

# The Mongols in the West

By Denis Sinor

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Born in Hungary in 1916, Sinor was educated in Hungary, and Switzerland. As a student at the University of Budapest he received various fellowships. In France between 1939 and 1948, he held various teaching and research assignments. A member of the French Resistance, he joined the Free French Forces, served in the French occupation of Germany and was demobilized in November 1945.

From 1948 to 1962 he was on the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge University, England. In 1962 he moved to IU, and 1963-1981 was Chairman of the Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies which he created. From 1965 to 1967 he was Chairman of the Asian Studies Program. In 1967 he founded the Asian Studies Research Institute, to become the Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, which he directed until 1981. In 2006 it was renamed Denis Sinor Institute for Inner Asian Studies. 1963-1988 he was Director of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, the only one of its kind in the country. Indiana University honored him in 1986 with the "Rocking Chair Award" and the Thomas Hart Benton Mural Medallion, the John W. Ryan Award (2006) and inclusion into the "President's Circle" (2005). He has received two Guggenheim Fellowships (1968, 1981), and grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the ACLS, the NEH, and IREX. In 1975 he was scholar-in-residence at the Rockefeller Fund Study Center, Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio.

A former president of the American Oriental Society, Sinor has been very active in various national and international scholarly societies in which he has held important positions. From 1960 to 2007 He was Secretary-General of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) which during this period had annual meetings in altogether twenty-one countries. He served at various committees of the UNESCO such as the Bureau of the International Association for the Cultures of Central Asia, the Consultative Committee of the Silk Road Project. 1981-2005 he was the vice-chairman of the UNESCO Commission for the preparation of a *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia*.

Sinor is a Corresponding Member of the French Academy, an Honorary Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a Foreign Member of the Academia Europaea. Honors received include doctorates h.c. of the University of Szeged (Hungary, 1971), and of the University of the Humanities Kazan (Russia, 2007). He is an Honorary Member of the Société Asiatique (Paris), the Körösi Csoma Society (Budapest), the Societas Uralo-Altaica (Hamburg). He was awarded the Arminius Vambery Medal (1983), the Gold Medal of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (1982, 1996), the "Order of the Star" of Hungary (1986), the Commander's Cross Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary (2006) the Silver Avicenna Medal of UNESCO (1998), UNESCO's 60th Anniversary Medal (2005), the Medal of Honor of the American Oriental Society (1999). The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain has honored him with the creation of a "Denis Sinor Medal for Inner Asian Studies". In 2005 he was appointed an Honorary Professor of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow).

Sinor authored 8 and edited 13 books, more than 160 articles written in Hungarian, French, English and German. Some of these were translated into several languages, including Russian and Chinese. He reviewed more than 125 books. He has been a contributor to various encyclopedias, including the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for which he prepared several major articles. He is still the Editor of the *Journal of Asian History* (since 1967), the *Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series* (over 150 volumes) and the *Indiana University Oriental Series*.

Sinor has travelled extensively in Asia, including Afghanistan, Chinese Turkestan, Soviet Central Asia, Northern Pakistan, Siberia, Inner and Outer Mongolia. In 2004, for no particular reason, he made it to the North Pole.

Listed in *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Education* and other reference works, Sinor is a member of the Cosmos Club (Washington, D.C.), of the Explorers Club (N.Y.C.), and of the United Oxford and Cambridge University Club (London).

Professor Sinor's presence at Indiana University has made it the leading center in the world for Inner Asian and Central Eurasian Studies.

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#### Selected works

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The economic and social factors which made conflicts between China on the one hand and the pastoral empires of Mongolia on the other almost inevitable did not normally favor westward expansion. The

Mongol conquest of western regions - including Iran and Eastern Europe - may be regarded as a by-product, as it were, of personal ambitions, of mistakes made by rulers of limited abilities, of armies left to their own devices to determine their course of action. In what follows, an attempt will be made to present the main features of Mongol history in the West with a minimum of digressions. This is a field which has been tilled over and over again by scholars good and bad, in voluminous books and short articles. It has been my feeling for a long time that a short, straightforward narrative may be needed, one that can be used for general orientation while, at the same, containing sufficient new material and views to warrant publication in a scholarly periodical. It will be up to the readers to judge whether either of these aims has been achieved here.

The disintegration of the Karakitai state can be set in 1218, when the fleeing Naiman Kuchlug, who for almost a decade had been its effective ruler, was killed by his arch-enemies the Mongols.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the Mongols was not the destruction of the Karakitay state but the punishment of Kuchhug, but the move brought them into contact with the bellicose 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad II Sultan of Khwarazm (1200-1220) who in 1218, completely misjudging Mongol power, made the fatal mistake of murdering Mongol envoys, an act always abhorred by the peoples of Inner Asia. The Mongol punitive expedition set in motion that same year led first to the conquest of Transoxiana, then expanded to include Afghanistan and Eastern Iran. The arrogant folly of Muhammad, who was thinking of conquering China, was backed by neither statesmanship nor by adequate military abilities. With his senseless presumption he had made the caliph his mortal foe, dividing thereby the Muslim world on the eve of the Mongol attack; as a poor strategist, he failed to make use of the numerical superiority of his army. As far as any individual can be held responsible for historical developments, the guilt of Muhammad of Khwarazm in bringing about one of the great disasters of human history is beyond doubt. The effects of the Mongol attacks were literally devastating. The complicated system of irrigation was badly damaged, fertile land was turned into desert; the bleak, cheerless regions of Iran and Turkestan still bear witness to the terrible thoroughness of Mongol destruction.

While Chinggis Khan remained in Persia to direct operations personally, two of his generals, Jebe and Sube'tei (ordinarily referred to as Subetei or Subotei) in their pursuit of the fleeing of Shah of Khwarazm reached the Caucasus.<sup>2</sup> In the winter of 1220-1221 they attacked Georgia, then ruled by King George Lashen IV. It was the first campaign in which Mongol forces were opposed by a Christian army and, though Grigor of Akanc speaks<sup>3</sup> of the "merciless slaughter" perpetrated by the "nation of the archers", it can be assumed that the small army commanded by Jebe and Subetei had no intention of occupying on a permanent basis either Georgia or Azerbaijan. After some half-hearted attacks on Shirvan and Derbend, the Mongol expeditionary force crossed the Caucasus and, in 1222, emerged on the South Russian steppe which

had been home, since the middle of the 11th century, to the Turkic tribes of the Kipchaks or Cumans.<sup>4</sup> According to the Arab historian Ibn al-Athir, the Mongols' first victory was achieved through dividing the joint Kipchak-Alan forces by an appeal to the former, reminding them that the Cumans and Mongols "are of the same race, the Alans, however, do not relate to you," a specious argument which, nevertheless, the Cumans found appealing.<sup>5</sup> In January 1223 the Mongol armies entered Sudak (Soldaia) the principal market place in the Crimea, a colony of the Empire of Trebizond, where they met a mixed population consisting mainly of Greeks and Armenians. The Cumans' treachery did not pay off since, separated now from the Alans, they had to bear alone the brunt of a Mongol attack. Defeated, their prince Koten (Kotien) sought refuge with his father-in-law Mstislav of Halich whom he warned by saying that "today they (the Mongols) took our land, and tomorrow they will come and take yours."<sup>6</sup> Koten succeeded in persuading some of the Russian princes to take the initiative and meet the Mongols before they had reached Russian territories. This bold attitude brought initial success to the Russian armies and their Cuman allies; it was however insufficient to avert disaster at the principal battle fought near the river Kalka (present-day Kalec, a small tributary of the Kalmius) which, depending on our sources, took place either on May 31 or June 16, 1223. Some of the Russians, led by the Grand Duke of Kiev, resisted in a retrenchment for three days before surrendering on the promise that their lives would be spared. Yet after the surrender all the defenders were massacred, except the leaders, who were smothered under the planks on which the Mongols sat celebrating their victory with a banquet. This was the epilogue of the Battle of Kalka, "a victory over the Russian princes" says the Chronicle of Tver "such as has never been since the beginning of the Russian Land."<sup>7</sup>

Mongol forays continued for a while, reaching Novgorod in the north and the line of the Dnieper in the west. A probably halfhearted attempt to take Bulghar <sup>8</sup> ended in failure. Ibn al-Athir, who recorded the event, also noted that subsequently the Mongols returned to meet Chinggis Khan, presumably towards the end of 1223.

To understand the motives and mechanism of the Mongol incursions led by Jebe and Subetei one should bear in mind that these men operated mostly on their own initiative, with no other orders from Chinggis Khan than to follow and capture the Shah of Khwarazm, and in the process of so doing to make as many peoples as possible submit to Mongol rule. The coordinated movements of Mongol troops separated by thousand miles could only be achieved by rigid adherence to a timetable which obligated individual commanders to appear at a given time and place, but which left to their initiative the actions to be undertaken in the meantime.<sup>9</sup> Unexpected withdrawals - such as that from Russia - and reluctance to occupy heavily fortified places, were often viewed by contemporaries and historians alike as defeats, though in

reality they were prompted by strategic concepts totally alien at that time to western military thinking. The Mongol generals had to adhere to their timetables.

The Mongol conquests in Iran, and the ephemeral but impressive thrust into Russia, did not pass unnoticed in the West, though the two events were not connected, and the realization that the two campaigns had been conducted by the same people, the Mongols, was not immediate. Throughout the history of Mongol relations with Europe, contacts, both hostile and friendly, were established and maintained in two theaters of operation. Information flowed through two separate channels. Interaction between Mongols and the West took place either in Outremer, through the crusaders, or in Eastern Europe, mainly through Hungary. This two-pronged approach, be it peaceful or warlike, is seldom taken into account by historians.

News of the turmoil caused by the Mongol invasion of Central Asia, and of the plight of the Muslim world, reached the crusaders and raised considerable hope among them. In their minds the Mongols were connected with the mythical people of Prester John,<sup>10</sup> or of his son David, and were viewed as Christians, thus potential allies of the crusaders. In 1221, to the armies gathered round Damietta, James of Vitry (Jacobus Vitriacus) "publicly preached that David, king of the two Indies, hastened to the help of the Christians, bringing with him most ferocious peoples who will devour like beasts the sacrilegious Saracens".<sup>11</sup> Under the same year of 1221, the chronicle of Alberic of the Three Fountains (Albericus Trium Fontium) recorded that King David came to Cumania and Russia where he destroyed some countries and killed many thousands of Cumans and Russians. In his entry for the following year Alberic specifies that King David and his army are called Tartars by the Hungarians and Cumans. Under the year 1223, Ricardus of Sancto Germano records, "The king of Hungary notified the pope through his ambassadors, that a certain King David, commonly called Prester John, with an unlimited multitude of people had come to Russia. He had left India seven years ago, carrying the body of the blessed Apostle Thomas; and in one day they killed 200,000 Russians and Cumans (Plavci) ..." <sup>12</sup> It is clear that the information which had reached the king of Hungary before he sent his report to the pope was, on the whole, of the same nature as that used by James of Vitry but that it originated in Eastern Europe, probably in Russia. This is clearly shown by the use of the name Plavci, the Slavic appellation of the Cumans (Polocvy). One would hardly expect to find the Slavic name of the Cumans in a report originating in the Holy Land. With the withdrawals of the Mongol forces led by Jebe and Subetei "the rumor - to quote Alberic - "that had spread on their behalf, vanished in no time."<sup>13</sup> The hope of the crusaders aroused by the coming to their rescue of the Prester John or David turned out to be false; as for the Russian princes and the Hungarians, the Mongol incursion remained an episode without consequences in the long series of conflicts with nomad peoples.

