

ABSTRACT

ZHANG, ZHAN. *Beyond Preaching: Papal Legate and Sino-Western Contact in Mongol-Yuan Eurasia, 1206-1368*. (Under the direction of Dr. Xiaolin Duan).

After the foundation of Genghis Khan in 1206, the Mongol Empire quickly took up a prominent role on the world stage from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. Through numerous conquests across Eurasia, the Mongols established a vast territorial domain connecting Asia and Europe. As a result, transnational political and cultural contacts of European society to Mongol Asia begun in the mid-thirteenth century, benefitted from the increasing mobility of people including soldiers, missionaries, and merchants. This thesis examines the visits of Catholic missionaries to the Mongol-Yuan dynasty (1206-1368) in the context of the conversation and negotiation between Western Europe and the Mongols. It explores various purposes that motivated these envoys sent by the Pope or European King to the Mongol court in different periods, how they reached out to and observed the Mongols, and their role in Sino-Western communications. By analyzing correspondences between the Pope and Mongol Khan, as well as missionaries' reports and travel notes, this thesis looks into how the intentions and strategies of these visitors changed before and after the fragmentation of the Mongol Empire in the 1260s. This thesis argues that the division of the Mongol Empire and the consequent establishment of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) was a significant turning point in the history of Mongol-European contact. Before the empire disintegrating into four khanates, Mongol army was considered as a potential military threat to Western Europe. The Pope therefore sent legates to request the Mongols' conversion for the sake of peace and also to check out Mongol's military plan. Through their travels, Franciscan friar John of Plano Carpini (1245) and other Catholic missions primarily aimed to gather information about the Mongol forces and convert Mongolians to Catholic

Christianity. However, the Mongol Khan firmly claimed political and religious authority over Western Europe. Due to power struggles and religious misunderstandings, the European contact with the Mongols during this period received little achievements. After the Mongol Empire fractured into four khanates, the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in East Asia proved little threat to the Europe since the two sides had no direct boundaries and Yuan emperors' ambition of conquering the European world faded. Under this background, European missionaries came to China in the first half of the fourteenth century were dedicated to preaching, and especially evangelizing Catholicism to several local cities in China. Often received with hospitality by the Yuan court, these missionaries also helped the papal court and the Yuan dynasty build diplomatic relationships.

© Copyright 2020 by Zhan Zhang

All Rights Reserved

Beyond Preaching: Papal Legate and Sino-Western Contact in Mongol-Yuan Eurasia, 1206-1368.

by
Zhan Zhang

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina
2020

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Xiaolin Duan
Committee Chair

Dr. David. P Gilmartin

Dr. Julie L Mell

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my husband, my best friend Xiangyu Zhang.

BIOGRAPHY

Originally grew up in Zhengzhou, China, Zhan Zhang earned her B.A. in History and M.A. in Chinese History at Guangzhou before enrolling in the master's program in History at North Carolina State University in Fall 2018. Her research interest fields include cross-cultural Eurasian exchange, religions in Middle Period China, Mongol Yuan studies, spatial and environmental history, and digital humanities. She plans to continue her study in the History Ph.D. program at the University of Pittsburgh after graduation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful for numerous people for their encouragement and generous support since I started my graduate study in the US two years ago. I could not be more appreciated for their kind help and advice that fostered both my intellectual skills and the ability to live in a foreign environment.

First, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor and my committee chair Dr. Xiaolin Duan for her guidance and support over the past two years. Her professionalism and dedication to history have always inspired me in the journey of learning. I greatly appreciate her insightful comments and suggestions on every pieces of my work, especially my thesis. It is my honor to have her as my mentor.

I am also grateful to my other two committee members, Dr. Julie Mell and Dr. David Gilmartin, for their knowledgeable advice to my work. Thank you all for reading my paper and for giving me important feedback. It is their encouraging commentary that motivates me to refine this study of work.

My deep appreciation also goes to professors from the Department of History at North Carolina State University who had helped me throughout the past years. Thank you, Dr. Craig Friend, for being one of my referees. It is your endorsement that makes my Ph.D. application materials more competitive. Thank you, Dr. Noah Strote, Dr. David Zonderman, Dr. Frederico Freitas, Dr. Hunter Bandy, and Dr. David Ambaras, for guiding me into several interesting study fields. Your instructions not only broadened my research horizon but also motivated me to explore different historical methodologies, related technics, and diverse angels of perspective to do historical research. And, thank you, Ms. Ingrid Hoffius, for your kind assistance over the past two years.

The warm friendship that my colleagues and friends have given me will always be greatly appreciated. Thank you all to the friends at Gethsemane Lutheran Church for their sincere encouragement. Thank you to all my friends in the US and in China for cheering me up with their laughter and continuous support.

I wish to say many thanks to my husband Xiangyu Zhang. Thank you for being with me, encouraging me, and sharing the happiest moment of life with me. And finally, many thanks to our little puppy, Jimbo, an angel of love who enriches our lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historiography about Missionaries in Mongol-Yuan	7
Sources and Methodologies	16
Organization.....	19
CHAPTER I: The Intention of Catholic Contact to the Mongol Empire.....	21
The Birth of the Mongol Power	24
Mongol Conquests	25
First Invasion of Central Asia	26
Second Invasion of Eastern Europe	29
The Crusades.....	34
Legendary Kingdom of Prester John	38
CHAPTER II: Multi-identities of Early Catholic Missionaries, 1245-1260.....	45
Papal Envoy	47
John of Plano Carpini.....	47
Ascelin of Lombardy	58
King’s Emissary.....	60
André de Longjumeau.....	60
William of Rubruck	65
CHAPTER III: Catholic Evangelization in Yuan China, 1271-1368.....	72
The Devoted Archbishop	75
John of Montecorvino	75
Suffragan Bishops in Zayton	80
The Last Missionary	86
John of Marignolli.....	86
CONCLUSION	98
REFERENCES	102
APPENDICES	110

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1. Asia Under the Mongols, 1290	2
Map 2. The Mongol Empire before 1259.....	22
Map 3. Batu’s Invasion of Russia and Europe	32
Map 4. The Route of Crusades of Louis IX, 1248-1254 and 1270	37
Map 5. The Steppe World, 1190	40
Map 6. The Travel Routes of John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, and Marco Polo.....	66

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Interrelationship among the Mongol Empire, Western Europe, and the Islamic Middle East, 1200-1260.....	43
Figure 2. Letter of Pope Innocent IV to Güyük Khan, 1245	49
Figure 3. The 1246 Letter of Güyük to Pope Innocent IV	55
Figure 4. Tombstone of Bishop Andrew de Perugia from Quanzhou, 1332	83
Figure 5. The Head Part of the Nestorian Stele	85
Figure 6. Zhou Lang. “Folangguo xianma tu” [Tributary Horse from France], 1342	92

INTRODUCTION

On April 16, the Easter Day of 1245, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (ca. 1185-1252, known as “John of Plano Carpini”), a 65-year-old Italian Franciscan friar, as the first official envoy commissioned by Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243-1254), started his long journey from Lyon in France to the Mongol court. He carried the Pope’s credential which insisted on the Mongols’ military withdrawal and their conversion to Christianity.¹ After a one-year intercontinental land route through Western and Eastern Europe, John of Plano Carpini made a short stop at the camp of Batu Khan (r. 1242-1255), founder of the Golden Horde, and then continued heading to the East. John of Plano Carpini finally arrived at the imperial court near the capital of Karakorum (modern Kharkhorin in Mongolia) in July 1246. One month later, he was invited to participate in the enthronement ceremony of Güyük Khan (r. 1246-1248) as an ambassador. During his stay at the Mongol court, John of Plano Carpini presented the Pope’s letter to clarify his travel purpose for peace and Mongols’ conversion to Christianity.² However, Güyük Khan showed little interest in what he proposed by claiming that God Tengri they believe in also has righteousness to bless and protect people. In November 1246, John of Plano Carpini began returning to Western Europe. He presented Pope Innocent IV with a report regarding what he saw and how he thought about the Mongol power, which was the well-known travelogue *Ystoria Mongalorum*, the oldest European account of the Mongol history.³

¹ Christopher Dawson, ed., “Two Bulls of Pope Innocent IV Addressed to the Emperor of the Tartars,” in *Mission to Asia: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 73-76.

² The first letter *Cum non solum* was successfully sent to Güyük Khan, the second letter *Dei patris immense* was carried by another friar Lauren de Portugal who did not arrive at the Mongol court, while scholars think that John of Plano Carpini also delivered the copy of this letter to Güyük Khan. See Paul Pelliot. “Les Mongols et la Papauté.” *Revue de l’Orient chrétien*. t. III (XXIII), nos. 1 et 2 (1922-23): 3-30. t. IV (XXIV), nos. 3 et 4 (1924): 225-335; t. VIII (XXVIII), no. 1 et 2 (1931-32): 3-84. In *Menggu yu jiaoting* [Mongol and the Papal Court], trans. Feng Chengjun (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 4-7.

³ William Woodville Rockhill. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as*

John of Plano Carpini was eager to meet Güyük Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan (r.1206-1227) who founded the Mongol Empire in 1206. Originating from the Mongolian Plateau, Mongol rulers continuously enlarged their imperial domain through countless wars of conquest, making the Mongol Empire geographically the largest country in the thirteenth-century world (Map 1).



Map 1. Asia Under the Mongols, 1290. In Albert Herrmann, *Historical and Commercial Atlas of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1935), 50-51.

Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1900), 1-30. Accessible digitized online source see William Woodville Rockhill, "The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55." Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/journeywilliamr01ruysgoog/page/n9/mode/2up> (accessed November 10, 2019).

Whether or not John of Plano Carpini achieved his travel goal, his trip has marked the beginning of cross-cultural communications between medieval European society and the Mongol Empire during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. Subsequent papal envoys, unofficial emissaries, and long-distance commercial traders connected Christian Europe to Asia under Mongol control, facilitating the development of Catholic Christianity in China. As the first official legate on behalf of Pope Innocent IV, John of Plano Carpini started the Catholic visits to the Mongol-Yuan dynasty. Catholic missionaries significantly contributed to not only build a communication bridge between the Pope and Mongol Khan, but also to shape Europeans' understanding of the Mongols. It was also the personal observations of the travelers, merchants, envoy, and legates to Mongol Asia that facilitated the circulation of knowledge and cultural exchange across Eurasia.

This research focuses on the journeys of European missionary travelers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From the 1240s to the 1260s, Catholic missions continually traveled to the Mongol court and Mongol commander's camp in Persia, including Franciscan friar John of Plano Carpini and Dominican priest Ascelin of Lombardy sent by Pope Innocent IV, as well as André de Longjumeau and William of Rubruck (1220-1293) who were appointed by King Louis IX of France (r. 1226-1270). After the division of the Mongol Empire, the khanate of the Great Khan was known as the Yuan dynasty. Missionaries to Yuan China included Franciscan Giovanni da Montecorvino (1246-1328, known as "John of Montecorvino"), the subsequent local Bishops, and Giovanni de Marignolli (1290-1360, known as "John of Marignolli") the last papal envoy to reached out to the Yuan emperor before the dynasty fell in 1368. Furthermore, the cultural exchange in the Mongol-Yuan era was not a one-way event from Europe to Asia. Mongol commander Eljigidei (1206-1251) 野里知吉帶 once sent two envoys, David and Marco,

in hopes of establishing a military alliance with Louis IX.⁴ In addition, Nestorian monks Rabban Sauma (1220-1294) and Marcos were also famous for their pilgrimage journey from China to the Middle East, France, and the papal court.

Considering the prosperous Eurasian contacts in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, this thesis primarily focuses on the European missions' trips to the Mongol realm from 1245 to the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, the period when Catholic Christianity for the first time officially spread to China. Through a textual analysis of the missionaries' travelogues and letter correspondence between the Pope and the Khan, this thesis discusses various purposes that prompted the missionaries constantly traveling to the Mongol Empire and later the Yuan dynasty, and evaluates the accomplishment of these Catholic missionaries in facilitating diplomatic relations and in spreading religious teachings.

I argue that the division of the Mongol empire in the 1260s was a significant turning point for the communication between Western Europe and the Mongol regime, due to the changing global situation and the increasing conversations between the two. Early Mongol-European contact received little achievements since both the Pope and the Khan sought to claim their political and religious authority and refused any compromises. The imperial division and the establishment of the Yuan dynasty reduced the possibility of the Yuan emperor further ambitiously conquering Western Europe, thus affected the attitude of Latin Christendom towards the Mongols. The primary motivation of following Catholic missionaries to visit Yuan China progressively transformed from political-oriented to religious-oriented.

Therefore, this paper considers the papal missionaries' Eurasian travel in two stages. The former stage started from the first envoy John of Plano Carpini's departure in 1245 and ends at

⁴ Feng Chengjun, *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 153-54.

Mongol Empire's fragmentation in 1260. The urgent international environment, including Mongol invasions and the Crusades, pushed the Pope and European kings to get in touch with the Mongol regime. During this period, under the context of Mongol conquests, early missionaries, as diplomatic ambassadors officially dispatched by the Pope, primarily aimed to collect information about Mongol forces. The papal envoys intended to prevent further Mongol invasion by converting the Mongols into Christians. Meanwhile, some European countries were in conflicts with the Islamic world in Crusades, so King Louis IX of France also sent missionary emissaries to seek military alliance with Mongol troops.

The latter stage began when Kublai Khan (r. 1260-1294) established his authority in China in 1271 and the dynastic fall in 1368 marked its end. The changing relations between Western Europe and Mongol China from military confrontation to peaceful coexistence influenced the role of Catholic missionaries during this period. When the Mongol Empire split into four khanates, Yuan emperors gradually terminated the military ambition of invading westward. Therefore, the fear of being subdued by this nomadic power slowly reduced in Latin Christendom. As European society accumulated increasing first-hand information about the Mongols, their urge to probe military information or to defend their own religious superiority faded. During the era of Yuan, the travel of Franciscan missionaries eventually turned to purely focusing on religious activities. Thus, the role of the following missionaries shifted from the combination of diplomats and spies to ambassadors and preachers, a small Catholic community dedicated to preaching God's words in China.

This thesis contributes to the discussion about the early history of the Catholic church in China by exploring the initial stage and the dynamics when Catholic Christianity spread to East Asia. Travels of medieval European missionaries are meaningful not only because their arduous

intercontinental journey officially introduced Catholicism to China for the first time, but also for their reports and travelogues shaped the West's impression of the Mongol world. After the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, the founder Kublai Khan and his successors welcomed a tolerant policy regarding religious affairs, making the era of Yuan a period of religious diversity. Traditional religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and foreign religions such as Catholic Christianity all had privileges in taxes or general welfare.⁵ However, Catholics in the Yuan era had to compete with other foreign religions such as Nestorian Christianity and Islam, let alone China's dominant indigenous religions, to gain space and opportunity for survival, therefore their religious influence remained limited.

This research also enriches Catholic research by providing case studies of missionary travels in the Mongol-Yuan period. It explores how missionaries played the role as diplomatic envoys and information collectors during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. It was the personal observation and preaching effort of these European missionary individuals who contributed to the spread of Catholic Christianity to China and also the European perception of China under Mongol rule. The documentation left by these missionaries had lingering impact on later visitors. The history of Catholicism re-entering China would be tracked 300 years later to Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

The title of the thesis "beyond preaching" reveals the multiplicity of goals and accomplishments of these early Catholic missionaries. On the one hand, most of the travelers came to call for Mongols' religious conversion. On the other hand, they were also dispatched with different political motivations. It is crucial to explore their diverse roles as ambassadors, spies, or emissaries of these medieval Catholics during their trips to Mongol-Yuan China: they

⁵ Song Lian 宋濂. *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of the Yuan dynasty]. Vol. 202. "Shilaozhuan 釋老傳" (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 4517-34.

established the primary connection between the East and West not merely as religious missionaries but also in other roles. The motivations and accomplishments of Jesuit missions in the late Ming dynasty have been well discussed among historians and religious scholars.⁶ While, the purpose and result of European missionaries in the Mongol-Yuan dynasty did not receive enough attention from scholars of the Catholic history in China.

The second reason to title this thesis “beyond preaching” comes from its metaphoric considerations. This thesis reconsiders the questions of how European society constructed an understanding of the land of Cathay by missionaries who brought back information not only about the religious activity but also about the Mongol military power. If the papal legates came to China with purposes not merely of preaching, what impact did their visits have on Sino-Western relations during this period. These are the puzzles this thesis attempts to investigate.

Historiography about Missionaries in Mongol-Yuan

Due to the vast territory of the Mongol empire dominated, the study of Mongol-Yuan history inevitably requires not only focusing on regional history but the histories of the multiple regions under Mongol control. Mongol-Yuan studies also require multilingual skills, as Eurasian travelers and officials wrote in different languages – the papal letters to Mongol rulers, the travel report of John of Plano Carpini, travelogue of John of Marignolli, and letters of John of Montecorvino and his suffragan Bishops were originally written in Latin; the travelogue of King Hethum I of Armenia was written in Armenian; and the response letters of Mongol Khans and

⁶ Jacques Gernet. *China and the Christian impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Huang Yinong. *Liangtoushe: Mingmo qingchu de diyidai tianzhu jiaotu* [Two-Head Sneak: The First Generation of Catholics in the Late Ming and Early Qing] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006); Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: the Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008); Christina H. Lee ed. *Western Visions of the Far East in a Transpacific Age, 1522-1657* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

the travelogue of Nestorian Monk Marcos were written in Persian (Appendix A). Although using translated materials may risk losing historical accuracy, translations and annotations of the original travel sources help researchers access and analyze the documents altogether.

Research on Catholic missionaries begins with translation works of the primary travel sources. Scholars have dedicated their efforts to translating missionary traveling writings from Latin or Armenian into English.⁷ Henry Yule's monumental work *Cathay and the Way Thither* not only contained most of the travelogues and letters of missionary friars, more importantly, it also annotated these materials with different translated versions.⁸ Prior to each interpretation, Yule provided an introductory note about the traveler's biography or the contemporary historical context. His comprehensive and meticulously annotated work continues to be a fundamental reference in the field of cultural exchange between medieval Europe and Mongol-Yuan China to date. In addition to travelogues, historians also translates the correspondence between the Pope and Mongol rulers. Christopher Dawson collects two letters of Pope Innocent IV to Güyük Khan, two letters of John of Montecorvino, one letter of Peregrine the Bishop of Zayton (modern Quanzhou), and the letter of Andrew of Perugia, which later became one of the main English references.⁹ Although all the relevant translations of original missionary accounts do not devote

⁷ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time Within the Compasse of These 1600 Yeeres* (London: Imprinted by George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1589); Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1900); John Andrew Boyle, "The Journey of Het'um I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke." *Central Asiatic Journal* 9, no. 3 (1964): 175-89. www.jstor.org/stable/41926618 (accessed April 3, 2020); Peter Jackson, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990).

⁸ Henry Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (1866; revised edition, London: Hakluyt Society, 1913-16).

⁹ Christopher Dawson, ed. *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London & New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955); *Mission to Asia*. (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1980). Digitized online source see "The Mongol Mission." Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/mongolmission008646mbp> (accessed November 1, 2019).

much effort to analyzing the travel text, these researches provide primary sources for the study of Sino-Western contact and history of Catholic missionary in China.

In the study of Catholic missionary in the Mongol-Yuan period, scholarly attention has focused on individual European travelers and their personal journeys in the Mongol world, putting their effort on the correction of precise information about missionary activity according to different historical records or translation editions. For example, after a detailed investigation, Berthold Laufer conjectures that Odoric of Pordenone had never traversed the Tibetan area.¹⁰ His student Giuseppe Tucci concentrated on another missionary John of Plano Carpini. Tucci studies the relationship of the Mongol Empire to Western Europe, investigates the historical background of the beginning of Catholic contact to the Mongols, and examines how the earliest envoy John of Plano Carpini viewed the Eastern world with his awareness of the terrible danger impending on Latin Christendom.¹¹

Besides focusing on European Catholics to the Mongol Empire, scholars have also studied Mongol missions to European society. Medieval historian Jean Richard studies two Mongol envoys who traveled to France with the letter of Eljigidei, the Mongol general in Persia, who proactively anticipated to establish a military ally with Western Europe against Muslims.¹² Richard stresses the importance of interactions not only from the feedback of Great Khans in Mongolia but also from local Mongol rulers in Persia, which later influenced and promoted the journeys of Ascelin of Lombardy and André de Longjumeau to China. Morris Rossabi's

Dawson's work based on the study of Wyngaert, Anastaas van den. "Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV, collegit, ad fidem codicum redigit et adnotavit P." Quaracchi, Florence: OFM Sinica Franciscana 1, 1929.

¹⁰ Berthold Laufer, "Was Odoric of Pordenone ever in Tibet?" *T'oung Pao* 15, no. 3 (1914): 405-18.

¹¹ Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: the Yüan-Sa-Skya Period of Tibetan History* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990).

¹² Jean Richard, "The Mongols and the Franks." *Journal of Asian History* 3, no. 1 (1969): 45-57; "Une ambassade mongole à Paris en 1262." *Journal des savants* 4, no. 1 (1979): 295-303.

monograph *Voyager from Xanadu* (1992) contributes to the study of Nestorian monk Rabban Sauma, the first Eurasian traveler whose journey started from Yuan China to Ilkhanate, and to the Latin West. Rossabi not only engages in the question of Rabban Sauma's motivation for his pilgrimage, but also contributes to a larger question that how Eurasia came to integrate in the thirteenth century.¹³

Previous scholarship in the study of missionary travel in the Mongol-Yuan era has provided a detailed analysis on several topics such as preaching time, region, individual missionaries' activities, religious politics and attitude of the Mongols, and missionary's understanding of the Mongol power. However, these researches might lose a broader perspective on how the contact motivation and features of Western Europe to the Mongol Empire changed, accompanied by the changing relationship between the two in different periods. What my thesis aims to look into is how the primary travel goal of Catholic envoys and emissaries changed before and after the division of the Mongol Empire in the mid-thirteenth century, in order to explore diverse natures of interactions between the West and Mongols.

Furthermore, Mongolists and historians have been dedicated to telling an overall history of Christian communication to Asian society, which includes the early encounter between Mongol-Yuan China and medieval Europe. Kenneth S. Latourette provides a complete study of the Christian communication from the Yuan period to 1926, which includes a description of Christian missions in Yuan China in chapters four and five.¹⁴ He argues that the Mongol conquests facilitated Christianity's contact with China because, first, the Mongol Empire built up

¹³ Morris Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kúblâi Khân, Emperor of China: or, The History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Šâwmâ, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khâns to the kings of Europe, and Markôs who as Mâr Yahbh-Allâhâ III Became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1928).

