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ON THE ARMAMENT IN THE MILITARY CONFLICTS IN LATIN ROMANIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 13TH CENTURY

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Abstract. The beginning of the 13th century marked a particularly intense period of military clashes in the Balkans, especially in the lands of Latin Romania, resulting from the Fourth Crusade and the rise of the Latin Empire (1204 – 1261). In these military campaigns, different military systems and correspondingly different types of armament collided: the traditional Byzantine warfare, the Bulgarians' and Cumans' one, and the Latin Western European military art. The author analyzes the key characteristics of the armament and the modes of warfare typical of these three political powers. In conclusion, the author draws some basic findings about the specific characteristics and mutual influences in the military clashes in the lands of Latin Romania during the considered period.

Keywords: Latin Romania; Fourth Crusade; Latin Empire; medieval warfare

Valuable insights into the weaponry and military systems of the late 12th and early 13th centuries are derived primarily from written sources concerning the Third and Fourth Crusades. First, I would place the greatest importance on the descriptions of Latin weapons and the model of warfare. Information about the armament of the crusading troops of Emperor Friedrich I, Barbarossa, during the campaign through the Balkans in 1189 – 1190 is provided by *Expeditio Friderici I*. During the crossing of the *Bulgarian Forest*, the archers who ambushed the Crusaders were surrounded by squires and crossbowmen (Historia de expeditione 1965, p. 253)¹. This is a clear indication that the Crusader army employed numerous crossbowmen and that the crossbow was an extremely effective and popular weapon during the period. The crossbow and crossbowmen are mentioned in several other places in the text. Still, the sources in question do not offer more detailed information about the types of defensive and offensive weaponry in the crusading army. The only additional information about the armament comes from a letter of Emperor Friedrich I to his son Heinrich, which also mentions archers who acted successfully against bandits in the *Bulgarian Forest* (Georgiev 1931 – 1932, p. 259). The information

about the armament of the troops of the Fourth Crusade is more detailed in the chronicle of Geoffroy de Villehardouin. The first information appears in the fall of 1202 when the Crusader fleet was still in Venice. Describing a clash between Franks and Venetians in the captured city of Zadar, Geoffroy de Villehardouin mentions swords, long and short spears, and crossbows (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 54)². It seems that the crossbowmen were often mounted as well, since during the unblocking of Renier de Trit in the Asen's fortress in 1206, they were sent ahead as scouts with turcopules and mounted archers with crossbows (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 121). In addition to crossbowmen, Villehardouin specifically attests to archers. Usually, in a battle, these archers went ahead of the knights, sergeants, and shield-bearers (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 81). Next, describing events in June 1203, Villehardouin also notes helmets (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 66). Elsewhere, in his account of the Franks climbing and fighting on the walls of Constantinople during the first assault in 1203, the author describes them as being armed with axes and swords – **haches et as espees**. (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, pp. 69 – 70). Geoffroy de Villehardouin uses two terms for sword-like weapons – *espee* and *glaive* (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 83). Describing the death of the Latin ruler of Thessaloniki – Boniface de Monferrat in a battle with the Bulgarians in 1207, Villehardouin points out that before his death, Boniface held a *glaive* in his hands (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 133)³. In summary, the most common weapons in the chronicle are the sword, falchion, long spear, short spear, and battle axe. As for the defensive armament, Villehardouin indicates a helmet with a visor – *les hielmes lacies* (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, p. 66, 127). The chronicler also notes a gambeson as a protective garment and shield (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen 1985, pp. 68 – 69).

Next, the chronicler gives valuable information about the fleet as part of the military power of the Latins, describing several vessels: *uissiers*, *nés de marcheans*, *galies*, *nés*, *vaissials*, *barges*. The *uissier* was a deep-draft transport ship built specifically for the transport of provisions, especially horses. This type of ship played an important–albeit indirect–role in the Bulgarian-Latin wars, as it enabled the Latins to maintain high mobility and swiftly transport cavalry between Asia and Europe. The next type of ship described by Geoffroy de Villehardouin – the *nés de marcheans* was similar to the *uissiers*. Other Latin ships described by Villehardouin were *galies* – the basis of the Venetian naval power in the Middle Ages. They were used quite successfully in the hostilities against the Nicaeans in 1207. Another type of ship mentioned in Villehardouin's chronicle is the **vaissials** – large, difficult-to-manoeuvre warships with pronounced overhangs at both the bow and stern. These vessels were owned by the Venetians, and according to the author, their number stood at seventeen in March–April 1207. Another term associated with the Latin fleet is **nés**, referring to a type of ship that took part in the assaults on Constantinople in the summer of 1203 and again in the spring of 1204. (Zhofroa dyo Vilarduen

