

**THE FAMILY FRANKAPANI AND KING MATTHIAS
CORVINUS**

by

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from

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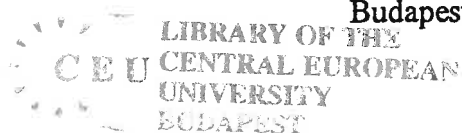
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ABSTRACT

The present thesis, entitled "The Family Frankapani and King Matthias Corvinus", tries to cast light on a period and circumstances until now not often in the centre of Croatian historiography. The second half of the fifteenth century still lacks a modern synthesis, both for the reign of King Matthias Corvinus, and for the family Frankapani. Therefore, my work tries to fill this obvious gap. I chose the family Frankapani, a most powerful magnate family in the Croatia of the period, because many aspects of Matthias's internal and foreign policy had significant reflection upon the family's status, with serious consequences both for the family and the Croatian kingdom. Analysing relevant sources and literature, I have attempted to build up a coherent picture of the Frankapani family at the time, and to correct interpretations of older Croatian historiography, particularly concerning the role of Venice. In doing so, I analysed all major collections of relevant published sources, Croatian, Hungarian and Italian editions, mainly from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (for example: Ljubić, Nagy-Nyáry, Thallóczy-Barabás, Šurmin, Lopašić, etc.). The thesis suggests additional questions about the role of the Croatian magnates as a whole in that period, the comparative analysis of their relations with Matthias and Venice, and the impact of the changes throughout the period 1450-1550 on the long-term processes in the development of Croatian society.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

a) Preliminary remarks

The family Frankapani (earlier the Counts of Krk) were one of the most important and distinguished magnate families in Croatia. Their significant role in Croatian history started with the beginning of their acquiring of lands in the Croatian territory during the second half of the twelfth century, and lasted until the execution of Fran Krsto (Francis Christopher) Frankapan in Wiener Neustadt, 1671. Throughout these five centuries, the family gradually moved its centre from the island of Krk to the north. The Counts of Krk, originally Venetian officials of native origin on that island, successfully followed all the political changes until the mid-fifteenth century, by which time they had become the richest and the most important Croatian magnate family, constantly increasing their land holdings on the Croatian mainland. From that time onwards, the fortunes of the family started to decline.

The main task of this paper will be to reconstruct the circumstances that led to the process of the decline of the Frankapani family. It will analyse which components played a part in it, to what extent it was a consequence of the disputes within the family itself, and what were the roles of factors beyond their immediate control. Among these were the other Croatian noble families, the Hungarian-Croatian kings, the German Empire, the Republic of Venice and the Ottomans. I will try to explain the various attitudes taken by the family members towards King Matthias, Venice and other neighbouring powers, analysing the diversity of the economic and strategic value of their land holdings. I will also analyse the changes which gradually took place on the family lands, and their impact on the power of the family, on King Matthias and the other parties involved. The individual sections of the work will be

dedicated to the important changes taking place at Senj, Vinodol and Krk in the second half of the fifteenth century, pointing to their consequences for the family and the Croatian kingdom as a whole. I shall also try to elaborate the role some of the Frankapani played in wider European circles as diplomats, relatives of the various Italian courts, and their involvement in building and pious activity, using the most representative examples. The consequences of the changes taking place, both immediate as well as long-term, will also be taken into consideration. Finally, I will attempt to summarise the most important results in a separate conclusion.

The sources and literature for the history of the Frankapani family, in the second half of the fifteenth century, are neither abundant, nor very diverse, concerning the aspects they cover of the Frankapani's life and activity.¹ The political activity of the counts is best represented, and this will be the main topic of the present analysis. Particularly well covered are the problems connected with the role of the Frankapani in Venetian-Hungarian diplomatic relations, military conflicts and co-operation with other powers. A significant quantity of documents exist for the relations among the family members, about their lands and disputes. Some of the documents reveal the internal organisation of their land holdings. An exceptional and particularly abundant source for the history of the island of Krk is a detailed relation of the Venetian envoy (later the first governor) at Krk, composed after the Venetian take-over of the island.

Concerning literature, it should be emphasised that the Croatian historiography still lacks methodologically modern books, a synthesis about the age of Matthias Corvinus in Croatia, as well as one about the Frankapani. The only one existing is Vjekoslav Klaić's book, written almost a century ago. Its

¹ The list of sources and literature used in this work, and related closer to the topic, can be found throughout the footnotes later in the text, as well as in the bibliography at the end of the paper. Therefore, I shall not include the references at this point.

quality lies in a reliable and very detailed description of the family's political activity. Klaić took in consideration all available published sources, as well as parts of the archive material and contemporary literature. However, his work varies in the quality of the analysis it provides, frequently lacking any at all. Sometimes his positions are very well argued. On the other hand, Klaić could not avoid certain simplifications and stereotypes, particularly concerning the role of Venice and the internal disputes among the counts. Croatian historians after Klaić did not continue his work, or reinterpret the over-all history of the Frankapani family. Only Nada Klaić, in her synthesis of Croatian medieval history, gave an overview concerning the Counts of Krk, until 1409, where her book stops. Other authors, before and after Vjekoslav Klaić, were mainly local historians or specialists, interested in a certain micro-region or a particular problem, almost never about the second half of the fifteenth century. Among Hungarian and Italian historians, there is also a lack of studies concerning the Frankapani family. However, in various books and articles, particularly those of Hungarian scholars, one can find information about Matthias's reign and various aspects of his policy, and these can be useful in analysing the contemporary development of the Frankapani family.

b) The family Frankapani before the second half of the fifteenth century²

The first count of Krk known from twelfth century documents, was Dujam (Doymus, 1118-63), the elder of the later counts. He held the island as a Venetian official. About 1180, after King Béla III of Hungary (1172-96) managed to recapture the regions of Croatia bordering Istria and Carniola, some of the brothers of the Counts of Krk, deprived of their share of the island, such as Bartol (Bartholomew), Vid (Vitus) II and Henrik (Henry) I, started to place themselves in service of the Hungarian kings—Béla III, and later Andrew II. Vid and Henrik took an active part in the fight against patarens and Kačić family, and were rewarded with the middle Dalmatian islands, but probably never received them. Vid's sons helped King Béla IV at the time of the Tartar invasions (1241-2). Ivan (John) became, as a

² This survey is based on the following books and articles: V. Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani. Od najstarijih vremena do gubitka otoka Krka* [The Frankapani, Counts of Krk. From the Earliest Period until the Loss of the Island of Krk], vol. 1, Zagreb 1901, pp. 3-234. ; idem, "Darovnica kralja Bele III (IV) krčkim knezovima za Senj jest patvorina" [The Charter of King Béla III (IV) to the Counts of Krk for Senj is a Forgery], *Vjestnik kraljevskog hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemaljskog arkiva*, vol. 1, 1899, pp. 262-74. ; idem, "Ime i porijeklo Frankapana" [The Name and Origin of the Frankapani], *Vjesnik hrvatskoga arheologička društva*, n. s., vol. 4, 1899, pp. 1-20. ; N. Klaić, "Kako i kada su knezovi krčki stekli Modruš i Vinodol?" [How and When did the Counts of Krk Acquire Modruš and Vinodol?], *Vjesnik arhiva Rijeka i Pazin*, vol. 16, 1971, p. 131 ff. ; idem, "Društvena struktura kvarnerske općine u razvijenom srednjem vijeku" [The Social Structure of the Quarnero Commune in the High Middle Ages] in: *Krčki zbornik*, vol. 2, Krk 1971, pp. 111-44. ; idem, *Povijest Hrvata u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* [The History of the Croats in the High Middle Ages], Zagreb 1976, pp. 370-407.

consequence, the *potestas* of Split, and Fridrik (Frederick) of Senj. They were the first who took the titles of Counts of Modruš and Vinodol. Because of their help to Béla, they were deprived by Venice of their office at Krk, but probably received Modruš and Vinodol at the same time from the king. In 1260, Venice reinstated them both at Krk. While Krk remained a joint holding of the family, only Vid's branch managed to keep and inherit all lands on Croatian soil. While the counts in Vinodol were, as at Krk, mainly collecting income, at Modruš they were real *domini terre*. The reason lies in the different development of these regions before the twelfth century. Vinodol, like neighbouring Istria and the Quarnero islands, established a communal system, based on a tradition dating from antiquity, something still unimaginable for the remote Modruš. At the island of Krk, between 1260 and 1358, the position of the counts became more and more independent of Venice, due to their distinguished position in Croatia, and Venice's problems with various enemies. It seems that Venice deprived the counts of their office at Krk during the Zadar war (1345-6). However, the Venetians were not able to back up their threats, until the final loss of Krk, with the peace in Zadar, in 1358.

From 1271 onwards, the counts became *potestates perpetui* of Senj. The first in the line was Vid. His son, Ivan, managed, through his marriage, to increase the family's lands with some parts of Slavonia. For their diplomatic mission to Naples, 1289, King Ladislav IV rewarded Ivan and his brother Leonardo (Leonard) with the *iura patronatus ecclesiarum de Corbauia et de Scenya*. After Ladislav's death, the counts managed to obtain a papal charter from Pope Nicholas IV, donating them Gacka county. Besides Babonić and Šubić families, the Counts of Krk were among the strong supporters of the new, Anjou dynasty. From 1302 onwards, they managed to make the internal organisation of their land holdings uniform, even in Senj. Their firm position enabled them to resist the pressure of the powerful ban Pavao (Paul) Šubić, who could not, even with the help of Rab (Arbe), take over the coastal town

of Jablanac from the Counts of Krk. King Charles Robert donated Požega county to Count Dujam, and confirmed the rights of family for Gacka, Otočac and Doljani. Count Fridrik III, who was in charge of family matters at the time of Šubići's fall (1322), remained loyal and faithful to the king. With the king's consent, he extended the role of the counts at Drežnik and Slunj. Donations of King Charles Robert formed the basis of the firm and almost unlimited power of the family in these parts of Croatia.

In the following years, whenever the king led a campaign against other Croatian magnates, Fridrik III and Ivan IV joined him. It seems that Fridrik's sons, Dujam III and Bartol VIII, were even *comites* at Székesfehérvár around 1335, which shows their significance at the time. They remained faithful to Charles Robert until his death, and continued their loyal service to the new king, Louis of Anjou. Dujam and Bartol were very active on the king's side during the war for Zadar, openly supporting the rebellious town, and trying to seize the important Croatian fortresses in the Dalmatian hinterland for their king. As a consequence, Venice deprived them of their office at Krk. During the early fifties of the fourteenth century, after Dujam died, Bartol improved his relations with Venice, following the peace between Hungary and Venice, 1348. There is no information about the family during the decisive war between 1356 and 1358 for Dalmatia. After the peace in Zadar, 1358, Krk was returned to the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, after 240 years. Count Stjepan, Bartol's son, was at the time *comes* in Požega and Zala.

Around the year 1386, the so called Škinela's branch of the family at the island of Krk died out. Vid's branch, led by Bartol VIII, then took over all the family lands. After Bartol's death, his sons Stjepan (Stephen) I and Ivan (Anž, John) V managed to increase the family's power and status. They became related to the counts of Gorica, and with the Carrara family in Padua. Ivan distinguished himself in 1387, liberating Queen Mary from captivity in Novigrad. Therefore, King Sigismund donated to him Cetin and Klokoč in

Zagreb county. Stjepan's death initiated a struggle over his inheritance. His daughter, Elizabeta (Elisabeth) married Count Friedrich Celjski. Ivan V became the only lord of the family, and Croatian ban (in 1392), the first one in family's history. He died in 1393. His son, Count Nikola IV (1393-1432), achieved even greater results. During the fights between King Sigismund and Ladislav of Naples (1393-1409), he bought Ribnik and borrowed Ozalj. He was forced by circumstances to recognise Ladislav's rule in 1403. However, he soon returned to Sigismund's side, and remained faithful to the king until his death. Nikola helped Sigismund during the war with the Venetians, and received in return the confirmation for Krk, in 1412. His son, Ivan VI, married in 1416 Katarina (Catherine), the heir of Nelipić family and its lands. Nikola allied himself with Ernest Habsburg in 1418, as well.

The death of Elizabeta Krčka, 1422, in suspicious circumstances (maybe killed by her husband), gave a possibility for Nikola to seize all the family's territory belonging to Friedrich Celjski as Elizabeta's dowry. Nikola successfully concentrated in his hands all the large family estates throughout Croatia and Slavonia. In 1426, Nikola became a Croatian ban. Becoming ban, he lent 28000 golden florins to King Sigismund. In return, the king entrusted Nikola to govern over almost all the other parts of Croatia, not belonging to the Kurjakovići and Nelipići families (Bihać, Sokol, Ripač, Rmanj, Knin, Lab, Vrlika, Ostrovica, Skradin, Luka county, Poljica, etc.). Nikola made many efforts to reconcile Sigismund and Venice, and contributed to the truce in 1428. Nikola even visited The Holy Land. In 1430, he met with Pope Martin V in Rome, who confirmed him with a putative tradition of the Roman descendance of the family. From then on, the title Frankapani (Frangepani) became permanently a part of the family's name. The other reason to visit the pope was to obtain his support for Nikola's cause at Buda, because Nikola temporarily lost the good favour of the court, while Sigismund was abroad (Queen Barbara Celjska). However, in 1431, Sigismund again confirmed all

possessions and rights to Nikola, but the latter had to pay an additional 14000 ducats for that. Next year, Nikola died.

Nikola was followed by his nine sons, the same ones who were later involved in the division at Modruš. Firstly, they held their territories as a joint possession, and performed the banal duty jointly, as well. The most distinguished were at the beginning Ivan VI and Stjepan II. In 1436, Ivan died, and his widow Katarina Nelipić lost her family lands in southern Croatia to Talovci family. On the other hand, in 1439, Count Martin through his wife received Lipovac, Jastrebarsko, Kostajnica and Komogovina. At the same year, through an accord with the Zrinski family, the Frankapani kept Slunj. In 1436, Stjepan became a captain in Carniola, and in 1442 took over Dubovac from the Babonići family.

For three centuries, the Frankapani family gradually and successfully established their control over a major part of medieval Croatia and parts of Slavonia, skilfully balancing among the neighbouring powers and the kings in Buda. By the mid-fifteenth century, they established an almost completely independent position, received "confirmation" of their Roman origin, and seemed to be almost untouchable. However, the situation started to change very soon.

