

Domagoj Smojver

**THE MONGOL INVASION OF SLAVONIA AND DALMATIA:  
WERE THE MONGOLS AS CRUEL AS THE SOURCES SAY?**

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University

Vienna

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by

Domagoj Smojver

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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External Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Domagoj Smojver**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 24 May 2021

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## Abstract

The Mongol invasion of 1241-42 resulted in King Béla's call for strengthening the Hungarian kingdom with new forts. Many lords and counts received royal privileges, granting them either direct land possession, jurisdictional power or the right to exert power over certain areas in the kingdom. These charters were a way of expressing gratitude to regional lords for their financial and military aid, in times of need. The king took refuge in many cities throughout Slavonia and Dalmatia over the two years, often changing forts in order to avoid being caught or killed. This thesis will follow two military powers, respectively. The first one is led by King Béla, followed by his royal and ecclesial entourage, sometimes supported by local nobles. The other one is the invading force, led by two army commanders: Batu and Qadan. Following modern road reconstruction and military troop movement, this study provides an overview and in-depth analysis of Mongol activity in Slavonia, bordered by natural dividing lines, like the rivers Drava, Sava and Danube. Moreover, it traces the Mongol progress from Slavonia to Dalmatia, through the Lika region, backed up with relevant archaeological finds, where such remains exist. Available existing theories on major battles, minor clashes and raids, carried out by the Mongols, are reassessed with a focus on Croatian historiographical tradition. The king managed to escape the Mongol threat, safely hidden behind stone walls. Major battles did not occur in northern Adriatic region, but rather to the south, near Trogir, Split, and Šibenik. It is disputable what was the extent of Mongol raids in the Dalmatian hinterlands. The conclusions are thus based on a combination of critical-based analysis of medieval sources (Thomas of Split, Master Roger), reflection on secondary literature, and supplemented with recent historical and archaeological publications.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both of my mentors, Balázs Nagy and József Laszlovszky. Their patient guidance, useful comments and supervision of both research and writing process contributed to the emergence of this thesis. I would like to thank them for referring some of recently published scientific works, as well as archaeological projects, which helped highlight the sphere of archaeological discoveries directly or indirectly related to the Mongol invasion.

Secondly, I would like to thank Andrej Janeš, Nikolina Antonić and Antun Nekić for their insight on archaeological works and publications, which I incorporated into my research topic.

Thirdly, I show my gratefulness to Zsuzsanna Reed, for her continuous support and advice in honing my language skills in written form.

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## List of Abbreviations

CD – *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*

Master Roger – *Magistri Rogerii: Epistola in miserabile carmen super destruction Regni Hungariae per tartaros facta*/Master Roger's *Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*. Translated and edited by János M. Bak and Martyn Rady. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010.

Thomas of Split – *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum*/Archdeacon Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*. Edited and translated by Olga Perić, Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and James Ross Sweeney. Budapest: CEU Press, 2006.

## Introduction

The Mongol invasion of 1241-42 was a calamitous period in history of the Hungarian kingdom. Various consequences emerged both during the invasion, and after the Mongol army left the Great Hungarian Plain. During the invasion, many cities, fortified places and settlements suffered total destruction or partial devastation. Medieval author Thomas of Split reports horrific details about the Mongol atrocities in the cities and towns: women, children, and old people stripped down naked and pierced by spears; beautiful women enslaved; disfigured people slain; Mongol children beating captive children to death for sport; convents invaded, their occupants decapitated, holy objects defiled.<sup>1</sup> Another contemporary author, Master Roger, was held captive by the Mongols. Afterwards, he composed the *Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, a narrative work which describes the destruction carried out by the Mongols. Among others, Roger reports with pain and sadness that the Mongols left only devastation in their path: roads and paths vanished; grass and thorn bushes took over; a great deal of people slain in the fields; whole villages were destroyed by the Mongol soldiers; razing the cities formerly known for their reputation.<sup>2</sup> Chapter 40 is entitled “How the Tatars Returned Home Having Destroyed Almost all of Hungary,” which shows the impression left on thirteenth-century intellectual, after experiencing the invasion that lasted “only” two years.

This thesis will focus on the invasion of Slavonia and Dalmatia, in the context of medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Slavonia was incorporated into Hungarian kingdom in the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas of Split, *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum/Archdeacon Thomas of Split, History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, Olga Perić, Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and James Ross Sweeney, eds. and trans. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), 280-9.

<sup>2</sup> Master Roger, *Magistri Rogerii: Epistola in miserabile carmen super destruction Regni Hungariae per tartaros facta/Master Roger's Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, János Bak and Martyn Rady, eds. and trans. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 206-25.

eleventh century, and was given to relatives of Hungarian monarchs or, in some cases, other noblemen, for centuries to come. As will be shown in maps later, this area was under the direct rule of the duke of Slavonia, and thus was drawn into the political sphere of the Hungarian ruler's inner circle. At the time of Mongol invasion, the duke of Slavonia was Coloman (Kálmán), King Béla IV's brother. Coloman was present at the Battle of the Sajó River, alongside his brother and other high ranking nobles in the kingdom. His rule over the territory of Slavonia ended abruptly, when he died shortly after the battle in his own land, in Čazma, Slavonia.

The Mongol invaders, led by Batu and Qadan followed the brothers across the Hungarian kingdom. Their goal was to strike a fatal blow to both Béla and Coloman, to make sure they are unable to gather another army and put up resistance against the invasion. The present thesis starts at this point. It will show both Mongol army movement in Slavonia and Dalmatia, and King Béla's escape route in detail. The movements of these troops will be traced using reconstructed maps, the description of the situation on the ground is based on primary sources and secondary literature, as well as on the reconstruction of medieval road system used by the king, his brother, and their entourage. This research serves two purposes. The first one is the reconstruction on King Béla's movement through Slavonia and Dalmatia, and identifying the fortified towns in which he stayed. The second one is determining the route by which the Mongols entered the territories of Slavonia and Dalmatia, thus locating their troops in real time and space.

Using medieval sources and secondary literature, case-study publications and recent studies on the Mongol military activity in the Hungarian kingdom, the thesis sets out to determine the location and nature of Mongol maneuvers in the territory of Slavonia in 1241-42. Contemporary information comes from two most prominent authors of the thirteenth century, Thomas of Split and Master Roger. Thomas of Split does provide more information

on Mongol attacks and raiding parties, especially in Dalmatia, so his account will be closely examined. One of the main arguments based on this source is that during the 1241-42 campaign, not one, but two armies were present in Slavonia, at least at some point. The first one was led by Batu, a military commander who managed to cross the Drava River from the north. He entered Slavonia after the sieges of Szeged and Pécs. The examination whether siege of Banoštor, Orljava, Kamenica and Čazma can be attributed to his army will be discussed in the first chapter.

The second army present in Slavonia was led by Qadan. Commander Qadan followed King Béla all the way from the battlefield at the Sajó River, and his main goal was to capture the king as fast as possible. The siege of Kalnik and Zagreb are directly attributed to his military actions, as he attacked the forts in which he believed the king was seeking refuge. His army movement differs from those of Batu, as will be presented in separate subchapters and maps.

In addition, available archaeological material is also gathered in the first chapter. Evidence or possible evidence, linking artifacts with Mongol invaders, may shed some light on material remains placed in mid-thirteenth century. Coin hoards, fire destruction residue and layers in defense structure foundations are introduced accordingly.

The second chapter deals with the question mentioned in title of this thesis: what was the extent of Mongol cruelty? Was Mongol cruelty only a rumor, or was there actual evidence of Mongol slaughter in Slavonia or Dalmatia? Eye-witness reports, by both Thomas and Master Roger, suggest that Mongols killed non-combatants on regular basis. Moreover, they are accused of pillaging and raiding throughout the Great Hungarian Plain, using fire as a weapon in their raids. But most of these accounts place Mongol violence against civilians north of Drava and Danube, following the sieges of Pest, Vác, Pécs, Esztergom, Szeged and Csanád. The question arises: was this also practiced in Slavonia by either Batu or Qadan? As

a prime example, the alleged slaughter at Sirbium will be discussed, serving as a possible evidence for massacres continuing between Slavonia and Dalmatia. Its location has not yet been confirmed, but it is assumed that the site is somewhere in Lika County, near Velebit mountain range.

Another important distinction that needs to be addressed is the term “cruelty” used consequently throughout this thesis. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, cruelty is a quality or state of being cruel, where being cruel refers to inhuman treatment or inflicting pain or suffering.<sup>3</sup> A similar definition of cruelty is described in Cambridge On-line Dictionary, where the term applies to an extremely unkind or unpleasant act of causing pain to people or animals intentionally.<sup>4</sup> Labeling the Mongol invaders in 1241-42 campaign as cruel can be seen as anachronistic, since their main goal was to conquer the lands they invaded, as short as possible, and with as much spoils as possible. Thomas of Split refers to Mongol actions in Hungarian kingdom as cruel and godless, but that only shows a perception by mid-thirteenth-century European intellectual reflecting on war activities. A noteworthy discussion of the background and causes of the Mongol conquests, and its later association with the terms “cruelty” and “barbaric” is presented in Gyucha, Lee, and Rózsa publication.<sup>5</sup> This discussion outlines and explains what was the practicality behind the decapitation of the elite, eliminating certain amount of local population, and raiding, primarily classified under the term “cruel behavior.” This way, the actions labeled as cruel, such as obliterating the settlements, indiscriminate killing practice, leaving the dead unburied, and hunting down refugees can be seen from a different angle. This angle shows that the practice of conducting a “total war,” where the term applies to a war that is unrestricted in terms of the weapons

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<sup>3</sup> “Cruelty,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed May, 20, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cruelty>.

<sup>4</sup> “Cruelty,” Cambridge On-line Dictionary, accessed May, 20, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cruelty>.

<sup>5</sup> Attila Gyucha, Wayne E. Lee and Zoltán Rózsa, “The Mongol Campaign in Hungary, 1241-1242: The Archaeology and History of Nomadic Conquest and Massacre,” *Journal of Military History* 83 (2019), 1021-66.

used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the laws of war are disregarded, was applicable by the Mongols not only in 1241-42 Hungarian campaign, but also in other Eurasian campaigns, and that this practice took hold in the different approach to conquest types in war carried out by steppe nomadic pastoral tribes. Regarding Mongol military actions in Slavonia and Dalmatia, term “violence” might be a better substitution, in order to better describe the deeds of war.

The third chapter will deal with Mongol military activity in Dalmatia. Qadan entered Dalmatia after unsuccessfully attempting to capture the Hungarian king in Slavonia. Sieges of Kalnik and Zagreb did not last long, because Qadan left these towns once he found out that the king was no longer there. His attempt to capture the king in the open field, before he reached safety behind city walls was never realized, so he needed to start siege after siege, without siege machines to break the city ramparts. Here, the sieges of Split, Klis and Trogir, as well as their outcome, are put into context, too. The strange case of Šibenik – how and why its siege falls into the category of Mongol attack – will be addressed in a separate subchapter.

There are reports of Mongol raids and pillaging parties all across northern and southern Dalmatia. Some can be found in Thomas’s work, some in later works, starting with sixteenth-century author Ivan Tomašić. His chronicle marks the starting point for introducing the Frankopans, the naval campaign, the legendary Battle of Grobnik Field and other smaller raids in Dalmatian hinterlands.<sup>6</sup> The reports are broadly discussed in works of Croatian historians and authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>7</sup> The third chapter will provide insight into the background of this historiographical phenomenon, listing the

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<sup>6</sup> Ivan Tomašić, “Chronicon breve Regni Croatiae Joannis Tomasich minorite” [A short Croatian chronicle by Ivan Tomašić] in *Arkiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku*, vol. 9, ed. Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski (Zagreb: Tiskara Dragutina Albrechta, 1868), 1-34.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli i Tatari: povjesno-kritična razprava* [The battle of Croats with the Mongols and Tatars: a historical-critical discussion] (Zagreb: A. Jakić, 1863); Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata* [History of Croats], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Lav. Hartman, 1899), 218-30; Antun Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola iz Hrvatske* [Expulsion of the Mongols from Croatia] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1942).



hypotheses and analyses of Croatian historians who dealt with Mongol campaign in Dalmatia. The different approaches, reasons behind locating battles in either northern Dalmatia, southern Dalmatia, or the islands in Adriatic Sea, are presented to show why certain theories on Mongol military activity in Dalmatia emerged. Evidence of Mongol attacks based on archaeological interpretation is also discussed. A separate subchapter is devoted to the Grobnik question, as this episode in history is rife with controversy, false information, and overemphasis. No archeological remains connected to the battle have been excavated, so in the absence of material remains, both primary sources and secondary literature are scrutinized.

