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**“SWORDS DRUNK WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SLAIN”  
(GH, MAG. ROGERII..., P. 211).  
TRACES OF DESTRUCTION. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS  
OF THE MONGOL INVASION OF HUNGARY**

ABSTRACT

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The Mongol invasion of Europe in the early 1240’s were devastating for more countries in Central Europe, and triggered a great interest in the research of history and archaeology. The present study gives an overview of the course of events, the archaeological and historical research trends and ideas, and a detailed discussion on the archaeological source types connected to the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241–1242.

**Key words:** Hungary; Mongol invasion; mass graves; deviant burials; hoards; battlefields

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241–42 is undoubtedly one of the largest traumas that the state suffered in history, although not alone in the region, as similarly to Hungary, Poland and the East Slavic principalities were also affected by the severe attack. Still, in the collective memory of Hungarian people, the horrific massacre is still there as a vivid, but still image. Not surprisingly, besides the history books from primary schools, the topic has long been in the focus of academic historical research, based on mostly contemporary accounts. It is not possible to review and enumerate all the works that were dealing with the issue, however, the most important, fairly recent, synthetic volumes must be mentioned as they are crucial concerning the archaeological interpretation of the Mongol invasion of Hungary.

Following the chronological order of the publishing, first the enormous work, *Tatárjárás* (Mongol Invasion), edited by Balázs Nagy, published in 2003, should be mentioned. This edited volume is the first and so far the last attempt for a compositive work on the Mongol invasion of Hungary, including every aspect

of it, from the analysis of the written sources (both east and west), historiography of the research, the cultural aftermath of the events (up to nowadays), the course of events, the most debated issues, such as demographical loss, the changes that followed the event, and last but not least, the archaeological evidence of the event.

This is most important, as the study in the volume by József Laszlovszky is the first attempt for a general archaeological interpretation of the invasion. The second important volume: *A Tatárjárás 1241–42*, edited by Ágnes Ritoók and Éva Garam, published in 2007, is a catalogue of the concordant exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum. Not surprisingly, the focus of the exhibition and the volume was put on archaeological finds, of which castles, destroyed settlements, metal-work, hoards, and the architecture of the period were discussed separately. This volume is crucial also, because after its publication only isolated studies were issued, mostly of individual sites or finds. The third book to be mentioned is a monograph by János B. Szabó, published also in 2007, with the title *A tatárjárás: a mongol hódítás és Magyarország* (The Mongol invasion: the Mongol conquest and Hungary).

Although this work deals specifically with the historical side of the event, its importance is that it also takes into consideration the results of archaeology, and applies a critical approach towards the traditional historical research of the invasion, reconsidering both the contemporary political situation of Hungary, and the aims and the "background story" of the Mongols, and evaluates the aftermath of the events on both sides. Accordingly, in the following, the description of the course of event and the internal affairs will rely mostly on his work. Besides these synthetic studies, one more important volume should be mentioned — the English — Latin bilingual edition of the work of Master Roger (*GH, Mag. Rogerii...*), which brought international importance to it. The latest edited volume about the period is a festschrift for András Pálóczi-Horváth, with the title *Carmen Miserabile: a tatárjárás magyarországi emlékei* (*Carmen Miserabile: the remnants of the Mongol invasion in Hungary*), edited by Szabolcs Rosta and György V. Székely, published in 2014. The volume bears Master Roger's work in the title, and consists of 26, mostly archaeological papers about case studies, sites connected to the Mongol invasion, with the exception on one synthetic study on numismatics, by György V. Székely (2014).

It also shows the difference between the state of research in archaeology, and in history. Whilst in historical research, comprehensive investigations were carried out, as much on details as on synthetic studies on the invasion, archaeology now is more on the level of the discovery of individual sites, which is already a new phenomenon, as the discovery of such sites in larger numbers are the consequence of excavations preceding motorway constructions, carried out in the past decade, mostly on the area of the Hungarian Plain, where destruction were most severe, and according to archaeological evidence, much densely populated then than nowadays. These largescale excavations made it possible to discover more those sites where the destruction reached the limit where not even the

inhabitants of nearby settlements were able to clear the ruins and bury the dead (L a s z l o v s z k y 2012, 3). A broader, comprehensive investigation is to be noted concerning only one group of finds, the hoards of the period (L a s z l o v s z k y 1991; T ó t h 2007; V a r g h a 2015). Besides, synthetic studies about the archaeology of the invasion were carried out by József L a s z l o v s z k y (2003; 2007; 2012). Two further, recent studies have concentrated around the debates of the Mongol withdrawal and its environmental relations (P i n k e *et al.* 2017; see also B ü n t g e n, D i C o s m o 2016) and on the reconstruction of the battle of Muhi and further directions and possibilities of its research (L a s z l o v s z k y *et al.* 2016).

Nonetheless, even with deep research on the event, there are still debated details. Still, the history of the invasion is fairly well reconstructable from contemporary written sources. In Hungary, sources are even more fortunate, as there is a rather rare, eyewitness account of the invasion by Master Roger, archdeacon of Oradea at the time of the attack. Besides this source, a somewhat later, rather prejudiced, but still quite detailed work of Thomas of Split helps reconstructing the incursion. These sources not only tell about the course of events, but — especially Master Roger — describe in details and with examples the cruelty of the enemy, the carnage, and the devastation of the landscape and the people. Thus, there has long been an eagerness to excavate and fit archaeological sites to the dreadful picture that has been living in the mind of the people — of burnt down settlements with slaughtered, unburied dead and body parts scattered all over. To be able to interpret the archaeological traces of the Mongol invasion, at first it is necessary to summarise the events, and contextualise it historically.

## II. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE COURSE OF EVENTS

The political situation in Hungary was difficult long before the actual attack. It did not even start with the actual king, Béla IV, but his father, András II. After 1208, he started to conduct a new kind of economic policy that included huge donations of the royal domain to mostly foreign newcomer nobles, which crossed the interest of many, especially local higher nobility. The discontent and tension caused by king's actions is well represented by the fact that it resulted in the murder of the queen by the barons in 1213. The crown prince, Béla was opposed to his father's politics, and although he was crowned only in 1235, he gained power over some parts of the country as a prince, and so he started to retrieve some of his father's donations already from 1228. Once he was crowned, he displaced the former king's government, of which some even went to exile, and put his own people in position, in order to restore the royal domain to the condition of the time of his grandfather, Béla III. Together with that, some other, more direct actions that insulted the barons personally, such as the order that forbid them to sit in the king's presence. Just as much as his father's provisions

had harmed the interest of many, so did his and thus, the general dissatisfaction with the king remained (Szabó 2007, 77–82).

