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**The Medieval Bosnian State as an Elective Monarchy<sup>1</sup>**

**Bir Seçim Monarşisi Olarak Ortaçağ Bosna Devleti**

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### **Abstract**

The paper will include an analysis of the organization of state power in the medieval Bosnian state with special reference to the specifics of the position of rulers, as well as the position of the Bosnian nobility gathered in the State Diet, and their relationship. The Bosnian Church will also be considered as a special feature of medieval Bosnia, and its influence on the weakening of the central state of power, but also the limitation of the Bosnian nobility in terms of particularization of the Bosnian state. Finally, the powers of the Bosnian State Diet to elect and overthrow the Bosnian ruler will be considered with a view to drawing a conclusion about this feature of the medieval Bosnian state.

**Keywords:** Medieval Bosnia, Nobility, State Diet, Ruler, Parliament, Bosnian Church, Elective Monarchy.

### **Öz**

Makale, ortaçağ Bosna devletinde devlet iktidarının örgütlenmesinin bir analizini, hükümdarların konumunun ayrıntılarına ve ayrıca Devlet Diyetinde toplanan Bosnalı soyluların konumuna ve bunların ilişkilerine özel bir atıfta bulunacak. Bosna Kilisesi aynı zamanda ortaçağ Bosna'sının özel bir özelliği ve merkezi güç devletinin zayıflaması üzerindeki etkisi, aynı zamanda Bosna devletinin tikelleşmesi açısından Bosna asaletinin sınırlandırılması olarak değerlendirilecektir. Son olarak, Bosna Devlet Diyetinin Bosnalı hükümdarı seçme ve devirme yetkileri, ortaçağ Bosna devletinin bu özelliği hakkında bir sonuca varmak amacıyla ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ortaçağ Bosna'sı, Asalet, Devlet Diyeti, Hükümdar, Parlamento, Bosna Kilisesi, Seçmeli Monarşi.

## Introduction

The Bosnian medieval state is a strange, but also interesting historical and legal creation. We first get information about it at the end of the 10th century in the capital work of the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus “De administrando imperio”, and centuries later the sources become more and more numerous. From then until today, Bosnia is known to us as a geographical, historical, legal and political term. In the Middle Ages, the Bosnian state had a number of its own specifics that will be presented in the paper. Starting from its unique social structure, through the church to the central government. Medieval Bosnia can be defined as an atypical feudal, class monarchy with pronounced elements of an elective monarchy. Although the authors often compare it with other feudal states in the area, we must agree that this is not the case. In Bosnia, the power of the ruler was significantly limited by the influence of the nobility gathered in the State Diet as the second organ of central government, and in everyday politics the will of the state parliament really had an influence on the state by the monarch. We can find the central government expressed in this way during the government of Ban Kulin, and Ban Matej Ninoslav, when there was a separate expression of the same. In addition to the central bodies, we also notice the bodies of regional and local self-government – the Bosnian nobility, which enjoyed economic, administrative and judicial immunity on their land holdings. It is believed that the reason for this state structure of the medieval Bosnian state was the Bosnian Church, which we see as a feature of the Bosnian medieval statehood. Although we work with scanty sources, we will try to show the position of the monarch, the nobility and the state parliament, and their relationship, in order to conclude that medieval Bosnia was a classic type of electoral monarchy.

## The Position of Feudal Lords and Nobility

The Bosnian nobility finds its origin in clan and tribal communities, that is, it originated from tribal elders who received land holdings for service and loyalty from the rulers for enjoyment (Čulinović, 1961, p. 27). All members of the Bosnian aristocratic class were collectively called princes or, according to some sources, only lords.<sup>2</sup> According to their economic and political strength, all the nobility is divided into: high nobility (or as they were called “velmože”), nobility (“vlastela”) and lower nobility (also called “vlasteličići”) (Imamović, 2003, p. 82; Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 57).

