CHAPTER 6

The Balkans in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century

Dušan and Byzantium to 1334

Stefan Dušan came to the throne in Serbia as a result of a revolution led by a segment of the Serbian nobility that had been dissatisfied by Stefan Dečanski’s unwillingness to wage war against Byzantium to expand into Macedonia. All evidence suggests that Dušan started what was to be a glorious reign as a mere puppet of these nobles. This is stated not only in the Byzantine sources, but also in Ragusan records. For example, on one occasion the town’s instructions to an envoy at the Serbian court reminded him that decisions did not depend just on the ruler but also on his entourage. Not surprisingly, considering the political goals of the nobility, Serbian troops raided into Macedonia in the late fall of 1331 immediately after Dušan’s succession. They reached the Struma River. Probably on this occasion they captured the town of Strumica. Further large-scale action in Macedonia was then delayed because in 1332 Dušan needed to put down the revolt of Bogoje in Zeta and northern Albania.

Dušan suppressed this revolt in 1332. He then had two foreign policy areas calling for attention. Besides Macedonia, he was faced with problems in the west, for, as we have seen, in the 1320s Serbia had suffered serious losses in that direction when Bosnia had annexed most of Serbia’s Hum, and Dubrovnik had taken Ston and the Pelješac peninsula. Presumably Serbia would have liked to re-assert its authority in these areas. However, it was not strong enough to campaign on two fronts and it is evident that the nobles, desiring action in Macedonia because it would bring them benefits (rather than simply obtaining the recognition of Serbian suzerainty from existing landlords, most of whom presumably would keep possession of their lands), were a strong pressure-group for the Macedonian option. So Dušan opted for offensives to his south. To carry out this policy, it made sense to reach a settlement with Dubrovnik. Such an agreement would benefit Serbia financially, not only by preventing ruptures in the commercial activities from which Serbia’s ruler
collected customs but also by obtaining a cash settlement for the lands Dubrovnik had annexed.

So in 1333 after negotiations Dušan sold Ston and its environs—including the Pelješac peninsula and the coastland between Ston and Dubrovnik—to Dubrovnik for eight thousand perpera in cash and an annual tribute of five hundred perpera to be paid each Easter. From 1348 on, by order of Dušan, this tribute was donated to the Monastery of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Jerusalem. Dubrovnik also had to guarantee freedom of worship for Orthodox believers in this territory. This last promise was not observed, for almost before the ink was dry on the treaty Dubrovnik sent Catholic clergy, particularly Franciscans, into this territory to proselytize on behalf of Catholicism. However, despite Dubrovnik’s encouragement of the Catholic missionaries, for much of Dušan’s lifetime Orthodox priests were tolerated in Ston. But after 1347 scholars have found no further references to Orthodox clergy in Ston. In 1334 Bosnia recognized the Serbian-Ragusan agreement. With this settlement Serbia, which had been the aggrieved party, could expect peace on its western frontier and thereby gain a free hand to carry on an active southern policy.

Since later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nationalism became so prevalent in the Balkans, many modern scholars have at times attributed nationalist feelings to leaders in the medieval Balkans. It is worth noting, in that context, that Dušan and the Serb nobles opted for an internationalist policy—expanding south into lands with large numbers of Greeks and Albanians rather than attempting to regain the lands to the west inhabited by fellow Serbo-Croatian speakers.

Though there seem to have been a certain number of raids to the south after Dušan’s accession, major gains did not occur until 1334, when a great opportunity presented itself to the Serbs. In late 1333 a leading Byzantine general, Syrgiannes, governor of the western provinces (including western Macedonia and Albania), revolted against Andronicus III and sought Dušan’s help. We have already met Syrgiannes, who was half Cuman and half Greek, during the civil war between Andronicus II and Andronicus III; Syrgiannes had played an active role in it, first supporting Andronicus III and later Andronicus II. After Andronicus III’s succession, he restored himself to the new emperor’s favor and received his governorship. However, disliking John Cantacuzenus, Andronicus’ leading advisor, Syrgiannes seems to have joined the emperor’s mother in a plot against Cantacuzenus. Some information about his activities was uncovered, causing him to be accused of plotting against Andronicus III; to avoid arrest he fled into Albania and soon showed up at the Serbian court.

The Serbs, not surprisingly, agreed to support him and in the spring of 1334 launched an attack into imperial Macedonia; the invaders benefited greatly from Syrgiannes’ knowledge of Byzantine defenses, his ability as a strategist, and the fact that he had many friends and supporters in high posi-
tions in that area. Fortresses surrendered rapidly to the Serbs, who soon found themselves in possession of Ohrid, Prilep, and Strumica. Syrgiannes then directed the capture of Kastoria. After this the Serbs marched down the Vardar toward Thessaloniki, soon reaching that city’s walls. The hard-pressed Byzantines responded by implementing a well-conceived plot. Frantz (Sphrantzes) Palaeologus, who commanded several fortresses in the vicinity of Kastoria, deserted to the Serbs, who received him warmly. Next a Byzantine army moved into the province of Thessaloniki and set up camp near the beleaguered city; the Serbs withdrew a short distance away to the mouth of the Vardar. While the two armies were thus camped, Palaeologus succeeded in enticing Syrgiannes away from the main camp by himself; at once he and some associates murdered him and succeeded in escaping after the deed to Thessaloniki.

Dušan’s plans were now seriously upset, for his successes until then had chiefly been owing to Syrgiannes’ strategic abilities, knowledge of the Byzantine opposition, and friends who surrendered fortresses to the Serbs. His death lost Dušan these advantages. Thus Dušan, not surprisingly, was receptive when Andronicus III offered a peace with generous terms. Furthering Dušan’s willingness to negotiate was intelligence that the Byzantines had just repelled a major Turkish raiding party—freeing more Byzantine troops for the Thessaloniki front—and a report that the Hungarians, knowing of Serbia’s involvement in the south, were mobilizing to attack Serbia from the north. Thus the Serbs agreed to peace on 26 August 1334. The Byzantines recognized a large number of Serbian gains, thereby officially surrendering title to a series of forts already taken by the Serbs. These included Ohrid, Prilep, Strumica, Siderokastron, Čemren, and Prosek. This made the Byzantine-Serbian border almost identical to the present Greek-Yugoslav border. There is debate over when certain of these fortresses were taken by the Serbs. Prosek had clearly been taken previously, in 1328, by Dečanski. And Ostrogorsky, following Gregoras, thinks Strumica was taken in 1331. The others seem to have been taken in the course of 1334 after Syrgiannes had joined the Serbs. By the treaty Kastoria reverted to Byzantium.

**Dušan and Hungary**

Dušan then marched north to face the Hungarians. They had received military support from Bosnia. Whereas this support probably reflects Kotromanić’s alliance with Hungary more than any particular hostility toward Serbia, it still shows that Dušan could not entirely ignore his western neighbor. The Hungarians, not expecting any serious Serbian resistance, had already penetrated well into Serbia, reaching the neighborhood of the Žiča monastery. They now quickly withdrew their armies. The Byzantine sources claim that the empire’s treaty with Serbia had promised Byzantine aid to Serbia against the Hungarians. Fulfilling this promise, Byzantine troops had marched north with Dušan and their presence had caused the Hungarians to withdraw. Most
scholars reject this claim as fiction; it is doubtful that the Byzantines, threatened by Turkish raiders, could have afforded to spare many troops. Furthermore, it is unlikely that whatever limited aid the Byzantines could provide would have seemed fearsome to the Hungarians. Thus most scholars have concluded that Byzantine authors were simply bragging to bolster the empire’s declining prestige at a moment when it had had to conclude a humiliating treaty with Serbia that recognized Serbian possession of a large part of what had been Byzantine Macedonia.

Thus the Hungarian invasion, which does not seem to have been seriously planned and may have been intended only as a raid, led to no territorial losses for Serbia. In fact some scholars believe that Dušan made use of his mobilized forces to go on the offensive against the Hungarian aggressors to regain part or all of Mačva and restore the Danube and Sava as the Serbian-Hungarian border. Ćirković argues that Dušan even took Beograd at this time but was unable to retain it, and that soon thereafter, probably in 1339, the Hungarians recovered Beograd.\(^1\) Furthermore, if Dušan in 1335 did regain Mačva, which other scholars doubt, he may not have been able to retain it either. For in the period that followed, Bans of Mačva, appointed by and loyal to Hungary, including a Ban Nicholas between 1335 and 1340, are mentioned in the sources. Though it is possible Nicholas and his successors merely bore this title as an empty court honor, which may also be regarded as an official statement of Hungary’s claims to this territory, most scholars believe that the existence of these Bans of Mačva reflects Hungary’s possession of some, or even all, of Mačva. However, we must conclude that we lack sources to resolve this question. The Hungarian attack and Serbian response is usually dated as occurring in 1335; however, the warfare may have been initiated in late 1334.

No peace seems to have been concluded with the Hungarians; thus a state of semi-war marked by mutual raiding seems to have continued. These sorties, chiefly for plunder, seem to have brought about no territorial changes except for the possibility of Beograd’s changing hands. We know of forays and skirmishes in 1338, 1339, and 1342. Finally, it seems in 1346, a peace was concluded; its terms are unknown. Interestingly enough, despite this long period of hostility between Serbia and Hungary (including the Hungarian raid deep into Serbia as far as Žiča in 1334/35 and the possible fighting over Mačva), the Hungarians seem to have made no attempt to dislodge the Serbs from the province of Braničevo. Despite its vulnerable location on the Hungarian border, Braničevo remained Serbian and, it seems, unattacked throughout Dušan’s reign.

**Dušan, the Empire, and Albania**

Dušan, concerned with the south, clearly did not want to involve himself in a major confrontation with Hungary. But though he seems to have had a new war with Byzantium in mind, no warfare was to take place against the empire
from 1334 until the death of Andronicus III in 1341. In the interim the rulers of the two states met in 1335, spending seven days together. At the time the Byzantines, needing their forces elsewhere, were worried that the Serbs intended to break the 1334 treaty. The discussions were fruitful, and the Serbs agreed to take no action in Macedonia, thus leaving Byzantium free to divert its forces to Anatolia and the Aegean islands.

While the Serbs were maintaining their peace with Byzantium, they turned their attention to Albania, presumably both to subdue various chieftains who were not observing their obligations to their Serb suzerains and also to extend Serbian influence. At Dušan’s accession the Serbs held the Albanian lands north of the Mati River. In 1336 Dušan had limited successes in central Albania which included the acquisition from the Angevins of a major prize, Durazzo. At the time Durazzo seems to have been managed by a clique of local nobles who recognized Angevin suzerainty. Dušan seems to have done nothing more than negotiate with these locals and persuade them to recognize his suzerainty. His acquisition of Durazzo, which occurred by August 1336, was not to last, for soon the city is found once again under the Angevins. Observing his treaty with Byzantium, Dušan does not seem to have disturbed Byzantium’s holdings in Albania. In 1337 Dušan was still active in the area; at roughly the same time Andronicus III was campaigning against certain Albanian tribes in southern Albania who had been raiding his subjects who lived in the plains. Andronicus seems to have been fairly successful in the warfare, taking many prisoners and acquiring the submission of certain tribes. His successes, though, do not seem to have been long-lasting, and the tribesmen soon reverted to their former activities. Though Dušan was operating in the vicinity at the same time, he seems neither to have clashed with Andronicus nor to have collaborated with him. Some scholars believe that in 1337 Dušan acquired Kanina and Valona; if this occurred, Andronicus presumably was not pleased. However, it seems more probable that Dušan’s forces remained well to the north of these towns and that they became Serbian at some time between 1343 and 1345.

**Dušan in 1340**

While the Byzantines were putting down the 1339–40 revolt in Epirus, the Serbs pressed further into Albania and obtained the submission of further tribal chieftains. The Serbs at this time were clearly operating in the south of Albania; sources document them in the vicinity of Jannina. Dušan at this time added “Albania” to his title. The Byzantines in 1340 were in no position to oppose him, but various Albanians probably did. And the tribes of Thopia (Topia), which controlled much of the territory between the Shkumbi and Mati rivers, and of Musachi (Muzaki), holding much of the region between the Shkumbi and Valona, concluded treaties with the Angevins against the Serbs. The Albanian leaders agreed that after their uprising succeeded their territories would recognize Angevin suzerainty. Except for one battle at about
this time, in which Andrew II Musachi defeated a Serb unit in the Peristeri Mountains (for which he received a medal from the Byzantines), we know of no action taken by any Albanians to oust the Serbs and realize the treaty with the Angevins. We also know of no Angevin or Byzantine aid against the Serbs to these or any other Albanian tribes. However, though Serb troops penetrated into southern Albania, it is not at all clear which towns they took or how much of this area they occupied or asserted their control over. Some scholars date their acquisition of various towns to these years, but others believe the Serbs obtained submission, possibly only nominal, from various tribes but did not take any central or southern Albanian towns until 1343–45.

In the course of 1340 Dušan fell seriously ill. Quite probably at that time a certain amount of jockeying for power took place among his nobles. At this critical time one of Dušan’s leading commanders, Vojvoda Hrelja, possibly finding himself allied with a weaker faction, deserted to the Byzantines, taking his lands with him. He could do this because he possessed a large holding right on the Byzantine-Serbian border that included the region of the middle Struma River, with Strumica and two other strongly fortified castles near-by. Some scholars believe he held the river’s course to its mouth on the Aegean. Thus Hrelja seems to have obtained a sizeable chunk of the territory Serbia gained from the empire in the early 1330s. The Byzantines allowed him to retain his lands and granted him the high court title of caesar. Dušan soon recovered, but he was not immediately able to take any action to regain this lost region. The ease with which Hrelja was able to secede shows how decentralized the Serbian state was. Lacking officials from the central government to administer it and lacking garrisons of troops under generals appointed by and loyal to the king, this Struma territory was more-or-less the private holding of Hrelja, who, supported by his own forces, administered and defended the region.

Turkish Activities in the Balkans

Besides the civil strife and the international violence among the southeastern European states and peoples, already described, the Turks were also disrupting parts of the Balkans in the 1330s. Two different Turkish emirates, both based in Anatolia, caused particular hardship for the Christians of southeastern Europe: that of the Ottomans based in Bithynia in northwestern Anatolia and that of Aydin centered in Smyrna on the west coast of Anatolia. Raiding by sea, they disrupted Greek and Latin shipping, raided islands and towns near the coast, and took large numbers of captives as well as plunder.

Mehmed, the Emir of Aydin, was persuaded to conclude a treaty with the Byzantines in 1329. From then until his death in 1334 his Turks concentrated their activities against the Latin areas of Greece. However, peace with Aydin did not relieve the Byzantines from Ottoman attacks. In 1329 the Ottomans raided into Europe, plundering Trajanopolis and Bera in Thrace before being expelled. And Turks, presumably Ottomans, raided Thrace, particularly
along the coast, in 1331, 1332, and 1334. On all these occasions the Turks were driven back, but they procured considerable plunder and the efforts against them were costly, as the empire lost manpower that it could ill afford to lose in battles against them.

Meanwhile, the Turks of Aydin took to the Aegean as pirates and RAIDed the Latin islands and the coastal regions of Frankish Greece. A particularly large campaign was carried out, most probably during 1332 and 1333, under the direction of Mehmed’s son Umur. He attacked Euboea and was persuaded to leave only after the Venetian bailiff agreed to pay him tribute. At this time he also RAIDed the islands forming the Duchy of Naxos and allegedly took fifteen thousand captives from these islands. On the mainland both the small Duchy of Boudonitsa and the Peloponnesian coast suffered from his raids as well. In 1334 Mehmed died and was succeeded by Umur; the Latins retaliated against him by launching a raid against Smyrna, but the city held out. Undeterred, Umur was back RAIDing the Peloponnesus in 1335. (In fact 1335 was a particularly active year for Turkish pirates in the Aegean.) And as he did not feel bound by his father’s agreements with the empire, he plundered Byzantine Thrace in 1336 as well. However, in the course of that year the Byzantines negotiated a new treaty with him. And thereafter he maintained friendly relations with the empire, and particularly with John Cantacuzenos who seems to have been the envoy who concluded the treaty with him. Thus when Cantacuzenos found himself in difficulties in the early 1340s, he was able to turn to Umur and find in him a loyal supporter against any and all opponents. Immediately after the treaty of 1336, Umur provided two thousand infantrymen archers to assist Andronicus III in his Albanian campaign of 1337.

Since the most active raiders of the 1330s and early 1340s, the Turks of Aydin, concentrated their activities against the Latins, the Latins in turn were forced to take measures against Aydin. After considerable planning, they were to mobilize a crusading effort against Umur’s capital of Smyrna. In 1343 a major naval effort led by the knights of Rhodes and the King of Cyprus was to fail. However, a second attack in the fall of 1344 was to have considerable success.

**The Byzantine Civil War between Cantacuzenos and the Constantinopolitan Regency**

On 15 June 1341 the Byzantine emperor Andronicus III died unexpectedly. The Serbs immediately took advantage of his death to dispatch a raiding party that penetrated deeply into Macedonia and reached Kritskoselerije near Thessaloniki. It seems this was done on the spur of the moment; not having time to prepare a major offensive, the Serbs’ goal was simply plunder. Albanian tribesmen in the regions of Pogonia and Livisda also rose up, plundering the Byzantine town of Berat and part of northern Epirus. And Turkish pirates launched extensive raids against the coasts of Macedonia and Thrace.

At the same time the Bulgarians threatened the Byzantines with war.
Taking advantage of the weakness anticipated from Andronicus’ death, John Alexander sent an embassy to demand the person of John Stefan, who had fled to Byzantium when John Alexander overthrew him in 1331. John Cantacuzenus, who received the envoys, not only refused to comply but threatened to send Umur of Aydin to raid the Bulgarian coast and spoke of the possibility of a Byzantine-Turkish expedition along the Danube that could attack Vidin and other Bulgarian cities from that river. And to add force to his threat he allowed Umur’s fleet to pass through the Straits and the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. It arrived at the Danube mouth in July or August 1341. Under this pressure, John Alexander backed down from his demands.

Andronicus’ heir was his son John V (1341–91) who then was about nine years old. In his will Andronicus III had appointed his best friend and longtime associate John Cantacuzenus to be the regent. He was an immensely rich landlord having vast estates in Thrace and a large number of animals: five thousand cows, one thousand oxen, twenty-five hundred mares, two hundred camels, three hundred mules, five hundred donkeys, fifty thousand pigs, and seventy thousand sheep. Cantacuzenus was greatly disliked by Andronicus’ widow, Anna of Savoy. He was to be an active figure in Byzantine politics for the next fifteen years, eventually in 1347 becoming emperor himself. After his forced retirement, he wrote a history that devoted its attention to the turbulent events he participated in. Thus his work is also a memoir, and, like many memoirs, it is a very biased source that depicsts its author in the best possible light. Considerable scepticism must therefore be used when one evaluates many of its statements, particularly statements concerning Cantacuzenus’ motives, verbal agreements, and aims.