Linked with the Grobnik Battle and the alleged naval clashes with the Mongols, royal charters, issued by King Béla years after the Mongol departure, are also brought into discussion. Several charters mention the help and assistance provided by local nobles to the king, and some of them serve as basis for claim that the king would surely be dead if there were not the counts of Krk, the defenders of Pag, Filip and Bartol Skalić, or the heroic brothers Kres, Rak and Kupiša.<sup>8</sup> The chapter includes an analysis of the character of these charters, and whether they can serve as evidence for major battles on the Adriatic coast and islands.

This thesis traces the events until the Mongol departure in March 1242, as the sudden Mongol retreat is beyond the remit of the present study and has enjoyed significant attention in scholarship, such as Stephen Pow's recently completed doctoral dissertation.<sup>9</sup>

The information presented in the three chapters below is enlisted as background data and analysis for a thorough reassessment of the situation in Slavonia and Dalmatia in 1241-42. The question whether the Mongols were as cruel as the sources say is a recurring issue

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<sup>8</sup> *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 4, ed. Tadija Smičiklas (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1906), 220-2; vol. 5, 173-5, 177-8, 179-80, 277-8, 308-11.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Pow, "Conquest and Withdrawal: The Mongol Invasions of Europe in the Thirteenth Century," Ph.D. diss. (Central European University Budapest, 2020).

addressed throughout the thesis, and come to special focus in the conclusion. All the sieges, raids, and pillages examined contribute to this question: is it justifiable to claim that Mongols engaged in a large-scale slaughter of civilians in Slavonia and Dalmatia? Or was their main focus on something else? For example, on their preoccupation with catching the king, who managed to escape his pursuers again and again.

# Chapter 1. Slavonia

## 1.1 Medieval Slavonia: Territory

This chapter will deal with the Mongol invasion of 1241-42, more explicitly with their attacks and activities in the territory of medieval Slavonia. To begin with, the term medieval Slavonia will be used for describing the territory within the Hungarian kingdom, and is not to be mistaken for either Slavonia as the territory of all the Slavs, or the part of the medieval polity limited to the modern Republic of Croatia. The borders of medieval Slavonia under scrutiny here are the Drava River to the north, the Danube to the east, the Sava River to the south, the Žumberak Mountains to the northwest and the region of Lika and the Bosnian mountains to the south. The southern border between Slavonia and the Bosnian mountains are loose, taking into consideration that some parts of this region were disputed by the Hungarian king and the Bosnian rulers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> The northern territories of Bosnia were also subject to political pretension by the Hungarian kings, whose main goal was to expand the range of jurisdiction south of the Sava River, all the way to the Rama region. The map of the thirteenth-century territorial expanse of the Hungarian kingdom (Map 1) provides an insight into the thirteenth-century situation in this respect.

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<sup>10</sup> For further clarification on this topic see: Nada Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna: Politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* [Medieval Bosnia. The political position of the Bosnian rulers until Tvrtko's coronation] (Zagreb: Eminex, 1994); Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti: (sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska): 1387-1463* [On the landslide of history: (holy crown of Hungary and holy crown of Bosnia): 1387-1463] (Zagreb: Impresum, 2006).



Figure 1. Hungary in the second half of the thirteenth century. Source: *Történelmi atlasz a középiskolák számára* [Historical atlas for secondary schools]. Budapest, Kartográfiai Vállalat, 1990, 15-18.

## 1.2 Béla and Coloman: Flight After the Defeat at the Sajó River

After the defeat at the Battle of Sajó River (April 11, 1241), King Béla and his brother Coloman, left the Sajó River encampment and tried to get away as far away as possible from the oncoming Mongol threat. King Béla first went to his neighbor, the duke of Austria, while his brother left for Čazma in Slavonia, after taking refuge in Pest.<sup>11</sup> After an unpleasant reception, the king left and headed for Zagreb.<sup>12</sup> The road which Coloman used was most probably the one referred to in scholarship as *via Colomani Regis*, “Coloman’s Road,” starting with Székesfehérvár, going to the south through Nagykanizsa, Koprivnica, Križevci, and into Zagreb, see the map showing the route reconstructed by Danko Dujmović (Map 2).<sup>13</sup> The dispute whether the Coloman’s Road mentioned in medieval sources is indeed the reconstructed one exists and the consensus is not yet reached.<sup>14</sup> Sarolta Tatár states that Qadan must have followed the main road when pursuing the king, that being the road that connected Pest with Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, Zalavár, Kemlük/Kalnik finally arriving Zagreb.<sup>15</sup> It corresponds with the road reconstruction shown in Map 2.

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<sup>11</sup> Master Roger, 193-5.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas of Split, 280-1.

<sup>13</sup> Danko Dujmović, “Cesta kralja Kolomana u zapadnom međuriječju Save i Drave” [King Coloman’s Road in the western parts of the region between the rivers Sava and Drava], *Radovi: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 48 (2016): 248.

<sup>14</sup> Ranko Pavleš states that there is a discrepancy between medieval sources mentioning the road and later historiographical allegations: Ranko Pavleš, “Cesta kralja Kolomana” [King Koloman’s Road], *Podravina* 7, no. 13 (2008): 65-75; Danko Dujmović points out the complexity of the terms used for the Coloman’s Road: *velika cesta* [“great road”], *stara cesta* [“old road”], *javna cesta* [“public road”], *kraljeva cesta* [“king’s road”] and *cesta na nasipu* [“road on the embarkment”]: Dujmović, “Cesta kralja Kolomana,” 245-72; Extensive research has been presented by Magdolna Szilágyi, with a focus on the variability of these roads through East-Central European road networks: Magdolna Szilágyi, *On the Road: The History and Archaeology of Medieval Communication Networks in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: Prime Rate, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Sarolta Tatár, “Roads Used by the Mongols Into Hungary, 1241-1242,” in *Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Mongolists*, vol. 1, *Prehistoric and Historic Periods of Mongolia’s Relations with Various Civilizations* (Ulaan Baatar: International Association for Mongol Studies, 2012), 338.

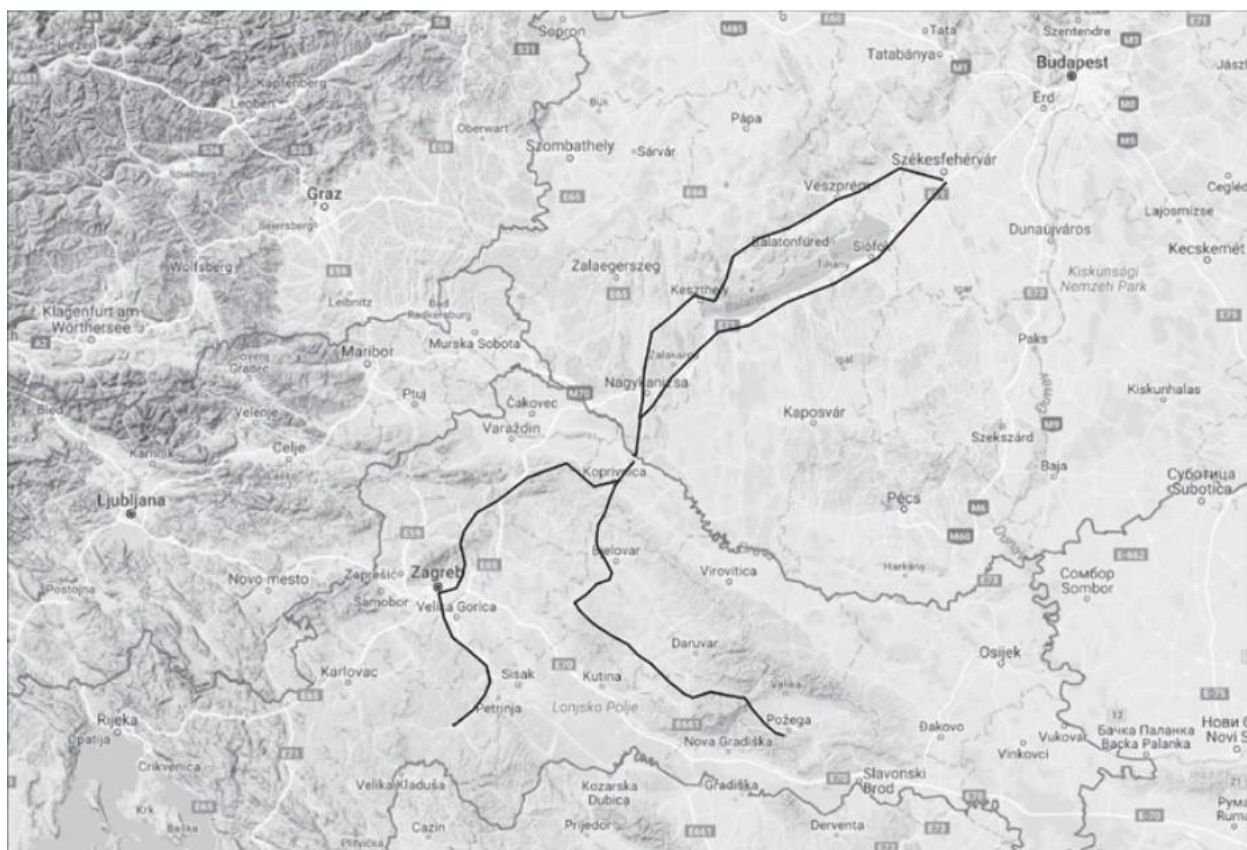


Figure 2. *Via Colomani regis*. Military roads in the Hungarian kingdom, according to Magdolna Szilágyi's reconstruction. Source: Danko Dujmović, "Cesta kralja Kolomana u zapadnom međuriječju Save i Drave" [King Coloman's Road in the Western Parts of the Region between the Rivers Sava and Drava], Radovi: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest 48 (2016): 248.

### 1.3 Kalnik: Withstanding the Attack

The king's arrival into Zagreb is dated to May 1241. According to the hypothesis presented by János Bak and Martyn Rady, Béla passed through Segesd, where the queen was waiting for him, staying in the vicinity of the Zagreb, before going to the south.<sup>16</sup> One of the forts that managed to withstand the Mongol attack is Veliki Kalnik (Kemlék, Nagykemlék). The fort is mentioned for the first time in 1193.<sup>17</sup> Being directly on the route going from Pest to Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, Zalavár, Kalnik and ultimately Zagreb, the fort was destined for attacked.<sup>18</sup> The main reason why the Mongol raiders attacked the Kalnik Castle was because they believed the king was hiding there. Following him from the battlefield at the Sajó River, they wanted to catch and execute him, as this was a rule in Mongol warfare. However, there is no strong evidence that King Béla was ever present in Kalnik, whether it was Veliki or Mali Kalnik.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Béla visited Kalnik for a very short period of time. Its close proximity to Coloman's Road may be one of the reasons as the king may have wanted to inspect the castles in the region if they could withstand the Mongol onslaught.<sup>20</sup> That the castle served its purpose is proven by the privilege given to Filip Bebek in 1243, for his bravery in the fights against the Mongols.<sup>21</sup> According to Gjuro Szabo, Kalnik was part of

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas of Split, 195, note 5.

<sup>17</sup> CD II, 265.

<sup>18</sup> Andrej Janeš, "A Phantom Menace. Did the Mongol Invasion Really Influence Stone Castle Building in Medieval Slavonia?" in *Fortifications, Defence Systems, Structures and Features in the Past: Proceedings of the 4th International Scientific Conference on Mediaeval Archaeology of the Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb, 7th – 9th June 2017*, ed. Tatjana Tkalčec, Tajana Sekelj Ivančan, Siniša Krznar, and Juraj Bela (Zagreb: Institut za arheologiju, 2019), 226.

<sup>19</sup> Ozren Blagec states that there is no objective way to know whether the battle occurred at Veliki Kalnik or Mali Kalnik, in the absence of archaeological evidence or written sources: Ozren Blagec, "Bela IV. i kalničko plemstvo" [Béla IV and the gentry of Kalnik], *Cris: Časopis Povijesnog društva Križevci* 12, no. 1 (2010): 235-6.

<sup>20</sup> Blagec, "Béla IV," 236.

