



Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185-1365

By István Vásáry

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The Cumans and the Tatars were nomadic warriors of the Eurasian steppe who exerted an enduring impact on the medieval Balkans. With this work, István Vásáry presents an extensive examination of their history from 1185 to 1365. The basic instrument of Cuman and Tatar political success was their military force, over which none of the Balkan warring factions could claim victory. As a consequence, groups of the Cumans and the Tatars settled and mingled with the local population in various regions of the Balkans. The Cumans were the founders of three successive Bulgarian dynasties (Asenids, Terterids and Shishmanids) and the Wallachian dynasty (Basarabids). They also played an active role in Byzantium, Hungary and Serbia, with Cuman immigrants being integrated into each country's elite. This book also demonstrates how the prevailing political anarchy in the Balkans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries made it ripe for the Ottoman conquest.

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"Istvan Vasary's admirable book attempts to shed new light on the relatively neglected topic of the impact of the Eurasian nomadic tribes, the Cumans and the Tartars, on the Balkan region from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. The book's strength lies in its ambitious attempt to connect the histories of several Balkan lands to each other and link them to the activities of the invading steppe nomads in the area...an important contribution to the history of the medieval Balkans and should be welcomed by both specialists and non-specialists alike."

Michael Pesenson, Slavic and East European Journal

About the Author

Istvan Vasary is Professor of Turkish and Central Asian Studies at Lorand Eotvos University, Budapest. His previous publications (in Hungarian) include The Golden Horde (Kossuth, 1986), and History of Pre-Mongol Inner Asia (1993, 2ed.: Balassi, 2003). He served as Hungarian Ambassador to Turkey (1991-1995), and to Iran (1999-2003).

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