

AN ABBEY AS A STRONGHOLD: A STRATEGIC ROLE OF CISTERCIAN ABBEY OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN TOPUSKO (TOPLICA) IN ANTI-OTTOMAN DEFENSE EFFORTS DURING 16TH CENTURY

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The main goal of this paper is to analyze the strategic role of Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko (medieval Toplica) in anti-Ottoman defense during 16th century, especially because it is rather exceptional of usage sacral complex in anti-Ottoman defense system in rather long period. In order to do so it is determined and analyzed strategic importance of the monastic complex in anti-Ottoman defense line and the change of it according to ever going Ottoman conquest of new territories, i.e. approaching of the bordering line. Furthermore, the organization of defense of the rather large estate of Topusko abbey as well as the changes of the monastic fortifications are addressed. Even more, the role of the commendatory abbots of the abbey, as well the serves of the abbey, in the larger efforts in composing and functioning of the anti-Ottoman defense line are analyzed. Finally, the proximate time and context of the final abandoning of the former Cistercian abbey is determined.

Keywords: The Topusko abbey, Ottoman raids, anti-Ottoman defense strategies, war strategies, 16th century, Croatia, Keglević family

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1. Introduction

On April 16th, 1584 Croatian ban (viceroy) Thomas Erdödy wrote his letter addressed to archduke Ernest Habsburg and in it he requested from the archduke to urge the king Rudolph Habsburg to confirm the conclusions of the Croatian Diet hold several days earlier in Zagreb.¹ Among other things ban Erdödy stated that the fortifications of the Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko (Toplica) were “in all sides ruins, damaged”, but he also wrote that it was only needed small efforts in repairing those fortifications in order to achieving such state that in them can continue to stay company of banal soldiers.²

From this short historical account one can easily perceive that Cistercian abbey in Topusko played certain role in anti-Ottoman defense efforts, as well as that in 1584 it was in bad condition, almost in ruins, and that same can be said of yonder fortifications. One can also see that in the middle of 1580-ties the defense of the abbey was responsibility of Diet of Croatian estates (cro. Sabor), that is Croatian ban in particularly. Nevertheless, this account raises many other questions on the role Cistercian abbey in Topusko in anti-Ottoman defense during whole 16th century that is during the period of height of Ottoman conquest and raids on today central Croatia. Therefore, the main goal of this paper is to analyze the strategic role of Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko in anti-Ottoman defense during 16th century, especially because it is rather exceptional of usage of sacral complex in anti-Ottoman defense system in rather long period. In order to do so it will be determined and analyzed strategic importance of the monastic complex in anti-Ottoman defense line and the change of it according to ever going Ottoman conquest of new territories, i.e. approaching of the bordering line. This can be that by attesting the four territorial zones of endangered Christian lands bordering the Ottoman Empire, as demonstrated by Jurković.³ Even

¹ Ferdo Šišić, ed., *Acta comitalia Regni Croatiae Dalmatiae Slavoniae. Hrvatski saborski spisi* (hereafter: HSS), vol. 4 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1917), pp. 136-137.

² ...*Caeterum serenitati vestre humillime significandum duxi de castro Topuska, quod ita ex omnibus partibus ruinosum est, ut ingressum hosti facillimum prebeat et quam difficile milites in eo interteneantur...*, HSS 4, p. 136.

³ The first zone were the occupied territories under Ottoman control; the second zone were territories without the control neither Christians or Ottoman and which was heavily depopulated; the third zone were the territories under Christian control, but these territories suffered a lot by continuous Ottoman raids; the fourth zone were the territories under Christian control fully protected and without of major Ottoman incursions. These zones shifted due to the Ottoman progress, i.e., their territorial gains. See in more details: Ivan Jurković, “Klasifikacija hrvatskih raseljenika za trajanja osmanske groze (od 1463. do 1593.)” [The classification of

more, the organization of defense of the rather large estate of Topusko abbey as well as the changes of the monastic fortifications are going to be addressed. Finally, the role of the commendatory abbots of the abbey, as well the serves of the abbey, in the larger efforts in composing and functioning of the anti-Ottoman defense line are going to be analyzed.

Most of the historical accounts on the role of the Cistercian abbey in Topusko in anti-Ottoman defense during 16th century are various reports made either by local military commanders of or by the Habsburg high command. These reports are mostly kept in several archives in Croatia, Austria and/or Slovenia, such as Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archive, Zagreb), Österreichisches Staatsarchivarchiv (Austrian State Archives, Vienna), Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (Styrian Provincial Archives, Graz) and Arhiv Republike Slovenije (Slovenian State Archive, Ljubljana). Furthermore, the role of the Croatian magnates in defense of the Topusko abbey can be easily detected in the conclusions of the Diets of Croatian (or Slavonian-Croatian) estates held during that period. Those documents are mostly kept in Hrvatski državni arhiv in Zagreb and are published by Ferdo Šišić.⁴ Finally, by analyzing the lists of various contributions and/or rental obligations (*urbaria*) of the serves, one can address on certain level the scope of the Ottoman raids on the estates of the Topusko abbey, i.e. effects of decreasing of the population of the estate and still existing economical activities as well as the changes of the social structures during 16th century. These documents are mostly kept in several archival funds in Nadbiskupijski arhiv (Archdioceses Archive, Zagreb).

Considering the results of the historiography on the of Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko, it has to be said that this abbey had been in focus of several travel writers and historians from the beginning of 19th century, and that this interest exists up today. Hence, it was Michael von Kun-nits who written the first historical-topographic study on Topusko in 1827.⁵ After he has visited Topusko in 1830-ties Radovan Šiljak published booklet in German about the history and ruins of the abbey.⁶ Twenty years after it was Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski who had published first scientifically relevant

displaces among Croats during the Ottoman peril (from 1463 till 1593), *Migracijske i etničke teme* 19 (2003): 154-156.

⁴ HSS 1-5.

⁵ Michael von Kun-nits, *Historisch topographische Beschreibung des Mineralbades Topusko im Königreiche Croatien* (Carlstadt: gedruckt mit Prettnerschen Schriften, 1827). Edition in Croatian: Michael Kunić, *Povijesno topografski opis mineralnog kupališta Topusko* [Historical and topographic description of the mineral baths in Topusko] (Topusko: Lječilište Topusko, 1997).

⁶ Radovan Šiljak, *Kloster dann Abtei und Schloss Toplica (Topoczko) nun Thopusko* (Agram: 1840).

study about the history of the Topusko abbey.⁷ Šime Ljubić significantly improved Kukuljević' study after he conducted first archaeological excavations on the site.⁸ Furthermore, in 1897 Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić gave the most detail overview of the history of the Topusko abbey, based on the analysis of the preserved written sources.⁹ Nevertheless, in the beginning of the 20th century Emilije Laszowski and Vjekoslav Klaić analyzed and published new medieval documents on Topusko history.¹⁰

In the second half of the 20th century, Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko once again came into the focus of historiography, and the authors started to raise new questions on the social structures and everyday life as well as political position of the abbey in medieval Slavonia. Hence, Josip Adamček wrote most detail study on economic conditions and peasants' turmoil on the abbey's estate in the middle of 16th century.¹¹ In the beginning of the last decade of 20th century, Mladen Ančić published a paper on the inner structure and governing mechanisms on the large Cistercian estate since the foundation of abbey in 1205 until to their absorption into the commendatory system in the early fifteenth century.¹² Some ideas presented in that paper Ančić elaborated in more details and published in 1997 in English.¹³ In 2006, László Ferenczi published a paper in English focusing on the economic aspects of the everyday life of the Topusko abbey that is among the other things, he discussed the importance of trade routes and waterways, as well as existence

⁷ Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski, "Opatija b. d. M. u Topuskom", *Književnik: časopis za jezik i povijest hrvatsku i srbsku, i prirodne znanosti* 1 (1864): 78-89.

⁸ Šime Ljubić, "Topusko (Ad fines)", *Vjestnik hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva* 2/1 (1880): 1-11, 34-42.

⁹ Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić, "Cistercitski samostan u Topuskom" [Cistercian abbey in Topusko], *Vjestnik hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva* 2/1 (1896-1897): 110-129.

¹⁰ Emilij Laszowski, "K povijesti opatije Topuske" [To the history of the abbey in Topusko], *Vjestnik Hrvatsko-Slavonsko-Dalmatinskog Zemaljskog arkiva* 1 (1899): 199-200; Vjekoslav Klaić, "Dva priloga za povijest cistercičanskoga samostana u Topuskom" [Two contributions to the history of the Cistercian abbey in Topusko], *Vjestnik Hrvatsko-Slavonsko-Dalmatinskog Zemaljskog arkiva* 3 (1901): 263-264; Emilij Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest opatije topuske" [An contribution to the history of Topusko abbey], *Starine JAZU* 32 (1907): 92-130.

¹¹ Josip Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske opatije sredinom XVI. stoljeća" [Turmoil on the estates of Topusko abbey in the middle of 16th century], *Historijski zbornik* 21/22 (1968-1969): 283-308.

¹² Mladen Ančić, "Cistercitska opatija u Topuskom do pretvaranja u komendu" [Cistercian abbey in Topusko until its transformation into commende], *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 27 (1994): 29-42.

¹³ Mladen Ančić, "Cistercians in Thirteenth Century Croatia", *Mediaevistik* 10 (1997): 205-218.

of mills and market-towns.¹⁴ It is also important to emphasize that in 2008 Ana Novak defended her M. Phil thesis on the history on Topusko abbey.¹⁵ In her M. Phil thesis Novak gave an overview of historiography as well as described history of Topusko before and after arrival of Cistercians. Even more, Novak focused on cultural, religious, political and economic aspects and influence on surrounding areas, as well as emphasized the traffic importance of the Topusko in wider context of medieval Slavonia. Afterwards Novak also published several papers on Cistercian abbey in Topusko. In the first of those papers she was examining importance and actions of Topusko abbot John II,¹⁶ while in second, she has demonstrating importance of Topusko abbey in the context of border studies during Middle Ages.¹⁷ Finally, in in third one while writing on the history of village Čuntić in 14th and 15th centuries Novak had contextualized it in aspect of Čuntić being a *praedium* of Topusko abbey estate.¹⁸ Even more, in this short overview on the historiography on of the Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko it has to be point out on the writings of Hrvoje Kekez. Hence, in 2010 Kekez published paper in which he in details examines spiritual, cultural and political colorations between noble family of Babonići and Cistercian abbeys in Kostanjevica upon Krka (Landstrass) and in Topusko at the end of 13th century and beginning 14th century.¹⁹ He extended this study in 2017, covering the period until the end of 14th century, and published it as one chapter in his book on the history of

¹⁴ László Ferenczi, "Estate structure and development of the Topusko (Toplica) abbey – case study of medieval Cistercian monastery", *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 12 (2006): 83-100.

¹⁵ Ana Novak, *Topusko u razdoblju od dolaska cistercita do kraja srednjega vijeka* [Topusko in the time from arrival of the Cistercians until the end of the Middle Ages] (manuscript M.Phil. thesis University of Zagreb, 2008).

¹⁶ Ana Novak, "Uključivanje Opatije Topusko u crkveno-politički i javni život na području Zagrebačke biskupije (Djelatnost opata Ivana II. i sjeveroistočni posjedi cistercitske Opatije Blažene Djevice Marije)" [The inclusion of the Topusko Abbey into the Church-political and public life on the territory of the Zagreb bishopric: the Abbot Ivan II and the north-eastern estates of the Cistercian Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary], *Povijesni prilozi* 34 (2008): 27-45.

¹⁷ Ana Novak, "Croatia and the Borders of Christianity: The Fortified Cistercian Abbey of Castrum Thopozka", in: *Monasteries on the borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Interaction*, eds. Emilia Jamrozak and Karen Stöber (Turnhout: Brepols Publisher, 2013), pp. 49-81.

¹⁸ Ana Novak, "Čuntić i njegova okolica u 14. stoljeću" [Čuntić and its surrounding in 14th century], in: *Osam stoljeća Čuntića 1211.-2011.*, eds. Jakša Raguž, Hrvoje Kekez and Petar Krpan (Petrijnja-Zagreb: Matica hrvatska u Petrinji – Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2012), pp. 39-73.

