
II.1. THE FRONTIER BY THE WESTERN LOWER DANUBE (THE 13TH-18TH CENTURIES)

Confrontations between Hungary, the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria for the Belgrade–Vidin Border Region in the 9th-14th Centuries

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BORDERED BY two Roman cities that were among the first to be reborn as medieval fortifications (Singidunum-Belgrade and Bononia-Vidin), this sector of the Danube between the Tisza and the Timoc represented, by its very position, the territory of intersection between the spheres of influence exerted by the power centers south and north of the Danubian river. Over time, the actors changed, but the rapport between them remained the same. Control over the road along the Danube and over those along the Morava and the Timoc valleys was the reason why all the power centers formed in what is broadly designated as Pannonia engaged in confrontations with the states that owned this territory. We should recall the actions undertaken by the Huns and the Avars, in almost identical manner, in the years 441–448 and, respectively, 574–601.¹ We shall focus in more detail on the situation from the 9th century, which led to the expansion of Bulgarian domination in this region, where the dismantling of the Avar Khaganate had created a power vacuum. The expansion began in 818, when the so-called *Timociani* sought refuge in Pannonia, dominated by the Frankish Empire, because their country had been occupied by Bulgaria. In 824, a population known as the *Abodriti*, who lived near the Bulgarians, settled in Dacia close to the Danube, that is, in the Banat, where it was attacked by Bulgaria.² Then Omurtag (814–831) attacked the Frankish Empire in 827. Under the peace treaty of 832, the territories of the two powers were separated by a neutral zone between the Tisza and the Danube, and Bulgaria expanded to Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovitza), on the Sava.³ During the attack of 824, Belgrade was also conquered, where the area of the former Singidunum had meanwhile become inhabited again. The name of this town,

like the one from Transylvania that was also going to be dominated by Bulgaria, means "White City," and is explained by the custom of the Turkic populations to symbolize the West through this color.⁴ Like the whole area up to Vidin incorporated in 824, Belgrade remained under Bulgarian rule until this state was conquered by the Byzantine Empire. *The Life of Saint Clement* attests the presence of the Bulgarian commander Radislav in Belgrade. Following the establishment of the Bulgarian Church, a diocese was established there. A bishop, Sergios, was attested in 878. The Diocese of Moravon, mentioned in 879, was also in the territory conquered in 824. Moravon was named after a river that had been called Margum in antiquity and where the city of Margus had existed, which had also had a diocese (present-day Dubravica).⁵ As regards Vidin, although there is no data, it can be assumed that there had also existed a diocese since the early years of the Bulgarian Archdiocese, just like in Sirmium (where the ancient diocese was reactivated).⁶ In 971, the Byzantine army occupied Bulgaria only up to Iskar, but after 975 a short-lived strategy of the Morava was created, probably lasting until 986, when the Bulgarian state, revived under the leadership of Samuel, recovered most of the lost territory.⁷ The situation changed radically after the Byzantine army took the initiative through the great offensive of the year 1000 by the Lower Danube. In 1002 Vidin was also conquered,⁸ and thus began the first of the confrontations analyzed in this study.

The aim of the war waged by Stephen I against Ahtum in around the year 1002 was to take over control of the salt traffic in the Mureş valley, but it was part of a wider conflict, in which the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria were also involved. In 997, Samuel and the Duke of the Hungarians, Vajk (later King Stephen I), became enemies, and since Ahtum had been baptized at Vidin, it was natural that he should have allied himself with the Tsar of Bulgaria. Two coalitions were thus formed: Bulgaria and the Banat duchy against Hungary and the Byzantine Empire; the objective of this conflict was domination over the riparian region between Belgrade and Vidin.⁹ The conquest of Vidin by the Byzantine army was perhaps the factor that triggered the other offensive, launched by Stephen I. Bulgaria, however, kept the region between Belgrade and Sirmium until 1018-1019.¹⁰ Only after 1019, can one speak of the expansion of the Byzantine administration (*thema Sirmium*) into the region that was now bordering the young kingdom of Hungary. Simultaneously, the new ecclesiastical organization of the Archdiocese of Ohrid was introduced, covering this area too through three dioceses taken from the Bulgarian Church: Belgrade, Branicevo and Vidin.¹¹ During the first decades of Byzantine domination, Branicevo began to develop near Moravon, becoming the most important center between Belgrade and Vidin. Dibiskos was among the parishes included in the Diocese of Branicevo: it could only have been located at Cuvin, which then functioned as a Byzantine bridgehead.¹² Stephen I had fought alongside Basil II against Samuel, but after the consolidation of the Byzantine administration by the Danube, Hungary began to consider itself at threat. It is very possible that the rebellion of Peter Delian, who tried to liberate Bulgaria, was supported by Hungary (he claimed to be the son of former Tsar Gabriel Radomir and Stephen I's sister). The rebellion of 1040 began in Belgrade.¹³ Not long afterwards, the intentions of Hungary became evident: the occupation of Belgrade, as a first step towards gaining control over this sector of the Danube which stretched up to Vidin. This policy was constantly followed until the 14th century, when the states from the south (the Byzantine Empire, and then Bulgaria again) went through periods of weakness.

