

## CHAPTER 4

# The Second Half of the Thirteenth Century

### **Bulgaria upon John Asen II's Death**

John Asen's heir was his seven-year-old son Koloman. As had been the case previously, no apparatus existed to hold the state together. Bulgaria lacked a state-wide bureaucracy staffed by administrative and financial officials appointed by the central government and dispatched to the provinces. There was also no state-financed army raised by the state to serve under the command of state-appointed generals who owed their positions solely to state service. Instead the provinces were dominated by a provincial nobility; these nobles governed their localities, rendered to the state local taxes which they themselves collected, and dominated the army, which was to a large extent composed of local levies raised by and serving under these nobles themselves. Even when governors were sent out from the center, they found themselves unable to deprive the boyars of their local authority and thus served in co-operation with them. When a tsar like Asen proved himself a successful war chief, he won from the boyars, through their fear of punitive action or through their eagerness for booty, expressions of loyalty. Then, through these personal ties of allegiance, the localities commanded by the boyars became temporarily bound to Trnovo and the central government. Clearly such bonds could not bring lasting cohesion to a state.

Koloman's regents quarreled among themselves and the boyars split into squabbling factions. Peripheral territories seceded and neighbors were again able to wrest territories away from Bulgaria. The disintegration was facilitated by a new outside factor. Already in Asen's lifetime the Tatars had appeared in the Steppes northeast of the Danube on Bulgaria's border. In 1238–39 they had brought the loosely-held-together Cuman state, which stretched between the Volga and the Carpathians, under their control. Since the Cumans had normally enjoyed good relations with Bulgaria and regularly provided Bulgaria's armies with large numbers of troops, the collapse of this state was to considerably weaken Bulgaria militarily, particularly since the new Tatar

khanate was not usually particularly friendly. Thus Bulgaria saw a friendly neighbor replaced by a powerful and dangerous one. Many of the Cumans remained in the Steppes and were absorbed into the Tatar state, strengthening its armies. Others fled to Hungary, the Latin Empire, Nicea, or Bulgaria. Asylum granted to various Cuman leaders seems to have been a cause of the major Tatar attack, discussed above, launched against Hungary in the spring of 1241.

On 6 December 1240 Kiev fell to the Tatars. And, as we shall see, Asen gave asylum to various Russian princes and boyars, some of whom were presumably from families who had aided him during his ten-year exile in Russia. This Tatar expansion brought the Tatar state to Bulgaria's border. It was to remain there for the next century, being particularly influential on Bulgarian developments during the next sixty years. Of all the Balkan states, Bulgaria, having the Tatars immediately on its borders, was to be the most subject to Tatar influence: of all Balkan states it suffered the largest number of raids, fell first and remained longest under Tatar suzerainty, and absorbed the largest number of Tatar settlers, and thus experienced a greater mixing of peoples.

The Hungarians and Bulgarians, faced with this new power on their borders, must have seen the need to patch up their lesser differences and plan a joint defense should the Tatars try to expand further west. And, as we saw in the last chapter, early in 1240 a Bulgarian envoy was well received in Hungary, after which their relations seem to have improved. Then in the spring of 1241, before John Asen II died, the Tatars, having conquered south Russia, invaded Hungary. Defeating the Hungarian king's armies in a pitched battle on the River Sajó on 11 April 1241, the Tatars pursued King Bela to the Dalmatian coast, where he found safety by sailing to an island. The Tatars plundered Dalmatia until word reached them of the death of the great khan in Karakorum. They turned back, swinging east across Zeta—plundering Kotor, Svač, and Drivast (Drisht)—and Serbia, causing more destruction; possibly the inability of Serbia's King Vladislav to stop them alienated his subjects and thus contributed to his overthrow the following year.

The Tatars then passed through Bulgaria, meeting little opposition and doing considerable damage. Before they crossed the Danube, they probably also imposed tribute upon the Bulgarians. Such tribute is documented in 1253 as already in existence. Since there were no further known major Tatar attacks in the interim, 1242 seems the most likely date for its imposition. Since in 1242 time was short, the Tatars took only booty and prisoners; they took no fortresses and occupied no territory. Bulgaria's main rival for Thrace, Nicea, escaped Tatar attack. Though a second wave of Mongols had hit Anatolia from the east, as we saw above, it too had withdrawn to attend the selection of a new khan before it reached the Nicean state. And by devastating the realm of the Seljuks to Nicea's east, the Mongols had improved Nicea's position; for they had eliminated for a time Nicea's need to worry about a second front on

its eastern frontier. The devastations from this attack, coming at a moment of weakness at the center, set Bulgaria spinning into a rapid decline from which it never recovered.

In 1246 Koloman, who was the son of the wife Asen lost in 1237, died. Koloman was succeeded by Asen's son Michael, the offspring of Irene, Theodore's daughter whom Asen had married late in 1237. Michael was only about eight, so the problems associated with a minor as tsar and with regents continued. The cause of Koloman's early death is not known. Acropolites reports that some say he died of a natural illness while others say he was poisoned. Many scholars believe he was murdered and argue that supporters of little Michael and his mother Irene were responsible. They then argue that Irene became the leading regent for Michael. However, regardless of how Koloman died, it is almost certain that Irene did not become the regent for Michael. Recently Lazarov has published a convincing study which not only discredits the evidence supporting such a role for Irene, but also shows she was residing with her brother in Thessaloniki late in 1246; the context suggests she had been there for a while. She presumably had been exiled from Bulgaria early in Koloman's reign. Lazarov identifies Sevastocrator Peter, a son-in-law of Asen who is found in a high position on a charter to Dubrovnik, as the leading regent for Michael.

### **Nicea and Epirus, 1246–61**

The new regency in Bulgaria, which had not yet had time to install itself in power and which probably was faced with opposition from those who had surrounded Koloman, seems to have had little authority in much of Bulgaria. Taking advantage of this weakness, in 1246 Vatatzes of Nicea immediately attacked Bulgaria and took its holdings in Thrace as far as the upper Marica River. His gains included Adrianople and its district. Then, moving beyond Thrace, Vatatzes took the region of the Rhodopes, Melnik, Velbužd, and Serres. He also acquired the Chalcidic peninsula (with Mount Athos); his rule provided better order and security for the monasteries. He also took eastern Macedonia at least up to the Vardar, acquiring Skopje, Veles, and Prosek. Some scholars have argued that he actually pressed beyond the Vardar as far as Prilep or even Pelagonia (modern Bitola). This enormously successful campaign took only three months. In the course of it he also regained Tzurulum and Bizya from the Latins. Michael II of Epirus also got into the act and occupied western Macedonia, including Ohrid; much of Albania also clearly belonged to him at this time. Though some historians believe he now acquired Durazzo, it seems he had actually held it from the 1230s. Other scholars have argued that Epirus also acquired Bitola and Prilep. These scholars place the Epirote-Nicean border along the Vardar. Those scholars, noted above, who credit Vatatzes with greater success draw the border between Nicea and Epirus established by the end of 1246 between Pelagonia and Ohrid. In any case Bulgaria lost all this territory.

Having successfully annexed this region south of the Balkan Mountains which Asen had previously gained, Vatatzes, from a position of strength, obtained a treaty from Bulgaria that not only recognized Nicean possession of this territory but also brought Bulgaria into an alliance with Nicea against the Latin Empire. And apparently in 1247 the Bulgarians participated in a common military action with Nicea that acquired for Vatatzes several fortresses in eastern Thrace and even briefly besieged (without success) Constantinople. Bulgaria may also have suffered losses in the northwest. For in the late 1240s Hungary is found in possession of Beograd and Braničevo. If Asen had in fact recovered these cities from the Hungarians, as various Bulgarian scholars have asserted, then the Hungarians retook them, quite possibly in the midst of Bulgaria's troubles in 1246. However, it is by no means certain that Asen had regained them; thus they may have been in Hungarian hands since 1232.

At the close of Vatatzes' remarkably successful 1246 campaign against Bulgaria, he was preparing to return home when a marvellous opportunity to acquire Thessaloniki presented itself. In 1244 Theodore's son John had died. He had been succeeded in Thessaloniki by Theodore's younger son Demetrius, an extravagant and reckless young man. He quickly provoked against himself so much unpopularity that many Thessalonians came to feel it would be best to rid themselves of him and submit to Nicea. This would, of course, also have brought them the advantage of joining what was now the strongest Greek state, which more and more non-Nicean Greeks were coming to see as the Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Some leading Thessalonians formed a conspiracy to turn the city over to Vatatzes and sent envoys to him. Vatatzes naturally gave the conspirators his full support. He marched his armies to the city and ordered Demetrius to present himself and pay homage. Demetrius, suspicious of a conspiracy, refused to come out and do obeisance. Then the conspirators opened a gate to Vatatzes. Demetrius was captured, deposed on the grounds of refusing homage, and imprisoned briefly before being given large estates in Anatolia as compensation. His blind but still dangerous father, Theodore, was exiled to estates in Voden (Edessa). Vatatzes installed as governor in Thessaloniki Andronicus Palaeologus, the father of the future emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus. Michael at the time was made military governor of the newly recovered regions of Melnik and Serres. Vatatzes left a garrison in Thessaloniki and then rapidly annexed, against little opposition, the territory surrounding Thessaloniki.

Already sharing a border with Michael of Epirus somewhere in central or western Macedonia, Vatatzes now found himself facing Michael along a second border to his south, for Michael held most of Thessaly as well. Vatatzes' conquest of Thessaloniki had had little or no effect upon Epirus, for Epirus had already become for all practical purposes independent of the state of Thessaloniki. Interested in Constantinople, Vatatzes hoped to avoid conflict with Epirus, so he concluded a treaty with Michael. It was sealed with an engagement between Vatatzes' granddaughter and Michael's son and heir Nicephorus. This peace was not to last, however. Theodore, dissatisfied with

events, eventually persuaded Michael to break the treaty. Michael took some minor fortresses from Nicea, probably early in 1251. If it was not his already, he may also at the time have taken Prilep. Then, still in 1251, he moved against Thessaloniki.

At that moment Vatatzes was mobilizing to besiege Constantinople. Michael may well have directed his march against Thessaloniki at this time to prevent or disrupt that siege, for Michael seems to have had a long-range hope for Constantinople, and it would have been easier for him to take it from the weak Latins than from a dynasty of Greeks from Nicea. Fearing an attack on his rear during his siege, Vatatzes called off the operation and led his troops west against Michael, who wisely avoided an engagement and withdrew his armies into the mountains of Albania. Vatatzes took Kastoria, probably early in 1252, and then entered into negotiations with various Albanian chieftains. By winning the allegiance of Golem, the Albanian chieftain who held the mountain fortress of Kroja, Vatatzes broke the ice. Soon various other Albanian tribal leaders brought their tribes into his camp. Thus Nicea, through the declared loyalty of these chieftains, won suzerainty over much of southern and central Albania.

Michael, threatened with attack and seeing his hold over a large portion of his Albanian lands evaporating, sent envoys to conclude a truce. Soon, in 1253, this truce became a peace treaty. By its terms Michael not only had to cede the fortresses he had taken from Nicea in 1250 or 1251, but he also had to surrender various others that since 1246 had been his, not Nicea's. Some of these, like Kastoria, had already been taken by Vatatzes by the time of the treaty. Michael had clearly lost his Macedonian holdings, for after the treaty Vatatzes garrisoned the principal fortresses between Thessaloniki and Ohrid. Vatatzes also acquired suzerainty over part of the Albanian interior. Theodore, who had played a major role in stirring up this warfare, was captured and taken to a Nicean prison where soon thereafter he died. Theodore's last appanage, Voden, also went to Nicea. Michael's son Nicephorus, already engaged to Vatatzes' granddaughter, retained his marital hopes but was taken to Nicea, albeit with honor, but also as a hostage. He was awarded the title of despot. Having recognized Nicean suzerainty, Michael was also rewarded with the title despot; he, of course, was already using this title, having received it from Manuel of Thessaloniki in the 1230s.

Nicea now seemed in a strong position and, alone of all the former candidates, able to take Constantinople. Bulgaria was powerless to make an attempt for the city and by then had lost its Thracian lands; the Kingdom of Thessaloniki no longer existed; and Epirus was not only reduced in size but, deprived of its Macedonian holdings, was pushed back into northwest Greece, with its borders that much further from Constantinople. Having lost its Macedonian and some of its Albanian holdings, Epirus had also lost much potential manpower and was thus that much weaker militarily. Nicea's prospects for conquering Constantinople, moreover, appeared excellent. The city stood

alone, completely surrounded by Nicean possessions, at considerable distance from all its allies, and weakly defended.

To prepare for his attack on Constantinople Vatatzes, on his return from his 1252–53 campaign, took action to solidify his hold over his Thracian possessions. To do this he re-established the former Byzantine soldier-farmer system of settling soldiers who owed service for them on small plots of land. He did this not only in Thrace, but also in Macedonia to strengthen his hold on this newly gained region. Those so settled included many Cumans, who were still in large numbers leaving the Steppes, recently occupied by the Tatars.

Then, in November 1254, Vatatzes died. He was succeeded by his son Theodore II Lascaris, a scholarly man of letters. In January 1255 the Bulgarians took advantage of the death of the great military leader to overrun Macedonia all the way to Albania. Their reconquest was facilitated by local actions; for many Bulgarians living in Macedonian towns preferred Bulgarian rule to Nicean. Furthermore, Nicea had left only small garrisons in many of these towns; these garrisons were ousted without much difficulty. Two costly campaigns in 1255 and 1256 were required for the Niceans to recover this territory; all of it had been regained by July 1256. Peace was then concluded, mediated by Michael of Bulgaria's new father-in-law, Rostislav of Mačva. His presence reflected a recent Bulgarian decision on foreign policy. Having decided, after Vatatzes' death, that Nicea was its main enemy and the recovery of the southern and western territory its top priority, and moreover realizing it could not afford to face a second major enemy, Bulgaria renounced its claims to its northwestern lands (Beograd and Braničevo) and concluded an alliance with Hungary. Bulgaria, thus free from any worry about Hungarian action that could have led to a two-front war, was then able to devote its full attention to the recovery of Macedonia which, as we saw, it briefly achieved in 1255.

The peace with Hungary was sealed when Tsar Michael of Bulgaria married the King of Hungary's granddaughter in 1255. She was the child of Bela IV's daughter Anna and a Russian prince named Rostislav, who had been assigned the post of Ban of Mačva by Bela. Mačva, originally centered around the Kolubara River, had by this time been expanded to include the territory from the lower Drina in the west, the lower Morava in the east, Serbia in the south, and Hungary, along the Sava and Danube rivers, in the north. By this time Mačva included Beograd and by 1256, if not earlier, Braničevo. Bulgaria's efforts to regain Macedonia from Nicea then, as noted, ended in failure. But Michael's new ally Rostislav was able to mediate the above-mentioned Bulgarian-Nicean peace in the summer of 1256. Once again, by this treaty, the upper Marica became the Bulgarian-Nicean frontier. And the defeated Bulgarians had to become Nicean allies. As this alliance soon drew the Bulgarians into supporting Nicea against Constantinople, it led to a worsening of Bulgarian-Latin relations.

Epirus, as noted, had lost considerable territory and potential manpower

to Nicea in 1253. However, Epirus had not become a weak state. It still retained its core area of western Greece (Epirus), and it had regained Acarnania and Aetolia, presumably by occupation on the death of Theodore's brother Constantine who had governed these regions. It also still held most of Thessaly, a comparatively rich province, and the Albanian coast, including the strategic port of Durazzo. Its dynasty also enjoyed considerable local popularity. The campaign that had brought about Michael's submission to Nicea in 1253 had not engaged his army, which was still intact, and, since the Nicean troops had not operated in Thessaly or Epirus itself, the most productive regions of the state had not been damaged. Nicea's military occupation had affected only Macedonia and Albania; and the territory that Epirus was to lose in the end, also in these regions, was territory recently gained by Epirus from Bulgaria that had not yet become an integral part of its state. Thus the Epirote state, controlling most of northern Greece and uninvaded, was still economically strong and both able and willing to support its ruler, Michael.

When Nicea became involved in the 1255–56 war with Bulgaria, Michael of Epirus, either ambitious to take advantage of matters for his own ends or afraid that a victorious Nicea operating in Macedonia along his northern border might next attack his heartland, entered into an alliance against Nicea with Uroš, King of Serbia. At the same time agents from Michael, bearing promises and gifts, traveled about the mountains of Albania to regain the support of Albanian chieftains. Seeing what was happening, and expecting further trouble from Michael, Theodore Lascaris, after his victory over Bulgaria in the fall of 1256, ordered that the wedding between his daughter and Michael's son Nicephorus take place. Michael himself wisely did not attend the ceremony, but his wife, the groom's mother, did. She was not allowed to return to Epirus but was held as a hostage, with her return dependent on Michael's surrendering Durazzo and the fortress of Servia to Nicea. To obtain her release, Durazzo was yielded to Nicea. The Albanians from the environs of Durazzo seem to have disliked the change. Michael's resulting anger found relief in the spring of 1257 when the tribal chiefs of Albania, stirred up and co-ordinated by Epirote agents, rose up against Nicea. The Serbian and Epirote armies then went into action simultaneously. Michael rapidly regained most of Albania, most probably including Durazzo. Then Michael dispatched his troops into Macedonia and quickly reoccupied Kastoria and Prilep.

In this conflict between the two Greek states a number of great magnates, either local landholders or generals appointed to command garrisons in Macedonian fortresses, supported Epirus. The small military holdings established by Vatatzes had threatened their authority. By taking lands which the magnates aspired to own and by using these lands to support soldiers to man a state army independent of the magnates and loyal to the emperor, serving under commanders appointed by the emperor, this policy undermined the influence of the magnates in military affairs. For, as noted, previously the Nicean armies had largely been composed of private troops, belonging to the

individual magnates, who followed their master to battle and served under his command. However, the small-holding policy could provide the emperor with an army to balance the forces of the magnates and give him the freedom to appoint commanders of his choice and to by-pass members of the great military and landed families. Finding themselves probably with less influence in the army (to the degree the policy succeeded) and threatened with further losses of influence, many magnates had become disgruntled. As a result the emperor accused various leading magnates of conspiring against him; several of these had been arrested. Thus when war broke out between Nicea and Epirus, various leading Nicean magnates decided to throw their support to Michael. This proved costly to Theodore Lascaris, especially when the magnates who defected were fortress commanders and opened their gates to Michael.

Thus through a combination of these various factors, in the course of 1257 Michael rapidly regained much of western Macedonia. With momentum on his side, Michael was marching toward Thessaloniki, when suddenly he was attacked in the rear—on the west coast of Epirus—by a new actor, Manfred of Sicily. Manfred had first occupied the major Ionian islands, including Corfu. Then he had landed on the Albanian coast and taken Durazzo, Berat, Valona (Avlona, Vlonë, Vlora), and their environs. Faced with war on two fronts, Michael decided to sacrifice the west for gains in the east, which he hoped might include Thessaloniki and Constantinople. He therefore sent envoys to Manfred to offer peace and an alliance. He agreed in June 1258 to recognize Manfred's Ionian and Albanian conquests in exchange for an alliance against Nicea. Manfred agreed and their treaty was sealed by Manfred's marrying Michael's daughter Helen; Manfred was awarded his conquests as her dowry. Thus Manfred ended up in legal possession of the Albanian coast from Cape Rodoni past Valona to Butrinti.

At roughly the same time, in August 1258, Theodore II Lascaris died, leaving a minor son, John IV Lascaris, under a regency composed of trusted adherents who had supported Theodore in his campaign to reduce the influence of the aristocracy. Needless to say the aristocrats wanted to take advantage of Theodore's demise to re-assert themselves; furthermore, they desired revenge against the regents. Within ten days, they had overthrown the regency and the aristocrat Michael Palaeologus became the leading regent. He had formerly been Vatatzes' military governor of Melnik and Serres. Shortly before Lascaris' death, he had been accused of plotting against Lascaris but, by a clever defense and personal oath, he had escaped punishment. As regent, he soon acquired the title despot and shortly thereafter was crowned co-emperor.

Michael of Epirus decided to take advantage of the turmoil in Nicea to construct a major coalition and march against Nicea. He had already enrolled Manfred of Sicily, who had promised to supply a German cavalry detachment of four hundred horsemen. He also had at the ready a large unit composed chiefly of Vlachs under his illegitimate son John, who had taken the surname



Ducas, to whom Michael, it seems, had assigned the government of Thessaly. John had solidified his position in that province by creating close ties with the local Vlachs, who dominated the mountainous regions of west-central Thessaly, by marrying the beautiful daughter of Taron, the leading Vlach chief of Thessaly. Michael had also sent envoys to acquire the support of William Villehardouin, an able warrior who had succeeded to the rule of the Morea on the death of his brother Geoffrey II in 1246. William agreed, and he sealed the alliance by marrying Anna, another of Michael's daughters. The Serbs also agreed to help, but they never gave the coalition any support and by the end of the campaign had joined the Niceans, providing them with a limited number of troops.

