

only to Avars, while Archbishop John describes an attack by an army of Sclavenes and other barbarians, which, though obeying the orders of the qagan, was not led by the qagan himself and apparently did not include any Avar troops.⁷⁶

Barišić and Lemerle supported a date of 586, on the basis of a better fit of this event into the general picture of Avar–Byzantine relations in the 580s. In 586, as well as in 597, the bulk of the Avar forces led by the qagan were far from Thessalonica. But in the 590s, most, if not all, of the operations of the Avar–Byzantine war took place in the northern part of the Balkans. The 580s are the only period in which the Avars are known to have reached the southern regions of the Balkans. In addition, Archbishop John explains that the attack was ordered by the qagan, because he wanted to take revenge on Emperor Maurice, after his embassy's requests had been denied. We do not know of any such dealings preceding the campaign of 597. We do know, however, that shortly after the Avar shaman Bookolabra defected to the Romans, an Avar envoy to Constantinople, who was coming for the 100,000 solidi paid as annual subsidies to the qagan, was arrested and sent to jail by the order of the enraged emperor Maurice. This event took place just before the Avar campaign along the Danube, in 585. It would make sense to identify this incident with the failed negotiations referred to by Archbishop John as causing the attack on Thessalonica.⁷⁷

Two years later (588), a group of Slavene warriors, whom Theophylact Simocatta calls Getae, raided Thrace.⁷⁸ That Theophylact refers to these Sclavenes as "Getae," without any mention of Avars, may indicate an independent raid. But Theophylact also mentions Slavs, who were subordinated to the qagan. In 592, in order to conquer Singidunum, the qagan ordered the Sclavenes to build boats for his troops to cross the Danube river. The Sclavenes engaged in "timber operations" at Sirmium

⁷⁶ *Miracles of St Demetrius* I 13.117. See Nestor 1963:56; Avenarius 1973:13–14; Pohl 1988:105. Avar war in Thrace: Pohl 1988:85–9. For the size of the army besieging Thessalonica, see *Miracles of St Demetrius* I 13.126; see also Charanis 1976:10; Skedros 1996:17. For the association between the siege of Thessalonica and the war in Thrace, see Popović 1975:473; Whitby 1988:147. For Eusebius, the bishop of Thessalonica, see *Miracles of St Demetrius* I 14.131; Lemerle 1953:353–4 and 1981:50; Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou 1970:173; Pohl 1988:104. Appiaria episode: Theophylact Simocatta II 16.1–11; Vryonis 1981:387–90; *contra*: Pohl 1988:88. Evagrius (VI 10) clearly attests to the fact that when raiding Greece, the Avars were capable of conquering cities and strongholds by "fighting on the parapets."

⁷⁷ Barišić 1953:57–67; Lemerle 1981:49–69; see also Waldmüller 1976:123; Weithmann 1978:87; Popović 1975:450–1, 1978:622, and 1980:132; Yannopoulos 1980:339; Whitby 1988:117–18; Ivanova 1995a:186–7. Arrest of the Avar envoy: Theophylact Simocatta I 8.7–10.

⁷⁸ Theophylact Simocatta III 4.7: τὸ δὲ Γετικόν, ταῦτόν δ'εἰπεῖν αἱ τῶν Σκλαυηνῶν. There are two other instances of "Getae" instead of Slavs (VI 6.14 and VII 2.5), but it is difficult to explain this usage. Given Theophylact's bombastic style, it may just be literary antiquarianism. For the date of this raid, see Waldmüller 1976:137; Whitby and Whitby 1986:77 with n. 14.

in that same year had their own officers, apparently appointed by the qagan. The Avar army itself consisted of a considerable number of Slavene warriors, as suggested by the great number of prisoners captured by Priscus in 599.⁷⁹ In 603, the qagan sent Slavene warriors to help the Lombard king Agilulf to conquer Cremona. Small Slavene tribal units were also developing on the western frontier of the qaganate. They seem to have been clients of the qagan, for they were involved in petty warfare with the western neighbors of the Avars, the Bavarians. According to Paul the Deacon, in 592, Duke Tassilo of Bavaria raided *provincia Sclaborum* and returned home *cum maxima praeda*.⁸⁰

WAR AGAINST THE SCLAVENES: MAURICE'S CAMPAIGNS OF THE 590S

To Roman eyes the real danger was not the Slavs under Avar authority, but the independent ones in the immediate vicinity of the frontier. All attempts to deal with them, from Justinian's building program to the practice of setting barbarian groups against each other, had borne no fruits. Maurice's reign, therefore, brought a drastic change. For the first time since Chilbudius' campaigns, the Roman army launched operations across the Danube frontier. That no effort seems to have been made to drive out the Slavs from Roman territory shows that the perceived danger was still north, not south, of the Danube frontier. The real problem was not to remove the Slavs presumably infiltrated and settled on imperial lands in the Balkans or in Greece, but to deal with those remaining beyond imperial frontiers. From Theophylact's evidence, however, it is clear that the main attraction was not booty or the extraction of tribute, but the propaganda value of relatively easy military victories which could be celebrated in Constantinople. Roman attacks were almost exclusively targeted against a relatively limited territory in

⁷⁹ Sclavenes building boats: Theophylact Simocatta VI 3.9–4.1; timber operations: VI 4.4–5. See also Whitby and Whitby 1986:162; Waldmüller 1976:140; Pohl 1988:134. Slavene warriors in the Avar army: Theophylact Simocatta VIII 3.14–15; Mango 1997:407. According to Theophylact, Priscus took 8,000 Slavene prisoners, besides 3,000 Avars and 6,200 other barbarians.

⁸⁰ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV 28 and IV 7. See Popović 1975:465; Waldmüller 1976:183; Fritze 1980:536–7; Bertels 1987:92–5; Pohl 1988:150. Location of *provincia Sclaborum*: Bertels 1987:93. Avar protection of Slavs against Bavarians: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV 10. The Sclavenes struck back in 610, as they defeated Duke Garibald, son of Tassilo III. Encouraged by Avars, they plundered Bavarian territories in the upper Drava valley (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV 39). The political influence of the qagan reached even farther to the north, as suggested by Theophylact Simocatta's account of the three Sclavenes captured by imperial bodyguards near Heraclea (VI 2.10–16; see Mango 1997:391). The Sclavenes belonged to a tribe living "at the boundary of the western ocean," to which the qagan had dispatched envoys, in order to levy a military force.

present-day eastern Walachia and Moldavia. They did not aim to conquer, but strictly to protect what was still viewed as the frontier of the Empire. On the other hand, operations against the Avars in Pannonia were only launched after the campaign against the Sclavenes north of the Danube, an indication of Maurice's priorities.⁸¹

The chronology of these events is most controversial. According to Theophylact Simocatta, our main source for this period, Maurice launched his campaign after concluding a peace with Persia, which is known to have taken place in 592.⁸² At the same time, Theophylact mentions a Frankish embassy arriving in Constantinople. The embassy had been sent, according to Theophylact, by a ruler named Theodoric, but there was no ruler by that name in 592. Theodoric II became king of Burgundy only in 596. Some have argued therefore that the beginning of the campaign should be placed in 596. Since Theophylact's source for this part of his *History* is the *Feldzugsjournal*, his chronology is based on annual campaigns. The campaign against the Sclavenes could therefore be fairly well dated to 593, by counting back the years from the final campaign of Maurice's reign in 602. Moreover, Theophylact tells us that at the beginning of the campaign, Maurice appointed Priscus as *magister equitum* and Gentzon as *magister peditum*. In July 593, Priscus received a letter from Pope Gregory the Great, congratulating him for having regained the emperor's favor. It is likely, therefore, that the campaign was launched in the spring of 593.⁸³

A month after leaving Heraclea (present-day Yeşilköy), Priscus crossed the Danube river, already knowing that Ardagastus was gathering Sclavene warriors for a new raid across the Danube. Taken by surprise in the middle of the night, Ardagastus barely escaped being captured. Priscus had crossed the Danube at Durostorum (present-day Silistra) and his troops encountered Ardagastus just one night after the crossing. It is possible, therefore, that Ardagastus' headquarters were located some-

⁸¹ Goubert 1963:115; Pohl 1988:135–6. For the first time since the days of Theodosius I, the emperor led in person the first part of the campaign. Following Priscus' successful attacks, Maurice kept vigil at the church of St Sophia and "made prayers of supplication" to God to grant "more glorious trophies" (Theophylact Simocatta vi 8.3–8). Direction of Roman attacks: Janković 1981:202. The Sclavenes against whom Maurice launched his campaign were not subjects of the Avars. This results from the answer Priscus gave to the Avar envoys: the agreement and the truce with the Avars had not concluded the "Getic war" as well (Theophylact Simocatta vi 6.13). See Waldmüller 1976:142–3; Rusu 1981:23.

