

The Byzantine Frontier in Macedonia

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In 1957, George Ostrogorsky, one of the twentieth century's foremost historians of the Byzantine Empire, made the following statement: 'the frontiers between the Byzantine and Slavic spheres [in the Balkans] in the middle of the ninth century correspond fairly exactly to the cultural zones which the eminent Yugoslav geographer Cvijić has defined in modern times'.¹ In this paper we will explore his claim in order to establish whether Cvijić's cultural frontier can be identified in medieval Macedonia. But let us start with the twentieth-century frontier, forty-one years after Ostrogorsky made his claim.

The modern frontier between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia

On Saturday 18 July 1998 I walked across the border between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In doing so I crossed from Makedonia into Makedonija. A point of practical information for potential cross-border travellers: in Greek *nai* – pronounced 'ne' – means yes, whereas in Slavic *ne* means no. This jarring polarity serves to emphasize the most obvious feature of crossing the modern frontier: it marks an official linguistic border. The policies pursued in the early years of the twentieth century, after the so-called 'Macedonian Struggle' (1904–8), the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and the First World War (1914–18) – we will return to these later – to some extent created a linguistic frontier which had hitherto not existed. However, there are some Slavic speakers still resident in Greek Macedonia, for example those in and around Florina. They refer to themselves and their language as *dopii/dopia*, local, and are also thus referred to by ethnic Greeks (mostly refugees from Pontus) living in the area.² Some locals may also, discreetly, refer to their hometown by a Slavic name, for example Lerin for Florina. However, Slavic place-names have been increasingly suppressed in Greece since the population transfers and the systematic renaming of places and people which took place between 1913 and 1928.³ This supposedly ended a form of bilingualism which had endured, with or without official sanction, for

more than a millennium. Thus, we know from the letters of the Byzantine author Theophylact Hephaistos, who was archbishop in Ohrid, that alternative Slavic and Greek names for many towns, rivers and mountains were in everyday use by the later eleventh century. While the Slavic names jarred his delicate jaw, Theophylact knew and used them alongside their Greek equivalents. Today the river Axios suddenly becomes the Vardar at the frontier, but for Theophylact it was both Axios and Vardar, and it represented a conceptual barrier between the uncivilized provincial world where he was posted and civilization: Constantinople.⁴ To that extent he conceived of the river as a cultural frontier, but we cannot, I think, consider this characterization of the frontier between the medieval Greek and Slavic spheres as being the final word.

The recent confrontation between Greeks and Slavs over international recognition for the Republic of Macedonia was far less bellicose than encounters in the early years of this century. The central issue between 1870 and 1913 was the language and ‘national consciousness’ of locals.⁵ Today it is competing claims to the name Macedonia and to the sixteen-ray star of Vergina. The earlier conflict took place in the low hills north of Florina, the recent confrontation in the committee rooms of the European Community (now the EU) Headquarters in Brussels and the United Nations Building in New York City. A workable compromise was hammered out between 1992 and 1995, and since then, as ethnic rivalry has led to war in Bosnia and Kosovo, both Greece and FYROM have realised the value – in terms, for example, of their increased moral authority – of the peaceful resolution of their differences. The symbols of recent acrimony are still apparent at the frontier. But the Greek statue of Alexander the Great is not aiming his javelin, held aloft, at those beyond the no-man’s-land; and, on the far side, the trench through which cars from Greece are forced to drive is only half-filled with water. In the spirit of compromise the tariff for disinfection has not been raised in line with inflation, and as a pedestrian I was not charged.

The *Sklavenoi* and *Sklaviniai* in Macedonia

Compromise and cooperation, with occasional outbreaks of violent hostility, are not unusual in Macedonia; they have characterized life since the arrival of the Slavs in the sixth century AD. In the second half of the seventh century we first hear of the seven so-called *Sklaviniai*. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* a *Sklavinia* was both ‘a region occupied by the *Sklavenoi*’, the Slavs; and also ‘a stronghold, whether small or large in area, of the frontier military type’.⁶ The Macedonian *Sklaviniai* had close relations with the

neighbouring city of Thessalonica: it is from the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, patron of that city, that we learn the names of several Slavic tribes, and something of their activities. On occasion these were actively hostile: the Slavs besieged Thessalonica three times in rapid succession, in 614, 616 and 618. But there is also clear evidence for cooperation between the Greek-speaking citizens and their Slavic-speaking neighbours.⁷ Whether they were at peace or war, we are told nothing of a frontier between the Greeks and Slavs, unless we place it at the walls of Thessalonica.

We have to wait until the arrival of the Turkic Bulgars in c. 680 for more information on the Slavs in Macedonia, and then must rely on the testimony of a Byzantine author writing more than a century later. Completed probably in late 813 or early 814, the *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* relates that in AM 6171 ‘the tribe of the Bulgars assailed Thrace’. Settling in the vicinity of Varna, they ‘subjugated the so-called Seven Tribes of the neighbouring Sklavinian nations’ and apparently set about moving them as tributaries to strategic locations on enemy borders.⁸ This proved unsatisfactory to the emperor Justinian II who, in 687–8, launched an attack on the Bulgars and the *Sklaviniai* (alternatively, the singular *Sklavinia*). ‘He pushed back for the time being the Bulgars who had come out to oppose him and, having advanced as far as Thessalonica, captured a multitude of Slavs, some by war, while others went over to him.’ Justinian transferred these Slavs – allegedly more than 30,000 – across the Bosphorus into Asia Minor, and settled them in the district (*thema*) of Opsikion.⁹ However, if the Slavic regions east of Thessalonica were somewhat depleted, the greater area was still sufficiently populous and troublesome to justify a full-scale Byzantine invasion in the year 758. At that time, we are told, the emperor, Constantine V ‘conquered the *Sklaviniai* in Macedonia and subjected the rest’. The *Sklaviniai* are mentioned only once more by Theophanes, at the very end of his chronicle, where the term designates a region where Byzantine troops from Anatolia might be settled.¹⁰

