



## Projecting the Crusading Routes in Southeastern Europe: The Case of Martin Segon's Treatise *Quos terrarum limites* (1480/81)<sup>1</sup>

di Igor Stamenović

*Abstract:* The subject of this paper is the military routes proposed by the humanist Martin Segon in his anti-Ottoman crusading treatise *Quos terrarum limites* (1480/81). The study examines Segon's methods of crusade planning, particularly regarding his use of knowledge about the road networks and terrain of Southeastern Europe. It provides a classification of Segon's crusading routes based on their strategic importance. Furthermore, the extent to which Segon's descriptions were based on personal insight versus reliance on other sources is evaluated. The paper also discusses the matter of continuity and discontinuity in the use of certain war routes.

*Keywords:* Martin Segon; Later Crusades; Military Routes; Quattrocento.

### *Introduction*

The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople on 29 May 1453, caused significant disturbance across the Latin West, particularly within the Curia<sup>2</sup>. In response, the papacy under Nicholas V (1447-1445), Callixtus III (1455-1458) and Pius II (1458-1464) intensified efforts to organize an anti-Ottoman crusade, mobilizing European powers like the Holy Roman

---

<sup>1</sup> This study was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovations of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-66/2024-03). This research represents an extended version of the paper *Projecting the Crusading Routes in Southeastern Europe – the Case of Martin Segon's Treatise (1480/81)* presented at the VI *L'Apprendistato dello Storico* conference (Sapienza University of Rome, 22-24 January 2024).

<sup>2</sup> M. Angold, *The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans: Context and Consequences*, London 2016, pp. 84-113. For various contemporary reactions to the conquest, see A. Pertusi (ed.), *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. 1, *Le testimonianze dei contemporanei*, Milano 1976, pp. 5-239; V. Déroche and N. Vatin (eds.), *Constantinople 1453. Des Byzantins aux Ottomans. Textes et documents*, Toulouse 2017, pp. 451-861.

Empire, Venice, Hungary and Burgundy<sup>3</sup>. While Jerusalem nominally remained the ultimate goal, the liberation of Constantinople became the focal point of humanist crusading discourse<sup>4</sup>. Rulers on the Christian-Ottoman frontier, such as the Branković dynasty in Serbia, Skanderbeg in Albania, and the Morean Palaiologoi, were also engaged as potential allies<sup>5</sup>. Paul II's pontificate (1464-1471) saw a decline in crusading activity, although the Curia continued supporting figures like Skanderbeg and the Tocco despots of Epirus<sup>6</sup>. Sixtus IV (1471-1484) renewed anti-Ottoman efforts. By his pontificate, most Balkan states, such as Serbia (1459), Morea (1460), and Bosnia (1463), had fallen to the Ottomans. Nevertheless, the pope continued to maintain contact with remaining rulers like Stephen III (1457-1504) of Moldavia and Ivan Crnojević (1465-1490) of Zeta<sup>7</sup>.

The Ottoman conquest of Otranto in 1480 marked a critical juncture in Sixtus' crusading activities<sup>8</sup>. Direct Ottoman threat to Italy prompted the pope to form an anti-Ottoman coalition and develop new crusading plans. These plans aimed to extend the military campaign beyond Otranto into Southeastern Europe. A crusade was proclaimed through the bull *Cogimur iubente altissimo* (April 8, 1481). While Otranto was liberated in

---

<sup>3</sup> Further on the late medieval crusade movement, see N. Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580*, Oxford, New York, Toronto 1992, pp. 80-150; N. Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505*, Oxford 2012; M. Pellegrini, *Le crociate dopo le crociate*, Bologna 2013.

<sup>4</sup> J. Hankins, *Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II*, in «Dumbarton Oaks Papers», 49 (1995), pp. 113-114; N. Housley, *The Later Crusades*, cit., pp. 80-116; B. Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs*, cit., pp. 497-500. Parallels between Constantinople and Jerusalem were facilitated by the perception of Constantinople as a holy city and New Jerusalem, a discourse developed in Byzantium prior to 1453. Further on Byzantine perspective, see J. Erdeljan, *Chosen Places: Constructing New Jerusalems in Slavia Orthodoxa*, Leiden 2017, pp. 52-62; J. Šaranac Stamenković, *Motiv Carigrada u Pselovim enkomionima pisanim za Romana IV Diogena*, in «Godišnjak Pedagoškog fakulteta u Vranju», 7 (2016), pp. 69-75. For translation of Byzantine ideological models into the Latin anti-Ottoman discourse, see N. Aschenbrenner, *Reframing Empire: Byzantium and the Transformation of European Identity*, PhD Thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 2019.

