

## РЕЦЕНЗИИ

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**“UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE DOG” – A NEW MONOGRAPH ABOUT THE GOLDEN HORDE AND ITS PRESENCE IN THE BALKANS**

(BOOK REVIEW: ALEKSANDAR UZELAC. POD SENKOM PSA.

TATARI I JUŽNOSLOVENSKE ZEMLJE U DRUGOJ POLOVINI XIII VEKA

[UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE DOG. TATARS AND SOUTH SLAVIC LANDS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY]. BELGRADE, UTOPIJA PUBL., 2015. 324 P.+ 12 P. WITH COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS)

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The article offers a critical review of the book of Serbian historian Aleksandar Uzelac, dedicated to the analysis of the relations between the Golden Horde and the Medieval Balkan Slavic states – Bulgaria and Serbia in the second half of the thirteenth century. The book is based on the wide corpus of Slavic, Latin, Byzantine and Oriental sources, archeological and numismatic findings, toponymy, as well as folklore tradition. The author offered a very insightful overview of the political relations between the Golden Horde and the Balkans, migratory movements of the populations from the Pontic Steppes to the Balkan region, and in addition he also dealt with the image of the Tatars in the eyes of its Christian contemporaries. The pivotal figure of the book is Nogai, whose career, status within the Golden Horde and achievements are analysed in detail. Moreover, armed with impressive erudition, the author challenged and revised many established misconceptions in Serbian and Bulgarian historiography. Another asset of the book is vivid and dynamic presentation of its contents, aimed not only at the specialists, but also the general audience. The shortcomings of this monograph are relatively few, with respect to omission of some archeological materials, but they do not diminish the general value of the monograph in question.

**Keywords:** new monograph, written sources on the history of the Golden Horde, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Nogai, Serbia, Bulgaria.

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In the previous year, Belgrade based publisher Utopia specialized for scholarly and popular historical literature, issued a monograph which may be considered as a pioneer work in Serbian medieval studies. The book, titled “Under the Shadow of the Dog – the Tatars and the South Slavic states in the second half of the thirteenth century” (Serbian title: *Pod senkom Psa – Tatari i južnoslovenske zemlje u drugoj polovini XIII veka*), is in fact amended and revised text of the doctoral dissertation of

Aleksandar Uzelac, a Research Associate of the Institute of History, Belgrade. It follows the Tatar influence in the Balkans, from the Mongol invasion of Europe to the death of Nogai (the "Dog" from the book title), an influential member of the Juchid line who in the late thirteenth century created de facto independent state in the western parts of the Black Sea steppes.

Besides the longer introduction and concluding remarks, the book is divided into seven chapters. It contains general index, summary in English language and bibliography, presented in the form of abbreviations of the titles cited in more than one place in the text. It is noteworthy that it is furnished with carefully selected color illustrations, photographs, miniatures and maps that have not only the aesthetic value. Among them one may mention a little known fresco from the Monastery of Dečani that depicts the Bulgarian-Cuman attack on the city of Thessaloniki in 1207. It is the only visual representation of the Cumans in Serbian medieval art, and one of the rare European ones that have been preserved; thus, it is of interest to the general scholarship.

At first glance, it may be noticed that the structure of the book does not follow precisely chronological pattern. In the Introduction (pp. 11–30), the author provided the overview of the sources, geographical considerations, as well as detailed explanation of technical and historical terms used in the book (such as the nomadism, the Golden Horde and Ulus of Juchi, the usage of the term "Tatars" in the sources as an ethnonym, exonym and politonym, etc.). First three chapters revolve around the Mongol invasion, establishment of the Golden Horde and the consequences of these events in the Balkans. The first chapter titled "The Storm above the Southeast Europe" (*Oluja nad jugoistočnom Evropom*, pp. 31–58), deals with the Mongol invasion and the passage of the Mongol armies through Serbian and Bulgarian lands. It is followed by the "Establishment of the Tatar sphere of Influence" (*Stvaranje tatarske sfere uticaja*, pp. 59–88), a chapter focused on the internal developments in the Golden Horde and the first decades of Bulgarian-Tatar relations, shrouded into obscurity due to the lack of sources. The third section – "The Time of Temptations" (*Vreme iskušenja*, pp. 89–120) deals with several smaller topics – the settlement of the Cumans in Serbia and Bulgaria on the eve of the Mongol Invasion, the mutual relations between the two Slavic states and separatist movements in Bulgarian lands during the second half of the thirteenth century, in which the descendants of the Cumans had an active and prominent role.

The main protagonist of the second part of the book is Nogai. Chapter four, "Nogai and his era" (*Nogaj i njegovo doba*, pp. 121–157), as the title suggests, follows the career of the Tatar commander from its beginnings in the Juchid-Hulaguid war to the apogee of his power. The next segment of the monograph, titled "Ulus of Nogai – the state within the state" (*Nogajev ulus – država u državi*, pp. 158–183) deals with the economic, social and religious conditions in the territories under Nogai's control, in the western part of the Black Sea steppes, as well as its geographic extent. The sixth chapter, which bears the same title as the book itself – "Under the Shadow of the Dog" (*Pod senkom psa*, pp. 185–230) is focused upon the relations between Nogai and the South Slavic world during the last two decades of the thirteenth century, an era during which the Tatar influence in the Balkans reached its heyday. This chapter describes and analyzes complex political relations between Nogai, Serbian king Milutin, Byzantine emperor Andronicus II, Bulgarian emperor George I Terter and prince Šišman, who ruled the northwestern Bulgarian lands. The last chapter of the book, "The end of an Era" (*Kraj jedne epohe*, pp. 231–257) is focused upon the civil war between Nogai and Tokhta and its consequences, most importantly the immigration and the settlement of the Tatar and Alan groups from the Nogai's lands in Bulgaria and Serbia.

