



Italian City-states and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries

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ITALSKÉ MĚSTSKÉ STÁTY A KATOLICKÉ MISIE V MONGOLSKÉM SVĚTĚ 13. A 14. STOLETÍ

ABSTRAKT Italské městské státy – Benátky, Janov, Pisa, Florencie, Milán, Siena, Lucca – se ve 12. a 13. století rozvíjely s rychlostí neobvyklou pro poklidný středověk. Rozšíření evropského trhu, růst obchodu s Východem, nájezdy do bohatých oblastí Sýrie, Palestiny, Malé Asie a Balkánu přispěly ve 14. století k rozkvětu italských měst, která se nacházela na křižovatce hlavních tras ve Středomoří. Obchodníci ze Západu ochotně využívali cesty přes Malou Asii a Írán, přičemž se postupně přesouvali dále ke zdrojům „jemného koření“. V těchto zemích souběžně postupovali jak janovští obchodníci, tak františkánští a dominikánští misionáři. Zejména janovské kolonie, faktorie a hlavní obchodní stanice se staly základnami těchto řádových misí.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA Mongolská říše; italské městské státy; pronikání do střední a východní Asie; františkánské a dominikánské misie na Východě

ABSTRACT The Italian city-states of the 12th and 13th centuries – Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Milan, Siena, Lucca – have developed and gained strength with the speed, which was unusual for a leisurely Middle Ages. The expansion of European market, growth of trade with the East, plundering raids on the rich regions of Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, and the Balkans contributed, in the 14th century, to the flourishing of the Italian cities, located at the crossroads of major routes in the Mediterranean. Western merchants were willing to use ways via Asia Minor and Iran, gradually moving farther and farther to the sources of “fine spices”. In these countries, side by side, were advancing both Genoese merchants and missionaries of Franciscan and Dominican orders. The Genoese colonies, factories and leading trading posts were supporting bases of these order missions.

KEY WORDS The Mongol Empire; Italian city-states; penetration into Central and East Asia; the Franciscan and Dominican missions in the East

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 13th century, during the rise of the Mongol Empire in the East, Italy saw the ascent of numerous Maritime Republics (*Repubbliche Marinare*), the most notable of them being Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi. These city-states, being involved in the Crusades, took advantage of political and trading opportunities. Venice and Genoa soon became main gateways of Europe in the trade with the East, often controlling most of the commercial transactions with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Mediterranean world, and establishing colonies as far as the Black Sea.

In the first half of the 13th century, the Venetians, Genoese, Pisans, Catalanians, Marseillais substantially strengthened their positions in the Aegean Islands, Cyprus and Cilician Armenia¹. Especially active were the Venetians, who settled down

1 Cilician Armenia, The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (Classical Armenian: *Kilikio Hayots Tagavorutyun*, 1080/1198–1375), was an independent principality formed during the High Middle Ages by Armenian refugees fleeing the Seljuk invasion of Armenia. It was located outside of the Armenian Highland and centred in the Cilicia region northwest of the Gulf of Alexandretta, in what is today southern Turkey. – See Der Nersessian (1962): 630–631.

in Crete, Euboea, the Cyclades Islands and on the shores of the Sea of Marmara. However, the trade contacts of the Westerners with Mongolian East at this time were limited to only a preliminary reconnaissance.

The Fourth Crusade (1201–1204) resulted in the conquest and looting of Constantinople. The Venetians, being the main transporter of crusaders, gained much booty and territorial gains at the expense of the Byzantine Empire. They mastered three eighths of the territory: a large part of the capital and Adrianopolis (now Edirne), important ports of Durres and Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast, Koroni (*Corone*) and Methoni (*Modone*) in the Peloponnese (the “eyes of Venice”), Gallipoli on the European shore of Dardanelles, Heraclea (ancient *Heraclea Pontica*, present-day Karadeniz Ereğli) in Western Anatolia, and almost all Greek islands, including Crete (*Candia*) and Euboea (*Negroponte*). In such a way they won the territorial base for the dominant position in the Mediterranean trade.

In the coming decades, Venice has used its military triumph to set up a trading and colonial empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. The chain of coastal forts stretched from Dalmatia, Greece and Crete to the Black Sea and trade routes now directed up to the heart of Asia. The main rival of Venice at that time became the other Italian trading city, Genoa. In 1261, with the help of the Genoese, Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (r. 1259–1282) surprisingly conquered Constantinople back, and Venice had to concede part of the colonies and trading privileges to Genoa.²

ITALIAN TRADING REPUBLICS

The Italian city-states of the 12th and 13th centuries – Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Milan, Siena, Lucca – have developed and gained strength with the speed, which was unusual for a leisurely Middle Ages. The expansion of European market, growth of trade with the East, plundering raids on the rich regions of Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, and the Balkans contributed to the flourishing of the Italian cities, located at the crossroads of major routes in the Mediterranean.

In the 13th century, they have become major centres of handicraft production. Florentine cloth, silk fabrics of Lucca, Genoese velvets, the products of Milanese armourers, Venetian glass – all these products became famous not only in Italy but also far beyond. Working mostly on imported raw materials, the Florentines, Lombardians, Genoese, and Venetians expanded the scope of their business activity. In France, England, Aragon, Castile, Portugal, Germany, the influence of Italian merchants and bankers were constantly growing. In Genoa and Venice, the main source of wealth and power has been a transit trade between Western Europe and the East.³

2 See Geanakoplos (1959).

3 Of course, they were not the only mediators. Their major rival was Pisa, and in addition, many non-Italian cities, including Narbonne, Marseille, Montpellier, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, were actively involved in the transit trade to the East.

