

УДК 94(=511.145):327(=511.145:495.02:497.2)

## WAR AND PEACE IN THE PONTIC STEPPES (1300–1302)

*Aleksandar Uzelac*

*(Institute of History, Belgrade)*

This paper discusses events in the Pontic steppes after the death of Noghai and efforts of khan Tokhta aimed at the reorganization of the right wing of the Ulus of Juchi. The political instability, bloody conflicts among Noghai's sons, as well as conspiracies and revolts in which the khan's closest relatives also participated had grave demographic and economic consequences in the region lying between the Dnieper and Danube rivers. More than two years passed before Tokhta finally managed to establish the presence of central authority, while dealing with another important task at the same time – assertion of the Tatar supremacy in the lands bordering the Golden Horde.

**Keywords:** Golden Horde, Ulus of Juchi, Noghai, Tokhta, Chaka, Bulgaria, center – periphery, internal conflicts.

Turbulent events that followed the death of Noghai and khan Tokhta's policies aimed at reorganization of the lands that belonged to his bitter enemy are usually presented and outlined briefly. However in several recent studies, written by Russian, Hungarian and Romanian scholars, their significance was duly noted [13, p. 141–147; 43, p. 259–263; 58, p. 91–98]. A critical look at the affairs in the Pontic steppes between 1300 and 1302 is important for numerous reasons. At the first place, it casts a much needed light upon the ambiguous character of mutual relations between the central power and local steppe aristocracy; furthermore, it offers insight into internal organization of the western parts of the Golden Horde; last but not least, it provides the possibility to assess how internal struggles among the Tatars reflected on neighboring lands. All three above mentioned issues are discussed in this paper.

Considering the limited chronological frame of the text, there is no need to relate here in detail neither the causes, nor the course of the war between Tokhta and Noghai (1297–1299)<sup>1</sup>. It is sufficient to point out that

---

<sup>1</sup> The question of Noghai's adoption of the title of khan is another issue left aside in the text. It is attested by numerous coins bearing his name and the title discovered primarily in Isaccea, but also at other sites in the Danube delta, Crimea and in North-east Bulgaria [51, p. 191–214; 52, p. 245–258]. However, some of these findings were wrongly attributed to Noghai [28, p. 76–79; 29, p. 17–19]. *My gratitude goes to V.N. Nastich (Oriental Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences), who turned my attention to the last two references cited above.*

the decisive battle at the field of Kukanlyk (probably the river Kogilnikin the Odessa region [40, p. 163]) in late 1299 – early 1300 had tremendous consequences. The old leader of the right wing of the Golden Horde was captured and murdered at the hands of an enemy Russian soldier, while many among his men were either slain or fell into captivity and eventually sold into slavery [6, p. 102–104, 111; 25, p. 85–86; 31, p. 113–115, 122; 49, p. 489]. The ravages of war spread over the vast region of Danube-Dnieper interfluvium. Russian chroniclers wrote about the plight of the metropolitan of Kiev who, due to the war conditions had to abandon his seat, followed by many of his flock [5, p. 150; 20, p. 485; 21, p. 84; 30, p. 16; 53, p. 92–95]. Another testimony of the thorough waves of destruction was preserved in coin hoards discovered near Maurocastro (contemporary Belgorod Dnestrovskiy) and *Oteleni*, not far from Iași [9, p. 117–120; 14, p. 95–96; 19, p. 64]. The chaos resulted from the operations of the victorious Tokhta's armies, but also from the actions of those forces belonging to the defeated, but not yet destroyed party.

\* \* \*

Noghai left behind him three grown up sons – Chaka (Djeka) of unknown mother; Tekka, son of Chubei; and Turai, son of his main wife Alakha (Baylak) [25, p. 86]<sup>2</sup>. All three of them managed to escape the final bloodshed at the field of Kukanlyk by sneaking through enemy lines. After they retreated to the west, it was Chaka who managed to gather remnants of the beaten father's army, to take over the power and to proclaim himself as his sole successor. It was a prelude to a bitter and desperate struggle that led to the downfall of Noghai's descendants, described in detail by Mamluk historian Baybars al-Mansuri and reflected in the works of Rashid al-Din, Byzantine writer George Pachymeres and several other sources.

Although Noghai's sons were symbols of the resistance to the khan's authority, they did not represent a cohesive force. Relations between Chaka and Tekka were anything but harmonious and seeds of their discord were sown even during their father's lifetime. As we are told by Rashid al-Din, before the decisive battle the younger brother secretly entered the negotiations with some discontented groups who defected to Tokhta. The talks proved to be a ruse and he was captured by the rebels, only to be eventually released thanks to the energetic efforts of Chaka [25, p. 85–86]. Tekka received pardon from his father for his treacherous actions, but not from his older brother and the mistrust between them remained. When Chaka announced himself as his father's successor, Baybars al-Mansuri confers that Tekka again began to think about the defection [6, p. 104; 31, p. 115]. He enjoyed the support of two of his father's widows – Alakha

---

<sup>2</sup> Byzantine historian George Pachymeres says that Chaka's mother was Alakha [48, p. 290–291]. This is usually accepted in the literature, but, in accordance with Rashid al-din, Baybars al-Mansuri also points out that neither Chaka, nor Tekka, were Alakha's sons [6, p. 99; 31, p. 109].

and Chubei, who wanted to ask for pardon from the khan and to stop the further conflict. Chaka acted promptly in order to eliminate the opposition. He first sent his men to kill Teka and when they failed to perform the task, he did it on his own. Another victim of “the purge” became his stepmother Alakha [6, p. 104–105; 25, p. 86; 31, p. 115–116].

