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Department of History
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Адреса Редакције:
Чика Љубина 18–20/V
11000 Београд, Србија
Електронска пошта:
bel.hist.rev2010@gmail.com
www.komunikacija.org.rs

Address:
Čika Ljubina 18–20/V
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
E-mail:
bel.hist.rev2010@gmail.com
www.komunikacija.org.rs

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за Историју
научни сарадник
is@f.bg.ac.rs

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Сву преписку упутити на / All correspondence should be directed to:
bel.hist.rev2010@gmail.com

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Aleksandar Uzelac

Institute of History, Belgrade

Kneza Mihaila 36/II, Beograd

aleksandar.uzelac@iib.ac.rs

FOREIGN SOLDIERS IN THE NEMANJIĆ STATE – A CRITICAL OVERVIEW*

This article attempts to gather all the relevant information related to the presence of foreign soldiers in the medieval Serbian state during the Nemanjić Age (1166–1371). It is based on the wide range of Serbian, Greek and Latin sources and published material from Ragusan and Venetian archives. Besides chronological overview of the events in which the foreign soldiers took part, attention is also brought to their organization, and the role they played in the shaping of the Serbian medieval army.

Key words: *Medieval Serbia, Medieval Army, Mercenaries, Stephen Uroš II Milutin, Stephen Dušan, Cumans, Tatars, Catalans, Palman*

Presence of foreign military contingents in medieval Serbia has been analyzed in numerous works.¹ However, all of these papers were published only in Serbian and thus remain unknown to the larger audience interested in the military history of the Medieval Balkans. On the other hand, some of the sources important for the topic have remained out of the scope of the researchers so far. For the above mentioned reasons, this article attempts to provide a critical overview of the origin, organization and role the foreign soldiers had in the

* The author expresses his gratitude to Milomir Maksimović (Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade) and Mirko Sardelić (The Institute for Historical and Social Sciences, Zagreb) for their valuable comments and remarks.

1 Novaković 1893, 76–96; Jireček 1952, 110–114; Škrivanić 1954 80–93; Škrivanić 1967, 150–157; Veselinović 1994, 407–414; Uzelac 2011, 9–27.

medieval Serbian state in the time span of two centuries, roughly corresponding to the Age of the Nemanjić dynasty (1166–1371).

At the very beginning an explanation needs to be added in order to distinguish the broad term “foreign soldier” from the classical concept of medieval mercenary. In the earlier works of Serbian researchers, all of them were plainly characterized as “a professional army, whose trade and means of sustenance was warfare”.² However, according to a popular definition “it is the concept of fighting for profit, together with the gradual emergence of a concept of ‘foreignness’ which distinguish the true mercenary from the ordinarily paid soldier.”³ This definition is also not universally accepted, but despite the problems occurring with terms like “paid” and “foreign” in a medieval context,⁴ it may serve as an adequate basis to distinguish the two groups of soldiers: those that fall into the category of mercenaries, as well as those contingents that presented foreign aid or external support sent by the neighboring states. Naturally, both of these groups fall into the scope of this text.

* * *

It is generally assumed that the earliest mention of mercenary contingents in Serbian lands can be found in a report about the internal conflict between the founder of the dynasty, *grand župan* Stephen Nemanja, and his brothers that took place around 1168.⁵ It is preserved in the Nemanja’s hagiography, written by his son Stephen the First-Crowned approximately half a century later. According to him, Nemanja’s brothers for this purpose employed “Greek soldiers, Franks, Turks and other peoples”. However, they suffered a crushing defeat in the battle of Pantin, a village situated not far from the city of Zvečan in Kosovo.⁶ The Turks, mentioned in this text, may in fact refer to the Pechenegs, previously settled by the Byzantine government in the region of Niš and around Ovče Polje in Macedonia.⁷

It is doubtful whether these contingents were mercenaries or, more probably, auxiliary forces sent by Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1143–1180) to the friendly political faction in Serbia. The same may be said for foreigners that took part in the power struggle between Stephen the First-Crowned and his older brother Vukan in the beginning of the thirteenth century. In this

2 Škrivanić 1954, 81; Veselinović 1994, 407.

3 Malett 1999, 209.

4 De Vries 2008, 43–60.

5 Novaković 1893, 81; Škrivanić 1954, 82; Veselinović 1994, 408.

6 Stefan Prvovenčani, 30–31.

7 Antonović 2007, 81.

conflict, both sides counted on foreign support. While Vukan relied on the help of Hungarian king Emeric (1196–1204), Stephen enjoyed the support of Bulgarian emperor Kaloyan (1197–1207). In Stephen's words, his brother "brought foreigners in the fatherland, took away my lands and devastated them".⁸ However, despite the fact that Vukan had "many foreign detachments" with him, it was Stephen who managed to secure the victory in the conflict and with the help of Kaloyan's forces – Bulgarians and Cumans. A vivid testimony of their activities in Serbia is preserved in a Papal letter sent to the king Emeric in 1202 where activities of a certain Guban(us), a Cuman leader who devastated parts of Serbia with "an innumerable multitude of pagans", are specifically mentioned.⁹

