

A Tale of Three Fortresses

Controversies Surrounding the Turkish Conquest of Smederevo, of an Unnamed Fortress at the Junction of the Sava and Bosna, and of Bobovac

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The politics and events surrounding the conquest of cities in a major war are clearly complex. They may involve treachery and betrayals. Usually, documents determining treachery are not to be found, for treachery is seldom relegated to paper. Rumors of treachery, however, are frequent. Sometimes one may trace their source; at other times this is hard to do. And even when we can trace a rumor to its source, we still may not know whether the source knows of what he speaks, or simply has come to believe what he reports, or is deliberately lying to blacken someone. In any case, the circumstances around the taking by the Turks of several South Slav towns between 1459 and 1463 are of interest. And even if we cannot uncover enough hard facts to resolve all the issues involved, the cases are inherently interesting, and their presentation may provoke further discussion that may help clarify matters.

I hope this topic, which places its emphasis on Bosnia, will also interest George Dennis, whom we are honoring in this volume. Recently, he was drawn into Bosnia's murky history by his discovery of three letters from the Venetian consul in Modon, one of which contained interesting and original data from 1400 about an unknown phase of Hungary's on-going war against Bosnia.¹

1. Dennis, "Three Venetian Letters." For my discussion of the significance of the material on Bosnia, see Fine, "Novootkriveni," 107-9.

I. Smederevo

When Stefan Lazarević of Serbia died in 1427, he was succeeded by his nephew George Branković. The Turks were exerting great pressure on Serbia from the south, and as a result Serbian centers were moving north. Stefan's capital had been Belgrade at the junction of the Danube and Sava, but the Hungarians took Belgrade back as part of the deal that led to their recognition of George Branković as the despot of Serbia. Needing a new fortified capital, George, having received permission from his suzerain Sultan Murad II, erected the great fortress of Smederevo at the junction of the Morava and Danube rivers. Constantine Mihailović of Ostrovica, the Janissary who defected and wrote his account of Turkish expansion, provides the most detailed, though not necessarily the most accurate, account:

The Despot sought from the sultan permission to build without interference a monastery, which the sultan allowed and promised not to interfere with, and beside it he also allowed him to build a secure fortress, giving his word that he would allow him to hold all of this.²

Upon its completion Smederevo became Serbia's last capital.

Smederevo was built in the early 1430s, and since the Turkish threat hung heavily over Serbia, the fortress obviously had to be built rapidly. And its swift construction is reported in the epics that claim that Smederevo was built with the blood of the Serbian people. They were mercilessly driven to work on it as slaves—levied by force and compelled to work as laborers on the construction for over a year without remuneration. Moreover, the Serbian people were also taxed beyond their means to pay for its construction. These pressures drove many to banditry. The initial fortress was completed in 1430, with further walls erected in the course of that decade. At least this is the conclusion of A. Deroko. Having noted a recently found inscription on one of Smederevo's towers dating the completion of the fortress to 1430 and crediting the building to George Branković, Deroko persuasively argues that the inscription refers to the completion of the "small fortress," a small triangular affair at the junction of the Jezava and Danube, which included the despot's court. And then subsequently—and in any case prior to 1439—was built the large fortress whose walls

2. Živanović, ed., Konstantin Mihailović, *Janičarove*, 105.

stretched from the two corners of the small fortress to make a much larger triangle.³

The driving force behind the building of the fortress and the way it was carried out, according to Serbian epics, was George's wife, "the cursed Jerina" as they call her. Irina (as she was named in Greek) was from the Kantakouzenos family, great-granddaughter of Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos and granddaughter of the emperor's son, Matthew. It is not certain which of Matthew's sons was her father. One of Smederevo's towers is popularly known to the present as Jerina's tower. It is conceivable that Jerina did have a role in the building of Smederevo, but we cannot document this role from contemporary sources.

