

*Nota sectam maometricam atterendam a tartaris et christianis***The Mongols as non-believing apocalyptic friends around the year 1260**

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Around 1200 far in Eastern Central Asia the rising power of the Mongolian tribes started to conquer large parts of Asia and finally to reach the European sphere. Surprisingly, the earliest indications of movements in Asia in the 1220s were received in the West without fear, and were connected with positive expectations.<sup>1</sup>

One reason for this uncommon attitude regarding foreigners was the medieval conviction that the world had been entirely described in the antique, biblical and literary traditions. So the medieval Europeans could expect only a small choice of well-known, whether good or bad, potential intruders. These ones had to be good: in the Holy Land for decades now the Crusaders had experienced nothing but set-backs and they urgently needed allies against the Saracens. Those allies had to be Christians to conclude a reliable agreement, because: "It is certain that unbelievers lacking the true faith (*fides*) cannot be tied by the bond of trust (*fides*). Neither do they admit any authority to our oaths of allegiance, nor is a Christian able to trust

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<sup>1</sup> For the usual Western expectations cf. Gian Andri Bezzola, *Die Mongolen in*

(*fides*) undoubtedly in heathen oaths"<sup>2</sup>. Thus were people convinced that the prophesied Prester John was approaching, the legendary Christian king from India, who would attack the Muslims from behind to support the Latin Christian realm of the Holy Land.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Christ had ordered the apostles to go and teach all nations<sup>4</sup> - and this order had to be fulfilled before Christ would finally return to Earth. The widening of the European horizon over the course of the crusades had shown that the Christians represented only a fraction of the people in the world. Additionally, the fatal year 1260 was approaching, for which the great 12th-century-prophet Joachim of Fiore had prophesied the coming of the First Antichrist, the beginning of the Third and Last Millennium.<sup>5</sup> So it would not have been easy to expect even more heathen enemies - and for the same reason, help in extinguishing the non-believing Saracens, too stubborn to be baptized, was needed even more urgently.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter of Pope Alexander IV. to the Hungarian king Bela IV. at the occasion that the king threatened to marry his daughter or son to a son or daughter of a - heathen - Mongol Khan in order to gain relief from Mongol onslaughts, since the West didn't send soldiers to help Hungary: Ed. Augustin Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia*, vol. 1-2, Rom 1859-60, I, no.CCCCLIV, here p.240.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Zarncke, "Der Priester Johannes," in: *Abhandlungen der königlich sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse* 7 (1879) p.829-1028, 8 (1883) p.3-186; sep. Hildesheim/New York 1980; Vsevolod Slessarew, *Prester John. The Letter and the Legend*, Minneapolis 1959; Igor de Rachewiltz, *Prester John and Europe's Discovery of East Asia*, Australian Nat.Univ.Press 1972 (The 32nd George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology 1971); several articles in: Charles F.Beckingham, *Between Islam and Christendom*, London 1983 (Coll.Studies Ser.).

<sup>4</sup> Mt.28,19/20 *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes* (vgl. Mk.16,5 Lk.24,47), cf. E.Randolph Daniel, "Apocalyptic Conversion: the Joachite Alternative to the Crusade" in: *Traditio* 25 (1969) p.127-54.

<sup>5</sup> Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Recent Scholarship on Joachim of Fiore and His Influence", in: *Prophecy and Millenarism. Essays in Honor of Marjorie Reeves*, Burnt Hill/Essex 1980, p. 21-52; Verbeke, Werner/Verhelst, Daniel/Welkenhuysen, Andries(Hg.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven 1988; Potestà, Gian Luca(Hg.),

When the Mongols started to attack Christians and finally, in 1241, overran the Eastern parts of Europe, the chosen patterns of explanation had to be changed: the Mongol's European name, Tartars, was interpreted as coming straight out of hell, or, even worse, Gog and Magog now were understood as hurrying to Antichrist's assistance to bring the world to its End.

