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TATARS AND SERBS AT THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

ALEKSANDAR UZELAC *

Abstract

The last decades of the Thirteenth century in the South East Europe and Lower Danube basin were marked by the rise of Mongol prince Nogai, “maker of the khans”. At the height of his power, his influence extended south of Danube, as far to the west as Medieval Serbia. The main topic of this article is an analysis of Serb-Tatar political and military relations, and their assessment, in the context of Nogai’s expansion in the Balkans and foreign policy of King Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321).

Keywords: *Tatars, Serbs, Nogai, Stephen Uroš II Milutin, Stephen Dragutin, XIII-XIV Century, Lower Danube, Braničevo*

Nogai (c. 1240-1299) is perhaps the most enigmatic and controversial figure in the history of the Golden Horde¹. He officially declared himself a Muslim, but his two chief wives were an orthodox Byzantine princess and a Mongol lady converted to Roman Catholicism; he was “maker of the khans” but never sat on the throne of Sarai himself; he was recognized as an emperor (tsar) among the Eastern and Southern Slavs even before he eventually became *de facto*, and *de jure* independent ruler; finally, he fought against the neighboring Christian states – Bulgaria, Byzantium, Hungary and Poland, but his ultimate downfall came as a result of clash with his cousin Tokhta, whom he put on the throne of Sarai in 1291.

From an establishment in the Lower Danube region, in the late 1260s – early 1270s², until his death in 1299, Nogai’s shadow hung over the

medieval Balkans, covering Bulgarian empire, Serbia, and heavily influencing Byzantine foreign policy. It is a fact that Serb-Tatar relations of the time are scarcely documented. Even the main source, *Vita* of Serbian king Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321), written by Archbishop Danilo II around 1324, provides only their partial and biased image, from one-sided point of view³. However, his report, compared with other sources, provides enough material to outline these relations, as well as their critical assessment.

Prelude: Byzantine-Tatar attack on Serbia

First decade of Nogai’s rule in the Lower Danube was characterized with an establishment of diplomatic relations with Mamluk

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Sultans in Egypt and a political alliance with Byzantium. Around 1273, Nogai took as his wife Euphrosyne, illegitimate daughter of emperor Michael VIII Paleologus (1258-1282)⁴. The alliance was beneficial, as Nogai intervened, on behalf of Byzantium, in Bulgaria torn apart by war during the so-called uprising of Ivaylo (1277-1280)⁵. Relations between Michael VIII and Nogai were at their peak, and Byzantium could rely on Mongol power in order to cope with Thessaly and Serbia, two Balkan allies of Charles of Anjou, pretender to the imperial throne in Constantinople⁶.

Although Michael's skillful diplomacy thwarted Charles' plans, his Balkan allies remained a threat on the Western and Northern borders. In the fall of 1282 Stephen Uroš II Milutin replaced his older brother Stephen Dragutin on the Serbian throne. The change of government was marked with more aggressive posture of Serbs towards their southern neighbor; before the end of 1282, Serbian forces occupied northern Macedonia, including the city of Skopje⁷. In the meantime, Thessaly, which traditionally contested legitimacy and authority of Paleologus dynasty, was perceived as more dangerous opponent on the Byzantine side. Michael VIII therefore sought the help of his son-in-law – Nogai, in order to use the Tatar forces to crush sebastocrator John Angel and “exterminate him and the flower of Thessalian nobility”? Nogai promptly answered by sending his 4000 cavalymen in Thrace. In October 1282, after he greeted his Tatar auxiliaries, and before the campaign even begun, Michael VIII died⁸.

His son Andronicus II (1282-1328), who took the reigns of power on his deathbed, did not see in the Tartars the desirable support. He decided to postpone campaign against Thessaly, and since he was not able to dispatch Nogai's men empty handed, he ordered them to go against Serbs, “to weaken them and then to return with plunder over the Danube”, as Byzantine historian Nicephoros Gregoras reports⁹. The plan went into effect; Tatar troops, strengthened with Byzantine auxiliaries, were placed under the command of the famous im-

perial general Michael Tarchaneiotes Glabas¹⁰. At the beginning of 1283, joint forces penetrated deep into the Serbian territory, to the cities of Prizren and Lipljan. Not far from Prizren, one Tatar detachment separated from the main body of the army, but suffered a crushing defeat in an attempt to cross the swollen river Drim. Their commander, whom Danilo mentions as *Чрноглав* (“Black-head”), was captured and beheaded¹¹. We can only guess what happened with the rest of the Tatars; it is possible that they managed to return to the lands across the Danube, as Gregoras laconically notes that the plans of Andronicus were achieved as planned¹². At any rate, the military operation of limited scope, conceived by Byzantine emperor, could not prevent further Serbian attacks. In the fall of 1283, Milutin, supported by his brother Dragutin, launched a new offensive and the Serbian army penetrated as far as the shores of Aegean Sea and the city of Kavala¹³.

Serbian encroachment into the Danube region

In the summer of 1284, on return from the Greek campaign, Milutin visited Bulgarian capital Veliko Tarnovo, and married four year old daughter of emperor George I Terter¹⁴. This alliance might have been at least partly motivated by the desire of the Balkan Slavs to consolidate their borders from Nogai's pressure¹⁵. However, it is certain that at the moment, Milutin was still preoccupied with the war against Byzantium. Details of the Serbian – Bulgarian treaty are not known, but it was beyond doubt a political and military alliance; in the autumn of 1284, while leading his third campaign, aimed at establishing Serbian control in Western Macedonia, Milutin had Bulgarian troops at his disposal¹⁶. Evidently, George I Terter, faced with the Byzantine hostility, Tatar pressure and local separatist tendencies in the country, wanted to establish firm relations with the Serbian king, in order to avoid political isolation.

