

Research Article

Trade Relations between Bosnia and Ragusa in the late 13th Century

Elmedina Duranović*

Abstract:

Based on a rather modest number of original data records, this paper outlines the economic position of Bosnia in the second half of the 13th century. Assuming that the Bosnian population was predominantly oriented towards agriculture and livestock breeding, as was the case with its neighbours, the paper focuses on the trade related to agriculture and livestock breeding relying therein on the trade records as the most preserved archival documents at our disposal. Notwithstanding the fact that the slave trade was the most developed and therefore mostly recorded intercourse between Bosnia and Ragusa (Dubrovnik), this paper draws attention to other items related to Bosnian export. Hence, the paper discusses data on departure of Bosnian boys to study crafts in Ragusa and other Dalmatian coastal cities, which is a segment not to be neglected in an overview of economic relations in Medieval Bosnia.

Key words: Bosnia, Ragusa, 13th century, trade.

Introduction

The second half of the thirteenth century brought changes to the Bosnian society which consequently led to a rise of the medieval Bosnian State that existed in the following century and a half. Scarce primary written sources which would have contributed to resolving the abovementioned issue, do not justify neglecting or denying the importance of this period.

* Research Associate, University of Sarajevo - Institute for History,
ORCID: 0000-0003-3790-6060; Eposta: elmedina.duranovic@iis.unsa.ba

The Ragusan (Dubrovnik) Archives, well known for their valuable material for medieval studies, do not offer much information about Bosnia when it comes to the second half of the thirteenth century. One of the reasons lies in the fact that Bosnia and Ragusa were not immediate neighbours at that time and this distance between the two affected the extent of their mutual relations. Moreover, it is important to note that, by the end of the thirteenth century, the Ragusan Archives just established its systematic recording of documents and notarial deeds which subsequently developed into the present day system. Interestingly, it is the second half of this century when we notice for the first time the archival records regarding the trade items which held an important place in trade exchange between Bosnia and Ragusa.¹ Hungarian diplomatic materials, gathered in the well-known collections of published sources, do not offer much different picture either.² Not many historians have opted to study the timeframe due to the aforementioned problems and the evident lack of sources. Therefore, almost everything we know about this period comes from the general surveys of the Bosnian medieval history, and not from the specialist scholarly articles dealing specifically with the issues from this time.³

Agriculture and livestock breeding (animal husbandry), the basic economy branches in medieval Bosnia, have not been paid the deserved attention in the historiography of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. We find data on Bosnian livestock and agricultural products recorded only from the moment they became an object of trade; however, even then they were analysed only in that trade context. The greatest contribution to the study of the economy of medieval Bosnia was made by Desanka Kovačević-Kojić whose papers are indispensable for any type of study of this issue. However, as it may be observed from the number of available original data,

¹ A part of the archival material created in this period was published in: Gregor Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski i notarski spisi (1278-1301)*, vol. 1 (Beograd: SKA, 1932).

² The available diplomatic material from the second half of the 13th century comprise only one document authored by the Bosnian ruler and that is a Latin translation. All other documents from this period are of papal or Hungarian provenance, which affected the content of the documents.

Augustin Theinera, *Vetra Monumenta historica Hungarum sacram illustrantia*, Tomus primus (1216-1352), (Romae: Typis Vaticanis, 1863); Ferdinandus Knauz, *Monumenta Ecclesiae Strigoniensis, II (1273-1321)*, (Strigonii: Typis descripsit Gustavus Buzárovits, 1882); Tadija Smičiklas (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, II-VIII (Zagreb: JAZU, 1904-1910).

³ The starting point in getting to know this topic is provided by the synthetic works of prominent historians. Vjekoslav Klaić, *Poviest Bosne do propasti kraljevstva*, (Zagreb: Tiskom dioničke tiskare, 1882); *Povijest Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463*. (Sarajevo: HKDN, 1998); Vladimir Ćorović, *Historija Bosne* (Banja Luka - Beograd: Glas srpski - Ars Libri, 1999); Sima Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države* (Beograd: SKZ, 1964).

the emphasis of her studies was not on the thirteenth century, but on the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century.⁴

Given that the slave trade was pretty known during the second half of the thirteenth century,⁵ it was a topic that a large number of authors covered by their works. Considerable attention was paid to the very appearance of slavery, enslavement, the legal and social position of slaves, sale contracts, slave prices, the struggle of the secular and church authorities to ban the slave trade, i.e. bring it under control, and the slave trade as an integral part of migrations of the Slavic population in the Middle Ages.⁶

Considering the presented situation in historiography, the aim of this paper is to analyse the available sources and present the gained knowledge about the economic life of medieval Bosnia in the second half of the 13th century. Well aware of the fact that the few available sources only partially clarify the questions raised, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the second half of the 13th century in the history of medieval Bosnia happens to be crucial in understanding the events that shaped the following centuries. It is a long line of interconnected events that eventually culminated in the fourteenth and, consequently, the fifteenth century.