There are a number of general points we can make about the *Sklaviniai*, and a number we cannot. First, the Slavs occupied a number of regions to the east, north and west of Thessalonica, and they interacted regularly with the citizens. Second, the Slavs acknowledged the suzerainty of the Turkic Bulgars in the aftermath of the Bulgar invasion of c. 680, but were similarly willing to acknowledge the authority of the Byzantine emperor when he had the upper hand. Third, the number and scale of recorded population transfers in and out of Macedonia made this one of the most fluid areas of the empire. Clearly, throughout the two centuries of their recorded existence the *Sklaviniai* in Macedonia were not a fixed or coherent polity, and certainly not a nascent state.

We cannot establish a fixed political border, still less a clear cultural frontier between Greeks and Slavs beyond the enduring division between the urban and rural, between the city of Thessalonica and the surrounding countryside. Yet we have almost reached the point in time when Ostrogorsky sees the cultural frontier between Greek and Slav finally fixed: the mid-ninth century.

At this point we must pass swiftly across two hundred years of Byzantine and southern Slavic history. Those wanting fuller insights will have no problem finding excellent accounts in English by such eminent scholars as Runciman, Obolensky and Browning.¹¹ A perusal of any of these will show my decision to ignore the ninth and tenth centuries to be quite obtuse. This was the period when the Balkan Slavs, in contact and competition with their Byzantine neighbours, forged a distinctive Orthodox culture: *Slavia Orthodoxa*. Key figures in that period are the brothers from Thessalonica, Cyril and Methodius, whose knowledge of the local Slavic language allowed them to create a new alphabet to aid their missionary activity; Khan Boris, who presided over the conversion of Bulgaria to Christianity; and his son Symeon (c. 894–927), who began the systematic translation of key Christian texts from Greek into (Old Church) Slavonic, and built a capital at Preslav which he intended, in time, to rival Constantinople. In Symeon's reign the Bulgarian empire in the northern Balkans reached its greatest extent, and the political frontier with Byzantium was marked by the erection of boundary stones. Two stones which were erected in 904 have been discovered 22km north of Thessalonica, showing the line of the Byzantine frontier with Bulgaria in Macedonia.¹² But this is a period we must ignore to concentrate on a second time when Macedonia attracted the frequent attention of the Byzantine emperor.

Basil II the 'Bulgar-slayer' and Samuel Kometopoulos

The emperor Basil II (d. 1025) came to power with his younger brother Constantine at the death of John I Tzimiskes on 10 January 976. Immediately a civil war erupted in Byzantium between the young emperors and several aristocratic families. The struggle for mastery of the empire took place in Anatolia, where the aristocrats had their vast estates. Bulgaria and the lands beyond were neglected, and in the absence of any firm imperial interest a revolt by the four sons of Nicholas, a regional commander in Macedonia, secured control over certain lands east of Thrace. The rebels, known as the Kometopouloi ('sons of the count'), swiftly came to dominate the heartland of Bulgaria, between the Balkan mountains and the lower Danube: they took Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, in 986. However, the realm that they constructed was centred on the lands to the south-west of the Balkan Mountains.

By 994, with his three brothers dead, one killed by his own hand, Samuel Kometopoulos ruled alone. From his base at Prespa, near Ohrid, he launched regular attacks on surrounding lands, focussing his attention on Thessalonica, and Larissa, the metropolitan see of Thessaly. Repeated raiding saw the destruction of the Athonite monastery of Hierissos¹³ and pressed as far south as the Isthmus of Corinth, engendering great fear among the populations of Hellas and Peloponnesus. The level of trepidation is reflected in the *Life of St Nikon*, which was written within living memory of Samuel's campaigns. The saint is credited with alleviating the suffering and anxiety of the *praitor* and *strategos* of Corinth, Basil Apokaukos, who faced Samuel's advance, and with prophesying the eventual elimination of the Bulgarian menace. But this was for the future, and in the mid-990s Samuel was considered 'invincible in power and unsurpassed in strength'.¹⁴ Perhaps Samuel's greatest coup was gaining control of Dyrrachium (modern Durrës). This city was the gateway to the Via Egnatia, the great road which passed through Samuel's lands as far as Thessalonica, and from there ran on to Constantinople (see map 1). Samuel did so by marrying a daughter of the leading man, John Chryselios.¹⁵ By 997 Samuel held most of the lands that had pertained to Tsar Symeon at the height of his power and in that year had himself crowned Tsar of the Bulgarians.

Received opinion holds that between 1001, when he reappeared in the northern Balkans, and 1018, Basil II masterminded a prolonged, systematic and bloody recovery of strongholds and territory which earned him the epithet *Voulgaroktonos*, 'the Bulgar-slayer'. Basil's first advance towards Sardica (modern Sofia) in 1001 divided Samuel's realm in two, and we will concentrate on his actions in the south-western portion. Success in the north-eastern part was swift: his generals Theodorokan and Nikephoros Xiphias recovered Preslav, 'Little Preslav' (Presthlavitza), and Pliska with remarkable alacrity, indicating that Samuel's support in the heartland of the former Bulgarian realm was patchy.¹⁶ Basil also recovered the lands beside the Danube as far as Sirmium (modern Sremska Mitrovica). In 1002 he personally conducted an eight month siege of Vidin, and in victory secured the loyalty not only of those south of the river, but also of a chieftain known as Ajtony (or Achtum), whose lands stretched north of the Danube to the river Körös.

