Emese Muntán*

Uneasy Agents of Tridentine Reforms: Catholic Missionaries in Southern Ottoman Hungary and Their Local Competitors in the Early Seventeenth Century

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jemc-2020-2020>

Abstract: From the 1570s onwards, the territories of southern Ottoman Hungary with their amalgam of Orthodox, Catholics, Reformed, Antitrinitarians, and Muslims of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, were the focus of Rome-directed Catholic missionary and pastoral endeavors. Prior to the establishment of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide in 1622, several Jesuits had already been active in the region and sought to implement Tridentine reforms in this religiously, linguistically, and legally-diverse setting. The activity of the Jesuits, however, was complicated by the presence of the Bosnian Franciscans, who were legally Ottoman subjects, and with whom the Jesuits were in a permanent competition over the jurisdiction of certain missionary territories. Furthermore, the Jesuits also had to contend with the local authority and influence of Orthodox priests and Ottoman judges (*kadis*), who, in several instances, proved to be more attractive “alternatives” to many Catholics than the Catholic authorities themselves. Drawing primarily on Jesuit and Franciscan missionary reports, this article examines how this peculiar constellation of local power relations, and the ensuing conflicts among missionaries, Orthodox clergymen, and Ottoman judges, influenced the way(s) in which Tridentine reforms were implemented in the area. In particular, this study addresses those cases where various jurisdictional disputes between Jesuits and Bosnian Franciscans on the one hand, and Jesuits and Orthodox priests on the other, resulted in contestations about the administration and validity of the sacraments and certain rituals, and led Jesuits, Franciscans, and even Roman authorities to “deviate” from the Tridentine norm.

Keywords: Catholic missionaries, Tridentine reforms, Orthodox priests, southern Ottoman Hungary

*Corresponding author: Emese Muntán, Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, E-mail: muntan_emese@phd.ceu.edu

Open Access. © 2020 Muntán, published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Public License.

1 Introduction

In the last couple of decades the role of Catholic missionaries in furthering the tenets of post-Tridentine Catholicism has been subjected to extensive scholarly scrutiny, with a predominant focus on the activity of the Jesuits and the Franciscans.¹ Several scholars challenged previous assumptions about the homogeneity of the category of “Catholic missionary” itself and strived to see behind the “glass of order-centrism”.² This ongoing research has highlighted the heterogenous nature of various groups of missionaries, and accordingly demonstrated that these agents cannot be simply described as “harbingers” of a renewed Catholic religiosity; instead, their missionary endeavors should be approached as products of the multilayered social, political, economic, and legal frameworks they were part of.

The religious and cultural life of early modern tripartite Hungary has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in the past two decades.³ These studies, however, have predominantly focused on the territories of Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania; consequently, the study of Catholic missionary activities has been limited to these areas.⁴ The interest in

1 The literature in question is immense. Major contributions from the last decade include, but are not limited to: Leonardo Cohen, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia* (1555–1632) (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2009); Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, *Jesuits at the Margins. Missions and Missionaries in the Marianas (1668–1769)* (London – New York: Routledge, 2015); Bert Roest, *Franciscan Learning, Preaching, and Mission c. 1220–1650* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015); Alison Forrestal and Seán Alexander Smith, eds., *The Frontiers of Mission. Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016); Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, ed., *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Nadine Amsler, Andrea Badea, Christian Windler, and Bernard Heyberger, eds., *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization* (London: Routledge, 2019); and Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford: OUP, 2019).

2 Most recently, see, for instance the articles in Hsia, ed., *Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*; and Amsler, Badea, Windler, and Heyberger, eds., *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia*.

3 Studies from recent decades with an international outreach include, but are not limited to Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier, 1600–1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Márta Fata, *Ungarn, das Reich der Stephanskronen, im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Multiethnizität, Land und Konfession, 1500 bis 1700* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000); and István Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East-Central Europe. Ethic Diversity, Denominational Plurality, and Corporative Politics in the Principality of Transylvania (1526–1691)* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009).

4 See, for instance: Christine Peters, “Jesuits, Confessional Identities and Landlordship in God’s Transylvanian Vineyard, 1580–1588,” in *Communities of Devotion. Religious Orders and Society*

the cultural and religious history of early modern Ottoman Hungary has been mainly reserved to regional scholars, and even though the resulting research is rich and informative, it is equally fragmented.⁵

In a similar vein, the history of Catholic missions in Ottoman Hungary has prominently featured on the agenda of regional historians.⁶ Despite the great

in *East Central Europe, 1450–1800* (Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 197–226; Maria Crăciun, “Traditional Practices: Catholic Missionaries and Protestant Religious Practice in Transylvania,” in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (Manchester – New York, 2002); idem, “Implementing Catholic Reform: The Jesuits and Traditional Religion in Early Modern Transylvania,” in *Jesuitische Frömmigkeitskulturen: Konfessionelle Interaktion in Ostmitteleuropa 1570–1700*, ed. Anna Ohlidal and Stefan Samerski (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 37–61; Paul Shore, *Jesuits and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania. Culture, Politics and Religion, 1693–1773* (Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, 2007); and idem, *Narratives of Adversity: Jesuits in the Eastern Peripheries of the Habsburg Realms (1640–1773)* (Budapest – New York: CEU Press, 2012).

5 For an overview of the achievements and limits of Hungarian historiography concerning the study of Ottoman Hungary, see Markus Koller, *Eine Gesellschaft im Wandel: die osmanische Herrschaft in Ungarn im 17. Jahrhundert (1606–1683)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010). It is beyond the scope of this paper to list even the most important studies on Ottoman Hungary. For a more recent edited volume with an international outreach, see Pál Fodor and Pál Ács, eds., *Identity and Culture in Ottoman Hungary* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2017).

6 Filling a major niche in the field, the Hungarian historian Antal Molnár examined the institutional side of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Catholic missionary activities in the Balkan peninsula and Hungary, with a special emphasis on the peculiar dynamics that had existed among and within the different religious orders, and between the particular orders and the Roman Curia: Antal Molnár, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie Ottomane, 1572–1647* (Rome – Budapest: Biblioteca Academiae Hungariae, 2007); idem, *Confessionalization on the Frontier. The Balkan Catholics between Roman Reform and Ottoman Reality* (Rome: Viella, 2019). Besides Molnár, the late István György Tóth assumed the task of exposing the primary source material of the rich Roman archives, whilst presenting the cultural history of Catholic missionary activities in early modern tripartite Hungary. His most important works for an international audience are: “The Missionary and the Devil: Ways of Conversion in Catholic Missions in Hungary,” in *Frontiers of Faith. Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750*, ed. Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (Budapest: CEU–ESF, 2001), 79–89; “Between Islam and Catholicism: Bosnian Franciscan Missionaries in Turkish Hungary, 1584–1716,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003): 409–433; and “Between Islam and Orthodoxy: Protestants and Catholics in South–Eastern Europe,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 6, *Reform and Expansion 1550–1660*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 536–557. Concerning international scholarship, more recently the Irish historian Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin has devoted a chapter to discussing Catholic missionary activity in the northern Balkans, using missionary sources. See, his, *Catholic Europe, 1592–1648: Centre and Peripheries* (Oxford: OUP, 2015); and “Catholic Missionary Activity in the Northern Balkans in the Seventeenth Century,” in *The Frontiers of Mission*, ed. Forrestal and Smith, 136–159. This is far from being an extensive list of the existing literature on the topic, but several of these works

achievements of this scholarship, due to the Rome – and order–centric approach that has mainly dominated this research, it is still not sufficiently clear how and to what extent the Ottoman imperial and provincial framework determined the nature of missionary endeavors on the ground. Thus, this study is a step to build on and complement the results of both regional and international scholarship, and scrutinize what it meant to be a Catholic missionary in southern Ottoman Hungary at the beginning of the seventeenth century; as well as to introduce other, rather “unexpected” actors who also shaped the impact of Tridentine reforms in these territories (such as, the Serbian Orthodox clergy or local Ottoman judges).

