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The Authority of the Church in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Catholic Literature of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Catholic Reformation and Counter-Reformation led to extensive religious and cultural activity among Catholics in Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina. The initiators of these actions were the clergy, primarily the Franciscans of the Bosna Srebrena province. A significant aspect of their work was the publication of religious literature, with the issue of Church authority being one of its central themes. The first part of this paper aims to examine the representation of the Church and its authority in literature derived from Latin and Italian sources. The second part addresses the distinct characteristics of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism in the early modern period. Given that these particularities are especially evident in the way Church authority functioned, this raises the question of coherence between the concept of Church authority as articulated in religious literature and its practical implementation.

Keywords: Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism, Tridentine Catholicism, authority of the Church, the literature of the Bosna Srebrena Franciscans, cultural worldviews.



After the Council of Trent, the Catholic Reform Movement created a favourable environment for the printing and dissemination of religious literature in vernacular languages. This need arose from a shared understanding between the Protestant and Catholic reformations,¹ namely that baptism alone is not sufficient for salvation. In addition to baptism, it was necessary to be familiar with religious doctrines and to align one's beliefs and behaviour with religious regulations.² Therefore, the Catholic Church made

¹ The term Catholic Reformation is used in this study as it more accurately reflects the nature of the religious activities described, compared to Counter-Reformation, which carries a more limited connotation, or Catholic Renewal, a term commonly used in Croatian culture. However, when describing the content of this literature and the value system it promotes, I use the term Tridentine Catholicism. For a comprehensive understanding of the history of this movement, as well as the development of various terms used to describe it, see: O'MALLEY 2002; JEDIN 1999. p. 19–45.

² DELUMEAU 1993. p. 262–332; BOSSY 1999. p. 85–104.

significant efforts to educate the clergy and provide the handbooks necessary for preaching, administering sacraments, conducting regular catechesis, and fulfilling other duties outlined by the reform plan.

In Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Catholic clergy participated in these activities for nearly three centuries. Due to specific historical circumstances, they were predominantly drawn from the ranks of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena. A significant part of their work involved printing religious books, primarily those intended for clergy to assist them in pastoral duties. This literature is typical for Tridentine Catholicism: catechisms, collections of sermons, and confessional manuals. Also worth mentioning are narrative texts, which predominantly served as exempla for sermons, as well as religious poetry, which became the most popular form of Franciscan literature during these two centuries.³

The content of these books aligns with the official doctrine of the Roman Church and was most frequently compiled from Church literature in Latin and Italian. They predominantly convey Catholic values and provide guidance on leading a pious and moral life, while also explaining Catholic doctrines, particularly those outlined in the documents of the Council of Trent. The power and authority of the Church is a central theme in these works and is also the focus of this study.

This research is structured in two parts, each aimed at distinct objectives: the first is to examine the representation of the Church and its authority in literature compiled from Latin and Italian sources. The second aim focuses on the specific characteristics of early modern Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism, which historiographic literature often describes as unestablished. Since these characteristics are particularly evident in the functioning of Church authority, this raises the question of the coherence between the concept of Church authority as articulated in religious literature and its practical application.

The focus of this work is on the literature produced by the Franciscan clergy in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This literature is part of a broader, supra-regional cultural phenomenon of the early modern era. Due to the expansion of Ottoman rule, the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena provided pastoral care across much of Dalmatia, Slavonia, Syrmia, Bačka, Banat, and southern Hungary until the mid-eighteenth century. A similar pattern of Catholic Church culture developed across this region, and the popular Franciscan books analysed in this paper were not confined by regional borders. Instead, they were distributed and read throughout the entire Bosna Srebrena area.⁴ This research, however, primarily focuses on texts written in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the particularities of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism are a key subject of this study. Books written by

³ Narrative texts and religious poetry are a good example of what Peter Burke describes as a replacement for popular culture. BURKE 1978. p. 223–243.

⁴ See KUNA 1974. p. 109–116; BELJAN KOVAČIĆ 2021. p. 157–161.

Dalmatian Franciscan authors, which were influential and popular in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian region, are also included.

Regarding timeline, it should be noted that Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholic literature of the nineteenth century, for the most part, continued to follow the patterns described here. However, as it began to incorporate modern elements – such as new genres and an increased focus on secular themes, particularly social and political issues – this research is limited to literature from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the early decades of the nineteenth century.⁵

1. Church Authority in Compiled Literature

The origin and scope of Church's authority is a central theme across all genres of this literature, including catechisms, sermons, confessional manuals, and narrative texts. This focus is understandable, given that a key aspect of Catholic doctrinal disagreements with Protestantism revolves around the authority of the Church.

