

The Mongol Invasion in the Year 1241—Reactions among European Rulers and Consequences for East Central European Principalities

Grischa Vercamer 

ABSTRACT

In this article I will argue that the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, especially 1241/42, left a deep impact on the perception and self-awareness of East Central European polities. The Polish and Hungarian peoples had to learn that they stood alone against incoming Asian nomads, lacking support from Western European kingdoms, foremost the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. This process contributed to their notion of being part of a bigger historical region—East Central Europe (separated from the Ruthenian principalities in East Europe who were subjected to Mongolian control). In order to show the different stages of this process in the realms in East Central Europe I will analyze a) the prehistory before the Mongolian invasion of 1241, b) the retarded and reluctant reactions of the West European realms (especially the Holy Roman Empire) and c) the (painful) consequences for the East Central principalities. Within the limits of this article I focus on Bohemia, Hungary and Poland. After the Mongol invasion of 1241/42 East Central European princes at once changed their policy—at least visible in the Polish and Hungarian case. In order to become more resistant against future Mongol raids they reached for new strategies (fortifications, tactically establishing networks through matrimonial ties, rallying people by worshipping freshly created “national” saints).

KEYWORDS: Thirteenth Century, Mongolian invasion, East Central European polities, Henry II of Silesia, Bela IV of Hungary, European foreign affairs

Declaration on Possible Conflicts of Interest

The author has declared that no conflicts of interest exist.

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Prof. Dr. Grischa Vercamer, Chemnitz University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities, grischa.vercamer@phil.tu-chemnitz.de, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4103-9991>

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General

The Mongols¹ (or the “Tartars,” the “people from hell,”² as they are called in European sources in the thirteenth century) are normally associated with

¹ The literature on the topic is quite vast and I am limiting myself to a few important publications, especially with regard to recent German and Polish research. In alphabetical order: GIAN ANDRI BEZZOLA: *Die Mongolen in abendländischer Sicht (1220–1270)*, Bern—München 1974 (a very solid study on the political situation in Europe in the thirteenth century and the perception of the Mongols); WITOLD CHRZANOWSKI: *Wojna tatarska: Najazd mongolski na Polskę 1241 r.* [Tatar War: Mongolian Raid to Poland in 1241], Kraków 2006; STEPHAN CONERMANN, JAN KUSBER (eds.): *Die Mongolen in Asien und Europa*, Frankfurt am Main 1997; JOHANNES GIEBAUF: *Barbaren—Monster—Gottesgeißeln: Steppennomaden im europäischen Spiegel der Spätantike und des Mittelalters*, Graz 2006 (a very helpful study, which puts the Mongols in the wider context of the European perception of other steppe peoples); HANSGERD GÖCKENJAN: *Ungarn, Türken und Mongolen: Kleine Schriften*, ed. by MICHAEL KNÜPPEL and EBERHARD WINKLER, Wiesbaden 2007 (a fine selection of the most important articles of that author on the Mongols); AXEL KLOPPROGGE: *Ursprung und Ausprägung des abendländischen Mongolenbildes im 13. Jahrhundert: Ein Versuch zur Ideengeschichte des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden 1993 (reception and image of the Mongols in the thirteenth century in Europe); WACŁAW KORTA: *Najazd Mongołów na Polskę w 1241 r. i jego legnicki epilog* [Raid of the Mongols in 1241 and the Legnica Epilog], in: *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Historia* 50 (1985), pp. 3–73; JERZY MAROŃ: *Bitwa Legnicka w najnowszej historiografii* [The Legnica Battle in the Recent Historiography], in: *Sobótka* (1998), 1–2, pp. 185–192; JERZY MAROŃ: *Koczownicy i rycerze: Najazd Mongołów na Polskę w 1241 roku na tle sztuki wojennej Europy XII i XIII w.* [Nomads and Knights: The Mongolian Raid to Poland in 1241 on the Background of the Arts of War in Europe in the Twelfth and Thirteenth century], Wrocław 2001 (a monograph based more on a traditional military history approach); JULIANE SCHIEL: *Mongolensturm und Fall Konstantinopels: Dominikanische Erzählungen im diachronen Vergleich*, Berlin 2010; FELICITAS SCHMIEDER: *Europa und die Fremden: Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert*, Sigmaringen 1994 (a very detailed and helpful study on the European perception of the Mongols); GUSTAV STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN: *Der Einfall der Mongolen in Mitteleuropa in den Jahren 1241 und 1242*, Innsbruck 1893 (this is in fact an older study, which should be read with caution, but on the other hand, all the important sources are well analyzed and placed in the state-of-the-art-research at the end of the nineteenth century); BALÁZS NAGY (ed.): *Tatárjárás* [Mongolian Invasion], Budapest 2003 (a repository of sources in regard to the invasion in Hungary, edited and translated into Hungarian); ROBERT URBAŃSKI: *Tartarorum gens brutali: Trzynastowieczne najazdy mongolskie w literaturze polskiego średniowiecza na porównawczym tle piśmiennictwa łacińskiego antyku i wieków średnich* [The Mongolian Raids in the Thirteenth Century in the Polish Medieval Literature on the Background of the Latin Literature of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages], Warszawa 2007 (a good study that places the notion of the Mongols in Polish medieval literature into the wider context of Latin literature in Antiquity and the Middle Ages); MICHAEL WEIERS: *Geschichte der Mongolen*, Stuttgart 2004 (a good overview of the history of the Mongols in general).

² They were considered as the monstrous product of Tartaros, which in Greek mythology was the personification of a part of the underworld. The report of John de Plano Carpini might well have changed this name, because Carpini, (who returned in 1247

Činggis Khan (born: 1155/1162/1167, died 18 August 1227), however he had already died some years before the main raid on Europe. During his reign, he founded the Mongolian Empire and it soon embraced large parts of Asia, but with Europe still spared at that point. His successor—the Great Khan Ögedei (the third son of Činggis Khan), who ruled from 1228/29 to 1241—set up a solid infrastructure for the Empire, carried out important reforms of the military and administrative systems, and engaged in further conquests.³ The plan then arose to conquer Europe. In 1235, a meeting of all the Mongolian chieftains took place (mong. *quriltai*) and the “west campaign” was approved.⁴ This invasion would become famous among the Europeans as “the storm of the Mongols.” In Europe it is firmly linked to the battlefield-names of Legnica in Poland and Mohi (a village close to the Sajó River in Hungary); however, it must also be seen in a wider context that would at least include the subjugation of the Ruthenian dukedoms and the conflicts in the Middle East (map 1).⁵ The East Central European rulers,⁶ however, were not able to oppose the masses of horse-back warriors rushing into their countries: On 9

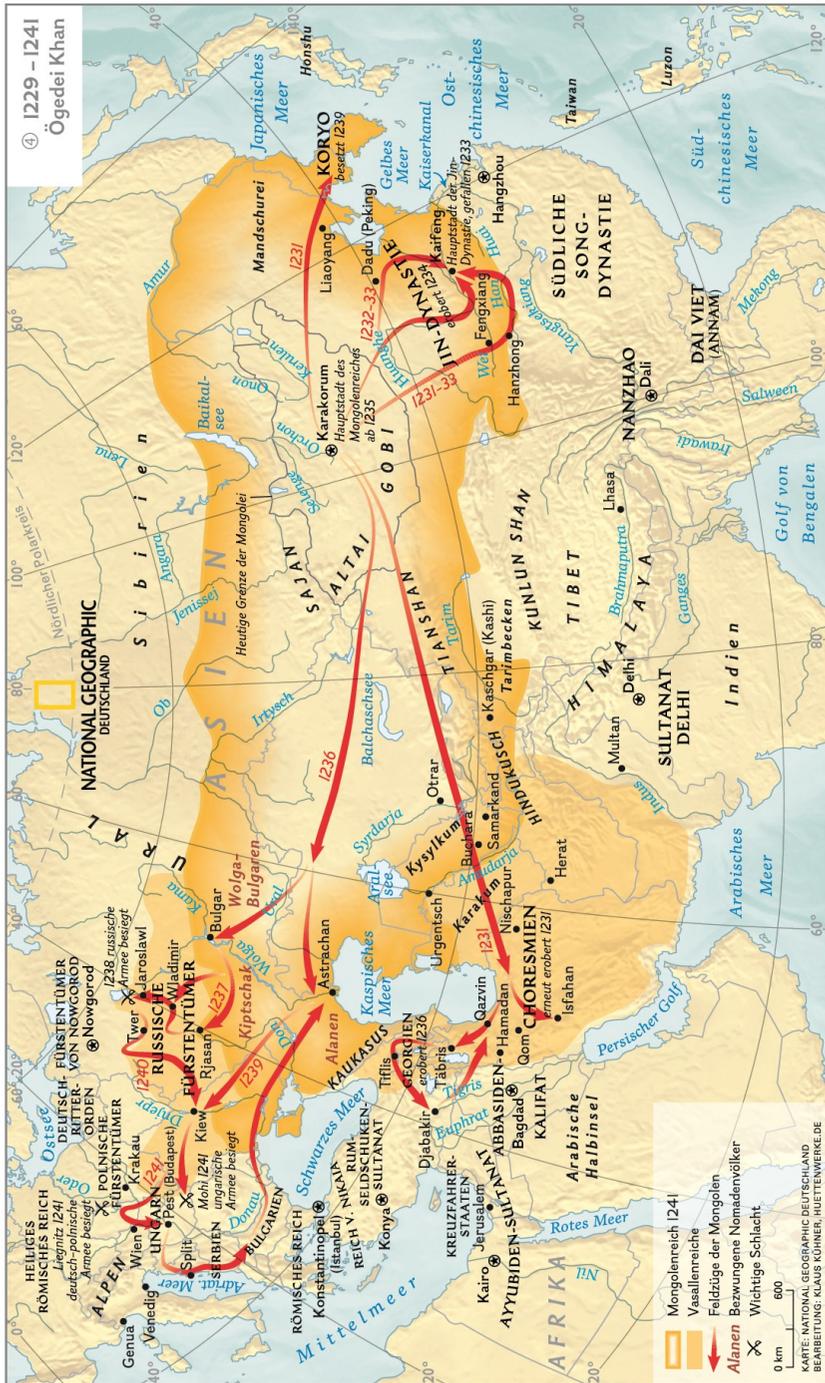
from a long diplomatic journey to the Mongols), sorted through multiple stereotypes of the Mongols and argued that the name should not be “Tartari,” but rather “Tatari,” which is self-referential. But his view did not prevail against the existing stereotypes and the Mongols continued to be referred to as Tartari. Cf. HANSGERD GÖCKENJAN: Endzeitstimmung und Entdeckergeist: Die Mongolen im Spiegel zeitgenössischer abendländischer Quellen, in: JUTTA FRINGS (ed.): Dschingis Khan und seine Erben: Das Weltreich der Mongolen [exhibition catalogue], München 2005, pp. 209–221, here p. 214; SCHMIEDER, Europa und die Fremden, pp. 22–23.

³ Cf. MICHAEL WEIERS: Loyalität und Fürsorge—Činggis Khan, seine Nachkommen und das Weltreich bis 1260, in: FRINGS, pp. 92–95.

⁴ Cf. JOHANNES GIEBAUF: Herzog Friedrich II. von Österreich und die Mongolengefahr 1241/42, in: HERWIG EBNER (ed.): Forschungen zur Geschichte des Alpen-Adria-Raumes, Graz 1997, pp. 173–199, here p. 174 (with further literature).

⁵ The map is taken from the exhibition catalogue: FRINGS, p. 30.

⁶ The author is well aware of the problematic concept of “East Central Europe,” often varying in usage from country to country and often as well referred to as “Central Europe,” cf. for recent surveys of the debate: JERZY KŁOCZOWSKI (ed.): East-Central Europe in European History: Themes & Debates, Lublin 2009; CHRISTIAN LÜBKE: Ostmitteleuropa: Von der Formierung einer Geschichtsregion im Mittelalter bis zur Formulierung eines Forschungskonzeptes, in: IDEM, MATTHIAS HARDT (eds.): Handbuch zur Geschichte der Kunst in Ostmitteleuropa. Vol. 1: 400–1000: Vom spätantiken Erbe zu den Anfängen der Romantik, Berlin 2017, pp. 16–37; NORA BEREND, PRZEMYSŁAW WISZEWSKI, PRZEMYSŁAW URBAŃCZYK: Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, Cambridge 2013, pp. 1–15 (“The Concept of Central Europe”). Here as well is a discussion of the different ‘labelling’ of East Central Europe (“Zwischeneuropa,” East Central Europe, Central Europe, etc.), pp. 11–12. There is no room here to deepen the discourse around that terminology, since the debate is quite broad and complicated. For the sake of a clear grasp in this contribution the term “East Central Europe” shall comprise foremost the bigger principalities of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary, although other regions such as Lithuania or smaller entities situated on the Balkan Peninsula also, in general, belong to this concept but cannot be considered here.