Ban Priesda: A Central Figure in Bosnian Politics

The central figure in the Bosnian political life in the second half of the thirteenth century was *ban* Priesda, previously known as a "vice ban" to ban Ninoslav,⁷ who turned to securing domestic political activities and

⁴ Desanka Kovačević, „Prilog proučavanju zanatstva u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni“, *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* 10 (1959): 279-296; Desanka Kovačević, *Trgovina u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* (Sarajevo: NDNRBiH, 1961); Desanka Kovačević-Kojić, „Privredni razvoj srednjovjekovne bosanske države“, in *Prilozi za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine, I, Privreda i društvo srednjovjekovne bosanske države*, ed. Enver Redžić (Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 1987), 85-190.

⁵ The main sources for the study of the slavery phenomenon in medieval Bosnia are the purchase and sale contracts kept in the State Archives in Dubrovnik, but only from the 70s of the 13th century, when the Ragusa (Dubrovnik) government made a decision that trade deals exceeding 10 perpers had to be concluded in writing. Gregor Čremošnik, „Dubrovačka kancelarija do god. 1300.“ *Glasnik* 39/2 (1927): 231.

⁶ The historiographic production on this topic is voluminous and covers almost all its segments. Review of literature in: Elmedina Duranović, „Žene iz Bosne na tržištu roblja u Dubrovniku 1279-1301.“, in *Žene u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni*, ed. Emir O. Filipović (Sarajevo: Društvo za proučavanje srednjovjekovne bosanske historije – Stanak, 2015), 38-40.

⁷ Back in 1233, a certain "nobilis uir Vbanus dictus Priesda" is mentioned as a relative of the ban Ninoslav, but we cannot say with certainty that this Priesda is the same person who succeeded Ninoslav on the ban throne. Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus*, III (1201-1235) (Zagreb: JAZU, 1905), 389-390; Theiner, *Vetra Monumenta historica*, 120; cf. Mortiz Wertner, „Beiträge zur bosnischen Genealogie“, *Vijesnik Kr. hrvatsko – slavonsko – dalmatinskoga Zemaljskoga arhiva*

the borders right after he regulated his personal relations with the Hungarian king in the context of the so called “post-crusade actions”. The exact time of Priesda's accession to the throne is not known. It should be looked for in the period between 1249, when his predecessor ban Ninoslav appeared for the last time in the sources,⁸ and 1255, when the charter of the Hungarian King Béla IV mentioned Priesda with the title of Bosnian ban.⁹ So, in the period between 1249 and 1255, Priesda came to the position of the Bosnian ban and remained until 1287, when he was last mentioned alive in the sources. Actually, in 1287, in the presence of his three sons, he donated *župa* of Zemunik in Bosnia to his unnamed daughter and her husband, Prince Ladislav Babonić.¹⁰ We assume that he died soon after that and was succeeded by his eldest son Stjepan I.¹¹

Ban Priesda, managed to ensure peace within the Bosnian borders. In doing so, he was very much „blessed” with the turmoil in the Hungarian kingdom and he tried to keep friendly relations with his neighbours. In order to strengthen the reputation of the Bosnian State, Priesda made two significant dynastic marriages of his children with prominent families in the neighbouring countries and thus somehow approached the Hungarian royal family. One of those marriages proved to be a very important move at the time when Bosnia was raised to the level of a kingdom. By the end of 1284, Priesda's eldest son Stjepan I married Elizabeth, daughter of the former Serbian king Dragutin.¹² The new Bosnian bride had strong ties with

VIII/1 (Zagreb, 1906): 235-239; Jaroslav Šidak, *Studije o „crkvi bosanskoj” i bogumilstvu* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1975), 188.

Priesda is again mentioned in 1240 as a member of ban Ninoslav's entourage during his visit to Ragusa, when he issued one of his charters. Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, I/1 (Beograd-Sremski Karlovci: SKA, 1929), 7.

⁸ In March 1249, ban Ninoslav issued Ragusa a charter, in which he confirmed their rights and privileges from 1240, and promised them help in case they went to war with the Serbian king Uroš I. Franz Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica Spectantia Historiam Serbiae Bosnae Ragusii* (Viennae: Apud Guilelmum Braumüller, 1858), 32-34; Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, 9-10.

⁹ While confirming the donation of the *zupe Novake*, on March 30th 1255, the Hungarian king Bela IV addressed Priesda as a Bosnian ban. Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus*, IV (1236-1255) (Zagreb: JAZU, 1906), 594-596.

¹⁰ Lajos Thallóczy and Samu Barabás, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay (A Blagay-család oklevéltára)*, (Budapest: Magyar Tudomány, 1897), 53-54; Smičiklas, *Codex diplomaticus*, VI (1272-1290) (Zagreb: JAZU, 1908), 588-589. Cf. Neven Isailović, „Povelja bana Prijezde I kojom dodjeljuje župu Zemunik svojoj kćerki i zetu, sinu bana Stjepana III Babonića”, *Grada o prošlosti Bosne* 5 (2012): 9-25.