1985, p. 84). Villehardouin also describes Byzantine barges used to transport troops during the assault on Constantinople in 1203. (Pentek 2004, p. 224). The above testifies to the variety of vessels in the Latin army. The fleet formed the backbone of the crusading army's transport and logistics and played a crucial role in the capture of Constantinople in the spring of 1204.

The next important aspect in the present study is the armament of the Bulgarians in the military clashes in Romania at the beginning of the 13th century. According to some researchers, the protective armor used by the Bulgarians during this period can be classified into three types: woven, plate, and chain mail (Arizanova 2015, pp. 151 – 152). Parts of chain mail armor were found during archaeological excavations in the palace of Tsarevets. Despite some advantages such as flexibility, easy portability, and relatively good protection, especially from slashing blows, this type of mail armor also had several disadvantages – they were vulnerable to arrows and a stabbing blow with a heavy and sharp weapon (Dimitrov 2008, pp. 145 – 154; Manova 1966, p. 69).

Fragments of chain mail have also been found in other places in the Bulgarian lands, but unfortunately, some have not been dated. Another type of protective clothing was the scale armor. A notable example is a 14th-century archaeological find unearthed in Building II, situated in the southeastern sector of the royal palace complex in Veliko Tarnovo (Rabovyanov, Dimitrov 2010, pp. 76 – 87; Rabovyanov, Dimitrov 2011, pp. 167 – 174; Arizanova 2015, p. 155). Another example of such scale armor also dates from the period of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom from the Nikopol fortress, again drawing parallels with defensive armaments from Central and Western Europe (Rabovyanov, Dimitrov 2010, pp. 77 – 89)⁴. A vital element of the Bulgarians' defensive armament during the researched period was the helmet. Helmet finds are extremely rare and only a few are dated, making their study difficult. A slightly protruding part of a copper helmet was discovered during archaeological excavations of the Tsarevets palace. The fragment does not allow researchers to restore its exact form and features (Arizanova 2015, p. 156). Better preserved is the cone-shaped iron helmet discovered during the archaeological excavations of the fortress at Pernik, which is dated to the 12th century (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, pp. 349 – 350). This type of helmet is associated with the South Italian Normans. According to the authors, it is clearly of Western European origin, and it likely belonged either to a Byzantine mercenary or arrived as war booty. Among the sgraffito ceramics found at Melnik from the 13th century, a fragment depicts a man with a tall conical helmet. Its shape resembles that of the one from Pernik fortress, indicating that its use likely continued beyond the 12th century (Arizanova 2015, p. 157).

A lot of the information about the body armor used in the 13th – 14th centuries remains controversial, and it needs additional research. Some conclusions can be formulated: 1) some Bulgarian soldiers had protective weapons such as chain or

scale mails, helmets, and others; 2) chain mails of metal rings and ones made of scales connected by sewing or rivets to dense material were used; 3) helmets were conical and in some cases with a neck guard; 4) the Bulgarian defensive armament was the result of a strong Byzantine and Western European influence, which does not exclude its specific vision and characteristics (Arizanova 2015, p. 159). Among the weapons used by the Bulgarians during the studied period were swords (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, pp. 346 – 347; Kamburov 2022, pp. 40–43), sabers, daggers (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, p. 347), and kisten⁵.