<sup>21</sup> CD IV, 191-2.

the royal estate. It was given to Bebek for successfully defending the king, and later, in 1270 it was passed to *ban* Roland by King Stephen.<sup>22</sup>

Andrej Janeš warns that the victory achieved on Mongol army should not be overemphasized. In his 2019 publication, he points out that the troops following King Béla were of a rather small size. Therefore, the damage inflicted upon the stone castle could not have been great. In addition, the Mongols did not bring siege weaponry with them.<sup>23</sup> The Mongols have razed numerous cities and fortresses before Kalnik, and if they had enough time, he believed that a little fort of Kalnik would not prove as an impenetrable defense point. Following his hypothesis, the Mongols did not want to lose precious time on long-lasting siege, once they realized Béla was not in Kalnik. They moved onwards, to Zagreb, because the rumour that the king fled to Zagreb was correct.

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<sup>22</sup> Gjuro Szabo, *Srednjovječni gradovi u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji* [Medieval towns in Croatia and Slavonia] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1920), 96-7.

<sup>23</sup> Janeš, "A Phantom Menace," 227-8.





*Figure 3. Aerial view of the castle of Veliki Kalnik. Source: Kalnik Municipality, 2008.*

## 1.4 Next Stop: Zagreb

The king arrived at the Zagreb in May 1241. The evidence is the royal letter sent to Pope Gregory on May 16, 1241.<sup>24</sup> The letter is not very long, but it is written in a tone of imminent danger. The Mongols are described as raging beasts, committing terrible actions and causing terror in Hungary. The pope did not remain silent. On June 16, one month later, the pope tried to give comfort to both Béla and his brother, Coloman, duke of Slavonia. While the king was taking refuge in Zagreb, Coloman was recovering from his wounds in Čazma, an episcopal estate of the Kaptol, a possession of the bishop of Zagreb.<sup>25</sup> He succumbed to his wounds there and was laid to rest in a hidden crypt at the Friars Preachers.<sup>26</sup> The reason for putting his body in a hidden crypt was the belief that the “iniquitous race of Tatars made a practice of violating Christian burial places with their impious hands, especially the tombs of princes, destroying them and scattering the remains,” as suggested by Thomas of Split.<sup>27</sup>

The king spent the next ten months in Zagreb, waiting for the help he called for earlier. The idea for a crusade against the Mongols, perceived as a threat to Christendom, was supported by the pope. Gregory showed himself ready, but other European monarchs did not.<sup>28</sup> Soldiers who would serve as a bulwark and a driving-out force never reached the Hungarian kingdom.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> CD IV, 128-9.

<sup>25</sup> Maja Cepetić, “Granice srednjovjekovnih biskupskih posjeda Dubrave, Ivanića i Čazme” [The boundaries of the bishop’s possessions Dubrava, Ivanić and Čazma in the Middle Ages], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3, no. 40 (2013), 220-1.

<sup>26</sup> Ferdo Šišić, *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog naroda: Od najstarijih dana do godine 1873* [An overview of the history of the Croatian people: From the earliest days to year 1873] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1916), 98.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas of Split, 288-9.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Jackson, “The Crusade Against the Mongols (1241),” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42, no. 1 (1991): 11-3.

<sup>29</sup> For more information about the help promised by the pope, see: Mikołaj Gladysz, *The Forgotten Crusaders: Poland and the Crusader Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

Without foreign aid, the king resided behind Zagreb's city walls until the word reached him that the Mongols were on their way once again. Somewhere between January and March the King departed from Zagreb. The Mongols managed to cross the frozen Drava during winter, most probably in late December or in early January, allowing them to enter Slavonia from the north.<sup>30</sup> Soon after that, they crossed the Danube near Esztergom. The king headed south, because he realised that staying inside the city walls of Zagreb would be dangerous. Before the enemy crossed the Drava, Béla left the camp at Zagreb with all of his entourage and made for the sea.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, neither Master Roger's *Epistle* nor Thomas's *Historia* contains the information describing the complex situation in Slavonia. The narratives simply move southwards, mentioning either Split or the islands on which the king took refuge.<sup>32</sup>

Direct evidence that the Mongols either besieged or entered the city of Zagreb is debatable.<sup>33</sup> There is a mention in secondary literature that the Mongols besieged the city and set fire to the church inside the city. However, only Thomas of Split mentions only that Stephen II, bishop of Zagreb (1225–47) joined Béla's flight to Split.<sup>34</sup> The church withstanding the siege is the Zagreb Cathedral, which was being rebuilt and remodelled several times during the Middle Ages. Despite the fact that both Vjekoslav Klaić and Ferdo Šišić state that the Mongols destroyed the city of Zagreb, setting fire and razing the main church, direct evidence on the extent of the destruction is lacking.<sup>35</sup> Thomas of Split mentions the Mongols entering the fortified city and nineteenth-century Croatian historians seem to take this information and magnify the scope of the damages. As for the indirect evidence

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas of Split, 288-9.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas of Split, 290-1.

<sup>32</sup> Master Roger, 214-5; Thomas of Split, 290-1.

<sup>33</sup> For this thesis, the term Zagreb will be applied for medieval settlements of Gradec and Kaptol, as the name Zagreb is a later version. For further clarification, see: Hrvoje Gračanin, Borislav Grgin, Zrinka Nikolić Jakus, *Povijest grada Zagreba* [History of the City of Zagreb], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Znanje d.o.o., 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas of Split, 290-1.

<sup>35</sup> Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 224; Šišić, *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog*, 96.

mentioned above, the restoration of a church is placed right after the Mongol departure. “Timothy’s post-Tatar church” and St. Stephen were built between 1242 and 1247.<sup>36</sup> The rebuilding process was started by bishop Stephen II.<sup>37</sup> According to Antun Ivandija, the Mongols did not raze the entire church. Remains of the walls of the original church under the floor dated to 1217, according to his theory, testify that the Mongol invaders laid siege, but did not irretrievably destroy the entire building.<sup>38</sup> This church was the foundation for the new cathedral, rebuilt in a new, Gothic style.

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<sup>36</sup> Antun Ivandija, “Prilozi za građevnu povijest zagrebačke katedrale” [Annexes to the building history of the Zagreb Cathedral], *Croatica Christiana periodica* 5, no. 8 (1981): 12.

<sup>37</sup> Gjuro Szabo, “Prilozi za građevnu povijest zagrebačke katedrale” [Annexes to the building history of the Zagreb Cathedral], *Narodna starina* 8, no. 19 (1929): 67.

<sup>38</sup> Ivandija, “Prilozi za građevnu povijest,” 12.

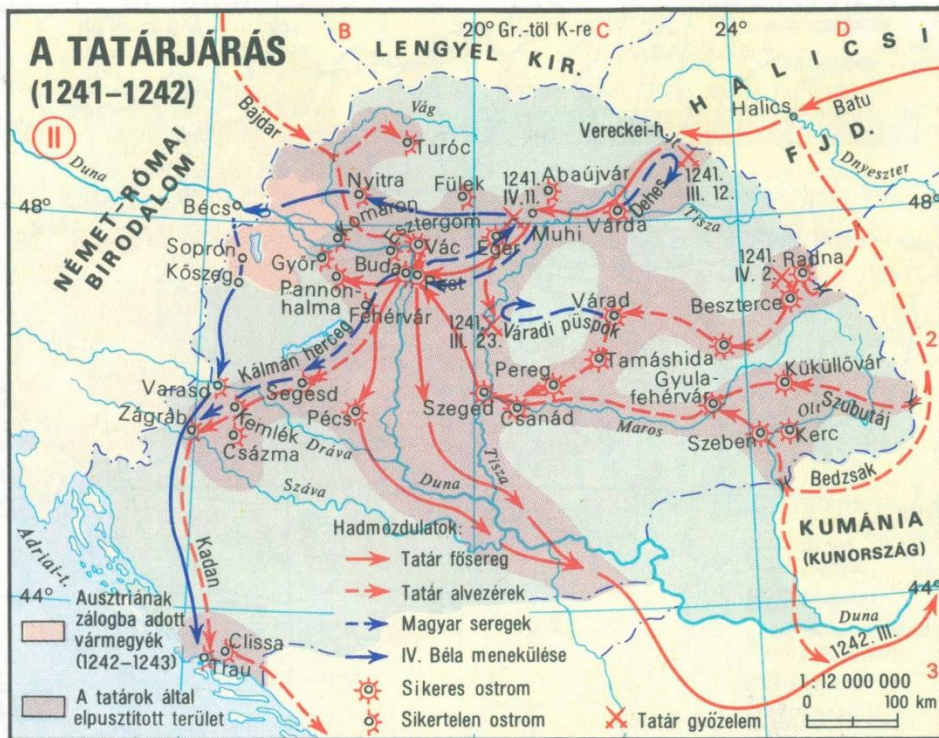


Figure 4. Mongol Invasion of Hungary 1241-42. Source: *Történelmi világatlasz*, 110.

## 1.5 Eastern Slavonia: Banoštor, Orljava, Čazma

In a historical commentary on Thomas of Split's work, the situation on medieval Slavonia in 1241-42 is described as follows: Hungary was ravaged, Slavonia overrun. Orljava, Čazma, Kamenica and Zagreb were razed.<sup>39</sup> The exact location of the fort of Orljava fort is unconfirmed. It is most probably somewhere near the Požega city.<sup>40</sup> Vjekoslav Klaić and Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski place Orljava in Požega County. Klaić states that the Mongols ransacked the fort and there is no mention of attacking Požega.<sup>41</sup> Kamenica is mentioned as the see of Diocese of Srijem.<sup>42</sup>

The city of Čazma, noted earlier, was a fortified place where Coloman fled, in order to recuperate. It is unclear whether Qadan razed the city, following King Béla from the north, through Kalnik and Zagreb, or this siege was orchestrated by Batu, who led his army from Szeged and Pécs southward, crossing the Drava and Danube. Once again, there is a discrepancy between the medieval sources and nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography. Neither Thomas nor Roger mentions that the Mongols besieged or destroyed the Chapter of Čazma. It is possible that Qadan or Batu tried to take over the city in order to deal a killing blow to the duke of Slavonia and a survivor of the Battle of Sajó. Klaić and Sakcinski emphasize the extent of the Mongol destruction in the area between Orljava, Čazma and Zagreb. According to them, the raiders burnt and razed everything in their path.<sup>43</sup> If the raid was led by Batu, who was leading his soldiers all over the territory of Slavonia after the great victories at Esztergom, Vác and Pécs, the claim that the Mongols scattered all over Slavonia looking for loot and spoils of war is not farfetched, but more historical or

<sup>39</sup> Thomas of Split [Thomas Archidiaconus], *Historia salonitarum atque spalatinorum pontificum*, eds. and trans. Olga Perić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and Radoslav Katičić (Split: Književni krug, 2003), 360.

<sup>40</sup> Szabo, *Srednjovječni gradovi*, 127.

<sup>41</sup> Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, 224.

<sup>42</sup> Josip Ante Soldo, Josip Ante Soldo, "Provala Tatara u Hrvatsku" [Tatar Invasion of Croatia], *Historijski zbornik* 21-22 (1968): 384.

<sup>43</sup> Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli*, 28-9; Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, 224.

archaeological evidence is needed. That being said, it seems highly unlikely that the raids on Orłjava, Čazma and Banoštor were carried out by Qadan. After all, his main goal was to capture and execute king, without time to spare. And long-lasting sieges and pillaging are exactly that – a waste of time, from a military point of view.

As for Banoštor, there is a mention in papal correspondence that the fort suffered a Mongol attack.<sup>44</sup> As evidence that the destruction was severe, Szabo points out that Pope Innocent IV in 1247 advised the bishop of Srijem to relocate to one of his monasteries nearby, either to St. Gregory or St. Dimitry.<sup>45</sup> Being on the far eastern part of Slavonia, it is not mentioned in the sources whether Banoštor was first in the line of attack, or the siege of Banoštor took place after the fall of Orłjava, Čazma and Zagreb. Since there is a mention that Kamenica, serving as the see of Diocese of Srijem, was in fact Banoštor, known under different names (Srijemska Kamenica, Kő, de Kw), I conclude that the destruction of Banoštor was in fact the destruction of fortified bishopric estate during the 1241-42 Mongol campaign.<sup>46</sup>

## 1.6 Archaeological Evidence in Slavonia

Despite several mentions of Mongol military actions and the apparent slaughter performed by the invaders, only a few archaeological material remains indicate destructive Mongol activity undoubtedly. Recently, Attila Gyucha, Wayne E. Lee and Zoltán Rózsa examined whether the Mongol army did raid and pillage the countryside.<sup>47</sup> This archaeology-based research was based on a number of sites: Orosháza-Bónum, Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze,

<sup>44</sup> CD IV, 326.