Upon learning what was happening, Michael Palaeologus sent envoys to Epirus, but Michael II refused to receive them. Palaeologus then decided that quick action was the only solution. He mobilized an army composed chiefly of Seljuk and Cuman mercenaries, supplemented by contingents sent from Serbia and Hungary, and dispatched it under the command of his brother John on a surprise attack into Macedonia. These forces, arriving before Michael's allies could send support, won a skirmish against an Epirote army near Kastoria in March 1259. Michael II quickly withdrew his troops into Albania to regroup and await the arrival of his allies. The Niceans in the meantime occupied most of Macedonia, penetrating as far west as Ohrid, which they captured. Michael II had at once appealed to his allies, including Manfred who, now seeing his Albanian lands threatened, immediately dispatched his cavalry unit. Villehardouin soon showed up leading his own troops as did John of Thessaly. This joint force then marched into Macedonia, reaching the plain of Pelagonia (modern Bitola) in June 1259. Michael's combined forces greatly outnumbered the Nicean troops; however, the Epirote army was composed of four different groups—Epirote Greeks, Vlachs, Germans (Manfred's cavalry), and Morean Franks, each under its own leader. There was thus no unified command, and each group displayed a strong disinclination to take orders from anyone else. The units were also accustomed to different methods of warfare; thus their commanders disagreed on the tactics to be employed. The Nicean army that now approached Pelagonia, though composed of different mercenary groups, enjoyed a much more unified command, for its mercenaries were willing and ready to obey John Palaeologus.

On the eve of the battle John of Thessaly quarrelled violently with Villehardouin, who, it seems, had been making eyes at John's beautiful Vlach wife. John stalked back to his own camp, rounded up his troops, and marched off with them to the Nicean camp. When they accepted his condition that he need not fight against the troops of his father (Michael), John joined the Niceans. Seeing this defection and concluding that it would assure a Nicean victory on the morrow, Michael of Epirus, in order to preserve intact his own forces, slipped away with them in the night toward Albania. In the morning, seeing the situation, the Niceans quickly moved in for the kill. The Germans and French, even though the prince in whose cause they were fighting had

departed and though they had no stake in western Macedonia, decided to stand their ground and do battle anyway. The Niceans won an overwhelming victory. The Westerners suffered heavy casualties and Villehardouin was captured.

With momentum on their side, the Niceans solidified their control over all Macedonia, subduing any fortresses that might have resisted up to this point, and over central-southern Albania to the walls of Manfred's Durazzo. It is likely, but by no means certain, that the Niceans also took Durazzo. They then marched into Epirus itself, whose defenses Michael had not had time to prepare, and occupied much of it, including Michael's capital of Arta. The citizens of Vonitsa and Jannina (Ioannina, Joannina) held out, behind their walls, loyal to Michael. Nicea made no attempt to conquer any of Epirus' islands. Unwilling to risk the loss of his armies, Michael did not try to oppose the Niceans, but withdrew his army to an island, where he planned his return. Epirus seemed subdued, with all but two of its fortresses fallen, and those two under siege. At the same time other Nicean troops, accompanied by John of Thessaly, overran much of Thessaly. Thus, not surprisingly, the Battle of Pelagonia is usually depicted as a major event that decided the fate of the Greek world.

However, Donald Nicol argues that the battle's significance has been greatly exaggerated.<sup>1</sup> The conquest of Epirus was superficial. The population remained loyal to Michael, and Nicea did not have sufficient troops to occupy it thoroughly and put it under military rule. When the shock of the rapid occupation wore off, the Epirotes were to rally and fight back. Michael had kept his army intact. So had John of Thessaly, who by now had clearly lost whatever attachment he had had to the Niceans. Possibly they had not allowed him to retain his former role in Thessaly. John soon brought his army to Vonitsa and sent an embassy to his father; he apologized for withdrawing from the battle, saying he had not realized that his actions could have cost the family Epirus itself, and promised to support Michael's recovery of Epirus. Michael forgave him and they began planning a counter-offensive. At the same time Manfred, angry at the defeat of his cavalry and seeing his Albanian possessions in danger (if not already partly occupied), promised further aid. So Michael, returning with his forces to the mainland, joined with John's army; together they marched on Arta, whose inhabitants opened their gates to them, welcoming them back. Having established their administration there, they then marched north to Jannina and dispersed the Nicean troops besieging that city. Shortly thereafter they had expelled the Niceans from Epirus entirely. This success was the result of the regrouping of Epirote forces, the loyalty of its population to Michael, the failure of the Niceans to establish an effective administration in the conquered region, and, in the final stages, the Niceans' poor generalship. Considering the short duration of the Niceans' occupation, their limited manpower, and the hostility of the local population, their administrative failure was probably something that the Niceans could not have prevented, even if they had been aware of the problem.

In the spring of 1260 Michael sent his son Nicephorus at the head of an army into Thessaly. These troops defeated the Nicean army at Trikorifi and captured its commander, Alexius Strategopoulos. As a result of this campaign Nicephorus recovered most, if not all, of Thessaly. It is possible that part of the east coast of Thessaly near the Gulf of Volos remained in Nicean possession. However, since Nicephorus was to grant land to a monastery (Makrinitisa) in the Volos region in 1266, it is evident Epirus had recovered it by then; 1260 seems a reasonable time for this recovery to have occurred. Moreover, since Nicephorus was, in 1266, the one to be granting this land, it appears he was governing this territory. Thus probably in the 1260s Nicephorus had been awarded an appanage in Thessaly. Whether his half-brother John still had a role in that province is not known. John had been active in Thessaly prior to the Battle of Pelagonia. But whether before and during 1259 he governed all Thessaly for his father—as most scholars believe—or only had large estates there, is not really known. The Vlach troops he brought to battle, though usually depicted as an official force, could easily have been a private army raised on his own estates. John may well have returned to Thessaly after its recovery by Epirus, but this is not certain. Nicephorus clearly was responsible at that time for at least a small region in Thessaly, but he may well have managed a much wider area, possibly all Epirote Thessaly. We simply do not know how Thessaly was administered. Manfred also sent forces to regain his Albanian possessions. Between 1260 and 1262, according to Pachymeres, he conquered numerous places in “Illyria and New Epirus.” Thus we may conclude he regained most, if not all, of his Albanian possessions.<sup>2</sup>

Though Pelagonia was an ephemeral victory and Michael did not suffer long-term losses (being back to his former strength within a year) it was still important insofar as the battle had not gone the other way. For had Nicea lost, the Epirote coalition could have marched east and possibly taken Thessaloniki and who knows how much more.

Thus Michael had quickly regained northern Greece. Furthermore he still posed a threat to Nicea’s ambitions. He had a fairly strong army and still hoped to recover Thessaloniki. Manfred had sent him a new military unit, a company of Italian soldiers, and Nicea did not know how many more troops he might send. Thessaloniki might actually find itself in danger. The Niceans strengthened their garrison in Thessaloniki and renewed their alliance with Bulgaria. They also concluded in March 1261 an alliance with Genoa (the Treaty of Nymphaeum). However, its purpose was not defensive but rather to obtain naval support for the conquest of Constantinople. A fleet was essential for this task, and the Niceans needed assistance in this area. Furthermore, since Constantinople would be defended by the powerful Venetian Eastern fleet, it seemed a good move to bring their Genoese rivals into action. The Genoese, who had suffered from the Venetians’ monopoly of Constantinopolitan trade under the Latin Empire, were promised a series of privileges that

in essence would allow them to take over Venice's position there when the city fell.

### **The Nicean Recovery of Constantinople**

The Genoese alliance proved unnecessary, for Constantinople was to fall without Genoese aid. But the treaty had already been signed and Genoa collected on the promises; so, after regaining Constantinople, the Greeks were to find themselves once again dependent upon Italians for commercial transport as well as for naval defense. The Italians regularly were to take naval action to prevent the Byzantines (as we again can call the Niceans) from rebuilding their navy. And through blackmail, by threatening attacks on Greek islands or coastal towns, the Italians steadily increased their privileges and through them their hold on commerce, to the disadvantage of Greek merchants.

But lest we get too far ahead of ourselves, the recovery of Constantinople was to be ridiculously simple. An elderly general, Alexius Strategopoulos, with no orders to go against Constantinople, was reconnoitering in the suburbs of the city on 25 July 1261. Discovering that the Frankish garrison was not present in the city, he brought on his own initiative a small number of troops to the walls, forced an entry through a narrow secret passage, overcame a puny guard, and opened a gate from inside to the rest of his troops. He and his men were warmly welcomed by the Greeks of the city. Hearing the news, Baldwin II took flight aboard a Venetian ship. Thus after fifty-seven years of Latin rule Constantinople was taken by accident, without a battle or even a plan.

Michael Palaeologus hurried to Constantinople, leaving the young legitimate emperor, John IV Lascaris, back in Nicea. Michael had himself, and himself alone, crowned in Hagia Sophia. Shortly thereafter, he had John blinded and deposed. Thereafter Michael ruled alone. He founded the dynasty that was to rule Byzantium from then until the Turkish conquest. But by this time Byzantium was hardly an empire any longer—despite its titles, rhetoric, and court ceremonial; it was just another petty state, holding, together with Constantinople, western Anatolia, Thrace, Thessaloniki, and Macedonia.

### **The Struggle between Franks and Byzantines for the Morea**

Michael VIII, as Michael Palaeologus can now be called, was ambitious to restore the empire's lost territory and glory. His main targets of re-conquest were in Greece: Epirus, Thessaly, and the Morea (Peloponnesus). The last, though most distant, seemed the easiest to recover. First, its rulers were Franks whom Michael hoped the Greek population would not support; second, in 1261 he still had the Morea's ruler, William Villehardouin, in his power as his prisoner, having captured him in the Battle of Pelagonia.

Michael had started negotiating with his captive immediately after the battle. At first he had demanded all the Morea back in exchange for his release. William had refused, saying, even if he wanted to agree, it was not his to give; the peninsula was held collectively by all eleven great barons (of which he was only one, albeit the most important). He could yield only his own two baronies; the rest could be surrendered only by the Great Council of Achaia. Michael, deciding to bide his time, put William back in prison, where, it seems, he was at least housed under comfortable and honorable conditions. Meanwhile, Michael recovered Constantinople, and the Morea had accepted as its bailiff, or acting prince, Guy de la Roche, the ruler of Athens and the most powerful baron in the area. It was clear that Guy would not agree to yield much of the Morea, so Michael had to reduce his demands. He decided to seek possession of certain powerful fortresses to give him a foothold in the area, from which, he hoped, when the time was ripe, he could expand Byzantine rule. So, he demanded three important fortresses: Mistra (near old Sparta, a powerful fortress completed by William Villehardouin in 1249 for defense against the unruly Melingi, a Slavic tribe in the vicinity), Monemvasia (in the southeastern Peloponnese, on the Malea peninsula, the last Greek fortress to fall to the Franks, which William had captured in 1248 after a three-year siege), and Maina (on the Mani peninsula on the southern tip of the Peloponnese). William said he would agree if the Council did. So Michael released one captive Frank to go to the Morea and place the proposal before the Council. Guy opposed yielding any territory; he had several reasons to stand fast. William's return would reduce Guy's authority; at present Guy was the dominant figure in the whole of Frankish Greece as well as in the Morea, a position he would lose once William returned. Furthermore, there was no love lost between the two individuals, for the close relations that had existed between Geoffrey I and Othon had not continued under their heirs.

However, Guy could not act alone. Captive along with William were various other barons whose wives were representing them on the Council and who wanted their husbands back. So, after arguing against the offer, Guy had to yield. Then Michael VIII, after taking two powerful Franks as hostages for William's good faith and after extracting an oath of loyalty from William, released William, who returned to the Morea late in 1261 and turned over the three forts. Michael installed garrisons in them at once. Monemvasia was particularly important; not only were its strong fortifications virtually impregnable, but as a port it provided a gateway through which the Byzantines could bring troops and supplies to the peninsula. Mistra, a strong fortress located in the center of the peninsula, was also to be a nuisance to the Franks. The Byzantine position here quickly became stronger as the neighboring Tzakoniens—a distinct Greek group that preserved to a considerable extent an archaic dialect—declared their allegiance to Michael, as did the Slavs of the Taygetos Mountains. These groups became a force supporting Byzantine expansion from that center.

William clearly was unhappy with these losses, as was the pope, who

immediately assured William that he was not bound by his oath to Michael since it had been extracted under duress. Thus both sides prepared for war, Michael expecting William to try to recover the three forts, and William expecting Michael to begin expansion. The Byzantines based there, with local help, had at once made gains. Not only had they assumed at least suzerainty over much of the area around Mistra, but also by 1263 the Byzantines had driven the Franks from Malea, on which lay Monemvasia, and from Mani, two of the three promontories on the southern Peloponnesus. Then, in the summer of 1263, a Byzantine army landed at Monemvasia and marched through Laconia into Arcadia, with its destination Villehardouin's capital of Andravida. The army was successful, acquiring various small fortresses, until the Franks defeated it in an open field battle near Andravida. The Greeks fled in panic back to Laconia (where their city of Mistra was located). Their flight gave William time to regroup his forces.

Meanwhile a second Greek army, also operating in Arcadia, had taken Kalavryta, whose Greek population welcomed it. The Byzantines dispatched a new force from Mistra through Arcadia in 1264, again with the intent of attacking Andravida. But ten miles from that town it was met by a Frankish army. In the small skirmish that ensued, the Greek commander John Cantacuzenus was killed. The Greeks again lost heart and retreated. After this failure, the Turkish mercenaries—who made up a large part of the Byzantine forces, whose pay was long in arrears, and who had come to have little expectation of Byzantine success—deserted the Byzantine cause and offered their services to William, who was happy to hire them. Then William's armies, supplemented by these Turks, marched into Laconia and defeated the remaining Greeks in a fierce battle at Nikli. The Greeks retreated to Mistra which, behind its strong fortifications, they still held. The Franks then attacked, but failed to take, Mistra. Finlay notes:

The weakness of the two contending parties, and the rude nature of the military operations of the age, are depicted by the fact that the Prince of Achaia continued to retain possession of Lacedaemon for several years after the war had broken out, though it was only three miles distant from Misithra [Mistra] which served as headquarters of the Byzantine army.<sup>3</sup>

Mistra's population grew rapidly as many Greeks from the surrounding area migrated to it. An Orthodox metropolitan was established there. However, Monemvasia, a port through which troops and supplies could enter, became the main Byzantine operational center. The Byzantine governor (kephale) for the empire's Morean holdings resided in Monemvasia throughout the 1270s. However, in time he moved to Mistra. He is to be found residing there in 1289. By 1262 the Metropolitan of Monemvasia had been given the senior rank among the Peloponnesian bishops. The inhabitants of Monemvasia were also successful corsairs in the Aegean. They were especially inclined to prey on the Venetians.

Michael VIII's campaigns in 1263 and 1264 failed to expand the empire's territory, and an uneasy peace followed. However, the threat of a new Byzantine offensive, which Michael clearly wanted, remained. The Byzantines sent agents among the Greek population of the Morea and raided Frankish territory from their fortified bases. Various skirmishes occurred from time to time. These activities all had a negative effect on commerce and agriculture which, having enjoyed prosperity for over fifty years, now declined together with the security of the area. Now for the first time the Frankish Morea actually had an enemy on, and even within, its borders. The Franks began building more castles.

William, worrying about the prospect of a major Byzantine offensive, now concluded that his principality needed a powerful protector. He found one in Charles of Anjou, brother of King Louis IX of France. Charles, as we shall see, was at the time becoming a major enemy of Byzantium. William, in 1267, became Charles' vassal and agreed that upon his death his principality would be inherited directly by the Anjous. William's daughter Isabelle married Charles' younger son Philip and, according to Charles' plans, Philip would succeed William as Prince of Achaea. It was also agreed, however, that should William have a son, that son would get as a fief one-fifth of Achaea (the Morea in this context) as a vassal of the Anjous. William in exchange received a promise of military support from Charles.

By the end of the 1260s the Byzantines had been able to take Lacedaemonia and had asserted their control over much of Laconia. They then decided to extend their authority over Arcadia, making two serious attempts to conquer that region between 1270 and 1275. However, in both cases Charles of Anjou sent forces to aid William, and the Byzantines were repelled. This warfare, beginning in the 1260s, ended the period of prosperity for the Morea. Continuing over the next decades, the wars were fought chiefly with mercenaries on both sides; these professionals, who had no stake in the area, freely plundered it. The Latins found themselves at a distinct disadvantage. The local Greek and Slavic populations, the majority of the peninsula's population, tended to support the Byzantines. Many Frankish fiefs, being held by widows, provided no troops, and since the Principality of Achaea was on the defensive and there were few or no new fiefs to distribute, few knights from the West were interested in coming to the Morea. Even so, however, the Frankish knights still dominated whenever they met the Greeks in a pitched battle. Thus Greek success depended on avoiding major confrontations, staging coups in towns, and picking off poorly garrisoned towns. Most of the warfare initiated by the Greeks consisted of sieges of forts and ambushes of small Frankish units.

### **The Struggle for Northern Greece**

While the struggle for the Morea was occurring, Michael of Epirus, miffed by Nicaea's success and Michael VIII's coronation, resumed his attack upon

Nicean (now Byzantine) territory. The Byzantines sent troops against him, which forced him to agree to a treaty in 1264. However, once again Michael had managed to keep his armies out of battle, and the Byzantines had failed to occupy Epirus. Thus both Michael's state and army remained intact. However, Michael's prospects had deteriorated as he found himself becoming isolated, for his ally Manfred was now fighting for his very survival against Charles of Anjou and unable to provide any further aid. So the Byzantines were able to force this peace upon Michael that compelled him to surrender Jannina and also forced his son Nicephorus to marry Anna, a niece of Michael VIII. Nicephorus' wife, Theodore Lascaris' daughter, seems to have died previously. In 1265 the new marriage took place, and Michael VIII granted Nicephorus the despot's title.

Then on 26 February 1266 at the Battle of Benevento Charles decisively defeated Manfred, who was killed. Charles of Anjou now gained Sicily. When he received word of Manfred's death, Michael of Epirus marched through the coastal regions of northern Epirus and into Albania, recovering the lands that Manfred had taken from him.

How much of Albania Michael was able to recover is unknown. He attacked Kanina, held by Manfred's governor for Albania, Philip Chinardo. He succeeded in securing the assassination of Chinardo, but failed to take the city whose Italian garrison refused to surrender. The garrison remained in control of Kanina as did Chinardo's deputies in Berat and Valona, resisting both Epirotes and Angevins until 1271 or 1272 when the Latin leadership of all three cities finally submitted to the Angevins. Whether these failures led Michael to give up the idea of proceeding further into Albania or whether, bypassing these towns, he did acquire control of territory beyond Valona and Kanina is not known. The Byzantines also retained a presence in the mountains of north-central Albania, at least along the Mati (Mat) River, as is seen in an inscription from that region from about 1266 mentioning their kephale. The Byzantines also controlled access into the area through possession of most of Macedonia.

Michael II of Epirus then died in 1267 or 1268, and his lands were divided; his son Nicephorus acquired Epirus with its capital of Arta, while his illegitimate son John Ducas inherited Thessaly. Gregoras states that John's holding extended from Mount Olympus in the north to Mount Parnassus in the south, with the Achelous River serving as its western border. John's capital was at Neopatra near Lamia.

Byzantine sources do not make clear what preceded this division. One author implies John received Thessaly at this time. A second implies he was already there at the time. It is clear that John had been in Thessaly in 1259, though it is not known how much of the province he then held. However, Nicephorus had the major role in recovering Thessaly from the Niceans in 1260 and he alone is documented as in possession of part of Thessaly in the 1260s—making a grant to a monastery in 1266. Though John may well have held part of Thessaly after 1260 during Michael's lifetime, this cannot be documented.<sup>4</sup>



By the late 1260s the Byzantines had again established a foothold in eastern Thessaly. Very likely they had taken advantage of the instability produced by Michael of Epirus' death to achieve this. A grant to a monastery from August 1268 by the east Thessalian nobleman Nicholas Maliasinos states that Nicholas had submitted to the emperor. This nobleman, presumably in the previous year (1267–68), had married a niece of Michael VIII. By 1270 Michael VIII had issued charters to two monasteries in eastern Thessaly near the Gulf of Volos (Makrinitisa and Neopetra), showing he had acquired that region. From these years imperial grants of *pronoias* and of tax exemptions to various notables of east Thessaly begin appearing. Thus probably in 1267/68 the Byzantines regained some or all of Thessaly's east coast. They clearly had at least acquired the territory just north of the Gulf of Volos. Since various local nobles were receiving rewards, it seems likely that the Byzantine conquest, though it may well have been carried out by invading troops, owed its success at least partly to local nobles' switching sides to join the Byzantine camp. Despite these gains, however, John of Thessaly still possessed the lion's share of the region, holding all western and central Thessaly, and presumably intending to reassert his authority over the lands he had lost in the east along the coast. In the years that followed, he was to launch various raids into eastern Thessaly. And since the Byzantines were not satisfied with having just the east coast but wanted to regain all of this rich province, tensions between the two camps continued.