The sword unquestionably ranked among the principal offensive weapons of the period under study, with archaeological evidence indicating that some swords discovered in medieval Bulgarian lands were of Western European origin (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, pp. 345 – 355). Among the sources for the weaponry in the period, I can also include the miniatures from the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* (Ivanov 2017, pp. 489 – 504). An analysis of the miniatures offers valuable insights into various examples of both offensive and defensive armaments. Among the primary offensive weapons, two main types can be identified: a straight sword and a sword with a curved wedge, likely pointed on one side (Ivanov 2017, p. 492). Against the background of the relatively numerous miniatures in the four gospels, as well as the many images of elements of armament, swords are relatively rare, only four images (Ivanov 2017, p. 492). It is interesting to compare these images with miniatures from Royal Armouries Ms.I.33, dated to the late 13th to 14th century. The manuscript stands as one of the most significant Western European fencing manuals, illustrating swords and small buckler shields typical of the studied period. Some of these small shields resemble similar ones found in the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander*. Thus, comparing the two manuscripts reveals intriguing cross-cultural visual parallels regarding the depiction of small shields. The similarity of certain bucklers illustrated in the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* to those found in Ms. I.33 implies either a diffusion of martial iconography or a case of convergent evolution within late medieval Europe (Forgeng, J. L.(ed) 2018).

Next, among the weapons in the miniatures of the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* are spears. Two types of spears can be distinguished in the image: a short spear, approximately 1.2 to 1.5 meters long, and a long spear, about 2.0 to 2.2 meters in length (Ivanov 2017, p. 492). Notably, the manuscript portrays commoners and the poor armed with short spears, alongside warriors clad in mail and helmets. Furthermore, long spears are shown being carried by both infantrymen and cavalrymen. Most of the blades of the spears are of the same type, but some are more massive, with a diamond-shaped form. Unlike the spear, the bow is among the rare weapons in the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander*. The only image of a bow we find is on *fol. 123r*. (Ivanov 2017, p. 493). The illuminated bow is composite, but the schematic image does not show clear details. The bow was a common weapon in the Bulgarian lands during the 14th century, so its absence in this richly illustrated

manuscript raises questions that remain unanswered. The miniatures of the *Gospels of London* also present images of axes, but they are certainly not among the most common weapons. Only ordinary, non-noble people are armed with axes, often in a crowd (depicting the servants of the Jewish high priests in the Garden of Gethsemane)⁶. Since the axes depicted are the same type, they probably represent a type that existed, used both in everyday life and as a weapon. Finally, in the group of weapons, I can include several images of war clubs and one of a mace (Ivanov 2017, p. 493; Popov 2007, pp. 32 – 38; Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, pp. 347 – 348; Popov, S. 2015, pp. 212 – 234). The relatively rare and schematic depiction of this weapon is striking, and against the background of definite evidence for the use of maces during the period under consideration.

Next, the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* present specific images of protective equipment, among which shields occupy a significant place. The available illuminations lead to the distinction of two main categories – round and kite-shaped shields. Some miniatures do not allow a clear conclusion as to whether a small or a large round shield is represented, but depicting small round shields alongside large round ones is indisputable. Depictions of larger round shields, measuring about 50 to 60 centimeters in diameter, are also present, albeit less frequently than those of smaller round shields (Ivanov 2017, p. 494). Another form of covering in the illustrations of the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* is protective armor. Some of the presented warriors have short mail with sleeves just above the elbow (Ivanov 2017, p. 495). The armor depicted in the miniatures in question can be referred to as the *haubergeon* type (a short chain mail that protects the torso, shoulders, and thighs, without a chain hood or long sleeves).

A common item of protective equipment in the manuscript is also the helmet. The helmets found in the miniatures of the *Gospels of London* can be divided into several groups. First, I can distinguish the images of conical helmets, which are the most common in the studied miniatures. Some are short and others are tall and elongated towards the top (Ivanov 2017, p. 496). I can assume that both reflect existing elements on top of the helmet during the period in question. Among the depicted helmets, I can also point out the so-called *spangenhelm*.⁷ There are only two images of such a helmet, but they present a conical helmet made of four components. However, I must emphasize that conical helmets are far more common than the spangenhelm type and constitute the third subgroup among the helmets depicted (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, pp. 349 – 350). Clear in the depiction is the image of conical helmets with neck protection falling to the shoulders (probably from chained metal rings attached to the helmet) (Ivanov 2017, p. 496). Of special interest is the depiction of an open helmet with a broad brim, similar to the kettle hat type frequently used in Western Europe at the time⁸. The analysis of the aforementioned images from the miniatures in the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* demonstrates their value as a source of information on Bulgarian and Balkan ar-

mament in the period under study, alongside archaeological evidence. This visual information aligns with the traditions of armament and military practices in medieval Bulgaria and the Balkans, where centuries-old traditions, contacts with steppe peoples, and Byzantine influence strongly shaped both the weaponry and the model of warfare.