The high nobility included representatives of the most powerful families in medieval Bosnia, who, like the ruler, had their own courts, their own court apparatus, and even their own feudal lords. They could issue charters (as well as the ruler), they could conclude international agreements and trade agreements, wage wars independently, and at the time of the greatest weakening of the central government, they collected the ruler's income and kept it for themselves. They usually bore the titles of duke, archduke, grand duke, or simply prince.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these titles, the titles of prefect, prince, and grand duke were also in use (these were more honorary titles than real functions). The small nobility or “vlasteličići” are mentioned by King Stjepan Tvrtko in a treaty with Dubrovnik from 1378, and later they are mentioned by Queen Jelena Gruba as members of the State Diet (Ritter von Miklosich, 1858, p. 188).

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<sup>2</sup> In one agreement with Dubrovnik (Ragusa) Ban Matej Ninoslav identified the nobility with the “boljari”, which would mean good or honor man (Kurelac et al., 1873, p. 98).

<sup>3</sup> Members of the most powerful families in Bosnia bore the title of duke and herzog (eg. Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić bore the title of Duke of Split, Stjepan Vukčić Kosača bore the title of Herzog of St. Sava), the Great Duke of *Bosnian rusag* was the title of the oldest and most influential nobleman in State Diet. The title of duke was probably at first a military vocation to later become a noble title (Ćorović, 1940, p. 483).

The nobility in Bosnia, in contrast to those in neighboring countries, was largely secular. In medieval Bosnia we do not see the spiritual nobility, that is, we do not see the Church as a great landowner, because the ruling Bosnian Church, as part of its teaching, renounced feuds and other material wealth (but it is assumed that the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church had their feuds). All Bosnian nobility belonged to the category of nobility that enjoyed their possessions for life and passed them on to their heirs, and we do not see the existence of nobility that received land in exchange for military service (as *pronjari* in medieval Serbia or Byzantium).

As the holders of property rights over the feud, he was not an individual - the elder of a noble house, but his entire family (specifically all his brothers and male relatives). This is where the name for feuds in Bosnia comes from – “*plemenita baština*” [“noble heritage”] (Krključ, 2004, p. 116). Thus, we can say that the feud belonged to the collective rather than to the individual. This had great consequences for the social and political relations between the ruler and the nobility. This circumstance gave special strength to the Bosnian nobility and to a considerable extent strengthened the independence of the feudal lords in relation to the ruler. Once the land was given to the feudal lord and his family, it could never be taken away again. There is one exception to the previous rule, and that is betrayal (“*feudalna nevjera*”, feudal infidelity). In case the feudal lord committed the crime of treason, the ruler could accuse him before the State Diet (Dinić, 1955, p. 41; Babić, 1965, pp. 41-43). If the parliament finds him guilty, all his possessions and treasures will be confiscated (he was responsible “*glavom i blagom*” [“with his head and treasure”]).<sup>4</sup>

The rights of the Bosnian nobility to land tenure were really broader than the duties to the ruler which were loose and quite vague.<sup>5</sup> Although, *de iure*, the nobility had all the obligations that every feudal lord had in every feudal state, *de facto* this was not exactly the case. The nobility enjoyed significant social as well as political influence. At the signing of any interstate agreement, at least twelve members of the higher nobility had to be present as witnesses in addition to the ruler.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the feudal lords enjoyed economic, administrative and judicial immunity on their property.

Economic immunity consisted in the fact that the feudal lord had the right to collect a feudal rent from the peasants who lived and worked on his land. This rent appeared in three forms: in work, in material goods or in money (Imamović, 2003, p. 85). The labor rent consisted of the obligation of the peasants to work a certain number of days a week or a year on the property of their feudal lord. Later, this work turned into the obligation of the peasants to give a certain percentage or exactly a certain amount of their agricultural products to their master. Sources tell us that the combination of the previous two lasted for a very long time, only to eventually evolve into a cash rent with the development of the commodity-money economy. Administrative immunity generally consisted of the exercise of administrative and police authority over one's possession. Closely related to this is the judicial immunity contained in the right of the feudal lord to distribute justice among the settlers of his estate (Čulinović, 1961, pp. 36-37).

The scope of economic immunity can be seen in a fragment of a charter of King Stjepan Tomaš from 1446, which, after listing the towns and villages, states:

<sup>4</sup> The State Diet also decided on the issue of endowing someone with land or a noble title.

<sup>5</sup> There was military service, but it was quite vague (it is stated in a charter that a feudal lord should serve the ruler “*gospodinu oružjem, kako može najbolje*” or to serve “the Lord with arms, as best he can”).