Foreign military contingents also participated in another internal conflict in Serbia during the course of the thirteenth century, namely the civil war between Stephen's son, king Uroš I and his older son, Stephen Dragutin. According to Dragutin's biographer archbishop Danilo II, he rose against his father at the instigation of his father-in-law, Hungarian king Stephen V (1270–1272), most probably in 1272. Dragutin enjoyed the support of Hungarian detachments, as well as Cumans settled in Pannonia. Four years later, he carried out a decisive victory on the field of Gacko (modern Herzegovina). Hungarian and Cuman detachments undoubtedly played an important role in Dragutin's ascension to the Serbian throne.¹⁰

* * *

The military role of Cumans in medieval Serbian lands was not limited to external support in internal dynastic conflicts. In fact, it seems that the earliest presence of permanent mercenary contingents in medieval Serbia was related to the immigrants from the Pontic steppes. As is well known, on the eve of the Mongol invasion a group of Cumans found refuge in Hungary, but after their leader Kuthen was killed in the beginning of 1241, they emigrated south of the Sava River. According to the report, preserved in the chronicle written by Dominican Gerard de Frachet, they eventually settled "in Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and other neighboring lands" (...*Cumani post predictam Tartarorum persecutionem de diversis Grece, Bulgarie et Servie et aliorum vicinorum regnorum partibus, in quibus erant dispersi*).¹¹ The destiny of these Cumans in Serbia is not

8 Stefan Prvovenčani, 72–75.

9 Codex Diplomaticus, 393–394; Font 1988, 260–263; Nikolov 1995, 105. Gubanus can be probably identified with Cuman leader Coban from the Urusoba clan, mentioned in Russian chronicles at the end of the twelfth century, Pavlov 1998, 44.

10 Danilo, 17–21; Vasary 2005, 99–100; Gál 2013, 492–493.

11 Gerard de Frachet, 307; Uzelac 2015, 40.

recorded in the sources. It is possible they participated in the battle of Pelagonia in 1259, where king Uroš I lent support to the Nicean Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus against the coalition formed by despot of Epirus, Achaean prince and king of Naples. According to Greek, French and Aragonian redactions of the Chronicle of Morea, King Uroš I (1241/3–1276) sent to his ally cavalry troops, amounting 600 to 1,000 men.¹² The Tuscan redaction of the Chronicle, compiled in the fifteenth century, states that the Serbian contingent in the battle of Pelagonia consisted of 5,000 mounted archers.¹³ The number is overestimated and naturally one may doubt whether these mounted archers were indeed Cumans. However, this possibility is not easy to dismiss; in the later Albanian epic folklore presence of “the Black Cumans” in the service of Serbian kings is also recorded.¹⁴ Considering the important role the Cumans played in Bulgaria, Byzantium and Hungary during the second half of the thirteenth century, it is logical to suppose that their role in Serbia was not insignificant either.

Foreign military units in the Serbian medieval state are known to have been present in larger numbers during the four decade long rule of Dragutin’s younger brother Stephen Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321). In 1282 Dragutin had to abdicate from the throne and to cede it to Milutin. He kept under his control northeastern parts of the state, enlarged by the acquisitions he received from the Hungarian crown, as well as the official title of king, but it was his successor who began to pursue strong expansionist policies in Macedonia at the expense of Byzantium; and he counted on foreign support in his enterprises. When describing Milutin’s campaign in western Macedonia in the fall of 1284, the king’s biographer archbishop Danilo II writes how “many soldiers came from the neighboring empires to this blessed king, hearing of his great virtue and glorious name”.¹⁵ Danilo’s words about the neighboring empires undoubtedly refer to Bulgaria and Byzantium. In the summer of the same year Milutin visited Bulgarian capital of Tarnovo. He formed an alliance with the Bulgarian Empire and married an underage daughter of Emperor George I Terter (1280–1292).¹⁶ The Serbian king also enjoyed the support of Byzantine renegades. Among them the most prominent place belonged to Kotanitses Tornikes, who at the end of the thirteenth century became *hypostrategos* (deputy commander) of the king’s army.¹⁷

12 Libro, 54, 59, 61; Chronicle, 236–238; Livre, 96–97.

13 Chroniques, 441.

14 Folklor shqiptar, 199–202; Schütz 1985, 193–203.

15 Danilo, 114; Mošin 1977, 175; Uzelac 2011, 11–12.

16 Istoriski spomenici, 122, 136; Bozhilov 1994, 257–258; Mišić 2009, 333–335.

17 Pachymeres, III, 284–285, 298–299; Maksimović 1991, 183–191.

Milutin counted again on Bulgarian and Byzantine military support in the last year of his reign. According to a short interpolation, titled “Sufferings of the Holy King” and preserved in a later source, the king’s younger son and his designated successor Constantine, was then sent to hire an army from among the Greeks and Bulgarians, because of “a war that took place at that time”.¹⁸ These words refer to the Serbian-Hungarian conflict that erupted after the death of Dragutin in 1316 over the control of his lands. During Constantine’s absence his father died. The foreign mercenaries he employed were used in another civil war – between Constantine and his older brother Stephen Dečanski. In Stephen’s *Vita*, written by Gregory Tsamblak at the beginning of the fifteenth century, it is said that Constantine, “having collected enough troops, also summoned a significant number of soldiers from the neighboring lands”.¹⁹ The mercenaries were not enough to help him. In the first half of 1322 Constantine was defeated and captured near Zvečan, and if we are to believe a report from a western contemporary, killed in an extremely cruel manner.²⁰