The book of Dr. Uzelac is based on the wide corpus of Slavic, Latin, Byzantine and Oriental sources, archeological and numismatic findings, toponymy, as well as folklore

tradition. Armed with impressive erudition, the author challenged and revised many established misconceptions, such as the alleged hostage status of Bulgarian prince Theodore Svetoslav, son of George I Terter, who resided in the Nogai's lands at the end of the thirteenth century (pp. 198–203). Equally important is analysis of the nature of dependant status of the Serbian state of King Milutin and its ephemeral incorporation into the Tatar sphere of influence (pp. 219–224). In addition the author managed to correct chronology and timeframe of many important events in the Balkan history in which the Tatars participated. Throughout the book and especially in the “Concluding remarks” (*Zaključna razmatranja*, pp. 259–265), the ambivalent role that the Tatars played in the thirteenth century Balkans – as an external menace and as a protective force and valuable military resource of the South Slavic states, diligently and meticulously elaborated. This circumstance, together with the fact that the book is written in a vivid and dynamic style, aimed not only at the scholarly audience, but to the wider circle of readers interested in medieval history, is undoubtedly one of its main assets.

The shortcomings of this monograph are relatively few. Several important findings from the territory of Croatia related to the Mongol invasion are omitted as well as the discussion of the scarce archeological material which may be related to the Mongol passage through Serbian lands in the spring of 1242, despite the fact that it may corroborate the author's hypothesis about the route of Mongol invaders via so-called “Zeta road” (pp. 55–56). The phenomenon of the Tatar fear in the South Slavic world is not treated as a separate subject, although the author presented several neglected, but nonetheless extremely intriguing, apocryphal sources that provide further insight into the impact of the Mongol advance on the local societies (pp. 57–58). One important indirect consequence of Nogai's death and defeat, which lead to the temporary weakening of the Tatar influence in the region of the lower Danube, namely the emergence of the independent Principality of Wallachia in the beginning of the fourteenth century is unfortunately left out of the book.

These remarks are not aimed to, and should not diminish the general value of the monograph in question. In all, the study of Dr. Uzelac is very welcome refreshment in the Serbian medieval studies, whose importance is not limited only to the Serbian and Bulgarian historiography. After the works of the Hungarian scholar I. Vasary (*Cumans and Tatars. Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans*, Cambridge, 2005) and Bulgarian historians P. Pavlov and G. Vladimirov (*Zlatnata orda i balgarite*, Sofia, 2009), another study dedicated to the Tatar influence in the Balkans appeared, and most importantly, the one that greatly extends our knowledge of this phenomenon and goes several steps further than the earlier scholarship. Undoubtedly, it will become a standard reference title for the future historical and archeological researches. In this aspect one may applaud the fact that the author and the publisher decided to make the book freely available in electronic form and we may only hope that a slightly revised English or Russian edition of the book, which will take into account the above mentioned remarks and suggestions, will appear soon.

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**«ПОД СЕНЬЮ ПСА» – НОВАЯ МОНОГРАФИЯ  
О ПРИСУТСТВИИ ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЫ НА БАЛКАНАХ**  
(РЕЦ. НА: АЛЕКСАНДАР УЗЕЛАЦ. ПОД СЕНКОМ ПСА. ТАТАРИ  
И ЈУЖНОСЛОВЕНСКЕ ЗЕМЉЕ У ДРУГОЈ ПОЛОВИНИ XIII ВЕКА.  
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Данна рецензија представља критички обзор књиге српског историка Александра Узелаца, посвећеној анализи одношења између Золотој Ордој и средњовековима балканским славјанским државама – Бугарији и Србији – во другој половини XIII века. Књига основана на обширном корпусу славјанских, латинских, византијских и источних извора, археолошких и нумизматичких налази, топонимија, а такође фолклорној традицији. У књизи представљен веома детаљан обзор политичких одношења Золотој Ордој с Балканским регионом, миграцији насељеника из Понтијских степа у Југо-Источну Европу, а такође образа татара у очима њихових хришћанских савременика. Главном фигуром књиге је Ногај, његова каријера, статус и достигнућа у Золотој Орди анализирају се детаљно. Осим тога, аутору, који се истиче својом ерудицијом, успело је оспорити и ревидирати многе укоренившије заблуде у српској и бугарској историографији. Још једном предношћу књиге је њена јарка и динамична презентација илустративног материјала, који интересује не само специјалисте, већ и широку аудиторiju. Недостатака у овој монографији релативно мало, али они не умањују њену вредност разматрамог монографског дела.

**Кључне речи:** нова монографија, писмени извори по историји Золотој Орди, XIII век, Ногај, Србија, Бугарија.

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