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929).

the transcontinental route system that connected the East and West, and second, the open-minded religious attitude of the Mongol rulers provided every religion an opportunity to survive in China. Arthur C. Moule's *Christians in China before the Year 1550* is also a general study that analyzes the rise and decline of Christianity from the Tang dynasty to fourteenth-century China.¹⁵ Moule gathers abundant archaeological materials, inscriptions, ancient gazetteer in Quanzhou, and Western translation works altogether to represent the development of Christianity in Yuan China. Following the studies of Paul Pelliot and Arthur Moule, René Grousset's *The Empire of the Steppes* discusses Catholic development in the Mongol Empire and Yuan dynasty.¹⁶ Herbert W. Franke also adopts a broader view of global communications in terms of religion, culture, population, science, and trade in the Mongol time to characterize the Mongol contacts with Central Asia and Near East.¹⁷

A special study that focuses on the Catholic exchange between Mongol-Yuan China and Europe is published by Igor de Rachwitz in 1971.¹⁸ His *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* tells the history of Catholic missionaries dispatched to the East in the Mongol era. He frames the narrative of each missionary's trip chronologically to measure the changing historical context, as well as the envoys' motivations and the attitude of Khan in different periods. This book is still one of the fundamental readings in the subject of the East-West Catholic interactions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. To date, however, only this published monograph purely concentrates on the Catholic missionaries to China in Mongol-Yuan era, whereas other scholars

¹⁵ Arthur Christopher Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London: Society for promoting Christian knowledge, 1930).

¹⁶ René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. (Naomi Walford, New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 1970); Paul Pelliot, "Chrétiens d'Asie centrale et d'Extrême-Orient." *T'oung Pao* 5 (1914): 623-44; Paul Pelliot, *Menggu yu Jiaoting*. trans., Feng Chengjun (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008).

¹⁷ Herbert Franke, "Sino-Western Contacts under the Mongol Empire." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1966): 49-72.

¹⁸ Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

treat this topic in a book chapter or section, which limits the space to dig up more detailed histories of the missionary communication to the Mongol rulers and the development of Catholic Christianity in Yuan China. Moreover, the style of existing research is more narrative than analytical. My thesis builds on current scholarship in the field of Chinese Christian history and emphasizes on Catholic contact between Western Europe and Asia under Mongol rule in the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries.

Currently, contextualizing the study of the Mongol Empire in a broader Eurasian context becomes a new trend. The interpretation of the Mongol Empire also changes from a barbaric conqueror to a more positive image—a connector for the cultural diffusion across the Eurasian continent, or even the medium for the modernization of medieval Europe.¹⁹ Mongolist Tomas T. Allsen perfectly indicates the new features of the Mongol research. He examines the extensive cultural exchange between Yuan China and Ilkhanate (Allsen, 2001).²⁰ One feature of the Mongol Empire as a global regime was that although people from submitted lands might had different traditions from the Mongol rulers, they were still allowed to keep their own culture and religion. The boom of cross-cultural exchanges then diffused by the imperial agents, such as governors, soldiers, and diplomats, and the particular goods, ranging vastly from agriculture, cuisine, medicine, to historiography, cartography, astronomy, and printing.

As a result, historians have turned to investigate the Catholic exchange in the era of Mongol from a diverse perspective. Li Tang's *East Syriac Christianity in Mongol-Yuan China* represents six famous Eurasian travelers under the background of Pax Mongolica, then discusses the legendary kingdom of Prester John. She examines the development of Christianity in Yuan

¹⁹ Michal Biran, "The Mongol Empire in World History: The State of the Field." *History Compass* 11, no. 11 (2013): 1021-33.

²⁰ Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

China as well as the spread of religions through the Silk Road. The appealing approach she adopts regarding the East-West religious contact is to contextualize Catholic exchange in the development of all other sects of Christianity within the Mongol domain.²¹ Similar to Tang, Timothy May also addresses the “Chinggis Exchange” under the Pax Mongolica, reconsidering the heritage of the Mongol Conquests through a military perspective. He theoretically hypothesizes the Mongol Empire as a moment of East-West exchange between goods, cultures, religions, and people. This framework provides a new view and an approach when thinking about religious communication in the Mongol era.²²

Reevaluating the early Sino-Western contact from a military perspective has gained large attention in the last two decades as well. Colleen Chi-Wei Ho explores the motivation of the early papal envoys and the relationship between the Mongols and Western Europe (2013).²³ Ho articulates that the Mongols’ attitudes toward Catholic Europe and the proposed military alliance may change through different leaders and periods. In the eighth chapter from her *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality*, Denise Aigle also examines the dynamic change of attitude towards Mongol rulers from different areas and times. According to a careful analysis of the correspondence, Aigle discusses how the Great Khan in the Mongol court refused to establish an alliance with Western Europe while almost simultaneously, the Mongol commander in Persia, Eljigidei, hoped to build military collaborations with Latin Christian against Muslim power together.²⁴

Besides monographs, collected papers published in recent years provide multiple views

²¹ Li Tang, *East Syriac Christianity in Mongol-Yuan China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011).

²² Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

²³ Colleen Ho, “A Sign of the Apocalypse Or Christendom’s Ally? European-Mongol Relations in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.” Ph.D. Diss. University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013.

²⁴ Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

on the subject of Sino-Western Catholic communication. Peter Jackson concentrates on the history of the Catholic Western's primary impression on the Mongols.²⁵ Nicholas Koss's *The Best and Fairest Land: Images of China in Medieval Europe* also aims to reconstruct the perception of the East ruled by Mongols in medieval European society.²⁶ *The Spiritual Expansion of Medieval Latin Christendom: The Asian Missions and Eurasian Influences on Yuan China* collected the latest articles respectively regarding this topic.²⁷ By adopting diverse perspectives such as Catholic development in different areas and transportation systems, scholars demonstrate the opening of the land route to the East, Italian merchants in the Mongol Empire, cross-cultural and geographic exchange in Yuan China, and other stimulating topics. These up-to-date works highlight the significance of interdisciplinary research. Different perspectives such as social, regional and maritime history would be conducive to the current study of Eurasian exchange in the Mongol era.

How to articulate the feature of the Sino-European relations in the Mongol-Yuan period remains uncharted, especially in a broader concept of the Eurasian exchange, which refers not only to an active exchange of people and daily supplies such as food and medicine, but also to the exchanges of techniques, arts, commodities, or religious cultures.²⁸ History of Catholic missionary travelers to the Mongol realm provides a unique perspective angle for reconsidering the religious and political interactions across Mongol Eurasia. My thesis aspires to explore how Western Europeans and the Mongols understood each other before the division of the Mongol

²⁵ Jackson submitted his paper "Medieval Christendom's Encounter with the Alien" to the "Race and Ethnicity: the 68th Anglo-American Conference of Historian" in 1999. The revised version was included in *Travelers, Intellectuals, and the World beyond Medieval Europe*, ed. James Muldoon (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2009), 31-53.

²⁶ Nicholas Koss, *The Best and Fairest Land: Images of China in Medieval Europe* (Taipei: Bookman Books, 1999).

²⁷ James D. Ryan, ed. *The Spiritual Expansion of Medieval Latin Christendom: The Asian Missions* (London: Routledge, 2013); Morris Rossabi, ed. *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*. Vol. 15 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

²⁸ Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, 83-188; Paul D Buell, "Food, Medicine and the Silk Road: The Mongol Era Exchanges." *The Silk Road* 5 (2007): 22-35.

Empire, as well as how the travel purpose of Catholic missionaries transformed afterward.

More importantly, most of the English studies have been unable to incorporate Chinese materials. *Yuanshi* 元史, the official history of the Yuan dynasty, records the foundation and function of Chongfusi, the official organization of Christianity in China.²⁹ *Yuandianzhang* 元典章, a collection of the laws and decrees in mid-Yuan, also mentions cases concerning the Christian conflict with Taoist priest (vol. 33, Libu 6).³⁰ The development of Christianity beyond the capital city can also be found in contemporary Chinese gazetteers.³¹ Plentiful Chinese materials in the Yuan era document the history that the last papal legate John of Marignolli presented Emperor Toghon Temür (r. 1333-1368) a tributary horse in 1342. Literati in the imperial court all created poetries about how great the horse was. The court painter Zhou Lang 周朗 was also required to portray this special French horse. These sources reflect the history of cultural and religious interactions between Yuan China and Western Europe from the Mongol perspective.³²

Building on the current historiography, this thesis makes the contribution by incorporating Chinese sources to the history of Catholic Christianity. This thesis examines not merely the religious context but also international relations between the Latin Christendom, the emerging Mongol Empire, and the Islamic Middle East, in particular considers the motivation of the Pope and European king who sent missionaries to reach out to the Mongols. At the early stage, when the Mongols were expanding their imperial territory through three destructive conquests to the West, the entire European society was genuinely horrified by the impending

²⁹ Song Lian. *Yuanshi*. Vol.89. “Baiguanzhi, Chongfusi 百官志·崇福司,” 2273.

³⁰ Chen Gaohua, ed. *Yuandianzhang* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2011).

³¹ Yu Xilu. *Daxingguosi ji*. In *Zhishun zhenjiangzhi*. Vol 9. (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990).

³² Zhang Xinglang and Zhu Jieqin ed., *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*. 6 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003).

invasions with no proper strategies to fight. Therefore, previous friars dispatched by the Pope coming to the Mongol court not only calling for peace but also gathering military information for the survival of Latin Christendom. As the Mongol rulers stopped conquering Eurasia, religious purpose gradually went beyond the military and political aims during the last thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Sources and Methodologies

The first group of sources comes from official Chinese documents and literati's discussion on the French horse. Compared with the impact of missionary travel accounts, research on the attitude of the Mongol Empire towards the papal envoys has not attracted enough academic attention. There is still plenty of space to discuss the actual effect of Catholic missionaries' journeys in the Mongol-Yuan China, toward whom largely depended on the attitude of the Mongol Khans. Moreover, with the analysis of how Chinese literati praised on the French horse presented by John of Marignolli, it is helpful to demonstrate the changing relationship between Yuan China and the Latin Christian world, and to investigate why Mongol rulers started to formally support Christian missionaries in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

The second group of primary sources comes from the missionaries' travel materials. Travel reports to the Pope and missionaries' travelogues enriched the first impression of the East in medieval European society. The letters between missionary travelers and their colleagues provide the primary perspective to the history of Catholicism in China under Mongol rule. Letter correspondence between the Pope or European king and the Khan in different periods are also helpful to understand the multi-nature of Catholic missions and how Mongol rulers responded to the request of converting to Christianity and the suggestion of military alliance from Western

Europe.

The last group of sources comes from general studies on the history of the Mongol Empire and Mongol military studies. *History of the World Conqueror* and *The Successors of Genghis Khan* are two official compiled historical books in the Mongol-Yuan era written by Ilkhanate historians, which provide initial perspectives on the foundation and rise of the Mongol Empire.³³ When examining the historical backgrounds of Sino-European communication in the context of Mongol conquests, these documents offer primary sources on the making of the Mongol Empire. For example, *History of the World Conqueror* recorded the emergence of Mongol society and three famous Mongol conquests to Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Islamic caliphate, which would be supplementary to explore the intention of Mongol invasions.

This thesis analyzes the content of the missionaries' travel writings to investigate what aspects of the Mongol world that different Catholic travelers focused on. The early European travel accounts provide primary descriptions of the Mongol people, their society and religious cult, and especially their military structure. Examining the narrative from travel writings can reveal how missionary constructed the European understanding of the Mongol world. Additionally, how the Mongol rulers replied reflected their attitude toward Christian Europeans. From the perspective of Mongol Khans, Catholic missionaries were not obviously distinct from a Buddhist sangha or a Taoist when praying for the Mongol rule. While for the papal envoys, they believed there were clear boundaries between them and pagan Mongols. Scrutinizing the Khan's

³³ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh. *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* [The Successors of Genghis Khan], trans. J.A. Boyle. (New York, Columbia University Press, 1971), digitized version available online, see "The Successors of Genghis Khan." Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/Boyle1971RashidAlDin/page/n24> (accessed November 15th, 2019); 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Tarīkh-i Jahān-gushā* [History of the World Conqueror], Trans. J.A. Boyle. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958). Digitized online source see "The History Of The World Conqueror Vol I." Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/historyoftheworl011691mbp/page/n8>, (accessed November 15, 2019).

word preference and narrative in his response letter to the Pope also supplies the most original evidence of how they view the papal missions and their religious-military demand.

Contacts between Asia and Europe have not only facilitated the intercontinental movement of populations and culture, but also stimulated bilateral religious and political communication when the two worlds started to know each other. Even in the same period, attitudes of the Great Khan toward European society differed from regional Mongol leaders, which in turn affected outcomes of the European-Mongol contact. This new feature of intercommunication requires a larger research horizon. When studying cross-cultural exchanges during the era of Mongol, we should consider not only the situation of the Mongol Empire in East Asia, but also how other khanates in Persia and Eastern Europe which might affect the missionary contact.

The cultural communication between Western Europe and Mongol-Yuan China was a bidirectional interaction in which both sides influenced the historical outcomes of the exchange. On the one hand, China under Mongol rule was regarded as “the other” from the perspective of the Catholic Church.³⁴ On the other hand, in the eyes of Mongol rulers, Catholic missionaries coming to the central court did not significantly differ from other religious representatives – all of them should be authorized by the Khan, otherwise, they will not be allowed to preach and develop in China.³⁵ Rather than the traditional view from Church history that considers European traveler as the transmitter and Mongols as the receiver, the nature of their communication ought to be interactive and interdependent. Since the Mongols themselves “transmitted” the Mongol image as conquerors to European society, which motivated the Pope to send Catholic missionary

³⁴ Nicolas Standaert, *Methodology in View of Contact between Cultures: the China Case in the 17th Century*. Vol. 11. (Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2002).

³⁵ Erik Zürcher, “Jesuit Accommodation and the Chinese Cultural Imperative.” In *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, ed. David E. Mungello. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 132, (1994): 31-64.

to the Mongol realm seeking peace, and therefore initiated official contact between Christian Europe and the Mongol Empire.³⁶

Organization

This thesis unfolds into three chapters. The first chapter depicts a broader historical background of thirteenth-century Eurasia. It begins with introducing the history on the Mongolian Plateau since the twelfth century. After giving an introduction to how the different nomadic tribes gathered together under the rule of Temüjin Borjigin (later Genghis Khan), and how Temüjin founded the Mongol Empire in such a short time, this section then follows the step of the Mongol cavalymen to explore how they enlarged the territory and expanded their rule to most of the Eurasian regimes through numerous conquests in the first half of the thirteenth century. This chapter also analyzes the military conflict between Latin Christendom and the Islamic Middle East, to provide clues on how the relationship between the two drove early Catholic missionaries to reach out to Mongol rulers. Additionally, it discusses a mythical legend about a Nestorian king Prester John that attracted Catholic Europeans to ask for religious and military assistance from this famous figure.

Chapter two looks into the motivations and roles of the early Catholic travelers to the Mongol realm before the division of the Mongol Empire in 1260. During this period, four mission groups were famous for their trips to the Mongol rulers in Karakorum and Persia, which were led by John of Plano Carpini, Ascelin of Lombardy, André de Longjumeau, and William of Rubruck. This chapter investigates why they focused on slightly different goals and evaluate the

³⁶ Chen Hui-hung. "New Perspective on the Methodology of Cultural Contacts in the Studies of the Cultural Encounters between China and Europe in the Seventeenth Century." *Historical Inquiry*. 40 (2007): 239-78.

outcomes of these travels. This chapter argues that under the intense fear of being defeated by upcoming Mongol troops, Western Europeans were eager to obtain as much knowledge as possible to figure out whether the Mongols will conquer them. They wanted to prevent further Mongol invasion by converting the Khan and his people to Catholicism. Early Catholic missionaries failed to convert the Mongols, however, they brought back the first-hand information about the Mongol world.

The final chapter turns to the papal missionaries in Yuan China (1271-1368). It discusses why the Pope decided to send special legates to the Mongol regime once again. Then, it reconsiders the achievements and profound influence John of Montecorvino had in the history of Catholic Christianity in China, along with how the Yuan court received and recorded this visit. This chapter explores how the local Catholic church developed in Zayton (modern Quanzhou). The last part of this chapter explores the influence of cross-cultural exchanges between Catholic and Chinese literary and artistic works.

CHAPTER I: The Intention of Catholic Contact to the Mongol Empire

In the late twelfth century, the Mongols as a nomadic tribe, arose quickly in the central part of the Mongolian Plateau. Although started initially as a small tribal group, the Mongols successfully defeated other more powerful tribes under the leadership of chief Temüjin Borjigin (future known as Genghis Khan) and united Mongolian nomads from various ethnic groups into one political entity. After the foundation in 1206, the Mongol Empire quickly became one of the significant powers that connected East Asia and Western Europe through numerous conquests across Eurasia. The first Mongol expedition (ca. 1219-1223) led by Genghis Khan conquered Qara Khitai (ca. 1124-1220) and the Khwarazmian dynasty (ca. 1077-1231) in Central Asia. The Mongols soon expanded their territory to modern Georgia and Qipchaq steppe north of the Black Sea. After defeating the Jin dynasty (1115-1234), Ögedei Khan (r. 1229-1241) started the second invasion (ca. 1236-1241), which trampled major cities in vast areas of Eastern Europe.³⁷ By the first half of the thirteenth century, most of the Eurasian countries and regimes from the East China Sea to Russia were under the united kingship of Mongol power (Map 2). As the Mongol troops were getting closer and closer to Western Europe, the Pope and European kings considered the Mongol force to be a severe hostile to their rule. They began to send friars as legates and emissaries to get in touch with the Mongol rulers, expressing their concern about Mongol invasions and the willingness to establish friendly relations.

Mongol's absolute subjugation had increasingly become a serious threat to the Christian world. At the same time, Western European countries were militarily engaging with Muslims in the Islamic Middle East – the Fifth Crusade and the first Mongol conquest happened almost simultaneously. As the Mongol cavalry was approaching the eastern frontier of the Latin

³⁷ Han Rulin, ed. *Yuanchaoshi* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008), 126-46.

Christendom, Louis IX of France was trapped in the Seventh Crusade against Mamluks in Egypt. This dilemma urged him to reach out to the Mongol Khan to establish a military alliance fighting against the Muslims together.³⁸



Map 2. The Mongol Empire before 1259.³⁹

Meanwhile, Prester John, the mythical Nestorian King who ruled a Christian nation in the East, was a long-spread legendary figure by whom the medieval European society has been attracting. One of the possible identifications of this monarch was Toghrul Khan (also known as

³⁸ Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, xviii-xix.

³⁹ Online sources: "The Mongol Empire before 1259," *The Mongols, 1200's-1300's*. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00maplinks/medieval/mongols/map1259max.jpg> (accessed March 17, 2020).

Ong Khan or Tooril Khan) of the Keraites, the foster father of Genghis Khan. The Pope and Western kings believed that finding this Christian kingdom and building some relations would strengthen the authority and sacred sovereign of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the Pope expressed a wish that the Khan would accept Catholic faith, because once the Mongols converted to Catholicism, the Pope would become the holy leader of the Mongol Empire. Therefore, he could articulate his religious authority by legitimizing Khan's rule, and hopefully, Latin Europe could gain more support from the eastern world.⁴⁰

This chapter charts the historical background during the first half of the thirteenth century when Mongol conquests started to reach the European border and threatened the Roman Catholic church. By investigating the relations among the Mongols, Europe, and the Islamic world, it explores the circumstances which motivated the Pope and European kings to contact the Mongol court. This chapter argues that during the first half of the thirteenth century, due to the threat from the Mongol conquests, its military engagement with the Muslims, and the legendary story about the Prester John, Western Europe sought to form both a military and ideally a religious alliance with the Mongols. Out of the fear of being potentially conquered by the Mongol army, Pope Innocent IV dispatched missionary in primarily converting Mongols and collecting information about the Mongol power. In the confrontation with the Mongol Khan, the Pope harshly condemned their invasions. He aimed to protect his political and religious authority over Western Europe by expressing his hope of the Mongols' conversion to Christianity. Furthermore, Western kings also expected to have help from Prester John once they got attacked by the Mongol army or Muslims from the Crusades.

⁴⁰ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 19-40.

The Birth of the Mongol Power

The history of the Mongols could trace back to the collective name of several ancient nomadic tribes that originated on the Mongolian Plateau. In the very beginning, the steppe herders gradually developed into several tribes (ordos), scattered throughout the vast Mongolian Plateau under the protection of natural geography – the Altai Mountains and Mount. Tian from the west, the frosty Siberia forest from the north, the wide Gobi Desert from the south, and the Great Khingan Range from the east – from being invaded by surrounding regimes.⁴¹

Among all the ordos, the Mongol tribe, which developed between the rivers of Kerülen and Onon, did not seem like an aggressive or powerful subtribe at the time when Temüjin Borjigin was born in 1162 from the Kiyat clan.⁴² While within forty years, Temüjin founded the unprecedented unification of Mongolian tribes and came to be the most influential Khan in the history of the Mongols.⁴³

Although the earliest record of the Mongols can be traced back to the official historical compilation about the Tang dynasty (ca. 618-907) and the Later Jin (ca. 936-947) period, this emerging ethnic group had not gained widespread attention until the late twelfth century when Temüjin built the unparalleled political unity in the Mongolian steppe.⁴⁴ His family was characterized as “Niruyun (the royal family)” with a mythology recorded in *The Secret History of*

⁴¹ Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East: From Ghengis Khan to Khubilai Khan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 16-20.

⁴² Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank, eds. *The Cambridge History of China: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Vol. 6. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 321-24.

⁴³ Rashīd al-Dīn and Faḍl-Allāh al-Hamadānī. *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh. The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. J.A. Boyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); *Shiji*, trans. Yu Dajun and Zhou Jianqi (Beijing: the Commercial Press, 2014), 149-209.

⁴⁴ The eldest record of the name of the Mongol can be found in *Jiutangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Book of the Tang] as “Mongghol 蒙兀.” See Liu Xu. *Jiutangshu*. Vol. 199 “Beidizhuan 北狄傳” (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju chu ban, 1977); Han Rulin. “Menggu de mingcheng,” in *Qiongluji* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 153-65.

the Mongols that ancestors of Temüjin were a blue-white wolf and a dull-white doe.⁴⁵ Such descriptions from the legendary combination of myth and actual history that recorded the rise of the Mongols might not be convincing for some historians. Nevertheless, it enhanced the uniqueness of the Borjigin family lineage and further implied that Temüjin was the one who ultimately became the leader of the entire tribal nomads. Overall, *The Secret History of the Mongols* provided first-hand sources of young Temüjin's struggles. It helped legitimize the narrative of Temüjin's surprising achievements in establishing a united Mongolian entity and expanding his imperial territory that almost bordered Western Europe in decades.

In 1206, Temüjin defeated most of the tribal chiefs from clans of Keraites, Naiman, Ongud, and Merkit, proclaiming his authority to the new-found Mongolian state – *Yeke Monggol Ulus* (the Mongol Empire) – in the great khuriltai at the upper source of the Onan River.⁴⁶ Since then, different tribes were united as a single identity under the control of Genghis Khan, who intended to enlarge his domain and strengthen the Mongol rule by continuously conquering Eurasian countries.

