

# The Reformation in the Croatian Historical Lands

RESEARCH RESULTS, CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES

Edited by  
Zrinka Blažević  
Stanko Jambrek  
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Zagreb, 2015



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Nataša Štefanec

## **The Adaptable Religious Politics on the Zrinski Estates during the Reformation**

### **Introduction**

In the 1570s, a handful of magnates, along with the Zagreb bishopric and chapter, owned around 75% of the entire territory of the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom (Adamček, 1981, 23). Baronial titles, large estates and prestigious political positions in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom were held by a small number of magnate families. Next to the Zrinski and Frankopan families, other highly influential families included: Erdödy, Drašković, Tahy, Kaštelanović, Keglević, Alapić, Batthyány and Ungnad. The bishopric and the chapter of Zagreb were also mighty feudal lords. By the 1560s, many of those numbered above had converted to Protestantism, like Zrinski, Ungnad, Tahy, Erdödy, Batthyány, etc. (Jambrek, 2013, 206-233). An investigation of their religious policies can therefore have great explanatory value in the early modern Croatian context.

### **1**

Accomplished research shows that the Protestant movement in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom did not have as profound an effect on political and everyday life as in the neighboring Austrian lands where a Catholic-Protestant clash resulted in a long, complex and severe political struggle that often included violence and persecution,<sup>1</sup> and in the neighboring Hungarian area, where it provoked political struggles, rebellion and uprisings throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, quite the opposite to

- 1 On the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Austrian Hereditary Lands, see: Loserth, 1898, *passim*; Loserth, 1898b, *passim*; Pörtner, 2001; Winkelbauer, 2004, 9-147.
- 2 On anti-Habsburg uprisings and the movements of István Bocskai, Gábor Bethlen, György I Rákóczy, György II Rákóczy, Nikola Zrinski, Imre Thököly and Ferenc II Rákóczy see, for example, a collection of articles in: Bak and Király, 1982, 275-513. See also: Kontler, 2007, 166-195.

the Inner-Austrian and Hungarian estates who collided with their Catholic rulers, the noble majority in the Croatian-Slavonian diet maintained a strong pro-Catholic policy advocating the prohibition of Protestant teaching and the persecution of Protestants which was always readily endorsed by the Habsburgs. In practice, though, major military and civil offices in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom were further filled by aforementioned Protestant magnates.<sup>3</sup> In daily political and military dealings, questions of their faith rarely came to the forefront.

The first and the most obvious reason for this controversy is that the Ottomans were considered a more dangerous and imminent threat to the kingdom than the Protestant issue. Secondly, local Protestant magnates were tolerated by the Habsburgs because they provided substantial, even prevailing, military and financial input, as well as human resources needed for the defense and maintenance of the border. In comparison to the Inner-Austrian lands where stronger Catholic opposition had already started by the end of the 1570s, in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom, magnates remained Protestant another several decades.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, the Croatian-Slavonian diet was attended by lesser and middle, mostly Catholic, nobility. It was a provincial political body that was generally avoided, sometimes even

- 3 For example, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Petar Erdödy II and Christoph Ungnad (also Toma Erdödy II, son of Peter Erdödy II) held the position of Croatian-Slavonian Ban (viceroy), while Juraj Zrinski IV rejected the function and held the most prestigious military offices in the region.
- 4 The Erdödy family probably converted before the Zrinski family. Jambrek informs that Toma Erdödy II converted with his wife, Ana Maria, between his first and second mandate as Ban (and that Franjo Valla believes he remained Lutheran until 1608), Jambrek, 2013, 226-227. I believe that the conversion of Toma Erdödy II (1558-1624; ban from 1583-1595 and 1608-1615) might have been prompted by several factors. Increasingly severe Counter-Reformation measures in Inner-Austria from the beginning of the 1580s (escalating with the decree on the expulsion of Protestants in 1599) put great pressure on Inner-Austrian, mainly Protestant, magnates, reducing their possibility to find employment and promotion in Habsburg service. From the 1580s, it was probably more difficult for Protestants to obtain and retain the position of ban that was granted by the Habsburgs, especially in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom that usually opted in favor of Catholics. Victorious events in 1593 (the battle of Sisak) catapulted Toma into the sphere of European war heroes (he was among leaders of the Christian army and soon became famous throughout Europe due to reports that celebrated the event) which he might have wanted to use to improve his position in the Habsburg hierarchy. Finally, Toma's family had a 'suspicious' past (Bishop of Zagreb Šimun Erdödy opted for Ivan Zapolja / *Szapolyai János* in the 1520s, and the family was closely involved in a Protestant case throughout the century). Evidently, Toma opted to distance himself from the later image and fervently started to build his cult as a Catholic hero.



disrespected, by the magnates who mostly participated in the work of the Upper House of the Hungarian diet.<sup>5</sup> Protestant magnates were not overly concerned with anti-Protestant decisions made by the Croatian-Slavonian diet as long as the Hungarian diet supported the Protestant issue. The executive power within the kingdom rested with the *Ban* (Viceroy) who was often Protestant, and even when he was not, he often lacked the necessary will, time or power to strictly execute anti-Protestant laws. However, the policies of the Croatian-Slavonian diet did have some effect as there are more clues of systematic evangelism in Međimurje and Prekmurje that belonged to Zala County (Hungarian kingdom proper) than in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom. This could indicate that Protestant magnates felt better supported in the Hungarian kingdom proper than in the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom.

