

THE PRESENCE OF MONGOLIAN MILITARY DETACHMENTS IN MEDIEVAL SLAVONIA AND ITS SURROUNDING COUNTIES DURING THE 1241-42 CAMPAIGN

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Abstract: The Mongol invasion of 1241-42 resulted in King Béla's call for strengthening the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia with new castles. 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 towns throughout Slavonia and Dalmatia over the two years, often changing castles to avoid being caught or killed. This publication's goal is to recreate Mongol military detachments 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 medieval Slavonia, as well as the surrounding regions between the rivers Drava, Sava, and Danube. Research will be backed up with relevant archaeological finds, where such remains have been excavated. Major battles, minor clashes, and raids, carried out by the Mongols, will be reassessed with a focus on Croatian historiography. The conclusion will be drawn taking using medieval sources (Thomas of Split, Master Roger), reflection on secondary literature, and supplemented with recent historical and archaeological publications.

Keywords: medieval Slavonia, Mongol, Tatar, castles, King Béla

INTRODUCTION

The Mongol invasion of 1241-42 was a calamitous period in history of the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia.¹ Various consequences emerged both during the invasion, and after the Mongol army left the Great Hungarian Plain. During the invasion, many towns, fortified places, and settlements suffered destruction or partial devastation. Medieval author Thomas of Split reports horrific details about the Mongol atrocities inside and outside 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. 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

¹ Term "Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia" will be used throughout the paper when describing historical territorial-political entity centered around Hungarian kings and their courts, recognized as *Archiregnum Hungaricum* or The Realm of St Stephen. In Croatian historiography, there is a lack of consensus regarding the nomenclature for this political formation, leading to terms such as the *Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia* (Ugarsko-hrvatsko Kraljevstvo) and *Kingdom of Croatia-Hungary* (Hrvatsko-ugarsko Kraljevstvo). Conversely, Hungarian historiography predominantly simplifies this complex entity by using the term Kingdom of Hungary (or Hungarian Kingdom). While acknowledging the term's inherent challenges, the author will use the term "Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia", since it remains a closer approximation to describing the aforementioned political creation.

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 towns formerly known for their reputation. Chapter 40 is entitled “How the Tatars Retuned 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.

Primary focus will be military presence of the Mongol forces in medieval Slavonia, in the context of medieval Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia. Slavonia was part of the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia since the eleventh century, and was given to relatives of Hungarian monarchs or, in some cases, other noblemen. This domain 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, 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.

The Mongol invaders, led by Batu and Qadan followed the brothers across the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia. 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. One of the goals is to present reconstructed Mongol army movements in Slavonia as well as supposed King Béla’s escape route. The movements of these troops will be traced using reconstructed maps, the description of the situation on the ground, which 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. By using medieval sources, secondary literature, and other publications the goal is to determine the location and nature of Mongol manoeuvres in region between the Sava, Drava, and Danube rivers. Contemporary information comes from two prominent authors of the thirteenth century, Thomas of Split and Master Roger. Both



Map 1

authors provide information on Mongol army movements, settlements and towns they attacked, and their consequences. Additionally, archaeological finds outside the domain of Slavonia, namely its surrounding counties, such as Moslavina, Syrmia, and Banat will be taken into consideration. Main goal of these recent finds is to give context of the 1241-42 invasion, in other words to present the possible range of Mongol military detachments.

THE TERM AND TERRITORIAL SCOPE OF MEDIEVAL SLAVONIA²

To begin with, the term medieval Slavonia will be used for describing the territory within the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia 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 ones visible on map 1, which represents territory of Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in the second half of the thirteenth century, highlighting distinct his-

