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WERE THERE ANY SLAVS IN SEVENTH-CENTURY MACEDONIA?

Ever since the 1970s, the common opinion among historians has been that following the Avar and Slavic raids into the central Balkans (culminating in the first three sieges of Thessalonica mentioned in the *Miracles of St. Demetrius*), the Slavs settled in the lands now within the Republic of Macedonia.¹ Beginning with the 630s, the lands in western Macedonia between the present-day cities of Veles, Prilep, Bitola, Kičevo, Debar, Ohrid, and Prespa were occupied by the Berzetes, a tribe mentioned in the second book of the *Miracles of St. Demetrius* as participating in a large alliance of Slavic tribes bent on conquering Thessalonica.² They formed a *sklavinia* known to later Byzantine sources as

¹ Boško Babić, "Arheološki tragovi iz antičkog i srednjevekovnog perioda u Prilepskom kraju," in *Varvarske migracije u jugoistočnoj Evropi i njihov odnos prema autohtonoj populaciji. Referati i koreferati*, edited by Danica Dimitrijević (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo Jugoslavije/Narodni Muzej Prilep, 1972), 21-38, at 27; Бранко Панов, "Охрид и Охридската област во првите векови по словенската колонизација (VI-VIII век)," *Годишен зборник. Филозофски факултет на Универзитетот Скопје* 30 (1976-1977), no. 4, 119-136, at 123; Boško Babić, "Ohrid, Byzanz und die Slawen in Mazedonien," in *Welt der Slawen. Geschichte, Gesellschaft, Kultur*, edited by Joachim Herrmann (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), pp. 83-88; Бошко Бабич, "Раннесредневековые славянские поселения на территории Социалистической Республики Македонии," in *Труды Международного конгресса археологов-славистов, Киев 18-25 сентября 1985 г.*, edited by Petro P. Tolochko (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1988), pp. 195-196.

² *Miracles of St. Demetrius* II 1.180, edited by Paul Lemerle (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979), p. 175. See Mitko B. Panov, "On the Slav colonization and the ethnic changes in Macedonia by the end of the 6th and the

Berzitia.³ This scenario remains to this day generally accepted, at least in Macedonia, despite a number of recent studies directly challenging the notion of a Slavic settlement in the Balkans shortly after AD 600, and inviting a more nuanced interpretation of the *Miracles of St. Demetrius*.⁴ Equally important in this respect has been the re-evaluation of the archaeological evidence in the western Balkans (Albania, Montenegro, and the Dalmatian coast of Croatia) pertaining to the seventh century.⁵ It is worth taking therefore a fresh look at the old thesis of the Macedonian historiography in the light of those new approaches and ideas.

first half of the 7th century," *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 11-12 (2001), 23-33, at 27. According to Boško Babić, the Berzetes lived within the vast territory between the Vardar River and the Adriatic Sea. See Boško Babić, "Badania w zakresie archeologii słowiańskiej w Republice Macedonii od 1965 do 1995 roku," *Slavia Antiqua* 37 (1996), 73-88, at 87.

³ Babić, "Arheološki tragovi," p. 123. See also Pananos Sophoulis, *Byzantium and Bulgaria, 775-831* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 94. For *Sklaviniai*, see Evangelos K. Chrysos, "Settlements of Slavs and Byzantine sovereignty in the Balkans," in *Byzantina Mediterranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Klaus Belke, Ewald Kislinger, Andreas Külzer and Maria Stassinopoulou (Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), pp. 123-135; Florin Curta, "*Sklaviniai* and ethnic adjectives: a clarification," *Byzantion Nea Hellás* 30 (2011), 85-98.

⁴ Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs. History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Αμαλία Κ. Ηλιάδι, Τα θαύματα του Αγίου Δημητρίου ως ιστορικές πηγές. Επιδρομές και Σλαβικές εποικίσεις εντεύθεν του Δουνάβειος (Trikala: Vogiatzougλου Thrasylvoulos, 2003); Florin Curta, "Etnicitet u ranosrednjovjekovnoj arheologiji: primjer ranoslavenskih nalaza u jadranskoj regiji," *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 37 (2010), 17-48; Florin Curta, "Still waiting for the barbarians? The making of the Slavs in 'Dark-Age' Greece," in *Neglected Barbarians*, edited by Florin Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 403-478.

⁵ Etleva Nallbani, "La civilisation de 'Komani' de l'Antiquité tardive au Haut Moyen Age," Ph. D. Dissertation, Université de Paris-I Sorbonne (Paris, 2002); William Bowden, *Epirus Vetus. The Archaeology of a Late Antique Province* (London: Duckworth, 2003); Etleva Nallbani, "Transformations et continuité dans l'ouest des Balkans: le cas de la civilisation de Komani (VIe-IXe siècles)," in *L'Illyrie méridionale et l'Épire dans l'Antiquité. IV. Actes du IVe colloque international de Grenoble, 10-12 octobre 2002*, edited by Pierre Cabanes and Jean-Luc Lamboley (Paris: De Boccard, 2004), pp. 481-490; Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat. Identity Transformation in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010); Although rich in information regarding new excavations in southwestern Montenegro, Đorđe Janković's book (*Српско Поморје од 7. до 10. столећа* [Belgrade: Srpsko arheološko društvo, 2007]) must be used with great caution, given the author's notoriously nationalist slant.

