

JUSTINIAN'S BALKAN WARS. CAMPAIGNING,  
DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN  
ILLYRICUM, THRACE AND THE NORTHERN  
WORLD A.D. 527-65. BY ALEXANDER SARANTIS

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Balkan je bio važan. To je glavna ideja nove knjige Alexandra Sarantisa o povijesti i rimskoj politici u regiji tijekom vladavine Justinijana I. U prvoj usmjerenoj obradi carske politike na Balkanu tijekom navedenih godina, Sarantis, temeljeći se većinom na povijesti Prokopija iz Cezareje i modernih povjesničara, preispituje tvrdnju da Justinijan nije mario za Balkan, već da ga je koristio samo kao podlogu za regrutiranje za zapadnu i perzijsku kampanju. Kao istraživački predmet, Sarantis uzima „balkanske provincije“. Nema konsenzusa oko toga koje je područje Balkan, a koje nije. „Balkan“ i „Jugoistočna Europa“ često se smatraju istoznačnicama, ali oni nisu nužno to i ne postoji savršena sinkronizacija između njihovih ideoloških, političkih, povijesnih i geografskih granica. To se osobi-

The Balkans mattered. This is the central take away from Alexander Sarantis' new book on the history of and Roman policy in the region during the reign of Justinian I. In the first focused treatment of imperial policy in the Balkans during the years in question, Sarantis challenges the idea, resting largely with the histories of Procopius of Caesarea and taken up by modern historians, that Justinian did not care about the Balkans and merely used it as a staging post and recruitment pool for his Persian and Western campaigns. Sarantis takes as his unit of study the "Balkan provinces." There is little consensus as to which areas are part of the Balkans and which are not. "The Balkans" and "South-eastern Europe" are often seen as synonymous but are not necessarily so, and there is a very imperfect

to odnosi na države koje se nalaze u karpatskom bazenu sjeverno od Dunava – Sloveniju, Austriju, Mađarsku, Rumunjsku, Češku, Slovačku i južnu Ukrajinu – koje se često isključuju iz njih, iako su u određenim vremenskim razdobljima imale važnu ulogu u povijesti južnijih područja. Sjeverozapadna područja Hrvatske te Bosne i Hercegovine ponekad se također isključuju iz njih na osnovi geografskog položaja.<sup>1</sup> Stoga je Sarantis koristio fleksibilnu i inkluzivnu definiciju „Ilirika, Trakije i Sjevernog svijeta“ u naslovu svoje knjige te na taj način uključio provincije dijeceze Trakije i Prefektore Ilirik šestog stoljeća, kao i sjeverozapadnije provincije, Dalmaciju i Panoniju, koje su podjednako važne za njegov narativ, a koje naziva Sjeverni Ilirik. S obzirom na to da se knjiga bavi barbarima i carskim odgovorima na te barbare, razmatraju se i dokazi s područja sjeverno od Dunava u karpatskom bazenu, iz tzv. barbarika (*barbaricum*), ali Sarantis navodi da su oni ograničeni u usporedbi s dokazima i raspravama južno od rijeke, tj. s carskog (ili nekadašnjeg carskog) područja.<sup>2</sup>

Sarantis isprepliće različite povijesne niti među populacijama sjeverno i južno od središnje i donje dunavske granice kako bi Justinijanove akcije i reakcije stavio u odgovarajući kontekst. Na taj način naglašava važnost regije Istočnom Rimskom Carstvu u cjelini. Dojam koji se može dobiti je taj da je Balkan bio kako zaseban dio Carstva s vlastitom geografijom, populacijama i problemima tako i potpuno integriran u zamišljeni carski svjetonazor i u stvarnost carske administracije.

