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THE IL-KHANS OF PERSIA AND THE PRINCES OF EUROPE*

by
JOHN ANDREW BOYLE

The Muslim historians of the Il-Khans supply disappointingly little information about their rulers' contacts with the Christian West. In the section of his encyclopaedic work, the *Jāmiᶜ al-Tawārīkh*, which deals specifically with the Il-Khans, Rashīd al-Dīn refers only twice to their relations with the Palaeologi. Amongst the wives of the Il-Khan Abaqa (1265–1281) he lists one Tespina Khatun, who is described in the printed text and in all the MSS. save one as "the daughter of the ruler *(malik)* of Trebizond".[1] In a manuscript dated 1317, i.e. only one year before the author's death, she is referred to correctly as "the daughter of the ruler of Istanbul, whom they call Fāsiliyūs".[2] Tespina is of course the lady's title, Despoina, by which she was known to the Mongols: this was Maria, the natural daughter of Michael Palaeologus, originally destined to be the bride of Abaqa's father Hülegü, the founder of the dynasty. Of the embassy to Hülegü in 1261, in which the question of a marriage alliance was first broached, of the second embassy in 1265, when the young lady was brought to Tabriz, and of the dispatch of an embassy to Constantinople by Abaqa in 1267–8,[3] the Persian historian says not a word. He does, however, mention another such approach made by Michael's son Andronicus II to Abaqa's grandson Ghazan. *En route* for Mesopotamia to launch his last campaign against the Mamelukes Ghazan was somewhere in the mountains of Luristan between Kermanshah and Mandali in the late autumn of 1302, when, in the

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[1] *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, Vol. III, ed. A. A. Alizade (Baku, 1957), p. 97.

[2] *Ibid.* note 27.

[3] See B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1955), pp. 65–66 and 67–68.

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words of Rashīd al-Dīn, "the ambassadors of Fāsiliyūs, the king *(pādshāh)* of Istanbul, arrived with gifts and presents and delivered the message that Fāsiliyūs wished to be under the protection of the Lord of Islam [i.e. Ghazan] and to send his daughter to him as a concubine".[4] The language is perhaps deliberately contemptuous. According to Pachymeres, who records the embassy *sub anno* 1304, the year of Ghazan's death, the young woman was reputed to be Andronicus's natural daughter; he makes it clear, however, that the proposal was for an alliance by marriage.[5] Ghazan seems to have agreed to such a union, but he died before it could have been concluded. His brother and successor Öljeitü did marry a Byzantine princess, Andronicus's sister, who, like the wife of Abaqa, bore the name of Maria and was called Despoina by the Mongols. In the *History of Öljeitü* by Kāshānī, one of Rashiḍ al-Dīn's collaborators, she appears simply as the twelfth of the Il-Khan's wives[6]: there is no mention of her attempt to frighten the founder of the Ottoman Empire away from Nicaea by threatening him with the approach of her affianced husband's troops.[7]

But if Rashīd refers only twice to his masters' relations with the Byzantines, he makes no mention whatsoever of their various missions to the princes of Western Europe, missions which continued throughout almost the whole of the Il-Khanid period. This is the more surprising because the second part of his work, devoted to the history of the various Eurasian peoples with whom the Mongols had come into contact, includes an account of the nations of Europe. This section of his work, the *History of the Franks*, contains a chapter on the "confines of the empire of Armenia, its towns and places",[8] and one would have expected a similar chapter on the contemporary Byzantine state. It does enumerate the Eastern Emperors down to Constantine VI, i.e. down to the restoration of the Western Empire by Charlemagne, but this is because Rashīd al-Dīn is simply reproducing his main source, the *Chronicon* of Martin

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[4] *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, p. 352. See also the *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. III, ed. J. A. Boyle (Cambridge, 1968), p. 392.

[5] Pachymeres, v. 16.

[6] *The History of Uljaytu*, ed. Mahin Hambly (Tehran, 1969), p. 8.

[7] Pachymeres, vii. 33. See also Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, III, 579, where, by a curious miprint, Nicea appears as Mecca!

[8] See *Histoire des Francs*, ed. and transl. K. Jahn (Leiden, 1951), p. 4. The chapter is omitted from Jahn's edition and translation but will be included in a new edition to be published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

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of Troppau.[9] The *History of the Franks* was in fact written at the express orders of his master, the Il-Khan Öljeitü, and in no way reflects the historian's own interests. His total silence with respect to the Il-Khans' contacts with Western Europe is to be ascribed in part to discretion and in part to those feelings of "indifference, caused by a sense of superiority and contempt, which the Muslims always showed, except for a few occasions, for the western world",[10] feelings which, it need hardly be added, the western world, for the most part, heartily reciprocated.