But the Mongol flood ebbed, and hope quickly reemerged - the political and eschatological need for help in extinguishing the Muslims won the day, combined with the eschatological obligation to baptize the Mongols, emphasized in the papal missionary summons *cum hora undecima*, "since it's the eleventh hour".<sup>6</sup>

The first envoys sent by Pope Innocent IV. in 1245, Franciscans and Dominicans, were diplomats and missionaries at the same time. But the diplomatic embassies were received as offers of submission by the Mongols claiming world domination. As that was entirely unacceptable for the Europeans, diplomatic contacts were broken off for the moment - while the missionaries in the following decades built up a broad network all over the Asiatic continent, unhindered by the Mongols.<sup>7</sup>

In the Near East, after giving up initial hopes for military aid against the Saracens, the Westerners had primarily feared Mongol power. Then, in the very year 1260, the Mongols in Syria fought directly against the Mamluks, just as the West had been dreaming of. But the expectations had changed so much that the Roman Christians in the Holy Land were now cheering that the scourge of God, the Mongols, had been defeated.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The development Bezzola, *Mongolen* (cf. n. 1) and Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert*, Sigmaringen 1994, ch. III,1 + 2; for the *cum-hora*-bulls *ibid.* p.129.

<sup>7</sup> For the Asian mission Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'orient au Moyen Age (XIIIe-XVe siècles)*, Rome 1977 (*École française de Rome*.33); for the Mongol mission also: Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden* (cf.n. 6) ch. III,5.

<sup>8</sup> For the Mongol mission also: Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden* (cf.n. 6) ch. III,5.

That again changed immediately as soon as the slightest flicker of hope flared up - that is, when the Mongols themselves were looking for allies. From 1262 on, the Persian Il-khans repeatedly turned to the Western powers.<sup>9</sup> Their court then accommodated many Oriental Christians and probably already European merchants as well (perhaps the first Western missionaries), and they became the Mongols' informants. Oriental Christians for several reasons regarded Mongol rule as preferable to Muslim. And the Roman Christians in the Holy Land now agreed: until the Mongols were defeated they obviously had been regarded as too invincible and threatening, but now the Muslims returned to first place in the hierarchy of enemies. Thus those same Christians started a massive propaganda campaign for an alliance between Mongols and European crusaders.

Time and again the Khans sent proposals for joint military action, time and again they were urged by the popes to be baptized first - and time and again the Christian intermediaries tried to portray this event as imminent. When the European kings again took part in the talks, and joint actions were indeed planned, those kings, for one reason or another, were persuaded to negotiate with a Christian Khan. Translators of the mutual letters knew how to extirpate the mutual insults<sup>10</sup>: just as Western Christians could not do without the demand for baptism, the Mongols did not abstain from repeating their claim for submission - and both could be

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<sup>9</sup> The remaining letters from the diplomatic contacts ed. Karl Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels*, Città del Vaticano 1981 (*Studi e testi*.291); cf. Jean Richard, among other works: "Chrétiens et Mongols au Concile 1274: la papauté et les mongols de Perse dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle," in: id., *Croisés, missionnaires et voyageurs. Le perspectives orientales du monde latin médiéval*, London 1983 (*Collected Studies Series*.182).

<sup>10</sup> Best example is the Italian translation of Thomas Ilduci on the back side of the letter he brought from the Mongol Il-khan of Persia back to Europe, ed. Antoine Mostaert/Francis

smoothed or translated out of the letters. For those intermediaries who had reached a closer knowledge of both sides, pragmatism overcame principle.

The extent to which the insoluble deadlock must have been, by them, regarded as unsatisfactory is best reflected by contemporary eschatological writings dealing with the ultimate meaning of all missionary activity mentioned above, with the coming of Antichrist, the Final Judgment, and Christ's return to Earth. Regarding the importance of these questions, medieval prophecies were part of real life, vitally important, highly political at any time and highly up-to-date; they had to be continually updated and therefore showed extensive flexibility and vivid thinking. Hopes and disappointments, and actual judgments were received immediately, each nuance estimating the Christian position in the struggle with the Muslims and for the Mongols echoing more than clearly in the texts. Prophecies wanted to and could influence; they were read, spread, combated, forbidden - believed. They were a due medium of propaganda because of a very special quality: Starting from real events, they primarily described actions that were to take place in the future and so could serve as projections of present dreams and ideas.