<sup>5</sup> N. Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, cit., pp. 29-34; J. Gill, *Pope Callistus III and Scanderbeg the Albanian*, in «Orientalia Christiana Periodica», 33 (1967), pp. 534-562; B. Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs. Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle*, Rome 2013, pp. 210-226; E. Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386-1463)*, Sarajevo 2019, pp. 374-384, 404-411.

<sup>6</sup> B. Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs*, cit., pp. 213-215; B. Weber, *Y a-t-il eu des projets de croisade pontificaux au XVe siècle?*, in J. Paviot (ed.), *Les Projets de croisade*, Toulouse 2014, <<http://books.openedition.org/pumi/16344>> [acc. 27.1.2025].

<sup>7</sup> K.M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, vol. 2, Philadelphia 1978, pp. 314-345; L. Pilat and O. Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century*, Leiden 2018, pp. 135-190; N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, vol. 5, Paris 1915, no. II, p. 3. On various aspects of Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, see O.J. Schmitt (ed.), *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans: Interpretations and Research Debates*, Wien 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Further on the conquest of Otranto, see H. Houben, (ed.), *La conquista turca di Otranto (1480) tra storia e mito*, vols. 1-2, Galatina 2008.

September 1481 and Christian-Ottoman conflicts briefly continued in Albania, Kefalonia and south of Danube, larger-scale crusading efforts ultimately failed<sup>9</sup>.

During the crusading preparations, Martin Segon, a Serbian humanist from Novo Brdo and later Bishop of Ulcinj, composed the treatise *Quos terrarum limites*, dedicated to Pope Sixtus IV<sup>10</sup>. Segon's treatise exemplifies a crusading project – a genre within crusader literature that flourished from the late thirteenth to seventeenth century, intended to outline the military, political, economic, and logistical strategies necessary for reclaiming the Holy Land or resisting the Ottomans<sup>11</sup>. Scholars have observed that «to be effective and coherent, they must be based on geographical and cartographic documentation, accumulated since the first centuries of the crusades and refined according to circumstances»<sup>12</sup>. It remains unclear whether *Quos terrarum limites* was written at the pope's direct request, as was often the case for such projects<sup>13</sup>.

Segon's treatise is preserved in two manuscripts housed in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan<sup>14</sup>. The excerpts of the writing were first published in 1915<sup>15</sup>, while a critical edition was prepared in 1981<sup>16</sup>. Earlier researchers dated the treatise to 1479<sup>17</sup>, or the summer of 1480<sup>18</sup>. However, more recent analysis has changed the dating to the

---

<sup>9</sup> K.M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, cit., pp. 343-345, 364-380.

<sup>10</sup> Little is known about Martin Segon. He was born in Novo Brdo, a town in the Serbian Despotate. He studied in Padua from 1474 to 1475. During the pontificate of Sixtus IV (1471-1484), he became involved in crusading activities following the Ottoman conquest of Otranto (1480). It is unknown whether Segon spent part of his life in Rome, which would align with him belonging to the circle of Pope Sixtus' close associates. Segon was appointed as the Bishop of Ulcinj in 1482 and died before October 1485 or in 1486. A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono di Novo Brdo vescovo di Dulcigno*, Roma 1981, pp. 9-28; B. Stojkovski, *Srpska Despotovina u delu Martina Segona – Nekoliko istorijskih opservacija*, in G. Jovanović (ed.), *Srednji vek u srpskoj nauci, istoriji, književnosti i umetnosti*. XI, Despotovac-Beograd 2021, p. 204.

<sup>11</sup> J. Paviot, *Introduction*, in Id. (ed.), *Les Projets de croisade*, Toulouse 2014, <<https://books.openedition.org/pumi/16281>> [acc. 26.1.2025]; A.R. Leopold, *Crusading Proposals in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, in «Studies in Church History», 36 (2000), pp. 216-227.

<sup>12</sup> E. Vagnon, *Géographie et stratégies dans les projets de croisade, XIIIe-XVe siècle*, in J. Paviot (ed.), *Les Projets de croisade*, Toulouse 2014, <<https://books.openedition.org/pumi/16320>> [acc. 27.1.2025].