Contrary to a former general perception, the Mongol attack was not taken short by Hungary. The wars of the eastern areas with the Mongols were well-known by the king, as father Julianus, a Dominican monk who went on an eastern mission at his comeback he brought back the letter of the Great Khan, who threatened him for taking the Cumans, whom he considered as his defeated subjects. Despite of that, in 1239 King Béla took further Cuman people to the kingdom, the main leader of the Cumans of the Dnieper area, Kuten, and his people. Furthermore, the rulers of diverse Eastern-Slavic principalities that were destroyed by the Mongols sought refuge in the court of Béla, who by that had a first-hand account on the Mongol conquest. The reception of the Cumans could already be interpreted as a preparation for the Mongol attack, as the king counted on them also as a supplement in his army. Furthermore, on the news of the forthcoming attack, he himself went to the north-eastern border, and he ordered to strengthen the natural fortification of the country, by blocking the Mountain passes of the Carpathian Mountains. In the beginning of 1241, when the threat of a Mongol attack became real, he summoned the all the people pledged for military service, from the whole country, and asked for help from the surrounding western kingdoms. He also sent the palatine with an army on the northeast border, from where he and some others returned with the news of the defeat in February, 1241. The king ordered the assembling armies to meet up at Pest, where an unforeseen event made the situation even more severe; the king's cousin, Frederick II from the Babenberg family — the only western ruler, who came to the help of the king — lead a sortie against a raiding Mongol force, despite the king's orders. There he took a captive, who turned out to be Cuman. The distrust of the Cumans was a general phenomenon already, as previous fights, and conflicts driven by the different lifestyle of the accommodated, nomadic Cumans and settled Hungarians lead to serious tension. According to that, a rumour arouse that Cumans were colluding with the Mongols, and all this ended up a hysteria, that flamed out in Pest, and were directed to Kuten and his entourage, whom the king could not protect, and thus were slayed by the crowd. This is considered by historians as the greatest mistake of the king, as to the news of the death of the Cuman leader, people turned against the Cumans throughout the country — the Cuman army that was coming towards Pest to join the forces against the Mongols could only force its way out, which was followed by an exodus of the Cuman people to the area of Bulgaria, fighting their way out. This way, the king not only lost a considerable part of his army, but also had a serious internal conflict, that mostly affected the area of the Great Plain (Szabó 2007, 111–123).

Following this, the main troop of the Hungarian army moved towards north-west, and stopped at the River Sajó, to join forces. The army formed into a rather closed, tight camp, which was evaluated ambiguously by historical research. However, the latest studies suggest that the king most probably considered a Mongol



attack during the time of the assembling of the army. Sources suggest that the king was well aware of the movements of steppe style warfare, and considering these, the latest research suggested that the only chance for an open battle was to provoke an attack, in which case the closed camp would have fulfilled the role of a rear-guard. However, chances were still low against the largest and most advanced army of the period, and were aggravated by wrong tactical moves. Sources are somewhat contradictory, but it is certain, that during the course of the night the Mongol army crossed the river and got to the close proximity of the Hungarian forces, which caused a general panic. In the morning, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, the battle had started. Although there was undoubtedly a hard fight, but war-lords could not embattle the army, and the Mongol army, superior in numbers, tactics and discipline encircled the Hungarian army and its camp, and thus, by the afternoon the army was not fighting for victory, but to escape. The king was able to escape, supported and saved by his entourage (Fig. 1), and so was his brother, Prince Kálmán, who, however died of his wounds not much later (Szabó 2007, 123–141). By the middle of the year 1241, the Mongols conquered most of the eastern part of the country, to the line of the Danube, leaving behind a devastated countryside. The king fled to Dalmatia with his family, and asked for help from the pope and the surrounding Christian kingdoms,



Fig. 1. King Béla fleeing from the Mongols; after *Képes Krónika = Chronicon Pictum*, D. Dercsényi (ed.), Budapest (Magyar Helikon) 1964, p. 125 (f.63b)

fearing the next phase of the attack — targeting the Transdanubian territories, which came true in February 1242, starting with the destruction of Óbuda and Esztergom. However, the success was not as unambiguous as in the previous year, mostly in consequence of the stone castles. Therefore, the Mongol army was less concentrated on territorialisation this time, and their main goal was to capture the king, and followed him to Dalmatia, destroying the countryside on the way. By springtime, 1242, the Mongol army left the country quite suddenly. The reasons behind the retreat are still debated; explanations such as the death of the Great Khan, Ögedei in December 1241, the stronger defence, strategic matters, and the unsuccessful attempt to capture of King Béla could all be of importance (Szendé 2007, 11–13).

Although the devastation of the country was described in details in the sources, drawing a horrific picture about the country after the massacre of the Mongols; sources speak about the cruelty of the invaders, burnt down villages, slaying of its inhabitants and the abduction of women, followed by starvation and a general devastation of the country. However, having a closer look on the political acts of the king, it suggest that the recuperation of the country has happened shortly. His internal politics changed, as so was his foreign politics, with the aim of securing the country as much from the inside as from the outside. To end internal conflicts, he supported the barons with donations, but asked for building of stone castles and serious army service in return. He re-accommodated the Cumans to the country, and settled them on the areas that were most depopulated after the invasion. Of foreign policy, first of all, he needed to secure the political stability of the country from the neighbouring powers, starting with the retrieval of the lands from the Austrian prince already in 1242, which was taken during the Mongol invasion. Another form of that was marriage policy; marrying his son, the crown prince to a Cuman princess, and some of his daughters to Polish and Russian princes, of which one, Rastislav, the son of the Prince of Chernigov in 1243, was supported by him to gain the throne of Galicia — an attempt that was eventually failed. He was more successful in the fight with Venice for Dalmatian towns in 1244, and interfered in the affairs of the Holy Roman Empire in 1245. Naturally all these provisions were part of a preparation for a presumptive Mongol attack too, which eventually only came real in 1285 (Szabó 2007, 170–177). Despite the difficult internal affairs of the period (revolting Cumans), the second attack had not as severe outcome as the first one. The Mongol troops entered the Carpathians in the beginning of 1285, and despite of reaching the Danube quickly, they were leaving already in March, without a major battle, but with considerable losses, mostly during the crossing of the mountains on the way back. This also shows that the efforts to recover the country were effective, and in contempt of the severe attack, the recuperation started quite soon (Szabó 2007, 181–183).