⁸² According to the seventh-century Armenian chronicle attributed to Sebeos, after the peace was signed between Maurice and Khosro, the emperor "ordered all troops in the Eastern area to be taken across the sea and assembled against the enemy in the Thracian area" (Sebeos, p. 51).

⁸³ Frankish embassy: Theophylact Simocatta vi 3.6–7; Olajos 1988:167 with n. 705. Pope's letter to Priscus: Gregory the Great, ep. iii 51; Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou 1970:164; Olajos 1988:171; Whitby 1988:158. For a late date of Priscus campaign, see Labuda 1950:170; Duket 1980:55. For an early date, see Ștefan 1967:255; Waldmüller 1976:142; Whitby and Whitby 1986:167; Pohl 1988:128–9.

where between the swampy Mostiștea valley, to the northeast from Durostorum, and the river Argeș, across which Ardagastus swam to escape his followers.⁸⁴

The booty captured by Priscus was considerable enough to excite protests from the troops, when he attempted to send it all to Constantinople. Just as Dauritas and his fellow tribesmen, the Sclavenes of the 590s seem to have been prosperous. The author of the *Strategikon*, who most likely was a participant in this campaign or in those of 594 and 602, would later recommend officers of the Roman army operating north of the Danube to transport provisions found in Sclavene settlements "to our own country."⁸⁵

Priscus himself seems to have acted as if advised by the *Strategikon*. He ordered some men to move ahead on reconnaissance, and commanded the brigadier Alexander to march into the region beyond the adjacent river Helibacia, most likely the present-day Ialomița river. He encountered a group of Sclavenes, who quickly made their escape in the nearby marshes and woods. All attempts to capture them failed, but Alexander found a Gepid, "who had once long before been of the Christian religion," who divulged to the Romans the place where the Sclavenes were hidden. He also told Alexander that the Sclavenes were subjects of Musocius, "who was called *rex* in the barbarian tongue" and lived thirty parasangs (93 to 111 miles) away. If the Roman army headed northeast and not west, Musocius' territory must have been located somewhere in southern Moldavia.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Theophylact Simocatta vi 7.4–5. See also Wiita 1977:334; Zasterová 1971:65. For night attacks, see the *Strategikon* ix 2.7. The normal marching speed during summer was four Roman miles (about 6 km) per hour. See Vegetius, *Epitome Rei Militaris* 19, ed. Leo F. Stelten (New York and Bern, 1990), p. 25; Watson 1969:55 with n. 170. The distance between Silistra and the Mostiștea valley is 40 km, but the pursuit of Ardagastus seems to have been the work of horsemen, not of infantry troops. ⁸⁵ *Strategikon* xi 4.32; see Pohl 1988:140–1.

⁸⁶ Theophylact Simocatta vi 9.1: ὑπὸ Μουσώκιον τὸν λεγόμενον ῥήγα, τῇ τῶν βαρβάρων φωνῇ. For the emendation of βάρβαρον into βορβορώδη, meaning "swampy," see Whitby and Whitby 1986:169. Retreat into woods and swamps: *Strategikon* xi 4.12 and 38. Reconnaissance: *Strategikon* xi 4.41. Helibacia as Ialomița: Cihodaru 1972:5; Comșa 1974:309; Schramm 1981:257; Whitby and Whitby 1986:171. Helibacia was large enough to pose crossing problems (see Theophylact Simocatta vii 5.7–10). Ialomița is the only tributary of the Danube that could pose such problems in this region. Alexander attempted to set fire to the woods to which the Sclavenes fled as soon as they saw him coming. He failed, Theophylact explains, because of the damp conditions. This detail may point to a swampy region at the confluence of Sărata and Ialomița, near the modern city of Urziceni. If so, Alexander might have crossed the river somewhere between present-day Snagov, near Bucharest, and Slobozia. In any case, after crossing the Danube, Priscus' army must have headed east, not west. This results from the fact that in 594, moving from west to east, Peter's army did not encounter Pasprius before reaching Helibacia (see Theophylact Simocatta vii 5.6). In ancient sources, a parasang was the distance covered in a fifth of a marching day, i.e., 3.1 to 3.7 miles. Musocius was thus at a considerable distance (about three days of marching) from Helibacia, which probably formed the border between his territory and that of Ardagastus. For Musocius' name, see Braichevskii 1953:23; Cihodaru 1972:5; Comșa 1974:310; Ditten 1978:80 with n. 2.

Alexander did not pursue his mission into Musocius' territory, for it was too far for his small-sized contingent. He re-crossed Helibacia and returned to Priscus, bringing with him the barbarian prisoners and the Gepid defector. Priscus ordered the execution of the Sclavene prisoners. The deserter agreed to beguile the Sclavene "king" in exchange for gifts. He returned to Musocius, asking to be given canoes for ferrying across the refugees from Ardagastus' territory. With 150 canoes and 30 oarsmen, the Gepid re-crossed the river Paspirius. Since the river seems to have been navigable, at least for canoes, Paspirius may refer to the lower course of the Siret river.⁸⁷

In the middle of the night, the Gepid came to Priscus, who sent him back together with 200 soldiers under the command of the brigadier Alexander. Drunk and asleep, the Sclavenes were no match for Alexander's men. An additional Roman force of 3,000 men crossed the river on canoes captured from the Sclavenes. Just as with Ardagastus, the Roman army took the Sclavenes by surprise. But unlike Ardagastus, "king" Musocius was taken prisoner, while most of his subjects were killed. Apparently, this was not a decisive victory, for the next day, Priscus' soldiers barely escaped being destroyed by Sclavenes. Theophylact claims that Roman troops were saved only by the swift intervention of *magister peditum* Gentzon, an indication that both generals participated in the expedition north of the Danube. After this last combat, Priscus moved south of the Danube. There may have been at least one more raid by Roman troops into Sclavene territory, until Tatimer's return from Constantinople in the fall of 593.⁸⁸

Tatimer had been sent to Maurice with the prisoners captured after Priscus had stormed Ardagastus' territory. Somewhere on his way to Constantinople, he was ambushed by Sclavenes roaming freely on Roman territory, despite Priscus' campaign north of the Danube fron-

⁸⁷ Priscus closely followed the counsels of the *Strategikon*: to kill the prisoners (XI 4.45) and to promise gifts to those deserters who can provide valuable informations (IX 3.8). Though Theophylact does not mention the first crossing, it is clear that in order to attack Musocius, one first needed to cross the river Paspirius (VI 9.10 and 12). The small number of oarsmen may indicate that the Gepid expected to find available oarsmen among the refugees. That Musocius agreed to help those coming from Ardagastus' territory seems to confirm the suspicions of the *Strategikon*. Its author recommends Roman officers to win over some of the Sclavene chiefs by persuasion or by gifts, then to attack the others, so that "their common hostility will not make them united or bring them together under one rule" (*Strategikon* XI 4.30). See Cankova-Petkova 1962:267. According to the *Strategikon*, all northern tributaries of the Danube were navigable (XI 4.32). Paspirius has often been identified with the Buzău river, mainly on the basis of the dubious derivation of Musocius' name from the river's ancient name, Musaios. See Iorga 1937:307; Nestor 1970:104; Comşa 1974:310; Pohl 1988:141.