Mongol Conquests

Since the foundation of the empire in 1206, Genghis Khan and his successors have never stopped the process of invading other countries. Considering the foundation of this regime, the “Mongols” at this time were not the name or kinship of a single ethnic group but an unconsolidated confederation consisted of different tribal *ulus* with diverse historical traditions

⁴⁵ Francis Woodman Cleaves, trans. *The Secret History of the Mongols; For the First Time Done into English out of the Original Tongue and Provided with an Exegetical Commentary*. Vol 1. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), xxv.

⁴⁶ Sugiyama Masaaki, *Jichi de caoyuan zhengfuzhe*, trans. Wu Lan and Wu Rina (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2014), 257-60.

and religious backgrounds. If Genghis Khan did not start wars once founding the authority of the Kiyat clan, the imperial political unity might be weakened by other traitor's collaboration with the rival countries.⁴⁷ Additionally, the Mongol people could obtain daily and military supplies from the enemies if they won the war, which could also reinforce the authority of Khan in ruling the growing territory.

First Invasion of Central Asia

Before the mid-1350s, the Mongol military has subjugated various regimes from East Asia to Central Asia, including Qara Khitai (1124-1218), the Khwarazmian Empire (ca. 1077-1221), the Western Xia (1038-1227), and the Jin dynasty. The Western Xia was a local regime founded by Tangut people since the eleventh century who lived around nowadays Gansu, the eastern part of Qinghai, and Ningxia provinces. It was considered by the Mongol army as the first conquest target. Genghis Khan intended to vanquish Western Xia in order to break up its alliance with the Jin dynasty. Therefore, one year before the foundation of the empire, the Mongols has invaded a border town of Western Xia and won some trophies.⁴⁸ In 1207, Mongol cavalymen re-encroached Western Xia. In 1209, the Mongols even besieged its capital Zhongxingfu 中興府 (modern Yinchuan) to coerce their surrender. Under the fear of being destroyed, the ruler of Western Xia had no choice but to submit to Mongol control, providing necessary support for the Mongols' invasion, and paying regular tribute to Genghis Khan as well.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

⁴⁸ Wang Guowei. *Jiaozhu shengwu qinzheng lu* 校注聖武親征錄 (Beiping: Beiping longfusi wendiangeshezhuang paiyinben, 1936).

⁴⁹ Han Rulin ed., *Yuanchaoshi*, 91-97.

The Jin dynasty in northeast China has also been the target of Genghis Khan for a long time, since one of the former Jin emperors killed his ancestor. Therefore, conquering the Jin dynasty meant a war of revenge to which he must accomplish. After repeatedly attacking several border areas, the Mongols kept preparing for the provisions and supplies to fight with Jin armies. They started a formal invasion in 1211 and defeated around 400,000 Jin armies in the Battle of Yehuling.⁵⁰ Up to 1214, the emperor of Jin was forced to move the capital from Zhongdu (modern Beijing) to Kaifeng. Although not been completely vanquished until 1234, the Jin dynasty has begun to eliminate its influence in northeast China.

Conquering another enemy in the west, Qara Khitai (Western Liao), also generated Mongol Empire's primary political and territorial expansion. In 1209, Qocho (modern Turpan) 高昌回鹘 terminated the relationship with Qara Khitai and pledged its loyalty to the Mongol rule. Sooner, other vassals of Qara Khitai such as the Karluks and Uyghurs in Bechbaliq (modern Jimsar county in Xinjiang) also acknowledged their allegiance to Genghis Khan, accelerating Mongol's conquest over Qara Khitai.⁵¹ In 1218, Mongol general Jebe 哲别 captured Kuchlug 屈出律 the ruler of Qara Khitai, marking the ending of its dynastic control in northwest China.⁵²

The fall of Qara Khitai made the Mongol Empire's territory bordered the frontier of the Khwarazmian Empire, a country which was located at Transoxiana. Initially found by a Seljuq commander, this Sunni Muslim empire was one of the most remarkable regimes in twelfth- to thirteenth-century Islamic world. The sultan of the Khwarezmian Empire Ala ad-Din Muhammad II (r. 1200-1220) was an influential figure in Central Asia who just completed

⁵⁰ Wang Guowei. *Jiaozhu shengwu qinzheng lu*.

⁵¹ Ata-Malik Juvayni, *Shijie zhengfuzhe shi*, trans. He Gaoji (Hohhot: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 1980), 49-60.

⁵² Chen Dezhi ed., *Zhongguo tongshi: Yuanshiqi*. Vol.8 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), 370-71.

conquering the Transoxiana area and planned to possibly defeat China.⁵³ The conflict between the Khwarezmian Empire and the Mongol Empire started from a controversial incident that the chief of Otrar accidentally killed the envoys of Genghis Khan. In 1218, Genghis Khan appointed a trade mission to Khwarizmi to deliver his expectation of the commercial interaction. However, when the embassy arrived at the city of Otrar, the local governor executed the trader and forcibly confiscated their goods. Based on the current historical document, it remains unclear whether the Otrar governor got permission from Sultan Ala ad-Din Muhammad II to treat Mongol envoys contemptuously. While the thing for sure was Genghis Khan's determination to make reprisals upon the Khwarezmian Empire.

One year later, Genghis Khan started advancing westward with a force of approximately 200,000 soldiers to Central Asia. The Mongol army rapidly swept down major cities, including Otrar, Bukhara, Gurganj, and finally the capital Samarkand in 1222.⁵⁴ However, the Mongols did not capture the new Sultan Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu (r. 1220-1231), son of Ala ad-Din Muhammad II, in the Battle of Indus. Nevertheless, the triumphant invasion of the Khwarezmian Empire reflected the effective warfare strategy of the Mongol military, through which Genghis Khan has extended his political power to Central Asia in the early thirteenth century. The demonstrated military ambitions of the Mongols and their cruelty in conquering Central Asia enforced the image of Mongols as tough enemies.

⁵³ Constantin Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols, depuis Tchinguiz-khan jusqu'a Timour bey ou Tamerlan*. Vol. 2. (La Haye, Amsterdam: Les frères Van Cleef, 1940), trans., Feng Chengjun. *Duosang menggushi* (Beijing: the Commercial Press, 2013), 101-08.

⁵⁴ He Gaoji trans., *Shijie zhengfuzhe shi*, 95-149.

Second Invasion of Eastern Europe

Afterward, the Mongol cavalry quickly advanced westward and defeated several Eastern European regions such as Cumania, Armenia, and Russian principalities.⁵⁵ Till the end of the 1240s, the western border of the Mongol Empire has almost approached the front line of Western Christian countries. The brutal Mongol power consequently turned into a severe threat to the Pope and kings in Western Europe.

As early as the year of 1221, when the generals Jebe and Subutai 速不臺 were commissioned to chase Sultan Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, Mongol troop's step has already advanced the Eastern European country Georgia near the Black Sea and Azerbaijan near the Caspian Sea. They even attacked Kievan Rus's city Sudak in Crimea before withdrawing in 1223 to rejoin Genghis Khan's force and back to Mongolia.⁵⁶ This would be the first time when European society got invaded by the Mongol power. The unwillingness of Kievan Rus to remain loyal to the Mongol Empire, however, incurred Mongols' much more powerful expedition, later known as the Mongol invasion of Europe by historians.⁵⁷

In 1229, Ögedei Khan (r. 1229-1241) succeeded to the throne on the kurultai two years after the death of Genghis Khan in 1227 during the conquest war of Western Xia. Throughout his reign of the empire, the primary goal of Ögedei Khan was to maintain his father's legacy and keep enlarging the imperial territory. Among all the unfinished missions of Genghis Khan – conquering the Jin dynasty, Western Xia, the Khwarezmian Empire, Southern Song China, etc., defeating the nomadic tribes on the Qipchaq Steppe and Kievan Rus was the urgent one. Sooner, Ögedei Khan dispatched a thirty-thousand-people military troop heading to Qipchaq, Saqsin, and

⁵⁵ Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, 226-47.

⁵⁶ Song Lian, *Yuanshi*. Vol. 120 “Hesimaili zhuan 曷思麥裏傳”, 2969-74.

⁵⁷ Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, 245-47.

Bilär (in Volga Bulgaria). Although got Mongol's attack and retreated a bit, the Qipchaq army kept resisting the Mongol force and temporarily avoided Mongol's devastation.

Ögedei Khan gradually consolidated his authority in the next six years by implementing several kinds of new policies. He hosted the *kurultai* in the middle of 1234 – just after conquering the Jin dynasty – to specify *Yassa*, the general law code of the Mongols declared by Genghis Khan. This clarification of the rule of *Yassa* 札撒 undoubtedly highlighted the legitimized power of Ögedei Khan to both Mongol aristocrats and the ordinary people. At the beginning of 1235, Ögedei Khan claimed to construct the capital Karakorum and started to establish the nationwide *jamci* 站赤 transportation system.⁵⁸ These domestic institutions solidly unified the Mongol Empire as a single polity under the rule of Ögedei Khan.

Regarding the military affairs, Ögedei Khan made a significant decision on Mongol's second westward campaign, which directly led to the decision of the Pope and potentates in Western Europe to contact with the Mongol Empire. In the summer of 1235, Ögedei Khan held the *kurultai* once again for approving the invading plan to Southern Song China and Eastern Europe. The general leader of the expedition to Europe claimed to be Batu 拔都, the son of Jochi 朮赤, along with other prince leaders from Genghis family including Güyük and Möngke (Map 3). Subutai, the renowned Mongol military leader, served as the actual chief general again after fifteen years when he plundered Rus and the Qipchaq Steppe in the 1220s. His extensive experiences in familiarizing the local geography and political regime, which qualified his command authority over a huge army of around 150,000 Mongols.

⁵⁸ Sugiyama Masaaki, *Jichi de caoyuan zhengfuzhe*, 272-73.

In the winter of 1236, Subutai rapidly destroyed the opposition of the Qipchaqs once arriving on the battlefield at Volga.⁵⁹ Qipchaqs refers to another group of ancient nomadic tribes who lived on the vast steppes between the Caspian Sea in the south, the Caucasus to the north of the Black Sea, and the Danube River in the south. The Mongol targeted Qipchaqs as the first object not only because they wanted Qipchaq people to pay the cost for not surrendering to them, but more importantly, the Qipchaq nomads shared fairly similar military structures and equestrian skills with the Mongol tribes, so that Qipchaq soldiers can be incorporated into Mongol's current cavalry army for future conquests.⁶⁰

After defeating the Qipchaq tribes and Bulgarian area, at the end of 1237, the Mongols had been ready to head out to the Russian land. They made their first triumph at Rjasan (modern Ryazan), and then successively stormed tens of cities such as Moscow, Kolomna, Vladimir, and Rostov within a month at the beginning of 1238.⁶¹ In February, Mongol armies sieged the capital Kiev of the Rus principalities and then massacred the city of Kozelsk due to its resistance. Then, the Mongol army continued to march south and camped at the Don Basin to recruit slave mercenaries.

After a one-year recuperation, in 1241, Batu divided the Mongol army as two troops to invade Poland and Hungary, respectively. The northern force was led by Baidar and Uriyanghadai, who swept the cities of Sandomierz, Cracow, and Moravia. Then they annihilated the Polish and German army under Duke Henry II of Silesia at Liegnitz (modern Legnica in Poland).⁶² While defeating Olomouc, they rejoined Batu's force from the south.

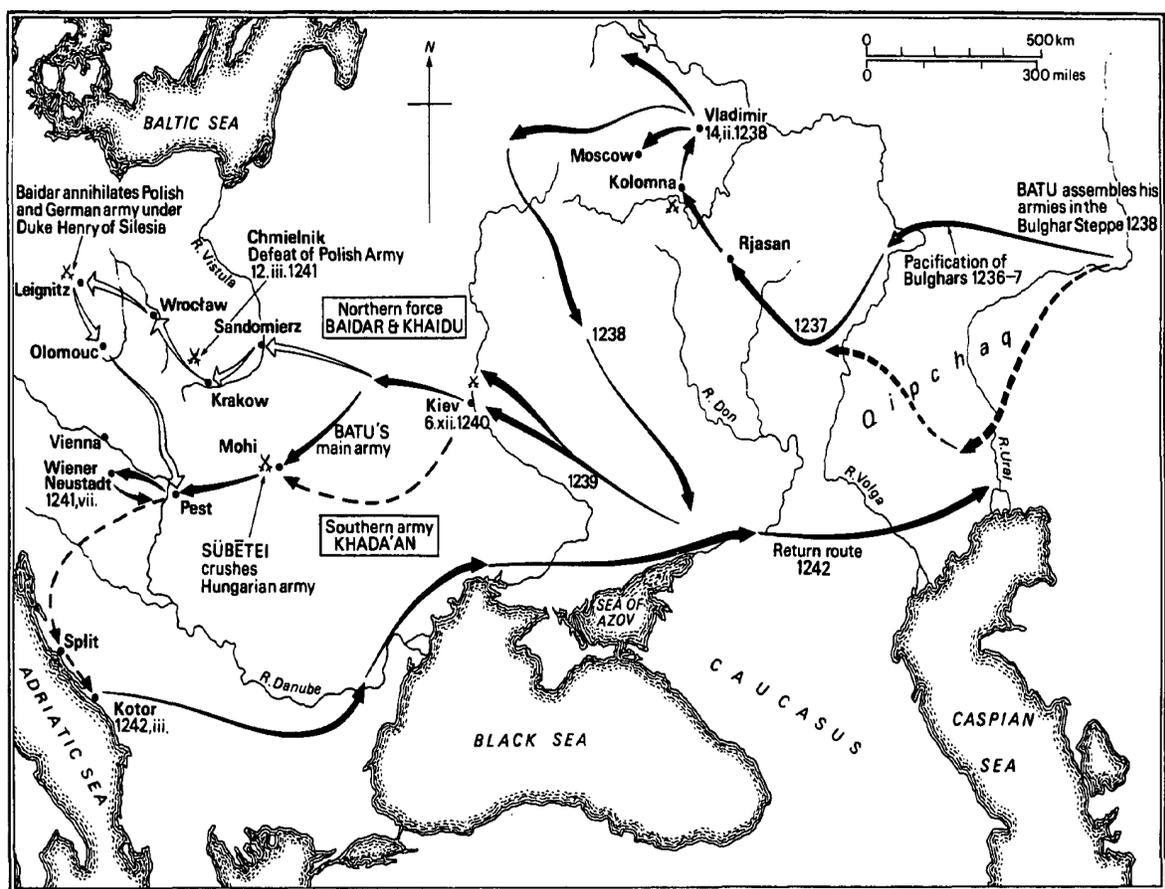
⁵⁹ Thomas T. Allsen, "Prelude to the Western Campaigns: Mongol Military Operations in the Volga-Ural Region, 1217–1237." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 3 (1983): 5-24.

⁶⁰ Sugiyama Masaaki, *Menggu diguo de xignwang: junshi kuozhang shidai*, trans., Sun Yue (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015), 67-69.

⁶¹ Han Rulin ed., *Yuanchaoshi*, 143-45.

⁶² Song Lian. *Yuanshi*. Vol. 121. "Subutai zhuan 速不臺傳," 2975-77.

Meanwhile, Batu was attacking Hungary from three directions. The King Béla IV of Hungary quickly fled to Zagreb, and then to Dalmatia when he heard about the Mongols stormed Hungarian army alongside the Sajo River.



Map 3. Batu's Invasion of Russia and Europe. In Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank, eds. *The Cambridge History of China: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 369.

In the summer and autumn of 1241, Batu's military approached Pest and butchered the residents there. The winter of 1241/42 was also so harsh for Eastern European locals since the

Mongols crossed over the frozen Danube River and overwhelmed the city of Gran. Meanwhile, commander Qadan's troops set off to capture King Béla IV, who had left Croatia to an island in the Adriatic Sea.⁶³ Qadan therefore failed to persuade Béla IV to surrender, so he burned Split and Kotor in his fury. His troops then passed through Serbia to Bulgaria, where they united with Batu's army and returned to Batu's camp at the lower course of the Ural River (Map 3).

Batu's army suddenly left Eastern Europe not only because of the lack of supplies, but more importantly because of the news that Ögedei Khan had died during the last days of 1241 arrived. All the Genghisids were ordered to retreat to Mongolian Plateau for the competition of being the new Great Khan. Although the Mongols withdrew military force abruptly, their barbarity and the cruel feature has long been the nightmare to the entire European society.⁶⁴ The Mongol devastation and the massacre of the local population widely spread to Western Europeans even they had not been attacked by the Mongol army. Pope and the kings had no choice but to pray for God's protection from the potential Mongol conquests.⁶⁵

While after fearing a confrontation with the brutal Mongol military for around two decades, the news of Ögedei Khan's death and the martial withdrawal of Batu finally gave Western Europeans a chance to respite, thinking about how to change the plight of being possibly attacked by the Mongols. Since Western Europeans had been witnessing the Mongol invasions of Volga Bulgaria, the Qipchaq Steppe, Kievan Rus, and even conquests of Poland and Hungary in Eastern Europe, they began to think about how powerful and sanguinary the Mongols would be. They supposed that establishing some connections with this nomadic regime could serve as an effective way for both sides to learn more about each other. The successful

⁶³ Di Cosmo et al., eds. *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 70-72.

⁶⁴ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 76-77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-88.

contact could also provide Mongol Khans a more positive impression on Europeans, so that Western Europe and the Mongol Empire could hopefully remain a peaceful condition for a while. On the other hand, if the Mongols refused to build interactions or even intended to attack Western Europe, the church still needed to gain knowledge and information about this emerging power across Eurasia for the preparation of a possible conflict.

Therefore, to prevent the future invasion from the Mongols, the Pope and kings from Latin Christendom started to dispatch Catholic missions as official legates with papal letters to reach out to the Mongol rulers.⁶⁶ These missionaries were not only served as negotiators seeking peace, but as political ambassadors dedicated to building some relations between Latin Europe and the Mongol Empire. In addition, they were required to collect information on the Mongol power as much as possible. In this way, they expected to defend upcoming attack once knowing more about the strength and military power of the Mongols.

The Crusades

From the twelfth to the thirteenth century, Mongol conquerors were not the only enemies to whom Western European society had to confront. The Pope and European kings also targeted Muslims as religious hostiles to fight against during the Crusades. By the early thirteenth century, Christian nations in Europe have initiated six crusades towards caliphates. They witnessed how the Mongol military devastated the cities of Islamic countries in Central Asia and massacred the local Muslim population. In the eyes of European kings, the Mongol army also viewed the Islamic world as an enemy. Therefore, Pope Innocent IV was not the only one eager to come in contact with the Mongol Khan. King Louis IX of France, the leader of the Seventh

⁶⁶ Henry Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1, 154-55.

Crusade, was also keen to reach out to the Mongol force and called for the probability of a military alliance to defeat the Islamic world together.

Islam was initially founded by Prophet Muhammad, who claimed to receive revelations at Mecca in 610. Although the religious faith of Islam was not fully formed after Muhammad's death in 632, the emergence of initial Islamic identity and its religious authority was gradually strengthened during the era of the Rashidun Caliphate and the foundation of Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.⁶⁷ By the tenth century, the Islamic world has taken most regions of the Middle East from the Arabian Peninsula, modern Iran and Iraq, North Africa to Transoxiana. With the decrease of political and military control of the central government, the authorized power of Abbasid caliphs has largely declined, while Turkish Seljuq guard officers started to claim to be the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad.⁶⁸

In 1071, Seljuq Empire's ruler Alp Arslan (r. 1063-1072) conquered the Byzantine Empire in the Battle of Manzikert, which made Jerusalem and Damascus under his control. The loss of the holy city urged Byzantine emperor Alexius to ask for aid from Pope Urban II against Muslim Turks. Reclaiming the lost Holy Land thus became one of the primary purposes of the First Crusade.⁶⁹ In 1099, the crusaders achieved the first victory – they recaptured Jerusalem from Shiite Fatimids and built first crusader states. Since then, the Pope and European king had led six more crusades before Hulagu Khan (r. 1256-1265) conquering the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258 with a brutal execution to the last Caliph Al-Musta' sim.

⁶⁷ Jonathan P Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800*. Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57-58.

⁶⁸ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106-09.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Simon Christopher Riley-Smith, ed. *The Oxford History of the Crusades* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-3.

The conflicts between the Christian world and the Islamic caliphates remained intensive when Mongol power emerged on the Mongolian Plateau at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In 1218, Pope Innocent III initiated the Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) to reclaim Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land. Approximately at the same time, Genghis Khan started invading the Khwarazmian dynasty, the remarkable Islamic state in Central Asia, and destroyed it within two years. To some extent, the Mongol army helped weaken the Islamic power from the east when European Crusaders confronted the Muslim countries from the west. The Khwarazmian dynasty, unfortunately, failed to counterattack effectively and was quickly defeated. The Mongols made cruel atrocities toward Muslim leaders, Imams, teachers, and the majority of people.⁷⁰ They destroyed the palaces and gardens in the city and killed all the residents as an act of revenge with no hesitation – the typical way that Mongol force conquered Central Asian Islamic countries.

Up to the late 1240s when King Louis IX of France launched the Seventh Crusade to attack the Ayyubid regime in Egypt, the war between Europeans and Muslims had continued for a century and a half. However, Latin Christendom has not accomplished so many victories. The Seventh Crusade which led by King Louis IX also ended up with failure. Despite being equipped with the complete supplies, the Crusaders led by King IX still faced a terrible timing when the Nile flooded just as they landed in Egypt in 1249 (Map 4).⁷¹ The severe conditions of the local environment also led to the spread of the plague, and even King Louis IX himself suffered from this disease. On the other hand, the Ayyubid dynasty also experienced a turbulent situation that

⁷⁰ John Andrew Boyle, ed. *The History of the World Conqueror*. Vol. 1. (Manchester, UK.: Manchester University Press, 1958), 116-49.

⁷¹ Lars Brownworth, *In Distant Lands: A Short History of the Crusades*. (Horley, U.K.: Crux Publishing Ltd, 2017).

Ayyubid sultan Al-Salih Ayyub (r. 1240-1249) died during this time.⁷² It was the Mamluk commanders who took over the Ayyubid army of Turkic slave soldiers, and then the entire country. At the Battle of Mansurah in February 1250, the Mamluks defeated the Crusaders and captured Louis IX, marking the failure of Latin Christendom in the Seventh Crusade.⁷³



Map 4. The Route of Crusades of Louis IX, 1248-1254 and 1270. In William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas*, “The Mediterranean Lands after 1204” (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926), 73.

King Louis IX and other European potentates have witnessed how the Mongol cavalymen destroyed Eastern European countries. Although he worried that the Mongol Empire might also be a severe threat, Louis IX still intended to ask Mongols to build a military ally to

⁷² Arthur Goldschmidt Jr, and Aomar Boum. *A Concise History of the Middle East* (New York; London: Routledge, 2019), 83.

⁷³ Riley-Smith, ed. *The Oxford History of the Crusades*, 238.

fight against the Muslims. In fact, it was Eljigidei, the Mongol commander at Persia who dispatched the mission to visit Louis IX in 1248 that motivated the king to send envoys back. In winter 1248, during the stay at Cyprus for war preparations, Louis IX met David and Marco, the embassies on behalf of Eljigidei.⁷⁴ The two envoys handed in Eljigidei's letter, which suggested a tactical plan that while Eljigidei advanced Baghdad, Louis IX should attack the Ayyubid dynasty as a way to prevent the alliance between the Muslims in Egypt and those in Syria.⁷⁵ This plan perfectly matched what Louis IX wanted to achieve, so that could be a reason targeted invading Egypt first.

