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BISHOP NIKODIM BUSOVIĆ AND UNIATISM IN LATE 17TH AND EARLY 18TH CENTURY DALMATIA AND BOKA

Abstract: This article deals with the role and activities of Bishop of Dalmatia Nikodim Busović at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. For Dalmatia and Boka, these were tumultuous times caused by the Morean War (1683–1699), with increased population migrations and increased Uniate pressures on the local Serbian population. During this turmoil, the Uniate archbishop of Philadelphia, Meletius Tipaldi, attempted to expand his influence and bring the Serbian Orthodox population in Dalmatia under his jurisdiction. At the same time, Catholic bishops in Dalmatia and Boka, protégés of the *Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith*, were pressuring Serbs to embrace Uniatism. Under these circumstances, Bishop Nikodim Busović managed for more than a decade to skillfully maintain the Serbian ecclesiastical organization under Venetian rule. After his suspension, Serbs in the coastal area of Dalmatia and Boka did not have a bishop until late eighteenth century.

Keywords: Bishop Nikodim Busović, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, coastal area of Dalmatia and Boka, Venetian rule, jurisdiction, Uniatism.

1. Bishop of Dalmatia Nikodim Busović: Action and Historical Circumstances

The role of Bishop of Dalmatia for Nikodim Busović (1657–after 1710),¹ was contradictory both for the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Christian churches. His exact activities have never been fully explained, and specific information is difficult to find due to a lack of sources. However, material that is available, both published and archival, allows for a partial reconstruction of Bishop Busović's life.

According to some sources, around 1676, Busović was in the ministry of the priest of the Church of St. Elijah in Šibenik. Several years later, on June 24, 1693, he was ordained

¹ A note about the baptizing of Bishop Busović, discovered in the old Church of Dormition of Virgin in Šibenik, indicates that he was born on December 27, 1657, and given the name Nikola, from father Dragosav and mother Teodora Busović. See more in: Desnica 1937: 274–275.

Bishop of Stratonicea by the Uniate Archbishop of Philadelphia, Meletius Tipaldi.² Other than Meletius Tipaldi, only one other bishop from Corfu attended the ordination. The issue of Busović's ordination was discussed by the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*).³ Although the members of the Congregation were satisfied with Bishop Busović accepting the Uniatism, certain further explanations were requested regarding Archbishop Tipaldi's election procedure and jurisdiction. A question was raised about how Archbishop Tipaldi, without any prior meeting of the clergy and confirmation by corresponding ecclesiastic heads, could perform an ordination that deviated from common canonic ordination.⁴ It is clear that, as a Uniate, Archbishop Tipaldi could not have received such approval from the ecumenical patriarch, who was apparently still formally his superior.⁵ Therefore, it seems most likely that Tipaldi performed the ordination for the most part in secrecy, without the presence of corresponding heads, and without the Congregation's immediate knowledge. He may have believed that, through Busović, he could more easily obtain jurisdiction over the Serbian Orthodox population in the Dalmatian area with little interference, and would be able to collect duties from them undisturbed.⁶ He essentially presented the Congregation with a *fait accompli*, thereby preventing complications regarding the jurisdiction of Latin bishops over Dalmatian territory, while also substantially diminishing their influence over Orthodox population in the area.

It is interesting to look at Bishop Busović's activities in Dalmatia.⁷ On February 1, 1694, the Congregation sent a decree to Bishop Busović that enabled him to use pontifical anywhere in Dalmatia.⁸ The ordination of Bishop Busović as a Uniate bishop was verified by both Venice and Rome. Therefore, an assertion that Bishop Busović did not in fact embrace the Roman Catholic faith on June 18, 1693⁹ (which was a precondition for officially accepting Uniatism)¹⁰ seems highly unlikely, as is a dispute over Busović's ordination as a Uniate bishop. Although there were certain canonic irregularities regarding

² Milaš 1899: 118. Stratonicea is one of the 24 dioceses in Asia Minor, which were under jurisdiction of Archbishop of Philadelphia. Archbishop of Philadelphia was the exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch, with jurisdiction over Greek Orthodox churches under the Republic of Venice (especially in Dalmatia, Istria, Venice). Directly subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarch, he was authorized to judge, interrogate and make decisions regarding ecclesiastic matters in Greek churches in the Republic, in accordance with Orthodox Church canons. This status of his was regulated by a special decree, issued by Ecumenical Patriarch Parthenius II in 1644. The seat of Archbishop of Philadelphia was in Venice, with its center established around the Church of St. George (San Giorgio dei Greci) (Milaš 1989: 306–307; Bogović 1982: 23–25).

³ Bogović 1982: 42–43.

⁴ *Ibid.* 42–43.

⁵ Archbishop Meletius Tipaldi embraced Uniatism in 1690 (Radonić 1950: 433), however the Ecumenical Patriarch, as we will see, officially excluded him from the Orthodox Church community only in 1712 (Milaš 1899: 90–96).

⁶ Radonić 1950: 601.

⁷ Bishop Gerasim Petranović wrote about Bishop Busović in his chronicle "About Orthodox Dalmatian Bishops", but with a certain portion of unconfirmed or incorrect data (Petranović 1859: 154–157). Boško Strika had a similar approach in his exposure about Busović (Strika 1930: 100–101). See further: Kašić 1971: 19–20; Popov 1873: 272–273.

⁸ Bogović 1982: 43.

⁹ Milaš 1901: 334–335.

¹⁰ Bogović 1982: 42.

Busović's ordination, as already stated, it would be too simple to claim that his profession of the Roman Catholic faith was only "a malevolent lie by Catholic prelates Vićentije Zmajević and Mato Karaman."¹¹ Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that Tipaldi invented Busović's acceptance of the Roman Catholic faith in order to justify himself before Latin bishops in order for them to accept Busović as his legitimate deputy.¹² There are several sources, direct and indirect, which indicate that Busović definitely embraced Uniatism.¹³ According to some, Busović had already done so on September 4, 1692.¹⁴ Further support for this theory also comes from a complaint by monks from Krka Monastery addressed to Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević in early 1693. They objected the ordination of Bishop Busović by a Uniate archbishop. Arsenije III replied to their complaint in March 1693.¹⁵ At that time, Busović had still not been formally ordained a Uniate bishop, but had apparently professed his Roman Catholic faith, which is what had provoked the disapproval of the Krka Monastery fraternity. There also exist letters, written by Bishop Busović to the Pope and the nuncio in Venice, before his ordination, in which he recognizes the Pope and commits to Catholic service.¹⁶ He certainly would not have received the decree regarding the use of pontificals if he had not already officially confirmed his stance. However, the issue of canonic protocol, which Archbishop Tipaldi did not adhere to, still remains an issue of dispute and calls into question the credibility of the ordination. This apparently suited Bishop Busović and he obviously intended to retain his independent status and continue acting independently for an extended period of time. In this he appears to have been successful, and the meaning behind that will be discussed later.

