



# DPP

# *Digitising Patterns of Power*

Peripheral Mountains in the Medieval World

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Lecture • 8 June 2017 • 18<sup>00</sup>-20<sup>00</sup>

### **VLACHS FROM MACEDONIA IN THE MEDIEVAL WRITTEN SOURCES: Ethnicity and / or Social Category**

**Ass. Prof. Dr. Toni Filiposki**

*(“Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, Department of History, Skopje)*

There are a number of non-sedentary peoples (Vlachs, Albanians, Pechenegs, Cumans, Turks etc.) known in the medieval history of Macedonia. The issue of the origin of the Vlachs is still one of the biggest scholarly enigmas within the Balkan Medieval Studies. However, one should consider the thesis as dominating that remainders of the ancient Romanised Balkan population hide under this name, who at the time of the Great Migration of Peoples and the Slavic settlement (IV–VI centuries) in the Balkans retreated to the mountainous regions and focused their activities on cattle breeding. A particularity of the Vlach ethnic group is its presence in the early medieval times in the wider area of the Balkans. Based on Byzantine, Latin and Slavic sources their presence on the territory of Macedonia during the Middle Ages becomes an undisputed certainty. One can notice that issues related to the significance and content of the ethnonym “Vlachs” have been insufficiently researched in the Balkan Medieval Studies. It seems that the given ethnonym had a double layer of meaning until the 13th/14th centuries, primarily an ethnical and secondly a social one (cattle breeding) which overlapped. However, objective difficulties regarding the ethnonym’s interpretation appeared in the later sources, because the so-called secondary meaning (cattleman) started to dominate. The present paper will outline the respective transformation of the term “Vlach” based on a remarkable variety of sources.

### **THE VLACHS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS AND MOUNTAINS IN MEDIEVAL POLOG**

**Prof. Dr. Boban Petrovski**

*(“Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University, Department of History, Skopje)*

Vlachs are mentioned in the medieval written sources regarding the region of Polog (north-western part of Macedonia) both in the settlements and in the mountains. Original written records, which include references to Polog, offer a detailed insight into the medieval topographic nomenclature and historical geography of this region in the Middle Ages. The existence of at least 47 settlements (i.e. fortified towns, villages, nucleuses of hamlets and hamlets) is attested. Certainly, there must have been other settlements as well, and even towns (e.g. Sobri and Trnovo), which are not recorded in the written sources. The presence of Vlachs in these settlements is documented by the medieval written sources, and in some cases it may be surmised, although the respective evidence is lacking or incomplete.

The paper will amongst others focus on sources from ca. 1343 regarding the Monastery of Bogorodica Htetovska (Monastery of the Holy Virgin of Htetovo), which contain data on the Vlachs as a population in the mountains. Although there is a dispute in the contemporary scholarly literature, whether the Vlachs were an ethnic group or a specific kind of dependent population, we are going to analyse the respective sources and shed new light on the presence of the Vlachs in Polog from the end of the 13th to the middle of 14th century.

In cooperation with the  
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**Tabula Imperii Byzantini**



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