<sup>45</sup> Gjuro Szabo, "Iz Srijema: Banoštor" [From Syrmia: Banoštor], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 2, no. 1-2 (1928), 116.

<sup>46</sup> Bálint Ternovác, "Nastanak i rana povijest latinske biskupije Srijema" [The origin and early history of the Latin Diocese of Srijem], *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 35 (2017): 1-14.

<sup>47</sup> Gyucha, Lee, and Rózsa, "The Mongol Campaign," 1021-66.

Onga-Ócsanáros, Cegléd-Madarászhalom, Dunaföldvár-Ló-hegy, Bugac-Pétermonostora, Csanádpalota-Dávid-halom and several others. The evidence enlisted seems to support the claim that the Mongols carried out mass killings of local population. Evidence for indiscriminate slaughter of both male and female victims; weapon fragments embedded in bodies; number of burnt houses and charred remains; a door blocked in order to trap individuals inside a burning building; human skeletal remains, disintegrated, fragmented, and burned to varying degrees; dismembered skeletal remains of ten individuals, inside well – these finds all attest to violent attacks on civilian population.<sup>48</sup> But all of the examples for this type of destruction and elimination of the populace activity are attested north of the Drava River.

Archaeological evidence based or found in territory of medieval Slavonia can be similarly examined to inform the present understanding of the extent of Mongol violence in areas affected after the main campaign in the kingdom of Hungary.

There are a handful of examples suggesting the presence of Mongols and violent warfare. For one, a dog skull found in a pot at the Torčec-Cirkvišće site, south of the Drava River suggests Mongol ritual practices.<sup>49</sup> In one such nomadic ritual practice, an individual or a group bury the dog's head, which is carefully separated from the rest of the body and placed inside a special vessel. The presence of this find, thus, can be associated with the passage of nomadic warriors, in this case Mongols, through the area.<sup>50</sup> However, this kind of ritual burial is not limited to the Tatar group, or the Mongol confederacy group, but may also be linked to the Cumans, who were present in medieval Hungarian kingdom prior to the Mongol invasion

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<sup>48</sup> Gyucha, Lee, and Rózsa, "The Mongol Campaign," 1048-58.

<sup>49</sup> Tajana Sekelj Ivančan, Snježana Kužir, Mario Bauer, and Zorko Marković, "Slučajni nalaz lubanje *Canis familiaris* položene u srednjovjekovnu keramičku posudu s lokaliteta Torčec-Cirkvišće kraj Koprivnice" [Accidental find of a *Canis familiaris* skull placed in a medieval ceramic vessel from the locality Torčec-Cirkvišće near Koprivnica], *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 15/16 (1998): 61-79.

<sup>50</sup> Panos Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasions of Croatia and Serbia in 1242," *Fragmenta Hellenoslavica* 2 (2015): 264.



1241-42, so this find in itself is no irrefutable evidence for Mongol war activity in the area. Moreover, no skeletal remains or burnt structures were found in the site.

The second find is the one hoard of 846 silver coins from Čakovec, in eastern Slavonia, which was primarily being attributed to the Mongol army presence there.<sup>51</sup> Following the historical interpretation pattern in Hungarian studies on coin hoards, the author directly linked the presence of a coin hoards with an invasive Mongol campaign near Čakovec.<sup>52</sup> Conversely, the second interpretation of the found coin hoard debunked the initial interpretation, and the direct link between the buried coin hoard and Mongol invasion is no longer considered so straightforward.<sup>53</sup>

There are two more archaeological finds, published quite recently, which could shed some light on the Mongol activity in Slavonia, but further research and confirmation is necessary. The first one is publication by Dejan Radičević in 2019.<sup>54</sup> Radičević discusses archaeological data in medieval Kovin, among other fortifications, placed on the Danube River, serving as a border between the Byzantine Empire and the Hungarian kingdom. According to new archaeological finds, a reconstruction of the forts is related to the beginning of the later phase of the medieval era in Kovin, that is, after the destruction of the settlement by a layer of burnt material, which is roughly dated to the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup> The author concedes that there are no written testimonies for this period, but, according to archaeological data, concludes that the city was destroyed by the invasion of

<sup>51</sup> Željko Tomičić, “Skupni nalaz ranosrednjovjekovnog novca 12. i 13. stoljeća iz Čakovca” [Collective find of early medieval money of the twelfth and thirteenth century centuries from Čakovec], *Muzejski vjesnik: Glasilo muzeja Sjeverozapadne Hrvatske* 8 (1985): 57-8.

<sup>52</sup> József Laszlovszky, Stephen Pow, Beatrix F. Romhányi, László Ferenczi, and Zsolt Pinke, “Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion of Hungary in 1241-42,” *Hungarian Historical Review* 7, no. 3 (2018), 425-7.

<sup>53</sup> Ivan Mirnik, “Najsitnija kulturna dobra: Novac i njegova uloga u srednjovjekovnoj Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji” [The tiniest cultural heritage: Money and its role in the medieval Croatia and Slavonia], *Analecta* 6 (2008): 125-43.

<sup>54</sup> Dejan Radičević, “Fortifications on the Byzantine-Hungarian Danube Border in the 11th and 12th Centuries,” in *Fortifications, Defence Systems, Structures and Features in the Past: Proceedings of the 4th International Scientific Conference on Mediaeval Archaeology of the Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb, 7th – 9th June 2017*, eds. Tatjana Tkalčec, Tajana Sekelj Ivančan, Siniša Krznar, and Juraj Bela (Zagreb: Institut za arheologiju, 2019): 157-171.

<sup>55</sup> Radičević, “Fortifications on the Byzantine-Hungarian,” 165.

Mongols in 1241. After this destruction, the fort obtained new stone ramparts or the earth ramparts were reinforced by stone.<sup>56</sup> Once again, Radičević points out that a reliable answer to this question can only be provided by the future excavations.

The fourth and final possible evidence is the one presented in 2017 by Marijana Krmpotić, Andrej Janeš, and Petar Sekulić.<sup>57</sup> The archaeological excavation of a research hillfort/motte located in Gradišće, near the city of Čakovec, in northern medieval Slavonia, has shown that life in this hillfort lasted from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century, when it perished in fire.<sup>58</sup> There is no direct evidence that the Mongols besieged the motte, but the analysis of movable ceramic material and coal samples attest to some degree of devastation by burning, dated in first half of the thirteenth century. Once again, this is an initial research project which unearthed a presence of a medieval fortified settlement in northern Slavonia. Additional archaeological investigation is necessary, but until then, this may be interpreted as possible material remain of a Mongol raid. It was a customary practice within Mongol army to set a city, fort or church on fire, in order to cause chaos or to force the inhabitants and defenders outside the city quarters. If the Zagreb Cathedral was indeed set on fire, as some of the historians claim, then this fire-based attack on fortified places in the Hungarian kingdom may also be linked to other examples of Mongols use of incendiary weapons. It is known that the Mongol used siege machines and incendiary devices after the Chinese campaign.<sup>59</sup> Medieval author, Atâ-Malek Juvayni, for example, reports how the Mongol army under Genghis Khan besieged the city of Bukhara

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<sup>56</sup> Radičević, "Fortifications on the Byzantine-Hungarian," 165.

<sup>57</sup> Marijana Krmpotić, Andrej Janeš, and Petar Sekulić, "Gradišće u Turčišću, Međimurje, gradište/mota iz razvijenog srednjeg vijeka" [Gradišće in Turčišće, Međimurje, a Hillfort/Motte of the High Middle Ages], *Portal: Godišnjak Hrvatskoga restauratorskog zavoda* 8 (2017), 7-20.

<sup>58</sup> Krmpotić, Janeš, and Sekulić, "Gradišće u Turčišću," 7.

<sup>59</sup> Kate Raphael, "Mongol Siege Warfare on the Banks of the Euphrates and the Question of Gunpowder (1260-1312)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009): 357-8.

using fire.<sup>60</sup> Recent archaeological finds also reveal traces of intensive, high-temperature burning in the village of Orosháza-Bónum, and burnt and highly fragmented remains in two torched, semi-subterranean houses at the site of Kiskunmajsa-Jonathermál Kelet, it is evident that the Mongols used fire when available.<sup>61</sup>

All things considered, it seems that it was commonly practiced by the Mongols to use fire-based attacks on both sieges of fortified cities and raids in the countryside. Although archaeological finds presented here are recently published and a second-step confirmation is necessary, I am safe to say that there is handful of material-based evidence some kind of destruction took place in the mid-thirteenth century. Unfortunately, no archaeology-based research can take place at the moment inside Zagreb's Cathedral, because of a recent earthquake. Moving the scope to the east, the medieval fort of Orljava is not yet located. Banoštor is not mentioned in papal and bishopric sources during the six years period after the Mongol invasion in 1241-42, so the discontinuity theory supporting devastation might be applied here. I conclude that determining the paths and roads used by the Mongol troops in Slavonia, as well as the distinction between the northern point, and the northeastern point, is a priority. This is because there is a lack of information regarding military troops in this area, evident in both Thomas's and Roger's works. As a result, Mongol countryside devastation in certain parts of Slavonia is highly debatable. The sources mention only that the fortified places suffered from Mongol attacks, without paying attention to the areas between those forts. Until additional archaeological finds emerge, a direct comparison between the devastation at the sites to the north, such as the ones at Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze or Csanádpalota-Dávid-halom, and the countryside of Slavonia to the south remains debatable.

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<sup>60</sup> 'Ala-ad-din, 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, John Andrew Boyle, trans., vol. 1-2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), 106.

<sup>61</sup> Gyucha, Lee, and Rózsa, "The Mongol Campaign," 1043-58.

## Chapter 2. Between Slavonia and Dalmatia

In his *Historia Salonitana*, Archdeacon Thomas of Split narrates the Mongol campaign in great detail. However, as the story continues to the south, there are fewer and fewer details on the Mongol army routes. Thomas's Mongol chapters, although incomplete, exhibit a high degree of factual accuracy, as pointed out by James Ross Sweeney.<sup>62</sup> However, the reconstruction of the Mongol activity south of Zagreb is largely speculative, with the exception of towns of Split, Klis and Trogir. When both Thomas and Master Roger present a list of deeds, mostly horrific, carried out by the Mongol riders, the most detailed descriptions are linked with cities and fortified places north of the rivers of Drava and Kupa. The last part of Master Roger's *Epistle* portraying the Mongol campaign south of the Drava-Sava interfluvium consists of "only" five pages, in contrast to the forty-four pages describing the reasons, the start of the campaign and its progress in the Hungarian kingdom. A similar situation can be seen in Thomas's *Historia*. The area between medieval Slavonia and the province of Dalmatia is omitted. Whether this was because no military actions were performed in this wooded and mountainous region or because the refugees did not bring news from that frontier remains an unresolved question.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, it contains one report on a massacre carried out by the Mongol leader, which has been attributed to the Lika region, the region placed between Slavonia and Dalmatia.

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<sup>62</sup> James Ross Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols: A Thirteenth-Century Dalmatian View of Mongol Customs," *Florilegium* 4 (1982): 160.

<sup>63</sup> For a more detailed debate on medieval refugees in Hungarian kingdom during the Mongol invasion 1241-42 see: James Ross Sweeney, "'Spurred on by the Fear of Death': Refugees and Displaced Populations during the Mongol Invasion of Hungary," in *Nomadic Diplomacy, Destruction and Religion from the Pacific to the Adriatic: Papers Prepared for the Central and Inner Asian Seminar, University of Toronto, 1992-93*, eds. Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1994), 34-62.