Two significant aspects are evident in the representation of the Church in this literature. Firstly, the Church is depicted as the representative of God's rule on earth, acting as a mediator between God and humanity. As such, the Church possesses the power to absolve sins, administer the sacraments, provide spiritual comfort, and dispense all forms of spiritual goods, as well as impose penalties. Secondly, the Church is presented as a community of true believers, with salvation possible only within its fold. The teaching that "there is no salvation outside the Church" (*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*) is, therefore, a major theme in this literature. We will analyse both aspects using Ken Wilber's explicative system of cultural worldviews, along with similar models developed by Jean Gebser and Clare W. Graves.⁶

1.1. Theoretical Framework: Cultural Worldviews

The founder of integral theory, Ken Wilber, posits that the developmental capacities of the interior collective domain of reality – which includes culture, language, beliefs, and shared values – progress through a series of developmental waves or levels. The essence of this progression is a tendency toward creating units of increasing complexity and depth.⁷ A fundamental characteristic of these developmental waves is their transcendence and inclusivity: each successive wave encompasses the capacities of the previous one while also transcending them, adding new dimensions. Wilber refers to

⁵ The research covers authors ranging from Matija Divković in the early seventeenth century to Augustin Miletić in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Miletić represents the culmination of religious and cultural activities inspired by the Church's reform efforts.

⁶ The research of American developmental psychologist Clare W. Graves was further developed by his students, Don Edward Beck and Christopher C. Cowan, whose work is referenced in this paper.

⁷ See: WILBER 2001. p. 36–58.

these developmental waves as cultural worldviews, viewing each as a significant turning point in consciousness that transforms how one perceives and regulates both the external and internal world. A turning point still crucial for our world is the emergence of the mental cultural worldview.⁸

The rise of the mental worldview begins with the separation of the self from identification with the environment and the body. In its early stages, it is characterized by pre-conventionality and egocentrism, where the world is perceived as an extension of the ego. In this study, this early mental worldview is therefore termed egoic.⁹ Values such as winning, conquering, domination, physical strength, and “power gods” hold a prominent place in its value system.¹⁰

The next phase of the identification of self with the mind is marked by conventionality and sociocentrism. Here, the world is viewed as an orderly place where everyone has an assigned role, and the individual learns to conform to the norms of their social group. Because it leans toward closed, static, and immutable explanations of the world, this phase is termed dogmatic in this study. Its limitations are surpassed in the following stage, which is characterized by post-conventionality, world centricity, and a deeper understanding of multiple perspectives. This advanced phase of the mental worldview is referred to here as rational.¹¹

The Protestant and Catholic Reformations played a significant role in the rise of the mental worldview within European cultures. Their programs aimed to extend forms of religiosity, morality, and behaviour – previously characteristic of elites, particularly monastic ones – to all believers. From a worldview perspective, this process marked the expansion of the dogmatic mental worldview while simultaneously detaching from the pre-mental¹² mythic. However, the transition was complex and gradual, with elements of the mythic worldview present not only in popular culture but also, to some extent, within Church culture. The representation of the Church in Catholic religious literature is also an indicator of that.

The understanding of belonging to the Church and the nature of its authority in this literature is primarily rooted in the dogmatic mental worldview and is thus influenced by the inherent limitations of this worldview. However, the high degree of concretization in spiritual teachings

⁸ Jean Gebser observes that the root of the word “man” in many languages is the same as the root of the word “mental”. *Mental world is “a world of man”*. GEBSER 1985. p. 17.

⁹ The classification of the mental worldview into egoic, dogmatic, and rational is based on the model found in the work of Beck and Cowan, though different terminology is introduced in this paper. Specifically, Beck and Cowan use colours to label different worldviews (or value memes in their explicative system).

¹⁰ BECK – COWAN 1996. p. 215–216.

¹¹ The process continues with the questioning of the self’s identification with the mind, eventually leading to the transcendence of the limitations imposed by this identification. WILBER 2002. p. 75–90, 141–156, 253–271. However, these worldviews are not relevant in the context of this work.

¹² More accurately, Wilber describes mythic worldview as proto-mental and proto-individual. WILBER 2002. p. 97–102.

also points to remnants of the mythic worldview. In this study, we will attempt to describe both of these components in the representation of the Church.