But though the approaches of the Il-Khans to the Christian West are entirely ignored by their Muslim historians, the detailed account which these authorities (especially Rashīd al-Dīn) give of their rulers' movements and activities enables us better to understand the background to their diplomatic missions. Fresh light has also been thrown on these relations by the study of the Il-Khans' letters to the princes of Europe. Some of these have been discovered and interpreted in comparatively recent times; others, first published more than a century ago, are now available in new translations based on a better knowledge of the language. With this fresh information at our disposal we may profitably re-examine a correspondence which was instituted by the founder of the dynasty, the Il-Khan Hülegü, and which continued down to the reign of his great grandson Öljeitü.

We are told by Rashīd al-Dīn how in the spring of 1257 Hülegü, preparing for his attack on Baghdad, summoned to his camp at Hamadan the Mongol commander in Western Asia, Baiju, famous for his victories over the Seljuks at Köse-Dagh (1243) and Aksaray (1256). After reprimanding him for his dilatoriness in engaging the Caliph's forces Hülegü dismisses him with the charge: "Thou must go and free those countries down to the Mediterranean from the hands of the children of France and England".[11] This must be a reference – the only one in the whole of the section on the Il-Khans – to the Crusaders, but it is difficult to see what quarrel Hülegü could have had with the Franks in 1257, when his armies had not been in con-

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[9] See *Histoire des Francs*, pp. 8–9.

[10] Francesco Gabrieli, "The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades" in *Historians of the Middle East* ed. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (London, 1962), pp. 98–107 (p. 98).

[11] *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, p. 238; J. A. Boyle, "Rashīd al-Dīn and the Franks" in *Rashīd al-Dīn Commemoration Volume (1318–1968)* ed. J. A. Boyle and K. Jahn (Wiesbaden, 1970), pp. 62–67 (63–64).

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tact with them. Perhaps his words, if authentic, were in response to a complaint by Baiju, or perhaps they are an anachronistic reflection of the displeasure felt at the attitude of the Franks of Acre in 1260, when their benevolent neutrality contributed to the Mameluke victory at ᶜAin Jālūt.[12] Such displeasure must have been quickly dispelled, for it is at this very time that relations with the West were first established. The history of those relations is recorded in a document discovered some fifty years ago by the Abbé Borghezio: a report, drawn up in Latin, which was laid by the envoys of Hülegü's son Abaqa before the Council of Lyons in 1274.[13] From it we learn that when in 1260 the Mongols, fresh from their victories over the Muslim kingdom of Aleppo and Damascus, had entered Transjordan, the apostolic legate and the regent of the kingdom of Jerusalem decided to send an embassy to the invaders to ascertain their intentions. At the head of this embassy was a Dominican friar, one David of Ashby, an Englishman, who was afterwards to spend more than ten years at the Mongol court, to return to Europe in 1274 as one of Abaqa's envoys to the Council of Lyons and to write in French an account of the Mongols now, except for a few fragments, unfortunately lost.[14] The ambassadors were favourably received by Hülegü, who had apparently by this time returned to Persia, and he decided, as a result of this encounter, to send his own ambassadors to the Pope and the kings and princes of Europe "pro perpetua confederatione procurata". When the ambassadors reached Sicily, Manfred, then at the height of his quarrel with the Pope, forced them to re-embark and turn back. However, although this is not stated in the Mongol report, one of their number, a Hungarian clerk called John, succeeded in eluding the surveillance of the Sicilians and making his way to Rome, where he communicated to the Pope (Urban IV) the little that he knew about the contents of Hülegü's letter. It was this communication that inspired the short letter, *Exultavit cor nostrum*, usually attributed to Urban's predecessor Alexander IV (1254–1261), in which the Pope speaks with pleasure of Hülegü's reported inclination to embrace the Catholic

[12] See the *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. III, 351.

[13] See Gino Borghezio, "Un episodio delle relazioni tra la Santa Sede e i Mongoli (1274)", *Roma*, Vol. XIV, 362–372; also Jean Richard, "Le Début des relations entre la Papauté et les Mongols de Perse", *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. CCXXXVII, 291–297.

[14] See C. Brunel, "David d'Ashby auteur méconnu des *Faits des Tartares*", *Romania*, Vol. LXXIX, 39–46.

