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Author(s): Devin DeWeese

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE MONGOLS ON THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THIRTEENTH CENTURY EUROPE

Devin DeWeese
(Indiana University)
Introduction

The appearance of the Mongols on the horizon of the European world was an event of profound significance in Western history. Suddenly a third power intruded itself into a world which for six centuries had been divided into two camps, Christian and Muslim, and this new power had to be confronted and dealt with militarily and diplomatically by Christian Europe. No less important, however, than the urgent need to reckon with this new force—whether as a threat to the Christian world or as an opportunity for alliance against the Muslims—was the need to situate the Mongols within the medieval Christian picture of the world and to explain the origin and nature of this new people which seemed to come from nowhere.

This need expressed itself as early as 1219, when the first rumors of the Mongols' campaigns in northwest Persia reached the Crusaders in the Holy Land, and revived among them the twelfth century hopes centered around 'Prester John'; the Mongols, identified with the people of Prester John, or of his son 'King David', were explained in terms of this legendary Christian king who ruled far to the east and was expected to come to the aid of the Crusaders. When, however, rumors of distant attacks on Muslim territory were replaced by reports of actual incursions into Christian lands, the comfortable designation of the invaders as members of the Christian community was placed in doubt. Confidence in the Christianity of the Mongols, first shaken by the Russian campaign of 1223, was shattered by the devastating attacks in Russia and Eastern Europe during the years 1237-1242.

It is from this period that the first real attempts to explain the appearance of the Mongols may be dated, for the legends of Prester John and King David represent hopeful speculation concerning vague rumors, not actual responses to an encounter with the Mon-

gols. The campaign of 1237-1242, however, evoked strong responses as the people of Europe tried to explain the meaning of what had happened. In the thirteenth century such responses were inevitably to be expressed in religious terms, for the Mongols represented not only a danger to the political security and economic well-being of Europe, but a threat to the spiritual order of Christendom as well: the invaders were a mysterious and hitherto unknown force which had somehow to be integrated into the traditional Christian perception of the Church and the world.

The process of the Mongols' integration into the world-view of medieval Christendom from the invasions of Poland and Hungary through the close of the thirteenth century, developed through several stages; after the initial horror expressed at the invasions of Poland and Hungary, there followed the more sober evaluations based on reports of travelers, and finally the often quite favorable approach common in the latter decades of the century as hopes of Mongol-Christian cooperation once again materialized. At the end of this last stage stands the figure of Ramon Lull, the great Catalonian poet, traveler, philosopher, and missionary; in whose writings several strains of the religious response to the Mongols are united.

*The Religious Climate
in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*

Before turning to the specific responses to the coming of the Mongols, it will be worthwhile to note a few aspects of the religious climate of Europe, immediately prior to the Mongols' appearance, which seem to have had a bearing on the forms which those responses took. One of the most important of these aspects was the strength of apocalyptic expectations which, despite (or perhaps, rather, precisely because of) the successes of the Muslims in the Holy Land, looked to the period of perfection ushered in by the Apocalypse rather than to the tribulation which was to precede it. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), for instance, prophesied the imminent demise of Islam because the Apocalypse of St. John said that the number of the 'Beast' was 666, and almost that number of years had elapsed since the appearance of Muhammad.¹

A particularly significant strain of apocalyptic speculation, which was current in the early thirteenth century, was based on the

writings of the Abbot Joachim of Flora (1132?-1202). Joachim, with his vision of the 'Three Ages' of the world, contributed much to the 'historicization' of the blessed state of perfection which was expected to follow the sufferings of the Apocalypse: the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment were the final episodes within history, in which men would live purely spiritual lives and dwell in continual blessedness, and which preceded the Second Coming and Last Judgment.² In deference to the requirement that absolute perfection be attainable only beyond historical time, Joachim admitted that his Third Age would finally deteriorate and end with the coming of the people of Gog and Magog; nevertheless, "the essence of the Joachimist view lies in the belief that the greatest persecution of the Church—*Antichristus pessimus*—must precede the Third Age, whereas Gog and Magog represent only a final flick of the Dragon's tail."³

Joachim thus taught that mankind's greatest tribulation would precede the advent of the Third Age, which would be a period of spiritual purity and beatitude. Accordingly, the characters who figure in the Apocalypse—the Antichrist, the false and angelic popes, the evil tyrant and the virtuous emperor⁴—are in Joachim's vision placed at the end of the Second Age. An earlier apocalyptic scenario had envisioned a period of material prosperity ruled over by a Last World Emperor; this age was nevertheless not spiritually pure, and would collapse upon the attack by the Antichrist:

The Last Emperor will rule the earth in peace and tranquility. Men will be eating, drinking and making merry, as in Noah's day, when suddenly the gates of the north will open and the people shut up by Alexander will pour in. The Emperor will go to Jerusalem, and when Antichrist appears he will place his crown upon the Cross on Golgotha and render up his rule and his soul to God, leaving the final destruction of the forces of evil to the divine intervention of Christ from on high.⁵

For Joachim, however, the Third Age was to be a time of spiritual beatitude, and not merely material prosperity, which would follow the definitive victory over the forces of the Antichrist.

Joachim, moreover, felt that the Third Age was imminent, and affirmed that in this age a monastic community would come to take the dominant role in the Church:

Because in the first age the order of the laity stood out, in the second the order of clerics, in the third, the beginnings of which are making themselves felt, . . . the order of monks ought to appear.⁶

In connection with the role he assigns to the order of monks may be noted the second major aspect of the European religious climate prior to the Mongol invasions: the new emphasis on the ideal of poverty and its expression in the Franciscan Order.

The ideal of poverty rests on the spiritual goal of relying upon nothing other than God for one's sustenance and security. As such it is expressed in a variety of ways, notably in the eremitical and monastic traditions of Christianity. The former tradition found its classic expression in the lives of the 'Desert Fathers,' who epitomized the life of perfect humility, total trust in God, and the withdrawal from the world into the 'wilderness.' This eremitical ideal was praised in the early twelfth century by Guigo the Carthusian, who associated with it the ideal of the 'spiritual nomad'—the wanderer in the wilderness who takes no refuge but in God and who considers no earthly abode his home:

You who are spiritual men, like the Hebrews—that is, nomads, having no permanent city here but seeking a future home⁷—build for yourselves. . . . tabernacles in which you may dwell. For in tabernacles dwelt our fathers, living in the Land of Promise as in a foreign country, awaiting with their fellow heirs of the promise a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, not having received the things promised but seeing them from afar and being persuaded of them and confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth. For he who says this signifies that he is seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly. Therefore our fathers in Egypt and the Thebaid [were] most ardent followers of this holy life, dwelling in deserts, most circumscribed and wretched, of whom the world was not worthy. . . . They worked with their hands and they fed the poor by their labor; hungry themselves, they nourished out of the wastes of the desert those who had escaped from the urban prison. . . .⁸

The dominant elements of the eremitical tradition—withdrawal from the world, the rigorous life, the lack of personal possessions—were transformed and united with the intellectual and spiritual elements of the monastic tradition by St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) and his Order. Total withdrawal from the world was

rejected, but the life in the wilderness was translated into the Franciscan concern for the things of Nature, while the rigorous lifestyle was placed in a communal setting and given the additional element of a responsibility for preaching and service. Poverty, moreover, was the hallmark of St. Francis' vision of the life lived for Christ, representing a rejection of the concern for material things which had entered the Church.

These two strains of thought—the Joachimist view of the Apocalypse and the growing importance of the ideal of poverty—represent significant elements of the religious milieu of Western Christendom out of which responses to the coming of the Mongols were formulated. The Joachimist vision stressed the imminence of a period of tribulation in which a virtuous ruler would fight with the forces of evil led by the Antichrist himself; this tribulation would be followed by the glorious Third Age of the world, a state of spiritual blessedness which was to occur within the historical future, and in which a monastic lifestyle would prevail. The ideal of poverty inculcated a disregard for the things of this world and, in its Franciscan expression, a concern for a well-ordered, disciplined life as well as a selfless desire to provide assistance, both material and spiritual, to mankind. In these ideas lay the seeds of some of the religious reactions to the Mongols.

A final aspect of the religious atmosphere in Europe at the time of the Mongols' appearance involves the union of the first two aspects: the Franciscan lifestyle and Joachimist eschatology were joined in a vision of the apocalyptic significance of the new Order and its founder. Already in the writing of Joachim himself the monastic and eremitical ideals were connected with the preparation of the spiritual community which would prevail in the last age; he held that God would send two Orders into the world, and that "One would have the task of leading the spiritual People in the desert as Moses had done; the other would have the task of living in solitude far from the community of men as Elias had done."⁹

However, the real synthesis of the Joachimist and Franciscan visions came in the mid-thirteenth century and may thus already bear the effects of European awareness of the Mongols. One indication of this synthesis is found in a Joachimist writing which appeared in the 1250's, the *Liber Introductorius in Evangelium aeternum*. This was an anti-papal document which prophesied the Second Coming in the year 1260, at which time the Antichrist would occupy

the papal throne; the anonymous author proclaimed St. Francis to be the initiator of the new age, with Joachim as his John the Baptist.¹⁰ It seems quite possible, especially considering the predicted date of the Second Coming, that this work reflects apocalyptic expectations regarding the Mongols, who in the 1250's were again active in northwest Persia.

