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**Southeastern Europe  
in the Middle Ages  
500–1250**

Florin Curta

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## Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250

Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages stood at a strategically important crossroads of trade and crusading routes and fell within the spheres of influence of both the Byzantine Orthodox Church and Latin Christendom. This comprehensive and authoritative survey draws on historical and archaeological sources to illuminate 750 years of the region's history, covering Romania, southern Ukraine, southern Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, and Greece. Exploring the social, political, and economic changes that marked the transition from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, the book addresses important themes such as the rise of medieval states, the conversion to Christianity, the monastic movement inspired by developments in Western Europe and in Byzantium, and the role of material culture (architecture, the arts, and objects of daily life) in the representation of power.

FLORIN CURTA is Associate Professor of Medieval History and Archaeology at the University of Florida. He is the author of *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700 AD* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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SOUTHEASTERN  
EUROPE IN THE  
MIDDLE AGES  
500–1250

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FLORIN CURTA

University of Florida



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To Ana and Lucia



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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, NAMES, DATES, AND WORDS

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The transliteration of personal and place names follows a modified version of the Library of Congress system. This is especially true for Bulgarian words: “Velbāzhd” instead of “Velbuzhd” and “Carevec” instead of “Tsarevets.” As a consequence, and for the sake of uniformity, I have altered the standard transliteration for Ukrainian names, e.g., “Lenkyvcy” instead of “Lenkivtsi.” In general, the geographical terminology closely follows the language in use in any given area. Commonly accepted equivalents are excepted from this rule. For example, “Cenad,” “Durrës,” and “Zadar” are favored over “Csanád,” “Durazzo,” and “Zara,” but “Belgrade,” “Bucharest,” and “Corinth” are preferred to “Beograd,” “București,” and “Korinthos.” It is particularly difficult to be consistent about Greek forms, especially for names of emperors. In such cases, I have followed the established convention and used Constantine Porphyrogenitus and Andronicus, instead of Konstantine Porphyrogenetos and Andronikos. The same is true for several Slavic names. I have preferred Cyril to Kiril, John to Ivan, and Peter to Petar or Petăr. On the other hand, I strove to respect differing spellings, when anglicized versions have been long accepted as such. Thus the first Bulgarian emperor is Symeon, but his namesake, the first saint of Serbia, is Simeon.

Since all dates are from the medieval period, “AD” is not used unless necessary in the context. Where imprecise, years are given in the form “935/6” to indicate one year or the other, but as “1203 or 1208,” when the options are separated by a longer span.

Certain terms are sometimes used in a technical sense, which is specific to the space and period considered in this book, not in their widely accepted meaning. Such is the case of the word “duke” to refer to a military commander or warlord. For example, the Croatian dukes of Bribir were local governors of that fortress and of the surrounding hinterland, but most importantly, local warlords. They should not be viewed as a part of a feudal hierarchy in the same sense as, for example, the Duke of Burgundy might be viewed. In much the same way, a Byzantine duke was a commander of troops, not a title referring to a position in the social and political hierarchy. The duke of Valona, for example, was a military governor appointed by the emperor. “Qagan” is the highest “imperial” title in medieval nomadic societies, while “khan” (qan) is a lesser title. I use “theme” in the sense of a (Byzantine) province, although the first attestation of the word in Byzantine sources seems to point to army units. “Roman” and “Byzantine” are used for distinct periods of time in the history of the Eastern Roman Empire, which has been arbitrarily divided by modern historians into an earlier and a later period, respectively, separated from each other by the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–642).

## CHRONOLOGY

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- 499 Bulgar raid in the Balkans
- 502 Bulgar raid in Thrace and Illyricum
- 535 Emperor Justinian issued Novel 11 establishing the archbishopric of Iustiniana Prima; Gepid–Hunnic alliance for raids into the Balkan provinces of the Empire
- 536 Creation of the *quaestura exercitus* combining Balkan provinces with rich provinces in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean region
- 539 Bulgar raid devastated the northern and northeastern regions of the Balkans
- 545 First Slavene raid of the northern Balkans
- 547 Gepids defeated by the Lombard and Byzantine troops
- 551/2 Gepids defeated by the Lombards
- 558 Cutrigur invasion of the Balkans that reached the Long Walls near Constantinople; Avar envoys arrived in Constantinople
- 568 Annihilation of the Gepid kingdom; the beginning of the Avar conquest of the Carpathian Basin
- 578 Avars raided the Slavene settlements in Walachia
- 581–4 Four-year Slavene invasion of the Balkans
- 582 Avars conquered Sirmium
- 583 Migration of three groups of steppe people (Tarniakh, Kotzager, and Zabender) into the Avar qaganate

- 586 Scлавenes and other barbarians besieged Thessalonica; Roman troops defeated the Avars near Adrianople
- 592 Avars conquered a number of cities on the Black Sea coast and defeated the Roman troops in the hinterland of Constantinople
- 595 Roman troops crossed the Danube against the Avars
- 596 Roman troops under Priscus defeated an Avar army in the southern region of the qaganate and killed the qagan's four sons
- 599–600 Byzantine troops devastated the southern regions of the Avar qaganate
- 601 Avar general Apsich attacked the Roman troops in the Iron Gates sector of the Danube frontier
- 602 Avar general Apsich attacked the Antes in the Lower Danube region; revolt of the Roman troops on the Danube frontier that led to the demise of Maurice and the rise to power of Phocas
- 610 Slavene raid into Istria
- 615/6 Scлавenes besieged Thessalonica
- 617/8 Avars besieged Thessalonica
- 623 Avars ambushed Emperor Heraclius near the Long Walls of Constantinople
- 623/4 Samo led the rebellion of the Wends against the Avars
- 626 Avars besieged Constantinople
- 630 Rise of Great Bulgaria under Kubrat
- 631/2 Civil war within the Avar qaganate
- c. 660 Khazars defeated the Bulgars; the collapse of Great Bulgaria
- c. 670 Asparukh led the Bulgar migration to Oglos north of the Danube
- 677 Rynchines, Sagudates, and Drugubites besieged Thessalonica
- 678 Avar envoys brought gifts to Constantinople; Byzantine campaign against the *Sklaviniai* of southern Macedonia
- 680 Sermesianoi under Kouber moved out of the Avar qaganate and into the environs of Thessalonica

- 680/1 Bulgars under Asparukh defeated the Byzantine troops sent against them; the creation of the Bulgar polity in the Balkans
- 688/9 Byzantine troops defeated by Bulgars near Philippopolis; Justinian II settled the “Scythians” around the gorges of the river Struma
- 695 Leontius appointed first military governor of Hellas
- 705 Tervel, the ruler of the Bulgars, formed an alliance with Emperor Justinian II; Tervel proclaimed Caesar
- 716 Peace treaty between Byzantium and Bulgaria established the boundary in Thrace and regulated trade relations
- 723 St. Willibald stopped in Monemvasia en route to the Holy Land
- 725 Rebellion of the theme of Hellas against Emperor Leo III
- 740 Duke Boruth ruled over Carantania
- 745/6 Plague from Sicily spread to Monemvasia and the theme of Hellas; Duke Boruth died and his son, Cacatius, was recognized Prince of the Carantanians
- 752 Chietmar ruled over Carantania
- 755 Emperor Constantine V began fortifying towns in Thrace; Syrians and Armenians settled on the Byzantine frontier with Bulgaria
- 759 Constantine V campaigned in Macedonia; Byzantine attack on Bulgaria on both land and sea
- 761/2 Coup d'état in Bulgaria brought Telec to power
- 763 Byzantine invasion of Bulgaria; battle at Anchialos
- 764 Telec assassinated; Sivin sued for peace, but was overthrown; Paganos came in person before the emperor to sue for peace
- 765 Byzantine attack on Bulgaria; the Byzantine troops burned villages in northern Bulgaria and aristocratic courts on the river Ticha
- 766 Emperor Constantine V moved artisans from Hellas to Constantinople
- 769 Chietmar died; Carantanian rebellion against the Bavarians

- 772 Bavarian intervention in Carantania brought Waltunc to power
- 774 Byzantine campaign mounted against Bulgaria; Telerig sued for peace, but invaded Macedonia and killed the Byzantine agents in Bulgaria; Istria occupied by Frankish troops
- 783 Byzantine troops under Staurakios campaigned successfully in Peloponnesus
- 784 Empress Irene toured Thrace as far west as Philippopolis; Beroe rebuilt and renamed Irenopolis
- 788 Carantania within the Frankish kingdom
- 799 Akameros, the *archon* of the Slavs of Velzetia, supported Emperor Constantine V's sons against Empress Irene
- c. 800 Creation of the theme of Macedonia
- c. 802 Krum came to power in Bulgaria
- 805 Slavs of Peloponnesus attacked Patras
- 809 Krum attacked Serdica
- 810 A Byzantine fleet reestablished the Byzantine control over Dalmatia and Venice
- 811 Byzantine campaign against Bulgaria; Emperor Nicephorus I killed in a battle in a pass across the Stara Planina range of mountains
- 813 Krum was offered peace; the Bulgars conquered Mesembria and attacked Constantinople; battle of Versinikia
- 814 Krum died; Dukum and Ditzevg ruled Bulgaria; the beginning of the persecution of Christians in Bulgaria
- 816 Byzantine attack on Mesembria
- 818 Envoys from the Timociani and from Borna, the "duke of Dalmatia and Liburnia", appeared at the court of Louis the Pious in Herstal
- 819 Liudewit attacked Borna
- 820 Frankish armies devastated Liudewit's territory
- 821 Liudewit fled from Sisak to the Serbs; Omurtag intervened in the civil war between Emperor Michael III and Thomas the Slav

- 822 Two Bulgar embassies to Emperor Louis the Pious demanded the rectification of the Bulgar–Frankish frontier
- 826/7 Birth of Constantine–Cyril; Bulgar expedition against the Slavic clients of the Franks in the Lower Drava region
- 829 A Bulgar fleet of boats attacked Frankish estates on the Drava River
- 831 Omurtag died; Malamir became ruler of Bulgaria
- 832 Bulgar envoys brought an offer of peace to Emperor Louis the Pious; Prince Enravotas killed at the order of Malamir because of his Christian beliefs
- 836 Malamir died; Persian became ruler of Bulgaria
- 836/7 First Magyar raid in the Lower Danube region; Slavic rebellion against the Byzantine rule in the environs of Thessalonica
- 839 A Venetian fleet destroyed the encampments of the pirates on the Neretva
- 842/3 Constantine–Cyril arrived in Constantinople
- 846 Godescalc of Orbais arrived at the court of Trpimir, the duke of the Croats
- 852 First charter mention of Trpimir, the duke of the Croats; Persian died and Boris became ruler of Bulgaria
- 860 Constantine–Cyril and Methodius sent as Byzantine envoys to the Khazar court in Itil; Mutimir of Serbia defeated the troops sent by Boris of Bulgaria and captured his son Vladimir
- 863 Constantine–Cyril and Methodius’ mission to Moravia
- 864 Byzantine troops landed at Mesembria; Boris accepted baptism with Emperor Michael III as his sponsor
- 865 Arab pirates besieged Dubrovnik; Bulgar embassies to Rome and Louis the German; Bishop Formosus of Porto arrived in Bulgaria
- 865/6 Rebellion of the Bulgar aristocrats against Boris’s conversion to Christianity
- 867 Formosus returned to Rome; Grimuald, the bishop of Bomarzo, arrived in Bulgaria