With the lands to the north and east secure, Basil was able to turn his attention to the heartland of Samuel's empire: Macedonia (see map 1). The first major Byzantine offensive in Macedonia began auspiciously with the recovery of Veria and Servia, which allowed Basil to advance further into western Macedonia and Thessaly. Further victories secured the recovery of

Vodena (modern Edessa), and then, in 1004, Skopje. There can be no doubt that Basil's achievements between 1001 and 1004 were significant, and that to a great extent they restored the faith of regional magnates in the empire. It is evident from the account of the Byzantine chronicler John Skylitzes that during these campaigns success was achieved by securing the support of the leading man (*proteuōn*) in a fortified town (*kastron*) and the ruler (*archon*) of a district. And in this struggle Basil's greatest weapon was his capacity to award lofty imperial titles, with their associated insignia, stipends and prestige. Thus, Veria came with the loyalty of a certain Dobromir, who was a relative of Samuel by marriage, and who received the imperial rank of *anthypatos*. Similarly, the *kastron* of Servia was handed over by the commander Nikolitzas, who was taken to Constantinople and given the rank of *patrikios*. Unlike Dobromir, he proved fickle, and fled back to Samuel. A further prize, Skopje, came with Romanos, the son of the former Bulgarian Tsar Peter (927–c. 969), whom Samuel had installed there as governor. Then, and crucially, in 1005 Dyrrachium was returned to Byzantine suzerainty by the leading family, the Chryselioi. Since, as we have seen, Samuel was married to a daughter of John Chryselios, the change in loyalty was even more remarkable. Consequently Chryselios received the imperial rank of *patrikios* for himself, and also for his two sons.

We have no information on any campaigns between the recovery of Dyrrachium and the fateful campaign of 1014.¹⁷ The campaign of 1014 culminated in the Battle of Kleidion where Basil allegedly captured 15,000 of the enemy, and blinded ninety-nine of each hundred, leaving a single eye to the hundredth so that he could guide his comrades home. When Samuel saw his army returning mutilated he suffered a heart attack and died shortly afterwards. This story, more than any other, ensured that Basil's reputation as the *Voulgaroktonos* stuck. The first account of this episode is contained in Skylitzes' chronicle, and the relevant chapter begins with the allegation that Basil had launched annual raids into Samuel's lands before 1014. I believe Skylitzes may be mistaken in this claim, for which he offers no supporting information. In referring vaguely to annual raids Skylitzes presents the reader with an introductory remark which is consistent with his general portrait of Basil's reign. And while it is possible that skirmishing occurred before 1014, and that Basil made much of this to generate political capital, it is equally possible that it is an invention by Skylitzes to fill an obvious gap in his coverage. We might also consider the author's audience, and his desire to promote the protracted imperial campaigns conducted in the Balkans by his master, Emperor Alexius I Komnenos (1081–1118).¹⁸

Therefore, I am more inclined to believe another author, Yahya of Antioch, who maintained that after *four* years of fighting Basil had won a 'complete victory'.¹⁹ This corresponds exactly with the notion that the campaigns which began in 1001 were brought to an end by the events of 1005. It is perfectly possible that Basil was satisfied with his achievements to date, which included the recovery of the key coastal stronghold of Dyrrachium, the reopening of the Via Egnatia, and consolidation of his control north of Thessalonica. He was, therefore, content to leave Samuel with a realm based around Prespa and Ohrid, from which he could dominate the southern Slavs in Duklja and southern Dalmatia, but was denied access to the lands north and east of Sardica, and to Thessaly and the themes of Hellas and Peloponnesus. Samuel must also have kept his imperial title. Indeed, with the caution appropriate to any argument from silence, it is possible that Basil's agreement with Samuel has been erased from the written record to conceal the fact that the 'Bulgar-slayer' was previously a 'peacemaker' (*eirenopoios*). On my reading of the evidence, Basil recognized an independent and predominantly Slavic realm known as Bulgaria, but with its centres of power in Macedonia.²⁰ This leaves us with the possibility, indeed probability, that a peace treaty was signed which lasted for ten years (1005-1014). If so, Basil and Samuel must have recognized each other's political frontiers. But we cannot travel further down this road without further evidence: I believe we may find it in the *notitiae episcopatum*, notices of bishoprics subject to the patriarch of Constantinople.

Although these notices are notoriously difficult to date, making an absolute chronology impossible to establish, a firm relative chronology has been constructed. According to *notitia* 7, compiled at the beginning of the tenth century, the archbishopric of Dyrrachium had slipped to forty-second in the precedence list of metropolitan sees subject to Constantinople. The list of bishops suffragan to Dyrrachium had been reduced to just four: Stefaniaka (exact location unknown, but near Valona in Albania), Chounavia (exact location unknown, but between Dyrrachium and the river Mat), Kruja (modern Krujë), and Alessio (modern Lesh) (see map 1).²¹ According to *notitia* 9 – first completed in 946, and revised between 970 and 976 – the status of Dyrrachium remained the same throughout the tenth century. However, its standing improved suddenly in *notitia* 10, when it was granted eleven more suffragan sees, bringing the total under the metropolitan to fifteen. These were Stefaniaka, Chounavia, Kruja, Alessio, Duklja, Skodra, Drisht, Polatum, Glavinica, Valona, Ulcinj, Bar, Chernik, and Berat (with Graditzion).²² The date of *notitia* 10 cannot be ascertained precisely, but it certainly post-dates *notitia* 9, and must pre-date additional documents issued by Basil II in 1020,

which stripped Dyrrachium of all the additional sees and granted them to Ohrid. (By 1020 Basil had finally defeated Samuel and his son, and recovered Ohrid and the surrounding territory for the empire.) Therefore, *notitia* 10 must date from the final years of the tenth, or, more likely, the first years of the eleventh century.²³

