

1242

Gateway to the West

HUNGARIAN-MONGOLIAN-BRITISH CO-PRODUCTION



1242 Gateway to the west

IN THE DARKEST OF DAYS,
WHEN THE GLORIOUS HUNGARIAN ARMY
WAS ANNIHILATED AT THE BATTLE OF MOHI

Esztergom

ONLY ONE LAST FORTRESS,
THE KINGLESS ROYAL CASTLE
OF ESZTERGOM IN HUNGARY STOOD
IN THE WAY OF THE MONGOLS
INVADING THE WEST.



THE HUNGARIANS
CANNOT EXPECT HELP.
NEITHER CAN THEY
EXPECT MERCY.

Story

1242. BATU KHAN, THE GRANDSON OF THE WORLD-CONQUERING GENGHIS, THE MIGHTY LORD OF THE EASTERN STEPPES, REACHES THE WALLS OF ESZTERGOM WITH HIS INVINCIBLE ARMIES. TO CONQUER EUROPE, HE MUST SWEEP THE CASTLE OF THE FLEEING HUNGARIAN KING BÉLA OUT OF HIS WAY.

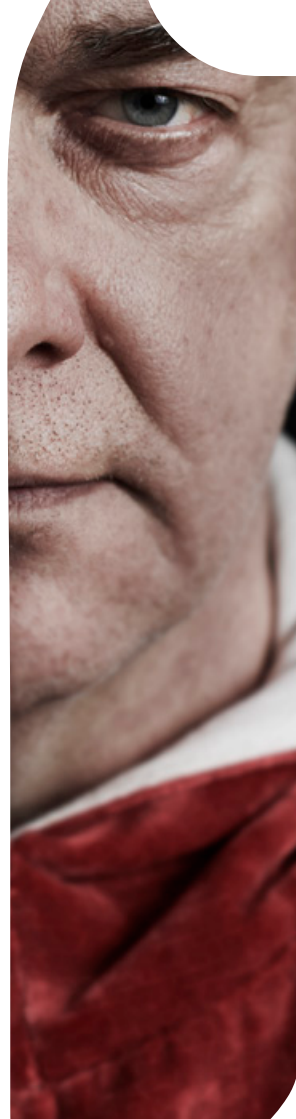
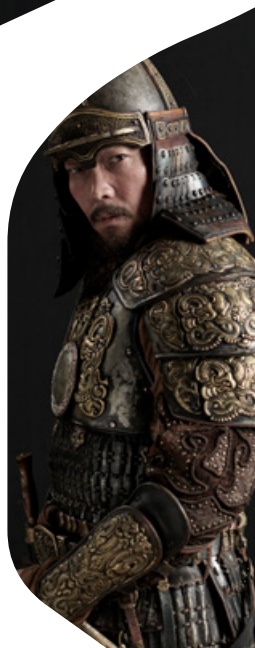
THE DEFENDERS, THE LAST SOLDIERS OF THE SHATTERED HUNGARIAN ARMY, LED BY EUSEBIUS, THE CANON OF ESZTERGOM, AND THE SPANISH MERCENARY, CAPTAIN SIMON, PREPARE FOR THE FINAL BATTLE.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE PAPAL LEGATE, CARDINAL CESAREANI, AND THE MONGOL LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION, APPEAR TO OFFER THE DEFENDERS A SMALL GLIMMER OF HOPE.

Cast

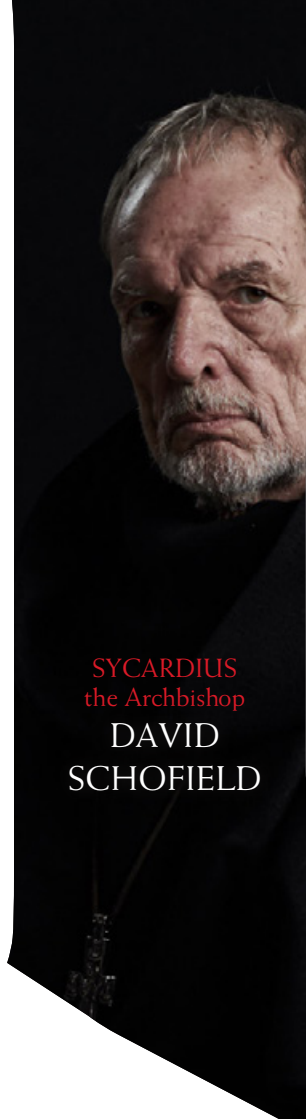
BATU KHAN
BOLD CHOIMBOL

hotblooded
leader of the
world-conquering
Mongol army.



