

= Stephen Tomašević of Bosnia =

Stephen Tomašević (Serbo @-@ Croatian : Stjepan / Stefan Tomašević , ??????? / ?????? ????????? ; died on 25 May 1463) was the last sovereign from the Bosnian Kotromanić dynasty . His father , King Stephen Thomas , arranged for him to marry Maria of Serbia and become Despot of Serbia in April 1459 . The marriage was meant to unite Bosnia and Serbia in their fight against the expanding Ottoman Empire , but failed in that regard . After ruling Serbia for merely two months , Stephen Tomašević surrendered it to the Ottomans and fled back to his father 's court .

Upon his father 's death in 1461 , Stephen Tomašević ascended as King of Bosnia , a kingdom whose existence was being increasingly threatened by the Ottomans . He desperately tried to secure help from Pope Pius II , King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and monarchs of other neighbouring countries . Confident that they would come to his aid , Stephen Tomašević refused to deliver the customary tribute to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror and thus provoked the invasion that cost him his life . In 1463 , Mehmed marched into Bosnia , meeting little effective resistance , and captured Stephen Tomašević , who was then beheaded . The execution marks the fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia to the Ottoman Empire .

= = Name = =

Like all Bosnian kings before him , Stephen Tomašević bore the name Stephen . His predecessors , with the exception of his uncle Stephen Ostojić , took the name Stephen upon accession as an honorific that signified their claim to the throne of Serbia , whose Nemanjić rulers had first adopted it . Stephen Tomašević , on the other hand , appears to have been baptized as Stephen (Stipan) , the last part of his name being a patronymic . On occasions when his predecessors referred to themselves by their Christian names only , omitting the honorific Stephen , Stephen Tomašević called himself simply Stipan ? suggesting that the name was in his case more than an honorific . The same is true for his uncle , Stephen Ostojić . For this reason , Stephen Tomašević has been listed as Stephen II ? his uncle being Stephen I ? albeit very rarely .

= = Family = =

Stephen Tomašević was born into the House of Kotromanić , as one of the two known sons of Stephen Thomas and a commoner named Vojača . The other son died as an adolescent . Stephen Tomašević 's father was an adulterine son of King Stephen Ostoja and a younger brother of Radivoj , who contested the rule of their cousin King Stephen Tvrtko II . Stephen Thomas was politically inactive and did not take part in the struggle between his brother and cousin , enabling his family to lead a quiet life in a period when the Ottoman state tried to weaken Bosnia by encouraging internal divisions . This all changed when the ailing and childless King Stephen Tvrtko II decreed that Stephen Thomas should succeed him . The King died shortly after , in November 1443 , and Stephen Tomašević 's father ascended the throne . The legal status of his parents ' marriage is ambiguous ; his mother has been described as either his father 's concubine or common @-@ law wife . The marriage ended when Bosnian noblemen , unwilling to recognize a commoner as their queen , requested that Stephen Thomas take a wife of noble birth . The annulment was granted by Pope Eugene IV on 29 May 1445 .

Stephen Thomas , raised as a member of the Bosnian Church , converted to Roman Catholicism in c . 1445 ; Stephen Tomašević later stated that he had been baptized into the Roman Catholic Church as a child , and that he had been taught Latin letters . In 1446 , Stephen Thomas married Catherine of St Sava , by whom Stephen Tomašević had a half @-@ brother named Sigismund and a half @-@ sister named Catherine .

= = Marriage = =

In 1453 , the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and annexed the remnants of the Byzantine

Empire . Without an adversary to their rear , the Ottomans were now able to freely campaign against European states , including the Kingdom of Bosnia and the neighbouring Despotate of Serbia . Stephen Thomas thereupon desperately tried to ensure Christendom 's help in case of Ottoman invasion , and entered into negotiations with Francesco Sforza , Duke of Milan , over Stephen Tomašević 's marriage to an illegitimate daughter of the Duke .