⁸⁸ Theophylact Simocatta VI 9.14. Alexander's soldiers must have reached Paspirius by horse. The signal of attack was given by the Gepid "by means of Avar songs," which were apparently familiar to both Romans and Slavs (Theophylact Simocatta VI 9.10).

tier. Some Roman infantry troops were, however, stationed in the environs, for only their intervention allowed Tatimer to reach his destination. In Constantinople, Emperor Maurice decided to send him back to Priscus, with orders for his army to pass the winter season "where they were." This most likely refers to the left bank of the Danube. Priscus may have indeed crossed the Danube for a second raid against the Sclavenes. It is not known whether Maurice's decision was dictated by tactics described in the *Strategikon* or by his need to avoid military expenditures during the winter season. But as soon as "the royal utterances became known, the army was kindled by commotion." As if rehearsing for Phocas' revolt of 602, the soldiers claimed that the "hordes of barbarians [were] irresistible." The conflict was just settled and Roman troops had just returned south of the Danube, when Priscus learned that the Avars were preparing a new incursion and that the qagan had ordered Sclavenes to cross the Danube against Roman troops. It is hard to believe that these were the same Sclavenes Priscus had just defeated north of the Danube frontier. They might have been subjects to the qagan and therefore may have come from the region under his control. However, during negotiations for peace with Priscus, the qagan demanded a substantial part of the booty taken by Roman troops during the campaign of 593. He claimed that in doing so, Priscus had attacked his land and had wrought injury to his subjects. It is difficult to separate reality from mere boasting, but beyond declarations and threats, it appears that the Sclavenes had now become a bone of contention between the Empire and the qaganate.⁸⁹

The campaign of the following year (594) was led not by Priscus, but by Maurice's brother, Peter. At Marcianopolis, Peter's advanced guard, under the command of brigadier Alexander, encountered 600 Sclavenes, returning from a raid across Moesia Inferior. The Sclavenes were carrying the booty in wagons, which they placed round as a barricade as soon as they perceived the danger. The Romans dismounted and approached the barricade. Though the Sclavenes fought fiercely, Alexander's men finally broke the barricade and slew them all. Just as the episode of Tatimer, this incident seems to indicate that Priscus' campaign against the Sclavenes north of the Danube had no effects on Slavic raiding activity. Moreover, learning that the Sclavenes were directing their attacks towards Constantinople, Maurice asked Peter to postpone his expedition across the Danube and to remain in Thrace.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Theophylact Simocatta VI 8.4-8, VI 9.1, VI 10.1-3, VI 11.5, VI 11.17; see also VIII 6.2; *Strategikon* XI 4.19. On Maurice's decision, see Pohl 1988:139.

⁹⁰ Theophylact Simocatta VII 2.1-10, VII 2.15. The forts sacked by Sclavenes (Zaldapa, Aquis, and Scopi) were all in Moesia Inferior. See Waldmüller 1976:148-9; Whitby 1988:160 with n. 30; Pohl 1988:141-2.

Peter had meanwhile reached the Danube frontier. The movements of the Roman army on the right bank, from one fort to another, are difficult to follow, for Peter often changed direction for no apparent reason. Theophylact, who seems to have been completely ignorant of Balkan geography, misunderstood his source (arguably, the *Feldzugsjournal*), and the resulting narrative is very confusing. Peter's intention may have been to patrol along the Danube, between Zaldapa and Asemus, in order to prevent Slavs from crossing the river. His troops, most likely, were already on the left bank when a reconnaissance mission was captured by Sclavene horsemen. The last city on the right bank visited by Peter was Asemus, where he attempted to remove the local garrison and to include it among his own troops. The city was located at the mouth of the river Asemus (present-day Osâm), which may suggest that Peter's confrontation with the Sclavenes occurred somewhere near the mouth of the Olt river, on the left bank. In this case, Peter may have headed east, for some time after the confrontation his troops reached the Helibacia river, which can be safely located in the vicinity of Durostorum.⁹¹

At the crossing of an unknown river north of the Danube (perhaps the Olt river?), Peter's army was ambushed by the Sclavenes under the command of their leader Peiragastus, whom Theophylact calls a "brigadier." The Roman troops, however, were able to land on the opposite bank and to encircle the "barbarian hordes." Peiragastus was killed and his warriors turned to flight. Without horses, the Romans were initially not able to press the pursuit, but the next day Peter dispatched a large detachment to follow the Sclavenes. Theophylact claims that the army's guides "made a great error, with the result that a water shortage beset the camp." Despite Theophylact's bombastic style, the meaning of the passage seems to be that the Roman troops found themselves in the middle of some sort of desert, for in the absence of water, soldiers "assuaged their thirst with wine." Fortunately, a Sclavene captive showed them the way to the nearby Helibacia. If Peter's troops were heading east and Helibacia is Ialomița, the arid country may have been the Burnaz plain between the

⁹¹ Theophylact *Simocatta* vii 3.1.10, vii 4.8–13. Location of Helibacia: vi 8.9. Route of the Roman army: Schreiner 1985:64; Whitby and Whitby 1986:182 with n. 10. As the Roman troops approached the Danube, they encountered 1,000 Bulgar horsemen. They been sent by the qagan to protect the frontier (vii 4.1–2). According to Theophylact, Peter "reached the habitations of the Sclavenes" even before marching along the Danube (vii 2.14). Michael Whitby believes this to be an indication that Peter already crossed the Danube against the Sclavenes, although Theophylact, because of his bias against the general, did not credit him with such energetic action (Whitby and Whitby 1986:181 n. 9). If this is true, however, it is difficult to understand why Peter recrossed the river, only to monitor the barbarians from the right bank. In reality, at this point, Theophylact's text is very obscure and no conclusion can be drawn as to the relative chronology of the Roman army's movements. In addition, the river referred to in the text (vii 4.8) is not the Danube, for ποταμός only occurs singly when preceded by ἱστρος. See Ivanov 1995b:59.

Vedea and the Argeș rivers. This would nicely dovetail with the four-day distance between Helibacia and the point where the Romans had encountered Peiragastus. Attacked by Sclavenes from the opposite bank of the Helibacia river, the Roman troops attempted to cross the river against them, but were overwhelmed and turned to flight.⁹²

Since Theophylact does not tell us anything else about the expeditionary force, and only reports that Peter was soon replaced by Priscus as "general in Europe," we may presume that Peter's campaign of 594 ended in failure. This, however, did not prevent Maurice from continuing to wage war against Sclavenes on their own territory. In 598, he concluded the peace treaty with the Avars. The Danube was agreed upon not as a frontier, but "as an intermedium (μεσίτης) between Romans and Avars," for "there was provision for crossing the river against Sclavenes." That these were not mere intentions is shown by the fact that the war against the Sclavenes resumed in 602, as Peter's second-in-command, Godwin, crossed the river and "destroyed the hordes of the enemies in the jaws of the sword." In response, the qagan attacked the traditional allies of the Romans, the Antes. The Avar general Apsich was sent "to destroy the nation of the Antes." Theophylact claims that "in the course of these very events, large numbers defected from the Avars and hastened to desert to the emperor." At first glance, the text seems to suggest that because of the defection, the intentions of the qagan had not been accomplished. But Theophylact is the last source referring to Antes and the last time the title *Anticus* appears in the imperial intitulation is in 612. It is likely, therefore, that, notwithstanding numerous defections to the Romans, Apsich's campaign resulted in the destruction of the Antian polity. After 602, the Antes disappear from all historical sources.⁹³

Godwin seems to have remained for a long time north of the Danube, waging war against the Sclavenes. Maurice's new orders to his troops to pass the winter in Sclavene territory were, however, received with dismay.