² The term “medieval Slavonia” is sometimes used interchangeably with “Slavonia”, which sometimes results in amalgams of the medieval and early modern terms of Slavonia. Therefore, the term “medieval Slavonia” was sometimes used differently than its proposed use. When depicting Slavonia region in the 13th century, one should consult one or more of the following titles, since there is an extensive scientific literature on this topic: Mladen Ančić, “Zajednička država – srednjovjekovna stvarnost ili povijesna utvara”, in *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102. – 1918.*, ed. Milan Kruhek (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), pg. 51-65; Stanko Andrić, “Upravna zasebnost i društvene osobitosti srednjovjekovne Slavonije”, in *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102. – 1918.*, ed. Milan Kruhek (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), pg. 89-95; Tomislav Bali, *Slavonski meander: prostor i pojam Slavonije u XIII. stoljeću* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2014); Vjekoslav Klaić, “Slavonija od X. do XIII. stoljeća”, in *Slavonske povijesne teme*, ed. Dragutin Pavličević (Vinkovci: Privlačica, 1994), pg. 8-51; Robert Zett, “O imenu Slavonija”, originally published as “Über den Namen ‘Slavonien’”, translated by Mica Orban Kljajić, *Scrinia Slavonica* 13/1 (Slavonski Brod, 2013), pg. 489-495.

torical counties. The natural borders of Slavonia were the rivers Sava, Drava, Sutla, and Danube. Region to the east, namely the counties of Požega, Valkó and Baranja were considered part of Hungary. Moreover, there will be mention of some potential archaeological finds and structural damage attributed to the invasion of the Mongols in the vicinity, such as the hillfort/motte in Gradišće and coin hoard unearthed near Čakovec. Although the region of Čakovec was a part of the Zala County and not Slavonia, it serves as an argument which could link Mongol army presence both north and south of the Drava River. In same regard, recent archaeological publications, like the interpretation dated to medieval era castle of Kovin will be mentioned as an attempt to present a possible route used by Mongol forces when advancing throughout medieval Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in their 1241-42 campaign. Although being a part of Keve County, if the castle was indeed raided by the Mongols, this piece of information could be used to strengthen the interpretation which states that the Mongols crossed the rivers of Sava, Drava, and/or Danube multiple times during their invasion, resulting in pillaging attempts or destruction.

The southern border between Slavonia and the Bosnian mountains was 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.³ 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, and this region will not be taken into consideration.

FLIGHT OF KING BÉLA AND DUKE COLOMAN 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 neighbour, the duke of Austria, while his brother left for Čazma in Slavonia, after taking refuge in Pest.⁴ After an unpleasant reception, the king left and headed for Zagreb.⁵ 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 (visible on map 2).⁶ The dispute whether the Coloman’s Road mentioned in medieval sources is indeed the reconstructed one exists and the consensus is not yet reached.⁷ 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, Kalnik, finally arriving in Zagreb.⁸ It corresponds with the road reconstruction shown on map 2.

KALNIK: WITHSTANDING THE ATTACK

The king’s arrival into Zagreb is dated to May 1241. According to the hypothesis presented by János Bak and

³ For further clarification on this topic see: Nada Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna: Politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* (Zagreb: Eminex, 1994); Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti: (sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska): 1387-1463* (Zagreb: Impressum, 2006).

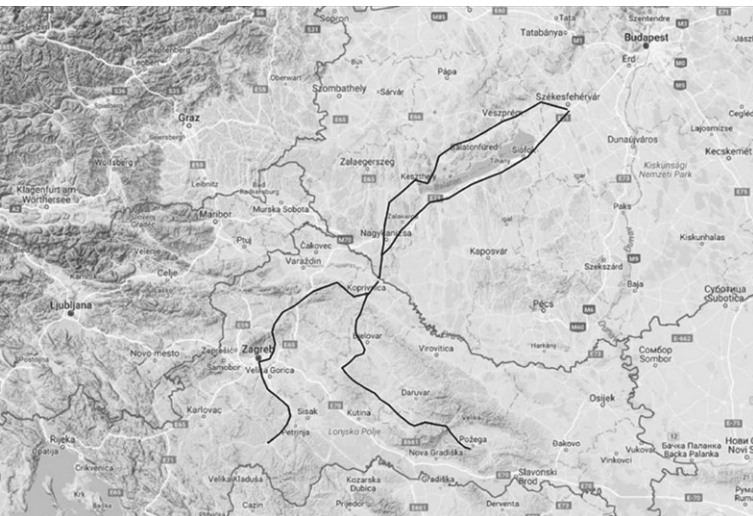
⁴ *Magistri Rogerii: Epistola in miserabile carmen super destructione Regni Hungariae per tartaros facta/Master Roger’s Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, János Bak and Martyn Rady, eds. and trans. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), pg. 193-195. Further: Master Roger.

⁵ *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinarum 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), pg. 280-281.