Chinggis Khan died in August 1227. In his lifetime he had apportioned his huge empire between his four sons. Jochi, the eldest, had died a few months before his father, and so his *ulus* (the part allotted to him) fell to his son Batu. This was the westernmost part of what was about to become the great Mongol Empire, and, roughly speaking, comprised Khwarazm, Siberia west of the Irtysh, the plain between Lake Aral and the Ural mountains. To Chagaday, the second son of Chinggis, was allotted Transoxiana, while - in accordance with ancient custom - Tolui, the youngest, inherited the Mongolian homeland. The third son, Ogedey, was to rule over the lands lying east of Transoxiana but at a *quriltay* (national assembly) held in 1228 or 1229, he was elected Great Khan, supreme ruler of the entire empire. Consolidation of Mongol domination over territories conquered under his father's rule and further expansion characterize Ogedey's reign (1228/29-1241). The conquest of North China and the reconquest of Persia, where Jalal al-Din son of the late Muhammad of Khwarazm established himself after Chinggis Khan, had left the country, have no direct bearing on our subject. More relevant to our topic is the fact that soon after his accession Ogedey convoked a second *quriltay* at which it was decided to launch a major campaign against the Russians, the Alans (called As by the Mongols) and the Bulghar, whose lands bordered on the camping grounds of Batu. An impressive bevy of princes - including Tolui's son M6ngke, the future Great Khan - was charged with the task of subjugating the "rebels" (i. e. those who had not yet recognized Mongol rule), and they were joined by the *baghaturs* Subetei, veteran of the previous campaign and probably de facto commander of this second invasion. Thereupon the princes returned, each to his own camp, in order to prepare for the campaign.<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the strategic concept indicated earlier, a rendezvous was agreed upon, and early in 1236, in Juvaini's words, "they came together in the territory of the Bulghar. The earth echoed and reverberated from the multitude of their armies, and at the size and tumult of their forces the very beasts stood amazed."<sup>15</sup>

The left wing of the Mongol army facing west was under the command of Mongke who, possibly to secure his rear, penetrated into the Kipchak territory. The Cumans must have gotten wind of the impending invasion, for one of their chiefs, whose name is known only in its Chinese transcription Hu-lu-su-man,<sup>16</sup> felt it wise to undertake the long journey to the court of Ogedei to offer him his spontaneous submission. During his absence Mongke's army invaded the eastern part of the Kipchak territory where Hu-lu-su-man's son submitted himself, apparently without combat. After a long and adventurous pursuit in the marshy regions of the Volga delta, another Cuman chief by the name of Bachman was caught and killed and his army destroyed. The same fate befell the chief of the Alans. Having thus subdued the Kipchak steppe, Mongke joined the other Mongol forces at the city of Bulghar, which was taken in the autumn of 1237.

As is shown by the careful preparation of the campaign against Bulghar - the year-long lull before the final assault - much more was at stake for the Mongols than simply the conquest of this important

trading center. The operational plan - and without any doubt such a plan did exist - envisaged the conquest of the Russian principalities, Poland and Hungary, in fact the whole of Eastern and part of Central Europe: a gigantic operation, to last over several years. The conquest of Bulghar was the first episode in the Mongol Blitzkrieg, to use a modern term, a series of devastating, well-nigh irresistible attacks against a number of Russian cities. As was their wont, the Mongols preferred to wage war in the cold season, whose rigors they did not mind, the frozen rivers being then no obstacle to their troop movements. Ryazan, defended by the Grand Duke Yuri, fell on the 21st December 1237, followed by Kolomna, Vladimir, Suzdal, and Moscow, at that time a city of small significance. By the beginning of March 1238 fourteen cities had been taken by the Mongols, including Torzhok, the fall of which marked the end of this campaign organized on the pattern of a huge battue in which the troops, divided in columns of ten thousand men, methodically combed the whole country. In the words of Rashid al-Din, after this lengthy and by no means easy campaign the Mongol chiefs "entered the houses and rested."<sup>17</sup> This overly simple statement can be put into a better perspective through a remark made in a document entitled *De facto Ungarie Magne* written by a certain Ricardus,<sup>18</sup> who culled most of his information from Julianus and, possibly, other Hungarian sources. According to him, near or in Magna Hungaria a Friar Preacher (perhaps Julianus?) met a Mongol envoy, who told him that a Mongol army, encamped at a distance of five days' journey "intended to march against Germany but was waiting for an other army which had been sent to destroy the Persians."<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the Mongol armies poised to attack the West were awaiting further reinforcements to be sent, probably by the *noyan* Chormagan, the powerful proconsul in the western territories of Iran, Mesopotamia and the Caucasus. Be that as it may, the information reveals yet another example of the coordination of military operations so characteristic of Mongol global strategy. In the Spring of 1238, the Mongols stood just east of the Dnieper. We are able neither to trace the exact frontline nor to describe the happenings of the following two years. In fact, it seems certain that no major operation was undertaken in this period, which was one of preparation for the great attack on Hungary.

It is possible that personal intrigues in the Mongol high command slowed down the rhythm of the preparations. Jealousies among high-ranking officers are a perennial feature of military life, and we are able to follow the development of a quarrel between Batu on the one side, and Bori and Guyuk on the other. The Secret History of Mongols contains the text of a message purportedly sent by Batu to the Great Khan Ogedei. In it, Batu relates how, having subdued the Russians and eleven nations, the victorious Mongol chiefs gathered for a feast. Seating himself at the banquet Batu, the senior among the princes present, took a few gulps before the others. This was taken amiss by Guyuk and Buri who refused to join the feast arguing that since "Batu is our equal, why did he drink first?" Other princes joined Guyuk and Buri in heaping

insults upon the head of Batu, whom they compared to a "woman with a beard." Batu, deeply hurt, related the events to the Great Khan, his uncle, pointing out that the conflict erupted just at the time when "having been sent to fight against rebels of a different race, we were asking ourselves whether we had been successful."20 On receiving the message Ogedei flew into a tremendous rage, and his invectives uttered against Guyuk and duly recorded in the Secret History (§276) make for most impressive reading. The Great Khan's decision fell in favor of Batu whom he entrusted with the conduct of the next campaign.

The rest of 1238 passed in minor operations, apparently aimed at securing the flanks and the rear of the Mongol army. Though it is impossible to follow with any precision the troop movements, we know that on the 26th December of that year Sudak, on the Crimean peninsula, was, once again, looted. Another event, of greater importance, was a new attack on the Cumans, resulting in their mass-emigration to Hungary. Although linguistically and racially homogenous, the Cumans constituted a loose federation of tribes quite independent of one another. The western part of the Kipchak country had for some time been ruled by Koten, already mentioned, who, though connected by family ties with Russian princes, had so far refused to embrace Christianity. Perhaps prompted by the imminence of a Mongol invasion, Koten sent ambassadors to Bela IV, king of Hungary, asking for asylum for himself and his whole people, comprising about forty thousand warriors, and, in return, promising his conversion. Encouraged by the Dominicans, who saw in this immigration the opening of a new and promising field of proselytism and the fulfillment of their old hopes, cherished by St. Dominic himself, for the conversion of the Cumans, Bela accepted the offer. On Easter Day 1239 he received Koten personally at the frontiers of Hungary and acted as godfather at his baptism. On the eve of a possible Mongol invasion it seemed a statesmanlike decision to accept the alliance of a people disposing of a large and efficient army, and the sight of a people coming of its own accord to submit to the suzerainty of the king of Hungary was bound to enhance Bela's prestige and popularity, which stood fairly low among the lords of his own country. Things turned out differently. The integration of the Turkic speaking, nomadizing Cumans into Hungarian life caused many problems, and, by favoring his recently immigrated subjects, Bela alienated the bulk of his own people. Internal tensions between the king and his subjects, lords and commoners, greatly weakened the country at a time when it was faced with unprecedented danger.

Russian cities and the Slavic populations were not the only victims of the Mongol invasion. The Mordvins - a warlike Finno-Ugric people, today widely dispersed over the vast territory between the Oka and Bielaya rivers but in the 13th century concentrated in the Middle Volga region - had to bear the brunt of their attack, which also destroyed Great Hungary (Magna Hungaria). The exact location of that country is the subject of some scholarly controversy, as is the ethnic composition of its people, but it is safe to say that



for all practical purposes, as far as our limited knowledge extends, Magna Hungaria is geographically undistinguishable from Bulghar. In 13th century sources it is identified with the land of the Bashkirs, today Turkic-speaking, and also, as indicated by its name, with that of the Hungarians. It was a contemporary, and not unreasonable belief, which modern research tends to support, that Magna Hungaria was an ancient abode of those Hungarians who had not migrated to Danubian Hungary. At the time with which we are concerned, knowledge of an interest in Magna Hungaria were sufficiently alive to prompt some Hungarian Dominicans to set out on an expedition aimed at locating their separated kin and converting them to Christianity. In their wake another Dominican friar, named Julianus, undertook the same journey, but by the time he reached the "limits of Russia," Magna Hungaria, Bulghar and "numerous other nations" had been subjugated by the Mongols. It is not a slight to suggest that missionary zeal was not the only motive prompting one of those "Preachers, Minorites, and other messengers, whom the king of Hungary had sent to explore", who were referred to in a letter sent by a Hungarian bishop to the bishop of Paris and cited by Matthew Paris.<sup>21</sup> In other words Julianus was a spy and, in fact, the report he prepared, which has survived in a mutilated form, contains detailed information on the whereabouts of the Mongol armies. Passing through Suzdal shortly before its occupation by the Mongols, Julianus was warned by the Grand Duke Yuri Vsevolodovich of Vladimir-Suzdal that "day and night the Tatars deliberate upon how they may come and conquer the Christian kingdom of Hungary. For they are said to have in mind to come and conquer Rome and the land beyond Rome."<sup>22</sup> The Grand Duke's warning was based on reliable information. He had captured Mongol envoys crossing the territory of Suzdal and had taken away from them a letter addressed to the king of Hungary. Painfully deciphered and translated it turned out to be an ultimatum:

I, Chayn,<sup>23</sup> messenger of the heavenly king, to whom he has given on earth to exalt those who submit to him and to cast down his adversaries, I wonder at you, king of Hungary, that although I have sent you messengers thirty times,<sup>24</sup> you have sent me back none of them, nor did you send me messengers of your own or letters. I know that you are a rich and powerful king, and that you have many soldiers under you, and that you govern alone a great kingdom. Therefore it is difficult for you to submit to me voluntarily. Further, I have learned that you keep the Cumans, my slaves, under your protection. Whence I charge you that henceforward you do not keep them with you, and that you do not make me your enemy on their account. For it is easier for them to escape than for you. Since they, having no houses and continually on the move with their tents may possibly escape. But you, living in houses and possessing fortresses and cities, how can you flee from my grasp?