In the meantime, after the death of Juchid khan Mengke-Temur¹⁷, and his Byzantine father-in-law, Nogai's alliance with Byzantium

effectively ended, and he adopted a more expansionist policy in the region. His first target was Hungary. In 1284-1285, he launched attack over Carpathians together with his cousin Tulabuga. Despite the fact that „Second Mongol invasion“ didn't achieve any lasting success due to the climate, epidemics and stiff resistance, Nogai was strong enough to turn his attention to the Balkans immediately. Before the end of 1285, one Tatar army entered Bulgaria. George I Terter was forced to accept Nogai's suzerainty, to send his son Theodore Svetoslav to Nogai's *ordu* and to give his second daughter to Chaka, son of Nogai. Ten thousand Tatars then encroached from Bulgaria into Thrace. They were defeated by a local strategos of Mesembria, but Andronicus II had to take a series of measures to strengthen border defenses. He ordered the transfer of population from villages to fortified places and the removal of the numerous groups Vlachs who lived between Vizya and Constantinople to the coast of Asia Minor, fearing that they may join the nomadic invaders in the future¹⁸. New political relations between Nogai and Bulgaria are illustrated by findings of coins, with images of the crescent, star and human bust, rightly interpreted as the symbols of supreme Tatar power¹⁹. Moreover, vivid picture of chaos that shook Bulgaria at the time due to frequent Tatar attacks provides an inscription found in the fortress of Shumen: "I George, glancing up and down, said: Lord, for Thy name's sake, deliver us from the invasion of Tatars"²⁰. After securing his dominant position in Bulgaria, Nogai turned elsewhere. In 1287 he put Tulabuga on the throne of Sarai, and next winter they undertook an expedition against Poland. In the meantime, an important set of events took place, which reshaped the political map of the Danube region and ultimately led to the clash between Serbs and Tatars.

Decade and a half back, in 1272, Hungary established its control over former northwestern provinces of the Bulgarian empire, the regions of Braničevo and Kučevo, on the right and left bank of the Great Morava River respectively²¹. However, Hungarian *banate of Boronch-Ku-*

chou proved to be short-lived. After 1273, two half-brothers, Dorman (*Дърман*) and Kudelin, Bulgarian aristocrats of Cuman origin, took over the control of these regions²². They enjoyed support of Šišman, prince of Vidin, who was independent from the Empire of Tarnovo, but under the patronage of Nogai.²³ Hungary didn't give up the claims over its former *banate*, which led to a bitter conflict with lords of Braničevo. Dorman and Kudelin repeatedly raided Hungarian *banate of Macho* (which included modern region of Mačva on the right bank of Lower Sava River, but also area stretching southwest of Belgrade)²⁴. Furthermore, few Hungarian attacks on their lands are also recorded. The most serious of these occurred in 1284, under the command of magister George Sovari. Despite the fact that King Ladislaus IV issued the diploma to his commander, in gratitude for his successes against "Dorman and Bulgarians", it seems that lords of Braničevo, probably with Šišman's support, successfully repelled Hungarian forces²⁵. After the Mongol invasion in 1285, Hungarian central government was too weak to continue the efforts to submit rebels; therefore, the task fell on the shoulders of their immediate neighbor – Serbian king Dragutin.

Following his abdication in the fall of 1282, Dragutin retained the title of the king and Serbian lands north of Western Morava River. As a brother-in-law of king Ladislaus IV (1272-1290), in the second half of 1284 he received *banate of Macho*, with the city of Belgrade, and the regions of Usora and Soli in the northeastern parts of modern Bosnia²⁶. This way a separate state was formed, headed by the Serbian king, but under the supreme authority of Hungary, which has maintained close relations with its northern and southern neighbors. There is no information in the sources regarding Dragutin's participation in the Hungarian attack on Braničevo, but it is more than a mere possibility. Quite striking is the fact that Dragutin fought together with Milutin against Byzantium in 1282 and 1283, but not in the third campaign in the fall of 1284, and his absence might be explained by his participation in Sovari's campaign.



Victory of King Milutin over the Tatars, Lithograph of Anastas Jovanović (1852)

The conflict between Dorman and Kudelin on one side, and Dragutin on the other, escalated in the following years. Danilo notes that since Dragutin had received Mačva, “not much time has passed” when he decided to attack lords of Braničevo. His attempt was no more successful than Sovari’s in 1284 and “since this country [Braničevo] was very fortified, he could not do them any harm, or drive them out from their lands, so he returned to his state”. Shortly after, with the help of Tatar and Cuman mercenaries from the left bank of the Danube, who “were paid in gold”, Dorman and Kudelin have taken an incursion into Dragutin’s lands and conquered “many parts of his country”. In fact, Dragutin was forced to flee from his lands, or as Danilo reports: “King Stephen [Dragutin], seeing himself in such misery and unable to do anything else went to his lovely brother king Stephen Uroš [Milutin]”²⁷. The scale of the operations and force the lords of Braničevo had at their disposal is further illustrated by the fact that Cumans under their command sacked the old ecclesiastical seat of Serbian archbishopric – Monastery of Žiča, situated at the territory of Milutin, near the confluence of Ibar river and Western Morava²⁸. As Dragutin supported him during the war against Byzantium, Milutin was probably obliged to return the help to his

brother during his attack on Braničevo and now he was involved in Dragutin’s conflict against Dorman and Kudelin.

During these events Milutin made another political move. Around 1290 he married Hungarian princess Elizabeth, sister of king Ladislaus IV, whose other sister Catherine (Katalin) was already married to Dragutin²⁹. The new marriage certainly reflects current political affiliations, strikingly visible in all Milutin’s marriage enterprises, first with a Thessalian princess before 1282, then with the daughter of the Bulgarian emperor in 1284, and finally with the Byzantine princess Simonis in 1299. As Milutin’s priorities shifted, so his alliance with Bulgarian emperor served him no more. The conflict with Byzantium entered a new, calmer phase, and in the sources there are no recordings of any operation on a great scale after 1284. Focused now on the imminent threat on his northeastern borders, and possibly via intermediation of his brother, Milutin came in closer contact with Hungary. Still, it seems the relations between the two Balkan courts remained relatively cordial. During 1291, at the time when Serbian military power was engaged in the fight against lords of separatist regions of Bulgarian empire, Braničevo and Vidin, Queen Helen, mother of Milutin and Dragutin, was in correspondence with George

Terter and she even intended to visit Tarnovo³⁰. It is unknown whether her visit ever happened, as George Terter was soon forced to abandon the throne, under the Tatar pressure.

