

NIKOLA LAŠVANIN

Nicolaus à Lasva, Nicolaus Marcsincussich

(b. ca. 1703; d. 2 September 1750)

LIFE

Biographical data on N.L. is very scarce. Though his toponymic surname indicates that he was born in the Catholic parish Lašva (Laşva), few kilometers from Travnik in Bosnia,¹ his real surname that appears in official documents was Marcsincussich.² The date of his birth is unknown. According to the list of novices of the Franciscan monastery of Fojnica (Foyniçe), N.L. entered the order in 1132/1719.³ Since the age of entry to the order was fifteen or sixteen, it seems plausible to suppose that N.L. was born around 1114-15/1703.⁴ There is no information on N.L.'s education, but it is very likely that he, like other Bosnian Franciscans of the period, studied theology and philosophy in one of the Italian universities. N.L. indeed visited Italy in his early twenties. The fact that some of the stopping places on a journey from Bosnia to Italy and back (Uskoplje/Gornji Vakuf-Maccerrata-Fojnica) and those on Italian tour (Assisi-Padua) appended to the *Kronika* dated Rajab 1138-Safar 1139/April-September 1726 (e.g., Padua, Ferrara, Bologna, Cesena, Maccerrata, Rome, etc.) are cities with famous universities and libraries, seems to indicate that the journey was not only a pilgrimage, but might have had educational relevance as well.⁵ Furthermore, a strong influence of Italian is evident both in the vocabulary and syntax of parts of the text written in the Bosnian-Croatian language.⁶

In 1142/1730 N.L. was elected as the teacher of novices in the monastery of Fojnica and remained on duty at least a year after 1147/1734 when he was re-elected for the fifth time.⁷ A petition sent by the Catholics of Kreševo (Kreşevo) to the Congregation of the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome (1153/1740) concerning the renewal of a privilege of educating Franciscan novices in Italy was ratified by N.L. as *Guardianus Cresseviensis et Vicarius Foraneus* ('The Guardian of the Monastery of Kreševo and The Representative of the Local Community').⁸ As heads of monasteries, Franciscan guardians possessed not only ecclesiastical but political authority over the Catholic community (*Latin řā'ifesi*) as its official representatives.⁹ In 1153-1154/1741, the chronicle of Bonaventura Benić (Benich), another Franciscan who was N.L.'s contemporary from the monastery of Sutisqa (Kraljeva Sutjeska), refers to N.L. as *pater agregatus*, an honorable title given to meritorious Franciscans.¹⁰

As a senior member of the monastery of Fojnica, and as Franciscan representative, N.L. was involved in several litigations with Ottoman authorities.¹¹ During the litigation of 1155/1743, he was imprisoned with other Franciscans for five days in Travnik.¹² After Pavao from Jajce (Yayçe), the custodian of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Argentina, died in the first year of his mandate in 1157-58/1745, N.L. succeeded him¹³ and became the highest authority over the Franciscans in Bosnia.¹⁴ In this capacity in 1160-61/1748 N.L. went to Vienna with Filip Lastrić Očevac (Philip-

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pus ab Ochievia), former Bosnian provincial and chronicler, to ask the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa for support and mediation in a dispute between Bosnian Franciscans and Slavonian Franciscans and clergy, who were Habsburg subjects, over seniority in the Province of Bosna Argentina and three parishes in Slavonya (Slavonia). The empress passed judgment in favor of the Slavonian clergy, but ordered the payment of three hundred florins annually to the monastery of Sutisqa as compensation for lost income of the parishes.¹⁵

Shortly after he wrote his last entry in his *Kronika* in the summer of 1163/1750, N.L. died on 1 Shawwal 1163/2 September 1750 while visiting his relatives in Jajce.¹⁶

WORK

① *Kronika*

N.L.'s *Kronika* is a compendium of various historical and ecclesiastical texts. The first part of the work is based on *Kronika aliti szpomen vsega szvieta vikov* by Croatian writer Pavao Ritter Vitezović (published in Zagreb in 1107-08/1696) and covers the period from the Creation of the World to 1101-02/1690.¹⁷ With Christian Europe as its primary focus, the work also provides basic information on the emergence of Islam, starting with Prophet Muḥammad's birth and early Islamic conquests. N.L. follows the tradition of European chronicles of the time, which identify all medieval Muslims regardless their ethnic origin and identity as "Turks."¹⁸ The history of the "real Turks," i.e. the Ottomans, from ʿOsmān Beg's ascent to the throne (699-700/1300) is covered sufficiently. The early conquests in the Balkans are depicted in detail, concentrating on important events like the battles of Chermanon (Çirmen), Kosovo (Qosova), Nicopolis (Niğbolu), Varna, the conquest of Constantinople, the annexation of Serbia, etc.