- 869 Constantine-Cyril died in Rome; a papal embassy crossed Bulgaria on its way to Constantinople
- c. 870 Creation of the theme of Dalmatia; the first archbishop of Bulgaria appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople; the expulsion of Grimuald from Bulgaria
- 871 Construction of the Church of St. John the Baptist in Athens completed
- 873 Domagoj mentioned in a letter from Pope John VIII
- 873/4 Construction of the Church of the Holy Virgin at Skripou completed
- c. 875 Construction of the Great Basilica in Pliska completed
- 876 Domagoj died; Sedesclav became Duke of the Croats
- 876/7 Construction of the Church of St. Gregory the Theologian in Thebes completed
- 879 Branimir became Duke of the Croats
- 880 St. Elias the Younger arrived in Sparta; birth of St. John of Rila
- 881/2 On his way to Constantinople from Moravia, St. Methodius met a “king of the Hungarians”
- 885 The expulsion of Methodius’ disciples from Moravia following his death; Clement, Naum, and Angelarius arrived in Bulgaria; Prince Oleg of Kiev attacked the Tivercians on the Dniester River
- 888 St. Elias the Younger and his disciple Daniel came to Patras; Symeon returned to Bulgaria from Constantinople
- 889 Boris abdicated in favor of his son Vladimir
- 890 Muncimir became Duke of the Croats; Vladimir launched a new persecution of Christians in an attempt to restore paganism
- 892 King Arnulf of Carinthia asked Vladimir to stop the sales of salt to the Moravians
- 893 The council of Pliska declared Vladimir deposed in favor of his brother Symeon; Clement of Ohrid appointed Bishop of Velika; Naum became Bishop of Ohrid

- 895 Construction of the church in Uzdolje near Knin completed
- 896 Battle of Bulgarophygon; beaten by the Pechenegs, the Magyars moved into the Carpathian Basin
- 897 Peace established between Byzantium and Bulgaria
- c. 900 Khrabr composed *On the Letters*
- 901 Magyar raid into Carantania; Arab pirates sacked Demetrias
- 904 Arab pirates sacked Thessalonica
- 905 Naum, Bishop of Ohrid, died
- 913 Symeon received a crown from Patriarch Nicholas of Constantinople
- 916 St. Clement of Ochrid died
- 917 The Pechenegs' attack on Bulgaria failed; Peter, son of Gojnik, attacked Symeon together with the Magyars; battle of Anchialos
- c. 920 Tomislav became King of the "province of the Croats and of the Dalmatian regions"
- 921 Milings and Ezerites rebelled against the Byzantine rule in Peloponnesus; Zacharias returned to Serbia with Bulgarian support
- 924 Symeon met Emperor Romanus Lecapenus in Constantinople
- 925 First synod of Split
- 927 Papal legates arrived in Croatia to mediate a peace between Croats and Bulgarians; the archbishop of Bulgaria elevated to the status of patriarch; Symeon died; Peter became Emperor of the Bulgars
- 928 Second synod of Split
- 930/1 Foundation of the Monastery of Rila
- 931 Časlav became ruler of Serbia and began to bring back the Serbian refugees from neighboring countries
- c. 940 Emperor Peter of Bulgaria wrote to Patriarch Theophylact of Constantinople asking for advice about the outbreak of heresy in Bulgaria

- 941 Testament of St. John of Rila for his monastery
- 943 Magyar raid into Thrace
- 946 St. John of Rila died
- 948 Magyar chieftain Bulcsu baptized in Constantinople with Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus as sponsor
- 952 Duchy of Istria incorporated into Bavaria
- 953 First mention of the march of Carniola
- 958 Athanasios, the founder of the Great Lavra, arrived on Mount Athos
- 966 Bulgarian envoys arrived at Constantinople to collect the annual tribute; Emperor Nicephorus II attacked Bulgaria
- 968 Rus' troops of Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev blockaded Dristra and took Pereiaslavec
- 969 Peter died; Boris II became Emperor of the Bulgars
- c. 970 St. Nikon the Metanoiete arrived in Sparta; the decree of Emperor John Tzimiskes for the monastic communities on Mount Athos (Tragos)
- 971 Byzantine campaign against Prince Sviatoslav and his Rus' troops in Bulgaria
- 972 Emperor Otto I granted Isola to the Venetian doge Peter Candiano IV
- 973 Emperor Otto II donated land near Kranj to the archbishop of Freising
- 976 Emperor Otto II separated Carinthia from Bavaria, with Istria as a march under Carinthian rule; Queen Helena of Croatia died; the revolt of the Kometopouloi in Macedonia; Samuel sacked Larisa and removed the relics of St. Achilleus
- 980 First mention of a count of Ptuj
- 985 Samuel took Larisa
- 990 Patriarch of Bulgaria moved to Ohrid
- 997 Samuel proclaimed Emperor of the Bulgarians; Bulgarians attacked Ulcinj and devastated the entire Dalmatian coast from Duklja to Zadar; Samuel transferred the relics of St. Tryphon from Kotor to Ohrid

- 1001 Emperor Basil II conquered Serdica and reoccupied Preslav, Pliska, and Pereiaslavec
- 1002 Byzantine troops took Vidin; Samuel attacked Adrianople
- 1003 Samuel defeated near Skopje
- 1004 Bled granted to the bishop of Brixen by Emperor Henry II
- 1009 Foundation of the bishopric of Alba Iulia
- 1014 Battle of Kleidion; Samuel died; Gabriel Radoslav proclaimed emperor as Romanus Symeon
- 1015 Romanus Symeon murdered by John Vladislav
- 1017 Byzantine embassy to the Pechenegs north of the Danube River
- 1018 John Vladislav died; the beginning of the Byzantine occupation of Bulgaria
- c. 1020 Deacon Maio completed the Beneventan manuscript of the Zagreb Psalter; mosaic decoration of the Church of St. Luke at Steiris completed
- 1023 Foundation of the Abbey of St. Benedict on the island of Lokrum
- 1027 Constantine Diogenes defeated the Pechenegs
- 1028 Frescoes of the Church of Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessalonica completed
- 1030 St. Gerald became bishop of Cenad
- 1032 Pecheneg raid into the Balkans
- 1034 Piraeus sacked by Harald Hardrada
- 1036 Dobronas, the governor of Zadar and Split, traveled to Constantinople; Pecheneg raid into the Balkans that destroyed Dinogetia
- 1037 First Greek-speaking archbishop appointed in Ohrid
- 1039 Ljutovid mentioned as ruler of Zahumlje
- 1040 Revolt of Peter Delian in Belgrade; Bulgarians occupied Demetrias
- 1043 Stefan Vojislav, ruler of Duklja, died; revolt of George Maniakes in Dyrrachion

- 1044 Foundation of the Abbey of St. Peter in Osor
- 1045 Kegen crossed the Danube with his Pechenegs
- 1046 Tyrach's Pechenegs invaded the Balkans
- 1048 Confraternity of the icon of the Holy Virgin in Thebes
- c. 1050 Construction of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Ohrid completed
- 1053 Michael proclaimed King of Duklja; Byzantine peace with the Pechenegs of the northern Balkans
- 1059 Hungarian and Pecheneg marauders defeated near Serdica
- 1060 Provincial council in Split
- 1064 Foundation of the Abbey of St. John the Baptist in Trogir; Oghuz invasion of the Balkans
- 1066 Peter Krešimir IV proclaimed "King of Croatia and Dalmatia"; rebellion of the Vlachs in Larisa
- 1068 Pecheneg raid into Transylvania; battle of Chiraleş
- 1069 Foundation of the Abbey of St. Peter In the Village near Split
- 1070 Arab pirates sacked Demetrias
- 1071 Hungarians attacked and occupied Belgrade and sacked Niš
- 1072 Rebellion of Tatous, Sesthlay, and Satzas in Paradounavon
- 1073 Rebellion of George Vojteh in Skopje
- 1074 Amico of Giovinazzo invaded Dalmatia; coronation of King Zvonimir of Croatia
- 1075 Council of Split banned the use of Slavic in the liturgy
- 1076 Carniola and Istria granted to the patriarch of Aquileia by Emperor Henry IV
- 1077 Michael of Duklja obtained the banner of St. Peter from Rome in recognition for his royal title; Pecheneg raid into Thrace
- 1078 Revolt of Nicephorus Basilakes in Dyrrachion; revolt of the Paulicians in Philippopolis; first Cuman raid into the Balkans

- 1080 Foundation of the Monastery of the Mother of God of Mercy in Veljusa
- 1081 Robert Guiscard attacked Dyrrachion; Byzantine troops under Emperor Alexios I Comnenus defeated at Dyrrachion by the Normans
- 1082 Bohemond of Taranto occupied Pelagonia, Trikkala, and Kastoria and laid siege to Larisa; foundation of the Monastery of the Mother of God Petritzonitissa in Bachkovo
- 1083 Byzantine troops recovered Kastoria; Paulician revolt in Philippopolis
- 1087 Pecheneg–Cuman raid into the Balkans; Alexios I Comnenus attacked Dristra
- 1088 Battle of Markellai
- 1089 Anti-pope Clement III raised the bishop of Bar to the status of Archbishop of Dioclea
- 1091 Cuman raid into Transylvania; battle at Levunion
- 1092 Dukljan raid into Byzantine territories; Cuman raid into Thrace
- 1096 Passage through the Balkans of the pilgrims led by Walter the Penniless and Peter the Hermit
- 1097 Peter, the last Croatian ruler, defeated in the Kapela Mountains; passage through the Balkans of the crusading army led by Godfrey of Bouillon
- 1098 Passage through Croatia of the crusaders led by Raymond de St. Gilles
- 1100 Crusaders from Lombardy plundered the environs of Philippopolis
- 1105 Hungarian invasion of Dalmatia
- 1108 Treaty of Devol
- 1111 Mercurius first mentioned as “Prince of Transylvania”
- 1114 Cumans attacked Vidin; the Byzantine troops crossed the Danube to fight the Cumans in their own territory
- 1115 Venetian authority over the islands of the Kvarner Bay restored
- 1116 Venetian control established over Zadar

- 1122 Cuman invasion of Thrace; Emperor John II Comnenus attacked the Serbs
- c. 1131 Korčula Codex completed
- 1135 Foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of Stična
- 1137 First Hungarian expedition into Bosnia
- 1147 Crusaders under Emperor Conrad III camped outside Philippopolis; the passage through the Balkans of the crusading army led by King Louis VII of France; Normans sacked Corinth and Thebes
- 1148 Cuman invasion of Thrace; Emperor Manuel I Comnenus attacked the Cumans north of the Danube
- 1149 Emperor Manuel I Comnenus attacked Uroš II of Serbia
- 1150 Battle on the Tara River; Byzantine troops devastated Frangochorion
- 1153 Andronicus Comnenus appointed duke of Niš and Braničevo
- 1154 Manuel I restored to power Uroš II; the bishopric of Zadar elevated to the status of archbishopric
- 1159 Ivan Rostislavich of Galicia crossed Moldavia together with his Cuman allies; first mention of a Venetian count of Zadar
- 1160 Foundation of the Carthusian Abbey of Žiže
- 1163 Stephen IV ruler of the southern region of Hungary
- 1164 Andronicus Comnenus captured by the Vlachs in Moldavia; Stephen IV established support in Sirmium
- 1165 Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela visited Thebes and Thessalonica; Stephen III of Hungary reestablished Hungarian control over Sirmium and Semlin, both retaken shortly thereafter by the Byzantines; Hungarian control reestablished over Zadar; Desa, the Serbian *zhupan*, tried in front of the emperor; Tihomir, Sracimir, Miroslav, and Nemanja appointed co-rulers of Serbia
- 1166 Byzantine attack on Transylvania; Nemanja attacked Kotor and Tihomir's domain in Serbia; construction of the cathedral Church of St. Tryphon in Kotor completed
- 1167 Treaty between Nicholas Kačić, duke of Omiš, and Kotor