Encouraged by this cooperation invitation, Louis IX shortly sent back two groups of missions to the Mongols. The first was David and Marco who went back to Eljigidei's camp in Persia. The second mission led by Andrew of Longjumeau planned to directly discuss with Güyük Khan on this significant military collaboration at the Mongol court. Although Louis IX failed in the crusade, he still believed that the establishment of a military alliance with the Mongol troops in the east would lead to a greater triumph for Latin Christendom in defeating the Muslims. Louis IX once again sent Franciscan William of Rubruck as his secret emissary in 1253 to reach out to Möngke Khan (r. 1251-1259), also in an attempt to build a cooperative military ally.

Legendary Kingdom of Prester John

Besides the political and military purpose of the Catholic missions to travel to the Mongol realm, Europeans were also eager to find the mythical Christian kingdom ruled by Prester John in the eastern world. In twelfth-century Western Europe, a famous legend spread

⁷⁴ Feng Chengjun, trans. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 153-54.

⁷⁵ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 181.

among the Franks that a Christian King from the East would be of assistance against the Muslims in Crusades, which has fascinated the Europeans for several decades.⁷⁶ Except for the temporary reoccupation of the Holy Church in Jerusalem during the First Crusade, European crusaders have not accomplished many victories in the early days. Therefore, they anchored their hopes on this legendary Christian companion from the remote eastern land to help them defeat the Muslims.

Another evidence that came from a letter allegedly sent by Prester John to the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180) in 1165, which also reinforced the religious authenticity of this figure.⁷⁷ In the letter, Prester John described himself as the “King of three Indies,” who reign a vast land full of treasure and riches.⁷⁸ He supposedly once conquered Persian military as a devout defender of Christianity in Central Asia. Finding this Christian king in the land of Orient would be excellent support for European Crusaders to eliminate the Islamic force and influence upon the Holy Land.

Many of the Mongol tribes with Nestorian beliefs became the origins of the legendary figure Prester John. Considering that the Mongol ulus was not a solidary unity when initially founded in 1206 – many tribal clans had different religious backgrounds (Map 5). Clans of Keraite, Naiman, and Ongud that came of the Nestorian Christian faith might be the possible sources of the European legend of Prester John. The clan of Keraite originally lived in the upper course of Kherlen River and the Tuul River. They might have converted to Nestorianism at the beginning of the eleventh century.⁷⁹ Temüjin’s foster father Tooril Khan (also known as Ong

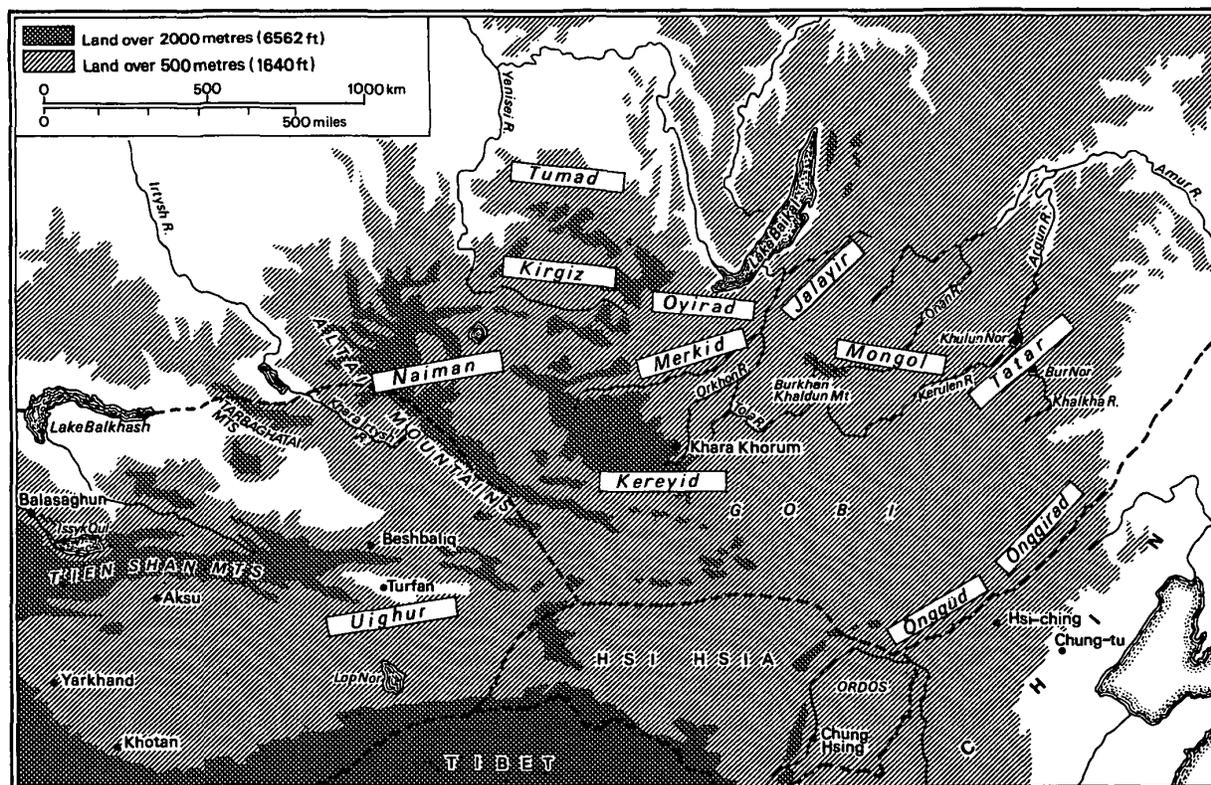
⁷⁶ Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 41-43.

⁷⁷ Keagan Brewer, *Prester John: The Legend and its Sources*. (Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 29, 97.

⁷⁸ Jean Richard, “The Relatio de Davide as Source for Mongol History and the Legend of Prester John,” in *Proceedings of the 35th Permanent International Altaistic Conference* (Taipei, 1993): 417-29.

⁷⁹ Feng Chengjun trans., *Duosang menggushi*, 48; Rashīd al-Dīn and Faḍl-Allāh al-Hamadānī. *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh*. See *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans., J.A. Boyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Also see Yu Dajun and Zhou Jianqi, trans., *Shiji*, 211.

Khan), the Khan of Keraites, was one of the most famous Nestorians who was recorded in many of the contemporary travel accounts and historical documents. Tooril was the blood brother of Yesugei, the chief of the Mongol tribe. He assisted Temüjin to fight with other nomadic groups such as the Merkits, the Tatars, and the Naimans in the early tribal wars.⁸⁰



Map 5. The Steppe World, 1190. In Denis C. Twitchett, Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank, eds. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 322.

The Ongud people who lived in the north of the Yin Mountains also had a long tradition of Nestorian belief. Both Marco Polo and missionary John of Montecorvino recorded that

⁸⁰ Cleaves, trans. *The Secret History of the Mongols*, 76-131.

Mongol aristocrat Kuoligis [translated from his Nestorian name George] was the descendant of Prester John, which provided the primary piece of evidence to confirm the legend of this Nestorian Christian king in the East. In his travelogue, Marco Polo mentioned that the rulers of the province of Tenduc 天德 were the descendants of Prester John. The great part of the people here were Nestorian Christians.⁸¹ The current king of Tenduc was Kuoligis (Prester George), the sixth generation of Prester John. This local Nestorian family maintained an influential relationship of intermarriages with the descendants of Genghis Khan. For example, Kuoligis's father, the former Tenduc King Aibuhua married Princess Yuelie, the daughter of Kublai Khan. Boyaohe, Aibuhua's father, married Alakhai Bekhi, a daughter of Genghis Khan.⁸² Archbishop John of Montecorvino recorded in his letter that King Kuoligis converted from Nestorianism to Christianity under his preaching. Kuoligis also let his subject soldiers make the conversion as well.⁸³

The Naiman tribe also had Nestorian believers who lived near the Altai Mountains.⁸⁴ Franciscan William of Rubruck raised the third possible origin of the image of Prester John. In the seventeenth chapter of the travelogue, he noted that a Nestorian Christian in the Naiman tribe made himself king, thus Nestorians in the tribe called him King John or Prester John. This John had a brother by name Ong, who was evidently the last Keraite ruler, Ong Khan. In the record of William of Rubruck, Prester John was the brother of Ong Khan and once became the ruler of the Naiman tribe.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Arthur Christopher Moule and Paul Pelliot, ed., *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: G. Routledge, 1898), 181-82.

⁸² Song Lian. *Yuanshi*. Vol. 118. “阿剌兀思剌吉忽里 (關里吉思)傳,” 2923-25.

⁸³ “The Second Letter of John of Montecorvino.” in *Mission to Asia*. ed. Christopher Dawson (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 225-26.

⁸⁴ Feng Chengjun. “Zhongya yu dongya zhi jidujiao tu”, *Xiyu nanhai shidi kaozheng yicong* (Beijing: the Commercial Press, 1932), 57-81.

⁸⁵ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 122.

Various records from William of Rubruck, Marco Polo, and John of Montecorvino reveal how the legend of Prester John widely spread in medieval Western Europe. European travelers were enthusiastic about connecting what they heard and saw with this mythical figure during their visit to China. Once proved to be a real kingdom, this legend meant that the gospel had spread to the East, indicating the omnipotence of God. Even though Nestorianism was still considered as a heresy belief by the Roman Catholic church at that time, it originated from Christianity, developed in Central Asia, and eventually spread to East Asia. If European countries successfully established contact with this brotherly kingdom, then the territory of Christ would expand to the eastern world. Prester John, whether based on imagination or reality, was a manifestation of God's love in the East, and an excellent opportunity for a spread of Christianity. This was the internal motivation of Catholic missionaries to discover and record the legend of Prester John during the Mongol-Yuan period.⁸⁶

The interrelationships of power struggling among the Mongol Empire, Latin Christian Europe, and the Islamic Middle East before the mid-1260s remains complicated (Figure 1). Within a few decades, the Mongol Empire quickly developed into a significant power in the contemporary world. It built up a vast territory from East Asia to Eastern Europe by conquering most of the countries across Eurasia through three times of western expeditions. Fortunately, Western Europe was not yet attacked by this nomadic power. After witnessing how the Mongol troops destroyed the cities in Eastern Europe, the Pope and Western kings considered the Mongols as a severe threat that they must gain more understandings about. The sudden

⁸⁶ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 86-87.

withdrawal of the Mongol army from Eastern Europe to the Mongolian Plateau provided Latin Christendom an opportunity to seek peace.

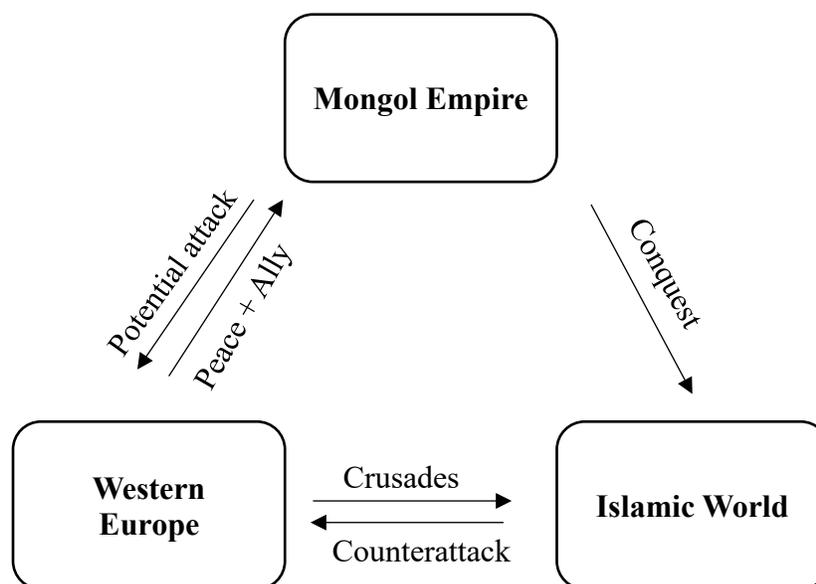


Figure 1. The Interrelationship among the Mongol Empire, Western Europe, and the Islamic Middle East, 1200-1260.

Under the terror of being swept down in the future, Pope Innocent IV decided to send several groups of missions as special legates with his letter to reach out to the Mongol ruler right away. In the official letter, the Pope expressed a hope of the Mongols' conversion in order to seek peace between the Mongol Empire and the Papal States. To better figure out what exactly the Mongols were and what further movement they intended to accomplish, the papal missionaries were asked to collect information regarding various aspects of the Mongols as much as possible. Besides, the European society was inspired by the legend of Prester John, a mythical Nestorian King who ruled a Christian nation in the East. Thus, the papal envoys were also required to find some information about this legendary state when they traveled to the Mongol

Empire. Furthermore, European kings also commissioned emissaries to reach out to the Mongol leaders. As the leader of the Seventh Crusade, King Louis IX of France was the one who intended to establish a military alliance with the Mongols to fight against Muslims together.

CHAPTER II: Multi-identities of Early Catholic Missionaries, 1245-1260

Pathetic sentiments to the militarily aggressive Mongols have been haunting on the Western European world since the 1240s. If the first Mongol incursion into Kievan Rus and Qipchaq steppe in the 1220s did not raise much attention in Western Europe, the second destructive invasion launched by Batu Khan in 1236 to several Eastern European countries including Russian, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania did spread terrifying emotions through Europe. The medieval European people even rationalized Mongol conquests as a punishment from God, as the “Tartar” Mongol closely sounds like the word *Tartarus*, meaning hell in Latin.⁸⁷ Although the sudden withdrawal of the Mongol expeditionary army in 1241 saved most of the regions of Western Europe from being destroyed, no one knew how long this situation would last. It was widely believed that shortly the Mongols would return to accomplish their conquest over Western Europe.⁸⁸

In 1243, Pope Innocent IV had just been elected as the new successor. In the early time of his papacy, Christendom had undergone a tough time – losing the Holy City of Jerusalem again from the Khwarazmian dynasty and witnessing Mongols trampling on East European lands.⁸⁹ Three years after Batu’s withdrawal, on June 2, 1245, Innocent IV with the support of King Louis IX of France, presided over the First General Council of Lyon (Lyon I) to formulate a couple of countermeasures against Muslims and the Mongols. In addition to deciding to start the Seventh Crusade (ca. 1248-1254), the Pope was well aware of how urgent it was to protect Europe by figuring out who the Mongols were and what they intended to achieve. It was believed to be crucial to encounter with Mongol rulers, not only for peace, but for demonstrating

⁸⁷ Noreen Giffney, “Monstrous Mongols.” *Postmedieval: a Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 227-45.

⁸⁸ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 82-84.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

authority of the Papal States to stop Mongol troops from further invading, as European leaders had noticed how Mongol cavalymen slaughtered Muslims in Central Asia in their first invasion. With goals above in mind, Innocent IV and France King Louis IX began dispatching missionaries to the Mongol territory to contact the Great Khan and local Mongol commanders.

Before the division of the Mongol Empire at the beginning of the 1260s, Latin Christendom dispatched two types of mission groups to the Mongol realm. All the missions were either Franciscan or Dominican friars, both of which were Catholic mendicant orders founded in the thirteenth century. Different from the Franciscan's dressing preference of putting on a grey cloak, Dominican friars were considered as "Black Friars." The first type of mission groups appointed by Pope Innocent IV were Franciscan John of Plano Carpini, who departed from Lyon to the Mongol court in 1245, and in the same year, the Dominican mission led by Ascelin of Lombardy, to negotiate peace with the Mongol commander Baiju (fl. 1230-1260) 拜住 in Persia. Another type of groups were sent by the France King, either in a public or a secret way. In 1248, on behalf of King Louis IX, Dominican André de Longjumeau paid a return visit to the Mongol ruler seeking the military ally. His mission was entertained by Mongol regent Oghul Qaimish (r. 1248-1251) in Yemili three years later. Franciscan William of Rubruck was the last Catholic European who came to the Mongol court before the division of the Mongol Empire. He was a self-proclaimed missionary for preaching. However, he was also considered to be an emissary and spy sent by Louis IX to secretly collect information on the Mongols.

By investigating these missionaries' motivations for reaching out to Mongol Khans, this chapter argues that under the fear of being conquered by the Mongol military and lacking knowledge about this nomadic power, papal envoys and king's ambassadors were motivated by the possibility of convert or make ally with the Mongols. Though failed to archive their original

goals, they were able to document much information about the Mongol force, especially their military structure. Compared to diverse intentions on the European side, the Mongol responses remained the same in claiming their religious and political superiority.

Papal Envoy

John of Plano Carpini

A few months before the First Council of Lyon (Lyon I) in June 1245, Pope Innocent IV entrusted Franciscan John of Plano Carpini in March as his first official legate to contact the Mongol Khan. John of Plano Carpini soon departed from Lyon on April 16, accompanied by friar Stephen of Bohemia. After a one-year adventurous land journey, they arrived at the imperial camp near Karakorum and received hospitable treatment there. John of Plano Carpini delivered two papal letters to Güyük Khan and got the permission to return to Europe, with Khan's response letter, on November 13, 1246. The report John of Plano Carpini wrote after safely returning to Europe provided the European world with a comprehensive description of the Mongol society.⁹⁰

John of Plano Carpini was said to be born around 1180 in a town near Perugia now called Magione.⁹¹ He had served as the provincial minister of Saxony in Germany and later held positions in Spain. At the time when Pope Innocent IV chose him as the leader of the diplomatic

⁹⁰ John of Plano Carpini originally written in Latin, Jackson, Dawson, and Rockhill translated the travel note into the English version, respectively. See William Woodville Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1900); Christopher Henry Dawson, ed. *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London & New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955); Peter Jackson, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 89; Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1, 155-57.

mission, John of Plano Carpini was a senior in his sixties – a bit old to travel the long-distance intercontinental route called Mongol Ortege Road.⁹² However, his career experience and knowledge made him a well-esteemed friar to handle this international negotiation with the Mongols.

In April 1246, John of Plano Carpini and his mission arrived at Batu Khan’s camp near the Volga River. Batu ordered officials to translate Pope’s letters from Latin to “Ruthenian, Saracenic, and Tatar characters.”⁹³ After a few-day stop at Batu’s Golden Horde, John of Plano Carpini kept going eastward and finally arrived at the Mongol court near Karakorum three months later. During their stay, they were allowed to visit the imperial camp where they were treated hospitably. The papal mission also attended the enthronement of Güyük Khan. On the day of the ceremony, John of Plano Carpini and his missionary fellows were listed as papal ambassadors on the official roster and were interviewed by the Khan along with diplomats from other countries. They brought Pope’s presents to Güyük Khan as other official diplomats did.⁹⁴ At Güyük Khan’s ordo near Karakorum, John of Plano Carpini had a more detailed conversation with him to articulate the intention of their visit and delivered two papal letters, *Dei patris immense* dated March 5, and *Cum non solum* dated March 13, which conveyed the primary motivation of the Pope to contact with the Mongol Khan (Figure 2).

⁹² Bira Shagdar, “The Mongol Empire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: East-West Relations.” in *The Silk Roads: Highways of Culture and Commerce*, ed., Doudou Diène (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), 127-44.

⁹³ “Saracenic” probably refers to “Persian.” “Tartar” would refer to “Uighur” since these were the languages used in the Mongol chancery. *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

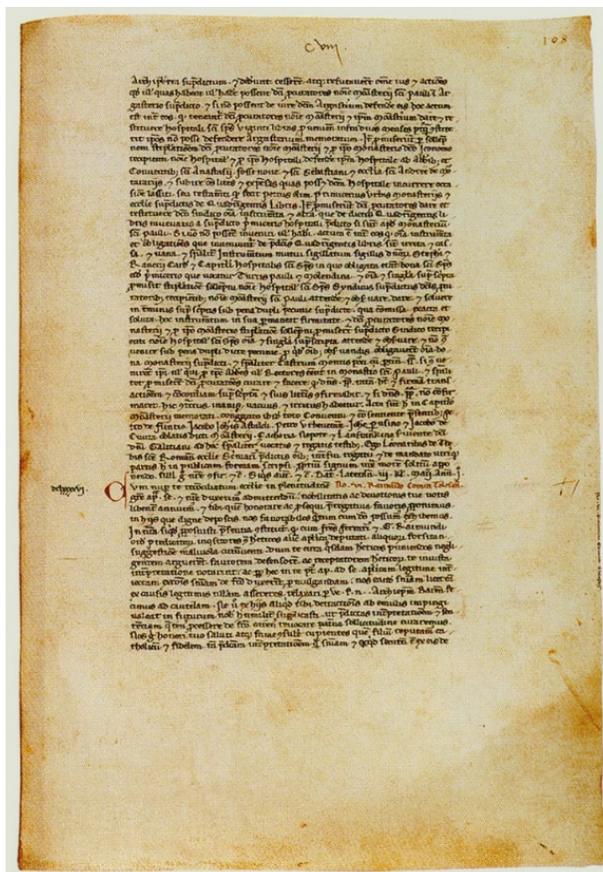


Figure 2. Letter of Pope Innocent IV to Güyük Khan, 1245. Vatican Secret Archives, Vatican City, Inv. no. Reg. Vat., 21, ff. 107 v. – 108 r.⁹⁵

The first letter was mainly to introduce Catholic Christianity to the Mongol Khan. It started with an introduction about the history of Christianity, explaining who Jesus was and how he put himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of humankind. Then, the letter explained the essential doctrine of Catholicism, with a specific focus on where the Pope’s power came from and how it was authorized by God, as noted:

He [Jesus] handed to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven by which he and, through him, his successors, were to possess the power of opening and of closing the gate of that

⁹⁵ Mohamad Ballan, “Mongol-Papal Encounter: Letter Exchange between Pope Innocent IV and Güyük Khan in 1245-1246,” <https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/mongol-papal-encounter-letter-exchange-between-pope-innocent-iv-and-guyuk-khan-in-1245-1246/> (accessed March 17, 2020).

kingdom to all. Wherefore we, though unworthy, having become, by the Lord's disposition, the successor of this vicar.⁹⁶

In this letter, the successors of Jesus undoubtedly referred to the Pope, the authorized vicar of God in the secular world. With the divine power given by God, it was the Pope's responsibility to watch over people's salvation and to care for souls. On the one hand, the Pope was the protector of Catholic believers. On the other hand, he was also a guide to "lead those in error into the way of truth."⁹⁷ From the perspective Pope Innocent IV, vast conquests to other countries and people had put the Mongols in error, so they needed to accept religious help from the Catholic church to get salvation. At the end of the letter, the Pope expressed a hope of the Mongols' conversion to Catholicism. By following the instructions of the papal legates to "acknowledge Jesus Christ the very Son of God," the Mongol people may receive God's mercy and protection.⁹⁸ This letter used religious discourse to manifest God's grace without thinking about whether the Mongols had their own beliefs. The Pope might consider the Mongol conversion as a pretty effective way to get in touch with and further build relations with the Mongol Empire.