From the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, the territories of southern Ottoman Hungary⁷ with their amalgam of Orthodox, Catholics, Reformed, Antitrinitarians, and Muslims of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, were the focus of Rome–directed Catholic missionary and pastoral endeavors. The papacy’s interest in these territories increased even more after the foundation of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (hereafter, Propaganda Fide) by Pope Gregory XV in 1622.⁸ Prior to the establishment of the dicastery, several Jesuits had already been active in the area in order to implement Tridentine reforms in this religiously, linguistically, and legally diverse region under Ottoman rule. The activity of the Jesuits was, however, complicated by the presence of the Bosnian Franciscans who were legally Ottoman subjects, and with whom the Jesuits were in a permanent competition over the jurisdiction of certain missionary territories. Furthermore, the Jesuits had to contend with the local authority and influence of Orthodox priests and Ottoman judges, who, in several instances, proved to be more attractive “alternatives” to many Catholics than Catholic authorities themselves. Drawing

are written in the local languages (i. e. Hungarian, Serbian, Croatian, and Romanian) and are often characterized by a narrow regional focus, nation(al)ist biases, and confessional allegiances of the scholars themselves.

⁷ I use the geographical term “southern Ottoman Hungary”, which is a rough translation of the term often employed in Hungarian scholarship, i. e. “Dél-Hódoltság” (~ the southern territories of Hungary under Ottoman rule). In the period between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries, this area approximately encompassed the historical regions of Slavonia, Srem, Bačka, and the Banat. Rome–directed Catholic missions were practically confined to these areas of Ottoman Hungary.

⁸ The founding of Propaganda Fide, by Gregory XV on January 6, 1622, represented one of the most significant events of the second phase of Catholic revival, and a crucial turning point in the development of missionary propaganda in the Ottoman Empire. For an overall framework of the activity of the Propaganda, see Josef Metzler, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum (350 anni a servizio delle missioni 1622–1972)*, 3 vols. (Rome – Freiburg – Vienna, 1971).

primarily on Jesuit and Franciscan missionary reports⁹, this article will examine how this peculiar constellation of local power relations and the ensuing conflicts among missionaries, Orthodox clergymen, and Ottoman judges¹⁰ influenced the way(s) in which Tridentine reforms were implemented in the area. It will do so by focusing on several cases where various jurisdictional disputes between Jesuits and Bosnian Franciscans, on the one hand, and Jesuits and Orthodox priests on the other, resulted in contestations about the administration and validity of the sacraments and certain rituals, and led Jesuits, Franciscans, and even Roman authorities to “deviate” from the “Tridentine norm”. In this way, the article will also shed light on heretofore lesser explored interactions between Catholic missionaries and other local non-Catholic communal representatives who were part of the complex religious and legal economy of the Ottoman Empire.

2 The dynamics of Catholic missions in the Ottoman Empire and Southern Ottoman Hungary

In order to strengthen their position within the European diplomatic sphere, Ottoman sultans accorded various *ahdnames* (capitulations) to countries such as England, France, Venice or the Dutch Republic, which did not only facilitate the development of trade, but was also conducive to the onset of Catholic and later

⁹ In this article, I use both published and unpublished missionary source material. When a source is published, I reference the publication, and in the case of unpublished sources, I provide the archival reference. I have separately indicated when an unpublished document was consulted, but there also exists a published version. Missionary reports were commissioned by the bodies of the Holy See that were responsible for the organization of the missions (primarily, the Holy Office and Propaganda Fide) and by the Jesuit order. Concerning Jesuit reports, the addressee was in most cases the provincial general (and later, also the Propaganda). Franciscan reports and other visitation reports by missionary bishops mostly addressed the cardinals of the Propaganda. Due to the fact that for seventeenth-century southern Ottoman Hungary there is a scarcity of Ottoman source material, and an even greater shortage of Orthodox sources, these missionary sources provide the most consistent data about local intercommunal relations. Nevertheless, since this material represents the “Catholic side” of the story, the information it provides should be treated carefully and analyzed within the larger imperial context.

¹⁰ In the present study I do not discuss in detail the relationship of the missionaries with the local Ottoman judges (*kadis*); I will deal with this topic more extensively in a forthcoming article.

(from the eighteenth century onwards) Protestant missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ These capitulations enabled the Catholic Church to send missionaries to the Ottoman lands, leading to a direct exposure of ethnically diverse Christian (Slavic-, Greek-, Armenian-, Arab-speaking, etc.) and also Muslim communities to the missionary propaganda of Rome. As far as those Catholics who were not Ottoman subjects were concerned, especially traders, pilgrims, and missionaries, their presence and activities in the Ottoman Empire were championed primarily by the Venetians in the sixteenth century, and then by the French, starting in the early seventeenth century. These two polities, especially the latter, were also key political agents of Catholic reform initiatives in the Ottoman diplomatic sphere, and protectors of the missionary orders, including the Jesuits.

From the foundation of the Jesuit order¹² onwards, the fathers showed a continuous interest in the status of Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire. This new awareness about the existence and condition of the Christian population of the empire in general, and the Balkan peninsula and Hungary in particular, also characterized the reform program of the post-Tridentine papacy, in which Jesuit “informants” occupied a crucial place. In 1580, Pope Gregory XIII dispatched two apostolic visitors to Ottoman Europe: the visitation of the southern parts of the Balkan peninsula and Constantinople were assigned to Pietro Cedula, Bishop of Nona; the northern parts, comprising Dalmatia, Slavonia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Hungary, were delegated to Bonifacije Drakolica, Bishop of Stagno, and his two companions, Antun Matković, Bishop of Bosnia

11 The Catholic missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire, especially targeting Arabic-, Syriac-, and to a lesser extent Coptic-speaking Christians in the Levant, have received considerable attention in recent decades. Some major contributions include: Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique: Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994); Elisabetta Borromeo, “Le clergé catholique face au pouvoir ottoman Les brevets de nomination (berâi) des évêques et des archevêques (XVIIe siècle),” in *Contacts and Controversies between Muslims, Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Pre-Modern Iran*, ed. Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2009); and John Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602–1747)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

12 It would be impossible to list here all the excellent works that have been written about the Jesuits and their role in spreading and fostering Catholicism around the world. From this great bulk, I would like to single out only a few: Adriano Prosperi, ““Otras Indias”, missionari della Controriforma tra contadini e selvaggi,” in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura* (Olschki: Florence, 1982), 205–234; Luce Giard and Louis de Vaucelles, eds., *Les Jésuites à l’âge baroque: 1540–1640* (Jérôme Millon: Grenoble, 1996); Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008); and Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford: OUP, 2019).

and the Jesuit Bartolomeo Sfondrati.¹³ It was also during this time that the ambitious Jesuit, Antonio Possevino, formulated his grandiose plan for the evangelization of the world, including the Christian communities under Ottoman rule.¹⁴ Following the request of the Catholic community of Galata (descendants of the Genoese colony and later joined by the merchants from Venice and other Italian city-states)¹⁵ to send educators to Istanbul, in 1583 Pope Gregory XIII and the Jesuit general, Claudio Aquaviva, sent five Jesuit missionaries to the Ottoman capital. With the assistance of both the French and Venetian ambassadors, the fathers could start their teaching and pastoral activity in the city.¹⁶ Thus, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards there were various Jesuits active in different parts of the Empire, including southern Ottoman Hungary, but without yet having established a permanent mission there. In 1612, during the pontificate of Paul V, two separate Jesuit missions were launched in southern Ottoman Hungary, one in Pécs (today's Hungary) and one in Belgrade (today's Serbia); and later, in 1613, the fathers also settled in Timișoara (Temeșvar, today's Romania).¹⁷ Since its very foundation, the Jesuit mission of Pécs (later supplemented with the missionary stations of Kecskemét, Gyöngyös, and Andocs) was under the jurisdiction of the Austrian province of the order and consequently, was more connected to Royal Hungary than to Rome. The territory of Pécs and its surroundings will be therefore only partially referred to in this essay.¹⁸ The Jesuits remained active in the aforementioned regions, albeit with small interruptions, up until the middle of the seventeenth century.