In Genoa and Venice, in the 12th and 13th centuries, new forms of business enterprises, which were well adapted to the practice of international trade, were created. They represented a sort of the joint-stock companies, in which, under certain conditions, both persons financing the business expedition and its immediate participants have their share. Such companies (known as *commenda* in Genoa, later as *colleganzia* in Venice) often accounted for dozens of participants who could sell their shares.⁴ Both Genoa and Venice had an internal structure, perfectly suited for conducting the trade transactions of vast scope. All power in these Italian trading republics belonged to the merchant patricians who were getting the lion's share of income from the overseas trade.

In Genoa of the 13th and 14th centuries the government was in the hands of the merchant families of the Doria (or D'Oria), Fieschi, Spinola, Pallavicini, Lomellino, and Negro. In their hands were organs of municipal government, the Navy, shipyards, customs. They also have been the consuls in the overseas colonies, ambassadors at European courts, as well as the commanders of military fleets and caravans of merchant ships. The Genoese patricians delivered the papal court the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, masters and priors of religious orders, the offspring of the Genoese noble families occupied prominent positions in the papal chamber, the financial department of the successors of Saint Peter.⁵

The same pattern was in Venice, where the patrician houses of the Dandolo, Morosini, Mocenigo, Contarini, Zeno, and Soranzo mandated in the Great (Major) and Minor Councils of the Republic, sent the flotillas to overseas countries, ruled over the Venetian colonies and strongpoints and, together with their rivals, the Genoese, supplied Rome with church persons, closely related to the oligarchy of the City of Saint Mark.

EXPANSION OF GENOA TO THE EAST

In the early 1260s, political situation has changed dramatica-

4 Power (ed.) (2006): 83. How extensive was the wealth of the Venetian and Genoese magnates, we can see in the following examples: In 1268 the Doge of Venice Renier Zen (or Raniero Zeno, r. 1253–1268) stated in his will that the capital invested by him in 132 *colleganzias* is 22,935 Venetian lire, adding at the same time that the total value of its movable property is equal to 38,848 lire. – See Luzzatto (1949): 371. At the beginning of the 13th century Venetian lira corresponded to 33.65 grams of gold. Thus, in weight units, the capital of Renier Zen invested in commercial enterprises amounted to 772 kg of gold. By itself, this figure is very impressive, but the true meaning of it will be much clearer, if we consider that in 13th to 14th centuries people with average incomes could live on two Venetian lire a year. – See *ibid.*: 419.

5 A Genoese Sinibaldo Fieschi (1195–1254) ruled Christian Europe, for eleven years, as Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243–1254), for welfare of his native city. His nephew Ottobuono de' Fieschi (c. 1205–1276) became Pope Adrian V (r. July to August 1276). – See Sayous (1937).

lly as a result of a series of interrelated events. First, in 1261 the Byzantine Empire has been restored, and the Genoese, who contributed to a coup d'état in Constantinople, immediately invaded the Black Sea basin. Second, there was a final separation of khanates (*ulus*) of the Mongol Empire, and in 1261–1262 the Golden Horde and the new-born empire of il-Khan Hulagu (r. 1256–1265) came together in the struggle, fraught with real benefits for the European West.

John III Ducas Vatatzes (r. 1221–1254), Emperor of Nicaea, purified his possessions of Asia Minor from the “Latin” Knights, crossed the Dardanelles and established himself in Thrace, at the gates of Constantinople. The closest successor of John III – Michael Palaeologus – in early 1261, with the active support of local people, captured Constantinople. His main allies were the Genoese, on whose behalf an important pact was concluded.

In March 1261, the Treaty of Nymphaeum, a trade and defence pact between the Empire of Nicaea and the Republic of Genoa, was signed in Nymphaeum.⁶ The Genoese obtained the right of customs-free trade on land and at sea, they were given special quarters in Smyrna (present-day İzmir), Salonica (Thessaloniki) and Constantinople, and special outlets on the Aegean islands of Chios and Lesbos. All the passages in the Black Sea were declared closed to all non-Genoese and non-Byzantine vessels (with the exception of those from Pisa). In their colonies, the Genoese had unlimited rights and were subordinated only to the Genoese consuls.⁷

Pera, a suburb of the Byzantine capital,⁸ located on the north shore of the Golden Horn, became the main base area of Genoa in the Middle East. In essence, Michael Palaeologus gave the Genoese keys to his empire. The precise limits of the Genoese colony were stipulated in 1303, and they were prohibited from fortifying it. The Genoese however disregarded this, and through subsequent expansions of the walls, enlarged the area of their settlement.⁹

The Genoese immediately after the coup of 1261 orientated to the north. In 1266, their agents entered Crimea, then under

6 Nymphaeum (part of present Kemalpaşa) was the *de facto* capital city of the Empire of Nicaea (1204–1261), before the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. A clear view on the consequences of the Treaty of Nymphaeum is given by the Romanian historian Brătianu (1929): 111.

7 The city-state of Genoa, unlike ancient Rome, bestowed the title of Consul on various state officials, not necessarily restricted to the highest. Among these were Genoese officials (*Consoli del Mare*) stationed in various Mediterranean ports, whose role included helping Genoese merchants and sailors in difficulties with the local authorities.

8 The quarter, known also as Galata, first appears in Late Antiquity as Sykai or Sycae (from the old Greek name for the place, *Peran en Sykais*, literally “the Fig Field on the Other Side”). At present, Galata is a quarter within the borough of Beyoğlu in Istanbul, and is known as Karaköy.