CHAPTER 2

The family Frankapani between King Matthias Corvinus
and Venice

a) *Division of family properties at Modruš, 1449*

During the fifth decade of the fifteenth century, some members of the Frankapani family gained significantly higher prestige, social and political status. This was particularly true for Stjepan and Martin. They managed through successful marriages with Isolda d'Este and Dorotea Blagajska respectively to establish important relations. Stjepan became a relative of the Neapolitan king Alfonso V. Martin won territory formerly belonging to Ivan (John) Babonić Blagajski, i.e. county Vrbas and some other land holdings in the present-day northern Bosnia. Stjepan was an active supporter of regent Ivan-János-Hunyadi, and acted as a mediator between him and King Alfonso V, particularly during 1448, when the regent prepared for a campaign against the Ottomans and asked for help and support from Naples. This activity marked the beginning of a long history of devoted service and good relations with the Hunyadi house.³

Martin Frankapan tried to compete with Stjepan. Although he had already signed the contracts of mutual assistance and protection with the Celjski (Cillei, von Cilly) family in 1446, a year later he signed the same kind of contract with Hunyadi, an enemy of the Celjskis. In 1448 he took part in Hunyadi's campaign against the Ottomans, which ended with defeat at Kosovo. Martin, who successfully escaped from the battlefield, also played an important role in liberating Hunyadi from Ottoman captivity following the battle.⁴

In order to prevent Stjepan and Martin from dominating and taking a bigger part of the family land holdings, other members searched for a

³ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 229-32.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

counterbalance. Nikola (Nicholas) V and Dujam IV established links through marriage with the Celjski counts and Emperor Frederick III, while the youngest brother Ivan VII inclined towards Venice. Disputes among the brothers, with Stjepan and Martin on one side, and Ivan leading the rest of the family on the other, arose and worsened through 1446 and 1447. In April 1448, Ivan asked the Venetians to mediate in the conflict, so that "all of the brothers could get a fair share of property."⁵

The biggest issue among the brothers included questions concerning the division of family property, which caused continuous instability. Disputes lead to repeated changes in political alliances and preferences, which in turn further worsened and inflamed conflicts. If the allies of the different family members were hostile to each other, as in the observed period, the situation deteriorated even more. Such disputes arose with each new generation. The reasons were the immanent structural weaknesses of the family's possessions. Geographically widespread, the land holdings differed in economic value, as they ranged from mountainous and scarcely populated parts inland, to prosperous and lucrative places on the coast, such as the port of Senj, or the island of Krk or Vinodol, a centre of agricultural production. The disputes were less heated in generations when the counts were less numerous and their political alliances not so conflicting. However, in the period under review, all factors joined in a particularly unfavourable combination, together with the emergence of a new and dangerous challenge from the east: the Ottomans. Vjekoslav Klaić emphasises family unity whenever the situation was not tense, as in 1445. However, I would argue that disputes and quarrels of varying intensity were a constant state of affairs within the family, as opposed to the image conveyed

⁵ Š. Ljubić, *Listine o odnošajih Južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike* [Documents Concerning Relations of the Southern Slavs with the Republic of Venice], vol. 10, *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 22, Zagreb 1891, p. 268.

by nineteenth-century Croatian historiography, which portrayed the magnates and nobles in a heroic manner.

Niccolo Barbo, a Venetian noble, elected to mediate among the counts, did not, however, succeed in his mission and returned to Venice by the end of June 1448.⁶ At the same time, Count Ivan was again in Venice, asking for help against Count Stjepan and the brothers supporting him and *qui sibi et dictis suis fratribus inimicantur esse dispositos ad totalem ruinam suam, et nolle pacem*. Accepting Ivan under their protection, Venetians asked Stjepan to make peace. Moreover, they assisted Ivan with one armed war-ship and also ordered their officials at the neighbouring Kvarner (Quarnero) islands to aid him. The same situation was repeated in October 1448.⁷

Conflicts continued throughout the first half of 1449. Finally, in June of that year, the counts agreed to hold a meeting and settle all disputes in a peaceful manner. Klaić suggests that the presence of bishops from the Frankapani-held territory (Krbava, Senj and Krk) probably played an important role in the reconciliation.⁸ The meeting took place in Modruš, on 12-14 June 1449, with an important result: the whole territory and land holdings belonging to the Frankapani were divided in eight parts, among seven brothers and their nephew Juraj (George) I, son of the late Ivan VI. This division marked the establishment of the eight territorialized branches of the Frankapani family.⁹ Senj and Krk remained the joint possession of the family, in which all eight branches had an equal part. Klaić suggests that this was due to their will to keep a certain level of unity in the family. In my opinion, the reason that the counts did not divide Senj and Krk was because of their

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 269.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 273-4, 281.

⁸ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 234-5.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 235.

economic and strategic significance. Also, this arrangement probably aimed to prevent Stjepan and Martin from acquiring even greater power.

The division was the following:¹⁰

1) Count Stjepan (Stephen) II received *oppidum Modrussa cum castro Thersan, ac alia castra et castella Wytun, Grobnik et Dubovacz vocata*.¹¹

2) Count Martin received *castra Okych, Starigrad, Noui, Brebir, Kothor, Bakar et Thersat*.¹²

3) Count Nikola (Nicholas) V received *castra Ozal, Ribnik et Grisan, ac porcio ciuitatum Wegle et Segnie*.¹³

4) Count Dujam (Doymus) IV received *Osteruicza, Nouum Castrum, Slun et Ledenicze*.¹⁴

5) Count Bartol (Bartholomew) IX received *oppidum Brine cum castro Jaknik et aliis castris Sokol, Thersacz et oppidum Bihach*.¹⁵

¹⁰ According to V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 235.

¹¹ Modruš and Tržan are located on the road from Zagreb to Senj, some 50 kilometres from the sea, and, holding a strategic position, were among the most important and densely populated parts of the Frankapani possessions. Vitunj and Dubovac are also located in the same region, while Grobnik, some 10-15 kilometres north from the present day town of Rijeka, was at the time part of Vinodol county.

¹² Most of these possessions are located on the coast-line between Rijeka and Senj. Trsat is part of present-day Rijeka. They all belonged to the Vinodol county, a rather developed and populated part of the family holdings. Okić is located some 20 kilometres south-west of Zagreb on the mountain Plešivica, which is, as well as Vinodol, a wine-producing region.

¹³ Ozalj and Ribnik are situated in the present day border region of Croatia and Slovenia, south-west of Zagreb, near the town of Karlovac. Grižane, near the coastal town of Crikvenica, was in Vinodol county.

¹⁴ Ostrvica and Lički Novi are near the town of Gospić, in the Lika region, at the time part of Lika county. Slunj is situated some 50 kilometres south of Karlovac. Ledenice was in Vinodol county.

¹⁵ Brinje with Jelovik is situated on the Zagreb-Senj road, closer to Senj, south-west of Modruš. Sokolac is south of the town of Bihać in north-western Bosnia, near the Croatian border. Bihać, with a very interesting urban history, was a part of the

6) Count Ivan (John) VII received *dominium Busan et castrum Hrelin*.¹⁶

7) Count Žigmund (Sigismund) received *castra Othochacz, Prozor, Werhouina et Dabar*.¹⁷

8) Count Juraj (George) I, nephew of the other counts, received *castra Cetin, Ermen, una cum Lapacz, Baska et Ribnik*.¹⁸

In addition to this division, the counts agreed on an inheritance system. If any of the counts would die heirless, the other brothers would meet and discuss who would control his portion. They agreed that this portion should pass into the control of the member with the least amount of holdings. At that time they also agreed on the status of possessions that Count Martin received from his two wives (*Lipovac, Pokupsko, Komogovina* and *Kostajnica* in Slavonia), stating that, in the case of his heirless death, these possessions would be divided among the remaining brothers.¹⁹

It is significant that, taking advantage of the fact that in 1449 King Ladislas Posthumus was still a child under the protection of Frederick III, the division at Modruš was made almost independently, without the consent of king or ban. Nobody was able to oppose the counts' action in the confused internal situation of the kingdom. Still, internal disputes among the brothers

Croatian kingdom until 1592, when the Ottomans conquered it and changed its features to the typical Muslim town it still is. Tržac is situated in Bosnia, some 25 kilometres north-west of Bihać, on the border with Croatia.

¹⁶ Bužim is situated near Gospić, at the time part of the equally named Bužane county. Hreljin was in the Vinodol county.

¹⁷ Otočac, Prozor, Vrhovine and Dabar were part of the Gacka county, situated in and around Gacko field, some 30-50 kilometres east of Senj, inland.

¹⁸ Cetingrad is situated 20 kilometres east of Slunj, on the Croatian side of the border with Bosnia. Rmanj is on the Bosnian side of the border, near the place called Martin-Brod, some 50 kilometres south-east of Bihać. Gornji Lapac and Donji Lapac are in the same region, on the Croatian side of the border, at the time part of the Srb county. Baška is a place on the island of Krk. Lički Ribnik is situated near Gospić, once in Lika county.

¹⁹ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 236, 334, n. 218.

continued. The causes of the dissatisfaction were various. Some of the brothers opposed Count Stjepan's receiving Modruš and Tržan. As the oldest part of the acquired lands in Croatia, they should have gone to the oldest brother. The others believed that they gained too little. Above all, Count Ivan, interested in augmenting his share of land holdings.²⁰ He concentrated his efforts on gaining control of the town and island of Krk (Veglia), the native region of the family, that probably had also a strong emotional value for the counts. In trying to do so, Ivan asked Venice for help. The disputes among the brothers concerning the matter were resolved at the end of 1451, when the envoys of the family in Venice confirmed that the other counts agreed to assign the town and island of Krk to Count Ivan. In Ivan's words, he rescinded his possessions in Croatia in order to take control over Krk. He placed himself under Venetian protection, received help of one armed Venetian *galea*, and even promised to raise the flag of San Marco in the town of Krk and in the fortresses all around the island.²¹ Ivan's statements of wanting to live and die only under Venetian rule displayed his insecurity. Putting himself in a position dependent on Venice assured him that the other brothers would not be able to change their minds, and might offer protection from possible intentions of future kings towards his holdings. On the other hand, Ivan probably counted on the possibility that, if everything went well, he could in time loosen his ties with the Republic and establish a more independent position on the island. In fact, Ivan was to be rather successful in doing so, almost for three decades, when, because of irresistible combined pressure from King Matthias and Venice, the island was taken over and directly administered by the Serenissima in 1480.

²⁰ For example, in 1449 he added Drivenik in Vinodol to his lands. Đ. Šurmin, *Hrvatski spomenici [=Acta Croatica]*, vol. 1, *Monumenta historico-iuridica Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 6, Zagreb 1898, p. 180. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 236.

²¹ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 9, *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 21, Zagreb 1890, pp. 410-1.

On February 1453, Ivan issued a charter in which he emphasised that *domino concedente dominium Veglae nec non totius insulae ad nos tantum, absque nulla fratrum nostrorum participatione, devenit*.²² The *dominus* in question was, in fact, the Republic of Venice. On 2 March 1453, Ivan composed his testament. He was very generous towards the Church, donating money to the cathedral church of St. Mary in Krk, to the Franciscan monastery of St. Mary at the small island of Košljun near Krk and to the Franciscan monastery in town. He donated money to the hospital for poor in town and granted payments and pensions to his officials and servants on the island as well. Of particular importance was his wish that his heirs should remain faithful to Venice and under her protection *sub pena paterne maledictionis*, and that, if heirless, *instituit et ordinavit serenissimum dominum ducem, qui pro tempore fuerit, et illustrissimum ducale dominium Venetiarum*. However, Ivan's loyalty was conditional. Venice should threat him "as her son." Still insecure, Ivan insisted that if his enemies captured him, Venice should do everything possible to liberate and place him back in power at Krk.²³ Venetians were, in that period, inclined to accept those conditions, as seen in letters to the Dalmatian magistrates.²⁴ Marriage with Elisabetta Mauroceno, the daughter of a Venetian noble, was a further step in Ivan's close alliance with the Venetians, aimed at securing his reign on the island and protecting it from his brothers.²⁵ Moreover, Ivan did not even participate at family meetings any more, separating himself almost completely from them.²⁶

²² I. Črnčić, *Najstarija poviest krčkoj, osorskoj, rabskoj, senjskoj i krbavskoj biskupiji* [The Oldest History of the Krk, Osor, Rab, Senj and Krbava Bishoprics], Rome 1867, pp. 165-6.

²³ Š. Ljubić, *Commissiones et relationes Venetae*, vol. 1, *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 6, Zagreb 1876, pp. 98-101.

²⁴ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, p. 31.

²⁵ *ibidem*, p. 178.

²⁶ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 238.

In August 1455, Ivan called himself *Veglae tociusque insulae dominus et comes*.²⁷

During the fifties of the fifteenth century, Juraj, son of the oldest brother, the late Ivan VI, challenged Count Stjepan for his possession of Modruš. However, Nikola, as the oldest living brother, supported Stjepan. No major problems occurred at the beginning. When, in 1452, King Ladislav Posthumus left Frederick's court and began to rule independently, Stjepan allied himself with Frederick III. He even served as his captain in Carniola in 1453 and 1454.²⁸ In 1455, Venice granted the Frankapani the privilege of sea trade and trade with Italy, thereby renewing the contract of 1408 between the Republic and Nikola, the counts' father.²⁹ The deaths of the Croatian ban Ulrich Celjski in 1456, and of King Ladislav Posthumus a year later, involved the Frankapani in the division of the Celjski family land holdings after they died out with Ulrich. The election of a new king contributed to a division among the family members along the lines of political preferences. The Frankapani reflected, on a smaller scale, the controversies in the kingdom among the supporters of Frederick III and young Matthias Hunyadi (Corvinus). By 1458, Nikola V and Bartol IX were already dead. Thus, Stjepan became the head of the family. At the same time, Stjepan's nephews, Juraj I of Cetingrad, Bartol X of Ozalj, Ivan VIII (Anž) of Brinje and his brother Nikola VI of Tržac, became prominent.³⁰

The division of family properties at Modruš had aimed at establishing stability and a clear state in the Frankapani possessions. However, it inevitably created new dissatisfaction among those who thought of themselves as being deprived of a fair share. Before Matthias Corvinus came to the throne, between 1449 and 1458, the island of Krk and its count gradually distanced

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 238. ; Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 249-52.

²⁸ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 240-1.

²⁹ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 61-5.

³⁰ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 243-4.

themselves from the family. The permanent loss of the family's cradle only a few decades later completed this process of separation. Different interests and quarrels about land holdings, connected with differences in political preferences concerning the election of a new king, produced a fertile soil for future conflicts. Therefore, unfortunately for the counts, the division at Modruš marked the peak of the family's power, after which a process of decline and not consolidation, followed.

b) *Relations of the various members of the Frankapani family with King Matthias—from hostility to confidence*

Count Stjepan Frankapan, a strong supporter of the new king, kept in close contact with Matthias during the first years of his reign. Between 1458 and 1460, Stjepan was mainly engaged in diplomatic activity abroad, aiming to secure Matthias's reign, or to represent his interests in the international affairs of the time. Matthias needed a man like Stjepan, who was well known throughout Italy. Stjepan had relatives at the courts in Modena, Ferrara, Milan and Naples. Besides that, he was, at the time, on friendly terms with Venice. Therefore, it is not surprising that Matthias several times entrusted him with delicate diplomatic tasks there. Stjepan was among the Hungarian-Croatian representatives at the meeting in Mantua, 1459, convoluted by Pope Pius II, with its aim to organise a pan-Christian military campaign against the Ottomans.³¹ On their way, the delegates stopped in Venice and, led by Stjepan Frankapan, invited the Venetians to participate in a joint effort. Stjepan did not let pass the chance to recommend himself and his family to the benevolence of the Republic. Answers to both requests were positive.³² The royal delegation spent several months in Mantua. They returned to Hungary in spring 1460, carrying money that was provided for military campaign against the Ottomans by the pope. The king was very satisfied with Stjepan's performance in Italy and, after his return, donated to Stjepan a few villages and land holdings. With carefully chosen words Matthias addressed Stjepan, particularly emphasising

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 245.

³² I. Nagy - A. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából* [The Hungarian Diplomatic Sources from the Period of King Matthias], vol. 1, Budapest 1875, pp. 54-7.

