

The moment of the Mongols or When Europe grew out of its infancy<sup>1</sup>

by

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In the year 1241 the huge army of the Mongols, having built up a vast empire that they allegedly wanted to once reach from one ocean to the other, finally reached Central Europe. In Silesia and in Hungary, Latin Christian knights were defeated devastatingly. This happened in a crucial moment, and thus took on decisive momentum for world history. The Mongols meant that to be only one more step on their way to the Western end of the world, but it turned out to become, for later Europeans, one of the (presumably) most important steps in their history. In multiple ways they became aware of the real world, and they finally entered real world history.

At first glance, Latin Christianity was hit entirely unprepared. This is obvious, not the least, on the field of military action. Though the Mongols were the first steppe intruders for some centuries, the last disastrous battle against a nomadic army had taken place only some decades earlier, when the Latin conquerors of Constantinople had had to fight the old Cuman enemies of the Byzantines at the battle of Adrianople in 1205. This had been described and written down, noting all the typical and irresistible nomadic warfare and tactics, by well-known Latin eyewitnesses.<sup>2</sup> But there was, besides an idea of the heathen Other as such, no detailed concept of different, individual foreigners that could have provided the Latins with comparative information and helpful expectations when the Mongols appeared.

This was about to change. There is another side of this coin of a missing concept. The Mongols were not only not compared with other nomadic fighters, they were also not compared with traditional ethnic patterns of explanation: They were never called Huns, nor Avars, nor Hungarians, and never compared to former steppe intruders as had happened any time nomads had appeared in the earlier medieval centuries.<sup>3</sup> Thus they were not explained in a

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<sup>1</sup> This is the English version of an article (due to be published in 2006 in German in the journal *Das Mittelalter* in the volume “Produktive Kulturkonflikte”); the present version is slightly different from the final German one and provided only with the most necessary footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, chapter 352 ss., ed. Edmond Faral, 2 vol. (1199-1203; 1203-1207), Paris 1938 (Les classiques de l'histoire de France du Moyen Âge. 18/ 19), II p.162 ss. on experiences with the heathen Cumans and on the battle of Adrianople.

<sup>3</sup> Just as an example: Widukind of Corvey speaks of Avars, which we now call Hungarians, *Avares quos modo Ungarios vocamus*: *Res gestae Saxonicae*, hg. v. Hans-Eberhard Lohmann,

topical way, so that further research on their true identity was needed and pursued. The one traditional explanation that was proposed, an eschatological one for the Mongols as an element of the Last Time, was immediately discussed widely. The question was not whether an eschatological explanation would apply, but which one – there was no question in those days that anything important naturally had a meaning in God’s plan. In the framework of the eschatological interpretation of history a rich choice of patterns existed, and their possible application on the Mongols was constantly discussed which lead to very much different and opposing roles for the Mongols (bad roles such as Gog and Magog, the Ishmaelites, Antichrist himself, but also good ones as the Last World Emperor or his baptised helpers<sup>4</sup>). The Mongols were, almost from the start, perceived as something not easy to explain but very much in need of explanation!

All this happened, because many things had changed since the last nomadic invasion and some considerable time earlier the direction of movement had changed, since the Latin Christians themselves had started to move. No longer content with gazing eastward, they had begun to move eastward as heirs of the Western Roman Empire; they had started to regain the East as their Christian heritage in the crusades and had, not long before the Mongols appeared, conquered the Eastern Roman capital itself in 1204. Latin Christians had even moved to conquer the East with their minds and thoughts, at least they had started to learn a great deal about it and so about themselves. Their own self-description and self-understanding started to change in confrontation and exchanges with their opponents (not only in the East). Among other things, they started to perceive and digest Otherness legally; they gradually began to rethink their own position and their legal and political existence in the real world of real differences.