¹⁹ Hrvoje Kekez, "Cistercians and nobility in medieval Croatia: the Babonići kindred and monasteries of Topusko (Toplica) and Kostanjevica (Landstrass) in the 13th and early 14th centuries", *Cîteaux: commentarii cistercienses* 61 (2010), fasc. 2-4: 257-278.

noble family of Babonići.²⁰ Finally, while writing of the first mentioning of the village Čuntić in 1211, Kekez analyzed that historical account in the context of foundation of the Cistercian abbey in Topusko.²¹

As it was already said, the first archeological excavations of the site of the Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko were conducted in late 1870-ties by Šime Ljubić and Franjo Erbem and they resulted in discovering some elements of the main church and monastic complex.²² Unfortunately, it was not before 1966 when the archeological excavations were continued. Nevertheless, those were short and resulted with only partial outcomes.²³ In 1999, new excavations started under the oversight of Amelio Vekić and resulted in finding many architectonic elements of monastic complex such as capitals and cords.²⁴ Finally, in 2013 archeological excavations were continued and for the first-time stratigraphic methodology was used. Despite the financial limits many new finds and new information on the appearance of the monastic complex in the Middle Ages and in 16th century was reached. In 2017 a group of archeologists conducted a major geophysical surveys of the park Opatovina in Topusko (a site of the monastic complex) resulting in new findings on the spatial perspective of the abbey, exceptionally on the features of the outer walls of the monastic complex.²⁵

Considering the historiography on the role of Topusko abbey during 16th century, it was not in primary focus of individual scientific study. Yet some authors considered it in their works on various topics including general anti-Ottoman defense efforts. Of those, the most important was Milan Kruhek who in his very detail and in many elements still not outmatch book on strongholds in Croatian historical lands during 16th century, referred several

²⁰ Hrvoje Kekez, *Pod znamenjem propetoga lava. Povijest knezova Babonića do kraja 14. stoljeća* [Under the sign of upstanding lion: History of the Counts of Babonići to the end of 14th century] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016), pp. 249-259.

²¹ Hrvoje Kekez, "Cisterci i Čuntić 1211. godine" [Cistercians and Čuntić in 1211], in: *Osam stoljeća Čuntića 1211.-2011.*, eds. Jakša Raguž, Hrvoje Kekez and Petar Krpan (Petrinja-Zagreb: Matica hrvatska u Petrinji – Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2012), pp. 21-38.

²² Ljubić, "Topusko (Ad fines)", pass.

²³ Zorislav Horvat, "Topusko – pokušaj rekonstrukcije tlocrta" [Topusko – an attempt to reconstruct layout], *Peristil* 10-11 (1967-1968): 5-16.

²⁴ Drago Miletić and Marija Valjato Fabris, *Topusko. Nekadašnja cistercitska crkva sv. Marije. Prijedlog prezentacije i sanacije konstrukcije* [Topusko. Former Cistercian church of St. Mary. Suggestion of presentation and sanitation of construction] (Zagreb: Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, 2010), p. 31.

²⁵ Andrej Janeš, "Nova istraživanja opatije Blažene Djevice Marije u Topuskom i njezini posjedi" [New research on the Abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko and its Estate], *Portal: godišnjak Hrvatskoga restauratorskog zavoda* 9 (2018): 15-30.

times on role of Cistercian abbey in Topusko in anti-Ottoman defense strategies.²⁶ The same author mostly repeated his arguments and conclusions in another paper of the same author published in more popular manner.²⁷ Even more, Novak in her study on Topusko abbey in the context of border of Christianity during Middle Ages, dedicated one chapter on the abbey's defense system against Ottoman raiders mostly focusing only on the three first decades of 16th century.²⁸

2. The departure of Cistercians

According to preserved written documents, it was in 1402 when for the first time Ottoman raiders plundered estates of Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko.²⁹ However, these raids occurred in the context of the Ottoman troops that were in the service of Bosnian great Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić and contemporary civil war.³⁰ Yet, it was not before first decade of 16th century that Ottoman incursions on abbeys estate became regularly practice. Namely, after the war between Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia and Venice against Ottoman Empire, as well as subsequent peace agreement signed in 1503, it was when castles Ključ and Kamengrad fell under Ottoman control.³¹ These two castles situated in western Bosnia in upper river Sana valley since became major bases for further Ottoman raids on Christian territories westwards situated between rivers Una and Kupa,³² what included the estate of Topusko abbey as well.

²⁶ Milan Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana Hrvatskog kraljevstva tijekom 16. stoljeća* [Borders strongholds and defense of the Croatian Kingdom during the 16th century] (Zagreb: Institut za suvremenu povijest, 1995), pp. 35, 80, 128, 187-188, 306-308.

²⁷ Milan Kruhek, "Topusko – cistercitski samostan u protuturskim obrambenim ratovima tijekom 16. i 17. stoljeća" [Topusko – an Cistercian monastery in anti-Ottoman defense wars during 16th and 17th centuries], *Glas Gradskog muzeja Karlovac* 4 (2005): 11-16.

²⁸ Novak, "Croatia and the Borders of Christianity", pp. 72-76.

²⁹ Andrija Lukinović, ed., *Monumenta historica episcopatus Zagradiensis. Povijesni spomenici zagrebačke biskupije*, vol. 5 (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost – Arhiv Hrvatske, 1992), pp. 173-174.

³⁰ Ferdo Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i njegovo doba (1350.-1416.)* [Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić and his ages (1350-1416)] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1902), pp. 226-235.

³¹ On this war see in more details: Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 298-323.

³² Matija Mesić, "Hrvati na izmaku XV. i na početku XVI. vijeka" [Croats at the end of 15th and beginning of 16th century], in: *Hrvati na izmaku srednjega vijeka. Izbrane rasprave*, ed. Damir Karbić (Slavonski Brod: Matica hrvatska Slavonski Brod – Povijesni arhiv Slavonski Brod, 1996), pp. 30-43.

Nevertheless, the first major incursions of Ottoman raiders on estates of Topusko abbey occurred in 1511 during their raids on the areas around river Kupa. Namely, in August 1511 Ottoman troops burst in all the way to the castle Modruš plundering the areas of Ribnik, Metlika, Ozalj and Dubovac, that is the nearest hinterland of Topusko abbey.³³ Furthermore, Cistercian estates in Petrinja and Donji Gradac were devastated in 1512 and 1515.³⁴ The scope of these raids can be easily seen by the fact that in following year no taxes were raised from abbey's estate as can be seen in preserved list of royal taxes collected in Slavonia in 1516 in which there was no mentioning of the Topusko abbey,³⁵ what was common case in earlier years. After these events, the situation around the Topusko abbey became so critical that the new and special commendatory abbot became archbishop of Esztergom, Thomas Bakač Erdődy (Hun. Tamás Bakócz Erdődy).³⁶

In the following year, the estate of Topusko abbey continued to be one of the targets of Ottoman raiders, but also an object of the pillages of the neighboring magnates. Namely, in January 1519 the Ottoman raiders once again appeared in front of the abbey and during that occasion they plundered marketplace of Topusko as well as nearby villages of Dolac and Sračica from where Ottomans taken 234 villains in captivity.³⁷ It was also during that raid that the abbey's wine cellar and nearby vineyards were destroyed. It is interesting to notice that Ottoman most likely had come from Kamengrad, what can be said by the fact that fifty bows ravished from the Topusko estate were taken to that Ottoman castle.³⁸

³³ Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Hodinka, eds., *Monumenta Hungaria Historica. Codex diplomaticus partium regno Hungariae adnexarum. Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára. A Horvát véghelyek oklevéltára*, vol. I, (Budapest: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1903), pp. 24-26.

³⁴ Novak, *Topusko u razdoblju*, p. 133.

³⁵ Josip Adamček and Ivan Kampuš, eds., *Popisi i obračuni poreza u Hrvatskoj u XV. i XVI. stoljeću* [List and contributions of taxes in Croatia in 15th and 16th century] (Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Institut za hrvatsku povijest, 1976), pp. 76-78.

³⁶ *...Thomae cardinalis et archiepiscopi strigoniensis tutorisque et specialis patroni ac possessoris abbacie ecclesie beatissime Marie virginis de Thopwzka aliter de Thoplyka...*, Matija Mesić, "Gradja mojih razprava u 'Radu'" [Documents of my studies in 'Rad'], *Starine JAZU* 5 (1873): 177.

³⁷ *...Item in iudicatu de Dolacz abbacie de Thopozka per Thurcos abducti sunt homines sexaginta, quantum ex eorum nihil est accpetum ...Per Thurcos homines recepti sunt C et LXXIII et vbi puer vnus remansit super eundem taxam regiam, efodendo foueas et milium vendendo recepit...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 113-114.

³⁸ *...Item ab eodem receipt absque omni iusticia boues quinque, quos conuertit proprium in vsum et aliquos dedit ad Kywar...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 111.

Even more, after the departure of the Ottomans, the local inhabitants intruded in abbey's buildings and plundered yonder movables and various good, while the rest of it was taken by count Benedict Ratkay of Veliki Tabor. This is described in details in lawsuit between the new abbots of Topusko, firstly Andrew de Eliis and then Andrew Tuškanić, against Ladislav Ratkay of Veliki Tabor, who together with his brother Benedict plundered the Topusko abbey.³⁹ Finally, it was Ladislav Ratkay who in 1522 thoroughly plundered the abbey's buildings by taking huge booty including 140 oxen and thirty abbey's serves to his castle of Veliki Tabor.⁴⁰

Even the monks were subject of violence conducted by the Ottoman raiders. Namely, in 1521 the Ottomans abducted two monks, as recorded in lawsuit against count Benedict Ratkay.⁴¹ Therefore, it is not surprising that number of Cistercian monks in Topusko abbey was constantly decreasing. Namely, in the same year in Topusko abbey only four monks and two priests were present, as well as only seventy various servants.⁴² Therefore, it is possible that during these Ottoman raids at beginning of 1520-ties, that aimed the abbey and its immediate surroundings, as well as during incursions of nearby magnates on abbey's properties and buildings, the last Cistercian monks left the abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko. This could also occur in early 1530-ties during the great war between Hapsburgs and Ottomans (1530-1533) and increased Ottoman activities in the outskirts of the Topusko abbey.⁴³ In any case, this must have happened before August 1533 when King Ferdinand I (V) Hapsburg urged ban Peter Keglević to try to bring back Cistercian monks in Topusko, and that in return he will receive the Topusko estate in his governance.⁴⁴ Due to the lack of historical accounts it is not certain

³⁹ See documents issued between 1521 and 1524 (Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 92-130).

⁴⁰ ...*quibus castrum prefate abbacie de Thopozka spoliatum fuit per preactum Benedictum et apportate ac appropriate castro suo Thabor, prefatus expoliavit iobagiones divite abbacie in pecuniis et prociis et propterea plusquam trecenti iobagiones sunt profligati ... nec non idem aduersarius post morem Benedicti, cuius heres existit, castrum abbacie expoliavit et euacuavit, ac appropriavit castro Thabor cenutm et quinquagunra boues...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 98.

⁴¹ ...*Item si duos fratres abduxerunt Thurci...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 114.

⁴² ...*In Thopozka sunt pixardii sedecim, fratres IIII, duo sacerdotes...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122.

⁴³ In 1530 the great Ottoman offensive had started on whole bordering areas of Hapsburg Monarchy. This offensive ended in 1533 with great Ottoman territorial gains (Ive Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko Carstvo*, [Croats and Ottoman Empire] (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 1998), pp 78-79).