### **Charles of Anjou Enters into Greek Affairs**

Meanwhile Charles of Anjou, having seized Sicily, concluded in 1267 a treaty at Viterbo with Baldwin II, the dispossessed Latin emperor who had fled West when the Greeks regained Constantinople. At Viterbo Baldwin ceded to Charles all suzerain rights over Greece and the Greek islands, except for Constantinople itself and the islands of Lesbos (Mytilene), Chios, Samos, and Kos. Baldwin's son Philip was then betrothed to Charles' daughter Beatrice. At the same time, as noted above, Charles gained an actual foothold in Greece by concluding, also at Viterbo, his agreement with William Villehardouin, becoming William's overlord as well as his heir for the Morea. Charles next was to set about creating a coalition to gain the parts of Greece he had title to as well as to regain Constantinople for Baldwin.

### **Bulgaria between Byzantium, Hungary, and the Tatars, 1256–77**

Meanwhile in Bulgaria, late in 1256 (probably in December) a group of boyars decided to kill Tsar Michael and replace him with his first cousin Koloman, the son of John Asen II's brother Sevastocrator Alexander. The plotters attacked Michael, who died soon afterwards from his wounds.

Koloman's claims to the throne were strong, for he was the highest ranking male member of the dynasty still living. To further his claims he forcibly married Michael's widow, the daughter of Rostislav of Mačva. It seems Koloman actually grabbed power briefly, though possibly holding nothing more than Trnovo and environs; he was faced with strong opposition from the start, some of which came from part of the army. Thus he could not consolidate power and had to flee from Trnovo almost immediately. He was captured in flight and killed. Whether Koloman had been an initiator of the plot against Michael or merely the tool of a boyar faction is not known.

Shortly before his demise, as noted, Tsar Michael had married the daughter of Rostislav, son-in-law of the King of Hungary and since 1254 Ban of Mačva. Rostislav's banate bordered on the Bulgarian province of Vidin. To protect his daughter Rostislav now, early in 1257, invaded Bulgaria. It seems he was using her as an excuse to acquire the Bulgarian throne for himself, a plan the Hungarians favored, for by it Bulgaria would fall under Hungarian suzerainty. Rostislav appeared at the gates of Trnovo. Inside the city, a boyar faction seized control. It is not certain whether these boyars had already, prior to Rostislav's arrival, ousted Koloman and taken over, or whether at Rostislav's appearance, lacking confidence in Koloman's ability to defend the city, they had then turned against him. Though it is sometimes stated that Rostislav briefly obtained Trnovo only to meet so much opposition that he was forced to withdraw, it seems that he probably never actually gained possession of the city. No Byzantine source claims that Rostislav ever acquired Trnovo. Acropolites says only that Rostislav attacked Trnovo and recovered his daughter. She could well have been yielded on demand to forces still outside the city. The boyars should have had no objection to surrendering her. If Rostislav had taken the city, or installed himself within it, presumably Acropolites would have mentioned it.

Meanwhile, because hostilities had resumed between Bulgaria and the Latin Empire after Nicea forced Bulgaria back into an anti-Latin alliance in the summer of 1256, the Latin emperor, Baldwin II, decided to strike against the weakened Bulgarians in the midst of the chaos of 1257. Since there was no land border between the two states, his attack had to be by sea. He enlisted the Venetians, who had a fleet then in Constantinople, to direct a raid against Mesembria. They took the town, plundering it. However, they did not try to hold it but soon withdrew, leaving it to the Bulgarians, possibly to Bulgarians under a certain Mico, whom we shall meet shortly, who also was a claimant for the Bulgarian throne. However, one may wonder whether this raid had not been launched in support of Rostislav, the Hungarian-supported candidate who that year was besieging Trnovo and who alone among the possible candidates might have been expected to support the cause of the Latin Empire.

In any case, having failed to take Trnovo, Rostislav retreated to Vidin, where he established himself, taking the title of Tsar of Bulgaria. The Hun-

garians recognized him with this title. In this way this major northwestern province was separated from the Bulgarian state and fell under Hungarian suzerainty, through the person of Rostislav. This secession also made Hungary's hold on the disputed provinces of Braničevo and Beograd to the west of Vidin that much more secure, for, by losing Vidin, the Bulgarians had lost their province that bordered on Braničevo.

Meanwhile in southeastern Bulgaria, Mico (the name is a diminutive of the name Dimitri), another relative of John Asen II and the husband of Tsar Michael's sister, was proclaimed tsar. He most probably never obtained Trnovo, however, but simply created his own principality, which he separated from the rest of Bulgaria, while he sought support to march on Trnovo to establish himself there as tsar.

Thus outside Trnovo there existed two claimants (Mico in the southeast and Rostislav in Vidin), each ambitious for Trnovo and each calling himself tsar, while the boyars held Trnovo, opposed to both claimants and prepared to fight both. The boyars next, still in 1257, elected one of their number, Constantine Tih, as tsar. Constantine had large estates near Sardika (modern Sofija) and was half Serbian, related through his mother to the Serbian dynasty. Having no connection to the Asen family, he sought one, at the same time seeking an alliance with Nicea by sending envoys to the Nicean court to ask for the hand of Irene, Theodore II Lascaris' daughter, whose mother was a daughter of John Asen. The negotiations were successful and the marriage took place in 1258. Acropolites informs us that Constantine already had a wife whom he had to divorce in order to marry Irene. Thus now Constantine's connection to the Asen dynasty was as strong as Mico's.

Scholars have long disputed over who actually ruled Bulgaria after Michael's murder; thus lists of Bulgarian tsars vary from study to study. The problem is complicated not only by the fact that a variety of individuals claimed the title of tsar, some of whom almost certainly never, not even briefly, held power in Trnovo, but also because our three sources do not agree. It is noteworthy, however, that none of them claims Rostislav was ever tsar in Trnovo. After Michael's murder, Acropolites reports, Koloman succeeded, only to be ousted; then after further disorders Constantine Tih was elected. Acropolites states specifically that there was no other person entitled tsar in Trnovo between the flight of Koloman and the election of Constantine Tih; a boyar faction had run Trnovo in the interim. Pachymeres has Constantine Tih directly succeeding Michael, having no other figure recognized as tsar in Trnovo. Thus to accept Pachymeres would mean that Koloman's supporters, having murdered Michael, were not able to place Koloman in power and Koloman had had to flee without becoming tsar. Gregoras states that Mico succeeded Michael in Trnovo only to be deposed for Constantine. Thus in describing Bulgaria after Michael's murder one source has Constantine emerging rapidly in Trnovo as successor, while the other sources have an interim ruler before Constantine, in one case the murderer Koloman, in the other Mico.

Since Acropolites is usually considered the best source, most scholars have accepted a brief reign by Koloman after Michael's demise. What about Mico? It is conceivable that Mico did rule Trnovo briefly in the midst of the disorders Acropolites mentioned, but that Acropolites failed to mention Mico's rule either because he did not know of it or because he felt it too brief or unstable to be worthy of mention. Thus we cannot reject the possibility that Mico, as Michael's brother-in-law, tried to seize power when Koloman was ousted and succeeded very briefly, only to be ousted in his turn and forced to flee by the boyar revolt that succeeded in winning Trnovo and eventually in establishing Constantine Tih as tsar.

In any case, if Mico ever had Trnovo, he had it only briefly and was soon driven out. He next appears holding a small principality in southeastern Bulgaria centered in the Black Sea port of Mesembria. What followed is not clear: it is not known whether Mico accepted his fate and concentrated on establishing himself as ruler of this small separate principality or whether he still plotted to gain Trnovo. It also is not known what actions, if any, Constantine took against him before the 1260s. It is possible that Constantine, concerned with the more dangerous threat from Rostislav and Hungary, was forced to ignore Mico for a time.

Faced with the threat from Rostislav and Hungary and also concerned about Mico (and wanting to prevent Mico from obtaining help from his Nicean neighbors), Constantine had every reason to forge closer ties with Nicea. The Niceans also could profit from an alliance with Bulgaria, since they wanted freedom of action to oppose the serious threat to them from Epirus as well as to try to recover Constantinople. Thus the two states created an alliance sealed by Constantine's marriage to Irene in 1258. Soon thereafter the Nicean official and historian Acropolites visited Trnovo, probably in January 1260, to confirm the alliance. It is sometimes stated that hostilities developed between the two states in 1260 when Michael VIII supposedly came to the aid of Mico, besieged in Mesembria by Constantine Tih. Though this statement is frequently found in scholarly works, recent scholarship argues persuasively that the events around Mesembria took place not in 1260 but in 1263.<sup>5</sup> Thus it seems accurate to conclude that a period of peace between Nicea and Bulgaria existed from 1258 to 1262. Had there been any warfare during these years between the two states Acropolites, whose history goes down to 1261 and who was interested in and well acquainted with Bulgarian affairs, would certainly have mentioned it.

This peace allowed Constantine to concentrate on Rostislav, who was a major danger owing to the support he had from the powerful Hungarian state. And Constantine found late 1260 an excellent time to take action to solve that problem. That year the Hungarians, having become involved in a war with Bohemia, were diverted from Balkan issues. Moreover, the Hungarians, having difficulties in this war, had to call upon Rostislav for help. In answer to this call, he had led a large portion of his troops off to Bohemia. His men are the "Bulgarians" referred to as fighting for the Hungarians in Bohemia in

Western sources, a reference that occasionally has been misinterpreted by scholars. Thus Rostislav's Vidin province became undermanned, and Rostislav himself was absent. Despite Rostislav's assistance, the Hungarians next suffered a defeat in Bohemia.

Thus the situation was ideal for Constantine. He attacked the token forces left behind in Vidin and regained not only the city but the whole province to the borders of the province of Braničevo. Letting his success go to his head, Constantine then sent his troops across the Danube to raid, and briefly hold, Hungary's Severin banate. This last act infuriated the Hungarians. So, as soon as they had concluded peace with the Bohemians in March 1261, they, led by Stephen V, co-king and heir to the throne, attacked Bulgaria. They first overran the Vidin province and forced Constantine to withdraw his troops from it. Then, having regained Vidin, the Hungarians continued into Bulgaria proper, soon reaching the walls of Trnovo. The Hungarians also besieged Lom, which lay east of Vidin, on the Danube, which it seems they had not held before. As far as we know, Constantine did not meet the Hungarians in a pitched battle. Thus he presumably kept his army intact and withdrew with it to Trnovo. Finally, at the end of the campaigning season, the Hungarians recalled their forces from Bulgaria. Though it is often stated that the Hungarian withdrawal from Bulgaria at the end of 1261 followed a treaty with Bulgaria, there is no evidence to prove this. As a result of Hungary's action, Rostislav was restored to the position he had held prior to Constantine's attack on him in 1260. Once again Rostislav was master of Vidin, bearing the title Tsar of Bulgaria. After the campaign Stephen V assumed, or was given, special responsibility for the southern lands of the Hungarian kingdom.

Bulgaria survived, though presumably badly plundered; moreover, it had lost once again the northwestern province of Vidin. Whether further Bulgarian territory east of Vidin (e.g., Lom) was taken by the Hungarians or Rostislav is not known. The weakening of Bulgarian central authority, which had allowed the separation of Vidin, was to continue in the years to come; frequently under one or another ruler (be he a native Bulgarian or a foreign puppet), Vidin was to break away from the central government in Trnovo, and in time its citizens seem to have come more and more to support this separatism. Thus from then on, up to the Turkish conquest, there were often to be two Bulgarian states, one centered in Trnovo and one centered in Vidin.

In July 1261, as noted, the Niceans recovered Constantinople, and we can call them again the Byzantines. Up to this time Constantine Tih had been allied to them. However, as we saw, only Michael VIII Palaeologus came to Constantinople, where he alone was re-crowned. John IV Lascaris was left behind in Nicea, where at the end of 1261 he was blinded and deposed. Constantine Tih's wife was the deposed boy's sister. Relations immediately deteriorated and sources have given Constantine's wife a major role in stirring him to action against Michael VIII and Byzantium. At the same time the Byzantines seem to have come into contact with Mico and to have been on the

verge of supporting him. Whether this contact was begun in 1261 and thus was another cause for Constantine's actions, or whether this contact was a Byzantine response to Constantine's changed attitude, is not certain. In any case in 1262 the Bulgarians launched an attack against Byzantine Thrace and seem to have taken various fortresses, including Stanimaka and Philippopolis. At least we may assume the Bulgarians took them, for prior to 1262—ever since 1255—they had been Byzantine, and shortly thereafter, in 1263, sources state the Byzantines recovered them, an act that would have been necessary only if the Byzantines had lost them. Since Bulgaria and Nicea (Byzantium) were at peace through 1261, the loss of these cities almost certainly took place in 1262.

At the same time in 1262 major changes occurred in the Hungarians' southern Slavic provinces. First Rostislav died. His lands were divided between two sons; his part of Bosnia—in northern Bosnia near the lower Drina—went to his elder son Michael, while Mačva, including Beograd, and the Braničevo province went to his younger son Bela. The immediate fate of Vidin is not known. In the same year, King Bela IV of Hungary, having made these assignments to Rostislav's children, who were also his grandsons, decided also to make some further changes in his peripheral territories. He took Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Croatia, which until then had all been under his elder son and heir, Stephen V, and which by now had become the appanage, by right, for the heir to the throne, and assigned them to a younger son named Bela. Stephen V was infuriated and immediately revolted against his father. In the fighting that ensued in 1262, Stephen came out on top. The father and son then concluded a peace on 5 December 1262, but the father was not pacified. Their former cordial relations were a thing of the past and hereafter tensions marked their relationship. And the nobles, who had split during the warfare in 1262, remained divided, inciting their patrons to further action. The treaty of December 1262 allowed Stephen V to retain the territory north of the Danube along Bulgaria's border.

Meanwhile documents for the first time begin to mention in Bulgaria a certain Jacob (Jakov) Svetoslav. He was of Russian origin. John Asen II, during his long exile in Russia, had established cordial relations with various Russian princes and boyars. When he returned to Bulgaria to fight for his throne in 1218, his army included a retinue of Russians. Later, after the Tatars had overrun south Russia, Asen had encouraged some of these Russians (as well as various Cumans from this region) to settle in Bulgaria and had given them lands. One such Russian—or the son of one such Russian—was Jacob Svetoslav, a man of princely origin who by 1261 bore the title of despot. He presumably received this honor from a tsar in Trnovo, though it is not known which tsar had granted it to him. He had also been granted by a tsar a large appanage in the southwestern part of the state. His lands apparently lay just south of the Vidin province. He seems to have had considerable autonomy there. Bearing the title of despot, he was clearly both one of the leading boyars in Bulgaria and also a figure closely associated with the court, from

which his title came. And he had fought loyally for Constantine in the 1261 war against the Hungarians. It seems that in 1262 he had also supported Constantine against Byzantium, for when in 1263 the Byzantines launched a new attack against Bulgaria, they also invaded the lands of Despot Jacob Svetoslav.

Meanwhile in late 1262 or early 1263 Constantine seems to have decided to eliminate Mico, for he marched into the latter's principality and besieged Mico's capital of Mesembria. Mico, who was inside the city, sought aid from the Byzantines, who presumably were already preparing to invade Bulgaria to avenge themselves for the 1262 attack and to regain their lost fortresses in Thrace. In any case, in 1263 the Byzantines launched a major two-pronged invasion. Their first army marched north along the Black Sea shore until it reached Mesembria. After driving away the besieging Bulgarians, the Byzantines negotiated with Mico the surrender of Mesembria to Byzantium, in exchange for which Mico was given lands in Asia Minor. It was also agreed that Mico's son John should marry Michael VIII's own daughter. These terms were realized, though the marriage was not carried out for several years. Thus the threat to Constantine posed by Mico from within was over, but at the expense of losing Mico's lands to Byzantium and of having to face the prospect that at some time in the future the Byzantines might advance Mico as a candidate for the Bulgarian throne. The Byzantine troops also took the important port of Anchialos and overran Sredna Gora. The Black Sea area, now lost, had been a particularly hard one for Bulgaria to control. It had a large Greek population, which may well have preferred imperial rule to Bulgarian, and it had shown its separatist tendencies by its support of Mico's rebellion. At about the time the Byzantine army was recovering this coastal territory, the Byzantines dispatched a fleet to the Danube mouth which conquered a strip of territory which was to be accessible to the empire only by sea. The most important place taken by this attack was the port of Vicina, where the Byzantines installed a Greek archbishop.

Meanwhile, the second Byzantine army marched into western Thrace and took Stanimaka and Philippopolis as well as various lesser forts in that region. At campaign's end, the Byzantines probably held in the Black Sea area all the coastal territory as far north as Mesembria<sup>6</sup> and as far inland as the Tundža River; and in western Thrace they probably held at least everything south of the Marica River. That Mico's surrender of Mesembria occurred in 1263, not in 1260, is supported by Pachymeres who states that the Byzantines took Philippopolis at the same time that Mico yielded Mesembria. This second Byzantine army, having achieved its successes in western Thrace, then continued on to overrun the lands of Jacob Svetoslav. Constantine Tih, faced with a major assault against his own fortresses, was in no position to help him, so Jacob Svetoslav turned to his northern neighbor, Stephen V of Hungary, for aid.

Loyal to Bulgaria until then, Jacob Svetoslav may already have been harboring ambitions for greater independence. Stephen V, on the other hand,

was seeking a new protégé on the ground to represent Hungarian interests in the south and prevent Trnovo from regaining Vidin, which now seemed vulnerable in the power vacuum created by Rostislav's death. Free at the moment of warfare between Bela IV and Stephen V, the Hungarians sent aid, drove the Byzantines out of Jacob Svetoslav's lands, and then continued on south to raid Byzantine territory. When the dust had settled from this, Jacob Svetoslav had concluded a treaty with Hungary by which he was granted the Vidin province and accepted Hungarian suzerainty not only for that province but also for his own territory in southwestern Bulgaria. Thus Trnovo suffered the secession of further lands, this time those in the southwest. Vidin is clearly documented as Jacob Svetoslav's in 1265, but most scholars believe it had been granted to him in 1263.

His new relations with Hungary caused difficulties for Jacob Svetoslav from Trnovo, which had hoped to take advantage of Rostislav's death to regain Vidin for Bulgaria. Presumably only the Byzantine attack in 1263 had prevented Constantine from moving against Vidin in that year. And it is apparent that of his two ambitions, the war against Byzantium had assumed a higher priority than war against Hungary, possibly owing to Constantine's wife's strong desire for revenge against Michael VIII, the usurper. Thus the hurried assignment of Vidin to Jacob Svetoslav in 1263, in the course of the Byzantine war, seems to have prevented the Bulgarians from regaining Vidin after Rostislav's death. And Trnovo knew that an attempt to regain Vidin by displacing Jacob Svetoslav would lead to war with his Hungarian protectors. Thus Hungary was able to secure its retention of these southern lands.

Caught between its two enemies Byzantium and Hungary, each of which was stronger than Bulgaria, and becoming weaker as a result of the loss in 1263 of even further territory, Constantine had little choice but to turn to his Tatar overlords. He sought aid against the Byzantines whose campaign in 1263 had caused not only considerable damage but also had wrested away from Bulgaria fortresses in two areas, western Thrace and along the Black Sea.

