

## CHAPTER 3

# The First Half of the Thirteenth Century

### Theodore of Epirus' First Decade, 1215–24

Michael of Epirus, as we saw in the last chapter, was murdered in late 1214 or early 1215. His murderer was a servant; whether he was hired to do the act and, if so, by whom is not known. Michael was succeeded by his half-brother Theodore. Theodore immediately exiled Michael's son Michael, to secure his own authority, and then set about expanding his state. As we shall see, Theodore rapidly doubled the size of Epirus and came to consider himself the heir to the Byzantine Empire. This posture sharpened the rivalry between Epirus and Nicea, for clearly they could not both regain Constantinople and re-establish the empire. The rivalry was exacerbated still more by the increasing weakness of the Latin Empire; particularly after Emperor Henry's death in 1216, its collapse must have seemed only a matter of time. And owing to Theodore's territorial expansion Epirus' borders moved ever nearer to Constantinople, making the possibility of Epirus' achieving this goal ever more likely and thus an ever increasing worry for Nicea. Yet though Theodore was a great military planner and commander, he was a fairly poor administrator and did not consolidate his conquests well or administratively integrate them into his state. Instead he was ever pushing on for further conquests.

Because his goal was Constantinople, Theodore willingly gave up Michael's idea of northern expansion into Zeta and made peace with the Serbs. To seal this peace, Theodore married Grand župan Stefan's sister. Though relinquishing Skadar and whatever other northern Albanian-Zetan territory Michael may have occupied, Theodore retained possession of the southern-central Albanian lands including Durazzo. Theodore worked diligently to assure himself of the loyalty and support of various Albanian chieftains.

Durazzo and Theodore's position in Albania were threatened almost immediately. As noted, Emperor Henry died in 1216 without an heir. The barons elected as his successor his brother-in-law Peter of Courtenay. Peter was crowned by the pope in Rome. He then had to travel east to assume control of his domain. Since the Venetians had recently lost Durazzo to

Epirus, they sought Peter's help to recover it. He agreed, deciding to land in Durazzo, recover the city, and then march overland to Constantinople, his capital. Scholars have long believed that Theodore's defenses held out, causing Peter's attack in 1217 on Durazzo to fail. Ducellier, however, following three Western chronicles, argues that Peter was successful and, having taken the city, received submission from Theodore and then, presumably leaving a garrison to hold Durazzo, proceeded to follow his original plan and march overland across Albania, Macedonia, and Thrace to Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> In either case, Peter left Durazzo and proceeded east overland. Not surprisingly, Theodore ambushed and captured him. For our purposes, it is not important which version is correct; for if Theodore had lost Durazzo to Peter, he quickly regained it after Peter was eliminated from the scene. Peter was subsequently executed by Theodore.

For a long time, however, Peter's fate remained a mystery; thus the administrators of the Latin Empire had to await confirmation of his death before they could elect a new emperor. At first they created a regency under Henry's sister and Peter's widow, Yolande, who had reached Constantinople safely by sea in 1217; soon after her arrival she gave birth to a son, Baldwin (II). Her regency continued until her death in 1219. Needing an adult to rule, the barons then turned the empire over to Yolande's elder son, Robert of Courtenay, who came to Constantinople and was crowned emperor in 1221.

Meanwhile, having secured himself in Epirus, Theodore pressed into Macedonia and quickly overran most of it. By the summer of 1215 he possessed Prosek and by 1216 Ohrid, where in 1216 or 1217 he installed Demetrius Chomatianus, one of his leading supporters, as archbishop. Demetrius, as we saw in the last chapter, had previously served as chancellor to that archbishopric. By 1217 Theodore held Prilep. These documented dates merely show Theodore to be in possession but do not necessarily reflect the order of conquest; for it is likely that he started in the west, gained Ohrid, and then moved straight across Macedonia through Prilep to Prosek. If such was the case, then (to the degree that Macedonia had not already been acquired by Michael in the second half of 1214 after Strez's demise) he acquired all this territory in 1215, when he is found holding Prosek. To what extent Theodore's conquests involved warfare with Boril's Bulgaria depends on the extent, if any, to which Boril had been able to recover Strez's territory. And as noted in the last chapter, some scholars believe Boril had been very successful in acquiring most of it, while others argue that Boril got little or nothing and believe Michael of Epirus had obtained the lion's share of it while the barons of Thessaloniki, taking some of Strez's eastern lands, had taken the rest. In any case, regardless of how much credit Michael and Theodore respectively should receive for these conquests, by 1217 Theodore was in possession of Macedonia at least as far east as the Vardar if not beyond it to the Struma.

As Theodore expanded toward the Struma he threatened the holdings of Alexius Slav in the vicinity of Melnik, stretching into the Rhodopes. Alexius

had become isolated first when his wife, Henry's illegitimate daughter, had died and then further in 1213 when Henry allied himself with Boril, Alexius' major enemy. Needing support and finding Theodore threatening his lands from the west, Alexius realized he needed either to make peace with Boril to guarantee his borders from Theodore's expansion or else to seek an alliance with Theodore to prop himself up against Boril. If Theodore was then at war with Boril over Strez's former Macedonian holdings, as seems likely, then an alliance with Alexius would have proved useful to Theodore. Thus in 1216 Theodore concluded a treaty with Alexius, who married the niece of Theodore's wife.

Theodore, in the meantime, having obtained Macedonia, pressed into Thessaly and, over the next five or so years, conquered it all. In Thessaly he assigned pronoias to various Greeks of aristocratic families. At the same time he reduced most of the fortresses in the vicinity of Thessaloniki. Thus by about 1220 Theodore held all Greece west of the Pindus Mountains together with southern Albania, Macedonia, and Thessaly except for Thessaloniki itself, which, after Theodore's capture of Serres in 1221, had become more or less an island in the midst of Theodore's possessions. This city, all that was left of Boniface's once relatively strong kingdom, now held out under an ineffective regency for the little Demetrius headed by his mother, Boniface's widow.

Thus it seemed only a matter of time before Theodore would obtain Thessaloniki. There was no power able to come to the city's relief and Theodore faced no serious enemy on any of his borders. The Duchy of Athens, bordering him in Thessaly, was taking care not to provoke Theodore into attacking it; Asen, a novice ruler, was still trying to assert himself over his central lands; and Serbia enjoyed good relations with Theodore. By this time a serious Church dispute had erupted between Serbia and the Archbishop of Ohrid. But, as we shall see, though Serbia's policy incensed Theodore's leading bishop Demetrius Chomatianus, it did not affect Theodore's policy of maintaining cordial political relations with Serbia. For his eastern goals necessitated his maintaining a peaceful border with Serbia to prevent it from attacking him in the rear when he was involved in the east. Thus in 1219 or 1220, in the midst of the Church quarrel, to be described shortly, Theodore's daughter married Stefan's son Radoslav.

### **Quarrel between the Churches of Epirus and Nicea**

In these years the Greek Church found itself in a complex situation. Since the Latin Empire would not allow the election of a Greek Patriarch of Constantinople and permitted the existence only of its own Latin patriarch in that city, the Greeks of Nicea in 1208 had convoked a council and created a new Ecumenical Patriarch (the title of their former Patriarch of Constantinople) who established his residence in Nicea. This new patriarch then crowned Theodore Lascaris emperor. As noted, the manner in which this patriarch was

created—by the convocation of a synod of bishops who happened to be present rather than by a body properly constituted according to Church canons—gave a basis for any opponent of the new patriarch or of Nicea to reject his claims to patriarchal status and also to reject the validity of the coronation he performed for Theodore Lascaris and therefore the legitimacy of Theodore's title. Nicea argued that both expediency and the critical situation faced by the Greek Church, as it fought to preserve Orthodoxy against the serious Latin threat to it, justified a very loose interpretation of canons. If the Greeks wanted to preserve their Church hierarchy, some action had to be taken, and it was impossible to take action if the letter of the law had to be followed.

Meanwhile in Epirus, it became necessary to replace bishops as they died. Furthermore, as Theodore expanded into territory that had been under the Latins, he expelled those Latin bishops he found in office. So, when the former Greek bishops were not available to be restored to office, new Greek bishops had to be appointed. In 1213 a regular standing synod of Epirote bishops had been created to carry out this task, in that year appointing new bishops for Durazzo and Larissa. Soon two such synods existed for western Greece, one for the south centered in Naupaktos and one for the north centered in Ohrid. And since Archbishop Demetrius of Ohrid was younger, abler, more ambitious, and more wholehearted in his loyalty to Theodore's political aims, Theodore turned more and more to Demetrius, who with his synod soon obtained greater influence than did John Apocaucus, Metropolitan of Naupaktos and his synod.

In view of his own ambitions to regain Constantinople and become emperor, it is not surprising that Theodore did not want to recognize Lascaris' title. He had a sound basis for refusal if he rejected the legality of the 1208 events. At the same time Theodore's leading bishop, Demetrius, was ambitious as well. An excellent and serious canonist, he probably really did harbor doubts about the legality of the 1208 synod at Nicea. Furthermore, it was in the interest of his own authority to reject that synod. For if the Epirotes recognized the legality of the 1208 synod and the patriarch's claims, they would have to recognize that patriarch's actions—which would have meant recognizing Lascaris as emperor. Furthermore, if they recognized the legitimacy of the Nicean patriarch, they would also have to concede him the right to appoint bishops in Epirus, which could lead to the appointment of pro-Lascaris bishops there.

Thus Demetrius argued that Epirus should have ecclesiastical autonomy: namely, the right to administer Church affairs for its territorial state. Nicea, of course, argued that despite state boundaries the Ecumenical Patriarch should have jurisdiction over the whole Greek Church; things eternal should not be governed by a temporary secular situation. Demetrius' party might admit the principle stated, but would deny that the bishop in Nicea was really the Ecumenical Patriarch. In 1213, Michael of Epirus, who had not entered into the theoretical issue, had sought recognition from the patriarch for his two new bishops of Larissa and Durazzo appointed by the newly created Epirote

synod out of the practical need to fill vacant sees. Already worried about principles and precedents, the Nicean patriarch had simply ignored his request. Under Theodore the Epirote synods continued to fill an increasing number of ecclesiastical vacancies with their own appointees. It seems they ceased informing or seeking confirmation from Nicea for these. Nicea began to protest, claiming the right to appoint or at least confirm episcopal appointees. And Nicea now began to appoint men to fill the Epirote sees, whom the Epirotes refused to accept, claiming, plausibly enough, that Nicea did not understand enough about local conditions to intervene in Epirote Church affairs. Thus frequently—as in the cases just cited—the reasons given by Epirus for refusing to accept Nicea's appointees remained practical rather than canonical-theoretical.

However, regardless of the nature of Epirote objections, Nicea's patriarch, Manuel I Sarantenos (1215–22), convinced of his right as patriarch to exercise jurisdiction over Epirus, was bent on asserting that right. In 1222 Manuel convoked a synod at which he insisted on his authority to appoint bishops for Epirus. He stated that though he was willing to compromise and recognize any bishops in Epirus now in office, he would tolerate no further uncanonical ordinations of bishops by the Epirotes. His synod rubber-stamped his position. Manuel died later that year, but his successor Germanos II was equally adamant and maintained Manuel's policies firmly.

### **Creation of an Autocephalous Serbian Church, 1219**

Meanwhile, as the Nicean-Epirote dispute began to heat up, Sava decided the Serbs could profit from it by obtaining an independent Church. At that time Sava was on Athos in protest of Stefan's closer ties with the pope, from whom Stefan had received a royal crown. Presumably Sava hoped to draw Stefan away from his Western ties by obtaining Byzantine (i.e., Nicean) recognition of his royal title and at the same time winning an independent Serbian Church. Nothing is known about the preparations preceding Sava's actions. Did Sava act entirely on his own, or had he been in touch with his brother and obtained some sort of agreement from him? In any case, in 1219 Sava left Athos for Nicea.

At that time the Serbian bishopric was a suffragan of Ohrid, the chief bishopric in Theodore's state and Nicea's main opponent in the developing Church dispute. In Nicea, Sava agreed to recognize the patriarch in Nicea as the Ecumenical Patriarch in exchange for Nicea's granting Serbia's Church autocephalous (autonomous) status. The Nicean patriarch was happy to do so, for at one stroke of the pen he was able to reduce by almost half the size of his rival's (Demetrius of Ohrid's) territory. And since Serbia had not even recognized Nicea before, Nicea lost nothing by recognizing Serbian autonomy. In fact, through Serbia's recognition Nicea gained support for its claims and was brought into closer and friendlier relations with the Serbs. The Patriarch of Nicea appointed Sava as Archbishop of Serbia to head the new Church.

Thereafter the Serbs were to manage their own Church, and autocephalous status allowed the Serbs henceforth to choose their own archbishop.

Sava returned to Serbia; he was to head its Church until he abdicated in 1233. He was well received by King Stefan, who was pleased by the arrangement and threw his support wholeheartedly behind his brother, the new archbishop. His ties with the Catholic Church dwindled. Serbia was never to fall under strong Catholic influence thereafter. Sava's first task was to place all Serbian territory under the jurisdiction of its new archbishop. This necessitated the ousting in 1220 of Greek bishops from the recently acquired towns of Prizren and Lipljan. Sava then proceeded to construct Serbia's Church administration, dividing all Serbia's territory (including Zeta and Hum) up into about ten bishoprics. The inclusion of Zeta and Hum contributed to the binding of these previously separate Serbian regions more tightly to Raška by helping their populations to identify themselves as Serbs and to perceive a commonality of interest with the Serbs of Raška. Sava then appointed bishops to fill these sees. The sees had jurisdiction over the following regions: Raška, Hum (with its seat in Ston), Zeta (with its seat at Prevlaka on the Gulf of Kotor), the Coast (Primorje), Hvosno (the Metohija), Budimlje (modern Ivograd), Dabar, Morava, Toplica, and Prizren-Lipljan.