- 1168 Foundation of the Benedictine Abbey at Sâniob
- 1169 Templars granted the Vrana Abbey near Zadar
- 1172 Manuel I attacked Nemanja, who was taken prisoner and paraded in Constantinople
- 1175 Raynerius, Bishop of Split, traveled to Constantinople; frescoes in the Church of St. Chrysogonus in Zadar completed
- 1176 First mention of the *voevode* of Transylvania
- 1180 King Béla III of Hungary occupied Sirmium and Frangochorion; Hungarian troops sacked Serdica and removed the relics of St. John of Rila
- 1181 Nemanja attacked Kotor and imposed his rule on the Dalmatian coast
- 1182 First mention of a Hungarian count of Dalmatia
- 1185 Normans sacked Thessalonica; revolt of the Vlach brothers Peter and Asen
- 1187 Byzantine army defeated near Beroe by the Cumans
- 1189 Passage of the crusaders under Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa through the Balkans; Nemanja and Peter established contacts with Emperor Frederick promising military assistance
- 1190 Emperor Isaac II Angelos attacked Nemanja
- 1191 First mention of the “Church of the Saxons” in Transylvania
- 1192 Conflict between Peter and Asen
- 1195 Asen took Serdica and transferred the relics of St. John of Rila to Tărnovo
- 1196 Nemanja abdicated in favor of his son Stefan; Asen and Peter died
- 1197 Ioannitsa (Kaloyan) became ruler of the Vlach and Bulgarian rebels in the northern Balkans
- 1198 Nemanja took the monastic vows and moved to Mount Athos
- 1199 Vlachs and Cumans raided Thrace; Nemanja-Simeon died

- 1200 Byzantine campaign against Ivanko
- 1202 Crusaders took Zara (Zadar); conflict between Nemanja's sons Vukan and Stefan
- 1203 Stefan restored to power in Raška with the assistance of Ioannitsa's troops
- 1204 Crusaders took Constantinople; Renier de Trith received Philippopolis as fief; Boniface of Montferrat began the conquest of Greece; Ioannitsa crowned king in Târnovo by the papal legate
- 1205 William de Champlitte and Geoffrey of Villehardouin began the conquest of Peloponnesus; battle at Koundoura; William de Champlitte proclaimed Prince of Achaia; battle of Adrianople; Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople died in Bulgarian captivity
- 1207 Boniface of Montferrat killed by Cuman marauders; Ioannitsa murdered by his men under the walls of Thessalonica
- 1208 Foundation of the Carthusian Abbey at Jurklošter; Geoffrey of Villehardouin proclaimed Prince of Achaia; Bulgarian troops under Boril defeated by Emperor Henry of Constantinople
- 1209 Parliament in Ravennika confirmed the Latin lordships in Morea; Demetrius crowned King of Thessalonica
- 1212 Church synod in Târnovo for the condemnation of the Bogomil heresy; a rebellion in Vidin against Boril caused the intervention of Hungarian troops from Transylvania; Teutonic Knights brought to Transylvania
- 1213 Michael Dukas of Epirus took Dyrrachion
- 1214 Michael Dukas died; Theodore Dukas became ruler of Epirus
- 1217 Templars granted the castle of Šibenik; Theodore Dukas of Epirus defeated and killed Peter of Courtenay; Stefan crowned first king of Serbia by the papal legate
- 1218 John Asen returned to Bulgaria and overthrew Boril
- 1219 Foundation of the autonomous archbishopric of Serbia
- 1221 Church synod in Žiĉa summoned by Archbishop Sava

- 1224 Theodore Dukas took Thessalonica
- 1225 Peter of Hum elected Prince of Split; Teutonic Knights expelled from Transylvania
- 1227 Theodore Dukas crowned emperor; the Cuman chieftain Boricius accepted baptism in Transylvania
- 1228 Creation of the bishopric of Cumania
- 1230 Battle at Klokotnica
- 1231 Hungarian troops occupy Niš and Braničevo
- 1232 Creation of the Hungarian march of Severin
- 1234 Construction of the monastery church at Mileševa completed; foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of Kostanjevica
- 1236 John Asen and John Vatatzes besieged Constantinople
- 1237 Theodore Dukas released from Bulgarian captivity; John Asen attacked the Nicaean troops in Tzurullon; a plague outbreak in Târnovo forced John Asen to make peace with John Vatatzes; Archbishop Sava of Serbia died
- 1238 John Asen allowed the crusaders recruited by Baldwin II to pass through the Bulgarian lands on their way to Constantinople
- 1241 John Asen died; Mongol invasion of Hungary
- 1242 Serbia and Bulgaria devastated by the Mongol troops of Kadan
- 1243 Uroš I crowned king of Serbia
- 1244 Matthew Ninoslav, *ban* of Bosnia, was elected Prince of Split; privilege of King Andrew II of Hungary in favor of the Saxon “guests” of Transylvania (*Andreanum*)
- 1246 Nicaean troops occupy Thessalonica; Michael II Dukas seized Ohrid
- 1247 John Plano Carpini appointed Archbishop of Bar; charter of King Béla IV of Hungary in favor of the Hospitallers mentioned Vlach polities between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube
- 1249 Conquest of Peloponnesus completed after Monemvasia was taken

## ABBREVIATIONS

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<i>AAASH</i>	<i>Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
<i>AB</i>	<i>Archaeologia Bulgarica</i>
<i>ABSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>AEMA</i>	<i>Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi</i>
<i>AMS</i>	<i>Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BHR</i>	<i>Bulgarian Historical Review</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Balkan Studies</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale Xe–XIIe Siècles</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Etudes Balkaniques</i>
<i>EBPB</i>	<i>Etudes Byzantines et Post-Byzantines</i>
<i>GSU</i>	<i>Godishnik na Sofiiskiiia Universitet "Kliment Okhridski." Istoricheski Fakultet</i>
<i>H&amp;M</i>	<i>Histoire et Mesure</i>
<i>IAI</i>	<i>Izvestiia na Arkheologicheskiiia Institut</i>
<i>IIBI</i>	<i>Izvestiia na Instituta za Balgarska Istoriia</i>
<i>INMV</i>	<i>Izvestiia na Narodniia Muzei Varna</i>
<i>JOB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i>
<i>MGH Epist.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae</i>

MGH Poet.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae Latini Medii Aevi
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores
MGH SS rer. Germ.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina
REB	<i>Revue des Etudes Byzantines</i>
RES	<i>Revue des Etudes Slaves</i>
RESEE	<i>Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes</i>
RRH	<i>Revue Roumaine d'Histoire</i>
RVM	<i>Rad Vojvodanskih Muzeja</i>
SCIVA	<i>Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie</i>
SEER	<i>Slavonic and East European Review</i>
SG	<i>Studi Gregoriani</i>
SL	<i>Starobălgarska Literatura</i>
SP	<i>Starohrvatska Prosvjeta</i>
T&M	<i>Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines</i>
VV	<i>Vizantiiskii Vremennik</i>
WMBHL	<i>Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen des bosnisch-herzegowinischen Landesmuseums</i>
ZFF	<i>Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta. Beogradski Univerzitet</i>
ZLU	<i>Zbornik za Likovne Umetnosti</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta</i>

## INTRODUCTION

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This book is an attempt to explore the fundamental dimensions of the medieval history of Southeastern Europe from *c.* 500 to 1250, broadly the period between the last century of Roman power in the Balkans and the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe. The primary aim of the book is to provide an overview of the historical developments that characterized a region of Europe about which there is generally little knowledge outside a small number of scholars with specific, often narrowly defined research interests. In the last few decades, the study of medieval societies in Eastern Europe has moved in new and significant directions. The successful use of interdisciplinary approaches, the growth of medieval archaeology, the revived interest in the history of the Church, the development of gender studies, and the encouragement to engage with comparative history have all informed research into the medieval past of Eastern Europe. The following chapters will make extensive use of the results of these new lines of research, in the process delineating a general conclusion that is worth stating plainly from the very beginning: medieval Southeastern Europe was in many ways similar to other parts of Europe, to a degree far greater than most scholars have so far been willing to admit. The secondary purpose of this book is therefore to relate to each other developments in the southeastern region of the European continent and to consider their implications for our understanding of the Middle Ages. The book is therefore concerned with moving back from the modern constructs and possible misconceptions deriving from attempts to draw lines of contrast against which either

“Western” or national medieval histories were defined. During the first half of the twentieth century, many historians in those countries in Eastern Europe that had either emerged or been enlarged at the end of World War I reinforced, rather than challenged, such misconceptions. A Polish historian, Kazimierz Tymieniecki (1887–1968), first addressed the problem of the medieval history of Eastern Europe at the Sixth International Congress of Historical Sciences, held in Oslo in 1928. By Eastern Europe, Tymieniecki meant the regions east of the Elbe, namely Poland, to the exclusion of both Scandinavia and the Balkans. Scandinavia was still perceived as part of the “West,” but the Balkans were not granted the status of a fully European region.