The appeal to the Tatars came at a moment the Tatars had reason to intervene against Byzantium. A Seljuk sultan named 'Izz al-Dīn had been ousted in a palace coup with the backing of the Mongols. 'Izz al-Dīn had fled to Byzantium for asylum but also sought aid. Michael VIII, having by then formed an alliance with the Mongols in Iran—who were supporting 'Izz al-Dīn's rival—did not want to risk that alliance by helping 'Izz al-Dīn. Thus, though receiving 'Izz al-Dīn honorably, Michael VIII kept him more-or-less under house arrest. 'Izz al-Dīn, needless to say, was not satisfied with this and secretly sent an embassy to the Steppe Tatars (the Golden Horde) for help. So the Tatars, already preparing to rescue 'Izz al-Dīn, were responsive to the Bulgarian appeal. In the winter of 1264–65 they crossed the Danube into Bulgaria, from which, after being joined by Bulgarian troops, they poured into Thrace and into the Black Sea region, causing severe devastation to both areas. They then laid siege to the town of Ainos, where 'Izz al-Dīn was held. To save their town, the citizens willingly yielded 'Izz al-Dīn to the Tatar



armies of Khan Berke, who may have been leading his troops in person. The Tatars, having achieved their aims, lifted the siege and returned home. Thus the Tatar aid had been of no lasting value to the Bulgarians other than giving them the satisfaction of revenge and plundering. The Tatars had withdrawn after their own object was attained and had not helped the Bulgarians in their aims, i.e., the recovery of their lost cities. At the end of the winter 1264–65 campaign all the major fortresses that had been lost to the Byzantines remained Byzantine. However, Constantine's position vis à vis the Byzantines was improved; he now seemed to have gained a deterrent, for should they again attack Bulgaria, the Byzantines might expect further military action against themselves from Bulgaria's Tatar suzerain.

In that same year, 1264, the Hungarian civil war between father (Bela IV) and son (Stephen V) broke out again. In the course of that year's actions, the father had gained the advantage. This caused Jacob Svetoslav worry, for Stephen V was his protector. Should Bela IV win, would he favor the continued rule of Vidin by his son's protégé? Furthermore, as the father-and-son war continued into 1265, Stephen V, occupied with fighting for his own survival, was in no position to aid Jacob Svetoslav should he be attacked. And Trnovo in 1265, no longer in danger from Byzantium, was now free to move against its disloyal former vassal and regain its seceded territory. And Jacob Svetoslav alone was no match for Trnovo's forces, which might even be supplemented with Tatar troops. Thus in 1265 Jacob Svetoslav quickly renegotiated his position. Whether, as seems likely, Jacob Svetoslav initiated negotiations to prevent attack or whether Constantine through threat of attack forced him to submit is not known. Jacob Svetoslav was allowed to retain his lands, but he now held them under Trnovo's suzerainty. Though this did not bring them back under direct Bulgarian rule, it at least separated these lands from Hungary; and Trnovo could expect now to raise troops from this territory, through its vassal, in the event of war. Hungary in 1265 was in no position to prevent this change. In fact it seems that in 1265 Bulgaria and Jacob Svetoslav jointly raided Hungarian lands across the Danube. Presumably this attack was Constantine's idea, for it would have forced Jacob Svetoslav into even worse relations with Hungary and thus have increased his dependence on Trnovo.

The Hungarians were not happy with developments. By late 1265 the tide was turning in the civil war, and Bela IV, doing badly, found it necessary to come to terms with Stephen. They concluded peace again in March 1266. Stephen regained his former position, including supervision of Hungary's southern lands. Free to do so, he immediately took action to reassert his former authority over the western Bulgarian lands. His forces took Vidin, after a short siege, by 23 June 1266. Ravaging that whole province, his forces soon reasserted Hungarian control over it. He even sent troops to plunder the lands of the Trnovo tsar. The Bulgarian army tried to resist but was defeated in the course of the attack, and its remnants retreated to various forts in the interior. A second Hungarian wave subdued a series of fortresses, including

Pleven, along the Danube. Jacob Svetoslav again had to submit to Hungary, which, despite his earlier defection, decided it was best to leave him in Vidin. Possibly the Hungarians believed he had enough local support to guarantee local loyalty in the event of an attack against Vidin by Trnovo. For whatever reason, Jacob Svetoslav was restored to his former position; in 1266 Hungarian documents begin referring to him as Tsar of the Bulgarians, the title previously held by Rostislav. Whether this title was granted simply to give his province greater prestige and to assert its independence from Trnovo, or whether it indicated an ambition—Jacob's or the Hungarians'—for him to take Trnovo and become tsar there is not certain.

In any case, the 1266 campaign restored to the Hungarians their western Bulgarian lands, weakening Trnovo by the same amount that the Hungarians gained, and established a separate "Bulgarian" state under a puppet tsar who had to lean on the Hungarians to maintain his independence in internal matters. And possibly the Hungarians intended him to provide a threat to Trnovo itself, if Jacob Svetoslav's title indicated a claim to his being *the* Tsar of Bulgaria. And, as it clearly was in Hungary's interests to make its protégé more dependent on it, what better way was there to do this than by encouraging tensions between Jacob Svetoslav and Trnovo by granting him such a provocative title? This state of affairs for Vidin was to last until the death of Stephen V in 1272. (Stephen became sole ruler of Hungary in 1270 when Bela IV died.)

Trnovo thus found itself weaker than ever after 1266. It had lost its western lands and Jacob Svetoslav was again a Hungarian vassal. It stood in danger of Byzantine attack if it took its armies north against Hungary, an action making little sense anyway because Hungary was stronger than Bulgaria. Relations with the Byzantines remained bad, and because that front retained top priority with Constantine, it made sense for him to accept his western losses and make peace with Hungary to keep himself free to move south against Byzantium. Furthermore, Bulgaria could no longer count to any extent on help against Hungary or Byzantium from the Tatars, for Khan Berke, Bulgaria's suzerain who seems to have felt an interest in protecting Constantine, had died in 1265.

Berke was succeeded by his son Mangu Timur, who was not able to maintain control over the array of tribes within the khanate; this led to a weakening of the khanate's central authority and considerable separatism on the part of smaller units across the Steppes. In the western lands bordering on Bulgaria a great general—a member of Ghengis Khan's family and a nephew of Berke—named Nogaj asserted increasing independence from Mangu Timur. After Mangu Timur's death in 1280/81 Nogaj was to become for all practical purposes the master of an independent state. In the period 1265–80 Nogaj, probably already stronger than the legitimate khan, was occupied in Steppe affairs and had little time, especially during the late 1260s when he was building up his own position in the Steppes, to intervene in Bulgarian affairs, other than to raid for booty from time to time. Furthermore, Nogaj

would not have intervened to assist Bulgaria, because he was hostile to that state; for the Bulgarians owed and paid tribute to Mangu Timur, from whom Nogaj was seceding and for whom Nogaj had little love. Thus Bulgaria found itself on the side of the Steppe faction opposed to its immediate neighbor, Nogaj.

To further add to Bulgaria's woes, Constantine himself became incapacitated. In 1264 or 1265 he fell from a horse and, we are told, badly broke his leg. Clearly his injuries were more serious than that, for he became paralyzed from the waist down and had to be carried in a litter or wagon. Thus his own personal leadership of armies became next to impossible, with the result that his control over his kingdom declined. As the Nogajs continued their raiding for pleasure and profit and as Constantine became less and less able to oppose them, various localities, particularly in the north, came more and more to be responsible for their own defense.

The Byzantines, concerned with Charles of Anjou's threat, however, had an interest in improving relations with Bulgaria. Though they probably were not in danger of losing major fortresses to the Bulgarians, they obviously wanted to spare themselves from plundering raids. So in 1268 Michael VIII tendered a proposal to Bulgaria for peace. He offered Constantine Tih, now a widower, his own niece Maria as a bride and agreed that as her dowry she would bring back to Bulgaria the two recently lost Black Sea cities, Mesembria and Anchialos, whose loss was Bulgaria's main grievance against Byzantium. The wedding followed, it seems in 1269.

Whether or not the Byzantines ever intended to surrender to the Bulgarians these two towns (both of which were militarily and commercially important) is not certain. However, by the time delivery was due, the Byzantines were in a strong enough position to renege on their promise. Michael VIII had in the interim entered into two valuable alliances that enabled him to do this. First, he had concluded an alliance with Hungary, by which his son and heir Andronicus married the daughter of Stephen V. Second, he had made an alliance with Nogaj, who was given as a bride for his harem Michael's illegitimate daughter Evrosina. Thus when the time came to do it, Michael simply refused to surrender the towns. Angry, Constantine raided Thrace, probably in 1271. The Byzantines then called on their new ally, Nogaj, who, on his own and without consulting Mangu Timur, launched a massive raid across the Danube that severely plundered Bulgaria.

Bulgaria was now surrounded by enemies on all sides, and the two northern ones, the Hungarians and the Nogajs, were allied to the southern one, Byzantium. Furthermore, because Bulgaria's Tatar suzerain no longer controlled territory on Bulgaria's borders, but had his lands further east, and because he was also weaker than his rival Nogaj, Bulgaria could find no protection from that source. Thus Constantine had no choice but to yield and make peace with Byzantium. Not surprisingly, however, he joined Charles of Anjou's coalition when he had the chance, in 1272 or 1273. But, surrounded by allied enemies, Constantine had to remain passive, unable to take action to

try to regain his lost lands, either those to the northwest (Vidin) or the southeast (Mesembria and Anchialos).

Meanwhile, on 1 August 1272, Stephen V of Hungary died. He was succeeded by his son Ladislas IV, who was only ten years old at the time. The boy's mother, Elizabeth, became regent. In that same year Rostislav's son Bela, who held Mačva with Beograd and Braničevo, was killed. The Hungarian regency asserted control over this territory, at least ousting any heir Bela might have had, and soon assigned it to a royally appointed ban. In December 1272 a certain John was Ban of Mačva. By that time Rostislav's other son, Michael, no longer held northern Bosnia. Michael, by supporting Bela IV against Stephen V, had won Stephen's enmity. As a result, in 1268, after Stephen had made peace with his father and regained his former position, he ousted Michael. By 1272 a Stephen was Ban of [northern] Bosnia. A certain Gregory then held Braničevo, which united with Kučevo was separated again from Mačva, and a certain Paul commanded the Severin province across the Danube from Vidin. Jacob Svetoslav continued to retain Vidin.

But this policy of replacing hereditary vassal rulers, who had local ties, with royally appointed governors, which presumably was intended to bind these areas more closely to the center, seems to have failed. This failure may be attributed chiefly to weakness at the center, for the regency could not provide sufficient support to these appointees for the regency to retain its control over these Slavic provinces. Difficulties with the magnates and with Bohemia soon arose and, it seems, local figures ousted the bans in the more easterly lands. After June 1273 there are no more references to Bans of Braničevo. In July 1273 Hungary suffered a defeat at the hands of the Bohemians. By the end of the decade—or in the early 1280s—two Bulgarian boyars, of Cuman origin, named Drman and Kudelin, were in control of Braničevo. Most scholars believe these two men had asserted their independence, presumably by acquiring local support and ousting the Hungarian-appointed ban, very early, possibly as early as mid-1273, when Hungary was distracted by its loss in Bohemia.

If the Hungarians were unable to retain Braničevo, they had even less chance of retaining influence over more distant Vidin; in fact, whenever they had lost Braničevo, they had lost their best base from which to launch troops to intervene in Vidin. Thus when this occurred—quite possibly in ca. 1273—Jacob Svetoslav found himself in a position to assert his independence from the Hungarians. Thus Hungary's policy of working through puppets could succeed only when Hungary was strong. In times when it was weak, there was nothing to stop the puppets from asserting their independence and taking their lands out of the Hungarian state. However, independence from Hungary had its dangers, for, not strong enough to stand alone, Jacob Svetoslav now had no prop to maintain his position should Trnovo try to oust him. Thus it was clear that once again he would have to reach some accommodation with Trnovo. His chances of achieving this were good, for owing to Trnovo's increasing weakness, Constantine may have doubted his ability to conquer

Vidin and thus probably was willing, should Jacob Svetoslav submit under acceptable terms, to allow Jacob's continued rule there. Moreover, Trnovo needed allies.

By then, as noted, Constantine was incapacitated and his ability to provide effective leadership had declined. His new wife, Maria, had borne him a son, Michael, whom she wanted to succeed him. Michael was crowned co-tsar in 1273. Owing to Constantine's paralysis, Maria took an ever increasing role in state affairs, and since she ruled by building factions, playing one group or individual off against another, she seems to have provoked considerable opposition against the regime. And as various boyars came to oppose her, or she suspected that they did, she began taking measures against them, arresting and executing real or suspected boyar opponents, which only increased boyar hostility to her. At the same time Nogaj raids increased, causing economic losses and also greater dissatisfaction with Constantine who was able to do nothing to stop them. Maria seems to have come to feel that the existence of the dynasty was threatened—be it by a coup against Constantine himself or one against her son in the event of Constantine's death.

The populace in the peripheral regions, which the central government was unable to manage or defend directly and which was becoming more and more dependent on local figures for defense, might well rally around a powerful alternative leader. One of the most logical candidates for that role was Jacob Svetoslav. Of good family, he was a relatively strong ruler and apparently popular with his subjects in the west; already entitled tsar, he had also connected himself with the Asen dynasty by marrying a granddaughter of the great John Asen. Thus he seemed dangerous, and Maria wanted to get rid of him or, failing that, to at least co-opt him to the side of the ruling house. Since Jacob might not have been able to withstand a major attack from Trnovo, it was also in his interests to reach some arrangement with Trnovo. Thus the two entered into negotiations, probably at her initiative, and with a sworn safe-conduct Jacob Svetoslav accepted her invitation to Trnovo. He was received with much ceremony and at a church service adopted by Maria as her second son, thus making him part of the Trnovo royal family. In the agreement Jacob Svetoslav probably recognized himself as second son, ranked after the baby Michael; in so doing he would have given Michael recognition as heir and promised not to try to overthrow him. At the same time Jacob Svetoslav was probably recognized as the heir to the throne in Trnovo in the event of Michael's death.

Thus Jacob Svetoslav was officially separated from Hungary—then in decline and unable to respond to these changes—and, though still autonomous, at least brought to recognize Trnovo's suzerainty. Moreover, he was sufficiently bound—by religious oaths—to Trnovo's dynasty to have become a supporter of it rather than a potential leader of opposition to it. This agreement should have given more security to both, to Maria for her rule in Trnovo and for her son's future, and to Jacob for his possession of Vidin. However, Maria still did not feel secure; after all, when Constantine died, what was

there to stop Jacob Svetoslav from breaking his oath and overthrowing little Michael? Thus Maria, owing to her suspicious mind, probably never intended to keep the agreement but from the start and throughout was bent on Jacob Svetoslav's destruction, only using the adoption as a means to create closer ties between herself and Jacob Svetoslav in order to more easily bring about his murder. In any case, in 1275 or 1276/77, she had him poisoned.

The immediate fate of Vidin is not known. Maria clearly would have liked to annex it; and various scholars, possibly correctly, have asserted that this happened. In support of this view they point out that in 1278 the Sv<sup>r</sup>rlig (Svrljig) province between Požarevac and Niš—which is believed to have been part of Jacob Svetoslav's original domain—was Bulgarian. Though this says nothing about Vidin, it does suggest that Bulgaria had been able to assert its control over at least part of Jacob's lands. Moreover, a Byzantine court poet, Manuel Philes, speaking about events in 1277 and 1278, says that Ivajlo, a rebel against Constantine who briefly succeeded him and whom we shall meet shortly, acquired rule over Bulgaria and Vidin. However, Manuel Philes is, as has been shown, a dubious source.<sup>7</sup> And it is possible that Manuel Philes may have been advancing only a title that Ivajlo claimed, rather than a statement about his actual possessions. For, in fact, Ivajlo almost certainly was never able to assert his authority in Vidin. However, Ivajlo's problems subsequently do not rule out the possibility that Maria and Constantine may have acquired Vidin immediately after Jacob Svetoslav's death and prior to Ivajlo's rebellion.

Against the view that Maria annexed Vidin, it can be argued that Maria, faced at home with increasing opposition, which eventually (within a year or so or even a matter of months, depending on when Jacob Svetoslav was poisoned) culminated in Ivajlo's rebellion, could never have asserted Trnovo's authority over Vidin unless the town had voluntarily submitted. And one might assume that the local inhabitants would not have happily submitted to the murderess of their prince. Thus one might expect Vidin's population, accustomed to the independence which had been developing in that region, to have supported the local big-men in Vidin, who presumably would have been trying to acquire authority and assert their province's independence, as Drman and Kudelin had in Braničevo. Thus if Maria had not been strong enough to strike quickly and effectively to take advantage of any instability that might have followed Jacob Svetoslav's death (for example, rivalry between local boyars), then Vidin probably would have resisted behind its walls and thus remained separate under local control. And even if Maria had been successful, quite likely Vidin would then have slipped from Trnovo's grasp when Ivajlo launched his rebellion against Constantine in 1277.

Thus with Trnovo and Hungary both weak and in no position to take decisive action, we may assume that Vidin remained independent of its two major neighbors; ten years later a certain Šišman had established himself as ruler of a principality there. Unless he had ousted some earlier secessionist, it seems probable that he had established his authority there in the late 1270s, a

period for which we have no sources about Vidin. It is possible he received outside support to assert himself, for example by allying with the two boyars who were ruling Braničevo or with Nogaj, who probably would have been willing to offer aid; after all Nogaj was hostile to Trnovo—a vassal of his rival Mangu Timur—and would not have wanted to see Trnovo become any stronger through the acquisition of this northwestern territory. Nogaj support of Vidin—by action or threat of action—is also suggested by the fact that later Šišman was to have close ties with the Nogajs, whose suzerainty he accepted and who provided units of Tatars for his armies. Thus one may postulate that Vidin either continued to remain independent throughout or else, had it fallen to Maria immediately after Jacob Svetoslav's death, it broke away again almost immediately thereafter, probably at the time of Ivajlo's rebellion. One may also postulate that it did so with the support of the Nogajs who probably were its suzerain protectors. However, Vidin's probable success in retaining its independence did not necessarily apply to Jacob Svetoslav's other lands, his original holding to the south of Vidin. And, as noted, at least part of this territory was regained by Bulgaria.

Hungary now found itself withdrawn from northwestern Bulgaria. It was to remain so until the 1360s. But its policies over the first three-quarters of the thirteenth century had contributed considerably, by encouraging and supporting secessionist movements in these peripheral territories of Bulgaria, to the weakening of Bulgaria.

## **Byzantium's Efforts to Defend itself against Charles of Anjou**

### *The Threat from Charles*

Meanwhile, Charles of Anjou, who by the agreement at Viterbo had obtained the rights to most of the Latin Empire, set about realizing his claims. Having acquired Corfu in 1267, he began negotiations with the Latins who had held Valona, Kanina, and Berat for Manfred and had then retained this territory after Manfred's demise. He made no progress for several years. Then in 1271 or 1272, according to Ducellier, Charles acquired the submission of all three cities, leaving Valona's holder in possession of his city as a vassal for the time being. Nicol doubts Valona yielded this early. Then in 1272 Charles landed on the Albanian coast and took Durazzo. Its conquest was facilitated by the destruction of its walls by a devastating earthquake. In fact, the Byzantine officials had already departed before his arrival. Ducellier dates the quake 1266/67. Nicol redates it to 1271, which would have given the empire little or no time for repairs before Charles' arrival. He soon was also in possession of the fortress of Kroja. Soon thereafter, in 1274, he was able to oust his vassal in Valona and take direct control of that city and its hinterland. Nicol believes 1274 marks Valona's initial submission to Charles. After he had established himself on the coast many of the Albanian chiefs rallied to him, accepting him

as their suzerain, and thus he became overlord over much of coastal Albania with its hinterland. Durazzo became his center of operations, the capital of his Kingdom of Albania, and he gave himself the title of king. Charles, as noted, also had a Balkan ally in Villehardouin, with whom he had concluded in 1267 a treaty by which Charles became Villehardouin's suzerain as well as his heir to the Morea.

The Byzantines in the meantime tried to counter this emerging threat by creating alliances nearer home; they, as noted, had co-opted Bulgaria, but then, by reneging on the agreement to yield the Black Sea cities, had antagonized Constantine Tih, who in 1272 or 1273 gladly joined Charles' coalition. Earlier, back in 1268, the Byzantines had tried to enlist the Serbs, and a Byzantine proposal gained tentative agreement; according to its terms Michael VIII's niece Maria would marry King Uroš' second son, Milutin, who in turn would become Uroš' heir. However, for some reason the plan fell through, and shortly thereafter the young lady had married Constantine Tih. Milutin was then married to a daughter of John of Thessaly. John was hostile to Michael VIII, who sought to regain John's Thessaly for the empire; thus, not surprisingly, John too was drawn into Charles' coalition in 1273. That same year (if not already in 1272) the Serbs also concluded an alliance with Charles. Thus the Byzantine Empire seemed to be in desperate straits, for Charles, ambitious for its conquest, was already established in the Balkans and had linked to himself by treaty all the Balkan leaders whose lands bordered on Byzantine territory between Charles' Albania and Constantinople: the Albanian chiefs, Serbia, Thessaly, Bulgaria, and also the more distant Morea.