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faith and declares his intention to instruct the patriarch of Jerusalem to make inquiries about Hülegü's plans, regarding which the Hungarian John had not furnished sufficient evidence.[15]

Hülegü's death, which followed shortly (8th February 1265), prevented his replying to Urban's letter. The correspondence was, however, soon resumed by his son and successor Abaqa. In a letter written in 1267, the text of which has not been discovered but the contents of which can be deduced from Clement IV's reply and from a second letter written in 1268, Abaqa congratulates the Pope on the victory of Charles of Anjou over Manfred, proposes that the armies of the Western powers should link up with the forces of his father-in-law Michael Palaeologus in order to trap the Mamelukes between themselves and the Mongols and inquires about the route by which the Christian princes would make their way to Palestine. The letter had been written in Mongolian, which no one at the Papal court could read, but the messenger seems to have been able to give a reasonably accurate account of its purport. The Pope in his reply thanks Abaqa for his felicitations on the defeat of "the rash usurper Manfred, the natural son of the ex-Emperor Frederick" and speaks of the preparations being made for a crusade by the kings of France and Navarre; he regrets that he is ignorant of the route which they propose to follow but promises to make inquiries and also to notify the kings of the plans of Abaqa and the Byzantine Emperor.[16] The Latin text of Abaqa's second letter was discovered by the late Cardinal Tisserand in 1922 but not published until 1946.[17] The letter is dated, according to the Uighur calendar, the 23rd of the sixth month of the Year of the Dragon, which corresponds within a day or two to the 3rd August, 1268.[18] Abaqa would at that time have been at one of his summer encampments in the mountains of Southern Azerbaijan.[19] It must have been here that he received the Pope's envoy, Jayme Alarich of Peripignan, the bearer of the letter to which he now replied. He begins by explaining that his previous

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[15] See Richard, "Le Début . . .", p. 291.

[16] See d'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols*, Vol. III, 540–542.

[17] Eugène Tisserand, "Une Lettre de l'ilkhan de Perse Abaga adressée en 1268 au Pape Clément IV", *Muséon*, Vol. LIX, 547–556 (555–556).

[18] On the slight divergence between the Uighur and Chinese calendars see Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, I (Paris, 1959), p. 308.

[19] In the Siyāh Kūh, the range which forms the watershed between the Zarīn-Rūd (Jaghatū) and Safīd-Rūd (Qīzīl-Özen). See *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, p. 107.

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letter had been written in Mongolian because of the temporary absence of his Latin secretary. He refers to the Pope's account of the defeat and death of Manfred; he speaks of his own achievements and, in particular, of his love for the Christians and protection of their churches; and he then enters into the details of the joint campaign. He will send his brother Ejei[20] with an army from the one side, and the Pope's army (by which he presumably means St. Louis') and that of the King of Aragon will attack from the other, and the enemy will be caught in between and utterly destroyed.

This was not how things turned out. The Crusade of the Kings of France and Navarre was diverted from Palestine to Tunis – "l'erreur de Tunis". as Grousset calls it.[21] King James I of Aragon had set sail from Barcelona a year earlier, but the bulk of his fleet was driven back by a storm and his sons, who continued the voyage and landed their forces at Acre were, able to accomplish little more than skirmishes with the enemy under the very walls of the town. Prince Edward of England, who reached Acre from Tunis on the 9th May 1271, at once made contact with Abaqa, but the Il-Khan was now involved in large-scale operations on his eastern flank against the Chagatai Mongols and was able to send only some 10,000 men to the West. Edward had brought only 1,000 Crusaders with him and his expedition was therefore foredoomed to failure.[22]

Abaqa refused to be discouraged. The appeal for an alliance was renewed by his embassy to the Council of Lyons; it was favourably considered. The same message was delivered by David of Ashby to Edward I, and we have his reply dated the 26th January, 1274 (i.e. 1275 N.S.) from Bellus Locus Regis, apparently Beaulieu in Hampshire. He wishes Abaqa well in his project to free the Holy Land but regrets that he can give no positive information about a Crusade since the Pope had not yet issued his decree.[23] In 1276 two further envoys, apparently Greeks, arrived in the West to repeat the appeal. They were received by the Pope and went on to the French and

[20] The Latin text has Hegei. Ejei was the eighth son of Hülegü. According to Rashīd al-Dīn he died ten days after his father. See *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, pp. 11–12. The name is apparently Mo. *eǰei* "term of endearment used when addressing little children or elderly women". See Ferdinand D. Lessing, *Mongolian-English Dictionary*, s. v. EZEI.