The sources reveal the existence of two confronting groups among the ruling elite of Noghai’s ulus. First one, led by Chaka was eager to continue the fight until the bitter end, while another, embodied in Noghai’s widows and his middle son Teka, openly expressed willingness to make peace with Tokhta and save what could be saved. The existence of personal hatred was not the cause of political disagreement; it just fuelled it to a greater extent and in these circumstances the physical elimination of close relatives did not serve any other purpose except to further deepen the crisis. Due to the committed fratricide, a conspiracy against Chaka was formed, led by two emirs: Taz, Noghai’s son-in-law and Tunghuz, brother of one of Noghai’s wives [6, p. 99, 100; 31, p. 109, 111]. Both were considered very influential among the local elite and the latter evidently enjoyed Chaka’s favors; he elevated Tunghuz to a position of his “deputy”, thus making him the commander of his armies [6, p. 105; 31, p. 116].

According to Baybars al-Mansuri, in 700 A.H. (1300–1301), immediately after the murder of Teka, the two leaders decided to organize an expedition against “Vlachs and Rus”, that is Bulgarian lands and western Russian principalities [6, p. 105; 31, p. 116]<sup>3</sup>. Slavic princes, who previously acknowledged Noghai’s supremacy, evidently renounced their allegiance to his successor, but besides its punitive character, gathering of manpower, horses and provisions necessary for the continuation of war might have also played important part in the organization of this enterprise. Whatever their initial intentions were, Taz and Tunghuz changed their plans as soon as they went far enough to be out of the reach. They held council, decided to turn back and to swiftly strike on Chaka, but it happened that he found out about their betrayal from a fugitive. Being outnumbered, he decided to flee to the country of As (Alans), roughly corresponding to the region of South Moldavia. He had with himself only a small retinue of 150 men, but he managed to swiftly gather and organize a new army, consisted mainly of faithful Alans. While Taz and Tunghuz were busy plundering enemy’s abandoned camps, he suddenly appeared and inflicted upon them a crushing defeat. Noghai’s daughter Tugulja heroically fought in the battle, on the side of his brother and against her husband Taz [6, p. 105; 31, p. 116–117]. Her role in the conflict is yet another intriguing detail that reveals deep discord among the members of Noghai’s family.

---

<sup>3</sup> Some researchers believe that term “Vlachs” should be interpreted as inhabitants of Vallachia or Moldavia, but Baybars al-Mansuri constantly uses this ethnonym for Bulgarians [5, p. 150; 30, p. 20; 58, p. 92–93].

Aware that bloody clashes among his opponents would serve his purposes, Tokhta initially did not interfere in the power struggles among Noghai's successors. But when Taz and Tunghuz suffered defeat and pleaded to him for help, he quickly responded by sending to them a large army, led by his brother Burluk. Encouraged by the support, the two rebel leaders announced they will continue the fight and Chaka, again faced with superior enemy, made a fateful decision. He decided to abandon his holdings, to cross Danube and to enter Bulgaria. It happened in late 1300 or early 1301 [6, p. 106; 31, p. 117]<sup>4</sup>.

In order to properly understand his motives, a note about Bulgarian-Tatar relations needs to be inserted here. In the early eighties of the thirteenth century, Noghai imposed his supremacy in Bulgarian lands, politically split between the two entities – Empire of Tarnovo controlling central and eastern parts of the country and Principality of Vidin, comprising northwestern regions lying on the right bank of Danube. Both were ruled by influential Bulgarian nobles of Cuman descent, belonging to Terter and Shishman family respectively. Not long after 1285, in order to strengthen the ties with the ruling dynasty in Tarnovo, Noghai decided to marry Chaka with a daughter of emperor George I Terter [48, p. 290–291]. The Bulgarian ruler soon lost Tatar support and in 1292, he was replaced on the throne by a local aristocrat Smilets, but members of his family still enjoyed Noghai's favors. According to Pachymeres, at the very end of the thirteenth century, Terter's son Theodore Svetoslav, then present in the lands north of the Danube, entered his marriage with Eyphrosyne, daughter of certain Mankous<sup>5</sup>, and grand-daughter of rich merchant Pantholeon<sup>6</sup>, while her godmother was another Eyphrosyne – Noghai's Byzantine wife [18, p. 177–185; 46, p. 92–93; 48, p. 290–291]<sup>7</sup>. The account of the Byzantine historian shows that the marriage was probably concluded under

---

<sup>4</sup> There are different opinions about the time of Chaka's crossing into Bulgaria – spanning from late 1299 to the summer of 1301. The date proposed here is based on the fact that Baybars al-Mansuri writes about Chaka's arrival in Bulgaria sub anno 700, i.e. after September 1300, and according to him, the pretender was murdered in the same year, i.e. before Sep. 1301. It must be taken into account that his stay in Bulgaria lasted at least several months.

<sup>5</sup> Mankous is just a grecisized variant of a Turco-Mongol name, either Mongke or Mangush [10, p. 226; 50, p. 179].

<sup>6</sup> Who may be identical with Pantaleo de Vicina, a merchant mentioned in a Genoese document dating from 1281 [39, p. 48, 173; 43, p. 260].

<sup>7</sup> It was usually supposed that Theodore Svetoslav had been sent by his father to Noghai as a hostage, but this long-held conjecture is groundless. Pachymeres mentions that the Bulgarian prince was impoverished and had to rely on Pantholeon's support, thus indicating that he was probably a political fugitive. The circumstances of his stay in the Pontic steppes are obscure, but on the basis of numismatic findings an intriguing hypothesis has been put forward by distinguished Romanian scholar P. Diaconu, according to which Theodore Svetoslav remained in control of the territories around Danubian fortress of Silistra after the dethronement of his father [45, p. 242–256].

the Noghai's auspices and this is further corroborated by Baybars al-Mansuri, who mentions that wife of the ruler of the Vlachs, i.e. Theodore Svetoslav, was a relative of Chaka [6, p. 106; 31, p. 117]. It may be assumed that after the death of Smilets in 1298, Noghai considered Theodore Svetoslav as an adequate replacement on the Bulgarian throne and therefore arranged his marriage with a suitable candidate from the wide circle of his kindred.