The fact that the Mongol conquest met a Latin West on the move, a West that was just then in the process of expansion, made this a world historical moment. Without the Mongol conquest, the early modern European expansion would certainly not have happened exactly the way it did – it might not have happened at all. After a brief time of violent clash, the Mongols opened up further opportunities for the Latin Christians to move into the steppes of Asia, and gradually, with a certain climax around 1260, the Latins started to take the chance.

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neu bearb. v. Paul Hirsch, Hannover 1935 (MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usu scholarum* 60), I,17, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Felicitas Schmieder, “Christians, Jews, Muslims – and Mongols. Fitting a Foreign People into the Western Christian Apocalyptic Scenario”, forthcoming in: *Medieval Encounters* 2005.

As a result, for the first time in its history Latin Europe came into direct, conscious contact with the Central, Eastern, even Southern Asian Orient, it was included in the vast interconnected World of the Mongol Empire and the neighbouring regions touched by it.<sup>5</sup> Having always had an image of the world, but one dependent on centuries-old tradition, the Latins now became aware of the ethnic, political, religious, and cultural conditions all over this real world – and they became aware of their own tiny space, moreover deeply in crisis, inside this world. This immediately brought about very different reactions, among them two cultural ideas extraordinary for the time but including huge potential, opposites of each other and at the same time deeply interdependent: They were realistic concepts for Latin Christians insofar as the real dimensions of the world and real ethnic and cultural diversity were considered to be at least virtually under control and, in the end, it was believed to rule this real world. In addition, a newly formulated concept of “Europe” as a political and cultural idea, as a collective of different but united Christian peoples, took root. Both concepts (which I will examine more closely in the following pages) had a long way to go before they were accepted in general and became mainstream; this was only a beginning: Once born in the thirteenth century they were never to be forgotten again.

Around 1260, from China to the Atlantic, from the Russian steppes to Egypt many more peoples than before had become aware of each other, and events crucial for the impending world order took place. 1261 was the year of the re-conquest of Constantinople by the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII. Palaiologos and thus a climax of the violent clash of Christian Latin and Greek cultures as well as a heavy setback on Latin expansion to the East.

In 1260, the Mongol expansion, having started from the East to re-shape the world considerably about half a century earlier, finally came to an end. This meant a major change for their empire as well as for their kind of participation in world history. Seemingly unstoppable they had conquered Bagdad and eliminated the last Abbasid Khalif in 1258, and continued their raids into Syria. Then, on September 3, 1260, at ‘Ain Galut, the spring where David had once beaten Goliath, the myth of their invincibility broke when they were defeated by a Mamluk army from Egypt. From then on, Mongols and Mamluks held each other in a kind of equilibrium; neither could finally defeat the other. As one consequence, the Mongols started to

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<sup>5</sup> For an outline of this Mongol World and some options of exchanges in it cf. Felicitas Schmieder/ Peter Schreiner/ Marino Zorzi(Ed.), *Il Codice Cumanico e il suo mondo*, Rome 2004, especially the introductory chapter by F. Schmieder, “The World of the Codex Cumanicus – the Codex Cumanicus in its world”.

consider union instead of conquest and turned to the Latin Christians in order to win them over as allies in the Holy Land. The first Mongol diplomatic letter in a long sequence was sent by Hülägü to the French king Louis IX in 1262.<sup>6</sup>

At virtually the same time, but for many more reasons, the whole huge but not-very-stable empire put together all too quickly by Činggis Khan, which had started to be devided among his heirs after his death in 1227, finally broke apart. Kubilai, grandson of Činggis Khan, who became the new Great Khan in 1259/1260, now left the steppe and started to build up Beijing as new centre of the Mongol rule. The rulers of two different realms – or hordes, to put it in Mongol terms – offspring of two different Činggisid branches, namely Kubilai's brother Hülägü in the more Urban based Il-khanat of Persia and Berke in the Golden Horde in the steppes north of Black and Caspian Sea, started to fight each other for control of the Caucasus. All this was driving apart the different Mongol branches, but at the same time making it possible for Latin (and other) merchants to easily enter and deal with China.

