

SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY SLAVS (c. 500–700)

Much of what we know about sixth- and seventh-century Slavs comes from works of contemporary authors writing in Greek and, to a lesser extent, in Latin or Syriac. The majority did not pay special attention to the Slavs, but simply mentioned them and a few other things about them in connection to events relevant to the history of the Empire. Some were accounts of eyewitnesses, but most were written long after the event or at a considerable distance. Their coverage is patchy, and the basic narrative has to be reconstructed from a wide variety of standpoints and perspectives. This chapter will examine some of the issues concerning authorship, trustworthiness, and dating, which might be relevant for the image of the Slavs resulting from early medieval sources. The following chapter will take into consideration the image which is often derived from these accounts.

PROCOPIUS AND JORDANES

Procopius was often viewed as the voice of the senatorial opposition to Justinian's regime. He is believed to have addressed an audience still fond of Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides. His description of the Slavic god as the "maker of lightning" (τὸν τῆς ἀστραπτῆς δημιουργόν) is indeed reminiscent of Sophocles. The episode of the "phony Childeus" betrays the influence of the neo-Attic comedy and, possibly, of Plautus. There is also a weak echo of Thucydides where Procopius claims that he had written about buildings which he had seen himself, or heard described by others who had seen them.¹

¹ Procopius, *Wars* VII 14.23 and VII 14.11–16; *Buildings* VI 7.18. See Sophocles, *Aias* 1035: ἐχάκνευε ξίφος... Αἰδὴς δημιουργὸς ἄστρος. See also Ivanov, Gindin, and Cymburskii 1991:221 and 231–2. Procopius, the senatorial opposition, and classical models: Irmscher 1969:470; Benedicty 1965:52–3; Irmscher 1971:340. See also Cesa 1982:203. For Procopius' concept of God and gods, see Veh 1951:21 and 23; Elferink 1967.

Despite his credentials as an eyewitness reporter, however, his account could hardly be checked, for he usually does not mention his sources. But doubts are rarely, if ever, raised about the authenticity of his account. It is nevertheless very likely that, except the regions in the immediate vicinity of the Capital, Procopius hardly knew the Balkan area other than from maps.² He probably had contact with the Slavs in Italy, where he was at Belisarius' side as his legal advisor and secretary.³ In 542, Procopius was back in Constantinople, where he certainly was an eyewitness to the plague. The writing of the *Wars* may have already started in the 540s, but Books I–VII containing material relevant to the Slavs were only completed in 550 or 551, probably at the same time as the *Secret History*.⁴ As for the *Buildings*, with its controversial date, Procopius seems to have left it unfinished. Some have argued that parts of the *Buildings*, if not the entire work, must have been written in 559/60. There is, however, a reference to the recent strengthening of the fortifications of Topeiros, after the city has been sacked by Slavene marauders in 550, as narrated in the *Wars*. There are several other indications that Procopius had formed the plan of writing the *Buildings* while he was still at work on the very different *Secret History*. If the two works were contemporary, we can date them with some exactitude before May 7, 558, the date of the collapse of the dome of Hagia Sophia (an event not mentioned in Procopius' *Buildings*). It is thus possible that the first books of the *Buildings* (including the reference to the Slavenes in book IV) were written before 558 and remained unrevised, probably because of their author's untimely death.⁵

Procopius' view of the Slavs is a function of his general concept of *oikumene*. An analysis of his diplomatic terminology reveals his idea of an empire surrounded by "allies" (ἐνσπονδοί), such as the Saracens, the

² Procopius' description of the road between Strongylum and Rhegium, on the *via Egnatia*, leaves the impression that he has seen the coarse paving stones with his own eyes (*Buildings* IV 8). But the lack of coherence in the direction of the author's account of Illyricum and Thrace may reflect the lack of personal experience of the area. Other details, such as the use of Mysia for Moesia (Inférieur), may be attributed to the influence of Homer, (*Buildings* IV 6; *Iliad* XIII 5). See Veh 1951:35 with n. 18; Cesa 1982:203; Cameron 1985:13 and 220 with n. 96; Litavrin 1986:25; Adshhead 1990:108.

³ After the first siege of Rome, Procopius was sent to Naples, in charge of supplies for the army, and then to Auximum, in 539/40, where Slavene mercenaries were used by Belisarius to capture some Ostrogoths from the besieged city (*Wars* VI 26.16–22). See Evans 1970:219; Ivanov, Gindin, and Cymburskii 1991:171; Anfert'ev 1991:132.

⁴ Veh 1951:9; Evans 1972:37; Cameron 1985:8; Greatrex 1994:102. For a different, but unconvincing, dating of the *Secret History*, see Scott 1987:217.

⁵ Evans 1969:30. For Topeiros, see *Buildings* IV 11.14–17; *Wars* VII 38.9–19. In his *Buildings*, Procopius places the capture of the city οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας. He also lists the Goths among the Empire's neighbors on the Danube frontier, which could only refer to the pre-555 situation (IV 1). See Veh 1951:9; Whitby 1983a:145; Scott 1987:220; Greatrex 1994:113 and 1995. See also Beshevliev 1967b:276.

Lombards, the Gepids, the Goths, the Cutrigurs, and the Antes. The Slavenes do not belong to this group, most probably because Procopius viewed them as "new." Indeed, among all forty-one references to Slavenes or Antes in Procopius' work, there is no use of the adverbs παλαιόν, πάλαι, αἰ, ἐξ ἐμῆ, or ἀνέκαθεν, while all verbs used in reference to settlement (οἰκέω, ἰδρύομαι, νέμονται) appear in the present tense or in the medium voice. Procopius constantly referred to Slavenes in relation to Antes and Huns or to other nomads. When talking about Slavic dwellings, he employed καλύβαι, a phrase he only used for military tents and for Moorish compounds. Both this phrase and the claim that the Slavs set up their dwellings far from one another betray the influence of military terminology.⁶

The Slavic ethnographic *exkursus* is nevertheless the longest in all of his work. It includes a rich list of topics: political organization, religion, dwellings, warfare, language, physical appearance, ethnic name, and territory. It is thus the richest of all *exkursus*, an indication of the special interest of both Procopius and his audience for things Slavic. Moreover, the Slavic *exkursus* shows that, despite claims to the contrary, Procopius' attitude toward Slavenes is altogether not hostile, for to him they are neither θηριώδης, nor ἀγριώτερος, as most other barbarians are described (e.g., the Herules).⁷ Most of this *exkursus* was probably written on the basis of the information Procopius obtained through interviews with Slavene and Antian mercenaries in Italy. His knowledge of the Slavs in the period following his return to Constantinople seems, however, to have been primarily based on archival material and oral sources.⁸ In the main narrative of the *Wars*, the accounts of Slavene raids are often introduced by temporal clauses, as if Procopius is striving to synchronize events in the Balkans with those in Italy or on the eastern frontier. He even suggests that a certain Slavene raid may have not been an accident, but a deliberate attempt by Totila to keep Roman armies occupied in the Balkans.⁹

⁶ Slavenes, Antes, and Huns: *Wars* v 7.2; vii 14.2; *Secret History* 18.20; Slavic dwellings: *Wars* vii 14.24. See Gindin 1988:180–1. See also Ivanov 1987:31; Gindin 1987:24–5; Ivanov, Gindin, and Cymburskii 1991:224.

⁷ Cesa 1982:207 and 212. For a cautious approach to Procopius' digressions and "origins" passages, see Cameron 1985:213.

⁸ Veli 1951:11; Litavrin 1986:27. Procopius' Constantinopolitan perspective is betrayed by his account of the Slavene invasion of 549 (*Wars* vii 38.21–3). Procopius tells us that after crossing the Danube river, the 3,000 Slavene warriors split into two groups, operating independently. One group attacked the cities in Thrace, the other invaded Illyricum. But Procopius' account focuses only on those Slavenes who approached the walls of Constantinople and completely ignores those raiding Illyricum. It is likely that Procopius used an oral source for the obviously exaggerated figure of 15,000 prisoners taken by the Slavenes after capturing Topeiros, as well as for the report of their torture and execution (*Wars* vii 38.23). The latter is an accurate description of the torture known in Late Antiquity as καρτομοιός and specifically associated with Christian martyrdom; see Vergote 1972:118–19, 125, and 139–40. ⁹ *Wars* vii 29.1, vii 38.1, vii 40.31. See Cesa 1982:190.

If Procopius imagined the Slavs as newcomers and nomads, Jordanes viewed them totally different. In writing the *Getica*, Jordanes may have engaged in a polemic with Procopius over the issue of the Empire's attitude toward barbarians, particularly Goths. Their respective treatment of Slavenes and Antes suggests that Jordanes' polemic with his contemporary may have been broader than that. In an attempt to establish a quasi-legendary origin for the Slavs, Jordanes points to Venethi, Procopius to Spori. Procopius classifies Slavenes and Antes as nomads, Jordanes gives them swamps and forests for cities. Procopius locates the Slavenes close to the Danube frontier of the Empire, while Jordanes moves them northward as far as the Vistula river. Procopius maintains that the Slavenes and the Antes "are not ruled by one man, but they have lived from of old under a democracy"; Jordanes gives the Antes a king, Boz. The number of examples could easily be multiplied. The evidence is too compelling to rule out the possibility that Jordanes was responding to Procopius' account. The coincidence in time of their works also supports this idea.¹⁰

Jordanes ended his *Getica* shortly before the *Romana*, in 550 or 551. According to him, the Antes were the strongest among all Venethi, a possible allusion to their treaty with Justinian, in 545. Despite serving as *notarius* to a certain general of the Empire named Gunthigis or Baza, Jordanes wrote *Getica* in Constantinople. From his work he appears to have been familiar with the horizons and viewpoint of the military or court circles in the Capital.¹¹ The preface to *Getica* contains a long paragraph borrowed from the preface of Rufinus to his translation of Origen's commentary on *Romans*. This suggests that Jordanes was not only a devout Christian, but also familiar with serious theology at a time when Origen was a controversial author. Jordanes apparently wrote in a sort of semi-retirement after his *conversio*, as a devout elderly layman deeply mindful of the transience of earthly life but nonetheless possessed of strong views on the state of the Roman world, and the immediate directions that imperial policy should take.¹²

What was Jordanes' source of information about Slavenes and Antes? The issue of Jordanes' sources for his *Getica* is one of the most controversial. Nineteenth-century scholars claimed that Jordanes did no

¹⁰ Jordanes, *Getica* 35; Procopius, *Wars* vii 14.22. For the polemic between Jordanes and Procopius, see Goffart 1988:93–5 and 101.

¹¹ The Antes as the strongest of all Venethi: *Getica* 35; Jordanes as *notarius*: *Getica* 266. Date of *Getica*: Várady 1976:487; Croke 1987:126; Anfert'ev 1991:99. Walter Goffart (1988:106–7) proposed the *Getica* was written before 552, but his ideas were met with criticism: Heather 1991a:44 and 47–9; Anton 1994:280 and 283. For *Getica* as written in Constantinople, see Wagner 1967:27; Croke 1987:119–20; Goffart 1988:106–7; Anfert'ev 1991:98.