<sup>6</sup> They were representatives of the State Diet, but also guarantors that what was signed would be carried out (in the agreements with Dubrovnik, the signature of at least twelve members of the nobility in addition to the monarch was always required).

*“...to vse više pisano, gradove, župe i sela i vsaka prihodišta ka od toga pristojne, dukate i ine dohotke dasmo i darovsma našim virnim i dragim slugam knezu Pavlu i knezu Marku, i knezu Jurju, i njih ostalomu, u vik vikom za plemenito...”* (Novaković, 1912, pp. 340-341)

*“...all that is written above, cities, parishes and villages and all revenues, ducats and all incomes we have given and given to our faithful servants to Prince Pavle, Prince Marko and Prince Juraj for all eternity that it is noble to them...”*

So, we see that King Stjepan Tomaš donated all the towns and villages listed in the charter with all their incomes. It is similarly stated in the charter of Ban Stjepan II Kotromanić sent to Duke Vukoslav Hrvatinić, where it is said that if the duke wants to give income to the monarch, he does so, and if he does not want to, he does not have to, and states:

*“...i da onde ne ni jednoga dohotkani sade razve kada hošte Vlkoslava...”* (Von Thalloszy, 1914, p. 8)

*“...and that there is not a single income here that Vukoslav does not want...”*

The same charter is important to us because of the insight into the administrative immunity that the feudal lords enjoyed:

*“...i da ne inoga vladavca onde, razve da su vladavci kneza Vlkoslava...”* (Von Thalloszy, 1914, p. 8)

*“...and that there is no other lord there except Prince Vukoslav...”*

We see judicial immunity in the charter from 1333, by which Ban Stjepan ceded certain territories to the Dubrovnik (Ragusa). The charter states the following:

*“...I sudctvo i globe i krvi u miru, da bude na njih volju, da imaju i drže, i da čine vsu svoju volju i hotenje kako od svoje baštine”* (Ritter von Miklosich, 1858, p. 106)

*“...and the judiciary and the fines, in blood and peace to have a will on them and to have and to hold and to do their will as on their own land...”*

Finally, the existence of a feudal hierarchy should be emphasized. Although the nobility was extremely powerful, there was still a certain hierarchical structure in the organization of the country. All large feudal lords were dependent on the monarch who was in fact „the first among equals“. The rest of the lower nobility and lower feudal lords depended on the more crowned ones (therefore, large feudal lords could establish feudal relations with their servants). If we were to draw a parallel, we could say that the small feudal lords were the servants of the great ones, and that the high nobility was obliged to serve the monarch faithfully as the highest sizen.

### **The Church of Bosnia as a Feature of the Bosnian State**

In order to understand the medieval Bosnian state, its nature and character, as well as its organization, it is necessary to consider the position of the Bosnian Church in this specific state formation. In medieval Bosnia, there were both Roman Catholic and Orthodox church organizations, but neither had such a role and such importance for the social and political life of the Bosnian state as the Bosnian Church, which played a key role until the collapse of the Bosnian kingdom in 15th century.

At its core, this church organization was Bogumil (or Pataren). It belonged to the ranks of heretical churches with dualistic teachings. This religious movement started from the belief that there are two

principles: good and evil. Based on these two principles, they came to the conclusion that there are two gods, one who is the creator of the spiritual and the other who is the creator of the material world.<sup>7</sup> They believed that these two gods - the “god of light” and the “god of darkness” were in constant conflict, just like good and evil. The Bogumil, or Pataren, teaching finds its roots in the third century in Persia, and boils down to a synthesis of Persian religious dualism with elements of early Christianity. This synthesis was shaped by the Persian religious scholar Maniheus. From Persia this teaching spread throughout Roman state, and especially among the disenfranchised peasant population (Imamović, 2003, p. 93).