¹¹ In a letter of the Ostrogony archbishop, which is usually dated 1287, Stjepan I is mentioned with the title of Bosnian ban for the first time. Ferdinandus Knauz, *Monumenta Ecclesiae Strigoniensis, II (1273-1321)* (Strigonii: Typis descriptis Gustavus Buzárovits, 1882), 422-423.

¹² Stephen I was married to Elizabeth, the daughter of the former Serbian king Dragutin. By the end of 1284, notes about this marriage were made in the Dubrovnik archive, because the Dubrovnik municipality decided to send 147 perpers to Dragutin as a wedding gift. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 136-137.

the Hungarian rulers, and the Bosnian ban has seen that as an opportunity to get closer to the Hungarian rulers, primarily by expanding his own reputation. With the marriage of Priesda's son Stjepan to Elizabeth, the Bosnian ruling house became connected, not only with the Serbian royal house of Nemanjić, but also with the Hungarian court since Elizabeth's mother Katarina was daughter of the Hungarian king Bela IV. At the same time, Stjepan and Pavao Šubić became related because they were married to sisters. Namely, Pavle was married to Urošica, Elizabeth's sister.¹³ By marrying his daughter, whose name remains unknown to us, in 1287 ban Priesda strengthened his relations with the Slavonian noble family Babonići.¹⁴ The most powerful representatives of this family were ban Radoslav I and his brother Stjepan III, whose eldest son Ladislav was married to the daughter of ban Priesda.¹⁵

Peaceful period in Bosnian history favoured the development of economy, which is confirmed by the increase in trade between Bosnia and Ragusa, and archival sources recorded trade items for the first time. The lack of fundamental archival documents concerning Priesda's political career resulted in a pretty much neglectful approach within the scholarship on thirteenth century Bosnia. However, it is precisely him who is considered to be the founder of the ruling Bosnian dynasty,¹⁶ and his rule over Bosnia is also known for being the time of restructuring the Bosnian Diocese which, later on, led to establishing a special ecclesiastical organization in Bosnia, also known as the Bosnian Church.¹⁷

¹³ Marko Perojević, „Prijezda I, Stjepan I Kotroman“, in *Povijest Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463* (Sarajevo: HKDN, 1998), 232-238.

¹⁴ Ljudevit Thallóczy, „Historička istraživanja o plemenu goričkih i vodičkih knezova“, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 3 (1897): 333-409.

¹⁵ Pejo Ćosković, „Kotromanići (Kotromanovići)“, in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, VII (Kam-Ko) (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2009), 724.

¹⁶ Although we cannot rule out the possibility that he was related to the predecessors of Ban Kulin and Ban Ninoslav, Ban Priesda is the first known individual who we can claim without any doubt as belonging to the famous Bosnian medieval ruling family of Kotromanić. The latest view on this topic with a review of older literature: Emir O. Filipović, *Kotromanići: stvaranje i oblikovanje dinastičkog identiteta u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni*, (Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu - Filozofski fakultet, 2022), 58.

¹⁷ With the decision to move the seat of its diocese from Bosnia to the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary in the middle of the 13th century, the Catholic diocese was left without its head in Bosnia which opened up the possibility of forming a new church organization known as the Bosnian Church. More on this topic, with a review of older literature: Dženan Dautović, „*Regio Nullius Diocesis: Kako je Bosna ostala bez biskupije? Procesi i posljedice*“, in *Prijelomne godine bosanskohercegovačke prošlosti*, ed. Sedad Bešlija (Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu - Institut za historiju, 2021), 75-92.

Although known sources from the second half of the 13th century do not trace the growth of the Bosnian Church, its appearance with a name and structure at the time of ban Stjepan II Kotromanić, at the beginning of the following century, clearly indicates the fact that we should

Natural Resources, Agriculture and Trade in Medieval Bosnia

The areas included in the medieval Bosnian state were rich in diverse plants and animals, as well as natural resources. River valleys, fertile fields and plains, and hilly and mountainous areas rich in pastures and forests allowed breeding of various domestic animals, as well as the cultivation of cereals, which was the basis for more permanent settlement of this area.¹⁸ Agriculture as well as livestock farming as a side branch of agriculture remained the principal occupation of most of the population whose final products were predominantly used to satisfy the local needs. Over time, the exchange of goods (surplus agricultural products) developed into real trade, even on the international level. The first preserved document testifying to trade relations between Bosnia and Ragusa dates back to 1189. The famous *Kulin ban's charter* is the first in a series of charters drawn up to regulate trade relations between these two medieval states.¹⁹ Almost all subsequent rulers of the medieval Bosnian state issued similar charters that basically constituted trade contracts. Certain favours, such as the exemption from paying customs duties, were intended to open the Bosnian state to the rest of the world through capable Ragusa merchants and their role in land and sea traffic. In the following centuries, certain changes were introduced in the business between Bosnia and Ragusa for the purpose of adjusting to new circumstances, that is, the development of the Bosnian economy, but the charter of Ban Kulin remained the blueprint defining the relations between Bosnia and Ragusa.²⁰

look for its beginnings in the second half of the 13th century. Sima Ćirković, „Bosanska crkva u bosanskoj državi“, *Prilozi za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine, I, Privreda i društvo srednjovjekovne bosanske države* (Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 1987), 207-210.

