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# **HOMAGE TO ACADEMICIAN DESANKA KOVAČEVIĆ KOJIĆ**

**TRADE, MINING, SETTLEMENTS, AND POLITICS  
IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE**

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## THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS IN MEDIEVAL SERBIA: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

**Abstract:** The questions of when and from where the Saxons came to the medieval Serbian state have long been present in Serbian historiography. This paper examines the views of Serbian historians from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to date, and places a focus on the methodological stance that the process of German migration into medieval Serbia can be explored only within the framework of European medieval history. The arrival of the Saxons in medieval Serbia was part of a broader pan-European demographic, economic and political process.

**Keywords:** Saxons, mining, Middle Ages, Serbia, Brskovo, town, Saxony, Hungary, mining law, Uroš I, King Vladislav.

The questions of when and from where the Saxons came to the medieval Serbian state have long been present in Serbian historiography. The history of the settlement of the German population in Central and Southeastern Europe has been extensively examined in European historiography.<sup>1</sup> We maintain that the arrival of the Saxons in medieval Serbia should be placed within the general medieval Central European

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<sup>1</sup> Jan M. Piskorski, "The Medieval Colonization of Central Europe as a Problem of World History and Historiography", *German History* 22/3 (2004) 323–343. Idem, "Medieval Colonization in East Central Europe", in: *The German and the East*, ed. Charles Ingrao & Franz Szabo, West Lafayette, Indiana 2008, 27–36. Nora Berend, "The Mirage of East Central Europe", in: *Medieval East Central Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, eds. Gerhard Jaritz & Katalin Szende,

context of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>2</sup> A major wave of German migration into Hungary occurred during the reign of Géza II (1141–1162). The Germans settled in Transylvania, from the region of Luxembourg. In addition to the southern Transylvanian territories, they predominantly settled in the northeastern (Spiš/Szepesség/Zips) and western (Šopron/Ödenburg, Bratislava/Pozsony/Pressburg, Kőszeg/Güns) peripheries of the country, as well as in its most significant centres. Military service was the primary duty for the Transylvanian Saxons, who had to defend the southern border region. The first German settlements were primarily rural and gradually urbanised as the commercial importance of the region grew during the 13<sup>th</sup> and especially the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This observation contradicts the frequently repeated claim that urbanisation in Hungary was an imported phenomenon under German influence. German miners most likely arrived in Hungary via Moravia and Czechia. The locations in the kingdom where silver exploitation first began on a significant scale were Rodna in Transylvania and Banská Štiavnica (Selmecbánya, Schemnitz) in Upper Hungary (Slovakia). Before the Mongol invasion (1241–42), the presence of German settlers can be attested in both places, where they introduced underground mining technology, replacing the initial surface extraction of ore. Regarding the privileges granted to German settlers, it is worth noting that these included freedom of movement and the right to elect their own judges, councils and priests. Moreover, the privileges granted to German (and other) settlers began to be extended to the territories they inhabited, rather than to individuals or groups. The first document marking this shift was the famous privilege of the Transylvanian Saxons, the *Andreanum*, issued by King Andrew II in 1224.<sup>3</sup> In Hungary, royal charters granted to towns did not follow any external model but were instead created in accordance with

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London 2016, 9–24. Erik Fügedi, “Das mittelalterliche Königreich Ungarn als Gastland“, in: *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung*, ed. Walter Schlesinger, Sigmaringen 1975, 471–507; András Kubinyi, “Zur Frage der deutschen Siedlungen im mittleren Teil des Königreichs Ungarn (1200–1541)“, in: *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung*, ed. Walter Schlesinger, Sigmaringen 1975, 527–566. Adrienne Körmeny, “Mittelalterliche *aedificatio terrae* im Lichte der ungarischen Historiographie“, in: *Historiographical approaches to Medieval Colonization of East Central Europe*, ed. Jan M. Piskorski, New York 2002, 145–176.

<sup>2</sup> We agree with the methodological stance of Erik Fügedi, who holds that the process of German settlement in Hungary can only be examined within the framework of European medieval history; see E. Fügedi, “Das mittelalterliche Königreich Ungarn als Gastland“, 472. We believe this methodological stance can also be applied to the process of German settlement in medieval Serbia.