### III. POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRACES OF THE INVASION

Despite of the fast recovery, diverse written records all over Europe speak about the general destruction of the country, even that it ceased to exist. This contradiction cannot be solved solely based on written sources — the few, ambiguous reports does not make it possible to reconstruct the destruction in different areas. For that, archaeology seems to be a better source. The general summary and interpretation of the archaeology of the Mongol invasion has been carried out by József Laszlovszky in three articles (Laszlovszky 2003; 2007; 2012). He argued that for the identification of the level of destruction archaeology could be the best source. Of these, hoards should be first mentioned. The range of their appearance shows directly the level of destruction, together with how developed money economy was in the given era (Fig. 2). The next source group he enumerated were sites discovered mostly connected to large-scale highway excavations. These sites are the direct evidence of the Mongol attack; such examples can be where the traces of the massacre preserved up to nowadays — burnt down sites with unburied dead scattered over on it, battlefields, and some fortifications that were created before the invasion. Laszlovszky also argued that besides the

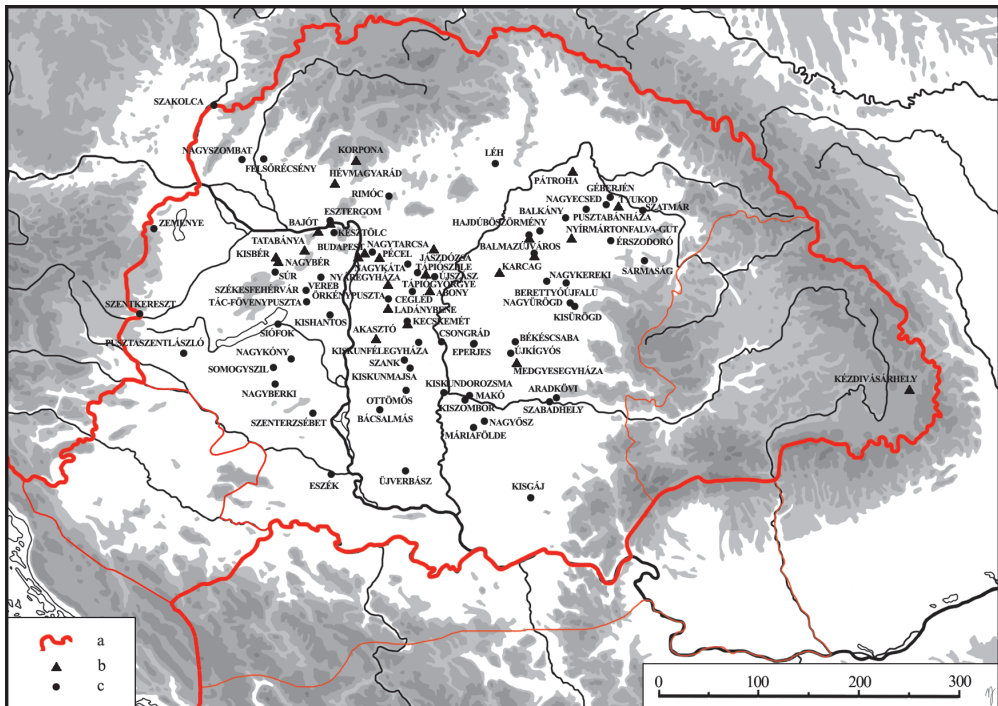


Fig. 2. The distribution of hoards connected to the Mongol invasion of Hungary by Csaba Tóth; after Á. Ritoók, É. Garam (2007, 81) redrawn by I. Jordan.

a — borders of medieval Hungarian Kingdom; b — mixed hoards; c — coin hoards

proofs of destruction, the — obviously indirect — footprints of recuperation can also be identified. These are the castle- and church building wave of the second half of the thirteenth century (L a s z l o v s z k y 2007, 42). He also reviewed the relation between the invasion and the phenomenon of settlement desertion, the change of material culture, settled new ethnic groups and concluded the results of archaeology of the events (L a s z l o v s z k y 2003).

Besides Laszlovszky's synthetic studies, no complex investigation has been carried out on the material evidence of the invasion that considered not only the archaeological evidence, but also the historical and socio-economic conclusions that can be based on the material; publications mostly focused on individual sites, or in some cases, a certain group of finds or sites, such as hoards or castles.

Thus, in the following, the present paper will first consult direct archaeological evidence of the Mongol invasion, and the recovery period that followed. According to the results of the latest investigations direct archaeological evidence are the following: battlefields, especially Muhi, mass graves connected to the battle, sites of complete destruction, hoards connected to these, and last, but not least, finds or sites that can be connected to the Mongols themselves. Of the recovery period, evidence is far more indirect. Although review of the mentioned broader questions that were in the focus of historical research, such as settlement desertion and the new wave of church and castle building would over exceed the limits of the present study, there is one more phenomenon that was not yet discussed in the frame of the recuperation of the Mongol invasion but should be investigated — the remnants of the battle in settlements that lived through the attack. This latter mostly concerns ambiguous traces of the clearing after the attack, that can be manifested either in suspicious graves within churchyards, or burials on settlements that can be connected to such an activity. Shortly, the phenomenon of 'no archaeological trace' should also be considered in the frame of recovery, as besides the inviolated character of the area it can also refer on a successful repopulation.

With the help of this complex analysis, archaeology can take one step further in the research of the Mongol invasion. Besides identifying the traces of destruction, and by their location the affected areas, with the help of social archaeological investigations, it is possible to shed light more on the socioeconomic changes took place after the battle, and about the actual destruction of the population — destroyed the villages and slaughtered people, of which it is less known by written sources that were more concentrated on the main battles and centres.