¹² Croke 1987:134; see also O'Donnell 1982:227 and 240. Justinian's advisor in matters regarding adherents and opponents of the council at Chalcedon was Bishop Theodore Ascidus of Caesarea, an enthusiastic supporter of Origen's doctrines. It is on Theodore's advice that Justinian issued the famous edict of the Three Chapters in 543/4. See Moorhead 1994:130.

more than copy, with slight alterations, the now-lost *Gothic History* of Cassiodorus. Others tend to give him credit for originality. In fact, there is little evidence to claim that Jordanes did more than use a cursory abridgement of Cassiodorus' work as the basis for a work of his own.¹³ Could the information about the Slavs have come from Cassiodorus? For his digression on Scythia, Jordanes cites the "written records" of the Goths, which was often interpreted as an indication that Jordanes used Cassiodorus as a source. In fact, the passage looks more like an insertion by Jordanes. Jordanes calls one and the same river Viscla when referring to Slavenes, and Vistula, when speaking of Venethi. This was interpreted as an indication of two different sources. In the case of the Venethi, the source may have been an ancient work similar to Ptolemy's geography. It is equally possible, however, that Jordanes was inspired here by Tacitus, for, like him, he constantly associates Venethi with Aesti. Some argued that the name Viscla indicates a Gothic oral source. However, the river is named Vistla three times by Pliny the Elder. Moreover, one of these references is associated with the Venedi. A citation from Pliny's work by Julius Solinus is rendered by some manuscripts as Vistla, by others as Viscla. That Jordanes used Solinus has long been demonstrated by Mommsen. It is therefore very likely that Jordanes borrowed Viscla not from an oral source, but from a manuscript of the third-century *Collection of Remarkable Facts*.¹⁴

Jordanes' sources seem to have been written, rather than oral. This is also true for the passage referring to the conquest of Venethi by Ermenaric. The king of the Ostrogoths had subdued many tribes, which Jordanes calls *thiudos*. It is possible that both this term and the list of tribal names were derived from a Gothic source, but there is no indication that this was an oral one. Jordanes' source for the subjugation of the Herules is Ablabius. Is it possible that his account of Ermenaric's victory over the Venethi originated in either the "Gothic source" or Ablabius? In my opinion, the answer must be negative for a variety of reasons. First, unlike the Herules, whom Jordanes describes as living near Lake Maeotis, the only thing he has to say about Venethi is that they were "a multitude of cowards of no avail." Second, the reference to God in this passage looks more like a commentary by Jordanes, with his idea of Divine Providence as the main force behind all events. Third, the passage contains a cross-reference, by which Jordanes, as if not willing to repeat himself, sends us back to the "catalogue of nations" for further information on Venethi.

¹³ Bradley 1966:79; Croke 1987:121; see also Baldwin 1981:145. For the relation between Cassiodorus and Jordanes, see Anton 1994:275–6.

¹⁴ The "written records" of the Goths: *Gética* 38; see Croke 1987:123; Barnish 1984:339. Viscla/Vistula: *Gética* 34–5; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* IV 81, 97, and 100; Julius Solinus, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* 20.2. See also Mommsen 1882:xxxii and 1895:xxvii; Anfert'ev 1991:131. For Venethi and Aesti, see *Gética* 35–6 and 119–20; Tacitus, *Germania* 46. See also Anfert'ev 1986:10.

The reference is not exactly accurate. In the "catalogue of nations" (chapter 35), we were told that the Venethi were "chiefly called Slaveni and Antes," which could only mean that Venethi were (later) subdivided into two subcategories, the Slavenes and the Antes. By contrast, in chapter 119, Jordanes claims that Venethi is just one of the three current names (*tria nunc nomina ediderunt*). They are a subcategory, not the archetype. The word *nunc* appears again when Jordanes claims that they, the Venethi, are raging in war far and wide. His concern is more to evoke the sixth-century setting of his argument than to impress upon readers the very distant antiquity of King Ermenaric's victory over the peoples of Scythia. Jordanes wants his audience to believe that Venethi was a name still in use during his own lifetime. Procopius, Jordanes' contemporary, only knows of Slavenes and Antes. In his *Romana*, Jordanes himself only speaks of Bulgars, Slavenes, and Antes. In fact, his audience must have been familiar with attacks by Slavenes and Antes, but might have never heard of Venethi. Jordanes' mention of the Venethi linked the narrative of the Gothic history to events taking place during his lifetime. This narrative strategy, however, was not very well thought out, for he clumsily superposed a vague geographical concept of contemporary invasions on the ethnic configuration described in his "catalogue of nations."¹⁵

When compared to Procopius, Jordanes' account of the Slavs is poorly informed. Besides locating them in Scythia, the only thing Jordanes knows about Slavenes is that they have swamps and woods for cities, a passage that has a distant parallel in Tacitus' description of the wooded and mountainous country raided by Venedi. The only "hard" piece of evidence about Antes is the episode of Vinitharius' victory over King Boz. Could this episode have originated in the oral Gothic tradition? In order to substantiate this idea, some pointed to the narrative pattern of the story. As in *Romana*, Jordanes employs here an unusual spelling, *Anti* instead of *Antes*, which suggests his source was Greek, not Latin. The episode of Vinitharius did not originate in Cassiodorus, because there is no indication that Cassiodorus read Greek. Just as in the case of Ermenaric's episode, Jordanes filled the imaginary map of much earlier accounts with sixth-century ethnic names.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Gética* 116–17 and 119; *Romana* 52. For *thiudos* as an indication of a Gothic (oral) source, see Wolfram 1988:87–8; Anfert'ev 1991:149–50; Kazanski 1991a:36. *Contra*: Heather 1996:55. There is additional evidence that the reference to Venethi in the account of Ermenaric's military deeds originated in the "catalogue of nations." Following his victory over the Venethi, Ermenaric subdued the Aesti, "who dwell on the farthest shore of the German Ocean" (*Gética* 120). Again, the Tacitean association between Venethi and Aesti betrays Jordanes' sources.

¹⁶ *Gética* 247; *Romana* 52; see Tacitus, *Germania* 46. See also Pritsak 1983:381; Wolfram 1988:251–2; Anfert'ev 1991:159. For the spelling of Antes in both Greek and Latin, see Werner 1980:577. For Cassiodorus and Greek, see Croke 1987:121; O'Donnell 1982:229 and 235.

It has long been recognized that one of Jordanes' sources for his *Getica* was a map. His account of the Venethi, however, suggests that there was more than one. Though Jordanes usually conceptualizes the Vistula river with a south-north direction, the "abode of the Slavani extends . . . northward as far as the Vistula." This indicates a west-east direction for the river, which contradicts not only all other references to Vistula, but also the entire geographical system on which Jordanes' description of Scythia is based. In addition, the river named here is Viscla, not Vistula. Jordanes' source may have been Pliny, who set his Venedi, along with Sciri and Cimbri, between the river Vistla and Sarmatia, thus acknowledging a south-north direction for this river. No other source describes the Slavanes as being bounded to the north by any river. The only exception is the Peutinger map. The twelfth- or early thirteenth-century copy of this road map, Codex Vindobonensis 324, reproduces an early fifth-century map, itself based on a third-century prototype. The Peutinger map shows the Venedi placed between the Danube and another river, named *Agalingus*, which is perhaps a corrupted form of Ptolemy's Axiaces river. In addition, the Venedi appear across the Danube, immediately beside a staging post named *Noviodunum*. *XLI*. This is, no doubt, the city of Noviodunum (present-day Isaccea), with the distance in Roman miles to the next staging post, Salsovia (present-day Mahmudia). Jordanes' *ciuitas Nouitunensis* is an equivalent of *Noviodunum* on the Peutinger map. His description is based on a map showing a route along the Danube, not on an oral source.¹⁷

Historians imagined Jordanes as a thorough observer of the ethnographic situation on the northern frontier of the Empire in the mid-500s. The purpose of his work, however, was not accurate description. *Getica* was probably meant to be a reply to Procopius in the current debate on the attitude towards barbarians. To support his arguments, Jordanes made extensive use of various, ancient sources. The description of Scythia is based on these sources for both the geographical framework and the tribal names used to fill the map.

Jordanes used at least three sources for his description of the Venethi. Tacitus may have served as the basis for the ethnographic material, but Jordanes used maps for his geographical orientation. One of them, based on a conical or coniclike projection, had the river Vistula with a south-north direction and was probably close to, if not inspired by,

¹⁷ *Getica* 35; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* iv 97; *Tabula Peutingeriana* Segment vii.4; see also Ptolemy, *Geographia* iii 5.18. For Jordanes' use of maps, see Mommsen 1882:xxxii; Curta 1999. The traditional interpretation of *ciuitas Nouitunensis* was that it referred to Noviodunum in Pannonia. This was further interpreted as indicating that in the mid-sixth century, the Slavs inhabited a vast area along the eastern slopes of the Carpathian mountains, from the Vistula river to the Middle Danube. See Skrzhińska 1957:6–10.

Ptolemy. The other, however, had the same river with a west-east direction, so typical for Roman road maps with no real geographical projection, such as the Peutinger map. Jordanes seems to have been unable to solve the apparent contradictions between these sources, for he was not interested in matters geographical. The issue of history concerned him to a much higher degree. Jordanes interpreted his sources as evidence for contemporary concerns. The attacks of the Slavanes and the Antes were an experience too familiar to his audience to be neglected, even in a history of the Goths. Through his research in ancient sources about the geography of Eastern Europe, Jordanes became convinced that the ethnic groups mentioned by second- or third-century authors were the same as those rampaging everywhere during his lifetime. Although in the mid-sixth century "their names were dispersed amid various clans and places," the Venethi were still recognizable to Jordanes' eyes. And although they were now known as Slavanes and Antes, it was the same *natio* that both Armenian and Vitharius had subdued to the Goths.

Jordanes' perspective thus proves to be the exact opposite of Procopius' standpoint. Instead of representing the Slavs as "new" and nomads, Jordanes calls them Venethi and thus makes them look ancient. This, however, is not a consequence of Jordanes' inability to cope with chronology, but derives from the specific purpose of his work. Like all Christian historians of the 500s and 600s, Jordanes had a high respect for the authority of the sources he used. He was aware that not to match account and source or to distort a document would damage the truthfulness of a writer. He fully embraced therefore the historical and geographical viewpoint of his predecessors, because he needed their authority as sources. This conclusion is in sharp contrast to traditional views, which held Jordanes for a better and more accurate source for the history of the early Slavs than Procopius, because of his alleged use of Gothic oral sources.¹⁸

THE SLAVS, THE THEORY OF CLIMATES, AND CONSTANTINOPLE

Revision is also needed for the old idea that the earliest reference to Slavanes is that of the author of *Erotapokriseis*, known as Pseudo-Caesarius. He must have been a Monophysite monk, most probably from the Constantinopolitan monastery Akimeton. His work is a collection of 220 queries and answers on a variety of topics (hence its Greek title, usually translated into English as *Dialogues*). Paradoxically, the style of the work reminds one more of a rhetorician than of a theologian. Pseudo-Caesarius seems to have been familiar with court life and he had certainly

¹⁸ *Getica* 35. For the historiography of Jordanes' Venethi, see Curta 1999:1–5. For Jordanes as accurate source for the history of the early Slavs, see Sedow 1978; Eckkaute, Garte, and Kazanski 1992.

visited Cappadocia, Palestine, and the region of the Danube frontier. This is suggested not so much by his use of a biblical name for the Danube (Physon), as by the phrase Ῥιμῑανοί he uses in reference to the inhabitants of the Danube region. The term is a derivative of the Latin word *ripa* and most probably refers to inhabitants of the province Dacia Ripensis, located alongside the Danube frontier. A *terminus a quo* for the dating of Pseudo-Caesarius' work is the reference to Lombards as living beyond the Danube, which indicates a date after c. 530. Moreover, in a passage referring to the same region, Pseudo-Caesarius uses the example of the frozen Danube to illustrate an argument based on a biblical citation (Gen. 1.6). He argues that 10,000 horsemen were thus able to invade Illyricum and Thrace, a clear allusion to the invasion of the Cutrigurs in the winter of 558/9. *Eratopokriseis* was therefore composed less than ten years after Procopius' and Jordanes' accounts. Pseudo-Caesarius, nevertheless, shares the former's attitude toward Slavs. He claims that the Slavenees are savage, living by their own law and without the rule of anyone (ἀννρημένοντο). This may be an echo of Procopius' report that they "are not ruled by one man, but they have lived from of old under a democracy."¹⁹

Pseudo-Caesarius' point of view is, however, radically different from that of Procopius. His purpose was to refute the so-called theory of climates (*Milieutheorie*), which claimed that the character of a given ethnic group was a direct consequence of the influence exerted by the geographical and climatic region in which that group lived. Pseudo-Caesarius made his point by showing that completely different peoples could in fact live within the same climatic zone. He chose, among other examples, the savage Slavenees, on one hand, and the peaceful and mild inhabitants of the Danube region (the "Physonites"), on the other. Pseudo-Caesarius' most evident bias against Slavenees has led some to believe that his appalling portrait of the Slavs is in its entirety a cliché, while others are more inclined to give him credit of veracity.²⁰

¹⁹ The Greek text of the passage cited after Riedinger 1969:302 and 305–6; for its English translation, see Bačić 1983:152. See also Procopius, *Wars* VII 14.22. In his narration of the invasion of 558/9, Agathias of Myrina refers to a multitude of horsemen, crossing the frozen river "as if it were land (καθάρπ χέρσων)" (v.11.6). This is very much like Pseudo-Caesarius' description: χείμονος πρηγυμένον και εις λιθάδην ἀντιπυμῖαν μεθίσταμένης τῆς μαλακῆς τοῦ περὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ. See Bakalov 1974:48. For the literary cliché of barbarians crossing the frozen Danube, see Hornstein 1957:155–8. Pseudo-Caesarius and the earliest reference to Slavenees: Gorianov 1930b:310; Skrzhińska 1957:13 and 35; Köpstein 1979:67. Pseudo-Caesarius' life: Ivanov 1991d:251–7. Date of *Eratopokriseis*: Duichev 1953:205.