N.L.'s *Kronika* follows events in the West as well, such as the rise of the House of Habsburg, the Venetians, and the situation in Central Europe. Ottoman wars in the area are thoroughly treated, with particular attention to the fall of the Bosnian kingdom and warfare in Croatia. Although N.L. clearly sympathizes with the Christian side, he does not pass in silence over misdeeds and cruelties of Christian soldiers. Since Vitezović, the author of the original chronicle, was an active participant and protagonist of the events of the late 11th/17th century, especially during the war of 1094-1110/1683-99, the exhaustive descriptions of warfare, massacres, expulsions, migrations, or forced Christianization of Muslim population in territories conquered by the Habsburgs are especially interesting.¹⁹

The second part of the work is a special chronicle of Bosnia covering the period between 1092-1164/1682-1750. The first section (until 1107-08/1696), seems to be a copy of a lost chronicle of Stipan Margitić, the Franciscan guardian of the monastery of Fojnica.²⁰ Of great importance is Margitić's eyewitness account of the turbulent situation in Bosnia at the end of the 11th/17th century, and of the migration and expul-

sion of Catholic population from the country during the war of 1094-1110/1683-99. N.L.'s account based on his first-hand experience of the period between 1143-63/1731-50 represents the genuine part of the chronicle.

The inner crisis and instability Bosnia suffered in the aftermath of the Treaty of Karlowitz was intensified by the wars of 1128-30/1716-18 and 1150-52/1737-39. Relations between ethnic and confessional groups were dangerously tense; the economy was in ruins. While hunger and plague severely struck the population, anarchy and corruption of local officials further worsened the situation. New taxes introduced by the central government and the annulment of exemptions (*mu'āfiyyet*) in Bosnia caused unrests and rebellions throughout the province.²¹ N.L. describes several legal suits when the Franciscans tried to avoid paying new taxes by referring to their previous privileged status. Their complaints and petitions, however, were largely rejected.²² After describing the changes in the structure and institutions of the local government and the rise of the power and influence of local notables (*a'yān*), N.L. observes that in 1149-50/1737 a council of "Bosnian lords" (*a'yān-i vilāyet*) met in Travnik. The institutionalization of their function (*a'yānliq*) was further indicated by the fact that rebellious Muslims were attacking *a'yāns* and *qādīs* as government representatives during major unrests eleven years later.²³ N.L. describes in detail the war of 1150-52/1737-39, during which the Franciscans were suspected for treason, and guardians of Franciscan monasteries of Fojnica, Kreševo, and Sutisqa were taken into custody in Sarajevo (Sarāybosna) to be released after paying a high fine.

The third part of the *Kronika*, a copy of Pavao Ritter Vitezović's *Bosna Captiva*,²⁴ is a pamphlet on the last days of the Bosnian kingdom and its conquest by the Ottomans, with a description of the death of the king Stjepan Tomašević (867/1463). The list of the provincials of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Argentina including their short biographies for the period between 929-1185/1523-1771 was continued by an anonymous Franciscan following N.L.'s death.²⁵

The work continues with another chronicle covering the period between 699-1109/1300-1697. N.L. mentions the levy of Christian children (*devşirme*) in 1075-76/1666, which Christians opposed *en masse*, because the collector "did not want to take Turkish but Christian children."²⁶ Due to the privilege of Bosnian Muslims to enlist their sons in the Janissary corps and the Palace services (*qapuqulu ocaqları*), the percentage of Christian boys in the levy sometimes might have been relatively low, while the levies in second half of the 11th/17th century were very rare.²⁷ These factors might have been the cause of such Christian opposition. Conflicts between Franciscans and the Orthodox Christian clergy, who were attempting to collect church taxes from the Catholic population, were quite frequent in those years. In 1108-09/1697, the dispute was solved in favor of the Franciscans in the court (*maḥkeme*) of Sarajevo, by a decision of the Bosnian governor Ġāzī Meḥmed Paşa Qorça (1103-09/1691-97). This section of the *Kronika* is based on an anonymous text found in the monastery of Fojnica referred to as *Fojnička kronika* (The Chronicle of Fojnica) and

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includes additions made by N.L.²⁸ Following a list of Bosnian bishops, the *Kronika* ends with a few paragraphs on issues related to everyday life, such as horticultural instructions, a recipe for ink production, etc. Although interesting in itself, the paragraph including twenty Turkish proverbs and phrases written in Latin script with Bosnian, Italian, or Latin translation recorded under the title *Aliquot Turcica Proverbia* is not enough to determine the extent of N.L.'s knowledge of the Turkish language.