The second book of the *Miracles of St. Demetrius* was written by an unknown author at some point during the last two decades of the seventh century.⁶ To him, the Slavs were savage, brutish, heathen barbarians. However, he also calls them repeatedly “our Slavic neighbors,” who 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.⁷ Conversely, those who besieged Thessalonica at some point during the first decade of Emperor Heraclius’ reign (610-641) are said to have brought with them their families, for “they had promised to establish them in the city after its conquest.”⁸ This strongly suggests that the “multitude of tribes” mentioned by the author of Book II—Drugubites, Sagudates, Belegezites, Baiunetes, and Bérzetes—came from the surrounding countryside, not from afar.⁹ There are several cross-references to some of those tribes in Book II, but not to the Berzetes. For example, during the siege of 677, the Belegezites, who lived at that time near Thebes and Demetrias, did not participate in the revolt of the Rynchines, the Sagudates, and the Drugubites, but instead supplied the besieged city with grain.¹⁰ The Berzetes do not appear anywhere else in the *Miracles of St. Demetrius*. Could they, like the Belegezites, have meanwhile moved from the vicinity of Thessalonica to a greater distance

⁶ Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans. II: Commentaire* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981), p. 172; О. В. Иванова, “Чудеса Св. Димитрија Солунског,” in *Свод древнейших письменных известии о славянах*, edited by Sergei A. Ivanov, Gennadii G. Litavrin and Vladimir K. Ronin (Moscow: “Vostochnaia literatura” RAN, 1995), pp. 91-211, at 200.

⁷ *Miracles of St. Demetrius* II 3.219, 3.222, and 4.231, pp. 194 and 208.

⁸ *Miracles of St. Demetrius* II 1.180, p. 175. For the date of the fourth siege of Constantinople, see Франјо Баришић, *Чуда Димитрија Солунског као историски извори* (Belgrade: Srpska Akademija Nauka, 1953), pp. 86-95; Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils*, pp. 91-94.

⁹ *Miracles of St. Demetrius* II 1.179, p. 175.

¹⁰ *Miracles of St. Demetrius* II 4.254 and 4.268, pp. 214 and 218. Both Thebes and Demetrias are mentioned in the text. An *archon* of the Belegezites named Tichomiros appears on an eighth- or early ninth-century seal, for which see Werner Seibt, “Siegel als Quelle für Slawenarchonten in Griechenland,” *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 6 (1999), 27-36, at 28. A second *archon* of the Belegezites, a man named Akamiros, is mentioned in the sources for attempting in 799 to release the sons of Constantine V from their exile in Athens and to proclaim one of them as emperor (Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, edited by Carl de Boor, vol. 2 [Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1885], pp. 473-474).

from the city, namely to western Macedonia? Theoretically, this is of course possible, but there is nothing in the *Miracles of St. Demetrius* to support such an interpretation. In locating the Berzetes between Ohrid, Bitola, and Prilep, Paul Lemerle followed the Czech archaeologist Lubor Niederle.¹¹ The basis of this interpretation seems to be a passage in Theophanes's *Chronographia* mentioning a region named Berzitia, which Telerig, the ruler of Bulgaria, was about to capture in 774 in order to "transfer its inhabitants to Bulgaria."¹² Leaving aside the fact that there is absolutely no geographical indication in Theophanes as to where Berzitia may have been located (although one may assume that it could not have been too far from the late eighth-century borders of Bulgaria), the connection between the Berzetes and Berzitia is unwarranted, since it is purely linguistic. The inhabitants whom Telerig wanted to move to Bulgaria are never called Berzetes, and it simply cannot be assumed that Berzitia was called so because of being (or, at least, having been at one point in time) populated by Berzetes. Moreover, even if Berzitia took its name from the Berzetes, it cannot be located in present-day Macedonia. Judging from the surprise attack, which in retaliation to Telerig's plans, Emperor Constantine V launched on Bulgaria, one would expect Berzitia to have been closer to the theme of Thrace, perhaps within the area between the Struma and the Marica, which in 788 became the theme of Macedonia.¹³ At any rate, Berzitia is not mentioned as a *sklavinia* in any Byzantine source.¹⁴ The only time the Berzetes are mentioned in the *Miracles of St. Demetrius*, they appear to be familiar to the author of

¹¹ Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils*, p. 90, citing Lubor Niederle, *Manuel de l'antiquité slave. L'histoire* (Paris: Champion, 1923), p. 106.

