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HUNGARY AND THE FALL OF EASTERN EUROPE 1000-1568



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Dedication

For Geza Fehervari, who set me on this road.

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Hungary and the fall of Eastern Europe 1000-1568

Introduction

The medieval history of south-eastern Europe is not widely studied in the West. The area is too often seen simply as a region crossed by Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land, periodically invaded by Asiatic hordes, and then suddenly collapsing before the Ottoman Turks. Yet a glance at an historical atlas shows the presence of a vast realm which endured throughout the Middle Ages—the Kingdom of Hungary, covering a territory as large as, and occasionally greater than, France. Then there was the even more extensive and enduring Byzantine Empire. Byzantine history, better known perhaps than that of Hungary and the lesser Balkan states, is often over-simplified. From disastrous defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert in 1071 to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 is almost four centuries, during which time an increasingly Greek Byzantium recovered; was then virtually obliterated by fellow Christians in the Fourth Crusade; and recovered once again, to remain a major regional power until finally being destroyed by the Serbs and Ottoman Turks. The Serbians, who are today the dominant nationality in Yugoslavia, won themselves a brief but extensive local empire in the 14th century; while the Bulgarians, though never repeating the glories of their First Empire (7th–10th centuries), established an effective and cultured state. Other players on this confusing Balkan scene included the Albanians; the Wallachians, Moldavians and Transylvanians, who today form the Romanian nation; the Croats and other members of the modern Yugoslav federation; plus various nomad peoples from the Eurasian steppes—not to mention assorted western Europeans from Italy, Spain and elsewhere, all of whom faced the Ottoman Turks at one time or another. How did they organise their armies and fight their wars; and why did they ultimately fail?

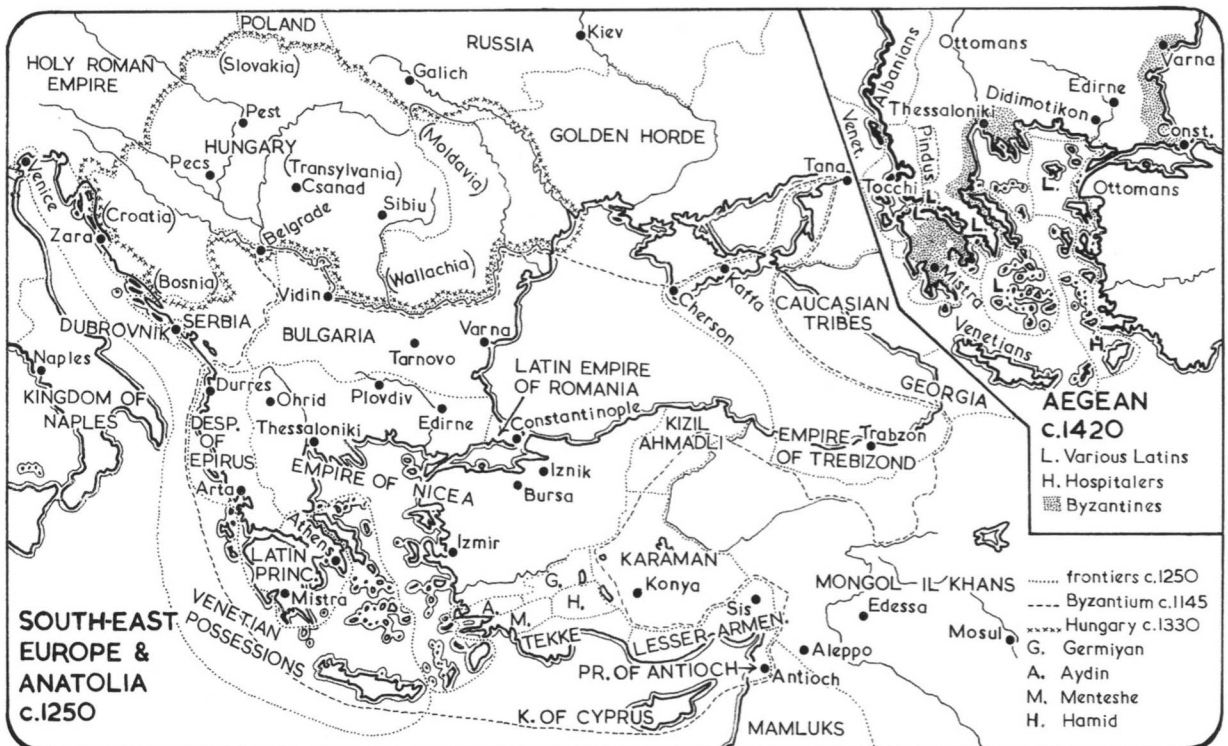


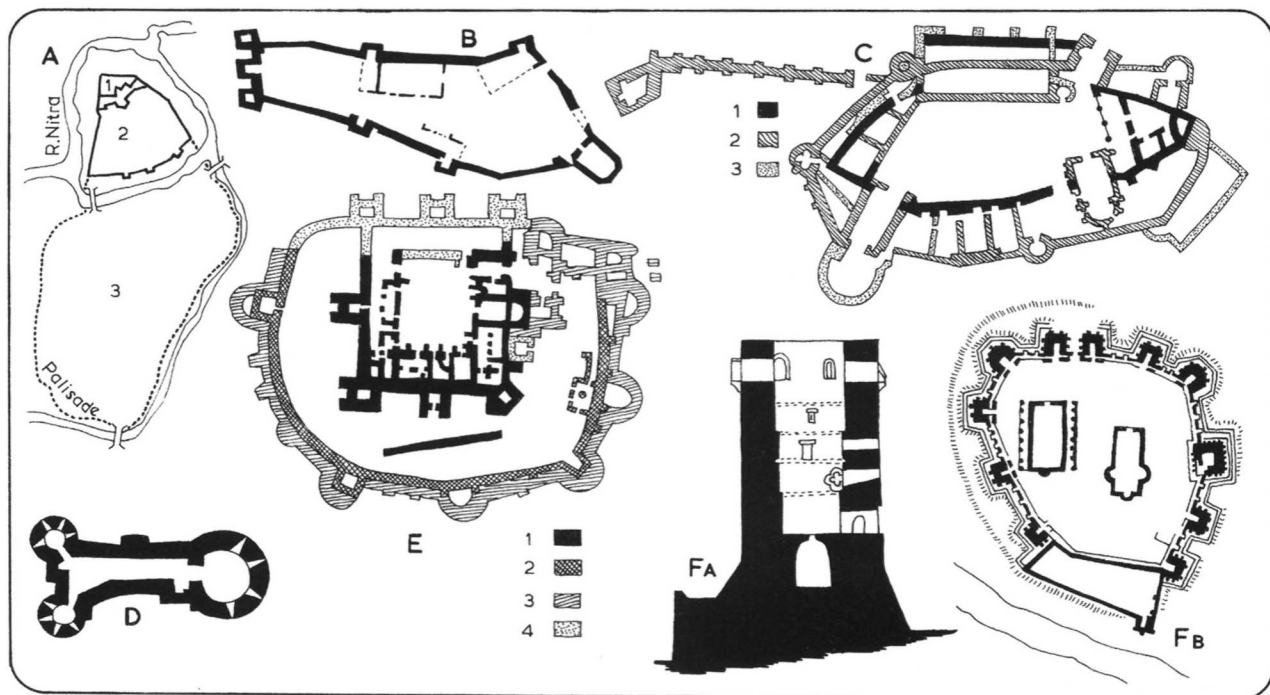
Hungarian bronze aquamanile, 12th C. This superb wine dispenser is in the form of a huntsman carrying a kite-shaped shield, riding with long stirrups, and probably wearing a full mail hauberk. The shape of his helmet suggests a directly riveted Magyar form, while the animal behind his saddle is a clear reference to Islamic Iranian art (see MAA 125 *The Armies of Islam* p.18). Whether such trained hunting cats were ever used in Hungary is doubtful. (Nat. Mus., Budapest)

Chronology

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1000 | Accession of King Stephan; Hungary officially becomes Christian. |
| 1018 | Fall of First Bulgarian Empire. |
| 1071 | Battle of Manzikert: defeat of Byzantium followed by loss of Anatolia. |

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|----------------|--|----------------|---|
| 1081 | Alexius I Emperor of Byzantium, starts Comnenid dynasty. | 1261 | Palaeologues retake Constantinople from 'Latin Empire'. |
| 1096-97 | First Crusade traverses Hungary & Byzantium. | 1307 | Beginning of Angevin dynasty in Hungary. |
| 1102 | Unification of Hungary & Croatia. | 1330 | Battle of Kustendil: Serbia defeats Bulgaria. Battle of Posada: Wallachia wins independence from Hungary. |
| 1169 | Unification & foundation of Serbian state. | 1343-52 | Serbia conquers most of Byzantine Greece. |
| 1176 | Battle of Myriocephalon: defeat of Byzantium by Seljuks of Rum. | 1354 | Ottomans capture first territory in Europe. |
| 1185 | Massacre of Westerners in Byzantium; fall of Comnenids & start of Angelid dynasty. | 1359 | Traditional date of <i>descalecat</i> : independence of Moldavia from Hungary. |
| 1186 | Vlach-Bulgar revolt & foundation of Second Bulgarian Empire. | 1371 | Battle of Cirmen: Balkan coalition defeated by Ottomans; beginning of fragmentation of Bulgaria. |
| 1204 | Fourth Crusade captures Constantinople; foundation of 'Latin Empire'. | 1389 | First battle of Kossovo: most of Serbia accepts Ottoman suzerainty. |
| 1206 | Re-establishment of Byzantine 'Empire' under Laskarids at Nicea. | 1396 | Battle of Nicopolis: Crusaders & Hungarians defeated by Ottomans. |
| 1237 | Mongols attack Cumans in Ukraine, some Cumans flee into Hungary. | 1417 | Wallachia accepts Ottoman suzerainty. |
| 1241-42 | Mongols invade Hungary. | 1444 | Battle of Varna: Hungarians defeated by Ottomans. |
| 1259 | Michael Palaeologus crowned co-ruler with Laskarid Emperor at Nicea. (Palaeologues sole Imperial dynasty from 1261.) | 1453 | Ottomans capture Constantinople. |
| | | 1456 | Defence of Belgrave: Hungarians |





A = Fortified Slovakian city of Nitra, 11th C (after Menci): 1—Bishop's Palace; 2—Upper City; 3—suburb. *B* = fortified bishop's palace of Maglic showing western influence, early 14th C Bosnia (after Pribakovic). *C* = Hunedoara Castle, Transylvania: 1—14th C; 2—additions by Janos Hunyadi; 3—late 15th C & later. *D* = Cetatii Arges castle, Wallachia, 14th C. *E* = Scaun Citadel, Suceava, Moldavia; 1—Byzantine style castle of Princes Peter & Alexander 1375–1432; 2—wall of

Stephan the Great (1st phase); 3—wall of Stephan (2nd phase), showing increased threat from gunpowder artillery; 4—collapsed defences. *Fa* = section through tower, early 15th C fortified monastery of Resava (Manasija), Serbia (after Nenadovic). *Fb* = early 15th C fortified monastery of Resava (Manasija) built in Byzantine-early Ottoman manner with high walls and rectangular towers, Serbia (after Milan).

defeat Ottomans.

- 1470** Stephan the Great of Moldavia throws off Ottoman suzerainty.
- 1492** Moldavia again accepts Ottoman suzerainty.
- 1526** Battle of Mohács: Hungary defeated by Ottomans.
- 1527** Croatia accepts Austrian-Hapsburg rule.
- 1552** Transylvania separate under Ottoman suzerainty.
- 1568** Treaty of Adrianople: Ottomans & Hapsburgs agree partition of Hungary.

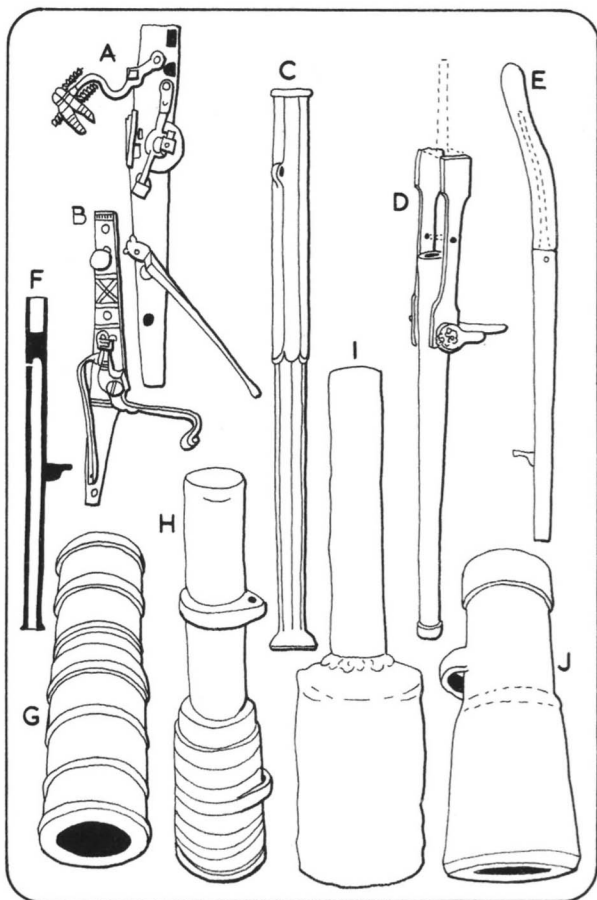
Hungary

Out of the shadows

The medieval Kingdom of Hungary had much in common with an empire. The Hungarians them-

selves, or Magyars, were probably a minority inhabiting the central plains while the surrounding mountains were inhabited by Slavs and Vlachs. Even the origins of the Magyars are shrouded in mystery.

Contemporary chroniclers regarded the Magyars, who conquered the area in the late 9th century, as Turks; but by the 11th century they were clearly speaking a Finno-Ugrian tongue—Hungarian. A recent theory suggests two conquests in which a Finno-Ugrian people accompanied an earlier invasion by Turkic Onogurs (related to the Bulgars and Huns) after the powerful Avar state had been destroyed by Charlemagne. The Turkic Magyars who then arrived at the end of the 9th century became a small ruling élite who soon adopted the language of the settled Finno-Ugrians. Whether or not this theory is correct, the conquering Magyars at first had strong cultural links with Iran and Turkestan, these being reflected in arms, armour and styles of combat. The nomadic tribal structure of the Magyars quickly disap-



A = wheel-lock from north-west Hungary, c.1540 (Nat. Mus. inv. S.176, Budapest). *B* = matchlock from Transylvania, early 15th C (Brukenthal Mus., Sibiu). *C* = bronze handgun, 15th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *D* = breech-loading iron cannon (breech chamber missing), late 15th-early 16th C (Milit. Mus. inv. 129/135, Budapest). *E* = reconstruction of handgun from Smederova showing wooden grip, 15th C (Milit. Mus., Belgrade). *F* = section of handgun from Smederova, 15th C (Milit. Mus. inv. II 65/1, Belgrade). *G* = bronze cannon of possible Serbian origin, late 14th C (Karaman Mus., Turkey). *H* = iron bombard, late 14th-15th C (Milit. Mus., Budapest). *I* = iron bombard from Kupres, 1380-1400 (Nat. Mus., Sarajevo). *J* = bronze bombard from Giurgiu island, probably Hungarian late 14th C (Cent. Milit. Mus., Bucharest).

the Magyar state, whereas most other kingdoms of nomad origin simply withered away.

In the year 1000—on Christmas Day, according to legend—Stephan was crowned as the first king of Hungary (previous rulers having been mere princes), while the country officially became Christian. Under Stephan's rule Hungary defeated two German invasions, helped Byzantium extinguish the First Bulgarian Empire, and extended its borders to the Carpathian Mountains. Expansion to the west had, of course, been blocked at the battle of Lechfeld. Feudalisation gathered momentum; but throughout the 11th century the Magyars remained a warlike, and in some cases nomadic people while the few towns were inhabited by Slavs and German settlers. There was also a steady move towards western European equipment, but not, as yet, tactics. This was, however, more noticeable in the Slav north-west—where Hungary faced threats from Germany, Bohemia and Poland—than elsewhere. Non-Magyars provided King Stephan with his administration, but the army which defeated a German invasion of 1030 was completely Hungarian. This and a further invasion in 1052 were both halted by 'scorched earth' tactics and harassment by cavalry, particularly at night.

Hungary also had to face invasion from the eastern steppes, by Peceneg nomads following in the footsteps of the Magyars themselves. However, the balance of power between nomad and settled state had now shifted, and Hungary was able to defeat these invaders. They were not driven out or exterminated: instead, Hungarian monarchs adopted Byzantium's policy of settling Turkish nomads in various frontier or sensitive regions where they became effective troops personally loyal to the king. The Pecenegs retained a separate identity for two hundred years. Later in the 11th century Kipchak or Cuman tribes similarly invaded, and were similarly settled.

While successfully resisting invasion, Hungary also grew by taking over the Kingdom of Croatia, or at least incorporating it on terms of near equality. This gave Hungary an Adriatic coastline, and almost inevitably led to conflict with Venice. Bosnia was conquered, and the turbulent First Crusade was helped on its way without too much damage. Western as well as Russian mercenaries had been recruited even before Stephan's reign, but now

peared, aggressive warfare into western Europe soon being the preserve of an aristocratic élite (see MAA 150, *The Age of Charlemagne*). Meanwhile, the indigenous Slavs and Finno-Ugrians retained a military rôle in mountainous regions, while existing fortresses were simply taken over by the conquerors.