⁹² Theophylact *Simocatta* vii 5.4 and 6–9. The Roman troops may have reached the Ialomița river at some point north of Bucharest.

⁹³ Theophylact *Simocatta* vii 15.12–14, viii 6.1. For Apsich's campaign, see Litavrin 1995a:309. For the epithet *Anticus*, see Ivanov 1991a:261. Both Priscus and Peter seem to have combined the *quaestura exercitus* with the office of *magister militum per Illyricum*. Indeed, judging from Theophylact's evidence, there always was only one commander on the Balkan front. Following Zlatarski, Bulgarian scholars insist that the Antes were imperial federates in Dobrudja. See Bonev 1986:56–61. As a consequence, Gennadii Litavrin (1999) suggested that Apsich's army moved along the right bank of the Danube, without ever reaching the Antes. According to Litavrin, the fact that, as late as 612, *Anticus* was still an imperial epithet is an indication that the Antes were still the emperor's allies and federates. Though destroyed by internal strife or attacks by Bulgars, the Antes resurfaced at the end of the seventh century under a new name, the Severeis mentioned by Theophanes. Leaving aside the dubious interpretation of the archaeological evidence, Litavrin seems to ignore the fact that the epithet *Anticus*, first attested under Justinian, referred to imperial victories over the Antes, not to them being imperial allies.

Just as in 593, they caused mutiny. According to Theophylact, the soldiers were "troubled by the emperor's purpose, both because of the booty itself, and because of the exhaustion of the horses, and in addition because hordes of barbarians were surging around the land on the opposite bank of the Ister." It is true that the author of the *Strategikon* recommends attacking the Sclavenes during winter, "when they cannot easily hide among bare trees, when the tracks of fugitives can be discerned in the snow, when their household is miserable from exposure, and when it is easy to cross over the rivers on the ice."⁹⁴ The audience of the *Strategikon* consisted of generals and officers, not of the common soldiers, like those who in 602 wanted to go home. On the other hand, there is no indication that the revolt itself was caused by the allegedly increasing barbarian pressure. Godwin had just returned from a successful campaign and there is no reason to believe that the situation was in any way different from that of 593. It is still a widely spread belief, however, that Phocas' revolt caused the collapse of the Roman frontier. As a consequence, ever since Robert Roesler argued that the Slavic settlement of the Balkan peninsula south of the Danube and the Save rivers could not have taken place before the reign of Phocas, historians speak of a Slavic stream now pouring in an irresistible flood and submerging the entire peninsula. This view, however, is contradicted by all existing evidence. First, Phocas' purge of the Danubian army (Peter, Comentiolus, Praesentinus, and other officers) did not affect its discipline and morale. The seventh-century Armenian chronicle attributed to Sebeos provides clear evidence that, after overthrowing Maurice, the army returned to the Danubian front and continued "to oppose the enemy." It must have remained there until Phocas concluded a treaty with the qagan in 605, in order to transfer the army to the Persian front.⁹⁵

Second, as Franjo Barišić has demonstrated, there is no evidence for raiding activity, by either Avars or Slavs, during Phocas' reign. By contrast, Heraclius' early regnal years witnessed some devastating incursions. Relying on information borrowed from the *historiola* of Secundus of Trento, Paul the Deacon tells us that in 610 or 611, following the conquest of Forum Iulii by the Avars, the Sclavenes devastated Istria, which

had been until then under Byzantine control. George of Pisidia, in a poem dedicated to Heraclius, describes the perils the new emperor was facing at the beginning of his reign. Among them, he lists the Sclavenes, gathering in hordes like wolves, and moving swiftly by land and by sea. In distant Spain, Isidore of Seville knew that at the beginning of Heraclius' reign, the Persians had conquered Syria and Egypt, and the Slavs had taken Greece from the Romans. It has been argued that Isidore's notion of *Graecia* was very vague and might have referred to what used to be known as Illyricum, rather than to Greece proper. This might indeed be the case for Isidore, but certainly does not apply to the author of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*. He knew that before attacking Thessalonica, the Sclavenes had devastated Thessaly and its islands, the islands of Greece, the Cyclades, Achaia, Epirus, and the most part of Illyricum, as well as parts of Asia. The reference to both Illyricum and Greece makes it clear that there is no confusion.⁹⁶

THE SEVENTH CENTURY

Unfortunately, the attack on Thessalonica by Slavs previously raiding Greece is impossible to date with any precision. We are only told that it occurred under the episcopate of John, the author of Book I. The description of the territories ravaged by Sclavenes before they turned against Thessalonica is viewed by many as fitting into the picture of Heraclius' early regnal years, snapshots of which are given by George the Pisidian or Isidore of Seville. In particular, the fact that the author of Book II specifically refers to maritime raids on canoes reminds one of what George of Pisidia has to say about the Slavene wolves. Historians agree, therefore, in dating this attack to the first decade of Heraclius' reign.⁹⁷

For the first time, we are told that the Sclavenes brought with them their families, for "they had promised to establish them in the city after its conquest." This suggests that they were coming from the surrounding countryside, for the author of Book II used 'Sclavenes' as an umbrella-term for a multitude of tribes, some of which he knew by name: Drugubites,

⁹⁴ Theophylact Simocatta VIII 6.2; *Strategikon* XI 4.19. See Theophylact Simocatta VIII 5.12.

⁹⁵ Sebeos, p. 80. See Olster 1993:69. Phocas' revolt and collapse of the Roman frontier: Roesler 1873; Ostrogorski 1959:4; Haldon 1997:37; Madgearu 1997:51. The definite withdrawal of all troops from Europe came only in 620, as Heraclius was preparing his campaign against Persia (Mango 1997:434). These troops were expected to return to Thrace after the campaign, but the conquest of Syria by the Muslims and the defeat of the Byzantine army prevented the return of the European troops. After Yarmuk, all troops were brought to Asia Minor, including those of Thrace. Thrace proper remained without any Byzantine troops until about 680, when a *hypostrategos* of Thrace, who was also count of Opsikion, is known to have attended the sixth ecumenical council. See Lilie 1977:27; Soustal 1991:76.

⁹⁶ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV 40; George of Pisidia, *Heraclius* II 75–8; Isidore of Seville, p. 479; *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 1.179. Secundus and Paul: Gardiner 1983:147; Pohl 1988:9. For the raid mentioned by Isidore, see Charanis 1971:22–5; Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986b:53–4; Ivanova 1995b:356–7. The *Continuatio Hispana* places this raid in Heraclius' fourth regnal year (Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986b:54). For the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, see Koder 1986:530–1. Slavene raids in the Aegean are also mentioned in the *Chronicon Miscellaneum* (also known as *Liber Chalifarum*), a compilation of various sources with different authors, which was preserved in an eighth-century Syrian manuscript. According to this source, a Slavic raid reached Crete and other islands in the year 934 of the Seleucid era (AD 623). See Krivov 1995.

⁹⁷ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 1.179; see also II 4.253 and 254. Barišić (1953:86–95) dated the siege to 616, Lemerle (1981:91–4) to 615. See also Ivanova 1995a:191.