Around the year 1260 suddenly many Oriental prophecies came to the West. The Orient had always been a reservoir for new prophecies, and in 1260 people were especially interested in them. Considering the Mongols' real power, it is not surprising that they played an important role in those new prophecies.<sup>11</sup> It is the role itself which is remarkable.

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<sup>11</sup> Davide Bigalli, *I Tartari e l'Apocalisse. Ricerche sull'eschatologia in Adamo Marsh e*

In the so called Book Sidrac, the *Fontaine des toutes sciences*<sup>12</sup>, a pagan king long before Christ's birth asks the wise man Sidrac a series of questions. All history is prophesied and can be easily recognized until the moment of writing - after that, things drift towards the coming of Antichrist. I give a cursory paraphrase: At first Sidrac prophesies the emergence of Islam and the crusades; the Latins would conquer the Holy Land and lose it again to the Saracens. But after some time a wild people were to come out of two mountains: the Tartars, even more unbelieving than the Saracens. They would gain the entire East from the Saracens and would kill their head, the Caliph - which indeed happened when Baghdad was conquered in 1258. As a result, after a few set-backs, a Christian crusade would finally bring Islam to its end; the fighting would shift here and there between Christians and Tartars, and the latter would eventually be beaten and driven away. The Christians would govern the entire land, would convert or kill the people, and would defeat the Tartars once again until the last of them would eventually become good friends of the Christians. All over the world, there would be peace under Latin rule until the final emergence of Antichrist.

Faithful to real historical development, the Tartars start as inimical heathens with some clear references e.g. to the apocalyptic peoples Gog and Magog - but they at first do not fight the Christians, but rather the Muslims. The Tartars are unbelievers, but nonetheless they fight the worst oppressors of the Christians in the Holy Land, which would consequently be liberated by the Latins. The cooperation of Christians and heathens is initially accepted in order to defeat Islam: that is the exact constellation which the Oriental Christians promoted

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<sup>12</sup> Unedited, best for work on the historical passages Ms. BN franc.1160 fol.108 ss. (s.XIV); unreliable transcription of some manuscripts of the Bibliothèque National at Paris in: Ernest Renan/Gaston Paris, "La Fontaine de Toutes Sciences du philosophe Sidrach," in: *Histoire littéraire de France* 31 (1893) p.285-318; medieval Italian version ed. Adolfo Bartoli, *Il libro di Sidrach. Testo inedito del secolo XIV*, Bologna 1868 (*Opere inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli della lingua*.25); medieval German version ed.H.Jellinghaus, *Das Buch Sidrach nach der*

time and again to be used by the West - obviously they also took their prophecy as a medium of their propaganda. Above all, they applied the history of salvation as a weighty argument for an alliance with heathens; they emphasized the eschatological aspect which had always been one part of the ideology of the crusades. And in prophecy the circumstances could easily be adapted to Christian wishful thinking: the decisive victories, the supreme power would be finally gained by Roman Christians.

Other prophecies imported from or influenced by the Orient also played the same tune. Around 1266/67 the English Franciscan Roger Bacon included in his *Opus Maius* an Armenian prophecy brought to the West ten years earlier by one of the early missionaries to the Mongols.<sup>13</sup> According to it a tribe of archers would come from the North and conquer all of the East, but in the end would be beaten by princes from the West. After that, all peoples would be converted and everywhere there would be peace. Another text, a commentary on the prophet Isaias, written in Southern Italy between 1260 and 1266, circulated under the name of Joachim of Fiore; it was long but vague, so that it itself needed to be glossed contemporarily.<sup>14</sup> Commentary and glosses prophesy that the devilish Tartars would defeat the Egyptians, the Saracens, and even fight against them together with the Christians: *sectam maometicam atterendam a tartaris et christianis*, the sect of Mohammed will be crushed by Tartars and

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<sup>13</sup> Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius ad Clementem papam*, ed. John Henry Bridges, 3 vol., Oxford 1897-1900, I p.363; William of Rubruk, *Itinerarium*, ed. P. Anastasius van den Wyngaert OFM, *Sinica Franciscana*, Bd.I : *Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, Quaracchi 1929, c. XXXVIII, 3 p.322; excellently transl. and commented by Peter Jackson/David Morgan, London 1990 (Hakluyt Society. Ser.2.173).