²⁰ Duichev 1953:207–8; Malingoudis 1990. For the theory of the seven climates and its astrological underpinnings, see Homigman 1929:4–7, 9, and 92–4. Pseudo-Caesarius' attack on the theory of climates suggests that he endorsed the measures adopted by the fifth ecumenical council (553) against astrology; see Ivanov 1991d:253.

A date slightly later than, if not closer to, that of Pseudo-Caesarius' *Eratopokriseis* could also be assigned to Agathias of Myrina's *History*. He provides little information relevant to the history of the Slavs, except the names of an Antian officer and a Slavene soldier in the Roman army operating in the Caucasus region. The importance of this source is rather that, together with John Malalas, Agathias is the first author to mention the Slavenees under a new, shorter name (Σκλάβοι, instead of Σκλαβηνοί or Σκλαυνηνοί). Since he obtained most of his information about Roman campaigns in Italy and Caucasus from written sources (military reports and campaign diaries), rather than from personal experience, the question is whether this change in ethnic naming should be attributed to Agathias himself or to his sources. Though born in Myrina, in Asia Minor, Agathias lived most of his life in Constantinople. He was one of the most prominent lawyers in the city and he died there in c. 582. He certainly was in Constantinople in 558/9, as Zabergan's Cutrigurs attacked the Long Walls, for the abundance of detailed information (names of participants, place names, consequences of the invasion) betrays an eyewitness.²¹

The same event is narrated by John Malalas on the basis of a now lost source, a Constantinopolitan city chronicle, later used by Theophanes for a version of the same invasion clearly not inspired by Malalas. Unlike Agathias, Malalas specifically refers to Slavenees as participants in this invasion. It is difficult to explain why Agathias failed to notice this detail, but it is important to note that, like him, Malalas (or his source, the Constantinopolitan chronicle) employs the shorter ethnic name (Σκλάβοι). Historians, perhaps influenced by the tendency to view Malalas as Justinian's mouthpiece to the masses, tend to give credit to Malalas and believe that Slavenees may have indeed taken part in Zabergan's raid. There are, however, insurmountable difficulties in assuming that Malalas' audience were *breite Völkern* or monastic circles. Malalas provides a summary of world history from a sixth-century point of view organized around a central chronological framework and informed by an overriding chronological argument. Whoever was responsible for the last part of Book xviii, whether an aged Malalas living in Constantinople or someone else, appears to have been affected by the gloom of the later part of Justinian's reign and so to have produced a desultory list of unconnected events of a sort to be associated with a putative city chronicle. Malalas did not witness the attack of 558/9 and, like Theophanes, relied exclusively on the Constantinopolitan chronicle. If

²¹ Agathias III 3.6.9, III 3.7.2, III 21.6, IV 18.1–3, IV 20.4. For Agathias' life and work, see Veli 1951:18; Cameron 1970:3; Bakalov 1974:207; Levinskaia and Tokhtas'ev 1991a:292.

Slavene warriors participated in Zabergan's invasion, they probably had a subordinate role, for they were invisible to the otherwise trustworthy testimony of Agathias.²²

An equally Constantinopolitan origin must be attributed to the reference to *Sclavus* in Bishop Martin of Braga's poem dedicated to St Martin of Tours, most likely written in the late 570s. Martin, who was born in Pannonia in the 510s, visited the Holy Land in 550 or 552, travelling via Constantinople. The short ethnic name given to the Slavs suggests a Constantinopolitan source. In writing his epitaph, Bishop Martin was inspired by two poems of Sidonius Apollinaris, in which, like Martin, he listed randomly selected ethnic, barbarian names, in order to create a purely rhetorical effect. Besides *Sclavus*, there are two other ethnic names not mentioned by Sidonius, but listed by Martin: *Nava* and *Datus*. The former is interpreted as referring to inhabitants of the former province of Noricum, the latter as designating Danes. In spite of the obvious lack of accuracy of these geographical indications, some have attempted to locate the Slavenes on a sixth-century ethnic map of Europe. It is very unlikely, however, that the mention of *Sclavus* in Bishop Martin's poem is anything more than a rhetorical device in order to emphasize the rapid spread of Christianity among *inmanes varisque gentes* through the spiritual powers of St Martin. Besides simply mentioning the Slavs, among other, more or less contemporary, ethnic groups, Bishop Martin's poem has no historical value for the Slavs.²³

No contemporary source refers to Slavenes during the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II. The next information about them comes from Menander the Guardsman's now lost *History*. Menander wrote, under Maurice, a work continuing that of Agathias. It survived in fragments incorporated into *De Legationibus* and *De Sententiis*, two collections compiled under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the mid-tenth century.²⁴ Menander's *History* may have been commissioned by Emperor Maurice

²² John Malalas xviii. 129. See Litavrin 1991a:269 and 272. The use of a Constantinopolitan city chronicle for Book xviii of Malalas' chronicle is betrayed by his dating by indiction, which is rare before the middle of Book xvi and becomes frequent only from the beginning of xviii. At this point, entries in Malalas' chronicle are brief and almost entirely focused on Constantinople. For Malalas' sources and style, see Jeffreys 1990a:166 and 1990b:214; Croke 1990:27 and 37; Scott 1990b:84. Malalas as Justinian's mouthpiece to the masses: Irmscher 1969:471 and 1971:342. That both Agathias and Malalas used Σκλάβοι instead of Σκλαβήνοι shows that, despite recent claims to the contrary, the shorter name originated in Constantinople, not from an allegedly Thracian or Illyrian intermediary. See Schramm 1995:197.

²³ Barlow 1950:282. For Martin's life, see Ivanov 1991b:357 and 359–60. See Sidonius, *Poems* 5.474–7 and 7.323, ed. W. B. Anderson (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 102 and 146. For Martin's poem as a source for the ethnic map of sixth-century Europe, see Zeman 1966:165–6; Pohl 1988:97; Trčák 1996:258.

²⁴ Another fragment has been identified in a fourteenth-century manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. See Halkin 1973.

or by a powerful minister, for it seems that he enjoyed ready access to imperial archives. The work probably had ten books covering the period from the end of Agathias' *History* (558/9) to the loss of Sirmium in 582. The core of the work was built around the careers of the two men who are in the center of the narration, Tiberius and Maurice. The outlook is Constantinopolitan and the city's concerns are paramount. Menander relied heavily, if not exclusively, on written sources, especially on material from the archives (minutes of proceedings, supporting documents and correspondence, reports from envoys of embassies and meetings). His views were traditional and his main interest was in Roman relations with foreign peoples, in particular Persians and Avars. The Slavs thus appear only in the context of relations with the Avars. Menander reworked the material he presumably found in his written sources. When talking about the devastation of the territory of the Antes by Avars, who "ravaged and plundered (their land) (πιεζόμενοι δ' οὖν ταῖς τῶν πολεμίων ἐπιδρομαῖς)," he strove to imitate Agathias' style. When Dauritas/Daurentius boastfully replies to the Avar envoy that "others do not conquer our land, we conquer theirs"; ἀλλὰ so it shall always be for us (ταῦτα ἡμῖν ἐν βεβαίῳ), as long as there are wars and weapons (emphasis added), this is also a phrase Menander frequently employed, particularly in rendering speeches of Roman or Persian envoys.

Despite Menander's considerable contribution to the speeches, which served both to characterize the speakers and to explore the issues, it is likely that they were fairly close to the available records. It is not difficult to visualize the possible source for Daurentius' speech. The whole episode may have been based on a report by John, "who at this time was governor of the isles and in charge of the cities of Illyricum," for when referring to the Slavene chiefs, Menander employs the phrase τοὺς ὁοὶ ἐν τέλει τοῦ ἔθνους. This is a phrase commonly used in Byzantine administration in reference to imperial officials. As such, it indicates that Menander's source for this particular episode must have been an official document. The same might be true for the episode of Mezamer. Detailed knowledge of Mezamer's noble lineage or of the relations between "that Kutrigur who was a friend of the Avars" and the qagan suggests a written source, arguably a report of an envoy. Menander may have only added his very traditional view of barbarians: greedy, cunning, arrogant, lacking self-control, and untrustworthy. To him, the Slavenes murdered the Avar emissaries specifically because they lost control.²⁵

²⁵ Menander the Guardsman, frs. 3 and 21; see Agathias 1.1.1. For Menander's sources and style, see Blockley 1985:1, 5, 11, 14, and 20; Baldwin 1978:118; Levinskaia and Tokhtas'ev 1991b:328 and 349–50. For the use of ὁοὶ ἐν τέλει τοῦ ἔθνους in reference to imperial officials, see Benedicty 1965:53.

Unlike Menander, John of Ephesus personally witnessed the panic caused by Avar and Slav attacks during Tiberius' and Maurice's reigns. His *Ecclesiastical History*, now lost, contained three parts, the last of which had six books. Book vi was compiled at Constantinople over a period of years, as indicated by chronological references in the text. The last event recorded is the acquittal of Gregory of Antioch in 588. John first came to Constantinople in the 530s, where he enjoyed Emperor Justinian's favors. He was absent from the Capital between 542 and 571, as he was first nominated missionary bishop in Asia Minor and then elected bishop of Ephesus. He was back in Constantinople when Justin II launched his persecution of the Monophysites. Beginning in 571, John spent eight years in prison. Most of Book vi, if not the entire third part of the *History*, was written during this period of confinement. John must have died soon after the last event recorded in his work, for the surviving fragments leave the impression of a draft, which he may not have had the time to revamp. The concluding chapters of Book vi are lost, but significant parts could be reconstructed on the basis of later works, such as the eighth-century chronicle attributed to Dionysius of Tell Mahre, that of Elias Bar Shinaya (tenth to eleventh century), the twelfth-century chronicle of Michael the Syrian, the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, and the thirteenth-century chronicle of Gregory Barhebraeus.²⁶

John was no doubt influenced by the pessimistic atmosphere at Constantinople in the 580s to overstate the intensity of Slavic ravaging. His views of the Slavs, however, have a different source. John was a supporter of that *Milieutheorie* attacked by Pseudo-Caesarius. To him, the Slavs were *lyt'* (accursed, savage), for they were part of the seventh climate, in which the sun rarely shone over their heads. Hence, their blonde hair, their brutish character, and their rude ways of life. On the other hand, God was on their side, for in John's eyes, they were God's instrument for punishing the persecutors of the Monophysites. This may also explain why John insists that, beginning with 581 (just ten years after Justin II started persecuting the Monophysites), the Slavs began occupying Roman territory, "until now, that is up to the year 895 [i.e., 584] . . . [and] became rich and possessed gold and silver, herds of

²⁶ For John's life and work, see D'iakonov 1946:20 and 25; Allen 1979:254; Serikov 1991:276, 281, and 283; Ginkel 1995. For John writing in prison, see iii 3.1 and iii 2.50. Despite Michael the Syrian's claims to the contrary, he borrowed much of his chapter x 21 from John's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He might have used John through an intermediary, possibly the chronicle attributed to Dionysius of Tell Mahre, who might have misled him over the precise conclusion of John's work. Certainly borrowed from John is the account of widespread Slav ravaging, including the sack of churches at Corinth, and the payments made by Maurice to the Antes for attacking the Sclavenes.

horses and a lot of weapons, and learned to make war better than the Romans."²⁷

SLAVS OR AVARS?