⁴⁴ Emilij Laszowski, ed., *Monumentna Habsburgica regni Croatiae Dalmatiae Slavoniae. Habsburški spomenici Kraljevine Hrvatske Dalmacije i Slavonije* (hereafter: MH), vol. 1 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1914), p. 157.

did ban Keglević managed to bring back any Cistercian monks, yet in January 1534 year king Ferdinand finally gave governance of Topusko abbey and estate to Keglević family, that is to Peter' son Francis Keglević who became new commendatory abbot.⁴⁵

In search for the final departing of the Cistercians from the Topusko abbey the accounts from the beginning of 1554 are rather interesting. Meaning it seems that in the preceding period it is possible that, at least on certain level, some monastic life existed in the Topusko abbey that is that ban Peter Keglević eventually managed to persuade some Cistercians to come back in Topusko. Namely, in the existing charter issued by King Ferdinand on 25 January 1554, he ordered to Francis Keglević, then the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey, to take the vows and to become a Cistercian monk, what Keglević had not done until then in spite of king's wishes.⁴⁶ This can mean either that there was an existing Cistercian community in the Topusko abbey and the king wanted that the head of the monastic community would be an genuine monk, or that the king wanted to keep the impression of the Topusko abbey as the real Cistercian abbey. One also has to have in mind that Keglević was the first layman appointed as the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey since it was transform into commendatory system of government in the beginning of 15th century.⁴⁷ Meaning, before him all commendatory abbots of Topusko were clerics – either monks or bishops.⁴⁸ So, this can also be seen as reason why King Ferdinand urged Keglević to take the vows. Therefore, more reasonable argument sounds that Cistercians had left the Topusko abbey in 1520-ties for good, because they were not willing to stay in uncertain and by the Ottomans endangered areas, as argued by Ostojić.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ MH 1, p. 187.

⁴⁶ ...quod tamen hactenus abste penitus fieri est pretermisum, peterea non ignores id quoque, quod per hec tempora aliquoties tibi madauerimus, vt filium tuum Franciscum Keglewytth, cuius nomine abbatiam de Thopoczka hactenus possedisti, ac nunc quoque possides, sacris iniciari et monasticum habotum induere..., MH 3, pp. 465-466

⁴⁷ About transforming Topusko abbey into the commende, see: Ančić, "Cistercitska opatija": 29-42.

⁴⁸ List of commendatory abbots of Topusko in 15th and beginning of 16th century see in: Novak, *Topusko u razdoblju*, pp. 122-139.

⁴⁹ Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj i ostalim našim krajevima* [Benedictians in Croatia and the rest of our lands], vol. 3 (Split: Benediktinski priorat – TKON, 1965), p. 209.

3. “Defensive system” of the Topusko abbey

Due to the continuous rivalries among the most prominent magnates of Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia,⁵⁰ ever since young Louis II stepped to the throne in 1516, the royal power started to diminish. The first and most damaging symptom was a breakdown of royal finances.⁵¹ It became more and more complicated to collect the most important source of royal revenue – the one-florin tax called “subsidiy”. There were several reasons for that. Firstly, constant Ottoman raids caused the depopulation of the state, but also since 1493 the greatest barons had been authorized to retain the tax on their lands in order to pay their troops. This led to insufficient filling of the royal treasury. These dispositions would have completely undermined the finances of the state had it not been possible to find other, extraordinary resources. However, from the middle of the second decade of 16th century inventing resources became almost impossible. Even more, the cost of frontier defense continuously grew and consumed enormous sums. The royal treasury was not able to provide necessary means leaving frontier commanders to resolve the problem of financing their troop what included the plundering and ransoming their own prisoners.⁵² Hence, the organization of defense of local areas became the mostly obligations and necessity of local feudal lords. This was especially case in the areas south of river Drava that is in medieval Croatia and Slavonia. As soon as the late 15th century yonder feudal lords started to organize rather elaborated “defensive systems” on their estates consisted of smaller and bigger strongholds strategically spaced around their lands. For example, by the beginning of 16th century on the Zrin estate existed 12 strongholds– two bigger ones (*castra*) and 10 smaller ones (*castella*). They were strategically spaced around the Zrin estate to protect major traffic corridors and river Una crossings, as well as mountain passes.⁵³ This was very important because Ottomans mostly used semiregular and irregular troops, such as the Akincis and the

⁵⁰ Martyn Rady, “Jagello Hungary”, in: *The Laws of Medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae*, vol. 4, eds. Péter Banyó and Marty Rady, (Idyllwild – Budapest; Charles Schlacks Jr. Publisher – Central European University, 2012), pp. xv-xvii.

⁵¹ Short overview of fiscality and taxation as well as organization and functioning of anti-Ottoman defense system in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia during Jagiełło period (1490-1526) see in: Rady, “Jagello Hungary”, pp. xi-xlvii.

⁵² Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-526* (London – New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2001), pp. 358-359.

⁵³ Hrvoje Kekez and Krešimir Regan, *Zrin – srednjovjekovno sjelo knezova Babonića i knezova Zrinskih. Tvrđi grad, urbana aglomeracija i posjed* [Zrin – Medieval seat of Counts of Blagay and Counts of Zrin. Castle, urban agglomerate and estate] (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2020), pp. 223-229.

Martoloses,⁵⁴ while raiding the areas of medieval Slavonia and Croatia, respectively.

Similar situation can be attested on Topusko abbey estate during second and third decade of 16th century. Namely, in that period due to increasing Ottoman threat and more common raids on Topusko abbey and its estate, the rather elaborated “defensive system” was put in place, too. This “defensive system” was based on two cornerstone – the abbey itself and several smaller strongholds strategically spaced around the Topusko abbey estate.

Based on the survived archival sources as well as on the results of archaeological reconnaissance and excavations, it can be argued that the Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko was fortified on certain level even during the Middle Ages, that is even before the major Ottoman incursions in the beginning of 16th century. Namely, during the Mongol invasion onto Kingdom Hungary-Croatia in 1242, they had passed through Topusko area plundering yonder estate, but abbey itself survived their attack, possibly because it was fortified on certain level. It also appears that some military forces existed in the abbey at its estate. Namely, during 13th century the special social group of *iobagioni castri* (castle warriors) existed on the abbey estate.⁵⁵ In the Arpadian period *iobagioni castri* had to fulfill military service and pay tax for the castle.⁵⁶ However, the original function of this partially changed and become mainly economical as suggested by the survived archival records.⁵⁷

Even more, it was during second decade of the 16th century that is during the period of first major Ottoman raids on abbey and its estate, when the Topusko abbey was significantly fortified and its organization structure was adjusted to more functionality military purposes. Namely, in the lawsuit between members of the noble kindred of Berković and Anthony Dukovački held in 1510 in Topusko abbey, not one but two castellans of Topusko abbey were mentioned.⁵⁸ It was castellan and abbot’s arbiter Simon Donat, as well

⁵⁴ Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans. From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara – Denver – Oxford: ABC Clío, 2009), pp. 58-61.

⁵⁵ Tade Smičiklas, ed., *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae. Diplomatički zbornik Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije* (hereafter: CD), vol. 3 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1905), p. 103; CD 4, pp. 519-520.

⁵⁶ Éva B. Halász, “*Iobagio castri – nobilis castri – nobilis regni*. Castle warriors – castle nobles – noblemen. The development of a social stratum in County of Križevci”, *Banatica* 26/II (2016): 120-121

⁵⁷ On possibility that Topusko abbey was fortified during Middle Ages as well as on its defensive potential, see in more details: Novak, “Croatia and the Borders”, pp. 59-63.

⁵⁸ Mesić, “Gradja mojih razprava”: 150.

as castellan Tomas Vojković who reached the joint verdict in abbot's name.⁵⁹ Another castellan of Topusko abbey was mentioned in 1521 – certain Valentin who was also literate.⁶⁰ The mentioning of the castellans of Topusko abbey in preserved written documents, an institution primary connected to military purposes, clearly indicates the growth of their role in abbey's inner organization during second decade of 16th century.

Even more, it was in the same year (1521) when Topusko abbey was for the first time mentioned in archival documents as castle (*castrum*),⁶¹ what indicated its primarily function, or at least what was perceived as its primarily function by the contemporaries. This was most likely the result of extensive work conducted in constructing outer walls of the abbey. Namely, it was Zorislav Horvat who firstly argued the existence of the outer walls and four early renaissance rondels on its corners after the archeological reconnaissance conducted in 1960-ies on the site of the abbey.⁶² Consequently, Kruhek argued that these outer walls were constructed in the beginning of 16th century and that they were built in typical early renaissance fashion with small rondels on the corners connected with the walls in straight line.⁶³ And indeed, this was the period when such structures were built not only around existing medieval castles in Croatia, such as Ozalj,⁶⁴ but also around ecclesiastical sites, such as cathedral in Modruš⁶⁵ or Chapter nearby Požega.⁶⁶ Furthermore, after the archeological excavations conducted in 1999 Horvat confirmed his arguments and added that the main entrance in abbey complex was also strengthened

⁵⁹ ...*Simon Donath, comes sedis, ac Thomas Woykowych, castellani ecclesie b. Marie virginis de Thopozka...*, Mesić, "Gradja mojih razprava": 150.

⁶⁰ ...*Valentinus litteratus castellanus in Thopozka...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122.

⁶¹ ...*castrum prefate abbacie de Topozka...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 98.

⁶² Zorislav Horvat, "Neke činjenice o cistercitskom samostanu i crkvi u Topuskom" [Some facts on the Cistercian abbey and church in Topusko], *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 13/14 (1996-1997): 121-134.

⁶³ Milan Kruhek and Zorislav Horvat, "Utvrde Banske krajine od Karlovca do Siska" [Strongholds of Banal county between Karlovac and Sisak], in: *Arheološka istraživanja na karlovačkom i sisačkom području*, ed. Nives Majnarić-Pandžić (Zagreb: Hrvatsko arheološko društvo, 1986), p. 164.

⁶⁴ Krešimir Regan, "Orlovo gnijezdo obitelji Zrinski – plemićki grad Ozalj" [*The eagle nest of the Zrinski family – castle Ozalj*], in: *Susreti dviju kultura: obitelj Zrinski u hrvatskoj i mađarskoj povijesti*, eds. Sándor Bene, Zoran Ladić, Gábor Hausner (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2012), pp. 87-89.

⁶⁵ Milan Kruhek, *Srednjovjekovni Modruš* [Medieval Modruš] (Ogulin: Matica hrvatska ogranak Ogulin, 2008), p. 92.

⁶⁶ Anđela Horvat, *Između gotike i baroka*, [Between gothic and baroque] (Zagreb: Društvo povjesničara umjetnosti Hrvatske, 1975), pp. 56-58.

with wider walls.⁶⁷ Finally, after the archeological excavations conducted in the period between 2013 and 2017, and well as the usage of geophysical surveys the existence of architectural structures on the north and east part of monastic complex that can be attributed to the above mentioned outer walls and corner rondels.⁶⁸ It is interesting to add that in late 1521 the abbey's outer walls were for the first time indirectly mentioned as *castrum novum*,⁶⁹ suggesting that the work on them were mostly and recently finished.

It is also possible that moat and wooden palisades existed around the new renaissance outer walls. Namely, one can argue this by analyzing the cadastral map of Topusko from 1779/1780 and situation plan of Topusko from 1829.⁷⁰ On these maps the structures that resembles to the remains of moat and wooden palisades were depicted. Having in mind that the Topusko abbey area is reach with water, and that the Romans built the first settlement (*Ad fines*) on that site exactly because of the yonder reach springs of fresh water,⁷¹ one can argue that in the first half of 16th century the abundance of water and castle moats, as well as and wooden palisades, were used to reinforced the defense of the abbey. Nevertheless, this must be proven or disproven by the archeological excavations.

Furthermore, the survived archival records from 1521 give us information on abbey's military crew and its armament. Namely, from that year there is an existing account that abbey's military crew existed of three guards, four mercenaries and seven *familiares* with horses.⁷² However, there is also another account on existing of additional seven infantrymen and one vice-castellan whose main task was protecting new other walls.⁷³ Furthermore, there is an existing account of one castellan (literate Valentin) and one vice-castellan (unnamed) of Topusko abbey in 1521, so one can try to argue that at least certain "chain of command" existed among the Topusko abbey military crew at the beginning of third decade of 16th century. Even more, the existing account from the same year lists armaments of the Topusko abbey. According to this

⁶⁷ Horvat, "Topusko – pokušaj": 9.

⁶⁸ Janež, "Nova istraživanja": 21.

⁶⁹ ...*In nouo castro...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122.

⁷⁰ Viki Jakaša Borić and Biserka Bilušić Bumbović, "Topusko – urbogeneza naselja" [Topusko – the urban genesis of the settlement], *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 32 (2008): 271-272.