If such a plan, aimed at the restoration of Terter dynasty in Tarnovo existed, it did not materialize due to the ongoing conflict with the khan from Sarai. Theodore Svetoslav stayed in Tatar lands for the time being. During the year of troubles, marked by the bloody dissensions between Noghai's sons, the Bulgarian prince was numbered among Chaka's prominent followers. Despite his foreign origin, he was considered as an important member of the local elite<sup>8</sup>. He had an important role in Chaka's schemes, because of his influence among local nobility and general knowledge of his native country. Therefore, it is not surprising that a strategic partnership was concluded between them; according to Pachymeres, when Chaka invaded Bulgaria, Theodore Svetoslav managed to win over representatives of the domestic aristocracy for their cause. Consequently, he and his brother-in-law took control over Tarnovo with ease, not encountering any resistance [48, p. 290–291].

It was earlier thought that Chaka himself became the emperor of Bulgaria for a short time, but the hypothesis has been convincingly proved wrong [15, p. 71–75]. He was never crowned, nor did he have aspirations to the title. It was of little interest to a Chingisid prince, who, in the capacity of Noghai's successor, was already the nominal suzerain of the Empire of Tarnovo. He still possessed small army and he still enjoyed support among Tatar and Bulgarian nobility; undoubtedly, his aim was to secure foothold in order to organize a new force and to carry the flames of war back to the north.

His plans were abruptly brought to an end. Pachymeres writes how Theodore Svetoslav suddenly attacked his brother-in-law, captured him and eventually strangled him with the help of Jewish executioners, kept at the court in Tarnovo for such purposes [48, p. 292–293]. Baybars al-Mansuri gives somewhat different overview of these events, pointing out to the role of Tokhta in Chaka's demise. According to him, the ruler of the Vlachs, instigated by his compatriots afraid of the khan in Sarai, decided to capture Chaka. He then informed Tokhta about his actions and in turn, the khan sent the murder warrant [6, p. 106; 31, p. 117]. The same story is repeated by geographer and historian *Abul-Fida'* al-Hamawi (Abulfeda),

---

<sup>8</sup> Maybe it is not a coincidence that a certain Terkheriy, whose name reveals the affiliation to Cuman clan Terteroba, is mentioned among Noghai's noyons [6, p. 100; 31, p. 111]. His identification with Theodore Svetoslav is already proposed in recent studies [27, p. 249].

who added a bizarre detail – after the execution of Chaka, Theodore Svetoslav sent his head to the khan in Crimea [34, p. 176–177].

Describing Chaka's demise, Baybars al-Mansuri concludes that Tokhta's empire was thus relieved of its opponents and khan's wishes were fulfilled [6, p. 106; 31, p. 117]. But it was not yet destined to be, as Turai, the third son of Noghai, was still on the loose. His status and destiny during the previous events is illuminated primarily by Rashid al-Din. Using the family ties (according to the Persian writer, he was married to a daughter of khan Abakha [25, p. 86]), he decided to seek refuge in Persia, together with his stepmother Chubei<sup>9</sup>. The Ilkhanid sovereign Gazan gave them refuge, but firmly rejected to interfere in the internal Juchid disputes [26, p. 169]. Indignant, but determined to continue the fight, Turai eventually returned to his homeland in 701 A.H. (1301–1302), where he found a useful ally in none other than Tokhta's younger brother Sarai Buga, posted in the meantime at "Noghai's place". It turned out to be a miscalculated choice. Turai won Sarai Buga's favors and eventually the returnee managed to persuade him to overthrow Tokhta and himself become the new khan [6, p. 107; 31, p. 118].

Turai's actions also deserve a bit of a consideration. He is mentioned neither among supporters of Chaka, nor among his opponents, but it is evident that he was left out when *Chaka took the reins of power and elevated Tunghuz as the commander of his armies*. Furthermore, as Chubei, who followed him, was Chaka's adversary, it may be concluded that Turai's position also became precarious, if not directly life-threatening, after the murder of Teka. The question of his motivations in subsequent events is of no less importance. He returned from Persia only after Chaka's demise, when he became the oldest living member of Noghai's family and the natural successor of his father. According to Rashid al-Din and Baybars al-Mansuri he was driven by a desire for revenge, but it is obvious that his objectives went far beyond plain retribution. Turai aimed at nothing less than *coup d'état in the Golden Horde and his final goal definitely was the return of the family lands under his authority* [13, p. 147].

The moment for realization of these far reaching plans was exceptionally favorable. In the east, a great dispute arose over control of the so-called Blue Horde, or Ulus of Orda. After the death of Orda's descendant Konchi (Kunichi) in 1301, his sons began a battle for supremacy. Tokhta could not stay out of the conflict and as one of pretenders – Kuyluk, sought the help from Kaidu, master of Central Asia and de facto ruler of the Chagataid khanate, he sent military support to the other – Bayan [6, p. 107–108; 25, p. 67–68; 31, p. 118]. In the meantime, the conspirators in the west moved their army of some ten thousand men and crossed Volga.

---

<sup>9</sup> A doubt exists whether the account of the Persian historian is entirely plausible. Other Mongol genealogies do not make a mention of any marriage between descendants of Abakha and Noghai [8, p. 194–195].

However, Sarai Buga made a fatal mistake by making a futile attempt to win over Burluk to their cause. Burluk not only remained faithful to Tokhta, but he also hurried to inform him about the betrayal of their common brother. The khan was ready to face his opponents with the army he had at his disposal and as a consequence, the rebellion was crushed and drowned in blood. Its leaders were captured and killed by his orders [6, p. 107; 31, p. 118–119].