A second source for the Joachimist-Franciscan synthesis lies in the writings of the Franciscan St. Bonaventure (1221-1274). Generally accepting Joachim's division of history, St. Bonaventure envisioned the founder of his Order as the herald of the New Age: "As a Franciscan, Bonaventure—like the entire Order of Franciscans—saw Francis not simply as another Saint, but as a sign of the final age, as one sent by God".¹¹ Writing also in the 1250's, St. Bonaventure identified Francis as John the Baptist resurrected,¹² and viewed him as the angel who ascends "from the rising of the sun" (perhaps implying the East?) and who gathers together the elect community of the 144,000 in the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse.¹³ Moreover, the central characteristic of the new spiritual community or Order is to be their life of poverty; the new Order is compared in its poverty with the Rechabites,¹⁴ an ascetical nomadic sect in ancient Israel which was praised by Jeremiah for its devotion to the Mosaic covenant (Jer. 35). The emphasis on poverty is connected with St. Bonaventure's belief that, if kept pure, the actual Franciscan Order might contain the seed for that future Order in the New Age; this idea is expressed in the following passage, along with a sense of chastisement for failing to maintain the 'perfect poverty' of St. Francis, which may again reflect an awareness of the Mongol invasions:

... and this simplicity is possible only together with the greatest poverty. And this will be the characteristic sign of the final Order. The intention of St. Francis is directed to perfect poverty. ... We have departed far from our original state. Therefore God allows tribulation to come upon us so that we may be led back to the state which holds the Land of Promise.¹⁵

Thus a significant element of the Franciscan Order viewed St. Francis as an apocalyptic figure, and his Order as an instrument whereby the future Order of the New Age would be selected; there was a strong feeling that the final age was imminent, that it would be established on earth and within historical time, and that men, par-

ticularly those who devoted themselves to the ideal of poverty within the Franciscan Order, could play a role in the gathering of the elect for the New Age. Such ideas formed the intellectual context in which reactions to the new and mysterious people were formulated, and though never explicitly connected with the Mongols, they must be kept in mind as the possible underlying basis for many of the hopes and fears regarding the invaders.

Reactions to the Campaign of 1237-1242

The initial European impression of the Mongols, after their attacks on Russia and Eastern Europe in 1237-1242, were of inhuman creatures whose unknown origin had surely to be in the depths of Hell; indeed, the classical *Tartarus* was indicated by Matthew Paris as the source of their name in a passage dated 1240 from his *Chronica Majora*:

In this year, that human joys might not long continue, and that the delights of this world might not last long unmixed with lamentation, an immense horde of that detestable race of Satan, the Tartars, burst forth from their mountain-bound regions, and making their way through rocks apparently impenetrable, rushed forth, like demons loosed from Tartarus (so that they are well called Tartars, as it were inhabitants of Tartarus); and overrunning the country, covering the face of the earth like locusts, they ravaged the eastern countries with lamentable destruction, spreading fire and slaughter wherever they went.¹⁶

His account continues with a description of the monstrous nature of these Tartars:

The men are inhuman and of the nature of beasts, rather to be called monsters than men, thirsting after and drinking blood, and tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and human beings.¹⁷

The Mongols were thus assimilated to inhuman beasts or demonic monsters, for only such creatures could commit the horrendous acts which were described in the reports reaching Western Europe. However, as demons, the Mongols were fit for a special role which was assigned to them in one of the most common religious

reactions to the invasions: the Mongols were monsters, to be sure, but they were monsters with a 'purgative' mission, being employed by God to chastize the Christians for their sins. Thus Emperor Frederick II, in a letter dated July 3, 1241 and recorded by Matthew Paris, describes the Tartars as

... the suddenly-coming tempest, which we believe to have arisen from a divine judgment, as the world is defiled by the infection of various sins, as charity begins to grow cold in many by whom the true faith ought to be preached and upheld, and their pernicious example pollutes the world with usury and divers kinds of simony and ambition.¹⁸

This reaction, viewing the Mongols as the instruments of God's wrath, had been expressed in Russia at the time of the first invasion. The *Novgorod Chronicle* records, for the year 1224, the year following the Russian-Cuman defeat at the Battle of Kalka, the following observation:

And thus, for our sins God put misunderstanding into us and a countless number of people perished, and there was lamentation and weeping and grief throughout towns and villages. . . . And the Tartars turned back from the river Dnieper, and we know not whence they came, nor where they hid themselves again; God knows whence he fetched them against us for our sins.¹⁹

Similarly, the same reaction was repeated in 1238, where the *Chronicle* explains the Russian defeat saying, "Thus also did God before these men take from us our strength and put into us perplexity and thunder and dread and trembling for our sins;"²⁰ and further on a more complete 'theological' explanation is offered:

God let the pagans on us for our sins. God brings foreigners on to the land in his wrath, and thus crushed by them they will be reminded of God. . . . And any land which has sinned God punishes with death or famine, or with infliction of pagans, or with drought, or with heavy rain, or with other punishment, to see whether we will repent and live as God bids; for He tells us by the prophet: 'Turn to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping.' And if we do so we shall be forgiven of all our sins. But we always turn to evil, like swine ever wallowing in the filth of sin, and thus we remain; and for this we receive every kind of punishment from God; and the invasion of armed men, too, we accept at God's command; as punishment for our sins.²¹

As might be expected, the contrition evoked by the belief that the Mongol attacks were Divine punishments was strongest among those closest to the devastation. Another notice of this reaction is found in a letter, also recorded by Matthew Paris, written by Brother Jordan, the Franciscan provincial in Poland, on April 4, 1242: "... through the sins of men receiving a miserable increase in this world, tribulation long foreknown and foretold has come upon us, as it were with wings from the Lord. . . ."²² Likewise, Boleslaw, Duke of Cracow and Sandomir, wrote some fifteen years after the invasion of "the terrible times caused by the punishment of God and by our original sin when the Tartars pillaged and devastated our land. . . ."²³

There seem to have been two aspects to this reaction. One viewed the Mongols as quite conscious of their purgative role; Matthew Paris records a discussion in 1244 with one Peter, an archbishop from Russia, who declared,

... they say that it has been intimated to them from heaven that they are to ravage the whole world for thirty-nine years; asserting that Divine vengeance formerly purged the world by a deluge, and now it will be purified by a general depopulation and devastation, which they themselves will put in execution.²⁴

It is not surprising that an awareness of their mission was attributed to the Mongols, for undoubtedly they fostered such rumors. Matthew Paris himself, in relating how the internal strife in Christendom pleased the Mongols, writes, "So they said, priding and vaunting themselves, that God was irritated against the Christians, who attacked and bit each other, and that he was more favorable to them, and increased their numbers and extended their power;"²⁵ and in the letter brought by John of Plano Carpini to the Pope from the Great Khan Guyuk, it is said,

Because they did not obey the word of God and the command of Chingis Chan and the Chan. . . therefore God ordered us to destroy them and gave them up into our hands. For otherwise if God had not done this, what could man do to man?²⁶

Another view, however, assumed that the Mongols were ignorant of their role, reiterating the theme of the wild, unlearned man as the instrument of God's punishment. This view would seem to have been more compatible with the monstrous image of the Mongols, in

which their blind fury was felt to be unleashed by God for the chastisement and purification of Christendom: the Mongols were in this view no more than mindless, inhuman beasts driven to rage, demons without moral judgment used by God for His purposes and then, presumably, discarded. On the other hand, the Mongols might also have been ignorant of their mission because of their 'unattached' status: as part of neither the Christian nor the Saracen world, they were free to be employed by God to punish both. This may have been the attitude of William of Rubruck, who certainly did not consider the Mongols monsters, when he cites scripture (Deut. 32.21) to explain Europe's chastisement by the Tartars,⁵

... whom God has raised up from far distant regions to be a people which is no people and a foolish nation, according to the words of the Lord: 'I will provoke them'—that is those who do not keep His laws—with that which is no people and will vex them with a foolish nation.' This is being fulfilled to the letter in the case of all the nations which do not keep the law of Christ.²⁷