13 Antal Molnár, *Katolikus missziók a hódolt Magyarországon I. (1572–1647)* [Catholic Missions in Ottoman Hungary I. (1572–1647)] (Budapest: Balassi kiadó, 2002), 124. On Cedulini's mission, see A. Gottlob, "Die lateinischen Kirchengemeinden in der Türkei und ihre Visitation durch Petrus Cedulini, Bischof von Nona (1580–1581)," *Historisches Jahrbuch* VI (1885): 42–72; on Drakolica's visitation, see István György Tóth, "Raguzai Bonifác, a hódoltság első pápai vizitátora (1581–1582)," [Bonifacio di Ragusa, the first papal visitor of Ottoman Hungary] *Történelmi Szemle* 3–4 (1997): 447–443.

14 John Patrick Connelly, "Antonio Possevino's Plan for World Evangelization," *The Catholic Historical Review* 74 (1988): 179–198.

15 After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the rights of the Galatans were guaranteed by an imperial *ferman* that assured them the privilege to trade within the Empire, it provided security for their lives and property, and it assured freedom to practice the Catholic faith. See, Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923* (London – New York: CUP, 1983), 5–6.

16 Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, 73.

17 Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 152–186.

18 For more detail on this missionary station, see Antal Molnár, "Jezsuiták a hódolt Pécsen (1612–1686)," [Jesuits in Ottoman Pécs (1612–1686)] in *Pécs a törökkorban* [Pécs in Ottoman times], ed. Ferenc Szakály (Pécs: Pécs Története Alapítvány, 1999), 171–264.

Unlike in the case of the Jesuit missions to the Levant, the fathers dispatched to these parts of the Empire were not subjects of the French Crown. Most of them were locally-born, of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, who either returned to their homeland (or to a territory close to it) after years of study and service in Rome or Padua, or they had been active in the neighboring territories of the Empire, such as Royal Hungary or the Principality of Transylvania.¹⁹ These Jesuit missions to southern Ottoman Hungary commenced under the protection and patronage of the merchants of the Republic of Ragusa (today Dubrovnik, Croatia). The Republic of Ragusa, itself a tribute-paying polity of the Ottoman Empire, assumed a crucial role in the organization of the missions in Southeast Europe. Collaboration with its merchants was critical for the successful realization of the missionary project. Since the subjects of the republic enjoyed various privileges within the empire, including the right to move freely within the realm, missionaries frequently travelled with Ragusan caravans, often dressed as merchants themselves, while merchants also played an essential role in the postal service between Rome and various missionaries.²⁰

The first Jesuit missionaries to southern Ottoman Hungary received detailed instructions²¹ from their Roman superior general, Claudio Aquaviva, one of the most ardent promoters of the global Jesuit missionary enterprise,²² where he outlined the primary agenda of the mission and the fathers' main tasks. The main objective of the mission was to assess and make contact with the Catholic communities in the region and provide them spiritual support. In accordance with the cautious nature of Jesuit missionary instructions,²³ this particular document also specified that the missionaries should not enter into religious polemics with Muslims, nor try to proselytize among them;²⁴ likewise, they should also not get too intimate with Muslims or visit their houses, nor should

¹⁹ Just to mention a few examples: the Jesuits Gergely Vásárhelyi, István Szini, and Zakariás Jékel were Transylvanian-born, Bartol Kašić SJ was born on the island of Pag, in Dalmatia, and George Buitul SJ was born in Caransebeș (Karánsebes, part of the Banate of Lugos and Karánsebes, today's Romania).

²⁰ See, Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 47–74.

²¹ Mihály Balázs, Ádám Fricssy, László Lukács, and István Monok, eds., *Erdélyi és hódoltsági jezsuita missziók 1/1–2 (1609–1625) = EHJM [Jesuit missions in Transylvania and Ottoman Hungary 1/1–2 (1609–1625)]*, vol. 1/1 (Szeged, 1990), 55–57.

²² For some of Aquaviva's letters encouraging Jesuit missionary activity, see the documents in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (= ARSI), Fondo Gesuitico, vol. 703/2a.

²³ See, for instance, the detailed instructions the Jesuits were given, especially concerning the way they should proceed in public disputations with heretics, ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, vol. 720/1.

²⁴ The Jesuits in the Republic of Ragusa (today's Dubrovnik, Croatia) were similarly instructed and were warned under no circumstances should they deal with the conversion of the "Turks" (i. e. Muslims), ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, vol. 720/A, fol. 105 r/v.

they inquire about the business of the “Turks” (i. e. Muslims) or the law of Mohammed; they should not enter mosques and avoid moving around fortifications, so as not to make the “Turks” (i. e. Muslims) suspicious; they should be careful with heretics (i. e. Protestants) and avoid any unnecessary quarrels with them and the Franciscans; they should live in poverty and should visit women only in the presence of witnesses.²⁵ The instruction did not deal separately with the Orthodox (or in contemporary parlance, the “schismatics”), which at first sight might seem unusual, especially considering the active role the fathers assumed in the Greek Islands and the Levant in preparing, and potentially realizing union(s) with the Eastern Christian churches under Ottoman rule.²⁶ In the case of the Jesuit missions to southern Ottoman Hungary, however, this task was effaced by the local circumstances.²⁷ The Jesuits were entrusted with the promulgation and local implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, especially concentrating on the acceptance and correct administration of the sacraments. This task, however, faced serious challenges and was complicated by several factors. As detailed as their instructions were, the decrees failed to address a number of issues the Jesuits were bound to face in this religiously, ethnically, and legally pluralistic context of southern Ottoman Hungary.

The most challenging task the fathers had to face, acknowledge, and eventually overcome, was the fact that their missionary outposts were situated in multiple and overlapping jurisdictions of authority. From the beginning of their missionary activity in the area, especially in Belgrade and the neighboring region of Slavonia, their presence and jurisdiction was contested by the local protectors of the Catholics, i. e. the Franciscans of Bosnia, who, from the fourteenth century onwards, were granted a wide range of missionary authorizations

²⁵ EHJM I/1, 55–57.

²⁶ See, Kallistos T. Ware, “Orthodox and Catholics in the seventeenth century: schism or intercommunion?” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge: CUP, 1972), 259–277; Karen Hartnup, ‘On the Beliefs of the Greeks’. *Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2004).

²⁷ The idea of “bringing” the Orthodox back to the Catholic fold most probably continued to inform the Jesuits’ understanding of their missionary “vocation” in these parts of the empire as well. However, in contradistinction to the often amical and cordial relationship the French Jesuits had with the Greek and Oriental Orthodox clergy in the Levant and on the Greek islands, in the case of southern Ottoman Hungary, except for a very few, rather isolated cases, the Serbian Orthodox clergy displayed a largely hostile attitude towards the Jesuits (and Catholic religious, in general). See also, Antal Molnár, “A szerb ortodox egyház és az uniós kísérletek a 17. Században,” [The Serbian Orthodox Church and union attempts in the seventeenth century] in his, *Elfelejtett végvidék* [Forgotten wasteland] (Budapest: Balassi kiadó, 2008), 76–90.

from the papacy to safeguard and maintain Catholicism in the region.²⁸ After the Ottoman conquest of the Bosnian Kingdom in 1463, the Franciscans legally became Ottoman subjects, which meant that besides their papal privileges, they now also enjoyed various sultanic prerogatives as imperial subjects. According to traditional historiography, the rights of the Franciscan order were (re)affirmed in the 1463 *ahdname* (capitulation)²⁹ of Milodraž by sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446; 1451–1481). This document guaranteed safety of life and possessions to the order, which implied that they could stay in the sultan's domains, while those who fled the territory could return, and that they could use their churches.³⁰ Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, these rights were reconfirmed and further supplemented in various *fermans* (sultanic orders), but their confirmation and actual implementation remained dependent upon local authorities. These rights included: the right to travel freely in Ottoman lands, to carry arms, to own and restore churches, to have rights to the local mines, to be exempt from tax, to be protected from harassment by Orthodox bishops, etc.³¹ Nevertheless, there was always a discrepancy between the written word and actual everyday practice. According to the Franciscan narrative, the members of the Order were regarded as potential spies of the Habsburgs, and the friars were under constant “surveillance” by the local Ottoman magistracy; who, despite the protected position of the order, kept asking for ever greater amounts from the friars in the form of various taxes and fees (especially when it came to getting permissions for restoring churches or quarrels with the Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy). However, one has to be cautious when trying to draw any kind of conclusions from these sorts of narratives.