The Ottomans kept up their expansion into Serbia through the 1430s, with major annexations in 1437 and 1438. By 1439 Serbia was greatly reduced in size. As a result, Albert, the king of Hungary, began putting pressure on George Branković to yield Smederevo to Hungary, arguing that Hungary could defend it better against the Turks than George could. George may well have felt unable to defend it and have agreed to yield it. For, according to one account, he agreed to exchange it for other property in Hungary, including Világosvár (Világos) and 110 villages. In any case Smederevo fell to the Turks, after a three-month siege in August 1439, before the exchange could take place. Doukas describes the occupation as follows:

He [Sultan Murad] dispatched ambassadors to the despot of Serbia, demanding the surrender of the newly erected fortress of Smederevo. The despot reminded Murad of the solemn pledge he had given of their kinship. [Murad had taken to wife George's daughter Mara.] But the tyrant ignored the despot's protest and marched against him. He arrived at Smederevo at that time of summer when the fortress's granary and store houses were empty. He kept the fortress under surveillance; after it had been blockaded for three months, it capitulated from lack of supplies. The gates were open and the defenders came out to make obeisance to him. Within were the despot's eldest son [Gregory] and his maternal uncle, Thomas Kantakouzenos.⁴

Writing in 1601, Orbini gives a similar story. He says that George had gone to Hungary to seek aid, leaving his son Gregory

3. Deroko, "Smederevski grad," 59-98.

4. Magoulias, trans., Doukas, *Decline and Fall*, 177.

to defend the town. The Turks attacked. No Hungarian help appeared, and despite the fortress' strong walls, Gregory was forced to surrender it. To explain the need to surrender the city, Orbini also notes that the fortress could normally have held out, but the garrison was starved into capitulation. He adds the further explanation, presumably based on an oral tradition, that Jerina, wanting cash, had sold the town's grain reserves.⁵ Jerina had accompanied her husband on his trip to Hungary, but this does not rule out the possibility that she might have sold the grain reserves at some time before her departure.

Constantine Mihailović provides a similar account, but one having certain specific variations, the most important of which was that not Gregory Branković, but a brother of his, was commanding the town for the Serbs when the Turkish forces struck:

When [Sultan] Murad heard that the despot was building the fortifications and before he had completed and supplied them, he [the sultan] immediately ordered that the despot's son Gregory, his brother-in-law, be imprisoned in the town of Demotika, while he set out with his troops to besiege Smederevo. When the despot heard that the sultan had set out, he departed for Hungary to King Vladislav. . . . Having arrived, the sultan besieged and, through starving out, took the city of Smederevo and when he had seized the despot's son, he sent him to join his brother in the same town [Demotika]. And thus he conquered the whole Raškan [Serbian] land, with all its towns, and Smederevo voluntarily submitted to him preferring the Turks to the Hungarians.⁶

After the successes of the crusaders in 1443, Serbia was restored as a state and George again took up the rule of Serbia; again Smederevo became his capital. George was to rule under Ottoman suzerainty, paying an annual tribute of 60,000 ducats. To survive he needed to maintain good relations with the Turks, a situation which led to tensions with Hungary and finally to George's death in 1456, since he died from wounds received in a skirmish with the Hungarians. His son Lazar succeeded. There seem to have been tensions within the family, and one of the issues between them was whether to try to hold on to what Serbia still had by cooperating with the Ottomans, or to get greater independence and regain some of Serbia's losses by cooperating with the Hun-

5. Orbini, *Kraljevstvo Slovena*, 111.

6. Živanović, ed., Konstantin Mihailović, *Janičarove*, 105.

garians. Supporters of these two viewpoints clashed when the succession was disputed, after Lazar died in January 1458. And, in fact, a month passed before Serbia got any sort of government, and what it then received was a collective affair that included General (Vojvoda) Michael Andjelović (Angelos), leader of the pro-Turkish faction, and Helena, Lazar's widow, who was the daughter of Thomas Palaiologos of the Morea.