Stjepan's fidelity, and the diplomatic efforts in Italy that the latter conducted successfully, at his own significant expense.³³

Stjepan wanted to distinguish himself in the matters of the church and prestige, as well. Trying to cope with Count Martin, his brother and political opponent, Stjepan paid attention to pious deeds and to the rank of the church on his land holdings. With the help of Franjo (Francis), bishop of Krbava, Stjepan received a confirmation from the pope, in which Pius II recognised the status of a votive church to the church of Miraculous Virgin Mary, near Modruš. Franjo, with the papal confirmation, transferred his seat in 1460 from Krbava to Modruš.³⁴ Stjepan's interest in such a transfer was obvious. Krbava was a seat of the Kurjakovići family, who were often in rather hostile relations with the Frankapani. This fact, combined with the good personal relations between Stjepan and the bishop, was a motive for the transfer. The Ottoman threat probably had no serious impact on that, but could serve as a good excuse, because of the exposed location of Krbava. Kurjakovići, however, reacted very firmly. They imprisoned bishop Franjo, and showed themselves inclined to free him only after repeated interventions from the pope and Venice.³⁵

The final solution concerning Matthias's throne in 1462 permitted the easing of tension among the members of the Frankapani family. It also enabled the king to launch preparations for war against the Ottomans over Bosnia. Therefore, Matthias tried to mobilise possible allies throughout Italy, again sending Count Stjepan there as his envoy. Moreover, Stjepan was at the same time appointed again as the Croatian ban. As head of the mission to Rome, Stjepan successfully conducted negotiations in Venice, in May 1463. The Venetians decided to grant Matthias 3000 ducats monthly, for the six

³³ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 246.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁵ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, p. 224.

following months.³⁶ From Ferrara, Stjepan sent letters to the Sforza family in Milan, trying to involve them also in the matter.³⁷ His activity in Rome at the papal court is not known. However, he obviously did not spend much time there, after hearing news of strong Ottoman attacks in the heart of his territories, and of their conquest of Bosnia.

Already in September 1463, Stjepan was in Petrovaradin (in present-day Vojvodina, the province of Yugoslavia). As a Croatian *ban* among other dignitaries, he witnessed the formation of an alliance for war against the Ottomans between King Matthias and Venice.³⁸ He probably took part in the military campaigns in Bosnia, as well. However, in 1464 he was replaced as a *ban* by Emerik Zapolja (Emeric Zápolyai). At the same year, his land holdings were hard hit by the Ottomans.

After the death of Count Žigmund, who died without male heirs, all the brothers gathered on 5 March 1466 in Senj, where they discussed the faith of Žigmund's land holdings, as well. They decided to donate two mills in Švica to the Pauline monasteries of St. Helen and St. Saviour near Senj. As the two mills were on Žigmund's territory, that provoked a reaction from the monastery of St. Nicholas in Gvozd near Modruš.³⁹ They demanded that the mills should have been handed over to them. Matthias ordered that the Frankapani do this, claiming that he was a witness when Žigmund granted these possessions to the Gvozd monastery.⁴⁰ It is undeniable that Matthias did interfere in family matters. On the other hand, it is debatable whether the king had any serious intention to take direct control over Žigmund's territory, as

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 243-4. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 1, pp. 206-7.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 208.

³⁸ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 272-4.

³⁹ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 247-8. ; J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* [The Age of the Hunyadi in Hungary], vol. 12, Pest 1857, pp. 120-1.

⁴⁰ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 266-8.

Klaić suggested.⁴¹ In 1464, when Matthias finally secured his reign, Count Žigmund was among those who explicitly recognised his supreme rule. Even Count Martin was at the time obliged to do so. However, it did not mean that the king wanted to take direct control over those territories then. He was at the time not able to do so, being far away and having few means of effective control at his disposal. In the case of Žigmund, it was, more than anything else, a matter of principle. Žigmund really did issue a document, backed by the king and his officials, in which he donated the disputed mills to the Gvozd monastery.⁴² Therefore, the decision of the family meeting in Senj was an unacceptable challenge to the king's supreme authority. That was probably the reason Matthias acted. In my opinion, Klaić mechanically applied a formula used by King Matthias for Senj, Krk and Vinodol to explain the position of Žigmund's land holdings, putting them in the same context because of the same period. One has to keep in mind, however, that Senj, Vinodol and later Krk, had a qualitatively completely different significance for Matthias and the kingdom as a whole, than did Žigmund's land holdings in the hinterland. Moreover, they were not on the main road from the north to the sea, which would provide them with strategical value, such as Stjepan's Modruš had, for example. Therefore, I argue, the events and processes exposed above could be placed in the common, wider context, of an increasing royal power, but with significant differences.

In the middle of 1466, King Matthias came to Zagreb.⁴³ At the same time, the internal struggles among the Frankapani reached their peak. They were further inflamed by the varied political alliances and preferences which

⁴¹ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 252–4.

⁴² Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 239–40.

⁴³ I. K. Tkalčić, *Povjestni spomenici slobodnog kraljevskog grada Zagreba* [= *Monumenta historica liberae regiae civitatis Zagrabiae*], vol. 2, Zagreb 1894, pp. 308, 310.

existed (King Matthias or Emperor Frederick III). These conflicts were exposed in a dispute over Modruš, Tržan and Vitunj, which Count Martin claimed from Count Stjepan. As expected, the king confirmed these land holdings to his faithful ally, Stjepan. However, immediately after the king's return to Buda, the same land holdings were disputed at Zagreb's chapter by the sons of Count Juraj of Cetingrad and by Count Ivan VIII (Anž) of Brinje.⁴⁴

In 1474, Count Bartol X died heirless. He was a son of the late Nikola V. While still alive, he handed over Grižane in Vinodol to his uncle, Count Martin, which his father received in Modruš, 1449. He spent his life mainly in the north, in Ozalj and Ribnik, not exposing himself much. After his death, Ozalj and Ribnik were handed over to Stjepan and Bernardin. It seems that Bernardin personally controlled Ozalj.⁴⁵ From then on, Stjepan's branch of the family started to be called *Ozaljski*. Their land holdings, thus, spread all the way to river Kupa and border with Carniola. In the Kupa and Vinodol regions, they bordered the territory belonging to Count Martin. Around 1475, Count Martin was already concerned about dying without an heir. It is very probable that he had already then named Stjepan and Bernardin his heirs for Trsat and Novi, and maybe even for Hreljin and Drivenik, all in Vinodol county. It could be concluded from Stjepan and Bernardin's confirmation of the Martin's donations to some monasteries there, already in July 1475.⁴⁶

Young Bernardin Frankapan distinguished himself as a member of a delegation that in 1476 went to Naples to marry Beatrice of Aragon with King Matthias. One day after the successful conclusion of the marriage, Bernardin, together with many other members of a delegation, on 16 September 1476 was created by King Ferdinand a knight of the order of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the charter issued at that occasion, King Ferdinand was full of

⁴⁴ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 254.

⁴⁵ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, p. 288.

⁴⁶ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 267.

compliments for his young cousin and his virtues.⁴⁷ Bernardin also met for the first time with his future wife, and cousin of Queen Beatrice, Aloisia de Marzano. Stjepan and Martin continued their faithful service to King Matthias. In 1479, they were waging war in Carniola against the emperor's troops. At the end of the same year, they concluded peace with Frederick's military commanders there, and obliged themselves to hand back some conquered territories in Carniola.⁴⁸

As one can see, the basic feature of the relationship among counts Stjepan and Bernardin and King Matthias was their permanent and loyal service to the king. It would continue, mainly unaltered, until the king's death. Except during the crisis over Senj, after which Stjepan quickly and easily regained the king's favour, Stjepan's branch of the family was among the king's most confident allies in the kingdom. Their Italian relations placed both Stjepan and Bernardin among the king's most important diplomatic officials, and even led to direct kinship between Count Bernardin and the king. What were the reasons for such an attitude on both sides? The answer for Stjepan and Bernardin, in my opinion, lies in the position of their land holdings. They were placed on the main route of the Ottoman attacks towards the imperial lands, and were the hardest hit. On the other hand, with the acquisitions in the border regions towards the Empire (in Vinodol and near the Kupa river), Stjepan started to have border disputes and problems with Carniola. The influence of Venice was not so important, because of its relative distance. For Stjepan and Bernardin, King Matthias was the logical choice, whose interests did not cross with theirs. It is true that Modruš had a significant strategic value because of the road passing there from Zagreb to Senj. However, both the

⁴⁷ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, Budapest 1877, pp. 326-9.

⁴⁸ L. Thallóczy - S. Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára* [= *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Frangepanibus*], vol. 2, *Monumenta Hungariae Historica-Diplomataria*, vol. 38, Budapest 1913, pp. 151-6.

king and Stjepan had common interests: defence against the Ottomans, conflicts with the Empire, connections in Italy, etc. While Stjepan was an ally of Matthias, there was no need for the king to control directly the road through Modruš. Stjepan and Bernardin held a few of the most prosperous and oldest land holdings of the family, and Stjepan was its oldest member. Therefore, he was frequently challenged for these territories by the other brothers, providing an additional reason for closer ties with the king. Matthias had reasons as well. Particularly during the period of securing his reign, Matthias needed support from the head of the most important Croatian noble family to help him establish his rule in the kingdom, particularly in Croatia. Moreover, Stjepan's family ties could serve Matthias in approaching many Italian courts. Stjepan could also play a role in Matthias's policy towards the Empire. On the other hand, certain of the king's actions were not convenient for Stjepan (Senj, Krk, Vinodol). Matthias manipulated the counts skillfully, and achieved his goals: supporting Stjepan and attacking counts in the most important parts of the family estates. Quickly renewed ties after Senj, because of mutual interests, had a much higher priority for Matthias and Stjepan than their disagreements. As a consequence, Stjepan and Bernardin preserved, and even increased, their land holdings with the king's consent. At the same time the position of the family significantly deteriorated during those three decades.

Stjepan's main opponent in family matters, as well as in political preferences and alliances, was Count Martin. He opposed King Matthias at the beginning of his reign. In February 1459, he was among the Croatian and Slavonian magnates who proclaimed Frederick III king.⁴⁹ After Matthias secured his reign in 1464, Count Martin was among those who had to recognise his supreme authority. At the beginning of 1464, King Matthias was still ordering Count Martin to stop imposing tolls and taxes on the inhabitants

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 246.

of Gradec at his land holdings, particularly in Jastrebarsko.⁵⁰ On the contrary, immediately after Matthias was crowned, one could see that Count Martin suddenly became rather generous towards him. Martin ordered that his town Krupa near the Una river should after his death be handed over directly to Matthias. Opposed to the conclusions of the division at Modruš, Martin deprived his family of their rights, and ordered that after his death Kostajnica, Steničnjak and Lipovac become royal possessions as well. On the other hand, the king confirmed these land holdings to Martin for life, and numerous others with the right of inheritance.⁵¹ Martin obviously felt some pressure on him. He bought Krupa in 1459. According to this document, Matthias had to redeem Krupa after Martin's death from his successors.⁵² One should emphasise that Count Martin's attempts to get closer to Matthias were earlier than one could conclude reading Klaić. In a charter issued in 1463, King Matthias confirmed all the land holdings of Martin and his successors throughout the kingdom. As a justification of this, Matthias stated that Count Martin had thoroughly performed all his military duties, particularly against the Ottomans. Matthias emphasised that, after the fall of Bosnia, Martin helped the royal army with all possible means, suffered significant damage, and therefore weakened the Ottomans, increasing the security of Croatia. In the recent fights for liberation of Bosnia, Martin led numerous Croatian magnates and other nobles, and suffered significant financial expenses.⁵³

In the period between the division at Modruš and fights for Bosnia, Count Martin earned the descriptive *Pobožni* (Pious). Led by his father's vow to enlarge the church of Virgin Mary at mount Trsat, and add a Franciscan monastery to it, Martin petitioned Pope Nicholas V to let him fulfil his father's

⁵⁰ Tkalčić, *Monumenta*, vol. 2, p. 287.

⁵¹ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 64-6.

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 33-6.

⁵³ *ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

wish. With his Bull from 1453, Nicholas V permitted Martin to proceed. In the following years, Martin bestowed numerous possessions and other benefits upon his foundation.⁵⁴ In 1455, he confirmed all the privileges of the Pauline monastery of St. Mary in Crikvenica.⁵⁵ In 1462, he founded a monastery for hermits at the mount Osp near Novi in Vinodol county, and granted the lands and income of the Bužane arch deaconry in Lika to its hermits.⁵⁶

After the fall of Senj, Count Martin had serious problems with his nephew, Count Ivan VIII (Anž) of Brinje. Ivan, fearing for his land holdings after the conquest of Senj, and unsatisfied with his share of family property, challenged his uncle for part of Martin's lands. In 1471, Martin handed over his *castrum* Kostajnica to his *familiaris* Ivan Bevenjud, in return for 4000 golden florins, as a reward for his devoted service. Namely, when Anž captured Count Martin and his *familiares* in Brinje, Bevenjud handed over his *castrum* Skrad to Anž, by order of Count Martin, to ransom them from the captivity.⁵⁷ Further development of the dispute is not well-known. However, one could presume that they soon reached an agreement, on the basis of which Count Anž, after Martin's death, had to receive Bakar and Bribir. This can be concluded from the Anž's confirmation of the donations granted by Martin to the monasteries there.⁵⁸

In the same period, Count Martin started to think of his heirless death and the fate of his land holdings. From 1465, when he could not appear in Zagreb because of his "weak body", he often felt ill.⁵⁹ Besides Anž, he named other heirs, for example Stjepan and Bernardin (see previously). Among the

⁵⁴ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 240.

⁵⁵ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 204-5.

⁵⁶ R. Lopašić, *Hrvatski urbari* [= *Urbaria lingua Croatica conscripta*], *Monumenta historico-iuridica Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 5, Zagreb 1894, p. 130.

⁵⁷ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 119-21.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

recipients of grants were his officials and servants, for example Mikulica (Nick), the son of Damjan de Drazgometh, Martin's *dapifer*.⁶⁰ Martin's activity in assigning his property was continuous and emphatic throughout the seventies of the fifteenth century.⁶¹ In 1477, he finally named King Matthias his heir for six *castella*, namely Kostajnica, Steničnjak, Lipovac, Okić, Novi and Bribir.⁶² By 1478 he handed over Kostajnica and Okić to King Matthias, who let it for annual rent at 1500 golden florins to the above mentioned Ivan Bevenjud.⁶³ Martin's decision about Novi and Bribir provoked the involvement of Count Ivan of Krk, with serious and lasting consequences for the latter. Count Martin died on 4 October 1479, and was buried in the Franciscan church of St. Mary at Trsat.

The position of Count Martin within the family and towards King Matthias was in many ways substantially different from Count Stjepan's. His taking part in the alliance against Matthias at the beginning of his reign had long and lasting consequences for him. Although Martin changed his attitude towards the new king a few years later, King Matthias never considered him a truly reliable ally as Count Stjepan. Further worsening of the relations between Count Martin and the king started with the events of Senj, when Martin stated that he would rather surrender himself and his lands to the Ottomans than to the king. However, between 1471 and 1479, being ill and heirless, Martin's position considerably weakened. He granted his most important land holdings to the king, even depriving his brothers of the fair share.

What were the reasons for Count Martin's position and attitude? His behaviour between 1458 and 1479 could be best explained by taking into account the internal family relations and geographical position of his land

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 137-8, 143-4.

⁶¹ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 257-8, 275-6, 278-9, 281-2.

⁶² Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 139-40.

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

holdings. The principle guideline for Count Martin was his competition with the oldest brother, Count Stjepan. Because Stjepan was Matthias's favourite, Martin was at odds with the king. Among the reasons he chose Emperor Frederick III, and kept the close ties with him throughout this period, was the location of his land holdings. Concentrated in the Vinodol county, Martin could not choose Venice for his ally, because his possible maritime ambitions interfered with Venetian state interests. If he chose Venice as an ally, he would probably be gradually marginalized. Besides that, such a move would openly challenge King Matthias. Emperor Frederick III had no territorial claims on Martin's lands and no significant strategic interests in Vinodol, as well. On the other hand, his territory bordered Martin's lands, and Martin could receive a direct help. The circumstances of the over-all conflict between the emperor and the king, made Frederick a more reliable protector for Martin. Frederick was the most suitable counterbalance against King Matthias. Despite that, in the conflict for Senj Venice was the only one who effectively helped the counts. The emperor's failure to provide assistance, combined with the Frankapani's defeat over Senj and his bad health, influenced Count Martin's resignation and defeat. As a consequence, Martin reconciled even with his most bitter enemies in the family, counts Stjepan and Anž. Matthias patiently waited for an opportunity to marginalize Count Martin, and managed to do it, step by step, by combining military actions and all sorts of pressure. As in many other cases throughout the kingdom, the king had a far-reaching memory, and did not forget his enemies, returning sooner or later to their debts to him.