1.2. Appointed Hierarchies

The image of the Church as a representative of God's rule on earth is a fundamental premise from which its various forms of jurisdiction arise: the absolution of sins, the administering of sacraments, teaching, and so forth. This premise is rooted in an understanding of the world as an orderly, hierarchical place, where governance is not seized or usurped but conferred through appointment – granted by a top-down transmission of authority, from those closer to supreme power to those farther away. In this literature, the supreme authority – God – is depicted as a king, a ruler on a throne with unlimited power.¹³ The Heavenly King-God establishes his regency on earth by appointing visible representatives of his rule. The image of Jesus as the Son of God, whose power is equal to that of the Father, is also grounded in this principle. It is through him that God the King establishes the hierarchy of his authority.

The sentence in the Gospel where Jesus calls Peter the rock upon which he will build his community is, within this worldview, interpreted literally as the transfer of divine authority to earth. In this way, through the transfer of power by appointment, the rule of Jesus and God is recognized in Peter. Since the pope is regarded as Peter's heir – based on the hierarchical principle that Peter is considered the first bishop of Rome – it follows that Peter's authority is embodied in the papal office. The same power given to Peter by Jesus is passed down to each Roman pope. The pope is, therefore, seen as "the true successor of Jesus Christ on earth."¹⁴ The pope is transferring authority onto his representatives, "bishops and other rulers of the Holy Mother Church, who doth govern the Christian folk."¹⁵ By the same principle, the authority respected in the pope is also respected in the bishops, as it is ultimately Peter's authority – i.e., that of Jesus. Bishops, in turn, grant authority to priests, through whom the authority of the bishop, the pope, Peter, Jesus, and ultimately God is upheld. In this hierarchical transfer of authority, even the lowest in the sequence, the priests, possess power bestowed by the supreme authority. The result is a hierarchy of delegation, where the supreme authority is reflected in even the most minor trustee.

On the positive side, this represents a step forward from the mythic level of understanding authority as an embodiment of a deity, or from the egoic

¹³ What predominates is the image of God as a judge, rooted in a sociocentric worldview that emphasizes law and responsibility. The image of God as the Father—a good but strict figure to whom obedience is owed—closely aligns with that of God the Ruler. As J. Delumeau demonstrates, this image in European Christian literature gradually evolves into that of a merciful and gentle Father. DELUMEAU 1986. p. 646.

¹⁴ DIVKOVIĆ 2013. p. 409.

¹⁵ DIVKOVIĆ 2013. p. 409.

level, where hierarchy is based on force and the ability to seize power, resulting in systems of dominance.¹⁶ In this new system, officials do not gain power through domination and subjugation but through appointment by a higher authority. This understanding of authority is typical of a socio-centric cultural worldview, where hierarchies are established in such a way that the institution's authority is respected in the individual representative, rather than the individual himself.¹⁷

In evaluating this development, it is important to consider that most Catholic believers for whom this literature was intended adhered to a mythic or early mental worldview. Doctrinal clarity, the hierarchical structure of the Church, well-established rules of belief and behaviour, a transparent system of obligations and rights for believers, along with the portrayal of the Church as a mother and God as a father – all provided a sense of security and protection within a community with visible leadership. Moreover, this hierarchical system serves a clear purpose, one that is fundamental to Tridentine Catholicism: fostering a socio-centric awareness, which includes the ability to curb arbitrariness and egocentrism, and to respect the group's rules.

However, numerous drawbacks of this concept of authority and hierarchy stem from the limitations of the dogmatic worldview, as well as the remnants of the mythic worldview evident in Tridentine Catholicism. A high degree of concretization, or literalism, in the understanding and presentation of the spiritual world is characteristic of the latter. As a result, the analysed texts reveal a dependence on spiritual authority on specific historical orders and institutions. Religious teachings require a material representation – a visible, particular individual who implements them and acts as the “head” of the hierarchy. The issue arises when this notion suggests that, without these representatives, the religious principles themselves would have no effect. A prime example of this can be found in the popular catechism by Friar Tomo Babić from the eighteenth century.

Babić explains that Jesus could not have left authority only to Peter and not to his successors, the bishops, for that would have lost its value upon Peter's death! Indeed, it would have called into question the very purpose of Jesus' coming: in that case, he would have come into the world only for Peter, and “to us others, there would be no profit nor benefit from his coming and suffering.” Furthermore, “after Peter, neither the law nor priestly authority would endure,” and “the Christian folk and the Holy Church would be without leaders, rulers, and chiefs, which can never be.”¹⁸ Simply put, if Jesus had not left the priesthood as ruler, his coming into the world would have been without purpose.