<sup>3</sup> Katalin Szende, “Iure Theutonico? German settlers and legal frameworks for immigration to Hungary in an East-Central European perspective“, *Journal of Medieval History* (2019) 1–20, 4–5, 9–11. Konrad Gündisch & Mathias Beer, *Siebenbürgen und die siebenbürger Sachsen*, Munich 2005, 29–33. Liviu Cîmpeanu, “Written Rules and Privileges: Fiscal and Military Obligations of the Transylvanian Saxons in the Middle Ages“, in: *Government and Law in Medieval Moldavia, Transylvania and Wallachia*, ed. Martyn Rady & Alexandru Simon, London 2013, 37–42, 37.

local conditions, often incorporating elements of local customary law.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it should be emphasised that the collective privileges for the Transylvanian Saxons, issued in 1224, as well as the charter of the Saxons of Spiš (Szepes), issued in 1271 and reaffirmed in 1317, rendered unnecessary the promotion of individual settlements within these regions.<sup>5</sup>

The matter of the arrival of the German population in medieval Serbia drew the attention of Mavro Orbini, who believed that Stefan, the Rascian King, brought to the country Germans skilled in mining. They opened mines, and the King thus grew exceedingly wealthy.<sup>6</sup> Jakov Lukarević asserted that the development of intensive mining activity began at the time of ban Kulin.<sup>7</sup> Nikola Radojčić dedicated an entire study to this legend, explaining the motives behind its emergence.<sup>8</sup> Jovan Rajić attributed to King Vladislav the credit of having brought skilled miners from *Alemannic lands*, who revitalised the Serbian kingdom economically.<sup>9</sup> Čedomilj Mijatović repeatedly addressed the question of when the Saxons arrived in Serbia. In two works, referring to Jovan Rajić, he embraced Rajić's view that no Serbian coinage existed before King Vladislav. As he emphasised, it was Vladislav who first brought the Saxons to Serbia, opened the mines, and began minting Serbian coinage.<sup>10</sup> However, in his *Studies for the History of Serbian Trade of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (*Смудује за историју српске трговине XII–ог и XIV–ог века*), Mijatović argued that the Saxons did not come to Serbia directly from Germany, but from Sibiu, at the time of King Radoslav. The mention in King Uroš's charter about the manner of regulation of disputes between the Ragusans and Saxons served Mijatović as further proof of their earlier arrival: "Old legislators never issued laws concerning relations yet to arise, but

<sup>4</sup> K. Szende, "Iure Theutonico? German settlers and legal frameworks for immigration to Hungary in an East-Central European perspective", 17. Also see: Bolgarka Weisz, "Mining Town Privileges in Angevin Hungary", *Hungarian Historical Review* 2/2 (2013) 288–312.

<sup>5</sup> Katalin Szende, "Continuity and change in the urban network of Hungary in the early Angevin period", *Banatica* 26 (2016) 53–76, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Mavro Orbini, *Il regno de gli Slavii*, Pesaro 1601, 252. The majority of historians believe that these data in Orbini's work relate to King Uroš I (1243–1276); see Михаило Динић, *За историју рударства у средњевијековној Србији и Босни I*, Београд 1955, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Giacomo di Pietro Luccari, *Copioso ristretto de gli annali di Rausa*, Venetia 1605, 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> Никола Радојчић, "Почетак рударства у Босни за време бана Кулина?", *Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор* 1–2 (1960) 30–33. Also see: Константин Јиречек, "Трговачки путеви и рудници Србије и Босне у средњем вијеку", in: *Зборник Константина Јиречека I*, Београд 1959, 203–303, 256.

<sup>9</sup> Иоанъ Раичъ, *Историја разныхъ славенскихъ народовъ, наипаче Болгаръ, Хорватовъ и Сербовъ*, том II, књига VII, глава VII, Виенъ 1794, 382–383.