In 1059 Hungary launched its first attack on Belgrade, but shortly after that the army of Isaac I Comnenus retrieved the town.¹⁴ Belgrade and Sirmium were nonetheless conquered by Hungary in 1071, in a war launched to punish the Byzantine commander of the fortress, Duke Niketas, who had urged the Pechenegs to attack Hungary.¹⁵ The victory of King Solomon (1063–1074) was facilitated by the difficult situation of the Byzantine Empire after its defeat from Mantzikert in the war against the Seljuk Turks. The Theme of Sirmium disappeared in 1071 and the area east of Belgrade became part of the Theme of Bulgaria, which expanded northwards. This explains the discovery of the seal belonging to Nikephor Batatzes, one of the dukes of this theme, at Moravon, dated after 1075.¹⁶ The region between the Sava and the Danube was then ceded by Michael VII to Geza, in 1075, so that he would secure an ally and save at least the region east of Belgrade, which remained under Byzantine rule nearly until the collapse of the empire in 1204.¹⁷ In 1096, when the Crusaders entered the empire through Belgrade, Niketas Karykes, the commander of the Theme of Bulgaria, was there. By that time, the Theme of Bulgaria had been divided into two smaller provinces, with the residences at Skopion and Belgrade. Later, sometime between 1096 and 1114, the residence of this theme, which included the towns of Belgrade, Moravon and Branicevo (each controlled by a strategist), was moved towards the interior, to Niš.¹⁸

The next stage in the history of clashes for dominance in the Belgrade-Vidin region was represented by the wars between the Byzantine Empire and Hungary between 1127 and 1167. In the war launched by King Stephen II (1116–1131) in 1127 as a reprisal against the granting of asylum to the contender Almos in the empire, the Hungarian army took the fortress of Branicevo and then advanced along the Niš-Sofia-Philippopolis route. The counteroffensive of the Byzantine army from the spring of 1128 led to the retrieval not only of Branicevo but also of the region between the Danube and the Sava that had been abandoned in 1071. The fleet landed troops on the bridgeheads from Haram (before the fortress of Branicevo) and Zemun (before Belgrade). During the next campaign of 1129, Stephen II's army, supported by the vassals from Bohemia and by the Grand Zupan of Serbia Uroš I (cca 1125–cca 1145), managed to reconquer Branicevo. The fortress was again recaptured by the Byzantine army in the same year; the victory was acknowledged through the treaty concluded in October 1129.¹⁹ The war of 1127–1129 had a defensive character for the Byzantine Empire, since its objective was to maintain its position at Branicevo. The following confrontations in the region were nonetheless subsumed under a vaster strategic plan, conceived by Manuel I Comnenus with a view to restoring the empire as it had been during the time of Basil II. According to this plan, Hungary was to become a buffer state between his empire and that of Frederick I, and the wars waged against Hungary between 1149 and 1167 had a clearly offensive character. In the first conflict from 1149–1150, after the repression of the Serbs' rebellion, which had been fuelled by Hungary, the Byzantine fleet advanced on the Danube to Belgrade, concurrently with an offensive of the land forces. An army corps occupied the region between the Danube and the Sava up to Sirmium, another besieged Zemun, and another entered the valley of the Timiš. The Byzantine forces retreated, however, when the bulk of the Hungarian army returned from Halych. After a new attack on the cities of Belgrade and Branicevo in 1154, these were consolidated and expanded, and Zemun was conquered in the war of 1167, which led to the restoration of Byzantine power not only on the Middle Danube, but also in Dalmatia and Croatia.²⁰