During his time in Venice in 1693, Busović strongly opposed the interference in his jurisdiction by Atanasije Ljubojević, the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia and exarch of the patriarch of Peć for Dalmatia. He also opposed, albeit less strongly, interference by the Latin bishops of Dalmatia. Furthermore, Bishop Busović appealed for the Latin bishops to be deprived of any authority in matters related to the Morlach Orthodox rites.¹⁷ Monks from Krka Monastery, who had occasionally acted as deputies of the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia in some parts of Dalmatia since 1578, offered up some resistance to Bishop Busović.¹⁸ The Krka monks complained about Busović to Patriarch Arsenije III, who then

¹¹ Milaš 1901: 334–335.

¹² *Ibid.* 335.

¹³ Milaš 1899: 118; Bogović 1982: 42, pic. 10–13.

¹⁴ Šimrak 1930: 81–92, enclosures 88–89.

¹⁵ Milaš 1899: 68.

¹⁶ Bogović 1982: 41, enclosures 10–13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 44.

¹⁸ Kašić 1966: 243. After the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć (1557), Patriarch Makarije undertook a general reorganization of the Serbian Church. He subsumed entire Bosnia and Dalmatia, except the Diocese of Zvornik, under jurisdiction of Metropolitanate of Dabar-Bosnia. Therefore, after that, the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia, most often as the exarch of the Patriarch of Peć, had jurisdiction over Orthodox Serbs in Dalmatia as well. The seat of the Metropolitanate was in Banja Monastery in Dabar, but the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia Gavriilo Avramović (1578–1588) soon moved it to Rmanj Monastery, on the Bosnia, Lika and Dalmatia tripoint (Slijepčević 1991: 310). His successor returned the seat to Banja Monastery, but, due to variable political circumstances in later periods, which we will talk about in the text, the jurisdictions and seats of metropolitans of Dabar-Bosnia will be altered and disputed.

humbly advised them to disregard what the bishop had done, to stay away from any evil, and to address him regarding ecclesiastic affairs.¹⁹ Naturally, Patriarch Arsenije III objected to Busović's ordination "on the foreign side" and the fact that had not sought ordination from him, but he did not explicitly say that Bishop Busović was an apostate and should therefore be disobeyed.²⁰

According to some speculations, upon his return to Dalmatia after his ordination, Busović settled at Krka Monastery and managed the Serbian Church in Dalmatia from there.²¹ The *Singelia (Decree) for the Municipality of Drniš* from Krka Monastery, dated February 8, 1694, is referred to as confirmation of such speculations.²² However, in the first few years following his ordination, Busović did not spend much time in Krka Monastery. The monks at Krka (led by Archimandrite Josif) were explicitly opposed to Uniatism and Busović's ordination by Archbishop Tipaldi. Also, a longer stay in Krka Monastery, immediately after receiving the episcopal rank in Venice, would probably seem suspicious to the Catholic clergy. It was well known that Krka and Krupa monasteries were centers of resistance to Uniatism, and they took a hard line regarding Orthodoxy. As a prelate still unverified and unconfirmed in his Uniate field activities, remaining at the Krka Monastery for an extended period immediately after receiving his ordination would probably have raised the suspicions of the Catholic clergy. At the very least, it would certainly have been unfavorable for him, especially if his real intention was to work undisturbed for the benefit of the Serbian Church in that area, even after formally accepting the rank of bishop in a canonically disputed form (and by a Uniate archbishop, whose actual jurisdiction in Dalmatia covered only four municipalities).²³

Therefore it is more probable that Bishop Busović stayed in Šibenik more often upon his return to Dalmatia, where he had served for years before and where he had relatives. This seems to have been confirmed by a letter written by a Catholic priest named Vidović, in which he mentions meeting Busović in Šibenik in early 1694.²⁴ He soon received Dragović Monastery with its surrounding land as donation from Venetian authorities, according to the gift certificate dated March 24, 1694, and it is possible that he often stayed there.²⁵ It seems that only after receiving episcopal consecration from Patriarch Arsenije III (1696),²⁶ which will be mentioned later, did Bishop Busović clearly position his seat at Krka Monastery. Around this time, he began signing documents as Bishop of Krka.²⁷

On a number of occasions, Bishop Busović's role became the subject of polemics. There are certain contradictions in things he did that, along with a lack of reliable information, prevent a complete interpretation of his role. There are statements that he possessed "the typical sense of Orientals (Byzantines!) for easily adjusting to current

¹⁹ Milaš 1899: 68.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 68; Nikolaević 1844: 127–128.

²¹ Milaš 1901: 336.

²² *Ibid.* 336.

²³ Šibenik, Zadar, Hvar and Pula.

²⁴ Bogović 1982: 45.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 44.

²⁶ Nikolaević 1844: 129–130.

²⁷ Milaš 1901: 336; Vuković 2004: 905–906. Together with that title, he also used the title Bishop of Dalmatia, confirmed by the *Decree (Singelia)* from October 1700, written in Krka Monastery, with which Bishop Busović appointed priest Ilija Končarović parson of the Ervenik Parish. (Petranović 1838: 86–87).

circumstances”, and thus deceitfully played both sides and even “spied” for Provveditore Generale Alvise Mocenigo.²⁸ Such an interpretation seems tendentious and simplified. As someone who knew the circumstances of the Orthodox Church in Dalmatia well and had served the Greek Church of St. Elijah in Šibenik for years, Busović was certainly aware that only skillful, smart, and tactful activities could preserve Orthodoxy in such an unfavorable environment. While serving in the Greek church, he could have discerned that, unlike the Latin prelates, Archbishop Tipaldi of Philadelphia did not have considerable influence or power in Dalmatia (except in the four Dalmatian municipalities mentioned previously). Therefore, formally embracing a loose Uniatism in a canonically disputable way, he assumed that he could, in fact, cautiously continue to act for the benefit of Orthodox Serbs. Primarily to preserve Orthodox faith in times of dangerous turmoil, when the nation he belonged to had fallen under synchronized pressure from Catholicism in all its lands.²⁹ Tipaldi would not have had the power to thwart his intentions, and the Latin prelates would not have a formal basis for doing so.