Meanwhile, Epirus was also drawn into Charles' coalition. When the Byzantines were campaigning in Albania in late 1274, they took the town of Butrinti. Nicephorus of Epirus believed this port was his by right; when the Byzantines refused to restore it to him, he turned to Charles of Anjou and in the summer of 1276 concluded a treaty with him. He also strengthened his ties with his half-brother John of Thessaly, another ally of Charles. Both strongly opposed, or at least enjoyed capitalizing on, Michael VIII's acceptance of the Union of Lyons, an event to be discussed shortly. Faced with this opposition, Michael VIII enticed Nicephorus' younger brother Demetrius, also called Michael, to Constantinople, where he gave him the despot's title and his own daughter as a bride. It seems he was laying plans to use him as a replacement for Nicephorus in Epirus, if the chance arose. And Demetrius/Michael was soon to be given an assignment in the western Balkans, where he actively participated in the defense of Berat against the Angevins. However, no opportunity arose to send him into Epirus. Meanwhile, under this pressure, Nicephorus felt compelled to move even closer to Charles. Thus in 1278, the same year that he had been able to take Butrinti from the Byzantines, Nicephorus, pressured by Charles, made a formal vassal submission to Charles. Not only did he accept vassal status, but he also had to yield to Charles the newly recovered Butrinti as well as the port of Sopot. He also had to recog-



nize Charles as Manfred's heir, giving Charles the right to all the towns Michael II had awarded to Manfred as the dowry of Michael's daughter Helen. Thus Nicephorus also had to surrender to the Angevins the important port of Himara (Chimara). As a result Charles acquired the Adriatic coast from the Akrokeraunian promontory (below the Bay of Valona) down to Butrinti.

### *Negotiations with Rome*

Michael VIII's only hope was to persuade the pope to prevent Charles from launching his campaign. To do this Michael dispatched an envoy to Rome to present a proposal to unite the Churches. The pope, not surprisingly, was receptive, for though Charles was promising the same thing upon the completion of his conquest, his union would again mean one forced on the Greeks by Western foreigners. That policy had been tried by the Latin Empire for fifty-seven years without lasting effect. The pope believed that a union effected by a Greek emperor offered more likelihood of lasting success. So, he ordered Charles not to proceed and in 1274 convoked a Church council at Lyons, at which Michael's delegation accepted the Union of the Churches.

At the council the Byzantine delegation accepted union on papal terms, agreeing to papal supremacy and *Filioque*, the controversial Latin addition to the Creed. Of course, these envoys accepted these points only in the emperor's name; they spoke for neither the Byzantine clergy nor the Byzantine populace. And until those groups accepted it, union could not in fact be achieved. And neither clergy nor populace, just thirteen years after Constantinople's recovery from fifty-seven years of Latin rule (during which the Latins had tried to force both union and Latin customs upon them), was in a mood to have any part of it. Michael VIII, enjoying the freedom given leaders in the days before mass media (when it was possible to tell different groups different stories with a chance of getting away with it), insisted in public addresses to his people that his agreement with the pope did not endanger their beliefs. Nothing, he affirmed, would change in the Greek Church. However, union was necessary to avert a greater danger: Latin attack and the restoration of Latin rule. Thus the emperor's motives had been purely political. His delegation had accepted papal primacy, but unless the pope were to visit Constantinople, a most unlikely event, that primacy was meaningless. To mention the pope's name in Church services was harmless. They had, Michael insisted, accepted no change in beliefs and practices and thus had rejected the use of unleavened bread for communion and *Filioque*. (This last statement was an utter falsehood.)

Most of the populace and clergy were not persuaded. They were not sure what had actually been promised and they were afraid concessions had been made to the Latins on *Filioque* and the communion wafer. Michael had the reputation of being tricky, and he had already shown his duplicity by violating his oath to the Lascaris family when he had blinded and seized the throne from

little John Lascaris, an act which had stirred up considerable wrath against him. The average Byzantine probably also did not fully comprehend how dangerous the threat from Charles was. Moreover, even if Michael's subjects had understood, it might not have mattered, for most of them believed that the Virgin protected Constantinople. The city had fallen in 1204 for their sins. Through her favor they had recovered it in 1261. Her intercession was clearly shown by the ease with which it was recovered, seemingly by chance. If they kept their faith pure, the Virgin would save the city from any danger. The best way to lose it was to betray the true faith and accept the heresy of Rome. Hatred for the Latins and the Latin Church was too strong for any danger to cause the populace to make compromises concerning their faith with the Latins.

The opposition was led by Patriarch Joseph, a supporter of Michael who had been installed when Patriarch Arsenius refused to accept the deposition of John Lascaris. But union was more than Joseph could stomach. Michael soon deposed him for an even more pliable cleric, John Bekkos. (To do Bekkos justice, it should be added that his acceptance of the Unionist position seems to have reflected a sincere conversion.) The Greek Church went into schism. The Arsenite party rallied around Joseph in this moment of danger, and most of the population supported the opposition. The Anti-Unionists included many high aristocrats and were led by Michael's own sister Irene, who had become a nun under the name of Eulogia; she was the mother of Maria, Constantine Tih's wife. Eulogia was soon thrown into jail for her opposition. Stirred up by Eulogia's daughter, who in this matter had the support of the local clergy, Bulgaria became a center of opposition to Michael's heresy. Thessaly became a second center of opposition to Michael's religious policy.

At first Michael's response was mild, and he stuck to reasoning and persuasion, chiefly through speeches. Two years passed before he himself was to accept union in an official ceremony.

But though it stirred up enormous opposition at home at a critical time when the population needed to be united, the Union of Lyons at least bought Michael time, for the pope, while awaiting Michael's execution of the agreement, refused to let Charles go into action. While Charles was thus restrained, Michael mobilized his forces and in 1274 attacked Charles in Albania. Michael's forces had considerable success and by 1276 had occupied most, if not all, of Charles' holdings in the Albanian interior, including the important fortress of Berat. By the campaign's end Charles held only Durazzo—which Michael had besieged unsuccessfully—and Valona, and overland communications between these two towns had been cut off. Charles seemed on the verge of being expelled from Albania entirely. To retain these two fortresses, which were to be the dispatch points for the troops he soon hoped to send against the Byzantine Empire, Charles began transporting thither a steady flow of mercenaries. Having increased his forces, he then launched a major attack against Berat in 1279. The Byzantines zealously defended Berat, and Charles' siege dragged on unsuccessfully for over two years.

In 1275 Michael VIII also ordered military action against his Greek rival John of Thessaly. An attempt to redate this attack to 1271 has not been generally accepted. It is not known whether Michael was chiefly reacting to past raids carried out by John's Thessalians against the Byzantine coastal holdings along the Gulf of Volos, or whether he hoped to annex more of Thessaly. It seems that he dispatched a large expedition, though it is highly unlikely that the Byzantine forces contained the forty thousand men Gregoras claims. Michael's armies marched successfully through Thessaly, taking one fortress after another, until they finally besieged John in his main residence of Neopatra. Things looked grim for John, so he slipped out of the city and traveled to the Duchy of Athens, which would find itself threatened by the Byzantines should Thessaly fall. John de la Roche, who in 1263 had succeeded to the duchy on the death of his father, Guy, sent support to John after the two rulers concluded an agreement. By this treaty, John de la Roche's son William, who was to succeed to Athens on the death of his father in 1280, married Helen, the daughter of John of Thessaly. As her dowry Athens acquired the towns of Gravia, Siderokastron, Gardiki, and Lamia (or Zeitounion) in southern Thessaly.

Meanwhile the Byzantines had divided their forces; leaving a token force to besiege Neopatra where John was still believed to be, the other troops moved off to plunder and capture various lesser forts. At this point John, accompanied by a contingent of knights from Athens, made a surprise attack on the Byzantines. Taken completely by surprise, the Byzantines panicked and, after a contingent of Cuman mercenaries switched sides and joined John, the Byzantines suffered a serious defeat.

### *Euboea*

Meanwhile Euboea had become a bone of contention between Byzantium and the Latins. The island had been given by Boniface in fief to three Lombard lords, who came to be known as the "triarchs." After Boniface's death and Emperor Henry's campaign of 1209 into Greece against Count Hubert of Briandrate, the Lombards of Euboea accepted the suzerainty of Henry. Subsequently, in 1236, after William Villehardouin provided aid to defend Constantinople at a critical moment, Emperor Baldwin II gave suzerainty over Euboea to the Prince of Achaia. William became interested in a more active role on the island when he married Carintana, the niece and heiress of one of the triarchs. Her inheritance may well have consisted of a sixth of the island. When she died in 1255, William laid claim to direct control over her lands. The Lombard barons were opposed to this, for control of this territory would then have passed from their families into that of a powerful foreigner. So they allied against him and assigned Carintana's share to Grapella of Verona, a member of a "triarch" family. Venice, meanwhile, had established a major commercial station on the island under the authority of a bailiff (bailo) resident in Negroponte (Chalkis, Chalkis), whose presence dated from between

1211 and 1216. Bury describes Negroponte as a sort of Venetian naval station and diplomatic bureau.<sup>8</sup> In the years that followed Venice had at various times been accepted as suzerain by certain triarchs. Venice had thus acquired considerable local authority and had no desire to see William Villehardouin obtain a direct role in the administration of any part of the island. So, in June 1256 Venice concluded a treaty with the local Lombard barons by which it also obtained rich concessions, including the right to all the island's customs receipts; in exchange the triarchs themselves were exempted from commercial duties and freed from the tribute that up to this date they had rendered to Venice.

In 1256 William invaded Euboea; he summoned the two leading triarchs, who were his vassals (and who did not dare ignore the summons) and took them prisoner. Then he and Venice engaged in a two-year struggle over Negroponte, not only the seat of the Venetian bailiff but also the capital of the island. The general residence of all the triarchs, Negroponte was commonly held by them all. The town was taken by William, recovered by Venice, re-recovered by William, and then besieged for thirteen months until Venice obtained its submission in early 1258. By that time William was involved in a quarrel with Guy of Athens, his hereditary vassal for Argos and Nauplia. For William was now demanding that Guy accept the Prince of Achaea as his suzerain for his Athens duchy as well. Guy refused, causing William to invade Guy's duchy. Guy was defeated in battle at Karydi; but the two barons agreed to let the King of France judge their dispute. William was then captured by Michael Palaeologus at the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259 and Guy of Athens became the acting bailiff for Achaea. Now Guy and, subsequently after his release, William, faced with a serious Byzantine challenge to the Morea itself, needed to improve relations with Venice. As a result in May 1262 William and Venice concluded a treaty by which William gave up his claim to direct possession of a portion of Euboea but was to continue to be recognized by the barons and by Venice as the suzerain of Euboea.

Meanwhile, after William's capture at Pelagonia Guy had released the two arrested triarchs. One of those released, Narzotto, along with William's rival the triarch Grapella, soon took up piracy in the Aegean, raiding as far afield as the coast of Anatolia. They maintained over a hundred ships and amassed a considerable amount of plunder.

Venice increasingly found itself caught in the middle between the Byzantines and the local Lombards. Venice did not want to see the Byzantines acquire Euboea; but it also had to worry about its major commercial rival, Genoa, which by the Treaty of Nymphaeum (1261) and the subsequent Byzantine recovery of Constantinople, had replaced Venice as the dominant commercial power in Constantinople. So, in 1265 Venice concluded a treaty with the empire, by which it was allowed to regain a commercial role in the empire. The treaty also recognized Venetian possession of Coron and Modon in the Peloponnesus. Thus these two Venetian towns would not be attacked by Byzantine forces in that region.

Meanwhile the piratical triarch Narzotto died. His heir, Marino II, was a minor; his inheritance was managed by his mother, Felisa. Felisa soon fell in love with an Italian adventurer of humble origins from Vicenza named Licario. Her family and the aristocracy of Negroponte, where all the triarchs and other leading barons lived, disapproved. The lovers soon contracted a secret marriage. Felisa's brothers learned of it and vowed to avenge themselves on Licario. However, he managed to escape to a very stout fortress, Anemopylai, near Karystos. Having strengthened its fortifications and assembled a band of retainers, Licario proceeded to plunder the neighboring countryside, lands of his Lombard opponents. Meanwhile the Byzantines, ambitious to recover Euboea and angered by a raid against various of their possessions in Asia Minor in 1269 by a Euboean Lombard fleet, retaliated by attacking Euboea; they defeated a Latin army, took many prisoners, and established a beachhead. The Byzantines stepped up this warfare in 1276 and found support from a considerable number of local Greeks. Meanwhile Licario, who had expected that his position of strength would force the triarchs to treat with him, found the barons still adamant in their refusal to do so. So Licario sent envoys to the Byzantines and soon concluded an agreement with the empire. Byzantine troops then entered his fortress of Anemopylai and warfare against the Lombards was stepped up, in the course of which many more local Greeks joined Licario's standard.

Meanwhile, after the victory in 1275 of John of Thessaly and John of Athens over the Byzantine invaders of Thessaly, the Lombards of Euboea thought to take advantage of the Byzantine defeat to attack a Byzantine fleet off Euboea. They launched a very successful surprise attack; however, the tide quickly turned when a large force of Byzantines, in retreat from their defeat in Thessaly, appeared in Euboea. The Byzantines defeated a large army of local Lombards, killing one triarch and capturing a second along with many other knights. The Byzantines immediately dispatched further troops to Euboea with the aim of taking the whole island. In 1276 Licario, as a Byzantine ally, took the major Euboean fortress of Karystos. Michael VIII, pleased by his success, awarded the whole island to Licario as a fief. In exchange Licario owed the emperor military service with two hundred knights. Licario, in order to win possession of his grant, now stepped up his activities and began reducing the forts of Euboea one after the other. He did not limit his activities to the land, but also commanded a fleet that in about 1278 took the islands of Lemnos and Skopelos.

By 1277 or 1278 Licario had taken all Euboea except for Negroponte. At this point he attacked Negroponte. A major battle occurred beneath its walls, which resulted in Licario's winning an overwhelming victory. Among Licario's prisoners were Gilbert of Verona, one of the triarchs, and John, Duke of Athens, who had been assisting the beleaguered Lombards. The city lay open before him, but for some reason Licario did not take it. Perhaps he feared Venetian anger and wanted to avoid future opposition from that quarter; or perhaps he feared intervention on behalf of Negroponte from John of Thes-

saly, flush from a second victory over the Byzantines in 1277 and free now to actively intervene in Euboea. In any case, Licario left Negroponte alone and satisfied his ambitions by ruling the rest of the island, which he did from the fortress of Filla. He sent John of Athens to Michael VIII as a gift. Later in that or the following year Michael released him under uncertain circumstances, but seemingly for a large ransom.

Licario also became admiral of a Greek fleet in the Aegean and followed up his terrestrial successes with naval ones, expelling the Venetians from various Aegean islands. As a result by 1280 most of the islands of the Archipelago were Byzantine. Venice, upset by this turn of events, agreed in July 1281 to support Charles of Anjou's crusade against Byzantium. And at roughly this time Licario ceases to be mentioned in the sources; we have no idea of what became of him.

### *Byzantium and Charles' Coalition, 1276–82*

Meanwhile, in 1277 the Byzantines attacked Thessaly again but were stopped at Pharsalos (Farsala) by John. The frustrated Byzantines then called on their Nogaj Tatar allies, who plundered Thessaly and caused considerable damage. The Tatars then withdrew. The year in which the Nogaj raid occurred cannot be determined.

In 1276 a new pope, Innocent VI, took office. He was more hostile than his predecessor toward the Greeks and toward Michael. Suspicious of Michael's words, he demanded results, ordering the emperor and Greek Church leaders to proclaim union and chant the Creed with *Filioque* in the presence of his legates. Michael, of course, had been insisting to his subjects that *Filioque* had not been part of the agreement. In April 1277 Michael followed the pope's order semi-publicly—for he did so in a palace ceremony—and chanted the Creed with *Filioque*. His action brought no nearer the conversion of his subjects, who were horrified when rumors about the palace ceremony spread through the city. So, Michael next wrote the pope stating he hoped the pope was satisfied, for he had carried out his part. He then suggested that the pope drop his demand about *Filioque* and leave the Greek Creed intact. After all, he stated, *Filioque* was not really a major theological point, but its importance had become blown out of all proportion in the minds of the Greeks. In the interests of peace and union, why not cease trying to force it on the Greeks? Neither Innocent nor his successors, however, would accept this reasoning.

Up to this time (spring 1277) Michael had treated his opponents leniently, trying to reason with them. But with both Greek opposition to union and Michael's need to persuade the pope of his own good faith increasing through 1276 and 1277, Michael turned to persecution. At first he resorted to arrests, jailings, and exilings; among those jailed was his own sister Irene/Eulogia, the mother of the wives of the rulers of Bulgaria and Epirus. Then, as resistance continued, he turned to mutilations (blindings or the

cutting out of tongues) and even executions. Persecution merely increased the opposition and caused large numbers of Anti-Unionists, both clerics and aristocrats, to emigrate from the empire. They fled chiefly to Thessaly, which was becoming a center for Anti-Unionists and for other opponents of Michael. Their presence gave Michael further cause to make war on Thessaly, though by 1277 the Thessalians had proved themselves equal to the task of resisting his attacks. In 1277 John Ducas held an ecclesiastical synod in Thessaly at which the bishops present declared John's political and religious enemy Michael VIII a heretic and condemned the Union of Lyons.

Meanwhile, persecutions reached Mount Athos. The monasteries had suffered considerably economically during the early thirteenth century. After Michael recovered Constantinople he had given the Church in general and Athos in particular many gifts and had spent much to repair various churches and monasteries there. These gifts were necessary politically because Michael had deposed, as noted, the popular and respected patriarch Arsenius, which had stirred up considerable opposition to him within the Church, particularly in monasteries. And Michael did not want Athos to become an Arsenite center against him. When he saw the danger from Charles developing back in 1273, Michael had approached the monks on Athos about the possibility of his seeking Church Union; the monks had strongly rejected the plan.

When the Council of Lyons was concluded, the monks on Athos rose up as defenders of Orthodoxy against Rome and declared Michael's action heretical. Trying to be conciliatory, Michael continued through 1277 to bestow gifts upon the Athonite monasteries. However, the monks were not to be won over to his views. Persecutions seem to have started on Athos in 1279. Unfortunately, we have no contemporary sources about these persecutions; later accounts (written in the fourteenth century) speak of them, however: the impious Latinizers, they say, sent troops in 1275 (probably the actual date, as we shall see, was 1280) who attacked several monasteries including the Zographou, the Bulgarian house, whose monks opposed Michael's religious policy. Twenty-six men (including twenty-two monks) were killed at the Zographou monastery. Its church and several other buildings were destroyed in a fire. Many manuscripts and vestments were lost in that fire or carried off in the looting. Michael's officials persuaded the Great Lavra to accept union and then turned their attention to the Vatopedi monastery. Its monks went into hiding, but were caught, and those who did not accept union were hanged. The Xeropotamou was bribed into accepting union; then an earthquake followed, killing many monks. Živojinović thinks this account—though elements of legend may have been mixed into it—is probably fairly accurate, particularly in its description of the actions taken against the Zographou monastery.<sup>9</sup> He notes that the Bulgarians had defeated the Byzantines in a battle in July 1280 and, postulating that the persecution on Athos occurred in that year, suggests the military defeat could well have led angry Greek officials to take their frustrations out on the Bulgarian monks who refused to accept union. Supporting his dating and reasoning is the fact that in the fall of

1280 the remnants of the defeated Byzantine army are known to have appeared in the vicinity of Athos. And it is evident that these soldiers were an undisciplined and violent bunch who carried out a certain amount of pillaging in the vicinity of Athos as well as on the mountain itself.

Thus Michael seems to have substituted civil war (plots and popular unrest that could easily grow into large-scale rioting or bring about his own overthrow, as well as increased opposition from and warfare with his Thessalian neighbor) for the threatened invasion. And in the event of an invasion Michael needed to have his population united behind him. At the same time, though Michael had delayed the invasion, the threat of it still hung over his head, for the pope was demanding greater results than Michael could deliver. And if the pope should come to the conclusion that Michael would be unable to realize his promises, then he might lose patience and cease restraining Charles. And, as we might guess, Charles was also putting considerable pressure on the pope to permit him to attack the empire and restore the Latin Empire, whose government—after restoration—would then impose Church Union in the regions Charles controlled. Thus Michael clearly had very little time.