The Byzantine hegemony ceased, however, after Manuel's death (1180). Pretending to fight against the usurper Andronicus, Bela III attacked the empire in 1182–1183 and conquered a region that stretched from Sirmium in Sofia. In this war, Bela III received help from the Grand Zupan Stephen Nemanja (1167–1196), in whose time Serbia's expansion into the dependent territories of the Byzantine Empire began. The Serbs occupied the town of Niš in 1183, during the campaign of Bela III, and continued their attacks against the Byzantine Empire until 1185 or even 1187. The region occupied by Hungary was then returned as the dowry of Princess Margaret (the daughter of Bela III, called Maria by the Byzantines), who married Isaac II Angelos in February 1186 (Bela III's rights over Dalmatia and Sirmium were nonetheless recognized).²¹ Stephen Nemanja reconquered the region between Branicevo and Niš in 1190, acting concurrently with his ally Peter, Tsar of the Romanians and the Bulgarians. Isaac II's army launched a counter-offensive at the end 1190 or at the beginning of the next year. The Serbs were defeated in a battle somewhere in the valley of the Morava River and the Byzantine army advanced to Belgrade. The peace that was concluded in 1191 was tantamount, in fact, with the recognition of the state of Serbia by Isaac II. One of the sons of Stephen Nemanja, also called Stephen, married a granddaughter of the emperor, Eudocia. The Byzantine Empire regained control over the road along the Morava valley, which included the towns of Niš and Branicevo. The area between Branicevo and Belgrade also stayed under Byzantine authority. Thus the Romanian-Bulgarian Tsarate lost contact with Serbia. The victory won by Isaac II in the Morava valley put an end to the coalition between the two rebel countries, which had begun in 1189.²² Bela III took advantage of Serbia's defeat and also launched an attack in the winter between 1192 and 1193, occupying an area south of Branicevo. He relinquished it at the request of Pope Celestine III (1191–1198) and Isaac II. The emperor reacted because he was now allied with Stephen Nemanja, to whom he gave assistance. The latter denounced Bela III for having broken the oath that he would not act against his empire or against Serbia, a country considered to be its tributary.²³

The region between Belgrade and Branicevo was, at least until the end of 1198, under Byzantine authority, as evinced by the privilege granted to the Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo by Alexios III in November 1198. Besides Niš (*provincia Nisi*), Branicevo (*Uranisoue*)²⁴ is also mentioned among the regions of the empire where the Venetian merchants enjoyed privileges. Shortly afterwards, Branicevo was conquered by Ioniță. This is known because in 1202, a bishop Blasius existed in Branicevo, subordinated to the Archbishop of Tarnovo.²⁵ In a letter he addressed to Innocent III in December 1199, Ioniță hinted at the recent expansion of his state,²⁶ which could only be the region between Branicevo and Vidin. Thus, the occupation of Branicevo can be dated exactly in the spring or summer of 1199. The dispute between Bulgaria and Hungary over the Belgrade-Vidin region was also reopened thus. On the other hand, Serbia occupied the town Niš again when Bulgaria attacked the Byzantine territory in 1199. After the abdication of Stefan Nemanja, this part of Serbia, Raška, was ruled by the younger son, Stephen, who was attacked in 1202 by his brother Vukan of Montenegro. Vukan had the ambition to become sole ruler, and was supported by both King Emeric of Hungary (1196–1204) and Rome, since he had converted to Catholicism. The Hungarian army entered Serbia and imposed Vukan as grand zupan, while the King of Hungary also assumed the title of King of Rascia (Serbia). Ioniță took advantage of this internal war, conquering Niš with the surround-

ing region, which had come under the rule of Vukan. After concluding the peace treaty with Alexios III (who was also hostile to Hungary) in the spring of 1202, Ioniță had freedom of movement in the north. King Emeric took a Cuman attack against Hungary from the autumn of 1202 as a pretext for waging war, together with Vukan, against Ioniță in the summer of 1203. What the King of Hungary wanted was to win back the territory that had been conquered by his father, Bela III, in 1183 and then ceded as Margaret's dowry. Hungary occupied the area between Belgrade, Branicevo and Niš, relinquishing the last city in Vukan's favor, as a reward for his role in the alliance.²⁷