Dorman and Kudelin managed to defeat Dragutin and to conquer Mačva, but they were not able to endure the long struggle against three allied opponents – Hungary and two Serbian kings. Tatar detachment in their service was defeated when Hungarian army crossed Sava River and entered Mačva, during the winter of 1291/1292.³¹ Not long after, probably before the end of the 1292, Milutin and Dragutin gathered their forces and conquered possessions of Dorman and Kudelin, who were forced to flee across the Danube³². Region of Braničevo, as well as neighboring Kučevo, was ceded to Dragutin, which was in accordance with Hungarian territorial claims over these territories. As for Milutin, he did not make any territorial gains; in fact, his attitude reveals that his temporary interests lied mainly in keeping northeastern borders of his state safe and secure.

Nevertheless, his military support was crucial in the defeat of Dorman and Kudelin, and now he became the main target of their ally Šišman. Nomads from the left bank of Danube seem to be the main force the prince of Vidin had at his disposal; according to Danilo: “he gathered thrice-cursed Tatar heretics and his own soldiers”³³. His army penetrated to the very center of the Serbian lands, but suffered a heavy defeat at the place called Ždrelo in Rugova Gorge (near modern city Ipek or Peć). Serbian counter-attack ensued and, although Milutin fought without allies (at least Danilo does not mention them), it was crowned with success. Vidin was occupied and Šišman, like lords of Braničevo before him, had to flee across the Danube. Ensuing negotiations between them led to the settlement, sealed with twofold marital bonds: first between Šišman and daughter of Serbian high official (*župan*) Dragoš, and in the following years, between Šišman’s son Michael and Milutin’s daughter Anne³⁴.

The lords of Braničevo and Vidin both relied on the Tatar forces and both, after the

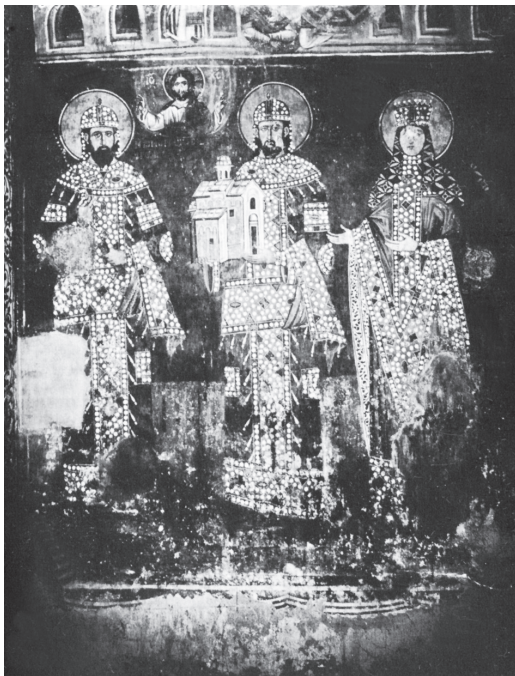
defeat, fled to the areas under the Tatar control. However, when Dorman and Kudelin recruited nomadic groups from the region of Oltenia, they had to win their support by “by paying them a lot of gold”; on the other hand, Tatar troops in Šišman’s army weren’t mercenaries. Principality of Vidin, geographically closer to Nogai’s possessions, was under the more powerful Mongol influence than its neighbors to the West.

Serbia under the shadow of Nogai

According to Danilo, “those who first attacked the state of this pious king [Milutin]”, which would, as we have seen, apply to the lords of Braničevo, instigated Nogai to intervene. But it seems Nogai at first favored the more indirect approach as his Tatars participated in Šišman’s attack on Serbia. Only after the crushing defeat of his protégé, Nogai finally decided to personally organize a campaign against Milutin. Danilo informs us how he “began preparations to strike with heathen forces on this pious [Milutin], wanting to seize his lands”. Warned of the upcoming danger, Milutin decided to undertake a brave, but calculated move; he sent his emissaries to Nogai to “say to him soft words of reason and wisdom in order to persuade him to return”. They found him “in the lands of his empire where he collected a great force”³⁵, and surprisingly enough, managed to convince him to cancel the intended military action. Instead of the army, Nogai sent to Serbia his messengers and an agreement was made. Although Danilo does not mention how the Serbian emissaries placated Nogai, he indirectly provides important details of conditions of the agreement between them. He notes that Milutin sent to Nogai “his lovely son Stephen, with the high nobles of Serbian lands, to serve him”³⁶.

By making the agreement with Nogai, Serbian king now made another turn in his foreign political orientation; after alliance with Bulgarian empire of Tarnovo, then with Hungary, he now successfully approached his former formidable enemy. It was an act of utmost political wisdom, but not an easy decision.

Milutin evidently decided to officially recognize Nogai's overlordship. Sending of his son and aristocracy as hostages, and possibly military support, was a usual practice in relations between principalities of Rus' and Mongols³⁷, and also in Nogai's relations with Bulgaria, as evidenced in the example of Theodore Svetoslav. Likewise, Milutin abandoned his recent conquests. Only in the context of this agreement, his leniency towards prince of Vidin, readiness to return him all his possessions and the marital bond between Šišman and daughter of high ranking Serbian official can be understood. Obviously, accord between Milutin and Šišman was related to the agreement between Serbian king and Nogai; it came simultaneously or as its consequence³⁸. Maybe these new political circumstances also had some weight in Milutin's decision to drive away his Hungarian wife, and maybe their separation was a result of other factors, possibly pressure of the Serbian Orthodox Church. At any rate, in the church of St. Achillius in Arilje, situated on Dragutin's territory, there is a fresco



**Portraits of Milutin (on the left),
Dragutin and Catherine in the Church of St.
Achillius in Arilje, 1296**

painted in 1296, portraying two Serbian kings – Dragutin and Milutin, but only the first one with a wife³⁹. Evidently, Elizabeth was no longer Serbian queen at the time. Nonetheless, the results of Serbian spread into Danube region have not altogether disappeared. Regions of Braničevo and Kučevo remained under the rule of Dragutin. After the death of his brother in 1316, Milutin managed to seize these lands and incorporate them into the Serbian state.⁴⁰

Settlement between the Serbian king and Nogai was just one manifestation of the Tatar expansionist policy in the region. In Bulgaria, an important political shift took place around 1292 which tied the country even more firmly to the Tatar state on Lower Danube. Faced with an increased Tatar pressure, Milutin's former ally George Terter was forced to leave country. He settled in the vicinity of Hadrianople, but Andronicus II, in fear of Nogai, was reluctant to give him official protection. According to the wishes and with the support of Nogai, throne of Tarnovo was taken by aristocrat Smilets, and Bulgaria was now serving as a base for future attacks on Byzantium⁴¹. This event definitely took place before the agreement between Milutin and Nogai; it is highly unlikely that Mongol prince would decide to take campaign against Serbia before he secured Bulgaria. Furthermore, Milutin's attitude could be explained by misfortunes of his former ally. Simultaneously, it seems Tatar pressure led to the loss of Hungarian control over the fortress of Turnu-Severin and neighboring areas⁴². Both banks of the Danube and northern and middle Balkans were now firmly linked to the Nogai's state.