<sup>10</sup> Чедомилъ Мијатовић, "Финанције српског краљевства. Политичко-економски погледи", *Гласник Српског ученог друштва* 25 (1869) 177–249, 184. Чедомилъ Мијатовић, "Финанције српског краљевст. Извори за финансијски доходак у XIII и XIV веку", *Гласник Српског ученог друштва* 26 (1869) 152–219, 217. He also notes Engel's opinion that the Ragusans, back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, held on lease some mines in Bosnia (Johann Christian von Engel, *Gesichte von Ragusa*, Wien 1807, 46).

always laws that were prompted by practical relations and genuine need; given that legal disputes between the Ragusans and Saxons presuppose that the latter had already been in regular trade with the Ragusans for some time, we may freely conclude that the Saxons had settled in Serbia before Uroš, and that he merely codified their legal relations with the Ragusans, which had already developed a lot by his time. Thus, the Saxons migrated to Serbia if not under Radoslav, then certainly under King Vladislav".<sup>11</sup>

Konstantin Jireček maintained that German miners were brought from Hungary during the reign of King Uroš I (1243–1276).<sup>12</sup> He further suggested that they came at the invitation of the Serbian ruler, most likely from the region of the Zips Saxons.<sup>13</sup> Gregor Čremošnik argued that the Saxons were invited to Serbia to advance mining production and were settled in designated locations for this purpose. Based on the similarity between the German name *Briskowe* and the Serbian *Brskovo*, he concluded that Brskovo was founded by the first wave of settlers from Germany (*Breisgau*). As regards the name *comes Freibergerius*, the same author noted that "it is not excluded that he took it from the town of Freiburg in Breisgau", while for *Heinz de Biberanis*, he observed that the surname pointed to the place Biberach in Schwarzwald, near Breisgau, some 40 km from Freiburg.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting on this theory, Vladimir Ćorović remarked: "Mr Čremošnik, I believe, goes too far when he argues so categorically that the Germans directly arrived in Serbia, excluding their prolonged stay in Hungary. The mediation of Hungary and its numerous German mining settlements seems to me the only plausible explanation, not only from a cultural and historical standpoint but also from a geographical one. Once the 'Saxons' arrived in Serbia, a new influx of their kinsmen, following mutual communication, could indeed have become direct. However, Čremošnik stood by his assertion, underscoring that 'the matter is so simple and so clear that no one believed in it.'"<sup>15</sup>

Mihailo Dinić emphasised that documentary evidence of Saxon presence in some places remains scarce. The earliest records concern Brskovo and King Uroš I, whose charter explicitly mentions... *оуѣ брдо над Гасе*.<sup>16</sup> While noting that the term *Saxon* originally carried ethnic connotation,<sup>17</sup> Dinić remained reserved regarding questions "to which no definitive answer can be given". Namely, he observed that it remains unknown whether the Saxons came to Serbia at the invitation of the Serbian ruler,

<sup>11</sup> Чедомиљ Мијатовић, "Студије за историју српске трговине XII-ог и XIV-ог века", *Гласник Српског ученог друштва* 37 (1873) 187–249, 240–242.

<sup>12</sup> К. Јиречек, "Трговачки путеви и рудници Србије и Босне у средњем вијеку", 256; idem, *Историја Срба*, I, Београд 1978, 187.

<sup>13</sup> Константин Јиречек, *Историја Срба* I, 269, 286. Idem, *Историја Срба* II, 90.

<sup>14</sup> Грегор Чремошник, *Развој српског новчарства до краља Милутина*, Београд 1933, 7–10, 14, fn. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Gregor Čremošnik, "Nekoliko napomena o Brskovu i Kragujevačkoj ostavi", *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja* 14 (1959) 9.

<sup>16</sup> М. Динић, *За историју рударства у средњовековној Србији и Босни* I, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, 24.



whether the ruler accepted their initiative, or whether the Mongol invasion prompted them to come to Serbia.<sup>18</sup> Sima Ćirković stressed that one cannot determine with certainty whether the Saxons arrived in Serbia fleeing the Tatars or as a group of colonists invited by King Uroš I (1243–1276). Drawing on later sources, he highlighted that they enjoyed personal freedom, mining-related rights and freedom of religion. They also had autonomous jurisdiction, which likely extended over time to all inhabitants of mining settlements, regardless of their origin.<sup>19</sup>