Closely related to the latter issue is the fourth reason for the relatively unhindered function of Protestant magnates which I want to examine more profoundly in this paper. It could be labeled as the flexible religious policy of Protestant magnates in Croatia-Slavonia. In general, historiography interpreted their activities in two ways.

First, Protestants in Croatia-Slavonia were often assigned a very positive cultural role. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers investigated Protestant movement from linguistic, literary, historical and cultural perspectives, while some other themes and topics in Croatian history had to struggle with the nationally more important political and legal histories. From the perspective of forging a national history, it was highly valued that Erdödy, Ungnad and Zrinski supported the translation and publication of works in the national language and script.

On the other hand, in the chronicles from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as in numerous studies and syntheses from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Protestants were often presented as villains that were trampling on Catholics, Catholic priests and religious orders. Most often repeated and cited were Juraj Zrinski's violent persecutions of Paulines in Međimurje and his allegedly aggressive and destructive religious policy.<sup>6</sup>

5 Vjekoslav Klaić already pointed to these circumstances in the last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and accentuated how the rest of the nobility complained and required magnates to regularly attend and respect the Croatian-Slavonian diet. Klaić, 1973 (1911), 427, 604-605. Original sources in: Šišić, 1917, 43-46, 143, 226.

6 Information was most often taken from the book by Josip Bedeković, *Natale solum magni ecclesiae doctoris sancti Hieronymi in rudibus Stridonis ....* See: Bedeković, 1752, Vol I, 261-262, 272-273; Vol II, 148 et passim. They were transferred by Bučar,

Today, we still have limited insights into the religious sentiments of the Croatian Protestant nobility, their knowledge of theological and religious issues and their everyday religious practices. Evidence is mostly indirect and implicit and sometimes, like in the case of the Tahy family,<sup>7</sup> almost non-existent. In the absence of more direct data, one needs to search for available clues in an attempt to reconstruct in more detail the religious policy of Protestant magnates in Croatia. This particular attempt to slightly broaden our understanding will focus on the Zrinski family.

Nikola Zrinski IV, the defender of Sziget, was famous for being a Protestant-friendly magnate. He married a Protestant countess from a highly influential Czech family<sup>8</sup> and was on friendly terms with Peter Erdödy II and Hans Ungnad. At the same time, until the end of his life in 1566, he acted as patron of Catholic churches, supported the building of churches and religious houses, elected priests at his estates, etc. For example, Nikola Zrinski IV was a patron of the church of St. George on the Hill (Sv. Juraj na Bregu), a parish church in today's Lopatinec (in 1650 - S. Georgii supra Chakturnia in Aquis), according to his donation in 1563. The Pauline monastery of St. Helen in Šenkovec near Čakovec (est. in 1376) was long supported by the Zrinski family whose members built a mausoleum in the monastery complex.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the Zrinskis were decent Catholic patrons even in times of transition towards Protestantism.

Juraj Zrinski IV was a well-known Protestant, though it is still not clear when exactly his conversion took place. In historiography, years like 1566 and 1570 show up.<sup>10</sup> Actually, there are still several letters that have not

1900, 201-205; Bučar, 1913, *passim*; R. Horvat, 1944, 62-63, and others. Interpretation of Bedeković's records in: Štefanec, 2001, 216-221.

- 7 The Tahy family has yet to be investigated properly, but there are fleeting remarks on his Protestant inclination in literature like, for example, in: A. Horvat, 1975, 75; Pelc, 2007, 259, 315-316, 556.
- 8 See monograph on Ivan (Jan) Zrinski, son of Nikola Zrinski IV and his second Protestant wife, Eva Rožmberk: Bůžek – Jakubec – Král, 2009.
- 9 See the indispensable study of Anđela Horvat: A. Horvat, 1956, 114, 46, 50-52, 191. There is also plenty of new research on the topic: Pleše, 2010, 210-211; Koruněk, 2014, 51-70 (Koruněk uses reports on the archeological research in Šenkovec made by Tajana Pleše in 2011 and 2012); Koruněk, 2014b, 397-412. Pelc believes that the mausoleum was built in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Nikola Zrinski IV following the example of Toma Bakač in Esztergom and some other lavish examples in Central and Eastern Europe, Pelc, 2007, 258-259. Koruněk asserts that the hexagonal mausoleum was built around 1626-27 for the burial of Juraj V. Koruněk, 2014, 66; Koruněk, 2014b, 398.
- 10 Jambrek offers details from the historiography, pointing out that Zvonimir Bartolić cites Franjo Fancev who mentions 1566 (the year of the death of Juraj's father, Nikola

been properly used in historiography. In one, written in 1573, seven years after his father had died, the then 34 year old Juraj Zrinski discussed the priests on their lands with Boldizsár Batthyány. Juraj was warned by the archbishop and the bishop (*ersek wram, Zabragy pyspek*) that they had a corrupt and immoral priest on their lands which put their subjects in danger. The warning was most probably issued by Juraj Drašković<sup>11</sup> which means that Juraj communicated with him over religious matters too. The archbishop asked them to replace the corrupt priest with another parish priest. A problem came about because Boldizsár Batthyány did not want to listen to Juraj at first, telling him that he should find another priest for his people on the estate if he so wished while he kept the old priest. Juraj responded that they had always shared patronage over the disputed church which he intended to continue in the way of his predecessors. Juraj also said that he had already been visited by the same archbishop who had warned him to pay his debts to the church that he owed on the account of *arrendatio*. The archbishop was angry and Juraj was thinking about how to pay and discussing it with Batthyány.<sup>12</sup> Later, Juraj did support and employ Protestant preachers on his estates, especially in Međimurje, but when exactly it started remains an open question because there are no clear clues in available letters.<sup>13</sup> His son, Juraj V, was raised as a Protestant. He converted to Catholicism after 1617,<sup>14</sup> or in 1625 at the latest.<sup>15</sup>

Zrinski IV) as the conversion year. Apparently, in 1570, Juraj Zrinski IV already openly adhered to Protestant teachings which is cited by Rudolf Horvat, Zvonimir Bartolić and others, mainly based on Bedeković, 1752. See: Jambrek, 2013, 219.