The year 1239 had passed without any major event, and so did the first eleven months of 1240. On December 6, 1240, Kiev, perhaps the most important town in Russian lands, fell after a siege of only nine

days. Excavations throw harsh light on the suddenness of the city's destruction.<sup>25</sup> There was found a pot full of porridge with a wooden spoon stuck in it, which someone had no time to eat when the house was set on fire. There are the valuable crystal beads that filled a jug dropped and left behind by their fleeing owner. More tragic are the remains of two small girls huddled together in a stove from which hiding place they would never emerge, or the hiding place of a few desperate men who tried to dig an underground passage through which to escape from the burning town; but the walls above them collapsed, burying them all, including a certain artisan, Maxim, who can be identified as the very man who had left his porridge uneaten in another part of the town. Probably no one at that time - least of all the Mongols themselves - was aware of the importance of the fall of Kiev. Yet this was the first and principal cause of the shifting towards the east, and towards Moscow, of the center of gravity of Russian life, a move which was to have a decisive influence not only on Russian but also on world history.

The fall of Kiev was immediately followed by that of other towns in Halich and Volhynia, but these were minor undertakings aimed at preparing the attack on Hungary, the strategic objective of the Mongol campaign.

The invasion of Hungary is a classic example of long-range strategic planning executed with meticulous care on a unprecedented scale. Against Hungary the Mongols envisaged a triple drive in which the right and left wings were each to launch a three-pronged attack, while the center, constituting the main force, would advance undivided. The right flank, facing west, was under command of Batu's brother Orda, seconded by Baidar and Qaidan, sons of Chagaday. Pushing west from Vladimir, its primary aim was the neutralization of Bela's Polish and Silesian allies. Bela's daughter Kinga was the wife of Boleslaw, son of Leszek the White of the Piast dynasty. The right wing of Orda's army, under his personal command, moving in a north-westerly direction, skirted or actually entered Prussia and, following an almost semi-circular course, descended south to Breslau (Wroclaw). Orda's center, under the command of Qaidan, advanced in a fairly straight line in the direction of Breslau, while the left wing, led by Baidar, crossed the San and moved south-west towards Cracow. Sandomierz (Sandomir) fell on February 13, 1241, Cracow on March 22. The advance of Baidar was deliberately slow, following the course of the rivers, first that of the San, then the Vistula, and, after the fall of Cracow, downstream, the Odera. On April 2, before Breslau, Baidar joined the armies of Orda and Qaidan. Once again, for them the timing was perfect. The city was set on fire, either by the Mongols or by the inhabitants themselves, who took refuge in the fortress, set on an island. Their first attack against this fortress having failed, the Mongols, reluctant to lose time, pushed on to face the first serious obstacle in their way since they left Vladimir. On April 9th, on the battlefield of Liegnitz, they clashed with the forces of Henry II, duke of Silesia, Bela's cousin, helped by a strong contingent of

Templars. The Mongol victory was decisive, and Henry II himself lost his life on the battlefield. Nationalist German claims - which here and there surface - to the effect that, though the battle was lost, it prevented the invasion of Germany, cannot be substantiated. The Mongol aim was the encirclement of Hungary which, now that their rear was safe, they entered from the north-west, through Moravia. Time was pressing, for Orda's army was bound to operate its junction with that of Batu somewhere near Pest, which it intended to reach by going downstream, on the left bank of the Danube. There was no time to enter Bohemia, whose wise king Wenceslas I - though ready to defend his land - avoided any hostile initiative. A small Mongol force sent to reconnoiter the Austrian border withdrew as soon as contact had been made.

The identity of the commander-in-chief to the left wing, facing south, cannot be established with any certainty. We do know, however, that Qadan, son of the Great Khan Ogedei, assisted by Bori, a grandson of Chagaday, was in charge of the corps which on March 31, coming from the north-east, crossed the Carpathians through the pass of Borgo into Transylvania. Another, probably weaker, Mongol force, whose commander cannot be identified, skirted the Carpathian arc and crossed it at the pass of Ojtuz (Oituz). The third, southernmost, left wing entered Transylvania through the defile of the river Olt. The three aforementioned armies joined forces in Csanad (Cenad), in the region of the confluence of the Maros (Mures) and the Tisza (Tisa). No organized resistance had been encountered by these converging army groups, which were now prepared to join forces with the armies of Orda and of Batu for a decisive blow against Bela.

The central army corps, under Batu - commander-in-chief of all the Mongol forces in the west - was poised for attack along the Dniester. Subetei, veteran hero of so many Mongol victories, and Shibani, a brother of Batu, were to second him. While there is no reliable evidence on the numerical strength of the three Mongol armies, it would appear that the one commanded by Batu and Subetei was stronger than the combined forces of the right (Orda) and left (Qadan and others) wings. Batu chose to enter Hungary from the North, through the "*porta Russiae*", i.e. the Pass of Verecke, used by the Hungarians themselves some three hundred years earlier for the conquest of their future homeland. It seemed for a while that this new attack would destroy the state which the earlier invasion had founded; in the laconic statement of a Bavarian chronicler "The kingdom of Hungary which has lasted for three hundred and fifty years, is destroyed by the Tatars."<sup>26</sup>

Bela IV had been aware of the Mongol menace - though it is not known whether he ever received the above-mentioned ultimatum and, if he did, whether he took it seriously - and had made great efforts to strengthen his country's defenses. At the news of the fall of Kiev he ordered the Hungarian borders to be

fortified and inspected the wooden barricades erected. He also did his utmost to convince the lords of the realm to raise armies and coordinate defense. On March 15, while at a meeting to discuss the measures to be taken he received the news, brought to him by the very man to whom the defense of Verecke had been entrusted, that on May 12 the Hungarian forces defending that pass had been routed and annihilated by a Mongol attack. The terrible news notwithstanding, the realities of the situation were not understood by the lords, who distrusted Bela and hated Koton, whose people they accused of treachery and whom they blamed for the Mongol attack. By this time Mongol reconnaissance units had reached Pest, attacked and looted the city of Vac some twenty miles north, and engaged in a number of skirmishes, always avoiding a major battle. The physical appearance of the Mongols, often undistinguishable from that of the Cumans, reinforced the belief in the latter's treachery. Koton and his immediate entourage fell victim to mob violence, causing a mass exodus of his people. Justifiably angered, the Cumans moved south, towards Bulgaria, burning and looting on their way, fighting Hungarian units moving north in response to Bela's appeal. Anarchy and confusion were spreading over Hungary, where no one, not even the king, had a realistic assessment of Mongol military power. Used to earlier incursion by steppe peoples, such as the Pechenegs or the Cumans, and for centuries undefeated on their own soil, the Hungarian lords remained cocksure, confident in their military capabilities.

Batu's army was moving south at a snail's pace, allowing time for the right and left wings - who had to cover a much longer distance - to reach Pest simultaneously with the main force. Batu could have made it to Pest within a week and thus could have taken advantage of the Hungarians' unpreparedness of which, no doubt, he was well aware. However, because the original operational plan had foreseen a decisive battle to be fought after the junction of the three army corps, Batu was reluctant to engage Bela's forces on his own. Yet this is what he had to do, because early in April the armed forces gathered by the king set out from Pest to meet and halt the advancing Mongols. Contact was established a little less than halfway between Pest and Verecke near the river Sajo which initially separated them but across which, on April 11, Batu's forces executed a night attack on the Hungarian camp, inflicting terrible losses on its trapped defenders. The king himself escaped with great difficulty from the debacle. While the outcome of the encounter is beyond dispute - some call it a massacre rather than a battle - historians disagree in their assessments of Bela's apparent ineptitude. Of course, the Hungarians could have done better; but it is beyond doubt that no ad hoc, feudal type force could have matched the well disciplined, highly trained, professional soldiers of the Mongol army. A seldom considered measure of the efficacy of the Hungarian resistance is the size of the losses sustained by the attackers. These were very heavy and in 1245, when the Franciscan John of Plano Carpini visited the Mongols, they were still vividly recalled. The friar noted the existence of special

cemeteries established for those fallen in Hungary.<sup>27</sup> He also discovered in Batu's camp the beautiful tents which once belonged to Bela IV

Though master of the battlefield, Batu made no haste in his advance. Mongol detachments fanned out to frighten and to loot, but the main army pursued its slow advance towards the Danube. By autumn of that same year the territories lying north and east of the Danube were occupied and the resistance put up by isolated groups was broken.

Hungary's collapse came as a shock to the pope, to the Emperor Frederick II and to all other potentates of the west, all ready to blame Bela (to use Frederick's words "the idle and careless" king),<sup>28</sup> none willing to provide effective help in preventing the further advance of the Mongols. Bela, now in the western (Transdanubian) parts of Hungary, foresaw that the Mongols would attempt to cross the Danube and did everything in his power to limit the further devastation of his country. Experience had shown that fortifications, though not effective in barring the Mongol advance (they were more often than not bypassed), at least provided a shelter for the population. The king did his utmost to increase their number and provide them with adequate means of defense.

The country East and North of the Danube was thrown into chaos and at the mercy of the Mongols, but Bela IV escaped, helped by luck and the devotion of some of his men. In his flight to the west he reached the Austrian border and stopped at Pozsony (Pressburg, Bratislava) where an invitation reached him from Frederick, Duke of Austria to be his guest. "But alas!", tells us the *Carmen miserabile super destructionis regni Hungariae per Tartaros* <sup>29</sup> written by Roger, canon of Varad, "the poor king was like a fish who in trying to escape from being frozen in an icebox, jumps into the fire to be roasted."<sup>30</sup> Once he got hold of the king's person, the duke made very heavy demands. He exacted and obtained three Hungarian counties and demanded a very large sum. Beta, fugitive, unable to produce it, had to leave with him as a pledge, all the silver and gold vessels he had managed to save in his flight. In these circumstances it is understandable that the Hungarian king did not wish to remain in Austria. In the middle of May 1241 we find him in Zagreb, Croatia, whence he endeavored to reorganize what remained of his country and to forestall possible Mongol attacks across the Danube.

