

Mongol Military Strategies Regarding the Campaign against the Hungarian Kingdom*

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Abstract

The focus of the study is the Mongol diplomatic and military tactics during the invasion of the Hungarian Kingdom in 1241–1242. The Mongols formed a characteristic art of war in the campaigns of the first half of the 13th century. The general elements of Mongol warfare and their military strategies and tactics can be identified in the campaign against the Hungarian Kingdom. Those elements are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Mongols, Mongol Warfare, Hungarian Kingdom, Medieval Europe

Introduction

The Mongols invaded the medieval Hungarian Kingdom in 1241–1242. It was the final move of the great Western campaign against Europe, starting in 1235. By that time, the Mongols had become the great power of Eurasia. Temüjin, known from 1206 as Genghis Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire, first conquered the peoples of the Central Asian Steppe, the Merkits, Tatars, Kereits, and Naimans. After receiving the title of Genghis Khan in a Kurultai in 1206, he started to conquer the neighboring settled states. He marched

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against Western Xia in 1211, and then in 1214 against the Jin Dynasty in Northern China. During these campaigns, the Mongols could learn to siege cities and gain military experts and engineers. Meanwhile, a Mongol army was sent against the Qara Khitais. After the conquest of Qara Khitai lands in 1218, the Mongols reached the borders of the Khwarazmians, the most powerful power of the Muslim East. The conflict between the Khwarazmians and the Mongols was due to the killing of the Mongol embassy in Otrar. The Mongols waged war against the Khwarazmians and conquered the regions of Transoxiana and Khorasan. The minor detachment persuaded the Khwarazm Shah to cross the Caucasus and defeat the Rus-Qipchaq allies at the battle of Kalka in 1223. Genghis Khan died while marching against the rebellious Western Xia in 1227. Ögedei was elected the Great Khan (1229–1241). Ögedei first marched against northern China and crushed the Jin Dynasty in 1234. He decided to send a great army against Europe at the Qurultai in 1235.

The Mongols attacked and subjugated the Volga Bulgars and the Qipchaqs on the Lower Volga. The Mongol armies defeated the most powerful Rus principality, Vladimir-Szudal, then the Qipchaqs on the Don and Dniester. The Mongols occupied the region of the Northern Caucasus. In 1240, they continued moving forward to conquer the city of Kyiv and defeat the Halich-Volhinian Principality. Afterwards, the Mongol armies marched into the Hungarian Kingdom and Poland. In 1241, Great Khan Ögedei died, and Mongols retreated from the Hungarian Kingdom in 1242. The Mongol empire was the consequence of a series of successful campaigns.

The Mongol art of war combined traditional nomadic tactics with Chinese and Muslim innovations. It was recently reviewed by Timothy May in a monograph.¹ The first chapter is a historical overview of the rise and expansion of the Mongol Empire between 1185 and 1265. It is followed by the recruitment and organization of the Mongol army. The size of the Mongol military power must have been large. It was recruited from nomadic tribes and from conquered agrarian societies using the census. Genghis Khan used the decimal system in organizing the army into units of ten, hundred, thousand, and ten thousand (*tümen*) men.² Genghis Khan turned the tribal organization into a military organization, which created the possibility of controlling the nomads and neighboring states under Mongol rule.³ The Mongol army was divided into three different corps: the right, left, and central corps.⁴ The bodyguard (*keshik*) border troops (*tamma*) securing the conquered

¹ MAY 2007.

² MARTÍN 1977, 102.

³ MAY 2007, 31.

⁴ MAY 2007, 32.

lands and the corps of engineers consisting of Chinese and Muslim experts also played an important role in the Mongol military organization.