#### IV. TRACES OF DESTRUCTION I — BATTLEFIELDS AND MASS GRAVES

Although conflict archaeology is a relatively new phenomenon in Hungary, and it is mostly focused on the post medieval and early modern period (N é g y e s i 2010; P o l g á r 2014; 2015), because of the exceptional place of the battle of Muhi



in the collective memory of the nation, predictably, as much as the historical research has been focused on the event, so was archaeology from its very beginning. The first attempts to identify the battlefield of Muhi took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was followed by further ventures up to nowadays, without any success, some even assumed that since the bodies could have been on the open battlefield for weeks, there might not be mass graves at all (Pusztai 2014, 141). However, unforeseen outcomes did happen — instead of the battlefield and its mass graves, the medieval village of Muhi, and its churchyard cemetery, more precisely the *ossarium* has been discovered. The identification of the battlefield is difficult mostly because the geographical features noted in the description of the battle are either not valid at all, or not anymore — the riverbed of Sajó, next to which the battle took place had changed its course several times since the event. (Lászlóvszky 2003, 453–455). Nevertheless, a new study has examined the possible archaeological traces that lead us closer to the identification of the battlefield. Mária Wolf, based on finds from the site Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze, presupposed that the valuable objects (spurs, arrowheads, two swords and a piece of coat-of-plates) left in the houses suggested a village emptied for the news of the battle. After reviewing the relevant sources, the author argued that both according to Thomas of Split and Master Roger, the Hungarian camp, and thus the battle should be localised on the left, eastern side of the river Sajó, and not on the other as it has been supposed previously by researchers. Because of the lack of destruction in the mentioned site and the medieval village of Muhi, she argued that the battle should be localised east to the line matched by these two settlements.

Wolf also presupposed strong connection between the place of the battlefield, and the size of the army, and despite of the difficulties and the huge differences in the estimations research has made so far, she supposed that the area that would have been able to accommodate the camp of the Hungarian army could only be on the eastern side of River Sajó, east to the mentioned line (Wolf 2014, 71–75). Seemingly, the mystery of the localisation of the battlefield of Muhi, and the presupposed mass graves of the victims are still to be uncovered. With directed, multi-approached effort, it is not an unaccomplishable task, and surely a field where archaeology could do a lot to get closer on the interpretation of the events.

## V. TRACES OF DESTRUCTION II — DESTROYED SETTLEMENTS

Another archaeological source for the Mongol invasion are destroyed settlements. As such sites have different characteristics to sites that were ruined and rebuilt, destroyed settlements provide unique opportunities for archaeologists with regards to dating and materials. Though untouched evidence of destruction is rare — as people who returned to such settlements would have buried the dead and rebuilt the destroyed infrastructure — in some exceptional circumstances no one could return, leaving the site as a palimpsest of violence.

As it was mentioned previously, large-scale excavations, particularly those carried out prior to motorway constructions, have uncovered more examples of such sites (L a s z l o v s z k y 2003, 457–458). Each of the destroyed settlements preserves the moment of crisis in a different way. Some of the settlements contain houses and pits with corpses inside. So far, such sites were identified as destroyed connected to the Mongol invasion are Szabolcs-Kisfalud (F o d o r 1975, 176f.), Tura-Szentgyörgypart (M i k l ó s 1991), Tápiógyörgye-Ilike part (D i n y é s 1994), Hejőkeresztúr-Vizekköze (W o l f 1999, 169f.), Hajdúböszörmény-Téglagyár (S z a b ó 2003), Dunaföldvár-Ló hegy (S z i l á g y i 2012, 161–164), Cegléd-bürgeházi-dűlő (G u l y á s 2014), Orosháza-Bónum (G y u c h a - R ó z s a 2014) and Szank (W i l h e l m 2014). Furthermore, there are some more, freshly excavated and yet unpublished examples such as the site at Kiskunmajsa, discovered recently<sup>1</sup>.

Such features in destroyed settlements are useful to the modern archaeologist because they represent an otherwise transient moment in everyday life. The bodies found in houses, along with their clothes and accessories, present an existence that is missing in hoards and cemeteries, showing the appearance of daily life that cannot be traced neither from the jewellery uncovered in hoards, neither in burials. The latter not only features a special occasion, in which the dress and ornaments could most probably differ from the ones that worn every day, but in the discussed period the extensive use of shrouds also resulted in no, or very little evidence on that. In exceptional cases, destroyed settlements can be regarded as being akin to a hoard. At Szank (Fig. 3:3), part of a destroyed sunken house was unearthed during an excavation. It revealed that the inhabitants of the village, altogether 34 individuals had sought refuge in one sunken house, only for it to be set on fire with them inside. A more detailed excavation of the ruins made it clear that the unfortunate people had sought refuge in this house with their valuables: consequently, the golden headpiece that was discovered is unlikely to have belonged to the owners of the house. It also showed that the bones of the ill-fated people were disturbed and mixed — showing a somewhat later attempt to rob the woeful site (Wilhelm 2014, 81–93). This example is also interesting concerning the treatment of destroyed settlements after the event — depending on whether the site has ever been revisited, or by whom, its fate could have been very different. Some other examples show untouched destruction. Of these, probably the most heavy-hearted is Cegléd-bürgeházi-dűlő (Fig. 3:1–2), where a mother with her two children, a 10–11 years old boy and an 8–10 years old girl, tried to hide in the oven of their house, which was eventually burnt down on them. The site preserved completely the moment when life ended, a moment, which also saved the remnants of a picture of a normal rural life — a household. Accordingly, everyday items, such as elements of domestic life — pots, diverse articles of personal use, agricultural and everyday tools have been recovered in

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<sup>1</sup> The site is only known from online news, such as: [http://www.museum.hu/hir/5569/Tatarjaras\\_kori\\_regeszteti\\_lelohelyet\\_tartak\\_fel\\_Kiskunmajsa\\_kozeleben](http://www.museum.hu/hir/5569/Tatarjaras_kori_regeszteti_lelohelyet_tartak_fel_Kiskunmajsa_kozeleben) (accessed on 24.04.2018).





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Fig. 3. Traces of destruction — typical settlement features showing the remains of the massacre; 1–2 after Gy. Gulyás (2014, 49, Fig. 3), 3 after G. Wilhelm (2014, 101, Fig. 5).

1–2 — Cegléd, county Pest, Hungary, 3 — Szank, county Bács-Kiskun, Hungary

the house, and so did the mundane trinkets and items remained with the mother and the children, uncovered together with their skeletons (Gulyás 2014, 33–41).

Written sources about the Mongol invasion provide more information to comprehend urban contexts. Roger's *Carmen Miserabile* provides a vivid account of people's behaviour during the Mongol siege of Esztergom. The stone castle was successfully defended, but the city outside the castle walls was destroyed. The inhabitants, according Roger, hid their valuables, killed their horses, burnt their houses, and fled (*GH, Mag. Rogerii*, 216–219). This corresponds to the archaeological evidence. In addition to a hoard of a small amount of money and some jewellery, an accidental discovery made during construction work in the 1950s graphically shows the event. Workmen found the body of a goldsmith who had unsuccessfully tried to hide himself and his possessions in a grain pit (Laszlovsky 2003, 458–461). Owing to the different context, such evidence should be interpreted differently to that described above.