The Mongols seem to have halted East and North of the Danube, though there were some forays into Austrian territory. The reports are contradictory but there is a curious tale, lacking any historical foundations, that Batu himself lost his life by drowning in the Danube.<sup>31</sup> There was a lull in Mongol troop movements and the German forces raised by King Konrad IV, son of the Emperor Frederick II, lured into a

false feeling of security, disbanded. Bela was more perspicacious. He took for granted that the Mongols would attempt to cross the Danube, and he acted accordingly, trying to build up an effective resistance. As there could be no hope of resisting a possible Mongol onslaught in the open field, Beta paid particular attention to the building of fortifications which, provided they had efficient ballistarii, stood a good chance against Mongol attacks. Most revealing in this respect is a letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 1242 and sent to whosoever may become the successor of Pope Gregory IX:

Lo! now for the third time, we are sending to your Paternity our beloved Friars Preachers, the bearers of these presents in conformity with their own will and with the good pleasure of their prelates; entreating your Paternity inasmuch that the groans of the fettered, the sobbing of mourning widows, of children and orphans may rise to the heart of your Holiness, and above all the great zeal of the Church should prevail upon you, lest her new plantation in Hungary should be wholly and thus wretchedly uprooted, to assign quickly to Hungarian soldiers who are experienced and willing and who are able to set themselves as a wall for the Lord's house together with us and with our men, of whom now, by Divine Providence, quite a number remains, more particularly lest the river Danube, by which up till now the most powerful Lord has prevented their [i.e. the Mongols'] passage, be crossed and the memory of Christ's name and the glory of our crown, which we and our fathers have held and hold by the blessing of the Roman Church, now be obliterated ... Therefore we ask your Holiness to the effect that you will a crusade to be preached among the Venetians, who axe the most necessary to us because of their ballistarii which are greatly needed for the defense of the said river and through the other kingdoms of Catholic princes.<sup>32</sup>

What Bela foresaw happened. Sometime in February 1242 33 the Mongol forces crossed the Danube. This is how Canon Roger describes the event in his *Carmen miserabile*

Lo! in the winter, the snow and ice came in such abundance that the Danube was frozen over, which had not occurred in times reaching very far back. But the Hungarians from the inside broke the ice every day and guarded the Danube thus, so that there was a continual fight by the foot-soldiers against the ice. However, when the hard frost came, the whole Danube was frozen over, yet the Mongols by no means tried to cross with their horses. Listen to what they did. They led many horses and beasts up to the banks of the Danube, but for three days they sent no one to look after them, so that the beasts seemed to be left without keepers; and none of those people made an appearance in those regions. Then the Hungarians, thinking that the Tartars had retreated, suddenly crossed over and led the animals over the ice. When the Tartars observed this, they thought they could cross freely over the ice on horseback. Which was done, and so many crossed in one charge that from that part of the Danube they filled the surface of the earth.<sup>34</sup>

West of the Danube, which was also the western limit of the Eurasian steppe, the Mongols' aim was not so much territorial conquest but, first and foremost, the capture of the fugitive king, who was pursued by Qadan with the same vigor as, earlier, Jebe and Subetei had shown in tracking down Muhammad of Khwarazm. Even the reasons for the Mongols' vendetta appears to have been the same: the possible murder and certain disappearance of Mongol envoys, reproached to Bela in the aforementioned ultimatum.

The Mongols' pursuit of the king was less successful than had been their attempt to seize Muhammad. Bela, like the Sultan of Khwarazm, thought that the safest refuge from Mongol horsemen would be an island, so he fled in a south-westerly direction towards Croatia and the Adriatic Sea, where - after many adventures - he found shelter on an island facing the city of Trogir. His pursuers, unable to get hold of his person and hampered in their movements by the lack of adequate pastures, engaged in minor predatory operations in Dalmatia and Croatia until, within the framework of the total evacuation of Hungary, they crossed Serbia and joined Batu's main force in Bulgaria. Mongol corps operating in the eastern parts of the country left the way they had come, through the passes of Transylvania. The evacuation of Hungary, another example of splendid military planning, was completed by May 1242.

According to John of Plano Carpini the death of Ogedei prompted the Mongols' withdrawal from Hungary. Valuable though the Friar's account may be, it does contain many mistakes, of which this explanation is a prime example. Unfortunately, the mistake has been perpetuated by generations of historians (including the present writer), who, for a long time, never pondered on the inherent weakness of this theory. Ogedei died on December 11, 1241, and it had been argued that when the news reached him, Batu, who might have had personal, imperial ambitions, decided either to return to Mongolia or, at least, to move closer to it. The fact is that Batu showed no signs of any desire to travel to Mongolia, but after the evacuation of Hungary remained on the South Russian steppe, still very far from the center of power. Whether Batu ever harbored ambitions to become the Great Khan is a moot question, but his behavior certainly did not reveal anything of the sort. Available evidence suggests that he was content to be the de facto ruler of the western part of the Mongol empire, and that he showed great loyalty to Ogedei's successor, Guyuk. The reason for the Mongol withdrawal from Hungary must be sought elsewhere; it was caused by logistical imperatives.

It is impossible to give an accurate assessment of the size of the Mongol army, let alone of the strength of the troops invading Hungary. The contemporary Roger speaks of half a million, but this is surely an exaggeration. According to Simon of St. Quentin 35 Batu's army (in 1245) was seven times the size of that of Ogedei, commander in the Near East, whose men numbered 600,000, comprising 160,000 Mongols.

The Mongol army was divided into divisions (tumen), ten thousand men strong, and it is hard to imagine that each of the four army corps constituting Batu's right and left wing respectively would have had less than one tumen. Even on the minimal level together they would have had 40,000 men. Bela's army is estimated to have been 65,000 strong, and it is reasonable to reckon that the Mongol center, opposing and defeating it, numbered at least as many. At a very conservative estimate one can set the strength of the Mongol invading forces between 105,000 and 150,000 men, a figure much lower than any of those appearing in our sources.

The military strength of the great nomad empires, and that of the Mongols in particular, rested on their cavalry and on a virtually inexhaustible supply of horses. According to Plano Carpini, the Mongols "have so many horses and mares that I do not believe there are so many in all the rest of the world."<sup>36</sup> There is evidence that each warrior had at least three or four horses, but Marco Polo spoke of about eighteen mounts for each man! Taking into consideration the losses suffered by the Mongols we may count with, say 100,000 men occupying Hungary who would then need, on a conservative estimate at least some 400,000 horses. It has been suggested that about 42,000 square kilometers (10,378,425 acres) can or could be used as grazing land. Estimates of grazing or carrying capacity of ranges vary widely but on the assumption that at that time about 25 acres were needed to support one horse for one year, the carrying capacity of the Hungarian range must be set at 415,136 animal units. On the completely unrealistic condition that no other animals were using these pastures, and counting five horses per Mongol horseman, the Hungarian range could provide for the mounts of 83,027 warriors, clearly far below the strength of the Mongol army. The Mongol high command found itself in a position similar to that of a commander of a modern armored division running short of fuel. Further advance to the west, into Transdanubia, would have made matters worse. It was the habit of the Mongols to stop fighting in the spring and let their horses go free to water and graze, and to multiply, so that they would be ready for war in the autumn. This is the reason why in the spring of 1242 the Mongols withdrew from devastated, overgrazed Hungary to the abundant pastures of the steppe, where they could replenish and strengthen their herds, on which their military power rested.<sup>37</sup>

During his lifetime Ogedei chose his third son Kochu to succeed him. But Kochu predeceased his father, who then decreed that Kochu's son, the young Siremun, be his heir. Ogedei's widow the *katun* Tdregene disapproved of this choice and favored Guyuk, the eldest son born to her by the late khan. The organization of the *quriltay* was no easy task since the electors, the various princes and barons, were dispersed in diverse parts of the huge empire. While they slowly converged on Karakorum, where the election was to be held, the government, as it were, of the late Guyuk continued to handle day-to-day affairs, and Toregene, making sure of all the arts of diplomacy, to quote Rashid al-Din <sup>38</sup> "wooed the hearts of kinsfolk and emirs with all manners of gifts and presents until they all inclined toward her and came under



her control." Toregene achieved her aim and Guyuk was enthroned on August 24, 1246, in an impressive ceremony witnessed and described by John of Plano Carpini (ix, 32-35).

The Franciscan was one of three envoys - and by far the most successful - dispatched by Pope Innocent IV in the spring of 1245 to learn more about the people who had brought such a devastation upon Hungary and, also, to exhort its unknown ruler to refrain from further misdeeds and embrace Christianity. They were to carry two letters addressed to "the king and the people of the Tartars," one (*Dei patris immensa*) is dated March 5, the other (*Cum non solum*) is of March 13.<sup>39</sup> One of the missions, led by the Dominican Ascelinus, approached the Mongols through Anatolia. Somewhere beyond Tiflis, Ascelinus was received by the Mongol general Baiju, commander in Caucasia, whom he strongly antagonized, and whose reply to the pope's letter he brought back to Lyons. Another mission, under the French Dominican Andrew of Longjumeau, traveling through Syria, met near Tabriz a Mongol army commanded by a man whose uncle had taken part in the Hungarian campaign. Andrew also met there a familiar of the Great Khan Ogedei, the Nestorian churchman Simeon, better known as Rabban Ata, who had been sent to Armenia sometime between 1235 and 1240. A man of high reputation, he exerted his influence in favor of the Christians living under Mongol domination.

Interesting and important though they may be, the missions entrusted to Ascelinus and Andrew of Longjumeau are overshadowed by that undertaken by the already oft-mentioned John of Plano Carpini.<sup>40</sup> One striking feature of his enterprise is the itinerary he had decided to follow. The former two made Syria their starting point, while Carpini chose to travel through Poland and Russia, i.e. on the road of the Mongol invasion of Hungary, the route Julianus had taken on his return journey. There is also evidence that Plano Carpini, on his way back to Lyon called on the king of Hungary.<sup>41</sup> As mentioned earlier, communication between the Mongols and Europe flowed through two channels: Outremer via the Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe via Hungary. The latter was the more convenient way to reach the seats of Mongol power, Batu in the west and the great khan in Mongolia. Carpini was to meet both, first Batu, nomadizing near the lower reaches of the Volga a man - so the friar reported - kind to his own people but very shrewd in warfare "for he has been fighting for many years";<sup>42</sup> then, after his enthronement, Guyuk himself. Carpini thought him to be between forty and forty-five years old, though he was at least some ten years younger, a man of medium height, "very intelligent and extremely shrewd, and most serious and grave in his manner."<sup>43</sup>