Serbia 's despot , Lazar Branković , died in 1458 , and a power vacuum ensued . Having left three daughters and no sons , he was nominally succeeded by his older brother Stephen , but Stephen 's authority was challenged as he was blind and thus considered unfit to rule . Stephen Thomas took advantage of Serbia 's weakness to recapture Eastern Bosnian towns he had lost to Lazar 's and Stephen 's father George . Shortly afterwards , he entered peace negotiations with Lazar 's widow , Helen Palaiologina . Abandoning the prospect of his son 's marriage to a daughter of the Duke of Milan , Stephen Thomas came to an agreement with Helen : Stephen Tomašević was to marry the eldest of the three daughters of her and Lazar , the 11 @-@ year @-@ old Helen , and assume the government of Serbia . The Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus agreed to the arrangement ? it was in his interest to create a strong buffer zone between his realm and the Ottoman Empire by uniting the Kingdom of Bosnia and the Despotate of Serbia , which he considered Hungary 's vassal states , under Stephen Tomašević . The Diet of Hungary confirmed Stephen Tomašević 's right to Serbia in January 1459 .

Stephen Tomašević duly set out for Serbia but narrowly escaped imprisonment during an Ottoman raid on the royal residence of Bobovac . He arrived to Smederevo , capital of the Eastern Orthodox despotate , during the Holy Week of 1459 , and ascended the Serbian throne on 21 March . Michael Szilágyi , regent for the underage King Matthias , arrived at the head of an army to ensure that command over the town 's fortress would be assumed by Stephen Tomašević without any difficulties .

= = Despotism = =

Stephen Tomašević 's marriage to Helen took place on 1 April , the first Sunday following Easter . Following the presumably Catholic ceremony , the bride was known as Maria . He assumed the title of despot , despite the fact that the title was neither hereditary nor tied to a specific territory , but a grant from the Byzantine emperor . It is possible that his mother @-@ in @-@ law , a member of Byzantium 's last imperial family , believed that she had the right to grant the title in the absence of an emperor . Within a week of the wedding , Stephen Tomašević exiled his wife 's deposed uncle from Serbia . King Stephen Thomas retold these events in a letter sent to the Duke of Milan , claiming that the title of despot was granted to his son by the King of Hungary " with the agreement and will of all the Rascians " . It is more likely , however , that only Hungarians and the supporters of Stephen Tomašević 's mother @-@ in @-@ law were pleased with his accession to the Serbian throne .

It was clear from the onset that Stephen Tomašević 's reign in Serbia would be short @-@ lived . The Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror considered Stephen Tomašević 's enthronement an unwarranted violation of his own rights , for the Ottomans too considered Serbia their vassal state . Mehmed promptly launched an attack on Smederevo in June , and there was no serious consideration of trying to defend it . Aware that it could not withstand the attack , Stephen Tomašević surrendered the fortress on 20 June . The Ottoman proceeded to annex the rest of the Serbian state to their empire within a year .

Following the fall of the town which Pope Pius II lamentably termed " the gateway to Rascia " , Stephen Tomašević fled to Bosnia with his wife and in @-@ laws , seeking refuge at the court of his father . The King of Hungary accused Stephen Tomašević and the Bosnians of selling Smederevo Fortress to the Ottomans , and the Pope at first believed the Hungarians . Pius 's own investigation appears to have come to the conclusion that Stephen Tomašević did not sell the fortress , as the Pope did not repeat the claim . Ottoman , Bosnian and Serbian sources say nothing about the supposed betrayal , so the allegation is unlikely to be based on fact . The Serbian @-@ born Janissary Konstantin Mihailović and the Byzantine Greek scholar Laonikos Chalkokondyles

maintained Stephen Tomašević's innocence and pointed out to the strength of the Ottoman army . Both agree that the Serbs within Smederevo were so unhappy with Bosnian rule and convinced that the Ottoman would prevail (and grant them more religious tolerance than the Hungarians) that they went out to meet Mehmed and presented him with keys to the city .