- 11 Juraj Drašković was bishop of Zagreb from 1563 until 1578. According to Kukuljević and others, Drašković was appointed archbishop of Kalocsa in 1574, which might be slightly erroneous. Kukuljević Sakcinski, 1886, 157-167.
- 12 Magyar Országos Levéltár, P. 1314, No. 53590 (6. January 1573), 53591 (17. January 1573).
- 13 On Protestantism on the Zrinski estates around the Kupa River, see: Štefanec, 2001, 203-211.
- 14 In 1617, before All Saints Day, preachers and superintendents with their adherents, cities, aristocrats and noblemen (Lutherans and Calvinists) in Hungary and Transylvania celebrated the anniversary of the Reformation for three days. Brothers Nikola and Juraj Zrinski took part in those celebrations. Fessler, 1824, 430-431. Juraj V was allegedly elected as defender of the Protestant faith between the Danube and Drava Rivers at the Hungarian diet. He demanded freedom of religious confession. Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, 1971, 632.
- 15 At the beginning of 1625, the Palatine Stanislaw Thurzó died. In his place, King Ferdinand appointed Miklós Eszterházy, who had already converted from Calvinism to Catholicism in 1600, making an instant social promotion. In those times, when even

In summary, Protestantism on the Zrinski estates can be traced for about half a century, but the exact dates are still blurry. Juraj Zrinski IV is remembered in the historiography as one who was chiefly responsible for the spread of Protestantism in the Croatian region. However, the majority of accusations for his misconduct against the Catholics were related to financial and personnel issues, as will be shown later.

There is little research in historiography regarding whether the Zrinskis evangelized all their estates at the same pace or whether they adapted to specific regional circumstances. In the Inner-Austrian case (even in the Hungarian case), it is well known that already from the 1540s, Protestant magnates and nobility were in the majority, leading a systematic policy of evangelism throughout their properties. Their clash with the Catholic archduke and the Jesuits was fierce, and they contemplated systematic measures for how to spread the new teaching on their personal estates and in the archduke's territories. They invited and supported the best Protestant preachers and teachers. They built new churches and renovated the old. They established Protestant schools. Their political culture was strongly influenced by their religious beliefs. They endeavored to provide religious infrastructure to people living on the lands of the Catholic archduke, especially townspeople, by erecting new churches on their own lands adjacent to towns. A massive effort of a similar sort cannot be traced in the Zrinski case, or in the case of Protestant magnates in Croatia-Slavonia. There, the spread of Protestant teaching was often erratic and loosely organized. Moreover, the Zrinskis, as Protestants, did not have a unique religious policy for all their estates; they adapted from one estate to another. Consequently, it seems that the status of the Catholic Church was radically affected on some estates, especially those in Zala and Vas counties,<sup>16</sup> and quite superficially in others.

Palatine was Catholic, magnates started to convert in greater numbers. In addition, Archbishop of Esztergom Péter Pázmány, who contributed to the conversion of many noblemen (Forgács, Erdödy, Balassa), convinced Juraj V Zrinski to abandon the Protestant teaching in 1625. Péter Pázmány became close to the Zrinski family, and after Juraj V died, he even appointed custodians for his sons. Fessler, 1824, 582, 587. Stanko Jambrek believes he converted to Catholicism after he became the Croatian ban (1622) in 1625. He partially accepted Bučar's view that this happened because the law against Protestants endorsed by the Croatian-Slavonian diet in 1608 did not allow Protestants to fill high offices in the kingdom, but also highlighted that he was elected while he was still a Protestant. Jambrek, 2013, 221-222. There are also opinions that he converted in 1623, as enumerated by Korunek. Korunek, 2014, 59.

16 A summary of events at the Zrinski and Batthyány estates in western Hungary in: Štefanec, 2001, 221-224.

## 2

I will start with the religious houses and buildings on the Čakovec estate as the central Zrinski residence in the Protestant period. According to an extensive study by Anđela Horvat on sacral buildings in Međimurje, there were no churches built for Protestant purposes from 1570 until 1623, and Zrinski iconoclasm was responsible for the fact that medieval church inventory and interior decoration were not preserved in churches and chapels in Međimurje that mostly date from the medieval, Gothic period (A. Horvat, 1956, 77-79; A. Horvat, 1975, 75-76). Anđela Horvat provides two examples of the adaptation of churches for Protestant worship: first, original Gothic decorations were removed from stone custodies (*kustodije*) in Nedelišće and Podturen and replaced with early-Baroque wooden decorations, except for angels that were acceptable to Protestants. Second, the rebuilding of sacral objects only started in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, first through the embellishment of Catholic churches and later through reshaping and rebuilding according to Baroque principles. It included interior decoration.<sup>17</sup> In sum, religious life in Međimurje was rather thoroughly changed by the Zrinski conversion to Protestantism though one should not neglect the effect of voluntary conversion due to the strong presence of Protestantism in neighboring Hungarian and Austrian regions. Did all this happen in a violent way? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that it left a visible trace on the architecture and interior design of Catholic churches.<sup>18</sup> The acceptance of Protestantism brought evident changes in the decoration of churches, but sheer vandalism cannot be confirmed in sources.