William Villehardouin of the Morea died in 1278. Charles inherited his principality according to the agreement made at Viterbo. William had had no son to inherit the fifth allowed by that treaty; thus the male Villehardouin line became extinct. At first glance, Charles' acquisition of the Morea might appear to be a considerable gain for him. However, in fact it was not. William as a local lord had been quite popular; he had understood local customs and had worked hard to maintain good relations with his Greek subjects. Now the Morea had acquired an absentee ruler who had no ties with the region. The chances of maintaining a Villehardouin connection had collapsed for a time because Charles' son Philip, who had married William Villehardouin's daughter Isabelle and who might have become a fit governor for the Morea, had died in 1277 with no sons. So, instead of being ruled by a prince on the ground, the Morea was run by a bailiff and his associates, outsiders sent in from the Anjou court. The populace found these foreign officials unpleasant; having no ties to the area and no understanding of local customs, they administered according to the ways of Anjou. At the same time as the old families of the Morea now became extinct, their lands were assigned by the Anjous to knights brought from France and Italy. These newcomers also did not know local ways or speak Greek; arrogant and throwing their weight around in district affairs, they stirred up considerable hostility on the local level.

Meanwhile in Rome, Pope Nicholas III (1277–80), who had succeeded Innocent VI, understood Michael's difficulties and had continued to restrain Charles. However, in August 1280 Nicholas died. In February 1281 Charles' candidate, Martin IV, became pope. Asserting that Michael had not realized the Union of the Churches, Martin declared Michael a schismatic to be deposed and excommunicated him. Charles was given permission to carry out the sentence. Thus Charles, who by this time had added Venice to his coali-



tion, was at last free to march. He planned his attack for early 1282. So, Michael was back to where he had started in 1274, facing invasion from a great coalition; in fact his position was now even weaker than it had been in 1274, because his unionist policy had earned him hatred and divided the Greek population.

However, suddenly on 31 March 1282 a rebellion broke out in Palermo, the capital of Angevin Sicily; this uprising is known as the Sicilian Vespers. The Sicilians had disliked Charles and, well financed by the gold distributed by Byzantine agents who had been actively involved in stirring up unrest in Sicily, rose up and overthrew Charles' officials. The Sicilians invited Peter of Aragon to be their prince. Charles thereby had to go to war against Peter to recover Sicily. This proved to be a long and costly war, and it ended in failure. Thus Charles' dreams of restoring the Latin Empire collapsed. How much credit should be given to Michael for bringing about the rebellion is much debated among scholars, though most give him some credit. In any case, since the activities of secret agents are not the sort of thing committed to paper, it is something we shall never know. Charles was hated in Sicily, and that hatred was clearly the major cause of the rebellion; for, if Charles had been popular the Byzantine agents could have done nothing. And, of course, once the rebellion broke out it became a mob action out of the control of any leaders. Michael not surprisingly made self-serving statements about his role in it, but they hardly constitute proof. Shortly thereafter, in December 1282, having seen his empire saved from disaster and perhaps having masterminded its salvation, Michael VIII died.

Michael, however, died hated at home. His son and successor Andronicus II (1282–1328) immediately repudiated the union—which, of course, had never been accepted by most Greeks—that had existed on paper for eight years. There was no reason to retain it, since the cause for it, preventing Charles' invasion, had been otherwise removed, and probably no one in the empire really wanted it. Once again, as in 1261 (upon Constantinople's recovery), Holy Water was sprinkled around Hagia Sophia and the other churches to purify them. Michael was denied the last rites of the Church and was buried on a distant mountainside with no church service at all. After the Union of Lyons was repudiated, the Greek Church in Thessaly and Epirus returned to communion with and obedience to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Thus from here on, despite the political independence of Thessaly and Epirus, the Church in these regions remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Soon thereafter, in the 1280s (most probably late in 1284) Andronicus II marched west and recovered for Byzantium the central Albanian lands the Angevins had taken, acquiring among other places Valona, Kroja, and Durazzo. The southern region centered around Valona was to remain Byzantine until the Serb conquest in the 1340s. The Angevins, however, were able to retain their possession of the coastal town of Butrinti as well as the island of Corfu.

## Civil War in Bulgaria, 1278–84

As noted, Tatar raiding increased in Bulgaria from the mid-1270s. These actions were carried out by the followers of the semi-independent chieftain Nogaj. Since Bulgaria's Tatar suzerain Mangu Timur was weaker than Nogaj, he could not put a stop to these depredations. The fact that Bulgaria still paid Mangu Timur tribute may even have caused an increase in Nogaj's raiding. Furthermore, the Nogajs were Byzantine allies. Bulgaria's anti-Byzantine policy—its lining up with Charles, opposing Church Union, and giving asylum to Michael's enemies—was grounds for Michael to encourage Nogaj to raid Bulgaria, a profitable activity that would have suited Nogaj's own need for booty to retain or obtain additional followers. At the same time the Bulgarian tsar Constantine Tih, as a result of the injury which left him paralyzed from the waist down, was not an effective leader in repelling these raids. Thus communities near the Tatar border or along Tatar raiding routes had more and more to assume responsibility for their own defense. And various localities produced leaders who commanded local resistance. The most successful of these was a swineherd named Ivajlo or, as Pachymeres calls him, Lahana—a name derived from the Greek word for kale. Pigs were a major Balkan livestock product, making it possible for the possessor of a large herd to join the ranks of a district's rural elite. The famous Karadjordje, who led the First Serbian Uprising against the Turks in 1804, was also a pig-farmer.

Ivajlo had great success in leading local "minute men" or vigilantes against the Tatar raiders, and with his success his following grew. He also seems to have been a charismatic figure; according to Pachymeres he had visions which promised great things for him. Various signs portending this were seen and so interpreted. And he claimed to be in contact with heaven and the saints. His success against the Tatars confirmed these predictions, and many Bulgarians came to see him as a God-given savior from the Tatars. His activities occurred at a time when, as noted, more and more central government functions were falling into the hands of the Byzantine-born Queen Maria, a scandalous intriguer who, to secure the succession for her son Michael, was turning against many of the boyars. Besides poisoning Jacob Svetoslav, she had imprisoned or executed various other boyars. Thus opposition to her and to Constantine was growing.

As Ivajlo's reputation and following grew, the area from which his support came also expanded; among his followers were also to be found an increasing number of boyars. Presumably they were not court boyars but provincial ones, who probably depended on Ivajlo's army for the defense of their estates and who also had become disillusioned with the regime as it turned more and more to arbitrary actions against real or imagined opponents. With this growing following, Ivajlo's effectiveness against the Tatars grew. And Ivajlo's growing power coincided with the increasing ineffectiveness of Constantine and with the increasing opposition to Maria. Soon the swineherd-

brigand, having through his own bravery built up a large following, proclaimed himself tsar.

Constantine grew worried; so, presumably carried in a litter or wagon, he led his armies out to meet Ivajlo. Deserted by many of his supporters, Constantine's troops were defeated and Constantine was killed. This battle occurred at the end of 1277. Then, while Maria continued to rule in Trnovo as regent for little Michael, Ivajlo captured a whole series of towns.

Meanwhile, the Byzantines, also concerned about Ivajlo, were in the process of beefing up their border fortresses; Michael VIII, moreover, detested Maria, who supported both her mother's opposition to his Church policy and Constantine's alliance with Charles of Anjou. So, Michael now decided to intervene and place his own candidate on the Bulgarian throne, the son of Mico, John Asen's son-in-law, who had accepted Byzantine asylum and estates in Anatolia. This son, called John Asen III, was proclaimed Tsar of Bulgaria. Having made him take an oath of loyalty to the empire, Michael VIII married John Asen III to his own daughter, Irene.

The Bulgarian boyars were called upon to desert Maria and support the legitimate Asenid tsar, and some were to do so. Then, accompanied by a Byzantine army, early in 1278, John Asen III appeared in Bulgaria. By this time Ivajlo was besieging Trnovo. Nogaj units had also got into the act, crossing the Danube and plundering Bulgaria as far as the gates of Trnovo. Maria found herself caught between one domestic and two major foreign enemies, Tatars and Byzantines, for even though she was a Byzantine she hated her uncle the emperor whom she believed a heretic. To save her situation, Maria, after negotiations, opened the gates of Trnovo to Ivajlo in the late spring of 1278. He became tsar and married her; thus she remained as tsarica. Presumably the little Michael continued, in theory, to be the heir to the throne.

Most Marxist scholars have depicted Ivajlo's movement as a social one. Nikov has presented a good case, however, that such an interpretation is exaggerated.<sup>10</sup> He insists there is no evidence Ivajlo's was a social movement; he even had boyars among his supporters. There is no sign that he or his followers protested against social injustices or sought any social reforms. The movement did not pit the people against the boyars or the people against tsarist authority; it was simply a movement against a particular incompetent tsar. Ivajlo's willingness to marry the hated Tsarica Maria also militates against the social movement interpretation.

Once in power, Ivajlo found himself in new company, that of his Byzantine wife and presumably of much of her court, as well as that of various high Trnovo aristocrats; thus surrounded, he almost certainly became isolated from many of his original supporters. If he had had any social reforms in mind, as modern scholars often claim, he seems to have done nothing to advance them; he can hardly be faulted for this considering the conditions of the country, where, despite the submission of many towns to him, his authority hardly reached beyond Trnovo, which soon was under Byzantine siege. But in any

case, whatever his initial ambitions, Ivajlo seems to have become part of the establishment. Presumably this disillusioned many of his original followers, if for no other reason than that they failed to obtain sufficient rewards. Since Ivajlo was inexperienced in state affairs one may well imagine that the local establishment, or the faction then dominating it, would have been fairly successful in manipulating him and keeping power in its hands. The local boyars probably also scorned Ivajlo's low origins and saw him and his retinue as a threat to their positions and influence. Thus probably from the start they wanted and plotted his removal. And if Ivajlo's following became alienated and drifted away, and if Ivajlo was unable to secure his own authority over state affairs, members of the establishment would have come to have few reasons either to fear him or to continue to play along with him. Very likely the desire of the courtiers to rid themselves of him was behind their urging Ivajlo to leave Trnovo in the autumn of 1278 to campaign against the Tatars.

Thus Ivajlo in the spring of 1278 had acquired Trnovo. At first he had considerable popular support, including that of some boyars, though not necessarily the major ones of Trnovo. The Tatars were looting in the vicinity of the capital, while a Byzantine army, also with some boyar support, accompanied by John Asen III, moved on Trnovo and laid siege to it beginning in the fall of 1278. Some Bulgarian towns had declared for Ivajlo, while others had not. Thus Bulgaria was in anarchy, and Ivajlo, besieged in Trnovo and facing two enemy armies within Bulgaria, was in no position to assert his authority over those towns that accepted him, let alone over those that did not. Surely if Vidin had been regained by Bulgaria after Jacob Svetoslav's death, it seceded again at this time. Since the Byzantines were allied to the Nogajs, the purpose of the Nogajs' presence at the moment (other than to plunder) was nominally to support the candidacy of John Asen III. A Nogaj unit, under a certain Kasim beg, served in the Byzantine army besieging Trnovo.

This situation lasted through the fall of 1278; in the course of the fall Ivajlo slipped out of Trnovo, mobilized an army, and went off to fight the Tatars. Rumors soon were circulated, probably sown by Byzantine agents (for John Asen III did have support among certain Bulgarians, including boyars), that Ivajlo had been killed. Because the rumors were believed, some citizens of Trnovo, who presumably had no love for Maria, opened the gates of Trnovo in February 1279 to John Asen III, who was recognized as tsar. He entered the city accompanied by Byzantine troops, and they remained in Trnovo to maintain him in power. The Nogaj Kasim beg received the high court title protostrator. After this allied victory, the Tatars did not withdraw from Bulgaria, but went off to roam and plunder the countryside. Maria, then pregnant, was turned over to the Byzantine commander by the Trnovo leaders. She was sent to the Emperor Michael VIII, who was then keeping in touch with the campaign from his town of Adrianople. (This town, located near the border, seems to have been Byzantium's chief intelligence post as well as its base for mounting attacks against Bulgaria.) He jailed Maria in Adrianople.

After taking Trnovo, John Asen III and the Byzantines sent part of their armies north in pursuit of Ivajlo, who shut himself up in the fortress of Silistria. The Byzantine forces besieged him there for three months but failed to take the town. John Asen's supporters meanwhile were unable to establish him firmly in power or put an end to the anarchy. Most of the country did not recognize him, and there were plots against him in Trnovo itself. To try to broaden his base of support John Asen III gave his own sister to become the wife of George Terter, a boyar leader who was of Cuman origin. In accepting, George sent the lady who had been his wife, along with their son Theodore Svetoslav, to Constantinople. Soon Ivajlo reappeared with a large army and laid siege to Trnovo. With him now was Kasim beg, who had changed sides. Two Byzantine armies were sent from the empire to aid the besieged John Asen. Ivajlo defeated them both, the first, supposedly of ten thousand men, on 17 June 1279, and the second, of five thousand men, at Sredna Gora on 5 August 1279. Realizing his own unpopularity and fearing for his life (after all, bolstered as he was by foreign armies, he must have appeared to the Bulgarians as a foreign puppet), John Asen III, late in 1279, secretly slipped out of Trnovo and fled to Mesembria where he found a ship to take him to Constantinople. The boyars inside the city, opposed to Ivajlo or ambitious to put their own clique into power (for Ivajlo surely had his own followers to award prizes to), then elected, still late in 1279, one of their number, the influential boyar George Terter, as tsar.

While George Terter established himself in Trnovo, his erstwhile opponents planned to carry on the struggle and oust him. Ivajlo and Kasim beg crossed the Danube to seek the aid of the powerful Tatar leader Nogaj. The Byzantines did not wish to accept Terter either—probably considering him a turncoat, for he had previously concluded the marriage alliance with John Asen III's sister—and, still intriguing, sent John Asen III with rich gifts to Nogaj's court to seek his aid. Nogaj seems to have expressed interest in the issue, but made no commitments and kept the suitors cooling their heels for several months. Then one evening at a banquet Nogaj, quite drunk, ordered the executions of Ivajlo and Kasim beg, and they were duly murdered. He seems to have at least nominally carried out this act as a Byzantine ally, for, according to Pachymeres, when he ordered Ivajlo's execution, Nogaj called Ivajlo an enemy of "my father" (the father being his ally Michael VIII, who was "father" over other rulers according to the Byzantines' theoretical hierarchy of rulers). It seems John Asen III barely escaped a similar fate; he was happy to return alive to Constantinople and to forget about further Bulgarian adventures. He settled down and became a member of the Byzantine aristocracy.

The Byzantines kept up their hostility to George Terter and encouraged Nogaj to raid Bulgaria, which he did over the next few years. Nogaj by now was becoming more of an independent actor, and thus less bound to the wishes of his Byzantine allies. Probably seeing nothing in it for himself, he made no effort to support John Asen's candidacy once Terter had gained the

throne. And though he continued to raid Bulgaria as Byzantium recommended, he probably did it primarily for the booty to be gained. In 1285 he even sent one of these raiding parties beyond Bulgaria to plunder Byzantine territory in Macedonia and Thrace. Their alliance was clearly on the wane.

The Byzantines justified their continued hostility to George Terter by blaming him for his alliances with their enemies Charles of Anjou and John of Thessaly. However, cause and effect are hard to determine. The Byzantines seem to have been opposed to George from the start; thus he may have reaffirmed these existing Bulgarian commitments (dating from Constantine Tih's time) in a search for allies to defend himself against Byzantium.

However, despite Bulgaria's grievances, it clearly was in George Terter's interests to make peace with Byzantium. After the Sicilian Vespers in 1282, Charles of Anjou was out of the picture, and thus George could not use his coattails to regain any of Bulgaria's lost territory along the Black Sea or in Thrace. Bulgaria clearly was too weak to regain these regions on its own, so there was no reason not to make peace. And if George was willing to recognize Byzantium's possession of the disputed territory, there was no reason for the empire not to make peace and recognize George as ruler of Bulgaria. Clearly the Byzantines had no chance of installing their candidate, John Asen III, without Nogaj's help, and probably they were less enthusiastic about John Asen after his flight from Trnovo where they had installed him. Thus in 1284 Michael's successor, Andronicus II, agreed to a treaty with Bulgaria. Andronicus recognized George Terter as Tsar of Bulgaria and gave him the Byzantine court title of despot. He also allowed George to exchange wives; the Byzantines took back George's second wife, the sister of John Asen III, married to George during the exciting days when John Asen and his Byzantine retinue held Trnovo, and they returned to George his first wife and their son Theodore Svetoslav.

### **Serbia under King Uroš, 1243–76**

Uroš, who in 1243 succeeded Vladislav in Serbia, seems to have been the ablest of the three brothers. (Though it might be said in the other two's defense that Uroš had the advantage over them in having his reign coincide with the decline of Serbia's two formerly powerful neighbors, Thessaloniki-Epirus and Bulgaria.) Under Uroš Serbia became a significant Balkan power. Serbia's rise is attributable not only to the weakening of its neighbors but also to its rapid economic development associated with the opening of its mines. The mines were developed primarily by the Sasi, Saxons from Hungary, who had the technical know-how to extract the ore. Located at the sites of the mines, their communities from the start, and throughout the Middle Ages, enjoyed a very privileged status; they were self-governing under their own laws with the right to have and to worship at Catholic churches. The earliest reference to Saxons in Serbia, which shows them already established, is in 1253 or 1254. The first mine to be reported in the sources is Brskovo on the

Tara, mentioned in 1253 or 1254. Brskovo was Serbia's richest silver mine during the second half of the thirteenth century. An important mint was soon established there. Brskovo was soon followed by mines at Rudnik, several in the region of Kopaonik, and at what was destined to become Serbia's richest mine, Novo Brdo.

The silver, gold, lead, copper, and iron extracted from these mines attracted greater numbers of Dalmatian merchants to Serbia. These merchants, particularly those from Dubrovnik and Kotor, also established privileged colonies in Serbia's economic and mining centers. Their colonies—like those of the Saxons—enjoyed freedom for their Catholic religion (provided they did not proselytize among the Serbs) and the right to live under their own officials and laws. Quarrels with local Serbs were resolved by mixed courts, with an equal number of Serbs and of colonists on the jury. These Dalmatian merchants took over the financial management of the mines and, particularly those from Kotor, assumed the higher financial offices at the Serbian court. They also bought the right to collect taxes and tolls within Serbia. In this way at the time of purchase the ruler was paid the income he expected from a particular income source for the year (thus this sum was guaranteed for him), while the purchaser hoped to profit by collecting more than anticipated. At times this led to overtaxing the populace, and the burden presumably fell most heavily on those least able to afford it, since the powerful magnates frequently had been granted charters providing broad financial exemptions. Accompanying this development, coinage, begun in Serbia under Radoslav, came under Uroš to be issued in much larger quantities.

The mines and increased trade resulting from their exploitation greatly improved the Serbian ruler's economic position. They gave him the cash to hire mercenaries, which, by giving him a military force independent of the nobles, provided him with a means to control his nobles. Thus unlike Byzantium, where increased use of mercenaries reflected the weakening of the state, mercenaries produced the strengthening of the state in Serbia. In the fourteenth century these mercenaries tended to be foreigners, frequently Germans, which further guaranteed their independence from local interests. Whether the policy of recruiting foreign mercenaries dates back to Uroš' reign is not certain.

Uroš' two main foreign policy concerns, since his southern and eastern neighbors were no longer threats to him, were maintaining his control over eastern Hum and defending Serbia from Hungary. These two problems were related. Radoslav of Hum, who had succeeded Andrew in western Hum and the coast in 1249, maintained close relations with his coastal neighbor Dubrovnik. Radoslav also improved relations with the King of Hungary, who was overlord over Radoslav's Croatian neighbors to Hum's northwest beyond the Cetina River. Documents show Radoslav in 1254, declaring himself a loyal vassal of the Hungarian king, allied with Dubrovnik and Bulgaria against Serbia. Some scholars have postulated that western Hum had been subjugated by Hungary in its brief campaign against "Bosnia" in 1253, and

thus Radoslav had been forced to accept this vassalage. However, it makes more sense to hypothesize that Radoslav had voluntarily accepted this position to gain Hungarian support in his projected war against Serbia, a closer and therefore more dangerous enemy. Whether this policy would have been defensive, to defend Hum against an attack he expected from Serbia, or offensive, to build up alliances to make it possible for him to expand his control into Serbia's eastern Hum, is not known.

This was a tense time in that area. In 1252 and 1253 Serbian and Ragusan forces had skirmished along their common border in southern Dalmatia. According to a later Ragusan chronicle, whose bias not surprisingly puts the blame on Uroš, the Serbian king sought to conquer Dubrovnik or at the very least force the town to drop Venetian suzerainty for Serbian. The Dubrovnik-Bar Church quarrel may also have been a factor in the war. In these wars Dubrovnik, which never was able to field effective land armies, usually got the worst of it, having its territory outside its walls plundered. This time, as usual, its walls held out, keeping the Serbs out of the city itself. By the time fighting broke out again in 1254, Dubrovnik had acquired as allies Bulgaria and Radoslav of Hum; little is known about how much fighting occurred that year by any of the parties or where it took place. It seems the Bulgarians carried out what was little more than a raid, reaching the Lim River and plundering the area around Bijelo Polje. Separate peace agreements were made with Serbia in the autumn of 1254, which seem to have restored matters in all cases to pre-war conditions.