¹⁸ On the importance of river courses in the construction of settlements and the formation of the first administrative units, see: Pavao Anđelić, *Studije o teritorijalno-političkoj organizaciji srednjovjekovne Bosne* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1982).

¹⁹ Bosnian Ban Kulin issued his charter on 29th August 1189, as a result of agreements reached with Krvas, the then Duke of Ragusa. In this charter, ban Kulin promised merchants from Ragusa that he would protect them and help them in the territory of the Bosnian banate, and that he would compensate them for any damage they might suffer from the state treasury. One of the most important provisions of this charter was the merchants' exemption from paying any taxes - customs duties. Desanka Kovačević-Kojić, „Kulinova povelja i bosansko-dubrovački odnosi“, in *Osamsto godina povelje bosanskog bana Kulina 1189-1989*, ed. Asim Peco (Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 1989), 37-44.

²⁰ As the trade in Bosnia developed, by the beginning of 14th century, the Bosnian ban Stjepan II introduced customs duties to be an important source of income for the public treasury but without threatening the existing trade on the Bosnia-Ragusa route. Desanka Kovačević, „Razvoj i organizacija carina u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni“, *Godišnjak Istorijskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine* 6 (1954): 229-248.

Given the fact that we do not have any records on renewal of the trade contracts between Ragusa and Bosnia in the second half of the thirteenth century, that is to say, during the reign of ban Priesda and his successors, it is reasonable to assume that the contracts did not exist and that the economic relations were mainly based on the principles set up in the previously concluded contracts between abovementioned entities, i.e. the ones concluded during the reign of ban Kulin and/or ban Ninoslav, as indicated above.²¹ The importance of trade relations between Ragusa and Bosnia in the late thirteenth century may be observed in the provisions of the Statute of the City of Ragusa dated 1272. Namely, one of the provisions of this document referred to regulation of disputes between Ragusans and Bosnians. The Statute foresaw that Ragusans could appear before the Bosnian court and pursue their claims only if they had an authorization issued by Ragusan prince, which would underlie the judgment of the Bosnian rulers as the final one and valid in Ragusa as well. The same was expected to apply vice versa.²²

It is interesting to note that in this period exactly, when we do not have official charters of the Bosnian ruler, the first indications of products that were the subject of trade between the two parties, Ragusa and Bosnia, were recorded. While agriculture products were not included in the trade deals with Ragusa, the situation with livestock farming was relatively different. Archival records from Ragusa, business book records more precisely, contain data concerning first Bosnian exports to Ragusa, namely wax and leather. Assuming that the abovementioned products were of Bosnian origin, one can easily conclude that these data may be considered the first ever on beekeeping in medieval Bosnia and thus livestock, as beekeeping is mostly seen as a specific branch of animal husbandry.

In 1296 there was a case of handing over 350 pounds weight of wax between two Ragusan merchants in the Bosnian marketplace of Vrhbosna.²³ Yet the abovementioned document did not imply that the wax was domestic Bosnian product; nevertheless, this piece of information is definitely an indicator of wax trade in Bosnia in the late thirteenth century.

²¹ Ban Ninoslav issued as many as four charters to Ragusa. He issued the first one in the spring of 1240 when he visited Ragusa with a group of his lords, thereby renewing the contract between Bosnia and Ragusa concluded during the reign of Ban Kulin. This charter also promised peace and friendship with Ragusa, freedom of movement, personal and property security for merchants coming from Ragusa to Bosnia. Over the following nine years, he issued three more charters with the same or similar content. Josip Nagy, *Prva utanačenja između bosanskih banova i Dubrovnika* (Dubrovnik: Štamparija Jadran, 1931), 25-26; Desanka Kovačević, *Trgovina*, 10.

²² *Statut grada Dubrovnika*, ed. end trans. A. Šoljić, Z. Šundrica, I. Veselić (Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv, 2002); Kovačević, *Trgovina*, 11.

²³ SAD, Div. Canc, III, 75v (5.11.1296); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 165-166.