Sve se češće pri proučavanju obilježja kasnoantičke i ranobizantske povijesti na Balkanu uočava njegova marginalna pozicija kod velikog broja znanstvenika, kako antičkih tako i modernih. Kako Sarantis zamjećuje, mali broj antičkih izvora u većoj se mjeri usredotočuje na Balkan kad je Carstvo bilo u nepovoljnom položaju, obično zbog barbarskih prijetnji na tom području.<sup>3</sup> To se posebno odnosi na Prokopija, koji je glavni izvor za ranu Justinijanovu vladavinu. Kasniji izvori manje su oštri u tom pogledu: Menandar i još više nje-

synchronicity between its ideological, political, historical and geographic boundaries. In particular, the countries nestled around the Carpathian Basin north of the Danube River – Slovenia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and southern Ukraine – are often excluded even though they have an important role to play in the history further south at certain points in time. The more north-western territories of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are also sometimes excluded on geographical grounds.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Sarantis has used the flexible and inclusive definition of “Illyricum, Thrace and the Northern World” in the title of his book and in doing so, includes the sixth century provinces of the Diocese of Thrace and the Prefecture of Illyricum, as well as the more north-western provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia which are equally central to his narrative and which he labels Northern Illyricum. Given the book is concerned with barbarians and imperial responses to those barbarians, evidence from territories north of the Danube in the Carpathian Basin i.e. *barbaricum* is also considered, but Sarantis notes it is limited in comparison with evidence and discussion from south of the river i.e. within imperial (or former imperial) territory.<sup>2</sup>

Sarantis interweaves the various strands of history amongst the populations both north and south of the Middle and Lower Danubian frontier in order to give Justinian’s actions and responses appropriate context. In doing so, he is able to emphasise the region’s value to the Eastern Roman Empire as a whole. The impression one gets is that the Balkans was both a discrete part of the Empire with its own geography, populations and problems, as well as completely integrated into both the imagined imperial worldview and the realities of imperial administration.

An increasingly remarked on feature of Late Antique and Early Byzantine history in the Balkans is its marginal position in much of the scholarship, both ancient and modern. As Sarantis notes, the limited ancient sources largely focus on the Balkans when the Empire is on the back foot, usually vis-à-

<sup>1</sup> F. CURTA 2006: 4–5 i M. TODOROVA 1997: 21–37 općenito te M. SLUKAN ALTIĆ: 2011 o Hrvatskoj po tom pitanju.

<sup>2</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: xvii–xix, Maps 2–4, 18–19.

<sup>3</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 7.

<sup>1</sup> F. CURTA 2006: 4–5 and M. TODOROVA 1997: 21–37 generally, and M. SLUKAN ALTIĆ 2011 on Croatia specifically on this issue.

<sup>2</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: xvii–xix, Maps 2–4, 18–19.

gov nastavljač Teofilakt bili su zainteresirani za diplomatske odnose između Rima i Prvog avarskog kaganata koji su uvelike određivali povijest regije od 560-ih nadalje.<sup>4</sup> Kod modernih znanstvenika Balkan se obrađuje samo u pododjeljcima uredničkih knjiga ili u člancima o zasebnim, često vrlo specifičnim temama.<sup>5</sup> Namjera je djela *Justinian's Balkan Wars* smanjiti taj manjak literature i bolje smjestiti Justinijanovu vladavinu i njegovu politiku na Balkanskom poluotoku u dugotrajniji kontekst nemirnog razdoblja četvrtog i petog stoljeća te kasnijeg perioda opadanja u šestom i sedmom stoljeću.<sup>6</sup> Sarantis je tu odradio odličan posao: jedna od pravih prednosti djela je autorova ustrajnost u stvaranju smislenog konteksta – kako lokalnog i regionalnog tako i na području cijelog Carstva – za aktivnosti kako cara tako i stanovništva, kao i za probleme s kojima se susretao.

Sarantis također pruža smislen kontekst za svoje izvore, kako u svom uvodnom poglavlju tako i kroz cijelu knjigu, što umnogome pomaže čitatelju prihvatiti i procijeniti način na koji ih on interpretira. Kako je i za očekivati u bilo kojem modernom povijesnom djelu, Sarantis koristi sva dostupna svjedočanstva, pa tako uz literarne izvore koristi još i one arheološke i numizmatičke. Pri tome ističe one primjere kad se čini da su različiti izvori međusobno kontradiktorni te ih pokušava uvjerljivo objasniti. Međutim, valja primijetiti, kako to i Sarantis čini u različitim dijelovima knjige, da na Balkanu ponekad nedostaju sustavna i metodološki korektna iskopavanja.