Matthias had to act to protect, so to speak, order as well as good conduct within the magnate circles in the kingdom. The king was more eager to act if this coincided with the strategical importance of a subject's land holdings, like in the case of Count Anž VIII of Brinje, son of Count Bartol IX. Brinje, with the nearby fortress, was on the main road between Senj and

Modruš. Linking all these territories would secure the royal control of Senj, as well as the control of traffic between Senj and the continent. While Brinje was in the hands of Anž, the rule over Senj was not secure. Anž, by behaving violently, provided good excuses for the king's intervention. He claimed his rights on Modruš from Count Stjepan, and successfully extracted his part from Count Martin, using all possible means (see previously). Anž also put a severe pressure on Helena (Helen), the widow of the late Count Žigmund, and plundered her land holdings in the Bužim county. Therefore, Helena was forced to put herself under the protection of the other relatives.⁶⁴ Taking into account Count Anž's attitude, it is possible, as Klaić suggested, that Anž had some plans for Senj, or to oppose his uncle Martin's last wishes, or to take over Otočac and Gacka.⁶⁵ In any case, King Matthias started decisive action against him.

By 1477, Count Anž asked for help from Dubrovnik, but did not get it. The Venetians helped him. Under pressure from King Matthias, who sent a letter full of open threats and menaces to them, the Venetians withdrew their support by the end of October 1478.⁶⁶ Until then, they sent weapons and ammunition to Anž, with the excuse of helping him in his fight against the Ottomans. Matthias did not accept this explanation, and accused Venice of plotting with his enemies. The Venetians then took a more cautious approach. In April 1479, they tried through diplomatic action to persuade the king to give up the attacks on the Frankapani, particularly on Anž.⁶⁷ As their main argument, the Venetians stated that Count Anž was a brave and courageous man, from whom the king could have much more use than from his older and weaker uncles and cousins. Despite that, King Matthias was determined to

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 132-5.

⁶⁵ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 268.

⁶⁶ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, p. 148. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 269-70.

⁶⁷ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 390-1.

finish what he started. The royal troops by June 1479 conquered all of Anž's land holdings.

With the deaths of Count Stjepan, Martin and Žigmund, the fall of Count Anž and of Count Ivan of Krk, King Matthias managed to obtain what he wanted: control over the most important parts of the Frankapani land holdings, which he handed over to his loyal officials. The power of the Frankapani family was reduced and controlled, and no real threat against the king's supreme rule existed any more among the family members. The most distinguished member of the family, Bernardin, was closely connected to, even related with, the king. Other Frankapani in the sixties and the seventies of the fifteenth century did not play such a significant role, with the exception of the struggle for Senj. They tried to augment their land shares, to keep good relations with the king, and to protect their land holdings from the more aggressive and exposed brothers and relatives. Such were the counts Dujam IV, Juraj I and Nikola VI of Tržac.

Count Dujam IV tended mainly towards acquiring parts of new land holdings. In 1461, he bought *oppidum* Perna in the Zagreb county for 2000 golden florins from Nikola Šubić.⁶⁸ He bought, as well, *castrum Wywar* in the Luka county, in 1464.⁶⁹ In 1465, he received the king's confirmation for his old and new land holdings.⁷⁰ He also received a part of his brother Martin's lands before the latter's death. In 1477, he received Mrkopalj, and immediately transferred it to one of his *familiaries*.⁷¹ In the beginning, Count Juraj I, the youngest at the division at Modruš, fought for his presumed rights for Krstinja near Cetingrad, and gained the king's support.⁷² Besides quarelling with Count

⁶⁸ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 41-2.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 71-2, 80-1.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 85-7.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 140-3.

⁷² *ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

Stjepan for Modruš, he also quarrelled for land with Count Žigmund.⁷³ In 1465 and 1466, Juraj busied with acquiring his part in Kladuša.⁷⁴ Juraj's sons, Martin and Ivan, protected Helena Frankapan from the assaults of Count Anž in 1475. In 1478, Ivan was invested with lands that he received from Helena.⁷⁵ Nikola VI of Tržac, brother of Count Anž of Brinje, in 1475 received royal confirmation for his land holdings.⁷⁶

Relations among King Matthias and the members of the Frankapani family varied from hostility to confidence, marked with the king's centralising attempts and the Frankapani's struggle to preserve their distinguished position among the Croatian nobility. The basic interests of the two sides obviously differed. Internal disputes among the counts for the leadership within the family were the second important cause for events taking the course they did, and a weakening of the family's position. All together, this resulted, between 1458 and 1480, in a marginalization of the family, and brought success to Matthias's attempts. Only Count Stjepan's branch of the family kept their power and lands mainly intact, while the others deteriorated significantly. The decisive and turning point in this process was the king's overtaking of Senj and Vinodol. Therefore, it deserves a closer look and a more detailed analysis.

⁷³ *ibid.*, pp. 45-6, 100-1, 105-7.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 82-4, 88-90.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 131-5, 145-6, 147-8.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 126-31.

c) *King's taking over of Senj and Vinodol*

After a few years of insecurity and attempts to strengthen his position as a new king, facing a strong opposition from the Garai party, King Matthias Corvinus finally reached an agreement with his most dangerous rival, Emperor Frederick III, in 1463. According to the agreement, Frederick adopted the young Hungarian king as his son, but kept the title of King of Hungary, and received the right to succeed Matthias if he died heirless. The success of this policy of Matthias led to his coronation in Székesfehérvár, on 29 March 1464. The death of László of Gara in the meantime, removed the last obstacle for Matthias. These successes were combined with his first military victories, including territorial gains during the Bosnian campaign in 1463-4, following the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia in 1463.⁷⁷

After successfully securing his reign, Matthias could begin to re-establish his control over his most important possessions, castles, and towns seized by various magnates during the times of his predecessors. In this regard, he was particularly active in Croatia, where most of the former royal possessions had been seized by the various magnates. The main obstacles in his way were the Frankapani. Their possessions were widespread throughout Croatia. However, the king's efforts achieved success in a relatively short time. His new initiatives and pressure on the Frankapani coincided with the imminent internal struggles among the various members of the family, as well as with the neighbouring

⁷⁷ K. Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III und das Reich. Zum hunyadisch-habsburgischen Gegensatz in Donauraum*, München 1975, pp. 13-27. ; J. Bak, "The Late Medieval Period 1382-1526" in: *History of Hungary* (P. D. F. Sugar, P. Hanák, T. Frank eds.), London-New York 1990, pp. 70-1. ; idem, *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn in 14-16. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1973, pp. 54-8. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* [The History of the Croats], vol. 4, Zagreb 1980, pp. 7-43, 59-67.

lords, such as *Kurjakovići* in Krbava county. Just as significantly, the first of the strong, even devastating, Ottoman raids, struck at the very heart of the family's possessions several times during this period.

These tendencies, however, did not proceed uniformly and regularly. Practically every year brought ups and downs, and even these differed from one member of the family to another. Senj was a particular case, being not an individual, but rather a collective possession of the family. Ever since 1271, when the family took the town from Templars, all members had equal rights and an equal portion of possession in it.⁷⁸

King Matthias's reason for being particularly eager to take control of Senj was obvious. Senj was the principal Adriatic port of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom at the time, while almost all other coastal towns and islands were already in the hands of Venice. Moreover, Senj was the closest port to most parts of the kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia, and major part of Hungary), and had well-established and co-ordinated trade links with Venice and other Italian Adriatic towns (in Marche, Abruzzo and Puglia). It was also a centre of transit commerce, exporting food, raw materials (particularly metals) from Croatia and Hungary, and importing wine, salt, oil and luxury products from Italy (mainly from or through Venice). Senj was also a settlement of various small merchant colonies (particularly Venetian), dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth century.⁷⁹ Thus, control over Senj was among the significant conditions for effective control of the import-export in the kingdom, something which could not, obviously, go unobserved by the king. By controlling Senj and coastal parts of the Frankapani possessions, Matthias

⁷⁸ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 110. ; Zs. Teke, "Rapporti commerciali tra Ungheria e Venezia nel secolo XV" in: *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi all' epoca del Rinascimento*, a cura di Tibor Klaniczay, Budapest 1975, p. 143.

⁷⁹ For more on the role of Senj in commerce and merchants in Senj, see in detail: Teke, *Rapporti*, pp. 143-5.

could also considerably weaken the position and power of the Frankapani, putting them between his possessions on the coast and inland. This would deny them access to the sea and cutting them off from one of their vital basis of power considerably diminish the economic value of their possessions.

Since the Bosnian kingdom collapsed in 1463, lands of the Frankapani had often been exposed to Ottoman raids. The Ottomans came frequently all the way to Senj and Modruš, and even further, on to Slavonia and Carniola. This represented a very difficult problem for the internal consolidation of the Frankapani possessions and the power of the counts. As early as 1463, after the fall of Bosnia, it was said that Ottoman army penetrated *in partes Corbavie* and committed *per loca etiam Comitum Segne, strages, rapinas, cedes et incendia plurima*.⁸⁰ In July 1464, Gherardo de Collis, Milan's ambassador in Venice, informed his duke about the raid led by Bosnian Ottomans into the lands of Stjepan Frankapan. The same ambassador informed his superiors of the defeat of the count's nephew, who was taken prisoner by the Ottomans. This nephew's wife had tried to escape to Dubrovnik, but was refused entry there because Dubrovnik was anxious not to get into hostilities with the Ottomans.⁸¹ The Ottomans attacked again in August 1464.⁸² Stjepan appealed to his former father-in-law, Borso de Este, margrave of Modena and Ferrara, to help him in getting assistance and protection from Venice. Venice accepted Stjepan under his protection, under the usual conditions, on 1 March 1465. In doing so, Venice was principally guided by its own strategic interests. They emphasised that Count Stjepan held some important possessions, especially *multos passus Modrusie*, and it would be inconvenient for the

⁸⁰ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 1, pp. 218-9.

⁸¹ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 251.

⁸² Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 1, pp. 284-8.

interests of the Republic if the Ottomans were to get control over them. This would enable them to attack at the very heart of Venetian territory.⁸³

Sources indicate that in 1465 King Matthias already had some intention to use military force against the Frankapani, presumably because they were not sufficiently obedient to him, but his army stopped in Slavonia and instead attacked Đurđevac (*castrum sancti Georgy*), whose *castellanus* had rebelled against the king.⁸⁴ Matthias also interfered in the family matters of the Frankapani after the death of Žigmund Frankapan, Count of Otočac and Gacka, in 1465. Combined with the influence of Emperor Frederick III on certain members of the family, this deepened the divisions among family members in terms of their political preferences, which in turn further weakened their position.

There is no information about the family in the year 1467. By the beginning of 1468, Frankapani possessions were again subjected to a round of devastating Ottoman incursions. The Ottomans invaded Croatia from Bosnia, continuing all the way down to Senj. Coming back, they plundered Modruš, which at the time had about 2000 houses, and captured many of its inhabitants.⁸⁵ These raids probably provoked the meeting of the family held in Senj, on 21 March 1468, where the division of family property after the death of Žigmund Frankapan, as well as the general status of their possessions and the town of Senj were discussed.⁸⁶ They had gathered in Senj by the beginning of the month, at which time they confirmed the properties and rights of the

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 312.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 364-5. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 251-2.

⁸⁵ "...corsi fin sopra le porte de Segna, et ano sachezato et abrusato una terra grossa, como vigliano de fuochi II mille, chiamata Modrusa, che he del Re de Ungaria, posta tra Signa et Ysagabria, et como menato via una infinita de anime..." Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai*, vol. 2, pp. 75-6.

⁸⁶ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 255.

hermit monasteries of St. Helen and St. Saviour near the town.⁸⁷ At the meeting, Senj's envoys petitioned the counts to confirm the old rights, liberties, privileges and statute of Senj. The counts added that if any of them should violate the rights of Senj, he would lose his share of property and rights in the town for ten years, and this would be divided among the other members of the family. That they did so could be seen as a consequence of the turbulent situation, in which the citizens tried to strengthen their position and prevent any unpleasant surprises. The fact that the Frankapani agreed to the request indicates that the position of the counts at the moment was far from ideal.

The attitude of Venice toward the Frankapani family and their possessions was cautious during this period. In my opinion, contrary to that of older Croatian historiography, Venice never had any serious intention of seizing territory on the coast, from the present-day town of Rijeka to the northern Dalmatian river, Zrmanja. It remained concerned with securing a safe maritime route from Venice through the eastern Adriatic towards the Levant. In doing so, the most important points on the present-day Croatian coast were numerous islands, and larger Dalmatian towns, as well as the western and southern Istrian coast. If the Republic had had control over the Kvarner (Quarnero) islands - Krk (Veglia), Rab (Arbe), Cres (Cherso), Lošinj (Lussin) and Pag (Pago) - it could, and actually did, successfully control all sea traffic in the region, thereby preventing smuggling of goods and damage to Venetian state income, which was always one of the principal goals of the Republic's policy. It could thus also secure ships in transit to and from the Levant.

Trying to conquer Senj, or any other point on the Croatian coast (Jablanac, Bag, etc.) would have been completely counterproductive for the Republic. It could not thereby improve its security, because of the geographical features (the coastline from Rijeka to the south-east, below the

⁸⁷ Thallóczy - Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 94-6. ; Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 247-9.

mountain Velebit, is completely congested with islands). Venice would have been dragged into enormous difficulties by trying to keep the new territories protected from the inevitable hostility of both Croatian magnates and King Matthias, as well as from that of Ottoman raids. This would have required significant expense in terms of both men and equipment, with uncertain results. Therefore, it is completely understandable that the Republic did not want to keep Senj in its hands, although this was the case for a short time, as will be shown later. The Venetian struggle for final and complete control over the island of Krk is another consequence of the situation. It is interesting that Venice acted only when King Matthias' troops threatened to conquer the island. The Venetians were completely satisfied that Senj and Vinodol would remain possessions of the Frankapani, preventing the Ottomans, as well as King Matthias, from having an outlet to the sea. Therefore, I argue, any speculation about Venetian territorial aspirations on Senj and the Croatian coast below the mountain Velebit should be dismissed.

Moreover, the Venetians even tried to play a constructive role in getting family members united and acted as conciliators among them, as well as with other important Croatian magnate families, particularly the Kurjakovići of neighbouring Krbava. This was not because of a favourable attitude towards the Frankapani family, but due to Venetian state interests. Weak and quarrelling Croatian magnates usually provided a convenient situation for Venice. However, in that period, it also made an excellent opportunity for the Ottomans to intensify their raids, and even to conquer Croatian territory. The Republic considered that possibility to be a direct threat to the centre of its state, particularly Istria. Therefore, Venetian diplomacy was moved to action.

On 23 July 1468, the Venetian authorities elected Niccolo Michael as a special envoy charged with promoting reconciliation among the counts.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, p. 411.