The establishment of these dioceses necessitated the employment of many more priests, but there were not enough available; thus certain regions were to be almost entirely priestless. A life of Sava notes, for example, that he sent priests on tours of the countryside to at last marry many old, middle-aged, and young people who had long lived together without the Church's blessing. The Church leaders also hoped to reduce the role of the Catholic Church in Serbia's western regions, including the coast. However, they did not expel Catholic bishops, as they did Greek ones. Thus in the west the Catholic organization continued to exist parallel to the Serbian Church, with each confession having in the same town its own church buildings, clergy, and occasionally even bishops. The Catholic hierarchy along the coast and its organizational problems will be treated later. In the years that followed a certain number of conversions from Catholicism to Orthodoxy occurred in western Zeta and in southern Dalmatia, where the Catholic Church had been strong.

As Catholic influence declined, the alliance between Church and dynasty was reasserted, and both ruler and Church worked to make the Church a strong national institution closely tied to the holy dynasty. The Church was to have a major role in medieval Serbia. Its leaders participated in state affairs, side by side with the aristocracy. High clerics were frequently drawn from the greatest families, including the royal family, which played a dominant role in the Church as well as in the state. The Church, through its canons, was to provide the foundations of the state's legal order until the following century. When the state created chancelleries it needed literate officials, and the clergy provided many of these. Not only did clerics witness and draw up charters, but they also were to play a major role in diplomacy. Each ruler stuck to the

pattern established by Nemanja and built at least one major monastery, his *zadužbina* (obligation), for the salvation of his soul. Many of these magnificent monasteries are still standing and a few are even active to the present. Many rulers built other churches as well and gave these and other monasteries lavish gifts including large landed estates and whole villages. They also continued to endow Hilandar on Athos with villages inside Serbia.

As new churches built by the rulers spread through Serbia, they played a role in Christianizing the populace—converting pagans or further Christianizing many peasants who had been only nominal Christians. The wealthier monasteries also provided schools, some of which probably taught only monks and young men destined to be clerics; these schools increased the number of literate Serbs, especially clerics and monks. Major monasteries also kept libraries containing Byzantine works translated into Slavic from the Greek (translated either at the monasteries themselves in Serbia or at Hilandar on Mount Athos and then brought to Serbia) as well as original Serbian works which began to appear in the thirteenth century. Sava played a major role in translations, doing some himself and encouraging others. Sava also produced original works such as his monastic rule and his biography of Simeon (Nemanja) couched as a saint's life. For furthering education, literacy, translations, and original writing, Sava earned the popular epithet of Illuminator (enlightener) of the Serbs.

In 1221, the year after Sava's major organizing efforts, Sava convoked a Church council at Žiča, the monastery built by Stefan and the first seat of the Serbian archbishop. This Council endorsed the new administrative structure of the Church and also endorsed Sava's episcopal appointees. Sava also presented at the Council a translation of the Byzantine Nomocanon that he had worked on for over ten years.

Perhaps as early as 1208 Sava had begun translating Greek Canon laws into Serbian for the use of the Serbian state and its churches. He had used as his basic text the *Byzantine Nomocanon of Fourteen Titles* (from the seventh century) which he modified with the canonical commentaries of Aristinos (from the third quarter of the twelfth century) and, when Aristinos' interpretations did not suit what Sava saw as Serbia's needs, Sava turned to the canonical commentaries of John Zonaras. Sava completed his work in 1220 in Thessaloniki where presumably he was able to find the texts he needed. He intended his translation to become, as it now officially did in 1221, the legal basis of the Serbian Church. His version made the Church and state equal partners; to achieve this he had to omit those Byzantine legal texts (the *Ecloga*, the *Epanagoge*, and Balsamon's commentaries from the twelfth century) that subordinated the Church to the state. Since Church canons also devoted much attention to how Christians were to live, Sava's compilation also was to have considerable impact on what we might consider civil law.

The 1221 council endorsed Sava's text which, as seen, was basically a translation drawn from the three Byzantine texts, but whose articles were carefully selected to fit what Sava saw as Serbia's needs. Sava's Nomocanon

became the main legal code for the Serbian state which was to have no other official statewide law code until it was supplemented in the fourteenth century by a secular code.<sup>2</sup> Arguments can be advanced that a secular code was first issued by Milutin (1282–1321). If his legislative efforts, most of which have not survived, did not comprise what one would call a code, then Serbia had to await Dušan's code, issued in 1349, as its first secular law code. (The Nomocanon was also translated from Greek and introduced into Bulgaria early in the thirteenth century.)

The Žiča council also endorsed the Sinodik of Orthodoxy, a ninth-century affirmation of Orthodoxy that condemned a variety of earlier heresies. To it were regularly appended anathemas of subsequent heresies. Sava not only conveyed to Serbia his translation of Byzantine Canon Law texts but also brought translations of monastic rules from Athos to be used in, or adapted for, Serbian monasteries. Sava brought as well translations of other Greek texts (sermons, saints' lives) to Serbia and encouraged ties between Serbia and Athos, where an increasing number of Serbs were to go as monks. There, in contact with the Greek cultural world and Athos' fine libraries, more and more Serbs came into contact with the Greek theological heritage. And, as noted, Serbs did not limit themselves to Hilandar but also resided in various of the Greek institutions on Athos. New translations followed over the next centuries and the Serbian Church acquired through them, as well as through oral contacts between Serbs and monks of other nationalities on Athos, many of the fruits of the ancient heritage of Orthodoxy.

Needless to say, Demetrius of Ohrid was infuriated by the agreement between Sava and Nicea. He denied its legality, arguing that the Nicean patriarch was not the true patriarch; moreover, he further argued that even if he were the true patriarch he still did not have a canonical right to remove territory from Ohrid's archdiocese. For Emperor Basil II in 1018 had removed Ohrid from the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople and made it an autocephalous archbishopric directly under the emperor; thus no patriarch had any right to interfere in the affairs of Ohrid's diocese. And Demetrius went on to point out that prior to the disaster of 1204 Patriarchs of Constantinople had recognized both Ohrid's autocephaly and Ohrid's jurisdiction over Serbia. Demetrius also launched a personal attack against Sava.

However, though Theodore was probably unhappy with Sava's action, he could not afford to break off his Serbian alliance. Thus he seems to have tolerated what had occurred, allowing his daughter to marry Radoslav, Stefan's heir, in 1219 or 1220, at the very height of the crisis—surely a gesture of good will designed to allay any alarm Stefan might have felt about the possibility of Theodore going to war against him.

### **Theodore Acquires Thessaloniki and Coronation**

In December 1224 after a long siege, Theodore conquered Thessaloniki, putting an end to that Latin state. In the West there was talk about a new



crusade for its recovery, but nothing was to come of it. Theodore ousted the Latin bishop of the city and restored the exiled Greek metropolitan.

Having conquered the second city of Byzantium, Theodore felt his claims to Constantinople were as strong as those of Nicea's ruler. Thus he, too, was justified in taking the title emperor. He put on the purple boots, dress worn only by an emperor, and began planning his coronation. Constantine Mesopotamites, the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, restored to his see by Theodore, doubted Theodore's right to the title, however. For though a majority of Epirote bishops supported Theodore and Demetrius' position on Church autonomy for Epirus, a minority of Epirote bishops had recognized the legitimacy of the Nicean council of 1208 and Nicea's reasoning to justify its legitimacy; this minority therefore accepted the council's decision that gave patriarchal status to Nicea and also the patriarch's action in crowning Lascaris emperor. When Thessaloniki's bishop refused to participate in Theodore's coronation and went back into exile, Theodore convoked an assembly at Arta in Epirus to approve his imperial claims. Then, with that approval obtained, his loyal supporter Demetrius of Ohrid, possessor of the state's second ranking see after Thessaloniki, crowned Theodore Emperor of the Romans (the official title of the Byzantine emperor). This coronation occurred between December 1224 and 1227, most probably in 1225.

Nicea's horror at and condemnation of Theodore's coronation intensified the Church quarrel. What right did a Bulgarian bishop (for Ohrid not only lay in a Slavic area but had also been the chief bishopric for Bulgaria under Samuel [976–1014]) have to crown an Emperor of the Romans? demanded Germanos, Patriarch of Nicea. Trying at first to avoid a fight with Theodore, the Niceans tried to place the blame for this "illegal action" on the irresponsible and ambitious Demetrius. At the same time, since the see of Durazzo had recently fallen vacant again, the Nicean patriarch, to assert his prerogatives, appointed a new bishop for that see. The Epirotes, not surprisingly, rejected the appointment. The Epirote synod in fact named a close friend of Demetrius to fill the see and announced as a matter of principle that Epirus would accept no Nicean appointees to sees in Epirus. Then Theodore expelled from Durazzo the Nicean candidate, asking on what authority could the Bishop of Nicea appoint bishops in Europe. Demetrius, moreover, argued that, on the basis of pre-1204 rankings, his see of Ohrid (as the successor of the important and ancient see of Justiniana Prima) ranked higher than the see of Nicea. Indeed, through much of this dispute Demetrius treated the patriarch in Nicea as if he were only the regular Bishop of Nicea. For, it could be argued, after the death of the last Greek Patriarch of Constantinople in 1206 the Ecumenical Patriarchate had ceased to exist.

In about 1227 Theodore convoked a new council at Arta to discuss the deteriorating relations between the Churches of Nicea and Epirus. Though some, led by Demetrius, felt strongly enough about the autonomy of the Epirote Church to risk schism over it, many other Epirote bishops were

disturbed by the situation that was developing. These moderates, who may well have been in the majority, did not want a schism but instead sought a united Greek Church to better face the Latin threat. For practical reasons they were willing to resist the encroachment of the Nicean patriarch into Epirus, but if the patriarch were willing to go half way, they, in order to unite the Greek Church, would be willing to accept him as the nominal head of the Greek Church. As a result the Arta council put forward a compromise, which it persuaded Theodore to accept. Noting that their ruler, Theodore, would not permit Nicean nominees to occupy Epirote sees, they requested the patriarch to grant them autonomy by allowing the Epirote assembly to name local bishops. They emphasized that it was administrative autonomy they were seeking and insisted that since they had no intention of making doctrinal changes, they were quite willing to leave doctrinal authority to the patriarch. If the Nicean patriarch were to agree to this request, then Theodore would allow the patriarch's name to be mentioned in church services and recognize the right of Epirotes to appeal to the patriarch. Thus in the compromise the Epirotes went so far as to recognize the Nicean bishop as Ecumenical Patriarch, demanding only administrative autonomy for themselves. The patriarch was called upon to reply in three months. This offer was accompanied by the threat that if the patriarch refused, Theodore might consider submitting to Rome.

The patriarch, however, wanting all or nothing, refused to take the olive branch offered him. A whole year passed before he sent envoys to refuse the demands and once again to protest over the uncanonical election of the bishops of Durazzo and Thessaloniki. The patriarch's message was delivered to an assembly of Epirote bishops at Arta which, obedient to Theodore, rejected the message. Moreover, since Theodore had involved himself in the dispute, the Nicean clergy had begun to attack Theodore. Thus, not surprisingly, a full-scale schism between the two branches of the Greek Church followed. The schism was to last until 1232–33.

In 1224 or 1225 Theodore also occupied the Chalcidic peninsula, including Mount Athos. After Pope Innocent III's death in 1216, various of the monasteries that seem to have submitted to Rome soon broke away again, as Innocent's successor Honorius III (1216–27) was unable to effect his will on the mountain. As noted, Sava felt free to return to Athos as an Orthodox center as early as 1217. A few years later some of the monasteries were in regular contact with the patriarch in Nicea. Hence Honorius in 1223 referred to the Athos monks as disobedient rebels. Then in 1224–25, after the monasteries had again come under the jurisdiction of an Orthodox ruler Theodore, all pressure from the Catholic Church was ended. Theodore does not seem to have pressured the monks on Athos to involve themselves in his dispute with Nicea. One may presume that he knew, or at least suspected, that various, possibly even many, important monastic figures recognized the Nicean patriarch as the Ecumenical Patriarch and would, if pressed, come out against Theodore and damage his cause.

## **Theodore's Ambitions and Actions, 1225–30**

After Theodore's coronation in 1225 there were four rulers in the region of Constantinople who claimed the title emperor, one of whom held Constantinople while the other three sought to gain it. They were the Latin emperor, who possessed Constantinople and hoped to retain it; the emperor in Nicaea; Theodore of Epirus-Thessaloniki; and Tsar John Asen II of Bulgaria. By now Asen had greatly strengthened his position, having built up his armies and consolidated his hold over the central Bulgarian territory; thus Bulgaria was a considerable Balkan power again. Even so, Asen did not yet feel strong enough to challenge Theodore over Macedonia or to assert himself against Alexius Slav in the Rhodopes. Each of the three have-not emperors possessed strong armies and stood, given a bit of luck, a realistic chance of gaining Constantinople. And after the fall of Thessaloniki, Constantinople truly stood alone.

Excluding island possessions, the Westerners retained in Greece only Attica-Boeotia and the Morea (Peloponnesus). By this time a new generation governed these two duchies. Othon de la Roche had returned to France in 1225, and his nephew Guy had succeeded him in Athens. Geoffrey Villehardouin had died, probably in about 1228, to be succeeded by his son Geoffrey II. The new Morean ruler was to enjoy a peaceful reign, and under him the Morea achieved considerable economic prosperity. However, despite the strength and prosperity of these two Latin states, they lay at too great a distance from Constantinople to provide effective aid for it in the event of an emergency. The chief reason that Constantinople was to remain Latin until 1261 was the rivalry among its enemies, whose warfare against one another prevented any of them from taking the city.

