This chapter will discuss at more length the written sources that are related to the Slav migrations to the western part of the Balkan Peninsula. There are three major groups of sources which should be taken into account when discussing the appearance of the earliest Croat identity. The first are the earliest sources that mention the appearance of the Slavs during the events of the 6th and the first part of the 7th century; the second are the sources which mention the appearance of the Slavs in the western parts of the Balkan Peninsula, and the last are late sources for the fall of Salona, the provincial capital of Dalmatia, including the treaty, *De Administrando Imperio* by the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, written in the mid-10th century, which is considered to be the only more-less credible primary source that historians use as evidence for the arrival of the Croats.

When discussing events known as the ‘Slav’ migrations and the historical sources describing them, it is important to note a few often overlooked terminological problems. The term ‘early Slavs’ has caused confusion for modern perceptions of the past, because under that same term were described different groups of people, depending on the type of sources used to describe them. Archaeologically, the ‘early Slavs’ were people who used specific types of material assemblages which archaeologists associated with ‘Slavs’, such as pottery or fibulae. Linguistically, the ‘early Slavs’ were speakers of early forms of Slavic language, such as Common Slavic. Historically, they were people described as ‘Slavs’ by outside, foreign sources (Byzantine, Frankish, Arab), and there is no decisive evidence for the self-identification of ‘Slavs’ as Slavs until at least the 12th century. Finally, ‘early Slavs’ was also an ethnographic term, which was related to the history of certain

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1 This statement of Curta 2001a: 350 was questioned by Fine in his review of Curta’s book (Fine 2004), quoting the example of the inscriptions of Croat duke Branimir (879–892) as *dux sclavorum* being a genuine expression of identity. These inscriptions are made by foreign outsiders, Frankish missionaries, and therefore do not represent a genuine expression of Branimir’s identity. See discussion below, pp. 198–9, and also Curta 2008b: 158–9.
folklore practices, including pre-Christian beliefs, which were regarded as ‘early Slavic’ (or pre-Slavic) by modern ethnographers researching peoples who speak Slavic languages in the present. What is most problematic in both popular discourse and scholarly studies until recently was the prevailing assumption that all these different groups shared the same sense of identity and the same cultural and ‘genetic’ ancestry.²

The metanarrative of the Croat arrival in post-Roman Dalmatia was chiefly based upon the interpretation of the existing written sources on the ‘Slav’ migrations, the majority of which were written in Greek, with only a few in Latin. These sources inform us that starting in the 6th century Southeastern Europe was exposed to attacks by people named ‘Sclavenes’, but also called, or related to, ‘Antes’ and ‘Venethi’. From the late 6th and into the early 7th century, the Sclavenes were committing raids in alliance with the Avars and were often mentioned in the historical accounts together with them. Some of the sources were contemporaries of the events, but the majority were of a later origin, and drew upon the oral and written sources which they had at their disposal. The early sources which depicted the Slav migrations never mentioned the Croats, and the assumption about their arrival in post-Roman Illyricum is based mainly on evidence provided by the DAI, which dated their arrival during the rule of emperor Heraclius (610–640). In addition to the DAI are less reliable evidence of the fall of Salona, which is preserved in the narratives of the Spalatine archdeacon Thomas and the Chronicle of the Presbyter Diocleas.

The sources that reported on those migrations were recently scrutinised by Florin Curta.³ Although the focus of his book was based upon an examination of the archaeological evidence, he also successfully used post-structuralist approaches to the problem, in particular contextual and genre criticism of the written sources on Slav migrations. His scrutiny casts significant doubts on the ways in which these events have been seen in the scholarship, indeed, even the entire scholarly discourse on ‘the Slav migrations’. Curta pointed out that a significant portion of our ‘knowledge’ of the Slav migration has been derived from ancient writers who described them as ‘Others’ from the perspective of the educated Mediterranean elite, using literary and ethnographic stereotypes of their times.

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³ Curta 2001a: 36–73 (written sources from the period of the migrations).