⁶ Danko Dujmović, “Cesta kralja Kolomana u zapadnom međuriječju Save i Drave”, *Radovi: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 48 (Zagreb, 2016), pg. 248. Further: Thomas of Split.

⁷ Ranko Pavleš states that there is a discrepancy between medieval sources mentioning the road and later historiographical allegations: Ranko Pavleš, “Cesta kralja Kolomana”, *Podravina* 7/13 (Samobor, 2008), pg. 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”, pg. 245-272; 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).

⁸ 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), pg. 338.



Map 2

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.⁹ One of the castles that managed to withstand the Mongol attack is Veliki Kalnik. The castle is mentioned for the first time in 1193.¹⁰ Being directly on the route going from Pest to Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, Zalavár, Kalnik and ultimately Zagreb, the castle was destined for attacked.¹¹ 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.¹² It is possible that Béla visited Kalnik for a very short period. Its 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ According to Gjuro Szabo, Kalnik was part of 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ The Mongols have razed numerous towns and castles before Kalnik, and if they had enough time, he believed that a little castle of Kalnik would not prove as an impenetrable defence 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.

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, 1241.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ He succumbed to his wounds there and

⁹ Thomas of Split, pg. 195, footnote 5.

¹⁰ Tadija, Smičiklas, ed. *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1904), pg. 265. Further: CD II.

¹¹ 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 Tkalcic, Tajana Sekelj Ivančan, Siniša Krznar, and Juraj Bela (Zagreb: Institut za arheologiju, 2019), pg. 226.

¹² 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", *Cris: Časopis Povijesnog društva Križevci* 12/1 (Križevci, 2010), pg. 235-236.

¹³ Blagec, "Bela IV. i kalničko plemstvo", pg. 236.

¹⁴ Smičiklas, Tadija, ed. *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 4 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1906), pg. 191-192. Further: CD IV.

¹⁵ Gjuro Szabo, *Srednjovječni gradovi u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1920), pg. 96-97.

¹⁶ Janeš, "A Phantom Menace", pg. 227-228.

¹⁷ CD IV, pg. 128-129.

¹⁸ Maja Cepetić, "Granice srednjovjekovnih biskupskih posjeda Dubrave, Ivanića i Čazme", *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 3/40 (Split, 2013),

was laid to rest in a hidden crypt at the Friars Preachers.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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.²¹ Soldiers who would serve as a bulwark and a driving-out force never reached the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia.²²

Without foreign aid, the king resided behind Zagreb’s town 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.²³ Soon after that, they crossed the Danube near Esztergom. The king headed south, because he realised that staying inside the town 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵

Direct evidence that the Mongols either besieged or entered the town of Zagreb is debatable.²⁶ There is a mention in secondary literature that the Mongols besieged the town and set fire to the church inside the town.²⁷ However, the only piece of information available in Thomas of Split’s account is that Stephen II, bishop of Zagreb (1225–47) joined Béla’s flight to Split.²⁸ The church withstanding the siege is the Zagreb Cathedral, which was being rebuilt and remodelled several times during the Middle Ages. Even though both Vjekoslav Klaić and Ferdo Šišić state that the Mongols destroyed the town of Zagreb, setting fire and razing the main church, direct evidence on the extent of the destruction is lacking.²⁹ Thomas of Split mentions the Mongols entering the fortified town and nineteenth-century Croatian historians seem to take this information and magnify the scope of the damages. As for the indirect evidence 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 1247.³⁰ The rebuilding process was started by bishop Stephen II.³¹ 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.³² This church was the foundation for the new cathedral, rebuilt in a new, Gothic style.³³

pg. 220-221.

¹⁹ Ferdo Šišić, *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog naroda: Od najstarijih dana do godine 1873* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1916), str. 98.

²⁰ Thomas of Split, pg. 288-289.

²¹ Peter Jackson, “The Crusade Against the Mongols (1241)”, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42/1 (Cambridge, 1991), pg. 11-13.

²² For more information about the help promised by the pope, see: Mikolaj Gladysz, *The Forgotten Crusaders: Poland and the Crusader Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²³ Thomas of Split, pg. 288-289.

²⁴ *Idem*, pg. 290-291.

²⁵ Master Roger, pg. 214-215; Thomas of Split, pg. 290-291.