9 These walls, including the mid-14th-century Galata Tower (originally *Christea Turris*, “Tower of Christ”, and completed in 1348), survived largely intact until the 19th century.

the Golden Horde, and in agreement with a local leader they acquired a land allotment on the eastern shore. The major overseas colony of the Genoese – Caffa (now Feodosiya) has there soon emerged.¹⁰ The Genoese established a flourishing trading settlement, which virtually monopolized trade in the Black Sea area and served as the chief port and administrative centre for the Genoese settlements around the Sea with one of Europe’s biggest slave markets.

In 1274, the Genoese settled in Soldaia (present-day Sudak in Crimea), driving the Venetians who had settled in the harbour only four years before the Treaty of Nymphaeum. In the first decades of the 14th century, the Genoese flag was already flying over dozens colonies in the Black Sea and the main harbour of the Sea of Azov – Tana (now Azov). In the 14th–15th centuries, there were 39 colonies of Genoa on the eastern shore of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov coastal area, the southernmost of them being in Sebastopoli (present-day Sukhumi).¹¹

In the last quarter of the 13th century, all grain from the southern Russian steppes and Kuban went to Byzantium and Italy through the Genoese. Caffa has become a centre of the slave trade. By the medium of the Genoese, the Golden Horde has sold live goods – the captives taken in raids on Russian, Polish, Lithuanian and Caucasian lands.¹²

The main advantage won by the Genoese in the result of “appropriation of the *Pontus Euxinus*” (as mentioned by Nicephorus Gregory, the Byzantine chronicler of the first half of 14th century) lay in the fact that they were able to settle on the initial sections of the trade route walking from Caffa to the Volga region, Khwarezm, Central Asia, Mongolia and China. The coup in 1261 extremely aggravated the already very tense Genoese–Venetian relations. The last third of the 13th century and the 14th–15th centuries was an era of continuous heavy wars between Genoa and Venice, complicating the political situation in the Mediterranean. These wars, to a large extent, contributed to the success of the gains by the Ottoman Turks in the South-Eastern Europe, disorganizing the whole system of transit trade relations between East and West in the 15th century.

10 In 1204–1261 and again 1296–1307, the city of Caffa was ruled by Genoa’s chief rival, the Republic of Venice. In the late 13th century, traders from the Republic of Genoa arrived and purchased the town from the ruling Golden Horde. Under Genoa, Caffa was governed, since 1266, by the Genoese consul, who in turn, since 1316, was in charge of all Genoese Black Sea colonies. – “I Genovesi nel Mar Nero” (2002).

11 Zevakin – Penčko (1938). At the end of the 14th century, about four dozen colonies were in Crimea. In Soldaia a cluster of 18 small colonies has been established. – See Brătianu (1929): 198 sq.

12 The Mongols were not the only supplier who delivered slaves to the Genoese. Circassian feudal lords and the Genoese themselves were engaged in this business, as well. The main consumer of live goods was Egypt, but also to Italy were continuously directed transports of slaves. – Cf. Zevakin – Penčko (1938): 176–177; Heyd (1936), vol. I: 558–561.

ITALIAN COLONIES IN THE TRANSIT ROUTES
TO THE EAST

Western merchants were willing to use ways via Asia Minor and Iran, gradually moving farther and farther to the sources of “fine spices”. In these countries, side by side, were advancing both Genoese merchants and missionaries of Franciscan and Dominican orders. The Genoese colonies, factories and leading trading posts were supporting bases of these order missions.¹³

A starting point of all Genoese roads leading to the Black Sea and the Iranian-Indian territories was Pera, “Genoa of Bosphorus”, the largest trading centre in the Mediterranean. In the first half of the 14th century, this Genoese colony in the Golden Horn surpassed, in its turnover, Constantinople or, more precisely, the Greek part of it, ruled by powerless Byzantine emperors. Pera was the main base of the Genoese fleet, through which various products originated in Eastern Europe (leather, beef, furs, wax, honey, hemp etc.) were exported to Italy. Pera supplied Thrace, Bulgaria, Moldova, Wallachia and the Golden Horde with Italian, French, Flemish cloth, silk fabrics from Lucca, linen cloth from Reims, Genoese velvets, Greek, Cypriot and Sicilian wines. Spices, precious Iranian and Syrian cloth, goat hair, raisins, dried figs, dyes, alum, raw silk, camlet etc. were transported from Pera to the East.

Smyrna (present-day İzmir) in the western extremity of Anatolia was much inferior in importance of Pera. Transit trade here was negligible, and the Genoese stronghold, which in 1261 existed in this city, had a rather strategic importance. But in 1275, the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus has granted the Genoese brothers Benedetto I Zaccaria (c. 1235–1307)¹⁴ and Manuele (Manel) Zaccaria (d. 1309/10) the town of Phocaea (*Foceia*, present-day Foça), situated on the Asia Minor coast, some 50 kilometres northwest of the Gulf of Smyrna. There were huge deposits of alum within this lordship (*signioria*), and the Byzantine emperor provided the Zaccarias with a monopoly on its export. Thus Phocaea has become a large base of Genoa. Its importance has increased particularly in the 1280s, when Benedetto I Zaccaria, who was

one of the most influential advocates of a broad penetration of Genoa to the East, proceeded to implement his other plans. In these plans, a pivotal role played Ayas (*Laiazzo*, *Ajazzo* or *Lajazzo*), main harbour of Cilician Armenia, on a direct route to Tabriz.¹⁵ In 1289 Benedetto Zaccaria was given a concession for this harbour. Some time later, new Genoese naval base – *Portus Palorum* – has been created near Ayas.¹⁶ Benedetto Zaccaria received the right to free passage of goods and a Cilician part of this transit road was put under the control of the Genoese.¹⁷