¹² Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, p. 447; English translation from Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (transl.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 617.

¹³ Sophoulis, *Byzantium*, p. 98. If the Berzetes of the early seventh century were somewhere around Thessalonica, it makes more sense to look for Berzitia in southern Macedonia, i.e., within Greek Macedonia.

¹⁴ Gennadii Litavrin's interpretation of Berzitia as a Sklavinia is based both on a misunderstanding of Theophanes' text and a confusion between Berzetes and Bel(ege)zetes, which goes back to Max Vasmer, *Die Slaven in Griechenland* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941), pp. 85 and 177. Litavrin specifically mistook Akamiros, the *archon* of the Belegezites, to be a ruler of Berzitia. See Геннадий Г. Литаврин, "Славинии VII-IX вв. Социально-политические организации славян," in *Этногенез народов Балкан и северного Причерноморья. Лингвистика, история, археология*, edited by Samuil B. Bernshtein and L. A. Gindin (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), pp. 193-203, at 200.

Book II, an indication that they may have not lived too far from walls of Thessalonica. Had they then moved to western Macedonia, it is remarkable that the author of Book II had no knowledge of their new whereabouts, even though he had good information about the Belegezites, who had meanwhile moved at an equally long distance from Thessalonica. Be as it may, there is no subsequent mention of the Berzetes, and no source locates them in the lands now within the Republic of Macedonia.

No doubt aware that there was nothing in the written sources about an early presence of the Slavs in Macedonia, Boško Babić turned to the archaeological evidence. The 1966 excavations inside the early Byzantine fort in Debrešte, near Prilep, have produced evidence of a later occupation of the site in the form of a number of sunken-floored buildings with stone ovens, as well as handmade pottery, including fragments of clay pans. The plan of only one house has been published, but without any of the associated finds. On the basis of a hasty comparison with a few selected sunken-floored buildings from sites in Ukraine and Slovakia, Babić attributed the house in Debrešte to the so-called Prague culture supposedly belonging to the early Slavs.¹⁵ In reality, in the absence of any associated finds, it is impossible to assess the date of the house, for houses like that in Debrešte are known from later centuries as well. Nor can the presence of clay pans be an indication of an early, presumably seventh-century date. Despite Babić's claims to the contrary, clay pans appear comparatively later in the central and southern Balkans than in the regions north of the Danube River, in which early Byzantine authors placed the sixth-century Sclavenes.¹⁶ The few specimens found in recent times in Macedonia are all stray finds from sites that were apparently re-occupied during the tenth and eleventh cen-

¹⁵ Babić, "Badania," 75 and 75 fig. 1.1. For a critique of the concept of "Prague culture," see Florin Curta, "The Prague type: a critical approach to pottery classification," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 5 (2001), no. 1, 73-106.

¹⁶ Boško Babić, "Crepulja, crepna, podnica-posebno značajan oslonac za atribuciju srednjovekovnih arheoloških nalazišta balkanskog poluostrva slovenima poreklom sa istoka," in *Varvarske migracije u jugoistočnoj Evropi i njihov odnos prema autohtonoj populaciji. Referati i koreferati*, edited by Danica Dimitrijević (Belgrade: Arheološko društvo Jugoslavije/Narodni Muzej Prilep, 1972), pp. 101-123. Equally problematic is the seventh-century date attributed to the handmade pottery accidentally found in Star Karaorman, Štip, and Berovo, for which see Звонко Белдедовски, *Брегалничкиот басен во римскот и раниот средновековен период* (Štip: Zavod za zashtita na spomenicite na kult, 1990), pp. 75-76; 46 fig. 33; 48 fig. 35; 49 fig. 38.

turies.¹⁷ In southwestern Serbia, at Pazarište near Novi Pazar, clay pans have been found in several houses together with typically tenth- and eleventh-century artifacts, such as double-handled jugs with incised signs and Middle Byzantine *engolpia*.¹⁸

Nonetheless, a number of finds *can* be dated with a great degree of confidence to the seventh century, although they require an interpretation very different from that until now accepted by most archaeologists and historians. Three coin hoards are known from seventh-century Macedonia, all to the east of the river Vardar. The first one was found in the 1930s in Valandovo and is a collection of some 40 gold coins, the latest of which have been struck for Emperor Heraclius between 613 and 629.¹⁹ The structure of the coin assemblage is very similar to that of two other hoards of gold found in the eastern Balkans, in which the latest coins have also been minted between 613 and 629.²⁰ One of them (Çatalca) was found only 43 km away from Constantinople, and contained 152 coins, which was a considerable amount of wealth, perhaps belonging to a high-ranking officer of the Roman army. The same may be true for the Valandovo hoard. Unfortunately, the exact location and circumstances of its finding remain unknown, but another hoard most certainly comes from the ruins of the early Byzantine fort next to the city, at Hisar (Kula).²¹ This second hoard consists of ten silver coins—five hexagrams struck for Heraclius, and five for Constans II, the latest

¹⁷ Виктор Лилчиќ, “Научно-истражувацки проект северо-западна Македонија во доцната антика и средниот век. Полог, Кичевија, Порече,” *Македонско наследство* 2 (1996), 53-84, at 66 (Stenče near Gostivar) and 80 (Modrište near Poreče). This is also the case of Debrešte: the early Byzantine site was occupied between ninth and the eleventh centuries by an open settlement with sunken-floored buildings and an inhumation cemetery. See Witold Hensel and Jadwiga Rauhutowa, “Archaeological research at Debrešte (Macedonia) 1974-1978,” *Archaeologia Polona* 20 (1981), 191-225, at 212-216.