Map 1: Mongol Empire 1229–1241 (© National Geographic Deutschland / Klaus Kühner, Hamburg, huetttenwerke.de)

April 1241, a Polish army under the command of Duke Henry II of Silesia was utterly defeated near Legnica—the Polish duke himself died on the battlefield or shortly afterwards.⁷ (The Mongolian riders paraded his head impaled on a lance as a trophy before the gates of the castle of Legnica.) Only two days later, on 11 April 1241 in the south, the main army of the Asian warriors faced the Hungarian contingents on the banks of the Sajó River in northern Hungary. The Hungarian king, Bela IV, made a major strategic mistake by arranging his main force within a defensive ring of wagons, which made it easy for the Tatars to encircle and kill nearly all the Hungarian troops, approximately 60,000 men.⁸ The Hungarian king, by sheer luck, escaped and fled to the Austrian duke. The slaughter of the Hungarian population north and eastwards of the Danube is testified to and described in horrifying detail by eyewitnesses like Rogerius of Torre Maggiore or Thomas of Spalato (Split).⁹ After a while, the Mongols changed their tactics: In order to stay in the country, they subjugated the rest of the population by setting up Mongolian officials in each village.¹⁰ But soon, as quickly as they had swept in, they disappeared back into the vast Asian steppe: On 12 December 1241

⁷ FELICITAS SCHMIEDER: Der Einfall der Mongolen nach Polen und Schlesien—Schreckensmeldungen, Hilferufe und die Reaktionen des Westens, in: ULRICH SCHMILEWSKI (ed.): Wahlstatt 1241: Beiträge zur Mongolenschlacht bei Liegnitz und zu ihren Nachwirkungen, Würzburg 1991, pp. 77–86. Only John Długosz (a Polish chronicler in the fifteenth century) points to a death on the battlefield, while sources from the thirteenth century provide that Henry was caught and later beheaded.

⁸ The size of the army of Bela IV is not easy to estimate: Matthew Paris refers to 60,000 Hungarians, cf. MATTHAEUS PARIENSIS: *Chronica Maiora*, ed. by HENRY RICHARDS LUARD [Matt. Par., CM]. Vol. 4: A.D. 1240 to A.D. 1247, London 1877, p. 113, but we do know how medieval authors exaggerated. The fact that Thomas of Split in his *Historia Salonitana* wrote about the moment when Batu Khan estimated the strength of the enemy's army and encouraged his warriors: "Tunc Bath, maior dux tartarei exercitus, in quendam collem conscendens, speculate est diligenter omnem dispositionem exercitus; et reuersus ad suos dixit: 'Bono animo nos esse oportet, o sotii, quia licet magna sit multitudo gentis istius, tamen quia improuido reguntur consilio, non poterunt effugere manus nostras. Uidi enim eos quasi gregem sine pastore in quodam arctissimo stabulo interclusos.'" In assessing this statement, it seems right to think that the Hungarian army was more or less the same size as the Mongolian army. THOMAS ARCHIDIACONUS: *Historia Salonitana*, ed. by FRANJO RAČKI, Zagreb 1896 [Thomas, HS], p. 160; cf. HANSGERD GÖCKENJAN: *Der Mongolensturm: Berichte von Augenzeugen u. Zeitgenossen 1235–1250*, Graz et al. 1985, p. 240.

⁹ Cf. BEZZOLA, pp. 86–104.

¹⁰ Master Roger's Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars, [Roger, Carmen] in: JÁNOS M. BAK, MARTYN RADY et al. (eds.): *Anonymi Bele Regis Notarii Gesta Hungarorum / The Deeds of the Hungarians: Magistri Rogerii Epistola in miserabile carmen super destructione regni Hungarie per Tartaros facta / Master Roger's Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, Budapest—New York 2010, pp. 133–228, here cap. 35, p. 208: "quelibet villa elegit sibi regem de Tartaris, quem optavit." As well in GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, p. 176.

the Great Khan Ögedei had died and a fight over his succession had broken out. Batu Khan, the leader of the European expedition, initially wanted to continue his plans to invade the Holy Roman Empire but was reminded by Subutai (one of the greatest generals and strategist of Genghis Khan and Ögedei Khan) of the oral Mongolian law code (Yassa), which forbids such actions in this situation, and therefore Batu withdrew to the Lower Volag region and left behind East Central European rulers in a state of total astonishment and sheer despair.

Although historians in general refrain from speculative and “what-would-have-happened-if” judgements, in this case one may state clearly that the European countries would not have been able to defend themselves from another assault on the scale they had just experienced. Estimating the strength of medieval armies is always a bit tricky; Johannes Gießauf mentions 130,000–150,000 Mongolian warriors involved in the campaign from 1236 onwards, other scholars counted around 50,000 men in the battle of Mohi.¹¹ Although between 1251 and 1259 another large-scale invasion took place under the Great Khan Möngke, this campaign (led by Hülegü) was meant mainly to subjugate the population of present-day Iraq, Iran and Syria and, indeed, Baghdad, which was conquered in 1258. Shortly afterwards, the Mongol Empire, as was the fate of many large Empires,¹² splintered into smaller regional rules. After 1259, given the new circumstances, the Golden Horde,¹³ which was initially set up as the northwestern sector of the Mongol Empire and served, amongst other things, in the conquest of Europe, settled in Sarai on the banks of the Volga River. Until the end of the fifteenth century, the Horde would oppress the Russian dukes by extorting high tributes from them. Although their invasion strategies and raids into East Central Europe during the second half of the thirteenth century are well attested (1259/60 and 1287/88 into Poland—led by Tula Buga Khan and Nogay, 1285 into Hungary, 1259 and 1275 into Lithuania, 1264, 1277–1280 and 1285 into Wallachia, 1277–1280 into Bulgaria, and 1264/65 and 1285 into Byzantium),¹⁴ the Horde never again mounted the level of the threat experienced in the years 1241/42.

¹¹ Cf. GIEßAUF, Herzog Friedrich II., p. 175 (with further literature); CARL SVERDRUP: Numbers in Mongol Warfare, in: *Journal of Medieval Military History* 8 (2010), pp. 109–117, here p. 115. ALEKSANDER PAROŃ: The Battle of Legnica (9 April 1241) and Its Legend, in: PRZEMYSŁAW WISZEWSKI (ed.): *Meetings with Emotions: Human Past between Anthropology and History (Historiography and Society from the 10th to the 20th Century)*, Wrocław 2008, pp. 89–108, here p. 93, estimated at around 120,000 for the whole campaign in 1241/42.

¹² Cf. ULRICH MENZEL: *Die Ordnung der Welt: Imperium oder Hegemonie in der Hierarchie der Staatenwelt*, Berlin 2015, pp. 62–64.

¹³ BERTHOLD SPULER: *Die Goldene Horde*, 2nd edition, Wiesbaden 1965; IDEM: *Die Goldene Horde und Rußlands Schicksal*, in: *Saeculum* 6 (1955), pp. 397–406.

¹⁴ PETER JACKSON: *The Mongols and the West: 1221–1410*, Harlow 2005, *passim*.

In this article I will argue that the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, especially 1241/42, left a deep impact on the perception and self-awareness of East Central European polities.¹⁵ The Polish and Hungarian rulers had to learn that they stood alone against incoming Asian nomads (and developed a certain *antemurale christianitatis*-mentality),¹⁶ without support from West European kingdoms, foremost the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. This process contributed to their notion and identification of being part of a bigger historical region—East Central Europe (separated from the Ruthenian principalities in East Europe who were subjugated under Mongolian control).¹⁷ In order to show the different stages of this process in the principalities in East Central Europe I will analyze a) the prehistory and alarming signs before the Mongolian invasion of 1241, b) the retarded and reluctant reactions of the Western European realms (especially the Holy Roman Empire) and c) the consequences for the East Central principalities. Within the limits of this article I can only present the cases of Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, leaving out, for example, Lithuania, which also belonged to East Central Europe.

¹⁵ OSKAR HALECKI: *Grenzraum des Abendlandes: Eine Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas*, Salzburg 1957, pp. 90–95, points to this phenomenon in a short chapter of his book. JENŐ SZÜCS: *Die drei historischen Regionen Europas*, 2nd edition, Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 16, mentions it briefly as well. Recently GÁBOR KLANICZAY: *Von Ostmitteleuropa zu Westmitteleuropa: Eine Umwandlung im Hochmittelalter*, in: ALEXANDER PATSCHOVSKY, IVAN HLAVÁČEK (eds.): *Böhmen und seine Nachbarn in der Premyslidenzeit*, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 17–48, here p. 24, has referred to Szűcs and underlines that the similarity between the Ruthenian principalities and the East Central European realms were cut in the thirteenth century by the Mongol control over the Kievan Rus’.

¹⁶ Concerning this concept (which is, in recent politics of Poland and Hungary, unfortunately misused and overstressed by transferring it into our present time) the following PhD thesis is important: PAUL SRODECKI: *Antemurale Christianitatis: Zur Genese der Bollwerksrhetorik im östlichen Mitteleuropa an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit*, Husum 2015; for an English overview: IDEM: *Antemurale-based Frontier Identities in East Central Europe and their Ideological Roots in Medieval/Early Modern Alterity and Alienity Discourses*, in: MICHAELA ANTONÍN MALÁNIKOVÁ, ROBERT ANTONÍN (eds.): *Collective Identity in the Context of Medieval Studies*, Ostrava 2016, pp. 97–120; though not *expressis verbis* using *antemurale christianitatis* in her work cf. as well NORA BEREND: *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and “Pagans” in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000—c. 1300*, Cambridge et al. 2001, pp. 23–41; unfortunately in the PhD thesis of KATHARINA SCHMIDT: *Trauma und Erinnerung: Die Historisierung der Mongoleninvasion im mittelalterlichen Polen und Ungarn*, Heidelberg, 2013, there cannot be found a closer focus on the *antemurale*-concept, cf. the review by PAUL SRODECKI, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 64 (2015), pp. 93–95.

¹⁷ For the Modern terminology cf. JÖRG HACKMANN: *Ostmitteleuropa*, in: *Online-Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa*, 2015, URL: omelexikon.uni-oldenburg.de/p32790 (2020-11-30); JOACHIM VON PUTTKAMER: *Ostmitteleuropa*, in: *Europäische Geschichte Online*, 2014-03-25, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/puttkamerj-2014-de> (2020-09-30).