Except for the part entitled *Bosna Captiva*, which represents 1/18 of the text, the *Kronika* was written in the Bosnian-Croatian tongue in old Bosnian Cyrillic script (*bosančica*). While preserving some characteristics of the language of older Bosnian chronicles, the language of N.L. resembles today's dialects of central and western Bosnia. The aforementioned influence of Latin and Italian in terms of syntax and vocabulary, as well as the presence of Turkish loan words is noteworthy.²⁹

Although some parts were copied from earlier chronicles, the original information the *Kronika* provides for the period between 1143-63/1731-50 is of crucial importance for the study of unrests and rebellions of Muslims, the rise of *a'yāns*, the war of 1150-52/1737-39, and the complexity of the confessional situation in Bosnia, written from the perspective of a Bosnian Catholic. Furthermore, N.L. preserved the otherwise lost chronicle of Stipan Margitić. N.L.'s *Kronika* strongly influenced his contemporary Bonaventura Benić in his writing of *Protocollum conventus Suttiscae*. The influence on later chroniclers is obvious as well. In the 13th/19th century, Mato Krističević Kolo, a Franciscan from the monastery of Fojnica, and Mato Mikić, a chronicler of the monastery of Sutisqa, interpolated some parts of N.L.'s *Kronika* in Latin characters into *Enchiridium seu frequentius ad manus... 1823* and *Arkiv*, respectively.³⁰ N.L.'s work is an indispensable source for the historians of the period in question as well as those of the Franciscan order and Catholicism in Bosnia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

① *Kronika*

Manuscript: (1) Livno, Library of the Franciscan Monastery "Ss. Peter and Paul," Gorica; 181+ 2 pages, ca. 42 lines, Bosnian Cyrillic alphabet (predominantly) and Latin (12.5 pages). (The manuscript is located in the aforementioned library since 1882. The handwriting belongs to N.L. with the exception of a few notes on the margins and a list of the provincials, i.e., Franciscans that were the official leaders of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Argentina, after 1163/1750. Before the renovation and preservation undertaken in 1982, the manuscript was damaged by humidity, and some parts are now blurred and hard to read).

Editions: Ćiro Truhelka. "Izvadak iz ljetopisa fra Nikole Lašvanina." *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine*, 1/3 (1889), 77-80, 127-134; 2 (1890), 220-225, 304-305 (Partially published abridged extract for the period between 1688-1750, transcribed into Latin script). Julijan Jelenić. "Ljetopis fra Nikole Lašvanina." *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine*, 26 (1914), 335-367, 555-583; 27

(1915), 1-35, 269-312 (Original Bosnian Cyrillic script of the original is preserved in rather small print. A few shorter paragraphs of minor importance are omitted. The edition has a critical apparatus, a detailed index of names and places, and one facsimile). Julijan Jelenić. *Ljetopis fra Nikole Lašvanina* (Sarajevo, 1916) (Reprint of the second edition in one volume). Nikola Lašvanin. *Ljetopis*. Trans. Ignacije Gavran (Sarajevo, 1981; 2nd edition: Sarajevo, Zagreb, 2003) (Transliterated into Latin-script, with Latin and Italian parts translated into Croatian. It contains critical apparatus, an introduction, and indices).

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¹ Ignacije Gavran, "Uvod" in: Nikola Lašvanin, *Ljetopis*, tr. Ignacije Gavran (Sarajevo, Zagreb, 2003), 7; Miroslav Džaja, "Pravo prezime fra Nikole Lašvanina i fra Filipa Laštrića-Očevca," *Dobri pastir*, 11-12 (1962), 291.

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² Džaja, 288-289.