One of the major junctions in that area was Sivas, the key to a mountain pass in the Anti-Taurus, on the way from Anatolia to Greater Armenia.¹⁸ From Sivas the Genoese entered Greater Armenia and in the 1280s their agents established in Erzincan (in the eastern Anatolian region) and Nakhichevan¹⁹. Many Genoese were settled in Trabzon, the capital of the Empire of Trebizond (1204–1461), at that time. In 1306 they acquired here the castle of Leonkastron and a special quarter, in which no local could reside without the permission of the Genoese consul.²⁰

Even these key points on the way to Iran were important, they could not compare to Tabriz, the capital of the il-Khans and the main crossing of the transit routes of Southwest Asia. The first evidence of the presence of Western merchants in Tabriz refers to a testament of Venetian merchant Pietro Viglioni (or Vilioni, Vioni), dated on 10 December 1264. Viglioni arrived in Tabriz from Acre with German and Italian fabrics, and bought in Iran different eastern products, including sugar and pearls. He was not the sole representative of the Western trading world in Tabriz. His will is certified by several signatures, and the most of the witnesses were clearly Italians.²¹ But later the Venetians recede into the background, and only in the 1320s their position in Iran are considerably stronger. Although first evidence about the large Genoese colony in Tabriz dates back to 1304, certainly many Genoese settled in Tabriz already in the 1270s and 1280s. It is interesting that they combined their trading activities very well with the service at the court of il-Khans Abaga (r. 1265–1282) and Arghun (r. 1284–1291). Genoese interpreters were in staff of the

13 Unfortunately, the Genoese merchants, in contrast to the missionaries, have left very little evidence for their tireless work. Nor diaries or reports of agents of the Genoese trading houses have preserved, and only in the notarial archives of Genoa and its colonies in Famagusta, Pera and Caffa, in purely business documents, can be found the data on the penetration of Genoa to the East. – Lopez (1943): 168. However, over the last century, there were published many different notarial documents from the Genoese archives, allowing a clearer idea of the course and particularities of the Ligurian penetration to the East in the Genoese magazine *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria* and some Italian, English, Russian, Greek and Romanian media.

14 Benedetto I Zaccaria was, at different stages in his life, a diplomat, adventurer, mercenary, and statesman. He first appeared as a Genoese ambassador to the Byzantine court in 1264. This was in response to the alliance of Michael VIII with the Republic of Venice. – See Miller (1911); Lopez (1933).

15 Bournoutian (1997)

16 See map 1 in Golubovich (1913).

17 Langlois (1861): 4.

18 The first mention of Sivas in the Genoese notarial acts refers to 1274. At the end of the 13th century, in Sivas was already a large colony of the Genoese with their consul, under the Genoese authorities in Pera.

19 In the 13th century, during the reign of the Mongol ruler Güyük Khan (r. 1246–1248), Christians were allowed to build churches in the strongly Muslim town of Nakhichevan, however the conversion to Islam of Mahmud Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) brought about a reversal of this favour. Nevertheless, the 14th century saw the rise of Armenian Catholicism in Nakhichevan. – See Hewsens (2001): 266.

20 Brătianu (1929): 99–100.

21 *Archiv. Veneto*, XXVI, 161–165; Brătianu (1929): 185; Heyd (1936), vol. II: 110.

embassies of il-Khans to the European courts, and sometimes the Genoese even served as ambassadors and on behalf of their Mongol rulers were negotiating with the West.

These diplomats-merchants were, particularly, prominent figures of Tabriz – such as Buscarello de Ghisolfi and Tommaso d'Anfossi. The name of Buscarello de Ghisolfi²² is found in news of the many embassies of il-Khan Arghun and in notarial acts of Genoa and Caffa.²³ This Mongol-Genoese politician negotiated in Crimea and Kuban, and his descendants owned the town of Matrega (Taman peninsula).²⁴ Tommaso d'Anfossi was a member of a famous Genoese banking company and helped as an interpreter in the court of Arghun. Probably as a sign of his profession, he was nicknamed Banker. He was in close contact with Sa'ad ad-Dawla (c. 1240–1291), a Jewish physician and statesman, the head of the finance department of il-Khan Arghun.²⁵

The most important Genoese undertaking in Mongolian Iran in the 1280s was the equipment of the “secret” fleet on the Tigris. Around 1288 the Genoese sailors and shipbuilders arrived in Baghdad, where they built two large galleys designed for remote oceanic voyages.²⁶ In the equipment of this fleet participated also a Genoese Domenicano Doria, probably the author of the first maps, known as the portolan charts. He could surely rely on the experience of Persian cosmographers.²⁷

In 1280s, the Genoese had their own ships in the Caspian Sea, about which Marco Polo stated that there began to flow in only recently.²⁸ In 1270s and 1280s, the Genoese have lived in many cities on the trade routes leading from Tabriz to Hormuz, such as Shiraz, Kerman and Yezd. By 1290, they have built a network of bases that have been used by Catholic missionaries in Iran.

THE FRANCISCANS AND DOMINICANS ON THE ROAD TO THE EAST

The “blood bonds” of the Genoese trading colonies and bases of monastic missionaries are most eloquently evidenced in the map of the “Franciscan East” (*Carta della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*), compiled by the Franciscan histo-

22 Little is known about Buscarello, except for his work as ambassador, and that he was a member of the powerful Ghisolfi family. He was a Mongol ambassador to Europe from 1289 to 1305, serving the Mongol rulers Arghun, Ghazan and then Öljeitü. – Cf. Paviot (1991).