¹⁸ Марко Поповић, *Тврђава Рас* (Belgrade: Arheološki Institut, 1999), pp. 142-145, 147-149, and 150-151; 143 fig. 89.12, 13; 145 fig. 92.1-5, 8.

¹⁹ Ivan Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien. Städte-Vici-Refugien-Kastelle* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), p. 112.

²⁰ Cécile Morrisson, Vladislav Popović, and Vujadin Ivanišević, *Les trésors monétaires byzantins des Balkans et d'Asie Mineure (491-713)* (Paris: Lethielleux, 2006), pp. 118-119 (Çatalca) and 141 (Nesebăr).

²¹ Весна Радић, “Налаз сребрног новца царева Ираклија и Констанса из збирке Народног Музеја у Београду,” *Нумизматулар* 17 (1994), 75-84, at 78-80. For sixth-century coin finds from Hisar, see Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen*, p. 450.

between 659 and 668.²² In the Balkans, there is only one other hoard of silver struck for Emperor Constans II, that from Valea Teilor, in northern Dobrudja. However, there was only one hexagram of Constans II in that hoard.²³ Valandovo II is therefore a unique assemblage for the entire region of the Balkans. A third hoard found in Gradec near Vinica consisted of some 60 solidi and tremisses, the latest of which is a coin struck for Emperor Constans II, possibly between 662 and 667.²⁴ Gradec may be compared to the very large hoard of gold struck for Emperor Constans II, which was found in 1876 or 1877 within the Asklepieion in Athens. There were 234 coins in the Athens hoard, four times more than in Gradec.²⁵ Like Çatalca, this considerable amount of gold must be regarded as the fortune of a well-to-do person. Given that the unusually large number of copper coins of Constans II found in Athens have been attributed to the military preparations preceding the mobilization of the fleet for the emperor's campaign to Italy, it is likely that the Asklepieion hoard may also be related to the presence of the Byzantine military, perhaps even attributed to a high-ranking officer of the fleet.²⁶ At any rate, finds of gold and silver coins struck for Emperor Constans II are extremely rare in the Balkans.²⁷ The cluster of no less than three hoards in

²² Morrisson, Popović, and Ivanišević, *Les trésors monétaires*, p. 201.

²³ Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, "Monede bizantine din secolele VII-X descoperite în nordul Dobrogei," *Studii și cercetări de numismatică* 7 (1980), 163-165, at 164-165.

²⁴ Maja Hadži-Maneva, "Coin hoards from the late 6th and 7th century discovered in the Republic of Macedonia," in *Byzantine Coins in Central Europe Between the 5th and 10th Century. Proceedings from the Conference Organized by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Rzeszów under the Patronage of Union Académique Internationale (Programme No. 57 Moravia Magna), Kraków, 23-26 IV 2007*, edited by Marcin Wołoszyn (Cracow: Institute of Archaeology University of Rzeszów, 2009), pp. 47-56, at 51. Only 32 coins have survived and are now in the Numismatic Collection of the National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia.

²⁵ Morrisson, Popović, and Ivanišević, *Les trésors monétaires*, p. 227.

²⁶ Florin Curta, "Byzantium in Dark-Age Greece (the numismatic evidence in its Balkan context)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 29 (2005), 113-146, at 118-119.

²⁷ Only two other gold coins are known from unknown locations in Bosnia and Dobrudzha, respectively. See Ivan Mirnik and Andrej Šemrov, "Byzantine coins in the Zagreb Archaeological Museum Numismatic Collection. Anastasius I (A.D. 497-518)-Anastasius II (A.D. 713-715)," *Vjesnik Arheološkog Muzeja u Zagrebu* 30-31 (1997-1998), 129-258, at 199; Gheorghe Poenaru-Bordea and Radu Ocheșeanu, "Tezaurul de monede bizantine de aur descoperit în săpăturile arheologice din anul 1899 de la Axio-polis," *Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române* 77-79 (1983-1985), nos. 131-133, 177-197, at 193-194. Similarly, only one other hexagram is known from Silistra (Bulgaria), for which see Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, "Monnaies byzantines des VIIe-

Macedonia—two of them found on one and the same site, and two with latest coins struck for Emperor Constans II—is therefore unlikely to be an accident of research. Their analogies in the Balkans strongly suggest that the three hoards were valuables of high-ranking members of the Byzantine society, possibly officers in the army. The fact that one of those hoards was found within the ruins of an early Byzantine fort substantiates that suggestion. Could the fort in Hisar near Valandovo have still been occupied during the seventh century? In the absence of systematic archaeological excavations, it is impossible to answer that question. However, there are clear signs of a seventh-century occupation on several sites in western Macedonia, especially on and around the northern shore of Lake Ohrid.