Further on the question of violence, Zagreb bishops and 18<sup>th</sup> century chroniclers were harsh towards Juraj Zrinski. According to them, Juraj was blatantly violent and aggressive in Međimurje on purely religious grounds, persecuting Paulines. At first, in December 1576, Juraj IV guaranteed the Paulinians that they could retain their traditional privileges obtained from the times of the establishment of the monastery during his rule and during the rule of his successors (Kukuljević Sakcinski, 1863, 278-279; Korunek, 2014, 57). According to later reports, he changed his mind; he lowered their rights to the tenth of vine and half of wheat for 15 years, he took their vineyards and market rights on St. Helen's day, he plundered their premis-

17 More on changes in sacral architecture in Međimurje in: A. Horvat, 1956, 78, 70-76 (on custodies of churches in Podturen and Nedelišće), 77-90; A. Horvat, 1975, 75-76.

18 On the strategies of Protestants and Catholics in church decoration and visual arts, see: Cvetnić, 2007, 31-34 et passim.

es, etc.<sup>19</sup> Similar to the entire Austrian, Croatian and Hungarian area where the Catholic Church was a rich landowner, a split with the church could provide new lands and new sources of income and power to noblemen. The Catholic Church often lost its income from the rented church tenth, paid on the basis of the so called *arrendatio perpetua*.<sup>20</sup> Normally, the persecution and takeover of church properties was perceived and interpreted dramatically by the Catholic side. Traces of these differences are amply present in the historiography.

Allegedly, events in Međimurje got worse; Pauline friars first fled the persecutions, but returned later; they continued to keep in contact with the local population and administer sacraments, running back to monastery tunnels whenever Juraj sent his soldiers. In 1580, Juraj tortured Paulines, destroyed the monastery and the prior died in prison after having been tortured.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Nikola Selnički stated in May 1601 that Juraj was the main heretic in the kingdom, that he withheld the tithe and revenues from all the churches in Međimurje and was replacing Catholic priests with heretics, but there was no mention of the extreme violence cited above.<sup>22</sup> The extreme events are rather ill-supported by contemporary evidence. Could Juraj Zrinski demolish the monastery and force the Paulines out if he wanted? Yes, he could do it easily. Still, judging by the archeological remains, the Paulines remained throughout the period and the majority of Zrinski family members were buried in the monastery complex, whether in the Paulinian church of St. Helen or in the mausoleum: Katarina Zrinski (born Frankopan), head of Nikola Zrinski IV, Juraj V, quite possibly even Juraj Zrinski IV, etc. A red, marble tombstone from the complex could belong to Nikola Zrinski IV or to Juraj Zrinski IV, or maybe to some other of Nikola's sons (Korunek, 2014, 56, 58, 65-66, 68-69; Pelc, 2007, 315.).

In sum, Catholic priests were no longer welcome; they had to convert or move. As for the Paulines, Zrinski did not respect traditional Pauline

19 These were oft repeated events from Bedeković onward. See: Bedeković, 1752, I, 261, 271; Bučar, 1900, 202; R. Horvat, 1944, 62; Korunek, 2014, 56-57.

20 On *arrendatio* in: Štefanec, 2001, 217-218.

21 Oft repeated from Bedeković onwards: Bedeković, 1752, I, 261, 272-273; Bučar 1900, 201-202. Short comments on Bedeković (including the appeal of Pauline Father General Ivan Zajc to Rudolf II) in: Štefanec, 2001, 216-221. Recent and comprehensive summary of events and literature in regard to Juraj Zrinski IV and Paulines in Međimurje in: Korunek, 2014, 56-59.

22 Latin letter of Nikola Selnički in: Klaić, 1973 (1911), 667-668. Reports on the refusal to pay church dues and reports on the replacement of Catholic priests with Protestants also in: Bedeković, 1752, I, 261-262, 271-272.

privileges, just like many other estate owners who wanted to reduce church licenses, but not specifically related to the Protestant-Catholic clash. The Zrinskis attempted to abolish Pauline traditional rights even when they were Catholics, throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Korunek, 2014, 61-64). In Međimurje, fights with the Paulines over feudal incomes were incessant and the reason behind it was not only faith, but finance (vineyards, market rights) as well. However, the adaptation of Catholic churches for Protestant worship and the replacement of Catholic priests with new preachers and pastors was naturally seen as a hostile act that gravely disturbed the Catholic Church. Setting ruthless killings, torture and deliberate vandalism aside as exaggerations, one must agree that Međimurje, as part of the Hungarian kingdom where Protestantism was politically well supported by political elites, was a region that witnessed visible changes from the Zrinski transfer to Protestantism.

### 3

Another large conglomeration of Zrinski estates (Brod, Ozalj and Ribnik) was situated southwest of Međimurje, partly in the diocese of Krbava-Modruš, and partly in the diocese of Zagreb. The diocese of Krbava-Modruš was traditionally administered by the Glagolitic Catholic priests, so called *popovi glagoljaši*. Glagolitic priests customarily celebrated Mass in Old-Slavonic or Church-Slavonic (not in Latin). Their theological education was rather basic. Priests were educated in the national language, their scarce books were written in Glagolitic letters and they corresponded in the national language and script. They often complained about the lack of religious books in the Croatian language. Their use of the vernacular conformed well with the new teaching. Therefore, many translators for the Protestant print shop in Urach were recruited from among the Glagolitic priests (Čutić Gorup, 2012, 100-154). Obviously, different circumstances and customs in the diocese of Krbava-Modruš reduced the potential for conflicts and misunderstandings with Protestants in the area.