Approximately two years after Noghai's death all his sons disappeared from the scene. Teka was murdered by his older brother, Chaka met his fate at the hands of Bulgarian Emperor and Turai was captured and slain by the khan. Only one male member of the family remained – Noghai's grandson and Chaka's son Kara Kisek. One can only guess what his role in the previous events was. It is certain that he did not follow his father and it is not impossible that he assisted Sarai Buga and Turai, for according to Baybars al-Mansuri, after they were punished, Burluk sent his men to capture the young prince. Accompanied by two of his cousins – Cherek Temur and Yol Kutlu, Kara Kisek was unwilling to surrender his fate into his hands and instead decided to flee. Together with 3.000 horsemen, a small remnant of once mighty Noghai's armies, "they came to the land of Shishmanin the place called Budul (Vidin) in the vicinity of Kelar (King of Hungary)". The prince of Vidin gave them refuge and they stayed there "roaming in various places and feeding with their swords", i.e. working as mercenaries [4, p. 58; 6, p. 107–108; 16, p. 115–116; 19, p. 64; 31, p. 119; 42, p. 1101–1102; 58, p. 97–98].

Some historians have guessed that Kara Kisek's mother had been Chaka's Bulgarian wife. Even if that was the case (of which, not the slightest indication exists), his flight to Vidin must have been motivated by purely practical reasons. Unlike Theodore Svetoslav and princes of the Western Rus', there are no indications that Shishman used the existing circumstances in order to break his ties with Noghai's family. In the last decade of the thirteenth century, the Principality of Vidin benefited from the Tatar protection. Noghai's actions and diplomatic pressure forced Serbian king Stephen Urosh II Milutin to retreat his armies from Bulgarian territories and to make peace with Shishman in 1293 or 1294, thus bringing not only stability to the Northern Balkans but also the Serbian kingdom under the Tatar sway for a short time [2, p. 120–122; 57, p. 13–14]. Considering that Tatars provided military assistance crucial for the survival of the western Bulgarian state, thereby serving as a barrier against Serbian and Hungarian aspirations, Shishman's loyalty to Noghai's descendants doesn't come as a surprise. His decision to give refuge to Kara Kisek carried a certain risk, but nonetheless, it seems that it did not provoke khan's anger or retribution. Evidently, the young prince was neither willing to pursue the ambitions of his father and uncle, nor was a figure significant enough that could cause uproar and challenge Tokhta's dominance [16, p. 116–118]. At that moment, the khan had more pressing mat-

ters to deal with and on his list of priorities the eventual elimination of Kara Kisek was undoubtedly of secondary importance.

\* \* \*

Internal conflicts among Konchi's successors, although initially leading to Bayan's victory over Kuyluk, lasted several more years and must have depleted Tokhta's resources to some extent [32, p. 134–145; 36, p. 23–25]. In addition, a border dispute arose between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanids, although a full scale war in Transcaucasia was averted [6, p. 108, 156, 308; 7, p. 70–72; 23, p. 83–84; 31, p. 120, 196, 436]. Troubles in the east and the south were matched by combination of war ravages and natural disasters in the Pontic steppes that had disastrous consequences on local economy. According to later writers Al-Makrizi and Al-Ayni, after three years of poor harvests and loss of livestock, in 702 A.H. (1302–1303) a terrible drought hit the region, followed by pestilence and famine. Local population suffered to such a great extent that they were eventually forced to sell their women and children to Frankish and Muslim slave traders [6, p. 308, 359; 31, p. 436, 513].

The Pontic steppes were depopulated to a great extent. Some ten to sixteen thousand Alans, faithful Chaka's allies, en masse fled south of Danube in 1301 and entered the Byzantine service [35, p. 214–218; 48, p. 336–353]. The presence of Alan emigrants at the beginning of the fourteenth century is also attested in Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary [3, p. 253–254; 35, p. 160–162; 41, p. 49–53; 57, p. 16–17; 58, p. 124–125]. Another group that suffered the consequences of war was a Mongol tribe Hadarkin, but in their case it was a forced relocation, rather than voluntary emigration, that characterized their plight. According to Rashid al-Din, a majority of them settled in the west with Noghai, but after his defeat they were ransacked and dispersed throughout various regions of the Golden Horde [24, p. 190]. Probably, the relocation of some other insubordinate tribal groups also took place after Tokhta's final victory, but it is logical to assume that these actions were not conducted on a larger scale, as no other such evidence has been preserved in the sources.

It has been noted already that the khan abstained from any activities in the west during the first year after the battle of Kukanlyk. He eventually sent the army commanded by Burluk in order to help Taz and Tunghuz in their fight against Chaka, but it was only a provisional measure. After the Noghai's son beheaded in Tarnovo, Tokhta took first steps aimed at reorganization of the acquired territories, initially posting his brother Sarai Buga at Noghai's place. According to Baybars al-Mansuri, he also installed Kurmishi's son Yanji at the post of his late older brother Abaji and finally, he sent two of his sons – Ibasar and Tukhal Buga, to the domains in the west. While the former took over the position previously enjoyed by



his uncle, that is, the post of the commander of the right wing<sup>10</sup>, the latter was established in former Noghai's residence in the Danube delta – Sakchi and in the lands stretching as far as the Iron Gates, i.e. the westernmost parts of the Wallachian plains [6, p. 107, 108; 31, p. 117, 119]<sup>11</sup>. The final distribution and territorial division of the lands in the Pontic steppes, including Ilbasar's appointment, took place in 1302, after the rebellion of Sarai Buga and Turai was crushed.