⁷¹ Ljubić, "Topusko (Ad fines)": 1-11.

⁷² ...*tres vigilatores, IIII mercenarii ... familiars cum equis vna mecum VII...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122.

⁷³ ...*In nouo castro sunt pedites VI, et vicecastelannus...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122

list the Topusko abbey was armed with two larger cannons and twelve large wall muskets.⁷⁴

Even during Middle Ages the Cistercians from Topusko made an effort to protect their rather large estate by constructing various fortification such as tower on the Island of St. Ladislav (later royal city of Bihać)⁷⁵ or smaller fortifications on river crossing such as fords *Bukenreue* and *Kulpateu*.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the main goal of those fortifications were to affiliate and protect economic production on the abbey's granges, while the strongholds constructed and/or maintained on the abbey's estate during 16th century had a different purpose. The main role of these strongholds was to protect most important travel routes and secure them from Ottoman incursions. Hence, they were erected over main roads leading from Topusko abbey either towards river Kupa on the north, or towards river Una on the south.⁷⁷

One of the most important strongholds mentioned in preserved written sources was smaller castle (*castellum*) Pokupsko (Pokupje), which was situated over river Kupa crossing upstream from later castle Sisak.⁷⁸ It protected very important road that led from Zagreb towards Topusko. It is possible that the Cistercians had built the castle Pokupsko during earlier period,⁷⁹ but in 1521 its wooden structure was in rather bad condition.⁸⁰ Hence, in the same year reconstruction of the castle had started in modern manner by using stone material, and the biggest bulk of work was conducted by the abbey's serves.⁸¹ The builders acquired stones and cement in the quarries near the castle Novi-grad (Todorovo).⁸² In addition to abbey's serves, even the serves from other nearby noble estates participated in the constructing new and improved castle

⁷⁴ ...cum duobus bombardis vlgō nuncupates tharazj, et barbatis duodecim..., Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 98.

⁷⁵ CD 5, p. 156.

⁷⁶ CD 7, pp. 389-391. On the efforts of Cistercians from Topusko to secure their estate and fortification constructed in that goal, see in more details: Novak, "Croatia and the Borders": 59-63.

⁷⁷ Novak, "Croatia and the Borders": 74-75.

⁷⁸ ...castello Pokwpya..., Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 118.

⁷⁹ Novak, "Croatia and the Borders": 75.

⁸⁰ ...Castelum vero Pokupya nulus valoris est. Una dierum casum dabit ad Kuppam si Turci vienient ipsum incedent, nemo ad ipsum fugere ausus est..., Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 116; Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 128.

⁸¹ ...Ceterum garatiose domine sunt in Pkupya illi miserimi coloni qui satis lapides conduxerunt ad coloni..., Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 116; Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 128.

⁸² ...Ad nouum castrum Wywar cremauerunt fornacem cimenit et lapides conducunt in castello Pokwpya..., Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 118.

in Pokupsko. Such was the case with the serves from Želin estate whose castellan, Peter Bogačović, in 1521 send his serves from the village Kravarsko to assist in the works.⁸³ Because the castle Želin was situated on the same road towards Zagreb north of the river Kupa crossing at Pokupsko, Bogačović's will to facilitate in the modernization of Pokupsko castle is not surprising.

Considering the military organization and troops present in castle Pokupsko, it seems that they were rather like those in Topusko abbey itself. Namely, at least two castellans existed in Pokupsko in 1521,⁸⁴ as it was in Topusko abbey in 1510.⁸⁵ Even more, similar to the Topusko abbey the castle company in Pokupsko consisted of vice-castellan and six infantrymen, as well as unknown number of guards and other serves.⁸⁶ Hence, due to the strength and organization of military crew in castle Pokupsko, as well as the construction improvements conducted in 1521, one can easily argue the great strategic significance of Pokupsko castle and yonder river crossing.

Another important smaller stronghold was fort Bović that existed nearby the traffic corridor north of Topusko abbey that was connecting it with Pokupsko castle and yonder crossing over river Kupa.⁸⁷ It was the section of the most important royal road (*via Colomani regis, via exercitualis*) that was connecting Hungary proper with east Adriatic coast, and it was for the first time mentioned that this royal road passed nearby Bović in the charter of king Andrew II of Hungary issued to knights templars in 1209.⁸⁸ Even more, it was most likely that the the noblemen of Bović constructed initial small fort after abbot Andrew Tuškanić confirmed them their right to build their own fortress.⁸⁹ In following decades the fort Bović continued to be important part of Topusko abbey "defense system", so it is not surprising that in 1563 captain John Lenković in his report on strongholds in Croatian and Slavonian border against Ottoman, stated that fort Bović is owned by Topusko abbey and that

⁸³ ...*Ceterum ipse Petrus Bogachowczy castellanus de Selin posset dare de officiolatu suo Krawarzka magnum auxilium pro constructione muri ipsius castelli Pokupya...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 119.

⁸⁴ ...*castellani de Pokupya...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 117.

⁸⁵ See footnote 58.

⁸⁶ ...*In castello Pokupya pedites sex et vicecastellanus ac vigilatores alii eciam seruitores...*, Laszowski, "Prilog za povijest": 122.

⁸⁷ ...*Bouich castrum abbatiae Topuzka...*, Radoslav Lopašić, ed., *Spomenici Hrvatske krajine* [Documents of Croatian Military Border] (hereafter: SHRK), vol 2 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1885), p. 345; Kruhek – Horvat, "Utvrdne Banske krajine", p. 169.

⁸⁸ ...*ex alia parte per magnam viam regis, que vadit Zagrabiam ex parte Boniche* (sc. Bović) *usque ad Cupam...*, CD 3: 85.

⁸⁹ Kukuljević-Sakcinski, "Opatija b. d. M.": 87; Novak, "Croatia and the Borders": 75.

it should have company of at least 24 men situated in it.⁹⁰ In the fort Bović continued to stay some number of soldiers, at least until 1578, as it was Bović from where the information of the Ottoman conquest of the important castle Bužim was forwarded to military headquarters in Ljubljana.⁹¹

Of even more importance to defense of Topusko abbey was another small fort. It was Sračica (Svračica) that was situated above the banks of rivulet Maja, a tributary of river Glina. Situated south of Topusko abbey, it protected and control a section of important road that led from abbey via valley of rivulet Maja towards castles Gvozdansko and Zrin situated in the valley of river Una. Although it was possible that Cistercians took over an existing fort built in earlier period,⁹² yet the Sračica fort became very important part of the Topusko abbey defense system during 16th century. Hence, in Croatian estates gathered on their Diet held in Zagreb in May 1559 decided that it was necessary to conduct some repairs on Sračica fort.⁹³ As well Bović fort, the fort Sračica was also mentioned in 1563 in Lenković list of fortresses in Croatian and Slavonian frontier. Lenković described the fort Sračica as stronghold that belonged to Topusko abbey. Even more, Lenković recommended that five guards should stay there, but he also mentioned still existing nearby market place that was enclosed by wooden palisade and that it should be destroyed.⁹⁴ Lenković proposed the destruction of Sračica market place most likely because it did not represent strategically important structure, yet its existence would decrease defensive potential of Svračica fort.

Therefore, it can be argued that by the beginning of the third decade of 16th century Cistercian abbey in Topusko had been transformed from ecclesiastical and cultural, as well as economic center of rather large estate, to functional defensive center by its newly added fortifications as well as by modifying organizational structure in which persons who held military positions, i.e. castellans continuously played more and more important role. This “defensive system” also included rather elaborated system of smaller strongholds strategically spaced around Topusko estate mainly to protect most important roads and possibly to alert of incoming Ottoman raiders.

⁹⁰ ...*Schloss Wouich, auch der abtei Topolsskha zeuehörig. (Mit 24 knechten zu besezen)...*, SHRK 3, p. 428.

⁹¹ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 268.

⁹² Novak, “Croatia and the Borders”, p. 62.

⁹³ ...*item Zrachycza palan legatur et in parte inferiori fortificetur roboribus...*, HSS 3, p. 59.

⁹⁴ ...*Schloss vnd zaun geflochtner markth Strätitsch der abtei TOPolskha zuehörig. (Schloss mit 5 kn. zu besezen, mark niderzureissen)...*, SHRK 3, p. 428.

4. In the hinterland of the anti-Ottoman defense line

Although during the third decade of 16th century, the Ottomans directed their main attacks towards Pannonian basin and westward, that is towards Buda and Vienna,⁹⁵ yet very soon after the fall of Belgrade in 1521 the situation in Croatia and Lower Slavonia became critical. In fact, after the fall of Knin, Drniš and Skardin in May of 1522, the defence of southern Croatia crumbled, with the exemption of the castle of Klis.⁹⁶ While the main bulwark of defence in the areas of northern Croatia became the city of Bihać.⁹⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that as early as the summer of 1522, the captain Nicholas Salm demanded from the archduke Ferdinand 400 cavalymen to strengthen the defence of this strategically very important city in the valley of the river Una.⁹⁸

These new Ottoman territorial gains in medieval Slavonia and Croatia at the beginning of the third decade of 16th century led to significant military changes, effected onto strategic position of Topusko abbey, too. Namely, it seized to be just one of the aims of the Ottoman raids, yet also become very important stronghold in immediate background of the main anti-Ottoman defensive line that mostly stretching on river Una and yonder fortifications such as Bihać, Krupa, Otoka, Blagaj, Zrin, Kostajnica and Dubica. It was in that time when the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey became Andrew Tuškanić (1523-1530), the bishop of Knin, who very soon proved himself as very capable procurator of the abbey and its estate. Namely, he tried to restore order in the abbey itself, but also on the abbey's estate, as well he issued many charters with various grants to local nobility with whom he coordinated the defence efforts against Ottomans.⁹⁹ Even more, he actively cooperated with the contemporary military leaders such as John Katzianer or Christopher Frankapan.¹⁰⁰ For example, a company of light cavalymen (hussars) financed by Topusko abbey participated in breach to Jajce, important Christian stronghold in central Bosnia than enclosed by Ottoman territory, led by Christopher Frankapan in 1525.¹⁰¹ Due to this proactive attitude of abbot Tuškanić it is not surprising that he was present on the Diet of Croatian estates held in Cetin-

⁹⁵ Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*, p. 23-26.

⁹⁶ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p.70.

⁹⁷ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 70.

⁹⁸ MH 1, p. 188.

⁹⁹ Kukuljević-Sakcinski, "Opatija b. d. M.": 87-88.

¹⁰⁰ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 87-88.

¹⁰¹ Lajos Thallóczy and Sándor Horváth, eds., *Codex diplomaticus partium Regno Hungariae adnexarum (banastus, castrum et oppidum Jajcza). Magyarország melléktartományainak oklevéltára. Jajcza (ánság, vár és város). Története 1450-1527* (Budapest: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia 1915), p. 321. On Frankapan's breach to Jajce in 1525 see in more detail: Pejo

grad when archduke Ferdinand I (V) Hapsburg was elected as new king of Croatia instead late king Luis II Jagiełło who perished in the battle of Mohács on 29 August 1526.¹⁰² He was even one of the cosignatories of the ceremonial charter issued in Cetingrad on 1 January 1527.¹⁰³

It seems that new king, Ferdinand I Hapsburg, was aware of the changed strategical position of the Topusko abbey which became important stronghold in immediate background of the main anti-Ottoman defensive, as well as aware of the activities of abbot Tuškanić. Therefore, he granted to Topusko abbey right to salaries for 50 cavalymen among other magnates to whom this privileges was given.¹⁰⁴ Even before he was elected as king of Croatia the archduke Ferdinand expressed his concerns for the security of the Topusko abbey. Namely, in his letter dated on 4 August 1526, he warned Croatian estates that strongholds on anti-Ottoman defensive line should had enough crews, and he also emphasized that counts Stephen of Blagaj and John Karlović, as well as abbot of Topusko, had to have enough soldiers on their disposal.¹⁰⁵ Even more, in the late fall of following year, now King Ferdinand, once again expressed his worries about the safety of the Topusko abbey. Namely, on 12 November 1527 King Ferdinand ordered ban John Karlović and count Nicholas Jurišić to protect the estates of Topusko abbey from the thrusts of nearby noblemen, i.e. mainly from attempts of count Stephen of Blagaj who wanted to deprive some estates from Topusko abbey.¹⁰⁶ The lawsuit between count Stephen of Blagaj and abbot Andrew Tuškanić finally came in front of king himself, who make verdict in behalf of abbot Tuškanić on 4 March 1530. King ordered to Slavonian estates that they had to ensure that all lands taken by count Stephen be returned to Topusko abbey.¹⁰⁷

Despite these problems, the Topusko abbey still had financial power to erect significant number of cavalymen and to be actively engaged in the war against Ottomans. Namely, according to King Ferdinand's call from the be-

Čošković, "Banjaluka i pomaganje Jajcu 1525. godine" [Banja Luka and helping of Jajce in 1525], *Istorijski zbornik* 8 (1987): 13-36.