Zrinski estates in the area were adjacent to Bela krajina and Metlika - famous for the rich activity of Protestant preachers supported by magnates and Protestant Austrian military commanders from the 1540s. The area had every predisposition to be reformed, even independently of the Zrinski family. According to contemporary reports, Juraj Zrinski supported Protestant preachers fleeing from Inner-Austria (Lopašić 1893, 171-173), but there are no conclusive signs that he attempted a systematic evangelization of the area. Firstly, those were regions where the anti-Protestant

policy of the Croatian-Slavonian diet and nobility with unanimous Habsburg support could have some effect. Secondly, in those parts, the major Zrinski concern for a long time was how to resettle, and not how to reform, the area.

According to tax registers and research by Josip Adamček, large fractions of these estates were heavily depopulated by long-lasting Ottoman incursions. In the estate, Brod or around Moravice, the majority of the population had left, escaped or perished by the 1550s, and desolation continued throughout the century. Only some estates, like Ozalj and Ribnik, were repopulated by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> The resettlement was even done by the Orthodox population. As presented elsewhere, the Zrinski dispute with the new Orthodox population was fierce, but it focused on taxation and land and income issues, not on religious issues (Štefanec, 2008, 125-151). Although older historiography puts great emphasis on the Zrinski support of Protestant preachers in the area, it seems that more organized measures started to be introduced only after the area was resettled and the Ottoman threat was significantly reduced. One source provides valuable information. According to an official report from May 1601 written to the king by the then bishop of Zagreb, Nikola Stjepanić Selnički from Konjščina (1598-1602)<sup>24</sup>, the Zrinskis started to introduce changes in the Ozalj region only around 1601. Selnički claimed that persecution of Catholic priests in the area of Ozalj and their replacement with heretics from Austrian lands persecuted by Archduke Ferdinand had happened quite recently.<sup>25</sup>

23 According to Josip Adamček, due to the Ottoman attacks, large areas from Ogulin to Brod na Kupa and Moravice were completely desolated by the middle of the 16th century. The Ozalj and Ribnik Estates also suffered. In 1558, there were only 16.5 inhabited plots of land (*session, selište*) in the huge area around the Brod estate. Next to the Lukovdol fortress, there were only 13 peasants and 3 refugees. In Ribnik alone, in 1558, there were just 5.6% desolated plots of land. After the 1570s, when Ottoman raids ceased, mainly due to the erection of Karlovac, the number of inhabitants on the Zrinski estates in the region started to stabilize. In 1579, there was around 22% of desolated plots of land on the Dubovac estate, which decreased to 12% in 1581. In 1598, the Ozalj estate was completely settled. Those were rather swift and remarkable recoveries from the situation half a century earlier. However, one has to take into consideration that completely settled did not necessarily mean that the previous population density was achieved since numerous plots of land were irreparably overgrown in the meantime. Adamček, 1980, 255-256, 262, 388, 537.

24 More on Bishop Nikola Selnički in: Krčelić, 1994 (1770), 345-359.

25 *Quorum caput est dominus comes a Zrinio, qui omnes propemodum parochiales ecclesias ante quidem in bonis Chaktorniensibus nunc autem recens in bonis castri suis Ozal,*



Hence, throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, apart from supporting Protestant preachers, Juraj Zrinski did not actively destroy Catholic structures in the area. This is possibly because clearly distinguished religious factions were still not formed in the area with its large presence of Glagolitic priests. For example, throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Glagolitic priests resided and served in the Catholic church of St. Mary in Mahićno (Laszowski, 1929, 6). In Trg near Ozalj, Glagolitic priests led the parish. The patrons of the parish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were the Zrinskis as owners of Ozalj estate. Its parish priest from 1580 to 1596 was a Glagolitic priest, *pop* Matija Maričić, who was known as the writer of communal letters, next to some *dyaks* like Miklous djak Perych. Many other Glagolitic parish priests in Trg were known from the 17<sup>th</sup> century which testifies to their continuity in the area. The parish in Ozalj and the church of St. Vitus in Ozalj functioned without reported problems in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and parish priests resided in it.<sup>26</sup> In Svetice in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a Pauline monastery and a church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while in the vicinity there were two smaller chapels (St. Margaret and St. Katrin). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the complex of Svetice was run by about twelve Glagolitic priests. The Frankopans were their patrons, but priests remained in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century during the Zrinski era. Only at the end of the century did they leave Svetice. According to Laszowski, they may have been persecuted by Juraj Zrinski or they may have left when Petar Domitrović, Bishop of Zagreb and tutor to Peter and Nikola, established a Pauline monastery in Svetice in 1627 with its first prior being Ivan Orlović Belostenec.<sup>27</sup> In any case, the monastery and churches remained unharmed – attempts at reformation were too irregular. Presumably, Juraj's actions mentioned by Bishop Selnički were the result of new, more peaceful circumstances and increased settlement in the area, possibly even the consequence of Juraj's increasing age which could have prompted him to more systematically help the Protestant cause on his other important estates too.