The reason for the short-lived promotion of the metropolitan of Dyrrachium has been the subject of speculation. However, if we accept that between 1005 and 1014 Basil acknowledged Samuel's political and ecclesiastical control over Ohrid, the brief promotion of Dyrrachium makes perfect sense: it was to serve as the centre of Byzantine ecclesiastical authority in the lands to the west of Samuel's realm, and as a check to encroachments from Ohrid. A complementary, but equally controversial feature of *notitia* 10, recension *a* (but not *c*) is the apparent consolidation of the authority of the bishop of Larissa in Thessaly.²⁴ Larissa temporarily acquired five additional sees: Vesaine, Gardikion, Lestinos, Charmenoi and Peristerai. These are also recorded as suffragans of Larissa in a separate manuscript of the fifteenth century (Parisinus 1362), which, Darrouzès suggests, was conflating information from several earlier documents which are now lost. Samuel had captured Larissa in 986 and for that reason the temporary extension of that see's authority in the early eleventh century would have acted as a complement to that of Dyrrachium, guarding against possible encroachments to the south from Ohrid. Therefore, the geographical distribution of the sees subject to both Dyrrachium and Larissa may be considered an illustration of the limits of Basil's political authority, which was concentrated in the coastal lands north and south of Dyrrachium, in the mountains to the west of Prespa and Ohrid, and in the lands south-east of Thessalonica.²⁵

So much then for Basil's and Samuel's political and ecclesiastical authority in Macedonia, and the frontiers between them. My suggestions are contentious because they rest on an argument from silence (because there is no account of the annual campaigns which Basil is alleged to have launched against Samuel between 1005 and 1014), and an episcopal notice (*notitia* 10) of uncertain date and questionable authority. Ultimately, one can accept or reject my hypothesis according to one's preferred view of the reign of Basil II. But it is an intriguing possibility and fits well into a revisionist approach to the reign of Basil the so-called 'Bulgar-slayer'.²⁶

Cvijić and Ostrogorsky

What then of the cultural frontier identified by Cvijić, and supported by Ostrogorsky, which separated the 'Greek' and 'Slavic' regions? Here we must

return to the twentieth century, and to the circumstances in which the two scholars made their observations. Neither man was making a neutral statement in seeking to distinguish clearly between Greek and Slavic areas of cultural hegemony. Cvijić's work presented an academic Yugoslav perspective on the struggle for 'national consciousness' in Macedonia. This had begun with the recognition by the Ottoman administration of an independent Bulgarian Church, the Exarchate, in 1870, and was brought to the fore by the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin in 1878. At that time Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia advanced competing claims to the region, which was still part of the Ottoman empire, inspiring factionalism and insurrection within Macedonia, and seeking the support or sufferance of greater powers: Austria-Hungary, the Russian tsar, and the Porte. In 1893 an body later known as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) was formed, whose objective was to achieve autonomy for the region through mass uprising. In 1894 an alternative vision was put forward by the so-called Supreme Committee, which favoured incorporation of an autonomous Macedonia into Bulgaria. The proliferation of competing claims and visions for Macedonia led to an armed struggle, which culminated in the so-called 'Macedonian Struggle' of 1904–8. Greece was temporarily in the ascendant, but the Macedonian Question was not settled. In 1912 the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians allied successfully against the Ottomans in the First Balkan War, but the treaty of London (30 May 1913) which brought this to an end focused attention back on Macedonia. By the settlement Serbia and Greece received the largest parts of Macedonia; the Bulgarians demanded a larger share, to compensate for the loss of the southern Dobrudja (to Romania), and insisted that the issue be subjected to Russian arbitration. Serbian and Greek refusals led the Bulgarians to declare war on their recent allies (29 June 1913). However, the Second Balkan War was short-lived: the threat of Romanian mobilization forced the Bulgarians to sue for peace, and the treaties of Bucharest (10 August) and Constantinople (13 October) saw Bulgaria lose all but Pirin Macedonia and a portion of Thrace.²⁷

Cvijić's conception of Macedonia was elaborated in the context of the Macedonian Struggle and Balkan Wars. It was expressed most clearly in his short book *Remarques sur l'ethnographie de la Macédoine*, where he maintained that 'Macedonian' was an inexact concept, and therefore one which could not manifest itself in a 'national consciousness'. Slavophone Macedonians, he maintained, were not Bulgarians, as many foreign ethnographers mistakenly believed. Moreover, these foreigners were wrong to base their ethnographic maps on the professed 'nationality' of Macedonians (which in any case was misrepresented by false or inaccurate compilation of

census information). Cvijić was certain that the best way to determine the borders of Macedonia was to do so cartographically. He turned to a number of maps, dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, which showed the limits of Macedonia. They also showed clearly that the Slavic region of importance for determining the limits of Macedonia was not Bulgaria, but Old Serbia. The second edition of his *Remarques*, was published in 1907 with 'a map of Old Serbia', the frontiers of which ran some distance to the south of Skopje and Tetovo, leaving Veles as the northern limit of Greek Macedonia (see map 2).²⁸