The second letter was a much shorter one which mainly focused on the potential conflict between the Mongols and Christian Europe. The Pope also used religious expressions to convey his concerns. At first, he condemned Mongol atrocities on the conquered countries and urged them to stop slaughtering innocent people, especially Christians in Europe:

We are driven to express in strong terms our amazement that You, as we have heard, have invaded many countries belonging both to Christians and to others and are laying them waste in a horrible desolation, and with a fury still unabated you do not cease from stretching out your destroying hand to more distant lands, but, breaking the bond of natural ties, sparing neither sex nor age, you rage against all indiscriminately with the sword of chastisement. We, therefore, following the example of the King of Peace, and

⁹⁶ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 74.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

desiring that all men should live united in concord in the fear of God, do admonish, beg and earnestly beseech all of you that for the future you desist entirely from assaults of this kind and especially from the persecution of Christians.⁹⁹

Since it was the first time for the Pope to reach out to the Mongol ruler without obtaining enough information, he used a pretty strong tone to blame the Mongols for the disasters in the Christian world and other countries. The Pope did not show any attitude of fear to the Great Khan but regarded Latin Christendom and the Mongol Empire as two equal entities. He gave a warning that the Mongols would get punished by Almighty God if they did not stop their invasion right away. They should conciliate the wrath of God by a fitting penance after bringing so many disastrous offenses to Christians and others. Expected for the immediate military suspend, what the Pope asked the Mongols to do in his letter were all about religious practices – beseeching God for his forgiveness, pious self-confessions, and a commitment of no more savageries. Otherwise, as warned by the Pope, God may no longer put off his punishment in this life but “take greater vengeance in the world to come.”¹⁰⁰ Regardless of what religious faith the Mongols believed in, the Pope requested them to follow Catholic doctrines as if they have already converted to Catholicism. By doing so, the Pope attempted to weaken Mongol Khan’s legitimacy of imperial expansion and indicate the righteousness of his rule over the secular world.

In fact, the strong attitude Pope Innocent IV showed in the letter did not precisely reflected the real fear and horror of the European society to the potential invasion from the Mongols. At the end of the letter, the Pope asked a inform from the Khan about what moved

⁹⁹ Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 75-76.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 76; Also see S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography. Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, And History of The Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitant*, vol 2. (London: WH Allen & CO, 1883), 415-16.

them “to destroy other nations” and what their “intention are for the future.”¹⁰¹ The Western European society, especially the Pope as the nominal supreme ruler of Latin Christendom, was eager to have Khan’s feedback about their intention and plan – whether they planned to further invade Western Europe would largely influence the ruling of the Pope.

Güyük Khan, however, expressed his disagreement with all the accusations from the Pope. With constant triumphs during invasions and conquests in the first half of the thirteenth century, the Mongol rulers got used to receiving emissaries from new countries or entities they defeated. Their hospitality, which included offering John of Plano Carpini entertainment and allowing the mission to attend Güyük Khan’s enthronement ceremony, mainly came out of an assumption that the European envoy would bring an official capitulation to acknowledge the Mongol supremacy.¹⁰² However, as discussed above, the Pope’s letter not only rebuked their military actions as a brutal invasion upon Eurasian countries and Christian people, but also demanded them to convert to Christianity. This arrogant tone of conviction irritated Güyük Khan, who rejected all the allegations of Mongol conquests in Hungary and Kievan Rus from Pope Innocent IV:

You have also said that supplication and prayer have been offered by you, that I might find a good entry into baptism. This prayer of thine I have not understood. Other words which thou hast sent me: “I am surprised that thou hast seized all the lands of the Magyar and the Christians. Tell us what their fault is.” These words of thine I have also not understood. The eternal God has slain and annihilated these lands and peoples, because they have neither adhered to Chingis Khan, nor to the Khagan, both of whom have been sent to make known God’s command, nor to the command of God. Like thy words, they also were impudent, they were proud, and they slew our messenger-emissaries. How could anybody seize or kill by his own power contrary to the command of God? ¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 76.

¹⁰² Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2004), 162-65.

¹⁰³ Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 85; Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 4-21.

Güyük Khan questioned why the Pope blamed all sins on the Mongols, since in his mind, the rightful motivation of the Mongols to conquer across Eurasia was authorized by the god they believed in. Güyük Khan claimed that all his power and the political legitimacy of ruling the empire came from the Heavenly-Father *Mongka Tängri*. It was not the Mongol army but God Mongka Tängri who started the war and annihilated these lands and people, because they submitted to neither Genghis Khan nor the God of Heaven. Güyük Khan's claim showed an internal religious tension in understanding God between the Mongols and European Christian. As of the emergence of the Mongol society in the twelfth century, Shamanism was the traditional and dominant religion among Mongol communities who understood all the supernatural powers in nature through a shamanized way. In their eye, the Pope, Christian Europeans, and other people who refused to adhere to God Tängri (Tengri) was impudent and should be conquered. Güyük Khan also doubted the divine power obtained from the Christian God:

Though thou likewise sayest that I should become a trembling Nestorian Christian, worship God and be an ascetic, how knowest thou whom God absolves, in truth to whom He shows mercy? How dost thou know that such words as thou speakest are with God's sanction? From the rising of the sun to its setting, all the lands have been made subject to me. Who could do this contrary to the command of God?¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, Güyük Khan rejected to convert to Christianity. Since believing in Christian God could gain authorized power was only a religious interpretation from the Catholic Church, the Pope should have learned what God Tengri asked the Mongols to do before requesting the Mongols to change their religious belief. What Güyük Khan expected from the visit of papal legates and the letter they delivered were neither the condemnation on their conquest nor the conversion to Christianity. Instead, he asked the Catholic Europeans to adhere to the command

¹⁰⁴ Dawson. *The Mongol Mission*, 86.

of God Tengri.¹⁰⁵ In the epistemological system of Shamanism, multiple deities from the sky, the mountains, the rivers, the land, the sun, and the moon have different powers in protecting and blessing people.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the Mongols did not worship one supreme God as Christians did. In the eyes of the Mongols, they did not see much difference among the Christian God, the Islamic god, or gods from other religious cultures. In the context of Shamanism, the Mongols conceptualized all different deities from diverse religious cultures as various types of Tengri in their belief systems. As a result, it was not a necessity to convert from their original belief to the Catholic faith, because essentially speaking, people believed in the same God. If the Pope insisted on the uniqueness of his God, Güyük Khan further emphasized it was *Mongka Tängri* the real God who protected their vast domain from sunrise to sunset.¹⁰⁷

At the end of the letter, Güyük Khan asked the Pope and kings of Europe to come to his court and submit to the great Mongol rule.¹⁰⁸ If the European leaders did not comply with this request, as Güyük Khan clarified, he would treat Catholic Europeans as other rebels the Mongols already conquered.¹⁰⁹

As the papal legate, John of Plano Carpini might not have accomplished the goal of converting the Great Khan to Christian faith or manifest the power of Almighty God and his supreme vicar, Pope Innocent IV, since Güyük Khan did not show any interests in it. On the last day of November 1246, they were allowed to leave the imperial camp and return to Europe, along with Güyük Khan's letter of response, which was translated from Mongolian into Persian and is preserved in Vatican now (Figure 3). One year later, the mission of John of Plano Carpini

¹⁰⁵ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 103.

¹⁰⁶ Owen Lattimore, "Religion and revolution in Mongolia." *Modern Asian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967): 81-94.

¹⁰⁷ Dawson. *The Mongol Mission*, 86.

¹⁰⁸ Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, 270-72.

¹⁰⁹ Dawson. *The Mongol Mission*, 86.

arrived at Lyon. Considering his primary travel purpose of collecting information about the Mongols on various aspects, John of Plano Carpini successfully recorded a detailed account based on his personal observation throughout the journey, and reported it to the Pope when they came back.



Figure 3. The 1246 Letter of Güyük to Pope Innocent IV (90° counterclockwise direction).

Vatican Secret Archives, Vatican City, Inv. no. A. A., Arm. I-XVIII.¹¹⁰

John of Plano Carpini's report narrative was not a general travelogue about the scenery view and personal enjoyment, but a first-handed description of Mongolia and the people, including the geographical and climatic environment, an ethnographical analysis of social traditions, its local customs, etc. The report was formed not chronologically but thematically, so he could elaborate on each specific aspect of the Mongols. The first five chapters introduced the basic information of Mongols. First, it analyzed the land position of Mongolian area and its climate. The second chapter was about the Mongol people, their clothes, possessions, and marriage. Chapter three introduced the worship God of Mongols, their sinfulness, and their funeral rites. The next chapter examined Mongol people's good and bad character, the food, and

¹¹⁰ "Letter from Güyük Khan to Innocent IV." Asnad.org, <http://www.asnad.org/en/document/249/> (accessed Mar 1, 2020).

their customs. The history of the Mongol Empire and the rulers consisted of the major content of chapter five.

The following four chapters moved the attention to the Mongol military power. Chapter six started with an evaluation of arms, the battle array, and the military tactics of the Mongols. It also stressed the Mongols' cruelty to captives and their perfidy to those who surrendered to them. The seventh chapter listed the conquered and still resisted countries, emphasizing the tyranny Mongols exercised over the inhabitants. Chapters eight and nine provided information on how to wage war against the Mongols, their army organizations, and their intentions. The final chapter expatiated on John of Plano Carpini's visit to Güyük Khan and his personal experience at Khan's camp near Karakorum.

The report of John of Plano Carpini basically covered every aspect of the Mongols, who had quite different cultural, social, religious, and political backgrounds compared to Western Europeans. What John of Plano Carpini wanted to emphasize throughout his account were the barbarism of the Mongol people. Considering the marriage, for example, John of Plano Carpini mentioned that each Mongol man "has as many wives as he can keep" depending on the man's willingness.¹¹¹ A levirate marriage was also normal in early Mongol society that "a younger brother may marry his brother's wife after his death."¹¹² This different marriage culture was rarely seen in medieval Christian Europe. John of Plano Carpini also noted that distinct from the only God worshiped by Christians, the Mongols maintained a polytheistic religious understanding. They venerated "the sun, the moon, fire, water and the earth, making them the first offerings of food and drink, especially in the morning before they eat or even drink."¹¹³ For

¹¹¹ Dawson. *The Mongol Mission*, 7.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

a pious and esteemed Franciscan friar, the concept of polytheism would be regarded as pagan and uncivilized.

Additionally, John of Plano Carpini spent plenty of space to elaborate on the cruelty of the Mongols – their personality and the way they treated conquered countries and captives. The Mongols were considered no sin “to kill men, to invade the countries of other people, to take the property of others in any unlawful way, to commit fornication, to revile other men, to act contrary to the prohibitions and commandments of God.” From John of Plano Carpini’s perspective, the Mongol people were a group of barbarous nomads with no fear of God. They treated the conquered people extremely bloody since “all those they take prisoner in battle they put to death.”¹¹⁴ The way John of Plano Carpini portrayed the Mongol image reflected his warning to the Pope and entire Western European society that a war was highly possible and they should be fully prepared once confronted with the brutal Mongols – on which topic he even provided practical suggestions and tips.

Although John of Plano Carpini provided the earliest first-hand knowledge about the Mongol world to Western Europe, his records unconsciously conveyed a sense of European or Christian supremacy, which more or less undermined or misinterpreted the real Mongol force. He specifically emphasized how barbaric the Mongols were and their sanguinary character, as well as stressed a necessity of conflicts, politically and religiously, between the Western Christian world and the Mongol Empire. Nevertheless, his report helped Latin Christendom establish an initial impression on the Mongol force they feared, which was also beneficial for the preparation of a war. In short, his visit and the two papal letters did not reach an expected outcome, as Güyük Khan paid little attention to convert to Christianity. The Khan just regarded

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

papal legates as one group of the envoys who came to submit to the Mongol regime on behalf of their county and handed in tributary gifts. The first European missionary visit to the Mongol Empire thus ended with up little success.

Ascelin of Lombardy

Almost at the same time as John of Plano Carpini was heading to the East, Pope Innocent IV also appointed four Dominicans as another group of diplomatic mission to Baiju Noyan, the Mongol commander in Persia. In 1245, the Pope sent Dominican friar Ascelin of Lombardy to deliver a papal letter, who was accompanied by other missionaries Albéric, Alexandre, and Simon de Saint-Quéentin.¹¹⁵ Then they returned with a letter of Baiju in 1248. This mission also tried to pursue peace as the Franciscan did at the Mongol court, however, the outcome of their visit was not as well-known as that of Franciscan John of Plano Carpini.

Right after the end of the First Council of Lyon, Ascelin of Lombardy set out on the journey to Baiju's camp. Baiju was a renowned Mongol commander who ruled Persia. He once participated in the war defeating Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, the last sultan of the Khwarezmian dynasty. Baiju replaced the sultan's predecessor Chormaqan 綽兒馬罕 to rule Persia by himself in 1242 appointed by the regent Töregene Khatun (r. 1241-1246).¹¹⁶ One year later, he conquered the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm, which extended Mongol control to northern Mesopotamia and Lesser Armenia.¹¹⁷

Since departing from Lyon to the Levant in 1245, the route and activity of Ascelin of Lombardy and his three companions were unclear. They finally arrive at Baiju's encampment

¹¹⁵ Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 63-84.

¹¹⁶ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 113.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

near northern Aras River in May 1247 two years later.¹¹⁸ During their stay waiting for the permission to meet with Baiju, however, the Dominican mission just began their contact with this ruler on the wrong foot – these envoys refused to make the triple genuflection to Baiju since they insisted the Pope was “the greatest of all men.”¹¹⁹ Additionally, the tone and content of the papal letter Dominicans conveyed were similar to the one John of Plano Carpini delivered. In the letter, Pope Innocent IV harshly berated Mongol conquests. The Pope also requested the Mongols to convert to Catholicism under his control. The missionary’s discourtesy undoubtedly infuriated commander Baiju, who threatened to kill the friars if they did not seek peace sincerely. Baiju even thought about sending the mission of Ascelin of Lombardy to the imperial court on the Mongolia Plateau to personally submit the papal letter to Güyük Khan, just as Batu directly dispatched the Franciscan missionary John of Plano Carpini to the Mongol court, so that the mission could gain an awareness of the Mongol Khan’s authority and his power over lands from the Mongolia steppe to the Caspian Sea.¹²⁰

The news brought by Eljigidei the future successor of Baiju from Karakorum mentioned that the Great Khan had met the papal envoy at the imperial court, namely John of Plano Carpini, and had responded to the Pope. It seemed there was no need to send Ascelin of Lombardy to Khan.¹²¹ Therefore, Baiju eventually released these Dominican missionaries with a copy of credential from the Khan, as well as an indignant rejection letter from him which indicated no allies or peace could be established without Latin Christendom’s surrender to the Mongol Empire.¹²² Baiju’s attitude toward European Christians was pretty similar to that of Güyük Khan,

¹¹⁸ Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 97.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹²² Baiju’s letter can be found in Pelliot’s “Les Mongols et la Papauté,” see *Ibid.*, 128-29.

which implied that within one year after the enthronement, Güyük Khan's administrative authority had already been effectively implemented by the commander-in-chief of the Mongol force at the westernmost border.¹²³

As a result, the mission did not have the opportunity to speak with Baiju personally till they returned to Western Europe on July 25, 1247.¹²⁴ Ascelin of Lombardy even feared to venture back to the Pope and made the report until 1250.¹²⁵ They, unfortunately, failed to establish direct contact with this Mongol governor in Persia, let alone building any active military alliance to fight with the Islamic world. There was a lack of extant documents that recorded how Pope Innocent IV felt when he received both letters of refusal brought by his Franciscan and Dominican envoys. One thing for sure was without establishing a formal relationship between Western Europe and the Mongol Empire, the fear of being destroyed by this bloody force would continue to bother European society.

King's Emissary

André de Longjumeau

André de Longjumeau was another Dominican missionary to reach out to the Mongols. While different from the former Dominican papal legate such as Ascelin of Lombardy, André de Longjumeau was entrusted as a formal ambassador on behalf of King Louis IX of France to pay a return visit to Eljigidei in Persia, the successor of Baiju. In 1249. André de Longjumeau

¹²³ Sugiyama Masaaki, *Menggu diguo de xingwang: junshi kuozhang de shidai*, 102-04.

¹²⁴ Pelliot demonstrated the left day of the mission of Ascelin of Lombardy. See Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 114.

¹²⁵ Rockhill. "Introductory notice," in *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, xxv.

traveled to the Mongol court in response to the suggestion of building the military ally against Muslims, which was initially suggested by Eljigidei.

Before the trip to Mongolia, André de Longjumeau actually had been to the Near East appointed by King Louis IX to bring back the Crown of Thorns he bought from the Emperor of Constantinople Baldwin II (r. 1228-1273).¹²⁶ André de Longjumeau set out in 1238 along with two Dominican companions and soon arrived at Constantinople, where he stayed to watch over the Crown of Thorns before the envoy paying up for the final ransom. In August 1239, they welcomed this holy crown to Paris.¹²⁷ It might be his former travel experience to the East that prompted the King to dispatch André de Longjumeau again as his official envoy to contact the Mongols.

Eljigidei was appointed after Baiju as the new commander-in-chief in Persia.¹²⁸ In May 1248, he dispatched two Catholic Mongols David and Marco as ambassadors with his letter to King Louis IX of France. In the letter, he proclaimed that on behalf of the Great Güyük Khan, the Mongol Empire will help to protect different sects of Christian Churches and more importantly, they were willing to be of assistance in helping the Crusaders recapture the Holy City of Jerusalem.¹²⁹

Eljigidei's compassion for Christians and his willingness to build military cooperation with Franks against Muslims were surprisingly distinct from what his predecessor Baiju showed in the letter to Ascelin of Lombardy. It was doubtful why Güyük Khan and Eljigidei chose to stand on the European side. One explanation was that perhaps feigning solidarity may be a ruse

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 137-38.

¹²⁸ Jagchid Sechen, *Menggu mishi: xinyi bing zhushi* (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1979), 428.

¹²⁹ Eljigidei's letter was translated from Latin to French by Paul Pelliot. See Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 153.

of war. While a more attractive reason emphasized by envoy David was that many of the Mongol leaders have got baptized, and even Güyük Khan might have converted to Nestorian Christianity at that time.¹³⁰ Güyük's mother, Naimaġin Töregene Khatun (d. 1246), was born in Naiman tribe.¹³¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, many of the Naimans were Nestorian Christians, thus Töregene was highly likely a Nestorian. Influenced by his mother, Güyük Khan may gain more Christian culture and knowledge than other Mongol rulers did. According to John of Plano Carpini's record, he "maintains Christian clerics and provides them with supplies of Christian things; in addition, he always has a chapel before his chief tent."¹³² It was also said that Eljigidei also prayed for God's protection on the Christian military to defeat Muslims, the "Cross scorer."¹³³

When envoy David and Marco arrived at king's camp at Cyprus in December 1248, Louis IX was preparing supplies for the Seventh Crusade against Muslims. During their visit, David and Marco delivered the message that Eljigidei planned to start attacking the Islamic Abbasid Caliphate. To achieve this goal, he encouraged Louis IX to prevent Egyptian Ayyubid Sultan from providing military assistance to the Caliph in Bagdad.¹³⁴ Although Eljigidei's actual purpose was hard to determine, since it was the first time the Mongols called for a military alliance with the European society, Louis IX was still deeply attracted by Eljigidei's collaboration proposal. He promptly made a response as this military plan perfectly matched what he anticipated.¹³⁵ Soon at the beginning of 1249, Louis IX once again commissioned André

¹³⁰ Zhou Liangxiao, "Yuan he yuanyiqian de jidujiao." in *Yuanshi luncong*. Vol 1, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 148-49.

¹³¹ Song Lian. *Yuanshi*. Vol. 114. "Houfeizhuan, Taizonghou Tuoliegena 后妃傳·太宗后脫列哥那" (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976). 2870.

¹³² Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 68.

¹³³ Zhou Liangxiao. "Yuan he yuan yiqian zhongguo de jidujiao," 153.

¹³⁴ Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 162-163.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 175-76; Rockhill. "Introductory notice," in *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the*

de Longjumeau as his official envoy heading to the Mongol court with generous gifts and one of his letters to Güyük Khan.

On January 27, 1249, André de Longjumeau, accompanied by missionaries Jean and Guillaume, set out their journey to the Mongol court. Unfortunately, the Franco-Mongol alliance supporter, Güyük Khan, died in April of the previous year, and the new Great Möngke Khan has yet been elected. Therefore, regent Mongol Queen Oghul Qaimish, the wife of Güyük, entertained the mission when they finally arrived at her encampment at Yemili 業密立 (modern Emin county in Xinjiang) in December 1251. She received the exquisite presents from the Dominican mission, including a red church-style tent with embroidered sacred painting and two real Crosses.¹³⁶

André de Longjumeau delivered King Louis IX's letter to Oghul Qaimish, which suggested an establishment of a military alliance between France and the Mongol Empire as proposed by Güyük. This letter, however, did not arouse much of this Mongol Queen's interest. Instead, she forced Europeans to submit to the Mongol power and provide the empire their tribute presents annually, otherwise they would be conquered.¹³⁷ Oghul Qaimish was from Merkit tribe which did not have a Nestorian tradition, so even this military plan was suggested by his husband, she might not pay close attention to it when André de Longjumeau pointed it out again. As Oghul Qaimish took over the imperial rule, the religious and military attitude of the Mongol successor toward Louis IX changed. This changing position greatly disappointed King

World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine. xxv-xxxiv.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 163; Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Quest for God: How the World's Greatest Conqueror Gave Us Religious Freedom.* (New York: Penguin, 2017).

¹³⁷ Paul Pelliot recorded the brief letter of Oghul Qaimish, see Feng Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting*, 198-99.

Louis IX because what he long for was to defeat the pagan Muslims and achieve a remarkable victory of regaining the Holy City of Jerusalem.

To made matters worse, Louis IX failed in the war of invading the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt. In the spring of 1250, the Crusaders were totally overcome by the Muslim army. Even Louis IX himself was captured in the Battle of Al Mansurah, in which his brother was killed by Mamluk slave soldiers.¹³⁸ Infectious diseases such as dysentery and scorbutus spreading among the army also deteriorated French soldiers' power. When Louis IX was released, the urgent need to ask for military assistance from the Mongols insistently stayed in his mind. The message from André de Longjumeau that Batu's son Sartaq (r. 1255-1256), the upcoming ruler of Golden Horde, was allegedly baptized and became a Christian also inspired King Louis to reach out to the Mongols again.

André de Longjumeau, as King Louis IX's ambassador, did not accomplish the expected diplomatic goal of building an alliance. While on the way down to Persia, he collected plenty of information regarding the Mongol ruler's religious belief – he mentioned that Sartaq Khan, the son of Batu Khan as well as the second khan of the Golden Horde, was supposedly a Christian.¹³⁹ Additionally, plenty of Nestorian Christian followers emerged in the Mongol territory. All the strange but attractive stories encouraged King Louis IX to reach out again for constructing some relations and connections. This motivation later facilitated missionary William of Rubruck's visit to the Mongol court.