After acquiring Thessaloniki, Theodore began to think seriously about Constantinople. Nicaea, aware of this interest and realizing all northern Greece, with western Thrace, was in Theodore's hands, felt it had to act quickly. So, in 1225, responding to the appeals of the Greek population of Latin-ruled Adrianople, Nicaea, under John Vatatzes, who had succeeded to the throne on Theodore Lascaris' death in 1222, launched its forces into Europe. The gates of Adrianople were opened to the Niceans. Surrounded by Nicean forces on all sides, Constantinople seemed about to fall to Nicaea. To prevent this from happening, Theodore quickly led his army into Thrace toward Adrianople. Threatened by a larger army, the Niceans immediately yielded, agreeing to vacate both Adrianople and the rest of Thrace. Theodore, having occupied Adrianople, then provided ships to ferry the Niceans back to Asia Minor.

Theodore, moving from victory to victory, now after this campaign, held Thrace comprehensively as far east as Mosynopolis and also Adrianople. As a result he seemed even nearer success than Vatatzes had been. Theodore realized, however, that taking Constantinople would require a long siege for which he was not at the moment prepared. In particular he feared being hit in

the rear by the Bulgarians, who could thereby trap his men between their attacking forces and the walls of Constantinople. Thus Theodore understood that before he could attack the capital, he must conclude an agreement with John Asen. The alliance between Epirus-Thessaloniki and Bulgaria was soon concluded, sealed by a marriage between Theodore's brother Manuel and a daughter of Asen. Then, late in 1225, Theodore brought his armies to Constantinople, but neither being technically prepared nor having the time for the long siege he saw would be needed, he withdrew.

Expecting an attack from Theodore and thus needing allies, the Latin Empire turned to Nicea, which also was interested in preventing Theodore from obtaining Constantinople. Nicea and the Latins had been skirmishing in Anatolia; now after a Nicean military victory, the two sides ended their state of war and reached an agreement. In exchange for an alliance and for support against Theodore, the Latin Empire agreed to give up its last holdings in Anatolia to Nicea. This agreement was carried out; Nicea now held all north-western Anatolia, and the Latin Empire was now more-or-less limited to the city of Constantinople itself and its immediate environs.

At this point a major question forces itself upon us. Now that Theodore had concluded his Bulgarian alliance, freeing him to attack Constantinople, why did he not do so in 1226 or in the years immediately following? Not only are we unable to answer this question, but we have no information on what he did concern himself with over the next few years. In 1228 his chances of success seem to have improved further when Emperor Robert died, leaving his eleven-year-old half-brother, Baldwin II, as heir. An interregnum or rule by regency would seem to have provided an ideal time for an attack. But Theodore still took no action.

Seeing the weakness of the Latin Empire and the probability of its fall if it received no outside help, Asen, it seems, offered the Latins in 1228 a solution that would provide such aid. He offered a marriage between his daughter Helen and the young Latin emperor Baldwin II. As father-in-law of the emperor he could then have assumed direction of the regency and drawn from Bulgaria sufficient troops to defend Constantinople from Theodore's attack. The Latins, presumably seeing this scheme as a revival of Symeon's plans from the tenth century which would have ended up delivering the city to the Bulgarians, did not want to accept this offer. But it seems they did not actually turn Asen down, but strung out negotiations with him—possibly even agreeing to an engagement between his daughter Helen and Baldwin—to keep his hopes up and prevent him from participating in any action by his nominal ally Theodore. Possibly they even hoped to procure Bulgarian troops from him to use against Theodore, if they could get them without actually agreeing to make Asen regent or letting him enter the city.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the barons and papacy decided to offer the regency, together with the title of emperor, to an aged but able Western knight, John of Brienne. John accepted the offer in an agreement concluded, with papal confirmation, in April 1229 at Perugia. The agreement seems to have been kept secret for a

time from the non-Latin actors in the East. It was agreed that Brienne would go east, be crowned emperor, and assume command of the defense of Constantinople. If Brienne, who in 1229 was already over eighty, should still be alive when Baldwin reached his majority, at age twenty in 1237, then the two would rule as co-emperors. Brienne had various affairs to settle in the West; thus he did not arrive in Constantinople until 1231, when the major threat, as we shall see, was over. Upon his arrival Brienne was crowned and assumed control of the Latin Empire.

Meanwhile, in 1230 Theodore finally decided to march on Constantinople. But suddenly, his armies changed course en route and entered Bulgaria. Evidence about his motives has not survived. Had he received word of the Latin-Bulgar negotiations of 1228, which may well have continued during 1229, and come to believe the two states were on the verge of concluding, or even had concluded, an alliance against him? In any case, we may presume that for some reason Theodore had concluded he could not trust Asen not to attack him during the siege of Constantinople, which clearly was going to be a long one. If Theodore felt himself faced with that eventuality, he had to reduce Bulgaria first in order to protect his rear.

### **The Battle of Klokotnica (1230) and its Results for Bulgaria**

John Asen II seemed surprised by Theodore's attack and played the role of an injured innocent who found himself attacked perfidiously by an ally with whom he had had a treaty. He quickly put together an army, said to have been assembled on the spur of the moment and thus considerably smaller than the forces with which Theodore was invading Bulgaria. He marched out to meet Theodore, with a copy of their treaty, including Theodore's seal and oath, affixed to his standard. The two armies met in April 1230 at the village of Klokotnica on the Marica River, close to Philippopolis on the route between that city and Adrianople. The Bulgarians enjoyed a massive victory and Theodore was captured.

A recently discovered letter in Hebrew, which discusses Jewish affairs in southeastern Europe, reports that Asen, having decided to blind Theodore so as to put an end to his imperial pretensions, ordered two Jews to carry out the deed. (Jews were frequently used as executioners in medieval eastern Europe.) It appears that he also expected them to carry out the act willingly, for the letter reports that Theodore had been persecuting the Jews in his territories as an excuse to confiscate their wealth, which he needed for his campaigns. (The persecution of Jews in Thessaloniki was not a new phenomenon under Theodore. Benjamin of Tudela, a rabbi who had traveled through the Balkans in the 1160s, reports that in his day there were about five hundred Jewish inhabitants in Thessaloniki who were much oppressed.) Theodore was flung to the ground and the Jews were ordered to blind "their enemy," but Theodore begged so piteously for mercy that the Jews refused to carry out the

order. As a result Asen lost his temper with them and had them thrown to their deaths from a high cliff. This did not save Theodore, who was blinded anyway and then pitched into a Bulgarian prison where he languished for the next seven years.

Once again the Latin Empire was saved by the rivalry between its enemies. Asen next mobilized a larger army and marched through Macedonia into Albania, taking one after the other most of Theodore's Macedonian and Albanian fortresses, including Serres, Prilep, and Ohrid. He also acquired more of Thrace, including Philippopolis with the Marica valley, Demotika, and Adrianople. As Kalojan had done earlier, Asen consistently replaced Greek bishops in the towns he conquered with Bulgarian ones.

It is often stated that Asen also took Durazzo. The evidence for this claim comes from an inscription, to be discussed below, that states Asen held all the land from Adrianople to Durazzo. However, as Ducellier notes, "to" does not necessarily mean "and including." He points out that in 1230, after the battle, Asen issued a charter of trading privileges to Dubrovnik in which were listed Asen's major towns; Durazzo is not to be found among them. Durazzo was a major commercial town; had Asen possessed it, one would expect it to be mentioned. Thus Ducellier concludes that though Asen's forces reached Durazzo, they did not take the town itself, which remained under the rule of Theodore's brother and successor Manuel.<sup>4</sup> Thus in one stroke at Klokotnica Asen had shattered the might of Theodore's state. The speed with which its northern holdings fell and its remaining territory fragmented shows how poorly Theodore had organized his administration and integrated his territories.

Klokotnica also spelled the end for Alexius Slav's principality in the Rhodopes. Presumably all that had prevented Asen from absorbing Alexius' principality previously was Alexius' alliance with Theodore. Having lost this prop, Alexius was clearly no match for the powerful Bulgarian ruler. Whether Asen had to carry out a military campaign against Alexius or whether Alexius surrendered on demand to receive a court position and lands elsewhere, as most scholars think, is not known. In any case Alexius' lands once again were incorporated into the Bulgarian state and Alexius himself disappears from the sources.

A contemporary inscription survives that expresses Asen's view of the situation:

I waged war in Romania, defeated the Greek army, and captured the Lord Emperor Theodore Comnenus himself and all his boyars. And I occupied all the land from Adrianople to Durazzo, Greek, Serbian, and Albanian alike. The Franks hold only the cities in the vicinity of Constantinople itself. But even they [these cities] are under the authority of my empire since they have no other emperor but me, and only thanks to me do they survive, for thus God has decreed.

Asen, however, did not yet have Constantinople. But he still seems to have been thinking of obtaining the regency over little Baldwin—as is seen when he asserts that the Latins “have no emperor but me.” This suggests that the Latins had been stringing out negotiations with him and that he was unaware of the Perugia agreement of 1229 that had already awarded the throne to Brienne. To have kept Perugia secret would have been sensible policy on the Latins’ part to prevent Asen from co-operating with Theodore. But now after Theodore’s defeat, the Latins had no further need of Asen. So they broke off negotiations with him. Soon Asen learned that John of Brienne had been invited to govern Constantinople, and, as noted, John arrived there in 1231. Burning for revenge, Asen at once opened negotiations with Nicea for a joint attack on Constantinople.

### **Thessaloniki-Epirus after Klokotnica**

After Klokotnica, Thessaloniki-Epirus was a shell of what it had recently been; the weakness of Theodore’s administration is shown by the speed with which the kingdom collapsed after his capture. The northern territory, Macedonia and Albania, as noted, went to Bulgaria. Theodore’s brother Manuel took the throne in Thessaloniki; he was also at first ruler of Thessaly, Epirus, the isle of Corfu, and probably Durazzo. However, he was far weaker than Theodore had been, and Thessaloniki-Epirus was for the moment out of the running for Constantinople. After the battle, not surprisingly, Manuel found himself more or less a client of the victorious Asen. (Since 1225 Manuel had also been married to Asen’s daughter.) As Asen’s client, Manuel seems to have been allowed control over internal affairs in the territory he retained but not to have enjoyed independence in foreign affairs. In the struggle for Constantinople, to be discussed below, among the Latin Empire, Nicea, and Bulgaria, Manuel was unable to capitalize on their rivalries to advance any claim of his own for Constantinople, to recover territory, or to reassert to any extent his freedom of action. It also seems that none of the three rivals involved, Latins, Niceans, or Bulgarians, thought it worth their while to seek his aid.

In Church matters Manuel also found himself hemmed in. Asen, as noted, was installing Bulgarians as bishops in the Macedonian territory he occupied, expelling the Greek incumbents. Having conquered the Chalcidic peninsula, later in 1230, Asen also visited Mount Athos (situated near the tip of this peninsula) and announced his protection over the monasteries; his charters make it appear that the monasteries had sought this protection. Asen gave the monasteries rich gifts and confirmed their earlier charters as well. He was especially generous to the Zographou monastery which by now had become a Bulgarian house. Though the monastery dated back to the late tenth century, it had become a center for Bulgarian monks only in the early thirteenth century, probably around 1220. Asen then tried to give his bishop in Trnovo jurisdiction over Mount Athos. The monasteries protested, as they

always did when attempts were made to place urban bishops over them. Apparently Asen backed down on this issue; at least he does not seem to have taken any action to facilitate his bishop's acquiring actual control over Athos.

At the same time, however, Asen did successfully acquire for Trnovo's hierarch jurisdiction over the various bishoprics he had conquered from Epirus. He also attempted to place his Trnovo bishop over various bishoprics in the territory retained by Manuel. To do this he tried to subordinate the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki to the hierarch in Trnovo and named a loyal clergyman to occupy the Thessaloniki metropolitanate. This was considered an even more unacceptable violation of canons and traditions than Nicea's earlier attempts to subordinate the bishops of Epirus to the hierarch in Nicea. Not only did the clergy of Thessaloniki and Epirus express strong objections, but the Athonite monks protested to the patriarch in Nicea about it.

To prevent the Bulgarians from achieving domination over his Church, Manuel sent envoys to negotiate with Nicea. He expressed his willingness to recognize the patriarch there as ecumenical and to submit to him. Thus to escape from an even more unpleasant situation, a weakened Epirus submitted to Nicea. And thus the schism between the two branches of the Greek Church was brought to an end. Manuel, in negotiating his submission, had tried to maintain a certain amount of autonomy for his Church. By emphasizing the difficulties of transportation and the time required to travel between Greece and Nicea, he hoped to avoid sending his bishops to Nicea for ordination. And he sought for western Greece freedom to elect its own bishops, as it had been doing since 1213.

Germanos II, patriarch in Nicea, however, would have none of this. His reply blamed past difficulties entirely on Epirus. Problems in communication, he declared, were irrelevant and merely a pretext to prolong the schism. In fact, the issue could easily be resolved, he claimed, if Nicea were to send thither a legate as plenipotentiary to carry out ordinations and supervise western Greek Church affairs. Germanos then proceeded to realize his suggestion by sending west as his legate Christopher, Bishop of Ancyra (Ankara). Manuel, though presumably not happy with this turn of events, received Christopher cordially. Christopher then convoked a synod of western bishops in 1233 at which Germanos' letter was read. The western Greeks thereupon renounced all claims to ecclesiastical independence, and the schism was officially proclaimed at an end. The legate also received complaints from the Athonite monks concerning Bulgarian interference in the administration of Athos and of the diocese of Thessaloniki.

In the years that followed, the Niceans regularly sent Church officials west to assert and implement the authority their patriarch claimed. Demetrius Chomatianus remained defiant to the end. But by this time his influence in politics was greatly reduced. He was not only older and less energetic, but his see, Ohrid, was no longer even part of the Thessaloniki-Epirus state but belonged to Asen's Bulgaria; moreover, his ally and protector Theodore was no longer in power in Thessaloniki. Thus the border changes and the Bul-



garian threat altered the issues of conflict and made Demetrius' concerns considerably less relevant to Manuel and his prelates. Demetrius died soon thereafter, in about 1234.