Cvijić's research on the ethnography of Macedonia was incorporated into his most famous work, *La Péninsule balkanique*, which was revised for publication in 1917–18, during the final stages of the First World War and while Cvijić was teaching at the Sorbonne. It was published in Paris in 1918, months before the Paris Peace Conferences which opened in January 1919. And there Cvijić's opinions on the frontiers in Macedonia were, to a large extent, given international recognition in the Treaty of Neuilly, signed 27 November 1919. The provisions of the treaty, and the borders it established, were rejected utterly by the Bulgarian National Assembly, and subsequently in a concerted revisionist campaign by Bulgarian politicians, journalists and academics. A leading Bulgarian revisionist historian of the interwar period, Georgi Genov, put the case succinctly thus: 'The Treaty of Neuilly confirmed and enforced the injustice done to Bulgaria at Bucharest in 1913 [after the Second Balkan War]. Purely Bulgarian lands, [such] as Macedonia ... remained within the frontiers of our neighbours by right of conquest.'²⁹

I do not mean to disparage Cvijić, whose research, in particular *La Péninsule balkanique* had a profound impact on geographical and ethnographical thought and practice. It also influenced the emergence of the Annales school of historical thought. Cvijić was the first scholar to speak of a *mentalité* (*la mentalité balkanique*), four years before Lévy-Bruhl's *La Mentalité primitive* was published; and he laid the foundations for the geographical determinism of the second generation of Annalists, not least Braudel who made both implicit and explicit use of Cvijić.³⁰ However, 'Cvijić was a Serbian patriot and a Yugoslav visionary and could rightfully claim major credit for the intellectual labour that contributed to the new state of Yugoslavia'.³¹ His was not a neutral vision. He set out to identify a common, geographically-determined identity for the southern Slavs which specifically excluded the Bulgarians, and elaborated the difference between the Yugoslavs and the Greeks. His was a vision which required clear frontiers in Macedonia.

So much, then, for Cvijić's 'cultural' frontier between Greeks and Slavs,

which cannot be removed from the context in which it was formulated. But this is exactly what Ostrogorsky sought to do in 1957, when he commended Cvijić's frontiers to the assembled Byzantinists at Dumbarton Oaks (citing *La Péninsule balkanique* in a footnote). Ostrogorsky's opinions on Macedonia and the cultural limits of *Slavia Orthodoxa* had been formulated over long years in the Academy in Belgrade, where he had risen to be Professor of Byzantinology. Born in St. Petersburg, Ostrogorsky was educated in the interwar period in Heidelberg and Paris.³² In 1933 he arrived in Belgrade, capital of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Macedonia was then known as Southern Serbia, and comprised the administrative district of Vardarska. Subsequently, during the Second World War, Macedonia and Kosovo were partitioned between Bulgaria and Albania. Then, when in March 1945 the new federal Republic of Yugoslavia came into existence, Macedonia became a full republic. Immediately concerted efforts were made to establish the region's independent Slavic culture: independent, that is, of Greek and Bulgarian influences.

Ostrogorsky's principal concern was not, like Cvijić's, to establish a Yugoslav claim to northern Macedonia. Yet, his statement in 1957 was a rare and explicit reference to a desire which, I believe, underpinned much of his scholarship. The desire, and one in which he was quite justified, was to challenge the historiographical myth that Byzantine history was exclusively Greek history. This view of Byzantium, formulated so persuasively by the Greek national historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, had been accepted by many south Slav scholars, who were willing to regard Byzantium as a Greek power opposed to their own nascent nation states.³³ Ostrogorsky did not regard the history of Byzantium as the story only of Greek-speakers, nor did he consider the history of the Balkan Slavs to be merely a chronicle of resistance to Greek hegemony. He saw Slavic society and culture as both a product of, and contributor to, Byzantine society and culture. This is made plain in the first line of the preface to the first edition of his *Hauptwerk*, where he states: 'This book sets out to trace the development of the Byzantine state and to show how this was determined by the interaction of changing internal and external forces.'³⁴ Ostrogorsky considered the Slavs to be a, if not the, principal external force which shaped the Byzantine state. The fact that his political history, first published in 1940, has enduring value in its English, French and German translations proves that his vision of Byzantium was acceptable to an international community of scholars. It does not mean that Ostrogorsky's vision was neutral, nor could his conception of past frontiers but be affected by the political and intellectual climate in which he worked. Therefore, while we can

understand his sympathy for Cvijić's ideas, we cannot, I feel, allow Ostrogorsky's claim of 1957 to stand. There was, as we have seen, no fixed line between the Greek and Slavic spheres in Macedonia in the mid-ninth century.

Conclusion

The modern frontier between Greek Macedonia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a political frontier marked by customs and passport controls. It is also an official linguistic border, marking the point of transition between Greek- and Slavic-speaking nation states. However, and despite the massive, and not always peaceful, demographic changes of the early twentieth century, it is difficult to accept that there is a fixed linear linguistic frontier between Greek and Slavic speakers, still less a cultural frontier.