## 2.1 The Savagery of the Tatars

Thomas's thirty-ninth chapter is titled "The savagery of the Tatars." His work is relatively free of the apocalyptic speculation found in other accounts of the Mongol invasion.<sup>64</sup> The text of the episode goes:

The unholy leader, unwilling to leave any crime uncommitted, with his raging army around him stayed on the heels of the king. Thirsting for nothing less than the king's blood, he threw himself with all fury into bringing about the king's destruction. He was able to inflict little slaughter on the Slavs, for these people had hidden in the mountains and forests. He arrived not as one journeying but as one flying through the air, surmounting pathless wastes and the most hostile mountains, where no army had gone before. He was driven by impatient haste, thinking that he could catch the king before he reached the sea. But when he found out that the king was safely at the coast, he began to proceed more slowly. When his whole army reached a waterway called Sirbium, he encamped there a while. Then the cruel butcher gave orders that all the captives that he had brought from Hungary should be gathered together in one place—a great multitude of men and women, boys and girls, and he had them all brought into a flat area. And when they were herded together like a flock of sheep he sent in his guards and had them all decapitated. Then a terrible wailing and crying could be heard and the whole earth seemed to move from the cries of the slaughtered. All lay dead scattered all over that plain, like bundles of corn lying scattered over a field. And in case anyone should imagine that this monstrous slaughter was perpetrated out of greed for spoils, they made no effort to remove the clothing. Rather, the whole multitude of this hellish race sat down in companies around the dead, and with great joy began eating and dancing and joking and rousing great laughter, as though they had performed some remarkably good deed.<sup>65</sup>

Sweeney suggests that the atrocities attributed to the invaders constitute a significant subtheme of the entire account.<sup>66</sup> Connected to this episode is the one located at the centre of Hungarian realm, just after the victory at the Sajó battlefield: "The whole land was filled with enemy troops, like locusts, who had no pity to spare the fallen, to show mercy to captives, or

<sup>64</sup> Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato," 156. For an overview of the apocalyptic representation of the Mongols as the forerunners of the apocalypse, see: Mirko Sardelić, "The Mongols and Europe in the First Half of the 13th Century: Prophecies and Apocalyptic Scenarios," in *Prophecy, Divination, Apocalypse: 33rd Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum Plymouth State University (April 20-21, 2012)*, ed. Aniesha R. Andrews (Weston, MA: PHI Press, 2013): 100-12.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas of Split, 294-5.

<sup>66</sup> Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato," 162.

to pass over the exhausted: rather, like savage beasts, they thirsted only for human blood.”<sup>67</sup>

If Thomas’s portrayal of chaos and disaster following the battle of Sajó River is to be taken as true, then it seems safe to say that this account can be taken as truthful too. The view of the Mongols in Thomas’s *Historia* combines three perceptions: heartless warriors, aliens, and instrument of divine chastisement.<sup>68</sup> Sweeney points out that this perception of the Mongol was not misplaced. There was a reason why Thomas portrayed them like this. This massacre could prove as to why were the Mongol raiders seen this way, and why the great deal of people fled to Dalmatia, after the Sajó defeat. If Thomas’s report on Mongol cruelty north of Drava is taken as true, then I do not see why this report on cruelty of the Mongols at Sirbium should be taken as unreliable or distorted. Conversely, it should serve as an argument that the Mongol invaders did commit slaughter in Slavonia and Dalmatia, although less often, when compared to other regions of the kingdom.

## 2.2 Qadan: The “Unholy Leader”

Although the “unholy leader” of the Mongols is not named, it can be deducted that this massacre was ordered by Qadan. Thomas consistently refers to Qadan as *dux impius*.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the Sirbium slaughter was attributed to Qadan and his forces.<sup>70</sup> As was presented in previous chapter, Qadan’s main focus was King Béla. He knew that his failure to capture the fleeing monarch would be a serious blow, as he would be held directly responsible for letting him slip away and organize a counter-attack. From a tactical standpoint, it does not

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas of Split, 270-1.

<sup>68</sup> Sweeney, “Thomas of Spalato,” 170.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas of Split, 270, note 2.

<sup>70</sup> Sirbium is either the River Una or its confluent Srebrenica flowing into the Una near the settlement of Srb: Thomas of Split, 295, note 2.

make sense to lose time on a planned massacre, when your main focus is hunting the king. Nonetheless, the slaughter happened.

There was a confusion in Croatian historiography regarding the question “Who committed the massacre?” Vjekoslav Klaić follows Tadija Smičiklas’s suggestion that it was Batu, not Qadan, who pursued the king from the north, across northern Slavonia and Croatia.<sup>71</sup> According to them, the massacre was, thus, carried out by Batu. However, Josip Ante Soldo refutes their hypotheses and attributes the king-hunt venture Qadan, who followed the king from Pest to Slavonia, and subsequently Dalmatian towns.<sup>72</sup>

Was Qadan, the “unholy leader” in Thomas’s narrative, enraged because he was unable to catch the king and ordered a massacre to satisfy his thirst for blood? Or did it happen because he wanted to show denizens of the Hungarian realm what will happen to those who do not subjugate?

Following the Mongol army movements (see Map 4), Batu’s forces pillaged the countryside as far as Banoštor to the east. Qadan’s forces followed the king from the north, across Kalnik and Zagreb, passing through Velebit mountain range. But the final extent of Batu’s reach to the west is not specified. It is possible that Qadan ordered a slaughter, because he was furious that the king managed to escape for the third time. Thomas’s next sentence, “He was driven by impatient haste, thinking that he could catch the king before he reached the sea.” may be evidence that he meant none else but Qadan.<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, this might not be a spontaneous massacre, ordered because of leader’s immediate disappointment. Report from *Historia Salonitana* states that the Mongol leader brought a great multitude of captives from Hungary, and not just local Slavs. This means that the leader brought the captured population from the north, and that these were the people who

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<sup>71</sup> Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, 224-5.

<sup>72</sup> Soldo, “Provala Tatara,” 374.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas of Split, 294-5.

did not manage to escape his army both north and south of the Drava River. This information could serve as argument that the so-called spontaneous massacre was maybe not spontaneous, but was planned. Arguably, this massacre could be seen as an act of vengeance, because of the Mongol losses in Hungarian kingdom. Peter Jackson points out that this kind of vengeful practice was common, especially when the siege included fortified cities.<sup>74</sup>

Up until now, no archaeology-based research took place in the Lika County, where the supposed mass killing took place. The main reason for this is that locating “Sirbium” is nearly impossible, since this was and still is a wooded and mountainous region. Connecting Sirbium to a river, by following a medieval narrative in Thomas’s work also does not give result, since the abundance of streams and rivers in this region complicates the potential find even more. If Thomas’s reports are true, then no less than few hundreds of people were executed in a ritual way, so many bodies bearing signs of decapitation or sudden death would be found in one site. As a consequence, until these bodies are found, the only indication that this massacre happened in Lika County is Thomas’s account in his *Historia Salonitana*.

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410* (London: Routledge, 2018), 43.



## Chapter 3. Dalmatia

### 3.1 Entering Dalmatia: Split

Having escaped the Mongol capture at Zagreb, King Béla headed for Split on the Dalmatian coast. According to Thomas's report, the king had sent the queen, his son Stephen and treasures from the churches in Hungary directly towards Split, to take refuge there. However, the queen, persuaded by certain persons with animosity towards the citizens of Split, left the city and went to nearby fort of Klis.<sup>75</sup> Soldo points out that Thomas does not describe the complex socio-political situation between the cities of Trogir, Split, and the king in detail. According to Soldo's theory, the king did not want to stay in Split, as he was not welcome there. Being in direct conflict with his neighboring community of Trogir, supported by the king in previous legal actions, the citizens of Split were not inclined to harbor the king during the imminent danger.<sup>76</sup> The reason declared for king's premature leave was that the citizens did not manage to secure the galley for king's eventual flight in time, and that Béla did not have time to waste, since the Mongols already entered Dalmatia. Thomas, whose subject was history of the bishops of Salona and Split, stated that the *podestà* Gargano and the nobles of Split approached the queen most earnestly, and that the Spalatins, citizens of the town of Split, came regularly to her court and paid her with much honor, bringing many gifts and presents.<sup>77</sup> Seen this way, Thomas sided with his fellow Spalatins, denying the possibility that the citizens of Split offended the king or queen in any way.

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas of Split, 286-7.

<sup>76</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 378.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas of Split, 286-9.

The Mongols arrived soon thereafter. Passing through Croatia, they arrived in front of the city gates. Thomas of Split specified that the city of Split harbored a huge amount of refugees coming from the north, and that the displaced people filled the city's archways, streets and passageways, as there were too many of them to hide inside houses.<sup>78</sup> The reason behind this mass flight was that the Mongols committed murders outside city walls, in the fields surrounding Split:

“But whenever the Tatars found anyone in the fields, they put them to the sword, all without exception, sparing neither women nor children, aged or weak; they even took the life of those wasting from leprosy, rejoicing at their barbaric savagery.”<sup>79</sup>

The motive for avoiding the Mongols out in the open was, thus, evident. Following the massacre at Sirbium and the killings outside Split, the local populace was terrified of the possibility of being decapitated by the invaders.

The city of Split was fortified, and Qadan's army did not manage to enter the city quickly as they hoped. Additionally, the defenders of Split began to construct war engines, erecting them at suitable spots.<sup>80</sup> The siege did not bear fruit, especially because the Mongols did not bring the siege machines with them to Dalmatia. Although Thomas mentions that the Mongols left the city of Split since the weather was harsh and the Mongols' horses did not have sufficient fodder, it is more probable that they halted the siege because of the rumor that the king was no longer inside the fortification.<sup>81</sup> The rumor was correct. The king left the city.

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas of Split, 296-7.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas of Split, 296-7.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-9.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-9.

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### 3.2 Well-fortified Klis

Qadan's failure at Split did not discourage him in his attempt to capture the king in Dalmatia. After he found out that the royal family departed from Split, he led his army to Klis, a nearby stone-built fortification. Once again, Thomas shows that the Mongols encountered the problem of not having their massive siege machines with them.<sup>82</sup> Instead, they began to attack the fort from all sides, launching arrows and hurling spears.<sup>83</sup> When this was not successful, the invaders dismounted from their horses and began to creep up to higher ground. This hand-to-hand combat favored the citizens of Klis, supported by the defenders hurling stones across the city walls, probably by using siege machines of their own, killing a number of Mongols.<sup>84</sup> Seeing that the siege was not going to succeed soon, Qadan decided to leave the well-fortified Klis and moved on, to Trogir. Before leaving the fort of Klis, his soldiers stormed the outer city and looted the houses, leaving with the spoils.<sup>85</sup>

Soldo indicates that Mongol reconnaissance units preceded the Qadan war activity in the area. He suggests that it is evident that the city of Knin in the vicinity of Dalmatian communities of Split and Klis suffered from Mongol attacks and raids.<sup>86</sup> Following the hypothesis proposed by Stjepan Gunjača in 1960, the city of Knin must have been raided for two reasons. The first one is that Knin was on the direct route between the Velebit mountain range and the Dalmatian coast cities, and Gunjača states that the Mongol army led by Qadan must have passed through this region.<sup>87</sup> The second reason for the Mongol army's need to stop there was their need for fodder. Because fodder was not readily available in the region

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<sup>82</sup> Master Roger, 200-1, 212-3, 216-7.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-9.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-9.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-9.

<sup>86</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 385.

<sup>87</sup> Stipe Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica – historica – topographica II," *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3, no. 7 (1960): 30.

around Klis, they moved to nearby fields where pastures provided fodder for their horses.<sup>88</sup> Gunjača supports this theory by stating that there is no continuity immediately after the Mongol invasion, suggesting that the invasion left its mark on the archaeological style of the Knin fortress. The presence of Hungarian army in the following year in the Knin region, and the mention of *comes* Peter of Knin in 1249 back up his theory of discontinuity.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.3 The Supposed Siege of Šibenik

The city of Šibenik, where King Béla took refuge after departing from Split and Klis, is just north of Trogir. Located on the Dalmatian coast, Šibenik was a potential departure point for the king if the Mongols happened to surround him on land. However, it is strange that neither Thomas nor Master Roger mention the siege of Šibenik. The siege and defeat of the Mongol army at the Šibenik fort is recorded by Arab historian Abū al-Fidā' (1273-1331), as suggested by Soldo.<sup>90</sup> Soldo states that an indication of a battle between the Mongols and the Hungarians is visible in Abū al-Fidā's geographical work *Taqwīm al-buldān*, translated into French as "Géographie d'Aboulféda."<sup>91</sup>

Soldo points out that Abū al-Fidā' based his account of the Šibenik battle on another historian, Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (1214-74).<sup>92</sup> Ibn Sa'id was an Arab geographer, historian, poet, and an important collector of poetry from al-Andalus. It is unclear how Ibn Sa'id obtained information about the battle between the combined forces of the Hungarians, led by King Béla and his allies. Soldo points out that Ibn Sa'id was well aware of the conflict

<sup>88</sup> Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica," 30.

<sup>89</sup> Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica," 30-1.

<sup>90</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 385-7.

<sup>91</sup> Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn 'Alī, *Geography of Aboulféda*, trans. Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, vol. 1 (Paris: l'Imprimerie nationale, 1848).