The chapter on training and equipping the Mongol warrior emphasized that the nomadic way of life forced even the young boys to learn riding a horse and practicing archery, which was an excellent base to train them as professional cavalry.⁵ They were doing some drills in order to improve their archery skills. Sometimes, they shoot at a standing target.⁶ From time to time, they were training on the same drill to control the horse while they stood up on the stirrup. Besides hunting and providing food, it became a way of practicing and training as well.⁷ Traditional Mongolian hunting practice in which mounted hunters would encircle their prey and then open enough space to allow young and pregnant animals to escape.⁸ The discipline was also a basic element of the successful campaigns of the Mongol army. The main weapon of the Mongols, actually for all the nomadic tribes of the steppe, was a bow. It could be made from layers of horn, wood, and sinew, and they used to glue the weapon to maximize its shooting range.⁹ Mongols made lots of different styles of arrowheads to set their lethality; iron, steel, horn, and bone were used.¹⁰ Soldiers carried files to sharpen the edges. Each arrowhead had a different function.¹¹ They range from armor-piercing, whistling signal arrows to lumpy stun arrows.¹² Horse archery had lots of advantages on the battlefield. A warrior wore a heavy coat and the sword hung from his belt. A dagger or axe was also carried. His boots were comfortable; they were made from felt and leather.¹³ He also wore a hat made from felt and fur. The armor-heavy horsemen wore iron or leather-like scale-made lamellar on their coats. Small scales of iron or leather were pierced with holes and sewn with leather thongs to make a composite armor plate.¹⁴ As an alternative, a coat was worn under the suit of armor. His boots were made from heavy leather. He wore a large iron-piece helmet with a rounded cone shape. Also, the horses of the Mongol cavalymen had protection from lamellar armor. Under their armor and coats, the Mongols wore silk shirts to protect the warriors.¹⁵ The horses provided the mobility of the Mongol army. The Mongol soldier on horseback

⁵ MAY 2007, 43.

⁶ MAY 2007, 44.

⁷ SPINER 2015, 261.

⁸ ATWOOD 2004, 595.

⁹ MAY 2007, 50.

¹⁰ MAY 2007, 51.

¹¹ DAWSON 1955, 35.

¹² MAY 2007, 51.

¹³ TURNBULL & REYNOLDS 2003, 13.

¹⁴ TURNBULL & REYNOLDS 2003, 13.

¹⁵ TURNBULL & REYNOLDS 2003, 14.

could cover approximately 965 kilometers in nine days.¹⁶ Their speed and maneuvering ability were very important in steppe warfare. The Mongol soldier had five horses in campaigns to change horses at regular intervals.¹⁷

The chapter about the care of the army: logistics, supply, and medical care deals with the nutrition of the corps, which they took with them or obtained in the territory of the campaigns. Dairy products were the main source of diet, which were supplemented by meat, mainly from hunting, and cereal products from sedentary populations. The supply of weapons was a personal duty of the soldier, but the rulers had to take care of the additional set of weapons and special war machines. Active communication among the corps of the army was another key factor in Mongol campaigns. They used the postal service to maintain the quick change of information. There is no record of a true medical corps, but it is probable that doctors, surgeons, healers, and shamans traveled with the Mongols to tend to the needs of the sick and wounded.¹⁸

There is a chapter in the May's monograph about espionage, tactics, and strategy. Spies and scouts are effective assets for collecting intelligence against enemies. Emperor Frederick II warned the King of England against such agents with the following words: "Through their emissaries, who are sent everywhere, the Tatars are informed of internal strife and the weaknesses of the countries."¹⁹ Sometimes the spies disguised themselves as merchants,²⁰ as evidenced by the case of the Mongol caravan, whose members were massacred in 1218 at Otrar by the Khorezmshah's soldiers on suspicion of espionage.²¹ The Mongols were primarily light-horse archers, like most steppe armies. Their tactics seek to take advantage of their bow and mobility, often staying away from their opponents' weapons and using hit-and-run tactics in waves while raining down arrows on the enemy. May describes one of their main tactics, i.e., the Caracole tactics as follows: "The Mongols combined the arrow storm with hit-and-run tactics, changing horses regularly to keep them fresh. Approximately 80 men in each jaghun participated, with the remaining 20 acting as heavy cavalry. Each jaghun sent 20 men per wave. The waves fired several arrows as they charged, and then circled back to the Mongol lines after completing their charge, having loosed their final shot roughly 40-50 m from the enemy line before wheeling around."²² The Mongols also used the false retreat on the battlefields, luring the enemy into

¹⁶ TURNBULL & REYNOLDS 2003, 17.

¹⁷ MAY 2007, 54.

¹⁸ MAY 2007, 66.

¹⁹ GÖCKENJAN 2001, 59.

²⁰ MAY 2007, 70.

²¹ GÖCKENJAN 2001, 59.

²² MAY 2007, 72.

a position where they were ambushed.²³ The battle of Kalka in 1223 was a classical example of this tactic.