The Mongol letters brought to the pope by Ascelinus and Plano Carpini made depressing reading: the Mongols demanded total submission, and even a friendly message sent by the aforementioned Rabban Ata urged the pope to make peace with the Mongols, "against whose power the whole Christian world cannot

resist."44 The prodigious mass of information brought back by Carpini confirmed the bleak impression to be gained from the letters. In fact the friar brought the alarming news that the new great khan Guyuk, supposedly favorable to Christians, was preparing an all-out attack against all Christian nations and kingdoms of the West. Fate willed it otherwise. Guyuk's reign was extremely short, he died in the spring of 1248, less than two years after his accession. His widow Oghul Qaimish - who for a short time kept secret the death of her husband - continued to administer affairs, though much of her time was spent in the company of shamans, on whose advice she apparently relied. She endeavored to ensure the succession of Siremun, who had been ousted by his uncle Guyuk. Theoretically, rule over the Mongols should have devolved on one of Guyuk's sons, an idea which did not appeal to Batu, whose relationship with Guyuk had remained strained since the memorable banquet already referred to, nor had he any sympathy for Oghul Qaimish. Sometime in 1250 she received Andrew of Longjumeau, then on his second mission to the Mongols. On this occasion Andrew represented Louis IX, king of France, who had taken upon himself to continue the endeavors initiated by Innocent IV. The attempt ended in utter failure: Oghul Qaimish presented the French embassy to her subjects as one suing for mercy, and her reply to Louis IX was couched in terms as intransigent and peremptory as had been those of her late husband. Oghul Qaimish had to contend not only with Batu's hostility, but also with the lady Sorquqtani Beki - the widow of Tolui, Guyuk's uncle - a Christian, and in Rashid al-Din's words "the most intelligent woman in the world."45 She had set her mind on having her son Mongke elected ruler of the Mongols, and sent him to Batu so that he might secure for himself the goodwill of this most influential man. Batu's endorsement obtained, Sorquqtani Beki intensified her efforts on her son's behalf. Opposition came from those loyalists who felt that one of Guyuk's sons should become the ruler, and should not accept Batu's main argument that they were too young to govern the huge empire. Those opposed to Mongke's election thought of preventing it by the simple device of abstention. But *les absents ont toujours tort*. At the insistence of Berke - Batu's younger brother and his trusted adviser in Mongolia - the old king-maker sent the message: "Set him (Mongke) on the throne". So those present at the *quriltay* elected Mongke, and Oghul Qaimish, whom (in a letter to Louis IX) he described as "more vile than a dog," was executed.46

The letter containing this remark was carried by the Franciscan William of Rubruck, often, and incorrectly, referred to as an ambassador of Louis IX. In fact the friar, fired by missionary zeal, had journeyed to the Mongols on his own account. He left Palestine early in 1253, crossed the Black Sea, traveled to Mongolia on the "northern route" used also by Plano Carpini. On December 27, 1253, he reached the court of Mongke, where he remained until early July of the following year. On his return he brought with

him the Great Khan's letter addressed to the king of France, a document in which the Mongol claim to world-domination was reiterated.

In his truly remarkable conversations with the friar,<sup>47</sup> Mongke emphasized the importance of Batu and compared their relationship to each other to that of two eyes in one head. Obviously, he fully trusted the man to whom he owed his throne, and was satisfied with the *status quo* in the Golden Horde, as Batu's dominion later - for reasons not quite clear - came to be called.<sup>48</sup> His plans concerned mainly two regions, called technically "in rebellion," where the situation was less favorable for the Mongols. M6ngke concentrated his own efforts on intensifying the war against Sung China, aided in his efforts by his brother Khubilai. His second principal endeavor was directed against Persia and he entrusted his other brother Hulegu with the task of re-asserting Mongol power in a region once conquered by Chinggis but where Mongol hold had since much weakened. The commanders in Transcaucasia, Chormaghan, and later Baiju, were concerned mainly with the Caucasus, Upper Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, where - since the battle of Kose Dagh fought in 1243, the Saljuk sultanate of Anatolia was a vassal of the Mongols. The re-affirmation of Mongol rule in Iran caused no great trouble to Hulegu. Just as that of Hungary had been, the invasion led by Hifegil was a masterpiece of strategic planning and led to the annihilation of the Isma'ilis and, on February 10, 1258, to the capture of Baghdad and the murder of the last Abbasid caliph. Hulegu then established his permanent rule over the Middle East. Though closely linked with his brothers - two successive great khans - he was the first of a series of rulers called the il-khans to rule over Iran (1256-1265). All this is well known but I thought it might be useful to recall here the principal events.

Batu died in 1256. His son Sartak, probably a Nestorian, was in Mongolia when the news of his father's death was received, and he was then and there invested by Mongke with Batu's dominion. However, he died on his way back to the Kipchak steppe, and his son (or brother) Ulagchi followed him to the grave almost at once. Into his place stepped Batu's brother Berke (1257-1267).

For a short while it appeared as if Berke would continue his brother's earlier policies of westward expansion; several small-scale campaigns were led against Volhynia and Galich. More surprising, and of greater import, was Berke's offer of an alliance to Bela IV. In it, the khan of the Golden Horde suggested establishing marital links between their respective children and promised to exempt Hungary from the payment of taxes; but he asked in return that one-fourth of the Hungarian armed forces should join the Mongols in a campaign against the Western nations. They were, in return, to be given one-fifth of the booty obtained. Faced with a terrible dilemma, Bela turned to Pope Alexander III for help which, of course, was

not forthcoming, though peeved advice was freely given. Bela temporized, sending a Cuman-speaking envoy to Berke, whose increasing commitments elsewhere removed this alliance from his list of priorities.

After the death of Batu, within a few years, the political landscape changed considerably. In Batu's lifetime the Mongol empire was practically bicephalous: he had served under - or rather with three great khans, and with the passing years his authority grew rather than weakened. In terms of consanguinity Berke was no further from Mongke or Khubilai, the new great khan (1260-1294), than Batu had been, but we find no trace of the warmth so characteristic of the relationship between Batu on the one hand and Ogedei and Mongke on the other. A further new element was the increased importance gained, in Mongol eyes, by China and Iran. Destiny was to make Khubilai the founder of the Chinese dynasty of the Yuan, Hulegu's descendants were to rule over Iran. The two were brothers, working in harmonious relationship, while Berke was but one of their many cousins in a distant land in which they had no particular interest. Moreover, after the death of Mongke, Berke had supported the contender Ariq-Boke against Khubilai, something the latter was sure to remember. In time, disagreements between Berke and Hulegu became more serious as the il-khan increasingly exerted his influence on areas adjacent to lands of the Golden Horde, for example on Azerbaijan. The various parts of the Mongol empire were slowly drifting apart, their individual rulers paying more attention to the weal of their immediate subjects (or to their own ambitions) than to the general interest of the huge domain.

Religious as well as ethno-linguistic factors led to sharpened antagonism between Berke and Hulegu. Of all the Chinggisid rulers Berke was the first to adopt Islam and he is said to have resented Hulegu's attack on Baghdad and the subsequent murder of the caliph. In fact, in the early years of Berke's rule, some coins minted in Bulghar bear the name of the glorious caliph al-Nasir (1180-1225), widely revered in the lands of Islam.<sup>49</sup> The Mamluks of Egypt principal enemies of Hulegu were of the same Kipchak (Cuman) stock as Berke's Turkic subjects, who constituted the ethnic and linguistic majority of the population making up the Golden Horde. Sultan Baibars of Egypt was the first to realize the potential advantages of an alliance with Berke, whom he contacted in 1261. He had reasons to believe in a community of interests, and must have been encouraged by the passivity shown by Berke in the conflict culminating on September 3, 50 1260, at 'Ain Jalut in Galilee, where Baibars' predecessor Sultan Kutuz had defeated the Mongol force of Hulegu's general Kitbuka, who lost his life in the battle. The Turkic Mamluk forces proved a match for the Turco-Mongol-Iranian armies of the il-khan. The death of Hulegu in 1265 did not put an end to the hostilities between the two Mongol states, namely the Golden Horde and Persia, and only the death of Berke in 1266 prevented the development of a new full-scale conflict between him and Hulegu's successor Abagha (1265-1282).

Kipchak bonds were stronger than Mongol solidarity, and the ties linking the Golden Horde to Mamluk Egypt prompted the il-khans to search for allies in the rear of the Mamluks. The possibility of an alliance between the il-khans and the Franks was explored by both parties. After the fall to the Mongols of Damascus, on February 24, 1260, James Pantaleon, patriarch of Jerusalem (1255-1261), decided to approach Hulegu with a view to ascertaining his intentions concerning a joint action against the Mamluks. When elected pope under the name of Urban IV (1261-1264), he pursued the matter and the dialogue was continued between his successor pope Clement IV (1265-1268) and Abagha. Contacts between the two were quite frequent and aimed at establishing a coordination of eastern and western forces to counterbalance the formidable Mamluk threat. As soon as he disembarked at Acre on May 9, 1271, Edward of England (the future Edward I) sought to obtain Abagha's help. For a number of reasons which it cannot be our task to analyze here, the alliance between the il-khans and the West failed to become operative. Efforts by Berke and his successor Mongke Temur (1267-1280) were certainly instrumental in barring the il-khans from the Mediterranean world until such time as the collapse of Frank implantations in Outremer made any hope of cooperation between them and the il-khans illusory.

Berke's principal preoccupation lay with the south: the il-khans, the Mamluks and, to a lesser degree, Byzantium. The relations of Byzantium with the il-khans were friendly, Abagha was the son-in-law of Michael VIII Palaeologus (1261-1281), whose illegitimate daughter Maria had been betrothed to Hulegu, but after her fiance's death, she had married his son and successor. Yet, playing safe, Michael VIII could or would do nothing to antagonize Berke, with whose lands he shared a long, common border. In fact, Euphrosyne, another of his illegitimate daughters, was married to Nogai, an ambitious and powerful Mongol general, in his actions quite independent of Berke.

Because of its location, Constantinople could not be bypassed by traders or envoys plying between Egypt and the Golden Horde. The relationship between the Golden Horde and Egypt was based on common interest in trade and in foreign policy. Egypt depended on the Golden Horde for the importation of slaves on which Mamluk power rested, and which was, from the Horde's point-of-view very lucrative. The historian al-'Umari praises the physical and mental qualities of the Turks from the Kipchak steppe.<sup>51</sup> In foreign policy an alliance between the Golden Horde and the Mamluks was the best way to keep the il-khans at bay. Trade had to pass through the straits controlled by the Byzantine emperor who could, and on occasion did, retain envoys. One such instance occurred in 1265 when relations between Berke and Michael VIII Palaeologus became strained to the point of open hostility. The probable cause was the detention by the emperor of the Souk sultan 'Izz al-Din Kaykawus II who, out of favor with Hulegu, fled to Constantinople, where he was coolly received by Michael VIII. reluctant to antagonize the il-khan. For reasons we do not

have to examine here `Izz al-Din was even imprisoned until, in the Spring of 1265, he was liberated by a coalition of the troops of Nogai and Constantine Tech, tsar of Bulgaria. The Mongol troops then ravaged much of Thrace and Bulgaria.<sup>52</sup> `Izz al-Din, eventually settled in the Crimea, a territory controlled by the Golden Horde, where he died in 1279. The incident, insignificant in itself, illustrates the delicate situation of Byzantium, set at the crossroads between the two mutually hostile Mongol states.