Busović enforced his idea very carefully. He certainly first had to strengthen his position and jurisdiction. He thus had the intention to eliminate the influence of Atanasije Ljubojević, the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia. Bishop Busović strongly criticized Metropolitan Atanasije. His harsh criticism of Atanasije “perversely undermining the consciousness of faithful ones turning them from real faith to dark hell” through his actions and his assertion that Latins were worse than Turks, come from the time of Busović’s ordination in Venice.³⁰ Metropolitan Atanasije did not give up so easily. He personally came to Venice in 1693. He brought a recommendation of Provveditore Daniel Dolfin, dated May 31 of that same year, a letter from Patriarch Arsenije III, and a request from Orthodox Serbs in Ravni Kotari to have him, Atanasije, appointed as bishop.³¹ Metropolitan Atanasije asked the Venetian authorities to confirm his jurisdiction in Dalmatia with a written act (ducal), so that he could freely perform his priestly duties “recently usurped by Bishop Busović.” He also used the occasion to complain to the Senate that Bishop Busović had been roughly and unreasonably attacking him.³² He especially emphasized that he had personally brought four hundred families under the auspices of the Republic, and that he only wanted to secure for them public peace and an evangelic path as their shepherd.³³ Despite his efforts, Bishop Atanasije did not succeed in receiving the ducal he sought, and he returned from Venice empty-handed. Bishop Busović had the advantage: he had been put forward by the Pope’s nuncio and had embraced Uniatism.³⁴

²⁸ Bogović 1982: 47.

²⁹ See more about Uniate pressures in other lands with a Serbian population: Gavrilović 1995: 7–42; Olbina 1992: 738–752.

³⁰ Bogović 1982: 44.

³¹ Jačov 1981: 66.

³² *Ibid.* 67.

³³ *Ibid.* 67. During the Morean War (1683–1699), Bishop Atanasije fled from Bosnia to Ravni Kotari (around 1688). There, under Venetian authority, he apparently built his residence, and often traveled to Lika to regular visits of Serbian churches, considering it his right, as the case was under Ottoman rule. However, political and territorial circumstances had changed during the Morean War, as well as jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church and Patriarch, which were no longer tolerated in these lands (Grbić 1891: 234–235).

³⁴ Jačov 1981: 67.

All of this clearly demonstrates that Bishop Busović did not want anyone interfering in the jurisdiction had received from the Archbishop of Philadelphia, but that he also most likely had in mind the current circumstances at the time. The jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia and exarch of the Patriarch of Peć, was unsustainable within Venetian territory, especially after Patriarch Arsenije III himself had moved under the auspices of the Habsburg Monarchy. Interference in the jurisdictions of a foreign metropolitan and, through him, the Serbian Patriarch, who was now under the protection of their rival empire, could in no way be tolerated under the auspices of *Serenissima*.³⁵ This is confirmed by a dispatch from the Provveditore Generale of Dalmatia on June 7, 1693, who had discovered that Metropolitan Atanasije Ljubojević had come to Dalmatia by imperial decree, and because of that the Venetians did not allow him to travel through their lands and visit Orthodox Serbs.³⁶ The patriarch's exarch, Bishop Stevan Metohijac, had done something similar earlier in the summer of 1691. As was laid out in Provveditore Dolfin's dispatch of June 1691, the Provveditore Generale had forbidden him from going out among the people and did not recognize his authority over Orthodox Serbs in Dalmatia as the Patriarch's emissary. Besides the Patriarch's epistle, Bishop Stevan, also took with him copies of two Habsburg imperial privileges given to the Serbian nation on September 21 and December 4, 1690, which especially rankled the Venetian authorities.³⁷

Hence, Bishop Busović, in fact, attempted to gain the trust of the Venetians through his strong position regarding Metropolitan Atanasije Ljubojević, to establish his status and jurisdiction, and prevent the Catholic prelates from having control over the Orthodox Serbs in this area. During his time in Venice, Bishop Busović openly requested that none of the Latin bishops interfere in his jurisdiction or create any obstacles for him.³⁸ It was soon clear that, at the time, Metropolitan Atanasije, could not do much in these lands. Patriarch Arsenije III's rather conciliatory reaction to Archimandrite Josif of Krka's letter, and his recognition of Busović as a legitimate bishop a little over two years later, indicate his awareness of the situation.

When the Serbian Patriarch confirmed his episcopal legitimacy on January 24, 1696, Bishop Busović submitted to Patriarch Arsenije III recommendations and pleas from his elders favoring him as bishop, along with the *Singelia* of the deceased Patriarch Pajsije for some Dalmatian bishop.³⁹ Had Bishop Busović not been acting in the interest of Orthodoxy and for the benefit of the people, he most certainly would not have received their support. People of that area, in constant tension due to Uniatism, pressures and oppression, strongly sharpened their ability to recognize someone's ill intentions toward them. Their very

³⁵ The fear of Venetians from the influence of foreign authority in their territory is vividly shown in the report made by Provveditore of Herceg-Novi Francesco Badoar (September 25, 1721) addressed to the Senate, where he recommends that it would be better for the Republic to allow the installation of an Orthodox bishop for Dalmatia and Boka, because: "If the Province (Dalmatia and Boka) does not have an Orthodox bishop, those with aspirations to become priests will move to Ottoman and Imperial (Habsburg) lands to be ordained and receive religious instructions. Besides money offered to those prelates there, they are submitted to foreign authorities..."; [Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Senato – Deliberazion Roma Expulsis*, fil. 31, fnc., (hereinafter ASV SDRE)].

³⁶ Tomić 1906: 151.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 133–135.

³⁸ Šimrak 1930: 86.