²⁶ The term Zagreb applied here is used 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*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Znanje d.o.o., 2012).

²⁷ Concerning the Mongol destruction of Zagreb cathedral, there is no real evidence present to support this theory. The main argument for the destruction of the cathedral, presented by authors Klaić and Šišić, is that the reason for the reconstruction was serious structural damage, which they attribute to the Mongols, although no irrefutable facts or archaeological evidence were presented for this claim so far. Moreover, medieval sources, such as Thomas of Spalato and Rogerius of Apulia fail to mention large-scale destruction in medieval Zagreb.

²⁸ Thomas of Split, pg. 290-291.

²⁹ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Lav. Hartman, 1899), pg. 224; Šišić, *Pregled povijesti hrvatskog*, pg. 96.

³⁰ Antun Ivandija, “Prilozi za građevnu povijest zagrebačke katedrale”, *Croatica Christiana periodica* 5/8 (Zagreb, 1981), pg. 12.

³¹ Gjuro Szabo, »Prilozi za građevnu povijest zagrebačke katedrale«, *Narodna starina* 8/19 (Zagreb, 1929), pg. 67.

³² Ivandija, “Prilozi za građevnu povijest”, pg. 12.

³³ Additional information on the construction history of the cathedral can be found in the following papers: Ana Bedenko, “Povijest izgradnje zagrebačke katedrale Uznesenja Blažene Djevice Marije s posebnim osvrtom na gradnju lađa u 14. i 15. stoljeću” (diplomski

UNIDENTIFIED ORLJAVA, TOWN OF ČAZMA, AND THE POTENTIAL CONNECTION WITH BANOŠTOR

In a historical commentary on Thomas of Split's work, the situation on the state of the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia in 1241–42 is described as follows: Hungary was ravaged, Slavonia overrun. Orłjava, Čazma, Kamenica and Zagreb were razed.³⁴ Modern authors Perić, Matijević Sokol and Katičić connect the destruction of the Hungarian domain to the north with its southern counterpart, territories between the Sava – Drava – Danube interfluve. However, to present viable arguments for this, Mongol destruction hypothesis south of the Drava River outside of the Dalmatian region can be described as challenging.

The first town mentioned here is placed outside the borders of medieval Slavonia – the town of Orłjava. The exact location of the castle of Orłjava is not yet confirmed. It is most probably somewhere near the Požega town.³⁵ Vjekoslav Klaić and Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski place Orłjava in Požega County. If that is to be confirmed, the Mongols carried out the attack on Slavonia's eastern neighbouring county. Klaić states that the Mongols ransacked the castle of Orłjava, but there is no mention of attacking Požega, a nearby fortified castle which was founded in 11th century.³⁶ Kamenica is mentioned as the see of Diocese of Syrmia.³⁷

Next town mentioned was Čazma, a fortified place where Coloman fled in order to recuperate. Although today it is part of a Croatian County of Moslavina, in the past it was a vital part of medieval Slavonia, sheltering the Chapter which was both cultural and religious centre. It is unclear whether Qadan razed the town, 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.³⁸ Once again, there is a discrepancy between the medieval sources and nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography. Neither Thomas nor Roger mention that the Mongols besieged or destroyed the Chapter of Čazma. It is possible that Qadan or Batu tried to take over the town in order to deal a killing blow to the duke of Slavonia – a survivor of the Battle of Sajó. Klaić and Sakcinski emphasize the extent of the Mongol destruction in the area between Orłjava, Čazma and Zagreb. According to them, the raiders burnt and razed everything in their path.³⁹ If the raid was led by Batu, who was leading his soldiers all over the southern territories within the Sava – Drava – Danube interfluve 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 archaeological evidence is needed to confirm this hypothesis. With this in mind, 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, this town falls outside the border of medieval Slavonia, being a part of the Syrmia County. However, there is a potential link between the Slavonian region, the Danube River, and this town when addressing the Mongol invasion period. There is a mention in papal correspondence that the castle of Banoštor suffered a Mongol attack.⁴⁰ As evidence that the destruction was severe, Szabo points out that Pope Innocent IV in 1247 advised the bishop of Syrmia to relocate to one of his monasteries nearby, either to St. Gregory or St. Dimitry.⁴¹ Being so far to the east, outside Slavonia, but within the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia, it is plausible that the Mongol army, or a detachment from the main force laid siege to this castle as well. Unfortunately, the sources omit the information

rad, (Zagreb, Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2013); Ana Deanović, Željka Čorak, *Zagrebačka katedrala* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1988); Zorislav Horvat, "Izgradnja lađe zagrebačke katedrale", *Peristil* 23/1 (Zagreb, 1980), pp. 67–98.