Asen seems to have taken no action to prevent the Nicean-Epirote negotiations. At that time he himself was trying to enter into closer relations with Nicea, which included obtaining Nicea's recognition of patriarchal rank for his bishop in Trnovo. Presumably Asen thought it best to obtain his main goals rather than risk them by starting a quarrel with Nicea over the Epirote Church, which while a secondary issue for Bulgaria was a major one for Nicea.

Manuel's weakened state continued to decline. By 1236 northern Greece found itself divided among members of the ruling family. Michael of Epirus' son Michael II, who had fled to the Morea when Theodore took over in 1215, returned and established himself in his father's old capital of Arta in Epirus. He seems to have received considerable local Epirote support. His return may well have occurred immediately after the Battle of Klokotnica, when Theodore was out of the picture and Manuel was in no position to oppose him. Manuel seems to have recognized him shortly thereafter, in exchange for Michael's recognition of Manuel's suzerainty. That this submission occurred is suggested by the fact that in his charters Michael II called himself "despot." This title is documented for Michael from 1236, but it may well have been taken a few years before. This title, second in the Byzantine court hierarchy after emperor (*basileus*), could be bestowed only by an emperor. When Theodore assumed the title emperor in 1225, he had made his brothers Manuel and Constantine despots. Subsequently, when Manuel succeeded Theodore, he had assumed the imperial title for himself. Then, soon thereafter, Manuel as emperor had apparently granted this title to Michael in exchange for Michael's recognition of Manuel's suzerainty. It should be stressed, however, that this was a ceremonial court title, not a functional one. Thus Michael was a ruler of Epirus who happened to be a despot. Michael was not despot *of* Epirus and thus Epirus was not a despotate.

As Manuel's actual power did not increase during the next few years while Michael's did, Michael became more and more independent. He also expanded his authority over the rest of Epirus, and by 1236 he also had Corfu. By 1236 whatever suzerainty Manuel might have claimed had become entirely nominal. Michael II clearly managed his territory as he saw fit, as if it were an independent state. In 1237, as an independent prince, and without seeking confirmation from Manuel, Michael issued a charter granting commercial privileges in his realm to the merchants of Dubrovnik. While the 1230s were years of decline for Thessaloniki and its territories, they were years of prosperity for Epirus.

## **Bulgarian-Hungarian Relations**

The Bulgarian negotiations with Nicea, opened after John of Brienne's assumption of power in Constantinople in 1231 (to be discussed shortly), af-

fected Bulgaria's relations with Hungary. As noted above, Boril had entered into close and somewhat dependent relations with Hungary in 1213, and Hungary, probably in that same year, had helped him put down the Vidin rebellion. Returning from his crusade in late 1218, the Hungarian king Andrew II appeared on Bulgaria's border, intending to return home by crossing Bulgaria. Instead of finding his client and friend Boril in power, he found John Asen II. Asen seized Andrew and allowed him to proceed on his journey only after he had agreed to a marriage between Asen and Andrew's daughter Maria. The wedding occurred early in 1221. Presumably, a major reason for Asen's insistence upon the marriage was his determination to regain Beograd and Braničevo. For he seems to have procured these cities and their provinces as the princess' dowry. These two cities were still Bulgarian in 1230, for in Asen's charter of privilege granted to Dubrovnik in that year they are mentioned as Bulgarian cities in which Ragusan merchants were to enjoy free trade.

Presumably the Hungarians were not happy about the loss of these cities, which they felt were rightfully theirs. Presumably they also disapproved of Asen's breaking off negotiations with the Latin Empire and entering into an alliance, in 1232, with Nicea against the Latin Empire. Hungary, as a zealous Catholic power, regularly maintained good relations with the Latin Empire. Thus Bulgaria's break with Constantinople and the threat it now posed to it—leading Brienne to call upon Hungary to attack Bulgaria—provided an additional excuse for the Hungarians to break with Bulgaria. So, in 1232, when Asen was involved in affairs to his south, the Hungarians attacked north-western Bulgaria and took Beograd and Braničevo. They also laid siege to Vidin. Alexander, Asen's brother, led a Bulgarian army to relieve that siege. He suffered a defeat before its walls, but the defenders within Vidin held out successfully, so the Hungarians did not capture Vidin itself. After withdrawing from Vidin, the Hungarian troops crossed the Danube into Wallachia, where they occupied the Severin region, creating a special banate there in 1233.

### **Bulgarian-Nicean Relations**

Asen was unable to respond to the Hungarian provocation because of his increasing involvement in affairs concerning Constantinople. Angry at the Latins, Asen established closer relations with Nicea. In 1234 an engagement between his daughter and the Nicean heir was agreed upon. Then in the spring of 1235 the Niceans crossed the Dardanelles and occupied Gallipoli. Asen and his family arrived there to meet with Vatatzes and his court. At this meeting their differences on Church questions were resolved. The Trnovo bishopric renounced its claims of suzerainty over Thessaloniki. In response to complaints made to the Nicean patriarch by the Mount Athos monks it was also agreed that the Trnovo bishop had no authority over Mount Athos. Furthermore Asen and his bishop recognized that the Patriarch of Nicea had jurisdic-

tion over eastern Thrace. Finally the Bulgarians recognized the patriarch in Nicea as the Ecumenical Patriarch. In exchange the Nicean patriarch recognized the bishop in Trnovo as a patriarch and the Bulgarian Church as autocephalous. The Athos monks, relieved of Trnovo's interference, gave their support to Trnovo's newly recognized status.

To be sure, the Bulgarian Church had been claiming patriarchal status ever since the time of Kalojan; until 1235, however, Byzantium (i.e., Nicea) had not recognized these claims. This recognition for his Church was useful to Asen, particularly in his relations with the Greeks in the territory he had annexed. The status of the Bulgarian Church was officially recognized in a formal ceremony in 1235 at which Asen's daughter Helen married Theodore (II) Lascaris, heir to the Nicean throne. Each child was then about ten years old. The frontier between the two states was also formally established. The treaty recognized as Bulgarian everything northwest of the lower Marica, which incidentally established the Bulgarian-Nicean border along the line of the present Greek-Turkish border.

Shortly thereafter the Nicean patriarch asserted his newly recognized authority by installing a new metropolitan in Thessaloniki. On this occasion he pleased the monks of Athos by asserting that Thessaloniki also was to have no authority over Athos. The monasteries, he decreed, were to be independent of all episcopal control.

From Gallipoli Vatatzes moved north, taking from the Latins a chunk of eastern Thrace including Tzurulum. From there he moved to the coast and occupied the coast of eastern Thrace as far west as the mouth of the Marica. The two allies, the Bulgarians and Niceans, then laid siege to Constantinople. The capital, defended by the aged John of Brienne, a small garrison of knights, the Venetian fleet, and in 1236 also by some troops provided by Geoffrey II Villehardouin of the Morea, heroically held out; but the situation was so critical that Constantinople's fall seemed but a matter of time. So in 1236, the young emperor Baldwin II was sent west by ship to seek further aid for his beleaguered capital. While involved in this effort Asen clearly could not take action against Hungary.

Meanwhile, as the Nicean-Bulgarian siege of Constantinople continued into 1236, it finally became clear to Asen that a victory for their coalition would simply give Constantinople to the Niceans; and a Greek empire centered there under the Nicean dynasty would be a greater impediment to a future Bulgarian conquest of Constantinople and also a greater danger to the state of Bulgaria in general than the continued rule of the weak Latins. So, once again Constantinople was saved by a quarrel between two of its enemies. Asen unilaterally broke off his alliance with Nicea and, it seems, sent an envoy to demand the return of his daughter. He then recruited a number of Cumans and declared war on Nicea.

Cumans were then appearing in the Balkans in large numbers. Displaced from their Steppe homes by the Mongols or Tatars who were in the process of

conquering south Russia, large numbers of Cumans migrated across the Danube, some settling in Bulgaria, others moving on into Thrace. Both regions suffered considerable plundering. Though both Bulgarians and Latins enrolled soldiers from their ranks, it appears that in the long run Vatatzes of Nicea recruited the largest number. He was to settle many in his lands, both in the parts of Thrace he held and in Anatolia.

Asen next concluded an alliance with the Latins and they—having been joined by a large number of Cuman refugees who had fled the Mongol conquest of the Steppes—jointly laid siege to the important fortress of Tzurulum in Thrace, which had recently been taken by the Niceans. Hardly had the siege begun when an epidemic of plague struck Trnovo, killing among others Asen's wife, his eldest son and heir, and the newly recognized Bulgarian patriarch. Supposedly interpreting this tragedy as a reflection of God's anger at his breaking his oath of alliance with Nicea, Asen repented, called off his siege of Tzurulum—thereby leaving the Frankish contingent high and dry and forcing the end of the siege—and made peace with Vatatzes. Once again they concluded a treaty, later in 1237.

At roughly the same time, also in 1237, some Western knights, recruited by Baldwin on his trip west and by the pope, appeared in Constantinople as crusaders and joined the garrison defending the city. However, their arrival could not compensate for the defection of Asen and the death that year of John of Brienne.

Continued Nicean pressure and Asen's defection from the Latins—which created the possibility that he might rejoin the Nicean attack on the capital—caused considerable worry for the leaders of the Latin Empire and the pope. The pope, in an attempt to take pressure off Constantinople, called on the Hungarians to attack Bulgaria from the north, hoping this would cause the Bulgarians to withdraw their troops from Thrace to defend their homeland. Thus in February 1238, Pope Gregory IX called on the King of Hungary to mobilize a crusade against the “heretical” Bulgarians. Since there were Bogomils, who were heretics, in Bulgaria, this statement is often taken as evidence by Church historians, who often take little notice of the general historical situation, that Bogomil activity had increased in Bulgaria to such an extent as to become a threat to Christendom, therefore necessitating the calling of a crusade. However, the date of this letter makes it seem more probable that the pope, as part of the Catholic alliance, was simply seeking justification for calling on Hungary to aid the Catholic-held city of Constantinople by attacking Bulgaria. The pope would also surely have been happy to see Bulgaria suffer a Hungarian attack. For back in 1204 Rome had received from Kalojan Bulgaria's submission to Rome, and not only had nothing come of it, but now Bulgaria had allied itself with the Greeks of Nicea and, breaking its nominal papal ties, had concluded an agreement with the schismatic patriarch in Nicea. Thus, with such clear political motives behind the pope's call for a crusade, we should not see this letter as evidence for an increase in Bogomil

activity. The Bogomils were probably nothing more than a nominal excuse to justify a war against Bulgaria or, better put, to justify calling a politically motivated war a religious crusade to make it more popular.

As far as we know, the Hungarians did not take action against Bulgaria at this time. They were then busy carrying out another so-called crusade, one directed against Bosnia, a war, we shall discuss shortly, which also, like the call to action against Bulgaria, was as much, if not more, politically motivated as religious.

Even so, Asen does not seem to have participated further in the action around Constantinople; possibly he remained at home to defend Bulgaria should a crusading effort from Hungary materialize. And, in fact, he was threatened by an assault from the northwest in 1239—though not from the Hungarians themselves. In the summer of that year Baldwin II, having mobilized a large number of crusaders in the West (estimates vary from thirty to sixty thousand) marched east with them overland. Having crossed Hungary, Baldwin and these crusaders appeared at the Bulgarian border. Not wishing to fight them, Asen, in violation of his treaty with Nicea, allowed them to pass freely across Bulgaria. The crusaders reached Thrace and once there reopened the siege on the Nicean Thracian fortress of Tzurulum. Nicea's attempt to relieve the siege failed, and the fortress fell to the crusaders in 1240. A large contingent of Cumans participated in the Latin victory. These crusaders then disappear into obscurity. Presumably most soon returned to their homes in the West, while a few may have remained to supplement the garrison of Constantinople. However, their arrival at this opportune moment surely did contribute to the Latin Empire's escape from disaster once again.

It has been argued that the fact Asen permitted the crusaders to pass through his realm to support the Latin Empire against Nicea shows that Asen had reverted to the Western alliance. It seems, however, that he did not actually break his alliance with Nicea but merely stood on the sidelines. Unwilling to support Nicea for fear that Nicea would make further gains that could cost Bulgaria its dominant position in the Balkans, he did not, however, go so far as to conclude an alliance with the Latins. But, he does seem to have worked to improve his relations with Hungary, a state which supported the Latin Empire. Scholars have called this policy a defensive one, designed to dissuade the Hungarians from responding to the papal call for a crusade against Bulgaria.

Though this concern may have had some influence on Asen's thinking, the main reason, it seems to me, for a Bulgarian-Hungarian alliance at this juncture was the danger posed by the appearance in the Steppes of the Tatars, who destroyed the Cuman state in 1238/39 and conquered Kiev in December 1240.<sup>5</sup> Both Bulgaria and Hungary now had the Tatars on their borders and reason to fear that the Tatars would continue their expansion further west at their expense. There was thus every reason for Hungary and Bulgaria to forget their relatively small differences and plan a joint defense against this danger.

And in fact a Bulgarian envoy visited Hungary between January and May 1240 and was well received by King Bela. Thus at the end of Asen's reign there occurred an improvement in Bulgarian-Hungarian relations, which was accompanied by smoother relations between the Latin Empire and Bulgaria. These improved relations with Catholic states continued into the opening years of the reign of Asen's successor Koloman.

It has been argued by various Bulgarian scholars that once Asen had withdrawn from his involvement of 1235–37 around Constantinople and Thrace, he had turned against Hungary and recovered Beograd and Braničevo. Whereas this theory is entirely possible, we have no contemporary source to support it. The main reason behind the assertion, it seems to me, is the belief of these scholars that Asen was powerful enough, when not involved elsewhere, to have achieved this; therefore, if he could have, then he would have. Such a recovery, in any case, would have been brief, for shortly after his death, when Bulgaria was ruled by successive weak regencies for Asen's minor sons, the Hungarians are documented as possessing these cities. Whether they held them straight through from 1232 or whether they had lost them only to regain them again after Asen's death is unknown.