#### WHAT IS SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE?

While the idea of “Eastern Europe” originated in the intellectual milieu of the Enlightenment, Southeastern Europe as a geographical expression has a much more recent history. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the preferred name for that region of the continent was “European Turkey,” which included Greece (even after that country gained its independence in 1829), as well as the Romanian Principalities, Walachia and Moldavia, technically not part of the Ottoman Empire. Several other phrases have subsequently been coined, ranging from the “Greek–Slavic world” to the “Balkans,” a name that proved remarkably resistant, perhaps because of its derogatory meaning introduced shortly before and during World War I. On the eve of the Congress of Berlin (1878), a new term appeared, “Southeastern Europe,” which seems to have been initially used mainly by scholars interested in comparative linguistics, and especially in common elements to be discovered in such languages as Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Greek. In other words, the use of the phrase Southeastern Europe is linked to some of the earliest attempts at identifying what is now known as the Balkan linguistic unity, the world’s most famous linguistic example of language contact.<sup>1</sup> The phrase was quickly adopted in Austria, especially by statesmen and

<sup>1</sup> A. Drace–Francis, “Zur Geschichte des Südosteuropakonzepts bis 1914,” in *Europa und die Grenzen im Kopf*, ed. by K. Kaser, D. Gramshammer-Hohl, and R. Pichler (Klagenfurt and Celovec: Wieser, 2003), p. 277. For the Balkan linguistic unity, see now I. Sawicka, *The Balkan Sprachbund in the Light of Phonetic Features* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Energeia, 1997); J. Lindstedt, “Linguistic Balkanization: contact-induced change by mutual reinforcement,” in *Languages in Contact*, ed. by D. Gilbers, J. A. Nerbonne, and T. de Graaf (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 231–246.

diplomats, to refer to the region between the Carpathian Mountains, the Dniester River, and the Aegean, Black, and Adriatic Seas, a region of vital importance for the expansion of the Austrian–Hungarian Empire around 1900. Thirty years later, the phrase was similarly used to express Nazi political aspirations in that region.<sup>2</sup>

The first course of Southeast European history was offered at the University of Vienna in 1912 and was taught by a Romanian, Ion Nistor (1876–1962), later to become a renowned historian of the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Following that appointment, another Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940), founded in Bucharest an Institute of Southeast European Studies (1914), and later a periodical, *Revue historique du sud-est européen* (1922), dedicated to the study of the Balkan region, which hitherto both historians and politicians had excluded from Europe. Iorga’s goal was to remove the stain of the derogatory meaning attached to the phrase “Balkans,” while promoting a certain foreign policy at a time of growing Romanian influence in the region.<sup>4</sup> To Iorga, the history of the Southeast European countries revealed a number of similarities strikingly reminiscent of the Balkan linguistic unity.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> M. Todorova, “Historische Vermächtnisse als Analysekategorie. Der Fall Südosteuropas,” in *Europa und die Grenzen im Kopf*, ed. by Karl Kaser, Dagmar Gramshammer-Hohl, and Robert Pichler (Klagenfurt and Celovec: Wieser, 2003), pp. 227–252. According to Todorova, the Nazi use has completely discredited the phrase, to which one should now prefer the “Balkans,” an idea for which see her *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> A. Pippidi, “Pour l’histoire du premier Institut des études sud-est européennes en Roumanie (I),” *RESEE*, vol. 16 (1978), p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> To be sure, in 1914 Iorga did not shy away from employing the phrase “Balkans,” which he employed, however, in a positive sense, otherwise covered by the supposedly more neutral “Southeastern Europe.” See N. Iorga, *Histoire des états balkaniques à l’époque moderne* (Bucharest: C. Sfetea, 1914) and *L’origine des idées d’indépendance balkanique* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1927). Moreover, to contemporary Yugoslav scholars, Iorga appeared as one of the most important historians of the Balkans. See M. Budimir and P. Skok, “But et signification des études balkaniques,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques*, vol. 1 (1934), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> N. Iorga, *Cinq conférences sur le Sud-Est de l’Europe* (Bucharest: P. Suru, 1924) and *Le caractère commun des institutions du Sud-Est de l’Europe* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929). For Iorga’s attitude towards Romania’s intervention in the Second Balkan War, see his *Notes d’un historien relatives aux événements des Balcons* (Bucharest: Charles Göbl, 1913). See V. Căndea, “Nicolas Iorga, historien de l’Europe du Sud-Est,” in *Nicolas Iorga, l’homme et l’œuvre, à l’occasion du centième anniversaire de sa naissance*, ed. by D. M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Editions de l’Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 1971), pp. 157–249; Pippidi, “Pour l’histoire du premier Institut,” pp. 147–156.

The study of Southeastern Europe survived both the dramas unfolding during World War II in that region and its subsequent political transformation. Institutes and associations for the study of Southeast European history now exist in many capital cities in the region, which have one after the other hosted the International Congress of Southeast European Studies. In addition, there is a journal entirely dedicated to that same topic, the *Revue des études sud-est européennes* published by the institute Iorga had founded in Bucharest. Despite the fact that few historians writing in English adopted this terminology, to which they seem to prefer the more popular “Balkans,”<sup>6</sup> the phrase “Southeastern Europe” is also used in the historiography of the region in Iorga’s sense.<sup>7</sup> However, there is no consensus as to whether or not the phrase is more than a historiographical construct. What seems to be well understood, however, is that the “Balkans” do not include Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and the southern regions of present-day Ukraine. By excluding Romania from the Balkans, Iorga may have reacted to the political divisions of the pre-World War I period and to their underlying assumption of Ottoman cultural and political traditions. In doing so, his goal may have been to hint at a much deeper past, namely the period during which the region was supposedly unified under Byzantine, not Ottoman, rule. But during the Middle Ages that part of Europe had no sharp boundaries, especially to the north.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, any serious analysis of the medieval history of the region cannot leave out those territories in the Carpathian Basin, as well as north of the Danube River and of the Black Sea, which have never been incorporated into the Byzantine Empire. In that respect, Iorga was right: the Balkans are a region defined by mountains, both etymologically and geographically. Geographically, the scope of inquiry in this book is limited to the area traditionally viewed as the Balkan Peninsula and comprised between the Adriatic and Ionian Seas to the west, and the Aegean and Black Seas to the south and to the east.

<sup>6</sup> See J. V. A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983); and *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> See P. F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> For the problematic northern border of Southeastern Europe, see F. Valjavec, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1963), pp. 37–38.

However, the northern limit, the most difficult one to establish, was moved beyond the Danube River and the Carpathian Mountains, to include Transylvania, as well as, occasionally, the eastern and southern regions of the Carpathian Basin now divided between Hungary and Serbia. The reasons for this rather arbitrary definition of the geography of Southeastern Europe are essentially historical and will hopefully become clear in the following chapters. It must be stressed that there is nothing unique in this approach to the geography of the region, although only archaeologists of the Bronze Age and political analysts of late twentieth-century developments customarily treat the area in this way. Similarly, to the northeast, the limit is pushed into the steppe corridor stretching from the Lower Danube to the Dnieper River, to include the forest-steppe belt across the modern states of Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. Without the steppe lands to the northeast, an area from which the Bulgar, Pecheneg, Cuman, and Mongol invasions originated, very little could be understood in terms of both military and cultural history of medieval Southeastern Europe.

#### SOURCES FOR THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Much of what we know about the history of Southeastern Europe comes from sources written outside the region and only later by authors in that region. This is certainly the case of the Byzantine, Rus', or Hungarian chronicles, the Byzantine saint lives, the acts of church councils, the letters or the panegyrics written by and for Byzantine authors, all of which have been the traditional sources employed to write the medieval history of Southeastern Europe. By contrast, only recently has the evidence of archaeology, numismatics, and art history been incorporated into the traditional narrative.

Writing and literacy were introduced to the region from outside as part of the "cultural kit" accompanying the conversion to Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Chanceries began to function in the tenth century in Croatia

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, P. Štih, "Začetki in razmah listinskega pismenstva na ozemlju Slovenije do konca 11. stoletja [The beginnings and the spread of writing in the Slovene lands until the eleventh century]," *Zgodovinski Časopis*, vol. 55 (2003), pp. 279–290.

and Bulgaria and in the eleventh century in Hungary.<sup>10</sup> However, no charter survives from early medieval Bulgaria, although leaden seals provide clear evidence of large-scale use of writing for both official documents and private correspondence. The practice of sealing documents was of course adopted from Byzantium, but then quickly adapted to the needs of the Bulgarian society. Several seals are known from Symeon and Peter, in addition to seals of archbishops and bishops of Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup> After the Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria in the late tenth century, the volume of written documents in use by the Byzantine administration increased considerably, as illustrated by the extraordinary find in Preslav of an archive of more than 350 seals of various military and fiscal officials of Byzantine Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> Since seals bear the names and, sometimes, rank and office of their owners, in the absence of any other written sources, they can provide valuable information, for example for the reconstruction of the administrative and military hierarchy of the Byzantine provinces in seventh- to ninth-century Greece or in late tenth- to eleventh-century Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> Although not dated, seals have numerous ornamental and epigraphic attributes that lend themselves to a stylistic analysis, which in turn can be used to infer the date of specific specimens on the basis of comparison with known seals attached to dated documents. Identical seals have been found at great distance from each other, a testimony to the relations their owners have established by correspondence with various other individuals, but besides imperial seals, very few other

<sup>10</sup> G. Györfy, "Die Anfänge der ungarischen Kanzlei im 11. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 30 (1984), pp. 80–96; E. Fügedi, "Ai confini tra l'uso orale e l'uso scritto. La pratica della cancellaria in Ungheria," in *Spiritualità e lettere nella cultura italiana e ungherese del basso Medioevo*, ed. by S. Graccioto and C. Vasoli (Florence: Olschki, 1995), pp. 377–387. There are to date no studies of the Croatian, Bulgarian, and Serbian chanceries during the early Middle Ages.

<sup>11</sup> I. Iordanov, *Pечатите на preslavskite vladeteli* [The Seals of the Preslav Rulers] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1993); and *Korpus na pechatite na srednovekovna Bălgariia* [The Corpus of Medieval Seals from Bulgaria] (Sofia: Agató, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> I. Iordanov, *Pечатите от strategiiata v Preslav (971–1088)* [The Seals of the Preslav Military Province, 971–1088] (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Okhridski," 1993); and *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria. Part I* (Sofia: Agató, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> F. Curta, "L'administration byzantine dans les Balkans pendant la 'grande brèche': le témoignage des sceaux," *Bizantinistica* 6 (2004), pp. 155–189; A. Madgearu, "The military organization of Paradunavon," *Byzantinoslavica*, vol. 60 (1999), pp. 421–446.

seals have been found outside the area of their owner's competence or power.<sup>14</sup>

Archives existed in several monasteries that often kept copies of charters issued on their behalf by rulers. The largest archives are those of the monasteries on Mount Athos, which preserve many chryso-bulls (imperial charters with golden seals) granting land property or privileges to the monks.<sup>15</sup> While only seventy-five documents can be dated before the early eleventh century, the archives at Mount Athos are particularly useful for the later period, especially for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the monks enjoyed the generosity not only of the emperors in Constantinople, but also of Serbian and Bulgarian rulers. Outside the archives of Mount Athos, the survival of official documents pertaining to the economic history of medieval Southeastern Europe has been only accidental, as in the case of the land-tax register known as the Cadaster of Thebes.<sup>16</sup> In the absence of such documents, *typika* (monastic rules) or the testaments of founders of Byzantine and Bulgarian monasteries often provide a wealth of information for social and economic history.<sup>17</sup> Several Benedictine monasteries in Croatia have extensive cartularies, containing copies of charters issued by Croatian and Hungarian rulers. A good example is the cartulary of the Abbey of St. Peter In the

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent discussion of seal circulation, see C. Morriſson and J.-C. Cheynet, "Lieux de trouvaille et circulation des sceaux," *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, vol. 2 (1990), pp. 105–136.

<sup>15</sup> *Actes de Lavra*, vol. I (897–1178), ed. by G. Rouillard and P. Collomp (Paris: Pierre Lethielleux, 1937); vol. II (1204–1328), ed. by Paul Lemerle (Paris: Pierre Lethielleux, 1977); *Actes d'Iviron*, vol. I (to 1050), ed. by J. Lefort (Paris: Pierre Lethielleux, 1985); vol. II (1050–1204), ed. by J. Lefort, N. Oikonomides, H. Papachryssanthou, V. Kravari, and H. Métréveli (Paris: Pierre Lethielleux, 1990); vol. III (1204–1328), ed. by J. Lefort, N. Oikonomides, and D. Papachryssanthou (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1994); *Actes du Prôtaton*, ed. by D. Papachryssanthou (Paris: Pierre Lethielleux, 1975); *Actes de Vátopédi*, ed. by J. Bompaire, J. Lefort, V. Kravari, and C. Giros (Paris: CNRS Editions and Pierre Lethielleux, 2001); *Actes de Hilandar*, ed. by M. Živojinović, V. Kravari, and C. Giros (Paris: CNRS Editions and Pierre Lethielleux, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> N. Svoronos, "Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe et XIIe siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, vol. 83 (1959), pp. 1–166. See also L. A. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 171–172.