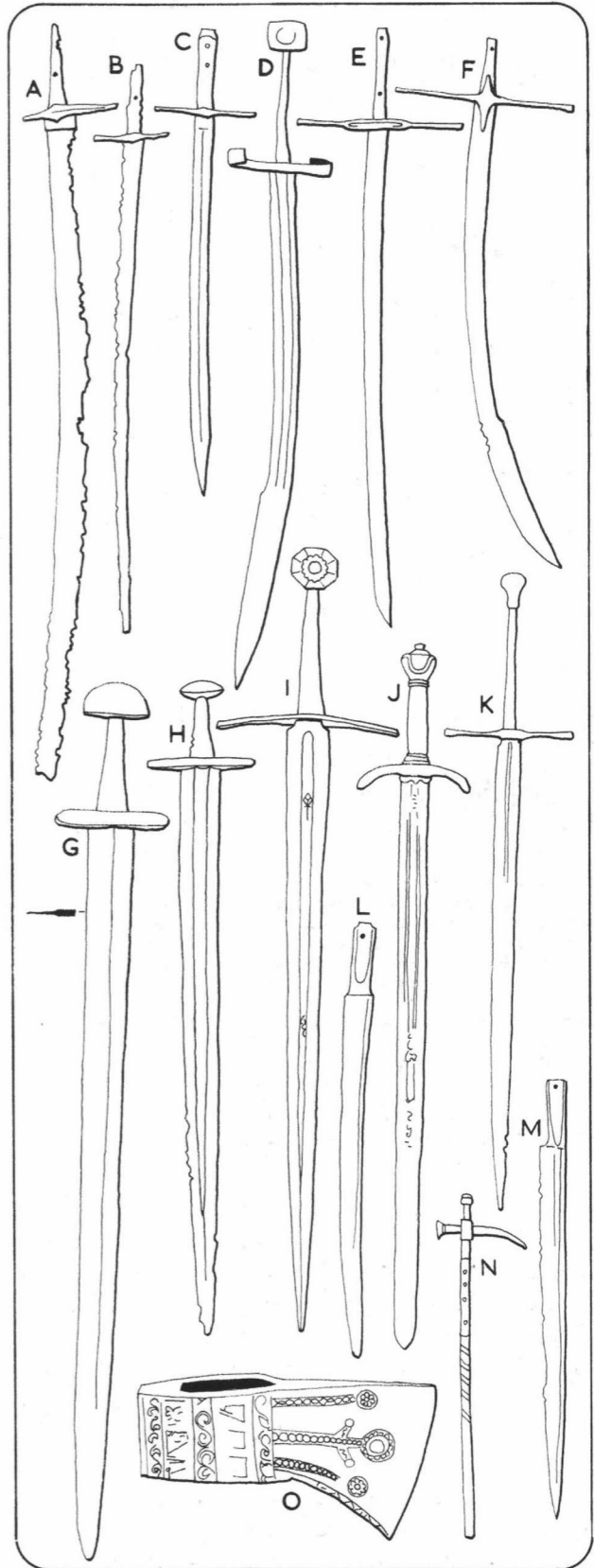
The catastrophic defeat at Lechfeld in 955 paradoxically helped the Hungarian ruler by wiping out much of the turbulent aristocracy, so helping him impose greater central authority. The ruler's success probably guaranteed the survival of

others, Germans and Italians, arrived in the retinue of the king's Bavarian wife. Known as *hospites*, many became part of a new feudal aristocracy. By the early 13th century nine of the total 26 leading Hungarian families were of foreign origin. The bulk of Hungarian warriors nevertheless remained unlike the forces of western Europe until at least the mid-12th century. In 1147 Otto of Freising described their 'ugly' weapons and their 'terrifying' appearance. Many still fought as light cavalry with sabre, spear, bow, and soft armour of felt or leather, and used the harassment tactics of the steppes. Horse-breeding remained the main occupation and much of the population remained semi-nomadic, living in waggons which could serve as field fortifications. The 11th century also saw the last pagan uprisings against Westernisation and feudalism, while a series of earth and wood castles sprang up across the country. Serving as administrative and defensive centres, they were garrisoned by non-aristocratic freemen called *jobbágy*.

The 13th century

Not until the early 13th century were Hungarian military traditions fully Westernised, and even then military obligation remained a personal matter between a man and his lord, not being so tied to land-holding as in the West. The 12th century also saw a significant, though temporary, change in Hungary's relations with Byzantium. Allies until the mid-12th century, they now clashed over the Emperor Manuel's efforts to rebuild Byzantine power in the Balkans. After Byzantium's collapse at the end of that century the two states once more became allies, remaining so until the fall of Byzantium in the 15th century. Nor were Hungary's sights set solely on the south. Part of the Russian Principality of Galich was temporarily conquered by a Hungarian feudal élite, itself under increasing French cultural and military influence.

Hungarian, weapons: *A* = 11th C sabre (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *B* = 12th-13th C Cuman sabre (Milit. Mus., Budapest). *C* = 14th-15th C sabre (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *D* = sabre with Sciacona hilt, late 15th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *E-F* = 16th C sabres (Milit. Mus., Budapest). *G* = single edged sword, Slovakia early 11th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *H* = 11th-12th C sword (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *I* = 13th-14th C sword, Slovakia (Gemer Mus., Rimavská Sobota). *J* = Croatian sword of Bán (governor) of Lendava, 14th C (Mus. of Croatian Hist., Zagreb). *K* = 15th C sword (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *L-M* = *kések* daggers, 15th C (location unknown). *N* = 15th-16th C *csákány* war-hammer (Nat. Mus., Budapest). *O* = inlaid Slovakian war-axe, 14th C? from Zemianske Podhradce (Nat. Mus., Martin).



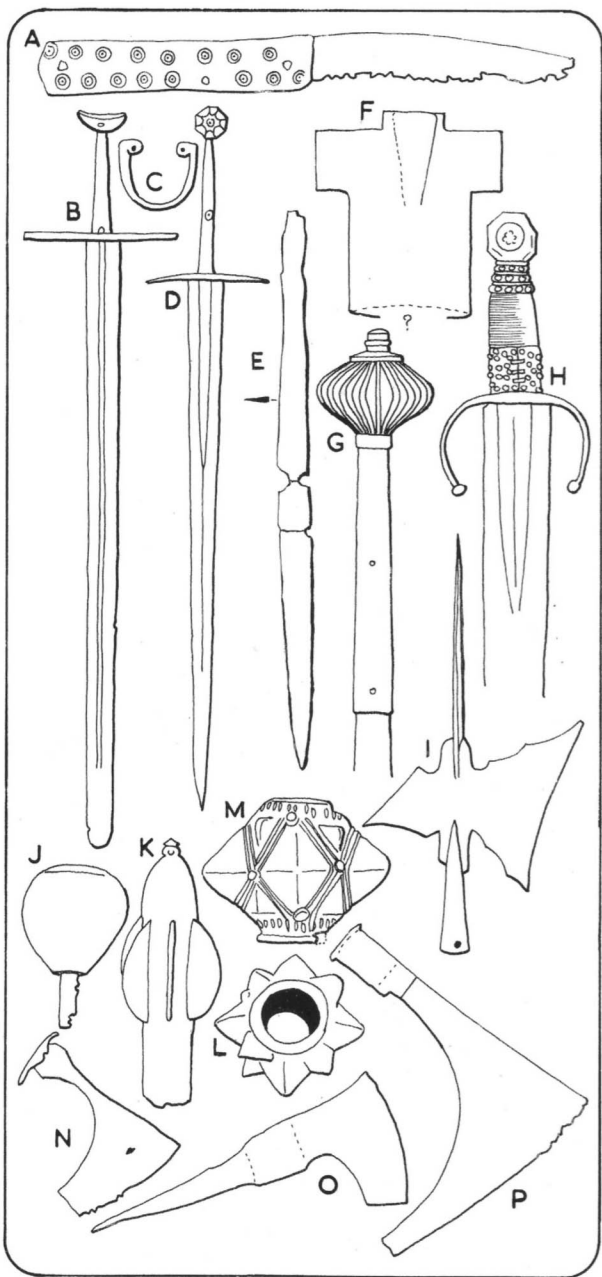
Meanwhile there were many other military influences at work. Balkan Slav mercenaries and vassal troops were recruited throughout the 12th century, and even some Byzantine troops may have arrived in the mid-13th century. The king's army, built around the Royal Household, became increasingly professional, with little rôle left for the free peasant *jobbágy*. Even the castle system declined along with the military obligations of the feudal aristocracy.

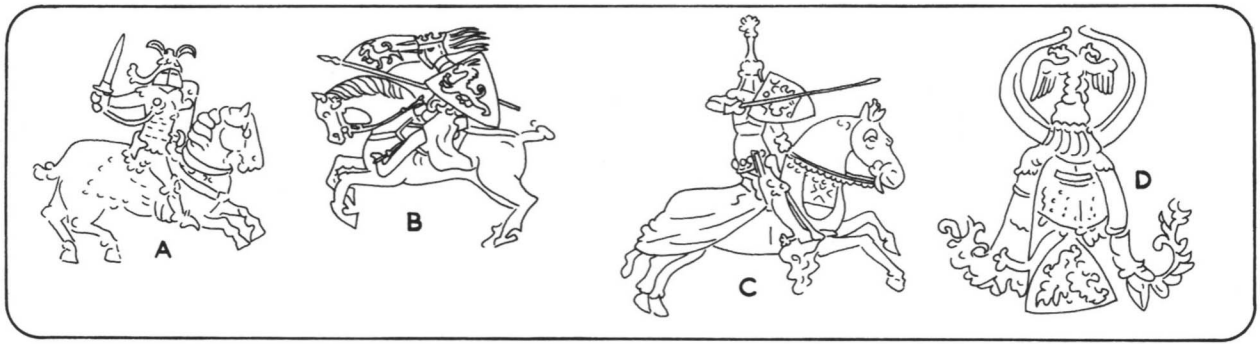
Archery declined while the crossbow rose in importance, most crossbowmen being recruited from Slav areas such as Slovakia. The raising of cattle gradually replaced the breeding of horses while light cavalry, though not disappearing, were now little more than auxiliaries. A Byzantine description of a Hungarian army shows just how Westernised they had become: ' . . . as he [the Hungarian commander] was full of conceit, instead of dividing his army into a right and left wing with columns and squads he concentrated all his forces into a single mass . . . His flag was fluttering in the wind on top of a high thick pole placed on axles and drawn by four yokes of oxen. It was really terrifying to see his army consisting entirely of cavalry armed with spears. Not only were the warriors covered by armour to the teeth but their horses also had straps and plates of armour on their forehead and breast . . .'

The tournament was introduced early in the 13th century as French and German military influence grew ever stronger. Hungary still strove to expand by briefly conquering Serbia, campaigning against the Bogomil heretics of Bosnia, competing with Venice in Dalmatia, and again trying to seize control of Russian Galich. This put enormous strains on the nation's military potential at a time when unforeseen catastrophe was approaching from Asia.

In 1237 the Mongols attacked the Kipchak Turks to the east. Many of the defeated nomads fled into Hungary, where the king again tried to settle them as potent allies against both external aggression and baronial dissent. Unfortunately the newcomers, many of whom were Muslims, were numerous, and the barons realised uneasily that their presence gave great power to the crown. The

Balkan weapons: *A* = dagger with bone grip, 1130–1230 from Ras castle, Serbia (Milit. Mus., Belgrade). *B* = 13th C sword, probably German, from Buzau, Wallachia (Slatineanu Coll., Bucharest). *C* = 12th–13th C sword-chape from Moldavia (ex-*Spinei*). *D* = sword, probably German c.1400 from Curtea de Arges (Slatineanu Coll., Bucharest). *E* = 12th–13th C sabre-blade from Moldavia (ex-*Spinei*). *F* = outline of 12th–13th C Bulgarian mail shirt from Mikhailovo, lower hem damaged (Local Museum, inv. 643, Kazanlik). *G* = winged mace-head from Serbia, possibly 15th–16th C (Milit. Mus., Belgrade). *H* = 'Sword of Foca', 15th C Bosnian (Nat. Mus., Sarajevo). *I* = 16th C ceremonial halbard (inlaid decoration not shown) from Bukovina (Local Mus., Suceava). *J–L* = mace-heads from Stara Zagora region, 13th–14th C Bulgarian (Local Mus., Kazanlik). *M* = undated bronze mace-head from Bukovina, Moldavia (ex-*Spinei*). *N* = 10th–12th C axe-head from Fedesti, Moldavia (ex-*Spinei*). *O* = 13th C axe-head from Cozanesti, Moldavia (ex-*Spinei*). *P* = 16th C axe-head from Calugareni, Wallachia (Cent. Milit. Mus., Bucharest).





Hungarian & Balkan seals: *A* = Istvan Erdélyi, lord of Pecs, mid-14th C (Budapest Historical Mus.); *B* = King Stephen V of Hungary, 1270–72 (Budapest Historical Mus.); late 14th–early 15th C Bosnian seal (Sarajevo Mus.); Despot Stefan Lazarević of Serbia, c.1410 (Monastery Archive, Manasija).

Cuman leader was murdered, and his followers fled south into the plains of Wallachia just when the Mongols were poised to strike. It seemed that only the king realised the danger. He tried hard to bolster the country's defences, but all in vain: the Hungarian army was virtually annihilated at the battle of Mohi in 1242. The king escaped, and for various reasons the Mongols ravaged but did not remain. More importantly, they did not return—at least not in strength—and so Hungary was quickly able to recover.

In the decades that followed, the power of the Hungarian monarchy faded while that of the aristocracy grew. So did the size of baronial armies consisting of knightly retainers called *familiares*. The great barons were now building Italian-style castles of stone around their estates or *provinciae*. Cities grew; foreigners, including many Germans, settled; and an iron industry developed. The Cumans also returned, King Ladislas IV even marrying a nomad and surrounding himself with Muslim and Jewish advisers.

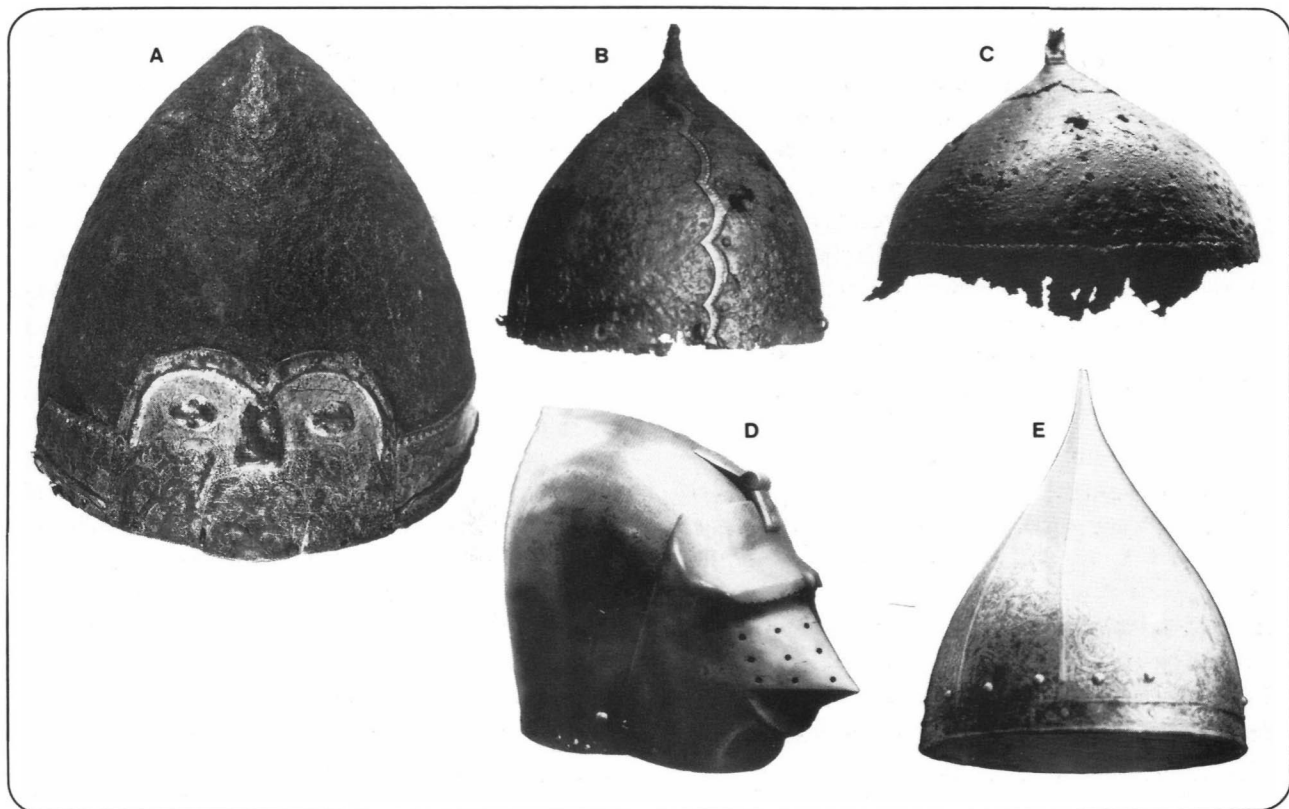
The Angevin Kings

With the death of Andrew III in 1301 the Arpad dynasty came to an end. It had led Hungary since the days of the Conquest but now, after a brief struggle, a member of the Italo-French Angevin family—which already ruled southern Italy and parts of Greece—became king of Hungary. For Hungary the accession of Charles Robert I marked the start of a brilliant age. The power of the barons was curbed; French Gothic and Italian Renaissance culture spread across the country, as did modern military ideas. Under Charles Robert and the Angevins Hungarian baronial armies were brought under closer royal control. Now known as the *bandiera* (from the Italian for flag), they were recruited from the peasantry, while a sense of noble

brotherhood between the king and his leading barons was strengthened by the creation of a new order of chivalry, the Order of St. George. Beneath the barons were counts or *ispáns*, followed by the castellans of the king's own castles.