In the next place, I would dwell on the armament of another important factor in the military clashes in Latin Romania in the studied period – the Cumans. The Cumans are among the best-studied steppe peoples of the 11th to 13th centuries (Gorelik 2017, pp. 303 – 337; Świętosławski 1999). Notably, some archaeological finds related to Cuman defensive armament attest to the use of chain mail and lamellar armor.

Chain mails with a length slightly below the waist were found in the burials in Lipovets, Tahancha, and Chingul mounds (Otroshtenko, Rassamakin 1986, pp. 14 – 36; Rasovskiy 2016, p. 114)⁹. Next, I can list several Cuman helmets of different types. The one from Tahancha is conical and tall, the one from Lipovets is cylindrical in its bottom half and conical towards the top, and the third from Chingul is lower and semicircular. All three have neck and nasal protection, and two have iron face masks. Experts suggest that these helmets are largely of external origin – mostly Persian-Turkic – and were exclusively worn by the high Cuman aristocracy, which numbered only a few hundred individuals at most (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 115). Shields likewise form an essential component of Cuman defensive equipment. Archaeological findings reveal shields exceeding 50 centimeters in diameter, with a small metal umbo, leather coverings, and red coloration. Evidence further suggests that some shields were imported (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 115).

Also, sabers between 111 and 130 centimeters long, with a slightly curved wedge about 3.5 – 4 centimeters wide, a small guard, and a short pommel at the end of the handle, can be listed in the group of offensive weapons of the Cumans of the period (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 116). Spears are next, but as only one archaeological find has been found, it is debatable how popular the spear was among the Cumans (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 117). Also, the mace can be mentioned among the offensive weapons of the Cumans. Like the spear, the mace is also a rare archaeological find. Another artefact from Tahancha, Ukraine, has a warhead with a diameter of 4.4 cm. Similar ones were not found in nomadic graves but were often found in neighbouring Russian lands (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 117). The most used offensive weapon among the Cumans was the composite bow, with parts of bows, bow cases, and arrow quivers found in burials of the period. A long arrowhead with a rhomboid cross-section was also found in the Tahancha burial. I can also add to the Cuman horse equipment, specifically saddles, and spurs (Rasovskiy 2016, p. 118).

In the study of the Cuman weaponry, I can also note some attempts at quantitative analysis of the weaponry found in nomadic burials in present-day Northeastern Romania and Moldova (Ioniță 2013, pp. 115 – 150). Knives make up the majority

of items, followed by arrowheads, artefacts of lamellar armor, armor plates, sabers, daggers, arrow quivers, pieces of defensive armor, cuirasses, spearheads, axes, helmets, and remains of composite bows. It should be emphasized that these types of weaponry have been discovered in only a limited number of excavated graves and burial sites¹⁰.

The percentage ratio of the individual elements of defensive and offensive armament leads to the following conclusions. Foremost among Cuman weaponry were bows and arrows, while the numerous finds of stirrups underscore their extensive use and the significant role of horses in both daily life and military operations. To this group, I can also add the fragments of arrow quivers. The interpretation of the percentage of sabers is interesting, as it turns out that they were not that common. It could be admitted that they were rarely laid with the deceased and were handed down from generation to generation. Not every warrior possessed a saber, but rather another cutting or stabbing weapon, such as a long dagger. Also notable is the low percentage of defensive weaponry items, as well as spearheads, metal helmets, and battle axes. This leads to the conclusion that the typical warrior-nomad of these territories and the researched period was a light horseman, armed mainly with a bow and arrow. A small percentage of these nomads possessed a lamellar armor, chain mail, or breastplate. Even fewer had metal helmets, spears, and battle axes.