1 Prehistory: Contacts between the Mongols and the European Princes prior to the First Invasion

The first reports of an unknown people had already been written during the 1220s: The Novgorod First Chronicle, and the chronicles by Caesarius of Heisterbach, Jacques de Vitry, Oliver of Paderborn.¹⁸ Caesarius of Heisterbach's report is similar to the Novgorodian chronicler (he used unknown information of Rus'ian origins). In the *Relatio de Davide* (1221) by Jacques de Vitry it is at least mentioned (although the author doubted it himself) that the bishop of Akkon was seized by the illusion that Činggis Khan must be one and the same as the priest/king John. Since the crusaders failed in Egypt against the Saracens during this very period (1219 at Damiette), this information was broadly disseminated. These first reports are closely connected with the military offensive of Činggis Khan, beginning in 1219 against the Empire of Khwarazmian of Ala ad-Din Muhammad II (in the territory of today's Iran, Afghanistan and Turkestan), whom he subjugated. But this subjugation was followed by the battle of Kalka (31 May 1223), where the Mongols defeated a joint army of the Ruthenian dukes and the Cumans. The Mongols did not use the victory to make further advances in the direction of Europe but retreated in the same year. None of these "older" chroniclers mention anything about the origins of these tribes. European chroniclers had very limited knowledge as to the origins of the Mongols.¹⁹ Henry of Latvia, covering the time from 1186 to 1227, seemed to be better informed in that he was probably in direct contact with the Ruthenian princes. He wrote about an alliance between the Ruthenian princes and the Cumans, and also about the battle of Kalka River (1223) and the subsequent peace negotiations.²⁰

In view of the few authors who even mentioned the Mongols at all, certainly nobody in Europe at that time took any warnings about a possible Mongol invasion of the continent seriously. Furthermore, the Mongolians were often mistaken as the people of the legendary priest-king John/King David (in the person of Činggis Khan)—this carried the implication that

¹⁸ For Caesarius of Heisterbach cf. GÖCKENJAN, *Der Mongolensturm*, p. 29. For the Ruthenian Annalists cf. LUDWIG STEINDORFF: *Der fremde Krieg: Die Heerzüge der Mongolen 1237–1242 im Spiegel der altrussischen und lateinischen Chronistik*, in: KONRAD CLEWING, OLIVER JENS SCHMITT (eds.): *Südosteuropa: Von vormoderner Vielfalt und nationalstaatlicher Vereinheitlichung. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*, München 2005, pp. 93–118, here p. 97–99. For the *relatio* of Jaques de Vitry cf. ANNA-DOROTHEE VON DEN BRINCKEN: *Die Mongolen im Weltbild der Lateiner um die Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des "Speculum Historiale" des Vincenz von Beauvais* OP, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 57 (1975), pp. 117–140, here pp. 119–120; GÖCKENJAN, *Endzeitstimmung*, pp. 209–210 (with source references).

¹⁹ Cf. GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, pp. 27–28.

²⁰ ALBERT BAUER (ed.): *Heinrich von Lettland: Chronicon Livoniae / Heinrici chronicon Livoniae*, Darmstadt 1959, pp. 278–281.

Christian people from the East had even come to help subjugate the Saracens.²¹ Following up on that idea, in 1235 the Hungarian king sent a handful of Dominicans into the Asian steppe to look for Hungarian people who (according to older Hungarian chronicles) had stayed behind when the main Hungarian tribes of the tenth century settled in Europe. And, in fact, on the banks of the Volga River they found people with whom they were able to talk. On this occasion, they were drawn into contact with “real” Mongols. The last survivor of that first delegation, Friar Julian, made another trip to the area of Suzdal in 1237 and brought back a letter from the Great Khan Ögödei. The letter was handed to the Hungarian king, Bela IV, in 1237: “I, the Khan, envoy of the heavenly king, who gave me the power to raise everybody who submits to me, but to subjugate everybody who opposes me, I am puzzled by your behaviour, little king of Hungary, for I have 30 times sent you envoys and you never sent anyone back. I know that you are a wealthy and powerful king with many warriors. Therefore you hesitate to subject yourself voluntarily to me, but it would be better and advantageous for you if you would do so.”²² Bela did not react to this letter at all. So the threatening signals were carelessly and deliberately disregarded.²³ In 1235, then, the previously mentioned campaign of the Mongols into the west was launched. Subsequently, under the command of Batu, a nephew of the Great Khan Ögedei and grandson of Činggis Khan, the Mongolian army conquered the Cumans, almost all Ruthenian principalities and captured Kiev, the “capitol” of the Rus’, on 6 December 1240. Slowly, European indifference shifted, at least, into a wider awareness, if not already fear: At this point, well-informed chroniclers like Alberich of Trois-Fontaines in France²⁴ and *Matthew* Paris in

²¹ BEZZOLA, pp. 13–37; SCHMIEDER, *Europa und die Fremden*, p. 24.

²² English translation by G. V. Cf. HEINRICH DÖRRIE: *Drei Texte zur Geschichte der Ungarn und Mongolen: Die Missionsreisen des fr. Iulianus O.P. ins Uralgebiet (1234–5) und nach Russland (1237) und der Bericht des Erzbischofs Peter über die Tartaren*, Göttingen 1956, letter of Frater Julian 4,9, p. 179; as well GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, pp. 107–108. In the same letter, there is a comment that the Mongols want to conquer Rome and the countries beyond Rome (“Propositum enim habere dicuntur quod veniant et expugnent Romam et ultra Romam”). These ambitions are confirmed by later authors, like John di Piano Carpini, *C. de Bridia* and Wilhelm Rubruck, cf. PAROŇ, *Legnica*, p. 92. The English source for Ivo of Narbonne (*Matt. Par.*, CM 4, p. 24) who was allegedly twice a messenger in Hungary. Cf. GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, pp. 93–126, esp. pp. 107–108 (letter in German); IDEM, *Ungarn, Türken und Mongolen*, p. 183; GIEBAUF, *Herzog Friedrich II.*, p. 175.

²³ Though it should be noted that Bela sent a couple of delegations of Dominicans eastwards (a very young order at that time, having founded its first institutes in Hungary only in 1221) to gain more information about the Mongolian threat, cf. GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, p. 33.

²⁴ PAUL SCHEFFER-BOICORST (ed.): *Chronica Albrici monachi Trium Fontium, a monacho Novi Monasterii Hoiensis interpolata [Chronica Albrici]*, in: MGH SS 23, *Hannoverae* 1874, pp. 631–950.

England began to systematically collect news about these foreign people.²⁵ *Matthew* commented for the year 1238 on something very unusual: The fish-mongers from Frisia and Gotland would not come to England that year out of fear of the Mongols.²⁶ Alberich pointed out that, in 1238, Ögödei Khan demanded that Emperor Frederick II submit himself to the Khan (which he obviously did not).²⁷ Nonetheless, leading politicians of the Christian Occident believed that the conflict with the Mongols should be resolved locally and not on some supra-regional level.²⁸

In sum, the political situation in Europe in the time shortly before 1241 was in general quite favorable for a Mongolian invasion, because the European rulers were intensely occupied amongst themselves: The German emperor, Frederick II, was arguing about who was supreme in the Christian community with Pope Gregor IX, by whom he had already been twice excommunicated (the second time in 1239).²⁹ The English and French kings were meanwhile absorbed in mutual quarrels and internal affairs or were planning crusades.³⁰ Therefore, East Central Europe stood very much on its own.

²⁵ But we do not have a clear sense exactly about when this news was integrated into the historiographic works, cf. HANS-EBERHARD HILPERT: *Kaiser- und Papstbriefe in der Chronica majora des Matthaeus Paris*, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 153–171. Matthew Paris explicitly collected information on the Mongols, cf. J. J. SAUNDERS: *Matthew Paris and the Mongols*, in: T. A. SANDQUIST, M. R. POWICKE (eds.): *Essays in Medieval History: Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, Toronto 1969, pp. 116–132.

²⁶ *Matt. Par.*, CM. Vol. 3: A.D. 1216 to A.D. 1239, London 1876, pp. 488–489.

²⁷ BEZZOLA, pp. 57–65; *Chronica Albrici*, a. 1238, p. 943.

²⁸ The bishop of Winchester voiced the view that the Tatars and the Saracens should kill each other, but the Christians would not become involved in it: “Sinamus canes hos [Mongols and Saracens] illos devorare ad invicem, ut consumpti pereant.” *Matt. Paris*, CM 3, p. 489.

²⁹ WOLFGANG STÜRNER: *Friedrich II. 1194–1250*, third revised edition, Darmstadt 2009, pp. 458–592, esp. pp. 502–508.

³⁰ BEZZOLA, pp. 74–81; J. J. SAUNDERS: *The History of the Mongol Conquests*, London 1971, pp. 73–90.

2 The Reactions and Consequences of/for Hungary, Bohemia, Poland and the Holy Roman Empire

2.1 The Case of Hungary³¹

Since Bela IV ignored the letter of Ögödei (as quoted above), the Mongols swept into Europe four years later—specifically attacking Hungary as the first great bastion of Western Christianity. Internal conflicts in Hungary had been occurring just prior to the invasion: King Bela IV was trying to regain old royal rights that had been violated by the nobles during the reign of his predecessor and father Andrew II. The high nobility fiercely opposed Bela's move.³² The old system of raising a royal army had stopped working properly and the new system of aristocratic (private) armies had not yet been thoroughly established.³³ One might suspect that parts of the nobility even desired that their king be defeated by the Mongols in order to weaken his position—obviously, without being fully aware of the consequences.³⁴ One thing for certain is that the nobility, in particular, was very reluctant to react appropriately to the Mongolian threat. Many of them thought the reports of an imminent invasion were a trick by the clergy to prevent them from attending a council in Rome to which Pope Gregory IX had summoned them for Easter 1241.³⁵ Thomas of Spalato was not sparing in his accusations of indulgent lifestyles, cowardice and idleness on the part of the Hungarian nobility and left no doubt about who was most to blame for the defeat at the Sajó River.³⁶ Bela IV, in search of allies, tried to integrate the pagan tribe of the Cumans,³⁷

³¹ I unfortunately do not read Hungarian, but would like to point to a source anthology, which takes into account all sources regarding the Mongolian invasion into Hungary: BALÁZS NAGY (ed.): *Tatárjárás [Mongolian Invasion]*, Budapest 2003. On pp. 628–638 one finds a very helpful bibliography of research publications on this topic. Apart from this, two surveys of Arpadian history are worth reading: GYULA KRISTÓ: *Die Arpadendynastie: Die Geschichte Ungarns von 895 bis 1301*, Budapest 1993, pp. 205–218; GÁBOR VARGA: *Ungarn und das Reich vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert: Das Herrscherhaus der Árpáden zwischen Anlehnung und Emanzipation*, München 2003, pp. 258–268.

³² HANSGERD GÖCKENJAN: *Der Westfeldzug (1236–1242) aus mongolischer Sicht*, in: IDEM, *Ungarn, Türken und Mongolen*, pp. 179–218, here p. 192; VARGA, pp. 239–246, 258–259.

³³ GYULA KRISTÓ: *Die Arpadendynastie: die Geschichte Ungarns von 895 bis 1301*, Budapest 1993, p. 206.

³⁴ As suggested by Rogerius de Torre Maggiore (Roger, Carmen, cap. 28, 180): “Volebant quidem, quod rex perderet, ut ipsi chariores postmodum haberentur, credentes plagam huiusmodi particularem quibusdem et non omnibus generalem [...]”

³⁵ VARGA, p. 259.

³⁶ Thomas, HS, cap. XXXVI 141: “Erant autem longa pace dissoluti, armorum asperitate desueti, non nisi carnalibus gaudentes illecebris ignaviae torpore marcebant.” Thomas continues in that style.

³⁷ He did this relatively early on as crown prince, when he took over control and rulership in Transylvania after the expulsion of the Teutonic Order from that region.

who had fled from the Mongols into his kingdom in 1239. They could have provided strong military assistance (comprising many thousands of warriors) for the Hungarian army—but their integration and the permission to settle given by the king caused major issues between Bela and the Hungarian nobility (and the German settlers), who all wanted to get rid of the Cumans. Taking into account that the Cumans had for decades been the direct enemies of the Hungarians, Bela could not realistically expect that their integration would go without problems. And since there were in fact some Cumans among the first Mongolian enemies captured by the Hungarians, the opposition toward them in the Hungarian camp grew. Shortly before the major battle close to Mohi took place, Kuthen, the leader of the Cumans, was killed during an assembly of the Hungarian nobility. All Cuman units and settlers left Hungary immediately thereafter.³⁸ In sum, Hungarian historiography states unanimously that the defeat at the hands of the Mongols was also a clear symbol of the deep political and economic crisis in Hungary.³⁹ That opinion, as shown above, was already shared by the contemporary witnesses: Rogerius of Torre Maggiore and Thomas of Spalato.⁴⁰

On the other hand, one must state clearly that obviously every high-ranking European “politician” was taken by surprise. This is, on a broader scale, well represented by the fact that, one month before the Mongolian invasion began, Pope Gregory IX had paradoxically requested that Bela take part in a crusade against the excommunicated emperor, Frederick II.⁴¹

After the defeat at the Sajo River in April 1241, Bela desperately tried to find allies against the Mongols,⁴² whose aim was to subjugate all of Hungary and who conquered one town after the other, often slaughtering whole local populations. Bela wrote to the French king, Louis IX, as well as to the pope and the emperor. He even offered to become Frederick II’s vassal and to make Hungary a fief of the Holy Roman Empire.⁴³ This offer was far too generous for Frederick to reject, but in the end he could not conclude the

Inevitably, he was drawn into contact with Ruthenian bojars and Cumanian princes (who also told him about the power and cruelty of the Mongols). As he fought against the dukedom of Galič in the year 1229, there were already Cumanian units among his troops. Cf. GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, p. 32.