## VI. TRACES OF DESTRUCTION III — HOARDS

Specific hoard horizons, such as the one connected to the Mongol invasion of Hungary provide unique possibilities for research. This opportunity to examine material that is connected to a sole event, but across a broad spectrum of geographical space and social class, is unique for hoard horizons in Hungary, and, for that matter, in Europe. Not surprisingly, this is the group of finds from the time of the Mongol invasion that have been most extensively studied from a social-archaeological and numismatic point of view (see for ex.: Laszlovsky 1991; Tóth 2007; Székely 2014; Vargha 2015), and will be explored also more detailed in the present study.

The agency of hoarding is vast. It can communicate socioeconomic issues, illuminate local events, and sometimes inform about local beliefs and/or conflicts. If more hoards could be connected to a well-known and easily detectable event — such as a crisis like the Mongol invasion — they can provide more information as a collection than as individual finds. Taking all this in mind, it can be stated that the composition of hoards connected to the Mongol invasion are fairly unified — the difference is just enough to make further conclusions about social-economic diversity. The last dated coins provide a loose dating of hoard, which, in most cases, can be connected to a historical event that is typically an insecure political situation that is either local or regional. Though some hoards are discovered during archaeological excavations, most hoards come to light unintentionally frequently during agricultural work. These hoards may contain coins, jewellery, and, in some cases, iron tools (mainly sickles) or other tools related to agricultural work, or a mixture (Fig. 4). Examining the spread of such hoards of a particular age and in a particular space and time permits suitable conclusions to be reached about the treasure troves and the characteristics of specific hoard horizons.

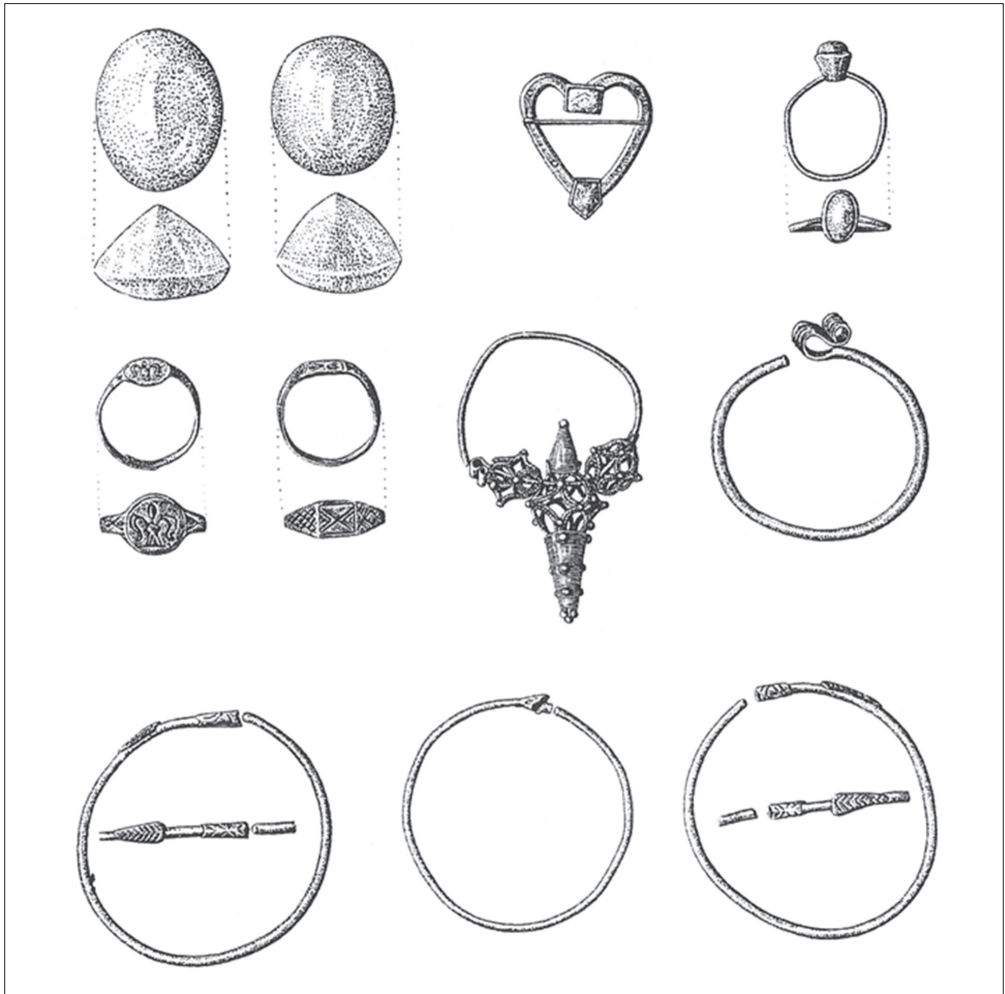


Fig. 4. The hoard of Nyáregyháza-Pusztapótharasz, county Peszt, Hungary;  
after N. Parádi (1975, 123)

In the preliminary research performed by Csaba Tóth, 87 hoards were identified as being from this date, 26 of them containing jewellery, the remaining being only coin hoards (Tóth 2007). His research revealed that while hoards have been found across the whole kingdom of medieval Hungary, more were found on the east of the Danube (Fig. 2). This corresponds to the location of much destruction. Three areas had the greatest concentration of hoards: Northeast Hungary, in the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg region, the east in Hajdú-Bihar County, and, in the middle of the country, between the Tisza and the Danube (today's Pest and Bács-Kiskun counties). The probable explanation for this state of affairs is that news the invasion provided time for valuables to be hidden, while the intensity of the violence and the destruction of the settlements meant the owners could

not return to collect their goods either due to death or other circumstances. The level of destruction may have been similar to areas where hoards are less common, though whether the lack of hoards indicates a surprise attack or a less frenzied response is difficult to determine. Likewise, the development of a market economy, in which fortunes were in money and goods other than jewellery, means the archaeological record may be affected by irretrievable possessions. The notable absence of hoards in the eastern part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary is likely owing to another cause: the state of research in Transylvania, present day Romania (Tóth 2007, 79f.)