<sup>17</sup> A great number of foundation documents in English translation have been published in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents. A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founder's Typika and Testaments*, ed. by J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000).

Village, a monastery founded by a wealthy citizen of Split in the late eleventh century. Known as the Sumpetar Cartulary, this is in fact a collection of documents pertaining to donations to the monastery, either of land or of moveable property (such as slaves). It also contains a list of books in the abbey's library, many of which had been donated by the founder. Besides such valuable information for economic and social history, cartularies sometimes contain unexpected documents of cultural history.<sup>18</sup> For example, the Cartulary of the Convent of St. Mary in Zadar (Croatia) contains documents from a long period between 1066 and 1236, including a church hymn known as *Sanctus*, one of the earliest pieces of polyphonic singing in Eastern Europe.

A relatively large number of notarial documents survive in the Venetian archives that pertain to the history of the cities on the Adriatic coast and in Istria, which were under Venetian rule beginning with the eleventh century. However, the number of those documents that could be dated before c. 1250 is rather small.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in Hungary most chapters and abbeys served as notarial institutions, known as “places of authentication,” but most contracts or authentic copies written by clerics date from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.<sup>20</sup> However, even before that date, and as early as 1200, chapters provided valuable service for laymen in Hungary, who often took oaths in front of the clerics or accepted ordeals to be administered by them. Although no records of such transactions have been preserved for the chapters of Arad, Alba Iulia, or Bač, the minutes of 389 ordeals held at the chapter of Oradea between 1208 and 1235 form the so-called Oradea Register, one of the most remarkable documents of social history in medieval Transylvania.<sup>21</sup> The quantity of surviving charters is only a fraction of what the royal chanceries of

<sup>18</sup> *The Cartulary of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter of Gumay (Croatia), 1080–1187*, ed. by E. Pivčević (Bristol: D. Arthur and Sons, 1984). See also V. Novak, *Zadarski kartular Samostana Svete Marije* [The Cartulary of the Convent of St. Mary in Zadar] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti, 1959).

<sup>19</sup> R. Härtel, “Notariat und Romanisierung. Das Urkundenwesen in Venetien und Istrien im Rahmen der politischen und der Kulturgeschichte (11.–13. Jh.),” in *Notariado público i documento privado de los orígenes al siglo XIV. Actas de VII Congreso Internacional de Diplomática, Valencia 1986*, vol. II (Valencia: Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Ciència, 1989), pp. 879–926.

<sup>20</sup> I. Borsa, “Die Beurkundstätigkeit der glaubwürdigen Orte in Ungarn,” in *Forschungen über Siebenbürgen und seine Nachbarn. Festschrift für Attila T. Szabó und Zsigmond Jakó*, ed. by K. Benda, T. Bogyay, and H. Glassl (Munich: Trofenik, 1988), pp. 143–147. Notaries appear in Hungary only after 1300.

<sup>21</sup> *Regestrum varadinense examinum ferri candentis ordine chronologico digestum*, ed. by J. Karácsonyi and S. Borovszky (Budapest: V. Hornyánszky, 1903). The *Regestrum* has

Croatia and Hungary produced between the tenth and the thirteenth century.<sup>22</sup> In Hungary, for example, while about 10,000 documents survive from the 1200s, there are over 300,000 for the entire period between 1300 and 1526. This has been estimated as about one or two percent of what had once been issued, for most archives were destroyed during the Ottoman conquest of 1526, as well as during World War II. Even greater must have been the destruction of royal and monastic archives in medieval Bulgaria, for which no charters survive that could be dated before c. 1200.

The deeds of the ruler were occasionally celebrated in ninth-century Bulgaria in inscriptions carved in stone, using the Greek alphabet and the Greek language. Much can be gleaned from the titles used in such inscriptions referring to ranks of the aristocracy that are otherwise unknown from contemporary written sources.<sup>23</sup> Foundation or funerary inscriptions in Greek are also known from Byzantine Thrace.<sup>24</sup> During the fifth to seventh centuries, Greek was used along with Latin for funerary inscriptions found in Bulgaria and southeastern Romania, while all known ninth- to eleventh-century

been reprinted in *Documente privind istoria României. C. Transilvania* [Documents regarding the history of Romania. Series C: Transylvania], ed. by M. Roller, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare România, 1951), pp. 37–147. See also I. Zajtay, “Le registre de Varad: un monument juridique du début du XIIIe siècle,” *Revue historique du droit français et étranger*, vol. 32 (1954), 527–562.

<sup>22</sup> *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, ed. by T. Smičiklas, vols. 1–iv (Zagreb: Ex officina Societatis Typograficae, 1904); *Diplomata Hungariae antiquissima, accedunt epistolae et acta ad historiam Hungariae pertinentia*, vol. 1, ed. by G. Győrffy (Budapest: Academia Scientiarum Hungarica, 1992). See also A. Marinović, “Le caractère juridique de la charte (diplôme) royale pendant l’époque de la dynastie nationale croate (vers 839 à 1102 a.),” *Folia diplomatica*, vol. 2 (1976), 7–16.

<sup>23</sup> V. Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963); and *Pärvoägarski nadpisi*, 2nd ed. (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1992). See also V. Beshevliev, “Les inscriptions protobulgares et leur portée culturelle et historique,” *Byzantinoslavica*, vol. 32 (1971), pp. 35–51 (reprinted in *Bulgarisch-byzantinische Aufsätze. Collected Essays of Véselin Beshevliev* [London: Variorum Reprints, 1978], Essay IX).

<sup>24</sup> C. Asdracha, “Inscriptions byzantines de la Thrace orientale et de l’île d’Imbros (XIIe–XVe siècles). Présentation et commentaire historique,” *Arkhaiologikon Deltion*, vol. 43 (1988), pp. 219–291; “Inscriptions byzantines de la Thrace orientale (IXe–XIe siècles). Présentation et commentaire historique,” *Arkhaiologikon Deltion*, vols. 44–46 (1989–1991), pp. 239–334; and “Inscriptions chrétiennes et protobyzantines de la Thrace orientale et de l’île d’Imbros (IIIe–VIIe siècles),” *Arkhaiologikon Deltion*, vols. 49–50 (1994–1995), pp. 279–356.

inscriptions found in Croatia are in Latin.<sup>25</sup> Beginning with the tenth century, Old Church Slavonic was also used for inscriptions written in either Glagolitic or Cyrillic script. While Cyrillic inscriptions have been found mainly within the borders of medieval Bulgaria, Glagolitic also appears in inscriptions found on islands of the Kvarner Bay in the northern Adriatic region or in Istria.<sup>26</sup> Finally, a few inscriptions in so-called East European (or Turkic) runes have been found on bone artifacts from Avar burials, the most famous of which is the Szarvas awl.<sup>27</sup> But as a rule, inscriptions often pose difficult problems of reading (particularly runic inscriptions)<sup>28</sup> or interpretation

<sup>25</sup> V. Beshevliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964). For Romania, see E. Popescu, "Die spätgriechische Inschriften aus Klein-Skythien," *Dacia*, vol. 11 (1967), pp. 163–176; and *Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [Fourth- to Thirteenth-Century Greek and Latin Inscriptions from Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1976). For Latin inscriptions in medieval Croatia, see V. Delonga, *Inscriptions des souverains croates du IXe au XIe siècle* (Split: Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> I. Goshev, *Starobălgarski glagolicheski i kirilski nadpisi ot IX i X v.* [Old Bulgarian Glagolitic and Cyrillic Inscriptions of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1961); R. Mihaljčić, L. Steindorff, and M. Hellmann, *Namentragende Steininschriften in Jugoslawien vom Ende des 7. bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982); K. Popkonstantinov and O. Kronsteiner, *Starobălgarski nadpisi. Altbulgarische Inschriften*, 2 vols. (Salzburg: Institut für Slawistik der Universität Salzburg, 1994 and 1997). Glagolitic inscriptions: K. Popkonstantinov and Al. Medynceva, "Za glagolicheskite nadpisi ot X v. [On the Glagolitic inscriptions of the tenth century]," *Arkheologija*, vol. 24 (1982), pp. 27–37; B. Fučić, "Glagoljski natpisi [Glagolitic inscriptions]," *Slovo*, vol. 38 (1988), pp. 63–73. Cyrillic inscriptions: Ph. Malingoudis, *Die mittelalterlichen kyrillischen Inschriften der Hämus-Halbinsel. I. Die bulgarischen Inschriften* (Thessaloniki: Association hellénique d'études slaves, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> A. Róna-Tas, "Problems of the east European scripts with special regard to the newly found inscription of Szarvas," in *Popoli delle steppe: Unni, Avari, Ungari. Settimane di studio, Spoleto 23–29 aprile 1987*, vol. 11 (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1988), pp. 483–511; I. Juhász, "A new Avar period runic inscription from Szarvas," in *Cultural and Landscape Changes in South-East Hungary I. Reports on the Gyomaendrőd Project*, ed. by S. Bökönyi (Budapest: Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1992), pp. 379–382. Many of the short inscriptions on bone artifacts found in Avar burials turned out to be Soghdian. See J. Harmatta, "Sogdian inscriptions on Avar objects," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 48 (1995), pp. 61–65.

<sup>28</sup> See E. Tryjarski, "Alte und neue Probleme der runenartigen Inschriften Europas. Ein Versuch der Entzifferung der Texte aus Murfatlar und Pliska," in *Runen, Tamgas und Graffiti aus Asien und Osteuropa*, ed. by K. Röhrborn and W. Veenker (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985), pp. 53–80.

(especially inscriptions in Bulgar with Greek letters).<sup>29</sup> They are also notoriously difficult to date, unless there is a precise date given in the text. For example, an inscription mentioning Duke Branimir of the Croats gives the date as *anno Domini* 888, a quite novel practice for that time, as AD dates are not known before 800.<sup>30</sup> In an inscription on a column in the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Târnovo, the Bulgarian emperor John Asen II speaks of himself as ruling over much of the Balkans, leaving only Constantinople (characteristically called “Car’grad,” the imperial city) to the “Franks” (i.e., the Latins). The inscription was written in Old Church Slavonic with Cyrillic script and dates from 1230, the *anno Domini* equivalent to *anno mundi* 6738 given in the text of the inscription.<sup>31</sup> Even when the inscription does not mention a specific date, an approximate one can occasionally be inferred from its content. The Baška Tablet, a Glagolitic inscription written in a Slavic idiom closer to present-day Serbo-Croatian than to Old Church Slavonic, was initially part of an altar screen in the church of the Benedictine Abbey of Jurandvor on the island of Krk. The text of the inscription contains no date, but refers to a donation of a certain king named Zvonimir, who is otherwise known to have ruled between 1075 and 1089.<sup>32</sup> Recently a great deal of attention has been paid to graffiti on church and rampart walls in early medieval Bulgaria. Many are short texts (of the type “Peter wrote this” or “I was here”), others are votive (“Lord, help thy servant Peter”) or commemorative inscriptions (“On that date, at that time, Peter visited this place” or “Peter died in the year of the Lord so-and-so”). There are also insults, prayers, epigrams, and even obscenities. Such inscriptions give us little chronological detail, but have been turned into a gold mine of detail for social and cultural history.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> K. Popkonstantinov and V. Popkonstantinova, “Die Inschriften des Felsklosters Murfatlar,” in *Paleobalkanistika i starobălgaristika. Părvi esenni nacionalni cheteniia “Profesor Ivan Gălăbov,”* ed. by E. Dogramadzhieva and K. Popkonstantinov (Veliko Târnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii,” 1995), pp. 111–134.