³⁸ KRISTÓ, p. 205.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 207; ZOLTÁN KOSZTOLNYIK: *Hungary in the Thirteenth Century*, New York 1996, p. 134 (based on the eyewitness report of Roger, Carmen).

⁴⁰ Cf. ALEX JANZEN: *Ursachen des Erfolges der mongolischen Expansion im 13. Jahrhundert: Versuch einer Analyse*, Neuried 2003, pp. 22–23.

⁴¹ BEZZOLA, p. 76.

⁴² KRISTÓ, pp. 208 ff. – Cf. for the Hungarian pleas for help KARL RUDOLF: *Die Tataren 1241/42: Nachrichten und Wiedergabe. Korrespondenz und Historiographie*, in: *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 19 (1977), pp. 79–107, here pp. 83–91.

⁴³ STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, pp. 105–107; VARGA, pp. 261–262, 267–268.

agreement (see below).⁴⁴ In fact, Bela was left alone; the great powers set their mutual conflicts higher than the needs of Hungary. The invasion of the Mongols came to a halt at the Danube and the threat vanished from the minds of the Western European kings, even though the Mongols stayed in Hungary until the winter of 1241/42—when the Danube froze, they crossed unhindered to the other side and plundered what up to that point had been the unharmed areas of Hungary.⁴⁵ It has been reckoned by modern historians that 20–50 percent of the Hungarian population was killed directly in the conflicts or died in their aftermath.⁴⁶ The testimonies of Thomas of Spalato and Rogerius of Torre Maggiore are very dramatic about this—they complain intensely about the lack of support from any other European ruler. Bela himself later put it in suitable words when he wrote to Pope Innocent IV in 1250: “We did not receive anything apart from empty words of consolation.”⁴⁷ Bela IV himself, in the winter of 1241/42, had to withdraw to Split on the Dalmatian coast and even further to the small island city of Trogir. Just prior to that, the Mongols, who were chasing him and could have captured him, suddenly disappeared for no logical reason. What the Europeans did not know was that the Great Khan Ögedei had died in the winter of 1241/42, and that rivalries over his succession had broken out in full force, such that Batu Khan, the leader of the European expedition and a grandson of Činggis Khan, was forced to withdraw and assert himself in the internal quarrels.

While Bela could let out a sigh of relief, he also knew that he had to react swiftly. The reconstruction of the country began: first of all, he introduced law and order⁴⁸ and gave orders to pursue and execute criminals and robbers, with no mercy to be shown. Afterwards, he returned the scattered population back to their villages, such that the economy slowly began to work again. He must have known that he could not really survive another assault from the Mongols and so he tried to find concrete and sustainable alliances through marriage agreements. These allies, not surprisingly but nonetheless remarkably, were all to be found amongst the other threatened realms in Eastern and East Central Europe. He even arranged a marriage of his son Stephan to a pagan Cuman princess – that might show the level of his despair. The Cumans were pagans and steppe-people, generally considered similar to the Mongols

⁴⁴ VARGA, p. 268, emphasizes that Bela was unbound from this “offer” by Pope Innocent IV in 1245—with the explanation that Frederick had not fulfilled his promises.

⁴⁵ They tried to hunt King Bela down, cf. JOHN ANDREW BOYLE (ed.): *Ala ad-Din 'Atalik Juvaini: The History of the World-Conqueror*, Manchester 1958, I, p. 143.

⁴⁶ VARGA, p. 267, footnote 260.

⁴⁷ AUGUSTIN THEINER (ed.): *Vetera Monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia maximam partem nondum edita ex tabulariis Vaticanis deprompta, collecta ac serie chronologica disposita [VMH]*. Vol. I: *Ab Honorio PP. III. usque ad Clementum PP. VI. 1216–1352*, Romae 1863 (second edition Osnabrück 1968, no. 440, p. 231: “nichil consolacionis vel subsidii recepiimus, nisi verba.”

⁴⁸ KRISTÓ, p. 209.

themselves. Bela was severely criticized for making a deal with these people.⁴⁹ When reflecting on his actions in a letter of 1250, he expressed deep frustration: “Now we are permitting the defence of our country by pagans and are letting them destroy the enemies of the church.”⁵⁰ Additionally, he married two of his daughters to Russian princes, and two others to Polish dukes.⁵¹ His policy of alliances, to underscore it yet again, was most visibly focussed on East Central Europe. Only one marriage is recorded (in 1247) of Bela’s daughter Elisabeth to a Bavarian duke (Henry XIII of Bavaria).⁵² The Hungarian king lived through the painful experience during this period of standing alone as *murus christininitatis*, as the wall of Christianity (an extensively developed *topos* in modern Hungarian self-representation).⁵³

Bela also stepped back from his hard political policies against the Hungarian nobility and refrained from further attempts to regain the older royal rights and lands.⁵⁴ Instead (even to the contrary), he sold or gave for free royal estates to nobles in order to obligate them to the duty to levy units and knights in times of war. In 1247 he gave land to the order of St. John in the Severin Banat in the east of the country to defend the borders and also invited other colonists, mainly German settlers, as farmers and miners, into the devastated areas of his realm: “When our kingdom was ransacked by the Mongols, many inhabitants were killed or kidnapped, so we notified the whole world that we were willing to grant privileges to new settlers and warriors in order to resettle the vast, deserted country.”⁵⁵ After the Mongols

⁴⁹ VMH I, no. 440, p. 231; GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, p. 308 (letter of Bela IV to Pope Innocent IV from 1250-11-11); BEZZOLA, p. 187, emphasizes that the Bohemian chroniclers barely distinguish between the brutality of the Cumans and that of the Mongols.

⁵⁰ Letter to the pope on 1250-11-11: GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, pp. 303–304, 308; RUDOLF, pp. 79–107; VMH I, no. 440, p. 231: “Cumanos eciam in regno nostro recepimus, et prohdolor per Pagonos hodie regnum nostrum defendimus” (English translation by G. V.).

⁵¹ GÖCKENJAN, *Mongolensturm*, p. 312. Anna to Rostislav of Černigov, Constance to Leo of Galič, Kinga to Bolesław V the Chaste, and Jolanta to Bolesław the Pious.

⁵² This happened probably in the aftermath of the death of Duke Frederick? II of Austria and thus with the dying out of the Babenberger dynasty. Rivalaries between German, Bohemian and Hungarian princes over the Babenberger’s legacy began during this period.

⁵³ SRODECKI, *Antemurale Christianitatis*, pp. 88 ff.

⁵⁴ KOSZTOLNYIK, pp. 184 ff.; KRISTÓ, p. 209.

⁵⁵ As in a note of Bela himself from 1268 (the above quotation, English translation by G. V., is a bit shortened from the original version): “Quod cum pridem regnum nostrum permissione Diuina Tartari inuasissent, et sua barbarica feritate vastauissent, regnicolis in magna parte vel peremtis, vel abductis, et Hungaria ante plena populo, multis in locis in solitudinem esset redacta, de cunctis mundi partibus homines tam agricolas, quam milites ad repopulandum terras depopulatas, et habitatoribus vacuatas, edicto regio studuimus conouare: venientibus itaque ad vocationem nostram causa habitandi regnum nostrum, dedimus et assignauimus terras et possessiones, et

left, Bela also initiated a totally new period of castle building, since, previous to 1241, most of the wars and conflicts had been decided on the open field of battle. The lesson from 1241/42 was very clear: The Mongols needed to be stopped by stone castles erected on hilly sites, which they could not conquer.⁵⁶ Indeed, the only unconquered castles on the left side of the Danube were exactly in this style. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the right to erect castles was strictly reserved for kings; after 1241/42 the nobility was even encouraged by Bela IV to build stone fortifications.⁵⁷ This, however, initiated an important and lasting change in the socio-economic structure of the country: As castles were regional centers of power from which the nobility henceforth could exercise their rule over their subjects, the phenomenon meant a major step towards the formation of local dominions in Hungary. The king himself engaged in castle building, for example, he built the castle of Ofen, into which he, for safety reasons, moved the whole population of the city of Esztergom, the main seat of the archbishop of Hungary, for almost a year, in 1247/48.⁵⁸

The Jews benefitted—as it were—from the Mongols, in that they gained protective privileges (and not only in Hungary), making it easier for them to travel and trade.⁵⁹ A later result of the changed politics after 1241 was a better situation for the petty nobles, who were originally severely burdened by taxes. In order to meet their demands, a decree was negotiated (the so-called third Golden Bull of Hungary), which might be compared to the Magna Charta of England:⁶⁰ The nobility achieved far-reaching rights with regard to the court, taxes, laws of inheritance and military services. This, however, was also another major step on the way toward the administration of the counties (*comitati*) by powerful noble families.

In his foreign policy the king tried, apart from the mentioned alliances, to conquer additional adjacent lands and broaden his own rule. He engaged in the conflict over the heir to the Babenberger dynasty in Austria (the last representative of this dynasty, Duke Frederick II, had died in 1246), but lost

aliquibus reditus, vnicuique prout status sui exigentia requirebat,” in: GYÖRGY FEJÉR (ed.): *Codex diplomaticus Hngariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, vol. IV, 3, Budae 1829, pp. 438–39; cf. as well STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, p. 180.

⁵⁶ ERIK FÜGEDI: *Castle and Society in Medieval Hungary*, Budapest 1986, pp. 42, 45, 50. In his excellent study Fügedi describes in great detail the placement of the few castles (he names ten stone castles in all of Hungary) that had been able to resist the Mongols (pp. 45–46).

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 50–51. Between 1261 and 1270 they erected 29 new stone-castles (p. 54). From 63 castles built by 1270, we can trace the investors of 30 of them. Most of them came from the functional elite around Bela, men who had offices at the royal court and belonged without a doubt among the confidants of the king.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 55. All old royal castles were overhauled. KRISTÓ, pp. 209–210.

⁵⁹ RUDOLF JAWORSKI, CHRISTIAN LÜBKE, MICHAEL G. MÜLLER: *Eine kleine Geschichte Polens*, Frankfurt am Main 2000, pp. 90–92.

⁶⁰ KRISTÓ, pp. 212–213.

in this struggle to the Bohemian king Ottokar II. At least Ottokar married a granddaughter of Bela's during the subsequent peace negotiations between the two of them. Furthermore, Bela conquered some land in Bulgaria,⁶¹ but elsewhere he was not successful.

In summation of the case in Hungary, as an immediate consequence the king launched a general fortification enhancement and focused his forces on the very possible return of the Mongols; but in doing so, he had to make concessions to the nobility, which gave them a whole collection of new liberties and led to the development of strong noble families acting at the local level in the kingdom of Hungary.

2.2 The Case of Poland

Poland had already ceased being a unified entity even before the Mongolian invasion took place, and was in fact split up into several weaker dukedoms ruled over by different members of the Piast dynasty.⁶² While there was a brief break in 1295/96, that would essentially remain the case until 1320. It was the Silesian dukes, however, in the first half of the thirteenth century, who step by step slowly became the mightiest rulers amongst the Piasts, hence it is not surprising that the biggest battle with the Mongols on Polish territory took place close to Legnica in Silesia.⁶³

In comparison to Hungary, things were different in Silesia, because the Mongolian troops in Poland under the leadership of Orda and Baidar only had orders to prevent potential Polish and Bohemian assistance being sent to aid the Hungarian king.⁶⁴ Thus, the incursion remained rather short, yet the raids were extremely brutal. The Mongols attacked Lower and Greater Poland (plundering Sandomir, Kraków, Łęczyca, Sieradz, and possibly the area of Kujawy) as well as Silesia (Ratibor, Opole, Wrocław, Legnica).⁶⁵ Henry II sent calls for help to his father-in-law Wenceslas of Bohemia and to other European rulers, but in the end he stood alone on the field near Legnica in Silesia.⁶⁶ After his army was defeated (military historians estimate its strength

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 217.