³⁹ Milaš 1899: 72.

survival, in spite of everything, is a proof of that. Patriarch Pajsije's *Singelia* was apparently supposed to represent a paradigm. As Patriarch Pajsije once gave Episcopal consecration to some Dalmatian bishop, Patriarch Arsenije III should give Episcopal consecration to him, Busović. It seems pretty justified that some recognize Epifanije Stefanović (1640–1648) as that unnamed bishop.⁴⁰ It is believed that Bishop Epifanije also embraced Uniatism under suspicious circumstances (1648),⁴¹ but it is known that he never went to the Pope to get his blessing.⁴² As stated, there is data confirming that Bishop Epifanije gave a letter or a document from Patriarch Pajsije to the delegates he sent to the Pope. Some authors believe that it was a letter of support and acceptance of Uniatism by Patriarch Pajsije, although the contents of the letter are still unknown.⁴³ However, if the mentioned Uniatism of Bishop Epifanije really had a deeper meaning or brought real results and fruit, the Catholic Church would not miss to provide detailed documentation about it. Uniatism was not a spontaneous process or internal spirit of the Orthodox Serbian population. It was conditioned by current external events.⁴⁴ We discover a similar moment, somewhat later, in relation to Bishop Busović's Uniatism. Allegedly, the Pope's nuncio in Venice sent a letter from Patriarch Arsenije III, with unknown contents, together with the report on Busović's embracing Uniatism, to the secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.⁴⁵ Having in mind all mentioned above, we see an unusually striking similarity of these two cases, without anything regarding Uniatism being realized in either case in real life.

Bishop Busović never refrained from doing certain favors to the Republic's officers, or reporting about events or situation on the Venetian-Turkish border.⁴⁶ One of the proofs of this is the letter from Provveditore Generale Alvise Mocenigo dated September 6, 1702. It clearly shows that Bishop Busović, upon the order of Provveditore, visited Krupa Monastery and, as stated, spent nine days in Lika to investigate the situation there and monitor the risky events in that area.⁴⁷ It was clear to Busović, as it was to others after him, how important it was to have the support of the Provveditore, whose influence and jurisdiction in lands they managed were almost undisputed. Only in such a way he could protect his church from Catholic bishops to a certain extent. Bishop Busović managed to avoid conflicts with bishops for an entire decade and slowly strengthen his position as protector of the Orthodox Church and Serbian ethnic community, receiving thereby recognitions both from state authorities and the Uniates. Archbishop Tipaldi appointed him visitor of Greek churches in coastal cities in 1699 and he had solid support from Provveditore Alvise Mocenigo. Mocenigo, in his decree dated September 10, 1699, granted Busović and the Dragović Monastery fraternity

⁴⁰ Vuković 1996: 186.

⁴¹ Bogović 1982: 32.

⁴² *Ibid.* 33; Šimrak 1929: 23.

⁴³ Šimrak 1929: 23–24.

⁴⁴ Bogović 1982: 36.

⁴⁵ Šimrak 1930: 87.

⁴⁶ Bogović 1982: 47.

⁴⁷ "D'Ordine di Sua Eccellenza Provveditor general Mocenigo Costituto Monsignor Vescovo Bussoovich ieri sera capitato dal Monasterio di Crupa sotto Velebith espone quanto segue: Gli scorsi giorni fui incaricato da Sua Eccellenza Provveditor Generale per trasferirmi in Crupa e ricavare le novità correnti di Lika, cosicchè doppo di essermi colà trattenuto per il corso di nove giorni, mi è sortito di ritraere le seguenti notizie", Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), *Legacy of Jovan Tomić*, no. 8711/VI-a/9 (hereinafter ASASA LJT).

yields from 50 camps of land in the village of Međupučje,⁴⁸ and on October 12, 1699 granted them the Church of St. John the Baptist in Bribir with surrounding lands, because the Turks had forced the fraternity was to leave Dragović Monastery.⁴⁹

The first hint of objections appeared during the mentioned Busović's visits to Greek churches, approved by Archbishop of Philadelphia Tipaldi. Such visits apparently did not suit some prelates. Parson of the Greek Church of St. Elijah in Šibenik, where Busović had spent many years before receiving Episcopal consecration, interpreted it as alleged breaking of jurisdiction and reported Busović to Tipaldi. Archbishop Tipaldi replied to the parson on October 10, 1699, stating that he had given an authorization to Bishop Busović to visit Greek churches only once, not forever, in order to submit necessary reports about the situation on the Adriatic coast.⁵⁰

Despite such oppositions, Bishop Busović succeeded in maintaining his service uninterrupted until 1702/1703. This overlaps with the departure of Provveditore Generale Alvise Mocenigo, who worked exclusively as state civil servant of the Republic and prevented any interference from the outside. After losing his support (1702), Bishop Busović was left to the mercy of Latin prelates. A letter from Exceptional Provveditore Iseppo Zuccato sent to Provveditore Generale, dated July 26, 1702, confirms that Busović was under surveillance, and Zuccato suggested that an experienced and reliable person be appointed to him, who will skillfully reveal the real intentions of Patriarch Arsenije III through Busović.⁵¹ Busović certainly didn't want to make the situation more difficult and further ignite the animosity of Catholic Dalmatian bishops towards himself and the Orthodox Church. Therefore his contacts with the Patriarch become rare, as can be seen in the Patriarch's concerned letters in the spring of 1702.⁵² One of the last *Singelia* Busović issued as Bishop of Dalmatia to chaplain Dositej, appointing him parson of the Church of St. Elijah in Dalmatian Kosovo, is from those times, April 2, 1702.⁵³

Already on November 3, 1703, Catholic Dalmatian bishops accuse Busović before the Congregation of "severe abuse" and false Uniatism.⁵⁴ Since the arrival of Giustin da Riva as Provveditore Generale of Dalmatia, Busović was increasingly prevented from performing his pastoral's duty. The attacks of Catholic bishops were becoming stronger. Bishop of Makarska Nikola Bjanković and Bishop of Knin Martin Dragojlo were constantly accusing Busović of rejecting Uniatism, wishing to place him under jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Split.⁵⁵ Although the certificate on the freedom of religion was issued already on May 30, 1702 by Provveditore Alvise Mocenigo, and confirmed on September 12, 1703,

⁴⁸ Desnica 1951: 351.

⁴⁹ Milaš 1899: 75–76.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 73–75.

⁵¹ ASASA LJT, no. 8711/VIII-f/8 („...Inconveniente studiarate prove di divertir con destesità la mossa del Vescovo Bussovich stesso nel riflesso alle conseguenze, che potrebbero derivarne dalla medesima pur stando voi più tosto somministrare al vescovo stesso qualche persona d'esperienza, e di fede che s'avanzi a nome e quella parte per penetrare con destra maniera le vere intenzioni, et affetti del patriarca mon con quel di più che troverete con relatione a pubblici interessi per renderne ogni più distinto ragguaglio a dovuto pubblico lume...”).

