СТАТЬИ

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CUMANS IN THE LATIN EMPIRE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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Abstract: *Research objectives*: An analysis of the background, circumstances and factors that led to the conclusion of the alliance between the Cuman fugitives from the Pontic Steppes and the Latin Empire of Constantinople, as well as its dissolution. Attention is also cast on some chronological issues and the participation of the Cumans in Frankish military campaigns.

Research materials: Contemporary sources in which this episode is detailed, among them the most important being the works of Byzantine historian George Akropolites, French chronicler Alberic (Aubry) de Trois-Fontaines and another French author, Jean de Joinville, biographer of the French King Louis IX (1226–1270).

Results and novelty of the study: The alliance concluded in Constantinople in the fall of 1239 between the Cumans and the Franks was without precedent in the western world. Together with the Cumans, the Frankish knights participated in a ceremony, performed according to nomadic customs. The 'blood brotherhood' was concluded between the two parties, and the alliance was consequently strengthened through the marital ties. Unlike Hungary, where the attempts to integrate the Cumans ended in failure due to the strong cultural and social differences between the newcomers and the local population, as well as internal instability, the Frankish elite in Constantinople was unanimous in their decision to compromise with the nomads, and there was no opposition to such an alliance. However, despite the fact that the Cumans were accepted in an exceptionally friendly manner, were held in high regard by the Frankish leadership and were allowed to retain their customs, the alliance did not last for long and was destined to be a failure. This was due to the complex internal and external factors such as lack of resources for the sustenance of the immigrants, the Mongol threat that loomed over the Latin Empire, and the untimely death of the Cuman leader Iona in 1241, whose personal authority was a guarantee of the alliance.

Keywords: Cumans, Latin Empire, Iona, Saronius, Baldwin II, Mongol invasion, nomadic integration

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On the eve of the Mongol invasion of central and southeast Europe an intriguing alliance was concluded between the Cumans and the Latin Empire. Considering its importance, it is no surprise that the 'Cuman episode' in Constantinople attracted considerable attention of the contemporaries. Among them were Byzan-

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tine historian George Akropolites (1220–1282), French chronicler Alberic (Aubry) de Trois-Fontaines (the name refers to the abbey of Trois-Fontaines near Châlons-sur-Marne where Alberic was the monk in the first half of the thirteenth century), and another Frenchman, Jean de Joinville (1224–1317), the celebrated biographer of King Louis IX (1226–1270). Furthermore, the Cuman stay in the Latin Empire is a topic not unknown in the historiography of the Medieval Balkans, or among the scholars dealing with the nomadic world. However, in modern historiography the attention was more frequently cast to some peculiarities recorded in the sources than to the political and social aspects of the alliance, or its consequences. Therefore, in this article, the attempt is made to reconstruct this episode in details, but also to assess its importance from the point of view of the contacts between the Christian Europe and medieval nomads, and from the perspective of nomadic integrations in the sedentary world.

The events dealt with in this text took place in 1239–1242 (more about the chronology will be said below), but in order to understand the nature of the contacts between the Cumans and the Latin Empire it is necessary to go back several decades earlier, to the time of the Fourth Crusade. As it is well known, in 1204 Constantinople was captured by the army, composed mostly of French Crusaders, diverted from its course towards Palestine. The downfall of the Byzantine Empire and the establishment of the Frankish rule in Constantinople left a tremendous impact on the Christian world, and drastically changed the political chart of the Medieval Balkans. Byzantium was no more; on its ruins the Crusader states were formed: Latin empire in Constantinople and its satellites in Thessalonica, Athens and Achaia. Simultaneously, on the western and eastern fringes of the Greek lands, Despotate of Epiros and Empire of Nicaea arose as serious contestants of the 'Frankokratia' and successors of the Byzantine imperial idea. The following decades were marked by continuous struggles and clashes in the region, in which participants were not only the Crusader states and Greek political entities, but also the so-called Second Bulgarian Empire of the Assenid dynasty. Led by its energetic and capable ruler Kaloyan (1197–1207), it was Bulgaria that emerged as the most important factor in the European southeast after the Fourth Crusade, albeit for a short time. Its regional political and military dominance owed much to the ability of Assenids to acquire the military aid of the Cuman groups to the north of the Danube. Kaloyan was married to a Cuman princess [10, p. 140–141; 12, p. 24; 32, p. 12–13; 37, p. 88], and through diplomatic means he managed to secure loyal support of the Cumans in his wars against the Frankish Crusaders.

