

Zitierhinweis

Krsmanović, Bojana: Rezension über: Alexandru Madgearu, Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th-12th Centuries, Leiden: Brill, 2013, in: Südost-Forschungen, 73 (2014), S. 538-542, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/50e4a4da9dae48c29f1e393fc9df8ea1>



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Das goldene Byzanz und der Orient [Katalog zur Ausstellung „Das Goldene Byzanz & der Orient“, 30. März bis 4. Nov. 2012]. Red. Christian GASTGEBER. Schallaburg o. J. [2012], 189-199.

⁵ Zuletzt etwa Ewald KISLINGER, Von Drachen und anderem wilden Getier. Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Byzanz?, in: Irena RADOVÁ (Hg.), *Laetae segetes iterum*. Brunn 2008, 389-404.

⁶ Das Poem stammt zwar – wie Schreiner festhält (551) – von einem „uns unbekannte[n] Hofdichter“, dieser ist jedoch als der sogenannte „Manganeios Prodromos“ zu identifizieren, ein anonymer, etwas jüngerer Zeitgenosse des Theodoros Prodromos.

⁷ Siehe auch oben Anm. 4.

⁸ Von den von Schreiner zitierten Ausgaben des Gedichtes (551, Anm. 1) ist jene von Neumann (1888) der von Heilig (1944) vorzuziehen, da letzterer völlig unnötige Versumstellungen und Konjekturen vorgenommen hat. Eine Neuedition ist im Rahmen einer von E. und M. Jeffreys angekündigten Gesamtausgabe des Manganeios Prodromos zu erwarten.

⁹ Zu den zahlreichen Auseinandersetzungen mit bzw. Besprechungen von Gouguenheims Buch sei die Rezension von Johannes Koder hinzugefügt, die sich als eine der wenigen nüchtern und nicht polemisch mit den darin vorgebrachten Thesen auseinandersetzt: Johannes KODER, *Religionen unterwegs* 17 (2011), H. 4, 30-32.

¹⁰ Anstatt „Gräzisierung“ und „Nicht-Gräzisierung“ wären m. E. die Termini „Byzantinisierung“ und „Nicht-Byzantinisierung“ passender, was offensichtlich auch Schreiner selbst so sah, wenn man den Titel des folgenden Beitrages Nr. 12 betrachtet.

¹¹ Vgl. Erich TRAPP u. a. (Hgg.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität* besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhunderts. Wien 1994-, s. v. *Ῥώσι*; *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG), s. v.

Alexandru MADGEARU, Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th-12th Centuries. Leiden, Boston: Brill 2013. 212 S., 15 Abb., ISBN 978-90-04-21243-5, € 112,–

The book “Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th-12th Centuries” by Alexandru Madgearu is a lucid study of the evolution of the Byzantine administration on the northern frontier of the Empire, along the Danube River. In the introduction (1-7), where the author gives an overview of previous research about Byzantine military organization, Madgearu underlines that the need for a new, updated text about the Danube frontier was the result of the development of Byzantine studies, especially in the fields of archeology and sigillography. In many respects, the findings of these two disciplines have considerably advanced our knowledge about the evolution of Byzantine military organization in the Danube region from the 10th to the 12th century. The author dedicated the previous two decades to the study of this topic; hence, the book is in fact an improved version of a few of his studies on this issue.

The contents of the book are arranged chronologically and divided into three major sections: I. The Recovery of the Danubian Frontier (7-57); II. The Military Organization of the Danube Region (59-100); and III. The Evolution and Function of the Danube Frontier of Byzantium (1000-1204) (101-166). The Conclusion (167-172) contains a brief summary of the author’s main findings. The book is equipped with a bibliography of primary

and secondary sources (173-198), as well as an index of people, geographical names and modern authors (199-212).