Flanking tactics and double envelopment are also called *nerge*. May give the following definition: "A hunting technique used by the Mongols that also became a training technique and common tactical and strategic practice. In the *nerge*, the Mongols would fan out over several miles, forming a circle. Then they would gradually dose and contract the circle, trapping the prey within a ring of men and horses."²⁴ According to Allsen, "*Jerge or Nerge*" came to mean "*battue*" which means hunting circle or encircling movement in the Mongol warfare.²⁵ Yet, we do not see this specific term from the Western travelers who visited the Mongol Empire. For example, in the work of Rubruck, "The ring hunt distinguished by its considerable scale and dramatic, bloody climax, culminated in the mass slaughter of trapped, frantic animals."²⁶ May sees the training of *Nerge* as an experience that "gave Mongol warriors the ability to function as a single unit on the battlefield."²⁷ The Chinese general Zhao Hong, the author of the *Meng-Da Bei-Lu*, describes the tactic with these words: "As soon as the scouting screen of a Mongol army made contact with the enemy, the main body extended in front over as great a distance as possible so as to overlap the flanks of the hostile force. On closer contact and the approach of action, skirmishers went forward, and scouts were called upon to bring in reports about local topography, lines of communication, and the strength and disposition of the opposing troops."²⁸

The siege warfare became effective after the conquest of northern China and the Khwarazmian empire, where they could set up corpses of engineers from Chinese and Muslim experts. The Mongols applied psychological tactics and means of deception, such as massacres and rumors, to discourage resistance.

The Mongol strategy was based on high mobility. The most characteristic elements of their strategy were timing, i.e., a rigid timetable of military operations; travel by columns approaching the enemy from several directions; annihilation of the enemy's field army; and the pursuit of the hostile ruler.

The leadership was crucial to the success of the Mongol wars. The Mongol commanders received excellent training. The bodyguards of the khans gave them the possibility of getting systematic training in Mongol tactics and strategies. Apprenticeship was another form of military education for the young Mongol princes and commanders who were sent to a senior general to

²³ TURNBULL & REYNOLDS 2003, 43-49.

²⁴ MAY 2007, 150.

²⁵ ALLSEN 2006, 26.

²⁶ RUBRUCK 1990, 85.

²⁷ MAY 2007, 46.

²⁸ MARTIN 1977, 33. MAY 2007, 75-76.

develop their knowledge of warfare and skills.²⁹ There was a command ranking according to the decimal system.³⁰ The Mongol army corps had its own commander. The *Örliüg* 'field-marshal', an experienced general, was appointed as the supreme commander of the army.³¹ Jebe and Sübedei were well-known *Örliüg* of the Mongol army. The short biographies of the most famous Mongol generals, such as Jebe, Sübedei, Toquchar, Muqali, and Chormaqan, close the chapter in May's monograph.³² Sübedei was chosen as the leader of the Western Campaign of the Mongols, though Jochi's son Batu was formally the commander in chief. Sübedei prepared the strategies for the campaign.³³

The opponents of the Mongols and their warfare methods are the theme of the next chapter. The Mongols waged war against different societies. The steppe nomads of Eurasia had similar organizations as the Mongols.³⁴ Due to the huge distances and horse archery, unifying all the nomadic tribes under one banner was a serious challenge. The Mongol military discipline made it possible to defeat them.³⁵ The main opponents of the Mongols were the Jin dynasty in north China, the Khwarazmians, the Rus' principalities and the Hungarian Kingdom, the Mamluks, and the Song dynasty.³⁶ May gives descriptions of the campaign against Khwarazmians and several battles and sieges.

Overviewing the basic tactics and strategies of the Mongols our study focuses on classical strategies and tactics applied during the Mongol campaign against the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, which can be clearly identified.

Genghis Khan, uniting the steppe nomads of Eastern Eurasia and defeating the Xixia, Jin, and Khwarezmian empires, may have perceived that the Sky-God gave him and his successors a mandate to rule the whole world. According to this concept, the people were divided into two categories: *el-irgen*, 'peaceful people accepting Mongol rule'; and *bulga irgen*, 'rebellious people' who must be defeated and submit.³⁷ There are several diplomatic sources, including claims for peaceful submission by the rulers of the Mongol Empire and threats for violating the rules of submission.

²⁹ MAY 2007, 87-88.

³⁰ MAY 2007, 88.

³¹ MAY 2007, 89.

³² MAY 2007, 92-99.

³³ MAY 2007, 94.

³⁴ MAY 2007, 100.

³⁵ MAY 2007, 101.