Members of the Angelos family of Thessaly, Michael Andjelović and his brother had been living as exiles in Serbia's Novo Brdo, when in 1427 the Ottomans had attacked that town. The brothers fled separately. Michael escaped to the court of George Branković, where he was well received, eventually becoming under Lazar the highest military officer in Serbia. His brother was captured by the Turks and soon converted to Islam. Thereafter, he rose rapidly in the Ottoman military establishment, and under the name Mahmud Pasha was the Ottoman military governor of Rumeli in the late 1450s. Nevertheless, the brothers kept up cordial ties. Helena was not happy at sharing power with Michael, and she set about increasing her contacts with the Hungarians in the hope that they would help her oust Michael. Michael, in turn, seems to have hoped to remove her and become Despot of Serbia, and believed he could achieve this with Turkish help. Some townsmen in Smederevo began calling him despot. At the same time opposition to him was growing, presumably instigated by Helena. Hungarian forces began mobilizing up the Danube; as a result, Michael received a unit of Turkish troops to beef up his Smederevo garrison. It seems he planned to use these troops also to support a move to get for himself sole rule in the city. But, upon their arrival in March 1458, the Turks promptly raised the Turkish flag over the battlements of Smederevo. Whether this indicated their intention to ignore Michael's cause and seize the town for the sultan is not certain. But it proved more than the local Serbian citizens could take, and they staged a spontaneous uprising. Many Turks were killed, and Michael was taken prisoner. Very likely the presence of the Hungarian forces a short distance up the river provided the rebels with the courage to carry out the revolt.

Helena, who already was negotiating with the Hungarians, now took sole power. Thus, the pro-Hungarian faction came out on top. The jailing of Michael, however, angered his brother, and he launched an attack into Serbia. The Hungarian king, Matthias

Corvinus, faced with serious opposition within Hungary, could spare no more troops than those he had already sent to reinforce the Belgrade garrison. Fearing the end of Serbia, the Hungarians again sought Smederevo, which they believed, even with their limited forces, they could garrison better than the Serbs could. In exchange they offered Helena other lands in Hungary. Helena tried without success to persuade the Hungarians to take the fortress of Golubac instead. By May 1458 the Turks had invaded Serbia; with their forces they had George Branković's son Gregory and Gregory's son Vuk, whom they may have been prepared to advance as alternatives to Helena. Thus, we see the Branković family divided. In August the Turks took the important fortress of Golubac.

Usually, it is thought that in the 1458 campaign the Turks did not attack Smederevo. But, a Turkish historian, Tursun Beg, describes much activity there including considerable Turkish success:

The Ottoman army suddenly emerged from the forest opposite the fortress of Semendere [Smederevo]. The Ottoman vanguard skirmishers drove back the force sent out to oppose them. When Mahmud [Pasha] reached the fortress, he proposed to its inhabitants that they surrender. They answered that the Hungarians were approaching speedily and would give the Ottomans a good fight when they arrived. Mahmud remained before Semendere a week and destroyed all the crops around the fortress. Although the begs objected to Mahmud's plan, reminding him of the enemy cannon and musket firepower, Mahmud led all the mounted and infantry forces gathered around him against the fortress. A second request for the surrender of the fortress was presented . . . but the enemy again refused. They continued to rain cannon and musket fire down on the Ottoman troops who now attacked. The enemy defenses consisted of a trench dug completely around the city proper surrounded by two separate walls. Mahmud stormed these walls and gained entry into the city. The enemy troops fleeing before him were put to the sword and the city was pillaged. Only the inner fortress now remained to be taken. After staying there another three days, Mahmud moved to the province of Mačva. . . .⁷

7. Inalcik and Murphey, ed. and trans., Tursun Beg, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 41. Here and below I have relied upon and cited the editors' summary translations. I thank Michael Hickok for checking the Turkish text, which is included in the volume, to ascertain that nothing of significance concerning the events that interested me was left out of the summary translation. He assures me nothing was.

