

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BATTLE OF KRBAVA (1493) AS SEEN BY ITS CONTEMPORARIES *

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The decisive defeat of the Christian army mostly composed of the knights and troops from medieval Croatia, Dalmatia and Hungary at the Krbava Field on September 9th 1493 at the hands of the Ottoman troops was one of most known events of the long-lasting anti-Ottoman defensive war. In the middle of 16th century, the friar John Tomašić described it as the first downfall of the Kingdom of Croatia (*prima destructio regni Corvatie*), and his attitude was on certain level accepted by historians in the subsequent centuries. Moreover, the narrative of the Krbava Field was intensively used in the 19th and 20th centuries as an important element of the strengthening of the Croatian collective identity, that is, as one of the cohesive elements of the national identity of the Croats. The author of this paper addresses how the consequences of the Battle of Krbava were seen by its contemporaries by analyzing various accounts composed after the event, those composed immediately after the battle as well as those composed with the delay of up to three decades. The focus of this research is on what was seen by the contemporaries as the main consequences of the battle, as well as on their perceptions of the long-term importance of the battle's consequences.

Key words: battle of the Krbava Field, late Middle Ages, Croatia, long-term perception, late medieval propaganda, 1493

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Introduction

The battle that took place on the Krbava Field in present-day central Croatia on September 9, 1493 is probably one of the best-known battles from the period of the long-lasting defensive war waged by the inhabitants of the Realm of St. Stephen, which included Croatian historical lands, against the Ottomans. The results of the battle in many ways influenced subsequent historical events not only in the areas of the Medieval County of Krbava and its surrounding counties, but also on wider territories of what were the Croatian historical lands. After the battle, various reports were composed and the narrative of it became very politically charged, so it is not surprising that the Battle of the Krbava Field was present in various chronical and/or historical works composed by writers who originated from or worked in what were then the lands of the Realm of St. Stephen in the period from the 16th to the end of 18th century. For example, short versions of the Krbava narrative are present in the work of Antun Vramec titled *Kronika vezda znovich zpravliena Kratka Szlouenzkim iezikom* [A Short Chronicle Newly Composed in the Slavonic Language] and published in 1578,¹ as well as in the writings of George Rattkay, a canon of the Chapter of Zagreb, titled *Memoria Regum et Banorum Regnorum Dalmatiae, Croatiae et Sclavoniae* and published in 1652,² and in the work by Balthazar Adam Krčelić titled *Povijest stolne crkve zagrebačke* [The history of the Zagreb Cathedral], written in 1754 and published in 1770.³

In the middle of the 16th century, the defeat of the Christian army, mostly composed of the knights and soldiers from the territories of Medieval Slavonia, Croatia and Hungary, on the Krbava Field was described by the friar John Tomašić in his work *Chronicon breve regni Croatiae* as the first downfall of the Kingdom of Croatia.⁴ This attitude was on a certain level accepted by the later historians and the narrative of the Krbava Field was intensively used in the 19th and 20th centuries as an important element of the strengthening of

¹ Antun Vramec, *Kronika vezda znovich zpravliena Kratka Szlouenzkim iezikom* [A Short Chronicle Newly Composed in the Slavonic Language], ed. Alojz Jembrih (Varaždin – Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti – Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1992).

² Juraj Rattkay, *Memoria regum et banorum, regnorum Dalmatiae, Croatiae & Sclavoniae. Spomen na kraljeve i banove Kraljevstva Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije*, 2 vols., trans. Zrinka Blažević (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001).

³ Baltazar Adam Krčelić, *Historiarum cathedralis ecclesiae Zagradiensis. Povijest stolne crkve zagrebačke*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1994).

⁴ ...*Hec est prima destructio regni Coruatie...*, Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, “Chronicon breve regni Croatiae Joannis Tomasich minoritae. Kratak Ljetopis hrvatski Ivana Tomašića malobračanina [A Short Chronicle of Kingdom of Croatia]”, *Arkiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku*, knj. IX (1868): 24.

the Croatian collective identity, that is, as the one of the cohesive elements of the national identity of the Croats.⁵ In historical and popular works the Battle of Krbava was mostly depicted as the turning point after which the rapid destruction of the Kingdom of Croatia occurred, with an emphasis on the loss of its territories and the eventual reduction to the “remnants of remnants” of the formerly glorious Kingdom of Croatia (*Reliquiae reliquiarum regni Croatiae*).⁶

And indeed, in 1835 Julius Fras described the Krbava battle as “bloody and for the Christian world the greatest misfortune”,⁷ while the author of the first modern scientifically relevant synthesis of Croatian history, Tadija Smičiklas, referred to the battle in 1882 as a “horrible defeat” and “the most terrifying debacle” of the Croatian army.⁸ Furthermore, in his paper on the Krbava battle Ferdo Šišić, a very prominent scholar and later author of another very popular syntheses of Croatian history which became the textbook used until the late 1970s at the at the University of Zagreb, which was then the only Croatian university, described the battle as a great defeat with consequences for the whole Croatian nation because it “heavily struck the trunk of the tree of the Croatian state” and “exposed the Croatian people to a 300-year long heroic fight against the Ottomans”.⁹ For Vjekoslav Klaić, author of a very popular synthesis of Croatian history in five books, the Battle of Krbava was a “terrible fight”, a “bloody battle” and a “fearsome catastrophe” that “undermined the foundations of the Kingdom of Croatia”.¹⁰ Moreover, Rudolf Horvat stated, re-

⁵ For more details, see: Suzana Miljan - Hrvoje Kekez, “The Memory of the Battle of Krbava (1493) and the Collective Identity of the Croats”, *Hungarian Historical Review*, 4 (2015), no. 2: 283–313. It is worth mentioning that during the existence of the monarchical and latter communist Yugoslavia (1918-1941 and 1945-1990) the Krbava narrative was also used in order to strengthen the Yugoslav ideology of which a very important part was the narrative of a single Yugoslav nation composed of three (in the communist period more) tribes. Regarding this, see: Miljan-Kekez, “The Memory of the Battle of Krbava”: 304-305.

⁶ For more details, see: Miljan-Kekez, “The Memory of the Battle of Krbava”: 283–313 and the works analyzed there.

⁷ Franz de Paula Julius Fras, *Cjelovita topografija Karlovačke vojne krajine* [A complete topography of the Karlovac military border], ed. Mate Pavlič (Gospić: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1988), p. 141

⁸ Tadija Smičiklas, *Poviest hrvatska* [Croatian History], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1879), p. 675.

⁹ Ferdo Šišić, *Bitka na Krbavskom polju (11. rujna 1493.): U spomen četiristogodišnjice toga događaja: Istorijska rasprava* [The battle on the Krbava Field (September 11th 1493): In memory of the 400th anniversary of the event: A historical discussion] (Zagreb: Knjižara dioničke tiskare i Knjižara Jugoslavenske akademije, 1893), p. 29.

¹⁰ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX. stoljeća* [History of the Croats from the Oldest Times to the End of the Nineteenth Century], vol. 3 (Zagreb: L. Hartman, 1901), pp. 230, 232-233.

garding the battle, that “the Croats never experienced a greater defeat than the one on the Krbava field in 1493”.¹¹ Even in the middle of the 20th century, similar statements can be found. For example, in 1937 Stjepan Srkulj described the battle as the “darkest” day in Croatian history,¹² while Slavko Pavičić in 1943 argued that the defeat was to be considered “the beginning and the main reason for the downfall of the whole Kingdom of Croatia”.¹³ It was not before the second half of the 20th century that Croatian authors took a more mature and layered approach in defining the long-term consequences of the defeat in the Battle of Krbava.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in the last two and half decades, historians that studied the Battle of Krbava generally concluded that immediately after the battle there were no territorial losses to the Ottomans, but instead stressed the loss of the leaders of the most important Croatian and Slavonian magnate families in the battle, as well as the beginning, or rather the acceleration of the process of emigration of the inhabitants of Medieval Krbava and its surrounding counties.¹⁵ And indeed, the death of several leading members of the most important Croatian and Slavonian noble families reflected negatively on the defense potential of late Medieval Croatian lands, due to their importance as organizers and key figures not only of the contemporary economic and social life, but

¹¹ Rudolf Horvat, *Lika i Krbava: Povijesne slike, crtice i bilješke* [Lika and Krbava: Historical images, sketches and notes] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1941), p. 305.