The importance placed on a specific historical representative – namely, the religious community and its structure and hierarchy – in the functioning

¹⁶ BECK–COWAN 1996. p. 216–217, 223–225.

¹⁷ The functioning of many systems rests on this principle (e.g., police or military forces).

¹⁸ BABIĆ 1829. p. 107.

of spiritual principles reveals elements of a mythic worldview. The principle of transferring power through appointment is, in itself, neutral. However, in this context, it is viewed as absolute and unchangeable, rather than consensual and temporary. This rigidity stems from the limitations of the dogmatic worldview, which struggles to separate spiritual realities – considered transhistorical and transmaterial – from their historically and culturally conditioned representatives. As a result, a lower level of reality (a particular community with its specific beliefs, rituals, and institutions) becomes indispensable for the functioning of a higher level (salvation, God's will, and so on).

The consequence of this limitation is that the principle of transferring power through appointment becomes a principle of representing divine power on earth. The hierarchical sequence we outlined (God → Jesus → Peter/pope → bishops → priests) is thus taken – and expressed – quite literally in this literature: respecting the authority of any part of the sequence is equated with respecting God's authority while opposing any of them is seen as opposing God:

"Whoever is obedient to the words of the pope, the words of the bishop, and the words of the least friar who speaks of divine things, is obedient to Jesus Christ. And whoever is truly obedient to Jesus Christ is obedient to Almighty God, who sent Jesus Christ into this world for our salvation and redemption. Likewise, whoever disdains the words of the pope and the pope himself, the words of the bishop and the bishop himself, the words of the least friar and the same friar who speaks of divine things, truly disdains Jesus Christ. And whoever disdains Jesus Christ and His words disdains Almighty God and the words of God, who sent Jesus Christ into this world. Therefore, the words spoken by the pope, the bishops, and other friars are not to be heard as if from the pope, nor as from the bishop, nor as from the friars, but as from the Lord God Almighty."¹⁹

The principle by which the transfer of authority is explained can also be applied to understanding Church teachings, the Church's magisterium, and all the laws and regulations of Church councils and leaders. The teachings and commandments of the Church are the teachings and commandments of God, and therefore: "whoever disdains the Holy Mother Church, the Church servants, and the orders and commandments of the Holy Mother Church, truly disdains Jesus Christ and the orders and commandments of Jesus Christ. And whoever disdains Jesus Christ and His commandments, His holy orders, truly disdains the Lord God and the commandments of God."²⁰ The doctrine

¹⁹ DIVKOVIĆ 2013. p. 410–411. Similar examples can be found in BABIĆ 1829. p. 61–63, 106–108.

²⁰ DIVKOVIĆ 2013. p. 256. No other teachings should be listened to: "That is, we should not listen to nor accept any law, but only the law of Jesus Christ, which is upheld by the Holy Mother Roman Church. As the Holy Mother Roman Church holds and observes it, so too must we observe the law of Jesus Christ if we wish to be saved, for this is the true and righteous path to salvation, and there is no other" – DIVKOVIĆ 2016. p. 623. All the works in this literature emphasize: we must believe what the Church teaches, and the Church teaches what is orthodox, that is, what God wills, and thus what saves the soul (LASTRIĆ 1755. p. 63). The Church has no other source but the revelation

and teachings of the Church are, therefore, equal to God's doctrine and teachings, and to oppose any of its segments means opposing God.

The priest is the representative of Christ on earth, by the authority bestowed upon him, and such a literal comprehension leads to extremes in the glorification of the priesthood, which abounds in this literature. Priests are described as "holy, chosen and consecrated by God"; they are the firstborn sons of God, "whose fatherhood is the heavenly kingdom by reason of their firstborn status."²¹ Priests take the place of Jesus because "after Jesus' ascension, Almighty God placed them in His stead, that they may hold His place and represent Him on earth."²² Priests are also judges with the authority of Jesus, as well as mediators: "Priests are placed as intermediaries between God and the Christian people, and every priest may say: 'I have stood between, between God and between you.'"²³ Moreover, if priests hold authority so close to that of God, it follows that they are "the gods of this world" or "the gods of the earth."²⁴

The second important aspect of the Church's representation in this literature is closely tied to the first: the Church is portrayed as a community of true believers. Due to the limitations of this worldview, truth is considered the exclusive property of one religious community – in this case, the Catholic Church. The maxim *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the Church) is present throughout this literature and leads to several consequences. First, the teachings of the Church, along with its rituals, indulgences, sacraments, and so forth, are seen as prerequisites for salvation. Second, this belief system implies that members of other religious communities – essentially all non-Catholics – are outside God's mercy and without the possibility of salvation.²⁵ This literature contains numerous examples of these convictions.