Tursun Beg does not say why Mahmud went off to Mačva instead of finishing the job. Since there is no evidence that Turks were found in the outer city the next spring, presumably Mahmud took the forces that had stormed the outer city to Mačva with him. Even though other sources do not confirm these events, I believe we should accept them as basically accurate. Tursun Beg was a close associate of Mahmud, accompanied him on many of his campaigns, and was in frequent contact with him. Thus, he was in a position to know things either directly himself or from his friend and superior Mahmud, who, in this case, had commanded the events described. By campaign's end, Serbia was little more than Smederevo itself.

Aware that Smederevo could expect a new attack the following year, Helena turned to the task of finding allies to help her defend it. Having got nothing from Hungary in 1458, she now decided to try for help from Bosnia, Serbia's neighbor across the Drina. Thus, she offered her daughter, also Helena, then about eleven years old, as a bride for Stefan Tomašević, the eldest son and heir of the Bosnian king. The Bosnians were interested, for the marriage would secure their possession of the rich silver mining town of Srebrnica, then in Bosnian hands, which had been a bone of contention between Serbia and Bosnia for the previous half century. Bosnia, however, felt it needed the agreement of Hungary before it could accept. After Bosnia again accepted Hungarian suzerainty, King Matthias Corvinus agreed to the marriage and to Stefan Tomašević's taking command of Smederevo. Stefan Tomašević arrived in Smederevo to assume his command in March 1459. His marriage to Helena, who upon her marriage—presumably a Catholic one—took the name of Maria, took place the following month. Angry at both Bosnia's defection and its alliance with the Hungarians, the Turks launched an attack on Bosnia in March.

The Ottomans besieged Smederevo and took it on 20 June 1459. Serbia again disappeared as a state; it would not regain its independence until the nineteenth century. Stefan Tomašević and his new bride fled to Bosnia. At once Matthias Corvinus accused Stefan Tomašević and the Bosnians of selling out to the Turks. He also seems to have felt the Branković family bore some responsibility, or at least used the fall of Smederevo as an excuse, for he

took from them the town of Tokai and its district, a major possession of the family within Hungary.

Matthias' accusations were at once taken up by the papacy, and Pope Pius II, writing at about this time in his diaries, later published as *The Commentaries*, states:

A few months after he [Stefan Tomašević] entered it [Smederevo], he called in the Turks and sold them the town for a great weight of gold. This was as crushing a blow to the spirits of the Hungarians as the loss of Constantinople had been. For Senderovia [Smederevo] is, as it were, the gate from Rascia [Serbia] to Wallachia, a most convenient base for making war against the Hungarians. . . . The Bosnian envoys, however, had left Mantua before the betrayal was generally known, and it was reported first to the Hungarian ambassadors.⁸

Pius makes his source for this information clear, stating that it was reported to, and we may conclude, circulated thereafter by, the Hungarian ambassadors. Confirmation for the substance of the accusation is found only in Hungarian sources or in sources derived from them. No Turkish source suggests a betrayal. Most modern scholars believe the accusation to be slander and have concluded that the Bosnian prince, unable to resist the superior strength of the Turks, was forced to surrender the town. The pope soon dispatched an envoy to Bosnia to look into the charges. He found the Bosnian king conciliatory. In fact, Pius states, "The king of Bosnia to atone for having surrendered Senderovia to the Turks and to give proof of his religious faith . . . forced the Manichees . . . to be baptized or to emigrate."⁹ Suggesting Bosnian innocence of the Hungarian charge is the fact that Pius simply uses the neutral expression "surrendered Senderovia" rather than a more loaded term such as "sold" or "betrayed." Also suggesting Bosnian innocence is the subsequent friendliness regularly shown by Pius to Stefan Tomašević when he succeeded to the Bosnian throne in 1461. Pius would hardly have been so supportive of the young man

8. *The Commentaries of Pius II (Aeneas Silvius de Piccolomini)* have been translated by F. Gragg and provided with an introduction and notes by L. Gabel. They were serialized in *Smith College Studies in History*, 22.1-2 (1936-37); 25.1-4 (1939-40); 30 (1947); 35 (1951); and 43 (1957). I have used Gragg's translation in my citations. Pagination is consecutive for the text as it goes from volume to volume. The passage cited in the text appears in Gragg, trans., *Commentaries of Pius II*, 201.