¹² Stjepan Srkulj, *Hrvatska povijest u devetnaest karata* [Croatian history in nineteen maps] (Zagreb: Offset tisak i naklada “Tipografije” d. d. u Zagrebu, 1937), p. 48

¹³ Slavko Pavičić, *Hrvatska vojna i ratna povijest i Prvi svjetski rat* [Croatian martial and military history and World War I] (Zagreb, 1943; reprint: Zagreb: Nakladničko trgovačko poduzeće „Mato Lovrak“, reprint not dated), p. 6.

¹⁴ For examples, see: Anđelko Mijatović, *Bitka na Krbavskom polju 1493. godine* [The Battle on the Krbava Field in the year 1493] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2005), pp. 88-91.

¹⁵ It has to be said that a substantial number of Croatian and Hungarian soldiers died in battle and that the various historical sources give different estimates as to their number, ranging between 1000 and 26000 (Mijatović, *Bitka na Krbavskom polju*: 78-79; Krešimir Kužić, “Bitka Hrvata – bitka na Krbavskom polju 1493. – strategija, taktika, psihologija” [The Battle of the Croats – the Battle of the Krbava Field in 1493 – Strategy, Tactics, Psychology], *Historijski zbornik*, 67 (2014) 1: 32-33). Without any doubt, this was also a very important consequence of the battle, but its long-term importance has to be analyzed in the context of the demographic potential of Croatia in the last decade of the 15th century. It seems that the latter was still rather high, as the scattered accounts from preserved written sources suggest. For example, consider the fact that Count Bernardin Frankapan lost in the Battle of Krbava his *banderium* (military unit composed of around 600 horsemen), but the very next year managed to muster a new *banderium* just to be sent by King Ferdinand to southern Italy, in order to expel the French army from Naples (Ivan Jurković, “Osmanska ugroza, plemeniti raseljenici i hrvatski identitet” [The Ottoman Threat, Displaced Nobles and Croatian Identity], *Povijesni prilozi*, 31 (2006) 31: 50, fn. 37)

also as organizers of the defense against the might of the Ottoman Empire in the period generally characterized by the lack of substantial and continuous military and financial aid from the kings of the Realm of St. Stephen – first Wladislas II Jagiellon (1490-1516), then Louis II Jagiellon (1516-1526).¹⁶ Moreover, the continuation of emigration of the inhabitants of endangered Croatian lands heavily increased in the last decade of the 15th century, and it is estimated that in the period from 1463 to 1593 Croatian lands suffered the loss of approximately 60 percent of their inhabitants.¹⁷ Therefore, these two factors led to the rapid diminishing of the defense potential of the Medieval Croatian lands endangered by the Ottoman threat.¹⁸

In this paper, the author wishes to address how the Battle of the Krbava Field was seen by its contemporaries, that is, what they have pointed out as the main consequences of the battle, and whether there were any differences among them that could be related to the geographical origin of the source and/or its author, and if there were, to try to explain them. Moreover, the question of the contemporaries' awareness of the importance of the battle and their perception of its long-term consequences for the development of Croatian historical lands will be addressed.

In order to do so, one should first examine the preserved written sources that show how the battle and its consequences were seen by the inhabitants of Krbava and its surrounding Medieval counties, that is, the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia and Dalmatia. Further on, one should investigate how the consequences of the battle were presented to the centers of power of contemporary Europe by the various individuals present in Medieval Croatia immediately after the battle, as well as how the consequences of the battle were seen

¹⁶ On this, see: Ivan Jurković, "Turska opasnost i hrvatski velikaši – knez Bernardin Frankapan i njegovo doba [The Ottoman threat and Croatian nobility - Count Bernardin Frankopan and his era]" *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 17 (2000): 68-70.

¹⁷ Jurković, "Osmanska ugroza": 39.

¹⁸ See the following works: Milan Kruhek, "Sraz kršćanstva i islama na Krbavskom polju 9. rujna 1493. [The Clash of Christianity and Islam on the Krbava Field on September 9th, 1493]", *Riječki teološki časopis*, 1-2 (1993): 243-248; Ivo Goldstein, "Značaj Krbavske bitke 1493. godine u hrvatskoj povijesti [The Importance of the Battle of Krbava in 1493 in Croatian History]", *Krbavska bitka i njezine posljedice*, ed. Dragutin Pavličević (Zagreb: Hrvatska matica iseljenika, 1997), pp. 22-27; Jurković, "Osmanska ugroza": 39-69; Dragutin Pavličević, "Težak poraz, ali ne i slom hrvatskog kraljevstva [Heavy Defeat, but not the Collapse of the Croatian Kingdom]", *Republika: Mjesečnik za književnost, umjetnost i društvo*, LXII (2006), no. 2: 104-106; Hrvoje Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan i Krbavska bitka: Je li spasio sebe i malo-brojne ili je pobjegao iz boja? [Bernardin Frankapan and the Battle of Krbava Field: Did he save Himself and a Few Others or did He Run Away from the Battle?]", *Modruški zbornik*, 3 (2009): 65-101; Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 11-63.

in the several centers of power of contemporary Europe, such as the Roman Curia, the Hungarian royal court in Buda, the Habsburg court in Innsbruck and even in London. At the end, the author will address how the consequences of the battle were seen by the count Bernardin Frankapan, the only magnate who participated in the battle and managed not only to survive it, but also to avoid being captured by the Ottomans. In the decades after the battle, Count Bernardin became one of the most prominent magnates of Medieval Croatia, and one of the most persistent fighters against the Ottomans. His efforts in this regard included petitions to various political centers of contemporary Europe, of which the most vivid example is his famous speech *Oratio pro Croatia* given at the diet of the Holy Roman Empire in Nurnberg in 1522.¹⁹ He was also a person whose life was rather well recorded in various written sources.²⁰

At the end of this introduction, it should be said that in the scope of this research, only those written accounts were considered that were composed by the contemporaries of the battle, in spite of the fact that most of the reports were not written by the participant of the battle, as well as the fact that many of those reports were finally written as late as two decades after the event took place.²¹

Aspect one – the perception of the consequences of the battle among the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia

One of the first accounts of the battle of Krbava is a short report composed just several days after the battle by an unknown author, but it is possible that

¹⁹ Bernardin Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia / Govor za Hrvatsku (1522)*, Ivan Jurković – Violeta Moretti eds. (Zagreb: Katedra Čakavskog sabora Modruše, 2010).

²⁰ On the life of Bernardin Frankapan see for example: Milan Kruhek, "Bernardin Frankapan Krčki, Senjski i Modruški knez - posljednji modruški europejac hrvatskoga srednjovjekovlja (1453. - 1529.) [Bernardin Frankapan the Count of Krk, Senj and Modruš – the last European of Croatian Middle Ages (1453-1529)]", *Modruški zbornik*, 3 (2009): 187-237.

²¹ In 1937 Ferdo Šišić published various medieval and early modern reports on the Krbava Battle (Ferdo Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika o hercegu Ivanišu Korvinu i o borbama Hrvata s Turcima (1473-1496) s „dodatkom“ (1491-1498) [A Handful of Documents concerning Duke John Corvinus and the Fights between the Croatians and the Ottomans (1473-1496), with an "appendix" (1491-1498)]" *Starine* 38 (1937): 1-181.), but his work was later complemented by Aleksij Olesnicki, who published several Ottoman reports on the Krbava Battle (Aleksije A. Olesnicki, "Bošnjak Hadum Jakub, pobjednik na Krbavskom polju g. 1493 [The Bosniak Hadum Jacub, victor on the Krbava Field in 1493]", *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 264 (1938): 147-155). Even today it is possible to find so far unknown reports on these events, as it was clearly shown by Krešimir Kužić who presented to the Croatian audience several so far unknown reports mostly of German origin (Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 53-59).

the latter was Count Anž (Hans) Frankapan of Brinje, who did not participate in the battle, unlike most of his relatives.²² It was originally written in Latin, but it is preserved in a mid-sixteenth century German translation, and it was probably sent to Emperor Maximilian I Habsburg in order to inform him of the events on the Krbava Field.²³ The author of the record pointed out that among those who perished in the battle were Ban Emeric Derencsényi and his brother Paul, as well as counts John Frankapan of Cetin and Nicholas Frankapan of Tržac, but also an unnamed ban of Jajce (most likely Michael Petheky), while only Count Bernardin Frankapan survived with just six of his personal retainers.²⁴ Further, the author of the record stressed that on the Christian side 3500 men were killed in the battle.²⁵ Therefore, one can argue that the main consequences of the Krbava Battle, as far as the unnamed author was concerned, was the loss of magnates and the death of a substantial number of the soldiers, while a loss of territories or fortified castles or cities was not mentioned at all.