The regent Cantacuzenus immediately led an army out from the capital to meet the Serbs while at the same time dispatching envoys to Serbia to try to re-establish the 1334 peace treaty. His aim at the time seems to have been to conclude peace with the Serbs so he could concentrate his efforts on fighting the Franks in the Peloponnnesus and restore Byzantine rule over that peninsula. His interest in the Peloponnnesus was strong, for his family had been very active in that region, supplying several governors for the territory recovered by the empire. Furthermore, Cantacuzenus had what seemed a glorious opportunity to acquire the rest of the Peloponnnesus. Threatened by Byzantium’s gradual expansion from Mistra and from other Peloponnnesian centers, a group of important Latin barons had decided that the best way to retain the lands they still held was to submit to Byzantine suzerainty provided that the empire was willing to confirm them in their lands, castles, and existing privileges. Envoys bearing this offer approached Cantacuzenus; he was very receptive to it and began planning a Peloponnnesian campaign under his own leadership that would accept the submissions of these barons. However, before he could act upon this, a new blow struck him.

Cantacuzenus’ enemies took advantage of his absence from Constantinople at the end of September 1341 to stage a coup against him. Declaring him an enemy of the young emperor, they deposed him as regent and established a
new regency under Empress Mother Anna of Savoy, Patriarch John Kalekas, and Alexius Apoclaus. Though the first two were titularly the leading regents, the most powerful figure, who was to dominate the regency, was Apoclaus, who became governor of Constantinople; as more-or-less a military mayor, he controlled the capital very tightly. Many of Cantacuzenos’ supporters in the capital were arrested. Cantacuzenos, who had left the capital to fight an enemy of the empire, was incensed. Having acquired considerable support from Byzantine Macedonia and Thrace, particularly from the great landlords, members of his own class, Cantacuzenos at Demotika on 26 October 1341 declared himself emperor (John VI), while insisting he was not acting against John V, whose rights he had sworn to protect. And for a time all Cantacuzenos’ charters and pronouncements were written in both their names, with the little boy’s name in first place. Thus his revolt was raised not against the heir, but against the usurpation of the new regency.

Thrace and what the empire still retained of Macedonia were regions dominated by the great magnates. Under their leadership these provinces were ready to support Cantacuzenos. Faced with this serious opposition, the regency government in Constantinople set about trying to undermine Cantacuzenos’ support in these provinces. The best means to do this was to incite other groups to revolt against the magnates and thereby establish a new leadership loyal to the regency in these provinces or at least create sufficient disorder and strife in Byzantine Europe to prevent the magnates from mobilizing their men and marching on Constantinople. Imperial agents began stirring up merchants and townspeople of Adrianople against the aristocrats who, holding great estates outside the town, possessed large town houses and palaces from which they dominated local politics; they seem to have had little popularity among the urban populace. These agents were successful and the town population of Adrianople, led by Branos, an agricultural worker who lived by manual labor in the gardens of the magnates, rose up against the aristocracy.

Soon various other Thracian towns followed suit, revolting, expelling the rich aristocrats, and confiscating their property. Limpidarios, the rebel leader in Ainos whose movement jailed or exiled most of that town’s magnates, had been a servant or serf of a certain Duke Nicephorus. Thus the regency succeeded in unleashing a social revolution that temporarily took over many Thracian towns, thereby bringing these towns into the regency’s camp. Revolt also occurred in Demotika, but here the magnates won, forcing many townspeople to flee. This city was to remain loyal to Cantacuzenos and be, for the next few years, his center of operations. But almost all the other cities of Thrace entered the regency’s camp, and a whole series of aristocrats joined the regency’s side to retain their property and positions.

Cantacuzenos’ campaigns in 1342, as we shall see, took him into western Thrace and Macedonia. In his absence the regency carried out its above-mentioned take-over of eastern and central Thrace. Cantacuzenos’ capital, Demotika, left in the hands of his wife, was a beleaguered island in the midst
of regency territory. Cantacuzenus was unable to break through regency defenses to come to his wife’s relief, and she underwent a desperate winter of 1342–43, in which she was not only threatened by the regency but also besieged by the Bulgarians. Somehow she managed to hold out until support came from Cantacuzenus’ old allies the Turks from the Emirate of Aydin, with whom Cantacuzenus concluded a new alliance. The Turks sailed up the Marica with some three hundred ships and a large number of men—Cantacuzenus claims twenty-nine thousand while the Turkish source claims fifteen thousand—and drove off the Bulgarians.

In any case, while the Thracian events were about to occur, Cantacuzenus began his campaign early in 1342 with an attack upon Kavalla. Defeated, he had to withdraw. He next turned his attention to Thessaloniki, for the aristocrats of that town, led by Synadenos the town’s governor, were preparing to open the town’s gates to troops loyal to Cantacuzenus. But then a rebellion broke out there against the aristocrats and against Cantacuzenus’ cause. The rebels not only refused to open the gates to the pro-Cantacuzenus army, but killed or exiled from the town his supporters and many of the town’s rich and seized their property. Those expelled included Synadenos. Then in early summer 1342 the rebels in Thessaloniki established their own government in the town. Those who came to hold power in Thessaloniki have come to be known as the zealots. For a long time scholars depicted their rule as a clear case of social revolution, in which for a while the poor successfully opposed the rich and governed an independent city-republic of Thessaloniki.

Recently, however, it has been shown that certain important sources which supported this depiction were not written at the time, as was thought at first, but somewhat later. Furthermore, among the zealots, and particularly in positions of leadership, various magnates were to be found. Thus magnates stood on both sides. In fact some of the important magnates on the zealot side had close ties with Constantinople, in particular with the regency and the Palaeologus family. For example the leader of the zealots was a certain Michael Palaeologus; also active in Thessaloniki was John Apocaucus, the son of Alexius Apocaucus, the governor of Constantinople and the most powerful regent. Thus it makes sense to argue that these zealots participated in the rebellion, if they did not actually lead it from the start, for political reasons (i.e., to support the regency against Cantacuzenus) rather than for social ones. This is not to say that social issues were not important for many adherents of the movement; in fact these issues had been emphasized by zealot leaders to acquire and hold mob support. And the zealot leaders seem to have ridden to power through this policy.

And thus was set up the so-called city-state of Thessaloniki. However, it was not an independent state; it recognized John V and the regency in Constantinople, and the regency government there recognized the zealots. In fact, in the name of John V the regency sent to Thessaloniki a governor who participated in running the town. However, it is evident that the local council predominated in local affairs and the governor did not direct town affairs as
imperial governors had in the past. However, through this mutual recognition and the town’s acceptance of the imperial governor, Thessaloniki remained part of the empire. And it must be stressed that in broad matters of policy—foreign policy and attitude toward Cantacuzenus—there was no real difference between the zealots and the regency. And even in social matters they did not differ seriously; though the regency was not advocating social revolution in Constantinople, it had been encouraging such revolution throughout Thrace. The regency, therefore, would not have opposed the social-revolutionary stance of the Thessaloniki zealots, particularly since it too was focused against the partisans of Cantacuzenus. Thus the zealots and regency were in agreement with one another on the major issues of the time. And one should consider the Thessaloniki zealots, led by Apocaus’ son and by a member of the Palaeologus family, as part of the regency’s campaign against Cantacuzenus. As part and parcel of the regency, zealot leaders simply played on social issues to gain support from the townsmen and deprive of influence the important group of Thessalonian magnates who supported Cantacuzenus.

Cantacuzenus had turned for support in late 1341 to his former colleague Michael Monomachus, who was then governing Thessaly. Michael hesitated to commit himself and then early in 1342 left, or was forced out of, Thessaly. He went to Serres and there joined Cantacuzenus’ opponents, who held that town for the regency. In Thessaly the nobles were left to their own devices; among those rising to great power and filling the power vacuum was another Michael, the leader of the powerful Gavrilopoulos family. We saw in the last chapter that in 1342 he was issuing charters to lesser nobles, defining their military obligations and guaranteeing tax reductions to them; these charters made no reference to the emperor though such matters were imperial prerogatives. Thus Michael Gavrilopoulos was acting as a fully independent prince. His actions presumably reflect the situation in Thessaly—or in his part of Thessaly—which, not yet recognizing either side, simply asserted its own autonomy. Since Michael’s surviving charters all come from 1342, after Andronicus’ death and before Thessaly, later in 1342, accepted Cantacuzenus’ appointee John Angelus as its governor, we can see Michael’s actions and authority as reflecting an exceptional time and situation. However, Michael’s ability to assert this role shows that in Thessaly the institutional structure based on the local nobles still existed and had been little changed by a decade of administration under the imperial governor Monomachus.

The Serbs Are Drawn into the Byzantine Civil War

At the first sign of trouble in the empire in the late fall of 1341 both the Bulgarians and Serbs raided south against the empire. Cantacuzenus found himself facing a grim situation. By mid-1342 his supporters were losing power throughout much of Thrace and imperial Macedonia. He thus needed new allies. Furthermore, the empire’s Slavic neighbors were trying to take
advantage of the empire’s troubles to wrest away more imperial territory. And Cantacuzenus did not have sufficient forces to stop them, either. Thus Cantacuzenus decided to negotiate with the Serbs to limit their conquests and to try, by making them into allies, to channel their activities into supporting his cause. He first visited Hrelja, who was then in the process of re-establishing his ties with Serbia. Hrelja was friendly but, not wanting to make his own situation any more complicated, refused to involve himself in the matter. So, Cantacuzenus decided to go to Serbia himself.

With two thousand soldiers and his sons, John Cantacuzenus marched north along the Vardar. He was received honorably at Prosek (now Serbian) by its governor, a Byzantine deserter named Michael who had been given the command by his new sovereign. He continued on to Veles where he was met by a Serbian army under the Despot John Oliver, who held a large appanage in that region that included Veles. Cantacuzenus already knew Oliver; it seems that both men had participated in the discussions between Andronicus III and Dušan in 1334 and 1335. Probably at one of those two meetings Andronicus had granted Oliver his title despot, for that title could only have originated with an emperor and Oliver seems to have borne it already in 1341 several years before Dušan took the imperial title that gave him the right to grant such titles. Cantacuzenus assured John Oliver that his presence in Serbia with an army reflected no ill intentions toward Serbia. The two men then entered into discussions; as a result of them, Oliver agreed to support Cantacuzenus and, accompanied by his own troops, led Cantacuzenus’ party further into Serbia, while dispatching couriers ahead to inform Dušan of Cantacuzenus’ visit. The couriers found Dušan en route to visit his brother-in-law John Alexander in Bulgaria. Cantacuzenus’ arrival was important enough to effect a change in plans, so, on Oliver’s advice, Dušan returned to Priština whither Oliver led Cantacuzenus.

There in July 1342 Cantacuzenus met with Dušan, Queen Helen (Jelena), and twenty-four leading Serb nobles led by Oliver. According to Cantacuzenus, Helen and Oliver took the most active part in the discussions. Cantacuzenus sought Serbian support tooust the Byzantine regency. For their help the Serbs expected to be rewarded with imperial territory. Cantacuzenus says the Serbs demanded everything west of Kavalla or at least west of Thessaloniki. Cantacuzenus says he refused to yield any territory and claims it was finally agreed that the Serbs could retain any Byzantine cities they had held at the time Andronicus III had died; however, all Byzantine cities taken after his death, including those still to be taken, would go to Cantacuzenus. The only exception made to this arrangement was to be Melnik, then in the process of being taken by Hrelja. Hrelja was to be allowed to retain Melnik; and since he was then negotiating his return to Dušan—a return recognized in the Dušan-Cantacuzenus agreement—this city was to go to the Serbs. Cantacuzenus insists that this was the agreement they made, but that Dušan violated it later by keeping what he took. Since this self-serving statement is hard to believe, most scholars believe Gregoras, who claims that Can-
tacuzenus yielded to Serbian demands and agreed that each party could hold the fortresses it conquered.

Since the Serbs were to supply the bulk of the troops, this in effect meant that if the allies were to be successful in their campaign, the Serbs would make extensive gains. In fact, according to Gregoras, their agreement was to give Serbia all Macedonia west of Kavalla excluding Thessaloniki. The only hope Cantacuzenus had to obtain any of these cities was provided, according to Gregoras, by a clause in the agreement that allowed voluntarily surrendering—as opposed to forcibly conquered—Byantine cities to submit to the ruler of their choice, whether Cantacuzenus or Dušan. In any case, and even if Gregoras is not entirely accurate, Cantacuzenus clearly agreed to the Serbs’ making substantial gains. Otherwise, there was no reason for them to aid him.

The sources state that Dušan was hesitant to involve himself. However, the twenty-four nobles, led by Oliver and Helen, were unanimous that Serbia should take advantage of the opportunity. So, in the end, Dušan agreed. Once again it was the nobility, ambitious to expand south, that pressed for and made the decision, whereas the ruler was hesitant and passive. Cantacuzenus then reports that the peace was sealed by a marriage. According to him Oliver wanted Cantacuzenus’ son Manuel to marry Oliver’s daughter. Dušan pushed the proposal because, according to Cantacuzenus, he was afraid to oppose Oliver. Cantacuzenus then accepted this proposal and Manuel remained in Serbia, presumably more or less as a hostage for his father’s good faith in fulfilling the treaty, though Cantacuzenus claims Manuel remained because he was Oliver’s son-in-law to be. According to Gregoras the marriage proposal originated with Cantacuzenus. Regardless of which man suggested it, the proposal probably dated back to the three-day meeting between Oliver and Cantacuzenus at Veles, before Cantacuzenus met Dušan. The marriage may well have been Oliver’s condition for arranging the meeting with and for using his influence on Dušan on behalf of Cantacuzenus. These marriage plans were dropped in 1343, when Dušan switched sides and came out for the regency.

Despot John Oliver

It is worth pausing briefly on Despot John (Jovan) Oliver, a major figure in his own right. Like Hrelja, he controlled a major territory, which he seems to have ruled more or less as an independent prince; he accepted Serbian suzerainty but did not suffer royal officials or troops in his realm. He seems to have supported the king faithfully insofar as he did not secede. But he also pressured the king to carry out the policies he wanted. A 1336 Ragusan document refers to him as Oliver Gherchinich (the Greek), suggesting he was of Greek origin. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that he knew Greek. According to Orbini (writing in 1601 on the basis of a lost source) he had married Karavida, the daughter of a certain Karavid who had been one of Dušan’s supporters in Zeta against Dečanski. Thus quite likely Oliver had
also supported Dušan in his revolt and, unlike some of the others (e.g., Bogoje) who felt slighted afterwards, had been well rewarded for his support of Dušan. He had fought actively in the 1334 war against Byzantium.

By 1336 his wife Karavida was dead and by 1340 he had evidently married Maria (in Serbian, Mara) Palaeologina, Dečanski’s widow and Dušan’s step-mother. For a 1340 charter issued by Dušan to Hilandar refers to his step-mother as “my mother Despotica.” We may assume her unusual title was derived from her relationship to Despot John Oliver. Thus he clearly held the title of despot that early—probably, as we have said, receiving it from Andronicus III in 1334 or 1335—and had married Maria by 1340. Most scholars date Oliver’s marriage to Maria to 1336 or 1337. He was also a great landholder, and since his lands lay on a foreign border—on that with Byzantium—he could exercise great independence. Their size gave him a large economic and manpower base to support himself. And their location prevented action against him, since he could in such an event easily switch allegiance to the emperor.

Considerable controversy exists about Oliver’s landholding, in particular over when and how he acquired certain places. The controversy arises owing to the scarcity of sources and the uncertain dating of various documents in which these places are mentioned. The questions debated are: Did Oliver have a large basic holding prior to Dušan’s accession? Or, were most of his lands granted to him by Dušan? Or, as is often argued, were many of the lands he is found holding in 1340 originally granted as an appanage to Queen Mother Maria, coming to Oliver subsequently through his marriage with her? Radonić believes that Maria had held, and Oliver thus obtained through her, the province of Osijek, with Kratovo, Kočani, and Veles, as well as the territory, including the Tikveš and Morihovo provinces, between the Vardar and Crna Reka (the Black River). In any case by about 1340 Oliver held all this territory. At Kratovo he had a rich mine that provided him with the silver he eventually was to use to coin his own money, a sign of his great independence. Though it is not known when he began issuing money, he evidently began doing so during Dušan’s lifetime, for among his coins are some that have his name and Dušan’s picture.

Thus John Oliver was a powerful prince, more-or-less autonomous in his realm, who, through his own clout and influence on the rest of the nobility, was a figure able to exert great authority inside the Kingdom of Serbia, sufficient at times to influence, if not even to dominate, the king. For given his power, one may well wonder how Dušan could have favored Oliver’s concluding an agreement to marry his daughter to Cantacuzenus’ son, a young man who, if Cantacuzenus’ venture succeeded, might eventually become the Byzantine emperor.

Oliver’s power is further illustrated by the fate of Hrelja’s lands. In the summer of 1342, at the same time that Cantacuzenus and Dušan met, Hrelja negotiated his return to Serbia, retaining all his lands and agreeing to accept Dušan’s suzerainty. To his earlier holding he had added during his brief stay
under Byzantine suzerainty more territory, including the important fortress of Melnik. According to Gregoras, Melnik had been surrendered to Hrelja by its Byzantine commander, a supporter of Cantacuzenus against the regency acting on the orders of Cantacuzenus. Cantacuzenus, not surprisingly, does not mention this; he simply says that in his discussion with Dušan he had raised objections to Hrelja’s including Melnik as territory to be under Serbian suzerainty. Whether Cantacuzenus objected or not, there clearly was nothing he could have done about it, and in the end he agreed to it. Soon thereafter, probably late in 1342, Hrelja died and was to be buried in the famous Rila monastery, which he had spent considerable money on restoring. After his death his lands were immediately annexed by Serbia. They seem, however, to have been divided between Dušan and Oliver. That Oliver was able to expand his great holdings even further, which surely was not in Dušan’s interests, shows the power he must have had inside Serbia. Thus by 1342/43 Oliver held in addition to the lands noted previously much of the region bordering on the Struma River, including the important towns of Velbužd, Štip, and Strumica. Thus he held much of the territory lying between the Struma and Vardar rivers.

In 1341 he, like the Serbian kings, completed a zadužbina (obligation), the Lesnovo monastery. After 1346 the Lesnovo monastery became the seat of a Bishop of Lesnovo. At that time Dušan gave the monastery additional villages and freed the peasants in them from state duties. They were put under the authority of the Bishop of Lesnovo. Since Oliver was the monastery’s founder, he was granted the right to participate in the bishop’s selection.