From other archival records one can learn that trade also included leather, as can be seen in case of dispute over smuggled goods which was conducted before a court of law in Ragusa in December 1296. Witnesses in this case, all merchants from Ragusa, had to testify twice before the court. One of the merchants left his goods to another one, also from Ragusa, as he had to go before the Bosnian ruler to ask for repayment of existing debts. According to one of the witnesses, all goods were leather while other claimed that there was also wax among the goods.²⁴ Another court case conducted during the month of July 1284 provided interesting data about trade articles between Bosnia and Ragusa. Namely, the Bosnian ruler Ban Priesda hired Marin de Gayma, a merchant from Ragusa,²⁵ to buy a horse from former Count of Ragusa Johannes Georgio. Interestingly, Marin de Gayma failed to fulfil his contractual obligations so the case was brought before the Count of Ragusa. According to judicial decision taken in this case, Johannes Georgio was granted Marin's vineyard as a compensation for unpaid amount of money, but Marin never took over the horse, nor did he respond to court calls.²⁶ As Johannes had to return to Venice, his hometown, he received a written permission from the Count of Ragusa to do whatever he found appropriate in the given situation. Consequently, Johannes decided to leave the horse tied up in the square in front of the municipal building and went to Venice.²⁷ On the other hand, Marin de Gayma explained his failure to appear before the Court by his lack of knowledge of Latin language as all court calls addressed to him were written in Latin. Finally, he was forced to commit to payment of foreseen 300 perpers, until Christmas at the latest,²⁸ so it seems very likely that he took the horse in the end. The agreed price of the abovementioned horse, as well as the owner of the horse, indicated that it was a horse of a noble race, most probably Andalusian type of horse.²⁹ This fact also indicated the social status of the Bosnian ruler, as he asked for such a horse, but certainly some other luxurious goods as well.

Considering the circumstances of trade between Bosnia and cities on the Adriatic coast in the late thirteenth century, one could easily note that most frequent commercial item were slaves as many archival records note the export of slaves from Bosnia. As this fact was heavily exploited by

²⁴ SAD, Div. Canc., III, 60-61v (16-24.9.1296); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 159-162; Kovačević, *Trgovina*, 12.

²⁵ Marin (de Gayma) participated in trade with Bosnian slaves. SAD, Div. Canc., I, 108v (7.11.1282); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 97.

²⁶ SAD, Div. Canc., II, 2 (1.7.1284); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 118-119.

²⁷ SAD, Div. Canc., II, 2v (2.7.1284); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 119-120.

²⁸ Esad Kurtović, *Konj u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* (Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2014), 41-42.

²⁹ Relja V. Katić, *Stočarstvo srednjovekovne Srbije* (Beograd: SANU, 1978), 116.

historians to claim how the Middle Ages were „dark“ in their essence, situation in Bosnia at that time was not very much different from any other in the region. Slavery was very much present throughout the Middle Ages in all parts of the world. Slaves were used as extra labour force at homes, although less on lands or ships; still slavery could be seen as an everyday life phenomenon of that time.³⁰ Person could lose his freedom and become a commodity in various ways: by capture, sale, debt, but also by voluntary sale. Due to debts and poverty, people sold themselves or one of their family members into slavery in order to survive, and there were not rare cases of violent capture of the free population and their sale into slavery.³¹ One of the oldest ways of enslaving the free population was war captivity.³²

However in case of Bosnia, archival records show us that certain social structure was entangled with the concept of slavery as some Bosnian slaves were enslaved by their birth, that is to say, that they inherited their social status from their parents who were slaves. Slave trade was a very profitable business. Slaves were traded by both smaller and larger traders, and the upper classes of society were often involved in this trade. Even the Bosnian ruler ban Priesda owned a couple of slaves as can be noted from a court hearing held in April 1279 in Ragusa on the complaint of a person named Gregory. Given indictment indicates that the Bosnian ruler was in possession of a number of slaves and took an active role in their trade.³³ On the other hand, a secondary source in this case shows that the Bosnian ruler used to donate slaves to certain individuals, which was something very common in Medieval as well as in Bosnian society of that time.³⁴

The main trade centres to which slaves from Bosnia were delivered were the Neretva valley, i.e. Drijeva and Ragusa. Only part of the large number of slaves exported from Bosnia remained in Ragusa and was used

³⁰ The manner of slavepower utilization in Middle Ages is the main reason of female presence in slave markets. Duranović, „Žene iz Bosne“, 37-52.

³¹ Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, *Migracije stanovništva iz jugoslovenskih zemalja u Dubrovnik tokom srednjeg veka* (Novi Sad: SANU - Filozofski fakultet, 1995), 17.

³² Information about a large number of 'heretics' who were taken to Hungary after the Hungarian wars in Bosnia during Ban Ninoslav is actually an indication that a large number of the Bosnian people were taken into slavery at that time. Theiner, *Vetra Monumenta*, 452. Cf. Anto Babić, „Društvo srednjovjekovne bosanske države“, in *Prilozi za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine, I, Privreda i društvo srednjovjekovne bosanske države*, ed. Enver Redžić (Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 1987), 72.