Agreement between Milutin and Nogai is approximately dated between 1292 and 1296⁴³. Hungarian-Tatar clashes in Mačva took place in the winter of 1291-1292, while the Serbian conquest of Braničevo followed shortly after, probably during 1292. Immediately after, Šišman's campaign against Serbia and Milutin's occupation of Vidin took place. Therefore, the agreement between Nogai and the Serbian ruler could not happen before 1293, but not long after

this date, at most in 1294, as Danilo clearly states that prince Stephen stayed long time with Nogai: "This his [Milutin's] son spent a lot of time in the court of unlawful Tatar Emperor Nogai. No one told him to return to his fatherland, but good God, who cares for all of us, returned this young man unharmed to his parent. When, after his departure a little time has passed, the devil, not having to do any harm to that pious [Milutin], wanted to be cheered by their deaths, looking how they mutually devour themselves. He aroused murdering hatred in them; one of a powerful name among those Tatar peoples revolted with all his powers and came upon that wicked Emperor Nogai who himself boasted against the state of this pious king. There was a great war among them, and bloodshed; he killed him [Nogai] with his own weapon and took his throne. Since then, a dissension was among them [Tatars] and they begun to exterminate themselves"⁴⁴.

Serbian Archbishop was obviously well acquainted with the war between Nogai and legitimate khan Tokhta ("one of a powerful name among those Tatar peoples"), its outcome and the fact that sons of Nogai continued to resist Tokhta after their father's death. He also claims that Stephen returned "a little time" before the war in the Black Sea steppes broke out⁴⁵. Here, we are on solid ground; three Arab sources: Baybars al-Mansuri, al-Nuvayri and al-Makrizi unanimously claim that the war between Nogai and Tokhta begun in 697 AH (19 October 1297 – 8 October 1298)⁴⁶. Nogai claimed victory in the first battle that took place on the banks of river Aksay, in the basin of Don; al-Makrizi adds that these news reached Egypt during the month of Jumada al-awwal, 697 AH (14 Feb. – 16 Mar, 1298). Since the news had to travel between the Black Sea coast and Egypt for at least a couple of months, it is certain that the battle took place near the end of the previous year⁴⁷. Hence, Stephen, who left Nogai's horde "a little time" before the conflict erupted, must have returned to Serbia as early as 1297.

Although the date of Stephen's return is now established, its circumstances are obscu-

red⁴⁸. Stephen's stay among the Tatars is briefly mentioned in the *Old Serbian Chronicles*, written in the second half of the XIV century, but these texts draw information directly upon Danilo's *Vita* of Milutin⁴⁹. On the other hand, in Stephen's donation to his foundation, the Monastery of Dečani in 1330, with autobiographical introduction, there is not a single word on his stay among Tatars, as well as in his later *Vita*, written by Gregory Tsamblak. Tatar episode from the Stephen's youth has been, possibly intentionally, forgotten in Serbian tradition.

Tatar factor and Serb-Byzantine rapprochement

The agreement between Milutin and Nogai reflected on relations between Serbia and Byzantium. Nogai managed to place Serbia and Bulgaria in the dependent position, but his relations with Byzantium remained hostile. Enmity against Constantinople mutually connected the Serbian ruler and Nogai. George Pachymeres mentions that Andronicus II was pressed by the restless *Tochars*, who occupied the northern parts, and the *Tribals*⁵⁰. Poet Manuel Philes, celebrating his hero Michael Glabas, speaks of his victories over *the Tribals* and *the Scythians*, i.e. Serbs and Tartars⁵¹. It is supposed that both authors refer to events that occurred in 1297⁵². The conflict between Byzantium and Serbia seems to have intensified a bit earlier. Imperial troops managed to take the important city of Durazzo (modern Durrës) on the Adriatic coast;⁵³ but already in 1296, Durazzo was under the Serbian control⁵⁴. Unfortunately, lack of precise information from the sources makes it difficult to determine whether actual Serb-Tatar military alliance existed at the time, but it is evident that the two sides were, speaking in modern terms, co-belligerents, warring against their common enemy of Byzantium.

In 1291, Nogai overthrew Tulabuga and placed Tokhta, son of Mengke-Temur, on the Juchid throne, believing that his new candidate would be obedient tool in his hands. However, Tokhta soon showed that he did not intend to just sit on the throne, but to actually rule. Du-

ring 1293/1294, the legitimate khan restored with force his control over those principalities of Rus', where Nogai's influence was previously dominant. Rise of the new adversary prompted Nogai to take final and crucial steps towards his independence. In AH 696 (1296/1297), the "marker of the khans" made a final step, officially separating from the Juchid *ulus*, as attested by numerous coins minted in Sakchi (modern Isaccea) in Dobrudja and elsewhere, bearing names of Nogai and his son Chaka, with titles of khan and sultan⁵⁵. Soon, the Tatar influence in the Balkans was shattered, as Nogai was forced to focus all his powers towards the Black sea steppes.

Driven by a desire to defend against inroads of Nogai's Tatars, the Byzantine emperor openly sided with Tokhta. As Euphrosyne was earlier sent to Nogai, now Andronicus' illegitimate daughter Mary became the wife of Khan in Sarai⁵⁶. In the meantime, when another Byzantine attempt to regain the lost territory in Macedonia came to nothing, in Constantinople it was decided to begin the negotiations with Serbs. Milutin was fast to exploit the opportunity. On the Serbian side, the return of Prince Stephen and Nogai's engagement in the fight against Tokhta have created favorable conditions for talks. Therefore, it may be said that Milutin's new political choice was prompted not because of the Tatar pressure, but by the lack of it. During 1298/1299, the Serbian king negotiated peace treaty with Constantinople, the surrender of Terter's daughter still held in Serbia to Byzantines, new borderline between the two states which corresponded with previous Serbian conquests and his marriage with princess Simonis from the house of Paleologus⁵⁷. During his stay at the Serbian court, Byzantine diplomat Theodore Metochites noticed that the envoy of the Bulgarian empress⁵⁸, who was also present, spread false rumors about the Tatar attacks on Byzantium, in order prevent the rapprochement of the two neighbors⁵⁹. Obviously, the negotiators from both sides were in belief that the appearance of Nogai's men south of the Danube would hamper the ongoing talks between Serbia and Constantinople.