By analysing the contents and exploring their agency, hoards can provide information regarding social and economic issues. Hoards can support investigations into money and, to some extent, thesaurisation habits of different social groups. In the specific context of hoard horizons — such as the one connected to the Mongol invasion — there is the possibility to compare the size, content, and context of multiple find complexes, allowing a greater appreciation of the material culture in a moment of time. This is especially important in period of change, such as the one in question. Since the Hungarian monarchs developed the habit of giving away large segments of the royal estates in to secure support, the system that was typical for eleventh and twelfth centuries became greatly weakened by the turn of the twelfth. The change was greatly accelerated by the Mongol invasion, which resulted in the abandoning of many of these domains. This was the second major period of change in rural society. Commoners either became part of an emerging section of the nobility, or part of the tenant peasantry that was developing. A growth in the number of notable people who were free but not noble created tension with the established lesser nobility who had been prominent in rural society (Zsoldos 1997, 201–206, 211f.). The difficulty with an historical interpretation of a past society is the relationship with the surviving material culture. József Laszlovszky, investigating the use of such evidence to understand social stratification, noted the problematic use of legal terms in the written sources. In addition to the terms not being used consistently in the written sources, he noted that evidence in the records of the canonisation process of Saint Margaret makes it clear that contemporary people were uncertain of the meaning of such terminology. The text revealed members of the same family having different answers regarding their social status. To counter this, Laszlovszky suggested using coin hoards of the period to illuminate social differences in the rural population, as he concluded that such material evidence would reveal significant differences within society, even if not showing such rigidity as seen in the written evidence (Laszlovszky 1991, 45–54; 2011, 105–107).

Research has frequently examined the containers of the hoard finds in addition to the hoards themselves. Consequently, these containers, usually clay pots, are the plausible choice for making the dating of hoards more precise. Though it is difficult to examine social divisions based on such artefacts, Nándor Parádi was the first to attempt an investigation into their spatial and social relations (Parádi 1963, 219). The logical development from Parádi's investigation of



the clay containers of hoards was detailed study of the jewellery in connection to the other contents. For comparative purposes, Parádi collected the jewellery hoards — both those with and without coins — hidden around the time of the Mongol invasion, and examined hoards from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that contained coins and jewellery. In doing so, Parádi was able to chart the characteristic jewellery of this age of a period, paying special attention to the pieces hidden at the time of the Mongol invasion. He noted that most of the jewels in the hoards were made of silver, and, in some cases, electrum; gold and gilded pieces were rare. The most common type of jewellery in these hoards were lock rings with flaring ends, with finger rings with inset stone or with a carved plate the next most frequent. A small number of the hoards contained brooches; fewer contained S-ended lock rings (Fig. 4). As most parallels to these objects were found in churchyards of different villages, and the hoards were found in or near contemporary villages, Parádi connected such hoards to the rural population. As this type of society participated in commodity production, some members of the rural population owned a significant amount of money. Given that the hoards contained contents of similar quality and from similar materials, Parádi viewed them as representing more or less the same layer of society (Parádi 1975, 138–155). Recent research supports the interpretation that one set of jewellery in a given hoard is likely to be the holdings (and, with the coins, the probable inheritance) of a single family. The distinct and individual pieces, typically found in much larger hoards, are indicative of a higher stratum of society likely to have been the uppermost layer of rural society (if not lesser nobility). Jewellery, it seems, can reveal like coins a highly structured society in regards to economic and financial status (albeit one more unified than the complicated legal structure presented in the written sources). This potential contrast means that it is worth stressing that financial position of a person and his or her legal status were not necessarily the same (Laszlovszky 1991, 51f.; 2003, 460f.).

Scholars have recently examined the contemporary financial value of hoards. József Laszlovszky noted that 60–70% of hoards contained 50 to 500 coins, and 30–40% contained more than 500. He then established the following subgroups: less than 100 coins, 150–400 coins (with its own subgroup of hoards containing around 250 coins), then those with 700–1,500, 2,000–2,500, around 4,000, and around 8,000 coins. Using the pioneering studies of Bálint Hóman regarding prices in medieval Hungary, Laszlovszky proceeded to identify the market value of the hoards. The majority of hoards, containing 50–500 coins, corresponded to one or more draught animals that averaged in price around 50 coins. 500 coins was the average price of a slave. 770 coins was the cost of land that accommodated a mill, a house, and pasture. 700–1500 coins was the price of a war horse, and 2,000–2,500 was a coat of mail. One of the largest hoards, containing 7549 coins, was the value of a house in Veszprém and 32 acres of land. Csaba Tóth, using four categories (up to 500, 1,000–2,000, 2,000–4,000, around 8,000 coins), reached similar conclusions (Laszlovszky 1991, 49f.; Tóth 2007, 80).

The latest research supplemented this with the comparison between the type of jewellery and the amount of money that were found together, which leads to the following conclusions. The category of hoards that features the largest amount of coins — over eight thousand — do not feature jewellery. The next category, hoards containing around four thousand coins, were typically found with only a few pieces of jewellery. Smaller coin hoards that contained only a few pieces of jewellery should be considered in many cases as fragmentary hoards. Regarding the quality of the jewellery, the hoards that contained the highest number of significant pieces such as gold and electrum artefacts were found either with one or two thousand coins or a negligible amount. From this, it should be noted that hoards containing both coins and jewellery were frequently of a high value solely due to the jewellery — making simple conclusions about the correlation between the value of the coins and the value of the jewellery difficult to support. Points can be made regarding the hoards reflection of social rank. Hoards containing cloak ornaments, the most sophisticated type of jewellery, are likely to have belonged to the upper echelons of society (albeit not to the rural setting in which most hoards are found). The discovery of multiple hoards in a single settlement reveals more nuanced picture of socioeconomic differences in a community. Broadly speaking, the widely held opinion that hoards belonged to the highest layer of rural society is correct. Connected to this is the view that smaller hoards were connected to lower sections of society. This category however is broad. Hoards containing the most sophisticated types of jewellery (cloak ornaments and gold headpieces) and/or a large number of coins suggest a very high level of social standing indicative of the emerging lesser nobility. Smaller hoards, containing jewellery of a more common type (such as silver lock rings with flaring ends and finger rings) and in lesser number, suggest a general fashion that was affordable to a wider section of society (V a r g h a 2015, 65–76).