⁵² Jačov 1997: 82–84.

⁵³ Nikolaević 1843: 107–108.

⁵⁴ Bogović 1982: 50.

⁵⁵ Jačov 1983: 180.

the pressure on Bishop Busović persisted.⁵⁶ Thus, Provveditore Giustin da Riva issued a ducal ordering Latin priests to train Orthodox clergy for their parochial duties.⁵⁷ The Venetian government repeated and confirmed the validity of its orders from 1534 and 1542, according to which Orthodox priests could perform their duties only if a Latin bishop has previously interrogated them and issued his confirmation for it.⁵⁸

Unable to survive under such pressure, Bishop Busović soon departed to Mt. Athos.⁵⁹ Although some authors state that Bishop Busović died in 1707, upon his return from Mt. Athos to Dalmatia,⁶⁰ we do not find any confirmations about it in sources. On the contrary, many Venetian sources mention Bishop Busović after 1707 as well. A document dated December 1, 1708 informs us that Busović “being far away and busy with other obligations”, asked the Metropolitan of Herzegovina Savatije to visit churches in Dalmatia instead of him.⁶¹ It is understandable considering the fact that the same year Bishop Busović sent a letter from Mt. Athos to the Patriarch (Kalinik I) and Serbian Church Council in the Habsburg Monarchy,⁶² asking for blessing to leave his Dalmatian diocese.⁶³ Later Venetian sources (1710) still state that Busović only departed from Dalmatia and left to Mt. Athos, but without any mention of his death.⁶⁴

2. Serbian Church in the Coastal Area of Dalmatia and Boka, the Problem of Jurisdiction and Uniate Pressure

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Venetian Dalmatia, as well as Boka, was often in disorder. It is commonly considered that Orthodox ecclesiastical municipalities in the coastal area, for the duration of the Venetian rule, were under jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which administered these lands through the Metropolitan of

⁵⁶ Milaš 1899: 76–78.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 82–83.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 84–86.

⁵⁹ Jačov 1981: 70. There is an inscription from 1704 on the so-called “Busović’s doors”, holy doors formerly in the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in the parish in Bukovica, now in Krka Monastery. It mentions Busović already as a former bishop, indicating that he has already left Dalmatia at that time [Stojanović 1903: 9 (no. 2131); Petranović 1863:169].

⁶⁰ Milaš 1901: 343. It is stated that he left a kind of a will in Vrlika in August 1707, leaving his belongings to Dragović Monastery (Zorica 2011: 21–22).

⁶¹ ASASA LJT no. 8711/VI–a/62 („Nel mio soggiorno in Castel Novo venuto a trovarmi il Vescovo Greco Sabathia mi ricercò con insistenza la permissione di passar alla visita ne territori della Dalmazia nelle veci del Vescovo Nicodimo Bussovich, che per essere lontano et in altre incombenze occupato gle ne aveva domandato la facoltà“). See more about the role of Bishop of Herzegovina Savatije in the fight for the Diocese of Dalmatia and Boka: Matić 2016a: 106–119.

⁶² Patriarch Arsenije III died in 1706. The Council of Krušedol was convened for the election of the new head of the Church in the Habsburg Monarchy, held in January 1708. The Archdiocese of Krušedol (later named The Metropolitanate of Karlovci) was based on it.

⁶³ ASASA LJT no. 8711/XXII–e/8 (“Essendo andato il nostro fratello Vescovo Nicodimo Bussovich dal suo contado di Dalmazia, qual le diede il Patriarca e la nostra Congregazione al Monte Santo a fare rito santo et il suo scritto mandò al Patriarca e Congregazione che asserendo non voler continuare più nel detto Vescovato, quale dimandò la benedizione e gliel habbiamo concessa come desiderava”).

⁶⁴ Jačov 1981: 70; Vuković 2004: 905–906; Petranović 1859: 157.

Philadelphia.⁶⁵ However, it is also stated that the Patriarch of Peć also had jurisdiction over a part of Dalmatia under Ottoman rule until the late seventeenth century, directly managed by Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia as his exarch.⁶⁶ However, it seems that it was not consistently implemented, as shown by the jurisdiction of Bishop of Dabar-Bosnia and Dalmatia Epifanije Stefanović, for whom Farlati himself states that he had jurisdiction over Orthodox Serbs both in the Ottoman and in the Venetian territory.⁶⁷ Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia often referred to himself, in addition to other titles, Bishop of Klis and Lika,⁶⁸ and his seat was moved from Banja of Dabar to Rmanj Monastery (*città d' Onza*)⁶⁹ on the Bosnia, Lika and Dalmatia tripoint. Some sources state that it was from there that Bishop Epifanije moved to Venetian territory.⁷⁰

An even bigger confusion happened after Venetian possessions had expanded at the expense of the Ottoman Empire in the late seventeenth century, after the end of the Morean War (1699) and planned migrations of new Serbian inhabitants. The question of jurisdiction over new territories and newly settled population became disputable, because everyone was interested in it. The importance of this issue for the Serbian Church is proven by the fact that during the last decade of the seventeenth century, the Serbian Patriarch appointed as many as seven bishops in the area of Dalmatia.⁷¹ During this great turmoil, the Ecumenical Patriarch, through Archbishop of Philadelphia Meletius Tipaldi, attempted to expand his influence and put all Orthodox people in Dalmatia, including newly-arrived Serbs, under his jurisdiction.⁷² However, on September 13, 1690, Tipaldi renounced the Orthodox faith and embraced Uniatism.⁷³ Archbishop Tipaldi realized that it would be best to attract the famous Serbian priest, recognized in those lands, and include him in his endeavor to expand and strengthen his Uniate jurisdiction in Dalmatia. Nikodim Busović, Hieromonk from Krka Monastery, seemed to be an excellent solution for it, especially after proving loyalty during his service in the Greek Church of St. Elijah in Šibenik.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Archbishop Tipaldi believed that Busović, very respected by his compatriots, knew well the situation in the field and the best way to introduce Uniatism in those lands. As exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Tipaldi's jurisdiction in the Adriatic coast was accepted only over Orthodox people in Venice and several Orthodox Greek churches in Istria and Dalmatia, but not over

⁶⁵ Boca 1969: 276.