<sup>30</sup> M. Matijević-Sokol, “Latin inscriptions,” in *Croatia in the Early Middle Ages. A Cultural Survey*, ed. by I. Supičić (London: Philip Wilson Publishers and Zagreb: AGM, 1999), pp. 242–243.

<sup>31</sup> Popkonstantinov and Kronsteiner, *Starobălgarski nadpisi*, vol. II, pp. 166–168.

<sup>32</sup> B. Fučić, “The Croatian Glagolitic and Cyrillic epigraphs,” in *Croatia in the Early Middle Ages. A Cultural Survey*, ed. by I. Supičić (London: Philip Wilson Publishers and Zagreb: AGM, 1999), pp. 266–268.

<sup>33</sup> R. Kostova, “Lust and piety: graffiti from Bulgarian medieval monasteries,” in *Disziplinierung im Alltag des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Internationaler Kongreß,*

Another type of evidence that can go some way towards offering a glimpse into private life is letters. Byzantine letter writing was however a formalized subgenre of rhetoric shaped by a very elaborate style, which was designed to impose upon the addressee the impression of a highly educated sender. It is literary convention, rather than direct reflection of social and political events, that mattered most to authors of letters written in the “classical style” of ancient epistolography. This is true not only for letters whose recipients happened to be the rulers of Bulgaria, such as those written by the patriarchs of Constantinople, Photios (858–867 and 877–886) and Nicholas Mystikos (901–907 and 912–925), but also for letters written for less significant, albeit often highly educated, addressees, such as those of Theophylact Hephaios, the late eleventh-century archbishop of Ohrid.<sup>34</sup> For example, when the archbishop complained in a letter about the “bumpkin lifestyle” in Ohrid, this is in fact a quote from Euripides, before being an accurate description of the conditions in Byzantine Bulgaria. Highlighting the literary value of these letters, recent studies have thus shown that despite his apparent hostility to anything Bulgarian, it is a mistake to take the archbishop’s letters as evidence for the Byzantine administration’s systematic effort at eradicating Old Church Slavonic culture and Bulgarian ethnic identity.<sup>35</sup> The risk of running into such misinterpretations of the evidence is apparently smaller with papal letters sent either to the Croatian rulers of the ninth to eleventh centuries or to Ioannitsa, the early thirteenth-century ruler of Bulgaria.<sup>36</sup> However, even in such cases, caution is recommended when attempting to reconstruct the thoughts or intentions of the rulers from the papal

*Krems an der Donau, 8. bis 11. Oktober 1996*, ed. by G. Jaritz (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), pp. 233–254. For figural graffiti, see D. Ovcharov, *Bălgarski srednovekovni risunki-grafiti* [Drawing Graffiti from Medieval Bulgaria] (Sofia: Septemvri, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> D. S. White and J. R. Berrigan, *The Patriarch and the Prince. The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982); *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters*, ed. by R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1973); M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot and Brookfield: Variorum, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> M. Mullett, “Byzantium and the Slavs: the views of Theophylact of Ochrid,” *GSU*, vol. 87 (1994), pp. 55–70. For the reading of Theophylact’s letters as evidence of anti-Bulgarian policies, see Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 220.

<sup>36</sup> M. Brković, “Il sovrano Branimir e la Croazia nelle lettere del papa Giovanni VIII,” *Croatia christiana periodica*, vol. 27 (1991), pp. 171–172; B. Primov, “The papacy, the fourth crusade and Bulgaria,” *Byzantinobulgaria*, vol. 1 (1962), pp. 183–211.

letters. At least in the case of Ioannitsa, we know that (some, at least, of) his letters were written in “Bulgarian” (Old Church Slavonic) and that they were translated in Rome into Greek and then into Latin. Much of the debate surrounding Ioannitsa’s imperial title may therefore be based on misunderstandings caused by mistranslation or by the impossibility to render in one language the nuances available in another.

Native narrative sources are conspicuously absent for the early medieval history of Southeastern Europe. There is no Southeast European equivalent to Paul the Deacon or Bede. When they first appear, such sources are typically the work of men of the church, with a selective coverage and with an understanding of the events in the past that was deeply influenced by the interpretative framework of the Bible. The first known historical narratives are those of Bulgaria, but they appear only in the mid-eleventh century in the context of growing millennialist fears. Apocrypha written in Byzantine Bulgaria in Old Church Slavonic, but preserved only in much later Russian redactions, propagated not only an eschatological view of the future, but also a bright vision of the Bulgarian past, portraying the reigns of Boris, Symeon, and Peter as the glorious days long gone. One of them, entitled the *Vision of Isaiah* and dated to the 1070s, contains a brief historical narrative, now known as the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle*.<sup>37</sup> While the explosion of apocrypha extolling the Bulgarian past may well have been related to the political events of the

<sup>37</sup> I. Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi i legendi* (Sofia: Pridvorna Pечатnica, 1925). A short passage from the *Vision* has been translated into English by T. Butler, ed. *Monumenta Bulgarica. A Bilingual Anthology of Bulgarian Texts from the 9th to the 19th Centuries* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1996), pp. 173–184. See also V. Beshevliev, “Nachaloto na bālgarskata dārzhava spored Apokrifen letopis ot XI vek [The beginnings of Bulgaria according to the eleventh-century Apocryphal Chronicle],” in *Srednovekovna Bālgariia i Chernomorieto. Sbornik dokladi ot nauchnata konferenciia, Varna 1980*, ed. by A. Kuzev (Varna: Knigoizdatelstvo “Georgi Bakalov,” 1982), pp. 39–45; T. Mollov, “Bālgarski apokrifen letopis: khronotop i struktura na teksta [The Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle: the chronotope and the structure of the text],” in *Studia protobulgarica et mediaevalia europensia. V chest na profesor Veselin Beshevliev*, ed. by V. Giuzelev, V. Tāpkova-Zaimova, K. Popkonstantinov, et al. (Veliko Tārnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii,” 1993), pp. 289–294; M. Kaimakamova, “Istoriografskata stoinost na Bālgarski apokrifen letopis [The historiographic value of the Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle],” in *Civitas divino-humana. V chest na profesor Georgi Bakalov*, ed. by C. Stepanov and V. Vachkova (Sofia: Centār za izsledvaniia na bālgarite “Tangra” TanNakRa IK, 2004), pp. 417–441.

mid-eleventh century that brought the issues of imperial power and Bulgarian past glory to the forefront, the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle* can hardly be used as a reliable source for the early history of Bulgaria. The chronicler viewed “tsar Ispar,” perhaps the same as Asparukh, as a biblical hero, ruling his people for no less than 172 years. Ispar was remembered as a builder of ditches and cities, primarily of Pliska, which, given the results of the recent research on that site, is a blatant anachronism. Moreover, he is also said to have expelled “Ethiopians” from Bulgaria and to have slaughtered great numbers of Muslims, before dying in battle against them “near the Danube.”<sup>38</sup> Whereas the error of attributing to Ispar the works of much later rulers of Bulgaria may be excused as a matter of faulty chronology, Ispar’s wars with the Muslims are a purely fictional detail, the invention of the chronicler.

Inconsistencies, obscurities, and fictional characters have also damaged the reputation among historians of the late twelfth-century *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, a work in fact written by Gregory, the archbishop of Bar.<sup>39</sup> Like the unknown author of the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle*, Archbishop Gregory was not interested in separating fact from fiction, but in writing a report of Dalmatian history that could support the claims to superiority of his see over that of Split, no doubt in the context of the relevation of Bar to the status of archbishopric and of the Dukljan–papal contacts of the late 1100s. Long dismissed as a collection of fact and fiction, especially in relation to the coverage of earlier periods, the *Chronicle* is nevertheless an invaluable, if not the only available, source for more recent periods, such as, for example, the mid-eleventh-century history of southern Dalmatia. Much like the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle* in late eleventh-century Bulgaria, the heterogeneous collection of historical and literary materials to be found in the *Chronicle of the Priest*

<sup>38</sup> Ivanov, *Bogomilski knigi*, p. 282. The account of Ispar in the *Chronicle* has been treated at face value by I. Duichev, “Edno legendarno svedenie za Asparukha [A legendary source on Asparukh],” *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju Dalmatinsku*, vols. 56–59 (1954–1957), 181–189.

<sup>39</sup> V. Mošin, *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina. Latinski tekst sa hrvatskim prijevodom i “Hrvatska hronika”* [The *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*. The Latin Text with Croatian Translation and the “Croatian Chronicle”] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1950). Fundamental for the understanding of the *Chronicle* as a medieval literary work is now E. Peričić, *Slavorum Regnum Grgura Barskog. Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina* [Archbishop Gregory of Bar’s *Slavorum Regnum*. The *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*] (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1991).

of *Dioclea* may be seen as a different kind of historical source, namely as a remarkable gauge for the level of literacy and for the political implications of literary production in twelfth-century Dalmatia.

Serious questions of trustworthiness have also been raised in connection with the earliest surviving chronicle of Hungary, the *Deeds of the Hungarians* (*Gesta Hungarorum*), written by a former notary of a king named Béla, who called himself “Master P.”<sup>40</sup> Although most certainly a man of the church, the author’s goal with this work was to defend not the interests of the church or, even less, that of the “legitimate” dynasty of Arpadian kings, but those of the old aristocratic families of Hungary, the descendants of the pagan warriors who had conquered the Carpathian Basin around AD 900. Much ink has been spilled over the true identity of the author of the *Gesta* and of the king for whom he served as notary (no less than three kings named Béla ruled in Hungary between the late eleventh and the late twelfth century). However, much more controversial is the degree to which the account of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin to be found in the *Gesta* can be trusted as a historical source written two to three centuries after the events narrated. Far from being a simple matter of source analysis, the debate has been complicated by the fact that the *Gesta* mentions both *Romani* and *Blachi* (Vlachs or Romanians) as inhabitants of certain regions of the Carpathian Basin before the arrival of the Hungarians, an issue that has received enormous importance in the context of modern territorial claims to Transylvania.<sup>41</sup> Nationalistic concerns aside, “Master P.” has very little of significance to say about Transylvania proper, which he seems

<sup>40</sup> Die “*Gesta Hungarorum*” des anonymen Notars. *Die älteste Darstellung der ungarischen Geschichte*, ed. by G. Silagi (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1991). See also G. Györfy, “Abfassungszeit, Autorschaft und Glaubwürdigkeit der *Gesta Hungarorum* des anonymen Notars,” *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 20 (1972), pp. 209–229; L. Veszprémy, “Historical past and political present in the Latin chronicles of Hungary (12th–13th centuries),” in *The Medieval Chronicle. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle. Driebergen/Utrecht 13–16 July 1996*, ed. by E. Kooper (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 260–268. For the identity of “Master P.,” see now K. Szovák, “Wer war der anonyme Notar? Zur Bestimmung des Verfassers der *Gesta Hungarorum*,” *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, vol. 19 (1991), pp. 1–17.