[21] R. Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, Vol. III (Paris, 1936), p. 651.

[22] *Ibid.* pp. 658–663.

[23] See d'Ohsson, pp. 542–544; L. Lockhart, "The Relations between Edward I and Edward II of England and the Īl-Khāns of Persia", *Iran*, Vol. VI, 23–31 (24).

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English courts.[24] In March 1277, yet another mission arrived in England to apologise for the inadequate aid afforded to Edward I during his Crusade of 1271 and, presumably, to offer some effective assistance in a new Crusade.[25]

In the end Abaqa decided to act alone. An army of 40,000 men commanded by his younger brother Mengü-Temür invaded Syria in 1281; they were totally defeated by the Mamelukes near Homs on the 30th October. Abaqa was determined to return to the attack in the following autumn and avenge a disaster apparently due to his brother's inexperience and lack of generalship; but he died on the 1st April 1282, and in the event the struggle was not to be resumed until nearly 20 years later in the reign of his grandson Ghazan (1295–1304). Abaqa was succeeded by his brother Tegüder (1282–4), a convert to Islam, who made an unsuccessful attempt to come to terms with the Mamelukes. He was overthrown by his nephew, Abaqa's son Arghun (1284–91), a Buddhist like his father, who in the course of his short reign was in constant contact with the West.

His first embassy was sent in 1285.[26] The only tangible evidence is a letter in excerable Latin preserved in the Vatican archives. Since this letter has been throught to refer to Arghun's investitute by the Great Khan Qubilai and since the relevant *yarlïgh* or decree did not reach Persia from China until February, 1286,[27] it has been argued that it is a copy of a message brought by the mission of 1287 and that there was no previous mission.[28] In fact the letter appears to refer, not to the Il-Khan's investitute, but to presents from the Great Khan brought by one ᶜĪsā the Interpreter, a Syrian Christian in Qubilai's service,[29] who had arrived in Persia in the winter of 1284–5[30] and who is mentioned in it as a member of the mission. It is dated from Tabriz, where Arghun is known to have spent some time in the early autumn of 1285.[31] Moule has attempted a literal translation, of which the following is an extract:

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[24] See d'Ohsson, pp. 544–546; Lockhart, pp. 24–25.
[25] See Grousset, p. 693.
[26] See J. B. Chabot, "Notes sur les relations du roi Argoun avec l'occident", *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, Vol. II, 566–629 (569–574).
[27] See *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, p. 205.
[28] Chabot, pp. 569–570.
[29] On ᶜIsā Kelemechi, the Ai-hsieh of the Chinese sources, see A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the year 1550* (London, 1930), pp. 228–229.
[30] See *Dzhami-at-Tavarikh*, p. 204.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 206.

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> "In the years past Ameto,[32] in the ways of Saracens and who did not protect the land of the Christians, was usurping (the throne), and so our embassy has been delayed. And now let it be, because the land of the Saracens is not ours, between us, good father, us who are on this side and you who are on your side; the land of Scami[33] to wit the land of Egipti between us and you we will crush. We send you the said messengers and (ask) you to send an expedition and army to the land of Egipti, and it shall be now that we from this side and you from your side shall crush it between us with good men; and that you send us by a good man where you wish the aforesaid done. The Saracens from the midst of us we shall lift, and the lord Pope and the Cam[34] will be lords. Our letter."[35]

It has been plausibly argued that this was in effect an embassy from the Great Khan to the Pope, to which Arghun had attached his own ambassadors.[36] The letter, as already stated, is our only evidence that the embassy actually took place.

Of the second mission in 1287 we have ample evidence in a Syriac work first discovered in 1887 in Kurdistan. In the translation by Wallis Budge[37] it is called *The Monks of Ḳûblâi Khân, Emperor of China*, and its contents are clearly described in the sub-title: "The History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Ṣâwmâ, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khans to the Kings of Europe, and Marḳôs, who as Mâr Yahbh-Allâhâ III became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia". The two monks belonged to the Öngüt, a Turkish people who lived near the great bend of the Yellow River north of the Great Wall and who had been converted to Nestorianism for several generations. They had come to Persia during the reign of Abaqa with the intention of making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In 1281 Marqōs was elected Patriarch of the Nestorians and shortly afterwards Ṣaumā was appointed Visitor General. In or about 1287, having, it is to be resumed, received no satisfactory reply to his mission of 1285, Arghun was looking for a suitable ambassador to dispatch on a second mission and, following the advice of the Patriarch, he chose the latter's fellow-countryman Rabban Ṣaumā.