Another account, composed by Martinac, the parish priest of Grobnik, in 1494 vividly depicts what was seen as the main consequences of the battle by the common people that inhabited Krbava and its surrounding medieval counties at that time.²⁶ The priest Martinac was emotional about the event, because he was a member of the Lapčani kindred and his relatives have participated in the battle, from whom he most likely gained the information about it. In his very emotional reports, he specifically pointed out the deaths of Ban Petheky and of Count John Frankapan, and the capture of Ban Derencsényi and Count Nicholas Frankapan.²⁷ Even more, Martinac also stressed

²² On the role of Count Anž Frankapan in the events before the battle, see: Kruhek, "Sraz kršćanstva i islama": 252-253; Jurković. "Osmanska ugroza": 78-79; Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan": 68-74; Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 18. It is also possible that the author of this record was Dorothy Frankapan, spouse of the late Count Charles of Krbava and sister of Anž Frankapan of Brinje and Nicholas Frankapan of Tržac (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 123, n. 8).

²³ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 121-122.

²⁴ ...*Der alt ban ist gefangen, sein son erslagen. Der ander ban mit seinem son erslagen. Grafe Yban von Yrting(!) erslagen. Der ban von Ytzew(!) erslagen mit etlichen Wendischen herren ... graf Hansen sein gefangen und erslagen IIIC [= 300]. Nicolos(!) Peter mit vil mer deln erslagen. Graf Bernhartin sein erslagen und gefangen bei VIC [= 600], sed ipse septimus evasit...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 121-122.

²⁵ ...*Toter heupter hat man gefunden IIIM und VC [= 3500] und etliche mere...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 122.

²⁶ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 118-119.

²⁷ ...*t'gda že uhitiše bana hrvat'skoga ošće živuća, tag' da že ubiše kneza Ivana Fran'kapana, t'gda otpelaše kneza Mikulu Fran'kapana, t'gda že ubiše bana êêč'kogo...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 119.

the death and annihilation of lesser Croatian nobility,²⁸ but he is also the first one to describe the atmosphere among the common people by comparing the fear they felt after the battle with the atmosphere that existed during the time of the raids of the Mongols, Huns and Goths.²⁹

Other evidence of how the defeat of the Christian army at the Battle of Krbava was perceived by the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia can be found in the writings of several Western pilgrims who on their way to the Holy Land stopped over in the city of Zadar during the years after the battle. One of these accounts is the travelogue *Putování k Svatému hrobu* [The Pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre] by Jan Hasišteinsky, a pilgrim from Bohemia. His group of pilgrims stayed in Zadar for a very short time, from September 23 to September 25 1493,³⁰ and Hasišteinsky wrote of how he heard the story about the battle from a lesser nobleman from Croatia, i. e. from the Dalmatian hinterland.³¹ Among many details, Hasišteinsky emphasized that Count John Frankapan of Cetin, Ban Derencsényi and his unnamed son, Ban Petheky and Count Nicholas Frankapan perished in the battle,³² as well as many knights and local noblemen, but also seventy priests and monks.³³ In his recounting, the unnamed Croatian nobleman said that in the Krbava County very few people remained, meaning that many of its inhabitants were murdered or captured.³⁴ Therefore, once again it is attested that what the local inhabitants perceived as the major consequences of the battle were the annihilation of the Croatian magnates and the destruction of the local population, who were either captured or left their homes because of the constant

²⁸ ...*Tagda že padoše krěpci vitezi i boriteli sl(a)vni v premoženii ihъ věri r(a)di H(risto)vi. Ošće že i pišci izabrani boriteli tu umriše, obstrbti zastupi v plčině pola, tuže semrtъ priěše vēri r(a)di êkože družba s(veta)go Mavriciê...,* Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 119.

²⁹ ... *I tьgda načeše cviliti rodivšie i vdovi mnoge i proči ini. I bis(tь) skr'bь veliê n' v'sihъ živučihъ v strahъ sihъ, êka že nestъ bila ot vr(è)m(e)ne Tatarovъ i Gotovъ i Atelê nečist'vihъ ...,* Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 119.

³⁰ Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 13.

³¹ ...*A prawil mi o tom geden dobray vrozenay czlowiek Charwat...,* Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 124; Jurković, "Turska opasnost": 70-71

³² Count Nicholas IV Frankapan did not die in battle, but was indeed captured by the Ottomans, just to be ransomed in subsequent years (Mihailo J. Dinić, "Iz dubrovačkog arhiva III [From Dubrovnik Archives III]", *Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskoga naroda*, 22 (1967): 172-173).

³³ ...*A tito zbiti: hrabie Gwan z Czitina, bana charwatskeho syn, czisty mladenecz a mnoho dobrych vrozenych rytijerzuow a dobrych vrozenych lidij zbito, a na sedmdesat kniezije a mnichouz take. A wiezniowe tito ze zgimani, totizto: ban charwatsky, ban bossensky z Yaycze, hrabie Mikulass z Frankrhaynu (!)...,* Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 124.

³⁴ ...*A prawil take, ze malo lidij w te czelee zemi zuostalo, ze wssiczkini zbiti a zgimani...,* Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 124.

threat of war, while there is no direct evidence of how they perceived the long-lasting effects of the defeat.

A similar approach can be seen in the writings of Heinrich von Zedlitz,³⁵ a German knight who traveled in the same group of pilgrims as Hasišteinsky. Due to the significant differences between their two accounts, one could argue that they used different sources, although they traveled within the same group of pilgrims.³⁶ The person who gave the information about the defeat on the Krbava Field to Heinrich von Zedlitz, specifically emphasized the fact Count John Frankapan and an unnamed son of Ban Derencsényi, who was beheaded, died in the battle, while Ban Derencsényi himself was captured.³⁷ Moreover, among the consequences of the battle the source listed the death of around 5000 Christian soldiers and the capturing of several hundreds of them, while just a few managed to escape being captured or killed.³⁸

Other, mostly German, pilgrims reordered an atmosphere of mourning among the inhabitants of Croatia in the subsequent years. For instance, Konrad von Parsberg, a pilgrim from Bavaria, while at anchor near the harbor of Biograd in 1494, recorded that in the clash that occurred on the Krbava Field the Ottomans had killed many Christians.³⁹ Furthermore, while staying in Zadar in 1497, yet another pilgrim, Hans Schürpfen from Luzern, recorded that Medieval Croatia had been devastated and that many people had been taken away by the Ottomans. He had also recorded a perception of a sort, held by the inhabitants of Croatia, of the long-term consequences of the battle, by stating that if no one came to their aid, the Ottomans would seize the whole country.⁴⁰

From these preserved records, it can be concluded that the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia, who were contemporaries of the battle, emphasized as

³⁵ Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata", App. 1: 54-55; Originally published as Reinhold Röhrich, "Die Jerusalemfahrt des Heinrich von Zedlitz (1493)", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins*, 17 (1894): 98-114.

³⁶ Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 11.

³⁷ ...Vnd do ist Graffe Iben todt plieben von Carbatie vnd der hauptmann der haist Heremiz vnnd In mite wegk gefuret, auch seinen Sohn des hauptmans das haupt abgeschlagen..., Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 55.

³⁸ ... das der Vnnsern bey funff taussendt auff der wlastadt bleiben ist ... vnnd auch etlich hundert gegangen vnd In gefurt, das Ir nicht viel darovn kommen sindt..., Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 54-55

³⁹ Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata", App. 5: 59.