An interesting aspect of the first view of the Mongols' 'purgative' mission, in which the invaders had knowledge of their role, lies in several allusions in Matthew Paris' history to suspicions of conspiracies within Europe aimed at aiding the Mongols. The first of these follows the letter of Frederick II regarding the invasion of Hungary. Matthew Paris comments that "there were some who said that the emperor had, of his own accord, plotted this infliction of the Tartars," and was concealing the conspiracy with his letter; the chronicler admits that this is possible, adding, "But God forbid that so much wickedness should be lurking in any one mortal body."²⁸

A second allusion is found in a letter of one Yvo of Narbonne to the archbishop of Bordeaux, dating from 1243. This letter attributes the Mongol invasions to the sins of Christendom, but also more particularly to the heresy of the Paterinians or Bugarians (apparently another manifestation of the old Manichaean-based heresies):

In consequence of this heresy, and many other sinful things arising among us Christians, the Lord has been roused to anger, and become an angry devastator, and most fearful avenger. This I say, because a fierce race of inhuman beings, whose law is lawlessness, whose wrath is fury, the rod of God's anger, is passing through and dreadfully ravaging a wide tract of terri-

tory, horribly exterminating with fire and sword everything that comes their way.²⁹

Toward the end of the letter Yvo expresses his disapproval of these heretics' actions, in a way that implies that he had heard of rumors of collusion between the members of this sect and the Mongols; his mention of the possibility of their aiding the enemy indicates that this was not an unheard of suggestion:

Seeing, then, that such dangers are arising to the whole of Christendom, what are these holy brethren doing, with their new religious rites, and fresh from the fire of the furnace out of which they have been fashioned, who wish it to be believed that they alone have found out the way of perfection beyond all others? By confession, and other intimacies, they should gain the favor of the princes and nobles, and earnestly and importunately cry into their ears against the Tartars: they do badly, if they do not so cry; they do worse, if they only make pretences; but worst of all, if they assist the enemy.³⁰

The third allusion to rumors of Europeans conspiring with the Mongols is found in Matthew Paris' famous story of the attempts by a group of Central European Jews to smuggle arms to the Mongols, "thinking that these Tartars and Cumanians were a portion of their race, whom God had, at the prayers of Alexander the Great, shut up in the Caspian mountains. . . ."³¹ This story is perfectly believable in light of what is known from other sources,³² namely that many Jews rejoiced in the news of the Mongol invasions because of the popular notion which united three strands of mythic thought regarding the invaders: the legends of the Enclosed Nations, bound by Alexander the Great behind the northern mountains, of the people of Gog and Magog, who were to come forth from the north at the end of the world, and of the Lost Tribes of Israel, whose historical deportation formed the basis of the story that they would one day return from the East. These three themes were important elements of the medieval Christian view of the world and its end; all was in proper order only so long as the 'unclean peoples' of the north were held in check, and the appearance of the barbarian hordes from the steppe seemed to indicate the nearness of the series of events that were to mark the final stage of history.

The Mongols were thus identified with the Lost Tribes of Israel insofar as they were also identified with the other two elements which had become fused in apocalyptic expectations; for the Christian world, however, this was not a favorable identification as it was for the Jews, since the Lost Tribes represented, in the peculiarly Christian penitential attitude to misfortune, a wicked people who had turned from God and were consequently punished with deportation.

No more favorable were the identifications of the Mongols with various other Biblical peoples known for their wickedness. Principal among these were the Ishmaelites and the Midianites, and both of these identifications seem to derive from a seventh century apocalyptic tract ascribed to a certain Methodius³³ and popular in Russia. The *Novgorod Chronicle* records of the Tartars that

others say that they are those of whom Bishop Mefodi of Patmos bore witness, that they came out from the Etrian desert which is between East and North. For thus Mefodi says, that, at the end of time, those are to appear whom Gideon scattered, and that they shall subdue the whole land from the East to the Efrant [Euphrates], and from the Tigris to the Pontic sea except Ethiopia.³⁴

Much the same account is given by the Russian archbishop Peter and recorded by Matthew Paris:

‘I believe that they are the remains of the Madianites [sic], who fled from before the face of Gideon, to the most remote parts of the east and north, and took refuge in that place of horror and vast solitude, which is called Etren.’³⁵

Similarly, the Russian chronicle refers to the Tartars as “the lawless Ismaelites,”³⁶ while the ‘landgrave of Thuringia and of Saxony,’ writing to John, Duke of Brabant and Boulogne, writes thus of the Mongols:

... we believe that they are the sword of the Lord’s anger for the sins of the Christian people, as witness Saint Methodius, who calls those Tartars ‘Ishmaelites and wild asses’...³⁷

In the period immediately following the invasions of Poland and Hungary, then, the Mongols were assimilated to infernal demons and monsters, to legendary and apocalyptic peoples, and to

unfavorably regarded Biblical tribes. Each of the identifications represents an attempt to categorize the Mongols in terms of the traditional Christian view of the world, but the primary religious response of this period was represented in the theme common to all of the explanations: the chastisement of Christendom at the hands of God's instruments, the Tartars.

Nevertheless, within that chastisement was the semblance of a divine mission for the Mongols, and two strange works³⁸ dating from the late 1240's confirm the existence of a strain of thought which portrayed the Mongols as chastisers or purifiers who were themselves in some sense 'pure'; in this view, the Mongols, in their purgative role in Christendom, were not a divinely 'used' people so much as a divinely inspired people. One of these texts depicted a vast army of barbarians, portrayed as Tartars but not given that name, moving toward Europe under the leadership of a prophetic figure who incited them to the destruction of Christian kingdoms and the massacre of churchmen.³⁹ Their mission, however, was to assure obedience to the New Testament; they came from the farthest Orient in order to spread a purified Christianity, and their principal targets seem to be the Christian rulers and clergy who had transgressed God's laws.

The other text purports to be a letter written by a figure calling himself 'Messias,' to the Emperor Frederick II (whose official deposition at the First Council of Lyons in 1245 was only a few years before the probable date of this letter). This 'Messias' promises to punish those who are 'persecuting' Frederick, namely the officials of the Church, and he is associated with the ruler of the Tartars. In both of these writings it is the Church which is to suffer, and not Christianity as such, from the threatened invasion of Europe by warriors from the East. It is probable that the two texts represent variations on the Prester John legend in which the defeat of the Saracens is replaced by a purification of Christendom of those elements which the respective authors considered inimical to the true spirit of Christianity. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see the divine chastisement, bewailed and yet accepted as just by other writers, awaited with something approaching eagerness in these two works; and it is possible that this eager expectation may lend credence to the rumors, mentioned earlier, regarding conspiracies with the Mongols on the part of three elements of society which felt little devotion to the Church organization—the Jews a heretical sect, and the Emperor.

Early Reevaluations of the Mongols

Throughout the thirteenth century rumors persisted to the effect that the Mongols were, or were about to become, Christians. These rumors undoubtedly represent recurrent manifestations of the old Prester John legend, which remained a popular focus for explanations of the Mongols' origins despite their destructive attacks on Christendom. In his letter of 1243, for instance, Yvo of Narbonne lists several suggested explanations for the Mongol invasions, which he attributes to the Mongols themselves but which undoubtedly reflect stories current in Europe:

At one time they say they left their country to bring back the sacred bodies of the magi kings, which adorn the city of Cologne; at another time they say it was to check the avarice and pride of the Romans, who oppressed them of old; another reason was, only to subdue under their dominion the barbarous Hyperborean nations and tribes; then they said it was their intention to temper the fury of the Teutronics with their own moderation; now it was to learn warfare from the French; now to gain a sufficiency of fertile land on which to maintain their multitudes; and lastly, they said it was to terminate their pilgrimage at St. James', in Galicia.⁴⁰

Both the first and last of these imply the Christianity of the Mongols, and the first shows a clear dependency on the Prester John legend; it refers to the Mongols' connection with the three Magi, who were in the legend portrayed as the ancestors of the Christian king of the Orient.

The Christianity of the Mongols, and the Prester John story as well, were undoubtedly given new credence by the Mongol embassy to St. Louis in 1248 by which a French-Mongol alliance against the Muslims was proposed. Such credence was short-lived, however. The French king's ambassadors brought back only reiterated demands for submission by the Tartars. Nevertheless, as late as 1285, the connection between the Mongols and the Magi was maintained in an apocryphal letter from the 'king of the Tartars' to the king of Hungary; the Tartar king affirmed that he was coming to annihilate the enemies of the Cross, and explained that he and his people were pilgrims who had left their country following a star to recover the bodies of their ancestors—the three Magi, Gaspard, Melchior, and Balthasar.⁴¹

However, despite the persistence of hopeful rumors about the Mongols' Christianity, it was generally realized that this new people did not belong to the Christian fold; and the inevitable result of this realization was an impulse to missionary activity. The most obvious candidates for the proselytizing enterprise were the Franciscans, whose discipline, endurance, and humble obedience were to contribute greatly to the success of the missions, whether primarily diplomatic or spiritual, which were sent to the Mongols.