23 Grousset (1936): 712.

24 Dessimoni (1877).

25 Phillips (1998): 192.

26 The fleet, however, did not set sail due to disputes between crew members, in which most sailors perished. In 1301 the rival cliques reconciled and their leaders, the sailors of the major families of Dorias and Grimaldis sold part of their assets to renew the fleet. Nevertheless, the ships not set in the end. – Brătianu (1929): 188–189; Ferrand (1922): 307.

27 La Roncière (1925): 54.

28 Polo (2006): 26, 328.

rian Girolamo Golubovich (1865–1941) at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁹ This map corresponds to the culminating period in the history of the monastic missionary work – 1320s and 1330s, but in its part relating to Asia Minor and Iran it almost entirely evidenced its earlier stage – 1280s and 1290s. The missions always are imposed on the Genoese colonies and were seated at key points of the main transit routes of Southwest Asia.

From the late 13th century, when the Franciscans (members of the Order of Friars Minor) intensively penetrated to the East, there were established vicariates on the newly administered territory.³⁰ The first was the Vicariate of “Northern Tartary” (*Vicaria Tartariae Aquilonaris*), established in 1274 at the decision of the Second Council of Lyon in the territory of the Golden Horde, with its centre in the Genoese trading colony of Caffa. This vicariate was formed of two custodies – Khazaria (*Custodia Gazariae*), including Crimea, lower Danubia and lower Transnistria, and Sarai (*Custodia Sarayæ*), the eastern part of the Golden Horde, including the North Caucasus.³¹

In the years 1279–1283, the Vicariate of “Eastern Tartary” (*Vicaria Tartariae Orientalis*) has been founded in the Ilkhanate and its subordinate countries.³² Its original centre was Tabriz, from 1318 it was Sultania (*Soldania*). This vicariate consisted of three custodies – Constantinople (*Custodia Constantinopolitana*), Trapezunt (*Custodia Trapezundis*) and Tabriz (*Custodia Thauris*).

In late 13th or in early 14th century, the third eastern vicariate of the Order of Friars Minor – “Tartary or Cathay” (*Vicaria Tartariae seu Cathay*) – has been established. This vicariate, including whole of China, Mongolia and Central Asia, came into being thanks to John of Montecorvino (1246–1328/1330), since 1307 the Archbishop of Khanbaliq 汗八里 and *summus archiepiscopus in toto dominio Tartarorum*.

The nature of relations between Genoese merchants and monastic missionaries can be judged about from the Genoese notarial records and reports of custodies of the eastern vicariates, and also from reports by abbots of monasteries, founded by the Franciscans and Dominicans in Crimea, Georgia, Asia Minor, Iran and other eastern countries. These contacts were very close and mutually beneficial.³³ The missionaries have often acted as intermediaries between the Genoese consuls

29 Golubovich (1913).

30 Golubovich (1913): 125, 262, 444.

31 Chronologically, the foundation of this vicariate coincides with the birth of the Genoese trading areas in the northern Black Sea coast. Caffa, the centre of the “Northern Tartary” vicariate, with its Genoese consuls and the Franciscan custodies, was the hearth of a double, merchant and monastic, expansion to the Golden Horde lands. – See Heyd (1936), vol. II: 172.

32 A part of Iran and whole of India, attached to the vicariate of Eastern Tartary, remained behind the frames of the Golubovich's map. India was attached to Sultania after 1318, when the Dominicans have established their own archiepiscopate (*archiepiscopatus Soltamensis*) in this town. – Cf. Iriarte (1982): 207.

33 Brătianu (1927); Dessimoni (1894).

of overseas colonies and the sovereigns, on whose lands the Genoese were settled.³⁴

The monastic missions of the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries came up with merchant “missions”. However, the unrest and confusion of the Franciscan Order have come so far away that it nearly led to the collapse of this monastic community. The progress of this struggle is described by Angelo Clareno da Cingoli (c. 1255–1337), one of the greatest leaders of the Spirituals, in his *Chronicon seu Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*.³⁵ Clareno was associated with the eastern missions, by reason of which the Friars Minor were drawn into the inner confusion in the Franciscan East.

The Dominicans did not fail to use this situation. Their patron became Pope John XXII (r. 1316–1334), a great enemy of the Spirituals. He set up his residence in Avignon rather than Rome, continuing the Avignon Papacy of his predecessor. John XXII involved himself in the politics and religious movements of many European countries in order to advance the interests of the Church. This made him a very controversial pope at the time. John XXII also created an extensive administrative and financial system which have not only collected many taxes, but also made various credit transactions. Apostolic Chamber (*Reverenda Camera Apostolica*) was closely associated with the largest trading houses in Florence, Siena, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Montpellier, Barcelona, Marseille, Bruges, Douai, London, Hanseatic cities. Giovanni Cattaneo, the advocate of Curia, was also the Avignonesse representative of a number of Genoese companies with which his patrician family had connections, and examples of this kind were not rare.³⁶

The Dominicans, who have never experienced addiction to the teachings of the Spirituals, and who provided active assistance to John XXII in his financial activities, were handsomely rewarded by the pope. He has carved out to the Dominicans just that part of East Asia, through which the main through roads to the “subtle spices” have passed. On April 1, 1318 Pope John XXII signed the bull “Redemptor noster” (Our redeemer), which was concerned with the division of spheres of missionary activities of the Franciscan and Dominican orders. The Dominicans received the newly founded archbishopric Sultania. In such a way this bull withdrew the Mongol Ilkhan’s dominions and “India” from the archdiocese of Khanbaliq, transferring them to a Dominican province. After this reorganization, only “Cathay” and “Khazaria” remained to the Franciscans, whereas Khazaria included not only Crimea, but all possessions of the Golden Horde. Thus the Dominicans have received the vicariate of Eastern Tartary under their administration, with generously added India and Ethiopia. Indian lands and Indian spices were in great concern of the Pope, the Dominican Order, and Italian and French trading houses.