Niccolo returned to Venice in December 1468, with little or nothing achieved. He emphasised the necessity of good relations between the counts Frankapani and Kurjakovići, to ensure that the Ottomans would not easily be able to invade Istria and inflict a big damage on the Republic. The Senate, with its decision on 18 December 1468, confirmed Niccolo's mission and ordered him to proceed with it.⁸⁹ Even before Niccolo departed again, on 15 January 1469, Venetian authorities elected secretary Lodovico Manenti to go to Senj with the same task of facilitating reconciliation between the Frankapani and Kurjakovići. They explicitly stated that due to recent Ottoman attacks, Senj remained unfortified and its soldiers and inhabitants had fled in fear. The Venetians estimated that if Senj were to fall to the Ottomans, it would mean the end of Frankapani power. They could not at the time provide any substantial support to the counts, but encouraged them to send their envoy to the pope, who could possibly help them.⁹⁰ The Venetian ambassador to the papal court, Francesco Sanudo, would also support their demands.⁹¹ On 20 January 1469 Niccolo Michael went to Senj to join Lodovico Manenti with the same mandate, and particularly to establish peace and good relations between Count Ivan of Krk and his brothers and nephews.⁹²

At the same time, Count Stjepan Frankapan, whose possessions were the main targets of Ottoman raids, sent his envoys to Venice. He tried to persuade the Republic to join efforts with the Croatian bans to fight against the Ottomans. Count Stjepan was especially concerned for Modruš, at the heart of his possessions, which was particularly hard hit by the Ottomans during the preceding years. The envoys had to emphasise the importance of Modruš for the security of the Republic's territories. The Venetians responded that the best

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 420.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 422.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 423.

⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 427-8.

thing for the counts to do would be to deal with their envoy in Senj, whom they had already sent.⁹³

In the spring of 1469, the situation on the Frankapani possessions worsened further. While King Matthias was busy leading a "crusade" against "heretical" Bohemia, and spending his time and money there with little result, the southern frontiers remained exposed. The Ottomans used this opportunity to attack territories belonging to the Frankapani and Kurjakovići families.⁹⁴ It seems that situation for the Frankapani was very serious, because Martin Frankapan, one of the family's most distinguished members, petitioned Venice to allow him to withdraw to Venetian territory, were he unable to defend his own possessions and remain in them. At the same time, counts Ivan, Nikola and brothers Pavao (Paul) and Karlo (Charles) Kurjakovići petitioned Venice for desperately needed men, arms and money. The Venetian Senate responded positively to the both requests, on 10 April 1469.⁹⁵

A few days later, the Venetians sent their ambassador Niccolo Michael to Senj. His task was to mediate between the Frankapani and Kurjakovići, for the common benefit, as well as to mount a stronger defence against the Ottomans. He had also to persuade the Croatian ban and bishop of Pécs, Janus Pannonius, to offer his support to Frankapani as well. The Venetians sent various goods to help the Frankapani and Kurjakovići, along with 1000 ducats for food and defence, which had to be distributed according to Niccolo's judgement.⁹⁶ The seriousness of the situation, and the importance of Senj for Venice is clearly shown in the letter that was sent at the same time to the Venetian ambassador in Rome. He had to assist Senj's envoy by supporting his

⁹³ *ibid.*, pp. 430-1. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziak*, vol. 2, pp. 96-8.

⁹⁴ Bak, *The Late Medieval Period*, p. 72. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 257. ; *ibid*, *Povijest Hrvata*, p. 99.

⁹⁵ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 434-5.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 435-7. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziak*, vol. 2, pp. 101-4.

requests from the pope, above all because the defence of Senj was of crucial importance. Senj was called "a key of Italy".⁹⁷

Although a lot of initiatives in the diplomatic and military fields had already been taken, these did not succeed in preventing a major Ottoman attack, that was carried out in April or May 1469 led by Isa-beg. About 20,000 of his men moved through Bosnia and Croatia all the way down to Senj, where he was persuaded to spare the town by a generous gift from the Frankapani. After that, the Ottomans plundered Modruš and Carniola, taking booty and slaves back to Bosnia. Especially hard hit, once again, was Count Stjepan Frankapan. On 1 July 1469, Niccolo Michael informed his superiors that the Count was deeply concerned for his property. The Senate concluded that because of the proximity of the Ottomans, there existed a real threat of Ottoman raids in Istria and Furlania, and ordered the strengthening of the lines of defence. They asked Niccolo Michael to express their regrets to Count Stjepan with regard to past events, and sent him 100 pedestrians at his disposal *pro tutamento et conservatione urbis Modrusie*.⁹⁸

Stjepan Frankapan, under pressure due to the difficult circumstances, tried to place himself and his possessions under the protection of the Emperor Frederick III. He sent his only son Bernardin (Bernard) to the imperial court in Graz for this purpose. Some documents indicate that Modruš was at the time considered imperial land. In a Venetian document from September 1469, one can read that the Republic was offering its help to King Matthias to prevent Ottoman raids *in Dalmatiam, Croatiam Inferiorem Sue Majestatis et Croatiam Superiorem Serenissimi Imperatoris*.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

⁹⁸ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 447, 453, 454. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 117-9, 122, 126-9, 132-3. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 258.

⁹⁹ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 140-2. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 258.

It was in this difficult situation that King Matthias initiated his action to take control over Senj from the Frankapani family. He used the straits in which the counts found themselves to take control over their most prosperous and important possession. He deliberately chose the most difficult period for the Frankapani, when they could in practice make no serious attempt to stop him. Matthias was probably not afraid that the Venetians would conquer Senj and other places, while sending their troops for help, as Vjekoslav Klaić suggests. The king was probably more afraid of Austrian plans connected with the counts, of the sort mentioned above.¹⁰⁰ He knew very well the limits of Venetian power, influence and interest, and could use Venetian military interference in Senj and Modruš as a good excuse, knowing full well that if his royal army appeared near Senj, the Venetians would not meet the challenge. Therefore, he acted immediately, designating his reliable military commander Blaž Mađarin (Mayer Blas, Merblas, Magyar Balázs) to lead the royal troops. The king was not at all confident in the help of Croatian bans.

As early as the beginning of August 1469, the Frankapani asked Venice for help in their conflict with the royal troops. Venice responded with diplomatic action. They sent Lodovico Manenti to meet with Blaž Mađarin and persuade him to give up the attack on the Frankapani, because they were ready to send their negotiators to King Matthias and obey his orders. The Venetians even used the opportunity to give a certain political lesson to Matthias, through the words of their envoy. He emphasised that it would be much better for the king to keep his subjects quiet by gentleness than to attack them militarily, especially in such dangerous times. The Venetians continued to use diplomacy to avoid hardship for the Frankapani during August and September 1469, employing parallel action in Buda and in Rome, at the papal court.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Teke, *Rapporti*, p. 145.

¹⁰¹ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 455-7.

At the end of September 1469, a new Ottoman raid temporarily protected the Frankapani from further assaults by the royal forces. The fighting continued throughout October. Niccolo Michael was continuously present in Senj, providing the Frankapani with help and advice in their fight against their enemies. The Venetians were even ready to send their naval forces, men and arms from Istria and the Kvarner islands in order to help the counts.¹⁰² Nevertheless, even in this extremely dangerous situation for the family, the counts continued to quarrel among themselves, making the many attempts to help them practically useless. The internal structural weakness of the family's inheritance system — numerous male members, differences in political preferences and orientations, disputes about the more lucrative possessions and territories — played a decisive role in the final outcome of the conflict. Even the last attempt of Venice to gather all, or at least a few, members of the family together for a meeting, out of which they might have emerged united in their defence of Senj, failed. Pope Paul II's bull, recommending the Frankapani to the mercy of King Matthias, another result of Venetian diplomacy, failed as well.¹⁰³

The final blow came in the mid-November 1469. A few days later, the Venetians described events in a letter to their ambassador at the papal court.¹⁰⁴ It came as a consequence of the Republic's withdrawal from the town. They had been militarily present there since the last Ottoman attack, when most of the Senj inhabitants had fled in panic. Venetian soldiers then entered the town, placed their units there and organised the return of refugees, thus gaining the support of the local people, who preferred to remain under Venetian administration. In spite of this, the Venetians withdrew. This

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 459. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai*, vol. 2, pp. 144-5.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, pp. 146-7. ; Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 459-60. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 260.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 260.

provided the opportunity for which the troops of Blaž Mađarin had waited. They defeated some units of the Frankapani forces, and entered the town.¹⁰⁵

It is particularly interesting that in the letter the Venetians stated they did not want to keep the town for themselves, but wanted to return it to its masters, the Frankapani family, because they were not greedy for the property of others. This passage could be, and was, interpreted as an excuse before the pope, who noticed that the Republic had aspirations to use the complicated situation to gain ground on the Croatian coast. This may not have been the case. It is necessary to keep in mind that the sources issued by the Venetian authorities could not be impartial, regarding the deeds of their subjects, Venetian state policy and interests. Many times they tried to minimise, omit or even deny what they had done or tried with rather questionable objectives and measures. Nonetheless, there was no reason to employ such techniques in this case. To the above arguments, I would just add that Venetians clearly stated that Senj was somebody else's property and they had withdrawn from the town. The end of the letter, where they stated that the royal troops conquered town and expelled the poor counts, its old masters, and conclude that this was truly a regrettable thing, because in this way that old and noble house had been exterminated, displays a distanced position and cold-blooded attitude. They had wanted to keep Frankapani in power, but when it was no longer possible, they had just lamented the situation, without any decisive action being planned or started, and simply prepared themselves to accept a new reality. However, it was the territory of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, and it was the royal army, not the Ottomans, who won.

Only after the fall of town did the Frankapani realise the serious consequences of what had just happened. They suddenly appeared united and determined to fight back and liberate their town. Even Count Ivan of Krk, who

¹⁰⁵ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 461-2. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 147-50.

had been rather uninterested in family matters and other properties before the fall of Senj, wanted to take part in the action, considering royal occupation of Senj as a direct threat to his own possessions. In this situation, Venice decided to continue with support for the counts, especially at the imperial and papal courts. They wanted to see the Frankapani back in power, as this was the most convenient situation for the Republic. The royal army in Senj could possibly threaten even the interests of Venice on the sea, and that had to be avoided. Finally, unity among the Frankapani, the necessary precondition that had been lacking before, was achieved then. This is one of the characteristic examples of the skillful and cautious Venetian foreign policy. They worked to achieve their goals with as few expenses and losses as they could, keeping in mind alternative solutions and strategies, in case they would be forced to accept an inconvenient situation. The Venetians did not want to interfere openly and directly, to involve themselves in a war with Matthias, but used Count Ivan as a leader of troops and ships provided to fight against Blaž Mađarin. With consent from Venice, the Frankapani even asked Emperor Frederick III for his assistance.¹⁰⁶

Hostilities between the Frankapani and royal troops in the region continued throughout December 1469 and January 1470. The Venetians continued to support the Frankapani, although they suffered defeat after defeat. Count Martin Frankapan, who was in January still at his residence in Novi (Vinodol county), donated part of his possessions to the monastery of St. Mary. A few days later, he fled with his brother Dujam to Venetian territory, leaving Vinodol to the victorious royal troops. Count Martin, who was an enemy of the king from the very beginning, stated that he would rather

¹⁰⁶ Ljubić, *Listine*, vol. 10, pp. 462-6. ; Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 150-5.

surrender his possessions to the Ottomans than to Matthias.¹⁰⁷ The Venetians decided to help the Frankapani, offering a combination of diplomatic efforts, food and weapon supplies. They even imposed a naval blockade on Senj in order to prevent supplies from reaching royal troops by sea. Furthermore, the Frankapani received a loan of 10,000 ducats, in case they needed such a sum to redeem Senj from the king. The Republic did not, however, send her warships to help the Frankapani, preserving a cautious and limited involvement.¹⁰⁸

In February 1470, King Matthias, while a guest of the Emperor Frederick III in Vienna, expressed his inclination toward a compromise solution concerning the former Frankapani possessions. What was the reason for the change in the king's attitude? The sources do not offer any explicit reasons for it. One might suppose the king was aware that a military solution could not ensure his gains in peacetime. What could he do with all the Frankapani possessions? They would require enormous expense to maintain, because of the defence requirements necessitated by the continued threat of the Ottomans and hostile relations with Venice. It would be enough to keep the most important part of the possessions, primarily Senj, in his hands, and return the rest of the lands to the family under certain conditions. The first of the counts to accept the deal, and receive his lands back, was Count Stjepan. The closest ally of the king even before the conflict, Stjepan could relatively easily deflect any accusations of infidelity. He was the hardest hit by the Ottomans, and nobody, except Venice, had provided him with any support throughout the worst period. Therefore, Matthias returned his share to Stjepan, and offered the same possibility to the others, if they would recognise the king's sovereignty. Venice sent a letter to the ambassador in Buda on 17 March 1470, encouraging the king in his inclination towards the family members, and

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 157-9. ; Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 117-8. ; Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, p. 257.

¹⁰⁸ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 159-61, 163-6.

trying to persuade him that they had no intention to take over the town of Trsat (Vinodol county, part of the present day town Rijeka [Fiume]) from Count Martin. The king was misinformed in this assumption, because the Republic recognized that Trsat was a part of Matthias' kingdom.¹⁰⁹

Blaž Mađarin, the successful leader of the campaign, soon received his reward. In 1470 he was appointed ban of Dalmatia, Croatia, Bosnia and Slavonia. Performing his new duty, he sent his envoys to Venice. They offered the free return of the Venetian *consul* to Senj. Blaž also petitioned for the return of Venetian subjects to the Senj market, and for permission to import cereals, wine, oil and other products from Marche to Senj. He also asked for help in provision of supplies and weapons for the planned campaign against the Ottomans in Bosnia. Except for the last request, which was refused because of the Venetians' own defence needs, the Republic accepted the rest without hesitation. They left the Frankapani behind, once again demonstrating their realism in politics.¹¹⁰ From that time on, Senj remained in royal hands. On 5 March 1471, the king confirmed all the rights and privileges of the town, cancelling the annual payment of 400 golden florins imposed by Blaž Mađarin.¹¹¹

The change of sovereignty over Senj did not have the major influence on the commercial activities of the town. Trade between Senj and Venice continued to be robust throughout the 70's and 80's of the century. According to Venetian writers from the end of the fifteenth century, Senj was among the eastern Adriatic coastal towns which were important for Venice because of their commercial activities, a number which included Zadar, Dubrovnik and Drač (Durazzo, Durrës). Even the system of measures in Senj and Venice was compared, demonstrating the importance of Senj to Venetian merchants.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 167-71.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 174-6.

¹¹¹ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 264.

During this period, Venice exported all kinds of spices and textiles to Senj, while importing iron, lead and other metals, salted meat, etc.¹¹²

The fall of Senj and Vinodol, followed a decade later by the Venetian takeover of Krk, marked a profound change in the overall status, power and influence of the Frankapani family. The events described above marked the beginning of the process of decline which ended in 1671 with the execution of Fran Krsto (Francis Christopher) Frankapan in Wiener Neustadt. What were the reasons for this turnaround? First of all, the practically independent power of the Counts in many parts of Croatia played a role. King Matthias considered this as the main obstacle for the re-establishment of royal power in Croatia. Extensive family power presented a great challenge to other Croatian, particularly neighbouring, magnates. Combined with the frequent and devastating Ottoman raids, it overwhelmed the ability of the counts to resist. All sorts of external pressure, combined with the internal quarrels among family members, produced a fatal combination. As a consequence, they started to lose ground, beginning with their most prosperous and important possessions. It was not, however, King Matthias, and particularly not his successors and the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom as a whole, who benefitted most from the decline of the Frankapani, but rather the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice. The permanent, enduring consequence of this strife was, therefore, the gradual marginalization of the Frankapani, and the ensuing loss of territory to neighbouring states. On the other hand, the effect on the increase of royal power was both limited and temporary.