Louis the Great, who succeeded Charles Robert in 1342, also recruited German and Italian mercenaries to be used against Venetian expansion in Dalmatia, pagan Lithuanians and Catholic Poles in the north, and Orthodox Serbs to the south. Louis also supported the Pope in Italy, and projected himself as the champion of the Church; but his dreams of leading a great Crusade against the Turks were frustrated by chronic divisions within the Christian camp. Instead, Louis' successors had to face the full might of the Ottomans in a struggle which brutally highlighted the failings of the *bandiera* system. As the Ottomans advanced deep into the Balkans, King Sigismund of Hungary called a Crusade; but the ill-disciplined (and largely French) host which answered his call met total disaster at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396, though Sigismund himself escaped.

The Hungarian army of this period was a mixed force and did not depend solely on the *bandiera*. Tribesmen of Cuman, and more recent Alan refugee origin played a vital rôle, while light cavalry were still recruited from the stock-raising population of the plains. A militia of *honveds* could only be used for local defence, but Sigismund revived the military obligations of ordinary people through a new *militia portalis* in which a certain proportion of the population had to serve. The king himself was now little more than leader of a league of barons, a situation recognised in 1409 by the creation of the



Knights was encouraged to fortify the eastern frontier against nomad encroachment, but the knights pressed on eastward across the mountains and threatened to create their own 'state-within-a-state'. This so worried the Hungarian king that he drove them out in 1225.

The indigenous inhabitants of the Carpathians spoke a language descended from Latin. Generally known as Vlachs, they were the ancestors of the modern Romanians (see below). Most were Orthodox Christians, although some living in Hungarian territory became Catholic. A Vlach aristocracy had recently developed out of the old tribal system, but in Transylvania its status was steadily eroded under Magyar and Catholic pressure. Nevertheless, a warlike Romanian élite led by regional *voivodes* and *knyazates* still existed around Maramures and other parts of eastern Transylvania, defending these regions against nomad infiltration well into the 14th century.

Hunyadi and Matthias

The great Hunyadi Janos came from such a background. His father had become Catholic and

Hungarian helmets: *A* = Peceneg helmet, perhaps basically of Byzantine origin with nomad decoration, 11th–12th C (Déri Mus. Nemiya no.2, Debrecen); *B* = 10th–11th C Magyar helmet of directly riveted segments decorated with copper filets (Archaeol. Mus., Pécs); *C* = Cuman helmet in mixed steppe and Iranian style, 13th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest); *D* = 14th C *bascinet* with *klappvisier*, probably of German origin c.1380 (Nat.Mus., Budapest); *E* = helmet in Turkish style, Mohács period early 15th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest).

Hungarian in culture, while Hunyadi himself rose to power and wealth through his military genius and loyalty to the crown. Other families, however, refused to adopt new ways and had migrated across the mountains into Moldavia and Wallachia. Catholic pressure on the Orthodox, and on newly arrived Hussite refugees from Bohemia, grew stronger in the 15th century; but this did not prevent Hussites from providing Hunyadi Janos with some of his most effective troops. Having learned his military trade as a young *condottiere* in Italy, Hunyadi used his own wealth to raise an efficient fighting force to face the Ottomans.

In addition to Hussite mercenaries and his personal followers, vassals and *familiares*, Hunyadi could also summon the peasant *militia*. Though he was often defeated when taking the offensive—as at



Engraved gold plaque forming part of belt-buckle, 13th C. This fine piece may have been made in Hungary or Germany; it illustrates knights in western European equipment, only the tambour drummer striking an exotic note. (Nat. Mus., Budapest.)

the battle of Varna in 1444, and at the second battle of Kossovo in 1448—Hunyadi's defensive efforts read like a lone Crusade against the Ottomans. In 1442 alone he defeated invading Turks at Sibiu, the Iron Gates and the Ialomita River. A true professional, Hunyadi Janos was also prepared to learn, and to adopt new weapons and new tactics. Firearms became increasingly important, particularly when mounted on waggons drawn up in a *waggonberg*. This was probably a traditional Magyar or nomad idea updated with Hussite firepower (see MAA 166, *German Medieval Armies 1300–1500*). A favourite Hunyadi tactic was to draw the Ottoman cavalry forward against such field fortifications, and then attack them in the flank with his own cavalry, a strategy clearly suited to the narrow valleys of Transylvania and Serbia.

Hunyadi's heavy cavalry were provided by mercenary German *ritters*, while light cavalry came from Hungary itself. Such troops used, according to a 15th century French observer, 'small bows of horn and tendons and crossbows with which they shoot, and they have good horses and are less armoured and light and do not descend happily on foot to fight'. These were the predecessors of the famous Hungarian *hussars*. Many Transylvanian horsemen also adopted a small version of the *pavise* shield developed for cavalry use in Lithuania.

In 1458, after yet another period of confusion and war, the 15-year-old son of Hunyadi Janos was elected ruler of Hungary as King Matthias Corvinus. He ruled over another golden age, but it was one in which the seeds of destruction had already been sown. The southern province of Bosnia was lost to the Ottomans in 1463, and young

Matthias not only had to face further threats of invasion but needed once again to curb the power of overmighty barons. He raised taxes and, building on his father's experience, recruited a standing army of Bohemian Hussites, German *ritters*, and Polish and Serbian mercenaries loyal only to himself. With this 'Black Army' Matthias tamed the aristocracy and tried to weld central Europe into a single empire powerful enough to tackle the Turks. Well paid, equipped in blackened armour, numbering around 30,000 troops, and skilled in winter warfare, the 'Black Army' fought against Poland and Bohemia, in Austria, Silesia, and against the Ottomans. Matthias failed to become Emperor of Germany but did capture Vienna. He won his central European empire; but it was a fragile thing, collapsing almost immediately after his unexpected death in 1490. Baronial power and anarchy was revived, and the 'Black Army' was one of its first victims: sent south against the Ottomans in 1491, but neither paid nor supplied, the 'Black Army' robbed the local inhabitants, and was consequently crushed by a baronial force.

All that remained to face the Ottomans were ill-disciplined private armies, and a courageous but poorly led light cavalry. The latter had clearly adopted many Turkish military styles, but the Ottomans were similarly learning from the Hungarians, particularly where firearms and the *waggonberg* were concerned. Yet the Hungarian military structure was undoubtedly in decay. The *banderia* were inefficient, while the minor aristocracy had lost interest in military affairs. The towns were defended only by small mercenary units, and the frontier fortresses were ill-maintained. In 1514 a peasant uprising was ruthlessly crushed so that even the old *jobbágy* could no longer be relied upon. Their neglected potential was made brutally clear a year after the disastrous battle of Mohács when the peasant army of Ivan the Black, a fanatical self-proclaimed Serbian prophet, took part in the civil wars which rent Hungary.

Mohács and After

Mohács, in late August 1526, was the greatest national disaster in Hungarian history, and it led to over a century of what many historians rather unfairly call Turkish 'misrule'. When the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman struck in 1526, Louis II of

Hungary mustered some 25,000 men and 85 cannon (only 53 being used in the actual battle), while for various reasons the troops of Transylvania and Croatia failed to arrive. The Ottomans are said to have numbered over twice as many—though this figure is exaggerated—and had up to 160 cannon. The result was a disaster, with the Hungarians advancing into withering fire and flank attacks, and falling into the same trap that Hunyadi Janos had so often used successfully against the Ottomans.

King Louis was killed, but the Ottoman Sultan did not occupy the country. Instead Hungary was left to tear itself apart in civil strife, serving as a battlefield for the rival Hapsburg-German and Ottoman-Turkish Empires until its partition was agreed at the Treaty of Adrianople (Edirne) in 1568. A puppet Hungarian kingdom survived in the north and west under the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian II, while central Hungary was divided into Ottoman provinces or *vilayets*, and Transylvania was recognised as an independent principality under Ottoman suzerainty.

Half of Hapsburg Hungary consisted of the Slav region of **Slovakia**. Although forming an integral part of medieval Hungary since the days of the Magyar conquest, this area remained distinct in many ways. Militarily Slovakia had been known for its infantry, many armed with large daggers similar to the Germanic *seax*. Longbows played a minor rôle in warfare, while mail armour and straight swords of Western type were common. There may

have been a small Eastern influence via a colony of Armenian merchants in neighbouring Ruthenia, while Poland occupied part of the country in the early 11th century. Magyar influence was of course felt, single-edged *tesák* short-swords being used in the 13th and 14th centuries; but the influence of Bohemia and Germany was stronger. Crossbows became common as infantry weapons in the 14th century, but the Slovakian aristocracy still relied on close combat with sword and spear.

Further south, another Slav area that was eventually to fall under Hapsburg rule was **Croatia**. Like the Slovaks, the Croats were fully within a Western military tradition throughout the Middle Ages, infantry archery and war-axes having been important since the days of Slav colonisation. Following a period of independence in the 11th century, during which Croatia had even challenged Venice at sea, the Croatian and Hungarian kingdoms were formally united in 1091. Hungarian control was not fully effective until around 1102, and even then Croatia retained its autonomy under a viceroy or *bán*. These *báns* often had trouble controlling a turbulent feudal nobility who tended

Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle, 'Louis the Great and his subjects', c.1360. The Great Hungarian Chronicle is a vital source for mid-14th century middle European arms, armour and costume. It shows men in typical European dress, such as Louis the Great himself, others in slightly unusual forms of western arms, such as the knights on the left, and warriors of obvious steppe nomadic origin like those on the right. The groups illustrated here symbolise the feudal and the nomadic subjects of the king. (Nat. Szech. Lib., Ms. Clmae 404, f.1, Budapest.)





Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle; (left) 'An unidentified Champion of the Conquest', (right) 'Kund, the 4th Champion of the Conquest'. These two warriors are probably based on different styles of 14th century Hungarian soldier. The man on the left is essentially Asiatic, but carries a European sword and shield, while the dots on his chest hint at a coat-of-plates. Kund on the right is more European in his attire, though even he is lightly equipped by western standards. Note that both warriors have chest medallions betraying the influence of Mongol 'heraldry' (see Plate D3). (Nat. Szech. Lib., Ms. Clmae 404, f. 13a, Budapest.)

to pursue their own ends in Dalmatia and Bosnia.

A local Croatian form of light cavalry broadsword evolved by the 14th century, developing into the better known *sciavona* in the 15th. The importance of light cavalry was a result of the region's relative isolation and mountainous terrain, but such troops were to stand the Croats in good stead against the Ottomans in the 15th century. Their descendants were eventually incorporated into the Hapsburg *Militärgrenze* or Military Frontier in the 16th century after a demoralised Croatian nobility elected Ferdinand of Austria as their king one year after the battle of Mohács. At first this *Militärgrenze* consisted of a few strongpoints overlooking the main invasion routes, but by 1550 the entire area was dotted with fortified villages,



earth and timber blockhouses, and watch-towers manned by some 5,000 *Grenzer*.

Bosnia, to the south of Croatia, emerged from tribal confusion late in the 12th century when the local chieftains or *zupe* accepted the leadership of a regional *bán*. Lower or northern Bosnia consisted of two Hungarian duchies which served as outposts against Serbia, while southern or Upper Bosnia generally retained an anarchic independence. Militarily and culturally the Bosnians were similar to the neighbouring Serbs. Their light cavalry used maces, axes and kite-shaped shields which, by the mid-14th century, had developed into the specialised cavalry *scutum bosniensem*. Another feature of this area was the strange Bogomil heresy, very similar to that of the Cathars in southern France. Bogomilism survived persecution and Crusade, but disappeared with the coming of the Ottomans when the Bogomils apparently converted to Islam, a faith which shared their fiercely egalitarian outlook on life. Meanwhile, Bosnian light cavalry continued to serve under an Ottoman banner (see MAA 140, *Armies of the Ottoman Turks*).

Rugged and backward, Bosnia had its own

Golden Age in the 14th century, not only achieving effective independence under Stephan Tvrtko (1353–91), but even conquering parts of Hungarian-ruled Croatia and winning an outlet to the Adriatic Sea. While Serbia was fragmenting, the Bosnian *bán* adopted Byzantine court ceremonial and titles, defeated an Ottoman army at Plocnik in 1386, and briefly became the most powerful state among the southern Slavs. Yet this glory merely reflected the weakness of the Balkan peoples as a whole. Serbia fell to the Ottomans in 1459, and four years later Bosnia itself was conquered.

Byzantium

While Hungary was evolving into a western European feudal state, the ancient Byzantine Empire went through a considerable revival followed by disaster. During the 11th century Byzantium re-emerged as the greatest power in the eastern Mediterranean (see MAA 89, *Byzantine Armies 886–1118*); but in 1071 came the battle of Manzikert, and the total defeat of a Byzantine army by the Seljuk Turks. In the resulting turmoil almost the whole of Anatolia was lost. Although the Emperor Alexius, first of a new Comnenid dynasty, recovered not only the coasts but also the fertile western part of Anatolia, the Byzantine Empire of the 12th century was not the power it had been in the 10th or 11th.



The Castle of Hunedoara, Transylvania. This great stronghold of Hunyadi Janos formed a vital link in the defensive system of south-eastern Hungary. The roofed towers seen here were built for Hunyadi Janos, but the bastion on the left is a later addition.

After Alexius died in 1118 his son and grandson, John and Manuel Comnenus, carried on his work. Byzantine armies were still well-disciplined when compared to those of western Europe; but efforts to confront invading nomads by imitating Turkish tactics were not a success, and Byzantine cavalry generally reverted to close-order heavily armoured tactics developed in the 10th century. Increasing emphasis was placed on lance-play in the 12th century, but the horses that Byzantium imported from Hungary and Syria were still lighter than the *destriers* used by the typical western European knight. Archery on foot and horseback continued to play a prominent military rôle. Peceneg and other

The Betrayal, wall-painting c.1400–20 Transylvania. Though damaged and restored, this picture includes distinctly different soldiers of western (left side) and Balkan (right side) origin. The fact that the westerners are so realistically drawn suggests that the Balkan or Byzantine warriors may be equally accurate. The former wear plate armour, whereas the latter rely solely on mail. (Wall-painting, *in situ* Lutheran Church, Medias, Romania.)



Gate-tower and surrounding wall of a church west of Medias. Many Transylvanian villages had such fortified churches serving as places of refuge in a war-torn region. Here the church lies within a curtain-wall with a tall tower above its only entrance.

Turkish refugees or mercenaries provided Byzantium with light cavalry skirmishers armed with the bow; but indigenous Byzantine horse-archers shot in disciplined ranks like the trained *ghulams* or *mamluks* of the Muslim world, not in the harassment technique of steppe nomads. Larger composite bows of Middle Eastern form seem to have replaced the earlier so-called Scythian type, which might also reflect the rising importance of infantry archery. It is even possible that Byzantium's famous Varangian Guard of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian mercenaries used longbows, although their most notable weapon was, of course, the large war-axe.

Mercenary recruitment

Alexius had disbanded many unreliable indigenous regiments, but high pay still made a military career popular, attracting the service of traditionally warlike peoples from both within and without the Empire. Greek *akritoi* or frontiersmen were reorganised along the Anatolian border. Whether such men were really soldier-farmers or lived on rents from smallholdings while concentrating on their military duties is still a matter of debate. Meanwhile Hungarians, Serbs, Bulgarians and Macedonians enlisted in large numbers. John Comnenus also settled Serbian prisoners as *stratioti* military colonists around Izmit, while Manuel

Comnenus similarly settled Serbs around Sofia. Romanian-speaking Vlach mercenaries grew in importance in regions that had once formed the First Bulgarian Empire, though the importance of Armenians declined. Serbs appeared as allies after Serbia won its independence, while other foreign mercenaries included Russians, Alans from north of the Caucasus, and Georgians. The military influence of these Caucasian troops may, in fact, have been considerable. Arab troops fought for the Emperor Manuel, although it must be remembered that Christian Arabs had long lived in Anatolia. It is by no means certain that mercenaries recruited from beyond the Empire's frontiers ever formed a majority, except in certain field armies, but the Comnenids did break with tradition by raising mercenaries to senior military posts. Foreign troops also had their own command structure under a *sevastos* and *protosevastos*.

The most famous mercenaries were, of course, the Varangian Guard. This long-established unit actually fought against Alexius in 1081. By that

The Road to Calvary, panel from a painted altar-back c.1480-90. Though the style of painting is German, the artist who painted these panels was surely a local with first-hand knowledge of Romanian, nomad, and even Ottoman costume. The soldiers in this panel are certainly slightly different to those of Germany or even Bohemia. (In situ Lutheran Church, Medias, Romania.)



time many of its members were Anglo-Saxon refugees from Norman England, and they came to dominate the Varangian Guard in the 12th century. North Germans and Frisians also served, as did the descendants of earlier guardsmen, service eventually becoming an inherited family occupation. Even more important were Norman mercenaries, mostly from southern Italy, who served as heavy cavalry (see Elite 9, *The Normans*). They, and other Frenchmen, also founded long-lasting Byzantine military families. German mercenaries were considered more effective as heavy infantry while Italians served in many capacities, especially at sea. Italians from Ancona had a special status as their city acted as a base for Byzantine operations in the Adriatic.

In addition to Western mercenaries there were numerous Turks, whole tribes having stayed in western Anatolia after the area was reconquered by Alexius early in the 12th century. Many became Christian and served in Byzantine armies. Other Turkish refugees from the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum deserted to Byzantium during the 12th and 13th centuries. Peceneg tribes also entered Byzantium, having been driven from the steppes of southern Russia by the Kipchaks. Both John and Manuel Comnenus settled them as *stratioti* in various parts of the Empire.

The old Byzantine *theme* system of provincial armies had not survived Manzikert. Nevertheless lightly equipped local *akritoi* remained effective in defensive warfare against raiding Anatolian Turks in the mountainous western and coastal regions still held by Byzantium. They relied on bows or javelins, skirmishing and ambushes, but were also used to cover a regular army as it deployed for battle. Under Manuel Comnenus Byzantine heavy infantry were armed with axes or swords, full mail hauberks and shields. The heavy cavalry elite may have consisted largely of Western mercenaries and Western influence was clearly very strong, particularly in the use of the couched lance.

