

do not [...]. Those who have entered the *silam* d
orders of the Eternal Heavens and the Misaqa.¹⁹⁰

In his reply to the Pope, Arghun in turn repeated the religious policy of Genghis Khan, as perceived by John of Plano Carpini: "They believe in a creator God, but as their religion is not based on any law, the Mongols have not forced any person to renounce his own faith."¹⁹¹

The politically influential Christians, who had placed such hopes in the possibility of an alliance between the Ilkhans and the West, never convinced the kings of France and the Supreme Pontiffs to provide the Mongols of Iran with military assistance to vanquish Islam. The rumours of the conversion of the Khans, the emphasis on the protection of the Christians, on the figure of Doquz Khatun—presented as the daughter of the powerful King John of India (*filia potentissimi regis Indie Iohannis*),¹⁹² in other words of Prester John—as well as the promise to restore Jerusalem to the Papacy: all these good reasons invoked in support of a military alliance remained without effect. This "good news" which would appear to have been of Christian origin was not enough to persuade Christendom to ally with the Mongols in order to overcome their mutual enemy, even if some Latin princes of the East did from time to time respond favourably to the Ilkhans' offers for alliances. We have observed that this pursuit of a military alliance was almost at the point of coming to fruition when the Mongols of Iran converted to Islam. But at that time, the rulers of the West were preoccupied by the situation in their own realms, and the affairs of the Holy Land were no longer their main concern. Nevertheless, it seems to me important to take into account a psychological factor. This diplomatic correspondence brought into contact two incompatible universalizing ideologies. The Mongols claimed power, at least implicitly when dealing with their potential allies, over all the peoples of the Earth, in the name of Eternal Heaven, while the Papacy of Rome, in its missionary efforts, sought to extend Latin Christianity to the borders of the Far East.

190 Francis W. Cleaves and Antoine Mostaert, "Trois documents Mongols," Mongolian text, 450; French translation, 451. Here *Misqa* corresponds to *Misica* in Hülegü's Latin letter.

191 *Ystoria Mongalorum*, 39; *Storia dei Mongoli*, 238. But the idea that the Mongol rulers were indifferent to the religious practices of their (non-Mongols) subjects was not the product of a natural inclination towards syncretism. It sprang from the *Realpolitik*, as their habit of exploiting the religious susceptibilities of independent powers for diplomatic and strategic purposes, see Peter Jackson, "The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered," 277.

192 Lupprian, n° 44, 229.

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Hülegü's Letters to the Last Ayyubid Ruler of Syria. The Construction of a Model

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

The formation of Hülegü's *ulus*, after the fall of Baghdad and the abolition by the Mongols of the Abbasid Caliphate in 658/1260, profoundly altered the geopolitics of the lands east of Egypt. For the first time this part of *dār al-islām* fell under the rule of a non-Muslim power. The semblance of unity that the Abbasid caliphs had, not without difficulty, maintained across the Iranian plateau, Mesopotamia, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula was definitively broken. The establishment of the Persian Ilkhanate resulted in a clear dividing line between two rival powers: the Ilkhans, whose territories spanned much of the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia, and the Mamluks, who ruled Syria-Palestine and Egypt as well as controlling the Islamic holy places of the Hijaz.¹ For over fifty years, these rival powers fought a merciless ideological war, not without resorting to the use of arms. The Ilkhans launched several major offensives into Syria 1260, 1281, 1299, 1300, 1303 and 1312–13). The first invasion, led by Hülegü, ravaged northern Syria. He briefly captured Damascus, but the Mongol advance was halted at 'Ayn Jālūt in 658/1260 by the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Muzaffar Quṭuz and his emir Baybars. This long period of conflict was marked by the exchange of embassies and ample diplomatic correspondence between the two rival powers until the negotiations that led to the peace treaty of 1323.²

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1 Since the conquest of Yemen by Saladin's son Tūrān-Shāh in 569/1174 it had been the Ayyubid sultan's duty to protect the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. This task then fell to Mamluks, who presented themselves as the guarantors of Islam against the Mongol dynasty of Iran.

2 See Charles Melville, "Sometimes by the Sword, Sometimes by the Dagger: The Role of the Isma'ilis in Mamluk-Mongol Relations in the 8th/14th Century," in *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 247–263; Reuven Amitai, "The Resolution of the Mongol-Mamluk War," in *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, eds. R. Amitai and M. Biran (Leiden: Brill, 2005),