CESAREANI
the Papal Legate
RAY STEVENSON

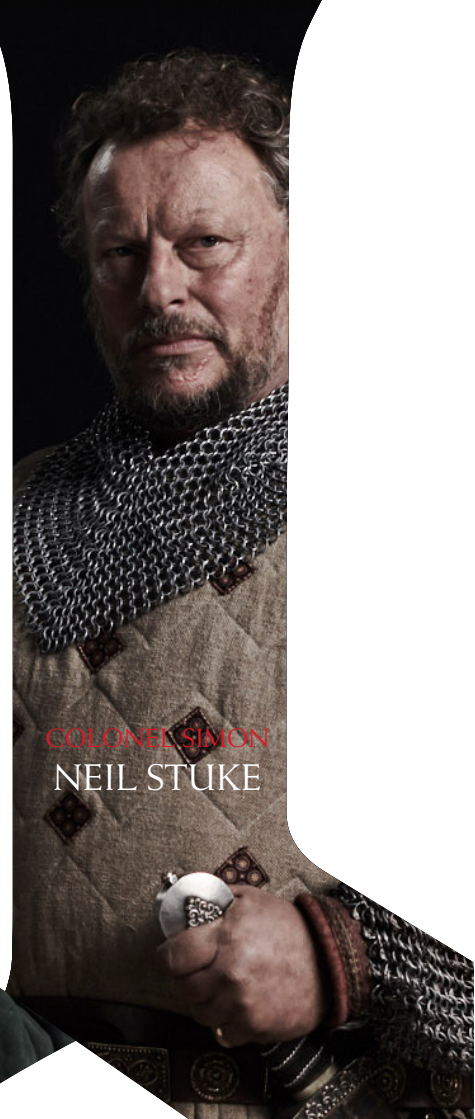
an Italian cardinal
who arrives at the
besieged castle at the
last moment with his
suspicious henchmen.



SYCARDIUS
the Archbishop
DAVID
SCHOFIELD



CAPTAIN AKOS
ERIC ROBERTS

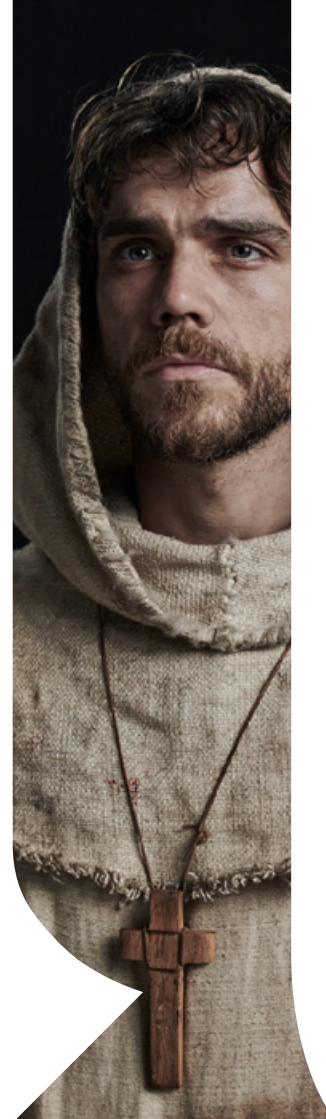


COLONEL SIMON
NEIL STUKE



UULEN
the bodyguard
GENEVIEVE
FLORENCE

EUSEBIUS
the Canon
JEREMY
NEUMARK
JONES
fighter-clergyman
who is ready to
sacrifice his life
for the defenders
of the castle