28 On Bosnian Franciscans, see: Srećko M. Džaja, *Konfessionalität und Nationalität Bosniens und der Herzegowina, Voremanzipatorische Phase 1463–1804* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1984); István György Tóth, “Between Islam and Catholicism: Bosnian Franciscan Missionaries in Turkish Hungary, 1584–1716,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003): 409–433; Antal Molnár, “Bosnian Franciscans between Roman Centralisation and Balkan Confessionalisation,” in *Papacy, Religious Orders and International Politics*, ed. Massimo Carlo Giannini (Rome: Viella, 2013), 211–231.

29 The *ahdname* denotes a peculiar group of diplomatic and legal documents in Ottoman political discourse. Traditionally, the beneficiary of the *ahdname* is a foreign subject with special privileges in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. On the controversy concerning the authenticity of the *ahdname* granted to the Franciscans in Bosnia, see Vančo Boškov, “Pitanje autentičnosti Fojničke Ahdname Mehmeda II iz 1463. Godine,” [The question of authenticity of the *ahdname* of Fojnica by Mehmed II from 1463] *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* 27–30 (1977–79): 87–105.

30 Džaja, *Konfessionalität und Nationalität Bosniens*, 181–185.

31 *Ibid.*

On the one hand, when the Franciscans talked about their miserable condition under the “Ottoman yoke”, their audience was in most cases the papacy. They could have occasionally been inspected by the local Ottoman authorities (most probably on an *ad hoc* basis), but this was something that could have easily occurred to any other subject of the sultan. On the other hand, according to Jesuit and lay priest reports, the Bosnian Franciscans themselves resorted to this “technique” of denouncing their co-religionist adversaries as “Habsburg spies” to the local Ottoman authorities. Suffice it to say that Ottoman subjecthood brought both privileges and limitations for the Franciscans, and also led to the conservation and further molding (according to Ottoman religious politics) of the medieval Franciscan church structure, which subsequently enhanced the distance between Rome and the Franciscan order in Bosnia.³² The friars were not willing to conform to the ecclesiastical stipulations set down by the Council of Trent, and refused to reorganize the structure of the Bosnian Catholic Church according to the Tridentine episcopal model.³³ And whilst the Franciscans’ interactions with the papacy and the Ottoman magistracy were informed to a certain extent by their religious affiliations, there were other components that complicated these connections. Besides administrative and political connections with the local Ottoman authorities, the Bosnian Franciscans also had family connections in the communities where they were preaching, and in many cases, these extended family networks also included Muslim members, which often worked in the friars’ favor.³⁴ But it was not only the Franciscans who contested and infringed upon the authority of the Jesuits.

Concomitant to the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan peninsula and the gradual northward migration of the Slavic-speaking populations of the region, the number of Serbian Orthodox communities gradually increased in Bosnia, Herzegovina, South-Croatia, and the territories of Ottoman Hungary, north of the Sava and the Danube.³⁵ After the restoration of the patriarchate of Peć

³² Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 84.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ István György Tóth, *Misszionáriusok levelei Magyarországról és Erdélyről* [Missionary letters about Hungary and Transylvania] (Budapest: Osiris, 2004), 22.

³⁵ Molnár, “A szerb ortodox egyház,” 79–80. See, also László Hadrovics, *Vallás, egyház, nemzettudat. A szerb egyház nemzeti szerepe a török uralom alatt* [Hungarian translation of the 1947 French edition, *Le peuple serbe et son église sous la domination turque*] (Budapest: OMIKK, 1991); Antal Molnár, “Szerb ortodox egyházszerkezet a hódolt Magyarországon,” [The organization of the Serbian Orthodox church in Ottoman Hungary] in *Szerb székesegyház a Tabánban – Az eltűnt Rácváros emlékezete* [A Serbian cathedral in the Tabán – The memory of a lost city], ed. Tamás Csáki and Xénia Golub (Budapest: Budapesti Történeti Múzeum, 2018), 32–63.

(today's Kosovo)³⁶ in 1557, the Serbian Orthodox Church extended its hegemony over the Ottoman territories of the north-western Balkans and Hungary. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the network of Serbian Orthodox eparchies and monasteries extended from Skopje to Buda, from the Dinaric Alps to the eastern border of Transylvania and northern-Bulgaria.³⁷ Thus, the Serbian Orthodox Church gained independence from the Greek Orthodox Church and was integrated into the Ottoman administrative apparatus. Similarly to the Greek one, the Serbian Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy occupied a privileged political and economic position in the empire; collaborated closely with local Ottoman dignitaries, and continuously tried to harness this advantageous status to extend their jurisdiction over the local Catholics, by collecting taxes from them, and where possible, also converting them. This way Orthodox priests and *vladike* (bishops) became the greatest rivals of the Bosnian Franciscans, since the territory of their province of Bosna Argentina (Srebrena) to a great extent overlapped with the area under the control of the Peć patriarchate.³⁸ From the middle of the sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries, several sultanic decrees (*fermans*) and legal certificates (*hüccets*) were issued based on the many complaints made by the Bosnian Franciscans that the Orthodox priests, metropolitans, and bishops had been trying to collect taxes from them and their flocks.³⁹ This competition for jurisdiction over the local Catholic communities was further exacerbated by one more element.

36 The patriarchate of Peć was established in 1346 and abolished in 1459, after the conquest of the Serbian Despotate. Subsequently, most of its former eparchies were absorbed by the Bulgarian Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid. The patriarchate was restored during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, under the influence of his grand vizier, Sokollu Mehmet Paşa (Mehmed-paşa Sokolović).

37 Molnár, "A szerb ortodox egyház," 79–80.

38 In 1556, just one year before the official restoration of the Peć patriarchate, a *ferman* (sultanic decree) was already issued that prohibited Greek patriarchs, metropolitans, and bishops from collecting taxes from those Franciscans who were living in the monasteries of Kreševo and Fojnica. The *ferman* was published in Vančo Boškov, "Turski dokumenti o odnosu katoličke i pravoslavne crkve u Bosni, Hercegovini i Dalmaciji (XV–XVII vek)," [Turkish documents about the relationship of the Catholic and Orthodox churches in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia (fifteenth–seventeenth centuries)] *Spomenik Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti* 131 (1992): 7–95, 14.

39 For the several pertaining documents, see Boškov, "Turski dokumenti"; Josip Matašević, *Fojnička Regesta* (Srpska kraljevska akademija: Belgrade, 1930); Donato Fabianich, *Firmani inediti dei sultani di Costantinopoli ai conventi francescani e alle autorità civili di Bosnia e di Erzegovina* (Firenze: M. Ricci, 1884).

Within the bureaucratic legal system of the Ottoman Empire, the Christian subjects (and non-Muslims in general) had the right to resort to their own ecclesiastical or communal courts when these were available for solving diverse cases pertaining to intra-communal matters, such as marriage, divorce or inheritance. They were obliged to use the *kadi* court only in those cases that involved disputes or transactions with Muslims. Still, the Christian subjects of the sultan were free to resort to the *sharia* (Islamic law) courts and seek the intervention of a local Ottoman judge (*kadi*) whenever they found it more appropriate and advantageous to their case – a frequent practice among the Christian communities of the empire in general, and in southern Ottoman Hungary in particular. This cross-institutional and cross-confessional dialogue ought to be interpreted within the larger context of legal pluralism that applied to the non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire, which theoretically allowed for a considerable amount of “forum shopping”.⁴⁰

Several Jesuit and Franciscan missionary reports alike attest to the fact that Catholics frequently appealed to the Orthodox priest or the Ottoman *kadi*, in most cases for officiating a marriage or, in the case of Orthodox priests, for performing baptisms also. Catholics opted for these “alternatives” either because the missionaries would not have blessed a particular union due to the violation of canon law, or for practical reasons, such as already being familiar with a particular *kadi* or Orthodox priest, or because there was no Catholic priest available, or the closest one too far away. Thus, the challenging task for the Jesuits was to insinuate themselves into this already convoluted arrangement of local power relations, whilst keeping up their missionary and pastoral agenda of rehabilitating the local Catholics in the spirit of a revived Catholicism, informed by the decrees of the Council of Trent.