The mission of John of Plano Carpini was essentially a diplomatic one, aimed at discovering first-hand the true intentions of the Mongols and delivering the Pope's letters importuning peace. Friar John nevertheless performed an important function in the development of European attitudes to the Mongols, for in his account of his journey to the Great Khan he humanized the invaders. Monsters and demons could not be reasoned with regarding peace, nor converted to the Christian religion, and Plano Carpini, though still recognizing the tremendous threat they posed, portrayed the Mongols as human beings; he even devotes a section of his work to the good aspects of their character, admiring their respectfulness, liberality, long-suffering endurance, and simple lifestyle.⁴²

By contrast with Friar John's mission, the journey of William of Rubruck seems to have been to a certain extent an individual enterprise undertaken for purely spiritual purposes. It is in his account that a changed attitude toward the Mongols, made possible by their humanization, first becomes apparent; two important themes which were used to portray the Mongols in a favorable light, and which were developed by later writers, are first evident in Rubruck's work.

The first of these is the simplicity of the Mongols' lives, a quality noted by Plano Carpini. The Franciscan friars, devoted to poverty and a somewhat 'rustic' life, appreciated the same aspects of Mongol life, and attributed their power to the discipline and strength such a life breeds. Addressing St. Louis, Rubruck writes:

I say to you with confidence, if your peasants, I will not say Kings and knights, were willing to go as do the Kings of the Tartars and to be content with the same kind of food, they could take possession of the whole world.⁴³

The second theme involves the 'innocence' of the Mongols in relation to those who, though professing the Christian faith, do not conduct their lives accordingly. For Rubruck these hypocrites are

exemplified by the Nestorians of the Orient, whom he describes as ignorant and immoral, and in contrasting them unfavorably with the Mongols he attacks not only hypocrites, but schismatics as well. Regarding these Nestorians, Rubruck writes:

They look after their wives and children well, consequently they pay more attention to gaining money than spreading the faith, whence it comes about that when any of them bring up sons of Mongol noblemen, although they teach them the Gospel and the faith, yet by their evil life and greed they rather alienate them from the Christian religion, for the lives of the Mongols themselves and even of the *tuins*, that is the pagans, are more innocent than theirs.⁴⁴

The Mongols are thus not Christians, but it is intimated that they cannot be blamed for their failure to adopt the faith; the fault lies with the examples of Christianity to which the Mongols have been exposed, and not with the Mongols themselves.

A further indication of the changed attitude toward the barbarians is found in two passages from Rubruck's account, in which particular aspects of Mongol life are explained by alluding to similar practices among another people. The people used as illustration is not, however, another barbarian tribe, nor a pagan people of antiquity, nor even one of the nomadic tribes of the Old Testament; rather, it is no less than the people of Israel with whom the Mongols are compared. In describing the order of Batu's camp, Rubruck states that, "Just as the people of Israel knew, each one of them, where they should pitch their tents in relation to the tabernacle, so these know on what side of the *orda* they are to place themselves when they unload their dwellings;"⁴⁵ and in explaining the place of the "diviners" in the nomadic wanderings of the Mongols, he writes, "When it is time for them to move they go before them as the pillar of cloud went before the children of Israel. . . ."⁴⁶ Rubruck thus chose to explain the Mongols' lifestyle not in terms of monsters or notoriously wicked peoples, but in terms of the biblical people of God.

Finally, the fate of the Prester John legend itself, without its affiliation with the Magi, is instructive as regards this new attitude toward the Mongols. One story explained the appearance of the Mongols in place of the hoped-for Prester John by the latter's defeat at the hands of the Tartars; and the same scenario was accepted, but given a unique interpretation, in the account of Jean, Sire de Joinville. In his account,⁴⁷ which was that learned by St. Louis' ambassa-

dors to the Mongols in 1248, Prester John was an oppressive ruler against whom the Mongols, led by “a wise man” (Chingis), rebelled. Moreover, after Prester John was defeated, a Tartar prince became lost for a period of three months, during which time he experienced a heavenly vision. In this vision a grand ‘king’ directed the prince to return to his people and tell them to give thanks to the ‘lord of heaven and earth,’ who gave them victory over Prester John; when the prince asks how his king will believe this story, the ‘lord’ declares:

Thou shalt tell him to believe thee by these signs: that thou shalt go and fight against the Emperor of Persia, with three hundred of thy people, and no more; and in order that your great king may believe that I have the power to do all things, I shall give thee the victory over the Emperor of Persia, who will do battle against thee with three hundred thousand armed men. . . .⁴⁸

Thus the Tartars are portrayed as being given a victory over their enemies in precisely the same language as the Bible describes the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon and his three hundred Israelites (Judges 7.7). Joinville’s account ends with the improbable baptism of the Tartars, but it nevertheless stands in the tradition of a new, more favorable attitude toward the Mongols which would reach its peak in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Responses During the European-Il-Khanid Rapprochement

The 1260’s and 1270’s saw renewed hopes for cooperation between Western Europe and the Mongols aimed at the destruction of the Muslims. In these two decades relations between the Il-Khans of Persia and the Western powers grew very close, and, accordingly, the impressions of the Tartars dating from this period are often highly favorable. Yet, however attractive the Mongols might have appeared politically, they were not spiritually part of Christendom, and the missionary impulse was still strong. Calls for the conversion of the Tartars were still the dominant religious response to the Mongol presence, with the difference that their conversion was no longer desired principally as the removal of a military threat; fears that the Mongols would turn to Islam persisted, of course, but there was a growing tendency to portray the Tartars either as poor, foolish

men crying for conversion, or as wise philosophers who, once hearing the Gospel, would accept the Christian faith.

Prior to the the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 (which was attended by a Mongol delegation from the Il-Khanid state), Pope Gregory X issued two requests⁴⁹ for 'memoirs' on the subject of a new crusade to conquer the Holy Land.⁵⁰ One memoir was submitted by Bishop Bruno of Olmutz, which opposed a new crusade on the grounds that there were more dangerous threats closer to home than the Holy Land; he referred specifically to the need for a crusade against the 'northern pagans,' including the Tartars, who menaced Hungary, Poland, and Germany.⁵¹ Bruno urged that attention be given to the forcible conversion of these peoples, before expending enormous wealth and energy against the far-off Saracens.

This view was attacked in another memoir, the *Opus Tripartitum*, written by the Dominican Humbert of Romans. He advocated peaceful conversion among the northern barbarians, who, contrary to Bruno's view, "are not accustomed to attack us and cannot do us much harm."⁵² The Saracens, however, could not be converted by persuasion. A crusade was necessary in the Holy land, for, according to Humbert, among the seven sorts of men who had attacked Christianity—"Jews, idolaters, pagan philosophers, various heretics, the emperors before Constantine, barbarians, and Saracens"⁵³—only the Saracens remained dangerous: the 'barbarians' were the Tartars, who Humbert says "now wished to join the Christians in the fight against the Saracens."⁵⁴

Humbert's stand against crusades in the north was shared by the English Franciscan Roger Bacon (1214?-1292), who in fact urged the peaceful conversion of all peoples, in this diverging from Humbert. In his *Opus Majus*, completed around 1268, Bacon criticized the order of the Teutonic Knights for their crusades against the "northern pagans,' which includes the Tartars:

There is no doubt that all the heathen nations beyond Germany would long ago have been converted but for the brutality of the brethren of the German house because the pagan race has again and again been ready to receive the faith in peace through preaching. But they of the German house will not allow it because they want to subjugate them and reduce them to slavery. . . .⁵⁵

Thus, whereas Humbert compared the Tartars, though no more Christian than the Saracens, quite favorably with Christianity's traditional foe, Roger Bacon lays the responsibility for the Mongols' failure to convert among unscrupulous members of the Christian community. In this he echoes the statement of Rubruck (who was Bacon's principal source of information on the Mongols) to the effect that the Tartars were more 'innocent' than the Nestorian Christians. It is thus the Christian world which is at fault if the Mongols do not convert, as Bacon reiterates in a statement which also emphasizes his concern for the learning of pagan languages: "... how fearful we ought to be that God will hold the Latins to account because they neglect the preaching of the faith through their neglect of languages."⁵⁶

Roger Bacon is ambivalent regarding the qualities of the Tartars. On the one hand he portrays the Mongols, or 'Moal,' as an unlettered, ignorant people; he refers to "the Moal, who were poor people, foolish and simple, without law,"⁵⁷ and writes,

This race, then, of the Moal from its beginning has been a very foolish and poverty-stricken one, which, however, by divine permission little by little has subjugated all the neighboring nations, and in a short time has subverted the world in its whole breadth.⁵⁸

On the other hand, Bacon counts the Tartars among the six existing 'sects' which he views as comprising all of the world's intellectual traditions, "namely Saracens, Tartars, Pagans, Idolaters [Buddhists], Jews, Christians. For the principal sects do not exceed this number nor can they do so until the sect of Antichrist appears."⁵⁹ He refers to "the Tartars, who pursue eagerly philosophy and the arts of magic,"⁶⁰ and attributes to them sophisticated theological ideas such as a belief in their religion as a divine revelation⁶¹ and the notion of God as First Cause.⁶² Bacon admits that the Tartar religion is not as rational as the religions of the Jews, Saracens, or Christians,⁶³ yet affirms that it was through their knowledge that the Mongols conquered. According to Bacon, the small and poorly-fed Tartars did not conquer by their might; rather, their success came "by means of science and especially by means of astronomy, by which they profess to be ruled and directed in all things."⁶⁴ The Mongols are thus portrayed as wise and artful philosophers whose 'science' is the key to their worldly power.