Hostilities between the Bulgarians and the Franks were present from the very beginnings of the Latin Empire. In the spring of 1205, Kaloyan launched a campaign against Frankish strongholds in Thrace. The Bulgarian army was strengthened by a Cuman auxiliary corps, numbering some 10,000–14,000 men [29, p. 92; 31, p. 32–33][1]. On April 14, Kaloyan's forces inflicted a heavy defeat to the Franks in a pitched battle near the city of Adrianople. Both Greek and Frankish contemporaries agree

[1] The higher figure of 14,000, provided by trustworthy Frankish knight and historian Geoffroi de Villehardouin (ca. 1150–1215), is the one generally accepted in modern scholarship. Although the number may seem exaggerated, there is no basis to reject it. Namely, it is worthy of note that at the end of the twelfth century in Bulgaria was permanently stationed Cuman corps, numbering some 10,300 men; its presence and strength is recorded in a contemporary inscription from Preslav [42, p. 168].

that the Cuman role in the battle was crucial [10, p. 139–140; 12, p. 21–22; 29, p. 94]. The Franks, who had no previous experience in dealing with the nomads and their military tactics, greatly underestimated their adversaries. Their army regarded "the Cumans dressed in skins" more like "a band of children", than a serious threat, wrote an eyewitness of the events, Robert de Clari from Picardy [25, p. 84]. In a feigned retreat, the Cuman light cavalry lured the Frankish knights led by count Louis of Blois into an ambush. As a result, the majority of their army was either slain or captured. Louis of Blois lost his life, while Latin emperor Baldwin I of Flanders (1204–1205) was wounded and fell into the Bulgarian hands. Not long after, he was executed in the Bulgarian capital of Tarnovo under spurious circumstances; allegedly, it was because Kaloyan unexpectedly found out that his Cuman wife fell in love with the noble captive [1, p. 885; 31, p. 33–34; 32, p. 13–14].

As the war continued, the Franks suffered another heavy defeat at the hands of mixed Bulgarian and Cuman army in the Battle of Rousion (modern Ruskoy) in the winter of 1206. The Cuman detachment again played a pivotal role in Kaloyan's stratagem aimed to divide and split the forces of heavily armored knights led by Thierry de Termonde. The catastrophe at Rousion was, according to the words of Frankish knight Geoffroi de Villehardouin, comparable to the one suffered just a year earlier near Adrianople [29, p. 107–108; 31, p. 34–35]. Not surprisingly, as the Bulgarians and the Cumans proved to be much stronger opponents than one might have expected, the attitude towards them drastically changed. At that time, they were already perceived as the strongest and most ferocious enemies of the Western Christianity, "even worse than Saracens", as Baldwin's brother and his successor on the throne in Constantinople, Henry of Flanders (1206–1216) himself emphasized in the same year [18, p. 528].

Although the Kaloyan's armies seemed invincible, the course of events was abruptly changed in 1207, when the Bulgarian ruler besieged Thessalonica. During the siege he was treacherously murdered by certain Monastras, possibly a Cuman nobleman from the ranks of his army [24, p. 61–65][2]. Kaloyan's demise signaled the end of the threat and opened a new era of coexistence between the Latin Empire and its northern neighbor. In the following years, Henry of Flanders reached a diplomatic agreement with Kaloyan's successor Boril (1207–1218), which served as a foundation of the Frankish temporary dominance in the Balkans.

The role of the Cumans in the Balkans greatly diminished after Kaloyan's death[3]. The Franks learned from the bitter previous experience about their military potential, warfare and strategy. Nonetheless, at that time no one could have thought that some three decades later, these nomads would become the much-needed and desired allies, and that the very existence of the Latin Empire of Constantinople would be gambled into an alliance with Cuman fugitives from the Pontic steppes.

[2] Kaloyan's death was attributed to divine intervention and actions of St. Demetrius, protector of the city, "who pierced him through his body with a lance and slew him" [25, p. 85].