¹⁰² On the Diet in Cetingrad see in more details: Ferdo Šišić, "Izbor Ferdinand I. hrvatskim kraljem. O četiristotoj obljetnici" [The election of Ferdinand I as king of Croatia. On the four hundred anniversaries], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta. Arheološko-historijski časopis. Nova serija* 1 (1927): 15-44.

¹⁰³ HSS 1, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴ HSS 1, p. 64.

¹⁰⁵ ...alsdann wellest graf Carl, von Plagey, dessgleichen den abbt von Topölschko an derselben stat in jr besoldung vnd zu erstattung der anzall annemben..., MH 1, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ MH 1, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰⁷ HSS 1, pp. 219-220.

ginning of August 1529, which was actually a preparation for upcoming war against Ottomans, all Croatian magnates had to arm and for the war equip certain number of horsemen.¹⁰⁸ Among them, the abbot of Topusko had to raise fifty cavalrymen.¹⁰⁹

Except by raising up above-mentioned fifty cavalrymen, the abbot Andrew Tuškanić had engaged in war events mostly in manner that his servants gathered information on the movements of Ottoman troops. For example, on 5 June 1530 abbot Andrew informed captain John Katzianer that Ottoman bey of Livno was mustering his forces in order to burst onto Croatian lands.¹¹⁰ Even more, two of them, the abbot Andrew and captain Katzianer, cooperated very closely and coordinated their efforts in protecting the borderline. Hence, on 1 May 1530 the abbot send a latter to captain Katzianer from Topusko in which he asked him to arrange their meeting in order to meet an agreement on the political and military issues and plans.¹¹¹ In the context of war events, it is interesting to notice that the Diet of Croatian estates was held in Cistercian abbey in Topusko on 1 January 1530.¹¹² The Topusko abbey was most likely chosen due to two reasons. Firstly, as it was already said, it was well-fortified complex that could provide safety for gathered estates. And secondly, it was situated rather closely to the front line on the river Una, so the information from the battlefields could easily reach this location, while the estates present on the Diet would not be in immediate danger by the Ottomans.

Therefore, it is not surprising the existing practice to hold the Diet of Croatian estates exactly in Topusko abbey during fourth decade of 16th century. For example, in summer of 1533 the Diet was once again held in Topusko abbey, and this is known by the letter of Simon Erdödy, the bishop of Zagreb, which was sent to ban Tomas Nádasdy from Čazma on 22 July 1533.¹¹³ In this letter bishop Erdödy informed ban Nádasdy about the assembly of partisans of King Ferdinand held in Topusko sometimes earlier of the same year. Even more, the Croatian estates yet again gathered in Topusko abbey on 9 September 1535, after what they sent their envoys, John Tumpić and Michael Budušić, to the King Ferdinand.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ MH 1, pp. 207-208.

¹⁰⁹ ...*Abbati in Topolska. Venerabilis, deuote, dilecte. Equites 50...*, MH 1, p. 208.

¹¹⁰ MH 3, pp. 340-341.

¹¹¹ HSS 1, p. 235.

¹¹² HSS 1, p. 210.

¹¹³ HSS 2, pp. 468-469.

¹¹⁴ HSS 1, pp. 336

After the death of abbot Tuškanić and short governance of new commendatory abbot Jerolimus Horvat of Klis (1531-1533),¹¹⁵ in 1533 not one, but two pretenders for the position of the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey appeared – before mentioned Peter Keglević and Francis Jožefić, the bishop of Senj. It is interesting to analysis how this still obviously lucrative position, the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey, was used in bargaining between three sides, among whom king Ferdinand most likely wanted to gain as much as possible for his war efforts against Ottomans as well as again John Szapolyai, who at that time also wore the crown of Kingdom Hungary-Croatia.¹¹⁶ It has started in the middle of March 1533 with the letter sent by Peter Keglević to king Ferdinand in which conditioned the acceptance of the service of ban of Croatia and Slavonia with king's approval of granting him the governance of Topusko abbey and estate.¹¹⁷ In this Keglević had the support of George Auersperg, the chief military commander in Croatia.¹¹⁸ Yet, very soon, the new pretender for the position of the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey appeared – Francis Jožefić, the bishop of Senj. Bishop Jožefić send, sometimes before September 1533, an letter to King Ferdinand in which he asked the ruler to grant him the governance of Topusko abbey and estate because he, as he vividly depicted, did not have any more financial means, even for the upcoming Christmas celebration.¹¹⁹

It seems that bishop Jožefić's appeal had some success. Namely, on 14 October 1533 King Ferdinand send a letter in which he informed Croatian estates that the soldiers in royal fortress of Ripač and Bihać, as well as to Peter Keglević, should receive the salaries. In this letter, King also emphasized that he had not yet reached the decision to whom he would grant the governance of Topusko abbey and estate, and that on that matter he had to rethink once again.¹²⁰ It is also interesting to notice that according that royal letter, Peter Keglević slightly modified his approach towards Topusko abbey. Namely, according to that letter Keglević did not any more inquire the governance of Topusko abbey for himself, but rather for his son, Francis Keglević.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Jerolimus Horvat of Klis become the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey in October 1531 (...*Hieronimus Horwath de Klyz. gubernator abbacie de Thopozka...*, MH 2, pp. 86-87).

¹¹⁶ About civil war between partisans of king Ferdinand I Hapsburg and king John Szapolyai, see: Geza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary And The Habsburg Monarchy In Sixteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 37-47.

¹¹⁷ ...*debitum sortient finem, abbatiam de Topuzka ad manus eisudem Petri in sequestrum aaignat ea lege...*, HSS 1, p. 308.

¹¹⁸ MH 2, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ MH 2, pp. 161-162.

¹²⁰ MH 2, p. 165.

¹²¹ ...*De abbatie vero Toplotza filio tuo post exactum, vt petis, biennium conferenda, graciose*

Furthermore, it is possible that King Ferdinand was delaying the decision because he wanted to receive further guarantee that by giving the governance of the Topusko abbey and estate he would receive additional military means needed either for the defensive for against Ottomans or for the war against the partisans of king John Szapolyai. It seems that bishop Jožefić accepted that kind of arrangement, so he received the governance of Topusko abbey as commendatory abbot by the middle of December of 1533. Namely, it can be seen in his letter from 31 December 1533, that bishop Jožefić was introduced as the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey. Yet, it can be also seen that bishop Jožefić promised that he would arm fifty light cavalymen on his cost and that he would renovate and put some soldiers in at least one of the strongholds on the anti-Ottoman border line, what excluded the cities of Senj and Bihać.¹²² It is also possible that bishop Jožefić was king's first choice because he was a cleric, and that none of commendatory abbots of the Topusko abbey before him were a layman.¹²³

Nevertheless, it seems that at least on certain level the bishop Jožefić did not fulfilled his promises, so by the end of January 1534 King Ferdinand once again changed his mind. Namely, on 29 January 1534 King finally granted the position of the commendatory abbot of Topusko abbey to Francis Keglević, the son of ban Peter Keglević.¹²⁴ On the same day in Prague the count Peter Keglević, in front of the King Ferdinand, bind himself that he would on his cost keep an extra one hundred horsemen on the border line, but also that he would defend fortresses Bihać and Ripač, as well as the Topusko abbey itself.¹²⁵ Consequently, on the same day King Ferdinand consigned to him the authority over the city of Bihać and Ripač castle with the condition that these fortresses would be returned in ruler's governance after three years.¹²⁶ One can argue that by delaying his decision about the new commendatory abbot of Topusko King Ferdinand gain significant more of military means. Even

deliberabimus, teque posthac de mente et voluntate nostra certiorefficiemus, quod ad tua petita respondere volumus..., MH 2, p. 165.

¹²² *...dominus noster gratiosissimus. nobis abbatiam de Topuska regni Croatie gratiose contulerit et donauerit ... volumnus pro defensione predicta ... quinquaginta equites leuis armature...*, MH 2, p. 508.

¹²³ See footnote 48.

¹²⁴ MH 2, p. 187.

¹²⁵ *...ex sua speciali et singulari gracia, abbaciam ecclesie beate virginis Marie de Thopwczka venerabili Francisco Keglewyth, filio meo dedisse et contulisse ... ac intra tempus premissum arces prefatas Bewhegh et Rypacz ex redditibus eiusdem abbacie ac meis propriis sumptibus conseruare, defendere et manutenere et vltra centum dicte abbacie pro deffensione dictorum regnorum...*, MH 2, p. 509.

¹²⁶ MH 2, pp. 509-510.

more, from the rather persistent efforts of two pretenders for the position of commendatory abbot of Topusko, it can be argued that it was still rather lucrative position, meaning that one could still raise rather significant income from Topusko estate.

Although it was Francis Keglević who became the governor of the Topusko abbey, in the following years the most prominent person in context of the history of the Topusko abbey became his father, ban Peter Keglević. Namely, after Peter Keglević became ban of Croatia and Slavonia in 1533,¹²⁷ he commonly stayed exactly in Topusko abbey, from where he directed his efforts in defending the country from Ottoman incursions. The abbey was rather logical choice for his headquarters not only because it was still heavily defended by its improved fortifications system, it was also situated in rather short distance from the battlefield that is outer line of defence on the river Una. The Topusko abbey continued to be the political and military headquarters of ban Peter Keglević even after the fall of important strongholds of Dubica and Jaenovac in 1538, when the defence line on the lower Una valley crumbled,¹²⁸ which meant that the outer line of defence came closer to the abbey itself. Hence, on 25 September 1538, while staying in Topusko abbey, ban Keglević sent a letter to Captain John Kaštelanović in which Keglević urged him to prepare his troops for upcoming war.¹²⁹ Several days later, once again while staying in Topusko abbey, ban Keglević sent another letter to king Ferdinand in which he expressed his plans for military actions to retake castle Kostajnica also situated on river Una, which became the Ottoman base for mustering their troops for further incursions.¹³⁰

Possibly because the Topusko abbey was kind of military headquarters of Peter Keglević, at that time one of the most prominent leaders of anti-Ottoman defense, the Topusko estate experienced heavy Ottoman raids in following years, that is in 1539 and 1540. Namely, it was new ban Tomas Nádasdy who on 3 October 1539 informed King Ferdinand about the very disturbing situation in Slavonia, and emphasized the Ottoman raids on the areas between the Topusko abbey and nearby castle Stjencičnjak earlier that year.¹³¹ In the spring of the following year, the Ottoman intruders once again plundered the Topusko estate as well as the areas around castles Kostajnica, Novigrad and Sračica. On this occasion, it was Peter Keglević who sent the news most

¹²⁷ Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko Carstvo*, p. 80

¹²⁸ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde*, p. 122.