Despite its limitations, the positive aspects of a *confessio*-centric identity should not be overlooked: it represents progress compared to the notion of group affiliation based on consanguinity. Belonging is now founded on shared beliefs – essentially, a communion at the mental level – which allows for the inclusion of a broader group of members, beyond just blood relatives.

2. Church Authority in Original Literature

The second part of this work focuses on the question of how this concept of Church authority aligns with the specific traits of early modern Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism, which could not be organized as a state-

of God, which the apostles received from the Son, who is true God, and the Church proclaims His teaching to the faithful (LASTRIĆ 1766b. p. 72). Faith, therefore, is the assent to all that the Church proclaims, as it has been revealed to her by God.

²¹ ANČIĆ 1681. p. 17, 56.

²² MARGITIĆ 2015. p. 453.

²³ MARGITIĆ 2015. p. 454.

²⁴ LASTRIĆ 1766a. p. 347; ANČIĆ 1681. p. 57, 60; ANČIĆ 1678. p. 129; MARGITIĆ 2015. p. 454.

²⁵ This belief is a hallmark of all religions in the stages defined by a dogmatic cultural worldview.

supported confession. Consequently, historiography describes it as non-established Catholicism.²⁶ The structure of Catholic religious institutions during the Ottoman period remained largely pre-Tridentine. Due to the legal restraints imposed by the Ottoman state, the establishment of a regular Church hierarchy was not possible. Since the thirteenth century, the Bosnian bishop resided outside Bosnia, in Đakovo, and during Ottoman rule, his visits were fraught with difficulties. As a result, he did not play a significant role in the lives of Bosnian Catholics.

During Ottoman rule, the only Church institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena. Its priests served Catholic parishes alongside a smaller number of secular Glagolitic priests. The Franciscan monasteries functioned not only as centres of religious life but also as political hubs: the guardians of the three monasteries acted as representatives of Bosnian Catholics before Ottoman authorities.²⁷ Additionally, the Franciscans were involved in economic affairs, medicine, and cultural activities. Beyond printing religious and didactic literature and poetry, they were also engaged in historiography and linguistics.²⁸

In these circumstances, the activities of the Franciscan Province were governed by a series of privileges – exemptions from both Franciscan and general Church legislation in matters of pastoral care, property, finances, and other areas.²⁹ In 1735, the institution of the Apostolic Vicariate was established under the direct authority of the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, with the vicar apostolic elected from the ranks of the Franciscan clergy. However, even this hierarchical structure became a source of conflict between certain vicars and the Franciscan Province, revealing a clash of differing concepts of Church authority.

Given that the specific traits of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism were also reflected in the functioning of Church hierarchy and authority, it is reasonable to ask whether the representation of the Church, as described in the previous part of this work, is merely a result of the compilation of official Church literature. The popular notion of Bosnian Franciscanism, largely shaped by Franciscan historiography, presents a positive view of this non-establishment as a less elitist variant of Catholicism. Since this paper is focused exclusively on concepts of authority found in written culture, this part of the research will examine the notion of Church authority in the original texts of Bosnian Franciscans from this period. The primary objective is to determine whether it differs from the concept found in compiled literature.

However, it is important to revisit the latter. Although this literature is the product of translation and compilation, it does not result from a passive

²⁶ The most comprehensive research on this phenomenon is found in the work of Bosnian-Herzegovinian historiographer Srećko M. Džaja.

²⁷ DŽAJA 1971. p. 103–233; DŽAJA 1999. p. 150–225.

²⁸ See: PRANJKOVIĆ 2008. p. 10–15.

²⁹ DŽAJA 1971. p. 118–123; DŽAJA 1999. p. 190–203.

transfer of texts. The authors of these Franciscan books function as editors, selecting and combining sources, as well as determining how they will be translated and reworked.³⁰ Moreover, the importance of a particular topic can be gauged by the attention it receives: the authority and power of the Church are given significant focus in this literature. The style of writing and the author's approach to the subject are also crucial; this topic is consistently presented with a strict, and often emotional, legislative tone. Additionally, there is a frequent use of narrative exempla that reinforce the authority of the Church, its rituals, symbols, saints, officials, and sacraments.