In more recent Serbian historiography, it is generally stated that no unambiguous source material exists to reliably answer the questions regarding the timing and locations of Saxon settlement.<sup>20</sup> Aleksandar Uzelac noted that Brskovo's economic rise followed the Mongol invasion. Though the first mention of Brskovo dates to 1243, he remarked: "While this document does not explicitly mention the Saxons, the connection between their first colony in Serbia and the migratory movements triggered by the nomadic conquerors becomes more tangible and evident".<sup>21</sup> Ivana Komatina likewise leans towards linking the Saxons' arrival to the Mongol invasion of 1241/42.<sup>22</sup> Aleksandra Fostikov underlines that the Saxons were already present in Brskovo by the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, while also suggesting that Germans may not have constituted a large proportion of the initial settlers.<sup>23</sup>

All these authors associate the flourishing of Serbian mining with the Saxons' arrival. A separate question concerns Serbian mining before the Saxons' arrival, as it existed prior to their settlement. Archaeological findings unequivocally show that Serbs were skilled in ironworking, with remains of smelting furnaces and slag

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 25. Also see: Десанка Ковачевић-Којић, *Градска насеља средњовековне босанске државе*, Сарајево 1978, 21. Ружа Ћук, "Долазак Саса и успон Брскова", in: Сима Ћирковић, Десанка Ковачевић-Којић & Ружа Ћук, *Старо српско рударство*, Београд – Нови Сад 2002, 21–23.

<sup>19</sup> Сима Ћирковић, "Неостварена аутономија: градско друштво у Србији и Босни", in: idem, *Работници, војници, духовници: друштва средњовековног Балкана*, Београд 1997, 259–276, 261.

<sup>20</sup> Миљан Гогић, "Рударска производња у средовековном Брскову", *Историјски записи* 83/1 (2010) 195–213, 197–198. Владета Петровић, "Друштвено раслојавање у српским средњовековним рударским градовима", *Наша прошлост* 12 (2011) 79–88, 80–81, especially fn. 11. Idem, "Градска насеља у доба првих Немањића", in: *Стефан Првовенчани и његово доба*, ур. Ивана Коматина, Београд 2020, 411–427, 417–418.

<sup>21</sup> Александар Узелац, *Под сенком пса: Татари и јужнословенске земље у другој половини XIII века*, Београд 2015, 55.

<sup>22</sup> Ивана Коматина, *Краљ Стефан Урош I Велики и његов век*, Београд 2021, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Александра Фостиков, "Утицај Саса на развој занатства у средњовековној Србији", in: *Између Подунавља и Средоземља: тематски зборник посвећен проф. Др Синиши Мишићу поводом његовог 60. рођендана*, Ниш–Пожаревац 2021, 153–171, 155–157. Miloš Ivanović also believes that the Saxons came to the Balkans in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. See Miloš Ivanović, "Purgari u gradskim naseljima srednjovekovne Bosne i Srbije", in: *Bosna i njeni susjedi u srednjem vijeku: pristupi i perspektive*, ed. Elmedina Duranović, Enes Dedić & Nedim Rabić, Sarajevo 2019, 253–272, 253.

discovered. In addition to archaeological findings, the mining terminology of Slavic origin points to early mining activity.<sup>24</sup> A rare Latin source connects the Serbs to mining. William of Tyre, in his *History of the Crusades and the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, left an interesting piece of information about the Serbs. King Amalric of Jerusalem sent William to negotiate with Byzantine Emperor Manuel Komnenos. Emperor Manuel was in a war with the Serbs and on his return William met him in Bitola. In his opinion: *Ancient legends hold that this entire people descended from exiles and outcasts condemned to quarry marble and dig ore, hence their servile name.*<sup>25</sup>

Božidar Zarković indirectly concludes that Stefan Nemanja came to power partly thanks to mining revenues. Within his domain lay the ore-rich Kopaonik mountain. It is particularly that his ktetor activity suggests significant wealth, which could not have derived from agriculture only, concludes Zarković.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, as already mentioned, we must underscore that a major wave of the settlement of German population into Hungary occurred during the reign of Géza II (1141–1162). For many years, the main figure at his court was Beloš, the brother of Queen Helen of Hungary and of grand župan Uroš II.<sup>27</sup> Beloš briefly held the title of grand župan, which opens the possibility that German settlers began migrating into medieval Serbia from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, potentially in several phases. It should also be noted