= = Kingship = =

= = Accession and coronation = = =

Stephen Tomašević's father died in the summer of 1461 . The 16th century Croatian chronicler Ivan Tomašić wrote that the King died on 10 July ? more precisely , that he was murdered on the order of his brother Radivoj and with the consent of his son Stephen Tomašević . No contemporary source records that the King was murdered , however , and historians have generally discarded the claim . Stephen Tomašević ascended the throne without difficulty , as he had been appointed his father's heir @-@ designate already during his brief reign as Despot of Serbia . He ensured that his uncle would not contest the succession by generously endowing him with land . The new monarch assumed the pompous title inherited from Stephen Tvrtko I , the first Bosnian king , styling himself as , " by the Grace of God , King of Serbia , Bosnia , the Maritime Lands , Zachlumia , Dalmatia , Croatia , and the Western lands " ? regardless of the fact that Serbia had by then become an Ottoman pashaluk , that Croatia had been lost to Hungary in the 1390s , and that he had to beg the government of the Republic of Venice to allow him to take refuge in Dalmatia in case of an Ottoman attack .

Immediately upon his accession , Stephen Tomašević set out to resolve all disagreements within the royal family in order to strengthen his own position . His relations with his stepmother , the 37 @-@ year @-@ old Queen Catherine , had been strained during his father's lifetime , but he now guaranteed that she would retain her title and privileges . Her father , Stjepan Vukčić Kosača , wrote to Venetian officials that the King had " taken her as his mother " , Vojača having already died by the time he ascended the throne . Kosača was the kingdom's most powerful nobleman , and had been engaged in a never @-@ ending conflict with Stephen Tomašević's father . It appears that he nevertheless refrained from claiming the Bosnian crown for his adolescent grandson Sigismund , Catherine's son and Stephen Tomašević's half @-@ brother , probably because he was aware that Bosnia needed a strong , mature monarch more than ever . Stephen Tomašević took the Venetians' advice to make peace with his stepgrandfather , thus finally ensuring the nobility's absolute support of their king . He then focused on improving Bosnia's economy , which became stronger than ever during his reign , and ensuring that the state would collect more profit from the flourishing metalworking trade .

Pope Pius proclaimed Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus " Defender of Bosnia " on Stephen Tomašević's request on 7 November , and sent a crown to be used for his coronation . On the feast of Saint Gregory ten days later , the newly appointed Bishop Nicholas of Modruš , Pope Pius's legate , crowned Stephen Tomašević in the Church of Saint Mary in Jajce . The coronation marked the first and last time a Bosnian monarch received his crown from Rome . It exemplified how , with the religious persecution established by Stephen Thomas and Stephen Tomašević's active correspondence with the papacy , the Kingdom of Bosnia acquired the character of a true Catholic state only at its very end .

= = Ottoman invasion = = =

Conflict broke out in 1462 between Stephen Tomašević's stepgrandfather and stepuncle Vladislav Hercegović , and the latter sought Ottoman help in the revolt . The King and Stjepan Vukčić Kosača , along with the papal legate Luke de Tolentis , prepared for an imminent Ottoman attack . The King could not count on Hungarian aid : Pope Pius's recognition of Stephen Tomašević as a sovereign independent from Hungary gravely insulted King Matthias , who had not forgiven Stephen

Tomašević for surrendering Smederevo in the first place . Stephen Tomašević seemingly appeased Matthias by paying him off with a considerable sum of money , ceding a few Bosnian castles , and promising to cancel the tribute due to the Ottomans .

Encouraged by Matthias 's commitment to help and possibly by the Bishop of Modruš , Stephen Tomašević made a tactless and fatal decision in June 1462 . Pope Pius wrote in his diary that , " relying on one knows what hope " , the King " refused the tributes which his ancestors had long been used to pay the Ottomans and had stormed the town which the enemy had built at the confluence of Sava and Bosna to put fear into the Hungarians and Slavs . " According to Chalkokondyles , Stephen Tomašević invited the Ottoman ambassador to his treasure house and showed him the money set aside as tribute , but informed him that he would rather use it to fight off an Ottoman attack or to live off it in exile . Mehmed the Conqueror was enraged by Stephen Tomašević 's insubordination and audacity . The Pope recounts how , hearing of Sultan Mehmed 's vow to conquer his kingdom and destroy him , Stephen Tomašević summoned the Bishop of Modruš and blamed him for infuriating the Sultan . He commanded Nicholas to go to Hungary and seek immediate action against the Ottomans , but no help ever arrived to Bosnia from Christendom ; Matthias of Hungary , Skenderbeg of Albania and the Ragusans all failed to carry out their promises , while the Venetians flatly refused the King 's pleas .

