PART THREE

BYZANTINE RULE IN THE
BULGARIAN LANDS, 1018–1185

Seals of Bulgarian Nobility in Byzantine Service

**Seal of Prusian, son of Tsar Ioan Vladislav.**
After Basil II conquered Bulgaria in 1018, members of the royal family and great nobles were co-opted in the Byzantine ruling class. Prusian, Vladislav’s eldest son, received the title *magister* in 1018. There are speculations that he engaged in an attempt to restore the Bulgarian state tradition and even sought Hungarian help for his projects, but the evidence is meager. This seal belongs to the foundation established or endowed by him. Edition: Jordanov, *Korpus*, 176.

(r) (image of Archangel Michael)
(v) Seal of the monastery of Prusian

**Seal of Alusian, Ioan Vladislav’s second son.**
The attribution of the seal is disputable, but it does seem to have belonged to Alusian, Vladislav’s second son. In 1018 he was made a *patrician*, married a noble Armenian, and in 1040 was recorded as military governor (*strategos*) of Theodosiopolis (now Erzerum) in Byzantine Armenia. He fell out of grace shortly thereafter. To reinstate himself in the emperor’s good books, in 1041–1042 he helped put down the Bulgarian uprising under Peter Delian and was granted the title of *magister* for his effort. His descendents Samuel Alusian, Constantine Alusian, David Alusian Alexios Alusian, and George Alusian were fully assimilated in the Byzantine system and held high provincial offices in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, documented by their seals. Edition: Jordanov, *Korpus*, 177, and 179–96 for seals of other members of the family.

(r) (image of St Basil)
(v) Lord help Basil Alusian *vestiarch* and *strategos*

*Saints’ Lives*

St Cyril’s Conversion of the Bulgarians (*The Legend of Thessaloniki*), southwestern Bulgaria, eleventh-twelfth centuries.

Although this historical forgery is most likely the product of a post-medieval environment, it does seem to contain a layer from the time of the Byzantine rule of Bulgaria. In its sentiment the *Legend* is close to the circle of apocryphal
works from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, which stress superiority in Orthodoxy and steadfast piety as specifically Bulgarian traits. The Byzantine attitude toward the Bulgarians is overstated and the Bulgarians’ pride in their written tradition and their Orthodox faith is emphasized in a manner echoing other works from the period. The verdict on its origins and specific purpose is still out. Edition: Angelov, Iz starata literatura, 2, with critical analysis of the two extant manuscripts.

I was born in Cappadocia and I studied in Damascus. One day, as I was in the church of the great Patriarchy of Alexandria, I heard a voice that came to me from the altar, telling me: “Cyril, Cyril, go to the land of the Slavic people called Bulgarians, because God has chosen you to convert them and give them the law. I was much saddened for I did not know where the land of the Bulgarians was. I went to Cyprus, but as I did not hear a word about the Bulgarian land there, I thought about turning back. I was afraid though not to end like the prophet Jonas and went to Crete. There they told me: “Go to the city of Thessaloniki.”

I went there and appeared before the metropolitan Ioan. He laughed at me when I told him [about the mission] and said to me: “Oh, mindless old man, the Bulgarians are cannibals and they will eat you.” Then I went to the market and heard Bulgarians talking. My heart got so fearful that I felt as if I was in Hell and in darkness. One day, on the Holy Sunday, I went out of the church and sat down on the marble, thoughtful and saddened. Then I saw a dove that was speaking and carrying in its beak a bundle of sticks, wrapped up double. It dropped them on my bosom and I counted them and found out that they were thirty two. I put them under my dress and took them over to the metropolitan. However, they sank in my body, and I forgot the Greek language. When the metropolitan send for me to join him at the table, I did not understand what they were telling me in Greek. Then everyone came and they marveled. Also, they hid me.1

However, the Bulgarians heard about me, and the great prince Desimir of Moravia, Radivoi of Preslav, and all Bulgarian princes gathered around Thessaloniki and waged war for three years, shedding much blood.2 And they said: “Turn over to us the man whom God sent us!” And they surrendered me. The Bulgarians took me with great joy and

---

1 That is, locked him up.
2 A possible echo of the sixth and seventh-century Slavic attacks on Thessaloniki.