³⁴ *Historia salonitarum atque spalatinorum pontificum*, eds. and trans. Olga Perić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and Radoslav Katičić (Split: Književni krug, 2003), pg. 360.

³⁵ Szabo, *Srednjovječni gradovi*, pg. 127.

³⁶ Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, pg. 224.

³⁷ Josip Ante Soldo, "Provala Tatara u Hrvatsku", *Historijski zbornik* 21–22 (Zagreb, 1968), pg. 384.

³⁸ The hypothesis that there were two distinct Mongol armies present in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia during their 1241–42 invasion is supported by the map available in *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, pg. 19. The map shows a reconstruction of the Mongol campaign, specifically two distinct lines portraying two distinct armies – the first one being the main army, and the second one labeled as a minor detachment. Source: Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe* (University of Washington Press, 1995), pg. 19. The smaller army was led by Qadan and its main goal was the hunt for King Béla and his brother Coloman.

³⁹ Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli i Tatari: povjesno-kritična razprava* (Zagreb: A. Jakić, 1863), pp. 28–29; Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, pg. 224.

⁴⁰ CD IV, pg. 326.

⁴¹ Gjuro Szabo, "Iz Srijema: Banoštor", *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 2/1–2 (Split, 1928), pg. 116.

whether Banoštor was the first town in the line of attack, when crossing the Danube River, or the siege of Banoštor took place after the supposed fall of Orjava, Čazma, and Zagreb. Since there is a mention that Kamenica, serving as the see of Diocese of Syrmia, was in fact Banoštor, known under different names (Srijemska Kamenica, Kő, de Kw),⁴² I conclude that the destruction of Banoštor, if it indeed was the bishopric see of Syrmia, displays the destruction of fortified bishopric estate by the Mongols during their 1241–42 campaign.⁴³

POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN SURROUNDING COUNTIES

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.⁴⁴ This archaeology-based research was based on a number of sites: Orosháza-Bónum, Hejőkertesztúr-Vizekköze, 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.⁴⁵ But all of the examples for this type of destruction and elimination of the populace activity are attested north of the Drava River, outside Slavonia.

Archaeological evidence based or found in surrounding territories bordering with 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-Croatia.

There are a handful of examples suggesting the presence of Mongols and violent warfare. For one, there was a find which falls into the territory of the Zala County, a northern neighbour of Slavonia. A dog skull was found in a pot at the Torčec-Cirkvišće site, south of the Drava River which suggests Mongol ritual practices.⁴⁶ In one such nomadic ritual practice, an individual or a group buries 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.⁴⁷ However, this kind of ritu-

⁴² I would like to point out two publications, among all other available literature, which I believe should be taken into consideration when discussing the complexity of this bishopric see of Syrmia, namely the (dis)continuity and its name(s) in the past, which have been disputed. The first one is: Bálint Ternovác, "Nastanak i rana povijest latinske biskupije Srijema", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 35 (Zagreb, 2017), pp. 1–14. The author points out the bishopric tradition stemming from the the 11th century, adhering to the complexity of multiple canonical aspirations in medieval Syrmia, resulting in a contest over the bishopric superiority. Moreover, after being destroyed by the Mongols, the see of Kő (a preceding name for Banoštor) was transferred to St. Ireneus, without calling into question the Mongol destruction. The second publication is: Stanko Andrić, "Regularni kanonici u srednjovjekovnom Srijemu", *Croatia Christiana periodica* 20 (Zagreb, 1996), pp. 1–22. This author presents the argument that a misinterpretation of the sources occurred, resulting in emergence of a non-existing abbey in Banoštor. Instead of this false monastery, the actual monastery in question was an abbey in Bátmonostor (County of Bodrog). Andrić does not mention the Mongol attack, but draws attention to a possible misinterpretation, which, if proven, could lead to more unfounded or fallacious conclusions when discussing the town of Banoštor.