Such troops could rarely catch Turkish raiders, even with the element of surprise, or when the latter were burdened with booty. This has led to harsh criticism of Comnenid military methods. Yet it must be remembered that the main threat to 12th-century Byzantium came from the West, above all from the Normans of Sicily, and not from the



Funerary effigy of *The Chamberlain Stibor*, c.1430. This detailed carving shows a leading Hungarian aristocrat in full Italian-style armour. Nothing except his unusual heraldry, and the stiffness of the figure distinguish him from a 15th century Italian knight. (Budapest Historical Mus., Budapest.)

Anatolian Turks. Heavy cavalry were also only one part of the army with which the Byzantines successfully held western Anatolia until the late 13th century. The defensive structure developed by the Comnenids in Anatolia served effectively for over a hundred years. Manuel's army certainly failed catastrophically against the Seljuk Turks at the battle of Myrioccephalon in 1176, but this was largely the result of appalling generalship.

Byzantine equipment was similar to that of the West, the Emperor Manuel being described in 1150 wearing gilded armour, fighting with spear and sword, and having a mail aventail covering his face. The rest of his cavalry made effective use of maces. Even a relatively isolated area such as Cyprus was

garrisoned by troops in 'good armour' of mail, using slings, bows and crossbows. A sophisticated system of musical instruments and flags was used for battlefield control, while it appears to have been the Comnenids who adopted the double-headed eagle as an Imperial insignia. 'Greek fire' was still a valuable weapon, and now could even be projected from a one-man blowpipe. In general, however, Byzantine siege skills had declined in comparison with those of their neighbours.

Although Manuel's army was destroyed at the battle of Myrioccephalon, it was probably the economic strain of his expansionist dreams that really undermined the Empire, the results of this not being seen until after Manuel's death. His successor, Andronicos, persecuted the military aristocracy, precipitating a civil war which, in 1185, led to the end of the Comnenid dynasty. Under the Angeloi Emperors things went from bad to worse. Power slipped into the hands of great magnates; the mercenary army could no longer be paid; Serbian independence had to be recognised; and the Vlachs

Ceramic panel showing a knight jousting, late 15th C. This tile came from one of the decorated stoves in the Hungarian Royal Palace at Buda. Such huge helmets are unlikely to have been used in war, particularly in Hungary. (Budapest Historical Mus., Budapest.)



and Bulgars rose in revolt. The ultimate catastrophe came in 1204 with the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade: Orthodox Byzantium had been conquered by Catholic Crusaders who then set up their own Latin 'Empire of Romania'. Yet it was not the end, and the Byzantines had one more revival still to come.

'Latin' and 'Nicean' Empires

In many areas the existing military élite accepted Latin rule, but elsewhere small Byzantine successor states sprang up. One of the first was the Despotate of Epirus in northern Greece and Albania, where a certain Michael Ducas, having failed to win advancement under the Latins, rallied support against the invader. In this rugged region the Despot Michael raised an army of lightly equipped Albanians, Greeks and Vlachs, with which his successors eventually expanded across most of northern Greece.

The future, however, lay with the second successor state, the 'Empire of Nicea' (Iznik). Here in north-western Anatolia another Byzantine aristocrat, Theodore Laskaris, also organised resistance, and was able to win control of almost the entire region after the Latins of Constantinople withdrew their troops to face a Bulgarian threat. From the very beginning the Nicean Empire had a small but efficient army organised like that of the Comnenids, and similarly including many Western mercenaries. It was, in fact, an army consisting largely of such Westerners as had gone on from Constantinople to Nicea which reconquered Thrace from the 'Latin Empire' early in the 13th century.

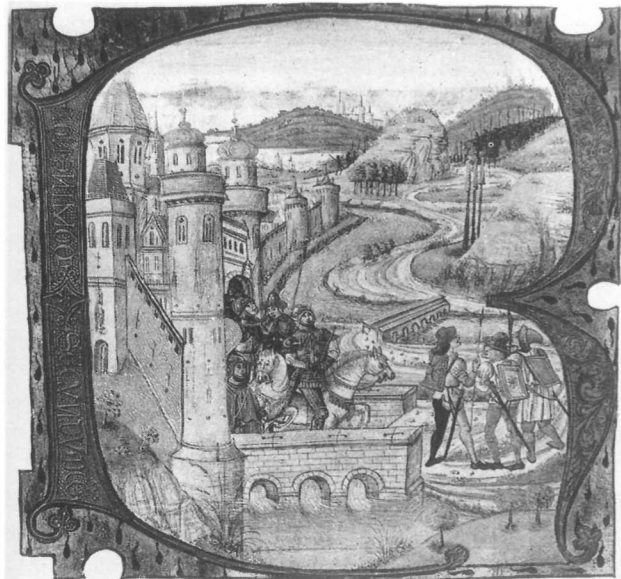
Nicea also imported arms from Genoa to equip local forces, such as the existing military colonies of the frontiers. The Nicean field army was, however, based upon the Imperial Household and had a sophisticated command structure. Each well-defended city was under the authority of a *prokathemenos* governor and a *kastrophylox* garrison commander. The overall defence of Anatolia was headed by dukes, who were in turn responsible for the organisation of the *pronoia* or military fiefs. These supported many of the troops, but were unlike Western fiefs in that they could not be passed on from father to son. Smaller *pronoia* were held by humble *stratioti* warriors, while others were given to

Western mercenaries. Some of the latter became assimilated into the Byzantine system with Hellenised names such as Syradam and Syrgaris.

Among regiments of the Imperial Household were the Vardariots—descended from a Turkish military colony in the Vardar valley—who maintained order in the Imperial camp. The Varangians' chief responsibility was now to protect the Imperial Treasury at Magnesia (Manisa). Other mercenaries included Kipchak or Cuman horse-archers who, as refugees from the Mongols, were again settled as military colonies in Thrace, Macedonia and Anatolia. Anatolian Turks only became important in the mid-13th century, but then whole allied armies were sometimes sent by the Seljuk of Rum. In return Nicea helped the Seljuks in their unsuccessful resistance to the Mongols. In contrast to the stability of Nicea's Asian provinces, the reconquered Balkan regions remained turbulent; existing élites were not always loyal while major population movements, particularly by the nomadic Vlachs, caused problems which even a separate European army could not solve.

A new phase was reached when Michael Palaeologus took over in 1258 following a military

Illuminated Initial from the *Corvinus Graduale*, late 15th C. King Matthias Corvinus was a great collector of books, and this example from his now dispersed library shows a king and his retinue emerging from a city. They are equipped in western style with minor variations, but the infantrymen beyond the bridge are clearly based on Hungarian soldiers with trapezoid shields and unusual hats. (Cod. Lat. 424, f. 99r, Nat. Szech. Lib., Budapest.)



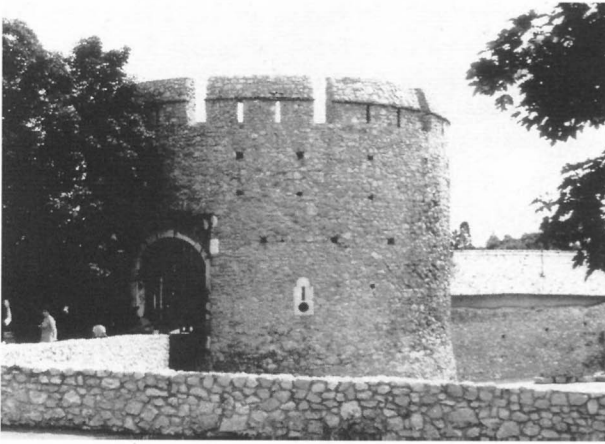
revolt in which the Latin mercenaries played a leading rôle. A year later the small Nicean army crushed its Epirot rivals and their Latin allies at the battle of Pelagonia. Their tactics are worth noting. While Nicean heavy cavalry including German—and perhaps Hungarian—mercenaries held the high ground, the Niceans' Cuman and Turkish horse-archers, plus the Bithynian light infantry, harried the enemy below. The Niceans also confused their foes by lighting additional camp-fires at night and by manoeuvring herds of distant cattle to look like cavalry formations by day.

In 1260 Michael Palaeologus retook Constantinople from the Latin 'Empire of Romania' almost without a struggle, and the city once more became the Byzantine capital. Michael and the emperors of the Palaeolog dynasty tried to follow a policy of centralisation, but nevertheless their rule was characterised by great regional variation in military matters. The Palaeolog emperors also alienated the powerful Anatolian élite, many of whom still regarded them as usurpers.

The Palaeolog Dynasty

After the reconquest of Constantinople Michael tried to cut back his expensive mercenary army, and to integrate provincial forces with the Imperial army, but this effort failed. In fact provincial units under local commanders survived, while many 14th-century Imperial Commanders found themselves with no forces to command. Emperor Andronicos II dismissed virtually the entire army, but later tried to recruit a standing force of 2,000 cavalry in Europe and 1,000 in Anatolia. As a result of Byzantium's declining wealth the Palaeologs tended to recruit troops only when at war; and because they were often unable to pay these mercenaries, the soldiers were consequently unreliable. On the Anatolian frontier the *akritoi* were given little support, while the *pronoia* fiefs gradually became hereditary, thus depriving the emperor of control over even the *stratioti*, who now gave allegiance to local leaders. Control of the Balkan interior was lost just as the centre of Anatolia had been two centuries earlier; yet once again Byzantium held many coasts, including much of the western Black Sea.

A seaborne Byzantine revival was meanwhile taking place in the very south of Greece. Here a



Gate in the north-western wall of Pécs. This fortified city was the southern key to the defence of the Hungarian heartland, while Belgrade was the most important frontier outpost. Its ramparts (now being restored) were consequently strong, provision for artillery being added probably in the 15th century.

rising Despotate of the Morea, unlike the Despotate of Epirus, formed an integral part of the Palaeolog Empire. It expanded from a tiny enclave to gradually reconquer most of the Peloponnese. Mistra was its capital, and from here the mid-14th century despots Manuel and Theodore dominated southern Greece with an army of up to 20,000 Greeks, Slavs and Albanians. In central Greece the Latins were also in retreat. Thessaly had long been dominated by Vlachs from the surrounding mountains; now they established a principality in the plains and fortified towns, maintaining large forces of *pronoia* cavalry organised along surprisingly Western lines. In general, however, Byzantine forces were now more Greek than ever before, and this accompanied a rising sense of Greek identity. Nor were the Byzantines lacking in military skill; their defensive strategy was sound, though they rarely had the means to carry it out. In 1327 Prince Theodore Palaeologus wrote one of the first medieval European military treatises, soon translated into French. Western military influence was still strong, the Emperor Andronicos III introducing jousting and tournaments in which he himself took part.

During the late 13th century the danger from the West was again seen as more serious than that posed by the Turks. This threat was, in fact, dealt with by a mixture of diplomacy and battle; but Byzantium's military success was ruined by a civil war that broke

out in 1341 on the death of Andronicos III. The victor was John Cantacuzenos, a general who owed his success partly to his Turkish allies.

A few Western mercenaries are also recorded around this time, including a small force of 'axe-bearing Varangians' who guarded the keys of any fortress in which the Emperor stayed. Italians were prominent in the navy. Up to 16,000 Alan refugees from the Mongols arrived on the Danube frontier in 1302, but their enlisted warriors proved ineffective. This may have been one reason why the Byzantines so eagerly accepted the Catalan Grand Company, an entire mercenary army consisting of numerous highly disciplined infantry supported by relatively few cavalry. Their lifting of the Turkish siege of Philadelphia in 1304 and their long march back to Gallipoli was something of an epic—but when their pay was not forthcoming these Catalans caused more damage than the Turks had ever done, before finally moving on to Greece where they established their own state around Athens. Byzantium's painful experience with this first Spanish army did not stop John Cantacuzenos hiring some 500 survivors of a disastrous Aragonese expedition into Byzantine waters in 1352. These remained his loyal guard until Cantacuzenos was deposed, some of them then occupying the little Anatolian town of Bigha until driven out by the Ottomans in 1361, while others may even have fought in Ottoman armies as late as 1380.

The rôle of Turkish mercenaries was ultimately more significant; infantry archers and crossbowmen called *mourtatoi* may have been Turkish prisoners, or the offspring of mixed Greek-Turkish marriages. Byzantine hatred of Catholics was such that they generally preferred to ally with Turks against Latins. In the 1330s a firm alliance was cemented between Byzantium and the Turkish *emirate* of Aydin in south-western Anatolia, but this was also aimed at the Ottoman Turks who were now threatening Constantinople itself.

Alliance with one *emirate* did not mean that Byzantium was resigned to the loss of Anatolia. Turkish pressure had increased after the Mongol invasion. Despite some temporary military successes by the Byzantines, mere raiding became a full-scale invasion as population pressure built up on the poorer Muslim side of the frontier. The neglected *akritoi* of the fertile Meander valley

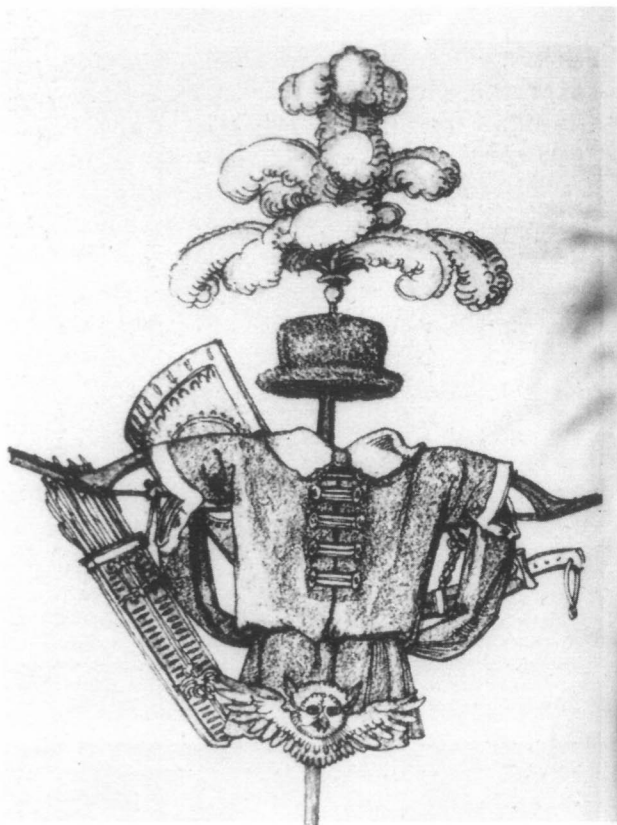
defected in droves to the rising *emirate* of Aydin, which by 1280 controlled the area. In 1293 a military colony of refugees from the Venetian-occupied island of Crete was established north of the Meander, while even some Turkish tribes changed sides. A military rebellion then led to the loss of this area as well. Fortresses were barely garrisoned as troops were withdrawn to face a Balkan threat. In places such as Magnesia (Manisa) local leaders maintained a brief independence between being abandoned by the Byzantines and overrun by the Turks. Elsewhere the aristocracy fled as Turkish raids made it impossible for their peasants to harvest the fields; defence of the summer harvests was now a prime objective, resulting in battles such as that at Baphaeon in 1301 when a Byzantine force was defeated by Ottoman raiders. By 1362 the Palaeolog Empire held nothing in Anatolia except the little port of Sile and the isolated city of Philadelphia (Alasehir) which survived against all odds deep inside Turkish territory.

Equally dramatic was the Byzantine collapse in the Balkans; there was virtually no resistance to the Serbian seizure of territory in 1331, although great efforts were then made to reunify remaining Byzantine lands. Thessaly and the Despotate of Epirus were taken by the Palaeologs; but within a few years almost the entire area fell to the great Serbian conqueror, Stephan Dusan.

The bitter twilight

A year after Dusan died in 1355 the Ottomans seized their first European territory on the Gallipoli peninsula. To survive this tiny enclave had to expand; and the Turks took Didymotikon around 1358, subsequently seizing fortresses on the vital

Effigy in late Gothic style, c.1535. Though damaged, this detailed carving shows a Hungarian knight of the period immediately after the disastrous battle of Mohács. His armour is similar to that worn in Germany. (Nat. Mus., Budapest.)



Engraving of an *hussar's* equipment by Dürer, 1514. This very detailed illustration shows the extravagantly plumed hat, coat with split sleeves, composite bow, bow-case, quiver, sabre and scabbard of a typical early *hussar*. (Whereabouts unknown.)

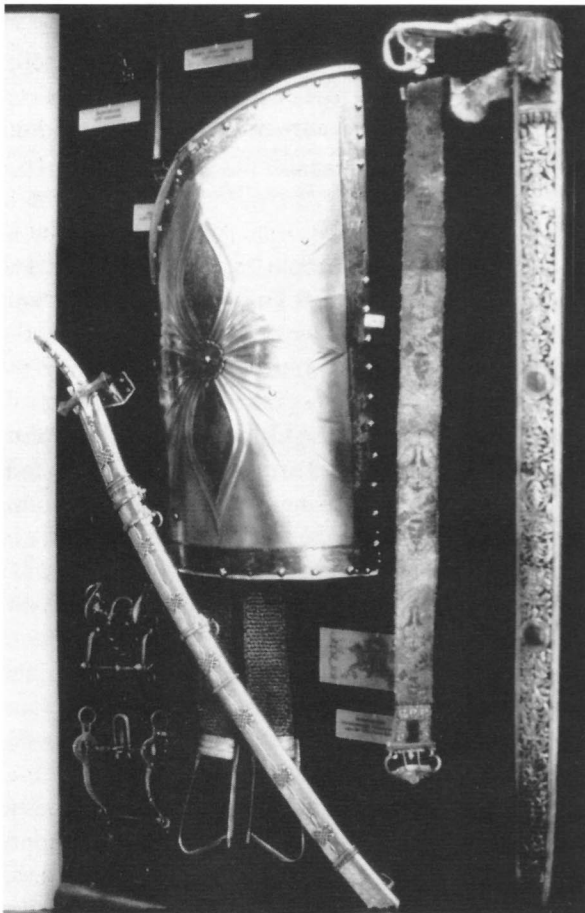
road from Constantinople to Europe. Byzantine garrisons rarely accepted Turkish conquest without a fight, normally challenging the invaders in the open before retreating inside their walls. Even so, the city of Adrianople (Edirne) probably fell in 1361, soon becoming the Ottomans' first European capital. The Turks then turned on the other Balkan states—this bringing some benefits to Byzantium, which was able to retake territory from Bulgaria in 1364, and from the Serbs in 1371. That same year Manuel Palaeologus introduced a series of interesting military reforms, seizing vast monastic estates to turn them into military *pronoia*. Meanwhile, the Sultan was similarly reforming the Ottoman system of *timar* military fiefs—but who was influencing whom?

