

The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest
John V. A. Fine
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THE LATE MEDIEVAL BALKANS

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*A Critical Survey from the
Late Twelfth Century
to the Ottoman Conquest*

JOHN V. A. FINE, JR.

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*To the inspiring teachers under whom
I studied the medieval Balkans
at Harvard and Sarajevo
With deep gratitude to
Albert Lord
Vlajko Palavestra
and to the memory of
Ante Babić
Georges Florovsky
Robert Lee Wolff*

Acknowledgments

The decision to write this work began when the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Committee on Eastern Europe asked me to produce a major regional history of medieval southeastern Europe, as part of a series for which they hoped to receive outside funding. When their funding efforts proved unsuccessful, I decided to go ahead with my part anyway, because there had long been a need for a book such as this one. I divided the project in half, first surveying the period from the late sixth century to the 1180s. That volume, entitled *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* was published by the University of Michigan Press in 1983. The present volume is that work's continuation. And to prevent this already long volume from becoming any longer, I have kept the background material to a bare minimum. Thus readers seeking a more thorough background about the state of the Balkans in the 1180s than this work provides are referred to the earlier volume.

Like its predecessor, this volume is to a large extent based upon lectures for the course on the medieval Balkans that I have been giving for the past fifteen years at the University of Michigan. I owe a debt to my students' responses to these lectures; their comments and questions have compelled me constantly to rethink and clarify my thoughts.

A grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation combined with a University of Michigan sabbatical semester gave me the academic year 1982–83 to devote entirely to writing. By the end of the year I had completed a first draft, which became the basis for a semester's lectures in the winter term 1984. I then carried out the revisions I felt the work required. It is a pleasure to recognize here the various people and institutions that have assisted in this work's preparation. First the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, in addition to supporting my time to write, also provided funds for travel—which enabled me to go to London and utilize the magnificent British Library of the British Museum and to visit Yugoslavia to use the Narodna Biblioteka in Sarajevo and to discuss various questions with Yugoslav scholars—as well as funds for typing and preparation of maps. The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan generously provided a subvention to facilitate the book's publication. The Center for Russian and East

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I am also most grateful to my family, to my wife, Gena, and sons, Alexander (Sasha) and Paul, who all suffered at times from the loss of my attention. They not only bore this deprivation with good spirit but also provided encouragement and a great deal of time in the thankless job of proofreading.

Note on Transliteration and Names

Serbo-Croatian is a single language (with, of course, dialectical differences) written with two alphabets, Latin for Croatian and Cyrillic for Serbian. Thus the Croatian Latin scheme is a natural one to use for transliterating Serbian names. Furthermore, it seems to me a better system than any other now being used to transliterate Bulgarian and Russian as well. Thus, following Croatian, the following transliteration scheme is used:

c = *ts* (except in words already accepted into English such as *tsar*)

ć = *ch* (soft)

č = *ch* (hard)

h = guttural *kh* (though I have left the *kh*, since it is standard, for Turkic names such as Khazars, khagan, Ispirikh)

j = *y* (as in *yes*)

š = *sh*

ž = *zh*

The Slavic softsign is indicated by a single apostrophe (').

The Bulgarian hardsign has been rendered with a double apostrophe ('').

Greek was undergoing evolution at this time with the *b* coming to be pronounced as a *v*. However, I have consistently stuck with the *b* in transliterating names, thus *Bardas* rather than *Vardas*. The same thing was happening to *u*, with its pronunciation shifting from *u* to *v*. I have almost always stuck to the *u*; thus *Staurakios* rather than *Stavrakios*. A major problem with Greek names is also the fact that their latinization has already become standard in English. Thus *k* tends to be rendered as *c* rather than *k*. I have reverted to the less ambiguous *k* in all cases (Kastoria, Nikopolis, etc.) unless names have already become commonplace in English: e.g., Nicephorus, Lecapenus, etc. In the same way the Greek *os* tends to be latinized to *us*. In names already commonplace in the English literature I have stuck with the *us*, otherwise I have used the *os*.

Since control of particular territories in the Balkans has changed over time from Romans or Greeks to different Slavic people to Turks, it is not surprising that there are many different names for some cities. On the whole, I have chosen the name used in the Middle Ages by the power that controlled

that place most. Upon first mention (and also in the index) I give the variant names for each place (e.g., Philippopolis [modern Plovdiv], or Durazzo [Dyrrachium, Durres], etc.).

Personal names have presented an insoluble problem, at least to an author making an attempt at consistency. Originally I intended in all cases to use Slavic names; however, how could I say Ivan Alexander when his Greek counterpart was John Cantacuzenus? I then tried to make a distinction between ultimate rulers and nobles, so that I could at least retain the Slavic flavor with the nobility. However, should we then suddenly change the name of Djuradj Branković to George when he became the ruler? As a result I threw up my hands and anglicized all first names, merely providing the Slavic forms on first mention. The only exception is Stephen (a name with various spellings in English as well as Slavic) whose significance on occasions went beyond that of a mere name. Its adoption by Serbian rulers came close to being part of a title, and its subsequent adoption by the Bosnian rulers—after Tvrtko's 1377 coronation—indicates the Serbian origin of Bosnia's kingship. Thus I have used the forms Stefan and Stjepan as they are appropriate.

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