⁴⁰ On this practice, whereby the litigants took their cases to the court that was most likely to deliver a favorable judgment, see Evgenia Kermeli, “The Right to Choice: Ottoman Justice vis-à-vis Ecclesiastical and Communal Justice in the Balkans, Seventeenth–Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Studies in Islamic Law: A Festschrift for Colin Imber*, ed. Andreas Christmann and Robert Gleave (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 165–210; Karen Barkey, “Aspects of Legal Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire,” *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850*, ed. Richard J. Ross and Lauren Benton (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 83–107; Antonis Anastasopoulos, “Non-Muslims and Ottoman Justice (s),” in *Law and Empire. Ideas, Practices, Actors*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Jill Harries, Caroline Humfress, and Nimrod Humfritz (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2013), 275–293.

3 Implementing Tridentine reforms in Southern Ottoman Hungary: Competition, conflict, and confusion

Breaching the Tridentine stipulations about the sacraments, especially concerning marriage (e. g. divorce, the accepted degrees of consanguinity and affinity, public honesty, the obligatory presence of the Catholic parish priest and witnesses at the wedding, and the accepted times for celebrating weddings), baptism (e. g. using liquids other than water, not uttering the right words, etc.), and the eucharist (e. g. giving bread) was a common occurrence in Catholic communities throughout the world and a challenge that missionaries shared, regardless of the territory in which they were active. And in this respect, the Jesuits in southern Ottoman Hungary were no exception. But how could these missionaries remedy the enumerated issues, when their authority, and even more so their authenticity and Catholicity, was being challenged and contested by their own co-religionists, i. e. the Bosnian Franciscans?

According to Jesuit reports, a great number of which came from Bartol Kašić,⁴¹ the Franciscan friar and later guardian of Požega Tommaso Juković incessantly questioned the legitimacy of the activity of the Jesuits in and around Belgrade, and prohibited the fathers from celebrating mass in the church and giving indulgences.⁴² Even if the conflict around the chapel of Belgrade was to a great extent economically motivated,⁴³ the public denouncement that these reports evidence show us how these tensions were fueled not only by socio-economic, but also confessional factors.

In one report from 1613, for instance, Kašić described an incident when Juković interrupted the service, while Kašić was celebrating the mass in the church, to publicly accuse a man of concubinage (most probably a Ragusan merchant) who took a widow into his house, based on the canonical decrees on

⁴¹ Bartol Kašić SJ (b. August 15, 1575, Pag Island, Croatia – d. December 28, 1650, Rome, Italy) was one of the most important figures of the Catholic reformation in the northern Ottoman Balkans and southern Ottoman Hungary. For further data on his life with bibliographical references, see Charles E. O'Neill SJ and Joaquín M. Domínguez SJ, *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Madrid, 2001), 2176–2177.

⁴² *EHJM* I/1, 65–67.

⁴³ The economic aspects of the conflict have been extensively dealt with by Antal Molnár, see, his, “Struggle for the Chapel of Belgrade (1612–1643). Trade and Catholic Church in Ottoman Hungary,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 60 (2007): 73–143; and also, his, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques*.

marriage (*Tametsi*)⁴⁴ of the Council. Kašić, on the other hand, claimed that the Franciscan had not promulgated these decrees locally, nor was there any proper juridical procedure. Hence, Kašić sided with the charged man who claimed that he had only taken the widow in so that she would not live in poverty or convert to Islam.⁴⁵ Later, in 1626, the Propaganda ordered the Bishop of Smederevo (today Serbia), the Ragusan Franciscan, Alberto Rengjić, to proclaim the decisions of the Council, especially *Tametsi*, in order to prevent further exemptions that happened under the pretext that the Tridentine decrees had not been promulgated⁴⁶ – an order Rengjić was reluctant to completely execute. He promised to supervise and control the marriage regulations of the Council as much as possible, but he was uneasy of publicly announcing them, due to the fact that the people of the region usually regarded the orders coming from Rome as “new faith”; in addition to his fear of the Ottoman authorities, as well as of his adversary, Tommaso Ivković, the Bosnian Franciscan and bishop of Scardona (*de facto* Bishop of Bosnia).⁴⁷ Ivković reported in 1631 to the Propaganda that the Tridentine decrees, together with *Tametsi*, had been

44 The marriage reforms of Trent, regulating clandestine marriage practices, were promulgated in the decree of *Tametsi* (from the Latin, “although”; the first word of Chapter 1, Session 24, *De reformatione matrimonii*) in 1563. According to *Tametsi*, for the sacrament of marriage to be administered, the consent of both parties and the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses was obligatory, and the event had to be preceded by the announcement of three banns of marriage. The *Tametsi* had to be promulgated and explained at every parish and after thirty days it became valid and binding. In many parts of Europe and in overseas missionary territories alike, the *Tametsi* was neither published nor explained to the faithful, sometimes for several decades after its acceptance at Trent. On the decree and its promulgation, see Giuseppe di Mattia, “Il decreto *Tametsi* e le sue radici nel concilio di Bologna,” *Apollinaris* 53 (1980): 476–500.

45 *EHJM* I/1, 65–67.

46 Archivio Storico della Sacra Congregazione per l’Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o de «Propaganda Fide» (Rome) (=APF), *Acta Sacrae Congregationis* (=Acta), vol. 4, fol. 31 v.–32 r.

47 APF Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (=SOCG), vol. 56, fol. 231 r/v. Dozens of letters inform us about the perpetual quarrels between Alberto Rengjić and Tommaso Ivković over the disputed border of their missionary bishoprics. Unlike the Ragusan Franciscan Rengjić, the Bosnian Franciscan Ivković had well-established connections with the local Ottoman magistracy. To testify to this, see for instance the *berat* (patent) of Murat IV from 1626, issued on the request of the *naib* (assistant of the judge) of Sarajevo (today Bosnia) which names Ivković as the provincial of the Bosnian Franciscan province. The *berat* is published in Boškov, “Turski dokumenti,” 35. Concerning the conflicts between the two bishops, see for instance APF SOCG vol. 56, fol. 212 r/v; fol. 216 r/v; fol. 217 r.; 280 r. Several other letters from APF SOCG, vol. 56, testifying to the conflict were published in István György Tóth, *Litterae missionariorum de Hungaria et Transylvania (1572–1717) I–V*, vol. 1 (Rome–Budapest: Biblioteca Academiae Hungariae – Roma, Fontes, 2002), 198–201; 219–221; 247–248.

announced in all the parishes under his jurisdiction; each priest had a copy of the Roman Ritual and administered marriages according to it. Only in a small territory under his jurisdiction at the southern border of Ottoman Hungary (unsurprisingly the contested territory between him and Rengjić), there were some men who left their first spouse and contracted a second marriage.⁴⁸

According to a report of the Jesuit Marino de Bonis from 1617, another Franciscan friar threatened with excommunication those who went to the masses of the Jesuits or accepted the sacraments from them, claiming that the Jesuit fathers only came there for their own ambition and avarice, and were not willing to recognize the prelates of the church; the Bosnian Franciscan friar also encouraged people to trample on the devotional objects they got from the Jesuits.⁴⁹ Bonis also claimed that another friar, who was schooled in Italy, ordered people to say five Our fathers and five Ave Marias with open arms in the church, then, having been invited by someone for lunch, he got angry and went away from the table, because some would not believe that it was necessary to remain open armed [while praying] and would not observe this custom in public. Having heard this, the father denounced these people as “heretics”, because they did not let themselves be persuaded by his view.⁵⁰

It is important to underline that besides perpetually being in conflict with the Jesuits, the Franciscans displayed a similarly hostile attitude towards secular priests⁵¹, who, in turn, also used every means at their disposal to denigrate the Franciscans. In around 1628, the lay priest Simone Matković reported to Propaganda Fide that the Bosnian Franciscans did not let him celebrate the mass in the chapel of Belgrade. Once a friar simply removed the candles that Matković had put on the altar, and the friars claimed that they had exclusive rights there, which had been given to them by the *pasha* (Ottoman governor) of

48 APF SOCG, vol. 73. fol. 151 r., 152–153/r. Tommaso Ivković’s letter and answers to Propaganda Fide are published in Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 368–370. I used the original document.