³³ Gregorius, son of Vysclausis, sued a well-know slave-trader Geruasio de Bucignolo for selling two Bosnian female slaves (which belonged to the Bosnian ban) in Ragusa instead of exporting them to Apulia as agreed previously. SAD, Praecepta rectoris, I, 20 (26. 6. 1279); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 22.

³⁴ Priesda, ban of Bosnia, gave a slave as a gift to Ragusan citizen Benedecito de Gondula. SAD, Deb. Not., I, 66 (18.7.1281); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 58.

as labour force.³⁵ Over time, the import of slaves from the hinterland exceeded the needs of Ragusa, so the surplus was exported via Ragusa and other Dalmatian cities to distant countries. Thus, Ragusa got an intermediary role in this type of trade, and merchants from Ragusa were most interested in the Italian market, because selling slaves in those parts could make a lot of money.³⁶ By purchasing a slave the owner also secured a document (*carta servitutis*),³⁷ with which he proved his ownership rights, and accordingly he could resell, gift, pledge, release or give the slave as a dowry. Since slave trading in Bosnia was not regulated in this way, such documents were drawn up upon the arrival of slaves to Ragusa or another Dalmatian city. Freeing slaves was not a rare phenomenon, either. This was also done in front of a notary and then a document on the release or the so-called *carta libertatis* would be issued.³⁸ A slave could buy his freedom himself, and one of his relatives could do the same. It happened quite often that masters, in order to save their souls, freed their servants before death or by will without any compensation.³⁹ However, the conditions under which masters freed their slaves could be different.⁴⁰ Once freed, slaves

³⁵ Most of the slaves, predominantly of Bosnian origin, were owned by Ragusian nobles, followed by artisans and merchants. Almost every wealthy house in Ragusa had its own slaves. Until the beginning of the 14th century, every nobleman's daughter was accompanied by a dowry, or a certain amount of money that could be used to buy a slave. Vuk Vinaver, „Trgovina bosanskim robljem tokom XIV veka u Dubrovniku“, *Anali 2* (Dubrovnik: Historijski institut JAZU, 1953): 130; Dinić-Knežević, *Migracije*, 20.

³⁶ Available sources show that Bosnian slaves were mostly exported to Venice and Bar. Vinaver, „Trgovina“, 1953, 132; Nenad Fejić, „Trgovina bosanskim robljem u Barceloni krajem XIV i početkom XV veka“, *Istorijski časopis 28* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1981): 27-48.

³⁷ The Statutes of Dalmatian cities determined that every citizen who bought or sold a slave for himself had to have a so-called *carta servitutis*, a document used to prove his authority over certain goods. Each card had to have the signature of a notary and his permanent mark of authentication, as well as the signature of a judge. Gregor Čremošnik, „Pravni položaj našeg roblja u srednjem veku“, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini 2* (Sarajevo, 1947): 70. In the Statute of the City of Trogir, it is stated that the purchase of servants and maids is possible only with a notary document, and if there is no such document, the servant or maid can initiate a lawsuit in court and be acquitted. Nada Klaić, *Izvori za hrvatsku povijest do 1526. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1972), 163.

³⁸ We have already mentioned the case from July 1281, from which we find out that the Bosnian ban Priesda presented a slave to Benko Gundulic. If the institution of slavery in Bosnia had been regulated as in the Dalmatian cities, Priesda would have been sent, together with the slave, the official document - *carta servitutis*. However, since such a thing did not exist in Bosnia, the formal proof that Radovan was Benko's slave had to be made only in Ragusa. That's why Radovan had to personally confirm in front of a notary that the slave was Benko's, and based on that statement, Benko received an official document on his right (*carta servitutis*). Čremošnik, „Pravni položaj“, 70; Vinaver, „Trgovina“, 143.

³⁹ More examples: Duranović, „Žene iz Bosne“, 48.

⁴⁰ Slaves could gain their freedom if the master got someone to replace them in their previous jobs. Thus, at the beginning of 1281, the slave Dobrost acquired another slave named Radost for her mistress, the widow Desaca from Ragusa, and thus gained her freedom. However, she

became free to decide on their future fate. However, it is very likely that they did not return to Bosnia. They were often sold into slavery again, even to the same masters, or they put themselves into their service for free. The reasons for this were very clear. The impossibility of finding a new job and obtaining the conditions for a normal life forced the freed men to put themselves in the service of other people again and thus lose their freedom for the sake of existence.

