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0521770173 - Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans,
900-1204

Paul Stephenson

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Byzantium's Balkan Frontier is the first narrative history in English of the northern Balkans in the tenth to twelfth centuries. Where previous histories have been concerned principally with the medieval history of distinct and autonomous Balkan nations, this study regards Byzantine political authority as a unifying factor in the various lands which formed the empire's frontier in the north and west.

It takes as its central concern Byzantine relations with all Slavic and non-Slavic peoples – including the Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians and Hungarians – in and beyond the Balkan Peninsula, and explores in detail imperial responses, first to the migrations of nomadic peoples, and subsequently to the expansion of Latin Christendom. It also examines the changing conception of the frontier in Byzantine thought and literature through the middle Byzantine period.

PAUL STEPHENSON is British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Keble College, Oxford

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*A Political Study of the
Northern Balkans, 900–1204*

PAUL STEPHENSON

*British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow
Keble College, Oxford*



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This book began as a refinement of my doctoral dissertation which I defended at the University of Cambridge in April 1996. My thesis presents a distillation, in the form of four regional surveys, of the written and archaeological evidence pertaining to the Byzantine frontier in the northern Balkans in the period 971–1180. The refinement, I thought, should have a narrative structure, since no synthetic narrative political history of the northern Balkans exists in English for this period. I also decided to increase its chronological and geographical range to allow a cursory treatment of Bulgaria before the imposition of the ‘Byzantine Yoke’, and a fuller exploration of how the ‘yoke’ was cast off by Bulgarians, Vlachs, Serbs and others. In the end the refinement bears no resemblance whatever to the thesis. It takes as its central concern Byzantine responses, first to the migrations of nomadic peoples, and subsequently to the expansion of Latin Christendom. It also examines the changing conception of the frontier in Byzantine thought and literature through the Middle Byzantine Period.

In the course of writing the thesis and book I have enjoyed the support of a number of institutions. St John's College, Cambridge awarded me a Benefactors' Scholarship and travel funds sufficient to take me around Turkey and the Balkans more than once. The British Academy funded my Ph.D. I was honoured to be appointed to a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, and privileged to hold this at Keble College, Oxford. The Warden and Fellows of Keble have provided intellectual and other sustenance.

I have benefited from the instruction, advice and criticism of many friends and scholars. My greatest debt is to Jonathan Shepard, who supervised the thesis, read drafts of papers published separately and reworked for the book, read the book in two drafts, allowed me to make use of his forthcoming works, supplied me with offprints of his published papers, provided bibliographical information and assistance with tricky

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texts, and saved me from many errors of fact and judgement. Simon Franklin and Elizabeth Jeffreys examined the thesis, and encouraged me to produce the refinement. Elizabeth has continued to provide encouragement and advice during my time in Oxford. Averil Cameron brought me to Oxford, and provided a home at Keble where I have been able to complete this project, and begin another. As my 'mentor', appointed by the British Academy, she has supervised my fellowship, and as a friend and critic she has improved my scholarship considerably. Other Byzantinists have helped: James Howard-Johnston provided the most insightful historical instruction at an early stage; Michael Metcalf taught me numismatics; Cyril Mango taught me sigillography, and inspired with his wit and erudition; Paul Magdalino offered welcome advice at a late stage. Ned Goy taught me Serbo-Croat in Cambridge, and David Raeburn improved my Greek in Oxford. Neven Budak and Mladen Ančić welcomed me in Zagreb and Zadar. Csanád Bálint and József Laslovszky welcomed me in Budapest. Despina Christodoulou argued with me in Cambridge and Athens. Dean Kolbas made me think about what I was doing and why I was doing it. My sisters and grandmother, Ian Stewart and Jennifer Lambert, Kristen Laakso and Brian Didier, Graham Stewart and Caroline Humfress have taken a keen and welcome interest. Clare lost interest years ago, but this book is still dedicated to her, and now also to Jack Jolly.