⁴⁰ Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata", App. 6: 59. Originally published as Jost V. Ostertag, "Hans Schürpfen des Raths zu Lucern, Pilgerfahrt nach Jerusalem 1497", *Der Geschichtsfreund, Mittheilungen des historischen Vereins der fünf Orte Lucern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden und Zug*, 8 (1852): 190.

major consequences of the defeat on the Krbava Field the loss of the noble magnates and a great number of Christian soldiers in the battle, as well as the hardships of the local inhabitants, who were either taken away as slaves or forced to start leaving their homes by the great fear of Ottoman onslaughts, while no long-lasting consequences were directly mentioned. Nevertheless, several years after the battle, as attested by Hans Schürpfen, a small change in the perception of the battle among the local inhabitants had occurred. For the first time Schürpfen had recorded a certain awareness of the possibility that the Ottomans could conquer the whole of Croatia if no aid would come, which was caused by the military defeat on the Krbava Field several years before.

Aspect two – Presenting the consequences of the battle to the contemporary centers of political power

One of the earliest accounts of the Battle of Krbava composed in order to inform a center of political power is a letter written by Antonio Fabregues to the pope Alexander VI on September 13th 1493.⁴¹ It seems that Fabregues was some kind of a papal representative in the coastal city of Senj, whose task was, among other things, to inform the Roman Curia about the local news, especially regarding the Ottomans' activities on the eastern coast of the Adriatic and in its hinterland.⁴²

In his letter, Fabregues stated that all of the Croatian noblemen either died in the battle or were taken into captivity, and among them he listed the Croatian Ban Derencsényi and his unnamed son, then Mihael Petheky, ban of Jajce, but also Count John Frankapan of Cetin and his relative Nicholas Frankapan of Tržac, as well as two unnamed counts of Zrin and two counts of Blagaj.⁴³ Nevertheless, Fabregues was aware of that Count Bernardin Fankapan was the only among the Croatian high noblemen who managed to escape being

⁴¹ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 35-36.

⁴² Just a day before battle on the Krbava Field (September 8th 1493) Fabregues briefly informed the pope about the Ottoman raids in the area (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 34). On Fabregues and his writings, and especially on the history of the preserved copies of his letters and their inner structure, as well as their propaganda purposes, see: Neven Jovanović, "Antonio Fabregues o Krbavskoj bici [Antonio Fabregues about the Battle of Krbava]", *Povijesni prilozi*, 41 (2011): 173-187.

⁴³ ...*Banus, ut fertur, certe captus est, filius eius mortuus. Banus de Hiareza (!) captus et tota nobilitas Corvatie capta est et mortua. Comes de Cetine et comes Nicolaus de Frangepanibus mortui. Duo domini de Sregna (!) et duo alii de Blagay etiam mortui...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 36.

captured by the Ottomans after the defeat.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he informed the pope that the situation in Croatia after the battle had become critical, because there was no one able left to defend it in the case of a new Ottoman raid.⁴⁵

Two weeks after Fabregues', Pope Alexander VI received another letter from Croatia informing him about the events on the Krbava Field. It was George Divnić, the bishop of Nin, who wrote this extensive letter, typical for the contemporary diplomacy, on September 27th, 1493.⁴⁶ This vivid and up-setting account of the battle was written by Divnić after he had personally visited the Krbava Field.⁴⁷ In his letter, Divnić noted that even in the times before the Krbava Battle, the Ottomans had raided Croatian lands from their strongholds in Bosnia.⁴⁸ Regarding the Croatian nobility that perished in the battle, Divnić wrote that they died bravely, and compared them with the "heroes of Israel".⁴⁹ Besides the loss of the nobility and the danger for the local inhabitants, Divnić emphasized that the corridors through Croatia, Slavonia and Pannonia were left open after the battle, what was particularly dangerous for Italy because the Ottomans could extend their raids even as far as the Italian lands.⁵⁰ Moreover, he also pointed out the danger for the Habsburgs lands, stemming from the fact that the corridors through the valleys of the rivers Sana, Kupa and Una were now open,⁵¹ thus demonstrating, among other things, an understanding of the contemporary local geostrategic importance of these corridors.

⁴⁴ ...*solus comes Bernaridnus de Frangepanibus, qui cum tribus ex suis aufugit ex trecentis, quos secum conduxerat...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 36.

⁴⁵ ...*nullus in tota Corvacia remansit, qui posset resistere...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 36.

⁴⁶ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 37-43

⁴⁷ Bishop Divnić's letter is yet another rather typical example of anti-Ottoman speeches in which authors main goal was to receive foreign aid in the long-lasting defensive war against the Ottomans. See in more details: Davor Dukić, *Sultanova djeca: Predodžbe Turaka u hrvatskoj književnosti ranog novovjekovlja* [Children of the Sultan: Images of the Turks in early modern Croatian literature] (Zagreb: Thema i.d., 2004), pp. 15-18.

⁴⁸ ...*Tutus in Bossina degit, in vado est quocumque vadit. Copiosus non minus viris quam omnibus bellorum remigiis, quo lubet graditur...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 38-39.

⁴⁹ ...*Ceciderunt ergo fortes Israel, morui sunt, qui fortes stabant in atriis, quibus vigilantibus hostis non ita tutus vagabatur per provincias, non ergo Saul aut reliqui famosi illi deplorandi sunt amplius...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 41.

⁵⁰ ...*Patet aditus per medios Croatię, Sclavonię Pannonięque exitus, qua tutos cursus et recessus posthac habere poterit ad Italiam, nam nec fluminum nec montium obicetu magnopere impediatur...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 42.

⁵¹ ...*Ipsam [sc. Bosnia, com. HK] Turcos totam incolit, unde quotiens vult tutus prosilit et provincias finitimas circumcursat populaturque, cum sibi cordi est, Illiriam penetrat et Librniam et ad Savi usque originem Teutonicorum quoque oras percurrit signaque ubi mens est pro libito point...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 38.

Therefore, it can be attested that Bishop Divnić identified the danger for the local inhabitants and the death of members of Croatian magnate families, as well as the future danger of Ottoman raids for Western Christian lands (especially Italy and the Austrian lands), as the major consequences of the defeat on the Krbava Field. Nevertheless, although his letter was intended to be an appeal for military and financial aid, it cannot be attested that Divnić perceived the defeat as a major setback with long-term consequences, as it described by friar Tomašić in the middle of the 16th century.

Aspect three – Perception of the consequences of the battle in the contemporary centers of political power

In the following chapter, we shall try to determine how the consequences of the Krbava Battle were seen in several, for the inhabitants of Croatian lands most important, centers of political power of contemporary Europe. Therefore, we shall study the perception of the consequences of the Krbava Battle in Buda, the center of the Realm of St. Stephen and the chief residence of its king Wladislas II Jagiellon, then at the Papal Curia in Rome, as well as in Emperor Maximilian's court in Innsbruck in Tyrol, but there are even some preserved accounts of the perception of the Krbava Battle at the English royal court in London.

One of the most reliable eyewitnesses of the stories about the defeat at the Krbava Field that circulated among the people present at the royal court in Buda in the weeks after the battle was Florian Waldauf von Waldenstein, the prothonotary and emissary of the Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg. Waldenstein resided at the royal castle in Buda since June 1493 and there he collected the information on the Krbava Battle. Nevertheless, he wrote down his memories of the event much later, in a book titled *Heilhumsbüchlein*, which he wrote sometime between 1508 and 1509. It was preserved in the archive of the parish church in Haal near Innsbruck in Tyrol.⁵²

Although Waldenstein did not explicitly mention the Krbava Battle in his book,⁵³ it is important because in it he specifically emphasized the awareness of the danger for Hungary, but also for the southern lands of the Holy Roman Empire, if the Ottoman raids would continue, present among the members of the royal entourage at the Buda Palace. Furthermore, the information gathered here by Waldenstein, as well as in his later writings, most likely helped

⁵² Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 134-135.