A final element of Roger Bacon's view of the Mongols involves his vision of the Apocalypse. He affirms that a sign of the imminent arrival of the Antichrist would be the coming of the people of Gog and Magog, and that the Tartars had come forth from those northern regions in which Gog and Magog had been bound; but he notes that throughout history other races have burst out from these regions, "just as the Tartars are now doing," and concludes, "Therefore the invasion of the Tartars is not sufficient to fix the time of the coming of Antichrist, but other facts are required. . . ." ⁶⁵ Bacon effectively sundered the connection between the Mongols and the people of Gog and Magog, emphasizing the geographical determinants of the people who are to come from the north in the last days; he urged the Church to heed those distant regions, both because they would provide the signs of the coming of Antichrist, and because they were currently inhabited by peoples who required conversion:

Oh, how necessary it is for the Church of God that prelates and catholic men should consider these regions, not only for the conversion of the races there, and the consolation of the Christian captives in the same, but because of the persecution of Antichrist, so that we may know whence he is to come and when, by studying this matter and many others. ⁶⁶

Bacon thus distinguished between the Mongols who inhabited the 'northern regions' in his time, and the eschatological people of Gog and Magog; he assigned an apocalyptic significance to the region from which the Mongols came, but did not directly identify them with the people who were to signal the advent of Antichrist. In his reduction of the apocalyptic features of the Mongol image, and even more so in his views of the Mongols as wise men, his concern for their conversion, and his stress on the learning of languages to facilitate missionary work, Roger Bacon stands as a parallel to his younger Spanish contemporary, Ramon Lull; it is Lull, however, who marks the most fitting culmination of the various strands of the religious response to the Mongols in the thirteenth century.

Ramon Lull and the Mongols

The life of Ramon Lull ⁶⁷ (1232?-1316) spanned a period of over eighty years in which occurred most of the major military and

diplomatic encounters between the Mongols and Western Europe. Born less than ten years after the first appearance of the Mongols in south Russia (1223), he died less than ten years before the old Christian dream of an alliance against the Muslims was finally shattered by the peace between the last Il-Khanid ruler and the Mamluks (1323). He thus lived during the period of initial horror at the Mongol invasion of 1237-1242, but his literary work began during the hopeful years when a military alliance with the Mongols of Persia seemed imminent; consequently his impressions of the Mongols appear quite favorable, and he unites, as did Roger Bacon, a somewhat idealized image of the Tartars with an intense feeling for the urgency of missionary work among them and among other unbelievers.

Unlike Roger Bacon, however, Lull was actively engaged in such missionary work and in the fostering of programs for the conversion of the Jews, Saracens, and Tartars. His life seems to have unfolded by means of a tension between two ideals, a tension which parallels the Franciscan⁶⁸ attempt to synthesize the eremitical ideal with a life of preaching and service. On the one hand, Lull's ideal man was the hermit epitomized in one of his most famous works, the *Blanquerna*, written in his native Catalan around 1283. The hermit Blanquerna, who certainly represents Lull's highest aspirations for himself, renounces a world of ease and luxury and goes into the forest to fix his mind on God; the description of his renunciation evokes the attraction which the solitary life held for Lull:

For the whole of that day. . . Blanquerna journeyed through the forest. At nightfall he came to a fair meadow, wherein was a beautiful fountain, beneath a tall tree. There did Blanquerna take his rest, and he slept all that night. Before dawn he began his prayers as he was wont; and through the strangeness and solitariness of the place, and the heavens and the stars, his soul was highly exalted in the contemplation of God. When he heard the wild beasts roaming through the forest, his prayer was disturbed through his fears, but by hope and fortitude his mind was strengthened to trust in the sovereign aid of God.⁶⁹

On the other hand there was for Lull no greater task for the Christian than to demonstrate the truth of his religion to all those who had not yet embraced it. It was this ideal which led him to implore the Church to establish missionary schools in which the heathen languages would be taught along with the arts of disputing

with unbelievers. The hermitage which he founded in his native Majorca was also a college, for despite his love for the life of solitude, Lull insisted that the hermit be also an educated man, well versed in the science of theology, and able to serve as a missionary to convert, by argumentation, the unbelievers; such learning was to be used to 'destroy the Qur'anic theology and Averroist philosophy' of the Saracens, to 'prove the divinity of Christ denied by the Jews,' and to 'refute the fatalist naturalism of the Tartars.'⁷⁰

The tension between these two ideals is apparent even in the *Blanquerna*, for the simple hermit eventually enters a monastery, rises to the position of abbot, and is finally elected Pope. He fulfills the worldly responsibilities of these positions admirably, but after many years in the papal see again feels "the desire which he had had aforetime to lead the life of a hermit."⁷¹ He retires to his church-hermitage on a high hill, but even there the cares of the world disturb him; finally he removes himself still further from worldly life and, as Lull implies, benefits Christendom more by his contemplative life than by his work as a Church official:

In this life and in this happy state Blanquerna remained until the people of those parts conceived a great devotion to the virtues of the altar of the Holy Trinity which was in that church; and through the devotion which they had, there came to that place men and women, who disturbed Blanquerna in his prayer and contemplation. And lest the people should lose the devotion which they had to that place, he feared to tell them that they should not come there, wherefore Blanquerna changed his cell, and went to a hill which was a mile distant from the church. . . ; and in that place he remained and dwelt, and would not go to the church at any time when the people were there, neither desired that any man or any woman should come to that cell wherein he had taken up his abode.

Even so lived Blanquerna, and remained in the estate of a hermit, considering that never had he led so pleasant a life, nor ever had been so well prepared for the exaltation of his soul to God. . . . And, through the holy life of Blanquerna, the Pope and the Cardinals and their officers stood likewise the better in the grace of God.⁷²

Ramon Lull was born in Majorca, probably around 1232, only a few years after that island had been conquered by James I of Aragon and recovered from the Muslims.⁷³ He was from a noble family, and, being made tutor while still quite young to Peter and James, the two sons of the king, the pleasant, easy life of the court seems to have

turned him into something of a profligate. This period ended with a conversion experience in 1263, and with the zeal of a new proselyte he turned his energies to spreading the faith he had found; a contemporary biography records that Lull, "now wholly enkindled in the ardor of love for the Cross, deliberated as to what greater or more pleasing act he could do than to convert infidels and unbelievers to the truth of the holy Catholic faith. . . ." ⁷⁴

Accordingly, he devoted himself to study for the next several years, learning Latin and Arabic; his first literary work, the *Book of Contemplation* (1272) was written initially in Arabic and then translated into Catalan. This work was devoted to a defense of Christianity against Muslim beliefs, although he does mention other unbelievers—"Tartars, heretics, idolaters, and many other sects which adore the sun and beasts and serpents, and do to these the reverence which they should do to Thy Deity, O Lord, and to Thy Humanity." ⁷⁵ Although he later admitted the need for the use of force against the unbelievers, Lull at this stage hopes for the conversion of the Saracens through argument and rational demonstration, and deplores the warfare between Christian and Muslim:

. . . were they at peace together, they could dispute with each other peacefully concerning the faith, and then it would be possible for the Christians to direct and enlighten the Saracens in the way of truth, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. . . . ⁷⁶

In advocating the peaceful conversion of the unbelievers, Lull reflected a common feeling of the time. The attitudes of Humbert of Romans and Roger Bacon toward peaceful conversion were noted above, and another tract written prior to the Second Council of Lyons expressed confidence that the Muslims would flock to Christianity if only they heard the Gospel: William of Tripoli, in his *De Statu Saracenorum*, affirmed that "solely by the word of God, without philosophical argument and without military weapons, they will seek as simple sheep the baptism of Christ. . . ." ⁷⁷ Finally, even so noted a figure as St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274) upheld the principle that unbelievers should not be physically coerced into accepting Christianity, since they "have never received the faith;" Christians should fight against these only to prevent them from hindering the true religion, while by contrast heretics and apostates must be compelled by any means to return to the Catholic faith. ⁷⁸