We saw earlier that the first permanent foreign contingent in the service of Serbian rulers may have been Cuman refugees from the Pontic steppes. During Milutin’s reign, oriental mercenaries played a prominent role in the internal conflicts and wars beyond Serbian borders. Detachments of Tatars, Alans and Turcoples participated in a struggle between Milutin and Dragutin that took place around 1310. Tatars and Alans were the former subjects of Nogai, commander of “the right wing” of the Golden Horde who managed to create a de facto independent state that stretched from the right bank of Dnieper to the westernmost parts of Wallachian plains. After Nogai was killed in 1299, in a war against his cousin khan Tokhta, many of his followers emigrated to the lands south of the Danube. It is possible that the hiring of Alans and Tatars was due to the activities of Danilo, who was abbot of Hilandar monastery at Mount Athos between 1307 and 1310. Danilo at that time had contacts with certain Alans and Tatars who deserted from the Byzantine service and pillaged monasteries on Chalcidice; it is probable that this is the same group that was later mentioned in the service of the Serbian king. Furthermore, Danilo actively supported Milutin’s campaign by giving him the treasury of the monastery as well as horse herds that were used to equip the soldiers in his service.²¹

Turcoples, descendants of Turkish fathers and Greek mothers, were also Byzantine renegades who renounced their allegiance to the imperial court.

18 Rodoslovi, 49.

19 Grigorije Camblak, 63.

20 Rodoslovi, 49; Brocardus, 438.

21 Danilo, 340–344, 357–358; Živojinović 1980, 251–273; Vasary 2005, 108–109; Uzelac 2011, 22.

They joined the notorious Catalan company and together with the Catalans, they thoroughly ravaged Thrace and Macedonia. In 1309 they parted with their allies after the Westerners decided to cross over to Central Greece. According to the contemporary Byzantine historian Nicephoros Gregoras, the commander of the Turcoples whose name was Malik, “decided to accept the invitation of the Serbian king, for he could not hope to come to friendly terms with the Romans”. With him there were 1000 cavalymen and 500 soldiers on foot.²² Milutin’s invitation to Turcoples is confirmed by the Serbian sources – Danilo and his anonymous continuator.²³ Malik was probably none other than Constantine Malik, son of Seljuk sultan İzzedin Keykavus, who was baptized and raised in Constantinople.²⁴

Information about the participation of the Orientals in the civil war is scarce, but there is no doubt they were the decisive factor that enabled Milutin to achieve victory in the war. According to the words of Danilo’s continuator, “Milutin arose alone and went against his brother to the war and against his will, because all of his nobles turned away from him. But God gave the blessed king an unexpected help: in the year of his troubles, many armies of Tatar, Turkish and Yas (=Alan) people came and surrendered to him. And with them, he stopped the violence of those who fought against him and with God’s help, he did all well”.²⁵ Soon, the war was over. Nicodemus, Danilo’s confidant who succeeded him as abbot of Hilandar, was sent to Constantinople, where the Byzantine Emperor and Milutin’s father-in-law Andronicus II, together with the Constantinopolitan patriarch, mediated between the warring parties.²⁶

Immediately after the establishment of peace, new difficulties appeared on the horizon, as Malik and his men rose in rebellion. According to the Serbian sources, the leader of the Turcoples was motivated purely by deceitfulness and malevolence, but Gregoras provides clearer reasons of their discomfort. Namely, the Byzantine historian related how it was supposed that Turcoples would give up their arms in order to lead “a private life”, except when the king ordered them to participate in a war.²⁷ Such an option was not welcomed by these hardened men, accustomed to constant military service and the privileged status that it brought. The rebellion was crushed in blood and Malik was killed. According to the Serbian sources, Milutin managed to

22 Gregoras, I, 254.

23 Danilo, 143, 354.

24 Wittek 1952, 665.

25 Danilo, 358–359.

26 Zapis i natpisi, 22–23; Dinić 1955, 68–73; Živojinović 2011, 103–104.

27 Danilo, 143, 354; Gregoras, I, 254.

defeat the rebels with the help of the local army, but also of his bodyguards (“хранение”).²⁸

Who the king's bodyguards were can be discerned from the later events. Not long after, in 1312, Milutin responded to the plea of his father-in-law Andronicus II and sent an expeditionary force to the Galipoli peninsula, to deal with another rebel group of Turcoples who had established themselves in the region and caused a lot of damage to Byzantine possessions. According to Gregoras, the expeditionary force consisted of 2,000 cavalrymen, while Danilo speaks about Milutin's “kindred and bodyguards” who participated in the crushing defeat of the Turcoples.²⁹ Nine years later, according to Byzantine historian John Cantacuzenus, Milutin sent a diplomatic mission to Constantinople, led by Callinicus, a monk and experienced diplomat. Their task was to ask for the return of “almost 2,000 Cumans”, who were previously lent to the Byzantine court.³⁰ This was probably the same group of soldiers that helped to crush the Turcoples at Gallipoli – 2,000 cavalrymen mentioned by Gregoras.³¹ This military contingent, or a part of it, was undoubtedly the bodyguard unit of the Serbian king, mentioned by Danilo. Despite the fact that Cantacuzenus talks about Cumans, while Serbian sources only mention the Alans and the Tatars in the service of Milutin, it may be surmised that all these reports refer to the same group of Oriental mercenaries, former subjects of the Tatar leader Nogai.