<sup>41</sup> Hungarian historians have the tendency to exaggerate the literary character of the *Gesta* to the point of treating its entire account of early Hungarian history as fictional. See G. Györfy, “Formation d’états au IXe siècle suivant les *Gesta Hungarorum* du Notaire Anonyme,” *Nouvelles études d’histoire*, vol. 1 (1965), pp. 25–155; G. Kristó, “Anonymus a 9. századi Kárpát-medence bolgár fejedelméről [*Gesta*

to have known better from hearsay than from first-hand knowledge. There is no mention of Alba Iulia, which at the time of the *Gesta* was the most important power center of the province, the residence of the local governor (*voevode*) and of the bishop of Transylvania. If, as seems probable, “Master P.” had been a notary of king Béla III (1172–1196), it is surprising to note that the *Gesta*, which is otherwise replete with allusions to twelfth-century events or situations, has nothing to say about the “guest” settlers brought from Western Europe by Béla’s father, King Géza II.

The *Deeds of the Hungarians* exists only in one preserved manuscript, an indication that the work was not very popular during either its author’s lifetime or the subsequent centuries. It may in fact have had but a limited circulation among some members of the thirteenth-century Hungarian aristocracy. A similarly limited circulation may be inferred for a work very different in terms of both genre and quality, namely the *Historia Salonitana* (The History of Salona) by Thomas of Spalato, which survives in only four medieval manuscripts, all of Dalmatian provenance.<sup>42</sup> A notary of the commune of Spalato (Split), canon of the cathedral, archdeacon, and candidate for the position of archbishop of that city, Thomas wanted to write a *gesta episcoporum*, that is a chronicle of the deeds of the archbishops of Salona and Split. In the process, however, he managed to produce a work of civic history much influenced by contemporary Italian models. As a consequence, one of the most salient features of his work is a strong feeling of urban patriotism, as well as the admiration that he

*Hungarorum* on the Bulgar princes of the ninth-century Carpathian Basin],” *Acta Historica*, vol. 113 (2001), pp. 11–19. By contrast, Romanian historians spared no efforts to emphasize the supposedly accurate, first-hand knowledge that “Master P.” had of the late ninth- or early tenth-century developments in Transylvania, see S. Brezeanu, “*Romani și Blachi* la Anonymus. Istorie și ideologie politică [Romani and Blachi in the *Gesta Hungarorum*. History and political ideology],” *Revista de istorie*, vol. 34 (1981), pp. 1313–1340; Al. Madgearu, *Românii în opera Notarului Anonim* [Romanians in the *Gesta Hungarorum*] (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane – Fundația Culturală Română, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> J. R. Sweeney, “Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols: a thirteenth-century Dalmatian view of Mongol customs,” *Florilegium: Carleton University Annual Papers on Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, vol. 4 (1982), pp. 161 and 176 n. 18. The edition of Thomas of Spalato’s work most frequently cited by scholars is that published by F. Rački in Zagreb in 1894. Two other editions are now available, one by the Russian scholar O. A. Akimova (Moscow: Indrik, 1997), the other by the Croatian scholars O. Peric, M. Matijević, and R. Katičić (Split: Književni krug, 2003).

had for the republican government of the city, which in turn seems to have been the source for Thomas's rather dismissive, if not outright critical, views of members of other political or ethnic communities. The Slavs, Hungarians, and Mongols that populate the *Historia Salonitana* are either primitive and cruel or simply foreigners incapable of understanding the superior culture of Dalmatia. Archdeacon Thomas seems to have had access to numerous sources that are now lost, which makes his *History* a uniquely valuable source. However, since for earlier periods his information cannot be verified against any other sources, historians have much debated the value of this work for Dalmatian history.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, the information about the eleventh- to thirteenth-century history of Dalmatia is viewed as most trustworthy, even if it has been demonstrated that in many cases (e.g., the account of the Mongol invasion of Dalmatia), Thomas relied on oral testimonies, not on his own observations or on written sources.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, without the *History* of Thomas of Spalato, there would be very little to say about the complicated picture of Dalmatia between c. 1000 and 1250 that would not be tainted by the bias of the Venetian sources, such as the fourteenth-century chronicle of Andrea Dandolo (*Chronicon Venetum*).

For the first few centuries of Southeast European medieval history, only sources written outside the region are available, but they too have their problems. Most Byzantine authors, from Procopius of Caesarea to Niketas Choniates, wrote from the perspective of Byzantium as God's Empire and espoused a mixture of scorn and learned curiosity for the territories beyond its borders, which were inhabited by those whom they viewed as incorrigible barbarians. The degree to which they regarded the status of barbarian as ingrained in the nature of anyone born outside the Empire is illustrated by the use that these authors made of antiquated names to refer to contemporary peoples,

<sup>43</sup> L. Katić, "Vjerodostojnost Tome Arcidjakona i posljedni dani Solina [The veracity of Thomas of Spalato's *History* and the last years of Salona]," *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju Dalmatinsku*, vol. 53 (1950–1951), pp. 99–120. Thomas had two Spalatan continuators, one of whom produced a new edition of Thomas's work to which he added some of the documents that the archdeacon had used for writing his *History*. The extended version of this work is known as the *Historia Salonitana maior* and has been published by N. Klaić (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1967). See also L. Margetić, "*Historia Salonitana* i *Historia Salonitana Major* – neka pitanja [*Historia Salonitana* and *Historia Salonitana maior*: some remarks]," *Hilandarski zbornik*, vol. 47 (1994), pp. 1–36.

<sup>44</sup> Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols," pp. 160–161.

such as Procopius' "Massagetæ" (for nomads in the steppe north of the Black Sea) or Niketas Choniates' "Mysians" (for the Vlachs or the Bulgarians in the northern Balkans). The stereotypical views attached to such labels considerably complicate the interpretation of these accounts, which are often the only ones that we have for key aspects of political and social history. For example, when Procopius of Caesarea described the Sclavenes as living "from of old under a democracy,"<sup>45</sup> what he meant was that in his eyes (as well as in those of any other subject of the Byzantine emperor), they, like all barbarians, lived in complete anarchy. Similarly, when the unknown author of a late sixth-century collection of questions and answers known as *Eratopokriseis* claims that the Sclavenes killed newborns by smashing them against rocks and consumed with pleasure "the breasts of women, full of milk," this can hardly be treated as anything other than stereotypes about barbarians in general, which resisted time with remarkable success and spread outside Byzantine culture to be found, almost word by word, in the late thirteenth-century description of the Mongols by Matthew Paris.<sup>46</sup> However, not all such accounts need to be interpreted as stereotypical. For example, the early ninth-century *Chronography* of Theophanes Confessor relates how, after the defeat of the Byzantine army by the Bulgars in 811, Emperor Nicephorus' head was cut and the skull covered on the "outside with silver" to be made a cup, from which the Bulgar ruler Krum drank together with his Slavic allies.<sup>47</sup> The same gruesome detail is reported in the

<sup>45</sup> Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars* VII.14.22. For the interpretation of this passage, see R. Benedicty, "Prokopios' Berichte über die slavische Vorzeit. Beiträge zur historiographischen Methode Prokopios von Kaisareia," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 14 (1965), pp. 51–78. For Byzantine stereotypes about the Slavs, see G. P. Majeska, "The Byzantines on the Slavs: the problem of ethnic stereotyping," *Acta Byzantina Fennica*, vol. 9 (1997–1998), pp. 70–86.

<sup>46</sup> For the portrait of the Sclavenes in the *Eratopokriseis*, see R. Riedinger, *Pseudo-Kaisarios. Überlieferungsgeschichte und Verfasserfrage* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1969), p. 302. The English translation is from J. Bačić, "The emergence of Sklabenoi (Slavs), their arrival on the Balkan Peninsula, and the role of the Avars in these events: revised concepts in a new perspective," Ph.D. dissertation (Columbia University, New York, 1983), p. 152. For the Mongol breast-eaters, see G. C. Guzman, "Reports of Mongol cannibalism in the thirteenth-century Latin sources: oriental fact or western fiction," in *Discovering New Worlds: Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination*, ed. by S. D. Westrem (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 31–68.

<sup>47</sup> Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, AM 6303, translated by Cyril Mango (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 674. This, of course, is in turn reminiscent of the story of how Alboin, the king of the Lombards, turned the skull of his rival, Cunimund, into a cup and forced his wife Rosemund, Cunimund's daughter, to drink from it (Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* II.28).

twelfth-century *Russian Primary Chronicle* in relation to Sviatoslav of Kiev. He was ambushed in 972 on the banks of the river Dnieper by the Pechenegs, who “made a cup out of his skull, overlaying it with gold, and they drank from it.”<sup>48</sup>

Byzantine sources pose different problems of interpretation when dealing with matters pertaining to those territories in Southeastern Europe which were under Byzantine rule. For example, Eustathius of Thessalonica’s account of the Norman sack of the city, despite being delivered as a Lenten sermon in 1186, is nevertheless an objective account, which Niketas Choniates used for his section on the Norman invasion of 1185. Despite his ambiguous attitude towards the Vlachs, Niketas’ account of the fighting going on in the late twelfth-century Balkans between the imperial troops and the Vlach rebels led by Peter and Asen is a reliable source, for Niketas participated in these campaigns as the secretary of Emperor Isaac II Angelos. Despite the commonplaces most typical of the hagiographical genre, there is no reason to raise doubts about the details about Sparta and the landed aristocracy in the surrounding countryside contained in the *Testament of St. Nikon the Metanoiete*.<sup>49</sup> This is also true of such works as the seventh-century *Miracles of St. Demetrius*, with its wealth of information about the hinterland of Thessalonica, or the tenth-century *Life of St. Blaise of Amorion*, with its rich detail about ninth-century Bulgaria.<sup>50</sup>

The earliest Western narrative sources to cover in some detail the southeastern region of the European continent are the annals of the Carolingian age reporting either on the Frankish–Moravian wars or, episodically, on conflicts with the Bulgars. Somewhat more detailed is the coverage of the ninth-century *Conversion of the Bavarians and the Carantians*, which has nevertheless raised some questions of reliability and truth, despite being the most important source for the history of the eighth-century Carantanian polity. The value of such sources

<sup>48</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle* AM 6480, translated by S. Hazzard Cross and Ol. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 90.

<sup>49</sup> *Testament of Nikon the Metanoiete for the Church and Monastery of the Savior, the Mother of God, and St. Kyriake in Lakedaimon*, English translation by A. Bandy in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, pp. 313–322.