¹²⁹ MH 2, p. 400

¹³⁰ MH 2, pp. 400-402

¹³¹ ...*quod tenebunt Thurci numerosas gentes et ponent ... iam caueat Thopozka et Sthenychnak et reliquia pars Croacie...*, HSS 2, p. 276.

likely from Topusko itself on May 1540.¹³² Nevertheless, count Peter Keglević, who was recently once again appointed as ban of Croatia and Slavonia, continued to reside in Topusko abbey from where he wrote an extensive letter to John Ungnad in which he expressed his view on the current political and security situation in Croatian lands underlining lack of military supplies and troops.¹³³ Yet, it was precisely the Topusko abbey from where ban Keglević continued to organize the defense of wider areas between river Sava on the north and Velika Kapela mountain in the south. For example, on 21 March 1544, while resided in the Topusko abbey, ban Keglević informed the Chapter of Zagreb that he would not be able to defend small fort Ustilonja, situated on the confluence of river Lonja and Sava, if he would not receive military support. Hence, he would be than forced to set it on fire due to danger of that the Ottomans would take it.¹³⁴

Mostly by the efforts of the Keglević family, the defense of the Topusko abbey continued by the middle of 1550-ties. Yet the Topusko estate also continued to be raided by the Ottoman troops, i.e. mostly the southeastern parts of the estate that is the areas closer to the river Una.¹³⁵ This led to collapse of agricultural activities as well as to depopulation of lands. Hence, in 1546 only 10 *denars* of royal tax was collected on whole Topusko estate according to the list of taxes collected on the areas of the Bishopric of Zagreb.¹³⁶ The Ottomans aimed even the abbey, as it was the case in 1548 when the Croatian estates considered that the abbey could be the goal of Ottoman incursion on that year.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, at least northern parts of the Topusko estate, i.e. those situated closer to the river Kupa, were still populated and yonder abbey's serves were included in the major construction work of the defensive fortresses. The most important of which was the new renaissance castle of Sisak erected on the confluence of rivers Kupa and Sava mostly by the Chapter of Zagreb in period between 1544 and 1556.¹³⁸ For example, on 16 April 1554 the King Ferdinand allowed that the serves from several estates, among which the Topusko

¹³² Radoslav Lopašić, "Prilozi za poviest Hrvatske XVI i XVII vieka iz štajerskoga zemaljskog arhiva u Gradcu" [The contributions for the history of Croatia in 16th and 17th centuries form Styrian Provincial Archives in Graz], *Starine JAZU* 17 (1885): 161.

¹³³ HSS 2, pp. 292-294.

¹³⁴ MH 3, pp. 174-175

¹³⁵ Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske": 286.

¹³⁶ MH 3, p. 267

¹³⁷ Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske": 286.

¹³⁸ Ljudevit Ivančan, "Kaptolska tvrđava Sisak" [The Chapter's fortress of Sisak], *Bogoslovska smotra* 16/3 (1928): 361-369; Juraj Kolaković, *Sisak u obrani od Turaka (1591-1593)* [Sisak in the anti-Ottoman defense] (Sisak: Jedinstvo, 1967), pp. 25-36; Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde*, pp. 128-140.

estate was also named, not to pay an annual taxes because they participated in the construction works on Sisak castle.¹³⁹ It seems that the working on the construction of the new Sisak castle became more or less regular activity of the Topusko abbey's serves. Hence, they participated in that work following two years.¹⁴⁰

In 1556 as well as in 1558 the Ottoman troops heavily plundered the Topusko estate.¹⁴¹ It was ban Peter Erdödy who, on 1 October 1558, informed Captain John Lenković that the Ottomans had raided areas between the Topusko abbey and the castle Stjeničnjak.¹⁴² Unfortunately, these were not the only blows that hit the Topusko abbey in those years. Namely, in 1557 counts Mathew, Peter and Simon, the sons of than already late count Peter Keglević, thoroughly plundered the complex of the Topusko abbey, after what the King Ferdinand forced them in 1558 to commit the governance of abbey and its estate to Simon Bruman, the bishop of Zagreb.¹⁴³ The choice felt on the bishop of Zagreb most likely because the king calculated that the bishop had the sufficient funds to continue the defense of the abbey. Since than it stayed in the formal governance of bishops of Zagreb until 1784.¹⁴⁴

5. The frontline stronghold

By the middle of 16th century in the most of unoccupied strongholds situated in Una valley, such as castle Kostajnica, the royal troops were stationed what influenced on the further defence efforts. Namely, from that period Habsburgs tried to centralise the defence of their Monarchy and in that goal the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*) was founded in Graz in 1556.¹⁴⁵ In the whole buffer zone that stretched from Adriatic to Transylvania, the network of fortresses was organised, and the whole area was divided into six captain generalcy regions (*Grenzgeneralat*). Each of these generalcy regions was under the command of border fortress captain general who set up his headquarters in a centrally located fortress or fortified city.¹⁴⁶ Due to geographic and strategic considerations, the border fortresses ranged from principal fortresses with

¹³⁹ HSS 2, pp. 399-400.

¹⁴⁰ HSS 2, pp. 451.

¹⁴¹ Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske": 286.

¹⁴² Lopašić, "Prilozi za poviest Hrvatske" (1885): 226.

¹⁴³ Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske": 285.

¹⁴⁴ Kukuljević-Sakcinski, "Opatija b. d. M.": 91.

¹⁴⁵ Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁶ Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*, p. 99.

a garrison of 1000 up to 1500 men, than there were large fortresses with 400 to 600 men, and the smaller stone or palisade fortifications with 100 to 300 soldiers. Between all these fortresses the chain of small patrol forts (*čardaks*) existed with only about dozen soldiers, and the main purpose of these patrol forts was to alert in case of coming Ottoman raiding parties.¹⁴⁷

The foundation of the Aulic War Council corresponded with the Ottoman conquest of castles of Kostajnica (1556) and Novi (1557), the very important defensive strongholds situated in lower Una valley, after what the defence of those areas crumbled.¹⁴⁸ This effected greatly on the strategic position of Topusko abbey. Namely, after the Ottomans had gained control the of most of the lower Una valley, the next natural obstacle in their advance became the slopes of the Zrinska Mountain, and even more the river Glina in which valley the Topusko abbey was situated. In the light of these events, as well as the changed strategic position of the Topusko abbey, which became the very important front line fortress, the estates assembled on the Diet hold in Zagreb on 7 March 1557 decided that the serves of Topusko abbey should not continue to work on the new Sisak castle. Instead the abbey' serves were to be send to reconstitution works on Blinja castle, an important stronghold on the slopes of Zrinska Mountain,¹⁴⁹ that is one of the outposts of the Topusko abbey.

Next year the common Diet of Croatian and Slavonian estates was held in castle Stjениčnjak and it was then when the key decisions in forming the new defence system were made.¹⁵⁰ Among other things the Croatian and Slavonian estates obliged themselves to arrange and to maintain the defence line in the areas between river Una, Sava, Kupa and Korana that is the areas of future Banal Border (*Banovina*).¹⁵¹ The obligation to keep and maintain the part of that defensive line, the section across the river Glina from its mouths to river Kupa upstream to fort Budemirić, became the responsibility of the governor of the Topusko abbey.¹⁵² According to the decisions of the Croatian estates made in following years, besides keeping the fortifications of the Topusko abbey in good condition, the biggest obligation of the governor of the Topusko abbey

¹⁴⁷ Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁸ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 127; Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁹ ...*Item, castrum Blynne vocatum coloni ad abbaciam de Thopozka spectantes munire et fortificare debeant...*, HSS 3, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, pp. 176-184.

¹⁵¹ HSS 3, p. 22-26.

¹⁵² ...*Ad erectionem indaginum in fluvio Glynā, videlicet a Colapi vsque Bwdmerych, tota abbatia de Thopozka decernitur...*, HSS 3, p. 25.

was to take care of castle Pokupsko,¹⁵³ as well as Sračica fort.¹⁵⁴ The Sračica fort very soon prove its strategic importance. Namely, it was there where the Ottoman raiding party led by Mustaf bey Sokolović, was defeated, and in the battle Mustafa bey perished.¹⁵⁵ In the same period, the Topusko abbey continued to be some kind of intelligence centre for gathering the information on the movements of Ottoman troops. For example, on 21 July 1562 captain John Lenković send a letter from Otočec in Kranjska in which he wrote that from Topusko abbey he had received information that Ottomans were going to attack Bihać and/or Ripač.¹⁵⁶

The changed strategic value and importance of the Topusko abbey in 1560-ties are also seen in the reports of Hapsburg's commanders on the field, especially from already mentioned report on strongholds in Croatian and Slavonian border against Ottomans composed by Captain John Lenković in 1563.¹⁵⁷ By that time Lenković was experienced field commander with more than twenty years of military service at theatre of war with Ottomans.¹⁵⁸ Confronted with the lack of troops and equipment, as well as ruined condition of border strongholds and ununified attitude of nobility towards the organization of defense, Lenković had to make the change in defining and implementation of defense strategies. This can be rather easily seen in his above-mentioned report on strongholds in Croatian and Slavonian border. Namely, Kruhek successfully argued that Lenković suggested three steps in the rationalization of defense. Firstly, Lenković recommended abandoning less important and smaller forts and moving yonder crews in bigger and more significant fortresses. Even more, Lenković proposed resettling civilians who dwelled in or in vicinity of the major fortresses, because supplying them diminished the efforts of keeping military troops sufficiently supplied with food and weapons. Thirdly, Lenković suggested demolishing all structures outside of strongholds themselves, such as churches, monasteries and/or market-

¹⁵³ 1562 – ...*et etiam omnia bona domini abbatis de Thopzka preadialiumque in perinentiis castelli Pokwpye existentium...*, HSS 3, p. 91.

¹⁵⁴ 1559 – ...*videlicet fortalitium abbatiae de Thopozja, Zrachycza vocatum, ad cuius municionem deputata sunt omnia bona dicte abbatiae de Thopozka...*, HSS 3, p. 67.

¹⁵⁵ Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko*, p. 132.

¹⁵⁶ Radoslav Lopašić, "Prilozi za poviest Hrvatske XVI. i XVII. vieka iz štajerskog zemaljskog arhiva u Gradecu" [The contributions for the history of Croatia in 16th and 17th centuries form Styrian Provincial Archives in Graz], *Starine JAZU* 19 (1887): 30.

¹⁵⁷ SHRK 3, pp. 426-432.

¹⁵⁸ On the life of John Lenković see: Steklasa, Ivan, "Ivan Lenković", *Letopis matice slovenske* (1893): 58-110.

places, because in the case of Ottoman siege they could use these structures as cover or any other military purpose.¹⁵⁹

At the areas between river Sava on the north, and Velika Kapela Mountain in the south, the cornerstones of defense line were castle Sisak and fortress Ivanić. These two stronghold defended upper Sava valley and yonder communications toward Zagreb, as well as royal city of Bihać situated in the middle river Una valley, which blocked the routes of Ottoman raiding parties toward the valley of river Korana and further toward Hapsburg hereditary lands – Carniola and Styria. From the list of fortresses that Lenković suggested for future defense, it can be easily argued that he wanted to protect main roads towards Bihać (mostly traffic communication via river Korana valley), as well as to protect the link between two major fortresses – Bihać and Sisak – that stretched via the valley of river Glina.¹⁶⁰

Because its location in the strategically important river Glina valley, John Lenković seen the Topusko abbey as rather important stronghold. Hence, he suggested that yonder military crew should be confirmable size of at least 200 infantrymen, but he immediately noted that this was not doable at moment.¹⁶¹ Being one of the rare larger and well-fortified strongholds in that area,¹⁶² the Topusko abbey did not only defend the valley of river Glina and areas of Petrova Mountain in its hinterland, but it also protected the section of vital route (*magna via*) between Sisak and Bihać. Unfortunately, due to the discontent of Croatian estates who wanted the continuation of defense of every fortress and castle, and by that they wanted to protect their estates and land rights, the Lenković' suggestions of rationalization and improvement of defense system in Croatia was not implemented in 1563 as well as in the near future.

The anti-Ottoman defense system continued to diminish in following years. Meaning, after the fall of Krupa in 1565 and Stijena in 1566,¹⁶³ the de-

¹⁵⁹ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, pp. 185-195.

¹⁶⁰ See in more details: Hrvoje Kekez and Martina Markešić, "Izveštaj Ivana Lenkovića iz 1563. godine i pravci kretanja na prostoru od Velike Kapele do rijeke Save" [The report of John Lenković from 1563 and the traffic communication on the area between Velika Kapela and Sava river], *Modruški zbornik* 9/10 (2017): 41-62.