The Macedonian Struggle and Balkan Wars encouraged Greeks and Slavs to consider their differences, old and new. As modern political frontiers were redrawn, medieval cultural frontiers were constructed. Basil the Bulgar-Slayer re-emerged as a Greek cultural icon: he has twelve streets named after him in Athens alone, and his campaigns are the backdrop to the most popular of all Greek children's books, *In the Time of the Bulgar-Slayer* by Penelope Delta.³⁵ The Bulgarians, contrarily, raised Samuel's historical profile, placing him on a par with the great Tsar Symeon.³⁶ Today, Delta's book has been through dozens of printings, and Samuel has emerged as a cultural icon in the Republic of Macedonia. In Ohrid the main road through the centre of town is called Tsar Samuel, and the ruined fortress above the city has been rechristened 'Samuel's castle'. Nevertheless, the cultural frontier constructed between the Macedonian Slavs and the Macedonian Greeks is increasingly subject to scrutiny. An alternative vision of the region as a broad zone of transition is being advanced, and a common consciousness of being Balkan peoples is emerging on both sides of the political border. Academics and politicians have realized that this is the best way to offset the increasing influence and interference of external powers. It is my contention that compromise between Greeks and Slavs was the norm in medieval Macedonia; that this characterized relations between Byzantium and the *Sklaviniai* in the seventh to ninth centuries; and for a short period in the early eleventh century it may even have allowed for the recognition of an independent Slavic realm based in Macedonia. Over a longer period both cooperation and conflict between Greeks and Slavs allowed the development and refinement of distinct and distinctly Slavic and Greek Orthodox cultures. But these were and are not delimited by a linear border somewhere between Skopje and Thessalonica.

NOTES

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- 1 G. Ostrogorsky, 'Byzantium in the seventh century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959) 5–21, at 7. His reference is to J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule balkanique. Géographie humaine* (Paris 1918). Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, tr. J. Hussey (2nd edn., Oxford 1968) 93–4, 217–8, for authoritative statements on Byzantine relations with the Slavs in the seventh to ninth centuries.
- 2 I am grateful to Despina Christodoulou for sharing with me her conversations with the people of Florina, and her observations on the 'Macedonian Question'. She drew my attention to J. Koliopoulos, *Ληλασσία Φρονημάτων: το Μακεδονικό Ζήτημα στην κατεχόμενη δυτική Μακεδονία* (1941–44), 2 vols. (Thessaloniki 1994–1995). Koliopoulos, a Greek-speaking native of the region, makes no attempt to conceal the fact that there are Slavic speakers in Greece with a 'Macedonian ethnic consciousness' who have been treated poorly by the Greek authorities. The first volume of his study won the Academy of Athens prize in 1994, which to some extent reflects official acknowledgement of his conclusions. Sharply differing emphases in relation to the 'Macedonian Question' on the ground are to be found in L. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton 1995), rev. R. Clogg, *Dialogos* 6 (1999); and A. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood. Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago 1997). The best recent collection of studies is P. Mackridge and E. Yannakakis (eds), *Ourselves and Others. The Development of Greek Macedonian Identity since 1912* (Oxford 1997).
- 3 Danforth, *Macedonian Conflict*, 69–72; Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 141–52.
- 4 M. Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Birmingham 1997) 272, 274. I have addressed elsewhere this aspect of the Byzantine frontier in Macedonia: P. Stephenson, 'The Byzantine conception of otherness after the annexation of Bulgaria (1018)', in D. Smythe (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (Aldershot 2000) 245–57.
- 5 The issues are addressed at appropriate points throughout Danforth, *Macedonian Conflict*; and in two chapters by Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, 77–137. However, the most comprehensive study in English is N. Zahariades, 'Greek policy toward the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 1991–1995', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 14 (1996) 303–27.
- 6 A. Kazhdan et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1991), vol. 3, 1910–11; Cf. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London 1971) 83: 'Politically the *Sklaviniai* designated areas occupied by the Slavs over which Byzantium had lost all effective control but which had acquired no alternative form of central administration.'
- 7 P. Lemerle, *Les Plus Anciens Recueils des Miracles de S. Démétrius*, 2 vols. (Paris 1979) vol. 1 (*texte*) 130–65 (on the sieges), 169–79 (on tribes of Slavs); vol. 2 (*commentaire*) 219–34 (an excursus by I. Sorlin on *Sklaviniai*). See especially vol. 1, 187, for the statement 'après [le quatrième] miracle, une cohabitation helléno-sklavène existe ...'. For further observations on the 'cohabitation' see J. D. Howard-Johnston, 'Urban continuity in the Balkans in the early Middle Ages', in A. Poulter (ed.) *Ancient Bulgaria*, 2 vols. (Nottingham 1983) vol. 2, 242–51, at 244–6. For the archaeological evidence see V. Popović, 'Au origines de la slavisation des Balkans: la constitution des premières Sklavinies Macédoniennes vers la fin du VI^e siècle', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1980) 230–57.
- 8 *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, tr. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford 1997) lviii (date of

composition), 497–501, especially 499; cf. *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople Short History*, ed. and tr. C. Mango, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 13 (Washington, D.C. 1990) 90–1: ‘Furthermore [the Bulgars] subjugated the neighbouring Slavic peoples, some of which they directed to guard the area in the vicinity of the Avars and others to watch the lands bordering the Byzantines (τὰ πρὸς Ῥωμαίοις ἐγγίζοντα τηρεῖν).’

9 Theophanes Confessor, 507–8. We later learn, at 511, that in AM 6184 (AD 691/2) 30,000 of these transferred Slavs were formed into an army known as the ‘Peculiar People’. Cf. Nikephoros, 92–3, who conflates the two pieces of information.

10 Theophanes Confessor, 667. We cannot adduce from this alone that ‘The greater part of the Balkan peninsula, the whole interior, became completely a Slav country, and from now onwards is referred to in Byzantine sources as the region of “Scлавinia”’ (Ostrogorsky, *Byzantine State*, 94).

11 S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London 1930); Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* (see note 6); R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria. A comparative study across the early medieval frontier* (London 1975). The latest valuable contributions in English are J. Shepard, ‘Slavs and Bulgars’, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* II (Cambridge 1995) 228–48; J. Shepard, ‘Bulgaria: the other Balkan “empire”’, in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* III (Cambridge 1999) 567–85.