Despite such attempts to strengthen domestic forces, the rulers of Byzantium realised that the only real hope of saving their empire lay in help from the West. John VI toured Italy in 1369, though he also

became a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan. His successor Manuel II went to Italy, England, and France—but again received only promises. In 1437 John VIII visited Italy with a final desperate plea for help. As vassals of the Turks, the Byzantines were not even permitted to strengthen the walls of Constantinople, but rather had to send troops to fight for the Ottomans when summoned. Perhaps the cruellest example came in 1390 when Byzantine contingents had to help in the reduction of Philadelphia, that last isolated Byzantine outpost inside Anatolia.

The only remaining Byzantine territory in Asia (apart from the little port of Sile, which fell in 1396) was the 'Empire of Trebizond' (Trabzon). This emerged from the wreckage of 1204 as a separate state on the northern coast of Anatolia when a

Hussar equipment of the Mohács era. Although probably for ceremonial rather than warlike purposes, this decorated weaponry shows the kind of sabre, trapezoid shield, stirrups and harness used in the early 16th century. (Nat. Mus., Budapest.)



branch of the Comnenid family seized power with help from neighbouring Georgia. Hidden behind the forested, rain-soaked Pontine mountains, a subtropical coastal strip was defended by fierce mountain folk armed with composite bows and crossbows. But Trabzon also had another special form of weapon—the daughters of its emperors. They were for generations famed for their beauty, and neighbouring princes often agreed to form alliances in return for their hand. The only empire that Trabzon ever controlled was an even more isolated Byzantine province in the Crimea; this did provide great wealth via trade, but was lost to Genoa after 1265. Trabzon itself survived until conquered by the Ottomans in 1461, eight years after the Great City of Constantinople fell.

While the end of Trabzon came suddenly, that of Constantinople was prolonged. A strange mood seized the people in the 15th century; it was not defeatism, but more a sense that the world was coming to its inevitable end. In some quarters anti-Latin feeling had even become pro-Ottoman, summed up by the saying 'rather the Muslim turban than the Cardinal's hat'. The Byzantine élite adopted many items of Turkish costume, and played the cavalry training game of polo. The small remaining army still included mercenaries, nomads from north of the Black Sea, and a large number of Spanish officers who may have been recruited to train local troops. There even seems to have been a Varangian Guard, perhaps recruited from local descendants of earlier Varangians, whose members were said to ceremonially hail the emperor in English!

To the south, the Byzantine Despotate of the Morea now included a military élite not only of Greeks, Albanians, and Slavs but of troops descended from the Venetian, Italian, and French knights of the virtually defunct Latin principalities in Greece. Two Greek scholars named Plethon and Bessarion, who were to play a leading rôle in the Renaissance, also took a keen interest in military affairs. Plethon advocated a properly trained full-time citizen army, supported by the labour of unarmed peasants, and argued against the common practice of blinding or mutilating prisoners. His student, Bessarion, went further by demanding that prisoners no longer be used as slaves but be given full citizen rights, while also suggesting that a new



'Fleeing Cumans', *Ladislav Legend*, Slovakian wall-painting c.1370. The primitive artist who made these paintings knew enough about nomad arms and harness to distinguish the Cumans from the pursuing Hungarians (left) in a moderately realistic manner. The fact that the Cumans wear almost European dress may even indicate their gradual assimilation by the late 14th century. (In situ Evangelical Church, Rimavská Bana, Czechoslovakia.)

fortified capital be built on the isthmus of Corinth to defend the Peloponnese. Whether their ideas had any influence is unknown, but a wall was certainly built across the Corinth isthmus more than once. Unfortunately this Hexamilion Wall, with its 153 towers and castles at each end, was clearly not a very strong structure, having been rebuilt in only 25 days. The army of the Morea, like that of Constantinople, included Western mercenaries. Italians were present to the very end, while a troop of 300 Burgundians arrived in 1445, but the despot still relied primarily on his Greek and Albanian warriors.

The situation was worse in Constantinople; here, despite plenty of warning, the emperor was only able to muster about 8,000 Greeks and 2,000 foreigners against a final Ottoman assault which, though its numbers have been greatly exaggerated, was undoubtedly far bigger than the defending force. When the blow fell in 1453 the harvest was in and the outlying castles fully provisioned; yet with

so few troops the walls of the Great City could not be properly manned. The inner rampart was in poor shape, so the defenders concentrated on the outer wall. They had bows, crossbows and artillery, but their cannon were far inferior to those of the Ottomans. Despite this the outcome only became inevitable when breaches were made in the wall by the Sultan's great artillery. The siege has often been described (MAA 140, *Armies of the Ottoman Turks*), and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 was undoubtedly a turning point in world history. This, however, was not quite the end; the fortress of Selymbria west of Constantinople fell only after the Great City itself, while the Ottoman conquest of the Despotate of the Morea had to wait another seven years.

Bulgaria

After the fall of the First Bulgarian Empire in 1018 the area formed part of the Byzantine Empire, but local uprisings were followed by devastating nomad incursions and a series of invasions by the Normans from southern Italy. The Bogomil heresy also flourished. Largely for reasons of defence the area



'Pursuing Hungarians', *Ladislav Legend*, Slovakian wall-painting late 14th C. This even more primitive picture puts the Hungarians in typical European armour, though only two men have *klappiers* on their *bascinet* helmets. (In situ church, Liptovsky Ondrej, Czechoslovakia.)

had been divided into two Byzantine duchies, and the revolt which led to the creation of the Second Bulgarian Empire began in the eastern duchy, in the wild Balkan Range.

Here it was led not by Bulgarians but by Vlachs, the Romanian-speaking nomads who had migrated into these mountains during the period of Byzantine domination. Two Vlach leaders, the brothers Peter and Asen, were apparently insulted by a Byzantine courtier and so raised the standard of revolt. With the help of Cuman nomads from the Danube plain they drove out the Byzantines, but it is not clear, however, what rôle the Bulgarians took in this struggle. The Vlachs were nimble mountain folk armed with bows and javelins, while the Cumans were, of course, horse-archers, so perhaps the settled Bulgarians provided administrative and technical skills.

The Second Bulgarian Empire was clearly a mixed Bulgarian and Vlach kingdom with the Cumans as its most effective military element. Peter and Asen were soon assassinated but under their third brother, King Kaloyan (1197–1207), the state became firmly established. After trying to forge an alliance with the arrogant Latins who had conquered Constantinople, Bulgaria became their deadly foe. A Crusader army was crushed near Adrianople (Edirne) in 1205, the Latin 'Emperor' Baldwin of Constantinople remaining captive in the Bulgarian capital until his death. It was again largely due to Cuman horse-archers that the Bulgarians went on to defeat a large Byzantine force in 1230.

The army of the Second Bulgarian Empire was not, of course, solely Cuman. The new state controlled large areas held by *pronoia* cavalry and other troops. Mercenaries were also recruited, including Russians. Organisation and equipment mirrored that of Byzantium, with relatively light mail hauberks, some lamellar armour, helmets,

- 1: Byzantine heavy cavalry, second half 12th C
- 2: Vlach auxiliariy, 12th C
- 3: Hungarian knight, early 12th C



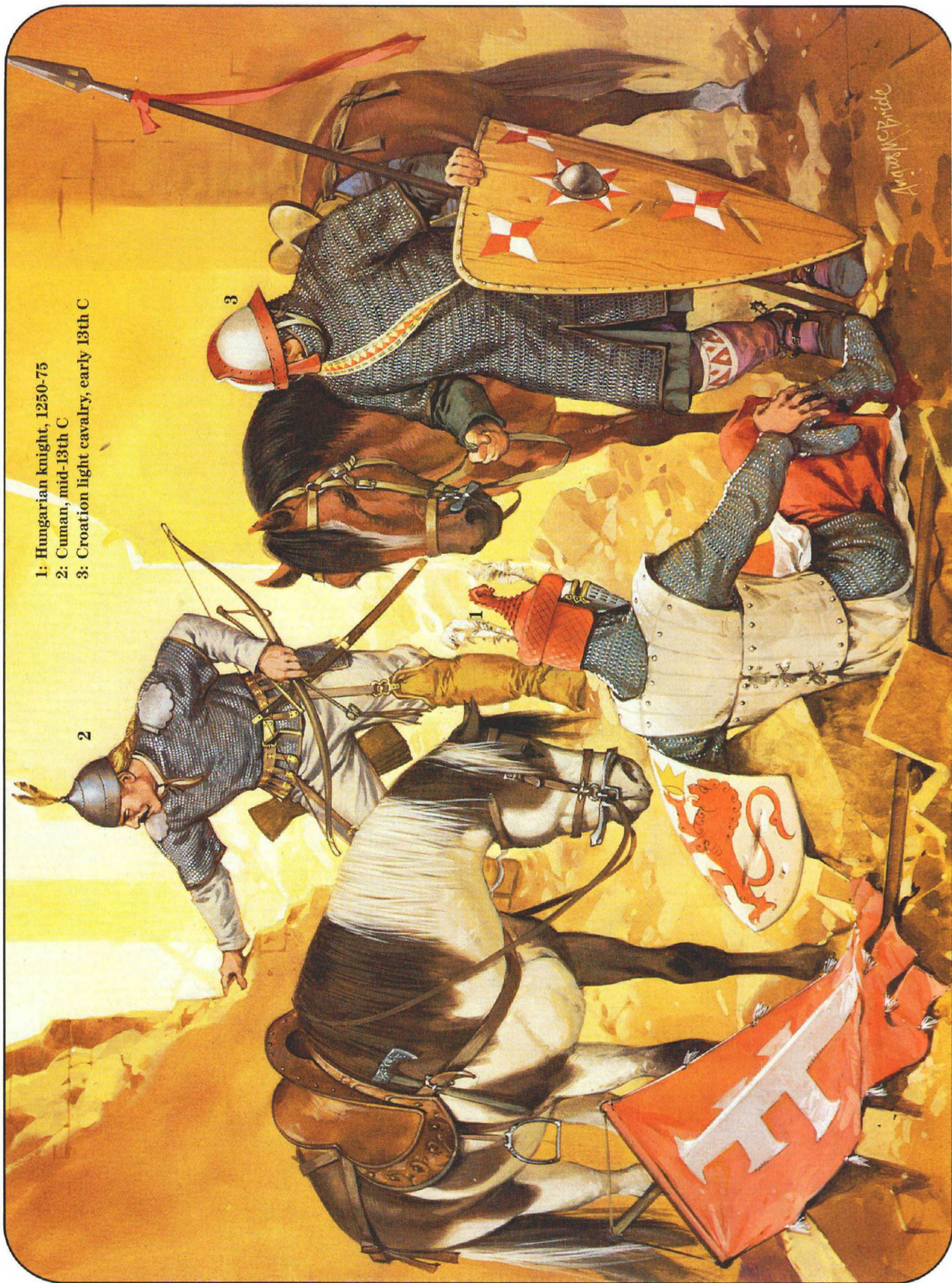
Andrew McPhee

- 1: Byzantine Palace Guard, late 13th C
- 2: Byzantine *murtartol* archer, late 13th C
- 3: Serbian heavy infantry, mid-13th C
- 4: Knight of Frankish Greece, late 13th C.



August, McPride

- 1: Hungarian knight, 1250-75
- 2: Cuman, mid-13th C
- 3: Croatia light cavalry, early 13th C



- 1: Byzantine light infantry, early 14th C
- 2: Byzantine *pronoia* cavalry, mid-14th C
- 3: Golden Horde Mongol, late 14th C





- 1: Hungarian Cuman light cavalry, c.1375
- 2: Albanian warrior, mid-14th C
- 3: Hungarian feudal cavalry, 1350-75



- 1: Serbian infantry, mid-14th C
- 2: Bulgarian *pronoia* cavalry, mid-late 14th C
- 3: Charles Thopia, Albania, mid-14th C

Angus McBride

- 1: Hunyadi Janos, c.1440
- 2: Bosnian light cavalry, mid-15th C
- 3: Byzantine senior officer, early 15th C
- 4: Greek infantry archer, late 15th C



Angus Mc Bride

- 1: Moldavian light cavalry, early 16th C
- 2: Transylvanian infantry, late 15th C
- 3: Hungarian hand-gunner, c.1500



spears, swords and shields being used. The Bulgarians had not used sabres since the 7th century but these would later be reintroduced under Turkish influence. Bulgaria had been strongly fortified since Byzantine times and cities like the capital Tarnovo were now given walls and towers in Byzantine style. Numerous frontier castles also reflected Byzantine military architecture, and the feudal organisation of the state with its regional magnates or *boyars* and *pronoia* fiefs was similarly Byzantine.

On the other hand divisions widened between the common people, who were influenced by Bogomil teaching, and a military élite maintained by forced labour and the conscription of peasants. Territory was lost to both Hungary and Byzantium late in the 13th century, and the authority of the king was weakened. A ferocious peasant uprising under the swineherd Ivailo tore the country apart, and Bulgaria had to accept domination by the Mongol Golden Horde. As part of the Mongol 'World Empire' the country enjoyed peace and a considerable economic revival; trade flourished, and European weaponry was imported through Black Sea ports taken from Byzantium back in 1307.

Yet the process of political decline continued, just as the power of Serbia grew. Even though the Bulgarians were helped by Mongol, Alan, and Wallachian allies they were defeated by the Serbs at the battle of Kyustendil in 1330. Macedonia was

lost to the Serbs, most of the Black Sea coast returned to Byzantium, and the rest of the country was split into three principalities: Dobrudja in the north-east, Vidin in the north-west and Tarnovo in the south. The Dobrudja built a Black Sea fleet which challenged the Genoese and intervened in the affairs of Trabzon; but elsewhere heresies flourished, the lowlands were depopulated as nomad raiding increased, and the country faced further wars with Serbia and Hungary.

When the Ottomans invaded, Bulgaria was hardly in a position to resist. Plovdiv fell in 1364 and the rest of the country soon had to accept Ottoman suzerainty. The peasants of the eastern lowlands entered a period of unexpected prosperity under tolerant Turkish rule, while a few Bulgarian lords fled to the mountains where they maintained a precarious autonomy for many years. Eventually, however, persistent revolts led to direct Ottoman rule over the last of these principalities in 1396.

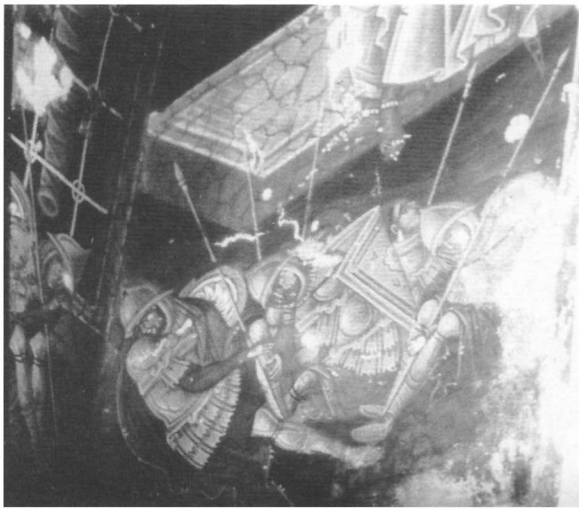
Serbia

The cattle-raising Serbian tribes under their *zupan* chiefs were partly tribal, partly feudal, and only partly Christian when, in the 11th century, two principalities began to emerge. These were Zeta in the west and Raska in the east. While Zeta was backward but free, Raska was stronger but under Byzantine domination. In 1172 Stephan Nemanja of Raska threw off an enfeebled Byzantium and, after uniting with Zeta, created the first medieval Serbian state. For a century and a half Serbia struggled to survive in the face of Byzantine, Hungarian and Bulgarian ambitions while Bogomilism was suppressed and the kingdom became thoroughly Orthodox.

Its small army developed under Byzantine and Hungarian influence but had little cavalry, relying mainly on infantry armed with javelins, spears, daggers, bows and even poisoned arrows. Swords were rare until the 14th century, by which time composite bows and crossbows were coming into use. Armour was almost unknown until the 12th century, after which mail rather than lamellar was favoured. Western-style plate armour came into use in the 14th century, though helmets seem to have

Bogomil tomb from Donja Zgorasca, central Bosnia mid-15th C. The strange carved reliefs on the best Bogomil tombs show huntsmen and warriors dressed in roughly European style, though lacking much armour. Some are represented as archers but most, as here, are spear-armed cavalry. (The Stone Tomb, Nat. Mus., Sarajevo.)





Guards at the Holy Sepulchre, Byzantine wall-painting c.1265. Most of the armour worn by these figures is the conventional 'Roman' armour of Byzantine art which does not reflect current reality. Some contemporary features may, however, be identified. These include spear shafts of reed, large flat-topped triangular shields and a new type of conical, brimmed chapel-de-fer helmet. (In situ Church, Sopocani Monastery, Yugoslavia.)

been imported from both East and West. From the late 13th century increasing wealth from mining enabled Serbia's rulers to recruit mercenaries, while the core of their army now consisted of armoured horse-archers equipped in Byzantine or élite Mongol style with composite bows, maces and some horse-armor. Nevertheless, many light infantrymen still used javelins, although the crossbow became by far the most important infantry weapon in the 14th century. Both crossbow and archery training seem to have been highly developed, with special ranges, exercises and competitions. By the 15th century crossbows spanned by a belhook were largely replaced by those drawn by a windlass. A Serbian army of 1347 wore hauberks, coifs, greaves, gorgets and possibly separate gauntlets. Much of this was imported from Italy and Germany, as were *coracia* coats-of-plates, *collarie* neck-guards and *barbuta* helmets. *Kord* daggers could indicate Hungarian or nomadic Turkish influence in the late 13th century, as might the adoption of curved sabres some years later.