The first chapter covers the period from the 7th to the early 11th century. The author follows the events in the Danube region, analysing Byzantine-Bulgarian relations (primarily conflicts), which were established immediately following the Bulgarians' settlement in the area south of the lower Danube, and which lasted until the recovery of interior Balkans during the reign of Basil II. The influence of other peoples – especially Russians – on the developments in the Danube region is also analysed. The policy led by Nikephoros II Phokas paved the way for the outbreak of the Russo-Byzantine war; which, in turn, led to the first major Byzantine incursion into the Danube region during the reign of John I Tzimiskes. Data contained in the “*Taktikon Scorialensis*”, as well as numerous seals, which advance our knowledge about the Byzantine administration in the Balkans, give us detailed insight into the military organization established by Tzimiskes. The author analyses some ambiguous cases, such as the location of Mesopotamia of the West, whose *katepano* was mentioned in the *Taktikon Scorialensis*; and the identification of Theodoroupolis, a toponym appearing on the seal of Sisinius, *katepano* of Theodoroupolis. In his attempt to reconstruct the territorial and organizational achievements of Byzantine rule established in the Balkans under Tzimiskes, Madgearu pays much attention to extant seals, mostly belonging to the so-called Preslav collection. In some cases, however, the dating of certain seals and ubication of toponyms mentioned on them cannot be taken as uncontested facts. For example, the seal of Damian Dobromir, *anthypatos, patrikios* and *doux* of Thrace and Mesopotamia could be dubious, since it is not certain that it was linked to Balkan Mesopotamia. In addition to this, the question of dating the seal of Adralestos Diogenes, *strategos* of Morava (to Tzimiskes' or Basil's time?) remains open, as does the ubication of this *strategis* (according to Madgearu, the town in question is Moravon, modern Dubravica, 43).

The author concludes his chronological overview of the developments in the Danube region by the reign of Basil and the establishment of lasting Byzantine rule in the region – the result of the Byzantine conquest of the state of Samuel and his successors (1018/1019). According to Madgearu, Byzantine rule over the newly conquered areas was organised into the following provinces: Bulgaria (which included the central parts of Samuel's former state and had its center at Skopje), Sirmium, and Dristra, both of which lay in the Danube region. The border between these two themes was located somewhere in the Iron Gates region around Vidin. Madgearu assumes that Western Mesopotamia, established under Tzimiskes, survived into Basil's time, even after 1002, and that it was at some point probably incorporated into the theme of Dristra. The also author mentions the theme of Serbia, not identifying it with Sirmium, but placing it on the territory of present-day Montenegro. Although the issue of the theme of Serbia does not strictly fit the thematic framework of this book, I wish to note that prior attempts to locate it focused on the region of Ras (an opinion supported by Lj. Maksimovic amongst others).¹

The second chapter – “The Military Organization of the Danube Region” – is split into three subsections, in which the author discusses the organization and history of the theme of Dristra (later Paradounavon), *strategoi* as the city commanders in the theme of

Dristra/Paradounavon. The last section deals with the theme of Sirmium and the New Bulgarian Theme on the Middle Danube.

In the author's opinion, Dristra/Dorostolon was the official name of a province/theme in the Danube region from Tzimiskes's time (the name of Dristra was first mentioned in the *Taktikon Scorialensis*; the sources reveal a parallel use of both names – Dristra and Dorostolon, with the latter being more frequent, especially on seals) until the reign of Isaac I Komnenos (1057-1059). Due to the conflicts with the Hungarians and Pechenegs, the administration of this theme was reorganised and the name Paradounavon began to be used to identify it. Without engaging in a deeper analysis of the structure of provincial government in the Byzantine Empire at the turn of the 10th-11th century, the author notes that the rank of the military commander of the province Dristra/Dorostolon changed: in Tzimiskes's time. The rank of *katepano* of Theodoroupolis/Dorostolon (the Sisinius seal) was established first, and was then discontinued and replaced by the function of *strategos* of Dristra/Dorostolon (cited in the "Taktikon Scorialensis"). The commander of the theme of Dorostolon remained at the rank of *strategos* until the title of *katepano* was renewed in the 1040s, which Madgearu associates with the Pecheneg invasion of 1036. The issue of the presumed division of the Paradounavon district into Western and Eastern (1065) has received a great deal of attention; Madgearu, however, disagrees. The author considers the history of the evolution of Byzantine administration in the province of Dristra/Dorostolon/Paradounavon in view of the military commanders known to have acted in these parts and concludes it in 1095, stating that there is no data about the activities of the *katepano* or duke of Paradounavon after the Cuman attack of 1095. The author also provides (86f.) a prosopographical list of the military commanders active in Eastern Danube areas in the period 971-1095 (katepanate of Western Mesopotamia, theme of Ioannoupolis/Preslav, katepanate of Theodoroupolis, theme of Dorostolon, theme of Dristra, theme of Dristra or the Paristrian cities and theme of Paradounavon). Since this list was composed using primarily sigillographical material, I would like to note that the chronology of the listed Byzantine officials' mandates cannot be accurately reconstructed.