<sup>92</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 386.

between the Venetians and Genoese in 1250s, as well as situation between the Venetians and the Croats on north Adriatic coast. He concludes that the Arab historian had access to information from this region, so the battle was not invented.<sup>93</sup>

However, both Ibn Sa'id and Abū al-Fidā' place the town of Šibenik too far to the north. Šibenik is not at the Gulf of Venice, but to the south, lying between the fortified cities of Trogir and Zadar, as shown in Map 5. It is possible that the battle of Šibenik between Mongol forces and King Béla's men, supported by his allies, reflected clashes between king's soldiers and the Mongol reconnaissance patrols, displaced in space. Lujo Margetić objects to this argument, stating that this information fall into category of hearsay and rumor, since the location of Šibenik is misplaced.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, he does not share Soldo's opinion that this might be an indication of some kind of battle or minor clash with either local nobles or king's men, since there is no confirmation from other sources.

All things considered, the siege of Šibenik is highly debatable. None of the contemporary medieval sources, besides Abū al-Fidā', according to Soldo's claim, mention the battle between the Mongol invaders and king's troops. There are no archaeological finds in that area, which would suggest that a major battle occurred. Additionally, the misplacement of Šibenik diminishes the possibility of a long-standing Mongol presence in the area. It is possible that Arab historian misplaced the clash between the Mongol and Hungarians, wanting to highlight the encounter in northern Adriatic coast, taking into account that he took that information from another historian. I would agree with the hypothesis which places Mongol activity at that time between the towns of Zadar, Trogir and Split, and to the back – the Dalmatian hinterlands, during the sieges of Split and Trogir.

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<sup>93</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 386-7.

<sup>94</sup> Lujo Margetić, "Vijesti iz vjerodostojnih i krivotvorenih isprava o provali Tatara u hrvatske primorske krajeve (1242)" [News from authentic and forged documents about the invasion of the Tartars into the Croatian coastal areas (1242)], *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta* 25, no. 1 (1992): 9.

### 3.4 Trogir: The Final Siege

While the sieges of Split and Klis were under way, King Béla was safely hiding behind stone walls in Trogir. He took refuge on a small island near the shore, called Kraljevac.<sup>95</sup> The name Kraljevac reflects this episode in history, as its direct translation means “King’s Island” or “King’s Abode.” When Béla saw that the Mongol are approaching the city, he put his lady and his children and all his treasure aboard ships, in case of dire need for flight across the sea.<sup>96</sup> The king himself, as Thomas points out, embarked on a boat and had himself rowed past the enemy lines, inspecting them and weighing the eventualities. Leaving dry land, had two benefits for the king. The first one was safety, in case Qadan managed to break the city’s defenses or scale the city walls. The other one was the ability to survey the enemy’s movement from a safe distance, trying to determine the number Mongol soldiers in the area outside the city.<sup>97</sup> Fortunately for Béla, Qadan’s forces did not manage to scale the city walls.

Qadan, after reconnoitering the nature of the position, made an attempt to break through by riding along close beneath the walls. But he discovered that the water that separated the city from the land was impassable because of the depth of the mud, and so he withdrew back to his followers.<sup>98</sup> Thomas specifies that the mudflats served as a natural defense against the attackers, so the Mongol leader tried another approach. He tried to obtain King Béla’s surrender by sending a messenger to address the citizens of Trogir in the Slavonic language:

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<sup>95</sup> Thomas of Split, 298-301.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

<sup>97</sup> Sophoulis, “The Mongol Invasions,” 267.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

“These are the words of the sacred Qadan, leader of an invincible army. Do not bring upon yourself the guilt for the blood of others, but hand over our enemies into our hands, lest you become involved in the vengeance with which they shall meet and perish for nothing.”<sup>99</sup>

The king instructed the guards not to respond to Mongols threats or proclamations. He stayed within safe distance, and suggested his guards and improve and the siege will not yield results, the Mongol army rose up and departed.<sup>100</sup> They left the region of both Croatia and Dalmatia, through Bosnia and Serbia. Before they left the province of Dalmatia, they bypassed Dubrovnik, which was too well defended to attack without siege engines, and turned against the cities of Svač and Drishti. Thomas specifies that the destruction of Svač and Drishti was so grave that no man was spared.<sup>101</sup>

Before leaving Dalmatia for good, the Mongols did raid the cities nearby. Thomas mentions that they remained in the regions of Croatia and Dalmatia throughout March, periodically descending five or six times on the cities in the vicinity.<sup>102</sup> It is probable that the raid on the Knin fort, mentioned earlier in the text, and the second raid on Split were happening at this time. The Mongol army moving to the north was in need of fodder and loot, which resulted in clashes with the local defenders, but on rather smaller scale, than suggested by Sakcinski and Antun Tresić-Pavičić.<sup>103</sup> Their claims that tens of thousands of Mongols raided throughout all of Dalmatia, both northern and southern parts, seem to be exaggerated. Approach to their hypothesis on Mongol activity in Dalmatia will be addressed in more detail in subchapter dealing with the Battle of Grobnik Field.

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<sup>99</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-3.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

<sup>103</sup> Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli*, 30-45; Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola*, 123-54.



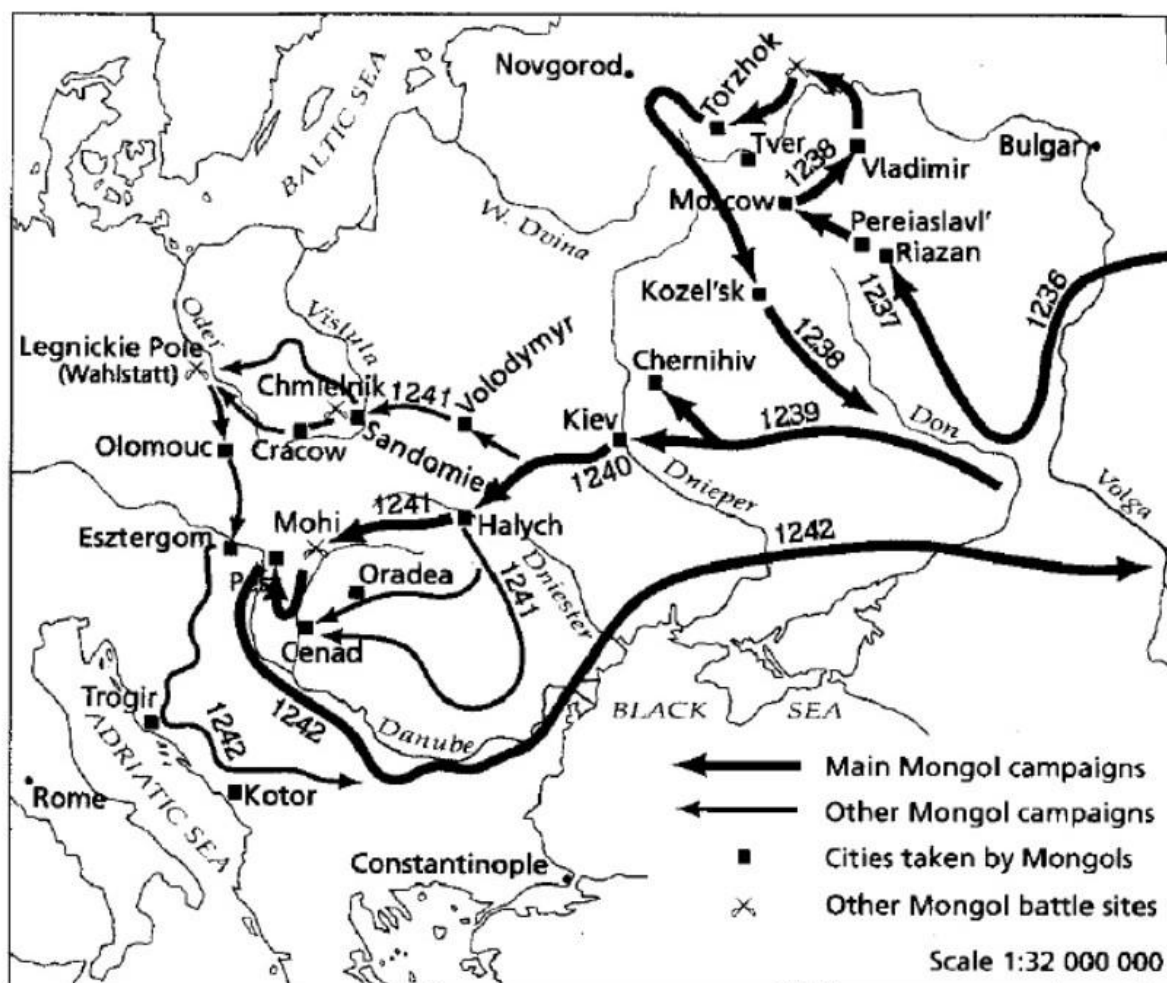
The extent of Mongol raids in the background of major Dalmatian cities – Split, Klis, and Trogir, and clashes with the local noble families and inhabitants are not recounted in detail in Thomas's or Master Roger's works. However, information can be found in royal charters and privileges given to the nobles and city communities, expressing gratitude for keeping the king safe during his stay in Dalmatia.

All things considered, the failed siege at Trogir meant no large scale massacre could take place in the area. Thomas mentions that the majority of refugees entered the Dalmatian cities, mostly Split, and spent time there until the Mongol attacks ceased.<sup>104</sup> The Mongols then most likely raided the Dalmatian hinterlands, both in search of fodder and spoils. The vicinity between the Dalmatian communities of Split, Klis and Trogir, and the fields and pastures abundant with fodder, needed for feeding the horses, resulted in frequent movement of Mongol troops back and forth. Although additional archaeological confirmation is needed, the cases of Knin and Brnaze could shed some light on Mongol presence in Dalmatia.<sup>105</sup> These forts might be evidence for Mongol raids in Dalmatia in mid-thirteenth century. But they were probably smaller raids and pillages, where fast attacks were used in order to get the spoils of war, rather than large-scale, long-lasting sieges.

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<sup>104</sup> Thomas of Split, 296-7.

<sup>105</sup> Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica," 30-1; Stjepan Gunjača, "Starohrvatska crkva i kasnosrednjovjekovno groblje u Brnazama kod Sinja" [Old Croatian church and late medieval cemetery in Brnaze near Sinj], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3, no. 4 (1955): 131.



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Figure 6. Reconstruction of Mongol campaign 1241-42. Two distinct lines show movements of two distinct armies. Source: Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, University of Washington Press, 1995, 19.

### 3.5 The Frankopans and their Battles with the Mongols

In Master Roger's account, the king fled before the Mongols, finding a safe refuge in the coastal fortresses (*maritime castra*).<sup>106</sup> This sentence inspired later historians to address the debate whether King Béla stayed inside Trogir, near the islands of Kraljevac or Čiovo, in the vicinity, or is it possible that he fled to other islands, to the north. Describing the maritime episode rather briefly, Master Roger's account reports that the king was assisted by the Knights of Rhodes and the lords Frankopan during his stay in Dalmatia.<sup>107</sup> This information is problematic, as the Frankopans, the counts of Krk, used this name only after the fifteenth century.<sup>108</sup> As pointed out by Soldo, this information was most probably added in Ivan de Thuróczy's 1488 edition of Master Roger's *Epistle*. Stjepan Antoljak also singled out the chronological discrepancy, and linked it both to Templar and Frankopan activity in the region in later centuries.<sup>109</sup> Both Antoljak and Soldo suggest that the editors in the fifteenth century incorporated this part, describing the combined efforts of Templars and Frankopans in keeping the king safe, while trying to emphasize or overemphasize their role in 1242.<sup>110</sup> The later intention was to highlight the importance of the Frankopan family retrospectively, lending them historical prestige and enabling them to make justified claims in the fifteenth century, at the height of their power. According to Nada Klaić, the forgeries embedding the Frankopans' influence in the text in 1488 came from Croatia or Dalmatia.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Master Roger, 222-5.

<sup>107</sup> Master Roger, 224-5.

<sup>108</sup> For more information on the family origin, territorial expansion and expansion of their influence, see: Petar Strčić, "Prilog o porijeklu Frankopana/Frankapana [Contribution to the origins of the Frankopans/Frankapans], *Rijeka* 1 (2001): 49-104; Nada Klaić, "Knezovi Frankopani kao krčka vlastela" [The Frankopan counts as the nobility of Krk], *Krčki zbornik* 1 (1970): 125-80.

<sup>109</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 377.

<sup>110</sup> Stjepan Antoljak, "Kako i kada je došlo do jednog umetka u Rogerijevoj 'Carmen miserabile'" [How and when did an insert appear in Roger's 'Carmen miserabile'], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3, no. 2 (1952): 187-200; Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 377.