Serbian palaces and fortresses were still mostly of wood, being little more than earthen ramparts with palisades, but some stone fortifications dating from Byzantine days existed in the south. Yet the Serbs did use mangonels in siege warfare, and more

advanced stone castles could be seen on the Adriatic coast, where Serbia had won a small outlet around 1196.

Ever since its foundation, the Serbian kingdom had looked south towards Byzantium, both as the source of its civilisation and later as an arena for expansion. The first advances came in the reign of Stephan Uros II (1282–1321), but it was his son Stephan Uros III who made a breakthrough by defeating Bulgaria at Kyustendil in 1330. This battle made Serbia the leading Balkan power; it also highlighted some interesting differences between a Bulgaria under Eastern military influence, and a Serbia now influenced by the West. While the Bulgars were supported by numerous Mongol and Wallachian horse-archers, the Serbian force apparently included some 1,000 Spaniards, perhaps Catalan veterans of Byzantine service. The Serbian

Warrior fighting a monster or demon, Byzantine bas-relief 13th–14th C. Catalogued as dating from the 10th or 11th century but this crudely carved warrior is almost certainly later because of his flat-topped triangular shield. He is also wearing a mail shirt, perhaps extending beneath a kilt as in Middle Eastern Islamic art, and he carries a straight sword (Byzantine Mus., Athens.)



front rank consisted of cavalry with infantry to the rear, and it was their sudden assault against the enemy's centre which quickly broke the Bulgars.

Despite his victory, Stephan Uros III was overthrown by a nobility which considered him too peaceful. In his place they raised his son Stephan Dusan who became the greatest conqueror in Serbian history. Trade and mining had now made Serbia rich and Dusan used this wealth to recruit a large, mostly German, mercenary force. While striving for peace in the north he overran huge areas of Byzantine territory to the south, eventually proclaiming himself 'Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks'—to which he later added 'Bulgarians and Albanians'. Clearly Dusan intended to replace the ailing Byzantine Empire with his own, and he was actually preparing to attack Constantinople when he suddenly died in 1355.

Stephan Dusan's imperial army was built on the existing Byzantine military administration. A levy of peasants was rarely used, but although Dusan disbanded the famous Vlach cavalry of Thessaly his army did include Albanians and Greeks as well as Serbian feudal forces. Cavalry and infantry archers

or crossbowmen served under local leaders around a royal army of local and foreign mercenaries. Such forces were theoretically divided along Byzantine lines into units of 15,100 and 1,000 men under the command of *tisucnik* leaders of 1,000, *voivodes* and *great voivodes*. Foreigners disseminated Western military ideas and weapons, but the Westernisation of the local military élite was to contribute to a growing gulf between aristocracy and commoners. This in turn played its part in Serbia's inability to resist the Ottomans. Nor was the Westernised army particularly effective against Turkish forces, being defeated by a relatively small and unprepared Ottoman expeditionary force in 1344.

Westernisation does not seem to have affected military architecture outside the coastal strip; 14th-century Serbia was now dotted with stone fortresses,

History of Alexander the Great, 14th century Byzantine manuscript. This is one of the most realistic Byzantine illustrations of the period. It not only shows horsemen in mail hauberks, mail aventails—one of which covers the wearer's face—mail chausses on the legs, and some lamellar armour, but also brimmed chapel-de-fer helmets typical of the 14th century. Note that the figures on foot (right) have broad brimmed hats similar to those seen in 15th and 16th century Balkan art (Lib. of the Scuola di S. Giorgio, f. 35v, Venice.)



but these were built in the old Byzantine style with high walls and rectangular towers incapable of resisting cannon. Gunpowder artillery became, in fact, increasingly common in the late 14th and 15th centuries, having first been imported via Dubrovnik in 1351. The Serbs had bombards at the first battle of Kossovo in 1389, but were still soundly beaten by the Ottomans. Cannon were soon being made in Serbia, although the Turks were the ones to benefit, as gunners from the now-vassal state of Serbia were helping the Ottomans in Anatolia in 1390 and 1402. Handguns or *schliopos* were also widespread.

By this time Dusan's empire was only a memory, having disintegrated shortly after his death. The fragments came together to challenge the Ottomans in 1371 but were disastrously defeated. The south fell tributary to the Turks, while the northern Serbs challenged the Ottomans again, winning victories in 1386 and 1388 before being virtually annihilated at the first battle of Kossovo a year later. The despots of northern Serbia survived as Ottoman vassals for another 70 years, their cavalry tipping the scales against a combined Hungarian-Crusader army at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396. The Despot George Brankovic did support Hunyadi Janos of

Medal of John VIII Palaeologus by Pisanello, c.1437. Here, on the back of Pisanello's famous medal, two horse-archers ride with Turkish-style horse-harness and short stirrups. Only their broad-brimmed hats identify them as Byzantines (British Museum, London.)



Hungary against the Ottomans, but he refused to break a peace treaty of 1443, and so was not with Hunyadi in the disastrous Varna campaign of 1444. Nevertheless Smederovo, the capital of the despotate, was seized by the Ottomans 15 years later, thus ending almost the last flicker of Serbian independence.

Down in the south, however, in what had been the ancient Serbian principality of Zeta, a tiny mountain-top kingdom known as Montenegro maintained a precarious, though permanent, hold on freedom.

Albania

The Albanians are descended from the ancient Illyrians, but throughout the Middle Ages they were divided into numerous mountain tribes. The Byzantine coastal cities flourished until the end of the 11th century after which they declined, though the coastal lowlands were still organised along feudal lines with local *stradioti* fighting for Byzantine armies. A sense of national identity was also hindered by the fact that some Albanians were Catholic (Arbanite) while others were Orthodox (Epirot).

The widespread collapse of Byzantine authority around 1190 led to a brief period of independence under local *archons*. These gradually united under a *Magnus Archonte* before the whole area fell under the Byzantine Despotate of Epirus in 1216. A limited degree of independence followed an Angevin invasion from southern Italy in 1272. This set up a local sub-kingdom, but the Angevins rarely controlled more than the narrow coastal strip and a few towns. Even so, local lords took over from Italians even before a general anti-Angevin revolt 14 years later. The Italian Angevins returned in strength in 1304 but this time they allowed greater autonomy to Albanian leaders. Cities developed along Italian communal lines, and one early 14th-century observer described the country as having six Catholic cities on the coast plus four 'Albanian' cities inland.

Most of the mountain people were still semi-nomadic, so that when a series of famines struck during the 14th century they were able to migrate

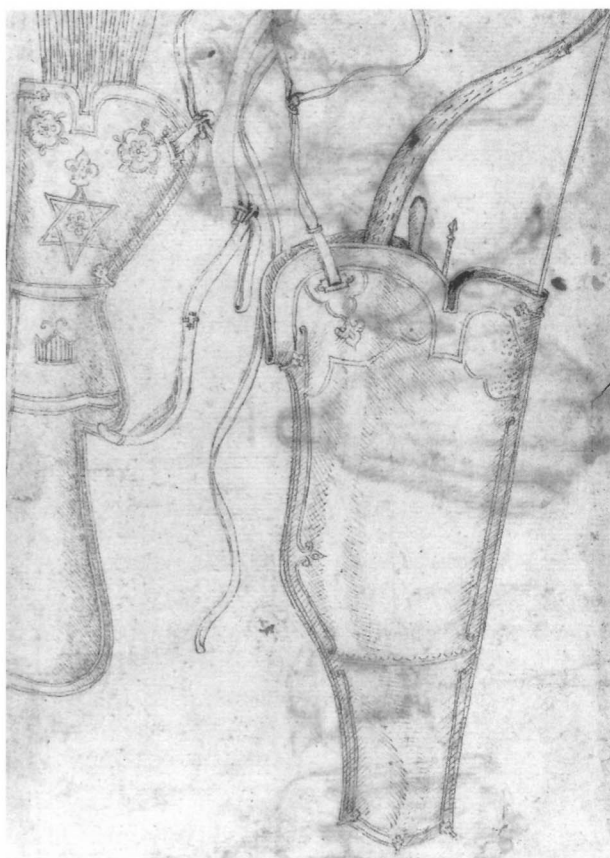
in large numbers, thousands moving deep into Greece and even reaching the southern Peloponnese. They competed with the Vlachs for grazing land, driving the Greeks to the coasts and fighting as mercenaries for anyone able to pay. Stephan Dusan of Serbia is said to have recruited 15,000 Albanian light cavalry armed with spear and sword. With the death of Dusan and the fragmentation of his empire an even more fragmented Albania was torn between pro- and anti-Angevin local factions. Charles Thopia (Plate F3) was one such Albanian leader. His father, Charles Tanush, married Princess Helen of Anjou and was thus recognised as Count of Albania while his son Charles Thopia became Prince of Durres (Durazzo).

Despite such anarchy the Albanians remained a potent military force. In 1378 they defeated an invading force of Hospitallers, though this time the Albanians might have had Ottoman support. A tiny independent Albanian enclave north of Naupactos (Lepanto) in Greece survived well into the 15th century, by which time Albanian resistance to the Ottoman conqueror had become an inspiration for a Christian world reeling before the Turkish onslaught. From 1443 to 1468 this defiance was led by the famous 'Skanderbeg'. He was born George Kastriotis, but had been educated at the Ottoman Court where he had converted to Islam and taken the name Iskander (Alexander). Later Iskander Beg apostacised and turned against the Turks. From his base at Kroia in northern Albania Skanderbeg attacked the Venetians almost as often as he did the Turks, and after his death in 1468 Albania fell firmly under Ottoman control.

Romania

The early history of the Romanian-speaking Vlachs is very unclear, but their way of life, once they do emerge into the light of history, is straightforward. As semi-nomadic, stock-raising tribes they built temporary villages and spent part of their year in the high pastures of various mountainous regions. Their horsemen rode small ponies, and relics of late Classical cavalry exercises might have survived in some Vlach funerary games.

Although roaming as far as the Adriatic coast



Archery equipment of a soldier in the retinue of Emperor John VIII. The detailed drawings made by Pisanello during the Byzantine Emperor's visit to Italy in 1437 are a little-known but vital source of information on the last Byzantine armies. They show equipment which is almost totally Turkish. The blurred outline of a drawing of a Byzantine horse-archer, which is on the back of this sketch, can just be seen behind the bow-case (Margaret Day Blake Coll., courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.)

and central Greece, the main Vlach population was centred upon the Carpathian Mountains in what is now Romania. The history of those Vlachs who inhabited the western slopes in Transylvania was linked to that of Hungary; but those of the eastern and southern slopes were to make their own mark.

North of the lower Danube were wide plains inhabited by Turkish nomads; these came under Byzantine domination, though not direct occupation, after the defeat of the Pecenegs in 1091, with Comnenid armies later campaigning across the region. To the north similar plains lying between the Carpathians and the River Dneestr came under the political influence of Kievan Russia. While neither Byzantium nor Kiev actually occupied these spheres of influence, in the 12th century they

did co-operate against the third regional power, Hungary. The plains were actually ruled by Turkish nomads, Pecenegs and Kipchaks (Cumans) while Slavs inhabited some of the northern foothills.

In the high valleys Vlach governorates or *voivodates* had gradually developed under Hungarian rule as Vlach tribalism was replaced by a simple feudalism under local *hospodars*. These were pushing back the Cumans, some of whom converted to Christianity, when all were suddenly overrun by the Mongols in 1241.

Almost a hundred years passed before the first independent Vlach principality emerged where the River Olt bursts through the Carpathians at the Red Tower Pass. The origins of this Oltenia are obscure, but seem to have begun when members of the Orthodox Vlach feudal élite of Transylvania moved to the region to escape Catholic pressure during the 13th century. There they joined the local Vlachs to establish an autonomous state under Hungarian suzerainty. From this grew a Principality of Wallachia, centred upon the citadel of Curtea de Arges. Its population also included nomadic Turks and Mongols, Saxons and Hungarian *Székel*s, while its military styles showed strong Mongol influence. Wallachians helped Bulgaria against Serbia in 1330, and in that same year defeated an army sent by the king of Hungary, thus winning the principality its first real independence.

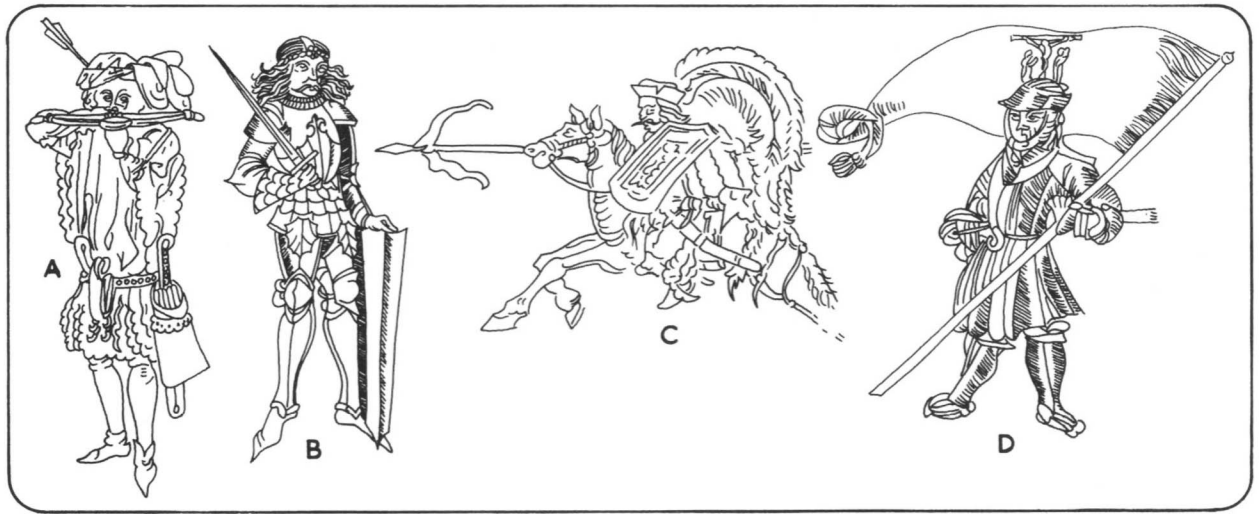
Wallachia then allied with the Mongol Golden Horde against Hungary, and at the same time extended its control to the Black Sea coast. The principality fell again under temporary Hungarian control in 1368, but by that time the Ottomans were nearing its frontiers. Under Mircea the Old, called by the Turks 'the most courageous and shrewd among the Christian Princes', Wallachia defeated Ottoman raiders in 1394, 1397, 1400 and 1408, but was also involved in the disastrous defeat at Nicopolis in 1396. In 1417 Wallachia had to accept Ottoman suzerainty, after which it was torn by civil strife in which Hungarians, Turks and even Poles supported the competing factions.

Of the many Wallachian princes who seized power in the 15th century one—Vlad Tepes the Impaler (1418–56), also known as Dracula—stands out for a variety of reasons. Legendary for his

sadistic cruelty, he was a brave and determined soldier. He attempted to defy the Ottomans, and achieved dramatic if short-lived success, but like his rivals eventually had to concede suzerainty. Unlike other Balkan vassal states, however, Wallachia survived as a separate Christian entity, never being wholly swallowed by the Ottoman Empire.

The second Vlach principality of Moldavia emerged in an area which had been under stronger steppe influence than Wallachia—as indicated by the many sabres and abundant archery equipment found in its graves. As Kievan Russia fragmented in the 12th century the power of the neighbouring Russian principality of Galich grew, but Galich never controlled Moldavia, which remained under Kipchak domination. The mixed population of Turkish nomads, Slav and Vlach tribes then passed under Mongol rule, while the Black Sea coast was to some extent controlled by Byzantines or Genoese. Yet the growing military power of the Vlachs was indicated by an increasingly abundant armoury of mail hauberks, helmets, war-axes, maces and archery equipment. At first these Vlachs held only the highlands under Hungarian suzerainty, but as Mongol power declined after the Black Death so Moldavian feudal lords, helped by Hungarian *Székel*s, seized the foothills. Later they pushed into the plains, towards towns which had grown up under Mongol rule. The main Mongol base was on the coast at 'White Castle' (Aq-Kerman in Turkish, Cetatea Alba in Romanian and now Belgorod Dnestrovski in Russian).

The Moldavian *voivodes* were still under Hungarian suzerainty, and often clashed with the neighbouring Slav Ruthenians who remained loyal to the Mongols. Further clashes came when Poland attacked Galich, which had become a base for Mongol raiding. The declining Mongols were supported by a rapidly expanding Lithuania, while the Hungarians wanted to push the Mongols out of Moldavia altogether. Between 1343 and 1346 Hungarian *Székel* armies drove the Mongols across the Dnestr, and in 1352 Hungary annexed the territory. Seven years later a Polish force invaded in support of a claimant to the now disputed position of *voivode*. In a clash which has entered Moldavian folklore the Polish cavalry were trapped in a forest battle when ready-axed trees were felled behind them.



A = Hungarian crossbowman from 15th C woodcut; B = Janos Hunyadi from a woodcut made shortly after his death; C = engraved design from the clasp of a sword-belt showing a hussar, early 16th C (Nat. Mus., Budapest); D = standard-bearer of a peasant revolt, from an early 16th century woodcut.