9. Gragg, trans., *Commentaries of Pius II*, 366.

if the Bosnian prince had actually sold the fortress to the Turks. Thus, we may conclude that Pius at first believed and thus recorded the Hungarian accusation in his diary, but soon, as a result of his own investigation, concluded the charges were unfounded. He therefore did not repeat them. He failed, however, to go back and correct the statement he had made earlier in his text.

Bosnian innocence of the charge of betraying Smederevo is also confirmed by Chalkokondyles and Constantine Mihailović, the Janissary chronicler. Both these authors stress the strength of the Turks, and though they hint that resistance might have lasted longer, place the responsibility for the surrender on Serbs within the city. Chalkokondyles states that the Smederevo Serbs, unhappy with Bosnian rule and believing they could not resist the Turks, went out to meet the sultan and turned over to him the keys of the city of Smederevo. Constantine Mihailović supports this description of events, insofar as he writes that the Smederevo Serbs, not having much faith in Bosnian rule, and preferring the Turks to the Hungarians, voluntarily saw to it that their preferences were realized.¹⁰ Constantine's remarks clearly imply that the Serbian attitude played a role in the city's surrender. Tursun Beg seems to agree, though he is extremely brief about the final conquest:

In the spring of 864 (1460) [sic 1459], [Sultan Mehmed] Fatih with his army established camp at Sofya. Out of fear of the Sultan's assault, the people of Semendere voluntarily submitted to him the keys to the fortress. Subsequently a garrison of 'azeb and Janissaries were assigned to guard duty under a commander (dizdar), and the fortress was assigned to a san-cak beg.¹¹

Though this account suggests the city was surrendered before the Ottoman assault was launched, it seems that the people judged they could not resist the main Ottoman army under command of the sultan in person. If most of the fortress had been successfully taken by Mahmud the previous year, then the citizens would have had even less reason for confidence in their defenses. As in the case of the two authors just cited, Tursun Beg also attributes the surrender to the people of Smederevo [i.e., the Serbs] and not to its young Bosnian commander.

10. Živanović, ed., Konstantin Mihailović, *Janičarove*, 125.

11. Inalcik and Murphey, ed. and trans., Tursun Beg, *History of Mehmed the Conquerer*, 44.

Politics and dissensions, then, certainly played a role in determining who defended Smederevo and how effectively it was defended, as well as on the timing of the Turkish attack. Even though the city did surrender, however, it probably could not have withstood the far stronger Turks indefinitely. And in any case the Bosnians do not seem to have in any way betrayed the trust placed upon them.

II. An Anonymous Fortress at the Bosna-Sava Junction

Our next fortress is a mysterious one at the junction of the Sava and Bosna rivers. Unnamed, it seems to have been held by the Turks already in 1462, and according to Pius II, Stefan Tomašević attacked and took it, an act that provoked the Turkish invasion that conquered Bosnia in 1463. There are several puzzles here, and though I shall not resolve any of them, it seems worthwhile to lay the issue out in the hope that it will provoke research on the question. First, one must ask whether Pius' story is true? If so, then we must address three questions. Of these the first must be about the structure itself. The fortress presumably lay in what is now Bosanski Šamac; I have found no indication of a medieval fortress there, but it seems logical that a fortress would have stood at the junction of two such important rivers. The pope states that the Turks built the place. If so, the lack of medieval reference is explained. But it still seems odd that no fortress had been built there previously. Second, the Turks had been pressing on Bosnia from the south and east, but, as far as I know, no one has noticed Pius' statement about the Turks' holding territory to Bosnia's north. If true, one may assume that, after subduing Serbia in 1458 and 1459, the Turks had sent forces up the Sava, occupying or erecting fortresses or stockades at least as far west as the Bosna. Third, Stefan Tomašević's attack upon the fortress seems suicidally foolhardy. What led him to order it? Let us turn to Pius' account.