⁶⁶ Berić 1940a: 1. Niccolo Comneno Papadopoli, reputable doctor of philosophy, theology, law and professor at the Academy of Padua, was of the opinion that the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarch was recognized over Serbs in the entire Illyrian area (as mentioned in the very Patriarch's title). Therefore, Serbian Morlachs, moving to Venetian territory, should remain under jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarch and not fall under jurisdiction of Catholic bishops (Milaš 1899: 144).

⁶⁷ Farlati 1817: 130.

⁶⁸ Kašić 1966: 243; Nikolaević 1843: 105.

⁶⁹ Berić 1940b: 40. The author states that the toponym *città d' Onza* implied Rmanj Monastery at the confluence of Unac and Una.

⁷⁰ Farlati 1817: 130.

⁷¹ Jačov 1997: 78–80.

⁷² Radonić 1950: 411.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 433.

⁷⁴ Bogović 1982: 41.

Serbs.⁷⁵ It is assumed that, led by his interest to collect taxes, Archbishop Tipaldi intended to expand his jurisdiction over Orthodox Serbs in Dalmatia through Bishop Busović, still as formal exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Tipaldi tried to exercise such politics in Dalmatia, but the Ecumenical Patriarch officially excluded him from the Orthodox ecclesiastical community in 1712, declaring him second Judas.⁷⁶

Latin bishops did not have any official right of jurisdiction in the newly-conquered areas in Dalmatia, confirmed by the fact that Busović's pastoral activities encompassed Serbs of the Orthodox rite mainly in areas Venice had gained in the recent wars (Candian and Morean). Those areas were clearly defined by Provveditore Generale Alvisé Sebastiano Mocenigo in his letter from 1720, stating that Busović's jurisdiction was limited to the surroundings of Zadar and territories around Knin and Sinj.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Archbishop of Philadelphia – direct primate only in three Greek municipalities in Dalmatia and one in Istria (Šibenik, Zadar, Hvar and Pula)⁷⁸ and not the entire territory of Dalmatia as often believed – wanted to expand his jurisdiction to the newly-conquered areas through Bishop Busović.

Although the issues of jurisdiction of Dalmatian Serbs could not be solved in their favor even after the Morean Wars, they never gave up on demanding their rights. They were persistent in their intention to protect their faith, spirituality and identity from Catholic programs of Uniatism supported by Venetian authorities.⁷⁹ Although there are claims that the role of Catholic bishops in Dalmatia was only within the limits set by the state and not in activities of forcing religious unity under the Catholic Church,⁸⁰ many presented sources and those that follow clearly indicate the tendentiousness of such positions.⁸¹ It is known that *Serenissima* did not look at members of other religions mainly through the prism of faith, as the Holy See and its Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith did, but as

⁷⁵ Radonić 1950: 601.

⁷⁶ Milaš 1899:90–96.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 118. Together with Busović's administration in Dalmatia, Bishop of Herzegovina Savatije Ljubibratić had jurisdiction over Orthodox Serbs in the area of Boka. After Busović's departure from Dalmatia, he tried to expand his jurisdiction to areas administered by Busović, often adding to his title of Bishop of Herzegovina the Bishop of Dalmatia or Coastal Areas title. He did not succeed, since Venetian authorities did not give their approval. The stands of Catholic Dalmatian bishops had a significant role in that decision (Matić 2016b: 159–164). Bishops of Cetinje also had unsubstantiated jurisdictional aspirations over Boka. They considered Boka their zone of jurisdiction, referring to a very unclear and ambiguous document issued by Dodge Giovanni Corner to Bishop of Cetinje Danilo on June 4, 1718 (*Montenegro* 1998: 145–146). The document literally states: "Subjects of the Greek-Serbian rite, located in the diocese of the Bishop of Cetinje, both within the old and the new state borders, are allowed to recognize him as their bishop and shepherd." Bishop of Cetinje was not allowed to visit those areas, and it was not clearly stated what areas he refers to. However, bishops of Cetinje persistently referred to that document, rightfully considering Boka their office. They neglected the fact that the so-called Dračevica parish with Herceg-Novi and Risan were historically never under the jurisdiction of Montenegrin, but of Herzegovina bishops (Stanojević 1955: 93).

⁷⁸ Bogović 1982: 43; Jačov 1981: 71.

⁷⁹ Such aspirations of Orthodox Serbs in Dalmatia and Boka, who preserved their strongholds within monasteries, were led by the clergy. Still, some authors see the clergy, especially bishops Savatije Ljubibratić, Stefan Ljubibratić, and Simeon Končarević, as versatile initiators of odium towards the Latins. (Ratel 1902: 372–373).
⁸⁰ Bogović 1982: 161.

⁸¹ Detailed reports about Uniate pressures on Serbian Orthodox people in Dalmatia and Boka are given by: Jačov 1981: 61–65.

ethnically colored communities.⁸² However, as faith was most often deeply related to tradition and ethnic characteristics, it indirectly had a significant contribution in determining the political course of the Republic, whose basis was *Ragione di Stato*.⁸³ Therefore, granting jurisdiction over the area of Dalmatia and Boka to Archbishop of Philadelphia was most convenient for Venetian authorities. Orthodox Serbs would thus remain beyond the jurisdiction of Orthodox Serbian bishops on the other side of Venetian borders, as well as beyond the jurisdiction of Latin bishops within the borders, most of whom were subjected directly to the Roman Congregation. It was believed that the higher interest of the state was to establish the “Greek-Uniate” hierarchy, with its center in Venice, rather than to allow excessive interference of Roman nuncios in areas under Venetian state authority. For Venice, Rome was both the Holy See and the capital of the monarch.⁸⁴ Knowing it, the Congregation and its protégés insisted on religious homogeneity being crucial for the stability of the state, stirring up the fear of confessional heterogeneity among Venetian authorities.⁸⁵ In order to give a more vivid review of the current reality at the Dalmatia and Boka coast and Uniate pressures on Orthodox Serbs, mostly by Catholic prelates, we will present several examples from Venetian archives.