⁵³ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 133-134.

to shape the anti-Ottoman narrative present in the first decades of the 16th century in Innsbruck. In that narrative, the struggle of the Croats, as the inhabitants of the borderlands, against the Ottomans was most likely a very important element, so it is not surprising that the struggle of the Croats against the Ottomans had been depicted on a relief on the cenotaph of Emperor Maximilian in the Hofkirche in Innsbruck.⁵⁴

Furthermore, probably the best insight into the official royal approach to the event itself, but also to the consequences of the Krbava Battle, can be found in the writings of Antonio Bonfini. Bonfini was the historian working at the court of king Mathias Corvinus, and his task was to compose a history of Hungary. Bonfini died in 1503, during the reign of King Wladislas II Jagiellon, and his work, *Rerum Hungaricum decades*, stayed unfinished.⁵⁵

Bonfini most likely based his account on the Krbava Battle on several lost reports that circulated among the members of the royal court in Buda in the time after the battle, but also on his own memory. He described in minute details the events before and during the battle, and pointed out that the Counts of Frankapan were to be blamed for the defeat, especially count Bernardin Frankapan who, from Bonfini's point of view, fled from the battle.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Bonfini lists among the major consequences of the defeat on the Krbava Field a great sorrow and a mournful atmosphere present among the inhabitants of Croatia, as well as the fact that after the defeat, the territories between the rivers Sava and Drava were endangered, that is, open to future Ottoman raids.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Miljan-Kekez. "The Memory of the Battle of Krbava": 12 and 31.

⁵⁵ On Antonio Bonfini and his writings, see for example: Giulio Amadio, *La vita e l'opere di Antonio Bonfini, primo storico della nazione ungherese in generale e di Mattia Corvino in particolare* (Montalto Marche: Tipografia Sisto V, 1930); Péter Kulcsár, *Bonfini magyar történetének forrásai és keletkezése* [Bonfini's sources of Hungarian history and formation] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiado, 1973). Montalto Marche

⁵⁶ Antonius de Bonfinis, "Rerum Ungaricarum Decades. Tomus IV. - Pars I. Decades IV. Et Dimidia V", *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum: Saeculum XV.*, ed. I. Fögel, B. Ivány L. Juhász (Budapest: K. M. Egyetemi Nymoda, 1941), pp. 238-242. It is quite easy to find in Bonfini's writings the reflection of the King Wladislas II Jagiellon's attitude towards the Counts of Frankapan. The king was very displeased with them because of their involvement in the uprising of Croatian magnates in the months before the battle, and because of the fact that, due to the later development of the events, they managed to escape the king's punishment. For more details about this, see: Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan": 89.

⁵⁷ ...*In Croatia plena omnia luctus et lamentationum fuerunt, cum alii patrem, alii filium, alii fratrem, alii alium lugerent, ut sibi quisque sanquine et amore coniunctus erat. Et, cum nemo extaret, qui aut populantibus hostibus resisteret, aut aliis publicis necessitatibus consuleret, magna iam rerum omnium inopia afflictabantur. Que mala ut, quoquo modo possent, curarent, sese in provinciam, que inter Savum et Davum sita est, retulerunt atque vim impetum incursantium hostium evitarunt...*, Bonfinis, "Rerum Ungaricarum Decades": 241.

The perception of the consequences of the Krbava battle among the magnates of the territories of broader Hungary can be seen in the writings of Louis Crijević Tubero (Ludovicus Tubero), an educated Benedictine monk from Dubrovnik.⁵⁸ Although his work, *Commentarii de temoribus suis*, was finished in Dubrovnik in 1522, most of it was written during his stay at the archbishop's palace in Bács (then in southern Hungary) as a guest of the Archbishop of Kalocsa, Gregory Frankapan.⁵⁹ Archbishop Gregory was a brother of the late Count George Frankapan, one of the Croatian magnates who perished in the battle of the Krbava Field, and was therefore personally deeply affected by the crushing defeat.⁶⁰ It is very likely that Tubero got his information on the Battle of Krbava from Archbishop Gregory himself.

Although Tubero gave only a brief account, he was the first author to pin the blame for the failure of the Christian army on the misguided tactics of Ban Emeric Derencsényi.⁶¹ For him, once again, a major consequence of battle was the demise of the magnates in the battle, especially of the, as he calls them, heroes "three most glorious heroes" - John Frankapan of Cetin, young George Vlatković and Ban Emeric Derencsényi.⁶² Moreover, because he was writing with the experience of more than twenty years of continuous armed conflicts with the Ottomans after the Krbava Battle, it is not so surprising that he indirectly depicted the defeat on the Krbava Field as an important setback in the long-term perspective.⁶³

It is also interesting to examine how the consequences of the Krbava Battle have been seen in the Habsburg lands and in the territories of northern Italy, that is, the areas that could have been easily reached and raided by the Ottomans if the defense of Medieval Croatia should collapsed. As it was already said, the public opinion on the battle of Krbava in the Habsburg lands was most likely chiefly shaped by the lost reports (if any written reports even existed) sent by Waldenstein from Buda to Innsbruck. It seems that the influ-

⁵⁸ On Tubero's life and writings, see: Vlado Rezar, "Uvodna studija: Latinitet Ludovika Crijevića Tuberoni [Introductory study: Latin language of Louis Crijević Tubero]", in: Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, *Komentari o mojem vremenu*, ed. Vlado Rezar (Zagreb: Hrvatski institute za povijest, 2001), pp. VII-LXXXVIII.

⁵⁹ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 143. Tubero's work was published in Frankfurt in 1603.

⁶⁰ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 143.

⁶¹ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 140-142.

⁶² *...Maxime autem haec clades trium clarissimorum virorum clade insignis fuit, morte Ioannis Frangepanii Zethinensium principis, Georgii Vlatkovi[ti] nobilis adolescentis e Narsio agro oriundi interitu, captivitate ipsius praefecti [sc. Ban Emeric Derencsényi, com. HK]...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 141.

⁶³ *...ea strage nobilitas Chorvatica fere deleta est, agri vero, abacto pecore, una cum agricolto-ribus paene deserti...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 141; Jovanović, "Antonio Fabregues": 185.

ence of this narrative was very strong, even among the members of the lower layers of the society. Therefore, it is not surprising that the account of the event on the Krbava Field can be found in the chronicle written by Jacob Unrest, a priest in a parish near Wörthersee in the Duchy of Carinthia.⁶⁴ Unrest had finished his work, titled *Die Österreichische Chronik*, sometime around the year 1500, and the account on the Krbava Battle in it is very likely composed on the basis of oral reports of the contemporaries of the battle, as well as on some lost written accounts.⁶⁵ Although Unrest's account of the Krbava Battle is very brief, and the names of the participants and toponyms are misspelled, he did identify two most important consequences of it. Firstly, he pointed out the death of around 3500 Croatian soldiers in the battle.⁶⁶ Secondly, Unrest took care to note the various places and regions raided by the Ottomans in the year after the battle.⁶⁷ If one would analyze those often-misspelled toponyms, it is possible to conclude that Unrest emphasized as a consequence of the battle the possibility for Ottoman raiders to attack not only the lands of Medieval Slavonia (today northwestern Croatia) but also parts of the duchies of Carniola and Carinthia, than under Habsburg rule.

The events that took place on the Krbava Field were also known in northern Italy almost immediately after the battle. Šišić argued that some sort of unidentified and lost written report on the Krbava Battle circulated in those areas in the years after the battle.⁶⁸ Although it is possible that Donado da Lezze, a Venetian patrician and amateur chronicler, used that unknown report presumably composed in Croatia for the description of the battle on the Krbava Field in his book titled *Historia Turchesca*,⁶⁹ it is also possible that he got the information from his relative, Bernado da Lezze, who was married to Catherine, sister of John Karlović, count of Krbava.⁷⁰ In any case, Donado finished his book in the period between 1509 and 1514, and in it he provided a very picturesque and detailed account of the battle, but also made many mistakes regarding the names, toponyms and chronology of the events. He

⁶⁴ Jakob Unrest, "Österreichische Chronik", *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Germanicarum. Nova series. tom XI.*, ed. Karl Grossmann (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1957): 299-230.

⁶⁵ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 132.

⁶⁶ ...warn 3 tawsent 5 hundred un etlich mer..., Unrest, "Österreichische Chronik": 230; Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 32.

⁶⁷ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 132.

⁶⁸ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 138.

⁶⁹ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 135-137.