Pius has a detailed description of a mission sent to him by Stefan Tomašević in 1462, about a year after he had succeeded his father as king of Bosnia. And Pius proves to be a very valuable source on conditions in Bosnia, for he seems to quote or paraphrase the actual letter written by the king and brought to him by the royal envoys. The king expressed deep fears that the Turks were about to attack him and that there was no possibility that Bosnia could

stand up to the might of the Ottomans. The text is well known so I will not go into it here. But what is important for us is that as a result of their discussions with the pope, the Bosnian envoys returned home expecting the pope to mobilize the Hungarians and Venetians to help the Bosnians resist. Pius' account ends: "The Bosnians, dismissed with such words, went away happy. They were followed by the pope's spokesman, Domenico of Lucca, who was to see that their requests were complied with by the Venetians and Hungary."¹²

Pius' text then turns to other matters, and returns to Bosnian affairs only in the following year. Here we find that all Stefan Tomašević's worst fears were realized. As Pius describes it in this, his last, section on Bosnia, the young king, encouraged by expectations of Western aid, seems to have become overconfident and acted rashly. He was possibly stirred up by the papal legate Nicholas of Modruša; for Pius suggests that the young king went out of his way to provoke the Turks, an act that led to the Turkish invasion of Bosnia in 1463. The most provocative act, the Bosnian attack upon a Turkish fortress, is not mentioned in other sources. Pius writes:

[R]elying no one knows on what hope, [the king] had refused the tribute which his ancestors had long been used to pay the Turks and had stormed the town which the enemy had built at the confluence of the Save [Sava] and Bosna to put fear into the Hungarians and Slavs. The Sultan Mahomet roused by that insult spat out at the king all the venom he was thought to have conceived against the Hungarians or others. When the king heard this, panic-stricken and desperate he summoned Nicholas, Bishop of Modrus, who happened to be the Pope's Legatus in Bosnia, and said: "Legatus, you have plunged me into these troubles for you egged me on by your advice to the point where I dared to attack the town of a mighty emperor whom the whole world could hardly resist. Now get us out of the danger you got us into."¹³

The bishop then went off to Hungary to try to urge the Hungarians into immediate action.

Did the king really show such poor judgment as to strike at the Turks before Western aid had materialized? Was he really egged on by the pope's legate, Bishop Nicholas? Pius was in a position

12. Gragg, trans., *Commentaries of Pius II*, 742.

13. *Ibid.*, 768.

to know. Moreover, although his legate is not shown in a positive light, the pope never tried to defend his bishop by denying that he had stirred up the king. Thus, it seems likely that the pope's account is accurate here.

III. Bobovac

The Turks then launched their massive attack, and Bosnia was left to face it all alone. Pius suggests that Bosnia did not resist as it might have. He reports:

A well planned scheme was frustrated by perfidy. On May 19 one of the Turkish captains named Bassa, at the head of a huge force, pitched camp under the town of Bobovac, the capital of Bosnia, and the next day was followed by the Sultan. The prefect of the town was Radak, once a Manichean but then pretending to be a Christian. He was bribed to admit the enemy within the walls and persuaded the garrison of the citadel not to resist the Turks, the masters of the world. The strongly fortified citadel, which could easily have held out two years in need of nothing, was surrendered.¹⁴

Whether the ex-Manichee (read Bosnian churchman) Radak really betrayed Bobovac or not is still debated among scholars. Pius' main source for information on Bosnia, the legate Nicholas, had gone to Hungary and was no longer there. Thus, we do not know what Pius' source for this information was. No other source from the time mentions Radak or any sort of betrayal in connection with Bobovac. The tale has entered Bosnian oral tradition, but that may well be because in subsequent centuries priests read the story in Pius or Orbini (or in other written sources based on Pius) and then repeated the tale to their flocks. Turkish sources, Tursun Beg and the Janissary Constantine Mihailović, suggest fighting occurred at Bobovac. Tursun Beg reports: "When the [Turkish] army reached the border region a group of raiders (akinci) attacked the fortress of Bobofca [Bobovac] and succeeded in taking it before the sultan arrived with the main body of the army. Following this, Visoka [Visoko] and several other fortresses surrendered of their own free