Behind Milutin's request for their return there was probably the same reason that prompted the departure of the king's son Constantine and his attempt to hire foreign soldiers from the Greek and Bulgarian lands – war that erupted earlier on the northern Serbian borders. However, the mission of Callinicus proved to be in vain: the Orientals were not returned and in 1327, they were resettled from Thrace to Aegean islands of Lemnos, Thasos and Mytilene, because of fear that they might join forces with the Tatars of Khan Uzbek who at the time had become a serious threat to Byzantium.³²

The important role of the Oriental mercenaries during the age of Milutin drastically diminished after his death. Only Ragusan writer Mauro Orbini testifies to their presence in his work *The Realm of Slavs* (1601). According to Mauro, Milutin's grandson, king (emperor since 1346) Stephen Dušan, had a detachment of Turkish mercenaries stationed in the city of Dagno (Danj),

28 Danilo, 143–144, 354.

29 Gregoras, 262–263, 267–269; Danilo, 145; Laiou 1972, 232–233; Oikonomides 1993, 163–165.

30 Cantacuzenus, I, 35; Mošin 1949, 117–132.

31 Mavromatis 1978, 70; Bartusis 1992, 83; Vasary 2005, 118–119.

32 Cantacuzenus, I, 259; Asdracha 1976, 82; Pavlov 2010, 320.

near Scutari (*Teneua et iandio alquanti de gl'istessi Turchi al soldo, i quali faceua habitare in Zenta appreso Dagno*).³³ Yet, it may be said that the presence of the Cumans, Alans and Tatars was important in several aspects. It probably led to the spread of composite bows, designed in Tatar fashion and with characteristic quivers. They are depicted in several fresco paintings of the fourteenth century, mostly from Macedonia.³⁴ Several medieval place-names on the territory of medieval Serbia indirectly attest to the history of Cuman and Tatar settlement; some of them, like the village Nogaevci in the valley of the central Vardar River, are still preserved today.³⁵

* * *

The earliest evidence about the presence of Western mercenaries in medieval Serbia also appears during the reign of Milutin. Certain Francesco de Salomone from Treviso was endowed with knightly belt by the Serbian king in 1304 on the day of the Annunciation, i.e. on March 25, which is mentioned on Francesco's cenotaph, preserved in the Duomo of Treviso (*MCCCIII. die XXV. Martii Franciscus de Salomone fuit per excelsum principem et D. D. Orosium regem Rasiae militali cingulo decoratus*).³⁶ Obviously, the title of knight, as well as the institution of knighthood, was well known in Serbia at the time.³⁷ Moreover, Francesco was not the first adventurer from Northern Italy who came into the service of the Serbian king. Florentine nobleman Simone Rossi was present on behalf of Milutin at the celebration of the Jubilee in Rome in 1300, organized by Pope Boniface VIII. Considering that he was mentioned in the lists of foreign emissaries as "magnus miles" (*Dominus Simon Rubeus magnus miles de Florentia... Ambasciator regis Grasciae*), it is possible that he had also previously distinguished himself in military service.³⁸ Another Italian who enjoyed a prominent military role was Bernardo de Masserano. In the testament of the merchant Thomas Pauli from Cattaro, written at the Nemanjić court in Štimlje in 1329, he is mentioned as a "knight and senechal of the queen's house" (*Bernardo de Maçarani millite et seneschalcho officii domine principisse*).³⁹ Nothing

³³ Mauro Orbini, 261.

³⁴ Rabovyanov 2011, 66; Bozhinoski 2013, 72–77.

³⁵ Uzelac 2015, 105, 257.

³⁶ Burchelatus, 232–233; Uzelac 2011, 19; cf. Jireček 1952, 110.

³⁷ Its earliest undisputed mention dates from the beginning of the second half of the fourteenth century, when a certain Georgius (Gyurash) is mentioned as the "third knight" (третий витезь) of the emperor Stephen Dušan, *Zapisi i natpisi*, 43; Škrivanić 1969, 207–212.

³⁸ Catalogus, 194–196; Uzelac 2014, 93–102.

³⁹ Dinić 1952, 104; Dinić 1960, 22–23; Malović 2001, 68–69.

else is known about him, but considering his position it may be cautiously assumed that he came to Serbia in the retinue of Queen Maria Paleologina, great-niece of Emperor Andronicus II, when she entered a marriage with the king several years earlier.