Sagudates, Belegezites, Baiunetes, and Berzetes. There are several cross references to most of these tribes in Book II. In all cases, we are left with the impression that they were a familiar presence. The Sclavenes were not just invaders, they were “our Slavic neighbors.” It is hard to believe, therefore, that those tribes were responsible for the devastation of the islands of Thessaly, the Cyclades, of most of Illyricum, and of parts of Asia. Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* contains two other cases of “lists of provinces,” one of which betrays an administrative source.⁹⁸

I suggest therefore that in describing a local event – the attack of the Drugubites, Sagudates, Belegezites, Baiunetes, and Berzetes on Thessalonica – of relatively minor significance, the author of Book II framed it against a broader historical and administrative background, in order to make it appear as of greater importance. When all the other provinces and cities were falling, Thessalonica alone, under the protection of St Demetrius, was capable of resistance. As in 586, the siege itself did not last more than a week. Unlike the siege of 586, however, the Sclavenes did not give up their idea of establishing themselves in Thessalonica after its conquest. More important, they now called upon the qagan for assistance. They offered rich presents and promised him much more provided that he would help them capture the city. These Sclavenes were certainly not subjects of the qagan. They were negotiating an alliance with the Avars as equals. That other Sclavenes, however, were still obeying the orders of the qagan is shown by the composition of the army the qagan eventually sent to Thessalonica.⁹⁹

The siege of Thessalonica was definitely not an event of major importance. Even the author of Book II was aware that nobody, not even the emperor, knew about it. We are not told who that emperor was, but he must have been Heraclius, for the siege occurred not long after the one described in the first homily of Book II. Indeed, two years after being offered the alliance of the Sclavene tribes who had failed in capturing Thessalonica, the qagan marched against the city. The siege must have taken place in 617 or 618, at the latest.¹⁰⁰

Eight years later, the army of the qagan was bent on capturing yet

⁹⁸ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 1.180. Multitude of tribes: II 1.179 (πληθος ἄπειρον). Sclavene as “our neighbors”: II 3.219 and 222, II 4.231. See also Speck 1993:354. Location of the various tribes: Lemerle 1981:89–90. Lists of provinces: II 2.197 and II 5.284. At II 5.284, the author lists provinces believed to be parts of the Illyrian prefecture. There are two Pannoniae and two Daciae. According to Book II, Illyricum included Rhodope, which in fact belonged to the Thracian prefecture. The author of Book II knows that Sirmium used to be the capital city of Pannonia (πάσαι μητρόπολεις). He had only an approximate knowledge of the sixth-century administrative geography of the Balkans (Beshevliev 1970a:287–8). This, however, may simply indicate that in the late 600s, when Book II was written, that administrative configuration was already history.

⁹⁹ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2.197–8. The Sclavenes attacked on the fourth day (II 1.185) and the decisive confrontation took place that same day.

¹⁰⁰ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2.210, II 2.198. See Lemerle 1981:99–100; Pohl 1988:242–3.

another city. A combined attack of Persian and Avar forces was directed against Constantinople. The Sclavenes appear as allies of the qagan. They formed the majority of troops besieging the city in the summer months of 626. Byzantine ships intercepted their fleet of canoes on August 4. However, Avar troops under the direct command of the qagan also included large numbers of Sclavenes, who were most likely his subjects. They too had canoes, which they used to attack Blachernae. The Sclavene troops included women. Their bodies were found in the Golden Horn waters after the battle. The Sclavenes attacking Blachernae must have been subjects of the qagan, for those escaping the massacre swam back across the straits to the bank where the qagan was positioned, only to be slain at his injunction. As the Sclavene squads abandoned the battlefield one after another, the defeat turned into a general retreat. Conflicts between Avars and Sclavenes seem to have followed the siege, as suggested by George of Pisidia.¹⁰¹

Avar power suffered considerably from this humiliating setback. According to Fredegar, Samo, the Frankish merchant elected king of “those Slavs who were known as Wends,” proved his *utilitas* in battle against the Avars, bringing victory after victory to his subjects. Fredegar claims that Samo went to the Slavs “in the fortieth year of Chlothar’s reign” (623/4) and that he ruled them for thirty-five years. Some took this at face value and concluded that the rebellion of the Wends against the Avars must have taken place before the siege of Constantinople. Others raised doubts about Fredegar’s chronology and claimed that the episode of Samo postdated the humiliating defeat of the qagan under the walls of Constantinople. Even if Samo came to power in 623/4, he must have taken advantage of this defeat for consolidating his power. In 631 or 632, Samo crushed an army led by the Frankish king Dagobert. His victory encouraged a certain Dervanus, *dux gente Sorbiorum que ex genere Sclavinorum*, to declare his independence from the Franks. Ten years later, in 641, Samo was still powerful enough for Radulf, the duke of Thuringia, to seek his alliance.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum* 197–201. Sclavene allies of the Avars: Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, p. 58 (εις συμμαχίαν) and *Chronicon Paschale*, p. 173. See also Litavrin 1995d:236; Ivanov 1995c:80. First day of the siege: *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. 173–4; Barišić 1954:380; Waldmüller 1976:281. See also Howard-Johnston 1995. Fleet of canoes: *Chronicon Paschale*, p. 183. For canoes brought from the Danube, see *Chronicon Paschale*, p. 174; Theodore Syncellus, *De Obsidione Avarica Constantinopolis* vi 22; Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, p. 58; George the Pisidian, *Bellum Avaricum* 409–12. For Sclavene women, see Nicephorus, *Breviarium*, p. 60. Retreat and post-siege conflicts between Avars and Sclavenes: *Chronicon Paschale*, pp. 178–9; George of Pisidia, *Restitutio Crucis* 78–81.

¹⁰² Fredegar IV 48, 68, and 87. For Fredegar’s chronology, see Szádeczky-Kardoss 1991:181; Gardiner 1978; Kusternig 1982; Pohl 1988:257. According to Fredegar, a “violent quarrel in the Pannonian kingdom of the Avars or Huns” broke during Dagobert’s ninth regnal year (631/2: IV 72; see Pohl 1988:269). By that time, a duke named Walluc ruled over a “Wendish March” (IV 72; Fritze 1994:279).

Almost nothing is known about contemporary developments in the Balkans. According to the thirteenth-century *History of Split* by Thomas the Archdeacon, a certain Abbot Martin came in 641 to Dalmatia on a papal mission to redeem Christians taken captive by the Slavs. Thomas's account is based on earlier sources, none of which survives. As a consequence, it is difficult to assess the value of this information. Thomas also claims that in the mid-600s, fearing the Slavic raids, the citizens of Salona decided to move the relics of St Anastasius to Split. This may be interpreted as a decision to abandon Salona, but without any contemporary evidence, Thomas' account should be treated with great caution.¹⁰³

Dalmatian Slavs may have been responsible for the raid of c. 642 into the duchy of Benevento, for Paul the Deacon describes them as having sailed across the sea. According to Paul, when Raduald, the duke of Benevento, attempted to revenge the death of Aio at the hands of the invading Slavs, he "talked familiarly with these Slavs in their own language, and when in this way he had lulled them into greater indolence for war, he fell upon them and killed almost all of them." Raduald was the son of Gisulf and had previously been duke of Forum Iulii, an area in which Slavs were a familiar presence at that time. In the 610s or the early 620s, two other sons of Gisulf, Taso and Cacco, who succeeded their father as dukes of Friuli, were ruling over *Sclavorum regionem quae Zellia appellatur*. At some point after 663, some 5,000 raided the duchy of Friuli. At about the same time, Arnefrit, the son of the Friulan duke Lupus, fled *ad Sclavorum gentem in Carnuntum, quod corrupte vocitant Carantanum*. This has rightly been viewed as the first reference to the *Carantani*, later to emerge as a strong polity under the dynasty of *dux Boruth*.¹⁰⁴

Similar polities seem to have developed in the eastern Balkans. Theophanes mentions Emperor Constans II's campaign of 656/7 against *Sklavinia* (Σκλαυινία), most likely located in the hinterland of Constantinople. Such polities seem to have represented a serious threat, judging from the fact that this successful campaign, the first since 602, was accompanied by the transfer of large numbers of Slavene prisoners to Asia Minor. The Georgian continuation of John Moschus'

¹⁰³ Thomas the Archdeacon, *Historia Salonitana*, pp. 29 and 34. See Katić 1950:1:101-2; Fine 1983:250. A late date for the abandonment of Salona has been recently corroborated by numismatic evidence. See Marović 1984.