⁴³ Additionally, future research concerning the case of Banoštor could take papal or royal correspondence into account, since I believe further information may be found in either papal letters or annals discussing the consequences of the Mongol campaign. Such information is, for example, noticeable in 1247 papal letter sent to the Bishop of Syrmia, where the pope is referring to the devastation this castle 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 Syrmia. 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.

⁴⁴ 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 (Lexington, 2019), pp.1021–1066.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, pp. 1048–1058.

⁴⁶ 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", *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 15/16 (Zagreb, 1998), pp. 61–79.

⁴⁷ Panos Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasions of Croatia and Serbia in 1242", *Fragmenta Hellenoslavica* 2 (Thessaloniki, 2015), pp. 264.

al 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 Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia prior to the Mongol invasion 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 another one from the medieval Zala County. A hoard of 846 silver coins was found near Čakovec, which was primarily being attributed to the Mongol army presence there.⁴⁸ The author directly linked the presence of a coin hoard with an invasive Mongol campaign near Čakovec. However, later interpretation of the found coin hoard from 2008 debunked the initial interpretation, and the direct link between the buried coin hoard and Mongol invasion is no longer considered so straightforward.⁴⁹ As a conclusion, the practice of burying the coins into the ground before the invaders is attributed only north of the rivers Sava, Drava, and Danube.⁵⁰

There are three more archaeological finds, published quite recently, which could shed some light on the Mongol activity in Sava – Drava – Danube region, but further research and confirmation is necessary. The first one is publication by Dejan Radičević in 2019.⁵¹ Radičević discusses archaeological data in medieval Kovin, among other fortifications, placed on the Danube River, on the very border of three counties: Kewe, Sylvania, and Banat (from 1247 named Banate of Mačva). In the past, it served as a border between the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia. According to new archaeological finds, a reconstruction of the castles 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.⁵² The author concedes that there are no written

testimonies for this period, but, according to archaeological data, concludes that the town was destroyed by the invasion of Mongols in 1241-42. After this destruction, the castle obtained new stone ramparts or the earth ramparts were reinforced by stone.⁵³ Once again, Radičević points out that a reliable answer to this question can only be provided by the future excavations.

Next possible evidence is the one presented in 2017 by Marijana Krmpotić, Andrej Janeš, and Petar Sekulić.⁵⁴ The archaeological excavation of a research hillfort/motte located in Gradišće, near the town of Čakovec, 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.⁵⁵ 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 Zala County, just north of medieval 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 town, castle, or church on fire, in order to cause chaos or to force the inhabitants and defenders outside the town quarters. If the invaders crossed the Drava River, it is possible their forces marched onwards, throughout medieval Slavonia, all the way to Zagreb. Moreover, 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 Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia 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.⁵⁶ Medieval author, Atâ-Malek Juvayni, for example, reports how the Mongol army under Genghis

⁴⁸ Željko Tomičić, »Skupni nalaz ranosrednjovjekovnog novca 12. i 13. stoljeća iz Čakovca«, *Muzejski vjesnik: Glasilo muzeja Sjeverozapadne Hrvatske* 8 (Varaždin, 1985), pg. 57-58.

⁴⁹ Ivan Mirnik, "Najsitnija kulturna dobra: Novac i njegova uloga u srednjovjekovnoj Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji", *Analecta* 6 (2008), pg. 125-143.

⁵⁰ For a distribution of hoards found in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia connected to the Mongol invasion, see map 1 in: József Laszlovszky, Stephen Pow, Beatrix F. Romhányi, László Ferenczi, and Zsolt Pinke, "Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion of Hungary in 1241-42", *The Hungarian Historical Review* 7/3 (Budapest, 2018), pg. 426.

⁵¹ 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), pg. 157-171.

⁵² *Idem*, pg. 165.

⁵³ *Idem*.

⁵⁴ Marijana Krmpotić, Andrej Janeš, and Petar Sekulić, "Gradišće u Turčišću, Međimurje, gradište/mota iz razvijenog srednjeg vijeka", *Portal: Godišnjak Hrvatskoga restauratorskog zavoda* 8 (Zagreb, 2017), pg. 7-20.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, pg. 7.