*omnino in hac mea dioecesi existents, decimis et aliis redditibus spoliavit; sacerdotes amovit et loco eorum haereticos concionatores, quos serenissimus princeps archidux Ferdinandus ex suis expulit provinciis, induxit et recepit, ...* The letter was originally published in Latin by Vjekoslav Klaić: Klaić, 1982, 667-668.

26 See more in: Laszowski, 1929, 21-22, 25. On St. Vitus in Ozalj, see: Laszowski, 1929, 49-50.

27 More in: Laszowski, 1929, 7-9. In Svetice, the last Frankopan Ozaljski, Stjepan (1577) was buried. Laszowski, 1929, 8. Belostenec also served as a prior of the Pauline monastery in Crikvenica near the Vinodol estate that was established in 1412 by Nikola Frankopan.

## 4

Further southwest, there was another large Zrinski estate called Vinodol. On the Vinodol estate, religious upheavals were even less obvious. Most of the churches and monasteries in Vinodol were built by the Frankopans in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when they were the only owners of Vinodol as well as major benefactors and patrons of the Catholic Church in the area. Zrinskis obtained the majority of land and towns in the Vinodol area from the 1550s until the 1570s. Juraj Zrinski worked on some fortifications and civil architecture in the Vinodol towns, but Radmila Matejčić has already stated that the Zrinskis did not once appear as patrons and financiers of churches in Vinodol in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Frankopans, on the other hand, fulfilled their traditional duties in their remaining Novi.<sup>28</sup> Matejčić also stated, which is slightly contradictory, that in the sacral architecture of Vinodol, one could notice new stylistic forms and shapes at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century introduced by masters from the Alpine area which she attributed to the Zrinski influence.<sup>29</sup>

To date, there is no mention of the transformation of churches in Vinodol for Protestant worship or an introduction of new priests. Quite on the contrary, the Catholic hierarchy retained its traditional privileges. Catholic churches in several Zrinski towns were supplemented by the joint effort of the chapter, brotherhoods, friars and priests, and Zrinski did not prohibit it. In the town of Grobnik, there was a parish church of St. Jacob from the 13<sup>th</sup> century that was extended in the 1520s by adding a new sanctuary and southern nave in the late Gothic and renaissance manner. The bell tower in front of the entrance started to be built in 1572. On the staircase leading to the chorus, there is an inscription with the letters F.D. and the year 1577. In the church, there are many tombstones, the oldest one from 1590, belonging to the parish priest, Ivan Vučić. A church of the Holy Trinity (with three altars) was erected in front of Grobnik in 1613. The little stone bell tower in Grobnik has three bells and the second was crafted in 1571.<sup>30</sup> According to Laszowski, the parish church of St. Martin

28 "Tokom čitavog stoljeća vladavine u Vinodolu Zrinski se ni u jednom slučaju ne pojavljuju kao zakladnici ili protektori gradnji crkava, dok Frankopani Tržaćki izvršavaju sve obaveze prema zakladama svojih predaka u Novom i na Trsatu." Matejčić, 1988, 71.

29 "U sakralnoj arhitekturi Vinodola krajem 16. stoljeća pojavljuju se novi stilski formalni oblici koje unose majstori iz predalpskog prostora." Matejčić, 1988, 71.

30 Data on Grobnik from: Matejčić, 1988, 71; ELU, 1962, 473 (facts from Emil Laszowski and Gyuro Szabo); Laszowski, 1923, 68-69; Hirc, 1996 (1891), 71; Bradanović, 2012, 69. In 1612-13, a fierce conflict between Julije Čikulin and Nikola Zrinski started

in Grižane has a baptismery with a Glagolitic inscription indicating that it was erected in 1579 in the name of God by the Glagolitic priest, *pop* Barić Franić. The Grižane bell tower ('Vinodol type' of bell tower) was probably finished in 1611 because the great church bell made by G.B. Polis is dated with 1611.<sup>31</sup> In Belgrad, there was a rebuilding of the church of the Holy Virgin Mary of Snow that was executed with the help of *pop* Mikula Mužević in 1611. Later on, it was rebuilt again.<sup>32</sup> Beside all this, in July 1602, when the Zrinskis were surely still Protestants, they liberated *capitol* in Grižane and Belgrad from the vine fee called *potoka* in order to "equalize them with other Vinodol priests" and demanded all Zrinski officials in Vinodol to respect the decision in the future.<sup>33</sup> In Bribir, in the church of St. Peter and Paul, there is a painting (feet washing) by Jacopo Palma Junior (1544-1628) and rich furnishings, partially from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the conscription of income and expenditures on the Zrinski Vinodol estate from 1608 mentions, for example, that some boards (possibly roof shingle) were bought in order to cover a chapel in the town of Grobnik (*Josche za Mesttriu daszak cziplyenyecz, chymaszeye kapella pokrilla wgradu. Thym Mesttrom kuplyenoie Mesza za hranu.*). Moreover, in the case of the Grižane priests, it was stated that they obtained 3 Libres yearly for church singing (*opivanje*) at the chapel of St. Michael (*Popom gre*

which might have influenced later building activities in Grobnik.