The tradition of peaceful conversion was strong in Lull's native country of Catalonia. There Ramon Marti (d. 1286) urged a greater effort at proselytization in his *Pugio Fidei*,⁷⁹ while the Dominican St. Ramon de Peñafort (1176?-1275) urged the peaceful conversion of unbelievers and emphasized the importance of studying Oriental languages.⁸⁰ It was undoubtedly this latter figure who influenced Lull's thinking on the matter, for the two met and discussed their missionary ideals in 1265. Lull's emphasis on the peaceful conversion of the Muslims did not go so far as to deny, with William of Tripoli, the need for philosophical arguments; yet throughout his works Lull reflects a respect for and sober appreciation of the religious sentiments of non-Christians, whether Saracens, Jews, or Tartars, an attitude which seems out of place in the highly polemical ambience of the Middle Ages.⁸¹

As early as 1277 Lull, after having established his own missionary college at Miramar in Majorca, journeyed to Rome "to obtain of the Holy Father and of the Cardinals that through-out the world should be founded monasteries wherein should be studied divers languages, to the end that unbelievers should be converted."⁸² Such requests were to become a standard pattern in Lull's life. In 1285 he returned to Rome and appears to have had some success in influencing the new Pope, Honorius IV, who "required that the study of Arabic and of other languages of the heathen should be established at Paris."⁸³

During the following year he went to Paris itself and, to the new king of France, Philip the Fair, proposed the foundation of schools for language study. Lull alludes to this in a work written in 1286, *Felix*, or *The Book of Marvels*:

A man who for a long time had labored for the utility of the Roman Church came to Paris and said to the King of France and to the University of Paris that there should be established in Paris monasteries, wherein should be learned the languages of those that are unbelievers; and that into these languages should be translated the *Ars demonstrativa*;⁸⁴ and that with that *Ars demonstrativa* men should go to the Tartars and preach to them and show it to them; and that there should be Tartars at Paris who should learn our writing and language before returning with this knowledge to their own country.⁸⁵

The value of learning languages and preaching to the heathens is also indicated by this figure, who says that "if the Tartars. . . and the

other heathen, are converted, the Saracens will be destroyed; so that. . . through the greatness of charity, the whole world will be converted to Christianity.”⁸⁶

This period of Ramon’s life thus saw him turn increasingly to the Tartars for the prime target of missionary work, perhaps reflecting the close relations which existed at the time between the Western powers and the Il-Khan Abagha (1265-1282). This new emphasis is reflected in the “*Blanquerna*” (1283). On one occasion, *Blanquerna*, as Pope, sends a command to a certain bishop that

he should provide yearly for fifty Tartars and ten friars whom the Pope sent to that diocese, that the Tartars might teach their language to the friars and the friars teach theirs to the Tartars. . . ⁸⁷

Later the outcome of this command is recorded:

It came to pass that of the fifty Tartars who learned our language and gained understanding of our faith, thirty were converted, and the Pope sent them with five friars to the Court of the Khan. These thirty, together with the five friars who had learned the language of the Tartars, came before the great Khan, and preached the faith of the Christians, and converted the great Khan from the error wherein he lived and made him to doubt it; and after a time, by process of this doubt, he came to everlasting life.⁸⁸

Elsewhere, the good relations between Europe and the Mongols of Persia are fictionalized in an account of cooperation, for the good of the Church, between ‘Pope *Blanquerna*’ and the ruler of the Tartars:

There went a messenger to Turkey,⁸⁹ and he found there four friars who had learned the language of the Turks, and the Turks forbade them to preach their land; and the messenger reported this in writing to the Cardinal, and the messengers were chosen whom the Pope sent with many gifts to the ruler of the Tartars who had subjected Turkey to his overlordship. The Pope requested the ruler of the Tartars, by his messengers, that he would suffer the four friars to preach the honor of the Son of God throughout all Turkey, and the ruler suffered it by reason of the prayers and the gifts which the Pope sent to him; so the Turks no longer dared to forbid the friars to preach from thenceforward.⁹⁰

Several other references to the conversion of the Tartars may be found in Lull's writings. In his *Book of the Five Wise Men* (1293), which portrays a discussion between a Muslim and representatives of Latin, Greek, Nestorian, and Jacobite Christianity, he expresses the fear that the Tartars might be converted by the Saracens because of the division among Christians.⁹¹ The same fear is the very foundation of the *Petition of Ramon for the Conversion of the Heathen*, presented to Pope Celestine V in 1294. This petition calls for the teaching of all the languages of the world, urging the foundation of missionary colleges for such instruction both in Tartary and in Christendom; it advocates a special effort to bring back schismatics into the Catholic fold, for they are best able to convert the Muslims and Tartars; and it stresses the urgency of taking these measures, for at present the Tartars have no 'law' but might soon establish a religion and be converted by either the Jews or the Saracens—and then "all Christendom will be in dire peril".⁹²

This *Petition* represents a different tone for Lull than is evident in his earlier works, for he uses the threat of the Mongols' adopting another faith as the impetus for missionary work. Possibly indicating a less flexible attitude to the unbelievers than he had adopted before,⁹³ this work goes so far as to call for an armed crusade against the 'lands of the infidels' as well as the Holy Land.⁹⁴ He continued to urge the foundation of language schools, as, for instance, in his letters to the French king from 1298 or 1299 advocating the establishment in Paris of a "studium Arabicum, Tartaricum et Graecum;"⁹⁵ yet he increasingly portrayed the Mongols as a threat to Christendom.

An interesting example of this is found in a work dating from 1307 called the *Disputation of Ramon the Christian and Hamar the Saracen*. In this work Lull again proposed the foundation of schools for the instruction of missionaries in heathen languages, giving as justification the tremendous opportunities for proselytization in the lands of the Tartars (from whom, nevertheless, "the whole of Christendom is in the greatest danger").⁹⁶ He continues with a description of the three Tartar emperors, who, despite the fact that only seventy years have passed since the Tartars "came out of the mountains," are said to rule an area twice the extent of the Christian and Saracen lands combined. The first of these is the Great Khan, who rules the "land of Prester John" in the east; next Cotay (metathesis for Toctay, or Toqtoga, a ruler of the Golden Horde), who is surrounded by

'proselytizing Saracens;' and finally Carbenda, ruler of Persia, who converted to Islam in the time of his brother 'Casan' (Gazan).

Lull seems to have been repeatedly disappointed in his attempts to encourage language study and missionary work. The introduction to his *Desconort* ('Disconsolateness'), written in 1295 after the discouraging reception of his *Petition*, states that the book was

made by master Ramon Lull in his old age, when he saw that neither the Pope nor the other lords of the world would put forth a method for the conversion of the heathen, according as he had prayed them at many and diverse seasons.⁹⁷

He was again disappointed when, in 1301, he sailed from Majorca for Palestine upon hearing that the Tartar emperor "Cassanus" had conquered Syria, hoping to do missionary work; arriving in Cyprus, however, "he found that the news was false."⁹⁸ The Il-Khan Gazan had indeed defeated the Mamluks in Syria in 1299, but had withdrawn to deal with a rebellion in Persia.

The last years of Lull's life saw him concentrating on the conversion of the Muslims once again. He was in Paris from 1309-1311, leading a campaign against Averroist philosophy, and he attended the Council of Vienne—where he once more proposed the establishment of language schools—in 1311. He died a martyr at Bugia in North Africa, where he had undertaken two missionary journeys before, in 1292 and 1307; this time (late 1315 or early 1316), he was stoned, as he had almost been during the earlier trips, by a crowd which objected to his exaltation of the Christian faith over Islam.