At the end of 1203 or the beginning of 1204, Ioniță sent a message to the pope, showing that Hungary had occupied five dioceses that rightfully belonged to his empire. Four of them were, of course, Branicevo, Niš, Belgrade and Sirmium, while the fifth might have been Vidin, which means that the Hungarian army had occupied this town too in 1203. Ioniță requested Innocent III to mediate the conflict with Hungary:

*Et de confinio Hungarie, Bulgarie et Blachie relinquo iudicio sanctitatis tue, ut diriges negotium istud recte et iuste, ut non habeat peccatum anima sanctitatis tue, et ita habeat imperium meum iusticias Bulgarie et Blachie, quod Rex Hungarie habeat iusticias Hungarie, et cessent occisiones Christianorum in me et ipsum. Sciat autem sanctitas tua, quoniam v. episcopatus Bulgarie pertinent ad imperium meum, quos invasit et detinet Rex Hungarie cum iusticiis ecclesiarum, et episcopatus ipsi sunt annichilati: et si iustum est, hoc fiat.*²⁸

The pope recognized Ioniță's rights over the territory in dispute:

*Duo fratres, Petrus videlicet et Ioannitus, de priorum regum prosapia descendentes, terram patrum suorum non tam occupare, quam recuperare cuperunt, ita quod una die de magnis principibus et innumeris populis mirabilem sunt victoriam consecuti. Non ergo negamus, quin forsan aliquam partem terre violenter invaserint, sed constanter asserimus, quod plurimam terre partem de iure recuperavere paterno. Unde nos eum non super alienam terram, sed super propriam ad instar predecessorum nostrorum regem intendimus coronare, volentes ut et ipse terram restituat iniuste detentam, et terra iniuste detenta, restituatur eidem, cum ipse postulaverit hoc a nobis, ut de terris invasis faciamus inter te et ipsum utrique parti iustitiam exhiberi.*²⁹

After several months, the Romanian-Bulgarian state recuperated the Vidin-Branicevo region in unknown circumstances, since it is known that in the spring of 1204 the Danube was once again the border between the two states.³⁰

Having asserted its hegemonic power in the Balkan Peninsula, the second Bulgarian Tsarate also strengthened thus its Danubian frontier. However, shortly after Ioniță's death, the region west of Vidin became a target for Hungary's expansion again. The next tsar, Boril, who had actually usurped power in 1207, conducted a policy of rapprochement towards Hungary, which helped him suppress the uprising from Vidin in 1211. In 1213, Boril gave his daughter in marriage to Prince Bela, and her dowry was the territory between Belgrade and Branicevo. Thus, King Andrew II regained by peaceful means Maria's ancient dowry, for which Ioniță and Emeric had vied. It has also been assumed that

the Belgrade-Branicevo region was ceded by Boril as a reward for the help he had received in 1211, but it seems more likely that Boril had acted thus in order to reconstitute the dowry of Margaret, who was the sister of King Andrew II. The territory then returned into the possession of Bulgaria in 1221, when John Asen II married another Maria, the daughter of Andrew II.³¹ The relations between Hungary and Bulgaria deteriorated in 1228, when an unsuccessful expedition against Vidin took place. Viorel Achim, who has drawn attention to this event, suggests that Andrew II reacted thus in order to counter Bulgaria's hegemonic position in relation to the Latin Empire. What was also at stake was the two countries' competition for dominance in Cumania. Having reached its apogee after the victory from Klokotnitsa over the Greek Empire of Thessaloniki (9 March 1230), Bulgaria became a threat both to the Latin Empire of Constantinople and to Hungary. That is why Pope Gregory IX himself encouraged Andrew II to wage war against John Asen II, which he did in 1232, when Hungary regained the region between Belgrade and Vidin (close to the whereabouts of this town, which remained in the composition of Bulgaria). Shortly afterwards, however, Bulgaria reoccupied the territory lost in 1232. On the opposite bank, one of Hungary's banats was immediately organized and named after the fortress of Severin, which had been previously held by Bulgaria as a bridgehead. Like in the case of the projected future implantation of the Knights of St. John, one of its missions was to continue the fight against Bulgaria. Relaunching confrontations for the Belgrade-Vidin area was possible only after Bulgaria was severely affected by the Tatar invasion, a moment which coincided with the decline of the Asen dynasty. In 1254 Hungary conquered the Belgrade-Branicevo area again (granted to Rostislav, Bela IV's son-in-law); in the next stage, this expansionary policy manifested through its interference in the struggles for power from Bulgaria, including by encouraging the secession of Vidin (1256–1266). Since these issues are dealt with at length by Viorel Achim in his monograph, we shall not insist on them. What should be stressed is that in 1266 the authority of Tarnovo as a power center of this region was definitively lost. After this moment, the confrontation would be waged only between Hungary and the center of power from Vidin.³²