⁶² STANISŁAW SZCZUR: *Historia Polski: Średniowiecze* [History of Poland: Middle Ages], Kraków 2004, pp. 257 ff.

⁶³ PRZEMYSŁAW WISZEWSKI: *Whose Region Is It? A Few Words on a Certain Research Project and Silesian History*, in: IDEM (ed.): *The Long Formation of the Region* (c. 1000–1526), Wrocław 2013, pp. 9–17, here p. 15.

⁶⁴ Cf. GIEBAUF, *Herzog Friedrich II.*, p. 179; PAROŃ, p. 99.

⁶⁵ The sources about the places under attack are neatly and briefly collected in: PAROŃ, p. 95, footnote 17.

⁶⁶ PIOTR RABIEJ: *Henryk II Pobożny* [Henry II the Pious], in: STANISŁAW SZCZUR, KRZYSZTOF OŻÓG et al. (eds.): *Piastowie: Leksykon Biograficzny*, Kraków 1999, pp. 393–400, here p. 398. There are no letters from him or other Polish dukes in the record, cf. WINFRIED IRGANG (ed.): *Schlesisches Urkundenbuch. Vol. 2: 1231–1250*, Wien et al. 1977, no. 198–222, pp. 125–134. We can only trace letters and short re-

at about 8,000 warriors), the Mongols tried to capture Legnica, but the defenders would not surrender. So the Mongols, who could not afford an extended siege, departed after a short while towards the south, in the direction of Hungary.⁶⁷ In contrast to Hungary, there are unfortunately no extant eyewitness reports of the events.⁶⁸ Poland, as already mentioned, did not have a cohesive and compact kingdom like Hungary, about which the Mongols were well informed, because Batu Khan sent only a small part (one *tiimen*) of his army to Poland, comprising about 10,000 warriors⁶⁹—intending it as a diversion for the East Central European defenders. The Silesian duke did not have an “international reputation” when compared with the king of Hungary, and the battle did not find a historiographical echo as the one in Hungary did.⁷⁰ The battle did not take on its mystique until some 200 years later (and through this Legnica became one of the significant sites in European memory), when Jan Długosz, the most important Polish chronicler in the Middle Ages, dedicated about four manuscript pages to the invasion of Tatars and the battle of Legnica in his opus magnum *Annales Regni Poloniae*. Much of it is considered by modern historiography to be pure fantasy.⁷¹

ports from Heinrich, count of Thuringia, Albert Behaim (papal legate), Jordanus (provincial vicarius of the Franciscans), Otto, duke of Bavaria, Wenceslas of Bohemia and some other persons writing to different addressees about the cruelty of the Mongolian raids in Poland.

⁶⁷ For good surveys on more recent Polish research of the battle of Legnica cf. already footnote 1.

⁶⁸ There is only the report from the grandmaster of the Templars, Ponce D'Aubon, in a letter to the French king, Louis IX: OSWALD HOLDER-EGGER (ed.): *Ex historiae regum Franciae continuatione Parisiensi*, in: MGH SS 26, Hannoverae 1882, pp. 603–610, here pp. 604–605. He reports that 6 knight-brothers, 3 *chevaliers*, 2 *sergans* and 500 men of their contingents were killed, while only 3 brothers managed to escape.

⁶⁹ GIEBAUF, *Barbaren*, p. 159, emphasizes rightly that Poland was just a sideshow of the Mongolian war and, consequently, we have hardly any reports (apart from the mentioned letter to Louis IX and a small fragment in the the *Annales S. Pantaleonis*).

⁷⁰ ULRICH SCHMILEWSKI: *Schlesien im 13. Jahrhundert vor und nach der Schlacht von Wahlstatt: Territoriale Entwicklung und Landesausbau*, in: IDEM, *Wahlstatt 1241*, pp. 9–34, here p. 17: Only the *Annales capituli Posnaniensis* (1192–1273), which are copied into the *Chronica Poloniae Maioris*, might be called “contemporaneous.” Apart from this, the historiographical material is much younger (late thirteenth century). SCHMIEDER, *Einfall der Mongolen*, p. 81, underscores that almost every chronicle for the next 200 years after the Mongolian invasion of 1241/42 mentions this incident briefly, but with a clear stress on the Hungarian battles, while Legnica is somehow only mentioned as an aside. The sources are listed by GEORG BACHFELD: *Die Mongolen in Polen, Schlesien, Böhmen und Mähren*, Innsbruck 1889, pp. 8 ff.

⁷¹ WINFRIED IRGANG: *Die Schlacht von Wahlstatt in der Darstellung des Jan Długosz*, in: SCHMILEWSKI, *Wahlstatt 1251*, pp. 109–116, here pp. 111–113, reflects concisely the Polish and German research positions. German research mostly disputes any relation to reality in the report of Długosz. Polish research gives it credibility (apart from the most obvious mistakes of Długosz). GERARD LABUDA: *Wojna z Tatarami w roku 1241 [The War with the Tartars in 1241]*, in: *Przegląd Historyczny* 50 (1959), pp. 189–224, is

The Mongolian invasion, however, left its impact on Silesia and, in a wider sense, on Poland—mainly, because the predominance of power within Poland shifted decisively away from the Silesian dukes, and one may presume that the battle itself unleashed a struggle for national identities.⁷² Previously, the father of the fallen duke of Silesia, Henry the Bearded, had brought vast parts of Greater Poland and Lesser Poland (also the capitol, Kraków, if one might designate it as such in thirteenth-century Poland) under his control.⁷³ That enabled him, on behalf of his son, to negotiate at Emperor Frederick II's court (around 1236–1238) for a revival of the Polish kingdom and the coronation of a new Polish king.⁷⁴ His wife, the later saint Hedwig (Jadwiga), a daughter of the duke of Andechs-Meran (an important German noble dynasty), had good contacts to the imperial elites and that made it much easier for Henry to proceed with his plans.⁷⁵ Although Henry the Bearded died in 1238 without having attained his goal, his son continued his politics successfully and managed to maintain Silesian influence over those Polish territories mentioned here, even though fiercely opposed by other Polish dukes. In particular, Władysław Odonic in Greater Poland and Conrad of Masovia in the area of Sandomir were powerful rivals of Henry. There is still a discussion going on (which will probably never be resolved) about whether Henry II would have gained the crown if the Mongols had not invaded.⁷⁶ But at least we can state that after 1238 he did continue to pursue, until his own death in 1241, his father's plan to have himself crowned.⁷⁷

His death, the devastation of the whole region, and the on-going fear of a return of the Mongols (who in fact returned in the years 1259/60 as well as in 1287/88) all thoroughly changed the fixed elements of Silesian/Polish

convinced that Długosz used a now lost Dominican chronicle from the middle of the thirteenth century. Even if this indeed happened, we can not tell which elements in the report from Długosz are from that chronicle and which elements were freely invented.

⁷² PAROŃ, p. 91; URBAŃSKI, p. 202, emphasizes that certain elites from Silesia fled and never came back. WOJCIECH MROZOWICZ: *Regional Identity in Silesia* (until 1526), in: WISZEWSKI, *The Long Formation of the Region*, pp. 215–235, here pp. 223–224, highlights the importance of Duchess Hedwig († 1243), the mother of Henry II, for all of Poland in the late Middle Ages. She was already canonized by 1267 and her cult had a central role in identity discourses in Poland.

⁷³ BENEDYKT ZIENTARA: *Henryk Brodaty i jego czasy* [Henry the Bearded and His Times], second edition, Warszawa 1997, pp. 303–320.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 318–320.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 342 ff.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 372–375, the older Polish literature is quoted, in which the conviction is expressed that there would have been a coronation and re-unification of Poland if not for the Mongols. Zientara discusses the point, opposing Jan Baszkiewicz who rejects the monocausal explanation of the failure of the Silesian Henrys. The latter has doubts about it, because the political situation in Silesia and Poland was, in any case, so tense with multiple political actors and competitors involved. But Zientara supports the monocausal thesis.

⁷⁷ RABIEJ, p. 397.

politics, as modern Polish historiography had stated, which is shown in the following three points:⁷⁸

Firstly, Silesia rapidly fell apart under the underage heirs of Henry II (Bolesław II, Henry III, and Conrad II) and it was divided into small territorial rulerships—among others Wrocław (Breslau), Głogów (Glogau), Legnica (Liegnitz), Opole (Oppeln), Racibórz (Ratibor), Bytom-Kosel (Beuthen-Kösel), Cieszyn-Oświęcim (Teschen-Auschwitz), Żagań (Sagan)—(cf. map 2, which depicts the situation in the first half of the fourteenth century). The areas in Lesser and Greater Poland under Silesian influence were lost completely—presumably because of the young heirs' lack of political experience. The Bohemian duke expanded his influence in Silesia decisively⁷⁹—the first signs of the eventual transition to Bohemian and Imperial rulership that came later in the fourteenth century.⁸⁰ Only when Ottokar II, the Bohemian duke, died in the Battle on the Marchfeld in 1278, was Henry IV (Probus) of Silesia able to slowly regain power in Silesia. His endeavors were crowned by the honor of becoming the “senior” duke (or Grand Duke) of Kraków in 1288, only a few years before his death.⁸¹

Secondly, the population losses and renewed settlement efforts are important: The extent of the losses to the population of southern Poland through the impact of the Mongolian incursion is hard to estimate. Only the fifteenth-century chronicler Jan Długosz gives some probably highly exaggerated estimates.⁸² Today, however, most historians assume that, firstly, the rural population was used to wars and simply hid in the woods with their goods⁸³

⁷⁸ PRZEMYSŁAW WISZEWSKI: Region-integrating or Region-disintegrating? The Social Groups of Medieval Silesia Examined in the Context of Their Political Activity (from the Last Decades of the 12th Century to the 15th Century), in: IDEM, *The Long Formation of the Region*, pp. 129–166, here pp. 137–138; RABIEJ, p. 400. On the other side, Henry II was followed by his heir Bolesław Rogatka, who is regarded by many historians as a gambler, and who carelessly let parts of Silesia slip into the hands of the families of German knights. Cf. TOMASZ JUREK: Bolesław II Rogatka, in: SZCZUR/OŻÓG, pp. 408–412.

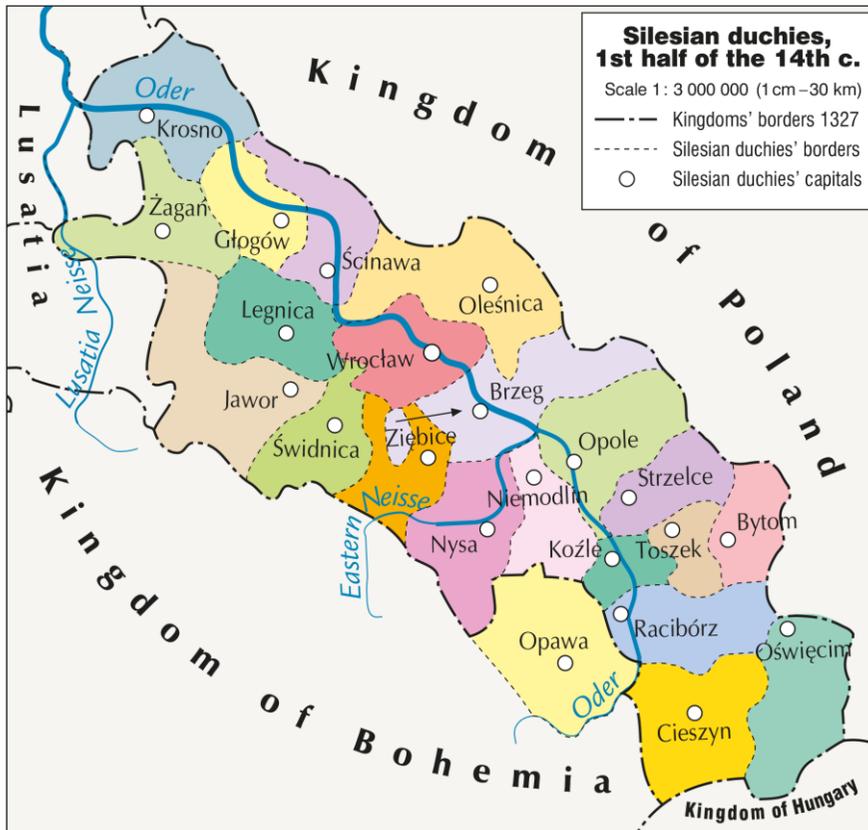
⁷⁹ The role of Wenceslas I of Bohemia, the father-in-law of Henry II, during the battle of Legnica is quite unclear. He was only a day's march away from the battlefield with a strong army (resting in Świna). He emphasized later that he could not make it to the battle. Probably he later took advantage of the defeat and the death of Henry II.