It is not certain whence Ramon Lull derived his information concerning the Mongols. Certainly the reports of the travelers reached him, and there may have been Spanish connections with the East: the Franciscan Albert of Pisa, provincial of England from 1237 to 1238, is known to have been also the provincial of Hungary, Germany, and Spain;⁹⁹ and Rubruck relates the following story of a Catalan Dominican he met at 'Naxua' (Nakhichevan) in Greater Armenia:

In that city Friar Bernard the Catalan of the Order of Friars Preachers met me; he had stayed in Georgia with a prior of the Sepulchre. . . ; and he had learned a little Tartar and had been with a Friar from Hungary to Argon at Tabriz to ask for transit to Sartach. When they arrived there they were unable to obtain an audience, and the Hungarian Friar returned by my ar-

rangement to Tiflis with a servant, but Friar Bernard remained at Tabriz with a German lay-brother. . . ¹⁰⁰

Lull himself, however, was quite well-traveled, and it is not unlikely that he himself reached some of the areas ruled by the Mongols. It is certain that he reached Lesser Armenia in Anatolia in 1301, on his return from Cyprus;¹⁰¹ but there is also evidence of wide travel during a much earlier period of his life, from 1277 to 1282, during which period there is little information on his activities. This period came immediately after his first trip to Rome with proposals for establishing language schools, and just before he wrote *Blanquerna*. There is evidence that he went to Germany and even met the Emperor Rudolf of Hapsburg, while the *Blanquerna* describes many countries—from Abyssinia to Georgia to 'Tartary'—in a fashion that indicates he may actually have visited them.¹⁰² The *Felix*, written in 1286, implies that Lull went to Jerusalem, and contains this oblique reference to its author:

A holy man visited the Tartars and many other idolaters who lived near them. That holy man regarded and considered the works which they did, and marvelled when he saw them do such dishonor to God,—namely, when some set up as God idols of gold and silver, others the sun, others the moon, others beasts and birds, and after diverse manners made strange gods.¹⁰³

Finally, again from a later period, there is a reference in a work dating from 1305, the *Liber de fine*, which implies that Lull traveled in Tartary (which refers unquestionably to the Il-Khanid state):

In 1305 he records in the *Liber de fine* that a 'certain man', who by the context is shown to have been undoubtedly himself, gave up all that he had, and, because of the evil state of the world, went over the whole earth seeking how best this could be remedied. The same book, in terms which distinctly suggest that the author knew Tartary, describes the intellectual and spiritual poverty of the Tartars, and the reported desire of their emperor¹⁰⁴ for Christian baptism.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Ramon Lull's image of the Tartars involves a work he wrote in 1285 or 1286, shortly after the period of travel, called the *Book of the Tartar and the Christian* (*Liber Tartari et Christiani*).¹⁰⁶ This book utilizes one of Lull's favorite devices, a polite dialogue between representatives of the major reli-

gions. In structure and argument the *Book of the Tartar and the Christian* reflects the first of Lull's works to use this device, the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, written in 1272 or 1273; indeed, the 'Gentile' in this work is certainly the Tartar of the later work, without the name applied, for both are presented in similar ways.

In the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*,¹⁰⁷ a heathen 'philosopher,' the Gentile, who "had no knowledge of God, neither believed in resurrection, nor supposed that there was aught beyond death," becomes sad pondering his eventual death; he wanders, from "distant lands," into a beautiful forest of the type entered by the hermit Blanquerna upon his renunciation. In the meantime, three wise men, a Jew, a Christian, and a Saracen, have left the gates of a certain city, discussing their religions as they walk into the forest, where they encounter the Gentile, now "sorely troubled and disconsolate." The Gentile explains his situation, and as his primary problem seems to be a fear of death, the wise men counsel him about God and resurrection; the Gentile rather uncritically accepts their arguments and recognizes One God, from whom he asks forgiveness for his sins, but he is distraught to discover that the three wise men have different views beyond their shared belief in one God. Lull then proceeds to describe, through his characters, each religion, and does so quite fairly and accurately. Interestingly enough, in the end the Gentile again praises God but accepts neither of the three religions. Seeing the Gentile depart praising God, the three wise men vow to dispute with one another in order that they might find one faith, one law, one religion, and one mode of worship, as they already knew one God;

... and they resolved that when they should have reached one faith. . . they would go throughout the world giving praise and glory to the name of our Lord God. So each of the wise men departed to his house.¹⁰⁸

The *Book of the Tartar and the Christian* follows somewhat the same pattern at first, but much more time is devoted to a discussion between the Tartar and the representatives of the Christian religion.¹⁰⁹ The Tartar of the story is a wise and earnest man, described as "sapiens & eruditus in Philosophia."¹¹⁰ He is concerned about the state of his soul, but has not previously sought religious advice because of thoughts of his wives, children, home, and the 'material losses which might follow his conversion.' However, the death of a

knight, his friend, leads him to think more seriously about his fate, and he goes successively to three teachers, a Jew, a Saracen, and a Christian. The Christian, unable to explain his faith to the Tartar's understanding, sends him on to the hermit Blanquerna, who explains the Christian religion at length. The Tartar is finally convinced, by the grace of God, and Blanquerna sends him to the Pope for baptism; the Tartar chooses the name 'Largus' at his baptism, "because God was so bountiful (*tam largus*) to men in sending His Son to earth."¹¹¹ As he prepares to leave, he begs that the book containing the account of his discussion with Blanquerna be translated, in order that other unbelievers might know what the Christians actually teach, and not be misled as he was; and watching him leave, an attending dignitary speaks for Lull, exclaiming, "Would that the Pope would send more of such messengers over all the earth!"¹¹²

Thus, in this work it is the Tartar who goes off converted to Christianity, instead of the representatives of the three religions vowing to find one faith, Lull uses the Tartar as a focus for a dialogue between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, but it is his portrayal of the Tartar which is significant: he is a wise man who thinks seriously about religious matters, and who, having come to see the truth of Christianity through discussion and persuasion, is concerned for the spiritual welfare of others. It may even be that the nomadic nature of the Mongols is being allegorized here, for the Tartar of the story, as well as the Gentile of the earlier work, are wanderers seeking peace and security in a true faith; they have left their homes and entered the wilderness seeking knowledge, and it seems plausible that, by extension from his representative of the Tartars, Lull might have attributed this noble motive to the Mongols in general.

It is a highly idealized image, of course, but one fictional extreme has been exchanged for another. The demons and monsters of the 1240's have given way to the wise philosopher, the innately intelligent and reasonable man to whom the complexities of Christian dogma can be easily imparted.

Conclusion

With Ramon Lull the European religious responses to the Mongols reached their culmination. He recognized the threatening side of the Mongols, but chose to portray them in a favorable light.

Earlier responses to the invaders portrayed them as inhuman creatures loosed from Hell, or as mythical peoples of the Apocalypse, or as remnants of the ancient tribes which had harassed the Israelites, and each of these represents an attempt to fit the Mongols into a world ordered by a traditional religious vision. Yet Lull's response was not essentially different from this. He was an idealist and a believer in the force of reason; for him the Mongols had to be rational, intelligent men in order to fit into his spiritual vision of the world, a vision which rested on the possibility of a union of all peoples under the Christian faith.

An interesting feature of the Christian responses to the Mongols' presence is the repeatedly conveyed sense of the relative innocence of the new people. This innocence is in a certain sense implied in the view that the Mongols were monsters, under the control of God, who uses them as the instrument of divine wrath. Such a view inevitably involved the penitential attitude which has characterized much of Christian religious expression, and it is essentially the same attitude which is to be seen in Rubruck's favorable comparison of the Tartars to the Nestorians and in the criticism of Christendom's failure to proselytize voiced by Roger Bacon and Ramon Lull.

Finally, it must be noted that for all the self-criticism evoked by the appearance of the Mongols—whether criticism of sins deserving and receiving punishment, or of the failure to live up to the Christian missionary ideal—and for all the favorable and even idealized portrayals of the Mongols, it was never suggested that the Mongols should not adopt Christianity or would not benefit by it. The common theme of most Western European religious responses to the Mongols must inevitably be their Christian foundation, and it may be said that the appearance of the Mongols, though never able to stimulate a united political front, did help to solidify, perhaps for the last time, the European consciousness of religious unity and homogeneity.

Notes

1. Palmer A. Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam: N. V. Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940), p. 267

2. Marjorie Reeves, "Joachimist Influences on the Idea of a Last World Emperor," *Traditio*, Vol.17 (1961), p. 324.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 325; later Joachimists attempted to assign these various roles to contemporary figures, and among Italians the favorite candidate for the position of the evil ruler was the Emperor Frederick II.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 324, note 3.
6. Quoted by George Boas, in *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 210.
7. The ideal of the 'spiritual nomad' seems never to have been connected with the nomadic Mongols directly; compare the statement of William of Rubruck, "The Tartars have no abiding city, nor do they know of the one that is to come" [from *The Mongol Mission*, 'translated by a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey,' ed. Christopher Dawson (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), p. 93].
8. Quoted by Boas, *Essays*, p.119.
9. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), p. 41.
10. Boas, *Essays*, p. 215.
11. Ratzinger, *Theology*, p. 31.
12. *Ibid.*, p.32.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, p.53. It is interesting to note that in medieval Jewish legends and rabbinical literature the Rechabites were identified with the Lost Tribes of Israel who were "taken by God to a safe and paradise-like refuge until they could return and claim the land of Palestine" [E. G. Martin, "Rechabites," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1976), p. 728]. In view of the idealized picture of the Rechabites in both Christian and Jewish circles, the nomadic qualities assigned to them, and the identification also of the Mongols with the Lost Tribes, it would be fascinating to find the Mongols directly linked with the Rechabites; no such direct identification has been found, unfortunately.
15. Quoted by Ratzinger, *Theology*, p.54.
16. From *Matthew Paris's English History*, trans. J. A. Giles (3 Vols; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853-54), Vol. I, p. 312.
17. *Ibid.*, Vol I, pp. 312-313.
18. Matthew Paris, Vol. I, p. 346; the Emperor obviously has the papacy in mind as the source of God's provocation.
19. *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016-1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes (London: Camden Society, Third Series, Vol. 25, 1914), p. 66.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
22. Matthew Paris, Vol. III, p. 452.
23. Letter dated March 2, 1257; quoted by Shinobu Iwamura in "The Mongol Invasion of Poland in the 13th Century," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, Vol. X (1938), p. 136.
24. Matthew Paris, Vol. II, p. 30.
25. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 473.
26. From *The Mongol Mission*, ed. Dawson, p. 83; the parallel section from a translation of the Persian copy reads: "The eternal God has slain and annihilated these

lands and peoples, because they have neither adhered to Chingis Khan, nor to the Khagan, both of whom have been sent to make known God's command, nor to the command of God. . . . How could anybody seize or kill by his own power contrary to the command of God?" (Dawson, p. 85).