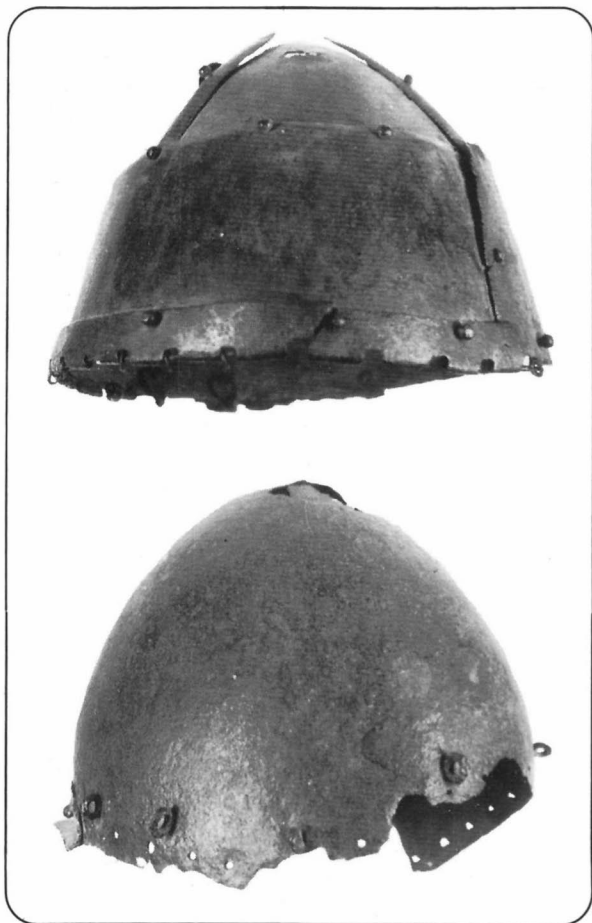
A partly mythical event is also said to have occurred in 1359. This was the *descalecat* in which the Transylvanian *voivode* Dragos of Maramures led his followers over the mountains to set up the first principality of Moldavia. The truth is less straightforward, though a real Dragos of Maramures does seem to have become Hungarian *voivode* of Moldavia. Paradoxically he did so while bringing a rebellious region back under Hungarian control. Moldavia actually won its autonomy under the *voivode* Bogdan I around 1365, but the area then fell under Polish suzerainty. In the late 14th century Moldavia won access to the Black Sea and Danube, giving it control of one of Europe's richest trade routes. Greater Moldavia covered what is now both Romanian and Soviet Moldavia, plus Bessarabia and the Bukovina.

Throughout the 15th century Hussites and Orthodox Vlachs continued to flee to Moldavia from Hungarian Transylvania, having a considerable impact on its military development, as did the Cossacks of the neighbouring steppes. From mid-century the princes of Moldavia, and in particular Stephan the Great (1457–1504), led resistance to the Ottomans, but even they finally accepted Turkish suzerainty. Clearly they saw Catholic Poland as a greater threat than a distant Ottoman Court which demanded mild tribute. Perhaps the princes were right; Moldavia not only survived as

an Orthodox state but grew wealthy on the waggon-trains of wine and vast herds of white cattle that it exported to Central Europe, while at the same time developing a very distinctive art and culture.

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Helmet from Yasenovo (top) and helmet from Ozana (below). These two helmets are sometimes thought to date from the 9th or 10th centuries, but the top example could as well come from the 12th or 13th centuries, while the lower helmet may be a locally modified 14th century European *bascinet*. The helmet from Yasenovo is clearly of Balkan, nomad, or Byzantine origin, and whatever their dates both helmets indicate that the Bulgarians used various equipment from a variety of sources (Inv. nos. 200 & 199, Archaeol. Mus., Kazanlik, Bulgaria.)

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The Plates

A: Hungary, Byzantium & the Balkans (1102–1204):

A1: Byzantine heavy cavalryman, c. 1150–1200

Although long-sleeved mail hauberks seem to have originated in the Middle East, Byzantine close-combat cavalry were more lightly armoured in the 12th century. This man is otherwise similar to his contemporaries in Italy. Only the method of hanging his sword, the sash around his chest (which might have been to hold the mail tight against his body), and his Turkish-style boots make him different. The leather hood, with its perhaps scaled-neck guard, appears in many pictorial sources, and could be related to a form of semi-stiff cap worn by the Alans of the Caucasus as well as many Muslim Iranian warriors. (Sources: wall-painting of late 12th C, church, Ferai, Greece; wall-painting, c. 1200, hermitage of St. Neophytos, Enkleistra, Cyprus; wall-painting, 1150–1200, Carikle Kilise, Göreme, Turkey; *Seraglio Octateuch*, early 12th C, Topkapi Lib., Istanbul; Byzantine or Caucasian silver dish from Beryozovo, 12th C, Hermitage Mus., Leningrad; helmet from Verkhne-Yichenkov, 11th C, Local Mus., Rostov on Don.)

A2: Vlach auxiliary, 12th century

The Vlach or Romanian nomads of the Balkan mountains served as auxiliaries in many armies, and their equipment was acquired from any available source. Javelins seem to have been favoured

weapons and the massive sheepskin cloak remained typical of Balkan shepherds until modern times. (Sources: dagger from Ras Castle, Serbian 1130–1230, Milit. Mus., Belgrade; helmet from Yasenovo, Bulgarian 10th C?, Kazanlik Mus., Bulgaria; carved portal, 12th C, *in situ* Church of the Virgin, Studenica, Yugoslavia; wall-painting, c.1265, *in situ* Monastery church, Sopocani; mosaic, c.1312, *in situ* Church of Holy Apostles, Thessaloniki.)

A3: Hungarian knight, early 12th century

By the 12th century much of the Hungarian military élite was indistinguishable from that of the rest of Central Europe. Only the occasional appearance of single edged, but now generally straight, swords was unusual. This man also wears a tall, segmented helmet of a type fast going out of fashion in Hungary, but still common in Russia and parts of Poland. His shield bears the black raven associated with Hungary's first Arpad dynasty. (Sources: helmet, 10th–12th C, Archeol. Mus., Pécs, Hungary; Slovakian sword, 10th–11th C, Nat. Mus., Budapest; bronze aquamanile, 12th C, Nat. Mus. Budapest; carved reliefs from Vranjevo & Bodrogmonostorszeg, 11th C, Nat. Mus. Budapest.)

B: Byzantine Collapse & Byzantine Revival (1204–1300):

B1: Byzantine Palace Guard, late 13th century

Byzantine troops of the early Palaeolog period seem to have revived some of the lost splendour of earlier centuries. Though basically equipped like contemporary European knights, their arms and armour also betrayed eastern influence. This man wears a *chapel-de-fer* war-hat, and extensive mail under a thickly padded *gambeson*. Even his shield is similar to those seen in Italy and the Crusader States, but while separate mail mittens would soon also be adopted in Italy his curved sabre is distinctly Turkish. (Sources: helmet from Peschki, Ukrainian 1100–1250, Hermitage Mus., Leningrad; Psalter, Byzantine 13th C, Benaki Mus. no. 34/3, Athens; St. Mercurius wall painting, Byzantine c.1295, *in situ* Sv. Klimenta, Ohrid, Yugoslavia; wall paintings, Bulgarian c.1259, *in situ* Boyana Church, Sofia; Arsenal Bible from Acre, 1275–1290, Bib. Arsenal Ms. 5211, Paris.)

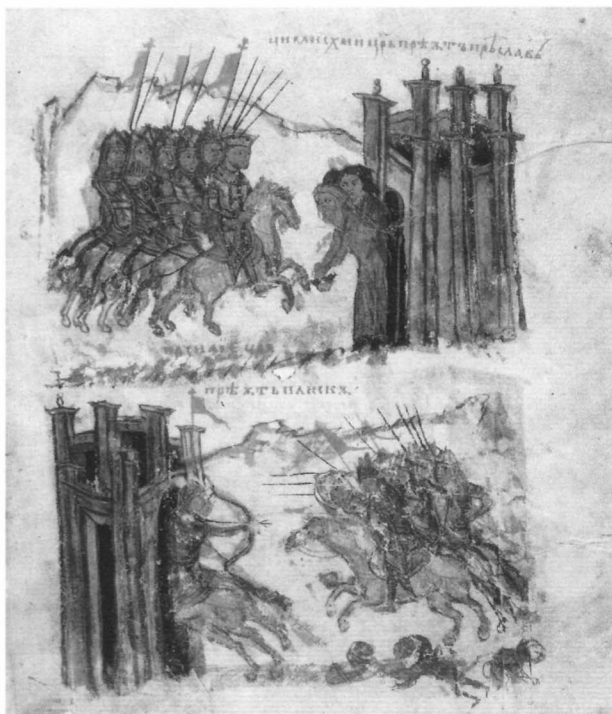
B2: Byzantine 'murtartoi' archer, late 13th century

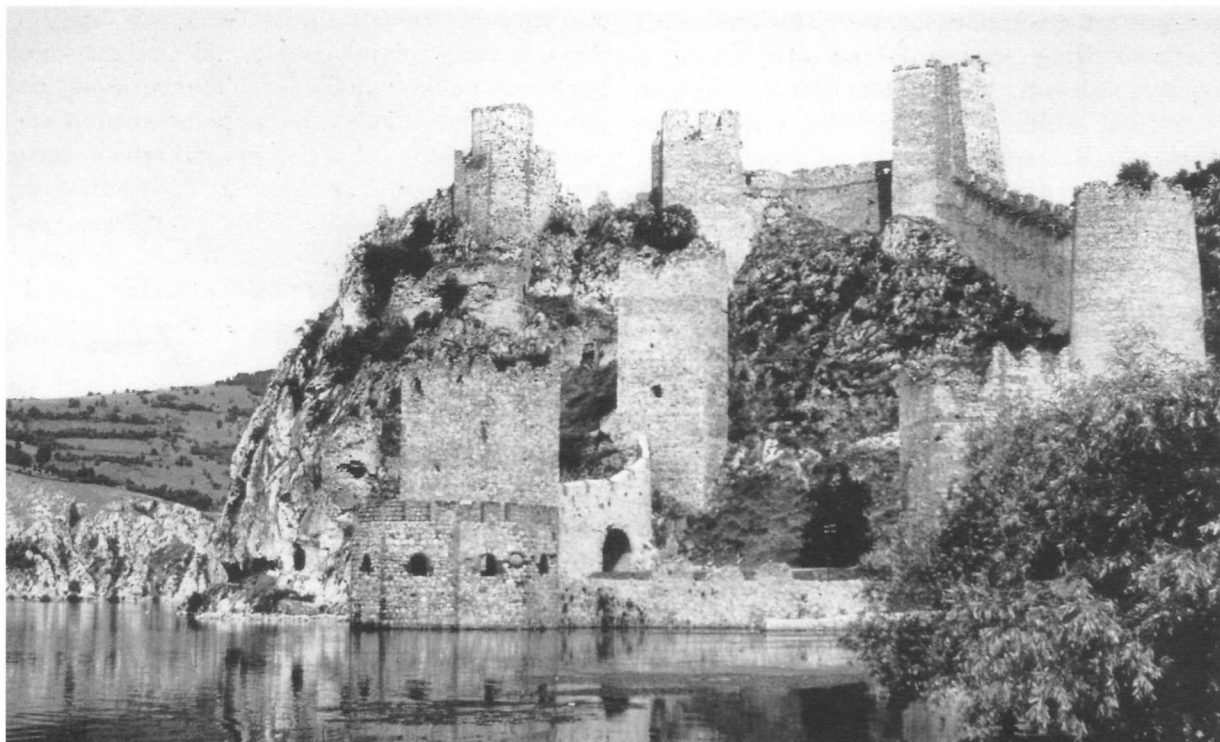
Documentary sources confirm the importance of archers in Palaeolog armies, but they rarely appear in realistic form in art. A number of warriors are, however, shown in body armour which could represent coats-of-plates comparable to those appearing in western Europe. This man wears such armour, as well as the tall one-piece brimmed helmet, that was becoming more common in Byzantine illustration. His archery equipment naturally reflected that of neighbouring Turks and Mongols. (Sources: lamellar or scale cuirass from Kitaev, Ukrainian 12th–13th C, whereabouts unknown; arrowheads from Ras castle, Serbian 12th–13th C, Milit. Mus., Belgrade; *History of Alexander*, Byzantine early 14th C, Lib. of San Giorgio di Greci, Venice; wall paintings, Byzantine c.1265, *in situ* Sopocani Monastery, Yugoslavia.)

B3: Serbian heavy infantryman, mid-13th century

Serbia and the western Balkans were already differing from the eastern Balkans by the 13th century. While the eastern regions were under

Manasse's Chronicle, 1344–5. Compared to the Byzantine History of Alexander, this Bulgarian manuscript is harder to interpret. Yet the figures in the upper register clearly have no visible armour other than helmets and perhaps lamellar aventails (Cod. Slav. 2, Vatican Lib., Rome.)





Golubac Castle overlooking (and now partly submerged by) the Danube was one of the strongest defences in Serbia. Though some of the fortifications were built by the Hungarians most consist of Byzantine-style high walls and rectangular towers. The lower, multi-sided, artillery bastion appears to have been added later, perhaps after the first Ottoman capture of Golubac in 1392.

increasing Turkish and Mongol influence Serbia was closer to Italy and southern Germany from whence so many mercenaries were recruited. Nevertheless, this man does carry a typically Balkan knobbed mace, and wears a sleeveless mail jerkin over a mail hauberk. His thickly padded coif illustrates an early phase of the Balkan pre-occupation with protection for the throat, which might reflect the importance of archery in Balkan warfare. (Sources: 13th C helmet, Nat. Mus., Budapest; iron and bronze maces from Biskupija & Ras castle, Mus. of Croat Archaeol. & Milit. Mus. Belgrade; *Guards at Holy Sepulchre*, Serbian wall painting 1230–37, *in situ* Milesevo Monastery, Yugoslavia; Bulgarian wall painting, c.1259, *in situ* Boyana Church, Sofia; Icon of St. George 13th C, Byzant. Mus. no. 89, Athens.)

B4: Knight of Frankish Greece, late 13th century

The arms and armour of the Crusader States in Greece showed considerable Byzantine influence. This is particularly apparent in the hardened leather greaves worn by this figure. His coat-of-arms also indicates that his family stemmed from the Crusader States in Syria. (Sources: seals of the Latin Emperors, Bib. Nat., Paris; tomb-slabs of

Lusignan family from Aya Sofia, late 13th C, Famagusta, Cyprus; donor figure, *Icon of St. Nicholas*, c.1300, Makarios Foundation, Cyprus.)

C: Hungary and the Mongol invasion (1200–1300):

C1: Hungarian knight, 1250–75

This knight has been given the arms of Bistrita in Transylvania and his equipment reflects the very strong German influence seen in Hungarian arms and armour at this time. His helmet, an early form of Great Helm, is covered by a padded cap supporting a light leather crest. Over his mail he wears an early coat-of-plates laced at the back. By his side lies a banner bearing the double-armed Cross of Hungary. (Sources: Slovak sword, 13th C, Nat. Mus. Martin, Czechoslovakia; Hungarian banner, 13th–14th C, Hist. Mus., Bern; design on belt buckle, Hungary 13th C, Nat. Mus. Budapest; *Shrine of Charlemagne* silver reliquary, German early 13th C, Aachen Cathedral, West Germany; St.

Maurice statue, German c.1250, Cathedral Mus., Magdeburg, East Germany; *Guards at Holy Sepulchre*, carvings, Constance Cath., West Germany.)

C2: Cuman warrior, mid-13th century

The Cuman tribes who settled in Hungary provided the king with his most loyal troops. Their equipment clearly showed their recent origins on the Eurasian steppes, but their physical appearance was certainly unlike that of most other steppe dwellers. The Cumans' characteristic blonde hair and blue eyes gave them their name in Russian and German, both of which meant 'yellow'. The mail shirt, and very advanced iron shoulder-protecting *spaulders* worn by this man would normally have been hidden beneath a kaftan-like coat of typical Turkish cut. The long straight quillons of his sabre also show European influence. (Sources: 'Kun' sabre, 12th–13th C, Milit. Mus., Budapest; Cuman helmet, mail, sword-belt, spear, arrow-heads & riding equipment, 13th C, Nat. Mus. Budapest; Peceneg shoulder armour, 13th C, Deri Mus., Debrecen; *Ladislav Legend* Slovakian wall painting, c.1300, *in situ* church, Velká Lomnica, Czechoslovakia; Peceneg *balbal* funerary statues from Dnepr region, whereabouts unknown.)

C3: Croatian light cavalryman, early 13th century

The warriors of Croatia were even more western in style than those of Serbia. The main source of military fashion seems to have been northern Italy but the men of isolated mountainous regions were naturally poorly equipped and behind the times. This man's face-covering mail *ventail* may again reflect the importance of archery, while his shield decoration is probably based on tribal emblems rather than proper heraldry. (Sources: spearhead from river Cetina, Archaeol. Mus. Split, Yugoslavia; wall-painting, early 13th C, *in situ* Crypt of Massenzio, Basilica, Aquileia, Italy; carved recumbent warrior beneath altar, late 12th–early 13th C, *in situ* Modena Cathedral, Italy.)

D: Byzantium & the Balkans (1300–1370):

D1: Byzantine light infantry, early 14th century

Lightly equipped local warriors, such as the famous infantry of Bithynia, had been effective against nomad invasion but they declined in the 14th century. This man has a fine one-piece *chapel-de-fer*

of typical Byzantine form, while his shield is also characteristic, although the doubled front of his small mail hauberk may reflect Turkish influence. His sword was almost certainly imported from Europe. (Sources: helmet, Byzantine 13th–14th C, Kremlin Armoury, Moscow; mail shirt, Bulgarian 12th–13th C, Kazanlik Mus., Bulgaria; Sts. Theodore Tyro, Mercurius & Demetrius wall-paintings 1295–1375, *in situ* Kariye Camii Istanbul, Sv. Klimenta Ohrid, Chs. of Apostles & St. Demetrius Pec.)