Illustrative examples of Francesco de Salomone, Simone Rossi and Bernardo de Masserano indicate there must have been other adventurers from Italy, who came to Serbia in search of luck and success at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Several documents testify that Milutin and his son had close relations with the *Serenissima* and that they frequently bought large quantities of weapons from Venice. Such shipments are recorded in 1313, 1318 and in 1323.⁴⁰ It is possible that mercenaries from the Apennine Peninsula were also arriving to Serbia via this route. Other circumstantial evidence of their presence is preserved in a chivalric romance titled *Fortunatus Siculus o sia l'avventuroso Ciciliano*, earlier attributed to Dante's companion Bosone da Gubio and probably written around the mid-fourteenth century.⁴¹ The romance recounts adventures of Knight Ulivo de Fontana, who, after the end of Angevin government in Sicily in 1282, entered the service of the king of Rascia and fought in his campaigns. The story has many fantastic details and its characters are maybe deliberately invented: the ruler of Rascia is named Archaeas, his grandson Anthony, and the king of Armenia Minor, where Ulivo also spent some time accompanied by Frankish and German mercenaries ceded by the Serbian king, Ancharigi. However, some of its aspects are undoubtedly historical, such as the Serbian-Hungarian conflict, which plays a prominent part in Ulivo's adventures.⁴²

In the romance *Fortunatus Siculus*, Frankish and German mercenaries are also mentioned in the service of the king of Rascia, but their actual presence in the Serbian lands during the reign of Milutin is doubtful. What is certain is that at the end of the reign of his son Stephen, there was already a permanent mercenary corps stationed near the Serbian royal court. Its role became apparent during the Serbo-Bulgarian conflict that culminated in the battle of Velbužd (modern Kyustendil in Western Bulgaria) in 1330. According to the report of the Byzantine historian Nicephoros Gregoras, "1,000 Celtic horsemen" fought on the Serbian side. They "stood out by their stature, exceptional strength and were the best trained and experienced in handling weapons".⁴³ John Cantacuzenus, on the other hand, speaks about 300 heavily armored sol-

40 Listine, I, 266; Acta Albaniae Veneta, 16; Monumenta Ragusina, I, 80; Petrović 1996, 147–148; Aleksić 2007, 15.

41 Jireček 1952, 112–114; Cardini 1997, 28–35

42 Avventuroso Ciciliano, 281–331.

43 Gregoras, I, 455.

diers from Alamania in the king's service.⁴⁴ Serbian sources do not mention foreigners in the army of Stephen Dečanski, but there is no doubt that the well organized and trained mercenaries played a prominent role in the Serbian victory on the battlefield.

The question of the origin of these mercenaries has been discussed and examined repeatedly.⁴⁵ Apparently, the composition of the mercenary corps in the battle of Valbužd was heterogeneous, but the most prominent ethnic element among them were undoubtedly the Catalans. In the Ragusan archives several documents are preserved that mention Catalan mercenaries, who during 1330 and 1331 were arriving in, or leaving Serbian lands. The most prominent group that stayed in Ragusa at the time numbered fourteen people. Its leader was a certain *Johannes Martino de Ponte de partibus Yspanie*, who is specifically mentioned as *connestabilis regis Servie et Maritime regionis*. However, Martino's company probably did not participate in the battle of Velbužd. He was in Ragusa as early as August 4, 1330, i.e. less than a week after the battle that took place several hundred kilometers away.⁴⁶

The Catalans in Serbia are also mentioned during the later years of Stephen Dušan's reign. In 1343, the Serbian king and his wife Helen gave their mercenaries, "Germans and Latins", to the Byzantine pretender John Cantacuzenus who, with their help, took control over the city of Veroia. Cantacuzenus remarked that the Latins were in the queen's service.⁴⁷ His alliance with the Serbian royal couple did not last for long, but his close ties with the mercenary corps were not forgotten. A decade later, a certain Joannes de Peralta was recorded as being a leader of the Catalans who garrisoned the walls of Constantinople. According to the words of Cantacuzenus, Peralta was previously in the Serbian service, exactly at the same time when the Byzantine pretender was a guest of Stephen Dušan.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that it was him who was the leader of the "Latin" mercenaries who were previously in the service of queen Helen.

The Catalans, who were considered some of the best soldiers at the time, were present in the Nemanjić state during the reign of Stephen Dušan, but even their role was overshadowed by the Germans who became a sort of elite troop this Serbian ruler had at his disposal. Their leader was Palman from Letinberch (in our opinion this place should be modern Littenberg/Litmerk in northeastern Slovenia, part of the historical region of Styria). He is first mentioned as

44 Cantacuzenus, I, 430.

45 Jireček 1952, 110–111; Dinić 1960, 23; Veselinović 1994, 409.

46 Dinić 1960, 17–19.

47 Cantacuzenus, II, 354–355.

48 Cantacuzenus, III, 301–302; Bartusis 1992, 294; Kyriakidis 2011, 112.

being in Stephen Dušan's service in October 1333, as *stipendiarius domini regis Raxiae*, when he received the equipment of an unnamed mercenary in Ragusa, in order to bring it back to a personal physician of the king.⁴⁹ In April 1336, he led the retinue that joined an embassy sent by duke Otto IV of Austria to the Serbian king, and followed them from Ragusa to Cattaro.⁵⁰ In the same year Palman's brother Chiarane (*Chiarane frater Palmani Teutonici, stipendiario predicti domini Regis*) is also mentioned in the service of Stephen Dušan and in 1343 his nephew George is recorded in the same capacity (*Giorgius nepos domini Palmanni Teutonici*).⁵¹ Several documents from Ragusan archives, dating from 1337 and 1338 reveal the names of several Palman's followers: knight Dietrich from Wien (*miles Detergius de Vienna*), Raph from Styria (*Rafus de Stayro*), Craftin from Waldenberg (*Craftinus de Valtinberch*), count (?) Friedrich from Carinthian Ortinburg (*comes Federicus de Ortinburgo*) and Gregor Paulich (*Gregorus Paulig*), who was probably Slovenian by ethnicity.⁵²