³⁶ MAY 2007, 10-113; CF. JACKSON 2005 61-62.

³⁷ ALLSEN 1987, 64.

The Hungarian Dominican monk preserved the Latin translation of a Mongol letter to the Hungarian King IV. Béla, which he received in Suzdalia in 1237. It contains several elements of the Mongol concept. Julianus recorded: *"I, the Qa'an [Chayn], the representative [nuntius] of the Heavenly King, [the one] to whom He has given power over the earth, to raise up those who submit to me and to cast down those who resist – I wonder why, O King of Hungary, when I have now sent envoys to you on thirty occasions, you have sent none of them back to me; nor do you send me in return your own envoys or letter. I am aware that you are a wealthy and powerful monarch, that you have under you many soldiers, and that you have the sole rule over a great Kingdom. Hence it is difficult for you to submit to me of your own volition; and yet it would be better for you, and healthier, were you to submit willingly. I have learned, moreover, that you keep the Cumans, my slaves, under your protection; and so I order that you do not keep them with you any longer and do not have me as an enemy on their account. For it is easier for them to escape than for you, since they are without houses and move about in their tents, and so may perhaps be able to escape. But as for you, who dwell in houses and have fortresses and cities – how will you evade my grasp."*³⁸

Accordingly, the Hungarian King was regarded as the ruler of a rebellious people (*bulga irgen*), as he did not want to submit voluntarily in the eyes of the Mongols, relying on his military strength. This Mongol idea is reflected in the letter of Güyük Khan to Pope Innocent IV in Persian, which Plano Carpini brought from Güyük; "Again. You [Pope] have sent words [saying]: 'Thou hast taken all the lands of the Majar and the Christians; I am astonished. What was their crime? Tell us. These words of thine We have not understood either. The command of God, Chingiz Khan (Genghis Khan) and Qa'an (Ögedei), both of them sent it to cause it to be heard. They have not trusted the command of God. Just like the words too have been reckless; they have acted with arrogance, and they killed Our ambassadors. The people of those countries (it was) the Ancient God (who) killed and destroyed them. Except by the command of God, how should anyone kill, how should (anyone) capture by his own strength?"³⁹ Güyük explained clearly that the Majars, i.e., the Hungarians, did not submit to the Mongols and killed their ambassadors, which meant that they were *bulga irgen*, who must be punished and attacked by the order of the Sky God.

The Mongol letter preserved by Julianus contains other important information concerning the cause of the hostility. The Cumans were regarded as the slaves of the Mongols since the Eastern Cumans, i.e., the Qipchaqs of the Muslim sources, were defeated and subjected to the Mongols.⁴⁰

³⁸ JACKSON 2014, 60-61. To see the latin version of the text: DÖRRÉ 1956, 179.

³⁹ DE RACHEWILTZ 1971, 213.

⁴⁰ ZIMONYI 2012, 176.

The basic tactic of the Mongols was to defeat and conquer those nomadic communities that escaped from them.⁴¹ Genghis Khan and the Kereit ruler (Togrul, Ong Khan) successfully defeated the Tatars and the Merkits, then subdued his ally, Ong Khan, with his people, the Kereits. The Naiman tribal alliance remained a serious power toward the west. After the death of Inanch Khan, his two sons, Buyruk Khan and Tayang Khan, shared the power and shortly afterwards became enemies with each other. Buyruk had the territory around Altai, while Tayang inherited the steppe along the Black Irtis. In 1198/9, Genghis Khan and the Kereits attacked Buyruk Khan, who fled across the Altai. In 1204, Tayang Khan attacked Genghis Khan but was defeated and killed.⁴² Tayang's son, Küchlüg, sought refuge with his uncle, Buyruk Khan, but in 1206 the Mongols also crushed Buyruk,⁴³ so Küchlüg and his retinue fled to the Qara Khitai Empire, where he married the daughter of the ruler and finally seized the throne in 1211. Genghis Khan, after ending his invasion of the Jin dynasty, sent one of the best of his generals, Jebe, against Küchlüg, who conquered the Qara Khitai region and captured and executed Küchlüg in 1218.⁴⁴

The conflict with the Merkits dates back to Genghis Khan's father's time, when he kidnapped Höelün from a Merkit chief.⁴⁵ In return, Genghis Khan's wife, Börte, was captured by the Merkits. Genghis Khan finally succeeded in getting back his wife after hard battles.⁴⁶ In 1204, Genghis Khan conquered the Merkits. Their leader, Toqto'a, and his sons fled west to the Altai Range. In 1206 and 1208, the Mongols raided their remnants, and their chief Toqto'a died.⁴⁷ His sons fled west to the Qipchaqs in modern Kazakhstan, while the bulk of the Merkits submitted to the Mongols. In 1216, the Merkits revolted, attacking the Mongols in their home camp. Genghis sent Sübedei against the rebels and crushed them, then Sübedei and Jochi marched against Toqto'a's sons, who were hosted by the Qipchaqs, and defeated and killed them around 1218 between the Volga and Ural Rivers.