¹¹² Teke, *Rapporti*, pp. 145-6.

d) *Count Ivan of Krk. Position of the island of Krk and its conquest by Venice, 1480*

After successfully securing his reign on the island of Krk, Count Ivan slowly began to change his policy towards the Republic of Venice, and his behaviour towards his subjects. He attempted to gain support from King Matthias, sending one of his sons, Anž (Anzolo), to his court in Buda.¹¹³ This move did not bring the king's favour to Ivan so much as arousing the suspicion of Venice. Ivan continued to play the risky game, in hopes of securing his reign at the island, as well as the reign of his descendants. He tried to place his other son (by Elisabetta Mauroceno), Nikola, in the service of the Neapolitan King, Ferdinand of Aragon, and to marry him there. This plan, just as a second one of marriage with the daughter of Duke of Urbino, did not succeed, because of Venetian opposition.¹¹⁴ Ivan then tried to marry his daughter Katarina (Catherine) in Naples, at the same time intending to make her the only heir, instead of Nikola. This worsened even further the relations with the Venetians who feared the Neapolitan presence in the Adriatic. They also accused Ivan of depriving Nikola because of his Venetian roots and his presumed loyalty towards the Republic.¹¹⁵ Ivan did not succeed in his ambitious plans. On the contrary, he managed only to alienate his most powerful protectors and make them suspicious of him.

Ivan continued the politics of overestimating his own forces. He involved himself in raids at Istria and other regions of Emperor Frederick III. Although it is not certain whether he acted with the knowledge and consent of

¹¹³ Anž died in Buda, soon after he arrived. Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 42-3. ; Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, p. 246.

¹¹⁴ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 43-6.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46.

the Venetians, as Klaić suggests, it is certain that he aroused the enmity of the Emperor. In fact, the Venetians tried to mediate peace between Ivan and Frederick, stating that the conflict was not in their interest, because Ivan's activity in Istria afflicted even their subjects.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Venetians accused Ivan, in the words of Antonio Vinciguerra's later report, that he committed these raids with the consent of King Matthias, at the time (1468-73) hostile to Frederick III. It would not be a surprise if Vinciguerra's description was accurate. Ivan had to improve his position at King Matthias's court after having supported his brothers in the Senj conflict. Ivan attempted to keep the fragile balance of power through which he tried to make gains for himself and his heirs.

As mentioned above, the first step Ivan took against King Matthias was his stance in the Senj conflict. The second and decisive one which Ivan made, in 1479, provoked his fall. Since he could not sit back and watch his brother, Martin, who was to die heirless, leave his land to the king and other brothers, Ivan invaded the Vinodol parts of Martin's lands and occupied Novi and Bribir.¹¹⁷ King Matthias immediately demanded that Ivan return back to Krk and seek his rights through regular legal procedure. Klaić suggests that Matthias was suspicious towards Ivan's status as a Venetian subject. The separate peace between the Ottomans and Republic left Matthias alone and exposed on the battlefield. Therefore, 1479 marked a particularly bad period in the relations between Hungary and Venice.¹¹⁸ Although it might have contributed to the king's decisive attitude, it is not probable that the Venetians tried to conquer Vinodol with the help of Ivan, as Klaić believed. After all,

¹¹⁶ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 192-4, 208. ; Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 42-3. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 274-5.

¹¹⁷ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 139-40.

¹¹⁸ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 275.

Venice had no legal basis for an invasion and, more importantly, no strategic interests in these parts. However, both had Ivan and King Matthias.

King Matthias took the decisive step. In November 1479 his troops gathered in Zagreb. They were again led by Blaž Mađarin (Magyar Balázs), ex-conqueror of Senj and former Croatian *ban*, entrusted to defend Croatia from the Ottoman attacks. His task was to expel Count Ivan from Vinodol if he would not obey the king's command. Ivan tried to resist, probably hoping for Venetian help. However, he was quickly defeated and forced back to Krk. It seems that the count's resistance was not particularly strong. According to Vinciguerra, the royal army managed to recapture *dicti castelli cum tute munition et artegliaria*.¹¹⁹ Blaž was not, however, satisfied with the achievement. He tried to exploit Ivan's inconvenient situation and attack the heart of his possessions: the island itself. Backed by rumours of great dissatisfaction among the count's subjects, who were expecting the royal troops "as the Jews expect the Messiah," Blaž tried to accomplish a rather difficult task, considering the Venetian interests in the island. But, what reasons did the inhabitants of Krk have for dissatisfaction with Count Ivan? The tax of 3500 ducats, imposed on them by the count for the expenses incurred by the battles for Vinodol, was one immediate cause.¹²⁰ However, the roots of the problem ran much deeper.

It is easy to agree with Klaić that Vinciguerra's report about Count Ivan's deeds and treatment of the islanders portrayed a monster, ready to maltreat and torture his subjects for any reason whatsoever and with pleasure. However, one should not fall into the other extreme and try, as Klaić did, to reject almost *a limine* his report, as a story of a malicious and envious Venetian slander of a brave Croatian noble. The events described and their character indeed draws a horrifying picture. True, the document issued by

¹¹⁹ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 47-8. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 276.

¹²⁰ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, p. 48.

Vinciguerra had a particular purpose: he wanted to justify the Venetian conquest of Krk and it was necessary to find a justification for it. What could be better than describing Count Ivan not only as a traitor towards his protectors, but also as someone lacking any moral ground to further perform his duty?

Vinciguerra accuses Count Ivan of being a bad Christian, questioning postmortal life, the validity of the sacraments and the pope's secular power, moreover, permitting priests to have concubines, neglecting the churches and allowing many of them to become ruins.¹²¹ While the first part of the accusations represent *topoi*, Ivan's supposed negligence of churches contradicts his numerous pious deeds on the island and his generosity towards the church in his last will. Vinciguerra proceeds with concrete examples of the count's wrong-doings.¹²² He lists all together fifty examples. Considering that Count Ivan ruled the island for twenty-eight years and that Vinciguerra probably collected everything that could possibly be found against Ivan throughout the island, it is not such a large quantity. Moreover, it is obvious that Vinciguerra, trying to discredit Ivan as much as he could, included much gossip and many stories of the local people, without checking their authenticity. However, there are some regularities that can be deduced after making a rough quantitative analysis of the events described.

Half of the count's alleged wrong-doings (twenty-five) were connected with the extortion of money. In fourteen of these cases (56%), the victims were inhabitants of the island. However, Ivan did not indiscriminately choose his victims. It is obvious from the extorted sums, exaggerated in the text, that the victims were mainly rich islanders—merchants, richer peasants, etc. However, in many cases Ivan acted after the death of the family's head, putting immense pressure on the widow and the children, in the interests of financial

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 75.

¹²² *ibid.*, pp. 76–90.

gain, occasionally using inhuman methods, including torture. Others subjected to the extortion of money were similarly less protected. Sometimes, he accused the heirs that the composition of the deceased person's last will took place without his consent and, therefore, was invalid. In four cases (16%), he extorted money from rich foreign merchants passing through or near the island (Venetians, Florentines, etc.). Once, his victims were relatives of the Bosnian prince Raduč, after his death. Six cases (24%) affected local friars and priests as well.

In seven cases, Count Ivan acted as a judicial power on the island and penalised those who were, in his opinion, violating local laws and customs. Vinciguerra, as expected, considers all these cases as a sort of extortion. Ivan punished a woman because women were forbidden to travel from the island. A priest, having a concubine without Ivan's consent, had to pay a fine. Use of counterfeit money on the island, travelling without permission, non-paid gifts to Ivan as a landlord for Easter and Christmas, adultery, etc., were among other cases.

In seven cases Count Ivan confiscated merchandise, lands and money. On the other hand, the count made a big mistake confiscating ships, once even from the Venetians. This could be, and obviously was, considered a grave insult to the Venetian monopoly and control of the sea, just as the three alleged cases of piracy committed by Ivan's servants were. A few recorded but minor cases of Ivan verbally abusing Venetian authority, taking personal vengeance and trying to poison a personal enemy, cast doubt on Vinciguerra's objectivity. Charges of falsifying royal charters concerning the family Frankapani, seals and money, are interesting and indicative, but have to be investigated further and confirmed from other sources.

One might conclude that Count Ivan did in fact abuse his rights and authority as a count of Krk. In doing so, he particularly used his judicial power and position in the succession of his subjects' property. He extorted significant

sums of money combining legal procedures and illegal pressures, from threat to torture. However, this activity can be considered neither very intensive and frequent, nor indiscriminate. The victims were carefully chosen according to their material wealth. Clearly, for effecting such an ambitious policy, and even military campaigns, Ivan needed significant sums of money. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that his main business while ruling the island was extortion, as well as all other ways of collecting money. It did not represent any serious matter of concern for Venetians or anybody else while it happened. These events gained importance later, in different circumstances, for specific political purposes. Occasional cases of piracy and the confiscation of ships presented a much greater concern for the Venetians than the fate of the maltreated islanders, over which Vinciguerra cried so pathetically. Combined with the other activities of Count Ivan, described above, this had a significantly greater importance for the final outcome of the conflict. Many accusations against Count Ivan were commonplace in describing a bad ruler. On the other hand, there are accurate and detailed descriptions, involving places, persons and events which seem totally authentic. Finally, it has to be pointed out that the count's behaviour seems very negative. Whether his behaviour represents anything special, remains debatable. Was it, perhaps, a common trait of territorial lords of that period? Is it possible that Ivan was misfortunate enough to have all his bad deeds and actions recorded by a systematic and detailed chronicler?

Aware of the difficult situation, Ivan sent his wife and son Nikola to Venice. They tried to get some help from the Venetians against Blaž. At the same time, he sent his envoy to Blaž to persuade him not to attack Krk.¹²³ The Venetians reacted by sending, in January 1480, Antonio Vinciguerra to Senj to negotiate with Blaž. The instructions he received from his authorities are

¹²³ *ibid.*, pp. 49-51.

revealing: he was to achieve that Blaž should not attack Krk, because the Venetians never interfered in Croatia; therefore, the Venetians expected not to be disturbed at sea and at Krk, which was under their protection. As to Count Ivan, the Venetians emphasised those of his wrong-doings that were directed against them, for example his treatment of Nikola. Vinciguerra had to ask Blaž to halt his action, at least until Venice had sent her ambassador to Buda. At the same time, the Venetians sent part of their naval forces towards Krk.¹²⁴ Because of the bad weather, Vinciguerra arrived at Krk later than planned, while Blaž had already invaded the island and was trying to conquer the fortress Omišalj (Castel Musclo). First negotiations produced no results. Blaž was probably hoping to conquer the island soon, and counted on the fact that the Venetians would not like to become themselves involved in an open war with Matthias.¹²⁵

At the same time, the Venetians started to act firmly. They sent Vinciguerra and Aloisio Lando as their ambassadors to Buda, and ordered admiral Vettore Soranzo to approach Krk quickly with his fleet.¹²⁶ However, these moves could not produce immediate results. They needed time. In the meantime, Blaž conquered Omišalj and around 20 February 1480 began the siege of the town of Krk itself.

The brilliance of Venetian diplomacy showed itself once more. Count Ivan was desperate, not knowing what to do. Vinciguerra proposed that he surrender the island to the Venetians, probably promising to reinstall him in power once the conflict had ended. Vinciguerra persuaded Ivan that all the islanders were against him and supporting Blaž. On the other hand, in Vinciguerra's words, they would gladly accept Venetian rule, enabling them then to cope with Blaž much more easily. Having no choice, Ivan accepted the

¹²⁴ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 407-10.

¹²⁵ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 278-9.

¹²⁶ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 2, pp. 412-7.

proposal, and handed over the town of Krk to the Venetians, on 22 February 1480.¹²⁷

The situation on the island changed rapidly. Although inferior in number, the Venetian garrison in Krk resisted the attacks. The inhabitants of the already conquered parts of the island began to rebel and desert Blaž. On 11 March 1480 Blaž was forced to lift the siege of Krk.¹²⁸ Correspondence between the Venetians and King Matthias at the end of the month already shows a significantly firmer position. Republic rejected the argument that Blaž was only punishing a king's rebel on the king's land, stating that the island of Krk and Count Ivan were Venetian subjects.¹²⁹ At the same time, the Venetian naval forces showed their power and completely cut off royal troops from the continent, putting them in an unbearable situation. Although reluctant to leave the island unconditionally, trying to preserve the honour of the royal army, Blaž was finally forced to do so, leaving all the booty to the Venetians. This happened some time before 28 March, when the events became known in Venice.¹³⁰

Count Ivan hoped there would now be no major obstacles for re-establishing his rule on the island. This is the only way to explain his immediate attempt to seize the fortresses around the island and punish the supporters of the royal army. However, the Venetians prevented Ivan's men from doing so, which clearly showed their unwillingness to allow the return of the *status quo ante*. Moreover, they confined Ivan and his family in Venice, allowing only Nikola to remain on the island.¹³¹ In mid-April 1480, Count Ivan left the island, and Vinciguerra became the first Venetian governor of Krk. Ivan could

¹²⁷ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 55-7. ; Črnčić, *Najstarija povijest*, p. 134, n. 2. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, pp. 280-1.

¹²⁸ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai*, vol. 2, p. 420.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 420-2, 423-7.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 426. ; Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, p. 59.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 63, n. 3.

hardly accept the new situation. At his leave, he appointed seventy-five of his officials for various duties on the island, still hoping that the end was not definite. On the other hand, his departure paved the way for a celebration among his ex-subjects, particularly in the town of Krk, where the citizens celebrated the leave of "the destroyer of their lives and property". The inhabitants of the town were probably particularly hard hit with the count's abuses, that prevented them from improving their social and economic status and to level it at least with the neighbouring Dalmatian communes. The Venetians immediately started to arrange the situation on the island according to their interests. In September 1480, the Franciscan friars of the Dalmatian province were allowed to come back to Krk. Previously, they were expelled by Count Ivan and replaced with friars from Bosnia.¹³² In April 1481, the Venetians expelled the Franciscans who were celebrating masses in Croatian, with the Glagolitic liturgy. No details were mentioned. They were just to be removed from the island *variis causis*. The reason for such a measure was probably that they sympathised with King Matthias and his army.¹³³ There is no evidence that they were identical with the friars recently arrived from Bosnia. It is not very probable, because of the centuries-long tradition of Glagolitic liturgy on the island.

The struggle for Krk was the last attempt of the Hungarian-Croatian kings to re-establish their positions in the eastern Adriatic. Although the legal basis for the dominion of Krk existed, it could not help King Matthias. In the peace in Zadar, 1358, Venice gave up all her rights to the eastern Adriatic coast. From that period, Krk was permanently a part of Croatia. On the other hand, with the contract of 1451 and the testament of 1453, Count Ivan installed Venice as his eventual heir. Therefore, both sides could claim rights to the island. The decisive factor in the struggle, as many times previously, was

¹³² Črnčić, *Najstarija povijest*, pp. 166-7.

¹³³ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, p. 107.

the superior Venetian navy, that controlled the situation and provided a significant advantage for the Republic. The interest of both sides to gain control over Krk is understandable. Krk was the last point in the chain of eastern Adriatic islands that was not under the definite control of the Republic—a necessary precondition for the complete security of maritime traffic in the region. This main goal of Venice had already been threatened by Count Ivan's overambitious plans. His connections with Naples could represent a serious threat for Venice, allowing a strong new power to take a position in the region and seriously endanger Venetian strategic interests. The count's occasional mistreatment of the merchants and ships passing near the island, and alleged cases of piracy, could only confirm the Venetian will to replace their unreliable ally with their immediate rule. Although Ivan's behaviour caused problems before, the Venetians could keep him under control. Blaž and his troops, however, were an unacceptable challenge. Venetian naval power, combined with the skills of diplomacy, produced the best possible results. The royal troops were defeated and forced to retreat, while Ivan was put down, sent to Venice, and replaced with direct Venetian authority. The conflict was solved quickly, in an ideal way for the Republic. From then on, there was no serious challenge to the Venetians in the region.