In 1336, the Serbian ruler hired 300 soldiers on foot for his bodyguard unit and the Venetian senate allowed them a free passage through the Republic's territory.⁵³ Undoubtedly these were the men that were later mentioned under Palman's command. He remained captain of Stephen Dušan's until the end of his reign. In 1354 Pope Innocent VI sent an embassy to the Serbian court, with letters to the highest members of the Serbian nobility; one of them was addressed to Palman, "captain of the king's forces and mercenaries" (*Palmano Theutonico capitaneo gentis armigere ad stipendia regis Rassie*).⁵⁴ The next year, Carmelite Pierre Thomas, bishop of Patti in Sicily, visited Serbia as the Pope's emissary.⁵⁵ His experiences were related by his biographer Philippe de Mezieres, chancellor of Cyprus, first in the *Vita* of Pierre Thomas and then in a letter that Mezieres sent to his nephew in 1381; the letter basically recounts the same story present in the *Vita* of the Carmelite bishop.

According to Mezieres, at Stephen Dušan's court Thomas encountered three hundred Germans, noblemen and mercenaries, under the command of a captain who was a faithful son of the Roman church. The Pope's emissary held a mass for Roman Catholics at the court; among them were the above mentioned 300 German knights and men-at-arms (*trecentos milites et scutiferos theotonicos*) and their captain, despite the emperor's threat that anyone who appears in

49 Jireček 1952, 111; Aleksić 2015, 95–96.

50 Monumenta Ragusina, II, 365.

51 Jireček 1952, 111–112.

52 Dinić 1953, 398–401.

53 Listine, II, 11

54 Vetera Monumenta, 16–17.

55 Vitae paparum, 333.

it may be subject to capital punishment. After the mass, Stephen Dušan spoke to the captain and his men and threatened to punish them. Allegedly, the captain then said the following words: “Oh king, we owe you the military service, but we owe our Catholic faith to God; it is our duty to submit to God rather than to men”. As one might expect, the punishment was not performed and the Serbian ruler forgave the captain and his men their transgression.⁵⁶ Some striking details in the story have a rather apocryphal character, but one of its aspects is undoubtedly true – that Palman and his men remained staunch Catholics.

The utmost trust the emperor had in Palman’s soldiers is illustrated by the last military enterprise in which the faithful captain and his regiment took part. In November 1355, Palman was sent to the city of Clissa in Dalmatia at the head of a small corps in order to support Stephen Dušan’s sister Helen, widow of the Dalmatian ban Mladen III Šubić. He arrived at his destination, probably via sea, but soon he was besieged by the Croatian forces in the service of Hungarian king Ludovic I of Anjou. The defenders managed to hold the citadel of Clissa for couple of months, but they were unable to withstand the siege. At the beginning of the next year Palman had to surrender the city to the enemies.⁵⁷ His destiny is unknown and the only thing certain is that he never returned to Serbia. Stephen Dušan died not long after his departure, on December 20, 1355.

* * *

On the basis of their origin, foreign soldiers present in the Nemanjić Serbia may be divided into three groups. The first was composed of the foreign military aid from the neighboring countries: Byzantium, Bulgaria and Hungary. The second group were Cumans, Alans and Tatars from the Black Sea steppes. The last one was represented by the westerners – Italians, Catalans, as well as Germans from the Austrian lands. Unlike the information about their origin and the conflicts in which they took part, answers to questions surrounding the presence of foreign military in Medieval Serbia, such as their number, organization, wages and the means of hiring, are much scantier, but do provide enough material for a brief analysis.

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the number of foreigners in the service of Serbian rulers greatly varied. Undoubtedly, Milutin was the one who had the largest amount of these military resources at his disposal. In the final stage of his conflict against his brother, he had 1,500 Turcoples and

⁵⁶ Épitre, 33–35; *Vita Petri Thomae*, 65–70.

⁵⁷ Listine, III, 288–289, 292; Ćuk 1986, 65–68.

approximately 2,000 Alans and Tatars. These figures, mentioned in the sources, are reliable, but it must be borne in mind that the presence of the Orientals ensued as a consequence of the particular war conditions. It is evident from the later events that they did not stay in the king's service for a longer time. The same may be said for the foreigners that took part at the battle of Velbužd. If we are to believe Gregoras, a thousand of them were present in the Serbian army (information of Cantacuzenus about 300 Germans was obviously contaminated by his personal experiences in Serbia). Even if the figures provided by Gregoras are not an exaggeration, it may be assumed that their number greatly diminished after the end of the war. Stephen Dušan constantly had around 300 mercenaries led by Palman who served at his court. They were not the only foreigners in his service. Some of the mercenaries were not stationed at the court, but in the provincial cities and fortresses. Orbini's information about the Turks stationed in Dagno is important testimony in this aspect. Furthermore, when Cantacuzenus reconquered Veroia in 1350, he encountered some German mercenaries who staunchly defended the citadel on behalf of the Serbian emperor. He knew these men well as they were the same ones who had helped them take control of the city seven years earlier.⁵⁸ It is possible they did not belong to Palman's unit and that they served as a separate military detachment.