[3] There is one exceptionally vague reference about the conflict between the Franks and the Cumans, recorded by bishop of Tournai Phillipe Mouskes in his Rhymed Chronicle, and referring to the events around the year of 1224. Nonetheless, it seems that the name 'Coumain' in his text is not related to the Cumans, but to 'Comnenus', i.e. the Emperor of Nicaea [5, p. 408, vv. 23155–23180; 45, pp. 368–369, n. 63; cf. 27, p. 196].

In the late thirties, the political chart of the European southeast looked completely different than at the beginning of the century. Frankish possessions in Asia Minor were lost after their defeat at the hands of Nicaean forces in the Battle of Poimanenon (early 1224) [45, p. 300–301], and in the same year the city of Thessalonica fell in the hands of the Epirotes. The glorious days of Henry of Flanders were long gone, and the Latin Empire was reduced to its possessions in Thrace.

The Epirote threat was eventually removed; their dreams for the imperial succession were shattered by Kaloyan's nephew John Assen II (1218–1241) at the battle of Klokotnitsa, a tributary of the Maritsa river, in 1230. In this battle, a small band of Cumans also participated as faithful Assenid allies [10, p. 178; 12, p. 41]. The decline of Epiros, was, however, exploited by the Empire of Nicaea, which gradually began to gain the foothold on the European soil. In 1235, the worst Frankish nightmares were materialized: John Assen II and Nicaean Emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes (1222–1254) concluded an agreement, crowned with dynastic marriage and directed against the Franks [7, p. 136–138; 27, p. 216–219]. Faced with this coalition, numerically inferior Franks managed to defeat the adversaries in some smaller skirmishes, and with the help of Venetian fleet to defend Constantinople, attacked by the forces of the two Orthodox powers. The alliance between Nicaea and Bulgaria was broken not long after these events, but even so, after their joint offensive, the possessions of the Latin Empire in Thrace were greatly reduced to several cities in the vicinity of Constantinople, and the position of the Franks became as precarious as never before.

In 1238, the regency of the Latin Empire passed into the hands of experienced Narjot de Toucy [26, p. 182]. At that time, young emperor Baldwin II of Courtenay (1227–1261) was in France, in an attempt to summon help for the recovery of the lost Frankish possessions. After difficult negotiations with Venice and the French king, he was eventually able to muster a formidable army, allegedly numbering 30,000 men and 700 mounted knights. As its leader, he returned to Constantinople via Hungary and Bulgaria in late summer or early autumn of 1239 [1, p. 946–947; 13, p. 136, n. 18; 26, p. 181–182; 28, III, p. 517–518; 27, p. 222–223]. Soon upon his return, another allies unexpectedly appeared on the horizon. It was the Cumans from the Pontic steppes, who were fleeing from the Mongol invasion, and to whom we now have to turn our attention.

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The echoes of the Mongol campaigns reached southeast Europe some time earlier. In 1237, the Chinggisid armies undertook operations against Cuman/Qipchaq groups in the Middle Volga basin. The unstoppable Mongol storm caused several waves of Cuman mass migrations to the west. Their movement towards the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary is attested in a letter of Dominican traveler to the East friar Julian that reached Europe in the early 1238 [17, p. 378, 387], and probably in the same year, a large group of the fugitives appeared on the left bank of the Lower Danube. According to the Byzantine contemporary historian George Akropolites, "the Scythian (=Cuman) race, all those who had escaped the sword of the Tatars who had overrun them, crossed the Ister (=Danube) on skin bags and passed over the Haimos (=Balkan Mountains) together with children and

wives"[4]. Their onslaught was so ferocious that even Bulgarian emperor John Assen II, despite his earlier good relations with the Cumans, was unable to pacify them. The only thing he could do was to allow them the passage further south, to the Thrace, where the newcomers made the region in the upper course of Maritsa river "their grazing grounds". According to Akropolites, the Cumans plundered everything in their way and in a short time stripped the local inhabitants bare of their possessions, turning the region into the "proverbial Scythian desert" [10, p. 199–200; 12, p. 53–54; 46, p. 63–64].

In the words of Akropolites, the 'Scythians', numbered "many thousands". Later Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras (ca. 1295–1360) assessed their strength at 10,000, and this figure is usually accepted by the contemporary historians [2, p. 81; 30, p. 36–37; 39, p. 302]. The number however, implies nothing else then 'multitude'. No other source provides even the slightest indication about the strength of this Cuman band, but considering the usual exaggeration of the nomadic numbers in Byzantine sources, it may be suggested that, together with their families, they hardly numbered more than several thousand people. Nonetheless, they were formidable enough to shake the stability, and even the very foundations, of the Christian states in the European southeast[5].