In essence, the movement was based on the Bogumil teachings from Bulgaria and Macedonia in the 10th century, and spread throughout feudal Serbia in the 11th and 12th centuries. He had more the character of a social and antifederal, but a religious movement. He, along with asceticism, preached the renunciation of material wealth, the refusal to go to war, and the disobedience of the nobility and earthly rulers, as well as the clergy. The movement took root in Bosnia at the end of the 12th century, where it rejected its anti-feudal teachings and began to work closely with the Bosnian nobility. He soon abandoned many of his original views. Believers in Bosnia were divided into “krstjani”, that is, true believers, and “mrsni ljudi”, ordinary believers.<sup>8</sup> “Krstjani” were obliged to live an ascetic life, while ordinary believers could also marry, fight, and acquire earthly treasures. Their only duty was to listen to the clergy of the Bosnian Church and to repent and be baptized before death. The Bosnian church, like other serious denominations, had its own solid organization. At the head of the Church, as its head, was the “djed Crkve bosanske”. Below it was the lower clergy called “gosti”, and at the end we see the ordinary clergy or as the Bosnians called them “starci” (Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 62). Senior officials of the Bosnian Church often performed significant state duties. They knew how to represent the Bosnian ruler in foreign policy relations, they performed diplomatic service, but also some administrative tasks.

Although the Bogumil church in Bosnia has evolved markedly and moved away from the original teaching, it retains some of the characteristics of the Bogumil church. First of all, she renounced earthly goods, and was not a “spiritual feudal lord” and thus collected income from land holdings, as was the case in neighboring countries. The Bosnian Church did not have any land or other property, and this is one of the reasons why we do not see the existence of religious buildings (therefore, the Bosnian Church had no property at all). This circumstance is one of the most frequently mentioned reasons why the Bosnian Church had such good relations with Bosnian large landowners. This extremely good relationship was used extensively by the Bosnian Church. It used the political and social authority of the Bosnian nobility to exert decisive influence on the ruler, and to protect its independence. She received protection from the rulers whenever a ruler or some foreign force attacked her (Dinić, 1955, p. 11-12).

Because of its strong ties to the nobility, the Bosnian Church was one of the factors in the weakness of the central government that ultimately led to the internal weakening of the Bosnian state in general. Not only did it not help the centralist aspirations of the rulers, but together with the nobleman it strengthened particularist tendencies and feudal fragmentation (Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 63). On the other hand, most Bosnian rulers have long torn between supporting Bogumilism and Catholicism, and some of them have fought hard to weaken and even destroy the Bosnian Church (eg Matej Ninoslav, Prijezda, Šubići ...).

<sup>7</sup> In 1461, Thomas de Torquemada, cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, commented on the Bosnian Church as follows. In Bosnians, he says, there are two principles, one spiritual and disembodied, and the other evil, visible or physical. He stated that they call the first the god of light and the second the god of darkness.

<sup>8</sup> The authors believe that there could have been only a few hundred *krstjani* because they represented the church clergy.

Bosnian rulers most often did so under pressure from outside (primarily the Hungarian king and the Holy See), but it is possible that they did so out of dissatisfaction with the way Bosnian nobles and church officials treated the central government.

Despite the fact that the Bosnian Church significantly contributed to the internal weakness of the Bosnian state, primarily by supporting the particularist aspirations of the major authorities, it is believed that it significantly contributed to Bosnia's independence and its defense against external enemies. It can be said that the Bosnian Church and the Bosnian medieval state complemented each other. The state protected the Church from external and internal threats, and the Church protected the state by preventing it from falling into complete anarchy by keeping the nobles together.

### **The Position of the Ruler**

Until 1377, Bosnian rulers bore the title of “Ban Bosanski” (“Ban of Bosnia”),<sup>9</sup> and after the coronation of Stjepan Tvrtko Kotromanić, they held the title of “Kralj Bosne, Srbijem, Primorja, Humske zemlje, Donjih kraja, Zapanih strana, Usore i Podrinja” (“King of Bosnia, Serbia, Littoral, Hum, the Lower Krajina and the West, Usora and Podrinje”) (Šišić, 1962, pp. 217-219; Klaić, 1885, p. 201-203; Ćirković, 1964, 135-140; Malcolm, 2011, p. 71). When Stjepan Tvrtko received the royal wreath (crown), he informed the nobles and the nobility that he (the king) was “the master of cities and all revenues”, and that the nobility owed him (the crown) loyalty.