In the 1250s the Orthodox bishop of Hum moved from Hum's capital Ston, on the coast, far inland to the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, built by Prince Miroslav, on the Lim River near the Serbian border and within the part of Hum controlled by Serbia. From then on throughout the Middle Ages the bishop remained at this church. The move followed shortly after an earthquake in Ston. Since the Orthodox Church's landed possessions in Hum lay chiefly in the more fertile regions near the Lim, this move has usually been linked to financial needs. Some scholars, however, have tried to relate this move to pressure on the Orthodox from heretics around Ston. While this hypothesis cannot entirely be ruled out, very little evidence exists (and what we have is questionable) concerning heresy in the vicinity of Ston.

Recently, V. Gračev has presented a more convincing explanation for the move.<sup>11</sup> He visualizes an on-going struggle throughout the first half of the thirteenth century by Miroslav's successors (he includes Toljen, Andrew II, and Radoslav; possibly we should also add Peter), allied with the local nobles of Hum, against the Serbian state allied to Sava's Serbian Orthodox Church represented in western Hum by the Serbian-appointed bishop in Ston. The importance of this bishopric is illustrated by the fact that Uroš' brother Sava—the future Archbishop Sava II—was appointed to that post. The Serbs through the Church had a means to gain further influence in western Hum, which presumably they used; at the same time the descendants of Miroslav sought to retain their position in an independent western Hum and possibly



even to regain the territory east of the Neretva, formerly held by Miroslav but annexed by Serbia. How accurately Gračev's model may fit the whole century cannot be established since the sources, particularly for the second half of the thirteenth century, are woefully sparse; however, his model certainly seems applicable to Radoslav's position vis à vis Serbia. And it is noteworthy that when Radoslav concluded his alliance against Serbia, the bishop moved from Ston to the Lim. Gračev reasonably links the two events and sees the move as a defeat for the Serbian party inside western Hum.

In the second half of the thirteenth century the scarce sources about Hum become even scarcer. Serbia retained the territory east of the Neretva throughout and also managed to extend its overlordship over part of western Hum. Much autonomy seems to have remained, however, in the hands of the local nobility, who seem to have been in frequent feuds and skirmishes with one another. This encouraged localism and hindered the development of feelings of loyalty to Hum as an entity. Presumably Serbia's expansion of its suzerainty over parts of western Hum resulted from these feuds, with Serbia supporting this or that noble against his neighbors or against the Prince of Hum and accepting submission for that aid, and with the nobleman finding it advantageous to lean on the powerful Serbian state for the achievement of his local aims. The position of Miroslav's descendants meanwhile declined to that of petty noblemen under Serbian suzerainty. By the early fourteenth century some leading families of Hum had become clients of Bosnia while others remained in the Serbian camp, most having made their alliances to better their own positions vis à vis their neighbors. This situation was finally brought to a close in 1326 when Bosnia, taking advantage of strife in Serbia, annexed most of Hum.

Despite Serbia's peace with Dubrovnik, necessary for both sides' economic health, tensions remained, leading to a new war between them breaking out between 1265 and 1268. Later Ragusan chronicles, as usual, blame it on Serbia. Other than Uroš' supposed ambition to conquer the city or make it drop its recognition of Venice as overlord, the chronicles provide a series of lesser grievances: Uroš accused Dubrovnik of seizing Serbian coastal territory, of granting asylum to Serbian deserters, and of maintaining ties with Venice (at a time Serbia was allied to Byzantium which was allied to Genoa against Venice). During the war Uroš' wife, despite her husband's policy, favored Dubrovnik and kept in secret contact with the town, promising to warn it if and when Uroš planned to dispatch troops to plunder its lands.

Peace was made in 1268. It was agreed that Dubrovnik was to pay two thousand perpera in tribute on Saint Demetrius' Day, for which Dubrovnik received the right to trade duty-free in Serbia and to enjoy the territory it claimed along the Serbian border (which Nemanja had recognized as Ragusan). The tribute was to be paid to the holder of Trebinje and Konavli. At this time, and through the reign of Stefan Dušan (1331–55), the recipient was to be the King of Serbia. Thus Dubrovnik basically ended up paying protec-

tion money to keep the peace and what amounted to rent for the disputed lands; it retained use of the land, but Serbia received an annual payment. This Saint Demetrius' Day tribute had nothing to do with suzerainty, for Dubrovnik remained after 1268 under Venetian suzerainty and the tribute was to continue after 1358 when Dubrovnik accepted Hungarian suzerainty. Serbia and Dubrovnik had a brief clash again in 1275 over a local issue—a quarrel between the two commercial towns of Kotor and Dubrovnik; because Kotor was considered part of Serbia, accepting Serbian suzerainty though it was self-governing with its own laws and town council, Uroš sent Kotor aid. This quarrel was quickly resolved and had no lasting impact.

Despite the probable existence of tensions between Serbia and Hungary, fighting between them seems not to have broken out until 1268. Though Radoslav of Hum, at war with Serbia, accepted Hungarian suzerainty, there is no sign of any Hungarian participation in his war with Serbia. Presumably the border between Serbia and Hungary remained north of the West Morava River near Ravno (Ćuprije). Relations between the two states became belligerent in 1268. Uroš seems to have initiated the fighting; perhaps he sought to push his border northward, or perhaps he simply wanted plunder. In any case, in 1268 he led Serbian troops to plunder Mačva, then held for Hungary by Rostislav's widow Anna as regent for their son Bela. The Serbs did considerable damage before Hungarian help came. The Hungarians then managed to capture Uroš himself. Uroš was forced to purchase his release. Some scholars believe that the agreement concluded between the two states resulting in Uroš' release also resulted in the marriage between Uroš' eldest son Stefan Dragutin and Katherine, granddaughter of King Bela IV and daughter of his eldest son Stephen V. Other scholars believe the couple had been married prior to 1268.

Seeking to centralize his realm, Uroš tried to stamp out regional differences by dropping references to them. He dropped from his title separate references to Zahumlje (Hum), Trebinje, and Duklja (Zeta) and called himself simply "King of all Serbian land and the Coast." In Serbian Hum, as noted, Miroslav's descendants dropped to the level of other local nobles. The official representatives of the Serbian ruler there were drawn from other families. In Zeta the status of Vukan's descendants declined; in fact his descendants disappear from the sources after George's generation. "King" George (referred to as king by the Ulcinj bishop in the 1240s) is not heard of further. His brother Stefan built the monastery of Morača in 1252, quite possibly on his own lands. He was remembered as king by a seventeenth-century painter who redid the monastery's frescoes. The third brother, Dmitri, bore the lesser title župan, and soon became a monk. Thereafter nothing more is heard of any descendant of Vukan in Zeta. However, Milica, who was to be Knez Lazar's wife in Serbia in the second half of the fourteenth century, claimed descent from Vukan.

Thus if Vukan's descendants had retained significant positions in Zeta prior to Uroš' consolidation of power, which is not certain, they do not seem

to have maintained them under Uroš. Under Uroš' successor Dragutin, Zeta was to become part of the appanage awarded, inside his own family, to his mother, Uroš' widow.

Uroš, seeking to centralize his state, did not create appanages for any son. Dragutin, his eldest son, lived at court. A Byzantine envoy who visited Serbia in about 1268 to negotiate a marriage that did not materialize owing to Serbian opposition (whose account may thus be somewhat biased) described the Serbian court as follows: "The Great King, as he is called [Uroš], lives a simple life in a way that would be a disgrace for a middling official in Constantinople; the king's Hungarian daughter-in-law [Dragutin's wife] works at her spinning wheel in a cheap dress; the household eats like a pack of hunters or sheep stealers." The envoy also stressed the insecurity of the highways.

Dragutin wanted an appanage, and his Hungarian in-laws seem to have exerted pressure for this too. Uroš resisted, and some scholars believe he even considered replacing Dragutin as heir with his younger son, Milutin. Finally in 1276 Dragutin demanded to share power. Uroš was furious at the suggestion and refused. Fearing for his life, Dragutin rebelled, receiving military help from his Hungarian father-in-law. Scholars disagree as to what set off Dragutin's rebellion. Dinić depicts it as being caused by the heir Dragutin's ambition and desire for a greater role in the state.<sup>12</sup> Mavromatis argues that Uroš had by 1276 selected his younger son Milutin to be his successor over Dragutin. Thus Mavromatis believes that decision caused Dragutin to rebel.<sup>13</sup> The Hungarian king, clearly wanting his son-in-law to succeed, threw his support behind Dragutin. Their joint armies defeated Uroš in battle near Gacko (in modern Hercegovina). Uroš abdicated and became a monk, dying in about 1277 at Sopoćani, the beautiful monastery he had built. Uroš throughout his reign had maintained close ties to the Church, which he also seems to have tightly controlled. He built the Preobraženje chapel at Hilandar on Athos. He also appointed his own brother Sava, until then Bishop of Hum, Archbishop of Serbia in 1263 and subsequently appointed as Serbia's archbishop Joanikije, a former Athonite monk and disciple of Sava II who prior to his appointment had been the abbot of Studenica. Joanikije was so closely associated with Uroš' cause that he left office when Uroš was overthrown. It is unknown whether he resigned in protest or whether he was seen by Dragutin as a partisan of Uroš who might plot against the new regime and thus had to be removed.

## **Hungary and Croatia**

When King Stephen V of Hungary died in 1272 his minor son Ladislas IV succeeded. He was greatly under the influence of his mother, who not only was regent but also managed large appanages in the north of Bosnia and in Srem. Joachim Peter, the Ban of Slavonia, had considerable influence as well. The presence of a young scatter-brained king and a weak court led the nobles to assert themselves further. The situation became particularly critical in

Slavonia, leading to warfare between the ban and the most important noble family there, the Babonići. In the course of the warfare in 1277 Ban Joachim Peter was killed. The rise of the nobles is also reflected in the balance of power within the administrative system. As noted, Slavonia was subjected to an administrative system similar to that of Hungary. Thus Slavonia under its ban was divided up into large administrative districts called *županijas*. Originally it had three great districts, centered in Križevci, Zagreb, and Varaždin, each managed by a royal appointee called a *župan* (count). This *župan* was based in his fortified capital and was the region's military commander. His other main duties were to collect taxes, raise and maintain the local army, and direct the regional law court. Eventually these districts were to be subdivided and restructured, and then Slavonia found itself divided into fourteen *županijas*. Within the *županijas* were the so-to-speak natural counties arising from geography or from the family holdings of the local Croatian nobles. These smaller (natural) counties were also called *županijas* (or *župas*). To make things simpler when discussing Slavonia, I shall call the larger imposed administrative districts under the king's appointees *županijas*, and the smaller districts *župas*. Croatia south of the Gvozd Mountain was not divided into *županijas*. It had only the family territories or *župas*, dominated by the hereditary lords of the counties.

In the thirteenth century the *županija* system in Slavonia began to break down. This was owing to the increased power of the great nobles achieved as a result of the general privileges received from the Golden Bull and of huge individual royal grants, greatly increasing their landed power base. The recipients of these grants and privileges were freed from the royally appointed *župan*'s authority and were directly subject to the king. This created a parallel administrative system, because the great noble ran his own county and its court, and the *župan* was not allowed to enter his territories (unless to put down a rebellion). Such a parallel system of administration that gave the *župan* jurisdiction over only part of his region could only weaken his authority, as did the increased strength of the great nobles backed by their private armies of retainers. Furthermore, the Church held huge estates, also separated from the authority of the *župan*, and owed service (including military service) directly to the king. Finally, the free towns too were separated from the *župan*'s jurisdiction and also stood directly under the king.

In the thirteenth century councils or assemblies of nobles became more active; for example, a major council was held in Zagreb in 1273. We find the *župans* there, but their authority was clearly limited and they were dependent to a considerable extent upon the decisions of the council; thus the *župans* came more and more to represent the collective will of the nobility rather than the wishes of the more distant king who had appointed them. The Ban of Slavonia, like the *župans* under him, also found himself more and more representing the will of the Slavonian nobility rather than that of the king. In Croatia, more distant from Hungary, the ban found himself in a similar situation, and there, too, frequent assemblies of the nobility settled issues that

affected the general welfare. In such a situation, with the nobles holding whole counties, administering them themselves, and presiding over the local courts and enforcing court decisions, the peasants found themselves entirely separated from any “state” organization. The peasants paid taxes for the state, but a nobleman collected the taxes from most of them, and if they were recruited into the army, they were mobilized by the noble and went to battle under him as part of his retinue.

The weakening of royal authority under the young king allowed the Šubići to regain their former role in Dalmatia. The Croatian ban lost authority and thus could not assert his right to appoint his own men as town podestas in Dalmatia. And in the early 1270s we find him yielding to the local balance of power and appointing members of the Šubić family as his deputies in various Dalmatian towns. In 1272 Stjepko Šubić’s eldest son Paul is documented as podesta of Trogir, and in the following year Paul’s responsibilities increased as did his title; at that time he is found as Prince of Split and Trogir. In 1274 Paul’s brother George (Juraj) is found as podesta of Šibenik. In that year Stjepko died and Paul I Šubić succeeded as the family elder. Soon the young king, recognizing the balance of power in Dalmatia, named Paul as Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia. He was briefly removed from this post when he became too strong a partisan of Šibenik—supported by Split—which sought to free its Church from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Trogir. But by 1278 (with the issue of the Church of Šibenik still unresolved) Paul had been re-appointed Ban of Dalmatia and Croatia, and his brothers were princes of the leading Dalmatian towns, Mladen of Split, and George of Trogir and Šibenik.

Venice, long annoyed by Kačić piracy against its ships and possessions in the Adriatic, took advantage of the weakness of that family’s Hungarian overlord to strike the Kačići’s coastal holdings, centered around Omiš, in 1279. In 1280 Venice took Omiš. The Venetian campaign, for all practical purposes, wiped out the Kačići, and they ceased to play a major role in Dalmatian affairs. Ban Paul, however, moved in at once to share in the spoils, and when the dust had settled Venice held of the former Kačić possessions only the citadel of Omiš and the islands of Brač and Hvar. For Paul had seized all the mainland holdings between the Neretva and Cetina rivers, including the lower town of Omiš. And in 1287 Paul was to take the castle of Omiš by force.

Meanwhile, the princely family of the island of Krk (whom I shall call the “Frankapans” even though they did not officially take that name until the early fifteenth century) was assuming an ever increasing role in Croatia. It has usually been stated that members of this family had long been active on the mainland, receiving from the King of Hungary the župa of Modruš in 1193 and the župa of Vinodol in 1225. Nada Klaić argues, however, that the charters providing evidence for this belief are later forgeries. The first firm evidence for the activities of this family on the mainland dates from the 1240s and 1250s. At that time two family members, Bartol and Vid, for some reason did not receive a share of Krk; going to the mainland, they entered the service

of the King of Hungary. As a result of subsequent service in the 1250s one of Vid's sons was named podesta of Split, while a second one became podesta of Senj. Shortly thereafter, in 1257, a reliable document refers to a family member for the first time as Count of Modruš and Vinodol. Presumably this individual, whose name was Frederick, had been granted the two counties at about that time by Bela IV for faithful service. Klaić argues that the subsequent forgeries, pushing possession of these counties back several decades, were carried out to provide evidence that a particular branch of the family had a right to these counties and that this right dated back to grants so specifying from 1193 and 1225 respectively.<sup>14</sup>

The region held by Frederick was not particularly fertile; as a result many of its inhabitants were pastoralists and in the absence of large estates many of those engaged in agriculture were not enserfed. The inhabitants of Vinodol were soon quarrelling with their prince; they objected to his and other noblemen's enserfing free peasants and to his imposing various new financial and service obligations on the inhabitants. Finally, in 1288, a council, attended by representatives of the nine towns and districts of Vinodol, met with the prince and drew up a statute of seventy-seven articles, which defined the region's obligations to the prince as well as his functions, authority, and rights. To a considerable extent this statute upheld local customs. It also discussed crimes and their punishment and to a certain extent touched on private law by defining how quarrels between subjects should be settled. The Vinodol Statute of 1288 was the earliest legal code, written in Croatian, though already the towns on the Dalmatian coast, starting with Korčula probably in 1214, Split around 1240, and Dubrovnik in 1272, had begun codifying their town laws.<sup>15</sup> In many cases these Dalmatian codes, which were in Latin, were drawn up to protect the local laws and customs of these urban communities against possible violations or alterations by their princes who were often foreigners.

King Ladislas IV died in 1290 leaving no sons. The Hungarian nobles immediately elected as his successor Andrew III, the son of Bela IV's younger brother Stephen. Andrew came to Hungary and was crowned by the Archbishop of Esztergom (Ostrogon). The pope opposed the choice of Andrew and claimed that since the year 1000, when the papacy had granted a crown to Saint Stephen, it was the pope's right to make the choice. The pope favored a rival candidate, Charles Martel, the son of Charles II and Maria, the Angevin rulers of Naples. Queen Maria was the sister of Ladislas IV. Accepting her claim that she (i.e., her son) was the legal heir to the Hungarian throne, the pope by means of a legate crowned Charles Martel in 1292. Most Hungarian nobles rallied around Andrew, but a large number of Croatian nobles—including the Ban of Slavonia, the Šubići, Kurjak of Krbava, the Krk princes (the future Frankapans), and all the Babonići—supported the Naples candidate. Andrew marched into Slavonia, achieving considerable success, but on his return march he was captured by hostile Croats and released only after a large ransom was paid. At this juncture the leading

Slavonian family, the Babonići, came out for Andrew; their reward came quickly when a Babonić was named Ban of Slavonia.

In response, Charles II of Naples awarded (on paper) all Slavonia to Dragutin's son Vladislav. And to revive his son's failing fortunes and to retain Croatian support, Charles (in the name of his son) awarded all Croatia from the Gvozd Mountain to the Neretva mouth hereditarily to Paul Šubić of Bribir, who had been holding the office of Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia from the time of Ladislav. Thus Charles converted Paul's personal position as ban into a hereditary one for the Šubić family. All other nobles in this vast region, he declared, were to be vassals of Paul Šubić. The most prominent nobles so assigned were Kurjak, the holder of Krbava, and George (Juraj) Isanov, the holder of Knin and progenitor of the Nelipčić (or Nelipić) family. To Paul's north lay the lands of the "Frankapans" who also were supporters of Naples.

To meet this challenge, Andrew III in 1293 also issued a charter naming Paul Šubić hereditary Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia (i.e., the very same position Charles II had given him). Whereas the Naples party had until then predominated in the Croatian interior, various towns along the Dalmatian coast had recognized Andrew on the ground that he alone had been crowned in Hungary. Andrew's efforts may have briefly won Paul over; however, if they did, Paul was clearly back in the Naples camp by 1295. As a result of this bidding for support and of the fact that in the course of the civil war no central power existed to restrain them, the already strong Šubići became the most powerful family in Croatia.

In 1295, the fighting became particularly violent in Zagreb, where the bishop's town supported Charles Martel and the free town (Gradec) supported Andrew. Then suddenly, in 1295, Charles Martel died in Naples of the plague. His "rights" to Hungary were left to his son Charles Robert.

Peace was briefly concluded at home between the two sides, and Andrew III was accepted as king. But when in 1299 the childless Andrew named his mother's brother as his heir, a new revolt on behalf of Charles Robert erupted. The papacy again threw its support to Naples, replacing as Archbishop of Split a partisan of Andrew with a court chaplain from Naples. The papal endorsement seems to have brought the Šubići back to active support of Naples. And George Šubić, Ban Paul's brother, went to Italy, visiting the pope and the Naples court. While at Rome he won papal approval for a long-standing Šubić aim, the removal of Šibenik's Church from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Trogir and the creation of a bishopric for Šibenik which was to be directly under the Archbishop of Split. In August 1300 George returned to Split, bringing Charles Robert with him. Charles Robert was thus on the ground, so to speak, when Andrew III died in January 1301.