- 31 Laszowski, 1923, 192-193; Matejčić, 1988, 71. Radmila Matejčić also provides information that the church of St. Martin started to be built by Barić Franić in 1599, but it does not change my line of argument. Matejčić, 1988, 71.
- 32 On Belgrad, see also: Matejčić, 1988, 71. According to Matejčić, in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a master from the north came to Vinodol, Baštijan Brnikar, in order to build holy places together with the parish priest, friars and priests of Grižane. He also worked at the church in Belgrad.
- 33 "... tuže se nam ta grički i belgracki capitul, da kruto teškom mestu gore i malo prostora i konfina imaju, i da bismo im pustili što malo potoke plaćaju, i da bi od toga mirovni bili, kako i drugi naši vinodolski popi, a to je za stanovito, da su oni takove pravice parvo imali, ... ostavljamo sim našim sadašnjem i vu napredak budućem vinodolskim officialom, da ta naša dva rečena capitola od potoke zgora rečene od plaće slobodneh činimo i vu toj slobošćine deržu, kako i derže naši Vinodolske pope, ...". The letter was signed by two Nikola Zrinskis and one Juraj Zrinski on July 30, 1612. Laszowski, 1951, 19-20.
- 34 ELU, 1959, 499. More on the Bribir church and Palma's painting, see also in: Matejčić, 1982, 481-482, 547. According to Sanja Cvetnić, Jacopo Palma Jr. was actually "an interpreter of post-tridentine ideas." His painting in Bribir might originate from the first two decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Zrinskis were still Protestants, but this case deserves further exploration. More in: Cvetnić, 2007, 13-14, 92-94.

na Leto za opiuanie kapele zuetoga Mikule, y danoymie L 3.)<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Glagolitic Catholic priests and institutions in Vinodol were traditionally released from the payment of dues to their Zrinski owners. It remained so throughout the Protestant period. According to the detailed conscription of income and spending for the entire Vinodol estate from 1593, priests (*popovi*) retained their privileges. The same was confirmed in the conscription of income and spending from 1608.

In 1593 in Bakar, relief from *bir* (yearly fee) was granted to the church of St. Lucia, the house of the friars, Priest or *pop* Grga, *pop* Starčić, *pop* Tounac and some officials and commendable men. In Drivenik, the parish priest (*plovan*) was released, and in Grižane, *pop* Barić and *pop* Lovrenac were released. In Bribir, the church of St. Peter was freed, while in Grobnik, the brotherhood of St. Mary<sup>36</sup> had to be sponsored yearly according to the wishes of the late Nikola Zrinski IV and his wife. *Porkulab* or administrator in Grobnik was *pop* Stipan Sandrić.<sup>37</sup> In the Bribir *urbarium*, there was a provision that all peasant houses should give some wheat to nearby churches (St. Martin, St. Helena, St. Steven, St. Vitus, St. Nikola). It was all collected by the estate owner (Zrinski) as church patron and guardian (Laszowski, 1915, 36; Laszowski, 1923, 224). In 1608, *pop* Stipan Sandrić was released from paying *bir* in Grobnik and donations were still due to the brotherhood of St. Mary. In Bakar, *pop* Grga, St. Lucia, the friar's house, *pop* Starčić and *pop* Tegunić were freed from the yearly dues for *bir*. In Grižane, Zrinski released *pop* Lovrenac and *pop* Barić Franić; in Drivenik, he released the local parish priest (*plouanacz*), and in Bribir, the church of St. Peter.<sup>38</sup> An interesting provision is mentioned in the oldest domesday book (*urbar*) of Bribir from the Zrinski period which testifies to the ordinary cycle of life of the Catholic clergy in Vinodol. Any *pop* (priest, monk) in Vinodol who begot a son with his female cook (*kwharycza*) had to pay a fine of 50 Libres, and if it was a daughter, the fine was 25 Libres. Even after

35 Hrvatski državni arhiv. Arhiv obitelji Čikulini Sermage. Kutija 45, 1.9., year 1608, 1-49, here 14, 22.

36 On the Brotherhood of St. Mary in Grobnik, see also the related article in: Laszowski, 1915, 18. On brotherhoods in this region in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see: Pelc, 2007, 232.

37 Hrvatski državni arhiv. Arhiv obitelji Čikulini Sermage. Kutija 45., 1.1., year 1593; Laszowski, 1923, 138, 187. With regard to various exemptions of priests and monks in Vinodol, check the Zrinski estate books, i.e., domesday books (*urbari*, *urbaria*) from the period considered and the instructions to Ludovik Čikulin from 1605 in: Laszowski, 1915, 13, 16, 21, 32-33, 35.

38 Hrvatski državni arhiv. Arhiv obitelji Čikulini Sermage. Kutija 45., 1.9., year 1608, 1-49.

that, the bishop could punish him at will.<sup>39</sup>

The report of Markantun de Dominis from 1602 states that there were 9 forts with churches (*zborne crkve*) in the bishopric of Krbava-Modruš after the Ottoman destruction that belonged to Count Zrinski, Croat and heretic. Moreover, he asserted that Mass was celebrated by 60 priests in the Old-Slavonic language. In 1615, Vincenzo Martena stated that the bishop had jurisdiction over 9 castles from which one belonged to the emperor, one to the Frankopans (Novi), 6 to the Zrinski family (Bakar, Grobnik, Grižane, Belgrad, Drivenik, Bribir) and one to Archduke Ferdinand (Trsat). Priests celebrated Mass in the Illirian way and there were 60 priests, 7 sub-deacons and deacons and 20 clerics. Out of those, only three knew some Latin.<sup>40</sup> In 1624, a famous synod was held in the Zrinskis' Bribir to discuss some Tridentine measures.<sup>41</sup>

Cited reports would surely mention major changes in local religious practices. Zrinski traveled to Vinodol and took good care of it as substantial income and trade products came from the area, but it seems reasonable to conclude that Zrinski only marginally intervened in religious affairs in Vinodol.