However, this question is best explored through texts that are not primarily compilations but are authored works in the modern sense of the word. These include the chronicles of three Bosnian Franciscan monasteries from the eighteenth century³¹, as well as Filip Lastrić's historiographical work *Epitome vetustatum Bosnensis provinciae* (1765). These works represent the most valuable contributions to Franciscan culture, not only from a historiographical perspective but also a literary one.³² Our focus is on how Church authority is represented in these texts and whether it differs from the concept described in the first part of this paper.

2.1 The Understanding of Personal and Collective Identity

We begin with understanding identity: personal and collective identity, as presented in these texts, is primarily defined through belonging to the Catholic Church (and the Franciscan Province, its representative in Ottoman Bosnia). The concept of belonging to a community of true believers is consistent with that found in the translated literature: salvation is not possible outside the Church, and it is attained only through its sacraments, officials, and authority. The attitude toward other religious communities remains rooted in the maxim *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* – salvation cannot be achieved under any other religious law. A different stance cannot be expected, as the notion of religious equality would require a shift to a rational cultural worldview, which transcends the limitations discussed in the earlier part of this study.

Nevertheless, while this teaching is addressed at a general level in the compiled literature, the Franciscan chronicles focus on the specific relationships between the three religious communities in Ottoman Bosnia – Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic.³³ They reflect the confessional differences

³⁰ An analysis of how Matija Divković translates the texts of the German Dominican Johannes Herolt reveals that Divković deliberately exercises freedom in expanding, condensing, and adapting the texts to suit his audience. PETROVIĆ 1982. p. 175–206.

³¹ These include the chronicles of Nikola Lašvanin, Bono Benić, and Marijan Bogdanović, from the monasteries in Fojnica, Kraljeva Sutjeska, and Kreševo, respectively – the three remaining monasteries in Ottoman Bosnia during the eighteenth century.

³² The literary value of these chronicles is the central focus of the book *Pripovijedanje povijesti / Narrating the History*. BELJAN 2011.

³³ This problem is addressed in the work of BARIŠIĆ 2021. p. 61–84.

that shaped all aspects of everyday life. However, it is notable that the chroniclers primarily concentrate on – and criticize – manifestations of the egoic worldview, rather than the dogmatic one. Their main concerns are violence, tyranny, corruption, disregard for the law, and the exploitation of institutions for private gain. The eighteenth century in Ottoman Bosnia was marked by institutional decay, widespread corruption among state officials, and increasing independence of the Bosnian nobility and janissary officials from central authority.³⁴

At the same time, the relationship between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was characterized by a deepening divide. The Ottoman administration played a significant role in fostering this divide, as it encouraged jurisdictional conflicts over believers to extort large sums of money from the parties involved.³⁵

However, it cannot be said that the Franciscan writers clearly distinguish between confessional affiliation and the decadence of the political and social system.³⁶ Many examples in these works interpret the repressive acts of authorities and individuals, as well as those by Orthodox clergy, as expressions of “hatred toward the faith”.³⁷ At the same time, within this framework, they demonstrate a nuanced portrayal of individuals, assessing both their positive and negative traits – such as greed, cruelty, and negligence, as well as skill in governance, integrity, and devotion to the monasteries.

2.2 Authority, Hierarchy, and Adaptation

We now move from understanding identity to how the Church’s authority is presented in these works. The fundamental principles are no different in this literature than in the translated texts. The power to mediate between God and people, to grant absolution, and to administer the sacraments, based on the principle of authority transferred through appointment and the representation of Christ on earth, remains unquestioned. While class-related notions of the Church are not absent from this literature, we do not find the detailed class distinctions seen in Western sources – primarily because, at the time these texts were written, there was virtually no Catholic middle class in

³⁴ When writing about the clashes between Bosnian Muslims and the central Ottoman authorities, personified by the Bosnian Vizier, the Franciscan chroniclers do not identify with the former. Although they were burdened by the financial demands of the state apparatus, their greater concern was the increasing tyranny and violence from local magnates and military officers. As a result, they welcomed any actions by the Bosnian Viziers aimed at “calming down” (mostly through force) the Bosnian local rulers, particularly those that restricted their power and reinforced central authority. See: BENIĆ 2003. p. 168–169, 173, 176, 187, 226, 271–272.