As Akropolites further relates, "the Latin race, which always nurtures a passionate hatred for us, and was even worse disposed because of the recent attack on them by the emperor John (Vatatzes) and (Bulgarian ruler) Assen and because of the loss of their lands and fortresses, was looking for the opportune moment to attack us. First, they won over Assen, concluding a peace treaty with him. Then, along with him, they drew to themselves the Scythians, barbarian men, vagrants and intruders, and made them accomplices in their deeds, with some small favors but larger promises" [10, p. 200; 12, p. 54–55]. There is no information about the date of these contacts, but it is evident that they took place after Baldwin II returned from the West in the fall of 1239. Namely, the emperor was present in person when the Franko-Cuman alliance was concluded. Thus, the event may be dated at the end of the same year, and such datation is circumstantially confirmed by Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, who mentions that it took place 'paucos annos' before 1241 [1, p. 949].

The leadership of the Latin Empire was quick to realize the military potential of the newcomers. Moreover, the Cuman arrival raised the hopes of the Franks in an unprecedented manner. Alberic de Trois-Fontaines recorded a contemporary prophecy that was circulating in the Church circles in the West, and whose origin

[4] Similarly to other Byzantine writers of the era, Akropolites constantly employs the archaic term 'Scythians' for Cumans [cf. 36, p. 90–92].

[5] Besides Akropolites, the tragic destiny of Cumans and their migrations was remembered in some Slavic apocryphal writings, composed in the mid-thirteenth century [33, p. 161–166; 44, p. 58]. It is also recorded in the Mamluk tradition, by Ibn Tagrîberdî (ca. 1410–1470), who described in detail the misfortunes of the Cuman fugitives in Bulgaria, among them the future Mamluk sultan Baibars al-Bunduqdari [22, p. 387, 398–400; 41, p. 542]. Possibly, the information provided by Ibn Tagrîberdî may be related to a different group of Cumans, and not to the ones who descended to Thrace. In addition, celebrated geographer Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi, also briefly mentioned the Cuman flight to the 'Land of Constantinople' [21, p. 34], but, neither Slavic apocrypha, nor Arabic sources, do not give any details about the contacts between the Cumans and the Franks.

must have been in Constantinople: "The king will execute unjust enemies, but not through friends" ('Rex inimicos perdet iniquos non per amicos'). As he further explained: "There was a belief that the arrival of the Cumans announced this prophecy and that the King of Heaven would destroy the enemies of the Constantinopolitan Empire – Vatatzes and Assen – not through friends, but through the Cumans, the heathens, who were not the friends of the Christ" [1, p. 949].

The ceremony that followed the conclusion of the alliance was described in detail by another Frenchman, Jean de Joinville. He relied on the information provided to him in person a decade later by Phillipe de Toucy, son of Narjot, at the time when they met in Cyprus, during the preparations of the Crusade of the French king Louis IX (Joinville mentioned Narjot de Toucy as the informant, but it is an obvious mistake, for he was not among the living at that time). According to his words: "The Emperor of Constantinople with the other rich men in that city, were leagued at that time with a folk called Cumans ('people que l'on appeloit Commains'), that they might have their help against Vatatzes, who at that time was Emperor of the Greeks. And in order that the alliance might be faithfully observed, the Emperor and the rich men with him had to bleed themselves and put some of their blood into a great silver goblet. And the King of the Cumans ('li roys des Commains') and the rich men with him did the same and mingled their blood with the blood of our people, and tempered it with wine and water, and drank of it, and our people likewise, and then they said that they were 'blood-brothers'". The ceremony also included a peculiar sacrifice: "they drove a dog between our people and theirs, and they, and our people too, hacked the dog in pieces with their swords; and said, so might they be cut in pieces if they failed one another" [20, p. 270; 29, p. 260].