Analysis of Serbian-Tatar relations, as well as Milutin's foreign policy during the last two decades of the Thirteenth century, would be incomplete if one does not take into account Metochites' notes on one his unusual companion⁶⁰. It was a Serb, sent by his king to Byzantine capital in the late 1298, who followed Metochites during his journey to the court of Serbian king. According to the Byzantine diplomat, this man previously "visited *Paeonians* (Hungarians), *Myzes* (Bulgarians), *Scythians* (Tatars) and other people beyond the Scythian ice"⁶¹. In the domain of his service was to carry out various diplomatic duties. Therefore, the mention of his stay among the *Scythians* could be related to the Milutin's mission sent to Nogai and note on his previous travels reflects earlier diplomatic enterprises of the Serbian king, in which the anonymous man was the witness and participant.

Epilogue: Alans and Tatars in the Serbian service

The decisive battle between Nogai and Tokhta took place in 1299, at the field of Kaganlyk, not far from modern Kremenchug, on the right bank of Dnieper. Nogai lost the battle and was slain by a Russian horseman from Tokhta's army. There is no need to relate here the events that followed his downfall – flight of his son Chaka to Bulgaria together with his brother-in-law Theodore Svetoslav, who eventually killed him in 1301, in order to appease Tokhta and to secure his accession to the throne of Tarnovo⁶²; futile resistance of second Nogai's son Turai before he eventually lost his head as well⁶³; how last living member of Nogai's lineage, his grandson Kara-Kishek, was granted refuge in the Principality of Vidin, where he entered the service of Šišman⁶⁴; misfortunes of numerous groups of Nogai's subjects, Alans and Tatars, who, with their properties and families, fled to Byzantium, Bulgaria and Hungary⁶⁵.

Nogai's men were to make one final appearance in Serbian lands. The country was then torn apart by bitter internal conflict. The relations between Milutin and Dragutin worsened

after Milutin's marriage with Simonis. Soon, Milutin challenged the conditions of his accession to the throne, according to which he should be inherited by descendants of Dragutin, and war broke out between them⁶⁶. Faced with the mass desertion of his nobles, who joined the opposing side, Milutin found himself in an unenviable situation, but he received unexpected help. According to anonymous continuator of Danilo, it came "by God's grace". One group of Alans and Tatars, formerly employed in Byzantine service, after the crushing defeat at the hands of Catalans, roamed in Greek Macedonia. Their attacks on the Serbian monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos occurred sometime between 1307 and 1310. After that they entered Serbia with Milutin's approval and were employed in his service⁶⁷. Continuator of Danilo states that "in that year [1310] of his [Milutin's] distress many armies [i.e. detachments] of the Tatar, Turkish and Yas [Alan] people came and surrendered to him. And with them he crushed the violence of those who led the fight against him, and he ended all well with God's help⁶⁸". Although short, these words reveal decisive factor that secured victory for Milutin in the most precarious moment of his reign – the same nomads on the horseback who were the most constant and pervasive menace to his foreign policy plans in the previous decades.

Traces of the Tatar presence in Serbia remained in the place names. Among these are *Татарин* and *Багатури*, two *limits*⁶⁹ of the villages Tmava and Žeravina respectively, recorded in the donation of Milutin's grandson, emperor Stephen Dušan, to the monastery of Holy Archangels in Prizren between 1348 and 1350⁷⁰. *Ногаевци* ("Nogai's men"), probably a populated place near Prizren, is recorded in the donation of Milutin's son Stephen to the monastery of Hilandar in 1327⁷¹; and even today, southeast of the city of Veles in modern Republic of Macedonia, there exists another village *Ногаевци*⁷², which preserves in its name the memory of the Tatar military activities in Medieval Serbian lands.

¹ Only one small monograph has been published on Nogai and his career: Н.И. Веселовский, *Хань изъ темниковъ Золотой орды – Ногай и его время*, Петроградъ 1922. Of recent general literature see: Е.П. Мыськов, *Политическая История Золотой орды (1236-1313 гг.)*, Волгоград 2000, pp. 112-140; Ю.В. Селезнев, "Ногай — полководец и политик Золотой Орды (исторический портрет)", *Новик* 3 (2000), pp. 67-77; Р.Ю. Почекаев, *Цары Ордынские*, Санкт-Петербург 2010, pp. 47-71. (=Почекаев, *Цары Ордынские*); А.А. Порсин, "Источниковая база по эпохе темника Ногай", *Вестник археологии, антропологии и этнографии* 1 (2010), pp. 209-215.

² Exact date of Nogai's establishment in the region is unknown. On this see data provided by the Persian encyclopaedist Rashid al-Din Hamadani and Byzantine historian George Pachymeres: Рашид ад-Дин, *Сборник летописей*, II, edd. Ю.П. Верховский – Б.И. Панкратов – И.П. Петрушевский, Москва – Ленинград, 1960, p. 83; В.Г. Тизенгаузен, *Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды*, т. II: Извлечения из персидских сочинений, собранные В. Г. Тизенгаузенем и обработанные А. А. Ромасквичем и С. Л. Волиным, Москва – Ленинград 1941, p. 69; Georges Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, edd. A. Failler - V. Laurent, II, Paris 1984, pp. 444-445. (=Pach./Failler). It may be said with certainty that Nogai didn't participate in the Bulgarian-Tatar attack on Thrace in 1264/1265, as it was often supposed, see А.А. Порсин, "Политика Золотой Орды в Восточной и Южной Европе в 50х-70х годах XIII века", *Золотоордынская Цивилизация* 3 (2010) 157-159; cf. П. Павлов – Г. Владимиров, *Златната орда и Българияте*, София 2009, p. 94.