34 Dessimoni (1877): 578–580.

35 Clareno (2005).

36 Renouard (1941): 7–25.

FRANCISCAN MISSIONS IN THE EAST

In his book of travels, Odoric of Pordenone (1285?–1331) frequently mentions the Franciscan settlements (*loca*) in places, where he was passing through. The activities of Roman Catholics (especially the members of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders) in the Mongol empire have survived only in a small number of documents. The information contained in them is undoubtedly valuable, but fragmentary. However, they may still give some idea of the expansion of Catholic missionary activities in this vast area, as well as of various mission localities.

The collection of these documents of high value is located in the Department of Anglo-Saxon and Latin manuscripts of the former British Museum Library in London (since 1973 an independent British Library). Here are stored, among others, also documents of Franciscan missionary activities in the East during the Middle Ages. A large part of these documents was published in the second volume of *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente francescano* by Girolamo Golubovich³⁷, among them also the anonymous work of a Minorite (Franciscan friar) about the Franciscan missionary outposts in the East around 1320.³⁸

This work has been written not later than in 1329 and represented a list of the Franciscan and Dominican missionary bases (*loca*) in different cities and settlements of the East, sometimes with specific information about places and people involved in them. The list in this document involves mainly monasteries in “Northern Tartary” (*Vicaria Tartariae Aquilonaris*), i.e. in the territory of the Golden Horde. Eighteen permanent monasteries are specified (only seventeen of them are listed). The emphasis on “permanent” or “immobile” indicates the existence of moving missions, which are recorded in other sources. The term “monastery” was apparently used because in permanent missions were also the friars, who followed the rules of the Catholic monasteries. However, the purpose of these “monasteries” was largely missionary activities.³⁹

The text of the document also mentions the Franciscan settlements in China and “India”: four *loca* in China (*Catay*) and one in the Quanzhou 泉州 (*Zayton*) in southeast China, located in Great India (*magna India*), which according to contemporary geographical knowledge and ideas included the southern China, as well. Besides the Franciscan missions in the “Northern Tartary”, that is in the Golden Horde, the document mentions also the Dominican missions in Caffa (*Capha*) and Tana (*Thana*). It refers also to twelve Franciscan missions and three Dominican missions in the territory of “Eastern Tartary” (the Ilkhanate and its subordinate countries).

37 Golubovich (1913).

38 Ms. Anonymi Minoritæ *De locis Fratrum Minorum et Predicatorum in Tartaria* (London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero A IX, ff. 100v–101v).

39 Malyšev (2006).

CONCLUSION

John of Montecorvino, Jourdain de Séverac, Odoric of Pordenone, John Marignola are some of the most famous travellers, who in the late 13th and in the first decades of the 14th century visited countries and seas of South and East Asia and lived in distant lands of “the edge of the world”. They were the immediate followers of the famous Marco Polo, the authors of the interesting stories of those countries.

Direct links of the East and West were interrupted in 1340s to 1360s, when the Mongol Empire, the large and unstable political system, which emerged in Asia as a result of conquests of Genghis Khan (r. 1206–1227) and his immediate successors, finally collapsed. However, in those fifty years (roughly 1290 to 1340) when from southern Europe to eastern Asia a route passed over through Iran and India, relatively close contacts between the Mediterranean and Eastern countries led to significant shifts in the material and spiritual life of the medieval world.

The four above-mentioned Western envoys, who brought to Europe the incredible news of the Eastern countries and seas, played an important role in this process. They were sent to the East by Popes and superiors of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, their fellow-travellers and companions often were agents of the Italian trading houses.

The works of these authors significantly changed Europeans’ view of the world. While in the mid-13th century there was the conviction in Europe that the Christian world takes up most of the *orbis terrarum* (inhabited, attainable world), already in 1332 the so-called *Pseudo-Brocardus*⁴⁰ states that Christians do not form a tenth or even twentieth of the population of Earth. Furthermore, he has stated that Asia is much larger than Europe, that it progresses far to the north, and the circumpolar regions are inhabited.

SUPPLEMENT⁴¹DE LOCIS FRATRUM MINORUM ET PREDICATORUM
IN TARTARIA

In *Tartaria Aquilonari* fratres Minores habent monasteria immobilia 18, in civitatibus et villis infra scriptis, videlicet: in *vicina iuxta danubin*. In *Mauro castro*. In *Cersona*, ubi beatus Clemens fuit exulatus, et ibi fundavit lxx ecclesias... (...). In *Cimbalo*. In *Barason*. In *Soldaia*. In *Capha* duo loca. In *Thana*. In *Cummageria* duo loca. In *Saray*. In *Sancto Johanne*, ubi est sepulcrum *Coktogani* filii Imperatoris. In *Ugek*. In *Delena (Selena?)*. In *Yveria* duo loca, ubi rex illius

40 This work entitled *Directorium ad passagium faciendum per Phillippum regem Franciæ in terram santam anno 1332* is partly attributed to the German Dominican named Brocard (Burkhardt), but mostly to Guillaume Adam (d. c. 1341), the French Dominican missionary and archbishop. — Brocardus (1906).

41 According to Malyšev (2006).

gentis, et multi de populo istis annis sunt conversi... (...).

Item in *Catay* quatuor loca. In *Zayton*, que est in *magna India*, unus locus.

