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STANISŁAW REK, *Kosowe Pole 1389 [Kosovo 1389]*, Bellona, Warszawa 2016, pp. 180 [= *Historyczne Bitwy*].

The battle of Kosovo in June 1389 formed an important part of the Serbs' struggle against the Turks who, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, had begun to conquer the Balkans. Contrary to what one might be inclined to think the battle, which did not end in as clear a victory for the Turks as is often assumed, did not have a particularly significant impact on the future of the Serbian lands. However, there can be no doubt that the myth that has built up around this battle has played a very significant role in shaping the Serbian national consciousness.

For a long time the battle of Kosovo did not attract the attention of Polish scholars. However, this has recently changed. The years 2015 and 2016 saw the publication of books by Ilona Czamańska and Jan Leśny¹, and Stanisław Rek, respectively. Although the book under review is intended for readers who are not necessarily experts on the subject matter, it is written by a professional historian and so is based on a wide range of primary sources and on a huge body of secondary literature². It is divided into three parts. Part 1, *Turcy i ich ekspansja w Azji*

i w Europie [The Turks and their expansion in Asia and in Europe], p. 15–52, deals with the rise of the Ottoman state, characterizes the military organization the Turks created and discusses the expansion pursued until the 1360s, first in Asia and then in the Balkans. Part 2, *Imperium osmańskie i „stare imperia” na Bałkanach [The Ottoman state and “old empires” in the Balkans]*, p. 53–82, describes the situation that emerged in the Balkans after the battle of Maritsa and recounts the Turkish expansion that took place between the clash at Maritsa, so tragic for the Serbs, and the battle of Kosovo. Part 3, *Wielka bitwa [The Great Battle]*, p. 85–166, is the main part of the book and provides a thorough analysis of the Kosovo campaign, including its causes, the description of the strength of both sides, the course of the battle itself and its effects. The work also contains a preface (p. 5–13), maps and plans (p. 167–170), the list of abbreviations (p. 171), and a bibliography (p. 173–180).

Minor remarks. Given the devaluation of the imperial title in the fourteenth century, one should not attach a special weight to Stefan Dušan's imperial ambitions. Laonicus Chalcondyles was the Byzantine historian and the author of *Historiarum Libri decem*, not Chalcondyles (p. 174).

¹ I. CZAMAŃSKA, J. LEŚNY, *Bitwa na Kosowym Polu 1389*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2015, pp. 245. The review of the book – M.J. LESZKA, SCer 5, 2015, pp. 379–380.

² It seems that the author should have made greater use of Bulgarian literature (for example. П. ПАВЛОВ, И. ТЮТЮНДЖИЕВ, *Османските турци и краят на средновековна България*, Велико Търново 1991; ИДЕМ, *Българите и османското завоевание (краят на XIII – средата на XV в.)*, Велико Търново 1995) as well as Polish one (M. SALAMON, *Bizancjum i Bulgaria wobec ekspansji tureckiej w dobie bitwy na Kosowym Polu*, [in:] *600-lecie bitwy na Kosowym Polu*, red. K. WASZKOWSKI, Kraków 1992, s. 29–43;

K. MARINOW, *Problem zdobycia Tyrnowa przez Turków Osmańskich w literaturze naukowej oraz w świetle źródeł pisanych i archeologicznych*, Mars 17, 2004, s. 3–23; IDEM, *Wybrane problemy upadku Tyrnowa*, AUL.FH 80, 2005, p. 139–160). These works would not add any significant details to the picture of the battle itself, but would highlight some specific issues raised in Rek's book (Bulgarian-Turkish relations, the failure to form the anti-Turkish coalition in the fourteenth century).

Although presented in a popular form, Stanisław Rek's book proposes interesting hypotheses and provides original conclusions. It can be considered to perfectly complement the work by Ilona Czamańska and Jan Leśny. Written in

a fluid language, it is certain to attract a great number of readers.

Miroslaw J. Leszka (Łódź)*

Translated by Artur MękarSKI

* Uniwersytet Łódzki, Wydział Filozoficzno-Historyczny,
Katedra Historii Bizancjum

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BŁAŻEJ SZEFLIŃSKI, *Trzy oblicza Sawy Nemanjicia. Postać historyczna – autokreacja – postać literacka* [Three Faces of Sava Nemanjić: a historical figure, self-creation and literary character], Łódź 2016, pp. 342 [= Byzantina Lodziensia, 25].

Sava Nemanjić-Rastko – the son of Stephan Nemanja, the founder of the medieval Serbian state – is an eminent figure who left his mark on the history of his own country and of the whole Christian ecumene. He was a founder of an independent Serbian church and its first archbishop; a sainted monk; a co-founder of Hilandar, the Serbian monastery on Athos; the author of the typikons of many monasteries; a lawgiver; a man of letters; and a politician. Proclaimed a saint, he is still held in reverence by the members of the Orthodox Church. He has attracted the attention of a great number of scholars, not only the Serbs, and the number of published works about him runs to thousands.

The book under review was written by Błażej Szepliński, a slavist of the younger generation from Łódź. Perhaps it is his young age that gave the author the courage to deal with the topic, which has already been covered by so many distinguished scholars. The main aim of the book is to collect all the available information about Sava's life and to juxtapose it with the saint's image found both in his own works and in the works of other medieval Serbian authors (epic literature).

The book is divided into four main parts. Chapter 1, *Stan badań nad życiem i średniowiecznym wizerunkiem literackim Sawy Nemanjicia* [The State of research into the life and medieval literary image of Sava Nemanjić], p. 7–26,

offers a survey of the book's primary sources and presents the modern scholarship's findings regarding Sava's life and literary image. Chapter 2, *Sawa jako postać historyczna* [Sava as a historical figure], p. 27–148, recounts Sava's life. Of particular note here are the paragraphs that deal with the issue of dating Sava's birth, the problem of the establishment of Serbian archbishopric, and the question of whether the saint owned a city district before escaping to Athos. In Chapter 3, *Kreacja własnego wizerunku przez Sawę* [Sava's creation of self-image], p. 149–172, Szepliński analyses Sava's writings [e.g.: *Karyes Typikon, Life of Simeon, The letter to Spiridon, the hegumen of Studenica*] in terms of the deliberate attempts to create his self-image. This analysis indicates that Sava tended to present himself as a humble person – a tendency that was to a certain extent fuelled by existing convention. What also shines through the saint's writings is his strong self-esteem. Chapter 4, *Sawa jako postać literacka w serbskich utworach epickich epoki średniowiecza* [Sava as a literary figure in Serbian medieval epic works], p. 173–220, provides an analysis of some Serbian texts containing references to the subject of Szepliński's book: *Hilandarska povelja* and *The Life of St. Simeon* by Stefan Nemanja; *The Prologue Life of Saint Sava* by Arsenius; *The Prologue Life of Saint Sava* (older), *The Life of St. Sava* by Domentian; *The Life of St. Sava* by Theodosius of Hilandar; *The Life of Archbishop*