With the conquest of Senj and parts of Vinodol a decade before, Matthias gained control of a territory that could serve as a basis for his attempts to establish the naval power of the kingdom in the region. That was a part of his general attempt to establish firm royal power throughout the kingdom. Count Martin Frankapan represented one of the significant obstacles to achieving this goal. In 1479, Martin died, already defeated, leaving the best portions of his land to the king, including new acquisitions in Vinodol. It is, however, debatable whether in that period the king had any serious intentions to deal with Count Ivan and Krk. Invading Vinodol, Ivan himself provided the reason. After defeating and expelling Ivan from Vinodol, Blaž Mađarin

combined the immediate and the strategic goals of the king's policy. He intended to punish the one who dared to oppose the king's rights. Using this as an excuse, he tried to conquer Krk and to achieve an important strategic gain for the kingdom, significantly increasing its role in the Adriatic. The moment seemed right. Count Ivan was in panic and demoralised, the inhabitants of Krk were inclined towards the king, while the Venetian fleet was still far away. Blaž had to act quickly, while the opponents were still confused. However, he was not fast enough. The whole action failed, putting an end to the king's attempts, and strengthening for a certain period Venetian supremacy on the Adriatic.

Count Ivan was for a few decades successful in keeping himself in place, trying to profit from the existing balance of power. All his deeds and actions from the beginning were aimed exclusively to get a desired share of the family property, and to preserve and secure it for his descendants. Therefore, he used Venetian authority and support to establish and strengthen his rule at Krk, in a time when the situation in Hungary and Croatia was confused. When the Republic's help was not as necessary as before, he started to search for new allies, distancing himself gradually from Venice, constantly balancing between the Republic, the Empire and the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom. However, his plans in Naples failed, and his overambitious military actions ended badly, with unwanted consequences. Therefore, at the end, when he found himself in a desperate situation, Ivan realised that he no longer had anybody to turn to, and that his former protectors both from Venetian and from the Hungarian-Croatian side were against him. Ivan could not rely on the support of his subjects since he had lost it as well. He became an unnecessary obstacle for both sides and their plans. Krk was too important for them. When the major conflict between the two armies occurred, nobody asked Ivan for his opinion. Nobody needed him any more, and he ended in exile. Ivan would have suffered the same fate if the royal army had prevailed. From the general trend

of developments on the eastern Adriatic during the fifteenth century, it was obvious that Ivan could permanently secure his position only if he had maintained close ties with Venice. However, even in this case he would hardly secure a place for his heirs.

The fight for the island of Krk represented the last attempt of the Hungarian-Croatian kings to keep a certain maritime role and importance at sea. That brought into conflict the opposite interests of the two parts. Venice needed to secure completely the eastern Adriatic part of the maritime route from Venice to Levant. In that situation, the decisive advantage was on Venetian side, because of their naval superiority. The importance of king's conquest of Senj and Vinodol, therefore, became limited. If King Matthias had conquered Krk, he could have established the direct links with the other side of the Adriatic, i. e. the middle Adriatic Italian coastal towns, much easier. That could enable him to play a more important role on Italian territory, and threaten the Venetian supremacy in the Adriatic. However, it has to be emphasised that throughout the seventies and the eighties of the fifteenth century, Matthias's priorities were on the west, not on the south. Therefore, his commander Blaž Mađarin, although a brilliant soldier, lacked the necessary support and backing of the much more substantial character, both in arms, supplies and money, and in political will to accomplish these goals. Only in this case Blaž could have possibly achieved some result.

The Venetians were trying to back up Ivan, and to preserve the *status quo ante*. However, when the danger of Hungarian troops conquering the island became obvious, they acted quickly and decisively. After succeeding in pushing back the royal troops, Count Ivan remained only an unnecessary obstacle. He had already caused enough problems to the Serenissima in previous three decades with his impulsive behaviour and connections with Republic's enemies or rivals. That was an excellent opportunity to have Ivan's power eliminated, and the Venetians did not miss it. Having established the

direct control over Krk, Venice completely secured its strategic interests on the eastern Adriatic.

Count Ivan's main goal was to preserve Krk for himself and his descendants. At the beginning, he was closely connected to Venice, and had a stabile position. After some time, feeling more secure, he started to act independently, trying to distance himself from Venice and obtain some support among the other powers in the region. His ambition gradually increased, and he wanted even to interfere and gain ground in the neighbouring territories belonging both to the Empire and the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom. Moreover, by bad conduct and frequent maltreatment, he mainly lost support of his subjects on the island. Only when he found himself in difficulties, Ivan realised that he has no one to turn to anymore. Having overestimated his own forces, Ivan paved the way for his fast fall and the Venetian victory. That produced the long-lasting consequences both for the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom and his family. The Frankapani were almost completely cut-off from an outlet to the sea, moved their centre to the continent, and significantly decreased in importance.

e) Decline of the Frankapani family, 1480-1490

After being expelled from the island of Krk, Count Ivan spent the rest of his days in exile, unsuccessfully trying to find allies for his return to power there. At the beginning, he tried to make contact with King Matthias, sending him letters from Venice accusing Blaž Mađarin of plotting with the Venetians to surrender the island. It was the task of Ivan's envoy to Buda to interfere within Venetian diplomatic activity there.¹³⁴ As Klaić pointed out, King Matthias did not need much persuasion to move against Venice. He became furious after the Venetians managed to persuade Pope Sixtus IV to send a letter of warning to Matthias. The pope wrote that the island justly belonged to the Venetians, and the king would have no right to interfere. Matthias responded that he would rather *omnia mea dominia ac eciam caput meum ponere ad fortunam*, than give up his rights to Krk. At the same time, he accused the pope of being one-sided and in alliance with the Venetians, who were themselves allies of the Ottomans.¹³⁵ However, Matthias could not actually confront Venice, lacking a fleet and being separated from the heart of Venetian territory by the lands of Frederick III--who at that time kept good relations with Venice. His words are, therefore, only evidence of his frustration and impotence. The Venetian ambassador Aloisio Lando continued to persuade Matthias of the Venetian rights to Krk.¹³⁶ Taking everything into account, Ivan had no great benefit of the recommendations to the mercy of King Matthias, provided by Ercole of Ferrara for example, for his cause.¹³⁷ The good relation between the Empire and Venice was a big obstacle for

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 64-7.

¹³⁵ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai*, vol. 4, Budapest 1878, pp. 383-6.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 428-33.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 435-6.

Ercole's attempts to help Ivan, too. Moreover, King Matthias was probably not inclined to reconcile with Ivan at the time.

The situation very soon deteriorated even further for Ivan. On 25 November 1480, authorities in Venice decided to permanently prohibit Ivan's return to Krk. At the same time, they provided him with an annual income of 1000 ducats, that would assure him a decent life in full comfort.¹³⁸ Ivan was not satisfied with this offer and continually refused it. His wife and daughter tried to persuade the authorities to at least allow them to return to the island. The Venetians, however, remained firm, offering them only financial compensation, for example expenses for Katarina's dowry, etc.¹³⁹ Having no choice, Elisabetta and Katarina accepted the offer. Ivan, on the other hand, did not wish to give his consent, and in the second half of 1481 emigrated to the territory of Emperor Frederick III. After experiencing hardships, probably caused by his previous wrong-doings against Istria, he managed to get on better terms with the emperor, who even engaged his diplomacy in Venice to help Ivan. By the end of 1483, the Venetians agreed that Count Ivan could live in the Empire, receive an annual provision of 1000 ducats from them, and carry his mobile property and cattle away from Krk. However, they did not permit him to come back to the island, even less to rule it again.¹⁴⁰

A good opportunity for Count Ivan occurred in 1484, when Milan, Ferrara, Naples and Florence joined in a league against Venice. Ivan immediately offered to participate, and was gladly accepted.¹⁴¹ The Venetians were obviously worried and took the necessary precautions. In November 1484, it seems that Ivan even attempted to land on the island, without

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 444.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 445-8.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 3, Budapest 1877, pp. 21, 26, 27.

¹⁴¹ V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 289.

success.¹⁴² Being repelled, and probably deprived of his annual income from Venice, Ivan now tried his luck with King Matthias. He managed to reach a reconciliation with the king, and took part in Matthias's conquest of Vienna, 1485, where the king even thought of appointing him to administrate the city. However, after realising that Ivan had no means of his own, Matthias did not want to have further contact with him. Matthias tried to sell a few castles to Ivan, who did not have enough money for that. One should emphasise that such an information comes from one of Ivan's courtiers, and cannot be regarded as impartial. The other motifs could also be involved. It is probable that king never, in fact, trusted Ivan, and the lack of funds could serve as a good excuse. Ivan tried to go back to Croatia, but died on the way, in Hungary, probably in March 1486. With Ivan's death, the last attempts of the Frankapani to preserve their family cradle ended.¹⁴³

Ivan's activity to reinstall his power in Krk, from 1480 to 1486, did not succeed. Ivan lost the material base of his power—the income from the island. It seems that even the quantity and value of the cattle and property Ivan was allowed to take from Krk were not at all enough to support his ambitious plans. However, there is no information about the later fate of his property. He became dependent on the financial backing of his protectors, revocable at any moment. Moreover, all his possible protectors, who were able to threaten Venetian control over Krk, were those who had many unresolved accounts with Count Ivan from the recent past. This fact, combined with the count's financial weakness, prevented him from having a firm base for his plans and made his attempts unsuccessful. King Matthias, always in great need of money for his ambitious plans in the west, did not have any reason to support such a useless ally at his court. Ivan could, possibly, create difficulties for Matthias

¹⁴² Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 3, p. 38. ; Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 90-1.

¹⁴³ Ljubić, *Commissiones*, vol. 1, pp. 97-8. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 290.

over Krk, but he would not be able to offer anything in return. In a word, all Ivan's attempts in this period were moves of a desperate man, who found himself overrun by much more powerful opponents, and who was destined to fail. After the death of Ivan and his wife (in 1484), there was nobody who could effectively continue their struggle, and Venetian rule at Krk was secured for centuries to come.

Other counts were not able to prevent the events on Krk and help their brother to defend or regain his holdings. After being expelled from Krk, Blaž Mađarin took firm control of the coast-line from Trsat to Senj, in the name of the king. He took over the holdings formerly belonging to the late Count Martin. Still in the hands of the family in Vinodol, the only estates were Grobnik (held by Count Stjepan) and Ledenice (held by Dujam IV). King Matthias was at the beginning rather busy with his newly acquired lands. He confirmed all the privileges, donations and liberties to the monasteries and towns in the county. Matthias even intended to come and visit the newly acquired holdings. For his merit in the struggle for Senj, Krk and Vinodol, the king donated Bribir to the Ragusan Maroje (Maurice) Žunjević, his captain in Senj and Vinodol.¹⁴⁴

After losing Senj, Gacka and Brinje and finally Krk and Vinodol, the family Frankapani had lost much, including the best parts of their holdings and, consequently, the importance they once had in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom. Among the estates still in the hands of the family were Modruš, Ozalj, the present-day region of Gorski kotar, Tržac, Cetingrad, Slunj and Ledenice. However, these parts were constantly attacked by the Ottomans and also under threat by King Matthias. The king himself was in a difficult situation, being under pressure both from the Ottomans and Frederick III. He needed soldiers and money. In 1481, Matthias spent a few months in Zagreb,

¹⁴⁴ Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 12, pp. 119-22. ; Lopašić, *Urbaria*, p. 129. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 294.

trying to regulate the situation in the Croatian lands.¹⁴⁵ On this occasion, all the tolls and toll-posts of the Frankapani-held territory, where the burghers of Zagreb had to pay for transit, were abolished, as well as those of the rest of the kingdom.¹⁴⁶ However, these measures had only a partial effect. Put under pressure from the two empires and Venice, Matthias could not allow himself to completely alienate the Slavonian and Croatian nobility. On the other hand, the incomes from the tolls were significant, and even the bans took part in it. Therefore, the repeated orders of the king and the activity of Blaž Mađarin to prevent the collecting of these tolls, failed.¹⁴⁷

Count Stjepan was the first who managed to restore good relations with the king. It is debatable whether the king had any serious intention to weaken Stjepan's position. It was well-known that Stjepan's actions were always conform to Matthias's interests. The king had no reason to alienate his devoted friend. Moreover, Stjepan's son Bernardin was married to a niece of Queen Beatrice, Aloisia de Marzano de Aragonia. Therefore, Matthias granted Stjepan and his family the parts of the newly acquired Vinodol holdings, formerly belonging to the late Count Martin. This transfer gives us the impression that Matthias could hardly wait to get rid of the complicated problems connected with ruling the newly acquired lands, being happy to hand them over quickly to Stjepan. Moreover, Matthias granted Stjepan and his family all the regal rights and income from their old and new land holdings, with the exception of the *tricesima*. To the possessions mentioned above, Stjepan added Hreljin, Bakarac, Drivenik and probably Novi, all in Vinodol

¹⁴⁵ N. Klaić, *Zagreb u srednjem vijeku* [Zagreb in the Middle Ages], vol. 1, Zagreb 1982, p. 166. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 294.

¹⁴⁶ Count Stjepan II had to obey this order for Ozalj, Lukovdol, Ribnik, Kajšić, Moravice, Delnice, Lokve, Brod, Hreljin, Vrbovsko, Modruš, Tounj, Grobnik and Dubovac, Count Dujam IV for Ledenice, Count Ivan IX for Cetingrad and Count Nikola VI for Tržac. ; Tkalčić, *Monumenta*, vol. 2, pp. 405-6.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 420-7. ; N. Klaić, *Zagreb*, p. 167.

county. It is significant that the queen seemed to have an important part in that decision.¹⁴⁸ Soon after, in 1481, Count Stjepan died.

Other documents concerning the family Frankapani in the ninth decade of the fifteenth century are rather fragmentary. This indicates that the family lost the distinguished position it had had a few decades before. Being mainly cut off from the outlet to the sea, and under permanent Ottoman pressure, the Frankapani gradually started to move their centre to the north. They became just one among other similar Croatian noble families, permanently struggling with the Ottomans to preserve their lands and to survive. On the other hand, squeezed from all sides by the Ottomans, Venice, the Empire, and King Matthias over the relatively small territory, the internal conflicts over the remaining land holdings were intensified among the Croatian nobles.

Stjepan's son, Bernardin Frankapan, was the only one who managed to retain a certain distinction. He continued his father's policy of upholding a strict alliance with King Matthias. His family ties helped him to benefit from this. In 1483, Bernardin distinguished himself in a battle with the Ottomans at the River Una, which ended victoriously for Matthias's army.¹⁴⁹ His cousins Ivan IX of Cetingrad and Mihael (Michael) of Slunj also took part in that campaign. In 1486, Bernard's lands around Modruš were again exposed to Ottoman raids.¹⁵⁰ However, he had to suffer territorial losses on the other side. The Croatian ban Matijaš (Mátyás, Matthew) Geréb tried in 1487 to conquer Rijeka from the imperial troops, during the war between Matthias and Frederick III. Frederick's troops were stronger: they pushed Matijaš back, conquering Trsat which then belonged to Bernardin. Although in 1488 King Matthias confirmed all his land holdings, including Trsat, to Bernardin, it did

¹⁴⁸ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 258-60. ; V. Klaić, *Krčki*, p. 295.