³ Архиепископ Данило и други, *Животи краљева и архиепископа српских*, ed. Ђ. Даничић, Загреб 1866, pp. 102-161. (Repr. by Variorum reprints, London 1972. In further text *Danilo*)

⁴ Pach./Failler, II, pp. 446-449; I. Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars -- Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans 1185-1365*, Cambridge 2005, p. 79.

⁵ Vasary, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-84; Павлов – Владимиров, *op.cit.*, pp. 102-105. On events in Bulgaria in 1277-1280 see also: Й. Андреев, "Въстанието на Ивайло – изследвания и проблеми", *Трудове на Великотърновския университет* 17 (1980) 9-27; Д. Радева, "Ивайло срещу Иван Асен III и Георги I Тертер – спорът за право на истинския цар", *Исторически преглед* 3-4 (2009), pp. 3-19.

⁶ On relations between Balkan states and Charles of Anjou see Б. Ферјанчић, *Тесалија у XIII и XIV веку*, Београд 1974, pp. 110-122; Й. Андреев, "Отношения между България и Неаполитанското кралство през втората половина на XIII век",

Исторически преглед 4 (1978) pp. 72-73; М. Антоновић, “Србија и Лионска унија – неуспео покушај приближавања”, *Међународни научни симпозион – 950 година од Великог раскола (1054) и 800 година од пада Цариграда у руке Крсташи (1204)*, ed. Р. Поповић, Београд 2005, pp. 118-120.

⁷ Danilo, pp. 108-109.

⁸ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia*, I, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn 1829, pp. 149-154 (=Gregoras); Pach./Failler, II, pp. 658-667.

⁹ Gregoras, I, p. 159; cf. Pach/Failler, III, p. 18-21.

¹⁰ According to Danilo, in addition to Tatars, Turkish and Western mercenaries also participated in the Byzantine attack on Serbia, Danilo, p. 110.

¹¹ Danilo, p. 112. There is opinion that the name of the Tatar commander is a corrupted variant of the name of Byzantine general Michael Glabas, L. Mavromatis, *La Fondation de l'Empire Serbe. Le kralj Milutin*, Thessaloniki 1978, p. 32. However, Черноглав is nothing else than a mere translation of the Turkish *Karabaş*, ‘a servant’, see Vasary, *op.cit.*, p. 102; cf. В. Стоянов, *История на изучаването на Codex Sitanicus*, Кумано-печенежки антропологици в България през XV век, София 2000, p. 255.

¹² Gregoras, I, p. 159; cf. A. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins – The foreign policy of Andronicus II (1282-1328)*, Cambridge MA 1972, p. 30.

¹³ Danilo, pp. 112-114.

¹⁴ Г. Чермошник, *Историски споменици дубровачког архива, III/1: Канцелариски и нотариски списи 1278-1301*, Београд 1932, pp. 122, 136-137. On the age of Bulgarian princess see: И. Божилов, *Фамилијата на Асеневици*, София 1994, p. 258. On Milutin's visit to Tarnovo, С. Мишић, “Српско-бугарски односи на крају 13. века”, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 46 (2009), pp. 334-335.

¹⁵ В. Мошин, “Балканската дипломатија и династичките бракови на кралот Милутин”, *Споменици за средновековна и поновата историја на Македонија*, II, Скопје 1977, p. 176.

¹⁶ Danilo, p. 114. Presence of Bulgarian auxiliaries in Milutin's campaign against Byzantium in the fall of 1284 went completely unnoticed, see А. Узелац, “Најамничке војске краља Стефана Уроша II Милутина”, *Војноисторијски гласник* 2 (2011) (in print, =Узелац, *Најамничке војске*).

¹⁷ There is a discrepancy in the sources about the time of death of khan Mengke-Temur. The year of 1282 seems as most probable, see Мисъков, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁸ Pach./Failler, III, p. 92-93, 120-123, 290-291. see also *Ioannis Dlugossii Annales seu Cronicae incliti regni Poloniae*, lib. VII-VIII, ed. D. Turkowska et al, Warszawa 1975, p. 238. and Russian Gustinskaya letopis sub anno 6792 (1284), in *Полное Собрание русских летописей*, II, Санктпетербург 1843, p. 346, where Hungarian and Balkan campaigns of

Nogai are considered as parts of the same military enterprise; cf. Веселовский, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁹ Т. Герасимов, „Монети на Георги Тертер с полумесец, звезда и бюст на човек“, *Известия на археологическия институт* 28 (1965), pp. 25-30.

²⁰ О. Кронщайнер – К. Попконстантинов, *Старобългарски надписи/Altbulgarische Inschriften*, II, Wien 1997, p. 131.

²¹ Medieval Kučevo (*Kuchou*) is not corresponding with modern region of the same name in Eastern Serbia. It was often supposed so, but analysis of Fifteenth Century Ottoman censuses showed beyond doubt that medieval Kučevo stretched from the left bank of Great Morava river towards West, to the mountain of Kosmaj, southeast of Belgrade, А. Крстић, “Кучево и Железник у светлу османских дефтера”, *Историјски часопис* 49 (2002), pp. 139-162.

²² П. Никовъ, *История на Видинското княжество до 1323. година*, София 1922, pp. 40-42. (=Никовъ, *Видинското княжество*)

²³ Никовъ, *Видинското княжество*, pp. 47-50.

²⁴ On the medieval region of Маџва (*Sirmia ulterior*, *Мачо*, *Мачва*) see М. Динић, *Српске земље у средњем веку*, Београд 1978, pp. 272-285. (=Динић, *Српске земље*)

²⁵ G. Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, V/3, Buda 1830, p. 276; *Documenta Romaniae Historica, Relații între Țările Române*, I, ed. S. Pascu et al., București 1977, p. 31; on the date of this campaign see Vasary, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

²⁶ Динић, *Српске земље*, pp. 123-147.

²⁷ Danilo, p. 115.

²⁸ А. Узелац, „Које спалио Жичу?“, *Браничевски гласник* 6 (2008), pp. 1-13.

²⁹ The long-held view is that this marriage was concluded around 1282. However, see E. Malamut, “Les reines de Milutin”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 93/2 (2000), pp. 495-499.

³⁰ А. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia*, Roma 1859, pp. 375-377; cf. I. Dujčev, “Il francescanismo in Bulgaria nei secoli XIII e XIV”, *Medioevo Bizantino-Slavo*, I, Roma 1965, pp. 403-404.