It will be remembered that after the evacuation of Hungary the withdrawing Mongol armies converged on Bulgaria, then ruled by regents acting on behalf of the child king Koloman I. To avoid an invasion similar to that suffered by Hungary, they decided to recognize Mongol suzerainty. For the following years the sources are mute on Mongolo-Bulgar relations, but a letter of Bela IV to the pope written in 1254 indicates that at that time the Bulgarians were still paying tribute to the Mongols.<sup>53</sup> Apparently the campaign of 1265 was the first occasion when Bulgarian obligations to the Mongols involved military action.

More than political alliances or trade, religion constituted the most important sphere for contacts between the Slavic population of the Golden Horde and Byzantium. The conquest in 1261 of Constantinople by Michael VIII Palaeologus restored there the predominance of the Orthodox Church and the patriarchate to which, since its foundation, the Russian Church was subordinated. The immense authority enjoyed by the Russian metropolitan, the bishops, and the clergy in general, constituted, together with the language, the strongest of bonds holding together a politically fragmented people and linking it, through eastern Christianity, to Byzantium. Though a convert to Islam, on the whole, Berke maintained the great Mongol tradition of religious tolerance, and Mongke Temur, who reverted to the undefined theism of the early Mongol rulers, granted the Church important privileges such as exemption from taxation.

Those who survived the initial massacres connected with a Mongol attack were usually left to their own devices and were allowed to continue in their accustomed mode of life, largely undisturbed by their culturally and physically distant overlords. For the Turkic populations of the steppe region the Mongols were congenial, through intermarriage the conquerors were slowly absorbed, turcized. Further north, in the agricultural lands or in the forested regions, the daily life of the Slavic populations were barely affected by the Mongol control exercised over the Russian princes. These had to present themselves to the khan to obtain confirmation of their right to rule, but the choice of the prince was left to the Russians and the Mongols did not normally interfere in the process. Their principal preoccupation was with the collection of taxes which, at the beginning of their rule, was in the hands of their own officials (the *basqaq*) but, little by little in the 14th century, was entrusted to the Russian administrations. In the early periods of the Mongol

occupation, taxation was rather occasional and had to be paid mainly in kind - men, animals, provisions to feed both of them, furs; but, as time went on, it was reorganized and a distinction was made between sedentary and nomadic populations. The former paid the *qalan* (Russian *poslina*), the latter the *qubcur*, which remained an occasional levy.<sup>54</sup>

The Mongol occupation, whatever its long range effects, did little to alter the political infrastructure of the Russian principalities and, as already mentioned, increased the cohesive force represented by the Church. Generally speaking, the Russian princes, engaged in a permanent, often armed, struggle with one another, took care not to offend the khan, whose retaliatory powers they feared, and whose help could decide the outcome of their internal conflicts. It was almost as if the histories of Russia and the Golden Horde were running parallel, as if they were neighboring states, sometimes friendly, at other times hostile, when the intervention by the rulers of the Golden Horde was virtually that of a foreign power. The effectiveness of Mongol rule was greatly diminished during what can barely be called the reigns of the two insignificant successors of Mongke Temur, who died in 1280. The first of these, Tode Mongke, more interested in Islam than in the affairs of state, abdicated in 1287, and his nephew and successor Tolebuka (1287-1291) did little except lead two unsuccessful campaigns against Arghun. At Nogai's instigation he was murdered by Toktai (Toqtogha), a son of Mongke Temur.

Since the end of the 1260's Nogai represented the most dynamic force within the Golden Horde and was often viewed by outsiders as its ruler, the "tsar", a title he never claimed. Nogai's life was spent in incessant wars. He intervened repeatedly in the internecine conflicts of the Russian principalities, invaded Transylvania (1285), and in the following year compelled the Serbian king Stephen Uros II Milutin to recognize his suzerainty. He also reasserted Mongol claims on Bulgaria, had the swineherd Ivajlo, leader of a mystical popular movement, murdered, made George Terter (1280-1302) his vassal and, after George's flight to Byzantium, set his own creature Smilec on the throne.

When he helped the young Toktai to assume power, Nogai no doubt hoped to find in him a puppet to be manipulated or ignored as the case might be. Things turned out differently, for Toktai (1291-1312),<sup>55</sup> a man of exceptional ability, took in hands the reins of government with a marked will to rule. Clash between him and his old mentor became inevitable, and at the first trial of armed strength Toktai was defeated. About a year later, probably towards the end of 1299, Nogai, feigning illness - a usual ruse of his - and referring to himself as a feeble old man, tried to mount an unexpected attack on Toktai who, informed of the true state of affairs, prepared for the battle in which Nogai's forces were defeated and the fleeing Nogai slain. Many of Nogai's undertakings, particularly those in the Balkans, were futile, yet he certainly had a vision of Mongol

grandeur which he endeavored to serve with uncommon talent. His wisest move was towards the il-khans of Persia, with whom he maintained friendly relations. With some ups and downs in the level of cordiality, peace with the il-khans was maintained also by Toktai.

In Iran, after Abagha's death, the short rule of Neguder - who converted to Islam and took the name of Ahmad (1282-1284) was a stormy interlude leading to the enthronement of the Buddhist Arghun (1284-1291), whose reign was marked by grievous financial troubles. The country's general situation deteriorated further under his brother Gaikhatu (1291-1295), deposed by a revolution which brought to the throne his nephew, son of Arghun, Ghazan (1295-1304). Under his rule the perennial problem, to whose domain Caucasia belongs, emerged once again. In 1301, after a half-hearted attempt to annex the territory in dispute, Toktai, to no avail, tried to obtain the same result by diplomatic means. Ghazan died at the early age of thirty-one and Toktai - face-to-face with the third il-khan doggedly stuck to his territorial claims, now to be pressed upon the new il-khan Oljeitu (1304-1316). The lukewarm reception by the Mamluk sultan Al-Malik an-Nasir of a suggestion for joint action against the il-khan made Toktai change his mind. A covenant of peace entered upon by him and Oljeitu put an end to the long, fratricidal strife. In a letter written in Mongolian and addressed to Philip the Fair in the summer of 1305, Oljeitu informed the king of France of the happy event: 56

... (we) the descendants of Chinggis kaghan who through forty and five years, up to the present, have indulged in mutual recrimination now, protected by Heaven, all of us, elder and younger brothers, have reached a mutual agreement and from the country of the Chinese where the sun rises to the limits of the world we have joined our countries and have linked the postal stations.

Oljeitu's desire for peace with the Golden Horde and for alliance with the Franks was genuine, motivated though it was by his wish to strengthen his position vis-a-vis the Mamluks. In his correspondence with Pope Clement V he offered to put 200,000 horses and as many loads of corn at the disposal of the Christian armies were these to disembark in Cilician Armenia, where they would be joined by 100,000 horsemen to be led by the il-khan in an attack against the Mamluks. The Armenian prince Hetoum, known as the historian Hayton, had an accurate picture of the situation: 57

As for me, who know quite well the Tartars' intentions, I firmly believe that they would willingly ... hand over all the cities and the land conquered to the Christians, since because of the great heat obtaining there during the summer, the Tartars would not stay in those regions, and would readily agree that the Christians should receive and hold them. For the Tartars do not wage war against the sultan of Egypt for territorial



gains - since the whole of Asia is already subject to them - but because the sultan is their principal enemy, who has done them more wrong than anyone else.

We have here another example of Mongol vindictiveness and the relentless pursuit of their enemies. Oljeitu's correspondence with the kings of France, of England, of Aragon, and with the pope, shows his lively interest in strengthening his ties with the West.<sup>58</sup> To this end, as a gesture of goodwill, he was ready to make concessions in the religious field. Although he had switched his allegiance to the Shi'ah and had initiated a persecution of the Buddhists, he allowed Christian proselytism among his subjects. Franciscan and Dominican missionaries were unhampered in their work in il-khanid territories.

The peace between the rulers of the Golden Horde and the Il-khans was of short duration. Under Abu Said (1316-1335), the last effective il-khan, a reversal of alliances took place through a peace agreement (1323) which put an end to the long-lasting feud between il-khans and the Mamluks and, unavoidably brought about a renewal of the conflict between the two Mongol sister-states. The chaotic conditions into which Persia sank after the death of Abu Said need not detain us here; not surprisingly, conflict with the Golden Horde played its part yet again in the tangled story. In 1335 Toktai's successor Ozbeg launched an attack against Azerbaijan, and in 1357 his son and successor Jarubeg (1342-1357) even entered Tabriz; the disintegrating il-khanid state could not offer organized resistance against the invading forces of the Golden Horde.

Mongol dominion in Russian lands proved to be more abiding than that of the il-khans in Persia, as already indicated, partly because of cooperation with Russian princes. Mongol policies were not immutable, and, particularly during the long rule of Ozbeg (1313-1341) important changes came about in the Horde's relationship with Moscow. The favor Ozbeg showed the Muscovite prince Ivan I Kalita was in acknowledgment of not only his services as an efficient tax collector but also as a trusted ally. Thus, for instance in 1328, in cooperation with Mongol forces, Ivan occupied Tver, where a year earlier, an envoy of the khan had been killed in a local revolt. In 1331 Ozbeg granted Ivan the "grand principality over all the land of Rus" and for the remainder of his life - he died in 1340 - relations between him and the khan remained harmonious. It has been argued that Ivan was but a willing tool in the hands of Ozbeg, a mere executor of his policies, which were formulated without regard to Russian interests. Yet, although Ozbeg's dominance cannot be denied, the collaboration in fact profited both. Ivan's pro-Tatar stance did not hamper him in dealing with internal affairs, while in matters of foreign policy the alliance was an effective bulwark against Lithuanian expansion, as unwelcome to the Russians as to the Tatars. The same policy served well also their respective successors, namely Janibeg and Simeon (1340-1353). Although during all this period no

major decision - whether about war or peace, alliance or succession could be made without the consent of the Horde, through this very involvement in the internecine squabbles of the Russian principalities the Mongols descended, as it were, to the level of their subjects. Their power was neither all-pervasive nor absolute in the north-eastern parts of Russia, where, most of the time, it operated through the intermediary of Russian clients. The fact is that in those regions, so distant from the steppe, the balance of military forces no longer tilted in favor of the former conquerors. A coalition of the princes could have ended Mongol domination; that this did not come about shows that the "Tatar yoke" did not weigh too heavily on their shoulders. Early in his reign Ivan II (1353-1359) trod a path leading away from the overlordship of the Golden Horde; but, partly under pressure from his own boyars, he had to mend his ways, and at the death of Jarubeg he set off to Sarai to ask the new khan Berdi Beg (1357-1359) for the edict (yarlzq) confirming this position.