The rest of the second section deals with the city *strategoi* or the garrison commanders stationed in major urban centers. The conclusion that the title of *strategos* had initially been reserved for commanders of themes, but that its meaning began to change in the early 11th century (88), is not valid. In fact, the reduction of the *strategoi* competences can be traced back to the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos as the sole emperor. This process began in the Eastern parts of the Empire approximately in the mid-10th century and spread to the rest of its territory in the following decades. In the Balkans, this process had already begun during the reign of John I Tzimiskes. The author focuses on data about the city *strategoi* which undoubtedly testifies to the evolution of military administration in the Danube region. The confirmed *strategoi* include those at Preslav, Pliska, Varna, Presthlaviza (the identification of which the author also addresses) and some other, less known localities. However, the reader is unable to understand the dynamics of the evolution of military administration in this part of border territory. The evolution of military organization in the region of Middle Danube is presented quite concisely. The scarcity of source information (virtually fragmentary) tied to various years throughout the 11th century does not allow for

a more detailed insight into the evolution of Byzantine military organization. The author's assertion that this part of the Danube frontier was of less strategic importance to Byzantium in comparison with Paradounavon seems justified. This situation would remain unchanged until the intensification of conflicts with the Hungarians.

In the third chapter, the Evolution and Function of the Danube Frontier of Byzantium (1000-1204), the author discusses the problem of fortification in the Danube frontier region, as well as the developments in this part of the Empire during the 11th and 12th centuries.

The work on the fortification of the Danube region was begun during the reign of John Tzimiskes, although some old Roman forts, restored by this ruler, were also important to Byzantium. Madgearu concludes that the restoration of forts served to reinforce the defensive system, and that it allowed Byzantium to compensate for the insufficient number of soldiers stationed in these garrisons. The intensity of fortification was not consistent along the Danube frontier and depended on the threat level of some Northern provinces. The defense of Dristra and of the main fords at Nafăru, Isaccea, Garvăn and Dervent was of great importance to Byzantium. The reinforcement of the defense system on the section of the frontier between Braničevo and Sirmium gained significance after the intensification of Hungarian attacks. This forced Isaac I Komnenos to take measures which would allow a more effective defense of this part of the frontier.