<sup>13</sup> Some examples are Lampugnino Birago's *Strategicon adversum Turcos* (1454) and Stefano Taleazzi's proposal (1500). See L. Birago, *Lo Strategicon Adversum Turcos*, I.M. Damian (ed.), Roma 2017; B. Feliciangeli, *Le Proposte per la guerra contro i Turchi presentate da S. T. vescovo di Torcello a papa Alessandro VI*, in «Archivio della R. Società romana di storia patria», 40 (1917), pp. 5-64.

<sup>14</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 31-35. One of the two Milanese manuscripts is available in digital form. See Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milano, Ms. I 204 inf., f. 16r-30v, <<https://digitallibrary.unicatt.it/veneranda/0b02da828029c5cf>> [acc. 2.6.2024].

<sup>15</sup> N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, Vol. 5, Paris 1915, no. LXXIV, pp. 57-58. Iorga did not name the author of the text.

<sup>16</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit.

<sup>17</sup> N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits*, cit., p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., p. 157.

period after December 1480 or January 1481<sup>19</sup>. That chronological framework aligns with the context of planning the crusade following the Ottoman conquest of Otranto.

There have been assumptions that Martin Segon was sent on a traveling mission by the Pope to gather intelligence about the Turks. This mission was roughly dated to the year 1485, albeit with limited basis in sources<sup>20</sup>. Scholars have also presumed that Segon traveled to the Christian East on a pilgrimage between 1475 and 1481, which seems more chronologically plausible<sup>21</sup>. Sending travelers on pilgrimages for espionage was not uncommon in the fifteenth-century crusading activities<sup>22</sup>. However, the question of Segon's traveling mission remains open, as firmer source evidence is still lacking.

Martin Segon and his work have thus far been analyzed in the context of his narrative on the Serbian Despotate<sup>23</sup>, as well as within broader topics such as the sources of Mavro Orbini<sup>24</sup>, the history of Serbian monasticism<sup>25</sup> and the writings of a humanist Felix Petančić<sup>26</sup>. Historical-geographical elements of Segon's writings have also been considered within the critical edition of his work<sup>27</sup>. This study aims to classify Segon's proposed crusading routes based on their strategic importance and to investigate his methods of crusade planning. The primary research focus is on Segon's use of geographical knowledge regarding the road networks and terrain of Southeastern Europe, particularly in lesser-studied roads and regions. By doing so, the research seeks to enhance the understanding of how humanists like Segon utilized available geographical data in their crusade planning.

---

<sup>19</sup> D. Salihović, *Definition, Extent, and Administration of the Hungarian Frontier toward the Ottoman Empire in the Reign of King Matthias Corvinus, 1458-1490*, PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, Cambridge 2021, pp. 221-222.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Bojović, *Hrišćanska motivacija u dubrovačkom baroknom epskom pesništvu*, in «Godišnjak Katedre za srpsku književnost sa južnoslovenskim književnostima», 5 (2010), p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., p. 20; B. Stojkovski, *Srpska Despotovina*, cit., p. 204.

<sup>22</sup> For Burgundian examples of Gilbert of Lannoy and Bertrandon de la Broquière, see J. Svátek, *Guillebert de Lannoy, un seigneur bourguignon espion en Terre Sainte*, in M. Nejedlý & J. Svátek (eds.), *La noblesse et la croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Toulouse 2015, <<https://books.openedition.org/pumi/16423>> [acc. 22.6.2024]; J. Svátek, *La vision de la croisade dans le récit de Bertrandon de la Broquière*, in M. Nejedlý & J. Svátek (eds.), *Histoires et mémoires des croisades à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Toulouse 2015, <<https://books.openedition.org/pumi/16537>> [acc. 23.6.2024].

<sup>23</sup> B. Stojkovski, *Srpska Despotovina*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> S. Ćirković, *Izvori Mavra Orbina: addenda et corrigenda*, in «Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu», 43 (2011) 1, pp. 59-60.

<sup>25</sup> A. Krstić, *O prvom pomenu manastira Rakovice*, in «Saopštenja», 53 (2021), pp. 27-38.

<sup>26</sup> L. Špoljarić, *Feliks Petančić*, in D. Thomas & J. Chesworth (eds.), *Christian-Muslim relations: bibliographical history*, Vol. 7, Leiden-Boston 2015, pp. 50-57.

<sup>27</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 157-263. Most of Pertusi's analysis is focused on ubication of toponyms from Segon's text.