The establishment of the sworn 'brotherhood by blood' between the nomads and the Franks had no precedent in the earlier similar contacts. The ceremony was evidently performed in accordance with the Cuman wishes, but the conclusion of the agreement did not finish there. According to Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, two Cuman leaders, whom he calls 'kings' (reges), named Iona and Saronius, gave their daughters in marriage to the dignitaries of the Latin Empire. Bailiff Narjot de Toucy married a daughter of the older and more respected Cuman chief Iona ('Filiam vero regis Ione, qui videbatur esse maior in regibus Cumanorum, duxerat domnus Nargoldus balivus'). The Cuman princess was baptized and after Narjot died in 1241, she became a nun. Two daughters of Saronius were also baptized in Constantinople, and were married to William (Guillaume), son of constable Geoffroy de Merry, and Emperor's cousin Baldwin of Hainaut respectively ('Saronius insuper traditor quidam duas habebat filias baptizatas in Constantinopoli, quarum unam duxit Guillelmus conestabuli filius, alteram Balduinus de Haynaco') [1, p. 950]. Alberic mentions these marriages sub anno 1241, which some scholars accept as the date of their conclusion [cf. 39, p. 303], but it is evident from the text that in this instance he referred to earlier events. It is, therefore, logical to assume that the ceremony performed in 'the Cuman manner', described by Joinville, and the marriages between the Cuman princesses and Frankish nobles, were nothing else than just two different parts of the same agreement, concluded in the fall of 1239, as we have seen. These marital ties were well-known in the West. They are reflected in the fourteenth century French continuation of 'The History'

of William of Tyre, where a marriage of a Frankish noble named Anseau and a daughter of a Cuman chief is mentioned [16, col. 1010][6].

The help from the West, simultaneous improvement of the relations with Bulgaria, as well as the alliance with the Cumans, gave the Franks an opportunity to even the odds with their most serious adversary – the Empire of Nicaea. In the summer of 1240, a campaign for the recovery of their lost possessions in Thrace was launched [7, p. 149–150; 10, p. 205, n. 9; 13, p. 130; cf. 27, p. 223]. Main operations were carried around the strategic fortress of Tzouroulos (modern Çorlu). According to Akropolites, "the superiority of the Latin force and the infinite number of Scythians, and the quantity and strength of the siege towers" had forced the Nicaean commander Petralyphas to surrender the town. "Thus, the Latins subdued Tzouroulos and carried off as captives to the city of Constantine the Romans in it" [10, p. 203; 12, p. 58–59]. The hopes of the Franks were high, and Emperor Baldwin II enthusiastically informed his cousin, English king Henry III (1216–1272) of the success and capture of a "very important fortress" ('maximam civitatem'), together with surrounding lands [28, IV, p. 54–55].

The Cumans were thus successfully put into action. In the beginning of 1241, the Franks achieved another victory, when allied Venetian fleet managed to defeat Nicaean ships in the vicinity of the capital [13, p. 131]. Nonetheless the operations abruptly stopped, under spurious circumstances, and in the same year the Latin Empire concluded two-year truce with Nicaea [1, p. 950]. It can be surmised that it was due to the events taking place outside the Balkans. The Mongol operations against Hungary commenced in the spring of 1241, not coincidentally immediately before the establishment of the armistice. The news about their advance probably led to the temporary halt of the hostilities in Thrace, and caused a strong sense of anxiety, not only among the Franks, but also among the Cumans, who soon renounced their loyalty to Constantinople.

The only notices about the Cuman leaders are provided by the Latin sources. Joinville spoke about a single Cuman 'king', while Alberic mentioned two of them – Iona and Saronius, explicitly stating that the former was more influential and of higher stature among them. Thus, it seems certain that the unnamed leader of the Cumans mentioned by Joinville was none other than Iona. He was not baptized, and when he died in the same year as Narjot de Toucy, in 1241, he was, according to Alberic, buried according to the nomadic customs. His body was put under a high tumulus just outside of the Walls of Constantinople and the funeral ceremony was followed by the voluntary sacrifice of eight of his men, as well as no less than 26 horses [1, p. 950].