Sarantis zauzima novi pogled na korisnost i pouzdanost pisanih izvora, koji su se ponekad pokazali kao „sve ili ništa“ u modernoj historiografiji zbog pristranosti i literarne hiperprodukcije. Sarantis se vodio jednostavnom i uvjerljivom pretpostavkom: iako su se glavni literarni izvori (Prokopije, Ivan Malala, Agatija, Teofilakt) nedvojbeno rukovodili općim stereotipovima te političkom i kulturnom pristranošću, oni su ipak velikim dijelom imali pristup prvorazrednim i drugorazrednim (a često i službenim) iskazima događaja koje prenose te je njihov cilj prije svega bio napisati istinu, a ne fik-

vis barbarian threats in the area.<sup>3</sup> This is especially true of Procopius, the main source for Justinian's early reign. The later sources are kinder: Menander Protector and his continuer Theophylact Simocatta in particular were interested in diplomatic relations between Rome and the First Avar Khaganate, which dictated much of the history in the region from the 560s onwards.<sup>4</sup> In modern scholarship, the Balkans is only ever addressed in sub-sections of edited books or in articles on limited and often very specific subject matter.<sup>5</sup> *Justinian's Balkan Wars* aims to address this gap in the literature and better situate Justinian's reign and his policies in the Balkan Peninsula in the long-term context of the turmoil of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries and the subsequent decline of the late 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>6</sup> And Sarantis does a good job: one of the real strengths of the volume is the author's persistence in creating meaningful local, regional and empire-wide context for the actions of both the Emperor and the populations and issues he was dealing with.

Sarantis also provides meaningful context for his sources both in his introductory chapter and throughout the book, which goes a long way to helping the reader accept and evaluate the way in which he interprets them. As must be done in any worthwhile modern historical text, Sarantis takes a multi-evidential approach utilising the literary sources, but also archaeological and numismatic evidence, noting and attempting to credibly account for those instances when they appear to contradict each other. It should be noted however, as Sarantis does at various times in the book, that systematic and methodologically sound excavation in the Balkans is sometimes lacking.

Sarantis takes a refreshing view on the utility and reliability of the written sources, which has sometimes proven to be a bit “all or nothing” in modern scholarship due to issues of bias and literary flourish. Sarantis operates on a simple and convincing premise: while the main literary sources (Procopius, John Malalas, Agathias, Theophylact) certainly followed generic convention and political and cultural bias, for the most part these writers had access to either first- or se-

<sup>4</sup> R. C. BLOCKLEY 1985: 13–15.

<sup>5</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 7–8.

<sup>6</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 12.

<sup>3</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 7.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. BLOCKLEY 1985: 13–15.

<sup>5</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 7–8.

<sup>6</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 12.

ciju.<sup>7</sup> Zbog toga ih Sarantis tretira kao „u osnovi pouzdane“.<sup>8</sup> U vezi lokalnog stanovništva na Balkanu posebnu pozornost pridaje epigrafskim i provincijalnim pravnim svjedočanstvima kao pokazateljima njihova socio-ekonomskog sastava, carske aktivnosti na lokalnoj razini (posebno u pogledu građevinske aktivnosti i administrativnih reformi), ali i percepcije tih zajednica o carskoj aktivnosti.<sup>9</sup> Važnost ove dvosmjerne dinamike ponekad se zanemaruje u modernoj historiografiji koja se bavi carevima i njihovim aktivnostima, ali Sarantis pokazuje da su „srca i umovi“ bili jednako važan faktor u učinkovitosti carskih mjera kao i snaga cigle i žbuke vojnih utvrda.