## *Crusading Routes of Martin Segon*

In the introductory part of the treatise Segon notes his aim to acquaint «the leaders of the faithful» with the land routes for the campaign against the Turks. While he acknowledged the importance of the maritime warfare, he believed that only a simultaneous attack by land and sea could bring success<sup>28</sup>. Segon's exposition on the routes can be divided into two sections based on the roads' purpose: (1) offensive routes, to be used by the crusaders to attack the Ottomans; and (2) defensive routes, commonly used by the Ottomans for their intrusions into Southeastern Europe.

*Offensive Routes.* Segon's offensive routes consist of subsections on the routes «across Pannonia», given immediately after the Prologue, and routes «across Epirus and Macedonia», given after the exposition on the defensive routes. Within the first subsection, three roads are evaluated. The first is the «Upper Road», which started from Belgrade and moved eastward towards the confluence of the Great Morava and the Danube rivers. Then it crossed the «Maioris Morava» (Great Morava River) and passed through the village of «Branizevus» (medieval Braničevo, now Selo Kostolac), reaching the Resava Monastery. The monastery was an endowment of Serbian Despot Stephen Lazarević (1389-1427), and Segon describes it as a royal mausoleum, indicating its activity. From there, the path descended southward, reaching «Nisum» (Niš) and proceeding southeastward towards «Pyroth» (Pirot) and Sofia. Then, crossing the Rhodope Mountains, it went eastward through Philippopolis, Adrianopolis, the Propontis, Hellespont, and eventually reaching Constantinople<sup>29</sup>.

The described route aligned with the track of the Imperial Road, also known as the Great Road or the Road to Constantinople, which connected Belgrade with Constantinople. This road was used both during the Roman and the medieval period. The Great German Pilgrimage (1064-1065) passed through it<sup>30</sup>, and it was well documented in the crusade literature by authors such as Odo of Deuil, Albert of Aachen, Arnold of Lübeck, and others<sup>31</sup>. The segments of the road were also incorporated into later crusade projects such as *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* (1330/23)<sup>32</sup> and travelogue *Le voyage d'Outremer* (c. 1444-1452/after 1453) of Bertrandon de la

---

<sup>28</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum reverendi domini Domini Martini de Segonis*, in A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 86-87.

<sup>29</sup> Ivi, pp. 88-90.

<sup>30</sup> B.E. Whalen (ed.), *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, Toronto 2011, pp. 175-180, no. 38; M.J. Larnach, *All roads lead to Constantinople: Exploring the Via Militaris in the medieval Balkans, 600-1204*, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney 2016, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> C.R. Beazley, *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum*, in «The American Historical Review», 12 (1907) 4, pp. 841-842.



Broquière, written for the purpose of organizing a crusade by Burgundian Duke Philip the Good (1419-1467)<sup>33</sup>.

The difference between Segon's writing and the aforementioned literature lies in Segon's more detailed description of the route from Belgrade to Niš. Within the description, he mentions toponyms not recorded in earlier accounts, such as fields of Godomin and Brailova, and the Resava Monastery<sup>34</sup>. This suggests the possibility that the author had a contemporary insight into the road either personally or through intermediaries.

The path from Sofia to Constantinople is described relatively briefly. Apart from the Rhodopes Mountains, there were no major obstacles along this road section which might be one of the reasons for Segon's brevity. Another possible reason could be the lack of firsthand insight into the track from Niš to Constantinople. The description of Niš as «formerly a glorious city, as seen by the ruins, [and] now almost reduced to a village» indicates potential direct insight into the city's appearance<sup>35</sup>. This depiction aligns with the numerous destructions of Niš and the surrounding region in the fifteenth century, both by the Ottomans and by Christians<sup>36</sup>.

Following the description of Niš, Segon makes an error. He states that the next place («vicus») called Pirot is «situated in the hills» («situm in montanis»)<sup>37</sup> whereas the town was situated in a plain after the second half of the fourteenth century<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, Segon mentions that beyond Pirot lies the mountain of «Cunovicae» (medieval Kunovica, now Suva Planina), whereas the mountain extends east of Niš, before Pirot<sup>39</sup>. Considering these mistakes, along with the brevity of the road's description from Niš to Constantinople, it could be presumed that the author did not personally traverse the path from Niš eastward, but rather relied on written or oral accounts from other sources. Describing the route from Sofia to Philippopolis, Segon narrates that Godfrey of Bouillon passed through it, as well as the crusaders during the Crusade of Varna (1443-1445)<sup>40</sup>. Continuity with the routes of crusading predecessors seems to hold symbolic significance<sup>41</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup> B. de la Broquière, *Le voyage d'outremer*, C. Schefer (ed.), Paris 1892, pp. 150-231.