### **Greek Affairs, 1237–42**

Meanwhile in 1237 Asen, a widower, fell in love with the daughter of Theodore, his blinded captive since 1230. He married the lady and then released Theodore, allowing him to depart wherever he wished. Ambitious to regain his lost dominions, Theodore secretly arrived in Thessaloniki and assembled a group of supporters who then seized, dethroned, and briefly imprisoned his brother Manuel. Theodore then crowned his own son John. Thus he observed the Byzantine custom denying the blind the right to rule. Theodore remained at John's side, however, and was the actual decision-maker. Manuel, soon released, escaped to Nicea. Once there Manuel paid homage to Vatatzes and then received Nicean aid to regain his kingdom. After all, the Niceans had no love for Theodore and saw him as a dangerous opponent of their main goals.

In 1239 Manuel returned on a Nicean ship to Greece, landing in Thessaly where he began to assemble an army. He soon conquered Larissa. At this point Theodore decided it was best to negotiate with Manuel. He was probably concerned over the possibility that Manuel might receive subsequent reinforcements from Nicea. Manuel was receptive and agreed to break off his Nicean alliance in exchange for the division of the realm of Thessaloniki into three parts: Manuel was to keep Thessaly, Theodore and John were to keep Thessaloniki and its environs, and a third brother, Constantine, was to have Aetolia and Acarnania. Constantine was actually ensconced there already. Having been granted these regions as an appanage by Theodore before Klokotnica, Constantine had held them through the 1230s. Epirus, the most important province of the former state, remained in the hands of Michael II,

who was not a party to the agreement and whose territory was not mentioned in it. When Manuel died in the summer of 1241 his territory in Thessaly was taken over by Michael, who seems simply to have occupied it.

In about 1240 Theodore, offered a safe-conduct, accepted an invitation to visit Nicea. Once there, he was detained while Nicea began to prepare for a new campaign against Constantinople. Vatatzes clearly wanted Theodore out of the way so he could not intrigue against this attempt. In early 1242 the Nicean army embarked, with Theodore brought along as an honorary prisoner; but instead of advancing on Constantinople for the expected siege, the troops marched on to Thessaloniki, devastating the region up to its walls. Inside, John ruled.

At this moment Vatatzes received word that the Mongols had invaded Anatolia; they were then in the eastern part, but Vatatzes realized they might well overrun the whole region. Thus he needed to return home at once to prepare his defenses. John, inside Thessaloniki, was unaware of this development. Thus not knowing that the Nicean army had to depart immediately and wishing to avoid a long siege if not the loss of his city (for the brave Vatatzes was popular with many groups in Thessaloniki), John was willing to negotiate to secure his continued rule. Theodore, also ignorant of the Mongol invasion, was allowed to participate in the talks. Vatatzes agreed to call off his attack and leave John and Theodore in possession of Thessaloniki if John would renounce his imperial title and submit to Nicean overlordship. In exchange for renouncing the title *basileus*, Vatatzes granted John the second title in the empire, *despot*.

This is the first time that the title *despot* was to be held by the dominant ruler in Greece and holder of Thessaloniki. We have seen that it was already held by Michael II of Epirus in the 1230s, probably having been granted him by the ruler of Thessaloniki. *Despot*, as noted, is an honorary court title, not a functional one. It made John part of the Byzantine (Nicean) court hierarchy and reflected his ceremonial place in that hierarchy. Thus John became a *despot* who also happened to be ruler of Thessaloniki, but he was not *despot* of Thessaloniki.

Having made this peace, receiving John's submission and permitting Theodore's return to Thessaloniki, Vatatzes marched back to Nicea. However, as Nicol points out, Vatatzes had only eliminated a title. Thessaloniki under a *despot* was as strong as it had been under an emperor. If Vatatzes had had time to capture and annex Thessaloniki on this occasion, he would have saved himself and his successors considerable future effort.

Back in Nicea, Vatatzes prepared his state's defenses against the anticipated Mongol attack. However, the Great Khan died suddenly in Karakorum, causing the withdrawal of the invading Mongols, who returned east to participate in the election of the new khan; thus Nicea was spared attack. In fact, by defeating and plundering the Seljuk state in central Anatolia, the Mongols contributed to Nicea's betterment, for it made Nicea that much more the strongest state in Anatolia. And by having less reason to worry about a Seljuk

attack from the east, Nicea was left in a better position to attack Constantinople. At the same time the western developments, just described, that culminated in John's submission, took Thessaloniki temporarily out of the running for Constantinople. Michael's state in Epirus, though prosperous, was too distant to threaten the imperial capital at this time. And since Asen had died in June 1241, leaving his seven-year-old son Koloman under a regency, within which various factions soon emerged, Bulgaria, too, declined rapidly. Thus in 1242 Vatatzes in Nicea stood alone without rivals—excluding the incumbent Latins—for the conquest of Constantinople.

Bulgaria's decline after Asen's death proves that he too, though a great conqueror, had been unable to create an administrative apparatus capable of sustaining a lasting state. Božilov argues that, despite Asen's many great and obvious contributions, he made one capital blunder in foreign affairs. Failing to recognize the danger posed to Bulgaria by Nicea, for much of his reign he had been allied to and supportive of the Niceans. This resulted in the firm establishment of Nicea in Europe, the consequences of which could be seen immediately after Asen's death when Bulgaria, ruled by minors and incompetent regencies, suffered great losses to the Niceans in Thrace, the Rhodopes, and Macedonia, losses that contributed substantially to Bulgaria's decline.<sup>6</sup>

Though Božilov's point is basically true, it should be noted in Asen's defense that he seems to have come to a realization of this danger from Nicea in 1236. Thereafter he did not make any serious contribution to the Nicean cause. In fact, his support of Nicea was limited to the brief period 1234/35–36. And in that time he contributed to only a few Nicean acquisitions in eastern Thrace, the major one of which, Tzurulum, was regained by the Latins in 1240. His major contribution to the Nicean cause was his destruction of Theodore as a power, but this he did in his own interests and in self-defense, for Theodore had attacked him. Thus if one wishes to criticize Asen, one should not focus on his contributions to Nicea's cause, but rather on his failure to concentrate a major offensive against the Niceans, after 1230, to expel them from Thrace. Yet even had he done this, had he not then also destroyed their state in Anatolia (which he was not strong enough to do), his gains could have been only temporary. After his death, upon Bulgaria's ensuing decline, the Niceans would simply have returned to Thrace as strong as they had been in the 1230s. Thus I believe there was really nothing that Asen could have done to prevent Nicean success in the long run.

### **Serbia under Radoslav and Vladislav**

Meanwhile Stefan, the King of Serbia, having fallen ill, became a monk and died in 1227. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Radoslav, who was crowned king at Žiča by Archbishop Sava. The younger sons of Stefan, Vladislav and Uroš, received appanages. Stefan's youngest son, who had become a monk and had also taken the name Sava, was shortly thereafter appointed Bishop of Hum and was to be Archbishop of Serbia from 1263 to



1270. The same family thus dominated both Church and state. And the close ties between dynasty and Church as well as the dynasty's role within the Church continued.

At first Radoslav, according to the biographer and monk Theodosius, was a good ruler, but then he fell under the influence of his wife. She, of course, was Greek—the daughter of Theodore of Thessaloniki-Epirus. And scholars have indeed detected a degree of Byzantine (Greek) influence on Radoslav. For example, when in exile in Dubrovnik after he was overthrown, Radoslav issued on 4 February 1234 a charter to Dubrovnik, valid upon his restoration to his throne, in which he gave himself the Byzantine royal name of Ducas. Whether Radoslav derived this name from his mother Eudocia, the daughter of Alexius III Angelus, whose family had intermarried with the Ducas family, or from his wife, whose father Theodore frequently used the last name Ducas, is not certain. Radoslav also referred to himself as Ducas on his coins.

Radoslav, in the interest of maintaining friendly relations with Epirus, seems to have wanted to improve his ties with Demetrius, the Archbishop of Ohrid, who, of course, was furious at the Serbs for their defection from his archdiocese. Radoslav corresponded with Demetrius about certain canonical issues, albeit those that did not directly touch upon Serbia's status; however, the very existence of this correspondence and the relationship it reflected may well have made Serbian churchmen uneasy. They may even have seen in it a threat to the newly won independence of the Serbian Church. Radoslav was probably safe from domestic rebellion as long as his neighbor Theodore remained strong. However, Radoslav's position seems to have weakened after Theodore's defeat and capture by John Asen II in 1230. Opposition against Radoslav grew, and in the fall of 1233 some of his nobles revolted. Radoslav fled from Serbia at some time between 1 September 1233 and 4 February 1234; for on the latter date he is found in Dubrovnik issuing to that city a charter of privileges whose validity depended upon Radoslav regaining his kingdom, something he was never able to do. Radoslav eventually returned to Serbia to become a monk.

Radoslav was succeeded by his brother Vladislav. Archbishop Sava, not part of the plot against Radoslav, was unhappy, but he eventually agreed to crown Vladislav. Then, upset by the dissensions among his nephews, Sava abdicated, taking a pilgrimage to Palestine. On his way home in 1235, Sava died during a visit to the Bulgarian court. The Bulgarians then buried him with honor in Trnovo. By this time Vladislav was married to John Asen's daughter Belisava. Their marriage seems to have occurred after Vladislav's coronation. As relations were fairly cordial between the two states, the Serbs were able, after a series of requests, to persuade the Bulgarians to return Sava's body. It was then buried in the monastery of Mileševo, built by Vladislav. Sava was soon canonized and his relics worked many miracles. His cult was to remain important throughout the rest of the medieval and Turkish periods.

At this time the Hungarians were exerting pressure on the lands south of the Danube. We discussed their conquest of Braničevo and Beograd from Bulgaria and the threat of their attacking Bulgaria in response to a papal summons in the late 1230s. At the same time, between 1235 and 1241, as we shall see, they were campaigning as crusaders against Bosnia. These policies posed a threat to the Serbs, now broken with Catholicism and once again fully in the Orthodox camp. This threat may have been a contributing factor to the marriage alliance Vladislav concluded with Bulgaria, then under the powerful Asen, who also was threatened by Hungary. Some scholars have speculated that under Vladislav Serbia accepted Bulgarian suzerainty. Whether or not it did is not known.

Serbia, though possibly feeling threatened, was not directly attacked by the Hungarians. However, the Hungarian crusaders, as we shall see, did threaten Serbian Hum directly. In fact, they may even have occupied some of it. Documents refer to Hungarian action in Hum, though it is not made clear whether the Hungarians had penetrated the parts of Hum under Serbian control or whether all their activity occurred in western Hum between the Neretva and Cetina rivers, where the Serbs had no role. In any case, once faced with this situation, the Serbs asserted their right to Hum and Vladislav added "Hum" to his title.

In the spring of 1243 the "inhabitants" of Serbia rose up and ousted Vladislav; they put Uroš, the third brother, on the throne. Many scholars have argued that Bulgarian influence had been strong and unpopular in Serbia under Vladislav, causing domestic opposition to him that was able to break out and bring about Vladislav's deposition after the death of his powerful father-in-law John Asen II in June 1241. It is impossible to prove that Radoslav and Vladislav were representatives of pro-Epirote and pro-Bulgarian parties in Serbia. But at least Asen's death did remove a powerful prop who might have aided Vladislav and prevented Uroš' successful coup.

Though overthrown, Vladislav did not retire from state affairs. He maintained good relations with his brother Uroš and was still referred to as king with his name linked to Uroš' in some official documents. Whether he had any special position or territorial responsibility is not known. However, since, as we shall see, Uroš seems to have opposed appanages, it seems likely that Vladislav was not given one.

## **Zeta in the Second Quarter of the Thirteenth Century**

Under Radoslav Vukan's son George re-emerged as governor of Zeta under Radoslav's suzerainty. Whether he had remained there throughout the latter half of Stefan's reign, possibly surrendering his kingship in exchange for an appanage within Zeta, or whether he had re-asserted himself, with local support, upon Stefan's death is unknown. In any case, whether the arrangement was based on a more ancient agreement or on one he and his supporters were able to wrench from Radoslav, George seems to have guaranteed his

position by a negotiated settlement. He clearly ruled with Radoslav's permission, be it happily or unhappily granted, and with recognition of Radoslav's suzerainty, because the charters George issued needed confirmation by Radoslav. How much of Zeta George held is not known. He continued to hold onto an appanage in Zeta under Vladislav. He is then found associated with the coastal town of Ulcinj, whose bishop was negotiating submission to the Archbishop of Dubrovnik and thus acting against the claims of the Archbishop of Bar, whose interests both Vukan and Nemanja had supported. The Ragusan records refer to George as Prince of Duklja, son of "Župan" Vukan. The mention of his being Vukan's son shows that this George is in fact George of Zeta. Not only was his title reduced from "king" to "prince," (or at least that is how Dubrovnik, probably interested in maintaining good relations with Serbia, spoke of him), but he or the town also posthumously deflated Vukan's title.

In 1242, a letter of the Bishop of Ulcinj, confirming the agreement with Dubrovnik, refers to "our king." Did this usage reflect local patriotism or was it instead evidence that George was again trying to claim that title, perhaps taking advantage of the chaos caused by the Tatars' passing through Serbia and of the disorders at home that were to lead to Vladislav's deposition in 1243?