Trade and Economy in the Second Half of the 13th Century

Taken as a whole phenomenon, trade between Bosnia and Ragusa in late thirteenth century was on the rise. As could be seen in the abovementioned cases, majority of trade was related to slaves, nothing new we could claim, but one could note that slave trade was at its peak exactly in late thirteenth century. Major stakeholders in those cases were Ragusan merchants with a very small percentage of the local Bosnians included in business. Most of Ragusan merchants went to Bosnia to take over their „goods“ while small number of them relied on the local Bosnian merchants and their export.⁴¹ Reselling slaves was a lucrative business so that a large number of people were involved in it in addition to those whose main occupation was the slave trade.⁴² The development of this type of trade is also evidenced by the provisions of the Statute of the City of Ragusa, which provided for payment of customs duties on the sale of slaves.⁴³

No archival record is available to confirm the existence of certain market places in Bosnia at that time. Still, it is reasonable to assume that there were already existing market places, although to a much lesser extent than compared to those in later period. The absence of such market squares can be seen in data concerning slave trading. Namely, when given data about their origin, it was usually said to be general place of their purchase (land or parish) but one could never find an exact market place mentioned where slaves were acquired. However, we must note that there were certain spots where trading took place even if it was of a temporary character. This

had to undertake that in the event that Radost escapes, she will pay a certain amount in money or return to the service of Desaca. SAD, Deb. Not., I, 37 (2.1.1281); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 42.

⁴¹ According to certain estimates, the Bosnian merchants participated in only 20% of total sale of slaves in 1281. Vinaver, „Trgovina“, 127.

⁴² Vinaver, „Trgovina“, 131.

⁴³ The tax (customs) was paid on the day the slave was sold. Only the Venetians were exempted from customs duties. Part of the amount that was paid belonged to the prince. This provision on the payment of customs duties is also proof that slaves were exported from Ragusa to other ports of the Mediterranean sea. Vinaver, „Trgovina“, 132; Fejić, „Trgovina“, 27-48.

did not imply that all those places were permanently populated areas. Nevertheless, it seems so logical to assume that those small squares grew out of the existing villages and were characterized by type of local economies operated by the majority of its population.⁴⁴ As there are records from Ragusa from late thirteenth century, we can note that Ragusans started lingering longer in the Bosnian territory and consequently founded their own colonies. Back to late 1296 we can trace records in the Ragusan court on certain disputes relating to Ragusan merchants who lived in Bosnia for a longer period of time, that is to say, much longer than usual trade travel would have lasted. In a dispute which took place a bit later and that was related to wax trade, we can follow a Ragusan merchant who lived in the parish of Vrhbosna in a house owned by another Ragusan merchant, Prodan de Cosala.⁴⁵ Not many things were known about Prodan de Cosala. Still, archival records referred to him on 31st March 1283, when he sold a slave named Radoslava, originally from Vrbas,⁴⁶ but we could not find his name in the list of those who took loans from Ragusan wholesalers. In some other court cases dated 1296 we can trace back his trade ties across Bosnia as we can see his servants going to Ragusa to complete certain trade deals on behalf of him. The fact that Prodan de Cosala was involved in slave trading indicates the wide range of his trade deals as well as a wide range of his expanded trade network.

All listed cases indicate that Ragusan merchants owned their homes in Bosnia. At first instance, we noted the examples from župa Vrhbosna,⁴⁷ but we can assume that they possessed their real estate in other parts of Bosnia, as well. Still, the case of Vrhbosna is very important as we do not have records from other areas in late thirteenth century. Nevertheless, Vrhbosna cannot be considered as an important commercial centre though we can see a developing story in this case.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Desanka Kovačević-Kojić, *Gradska naselja srednjovjekovne bosanske države* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1978), 25-27.

⁴⁵ SAD, Div. Canc., III, 60-61v (16-24.9.1296); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 159-162; SAD, Div. Canc., III, 75v (5.11.1296); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 165-166.

⁴⁶ SAD, Div. Canc., I, 123 (28.3.1283); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 102.

⁴⁷ „... in partibus Verboxenie in domo Prodani de Cosal...” Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 166.

⁴⁸ At this time Vrhbosna served as a market place, as can be concluded against the fact that by the end of the thirteenth century there was a small but functioning Ragusan colony. However, due to lack of archival records, it is hard to perceive the structure of its economy. Nevertheless, the available documents help us to understand push and pull effects for Ragusans to come to Vrhbosna. Mladen Ančić, *Na rubu Zapada. Tri stoljeća srednjovjekovne Bosne*, (Zagreb:Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001), 196-197.

The Role of the Ragusan Archives

Based on the well-preserved archival records held in Ragusa, as well as on certain provisions written in the Statute of Ragusa, one can observe a major trade development between Bosnia and Ragusa. Still, one should also keep in mind the existing trade with some other coastal cities, Trogir for instance. A collection of archival records, containing data about trade in Trogir, refers to Bosnia as to a slave trading partner of Trogir. It was recorded in this collection that a slave of a Bosnian origin was sold in Trogir in 1272.⁴⁹ Similarly, the same collection contains data that indicate the importance of economic relations of Bosnia with Dalmatian cities. In the testament by one of Trogir's noblemen (Duymus Domiche) one can note information about a deposit, in a total amount of 150 pounds, left by a Bosnian man named Radoisclavo.⁵⁰ Although the details are not very much clear in this case, partly due to the fact that the document has been heavily damaged, this is important input information about trade ties between Bosnia and Trogir. Still, it is the Ragusans who have pioneered in trade ties with Bosnia as all archival records kept in Ragusa are full of very valuable information about trade links between Ragusa and Bosnia.⁵¹