As for the Qipchaqs, known as Cumans in Western sources, the Mongols defeated them first in 1218, then Jebe and Sübedei defeated them in 1223 during their raid against Eastern Europe.⁴⁸ Then the great Western campaign of the Mongols was mentioned as the Qipchaq campaign in the Secret History of the Mongols and in Yuan sources. The Mongols first defeated Bachman, the

⁴¹ ZIMONYI 2012, 181.

⁴² DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 115 (§196).

⁴³ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 75 (§158).

⁴⁴ ATWOOD 2017, 50-51. DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 153 (§237)

⁴⁵ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 10-11 (§54-§56).

⁴⁶ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 37-38 (§110).

⁴⁷ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 118 (§198).

⁴⁸ ZIMONYI 2014, 325-328.

most powerful eastern chief of the Cumans, in 1236⁴⁹ and in 1238, they conquered the Western Qipchaqs living north of the Azov and the Black Sea.⁵⁰ It is evident that the Mongols regarded the hosting of the Cumans by the Hungarian King as an open declaration of war "*casus belli*". According to the letter of Julianus, he received the Mongol letter in Suzdalia in 1237. It cannot relate to the migration of Köten to Hungarian territory in 1239. However, it leads us to another Cuman chief who earlier migrated to Hungarian Kingdom, Bortz, moved to the border of the Hungarian Kingdom, and the Dominican friars made a successful mission among them under the guidance of the Prince of Transylvania, later King Béla IV. In 1227 Bortz and his son were baptized in Esztergom, and mass baptism happened next to Transylvania.⁵¹ Béla IV took the title of '*Rex Cumaniae*'⁵² 'the King of Cumans' in 1229. So, the threats of the Mongol ruler directed against the Cumans, under the leadership of Bortz, were seeking protection from the Hungarian King.

It is worth mentioning that the letter of the Mongol ruler compared the lifestyles of the Hungarians with those of the Cumans. The Cumans may escape, as their mobile, nomadic way of life makes it possible, whereas the settled population has no choice but to surrender. A similar concept is reflected in the *Secret History of the Mongols*. The Tanguts accepting Mongol rule⁵³ were obliged to send troops to the Mongol army campaigning against the Khwarazmian Empire, but they did not fulfill their obligation. Therefore, after conquering the Khwarazmian Empire, Genghis Khan decided to launch an attack against the Tanguts. During the march, Genghis Khan fell from his horse and had sustained a serious injury. The council suggested the following, which can be found in the *Secret History of the Mongols*: "The Tangut people are ones who have towns with pounded earth walls; they are ones who live in permanent camps. They won't leave, carrying off their towns with pounded earth walls. They won't leave, abandoning their permanent camps. Let us withdraw."⁵⁴ The Mongols regarded themselves as *sisgei to'urqatu ulus*, 'peoples of felt-walled tents.'⁵⁵

The Tatar (Mongol) campaign in Hungary in 1241 clearly proves how carefully and purposefully the Mongols used diplomatic vigilance.⁵⁶ As a result of the operation of these spies, the Mongol generals were accurately informed not only about the Hungarian military roads, the border crossing

⁴⁹ ZIMONYI 2014, 331.

⁵⁰ ZIMONYI 2014, 332.

⁵¹ KOVÁCS 2005, 256.

⁵² KOVÁCS 2005, 264.

⁵³ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 167 (§249).

⁵⁴ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 185 (§265).

⁵⁵ DE RACHEWILTZ 2004, 758 (§202-203).