¹⁶¹ ...*Abtey Topolskha, den h. bischoff von Agramb zuegehörig, hat bissher ansehnlich guet einkhumen gehabt, aber disen somer durch den feindeinfall zu zwaien mallen grossen schaden gelitten vnd was den feindten vberbliben, das verhört der h. pischoff selbst. (War von nöthen, mit ein gueten anzahl khnecht zu besezen, wie dan ih. M. obrist in die 200 Crab, geringe pferd darbey geordnet, aber der überzallung halben den wenigsten theil daneben zu bleiben vnmiiglich)...*, SHRK 3, p. 427.

¹⁶² Kruhek, "Topusko – cistercitski samostan": 12.

¹⁶³ Lajos Thallóczy, *Die Geschichte der Grafen von Blagay* (Wien: Selbstverlag, 1898), p. 133.

fense line on river Una finally crumbled except for the major fortress of Bihać, which determined defense, continued until 1592. Hence, after the annihilation of the river Una defense line the valley of river Glina became new outer line of defense in which the Topusko abbey was the most important stronghold. The estates of the Croatian Diet very soon acknowledged this change of strategic importance of valley of river Glina and Topusko abbey. Namely, on their assembly held in Zagreb on 21 September 1567, they ordered the public works on the strongholds situated south of river Kupa up to river Glina and the Topusko abbey.¹⁶⁴ Several days later new king, Maximillian Hapsburg, confirmed this.¹⁶⁵

In the following two years the Croatian estates fully realized that it is going to be needed to form a new line of defense that would stretched on the river Kupa.¹⁶⁶ This is especially visible in the resolutions of Croatian Diet held in Zagreb on 9 May 1569, in which they emphasized the necessity to construct new strongholds closer to river Kupa.¹⁶⁷ On that Diet in the focus was the castle Hrastovica that was defending southern approaches to Sisak, as well as the construction of new fort on the river Glina – Preseka.¹⁶⁸ Even more, the estates considered the situation of Topusko abbey as well. Because its fortifications were in rather bad condition,¹⁶⁹ the estates questioned abbey's future defense, and for the first time the opinion of abandoning the defense of the abbey was raised.¹⁷⁰

In the subsequent years the Ottomans had not only raided the Topusko estate,¹⁷¹ but it seems that they plundered the complex of abbey itself and even set it on fire. Namely, in the records of Croatian Diet hold in Zagreb on 30 October 1571 it is written that some time before that meeting the Ottoman raiders had plundered and burned the complex of the Topusko abbey, so at the moment of the meeting of Croatian estates in fall of 1571 the abbey was destroyed and abandoned.¹⁷² It is possible that the Topusko abbey became a collateral victim of the Ottoman attack on the Hrastovica castle on July 1571.

¹⁶⁴ ...*Item bona abbatiae ci set ultra Colapim existentia laborent a praefato fluuio Colapym usque ad Thopozka vna cum bonis...*, HSS 3, p. 186.

¹⁶⁵ HSS 3, pp. 185-187.

¹⁶⁶ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 249.

¹⁶⁷ HSS 3, pp. 244-247.

¹⁶⁸ HSS 3, pp. 245-246.

¹⁶⁹ ...*autem oppidum Topozka omnino quasi ruere videtur...*, HSS 3, p. 246

¹⁷⁰ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 250.

¹⁷¹ Adamček, "Nemiri na posjedima Topuske": 286.

¹⁷² ...*sed confinia ipsa optime seruauerint bona autem praefati episcopatus Zagrabiensis et etiam abbatiae Thopozkiensis a dicto domino episcopo bano per hostes fidei christianae omnino desolata ad manus deuenerunt...*, HSS 3, p. 331.

On that occasion, Ottoman troops gathered in Pakrac and Požega besieged the Hrastovica castle. The defender of the castle, Captain Joseph Dornberg, eventually defeated the Ottomans and forced them in flight.¹⁷³ It is possible that during the Ottoman raid that ended in their defeat at Hrastovica, the Topusko abbey was one of their goals as well.

Although the Croatian estates discussed about the Topusko during their Diet held in Zagreb in 1573,¹⁷⁴ its reconstruction was not in the focus of Croatian estates who rather focused on repairing of the Hrastovica castle.¹⁷⁵ However, due its strategic importance as the most important stronghold in river Glina valley, what was at that time the first line of defense, the estates could not neglect the Topusko abbey. Therefore, on the Diet held in Zagreb on 30 December 1573, the estates clearly pointed out the need of reconstruction as well as the further defense of the Topusko.¹⁷⁶ Even more, on the summer assembly of Croatian estates in the following year it was decided that the serves of count George Zrinski from his estates in Ozalj, Dubovac, Ribnik and Novigrad, would be sent in Topusko on work on the repairing of the abbey's fortifications.¹⁷⁷

Although there are no preserved accounts that the reconstruction of the fortifications of Topusko abbey really started in that 1574, but if it did, it had not gone without the problems. For example, according to the accounts from the Diet held in Zagreb on 1 October 1577, some *preadiales* (villains) from abbey's estates in Degoj, Pokupsko and Sišinačko, fled to the Ottomans.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it seems that at least some work on the abbey's fortification was finished by the middle of 1578, and it is possible that this was the main reasons for another major Ottoman attack on the monastery in May of the same year. Namely, on 15 May 1578 the Ottoman troops had attacked the abbey, and eventually destroying it and putting on fire.¹⁷⁹ This attack was most likely a preparation attack, a kind of diversion, for upcoming major Ottoman offensive on lower Una valley led by Ferhad bey during winter of 1578/1579 that ended by conquering yonder remaining Christian strongholds, of which the most important were castles Zrin and Gvozdansko.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko*, p. 140.

¹⁷⁴ ...*exceptis bonis abbatiae Thopwzkyensis ci set vltra Colpam existentibus ac pertinentiis castri Hrasthowycza reuerendissimi domini archiepiscopi et bani...*, HSS 3, p. 362.

¹⁷⁵ HSS 3, pp. 360-364; Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 252.

¹⁷⁶ ...*alterum vero ad Thopwskam de novo erigere et edificare per dominos regnicolas summe necessarium esse...*, HSS 3, p. 392.

¹⁷⁷ HSS 3, p. 411.

¹⁷⁸ HSS 3, p. 500.

¹⁷⁹ ...*Den 14. may sein die Türggen vnnder des castell Topusskha gezogen, dasselbe mit sturm vnd schiessen angegriffen, haben aber nichts ausgericht...*, SHRK 1, p. 26.

¹⁸⁰ Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko*, pp. 143-148.

6. The abandoning

Even before the major Ottoman attack on the Topusko abbey in May of 1578, the very important decisions about the future of anti-Ottoman defence were reached on assembly on inner-Austrian estates held in Bruck an der Mur by March 1578. Considering Croatian lands three were of the most importance. First, the agreement was reached that the financing of the anti-Ottoman defence in Croatia and Slavonia would be mainly obligation of the estates from Carniola, Styria and Kärnten that is inner-Austrian lands. Secondly, the inner-Austrian estates decided to build new renaissance fortress on the confluence of river Kupa, Korana, Mrežnica and Dobra – the future fortress and city of Karlovac. Moreover, the third decision was to build new defensive line across the river Kupa between castle Sisak and newly planned fortress Karlovac, by erecting several new and modernising already existing strongholds such as Drenčina, Brest, Sredičko, Letovanić and Pokupsko. Even more, the estates that the left bank of the river Kupa should be also protected by the line of multiple small patrol forts (*čardaks*).¹⁸¹

On the long term, it was decisions made in Bruck an der Mur that sealed the destiny of the former Cistercian abbey in Topusko. Yet, it was of course not clear at that moment. It must be said that strategic importance of the Topusko abbey was also considered on the Diet in Bruck an der Mur. Namely, it was decided that all strongholds in river Glina valley should be abandoned because their defence became inopportune, except the Topusko abbey, the most important one, as well as the castle Vranograč because it was an important advance-post of the Topusko abbey.¹⁸² The similar attitude had been expressed can by the Croatian estates on their Diet held in late December 1578 that is after the Ottoman ravage of the Topusko abbey. Namely, they purposed the reparation of the abbey's fortifications, as well as to station the certain number of cavalrymen and infantrymen there. They even recommended that the abbey should be headquarters of local military commander.¹⁸³ Even more, on their Diet held in February 1579 the Croatian and Slavonian estates reached the agreement to start the renovation of the abbey's fortifications, and for this work the serves from estates in Mišljenovac, Degoj and Augustanovac were

¹⁸¹ On the Bruck an der Mur Diet see in detail: Nataša Štefanec, *Država ili ne. Ustroj Vojne krajine 1578. godine i hrvatsko-slavonski staleži u regionalnoj obrani i politici* [State or not. Organization of Military Border in 1578. and Croatian and Slavonian estates in regional defense and politics] (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2011).

¹⁸² SHRK 1, p. 62.

¹⁸³ ...in partibus Transcolapinis Croatiae munitissimum esse locum arcem Thopwzkensem, intra cuius arcis moenia satis ampla ipse dominus capitaneus cum certo numero equitum et peditum ad defensionem partium illarum commode residere poterit..., HSS 4, p. 18.

appointed.¹⁸⁴ The reasoning beside these decisions most likely was the fact that the Topusko abbey was protecting the part of the vital communication to Bihać, than the only Christian fortress in Una valley that did not yet fell in Ottoman hands.

By the May of 1579 the Croatian and Slavonian estates became fully aware new strategic importance of the Topusko. Namely, during their Deit held in May 1579, the gathered estates agreed to continue the reconstruction of the abbey's defences because the site became important outpost of future defence line on river Kupa. They argued that the abbey is not far from river Kupa so it could be rather easy resupplied by food and troops.¹⁸⁵

Yet another obvious problem emerged. Because neither Croatian ban nor Croatian estate, as well as bishopric of Zagreb, the legal owner of the abbey, did not have enough funds, the Croatian estates decided that the conclusion on the matter who should finance yonder troops, should be left on king's will.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, it seems that certain conflict existed in the first half of 1580-ties between the bishop of Zagreb, the legal owner of the abbey and who was collecting the revenues from remaining lands of the Topusko abbey, and the Croatian ban who kept the troops in the remains of the abbey.¹⁸⁷ Namely, there are some accounts from May 1581 which confirms that in the remains of the Topusko abbey still was stationed some banal troops who on that occasion complained to archduke Ernest Hapsburg that ban Christopher Ungnad had not provided them with arms and monition needed for further defence.¹⁸⁸ Eventually the conflict between the bishop of Zagreb and Croatian ban came in front of the Aulic War Council from whom the verdict was expected. The members of the Aulic War Council adjudicated that the Croatian estates should forced the bishop of Zagreb as well as the Chapter of Zagreb, to rebuild the remains of the Topusko abbey's fortifications and to station their troops

¹⁸⁴ HSS 4, p. 27.

¹⁸⁵ ...*similiter et castrum finitimum Thopwzka in faucibus Turcicis, trans Colapim existens, in suam gratiosam custodiam recipere de facto digenur, quod castrum eget solummodo Tectura, alioquin pro residentia vicegerentis est satis aptum, et ad protectionem huius regni reliquiarum commodissimum...*, HSS 4, p. 29.

¹⁸⁶ ...*Quia autem sacra caesarea et regia maiestas ad querelam moderni domoni episcopi Zagrabienensis pro insufficinetia intertentionis et conservationis castri Thopwzkensis, quod est caput abbatiae illius, mandatun siim firum ad dominum banuum dederit, vt castrum illud tam diu, donec sua maiestatis bonis modis pro castro illo Thopwzka transigere poterit...*, HSS 4, p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, p. 307.