In order to properly understand Yanji's installment it needs to be mentioned that at the end of the previous century three sons of Kurmishi controlled the region on the right bank of Dnieper, inheriting domains from their father. They were numbered among Noghai's *tumen noyons*, but in early 1299 they decided to defect to the khan's side. Consequently, Abaji and the middle brother Kharajin were killed in the clash with Chaka, Teka and Turai, while Yanji managed to escape [6, p. 101–102; 31, p. 112–113]. The return of the patrimony under his control reveals that he enjoyed Tokhta's favors and by this step the khan wished to show his adherence to legitimism. In general, the establishment of the central authority relied to the support of local elite, whose representatives changed their allegiances and swore fealty to the victorious side. Renegades Taz and Tunghuz also kept their privileges under the new government. Sources are silent in this aspect, but events that followed the enthronement of khan Uzbek in 1313 shed some light on the high status the two emirs enjoyed. According to Ibn Dukmak and Al-Ayni, Taz and Tunghuz were discontented because of the religious policies of the new khan and his adherence to Islamic faith and they conspired to overthrow him. Uzbek eventually managed to defeat and kill the rebellious leaders, as well as other influential magnates who supported them [6, p. 242–243, 362; 31, p. 323, 516; 44, p. 118, 120]. It is debatable whether the reasons of faith were really the main cause of their rebellion, but be that as it may, it is important to note that they had resources, followers and army large enough at their disposal. Therefore, their influential position in the local administration is not open to doubt<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> According to Baybars al-Mansuri, Ilbasar was initially sent to the river Yaik (=Ural). On the basis of that fact some historians supposed that Nogai had possessions in the Ural region, but it is not confirmed by any other source. Therefore, either mention of Yaik, or its connection with Noghai, could constitute a mere error; even if Ilbasar was indeed sent to the east, less than a year later he was transferred to the Pontic steppes. Kalmyk scholar E. Khara-Davan identified the river as South Bug, but without providing argumentation for his thesis [33, p. 179].

<sup>11</sup> Apart from a few exceptions, majority of researchers agree that the words of the Mamluk writer refer to the great gorge on Danube that divides middle and lower course of the river, situated on the border of modern Serbia and Romania. In Romanian language the region still carries the same name – 'Porțile de Fier', while in Serbian it is nowadays known as 'Djerdap', which stems from the Turkish word 'girdap' – 'swirl'.

<sup>12</sup> A vivid testimony of their activities in the Prut-Dniester interfluvium is preserved in the local toponyms – Tazlău and Tonguzeni [56, p. 320].

The khan's policies in the West had three different aspects: displacement of local nomadic tribal groups loyal to Noghaid, confirmation of the privileges to the representatives of the local steppe aristocracy who joined the victorious side and appointment of the close relatives to high positions. The khan's sons were still very young at the time and their nomination served as a symbolic sign of complete victory over the enemy; it rather gave them opportunity to reign, than to actually rule. As a final consequence, the special position of the westernmost ulus of the Juchids, i.e. its right wing survived. It was Ilbasar who became its head, while duties of the commanders in the west (Sakchi) and the east (the right bank of Dnieper), passed to Tukhal Buga and Yanji, respectively.

\* \* \*

During his lifetime, Noghai managed to assert his supremacy in the Western Rus', Carpathian basin and in the lands south of the Danube, but when the war in the steppes broke out, the dominant Tatar position in the region was shaken. The expedition of Taz and Tunghuz in 1300 reveals that the neighboring Slavic principalities used the favorable circumstances to sever the ties with the Golden Horde, but it did not last for long and Tokhta's final victory eventually led to the reestablishment of the Tatar authority. This process is much less documented in the sources than internal struggles among different branches of Juchids or administrative reorganization of the Pontic steppes, but it is nonetheless evident that it constituted one of the priorities in Tokhta's politics.

Especially meager is the source material about Tatar relations with Galicia-Volhynia at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Still, it may be taken for granted that Prince Yuri Levovich, who succeeded his father in 1301 and styled himself as the King of Rus', acknowledged supremacy of the khan in Sarai soon after his accession, as it is attested by anonymous contemporary western source – *Descriptio Europae Orientalis* [37, p. 41]. In 1302 a joint Russo-Tatar military expedition against Sandomierz took place, and this enterprise clearly reflects the influence of the Juchid central authority in the Western Rus' [22, p. 128; 30, p. 118; 54, p. 186; 55, p. 853].

Conditions in Bulgarian lands are slightly better documented. As we have seen, Theodore Svetoslav recognized the khan as his suzerain in 1301 and he did not hesitate to use the reconciliation with Tokhta to his own benefits<sup>13</sup>. He brutally eliminated local opposition to his government,

---

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of spurious circumstantial evidence, an opinion emerged according to which Tokhta ceded to Theodore Svetoslav the city of Maurocastro and coastal area around the mouth of the Dniester, as a sign of gratitude for the elimination of Chaka. However, recent critics rightfully dismissed the hypothesis [11, p. 101–106; 42, p. 1105–1106]. In my opinion, one evidence about the Bulgarian control of Maurocastro remains convincing enough – a Genoese document from 1316, stating that the “Emperor of Zagora” (=Bulgaria) refused to provide the compensation for the damage done to some traders “in Mau[r]ocastro and elsewhere” [38, p. 469]. None-

not sparing even the Bulgarian patriarch Joachim III and using as pretext for the execution his support to (Noghai's) Tatars [10, p. 112–114; 17, p. 27–33; 48, p. 292–293]. During Tokhta's lifetime, the Bulgarian ruler remained his faithful vassal and dependent position of the Empire of Tarnovo is reflected in oriental and western sources alike [6, p. 154, 320; 31, p. 197, 447; 47, p. 176]. Another testimony of strong ties between Bulgaria and the Golden Horde is provided by numismatic evidence. The mint in Sakchi, established by Noghai, continued its work after Tokhta's victory, up to 711 A.H. (1311–12) [51, p. 193]. At that time the monetary reform was carried out in the Juchid lands [12, p. 62–67], and its reflection, according to one opinion, can be even seen on contemporary coins minted in Bulgaria [1, pp. 104–112]. The western Bulgarian state – the Principality of Vidin, where Kara Kisek and his men found the refuge, also acknowledged Tokhta's supremacy during the first decade of the fourteenth century [37, p. 38–40].