⁵⁶ Kate Raphael, "Mongol Siege Warfare on the Banks of the Euphrates and the Question of Gunpowder (1260-1312)", *Journal of*

Khan besieged the town of Bukhara using fire.⁵⁷ 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 Kiskunmajsza-Jonathermál Kelet, it is evident that the Mongols used fire when available.⁵⁸

Lastly, there are couple more archaeological sites with a presumed Mongol presence, first one being a wooden-earthen castle of Gradić near Torčec, where the previously mentioned dog skull was found. The town was a fortified settlement which was inhabited before the Mongol invasion. A bottom of a dark brown ceramic vessel was found, which represents a solitary find dated to the mid-thirteenth century.⁵⁹ Second potential link could be found when examining the interruptions and continuation of burial at medieval cemeteries. Exemplified by the Đelekovec-Šćapovo near Torčec⁶⁰ (medieval Križevci, Körös County) and Đakovo-Župna crkva⁶¹ (Valkó), these discontinuities could be used as evidence supporting Mongol presence south of the Drava River. The main argument for this hypothesis is that the Mongol raided these fortified places, causing the local populace to flee, abandoning their ordinary burial customs. On the other hand, Andrej Janeš stresses that discontinuation of burial at medieval cemeteries cannot be related to Mongol invaders simply because the finds were dated sometimes in 13th century. He calls for additional research which would undoubtedly confirm or refute this hypothesis.⁶²

All things considered, it seems that it was commonly practiced by the Mongols to use fire-based attacks on both sieges of fortified towns 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 a handful of

material-based evidence connected to the destruction which took place in the mid-thirteenth century. Unfortunately, no archaeology-based research can take place at the moment inside Zagreb's Cathedral to further verify the claims of Mongol destruction, due to reconstruction after the recent earthquake. Moving the scope to the east, the medieval castle of Orłjava is not yet located, so the archaeological excavation there is yet to be carried out. 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 regions encompassing the rivers of Drava, Sava, and Danube, as well as taking into consideration movements of two distinct armies, first one led by Qadan, and the second one led by Batu is a priority. This is a prerequisite due to 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 Slavonia and its surrounding counties is still highly debatable. Entry point into Slavonia might be from the north, where Qadan followed the fleeing king. The other army, led by commander Batu might have raided towns and countryside alongside the Danube River, crossing it more than once. If that was the case, the castle of Kovin may have been attacked by the forces of Batu.

The sources mention only some of the fortified places which suffered from Mongol attacks, without paying attention to the countryside between the castles, especially omitting the region of medieval Slavonia. 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.

the Royal Asiatic Society 19/3 (Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2009), pg. 357-358.

⁵⁷ John Andrew Boyle, trans., *'Ala-ad-din, 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, vol. 1-2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), pg. 106.

⁵⁸ Gyucha, Lee, and Rózsa, "The Mongol Campaign", pg. 1043-1058.

⁵⁹ Tajana Sekelj Ivančan, "Arheološko nalazište Torčec - Gradić", *Podravina 3/6* (Koprivnica, 2004), pg. 82.

⁶⁰ Marija Šmalcelj "Đelekovec – Šćapovo, Koprivnica", in: *40 godina arheoloških istraživanja u sjeverozapadnoj Hrvatskoj*, Muzejsko društvo sjeverozapadne Hrvatske; Muzej grada Koprivnice, (Koprivnica, 1986), pg. 132.

⁶¹ Krešimir Filipec, "Istraživanje srednjovjekovnog groblja u Đakovu 1995. i 1996. godine", *Opuscula Archaeologica*, 20/1 (Zagreb, 1996), pg. 193.

⁶² Janeš suggest caution when connecting here mentioned archaeological finds with Mongol invasion or destruction. He points out the cases of Frankavila (Mandelos) and Sv. Martin (Szentmarton/Martinci) in Syrmia, where destruction was caused by the rebelling Cumans, not the invading Mongols. Moreover, he points out *that the anthropological analysis of the skeletons from the Đakovo cemetery did not reveal any traces of large and sudden violence, and there is no direct material evidence of a discontinuity caused by the destruction*. When addressing the site at Đelekovec-Šćapovo, he underlines next: *when it comes to the Šćapovo cemetery, there are, unfortunately, still no detailed scientific studies of finds that would allow for a more detailed understanding of the site, or the indicated discontinuity*. Therefore, a direct connection between the discontinuity and the Mongol raids cannot yet be drawn. In: Janeš, "A Phantom Menace", pg. 232-233, footnote 8.