Trial excavations, between 1952 and 1954, in the prehistoric cemetery near the village of Trebeništa produced a belt buckle of the Boly-Želovce class.²⁸ Such buckles have been found primarily in the circum-Mediterranean region and are imitations of luxury (i.e., gold) specimens, such as found in the Kratigos hoard.²⁹ In the Balkans, buckles of the Boly-Želovce class appear primarily in the coastal regions of Greece and Albania, which were most likely in Byzantine hands during the seventh century.³⁰ To the same direction points the pair of earrings

Xe siècles découvertes Silistra, dans la collection de l'académicien Péricle Papahagi, conservées au Cabinet des Médailles du Musée National d'Histoire de Roumanie," *Cercetări numismatice* 7 (1996), 97-127, at 120.

²⁸ Васил Лахтов, "Археолошко ископување на Требенишко кале кај селото Требениште-Охридско 1953-1954 година," *Лихнид. Годушен зборник на Народниот музеј во Охрид* 2-3 (1959), 23-24; pl. VI.1.

²⁹ Ursula Ibler, "Pannonische Gürtelschnallen des späten 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts," *Arheološki vestnik* 43 (1991), 135-148, at 140; Vladimír Varsík, "Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen im mittleren und unteren Donaauraum im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert," *Slovenská Archeológia* 40 (1992), no. 1, 77-103, at 89. The Kratigos hoard includes 32 solidi, 28 of which have been struck in Constantinople for Emperor Heraclius, the latest between 616 and 625. See Isabella Baldini Lippolis, *L'oreficeria nell'impero di Costantinopoli tra IV e VII secolo* (Bari: EdiPuglia, 1999), pp. 229 and 37; Morrisson, Popović, and Ivanišević, *Les trésors monétaires*, pp. 386-387.

³⁰ J. Travlos and Alison Frantz, "The church of St. Dionysios the Areopagite and the palace of the archbishop of Athens in the 16th century," *Hesperia* 34 (1965), no. 3, 157-202, at 167 with pl. 43e; Etleva Nallbani, "Three buckles from the late antique period," in *Byzantine Butrint: Excavations and Surveys, 1994-99*, edited by Richard Hodges, William Bowden and Kosta Lako (Oxford: Oxbow, 2004), pp. 398-399, at 398; 399 fig. A3.2; Gladys R. Davidson, *The Minor Objects* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies in Athens, 1952), pl. 114.2186, 2188-2190; Fatos Tartari, "Një varrezë e mesjetës së hershme në Durrës," *Iliria* 14 (1984), no. 1, 227-250, at

with croissant-shaped pendant and open-work ornament from the cemetery excavated to the east from the Church of St. Demetrius on the Stenje Island in the Lake Prespa.³¹ Their analogies have been found in the Mersin hoard together with coins struck for Emperor Heraclius between 630 and 640, but such earrings appear frequently in southern Italy and in the Crimea.³² Only two other earrings of this kind are known from the Balkans, both found in Albania.³³ To sites in Albania also point the analogies for the earring with croissant-shaped pendant accidentally found in Orovnik, near Ohrid.³⁴ In grave 3 in Shurdhah and grave 8 in Krujë, such earrings were associated with seventh-century fibulae with bent stem very similar to those found in Prilep.³⁵

230-231; pl. II.28.1, 2; pl. IV.6; Γιώργος Γουνάρις, "Χάλκινες πόρπες από το οκτάγωνο των Φιλίππων και την κεντρική Μακεδονία," *Βυζαντιάκα* 4 (1984), 49-59, at 57 and 56 fig. 2γ.

³¹ Vera Bitrakova-Grozdanova, "Izkopuvanjata na Golem grad od 1981-1986 godina," *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 10 (1985-1986), 101-103; 102 fig. 1. No analogies are known for the iron earring from grave 63 of that same cemetery (Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen*, p. 379 fig. 280.4).

³² Isabella Baldini Lippolis, "Gli orecchini a corpo semilunato: classificazione tipologica (note preliminare)," *Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 38 (1991), 67-101; Isabella Baldini Lippolis, *L'oreficeria nell'impero di Costantinopoli tra IV e VII secolo* (Bari: EdiPuglia, 1999), p. 38.