Nakon početnog dijela u kojem se obrađuju izvori, historiografija i metodologija, knjiga je kasnije podijeljena po vremenskim razdobljima. Prvo poglavlje o Justinijanovim ranim godinama te drugo poglavlje o unutarnjim carskim reformama u regiji pružaju alate pomoću kojih se može ocijeniti uspjeh ili neuspjeh Justinijanovih kasnijih godina, kao i njegovih nasljednika (makar nakratko) na Balkanu. Stanje stvari na početku Justinijanove vladavine je jasno. Goti u Europi, Vandali u sjevernoj Africi i Perzija na istoku bili su najveće fizičke prijetnje. Zapadni Ilirik bio je u rukama Gota, a Trakija i istočni Ilirik bili su pod slabom carskom vlašću i prolazili su kroz brze društveno-ekonomske promjene (smanjivanje naselja, centraliziranje manjih utvrđenja, zatvaranje lokalnog stanovništva u odnosu na druge itd.). Teološke rasprave bile su još jedna od Justinijanovih glavnih briga i imale su poseban značaj na Balkanu u vrijeme kad je iliričko stanovništvo većinom bilo uz papu u Rimu, a ne uz cara u Konstantinopolu.<sup>10</sup>

Sarantis uvjerljivo pokazuje da je Justinijan rano u svojoj vladavini utrošio znatno vrijeme i sredstva na pojačavanje oslabljenih obrambenih sustava na Balkanu koji su preko stoljeća patili zbog hunskih i gotskih upada. Učinio je to na brojne načine, uključujući opširno fizičko utvrđivanje, administrativne reforme na regionalnoj razini te prokušanu metodu sklapanja savezništava s raznim barbar-skim narodima sjeverno od Dunava i Crnog mora

cond-hand (and often, official) accounts of the events they relate and their purpose, first and foremost, was to record truth not fiction.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, he treats them as “fundamentally reliable.”<sup>8</sup> Epigraphic and provincial legal evidence is given special attention in relation to the local Balkan populations as evidence of their socio-economic make-up, of imperial activity at a local level (particularly building works and administrative reforms) and of the perceptions of those communities of imperial activity.<sup>9</sup> The importance of this two-way dynamic sometimes gets overlooked in modern scholarship dealing with imperial actions and personalities, but Sarantis demonstrates that “hearts and minds” were just as important a factor in the efficacy of imperial measures as the strength of the bricks and mortar of military fortifications.

After initially dealing with evidence, historiography, and methodology, the book is divided according to time periods. Chapter 1 on Justinian’s early years and chapter 2 on internal imperial reforms in the region provide the means by which to evaluate the success or otherwise of Justinian’s later years and that of his successors (if briefly) in the Balkans. The state of play at the beginning of Justinian’s reign is made clear. Goths in Europe, Vandals in North Africa and Persia in the East were the biggest physical threats. Western Illyricum was in Gothic hands and Thrace and Eastern Illyricum were under only loose imperial control and undergoing rapid socio-economic change (settlement contraction, centralised small-scale fortification, inward-looking local populations etc.). Theological disputes were also a key concern of Justinian and had special significance in the Balkans at a time when Illyrican populations were largely aligned with the papacy in Rome rather than the Emperor in Constantinople.<sup>10</sup>

Sarantis convincingly argues that Justinian spent considerable time and resources on shoring up the fractured defences of the Balkans early in his reign, which had suffered from Hunnic and Gothic incursions for over a century. He did this through a number of means including extensive physical fortifications, administrative reform at a regional level, and the tried and tested method of alliances

<sup>7</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 12–18, pos. 15.

<sup>8</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 16.

<sup>9</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 167–172, 195–224.

<sup>10</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 1–3.

<sup>7</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 12–18, esp. 15.

<sup>8</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 16.

<sup>9</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 167–172, 195–224.