³ *Liber Inductionis Clericorum pro Conventu Fojnicensi Jussu Adm. Rndi Patris Gregorii a Varess Minri Provlis Provisus. 1784. In quo tamen prius referentur quidam olim induti, & ex pervetusto, ac obsoleto libello fideliter excerpti* (The Provincial Archive of Bosna Srebrena, Sarajevo), 4; cf. Džaja, 290; Gavran, 6-7.

⁴ Gavran, 7.

⁵ N.L., *Ljetopis*, tr. Ignacije Gavran (Sarajevo, Zagreb, 2003), 301-302.

⁶ Gavran, 8; Julijan Jelenić, *Ljetopis fra Nikole Lašvanina* (Sarajevo, 1916), 1; Aleksandar Mladenović, "O jeziku letopisa fra Nikole Lašvanina," *Grada Naučnog društva NR Bosne i Hercegovine*, vol. 10 (Sarajevo, 1961), 122.

⁷ *Spomenici kulturnog rada franjevac Bosne Srebreničke*, ed. Julijan Jelenić (Mostar 1927), 22, 24-26; Džaja, 288.

⁸ See: Julijan Jelenić, *Spomenici kulturnog rada franjevac Bosne Srebreničke* (Mostar, 1927), 67-69.

⁹ See: Andrija Zirdum, "Franjevački ljetopisi u Bosni i Hercegovini," *Croatica Christiana Periodica*, 9/15 (1985), 47. I am indebted to Boris Nikšić for his explanation of the term *foraneus* as "of a market-place, square, fair, town, place, community."

¹⁰ Bono Benić, *Ljetopis sutješkog samostana*, tr. Ignacije Gavran (Sarajevo, Zagreb, 2003), 161; cf. Gavran, 8-9.

¹¹ Lašvanin, 219-221, 223-225.

¹² Lašvanin, 219-221.

¹³ Benić, 67; Gavran, 9.

¹⁴ Gavran, 9.

¹⁵ Benić, 68-69; Filip Lastrić, *Pregled starina bosanske provincije* (Sarajevo, Zagreb, 2003), tr. Ignacije Gavran and Šimun Šimić, 81-82; Andrija Zirdum, *Filip Lastrić-Očevac 1700-1783. Prilog kulturnoj povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine* (Zagreb, 1982); Gavran, 10.

¹⁶ Jelenić, "Necrologium Bosnae Argentinae," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 28 (1916), 347; Jelenić, *Ljetopis*, 2; Gavran, 11.

¹⁷ Gavran, 14; Jelenić, "Izvori 'Ljetopisa fra Nikole Lašvanina'," *Naša misao*, 30/4 (1916), 61.

¹⁸ Lašvanin, 88.

¹⁹ Lašvanin, 182-192; Marin Franičević, "Vitezović Ritter, Pavao," *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 8, (Zagreb, 1971), 507-508.

²⁰ Lašvanin, 193; Gavran, 16; Jelenić, "Izvori," 62.

²¹ Avdo Sućeska, "Seljačke bune u Bosni u XVII i XVIII stoljeću," *Godišnjak Istorijskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine*, 17 (1966-67), 171-172, and *passim*.

²² Lašvanin, 219-221, 223-225.

²³ Lašvanin, 209, 230; cf. Sućeska, "Vilajetski ajani (prilog izučavanju organizacije turske vlasti u našim zemljama)," *Godišnjak Istorijskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine*, 13 (1962), 196-197.

²⁴ Gavran, 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁶ Lašvanin, 273.

²⁷ V.L. Ménage, "Devshirme," *EI2* (CD-ROM edition).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20; Jelenić, "Izvori," 62.

²⁹ Mladenović, 122.

³⁰ See Jelenić's introduction to "Ljetopis franjevačkog samostana u Kreševu," *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 29 (1917), 7-8; Džaja, 288; B. Inhof, "Dr. Fra J. Jelenić: Ljetopis fra N. Lašvanina," *Vrhbosna*, 30/7-8 (1916), 105; Andrija Zirdum, "Franjevački ljetopisi u Bosni i Hercegovini," *Croatica Christiana Periodica*, 9/15 (1985), 58-59. The evaluation of these fragmental copies of the *Chronicle* in the literature is somewhat complicated. Furthermore, the civil war in the

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1990's, during which some monasteries were damaged or destroyed, adds to the difficulty of locating the manuscripts which might have contained interpolated parts of N.L.'s *Kronika*.

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