Serbian Participation in the Byzantine Civil War

Cantacuzenus spent the next ten months with Dušan either at his court or on campaign accompanied by Serbian troops. In the late summer or early fall of 1342 Cantacuzenus, supported by a Serbian contingent, attacked the major Byzantine fortified city of Serres and laid siege to it. A stout Byzantine defense held the attackers off; then the Serbian troops came down with violent diarrhoea, said to have been caused by drinking too-young wine, and had to withdraw. Dušan meanwhile led a second army into southwestern Macedonia and took Voden (Edessa). In the fall of 1342, as noted above, Hrelja negotiated his return, bringing his lands back with him. He then died at the end of the year; his lands were absorbed by Dušan and John Oliver. An heir of his (unnamed in the sources) had tried to retain Melnik, but early in 1343 Dušan sent troops against him which took Melnik for himself.

The regency, alarmed by Cantacuzenus’ Serbian alliance, in the fall of 1342 sent envoys to Dušan to offer him an alliance against Cantacuzenus. The regency, according to the hostile source Cantacuzenus, offered Dušan all Macedonia west of Kavalla, excluding Thessaloniki, if he would turn Cantacuzenus over to it. Though Dušan clearly had no sincere interest in Cantacuzenus’ cause and though each was clearly using the other for his own
ambitions, Dušan refused, presumably still calculating he could gain more by supporting Cantacuzenus against the regency. Soulis speculates that Cantacuzenus may have offered Dušan even more to prevent his accepting the offer. Soulis also points out that since pronoias in Byzantine Macedonia were then held by regency supporters, it was in the interests of the pronoia-seeking Serb nobles to oppose the regency.  

Between 1343 and 1345 the Serbs campaigned actively in Macedonia and Albania. Owing to a lack of precision in our sources, scholars cannot be certain as to when during these three years certain cities and regions were conquered. Thus different scholars advance different dates, and there is considerable controversy over the chronology of Dušan’s expansion. However, it is evident that by the end of 1345 Serbia had all Macedonia, except Thessaloniki and possibly Veria, and all Albania, except Durazzo which was again in Angevin hands. In 1343 we know the Serbs were back on the attack again and operating east of the Vardar, taking Melnik from Hrelja’s heir and failing again against Serres. They also seem to have made extensive gains in what was left of Byzantine Macedonia, including Kastoria and Hlerin (Florina) — if these two cities had not already fallen in 1342. In 1343 Dušan added “Greeks” or “Greek lands” to the other territories included in this title. In his Greek language documents he wrote “Romans,” according to Byzantine custom. The Serbs also seem to have made extensive gains in Albania. But it is not at all clear which Serbian gains in Albania had been made earlier during the late 1330s and in 1340 when Byzantium was tied down in Epirus, which acquisitions dated from 1343 and what, if anything, remained to be taken in 1344 and 1345. In any case, at roughly this time Serbia can be documented holding Berat, Kanina, Kroja, and Valona. Many Albanians were incorporated into Dušan’s armies. On the whole, after obtaining their submission, he left the Albanian chiefs in power as local leaders. Eventually he was to appoint a Serbian governor for the area. But even under him the tribes, under their own leaders, continued to follow their tribal, pastoral ways as they had until then.

In late 1342, as Cantacuzenus’ position improved, he appeared as an increasingly viable candidate for the throne. It is not surprising, therefore, that he seemed attractive to the magnates of Thessaly who had remained outwardly neutral until then. After all Cantacuzenus, a great landlord himself, could be expected to support continued privileges to the magnates and in general to benefit them more than the regency, which through 1341 and 1342 had been stirring up social revolution and encouraging the townsmen to oppose the magnates. In the course of 1342, as Cantacuzenus became more active in pressing his cause, the magnates of Thessaly became more open in their sympathy for him, and that summer some had joined him while others had promised him their support. By the end of the year the magnates of Thessaly were formally negotiating with him. They had hoped that Cantacuzenus would come to Thessaly himself; but since he needed to be active in Thrace, this was impossible.
Eventually, probably at the very end of 1342, these negotiations ended in an agreement. Thessaly accepted Cantacuzenus as emperor, and he sent to Thessaly a deputy to govern. The deputy appointed, John Angelus, was a rich magnate, a relative (probably nephew) of Cantacuzenus, who had long association with Cantacuzenus and had been loyal to his cause throughout, being a member of the entourage that accompanied him to Serbia. Angelus was appointed governor of Thessaly for life. After taking an oath of loyalty to and recognizing the suzerainty of Cantacuzenus, Angelus went to Thessaly, which he administered as an autonomous province until his death from the plague in 1348. The magnates of Thessaly rallied around this decision. Soulis claims that Cantacuzenus also awarded Angelus the governorship of Epirus, Acarnania, and Aetolia. He had been appointed to govern these three western regions by Andronicus III in the end of 1340 and as far as we know had continued to hold that post until he chose to accompany Cantacuzenus to Serbia. Whether the regency had been able to install a successor to him in these western provinces during 1342 is unknown but also may be doubted.

Cantacuzenus' acquisition of Thessaly greatly improved his position and alarmed Dušan, who did not want to see a strong neighbor to his south. Cantacuzenus' successes in 1342 had been the result of Serbian support, which allowed the Serbs to control the disposition of conquered territory. But now Cantacuzenus was beginning to build his own independent support that might enable him to act independently of Serbian wishes. Furthermore, in early 1343 Dušan became angry with Cantacuzenus who, he felt, had cheated the Serbs out of Veria. While the Serbs were besieging the town, Cantacuzenus, whom Dušan until then had successfully kept from independent operations, had with his son slipped away and secretly opened negotiations with the defenders. After secretly entering the town, he won acceptance from its leaders, who then got the town to openly accept him in April 1343. The besieging Serbs, completely uninformed throughout, were caught by the fait accompli and, since Cantacuzenus was their ally, had to accept his coup and leave him in control of the town. Cantacuzenus then installed his son Manuel as governor of Veria. Several other forts in the vicinity, including Servia, followed suit and also accepted Cantacuzenus. This seriously threatened Serbia's plans for expansion into Macedonia.

So Dušan now in April 1343 sent an envoy to the regency in Constantinople to express his willingness to reach an arrangement with it. Their alliance was concluded in the summer of 1343 and sealed by the engagement of Dušan's son Uroš to a sister of John V. Dušan's new alliance enabled him to attack Veria and the other forts in its vicinity that he had wanted but that his erstwhile ally Cantacuzenus had in the meantime taken.

Cantacuzenus, fortunate to be elsewhere when Dušan reached his agreement with the regency and improving his own position in the empire, needed a new ally to replace the Serbs. And during the winter 1342–43 he had already found this ally in Umur, the Emir of Aydin. Cantacuzenus' center of operations continued to be Demotika. There Cantacuzenus had to face either (or
both) supply or discipline problems with his men. For his soldiers based in Demotika plundered the neighboring villages. Cantacuzenus admitted that the acts were committed by his partisans but claimed they were obliged to loot because they lacked any other means of subsistence.

In the summer of 1343 Cantacuzenus tried to take Thessaloniki, but the zealots, re-enforced by troops from Constantinople (showing the close ties between regency and zealots), successfully resisted him. He then moved into Thrace to try to rebuild the shattered fortunes of his scattered allies, the Thracian magnates. For it was necessary for him to oust as leaders of the Thracian towns the townsmen allied to the regency and restore to power his allies the magnates. The acquisition of Thrace, bordering on the capital, was also vital if he hoped to acquire the capital. Controlling Thrace would enable him to recruit further men from it and allow him to march freely against Constantinople and place his forces wherever he required them without fear of an assault upon his rear during that attack.

Between 1343 and 1345 Cantacuzenus was successful in this effort, frequently acquiring towns through subversion by the magnates from within rather than military conquest from without. With the help of Umur’s Turks he acquired a series of fortresses along Thrace’s Aegean coast, including Kavalla. He also took the region in the interior behind the coast as far north as the Arda River. The western part of this territory from the Mesta (Nestos) River in the west roughly to Gratianou in the east was called Merope; the territory to Gratianou’s east as far as Demotika was called Morrha. Local support brought more of the towns of Merope to submit to him than did military conquest. Cantacuzenus assigned Merope’s government in late 1343 to Momčilo, a brigand chief who, commanding his own retinue, was probably already based in the area. He had joined Cantacuzenus in 1343 and received from him the title of sebastocrator. The government of Morrha Cantacuzenus assigned to John Asen, a Byzantine aristocrat closely related to his wife. During the winter 1343–44, at the time he was acquiring most of this territory, he also besieged but failed to take Merope’s main port, Peritheorion (Anastasiopolis). Having gained the territory south of the Arda, his troops moved north of the river early in 1344 to briefly take Stanimaka and Tzepania. During this time Cantacuzenus’ garrison suppressed a revolt of townsmen in his capital of Demotika. Many of the townsmen were then forced to flee the city. His Turkish allies, who had successfully driven off the Bulgarian attack early in 1343, defended Demotika from a regency attack in 1344. In the course of 1344 Cantacuzenus took Adrianople.

At the end of the spring of 1344 Umur returned to Aydin and then was detained there as the Latins were preparing to attack Smyrna. That attack came in the fall, and on 28 October 1344 a Latin coalition took the castle at the port of Smyrna. However, Umur successfully defended the town’s main citadel. When the fighting ended the Latins were unable to move beyond the port fortifications; however, Umur was equally unable to dislodge them from the castle at the port.
The regency, faced with Cantacuzenus’ successes, probably in mid-1344, after negotiations, won to its side John Alexander of Bulgaria. For his support he was granted the region of the upper Marica, with nine Thracian cities including Philippopolis, Stanimaka, and Tzeprania. He quickly occupied this territory, taking the two last-mentioned cities from Cantacuzenus. This territory was to remain Bulgarian from then until the Ottoman conquest. In 1344 the regency also persuaded Momčilo to switch sides. Awarded the title of despot by the regents, he then attempted to persuade the cities placed under him by Cantacuzenus to switch their loyalty to the regency. He also plundered the cities in the area that were loyal to Cantacuzenus and skirmished with the small Turkish forces that remained with Cantacuzenus.

This eastern activity of Cantacuzenus had the effect of abandoning Macedonia and Albania to Dušan’s armies, and, as noted, in the course of 1343 and 1344 the Serbs were very successful. Only once did they meet opposition. In 1344 a Serb army under Vojvoda Preljub lost a skirmish to Cantacuzenus’ Aydın Turks somewhere near the Aegean. However, this was a small-scale encounter that did nothing to stop the Serbs’ advance in Macedonia.

Thus while the Byzantines fought one another in Thrace, leaving almost no troops to defend Macedonia, Albania, and Epirus, the regency’s new ally looked out for his own interests. In 1344 Dušan was active in Macedonia and probably Albania, acquiring whatever cities he had not taken before. By the end of the year he had all Macedonia except Thessaloniki, Serres, and possibly Veria. Whereas some scholars believe he gained Veria in 1344, Soulis argues that this town held out under Manuel Cantacuzenus until 1347, when the Serbs were finally to acquire it.

Early in the spring of 1345, after the Latins had been pushed back to the port castle of Smyrna and besieged there (and thus were unable to threaten further action against Smyrna), Umur returned to the Balkans with twenty thousand men to assist Cantacuzenus. Upon their arrival, probably in May and early June, they pillaged Bulgaria. Then they turned to the serious task of defeating the warlord Momčilo and regaining the territory that had gone over to the regency with him. In 1344 and 1345, nominally loyal to the regency but in effect an independent prince, Momčilo was trying to assert his control in the Rhodopes, in the Byzantine-Bulgarian-Serbian borderlands. He had as loyal retainers five thousand footsoldiers and three hundred cavalrymen drawn from different nationalities. This large figure for his armies, given by Cantacuzenus, is confirmed by Gregoras, who reports Momčilo had over four thousand armed men under him. His career was marked by raids against his neighbors and a willingness to form alliances and then shift sides at will; his policy was always founded on doing whatever would bring him the greatest profit at a given moment. As noted, in 1344 the regency had enlisted his support.

This was to be Momčilo’s undoing, for Cantacuzenus’ Turks attacked him and wiped out his army, killing Momčilo in the process, on 7 July 1345. This battle occurred outside the walls of Peritheorion. It is usually stated that
Momčilo held that city. If so, presumably the regency had granted it to him at the time he joined the regency. If indeed this had occurred, then Peri-
thorion’s inhabitants evidently disliked Momčilo, for when he and his reti-
nue sought to avoid battle with the more numerous Turks by fleeing to Peri-
thorion, its citizens locked the town’s gates against Momčilo, leaving him and his men outside to be killed by the Turks. Lemerle, however, believes
Momčilo had never held the city.7 Momčilo’s career provides one more good
illustration of the process of creating and maintaining a secessionist prin-
cipality in a border region. He also made sufficient impression on his contem-
poraries to become an important figure in the epic poetry of the region. After
Momčilo’s death Cantacuzenus regained all Merope.

In 1345 Dušan once again laid siege to Serres. Cantacuzenus sent an
envoy to him ordering him to desist from the siege or else face an attack from
him and his Turks. Dušan did not give up the siege, but Cantacuzenus for two
reasons did not bring his Turks west. First, on 11 July 1345 Alexius Apoca-
cus was murdered in Constantinople, causing Cantacuzenus to hurry with his
troops toward Constantinople in the hope that Apocacus’ death would create
sufficient instability in the capital to allow him to obtain it.8 His hopes were
not realized. Second, any plans he might have had against the Serbs depended
on his Turkish troops; and such plans had to be given up when Umur, the
Turkish leader, had to return with most of his men to Anatolia to defend his
own land from a possible attack.

For in August 1345, outside the walls of Constantinople, the commander
of a Turkish unit allied to Umur took sick and died. This commander was the
son of the Emir of Sarukhan, whose lands bordered on Aydin. Afraid that the
father might misinterpret his son’s death and use it as an excuse to attack
Aydin in Umur’s absence, Umur hurried back home with his forces. His
departure eliminated any hope that Cantacuzenus might have had of bringing
sufficient forces against Dušan to prevent the capture of Serres. The attack
against Aydin from Sarukhan did not materialize; however, having reached
home, Umur learned that the Latins were sending a new force to relieve the
besieged port castle. Umur had to wait until the summer of 1346 for these
forces to arrive; he defeated them with ease and forced them to retreat into the
castle. However, continuing tense relations with Sarukhan prevented Umur
from returning to the Balkans. Faced with the loss of his support from Aydin,
Cantacuzenus turned to the Ottomans. In the summer (probably June) of 1346
he concluded an agreement with them, sealed by giving his daughter Theo-
dora to the Ottoman ruler, Orkhan. Umur remained at home; later, in May
1348, in an attempt to dislodge the Latins from the port castle of Smyrna,
Umur was killed by an arrow. The Hospitaler knights were to hold the port
fortress until they were driven out in 1402 by Timur shortly after his victory at
Ankara.

Meanwhile Dušan, wiping out the stain of earlier failures, on 25 Sep-
tember 1345 finally took Serres after a long siege that had finally reduced the
town to the last extremities. Following the conquest many Greeks remained in
high positions; in fact the town’s first governor under Dušan was a Greek named Michael Avrambakes. Dušan then took Kavalla and Drama, the rest of Albania and Macedonia (getting whatever fortresses he had not been able to take previously), and occupied most of the Chalcidic peninsula, including Mount Athos. The only opposition he met came from small garrisons inside certain towns. Neither Byzantine side was in a position to send relief to any of the towns Dušan was attacking. Thus at the end of 1345 Dušan held everything between (and including) Kavalla and Albania, except Durazzo, Thessaloniki, the western part of the Chalcidic peninsula, the independent town of Anaktoropolis (modern Eleutheropolis), which was more or less an independent fief of a Greek pirate who had served Apocaucus at times, and possibly Veria. Kavalla was to remain the most easterly city in Dušan’s realm.

Dušan sent his logothete in September 1345 to visit Mount Athos and negotiate with the monks. For both political and religious reasons Dušan sought the support of this major religious center. He wanted the monks to recognize him as their suzerain and include his name in their prayers. This would not only bring him the benefits of the prayers but also would contribute to his obtaining broader recognition and acceptance from the Greek population he was adding to his empire. His envoy, having agreed to the monks’ condition that they be allowed to continue to also mention the Byzantine emperor’s name in their prayers, received a promise from the monks to accept Dušan’s suzerainty and to pray for him. After reporting to Dušan, the envoy returned to Athos in November 1345 with a charter from Dušan to all the monasteries on Athos. This charter allowed the Byzantine emperor’s name to be commemorated in their prayers and to precede the name of the Serbian ruler. It promised that Athos should continue to be governed by its existing rules and customs. Dušan promised to restore various possessions on the Struma River to the monasteries and to exempt these properties from all taxes and obligations. He also gave the monasteries’ boats the right to fish duty-free on the Struma River. The city of Hierissos would not be governed by a kephale but jointly by the Athonite monks and the town’s bishop.

Shortly thereafter Dušan began issuing separate charters to the individual monasteries that confirmed the monasteries in their lands and privileges. Two such privileges from January 1346 have survived. To celebrate his coronation as tsar (emperor) in April 1346 Dušan issued more charters confirming various monasteries’ lands and immunities and extending some of the latter. In order to gain the monks’ support for his coronation he was most generous to them. Subsequently Dušan himself visited Mount Athos, spending four months there from the end of 1347 to early 1348. He took his wife and son along. And the monasteries, which had rules against the presence of women on their terrain, made a special exception to allow Dušan’s wife to visit. The royal family visited all the monasteries, giving rich gifts to each. At this time Dušan granted many new lands to Hilendar, the Serbian monastery, and he settled a quarrel over land between Hilendar and the Bulgarian Zographou
monastery. His decision favored Hilandar; however, he granted new villages to Zographou to compensate the Bulgarians for what they might have felt to be their loss. These charters gave certain monasteries tax-free status for some of their lands. In November 1348 he issued a general charter to all the Athonite monasteries granting them all total tax exemption as well as total liberty from any and all service obligations to the state.

Thus the monasteries received large new tracts of land and other gifts from the Serbian ruler and also acquired tax-free status. It is not surprising that Dušan has gone down in their histories as one of Athos’ major patrons. Good relations followed between ruler and monks. He continued to give them gifts while they entered his name in their prayers—along with that of the Byzantine emperor—and, despite objections from the Byzantines, they supported Dušan’s raising the Serbian archbishop to the rank of patriarch and his own status from king to emperor. However, the monks called him Emperor of the Serbs rather than Emperor of the Serbs and Romans, as he called himself. In this period many more Serbs entered monasteries on the mountain and some rose to high positions. Under Dušan for the first time a Serb came to hold the office of protos, the primary elder, of the mountain. His appointment may well have resulted from political pressure.