<sup>14</sup> 8 Mss. (Reeves, *Influence*, cf. n. 5, p.521). Written after the joachite fatal year 1260 and before King Manfred of Sicily had died in 1266: Bernhard Töpfer, *Das kommende Reich des Friedens. Zur Entwicklung chiliastischer Zukunftshoffnungen im Hochmittelalter*, Berlin 1964 (*Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte*.11) p.137. Marginal contemporary comments Ms. Vatican Library lat.4959 and Ross.552; cf. Reeves, *Influence* (cf. n.5) p.77, who printed only a fragment of all of the *glossae*, especially of those concerning the Tartars. The commentary presumably was written in the Norman southern Italy and so under intensive

Christians. In the end the Tartars, at least partially, would be baptized together with all other peoples, even the few remaining Saracens.

Obviously the Armenian prophecy quoted by Roger Bacon as well as the *Commentary in Isaias* accept the Oriental option of heathen help. The latter even seems to accept a direct cooperation of heathen Tartars and Christians, normally regarded as especially difficult due to the Tartars' wildness. The tendency of Oriental Christian politics as well as prophecy is clear: better the unbelieving Tartars who could eventually become friends of the West than to bear any longer the yoke of Islam, the true enemy of Christianity. On the other hand the two prophecies were, more than Sidrac, adapted to the Western political as well as eschatological necessities. While Sidrac had been content with prophesying eventual eternal friendship in peace, here the Tartars' eventual baptism is explicitly predicted, and so God's plan explicitly fulfilled.

The actual problem of the political-military relations, the need for a baptized ally, could not be solved by that - but a pragmatic solution could be justified ideologically. And the constant propaganda seems to have worked eventually, for in the 14th century even the Canonical lawyers were intensively dealing with the problem of heathen alliance theoretically.<sup>15</sup> They began to consider it possible under certain, clearly articulated premises - with a tendency to enlarge those premises more and more.

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influence from the Holy Land, being inhabited in part by Norman Europeans. Cf. Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden* (cf. n. 6) p.272/73.

<sup>15</sup> Pope John XXII., the Bolognese lawyer Giovanni da Legnano, the lawyers of Poland and

But even though these pragmatic ideas struggled hard to enter Western eschatological writings, for the last decades of the 13th century the political hopes and plans still spoke another language, also reflected in eschatology.

The conviction that all heathens (and finally the Jews) had to be baptized was already fixed in the Bible; Joachim of Fiore had added to the program the schismatic Greeks' return to the fold; since the crusades the Westeners were convinced that the Ismaelitans, which normally meant the Saracens, could only be extirpated. Already shortly after the Mongol incursions to Europe, the Tartars had become the incarnation of the "heathens" of this program. The Franciscan Adam of Marsh already, in about 1245, had admonished the pope to remain firm, warning that everything would very soon take a turn for the better: The Saracens would be extinguished, the Tartars converted, and the Greeks would return home.<sup>16</sup> And again Roger Bacon in 1267 was convinced: "It's been prophesied for 40 years now ... that in our times there will be a pope ... and because of his goodness, truth, and justice will be fulfilled, that the Greeks will return to obedience to the Roman Church, the larger part of the Tartars will be converted and the Saracens will be extirpated; and there will be one flock and one shepherd"<sup>17</sup>. This pope, according to Roger, was to be Clement IV. to whom he dedicated his *Opus Tertium*.