Various mercenary groups served both as cavalry, and as infantry. Most of the Orientals were undoubtedly cavalry, but even in the contingent of Malik's Turcoples, one third of personnel were foot soldiers. Westerners were probably more equally divided between the two branches of service. When Stephen Dušan hired a group of Germans for his bodyguard in 1336, in the Venetian document it was stated that they were all soldiers on foot.

The internal organization of the foreign soldiers in Serbia before the age of Stephen Dušan remains almost completely unknown.⁵⁹ During his reign one notices a tendency to unify the foreign contingents and domestic army into a single military force. The emperor's Code of Law, promulgated in 1349, shows intent to equalize responsibility and obligations of domestic aristocracy and foreigners in military service. According to article 173 of the Law: "Greater or lesser nobility who go to the court of the Tsar, be it a Greek, German, or Serb, or any other noble, if he brings with him a brigand or a thief, that master shall

58 Cantacuzenus, III, 124–126.

59 There is one important information in this aspect. When describing the transfer of Milutin's body immediately after his death, Danilo II relates how "at many places regiments of soldiers appeared that wanted to achieve their will and to grab something from those that carried the body of the blessed king". These words probably refer to mercenaries, as it is very improbable that there was any other standing army in Serbia organized in regiments at that moment, Danilo, 157–158; Škrivanić 1954, 85.

be punished in the same way as a thief and brigand”.⁶⁰ The German mercenaries at the court formed a standing army, together with the domestic nobles who were educated for the state and military service, i.e. the “nobility that always stands in the emperor’s house”, as is defined by the Code.⁶¹ There was an obvious goal behind Stephen Dušan’s intentions, namely to modernize and organize the domestic army according to western standards.⁶² It is not an accident that many shipments of arms and armor from Venice are recorded during his reign, exceeding those from the times of his predecessors. The largest ones included 500 hauberks (1342), 800 barbutes in two shipments (1345, 1347), 1,900 cuirasses in three shipments (1341, 1342, 1345) and 400 shields (1349).⁶³

Hiring of the foreign mercenary groups was a task given to the most trusted people. The striking examples are Danilo, his successor Callinicus, as well as Milutin’s son Constantine. Palman, who was the confidant of Stephen Dušan, probably performed the crucial role in the hiring of his compatriots from Styria and Carinthia. With respect to the Catalans who were going to Serbia on the eve of the Battle of Velbužd, there were middlemen who helped in their hiring, notably Ragusan traders. One of them was a certain Junius Luccari (Lucarevich), who had good personal connections at the Serbian court.⁶⁴

There is no exact information about the pay of the mercenaries in the medieval Serbia, but if we take into account the accounts from the neighboring countries, it may be deduced that it varied from case to case.⁶⁵ Moreover, it is evident that the sustenance of the foreign soldiers was a heavy burden for the state treasury. Milutin had to take harsh measures to secure funds and other assets in order to accommodate the mercenaries during the war against his brother. Even regular state revenues were not enough to cover the costs of the hiring of mercenaries at the end of his reign. In 1320, the king wrote to

60 Zakonik, 77–78. The mention of Germans (“Nemtsi”) in this article of the Code may only be related to the mercenaries in Stephen Dušan service, because Saxon urban and mining communities, present in Serbia since the mid-thirteenth century, were constantly designated as “Sasi”, Novaković 1893, 86; Šarkić 2011, 54–55.

61 Zakonik, 79.

62 Aleksić 2015, 99–101.

63 Listine, I, 384; Listine, II, 4, 111, 118, 144, 289, 453; Listine, III, 133–134; Acta Albaniae Veneta, 101, 104–105, 120, 126–127; Petrović 1996, 152–153.

64 Dinić 1960, 16–17.

65 In the beginning of the fourteenth century, Catalan horsemen in the Byzantine service were paid 4 ounces of gold per month, and soldiers on foot 1 ounce, which is equal to 34, or 8.5 nomismas, Ramon Muntaner, 379, Bartusis 1992, 151. At the same time, the Alans who entered the service of Constantinople were paid only 3 nomismas, but they received the horses and other equipment at the expense of the imperial government, Pachymeres, IV, 460–461. In 1301, Ragusan government accepted into its service several archers (*balestieri*), from Iberian peninsula, for a monthly salary of 5 hyperpera, Monumenta Ragusina, V, 7; Dinić 1960, 15.

the rector of Ragusa, Bartolomeo Gradenigo, to ask for payment of the regular yearly tax. He then explicitly stated that he wants “good dinars, and not the bad ones, because the Greeks would not accept them”.⁶⁶ These financial assets were obviously needed to hire foreigners and it seems that the recourse to emergency sources of revenue was common practice in such cases. The medieval Serbian state was not unique in this regard: similar models of securing financial funds for military needs were also used in the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁷

When Milutin decided not to keep Turcopules constantly under arms, but to grant them land, he was probably motivated by the high costs of their sustenance. Financial reasons also explain why, not long after that, he decided to cede the Alans and the Tatars to Byzantium. Apparently, he considered it to be more profitable to “rent” his military assets to the neighboring power and thus to gain some political advantage, than to continue to exhaust the state resources in peacetime.⁶⁸