<sup>10</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 1–3.

kao što su krimski Goti i Heruli. Gledano u cjelini, teško je poreći da su te mjere činile koordinirani carski napor za učvršćivanjem dunavske granice i pristupom poluotoku iz Italije, a s Crnog mora i sjevernom barbariku. One su osim toga služile za zaštitu specifičnih ekonomskih interesa, poput trgovine na Crnom moru i carskih ispaša za konje na ravninama Trakije.

Čini se kao da povremeno Sarantisova proza i entuzijazam prema najpoznatijem kasnoantičkom caru impliciraju da su te mjere na Balkanu ostvarene isključivo zahvaljujući Justinijanu, iako u djelu postoji poveći dio koji je posvećen godinama koje su prethodile Justinijanovoj vladavini i koji jasno pokazuje drukčije.<sup>11</sup> Justinijanovi neposredni prethodnici Zenon (474. – 491.) te osobito Anastazije I. (491. – 518.) također su vodili brigu o jačanju Balkana te je izgledno da je, barem u nekim stvarima, Justinijan nastavljao njihov rad. Anastazije je postigao dosta uspjeha u obnovi ispražnjene carske blagajne te je mnogo investirao u popravak i učvršćivanje obrambenih sustava na Balkanu, u što se ubraja i popravak na tračkim Dugim zidinama, iako postoje dokazi da oni originalno potječu barem iz doba vladavine Zenona. Također je prilično vjerojatno da su mnogi zahvati koje Prokopije pripisuje isključivo Justinijanovu opsežnom fortifikacijskom projektu iz sredine šestog stoljeća zapravo Anastazijevi. Postoji nekoliko mjesta na crnomorskoj obali te na desnoj obali srednjeg i donjeg toka Dunava koji pokazuju popravke i zahvate obrambenog karaktera koji se datiraju u Anastazijevo doba ili se direktno referiraju na njega.<sup>12</sup> Ovaj niz careva, koji se proteže kroz gotovo punih stotinu godina, a koji se brinuo o Balkanu i na njega usredotočio znatne resurse, opovrgava to da je regija bila tek provincijsko zaostalo područje povoljno samo za novačenje. Balkan je *očigledno* bio važan te Sarantis tu ideju izlaže i zagovara kroz cijelu knjigu. Unatoč tomu, detaljnija rasprava o tome *zašto* je bio važan, kao i usredotočivanje na pokazatelje toga da *jest* bio važan, puno bi mu pomogli u daljnjem učvršćivanju argumentacije.

Ostatak knjige većinom je strukturiran oko interakcije između Justinijanove središnje vlasti i onih

with various barbarian peoples north of the Danube and Black Sea such as the Crimean Goths and Heruls. When taken as a whole, it is hard to deny that these measures constituted a concerted imperial effort to strengthen the Danubian frontier and the approaches into the peninsula from Italy, the Black Sea, and northern *barbaricum*. They also served to safeguard various specific economic interests such as the Black Sea trade and the imperial horse pastures on the Thracian Plain.

Sarantis' prose and enthusiasm for Late Antiquity's most famous Emperor occasionally seems to imply that these measures in the Balkans were achieved solely by Justinian, despite the inclusion of a good section on the years preceding Justinian's rule which clearly shows otherwise.<sup>11</sup> Justinian's closest predecessors Zeno (474 – 491 A.D.) and especially Anastasius I (491 – 518AD) were also concerned with strengthening the Balkans, and it is likely that in least some cases Justinian was building upon their work. Anastasius had done a great deal of good in restoring the depleted treasury of the Empire and had invested significantly in the repair and strengthening of the Balkan frontier defences, not least of which was repair work on the Long Walls of Thrace although there is evidence that they originally date at least the reign of Zeno. It is also quite likely that work at a number of sites which Procopius attributes only to Justinian's massive fortification project in the middle of the sixth century were actually the work of Anastasius. There are several sites on the Black Sea Coast and on the right bank of Lower and Middle Danube with repair and defensive works dating, or even directly referring, to Anastasius.<sup>12</sup> This line of emperors stretching over nearly one hundred years who were concerned with and focused considerable resources on the Balkans puts the lie to the region being regarded as merely a provincial backwater with recruitment possibilities. The Balkans *obviously* mattered and Sarantis arranges and argues this point well throughout the book. Nonetheless, a more detailed discussion on *why* it mattered as well as focusing on the indicia that it *did* would have served him well in strengthening

<sup>11</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 124–137.