⁸⁰ Cf. MARCIN PAUK, EWA WÓLKIEWICZ: The Administrative Structure of Silesia as a Determinant of Legal and Constitutional Cohesion (12th–15th Century), in: WISZEWSKI, *The Long Formation of the Region*, pp. 65–91, here pp. 79–82; PAROŃ, p. 100.

⁸¹ ANNA WAŚKO: Henryk IV Prawy (Probus), in: SZCZUR/OŻÓG, pp. 427–432, here pp. 429–431.

⁸² The references for the different estimates have been well compiled by STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, pp. 182–184.

⁸³ JERZY WYROZUMSKI: *Dzieje Polski Piastowskiej (VIII w. – 1370)* [History of the Piast Poland (Eighth Century – 1370)], Kraków 1999, p. 224; IRGANG, *Die Schlacht von Wahlstatt*, p. 224.



Map 2: Political fragmentation of Silesia, c. 1350 (WISZEWSKI, *Whose Region Is It?*, p. 18, © Dariusz Przybytek)

and, secondly, 10,000 Mongolian warriors moving in all haste for two weeks through southern Poland could not possibly have caused all that much damage⁸⁴ (especially in comparison to the year of terror in Hungary at the hands of about men.⁸⁵ The opinions of historians as to whether the previously initiated settlement of Germans and Flemish-Walloons had reached its climax

⁸⁴ Grzegorz Myśliwski, a historian of the economy in the Middle Ages, contends that “the Mongols did not in fact wreak economic havoc on the region [Silesia], an assertion which historians until recently claimed to be certain of. Their stay in Silesia was short and a one-off experience.” Cf. GRZEGORZ MYŚLIWSKI: *Did Silesia Constitute an Economic Region between the 13th and the 15th Centuries? A Survey of Region-integrating and Region-disintegrating Economic Factors*, in: WISZEWSKI, *The Long Formation of the Region*, pp. 93–128, here p. 121.

⁸⁵ SCHMILEWSKI, *Schlesien im 13. Jahrhundert*, p. 25 (with further references); PAROŃ, p. 100.

before or only after 1241 are far from being in agreement.⁸⁶ One must admit that setting a dividing line at the year 1241 for the settlement development, as often pointed out, could well be called artificial. Nonetheless, the border of the settlement movement in Lower Silesia before and after 1241⁸⁷ clearly shows that the German, Flemish and Walloon villages beyond the Odra were only established after 1241. Wrocław itself, after it had been burnt by the citizens in response to the threat of the Mongolian arrival, was rebuilt in 1241/42 and was some 20 years later granted the *ius teutonicum* (German rights, mostly *Magdeburger Recht*) in 1261. Other towns followed: Bolesławiec (Bunzlau), Jawor (Jauer), Strzegom (Striegau), Świdnica (Schweidnitz) and Ziębice (Münsterberg) were founded or at least privileged with the *ius teutonicum* between 1242 and 1258—in a time when Bolesław II still ruled the *ducatus Slesie* relatively uncontestedly. Legnica and Brzeg (Brieg), later to become the main seats of different Piast dukes in Silesia, followed in the 1250s.⁸⁸ The engagement of large parts of the Silesian nobility and, increasingly, of the citizens who wanted to benefit from a new system of rents and requirements (now allowing for a payment of money instead goods or services to be rendered⁸⁹) must be viewed as at least indirectly related to the Mongolian invasion. The Silesian dukes had lost significant power and could no longer actually oppose the ambitions of their nobles. Moreover, the financial expenditures of the increased number of Silesian ducal courts required much more money than before. Those costs were met by selling ducal estates and by allowing the establishment of new villages under noble rule.⁹⁰ This accelerated as well, as one can assess by browsing through the

⁸⁶ Cf. WINFRIED IRGANG: Der Anteil der Piastischen Landesherren an der Deutschen Besiedlung Schlesiens, in: IDEM: Schlesien im Mittelalter: Siedlung—Kirche—Urkunden. Ausgewählte Aufsätze, ed. by NORBERT KERSKEN and JÜRGEN WARMBRUNN, Marburg 2007, pp. 20–47. Walter Kuhn and Benedykt Zientara see the climax having happened before 1241, while e.g. Stanisław Trawkowski dates it as after the invasion (cf. IRGANG, Der Anteil, p. 33). PAROŃ, p. 100, states that the Mongol invasion cannot be taken as a “dividing line” concerning the settlement. He sees the climax as having been earlier as well.

⁸⁷ Cf. the map of SCHMILEWSKI, Schlesien im 13. Jahrhundert, p. 27; MYŚLIWSKI, p. 104, underscores (with reference to Andrzej Jureczko), that Henry III engaged himself in rebuilding and re-launching the process of founding villages and towns.

⁸⁸ IRGANG, Anteil der Piastischen Landesherren, pp. 26–27.

⁸⁹ HEINRICH VON LOESCH: Die Verfassung im Mittelalter, in: LUDWIG PETRY, JOSEF JOACHIM MENZEL (eds.): Geschichte Schlesiens. Vol. 1: Von der Urzeit bis zum Jahre 1526, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 238–313, esp. pp. 276, 278, 296–297.

⁹⁰ ERICH RANDT: Politische Geschichte bis zum Jahr 1327, in: HERMANN AUBIN (ed.): Geschichte Schlesiens, Stuttgart 1961, pp. 110–118; TOMASZ JUREK: Vom Rittertum zum Adel: Die Herausbildung des Adelsstandes im mittelalterlichen Schlesien, in: JAN HARASIMOWICZ, MATTHIAS WEBER (eds.): Adel in Schlesien. Vol. 1: Herrschaft—Kultur—Selbstdarstellung, München 2010, pp. 53–76, esp. pp. 60–62; WINFRIED IRGANG: Beginn der staatlichen Zersplitterung Schlesiens (1248–1251), in: IDEM, Schlesien im Mittelalter, pp. 55–63, here pp. 57, 62.

Silesian privileges of the first and the second half of the thirteenth century, the development of a *pragmatische Schriftlichkeit* (pragmatic literacy) in Silesia.⁹¹

Thirdly, the veneration of national saints grew instantly: Shortly after the battle of Legnica, the Polish rulers apparently became aware of the value of national saints in order to rally their people.⁹² While Polish chroniclers of the twelfth century knew of only non-Polish saints (for example, Adalbert, Aegidius and Laurentius, on a local level Sigismund of Burgundy in Płock), hagiographical works (almost exclusively from the circles of the mendicant orders), and as a result the veneration of local saints, emerged quite quickly, principally after the battle of Legnica: The Stanislaus *vita* (canonized in 1253; *vitae* from 1252 to 1260), the miracles of Werner of Płock (1263), the *vita* of Anna of Silesia (the wife of Henry II of Silesia, in the last third of the thirteenth century), the Salomea *vita* (1273–1290), the Hedwig/Jadwiga *vita* (canonized in 1267; *vitae* 1296–1300), as well as the *vita* and miracles of Kinga (in 1320–1329) and Hyacinth (1335–1336).⁹³ These changes were quite significant: After 1241, newly established cults of Polish saints caught the attention of the authors of chronicles and hagiographical literature.⁹⁴ One of the main tasks of saints was to assist on the battlefield and to create a link between God (as the decisive element in battle) and the humans—this fits perfectly into the idea about the aftermath of Legnica and the fear of more raids by the Mongols. However, it must be mentioned as well that the friars of

⁹¹ Cf. Schlesisches Urkundenbuch, vols. 1–5, and a clear enhancement of charters after 1241.

⁹² Before that, primarily Saint Adalbert/Wojciech of Prague was worshipped, cf. MARCIN RAFAL PAUK: Eine Dynastie oder mehrere? Herrschaft und ihre Legitimation in der politischen Kultur Polens (12.–13. Jahrhundert), in: GRISCHA VERCAMER, EWA WÓLKIEWICZ (eds.): Legitimation von Fürstendynastien in Polen und dem Reich: Identitätsbildung im Spiegel schriftlicher Quellen (12.–15. Jahrhundert), Wiesbaden 2016, pp. 29–54, esp. pp. 37–39, who emphasizes the fact that we do not have any Polish saint from the Piast dynasty, unlike in Hungary or Bohemia. In 1244 the Clarisses monastery of Zawichost (for Salome of Kraków) was founded in the east of Poland—not only but also as spiritual protection against the Mongols (it lasted only until 1257), cf. ANDRZEJ PLESZCZYŃSKI: Zur Geschichte und Bedeutung der Stiftung des Klarissenklosters in Zawichost, in: EDUARD MÜHLE (ed.): Monarchische und adlige Sakralstiftungen im mittelalterlichen Polen, Berlin 2013, pp. 395–416.

⁹³ All these hagiographical works were edited by different editors in: Monumenta Poloniae Historica, vol. 4, Lwów 1884. Cf. MACIEJ MICHALSKI: Kobiety i świętość w żywotach trzynastowiecznych księżnych polskich [Women and Holiness in the Vitae of Thirteenth-Century Polish Princesses], Poznań 2004, who emphasizes amongst other things on p. 64, that Jadwiga came from the family of Andechs, whose members often became saints in the twelfth century; GÁBOR KLANICZAY: Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe, Cambridge 2002.

⁹⁴ NORBERT KERSKEN: Gott und die Heiligen in der mittelalterlichen polnischen Geschichtsschreibung, in: PAWEŁ KRAS, AGNIESZKA JANUSZEK et al. (eds.): Ecclesia, cultura, potestas: Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa. Księga ofiarowana Siostrze Profesor Urszuli Borkowskiej OSU, Kraków 2006, pp. 619–647, here p. 646.

the mendicant orders, which had only been established in the early thirteenth century, mostly wrote the lives of the saints in Poland. On the other hand, Cistercians or Benedictines could also have written prior to that a life of, for example, the holy Stanisław, who died back in the eleventh century.

2.3 The Case of Bohemia

After the battle of Legnica, Baidar and Orda waited for orders from Batu. While waiting, small Mongolian contingents pushed into the adjacent German and Bohemian regions as far as the banks of the Elbe River. But since the Bohemian king Wenceslas I had retreated with his army into the German regions in order to join his troops with the forces of eastern German dukes who also feared a Mongolian invasion into the Holy Roman Empire,⁹⁵ the Mongols soon began (unable to cross the mountainous border to Bohemia) to attack the less well-guarded area of Eastern Moravia (near Opava).⁹⁶ They stayed for more or less two months (April–May) in the area of Poland/Moravia, and Wenceslas did nothing to hinder them. On the other hand, the Bohemian king did not allow them to advance into the western regions, because he fortified the big cities (especially Prague).⁹⁷ He had raised an army of around 40,000 men, but no serious clashes between these two armies were noted.⁹⁸ The famous legend about a heroic defence of Olomouc by Jaroslav of Sternberg on 23 June has no historical evidence at all, although it was long

⁹⁵ Cf. for source references FELICITAS SCHMIEDER: Der Einfall der Mongolen nach Polen und Schlesien, in: SCHMILEWSKI, Wahlstatt 1251, pp. 77–86; TOMÁŠ SOMER: Forging the Past: Facts and Myths behind the Mongol Invasion of Moravia in 1241, in: *Zoloto-ordynskoe obozrenie / Golden Horde Review* 6 (2018), 2, pp. 238–251, here p. 247, DOI: 10.22378/2313-6197.2018-6-2.238-251.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Annales S. Panthaleonis Coloniensis maximi*, ed. by HERMANN CARDAUNS (MGH SS 22), Hannover 1872, pp. 529–547, here p. 535; Jordan of Giano in a letter of May 1241, taken from Matt. Par., CM 4, p. 83; the two commanders of the army stuck to a very tight time schedule in order to join the main army of Batu in Hungary. They did not allow themselves to besiege castles, but simply plundered. Cf. STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, pp. 53–67. Cf. as well ALF ÖNNERFORS (ed.): *C. de Bridia Monachi Historia Tartarorum*, Berlin 1967, cap. XXVIII, 20; *Annales Silesiaci Compilati*, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* 3 (1878), pp. 657–679, here p. 679.