Thanks to his informant from de Toucy family, Joinville was also familiar with the funeral of Iona. He related how the Cumans "dug a deep, wide grave for him in the ground, and had seated him with great pomp and richly dressed in a chair, and put in with him the best horse that he had, and the best serjeant all alive […] When this was done, they placed him alive in the grave with his master and the living horse, and then they threw across the grave planks firmly secured, and all

[6] The man in question is probably none other than Anselm (Anseau) de Cayeux. a person of highest importance within the Frankish leadership, who was bailiff and interim regent of the Latin Empire after Jean de Brienne died in 1237, and before Narjot de Toucy took over the position in the next year. However, the information is extremely dubious, as it is known that Anselm de Cayeux was at that time married to a Greek princess Eudokia Laskarina.

the host came running with earth and stones. And before they slept, they had raised above the grave a great mound, in memory of those whom they had buried there" [20, p. 270, 272; 29, p. 260]. Although the report contains some fantastic details, it has been assessed by scholars as generally trustworthy [15, p. 124–145].

The peculiarities of Iona's funeral ceremony should be left aside in this text. It is more important to note that his death must have been a serious blow to the alliance. It is hardly a coincidence that Alberic characterized second Cuman leader Saronius as a 'traitor' ('traditor') [1, p. 950], and he obviously had a good reason to do so. In the meantime, Joannes III Vatatzes did not sit idle. He used the armistice with the Franks to turn his attention against the Epirote stronghold of Thessalonica, knowing very well that the possession of the second most important Greek city opens the path towards Constantinople in the long run. It is conspicuous that during this campaign in the summer of 1242, the Cumans were present in his army [10, p. 215–216; 12, p. 65–66]. Evidently, the Cuman host, or at least its larger part led by Saronius left the Franks in the fall of 1241, or in the beginning of the next year, thus effectively putting the alliance with the Franks to an end.

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On the previous pages, we have seen how the Cumans were eventually won over by Joannes III Vatatzes, after the flight from the Mongols, passage through Bulgarian lands and their service in Constantinople. Not long after they switched sides, they were settled in parts of Thrace and Macedonia, but also in Phrygia in Asia Minor, along the banks of the Meander (Menderes) river. In such a way the government in Nicaea wanted to break the cohesion of the newcomers. It was not a new invention, but a well-established practice of the Roman/Byzantine Empire. Still, the measures of Vatatzes successfully facilitated the Cuman integration in the Greek society, and settlement of the Cumans, particularly in the eastern border regions, where they were used to stop the Turkmen incursions, was applauded by his contemporaries [3, p. 140–154; 10, p. 217, n. 5; 23, p. 37–38; 30, p. 37; 36, p. 92].

The role of the Cumans in the state of Nicaea and in the restored Byzantine Empire (after 1261) is outside the scope of this text. It is sufficient to mention that the bulk of the newcomers formed a separate corps within the Byzantine army, called 'Scythicon' [36, p. 92; 47, p. 136–137]. They were present in almost all Byzantine military campaigns until the end of the 13th century, including the recapture of Constantinople in 1261, performed by general Alexios Strategopoulos [11, p. 189–190]. The descendants of Saronius (or Sıčğan, as researchers speculate, was his original Turkic name) were integrated into the highest ranks of the Byzantine aristocracy; among them was possibly a famous Byzantine general Sirgiannes, who almost a century later distinguished himself in the service of the Serbian ruler Stephen Dušan (1331–1355) [46, p. 67–68].

The more important question that needs to be dealt with here is why the alliance between the Franks and the Cumans, despite the promising beginning, eventually turned to be unsuccessful. The sources at our disposal are silent with respect to the Cuman 'transfer' from the Latin Empire to Nicaea. Therefore, in order to provide a sensible answer and to understand the circumstances that led to it, it is useful to briefly turn our attention to the events taking place in Hungary, and to the parallels between the settlement of the Cumans in the Latin Empire and the similar contemporary process in the Kingdom of the Arpads.

As it is well known, allegedly 40.000 Cumans and their families[7], led by their leader Cuthen (Kotyan) arrived in Hungary between 1237 and 1239. They were well received by king Bela IV (1235–1270). The Cuman leader agreed to be baptized and the King became his godfather, but Bela's intentions to use Cumans in order to strengthen his power were faced with insurmountable obstacles. Internal dissension between the king and the magnates of the crown was fueled by a deep distrust of the domestic sedentary population towards the newcomers. Eventually, in the early spring of 1241, the mob killed Cuthen in the city of Pest. His compatriots rose up in arms and wrought havoc in the central parts of the country before they descended south and crossed the Sava river [35, p. 559, 566–569]. Eventually, Cuthen's Cumans were, according to a Dominican contemporary source, scattered in "Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and neighboring countries" [8, p. 307; 17, p. 349, 351]. It took a lot of effort before some of them eventually came back to Hungary in 1245 or 1246, approximately four years after the Mongols withdrew from central Europe [39, p. 308].