49 *EHJM* I/2, 294.

50 *EHJM* I/2, 295.

51 In Srem (the territory between the Sava and the Danube) the expansion of the Bosnian Franciscans was vehemently hindered by lay priests, even though the Franciscan presence in these territories had a long history. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Catholic communities between the Drava and Sava were pastored by three Bosnian Franciscan monasteries: the region of Požega (today’s Croatia) and the river Sava by Velika (today’s Croatia), the region of Đakovo (today’s Croatia) and Verőce (today’s Hungary) by Našice (today’s Croatia), the Drava and Srem by Voćin (today’s Croatia). The community of lay priests was helped by the archbishop of Antivari (today’s Bar, Montenegro) Pietro Massarechi, but after his death the tensions

Buda.⁵² In around 1650, the secular priest Pietro Sabbatini noted that the Franciscans often did not go in person to marry a certain couple, but sometimes they sent a servant or an ecclesiastical procurator with a book or a note for this task, and as such they married the people. On other occasions, they sent only a booklet of some sort, which the couple had to put under their pillow on their wedding night. Thus, in the case that the Ottoman authorities came, the booklet would serve as testimony that they had been married – a custom that had allegedly been practiced by the Franciscans before the arrival of the vicar.⁵³

When reading these inter – (and also intra-⁵⁴) missionary accusations, it is important to bear in mind that the audience of these reports were in most cases the religious authorities of Rome (such as the Jesuit superior general or the cardinals of Propaganda Fide). Hence, when missionaries described the local situation, they equally had to legitimize their usefulness in a particular territory in the eyes of their Roman superiors. It was therefore also not uncommon that certain missionaries propagated their own personal agendas when reporting to Rome. Consequently, the information conveyed in these allegations always needs to be taken with a grain of salt and analyzed within the larger local context.

As noted above, local Catholics could turn to Orthodox priests and Ottoman *kadis* as “alternatives” for contracting their marriage, and these authorities became even more indispensable in the case of divorce. The Tridentine decrees on matrimony forbade the dissolution of marriages for any reasons except the death of one of the spouses, and divorce only entailed separation from bed and board (*a mensa et thoro*), without granting the right of remarriage. In contrast, both in Islamic and

between the priests and the Bosnian Franciscans even more intensified. See Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 348–349.

52 Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 261–263.

53 Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 3, 1826. Sabbatini reproached the Franciscans for certain “misdemeanors”; from a historical point of view, it would be interesting to determine the actual motivation of the Franciscans for resorting to such a seemingly unusual act in order to have written proof for the Ottoman authorities that they had married a particular couple. It is also important to note that in Sunni Hanafi law, marriage was a private agreement that did not demand judicial intervention or the registration of the marriage. In the Ottoman Empire, however there were attempts to make marriage registration at court obligatory, especially during the tenure of Ebu’s–su’ud Efendi (1545–1574) as *seyhülislam* (chief judge). A *fatwa* (nonbinding legal opinion) made by Ebu’s–su’ud testifies that by his time, an imperial decree had made marriage registrations mandatory in order to provide evidence in cases of dispute, and probably to prevent illicit unions. Nevertheless, the systematic recording of marriages was only introduced by the Ottoman state in 1881. See, Colin Imber, *Ebu’s–su’ud. The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

54 Needless to say, conflicts also arose between missionaries belonging to the same religious order. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to go into the details of such quarrels.

Orthodox canon law, divorce was an accepted yet reprehensible practice.⁵⁵ It is not surprising therefore that the validity of the marriages administered by these non-Catholic communal representatives became another point of contention between some Jesuits and Bosnian Franciscans.

In his report from 1613, as mentioned earlier, Bartol Kašić complained that many men got divorced and remarried following the example of the Serbs (i. e. the Orthodox), while others separated, having been convinced by some (i. e. the Bosnian Franciscans) that marriages conducted in front of the *kadi* or the Orthodox priest were not valid.⁵⁶ In the same report, Kašić further explained that the claim of the Franciscans that those who had married their first wife in front of the *vladika* (the Orthodox bishop) or the *kadi* were allowed to take another wife, demonstrated that these Franciscans did not recognize the decrees of the Tridentine Council⁵⁷ which stipulated that marriages contracted before the decree of *Tametsi* was promulgated were valid, regardless of who had officiated them, and divorces were prohibited. However, as emerges in further letters written by Bosnian Franciscans, the *Tametsi* had been proclaimed in the region of Bosnia (which according to the Franciscan understanding also comprised the parishes of Slavonia and Srem), long before these marriages were contracted, in which case they were indeed not valid.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, one also needs to take into account the fact that since divorce was an accepted legal category within both Orthodox and Islamic law, it is possible that some Bosnian Franciscans were simply more lenient in accepting the legal pluralism practiced in the

55 For more on the issue of marriage and divorce in Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy, see N. J. Pantazopoulos, *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman Rule* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1967); Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Svetlana Ivanova, “Judicial Treatment of the Matrimonial Problems of Christian Women in Rumeli during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans*, ed. Buturović and Shick, 153–201.

56 *EHJM* I/1, 75.

57 *EHJM* I/1, 76.

58 For instance, according to the above quoted letter by Tommaso Ivković, the decrees of the Council were announced more than forty years ago in Bosnia. *APF SOCG*, vol. 73, fol. 52 r. In southern Ottoman Hungary however, according to the extant documents in most dioceses, they were not publicized. When in 1626 Alberto Rengjić presented two complicated marriage cases to the Propaganda and asked for advice, it was still not clear whether the decrees of the Council were announced in and around Belgrade. *APF SOCG*, vol. 56, fol. 243 v. See also, Vanyó Tihamér, *Püspöki jelentések a Magyar Szent Korona országainak egyházmegyéiről (1600–1850)* [Episcopal reports about the dioceses of the Holy Crown of Hungary (1600–1850)] (Pannonhalma: MTA, 1933), 53–54. Therefore, it would be difficult to determine whether in the region in question the announcement actually occurred prior to the arrival of the Jesuits or not.

Ottoman Empire and, accordingly, viewed a marriage conducted in front of the *kadi* or the Orthodox priest as a breakable bond.

Some Jesuits and Franciscans also clashed on the issue of the Gregorian calendar⁵⁹: the Franciscans insisting on its introduction (at least, when presenting their merits to Rome), whilst the Jesuits were more accommodating of the needs of those Catholic groups who wanted to keep the old calendar – a view that was shared by both the Orthodox and even the Muslims; who also wanted to retain the old calendar, mainly for the sake of keeping the standard order of fairs. Already by around 1583, the Bosnian Franciscan Fra Tommaso praised the efforts of the Franciscans in introducing the new calendar in a letter he wrote to Pope Gregory XIII, despite what he described as the hardships the Franciscans endured under the Ottoman authorities, who claimed that they were confusing the world by moving the date of the fairs.⁶⁰ In a letter addressed to Bartol Kašić in 1613 from Pécs, three licentiates reported on the problems concerning the new calendar, stating that the Ottomans demanded the old one to be proclaimed, but the majority of the community had already accepted the new one.⁶¹ This information was however refined by the Hungarian Jesuit, Zakariás Jékel, who specified that the new calendar was accepted by only a small number of Slavic-speaking Catholics, but not at all by the Hungarian ones; therefore he asked for a papal dispensation concerning the usage of the old calendar.⁶² As a way of answering these requests and dealing with the convoluted situation on the ground, in 1613, the pope gave a dispensation to the Jesuit Gergely Vásárhelyi active in the mission of Pécs to use the old calendar, whenever they deemed it necessary.⁶³ Nevertheless, the problem persisted in the decades to come.