The high expenses that accompanied the hiring and maintenance of mercenary corps may explain why it was only during the reign of Stephen Dušan that a permanent presence of foreign contingents was successfully established. Still, the importance of foreign soldiers in the wars and internal conflicts of Nemanjić rulers is hard to exaggerate. During the reigns of Milutin, his son and his grandson, there was practically no armed conflict in which foreigners did not participate. While Milutin was forced to rely on foreign troops to secure the foundations of his power, primarily against internal adversaries, his successors managed to build a military system that relied to a great extent on the use of the best professional soldiers from the West. This was due to the economic rise of the Serbian medieval state, but also the quality of the statemanship of the Nemanjić rulers, who knew very well that a professional, loyal and trained army was a necessary prerequisite to building regional hegemony in the unstable political conditions of the fourteenth century Balkans.

66 Povelje i pisma, 39.

67 In 1305, when the Catalan company renounced its allegiance to the Constantinople, Andronicus II was forced to ask voluntary contributions from the citizens in order to equip a new army, Pachymeres, IV, 628–629; Laiou 1972, 167. During the war against John V Paleologus, Cantacuzenus used the church treasury to pay the services of Turkish mercenaries which caused the consternation and outrage of his contemporaries, Gregoras, III, 179; Bartusis 1992, 149.

68 Uzelac 2011, 23.

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Александар Узелац

СТРАНИ ВОЈНИЦИ У НЕМАЊИЋКОЈ ДРЖАВИ – КРИТИЧКИ ОСВРТ

Присуство страних војника и најамника у држави Немањића била је тема бројних радова који су се бавили српском средњовековном војском. Међутим, она до сада није била критички заокружена. Такође су и поједини извори значајни за ову проблематику измакли пажњи домаћих истраживача. У овом тексту начињен је хронолошки преглед учешћа страних војних формација у унутрашњим сукобима и оружаним конфликтима изван граница српске државе током дво-вековне владавине династије Немањића. Потом су разматрани начини њиховог унајмљивања, организација, као и њихов значај за развој српске средњовековне војске.

Као што је добро познато, први помен присуства страних војника у српској служби везан је за сукоб Стефана Немање и његове браће који је довео до битке код Пантина. У овим борбама, као и у унутрашњим сукобима између Стефана Првовенчаног и његовог старијег брата Вукана, као и између краља Уроша I и његовог сина Драгутина, одреди страних војника одиграли су кључну улогу. Међутим, то нису били најамнички одреди, како се уобичајено наводи, већ савезничка помоћ коју су Византија, Бугарска и Угарска слале као подршку пријатељским фракцијама у Србији. Присуство најамника у служби немањићких владара се ипак може пратити од времена Уроша I. То су најпре били Кумани из црноморских степа који су се пред монголским налетом склонили у балканске земље. Током владавине краља Милутина, присуство оријенталних најамника – Алана, Татара и Туркопула – било је нарочито изражено, захваљујући унутрашњим превирањима у Златној хорди. Њихов војни утицај осликава се у развоју далекометног стрељачког наоружања у српским земљама.

За то време, присуство западњака у Србији било је ограничено на појединце. Позната су само тројица људи са Апенинског полуострва који су се током владавине Милутина и његовог сина Стефана Дечанског истакли у српској служби – „велики витез” Симоне Роси, који је био краљев изасланик на прослави прве Јубиларне године у Риму 1300, Франческо де Саломоне кога је Милутин 1304 произвео за витеза и Бернардо де Масерано, поменут 1329. године као „витез и сенешал краљичине куће”. Ипак, извесно је да је крајем владавине Стефана Дечанског у српску службу примљен већи број каталанских најамника који су одиграли одлучујућу улогу у српској победи код Велбужда над бугарском војском (1330). Током владавине Стефана Душана, одред од три стотине немачких најамника којим је заповедао витез Палман из Летинберга (Литмерк у данашњој Словенији?) представљао је елитни одред краљеве (и касније цареве) армије. Поред Палмановог одреда који је чинио његову телесну стражу, Стефан Душан је имао на располагању и друге најамничке чете. Међу њима су изузетно важну улогу играли Каталанци којима је заповедао Јован де Пералта.

Стефан Душан је настојао да модернизује домаћу војску према савременим западним узорима. О томе сведочи изједначавање страних војника и домаће властеле пред законом, као и велике набавке оружја и војне опреме из Италије које су систематски организоване у више наврата током његове владавине. Иако је издржавање страних војника изискивало велика финансијска средства која се нису могла покрити од редовних прихода државне благајне, важно је истаћи да су током владавине краља Милутина и његових наследника страни војници учествовали у практично свим сукобима и већим окршајима које су водили припадници династије Немањића. Уопште узевши, привредни успон српске државе и умешна политика њених владара која је подразумевала унајмљивање најбољих ратних дружина значајно су допринели политичком успону Немањићке државе и њеном израстању у најмоћнију регионалну силу средином XIV века.

Кључне речи: средњовековна Србија, средњовековна војска, најамници, Стефан Урош II Милутићин, Стефан Душан, Кумани, Таишари, Кашаланци, Палман.