OLD CRUSADER
MICHAEL
IRONSIDE



BÉLA IV
King of Hungary
MÁTRAY
LÁSZLÓ



NEGUUN
The Shaman
TSERENBOLD
TSEGMID

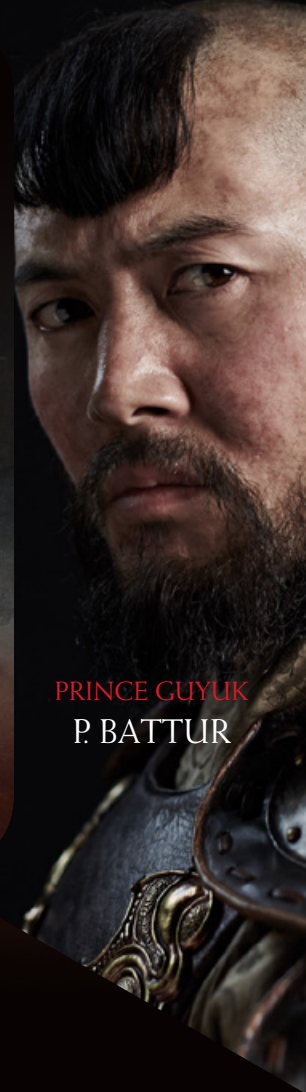


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BACSÓ
the Assassin
TAM
WILLIAMS



PRINCE GUYUK
P. BATTUR



KANGAR
the Scarface
ANDRÁS
STOHL



Crew

DIRECTOR: PÉTER SOÓS

SCREENWRITERS: ÁRON HORVÁTH, JOAN LANE
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: BALÁZS ISTVÁN BALÁZS

PRODUCTION DESIGNER: ZSUZSANNA BORVENDÉG
COSTUME DESIGNER: GYÖRGYI SZAKÁCS

EDITOR: KANT PAN (OSCAR NOMINATED)
SOUND DESIGN: GLENN FREEMANTLE

PRODUCERS: BILL CHAMBERLAIN, BAYAR BANZRAGCH,
CARLOS ALPERIN, KORNÉL SIPOS

INTERNATIONAL SALES:
CARLOS ALPERIN - GALLOPING ENTERTAINMENT
CARLOS@GALLOPINGENTERTAINMENT.COM

Director

PÉTER SOÓS

PÉTER SOÓS GRADUATED FROM THE EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY,
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY WITH A DEGREE IN HUNGARIAN HISTORY.
IN 1992, HE GRADUATED FROM THE COLLEGE OF THEATER
AND FILM ARTS AS A FILM AND TV DIRECTOR.

HE HAS BEEN DIRECTING FEATURE FILMS FOR HUNGARIAN
TELEVISION CHANNELS ("BUDAPEST ANNO", "BLESSED STATE",
"GENIUS - THE ALCHEMIST"). HE IS WELL-KNOWN IN HUNGARY FOR
HIS TV SERIES, SUCH AS "FOR BETTER OR WORSE" AND "HACKTION".

BESIDES DIRECTING ON STAGE IN SEVERAL HUNGARIAN THEATRES
PÉTER SOÓS WORKS AS A LECTURER AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF THEATRE AND FILM ARTS BUDAPEST.





BACKGROUND

The story takes place during an historic turning point of the 13th century and tells of the expansion of the Mongol Empire into Europe. The fundamental question is: Why did the unstoppable Mongolian Army, having travelled thus far into Europe, suddenly turn back from the Castle of Esztergom?

Historians have so far treated it as a fact, that the reason for the retreat may have been the death of the Great Khan Ögödei, leader of the Mongol Empire. However, this theory has been questioned, pointing out that the retreat only affected the Carpathian Basin and today's Central Europe. Using this historical uncertainty, the film script is completed with fictitious elements, providing an exciting, mystical, and surprising explanation of what could have happened.



THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN
FEBRUARY 1242 IN THE KINGDOM
OF HUNGARY AT THE CASTLE OF
ESZTERGOM AT THE FOOT
OF THE PILIS MOUNTAINS.