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[32] I.e. Aḥmad, the Muslim name of Arghun's uncle and predecessor Tegüder.
[33] I.e. Shām, the Arabic name of Syria.
[34] I.e. the Great Khan Qubilai.
[35] Moule, *Christians in China*, p. 106. For the text of the Latin original see Chabot, pp. 570–571.
[36] See Chabot, p. 572, note 3.
[37] London, 1928. See now also Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (London, 1971), pp. 157–159.

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Ṣaumā proceeded first of all to Constantinople, which he appears to have reached by sea from Trebizond; and from Constantinople he took ship to Naples, where he was received by Charles of Anjou and where he and his companions, sitting upon the roof of the house in which they were lodged, were able to watch a naval battle between the Angevins and the Aragonese. At Rome Ṣaumā found that the Pope (Honorius IV) had died; he and his party were subjected to a great deal of catechizing by the Cardinals, for whom, however, Ṣaumā seems to have been more than a match. From Rome they went on to Paris, where they were favourably received by Philip the Fair. The mission remained in the French capital for a month and were greatly impressed with the University. From Paris they proceeded to the court of Edward I at Bordeaux; here again they were warmly welcomed and Edward spoke of his eagerness to embark upon a Crusade. From Gascony they made their way to Genoa, where they spent the winter of 1287–8. Upon the election of the new Pope (Nicholas IV) in February, 1288, Ṣaumā and his party were summoned to Rome and were able at last to deliver Arghun's message. After witnessing the Easter celebrations, which are described at great length, the party left on the return journey bearing a number of letters addressed not only to the Il-Khan himself and the Patriarch but also to two Mongol princesses, to several Eastern ecclesiastics and to "nine laymen, interpreters of the king of the Tartars".[38] They apparently sailed from Genoa and were accompanied by the envoys of Philip the Fair.

Arghun's letter to the Pope does not appear to be extant, but it is reasonable to suppose that its purport was much the same as that of the earlier letter delivered by ᶜIsā the Interpreter and his colleagues, i.e. that it was an appeal for concerted action against the Mamelukes. If that is so, the Pope's reply can have brought him

[38] See Chabot, pp. 584–592. – The names of the two princesses appear as Tuctani and Elagag. Chabot, like d'Ohsson (Vol. III, 69) before him, identifies the former lady with Nuqdan, a widow of Abaqa and the mother of Geikhatu. She must in fact be another of Abaqa's widows, Toqtani, a niece of Doquz Khatun and therefore unquestionably a Christian. She had been one of Hülegü's concubines. When Doquz died shortly after her husband, Abaqa settled her aunt's *ordu* upon her and made her his wife. On the 12th July 1282 Tegüder gave her in marriage to his brother Qongqurtai: she died on the 20th February, 1291. See *Djami-at-Tavarikh*, pp. 7, 96 and 173. In Elagag Chabot sees a disfigured form of Öljetei, the name of one of Arghun's wives and also of a daughter by another wife Örüg Khatun, the mother of Öljeitü. See *Dzhami-at-Tavārīkh*, pp. 196–197.

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little comfort. It consists of two letters, of which the first and longer[39] speaks only of the Pope's appreciation of Arghun's kindness towards his Christian subjects, while in the second and shorter[40] he praises the Il-Khan's declared intention to receive baptism in Jerusalem after its deliverance from the infidels but urges upon him the desirability of embracing Christianity at once without awaiting that eventuality. Encouraged, however, by the more favourable response of Philip and Edward, Arghun, in the following year, dispatched yet a third mission, headed this time by a European, a Genoese called Buscarello Ghisolfi, an officer in the Il-Khan's guard.[41] Buscarello set out shortly after Easter, 1289, from a place called Köndelen, which it is now possible to identify. The name is mentioned both in the Il-Khan's letter and in an interesting note in French by Buscarello, which was attached to it. It was the late Professor Minorsky who first pointed out that Köndelen (or Condelan as it appears in Buscarello's note) is the modern village of Kondelān in Persian Kurdistan, 15 miles south of Saqqiz.[42] There can be no doubt that it was here that Arghun wrote his third letter to the Pope and the princes of Europe. We know that at the end of May, 1289, he was at his summer palace at Takht-i Sulaiman, the site of the famous Zoroastrian fire-temple, which lies some 70–80 miles to the N.E. of Saqqiz.[43] Kondalān lay on the route to his palace, and he must have halted there a Easter. We possess the actual Mongolian text of his letter, or at least of the copy addressed to Philip the Fair. Preserved in the French national archives it was discovered, published and translated by Abel-Rémusat at the beginning of the 19th century. The following is an extract from the most recent translation, that of the late Father Antoine Mostaert and Professor F. W. Cleaves:

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[39] Chabot, pp. 581–583.