¹³⁸ Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East: From Ghengis Khan to Khubilai Khan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹³⁹ Rockhill. "Introductory notice," in *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. xxxi-xxxii. Based on the investigation on the Armenian and Muslim sources, Rene Grousset inferred Sartaq was a Nestorian Christian. See Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

William of Rubruck

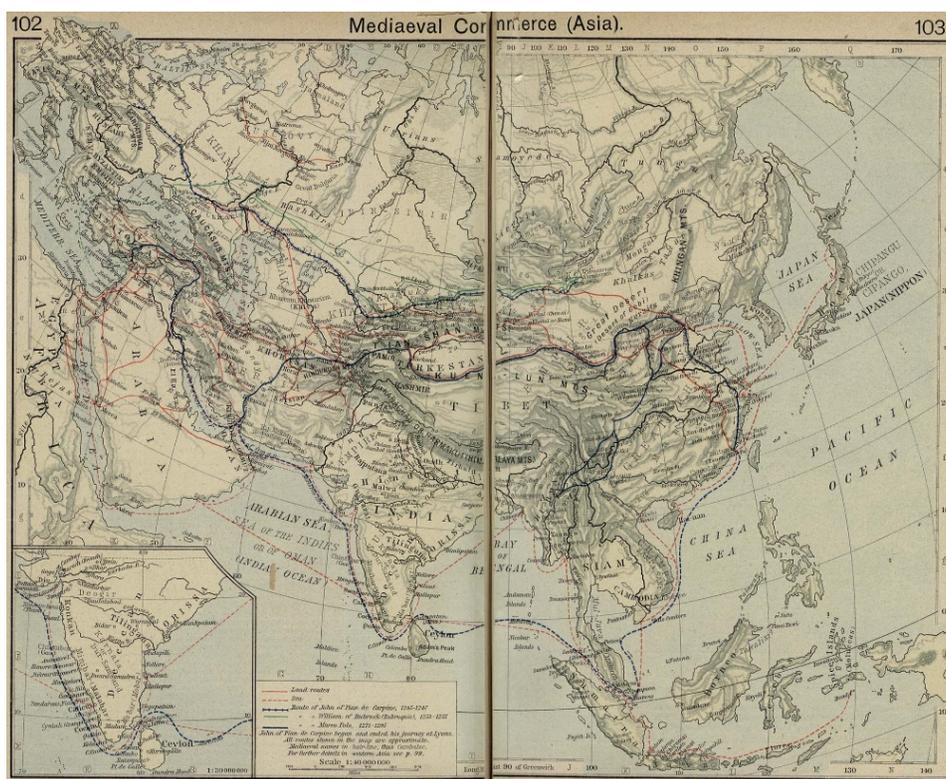
Franciscan William of Rubruck was the last missionary who arrived at the Mongol capital Karakorum and returned to Europe before the empire disintegrated into four khanates. His visit to Möngke Khan was deeply affected by the negotiation situation between King Louis IX of France and the Mongol ruler. On the one hand, Louis IX repeatedly received failures from the battlefields against Muslims in the Seventh Crusade. At the same time, Queen Oghul Qaimish's refusal to form an ally made the interaction and cooperation much harder. While on the other hand, one of the valuable information André de Longjumeau brought back was about Sartaq Khan's conversion, which implied that there were still some possibilities to connect with the Christian Mongol rulers, or directly converted the Great Khan into Christianity to ask for their military support.¹⁴⁰

It is unable to define the internal motivation or nature of William of Rubruck's travel to Mongol China since he did not articulate it in his travel account. There was no concrete evidence pointing out that it was an official journey in the name of Louis IX. Rather, William of Rubruck was more likely commissioned by the King, but in private to avoid additional diplomatic failures. Louis IX refused to show loyalty to the Mongol rulers, so he insisted William of Rubruck to clarify that France was unyielding to the Mongol regime, in case successive Mongol rulers assumed his visit represented the surrender of Louis IX.

In May 1253, William of Rubruck departed from Constantinople with two letters of Louis IX for Sartaq Khan in the Golden Horde and Möngke Khan in Mongolia, respectively. Two months later, he met Batu and Sartaq Khan at their encampments alongside the Volga River, where he got the permission to meet the Great Khan in Karakorum. In January 1254, William of

¹⁴⁰ Rockhill, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, xxxviii-xxxix.

Rubruck arrived at the imperial court and later met with Möngke Khan. He also visited the capital of Karakorum and witnessed disputes between monks from different religions. After a six-month stay at Karakorum, William of Rubruck went back to deliver the Khan's response letter to Louis IX and report the information he gained from the Mongolia steppe.¹⁴¹ He passed through Batu's encampment, the Caucasus mountains, Anatolia, and arrived at Tripoli in August 1255 (Map 6). At here, he finished his famous travelogue, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World*.



Map 6. The Travel Routes of John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, and Marco Polo.

In William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas*, “Mediaeval Commerce (Asia)” (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926), 102-03.

¹⁴¹ Tang Xiaofeng. *A study of Christianity in Chinese Yuan Dynasty* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubans, 2015), 107.

Based on the content of William of Rubruck's travel note, it is hard to consider his primary role as a pure missionary, even though he claimed that "call us not ambassadors, for I explained thoroughly to the Chan [Khan] that we were not the ambassadors of King Louis."¹⁴² Staying at the Mongol Empire to preach Catholicism was just an excuse since as a Franciscan friar, William of Rubruck was even not appointed religious missions by the papal court. Throughout the thirty-eight chapters of his travelogue, William of Rubruck recorded in detail about every place he stopped, the people he met whomever a Mongol aristocrat or the ordinary people, and especially what he experienced at the Mongol court. With the help of his travel note, the Western Christendom could map an advancing route of the Mongol army, as well as understand more about the forces of Mongol nomads.

Furthermore, William of Rubruck was entertained by local Mongol rulers upon his arrival. He visited Sartaq and Batu Khan at the Golden Horde. At the imperial court in Karakorum, he has also received at least seven official entertainment or interviews from Möngke Khan.¹⁴³ It is hard to imagine whether he would be treated equally if he claimed to be just a missionary without other mandated missions from his ruler, King Louis IX of France. William of Rubruck tried to deny all pretensions to the feature of an ambassador or an envoy by constant self-clarifications to the people he met. However, he carried letters from Louis IX to Sartaq and Möngke Khan and Khan's response letter when he came back. In fact, he did build the connection of correspondence between Louis IX and Mongol rulers.¹⁴⁴

Compared with John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck did not bring back more accomplishments in religious or political interactions with the Mongols. He discovered that there

¹⁴² Rockhill. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, 251.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 196-254.

¹⁴⁴ Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1, 158.

might be a massive misunderstanding of Batu and Sartaq to King of France. On the one hand, Mongol rulers wanted European countries to show loyalty and become vassals of regular tribute surrender. Louis IX, on the other hand, had been assuming that the Khan agreed to develop a relationship of military alliance with France, rather than commanding him to submit to the Mongol control.¹⁴⁵ However, his proposal was harshly refused by Möngke Khan. In the response letter, Möngke Khan indicated no interest in parity diplomacy but the surrender from the European world. He stated that only the submission of Christian Europe brought peace to themselves:

We send you in writing the commandments of the eternal God by these your priests: the commandments of the eternal God are what we impart you. And when you shall have heard and believed, if you will obey us, send your ambassadors to us; and so we shall have proof whether you want peace or war with us. When, by the virtue of the eternal God, from the rising of the Sun to the setting, all the world shall be in universal joy and peace, then shall be manifested what we are to be. But if you hear the commandment of the eternal God, and understand it, and shall not give heed it, nor believe it, saying to yourselves: "Our country is far off, our mountains are strong, our sea is wide," and in this belief you make war against us.¹⁴⁶

Followed by Güyük Khan's statement to John of Plano Carpini, Möngke Khan also stressed their vast territorial land from sunrise to sunset all came in the name of God Tengri, who was not subordinate to God of the Europeans, or even further, the father of all gods.¹⁴⁷ It was not that the Mongols should convert to Christianity, but the conversion of Europeans into Tengrism made the world peacefully under the Mongol regime. Perhaps the new successive Khan Möngke has not learned much Christian knowledge from his mother Sorghaghtani Beki, a Nestorian with a Keraite origin.

¹⁴⁵ Rockhill. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, 101-07.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 250-51.

¹⁴⁷ William of Rubruck recorded Möngke Khan's letter in his report under the help of a Mongol translator. See letter content from Rockhill. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, As Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*, 248-51.

Although with respect and tolerance to other religions, Möngke Khan insisted their power and military conquests were authorized by God Tengri. Not only the nomadic tribes such as Naimans and Merkits should surrender to the Mongol rule, countries beyond the Mongolian steppe should also pledge their loyalty to God Tengri and his only son on earth, Genghis Khan, and his descendants: “This is the decree of the eternal God. In heaven there is but one eternal God, on earth there is but one lord Chingis Chan, the son of God, Demugin Cingei...From the time they hear my decree and understand, and will not to believe, but wish to make war against us, you will hear and will see that they will have eyes, but will not see, and when they wish to hold anything they will be without hand, and when they wish to walk they will be without feet. This is the decree of the eternal God.”¹⁴⁸ In his response letter, Möngke Khan strengthened the authority of their God that Tengri was the only eternal Almighty in Heaven. It was Europeans who be converted from Catholicism to Tengrism. If countries or regimes refused to accept the control from the Mongols, they would receive nothing but Khan’s conquest.

Before the 1260s, the Mongol troops have taken over plenty of countries they conquered and the people from vast areas across Eurasia. They attributed all the triumphs they consistently accomplished to Almighty Heaven, the God they worshiped named Tengri. This supernatural power from Heaven protected the Mongols and their regime by legitimizing them to control the world by their tiny alien culture. In the eyes of Möngke Khan, the Pope was not the only representative of God, hence the Gospel that missionaries preached cannot replace their cult of Tengri, let alone persuading the Mongols to convert to Christianity.¹⁴⁹ Due to conflicts of political interest and religious misunderstandings, William of Rubruck was unable to negotiate any agreements with Möngke or convert the Mongols to Christianity. With no achievement but

¹⁴⁸ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 202.

¹⁴⁹ Cleaves, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, 53.

one response letter from the Khan, he started his return trip in August 1254, and one year after, he finally arrived at Tripoli to write a report about his experience in the Mongol world back to Louis IX in France.¹⁵⁰

Mongol conquests that swept the Eurasian countries deeply terrified Western Europe. The fear of the Pope and local kings was so strong since they knew nothing about who the Mongols were and what their intention would be. Therefore, during the first half of the thirteenth century, Western European society endeavored to build communications with the Mongol Empire aiming to gain knowledge about this power. European missionary legates were constantly appointed to contact with Khans in the Mongol realm. To be more specific, the missionary envoys dispatched by Pope Innocent IV aimed to seek the possibility to convert Khans and his people in order to indicate the authority of God to the Mongol Empire. While emissaries sent by King Louis IX of France reached out to the Mongol rulers for the purpose of establishing a military alliance to fight against Muslims together as well as secretly collecting information about military forces of the Mongols. After returning to Europe, these missionaries wrote reports or travelogues to record what the image of Mongols look like based on their travel experience. They delivered their travel document and Khan's response letter back to the Pope or the king. It was the travelers' experiences and their travel accounts that helped the Christians build up the very primary impression on the Eastern world.¹⁵¹

The Mongol rulers, however, did not have any interests in either the religious conversion or the proposal for military cooperation. What they want was a direct surrender of the Latin

¹⁵⁰ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 219.

¹⁵¹ Colleen Ho. "Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century European-Mongol Relations." *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (2012): 946-68.

Christian world and the loyal commitment of the Pope and European kings to the Mongol rule. At this time, both Western Europe and the Mongol Empire intended to use religious language to claim political authority over each other, while due to conflicts in military and political interests, both sides did not successfully convert each other.

CHAPTER III: Catholic Evangelization in Yuan China, 1271-1368

After the death of Möngke Khan in 1259, the Mongol Empire divided into four khanates – the Yuan dynasty in East Asia, the Chagatai Khanate in Central Asia, the Golden Horde in the Caucasus area, and last-established Ilkhanate in Persia. While the Yuan emperor still held the title of Great Khan and in theory had authority over the entire empire, each khanate held more autonomy to its dynastic development.

Kublai Khan was the founding emperor of the Yuan dynasty, who succeeded the throne from his brother Möngke Khan in 1260. After defeating his young brother Ariq Böke (c. 1219-1266) in the Toluid War (1260-1264), Kublai established the Yuan dynasty in 1271 and sustained his regime till 1294. Kublai's son and grandson continued the rule until 1368, when the dynasty was overthrown by the national-wide peasant rebellion. During the Yuan period, the attitude of Mongol rulers towards Christian missionaries have become more positive, facilitating the active communication between two parties effectively.

This chapter shows that all of the Catholic priests were dedicated to preaching God's word in China during the Yuan dynasty, despite that the Catholic church had to compete with other indigenous and foreign religions for space to survive and their religious influence kept on a limited level. Missionaries during this time made efforts to get along with the political framework of the Mongol regime, in order to spread Catholicism with the help and sponsorship by the emperor. Though their effort was often understood by the Yuan officials as a regular engagement in the imperial tributary system, missionaries' devotion to preaching marks the beginning of Roman Catholic Christianity spread in the capital and many coastal cities in southeast China. It was not until two hundred years later that Catholic Jesuit missionaries came

to China again in the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) during the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The most well-known Eurasian visitor from Europe during this period was Marco Polo, whose travel record *The Description of the World* conveyed a widespread image of the Far East during the medieval period.¹⁵² In May 1275, Marco Polo arrived at the capital Khanbaliq (modern Beijing) to meet Kublai Khan and present the Pope's letter. At the imperial court, he received kind reception from Kublai Khan, who later appointed Marco Polo as an official position to serve the country. According to his narrative, Marco Polo had been in China for seventeen years before backing to Europe. He was arrested in the Venetian–Genoese wars in 1296, and the world-renowned travelogue was thus transcribed by a cellmate Rustichello da Pisa under Polo's narration.

Marco Polo himself would be the most famous Christian figure in Sino-European relations based on the tremendous researches on him since the Middle Age, regardless of some inferences saying that he might have never been to China.¹⁵³ Distinct from the official envoy sent by the Pope, Marco Polo had no authorized title—he traveled to Yuan China as a European merchant. Therefore, his perspective or writing interest might not be similar to the former missionary. His vivid descriptions reveal different aspects of China under Mongol rule, such as the urban society, abundant products, and wealthy daily life of the Chinese, rather than military power analysis. In general, Marco Polo portrayed Mongol-led China as a wealthy land with

¹⁵² Moule and Pelliot. *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: G. Routledge, 1898); Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*. Vol. 2. (London: John Murray, 1871).

¹⁵³ Frances Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995). Some scholars have published some proof that Marco Polo has been to China. See Francis Woodman Cleaves, "A Chinese source bearing on Marco Polo's departure from China and a Persian source on his arrival in Persia." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 36 (1976): 181-203; Hans Ulrich Vogel, *Marco Polo was in China: New Evidence from Currencies, Salts and Revenues*. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

plenty of treasures and golden coins. Local residents lived in the metropolis where they enjoyed prosperous international trade and merchandise from other countries. This romanticized picture of the Mongols and their ruling was quite different from accounts left by previous missionaries, who gave more attention to the military power and strived to hold a calm and evaluating tone.

Represented by Marco Polo's observation, Europe's contact with China under the Mongol rule in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries not only further spread the image of a wealthy China among the European society, but also inspired the enthusiasm for exploring the New World. The explorer Christopher Columbus (ca. 1451-1506) was attracted by Eastern society under Marco Polo's depiction before his expedition to the East. Up to the fifteenth century, the printing technology has been widely used to print books. Christopher Columbus was just one of the wide number of audiences of the fantastical travelogue of Marco Polo that has been printed in the 1480s. Historian Henry Yule claimed that the world Columbus initially wished to find was not the new continent but a shortcut approaching wealthy Cathay.¹⁵⁴ Although he did not arrive at his dreamland, Columbus voyaged across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas and started the Age of Discovery for several centuries.¹⁵⁵

Approximately at the same time when Marco Polo travelled to Yuan China, another group of Eurasian travelers began their journey from Western Europe to Mongol Asia. Throughout the Yuan dynasty, Western Catholic church sent several groups of missionaries to assist the development of Catholic Christianity in China, famous ones including the archbishop John of Montecorvino (1246-1328) and his successive Bishops in local Chinese cities, as well as the last missionary legate John of Marignolli (1290-1360). John of Montecorvino made

¹⁵⁴ Yule, ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1, 164-65.

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan D Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (WW Norton & Company, 1999), 15-18.

significant contributions to the Catholic evangelization in capital Khanbaliq. John of Marignolli was also famous for his visit to the last Yuan emperor Toghon Temür by presenting him with a warhorse as an official gift. Documented in *Yuanshi* 元史, this event became the first record of Catholic Christianity in Chinese official historical materials. The arrival of this special horse inspired various literary and artistic creation, including a notable court painting “Folangguo xianma tu” 佛郎國獻馬圖 [Tributary Horse from France]. Records from Chinese official document and artworks conveyed the prosperous communication between Latin Catholic church and the Yuan dynasty in the mid-fourteenth century.

The Devoted Archbishop

John of Montecorvino

John of Montecorvino was an esteemed Franciscan friar in Yuan China. He was the first one entitled “Legatus Apostolicus” during his stay in China, who was also nominated by the Pope as the Archbishop of Khanbaliq, a high order responsible for all the Catholic activities in China.¹⁵⁶ Since the first papal legate John of Plano Carpini arrived at the Mongol court aiming to build Mongol-Europe contact in the 1240s, John of Montecorvino was the first missionary who primarily focused on preaching Catholicism during his stay in China. He was the pioneer of the foundation of Catholic Church in the Yuan period.

John of Montecorvino was born in Montecorvino Rovella (now in Salerno province in Italy) in 1247. He once was appointed as the papal messenger in Armenia and Persia areas before returning to meet with Pope Nicolas IV (r. 1288-1292) as the legate of King Hethum II of

¹⁵⁶ De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 160-61.

Armenia in 1289. As of the late thirteenth century, European Christian societies have accumulated much information about the Mongol regime. The Pope might be well aware of the religious attitude of the royal Kublai family toward Christianity. The letter from Arghun Khan (r. 1284-1291) in Ilkhanate, reports from the Polo brothers and later Marco Polo, and the recent visit of Chinese Nestorian Rabban Sauma have all indicated the possibility that Kublai Khan would welcome Catholic Christianity.¹⁵⁷ Encouraged by these messages, Pope Nicolas IV decided to entrust friar John of Montecorvino as his special legate to preach in Ilkhanate and Yuan China, carrying papal letters to Arghun Khan, the Great Khan Kublai, and Jabalah [Yaballaha III] the Patriarch of the Nestorians.¹⁵⁸

The mission of John of Montecorvino set out from Rome in 1289 and soon arrived in the capital of Ilkhanate at Tabriz. Due to the war between Kublai and Kaidu in Central Asia, John of Montecorvino decided to avoid passing the traditional overland Eurasian route but voyaged to China by sea. The transnational travel was such a prolonged hardship, they left from Hormuz, stopped at Quilon in South India, and then stayed at Madras in India for thirteen months, eventually his folks landed at southern China.¹⁵⁹

In 1294, they finally reached the capital Khanbaliq, while Kublai Khan just passed away in February of the same year. At the imperial court, John of Montecorvino met with the new emperor Temür Khan (r. 1294-1307), submitted the Pope's goodwill letter, and got the permission to preach. From then on, John of Montecorvino dedicated the rest of his life to evangelizing in China. The details of his religious activities recorded in two letters he sent out to his fellow missionaries in 1305 and 1306.

¹⁵⁷ Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 3-5.

¹⁵⁸ These three letters can be found in Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550*, 168-70.

¹⁵⁹ Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit. *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 300.

The primary achievement John of Montecorvino made was converting Mongol aristocrat Kuoligis from Nestorianism to Catholicism. Kuoligis was Kublai Khan's son-in-law, who administered the Ongud tribe in northwest China. As discussed in chapter one, Ongud people had maintained a long religious tradition in Nestorian faith. One of the prototypes of the legendary Prester John was supposedly Ong Khan, Genghis Khan's foster father and the chief of Ongud tribe. The current Ongud ruler was Prince Kuoligis, the sixth in descent from Prester John, as Marco Polo said.¹⁶⁰ After converting to Catholic faith, Kuoligis also persuaded his subordinates to make the conversion. In order to show religious piety, as Montecorvino mentioned, Kuoligis "built a fine church with royal generosity in honor of God."¹⁶¹

John of Montecorvino also contributed to the construction of Catholic buildings—one bell tower and two Catholic Churches in Khanbaliq. In the sixth year of his arrival, he built a Catholic Church and a bell tower to arrange the daily religious activity. In 1305, his companion, Master Peter of Lucalongo helped buy land to construct a new Church, where "only a stone's throw from the gateway of the Lord Chaan [Great Khan]" that if they are singing, the Khan will hear their voices.¹⁶² He also purchased forty slavery boys and baptized them, teaching them Latin, singing hymns, and writing psalters. Within his own religious properties, John of Montecorvino had baptized over 6,000 people, including Armenians and Alan soldiers in Khanbaliq.¹⁶³

John of Montecorvino's preaching work was not only achieved through the construction of religious space, but also through translation and artistic creation. During the past decade of preaching in Khanbaliq, John of Montecorvino has also translated the New Testament and the

¹⁶⁰ Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo: the Description of the World*, 181-85.

¹⁶¹ See Montecorvino's letter in Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 224-27.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁶³ Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 46.

Psalter into the language used by the Mongols so he could teach to Alan soldiers in Khanbaliq.¹⁶⁴ He also made six pictures to illustrate the Old and New Testament for “the instruction of the ignorant,” with an annotated explanation engraved in Latin, Tarsic, and Persian.¹⁶⁵ The visual images with multiple languages allowed the religious words to reach to ordinary people from different backgrounds.

The major challenge for John of Montecorvino, as well as his primary concern, was a lack of assistance in spreading Catholic beliefs. He had been “alone in this journeying without a confessor for eleven years.”¹⁶⁶ During this period, the effort and influence John of Montecorvino made were extremely limited, partially because the most potent Christian group of believers in Chinese society were the Nestorians. Nestorianism was one of the foreign religions being introduced in the Tang dynasty. It had developed well until the year of 845, when emperor Wuzong 唐武宗 (r. 840-846) oppressed Buddhism in the movement of Great Anti-Buddhist Persecution. In the next few centuries, Nestorianism only appeared occasionally in the northwest region before re-entering China. After the foundation of the Mongol Empire, many immigrants from Central Asia with a Nestorian faith came to live in China, which fueled the second peak of Nestorian development.