³⁵ The chronicles describe these situations, with some providing very detailed accounts: BENIĆ 2003. p. 207–217; LASTRIĆ 2003. p. 145–147; LAŠVANIN 2003. p. 275–279.

³⁶ See: BARIŠIĆ 2021. p. 69.

³⁷ LASTRIĆ 2003. p. 147.

Ottoman Bosnia.³⁸ Nevertheless, a clear distinction is made between the authority of the clergy and the laity.

At the doctrinal level, there is no significant difference in the understanding of Church authority in the authored texts from this period. However, they emphasize a different *implementation* of Church authority, tailored to the specific context. These differences arise solely from the needs of the situation and are, therefore, circumstantial rather than doctrinal. All of the aforementioned historiographical works describe the unique challenges and demands faced by the Catholic Church in Bosnia. The authors' descriptions are often marked by an emotional tone, aimed at conveying to the Church – particularly the Propaganda and the leadership of the Franciscan Order – the limitations they face, where fulfilling Church requests is often impossible. These accounts also include a typical topos of this literature: the portrayal of the Franciscan friar as the guardian of the Catholic faith in Ottoman territory, enduring suffering for that cause.

A specific situation requires a tailored structure for the institution: there is an effort to demonstrate the unsustainability of a regular Church hierarchy and the conventional structure of Church institutions in this context. As a result, these works document instances where the arrival of Church officials from abroad (such as Bosnian bishops or provincial visitors) provoked reactions from Ottoman authorities, endangering lives and monastery assets.³⁹ Moreover, since the unique status of the Province is essential for its functioning and is secured by Church privileges, these authors meticulously transcribed and preserved key documents (decrees, licenses, letters), constantly emphasizing the importance of legal exemptions.

A specific situation also requires adjustments to the hierarchy: while fundamental Church hierarchical principles are generally respected, adaptations are necessary. Since the establishment of the Apostolic Vicariate, the vicar apostolic has held the authority of a bishop, which was important for the Catholic Reformation's goal of strengthening the role of the bishop.⁴⁰ In practice, there was a custom where the vicar apostolic closely collaborated with the leadership of the province in decision-making, following the traditional model involving senior and meritorious friars. This arrangement worked well when the vicar apostolic and the province were aligned in their views. However, when the role of vicar was assigned to someone less inclined toward this model, conflicts would arise.⁴¹ In the explanations for such

³⁸ Historiography identifies the disappearance of the Catholic middle class following the catastrophe that struck Bosnian Catholics after the Great Turkish War as a critical factor in shaping the profile of Church culture. In the seventeenth century, it was the middle class that provided the largest number of Franciscan priests and supported cultural initiatives such as the printing of books. DŽAJA 1971, p. 63; DŽAJA 1999, p. 170–171.

³⁹ LAŠVANIN 2003, p. 253–258, 287–288; LASTRIĆ 2003, p. 142–145; BENIĆ 2003, p. 143–144; BOGDANOVIĆ 2003, p. 103–106.

⁴⁰ Cf. DELUMEAU 1993, p. 74.

⁴¹ The first major conflict – between Franciscan clergy and Apostolic Vicar Grgo Ilijić, which occurred at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century – was explored by

disagreements found in this literature, the principle of Church authority vested in the vicar apostolic is not disputed. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the circumstances: the arguments focus on the unsustainability of certain changes and the risks linked with specific actions taken by the apostolic vicars. Notably, the Ottoman authorities did not recognize the institution of the vicar; rather, it was the monasteries that represented the Catholic community before them.

In all the analysed texts, this topic is accompanied by emotionally charged statements from Bosnian Franciscans regarding the lack of understanding from the Church leadership, particularly the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the Order's leadership, and even fellow friars from neighbouring provinces, about the severity and challenges of their situation.⁴² In the passages addressing the difficulties with the Propaganda⁴³ it becomes clear that the expectations for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian priesthood to meet the high demands of the Tridentine Reform were evident. However, these demands were often not in alignment with the specific circumstances, where adjustments were necessary.⁴⁴