The echo of the panic caused by Slavic raids in the Balkans also reached Spain, where John of Biclar recorded their ravaging of Thrace and Illyricum.²⁸ Between 576/7 and 586/7, John was in Barcelona, where he may have received news from Constantinople, via Cartagena. The last part of his chronicle, written in 589/90, recorded only major events. For the year 575, there are thirteen entries concerning the East and ten referring to events in the West. The last entries, covering the period between 576 and 589/90, include only three events from the East, but twenty-two from the West. Two, if not all three, of the Eastern events mentioned are in relation to Slavic raids. Though John's chronology of Byzantine regnal years is unreliable, the raids were correctly dated to 576 and 581, respectively, because beginning with year 569, entries in the chronicle were also dated by King Leuvigild's and his son's regnal years. John of Biclar may thus have recorded events that, at the same time, in Constantinople, John of Ephesus interpreted as God's punishment for sinners.²⁹

In a passage most probably borrowed from a now lost part of John of Ephesus' *History*, Michael the Syrian speaks of Slavs plundering churches, but calls their leader, who carried away the *chiborium* of the cathedral in Corinth, a qagan. John of Biclar also speaks of Avars occupying *partes Graeciae* in 579. Evagrius visited Constantinople in 588 to assist his employer, Gregory, patriarch of Antioch, to defend himself against accusations of incest. On this occasion, he recorded information about the capture, enslavement, and destruction by Avars of Singidunum, Anchialos, the whole of Greece, and other cities and forts, which could not be prevented because of the Empire's Eastern commitments. Both

²⁷ John of Ephesus iii 6.25. This passage is one of the key arguments for the chronology of the Slavic *Landnahme* in the Balkans. See Nestor 1963:50–1; Popović 1975:450; Weithmann 1978:86; Ferjancić 1984:95; Pohl 1988:82. To John, "wars, battles, destruction, and carnage" proclaimed the return of Christ (iii 6.1). The end of his *History* seems to have been specifically added as a warning that the end of the world was close. For the intensifying eschatological apprehension, which is evident in a number of contemporary texts, such as John Malalas and Romanos the Melodist's hymn *On the Ten Virgins*, see Magdalino 1993:5 and 7. For John's image of the Slavs, see also Whitby 1988:110. The seventh climate was the northernmost and traditionally placed at the mouth of the Borysthene (Bug) river. See Honigman 1929:9.

²⁸ John of Biclar, *Chronicle*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH: AA* 11:214 and 216. John also knew of Avar attacks in Thrace, Greece, and Pannonia (11:215). See Weithmann 1978:88; Yannopoulos 1980:333; Pohl 1988:76 with n. 40.

²⁹ It is possible that the first raid was misdated by two years (578 instead of 576); see Waldmüller 1976:106. For Slavs in John's chronicle, see also Chermiak 1991:395.

John of Ephesus and Evagrius must have learned about these events in the Capital and there are good reasons to believe that John of Biclar's ultimate source of information was also in Constantinople. It has been rightly pointed that Evagrius was undoubtedly referring to invasions by Avars, not Slavs, and that it is unfair to accuse him of muddling Avars and Slavs. If this is true, however, we should apply the same treatment to both John of Biclar and John of Ephesus. Unlike Evagrius, they both refer elsewhere to Slavs, in the context of otherwise well datable events. We may safely assume, therefore, that in the 580s, in Constantinople, devastations in Greece were attributed to Avars, not Slavs. The ethnic terminology of later sources, such as the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* or *Vita S. Pancratii*, may be a dim recollection of this interpretation of events.³⁰

That the Slavs were considered the most important danger, however, is suggested by the analysis of a military treatise known as the *Strategikon*. Its author was an experienced officer, who had undoubtedly participated in Maurice's campaigns against Avars and Slavens, some ten years after the events narrated by John of Ephesus, John of Biclar, and Evagrius. He was accustomed to the life of military camps and knew a lot about different forms of warfare from his own experience of fighting on at least two different fronts. Unlike other military treatises, the author of *Strategikon* devotes a whole chapter to what might be called "exercise deception," describing a series of mock drills to be practiced so that enemy spies will not find out which one will be applied by Roman troops. He is also an enthusiastic proponent of misleading the enemy with "disinformation" and has a sophisticated appreciation of how to make defectors and deserters work against, instead of for, enemy interests. All this is strikingly similar to Theophylact Simocatta's later description of Priscus' and Peter's tactics during their campaigns against the Slavens and the Avars.

That the chapter in the *Strategikon* dedicated to Slavens and Antes is entirely based on the author's experience is shown by his own declaration at the end of Book xi: "Now then, we have reflected on these topics to the best of our ability, drawing on our own experience (ἐκ τε τῆς

³⁰ Michael the Syrian x 21; John of Biclar p. 215; Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, vi 10. See Whitby 1988:110. That this selective memory ostensibly operated only in connection with certain Constantinopolitan sources is indirectly suggested by the letters of Pope Gregory the Great. Before being elected pope, he had spent some time between 579 and 585/6 in Constantinople as papal *apocrisarius*. Gregory, however, was unaware of the importance of Avars in contemporary events relevant to the Balkans. Throughout his considerable correspondence (over 850 letters), there is no mention of the Avars. Two letters (ix 154 of May 599 and x 15 of July 600) specifically refer to Slavene raids into Istria. See Ronin 1993a:351-2. Paul the Deacon, arguably relying on independent sources, would later claim that besides Slavs, both Lombards and Avars had invaded Istria (*Historia Langobardorum* iv 24). In the tradition established by Constantinopolitan sources that have inspired both Agathias and Malalas, Gregory speaks of *Slavi*, instead of *Slaveni* (ix 154; *de Slavis victorias nuntiatis*; x 15: *Slavonum gens*).

πίρας αὐτῆς) and on the authorities of the past, and we have written down these reflections for the benefit of whoever may read them."³¹ Despite his reliance on the "authorities of the past," there can be no doubt that, when describing Slavic settlements, warfare, or society, the author of the *Strategikon* speaks of things he saw with his own eyes. By contrast, the chapters dedicated to the "blonde races" (Franks and Lombards) and to "Scythians" (Avars) are more conventional. Moreover, the chapter dedicated to Slavens and Antes, twice labelled ἔθνη (xi 4.1 and 4), is almost as long as all chapters on Franks, Lombards, and Avars taken together.³²

In sharp contrast to all treatises written before him, the author of the *Strategikon* boldly introduced ethnographic data into a genre traditionally restricted to purely military topics. It is true, however, that ethnographic details appear only when relevant to the treatise's subject matter, namely to warfare. Indeed, like John of Ephesus, the author of the *Strategikon* was inspired by the theory of climates. He believed that the geographical location of a given ethnic group determined not only its lifestyle and laws, but also its type of warfare.³³ If the *Strategikon* pays attention to such things as to how Slavic settlements branch out in many directions or how Slavic women commit suicide at their husbands' death, it is because its author strongly believed that such details might be relevant to Slavic warfare.

Who was the author of the *Strategikon* and when was this work written? Both questions are obviously of great importance for the history of the early Slavs. The issue of authorship is still a controversial one. The oldest manuscript, Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus 55.4 from Florence, dated to c. 950, attributes the treatise to a certain Urbicius. Three other manuscripts dated to the first half of the eleventh century attribute the work to a certain Maurice, whom Richard Förster first identified with one of Emperor Maurice's contemporary namesakes. The most recent manuscript, Codex Ambrosianus gr. 139, reproducing the oldest version, explicitly attributes the treatise to Μαυρικίου . . . τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ βασιλέως Μαυρικίου γεγονότος. It is very likely that Emperor

³¹ *Strategikon* xi 4.46. See Mihăescu 1974:20-1; Kuchma 1978:12; Dennis and Gamillscheg 1981:13; Petersen 1992:75.

³² The importance attributed to Slavens also results from the reference to "Slavene spears" (ἀοχὴδία Σκλαβηλοῖα; xi B5), which apparently were in use by Byzantine infantrymen. Their equipment also included "Gothic shoes," "Herulian swords," and "Bulgar cloaks" (xi B 1 and xi 8.4). See Dennis 1981. Some even claimed that the chapter on the Slavs was the only original part of the work: Cankova-Petkova 1987:73. It is interesting to note, however, that the *Strategikon* lists Antes among enemies of the Empire, despite their being its allies since 545. See Kuchma 1991:381. For army discipline, see Giuffrida 1985:846.

³³ For the theory that each climate was governed by a star or a planet that determined its "laws," see Honigman 1929:92-3.

Maurice had commissioned this treatise to an experienced high officer or general of the army. This seems to be supported by a few chronological markers in the text. There is a reference to the siege of Akbas in 583, as well as to stratagems applied by the qagan of the Avars during a battle near Heraclea, in 592. Some have argued, therefore, that the *Strategikon* may have been written during Maurice's last years (after 592) or during Phocas' first years. A long list of military commands in Latin used throughout the text also suggests a dating to the first three decades of the seventh century, at the latest, for it is known that after that date, Greek definitively replaced Latin in the administration, as well as in the army.³⁴ But it is difficult to believe that the recommendation of winter campaigning against the Slavs could have been given, without qualification or comment, after the mutiny of 602, for which this strategy was a central issue. The *Strategikon* should therefore be dated within Maurice's regnal years, most probably between 592 and 602. In any case, at the time the *Strategikon* was written, the Slavens were still north of the river Danube. Its author recommended that provisions taken from Slavene villages by Roman troops should be transported south of the Danube frontier, using the river's northern tributaries.³⁵

THE SAINT AND THE BARBARIANS

The next relevant information about Slavs is to be found in Book 1 of a collection known as the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, written in Thessalonica. The collection, which was offered as a hymn of thanksgiving to God for His gift to the city, is a didactic work, written by Archbishop John of Thessalonica in the first decade of Heraclius' reign. A clear indication of this date is a passage of the tenth miracle, in which John refers to events happening during Phocas' reign but avoids using his name, an indication of the *damnatio memoriae* imposed on Phocas during Heraclius' first regnal years.³⁶

Book 1 contains fifteen miracles which the saint performed for the benefit of his city and its inhabitants. Most of them occurred during the

³⁴ Förster 1877. See Dennis and Gamillscheg 1981:18; Kuchma 1982:48–9. J. Witka believed that the author of the *Strategikon* was Philippikos, Maurice's brother-in-law and general. According to Witka, the treatise was calculated to facilitate Philippikos' return to power after Phocas' coup. See Witka 1977:47–8. For Latin military commands, see Mihăescu 1974:203; Petersmann 1992:225–8. *Strategikon* XI 4.19 and 32; see Whitby 1988:131.

³⁵ *Miracles of St Demetrius* 1 10.82. For the date of Book 1, see Lemerle 1981:44 and 80; Whitby 1988:116; Macrides 1990:189. Paul Speck (1993:275, 512, and 528) has argued against the idea that Archbishop John was the author of Book 1, which he believed was of a much later date. I find Speck's arguments totally unconvincing, for a variety of reasons. Most important, he claimed that John, who is mentioned in Book II as responsible for the collection in Book I, was an abbot, not a bishop. John, however, is specifically mentioned as *πατρις καὶ ἐπίσκοπος* (II 2.201).