## VII. TRACES OF RECUPERATION — “DEVIANT” BURIALS”

As it was mentioned before, archaeological traces of the Mongol invasion on settlements that survives the attack are rather hard to find, due to the clear-up that followed the massacre. Only a few, ambiguous traces may left, supposedly mostly those, that were either happened during the attack, or shortly following it, when a proper burial was not yet possible. This already tells that most of these traces are detectable in the form of “deviant burials”. However, there are some problems with this kind of evidence, starting with the term, which is a rather subjective one. Every case can be argued, whether it is “deviant” according to our present interpretation, contemporary practice or contemporary understanding. For more, the latter two is always influenced up to some limit by the first, and thus, a definite answer for that question does not exist. In consequence of all that, the term “deviant burial” is not only excessively over-end, but also not neutral enough to be a collective term for those graves that differ from the



norms of the given time period. Of this, the High Middle Ages is well definable, as the burial customs were much more clearly stated by the church as in the preceding eras, and therefore it is easier to define what differs from the normative practice, which is needed in order to define what kind of burials are those that could reveal the traces of the attack.

The legislation of burials, and the ritual of the funeral was controlled by the church, regulated by canon law. Of the canon law collections the most important in this period is the *Decretum Gratiani*, which was the first law collection that dealt with death and burial in a composite way. Of all the disposals concerning burials in this period the most important one is the location of the grave, and with it, the fact that the buried remains within the community of the church, because by placing the dead within the sacred area of the churchyard, the soul remains a part of the spiritual community. As the most clear deviancy in Christian understanding is not burying the body in the consecrated area, other minor deviancies are most probably surviving superstitious practices, which probably were not considered deviant in contemporary understanding, although they are definitely reflecting some kind of non-normative social behaviour in the life of the deceased, such as a critical situation like the Mongol invasion.

In the following, two case studies will represent the deviancies that may represent the traces of the Mongol invasion on a settlement that lived through the event (see also V a r g h a 2017). For that, the most fully excavated Arpadian era village in the Carpathian basin, Kána, located in the XI<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest, is an ideal example. Just as today, the village was centrally located: it is situated in the heart of the Medium Regni, located next to the notable road that connects the royal centres of Székesfehérvár, Óbuda and from there, Esztergom. György Terei directed the excavation in 2003-2005, a rescue operation carried out prior to the construction of a new housing estate. The whole settlement was excavated: 200 houses, 4 huge storage pits, a large number of other archaeological features, including the village church and churchyard that contained nearly 1100 burials. The scale of the project was exceptional, as it examined a medieval village in its entirety. The settlement existed from the mid twelfth roughly to the end of the thirteenth century (T e r e i 2005, 37–39; 2010, 81).

Within the churchyard, burial No. 106 is represents a unique case (Fig. 5:3). The grave was located in the western part of the cemetery, not on its edge, but in the middle, among other, completely normal graves. In this grave four people were placed, lying upon each other. All of them were young; a young adult of 21–24 years, two juvenile and a child aged 10–11 years. The juvenile skeleton was placed normally in the bottom of the grave. The child was laid directly on him, in a prone position. Right on the child was placed the second juvenile skeleton, lying on its side, in a crouched position. On it laid — also in a prone position — the young adult<sup>2</sup>. The burial was clearly coterminous, judging by the

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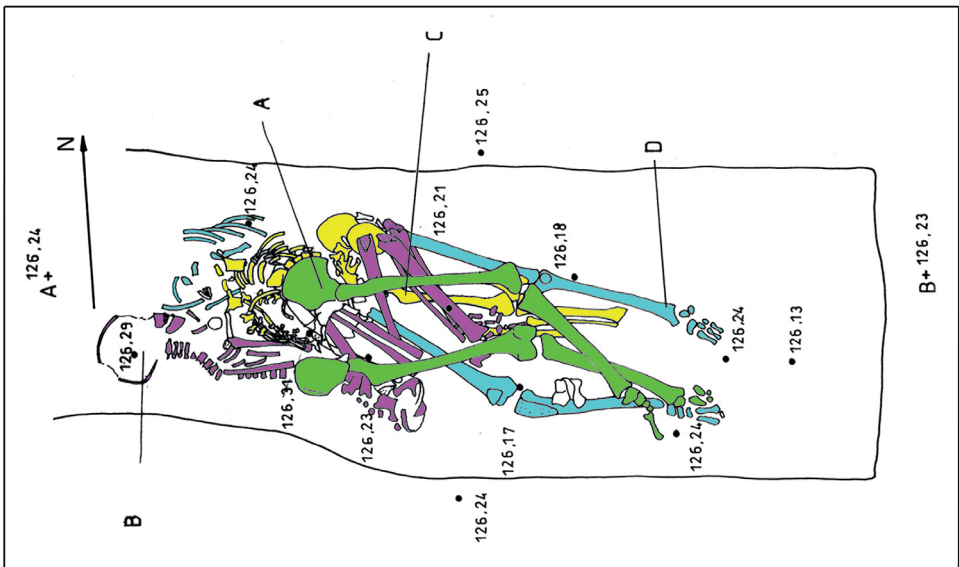
<sup>2</sup> The anthropological analysis of the bodies found at the site of Kána was carried out by Orsolya László, whose help I would like to thank here.



1



2



3

Fig. 5. Traces of recuperation from Kána villa (today part of Budapest; copyright: Budapest History Museum).

1 — Feature No. 6830, 2 — Feature No. 242, 3 — Grave No. 106

position of the skeletons; they were placed directly on each other, there was no earth layer between them. This makes the burial even more awkward, as some body parts are missing; for example only one of them had a skull, and some more bones are missing which cannot be explained by later disturbance of the grave. It is difficult to find any parallel to this situation. The closest is perhaps grave No. 119 from Sighișoara. Here four individuals — also with some missing body parts — of diverse age were buried together in one grave, in a rather similar manner as it was observed in Kána; the first individual on the bottom was laid in the grave in a normal way, and the other three cadavers were placed (thrown) on it without any care, in diverse positions. The most significant difference is that judging by the layers of earth between the individuals, the researchers of the cemetery perceived that these burials did not happen at once. For more, in this case the burial was located on the very edge of the cemetery, and therefore, it might have been actually outside of the sacred area, and according to that, it was interpreted as probably a mass grave of individuals who were denied to have the ecclesiastical funeral (Harhoiu-Gáll 2014, 201, 214). Another probable parallel is grave 235 from Dăbâca — Castle Area IV, where two individuals were thrown in a pit at once. Again, the burial was located on the edge of the cemetery (Gáll 2013, 160, 229) Although the similarity of the two burials is remarkable, the only explanation can be stated is that in case of Kána, especially because of its location, this burial surely did not take place under the observance of the church, and most probably can be connected to some critical situation or action. As this grave would be extremely peculiar even outside the sacred resting place. Inside of it, considering the strict rules of the churchyard, and how even minor things could have meant the desecration of it, it is almost incomprehensible. Superpositions of graves show the grave was dug after the second phase of the cemetery. The chronology cannot be more precise than this. It is possible also that they were buried in a period when the churchyard was not in regular use temporarily, or permanently.