In the spring of 1463 , Mehmed gathered an army of 150 000 men in Adrianople and prepared to march towards Bosnia . In his despair , Stephen Tomašević turned to the Sultan himself and tried at the last moment to procure a 15 -year long truce with him . Konstantinović claimed that he was present when the Ottomans duped the Bosnian envoys into thinking that the King 's request for truce was granted , and that he tried to warn them about the deceit . Mehmed 's army set out right after the envoys . Fortresses fell rapidly , and Stephen Tomašević fled with his family and possessions from Bobovac to Jajce . The Ottoman army under the leadership of Mahmud Pasha Angelović laid siege to Bobovac on 19 May , with the Sultan joining them the following day . Believing that Bobovac could withstand the siege for two years , Stephen Tomašević planned to assemble an army in Jajce , still counting on foreign aid . He sent his wife with their possessions to Dalmatia , while his stepmother took the rest to Ragusa .

= = = Capture and death = = =

Contrary to Stephen Tomašević 's expectations , Bobovac fell within days . The King had already realized that he had no choice but to take refuge in the neighbouring Croatia or Dalmatia . Angelović tirelessly pursued him , and caught up with him in Ključ . The Ottoman army was reportedly about to pass the city 's fortress , not suspecting that the King was hiding within its walls , when a local man revealed his whereabouts in return for money . A four -day long siege of the fortress ensued . Eager to capture him , Angelović had his messengers solemnly promise the King that he would be done no harm if he surrendered , and sent him a document guaranteeing him freedom . With food supplies and ammunition running short , Stephen Tomašević decided to surrender himself and his garrison to Angelović . Angelović , in turn , brought him , his uncle Radivoj and 13 -year -old cousin Tvrtko before Mehmed in Jajce .

The captured King sought to ingratiate himself with the Sultan , and sent out orders to commanders and castellans to surrender , enabling Mehmed to take command of more than seventy towns in one week . Mehmed , however , had no intention of sparing Stephen Tomašević 's life and summoned him on 25 May . The King brought Angelović 's document , but Mehmed 's mullah , Ali al -Bistami , issued a fatwah declaring that the Sultan was not bound to keep the promise made by his servant without his knowledge . As if to demonstrate the validity of his fatwah , the elderly mullah took out his sword and beheaded Stephen Tomašević in front of Mehmed . Benedetto Dei , on the other hand , recorded that Mehmed himself decapitated Stephen . The execution of the King , his uncle , cousin and two noblemen took place in a field next to Jajce , which has since been known as Carevo Polje (" the Emperor 's Field ") .

= = Assessment and legacy = =

Stephen Tomašević was buried on a hill near Jajce . Europe was stunned to see the Kingdom of Bosnia fall almost completely within weeks of his death . The country 's quick submission is said to be the consequence of a poor cooperation between Stephen Tomašević and his noblemen , but it is perhaps most accurate to attribute it to the people 's low morale and general belief that the conquest was inevitable . Additionally , the religiously diverse Bosnians were aware , much like the neighbouring Serbians , that the country would be overrun by Hungary if not by the Ottomans , and that they would enjoy far less freedom of religion and far higher taxes in that case . Therefore , resistance was not as strong as it could have been . Pope Pius 's claim that adherents of the Bosnian Church betrayed the kingdom is groundless .

Stephen Tomašević 's half @-@ siblings were taken to Constantinople and converted to Islam . Queen Catherine , his stepmother , left for the Papal States and unsuccessfully campaigned for the restoration of the kingdom ; Bosnia only ceased to be part of the Ottoman Empire in 1908 , 445 years after Stephen Tomašević 's death . His widow , Queen Maria , spent the rest of her life in the Empire .

In 1888 , the Croatian archeologist Vatro Truhelka excavated bones in a settlement close to Jajce known as Kraljev Grob (King 's Tomb) and found the skeleton of a decapitated adult male . Though there is no direct evidence that these are the remains of Stephen Tomašević , folk tradition and circumstantial evidence have led to the conclusion that they are . The bones were placed in a glass coffin , and have since been housed in the Franciscan monastery in Jajce .