Cantacuzenzenus’ Triumph

By 1345, supported by Thessaly and Umur’s Turks, Cantacuzenzenus was gaining the upper hand in the Byzantine struggle. He made progress even though the regency, through its acquisition of powerful allies, might have appeared the stronger. This was owing to the fact that Cantacuzenzenus’ Turks fought well for him, while the regency’s allies were clearly out for themselves and did nothing to aid the regency against Cantacuzenzenus. The Turks fought in the key area of Thrace. But Dušan avoided that region and devoted his efforts to acquiring Macedonia and Albania for himself. And John Alexander of Bulgaria (enlisted as an ally, probably in 1344, for which he was given Philippopolis, the upper Marica, and a sister of John V as a bride), though he did operate in Thrace, avoided Cantacuzenzenus’ troops and simply took for himself what Thracian towns he could. He could do this easily since he concentrated his efforts in western Thrace, whereas Cantacuzenzenus, interested in the capital, was by then concentrating his attention on eastern Thrace. Thus Cantacuzenzenus’ forces never came into contact with the armies of the regency’s powerful allies. Most of eastern Thrace by this time was in Cantacuzenzenus’ hands, which ended the fighting there. However, despite the end of the actual warfare, all of Thrace continued to suffer from the plundering of Cantacuzenzenus’ unruly Turkish mercenaries. In 1346 Cantacuzenzenus strengthened his position by allying with a second Turkish state, the Ottomans. This alliance prevented the Ottomans from aiding the regency, which might have spelled disaster for Cantacuzenzenus. From that time, owing to Umur of Aydin’s occupation with domestic worries and then his death in 1348, Cantacuzenzenus
was to turn increasingly to the Ottomans and to obtain from them ever increasing support.

While Cantacuzenus strengthened his position and became the master of most of Byzantine Thrace, the regency’s position declined. Holding little more than Constantinople and its environs, the regency was weakened further by the murder of its ablest leader, Alexius Apocaucus, in July 1345. Immediately thereafter a quarrel erupted in Thessaloniki between two zealot leaders, Alexius’ son John Apocaucus and Michael Palaeologus. Their split may well have been related to events occurring in Constantinople. The quarrel ended with Michael Palaeologus’ murder and Apocaucus taking power in Thessaloniki. However, the murder of his father had broken the ties binding him and his regime in Thessaloniki to the capital, and John no longer exhibited much loyalty to the regency. Letters, now lost but probably not particularly friendly, were exchanged between John Apocaucus and Constantinople. Then, breaking with the regency, he summoned an assembly in Thessaloniki, to which the masses were not invited, that endorsed his opposition to the regency and agreed to surrender Thessaloniki to Cantacuzenus if Cantacuzenus would recognize Apocaucus as governor of Thessaloniki and recognize the municipality’s privileges. Having thus declared for Cantacuzenus, the assembly awaited Cantacuzenus’ response. But before Cantacuzenus could take any action and before John Apocaucus could do anything about rendering the city to him, a counter-movement within Thessaloniki, supported by the majority of the original zealots and led by another Palaeologus (Andrew, head of the mariners’ guild), overthrew and butchered Apocaucus and his friends, most of whom were said to be rich. The city then continued on as a pro-regency, anti-Cantacuzenus “city-state.”

But despite this setback, matters stood well for Cantacuzenus. Alexius Apocaucus’ death made resistance to him less effective. He now had Ottoman allies who provided effective, even if unruly, troops. His successes during 1344–45, both before and, more especially, after Apocaucus’ death, included Adrianople, most of eastern Thrace, and the Aegean and Black Sea coastal cities. By the end of 1345 the regency seems to have retained only Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Sozopolis, and Heraclea. Cantacuzenus next marched toward the capital, stopping at Adrianople, where he was crowned emperor by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in May 1346. Despite his strength almost a year passed before he acquired Constantinople; he explains this delay by claiming he wanted to gain the capital through diplomacy or through his supporters inside the city, rather than turn his Turks loose against the capital. Finally, on 3 February 1347, the gates of Constantinople were opened to him and he took over its government as Emperor John VI, retaining the young John V as co-emperor. To seal an alliance with John V he married John V to his daughter Helen. Cantacuzenus was crowned again in Constantinople in May 1347. Though John V received full honors, Cantacuzenus ran the state and continued to do so for the next seven years. To solidify his family’s position and to prevent further Serbian expansion to the east, Cantacuzenus
converted the western part of Byzantine Thrace, from the Serbian border at Kavalla east to Demotika, into a special appanage which he assigned to his son, Matthew. One might see this appanage, established right on the dangerous Serbian border, as a special frontier march. Now Dušan found himself faced with a tougher Byzantium, for it was no longer divided and involved in civil war, but united once again under an able emperor.

Cantacuzenus, however, did not receive acceptance from the whole empire. Even after he acquired the capital the zealots, his enemies who administered Thessaloniki, refused to accept him. This marked the first time that a so-called zealot government in Thessaloniki refused to recognize a regime in Constantinople. And only from this moment early in 1347—when Thessaloniki's leaders refused to accept the emperor recognized in Constantinople—is one justified in speaking of an independent city-state of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki's existence as an independent city-state was to be short-lived. In 1350 Cantacuzenus marched against Thessaloniki. When they realized defeat was imminent, some zealot leaders wanted to surrender the city to the Serbs rather than allow Cantacuzenus to obtain it. However, they were unable to realize their plans, for Cantacuzenus arrived there first. And in October 1350 Cantacuzenus regained Thessaloniki, reuniting it to the empire. Those zealot leaders who could, fled, some of them ending up in Serbia.

Dušan's Coronation (April 1346)

By this time Dušan had changed his own title. In 1343 he had added “of the Romans (Greeks)” to his title of King of Serbia, Albania, and the coast. In late 1345 he began to call himself tsar, the Slavic equivalent of emperor. He used this title in charters to two Athone monasteries, one from November 1345 and one from January 1346. At a council meeting held at his new city of Serres around Christmas 1345 he seems to have called himself Tsar of the Serbs and Romans (the latter rendered as Greeks in Serbian language documents). Then on 16 April 1346 (Easter) he convoked a huge assembly at Skopje, attended by the Archbishop of Serbia, the Archbishop of Ohrid, the Bulgarian Patriarch of Trnovo, and various leaders from Mount Athos. These clerics and the assembly agreed to, and then ceremonially performed, the raising of the Serbian archbishop to the rank of patriarch. From then on he was the Patriarch of Serbia, though one document calls him Patriarch of Serbs and Greeks. The patriarch's residence was to be in Peć. Then the new patriarch, Joanikije, crowned Dušan Emperor (Tsar) of the Serbs and Greeks. Dušan's minor son Uroš was crowned king and nominally given the Serbian lands—which until then had been held by a king—to rule. Dušan, the emperor, though in fact governing the whole state, had particular responsibility for “Romania,” the Roman (i.e., Byzantine) or Greek lands.

After his coronation a further increase in the Byzantinization of Dušan's court followed, particularly in court ceremonial and court titles. For as emperor, Dušan was now able to grant various titles that could only originate with
an emperor. Thus many high Serbs in the years that followed received high non-functional honorary court titles, long found at the Byzantine court. Dušan’s half-brother Symeon and Dušan’s wife’s brother John Comnenus Asen each received the title despot. John Oliver, as noted, also had this title, but, though Ferjančić believes Dušan granted it to him, he probably held it prior to Dušan’s coronation, having obtained it from Andronicus III in the 1330s. Dejan, the husband of Dušan’s sister and also lord of Kumanovo, by 1354, and Branko of Ohrid, the father of the famous Vuk Branković, by 1365 had received the next highest title, sevastocrator, while two able generals (vojvodes), Preljub in 1348 and Vojin, became caesars. Serbian Church figures benefited in the same way from the creation of a Serbian patriarch. For the creation of a patriarch allowed the elevation in title of various other bishops, who, like the Bishop of Skopje, became metropolitan.

Constantinople had opposed increasing the title of the Serbian archbishop. For that reason Dušan had brought together at his council an impressive array of foreign clerics to sanction this change. The Byzantines also strongly opposed Dušan’s taking the imperial title. Cantacuzenus and Gregorys in their histories always refer to him only as king. And later the Byzantine patriarch was to excommunicate both the new Serbian emperor and the new Serbian patriarch. However, though scholars often state this excommunication followed at once upon the 1346 coronation, it is now evident the excommunication came in 1350.

Administration of Dušan’s State

Dušan’s state was becoming increasingly multi-ethnic. His gains in Macedonia had brought large numbers of Greeks under his rule, and, by annexing Albania, he had added to his state large numbers of Albanian tribesmen. These Albanians, having bound themselves to Dušan by oath and recognized his suzerainty, were then left under their tribal leaders, who ran their mountain districts as they had previously. However, excluding the Albanian regions, most of the state was inhabited by two main peoples: Serbs and Greeks. Serbs dominated the original Serbian heartland and northern regions. Then as one moved south into the newly conquered lands one passed through a mixed zone of Slavs and Greeks that became increasingly Greek as one got further south. The differences between the Serbian and Greek lands were retained after Dušan’s coronation. Serbia retained its status as a kingdom, under King Uroš, while the Greek lands, “Romania,” long under the Byzantine emperor, retained rule by an emperor, though now this emperor was a Serb. The support of the many Greeks added to his realm was important for the smooth functioning of his state and for what was to emerge as Dušan’s new goal—the creation of a Greek-Serbian empire, to replace the existing Byzantine Empire, that ideally would some day be run from Constantinople, if and when Dušan should take that city.

In the beginning Dušan had carried out the policy of expansion to the
south because he was pressed, or even forced, to do so by his nobility. And he benefited from existing circumstances—Syrgiannes’ revolt and the Byzantine civil war—to achieve astounding successes. In time, however, with his accomplishments Dušan was able to gain in his own right the authority that frequently belongs to victorious war leaders who can offer booty to their followers. And as his expansionist policy came to be increasingly successful, and as the size of his state grew along with his own authority over it, Dušan, who does not seem to have been averse to this policy, was swept up by events and acquired new and greater ambitions, imperial ones.

To realize such ambitions and to maintain order in the regions he conquered, he needed to keep the loyalty of the Greeks. Thus he left much of the Byzantine administration in place, maintaining the existing offices and often even their office holders. Greek titles, both functional and honorary, also usually remained in force. Many Greek magnates, including Byzantine pronoia holders, if they now swore allegiance to Dušan and provided service to him, were left in possession of their estates. Dušan confirmed these landlords in possession of their lands in typical Byzantine-style charters written in Greek. Greek remained the official language for the Greek lands. In the Greek provinces the existing legal structure also remained almost unchanged. Thus Byzantine civil, criminal, and tax laws on the whole continued in effect. However, as might be expected, matters did not remain static. Just as Byzantine institutions had been penetrating Serbia from the time of Milutin, now under Serbian rule certain Serbian taxes and titles began appearing in the Greek lands under Dušan.9

The most important change that took place was the insertion of Serbs into the highest positions on a provincial or regional level. Over half of what Ostrogorsky calls the top positions in the Greek lands were assigned to Serbs. However, they filled offices that had existed under the Byzantine Empire and that continued to bear their Byzantine names. Serbs were also assigned deserted lands—lands of those who had been killed or had fled. However, the middling and lesser Byzantine nobility entered Dušan’s service in considerable numbers, keeping its former titles and properties.

With Greeks retaining much of the landed property they had previously held, with existing laws continuing in effect, and with Greeks remaining as office holders (excluding the highest offices) anarchy was avoided and Dušan was able to manage a large territory and acquire for himself considerable loyalty from his new population. The use of Greeks in official positions benefited him; for it is doubtful, particularly if we consider the difference in language, that he had enough trained manpower from Serbia to administer these lands. Furthermore, the Serbs would not have known how the Greeks managed their towns. Thus to have given the management of towns over to Serbs would have caused friction and unrest. By leaving existing administrators in office to serve under traditional rules and regulations meant the functions of government could continue and provide the Serbian state with revenue from the region. Moreover, with the face of the state little changed,
the population would have been less likely to resist. In a conquered town a Serb governor (usually called by the Greek title *kephale*) stood over an administration of Greek bureaucrats and a Serb garrison. In this way Greeks, who held most of the municipal administrative posts, and certainly the posts that required contact with the local citizens, dealt in the local language with the problems and obligations of local Greeks and managed the day-to-day functioning of the town and its administration. However, since Serb troops were present in the major towns as garrisons under Serb commanders, the Greek population was in no position to resist Dušan’s orders.

In the Church Dušan also seems to have appointed Serbs to the most important episcopal positions. To do so he expelled some high Greek clerics and replaced them with Serbs. This occurred particularly at the metropolitan level. We find, for example, that Dušan’s friend Jacob was made Metropolitan of Serres in 1353; he held that post until 1360 when a new Serb was appointed to succeed him. Also, it seems that Dušan sought greater influence on Mount Athos by placing his appointees in high positions there. It seems that in 1347 he forced out Niphon, the Protos of Athos. In 1348 the protos was a certain Anthony, the first protos to sign documents in Cyrillic. Thus probably he was a Serb. He was succeeded by a series of short-term protoi, several of whom were clearly Serbs. Then in 1356 Dorotheus of the Serbian monastery of Hilandar became protos, holding that office to 1366.

Ostrogorsky stresses that we should not see the appointment of Serbs to these high positions as a “nationalist” policy. Dušan placed Serbs in the top civil, military, and ecclesiastical positions not only to keep order and to have people of known loyalty to him at the top to bind the area to his rule, but also because his Serb nobles demanded rewards. They had pressed for a militaristic policy, wanting to expand south for the gains to be had for themselves. Thus they expected land and other material rewards, including positions of authority in the newly conquered area. So Dušan had to consider their wishes and reward them with the high offices they expected. Such appointments, however, were not against his own interests and were a means to keep better control over his conquests.

The wishes or demands of the high Serbs who had carried out the conquest, to obtain lands in the newly conquered regions also caused problems at times, when there was insufficient abandoned land. Thus cases did exist in which Greeks lost lands or pronoias—for example, when Hrelja acquired villages and lands of various Greek pronoia holders near Štip—which must have caused some local dissatisfaction. However, if we take the conquered Greek lands as a whole, we probably would be justified in concluding that in general the Greeks were able to keep a large portion of their lands and were able to continue to live very much as they had before under the Byzantine Empire.

In the Serb territories, which also included the Albanian lands and northern Macedonia down to Skopje and possibly a bit beyond, Dušan did not
change matters either. He saw no reason to introduce a Byzantine administrative system here. If he had it probably would not have functioned properly, because there were not enough Serbs who understood how the system ought to work. Thus, as noted, he left the Albanians under their tribal chiefs to manage their mountain districts according to existing custom. Serbian remained the language of his Serbian lands. Serbs filled offices there, though in some places he had foreign—often German—mercenary garrisons, probably to control regions where the nobility was not considered trustworthy. His best-known mercenary unit was that of the German Palman who commanded three hundred Germans. The existing Serbian tax system was retained and usually so were the Serbian titles for offices (e.g., župan).

The existing legal structure also remained in force. Until Dušan’s reign Serbia had functioned under its customary law, supplemented in the early thirteenth century by a Church canon law code, introduced by Sava, that also covered many matters of civil and family law as well. Beyond these laws, rulers issued special acts (edicts) to a region or even to the nation as a whole in response to particular needs. Rulers also granted special charters of privilege to individual noblemen or monasteries (whose contents were often repeated to other individuals) or to special communities of foreign merchants or miners that allowed them to manage their own affairs under their own leaders according to their own customs. Dušan, though, soon came to believe his Serbian lands needed a more general code, and in 1349 he issued a state law code dealing with general matters. By it he intended to bring uniformity to the Serbian regions of his state and meet particular pressing problems. This document, which we shall turn to in a moment, excluding the general legal efforts possibly carried out by Milutin, is the first code of Serbian public law. Recognizing the existing division of the empire, it was valid only for the Serbian lands. In his Greek lands, as noted, existing Byzantine laws continued to be in force, supplemented only by Dušan’s particular edicts or charters.

Thus in theory the Serbian empire was split down the middle, with two legal systems and two rulers—an emperor for the Greek lands and a king for the Serbian lands. However, since the king was only ten years old, Dušan in fact managed the whole kingdom. Greek language, civil and military titles, institutions, and laws marked the south (and article 124 of Dušan’s law code recognizes the Byzantine charters for former Byzantine towns were to remain in effect), while Serbian language, civil and military titles, institutions and laws were used in the north. Dušan had two chancelleries, each under a logothete, one to issue Slavic documents and one to issue Greek ones. The position of logothete of the Serbian chancellery was held for a while by the father of the future prince, Lazar Hrebljanović. The chief financial official responsible for the state treasury and its income was the protovestijar. This position was regularly held by a merchant from Kotor who understood financial management and bookkeeping. It was long held by Nikola Buća of Kotor. Both
protovestijars and logothetes were at times used as diplomats, the protovesti-
jars in particular being sent west, for as citizens of Kotor they knew Italian
and Latin.

Dušan’s Law Code

Dušan’s law code was promulgated at a council in 1349. After it was applied
for a few years, it was found to have various short-comings. So in 1353 or
1354 he issued a series of additional articles to it.10 Dušan’s compilation is
usually said to be the first code of public law in Serbia. However, four articles
(nos. 79, 123, 152, 153), touching on various subjects, refer to the authority
of the “Law of the Sainted King” (i.e., Milutin), which suggests that Milutin
had issued some sort of code whose text has not survived. Dušan’s code thus
seems to have been a supplement to Milutin’s non-extant code as well as a
supplement to the various Church law codes that also had legal authority in
Serbia at the time; in particular we may recall Sava’s version of the Byzantine
Nomocanon which he translated and which was accepted by the Serbian
Church council in 1221. Moreover, Serbia had the Syntagma of Matthew
Blastares. This collection of legal decisions, touching on ecclesiastical but
also civil law cases, was written in the Byzantine Empire in 1335 and had
soon thereafter been translated into Serbian. This text clearly received legal
authority in 1349. Whether it had been given that authority prior to 1349 is a
matter of debate. For when we are dealing with translations of legal texts, it is
difficult to determine whether they were simply translated for information or
as guides or, as most scholars think in the case of the Syntagma, as documents
with binding authority in Serbia. In any case the Syntagma’s articles influ-
enced the text of Dušan’s code. Dušan’s code was throughout very heavily
influenced by Byzantine law—nearly half of its articles reflect that influence
to a greater or lesser degree, often modified to meet Serbia’s needs. The code
has many articles concerning the Church that reflect Byzantine Church law;
Byzantine civil law codes, especially the late-ninth-century compilation by
Basil I and Leo VI, also influenced the Serbian code.