Outside the churchyard, in the area of the village, traces of critical events are also observable. A horrid example for that is the pit, which was dug in the pit of an outside oven (Fig. 5:2). In this pit (No. 242) diverse body parts were placed, and by archaeological evidence it was covered right after it. First two female skulls were put on the bottom, and then on them an upper body part (in anatomical order) of a young adult was put. After that, on the right corner another female skull was placed with a left leg, a right arm, and parts of a hip, which did not belong to the female skull, as the leg once surely belonged to a male. On the top of the pit was laid another female skull, facing east. The first assumption for an interpretation could be that people buried there were battle victims, buried by the enemy. However, the large number of woman testifies against this. The custom of secondary burial (to re-bury people, or some body parts) is not known in medieval, especially not in Christian context. The anatomical order of the remains shows that these body parts were not yet (completely) decomposed in the time of the burial. Parallel phenomena are not known, and

therefore the interpretation of it is hard. The fact that the process — burying the remains and covering the pit — has been a quick action suggests that this can be connected to the removing of the signs of some criminal act (although the missing body parts cannot be explained by this), or the remains of some kind of critical situation – a massacre in the village could be the explanation for the numerous woman and children remains. Similarly to that, another example for such actions was a pit (No. 6830), located towards the edge of the village, in which one and a half body, and some other body parts were discovered (Fig. 5:1). First the lower half part of a 12–14 years old child was put into the pit (most probably put, not thrown, as the legs were laid straight), than a grindstone was placed on the middle of the pit, partially on the legs of the child. Than another, old man was put or thrown into the pit, who was lying partially on his side (legs, upper body was lying on the back), in a somewhat writhen position, his legs were crouched. Besides them, some more, disturbed bones were on the bottom of the pit. Except the grindstone, there was no other material in the pit. In this case many explanations can be made; it can be remain of a crime, but it can also be connected to the clearance after some kind of crisis. However, it should be mentioned here, that in case of the clearance after some battle, it would be more likely to bury the dead in the churchyard, or, if it is not possible, at least not within the area of the village, where burials were most probably not desired.

At it is most probably quite clear by now, the traces of the Mongol invasion on settlement that survived the attack are extremely hard to identify, and one can only make assumptions. For more, it is even more difficult on those cases, where only a part of the settlement has been excavated, and if the chronology of it is not as adequate as in the mentioned case. Still, a careful investigation these sites, and the recognition of similar phenomena in further cases could reveal more about the life after catastrophic events in a community, which would extend our knowledge of this issue concerning life after the Mongol invasion in rural communities.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Summarising the results of archaeology on the Mongol invasion of Hungary, the following conclusions can be made. As it is perceivable, the course of events are fairly well reconstructable by historical sources, which, given to the surviving eyewitness-account of Master Roger, even shed light on details such as the technique of the Mongol army when conquering the countryside, the cruelty and severity of the attack and the devastation in certain parts of the country. However, sources are quiet on larger issues that are still in the centre of the historical debates of the topic, such as the difference in the level of destruction between certain areas and social groups, and how soon took place the recuperation process. Archaeology, with more and more sites excavated, is able to answer these questions. For more, each site represent a case study and preserve

a moment of crisis that adumbrates us a living fragment of individual tragedies. Destroyed settlements feature mostly this picture, while also speaking of another issue — how well rural people were prepared for the attack. Although as it has been described, a possible attack was not unknown for the leaders, and at some points to the cities of the country. However, data from rural areas are antinomic. The slaughter that is reflected in rural settlements seems to suggest that the common people of the country were not aware of the approaching peril, or at least not with its gravity. On the other hand, serious preparations can be observed even in such sites, for example Csengele, where around the church a huge earthwork fortification was constructed around the church, consisting of three concentric mounds. Such work most probably was time consuming, and needed the joint work of more, neighbouring villages (L a s z l o v s z k y 2003, 457).

Hoards reflect the same situation; while in most cases, people had (just enough) time to hide their valuables, mostly in the close proximity of their home, trinkets that were usually placed in such assemblages remained with the people when the attack came too sudden, as destroyed settlements testify. As it was described, hoards can give an insight to the social-economic situation of the society during the time of the invasion, and speak much more about money economy than any written source. This group of finds are also important concerning the reconstruction of fashion of the period, which is otherwise hardly detectable due to the impoverishment of churchyard cemeteries, and the lack of other source types from the discussed period.

The growing number of discovered and published sites connected to the Mongol invasion directs to future tasks and possibilities for archaeological research. The detailed examination of destroyed rural settlements could reveal more information about the conditions of general habitation. The detailed, gender-based investigation of the people discovered on such sites could also speak about who stayed in the settlements, which would also be telling concerning how well informed and prepared were rural people to the attack, the segment of the society that was mostly affected by the invasion, and of whom we learn the least from written sources.

Furthermore, the determination and investigation of the battlefield of Muhi would be crucial in the archaeological research of the event. It would not only reveal details of the armament, the army, and the battle, but would most probably provide information about something that is not quite traceable elsewhere — the invaders themselves. Although it is known from written sources, that the Mongols suffered considerable losses also, almost no archaeological trace has yet been discovered. The only exception shows how little we know of them, and thus, how great discoveries are await for us — the sole archaeological artefact that can be connected directly to the Mongols is a javelin head, discovered in Transylvania (T u t u i a n u 2008). Similarly to that, more results are to be expect from the investigation of surviving settlements. A closer investigation of irregular phenomena in settlements could provide more sites that lived through the attack, and the investigation of these sites and their environments could provide more details on what helped them in the recuperation. This would lead closer to the debate



of the level of destruction and its causes in certain areas, and also the possible causes on the spatial diffusion of the rebuilding wave of churches and castles.

Therefore, it is statable, that archaeology plays a crucial, and in some cases irreplaceable role in the research of the Mongol invasion. Fortunately, it reached a good number of discoveries, and overstepped on the identification of individual sites by comprehensive works dealing with diverse issues and aspects on the invasion. Still, there is much work left for future archaeologist to discover, just as in fieldwork, as in theoretical analysis.

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