Sources

episcopate of Eusebius, otherwise known from letters addressed to him by Pope Gregory the Great between 597 and 603. The purpose of this collection was to demonstrate to the Thessalonians that Demetrius was their fellow citizen, their own saint, always present with them, watching over the city. The saint is therefore shown as working for the city as a whole, interceding on behalf of all its citizens in plague, famine, civil war, and war with external enemies. The fact that sometimes Archbishop John addresses an audience (*οἱ ἀκούοντες*), which he calls upon as witness to the events narrated, suggests that the accounts of these miracles were meant for delivery as sermons.³⁷

Moreover, each miracle ends with a formulaic doxology. John also notes a certain rationale which he follows in the presentation of miracles. His aim is to recount St Demetrius' "compassion and untiring and unyielding protection" for the city of Thessalonica, but the structure of his narrative is not chronological. The episode of the repaired silver *ciborium* (I 6) is narrated *before* that of the fire which destroyed it (I 12). Following a strictly chronological principle, the plague (I 3), the one-week siege of the city by the qagan's army (I 13–15), and the subsequent famine (I 8) should have belonged to the same sequence of events. Archbishop John, however, wrote five self-contained episodes, each ending with a prayer and each possibly serving as a separate homily to be delivered on the saint's feast day. This warns us against taking the first book of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* too seriously. The detailed description of the progress of the two sieges should not be treated as completely trustworthy, but just as what it was meant to be, namely a collection of a few sensational incidents which could have enhanced St Demetrius' glory. John depicted himself on the city's wall, rubbing shoulders with the other defenders of Thessalonica during the attack of the 5,000 Slavene warriors.³⁸ Should we believe him? Perhaps.³⁹ It may not be a mere coincidence, however, that, though never depicted as a warrior

³⁷ John's audience: *Miracles of St Demetrius* I 12.101. In the prologue, John addresses the entire brotherhood (*πᾶσαν τὴν ἀδελφότητα*) and the pious assembly (*ὁ φιλόθεος ἐκκλησία*). He will not speak from his "hand" or "pen," but with his tongue (*γλῶττα, διὰ μῦθς γλῶττης*), and will employ a simple and accessible language (Prologue 6–7). See also Lemerle 1953:353 and 1981:36; Ivanova 1995a:182; Skedros 1996:141. St Demetrius as intercessor for Thessalonica: Macrides 1990:189–90. The fifteenth miracle even shows him disobeying God, who is explicitly compared to the emperor, by refusing to abandon the city to the enemy (I 15.166–75).

³⁸ Prologue 6; I 12.107. John begins with miracles of bodily healing (I 1–3), moves on to a miracle of healing of the soul (I 4), then presents three miracles in which the saint appears to individuals (I 5–7), and ends his collection with miracles that directly affect Thessalonica and its citizens (I 8–15).

³⁹ The author of Book II explicitly states that Archbishop John led the resistance of the Thessalonians during the thirty-three-day siege of the city by the qagan (*Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2.204).

saint, St Demetrius also appears on the city's walls ἐν ὀπλίτου οὐχίῳ during the siege of Thessalonica by the armies of the qagan. Moreover, John would like us to believe that he had witnessed the attack of the 5,000 Slavanes, which occurred on the same night that the *alborium* of the basilica was destroyed by fire. He had that story, however, from his predecessor, Bishop Eusebius. On the other hand, John was well informed about the circumstances of the one-week siege. He knew that, at that time, the inhabitants of the city were harvesting outside the city walls, the city's eparch, together with the city's troops, were in Greece, and the notables of Thessalonica were in Constantinople, to carry a complaint against that same eparch. He also knew that the Slavene warriors fighting under the qagan's command were his subjects, unlike those who attacked Thessalonica by night, whom John described as "the flower of the Slavene nation" and as infantrymen.⁴⁰ My impression is that John may have been an eyewitness to the night attack, but he certainly exaggerated the importance of the one-week siege. Despite the qagan's impressive army of no less than 100,000 warriors and the numerous handicaps of the city's inhabitants, the enemy was repelled after only one week with apparently no significant losses for the besieged. To blame Archbishop John's contemporary, Theophylact Simocatta, for having failed to record any of the sieges of Thessalonica, is therefore to simply take the *Miracles of St Demetrius* at their face value and to overestimate the events narrated therein. That the sieges of Thessalonica were not recorded by any other source might well be an indication of their local, small-scale significance. As for Archbishop John, who was using history to educate his fellow citizens and glorify the city's most revered saint, he may have been well motivated when exaggerating the magnitude of the danger.⁴¹

THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE, THE CAMPAIGN DIARY, AND THE WENDS

There are few Western sources that mention the Slavs after John of Biclar and Gregory the Great. By the end of his chronicle, Isidore of Seville refers to the occupation of Greece by Slavs, sometime during Heraclius'

⁴⁰ St Demetrius on the walls of Thessalonica: 1 13.120; the episode of the *alborium* related by Eusebius: 1 6.55; circumstances of the one-week siege: 1 13.127–9; Slavene warriors in the army of the qagan: 1 13.117; Slavene warriors during the night attack: 1 12.108 and 110. John never calls the Slavs Σκλάβοι, only Σκλαβίνοι or Σκλαβήνοι. Paul Lemerle (1981:41) suggested that St Demetrius became a military saint only after the attacks of the Avars and the Slavanes. In Book II, St Demetrius already introduces himself as ὁπλιτάρχης to Bishop Kyprianos (II 6.309).

⁴¹ The army of the qagan: 1 13.118 and 126. See Τάπκova–Zaimova 1964:113–14. For the lack of information about Thessalonica, see Proudfoot 1974:382; Olajos 1981:422; Whitby 1988:49.

early regnal years. It is difficult to visualize Isidore's source for this brief notice, but his association of the Slavic occupation of Greece with the loss of Syria and Egypt to the Persians indicates that he was informed about the situation in the entire Mediterranean basin.⁴²

Isidore's *Chronica Maiora* ends in 624 or 626 and there is no mention in it of the siege of Constantinople by Avars, Slavs, and Persians. We have good, though brief, descriptions of the role played by Slavs in the works of three eyewitnesses. George of Pisidia refers to them in both his *Bellum Avaricum*, written in 626, and his *Heraclias*, written in 629.⁴³ The author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, a work probably completed in 630 and certainly extending to 629, was also an eyewitness to the siege, despite his use of written sources, such as the city chronicle of Constantinople.⁴⁴ As for Theodore Syncellus, he is specifically mentioned by the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* as having been one of the envoys sent from the city to the qagan on August 2, 626. His name is derived from the office he held under Patriarch Sergius, the great figure behind the city's heroic resistance. Theodore Syncellus' mention of the Slavs is therefore important, particularly because he is the first author to refer to cremation as the burial rite favored by Slavs.⁴⁵ What all these three authors have in common is the awareness that there were at least two categories of Slavene warriors. First, there were those fighting as allies of the Avars, the "Slavic vovles," as George of Pisidia calls them. On the other hand, those attacking Blachernae on canoes were the subjects of the Avars, as clearly indicated by the *Chronicon Paschale*.⁴⁶ We have seen that Archbishop John also recorded that Thessalonica was attacked at one time by the qagan's army, including his Slavene subjects, at another by 5,000 warriors, "the flower of the Slavene nation," with no interference from the Avars.

Was Theophylact Simocatta also a witness to the siege of 626? He certainly outlived the great victory, for the last events explicitly mentioned in his *History* are Heraclius' victory over Rhazates in 627, the death of Khusrō II, and the conclusion of peace with Persia in the following year. It has also been argued that since the introductory *Dialogue* of his *History* alludes to the patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius, as the man who had encouraged the composition of the work, Theophylact must have pursued his legal career in the employment of the patriarch. It is therefore possible that he was in Constantinople in 626, but there is no evidence for

⁴² Isidore of Seville, *History*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH: AA* 11:479. See Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986b:52–3; Ivanova 1995b:356–7. The use of an official, perhaps Constantinopolitan, report is also betrayed by the use of *Slavi* instead of *Slavini*. The same event is recorded by *Continuatio Hispana*, written in 754 (*Slavi Greciam occupant*). Its author derived this information not from Isidore, but from another, unknown source, which has been presumably used by Isidore himself (Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986b:54; Ivanova 1995b:355).⁴³ Ivanov 1995c:66–7.

⁴⁴ Scott 1990a:38; Ivanov 1995d:75. ⁴⁵ Ivanov 1995d:80. ⁴⁶ Ivanov 1995d:82.

that in his work. Theophylact has often been compared to George of Pisidia or the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, for having composed substantial parts of his narrative in the optimistic mood of the late 620s, after Heraclius' triumph, or to Theodore Syncellus, for his style. His *History* only focuses on the Balkans and the eastern front, in other words only on Roman dealings with Avars (and Slavs) and Persians, the major enemies of 626. It is possible that Theophylact's *History* was an attempt to explain current events in the light of Maurice's policies in the Balkans and the East. If so, this could also explain Theophylact's choice of sources for Maurice's campaigns across the Danube, against Avars and Slavs.⁴⁷

It has long been noted that, beginning with Book vi, Theophylact's narrative changes drastically. Although his chronology is most erratic, he suddenly pays attention to such minor details as succession of days and length of particular marches. The number and the length of speeches diminishes drastically, as well as the number of Theophylact's most typical stylistical marks. The reason for this change is Theophylact's use of an official report or bulletin, to which he could have had access either directly or through an intermediary source. Haussig rightfully called this official report a *Feldzugsjournal*, a campaign diary, which was completed after Phocas' accession of 602. Indeed, there is a consistency of bias throughout this part of Theophylact's *History*, for he obviously favors the general Priscus at the expense of Comentiolus and Peter. Peter's victories are extolled and his failures minimized, while his rivals appear lazy and incompetent. Any success they achieve is attributed to their subordinates, either Alexander, in 594, or Godwin, in 602, both winning victories against the Slavs for Peter. But Priscus was Phocas' son-in-law and it may be no accident that Theophylact (or, more probably, his source) laid emphasis on the army's dissatisfaction against Maurice on the question of winter campaigning against the Slavs, for this was at the very root of the 602 revolt. It has even been argued that for the chapters viii 5.5 to viii 7.7 narrating the events of 601 and 602, particularly Phocas' revolt of November 602, Theophylact may have used reports of surviving participants, such as Godwin himself, who is in the middle of all actions.⁴⁸

The campaigns in the *Feldzugsjournal* were narrated in correct sequence, but without precise intervals between important events. The

⁴⁷ Last events mentioned: Theophylact Simocatta, *History* viii 12.12–13. See Olajos 1981:2.41 and 1988:11; Whitby and Whitby 1986:xiv; Whitby 1988:39–40.

⁴⁸ Succession of days and length of marches: vi 4.3, vi 4.7, vi 4.12, vi 6.2–vi 11.21, etc. See Olajos 1982:158 and 1988:132 and 136; Whitby 1988:49–50, 93, and 96. For the *Feldzugsjournal*, see Haussig 1953:296. The complimentary reference to Bonosus, Phocas' hated henchman (viii 5.10), is also an indication that the *Feldzugsjournal* was produced in the milieu of Phocas' court. For the extolling of Peter's victories, see Whitby and Whitby 1986:xxiii, Olajos 1988:131; Whitby 1988:99.

account tends therefore to disintegrate into a patchwork of detailed reports of individual incidents, deprived of an overall historical context. This caused Theophylact considerable trouble, leading him to overlook gaps of months or even years. He must have been aware of the fact that his source recorded annual campaigns (usually from spring to fall), without any information about intervals between them. He therefore filled in the gaps with information taken from other sources, in particular from the Constantinopolitan chronicle, without noticing his dating errors. The Constantinopolitan chronicle also provided Theophylact with information about some major military events in the vicinity of the Capital, such as Comentiolus' victories over the Slavs, in which there is no hint of the anti-Comentiolus bias of the *Feldzugsjournal*.⁴⁹

But Theophylact's inability to cope with contrasting sources led him and modern historians into confusion. Theophylact places the beginning of the emperor's campaign against Avars and Slavs immediately after the peace with Persia, in 592. On the other hand he tells us that in that same year a Frankish embassy arrived in Constantinople, but the king allegedly sending it came to power only in 596. Without any military and geographical knowledge, Theophylact was unable to understand the events described in his sources and his narrative is therefore sometimes obscure and confusing. This is also a result of Theophylact's bombastic style. In Books vi–viii, he uses the affected “parasang” instead of “mile,” an element which could hardly be ascribed to his source. He describes the problem of Romans drinking from a stream under Slavic attack as a “choice between two alternatives . . . , either to refuse the water and relinquish life through thirst, or to draw up death too along with the river.” Again, it is very hard to believe that these were the words of the *Feldzugsjournal*. It is true that Books vi–viii contain no Homeric citations, but the stylistic variation introduced in order to attenuate the flat monotony of the military source amounts to nothing else but grandiloquent rhetoric. More often than not, the end result is a very confusing text.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Duker 1986:72; Olajos 1988:133–4. Theophylact's inability to understand his source may have also been responsible for some obscure passages, such as vii 4.8, where the river crossed by Peter's army against Petragastus cannot be the Danube, because ποταμός only occurs singly when preceded by ἵοτος. Theophylact may have omitted that paragraph from his source which dealt with the crossing of the Danube and only focused on the actual confrontation with Petragastus' warriors. For the use of the Constantinopolitan chronicle for Comentiolus' victory over the Slavs, see 7.1–6; Whitby and Whitby 1986:xxx. The Constantinopolitan chronicle, however, did not provide Theophylact with sufficient information to help him resolve the chronological uncertainties of his military source.