However, Nestorianism was considered as a heresy in the eyes of Catholic Christians. In his letters, John of Montecorvino complained about how hard he has been struggling with Nestorians.¹⁶⁷ He mentioned that after the Kuoligis’s death in 1298, the successive king started a campaign to led those converted subordinates and soldiers rapidly back to Nestorianism. Because

¹⁶⁴ It is likely that John of Montecorvino translated the holy books into the Uyghur script of Mongolian, rather than traditional Chinese. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*. Vol. 2. (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 69.

¹⁶⁵ Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 53.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁶⁷ Dawson. *The Mongol Mission*, 224-27.

of no assistance, John of Montecorvino himself could not leave Khanbaliq to the Ongud region but witnessed how his work has been destroyed. Nestorians also spared no effort to defame John of Montecorvino:

For these lands have never been reached by any apostle or disciple of the apostles and so the aforesaid Nestorians both directly and by the bribery of others have brought most grievous persecutions upon me, declaring that I was not sent by the Lord Pope, but that I was a spy, a magician and a deceiver of men. And after some time, they produced more false witnesses, saying that another messenger had been sent with a great treasure to the Emperor and that I had murdered him in India and made away with his gifts. And this intrigue lasted above five years, so that I was often brought to judgment, and in danger of a shameful death.¹⁶⁸

All these calumniation undoubtedly exacerbated the preaching situation of John of Montecorvino. Thus, in the 1305 and 1306 ecclesiastical letters, he repeatedly asked for document assistance from the European Catholic churches, “I beg the Minister General of our Order to supply me with an Antiphonarium, with the Legends of the Saints, a Gradual, and a Psalter with the musical notes, as a copy...if I had one for a copy, the boys of whom I have spoken could transcribe others from it.”¹⁶⁹ Besides the persecution from Nestorians, the lack of religious books and documents constituted another obstacle for John of Montecorvino to preach. Even so, he still persisted in translating the only two holy books he had to spread God’s word in this foreign country.

The news of John of Montecorvino’s situation in China finally reached the papal court. In 1307, to reward his religious achievements, as well as proved support for his preaching activity, Pope Clement V (r. 1305-1314) nominated him as the Archbishop of Khanbaliq. This title allowed him to take charge of all the affairs in China, and the Khanbaliq archdiocese includes seven parishes of Khanbaliq, Zayton, Almalik, Sarai, Kaffa, Tana, and Koumouk.¹⁷⁰ The Pope

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 224-25; Another translation version see Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 46.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-17.

also began to send seven Franciscan missionaries as suffragan bishops to assist John of Montecorvino. These suffragan bishops would subordinate to the order of Archbishop John of Montecorvino and helped him host local Catholic worships once arriving at China.

Suffragan Bishops in Zayton

In 1307, after receiving the letter from John of Montecorvino, Pope Clement V dispatched several groups of missionaries to China, who were Gerard, Peregrine de Castello, Andrew de Perugia, Nicholas of Bantra or of Apulia, Andrutius of Assisi, Ulrich Sayfustordt, and William of Villeneuve. They were sent as suffragan Bishops to serve under the Archbishop John of Montecorvino. However, due to the uneasy far-distance route, perhaps only the first three of them successfully arrived at China, while the other three (except William of Villeneuve who did not depart) had died of illness of fatigue in India.¹⁷¹ Three more Bishops were added later, namely Peter of Florence as the Bishop in 1310, and Jerome and Thomas in 1311.¹⁷² They first arrived at Khanbaliq to assist Archbishop John of Montecorvino, then some of them might be appointed to host local churches.

Friar Gerard, Peregrine de Castello and Andrew de Perugia were sequentially appointed as the Bishop of Zayton (modern Quanzhou, Fujian Province, on the southeast coastline of China), where the diocese was found in 1313.¹⁷³ They ran a church donated by an Armenian lady, who provided necessities of life for them as well.¹⁷⁴ After the death of Peregrine de Castello the second Bishop of Zayton, in 1323, Andrew de Perugia was nominated as the third

¹⁷¹ “Letter from Andrew Bishop of Zayton in Manzi or Southern China, 1326.” *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁷² Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550*, 167-68.

¹⁷³ Han Rulin, ed. *Yuanchao shi*, 818-20.

¹⁷⁴ See Peregrine’s letter in Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 232-34.

successor to take charge of the local religious issues. He shared most of his journey experiences with the Guardian of the Convent of Perugia in 1326.¹⁷⁵

During his stays in Khanbaliq and Zayton, Andrew de Perugia received the official's allowance, *alafa*, from emperor Toghon Temür for food and clothes for his entire mission of eight people.¹⁷⁶ *Alafa*, the Arabic transliteration of salary in use among the Turks, Persians, and the Mongols, was granted by the ruler to his visitors, etymologically for their beast fodder, while practically for all expenses.¹⁷⁷ Andrew de Perugia might learn *alafa* from Huihui 回回 (Muslim people) in China, and this word may correspond to “zhiyin” 祇應 in Chinese and šigüsün 首思 in Mongolian from the Yuan document, which also meant the official pay for the envoy's food and drink.¹⁷⁸ He mentioned that the sum of these well-paid salary exceed the income and expenditure of many Western kings.¹⁷⁹ This record revealed the Yuan emperors' generosity in treating different religious persons and their effort in integrating various religions within the dynastic territory into a unified governance system. Such economic support, however, also helped ensure to build these religious persons into the dynastic administration.

As the successive Bishop, Andrew de Perugia noted that he could transfer where he received his annual salary from Khanbaliq to Zayton without constraints. He lived on the bounty of emperor Toghon Temür, which may amount to the value of one hundred gold florins based on

¹⁷⁵ “Letter from Andrew Bishop of Zayton in Manzi or Southern China, 1326.” See Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 71-75.

¹⁷⁶ Évariste Régis Huc, *Christianity in China, Tartary and Thibet*. Vol. 1. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1857), 357.

¹⁷⁷ This strange word was also similar to Old Russian *a/olafá* “pay” and *lafá* “good luck.” See Federico Corriente, ed., *Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords: Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician and Kindred Dialects*. Vol. 1. (London; Boston: Brill, 2008), 47.

¹⁷⁸ Ye Xinmin. “Yuandai yizhan de zhiying zhidu.” *Menggushi yanjiu* 9 (Hohhot: Neimenggudaxue chubanshe, 2007), 86.

¹⁷⁹ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 235.

the estimate of a Genoese merchant.¹⁸⁰ He used most of his annuity to build a Catholic Church quarter of a mile from the downtown. This fine church consisted of several types of office rooms to house twenty clergies for general administration, as well as four chambers for senior prelates or bishops. None among all the monasteries, as described by Andrew de Perugia, could compare to this Catholic church in gorgeous decoration and amenities.¹⁸¹

However, the diocese of Zayton confronted the same difficulty of the lack of clergies to preaching. When Andrew de Perugia succeed as the Bishop of Zayton in 1323, his predecessor Gerard and Peregrine de Castello have all died in Zayton. Up to 1326, he might be the only or perhaps the last Bishop in south China.¹⁸² With no other Bishops could come to China, the Catholic church would someday be closed without worship and inhabitants.¹⁸³ Just like his pious leader, Andrew de Perugia also spend the rest of his life to preach Catholicism in China, and eventually died and was buried in Quanzhou in 1332.

¹⁸⁰ The florin was a currency coin produced by the Republic of Florence from 1252 to 1533. Henry Yule reckoned the amount of a hundred gold florins worth fifty pounds in his period. See Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3., 73.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ "A Letter (of Peregrine the Bishop at Zayton)," Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550*, 209.



Figure 4. Tombstone of Bishop Andrew de Perugia from Quanzhou, 1332. Copy on display at the Quanzhou Museum of Maritime History, the original is in the National Museum of China, Beijing.¹⁸⁴

In 1946, Bishop Andrew de Perugia's tombstone was excavated in the footing of wall at Tonghuai Gate 通淮門 near Longgong 龍宮 in Quanzhou (Figure 4).¹⁸⁵ This place could have been the original location of church built by him. The stele was made from local Qinggang rock

¹⁸⁴ "The Lotus and The Cross," Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History. https://web.archive.org/web/20110720101826/http://www.busstop.usfca.edu/ricci/exhibits/lotus_cross_exhibit/053Z32_29%28500%29.html (accessed March 15, 2020).

¹⁸⁵ Wu Wenliang, *Quanzhou zongjiao shike* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 1957, 29.

with a height of 63 cm and a width of 44 cm.¹⁸⁶ This weathered gravestone has an arch style head but only the bottom part extant to today. On the head of the tablet was two symmetrical figures with long sleeves, supporting a lotus flower throne and the lower arm of a cross.¹⁸⁷ In the center engraved nine lines of epitaph in Latin, which said:

<p>✠ Hic (in PFS) sepultus est Andreas Perusinus (de- votus ep. Caytonordinis (fratrum min.) (Jesus Christi) Apostolus (in mense) m(cccxx)xii ✠</p>	<p>✠ Here buried Andrew de Perugia, a devoted bishop of Zayton (Quanzhou) ... Order of Friars Minor...Apostle..... of Jesus Christ in... month... M (cccxx)xii ✠¹⁸⁸</p>
--	---

With the certain record of the name “Andreas Perusinus” of Bishop Andrew de Perugia, this tombstone was considered as one of the most significant archeological evidence about histories of Catholic mission to Zayton in the fourteenth century. The unique iconography of this Catholic gravestone that combined with both Nestorian Christian and local Chinese features is especially worthy of investigation. The cross, as an essential motif of Christianity, has been incorporated with Chinese religious elements since Nestorian Christianity spread in Tang China. On the top of the famous stele of the circulation of Nestorianism in Tang China 大秦景教流行中國碑 also stands a pearl cross on a lotus flower (Figure 5), along with the symmetrical cloud and

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Li Jingrong. “Research on the Iconography of the Christian Tombstones from Quanzhou in Yuan Dynasty” (Ph.D. Diss., Fujian Normal University, 2013).

¹⁸⁸ John Foster, “Crosses from the Walls of Zaitun.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 86, no. 1-2 (1954): 1-25.

plant patterns at two sides. The lotus was one of the four auspicious flowers in the Buddhist culture, and the lucky cloud was often a representative symbol of Daoism.¹⁸⁹ The combined decorative style of the lotus cross reflects the influence of Nestorian Christian art and the mixing of multiple religious art in China.¹⁹⁰

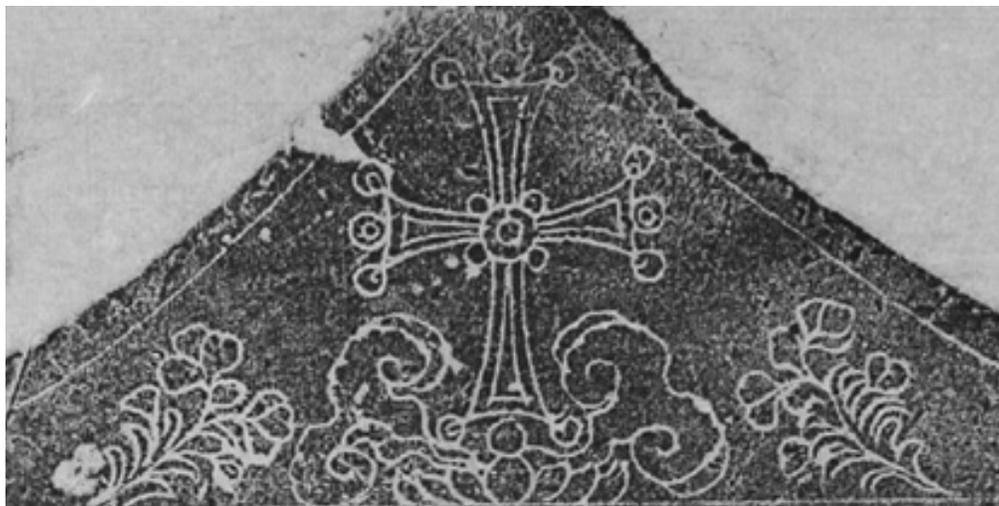


Figure 5. The Head Part of the Nestorian Stele. Preserved in Forest of Stone Steles Museum, Xian, China. Copy of rubbing from Sun Yat-sen University library.

Numerous Yuan Christian tombstones excavated in modern-day Quanzhou reflect that the local Nestorian community still kept the lotus cross icon on the headstone, some of them added the symmetrical flying-figures as well.¹⁹¹ While in this respect, it is extremely uncommon that a Catholic Bishop's gravestone contained some features of Nestorian Christianity, a community in the East whom Roman Catholics regarded as heretics. One possible explanation

¹⁸⁹ Yin Xiaoping and Zhang Zhan. "Luoyang jingjiao jingchuang tuxiang zaikaocha" [Restudy on the Luoyang Nestorian Stone Pillar], *Jinan History Studies* 12 (2016): 1-25.

¹⁹⁰ Ken Parry, "The Iconography of the Christian tombstones from Zayton." in *From Palmyra to Zayton: Epigraphy and Iconography*, ed., Iain Gardner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 229-46.

¹⁹¹ See more Christian tombstone in Wu Wenliang, *Quanzhou zongjiao shike*, 27-43.

was that the prevalent motif of a lotus cross supported by two angels was what local craftsmen used to engraving on the tombstone of a Christian – whoever a Nestorian or a Catholic. So, when commissioned to carve the stone pillar of Bishop Andrew de Perugia, they naturally carved a lotus flower held by two angel-like figures. It also indicates that the number of the Nestorian Christian was much more than Catholic community in Zayton during Yuan period.

Although Bishop Andrew de Perugia and his predecessors enjoyed the religious privileges and generous salaries in preaching Catholic doctrine throughout the country, their missionary activities were greatly shadowed by the Nestorians and other more powerful local religious communities. Therefore, no matter how enthusiastic they were to spread God’s word in the Yuan dynasty, their religious influence still remained at a limited level.

The Last Missionary

John of Marignolli

Giovanni de’ Marignolli (known as “John of Marignolli”) was the last papal missionary who came to China and returned to Europe before the fall of the Yuan dynasty. At the Mongol court, he presented a fine horse as the official gift to Emperor Toghon Temür, which greatly facilitated a much positive Sino-Western relationship in the fourteenth century. Plenty of poems written by literati and paintings marked this historical event as a milestone in medieval Eurasian communication. The magnificent welcome scene from Toghon Temür recorded in the travelogue of John of Marignolli was also valuable for studying the Mongol-European interaction in the fourteenth century as well as the history of Catholics in China.

A position vacancy of the Archbishop in Khanbaliq led to John of Marignolli’s visit to China. Since the esteemed Archbishop John of Montecorvino passed away in Khanbaliq in 1328,

religious affairs throughout the country have not been effectively arranged. Five years later when the news reached the papal court at Avignon, Pope John XXII (r. 1316-1334) commissioned Franciscan Nicholas, a professor of theology at Paris University, to take over John of Montecorvino as the Archbishop of Khanbaliq.¹⁹² Nicholas led a mission of twenty clergymen and six ordinary assistants, heading to Yuan China in February 1334 by overland route. It has been doubtful whether his mission had successfully been to China, since their travel updates terminated at the capital of Chagatai Khanate, Almalik 阿力麻里, where the mission was well received.¹⁹³ Besides, the Pope canceled this mission in October 1334, which meant Nicholas at this time either had already arrived or died on the halfway. Therefore, the archdiocese in Khanbaliq had no one to administrate since 1328.¹⁹⁴

The situation of Alans expressed serious concerns for the problem of archbishop vacancy. Toghon Temür the last Yuan Emperor was also quite worried about this religious issue since many Alan dignitaries in his court were Catholics, who had been unable to participate in worship for around eight years. Moreover, with tremendous preaching endeavors, John of Montecorvino had made almost all the Alan soldiers in Khanbaliq convert to the Catholic belief. These Alan people meant a lot to the emperor as they served as a vital component of the capital guard. In 1336, Toghon Temür sent out a diplomatic mission with sixteen persons led by Andrew the Frank, William of Nassio or Nassau, and Thogay, an Alan of Cathay, to the papal court at Avignon seeking resolution.

¹⁹² Feng Chengjun, *Duosang menggushi*. Vol 1., 436-37.

¹⁹³ Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 72.

¹⁹⁴ Yule recorded the Alan's letter, see Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3, 179-84; De Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 187-90.

The mission delivered two letters from Toghon Temür and the Alans, respectively.¹⁹⁵ The narrative of the Alan people sounds devout yet urgent. While Khan's voice sounds pretty genuine, unlike his predecessors' hostile attitude towards the Europeans. After the empire's division, the Mongols showed less intentions in territorial expansion and western expeditions, which temporarily relaxed Western Europe from a fear of being devastated by this nomadic power for more than half of a century. Thus, the official relations between the two could be gradually improved. Additionally, successive Yuan rulers maintained an open understanding of different religions under their rule and continued to implement Kublai Khan's religious tolerant policy, to allow each religion to have their living space. Therefore, rather than passively waiting for contacts from Western Europe, Toghon Temür chose to send out the embassy to find a more effective way to solve the issue of archbishop vacancy.

Encouraged by the letters, Pope Benedict XII (r. 1334-42) decided to appointing John of Marignolli as his special envoy and sent out a missionary to get in touch with the Mongol Khan in 1338. They first voyaged to Constantinople, made a quick stop at Caffa (modern Feodosia), then arrived at Almalik. In 1342, the mission finally arrived at Khanbaliq. Franciscan John of Marignolli, then, became the last official legate who came at and left the capital before the dynasty ended in 1368.¹⁹⁶

Once upon arrival, John of Marignolli and his mission received grand hospitality from emperor Toghon Temür:

We reached Khanbaliq where is the chief seat of the empire of the East, of the incredible greatness of which and people and array of soldiers let silence be kept. But the great Kaan [Khan], when he saw the war-horses and the Pope's presents and the sealed letter and king Robert's too with the gold and us, rejoiced with great joy, thinking all very good, indeed the best, and honored us very highly. Moreover, when I was ceremonially

¹⁹⁵ Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 3, 179-83.

¹⁹⁶ James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: the Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250-1550*. (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 92-94.

dressed, with a most beautiful cross which went before me with candles and incense, singing I believe in one God, we entered into the presence of the Kaan [Khan] dwelling in the glorious palace. And when the chant was ended, I gave a full benediction which he received with humility.¹⁹⁷

This record indicates how well the European missionaries have been treated in the imperial court of Toghon Temür. In the eyes of John of Marignolli, they were treated as diplomatic ambassadors with the greatest honor—they were assigned specific servants and two princes were appointed to attend to all their needs. The mission also received the same generous salaries as former missionaries from the emperor to cover all the expenses of thirty-two persons – food, drink, and even daily supplies such as paper for lanterns.¹⁹⁸ Besides the political role, meanwhile, John of Marignolli could also fulfill his religious role as Archbishop of Khanbaliq. During his stay, his mission had many and, as mentioned by John of Marignolli, glorious disputations with the Jews and other religious persons.¹⁹⁹ He also recorded that his mission made a great of Catholic conversions in late Yuan China.

John of Marignolli stayed in China for almost four years. He did not point out a clear reason, but nothing would induce him to abide China three years later.²⁰⁰ Perhaps he did not devote himself wholeheartedly to evangelizing in China, as John of Montecorvino did. Even the generous entertainment from the emperor did not changed his mind to return. Probably due to the same concern, the Catholic missionaries, no matter when they came to the East, encountered the difficult situation of spreading Catholicism in China. They did serve as the papal legate to build official contact with China and receive hospitable treat from the Mongol ruler. However, they still lacked sufficient clergymen to preach in local areas. John of Marignolli's mission left China

¹⁹⁷ Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550*, 257.

¹⁹⁸ John of Marignolli, *Recollections of Travel in the East*, in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, ed., Yule, Henry, 3, 214-15.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

in 1346 and arrived at Avignon in 1353 after a long voyage.²⁰¹ After this mission, no papal delegation on record successfully came to China again before the Yuan dynasty fell in 1368.

Despite of the relatively short period of visiting, it is during this late Yuan period that the relationship between papal court and the Yuan empire reached the best moment. The event that John of Marignolli presented a special horse as a gift to emperor Toghon Temür was recorded in the official history *Yuanshi*:

This month, Farang [France] presented a special horse, with a length of one *zhang* one *chi* three *cun*, a height of six *chi* si *cun*, with all-black fur and two all-white back toes.

是月，拂郎國貢異馬，長一丈一尺三寸，高六尺四寸，身純黑，後二蹄皆白。²⁰²

It is worth noting that the emphasis of this record is on the Catholic tributary gift rather than the religious message. Neither the missionary's role as the papal legate nor their religious activity in the imperial court were mentioned throughout the record. It might not reflect that emperor Toghon Temür just focus on the gift, but all this Chinese official history cared about this missionary visit was the special horse presented by the Frank envoy. The official historian meticulously depicted the body length, height, and the color of this war-horse to show how outstanding the horse's shape and lineage were. Listing tributary gifts as many and special as possible was one of the traditional ways in which Han Chinese dynasties to manifest its nominal control over the submitted countries.

While the Mongol Empire and the Yuan regime did not have to follow the Han Chinese tradition to show their power by a detailed list of tributary gifts from other countries, it is noteworthy to analyze why emperor Toghon Temür with a Mongol origin allowed the

²⁰¹ Marignolli's work *Chronicles of Bohemia* recorded his travel account about China, which has been translated in English by Henry Yule. See Yule, *Cathay and the way thither*. Vol. 2. "v. Marignolli's Recollections of Eastern Travel," 309-94.

²⁰² Song Lian. *Yuanshi*. Vol. 40 "Shundi benji 順帝本紀," 851-66.

historiographers to record this event in a Han Chinese way. According to the historical source, emperor Toghon Temür was a Mongol ruler full acquainted with Chinese knowledge, who devoted to practicing the policy of “Han system” 漢法. He supported new policies implemented by his prime minister Toqto’a, such as restoring the civil service exam and establishing an imperial school to accommodate Confucian teaching by renowned scholars.²⁰³ Therefore, it would be plausible as well if he tended to show his prestige through the Han Chinese way.

Moreover, 1342 happened to be the year of the horse when John of Marignolli traveled to the Mongol court. Motivations of presenting horse-related artworks to the ruler as auspicious prayers also fostered a series of related works created by literati and court painter. They focused on the tributary horse gift and the event of European envoy presenting it, among which the court painting “Folangguo xianma tu” [Tributary Horse from France] would be a prominent one (Figure 6).²⁰⁴ This artwork has been well preserved in the royal collection from generation to generation in the imperial court. French Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil mentioned that he once saw the picture in the Qing court.²⁰⁵ From this picture, we can explore more information on Mongol’s attitude towards the Catholic missionary.

²⁰³ Chen Dezhi ed., *Zhongguo tongshi: Yuanshiqi*. Vol.8. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), 510-11.

²⁰⁴ More literature works, see Zhang Xinglang. *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian*. Vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 256-67.

²⁰⁵ Han Rulin, *Yuanchaoshi*, 822.