Dušan’s code was not a thorough or systematic work but rather addressed
a series of individual issues. Since most early manuscripts of Dušan’s code
also contain two other texts, many scholars, led by A. Solovjov and Soulis,
conclude that the Council of 1349 actually issued a three-part comprehensive
legal document. The first part was a newly prepared abridgement of Blastares’
Syntagma, a fuller version of which, as noted, may already have acquired
legal authority in Serbia. The second part was the so-called “Law of Justin-
ian” (actually an abridgement of The Farmer’s Law). And then, always given
as the third part, was Dušan’s original code itself. If the three texts were
actually promulgated together and all given the force of law (as seems proba-
ble), then this would explain the unsystematic nature of Dušan’s code itself;
for if it was only the third part of a larger codex, its purpose would have been
to supplement the first two texts, by picking up items not covered in them, rather than to establish a comprehensive legal system.

Before turning to the original Serbian part of the codex, let us examine the first two parts. Part One was an abridgement in Slavic of the Syntagma of Matthew Blastraes. The original Byzantine work was a legal collection of an encyclopedic nature, providing discussions under alphabetical subject headings. Its content was drawn, as noted, from ecclesiastical and secular law; ecclesiastical articles made up a majority of the articles of the Byzantine original. Dušan’s new version—or at least the version found in manuscripts containing his law code—contained only a third of the original Greek version; it omitted most of the ecclesiastical material and contained mainly secular articles. This should not surprise us, for, after all, Serbia already had an ecclesiastical code in Sava’s Nomocanon. The secular articles of the abridged Serbian version of the Syntagma were drawn chiefly from Basil I’s law code and the novels (new laws) of emperors who succeeded him; they focused on laws governing contracts, loans, inheritance, marriage, dowries, etc. as well as on matters of criminal law (both violent crimes and moral violations). Part Two, the so-called “Law of Justinian,” was actually a shortened version of the eighth-century Farmer’s Law, a code discussed in my volume on the early medieval Balkans. It focused on settling problems and disputes among peasants within a village.

These two texts were followed by Dušan’s original code. This document seems to have been intended as a supplement to the other two parts, picking up what was not covered in them and dealing with specific Serbian situations. Since many aspects of civil and criminal law were well covered in the first two parts, Dušan’s articles were more concerned with public law and legal procedure. His code also provided more material on actual punishments; on this subject there can be detected a strong Byzantine influence, with executions and mutilations frequently replacing Serbia’s traditional monetary fines. Since Dušan’s law code is actually a Serbian work, I shall discuss its contents in some detail.

The code touched on crimes or insults and their punishment; settlement of civil suits (including ordeals and the selection and role of juries); court procedure and judicial jurisdictions (defining which cases were to be judged by which bodies among Church courts, the tsar’s court, courts of the tsar’s circuit judges, and judgment by a nobleman); and rights and obligations, including the right to freely carry out commerce (articles 120, 121), tax obligations (what was owed in taxes and the time of year to pay them), grazing rights and their violation, service obligations to the tsar, exemption from state dues (usually for the Church), obligations associated with land, and the obligation of the Church to perform charity. The code also defined the different types of landholding (specifying the various rights and obligations that went with various categories of land), the rights of inheritance, the position of slaves, and the position of serfs. It defined the labor dues serfs
owed to their lords (article 68) but also gave them the right to lay plaint against their master before the tsar’s court (article 139)—a right probably rarely if ever exercised. The code also noted the special privileges of foreign communities (e.g., the Sasi).

Many articles touched on the status of the Church, thus supplementing the existing canon law texts. On the whole the Church received a very privileged position, though it was given the duty of charity in no uncertain terms: “And in all churches the poor shall be fed . . . and should any one fail to feed them, be he Metropolitan, bishop, or abbot, he shall be deprived of his office” (article 28). The code also banned simony. In most matters a clear-cut separation of Church and state was established, allowing Church courts to judge the Church’s people and prohibiting the nobility from interfering with Church property and Church matters. It is also worth noting that though Dušan (like his predecessors) was on the whole friendly to, and willing to respect the rights of, foreign Catholics (such as the Sasi and coastal merchants residing in his realm), his code did not look favorably upon the Catholic Church. Dušan refers to it as the “Latin heresy” and to its adherents as “half believers.” He prohibited proselytism by Catholics among the Orthodox, Orthodox conversions to Catholicism, and mixed marriages between Catholics and Orthodox unless the Catholic converted to Orthodoxy. He also had articles strongly penalizing “heretics” (presumably referring to Bogomils). Only the Orthodox were called Christians.

The code defined and supported the existing class structure, allowing court procedure, jurisdictions, and punishment to depend upon the social class of the individual involved. Articles touched on the status in society and in court of churchmen, noblemen, commoners, serfs, slaves, Albanians and Vlachs (the last two differentiated legally more for their pastoral occupation, thus different life-style, than for ethnic reasons), and the foreign communities. The code was also concerned with guaranteeing the state’s authority and income; thus it contained articles on such matters as taxes, obligations associated with land, and services (and hospitality) owed to the tsar and to his agents.

The code also supported the state’s efforts to maintain law and order. In this it did not limit itself to articles against crime and insults but also, reflecting the state’s inability to keep order throughout the realm, gave responsibility in this field to specific communities. Thus the code made—or, as probably was the case, recognized the existing custom that made—each locality responsible for keeping order in its territory and liable for failure to do so. For example, a border lord was responsible for defending his border. Article 49 says, “if any foreign army come and ravish the land of the Tsar, and again return through their land, those frontier lords shall pay all [the people] through whose territory they [the army] came.” The control of brigands, a constant Balkan problem, also fell to localities. This issue was addressed in articles 126, 145, 146, 158, and 191. Perhaps article 145 is most explicit: “In whatsoever village a thief or brigand be found, that village shall be scattered and
the brigand shall be hanged forthwith . . . and the headman of the village shall be brought before me [the tsar] and shall pay for all the brigand or thief hath done from the beginning and shall be punished as a thief and a brigand.” And continuing, in article 146, “also prefects and lieutenants and bailiffs and reeves and headmen who administer villages and mountain hamlets. All these shall be punished in the manner written above [article 145] if any thief or brigand be found in them.” And article 126 states, “If there be a robbery or theft on urban land around a town, let the neighborhood pay for it all.” And finally article 158 requires that the localities bordering on an uninhabited hill jointly supervise that region and pay for damage from any robbery occurring there.

These articles demonstrate the weakness of the state in maintaining order in rural and border areas, which caused it to pass the responsibility on down to the local inhabitants. By threatening them with penalties, the state hoped to force the locality to assume this duty. A second reason for the strictness of the articles toward the locality was the belief, often correct, that a brigand could not survive without local support, shelter, and food. Thus the brigand was seen as a local figure, locally supported, preying on strangers. As a result, the locality, allegedly supporting the brigand, shared in his guilt and deserved to share the punishment. These strict articles were therefore intended to discourage a community from aiding brigands.

Articles like the ones just cited are also valuable sources on Serbian social history. However, they must be used with caution. For a series of laws is not the same type of source as a visitor’s description of a society. A law code does not describe how things actually functioned but only how they ought to have functioned. In some cases articles may have been based on customary laws; in such cases the articles’ contents were probably generally observed or practiced and thus can be taken as evidence about actual practices and conditions. However, an article could also reflect an innovation, a reform the ruler was trying to bring about through legislation. In this case it would not have reflected existing customs and we must then ask, was the ruler successful in realizing his reform or did it remain a dead letter? Thus a law code may at times more accurately depict an ideal than reality. And since certain—perhaps many—articles in Dušan’s code may have been attempts to legislate change, attempts which may or may not have been successful (and even if successful in one place, possibly not in others), we must always be careful and avoid leaping to the conclusion that this or that article describes the way things were done in fourteenth-century Serbia.

Serbia’s Peasants

Because Dušan’s code is one of our few sources on the position of peasants, this may be a good place to briefly discuss the peasantry in medieval Serbia. First it should be stated that we know almost nothing about free peasants. This
is not to say that they did not exist or even that they were a rare phenomenon; our knowledge depends upon what sources have survived, while our ignorance coincides with what surviving sources do not contain. The overwhelming majority of documents about peasants that have survived are from monasteries, particularly from those on Mount Athos; not surprisingly, they discuss the peasants on the monasteries’ lands, listing these peasants’ lands, status, and obligations. These peasants were, of course, dependent ones.

Even Dušan’s code, to the degree it discusses peasants at all, focuses on dependent ones. This may result from the fact that his code is accompanied by the “Law of Justinian” (i.e., an abridgement of The Farmer’s Law), which deals with village situations and treats them in a free village context. Thus Dušan may well have felt its articles sufficed for this subject. However, this document goes back to the eighth century, and though laws or customs governing many situations may have remained unchanged since that time, those governing others may not have. Thus it would be risky to use its contents to depict specific rural conditions in the fourteenth century. Moreover, since many of its articles could be applied to villages within an estate, the presence of this text cannot even be used to demonstrate the survival of many free villages into Dušan’s reign.

Some monasteries had enormous landholdings. At one time Hilandar possessed 360 villages scattered around Serbia, while the monastery of Visoki Dečani had 2,097 houses of meropsi, 69 of sokalniki, and 266 of Vlachs. According to a Visoki Dečani charter a merop was a peasant who ploughed six units of land and a sokalnik, three; this definition of these terms pertains to this monastery’s lands and should not be taken as a standard to define the two classes throughout Serbia. The monastery peasants were bound to the land, but they also had a hereditary right to their land. They paid taxes to the state, collected by the landlord. This lord might have tax exemptions. Monasteries had very broad exemptions, and, as noted, sometimes even total exemption from all state taxes. In such cases, the peasants were better off than they would have been under a secular landlord; however, even the secular lord often had some exemptions, which would have made his peasants better off vis à vis the state than independent peasants owning their own plots. Dependent peasants were under the jurisdiction of a lord, be it the monastery abbot or a secular nobleman. He judged their disputes and small-scale crimes. Major crimes—murder, arson, rape, treason—were judged by the state, though as time passed certain major monasteries received the right to judge people on their lands even for certain serious crimes. In fact throughout the Serbian and Greek lands, in the course of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, there was a trend to ever increase the area of jurisdiction of Church courts.

In addition to their state obligations, usually paid in cash, the peasants had obligations to their landlord. In Serbia these obligations were required partially in cash/kind and partially in labor. Labor dues predominated in Serbia, and the Hilandar charter obliges peasants to work two days a week on
the monastery’s lands. Dušan’s code also requires a serf to labor two days a week on his lord’s lands. In addition to their regular weekly obligation, peasants owed a certain number of other days’ labor at critical times of the year (e.g., at harvest time). Dušan’s code stipulates one day a year for harvesting and one day a year in the lord’s vineyard. The Vlachs, who tended flocks instead of farming land, owed work ducis in transport as well as a donation of a certain number of animals a year, while peasants owed chickens or certain amounts of produce at set times of the year. Byzantine peasants tended to owe smaller labor ducis and greater cash payments than their Serb equivalents, whose obligations tended to be in labor and services. Scholars relate this difference to the fact that in Byzantium money was far more stable and better established as the basis of the economy, whereas in Serbia it was less so and penetrated the countryside to a smaller extent.

The monastery or nobleman, if rich, held a number of villages. They might be scattered around Serbia. A monastery was more likely to have widely scattered holdings than a nobleman. At times a nobleman might own part of a village and a monastery the rest. When that occurred, then each judged and collected from its own lands and people. Within a monastery’s village, or part of a village, the land was divided between the direct holdings of the peasants and the lands of the monastery. The monastery’s direct holdings were worked partly by the peasants fulfilling their labor ducis. Reference at times is made to landless peasants; they presumably provided a full-time labor force on the lord’s lands, probably receiving a share of the crop in return.

The peasants tended to live in houses clustered together around a center with the land lying outside, usually surrounding the village. Besides the land held directly by the landlord, other village land was held by the peasants. The peasants’ lands were of two types: communal and private. Communal lands belonged to the village as a collective and included pasture land and woodland. Private lands were held by a particular peasant household. The peasant had a right to hold these lands, but title of ownership belonged to the lord, allowing him to demand dues and services from his peasants. These private lands, consisting of the peasants’ plots of farmland, vineyard, etc., tended to be in scattered long strips rather than in consolidated plots. The peasants worked these lands during the other four (or so) days of the week; and from them the peasants subsisted and met whatever cash tax they owed to the state and the kind and/or cash dues they owed to the landlord.

In and near Serbia’s Dalmatian coastal territory more obligations were met in kind or cash (usually valued at one-tenth of the produce) than in labor. This is probably related not only to the fact that cash was more common in this region—for people having cash from the coastal towns could come to the local markets and buy for cash—but also to the fact that the land in this area was less fertile and estates tended to be smaller. Thus with less land needing to be worked, it was in the landlord’s interest to let the peasants retain as large a piece as possible and render rents for it.
Dušan Conquers Thessaly and Epirus

Dušan’s appetite for expansion was whetted by success, and he saw no reason to limit his expansion to Macedonia and Albania. He was helped by various new Byzantine difficulties, including the great plague epidemic of 1347 and 1348 which swept through Thessaly and Epirus, killing among others John Angelus, the warlord and Byzantine governor of Thessaly (and probably also of Epirus, Acarnania, and Aetolia). Taking advantage of the chaos caused by the plague and the death or flight of various local leaders, Dušan, supported by various Albanian chiefs and their tribesmen, took—probably in 1347—Epirus (including Jannina and Arta), Acarnania, and Aetolia. Thus Epirus, recovered by Byzantium with such great difficulty, remained part of the empire for only seven years. As a result, Dušan acquired all the western Balkans south from Serbia’s older holdings in southern Dalmatia down to the Gulf of Corinth. Only Durazzo, remaining under the Angevins, did not fall to him.

At roughly the same time—most likely in 1348—Dušan’s able general Preljub attacked Thessaly, which had been particularly badly hit by the plague. Facing very little resistance, he took the whole province down to, but not including, Pteleon, which was still held by the Venetians. His conquests also included most of the Catalans’ lands in Thessaly, though the Catalans were able to retain Neapetras and its environs. The conquest of Thessaly was completed by November 1348. Many towns and noblemen seem to have surrendered quickly after negotiating agreements that allowed them to keep their existing privileges and lands. Preljub’s armies also contained considerable numbers of Albanians.

Epirus was turned over to Dušan’s half-brother Symeon to govern. To solidify his position he married Anna of Epirus’ daughter Thomais. Preljub was assigned Thessaly, which he ruled from Trikkala. Part, or possibly all, of central Albania, clearly including Berat and Valona, was given to Dušan’s brother-in-law John Comnenus Asen, who married the widowed Anna of Epirus to increase his ties to the appanage granted him. Soulis suggests that John Comnenus Asen was given direct rule only over Berat, Kanina, and Valona, while the rest of Albania remained under local Albanian chiefs who submitted directly to Dušan and were allowed to continue managing their communities as previously. Soulis may well be right; however, surviving sources do not tell us how much of the hinterland went with the three named cities and thus we do not know how much of Albania was assigned to his appanage. In any case most of the countryside was in the hands of the tribesmen; thus the question is, were they nominally under Dušan directly or under him indirectly through a nominal submission to John Comnenus Asen?

Thus in seventeen years Dušan was able to double the size of his empire, while halving that of the Byzantines. And it should be noted that he achieved all this without a single pitched battle in an open field. His conquests were carried out by taking a region’s towns one by one through sieges. As a result
Dušan’s realm stretched from the Danube in the north to the Gulf of Corinth in the south and from the Adriatic in the west almost to the Mesta River, as far as Kavalla beyond the Struma, in the east.

The depopulation resulting from the 1348 plague left vacant lands which attracted further Albanian migration into and settlement in Greece. The plague, having devastated northern Greece, then moved on to the Albanian and Dalmatian coast where it continued its destructive work. We do not know whether it penetrated Serbia itself. However, at this time Albanian migration into Serbia also did take place. A charter of Dušan from 1348 refers to nine katuns of Albanians north of Prizren.

The Condition of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century

The Byzantine Empire was now reduced to Constantinople, Thrace, Thessaloniki (regained in 1350), Anaktoropolis, the western part of the Chalcidic peninsula, certain Aegean islands (chiefly in the northern Aegean), and roughly half the Peloponnese. The civil wars, Turkish plundering, and Bulgarian raids had devastated much of Thrace, bringing its agriculture and economy to a standstill. There had been considerable depopulation in Thrace even before the 1348 plague, which of course made the situation that much worse. The survival of Constantinople and the other cities of Thrace, when they had to do without the produce of Thrace, depended on the Genoese transporting grain from the Crimea and to a lesser extent from Bulgaria, where Varna was becoming an important port for the export of Bulgarian grain. These grain shipments averted serious famine in the late 1340s.

The depopulation and devastation, by reducing agricultural productivity, also reduced the tax base of the empire’s provinces. And the rich, the only ones who could pay anything worth mentioning, in the course of the civil wars had been bribed by so many exemptions that they paid only a tiny fraction of their share. They had little sense of duty and continually sought more exemptions and evaded paying even the little that they owed. Thus the two great strengths of the empire in its days of glory, namely, its administration and treasury, had collapsed. Its income was so greatly reduced that the treasury was nearly empty. At Cantacuzenus’ coronation banquet in 1347 pottery and lead dishes replaced the former gold and silver service. Cantacuzenus discovered that the bureaucracy had broken down. Even near-by Thrace was controlled by the great nobles. Cantacuzenus now divided the shrinking empire further by making the Byzantine Morea in 1348 or 1349 into an autonomous despotate under his second son, Manuel. His eldest son, Matthew, as noted, had already received an appanage in Byzantine Thrace along the Serbian border; from that border near Kavalla (which was Serbian and which lay a little bit to the west of the Mesta River) his appanage extended possibly as far east as Demotika (according to Florinskij). Or, as others have argued, it stretched east beyond Xantheia but not as far east as Demotika.
These assignments were made for several reasons: (1) to keep the provinces from seceding under feudal lords like Momčilo, now that there was no longer any administrative apparatus to bind them to the capital; (2) to prevent in the Thracian case further Serbian annexations of imperial lands and in general to defend that region against the Serbs and Turks; and (3) to establish Cantacuzenus’ personal control over these regions. By utilizing his own family Cantacuzenus acquired a stronger hold over these provinces to bind them to him against the legitimate Palaeologian dynasty. And some of his opponents believed the creation of these appanages was a first step toward ousting the Palaeologists entirely. With regard to the second reason, in 1347 Matthew did repel a Turkish raid under Suleyman, but in 1350 he was not strong enough to prevent the Turks from plundering his lands and from then crossing the Marica to plunder Bulgaria. During that campaign they took much booty and many prisoners.

