

The Economies of Franciscan Church Ownership in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Slavonia

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On September 8, 1662, an unexpected incident disturbed the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church of Bapska in Ottoman Slavonia. Carrying a breve from the pasha of Bosnia, the Franciscan guardian of Olovo and three fellow Franciscans came to the celebration and with the help of their Ottoman Janissary escort, took the keys of the church by force and drove the parish priest away. This intriguing example is just one among many that illustrates the complexities of the Franciscan-Ottoman relationship in the seventeenth century Ottoman Balkans, highlighting the involvement of different segments of the provincial Ottoman administration in the everyday affairs of the Bosnian Franciscan province. Although the friars' relationship with the local Ottoman authorities was often fraught with conflicts, it was just as often characterized by collaboration. Accordingly, it was their Ottoman networks that would ultimately assure that the friars could possess, renew, and even take by force ecclesiastical buildings.

Looking at the economic factors that determined the strategies of (re)claiming/contesting Catholic spaces, the aim of this paper is to analyze how Ottoman interference informed and complicated the dynamics of Franciscan church ownership in mid-seventeenth century Ottoman Slavonia. The renewed northward expansion of the Bosnian Franciscan province into Slavonia during the seventeenth century had multiple repercussions. It brought the friars into conflict with secular priests serving Slavonian parishes with the support of Propaganda Fide, it exacerbated the tensions within the already factionalized province, and it ignited new conflicts between members of the Ottoman provincial governance. Drawing primarily on Catholic missionary reports and complementing them with other pertinent Catholic and available Ottoman sources, the paper will address these three interrelated aspects to shed light on less analyzed aspects of Franciscan economies in the early modern Ottoman world.