In the longest period of existence of the Bosnian medieval state, from the arrival of Ban Matej Ninoslav to power (around 1230), until its collapse in 1463, the ruling position was in one family – Kotromanić (Ćirković, 1958, p. 163). Regardless of the fact that the crown was in one ruling family, it often changed the head on which it stood, and not in a natural way according to some established hereditary order, but according to the will of the Bosnian ruler, which was expressed at the parliament. Thus, the will of the rulers was decisive both in bringing the new ruler to the throne and in overthrowing the Bosnian rulers from the same. This fact not only reflects the political power of the Bosnian nobility, but we also see that the ruler came by election. Thus, it can be concluded that Bosnia, whether intentionally or without it, has adopted a system befitting only one electoral monarchy.<sup>10</sup>

As in any other feudal state, the court apparatus (called “poštena dvorština [‘honest court’] in Bosnia) helped him in the daily affairs of the ruler. The ruler's office in medieval Bosnia was considerably smaller than in neighboring states. As a reason for this we can see a very small range of jobs that the ruler could do on his own. At the head of the ruler's staff was the “dvorski knez” [“court prince”].<sup>11</sup> This court official had authority over several departments, and performed a wide range of tasks for the ruler. The most

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<sup>9</sup> The title of “ban” is considered to be of Mongolian-Turkish origin and signifies one who is rich and famous. The authors believe that the Slavs inherited it from the Avars.

<sup>10</sup> Here we could draw a parallel with other electoral monarchies that developed in the feudal age. As the most famous we take the Holy Roman Empire created somewhere between the IX-X centuries. In the period from 1440 to 1770, a member of the Habsburg family would always be elected emperor (the situation is similar in Bosnia with the Kontromanićs), but regardless of that, it was still an elected monarchy due to the way the monarch ascended the throne. The Holy Roman Emperor was elected by a college of seven prince-electors (of which three were spiritual and four secular), so here too we see a similarity in the election of the Bosnian monarch when he was elected by a wider college of the State Diet (Bastaić and Krizman, 1981, pp. 181-184; Šarkić, 1999, pp. 168-169). As the second most famous example we can take the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, where the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania were initially elected by a small council so that near the end of this state union almost 500.000 nobles would participate in the assembly.

<sup>11</sup> It is believed that during the reign of king Stjepan Dabiša, the head of the king's office held the title “dvorski maršal” or court marshall (*marscealus aulicus*) (Durmišević, 2014, pp. 13-25).

important department was the state treasury, managed by a “komornik”.<sup>12</sup> He was in charge of collecting and disposing of the ruler's income. The function of court clerk was led by a “dijak”.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the sources that could tell us more about the court office in medieval Bosnia are few, and we can leave most things to speculation. In the available sources, members of the court apparatus also mention “tepčija”, “pehamnik” and “stavilac”.<sup>14</sup>

We would not have a complete picture of the position of the Bosnian ruler without considering his personal income. Bosnian rulers, in addition to the income from their land holdings, were also entitled to collect income on the basis of their regalia (which, in principle, belong to each ruler). Among the most important revenues of this kind were revenues from mines (especially the silver and lead mines for which Bosnia was known). The ruler often leased the mines to the people of Dubrovnik. In addition, he collected a special fee for the sale of silver (so-called “bolano”, silver stamped with the king's seal, that is, silver on which a special tax was paid could be freely sold and exported from the country).<sup>15</sup> Revenues came from minting money, but also from customs (the ruler often leased customs and customs to the people of Dubrovnik, but from the middle of the 15th century he also collected customs through his officials at a rate of 10%) (Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 64; Imamović, 2003, p. 99). As a special obligation, the peasants had to pay a tax of one ducat per house (the so-called “trgovina”, literally “trade”), then he charged the port tax from ships arriving in Bosnian ports. The ruler also received from Dubrovnik the so-called “stonski dohodak” [„Ston income“], in the amount of 500 perpers per year (since Bosnia ceded Ston and Peljesac to Dubrovnik in 1333) (Janković et al., 1967, p. 119), then from 1377 (since the coronation of King Stjepan Tvrtko) they also paid “svetodimitarski” income (2000 perpers which the people of Dubrovnik initially paid to Serbia for the enjoyment of trade privileges, and which later passed to the Bosnian ruler) (Ćorović, 2018, p. 227), and “mogoriš”, an income of 60 perpers paid for the use of vineyards and fields on Hum and Trebinje land (Imamović, 2006, p. 44). Despite such a large income of the ruler, his right to collect many was very limited by the feudal lords. After the death of King Stjepan Tvrtko, the nobility took over the customs (Kovačević, 1954, 234; Mijočević, 2017, p. 309-324, Kovačević, 1961), while the ducat in the house very rarely managed to reach the royal court (Babić, 1947, pp. 541-542).