Dušan, Byzantium, and Bosnia in 1350

Dušan, having acquired Thessaly and Epirus, began thinking more seriously of trying to obtain Constantinople. He realized that to acquire that city, he needed a fleet. The fleets from Serbia’s southern Dalmatian towns, even combined with Dubrovnik’s fleet (if he could have persuaded Dubrovnik to join such a venture), were far too small for the task. Thus Dušan opened negotiations with Venice, with which he maintained fairly good relations. Venice was polite, not wanting to antagonize him; but fearing a loss or reduction of its privileges in the empire if the stronger Serbs should replace the weaker Byzantines as masters of Constantinople, Venice found excuses to avoid a military alliance with him. Each state attempted to use the other; while Dušan sought Venetian support against Byzantium, Venice sought Serbian support in its struggle with Hungary over Dalmatia. However, whenever it sensed Serbian aid in Dalmatia might result in a Venetian obligation to Serbia, Venice politely turned down Dušan’s offers of help.

In 1350 Dušan launched an attack upon Bosnia. It was undoubtedly directed primarily at Hum. The motives behind this invasion were probably two-fold: to regain Serbian Hum, annexed by Bosnia in 1326, and to put a stop to Bosnian raids against the tsar’s tributaries in Konavli. Dušan had been complaining about attacks on Konavli and had received no satisfaction. In the summer of 1350 Venice had also tried, without success, to mediate a settlement. Venice had involved itself here in the hopes of settling the issue before Dušan took action, for it feared that if Dušan intervened successfully with his troops in Dalmatia, he might acquire new interests in that region and threaten Venice’s position in Dalmatia. But, diplomacy failed. So in October 1350 Dušan invaded Hum with an army which Resti, probably with exaggeration, claimed numbered eighty thousand men. This force seems to have successfully occupied part of the disputed territory.

According to Orbini, prior to his attack on Bosnia-Hum Dušan had been
in secret contact with various Bosnian nobles, offering them bribes to support him. And many nobles—presumably chiefly those from Hum—were ready to betray the Bosnian ban. These included the Nikolić brothers, who were major nobles in Hum and descendants of Miroslav. Instead of meeting Dušan’s forces, the Bosnian ban avoided a major confrontation by retiring into the mountains and dispatching small hit-and-run actions against the Serbs. Most of Bosnia’s fortresses held out, though some nobles did submit to Dušan. The Serbs ravaged much of the countryside: with one army they reached Duvno and the Cetina River, while a second one penetrated up to the Krka River—on which lay Knin—in Croatia, and a third, having taken Imotski and Novi (near Imotski), left garrisons in the two towns and then moved into Hum. From this position of strength, Dušan tried to negotiate a peace with the ban. He wanted it sealed by the marriage of his son Uroš to the ban’s daughter Elizabeth, with Hum as her dowry, thereby bringing about the restoration of Hum to Serbia. The ban was not willing to consider this proposal. How much of Orbini’s account is reliable is a subject of controversy; unfortunately we lack evidence to resolve it.

Dušan may also have intended the Bosnian campaign to provide aid for his sister. In 1347 she had married Mladen III Šubić, the lord of Omiš, Klis, and Skradin. After her husband’s death from the plague in 1348, she had tried to maintain her rule over these cities for herself and for her minor son. But she soon found herself challenged by both the Hungarians and the Venetians, who sought to acquire her cities. Interest in helping her could explain why Serbian armies were dispatched into western Hum and into Croatia (if, in fact, Orbini’s statement to this effect is true), for operations in this region were not likely to help Dušan obtain his own major goal of recovering Serbian Hum. However, before Dušan’s armies managed to reach her cities, if indeed that was their destination, and before they could occupy all of what had been Serbian Hum, Dušan was recalled to put down trouble in the east. Dušan was not to forget his sister’s plight; in 1355, just before he died, he was to send her troops to garrison Klis and Skradin against Hungary.

Cantacuzenus tried to take advantage of Dušan’s absence (and of the removal of many of his troops from Macedonia and Thessaly to participate in the Bosnian campaign) to regain part of Macedonia and Thessaly. To support his efforts the Constantinopolitan patriarch, Kallistos, excommunicated the new Serbian patriarch and emperor, accusing them of usurping titles, deposing Greeks from their bishoprics and replacing them with Serbs, and transferring Greek sees from the jurisdiction of Greek metropolitans to that of the Serbian patriarch. Thus Dušan’s conquests had also expanded the territory under the Serbian Church at the expense of the Greek hierarchy. The Greek bishoprics transferred in this way to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Peć were the Metropolitans of Melnik, Philippi, Serres, and Kavalla and the Archbishop of Drama. The excommunication seems to have been intended to discourage the Greek population in Dušan’s Greek provinces from supporting the Serbian administration and thereby to assist Cantacuzenus’ campaign to
recover them. The excommunication did not stop the Athonite monks from dealing with Dušan. They also continued to address him as tsar, though calling him Tsar of the Serbs rather than Tsar of the Serbs and Greeks.

Cantacuzenus, then, with a small army, the best he could muster, took the Chalcidic peninsula with Mount Athos; he next took the fortresses of Veria and Voden. Veria was the richest town in the region of Botie; to hold Veria Dušan had removed many Greeks from the town and replaced them with Serbs, including a Serb garrison. However, this was not sufficient to secure the town; for the remaining local citizens were still able to open the gates to Cantacuzenus in 1350. Voden resisted Cantacuzenus but was taken by assault. Cantacuzenus also took various smaller places in the vicinity of these two towns. He then advanced toward Thessaly but was stopped at Servia by Preljub and a force of only five hundred men. Thus the Byzantine army was prevented from entering into Thessaly. The Byzantine force retired to Veria, while the Turks associated with it went off plundering; their forays went as far afield as Skopje. The small size of the Serbian defending army also demonstrates the weakness of the invading force; the Byzantine army must have been tiny, for if it had had any kind of numbers, even if it could not have taken Servia, it would not have thought twice about by-passing Servia and pressing on further into Thessaly. Having five hundred men at one’s rear should not have seemed a serious danger to a normal army.

Word of the Byzantine attack upon his Greek lands reached Dušan in Hum. He quickly reassembled his forces from Bosnia and Hum and, abandoning that region, marched for Thessaly. His withdrawal led to the loss of whatever gains he had made in the west. It seems therefore that the local nobility had not seriously supported his invasion. He was not to move against Bosnia and Hum again; thus once again on behalf of his southern interests he wrote off what had been Serbia’s lands to the west. Some seventeenth-century sources suggest Dušan attacked Bosnia a second time in 1351, while others describe a single campaign which they date to 1351. However, most scholars believe he carried out only one campaign which took place in 1350. Bosnia remained in possession of Hum; in fact after Dušan’s death Bosnia was to expand further at Serbia’s expense, acquiring the remaining parts of Serbian Hum and thereby extending its authority all the way to the Lim River.

When Dušan reached Macedonia, the Byzantines quickly withdrew to Thrace. Dušan took Voden after a short siege. His troops plundered the town. He soon also regained Veria and the other places Cantacuzenus had taken. Thus Cantacuzenus’ attempt to regain the empire’s lost lands from the Serbs was an utter failure. Cantacuzenus gives a long account of the alleged negotiations with Dušan that followed; he states that Dušan, afraid of Cantacuzenus’ strength and readiness to fight, came close to accepting an agreement that would have restored considerable territory to the empire. Florinskij argues, plausibly, that this account is entirely fictitious, presented to depict Cantacuzenus in a better light. Cantacuzenus was to make no subsequent attempt to regain from the Serbs the empire’s lost territory.
Weak vis-à-vis the Serbs and suffering from Turkish raids, Cantacuzenus tried to make an alliance, supposedly directed chiefly against the Turks, with the Bulgarians. John Alexander—possibly under Dušan’s influence or possibly simply mistrustful of the Byzantines—rejected it. He then succeeded in the face of some opposition to persuade his council of boyars to agree to its rejection. Cantacuzenus’ negotiations with John Alexander, however, may have prevented a Bulgarian attack on Byzantium; for the Bulgarians had been angrily blaming Byzantium for raids into Bulgaria launched by Turks from Byzantine Thrace. Cantacuzenus at least was able to persuade John Alexander that the empire was not behind the raids and was powerless to prevent them.

Civil War Again in Byzantium

By this time the young legitimate emperor, John V, was reaching his majority and becoming restless at being excluded from power by his father-in-law. To try to pacify him, and also to remove him from the capital, Cantacuzenus assigned him in late 1351 or 1352 an appanage in the western part of Byzantine Thrace and in the Rhodopes. Including the former Boleron theme and the territory to its east, it stretched eastward at least to Ainos and shortly thereafter was extended to Demotika. His son Matthew, who had held this territory, was removed from it and given a new appanage to John V’s east, centered in Adrianople. The two princes were soon quarrelling over boundaries, and Matthew refused to recognize John V as the heir to the throne. Shortly after the territorial assignments, still in 1352, war broke out between the two princes. John V, having concluded a treaty with Venice, hired a large number of Turkish mercenaries. Then, having been promised support by the Thessalonians (long hostile to Cantacuzenus), he marched against Matthew’s appanage. One after the other Matthew’s towns, including Adrianople, quickly surrendered to the young Palaeologan emperor. Expecting serious retaliation from Cantacuzenus, John V sought and was promised help from both Serbia and Bulgaria. To obtain Serbia’s help, John V had to send his brother Michael to the Serbian court as a hostage. Contrary to general Byzantine policy and attitudes, John V also recognized Dušan’s title of Tsar of the Serbs. He seems to have recognized his title for the first time in 1352; he continued to do so thereafter for the duration of Dušan’s life.

After acquiring more troops from his Ottoman allies, Cantacuzenus marched into Thrace to rescue his son Matthew. When the Ottoman troops retook cities that had surrendered to John, Cantacuzenus allowed the Turks to plunder them. Among those so plundered was Adrianople. Thus it seemed that Cantacuzenus was on the way to defeating the young emperor, who retreated west seeking Serbian help. Dušan obliged by sending him four thousand horsemen. Orkhan, however, provided Cantacuzenus with ten thousand horsemen. The Ottoman cavalry met the Serbs and possibly also a Bulgarian force—since after the battle Turkish forces plundered Bulgaria—in an open-field battle near Demotika in October 1352. Thus the fate of the
Byzantine Empire was to be decided by a battle between Turks and Serbs. The more numerous Ottomans crushed the Serbs, and Cantacuzenus was able to retain power and assign appanages as he chose. Young John V, however, refused to surrender and sailed off to the Venetian-held island of Tenedos to continue his war.

The battle near Demotika was the first major battle between Ottomans and Europeans in Europe and its results made Dušan realize that the Turks were a major threat to eastern Europe. This danger became more serious in 1354 when the Ottomans crossed the Dardanelles and occupied the important fortress of Gallipoli, whose walls had collapsed during an earthquake. The Turks quickly repaired the walls and refused to depart, despite Cantacuzenus' protests. The Turks then stepped up the number of their raids, taking tribute from some towns of eastern Thrace and occupying others including ones along the coast of Thrace as far west as Kypsela on the lower Marica, which they took. They then advanced eastward along the north shore of the Sea of Marmora and conquered Rodosto (Rhaedestus). By late 1354 they held most of the north shore of the Sea of Marmora from Gallipoli to the walls of Constantinople. By this time, as he became more alarmed by the Turks, Dušan was actively trying to create a coalition, including members from the West, to oppose the Turks and drive them from Europe. He corresponded with both Venice and the pope on this subject but had no success.

Meanwhile, after the Turkish victory over the Serbs fighting for John V and a subsequent failure by John V to seize Constantinople in March 1353 when Cantacuzenus was absent from the city, Cantacuzenus lost his temper with the young Palaeologian emperor and decided to remove him from the imperial succession. He had his own son Matthew proclaimed emperor in April 1353, after which John V's name was dropped from state documents. Thus Cantacuzenus considered John deposed and Matthew to be his heir. To re-enforce this decision he sought a formal coronation for Matthew. When Patriarch Kallistos protested, he was deposed. Kallistos then withdrew to Mount Athos. His replacement then carried out Matthew's coronation as emperor in February 1354.

John V, still at large, was not ready to give up; he went to Galata and sought aid from the Genoese. He soon concluded an agreement with a brawling Genoese sea captain who was more or less a pirate; John gave the captain his sister as a wife and the island of Lesbos in exchange for helping him get Constantinople. Meanwhile, Cantacuzenus' unpopularity in the capital was increasing; he was particularly blamed for bringing to Europe the Turks, a Muslim force that was plundering Byzantine territory and taking Christians as slaves. Anger was turning to fear as the Turks took and securely fortified Gallipoli and then occupied the north shore of the Sea of Marmora to the very walls of the capital, which was now threatened by them. Cantacuzenus, blamed for their presence, also seemed incapable of doing anything about removing them. Thus John V could count on support inside Constantinople. So, having been recognized by the Byzantine Aegean islands as emperor, and
having Genoese ships, including those of his brother-in-law, in the waters around the capital, John V with a small force advanced on the capital in late November 1354. Constantinople’s gates were opened to him.

John VI Cantacuzenus abdicated and became a monk. In retirement he wrote his history/memoirs, a basic but biased source for the chaotic events we have been relating. John V, now sole emperor in his own right, nevertheless still respected his father-in-law’s brains; thus he frequently consulted him on state affairs. And as far as we know, Cantacuzenus never tried to depose him or regain the throne for himself or his sons. Cantacuzenus, as a monk, advisor, and historian, remained active until his death in 1383. He is often blamed for bringing the Ottomans to Europe. He clearly was the first to utilize them for European affairs. However, if he had not invited them, they certainly would have soon arrived on their own.

After John Cantacuzenus’ deposition, his son Matthew held out in the Rhodopes. John V marched against him and a number of Matthew’s towns rapidly surrendered to John. Under siege Matthew concluded a treaty with John, surrendering Thrace and agreeing to a partition of the empire. Matthew was to retain the possessions he still had until arrangements could be made to turn over to him his new lands. However, Matthew soon heard rumors, perhaps accurate ones, that John V had no intention of keeping the agreement but in fact was planning Matthew’s assassination. Feeling deceived, Matthew, before the end of 1355, had resumed the war to regain his former position in Thrace. This war continued into the fall of 1356 when Matthew was captured by a Serb, Vojin, the Count of Drama. At first planning to release Matthew for ransom, Vojin soon learned that John V was willing to pay a far greater sum for the captive. Thus Vojin sold Matthew to the emperor. As John’s captive, Matthew was forced to renounce both his territorial claims and his imperial title, in a court ceremony in December 1357. Then he was released. Eventually in 1361 he was allowed to go to the Peloponnesus to join his brother Manuel.

**Manuel Cantacuzenus in the Morea**

Matthew’s younger brother, Manuel, had been appointed, at the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven, in 1348 or 1349 to an appanage that consisted of the Byzantine Morea. As an emperor’s son, having great prestige and residing at so great a distance from Constantinople, he was able to behave as an independent ruler. This was facilitated by his father’s making him a despot and declaring his appointment a lifetime one. Thus from the moment of Manuel’s appointment one can start to speak of a Despotate of the Morea. His position was not an easy one. His territory was raided by Latins from the Principality of Achaea, by Catalans, and by Turkish pirates. Moreover, the local nobles were not interested in losing their local authority by submitting to any central government. Furthermore, some of these nobles may not have been Cantacuzenus’ partisans. And we may suspect that Manuel, besides being the
Byzantine governor, was appointed to be a defender of Cantacuzenus interests. He soon initiated a tax to finance the creation of a fleet to defend the Morea. The local Greek nobles greeted this tax with a rebellion; they probably were fighting as much for their own independence against central authority as against the tax. They attacked Mistra, and Manuel defeated them with his own body-guard, a corps of Albanian mercenaries, and with the help of some local Latins. This ended the offensive phase of the rebellion, though a few rebels held out in the provinces. But when his mercenaries began to plunder the lands of these duchards, the last rebels came out of the strongholds, in which they had been holed up, and submitted.

Manuel’s wife was a Latin, the daughter of the ruler of Cyprus, and he maintained friendly relations with the Frankish nobles of the Morea and also with the Catholic Church, which made it easier for the Catholic barons to accept his rule. Mistra, his capital, became a thriving cultural center, with a lively court, literate people, and excellent architects and artists; under Manuel’s patronage palaces and churches with fine frescoes began to appear. Though building activities were centered in Mistra, new monasteries were erected throughout the Byzantine Morea in this period.

When John V came to power at the very end of 1354, he wanted to oust Manuel from the Morea. John appointed two of his own cousins—Michael and Andrew Asen—to rule the Morea. They arrived there late in 1355 and won support from various Greek archons, some of whom had participated in the earlier revolt against Manuel. Manuel retired behind the walls of Mistra. Meanwhile the two cousins, trying to win local support by distributing booty, raided Venetian land in the vicinity of Modon and Coron, stirring the ire of the Venetians. As a result the Venetians gave their support to Manuel, as did most of the populace of the Morea. The two Asens soon returned to Constantinople. And John V, seeing the difficulties, which were exacerbated by the Morea’s distance from the rest of the empire, gave up his plan to oust Manuel and confirmed him in his position. The Venetians, who dominated commerce in the whole peninsula (including their own ports and those of the empire and the Principality of Achaia), were pleased by Manuel’s victory.

When Matthew Cantacuzenus was captured and forced to renounce his imperial title, he retired to the Peloponnesus, hoping, since he was the elder brother, to take over the Morea. Manuel and the court at Mistra, however, were not interested in changing the status quo. Realizing he had no hope of ousting his brother, Matthew accepted the situation; the brothers settled their relations amicably and Manuel continued to rule. Matthew settled in the Morea, supporting Manuel, and the two, who were both intellectuals, were active patrons of art and learning. When Manuel died in 1380 with no sons, his brother Matthew succeeded to the Morea.

The Morea in this period was spared the large-scale Turkish raids that Thrace and Bulgaria suffered. Peloponnesian violence was on a smaller scale; it consisted of feuds between different archons, an occasional armed act of resistance by a few archons against the authorities in Mistra (always put down
rapidly), and Turkish piracy along the coast, which though causing damage did not threaten the peninsula with conquest. Italians and Greeks were also active as pirates.

Needing to build up his army, Manuel recruited many Albanians who had migrated into the Peloponnesus. To obtain further recruits he seems to have encouraged more Albanians to migrate into and settle in his principality. They came and settled as tribes, still under their chiefs. Some scholars have argued that their settlement should be dated to, and after, the mid-1380s under Palaeologian despots. Though Albanian settlement then took place on what was clearly a larger scale, it certainly had been taking place during Manuel’s reign as well.