Loca fratrum Predicatorum duo tantum: videlicet in *Capha*, ubi dimisimus duos fratres sacerdotes, et duos clericos, et duos conversos; et in *Thana*, ubi dimisimus tres fratres.

In *Tartaria Orientali* fratres Minores habent xii monasteria, infrascripta, videlicet: In *Soldania*. In *Taurisio* duo loca. In *Salmastro*, ubi b. Bartholomeus fuit martirizatus. In *Carachisia*, ubi apostolus Thadeus fuit martirizatus et ibi ostenditur corpus suum. In *Arzerono*. In *Thephelisio*. In *Porsico*. In *Carpy*. In *Tarphexunda*. In *Summisso (Sumnusso?, Simmisso?)*.

Loca Predicatorum tria, videlicet: in *Taurisio* unus. In *Marga*. In *Diacorogon*.

ON THE SEATS OF THE FRIARS MINOR AND THE
FRIARS PREACHERS IN TARTARY

In Northern Tartary the Friars Minor (= the Franciscans) have eighteen permanent monasteries, in towns and villages mentioned below, namely: in *Vicina*, in the neighbourhood of *Danubia*. In *Maurum castrum*. In *Chersonesus (Cersona)*, where Blessed Clement was in exile and founded 70 temples... (...). In *Cimbalo*, in *Barason*, in *Soldaia*, in *Capha* two seats, in *Thana*, in *Cummageria* two seats, in *Saray*, in *Saint John*, where is the grave of Coktogan, son of the Emperor⁴², in *Ugek*, in *Delena (Selena?)*, in Georgia (*Yveria*) two seats, where the king of that nation and many of the people were converted [to Christianity] in those years... (...).

Also in China (*Catay*) four seats, in *Zayton*, which is in Great India, one seat.

The Friars Preachers (= the Dominicans) have only two sites: in *Capha*, where we sent two friars priests, two clerics and two converts, and *Thana*, where we sent three friars.

In Eastern Tartary the Friars Minor have twelve monasteries, mentioned below, namely: in *Sultania (Soldania)*, in *Tabriz (Taurisio)* two seats, in *Salmastro*, where Blessed Bartholomew was martyred, in *Carachisia*, where the apostle Thaddeus was martyred and buried there, in *Erzurum (Arzerono)*, in *Tiflis (Thephelisio)*, in *Porsico*, in *Carpy*, in *Trebizond (Tarphexunda)*, in *Summisso (Sumnusso?, Simmisso?)*.

The seats of the Preachers are three, namely: one in *Tabriz (Taurisio)*, in *Maragheh (Marga)*, in *Diacorogon*.

In addition to this document, there are several reports, which refer to the Franciscan missions in the East, especially in the vicariate of “Northern Tartary”, on the lands of the Golden Horde.⁴³

42 *Coktogan* or *Cotogont* is also known from other Franciscan sources. He was probably Kutugan, son of Möngke-Timur, the Golden Horde khan in 1266–1280.

43 See Golubovich (1913): 266–269, 272; Fedalto (1973): 470; Malyšev (2006): 188.

Vicariate of “Northern Tartary” (Vicaria Tartariæ Aquilonaris)

	1286	1320	1334	1390
Custodia Gazariæ	Kerqueti	–	–	–
	Capha	Capha (S. Francisci)	Cafa (S. Francisci)	Cafa (S. Francisci)
	–	Capha (S. Mariæ)	Cafa (S. Mariæ)	Cafa (S. Mariæ)
	–	Soldaia	Soldaya	Soldaia
	–	Cimbalo	Cimbum	Cimbalo
	–	–	–	Ylice
	Solhaten	–	Sulcata	Solcath
	–	Barason	Barasson	Carassu
	–	Maurocastro	Maurum castrum	–
	Vicum	Vicina	Vicena	–
–	Cersona	–	–	
Custodia Sarayæ	–	Thana	Tana	Thana
	Saray	Saray	Saray	Saray
	–	S. Johannes	S. Johannes	–
	–	–	–	Comuch
	–	–	–	Tarchis
	–	–	–	Mamucci
	–	Cummageria (2 loca)	Maieria (2 loca)	Mager
	–	Ugek	Ugek	Ugueth
	–	–	–	Acsaray
	–	Selena	–	–
	–	–	Veler	–
	Iberia	Yverie (2 loca)	Vierie (2 loca)	–

 EXPLANATION OF THE TOPONYMS MENTIONED
 (IN ALPHABETIC ORDER):

Acsaray – unknown location. While Malyšev⁴⁴ placed it to the steppe part of Crimea close to Simferopol, Golubovich⁴⁵ identified it with New Sarai, and the map by Henry Yule (revised by Henri Cordier)⁴⁶ draw it – in accordance with the Catalan Atlas (1375) – in the Dagestan coast of the Caspian Sea, in the delta of the Terek River.

Barason (Barasson, Carassu) – most likely the medieval Italian name of Karasu-Bazar or Karasubazar (Crimean Tatar:

Qarasuvbazar), now Bilohirs'k in Crimea, east of Simferopol. **Capha** (Cafa) – medieval Caffa (now Feodosiya, Crimean Tatar: *Kefe*), in southeastern Crimea, the mission of St. Francis and St. Mary.

Carpy – Golubovich locates it in the area of modern Kerpe, Kandıra district, in western Turkey, on the Black Sea coast, 50 km north of İzmit⁴⁷.

Carachisia – Probably it is a place in the northwest corner of Iran, near the town of Chaldoran, the place of the Monastery of St. Thaddeus. The monastery is known also under the Persian name *Qareh keliseh* (“Black Temple”), from which apparently originates the name of *Carachisia*.