<sup>111</sup> Nada Klaić, "Paški falsifikati" [The Pag Forgeries], *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta* 1 (1959): 47, note 209.

The first author to point out momentous importance of counts of Krk was Ivan Tomašić in the sixteenth century. He states that *cives nobiles romani* Frankopans gave 10,000 gold and silver pieces to the king, assembled a huge army and defeated the Mongols in Grobnik Field.<sup>112</sup> He helped build the myth of Frankopans and the citizens of the town of Senj making them a key factor in repelling the Mongols from Dalmatia. Croatian authors and poets between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, namely Antun Vramec, Ivan Tomko Mrnavić, Pavao Ritter Vitezović, continued to point out the importance of Frankopans in Dalmatia, even in northern parts of the region.<sup>113</sup> Andrija Kačić Miošić increases the number of soldiers present in Grobnik Field. He claims that the citizens of Senj, led by brave counts Frankopans, managed to kill 56,000 Mongols in the open field.<sup>114</sup> This is surely an exaggeration to portray citizens of Croatia as heroic defenders. The exact number of Mongol soldiers present in Slavonia or Dalmatia is not known, but the claim that 56,000 Mongols were present in Dalmatia in 1241-42 campaign is unfounded, and there is no confirmation for this number of soldiers surviving sources.<sup>115</sup>

I will discuss three royal charters addressed to Frankopan family, all dated to 1260.<sup>116</sup> The first one confirms their Roman origin, pronouncing them as primates of the kingdom. The second one gives them the right to rule over the city of Senj. The third one is allegedly issued in Dobra, and the Frankopans are given possession over Vinodol. All these charters could prove that great battles took place in Dalmatia, since they highlight the amount of aid

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<sup>112</sup> Tomašić, "Chronicon breve," 14-15.

<sup>113</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 379-80.

<sup>114</sup> Tomo Matić, ed. *Djela Andrije Kačića Miošića* [The works of Andrija Kačić Miošić], vol. 2, *Korabljica* (Zagreb: Tisak Narodne Tiskare, 1945), 271.

<sup>115</sup> The definite number of Mongol soldiers present in Slavonia and Dalmatia has not been established. An estimate of the total number of troops in time of Genghis Khan and his successors is presented in: H. Desmond Martin, "The Mongol Army," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 75, no. 1-2 (1943): 46-85. A more detailed discussion of the number of Mongol soldiers present in the Hungarian Plain, criticizing Denis Sinor's geographical theory is demonstrated in: Pow, "Conquest and Withdrawal," 124-51.

<sup>116</sup> CD V, 173-5, 177-8, 179-80. The first charter is dated to October 5, 1260, while the two latter ones are dated to the year 1260.

given to King Béla during his stay in Dalmatia. However, all contain structural-stylistic problems which call for a note of caution in research.

Firstly, they contain expressions unusual for diplomatic documents, expressions that do not fit thirteenth-century diplomatic vocabulary. According to Vjekoslav Klaić, Nada Klaić, Lujo Margetić and Soldo, the king is portrayed like a helpless man, being humiliated to the point of impossibility.<sup>117</sup> They argue for replacement hypothesis, which explains the unusual phrases, anachronistic, humiliating depiction of the king, and the disparity between land possession in the thirteenth century. The counterfeiters of these charters based their forgeries on documents issued by King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387-1437). Pompous style, phraseology and language used in the prologue (*arenga*) are all signs of fifteenth century style, with hints of humanistic Latinity.<sup>118</sup> These observations confirm that these charters are a well-crafted forgeries, based on fifteenth-century royal charters.

Secondly, the counts of Krk bear the Frankopan name in the charters. As was already mentioned, this practice took hold only in fifteenth century, when the family tried to improve their status, linking themselves as direct descendants of Roman patricians.<sup>119</sup> The use of a new name, based on a later tendency to identify themselves as Roman nobility, is not found in any charters prior to the fifteenth century, which supports the theory that the charters are of later making.

Reports of major battles and clashes with the Mongols in Dalmatia, and more importantly northern Dalmatia, next to the lands governed by the Frankopans, thus, cannot be interpreted as accurate. Medieval sources do not report about Mongol activity in northern

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<sup>117</sup> Vjekoslav Klaić, "Darovnica kralja Bele III (IV) krčkim knezovima za Senj jest patvorina" [The charter of King Bela III (IV) to the Counts of Krk for Senj is a forgery], *Vjesnik kr. hrv.-slav.-dalm. Zemaljskog arkiva* 1 (1899): 262-74; N. Klaić, "Paški falsifikati," 30-63; Margetić, "Vijesti iz vjerodostojnih," 5-14; Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 380-3.

<sup>118</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 382.

<sup>119</sup> Vjekoslav Klaić, "Ime i porijeklo Frankapana" [Name and origin of the Frankapans], *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 4, no. 1 (1900): 1-20.

Dalmatia. Only later authors tend to move the border to the north, near the territory governed by the counts of Krk, and around the islands of Krk, Rab and Pag.<sup>120</sup> Their depiction of great battles, led by brave counts and army leaders is not based on medieval reports, but rather on folklore, passed down from generation to generation, and not immune to distortion. A huge army led by a local noble against the pagan opponent is more a poetic motif, such as that by Kačić Miošić in the eighteenth century, than unambiguous information for a historian.<sup>121</sup>

### 3.6 The Battle of Grobnik Field: A Phantom Battle?

The legendary Battle of Grobnik Field is well-known in Croatia today. Details of the story vary, but the core is always the same: brave Croatians, led by their national leader, sometimes one of the Frankopans, managed to draw the Mongols out in the open, where sound victory was achieved over their soldiers. The number of soldiers also varies, but as centuries passed by, the number of participants in the battle increased. As noted by Jure Trutanić, the historical episode of Mongol presence in Croatia was used for political purposes in the context of the national awakening during the nineteenth century.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the story of the Battle of Grobnik Field in northern Dalmatia, between the towns of Rijeka and Senj, was used for political purposes, as proof of Croatia's merits in saving the Christian Europe from the Mongol invaders.

No surviving medieval sources mention such a sound victory achieved by either King Béla's entourage or local army led by nobles, such as the Frankopans. Tomašić, in the

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<sup>120</sup> Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli*, 36-45; Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola*, 123-54; Tomašić, "Chronicon breve," 14-15.

<sup>121</sup> Matić, *Djela Andrije Kačića*, 271.

<sup>122</sup> Jure Trutanić, "Pregled izvora, literature i zbivanja o mongolskoj provali u hrvatske zemlje u 13. stoljeću" [An overview of sources, literature and events about the Mongol invasion of Croatian lands in the 13th century], *Pleter* 1, no. 1 (2017): 105-6.

sixteenth century, writes about a victory achieved by Bartul and Fridrih Frankopan, whose army met the Mongols near *castrum Gelen, vulgo Grobnich, eius in campo, ubi nunc castrum Grobnich uiget*, and killed *LCV millia* invading soldiers.<sup>123</sup> The number of soldiers fighting with Béla was allegedly *XL millia*.

Sakcinski, in the nineteenth century, stated that there was a battle at the Grobnik Field, but on a smaller scale.<sup>124</sup> His hypothesis was that major battles occurred on the other side of Dalmatia, to the south, near Zadar and its surrounding settlements of Stari grad, Obrovac and Ražanci.<sup>125</sup> Šime Ljubić, another nineteenth-century author, was suspicious of major battles happening all across Dalmatia, both north and south. He pointed out that these alleged grand battles could not happen, as they do not fit into the timeframe of Mongol presence in Dalmatia, which ended in March 1242.<sup>126</sup> Ljubić, echoed by Sakcinski, suggests that major battles with the Mongols did not occur to the north, near Rijeka, Senj or the island of Krk, but rather to the south, near the city of Šibenik. They argue that a major battle to the north, near Grobnik field is highly unlikely.

Tadija Smičiklas followed Sakcinski's hypothesis on both the Battle of Grobnik Field and other battles with the Mongols in Dalmatia. He pointed out that the Croats, defending King Béla, fought the invaders both on land and on sea.<sup>127</sup> For him, the Battle of Grobnik Field happened.

Vjekoslav Klaić in his extensive work on history of the Croats portrays the fight between the Mongols on one side, and Hungarian and Croatian subjects led by King Béla on other. Over the course of twelve pages, he describes events during the 1241-42 invasion in a

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<sup>123</sup> Tomašić, "Chronicon breve," 14.

<sup>124</sup> Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli*, 49-50.

<sup>125</sup> Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli*, 50.

<sup>126</sup> Šime Ljubić, *Ogledalo književne poviesti jugoslavjanske* [A mirror of Yugoslavian literary history], vol. 1 (Rijeka: Tiskara Emidija Mohovića, 1864), 134-8.

<sup>127</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Poviest Hrvatska* [Croatian History], vol. 1 (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1882): 349-51.

narrative style and covers the area from northern Hungary all the way to Dalmatia.<sup>128</sup> However, the Battle of Grobnik Field is not mentioned. Soldo suggests that Klaić did not follow in Tomašić's and Sakcinski's steps, as he believed that the story about the great battle was unfounded.<sup>129</sup>

All of the major victories achieved over Mongols, including the one on Grobnik Field, turned out to be based on forged documents, namely the ones of nobles Frankopans and the Pag royal charter forgery.<sup>130</sup> This was first proposed by Ferdo Šišić, a Croatian historian who denied the possibility of major victories over a large number of Mongol riders in Dalmatia. If there were any major successes, for example, the one on the Grobnik Field, the first one to mention them would be Thomas of Split, who wrote about the Mongol invasion 1241-42 in great detail.<sup>131</sup>

The last author who stressed the importance of Frankopans in battles against Mongol invaders in Dalmatia was Tresić-Pavičić in the twentieth century. He accused Thomas of being a fanatic Latin, who had an agenda: namely, to strip Croats of their victories over the Mongols on the Adriatic coast and land.<sup>132</sup> As for the lack of mention of major battles on the Adriatic coast in Master Roger's account, Tresić-Pavičić suggests that although he did not hate the Croats as Thomas did, he had no sharp judgement.<sup>133</sup> Tresić-Pavičić published his work in 1942, and as Soldo explains:

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<sup>128</sup> Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, 218-29.

<sup>129</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 374.

<sup>130</sup> CD IV, 220-2. There is a disagreement on whether the Pag document, mentioning the battle against the Mongols at sea, is a forgery or not. Stjepan Antoljak states that the Pag document is authentic: Stjepan Antoljak, "Pitanje autentičnosti Paške isprave" [The question of the authenticity of the Pag document], *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 2, no. 1 (1949): 115-42. Tadija Smičiklas, Nada Klaić, and Lujko Margetić marked the Pag document as forgery: CD IV, 222, note 1; Klaić, "Paški falsifikati," 15-63; Margetić, "Vijesti iz vjerodostojnih," 12-3.

<sup>131</sup> Šišić, *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog*, 99, note 1.

<sup>132</sup> Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola*, 101-2.

<sup>133</sup> Tresić-Pavičić, *Izgon Mongola*, 28.



He [Tresić-Pavičić] himself takes from them [charters] what he needs to exaggerate the events in Croatia in 1242. In his work “The Expulsion of the Tatars” one can best see how dangerous it is when preconceived conception and imagination prevail in the act of writing history, instead of cold and critical reasoning based on available material.<sup>134</sup>

One of the reasons for the long tradition of the Battle of Grobnik Field is that it was continued by national poets and authors, which resulted in creating the national myth of triumphant win over the Mongols. For five centuries, the *topos* of Grobnik entered collective memory. But this battle remains unfounded in contemporary sources. As discussed above, the reconstruction of Mongol army movements based on both medieval sources and secondary literature by Šišić, Nada Klaić, and Soldo confirm that a battle so far to the north is very unlikely. The fact that the royal charters given to inhabitants of Pag, the Frankopan family and three brothers Kres, Rak and Kupiša are forgeries also discredit the assumption that major battles were fought on the north Adriatic coast and islands.

In addition to the lack of documentary evidence, no archaeological excavation material dated to the time of Mongol invasion has been found to date. The archaeological collection of the wider area of Grobnik situated in the Maritime and Historical Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka does not possess a single mid-thirteenth century artifact pointing to the Mongol invasion. Only one artifact, with a possibility of being associated to period of the Mongol invasion, was unearthed in 1934. It was “the sword made in northern Europe in the mid-thirteenth century.”<sup>135</sup> The records of the museum state that the sword was discovered in the eastern part of Grobnik Field, but it hardly serves as evidence for a major battle on Grobnik Field, as it cannot be linked with either Mongol army or Frankopan family.