³³ Muzafer Korkuti and Mehmet Kallfa, *Shqipëria arkeologjike* (Tirana: Universiteti shtetëror, 1971), p. 130; Skënder Anamali, "Die Albaner, Nachkommen der Illyrer," in *Albanien. Schätze aus dem Land der Skipetaren*, edited by Arne Eggebrecht (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1988), pp. 148-155, at 457 fig. 370.

³⁴ Владо Маленко, "Раносредновековната материјална култура во Охрид и Охридско," in *Охрид и Охридско низ историјата*, edited by Mihailo Apostolski (Skopje: Sобрание na obshtina Okhrid 1985), pp. 269-315 at 291 and pl. VII.6.

³⁵ Damian Komata, "Varrëza arbërore e Shurdhahut (Rrethi i Shkodres)," *Iliria* 9-10 (1979-1980), 105-121, at 120 pl. VI.6, 7; Skënder Anamali and Hëna Spahiu, "Varrëza e herëshme mesjëtare e Krujës," *Buletin i Universitetit shtetëror të Tiranës* 17 (1963), no. 2, 3-85, at 13; Jovan Kovačević, "Βάβας," in *Зборник посветен на Бошко Бабић. Mélanges Boško Babić 1924-1984*, edited by Mihailo Apostolski (Prilep: Institut des recherches scientifiques de la culture des anciens Slaves - Prilep 1986), pp. 119-121, at 120 and fig. For the chronology of the later fibulae with bent stem, see Florin Curta, "Seventh-century fibulae with bent stem in the Balkans," *Starinar* 62 (2012), forthcoming. In addition, four so-called "Slavic" bow fibulae are so far known from Macedonia, two of Werner's class I C (both fragments), one of his class I F, and another of his class II C (fragment, perforated): Mirjana Čorović-Ljubinković, "Les Slaves du centre balkanique du VI-e au XI-e siècle," *Balkanoslavica* 1 (1972), 43-54, at 47 and fig. 1.3; Аница Ѓорѓиевска, "Аваро-словенски моменти во Heraclea Lyncestis," in *Етногенез и етнокултурные контакты славян*, edited by Valentin V. Sedov (Moscow: Institut Arkheologii RAN, 1997), pp. 64-72, at 67 fig. 2.3; Стамен

Two cemeteries very similar to those excavated in Shurdhah, Krujë, and a number of other sites in central and northern Albania are known from western Macedonia. One of them is located on the shore of Lake Ohrid, at a short distance from the village of Radolishta. The cemetery was excavated between 1956 and 1959 and then, again, between 1976 and 1980. The excavations revealed 136 graves, all stone cists within the ruins of a sixth-century basilica, *spolia* from which were used for the building of some cists.³⁶ No burial has been properly published, only some of the more spectacular grave goods, such as two earrings with star-shaped pendant, a torc, a semicircular pendant with open-work ornament and three suspension loops, and a fibula with bent stem.³⁷ Such artifacts point to a seventh-century date, but there are others (e.g., earrings with pear-shaped pendant) which are clearly of a later, possibly eighth- or even ninth-century date. The cemetery may have started in the seventh, and then continued into the eighth or early ninth century.³⁸ A little further to the northwest, but still within a short distance from the shore of Lake Ohrid, the 1974 salvage excavations revealed 124 graves inside and outside the ruins of a sixth-century basilica. Some burials have cut through the mosaic pavement in the nave, others were directly on top of the mosaic pavement. All graves were stone and

Михайлов, "Раносредновековни фибули в България," *Известия на Археологическия Институт* 24 (1961), 37-60, at 43 and 41 fig. 3.1; Маленко, "Раносредновековната материјална култура," p. 289 and pl. VI.4. For the chronology of "Slavic" bow fibulae and a critique of their ethnic attribution, see Florin Curta, "Once again on bow fibulae of the 'Pietroasele type' (Werner's class I F)," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 59 (2008), 465-492; "Some remarks on bow fibulae of Werner's class I C," *Slavia Antiqua* 49 (2008), 45-98; "Женшина из Данчєнь или к вопросу о фибулах типа II C по Вернеру," *Tyragetia* 5 (2011), no. 1, 153-92.

³⁶ Stone cists have also been found in Prilep, next to the Baba hillfort, but nothing is known about the relation of that cemetery to the ruins of any late antique building (Kovačević, "Báβaς," p. 120).

³⁷ For a detailed discussion of the chronology of those artifacts, see Florin Curta, "The beginning of the Middle Ages in the Balkans," *Millennium* 9 (2012), forthcoming; and Curta, "Seventh-century fibulae."