### State Diet

As the second organ of central government in the medieval Bosnian state, we see the State Diet (according to some sources, the feudal Diet) (Imamović, 2003, p. 101) which officially called itself the “stanak” (Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 64). But in historiography we notice other names such as “sva Bosna“, “Bosna”, “zbor”, “sav rusag Bosanski” or just “rusag”.<sup>16</sup> The members of the parliament were all members of the Bosnian nobility, but only representatives of the most powerful families took an active part. On regular occasions, the parliament was convened and chaired by the ban, or later the king.<sup>17</sup> Unlike other medieval aristocratic colleges, members of the spiritual nobility did not take part in the work of the Bosnian State Diet, as there were none. However, the influence of the Bosnian Church and its clergy on the council

<sup>12</sup> The person who managed the state finances carried several titles, so according to some sources he is also called a “kaznac” and a “protovestijar”.

<sup>13</sup> In some charters it was also called “igramatik” and “logotet”.

<sup>14</sup> It has never been determined what falls within the scope of the *tepčija*, while the *pehamnik* and *stavilac* are considered to have been the stewards of the king's kitchen (Krključ, 2004, pp. 123-124).

<sup>15</sup> The ruler collected about 30.000 ducats a year from the silver mine in Srebrenica alone.

<sup>16</sup> *Rusag* from Hungarian *orszag*, *orszaggyules* – state, country, diet.

<sup>17</sup> Later, both the queen and the royal princes took part in the work of the Diet.

was great because church dignitaries had close ties with members of the high nobility in whom they saw an ally, so the Church pursued its interests in the parliament through its “friends” and “protectors” from the ranks of the high nobility, and sometimes through the ruler himself.

The agenda of the State Diet would include the most important issues of domestic and foreign policy of the Bosnian state, which included: 1. election and coronation of rulers,<sup>18</sup> 2. gift and confiscation of land, 3. change of state territory and 4. determination of foreign policy (Imamović, 2006, p. 45; Janković and Mirković, 1997, p. 64; Imamović, 2003, p. 101; Janković et al., 1964, p. 120).<sup>19</sup>

The rulers, therefore, came to power by election by the state parliament, but they were also removed in the same way. Regardless of the fact that, as a rule, the rulers were elected from Kotromanić's house, the ruler could come from any family, it is only important that the parliament elects him. All land holdings, as already explained in advance, were given by the ruler only with the consent and approval of the parliament. These possessions could not be confiscated except in cases where the Parliament deems it necessary. We exercise the second power of the parliament on the basis of the source left to us by King Stjepan Ostoja. In 1400, the unnamed monarch presented the town of Hlevno (today's Livno) (Šišić, 1962, pp. 219-221) to the Grand Duke Hrvoje Vukčić, and the charter states:

*“...kao svidoci i ručnici vlastele naše prisustvovali su od Bosne knez Pavle Radinović s braćom, knez Mirko Radojević s braćom, vojvoda Sandalj s braćom i tepčija Batalo s braćom, do Humske zemlje vojvoda Radić Stanković s braćom, vojvoda Vukašin Milatović s braćom, knez Juraj Radivojević s braćom, od Donjih Kraji Vladislav Dubravčić s braćom, od Usore vojvoda Vukmir s braćom, i od Podrinja Dragiša Dimčić s braćom, pristav od dvora Juraj Dragičević s braćom, a od svojih Hrvatina Smokvić s braćom...”* (Imamović, 2003, pp. 101-102; Imamović, 2006, p. 46)