⁹⁷ BACHFELD, p. 73. The estimation of FRANTIŠEK PALACKÝ: *Der Mongolen-Einfall im Jahre 1241: Eine kritische Zusammenstellung und Sichtung aller darüber vorhandenen Quellennachrichten, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Niederlage der Mongolen bei Olmütz*, Prag 1843, is that the claim that Wenceslas I rescued Europe through his retreat into Saxony, thus sacrificing Moravia, must be regarded as an exaggeration. Cf. ANTON KREUZER: Von Mongolen- und Kumaneneinfällen in Mähren, in: *Mährisch-Schlesische Heimat* 20 (1975), pp. 2–24, here p. 8.

⁹⁸ KAREL ERBEN (ed.): *Regesta diplomatica nec non epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*, vol. 1, Pragae 1855 [Erben I], no. 1024, p. 478: Letter on 1241-04-10 from Jordanus, the Vice Master of the Friars Minor in Bohemia, to all believers; *ibidem*, no. 1035, p. 486: Letter of Conrad of Freising to the bishop of Konstanz.

taken to be true up until the time of František Palacký.⁹⁹ Eventually, receiving orders from Batu, the march of the Mongolian army from Poland through Moravia to Hungary proceeded. Keeping in mind how swiftly they normally moved, in this case it took them a longer time (9–10 days) to ride through Moravia and reunite with the larger parts of the army under the leadership of Batu in Hungary.¹⁰⁰ Along the way, they burnt and raided, but did not bother to besiege bigger towns—the level of destruction can only be estimated, but must be measured in comparison to Poland and Hungary on a decisively smaller scale.¹⁰¹

2.4 The Case of the Holy Roman Empire

In the German annals of the time one can find only short notes about the invasion of the Mongols and the Polish/Hungarian situation.¹⁰² One of the few documents that is more explicit (around 1.5 pages) is the *Annales* of St. Pantaleon in Cologne. As with almost all other stereotypical descriptions of the Mongols, the author underlines their cruelty and ugly appearance. But apart from that, almost admiringly (he writes “incredibile dictum”), the author tells us about the swiftness with which the Mongols moved from Poland to Hungary, covering four days of travel by horse in just one day. He continues, saying that the Hungarian king fled to the Austrian duke and promised the emperor eternal loyalty in return for his help.¹⁰³ The *Annales* informs us further on that everywhere in Germany (in the *Annales* of St. Pantaleon by name: *Teuthonia*; normally referred to as the Northern parts of the Holy Roman Empire, for the sake of simplicity “Germany” is used here and later) the cross was being preached and the emperor himself had promised help and relief for Hungary.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ FRANTIŠEK PALACKÝ: *Geschichte von Böhmen*, vol. 2, Prag 1865, pp. 116–122. Cf. in opposition to that KREUZER, pp. 17–18; BACHFELD, pp. 23–26, 51 ff., 80.

¹⁰⁰ KREUZER, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰¹ BACHFELD, p. 72, as well as other scholars (e.g. Peter Jackson) are mistaken by the forgery of Antonín Boček (who simply invented sources in the *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Moraviae* in favor of the legendary hero Jaroslav of Sternberg or Zdislav of Sternberg, who allegedly defended Olomouc) and mentions destruction to Bruntál (Freudenthal), Opava (Troppau), the monastery Hratsch, Uničov (Mährisch-Neustadt), Littau, Přerov (Prerau), Jevíčko (Gewitsch), probably Brno (Brünn) and the monastery Rajhrad (Raigern). Cf. SOMER, p. 247, who points (pp. 241–242) as well to the fact that invasions in the 1250s from the king of Hungary and the Duke of Bavaria were later confused with the Mongol invasion (or at least by chroniclers, cf. *ibidem*, pp. 242–244, juxtaposed with each other).

¹⁰² Collected and annotated by BEZZOLA, pp. 90–104.

¹⁰³ *Annales S. Panthaleonis Coloniensis*, p. 535: “sponsa illi perpetua subiectione, si per operam suam contingeret ipsum regnum suum recuperare.”

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*: “Ex hoc conflictu et ante conflictum tam Polonie quam Hungarie multi fratres Predicatores et Minores evaserunt, qui signo crucis per totam fere Teuthoniam clericos

But in fact, the emperor reacted quite reluctantly. It was not until 20 June 1241 that Frederick II officially issued the *Encyclica Contra Tartaros* on the threat of the Mongols—up until then, and also afterwards, he was busy quarrelling with the Lombardian cities and the pope. In the *Encyclica* he admits that he had heard of the Tatars, but that for a long time he thought the story was based on old legends. This statement was often mistaken by historians, who wanted to show that Frederick was totally unprepared for the situation—but it seems much more likely that he was looking for a (not very good) excuse in the face of the accusation that he had not acted earlier on the matter. (We are well informed from Matthew Paris that Frederick had already sent a letter in 1240¹⁰⁵ to the English king informing him about the Mongolian threat.) In the above-mentioned *Encyclica*, however, the emperor guarantees that he himself would ensure the defense of the whole of Christianity—especially because the Hungarian king had placed Hungary under the dominion of the Holy Roman Empire on the condition that Frederick would help him.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, Frederick states very clearly that he expected the pope not to oppose or deceive him or even manipulate his imperial subjects while he was busy fighting with the Mongols. He reminds those reading it of the year 1229, when he was an official crusader in the Holy Land and the pope, taking advantage of that situation, occupied Sicily with his retainers.¹⁰⁷ To reach a settlement with the pope, Frederick says *expressis verbis* in the *Encyclica* that he wanted to travel to Rome. That did not happen; Gregory died two months later (22 August 1241) and the Holy See would stay vacant for the next two and a half years. Besides, Gregory IX himself mentioned in a couple of letters to different European princes that he would expect the emperor to submit publicly to the pope before Rome would offer him a peace treaty.¹⁰⁸ Previously, in May 1241, negotiators from the imperial and the pa-

et laicos adversus predictos barbaros armaverunt [...] eo quod ipse vellet afferre auxilium populo christiano contra truculentiam barbarum.”

¹⁰⁵ Matt. Par., CM 4, p. 113.

¹⁰⁶ LUDWIG WEILAND (ed.): *Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum inde ab a. MCXCVIII usque ad a. MCCLXXII* (1198–1272), in: MGH Const. 2, Hannoverae 1896, reprint 1963, no. 235, pp. 322–325, here p. 325: “Ecce enim quod rex Hungarorum per Wacziensem episcopum supradictum Ungarie regnum nostre ditioni subiecit, dummodo per nos in exterminium Tartarorum defensionis cesaree clypeo protegatur.”

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 324–325: “Succurrit verumtamen dolorosa preterite rei geste memoria, dum transfretantibus nobis dudum in Terre Sancte subsidium et Sarracenorum excidium, qui non minus fidem nostram quam Tartari persequuntur, iste carissimus pater noster, Mediolanesium ac aliorum suorum complicitum imperio subiectorum presidii convocatis, regnum nostrum Sicilie, nobis in partibus ultramarinis agentibus, violenter invasit, et, quod horribilius est auditu, per legatos suos omnibus Christi fidelibus, ne nobis in ipso crucifixi negotio ferrent auxilium, interdixit.”

¹⁰⁸ GEORG HEINRICH PERTZ (ed.): *MGH Epp. Saec. 13, vol. 1*, Berolini 1883, pp. 723–726 (no. 823, 826). Cf. STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, p. 114.

pal sides met for secret talks in order to come to terms with each other in the face of the Mongolian invasion. We do not have details about these talks, but we know basically that they produced no results.¹⁰⁹ The anti-Staufian opposition in Germany did their share to undermine an agreement between emperor and pope. They even accused the emperor of having summoned the Mongols, thereby bringing them to Europe.¹¹⁰ All this had the result that Frederick continued to be absorbed with his Italian and German affairs. Consequently, he announced in a letter to Bela IV his general willingness to help, but only after his own conflicts were settled. Eventually he recommended that Bela ask Frederick's son Conrad IV for help, to whom Frederick had delegated the defense against the Tatars.¹¹¹ So, what did Conrad IV—ruling since 1237 as *Romanorum regem electus* in Germany—and the administrators of the northern part of the Empire do in order to solve the problem?

Beginning in April 1241, one notices in the northern parts of the Holy Roman Empire different preparations for a crusade against the Tatars. The first reaction to the threat can be traced to 22 April 1241 in the eastern part of Germany (Merseburg) when an assembly of the high nobles debated the problem and decided to levy troops.¹¹² But it seems that the well-known fretting of the eastern lords (like the dukes of Meißen, Thuringia and Brandenburg), who gazed anxiously eastwards, played only a petty role within the royal agenda, because the whole affair was being dealt with centrally. Siegfried of Eppstein, the archbishop of Mainz and regent of Germany, seemed to be well aware of the problem and on 19 May 1241 an assembly in Esslingen (south-

¹⁰⁹ STRAKOSCH-GRASSMANN, pp. 109–114.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 115–116. Albert Bohemus in Bayern, in: Erben I, no. 1023, p. 478; Matt. Par., CM 4, p. 119.

¹¹¹ JEAN-LOUIS-ALPHONSE HUILLARD-BRÉHOLLES (ed.): *Historia diplomatica Friderica Secundi*, vol. 5, Paris 1857, pp. 1143–1146, here p. 1145: “et statu Italie pacifice reformato, ac regno nostro in Die securitate dimisso, [...], qua de cunctis inimicis nostris consuevimus triumphare, Tartarorum multitudinem devincemus [futur!]. Tuam igitur industriam exhortamur quatenus interim, cum tuarum conatu virium, dilecto filio nostro Conrado, in Romanorum regem electo, potenter assurgas, ad reprimendos impetus adversariorum communium et ingressus.” Cf. BEZZOLA, p. 79.

¹¹² This assembly is unfortunately only documented by the *Sächsische Weltchronik*, ed. by LUDWIG WEILAND, in: MGH Dt. Chron. 2/1, Hannover 1876, pp. 1–279, here p. 254: “In den selven tiden quamen aver de Tateren mit eme creftigen here in dat lant to Polenen [...]. Do diese mere quemen to Dudische lande [then this message came to Germany], do quemen to eneme dage to Mersburch vorsten unde herren vile [a lot of princes] unde worden to rade, [...] dat varen solden alle de binnen campdagen waren bi al irme rechte, unde solden varen alle de lif unde gut hedden; de gut hadden unde nicht der macht, de solden helpen den de de macht hadden.” [All free men who could afford it should be summoned to arms. Those who could not afford it, should at least support their fellows]. Later the author reports that a group of four free man must equip and support a fifth man.

ern Germany) was convened in the presence of King Conrad IV.¹¹³ Conrad took the crusader's vow and ordered a summoning of troops from all parts of Germany by 1 July, with the army to gather close to Nuremberg. Furthermore, he issued a *Landfrieden* (peace through the whole of Germany) to safeguard the crusaders on their way to Nuremberg.¹¹⁴ The Friars Minor began to preach the cross all across Germany.¹¹⁵ Charters from that time, from different issuers, show without a doubt that these royal orders were taken seriously. The archbishop of Mainz announced the crusade and asked the population for donations. The bishops and higher clerics collected this money, which was, incidentally, not returned to the donors after the crusade was cancelled, but divided among the participating bishops.¹¹⁶ It is most remarkable that ordinances and regulations about the Tatars can only be found until 20 July in the northern part of the Empire.¹¹⁷ The pressing need for action seemed no longer an issue. Taking into account that the Mongols stayed in Hungary until the winter of 1241/42, Conrad IV and his imperial father reacted very calmly and, one might say, almost carelessly. New quarrels and internal conflicts flared up within the Empire: For example, Siegfried of Eppstein, now the former regent, changed over to the opposing camp of the Stauffian dynasty in September 1241. These internal problems probably diverted Frederick and Conrad from what appeared to be a vanishing Mongolian problem.

If we ask about the engagement at the level of the princes in the northern Empire (Germany), one might state that especially the dukes and princes in the eastern territories sent cries for help to those in the west—but mainly within the time frame of May/June 1241. One of the few German dukes who

¹¹³ Regesta Imperii [RI] V,2,4 n. 11340, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1241-00-00_1_0_5_2_4_927_11340 (2017-11-30).