⁵⁰ In his account of the victory of the Romans against Musocius (vi 9.14), Theophylact tells us that “the Romans inclined toward high living” (πρὸς τρυφήν κατεκλινόντο), “were sewed up in liquor” (τῇ μέθῃ συρρήπτονται), and disregarded sentry-duty (τῆς διαφρουρᾶς κατημέλησαν).

In addition, Theophylact's view of history, as expressed in the introductory *Dialogue* between Philosophy and History, is that of a sequence of events that were fully intelligible to God alone. History is far superior to the individual historian whose role is to function as History's lyre, or even as her plectrum. Theophylact believed in the "extensive experience of history" as being "education for the souls," for the "common history of all mankind [is] a teacher." As a consequence, his heroes are not complex human beings, but repositories of moral principles.⁵¹

Far from being an eyewitness account of Roman campaigns against the Slavs, replete with personal observations, Theophylact's narrative is thus no more than a literary reworking of information from his military source. Like Diodorus' *Bibliotheca*, his work remains important for having preserved historical evidence from sources that are completely or partially lost. This is, in fact, what makes Theophylact's *History* an inestimable source for the history of the early Slavs. Despite his evident biases, Theophylact was unable to entirely absorb the *Feldzugsjournal* into his narrative and his intervention is relatively well visible. The episode of the three Slavens captured by Maurice's bodyguards at Heraclea, who wore no iron or military equipment, but only lyres, is certainly a cliché, for the same is said by Tacitus about the Aestii. This is in sharp contrast to the factual tone of Theophylact's account of Priscus' campaign against Ardagastus and Musocius or Peter's expedition against Peiragastus. Books vi and vii have little direct speech and flowery periphrases are comparatively fewer than in preceding books.⁵²

Theophylact preserved not only the day-by-day chronology recorded in the campaign diary, but numerous other details, such as the names and the status of three Slavic leaders. Moreover, there are several instances in

Footnote 50 (cont.)

Although all three actions took place at the same definite time in the past, Theophylact's use of tenses is most inconsistent, for, in a bizarre combination, he employs imperfect, present, and aorist, respectively. For Theophylact's bombastic style, see Olajos 1982:160. For Homeric citations in Theophylact's *History*, see Leanza 1972:586. The Frankish embassy: vi 3.6–7; Romans drinking from a stream: vii 5.9. Theophylact was aware that a parasang was not the equivalent of a mile. The distance between Constantinople and Hebdomon is at one time given in parasangs (v 16.4), at another in miles (viii 10.1), and Theophylact also uses miles separately (e.g., vii 4.3). Krivushin 1991:54 and 1994:10. For Theophylact's concept of God's role in history, see Leanza 1971:560 and 565. For his concept of history, see *Dialogue* 15; *History* Proem 6 and 13.

Olajos 1982:158. For Theophylact and Diodorus, see Whitby 1988:312 and 350. For Theophylact and Tacitus, see vi 2.10; *Germania* 46; see also Ivanov 1995b:48. A literary influence may also explain Theophylact's use of *ἔρκεον* (*ērkeon*) for the Slavs, a phrase more often applied to the Goths. It is interesting to note that he also called the Persians "Babylonians" and the Avars "Scythians." Despite claims to the contrary, the fact that the last part of the *History* is less stylish and organized does not support the idea that Theophylact's historical interest in Books vi–viii was only limited and that he must have died before re-editing this part of his work. See Olajos 1988:135; Whitby 1988:49–50.

which the actions of Priscus or Peter seem to follow strictly the recommendations of the *Strategikon*.⁵³ It is possible, though not demonstrated, that the author of the *Feldzugsjournal* was a participant in those same campaigns in which the author of the *Strategikon* gained his rich field experience. If true, this would only make Theophylact's account more trustworthy, despite his literary reworking of the original source. We may well smile condescendingly when Theophylact tells us that the three Slavens encountered by Emperor Maurice did not carry any weapons, "because their country was ignorant of iron and thereby provided them with a peaceful and troublefree life."⁵⁴ But there is no reason to be suspicious about his account of Priscus' campaign in Slavic territory. He may have clothed the plain narrative of the *Feldzugsjournal* with rhetorical figures; but he neither altered the sequence of events, nor was he interested in modifying details.

Theophylact's approach is slightly different from that of his contemporary in Frankish Gaul, the seventh-century author known as Fredegar. Until recently, the prevailing view was that the *Chronicle of Fredegar* was the product of three different authors, the last of whom was responsible for the Wendish account, but new research rejuvenated Marcel Baudot's theory of single authorship. Judging from internal evidence, Fredegar's Book iv together with its Wendish account must have been written around 660. A partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy, in particular of the Pippinid family, Fredegar may have been close to or even involved in the activity of the chancery. The purpose of his chronicle seems to have been to entertain his audience, as suggested by the epic style of his stories about Aetius, Theodoric, Justinian, or Belisarius.⁵⁵

Where did Fredegar find his information about Samo, the Wendish king? Some proposed that he had obtained it all from the mouth of Sicharius, Dagobert's envoy to Samo. Others believe that the entire episode is just a tale. Fredegar's criticism of Dagobert's envoy and his

⁵³ Ardagastus is attacked by surprise, in the middle of the night (vi 7.1; cf. *Strategikon* ix 2.7). The author of the *Strategikon* knows that provisions may be found in abundance in Slavene territory, a fact confirmed by the booty taken by Priscus that caused disorder among his soldiers (vi 7.6; cf. *Strategikon* xi 4.32). As if following counsels in the *Strategikon*, Priscus ordered some of his men to move ahead on reconnaissance (vi 8.9 and vi 9.12; cf. *Strategikon* xi 4.41). Finally, Maurice's orders for his army to pass winter season in Slavene territory (vi 10.1, viii 6.2) resonate with strategic thoughts expressed in the *Strategikon* (xi 4.10). ⁵⁴ Theophylact *Simocatta* vi 2.15.

⁵⁵ Fredegar ii 53, 57–9, and 62; see Kusternig 1982:7; Goffart 1988:427–8. His anti-Merovingian attitude and declared hostility toward Brunhild and her attempts at centralization of power also show Fredegar as a partisan of the Austrasian aristocracy. For the problem of authorship, see Krusch 1882; Baudot 1928; Kusternig 1982:12; Wood 1994a:359; Goffart 1993. For the date of Book iv, see Labuda 1949:90–2; Goffart 1963:239; Kusternig 1982:5 and 12. Fredegar's erratic chronology in Book iv has long been noted. See Gardiner 1978:40 and 44. For chronological aspects relevant to the Wendish account, see Curta 1997:144–55.

detailed knowledge of juridical and administrative formulaic language suggests a different solution.⁵⁶ According to Fredegar, the Slavs have long been subject to the Avars, "who used them as Befulci." The word is cognate with *fulfree*, a term occurring in the Edict of the Lombard king Rothari. Both derive from the Old German *felhan, fallh, fulgum* (hence the Middle German *bevelhen*), meaning "to entrust to, to give someone in guard." To Fredegar, therefore, Wends was a name for special military units of the Avar army. The term *befulci* and its usage further suggest, however, that Fredegar reinterpreted a "native," presumably Wendish, account. His purpose was to show how that Wendish *gens* emerged, which would later play an instrumental role in the decline of Dagobert's power.⁵⁷

Fredegar had two apparently equivalent terms for the same *ethnie*: *Sclaus coinomento Winedos*. There are variants for both terms, such as *Slavinii* or *Venedi*. The 'Wends' appear only in political contexts: the Wends, not the Slavs, were *befulci* of the Avars; the Wends, and not the Slavs, made Samo their king. There is a Wendish *gens*, but not a Slavic one. After those chapters in which he explained how a Wendish polity had emerged, Fredegar refers exclusively to Wends. It is, therefore, possible that 'Wends' and 'Sclavenes' are meant to denote a specific social and political configuration, in which such concepts as state or ethnicity are relevant, while 'Slavs' is a more general term, used in a territorial rather than an ethnic sense.⁵⁸

'Wends' and 'Slavs' were already in use when Fredegar wrote Book IV. They first appear in Jonas of Bobbio's *Life of St Columbanus*, written sometime between 639 and 643. According to Jonas, Columbanus had once thought of preaching to the Wends, who were also called Slavs (*Venetiorum qui et Sclavi dicuntur*). He gave up this mission of evangelization, because the eyes of the Slavs were not yet open for the light of the Scriptures. That Fredegar knew Jonas' work is indicated by a long passage cited from *Vita Columbani*. It has been argued that Jonas of Bobbio's source on Columbanus' missionary activity was his disciple, Eustasius, abbot of Luxeuil. Fredegar's Wendish account may have been inspired by

⁵⁶ Fredegar IV 68. See Baudot 1928:161; Goffart 1963:237–8.

⁵⁷ Fredegar IV 48. See Schütz 1991:410–11; Fritze 1980:498–505; Pritsak 1983:397 and 411. A dim recollection of the same story is preserved in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* and may have originated in the West. See Zasterová 1964; Swoboda 1970:76; Curta 1997:150. According to Fredegar, the Wendish *gens* was the outgrowth of a military conflict, but the *befulci* turned into a fully fledged *gens* only through the long-suffering *uxores Sclavorum et filias*. This suggests that the Wendish account operates as a counterpart to other equivalent stories, such as that of the Trojan origin of the Franks or that of chapter 65 of Book III, significantly entitled *De Langobardorum gente et eorum origine et nomine*. For the historiographic genre of *origo gentis*, see Wolfram 1981:311 and 1990; Anton 1994.