27. From Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, p. 132.
28. Matthew Paris, Vol. I, pp. 348-349.
29. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 469.
30. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 472-473.
31. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 357.
32. In *Annales Marbaccenses*, for 1222 (*Monumenta Germaniae historica*, *Scriptores*, Vol. 17, p. 175), wherein the Jews are said to have 'exulted' in and 'applauded' the rumors of the Mongols, whose king was called the 'son of David'; and in *Gestorum Treverorum Continuatio IV* (MGH. SS. Vol. 24, pp. 403-404), for 1241, in which the Jews are said to have rejoiced in the people who were to come out from behind the northern mountains at the end of the world.
33. Marjorie Reeves, "Joachimist Influences," p. 324, note 3.
34. *Chronicle of Novgorod*, p. 64.
35. Matthew Paris, Vol. II, p. 28.
36. *Chronicle of Novgorod*, p. 82.
37. Matthew Paris, Vol. III, p. 451. Rubruck (Dawson, p. 213) relates that an Armenian bishop interpreted Methodius' prophecy about the Ishmaelites in *Annales Scheflarienses Maiores* (MGH. SS. Vol. 17, p. 341), as 'Ismahelitas,' and in *Gestorum Treverorum Continuatio IV* (MGH. SS. Vol. 24, p. 403), as 'Hysmahelitas.'
38. Described by Jean Richard in "Ultimatums Mongols et Lettres Apocryphes: L'Occident et les motifs de guerre des Tartares," *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 17 (1973), pp. 219-221.
39. Echoing this idea that the Mongols' enemies are the established powers of Christendom, and not Christendom itself, is John of Plano Carpini's observation that "it is their object to wipe off the face of the earth all princes, nobles, knights, and men of gentle birth. . . ." (Dawson, *Mongol Mission*, p. 44).
40. Matthew Paris, Vol. I, p. 472; one can imagine these 'explanations' being discussed, some more seriously than others, among the people of Europe, and taken by Yvo for Mongol propaganda.
41. Jean Richard, "Ultimatums. . .", p. 221.
42. Dawson, *Mongol Mission*, p. 15.
43. Dawson, *Mongol Mission*, p. 220.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
47. *Memoirs of the Crusades*, trans. Sir Frank Marzials (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1957; originally published in 1908), pp. 254-257.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
49. *Salvator noster in*, dated March 31, 1272, and *Dudam super generalis*, March 11, 1273.
50. Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, pp. 19-20.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
55. Quoted by Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, p. 111.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
57. *Opus Majus*, trans. Robert Belle Burke (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), Vol. I, p. 385.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 788.
60. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 806.
61. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 805.
62. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 796. It is interesting to note in this connection that Dante attributes a belief in the immortality of the soul to the Tartars: "I say that of all stupidities that is the most foolish, the basest, and the most pernicious, which believes that after this life there is no other; for if we turn over all the scriptures both of the philosophers and of the other sage writers, all agree in this that within us there is a certain part that endures. . . . this we see is the contention of every poet who has spoken according to the faith of the Gentiles; this the contention of every religion, Jews, Saracens, and Tartars, and all others who live according to any law." [*Convito* II.9.55-72; from *The Convivio of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed (London: J.M. Dent and Company, 1912), pp. 97-98.
63. *Opus Major*, trans. Burke, Vol. II, p. 807.
64. *Ibid.*, Vol I, p. 416. Bacon projects the Tartars' exercise of their 'magical' knowledge back to a period before Europe knew of the Mongols, in a passage which is nevertheless of interest with regard to the 'conspiracy' rumors of the 1240's; he mentions the leaders of the 'children's crusades' in France and Germany, saying "The wise should not doubt that they were emissaries of the Tartars and Saracens, and that they had some means by which they fascinated the people." (Vol. I, p. 416.)
65. *Opus Majus*, trans. Burke, Vol. I, p. 645.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 382.
67. This is the old Catalan form of his name; in modern Catalan it is Llull, while in Latin works the forms Lullus and Lullius are found [E. Allison Peers, *Ramon Lull: A Biography* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929), p. 5, note 2.]
68. Lull was associated with the Dominicans in his early life, but gradually became more attracted to the Franciscan Order, professing as a Franciscan tertiary in 1295 (Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 268).
69. *Blanquerna: A Thirteenth Century Romance*, trans. E. Allison Peers (London: Jarrolds, 1926), II.42.1 (p. 155).
70. Odette d'Allerit, "Ramon Llull y la Tradicion del Eremitismo Apostolico," *Estudios Lulianos*, Vol. 6 (1962), p. 109.
71. *Blanquerna*, V.96.1 (p. 402).
72. *Ibid.*, V.98.4-5 (pp. 408-409).
73. Unless otherwise noted, all information on Lull's biography is taken from Peers, *Ramon Lull*, passim.
74. Quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 26.
75. *Book of Contemplation*, ch. 278, quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 72.
76. *Ibid.*, ch. 204, in Peers, p. 73.
77. Quoted by Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, p. 122.

78. *Summa Theologica*, Part II, first number, question 10, article 8; cited by Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, p. 138.
79. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 297; cf. E. R. Daniel, "Apocalyptic Conversion: The Joachite Alternative to the Crusades," *Traditio*, Vol. 25 (1969), p. 127.
80. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 35; St. Ramon de Peñafort "founded two schools of Oriental languages, at Murcia and Tunis. Further it is certain that St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles* was written, when St. Ramon was general of his order, at his suggestion. . . " (*Ibid.*, p. 36).
81. Cf. Eusebio Colomer, "Ramon Llull y el judaismo en el marco historico de la Edad Media hispana," *Estudios Lulianos*, Vol. 12 (1968), p. 138.
82. From the contemporary biography, in Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 142.
83. From the *Annals of Spondanus*, 1285, cited by Peers, p. 193.
84. A work of Lull's dating from 1283-83, in which the art of philosophical and theological proof was discussed.
85. *Felix*, VIII. 46, quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 204. Lull praises the University of Paris in *Felix*, claiming that "to it . . . the whole world looks for enlightenment in the way of truth, and from it men shall go in great numbers to convert heathen philosophers, so that in the end the entire human race shall owe its knowledge and love of God to the illumination which comes from Paris" (Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 206).
86. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
87. *Blanquerna*, IV.80.9 (p. 328).
88. *Ibid.*, IV.80.12 (pp. 330-331).
89. It is not clear to what area Lull refers by the designation 'Turkey,' although for him the 'Tartars' generally mean the Mongols of Persia, probably implying that these Turks, subjected to the Tartars, are the Turks of Anatolia.
90. *Blanquerna*, IV.88.5 (p. 376).
91. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 249.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
93. Eusebio Colomer, "Ramon Llull y el judaismo," p. 142.
94. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 253.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 279, note 2.
96. This account is taken from Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 332.
97. Quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 257.
98. From the contemporary biography, quoted by Peers, p. 304.
99. Edward Hutton, *The Franciscans in England, 1224-1538* (London: Constable and Company, 1926), p. 111.
100. From Dawson, *Mongol Mission*, p. 215.
101. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 306.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 145
103. *Felix* VIII.59, in Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 147.
104. "Cassanus Imperator Tartarorum" (Peers, p. 148, note 3), indicating that Persia, Gazan's Tartar kingdom, is meant.
105. Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 148.
106. Also known as *Liber Super Psalmum Quicumque Vult*, from the text which the Tartar and the Christian discuss.
107. The description follows Peers, *Ramon Lull*, pp. 83-97.
108. Quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 97.

109. The description follows Peers, *Ramon Lull*, pp. 197-200; cf. *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Vol. 29 (Paris: Librairie Universitaire, 1900), pp. 144-148.
110. From the Raymundus Lullus, *Opera* (Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1965; reprint of the Mainz edition of 1737), Vol. IV, p. 347.
111. Quoted by Peers, *Ramon Lull*, p. 199.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

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