<sup>12</sup> V. općenito F. K. HAARER 2006: 104–114.

<sup>11</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 124–137.

<sup>12</sup> See generally F. K. HAARER 2006: 104–114.



sjevnih barbarskih grupa koje su Carstvu prouzročile znatne probleme tijekom šestog stoljeća. Detalji narativne povijesti su impresivni, kao što su i autorova širina znanja i analiza dokaza. Dobar dio knjige s pravom se bavi onim barbarima koje se naziva Slavenima, a koji se spominju od ranih 520-ih, te Avarima koji su 560-ih godina prvi put pristigli s euroazijskih stepa. Osobito, međutim, treba istaknuti autorovu pozornost usmjerenu na akcije i interakcije s Gepidskim kraljevstvom na srednjem Dunavu u prvoj polovici šestog stoljeća, prije dolaska Avara. Suprotno konvencionalnim analizama perioda, Sarantis odolijeva teleološkom shvaćanju i smatra, na osnovi pomnog ispitivanja neposrednog konteksta događaja radije nego krajnjeg ishoda, da su Gepidi (konačno poraženi 567. godine) bili ti koji su predstavljali najveću prijetnju regiji do 560-ih godina, radije nego Slaveni (koji su u konačnici naselili velik dio Balkana). Dosta prostora posvećeno je i raspravi o manjku materijalnih dokaza o nekakvom realnom, značajnom lokalnom ili provincijskom efektu samostalnih slavenskih upada u tom periodu koji bi poduprli pisane izvještaje.<sup>13</sup> Prije se tu radilo o prirodi i snazi gepidske opasnosti koja je natjerala Carstvo na velike akcije na tom području, lako moguće uključujući Justinijanov ogroman fortifikacijski projekt, iako nema sumnje da su hunski/bugarski i slavenski upadi također bili faktor. Uistinu, Sarantis predlaže da je do povećane slavenske prominentnosti na Balkanu prije dolaska Avara vrlo vjerojatno moglo doći zahvaljujući gepidskom sponzorstvu u svojevrsnom savezničkom sukobu s Rimskim Carstvom. Ključni dokazi u tom pogledu su nekoliko zabilježenih primjera kada su Gepidi prevozili slavenske napadače preko Dunava u carski teritorij. Ova intrigantna i uvjerljiva ideja možda može objasniti kako su i zašto Slaveni bili toliko uspješni protiv Carstva tijekom dugog vremenskog raspona i na velikim prostorima, što je sporno pitanje među znanstvenicima. Ona je također u skladu sa slavenskom sposobnošću da u različitim okolnostima budu kooptirani pod strano vodstvo i da cvatu pod njime bez da pri tome kompromitiraju vlastiti način života ili materijalnu kulturu.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 357–374.

<sup>14</sup> V. A. L. WOOD 2016 (neobjavljeno).

the argument even further.