In his report to the Senate from Kotor dated May 1, 1692, Provveditore Nicolo Erizzo supports imposing Catholicity to Orthodox people, since it would contribute to easier control of the state over them, and interests of the state (*Ragione di Stato*), as we have already mentioned, were above everything for *Serenissima*: “Their faith (of the Orthodox people) is susceptible to bribery and depends on who offers more. They are more under influence of Barbarian than Christian laws, due to the narrowed truthfulness of ecclesiastic dogmas, as well as of Greek priests, who do not have any control and rule among savages and Ottomans. It would be of much more use to you if they followed only the Latin faith, which would force them to abide to this holy authority...”⁸⁶

The Bishop of Kotor Marin Drago, in his letter dated July 15, 1697, sent to Cardinal Leandro Colloredo in Rome, literally reveals the real intentions of Catholic prelates, protégés of the Congregation: “Since all my efforts have failed to convince bishops of Serbian faith, located in the vicinity of Herceg-Novi, to sincerely unite under the supreme pontiff of the universal church and free themselves from misconceptions about the Catholic faith, I addressed the people of Paštrovići.”⁸⁷ Bishop Drago, as we see in the letter, attempts to talk the Paštrović clan into separating from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cetinje, “who has always been a Turkish vassal, born and raised in the mountain among savages, therefore the source of all evils for his Christians”,⁸⁸ and put them under the jurisdiction of Archbishop

⁸² Cecchetti 1874: 457.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 455.

⁸⁴ Bogović 1982: 146–147. More about this issue and relations, interests and power struggle between Venice and the Holy See in: Stella 1964: 80–83.

⁸⁵ In that sense, the Archbishop of Bar and later of Zadar Vićentije Zmajević had a particularly remarkable role. About his activities see: Jačov 1984: 42–65.

⁸⁶ Tomić 1914: 80–81.

⁸⁷ ASASA LJT, no. 8711–XXIX/123 („Riuscitemi tutte le applicazioni vane nel persuadere li vescovi che esistono nelle vicinanze di Castel novo del rito serviano, acciò sinceramente si unissero al capo santo dell’universale Chiesa e lasciassero gli errori che tengono contro la verità cattolica, mi rivolsi ai popoli de pastrovich”).

⁸⁸ ASASA LJT, no. 8711–XXIX/123 („...instinuatii alli datti popoli Pastrovich che sono numerosi e di qualche

of Philadelphia, Uniate Meletius Tipaldi [“...since the requested bishop (of Cetinje) would have to fall under the administration of Archbishop of Philadelphia and recognize the holy Pope as the supreme pontiff, therefore his attempts to inflict damage on our faith, as today those who are not subjects (of the Republic) are doing, would not be tolerated, whilst the influence of the real monarch and the staying in his country would limit him...”].⁸⁹

Uniate priest Josephus Stremezchi from Poland also had a clear mission to this end. During his several-years long business trip in Byzantium during the first decade of the eighteenth century, he disembarked in Budva and then traveled to Herceg-Novi. Although the Bishop of Herzegovina Savatije Ljubibratić received him cordially, Stremezchi, having failed in his Uniate mission, ruthlessly attacked his host for exceeding his authority and complained about the hatred and intolerance of Orthodox people towards Catholics.⁹⁰

For the sake of objectivity, as a response to such a claim, we will quote, without any comments, part of a report created by Catholic vicar Luka Bolica, who was sent instructions on May 4, 1676 about the Catholic mission determined at the main council of the Congregation. Vicar Bolica states: “The only Christian church in Risan, Church of St. Peter, has two altars, an Orthodox and a Catholic one, although there are 40 Orthodox families living in the hinterland and only one Catholic.”⁹¹

The most explicit proof of the Catholic pressure on Serbian clergy (to accept Uniatism and Dalmatian Catholic bishops as their visitators) is the Venetian list of Orthodox Serbian priests, who refused the pressures of Latin bishops from Dalmatia and were therefore maltreated and arrested (pic. 1, 2).⁹²

considerazione al confin del Cettigne verso l’Albania nelle nostre parti, acciò almeno procurassero di sottrarsi dalla potestà del suddetto vescovo di Cettigne che sempre è stato suddito del Tourco, nato et allevato nelle montagne tra gente barbara, e perciò causa di ogni male nelli suri”).

⁸⁹ ASASA LJT, no. 8711–XXIX/123 (“...perchè il vescovo che si dimanda, dovendo dipendere dall’arcivescovo di Filadelfia e suddito riconoscerrebbe il gent.mo Pontefice per corpo supremo e non si tollerebbe se tentasse pregiudizii al nostro rito, come a giornata lo fanno questi che non sono sudditi, perchè li sarebbe al gran freno al riguardo del Cettigne naturale, e l’habitazione nel suo stato”).

⁹⁰ ASASA LJT, no. 8711–XXII–e/10, e/11.

⁹¹ Jačov 1998: 403–404.

⁹² ASASA LJT, no. 8711–XV/14 (List of Orthodox priests who were taken away, imprisoned and maltreated by Catholic Dalmatian bishops, because they refused to conform to their jurisdiction, visitations of Serbian churches, Catholic patents and alike.

1. **Monk Mojsej**, prior of the Monastery of Holy Archangels (Krka), together with his vicar Janičić, was imprisoned in Zadar, upon the order of the bishop from Skradin; 2. **Priest Radojica Novaković**, parson from Kninsko Polje, and together with him **Monk Dimitrije**, parson from Drniš, were sent to Zadar, escorted by a group of soldiers, upon the order of the bishop from Šibenik; 3. **Priest Simeon Končarević**, parson from Benkovac, was imprisoned in Zadar, upon the order of the bishop from Novi (Novigrad); 4. **Priest Mićo Ostojić**, parson from Biljani, was taken to prison in Zadar, upon the order of the bishop from Novi; 5. **Monk Mojsije**, parson from Žegar, was taken to prison upon the order of the bishop from Novi; 6. **Priest Jovo Manojlović**, parson from Bratiškovci, was escorted by the police to Zadar, where he was first confined and then imprisoned, all upon the order of the bishop from Skradin; 7. **Priest Dimitrije Krička**, from Petrovo Polje on the territory of Drniš, was taken to Knin and locked in the fortress, upon the order of the bishop from Šibenik; 8. **Monk Milenko**, parson from Drniš, was locked in Knin, upon the order of the bishop from Šibenik; 9. **Monk Makarije**, parson from Imotski, was caught and taken to the Imotsko fortress, upon the order of the bishop from Makarska; 10. **Priest Nikola Šaponja** from Ostrovica was locked upon the order of the bishop from Skradin, after refusing a parish, so he would not have to accept the patent from the stated bishop; 11.