*“...as witnesses and signatories of our nobility from Diet were present Prince Pavle Radinović with his brothers, Prince Mirko Radojević with his brothers, Duke Sandalj with his brothers and Tepčija Batalo with his brothers, Duke Radić Stanković with his brothers, Duke Vukašin Milatović with his brothers, Prince Juraj Radivojević with brothers, from Donji Kraji Vladislav Dubravčić with his brothers, from Usora Duke Vukmir with his brothers, and from Podrinje Dragiša Dimčić with his brothers, the bailiff from the court Juraj Dragičević with his brothers, and from his family Hrvatina Smokvić with his brothers...”*

From this fragment we see that the charter granting land ownership also lists all the present members of the nobility and the king's court office, who probably gave their permission to do so earlier. What catches our eye is that only the heads of noble houses are mentioned, and that others are addressed with the construction “with brothers”.

As already stated, the ruler himself could not deprive the feudal lord of his possessions. Only in the case of treason could he accuse the feudal lord before the State Diet, and only then, if the Diet finds him guilty (that is, according to the verdict of the Diet), can he be deprived of his feudal possession. The Diet also asked

<sup>18</sup> Special attention is paid to this issue.

<sup>19</sup> If we take into account all the stated powers of the parliament, it can be concluded that there are signs of the beginning of parliamentarism.

about the alienation of the state territory. The ruler could hand over a part of the state territory to a foreign state only when the parliament agreed to it (these were cases of renouncing parts of the state territory in favor of Dubrovnik, other cases were not or are unknown). In the end, but no less important, all the international treaties signed by the ruler went for ratification by the parliament and only after the parliament confirmed them would they start producing legal effect. Thus, foreign policy was completely handed over to the state parliament, which, in addition to interstate agreements, decided on both war and peace.<sup>20</sup>

The significance, but also the role of the parliament stemmed from the balance of power on the part of the ruler, on the one hand, and the nobility, on the other. The general conclusion is that the tendency to weaken the central government was the political reality of medieval Bosnia, in which the feudal nobility played a significant role, thus strengthening its position. However, respecting the historical and political significance of the Kotronamić dynasty, they were elected to the title of ban, ie a king who “rules” but “does not govern”. In essence, the rulers became only captives of their desires without any levers of power in their hands. In the end, we could conclude that sovereignty was a feature of the state parliament, not a feudal monarch.

### Conclusion

We see the specificity of the Bosnian medieval state in its state organization, but also in the social, economic and other relations that make up a young emerging society. We see the feudal monarch as the organs of state power, and the State Diet that played a significant role in the political development of the Bosnian medieval state. This role arose from the balance of power between the monarch and the feudal nobility, which, depending on time and circumstances, changed in favor of one or in favor of the other. Thus, during the reign of Ban Kulin, the central government was extremely strong, while a few years later, from Ban Matej Ninoslav, power passed more and more into the hands of the nobility gathered in the State Diet. The situation changed briefly with the coming to power of Stjepan Tvrtko, first as a ban and then as a king. The State Diet sat, but Tvrtko's word was the last. However, after his death, until the collapse of the Bosnian medieval state in 1463, the State Diet was constantly strengthened, and in the end he was the bearer of real sovereign power in Bosnia. Some authors state that this imbalance of power between the Diet, on the one hand, and the feudal monarch, on the other, led to the fall of Bosnia to the Ottomans in the middle of the 15th century. Many ask what it would be like if the nobility found a compromise with the ruler, and if it continued that tradition (provided it defended itself from the Turkish invasion), would we have a Bosnia that could match English parliamentarism? And could the Bosnian Church be the first Protestant church in the Balkans by rejecting the Bogumil teachings (which began to happen) and evolving Christian beliefs? It's hard to say. We are left with speculations.

From what is presented in the paper, it follows that the title of ruler remained in the same dynasty, Kotromanić (we can make a comparison with the Habsburg dynasty as the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire). Quickly, we see that the ruler ascended the throne only after approval, ie election by the nobility in State Diet, so we conclude that medieval Bosnia was an electoral monarchy (the principles of primogeniture and *maiorat* were completely excluded, and he could come to the throne anyone, of course by choice in State Diet). The will of parliament was a decisive factor both in ascending the throne and in descending from it.

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<sup>20</sup> See Janković et al., pp. 120-121.

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