The rest of the book is largely structured around interactions between Justinian's central government and those northern barbarian groups which caused the Empire considerable grief throughout the sixth century. The detail of the narrative history is impressive, as is the author's coverage and analysis of the evidence. A great deal of the book is concerned, rightly, with the group of barbarians called Sclavenes, evident from the early 520s, and also the Avars who first appeared in the 560s from the Eurasian Steppes. Of particular note, however, is the attention paid by the author to the actions and interactions with the Gepid kingdom on the Middle Danube in the first half of the sixth century prior to the Avar arrival. In challenge to mainstream analyses of the period, Sarantis resists a teleological reading and argues that by carefully examining the immediate context of events rather than the eventual outcome, it was the Gepids (finally defeated and broken as a power in 567 A.D.), rather than the Sclavenes (who eventually settled large parts of the Balkans) who posed the biggest threat to the region up until the 560s. Considerable space is given to arguing for the lack of material evidence of any real significant local or provincial impact of independent Sclavene raiding in this period to back up the written accounts.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it was the nature and strength of the Gepid threat that drove a great deal of imperial action in the area, likely including Justinian's huge fortification project although there is no doubt that Hunnic/Bulgar and Sclavene raiding were also factors. Indeed, Sarantis suggests that increasing Sclavene prominence in the Balkans before the Avar arrival may very well have been aided by Gepid sponsorship in a kind of proxy conflict with the Roman Empire. Several recorded instances of Gepid ferrymen transporting Sclavene raiders both into and out of imperial territory across the Danube is a key piece of evidence in this respect. This intriguing and persuasive idea may go some way towards explaining how and why the Sclavenes were so successful against the Empire across large spans of time and territory, a vexed question in scholarship. It also accords with the Sclavene ability in vario-

<sup>13</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 357–374.

Na kraju svoje knjige Sarantis zaključuje da gubitak Balkana koji je uslijedio krajem Justinijanove vladavine 565. godine „nije bio neizbježan“.<sup>15</sup> Prema tome ostaje i dalje otvoreno pitanje: zašto je onda bio izgubljen? Sarantis u velikoj mjeri krivicu svaljuje na Justinijanove nasljednike, no time se nije opširnije bavio, što se može razumjeti s obzirom na to da se knjiga bavi samo Justinijanom. Unatoč tomu, u posljednjem poglavlju naveliko se razvija implikacija da ni jedan sljedeći car nije bio sposoban uspješno se pozabaviti Balkanom jer nije bio Justinijan, čak ni sposobni vojnici i državnici poput Mauricija (582. – 602.) i Heraklija (610. – 641.). Iako se, kako se čini, prilično sigurno može reći da su Justin II. (565. – 574), Tiberije II. (574. – 582.) i Foka (602. – 610.) u velikoj mjeri izgubili kontrolu u svojim odnosima s raznim barbarским i lokalnim stanovnicima na Balkanu tijekom svojih vladavina, to je pitanje kompleksno. Ono je svakako interesantan put za buduća istraživanja i zaslužuje obradu iste razine kakvu je Sarantis dao Justinijanu u ovoj vrlo dobro napisanoj i utemeljenoj knjizi.<sup>16</sup>

us circumstances to be co-opted and thrive under foreign leadership largely without compromising their way of life or material culture.<sup>14</sup>

At the close of his book, Sarantis concludes that the subsequent loss of the Balkans “... was not inevitable”<sup>15</sup> at the end of Justinian’s reign in 565 A.D. And so the question remains: why, in fact, was it lost? The fault is placed largely by Sarantis on the shoulders of Justinian’s successors but is only briefly examined, which is fair enough considering the book takes only Justinian as its subject matter. Nonetheless, the implication looms large in the final chapter that no subsequent Emperor was able to deal as successfully with the Balkans because they were not Justinian, even effective soldiers and statesmen such as Maurice (582 – 602 A.D.) and Heraclius (610 – 641 A.D.). Although it certainly is fair to say that Justin II (565 – 574 A.D.), Tiberius II (574 – 582 A.D.) and Phocas (602 – 610 A.D.) seem to have lost considerable control in their dealings with various barbarian and local populations in the Balkan region during their reigns, the question is a complex one. It is one that is certainly an interesting avenue for future research and deserves a treatment of the same calibre given by Sarantis to Justinian in this well written and researched book.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 406.

<sup>16</sup> Takva će obrada velikim dijelom činiti doktorsku disertaciju koju trenutno piše autorica na Sveučilištu Macquarie u Sydneyu (Australija).

<sup>14</sup> See A. L. WOOD 2016 (unpublished).

<sup>15</sup> A. SARANTIS 2016: 406.

<sup>16</sup> Such a treatment will in fact largely constitute the PhD thesis currently being undertaken by this writer at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

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