After Clement had died without fulfilling these hopes similar expectations in 1271 were connected with the new pope Gregory X. And this time, all seemed to become reality when, in

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<sup>16</sup> Adam of Marsh, *Epistolae*, ed.J.S.Brewer in: *Monumenta Franciscana*, London 1858 (*Rerum Britannicarum Scriptores*, Rolls Series.4) I p.426, 428; cf. Bigalli, cf.n. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Bacon, *Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer in: *Opera*, London 1859 (Rolls Series.4) I p.426, 428.

1274, he celebrated the second Council of Lyon: A crusade was planned, a Greek embassy arrived to negotiate a union - many observers sensed Endtime drawing near.<sup>18</sup>

A Tartar embassy was also attending the Council, to again negotiate an alliance against the Saracens. Some of the envoys were, as is told, baptized. It's impossible to reconstruct what really happened, who the envoys may have been, whether they were in fact Mongols or, as often happened, Oriental Christians - and the baptism, perhaps, an act of their propaganda again - however, the success of the action was, in a way, overwhelming.

"Pope Gregory X. ... in the third year of his papacy celebrated the Council of Lyon for the benefit of the Holy Land ... which solemn envoys of the Greeks and the Tartars attended," as the Polish Chronicler Martin of Troppau reported. "The Greeks promised to return to the unity of the church ... The envoys of the Tartars were baptized in the course of the council and returned home ...".<sup>19</sup> This chronicle was immediately spread enormously, and was going to be the most successful source for European historians in the following two hundred years.<sup>20</sup> And like Martin innumerable other chroniclers briefly told the story of the council: The news of the baptism of the Mongols was spread over and over - but about the offer of alliance no word was said, not even about a potential alliance after the baptism. And practical

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. Salimbene of Adam, *Chronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vol. Bari 1966, p.718/19.

<sup>19</sup> Martin of Troppau OP, *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, Cont.Ed.III ed.Georg Heinrich Pertz u.a., *Monumenta Germaniae historica Scriptorum*, p.442. For the following cf. Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden* (cf. n. 6) p. 273-77.

<sup>20</sup> Anna Dorothee von den Brincken, "Studien zur Überlieferung der Chronik des Martin von Troppau (Erfahrungen mit einem massenhaft überlieferten Text)" in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 41 (1985) p.450-531; "Studien zur Überlieferung der Chronik Martins von Troppau, 2.Teil" in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 45 (1989) p.551-91; cf. also ead., "Zur Herkunft und Gestalt der Martinschroniken," in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 7 (1981) p.694-735 and ead., "In una pagina ponendo

consequences of the Tartars' visit were missing - besides the fact that the crusade failed and the Greek union was not lasting.

But the idea of the necessity of the Tartars' eschatological baptism had been promoted and strengthened further. In 1288, Alexander of Roes, cleric from Cologne, in his eschatological *Noticia seculi* explicitly connected the events at Lyon to Endtime<sup>21</sup>. His intention was to prove the near downfall of papacy, and skillfully he used the most common eschatological hints. The papacy clearly had reached the climax of power, since at the Council of Lyon all the *reges mundi*, the kings of the world, had submitted to its reign: the Jews, the Greeks, and ... the Tartars.

The Tartars' baptism had become a permanent eschatological quantity and could be used in the internal Western propaganda war between pope and emperor. The baptism, not the alliance against the Saracens, whether baptized or not, had become part of the eschatological program of the time. So the really successful prophecies of the 60s and 70s of the 13th century entirely followed the Western way and the Western chronology of the Last History.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ed. Herbert Grundmann/Hermann Heimpel, Stuttgart 1958 (*Monumenta Germaniae historica Staatsschriften*. 1,1) p.149-71, here c.8 p.154. The *Noticia*, written in Italy, was nevertheless mainly read and copied in Germany, cf. B.Hirsch-Reich, "Zur 'Notitia Saeculi' und zum 'Pavo'. Mit einem Exkurs über die Verbreitung des pseudojoachimistischen Büchleins 'De semine scripturarum'", in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 38 (1920) p.571-610; ead., "Alexander v. Roes' Stellung zu den Prophetien," in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 37 (1920) 206-16