³¹ Precise dating is based upon the text in a donation of Hungarian king Andreas III (1290-1301) where it is stated that this battle took place in the winter time, during the second year of his reign: I. Szentpétery, *Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke/Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico diplomatica*, II/1, Budapest, 1943, p. 125; cf. Ș. Papacostea, *Between the Crusade and the Mongol Empire – Romanians in the 13th Century*, Cluj-Napoca 1998, p. 223, n. 134; P. Jackson, *The Mongols and the West (1221-1410)*, Harlow 2005, pp. 205-206, 226, n. 73. There is another document issued by Andreas III, related to this battle – donation to

certain Hugrin, who was leading king's army, but without the exact chronology of the event, T. Smičičlas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Sclavoniae et Dalmatiae*, VII, Zagreb 1909, pp. 309-310. Also in Никовъ, *Видинското княжество*, pp. 118-119. Familiar only with the second document, Bulgarian scholar P. Nikov supposed that these events took place in 1290, while further Serbian conquest of Braničevo happened one year later, Никовъ, *Видинското княжество*, pp. 60-62. This is a long-held view. However, since the Tatars in the service Dorman and Kudelin still held Mačva in the winter of 1291/2, joint campaign of Milutin and Dragutin, and their conquest of Braničevo, could not have happened before 1292.

³² Danilo, p. 116.

³³ Danilo, p. 117.

³⁴ Danilo, pp. 117-119.

³⁵ Danilo, pp. 120-122

³⁶ Danilo, p. 122.

³⁷ М.Д. Полубояринова, *Русские люди в Золотой орде*, Москва 1978, pp 8-22.

³⁸ cf. X. Коларов, *Българо-сърбските отношения при Тертеровци*, България в света от древността до наши дни, I, София, 1979, pp. 218-220.

³⁹ Д. Војводић, *Зидно сликарство цркве Светог Ахилија у Ариљу*, Београд 2005, pp. 167-171; cf. М. Пурковић, *Принцезе из куће Немањића*, Београд 1996², p. 48; Lj. Maksimović, *War Simonis Palaiologina die fünfte Gemahlin von König Milutin?*, *Geschichte Und Kultur Der Palaiologenzeit - Referate des Internationalen Symposions zu Ehren Herbert Hungers*, ed. W. Seibt, Wien 1996, pp. 316-317.

⁴⁰ Динић, *Српске земље*, p. 98.

⁴¹ Pach./Failler, III, pp. 292-293; П. Никовъ, "Татаробългарски отношения през средните векове съ оглед към царуването на Смилецъ", *Годишник на Софийския университет* 15-16 (1919-1920), pp. 18-23. (=Никовъ, *Татаробългарски отношения*)

⁴² Paracostea, *op cit.*, pp. 192-193.

⁴³ It was dated in 1296 by Архимандрит Леонид, "Хан Нагай и его влияние на Россию и южных славян", *Чтения в Императорском обществе Истории и древностей Российскихъ при Московскомъ Университете* 3 (1868), pp. 36-37; Веселовский, *op.cit.*, p. 42; The year of 1292 was suggested by Никовъ, *Татаробългарски отношения*, p. 23; also in idem, *Видинското княжество*, p. 83; Почекаев, *op.cit.*, p. 66. In *Историја српског народа*, I, ed. С. Ђирковић, Београд 1981, p. 443, Serbian scholar Lj. Maksimović cautiously stated „a little after 1292“; G. Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, New Haven 1953, p. 186 „around 1293“.

⁴⁴ Danilo, p. 122.

⁴⁵ Despite the fact that Danilo's testimony is clear enough, long-held view is that Stephen returned only after Nogai's death in 1299. The error was pointed out by V. Мошин, who dated Stephen's return in 1298, Мошин, *op.cit.*, p. 180.

⁴⁶ В. Г. Тизенгаузен, *Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды*, т. I: Извлечения из арабских источников, Санкт-Петербург 1884, pp. 110-111, 158-159, 435-436. (=Тизенгаузен, I)

⁴⁷ Тизенгаузен, I, p. 436; Мыськов, *op.cit.*, pp. 134-136.

⁴⁸ Мошин thought that Stephen, during his return, passed over Bulgarian lands and married Theodora, daughter of Bulgarian emperor Smilets, Мошин, *op.cit.*, pp. 180-181. However, the marriage between Stephen and Theodora was concluded, but only after the death of Nogay, around 1306-1308, see Danilo, pp. 123-124; X. Матанов, "Нови сведения за родственици на деспот Елтимир/Алдимир", *Годишник на Софийския университет* 1 (1987), pp. 110-112; Мишић, *op.cit.*, pp. 338-339. If Stephen's departure was indeed result of some political combinations, circumstances can only be guessed. At any rate, the political background is noticeable in the marriage of another Nogai's hostage Theodore Svetoslav and certain Euphrosyne, the granddaughter of a local influential and wealthy merchant whose godmother was Nogai's namesake wife, Pach./Failler, II, pp. 592/593; A. Failler, "Euphrosyne l'épouse du tsar Théodore Svetoslav", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 78 (1985), pp. 92-93; П. Павлов, "Теодор Светослав, Ногай и търговецът Пандолеон", *Историко-археологически изследвания в памет на проф. др. Станчо Ваклинов*, Велико Търново 1994, pp. 177-185; see also testimony of Al-Nuvayri who mentions that "the ruler of the Vlachs" was married with a cousin of Chaka, Тизенгаузен, I, p. 161.

⁴⁹ Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, Београд – Сремски Карловци 1927, pp. 78-79, 103, 192-193, 199.

⁵⁰ Pach./Failler, III, pp. 284-285.

⁵¹ *Manuelis Philae Carmina*, II, ed. E. Miller, Paris, 1857, pp. 413-414.

⁵² Никовъ, *Татаробългарски отношения*, pp. 30-31; Мошин, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

⁵³ Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del regno di Romania* in: C. Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, Berlin 1873, p. 129.

⁵⁴ V. Makušev, "Isprave za odnošaj Dubrovnika prema Veneciji", *Starine Jugoslovenske akademije znanosti i ujetnosti* 30 (1902) pp. 340-341; on Durazzo under Serbian rule see A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age : Durazzo et Valona du XIe au XVIe siècle*, Thessaloniki 1981, pp. 327-329.