The author traces the functioning of the defense system along the northern border of the Empire in the 11th and 12th century through Byzantium's relations with the barbaric peoples which threatened it. The peculiarity of the Danube frontier was that it functioned as a land border (especially in winter, when the river would often freeze over). Except the Russians, who did have a fleet, the other peoples (such as the Pechenegs, Uzes and Cumans) crossed over the Danube (sometimes in great numbers) and penetrated into the deeper Balkan regions. Without adequate fortifications and military forces, the Empire could not effectively defend its northern frontier, as evidenced by the events of the 11th and 12th centuries. Hence, stationing a fleet in the Danube did not hold any particular significance for Byzantium, especially after the Russian threat receded. The Pecheneg invasions into Byzantine territory – growing ever more frequent and massive – posed a great challenge for the defense system along the Danube. With their settlement on the Empire's territory in greater numbers (shortly before the 1050s), writes Madgearu, the clearly demarcated border between Byzantium and the barbarians ceased to exist. The process of barbarization of the Danube frontier began with the Pecheneg incursions. This process gained momentum with the Uzes attacks, and culminated with the Cuman invasions, which began to threaten – almost continually – Byzantine interests on the lower Danube and in the interior areas from the late 11th century onwards. During the next century, the military and political situation grew more and more complex, and the Byzantine Empire finally found a worthy rival in the Hungarian state, which primarily threatened its positions on the Middle Danube. Despite the Komnenos emperors' efforts to preserve their positions on the Danube, complex military and political developments in other parts of the Empire (especially the Balkans) did not leave much space for a firmer consolidation of the Empire in this region. The restoration of the Bulgarian empire under the Asens (1185) finally pushed Byzantium

out of the lower Danube area and in the subsequent period the Danube frontier became a battleground between Bulgaria, Hungary and the Cumans.

Examining Byzantine military organisation on the Danube from the 10th to the 12th century primarily through the prism of military-political history, Alexandru Madgearu has certainly offered a detailed chronological insight into the establishment, evolution and decline of Byzantine power on the Empire's northern frontier, with a focus on the region of lower Danube. The geographical focus on the Danube region does to a certain extent limit some of the author's conclusions regarding the structure of provincial military organization, the competences of military commanders (*strategos*, duke, *katepano*) and their hierarchical relations, since the organization of rule in the Danube region rested on the same or similar principles characteristic of other parts of the Empire, especially border regions. Hence, in my opinion, certain questions remain unresolved (the definition of autonomous military-territorial districts and their interior structure; the competences of the duke and *katepano* and the evolution of these offices in the period from the 10th to the 12th century; the rank of the Sirmium district and the competences of its commander; the time of establishment of the Paradounavon district; the issue of civil administration and its organization etc). However, Madgearu's study – accompanied by an abundance of sigillographical, archeological, and numismatic findings – advances our knowledge about the evolution of Byzantine military organisation along the Danube, while simultaneously giving rise to new questions about the phenomenon of the Danube frontier.

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¹ See A. S. MOHOV, *K cursus honorum Konstantina Diogena, Antičnaja drevnost' i srednie veka* 27 (1995), 32-37; Ljubomir MAKSIMOVIĆ, Organizacija vizantijske vlasti u novoosvojenim oblastima posle 1018. godine, *Zbornik radova vizantoloskog instituta* 36 (1997), 39-42; IDEM, Βυζάντιο και οι Σέρβοι τον 11^ο αιώνα. Ζήτημα εσωτερικής ή εξωτερικής πολιτικής της αυτοκρατορίας, in: Vassiliki N. VLYSSIDOU (ed.), *Αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση (;). Το Βυζάντιο τον 11^ο αιώνα (1025-1081)*. Athens 2003, 75-85; Predrag KOMATINA, Srbija i Duklja u delu Jovana Skilice, *Zbornik radova vizantoloskog instituta* 49 (2012), 159-186.

Đorđe BUBALO, Pragmatic Literacy in Medieval Serbia. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers 2014 (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 29). XXVI, 428 S., ISBN 978-2-503-54961-3, € 100,–

Đorđe Bubalo, Jahrgang 1969, seit 2001 Professor an der Abteilung für Geschichte der Philosophischen Fakultät der Belgrader Universität, ist ein serbischer Historiker, dessen wissenschaftliche Laufbahn erst nach dem Zerfall des zweiten Jugoslawien begonnen hat. Seine Diplomarbeit von 1996 unter dem Titel „Otroci i robovi“ wurde vom Fond „Radovan Samardžić“ als beste Diplomarbeit des Jahres ausgezeichnet; 2001 folgte seine Magisterarbeit „Nomici i nomičke knjige“, für die Bubalo nach der Publikation unter dem Titel „Srpski