<sup>24</sup> Ружа Ћук, “Античко и словенско наслеђе”, in: Сима Ћирковић, Десанка Ковачевић-Којић & Ружа Ћук, *Старо српско рударство*, Београд – Нови Сад 2002, 11–19, 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Habent vetustae traditiones hunc omnem populum ex deportatis et deputatis exilio, qui in partibus illis ad secanda marmora et effodienda metalla damnati fuerant, originem habuisse, et inde etiam nomen traxisse servitutis.*

Even Ioannis Lucii, in several places, dealt with the etymology of the word Serb in the work of William of Tyre; see Ioannis Lucii, *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae*, Amsterdam 1661, 278–279; Ioannis Lucii, “Notae ad Historiam presbyter diocleatis regnum slavorum dictam”, in: *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae*, Amsterdam 1661, 439–443, 442–443. Also see: Станоје Станојевић, “Србија и Срби око 1168. године”, in: idem, *Из наше прошлости*, Београд 1934, 91–93.

For the Latin text and translation, see Александар Узелац, *Крсташи и Срби*, Београд 2018, 120–121, fn. 2. Aleksandar Uzelac argues that William of Tyre’s remarks about the Serbs reflect Greek perceptions rather than those of Western travellers. “What is certain is that the folk etymology of the Serbian name and connecting it to a ‘servile’ status, as stated by William of Tyre, was not his fabrication. It should be recalled that it appears as early as in *De Administrando Imperio*, attributed to Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.”

<sup>26</sup> Божидар Зарковић, *Копаник у средњем веку*, Косовска Митровица – Лепосавић 2022, 83–84.

<sup>27</sup> Јованка Калић, “Жупан Белош”, in: eadem, *Европа и Срби : средњи век*, Београд 2006, 623–642. In Hungarian diplomatic records, he is first mentioned with the title of *dux*; for the longest period, he held the title of ban of Croatia and Dalmatia (1144–1157). He appears with the highest court title of palatine for the first time in 1145. For a brief period, he was župan of Rascia (in 1162). The last mention of him as ban dates to 1163. He spent the rest of his life in Hungary, where he held extensive estates. In Banoštor, he founded a Benedictine monastery dedicated to St Stephen. The exact date of his death is unknown. He is mentioned as deceased in 1198. See: J. Калић, “Жупан Белош”, 639–641.

that in Hungary, the first German settlements were primarily rural, gradually urbanising as the region's commercial importance grew during the 13<sup>th</sup> and particularly the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

What is certain is that Brskovo, the oldest settlement associated with the Saxons, is first mentioned in a decision of the Kotor City Council issued on 22 August 1243.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the publication of this decision, it was believed that Brskovo's first mention occurred in the charter of King Uroš I's (1243–1276) to Dubrovnik, issued on 3 August 1254.<sup>30</sup> If we accept the assumption that this town was founded by Saxon miners, their arrival in medieval Serbia and the commencement of mining operations must have preceded this first mention of Brskovo.<sup>31</sup> This document significantly challenges the long-held assumption that the Mongol invasion of 1241 was the primary cause of the Saxons' arrival in the Balkan Peninsula, and lends credence to the theory that Saxon miners had been invited to Serbia earlier and settled in specific places to advance mining production. Based on the most recent archaeological excavations in Brskovo, it is entirely certain that its inhabitants were Roman Catholics, predominantly of Saxon origin. The fortification was constructed in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the urban settlement built at its foot. Two churches and remains of log houses with square foundations have been explored. The houses were constructed in cascading tiers, carved into the slopes and enclosed by drystone walls. The larger Roman Catholic church, locally known as "Saška", is an imposing single-nave structure with a rectangular apse, to which a sacristy was later added. Within the

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<sup>28</sup> K. Szende, "Iure Theutonico? German settlers and legal frameworks for immigration to Hungary in an East-Central European perspective", 5.

<sup>29</sup> Душан Синдик, "О првом помену Брскова", *Историјски часопис* 56 (2008) 305–309.