Tokhta also established cordial relations with Byzantium and took as his bride Maria, the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Andronicus II [48, p. 294–295]. The government in Constantinople quickly realized the benefits of rapprochement with the victorious side in internal Tatar struggles and in the following years, in order to ensure the favors, it did not hesitate to send an occasional tribute to Sarai [37, p. 7]. Still, the Tatar sphere of influence in the Balkans was not restored to its full former extent. The distant Serbian kingdom remained out of the khan's reach and a contemporary of the events, archbishop Danilo II, stressed that the conflicts among the Tatars provided much needed relief for king Milutin and his state [2, p. 122]. Furthermore, in the plains between the Lower Danube and the Carpathians seeds of independent Principality of Wallachia were sown immediately after the death of Noghai. Eventually, in the third decade of the fourteenth century, favorable conditions on Tatar-Hungarian frontier enabled the energetic Wallachian leader John Basarab, who had strong ties with the Tatar world, to secure the independence of his state. However, during Tokhta's lifetime, the Golden Horde remained the dominant power in the region and considering the devastating consequences of the five years of wars and tribulations (1297–1302), it was quite an outstanding accomplishment. In all, Tokhta's final victory over Noghaid branch of the Juchids owed more to the well-conceived political strategy than to the involvement of military power. Albeit achieved at high cost, his measures brought long-desired peace and stability in the Pontic steppes and asserted the Tatar presence in the Lower Danube.

---

theless, the short-lived Bulgarian control over the Black sea port, attested in the document, does not refer to the time of Tokhta and therefore, it must be discussed in the light of events in the Black Sea region during the early years of Uzbek's reign.

## REFERENCES

1. Avdev S. *Monetnata sistema v srednovekovna B'lgariya prez XIII–XIV v.* [Monetary system in Medieval Bulgaria during the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries]. Sofia, Besike, 2005. 238 p.
2. Arhiepiskop Daniloidrugi. *Životikraljeva i arhiepiskopasrpskih* [Lives of Serbian Kings and Archbishops]. Ed. Đ. Daničić. Zagreb, Svetozar Galc, 1866. (reprinted by Variorum reprints, London, 1972). 386 p.
3. Bubenok O.B. *Alany-asy v Zolotoy Orde (XIII–XV vv.)* [Alans-As in the Golden Horde (13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries)]. Kiev, Istina, 2004. 327 p.
4. Veselovskiy N.I. *Han iz temnikov Zolotoy Ordy – Nogay i ego vremena* [Khan among the Tumen Noyons of the Golden Horde – Noghai and His Times]. Petrograd, Rossiyskaya akademiya nauk Publ., 1922. 64 p.
5. Gorskiy A.A. *Nogay i Rus'* [Noghai and Rus']. *Tyurkologicheskiy sbornik 2001 – Zolotaya Orda i ee nasledie* [Turcological collection 2001 – the Golden Horde and its Legacy]. Moscow, Vostochnaya literatura Publ., 2002, pp. 130–156.
6. *Istoriya Kazakhstana v arabskikh istochnikakh. Vol. 1: Sbornik materialov, otosyashchikhsya k istorii Zolotoy Ordy. Izvlecheniya iz arabskikh sochineniy sobrannye V.G. Tizengauzenom, per. i dop. izdanie* [History of Kazakhstan in Arabic Sources, Vol. 1: The Collection of Materials related to the History of the Golden Horde. Excerpts from Arabic sources collected by V.G. Tizangauzen, revised and updated edition]. Eds. B.E. Kumekov, A.I. Muminov. Almaty, Dayk Press, 2005. 711 p.
7. Kamalov I.Kh. *Otmosheniya Zolotoy Ordy s Khulaguidami* [Relations of the Golden Horde with the Hulaguids]. Kazan, Sh. Marjani Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2007. 107 p.
8. Kostyukov V.P. *Buddizm v kul'ture Zolotoy Ordy* [Buddhism in the Culture of the Golden Horde]. *Tyurkologicheskiy sbornik 2007–2008*. [Turcological collection 2007–2008]. Moscow, Vostochnaya literatura Publ., 2009, pp. 189–236.
9. Kravchenko A.A. *Srednevekovyy Belgorod na Dnestre (konec XIII – XIV v.)* [Medieval Belgorod on Dniester (end of the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries)]. Kiev, Naukova dumka, 1986. 126 p.
10. Kr'stev K. *B'lgarskoto carstvo pri dinastiyatana Terterevci (1280–1323)* [Bulgarian Empire during the Terter Dynasty (1280–1323)]. Plovdiv, Fondaciya B'lgarsko istoricheskoto nasledstvo, 2011. 452 p.
11. Kuzev A. *Vladyal li e car Todor Svetoslav nad Mavrocastro?* [Did Emperor Theodore Svetoslav rule over Maurocastro?]. *Godishnikna Sofijskiya Universitet – Nauchen Cent'r za Slavyano-vizantinichni prouchvaniya "Ivan Dujchev"* [Annual of Sofia University – Center for Slavic-Byzantine Researches "Ivan Dujchev"]. 1987, no. 1, pp. 101–106.
12. Mukhamadiev A.G. *Bulgaro-tatarskaya monetnaya sistema v XII–XV vv.* [Bulgarian-Tatar Monetary System in the 12<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries]. Moscow, Nauka Publ., 1983.
13. Mys'kov E.P. *Politicheskaya istoriya Zolotoy Ordy (1236–1313 gg.)* [Political History of the Golden Horde (1236–1313)]. Volgograd, Volgograd State Universitet Publ., 2000. 175 p.

14. Nudel'man A.A. K voprosu o sostave denezhnogo obrashcheniya v Moldavii v 14–16 vv.: po materialam kladov [Towards the Question of the Structure of Monetary Circulation in Moldavia in the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries: According to Hoard Materials]. *Karpato-Dunayskie zemli v srednie veka* [Carpatho-Danubian Lands in the Middle Ages]. Kishinev, Shtiintsa, 1975, pp. 94–124.

15. Pavlov P. Bil li e tatarin't Chaka b'lgarski car? [Was a Tatar Chaka Bulgarian Emperor?]. *Istorichesko b'deshte* [Historical Future], 1999, no. 1–2, pp. 71–75.