The last stage of the confrontation began through the reconquest of the Branicevo region by two Bulgarian boyars of Cuman origin, Dărman and Kudelin (1273–1291), who were subjects of the Tatars, as was the ruler of Vidin, Şişman. The Tatar Khanate took the place of the Tsarate from Tarnovo as the hegemon of the region through these intermediaries. While the Principality of Branicevo of the two Cumans was an ephemeral formation (taken over, together with Belgrade, in 1291 by Dragutin, who had also become a protégé of Khan Nogai), the Tsarate of Vidin became the new center of power that imperiled the Hungarian domination in the area, which had been obtained with such difficulty in the battles between 1183 and 1266. Under the Tatar umbrella, the new power centers—Serbian, at Belgrade, and Bulgarian, at Vidin—restored the hegemony of the south over the region, though in a different manner than in the period ending in 1266. Hungary's reaction was delayed by two decades after the Golden Horde had begun to decline (1345): the 1365 war against the Tsarate of Vidin was the final expression of the policy of expansion towards the south-east (occupying the fortress and establishing the Banat of Bulgaria).³³ Hungary's Balkan ambitions came to an end - together with their subject, Bulgaria - when the Ottoman conquests turned the Danube again into a stable

imperial frontier, following the Roman and Byzantine models. Another historical stage, which was to be completed through the conquest of Belgrade in 1521, had begun.

Translated into English by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBELY

Notes

1. A. Madgearu, *Istoria militană a Daciei post-romane*, 275–614 (Târgoviște, 2011), 124–128, 200–210, 217–224.
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3. A. Schwarcz, *Pannonien im 9. Jahrhundert und die Anfänge der direkten Beziehungen zwischen dem Ostfränkischen Reich und den Bulgaren*, in W. Pohl, H. Reimitz (ed.), *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter [=Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 287]* (Wien, 2000), 99–104.
4. O. Pritsak, “Orientierung und Farbsymbolik,” *Saeculum. Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte* 5 (München, 1954): 4, 377.
5. Madgearu, *Istoria militană*, 124. The fortified settlement that covers about 10 ha is partially destroyed and only recently has it been accurately located. V. Ivanišević, I. Bugarski, “Application of LiDAR Technology in Analyses of the Topography of Margum/Morava and Kulic,” *Starinar* 62 (2012): 239–255.
6. V. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte* (Amsterdam, 1981), 352; A. Kuzev, “Bemerkungen über einige Bistümer in Bulgarien während der ersten Jahrzehnte nach 870,” in *Symposium Methodianum. Beiträge der Internationalen Tagung in Regensburg (17. bis 24. April 1985) zum Gedenken an den 1100. Todestag des hl. Method*, ed. K. Trost, E. Völkl, E. Wedel (Neuried, 1988), 187–192.
7. A. Madgearu, *Organizarea militană bizantină la Dunăre în secolele X–XII* (Târgoviște, 2007), 29, 34–35, 38.
8. G. Nikolov, “The Bulgarian aristocracy in the war against the Byzantine Empire (971–1019),” in G. Prinzing, M. Salamon, P. Stephenson (ed.), *Byzantium and East Central Europe. Papers of a Symposium, Cracow, 24–26 September 2000* (Cracow, 2001), 151.
9. A. Madgearu, *The Romanians in the Anonymous Gesta Hungarorum. Truth and Fiction* (Cluj-Napoca, 2005), 34–35.
10. Nikolov, *The Bulgarian*, 149–150.
11. H. Gelzer, “Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistümerverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche (II),” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 2, 1 (1893): 52–53, 55.
12. A. Madgearu, “The Church Organization at the Lower Danube, between 971 and 1020,” in *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines* IV (Iași, 2001): 80–83.
13. E. Révész, “Petăr Deljan, ein bulgarisch-ungarischer Dux,” in *Bulgarskijat ezik i literatura na krăstoptija na kulturite. Mezdunarodna konferencija. Seged, Ungarija, 21–22 mai 2007* (Szeged, 2009), 82–90.
14. T. Wasilewski, “Le thème byzantin de Sirmium-Serbie au XIe et XIIe siècles,” *Zbornik Rada Vizantoloskog Instituta* 8, 2 (1964): 478–479; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars* (Budapest, 1970), 62–63.
15. Wasilewski, *Le thème byzantin*, 480–481; Moravcsik, *Byzantium*, 64–65; F. Makk, “Les relations hungaro-byzantines aux Xe–XIIe siècles,” in *Études historiques hongroises 1990, publiées à l'occasion du XVIIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques par le Comité National des*