In 1243 Uroš came to the throne and George disappears from the sources. There is no evidence that any other member of the family ruled Zeta thereafter, though George's brother Stefan, who built the Morača monastery in 1251 or 1252, is spoken of as king in a seventeenth-century fresco (thought to be a redoing of an older, possibly contemporary, one). A third brother, Dmitri, who built a church at Brodarevo on the Lim in 1281, called himself only župan and soon thereafter became a monk. Thereafter no more is heard of Vukan's descendants in Zeta.

The different locations—scattered widely apart across Zeta—in which the three brothers left evidence suggest that perhaps each brother was given a small appanage by one of the Kings of Raška: George's along the coast, including Ulcinj; Stefan's on the Morača River; and Dmitri's on the Lim. The local populations of their appanages (or at least the Bishop of Ulcinj and the fresco painter of Morača) honored George and Stefan with the traditional royal title, even though that title was not recognized by foreign states, as is seen when Dubrovnik referred to George as prince rather than king.

In any case, regardless of what territory Vukan's descendants controlled, Zeta was under Serbian (Raškan) suzerainty. When Vladislav granted Ragusan merchants free-trade privileges in his realm, in listing the regions under his rule Vladislav included Zeta and made no reference to George or any other descendant of Vukan.

The documents, examined above, showing that George and the Bishop of Ulcinj recognized the Archbishop of Dubrovnik and gave up recognition of Zeta's Archbishop of Bar, are curious, for the secular rulers of Zeta, including George's father Vukan, were regularly strong partisans of Bar's claims. Since

in the 1240s Uroš of Serbia—and perhaps Vladislav before him as well—was also a strong advocate of Bar's claims, could George's relations with Dubrovnik have been an attempt to build up other alliances as a first step toward separating himself and his holding from Serbian rule? In any case, whatever George's motives for opposing the Church policy of his cousins ruling Serbia and of Zeta's archbishop, George's actions came at a moment when the quarrel between Dubrovnik and Bar had reached crisis proportions.

In 1247, after the death of an Archbishop of Bar had created a vacancy in that see, an envoy of the Archbishop of Dubrovnik came to Bar to read a letter expressing Dubrovnik's rights. The Serbian-appointed prince (or mayor) in Bar tried to be agreeable and neutral. But the leading cleric in Bar at the time, the archdeacon, could not find the time to meet the envoy. The archdeacon refused the first summons because he had to have lunch and the second because he had to go hunting; so eventually the Ragusan archbishop's letter was read to an assembly demanded by the envoy and convoked by the prince, but attended only by the lay population, with the clerics prominent by their absence. The citizens shouted down the envoy, and when he suggested that the pope supported Dubrovnik's claim, they cried, "What is the pope? Our lord, King Uroš, is our pope!" After this failure the embassy, on the verge of departing, heard rumors that it was to be attacked on the road. So, the prince gave it an escort, including his own son, to see it safely along its route.

The Archbishop of Dubrovnik then turned to the pope to protest. The pope seemed willing to listen, but at the same time, much to Dubrovnik's disappointment, he appointed a new archbishop—giving him the disputed higher rank—for Bar, John de Plano Carpini, a Franciscan famous for his earlier mission to the Mongols. Carpini began by being conciliatory. On his way to Bar he stopped in Dubrovnik, where he agreed that each side should gather all the evidence it could about the rights of each Church, after which both sides should meet, bringing their documents for discussion, at the neutral site of Kotor. (Kotor was neutral because it, alone among Dalmatian sees, was subordinated to the Archbishop of Bari in Italy.) Then, Carpini proposed, after the meeting and within four months, each side should take its documents to the pope for judgment. John promised to excommunicate anyone in Bar who should try to prevent the meeting in Kotor and promised not to use any Church discipline against Ulcinj, Bar's suffragan then recognizing Dubrovnik. Ulcinj soon thereafter, in 1249 or 1250, returned in its allegiance to Bar. Once in Bar, however, Archbishop John became a strong partisan of the rights of his see. And it seems that the proposed meeting in Kotor never took place. At one point in the ensuing dispute John was seized and imprisoned by Dubrovnik and had to purchase his release, for which humiliation he then excommunicated the Ragusans.

In any case the two contending archbishops finally presented their cases to the pope in 1252. Dubrovnik objected to the title archbishop for Bar and insisted that Bar and all its suffragans should be subjected to Dubrovnik. Bar claimed its see was older than Dubrovnik's. Originally, Bar claimed, there

were only two archbishops in Dalmatia: Salona (now Split) and Dioclea (succeeded to by Bar). Dubrovnik was a newcomer, at first only a bishopric, whose jurisdiction extended only over the town of Dubrovnik itself, under the supervision of the archbishop in Split. Dubrovnik insisted that in the eighth century Pope Zacharias had installed a certain Andrew as Archbishop of Dubrovnik and had placed him over a whole series of territories and towns, including Bar and its present suffragans. However, this letter—almost certainly a forgery—could not be produced, Dubrovnik claimed, because seventy years before a Serbian king [Stefan Nemanja] had stolen it when he occupied Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik also cited a series of submissions to its archbishop by various southern Dalmatian bishoprics, such as Ulcinj's in 1189 and 1242; pointed out that Pope Alexander III (1159–81) had recognized an excommunication of Bar and Ulcinj for disobedience by the Ragusan archbishop; and finally claimed that Bar had been recognized as an archbishopric only owing to an error; for Innocent III had given this recognition, it was claimed, at a time when the see of Dubrovnik was vacant and thus unable to protest. For its part, Bar denied its see had been created in this manner and stated that a whole series of documents presented by Dubrovnik to support its claims of jurisdiction over neighboring territories had nothing whatsoever to do with Duklja (Zeta). Bar supported its case with a series of documents from the previous century and a half, showing its archbishop exercising jurisdiction over its diocese with the approval of the pope.

While the pope and the agent he had appointed to supervise the case, the Archbishop of Ancona, heard the conflicting testimony, rumors circulated that King Uroš, a supporter of Bar, planned to attack Dubrovnik. Shortly thereafter, as we shall see, he in fact did. Meanwhile, to obtain further information a papal commission, accompanied by the two feuding bishops, left Italy to visit the two cities. After a visit to Dubrovnik, they were scheduled to visit Bar. But the Archbishop of Dubrovnik did not dare go there, for word was out that Uroš had ordered his capture and intended to skin him alive. Rumor also circulated to the effect that Uroš did not care what the pope should decide, for the pope had no authority in his kingdom, which had its own archbishop [the Orthodox Archbishop of Serbia] honored alike by Slavs and Latins.

On 1 August 1252, Archbishop John of Bar died, and despite Dubrovnik's protests, the pope again appointed a new archbishop for Bar. At the same time, in 1252, Dubrovnik, now involved in a war with Serbia, signed a treaty of alliance with Bulgaria, in which the Bulgarian ruler Michael promised that if he succeeded in his ambition to expel Uroš and Vladislav from Serbia and extend his conquests to the coast, he would turn over to the Church of Dubrovnik the coastal cities it had a right to. The Bulgarians, however, produced little more than a raid against Serbia and obtained no significant results.

The Church dispute continued to drag on without solution. In 1254, at

the death of the new Archbishop of Bar, the pope confirmed a successor; at the same time Dubrovnik concluded peace with Uroš. Finally, in 1255, Dubrovnik's representative to the papacy wrote home saying he could achieve nothing and sought permission to return home. Permission was granted, and in the absence of further pressure the papacy seems to have tabled the whole issue. Thus no final decision was given, and Bar won by default.

Stanojević argues that Dubrovnik simply gave up the fight. It was costing the town considerable money to maintain a lobbyist in Rome and his efforts were getting nowhere. The Serb ruler, in whose territory the disputed suffragans lay, was insistent that these sees be under Bar. Thus Dubrovnik's attempts to reassert the authority of its archbishop were bringing about bad relations with its powerful Serbian neighbor; in fact this issue may have been a major cause for Serbia's recent attack on Dubrovnik and the war that followed. So, when the pope, who was becoming tired of the whole quarrel, confirmed Bar's new archbishop, Dubrovnik recalled its lobbyist.<sup>7</sup> Thus Bar won a full victory, keeping its archbishopric and all its suffragans, and Serbia was not forced to see any of its Catholic coastal cities subordinated to an archbishop resident outside of the Serbian state.

Throughout this lengthy dispute, Kotor had remained neutral. Though its Church was listed in various papal bulls as being subject to the Archbishop of Dubrovnik, Kotor had made its own submission to the Archbishop of Bari in Italy in the eleventh century and remained under Bari thereafter. As Kotor was Serbia's major coastal city, its bishop received special honor from Serbia's rulers, and all Catholics living in the interior of Serbia (privileged foreigners granted the right to reside there whose religious freedom was guaranteed by charter, they included the Sasi [Saxon] miners and the Dalmatian merchants) were placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Kotor. The Bishop of Kotor was also given jurisdiction over the Catholics in Serbia's Hum (east of the Neretva) and later, after Serbia acquired it, over Catholics in Mačva. Kotor's privileged position no doubt emerged naturally. In the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Serbia merchants from Kotor outnumbered those from any other Catholic center; they established colonies with churches, in Serbia, and (presumably) naturally recognized the authority of their own bishop. Their wishes in this coincided with those of Serbia's rulers who maintained throughout cordial and close ties with Kotor and certainly would have preferred Catholics in Serbia to be governed by a bishop in a town that recognized Serbian suzerainty rather than by a bishop located in an independent town like Dubrovnik.

Bar, needless to say, was not happy about this. And in the second half of the thirteenth century Bar was to quarrel with Kotor over which bishop had jurisdiction over the Catholic church, built by the Sasi, in Brskovo in Serbia. Early in the fourteenth century Bar temporarily won out, obtaining from the papacy the right to administer Catholics in Brskovo, Rudnik, Trepča, Gračanica, and around Mount Rogozna. But this victory seems to have remained

a dead letter; for in the middle of the fourteenth century Pope Clement V was calling upon the relevant Slavic rulers to help the Bishop of Kotor collect his tithes in these and other places.

Kotor's bishop was to retain his jurisdiction over Catholics in Serbia thereafter, even though Dubrovnik, which by the middle of the fourteenth century had more merchants in Serbia than Kotor did, presumably would have liked to have had its colonists in Serbia under the Archbishop of Dubrovnik. Even Kotor's political submission to Venice in 1420 did not change jurisdictional matters, though in practice the bishop may well have had more difficulty in exercising his authority thereafter. However, despite various differences with Venice, Serbia's rulers desired good relations with Venice and were not going to disrupt these relations over what to them was a relatively unimportant issue. Thus one clause in the Serbian-Venetian treaty of 1435 specifically recognized Kotor's jurisdiction over all Roman Catholic property in Serbia.

### **Hum in the Second Quarter of the Thirteenth Century**

Very little is known about Hum at this time. In the last chapter we saw that in ca. 1216 Raška occupied most of Hum east of the Neretva, leaving only a small appanage (Popovo Polje and the coast) for Andrew (Andrej), Miroslav's son and Stefan of Raška's client. Peter, probably Andrew's brother, who had expelled Andrew earlier, retreated beyond the Neretva where he continued to rule in western Hum, styling himself Prince (Knez) of Hum. Shortly thereafter, probably in 1220, a Serbian bishopric for Hum was established by Sava with its seat in Ston, the traditional capital of Hum. Peter had held this city early in the second decade of the thirteenth century, but presumably, after Stefan's campaign that led to Andrew's acquisition of the coast, Ston had gone to Andrew. Probably he still held it in 1219/20, making it easy for Stefan and Sava to install their bishop in Ston. Some scholars claim that Peter held Ston at this time; if so, he probably allowed the bishop's installation to avoid further friction with Stefan, which might result in Stefan expelling him from Ston. In any case, with its bishop installed in Ston, Raška could increase its influence in Hum, both binding tighter to Raška those parts of Hum already held by Raška and exerting its propaganda through the Church in the regions of Hum not under Raškan rule. In 1227 the Catholic bishop was allowed to return to Ston, and for a while the town had both a Catholic and a Serbian bishop.

Andrew of Hum disappears from the sources at about this time, unless he should turn out to be the Andrew referred to as Prince of Hum in the 1240s. Most probably, however, that individual was a second Andrew from a subsequent generation. Between 1222 and 1225 Peter is referred to as Prince of Hum (presumably the term still refers to western Hum, though possibly by the 1220s Peter had regained the coastal territory as far as Ston) at which time he was elected prince of the town of Split. Thomas the Archdeacon, historian of

Split, refers to Peter as a “heretic,” though he never states the nature of Peter’s heresy. Quite possibly this was merely a term of abuse directed at Peter because of his Orthodoxy and the support he gave to the Serbian Orthodox bishop in Ston. However, Thomas says, the townspeople of Split liked Peter and refused to listen to the Church and oust him. So, Peter remained in office until ca. 1225. For this disobedience the Catholic Church placed the whole town under interdict.

In the late 1230s Toljen (who died in 1239, according to Thomas), possibly Peter’s nephew, was Prince of Hum; in addition he was active in the politics of Split, opposing the Šubići of Bribir who held Split as vassals of the King of Hungary. In the 1240s Toljen’s successor Andrew, called Great Prince of Hum but clearly active only in western Hum, allied himself with Split and Ninoslav of Bosnia against the Hungarians’ local supporters the Šubići and the town of Trogir. Andrew is last mentioned in 1249. He presumably died soon thereafter. Orbini says he was buried in an Orthodox church in Ston. Thus the holdings of these last rulers of western Hum seem also to have extended along the coast, beyond the Neretva, to and including Ston. How long the holders of western Hum had also controlled this coastal strip and Ston is not known. But, as noted, various scholars have claimed this control went back to Peter’s reign, possibly as far back as 1219/20. When the second Andrew died his lands in Hum were divided among three sons, according to traditional Slavic inheritance custom, with the eldest, Radoslav, receiving the largest share.