Byzantine weaponry represents another significant factor in the military conflicts that took place in the lands of Latin Romania in the early 13th century. It can be examined through both archaeological evidence and iconographic material (Haldon 1999, pp. 133 – 134)¹¹. Focusing on the group of defensive weapons, I can note that round shields were the most common (Kolias 2012, pp. 99 – 116)¹². Three types of shields can be found in the miniatures of the Madrid manuscript of the *Skylitzes Chronicle*: kite shields, small round shields, and large round shields (Kolias 2012, pp. 116 – 133)¹³. The first type is the most common in the chronicle, and shields are more common with infantrymen (Tsepov 2016, p. 14; Dawson 2007, p. 381). The kite shield appeared towards the middle of the 12th century, but the round one remained predominant (Theotokis 2018, p. 457). In the 13th century, the triangular shield appeared as a new element of weaponry (Grotowski 2010, p. 235)¹⁴. As for helmets, the old traditions of helmet design and production continued in Byzantium, and a form of helmet similar to those of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, but without nasal protection, appeared in the twelfth century (Theotokis 2018, p. 459). Many of these elements of defensive armament can be found in the miniatures of the Madrid Manuscript of the *Skylitzes Chronicle*. The helmets in these images are open-faced, in most cases made from iron and sometimes leather, judging by the characteristic curves of a softer material. In some miniatures, the helmets are equipped with protection for the back of the head and shoulders, probably made of leather and metal lamellas (Tsepov 2016, p. 10). This type of lamellar protection for the neck and shoulders is of Eastern origin and is absent from Western European

illuminated manuscripts (Tsepov 2016, p. 10). As noted by T. Kollias, Byzantine helmets can be classified into two main types: actual helmets and substitute forms. The latter have been made of thick cloth or felt (Kolias 2012, pp. 85 – 98)¹⁵.

In Byzantine textual sources, several terms are employed to refer to protective armor, among them **λωρίκιον**, **κλιβάνιον**, and **ξάβα** (Kolias 2012, pp. 41 – 50). Chroniclers more influenced by the ancient tradition also use the term **θώραξ**. They can mean different types of armor, requiring an adjective to define their type in specific cases, for example, **θώραξ φολιδωής** (plate or scale armor), **λωρίκιον ψιλόν** (soft armour made by textile or felt), and **λωρίκιον ἀλυσιδωτόν** (armor of metal rings) (Tsepov 2016, p. 11). Byzantine artists of the 11th to 13th centuries rarely depicted warriors wearing chain mail. Although there are various assumptions, the most plausible explanation is that this type of armor was not widely distributed in the Byzantine army. That is the reason I can note the *clibanion* (κλιβάνιον)¹⁶, which appeared as early as the 10th century (Theotokis 2018, pp. 461 – 466). It was originally sleeveless and waist-length, but cataphracts probably wore *clibanions* with sleeves and padded and quilted parts covering the body from the waist to the knees. The term is also employed in written sources to denote any form of lamellar armor. Certain examples were composed of scale-shaped plates and reached mid-thigh length. Comprehensive protection included, beyond the breastplate, lamellar sleeves extending to the elbows and abdominal defenses reaching as far as the knees (Dimitrov, Rabovyanov 2016, p. 348). Iron plates from lamellar armor were found in the Pernik Fortress. Also, circular metal shoulder protections can be found in isolated images (Kolias 2012, pp. 49 – 54). Another type of protective armor that was more accessible to many of the provincial troops was the *kabadion* (Tsepov 2016, p. 12 – 13). It was similar to the Western European *gambeson* and was made of several layers of leather, textile, and quilted fabric. There were two varieties of the *kabadion* – a longer one that covered the legs and was used by the cavalry, and a shorter one used by the infantry and horse archers (Kolias 2012, pp. 60 – 64). Complementing this armor were gloves and guards of thick silk, cotton, or metal (*χειρόψελα* or *μανικέλ(λ)ια*), which were used by the heavy cavalry. Another type of protection was the *podopsela* (ποδόψελα), which covered the lower leg of a warrior (Theotokis 2018, pp. 459 – 460)¹⁷. A further notable element is the **cremasmata**, a short skirt composed of strips of leather, silk, or cotton, designed to protect the area between the waist and the knees (Theotokis 2018, p. 460). Another element of the protective clothing worn by Byzantine warriors was the *epiloricon* (ἐπιλωρίκιον) – a padded, sleeveless coat worn over the *clibanion* (κλιβάνιον) (Dawson 2007, p. 387). Protective armor was also used for horses, covering the animal's head, neck, and chest. In the 12th century, chain mail armor was introduced into Byzantium under strong Frankish influence, likely due to its more affordable cost. Although chain mail was less effective at protecting the body, it was cheaper than lamellar armor (Kolias 2012, pp. 65 – 66). It is also important to note some

observations on the Byzantine defensive armament based on images of warrior saints from the studied period, which testify to the extensive use of hardened skin and bone in the protective armor (Dawson 2007, pp. 154 – 161)¹⁸.