12 V. Beshevliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften* (Berlin 1963) 215–9.

13 *Actes de Lavra, première partie: des origines à 1204*, eds. P. Lemerle et al., *Archives de l’Athos* 5 (Paris 1970) 117, nr. 8.

14 *The Life of St Nikon*, ed. and tr. D. F. Sullivan (Brookline, MA 1987) 2–7 (for the date of composition, shortly after 1042), 141–2 (Basil Apokaukos), 149 (judgement on Samuel).

15 *Ioannis Skylitzes Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 5 (Berlin & New York 1973) 349. Henceforth Skylitzes.

16 Skylitzes, 343–4.

17 Runciman, *First Bulgarian Empire*, 240, maintains that Basil fought Samuel at a village called Kreta, somewhere in the vicinity of Thessalonica, in 1009. His claim is based on his reading of a sixteenth-century Latin translation of the *Life of St Nikon*, by one Sirmondo. This, in turn, is based on the version of the *vita* contained in the fifteenth-century Barberini Codex, which is unique in referring to an episode ‘en Krete’; there is no reference to this taking place ‘in anno 1009’, which Sirmondo has interpolated. Moreover, it has been convincingly demonstrated that ‘en Krete’ was a simple misreading. See the remarks by Sullivan, *Life of St Nikon*, 290, ‘with the date [1009] removed from consideration, it seems more likely that the passage is a reference to ... 1014 in a general panegyric of Basil as victor over the Bulgarians.’ Antoljak, *Samuel and his State*, 78–81, errs considerably further than Runciman in maintaining that Basil fought Samuel on the island of Crete in 1009, and even suggests Samuel had secured Arab naval assistance to transport his army!

18 For this last suggestion I am grateful to Catherine Holmes. Fuller explorations of Basil’s and Alexius’ campaigns are contained in P. Stephenson, *Byzantium’s Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge 2000).

19 *Histoire de Yahya-Ibn-Said d’Antioch*, fasc. 2, ed. and tr. I. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* 23/2 (Paris 1932) 461; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London 1996) 389, 423.

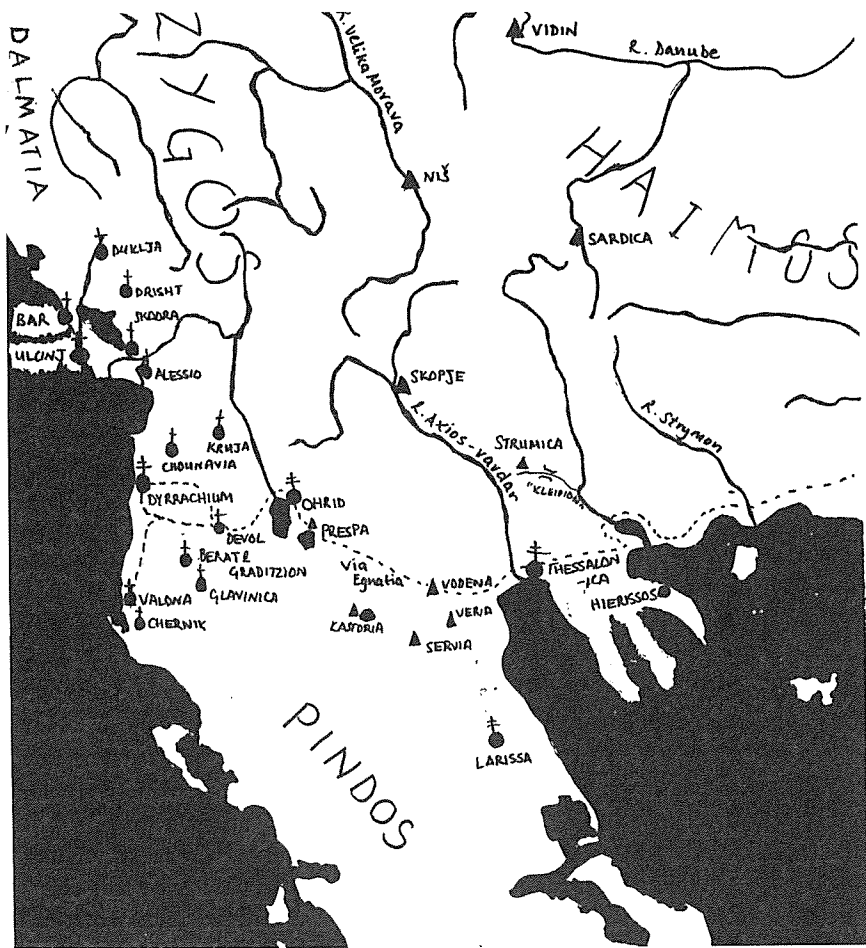
20 We cannot here address the debate as to the nature of the Slavic realm centred on Ohrid and Prespa. Suffice it to say, recent Yugoslavian, and now Slavic Macedonian scholarship maintains that Samuel’s realm was not Bulgarian. See for example, Antoljak, *Samuel and his State*, 32–7; and more recently J. Pavlovski & M. Pavlovski, *Macedonia Yesterday and Today – Makedonija večera i denes* (Skopje 1996) 81–5. The most recent account is S. Pirivitrić, *Samvilova Država, Obim i Karakter* (Belgrade 1997).

21 *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris 1981) 272, 286. This seventh extant notice is generally attributed to the patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas I Mystikos (AD 901–7, 912–25).