### **Bosnia in the Second Quarter of the Thirteenth Century**

After Ban Kulin disappears from the sources in 1204, Bosnia’s history falls under a cloud of obscurity for a decade and a half. Possibly Kulin’s son, who visited Hungary to confirm the Bolino Polje resolutions, succeeded in Bosnia. The Catholic Church in Bosnia, if we can believe later Ragusan chronicles, continued to recognize the Archbishop of Dubrovnik; it sent bishops to him for consecration and he toured Bosnia on occasion. Split and Hungary continued to complain about this relationship, but the Bosnians simply ignored the papal order to subordinate their Church to Split. Their policy seems to have succeeded temporarily, for sources from the 1210s no longer contain such complaints, and the Bosnians, remaining under Dubrovnik, were for a short while left in peace. Soon, however, Hungary was to change its line of attack and begin a campaign to subject the Church in Bosnia to Kalocsa, an archbishopric inside Hungary.

Meanwhile in the 1220s documents again refer to heretics in Bosnia and in the lands of the Kačići, a family of Dalmatian nobles based in Omiš and at the mouth of the Cetina River who was often involved in piracy. No source gives any details about what this heresy consisted of. A papal legate visited both regions in 1221 and 1222 but seems to have achieved little or nothing, for in 1225 the pope was calling on the Hungarians to launch a crusade to



clean up Bosnia. At that time Hungary had too many internal difficulties to respond, so Bosnia was left in peace. Bosnia's Catholic Church continued to need reform; and in 1232 a papal letter described the Catholic Bishop of Bosnia as being illiterate, defending heretics (among whom was his own brother), having obtained his position through simony, being ignorant of the baptismal formula, not performing the mass, and not carrying out the sacraments in his own church. A papal legate removed this ignorant prelate, and in his place the pope appointed a German Dominican as Bishop of Bosnia. Thus for the first time a native Bosnian did not hold the bishop's post. Instead a foreigner was appointed, though it is not known whether the German ever actually set foot in Bosnia. What actually happened thereafter to the management of the Church in Bosnia is unknown; though presumably nothing in fact had changed, at least on paper the Bosnians had lost control of their Church hierarchy.

By this time the ruler of Bosnia was a ban named Ninoslav. In 1233, when the pope appointed the German Bishop of Bosnia, Ninoslav had renounced "heresy" (again, of unspecified character). But despite Ninoslav's renunciation, the pope in 1234 called on the Hungarians to crusade against heretics in Bosnia. This time the Hungarians willingly obliged. Thus either the Bosnians had not carried out their promises to reform and had simply continued to follow their own ways (possibly not knowing how to do otherwise), or else Hungary, now freed from its internal problems, wanted to use religion as an excuse to assert its authority over Bosnia, an authority that had become entirely nominal in the course of Kulin's reign and the following decades. Thus quite possibly the impetus for the crusade was Hungary's ambition to assert its authority in the southwestern Balkans, for which it gained papal endorsement by setting the pope up with alarming reports about conditions in Bosnia.

The campaign was actively carried out between 1235 and 1241. There is no evidence that Hungarian troops reached Bosnia proper (the Bosnian banate) before 1238; for in Slavonia and in various parts of greater Bosnia between the Sava and the northern borders of the banate there were said to be many heretics; and presumably the crusaders would have had to subdue these regions first before they could reach the Bosnian banate. Presumably the northerners would have resisted, and since theirs was a mountainous territory the crusaders' progress probably would have been slow. In any case, the first indication given of crusader success in Ninoslav's state comes from 1238. For in that year the Dominicans who followed in the wake of the crusaders were erecting a cathedral for Bosnia in Vrhbosna (modern Sarajevo). That they were erecting it here shows that the Hungarians controlled Vrhbosna; thus at least this part of Ninoslav's state had been occupied. However, it is clear that they had not conquered all his lands, for if they had one would expect the church to have been erected in the central part of his banate, in or around Visoko, rather than Vrhbosna, then a peripheral town. Also showing that Ninoslav was still in control of at least some of his territory is a charter of

commercial privileges that, as Ban of Bosnia, he issued to Dubrovnik in 1240.

The Catholic Church in Bosnia was now placed in the hands of the Dominicans. The German bishop, who had never wanted the post, succeeded, after many requests, in having himself relieved of this office. The new bishop, the Dominican Ponsa, was also assigned "Hum." Whether this meant the Hungarians had also penetrated into Hum, between the Cetina and Neretva rivers, or whether this was simply a claim or plan is unknown. It is highly unlikely that the Hungarians penetrated into any of Serbian Hum; thus regardless of what the bishop's title may have been meant to claim, his actual jurisdiction at the most would have extended only to western Hum. Dominican sources also mention that some Bosnian heretics were burned at the stake. Yet despite the presence inside Bosnia of Hungarian clerics and troops who might have been in a position to discover some facts about the content of Bosnia's heresy, no source provides a single concrete fact about its nature.

Regardless of papal intent, the crusade had become a war of conquest for Hungary, and the Hungarians took advantage of it to occupy a large part of Ninoslav's banate (but not all of it, as the 1240 charter granted to Dubrovnik shows). Then in 1241 the Tatars, having conquered Kiev and south Russia, attacked Hungary. The Hungarians had to withdraw their troops from Bosnia to meet this threat. In a major battle on the Sajó River on 11 April 1241 the Tatars wiped out a major Hungarian army; among those killed was Koloman, brother of the Hungarian king, who had been the commander of the crusading forces in Bosnia. The Tatars then pursued King Bela of Hungary, who fled through Slavonia and Croatia to Dalmatia whence he took a ship to safety on an Adriatic island. The Tatars occupied themselves with plundering in both Croatia and Dalmatia—including some Serbian territory in southern Dalmatia—until news came of the death of the Great Khan in Karakorum. To be in on the action of electing a new khan, the Tatars turned back; they returned east via Zeta, Serbia, and Bulgaria, all of which they looted as they passed through, with the Bulgarians suffering the greatest damage. But though the Tatars proved a disaster for much of the Balkans, Bosnia benefited, for the Tatars forced the withdrawal of the Hungarian troops from Bosnia, and these troops were not to return. Thus Bosnia was able to reassert its independence and reoccupy the territories the Hungarians had taken.

In the mid-1240s, having failed to achieve his ends in Bosnia, the pope again called on the Hungarians to crusade in Bosnia. Thus this danger remained ever present. Ninoslav wrote the pope, insisting he was a good Catholic; he admitted associating with heretics but stated that he had only turned to them because he needed assistance in defending Bosnia from foreign invasion (i.e., the Hungarian crusade). The pope seems to have seen the logic of Ninoslav's argument, for in 1248 he ordered the Hungarians, who appeared ready to attack Bosnia, to take no action until the pope had had time to carry out his own investigation into the actual situation in Bosnia. The pope seems to have been interested in ascertaining the true facts, for this time he dis-

patched neither a Hungarian nor a Dominican but rather a Franciscan, together with a bishop from the coastal town of Senj, who should have had no ulterior motives to color their report. What they reported has not survived.

The Hungarians now changed their tack; once again they launched a polemical attack on Dubrovnik's archbishop and his inability to manage Bosnia's Church; once again the Hungarians called for the reassignment of Bosnia, but this time they sought Bosnia's subordination to Kalocsa, an archbishopric within Hungary. After King Bela repeated this demand in several letters written to the pope between 1246 and 1252, and after various papal inquiries, the pope at last gave in and in 1252 assigned the Church of Bosnia to Kalocsa. However, in so doing, instead of gaining Bosnia or even influence inside Bosnia, the pope and Hungary lost Bosnia for Catholicism entirely. For from 1252 the Hungarian-appointed Bishop of Bosnia resided not in Bosnia but in Djakovo in Slavonia. He remained resident there for the rest of the Middle Ages. It is clear that the Bosnians, seeing him as a tool of their political enemies the Hungarians, would have nothing to do with him and would not let him reside in Bosnia. Thus this bishop, bearing a meaningless title and having no influence upon Bosnian affairs, remained in Slavonia and involved himself chiefly with Hungarian court affairs and with land disputes in Slavonia.

Early in the fourteenth century documents begin to mention in Bosnia an autonomous institution known as the Bosnian Church. The papacy and Hungarians called it heretical and by the mid-fifteenth century were at times suggesting it was neo-Manichean or dualist, thus part of the same movement as the Bulgarian Bogomils and the French Cathars. Like the clerics who represented the Bosnian Catholics at Bolino Polje, the Bosnian Church clerics seem to have been monks. And both the Catholic monks in 1203 and the later Bosnian Church clerics called themselves "Christians." The Bosnian Catholic bishops early in the thirteenth century had frequently—or even regularly—been drawn from among these monks. Thus it is probable that, after 1234, when the German had been appointed bishop, and after 1235, when the crusade was launched, the Bosnians simply ignored the organizational changes that international Catholicism was trying to force upon them. They continued to follow their own clergy and elect their own bishops; presumably these bishops continued to be chosen from their own monks. And thus the Bosnians continued to administer their own Church affairs.

When the Hungarians appeared with troops and Dominicans and tried to re-establish a branch of the international Catholic Church there, their activities were limited to the areas they occupied, where they did a certain amount of church building. But after only three years they had had to withdraw; thus they were given far too little time to make much impact on the local population, who, we may suppose, was hostile from the start. The Hungarians were never able to return; thus their crusade had little or no lasting impact on the Bosnians, who in the years that followed continued to follow their own clerics and their own ways. There was no incentive for the Bosnians

to alter matters, particularly after 1252 when Bosnia's official Church was subordinated to a Hungarian archbishop. Thus what may have started as a temporary expedient, after the "reform" of 1252, turned into a permanent state of affairs and led to the establishment of a separate Church institution. Thus the crusades led to the permanent separation of the Bosnian monastic order (and those Bosnians who followed the monks) from international Catholicism. These Hungarian actions also increased the Bosnians' hatred for the Hungarians, a sentiment which was to last and be an influential factor in Bosnian politics up to (and even contributing to) the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463.

Most scholars have depicted the Bosnian Church as dualist. And some of the dualists living along the Dalmatian coast may indeed have come to Bosnia. In fact, Catholic Church sources do mention "heretics" fleeing from Split and Zadar into Bosnia. Unfortunately none of these sources ever specifies what sort of heretics these refugees were. It is likely, however, that some or all were dualists. However, the domestic Bosnian monks at the turn of the century seem to have considered themselves Catholics, and there was nothing dualist about the errors they renounced in 1203. The main flaws in Bosnian Catholicism then and later seem to have resulted not from particular heretical influences or beliefs but rather from ignorance. This ignorance is well illustrated by the description of the native Catholic bishop removed from office for that reason in 1232. The surviving Bosnian and Ragusan documents about the Bosnian Church that do make specific references to its beliefs suggest the Bosnian Church continued to hold mainstream Christian beliefs throughout its existence. Thus it seems to me, and I have argued this point at length elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> that the Bosnian Church emerged primarily to assert local independence from foreign interference; perhaps there was a little heretical or dualist influence upon it, but such influence certainly did not form the core of its beliefs. The new Church was based on a Catholic monastic order whose beliefs provided the basis of Bosnian Church beliefs. There was no reason for these monks, when seceding from international Catholicism, to have suddenly changed in a major way their existing beliefs. To have done so would have been an extraordinary occurrence—and though a handful of angry individuals might have adopted a new religion out of spite in such a situation, a whole monastic order certainly would not have.

Thus the Bosnians seem simply to have seceded under their own native clergy, who through ignorance had been carrying out certain "incorrect" practices; after secession they no doubt continued these practices. But they also would have retained the other beliefs and practices they had followed up to this point, and these were basically Catholic. Such an origin and course of development has the characteristics of what anthropologists call a Nativistic Movement, a term I find very fitting for Bosnia's newly emerging Church. Though this Church can be documented only from the early fourteenth century, at which time it is found in full-fledged existence, the logical time for its creation would have been in the middle of the thirteenth, a period for which

we have very few sources and none from Bosnia itself. We shall discuss this Church again, as it becomes relevant, in our discussion of Bosnia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Though Bosnia's religious policy was an act of defiance against Hungary, the Hungarians were unable to alter the situation. Ninoslav was still the ruler of Bosnia in 1249 when he issued another charter to Dubrovnik, with which he continued to maintain good relations. Since the Ragusans had been losing influence in Bosnia's Catholic Church, owing to Hungarian action, one would expect Dubrovnik to have had considerable sympathy for the Bosnians. After all their mutual relations had always been cordial. Had Dubrovnik, with its flexible tolerance, been allowed to continue supervising Bosnia's Catholic Church, the Bosnian schism presumably would not have occurred. Ninoslav is not mentioned again in the sources; presumably he died soon thereafter. The name of his successor is not known.

A Hungarian campaign was launched against Bosnia in 1253; presumably its aim was to subdue the banate and its Church. There is no evidence that Hungarian armies reached the banate, and for a variety of reasons I have presented elsewhere, it is apparent that the Hungarians did not conquer the banate then.<sup>9</sup> After 1253, and for the remainder of the thirteenth century, there were to be no more known Hungarian campaigns against Bosnia. Scholars have often argued that Bosnia was directly controlled by Hungary in the second half of the thirteenth century. But, if the banate was not conquered in 1253 and if no other Hungarian attacks occurred, how did Hungary gain this control? These scholars have generally believed this domination is demonstrated by "Bosnia's" being ruled over by a cousin of Ninoslav named Prijezda, who was a Hungarian vassal. Prijezda was clearly a Hungarian vassal, but all the specific lands he is documented as holding lay well to the north of the Bosnian banate, and no evidence exists to suggest he held any lands in the banate itself.