The assassination of Berdi Beg heralded a protracted period of internal strife resulting in the loss of the Golden Horde's dominant position in Eastern Europe. Though it was not the first occasion on which the Mongols were worsted in combat, yet the Battle of Kulikovo, fought on December 8, 1380, in which the Tatar forces of general Mamai suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Dmitry Ivanovich Donskoy, grand prince of Moscow and Vladimir, has always been considered a turning point in Russo-Tatar relations: it finally shattered belief in Tatar invincibility. Though in 1382 a campaign led by Toktamish, de facto ruler of the Golden Horde (1380-1395), resulted in the occupation of Moscow and the reassertion of the Horde's supremacy, the stigma of Kulikovo could not be erased.

Toktamish was the last major figure in the history of the Golden Horde, a man of considerable political vision who, however, made the fatal mistake of antagonizing his former protector and mentor Tamerlane (Timur). It was with the help of Timur that in 1377 Toktamish, himself of uncertain origin, became head of the White (sometimes called Blue) Horde,<sup>59</sup> formerly the apauage of Batu's older brother Orda, which occupied the steppes east of the Ural, now part of Kazakhstan. Taking advantage of the situation created at Kulikovo, Toktamish united the forces of the White and Golden Hordes. Intoxicated by these successes, he felt ready to take on Timur himself, and in 1387, and again in 1388, he invaded territories over which Timur claimed sovereignty. A long campaign led by Timur <sup>60</sup> brought him victory in June 1391, but did not put an end to Toktamish' restless aggressiveness. In 1394 he made a renewed attempt to penetrate south of the Caucasus, provoking thereby a retaliatory campaign by Timur which led to the destruction first of the prosperous Genoese trade settlements of the Crimea, then, at the end of 1395, of Sarai. Here, as in the case of Kiev, the horror of the massacre and devastation has been brought to life by excavation of the remains of that once flourishing city. Mutilated skeletons testify to the desperate and vain

attempts of the inhabitants, men, women, and children, to escape a fate willed by Timur, the annihilation of the city and all its inhabitants. No one was left to bury the dead.<sup>61</sup>

Even the hardened, by no means squeamish historian must pause here to ponder over the motives of Timur's expeditions to the north, which defy conventional explanation. What were they expected to achieve? According to the Arab historian al-'Umari, a contemporary of Ozbeg, the huge land of the Golden Horde was rich in steppes and poor in cities. Compared with that of the il-khans, so reports al-'Umari, the income of the khans of the Golden Horde was modest. Because of the lack of armaments and the poor quality of horses unsuitable for use on a mountainous terrain, the country was ill prepared for war." The campaigns against Toktamish involved strategic and logistic planning on a grand scale and months-long painful crossing of deserts and marshes which tested to their utmost even his hardened troops. What were the bonds of solidarity holding these men together? The sheer joy in fighting - so difficult to imagine by members of a society such as that of the U.S.A. where "counseling" is needed to those who witnessed an armed bank-robbery - cannot be experienced in the painful march towards a distant goal that promises no booty other than herds of poor quality that die for lack of adequate pasture or, at best, some gold or silver objects, difficult to distribute among the mass of warriors. But Sarai 63 was no Baghdad or Delhi with their accumulated treasures, and Timur's army could have found lands with booty more rewarding than that offered by the Kipchak steppe. There remained the women to be had but what they could offer was not particular to the place and could have been found at locations less distant.

Thus, once again the historian is faced with the recurrent phenomenon of conquest for conquest's sake and must take cognizance of the impalpable but pervasive power of a charismatic leader to rally his men towards a march into never-never land. Of all the military undertakings of the so-called Mongol era none seems to be as pointless as Timur's campaigns against Toktamish who himself escaped from Timur's grasp to lose his life in Siberia in 1406.

In objective terms the destruction of its capital was not a fatal blow to the Golden Horde, for Sarai had never played a role as important as had Baghdad or Delhi. Nevertheless, the event is an important station in the gradual weakening of the Golden Horde, bereft of the cohesive forces which, for a century and a half, had held together its motley population. The insignificant khans who followed on Toktamish - we barely know their names - could not establish a central authority strong enough either to set a course of policy or to command an army capable of its execution. Until his death in 1419, only Edigu represented a force to be reckoned with by the Russians, Lithuanians, or Poles; and his actions were mostly in response to events and reveal no central concept. By that time Tatar units were quite often mere mercenary forces in the

service of alien rulers who knew, or pretended to know, the aims they were pursuing. The Golden Horde then disintegrated because it no longer had a *raison d'etre*, because it could no longer be cogently argued that it was in the best interest of the population to live in one state. The successor khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan and the Crimea seemed to respond better to local interests, or, at least, it was hoped that they would do so. Though they may have continued to exact tribute from the Russian principalities,<sup>64</sup> in practical terms the khans no longer viewed them as parts of their own polities. Whatever their internal dissensions may have been, language and religion were powerful bonds between the Russian princes and set them, as well as their Slavic subjects, apart from their Tatar overlords whose power-base, in language as well as in religion, was more divided. Let us, briefly, examine these two factors.

While there can be no doubt that in the mid-13th century at the court of Batu the Mongol language was in general use, perhaps because of the prevalent general illiteracy, almost no Mongol texts written on the territory of the Golden Horde have survived.<sup>65</sup> Most of the edicts issued by the Golden Horde are extant only in a Russian translation. According to Grigor'ev, their originals were written in Mongol, then translated into Cuman. The final Russian version is but a rough translation made of the Turkic text.<sup>66</sup> Clearly, depending not only on the period but also on the occasion, the Horde's chancellery used either Turkic or Mongol.<sup>67</sup> The original of a decree issued on March 20, 1314 by Ozbeg, known only through a contemporary Latin translation was certainly written in Mongol.<sup>68</sup> The existence of Arabic-Mongol and Persian-Mongol dictionaries dating from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and prepared for the use of the Mamluks in Egypt suggests that there was a practical need for such works in the chancelleries handling correspondence with the Golden Horde. It is thus reasonable to conclude that letters received by the Mamluks - if not also written by them - must have been in Mongol. There are no data available to show when the use of the Kipchak Turkic language, Cuman, came to be general in the administration. In 1393 Toktamish used Turkic to write to Ladislas II king of Poland. The language called "Persian" in the Venetian registers may have been Turkic as in the case of a treaty, now lost, concluded in 1333 between the Golden Horde and Venice.<sup>69</sup>

It is certain that Cuman was the vernacular most used; its ubiquity is vouchsafed by many travelers, and the Italian trader Pegolotti in his commercial handbook, usually referred to as *La pratica della mercatura*, written in the middle of the 14th century, urged his fellow merchants to engage servants who knew the Cuman language well.<sup>70</sup>

The major document of the Cuman language as used on the territory of the Golden Horde is the so-called *Codex Cumanicus* <sup>71</sup> a compilation of various texts originally written in the first decade of the 14th

century by Italians and Germans. Its texts, comprising a Latin-Persian-Cuman and a Cuman-German dictionary, translations into Cuman of Latin hymns and passages of the Bible, short sermons, and riddles, were compiled in one of the Italian colonies on the northern shores of the Black Sea for essentially practical aims. And this is the crucial point that needs to be made here for our present purpose: while the Cuman language as reflected by the texts contains a number of Mongol loan words, the compilers thought that in the given circumstances. Cuman and even Persian were more useful to the users of the work than would have been Mongol. Though under Mongol suzerainty, the language of the rulers held no dominion in the Crimea. Thus, in fact, in the immense territory of the Golden Horde, three languages vied for primacy: Mongol, Russian, and Turkic Cuman, each of with its own script. But the battle among them was fought with unequal means. The Slavic Russian and Turkic Cuman had the backing of an important literary corpus put down in the Cyrillic or Arabic scripts respectively. These, in their turn, constituted a link with one of the two great contending civilizations of Western Eurasia, namely the worlds of Christianity and Islam, both literate. The Mongol script, recently borrowed from the Turkic Uighurs, had no hinterland to sustain it. The thin Mongol stratum had no literary and, hence, historico-political tradition on which to rely.

The divide between the growing number of Turkic-speaking Mongols, whom for the sake of distinction we may call Tatars, and Slavs ran not only along a linguistic line; difference in religion was an equally potent factor of division. Here again there was a three-way, perhaps even four-way conflict. With the passing of time, Mongol religious beliefs which in the mid-13th century were certainly shared by the leading stratum, received no sustenance from an organized clergy and had no sacred books to which they could turn for guidance. There was no Mongol counterpart to the Bible or the Koran.

Under Ozbeg and Janibeg (1342-1357), Islam, which among the 'Irks had deep roots going back into pre-Mongol times, gained general acceptance, though its adherents remained tolerant of other beliefs. No one has summed up better their attitude than Fr. Iohanca according to whom the Tatars could not care less to what religion someone belongs as long as he performs the required services, pays tributes and taxes and satisfies his military obligations according to their laws.<sup>72</sup>

The Russian Orthodox church had a twofold advantage over the Roman Catholics. Generally speaking, she was more accommodating towards the secular powers than was Rome, but, more importantly, she was already securely implanted in a large part of the territories which came under Mongol rule. An Orthodox bishopric was established in Sarai as early as 1261. On the other hand Rome had to send "missions" into these distant lands. A decree, issued probably by Mongke Temur, allowing the Franciscans to proselytize, was renewed in 1314 by Ozbeg, a convert to Islam.<sup>73</sup> Under him, as under his predecessors,

Catholic missionaries could work, with some ups and downs, unhampered.<sup>74</sup> Some of them, such as the aforementioned Hungarian friar Johanca, "following the camps of the Mongols,"<sup>75</sup> preached the Gospel to the far-away Bashkirs. This western presence further north in the forest zone - *in partes infidelium aquilonares* as the Franciscans called it - is worth noting because it seems to have disappeared without a trace.<sup>76</sup> Yet we know that a certain Estokis, ruler of Bashkiria, together with his whole family, was baptized by a German Franciscan called Henry.<sup>77</sup> In 1320 Johanca asked his superiors to send there other missionaries, preferably Englishmen, Germans or Hungarians, who were more gifted than the French or the Italians seemed to be in learning foreign languages. Religious clashes did occur, mostly caused by Christian provocation, as was the case in 1334 with the Hungarian Franciscan Stephen, who had apostatized to Islam but changed his mind, and in the mosque of Sarai solemnly professed his Christian faith and, for it, suffered martyrdom. Yet Christianity, in whatever form, could not resist the advance of Islam, a process of immense historical consequences. In Berthold Spuler's perceptive judgment: "The triumph of Islam among the Kipchak Mongols had effects which were the reverse of those brought about by its triumph among the Mongols of Persia; for whereas the latter identified themselves religiously with their subjects, the former set up between their [Slavic] subjects and themselves a definite religious barrier . . . By choosing . . . to guide their own nation to Islam, they precluded any possibility of its russification."<sup>78</sup>