Khan Batu, grandson of the world-conquering Genghis Khan, and Chief of the Mongolian Army, is on the verge of a never-to-return opportunity and - by conquering Europe - his achievement would then be recorded in the written history of the Mongol Empire, making him 'worthy of the inheritance of the mighty Genghis Khan' while fulfilling Genghis Khan's final order: „Reach the eternal sea!”



Khan Batu, who had come to a halt due to the sudden and mysterious disappearance of King Béla of Hungary, unites the Mongolian army and its allies under the Castle of Esztergom, which he is trying to take forcefully, by siege - but also by deception through collusion with the Papal Legate, Cesareani.

When news arrives that Ögödei, the great Khan of the Mongol Empire, has died, it disrupts the war mechanism that had worked perfectly until then. To everyone's surprise, Khan Batu gives orders for the celebration of the Lunar New Year – probably to counter the sad and potentially dispiriting news for his Soldiers of the death of the reigning Khan. He then offers a two-night truce for the Defenders of Esztergom and invites them to the feast.

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ELABORATES AND REFLECTS ON
THE EVENTS OF THOSE 48 HOURS

Eusebius, the Canon of Esztergom, who speaks excellent Mongolian, has a great career ahead of him in the Church, but he also maintains a good relationship with the enigmatic Hermits of the nearby Pilis Mountains. The arrival of Papal Legate Cesareani in Esztergom Castle surprises Eusebius, just as it surprises everyone else.

The two main characters in the film are Khan Batu, leader of the conquering Mongolian army and, on the opposing side, Eusebius, Canon of Esztergom. These two men represent two very different worlds which appear to have no common ground or meeting points. Eusebius encounters Khan Batu face to face as one of the delegates sent from the castle to the Lunar New Year feast. There is no question that, as a worshipper of the Christian religion, he can only carry out his duties with a pure heart. His way, as a divine trial, is lined with challenges and tragedies.

Khan Batu is opposed by his Warlords, who are fighting for the vacant throne and decide amongst themselves that the final order from Genghis can only be achieved by conquest. They inevitably become Khan Batu's 'enemies from within'.



During the two-man Hungarian delegation's visit to the Mongolian camp, the mission of Canon Eusebius is negated by his companion, the valiant archer, Bacsó, when the latter attempts to assassinate Khan Batu. The Khan survives the assassination due to the intervention of Eusebius. Khan Batu's only true confidante is Ulen, who in the eyes of others is merely his mistress, but behind the scenes is Khan Batu's insightful, wise counsel and skilled bodyguard.

Due to their mutual respect, Eusebius's goals are aided by Negin, the Shaman of the Mongol army, and the Canon finally succeeds with his secret mission: he leads Khan Batu to the Pilis Mountains, where Béla, King of the Hungarians, awaits him. During their negotiations, positions are debated, and relationships strained. Finally, common roots, along with a flag made from a white yak tail, which Temüjin (Genghis Khan) had previously given to Hungarian opponents as a symbol of friendship, reinterpret the command of the great Genghis: the eternal sea is not meant to be a physical place (the Atlantic Ocean), but is a figurative depiction of Peace!

Despite Khan Batu's orders, in his short absence in the Pilis Mountains the Mongolian Warlords call the army to arms and begin a final attack on the castle. The castle gates to the last Hungarian stronghold are opened by Cesareani, the duplicitous and dissembling Papal Legate. Khan Batu arrives just in time. He crushes the rebellion, retaliates, and reclaims power over the army.

The story ends with the departure of the Mongol army from the Kingdom of Hungary and the liberation of the Castle of Esztergom. The future fate of our heroes is known from the history books: Khan Batu returns home and unites his Mongolian provinces to establish the 'Golden Horde' and remains the guardian of his country for the rest of his life.

Eusebius bids farewell to his church career, unites with the Pilis hermits and founds a new religious community. The Order of St. Paul exists to this day. The Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit, commonly called the Pauline Fathers, is a monastic order of the Roman Catholic Church, founded in Hungary during the 13th century.





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