However, it should be noted that the reform demands of the Church are central to the activities of the Franciscan clergy and the leadership of the province. The printing of religious literature, which is the focus of this study, is a direct result of these efforts. The province worked to address issues related to the education of candidates for the Order, including sending them to study abroad. They also made significant efforts in parish work, ensuring that parish priests fulfilled their obligations to reside in parishes, preach, administer the sacraments, teach catechism, and be available to parishioners. Additionally, efforts were made to establish parish administration, including keeping register books (for baptisms, marriages, and deaths) and proper storage of files. The ideal image of a priest promoted in this literature reflects the Tridentine ideal: an educated, dignified, and moral shepherd who preaches and teaches.⁴⁵

2.3 Exterior and Interior Particularities?

It is necessary to ask another question: are the described particularities present only in the external domain of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism, at the level of institutions and their structures? As previously mentioned, there is no significant difference between the original and translated

DŽAJA 1971. p. 189–223. The most famous of these disputes, known in historiography as "The Barišić Affair," had significant international political implications at the time.

⁴² LASTRIĆ 2003. p. 77–84; BENIĆ 2003. p. 63–66, 192–198.

⁴³ See, for example, BENIĆ 2003. p. 192–198.

⁴⁴ This issue is an important topic in Antal Molnár's study *Bosnian Franciscans between Roman Centralisation and Balkan Confessionalisation*. MOLNÁR 2013. p. 220–229.

⁴⁵ A clear understanding of the specific aspirations surrounding the formation of this type of priesthood can be found in *Naredbe i uprave (Orders and Directions, 1828)* by Vicar Apostolic Augustin Miletić.

literature in the understanding of clerical and Church authority. In principle, even the concept of hierarchy remains the same, although it is explained why regular hierarchy cannot be applied in specific circumstances. Are these differences limited to the external level, or do they also exist on the internal level, within the domain of culture, language, and the value system?

Let us return to the principle of the transfer of authority by appointment. On a doctrinal level, this principle is fully upheld in Franciscan written culture. However, there is a shift in the traditional authority sequence "God → Christ → Peter/pope → bishops → clergy." The shift occurs in the final segment, where the priest is identified specifically as a Franciscan friar. Additionally, the Church is represented by the Franciscan Province in a given time and place. Thus, the friar becomes the central figure in the topos of the guardian of the faith.⁴⁶

This topos, however, is not only present in original texts such as chronicles, documents, and letters but also in translated religious literature, as observed on several levels. Scientific literature notes that Matija Divković frequently translates the word "priest" (especially in narrative texts) as "friar." He often simplifies expressions for various roles within the Church hierarchy, using the term "friar" instead of a broader range of titles.⁴⁷ In the exempla found in the works of Bosnian Franciscans, friars are most often depicted as the representatives of the Church. Thus, in this literature, the Franciscan friar becomes the central figure representing both the clergy and the Church. This linguistic shift and the corresponding literary imagery indicate that we can speak of particularities in this form of Catholicism within the interior domain as well.

In conclusion, over nearly three centuries in Ottoman Bosnia, the Franciscan clergy played an active role in the Catholic Reform Movement. Their efforts in educating the clergy, serving in parishes, preaching, and teaching catechism also led to the production of religious literature compiled from Western sources. One of the central themes in these works is the issue of Church authority and power, which is addressed in accordance with official Church teachings. While the particularities of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholicism during the early modern era are evident in the practical functioning of Church hierarchy and authority, an analysis of original Franciscan records from this period reveals that, in terms of the understanding and representation of Church authority, they align with the

⁴⁶ The friar is presented as discreet, arriving quietly in civilian clothes, adapting to the circumstances in which he works. Interestingly, this literature also presents a contrasting image of a secular priest who visits parishes in a more ostentatious manner. Lastrić recounts an episode in which Ottoman authorities punished friars because Vicar Apostolic Marijan Bogdanović had appointed several secular priests to administer the sacrament of penance before his canonical visitation. These priests visited the parishes with entourages, pomp, and prominence, which aroused the suspicions of the local Muslim population. LASTRIĆ 2003. p. 144–145.

⁴⁷ PETROVIĆ 1982. p. 175–206.

translated literature. The differences arise primarily from the unique socio-political context, which necessitated certain adjustments.

The harsh reality of Ottoman Bosnia, which necessitated the adaptation of Catholic institutions and their specific organization, gave rise to certain particularities in the early modern Bosnian-Herzegovinian Catholic mentality. However, these particularities did not extend to a fundamentally different understanding of Church authority or its hierarchy. Despite the popular image of the Franciscans' closeness to the people, there was no shift toward a more horizontal concept of the Church. At its core, the understanding of the nature, scope, importance, and power of Church authority remained unchanged.

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