14. *Ibid.*, 769. No Turkish officer named Bassa is known from this period. Could Pius have mistaken the title Pasha for a personal name? If so, perhaps Bassa is Mahmud Pasha who was commanding forces in the conquest of Bosnia. I thank Michael Hickok for this suggestion.

will."¹⁵ There is no suggestion of betrayal, and the Turks are clearly shown taking the fortress through a fight. Since the conquerors were only a raiding party, one might conclude that the Bosnian defenders did not distinguish themselves. It is also interesting to note in this account, that the sultan arrived only after the city fell, whereas Pius' story has the betrayal/surrender occurring right after the sultan arrived. Our second Turkish source, Constantine Mihailović, supports Tursun Beg only insofar as he reports that Bobovac was taken by force, not by betrayal. However, he has the city falling after the sultan's arrival—in fact this must have occurred long after that arrival: "And then he [the sultan] set out for the king's land and besieged first of all the fortress of Bobovac. He did not have cannons with him, so he ordered that they be cast immediately before the town and with these cannons, he conquered the fortress."¹⁶ If true, the casting of cannons on the spot was quite a feat. Furthermore, archaeologists have found during excavations of Bobovac evidence of fire, which also suggests fighting occurred there. The Turkish sources and evidence of fire, however, do not rule out the possibility that a betrayal took place after some military action.¹⁷ If such occurred, however, Pius' account would have to be modified, for he gives no time for much fighting to have occurred. He implies that Radak surrendered immediately after the arrival of Bassa's and then the sultan's army.

Bosnia's fall was rapid, far more so than most Bosnians might have expected. This required an explanation, and one that would not reflect ill on Bosnian fighting skill and bravery; such an explanation would have likely sought scapegoats and claimed betrayals. To cite a famous example in a similar situation, we need only think of the traditions connected with the famous Serbian battle of Kosovo, and the accusation of treachery directed at Vuk Branković, who almost certainly fought bravely to the end of the battle. And Pius himself may have been looking for scapegoats. He did not want to emphasize the failure of other Catholic states to aid Bosnia. Venice did nothing, and Hungary mobilized its troops

15. Inalcik and Murphey, ed. and trans., Tursun Beg, *History of Mehmed the Conquerer*, 50.

16. Živanović, ed., Konstantin Mihailović, *Janičarove*, 141.

17. Radak "Manichee" and the fall of Bobovac are discussed in Fine, *Bosnian Church*, 340, 353 note 149. On the archaeology at Bobovac see Bojanovski, "Stari grad," 87-88.

only after Bosnia was conquered. He also presumably did not want to criticize too strongly Bosnia's daring, if foolish, young Catholic king. Pius also hated the Bosnian Church, which he had come to call by the inaccurate but damning term "Manichee."¹⁸ Thus, what better scapegoat could he—or any Bosnian Catholics he might have had contact with—find than adherents of the Bosnian Church? Were there hints of betrayals in any other sources about Bosnia's resistance to the Turkish onslaught in 1463?

A letter attributed to Bishop Nicholas of Modruša reports that Turkish aid was being solicited in Bosnia by Manichee heresiarchs, who had been forcibly baptized.¹⁹ Elsewhere in the document Bosnia is referred to as Illyricum, a name not used to the best of my knowledge to describe Bosnia that early, but one revived as a descriptive term of Bosnia by Dalmatians at the very end of the fifteenth century. Thus, I wonder if this document really dates from the 1460s. If, in fact, the text is a late one (or one with interpolations) then possibly the remark is drawn in distorted form from Pius' story of Radak. If accurately presented, it does not seem to bear on Radak and Bobovac. First, Bobovac is not mentioned. Second, Radak was a military commander said to have betrayed a fortress. The people Nicholas allegedly refers to were heresiarchs, leaders of a heresy, and quite likely priests. One would not expect a religious leader to be in command of a fortress. And their betrayal was not to surrender a town, but to have invited the Turks to come. Thus, even if the letter is accurate, it still says nothing about Bobovac and cannot be used to confirm Pius' story.