¹⁰⁴ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV 44, 39, and 38, v 23 and 22. For the raid of 642, see also *Chronica S. Benedicti Casinensis*, ed. G. Pertz, *MGH SS* 3:200; Waldmüller 1976:347; Weithmann 1978:96. Dalmatian origin of the raid: Guillou 1973:13; Borodin 1983:57. Taso and Cacco: Hauptmann 1915:252-3; Fritze 1994:90 and 110. *Sclavorum regio Zellia*: Mal 1939:22; Bertels 1987:99-103. *Carantani* and *dux Boruth*: *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* c. 4-5; Bertels 1987:109; Wolfram 1987:342.

Leimonarion, preserved in a ninth-century manuscript, mentions a number of Slavic villages on the western coast. Furthermore, when in 663/4 the Muslim general 'Abd al-Rahman b. Khalid b. al Walid led a particularly successful raid against Byzantium, 5,000 Slavene soldiers deserted from the Byzantine army and later settled in the region of Apameia, in Syria.¹⁰⁵

Theophanes, our major source for this period, may have used at this point a translation of an eastern, Syrian chronicle. This may explain his emphasis on eastern developments, including those involving Slavs. There is comparatively little information on the interior of the Balkans. Both Nicephorus and Theophanes apparently employed the same source when reporting the victory of Asparuch's Bulgars over the imperial troops in 681 (678/9 by Theophanes). The Bulgars crossed the Danube and subdued the Slavic tribes in the area of "Varna, as it is called, near Odyssos and the inland territory that is there." The names of these tribes are to be found only in Theophanes. According to him, the Bulgars resettled the Severeis along their new frontier with the Empire, near the mountain pass Veregava (most likely, the Rish pass). They also moved "the so-called Seven Tribes" (αἱ λεγόμεναι ἑπτὰ γενεαί) on their southern and western frontier, against the Avars.¹⁰⁶

The best-documented case of Slavic tribes established in the Balkans, however, is that of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*. The fourth miracle is an extremely valuable source for the seventh-century Balkan Slavs and without this text there would be very little to say. To the unknown author of Book II the Slavs were a familiar presence, "our Slavic neighbors." He described what might have been, in Theophanes' words, a powerful *Sklavinia*, that of the Rynchines led by "king"

¹⁰⁵ Theophanes, p. 347; Mango 1997:484. See Graebner 1978:44. For *Sklavinia*, see Litavrin 1984. At the battle of Sebastopolis (692), 20,000 Slavs deserted to the Arabs (Theophanes, p. 366; Mango 1997:511). They formed the majority of Muhammad b. Marwan's troops raiding deep into Byzantine territory in 693/4 (Theophanes, p. 367; Mango 1997:513). By that time, the Slavens must have been a presence familiar enough for the Muslim poet al-Ahtal (c. 640-710) to use the golden-haired Slavs as a metaphor for danger. See Kalinina 1995. Georgian continuation of the *Leimonarion*: Ivanov 1995c. For the Slavs of 663/4, see Theophanes, p. 348; Mango 1997:487; Graebner 1975:41.

¹⁰⁶ Theophanes, p. 359 (Mango 1997:499); Nicephorus, p. 91. See Whitby 1982a:15; Mango 1990:15; Litavrin 1995a:25. For the location of the Veregava pass, see Soustal 1991:75 and *sub voce*. The Severeis are again mentioned by Theophanes in relation to their chief, Sklavunos, captured by Constantine V's troops on the eve of his 763/4 campaign against Bulgaria (Mango 1997:603). Cyril Mango's infelicitous translation, "(they settled) the Severeis . . . and the remaining six tribes, which were tributary to them" (Mango 1997:499) stands for τούς μὲν Σέβερεις κατέκτισαν . . . , τὰς ὑπολοίπους ἑπτὰ γενεὰς ὑπὸ πάκτον ὄντας. Mango failed to understand that the Severeis and the Seven Tribes were two separate entities and that the Seven Tribes were not tributary to the Severeis, but, most likely, to the Byzantine emperor. For the Seven Tribes, see also Tăpkova-Zaimova and Voinov 1965:38; Beshevliev 1967a:54; Cankova-Petkova 1968:157 and 1970:221-2; Koder 1978:316; Pohl 1988:277; Soustal 1991:75.

Perbundos. Other groups of Sclavenes existed in the vicinity of Thessalonica. There were Sclavenes living in the Strymon valley, while the Sagudates concluded an alliance with the Rynchines against the Empire in general, and Thessalonica in particular, as soon as they learned that the king of the Rynchines had been arrested and executed. Later on, a third tribe, the Drugubites, joined the alliance. The ensuing siege of the city is to be dated to July 25, 677, because of a clear reference to "July 25 of the fifth indiction." The Sclavenes appear as better organized than in any of the preceding sieges, with an army of special units of archers and warriors armed with slings, spears, shields, and swords. In a long story most likely derived from an oral account, the author of Book II mentions a Sclavene craftsman building a siege machine. He also mentions Sclavene tribes living at a considerable distance and not taking part in the Sclavene alliance against Thessalonica. The Belegezites, who lived near Thebes and Demetrias, even supplied the besieged city with grain.¹⁰⁷ The author of Book II also refers to Slavic pirates raiding as close to Constantinople as the island of Proconnesus. The emperor (whose name is not given) eventually decided to send an army to Thrace and to the "land on the opposite side," against the Strymonian Slavs. Since the siege can be dated to 677, and we are specifically told that prior to the siege the emperor was preparing for war against the Arabs, this expedition against the *Sklaviniai* of southern Macedonia must have been ordered by Constantine IV. The successful campaign took place in 678, shortly after the failure of the Arab blockade of Constantinople. Ten years later, another expedition led by Justinian II against the *Sklaviniai* reached Thessalonica, where the presence of the emperor was commemorated in inscriptions. According to Theophanes, Justinian had directed his campaign against both Bulgaria and the *Sklaviniai*. This may indicate that the *Sklaviniai* of 688/9 were clients of the Bulgar qagan. The same may be true for the Severeis and the Seven Tribes, the Slavic groups resettled by Bulgars in 681. Theophanes suggests that the Seven Tribes had until then been clients of the Byzantine emperor. In the late 600s, judging from the existing evidence, the creation of a Bulgar qaganate south of the Danube drastically altered the balance of power in the northern Balkans, while driving *Sklaviniai* into the orbit of the new state.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 3.219, 3.222, 4.231, 4.242, 4.255, 4.255, 4.262, 4.271–6. Supplies of grain from the Belegezites: II 4.254 and 268. The Drugubites supplied food to Kuver and his people (II 5. 289).

¹⁰⁸ *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 4.277, 4.278, 4.232. Date of Constantine IV's campaign: Lemerle 1981:131–3. Justinian II's campaign: Theophanes, p. 364; Mango 1997:508. Thessalonican inscription: Hattersley-Smith 1988:310. Justinian II's route: Grigoriou-Ioannidou 1982; Karayannopoulos 1989:14–15. Severeis as clients of the Byzantine emperor: Theophanes, p. 359 (ὑπὸ πάντων ὄντας); Voinov 1956; Avenarius 1976:301–2; Waldmüller 1976:403–4; Bonev 1985:67. *Contra*: Beshevliev 1967a:57.