<sup>50</sup> P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1979). See also V. Giuzelev, “Zhitieto na Vlasii Amoriiski kato izvor za bălgarskata istoriia [The *Life of St. Basil of Amorion as a source for the Bulgarian history*],” *GSU*, vol. 61 (1968), pp. 19–33.

for the history of Southeastern Europe is limited, as is that of the many chronicles of the Crusades, from Albert of Aachen to Geoffrey of Villehardouin. Limited in value is also the information provided by geographical sources, such as the sixth-century *Cosmography* of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna or the mid-ninth-century Bavarian Geographer.<sup>51</sup> Both show a rather vague understanding of the geography of Southeastern Europe, especially outside the borders of the Late Roman Empire. A somewhat more detailed knowledge of Southeastern Europe, including the steppe corridor in the northeast, is demonstrated by the twelfth-century map of the Arab geographer al-Idrisi, who lived and worked at the court of King Roger II of Sicily.<sup>52</sup> Much richer are travelogues of Jews from Muslim Spain, such as that of Ibrahim ibn-Ya'qub in the tenth century (preserved in the eleventh-century compilation of al-Bakri) and of Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century.<sup>53</sup> Contemporary Scandinavian sources,

<sup>51</sup> S. Čače, “Civitates Dalmatiae u ‘kosmografiji’ Anonima Ravenjanina [The *civitates Dalmatiae* in the *Cosmography* of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna],” *Diadora*, vol. 15 (1993), pp. 347–440. For the Bavarian Geographer, see *Descriptio civitatum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii* (t. zv. *Bavorský geograf* [The So-Called Bavarian Geographer]), ed. by B. Horák and D. Trávníček (Prague: Academia, 1956). For Carantania, see F. Lošek, *Die “Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum” und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> *Géographie d’Edrisi*, ed. by P.-A. Jaubert (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1840). See B. Nedkov, *Bългария i sāsednite i zemi prez XII vek spored Idrisi* [Bulgaria and the Neighboring Lands during the Twelfth Century, according to Idrisi] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1960); M. S. Kordoses, “Hoi dromoi apo to Dyrrakhio kai ten Aulona pros ten Anatole, symphona me ton Araba geographo Idrisi [The roads from Dyrrachium and Valona to the east, according to the Arab geographer Idrisi],” in *Istorike geografía. Dromoi kai kombi tes Balkanikes apo ten Arkhaioteta sten eniaia Europe*, ed. by E. P. Demetriades, A. Ph. Lagopoulos, and G. Tsotsos (Thessaloniki: Tmema arkhitektonon, Aristoteleio Panepistemio Thessalonikes, 1998), pp. 115–124.

<sup>53</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn Ja’kūba z podróży do krajów słowiańskich w przekazie al-Bekrīego* [The Account of Ibrahim ibn-Ya’qub’s Travel to the Slavic Lands Preserved in the Redaction of al-Bakri], ed. by T. Kowalski (Cracow: Gebethner i Wolff, 1946). Ibrahim ibn-Ya’qub did not travel to Southeastern Europe; instead he gathered information about Bulgaria from the court of Emperor Otto I, which he visited in the 960s. See P. Engels, “Der Reisebericht des Ibrahim ibn Ya’qub (961–966),” in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Begegnung des Ostens und Westens in die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, ed. by A. von Euw and P. Schreiner (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), pp. 413–420; D. Mishin, “Ibrahim ibn-Ya’qub at-Turtushi’s account of the Slavs from the middle of the tenth century,” *AMS* (1994–1995), pp. 184–199. For Benjamin of Tudela’s travelogue, see *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela. Travels in the Middle Ages*, translated by M. N. Adler (Malibu: J. Simon, 1987).

such as sagas and runic inscriptions, also contain some information about the northern region of Southeastern Europe, especially about the Vlachs.<sup>54</sup> However, the richest body of information after that contained in Byzantine sources is that from Rus' chronicles. The *Russian Primary Chronicle* is the basic source for the reconstruction of the eleventh-century history of the Pechenegs, while the Hypatian Chronicle provides invaluable information about the twelfth-century expansion of Galicia into Southeastern Europe.<sup>55</sup>

#### MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Despite the important contribution of such pioneering work as that of József Ujfalosi at Alba Iulia or Karel Škorpiľ at Pliska, medieval archaeology in Southeastern Europe only began to develop seriously some fifty years ago.<sup>56</sup> Much like in Western Europe, before about

<sup>54</sup> V. Spinei, "Informații despre vlahi în izvoarele medievale nordice [Informations about Vlachs in medieval Norse sources]," *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, vol. 24 (1973), pp. 57–81 and 259–282.

<sup>55</sup> *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev and V. P. Adrianova-Perec (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), with English translation by S. Hazzard Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953). See also D. Ostrowski, *The Povest' Vremennykh Let: an Interlinear Collation and Paradosis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Al. A. Shakhmatov, "Povest' vremennykh let i ee istochniki [The *Russian Primary Chronicle* and its sources]," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, vol. 4 (1940), pp. 9–158. The *Russian Primary Chronicle* contains unique information about tenth-century Bulgaria, see E. G. Zykov, "Izvestiia o Bolgarii v Povesti vremennykh let i ikh istochniki [The information about Bulgaria in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* and its origin]," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, vol. 24 (1969), pp. 48–53. For the Hypatian Chronicle, see *The Galician-Volynian Chronicle (Ipat'evskaia letopis')*, ed. by A. A. Shakhmatov (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. A. Aleksandrova, 1908), with English translation in L. L. Heinrich, "The Kievan Chronicle: a translation and commentary," Ph.D. dissertation (Vanderbilt University, Nashville, 1978). See also M. F. Kotliar, "Galicko-volynskaia letopis' [The Galician-Volynian Chronicle]," *Drevneishie gosudarstva vostochnoi Evropy* (1995), pp. 80–165.

<sup>56</sup> J. Ujfalusi, *A gyulafehérvári székesegyház: alapításának 900-ik évfordulója alakalmából* [The Alba Iulia Cathedral at the 900th Anniversary of its Foundation] (Gyulafehérvár: Schäser Ferenc Könyvnyomdája, 1903). For Karel Škorpiľ's discovery of Pliska, see L. Doncheva-Petkova, "Karel Škorpiľ i istoriata na prouchvaniata na Pliska [Karel Škorpiľ and the history of research at Pliska]," in *Zwischen Byzanz und Abendland. Pliska, der östliche Balkanraum und Europa im Spiegel der Frühmittelalterarchäologie*, ed. by J. Henning (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1999). Fundamental for the historical development of cemetery archaeology in the Carpathian Basin is J. Hampel, *A régibb középkor (IV.–X. század) emlékei Magyarhonban* [Monuments of the Early Middle Ages (Fourth to

1950, medieval archaeology was not recognized as a coherent discipline, separate from, yet fundamental to, the study of medieval history. Although many of its components, especially cemetery archaeology, have a much longer history of study, the main catalyst for this sudden rise of medieval archaeology was the post-war shift in emphasis from traditional political and constitutional to social and economic history. Unlike Western Europe, where explicitly Marxist approaches did not appear until the late 1970s and 1980s, in Southeastern Europe (with the exception of Greece), the rise of medieval archaeology coincides in time with, and was ultimately caused by, the imposition of Communist regimes under Soviet aegis, if not control. As a consequence, archaeology was organized along the lines of the Soviet school of “material culture history,” and received a degree of institutional attention it had never experienced before. Considerable long-term investments, with no parallel in contemporary Western Europe, made possible large-scale explorations of several key sites, some of which resulted in total excavation, following the principles first championed by the Soviet school of archaeology.<sup>57</sup> By directing the attention of archaeologists to how ordinary people lived, the Marxist paradigm encouraged the development of settlement archaeology (as opposed to the excavations of cemeteries, which has until then been the primary focus of medieval archaeology). This led to large-scale horizontal excavations of villages such as Popina–Dzhedzhovi Lozia and Garvan in Bulgaria, Bucov and Dridu in Romania, Hansca in the Republic of Moldova, Bostanište in Serbia, or Mrsunjski Lug in Croatia, all of which are remarkable parallels to the more or less contemporary developments in Western Europe.<sup>58</sup> The growth in the 1960s and 1970s of cemetery

Tenth Century) from the Hungarian Homeland] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1894).

<sup>57</sup> F. Curta, “Pots, Slavs, and ‘imagined communities’: Slavic archaeology and the history of the early Slavs,” *European Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 4 (2001), pp. 367–384. For the Soviet archaeology and its use of the total excavation of sites, see B. G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 217–227.

<sup>58</sup> The results of some of these excavations were published with remarkable speed shortly after the closing of the archaeological campaigns. Others had to wait for up to twenty years for a detailed publication, a delay otherwise attested for contemporary excavations in Western Europe (e.g., Feddersen Wierde in northwestern Germany). For Bulgaria, see Zh. Văzharova, *Slaviano-bălgarskoto selishte kraï selo Popina, Silistrensko* [A Slavic–Bulgarian settlement near Popina,

archaeology, especially in Hungary and Yugoslavia, led to a quick increase in the volume of data, to such an extent that entire chronological gaps in the knowledge of the early Middle Ages have been virtually eliminated by 1990 primarily because of archaeological research. Without extensive archives, research in Hungary and what is now Croatia had to lean heavily on archaeological evidence, especially for the eighth and ninth centuries. This is not to be viewed as a weakness, because archaeology gives information of a character different from that provided by written sources. The Late Avar period (c. 700–800/820), for example, is devoid of written sources, yet can now be studied in detail on the basis of archaeological excavations of both settlements and cemeteries. Similarly, many of the changes to our perception of the eighth- and ninth-century Bulgar society have resulted from archaeological fieldwork.<sup>59</sup> History books published in the 1980s and 1990s on such subjects as the “material culture of the Old Croats” or the southern region of Hungary during the

district of Silistra] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1954); *Slavianski i slavianobălgarski selishta v bălgarskite zemi ot kraia na VI–XI vek* [Slavic and Slavic–Bulgarian Settlements in the Bulgarian Lands from the Late Sixth to the Eleventh Century] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1965); and *Srednovkovnoto selishte s. Garvăn, Silistrenski okrăg (VI–XI v.)* [A Medieval Settlement in Garvăn, District of Silistra (Sixth to Eleventh Century)] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1986). For Romania, see E. Zaharia, *Săpăturile de la Dridu. Contribuții la arheologia și istoria perioadei de formare a poporului român* [Excavations in Dridu. Contributions to the Archaeology and History of the Romanian Ethnogenesis] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1967); M. Comșa, *Cultura materială veche românească (Așezările din secolele VIII–X de la Bucov–Ploiești)* [The Old Romanian Material Culture (Eighth- to Tenth-Century Settlements in Bucov–Ploiești)] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1978). For settlements excavated in northern Serbia, see N. Stanojev, *Srednjovekovna seoska naselja od V do XV veka u Vojvodini* [Fifth- to Fifteenth-Century Medieval Rural Settlements in Vojvodina] (Novi Sad: Muzej Vojvodine, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> G. Fülöp, “La basse époque avar en Hongrie,” in *L’art des invasions en Hongrie et en Wallonie. Actes du colloque tenu au Musée royal de Mariemont du 9 au 11 avril 1979*, ed. by G. Donnay (Morlanwelz: Le Musée, 1991), pp. 151–154; U. Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1992). One of the earliest books on the Avar qaganate was almost exclusively based on the archaeological evidence, and at least one archaeologist attempted to reconstruct the structure of Avar society on the basis of the archaeological evidence. See J. Kovačević, *Avarski qaganat* [The Avar Qaganate] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1977); G. László, *Etudes archéologiques sur l’histoire de la société des Avars* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1955).