Figure 6. Zhou Lang. “Folangguo xianma tu” [Tributary Horse from France], 1342. Ming copy of Yuan original, preserved in the Palace Museum, Beijing, China (A, B, C).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Ye Xinmin. “Memorable Stories of Friendly Intercourse between China and Europe in Yuan dynasty – a Study on Tian Ma Tu by Zhou Lang.” *Collections on the Mongol Studies*, 2 (2013); CCHICC.com. <http://www.cchicc.com/photo.php?id=99621> (accessed November 20, 2019).



(A)



(B)



(C)

This painting is now preserved in Palace Museum in China now, a copy in the Ming dynasty of the Yuan original, 134 cm in length and 30.3 cm in height.²⁰⁷ Court painter Zhou Lang vividly portrayed the scene of the European legates presenting the tributary horse gift to Toghon Temür. We can see one humble translator from the left, along with two envoys, was showing the war-horse to the emperor from the right, who accompanied by a group of horse tamers, officials, and concubines or maidservants. The whole picture did not even contain a specific envoy's behavior of handing in the Pope's letter and presents but all about the horse. Even if the painting were to show how excellent the horse was, it made emperor Toghon Temür the center, manifesting the ruler's supreme authority.

The foci and hierarchical structure of the painting aimed to convey a message about the attitude of both the Mongol ruler and the imperial officials toward European papal legates – they just served as the envoy to pledge the loyalty to the Mongol power by offering tributary gift with respect.²⁰⁸ To some extent, this attitude reflected in the painting and other artworks has intentionally or otherwise weakened not only the religious role of the missionaries as appointed priests requested by the Mongol side beforehand but also John of Marignolli's political role as papal ambassadors to hand in Pope's credential to the Khan.

From the perspective of Toghon Temür, it did not matter to provide plentiful financial assistance to the Catholic missionary in spreading their doctrine, as long as the missionaries pray for his wellness and the Mongol regime. The Mongol rulers in the Yuan period did not consider different religious people as hostilities, what they cared about was that the religious prayers from various religious communities respect the throne. This attitude of religious tolerance, in turn,

²⁰⁷ Ye Xinmin. "Memorable Stories of Friendly Intercourse between China and Europe in Yuan Dynasty – a Study on *Tian Ma Tu* by Zhou Lang." *Collections on the Mongol Studies*, 2 (2013): 5-7.

²⁰⁸ Yu Hui, *Stories of Paintings in the Palace Museum Collection* (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2014), 180-83.

generated an amicable relationship between the Latin Christendom world and Yuan China, and further promoted Catholic Christianity – albeit with limited influence – spread in China for the first time since the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Compared with the close interactions between the Mongol Khan and Latin European society in the middle of the thirteenth century, communication between two sides concentrated more on the religious affairs after entering into the fourteenth century. More harmonious communications emerged since the Mongols had ruled China for several decades without year-by-year wars, social unrest, or national famine, the stable social condition is pretty conducive to a mission. Moreover, because of the division of the Mongol Empire, Yuan China and Europe were separated by the Golden Horde and the Chagatai Khanate, Yuan's actual jurisdiction is far away from Western Europe hence makes no direct military threat to the Papal States. The ambition of Yuan ruler to conquer remote European society has also gradually faded away.

Furthermore, according to reports and travelogues of the early papal envoys which carried rich information about the Mongol power, it is the primary motivation for the European world to keep investigating and maybe even trading with the Yuan dynasty. With comparatively enough information collected by former papal legates, missionaries during the late Yuan period tended to focus on holding Catholic activities in local communities and maintaining the religious goal of evangelization in China.

On the other hand, although not all the Mongol rulers like Toghon Temür expressly supported the development of Christianity, it was hard to find decrees during the Yuan period that restricted Christianity, Buddhism or Taoism in the empire. In the eyes of the Mongols, various religious leaders had the same quality of almighty power and served as a Shaman who

connected the secular world to the sacred world. As long as praying for the Khan and the Mongol rule, all the different religions were welcomed to the land of Khan. The Mongols' shamanized epistemology towards other religions also contributed to the religious diversity and the prosperity of cross-cultural communication in Mongol-Yuan period during the end of the thirteenth century to the first half of the fourteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The Mongol-Yuan dynasty was not only a remarkable period for early contact between the East and the West, but also a significant moment in the history of Catholic Christianity in China. In the first half of the thirteenth century, an emerging nomadic power from Mongolia rapidly swept most of the Eurasian areas from Manchuria to the Qipchaq steppe. Although the sudden withdrawal of Mongol expeditionary troops eased Western Europe's fear of being destroyed presently, the uncertainty about what the Mongols were and what their intention would be continuously threatened Latin Christendom. In this context, Latin Europe was eager to build contact for self-protection.

Collecting information about the Mongols as much as possible formed the nature of the primary Catholic missionary. Papal legates transferred the correspondence between the Pope and the Khan as the communication media. More importantly, their journeys to the Mongol East by physically being there built the first-hand source for their reports and travel accounts, which later shaped the initial impression of Western Europe to the East. The Mongol image described in the first missionary materials was mostly about bloody and barbarous.²⁰⁹ This cognitional stereotype may come from the lack of understandings of the Mongol world.

Besides the information collection, legates sent by the Pope and kings played multiple identities – not merely as a preacher expecting Mongols' conversion, but as a diplomatic ambassador to negotiate with the Mongol force, as well as a papal envoy condemning the misery people were suffering caused by Mongol conquests. Furthermore, through the condemnation to the Mongols attacks, the Pope also intended to articulate Catholic supremacy toward both the

²⁰⁹ Dawson, *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 25.

sacred and secular world. He aimed to fight with the potential Mongol threat on the supreme political and religious authority to Latin Christendom.

The Mongol Empire, at this time, was in the phase of territorial expansion, it would not easily choose to establish bilateral relations, such as a military alliance, which might influence the pace of its conquests. In addition, the Mongol sovereign was also experiencing a quick change of reign, which disappointed kings in Europe occasionally. Since the policy and promise made by different Mongol rulers varied, it was extremely challengeable for Western Europe to establish any forms of military assistance with the Mongols to fight against Muslims.

After the division of the Mongol Empire until the end of the Yuan dynasty, the conflicts between different khanates were gradually decreasing. Since Western Europe no longer bordered the Mongol Empire as a single kinship, also because that Mongol-Yuan China enjoyed the Pax Mongolica of a peaceful period that after the vast Mongol conquests, most politically fragmented Eurasian countries were included in the single sovereign of the Mongol Empire's unified administration, which assured much security and guarantees for the long-distance commercial trade and the intercontinental travel under the transportation system *jamci* built by the Mongols.²¹⁰ This change of external environment prompted European Christians to turn to religious-oriented trips to China.

In the late thirteenth century, the Mongols image gradually got improved by the accumulative information that reached the papal court, such as reports saying that how religiously tolerant the Mongol rulers were towards different religions, or how many Nestorian churches there were in China. Encouraged by these messages, the Pope decided to dispatch missionary once again for the potential religious conversion of Mongol people.

²¹⁰ Janet L Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: the World System AD 1250-1350*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 158.

Different from former travelers, John of Montecorvino was the first missionary coming to Yuan China with no other purposes but preaching Catholicism. He stayed in capital Khanbaliq for the rest of his life, dedicated to holding missionary work and evangelizing in the Yuan dynasty. It was his religious devotion that led to a breakthrough of Catholics in the history of Catholic Christianity in China. Because of him, the institution of Archbishop and Suffragan Bishop began to establish in the beginning of the fourteenth century. The next time when Catholic Christianity came into China would jump to the Jurist missionary, another Catholic order, in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.

After establishing the Ming dynasty, successive Ming rulers aimed to tend the imperial legitimacy back to pure Han Chinese control by eliminating all the non-Han Chinese culture. As a result, the space for Catholic and Nestorian churches to survive in Ming China diminished dramatically. The implementation of the sea ban policy during the Ming period also impeded the possibility for missionaries landing in China by sea. With the expansion of overseas colonization in European countries, the enthusiasm of European missionary for preaching God's words has also increased greatly.²¹¹ These devoted Catholics once again decided to voyage to the Far East to spread Catholicism.

Admittedly, the development and influence of Catholicism in China during the Mongol-Yuan dynasty remained faint. Catholic missionaries could convert only a limited number of believers mainly because of the lack of assistance of clergymen, as well as the obstacles coming from other religious communities, especially the Nestorians. Moreover, Catholic successors such as John of Marignolli did not have that much enthusiasm as the pious Archbishop John of Montecorvino did. The successive missionaries mainly communicated with the upper-class

²¹¹ Mou Zhongjian and Zhang Jian. *Zhongguo zongjiao tongshi* [A general history of Chinese religions] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2003), 558; 616-17.

Mongolian or religious clergy, and gradually lost their foundation of mass development in China.

The minor alien Catholic Church quickly disappeared as the Yuan dynasty demised in 1368.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources:

- Boyle, John Andrew. "The Journey of Hetoum I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke." *Central Asiatic Journal* 9, no. 3 (1964): 175–89.
- Bretschneider, Emil. *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources: Fragments towards the Knowledge of the Geography and History of Central and Western Asia from the 13th to the 17th Century*, Vol. 2. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1887.
- Budge, Ernest Alfred Wallis trans. *The Monks of Kúblâi Khân, Emperor of China: or, The History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Šâwmâ, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khâns to the Kings of Europe, and Markôs who as Mâr Yahbh-Allâhâ III Became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1928.
- Chen, Gaohua, 陳高華 ed. *Yuandianzhang 元典章*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe. 2011.
- Cleaves, Francis Woodman trans. *The Secret History of the Mongols; For the First Time Done into English out of the Original Tongue and Provided with an Exegetical Commentary*. Vol 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Dawson, Christopher Henry, ed. *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. London & New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955.
- , ed., *Mission to Asia*. Vol. 8. Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1980.
- Hakluyt, Richard. *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation: Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at Any Time Within the Compasse of These 1600 Yeeres*. London: Imprinted by

- George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1589; Reprinted by Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1903–05.
- Jackson, Peter. *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253–1255*. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990.
- Juvaynī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik. *The History of the World Conqueror*. Translated by J.A. Boyle, Vol. 2. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958.
- Marco Polo. *Marco Polo: the Description of the World*. Edited by Arthur Christopher Moule, and Paul Pelliot. London: Routledge & Sons Limited, 1938.
- Rockhill, William Woodville. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253–55, as Narrated by Himself. With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1900.
- Sechen, Jagchid 札奇斯欽. *Menggu mishi xinyi bing zhushi* 蒙古秘史新譯並註釋. Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1979.
- Song, Lian 宋濂. *Yuanshi* 元史. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976.
- Ṭabīb, Rashīd al-Dīn. *The Successors of Genghis Khan*. Translated by J.A. Boyle. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
- Wang, Guowei 王國維. *Jiaozhu shengwu qinzheng lu* 校注聖武親征錄. Beijing: Beijing longfusi wendiangeshezhuang paiyinben, 1936.
- Wu, Wenliang 吳文良. *Quanzhou zongjiao shike* 泉州宗教石刻. Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957.
- Yu, Xilu 俞希魯. *Zhishun zhenjiangzhi* 至順鎮江志. vol. 9. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990.

Yule, C. Henry, ed. *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*. Vol. I & II. London: Hakluyt Society, 1866; New edition, revised throughout in the light of recent discoveries by Henri Cordier. 4 Vol. London: Hakluyt Society, 1913–16.

Secondary Sources:

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Before European Hegemony: the World System AD 1250-1350*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Aigle, Denise. "The Letters of Eljigidei, Hülegü, and Abaqa: Mongol Overtures or Christian Ventriloquism?." *Inner Asia* 7, no. 2 (2005): 143-62.

----- . *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*. Boston: Brill, 2014.

Allsen, Thomas T. *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

----- . "Prelude to the Western Campaigns: Mongol Military Operations in the Volga-Ural Region, 1217–1237." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 3 (1983): 5-24.

Arnold, Lauren. *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and Its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350*. San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999.

Baum, Wilhelm, and Dietmar W. Winkler. *The Church of the East: A Concise History*. Vol. 1. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.

Bays, Daniel H. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Vol. 7. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

Berkey, Jonathan P. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Biran, Michal. "The Mongol Empire in World History: The State of the Field." *History Compass* 11, no. 11 (2013): 1021-33.

-----, "The Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange." in *The Cambridge World History: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500CE–1500CE*. Edited by Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, 534–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Boyle, John Andrew. *The Mongol World Empire: 1206-1370*. Vol. 58. London: Variorum Publishing, 1977.

Brewer, Keagan. *Prester John: The Legend and its Sources*. Farnham, Surrey, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015.

Chen, Dezhi 陳得芝 ed., *Zhongguo tongshi: Yuanshiqi* 中國通史：元時期. Vol. 8. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2004.

De Rachewiltz, Igor. *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971.

Di Cosmo, Nicola, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden, eds. *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

D'Ohsson, Constantin Mouradgea. *Histoire des Mongols, depuis Tchinguiz-khan jusqu'a Timour bey ou Tamerlan*. Vol. 2. La Haye, Amsterdam: Les frères Van Cleef, 1940. Translated by Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞, *Duosang menggushi* 多桑蒙古史. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2013.

Foster, John. "Crosses from the Walls of Zaitun." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 86, no. 1-2 (1954): 1-25.

- Franke, Herbert. "Sino-Western Contacts under the Mongol Empire." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1966): 49-72.
- Gillman, Ian, and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit. *Christians in Asia before 1500*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Grousset, René. *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*. Translated by Naomi Walford. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970.
- Guzman, Gregory G. "European clerical envoys to the Mongols: Reports of Western merchants in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 1231–1255." *Journal of medieval history* 22, no. 1 (1996): 53-67.
- Han, Rulin 韓儒林 ed., *Yuanchaoshi* 元朝史. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008.
- Ho, Colleen Chi-Wei. "A Sign of the Apocalypse Or Christendom's Ally? European-Mongol Relations in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries." Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013.
- . "Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century European-Mongol Relations." *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (2012): 946-68.
- Hudson, G. F. *Europe & China: a Survey of Their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
- Jackson, Peter. "The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered." In *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*. Edited by Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005.
- . *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410*. Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Longman, 2005; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- . "William of Rubruck in the Mongol Empire: Perception and Prejudices." In *Medieval*

- Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*. Edited by Joan-Pau Rubiés. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2017.
- Khazanov, Anatoly M. "The Spread of World Religions in Medieval Nomadic Societies of the Eurasian Steppes." *Nomadic Diplomacy, Destruction and Religion from the Pacific to the Adriatic* 1 (1994): 11-34.
- Koss, Nicholas. *The Best and Fairest Land: Images of China in Medieval Europe*. Taipei: Bookman Books, 1999.
- Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christian Missions in China*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929.
- Lieu, Samuel NC, Lance Eccles, Majella Franzmann, Iain Gardner, and Ken Parry. *Medieval Christian and Manichaean Remains from Quanzhou*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2012.
- May, Timothy. *The Mongol Conquests in World History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
- Moule, Arthur Christopher. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. London: Society for Promoting Christian knowledge, 1930.
- , "Fourteenth Century Missionary Letters." *The East & the West: a Quarterly Review for the Study of Missionary Problems*. Westminster 19 (1921): 357-66.
- Muldoon, James. *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: the Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250-1550*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Pelliot, Paul. "Chrétien d'Asie centrale et d'Extrême-Orient." *T'oung Pao* (1914): 623-44.
- Translated by Feng Chengjun. "Tangyuan shidai zhongya yu dongya zhi jidujiao tu 唐元時代中亞與東亞之基督教徒," in *Xiyu nanhai shidi kaozheng yicong 西域南海史地考證譯叢*. Beijing: the Commercial Press, 1932, 57-81.

-----, "Les Mongols et la Papauté." *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*. t. III (XXIII), nos. 1 et 2 (1922-23), 3-30. t. IV (XXIV), nos. 3 et 4 (1924), 225-335; t. VIII (XXVIII), no. 1 et 2 (1931-32), 3-84. Translated by Feng, Chengjun. *Menggu yu jiaoting* 蒙古與教廷. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008.

Petech, Luciano. *Central Tibet and the Mongols: the Yüan-Sa-Skya Period of Tibetan History*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990.

Richard, Jean. "European Voyages in the Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea (12th-15th Centuries)." *Iran* 6 (1968): 45-52.

-----, "The Mongols and the Franks." *Journal of Asian History* 3, no. 1 (1969): 45-57.

Riley-Smith, Jonathan Simon Christopher, ed. *The Oxford History of the Crusades*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002

Rossabi, Morris. *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

-----, ed. *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*. Vol. 15. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013.

Ryan, James D., ed. *The Spiritual Expansion of Medieval Latin Christendom: The Asian Missions*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Saunders, John Joseph. "The Decline and Fall of Christianity in Medieval Asia." *Journal of Religious History* 5, no. 2 (1968): 93-104.

Standaert, Nicolas, eds. *Handbook of Christianity in China: 635-1800*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Sugiyama Masaaki. *Jichi de caoyuan zhengfuzhe* 疾馳的草原征服者. Translated by Wu Lan 烏蘭, and Wu Rina 烏日娜. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2014.

-----. *Menggu diguo de xingwang: junshi kuozhang shidai* 蒙古帝國的興亡：軍事擴張時代.

Translated by Sun Yue 孫越, Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015.

Tang, Li. *East Syriac Christianity in Mongol-Yuan China*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011.

Twitchett, Denis C., Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank, eds. *The Cambridge History of China: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Vol. 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Williams, Samuel Wells, and Frederick Wells Williams. *A History of China: Being the Historical Chapters from "The Middle Kingdom."* New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1897.

Wood, Frances. *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* London: Secker & Warburg, 1995.

Ye, Xinmin 葉新民. "Memorable Stories of Friendly Intercourse between China and Europe in Yuan Dynasty – A Study on Tian Ma Tu by Zhou Lang." *Collections on the Mongol Studies*, 2 (2013): 5-7.

Zhang, Xinglang 張星烺 and Zhu Jieqin 朱傑勤 ed., *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* 中西交通史料彙編. 6 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003.

Zhou, Liangxiao 周良霄. "Yuan he yuan yiqian zhongguo de jidujiao 元和元以前中國的基督教." in *Yuanshi luncong* 元史論叢. Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.

Zürcher, Erik. "Jesuit Accommodation and the Chinese Cultural Imperative." *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, ed. David E. Mungello. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 132, (1994): 31-64.

APPENDICES

Appendix A.

The Primary Sources of Travelogues and Letters with the English Translation Work

Type	Author and Title	Original Language	English Translation Work
Letter	Pope Innocent IV to Güyük Khan, 1245	Latin	Dawson. <i>The Mongol Mission</i> , 1955.
Letter	Güyük Khan to Pope Innocent IV, 1246	Persian	Dawson. <i>The Mongol Mission</i> , 1955.
Travelogue	John of Plano Carpini. <i>Historia Mongalorum</i> , 1246	Latin	Dawson. <i>The Mongol Mission</i> , 1955; W.W. Rockhill. <i>The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World: 1253–55</i> , 1900.
Travelogue	King Hethoum I, 1254	Armenian	J.A. Boyle. “The Journey of Hetoum I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke.” <i>Central Asiatic journal</i> 9, no. 3 (1964): 175–89.
Travelogue	William of Rubruck. <i>Itinerarium ad Partes Orientales</i> , 1255	Latin	W.W. Rockhill. <i>The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World: 1253–55</i> , 1900.
Travelogue	Rabban Sauma, 1288	Persian	E.A. Budge. <i>The Monks of Kúblâi Khân</i> . 1928
Travelogue	Marco Polo. <i>Le deuisement dou monde</i> , 1298	French and Italian	A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot. <i>Description of the World</i> , 1898; Henry Yule. <i>Cathay and the Way Thither</i> . Vol.2, 1866.
Letter	John of Montecorvino, Peregrine de Castello, Andrew de Perugia, ca. 1300 – 1330	Latin	Henry Yule. <i>Cathay and the Way Thither</i> , Vol.3, 1866; Dawson. <i>The Mongol Mission</i> , 1955.
Travelogue	Odoric of Pordenone, 1330	Latin	Henry Yule. <i>Cathay and the Way Thither</i> . Vol.2, 1866
Travelogue	John of Marignolli, 1355	Latin	Henry Yule. <i>Cathay and the Way Thither</i> . Vol.3, 1866.

Appendix B. Graph

The Lineage of the Mongol Empire²¹²

TABLE I—THE MONGOL EMPIRE

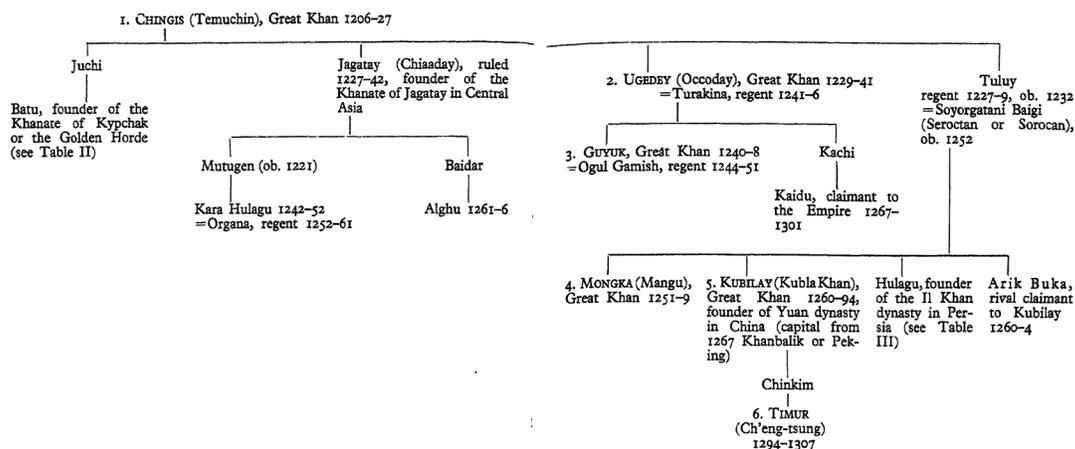


TABLE II—THE KHANS OF KYPCHAK OR THE GOLDEN HORDE (RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN) (CAPITAL: SARAI ON THE VOLGA)

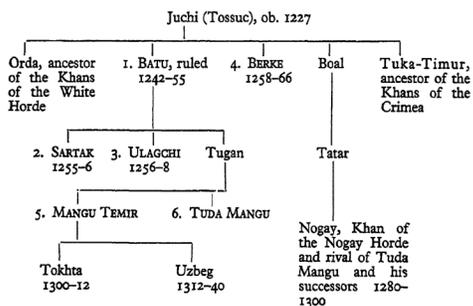
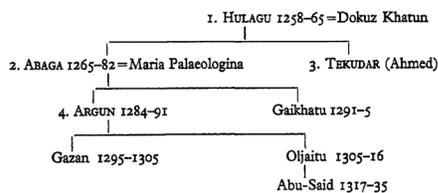


TABLE III—THE IL KHANS OF PERSIA (CAPITAL: TABRIZ)



Note.—These Tables do not pretend to be complete, but they include most of the names mentioned in the text and show how they are related to Chingis Khan and to one another.

C. D.

²¹² Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*.