CONCLUSION

I began this chapter with the statement that the nature of the Slavic settlement remains obscure to many modern historians. Several conclusions follow from the preceding discussion, but the most important is that, whether or not followed by actual settlement, there is no "infiltration" and no *obscure progression*. The evidence of written sources is quite explicit about this.

Could then "migration" be an appropriate term? Modern studies have shown that migration is a structured aspect of human behavior, involving a more or less permanent change of residence. Historians, however, generally treat migration as chaotic and inherently not explicable through general principles. Recent formulations of migration as a structured behavior have established that migrations are performed by defined sub-groups (often kin-recruited) with specific goals, targeted on known destinations and likely to use familiar routes. Most migratory streams develop a counterstream moving back to the migrants' place of origin.¹⁰⁹ The problem with applying this concept of migration to the sixth- and seventh-century Slavs is that there is no pattern of an unique, continuous, and sudden invasion. Moreover, until the siege of Thessalonica during Heraclius' early regnal years, there is no evidence at all for outward migration, in the sense of a permanent change of residence. Almost all raids reported by Procopius in the mid-sixth century were followed by a return to the regions north of the Danube frontier. At times, the Sclavene warriors may have spent the winter on Roman territory, as in 550/1. However, Menander the Guardsman makes it clear that the wealth acquired during Sclavene raids was usually carried back home, across the Danube.

John of Ephesus, on the other hand, claims that in 584, after four years of raiding, the Sclavenes were still on Roman territory. They had become "rich and possessed gold and silver, herds of horses and a lot of weapons, and learned to make war better than the Romans." This, however, could hardly be interpreted as an indication of Slavic settlement. What John had in mind were warriors, not migrant farmers. Michael the Syrian, in a passage most likely taken from John, describes a Sclavene leader who took *with him* the *ciborium* of a church in Corinth, not a chief establishing himself in the conquered city. The only evidence for such a decision is that of the Sclavene tribes besieging Thessalonica in the early years of Heraclius' reign. They had brought their families with them, for they intended to establish themselves in the city following its conquest. This also indicates that they were not coming from afar, for the prisoners they

¹⁰⁹ Lee 1966; Anthony 1990; Gmelch 1980.

had taken after the siege could return to Thessalonica carrying the booty taken by the Sclavenes from the inhabitants of the city. Moreover, some of the tribes mentioned in the second homily of Book II are described in the fourth homily as living in the immediate vicinity of the city. When did they settle there? Paul Lemerle argued that in the 610s a Slavic settlement around Thessalonica must have been a relatively recent phenomenon. How recent, however, is impossible to tell. The evidence regarding the mid-600s and the second half of that century suggests that the Sclavenes were by then already established at a short distance from the eastern frontier of the Lombard kingdom and from Constantinople. In 681, as the Bulgars moved south of the Danube, there were already Slavic groups in the eastern Balkans and around Thessalonica. Judging from the existing evidence, therefore, a true migration could have taken place only during a relatively short period of time, namely not long after Heraclius' accession to power.¹¹⁰ To Theophylact Simocatta, writing about Maurice's reign on the basis of a late sixth- or early seventh-century source (the *Feldzugsjournal*), *Sklavinia* was still located north of the Danube frontier. In the mid-600s, the *Sklaviniai* moved to the outskirts of Constantinople and Thessalonica.

The survey of Slavic raiding activity during the sixth and the early seventh century points to another important conclusion. There seems to be a certain raiding pattern (Table 4). Independent Sclavene raids began in the 540s, with a long interruption after 551/2. They resumed in the late 570s and seem to have come to an end only after Maurice's campaigns north of the Danube. A new phase opened with massive raids, both on land and on sea, during the early years of Heraclius' reign. One can hardly fail to notice that this pattern coincides with major engagements of Roman armies on other fronts: in Italy, in the 540s and 550s, as well as in Persia and on the eastern front in the 570s, the 580s, and the 610s. It has indeed been shown that the pattern of information-movement across the Danube frontier proves that northern peoples often seem to have known when sectors of the Empire's defence were weakened as a result of Roman problems elsewhere. The Sclavenes of 550, who were bent on capturing Thessalonica, quickly changed their plans as soon as they learned that Germanus was in Serdica. The figures advanced by Menander the Guardsman and Archbishop John of Thessalonica for the

¹¹⁰ John of Ephesus VI 25; *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2.196. See Lemerle 1981:90. No evidence exists, however, that the Sclavenes established either on the frontier of the Lombard kingdom or near Constantinople came from regions located north of the Danube. *Sklavinia* north of the Danube: Theophylact Simocatta VIII 5.10. Whitby's unfortunate translation ("Peter prepared to move camp against the Slavene horde") stands for Πέτρος κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πλεθρὺς στρατοπεδεύεσθαι παρεσκεύαζεν. See also Litavrin 1984:196.

Sclavene raids of the 580s were no doubt exaggerations. They suggest the efforts of these authors to explain why barbarians achieved success against the Empire in spite of being numerically and organizationally inferior to the Romans. In the 580s and the late 590s, the Sclavenes seem to have known remarkably well where to strike, in order to avoid major confrontations with Roman armies, and when to attack, in order to take advantage of the absence of troops.¹¹¹

I would stress, however, another important conclusion following from the preceding discussion. None of the Sclavene raids in the 540s or early 550s was organized under the leadership of a chief. Procopius could distinguish "armies" from "throngs," but ignored any names of Sclavene chiefs or leaders. He claimed that the Sclavenes and the Antes "were not ruled by one man, but they [had] lived from old under a democracy, and consequently everything which involved their welfare, whether for good or for ill, was referred to the people." As the story of "phoney Chilbudius" suggests, the Antes did not even have a name for the Roman official, who was supposed to guide them into some sophisticated organization. They just called him "Chilbudius."¹¹²

However, writing as he did in c. 560, Pseudo-Caesarus knew that, though living without the rule of anyone, the Sclavenes often killed their leaders "sometimes at feasts, sometimes on travels." At the turn of the century, the picture radically changed, as the author of the *Strategikon* now recommended that Roman officers win over some of the Sclavene chiefs by persuasion or gifts, while attacking others, "so that their common hostility will not make them united or bring them together under one ruler." As soon as the Sclavene raids resumed in the late 570s, we learn of many Sclavene leaders, apparently different in status from each other. Names such as Dauritas, Ardagastus, Musocius, and Peiragastus are in sharp contrast to the lack of any chief-names in Procopius' work. Other names, such as Chatzon, Samo, Dervanus, Walluc, or Perbundos, appear in seventh-century sources. Is the absence of names in Procopius' work just an illustration of his idea of "Slavic democracy" or does this reflect some aspect of Slavic society? This question is most difficult to answer. It is hard to understand, however, why Procopius should invent the "Slavic democracy" if nothing justified the use of this concept for contemporary Slavic society. It is interesting to

¹¹¹ Menander the Guardsman, fr. 20,2; *Miracles of St Demetrius* I 13.117. For the pattern of information-movement, see Lee 1993:141-2.

¹¹² Procopius, *Wars* VII 14.22. See Benedicty 1963:46 and 1965:53; Evans 1989:63. There are many names of barbarian leaders in Procopius' *Wars*: Datios, Aordos, and Suartua, kings of the Herules (V 15.29 and 33); Torisind, king of the Gepids (VII 18.3); Auduin, king of the Lombards (VI 34.5); and Chinialon, the Cutrigur chief (VII 18.15).