CONCLUSION

As was presented, the Mongol campaign in Kingdom of Hungary-Croatia 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 southern reaches of the kingdom and spread throughout its territory to 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 castle to suffer the attack of the invaders. He moved from castle to castle, trying to enter the towns and castles 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 Duke Coloman. My hypothesis is that this part of the Mongol army possibly 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 north-eastern point of entry.

Available archaeological material and material remains in Slavonia and its surrounding regions 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, to the north of Slavonia. If the passing Mongol army attacked the hillfort using fire, it is plausible that the same military detachment could be responsible for the attack on Zagreb's castle. The reports on the raid on Zagreb tend to indicate that the Mongols used fire to destroy the town'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 the castle at Kovin might have suffered fire-based destruction in the thirteenth century as well, 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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ Lastly, cases of Đelekovec-Šćapovo near Torčec and Đakovo-Župna crkva tend to be controversial, where a certain aspect of the finds could be highlighted in order to support or rebuke presence of a Mongol destructive force in the area.

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 River. The only certain account of a massacre is the one mentioned by Thomas, and is placed in the Lika region, between Slavonia and Dalmatia.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, exact location of this site of mass killing is not yet confirmed. Similarly, the alleged sieges of Orjava, Banoštor, 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 the Drava River. 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 destruction in Slavonia is still not possible to reconstruct in great detail. Further research in the aforementioned castles, towns, as well as initiating village devastation research should serve as a buttress for possible confirmation of the hypotheses mentioned in this work. Until then, some of the hypotheses on Mongol cruelty in the Sava – Drava – Danube interfluvium rely mostly on secondary literature.

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⁶³ Radičević, "Fortifications on the Byzantine-Hungarian", pg. 165.

⁶⁴ For the crossing of the Danube by the Mongol army and its entry point to Serbia through Banat, see: Sophoulis, "The Mongol Invasions", pg. 259-260. The author specifies that the fort of Kovin was a part of Qadan's campaign of Serbia, in the spring of 1241.

⁶⁵ Thomas of Split, pg. 294-295.

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PRISUTNOST MONGOLSKIH VOJNIH ODREDA U SREDNJOVJEKOVNOJ SLAVONIJI I OKOLNIM ŽUPANIJAMA TIJEKOM POHODA 1241.-42.

Sažetak

Mongolska invazija 1241.-42. rezultirala je pozivom kralja Béle da se Ugarsko-Hrvatsko Kraljevstvo ojača novim dvorcima. Brojni plemići i grofovi dobili su kraljevske privilegije, dajući im ili izravan posjed zemlje, jurisdikcijsku moć ili pravo da vrše vlast nad određenim područjima u kraljevstvu. Ovim se poveljama izražavala zahvalnost oblasnim gospodarima za novčanu i vojnu pomoć u nevolji. Kralj se tijekom dvije godine sklanjao u brojnim gradovima diljem Slavonije i Dalmacije, često mijenjajući dvorce kako ne bi bio uhvaćen ili ubijen. Cilj ovog rada je prikazati mongolske vojne odrede koje su predvodila dva vojna zapovjednika: Batu i Qadan. Nakon moderne rekonstrukcije cesta i kretanja vojnih trupa, ovaj rad daje pregled i dubinsku analizu mongolske aktivnosti u srednjovjekovnoj Slavoniji, kao i okolnim područjima između rijeka Drave, Save i Dunava. Istraživanja će biti potkrijepljena relevantnim arheološkim nalazima, tamo gdje su takvi ostaci iskopani. Glavne bitke, manji okršaji i pohodi Mongola bit će preispitani s naglaskom na hrvatsku historiografiju. Zaključak će se izvesti korištenjem srednjovjekovnih izvora (Toma Arhiđakon, Rogerije iz Apulije), osvrtom na sekundarnu literaturu, te nadopunjen novijim povijesnim i arheološkim publikacijama.

Ključne riječi: srednjovjekovna Slavonija, Mongoli, Tatari, dvorci, kralj Béla