Next, I can consider the offensive Byzantine weaponry, and as the first items in this group, I could focus on the sword and the knife (Grotowski 2010, p. 149). After the 10th century, the double-pointed sword prevailed, but the straight, single-pointed saber used by the cavalry was also found (Kolias 2012, pp. 149 – 182)¹⁹. The sword was a secondary weapon for the Byzantine horseman, after the spear, and is widely represented in the miniatures of the *Skylitzes Chronicle*. The straight, double-edged sword is most common, but there are also curved and single-edged weapons, probably sabers. Another offensive weapon used after the 10th century, mostly by horsemen, was the mace (Theotokis 2018, pp. 446). According to Nicephorus Uranus' 10th-century *Praecepta Militaria*, the mace was the primary weapon of the Byzantine cataphracts – the most heavily armed Byzantine cavalrymen. There is written evidence of the use of maces by the Byzantine cataphracts in the war with the Hungarians from 1167 (Tsepov 2016, p. 15; Yotov, Kolias, Eger 2022, pp. 52 – 53). In miniatures, the mace is less common than the sword and is most often a single weapon that seems to mark the higher rank of its bearer. In the *Skylitzes Chronicle*, the mace can be found either in isolated cases or as a secondary weapon of horsemen (Kolias 2012, pp. 197 – 210). Another weapon used by Byzantine troops during this period was the battle axe (Theotokis 2018, p. 448). Its design was close to the large Danish battle-axe, with a handle length of about 1.2 – 1.4 meters. Notably, the battle axe is depicted in religious contexts, including the *Skylitzes Chronicle* and illustrations of warrior saints from the period under study (Tsepov 2016, p. 15; Zlatkov 2018, pp. 169 – 189). Another weapon is the war club, which could be found only in miniatures from the *Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander* and in the *Skylitzes Chronicle* manuscript. Next, I can specify the spear (Kolias 2012, pp. 183 – 195). As expected, the spear was among the most-used weapons by the Byzantine cavalry (Theotokis 2018, pp. 450). Spear handling techniques were quite varied, but generally, it was not used for throwing. When the horsemen are depicted in a group, the artists' preferred method of attack is with a spear under the arm, which was typical of Western knights. In certain individual representations, the illustrated *Skylitzes Chronicle* portrays a spear held aloft above the head, ready to strike downward (Kolias 2012, pp. 211 – 243)²⁰. According to some researchers, three types of spears used by the Byzantines can be classified. The spears vary in length, with the first ranging from 2.4 to 2.7 meters, the second from approximately 3.5 to 4.6 meters, and the third—a notably long spear—measuring around 5.8 to 7 meters (Dawson 2007, p. 382). A special type of spear was the *menavlion* – a heavy spear, made of hardwood, between 2.7 – 3.6 m long, used against enemy horsemen, with its rear end sticking into the ground (Tsepov 2016, p. 15). An important and widely used weapon in the Byzantine armies was the composite bow, with a

range of about 225 meters and the ability to penetrate protective metal armor up to 90 meters (Theotokis 2018, pp. 451). This bow had a firing rate of 2 to 3 arrows every 10 seconds and was employed by mounted warriors as well. There was also a manual ballista, also known as *tzagra* (Theotokis 2018, pp. 453; Kolias 2012, p. 221). Mounted archers were an invariable part of the Byzantine army, both in military treatises and the descriptions of specific battles. The depictions of armor and helmets in the miniatures, combined with the integration of these heavily armed horse archers into mixed units alongside spearmen, conclusively classify them as Byzantines rather than nomadic allies, according to the Skylitzes Chronicle (Tsepov 2016, pp. 17, 19). Among the weapons of the Byzantines, I can also mention the crossbow and the slingshot (Kolias 2012, pp. 273 – 295). According to T. Kolias, the thesis about the discovery of the crossbow by the Byzantines as a result of Western and later influence is wrong, since the crossbow was known in Byzantium from the 10th century, after which it fell out of use and became popular later, under the reign of Alexius I Comnenus under the term *tsagra* (τζάγγρα) (Kolias 2012, p. 281, 287). Although most descriptions of the slingshot pertain to the Early Middle Ages, it can be assumed that this weapon was also used during the period under study – the 12th century to the early 13th century. The foregoing illustrates the extensive range of Byzantine defensive and offensive weaponry in the period under study, attesting to enduring traditions as well as significant external influences that shaped and improved the effectiveness of Byzantine military practices.