Table 4 *Raiding activity in the Balkans*

Date	Group	Target	Source
493	Bulgars	Thrace	Paul the Deacon
499	Bulgars	Europe	Marcellinus Comes, Jordanes
502	Bulgars	Thrace, Illyricum	Marcellinus Comes, Theophanes
504/5	Ostrogoths	Moesia Superior	Jordanes, Procopius, Ennodius, Cassiodorus
505	Gepids (Mundo)	Dacia Mediterranea	Jordanes, Ennodius, Marcellinus Comes
518	Antes	Balkans	Procopius
519	Bulgars	Illyricum	Zonaras
526/7	Ostrogoths	Dacia Mediterranea	Procopius, Cassiodorus
529/30	Bulgars (Huns)	Thrace	Marcellinus Comes, John Malalas
533-45	Antes	Thrace	Procopius
535	Bulgars	Moesia Inferior	Marcellinus Comes
	Gepids	Moesia Superior	Procopius, John Lydus, Theophanes
539	Bulgars	Scythia Minor, Moesia Inferior, Thrace	John Malalas, Theophanes
540	Huns	Illyricum, Europe, Asia Minor, Thessaly, Achaia	Procopius
544/5	Huns	Illyricum	Procopius
545	Sclavenes	Balkans	Procopius
548	Sclavenes	Epirus Nova	Procopius
549	Sclavenes	Thrace, Illyricum	Procopius
550	Herules, Gepids, Bulgars	Illyricum	Procopius, Jordanes
	Sclavenes	Dacia Mediterranea, Dalmatia	Procopius
551	Cutrigurs	Illyricum, Thrace	Procopius
	Sclavenes	Haemimons, Europe	Procopius
	Sclavenes	Illyricum	Procopius
558	Cutrigurs, Sclavenes ?	Scythia Minor, Moesia Inferior, Achaia, Rhodope, Europe	Agathias, John Malalas, Theophanes
574	Avars	Balkans	Evagrius, Theophanes
578	Sclavenes	Thrace, Greece	Menander the Guardsman, John of Biclar
579	Sclavenes	Illyricum	Menander the Guardsman
579-82	Avars	Moesia Superior	Menander the Guardsman
581	Avars	Thrace, Greece	John of Biclar
581-4	Sclavenes	Greece, Macedonia, Thrace	John of Ephesus, <i>Miracles of St Demetrius</i>
584	Avars	Moesia Superior, Dacia Ripensis, Haemimons	Theophylact Simocatta
	Sclavenes	Thrace, Europe	Theophylact Simocatta
585	Sclavenes	Haemimons	Theophylact Simocatta
585	Avars	Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Inferior, Scythia Minor	Theophylact Simocatta
586	Avars	Scythia Minor, Moesia Inferior, Haemimons, Europe, Thrace, Macedonia, Achaia	Theophylact Simocatta
	Sclavenes	Macedonia	<i>Miracles of St Demetrius</i>
588	Sclavenes	Thrace	Theophylact Simocatta
592	Avars	Europe	Theophylact Simocatta
593	Sclavenes	Moesia Inferior	Theophylact Simocatta
594	Sclavenes	Moesia Inferior	Theophylact Simocatta
595	Avars	Moesia Superior, Dalmatia	Theophylact Simocatta
597	Avars	Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Inferior, Scythia Minor	Theophylact Simocatta
598	Avars	Moesia Inferior, Europe	Theophylact Simocatta
601/2	Avars	Istria	Paul the Deacon
609/10	Avars	Illyricum	John of Nikiu
610/11	Sclavenes , Avars	Istria	Paul the Deacon
610-20	Sclavenes	Thessaly, Greece, Cyclades, Achaia, Epirus, Illyricum, Asia	<i>Miracles of St Demetrius</i>
615	Avars	Dacia Mediterranea	<i>Miracles of St Demetrius</i>
617/18	Avars	Macedonia	<i>Miracles of St Demetrius</i>
618	Avars	Thrace	Theophanes
623	Avars	Europe	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i>
626	Avars, Sclavenes , Bulgars	Europe	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i> , George of Pisidia, Theodore Syncellus, Nicephorus

note that, with the exception of the quasi-legendary King Boz of the Antes, Procopius' contemporary, Jordanes, also ignores any Slavic leaders. I am inclined, therefore, to take Procopius' evidence as a strong *argumentum ex silentio*. Something had radically changed in Slavic society as the Slavic raiding activity resumed in the late 570s. A detailed discussion of this change is to be found in Chapter 7. For the moment, it is important to note that in terms of their social organization, the Sclavenes of the 580s were different from those of the 540s.¹¹³

Finally, there are important changes concerning the very name of the Slavs. Until the first decade of Heraclius' reign, as Sclavene groups settled on Roman territory, all sources – Greek, Latin, or Syriac – spoke exclusively of Sclavenes and/or Antes. The author of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* was the first to introduce tribal names, such as the Drugubites, the Sagudates, the Belegezites, the Berzites, and the Rynchines. Fredegar spoke of Wends and Theophanes of Severeis. The evidence is too strong to be interpreted as mere accident. The author of the *Strategikon*, a direct participant in Maurice's campaigns of the 590s, knew only of Sclavenes and Antes. The campaign diary later used by Theophylact Simocatta, but most likely written at about the same time as the *Strategikon*, also used only 'Sclavenes' and 'Antes.' In this particular case, 'Sclavenes' was an umbrella-term for various groups living beyond the frontier, in *Sklavinia*. As soon as *Sklaviniai* moved south of the Danube, the precise affiliation to any particular "tribe" became a key issue. Indeed, some "tribes" are described as hostile and bent on conquering Thessalonica, while others appear as friendly, willingly supplying food to the besieged city. The same may be true for Fredegar's Wends. As they successfully fought the Avars and elected a king for themselves, the Sclavenes, in Fredegar's eyes, became "different" and required a new name, 'Wends.' A similar conclusion follows from Theophanes' account. According to him, after crossing the Danube in 681, the Bulgars did not encounter an undifferentiated mass of 'Slavs,' but (at least) two groups, the Severeis and the Seven Tribes. The newcomers approached and treated them as two separate entities.

What all this suggests, in my opinion, is that the name 'Sclavene' was a purely Byzantine construct, designed to make sense of a complicated configuration of *ethnies* on the other side of the northern frontier of the

¹¹³ For the independent (ἀναγεμόνεις) Sclavenes killing their leaders, see Riedinger 1969:302. Sclavene chiefs united under one ruler: *Strategikon* XI 4.30 (μοναρχία). For Boz, see Jordanes, *Getica* 247. Paul the Deacon also avoids mentioning any Sclavene leaders, though at the time he wrote the *History of the Lombards*, the Carantani were already organized as a polity under the "dynasty" of dux Boruth. The *Life of St Hrodbert*, bishop of Salzburg, indicates that the Carantani had a rex not long after Arnefrit, the son of the Friulan duke Lupus, fled *ad Sclavonum gentem in Carnuntum, quod corrupte vocitant Carantanum* (*Historia Langobardorum* v 22; *Vita Hrodberti*, p. 159).

Empire. Byzantine criteria for classifying ethnic groups were substantially different from ours. In spite of their common language, "an utterly barbarous tongue," the Sclavenes and the Antes were often at war with each other. On the other hand, the author of the *Strategikon* knew that there was more than one Sclavene king, and that Sclavene "kingdoms" were always at odds with one another. Despite obvious differences in status, the name 'Slavs' applies to both those attacking Constantinople in 626 as allies of the Avars and those who were the subjects of the qagan. It might be that 'Sclavene' was initially the self-designation of a particular ethnic group. In its most strictly defined sense, however, the "Sclavene ethnicity" is a Byzantine invention.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Procopius, *Wars* VII 14.26; *Strategikon* XI 4.30. For the name 'Sclavene,' see Pekkanen 1971; Schelesniker 1973:11; Schramm 1995:165.