⁷⁰ Petar Grgec, *Hrvatski Job šesnaestoga vijeka: Ban Ivan Karlović* [Croatian Job of the Sixteenth Century. Ban John Karlović] (Zagreb: Hrvatsko književno društvo sv. Jeronima, 1932), p. 25.

described the battle as a great defeat for Cristian forces and emphasized the demise of the Croatian and Hungarian nobility and soldiers, but he did not address any long-term consequence of the battle.

As it was already mentioned, the Roman Curia was almost immediately informed about the events that occurred on the Krbava Filed on September 9th 1493, and without any question it acted as a center for spreading the news (and even propaganda) to the various political centers of contemporary Europe.⁷¹ For instance, on October 2nd 1493, Pope Alexander VI sent a letter to Emperor Maximilian I Habsburg, informing him about those events. Although this original later in Latin is not preserved, its contemporary translation into German, printed by Johann Winterburg in Vienna, is.⁷² Several copies of this propaganda leaflet are known – one in Nürenberg, one in Hannover, another one in Paris, and a fragment of it in Vienna.⁷³ On the same day (October 2nd 1493) Pope Alexander VI sent another letter to Gian Galeazzo and Ludovico Sforza, dukes of Milan, with the news of the Krbava Battle.⁷⁴ Another letter with brief news had been sent from Rome by Cardinal Ascanio Maria Sforza to his brother Ludovico Sforza on October 19th 1493.⁷⁵ Two days later, Cardinal Sforza sent another letter to his brother, in which he specifically urged him to send military aid to the Croats for their fight against Ottomans.⁷⁶ Although there is no evidence of the Duke Ludovico Sforza sending any military aid to Croatia,⁷⁷ he did inform other important political figures in contemporary northern Italy about the Ottoman actions and threats on the eastern Adriatic coast and its hinterland. According to a response to one of his letters, composed by Ercole, duke of Ferrara, the latter received a copy of Pope Alexander's letter from Duke Ludovico Sforza.⁷⁸ Indeed, the main goal of the pope's propaganda activities was the organizing of military aid to be sent to the Croatian lands in order to prevent further Ottoman raids, whose target could now be not only the Habsburg lands, but also northern Italy.

⁷¹ Jovanović, "Antonio Fabregues": 174-178.

⁷² Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 43-44.

⁷³ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 43; Jovanović, "Antonio Fabregues": 176.

⁷⁴ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 45-46.

⁷⁵ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 51-53.

⁷⁶ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 55-56.

⁷⁷ Nevertheless, there is evidence that Duke Ludovico Sforza had plans for directing military aid to Croatia. On October 30th 1493, Duke Ludovico wrote in a letter to Thadeo Vimercato, his envoy in Venice, that he would send a sum of 5000 ducats as aid for the military efforts in Croatia (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 57-58).

⁷⁸ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 56-57.

In the months after the battle, quite a vivid correspondence, or rather diplomatic activity took place between the various political centers of Central Europe and northern Italy. Its main goals were to inform of the events of the battle and the possible danger for Christian Europe (*communitas christiana*) if the Ottomans should extend their raids further to the west. In the various preserved letters that circulated between the centers of political power, one can easily discern a general awareness of the need to send military help to Croatia to strengthen its defense, because the Croatian lands were, so to speak, a bulwark against the Ottomans aggression.⁷⁹ The geographical scope of these activities was very broad, so it is not surprising that even the royal court of King Henry VII Tudor of England was informed of the events on the Krbava Field as early as the end of the year 1493. To be exact, King Henry's response to the Roman Curia, sent on January 12th 1494, is preserved. In it, he expressed his concern for Croatia, which was suffering from Ottoman raids, and also emphasized the danger for the neighboring countries, especially Italy.⁸⁰

Aspect four – Perception of the consequences of the battle by its participants

Finally, it has to be addressed how the consequences of the battle on the Krbava Field were seen by its participants, namely by Count Bernardin Frankapan, who was the only member of the Croatian high nobility who survived the battle and managed not to be captured by the Ottomans. The very fact that he was the only magnate who survived the battle and had not been imprisoned, as well as his participation in the anti-royal mutiny of certain members of

⁷⁹ For example: on November 5th 1493 Ludwig Klinghammer informed Sigismund Habsburg, duke of Tyrol, of the defeat on the Krbava Field (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 61-62); on November 13th Emperor Maximilian informed Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan, about the Ottoman raids in Croatia that happened earlier that year (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 63); on November 25th Thadeo Vimercato, envoy of Duke Ludovico Sforza to Venice, informed his master that the Ottoman raiders had finally left Croatia several days earlier (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 65); on November 25th the city council of Ancona asked Pope Alexander VI to send some help to the inhabitants of Croatia for their struggle against the Ottomans (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 66); on January 27th 1494 Thadeo Vimercato informed Duke Ludovico Sforza about a new Ottoman raid on Croatia (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 68-69); on January 30th 1494 Thomas Erdődy, bishop of Győr, informed Ladislav Bánffy of Lučenec (hun. Losonc) on the peace negotiations with the Ottomans that were in progress (Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 69-70), etc.

⁸⁰ *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 1: 1202-1509*, ed. Rawdon L. Brown (London: Longman, Roberts & Green, 1864), 216, no. 635; Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 4.

the Croatian nobility before the battle, which was led by Count Charles Kurjaković of Krbava and Count Anž Frankapan of Brinje, was very likely the reason why the royal chronicler Anotonio Bonfini singled out exactly Count Bernardin as the person who bore the greatest responsibility for the defeat. Likely under the influence of Bonfini's writings, later historians accepted this statement.⁸¹

It has to be said that Count Bernardin was born sometime around 1453 in his father's castle of Modruš, and that at a later age he became one of the most important figures of the Croatian society at the end of the 15th and during the first three decades of the 16th century.⁸² His life, as well as his actions and deeds, are rather well documented in various preserved contemporary written accounts, hence it was the subject of a rather substantial number of historiographical works.⁸³ In the year of the Krbava Battle, Count Bernardin was in his early forties and had by then become the leading member of his family, as well as of the whole noble kindred of the Frankapani. In the subsequent years, he became the most persistent defender of his family's estates, and by that one of the most important figures and leaders of the anti-Ottoman defense war in contemporary Croatia. Therefore, it is not surprising that in folk poetry Count Bernardin listed among the most eminent adversaries of the Ottoman Empire, together with Duke John Corvinus, the Serbian despot Vuk Branković, Count Nicholas IV Frankapan and Ban Derencsényi.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, so far no account on the events before, during and after the Battle of Krbava composed by Count Bernardin was found. Therefore, it is quite problematic to determine his attitude towards the consequences of the battle. Nevertheless, due to the already mentioned fact that count Bernardin became one of the most important figures of the anti-Ottoman defense en-

⁸¹ For more details on this, see: Jurković, "Turska opasnost": 70-71, fn. 46; Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan": 89.

⁸² For a good overview of the life of Bernardin Frankapan, see: Kruhek, "Bernardin Frankapan": 187-235; also, see his recently published book, written in a more popular manner: Milan Kruhek, *Bernardin i Krsto Frankopan: Posljednji knezovi Modruški: Mačem i riječju za domovinu Hrvatsku* [Bernardin and Chrisopher Frankopan: the last Counts of Modrus: with sword and word for the Croatian homeland] (Modruš: Katedra Čakavskoga sabora Modruše, 2016).

⁸³ In 2009, the papers presented on the scientific conference on the life of Count Bernardin Frankapan, titled "Bernardin Frankapan i njegovo doba [Bernardin Frankapan and his age]" were published in *Modruški zbornik*. For various aspects of the historical role of Bernardin Frankapan, see: *Modruški zbornik*, 3 (2009): passim; as well as and the works cited there.