In 1619, Marino de Bonis SJ reported that in a village near Carașova⁶⁴ (Karaševo, today's Romania), people (according to the letter, most likely, a

59 The introduction of the Gregorian calendar was a contentious issue in other parts of Europe as well, especially where Catholics coexisted with Protestants. See also, Jennifer Powell McNutt, "Hesitant Steps: Acceptance of the Gregorian Calendar in Eighteenth-Century Geneva," *Church History* 75 (2006): 544–565; and Rona Johnston Gordon, "Controlling Time in the Habsburg Lands: The Introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in Austria below the Enns," *Austrian History Yearbook* 40 (2009): 28–36. I explore the issue of the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in early modern Ottoman Europe in more detail in a separate study.

60 Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 125.

61 *EHJM* I/1, 91.

62 *EHJM* I/1, 94.

63 *EHJM* I/1, 136.

64 In the period analyzed, the city of Carașova and its surroundings were part of the Banate of Lugos and Karánsebes, an administrative territorial entity of the Principality of Transylvania (itself, a tribute paying polity of the Ottoman Empire). Even though at this point the area was

contemporary Romanian-speaking group) celebrated Pentecost according to the old calendar.⁶⁵ In 1626, the Bishop of Smederevo, Alberto Rengjić, during a visit in southern Ottoman Hungary, informed the Propaganda that there were many Catholics who were still following the old calendar.⁶⁶ The Bosnian Franciscans, on the other hand, focused on reporting those groups who had already accepted the new calendar to Rome. Thus, in 1630, the Bosnian Franciscan Marco Bandini claimed that in a village near Caraşova there were already ten Romanian-speaking families who started celebrating Roman Catholic holidays according to the new calendar.⁶⁷ The introduction of the Gregorian calendar among various local Catholic groups remained high on the agenda of the missionaries throughout the seventeenth century. Moreover, the acceptance or refusal of the new calendar also became a common means for various Catholic groups to “draw” the boundaries of their community – a decision, which, besides the above detailed economic and ethnic factors, also had confessional motivations. For instance, many people believed that accepting the “new calendar” promoted by the missionaries would mean embracing a “new faith”; a confusing situation which sometimes resulted in people celebrating each holiday twice.⁶⁸

Besides the above detailed conflicts with the Bosnian Franciscans, the Jesuits also had to find a way to deal with their Orthodox “competitors”. Contemporary Jesuit reports inform us of the existence of a significant number of Orthodox priests (*pop*) in the territory in question, and, considering the large number of eparchies and metropolitanates therein,⁶⁹ one could perhaps take at face value the assertion of the Jesuit Marino de Bonis: namely that there were no villages without an Orthodox priest.⁷⁰ In contrast, there were only one or two fathers stationed together at a particular missionary outpost. But it was not only their larger number that put the Orthodox priests in a more advantageous position.

In 1617, reporting on the situation of the mission in Belgrade and Timișoara, de Bonis noted that despite the fact that the Orthodox priests were uneducated, ignorant, and could barely read the “Ruthenian” script, they were able to easily affect the simple Slavic-speaking Catholics, not only due to the common

not under direct Ottoman rule (only after 1658), since both the Jesuit and Bosnian Franciscans missions extended to these territories, I am including the region in the discussion.

⁶⁵ *EHJM* I/2, 367.

⁶⁶ Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 200.

⁶⁷ Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 327.

⁶⁸ *EHJM* I/1, 74–75; 91; *EHJM* I/2, 401–402.

⁶⁹ See, also Molnár, “Szerb ortodox egyházszervezet,” 32–63.

⁷⁰ *EHJM* I/2, 289.

language and continuous interactions, but also because of the similarities in the two religions, i. e. many elements of exterior worship and profession of the faith.⁷¹ In order to understand how harmful these priests could be, one needs to know that besides the fact that they speak Slavic (“linguaggio schiavono”) well, they are afflicted with the errors of the “Greek sect” (“sono tutti infetti degli errori della seta greca”).⁷² The Orthodox priests did not teach people how to pray but only how to make the sign of the cross; however, they insisted that the crossing should not start from the left side (in contradistinction to the Catholic practice); since, according to their interpretation, that is where the power of the devil came from.⁷³ Concerning the confessionally distinguishing role of the sign of the cross, it is interesting to note that already by 1613, the Jesuit István Szini reported that he had heard that in the region surrounding Timișoara, around thirty Romanian-inhabited villages (“30 villas valachorum”) left all “schismatic sects” (“ad omnes sectae schismaticorum sic valedixere”) and formed their own spiritual community.⁷⁴ One peculiar characteristic of this community was that whilst they were praying in front of a cross, they did not make the sign of the cross, claiming that if the cross was there, it was no longer necessary to make the sign.⁷⁵

The two Jesuits, Bartol Kašić and Marino de Bonis provided further information about the role of Orthodox priests in the performance of baptisms in the region. Kašić, for instance wrote that many Catholics took their children to the Orthodox priests for baptism, either due to the lack of Catholic priests or the misdemeanors of some (naturally, referring to the Bosnian Franciscans). Kašić accordingly asked these priests about the words uttered during the sprinkling of the water so he could find out whether he needed to rebaptize these people *sub conditione* (conditionally). Allegedly, the Orthodox priests told him that one can only be legitimately baptized by a priest, and to Kašić’s next question concerning the baptism of children in the face of death in case there is no priest, an Orthodox priest replied that the godfather had to take the dead child and turn the body towards the east, before singing the adoration of the faith three times, burying the child in the church and then performing forty liturgies. Through these acts, the child would be saved and baptized.⁷⁶ Bonis’ report repeated

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *EHJM* I/2, 289. The role of the Jesuits as informants, articulating the image about the local Orthodox in seventeenth-century southern Ottoman Hungary is the topic of another, forthcoming article of mine.

⁷³ *EHJM* I/2, 290.

⁷⁴ *EHJM* I/1, 159.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *EHJM* I/2, 72.

almost verbatim Kašić's description of this practice, but the missionary also added that some Orthodox priests, having seen the devotion of the Jesuits, scorned their priests and sent their sons to learn at the school of the Jesuits and let them become Catholics. They decided to re-baptize these children, since they were uncertain about the validity of the baptism performed by the Orthodox clergy.⁷⁷ In 1619, the Bishop of Prizren, Petar Katić, reported from the mission of Belgrade that many people were baptized *sub conditione*, since the baptisms performed by "heretic" [i. e. Protestant] and "schismatic" [i. e. Orthodox] priests were invalid, because some baptized with wine, aqua-vitae, or butter; others first uttered the words, then sprinkled the water on the child, or vice versa.⁷⁸ Throughout the seventeenth century, it was a matter of continuous debate whether "heretic" or "schismatic" priests can administer the sacrament of baptism to Catholics. According to the Decree of the Armenians (1439)⁷⁹ and the Council of Trent (1545–1563), if the proper matter and form was used, even baptisms performed by heretics or schismatics could be considered valid. But, as the above enumerated cases also illustrated, in most cases neither the matter nor the form of these baptisms, performed by the non-Catholic clergy, conformed to the stipulations of the Catholic Church. Therefore, even in case of necessity (when there was no Catholic priest available), the Church did not permit "schismatic" priests to baptize the children of Catholics.⁸⁰

On the one hand, the insistence on the correct matter and form of baptisms illustrates how, in practice, performing certain acts in a prescribed way and order could raise particular rituals to a sacramental level, or, on the contrary, undermine the sacraments' validity. On the other hand, it shows how Catholic missionaries and Orthodox priests tried to (de)limit each other's area of jurisdiction; and in this way, the competition transformed the sacrament of baptism into a territory marker.