<sup>34</sup> The monastery was active until 1574. B. Todić, *Manastir Resava*, Beograd 1995, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., pp. 87-88; A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> J. Kalić, *Niš u srednjem veku*, in «Istorijski časopis», 31 (1984), pp. 31-38; A. Krstić, *Srpski gradovi i trgovi u ugarskoj građi iz vremena „Duge vojne“ (1443-1444)*, in «Istorijski časopis», 65 (2016), pp. 113-146.

<sup>37</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> N. Petrović, *Pirotski grad*, in «Starinar», 5-6 (1954), pp. 295-304; B. de la Broquière, *Le voyage d'outremer*, cit., p. 203.

<sup>39</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., 88. For this segment of the Imperial Road, see O. Zirojević, *Carigradski drum od Beograda do Sofije (1459-1683)*, in «Zbornik Istorijskog muzeja Srbije», 7 (1970), pp. 35-36.

<sup>40</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Mentioning Crusade predecessors was common in late medieval crusade literature. S. Schröder, *To Follow the Deeds of Godfrey of Bouillon: The Remembrance of the Crusades and Crusading Ideas in Late Medieval Travel*

Segon's second suggested route («altera inferior via») descended from Belgrade southwards, towards the town of «Ostrovizae» (Ostrovica on Mount Rudnik), then to the southeast, to the West Morava River and the town of «Crusavae» (Kruševac). The author warns of the frequent flooding of the river, which could render the route impassable at times. The road then continued to «Basilica Alba» (present-day Kuršumlija) and to the «Apenini montes», likely referring to the mountains of Kopaonik or Veliki Jastrebac. At this point, the road forked into two branches: one towards Prokuplje and Niš, and the other southwards through the Kosovo field («latissimum Cosovum») to the town of «Scopiam» (Skopje). Skopje is described as a wealthy city with abundant food and water from the Vardar River. It was outlined as a well-suited place for assembling an army<sup>42</sup>.

From Skopje, the road turned to the east, to the spa of «Beobussi» (Velbužd, present-day Kyustendil), crossing Struma River, further leading across the wooded area around Samokov and the «montis Haemi»<sup>43</sup>. Given that Segon refers to this area as «Costenazo» (present-day Kosteneč), it seems plausible, based on its location, that the toponym «Haemi» refers to the Rila Mountain rather than the Balkan (Haemus) Mountains. The path then continued to the Maritsa River and Philippopolis, where it joined the main route of the Road to Constantinople<sup>44</sup>.

The description of this route provides a significantly more detailed and precise account than the previous one. Narratives about the inhabitants, alongside historical insights, are interspersed among the description of the route segments<sup>45</sup>. Most parts of the route were traversed during the Middle Ages. The path from Belgrade to Mount Rudnik was noted in mid-fifteenth century records as *Via de Rudisca*<sup>46</sup>. The route from Kosovo Field to Skopje was known to travelers from the eleventh to the fourteenth century<sup>47</sup>. In 1498, a German pilgrim and travel writer Arnold von Harff traversed the route from Philippopolis to Kosovo Field<sup>48</sup>. However, aside from the latter work, which postdates Segon's treatise, the route as a whole, along with many of its segments, is absent from medieval geographical, travel, or crusade literature. Thus, it is conceivable that Segon had contemporary insights into most parts of the route. His origin from Novo Brdo likely contributed to his extensive knowledge of the area<sup>49</sup>.

---

*Reports to the Holy Land*, in M. Ressel (ed.), *Crusading Ideas and Fear of the Turks in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Toulouse 2021, pp. 35-70.

<sup>42</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., pp. 91, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> Ivi, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Ivi, pp. 91-93.

<sup>46</sup> G. Škrivanić, *Putevi u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji*, Beograd 1974, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, pp. 105-106.

<sup>48</sup> A. von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff, Knight*, M. Letts (ed.), London 1946, pp. 247-248.

<sup>49</sup> Segon described his hometown as «[...] princeps et metropolis regionis». M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 102. Although Smederevo was the capital of the Serbian Despotate, Novo Brdo was one of the state's most important economic centers. Further on this town, see V. Jovanović, et al., *Novo Brdo*, Beograd 2004.