⁸⁴ Petar Strčić, „Prilog životopisu Bernardina Frankopana: (s izborom literature) [Contribution to the curriculum vitae of Bernardin Frankapan: (with selected bibliography)]“ *Sveti Vid: zbornik*, 4 (1999): 31.

deavors in Croatia in the years after the battle, this problem can be addressed to certain level. One of the most eloquent historical records on count Bernardin's attitude towards the Ottoman threat, not only to his family estates, but also to the historical Croatian lands, is without any doubt his famous speech given at the Diet of Holy Roman Empire in Nuremberg in 1522 – *Oratio pro Croatia*.⁸⁵

The main purpose of Count Bernardin's speech was to elicit military and financial aid for the defense of the endangered Croatian lands in their continuous attempts to stop Ottoman raids. Among many other things, in his speech he had very vividly depicted the various troubles inflicted on the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia by the Ottomans. In an approach and manner typical for the so-called *antiturcica* literary genre,⁸⁶ Count Bernardin mentioned the many supposed cruelties committed by the Ottomans, such as murdering children in front of their parents, raping women, maltreating priests and elderly people, abducting male children, etc.⁸⁷ This was *topoi* of *antiturcica* literary genre in which author's goal was to receive foreign military and financial aid to defense his land, so the authors often emphasized the supposed cruelties of "others" – in this case the Ottomans.⁸⁸ He also emphasized his opinion that if the defenders of Croatia would be defeated, i. e. if the Croatian defense system would crumble, a great danger would arise for the rest of Europe,⁸⁹ what is yet another example of typical *topoi* of *antiturcica* literary genre.⁹⁰ Finally, among many other things, Count Bernardin stated his opinion that Croatia and its inhabitants have been defending not only their

⁸⁵ Count Bernardin's speech was almost immediately published and circulated not only among the participants of the Nuremberg Diet of 1522, but also between various political centers of contemporary Europe, and was heavily used in propaganda purposes. See the Latin text and its translation into Croatian, together with an essay on its historical importance and linguistic characteristic, in: Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia*.

⁸⁶ On this, see: *Govori protiv Turaka* [Anti-Ottoman speeches], ed. Vedran Gligo (Split: Spitski knjižveni krug, 1983): 7-65.

⁸⁷ ...*liberos ante ora parentum, viros ante uxorum conspectum obtruncasse, abduxisse uxoresque spectantibus miseris maritis stuprasset, violasse bimosque ac trimos infants quos abducere nequirent coram matribus discernisset, sacerdotes ac grandevos homines per humum, dum eis spiritus superasset, atrociter petraxisset illisque afflictis onera humeris imposuisse, puerosque portandos dedisset in eosque tantorum impatientes laborum agmine facto, ut animam exhalarent, desevisse; omni denique crudelitatis genere usos fuisse...*, Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia*: 103.

⁸⁸ Dukić, *Sultanova djeca*, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁹ ...*Et precipue illud in memoriam vobis redigerem Croatiam ipsam christianorum scutum esse ac portam, qua capta nihil in universe Sacro Imperio Romano satis a periculo et exitio tutum esse...*, Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia*, p. 102.

⁹⁰ Dukić, *Sultanova djeca*, p. 16.

own lands, but also the whole of western Europe for more than 60 years, that is ever since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which they could not continue doing without foreign help.⁹¹

Although Count Bernardin's speech is written in style of *antitursica* literary genre,⁹² it is somewhat surprising that in his whole, rather long, speech, Count Bernardin did not even once mention the defeat on the Krbava Field, in spite of the fact that he had himself participated in the battle and the fact that it was a great disaster for the whole Frankapan family due the loss of several of its members. One should pose a question why is this the case, especially if one has in mind that the mentioning of the catastrophe on the Krbava Field and his personal losses in it would most likely be an excellent argument in favor of Count Bernardin's main goal—eliciting military and financial aid for the defensive efforts against the Ottomans. By answering this question one can, at least on a certain level, gauge Count Bernardin's attitude towards the Battle of Krbava and its consequences.

Indeed, there are two possible answers to that question. First, it is possible that Count Bernardin did not mention the defeat on the Krbava Field because almost 30 years had passed, and during that period many more distressing events took place, such as the fall of the very important Hungarian stronghold of Beograd in 1520, so that the audience present at the Diet in Nuremberg would not be very moved by an event rather unknown to most of them. If this was the case, it is possible to see how the event on the Krbava Field was perceived no more than 30 years later, that is, by the second generation after the event, that is for them it was rather distant and unknown event.

Nevertheless, as it was already explained in this paper that the events and consequences of the Krbava Battle were present in the minds of the mem-

⁹¹ ...*qua supra sexaginta annos, ex quo Constantinopolis in Turcarum venit potestatem (mirabile et miserabile dictum), quod nulli adhuc regno contigit, sine aliquo christianorum praesidio ab iisdem feris hostibus assidue propemodum infestata, vexata, vastata est...*, Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia*: 102. It is interesting to notice that the practice of emphasizing the long-lasting defense efforts were commonly present in anti-Ottoman writings (Dukić, *Sultanova djeca*, pp. 16-18).

⁹² Moretti successfully argued that Count Bernardin wrote his speech in style of *antitursica* literary genre and used many topoi (*loci communes*) because, among other reasons, because his aimed public was accustomed to it (Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia*, pp. 87-89). On development of *antitursica* literary genre see, for example: Paul Srodecki, "Antemurale Christianitatis", *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa. Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Thomas Wunsch and Stefan Rohdewald (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), pp. 804-822; Klára Pajorin, "Antitursica ngeli anni quaranta del '400: Le epistole di Francesco Filelfo, di Poggio Bracciolini e di János Vitéz", *Camoenae Hungaricae*, 3 (2006): 17-28.

bers of the contemporary higher classes, at least of those in the Realm of St. Stephen, as it can be attested, for example, in the writings of Louis Crijević Tubero. Therefore, one should look for another explanation as to why Count Bernardin omitted to mention the defeat on the Krbava Field in his speech.

It seems that count Bernardin intentionally left out the Battle of Krbava in his speech, even though it could have been a rather strong argument in favor of his appeal. It is very likely that he had done so because of the role of the counts of Frankapan in the events before the battle, that is, in the aforementioned anti-royal mutiny, in which the main goal of the Frankapani was to reclaim the important port city of Senj, as well as several other castles in the Vinodol region. As it was already said, Bonfini singled out precisely Count Bernardin as the most responsible person for the defeat, because he had retreated from the battle even before it was resolved.⁹³ Bonfini's writings, that is, his attitude not only towards Count Bernardin, but also towards the whole Croatian high nobility, had a great influence on the society of the royal court in Buda even 20 years after he died. This can be attested in the writings of Tubero who, most likely influenced by Bonfini's writings and the attitude of his host, Archbishop Gregory Frankapan, who was very well connected with the royal Jagellonian family, accepted the 'royal' narrative on the events before and during the Battle of the Krbava Field, as it can be seen in work, *Commentarii de temoribus suis* finished in 1522. In it, he stated that the main reasons for the defeat on the Krbava Field were Ban Derencsényi's alleged inexperience, as well as the treason of the Croatian high nobility, among whom the most important were the Frankapan family, because they purposely misled the ban to make a stand against the Ottomans, in his opinion, in an inappropriate place, that is, in the open field.⁹⁴ Tubero thought that the reason for this course of action of the Croatian nobility was their fear that after the victory over the Ottomans, Ban Derencsényi would turn on them because of their anti-royal mutiny in the months before the Krbava Battle.⁹⁵

⁹³ Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 125-129.

⁹⁴ It is possible to argue that Krbava Field, more precisely the part of the larger Field that lays beyond the Udbina Castle, was rather logical choice for Ban Derencsényi because, among other benefits, by arranging his army at that place the Christian army blocked all possible exit corridors that led towards medieval Bosnia. See in more details: Kekez, "Bernardin Frankapan": 78-82.

⁹⁵ ...*Derencinum Dalmatiae praefectum, quem banum appellant, in Corbaviensi agro, non procul ab Albio monte, adversus Turcas male pugnasse exercitumque nostrum occisione paene deletum, quum temeritate atque imperitia ipsius praefecti, tum prodicione, ut fama est, quorundam Chorvatorum principum, quos ferunt Derencinum ad conferendas cum Turcis manus alieno nostris loco per fraudem impulsisse, veritos sane, ne banus, que mob quaedam eorum admissa a se alienatum suspicabantur, superatis Turcis, in se arma converteret...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 140-141.