16. Pavlov P. Mongolo-tatari na b'lgarska voenna sluzhba v nachaloto na XIV vek [The Mongol-Tatars in Bulgarian Military Service at the Beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century]. *Voенноисторически сборник* [Military History Review], 1987, no. 2, pp. 112–120.

17. Pavlov P. Patriarh Yoakim III, tatarskiyat khan Chaka i tsar Teodor Svetoslav [Patriarch Joachim III, the Tatar Khan Chaka and Emperor Theodore Svetoslav]. *Duhovna kultura* [Spiritual Culture], 1992, no. 6, pp. 27–33.

18. Pavlov P. Teodor Svetoslav, Nogay i t'rgovec't Pandoleon [Theodore Svetoslav, Noghai and Merchant Pantholeon]. *Istoriko-arheologicheski izsledvaniya v pamet na prof. dr. Stancho Vaklinov* [Historical and Archaeological Researches dedicated to the Memory of Stancho Vaklinov]. Veliko T'rnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiy", 1994, pp. 177–185.

19. Paraska P.F. *Vneshnepoliticheskie usloviya obrazovaniya moldavskogo feudal'nogo gosudarstva* [Foreign Political Conditions of the Emergence of Moldavian Feudal State]. Kishinev, Shtiintsa, 1981. 176 p.

20. Polnoe sobranie russkikh hletopisey. Vol. I: *Lavrent'evskaya letopis'* [A Complete Collection of the Russian Chronicles, Vol. I: Laurentian Chronicle]. Leningrad, Akademiya Nauk SSSR Publ., 1926–1928. 580 p.

21. Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey. Vol. XVIII: *Simeonovskaya letopis'* [A Complete Collection of the Russian Chronicles, Vol. XVIII: Simeonian Chronicle]. Ed. A. Koshelev. Moscow, Znack, 2007. 328 p.

22. Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey. Vol. XL: *Gustinskaya letopis'* [A Complete Collection of the Russian Chronicles, Vol. XL: Gustinian Chronicle]. St. Petersburg, Dmitriy Bulanin, 2003. 202 p.

23. Pochekaev R. Yu. *Tsari ordynskie: Biografii khanov i praviteley Zolotoy Ordy* [Emperors of the Horde: Biographies of Khans and Rulers of the Golden Horde]. St. Petersburg, Evraziya Publ., 2010. 408 p.

24. Rashid al-Din Fazlallah. *Sbornik letopisey* [Compendium of Chronicles]. Vol. 1, T. 1, Eds. L.A. Hetagurov, A.A. Semenov. Moscow, Leningrad, Akademiya Nauk SSSR Publ., 1952. 197 p.

25. Rashid al-Din Fazlallah. *Sbornik letopisey* [Compendium of Chronicles]. Vol. 2, Eds. Yu.P. Verhovskij, B.I. Pankratov. Moscow, Leningrad, Akademiya Nauk SSSR Publ., 1960. 214 p.

26. Rashid al-Din Fazlallah. *Sbornik letopisey* [Compendium of Chronicles]. Vol. 3, Eds. A.K. Arends et al. Moscow – Leningrad, Akademiya Nauk SSSR Publ., 1946. 316 p.

27. Sabitov Zh. Voенnoe protivostoyanie Nogaya i hana Tokty [Military Confrontation between Noghai and Khan Tokhta]. *Voенное дело Улуса Джучи и его наследников – сборник научных статей* [Warfare of Ulus of Juchi and its successors – Collection of Scientific Papers]. Astana, Foliant Publ., 2012, pp. 246–253.

28. Severova M.B. I snova o monete s imenem Nogaya, a takzhe o redkoy krymskoy monete s dvumya tamgami [Again on a coin bearing Noghai's name and also on a rare Crimean coin with two tamghas]. *Desyataya Vserossiyskaya Numizmaticheskaya konferentsiya, Pskov, 15–20 aprelya 2002 g. Tezisy dokladov i soobshcheniy* [The Tenth All-Russian Numismatic Conference, Pskov. April 15–20, 2002. Abstracts and Reports]. Moscow, Gosudarstvennyy istoricheskiy muzey, 2002, pp. 76–79.

29. Severova M.B. O nekotorykh monetakh Nogaya [On some coins of Noghai]. *Tret'ya Vserossiyskaya Numizmaticheskaya konferentsiya v g. Vladimire. 17–21 aprelya 1995 g. Tezisy dokladov* [The Third All-Russian Numismatic Conference in Vladimir. April, 17–21, 1995, Abstracts]. Moscow, Gosudarstvennyy istoricheskiy muzey, 1995, pp. 17–19.

30. Shabul'do F. *Zemli Yugo-Zapadnoy Rusi v sostave Velikogo knyazhestva Litovskogo* [Lands of South-West Rus' in the Great Lithuanian Principality]. Kiev, Naukovadumka, 1987. 183 p.

31. Tizengauzen V.G. *Sbornik materialov, otnosyashchikhsya k istorii Zolotoy Ordy, Vol. 1: Izvlecheniya iz arabskikh istochnikov* [The Collection of Materials related to the History of the Golden Horde: Excerpts from Arabic Sources]. St. Peterburg, Imperatorskaya akademiya nauk Publ., 1884. 563 p.

32. Uskenbay K. *Vostochnyy Dasht-i Kypchak v XIII – nachale XV veka* [The Eastern Dasht-i Kipchak in the 13<sup>th</sup> – early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries]. Kazan, Sh. Marjani Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2013. 288 p.

33. Khara-Davan E. *Chingis-han kak polkovodets i ego nasledie* [Genghis-Khan as a Leader and His Heritage]. Elista, Kalmytskoe knizhnoe Publ., 1991. 196 p.

34. *Abulfedae Annales Muslemici, arabice et latine*. Ed. J. Reiske. Vol. 5. Copenhagen, 1794. 574 p.