[40] *Ibid.* 584.

[41] On Buscarello see Luciano Petech, "Les Marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol", *JA* (1949).

[42] See V. Minorsky, "Mongol Place-Names in Mukri Kurdistan", *BSOAS*, Vol. XIX/1, 58–81 (71–72), also A. Mostaert and F. W. Cleaves, *Les Lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhan Aryun et Öljeitü à Philippe le Bel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 54. Lockhart, p. 26, note 26, is wrong in seeing in Köndelen a corruption of Qongqur-Öleng, the Turco-Mongol name for the pastureland on which Öljeitü's capital of Sultaniya was situated.

[43] On Takht-i Sulaimān see V. Minorsky, "Roman and Byzantine Campaigns in Atropatene", *Iranica* (Tehran, 1964), pp. 86–109 (97–101), and now Ali Akbar Sarfarāz, *Taxt-e Soleymān* (Tabriz, 1968).

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"Approving what thou hast sent to say [referring to Philip's promise to join in a concerted offensive against the Mamelukes], we have said: Praying to Heaven, we shall take the field in the Year of the Tiger in the last month of winter [i.e. January, 1291] and reach Damascus on the 15th of the first month of spring [i.e. February]. Now, if, fulfilling thy sincere word, thou sendest thy troops at the time agreed upon, and if, blessed with good fortune by Heaven, we conquer these people, we shall give you Jerusalem."[44]

Attached to the letter, as has already been mentioned, there was a message from Buscarello himself.[45] In it he informs Philip that Arghun, having heard that it would be difficult for him to transport the required number of horses across the sea, was willing to place at his disposal 20,000–30,000 animals as a gift or at a reasonable price. He also passes on a complaint from Arghun that Philip's ambassadors had refused to make the genuflections expected before a Mongol prince. He requests the King to instruct any future ambassadors to conform with Mongol usage; they would not, however, be required to pass between the two fires. The latter point is an interesting reference to the ancient Turco-Mongol practice of purification by fire.[46] The contents of Arghun's letter to the Pope are not known but they were probably identical with those of his letters to Philip and Edward. The letter was duly delivered, and the Pope gave Buscarello a letter of recommendation to Edward, dated the 30th September, 1289, in which he requests the King to treat Arghun's envoy honourably and to listen with attention to what he had to say.[47] *En route* Buscarello passed through Paris and delivered to Philip the Fair the letter that has already been mentioned. His visit to England is recorded in the Wardrobe Accounts of Edward I, from which we learn that he arrived in London on the 5th January, 1290, accompanied by three esquires, a cook, eight horses and six *garçons*; that he remained 13 days in London and in all 20 days in England; and that his expenses were defrayed by Edward. We have a copy of Edward's reply, from which it appears that Arghun had written to him in the same terms as to Philip; he too had been offered horses for the use of his troops, "whenever he should reach

[44] Mostaert and Cleaves, *Les Lettres* . . ., p. 18. (Translated from the French.)
[45] For the original French text see Chabot, pp. 610–613.
[46] On this practice see J. A. Boyle, "Turkish and Mongol Shamanism in the Middle Ages", *Folklore*, LXXXIII, 173–193 (182–184).
[47] See Chabot, pp. 613–614.

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the Holy Land". He promised to send envoys to Arghun with some gerfalcons and "other jewels of our land", as Arghun had requested of him (and indeed of Philip also); and this promise he kept.[48] The record of Edward's mission survives in "a prosaic account, in bad Latin, of the expenses incurred by its members at various places on its journey from Genoa to Tabriz and back."[49] In fact they accompanied Buscarello on his return from Arghun's fourth and last mission; they were received by the Il-Khan's successor, his younger brother Geikhatu, for Arghun had by this time been dead for more than a year.