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<sup>134</sup> Soldo, “Provala Tatara,” 375.

<sup>135</sup> The sword was publicly presented at the exhibition “Žeravica,” as part of the traditional event “Grobnik Fall 2013” by the Department of the Čakavian Council for Grobniščina, in cooperation with Maritime and Historical Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka.

Without material and archaeological evidence to support the hypothesis of frequent clashes or significant battles with the Mongols in northern Adriatic region, another solution was proposed by Soldo. He presented his own solution about the Grobnik site and its whereabouts. Following his hypothesis, Soldo points out that Tomašić's mention of the great battle of Grobnik near *castrum Jelen* was not without basis. There is a village Grebaštica near the town of Šibenik and Soldo suspects of a transcription error.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, on the other side of Grebaštica there is a hill called Jelinjak, which may be identical with Tomašić's *castrum Jelen*.<sup>137</sup> Soldo undergirds his hypothesis with archaeological evidence, the possible thirteenth-century destruction of a church in Brnaze, only sixty-two kilometers away from Šibenik.<sup>138</sup> Trutanić, however, considers Soldo's hypothesis far-fetched, not backed up by sources.<sup>139</sup>

To summarize and to present a satisfactory conclusion, the case of the Battle of Grobnik Field is a prime example of a debatable historical episode, inflated and distorted beyond the point of return. There were two main reasons for that to happen. Firstly, the account is based on fifteenth-century forgeries, and not on mid-thirteenth century sources. There was a political reason to highlight an episode in history using anachronistic interpretation. Secondly, it became the domain of national poets and writers who did not consult medieval sources or archeological records. The distortion was gradual, but consistent.

As for where does this historical episode fall into the category of Mongol violence, it displays how an idea can take hold in folklore, based on supposedly accurate reports, and grow out of its proportions. The reports of Mongol cruelty are not mentioned in medieval sources, but later authors used analogy when comparing the actions reported during the sieges

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<sup>136</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 387-8.

<sup>137</sup> Soldo, "Provala Tatara," 388.

<sup>138</sup> Stjepan Gunjača concludes that an old Croatian church was destroyed in thirteenth century: Gunjača, "Starohrvatska crkva," 131.

<sup>139</sup> Trutanić, "Pregled izvora," 107.

of Split, Klis and Trogir, and the clashes in the hinterlands. A huge battle could be, presumably, followed by retribution by the defeated army in other parts in Dalmatia. It turned out that the battle was non-existent, so successively, countryside massacres, pillaging and devastation could not take place in northern Adriatic region.

## Conclusion

As was presented, the Mongol campaign in Slavonia and Dalmatia had two main goals, and two respective armies operating in Slavonia. The first goal was to capture the king, who survived the Battle of Sajó River. The second goal was to enter Slavonia and spread throughout its territory, and carry out sieges and raids yielding bountiful spoils of war. My hypothesis is that the two distinct armies, led by two commanders, Qadan and Batu, operated with their own objectives on their minds, which could, but did not necessarily overlap. Mongol army led by Qadan entered Slavonia from the north, Kalnik being the first fort to suffer the attack of the invaders. Qadan, then, moved from fort to fort, trying to enter the cities and forts he laid siege to, in order to capture the king as soon as possible. The other army, led by Batu was not on a hunt. At least not one concerning the king or his younger brother, the Prince Coloman. I argue that this part of the Mongol army entered Slavonia's territory by crossing the Drava River, after laying siege to Esztergom, Vác and Pécs. It is debatable whether the siege of Čazma, where Coloman took refuge, was carried out by Batu or Qadan, since it is placed halfway between the northern and northeastern point of entry.

Available archaeological material and material remains in Slavonia do not provide firm evidence for large-scale military operations and countryside destruction. Fire-based destruction residue may prove to be of a Mongol origin, which is the case with a hillfort located in Gradišće, in northern Slavonia, and potentially with Mongols entering Zagreb's fort. The reports on the Mongol raid on Zagreb tend to indicate that the Mongols used fire to destroy the city's main church. However, additional confirmation is needed, since medieval sources do not speak of the degree of destruction there. As for the use of available archaeological excavations, caution is always needed. The prime example is the case of coin hoard near Čakovec. The initial claim that the hoard was indisputable proof of Mongol

military action in the area was refuted. Guided by this and similar warnings, Radičević points out that Kovin, in eastern Slavonia, might have suffered fire-based destruction in the thirteenth century, associating the layer of burnt material with the Mongol army presence in the Danube region. However, he concedes that additional excavations and further corroboration are desirable and necessary to show that this can be considered a clear sign of a Mongol siege in the area.<sup>140</sup> If proven right, this siege may suggest Batu's troops crossing the Danube to the southeast, a military manoeuvre distinct from the crossing near Esztergom.<sup>141</sup>

To date, no material evidence has been unearthed to show Mongol destruction and indications of massacres in Slavonian countryside. No traces of violent deaths or unearthed skeletons bearing marks of violation have been found. Only records from Thomas of Split and Master Roger serve as a pool of information, and their works are often unclear whether this countryside massacres happened north or south of the Drava. The only certain account of a massacre is the one on the border of Slavonia, in the Lika region, between Slavonia and Dalmatia. Similarly, the alleged sieges of Orljava, Kamenica and Čazma need to be further investigated, since neither Thomas nor Roger mention the passage of the army through these fortifications. Thus, the degree of destruction and possible massacres linked with Mongol military actions in these areas can only be determined by analogy, comparing the area with the area in the north, across Drava. But I would suggest caution while using this approach, and the priority remains to determine whether the campaign was led by Qadan or Batu. To conclude, the severity of Mongol cruelty in Slavonia is still not possible to reconstruct, and further research in all of the aforementioned forts and cities should serve as a buttress for possible hypotheses. Until then, hypotheses on Mongol cruelty in Slavonia rely mostly on secondary literature.

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<sup>140</sup> Radičević, "Fortifications on the Byzantine-Hungarian," 165.

<sup>141</sup> For the Danube crossing by the Mongol army and its entry point to Serbia through Banat, see: Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasions," 259-60. The author specifies that the fort of Kovin was a part of Qadan's campaign of Serbia, in the spring of 1241.

It is important to stress that long-lasting sieges did not occur during Qadan's campaign in Dalmatia. At one point, Thomas points out that the Mongols typically terminated ongoing sieges for two reasons. The first one is the redundancy of maintaining the siege, if the king had escaped. The second one is the lack of fodder, which can be seen as the direct or indirect cause of their attacks in Dalmatian hinterlands. Two potential proofs are signs of damage and discontinuity at Knin and Brnaze.<sup>142</sup> The first proof highlights the vacancy of the Knin fort between 1241-42 and 1247, while the second one, at Brnaze, associates the destruction of a church with Mongol activity near Šibenik. Methodologically speaking, this is important because if the thirteenth-century destruction of the church in Brnaze can be connected with a fire-based attack, a comparison with Banoštor or Zagreb could be very informative.

Qadan did not manage to enter Split, Klis or Trogir. The fact that these fortifications withstood the Mongol attacks means that there were no subsequent killings of local populace inside the cities, as was the case with other successful sieges of stone-built forts. The act of executing people with swords and frying people alive, occurring elsewhere, could not take place here.<sup>143</sup> However, similar violence took place during the Dalmatian campaign. Thomas reports that the people fled the invaders, fearing what they were capable of doing to them. The acts of cruelty here consisted of killing the people outside the city walls of Split, regardless of their age, sex or combat condition. Thomas is shocked because the Mongols killed lepers, and he interprets this act as utmost cruelty.<sup>144</sup> This could be either to show what the oncoming Mongol army was capable of doing, presenting themselves as conquerors, or to show what kind of treatment will the people of Split expect if they do not give up their king.

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<sup>142</sup> Gunjača, "Tiniensia archaeologica," 30-1; Gunjača, "Starohrvatska crkva," 131.

<sup>143</sup> Cruel acts portrayed here are the ones reported by Master Roger, when describing the siege of Esztergom and its successive killings of local population. In: Master Roger, 216-9.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas of Split, 296-7.

There are two types of sources regarding Mongol raids and pillages between the cities of Zadar, Trogir, Split, Klis, and Šibenik. The first one is indirect, presented in secondary Croatian literature from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. They speak, at great length, of Mongol raids present all throughout Dalmatia, including northern reaches, the islands near the Frankopans' rule, and the southern parts, near Trogir and its surrounding islands. The second type entails available archaeological records, fewer in number than those found in Slavonia. Both Master Roger's and Thomas's accounts contain little information on Mongol raids in the countryside of Dalmatia. Only direct reference to their raids to the hinterlands is the Mongols' stay in Dalmatia in the course of March 1242. According to Thomas, the Mongol raiders descended on the neighbouring cities of Trogir five or six times, clearly looking for additional spoils.<sup>145</sup> The extent of their pillage in the countryside is open for discussion, but archaeological finds presented in previous chapters indicate that pillages and raids definitely occurred in Dalmatia.

The royal charters mentioning fights with the Mongols in the Adriatic Sea turned out to be fifteenth-century forgeries, so no evidence from these documents can be taken into consideration. The Battle of Grobnik Field was used as a prime example to show the kind of misconception that survived centuries, without any medieval evidence to support it. As detailed above, various pieces of evidence suggest that the possibility of a battle near Grobnik, as well as of the battles and clashes with the Mongols in the northern Adriatic, is minimal. The phantom battle of the Grobnik Field was a later invention, beginning with Tomašić's sixteenth-century work and afterwards.

However, the massacres recorded in contemporary sources certainly deserve attention. Two written pieces of evidence attest to Mongol violence in Slavonia and Dalmatia. The first one is the mention of the massacre at Sirbium, most probably located in the Lika County,

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<sup>145</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-1.

near the Velebit mountain range, in Thomas of Split's account.<sup>146</sup> I have concluded that the massacre might have been planned, since losing time by hunting the local populace in order to express uncontrolled anger directly opposes the king-hunt agenda. Moreover, not only Slavs, but Hungarians were amongst the captives. The second piece of written evidence in the same source is a smaller-scale massacre in front of the Split's city walls in Dalmatia, just prior to the Mongols' arrival there. Compared to other regions of the kingdom, it seems that the massacres here did not take place so often.

A recent publication proposes the gradual conquest theory, suggesting that the Mongol invasion, at this point, was more of an exploratory raid rather than a permanent occupation or conquest.<sup>147</sup> Connecting this statement with the information presented in this thesis, it seems that the Mongols did not want to stay too long in Dalmatia either. Short- and medium-lasting sieges, followed by raiding parties and pillaging were the most effective way of accumulating a great deal of spoils in a short time. Vjekoslav Klaić also points out that the Mongols were at one point overstaying in Dalmatia, facing a possibility of a counter-attack led by local nobles, so they decided to leave Dalmatia by going south, passing through Svač and Drishti.<sup>148</sup> This, too, shortened their stay in Dalmatia, and the last massacre was that of the southern cities of Svač and Drishti.<sup>149</sup>

Present thesis brings together recent scholarship about a relatively under-researched leg of the Mongol campaign in Europe, unlike other publications where the emphasis was always focused on the destruction of major cities in the Hungarian kingdom, such as the devastations of Esztergom and Vác. Moreover, I have given as detailed a picture of this neglected historical event as possible, focusing primarily on reconstructed medieval road systems and Mongol troop movement following contemporary accounts. I have also

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas of Split, 294-5.

<sup>147</sup> Laszlovszky, Pow, Romhányi, Ferenczi, and Pinke, "Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion," 436-8.

<sup>148</sup> Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 226-9.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas of Split, 300-3.



presented an analysis of Mongol warfare and how it was carried out right before the ultimate retreat. Additionally, future research on this phenomenon could take papal correspondence into account, since I believe further information may be found in either papal letters or annals discussing the consequences of 1241-42 Mongol campaign. Such information is, for example, noticeable in 1247 papal letter sent to the Bishop of Srijem, where the pope is referring to the devastation this fort had suffered in the past. The result was that the seat of the Chapter in St. Irenaeus – as the second episcopal centre – was founded on the island on the Sava River after the Mongol invasion, at the request of the Bishop of Srijem.<sup>150</sup> This serves as an indicator that the continuity was not terminated, but rather temporarily abrupted, and was continued in the area around Banoštor once the Mongols had departed in 1242.

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<sup>150</sup> Ternovác, “Nastanak i rana povijest,” 14.

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