35. Alemany A. *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation*. Leiden, Brill, 2000. 451 p.

36. Allsen Th. *The Princes of the Left Hand: An Introduction to the History of the Ulus of Orda in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*. *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 1985, no. 5, pp. 5–40.

37. *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis: "Imperium Constantinopolitanum, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Ruthenia, Ungaria, Polonia, Bohemia" anno MCCCVIII exarata*, Ed. O. Górka. Kraków, Academia literarum Cracoviensis, 1916. xlix + 70 p.

38. *Árpádkori új okmánytár. Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus*. Ed. G. Wenzel. Vol. 8. Pest Eggenberger Ferdinánd Akademiai Könyvtárnál, 1870. 479 p.

39. Brătianu Gh. *Recherches sur Vicina et Cetatea Albă*. Bucharest, Imprimeria nationala, 1935. 196 p.

40. Bromberg J. Toponymical and Historical Miscellanies on Medieval Dobruja, Bessarabia and Moldo-Wallachia, *Byzantion*, 1937, no. 12, pp. 151–180.

41. Ciocîltan V. Les Alans et le commencement des états roumains. *Studia Asiatica. International Journal for Asian Studies*, 2000, No. 1, pp. 42–76.

42. Ciocîltan V. Hegemonia Hoardei de Aur la Dunărea de Jos (1301–1341). *Revista Istorică: Serie nouă*. 1994, No. 5/11–12, pp. 1099–1118.

43. Ciocîltan V. *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012. 344 p.

44. DeWeese D. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Türkles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park PA: Penn State University Publ., 1994. 656 p.

45. Diaconu P. À propos des soi-disant monnaies de Jacob Sviatoslav. *Dobrudja*, 1995, no. 12, pp. 242–256.

46. Failler A. Euphrosyne l'épouse du tsar Théodore Svetoslav. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 1985, no. 78, pp. 92–93.

47. Gautier Dalché P. *L'espace géographique au Moyen Âge*. Firenze, Sismel, 2013. x + 464 p.

48. Georges Pachymérès. *Relations Historiques*. Vol. 3, Ed. A. Failler. Paris, Institut français d'études byzantines, 1999. 305 p.

49. Marco Polo. *The Description of the World*. Vol. 2, Eds. A.C. Moule, P. Pelliot. London, Routledge & Sons, 1935. 596 p.

50. Moravcsik Gy. *Byzantinoturcica – Die Byzantinischen Quellen Der Geschichte Der Türkvölker*. Vol. 2. Leiden, Brill, 1983. 376 p.

51. Oberländer-Târnoveau E. Byzantino-tartarica – Le monnayage dans la zone des bouches du Danube à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> et au commencement du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. *Il Mar Nero: Annali di archeologia e storia*, Vol. 2. Roma, 1996, pp. 191–214.

52. Oberländer Târnoveau E. Numismatical Contributions to the History of South-Eastern Europe at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 1987, no. 26, pp. 245–258.

53. Ostrowski D. Why did the Metropolitan Move from Kiev to Vladimir in the XIII Century?. *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs, Vol. 1: Slavic Cultures in the Middle Ages*. Eds. B. Gasparov, O. Raevsky-Hughes. Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Publ., 1993, pp. 83–101.

54. *Rocznik Małopolski*, Ed. A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Vol. 3. Lwów, Księgarnia Gubrynowicza i Schmidta, 1878, pp. 135–202.

55. *Rocznik Traszki*, Ed. A. Bielowski, Monumenta Poloniae Historica. Vol. 2. Lwów: nakład własny [self-published], 1872, pp. 826–861.

56. Spinei V. *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2009. xviii + 546 p.

57. Uzelac A. Tatars and Serbs at the End of the Thirteenth Century. *Revistade Istorie Militară*, 2011, no. 5–6, pp. 9–20.

58. Vasary I. *Cumans and Tatars – Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Publ., 2005. 230 p.

**About the author:** AleksandarUzelac – Research Associate, Institute of History, Belgrade, Ph.D. (History) (Kneza Mihaila 36/II, 11000, Belgrade, Serbia); aleksandar.uzelac@iib.ac.rs

---

**ВОЙНА И МИР В ПОНТИЙСКОЙ СТЕПИ (1300–1302)***Александар Узелац**(Институт истории, Белград)*

Статья посвящена событиям, последовавшим за гибелью Ногая, и усилиям хана Токты по реорганизации земель, принадлежавших ранее его противникам и расположенных между Днепром и Дунаем.

Политическая нестабильность, внутренний конфликт между сыновьями Ногая – Джекой, Текой и Тураем; заговоры и перевороты, в которых принимали участие и ближайшие родственники хана, в целом, имели большие демографические и экономические последствия в регионе. Только через два года хан сумел установить свою власть, но его окончательная победа была достигнута скорее *политическим*, чем военным путем. Он опирался на поддержку местной степной аристократии, которая сумела сохранить свои привилегии и позиции при новом правительстве. Правое крыло джучидов продолжало свое существование, хотя и под формальным управлением сына Токты Ильбасара.

Окончание войны было необходимой предпосылкой для восстановления татарского влияния в соседних землях. Хану Токте удалось утвердить татарское верховенство на нижнем Дунае и в Болгарии, а также обеспечить дружественные отношения с Византией. Его успехи являются бесспорными; но утвержденный баланс сил опирался, в значительной степени, на саму личность и харизму хана. Поэтому не удивительно, что конфликт между центром и периферией возобновился в понтийских степях в начале правления хана Узбека.

**Ключевые слова:** Золотая Орда, Улус Джучи, Ногай, Токта, Джека, Болгария, центр – периферия, внутренние конфликты.

**Сведения об авторе:** Александар Узелац – научный сотрудник Института истории, Ph.D. (история), (11000, Кнеза Михаила, 36/II, Белград, Сербия); [aleksandar.uzelac@iib.ac.rs](mailto:aleksandar.uzelac@iib.ac.rs)