Moreover, a similar account of Count Bernardin's role before and during the battle circulated in Italy during the 1520-ties, most likely due to the writings of Donado da Lezze who, in his *Historia Turchesca*, singled out Count Bernardin as the main culprit of the defeat on the Krbava Field.⁹⁶ Indeed, it seems that a similar attitude towards the role of Count Bernardin Frankapan in the events before and during the Battle of Krbava was present in the early 1520-ties at the Roman Curia, one of the most important centers for distributing information to various political centers of contemporary Europe. This attitude was so strong that Count Bernardin's son, Count Christopher Frankapan, in his speech addressed to the Roman Curia in 1523, the goal of which was also eliciting military and financial aid for the anti-Ottoman defense, felt the need to explain and justify the actions of the members of the Frankapan family before the battle, that is, the attempted retaking of the city of Senj, to which they had hereditary rights and which was, at least from Christopher's point of view, unjustly taken from them by king Mathias Corvinus in 1469.⁹⁷

Therefore, one can argue that count Bernardin intentionally omitted to refer to the Battle of Krbava in his famous speech *Oratio pro Croatia*, although it would have been a great argument in favor of his cause, and by doing so he deprived us of the insight into his personal perception of the consequences of the Krbava Battle, which would be very important because he was the only member of the Croatian high nobility who survived the battle and managed not to be captured by the Ottomans.

Conclusion

As was presented in this paper, it can be easily argued that the perception of the consequences and the long-importance of the defeat on the Krbava Field on September 9th 1493 heavily depended on the perception, personal involvement, political agenda and, finally, awareness of the details of the event of the author of the preserved written account. Nevertheless, it can easily be seen that in all the accounts studied here, which were produced by the contemporaries of the event, the death of great number of soldiers, as well as the demise of many members of the Croatian high nobility, is regularly emphasized as one of the main consequences of the battle.

⁹⁶ ...*Il conte Bernardino Frangipane fù delli primi a fuggir, et s'intende che fù causa di questo conflitto...*, Šišić, "Rukovet spomenika": 137.

⁹⁷ "Govor Krsta Frankopana, krčkog, senjskog i modruškog kneza papi Hadrijanu VI [The Speech of Christopher Frankapan, count of Krk, Senj and Modruš to Pope Adrian VI]", trans. Nikola Žic, *Govori protiv Turaka*: 350-352; Kužić, "Bitka Hrvata": 47-48.

The other main consequence of the defeat that can be attested in the accounts of its contemporaries is the 'fear' of Ottomans. On this there are rather significant differences in the preserved material, depending on wherever the account was composed on the basis of a testimony of the participants of the battle or the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia, or on the stories that circulated between the centers of power of contemporary Europe, such as the Roman Curia, Buda or Innsbruck. Even more, the perception of awareness of the power of and the danger from Ottomans not only for the Croatian Medieval lands, but also for their neighboring countries (such as Italy, the southern Habsburg lands and Hungary), as it was already stated in this paper, also depended of the political and propaganda goals of a given preserved account.

On the one hand, in spite of the fact that Count Bernardin Frankapan, as the only participant of the battle who managed to survive and avoid being captured by the Ottomans, did not leave, as far as we know, an account of the consequences of the battle from his point of view, the sources in which the attitude towards the consequences of battle of the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia can be seen, almost regularly list, beside the demise of the nobility (including lesser nobility) in the battle, the danger of expected new Ottoman raids, that is, their continuation in the subsequent years, which is regularly seen in a rather mournful atmosphere recorded in the accounts. Furthermore, in several accounts the misery and many cruelties inflicted on the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia by the Ottomans, such as murder and enslavement, are listed as consequences of the defeat. Moreover, although the emigration of the inhabitants of the endangered Croatian lands, as was argued by the modern historians – which was mentioned above - is one of the most important consequences of the battle, direct statements regarding this cannot be found in accounts composed on the basis of the oral reports of the inhabitants of Croatia. This – the mass emigration - can be, on a certain level, inferred on the basis of the description of the 'fear' of Ottomans. Finally, it has to be mentioned that only in one of the writings of the battle's contemporaries based on the oral accounts of the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia, is the possibility of a complete Ottoman conquest of the historical Croatian lands mentioned. Those are the writings of Hans Schürpfen from Luzern from 1497. Hence, it is rather difficult to argue what was the level of the inhabitants of Medieval Croatia awareness of possible Ottoman occupation of their lands as direct long-lasting consequences of the defeat at the Krbava Field. Nevertheless, some awareness of this possibility obviously existed.

On the other hand, the consequences (beside the loss of the nobility) of the Krbava Battle and its long-term importance, as seen by its contemporaries whose accounts were composed farther away from Krbava and Croatia, whether it was in Rome, Innsbruck, Buda or even London, heavily depended on the main goal

of the author's writings, as well as on the political and propaganda purposes of the author's or the intended recipient's geopolitical environment. That is, if the account was intended for, or produced in the political center situated in Italy (Rome, Venice, Milan etc.), it is usually the danger for those areas that is singled out as the one of the main consequences of the battle. Similarly, if the account was intended for, or produced in, the political center situated in the Habsburgs lands (Innsbruck, Graz etc.), then the danger for the southern provinces of the Holy Roman Empire, such as Carinthia and Carniola, was emphasized. Nevertheless, in most of the accounts intended for the western European audience, or produced in those areas, the need for sending military and financial aid to Croatia to strengthen its defensive capacities is, at least vaguely, pointed out.

Finally, as was seen in this analysis, the battle's long-term importance as the downfall of the Kingdom of Croatia or the cornerstone of future historical development, as it was referred to by the friar John Tomašić in the middle of the 16th century, and later accepted by the 19th and 20th century historians, as well as by the general public for whom the Krbava Battle was one of the important elements of the strengthening of the Croatian collective identity, cannot be found in the preserved accounts of the contemporaries of the Krbava Battle, with the exception of Tubero's who, on a certain level, saw it as an important event with long-term consequences. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that Tubero was a well-educated monk and that his work was composed more than 20 years after the event took place, that is, after many other events confirmed the importance of the defeat on the Krbava Field. Finally, it seems that today, the perception of the long-term consequences of the Krbava Battle are more the result of the treatment of it by the historians from the 19th and most of the 20th centuries and the context of their work and time, i. e. of the sometimes lagging development of Croatian historiography, as well as of the usage of the Krbava narrative in the Croatian collective identity, than of the preserved accounts of the battle's contemporaries.

Konsequenzen der Schlacht bei Krbava (1493) in den Augen ihrer Zeitgenossen

Zusammenfassung

Die schwere Niederlage, die die christliche Armee, zusammengesetzt von Rittern und Einheiten aus dem Gebiet des mittelalterlichen Kroatien, Dalmatien und Ungarn, am 9. September 1493 in der Schlacht auf dem Krbava-Feld von Osmanen erlitten hatte, war ein der bekanntesten Geschehnisse im lan-

gen antiosmanischen Verteidigungskrieg. Schon Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts beschrieb Chronikschreiber Franziskaner Ivan Tomašić diese Niederlage als „den ersten Zerfall des Königreichs Kroatien“ (*prima destructio regni Croatiae*) und solche Vorstellung von der Schlacht auf dem Krbava-Feld wurde meistens von späteren Geschichtsschreibern angenommen. Das Narrativ von der Schlacht bei Krbava wurde sogar als ein der wichtigen kohäsiven Elemente bei der Stärkung der kroatischen nationalen Identität im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert intensiv gebraucht. Der Verfasser dieses Artikels versuchte zu erforschen, wie die Zeitgenossen dieses Geschehens die Folgen der Schlacht auf dem Krbava-Feld gesehen hatten. Er analysierte ziemlich zahlreiche Berichte, die nach der Schlacht verfasst worden waren, und zwar jene, die unmittelbar nach der Schlacht geschrieben worden waren, wie auch solche, die mit gewissem zeitlichen Abstand, sogar von drei Jahrzehnten, verfasst worden waren. Im Fokus der Forschung war die Frage, welche Folgen der genannten Schlacht ihre Zeitgenossen als die wichtigsten betrachtet hatten und ob sie, und wenn ja, auf welche Weise, die langzeitige Folgen dieser Schlacht beurteilt hatten.

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