The northern reaches of greater Bosnia were without question under Hungary; they were ruled in the 1280s by Prijezda as well as by various members of the Hungarian royal house who were assigned appanages there. But this picture of Hungarian domination through vassal bans seems to have been true only for the northern regions, for every concrete reference to a region under such control refers to a region in the north—Soli, Usora, Vrbas, Sana. There is no evidence of Hungarian control or even activity in any part of the central Bosnian banate. Had the Hungarians held that region, they certainly would have tried to assert themselves, by sending troops and re-establishing the Church organization they had tried to initiate under the Dominicans in 1238–41. However, there is no evidence of any such action, and all the existing documents about the activities of Hungarian Dominicans in the second half of the thirteenth century concern Hungary itself or other territory well north of the banate. In fact no documents exist about the banate itself in the second half of the thirteenth century. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, the Bosnian banate probably continued to exist, as it had during the first half

of the century, as a de facto independent entity under Ninoslav's successors, whose names have not survived.

### **Croatia in the Second Quarter of the Thirteenth Century**

Croatia and Slavonia remained fairly decentralized under local nobles throughout the thirteenth century. When the Hungarian nobles revolted against King Andrew II and forced him to issue in 1222 a charter, known as the Golden Bull, defining the rights of the nobility, this charter affected only Slavonia (north of the Gvozd Mountain). However, the Croatian nobles south of that mountain already enjoyed most of the privileges that document granted. By 1255 under the Croatian duke, there existed two bans, one for Croatia and Dalmatia, the other for Slavonia.

In 1235 King Andrew died and was succeeded by his son Bela IV (1235–70). Bela did not come to Croatia for a second coronation, and thus the custom of two coronations ended at this time. But, the notion of a dual monarchy, uniting two kingdoms, Hungary and Croatia, in the person of one king bearing two titles, remained. (Some scholars claim that when he became king in 1205 Andrew did not have a Croatian coronation either and thus believe that the custom of a separate Croatian coronation had been dropped already. This issue cannot be settled because we have no documents on Andrew's coronation[s] at all.)

Bela was concerned with the power of the great nobles, which had been growing as a result of the privileges granted by Andrew; these had been either granted "voluntarily" to win the nobles' support during civil war or forced upon him and expressed in the Golden Bull. And the great families in Slavonia and Croatia had by way of land-grabbing and/or royal grants been enlarging their already sizeable territories. The Babonići rose to become the most powerful family in western Slavonia. They held a huge territory along the right bank of the Kupa, between modern Karlovac and Sisak, which they extended to include the region of Gorica as well as parts of the Kranj region.

In Croatia great power belonged to the Šubić family of Bribir. Its lands were divided among various branches of the family, among which one branch dominated. The elder of the dominant branch, who earlier bore the title župan but from the end of the twelfth century was entitled knez, always held the family seat of Bribir. The Kačići, an unruly family practicing piracy, dominated the region between the Cetina and Neretva rivers. They also held various Adriatic islands in the area. Their main town was Omiš.

Between the Kačići on the Cetina River and the Šubići of the county of Bribir lay the lands of a certain Domald. His family ties are unknown, though he may well have been a Kačić. Holding Šibenik and Klis, he was elected Prince of Split in 1209. That same year he took Zadar from Venice; it was a brief triumph, for Venice soon took it back again. Probably as a reward for regaining Zadar, King Andrew in 1210 awarded Domald the župa of Cetina. In the decade that followed, however, Domald's relations with both king and

Split cooled. In 1221 the citizens of Split expelled him, electing in his stead a member of the Šubić family, Višan of Zvonigrad. War followed between Domald and the Šubići that soon involved various other Croatian families in the area. With royal support, the Šubići emerged victorious by 1223, and the king granted his Šubić allies a substantial portion of Domald's lands. Victory did not bring peace, however, for the Šubić family elder, Prince Gregory of Bribir, was not happy to see his uncle Višan as Prince of Split. The two Šubići were soon at war and in the course of 1223 Gregory captured and executed his uncle; as a result he annexed his uncle's territory in Lika and united all the Šubić lands under his own authority. However, after the death of their prince, the citizens of Split, to avoid accepting his executioner, elected Peter of Hum as their prince. Also contributing to this action was Split's emerging hostility toward Hungary—Gregory's patron—a feeling reflected not only in its choice of prince but also in its efforts during this period to reject Hungarian candidates for its archbishop by turning directly to the pope.

Meanwhile, following his defeat at the hands of the Šubići, Domald, still in possession of Klis, remained ambitious to regain Split. He soon attacked but failed to take Split. Peter remained under attack, however, for Gregory Šubić, victorious over his uncle, then sought to acquire Split. Warfare between Gregory and Peter followed in 1224 and 1225; shortly thereafter Peter died and by 1227 Gregory Šubić was Prince of Split. Having a large territory to manage, Gregory installed a deputy in Split. At about the same time Gregory's younger brother Stjepan was elected Prince of Trogir. The two brothers co-operated, and under their rule the two towns, usually rivals, established peaceful relations.

In the course of further warfare the Šubići took Klis from Domald. To try to restore his lost position Domald then allied himself with the Kačići and resumed the war. During it, in 1229, Domald's partisans in Split expelled Gregory's deputy and re-elected Domald as Split's prince. In the fighting that followed, the King of Hungary threw his support to the Šubići and by 1231 Gregory was again Prince of Split. Shortly thereafter Gregory is found also as Prince of Šibenik, a town until then held by Domald. Gregory is mentioned as still being Prince of Split in 1234, after which he disappears from the sources. Since he was not young, it is probable that he died.

Domald took advantage of the new situation to re-assert himself. In 1235 he was again Prince of Split. His success was short-lasting, for the king's party in the town led an uprising in 1237 that again expelled him and elected in his place Gregory's son Marko. But Marko soon died, and leadership of the Šubić family fell to Stjepan's son Stjepan (usually called Stjepko). At this point the citizens of Split chose an Italian nobleman as their prince, but Stjepko inherited Trogir. Domald soon launched an attack against Trogir; the king sent aid to Stjepko and their combined forces soon defeated and captured Domald at Klis, which at some point he had regained.

Peace was not to follow, however, as the rivalry between Split and Trogir heated up. Trouble came to a head in 1242 when King Bela of Hungary

granted to Trogir lands in the hinterland of Split, which Split had long claimed for itself. Having the support of King Bela and also of the Šubići, who were angry at Split's attempt to exclude them, Trogir at once went to war against Split. Isolated and thus weaker, Split acquired new allies: the Kačići, Andrew of Hum, and Ninoslav of Bosnia. And in 1244 Split elected Ninoslav as its prince. He launched an attack against Trogir; his men ravaged the environs of Trogir, causing particular damage to its vineyards, but were unable to take the town itself. Ninoslav then returned to Bosnia, leaving a relative as his deputy in Split. The King of Hungary, supported by a large number of leading Croatian nobles (including Stjepko Šubić and Daniel Šubić, who held Šibenik for the family), marched against Split. Having no hope to withstand such opposition, Split immediately surrendered. Yielding to the king's demands, it made peace with Trogir and accepted as its prince a Hungarian appointee.

Soon thereafter Bela IV came to the conclusion that to prevent further wars among the Dalmatian towns his Croatian-Dalmatian ban, rather than the towns themselves, should choose the governors of towns. In 1250 he implemented this policy in Trogir and Split and in the years that followed in his other Dalmatian towns. The Šubići were unhappy over this change, for throughout the wars of the second quarter of the thirteenth century they had loyally supported the king, and now they were rewarded for their pains by being removed as princes from the Dalmatian coastal towns. The ban, who at this time had himself assumed the title of prince of each of the various Dalmatian towns, was unable to administer them directly. Thus he appointed a deputy—called a *podesta* or *potestas*—in each town to represent him. These deputies generally served for a year's term. And on one occasion, in 1263, the ban did appoint Stjepko Šubić to be his *podesta* for Šibenik.

While the warfare flared up all around it, Zadar tried to free itself from Venetian rule by a revolt in 1242–43, but failed.

As a result of the Tartar invasion of 1241–42, which caused considerable destruction in Croatia and Dalmatia, Bela IV allowed the nobles to establish securer defenses: to build castles on their lands and to increase the size of their private armies. The result, naturally, was to increase the power of the great nobles who became to an even greater extent independent masters of their districts; some even became great robber barons. This caused difficulties for Bela, and in an attempt to counter the authority of the great nobles in Hungary (including Slavonia) and to maintain his own influence, he tried to increase the power of the court nobility by assigning fiefs or even straight patrimonial grants to various courtiers and thereby provide them with a landed base. He also tried to appoint as his bans and governors nobles whose loyalty he trusted.

However, this policy of granting land to court nobles could not succeed in the long run, for later on the grantees (or their heirs) came to consider themselves great local lords with their own local interests, and thus in time many of them came to be members of the provincial independence-seeking nobility. Furthermore, the bans in the Slavic lands often tended to become



supporters of local interests and thus could not always be relied upon, except at moments of royal strength, to enforce the will of the monarch. The development of localist tendencies among newly endowed nobles and their successors was also to result when similar attempts were made by the Hungarian kings Charles Robert and Louis in the fourteenth century.

Bela also issued charters giving free-town status to various towns in the hope of separating them from the authority of the local nobles. The charters granted were based on Germanic models. Varaždin had already obtained such a charter in 1220 from Andrew II, who also issued charters to Vukovar in 1231 and Virovitica in 1234. Other Slavonian towns followed under Bela: Petrinja in 1240; Gradec, the fortified economic center for Zagreb (but not the cathedral chapter [kaptol], where the Zagreb bishop resided, under its own administration) in 1242; Samobor in 1242; Križevci in 1252; and Jastrebarsko in 1257. The towns elected their own councils and magistrates (usually by annual elections carried out as defined in their charters), ran their own administrations and law courts, collected their own taxes and dues, and managed their own economies and trade. Power to do so was embodied in the articles of their charters, supplemented by the decisions of their councils and magistrates. The towns also owed military service to the king and, being directly under the king, were removed from the jurisdiction of provincial officialdom.

In Church affairs, as noted, the Croatians of Slavonia were subject to the Archbishop of Kalocsa (in Hungary). The leading bishopric in Slavonia was that of Zagreb. The Dalmatians and Croatians south of Velebit were under the Archbishop of Split. Though much has been written about the retention of Slavonic written with the glagolitic alphabet by the Church in Croatia, it should be noted that for most of the Middle Ages glagolitic was used only in a limited area. In Slavonia, it seems to have been scarcely used; the earliest evidence we have of glagolitic in the region under the jurisdiction of Zagreb appears in the fifteenth century. The area in which glagolitic thrived was that of Lika, Gacka, Krbava, Vinodol, Modruš, and the islands in the Gulf of Kvarner. The decisions of various Church councils against Slavonic in the tenth and eleventh centuries do not seem to have been particularly effective in this region. The Catholic Church seems to have become more liberal toward diversity in the thirteenth century; in 1215 a Lateran council allowed for various differences in the service. This new attitude may have encouraged Philip, the Bishop of Senj, to ask Pope Innocent IV (1243–54) for permission to use glagolitic Slavonic in his diocese. Having explained to the pope that it was an ancient language dating back to Saint Jerome(!), Philip received the papal permission he sought. Thereafter glagolitic Slavonic was used with papal sanction in both church services and matters of daily life throughout this region. Latin predominated only in the larger towns; for example, in the town of Senj Latin was used by the Church and usually by its secular leaders, who from the 1250s were drawn from the Krk (later Frankapan) family.

In the thirteenth century the Templars, already based in Slavonia since the twelfth century and holding Senj from 1180, acquired territory in Croatia.

In order to participate in the crusade of 1217 Andrew II had had to borrow from the Templars. Unable to repay them he had granted them Gacka as compensation in 1219. The Templars may not have administered this territory themselves but merely have taken income from it, for in the 1250s a Krk prince is documented as being podesta of Senj. The Templars remained in possession of this Croatian territory until 1269 when Bela IV granted them the župa of Dubica in exchange for Gacka and Senj.

## NOTES

1. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, pp. 161–62.
2. The Serbs were, of course, not without legal order. Besides customary laws, from at least the time of Nemanja their rulers issued specific legal acts in the form of charters and grants of individual privilege.
3. The version chosen here is that adopted by Nicol, “The Fourth Crusade and the Greek and Latin Empires, 1204–61,” which is chapter 7 of *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 1966 ed., pp. 309–10. A second version that depicts the threatened Latin Empire opening negotiations with Asen—rather than having the initiative come from Asen—is often seen. For example, G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), pp. 435–36. The only difference between the two versions is the camp from which negotiations were opened. For it is evident that matters were never resolved between Latins and Bulgarians. And possibly the Latins, even if they had initiated matters, were not serious about concluding an agreement with Asen, but simply hoped to raise his hopes of getting influence in the city by treaty and thus split his alliance with Theodore and prevent him from providing troops for Theodore’s attack.
4. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, p. 166.
5. The great empire founded by Ghenghis Khan should strictly be called Mongol and the term *Tatar* becomes proper only in about 1242/43 when Batu Khan established a more or less independent khanate, known as the Golden Horde, in south Russia. Thereafter the term *Mongol* should still be used for the great khanate centered in Karakorum, while *Tatar* becomes appropriate for the khanate of Batu and his successors. However, since this same Batu and his followers were active in the Steppe area from the mid-1230s—though then as forces under orders from the Great Khan—I think it justified and in some ways less confusing to use *Tatar* for these Mongol armies active in the Steppes even in the mid- to late 1230s, rather than switch from *Mongol* to *Tatar* in mid-stream in the already complex enough 1240s.
6. I. Božilov, “La famille des Asen (1186–1460): Généalogie et prosopographie,” *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1981, nos. 1–2: 140.
7. St. Stanojević, *Borba za samostalnost katoličke crkve u Nemanjičkoj državi* (Beograd, 1912), pp. 154–56.
8. J. Fine, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, East European Monographs, vol. 10, East European Quarterly, distributed by Columbia University Press (Boulder and New York, 1975).
9. J. Fine, “Was the Bosnian Banate Subjected to Hungary in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century?” *East European Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (June 1969): 167–77.