An alternative route «from Pannonia [...] into Moesia» was given as a separate subsection in the treatise but conceptually complements the preceding exposition. This road extended southward from «Saslon» (Zaslon, present-day Šabac) to the town of «Vaglevi» (Valjevo)<sup>50</sup>. It then traversed a mountain referred to as «Lazci», likely corresponding to the present-day Maljen.<sup>51</sup> Segon emphasized the unfavorable nature of this road segment for the passage of an army. The route continued towards the river of «Maioris Moravae» (Great Morava), where a boat crossing was situated, probably at the location of Parakinov Brod (present-day Paraćin)<sup>52</sup>. Here the alternative route intersected with other primary roads<sup>53</sup>. The segments of this route were utilized in the Roman period, as well as from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. The road was not documented in itineraries and travelogues before Segon's work<sup>54</sup>.

According to Segon, the next route «from Pannonia through Transylvania to Thracia and Pontus» was well known to the local population, numerous merchants, and those who fought against the Turks on the Eastern Christian-Ottoman frontier. Therefore, the author wanted to present a concise report.<sup>55</sup> The road started from Buda and led to the town of «Varadino» (Varadin, present-day Oradea), across the Tisza River («Thibisco»), close to the fortress of «Rheum»<sup>56</sup> and the river of «Crisiam» (present-day Sebes-Körös, or Crișul Repede) to «Colusvar sive Themisuvar» (Timișoara). From there, the road headed east towards the towns of «Sibinum» (Sibiu), «Bresovia» (Brașov) and «Targovistus» (Târgoviște), which was listed as the capital of Wallachia. According to Segon, this road continued southwest towards Vidin and Nicopolis. It was also possible to branch off northeast to the town of «Vasilum» (Vaslui), and then south to the town of «Brilagum sive Brailovum» (Braila). From Braila, the road continued to Pontus, to the Danube Delta and the town of Varna<sup>57</sup>.

The described route mostly corresponds to the medieval road that connected Hungary with the Romanian Principalities and the Black Sea on one side, and Nicopolis and Vidin on the other<sup>58</sup>. A part of the route was probably used in 1444 during the second

---

<sup>50</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 96.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, p. 96; G. Škrivanić, *Putevi*, cit., pp. 111-112.

<sup>52</sup> A. Uzelac, *Paraćin*, in S. Mišić (ed.), *Leksikon gradova i trgova srednjovekovnih srpskih zemalja*, Beograd 2010, pp. 209-210.

<sup>53</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 97.

<sup>54</sup> G. Škrivanić, *Putevi*, cit., pp. 110-114.

<sup>55</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 97.

<sup>56</sup> Rheum is identified with the fortress of Rew. A. Pertusi suggested that it could be identified with the present-day Huedin. A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 217-218. Rheum's second possible location is on the spot of present-day Aleșd. A. J. Vistai, *Tekintő. Erdélyi helynévkönyv*, Vol. 3, Bukarest n.d., p. 829.

<sup>57</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., pp. 97-100.

<sup>58</sup> L. Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders: Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities*, Leiden 2010, pp. 136, 223-224.



phase of the Crusade of Varna<sup>59</sup>. As in the previous cases, Segon's report is interspersed with historical narrative, which is not always precise. For example, he incorrectly locates both Wallachian Voivode Vlad III's night attack on Târgoviște (1462) and the Battle of Vaslui (1475) between Moldavians and the Turks in the town of Vaslui<sup>60</sup>. This was likely done to highlight the notion of Christian victory in the mentioned area.

*Via Egnatia* and *Via Candavia* formed the second group of the offensive routes. Their description appears towards the end of the treatise but it conceptually forms a whole with the previously analyzed roads. Segon himself emphasized in the Epilogue that the attack on the Turks should be undertaken simultaneously via routes from Epirus and Macedonia, and through Pannonia<sup>61</sup>.

*Via Egnatia* was a well-known and busy road, both in antiquity and the Middle Ages<sup>62</sup>. Segon's narrative mostly relied on the road descriptions of the classical authors such as Strabo, Ptolemy, Polybius, and Pliny the Elder<sup>63</sup>, but it also incorporated contemporary insights. According to Segon, the road led «from Dyrrachium to the east» and «across Emathian fields» («per [...] Emathiae campos»).<sup>64</sup> By the latter toponym, the author probably did not mean the ancient Emathia, but the region of Amathia or Aemathia (present-day Mat in central Albania)<sup>65</sup>. The road further led to Lissus, across the «villages of Vrachiae and Dibri»<sup>66</sup>, to the fortress of «Belgradum» (Berat)<sup>67</sup>. In the Middle Ages, in addition to the main route, secondary routes of *Via Egnatia* were often used<sup>68</sup>. Segon's description likely pertains to one of them. It is not specified at which point

---

<sup>59</sup> C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-45*, Hampshire 2013, p. XV, map 5. The entire crusade route is difficult to reconstruct due to the fragmented data in the sources. Ivi, p. 29, note 106.