⁵⁸ Fredegar IV 48, 68, 72, 74, 75, and 77. See Curta 1997:152–3.

missionary reports. He may have used the perspective, if not the accounts, of the missionaries for explaining the extraordinary success of Samo against Dagobert and his Austrasian army. In Fredegar's eyes, the Wends were a *gens* primarily in the political sense of the term. To him, they were agents of secular history, though more of political dissolution, as indicated by their alliance with Radulf, whose victories "turned his head" to the extent that he rated himself King of Thuringia and denied Sigebert's overlordship. The use of missionary reports may also explain why Fredegar's image of the Slavs does not include any of the stereotypes encountered in older or contemporary Byzantine sources. No *Milientheorie* and no blond Slavs emerge from his account. Despite Fredegar's contempt for Samo's haughtiness, he did not see Wends primarily as heathens. Samo's "kingdom" may have not been the first Slavic state, but Fredegar was certainly the first political historian of the Slavs.⁵⁹

THE SAINT AND THE BARBARIANS AGAIN

In contrast to Fredegar's attitude, to the unknown author of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* the Slavs were nothing else but savage, brutish, and, more important, heathen barbarians. Despite his ability to speak Greek and to dress like Constantinopolitan aristocrats, King Perbundos dreams only of slaughtering Christians. At any possible moment, the Slavs are to be impressed by St Demetrius' miracles. When an earthquake devastates the city, they are stopped from plundering the victims' destroyed houses by a miraculous vision. After yet another failure to conquer Thessalonica, the barbarians acknowledge God's intervention in favor of the city and St Demetrius' miraculous participation in battle. St Demetrius slaps in the face a dexterous Sclavene craftsman who builds a siege tower, driving him out of his mind and thus causing the failure of a dangerous attack on the city walls.⁶⁰

On the other hand, however, one gets the impression that the Slavs were a familiar presence. They are repeatedly called "our Slavic neighbors." They lived so close to the city that, after the imperial troops chased them from the coastal region, the inhabitants of Thessalonica – men, women, and children – walked to their abandoned villages and carried home all provisions left behind. Moreover, while some were attacking the city, others were on good terms with its inhabitants, supplying them with grain. Still others were under the orders of the emperor in

⁵⁹ Fredegar I 27, IV 36, IV 77; *Vita Columbani* I 27. For the date of Jonas' work, see Wood 1994b:248–9; Ronin 1995b. For Fredegar's Wends as agents of secular history, see Fritze 1994:281. For Samo's 'kingdom' as the first Slavic state, see Labuda 1949.

⁶⁰ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 4–241, II 3, 219, II 2, 214, II 4, 274.

Constantinople, who required them to supply with food the refugees from the Avar qaganate under Kuver's commands. In contrast to Archbishop John's account, Book II also provides a more detailed image of the Slavs. Its author knew, for instance, that the army of the Slavens besieging Thessalonica comprised units of archers, warriors armed with slings, lancers, soldiers carrying shields, and warriors with swords. Unlike John who invariably called them either Σκλάβοι or Σκλάβηνοι, the author of Book II at times prefers Σκλάβοι. He also provided the names of no less than seven Slavic tribes living in the vicinity of Thessalonica.⁶¹

He also seems to have used oral sources, especially those of refugees from Balkan cities abandoned in the early 600s, such as Naissus or Serdica. It has been argued that he may have used written sources as well, probably the city's annals or chronicle. He specifically referred to some iconographic evidence (ἐν γραφῇ) in order to support a point that he made. Book II has fewer miracles and miraculous deeds than Book I and seems to have relied more heavily on documentary material.⁶²

Unlike Archbishop John, who was using history to glorify St Demetrius and to educate his fellow citizens, the author of Book II, despite his obvious desire to imitate John's style, took a different approach. He wrote some seventy years later, shortly after the events narrated. His account is visibly better informed, his narration approaches the historiographic genre. Paradoxically, this is what would make Book II less popular than Book I, despite the growing influence of St Demetrius' cult in the course of the following centuries. There are numerous manuscripts containing miracles of Book I, but only one rendering Book II. In the late ninth century, Anastasius Bibliothecarius translated into Latin ten miracles from Book I, but only one from Book II. Unlike Archbishop John, the author of Book II was more concerned with facts supporting his arguments and often referred to contemporary events, known from other sources. His mention of "July 25 of the fifth indiction" and of the emperor's war with the Saracens makes it possible to date the siege of Thessalonica precisely to July 25, 677. Book II must have been written, therefore, at some point during the last two decades of the seventh century.⁶³

⁶¹ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 3.219, 3.222, 4.231, 4.279–80, 4.254, 5.289, II 4.262. For a list of five tribes, see II 1.179; for other tribes, see II 4.232.

⁶² *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2.200, II 1.194; see Lemerle 1979:174 with n. 19. For the use of city annals or chronicles, see Lemerle 1981:84. For the use of administrative sources, see Besheliev 1970a:287–8. For the attitude toward the central government, see Margetić 1988:760; Ditten 1991.

⁶³ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 4.255. See Lemerle 1979:34 and 1981:172; Ivanova 1993a:203. Ivanova (1993a:200) argued that since its author refers to a numerous Slavic population living near Bizye, at a short distance from Constantinople (II 4. 238), Book II must have been written after Emperor Justinian II's campaign of 688 against the *Sklauiua*.

LATER SOURCES

With Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* we come to the end of a long series of contemporary accounts on the early Slavs. None of the subsequent sources is based on autopsy and all could be referred to as "histories," relying entirely on written, older sources. First in this group is Patriarch Nicephorus. His *Breviarium* may have been designed as a continuation of Theophylact Simocatta, but Nicephorus did not have personal knowledge of any of the events described and it is very unlikely that he had recourse to living witnesses. The source of the first part of the *Breviarium*, covering the reigns of Phocas and Heraclius, was most probably the Constantinopolitan chronicle. In tone with such sources as George of Pisidia or the *Chronicon Paschale*, Nicephorus spoke of Slavs besieging the capital in 626 as the allies of the Avars, not as their subjects. When referring to Slavic canoes attacking Blachernae, Nicephorus spoke of *μνοξύλοι ἄκατοι*, which suggests that at the time he wrote his *Breviarium*, a Slavic fleet of canoes was something exotic enough to require explanation. For their respective accounts of the settlement of the Bulgars, both Nicephorus and his contemporary, Theophanes Confessor, used a common source, probably written in the first quarter of the eighth century in Constantinople.⁶⁴

But unlike Nicephorus, Theophanes' accounts of Maurice's campaigns are a combination of the Constantinopolitan chronicle and Theophylact Simocatta. At several places, Theophanes misunderstood Theophylact's text and confused his narrative. The most significant alterations of Theophylact's text result from Theophanes' efforts to adapt Theophylact's loose chronology, based on seasons of the year, to one that employed indictons and the world years of the Alexandrine chronological system. This makes the controversy over Theophanes' reliability a *cul-de-sac*, for any chronological accuracy that is present in Theophanes is merely accidental.

Theophanes spread some of Theophylact's campaigns over more than one year, and at one point he repeated some information which he had

⁶⁴ *Breviarium* 13; see Mango 1990:7. In 769, the terminal date of his *Breviarium*, Nicephorus was about eleven years old (he was born in or about 758, in the reign of Constantine V). The *Breviarium* was finished in or shortly after 828. See Litavrin 1995d:221–2. For the Constantinopolitan source used by both Nicephorus and Theophanes, see Mango 1990:16. It has been argued that the source was the Great Chronographer. None of the surviving fragments, however, refers to the settlement of the Bulgars. See Bozhilov 1975:29. On the other hand, for much of the seventh and eighth centuries, Theophanes was also dependent on a Syriac chronicle, not available to Nicephorus (Scott 1990:41). It is possible that this source provided Theophanes with a description of the Black Sea northern coast and an *excursus* on the history of the Bulgars, which cannot be found in Nicephorus. See Chichurov 1980:107. For relations between the Great Chronographer and Theophanes, see also Whitby 1982a; Mango 1997:xc1.

already used. He paraphrased the much longer and more grandiloquent account of Theophylact. Though Theophylact had no date for the Slavic raid ending with Comentiolus' victory over Ardagastus' hordes, Theophanes attached the year AM 6076 (583/4) to this event, on the basis of his own interpretation of Theophylact's text. He dated Priscus' campaign against the Slavenes to AM 6085 (592/3), abbreviated Theophylact's account, and changed parasangs into miles. The end result is that Theophylact's originally confusing narrative becomes even more ambiguous. It is only by considering Theophanes' summary of Theophylact that we begin to appreciate the latter's account, based as it is on the *Feldzugsjournal*. If Theophylact's history had been lost, Theophanes' version of it would have been entirely misleading, if not altogether detrimental, to any attempts to reconstruct the chronology of Maurice's wars against Avars and Slavenes. Since he had also incorporated bits of information from other sources, now lost, this caveat should warn us against taking Theophanes' text at its face value.⁶⁵

Theophanes, together with Nicephorus, is the first to use the word Σκλαυνία to refer to a loosely defined Slavene polity, arguably a chiefdom. There is no basis, however, for interpreting his use of the term in both singular and plural forms, as indicating the fragmentation of an originally unified union of tribes into smaller formations. Composed as it was in c. 812, the *Chronographia* of Theophanes is not the work of a historian in the modern sense of the word. He was certainly capable of skillful amalgamation of various sources, but his coverage of the seventh century is poor and it is very unlikely that his labor went beyond mere copying of now extinct sources.⁶⁶

Modern approaches to the history of the Balkans during the first half of the seventh century have been considerably influenced by one particular text: *De Administrando Imperio*, a work associated with the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. There is not too much material relevant to the history of the early Slavs in this tenth-century compilation, but chapters 29 to 36 represent a key source for the controversial issue of the migration of Croats and Serbs. It has long been recognized that all

⁶⁵ Theophylact Simocatta 1 7.5; Mango 1997:376 and 394. Theophanes misunderstood Theophylact's reference to the city of Asenus (vii 3.1), and transformed it into the ἐπίτοποι (leading soldiers) of Novae (p. 399 with n. 3). There are also instances of innovative modification, as in the case of the episode of Peter's military confrontation with 1,000 Bulgar warriors (vii 4.1-7), which Theophanes enriched with a short reply of Peter to Bulgar offers of peace (p. 399), a detail absent from Theophylact's account. See Whitby 1982a:9 and 1983:333; Chachurov 1980:90; Litavrin 1995a:299. For Theophanes' chronological system, see also Duket 1980:85; Mango 1997:lxiv-lxvii. For Theophanes' narrative, see Liubarskii 1995.

⁶⁶ Mango 1997:484, 507-8, 595, and 667. For *Sklauiinai*, see Litavrin 1984:198. For the use of the word (*Sklauiinai*) in contemporary Carolingian sources, see Bertels 1987:160-1. For the date of the *Chronographia*, see Whitby 1982a:9; for a slightly later date (815), see Mango 1997:lxii.

these chapters were written in 948 or 949, with the exception of chapter 30, which must be regarded as a much later interpolation, composed by another author, after 950, arguably after Constantine's death in 959. In any case, the book seems never to have received its final editing, for there are striking differences, as well as some repetition, between chapters 29, 31, and 32, on one hand, and 30, on the other. The problem of reliability and truth raised by this source derives primarily from the fact that it contains two significantly different accounts of the same event, the migration of the Croats. The one given in chapter 30 is a legendary account, which may well represent a "native" version of the Croat *origo gentis*, arguably collected in Dalmatia, in one of the Latin cities. The same is true about the story of the migration of the Serbs, which most probably originated in a Serbian account. By contrast, the narrative in chapter 31 betrays a Byzantine source, for Constantine rejects any Frankish claims of suzerainty over Croatia. He mentions a minor Bulgarian-Croatian skirmish almost a century earlier, but has no word for the major confrontation between King Symeon of Bulgaria and Prince Tomislav of Croatia, which happened in his own lifetime (926). This further suggests that the account in chapter 31 is biased against both Frankish claims and Croatian independent tendencies, in order to emphasize Byzantine rights to the lands of the Croats. As a consequence, some believe that chapter 30 is the only trustworthy source for early Croat history, for it reflects Croat native traditions. These scholars also reject the version given by chapter 31 as Constantine's figment.⁶⁷

Indeed, the presumed Croat version in chapter 30 has no room for Emperor Heraclius helping Croats in settling in Dalmatia or ordering their conversion to Christianity. By contrast, the constant reference to Heraclius and the claim that Croatia was always under Byzantine overlordship were clearly aimed at furthering Byzantine claims of suzerainty. But the "Croat version" is not without problems. The motif of the five brothers, which also occurs in the account of the Bulgar migration to be found in Theophanes and Nicephorus, is a mythological projection of a ritual division of space which is most typical for nomadic societies. Moreover, in both chapter 30 and 31, the homeland of the Balkan Croats is located somewhere in Central Europe, near Bavaria, beyond Hungary, and next to the Frankish Empire. In both cases, Constantine makes it clear that Croats, "also called 'white'," are still living in that region. "White" Croatia is also mentioned by other, independent, sources, such as King Alfred the Great's translation of Orosius' *History of the World*, tenth-