⁵⁶ GÖCKENJAN 2001, 59.

points, the border fortifications, the number of Hungarian troops, and their fighting behavior, but also about the conflict between the Hungarian King and the nobility before the start of the attack.⁵⁷

During the creation of the Mongol Empire, Genghis Khan formed a policy to capture the enemy's leaders in order to prevent them from reinforcing themselves again. Once the army of the enemy had been defeated, the Mongols focused on destroying their opponents to gather. They targeted the rulers of the enemy and tried to kill them as soon as possible. Genghis Khan started to use this policy during the wars of unification of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia. In his first campaign, the leaders of the enemy were able to escape and be reinforced again. In order to prevent that, he insisted on the merciless pursuit of the hostile rulers.⁵⁸ The pursuit of the Naiman Küchlüg and the Merkit Toqto'a were mentioned above. The Khwarazmshah Muhammad fled to an island on the Caspian Sea, chased by the Mongol generals Jebe and Sübedei, where he died. His son, Jalal al-Din, was chased but he could not escape to India. Then he returned and tried to rebuild the Khwarazmian empire, focusing on the Western territories. Ögödei sent Chormaqan against him.⁵⁹

The pursuit of Hungarian King Béla IV is an example of this policy. After the defeat of the Hungarians at the Battle of Muhi, King Béla IV had to flee from the battlefield and from the country. He went to Pozsony (Bratislava). The Austrian duke invited him, but instead of helping, he robbed the King, who rode to Segesd and Zagrab.⁶⁰ Finally, he found refuge on an island of the Adriatic in Trau.⁶¹ Qadan, with a Mongol detachment, followed him to the Adriatic Sea but could not capture him. Mongols following the fledging leader created distractions as well. The pursuit forced the local lords to keep their men at home instead of joining the ruler and fighting against the Mongols.

One of the main strategies of Mongol warfare was timing. Denis Sinor explains it as this: 'Mongol strategy, at its best, was based on very careful planning of the military operations to be carried out, the essence of which lay in a very strict timetable to which all Mongol commanders were expected to strictly adhere'.⁶² It is easy to follow the adaptation of the Mongols to environmental and weather factors. As May said, "They were not afraid to do so when their horses were lean or weak, or over frozen rivers in the middle of winter".⁶³ The armor of the Hungarian army did much to protect them from

⁵⁷ GÖCKENJAN 2001, 59.

⁵⁸ MAY 2007, 84.

⁵⁹ RATCHNEVSKY 1991, 133.

⁶⁰ THOMAS OF SPLIT 2006, 100.

⁶¹ ZIMONYI 2012, 188. PRAWDIN 2017, 269.

⁶² SINOR 1971, 240.

⁶³ MAY 2007, 82.

arrows; therefore, the Mongols had to use some other tactics, such as rolling barrages of trebuchet and ballistae fire, to force them out at the Battle of Muhi from the bridge.⁶⁴

Marching columns of the Mongols mostly used several routes to invade the territory. These pre-planned strategies gave the Mongols enormous advantages. Because of their scouts, they could march divided but fight united against the enemy's troops. Concerning the Khawarazmian Empire, they followed four or five routes, one of them via the Kızıl Kum desert. During the campaign against the Rus, Julianus informs us about the preparation of the Mongol campaign against the Principality of Vladimir Suzdal: "Now, when I stay at the confines of Russia, I learned the whole truth: the full Tatar army marching westward has divided into four units. One part approaches Suzdal' at the confines of Russia along the river Etil, another part has reached the borders of Ryazan' towards the south; it is another Russian principality, which has not been defeated yet; the third part camps on the other bank of the river Don at the fortress Voronež; it is another Russian principality."⁶⁵ The Mongol invasion of the Hungarian Kingdom was planned according to this strategy: the main corps of the army led by Batu and Sübedei crossed the Verecke Pass and arrived at Muhi.⁶⁶ The southern wing came via Transylvania, divided into three corps under Qadan, Böček, and Büri, penetrating three passes (Borgó, Ojtoz, and Vöröstorony). The northern wing of Orda attacked Poland and Silesia, joining the main army from the north. If we put them on a map, the strategy is clearly outlined.

May, emphasize that the *nerge* military tactic was used not only in battles but in invading regions or provinces.⁶⁷ There are several pieces of data that confirm the use of this tactic during the Western campaign.

When the Mongol army faced the troops of the Hungarian King on the Sajó near the village of Muhi, the Mongols crossed the bridge on April 11-12 at night and attempted to get positions on the right side of the river, but the Hungarian troops successfully prevented it.⁶⁸ However, the Mongol leadership found fords and built a temporary bridge, so they were able to cross the river Sajó in several places and encircle the Hungarian camp.⁶⁹ After the encirclement of hostile troops, the Mongols opened a corridor for escape. Rogerius, describing the battle, noted: "They (the Hungarians) thought that most of the warriors were joining battle on the other flank of the army; yet they did not go to fight, because the Tatars stepped back a little and opened

⁶⁴ MAY 2007, 109.