³⁸ Маленко, "Раносредновековната материјална култура," pp. 291-293 and pl. XVIII-XXI; Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen*, pp. 491; 490 fig. 409; 490 fig. 410.1-4. According to Elica Maneva, "La survie des centres paléochrétiens de Macédoine au Haut Moyen Age," in *Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju. Split-Poreč (25.9.-1.10. 1994)*, edited by Nenad Cambi and Emilio Marin (Vatican/Split: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana/Arheološki Muzej, 1998), pp. 843-858, at 847 the later phase of the cemetery extends well into the fourteenth century.

brick cists. Some had no grave goods whatsoever. Much like with Radolishta, no burials have been published, only a few grave goods: seven fibulae with bent stem, two earrings with star-shaped pendant, a semicircular pendant with open-work ornament and suspension loops, pendants, torcs, and pottery.³⁹ There are three arrow heads known from the cemetery. The earliest graves cluster in the southern aisles on the southern side of the basilica, later graves dated to the early ninth century appear in the nave and in the northern apse.⁴⁰ The association of the cemeteries in Radolishta and Sv. Erazmo with ruins of sixth-century basilicas strongly suggests that those were Christian communities, but without a detailed publication of every burial assemblage and of the corresponding settlements it is impossible to assess the role of Christianity in social practices.⁴¹ Nonetheless, cist graves also appear in Macedonia without any associated churches. The trial excavations carried out in 1959 in Viničani near Veles by Todor Grujev and Mirjana Čorović-Ljubinković revealed a cemetery very similar in layout and grave construction to the other two on the northern shore of Lake Ohrid.⁴² One of them (grave 6) produced a one-handled jug with painted ornament.⁴³

³⁹ See note 37. It is not clear whether the pottery found on the site—handmade, but also wheel-made, including a double-handled jug—was associated with earlier or later graves.

⁴⁰ Владо Маленко, Нови археолошки наоди на локалитете ‘Козлук’, ‘Габавци’ и ‘Св. Еразмо’, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 2 (1976), 219-235, at 222 and 232-234; 223 fig. 2; 224 fig. 3; 231 fig. 13; 234 fig. 14; Маленко, “Раносредновековната материјална култура,” pp. 288-289; pls. V-XIII; Бошко Бабић, “Денешните територии на Република Македонија и Република Албанија во VII и VIII века,” in *Цивилизацији на похвата на Македонија* (Skopje: MANU, 1995), pp. 153-182, at 161; Maneva, “La survie,” p. 846; Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen*, pp. 480; 481 fig. 400 and 401.1-5.

⁴¹ The graves at Shurdhah were placed on the southern side and around the apse of a church (Hëna Spahiu and Damian Komata, “Shurdhahu-Sarda qytet i fortifikuar mesjetar Shqiptar (Rezultatet e gërmimeve të viteve 1967-1970),” *Iliria* 3 [1974], 257-328, at 316). Similarly, the foundations of three churches (St. George, St. Michael, and St. Nicholas) were found to the east of the cemetery in Koman, while two other churches were located to the west of that cemetery (Etleva Nallbani, “Résurgence des traditions de l’Antiquité tardive dans les Balkans occidentaux: étude des sépultures du nord de l’Albanie,” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 10 [2004], 25-42, at 41 with n. 4).

⁴² Mirjana Čorović-Ljubinković, “Viničani,” in *Зборник посветен на Бошко Бабић. Mélanges Boško Babić 1924-1984*, edited by Mihailo Apostolski (Prilep: Institut des recherches scientifiques de la culture des anciens Slaves - Prilep 1986), pp. 133-137.

⁴³ Čorović-Ljubinković, “Viničani,” p. 136 fig. 3; Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen*, p. 442 and fig. 355.1.

Such jugs appear occasionally on other sites in Albania and Bulgaria,⁴⁴ but also in southern Italy. In fact, one- or two-handled jugs with painted decoration are the most common painted ware form on seventh- and eighth-century cemetery sites in Apulia and Campania.⁴⁵

The existence of Christian communities in seventh-century Macedonia nicely dovetails with the meager evidence from the written sources. Two bishops of Stobi participated in the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680-681 and in the Quinisext Council of 692.⁴⁶ They were most likely not residents of Stobi, a city which had long been abandoned, but they were also not living in Constantinople at that time. It is possible that they were based somewhere in western Macedonia. If so, then the obvious ties which communities in western Macedonia (as well as Albania) maintained with the Empire must have been much more intense than apparent from the examination of finger-rings with Greek monograms or inscriptions.⁴⁷ Seventh-century hoards of gold and silver

⁴⁴ The largest number of specimens is from Krujë (Anamali and Hëna Spahiu, "Varrëza, pp. 13; 23 pl. V.3-4, 6, 9-11; 26 pl. VI.1, 3, 5-8, 11-12; 27 fig. 9; 28 fig. 10; Skënder Anamali and Hëna Spahiu, "Varrëza arbërore e Krujes," *Iliria* 9-10 [1979-1980], 47-103, at 53 and 51 fig. 3). For Bulgaria, see Dimka Stoianova-Serafimova, "Die neuentdeckte mittelalterliche Nekropole beim Dorf Tuchovište, Kreis Blagoevgrad," in *Rapports du III-e Congrès international d'archéologie slave. Bratislava 7-14 septembre 1975*, edited by Bohuslav Chropovský (Bratislava: VEDA, 1979), pp. 789-804, at 793.