39 "Popy po uszem Wynodollu, ki by ymel z kwharyczom szwoiom szyna, ima sze nad nym wazettj byrsaga gospodina m. l. 50. Ako by kchy bila, ima sze wzettj l. 25. A oberh toga biskup tay kye wollian kastigattj po nyegouoy woly." Laszowski, 1915, 5, 37.

40 The number of Glagolitic priests decreased during the century. The Holy Mass was served in Old Slavonic, rarely in Latin. Bistrovic, 2012, 56-57. Latin became obligatory by the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jesuit gymnasium in Rijeka, etc.). Glagolitic priests were educated by the parish priests who taught them how to read and write Glagolitic letters, moral theology and casuistry. They assisted parish priests in church rituals and learned the liturgy from Glagolitic books. Only from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century did the bishop start to insist that they learn Latin in order to read theological literature. Medved, 2012, 37-47, here 44-46; Hoško and Kovačić, 2003, 176-177.

41 The Catholic Reformation resulted in numerous synods in Dalmatian and Istrian bishoprics. One of them was held in Vinodol, in Zrinski Bribir, in 1624. It was summoned by Bishop Ivan Agatić (1617-1640). A Franciscan monk from Trsat, Franko Glavinić, was present. They discussed how to publish decaying Glagolitic liturgical books, missals and breviaries according to the new prescriptions of the Council of Trent (changes to the Roman Missal and the Roman Breviary). Agatić and Bosnian Bishop Tomko Mrnavić wanted to print them in papal custody in Rome. The pope was Urban VIII. The task was entrusted to Glavinić (Laszowski, 1923, 225). They should have been printed in Glagolitic letters. Glavinić's assistant, Franciscan Rafael Levaković, took over the job and transferred the Protestant print shop that Glavinić acquired in Tuebingen to Rome. There, he printed liturgy books in Glagolitic letters in the Old-Slavonic language, and in Church-Slavonic with Russian redaction. Medved, 2012, 45; Hoško and Kovačić, 2003, 165-168; Matejčić does not exclude the possibility that masters from Carniola adapted the church in Bribir (*zborna crkva u Bribiru*) on the occasion of the mentioned church synod. Matejčić, 1988, 71.

## Conclusion

Considering the available data, one still cannot assert that the Zrinskis converted due to their strong religious beliefs and substantial theological disagreements with Catholic teachings. Most probably, the reasons for the Zrinski transfer to Protestantism were manifold: financial (reluctance to pay church dues and possible financial benefits from the transfer of Catholic properties to private hands), socio-cultural (they were living in the surroundings of Hungarian, Austrian and Czech magnates that had largely converted to Protestantism) and religious (they were brought up in a Protestant-friendly and rather tolerant family). I believe that it was exactly a mixture of the above motives that resulted in their conversion and, consequently, with the uneven pace of evangelism on the Zrinski properties and something that could be considered their flexible and adaptable religious politics. Protestantism in the Zrinski family was not a revolutionary act or a result of intense religious passion, but a natural consequence of aristocratic life in a predominantly Protestant social and religious setting. As a consequence, Međimurje experienced the most systematic evangelization of all the Zrinski properties. Protestant communities remained functional in Međimurje even at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although the Zrinskis had returned to Catholicism more than 70 years earlier.<sup>42</sup> More significant changes were introduced on the properties in the central part of Croatia only towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while in Vinodol, one could hardly discern any clear evidence of evangelism because the Zrinskis opted out of tackling traditional conditions on that estate. The Zrinskis acted more systematically on the estates where they resided, but on more distant estates, they largely respected traditions and customs – they adapted.

Because of constant warring, it was important to be financially and militarily strong, to settle estates with serfs, to save on expenditures (if possible on the account of the Catholic Church) and to avoid unnecessary turmoil. Juraj Zrinski's religious policy was flexible, spatially adaptable and maybe not so infamously one-dimensional as it is sometimes described. He was judging where he could act with more determination and vigor, and where he could not. His sons, following in his footsteps, adjusted their religious orientation to the new political and social circumstances.<sup>43</sup> Nikola

42 Numerous sources in the collection published by Lopašić: Lopašić, 1893, 181-182, 189-190, 193.

43 Already, during the life of Juraj Zrinski IV, from the 1580s and 1590s, factions of Inner-Austrian nobility started to reconvert to Catholicism, supporting ever more stringent

Zrinski VII, or Nikola the Poet, remained rather tolerant to Catholics and members of the Zrinski family continued to marry into Protestant families until their very end.

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Counter-Reformation measures in Inner-Austria. It lasted until the end of the 1620s when the Protestants were finally expelled. Half a century of Habsburg efforts in Austria resulted in an increasing number of Hungarian noble families turning to Catholicism and building careers in Habsburg service.

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## Abstract

It is still largely unknown how the conversion of Croatian-Slavonian magnates to Protestantism affected Catholic religious orders, churches and priests on their lands. Focusing on the Zrinski family as one of the most powerful magnates in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, this paper will address several questions. How did Protestant magnates treat sacral buildings and building projects on their diverse territories? To what extent did they intervene in the lives and customs of Catholic priests and friars in various estate groups that stretched from western Hungary to the Adriatic? Did the Zrinskis have unique strategies for all their estates or did they adapt their religious policies from one estate to another, depending on laws, political circumstances and the amount of their presence in certain regions?