⁶⁷ For chapter 30 as a later interpolation, see Bury 1906. For the migration of the Serbs, see Maksimović 1982; Lilie 1985:31-2. For the migration of the Croats, see Grafenauer 1952; Fine 1983:52.

century Arab geographers (Gaihani, Ibn-Rusta, and Mas'udi), the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, and the Emperor Henry IV's foundation charter for the bishopric of Prague. None of these sources could be dated earlier than the mid-ninth century and no source refers to Croats, in either Central Europe or the Balkans, before that date. Traditional historiographical views, however, maintain that the Serbs and the Croats referred to by Constantine were a second wave of migration, to be placed during Heraclius' reign.⁶⁸ There are other anachronisms and blatant errors that warn us against taking Emperor Constantine's account at its face value.⁶⁹ That *De Administrando Imperio* contains the first record of a "native" version of the past cannot be denied. There is, however, no reason to project this version on events occurring some two hundred years earlier. The same is true about other late sources. Emperor Leo VI's treatise entitled *Tactica* borrows heavily from the *Strategikon*. But unlike the author of the *Strategikon*, Leo had few original things to say about the Slavs, in general, and those of the sixth and seventh centuries, in particular. To him, the Slavs were not a major threat, because they had already been converted to Christianity, though not fully subjugated. Leo placed the narrative taken from the *Strategikon* in the past and claimed that the purpose of Byzantine campaigns against the Slavens had been to force them to cross the Danube and "bend their necks under the yoke of Roman authority." Another late source, the eleventh-century chronicle of Cedrenus, contains a reference to Heraclius' reconstruction, in his fourteenth year, of the Heraios leper hospital at Galata, which had been burnt by Slavs. According to the *Vita Zotici*, written under Emperor Michael IV (1034–41), the hospital was, however, restored by Maurice, after being burnt by Avars. It is possible therefore that Cedrenus' reference to the Slavs at Galata is the product of some confusion.⁷⁰

Highly controversial is the testimony of the so-called *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, the source on which Fallmerayer based his theories concern-

⁶⁸ Constantine found it necessary to explain why Croats lived in two different places so far from each other. His explanation, however, is an impossible and meaningless etymology: "Croats' in the Slav tongue means 'those who occupy much territory'" (chapter 31). For earlier approaches, see Dümmler 1856:57–8; Jireček 1911:108; Mal 1939. Despite clear evidence that Constantine's account of early Croat history is an amalgamation of various sources freely interpreted in accordance to Byzantine political claims, the idea of migration is too powerful to be abandoned by modern historians. See Margerit 1977; Klačić 1984 and 1985; Fine 1983:53 and 59. For the Serbs, see also Schuster-Šewc 1985.

⁶⁹ The Serbs sent a request to Emperor Heraclius through the military governor of Belgrade (Βελέγραδον, instead of Ζευγιδέον, as in chapter 25). They were first given land in the province (ἐν τῷ βέγρατι) of Thessalonica, but no such theme existed during Heraclius' reign. Emperor Constantine's explanation of the ethnic name of the Serbs as derived from *serri* is plainly wrong.

⁷⁰ Leo the Wise, *Tactica* 78 and 98; Cedrenus, *Compendium Historiarum*, ed. I. Bekker, I (Bonn, 1838), 698–9; Aubineau 1975:82. See Whitby 1988:124.

ing the extent of the Slav penetration into Greece. The chronicle survives in three late manuscripts. Only one of them, which is preserved at the Iberon monastery at Mount Athos and dates to the sixteenth century, deals exclusively with Avar invasions into Peloponnesus, the settlement of the Slavs, and Nicephorus I's campaigns against them. The *communis opinio* is that this manuscript should therefore be treated as the earliest version of the text. It also gives the impression of a more elaborate treatment which has led to a more "scholarly" style. But recent studies have shown that the Iberon manuscript uses the Byzantine system of dating, whereas the other two manuscripts use the older Alexandrine system. As a consequence, the Iberon cannot be the earliest of all three, for the Byzantine system of dating was introduced only after the Alexandrine one. The *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is not a chronicle properly speaking, but a compilation of sources concerning Avars and Slavs and referring to the foundation of the metropolitan see of Patras. Patras, and not Monemvasia, is at the center of the narrative. It has been argued therefore that this text may have been written in order to be used in negotiations with the metropolitan of Corinth over the status of the metropolitan of Patras.⁷¹ Since the emperor Nicephorus I is referred to by the unknown author of the text as "the Old, who had Staurakios as son," it is often believed that he must have written after the reign of Nicephorus II Phocas (963–9). It has been noted, on the other hand, that the text explicitly refers to the death of Tarasius, the patriarch of Constantinople (784–806), which gives the first *terminus a quo*. Moreover, the author calls Sirmium Σίρμακος and locates the city in Bulgaria, an indication that the chronicle was written before the conquest of that city by Basil II, in 1018. Its composition must have taken place in the second half of the tenth century or in the early eleventh century.⁷² The author of the chronicle drew his information from Menander the Guardsman, Evagrius, Theophylact Simocatta, and Theophanes. Descriptions of the attacks of the Avars in the *Chronicle* are modeled after the description of Hunnic attacks by Procopius. But the author of the *Chronicle* was completely ignorant of Balkan geography outside Peloponnesus. More important, his account of invasions into Peloponnesus refers exclusively

⁷¹ Fallmerayer 1845:367–458. See Charanis 1950:142–3; Setton 1950:516; Kalligas 1990:13; Turley 1997:410. For the style of the chronicle, see Kodér 1976:76. For the ecclesiastical division in Peloponnesus, see Yannopoulos 1993. For the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* as a forgery of ecclesiastical origin, perpetrated by or on behalf of the metropolitan of Patras, see Setton 1950:517. For the *Chronicle* as an "exposé," an elaborate report on the circumstances leading to the establishment of the metropolis of Patras, see Turley 1998:455 with n. 23.

⁷² For the date of the chronicle, see Kougeas 1912:477–8; Barišić 1965; Duichev 1976:xlili and 1980. For less convincing attempts to attribute the *Chronicle* to Arethas of Caesarea and to date it to c. 900, see Kodér 1976:77; Pohl 1988:99; Avramica 1997:69.

and explicitly to Avars, not Slavs. The Slavs only appear in the second part of the Ieron version of the text, which describes how Emperor Nicephorus I (802–11) conquered Peloponnesus and established the metropolis of Patras.⁷³

This account comes very close to a scholium written by Arethas of Caesarea on the margin of a manuscript of Nicephorus' *Historia Syntomos* written in 932. The note is a comment made by Arethas, while reading Nicephorus' work and thus must be viewed as a text of private, not public nature. In some instances, the one repeats the other verbatim. Arethas, nevertheless, speaks only of Slavs. Though the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* was clearly composed much later, it is very unlikely that its author derived his information from Arethas. It has been argued, therefore, that both drew their information from an unknown source, but it is also possible that there was more than one hand at work in the earliest known version of the *Chronicle*. Others have argued that since Arethas only speaks of Slavs, the Avars are a later addition to the *Chronicle*. Still others attempted to solve the quagmire by pointing to a now-lost privilege of Emperor Nicephorus I for Patras as the possible source for the story of the Avar rule in the Peloponnesus. This, it has been argued, was a propaganda response to Charlemagne's claims to both the imperial title and victories over the Avars. But the evidence of the eighth-century *Life of St Pancratius*, as well as of sixth-century sources, such as Evagrius, John of Ephesus, or John of Biclar, contradicts this view. If the source for the *Chronicle's* account of heavy destruction in Greece during Maurice's reign were oral traditions of Greek refugees in southern Italy and Sicily, then we must also admit that they remembered being expelled by Avars, not by Slavs. Arethas, who had been born at Patras in or around 850 to a rich family, may have well applied this tradition to a contemporary situation and therefore changed Avars into Slavs.⁷⁴ Family memories or stories may well have been the source for Arethas' knowledge about such things as

⁷³ The author of the chronicle confounds Anchialos with Messina in Macedonia; see *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, pp. 8 and 16. See also Charanis 1950:145; Duichev 1976:xlii; Kalligas 1990:25; Litavrin 1995c:338; Pohl 1988:100–1.

⁷⁴ For the scholium of Arethas, see Westerink 1972. The date and authenticity of the scholium have been disputed, mainly because it refers to both Thessalia prima and Thessalia secunda, an administrative division that took place in the eleventh century. See Karayannopoulos 1971:456–7. For a common source for Arethas and the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, see Charanis 1950:152–3. For the Avars as a later addition, see Chrysanthopoulos 1957. For oral traditions of Greek refugees as a source for the story of Avar rule, see Tuttle 1998:467. For oral traditions of Greek refugees as a source for the chronicle, see Setton 1950:517; Pohl 1988:101. For the *Life of St Pancratius*, see Vasilev 1898:416; Capaldo 1983:5–6 and 13; Olajos 1994:107–9. Arethas' knowledge of and interest in South Italy derives from the Greek refugees returning to Patras. See Falkenhausen 1995. For Arethas' life, see Litavrin 1995c:345.

the exact period (218 years) between the attacks of the Slavs and the settlement of Greeks in Peloponnesus by Emperor Nicephorus I, or the exact whereabouts in Italy of the population transferred to Greece by that emperor. But it is much more difficult to visualize how the emperor himself could have known that the successors of those expelled from Patras by the Slavs, more than two hundred years earlier, were still living in Reggio Calabria.⁷⁵ This warns us against pushing too far any kind of argument based on either the *Chronicle* or Arethas.

After 700, Slavs also appear in Western sources. Around 630, Bishop Amandus, one of St Columbanus' disciples, led the first known mission to the Slavs. His *Life*, written a century later, describes his journey across the Danube, to the *Sclavi*, who "sunk in great error, were caught in the devil's snares." Amandus' mission had no success but the association of the Slavs with the river Danube proved to be a lasting one. The Danube appears again in the Frankish Cosmography, written after 650, as providing grazing fields to the *Sclavi* and bringing *Winidi* together.⁷⁶

Much of what we know about the early history of the Slavs in the West derives, however, from Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*. The entries concerning the Slavs fall into two groups: those referring to conflicts between Slavs and Bavarians and those in which Slavs appear in a more or less direct relation to Lombards. These references are characteristically dated, sometimes even by month, a practice quite uncommon for the rest of Paul's *History*. This has been interpreted as an indication that, as this point, Paul closely followed the now-lost history of Secundus of Trento.⁷⁷

The Slavs are described as allies or paying tribute to the dukes of Forum Julii, "up to the time of Duke Ratchis." Some of Paul's heroes are well accustomed to their presence. According to Paul, when Raduald, the duke of Beneventum, attempted to revenge the death of Aio by the hands of the invading Slavs, he "talked familiarly with these Slavs in their own language, and when in this way he had lulled them into greater

⁷⁵ In contrast to the richness of detail in the preceding paragraph, Arethas' text is very vague at this point. We are only told that the emperor "has been informed" (βασιλεὺς γὰρ ὁ εἰρηνοφύλακος ἀναπαύσας) where the "ancient inhabitants" (τοὺς ἀρχαίους οἰκήτορας) of Patras lived at that time. See the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, p. 19.

⁷⁶ *Vita Amandi*, ed. Krusch, MGH: SRM 5:440; *Frankish Cosmography*, vv. 22–4, ed. G. H. Pertz (Berlin, 1847). Some sixty years after Bishop Amandus, St Marinus was burnt at the stake by *Unaudi* on the Bavarian frontier (*Vita Sancti Marini*, p. 170). By contrast, the bishop of Salzburg, St Hrodbert, successfully converted a *rex Canatanorum* in the late 600s, and also preached to the *Wandali* (*Vita Hrodberti*, p. 159). For 'Vandals' as Wends, see Steinberger 1920.

⁷⁷ *Historia Langobardorum* iv 7, 10, 28, and 40. For Secundus of Trento, see iv 10. See also Kos 1931:207; Gardiner 1983:147; Pohl 1988:9. For a detailed discussion of Paul's image of the Slavs, see Curta 1997:155–61.