The Mongols were the last Inner Asian people to deposit a new population layer on the fringes of Europe. Though they brought no lasting contribution to Western civilization, their historical role was considerable. History shows that the peoples of Central Eurasia were attracted by what they conceived to be the focus of whatever sedentary civilization lay within the purview of their interest. Hsi-ung-nu, Juan-juan and Turks thus looked towards China, Huns and Avars towards Byzantium. For the Mongols in the west, the Promised Land seems to have been Iran. To be sure, they campaigned in Poland or Hungary and sent haughty messages to the pope and to other western potentates; but their effort was directed, again and again, to reaching out south through the Caucasus into Anatolia and Iran. From Berke to Toktamish the rulers of the Golden Horde doggedly and vainly pursued the dream of bringing these southern lands under their domain. Their links with Mongolia, their own distant homeland, made them aware of the immensity of the territory which could be centrally controlled. The riches of Iran, Iraq, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor were more immediate and more tempting than those of little-known, fragmented Europe. Their eyes were turned towards the world of Islam which they joined at a time when it had entered a period of stagnation. They left their vision as a legacy to the rulers of Russia, who became more intent on expansion to the south and to the east than to the west. We cannot enter here into the ongoing debate about which, if any, contributions the Mongols made to later Russian civilization. Yet I venture to suggest that a balanced assessment of the

relative importance of Europe and Asia, and, in conjunction with it, a racial tolerance greater than that of the Europeans, may qualify as traces of a Mongol world-view. To allow some raised eyebrows to be lowered to relax on reading this statement, let me cite a view expressed more than a century ago by George N. (later Lord) Curzon, the great antagonist of Russian imperialism in Central Asia, in a book dedicated "To the great army of Russophobes who mislead others, and Russophiles whom others mislead." It reads as follows:<sup>79</sup>

The Russian fraternizes in the true sense of the word. He is guiltless of that air of conscious superiority and gloomy hauteur which does more to inflame animosity than cruelty may have done to kindle it ... His own unconquerable carelessness renders it easy for him to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude towards others, and the tolerance with which he has treated the religious practices, the social customs, and the local prejudices of his Asiatic fellow-subjects is less the outcome of diplomatic calculation than it is of ingrained *nonchalance*.

Although language and religion were important for defining and maintaining a national identity, as is so often the case, it was the fertility rate which decided the outcome of the struggle for national survival. Within a few generations the conquering Mongols were absorbed by the conquered Turkic populations. The process of assimilation was so fast that Al-'Umari <sup>80</sup> could already state in his time that Mongols and Kipchaks seemed to belong to the same race. He thus echoed the view ascribed to the Mongols themselves by Ibn al-Athir a century earlier.<sup>81</sup> The Mongols eliminated through natural process, there remained but two contenders, Slavs and Turks, for the heritage of the Golden Horde. The contest continues.

## References

## Abbreviations

*AEMAE. Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*

*AOH. Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*

*BSOAS. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

*CAJ. Central Asiatic Journal*

*HJAS. Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*

*JRAS. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

*MGH. SS. Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum*

*Albericus Trzsum Fontium, Chronica. MGH. SS. xxiii, pp. 631-950.*

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End Notes

1 On a new interpretation of the end of the Karakitay state see Sinor 1995, p. 263.

2 For further information see Allsen 1991.

3 Blake-Frye 1949.

4 For further information on the Kipchaks or Cumans see Golden 1997.

5 See Marquart 1914, p. 142.

6 As cited by Marquart 1914, p. 148.

7 As cited by Marquart 1914, p. 150.

8 This is the Bulghar kingdom located near the Volga. I am using the spelling with *gh* for easy distinction from the Bulgars of the Balkans.

9 On the coordination of Mongol military movements see Sinor 1975 a.

10 A good, though selective, bibliography on the Prester John question would need several pages. Klopprogge 1993, pp. 105-152 gives an excellent analysis of the question. The essential point which cannot be overemphasized is that the legend of Prester John is just that, a piece of fiction with no connection to reality.

11 The Latin text is given on p. 9 of Zarncke 1876.

12 *Rerum Itaticarum Scrip tores* 7/2, pp. 110-111.

13 Albericus Trium Fontium, ed. Pertz, p. 912.

14 An excellent, succinct essay on this first Mongol campaign against Europe is given in Pashuto 1970.

15 Boyle 1958, p. 269.

16 See Pelliot-Hambis 1951, p. 97.

17 Boyle 1971, p. 60.

18 Now translated into German by Gockenjan 1985, pp. 67-91.

19 Latin text in Dorrie 1956, p. 158.

20 §275, ed. Ligeti 1971, p. 130. The translations are my own.

21 *Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series, vol. VI (1882), p. 76.

22 Edition by Dorrie 1956, pp. 177-178. I do not accept the dates given by Dorrie. Cf. Sinor 1952. German translation in Gockenjan 1985, pp. 93-125.

23 *Chayn* must be a distortion of the title *qan* in Latin texts often spelt *cam*. Sinor 1952, pp. 594-595. I suggested that the author of the ultimatum was Batu. I think that this is the most likely hypothesis and it was followed by Dorrie. The general tenor of the text leaves no doubt as to its genuineness.

24 The figure seems to be exaggerated; it could be a scribal error.

25 Cf. Karger 1958, pp. 496-508.

26 "*regnum Hungariae quod 350 annos duravit a Tataris destruitur*", cited in Strakosch-Grassman 1893, p. 159.

27 Carpini III,14: *Aliud est in quo sepulti sent illi qui in Hungaria interfecti fuerunt; enim ibidem fuerunt occisi*. This is a most astonishing statement, usually eschewed by commentators of the text. Carpini locates these cemeteries in far-away Mongolia! Yet the fact is that according to the usually reliable Hei-Ta shih-lueh the Mongols of the period made serious efforts to take home the bodies of their fallen comrades. Cf. Olbricht-Pinks p. 223.

28 *rex deses et nimis securus*, in a letter addressed to King Henry III of England, dated July 3, 1241. Cf. Matthew Paris, ed. Luard, vol. VI, p. 113.

29 "A pitiful tale on the destruction of the Hungarian Kingdom by the Tatars." For a German translation of the Carmen accompanied by copious commentaries see Gockercan pp. 127-223.

30 Text in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum* II, p. 575.

31 See Sinor 1941-1942. As I have discovered since, the drowning of Batu is mentioned also by Hayton, p. 162. For a thorough study of other imaginary versions concerning Batu's death, see Halperin 1983.

32 Huillard-Breholles VI, 2, pp. 903-904.

33 According to Thomas of Spalato. According to the *Carmen miserabile* this happened on Christmas Day 1241. I opt for Thomas' date because, as we have seen, on February 12 Bela was still unaware of the Mongol move. Had it happened at the previous Christmas, the king would have known it.

34 Text in *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum* II, pp. 583-584.

35 Ed. Richard, p. 93.

36 Dawson, p. 8.

37 On all this see Sinor 1972, particularly pp. 181-182. Here I have taken into account some of the remarks made by Lindner 1981. A very thorough overview of various scholarly approaches concerning the Mongols' withdrawal is given by Rogers 1996.

38 Boyle 1971, p. 176.

39 An English translation of these letters is given in Dawson, pp. 73-76. These events have been studied extensively. Though, to complete the picture, I have to mention them, there seems to be no need for bibliographical references.

40 The edition of Wyngaert 1929 has now been superseded by a splendid Italian edition, complete with translation and commentaries prepared by a group of Italian scholars. See Pian di Carpini in the bibliography. Mention should also be made of a new English translation (Hildinger 1996) and two new German translations (Giefsauf 1995, Schmieder 1997).

41 See Sinor 1957.

42 Dawson, p. 57.

43 Dawson, p. 68.

44 The text is given by Matthew Paris, ed. Luard, vol. VI, p. 115.

45 Boyle 1971, p. 199.

46 Dawson, p. 203.

47 See Jackson, pp. 236-239.

48 On the origin of this term see Egorov 1985, p. 154.

49 Cf. Fedorov-Davydov 1968, p. 95.

50 On a recent assessment of this battle see Amitai-Preiss 1992 with ample reference to previous studies, to be completed by Schutz 1991, an article which Amitai-Preiss could not have known.

51 Lech, p. 138.

52 See Zlatarski, pp. 514-516.

53 Fejer 1829, v. 2 p. 219.

54 Cf. Smith 1970.

55 Toktai might have been a Christian. On this question see Sinor 1993, p. 112 and the references there given.

56 Text in Mostaert-Cleaves 1962, p. 55.

57 Hayton, pp. 245 and 357. A complete English translation by Emmanuel J. Mickel with commentaries by Edmond Schutz and Denis Sinor is now under preparation.

58 Much has been written on this subject. For an overview, see Sinor 1975 b. Lupprian 1981 contains a splendid collection of relevant documents.

59 See Fedorov-Davydov 1973, pp. 118-122, with some remarks on the administrative term "Horde".

60 Described in Nagel 1993, pp. 193-201.

61 See Fedorov-Davydov 1968, pp. 145-148.

62 Lech, p. 136.



63 The city in question, located at the present site of Carev is usually referred to as New Sarai, probably founded by Berke. Old Sarai, located in the region of Astrakhan, probably owed its existence to Batu. On the two Sarai cities see Egorov 1985, pp. 112-117.

64 It should be recalled that it was only in 1700 that the Russians ceased the payment of tribute to the khans of Crimea.

65 Notable examples are the Mongol songs written on birch-bark, and dating from the 14th century. See Poppe 1941.

66 Grigor'ev 1987, p. 85.

67 On the question of the official language used in the Golden Horde, see Grigor'ev 1981. For a general overview of the language situation within the Golden Horde, see Spuler 1965, pp. 285-293, somewhat out-of-date now but still useful.

68 Sinor 1993, pp. 111-112.

69 See Spuler 1965, p. 291.

70 Evans, p. 22.

71 Even an abbreviated bibliography of works dealing with the Codex would transcend the scope of this article. Luckily we have now the magisterial study of Ligeti 1981 which must serve as the basis of all further study of the Codex.

72 *Nam diuersas nationes sibi potencia prelii de populis xristianis Tartari subiecerunt, quos permanere sinunt in sue legis & fidei obseruanciis, non curantes vel modicum quisquam sectam tenuerit: sic ut in temporalibus seruiciis, tributis & vectigalibus ac sequelis bellicis suis faciant dominis, ad que obligantur secundum edictam legis.* Bihl-Moule 1924, p. 66.

73 On the conversion to Islam of Ozbeg see DeWeese 1994, pp. 93-158. See also Sinor 1993, pp. 111-112.

74 For a general overview of Catholic missionary activities in the territories of the Golden Horde see Richard 1977, pp. 87-98.

75 Bihl-Moule 1924, p. 66: *castra Tartarorum sequendo.*

76 A rather cursory search through the Russian works dealing with the Bashkirs left me with the impression that these Latin data are unknown by specialists of early Bashkir history.

77 *Estokis dominos totius Baschardiae cum uxore et filiis et families multa [baptizatus est]*. Golubovich II, p. 73.

78 Spuler 1960, p. 52.

79 Curzon, p. 399.

80 Lech, p. 141.

81 See above p. 2.

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