<sup>60</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 99. For an overview of these events, see F. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, Princeton 1978, pp. 204-206, 340-341.

<sup>61</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 116.

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed study of the road, see M. Fasolo, *La via Egnatia I. Da Apollonia e Dyrrachium ad Herakleia Lynkestidos*, Roma 2003.

<sup>63</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., pp. 108-111.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, pp. 108-109.

<sup>65</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 249-250.

<sup>66</sup> It is presumed that both Vrachia and Dibri are ethnonyms, probably referring to the inhabitants of Debar, near the Ohrid Lake. Ivi, pp. 252-253.

<sup>67</sup> The only known «Belgradum» in the area around the *Via Egnatia* was the present-day town of Berat, located about 60-80 km southwest of the main track of the road. A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., p. 252 does not accept this identification, earlier proposed by P. Matković, *Felix Petančić i njegov opis puteva u Tursku*, in «Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti», 79 (1879), p. 155. Pertusi considered that under «Belgradum» Segon implied Svetigrad (present-day Kodžadžik). However, this identification relies solely on the presumption that Segon intended to follow the main, Roman route of *Via Egnatia*. Segon narrates that the road leaves «on the right side the mountains of Thessaly and on the left the river of Drina [Drim, I.S.]». M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 109. This would be the case if one was to start northeast from Berat towards the main route of *Via Egnatia*.

<sup>68</sup> G. Škrivanić, *Putevi*, cit., p. 77.

the road connected to the main track. With a note that the further road passes «through forests of nearby hills», without mentioning any toponyms, Segon concludes the route in the plain of Macedonia<sup>69</sup>.

The description of *Via Candavia* mostly relies on the aforementioned classical sources. Consequently, in this chapter, more than in others, the ancient place names frequently appear. Relying on Strabo, Segon placed the beginning of the route in ancient Apollonia, on today's southern Albanian Adriatic coast<sup>70</sup>. The route continued towards the Ambracian Gulf, the River Evinos, Corinthian Gulf and Thessaly. It followed the coastline to Attica and near Euboea, turning northwards to Thessaloniki. It then proceeded eastward, along the coastline all the way to the fortress of «Aenum» (Enez) on the Maritsa River. Here the road bifurcated into two branches: one going northeast to Adrianople, and the other eastward, crossing the bridge of «Egine» which was described as «three thousand steps» long, bridging «the swamps and lakes»<sup>71</sup>. The size of the bridge and the mention of the Egine River (present-day Ergene) indicate that Segon referred to the bridge near present-day Kırkgöz, located on the Byzantine and Ottoman road to Constantinople<sup>72</sup>. *Via Candavia* ended in Gallipoli and Constantinople<sup>73</sup>.

*Defensive Routes.* In addition to the crusader offensive, Segon seemingly considered the possibility of Ottoman attacks during the campaigns. For that reason, he offered an overview of the main directions that were commonly used for Ottoman attacks in the Central Balkans in the second half of the fifteenth century. The author provided a general overview of the Ottoman army in a separate treatise titled *Tractatus de provisione Hydronti et de ordine militum Turci et eius origine*, probably composed in the similar context and in the same time as *Quos terrarum limites*<sup>74</sup>. The passages of *Quos terrarum limites* complement the previous treatise, focusing on the use of terrain and road network in Ottoman strategy.

«Varbosania» (Vrhbosna, near present-day Sarajevo) was highlighted as the most suitable spot for Ottoman attacks in Southeastern Europe. From there, easy incursions could be made towards the plains of Knin or Cetina. According to Segon, two routes were previously used by the Ottomans. One led through the towns of «Vuisochi» (Visoko), «Grasav» (Kreševo), and «Prosor» (Prozor) to the towns on the eastern Adriatic coast such as «Clisam» (Klis), «Spalatum» (Split), «Tragurium» (Trogir), and «Sebenicum» (Šibenik).