4 Conclusion

If one returns to the instructions that the Jesuits going to southern Ottoman Hungary received upon embarking on their missionary quest, one might notice

⁷⁷ EHJM I/2, 291.

⁷⁸ Antal Molnár, "Három hódoltsági levél a Római Inkvizíció levéltárából," [Three letters about Ottoman Hungary from the Archive of the Holy Office] *Lymbus* 2 (2004): 51–59, 53.

⁷⁹ <http://www.vatican.va/content/eugenius-iv/la/documents/bulla-exultate-deo-22-nov-1439.html> Accessed on 05. 01. 2020.

⁸⁰ See, for instance APF Decreta, fol. 84 r.

that their activity was imagined as if it would happen in a “vacuum”, “tuning out” the actual local circumstances and power structures. Even if there were attempts upon several complaints to reconcile the differences between the Jesuits and Bosnian Franciscans, by establishing the border of their missionary bishoprics, Roman intervention only further exacerbated the tensions between the two orders. Concerning the contacts with the local Orthodox prelates and Ottoman dignitaries, however, the best advice missionaries generally got was to be cautious and to avoid conflicts.

Even though Roman authorities should have officially refused to accept any sort of deviation from the standard Tridentine sacramental practices, the papacy gave leeway to several missionary requests. In 1620, Pope Paul V issued a breve to the Jesuit Marino de Bonis whereby he endorsed the missionary to validate those marriages where the spouses were related in the second or third degree, since the dissolution of marriages would be problematic in this region.⁸¹ The Apostolic Penitentiary issued a similar authorization to the Jesuits active in Caransebeș (Karánsebes, today Romania) and its surroundings.⁸² In 1625, the Propaganda issued a decree stating that on account of the imminent Ottoman threat, weddings could be celebrated even in the prohibited times.⁸³ Then in 1629, it advised the Bosnian Franciscan Marco Bandulović to celebrate marriages without festivities so that the local Catholics would not appeal to the *kadi* or Orthodox priest to officiate the marriage.⁸⁴ In 1631, a dispensation was granted to the lay priest, Simone Matković, concerning public honesty.⁸⁵ In several cases, however Rome remained silent, leaving missionaries to their own devices – a challenge so characteristic of the global Catholic missionary enterprise.⁸⁶ This “silence” also contributed to steering both Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, who otherwise generally condemned the idea of Catholics turning to the local Orthodox or Muslim authorities, towards seeking the “service” of the Ottomans to obtain permissions to renovate or build a church, minister to a particular group in a particular territory, or get orders to be protected from the tax-collection of the Orthodox powers. Furthermore, in numerous instances, Jesuits and Franciscans asked for Ottoman intervention in the settlement of their own inter-missionary conflicts.⁸⁷ The dynamics of these local

⁸¹ EHJM I/2, 379.

⁸² Antal Molnár, “Jezsuita misszió Karánsebesen (1625–1642),” [Jesuit mission in Karánsebes (1625–1642)] *Történelmi Szemle* 41 (1999): 127–156, 138.

⁸³ APF Acta, vol. 3, fol. 182 v.

⁸⁴ APF Acta, vol. 6, fol. 263 v.–264 r.

⁸⁵ APF Acta, vol. 7, fol. 61 v.

⁸⁶ See, Hsia, ed., *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*.

⁸⁷ Among the several examples of such requests, I would like to single out a few: for instance, in a letter from the mission in Bačka in 1622, the Ragusan secular priest Paolo Torelli informs

powerplays did not only determine the tactics of the missionaries on the ground, but also directed the development of missionary strategies in Rome.

Besides the occasional papal dispensations granted to different missionaries, Rome also had to find a way to deal with the multiplicity of agents, vindicating their pastoral rights over a particular group and territory. Thus, one of the most notable repercussions of the emergence of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide was the gradual effacement of the role of the Jesuits in the missionizing programs, due to the empowerment and predominance of Bosnian Franciscans in the Catholic missions in Ottoman-governed Central and Southeastern Europe. The reason for this provision of the Propaganda was manifold. After the establishment of the Congregation, the members of the regular orders were not only under the jurisdiction of their superiors, but they also came under the direct authority of the Congregation, which subsequently enhanced their role in papal diplomacy.⁸⁸ The Jesuits, however wanted to keep their autonomy and privileged status in organizing their own missions, and therefore the dicastery did not completely succeed in integrating them within its centralized missionary program.⁸⁹ In the case of the Jesuit missions in southern Ottoman Hungary, it gradually became evident to the Roman authorities that

the Propaganda that he got permission to rebuild two churches (Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 131); the Bosnian secular priest, Don Simone Matković continuously emphasized in his letters to Propaganda Fide that with the help of his connections with the Ottoman magistracy he could regain churches from the Calvinists along the Drava (Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 136); also according to a report of Simone Matković from around 1628, the Bosnian Franciscans in Zrenjanin (Nagybecskerek, today Serbia) claimed that they had an order from the pasha of Buda according to which they [i. e. the Franciscans] had exclusive rights to minister to the Catholics of the region (Tóth, *Litterae*, vol. 1, 260).

88 See, Massimo Carlo Giannini, “Introduction,” in *Papacy, Religious Orders and International Politics*, ed. Giannini, 9–17.

89 Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 201–202. The controversial and tense relationship between the Propaganda and the Jesuit order has been subject to several studies, examining the possible implications of what has often been traditionally dubbed as “anti-Jesuitism”. Nevertheless, problems that pertain to ecclesiastical jurisdiction and privileges were characteristic of the relationship between the Jesuit order and the Propaganda, since all the regular orders wanted to defend their own privileges, which guaranteed their autonomy in relation to ecclesiastical power. As Giovanni Pizzorusso has correctly highlighted, in several instances, particular members of the Propaganda were not more “anti-Jesuit” than certain Jesuits were “anti-Propaganda”. See, Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Le pape rouge et le pape noir. Aux origines des conflits entre la congrégation « de Propaganda Fide » et la Compagnie de Jésus au XVII^e siècle,” in *Les Antijésuites. Discours, figures et lieux de l’antijésuitisme à l’époque moderne*, ed. Pierre-Antoine Fabre and Catherine Maire (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 539–561. The present case could further complicate our understanding of the relationship between the Propaganda and the Jesuit order, and also, with other regular orders.

without the local know-how, and sometimes even knowledge of the local languages, the activity of the fathers was bound to face serious challenges – as the above detailed cases have illustrated. And it became even clearer that local power relations were primarily determined by the decrees of the Ottoman authorities, and not by Rome. Thus, it was all the more logical that the Propaganda decided to eventually side with the more Rome-oriented group of the Bosnian Franciscans, who were familiar with the local circumstances and most importantly, occupied a special political and social stratum within the Ottoman Empire. By the middle of the seventeenth century the Bosnian Franciscans had managed to supersede their missionary adversaries and gain local control.⁹⁰ Still, they could not “neutralize” the local hegemony of Orthodox priests and Ottoman judges.

Jesuit missionaries were commissioned to go to the territories of southern Ottoman Hungary to regulate different aspects of daily confessional (co)existence. Meanwhile, as the reports featured in this article attest to, their activity was informed and circumscribed by the written and unwritten rules of having to coexist with the Bosnian Franciscans, Orthodox priests, and Ottoman judges; as well as, of course, by the active role different religious groups assumed in this dialogue. The complex and multilayered interaction among these communal representatives did not just dictate the course of implementation of Tridentine reforms, and the efforts to reinforce Catholicism in the region, but it also shaped both the newcomer Jesuits and the local Franciscans, turning them into “uneasy agents of Tridentine reforms”.

Funding: Research for this essay has been undertaken within the framework of the project entitled “The Fashioning of a Sunni Orthodoxy and the Entangled Histories of Confession–Building in the Ottoman Empire, fifteenth–eighteenth Centuries” (OTTOCONFESSION, PI: dr. Tijana Krstić), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 648498).

90 See for more detail, Molnár, *Katolikus missziók*, 287–367.