In conclusion, several general observations can be made. Foremost among them is that the confrontation, alongside the interaction, of diverse military systems and armaments in the territories of Latin Romania offers a highly nuanced and multifaceted view of early 13th-century military conflicts. To a significant extent, this clash and mutual influences, especially on the part of Eastern and Western European armaments on Byzantium and the surrounding countries, were not a phenomenon, but a result of centuries-old relationships. The Third Crusade and, especially, the Fourth Crusade significantly altered the nature of warfare in Byzantium and Latin Romania. The initial and significant military successes of the Latin Crusaders cannot be attributed to superiority in offensive and defensive armaments. The technological superiority of the Latins over the Byzantines and other natives had limited significance and manifestations. The only clear area of tangible supremacy at the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century was the effective use of ships and fleets by the Latin Crusaders, which granted them logistical advantages over the local warriors—Greeks, Bulgarians, and Cumans. The local opponents of the Crusaders in Latin Romania employed defensive and offensive weaponry that was a result of deep traditions and centuries of evolution.

NOTES

1. Strashimir Lishev's translation is incorrect, since the phrase "...*balistariis et militibus vallate*" is translated as knights and archers of stone-throwing machines. The more accurate translation is "*crossbowmen and armor bearers*".
2. Quite often the author indicates *darz* – short spears for throwing.
3. The modern term for this weapon may have been *faussar*, a single-edged weapon also known as *falchion*, *falcata* or *fauchard*, derived from *falx*, the Latin term for scythe.
4. According to the authors, the discovery of similar finds in Tarnovo and Nikopol testifies that the Bulgarian rulers used heavily armed cavalry, close in appearance to the Western European knights of the same period.
5. Kisten – a weapon with a short or medium-length wooden handle and a mace-like weight attached loosely to the wooden handle.
6. For depictions of armaments in visual sources see: Манова, Е. Средновековното въоръжение според някои стенописи в Югозападна България от XIII, XIV и XV в., – Известия на археологическия институт (ИАИ), 29, (1966) 69, обр. 3, 4.
7. The *spangenhelm* is a type of segmental helmet used for centuries, from Antiquity to the beginning of the 14th century. It is assumed that its origin is in the lands of Eastern Europe in the first centuries A.C.
8. This type of wide-brimmed open helmet, also known as *Eisenhut* (German), *chapeau de fer* (French), *kettle helm* (English), was widespread and used in the 13th – 16th century, mostly by ordinary soldiers. I can assume that a similar helmet was available to the middle urban stratum of the medieval Balkans and Bulgaria in 13th – 14th centuries.
9. See also: Pletneva 1973; Świątosławski 2006, p. 103.
10. The small percentage of burials with elements of armament leads to a significant discrepancy with the data from the written sources about the countless Cuman horsemen.
11. According to the author, the Franks, Normans, Pechenegs, and Seljuks exerted a strong influence on Byzantine armaments in the 12th – 13th centuries. See also: Kolias 2012.
12. According to the author, Byzantine shields can be divided into two groups depending on the material of manufacture: wooden and metal shields.
13. Kolias points to another type of large shield, covering the warrior from the legs to the shoulders. Foot soldiers carried this type of shield on the front line.
14. According to the author, the triangular shield appears in images from the 13th century and was influenced by the Crusades.
15. According to the author, many examples in the sources show that the helmet was often able to withstand a blow with a sword or an arrow, or could deflect the blow, respectively deflect the arrow.

16. The *clibanion* (Greek: κλιβάνιον) is a Byzantine lamellar protective armor made of metal plates (in the form of scales or lamellae) sewn onto leather or cloth, as well as a piece protecting the shoulders and back. The name is said to be derived from the Greek κλίβανος meaning “furnace” as this armor heated up when worn in the sun.
17. The author also defines it as a substitute mail.
18. The author notes that chain mail appears in images of warrior saints in the 13th century.
19. According to the author, the Byzantine sword was used for slashing rather than stabbing.
20. According to the author, Byzantine spears can be divided into two sub-groups: throwing and stabbing spears.

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