Greek Landholding, Peasants, and Lords

When we turn to the subject of Greek peasants, we are faced with various problems, most of which are derived from the nature of our sources. Basically, what have survived are documents describing monastic lands, particularly the holdings of the Athonite monasteries. The monastery archives preserve a few such documents about secular holdings that depict the former status of certain lands acquired subsequently by a monastery from a secular landlord. But very few of such documents exist and one must wonder if one is entitled to generalize from these few examples about secular estates as a whole. One also wonders to what extent conditions on secular estates resembled those on monastic ones; for if they were very similar, then one could use documents about monastic estates to describe great estates in general. The few documents touching on secular estates that are preserved do show certain differences; but whether these differences were typical or idiosyncratic for these particular estates is unknown. Furthermore, monasteries had particularly broad immunities. Their exemptions presumably had significant impact upon peasant obligations. As for peasants not on estates but in free villages, paying their taxes directly to the state, we are completely in the dark; for no cadaster describing such a village has survived. The absence of source material about free peasants has led some scholars to say there were no free villages left. This conclusion surely goes too far, but probably as time passed there were ever fewer of them. And in fact Charanis, in examining legal disputes, has uncovered a few examples of free peasants and even free villages in the thirteenth century. For example, he found a case in which a monastery sued some villagers who had usurped and farmed certain deserted lands which the monastery claimed belonged to it. Charanis reasonably concludes these were free villagers, for if they had belonged to an estate, the monastery would have sued the villagers’ landlord.¹¹

In the previous volume, and earlier in this one, we discussed the growth of great estates, which became a serious problem for the Byzantine state in the tenth century. As the lands of free peasants and soldiers became absorbed by the magnates’ estates, the state became increasingly dependent on the great
magnates with their private retinues. As a result there arose in the eleventh century the pronoia system. Pronoias, as noted earlier, were grants of an income source (usually a landed estate) for service. The state retained title to the land, but the holder had the right to its income, generally collecting for himself from the peasants the taxes formerly owed to the state and thus reducing the income from taxes received by the state. In exchange for this income he owed service (usually military) to the state. The number of retainers he had to bring to battle depended on the size of his pronoia. Upon his death or upon failure to perform the required service, the state took back the land for re-assignment. In time, particularly from the late thirteenth century, pronoias tended to become hereditary, but the state still, in theory, retained title and could demand service from them.

Recent scholarship shows that pronoias were a more complex institution than had previously been thought. Whereas the earliest pronoias were distributed from state lands, by the fourteenth century, as state lands became scarce, other types of land were granted as pronoias. For example a pronoia might be the recipient’s own patrimonial estate; in this case, in exchange for service the state granted him the right to keep the taxes he owed to the state—in other words, the state gave him a tax exemption for service. Or the pronoia could be a free village, in which case the peasants henceforth paid their state taxes to the grantee rather than to the state. Or it could even be the lands of a third person or institution (e.g., a monastery) in which case the pronoia holder received the taxes the third person had previously paid to the state. The pronoia holder was usually granted the right to judge peasants on the lands granted to him; but when a pronoia holder received income from the lands of a third person, the pronoia holder did not receive judicial privileges. In theory, a free village that became a pronoia remained free. It owed no feudal rents to the grantee and he received no judicial authority over the village. He was not granted the village’s land but its tax income. But though a very clear legal distinction exists, documents show, as one might expect, that holders of free-village pronoias frequently tried—sometimes with success—to convert the pronoia into their own holding and demanded from it feudal dues from the peasants in addition to the state taxes.

On occasion a whole region was granted as a pronoia. Generally such a grant was made to a close relative of the emperor. Thus Michael VIII granted the islands of Rhodes and Lesbos to his brother John. In such a grant the status of private lands located in the region did not change. The property owners simply paid the taxes to the new grantee instead of to the imperial treasury.

By the ninth century a free peasant owed a hearth tax—a collective family tax rather than an individual head tax for each adult—as well as land taxes to the state; he also owed supplementary taxes on particular items like bee-hives or fruit trees as well as various service duties like road or bridge building. The village also owed men for military service. These obligations to the state, in theory, remained when a village was absorbed by a great estate,
unless the state specifically granted the lord an immunity charter. Such charters usually exempted the estate from a particular duty, not from obligations in general. In addition to state duties, peasants on estates owed rents and gifts to the landlord.

The most common term for a peasant in the late empire was paroikos (plural, paroikoi). Scholars have long argued about the legal significance of this term. It seems probable the paroikos was not a full serf. Though dependent to the degree that he was tied to his land, he was legally free. And despite the obligations he had to the estate, he was free to buy and sell other lands. Moreover, a paroikos on an estate, once he was established on his land, could not be evicted. Thus he had a legal right to his land. He also seems to have had an obligation to remain on it and work it. However, cases do exist where a paroikos was allowed to go and work in a town and send back to the estate in cash the feudal dues (or their equivalent) he owed the landlord. The typical paroikos, in the surviving documents, lived on a monastic estate. And of course, we do not know how similar he was to a paroikos on a nobleman’s estate. Indeed we cannot even say with certainty that the peasants documented on the lands in Thrace and Macedonia, owned by the rich monasteries of Mount Athos, most of which had total or nearly total exemptions, were typical of peasants living on the estates of other monasteries.

Professor Laiou has made a detailed study of late medieval Greek peasants and the discussion that follows is much indebted to her work. She shows that the typical Thracian-Macedonian Athonite peasant lived in a nuclear household paying the hearth tax. In 1300 the average household consisted of four to six individuals. Between 1320 and 1348 this average fell to between three and five. The village (the geographical unit with a name) was a conglomerate of houses with its lands lying around the outside. The whole village could be free, or it could all be part of one estate, or it could be split between free lands and households and dependent lands and households; the dependent ones could all be members of one estate or they could be divided between dependents of more than one estate. Laiou has found that most households had a vineyard, fruit trees, and a garden plot; they owned these entirely by right. The village had common lands for pasturing sheep. Many peasants owned animals that were their own personal property: bees, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, sometimes even a cow. A few had oxen and/or horses. The village also tended to be drawn from a very small number of different families; thus villagers were often related, with brothers remaining in the village, keeping a share of the land, bringing in wives from outside, and starting new households. In general families were patriarchal; however, Laiou has found cases of widows managing lands. If a man died leaving only a daughter, she was briefly the household head, until she found a husband willing to move to her farm; then as her husband he replaced her as household head. Sometimes village rights were contested by a monastery. These quarrels usually centered around fishing rights or rights to the village’s common land.
The monastery, even though it had been granted the village, was not entitled to interfere with these rights and could not legally put the common land to other uses.

In general, Laiou shows, peasants produced what was cheap to cultivate. Few had arable land for grain. Thus on estates the arable grain-producing land generally belonged directly to the monastery. This situation arose because arable land required capital: seed and oxen for plowing. The monastery, which alone had the capital, could then demand from the peasants the feudal rents owed for their own holdings in the form of labor (corvée) on its arable land. Corvée duties for peasants varied from monastery to monastery. The number of days seems to have depended partly on local custom and partly on what the monastery could get away with demanding. In Thrace and Macedonia, unlike Serbia, corvée was set at so many days a year. Frequently twelve days was considered a standard, but Laiou has turned up cases in which twenty-four and even forty-eight days a year were demanded from an individual. Presumably these days were staggered among different peasant families throughout the agricultural season. Thus the monastery got its direct holdings worked as its rent.

A monastery could also rent its arable land directly to a peasant. And Laiou has discovered a surviving contract stating that if the peasant cultivated at his own expense the land he rented, he might keep two-thirds of the produce, rendering only one-third to the monastery. Presumably in other cases, when the peasant depended on the monastery to provide him with all or some of the seed, and possibly the oxen with which to plow the land, the division of the produce would have been nearer fifty-fifty. Thus the monastery either rented out its own direct domain for a share of the produce or else had its lands farmed by the corvée owed by its peasants.

Shares of produce were based on the productivity of the year; thus a peasant paid more or less depending on how much he produced. This was a fairer arrangement than the state taxes, which demanded so much per hearth/acre regardless of whether it was a good or bad year.

Professor Laiou has also studied inheritance patterns. A particle inheritance system, giving each son an equal share, existed in Macedonia and Thrace. Equal shares meant an equal share of everything, including equal portions of each type of land. This system increased the scattered nature of village lands. For each son inherited a piece of vineyard, of first-quality land, of second-quality land, of orchard, etc. And with each generation, each piece tended to be increasingly divided. Thus after several generations dwarf holdings could develop, unless there was sufficient abandoned land or sufficient unspoken for woodland available to be converted into usable land. However, the system described above allowed a peasant who inherited a dwarf plot to survive. For in addition to the small plots he inherited, the peasant could rent additional land from the landlord’s domain for a share of the produce.

Laiou also believes the status of paroikos did not pass to all sons, if they did not want it. And she has found cases where one son inherited the land and
the other sons left. Since primogeniture was a violation of both Greek and Slavic custom, it is not likely that those departing were actually disinherit.

The younger sons probably saw no economic future in the village and wanted to leave; they thus presumably agreed that one brother should have the lands and paroikios status, while they, in return for some sort of compensation, left to seek their fortunes. Charanis argues that paroikios status went to only one son. But Laiou convincingly argues that legally one did not inherit the status but land, and that status was tied to the land. Laiou also notes that in certain areas long held by the crusaders, particularly in parts of the Morea, the Western custom of primogeniture took root even among Greek villages. The younger sons from this region, though disinherit, generally remained in the village, working as serfs on the domain of the landlord.

When a family in a free village died out or its last member wanted to sell a farm, the system of pre-emption (priority buying), going back to the tenth century, was still in effect. Under this system, other relatives and then other villagers had the right of refusal before the land could be placed on the open market, where a magnate would usually acquire it. However, by the late empire magnates regularly had lands in the village already, giving them the fellow-villager priority status; this helped them to expand their own holdings.

In the mid-fourteenth century and thereafter there were shortages of labor. These can be attributed to the depopulation caused by the civil wars, Serbian-Byzantine wars, Turkish raids, and also the plague epidemics. Laiou, however, argues that since plagues tended to strike urban areas, they may have had less effect on village populations than one might at first think. Land grants were almost worthless without people on the lands to work them (unless, as occasionally might be the case, the recipient had an excess of labor on some other estate); thus lands were usually granted with people on them. To help solve the labor problem imperial grants of people alone were sometimes made, enabling the recipient to acquire manpower for his lands. Lords also tried to acquire more people through enticement and kidnapping. If an enticed or stolen paroikios was found, the case could be taken to court; if it was won, then the paroikios was restored to the original estate. The usual category of people recruited by a landlord or granted by the state were the eleutheroi (literally, free men, but in this case meaning free of land, landless). Since dependence was based on land and since they did not have it, they were free of fiscal obligations. Many of them were probably younger sons of land-poor families, who had left to seek a better life. Others were surely run-away paroikoi who had fled from bad situations, ruthless landlords, or the proximity of enemy raiders. Thus the eleutheroi were a mobile element. When settled on an estate, some remained eleutheroi as share-croppers (renting domain land) or as the domain’s labor force, but others were settled on plots of land and became paroikoi.

Because labor was short and conditions unstable, owing to the great amount of military activity and the many raids that dislocated the population and ravaged the lands of Thrace and Macedonia, demographic mobility in-
increased greatly from the second half of the fourteenth century. Presumably there was a steady movement of population from villages on or near main routes to those further afield. Some villagers fortified their villages, others limited themselves to erecting stockades in village centers.

Laiou argues that early in the fourteenth century Macedonia was still widely populated, and she guesses the region then may have had half the population of modern Macedonia. She thinks earlier scholars have regularly underestimated the size of villages. For example, she notes, various scholars have based village population figures on a cadaster for a monastery’s village holdings and have taken the cadaster’s figures to be the village’s entire population, not taking into account the possibility that the monastery may have had title to only a part of the village. She notes that around 1300 one could still find villages of five hundred to a thousand people. Again though, one may ask, would such a large village have been typical?

Dušan’s Last Years and Death

Dušan continued to dream about marching against Constantinople, conquering it, and becoming its emperor. Having failed to recruit Venice and provide himself with a fleet for this enterprise, he seems to have done little more than dream. There is little evidence to suggest he was making active preparations for such an expedition.

In 1354 he was attacked by the Hungarians. They occupied part of northern Serbia. At this point Dušan began corresponding with the pope, stating he was even ready to recognize papal supremacy. Since there is no other evidence that Dušan was seriously attracted to Catholicism, one may regard his letters as a diplomatic ploy to better relations with the papacy while Serbia was endangered by Hungary. When the Hungarians retreated at the end of that year, Dušan did not continue the correspondence.

Dušan successfully repelled the invasion, preserving, if not extending, his original borders in the north. Peace was concluded in May 1355. Kalić-Mijušković believes this peace recognized Dušan’s success in driving the Hungarians beyond the Sava and Danube and thus awarded Dušan Mačva, though not including with it Beograd, behind its strong fortifications. Thus during his reign Dušan was able to hold his own against the Hungarians and prevent their expansion south. However, his southern focus prevented him from taking the offensive against the Hungarians. And even though he may have recovered in the end (1355) much of the territory held by Dragutin in Mačva, he did not acquire Beograd. Furthermore, whatever gains he may have made in this region were to be short-lived, not lasting much beyond his death. Thus on this frontier, as on the Bosnian one in the west, he basically held his own and simply prevented the expansion of his neighbor. Dušan’s major foreign policy achievements were the results of his southern focus which added to his Serbian state: Albania, the remaining parts of Macedonia, most of the Chalcidic peninsula, Thessaly, and Epirus.
Having repelled the Hungarian threat, Dušan was again free to think about Byzantium and to plan his attack on Constantinople. Most scholars believe that now he did begin seriously to plan for this venture and indeed was actually preparing to march in 1356 against Constantinople—some scholars even go so far as to state that he had actually set out on his march toward that city—when, in December 1355, he suddenly died of a stroke at the relatively young age of about 47.

Florinskij, however, back in 1882, expressed serious doubts that Dušan was in fact planning to attack Constantinople in 1356.14 Strangely, the serious arguments Florinskij advanced have been ignored by subsequent scholars, who still tend to hold to the view that only Dušan’s sudden death prevented his attack on the capital. Florinskij first points out that no contemporary source states that Dušan was preparing in 1355 for such an attack. Since Byzantium was interested in Serbian affairs and since the empire’s intelligence service and foreign contacts were active, it seems unlikely that Dušan could have kept such preparations secret from the Byzantines; and if the Byzantines knew of his plans, it is very unlikely that their historians would not have mentioned them. Cantacuzenus and Gregoras, however, say simply that he died; they never suggest that he was on a campaign or preparing one.

If we exclude later epic poetry, some of which does portray Dušan as dying en route to attack Constantinople, there is only one source, a seventeenth-century one, Luccari (writing in 1605), that provides evidence for the popular theory: Luccari says that in 1356 (sic) Dušan, marching for Constantinople with eighty-five thousand men, had reached the village of Diapoli in Thrace when he suffered a stroke and died on 18 December. Orbini, writing in 1601, a few years before Luccari, confirms part of Luccari’s information. Orbini states that Dušan suffered a stroke at Diavolopote in “Romania” (i.e., the Byzantine Empire) and died at the age of 45 in 1354. But Orbini says nothing about Dušan’s being there en route to Constantinople. In fact Orbini does not explain what Dušan was doing in Thrace. However, the correspondence between his account and Luccari’s suggests the two may have had a common source; this source may well have been an oral one. Orbini clearly was not certain about the circumstances of Dušan’s death, for he adds that a second story has the tsar dying at Nerodimlje, in Serbia.

Contemporary documents show that Dušan was in his own realm in December 1355 when he died. These prove only that he was not actually on campaign; they do not rule out the possibility that he was planning a major campaign for the following year. These contemporary sources include his correspondence during much of December 1355 with the Hungarian king, with whom he was then at peace, about the Venetian threat to Skradin and Klis. Dušan’s letters came from Prizren and Macedonia. Furthermore, he issued a charter to Dubrovnik on 2 December 1355; this document was probably issued at Serres, as Florinskij argues, though an earlier scholar, Pucić, had read the place of issue as “Bera,” which, if Pucić was right, could have been Bera in Thrace. A later source, though earlier than Luccari and Orbini, the
sixteenth-century Serbian *Trnoški Chronicle*, reports that Dušan died at his court at Prizren. The death site of Prizren is also given in some of the epics.

Florinskij believes that Dušan’s long successful wars against the empire, combined with his taking the title tsar (emperor), were sufficient to make this great tsar into an epic opponent of the Byzantines. Epic singers would naturally have wanted both to increase the dramatic aspects of his career and also to explain why he did not conquer Constantinople or, in fact, even try to do so. A dramatic way to explain this failure would have been to have him die, tragically, on the eve of such a campaign. And this is certainly a plausible way for an epic story to have developed. Thus one should not assume in this case that the epics reflect reality. Florinskij also thinks the seventeenth-century Dalmatian historians based their accounts on oral sources.

Florinskij concludes that Dušan died in Serbia, ambitious for, and in his long-range plans probably pondering the conquest of, Constantinople, but not actually prepared to do anything about these dreams and certainly not on the verge of launching an attack against Constantinople. Florinskij points out that Dušan still was not ready for such a campaign. Dušan realized he needed a fleet for the task and he still had not acquired one; in fact no Dalmatian or Venetian source suggests he was even seeking one in 1354 or 1355. Florinskij also thinks the large Ottoman presence near Constantinople, which controlled the north shore of the Sea of Marmora up to the city’s walls, would not have facilitated Dušan’s task. The Turks probably would have attacked his besieging armies, possibly trapping them against the city walls. Dušan, knowing of the Turks’ presence there, surely would have hesitated to attack Constantinople in such a situation. Thus I believe that Florinskij has made a strong, granted not air-tight, case that Dušan, despite ambitions and long-term dreams for Constantinople, was not at the time of his death doing anything in particular to realize his dreams.

Dušan is considered one of the greatest of medieval Balkan conquerors, for he doubled Serbia’s size, acquiring the parts of Macedonia his predecessors had not annexed, Albania, Thessaly, Epirus, and most of the Chalcidic peninsula. However, his strength should not be exaggerated. He acquired some of these lands during a Byzantine civil war, when he was allied to one or the other Byzantine side and when few troops existed to defend them. At times certain Byzantine commanders surrendered to him (often on behalf of his Byzantine ally) rather than allow their forts to fall to the other Byzantine side. Other lands he won in the aftermath of a major plague epidemic that had killed or caused the flight of many of the Byzantine leaders. He won all this territory by taking the cities within it by siege, without a single open-field, pitched battle.