In the second attempt to win the Cumans, Bela IV made similar concessions as the Franks did previously. The king gave them a land for settlement and married his oldest son and successor, Stephen, to a Cuman princess, who was baptized and took the name Elisabeth. The Cumans swore an oath of fealty to the King in a conspicuously similar manner that followed the establishment of Cuman-Frankish agreement several years earlier [14, p. 95–96]. In this instance, the Cuman nobles swore over a carcass "of a dog that had been cut in two with a sword" ('super canem gladio bipartitum iuxta eorum consuetudinem') [38, p. 203; 40, p. 220]. It is possible, and indeed probable, that Bela IV, who had close contacts and good relations with the Franks in Constantinople, was familiar with their experience and realized how important was to allow the Cumans to perform the oath in accordance to their customs.

Between the Frankish and Hungarian dealings with the Cumans there were also some striking differences. Unlike internal conditions in Hungary at the time of Cuthen's arrival, where disagreements between the king and the magnates eroded the efforts towards the Cuman integration, the Frankish elite in Constantinople was evidently unanimous in their decision to compromise with the nomads. There was no opposition to such an alliance in Constantinople, the whole Frankish leadership participated in the sacral ceremony, and no less than three marriages between the dignitaries of the Empire and Cuman ladies were concluded, with the obvious purpose to strengthen the alliance. Moreover, considering the case of Iona who remained loyal to the old beliefs of his people, it seems that the baptism was not specifically required from the Cuman chiefs in Constantinople. In these aspects, one may observe that the conditions in the Latin Empire were much more favorable for the Cuman integration than in Hungary.

However, the Franks were at a great disadvantage in other important points that influenced the outcome of their alliance with the Cumans. One may recollect the words of Akropolites how they secured the Cuman loyalty "with some small favors but larger promises". The statement of the Byzantine historian reveals an important

[7] This number is given by the eyewitness, Roger of Várad [35, p. 553–554]. Although frequently quoted, it is undoubtedly exaggerated. The more realistic figure is recorded in a letter of Duke Henry of Thuringia from 1242, which mentions 20,000 Cumans in Hungary [28, VI, p. 77].

fact; unlike Hungary, the Latin Empire had little else to offer the Cumans besides the benevolence of its leadership and the promises that were hard to fulfill. Limited to a small, largely urbanized territory in the vicinity of Constantinople, there was no land to give to the newcomers, and sustenance of a large foreign military corps with its non-combatant families was impossible in the peaceful times. The personal factor also possibly played its role, as the allegiance of the Cumans towards the Latin Empire conspicuously disappeared after the death of their leader Iona.

All these factors evidently contributed to the disintegration of the alliance, but were not the only ones. There was probably another force that influenced the decision of the Cumans to abandon their loyalty to the Latin Empire – the Mongols. Namely, Cuman refugees were the primary Mongol target during their campaigns in central Europe. This fact is well attested in the Batu's letter to Bela IV, transmitted by Dominican Julian, in which the Mongol leader openly attacked the Hungarian king because of his acceptance of the Cumans, announcing a terrible revenge [17, p. 380–381, 389]. It is not impossible that the Franks in Constantinople received similar threats (which may further explain their readiness to conclude the armistice with Nicaea in 1241), and not coincidentally, during the course of the Mongol operations in the Balkans in 1242, the Latin Empire became a Mongol target together with Serbia and Bulgaria, where the Cumans were also present. The acceptance of the Cumans probably served as a pretext for the Mongol operations against all three Balkan countries, in a similar way as it was the case with Hungary [19, p. 65; 43, p. 42].