¹⁴⁹ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziak*, vol. 4, pp. 363-6. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, pp. 165-7.

¹⁵⁰ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziak*, vol. 3, pp. 121-3.

not help much. Bernardin even became more closely related to the royal family in Buda: at the incentive of Queen Beatrice, in 1489, he betrothed his daughter, Marija Magdalena (Mary Madalene) to the king's cousin Matija (Matthew) Pongrac, the son of the Transilvanian voivode.¹⁵¹

Count Bernardin wanted to show his distinguished position through his pious activity. One of the most representative monuments connected with the Frankapani family from the fifteenth century, is a part of a tabernacle from Hreljin in Vinodol, constructed in 1491, at his order. By a stylistical analysis, it can be attributed to Giovanni Ricci, an Italian Renaissance sculptor, known for his other works in contemporary Hungary, and elsewhere in Europe, as "The Artist of the Marble Madonnas". On the right side of the tabernacle one can see the coat of arms of the Frankapani, and on the left side a relief representing St. George fighting the dragon. It is hardly surprising that such a skilful work of art is to be found in the seat of Bernardin, documenting his close relations with Italy, and the royal court in Buda.¹⁵²

King Matthias was waiting for an opportunity to take revenge against the Venetians and the pope, after the events of Krk, Rijeka and Trsat. He managed to persuade a rebellious town of Ancona (in papal territory) to recognise his supreme rule, in 1488. The Venetians feared Matthias's influence in Zadar. In fact, they did have some reason for this. Some contacts really existed. In these circumstances, Count Ivan VIII (Anž) of Krbava, ex Count of Brinje, offered

¹⁵¹ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 184-6, 188-91. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, p. 177.

¹⁵² For the Hreljin tabernacle and artistic production of Giovanni Ricci, see in detail: J. Balogh, "A márvány Madonnák mestere (Mátyás király szobrásza)" [The Artist of the Marble Madonnas (King Mathias's Sculptor)], *Építés-Építészettudomány*, vol. 12, 1980, pp. 77-86. ; Idem, "I mecenati ungheresi del primo Rinascimento", *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 13, 1967, pp. 205-12. ; Idem, "Mattia Corvino ed il primo Rinascimento ungherese" in: *Actes du XXIIe Congrès international d'Histoire de l'art (Budapest 1969)*, vol. 1, Budapest 1972, pp. 611-21.

himself to the Venetians to kill Matthias. The king had a decade previously deprived him of most of his lands.¹⁵³ However, the Venetians refused his proposal. They probably thought that the participation in such a plot could bring them more trouble than benefit, as well as introducing a dangerous precedent. Therefore, Anž did not carry out his proposed plans. On the other hand, it seems that at the same time some of the Frankapani counts were still thinking about Krk. Venice, therefore, ordered the local authorities there to take the necessary preventive measures.¹⁵⁴

At the same time, ban Matijaš Gereb was involved in solving the disputes among the Croatian and the Slavonian lesser and higher nobility. Various members of the Frankapani family were involved in such matters. Petar and Pavao (Peter and Paul) Zrinjski quarrelled with the Frankapani about Komogojno in Zagreb county and about Bužim county. Nikola Frankapan had problems with the lesser nobility on his territories. At the same time, he was very concerned to receive the confirmation of his land holdings from the king, and, finally, succeeded in this. Matijaš Gereb tried to solve the constant disputes that the counts Stjepan and Mihael of Blagaj had with all their neighbours, especially between 1485 and 1487.¹⁵⁵

The contemporary witness, a priest Broz Kolunić, described the situation in Croatia in 1486 as a period when King Matthias *podbil (je) poda se vsu hrvacku gospodu* (subjugated all Croatian magnates), expelled Count Anž and Count Ivan of Krk from their lands, and ruled over Senj and Otočac.¹⁵⁶ His characterisation of the period between 1480 and 1490 is mainly valid. The

¹⁵³ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 4, pp. 4-6, 115. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, pp. 173-4, 179.

¹⁵⁴ Nagy-Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái*, vol. 3, pp. 426-7. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, p. 176.

¹⁵⁵ Thallóczy-Barabás, *Codex*, vol. 2, pp. 156-7, 161-2, 167-82. ; V. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, pp. 178-9.

¹⁵⁶ Šurmin, *Acta*, vol. 1, pp. 313-4.

Frankapani and other Croatian magnates had to fight for their survival, surrounded by hostile forces (particularly Ottomans), and exposed to king's centralising attempts. The Frankapani were the hardest hit, losing their oldest and most prosperous land holdings on the Adriatic coast.

The inevitable consequence of Croatia being "overcrowded" with nobility within a relatively small territory was a constant struggle for land among the nobles, that in turn worsened the situation, providing further opportunities for Ottoman conquests. The Frankapani, as well as other Croatian magnates, gradually started to move their centre to the north, towards medieval Slavonia, carrying with them the Croatian name, institutions and traditions. The process of the forced displacement of the Croats that started in the second half of the fifteenth century, as a consequence of the Ottoman raids and conquests, reached its peak after the battle of Krbava, in 1493. In 1516, the region between Zagreb and Senj was completely devastated and without inhabitants, according to contemporary witnesses. The changes in settlement caused by the Ottomans completely altered the social relations at the old Croatian territory. The previous ties among the Croatian nobility disappeared and the institution of the so called "twelve kindreds" as well. The old families disintegrated into the various branches, and substituted their old names for new, geographic ones. The Ottoman conquests, completed until 1537, caused the disappearance of all the old noble kindreds in Croatia.

CHAPTER 3

Conclusion

The period of King Matthias's reign in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom (1458-90) was marked by a significant decline of the power and status of the Frankapani family. The family reached the peak of its importance, wealth and power a decade before Matthias's reign. With the division of family lands at Modruš in 1449, the Frankapani tried to secure their land holdings without outside interference by making use of a period when the power of the king and the bans was weak. However, there were several reasons preventing them from maintaining the position they had previously held. Firstly, there were disputes among the counts of the Frankapani themselves. Their lands extended over most of Croatia, ranging in their economic value and strategic importance. Furthermore, the male members of the family were particularly numerous in that period. The consequence of this was that the division could not be made in a way to satisfy the wishes of all the members. The older counts, particularly Stjepan and Martin, obtained a huge territory, densely populated, and with access to the important roads and the sea. The other counts reacted to this differently. Some of them tried to challenge their older brothers for their lands. Count Ivan VII successfully concentrated his efforts on obtaining the island of Krk, the birth place of the family. He allied himself with the Republic of Venice. The inevitable consequence for Ivan during the first period of his rule of the island was his strict subordination to the Serenissima. This also had long lasting consequences. It started the process of distancing the island of Krk from the rest of the family and from the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, and this ended with its annexation by Venice in 1480. Moreover, from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, the Frankapani had to face a new, dangerous challenge, the Ottomans, who began to threaten the heart of their lands with their raids.

King Matthias's coming to power created an opportunity for substantial changes in the family's status. The most reliable allies of the king were, throughout the period, Count Stjepan and his son Count Bernardin. The reason for this was the concordance of their interests. The king used Stjepan to establish relations with various Italian courts, where Stjepan was highly estimated, and had many relatives. Therefore, on many occasions he performed successful diplomatic missions for the king. Stjepan was twice appointed ban, as well. In this function, he was also in charge of the western side of the southern part of the defence system in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom.¹⁵⁷ Besides, Stjepan was ruling over Modruš, which had strategic importance due to its position on the road between the continent and the Adriatic coast. Defending it from the Ottoman raids soon became an urgent task both for Stjepan and Matthias. The king had no reason to be equally generous towards the other brothers, particularly towards those who threatened his strategic interests, such as Count Anž of Brinje. Count Martin, the second in the rank within the family, was permanently opposed to his oldest brother Stjepan. As a consequence, he opposed Matthias at the beginning, and allied himself with Frederick III. Martin gained no real benefit from that association, but arose the enmity of Matthias. Although a few years later he became closer to the king, taking an active part in the defence against the Ottomans, he never really won the king's favour. Later, Martin became ill, remaining heirless. In this situation, voluntarily or forcibly (Anž), he handed over most of his inheritance to his brothers and relatives, and some important parts of his lands to the king. With the exception of Count Ivan of Krk, who ruled the island practically independently from his brothers and Matthias, the

¹⁵⁷ For details of the military organization of the time see: F. Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and its Collapse" in: *From Hunyadi to Rakóczi. War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. J. M. Bak and Béla B. Király, Brooklyn 1982, pp. 141-58.

other brothers and their nephews were mainly concerned with acquiring parts of the new lands, or confirmations of their existing holdings.

Particularly important both for King Matthias and the Frankapani was Senj. The coastal town, under Frankapani rule since 1271, remained at the time one of the few Adriatic ports of the kingdom. Moreover, Senj was the closest sea port for Croatia, Slavonia and the main body of Hungary, being situated at the end of the trade route from Zagreb. For King Matthias, Senj was also important as a last point in the chain that formed the western part of the defence against the Ottomans. For the Frankapani, Senj was primarily important as an abundant source of income, and they tried their best to keep it. The importance of Senj for both sides resulted in the only open conflict in which the Frankapani stood as a whole against King Matthias. Even Count Stjepan joined the brothers against the king. The superiority of the royal troops, led by Blaž Mađarin, was substantial. The conflict ended with the victory of the king. The third factor involved in the conflict was Venice. The Republic did not want to establish direct rule over Senj, as earlier historians thought. Their main interest was to keep King Matthias away from a direct outlet to the sea, which could possibly endanger their position in the region. Keeping Senj in their hands would be too expensive and too risky. The best solution for Venice was to keep the *status quo ante*, to keep the Frankapani in power there. In any case, the counts could never become such a dangerous rival for Venice on the sea as King Matthias. Therefore, Venice concentrated her efforts on helping the counts, using all possible diplomatic channels. However, when the final outcome of the conflict became obvious, Venice decided that their engagement on behalf of the counts was not worth an open confrontation with King Matthias. The loss of Senj and parts of Vinodol deprived the Frankapani of their most prosperous land holdings, considerably diminishing their income and the strategic value of their lands, inevitably leading to a decrease in the family's power and importance. The gain for King

Matthias consisted mainly in using Senj as a military base against the Ottomans. The economic role of Senj did not increase. After 1468, the king chose policies oriented towards the west and the Empire. The situation on the southern borders had by that time generally stabilised. One may presume that, considering Senj, Matthias realised he had neither adequate means, nor suitable economic resources, to compete with the Venetians on the sea. The king's plans and deeds were already too ambitious for the limited resources and abilities of the kingdom. New projects, such as building a navy, would be very expensive, of long duration, and of uncertain result. Although Matthias never renounced his involvement on the eastern Adriatic coast, even playing some role in Italy (Ancona), there are no indications that he ever attempted to develop a navy or a merchant fleet.

The involvement of Venice was much more pronounced on the island of Krk. Count Ivan of Krk came to power there with the Venetian help and kept his position thanks to Venice. He bequeathed his possessions to the Serenissima, should he die without an heir. After securing his reign, Ivan conducted a more independent policy, involving himself in activities inconvenient both for his Venetian protectors and for King Matthias, for example attacking Istria. With his impulsive actions, Count Ivan awoke the enmity of all his possible protectors. Moreover, it seems that Ivan treated his subjects on the island rather badly, causing the greater part of them to be hostile towards him. He wished to create a marriage alliance with the court in Naples. This could have created a very inconvenient situation for the Venetian rule over the eastern Adriatic. Therefore, Venice stopped him. It is not clear whether King Matthias had any serious intention to try to take control over Krk, although the legal basis for such action existed. The island was still part of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, already from 1358. Ivan provided the reason for a conflict with his involvement in Vinodol. His brother, Count Martin, before death left the majority of his lands in Vinodol to King Matthias.

Ivan, feeling deprived of a fair share, intervened militarily. After being repeatedly warned, the royal troops forced him to leave Vinodol. Blaž Mađarin, the commander of the royal troops and king's captain in Senj, decided to invade Krk and achieve two goals. He wanted to establish a royal rule over Krk, punishing Ivan for rebellion and depriving him of his lands. The invasion of royal troops provoked the direct engagement of Venice, firstly on Ivan's side. Combining military action and diplomacy, the Venetians achieved the best result for them. They expelled Hungarian troops from the island, and also expelled Count Ivan, taking direct control. The Serenissima had important strategic reasons not to allow Krk to follow the example of Senj. Krk was the last large eastern Adriatic island not in the hands of Venice. It was necessary to take direct control over it to establish complete control of the eastern Adriatic part of the route between Venice and the Levant. Moreover, it prevented the possibility that the Hungarian-Croatian kings or magnates should play a maritime role, or establish firm relations with the Italian middle Adriatic towns without the approval of Venice. Having Krk, the Venetians effectively controlled Senj. Therefore, the importance of the king's take-over of Senj was considerably diminished. Probably the situation on the sea would start to change positively for the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom if it had been possible for Blaž to keep Krk. As Matthias's priorities were from 1468 concerned with the west, the basic ground for the success of Blaž's action at Krk was lacking. King Matthias reacted nervously to the fall of Krk. However, he did not act decisively. The financial resources of the kingdom were already exhausted, and more active involvement against Venice could mean a weakening of his other fronts, particularly against the Empire and the Ottomans. Therefore, these changes established a new balance of power between the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom and Venice on the Adriatic. The advantage for the Venetian side widened, as was the case each time throughout the fifteenth century.

After losing Senj, Krk and Vinodol, the Frankapani's power was significantly reduced in comparison with the time of the division at Modruš. Their formerly most prosperous and populated lands were controlled by Venice or King Matthias. The most important member of the family, Bernardin, continued his father Stjepan's policy of close alliance with the king. Among the other counts, there was nobody who would dare to oppose the king openly. Count Ivan tried unsuccessfully to return to power at Krk, changing allies and protectors, always lacking funds for his plans. Finally, he died in exile. Count Anž, who was deprived of his lands in Brinje by the king, intended to kill Matthias, asking for Venetian support, but was refused. Other counts were mainly busied with protecting their own lands and position. The defence system of the kingdom did not long resist after Matthias's death, particularly in Croatia. The king's mercenaries were never in these parts the basis of the royal troops fighting against the Ottomans. This role was still performed by the Croatian nobility. In these circumstances, weakening the Frankapani, as well as other Croatian magnates, had a direct, negative impact on the security of Croatia, as was well shown at Krbava field in 1493. King Matthias, focusing his attention on the west, did not develop his defence system on the south-west as he should have done to face further Ottoman challenges. Therefore, after the king's death, the combined influence of the exhausted material resources of the kingdom, weaker Croatian magnates, weaker kings and lack of real support from abroad, paved the way for the swift fall of the greater part of medieval Croatia into Ottoman hands.

It could be argued that the geographical position of the Frankapani lands had an important role in their decline during the second half of the fifteenth century. Bordering the Empire on the west, Venice on the sea, and being close and exposed to Ottoman raids, the Frankapani had a difficult task to defend their position. However, while the power of the kings in Buda was weaker, as between 1437 and 1458, the Frankapani could successfully organise their

mainly independent rule over much of Croatia. Besides that, the Ottoman pressure was then considerably less threatening. Between 1458 and 1490, with the king's efforts to reduce their power and with intensified Ottoman raids, the circle was closed, without a way out being left to the counts. Some Frankapani attempted to oppose Matthias and to ally with the Empire or Venice. However, this produced no result for the counts, except that they lost territory, both to the king and to Venice, and suffered heavy losses from the Ottomans. In a few words, the overall circumstances of that period surpassed the ability of the counts to cope with them. The prestige and self-confidence of the Frankapani at the time of the division at Modruš was never achieved again.

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