The third and final reference to disloyalty is found in a letter written 27 January 1464 by King Matthias of Hungary to Pius II. The king states that the Muslims had been invited to Bosnia by certain traitors. Then, having noted the ease and speed with which the Turks conquered Bosnia, he states that the traitors suffered as much as those betrayed.²⁰ Here once again, the alleged disloyalty was inviting the Turks to come. It could be seen as confirmation of the bishop of Modruša's remark, though the king does not say that heretics or heresiarchs did the inviting. And since Nicholas

18. On the Catholic Church's efforts to depict the schismatic Bosnian Church as heretical or dualist (Manichee), particularly from the 1440s, see Fine, *Bosnian Church*; and Fine, "Mid-Fifteenth Century Sources," 17-31.

19. Mercati, "Note varie sopra Niccolo Modrussienne," 218.

20. Thalloczy and Horvath, *Codex Diplomaticus*, 14.

had gone to Hungary, the bishop probably heard the story at the Hungarian court. Thus, if Nicholas' story actually dates from 1463, then we can see that it and the contents of Matthias' letter derived from a common source and thus do not provide independent confirmation of the claim's accuracy. The Hungarian court was in position to receive accurate reports on Bosnia; after all, at the end of the Turkish campaign when most of the Ottoman troops were withdrawn, the Hungarians had sent troops into northern Bosnia and taken for themselves a large chunk of territory, including Jajce. Thus, they were certainly able to acquire information. But, they also had a tradition of slander and propaganda against Bosnia, as we saw above in the case of their accusations against Stefan Tomašević in connection with the surrender of Smederevo. Thus, one would like to find independent confirmation for any claim Hungary made about Bosnia. And since our bishop was at the Hungarian court, his letter, even if contemporary and unaltered, cannot be so considered. In any case, once again Matthias speaks of invitations; his accusation has nothing to do with the betrayal of a particular city, and, therefore, has no bearing on Radak or Bobovac.

Thus, the circumstances of Bobovac's fall cannot be satisfactorily recovered. Pius provides, however, an explanation for the rapid fall of Bosnia. Having reported the Turks' capture of the king, Pius states:

He [the king] was taken before the Sultan who cajoled him with many hopes and easily induced him to give orders for the surrender of all the towns still in his possession, telling him that he might expect more and better ones from him. Written instructions were sent to the commandants of citadels to surrender their keys and munitions. All obeyed and thus in some eight days more than seventy towns strongly fortified by art and nature and more than a million ducats of Christian money came into the enemy's hands . . . After a few days the King was beheaded and many men of high birth were executed with him.²¹

Tursun Beg more or less confirms this report—though not the number of seventy fortresses. The king was in the fortress of Ključ. "When Mahmud Pasha finally arrived, the fortress was surrounded on all sides. The city outside the fortifications was put to fire; the fortress, which had now lost all hope of survival, surren-

21. Gragg, trans., *Commentaries of Pius II*, 769.

dered. The king came forth from the fortress and, to ensure his own safety, agreed to surrender other fortresses and give over his treasury." Tursun Beg then goes on to note that when the defenders of Jajce (which was Bosnia's actual final capital) saw that their king had been captured, they voluntarily surrendered to the sultan, and Tursun Beg concludes, "in short, this extensive land [Bosnia] with all of its fortresses was entirely subdued."²²

Bosnia certainly did fall rapidly, despite many inaccessible mountainous fortresses. That the king really did order their surrender as described by Pius, since the story is basically confirmed by Tursun Beg, seems likely. And such a means would well explain the rapidity of Bosnia's fall.

22. Inalcik and Murphey, ed. and trans., Tursun Beg, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 51.