¹⁸⁸ ...*Iam in castris, castellis et fortaliis, quibus ipse dominus banus praeest, ut sunt Topuzka, Gora, Brezth. Percseneo et alia, nulla bellica instrumenta, ut sunt pixides barbatae, pulveres, plumbum et similia, inveniuntur neque existunt, quibus vi hostili ingruente sese defendere et loca illa tueri milites possent...*, HSS 4, p. 549.

there, while yonder banal soldiers should be resettled in other forts, precisely those that protected fords on river Kupa, that is Brest, Sredičko and Letovanić, respectively.¹⁸⁹ The similar attitude the members of the Aulic War Council expressed once again in the beginning of 1582.¹⁹⁰ Even more, from the decisions made on Diet of Croatian estates held in Zagreb on 27 June 1582 it can be seen that archdukes Ernest and Charles Hapsburg had the same view on the matter. Yet, the Croatian estates further suggested that if the bishop of Zagreb, the formal owner of the abbey, would not want to finance the defence of the abbey, than he should gave the abbey and the income from its estate, under the royal authority and then the king should organised and financed the defence of the Topusko abbey.¹⁹¹ Although the matter whose responsibility was to defend the Topusko abbey, included several most important institutions (the Croatian ban, the Croatian estates, the Aulic War Council, the Hapsburgs, the bishop of Zagreb, the Chapter of Zagreb) who had the opposing opinions, this historical episode clearly also shows us that all of them were aware of the importance of maintaining the defence of the remains of the Topusko abbey. This was most likely because the Topusko abbey was an outpost of the future defence line on the river Kupa that was at that time still under construction.¹⁹²

In any case, because the agreement on whose responsibility was to defend the Topusko abbey, was obviously not reach in 1582, the *status quo* remained. Namely, there are some accounts that the banal troops stayed in the remains of the Topusko abbey at least until the first half of 1584. As it was stated in the beginning of the paper, on April 1584 the ban Thomas Bakač Erdödy send an letter to archduke Ernest Hapsburg in which he stated that his soldiers were still situated in monastic complex of former Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko which was at time mostly in ruins.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ ...*Dabei sollen auch die stände ir guetachten geben, wie Topuska in anderweg und nämlich durch den bischof von Agram und das capitel slbst, wieweil si die einkumen der abtei geniessen, underhalten und besetzt, und das banisch kriegsvolk dessen ain tail bisher dagin auf Topuska gelegt und gebraucht worden, an sainen orten und sonderlich zu obbemelter versicherung des pass und schlösser Zredicki, Brest un Litovanitch verbleiben möchten...*, HSS 4, p. 74.

¹⁹⁰ HSS 4, pp. 74-75.

¹⁹¹ HSS 4, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹² On the construction of the anti-Ottoman defense line on across the river Kupa that stached between newly built fortress Karlovac and castle Sisak, see in more detail: Milan Kruhek, "Rat za opstojnost Hrvatskog kraljevstva na kupskoj granici. Borbe za kaptolski kaštel u Sisku i druge utvrde na Kupi 1591.-1595. godine" [The war for the existence of Kingdom of Croatia on the Kupa border. The battles of Chapter's castle Sisak and other fortresses on river Kupa 1591-1595], in: *Sisačka bitka 1593*, eds. Ivo Goldstein and Milan Kruhek (Zagreb-Sisak: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta – Institut za suvremenu povijest – Povijesni arhiv Sisak, 1994), pp. 33-66.

¹⁹³ See footnote 1.

Due to the lack of survived written materials, it is not possible to say when exactly the defenders of the Topusko abbey finally abandoned it. Yet, overall, it is very likely that it happened sometimes before the beginning of the 1590-ties, when the Kupa defence line was finally finished and became fully operational.¹⁹⁴ Hence, by that time Christian forces abandoned most of the remaining strongholds south of river Kupa because they lost their strategic importance.¹⁹⁵ Hence is reasonable to believe that the same happened with the Topusko abbey. In any case, Croatian estates once again evaluated the situation around the Topusko abbey on their Diet held in Zagreb on 5 September 1602. On that occasion they described the monastic complex in Topusko as in ruins and deserted, i.e. they described the Topusko abbey area as no-man's land.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, the remains of the complex of former Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko were left abandoned in following period and continued to deteriorate by the passage of time and weather condition, as well as by nearby dwellers who used its stone material in building their homes.

7. Final remarks

Although plundered and/or put fire by the Ottomans on several occasions (1519, 1571, 1578), and even plundered by its commendatory abbots (1522, 1557), the Cistercian abbey of Blessed Virgin Mary in Topusko proven to be rather important defence position in prolonged anti-Ottoman war during 16th century. That is, the Topusko abbey and its renewed fortifications as well as the "defence system" that included several smaller forts strategically spaced around the Topusko estate, represented one but still important loop in the defence chain that stretched from the shores of the Adriatic Sea to the Transylvania in northeastern Hungary. Nevertheless, its strategic importance and role changed during 16th century mostly due to Ottoman territorial gains and the approach of the battle zone. Hence, in the beginning of the 16th century, that is until the middle of 1520-ties and the collapse of anti-Ottoman defence system in southern Croatia, what led to the growth of the defence importance of Una river defence line, the Topusko abbey was in the rather distanced hinterland of the battle zone. Nevertheless, due to increased Ottoman raids on the Topusko estate it was than when the abbey's fortifications were improved and "defence system" put in place.

¹⁹⁴ Kruhek, "Rat za opstojnost", pp. 37-40.

¹⁹⁵ Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana*, pp. 306-312.

¹⁹⁶ ...*ut in abbatia beatitissimae Virginis Mariae de Topwzka ... fortificent contra insidias et impetus hostium...*, HSS 4, pp. 427-428.

During the most of the first half of the 16th century, that is until 1556 and the Ottoman conquest of Kostajnica, the Topusko abbey functioned as the very important stronghold in the nearest hinterland of the anti-Ottoman defence line that existed in the valley of river Una. It did not only protect the section of the vital road that connected river Una valley with safer zones north of river Kupa and around Zagreb, it also functioned as the military headquarters of ban Peter Kegelvić, than one of the most prominent leader of the anti-Ottoman defence, but also as the centre of intelligence. Even more, due to its closeness to defence line as well as the strength of its fortification, the Topusko abbey was also important political centre, i.e. during that time the Croatian Diet was held there for several times. Yet, the major changes occurred after the fall of Kostajnica in 1556 and disintegration of defence line on the lower Una valley. Namely, the Topusko abbey strategic role changed in following two decades, and it became the frontline strongholds as well as continue to be very important defence position in protecting route that was connecting Bihać and northern and safer territories of Croatia through river Glina valley. This changed position led to the end of practice to held Croatian Diets in the Topusko abbey. Finally, after the fall of Zrin and Gvozdansko in late 1578 and the beginning of 1579 that is after the final disintegration of the river Una defence line some troops continued to stay in the Topusko abbey. Yet, it became the outpost of the river Kupa defence line than still under construction. Eventually it was abandoned as the defence post most likely at the end of 1580-ties, that is when the river Kupa defence line was completed and became fully operational. Hence, it can be said that it was decision made in Bruck an der Mur in 1578 – the construction of new defence line on the river Kupa – that sealed the destiny of the former Cistercian abbey in Topusko.

Unfortunately, although the Habsburgs rulers tried and finally managed to improve and to modernise the defence of the borderline towards the Ottoman Empire by building new and modern strongholds and introducing general usage of fire arms, as well as introducing permanent troops on the bored, that it to organise self-contain defence system,¹⁹⁷ this came too late for the Topusko abbey. Meaning that the development of the military and political, that is the approaching of the frontline towards the abbey itself, as well the deterioration of the abbey's fortification system, eventually made the Topusko abbey strategically obsolete.

Finally, the Topusko abbey is a good example of the former ecclesiastical site incorporated in the anti-Ottoman defence during 16th century. Its strategic position changed during analysed period, yet most of the important po-

¹⁹⁷ Gábor Ágoston, "Habsburgs and Ottomans. Defense, Military Change and Shifts in Power", *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 22/1 (1998): 126-141.

litical factors, such as Croatian estate as well as Croatian ban, or Hapsburgs and their military commanders, considered it as important defence position, at least to the very end of 16th century. One can also hope that further research in archives, and even more future archaeological excavations on the site that are proven to be necessary, will shed more light on the abbey's fortifications as well as its strategic importance during the 16th century.

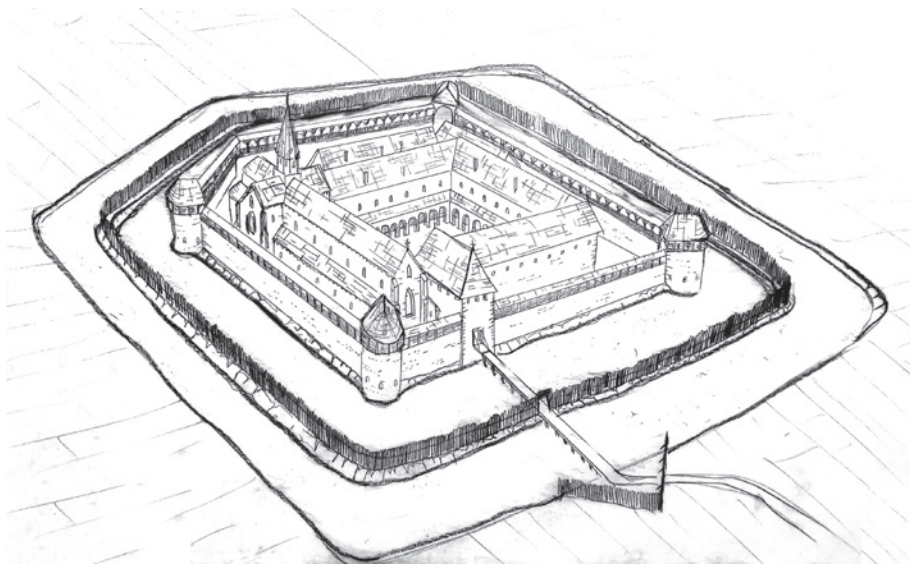
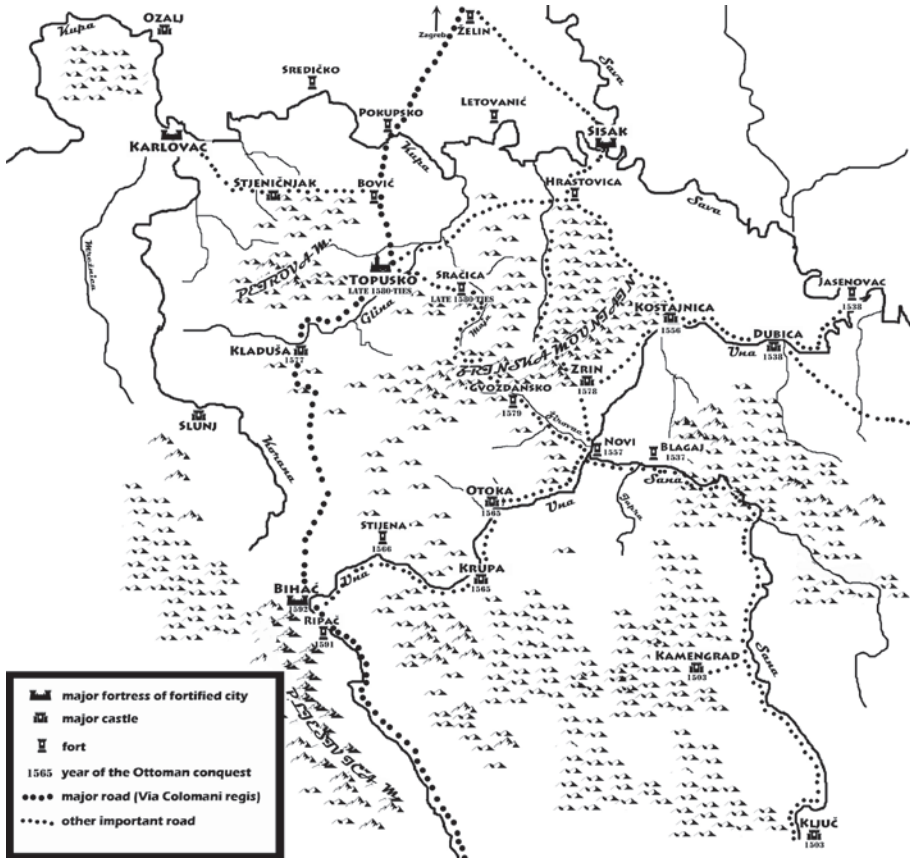


Fig. 1 – The possible reconstruction of the Topusko abbey in the first half of 16th century (author: Krešimir Regan)



Map 1 – The Ottoman conquest of central Croatia during 16th century (only geographical info relevant to paper’ subject is given; made by author)

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