He rose, as we have seen, from a semi-puppet of his nobles to become a powerful military leader and their master. By following the nobles’ policy of war against Byzantium, he won many of them to his standard; the booty and lands he won attracted many more. Having thus won many nobles to obedience, he was able to create a relatively large military force loyal to him
personally; he supplemented these troops with mercenaries, whom he had in large numbers and whose loyalty he retained by prompt and generous pay-ment. Those whose loyalty he thus won, plus the mercenaries and the Alba-nians he recruited, then provided sufficient muscle to cow any who might have remained recalcitrant. Thus he ended up with a powerful army for the Balkans of his day and the ability to control his state. Control of the state, of course, meant only that he retained the loyalty of his nobles to the extent that they did not secede, but rendered to him their service and financial obliga-tions. He placed military governors and mercenary garrisons in various provincial towns to retain his control over them and to supervise the local nobles. These outsiders presumably exerted pressure on the nobles to fulfill their obligations to the state. But they were not sufficient to institutionalize state control over a province. And Dušan never truly asserted state control over his whole realm. He could not, as we saw above, control brigandage or even guard all his frontiers. And his failure to establish centralized institutions left the nobles with great authority in their counties; as a result, the basis for separatism remained. His empire was to diminish piece-meal during and after the reign of his son and successor Uroš (1356–71).

Hungary and Venice Struggle for Dalmatia

Hungary was willing to conclude peace with Serbia, possibly even yielding Mačva, because it, like Serbia, could not afford to involve itself in a two-front war; and at this time it decided Dalmatia should have higher priority.

At that time, as had been the case since the Fourth Crusade, Venice was the dominant outside power along the Dalmatian coast. And much of Dalmatia had come to recognize Venetian suzerainty: Zadar in 1202; Dubrovnik, through three treaties, in 1232, 1236, and 1252; the isles of Hvar and Brač in 1278; Šibenik and Trogir in 1322; Split in 1327; Nin in 1329; and by the reign of Dušan also Krk, Osor, Rab, and Cres. Most of these cities and islands continued to manage their own affairs, under their own councils and laws, while rendering Venice tribute, military help when summoned, and observing the commerical regulations imposed by Venice. A Venetian prince or count (commonly rendered in Slavic as knez) was usually resident in each town, representing Venetian suzerainty and interests. His role, generally a formal one, was defined in the treaty concluded between the town and Venice. Thus, for example, the Venetian knez of Dubrovnik was to be a Venetian of high birth to serve for a two-year term. He was not to interfere in the management of Dubrovnik’s local affairs, for local governmental and judicial functions were to be exercised by local councils drawn from the Ragusan nobility. However, we may suspect that the Venetian knez did have a supervisory function to see that Venice’s trade regulations were observed by the Dalmatian towns.

Venetian overlordship was imposed chiefly to advance Venice’s com-mercial interests. It thus consisted chiefly of creating and maintaining in Venetian Dalmatia limited “staple rights.” Staple rights meant that a vassal
town could sell goods only at home (for domestic needs) or in Venice, and, moreover, that foreign merchants could not go to the vassal town but had to purchase that town’s goods in Venice. Thus Venice made itself the middleman, able to collect taxes on its vassal’s goods and to make sure the pricing of these goods did not interfere with the sale of Venetian goods. Thus its first goal, though one never fully realized, was to make Venice the central clearing house for its own goods and those of all its vassals; its second goal was to force its vassals to purchase foreign goods only through Venice, be it in Venice itself or at home, with the goods brought thither from their point of origin on a Venetian ship.

In the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century, the Venetians did not realize these goals; thus the Dalmatians had more commercial freedom than the theoretical vassals described above. Thus we can say the Dalmatians under Venice were subjected to a modified staple system. They were able to trade directly with each other and also with Ancona and Apulia; they were also free to trade with the Balkan interior. In this period Dubrovnik dominated the trade with the Balkan interior. But Venice did try to impose a variety of petty restrictions upon its Dalmatian towns; and it regularly took advantage of its vassals’ difficulties to tighten its influence. Thus in the 1320s when Dubrovnik was threatened with a war with Dečanski of Serbia, Venice gave support to Dubrovnik in exchange for various commercial benefits to itself.

Furthermore, the Dalmatian towns were not at liberty to trade with the ports on the northern Adriatic; all the northern Italian trade, according to Venetian regulations, had to go through Venice as middleman. This particular restriction had little impact on Dubrovnik, whose economy was based on trading with other partners, but it rankled particularly with Zadar, located in the north, which found its potential to expand commercially severely restricted by Venice’s staple system and especially by Venice’s northern monopoly. Not surprisingly, then, Zadar had a strong pro-Hungarian faction; it also staged a series of revolts, all suppressed, the most important of which occurred in 1242-43 and 1311-13. In the second of these revolts the town chose Mladen II Šubić as its prince, against Venice’s wishes. However, he was not strong enough to defend Zadar against a Venetian recovery. As a result of Zadar’s proven unreliability, Venice, after crushing each of its uprisings, imposed increasingly strict control over the town, including the installation of a Venetian garrison in the town in 1247.

Dubrovnik was much better off than Zadar, because it had achieved the position of being the major exporter of goods, including silver, from the Balkan interior, a region in which Venice itself did not play an active role; thus Dubrovnik found in Venice a ready market for these Balkan goods. And since Venice was not interested in becoming involved in the overland trade with Bosnia, Serbia, and Bulgaria—though Venice did carry on extensive trade with Bulgaria for grain through the Black Sea ports, especially Varna—and yet was interested in acquiring various Balkan products, it granted Dubrovnik a variety of customs exemptions in Venice. Moreover, Venice was
able to provide Dubrovnik with some support or protection against Dubrovnik’s powerful Slavic neighbors from the interior. Thus Dubrovnik was able to benefit from the relationship with Venice.

To maintain or advance its position, Venice had to retain the loyalty of its vassal towns; and in this goal it was hampered by Hungary, which was seeking to restore its lost position in Dalmatia. Thus it tried to build up pro-Hungarian parties in Venice’s towns. Hungary also worked hard to keep its control over its Croatian vassals in the area, aiming not to lose suzerainty over them and to use them to regain the lost towns. These Croatian nobles, who were not the most loyal of Hungarian vassals and were always seeking greater independence, like the independent-minded Nečipor of Knin, held a few coastal towns and most of the hinterland. Thus, if they could be mobilized, these Croatians were in a position to launch an effective attack upon Venice’s coastal towns. Aware of this, Venice devoted considerable effort to maintaining good relations with its towns, to trying to make allies of the Dalmatian towns not under its control, and to keeping up good relations with Serbia. It also maintained contacts with Hungary’s Croatian vassals and was not above tampering with these nobles in order to woo them over to its side. Venice made a major effort in this direction in 1343; on that occasion it sent embassies to several towns and to various Croatian nobles. This effort, however, netted only Mladen III Šubić, Prince of Klis, Omiš, and Skradin, and Paul II Šubić of Ostrovica. The Hungarian king, by this time Louis I (1342–82), unhappy with this Venetian tampering and also hoping to reassert his own authority in the Cetina region by taking advantage of the death of Nečipor of Knin in June 1344, mobilized an army for a Dalmatian campaign in 1345. King Louis and part of this army stopped at Bihać, but the rest of the army under Ban Nicholas continued on to besiege Knin. Nečipor’s widow Vladislava, acting on behalf of her minor son John (Ivan) Nečiporić, tried to defend the town. However, seeing that her long-range chances were poor, she decided to negotiate. She and her son made the trip to Louis at Bihać, where they submitted to him. Louis accepted their submission and confirmed young John Nečiporić in most of his father’s possessions excluding Knin, which Vladislava surrendered to Louis and he chose to retain. However, despite the retention of most of their lands, including the Cetina župa, the Nečiporić lost for a period much of their independence and became de facto vassals of the Hungarian king.

The king’s presence in the area encouraged the pro-Hungarian faction in Zadar to stage a new revolt against Venice in 1345. The king sent troops to the town and the rebels submitted to him; however, the Venetians were not willing to accept the loss of Zadar and sent forces thither. After a long siege and a victory in July 1346 over the Hungarian army (owing to its own carelessness), the Venetians in late 1346 or early 1347 regained the city, whose populace suffered severe punishment. Moreover, for future security Venice destroyed Zadar’s sea walls, ordered its citizens to surrender all their weapons, and prohibited the town from keeping more than a four-month
supply of food in town. The Venetians also confiscated a large number of ships belonging to citizens of Zadar and sent a Venetian to be the town’s knez. He was accompanied by a number of Venetians who assumed major roles in administering the town.

Hungary, then becoming involved in the affairs of Naples, was not able to send further troops to Zadar to reverse this. In fact, King Louis accepted an eight-year peace with Venice in 1348.

However, the king did have sufficient troops to spare for action against the Šubić, who during the 1340s had been forging closer ties with Venice. The family had gone so far as to support Venice against the rebels in Zadar. It seems Paul II Šubić had not expected the Hungarians to take action in this affair; thus when they did send troops to support the rebels in 1346, Paul found himself in considerable danger. Venice’s victory over the Hungarians in 1346 saved Paul from immediate disaster. But the next year found King Louis determined to assert his control over the Šubići. By that time his enemy Paul had died—probably in August 1346—and Paul’s fortress of Ostrovica had been left to his minor son, George (Juraj) III, under the regency of Paul’s brother Gregory. Gregory’s task was made more difficult because shortly before Paul’s death Paul’s wife, Elizabeth, and their little son had gone to visit her brother, Dujam “Frankapan.” Paul’s death found them there and Dujam, as a loyal vassal of King Louis, did not allow them to return to Ostrovica. Dujam wanted them to negotiate peace with Louis even if it meant surrendering Ostrovica to him. Gregory, determined to retain Ostrovica, sought aid from Venice, expressing his willingness to accept Venetian suzerainty. However, Venetian support was not forthcoming and on 31 July 1347, through the mediation of Dujam “Frankapan,” Gregory agreed to negotiate with Louis. As a result Gregory and George III submitted to the king and surrendered Ostrovica to him. As compensation, later the same day, King Louis granted George hereditary possession of the župa of Zrin in Slavonia. Louis’ acquisition of Ostrovica, which he placed under a royally appointed commander, strengthened the king’s position in the Dalmatian-Croatian area. It also placed him in a better position to launch a new attack against Venice’s holdings along the Dalmatian coast. George Šubić’s descendants retained possession of Zrin and became hereditary counts of that province, from which they took the name Zrinski. They were to become one of the leading families of Slavonia.

By transferring one branch of the Šubić family to Slavonia, the king succeeded in reducing the family’s strength in Croatia. Thus he was content to leave Mladen III Šubić in possession of Klis, Omiš, and Skradin. However, angry at the Hungarians, Mladen sought outside alliances to enable him to resist Hungarian control. In 1347, hoping for support from Dušan who already had poor relations with Hungary, Mladen married Dušan’s sister Helen (Jelena). At about the same time he arranged the marriage of his younger brother, Paul III, with a Venetian noble lady and set about aligning himself more closely with Venice. However, before the developing situation could
come to a head, Mladen III became seriously ill and then died in May 1348. His weak brother, Paul III, and his widow, Helen, inherited Mladen's territory.

An uneasy peace between the Šubići and Hungary followed. However, upon the conclusion of its war with Serbia in 1355, Hungary decided to mobilize its Croatian vassals and settle affairs with the Šubići. Dušan, whose hostility to Hungary had been exacerbated by the Hungarian attack on Serbia in 1354, decided—despite the peace treaty he had just concluded with Hungary in 1355—to support his sister, who then held Klis and Skradin. Late in 1355 he sent her troops under two able commanders to garrison her two cities. To Klis he sent a unit under his German mercenary commander Palman, and to Skradin he sent a unit under the Zetan nobleman Djuraš Ilijić (or Ilić), surely the son of Ilija the kefalia who had been active in Zeta under Milutin. The two towns were too distant for Dušan to extend effective aid; Croatian vassals of Hungary took Klis between late 1355 and March 1356, and Serbian troops were not sufficient to hold Skradin, which surrendered to Venice in January 1356, after Dušan's death. One suspects it surrendered to the Venetians to prevent the Hungarians from acquiring it. Serbian involvement in this part of Dalmatia ceased for a time as Dušan’s successors had too many other problems nearer home. Palman does not seem to have returned to Serbia. No documents mention him there subsequently, and in 1363 he is found in Dubrovnik as a beneficiary of a will.

Having made peace with Serbia in May 1355, Hungary was ready for a major effort against Venice. And it saw Venice’s acquisition of Skradin as a violation of the Hungarian-Venetian peace agreement of 1348. Hungary launched a major attack against Dalmatia in 1356. Venice was caught by surprise, for Louis had nominally mobilized his forces for an attack on Serbia—a likely target in view of Dušan’s aid to Klis and Skradin—and then had suddenly dispatched them against Dalmatia. The Venetians found themselves no match for the Hungarians, who immediately took Skradin and Omiš. Split and Trogir quickly submitted to Hungary, then the other towns rapidly followed. Venice, through its garrison in the town, was able to retain only Zadar, inside of which considerable fighting did occur. By early 1358 Hungary had regained Dalmatia; all the towns, except for those under Serbian suzerainty like Kotor and Bar, from the Gulf of Kvarner south to, but not including, the Angevin’s Durazzo submitted to Hungary. Venice was forced to give up, concluding the Peace of Zadar in February 1358, by which it surrendered to the Hungarians title to all its Dalmatian possessions—including Zadar—between the Gulf of Kvarner and Durazzo.

The Venetian prince left Dubrovnik at the end of February 1358. Under Hungary Dubrovnik and the other towns continued to manage their own affairs, rendering only tribute and naval service, when demanded, to their suzerain. Hungary, not a commercial power, placed no commercial restrictions upon its new vassals. Its liberal attitude is seen in the charter the king granted to Dubrovnik in May 1358, which was brought to the town by
his envoy in July. Dubrovnik owed its suzerain, the King of Hungary, a tribute of five hundred ducats annually; Dubrovnik was to enjoy full autonomy, free trade in Hungary, and the right to trade freely wherever it wished, including in Serbia, even in the event of a Hungarian-Serbian war. Thus Hungary, understanding that trade with Serbia was the cornerstone of Dubrovnik’s economy, respected Dubrovnik’s right to trade with Serbia even though Serbia was no friend of Hungary. However, Dubrovnik’s acceptance of Hungarian suzerainty did create difficulties with its Serbian neighbors whenever Serbia and Hungary were at war. This in particular was to be the case, as we shall see, in the decade after Dušan’s death, when Dubrovnik’s neighbor Vojislav Vojinović, holder of Trebinje, Konavli, and various regions further inland, used the Hungarian relationship as an excuse to plunder Dubrovnik’s lands when war broke out between his Serbian suzerain and Hungary.

Hungary’s victory also completed the subjection of the Šubići. After the Hungarian acquisition of Klis, Skradin, and Omiš in 1356, Paul III retained only the city of Bribir and its župa. He died later that year and his heirs, never able to regain their lost possessions, had to be satisfied with the possession of Bribir alone. The family is last heard of there in 1456.

Moreover, in areas under the king’s control, like Knin and its environs, the king established a županija organization under the authority of the Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia. It was supported by the lesser nobility whom the ban actively recruited and converted into an organized royal nobility now subject to the ban’s authority. These nobles served in his forces and were also under the jurisdiction of his court of law. The king also recruited for his armies Vlach pastoralists from the districts of Knin and Lika. These Vlachs were bound to royal service through land grants.

In much of Dalmatia—both in the towns and on the islands—there took place in the fourteenth century a solidifying of class lines and an increase in the richer merchants’ dominance over towns. Throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the rich had predominated; but on major issues that affected a whole town, large assemblies, in which all citizens participated, were held. Moreover, individuals from the middle and occasionally even from the lower classes who acquired wealth could join the nobility. By the second quarter of the fourteenth century, however, the rich were coming more and more to form a closed aristocracy—known as the patriciate—that increasingly came to monopolize the administration and judiciary of the towns. For example, on Hvar a law of 1334 banned from the town council anyone whose grandfather was not a member of the council. A similar law was issued on Korčula in 1356.

Such a closing of the patriciate’s ranks, blocking social mobility and leaving the town’s affairs in the hands of councils whose members came to be drawn only from the patriciate, was not pleasing to the general populace. And various popular uprisings occurred that often led to temporary expulsions of the nobles. None of these uprisings succeeded in the long run, for neighboring
towns, and outside powers like Venice, regularly supported the nobles and, through mediation and even at times military help, brought about the restoration of the ousted elite. Thus often the pro-Venetian party in a Dalmatian town was drawn from the aristocracy. Such rebellions, often in conjunction with a larger war in the area, occurred in Split in 1334, Trogir in 1357, and Šibenik in 1358; and unrest was rampant in Split again between 1398 and 1402.

NOTES

2. Both of these regions lay north of Jannina and south of Berat. Though Pogonia is rarely mentioned in the sources, it was important enough to be an archbishopric at the time of Andronicus III.
3. B. Ferjančič (Despoti u Vizantiji i južnoslovenskim zemljama, pp. 159–66) argues against the position I have taken and believes John Oliver received the title despot only in 1347 and from Dušan. He is clearly documented with the title in 1347. The question centers around how much earlier he might have held it. Ferjančič’s major argument against John Oliver’s holding the title in 1340 is a good one: John Oliver called himself “great vojvoda” in an inscription he composed in 1341 for the monastery he built at Lesnovo. Ferjančič plausibly argues that if he then held the title despot, he would have used it in this inscription. My only reply, which I grant is weak, is that for some reason in 1341 John Oliver chose to describe himself by a functional domestic title rather than by the honorary title he had been granted by the foreign, Byzantine, ruler. Possibly the fact that Serbia was then plundering Byzantine territory and thus in a state of war with the empire led him to avoid using a title of Byzantine origin. However, the reason that I do not follow Ferjančič on this point but follow what prior to Ferjančič’s book had been the standard view, is Dušan’s charter from 1340 referring to his step-mother, John Oliver’s wife, as despotica. Ferjančič, it seems to me, has failed to explain away this important piece of evidence.
6. Dinić believes the Serbs took Valona in 1343 (M. Dinić, “Za kronologiju Dušanovih osvajanja vizantiskih gradova,” ZRVI 4 [1956]: 1–10). Others have argued that Valona and Kanina were Serbian as early as 1337, while Spremić limits Dušan’s activities in 1343 to Macedonia and believes he conquered the Albanian cities of Valona, Berat, and Kanina in 1345 (M. Spremić, “Albanija od XIII do XV veka,” p. 35). Ducellier accepts 1345/46 as the date Dušan acquired Valona, Kanina, and Berat, but dates the conquest of Kroja to spring 1343.
8. Apocacus’ murder has traditionally been dated 11 June (following Gregoras). Lemercé (ibid., p. 210) persuasively argues that it occurred on 11 July.