- 22 *Notitiae episcopatum*, 113–4, 330. The additional sees are recorded in two of the four recensions of *notitia* 10, being *a* (the oldest) and *c* (the most numerous). They are not recorded in recensions *b* and *d*. According to Darrouzès (*Notitiae episcopatum*, 117) contradictions between *ac* and *bd* are the most historically significant, and therefore one must choose which version is to be preferred. In coming to the choice presented here I have followed his advice that one must regard *a* as the ‘conservateur’ and the other recensions as ‘évolutif’.
- 23 *Notitiae episcopatum*, 103, 116–7, suggests in or after the later years of the tenth century, but sees no grounds to be more precise. The context for compilation suggested here would allow for greater precision.
- 24 *Notitiae episcopatum*, 110–11, 326–7, 339.
- 25 V. von Falkenhausen, ‘Bishops’, in G. Cavallo (ed.), *The Byzantines* (Chicago 1997) 172–96, at 173: ‘the organization of the ecclesiastical geography and hierarchy [was], almost inevitably, a reflection of secular organization’.
- 26 See now C. Holmes, ‘Basil II and the government of empire’ (unpublished D.Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford 1999); also B. Crostini, ‘The emperor Basil II’s cultural life’, *Byzantion* 66 (1996) 55–80. I am grateful to Jonathan Shepard for his vigorous criticism of my hypothesis which has obliged me to rethink and refine my position considerably.
- 27 Accessible outlines of this period are contained in R. Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge 1992) 47–99; R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge 1997) 120–48. Both provide maps of territorial changes after the Balkan Wars.
- 28 J. Cvijić, *Remarques sur l’ethnographie de la Macédoine. Deuxième édition augmentée d’une carte de la Vieille-Serbie* (Paris 1907). Cvijić clearly intended for his work to reach an international audience, since it was also published in English, German, Russian and Serbo-Croat. A Bulgarian riposte to his treatise was swiftly published by A. Ishirkov (Ichircoff), *Étude ethnographique sur les Slaves de Macédoine. Réponse à M. J. Zvjitch* (Paris 1908). This fascinating exchange regarding the mapping of Macedonia deserves a paper to itself. David Ricks has drawn my attention to a contemporary echo of Cvijić’s position on the common frontier between Serbia and Greece in Macedonia: since the early 1990s graffiti has appeared on Greek walls declaring ‘ΕΛΛΑΣ-ΣΕΡΒΙΑ ΚΟΙΝΑ ΣΥΝΟΡΑ’.
- 29 G. P. Genov, *Bulgaria and the Treaty of Neuilly* (Sofia 1935) 182–3. For a contemporary western perspective on the discussions see R. J. Kerner & H. N. Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente, 1930–1935* (Berkeley 1936) 18: ‘Bulgaria has smarted under the loss of ... Macedonia, and of territorial access to the Aegean Sea. Many Bulgarians, and especially Macedonians, have not ceased to complain ...’
- 30 F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols. (Paris 1949; 2nd edn. 1966). For references to Cvijić see F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, tr. S. Reynolds, 2 vols. (London 1972) vol. 1, 32, 56–8, 283; vol. 2, 724, 770–1, 776. The influence of both Cvijić and Braudel is apparent in Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, 19–63, which comprises a lengthy introduction to ‘the Geographical setting’.
- 31 P. M. Kitromilides, ‘“Balkan Mentality”: history, legend, imagination’, *Nations and Nationalism* 2 (1996) 163–91, at 167. This paper contains a fine and balanced overview of Cvijić’s contribution to Balkan scholarship and thought.
- 32 On Ostrogorsky’s life and works, see R. Syme, *Gedenkworte für Georg Ostrogorsky. Orden pour le merite für Wissenschaften und Künste. Reden und Gedenkworte, vierzehnter Band* (Heidelberg 1978). Also, at greater length, see the posthumous tributes by his Belgrade colleagues in *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 18 (1978) 269–85.
- 33 For a brief introduction to the contribution of Paparrigopoulos see now P. Kitromilides, ‘On the intellectual content of Greek nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea’, in D. Ricks and P. Magdalino (eds.), *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity* (Aldershot 1998) 25–33.

- 34 Ostrogorsky, *Byzantine State*, vii. For a list of his publications 1926-62 see *Mélanges Georges Ostrogorsky*, 2 vols. (= *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 8) (Belgrade 1963) vol.1, vii-xviii.
- 35 E. Petropoulos, 'Ἡ μετονομασία ὁδῶν καὶ πλᾶτειῶν' (Athens 1995) 70-1, 80; P. Delta, *Τὸν καιρὸ τοῦ Βουλγαροκτόνου* (Athens 1911). See now P. Mackridge, 'Στα Μυστικά του Βαλτου (1937) by P. S. Delta', *Dialogos* 7 (2000) 41-55.
- 36 V. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na prvoto b'lgarsko tsarstvo* [History of the First Bulgarian Empire] (Sofia 1927). Runciman, *First Bulgarian Empire*, draws heavily on Zlatarski throughout, but refers to Samuel (at 223) only as 'a Bulgarian rebel in the emperor's eyes'. Bulgarian claims to Samuel have been vehemently challenged by scholars in the Republic of Macedonia, inspiring remarkable Greek support. See D. Tashkovski, *The Macedonian Nation* (Skopje 1976) 46-56; N. Martis, *The Falsification of Macedonian History* (Athens 1983) 97.

MAP I
MACEDONIA BETWEEN BASIL I AND SAMUEL KOMETOPOULOS, c.1005



MAP 2
THE MEDIEVAL FRONTIER BETWEEN GREEKS
AND SLAVS IN MACEDONIA ACCORDING TO J. CVJIJIĆ,
Remarques sur l'ethnographie de la Macédoine. Deuxième édition augmentée
d'une carte de la Vieille-Serbie (Paris 1907)