Cersona – the ancient city in southwestern Crimea, Chersonesus Taurica (also known as Korsun in Old East Slavic), in the south of present-day Sevastopol.

44 Malyšev (2006): 189.

45 Golubovich (1913): 565–566; chart 2.

46 See Yule – Cordier (1914): 84 + map.

47 Golubovich (1913): chart 2.

Cimbalo (Cimbulum) – the medieval Italian/Latin name (also *Cembalo*) of present-day Balaklava (Crimean Tatar: *Ba-lıqlava*), in southwestern Crimea.

Comuch – Kazi-Kumukh (Lak: *Gazi-Gumuchi*), present-day Kumuch (Lak: *Gumuchi* or *Gumuk*), a village and the administrative centre of Laksky District in Dagestan. In the Middle Ages Kumukh was a large trading centre.

Cummageria (Maieria, Mager) – medieval Italian name of an unknown location on the Taman peninsula, perhaps in the territory of medieval Tmutarakan, or Matrega, now Taman on the coast of the Taman Bay, at the passage from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.

Diacorogon – probably Dehkhargan between Tabriz and Maragheh, in the 14th century seat of a bishopric. Today Azarshahr in northwestern Iran.

Iberia (Yverie, Vierie) – old name for Georgia, known also as Caucasian Iberia; originally the ancient Georgian kingdom of Kartli (4th century BC – 5th century AD).

Kerqueti – a distorted version of the city name of Kyrk-Yer (Crimean Tatar: *Qırq Yer*), now Chufut-Kale (Crimean Tatar *Çufut Qale*), in southwestern Crimea, about 2.5 km from Bakhchysarai.

Mamucci – unknown location. While Malyšev⁴⁸ placed it as Mamuk or Michach / Michak into modern Dagestan, Golubovič⁴⁹ maps it twice: a) in modern city of Shamakhi (Azer: *Şamaxı*, Russian: *Shemakha*) in Azerbaijan, northwest of Baku, b) around modern Bingöl city (to 1950 known as Çapakçur, according to its Armenian name of Chapaghjur) in eastern Turkey.

Maurocastro (Maurum castrum) – “Black Castle” (from the Greek *Maurokastron*), the medieval Italian name (also Moncastro) of present-day Ukrainian Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, at the mouth of the Dniester into the Black Sea.

Porsico – unknown location, maybe in northern Iran, near Edessa.

S. Johannes – the mission of St. John is not exactly located. According to some sources it was about 5 km west of Old Sarai.⁵⁰

Salmastro – This site is usually located west of Tabriz, in northwestern corner of Lake Urmia. Golubovich directly identifies it with the city of Salmas.⁵¹ However, this does not correspond to the statement in the text, that in this place St. Bartholomew was martyred. According to the Armenian traditions this event occurred in the former Armenian Adamakert city, now in the territory of eastern Turkey (present-day Başkale), near the Iranian border, southeast of Lake Van.

Saray – a Turkic word of Persian origin (*sarai*), meaning “palace”: a) “Old Sarai”, or “Sarai Batu”, the capital of the Golden Horde in 1254–1282; near to the modern village of Selitrennoye, about 80 km north of Astrakhan; b) “New Sarai”, or

“Sarai Berke”, the capital of the Golden Horde in 1331–1395, one of the largest cities of the medieval world; near modern village of Tsarev, about 85 km east of Volgograd.

Selena (Delena?) – There are several versions of its localization: a) in the area of the Lower Volga or Ciscaucasus; b) on the west coast of the Caspian Sea near Baku; c) in Georgia; d) in Crimea; e) in the Danube Delta (today the Romanian port of Sulina)⁵².

Soldaia (Soldaya) – the medieval Italian name of present-day Sudak (Crimean Tatar: *Sudaq*), on the southern coast of Crimea.

Solhaten (Sulcata, Solcath) – turkified form of the Italian name of *Solcati* (Italian: *solcata* = furrow, ditch), now Staryi Krym (Crimean Tatar: *Eski Qırım*), in eastern Crimea.

Summisso (Sumnusso?, Simmisso?) – probably refers to today’s city of Samsun on the Turkish Black Sea coast, in the 13th to 15th centuries one of the Genoese trading posts.

Tana (Latin: *Thana*, Italian in full: *Tana nel Mare Maggiore*, after *Tanaïs*, ancient Greek name of the Don River) – the Venetian and later Genoese trading colony at the mouth of the Don into the Sea of Azov; *Azaq* of the Golden Horde, present-day Azov.

Tarchis – present-day Tarki (Kumyk: *Targhu*), an urban locality of the city of Makhachkala, Dagestan.

Ugek (Ugueth) – place probably in the Lower Volga region. Editors and commentators incorrectly placed it halfway between Bulgar and Samara.⁵³ It was due to the erroneously reading of Sarai as Samara.⁵⁴

Veler – unknown location. This may be a distorted name of Iberia (see below).

Vicum (Vicina, Vicena) – unknown location in the Danube Delta (*iuxta danubini*); Golubovich⁵⁵ locates it within the present-day town of Tulcea in Romania’s Dobrogea.

Ylice – unknown location.

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48 Malyšev (2006): 189.

49 Golubovich (1913): chart 2.

50 Cf. Golubovich (1913): 170–171; chart 2.

51 See Golubovich (1913): chart 2.

52 Golubovich (1913): 565–566; chart 2.

53 See Golubovich (1913): 570; chart 2; Soranzo (1930): 502–503.

54 Malyšev (2006): 186.

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