Until recently, it seemed that the Mongol encroachment against the Latin Empire in 1242 was a marginalized event in historiography. Be that as it may, the contemporaries were under the strong impression of the Mongol-Frankish conflict. As attested in a vague passage, preserved in several Austrian chronicles, emperor Baldwin II and his knights clashed with the Mongols twice. They managed to defeat them in the first encounter, but were defeated in the second one [4, p. 85; 46, p. 70]. This defeat eventually led to the spread of false rumors in the Western Europe, according to which the emperor died in battle [5, p. 689, vv. 31180–31183; 13, p. 132]. Still, it seems that Baldwin II and the Franks had some success in an effort to drive the Mongols away. Conspicuously, Syriac chronicler Gregory Abulfaraj (Bar Hebraeus, 1225–1286) recorded a different rumor. He wrote how the Mongols encroached on the Frankish territory from Bulgaria, with an ambition to take the city of Constantinople, but were defeated by the Franks [6, p. 398; 43, p. 65, n. 3]. What is certain, the Mongols were not able to do much damage to the possessions of the Latin Empire, and at least in this way, the guardians of the legacy of the Fourth Crusade, led by the young and inexperienced emperor Baldwin II, managed to do something that was unimaginable even to the most formidable Christian powers – to check the Mongol advance. Considering the Frankish familiarity with the Cumans and their military tactics, their preparedness to deal with the Mongols does not come as a surprise.

On the previous pages, it has been briefly described how the Cuman fugitives were successfully integrated in the Empire of Nicaea. A similar process occurred in Bulgaria, a country that experienced several waves of Cuman migrations, on a larger and more comprehensive scale. The Cuman dignitaries rose to the highest levels of Bulgarian society, and their baptized descendants even founded several royal dynasties that ruled the Medieval Bulgarian Empire, or its separatist territories, until the late fourteenth century. Even in Serbia, the least influenced by the

Cuman migrations of all Balkan states, there is circumstantial evidence that the newcomers were permanently settled, and that some of them became mercenaries in the royal service [44, p. 103–105]. Quite different was the case with the Latin Empire of Constantinople. Despite the fact that the Cumans were accepted in a particularly friendly atmosphere, and were held in high regard by the Frankish leadership, the alliance did not last for long, and was destined to be a failure, due to the complex internal and external factors that eventually influenced its outcome. Nevertheless, the Franks learned a valuable lesson from their dealings with the Cumans. A decade after the Mongol invasion, the Latin Empire became the first Christian power that successfully established the diplomatic relations with the Juchids in eastern Europe. It was a consequence of the diplomatic mission undertaken by the Emperor's cousin Baldwin of Hainaut [34, p. 115–121; 43, p. 62–75], the same man who married a daughter of the Cuman 'traitor' Saronius, and who through his wife undoubtedly became well acquainted with the nomadic world and its customs.

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КУМАНЫ В ЛАТИНСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ КОНСТАНТИНОПОЛЯ

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Цель исследования: анализ предыстории, условий и факторов, которые привели к заключению союза между куманскими беженцами из Понтийских степей и Латинской империей, а также обстоятельств, приведших к его расторжению. В статье уделяется внимание некоторым хронологическим вопросам, как и участию куманов во франкских военных кампаниях.

Материалы исследования: синхронные источники, среди которых наиболее важными являются известия византийского историка Георгия Акрополита и французского летописца Альберика (Обри) де Труа-Фонтен, как и Жана де Жуанвиль, биографа французского короля Людовика IX (1226–1270).

Результаты и новизна исследования: союз, заключенный между куманами и франками в Константинополе осенью 1239 года, не имел прецедента в западном мире. Вместе с куманскими воинами, франкские рыцари участвовали в церемонии, проводимой в соответствии с кочевыми обычаями. Между ними было заключено «кровное братство», и их союз был скреплен брачными связями. В отличие от Венгрии, где попытки интегрировать куманов были неудачными из-за сильных культурных и социальных различий между пришлым и местным населением, а также внутренней нестабильности, франкская элита была единодушна в решении пойти на компромисс с кочевниками, и в Константинополе не было противостояния такому союзу. Однако, несмотря на то, что куманы были приняты в исключительно дружеской манере, им было выказано уважение со стороны лидеров франков, а также им было разрешено сохранять свои обычаи, союз просуществовал недолго и был обречен на провал. Это было связано со сложными внутренними и внешними факторами: нехваткой ресурсов для поддержания иммигрантов, монгольской угрозой, которая нависла над Латинской империей, и смертью Йоны, лидера куманов, в 1241 году, чей личный авторитет представлял гарантию существования союза.

Ключевые слова: куманы, Латинская империя, Йона, Сароний, Бодуэн II, монгольское нашествие, интеграция кочевников

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