⁴⁵ Paul Arthur and Helen Patterson, "Ceramics and early medieval central and southern Italy: 'a potted history'," in *La storia dell'Alto Medioevo italiano (VI-X secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia. Convegno internazionale (Siena, 2-6 dicembre 1992)*, edited by Ricardo Francovich and Ghislaine Noyé (Florence: Insegna del Giglio, 1994), pp. 409-441, at 427; Paul Arthur and Helen Patterson, "Local pottery in southern Puglia in the sixth and seventh centuries," in *Ceramica in Italia: VI-VII secolo. Atti del Convegno in onore di John W. Hayes, Roma, 11-13 maggio 1995*, edited by Lucia Sagui (Florence: Insegna del Giglio, 1998), pp. 511-530, at 528.

⁴⁶ Bishops John and Margarites, for whom see Rajko Bratož, "Die frühchristliche Kirche in Makedonien und ihr Verhältnis zu Rom," in *Klassisches Altertum, Spätantike und frühes Christentum. Adolf Lippold zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, edited by Karlheinz Dietz, Dieter Hennig and Hans Kaletsch (Würzburg: Der christliche Osten, 1993), pp. 509-551, at 549.

⁴⁷ For two finger-rings with Greek monogram on the bezel, which were found in Radolishta, see Маленко, "Раносредновековната материјална култура," pl. XX. For finger-rings with Greek inscriptions from Albania, see Hasan Ćeka, "Mbishkrimet bizantine të unazave të Komani dhe datimi i tyre," *Studime Historike* 19 (1965), no. 4, 39-46; Hëna Spahiu, "Unaza të reja me mbishkrim nga Komani," *Iliria* 15 (1985), no. 1, 229-246; Hëna Spahiu, "Bagues aux inscriptions byzantines à Komani," *Corso di cul-*

coins have so far been found to the east from the river Vardar, a region which has not produced any remains comparable to those of western Macedonia.⁴⁸ It remains unclear what, if any, was the relation of the communities in western Macedonia to the owners of those hoards. Nor is the power structure known which may have existed in those communities, and especially whether or not they still occupied the many sixth-century fortified sites in the region.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, it is quite clear that, despite claims to the contrary,⁵⁰ burial assemblages associated with the so-called Komani culture, such as those known from Radolishta, Sv. Erazmo and Viničani have nothing to do either with sixth- to seventh-century sites in the Lower Danube region known from written sources to have been inhabited by Slavs, or with cremation and biritual cemeteries, such as Olympia (Greece), Balchik and Razdelna (Bulgaria), which have been dated to the seventh century and viewed as solid evidence of the presence of “barbarians.”⁵¹ In many respects, the communities who buried their dead in western Macedonia continued the traditions of Late Antiquity: stone or brick cists, cenotaphs and multiple burials within one and the same grave, the west-east grave orientation, female fashions with earrings and fibulae with bent stem.⁵² There are of course new elements, such as furnished burials, the deposition of weapons, and stark gender differentiation. But nothing indicates that those were communities com-

tura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina 40 (1993), 435-46. Such finger-rings have also been found in southern Bulgaria: Живка Вържарова, *Славяни и прабългари (по данни на некрополите от VI-XI в. на територията на България)* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bălgarskata Akademiia na Naukite, 1976), pp. 340-341; 309 fig. 193.10.

⁴⁸ However, two inhumation burials are known from Sandanski, just across the border in southwestern Bulgaria, and one of them produced a finger-ring with Greek inscription on the bezel (Вържарова, *Славяни*, p. 341).

⁴⁹ Nothing is known about the end of the late antique phase of occupation on such sites as Lychnidos (Ohrid), Heraclea Lyncestis (near Bitola), or Baba (near Prilep).

⁵⁰ Никос Чаусидис, “Релације између ‘Комани’ културе и ‘Салтово-Мајацке’ и проблем порекла њихових носилаца,” in *Становиштво словенског поријекла у Албанији. Сборник радова са Међународног научног скупа одржаног у Цетинју, 21, 22 и 23 јуна 1990* (Titograd: Istorijски Institut SR Crne Gore, 1991), pp. 57-62, at 62.

⁵¹ Speros Vryonis, “The Slavic pottery (jars) from Olympia, Greece,” in *Byzantine Studies. Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century*, edited by Speros Vryonis, Jr. (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992), pp. 15-42; Людмила Дончева-Петкова, “Некрополът при Балчик. Нови данни за прабългарите,” *Археология* 50 (2009), nos. 1-2, 76-88; Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis 9. Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau* (Bonn: Rudolf. Habelt, 1992), pp. 463-484.

⁵² Curta, “Beginning of the Middle Ages.”

ing from beyond the borders of the Empire. Judging from the archaeological evidence, no Slavs have settled in Macedonia during the seventh century.