<sup>30</sup> Љубомир Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/1, Београд – Сремски Карловци 1929, 19.

<sup>31</sup> There is a possibility that Serbian miners were already present in Brskovo and that the Saxons were subsequently brought in to further enhance exploitation. The phrasing "by the hill above the Saxons" in the charter of King Uroš I (*Зборник средњовековних ћириличких повеља и писам Србије, Босне и Дубровника* I, ed. Владимир Мошин, Сима Ћирковић & Душан Синдик, Београд 2011, 197) suggests that they lived separately from the other part of the settlement. A similar situation is observed in Trepča, where the Saxons are referred to as "the Trepča Saxons" – indicating that they resided in a distinct, separate part of Trepča. By emphasising the Saxons, or rather their part of the settlement, the text implies the existence of another part where the Serbs lived. In the St Stephen's chrysobull, this part of the settlement is clearly distinguished as the village of Trepča. See: Б. Зарковић, *Копаник у средњем веку*, 138. We extend our gratitude to our colleague Božidar Zarković for his invaluable suggestions during the work on this study, regarding potential parallels in the settlement patterns of the Saxons in Brskovo and Trepča.

In terms of the economic activities in Brskovo, Людмила Алексáндровна Шаферова, in addition to the trade in metals, particularly highlights the trade in agricultural products. See: Людмила Алексáндровна Шаферова, *Города сербского средневекового государства*, Красноярск 2002, 49.

sacristy, an ossuary and Latin inscriptions on frescoes were discovered. The entire area surrounding and within the church served as a burial ground.<sup>32</sup> A charter of King Dragutin may provide a clue for more reliable tracing of the place of origin of Brskovo's German settlers. In this charter, the word *прѣбѣзар* is in fact the German ethnic/ktetic Freiburger from Freiberg.<sup>33</sup> As Aleksandar Loma notes, Brskovo's *comes freiberger* could, but need not necessarily, be directly linked to Saxon Freiberg because, given that the toponym signifies a "free mine," there may have been other "freiberger", i.e. mines with such or similar status, one of which was Brskovo.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Милош Живановић, Дејан Драшковић, *Брсково, снага и слава средњовековног града*, Мојковац 2024, 4–5. Also see: Милош М. Живановић, "Нова сазнања о средњовековном Брскову", *Нова античка Дукља* 11 (2020) 113–130. Idem, "Витраж Сашке цркве у Брскову, Црна Гора", *Нова античка Дукља* 14 (2023) 159–179.

<sup>33</sup> For more details about the mention of *прѣбѣзара* in this charter see: Владета Петровић, "О помену Прѣбѣгара или прѣбѣгара у Брскову", *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 12 (2024) 125–137.

<sup>34</sup> Александар Лома, "Из старосрпске терминологије рударства гвожђа и његове обраде: желџо гвозд(и)је", *Јужнословенски филолог* 80/2 (2024), 9–41, 21–22, fn. 41.

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**Владета Петровић**

**ДОЛАЗАК САСА У СРЕДЊОВЕКОВНУ СРБИЈУ:  
ПРИЛОГ ЗА ИСТОРИЈУ ИСТОРИОГРАФИЈЕ**

**Резиме**

Када и одакле су дошли Саси у средњовековну српску државу питања су која су дуго присутна у српској историографији. Већина историчара сматра да су дошли у Србију за време краља Уроша I (1243–1276) године, док је Чедомиљ Мијатовић мишљења да су они дошли за време краља Владислава или његовог брата краља Радослава. Сима Ћирковић истиче да се не може тачно утврдити да ли су Саси дошли у Србију бежећи од Татара или су као група колониста дошли на позив српског краља Уроша I. Александар Узелац и Ивана Коматина сматрају да је татарска најезда главни узрок њиховог доласка. Грегор Чремошник је сматрао да су Саси позвани у Србију ради унапређења рударске производње и да су у том циљу насељени на одређеном месту. Владимир Ћоровић је, пак, одбацивао тврдњу о непосредном доласку Немаца у Србију, указујући на њихово могуће дуже задржавање у Угарској, пре доласка у Србију. У новије време истакнута је њихова могућа веза са Фрајбергом у Саксонији, која не искључује посредничку улогу Угарске.