¹¹⁴ “Statuit enim dominus rex, ut per totam Theutoniā pax firma et sincera usque ad festum beati Martini presentis anni ab omnibus inviolabiliter observetur.” RI V,1,2 n. 4437, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1241-00-00_1_0_5_1_2_792_4437 (2020-11-30).

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Only the bishop of Worms returned the collected money. Cf. GEORG HEINRICH PERTZ (ed.): *Ann. Wormatienses* (MGH SS 17), Hannoverae 1861, pp. 34–73, here p. 47: “de bonis suis secundum quod Dominus inspirasset tribuerent, quod aliis euntibus et non habentibus distribueretur. [...] Et congregata est pecunia ubique locorum infinita [...] Supervenerunt itaque iisdem temporibus alia nova, quod Tartari ad alias partes secessissent. Tunc episcopi et domini pecuniam congregatam inter se diviserunt. Sed domnus Landolfus episcopus Wormatiensis pecuniam Wormatie congregatam et in episcopate, singulis reddi iussit.” Similar reports in the *Gesta Treverorum Continuatio*, ed. by GEORG WAITZ, in: MGH SS 24, Hannoverae 1879, Cont. IV, pp. 390–404, here p. 404.

¹¹⁷ At least as compiled in the Regesta Imperii, which gives a very good survey and chronology. The last record refers to Albert, Duke of Tirol, who as a crusader against the Tatars endowed the monastery of the Holy Spirit in Pollingen with 40 marks. Cf. RI V,2,4 n. 11359, in: http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1241-07-20_1_0_5_2_4_946_11359 (2020-11-20).

reacted early was Henry, the landgrave of Thuringia (1204–1247), who wrote to his relative, the duke of Brabant, already on 10 March. He pointed to the fact that the Mongols had come closer and closer and that the time for help would be now, because the neighboring “wall” was already burning and the closest regions in the east had been plundered.¹¹⁸ King Wenceslas of Bohemia as well, who must be counted among the *Reichsfürsten* (the princes of the Empire), became involved in the search for help, and sent information in a couple of letters to different princes about the situation in Bohemia.¹¹⁹ But the rivalries between Henry of Silesia, Wenceslas of Bohemia, Bela IV of Hungary and Duke Frederick II of Austria were unfortunately not to be resolved even in the face of the threatening Mongolian invasion. A unified defense on the part of these princes might have prevented the vast devastation to Silesia and Moravia,¹²⁰ but it was never mounted.

Especially Duke Frederick II of Austria, who sent shocking reports on the dire situation in Hungary to the pope and to the emperor,¹²¹ took advantage of the Hungarian situation in a very egoistical way. He lured the desperate Hungarian king, who was escaping from the Mongols after the defeat of Mohi, into one of his castles (Hainburg?) on the Danube, imprisoned him there and extorted promises from him: If he, Bela IV, wanted to go free and continue his flight, the duke demanded the return of (from his point of view) unjustly required payments made earlier by him to Bela, and the handing over of three adjacent comitats (districts) from the Hungarian kingdom.¹²² Later, the Austrian duke plundered the area around the Hungarian city Raab (Győr) and occupied the city temporarily¹²³—obviously the Hungarian king was not in a position to react to these actions. The reputation of Duke Frederick of Austria as “rescuer” of the Empire, as sometimes postulated by historians in the past, is based on a letter of Yvo of Narbonne (also copied in the *Chronica Maiora* by Matthew Paris). In that letter Yvo states that the Mongols attacked the new town of Vienna in the summer of 1241 with a “huge number of warriors” (“cum infinitis militibus”). But one must seriously doubt¹²⁴ the truth of this record—all other sources state clearly that the main Mongolian army stayed for the entire time in Western Hungary and the Danube froze only in the

¹¹⁸ “paries nobis proximus succenditur, et terra vicina petet vastationi.” Erben I, no. 1018, p. 473, and no. 1021, pp. 476–477 (1241 o.D.) on the same matter.

¹¹⁹ BACHFELD, pp. 15–26.

¹²⁰ This is Bachfeld’s opinion, *ibidem*, p. 82.

¹²¹ Gregory IX mentions this on 1241-06-19 in his request for a crusade to be preached in Germany, see: AUGUST POTTHAST (ed.): *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*. Vol. 1: 1198–1243, Berlin 1874, Nr. 11038, p. 934; MGH Epp. Saec. 13, vol. 1, Berolini 1883, no. 822, pp. 722–723 (Frederick’s letter to Conrad IV from 1241-06-13). Cf. also JOSEPH HORMAYR: *Die goldene Chronik von Hohenschwangau, der Burg der Welfen, der Hohenstauffen und der Scheyren*, München 1842, II, 2, p. 66.

¹²² For the whole situation: GIEBAUF, *Herzog Friedrich II.*, pp. 173–199.

¹²³ Roger, *Carmen*, cap. 33, pp. 70–72.

¹²⁴ GIEBAUF, *Friedrich II.*, pp. 188–190.

winter of 1241/42 and surely not already in the summer.¹²⁵ So certainly Frederick II of Austria did not rescue the Empire from a large-scale Mongolian raid, because the Mongols were themselves busy with the subjugation of Hungary. But nonetheless, like Wenceslas of Bohemia, Frederick did his share of fending off the Mongols, discouraging them from any further advance into Western Europe.

Summary

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that I have limited myself for good reasons to the reactions and repercussions of the Mongolian invasion in Hungary, Poland, Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire, and that much more could be said about the general European reactions. But the nations selected here were more directly involved when compared to the western European countries and they had to react immediately. The invasion caused different impacts and reactions: At the beginning of the Mongolian conquest, the Hungarians were absorbed with internal quarrels and Bela IV was not in a position to lead the self-assertive nobility without being challenged. After the defeat and the lengthy Mongolian dominion, after the reduction of the Hungarian population through murder and starvation, Bela IV faced to huge undertakings: The fortification of his country (stone castles) and the introduction of new settlers from outside Hungary to the deserted regions and villages. His marriage strategy after 1241 within an East Central European network (including the Rus' and the Cumans) revealed a clear direction. Furthermore, the concessions made to the Hungarian nobility (the Golden Bull of 1242) marked a clear break in his policy. Also, one can see from his later letters that Bela was forced to even consider the unthinkable: submitting himself to the Mongolian dominion as *ultima ratio*.¹²⁶ It is generally known by historians that many of the countries that did subjugate themselves to the Mongols did quite well under Mongolian dominion (the famous *pax Mongolica*). It is, for example, striking that Aleksandr Nevskii, whose father was killed by the Mongols, when choosing between the pope's encouraging him to resist (with an offer of help in 1251) and an offer by the Mongols to subjugate himself, chose the latter.¹²⁷ Bela, for his part, was so desperate for options (and so disappointed by Western support) on how to defend his realm that he was not deterred from allying himself with the pagan Cumans (even marrying his son to a Cuman princess).

In the Polish case, the situation was completely different: The divided country, having previously already disassembled into different dukedoms, was not able to resist the Mongolian assault at all. The strongest among all

¹²⁵ Ibidem, p. 190.

¹²⁶ BEZZOLA, pp. 186–187, quotes the letter.

¹²⁷ Ibidem, p. 184; WEIERS, *Geschichte der Mongolen*, p. 200.

Piast dukes at that time was the Silesian, Henry II, who died on the battlefield of Legnica. His dukedom was afterwards divided among his young sons and the petty principalities became more and more dependant on the adjacent kingdom of Bohemia. That led to a significant retardation of the project on which the Silesian Henrys (Henry the Bearded and Henry the Pious) had worked for years: The reunification of Poland under a new Polish king. Bearing in mind that the division of Poland started with the death of Bolesław III (†1138), by 1241 this state of affairs had already lasted some 100 years. Through the defeat and the proceeding events of 1241, the reunification was once again delayed until 1320 when Władysław the Elbow-high eventually became Polish king (after almost 200 years without a king – except for the short reigns of Przemysław II from 1295 to 1296, Wenceslas II from 1300 to 1305, and Wenceslas III from 1305-06). The losses to the population (about 2,000 people—as indicated above) were not at all comparable to the Hungarian situation; nonetheless, the previously initiated settlement effort seems after 1241 to have even been on a much larger scale and now increased and spread into areas that had been previously totally untouched by it (see above). Furthermore, it seems that 1241 was an important starting point in the development of the cults of national saints in Poland: Especially the cults of the Silesian female saints (Anna, Salomea, Hedwig/Jadwiga, Kinga) thrived after 1241.¹²⁸ As well as in Hungary, the nobility in Silesia and Poland gained power and privileges from various Polish dukes.

The Bohemian case is, in a way, insignificant: The Mongol invasion did affect smaller towns and the countryside in Moravia, but there is no record of any large-scale sieges or battles. Bohemia had a special status among the East Central European realms as, since 1212 (or even before), it had been a stable part of the Holy Roman Empire and their kings could count on the support of the princes within the Empire if attacked. On the other side, one could argue that it was exactly this notion of being spared that weighed heavily on late medieval Bohemian self-confidence, given that Hungary had its Mohi and Poland had its Legnica as *lieux de mémoire*. At least it is striking how the late medieval Bohemian chroniclers began to invent and forge stories of famous heroism (like Jaroslav of Sternberg) during the Mongolian invasion period.

Finally, the Holy Roman Empire was scarcely affected by the Mongols, apart from some very small recorded raids. The danger was soon regarded as over (in July 1241, at a time when the Mongols set up an administration in Hungary and introduced a very severe regime), and the emperor, in company with the English and French kings, did hardly anything to address the problems of the Hungarian king. All in all, we must state that even the pope as the head of the Catholic Church did not manage to rally the highest European princes in order to focus their forces on this deadly and very powerful enemy. In the aftermath of the Mongolian intermezzo of 1241/42 it seems somehow

¹²⁸ There is certainly further research necessary to support this thesis.

odd, though, that the otherwise cautious and thoughtful Emperor Frederick II and his son Conrad IV were apparently not interested in sending their own delegations of diplomats and missionaries to the Mongolian court in Karakorum. The first such undertakings of this nature are linked to the following: The pope (Ascelin of Lombardia, John de Plano Carpini),¹²⁹ the Hungarian king (Julianus), maybe the Ruthenian dukes (archbishop Peter), maybe the Polish dukes (Benedictus of Poland, C. de Bridia), maybe the Bohemian king (Stephan of Bohemia, Ceslaus of Bohemia), certainly to the northern Italian cities (Marco Polo, obviously for commercial reasons) and to the French king (Andreas de Longjumeau, Simon de Saint-Quentin, Wilhelm Rubruk).¹³⁰ No initiatives came from the German emperor. This might be viewed as a result of the difficult political situation in Germany—two rival claimants to the throne in 1246/47, the very weak position of Conrad IV and, finally, the almost total extinction of the Stauffian dynasty in 1254. After that, until Rudolf of Swabia was elected as new Roman-German king in 1273, the Empire was very much caught up with internal affairs (the period referred to as the *interregnum*) and it did not, apparently, manage to send any delegations to the Mongols. Nonetheless, a question could be raised as to why the emperor did not make any efforts between 1242 and 1246, but this problem cannot be addressed here.¹³¹

Overall and generally, one can state, as I argued in the beginning, that East Central European princes and polities had to encounter in a quite painful way that they stood alone against incoming warrior nomads from Asia, because the West European kingdoms, in the first place the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, only supported them through futile letters and with empty messages of consolation. This developed a certain notion and awareness of a) being an *antemurale christianitatis* (a wall for European Christianity) and b) being part of a bigger historical region of East Central European polities, which shared some common attributes (especially since the Ruthenian polities had come under Mongolian control up to the fifteenth century).

¹²⁹ Innocent IV was very interested and probably sent several delegations. He wanted to juxtapose the Mongolian claim to world domination to his own, papal claim to world domination. Cf. SCHMIEDER, *Europa und die Fremden*, pp. 74–75.

¹³⁰ Cf. BEZZOLA, pp. 110–182.

¹³¹ There seems to be a gap in the research literature on this topic. In the future, it would be interesting to address the question of why the Holy Roman Empire was not interested in contact with the Mongols after 1241.

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