⁵⁵ E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, "Numismatical contributions to the history of the South-Eastern Europe at the end of the 13th Century", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 26 (1987), pp. 245–258; *idem*, "Byzantino-Tartarica – le monnayage dans la zone des bouches du Danube à la fin du XIIIe et au commencement du XIVe siècle", *Il Mar Nero: Annali di archeologia e storia*, II, Roma 1995-1996, pp. 191-214. (=Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *Byzantino-tartarica*) The coins minted by Nogai are also found in North-eastern Bulgaria, see Л. Лазаров, *Нумизматични проучвания и материали*, V, София 2004, pp. 131-143; Г. Атанасов – Н. Русев, "Средновековие българские и ордънские монеты XIII-XIV в. из укрепления близ с. Пожарево на нижнем Дунае", *Acta Musei Varnensis* 7/1 (2008), pp. 394-395; Л. Лазаров, "Непубликувани джучидски монети от фонда на Варненския археологически музей", *Acta Musei Varnensis* 7/1 (2008) pp. 411-412.

⁵⁶ Pach./Failler, III, pp. 294-295; Vasary, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-88.

⁵⁷ On this see: Mavromatis, *op.cit.*, pp. 36-53; M. Živojinović, *La frontière serbobyzantine dans les premières décennies du XIVe siècle*, Вођанто каи Сербѝа катá тов ИД' аи́она (Byzantium and Serbia in the 14th century), Athens 1996, pp. 57-66; Laiou, *op.cit.*, pp. 95-100.

⁵⁸ Smilets died in 1298. He left an underage son, named Ivan, who ruled Bulgaria under the tutorage of his mother, И. Божилков, *Бележки върху българската история през XIII век*, Българско средновековие - Българо-Съветски сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на проф. Иван Дуйчев, София 1980, pp. 78-81.

⁵⁹ *Theodore Metochite Presbeuticos* in: Mavromatis, *op.cit.*, pp. 118.

⁶⁰ On the interesting personality of Metochites' companion a couple of articles have been written recently., see Р. Радић, *Из Цариграда у српске земље*, Београд 2003, pp. 197-207; Д. Атанасов, *Разголићено тело (размишљања о телесној голотињи у средњем веку)*, Ниш и Византија – зборник радова, VIII, ed. М. Ракоција, Ниш 2010, pp. 507-520.

⁶¹ Mavromatis, *op.cit.*, pp. 94-96.

⁶² Pach./Failler, III, pp. 290-293; Тизенгаузен, I, pp. 117, 161. (Baybars al-Mansuri, al-Nuwayri); П. Павлов, "Патриарх Йоаким III, татарският хан Чака и цар Теодор Светослав", *Духовна култура* 6 (1992), pp. 27-33; П. Павлов, "Бил ли е татаринът Чака български цар?", *Историческо бъдеще* 1-2 (1999), pp. 71-75.

⁶³ Тизенгаузен, I, pp 118-119. (Baybars al-Mansuri); Веселовский, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

⁶⁴ Тизенгаузен, I, pp. 119, 162, 385. (Baybars al-Mansuri, al-Nuwayri, Ibn Khaldun); П.Ф. Параска, *Золотая орда и образование молдавского феудального государства*, Юго-восточная Европа в средние века, Кишинев 1972, p. 184; П. Павлов,

"Монголо-татари на българска военна служба в началото на XIV век", *Военноисторически сборник* 2 (1987), pp. 112-120.

⁶⁵ Pach./Failler, IV, pp. 339-353; A. Pálótzsi-Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Tatars - Steppe Peoples in Medieval Hungary*, Budapest 1989, pp. 62-67; Э. Хоргоши, "Два етюда о ясах Венгрии", *Аланы, Западная Европа и Византия*, ed. В.Х. Тменов, Владикавказ 1992, pp. 130-134; V. Ciociltan, "Les Alains et le commencement des états roumains", *Studia Asiatica* 1 (2000), pp 49-52; A. Alemany, *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation*, Boston-Leiden 2000, pp. 213-218, 302-307;

⁶⁶ On the conditions of Milutin's accession to Serbian throne and roots of conflict between him and Dragutin, see М. Динић, "Однос краља Милутина и Драгутина", *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 3 (1955), pp. 47-58; И. Ђурић, "Дежевски сабор у делу Данила II", *Архиепископ Данило II и његово доба – међународни научни скуп поводом 650 година од смрти*, ed. В. Ђурић, Београд 1991, pp. 169-195; С. Марјановић-Душанић, *Владарска идеологија Немањића*, Београд 1997, pp. 118-128.

⁶⁷ The abbot of Hilandar at the time was none other than the future archbishop Danilo. He supported and funded Milutin's war efforts, by carrying the treasury of the Monastery to Serbia. It is very probable that he also personally intermediated in the hiring of these mercenaries, *Danilo*, pp. 343-344; Узелац, *Најамничке војске* (in print); cf. М. Живојиновић, "Житије архиепископа Данила II извор за ратовања Каталанске компаније", *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 19 (1980), pp. 251-272; Vasary, *op.cit.*, pp. 108-110.

⁶⁸ *Danilo*, pp. 358-359. *Turks* mentioned here are in fact Byzantine renegade Turcopoles, who were allies of Catalan company before they entered Milutin's service. On them see also *Gregoras* I, p. 254; *Danilo*, pp. 143, 354.

⁶⁹ Serbian term *међник*, here translated as *limit*, is technical. It signifies a landmark, either natural (a hillock, tree, pond etc.) or artificial object, which serves as the demarcation point of an area belonging to one village, see „Међници“, *Лексикон српског средњег века*, edd. С. Ђирковић – Р. Михаљчић, Београд 1999, pp. 391-392 (Р. Михаљчић)

⁷⁰ С. Мишић – Т. Суботин-Голубовић, *Светоарханђеловска хрисовуља*, Београд 2003, pp. 97, 114.

⁷¹ Љ. Стојановић, "Стари српски хрисовули, акти, биографије, летописи, типичи, поменици, записи и др.", *Споменик Српске краљевске академије* 3 (1890), p. 25.

⁷² Ђ. Заимов, *Заселване на българските славяни на Балканския полуостров. Проучване на жителските имена в българската топонимия*, София, 1967, p. 252.