Arghun's last embassy, headed by a Mongol convert to Christianity called Chaghan, who must have been a person of consequence, though it has not been possible to identify him, arrived in Rome towards the end of 1290. Buscarello was a member of the embassy but apparently subordinate to Chaghan. The envoys were the bearers of letters to the Pope and King Edward; the Pope provided them with letters of recommendation to the latter and they proceeded to England, where we have no details of the length of their stay; they appear to have left on their return journey after the end of August 1291.[50] Again, as in 1288, Pope Nicholas sent two replies to the Il-Khan: in the first, dated the 21st August, he simply, in effect, calls upon Arghun to accept baptism; in the second, written only two days later, he holds a very different language, saying that he had urged upon all the kings and princes to concert their efforts to recover the Holy Land; that Edward of England had taken the cross and would shortly set sail at the head of a great army; and that he, the Pope, had ordered the preaching of a Crusade against the abominable Saracens. The change in tone between the two letters is probably due to information that the Pope had received about the emotions roused by news of the fall of Acre. These letters and a number of others were entrusted to two Franciscans who accompanied the Mongol envoys on their return journey. The recipients of

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[48] See Chabot, pp. 614–616, also Lockhart, p. 26.

[49] Lockhart, p. 27: he gives, pp. 28–29, a detailed account of the mission's itinerary.

[50] See Chabot, pp. 616–619. On another letter from Arghun to Pope Nicholas, written at Urmiya on the 14th May, 1290, see A. Mostaert and F. W. Cleaves, "Trois documents mongols des Archives secrètes vaticanes", *HJAS*, Vol. 15/3–4, 419–506 (445–467). This letter, in the opinion of the editors (pp. 429 and 448), was not delivered by a special envoy from Arghun but was simply handed to the person who had brought the Pope's message.

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letters included, besides the future Il-Khans Ghazan and Öljeitü, a Mongol general called Taghachar, an unprincipled man, who was afterwards to betray two of his masters and who had now apparently, to serve his own ends, affected an interest in Christianity.[51]

Arghun had died before his envoys had left Europe; Edward I's ambassador, as we have seen, had been received by his successor Geikhatu. A pleasure-loving, dissolute ruler, Geikhatu was not perhaps as black as he has been painted; but he was not the man to take up the struggle with the Mamelukes. He was overthrown in 1295 by his cousin Baidu, who was overthrown in turn, after only a few months reign, by Arghun's son Ghazan, the greatest of the Il-Khans, who was to launch three campaigns against the Egyptians and to meditate a fourth. In his first campaign in 1299–1300 he drove the Mamelukes out of Syria, which however they re-occupied when the Mongols withdrew in the spring of 1300. The second campaign in 1300–1 was brought to a halt by torrential rains. Ghazan now resumed the correspondence which his father, grandfather and great grandfather had conducted with the princes of Europe. There was discovered in the Vatican archives in 1921 the Mongolian original of a letter written to the Pope (then Boniface VIII) on the 12th April 1302, from a place called Qush-Qapugh (in Turkish "Bird Gate"). This was the name that Ghazan had given to the narrow coastal strip on the western shores of the Caspian stretching northwards from the Gulf of Kirov to Divichi in what is now Soviet Azerbaijan.[52] Ghazan begins this letter by referring to a message from the Pope delivered by Buscarello; he goes on to speak of a *yarlïgh* or decree transmitted in reply by an embassy composed of Buscarello and two Mongols. This *yarlïgh*, as Mostaert and Cleaves have suggested,[53] was apparently a detailed plan for the invasion of Syria proposed by Ghazan to the Pope and the Christian princes. "As for now", he continues, "we are making our preparations exactly in the manner [laid down in our *yarlïgh*]. You too should prepare your troops, send word to the rulers of the various nations and not fail to keep the rendezvous. Heaven willing, we shall the

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[51] See Chabot, pp. 619–629. On Taghachar see J. A. Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V, 373, 375–6, 379 and 381.

[52] See J. A. Boyle, "Ghazan's letter to Boniface VIII: where was it written?" *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh International Congress of Orientalists, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 13–19 August, 1967* (Wiesbaden, 1971), pp. 601–602.

[53] "Trois documents mongols . . .", p. 469.

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great work [i.e. the war against the Mamelukes] our sole aim."[54] In the event Ghazan's last campaign was launched without European co-operation. He himself remained to the east of the Euphrates whilst his forces swept down through Syria, meeting no obstacle to their advance until they had passed beyond Damascus: they were decisively defeated at Marj al-Suffar, a famous battlefield of early Islam, on the 20th April 1303. In the autumn of that year Ghazan began preparations for a fourth campaign: its realisation was prevented by an illness that at last proved fatal: he died on the 11th May 1304.