⁶⁵ ZIMONYI 2014, 332-333.

⁶⁶ JACKSON 2014, 16.

⁶⁷ MAY 2007, 77.

⁶⁸ ZIMONYI 2012, 188.

⁶⁹ MASTER ROGER 2010, 182-183.

up among themselves a point of exit where they did not shoot. Therefore, ever more Hungarians left the army using this way; and the more that had left the wider the gap that the Tatars opened."⁷⁰ The other main source about the battle of Muhi, the work of Split of Thomas, recorded: "...the enemy surrounding them on all sides pressed them relentlessly with spears and arrows. The wretched Hungarian multitude, lacking any plan of deliverance, had no inkling what to do...when the Tatars perceived that the Hungarian army had turned to flight, they left a door open for them, so to speak, and allowed them to depart. They did not pursue them with all their force, but followed them cautiously, on two sides, not allowing them to turn aside. ...When they saw that their enemies were exhausted from running and unable to stretch out their arms to fight or their legs in flight, they began to rain spears upon them on all sides and to cut them down with swords, sparing no one, and butchering them like animals."⁷¹ The descriptions of Master Roger and Thomas of Split reflect the classical *nerge* tactic in battle.

The other possibility for its use was the encirclement of regions. Rashid al-Din mentioned it in connection with the raid against the Cuman leader Bachman living in the lower Volga region: "Möngke Qa'an ordered two hundred boats to be constructed and one hundred fully armed Mongols to be set in each, while he and his brother formed a hunting ring and proceeded along the banks of the river."⁷² Finally, Bachman was captured and executed. Rashid al-Din reported other cases after the conquest of Vladimir and defeating the prince of Vladimir-Suzdal at the Sit' River in 1238, it is recorded: "Then they turned back, and (after) holding a council (they) decided to proceed in a hunting ring, tümen by tümen, capturing and destroying any town, province, or castle that lay in their path."⁷³ After the siege of Kyiv the Mongols attacked Halich-Volhynia following the same method: "Then they proceeded in a hunting ring, tümen by tümen, against the towns of Vladimir, seizing the castles and lands that lay across their path."⁷⁴

This method can be reconstructed after the Mongol invasion of Transylvania. The southern wing, consisting of three Mongol corps, penetrated Transylvania. Kadan crossed the *Borgó* Pass on March 31, 1241, and then occupied Radna, which was the center of silver mining. After that, he took Beszterce on April 2, then reached Csanád, touching Cluj-Napoca and Várad. The other two corps of the southern wing, led by Böcsek and Büri, attacked through the Ojtozi and Vöröstorony Passes. Crossing the Ojtozi Strait, the team entered Barcaság, where they defeated the army of the Transylvanian

⁷⁰ MASTER ROGER 2010, 182-183.

⁷¹ THOMAS OF SPLIT 2006, 266-269.

⁷² ZIMONYI 2014, 332.

⁷³ BOYLE 1971, 59-60.

⁷⁴ BOYLE 1971, 69.

voivode, and then took Küküllővár on March 4, from where they marched to Gyulafehérvár, where they waited for the other corps. The latter, which penetrated through the Vöröstorony Pass, captured Nagyszeben on 11th of April and then reached Gyulafehérvár from there. Moving along the river Maros, the united army met the army unit led by Kadan at Csanád. The army of the united southern wing crossed the Tisza at Szeged and marched to Pest.⁷⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Mongol military tactics and strategy are reflected in the campaign against the Hungarian Kingdom. The Mongol diplomacy used the difference between nomadic and settled lifestyles to threaten the settled population to submit peacefully as they have no possibility to migrate, contrary to the nomads, who are mobile. The Mongols, similarly to the Türk Khaganate, strictly insisted on the full subjugation of the nomadic population; groups that fled to the West were persecuted and subjugated. The ruler of the hostile people must be captured and killed to overcome resistance more easily. The classical *nerge*, which was practiced in round hunting, was an effective method in battles, conquering districts, and even as a strategy to subdue another state or country.

⁷⁵ ZIMONYI 2012, 187.

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