The excerpts set out above once again confirm that the Catholic prelates' activities promoting Uniatism were clearly and systematically carried out in the area of Dalmatia and Boka, but the resistance of Orthodox Serbs continued. Upon the departure of Bishop of Dalmatia Nikodim Busović and until the end of Venetian rule (1797), the Serbian population in this area did not have their bishop, who would work in the interest of Orthodox Serbs and represent the ecclesiastical authority. The role of leaders of Orthodox people and preserving their identity was taken over by Serbian Orthodox monasteries and their capable archimandrites. In that sense, especially significant are the monasteries of Krka and Krupa for the area of Dalmatia, and Savina Monastery for Boka.⁹³

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Monk Pahomije Đurović, prior of the Monastery of Holy Archangels (Krka) fled to the Habsburg Monarchy from the persecution of the bishop from Skradin, where he spent three years. Three years later, he returned to his monastery, and when the mentioned bishop saw him, he ordered him to be captured and taken to the prison in Zadar. He was imprisoned there for twelve months; 12. **Priest Živan Vuković**, parson from Kosovo, was caught by a group of soldiers and taken to the prison in Zadar, upon the order of the bishop from Šibenik; 13. **Priest Avram Simić** was caught by a group of soldiers and taken to Zadar, upon the order of the bishop from Šibenik; 14. **Monk Arsenije**, prior of Dragović Monastery and his friend **monk Janičić**, parson from Vrlika, were sought by inquisitors upon the order of the Archbishop of Split, and after being arrested, they were set free without any detention.

The list does not have a date, but probably dates from 1728. The fact that parson from Benkovac Simeon Končarević, later Bishop of Dalmatia, is mentioned in the list leads to such a conclusion. It is known that Simeon was arrested and taken to Zadar in 1728, as stated in the enclosed list (Lakić 1970: 30).

⁹³ See more in: Matić 2016b: 159–182.

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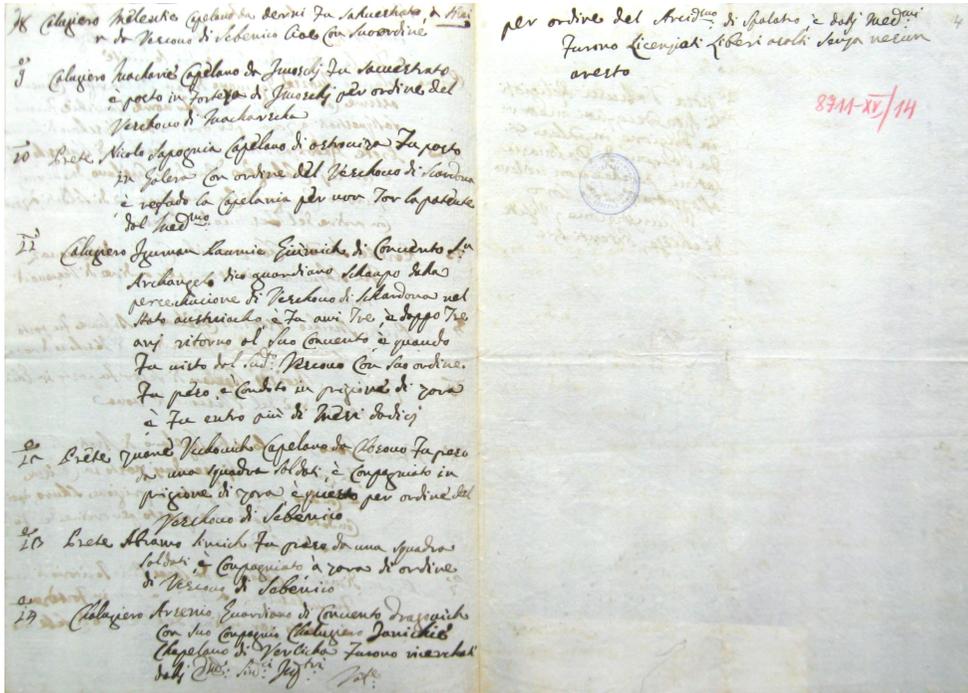


Fig. 2. Venetian list of Serbian priests from Dalmatia arrested because of refusing to conform to the jurisdiction of Catholic prelates

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**ЕПИСКОП НИКОДИМ БУСОВИЋ И УНИЈА
У ДАЛМАЦИЈИ И БОКИ КРАЈЕМ XVII И ПОЧЕТКОМ XVIII ВЕКА**

Резиме

Текст се бави улогом и делатношћу далматинског епископа Никодима Бусовића током последње деценије XVII и прве деценије XVIII века. Његова личност и активности разматрани су на основу објављених и необјављених извора, у покушају да се што прецизније расветле многе нејасноће и контроверзности у којима је суделовао. Такође, разматрају се покушаји спровођења унијатске делатности на подручју далматинско-бокељског приморја, у том раздобљу спорних и недовољно дефинисаних јурисдикција.

То је у Далмацији и Боки време превирања изазваних Морејским ратом (1683–1699). Забележене су велике миграције и појачани унијатски притисци на српско становништво. Током ових пометњи филиделфијски унијатски архиепископ Мелентије Типалди (Meletius Tìpaldi) покушава да прошири утицај и подвргне својој јурисдикцији српско православно становништво у Далмацији, јер су његове стварне ингеренције остварене само у оквирима четири грчке општине у Далмацији. С друге стране, католички бискупи Далмације и Боке, штићеници *Конгрегације за пропаганду вере* (*Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), врше притисак на Србе и настоје да их принуде на унију. У таквим околностима владика Никодим Бусовић вешто је успевао, дуже од деценије, да одржи српску црквену организацију на тим просторима, што није било једноставно под млетачком влашћу, која је константно штитила само своје државне интересе (*Ragione di Stato*) на начин без преседана. У тексту се наводи више цитата из необјављене архивске грађе, који допуњавају досадашња сазнања о притисцима и покушајима наметања уније на далматинско-бокељском приморју. Приложен је и списак имена већег броја свештеника са далматинског подручја који су били шиканирани од стране католичких бискупа и хапшени.

Након уклањања владике Бусовића, Срби на далматинско-бокељском приморју више нису имали свог епископа до краја XVIII века. Улогу предводника православних и очување њиховог идентитета преузели су тада српски православни манастири и њихови способни архимандрити. За подручје Далмације, у том смислу, посебно се истичу манастири Крка и Крупа, док је за Боку то био манастир Савина.

Кључне речи: епископ Никодим Бусовић, XVII и XVIII век, далматинско-бокељско приморје, млетачка власт, јурисдикција, унија.

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