His brother and successor Öljeitü (1304–16) made the last appeal to Europe and launched the last attack on the Mamelukes. His approach to the Christian powers was apparently inspired by a letter which he received, at the very beginning of his reign, from the Great Khan Temür, the grandson and first successor of Qubilai. The purpose of the letter was to inform the Il-Khan of a pact concluded between the Great Khan and the Mongol rulers of Central Asia to put an end to their long-standing quarrels. An embassy from Toqta, the ruler of the Golden Horde, indicated that he too was a party to this agreement. It is referred to in a letter from Öljeitü to Philip the Fair, which, like the letter of his father Arghun to the same monarch, is preserved in the French archives. The text of the letter may be taken to be identical with that of similar letters addressed to the Pope and Edward of England, and perhaps to other rulers also. Written on the 5th April 1305, in a place called Barzand in the Moghan Steppe, it begins with an expression of his desire to maintain the traditional bonds of friendship between the Il-Khans and the "sultans of the Frankish people". Öljeitü then refers to the concord now existing between the various branches of the House of Genghis Khan, "We have been informed", he continues, "that you also, the numerous sultans of the Franks, are living in concord among yourselves. Truly, what is better than concord?". And he concludes: "Now, as for those who shall not agree either with us or with you, let Heaven decide on the manner in which by the strength of Heaven leaguing against them all together, we shall take our stand".[55] One of the editors of this letter sees in it "a formal proposal to consolidate peace across all the immense space of the Old

[54] *Ibid.* p. 471.
[55] Mostaert and Cleaves, *Les Lettres . . .*, pp. 56–57.

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World".[56] But, in fact, the last sentence is simply a veiled appeal for combined action against the Mamelukes. The Il-Khan's meaning, as is made clear in a contemporary Italian version of the letter, was to be amplified by word of mouth.[57] What Philip the Fair's response was we do not know. The letter addressed to Edward was acknowledged by his son Edward II in a letter dated the 16th October 1307; in a second letter dated the 30th November he expresses approval of Öljeitü's "laudable design" and promises to co-operate if the distance and other difficulties do not prevent him. The Pope (Clement V) discloses some of the details which it had been left to the envoys to explain orally. Öljeitü, it seems, had offered "200,000 horses and 200,000 loads of grain, which will be in Armenia when the army of the Christians arrives there". He would "march in person with 100,000 horsemen to support the efforts of the Christians to expel the Saracens from that Holy Land". Clement thanks the Il-Khan for this offer, which, he says, "has strengthened us like spiritual food", but he, like Edward II, makes only vague and general references to future collaboration.[58]

Encouraged by certain dissident Syrian emirs Öljeitü did, in the winter of 1312–3, invade the Mameluke territories. Crossing the Euphrates he invested the town of Rahbat al-Shām, the present-day Meyadin; but fierce resistance caused the Mongols to withdraw across the river, never to return.

The only tangible result of Öljeitü's mission to the European courts may well have been the compilation of the *Flos Historiarum Terrae Orientalis* of the Armenian Hayton. In this work, dictated in 1307 at Avignon at the behest of Clement V, the author, writing from first-hand knowledge of the Mongols as a military power (he had taken part in Ghazan's campaign of 1299–1300), discusses the strategy to be adopted in the kind of joint operation which the Il-Khans had been advocating for the past 40 years. That in theory some such collaboration would have been possible there can be no doubt, but only under favourable circumstances; and it is questionable whether circumstances ever were favourable in the second half of the 13th century. By the end of the century only the Church was seriously interested in the recovery of the Holy Land,

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[56] W. Kotwicz, "Les Mongols promoteurs de l'idée de paix universelle au début du XIII[e] siècle", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, Vol. XVI, 428–434 (433).
[57] See Mostaert and Cleaves, *Les Lettres . . .*, pp. 5–6 and 82.
[58] See d'Ohsson, Vol. IV, 592–597.

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which, with the fall of Tripoli and Acre, must have seemed to practical men to be irretrievably lost. In any case Hayton's preaching fell on deaf ears. The Popes still maintained relations with the Mongol rulers of Persia, but only to protect the interests of the Church within their territories. So too the merchant states of Italy still had their commercial treaties with the Il-Khans and even with the epigone dynasties of the Chobanids and Jalayirids.[59] But the question of a military alliance between Persia and the Western powers was not to be revived until some three centuries later when the powerful and expanding Ottoman state presented a greater danger to both parties than the Mamelukes had ever done.

[59] See Luciano Petech, "Les Marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol", *JA*, Vol. CCL, 549–574, also Jean Richard, "The Mongols and the Franks", *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 3/1, 45–57 (57).

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