There are Ragusa office records and notary records on another form of clear economic communication between Bosnia and Ragusa developed by the end of the 13th century; that is departure of Bosnian boys to Ragusa to study crafts. While majority of population satisfied their existential needs by cultivating land and employing themselves in agriculture, there was also a number of people who were engaged in manufacture. A clear division between those who were engaged in agriculture and those engaged in handicrafts production (making tools, weapons, vessels, fabrics and other items for everyday use) cannot be made easily. However, archival records do refer to some Bosnian boys who were sent to Ragusa for apprenticeship in late thirteenth century. Written contracts between masters and boys, or their parents, remain the main source of data in reconstructing this type of training as well as the conditions under which the training was conducted. Those contracts usually specified the craft type, the training duration, the boy age and place of origin and certain rights and obligations of both parties thereto. In given circumstances trainings lasted

⁴⁹ Miho Barada, *Trogirski spomenici*, vol. 1 (21.X.1263-22.V.1273) (Zagreb: JAZU, 1948), 404-405.

⁵⁰ Miho Barada, *Trogirski spomenici*, vol. 2 (31.I.1274-1.IV.1294.), JAZU, Zagreb, 1948, 117-118; Kovačević, *Trgovina*, 10.

⁵¹ Kovačević, *Trgovina*, 10, 15.

for several years.⁵² For instance, a boy named Dragoje from Bosnia entered into apprenticeship with a tailor Bogdan for six years. During this time, Dragoje was to study the craft and to help his master as well.⁵³ This type of contract usually meant free work in all jobs in the masters' household, that is to say, not only the craft work needed to get the qualification for an independent performance, but everything that master could ask him to do. Therefore, masters were keen to make those contracts for a long time to be able to use as much as possible of free labour force.⁵⁴ On the other hand, masters were obliged to give those boys all the tools necessary to perform a specific craft properly as well as to provide clothes, shoes and food during their stay. In given circumstances, conditions were not easy and certain kinds of punishments were foreseen in cases of escaping before the expiry of the contracts or committing some kind of fraud.⁵⁵ A few years later two more agreements about Bosnian boys who left for Ragusa for apprenticeship on tailoring were recorded. They had single master but different contract duration of eight and ten years respectively.⁵⁶ As we can see, the Bosnian population tried to secure their future and existence by learning crafts and going to work in the Ragusan area. That brought a kind of relief for the family and partial financial security with monetary earnings, which is necessary for the existence of other family members.

Summary

Livestock farming and agronomy were the primary segments of Bosnian medieval economy of which very little archival data have been preserved. In given natural conditions such as relief features, layout of mountains and hills, river basins and valleys, livestock farming and agronomy were the most suitable forms of economic endeavours. Most of the population in the Middle Ages cultivated the land to which it was tied by typical feudal relations and could not leave the land without the permission of its master. Existing agriculture tools were predominantly used by manpower, except plows which were used by livestock power which is one of the arguments why we can claim that animal husbandry represented an ancillary economic branch of agriculture. To put it precisely, agriculture somehow involved the livestock farming while it was not always the case vice versa. A part of population was exclusively engaged

⁵² Kovačević, „Prilog proučavanju zanatstva“, 289.

⁵³ SAD, Deb. Not., I, 79 (30.10.1281); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 69-70.

⁵⁴ Dinić-Knežević, *Migracije*, 60.

⁵⁵ SAD, Deb. Not., I, 79 (30.10.1281); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 69-70.

⁵⁶ SAD, Div. Canc., I, 143 (4.11.1283), 148 (17.12.1283); Cf. Čremošnik, *Kancelarijski*, 115-117.

in cattle breeding while artisanal production was carried out mainly within the framework of „domestic work“ which met the basic needs of the population and the feudal lords. In the course of the second half of the 13th century, several Bosnian boys were recorded to have gone to study crafts in Dalmatian coastal cities. Interestingly, Bosnian rulers Priesda and his successor Stephen I did not renew their predecessors' contracts with Ragusa, but it is precisely from the time of their reign that we have first recorded specific trade items between Bosnia and Ragusa such as wax, animal skins and slaves. The slave trade was the most developed as recorded by numerous documents in Ragusan notary and office files. Given the fact that most of those records related to trade between Bosnia and Dalmatian coastal cities, one can easily conclude that trade was an important branch of economy. However, the trade activities were predominantly carried out by foreigners, mainly citizens of Ragusa, who came to Bosnia and exported the necessary articles, primarily raw materials, while local Bosnian traders were not recorded at that time.

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