Andrew III's death brought the Arpad dynasty to an end. Ban Paul accompanied Charles Robert to Zagreb, where he was recognized as king; they then proceeded to Esztergom, where in 1301 the Archbishop of Esztergom crowned him King of Hungary and Croatia. The new king was only twelve years old. Trogir, presumably angry over Naples' support for the

independence of the diocese of Šibenik, tried to refuse Charles Robert recognition. However, the town's resistance was short-lived and by 1303 all the towns of Dalmatia had recognized Charles Robert. For their services on his behalf the Šubići were confirmed in the privileges granted them by both sides during the civil war, in particular the hereditary banship of Croatia and Dalmatia. This was well deserved, for the Šubići, especially George, had played the dominant role in gaining the throne for Charles Robert. And the "Frankapans," also loyal to Naples throughout, were granted the župa of Gacka by the new king. Soon thereafter Charles Robert granted them Požega as well.

But though the Croats all recognized the new king, the Hungarian nobles were divided, with a majority coming to support Wenceslas III, the King of Bohemia. Wenceslas was brought to Alba Regalis (Stolni Biograd, Székesfehérvár), then the main capital of Hungary, where he was crowned, also in 1301, King of Hungary. He took the name Ladislas V. Civil war followed. However, it did not touch Croatia, which remained loyal to Charles Robert and under the firm authority of Paul Šubić. Finally, in 1304, Pope Boniface VIII intervened and Wenceslas agreed to leave Hungary.

The Hungarian opposition, however, still refused to accept Charles Robert and now gave its support to Otto of Bavaria, whom it crowned in 1304. By 1308 Otto's support was already dwindling, when he was captured and jailed by supporters of Charles Robert. Offered his release if he would abandon his claim to the throne, Otto agreed, was released, and departed. A brief attempt to advance the candidacy of Vladislav, son of Stefan Dragutin of Serbia and Katherine, Stephen V's daughter, attracted few supporters. At this point one of the leaders of the anti-Naples party, Paul Garai (Gorjanski) declared himself for Charles Robert, and with his defection the remaining members of the opposition became more willing to negotiate. Papal envoys came to mediate peace; the Hungarian nobles said they would accept the papal candidate, Charles Robert, if the pope would renounce his claim that the papacy had the right to select the King of Hungary. The pope acquiesced, recognizing the nobles' right to choose their own king; then the nobles acknowledged Charles Robert as hereditary king. He was crowned in Buda in June 1309. And, shortly thereafter in August 1310, after he had received back from Otto the official Crown of Saint Stephen, he was given a new coronation with it in Alba Regalis. Thus the civil war was over. Various Hungarian nobles were to sporadically exhibit signs of insubordination against him for another decade. But the Croatian nobles all recognized him; however, even they continued to act independently in local affairs, greatly to the new king's irritation.

Meanwhile Paul Šubić, Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia, became "Lord of Bosnia" as well in 1299. No source provides any information on how this happened. It is doubtful that he really held all Bosnia, though he may well have been overlord over much of it. He also ruled directly or indirectly all Croatia and Dalmatia from the Gvozd Mountain down to the Neretva mouth,



except for Zadar. He continued to delegate authority to various family members. He assigned whatever parts of Bosnia he held to his brother Mladen I, who had been Prince of Split from 1278 to 1301; by 1302 Mladen bore the title Ban of Bosnia. His brother George retained special responsibility for Dalmatia, with the title Prince of the Coastal Towns. When George died in 1303, he was succeeded in Dalmatia by Paul's son George (Juraj) II. In 1304 Ban Mladen I of Bosnia was killed fighting "Bosnian heretics." Paul seems then to have carried out a campaign against the Bosnians which evidently brought more of Bosnia under his rule, for Paul referred to himself in a 1305 charter as "lord of *all* Bosnia." At about this time Paul appointed his second son, Mladen II, Ban of Bosnia, and in 1305 his third son, Paul II, was elected Prince of Split. During these years many of Ban Paul Šubić's charters, awarding lands and titles, made no reference to the Hungarian king, showing that Paul was for all practical purposes an independent ruler within his banate.

The only thorn in his side was the Venetians' possession of Zadar, which seems to have bothered the citizens of Zadar as much as it did Paul. Finally a chance to liberate Zadar arose. In 1308 Venice and the papacy became engaged in a heated quarrel over the city of Ferrara, which led the pope in 1309 to put the city of Venice under interdict. Venice's involvement in Italy and the papal encouragement of Catholics to resist Venice, exhibited by the interdict, spurred Paul to action. Early in 1310 he brought his forces to the walls of Zadar. The Venetian garrison held out through that year, but in 1311 after much careful planning, an uprising against Venice broke out inside the city. The rebels arrested the Venetian authorities and took control of the town. The Venetians quickly dispatched a fleet to Zadar, besieging the town from the sea. Paul Šubić's troops actively participated in the city's defense. Meanwhile the town sent envoys to Charles Robert, offering him its submission and seeking his confirmation of all the town's traditional privileges, including the right to elect its own prince. The king graciously received the town's submission and confirmed the requested privileges. The town's citizens then elected as their prince Paul Šubić's son Mladen II, who was actively defending the town at the time. The situation soon reached a stalemate: the Venetian fleet could not take the town and the combined forces of Šubić and Zadar—receiving no re-enforcements from the king—were not strong enough to drive the Venetians off. In the midst of this stalemate, in May 1312, Paul I Šubić died. He was succeeded as Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia by his son Mladen II. He at once shared out his cities among his brothers. Gregory received Šibenik and Bribir, Paul II Skradin and Trogir, and George II Omiš, Nin, and Klis. Various podestas were appointed to supervise the towns.

Mladen immediately found himself in difficulties, however. Venice made peace with the pope, causing the papal interdict to be lifted; this allowed Venice to concentrate greater attention on Zadar. Alarmed by this prospect and suffering commercially from the Venetian blockade, some in Zadar began thinking of an accommodation with Venice and dispatched envoys to Venice for discussions. Mladen was able to hold the loyalty of sufficient citizens to

retain the town through 1312. However, in September 1313, after it became apparent that the King of Hungary was not going to provide any relief, the citizens of Zadar finally submitted to Venice. Mladen's prestige among the Croats suffered greatly from this defeat; moreover, his and his family's support of the Zadar rebels brought upon Mladen Venice's enmity.

During the next decade Mladen was faced with various revolts; in 1315 or 1316 Trogir attempted unsuccessfully to secede from his control, and in 1316 and 1317 Mladen was forced to defend his position against a coalition of Croatian princes—Budislav Kurjaković of Krbava, Nelipac (son of George Isanov) of Knin, the sons of Hrvatin of the Donji Kraji, and the Mihovilovići of Livno—who sought to assert their independence from the Šubić overlordship imposed upon them by the Hungarian king at the time of the dynastic warfare. The Babonići of Slavonia, surely with the king's blessing, soon joined the coalition. In the course of this warfare Nelipac gained in strength and emerged as the leader of the coalition and the leading rival of the Šubići for hegemony. During this struggle Mladen maintained correct relations with King Charles Robert and supported him in his war against Milutin of Serbia in 1318 and 1319. In that campaign Mladen seems to have been active in Bosnia, and when the dust settled Stjepan Kotromanić had become Ban of Bosnia. Perhaps Mladen's activities in the Bosnian area were responsible for installing Kotromanić in power. In any case, Kotromanić appears as a Šubić vassal in 1318, when Mladen is found asking the pope to give special dispensation for a marriage Kotromanić sought. And in the fighting that ensued in the early 1320s Kotromanić remained lined up with the Šubići against Nelipac.

In the midst of the Serbian war the Šubić podesta for Šibenik seceded, seeking the help of Venice. Mladen marched against the town in 1319 or 1320; he succeeded in capturing the podesta during a skirmish but was unable to take the town itself, which was determined to continue its secession. Venice, hoping to increase its influence in Šibenik, stepped forward as a defender of Dalmatian urban autonomy and privileges, by providing aid to the besieged city. Then Šibenik, presumably with Venetian consent, accepted Mladen's opponent Budislav Kurjaković as its podesta. The following year, 1321, Trogir expelled its Šubić-appointed podesta. Venice, clearly by this time out to ruin its former enemy, urged the two towns, which had long been hostile to one another, to make an alliance against Mladen. The towns made peace and concluded the alliance, which included Venice, in January 1322. Mladen attacked both towns, devastating their lands beyond their walls, but he was unable to take either of them. Venetian ships participated in the defense of the two towns, both of which accepted Venetian suzerainty in the course of that year.

Mladen's loss of the towns was also a loss for the King of Hungary, who held ultimate suzerainty over all Mladen's territory. The king was displeased and encouraged joint Croatian action against Venice. As a result Mladen called a council meeting to discuss the recovery of the lost towns. It was

attended not only by Mladen's supporters but also by the leading Croatian nobles, who had formed the coalition against him. Not surprisingly, the meeting was a tense one; Mladen accused the nobles of disloyalty toward him and of encouraging the towns' secession. After charges and countercharges were flung back and forth, the nobles stormed out of the meeting—which came to no decision on action over Šibenik and Trogir—and reaffirmed their alliance against Mladen. Thus all Croatia—excluding the Šubić lands—was in revolt against Mladen, the Croatian ban. The rebels then attacked Mladen's territory.

Mladen seems to have defended his lands well until he suffered a major betrayal. In April 1322 his brother Paul II, who until then seems to have supported him loyally, switched sides and joined the coalition. Paul's town of Trogir had been lost; possibly he had not received compensation from Mladen, or perhaps he hoped by this action to become the Croatian ban himself. Paul, in that month, concluded an alliance with the rebellious town of Trogir against Mladen. The third brother, George II, holding Nin, Klis, and Omiš, remained faithful and as Prince of Split was able to hold that town's loyalty to Mladen. The King of Hungary then decided to intervene, sending John (Ivan) Babonić, the Ban of Slavonia, with a force to support the coalition. Considerable fighting took place during that summer in the vicinity of Skradin; then finally in August or September Mladen was defeated in a major battle at Bliska (or Blizna, exact location unknown, but near Klis). Mladen fled to Klis; there he held out behind its walls. The coalition then seems to have taken and devastated Skradin and Omiš.

At this point the King of Hungary personally intervened, arriving with a substantial force in Croatia in September 1322. Establishing himself at Knin, he convoked a council at which he obtained the submission of the Croatian coalition members. They presumably also leveled various accusations against Mladen. He, meanwhile, sent his brother George as his envoy to the king. The king seemed gracious toward Mladen and arrangements were made between him and George for Mladen's appearance at Knin. Mladen duly appeared, only to be seized. He disappears thereafter from the sources. Though his fate is unknown, various later accounts report that he died in prison in Hungary.

Mladen's capture marks the end of the Šubić family's dominant position in Croatia. The king did not appoint Paul II Šubić as ban. Instead he terminated the family's hereditary banship and appointed John Babonić as Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia. And Stjepan Kotromanić, the new Ban of Bosnia, whom we shall discuss in the next chapter, until then a Šubić vassal, was recognized as independent (i.e., independent of the Šubići and a direct vassal of the King of Hungary). The "Frankapans" who had supported the king against Mladen received in 1323 the county of Drežnik as their reward.

The Šubići's holdings were also reduced. And what they retained was split between Mladen's brothers George II and Paul II, who were already at logger-heads as a result of Paul's defection during the war. Paul, isolated for a

time from the rest of the family, held Bribir and Ostrovica, while George held Klis, Skradin, and Omiš. These five towns constituted the family's remaining possessions. The family's position and influence elsewhere on the coast was also greatly reduced. Venice retained suzerainty over Trogir and Šibenik. And Split and Nin, which until then had accepted Šubići as princes, now chose as their princes members of other Croatian families.

Many Croatian nobles were unhappy with the results of the king's intervention. For he had sought and partially succeeded in increasing his control over the Croatian lands by appointing a non-local, the Slavonian John Babonić, as Ban of Croatia. After the decline of the Šubići, Nelipac had risen to become the dominant figure in the Croatian lands. Seeking hegemony among the Croats, he also sought to re-assert Croatian autonomy. These two goals led him into conflict with certain other Croats as well as with the king and his officials. When threatened with royal intervention most of the Croats, including Nelipac's local rivals, usually rallied around him. In any case, soon after the king's return to Hungary, Nelipac seized the royal city of Knin, which prior to 1322 had almost certainly been his, but which the king had taken over in 1322. Babonić's inability to prevent Knin's fall led Charles Robert to remove him from his banship and appoint a Hungarian as Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia. A Hungarian army, led by the new Slavonian ban, Ban Mikac (1325–43), was then sent into Croatia in 1326. Nelipac defeated this army, so all of Croatia from Lika and Krbava south to the Cetina River was in fact outside the king's authority. Only the "Frankapans," lords of Krk, Modruš, Vinodol, Gacka, and Drežnik, and the nobility of Slavonia supported the king.

In the local fighting Nelipac's leading opponent was George Šubić. In 1324 Nelipac took him prisoner in the course of a battle and held him captive for two years, during which time George's wife managed George's lands. However, to face Ban Mikac's invasion in 1326, the two made peace and Nelipac released George, who participated in defending Croatia against Mikac.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of this warfare, of the decline in royal authority, and of the need of the local nobles to concentrate their forces on opposing the king, Venice asserted its suzerainty over Split in 1327 and Nin in 1329. Venice thus acquired most of the coast from the mouth of the Cetina north to the Zrmanja—with Omiš and Skradin under the Šubići excepted. At the same time, during the late 1320s, Ban Stjepan Kotromanić of Bosnia, as we shall see, annexed the territory between the mouths of the Cetina and Neretva rivers as well as the territory between Bosnia and the coast: Imotski, Duvno, Livno, and Glamoč, which came to be known as Završje (or the Western Lands, *Zapadne Strane*). The Hungarian king did not oppose Kotromanić in this matter since most of his gains had been made at the expense of the king's major enemy in the area, Nelipac—or of Nelipac's allies like Mihovilović, who had been the lord of Livno. Kotromanić in fact had become the king's leading ally in the region. In the inland territory north of the Cetina River Nelipac, based in Knin, remained the most powerful

among the Croatian nobles. Nelipac continued to have tense relations and frequent skirmishes with the Šubići during the 1330s. George II Šubić died between 1328 and 1330 to be succeeded by his son Mladen III. Pressure from Nelipac, including his capture of Ostrovica and various lesser Šubić places, led Mladen III and his uncle Paul II to make peace so as to better resist Nelipac. Venice, unhappy with the growing strength of Nelipac which might threaten its position on the coast, intervened and mediated a peace between Nelipac and the Šubići that included the return of Ostrovica to Paul.

However, while these territorial losses were taking place in Croatia, Charles Robert was able to assert firmer control over Slavonia. There his ban, Mikac, was able to reduce the local power of the Babonići. He found an excuse to go against the sons of Stjepan Babonić and to confiscate their fortress of Steničnjak. Mikac kept it for himself, eventually giving them various lesser forts as compensation. However, they remained angry and in 1336 concluded an agreement to serve the Habsburgs; as a result they seceded from Hungary with their lands. However, other Babonići, in particular the sons of Radoslav Babonić, continued in the king's service and as a result increased their holdings. Still, by provoking fights with nobles he felt to be disloyal and then seizing their key forts, Ban Mikac was able to reduce the authority of various leading Slavonian magnates. In so doing, he kept many of the confiscated fortresses for himself, thus augmenting his own local power. He did not, however, take advantage of his increasing power to assert himself against the king.

Ban Mikac also made it his policy to win over from the great nobles many of the lesser nobles who until then had served as vassals in the retinues of these local leaders. As a result he reduced the armies of the great, to the profit of the crown. With this growing core of loyal servitors Mikac was able to establish a reformed županija organization and also to augment the garrisons of the royal castles in Slavonia. Some of these castles were newly acquired by the king. For in this period, supported effectively by Mikac, Charles Robert was claiming various important Slavonian fortresses, hitherto controlled by magnates, as royal ones. Moreover, to increase state authority Mikac was able to expand the authority of the ban's court, asserting its jurisdiction over those lesser nobles who until then had been subject to the jurisdiction of the great local nobles. Slavonia thereafter remained at peace and loyal to the king until Charles Robert's death in July 1342.

## NOTES

1. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus*.
2. The fate of Durazzo in the 1260s is a mystery. Since in 1261 an Orthodox metropolitan loyal to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Nicea is found in Durazzo, it seems likely that Nicea acquired Durazzo also after the Battle of Pelagonia. Did Manfred then regain the town in ca. 1262? Supporting such a conclusion is an inscription from 1266

from northern Albania referring to a kephale there who governed in the time of several mentioned rulers, one of whom was Manfred in Durazzo. However, later, in 1266/67 (according to Ducellier) or in 1271 (according to Nicol), after Manfred's death, the same Orthodox metropolitan is still to be found in Durazzo. His presence suggests Nicean rule, unless Manfred, showing unusual tolerance for a Latin ruler of this time, allowed the Orthodox metropolitan to continue to exercise his authority after Manfred's recovery of Durazzo. A further argument to suggest that Manfred did not regain Durazzo is advanced by Ducellier (*La façade maritime*, pp. 177–80). When Manfred was killed, Michael II of Epirus invaded Albania to recover his former lands. His chief opponent was Manfred's governor for Albania, Philip Chinardo, who was in the process of trying to create his own principality in Albania. But what is important for us is that Chinardo did not reside in the major city of Durazzo but in the lesser fortress of Kanina. Ducellier reasonably concludes that this shows Manfred did not hold Durazzo at the time of his death. Ducellier then turns to Pachymeres' description of the major earthquake that struck Durazzo (he believes it occurred at the end of 1266 or early 1267, but Nicol dates it to 1271). Since this account mentions actions by no officials in the town except the Orthodox metropolitan, Ducellier concludes that Durazzo had no foreign lord at this time but was governed by its own citizenry. Though Ducellier may be right about self-rule, it seems to me that these citizens would certainly have had some leader or council that would have taken or failed to take action when the earthquake struck and that Pachymeres would equally have been expected to mention. Thus since clearly some civil government, be it local or foreign, existed in Durazzo, the argument from silence is inconclusive. Nicea (by then Byzantium) may well have held the city at the time of the earthquake. Whether the Byzantines had held it continually since Pelagonia, or whether Manfred had at some point briefly regained it—hence the inscription—only to lose it again, is unknown. Thus we must conclude that we do not know who (and the who may be in the plural) controlled Durazzo in the 1260s.

3. Finlay, *History of Greece*, vol. 4, p. 204.

4. The discussion of Thessaly in this and subsequent chapters owes much to B. Ferjančić, *Tesalija u XIII i XIV veku*, SAN, Vizantološki institut, Monograph no. 15 (Beograd, 1974).

5. P. Petrov, "B"lgaro-Vizantijskite otnošenija prez vtorata polovina na XIII v. otrazeni v poemata na Manuil Fil 'Za voennite podvizi na izvestnija čutoven prostrator,' " *Izvestija na Instituta za B"lgarska istorija* (BAN) 6 (1956): 545–72.

6. At about this time, presumably in the warfare of 1262 or 1263, the Byzantines re-established control over the Danube delta including the town of Vicina. They almost certainly won this region through a naval attack; thereafter they could maintain communications with it only by sea. To defend Vicina and environs from the Bulgarians and from Steppe raids, Michael VIII established here in the Dobrudja some Anatolian Turks who had been serving him as mercenaries and who disliked barracks life near Constantinople. They soon established two or three towns in the delta and took up their defensive role. In time some migrated to the Steppes and others returned to Anatolia, but enough of them remained to maintain their own ethnic identity. In the years before the Ottoman conquest those Dobrudja Turks who remained converted to Christianity. This community of Christian Turks in the Dobrudja, known as the Gagauz, has survived to the twentieth century and still speaks a recognizably Anatolian dialect of Turkish. On the Dobrudja Turks, see P. Wittek, "Yazijioghlu 'Ali on the Christian

Turks of the Dobruja," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London) 14 (1952): 639–68.

7. Petrov, "B"lgaro-Vizantijskite otnošenija."

8. J. B. Bury, "The Lombards and Venetians in Euboea," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 7 (1886): 329.

9. M. Živojinović, "Sveta Gora i Lionska unija," *ZRVI* 18 (1978): 141–53.

10. P. Nikov, in "Vesti i ocenki," *Periodičesko spisanie* 70 (1909): 575–76.

11. V. Gračev, "Terminy 'župa' i 'župan' v Serbskih istočnikah XII–XIV vv. i traktovka ih v istoriografii," in *Istočniki i istoriografija Slavjanskogo srednevekov'ja*, AN SSSR (Moscow, 1967), pp. 33–34, 49–50.

12. M. Dinić, "Odnos izmedju Kraljeva Milutina i Dragutina," *ZRVI* 3 (1955): 49–82.

13. L. Mavromatis, *La fondation de l'Empire Serbe: Le Kralj Milutin* (Thessaloniki, 1978), pp. 19–20.

14. N. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb, 1976), pp. 370–86.

15. For a brief summary of the contents of Dubrovnik's Statutes, see N. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, pp. 245–48.