---

<sup>69</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*. Segon explicitly opposed the identification of Apollonia with Valona (present-day Vlorë). Ivi, pp. 111-116.

<sup>71</sup> Ivi, pp. 109-111.

<sup>72</sup> A. Külzer, *The Byzantine Road system in Eastern Thrace: Some Remarks*, in C. Bakirtzis, N. Zekos, X. Moniaros (eds.), *Byzantine Thrace, Evidence and Remains*, Amsterdam 2011, p. 182.

<sup>73</sup> M. Segonius, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 111.

<sup>74</sup> Ivi, pp. 79-86.

The other direction passed through the fortress «Cluzi» (Ključ) to the town of «Iader» (Zadar). From there, two paths diverged. One led towards the river of «Hun sive Hunam» (Una). The other, described as very challenging, led to Istria, Trieste, and Monfalcone through the region of «Licha» (Lika) and «Alpium Chorbaviae», probably one of the hills in the Corbavia region<sup>75</sup>.

Through the existing routes, Ottomans could undertake deeper incursions towards Sava and Drava Rivers, «Cilium» (Celje), Ljubljana, Carinthia, Styria, Mura River, and Austria<sup>76</sup>. The area of «Metlica» (Metlika) and the nearby «steep mountain challenging for passage» was proposed as suitable for halting the enemy<sup>77</sup>. Although this «mons arduus» is not explicitly named, it can be inferred from the topography of the surrounding area that Segon referred to Žumberak Mountains. He does not state his sources regarding Ottoman incursions. Considering that the raids along the described routes were particularly frequent between 1460 and 1480, it is likely that Segon consulted contemporaries and participants in those events<sup>78</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

In composing crusading route proposals, Martin Segon relied on geographical and historical knowledge from antiquity, combined with the information from earlier crusade literature, as well as contemporary data. The latter category includes potential firsthand insights and field reports from intermediaries, which is particularly evident in the use of contemporary place names and information about routes not found in other sources. Segon's crusade planning methodology emphasized terrain characteristics, strategy rooted in the importance of roads, personal knowledge of the described regions, and a focus on detailed planning of land routes rather than a general attack on both land and sea. This approach added precision to the project. In addition to geographical knowledge, Segon incorporated historical memory into his narrative, emphasizing continuity with previous crusaders through the use of certain similar routes.

Segon's crusade plan showed relatively lasting influence. It was extensively used in Felix Petančić's 1502 crusade project, *De itineribus quibus Turci sint aggrediendi*, which was essentially a complete copy of *Quos terrarum limites*<sup>79</sup>. The Segon and Petančić families, originating from Novo Brdo and possibly related, might have facilitated Petančić's access

---

<sup>75</sup> Ivi, pp. 104-105.

<sup>76</sup> Ivi, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> For details on Ottoman incursions in Inner Austria, Friuli, and Croatia, see O.J. Schmitt and M. Kiprovska, *Ottoman Raiders (Akincis) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy*, in «Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient», 65 (2022) 4, pp. 497-582.

<sup>79</sup> A. Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, cit., pp. 60-66.

to Segon's work<sup>80</sup>. Petančić's plan, part of Hungarian anti-Ottoman efforts, followed Segon's project with minimal modifications<sup>81</sup>. It omitted only two strictly geographical chapters, not essential for crusade planning: one on «Upper Moesia or Serbia» and another on the identification of Valona with ancient Apollonia<sup>82</sup>. Petančić's work, first printed in 1522, reached 22 editions by the eighteenth century, becoming a «Renaissance bestseller»<sup>83</sup>. In this way, Segon's geographical data continued circulating in Europe under another author's name.

---

<sup>80</sup> S. Ćirković, *Izvori Mavra Orbina*, cit., p. 60.

<sup>81</sup> I. Miličić, *Književnost ili povijest?*, p. 156. For the crusading activities between 1500 and 1503, see K. M. Setton, *The Papacy*, cit., pp. 514-542.

<sup>82</sup> F. Petančić, *De itineribus in Turciam libellus*, Ioannes Singrenius, Viena 1522; M. Segonius, "Opusculum", cit., pp. 100-103, 111-116.

<sup>83</sup> I. Miličić, *Književnost ili povijest?*, cit., p. 156.





Map 1. Crusading Routes of Martin Segon. Author: I. Stamenović. Blank relief map adopted from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Balkans\\_relief\\_location\\_map.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Balkans_relief_location_map.jpg). Copyright: Ikonact. License: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International.