*D2: Byzantine *pronoia* cavalry, mid-14th century*

Very little is known about the equipment used by Byzantine *pronoia* horsemen in the 14th century, and the artistic references of this period are particularly difficult to interpret. Yet some characteristics may be identified; such cavalry were generally lighter than those of western Europe, relying on brimmed *chapel-de-fer* war-hats and substantial, often face-covering, mail. Lamellar may have been coming into use as a result of steppe influence. Some

Warrior saint, wall-painting c.1338–50. This painting of the so-called 'coastal school' of Serbian art clearly shows Italian military influence in the Saint's, albeit inaccurately drawn, visored *bascinet*. The rest of his costume is archaic and unrealistic: (*in situ* Monastery Church, Decani, Yugoslavia.)



illustrations hint at rigid arm defences, probably of hardened leather, worn beneath other garments while stiffer riding boots may indicate Alan or Georgian influence. Weapons, such as the sword shown here, were still imported from the west. (Sources: *Barlam & Joasaph*, Byzantine 14th C, Bib. Nat. Ms. Gr. 1128, Paris; *History of Alexander*, Byzantine early 14th C, Lib. of S. Giorgio di Greci, Venice; wall-paintings, Byzantine 14th C, *in situ* Ag. Nikolaos Orfanos, Thessaloniki; wall-paintings, Serbian 1338–50, *in situ* Monastery Church, Decani; St. George wall-painting, 14th C, *in situ* Ch. of Panagia Phorbiotissa, Asinou, Cyprus.)

D3: Warrior of the Golden Horde, late 14th century

This man is clearly a member of a princely clan, the embroidered medallion on his back probably being a form of Mongol heraldry. His weaponry is essentially the same as that used by Eurasian nomadic warriors for a thousand years, though the broad, waist-supporting girdle seems to have been a new idea. His helmet is also of a characteristic

Psalter, Serbian or Bulgarian c.1370. This little illumination includes an interesting variety of features ranging from the horseman's straight-legged riding position and couched lance, to complete lamellar armour and pointed helmets. Two of these include external rigid neck-guards similar to those seen in 12th–13th century Iranian art (MAA 171 *Saladin and the Saracens*, plate C3). (Cod. Slav. 4, Bayerische Staatsbib., Munich.)



14th–15th century form. (Sources: after *Medieval Mongolian Arms* by M. V. Gorelik, Ulan-Bator 1978; Tartar helmet, 14th C?, Milit. Mus., Istanbul; 14th C east European nomad equipment ex-Pletnyeva; vambrace from Bogatogo Zhilisha, prob. Mongol c.1240, Hist. Mus., Kiev; iron *chanfron* from Romashki, Ukrainian or Mongol c.1240, Hist. Mus., Kiev; *Ladislav Legend* wall-painting, Slovak c.1370, *in situ* Evangelical Church, Rimavská Bana; *Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, c.1360, Nat. Szech. Lib., Budapest.)

E: The Hungarian Empire, 14th century:

E1: Light cavalryman of Cuman origin, c.1375

The evidence is contradictory as to the degree of Westernisation seen among Hungarian Cumans in the 14th century. Perhaps it differed from tribe to tribe. This man, while still relatively lightly armoured, merely uses less of the same armour as that worn by feudal horsemen. The only distinguishing features are the hat worn over his *bascinet*, the open-fronted mail *aventail* of the latter, and his light spear and sword. He would also ride with a slightly bent leg. (Sources: spearheads, early–mid 14th C, Danubian Mus. Komárno, Czechoslovakia; *Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle* c.1360, Nat. Szech. Lib., Budapest; *Ladislav Legend* wall-painting, Slovak c.1370, *in situ* Evang. Church, Rimavská Bana; *Ladislav Legend* wall-painting, Slovak c.1300, *in situ* Church, Velká Lomnica; Kalmuk horseman sketch by Pisanello, mid-15th C, Louvre, Cod. Vallardi 2325, Paris.)

E2: Albanian tribal warrior, mid-14th century

Albanians are frequently illustrated because of their military service in Italy but the pictures are stereotyped and perhaps unreliable. Written descriptions confirm, however, that they fought as archers both on foot and horseback, and imported much of their equipment from Italy. This man wears a heavy padded coat or *gambeson* of Italian cut, while his weaponry is based on a mysterious drawing in Oxford which probably shows a Balkan foot soldier. (Sources: Bohemian or Venetian drawing, 1350–60, Christ Church College Lib., Oxford; *Orientalis*, wall-painting, c.1340, *in situ* Avio Castle, Italy; Albanian *stradioti* at battle of Fornovo, French drawing, c.1500, Nat. Gall. of Art, Washington.)

E3: Hungarian feudal cavalry, 1350–75

This man bears the arms of Moldavia and Hungary on his shield and his armour is largely in Italian style. The only 'exotic' element is the decorative plume, probably of gilded leather, attached to his visored *bascinet*. This feature appears in many Hungarian sources and could be a residual Byzantine or Balkan fashion. Over a mail *hauberk* he wears a coat-of-plates. His arms are protected by splinted *rerebraces* outside the mail and splinted *vambraces* beneath the mail while on his legs he has hardened leather greaves. (Sources: St. George statue, c.1373, *in situ* Hradschin, Prague; *Hungarian Illuminated Chronicle*, c.1360, Nat. Szech. Lib., Budapest; bridle, 14th C, Nat. Mus., Budapest; *Ladislav Legend*, Slovak c.1370, *in situ* Evang. Church, Rimavská Bana, Czechoslovakia.)

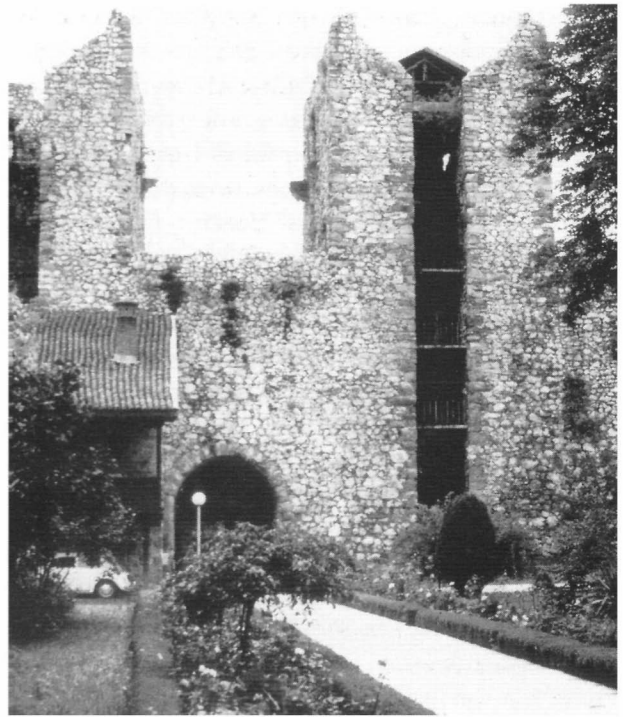
F: The Fall of the Balkans, 1330–90:

F1: Serbian infantry, mid-14th century

This man is in almost all aspects identical to the heavy infantry of Italy. His separate mail-covered gauntlets may, in fact, have been a Byzantine and Balkan fashion that had spread to Italy early in the 14th century. Only his massive splinted *gorget* neck and shoulder protection is different. Such pieces of armour appear quite suddenly in 14th-century Balkan art, and though they are sometimes worn by infidel or alien figures in Italian illustrations they are otherwise rarely seen anywhere else except 14th century Spain. A connection may be possible via the mercenary Catalan Grand Company and Spanish-ruled southern Italy, but it is not known in what direction such hypothetical influence flowed. (Sources: helmet, perhaps of German origin, Milit. Mus., Belgrade; warrior saints, Serbian wall-paintings, 1333–1371, *in situ* Chapel of St. Nichola Sopocani Monast., Church Psaca, Monastery Church Decani, Church Lesново, Yugoslavia; *Pride*, carved capital, early 14th C, *in situ* Doge's Palace, Venice; *St. George*, early 14th C, wall-painting, *in situ* Church of Panaghia Kera, Kritsa, Crete; Hungarian manuscript, 1325–50, Pierpont Morgan Lib. M.360-11, New York.)

F2: Bulgarian pronovia cavalryman, mid-late 14th century

The contrast between this warrior and the Serbian infantryman highlights the differing military traditions of the eastern and western Balkans. He is



Interior of the main gate, fortified Monastery of Resava (Manasiya), Serbia early 15th C. An interesting feature that is seen in many Balkan fortifications is the open-backed wall tower in which the wooden floors or stages are clearly visible.

not only very similar to a late Byzantine warrior but his equipment and costume both show considerable Turkish or Mongol influence. This is particularly apparent in his long coat, his reliance on lamellar armour, and the bells on his spear-shaft. The collection of maces may be captured symbols of rank. (Sources: helmet from Khalkhis, Ottoman or late Byzantine, Ethnolog. Mus., Athens; maces from Stara Zagora region, 13th–14th C, Kazanlik Mus., Bulgaria; *Manasses Chronicle*, Bulgarian 1344–5, Vat. Lib. Cod. Slav 2, Rome; *Psalter*, Bulgarian or Serbian c.1370, Bavarian State Lib. Cod. Slav 4, Munich; wall-painting, c.1355, *in situ* Zemen Monastery, Bulgaria; warrior saint Serbian wall-painting, c.1307, *in situ* Ch. of Our Lady of Leviska, Prizren.)

F3: Charles Thopia, Albania, mid-14th century

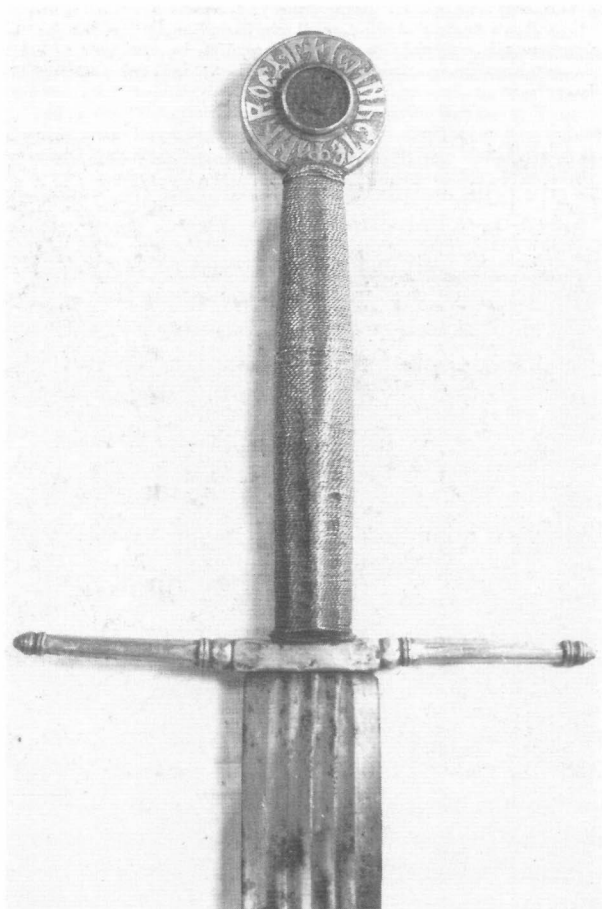
Although no picture survives of Charles Thopia, lord of Kruja and Petrala, a fine carved relief does illustrate his coat-of-arms and crest. Here his tunic, which is remarkably similar to early Ottoman court costume, is taken from a similarly-dated painting of

Peter Brajan, the *Jupan* or governor of a neighbouring region of Bosnia. Like the Serbian infantryman he is protected by a brimmed helmet and an even more massive *gorget* or *bevor*. (Sources: bronze-covered lead mace from Luk, Archaeol. Mus., Split; bas-relief showing armourial bearing of Charles Thopia, *in situ* Church of St. John Vladimir, Elbasan, Albania; *Peter Brajan*, Serbian wall-painting c.1335, *in situ* Church Karan, Yugoslavia; warrior saint wall-painting 1338–50, *in situ* Monastery Church, Decani, Yugoslavia; *Loyal Address from City of Prato to King Robert of Naples*, 1335–40, British Lib. Ms. E. IX, London; barbarian warrior in *St. Martin renouncing the sword*, wall-painting by Simone Martini, c.1317, *in situ* Montefiore Chapel, Lower Church of St. Francis, Assisi.)

G: Hungary & the Ottoman Vassal States, 15th century:

G1: Hunyadi Janos, c.1440

Here the great Hungarian leader against the



Ottomans is fully armoured in the latest style of Milanese plate-armour, including a *great bascinet*. Only his continued use of a typical Hungarian shield (bearing the Hunyadi arms), as well as the single edged *kesek* small-sword on his right hip, set him apart from the heavy cavalry of Italy or Germany. (Sources: effigy of the Lord Chamberlain Stibor, Hungarian c.1430, Budapest History Museum; armour from the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Grazie, 15th C, Castle Museum, Mantua; *kelet* swords, Nat. Mus., Budapest.)

G2: *Bosnian light cavalryman, mid-15th century*

The importance of light cavalry apparently increased in many areas in response to the staggering success of Ottoman light horsemen. In the 15th century their equipment still consisted of standard European arms, though worn in smaller quantities. This man has a locally decorated, Italian-made *bascinet*, a velvet covered *brigandine* to protect his body, and knee-covering *poleyns* worn without other leg harness. His sword has the characteristic Bosnian or Dalmatian *sciavona* hilt. (Sources: *Helmet of Skanderbeg*, Kunsthistorische Mus., Vienna; Bogomil tomb from Donja Zgosca, 1400–75, Archaeol. Mus., Sarajevo; wall-paintings, 15th C, *in situ* church Beram, Istria, Yugoslavia.)

G3: *Byzantine senior officer, early 15th century*

Here an envoy has been dressed in Byzantine court costume. This is remarkably well recorded in Italian as well as Byzantine art as a result of embassies sent to Europe by the last Byzantine Emperors. It already shows Ottoman influence, though it should be remembered that Ottoman ceremonial costume might also have been under Byzantine influence. This officer's weaponry is, however, almost totally Turkish. (Sources: sketches of Byzantine envoys by Pisanello, 1438, Art Institute, Chicago; Medal of John VIII Palaeologus by Pisanello, British Mus., London; *Theodore Metochitee*, mosaic c.1310, *in situ* Kariya Camii, Istanbul; *High Admiral Apocaucos* in *Manuscript of Hippocrates*, c.1342, Bib. Nat. Ms. Gr. 2144, Paris).

Sword of Stephan the Great of Moldavia, c.1480. The blade of this fine weapon may have been imported from Germany but the hilt, and in particular the pommel with its Cyrillic inscription, was probably added locally. (Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul.)

G4: Greek infantry archer, late 15th century

While the last Byzantine élite apparently adopted many Ottoman fashions, the ordinary people of Greece and the Balkans wore simple clothes similar to those of other Mediterranean peasants. Common soldiers appear only rarely in the background of illustrated sources but these suggest that mail was still widely worn, that bows were a favoured weapon, and that headgear was similar to that worn in Hungary. (Sources: *Fall of Constantinople*, early 16th C wall-painting, *in situ* Moldovita Monastery, Moldavia; late 15th–early 16th C wall-painting, *in situ* Sucevita Monastery, Moldavia.)

H: The Fall of Hungary, late 15th to mid-16th century:

H1: Moldavian light cavalry, early 16th century

This man is one of the earliest *hussars*, a type of light cavalry that was to become the most typical Hungarian soldier, as well as playing vital rôles in Poland, Lithuania, Moldavia and Wallachia. In fact it seems likely that their origins are to be found in regions such as Transylvania, Moldavia, eastern Poland and Lithuania. At this early period many *hussars* still fought as horse-archers. Like the famous professional infantry of 15th and 16th century Germany, they often adopted extravagant costume but wore little or no armour. The origins of the leather ‘wings’ on the boots of some eastern *hussars* is obscure, but the rest of their costume and equipment was clearly a mixture of central or eastern European, Turkish and even Russian styles. (Sources: *Fall of Constantinople*, mid-16th C wall-painting, *in situ* Moldovita Monastery, Moldavia; *Battle of Orsha*, Polish painting, early 16th C, Nat. Mus., Warsaw; Hussar equipment, engraving by Dürer 1514, location unknown.)

H2: Transylvanian infantryman, late 15th century

This man is a poorer warrior than the *hussar*, but he also adopts fashionably slashed sleeves, and a fabric-covered coif beneath his simple scale helmet. Otherwise he is protected only by a mail *hauberk* and iron gauntlets. The heavy *halbard* was clearly popular in Transylvania, but his *cinquedeia* dagger is an exotic import from Italy. (Sources: *Corvinus*

Graduale, Hungarian late 15th C, Nat. Szech. Lib., Budapest; painted altar-back, 1480–90, *in situ* Lutheran Church, Medias, Romania.)

H3: Hungarian hand-gunner, c.1500

Firearms were now growing in importance in Hungary. This man has an advanced matchlock with a crossbelt of prepared cartridges, a bullet-bag on his right hip—the powder being in a smaller bag on the back of his belt—plus a ramrod of reed. His helmet is a visored *salet* of German manufacture. (Sources: painted altar-back, 1480–90, *in situ* Lutheran Church, Medias, Romania; sword, early 16th C, Milit. Mus., Budapest; *Battle of Orsha*, Polish painting, early 16th C, Nat. Mus., Warsaw; gun based on pieces in Milit. Mus., Belgrade.)

‘Christian horseman slaying Ottoman rider’, *Fall of Constantinople*, Moldavian wall-painting 1532–37. The painted account of the Fall of Constantinople at Moldovita is one of the earliest Balkan illustrations of this event, made by men who certainly knew Ottoman troops; they may even have had access to illustrations of the last defenders of Byzantium. This particular horseman at the bottom of the main picture could symbolise Moldavia’s continuing struggle as champion of Orthodox Christianity against the Muslim Turks. If so, then he almost certainly reflects current Moldavian light cavalry *hussar* styles (*in situ* exterior of Monastery Church, Moldovita, Romania).



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