Oxford, March 1999

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In citation, more for reasons of length than style, I have employed a modified author-date system similar to that used in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Primary sources are referred to, according to common practice, by the name of the author, or by an abbreviation of the title of the work. Thus, I refer to Cinnamus (not *The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*), but the *Alexiad* (by Anna Comnena). Most abbreviated titles are self-evident, for example *Codex Diplomaticus* refers to the *Codex Diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*. However, some sources have a more cryptic abbreviation which is in common use, for example *DAI*, the *De Administrando Imperio*, or *PVL*, *Povest' Vremennykh Let* (*Russian Primary Chronicle*). In each such case the work is listed in the bibliography after the abbreviation, and is also included in the list of abbreviations which precedes the text. Where an author has produced multiple works, both name and title are used, for example Theophylact [of Ohrid], *Lettres*, and Theophylact, *Discours*. Where a work exists, and is commonly cited, in more than one standard edition, the name of the editor has been included, for example Cecaumenus, ed. Litavrin (not ed. Wassiliewsky and Jernstedt). Secondary works are cited in notes (and occasionally within the text) according to the simple formula author, date, page, and (where necessary), column (col.), ep. (letter), number (nr.) or note (n.). Thus Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204: a Political History*, 2nd edn., London and New York 1997, page 176, note 3, is cited as: Angold 1997: 176, n. 3.

In transliterating from Cyrillic I have used, I hope consistently, the Library of Congress system. This has led to my occasionally emending an author's chosen transliteration of a work, or even her or his own name. Thus, I refer to I. Duǰčev as Duichev, and V. Šandrovskaya as Shandrovskaiia. I have been less consistent in my transliteration from Greek. On the various methods for transliterating Greek I refer the reader, for once, to Treadgold 1997: xxi–xxiii, and to the criticism of

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Treadgold by George Dennis, in *BMGS* 21 (1997): 283, 'Latinisation . . . is contrary to th[e practice] of most serious Byzantinists today, and is especially unwarranted now that the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* has provided writers in English with a standard system of representing Byzantine terminology. To continue with Latinisation is simply a foppish affectation, with a touch of arrogance.' This is correct, and for specific Greek terms I have employed a Greek transliteration italicized, so *strategos* not strategus, and *doux* not dux or duke. However, with just a hint of foppish affectation, I have employed a Latin transliteration for each proper name except where a common English variant exists, for example Alexius Comnenus not Alexios Komnenos, and John not Ioannes nor Ioannis. In my defence I cite precedent not principle, and skulk behind the authority of a serious Byzantinist: Angold 1995: ix, 'I have come to favour far more than in the past a Latin transliteration of Byzantine proper names: so Comnenus not Komnenos.'

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- B* *Byzantion*, Brussels and Paris 1924–
- BF* *Byzantinische Forschungen*, Amsterdam 1966–
- BMGS* *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Oxford 1975–83,
Birmingham 1984–
- BS* *Byzantinoslavica*, Prague 1929–
- BZ* *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, Leipzig and Munich 1892–
- CFHB* *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, Washington, DC *et al.*
1969–
- Choniates All references to Choniates are to Nicetas' *History* unless
otherwise specified
- CMH* *The Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, ed. J. M. Hussey,
Cambridge 1966
- CSHB* *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn 1828–97
- DAI* *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G.
Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington, DC 1967
- DOP* *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Cambridge, MA and Washington,
DC 1941–
- FRB* *Fontes Rerum Byzantarum*, eds. V. E. Regel and N. I.
Novosadskii, St Petersburg 1892–1917, reprinted Leipzig
1982
- JÖB* *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, Vienna, Cologne
and Graz 1969–
- LPD* *Letopis Popa Dukljanina*, ed. F. Šišić, Belgrade and Zagreb
1928
- MGH* *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Hanover *et al.* 1824–1934
- MGH SS* *MGH Scriptores*, in folio, 30 vols., Hanover 1824–1924
- ODB* *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan, A.-M.
Talbot, A. Cutler, T. E. Gregory and N. P. Ševčenko, 3
vols., Oxford and New York 1991

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List of abbreviations

- PG* *Patrologia Cursus Completus, series Graeco-Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1857–66, 1880–1903
- PL* *Patrologia Cursus Completus, series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1844–1974
- PVL* *Povest' Vremennynkh Let*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and V. P. Adrianova-Perrets, 2 vols., Moscow and Leningrad 1950
- REB* *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, Bucharest and Paris 1944–
- RESEE* *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, Bucharest 1963–
- RHC* *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, Paris 1844–95, 1872–1906
- SBS* *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, ed. N. Oikonomides, Washington, DC 1987–
- SEER* *The Slavonic and East European Review*, London 1922–
- SRH* *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. E. Szentpétery, 2 vols., Budapest 1937–8
- TM* *Travaux et Mémoires*, Paris 1965–
- ŽRVI* *Žbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, Belgrade 1952–