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 17. Moravcsik, *Byzantium*, 65–69; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000), 141, 188–193; J. C. Cheynet, “L'Empire byzantin et la Hongrie dans la seconde moitié du XIe siècle,” *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43 (2002): 7–11.
 18. Madgearu, *Organizarea militară*, 83–84.
 19. A. Urbansky, *Byzantium and the Danube frontier. A Study of the Relations between Byzantium, Hungary and the Balkans during the Period of the Comneni* (New York, 1968), 45–46; Z. Kosztolnyik, *From Coloman the Learned to Béla III (1095–1196). Hungarian Domestic Policies and their Impact upon Foreign Affairs* [=East European Monographs, 220] (Boulder, 1987), 88–90; F. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni. Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th Century* (Budapest, 1989), 24–27; J. V. A. Fine Jr., *The Early Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 234–235; Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 207–209; F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250* (Cambridge, 2006), 328–329; R. Kostova, “The Lower Danube in the Byzantine Naval Campaigns in the 12th C.,” *Cultura și civilizație la Dunărea de Jos* 24 (2008): 270.
 20. Urbansky, *Byzantium*, 48–49, 52, 71–77, 80–85, 93–103; Moravcsik, *Byzantium*, 80–88; Kosztolnyik, *From Coloman*, 146–150, 185, 187; Makk, *The Árpáds*, 48–56, 60–62, 85–92, 99–100; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge), 54–58, 79–83; Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 225–226, 230–234, 241–260; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, 329–333; Kostova, *The Lower Danube*, 271–273.
 21. R. Guillard, “Byzance et les Balkans, sous le règne d'Isaac II Ange (1185–1195),” *Actes du XIIe Congrès International d'Études Byzantines (Ochrida, 10–16 septembre 1961)* XII, 2 (1964): 125; Urbansky, *Byzantium*, 109–111, 122; Moravcsik, *Byzantium*, 89–93; Kosztolnyik, *From Coloman*, 181, 186, 207–209; Makk, *The Árpáds*, 86–88, 97–98, 106–108, 115–120; J. V. A. Fine Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans: a Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 6–10; Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 277–284; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, 334–335.
 22. V. Laurent, “La Serbie entre Byzance et la Hongrie, à la veille de la quatrième croisade,” *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen* 18 (1941): 119, 122; Guillard, “Byzance,” 135–136; Makk, *The Árpáds*, 123; Fine Jr., *The Late Medieval*, 25–26; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*, 301; L. Maksimović, “La Serbie et le contrées voisines avant et après la IV^e croisade,” in A. Laiou, ed., *Urbs capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences/La IV^e croisade et ses conséquences* [=Réalités byzantines, 10] (Paris, 2005), 272; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, 335.
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28. Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 30–31 (doc. XXI); Wolff, "The Second Bulgarian Empire," 196; Tăutu, "Devotamentul," 205.
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Abstract

Confrontations between Hungary, the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria for the Belgrade-Vidin Border Region in the 9th-14th Centuries

The battle for control over the Danube sector between Belgrade and Vidin and over the Morava and the Timoc valleys was a constant of medieval history, because those were the points of intersection between the spheres of influence exerted by the power centers south and north of the great river. The battle was fought between centers of power that changed over time, but the reports between them were similar. The beginning was marked by the confrontation between the first Bulgarian Tsarate and the Frankish state. In the 11th–14th centuries, the stages of this confrontation were: 1—between the Tsarate of Samuel, Hungary and the Byzantine Empire; 2—between Hungary and the Byzantine Empire; 3—between Hungary and the Romanian-Bulgarian Tsarate; 4—the extension of Tatar hegemony over the centers of power from Belgrade and Vidin.

Keywords

Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Danube, frontier, Belgrade, Vidin, Branicevo, the Banat of Severin