How did the Latin Christianity react to the opportunity to really become involved in world history? Well, at this very time – if any certain date could be named at all – it started to expand beyond the hitherto-known horizons, which led to world domination much later. It was the war in the Caucasus that made it impossible for the Venetian merchants, the brothers Polo, father and uncle of the famous Marco, to return to then Latin-Venetian Constantinople from an exploration tour to the northern steppes: Since the way to the west was blocked, they decided to travel further east.<sup>7</sup> When they had returned they set out again around 1270 and took their son, respectively nephew, Marco with them since they had found and were eager to conquer a huge market out there – and they were soon followed by many other merchants, mainly Italians. The first missionaries trying to include the Mongols into the Christian *orbis terrarum*, like the famous William of Rubruk in 1255,<sup>8</sup> returned less optimistic (although this did not stop Christian mission to Asia, India, and China). Nor on the diplomatic-political field

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<sup>6</sup> Letter to the king ed. Paul Meyvaert, An Unknown Letter of Hulagu, Il-khan of Persia, to King Louis IX. of France, in: *Viator* 11 (1980) 245-59. For all contacts between Christians and Mongols and the European perceptions of the Mongols (and, as a consequence, of the real world) cf. Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert*, Sigmaringen 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Marco Polo, *Il Milione*, c. III-V, ed. Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, Florence 1928, p.4/ 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Itinerarium*, ed. Sinica Franciscana I: *Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, ed. P. Anastasius van den Wyngaert OFM, Quaracchi 1929, p.147-332; *The mission of Friar William of Rubruck. His Journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253 – 1255*,

could much trust be spared for the Mongols, who not long before had annihilated Christian armies and were still, in their letters, referring to their intention of subduing the whole world to their rule. Moreover, they had returned, with renewed force, to the eastern parts of Central Europe, raiding Poland and Hungary again, around 1260. They had been and seemed likely to remain a dreadful threat.

All the ideas about the frightful unknown people had made many Latin Christians in the Holy Land cheer when the Mamluks – the Latin’s well-known enemies – won the victory at ‘Ain Galut in 1260. Before this, the Mongols had attacked Aleppo and threatened Damascus, and bishop Thomas of Bethlehem had sent an apologetic letter to the West,<sup>9</sup> convinced that the end was approaching: The devilish Tartars (the usual name for them among their contemporaries) – fit their name to their deeds, since they are named either for pulling everybody down to hell (*ad tartara*) or from their similarity to the hellish creatures (*tartareis*) or from Greek *tartasin*, which means “to tremble” or “to freeze from horror” – soak the soil with blood, since the Day of the Lord is near. Everyone in the Latin West, even illiterate people, knew that 1260 was the year in which the famous and popular prophet Joachim of Fiore had prophesied the coming of the First Antichrist – this widespread expectation seemed to fit the facts all too well.

Still, there was another option for reading the signs of the times. Urban IV, who had been patriarch of Jerusalem from 1255, was elected pope in the very year 1261 and accepted the Mongol offer of diplomatic talks when he was addressed by Hülägü in 1262/1263, although no pope ever forgot to admonish the Mongols to better become Christians immediately.<sup>10</sup> Considering the apocalyptic expectations more carefully, everyone knew that all the world had to become Christian before the Second Coming of Christ and thus before the End.

In these theoretical terms the Latins, being Christians, had always had the idea that they would rule the whole world, to be achieved before the Second Coming of Christ. This goal

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transl. and notes by Peter Jackson/ David Morgan, London 1990 (Hakluyt Society. Ser. 2. 173).

<sup>9</sup> Letter (March 1st, 1260) in: Menko abbas Werumensis, *Chronica*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz et al., MGH *Scriptores* XXIII p.523-61, here 547-9.

<sup>10</sup> The letters between the popes and the Mongol Il-khans of Persia up to 1300, ed. Lupprian, cf. N. 13; for all the diplomatic contacts Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden*, cf. N. 6, p.328-35. For the constant clash of misunderstandings between Mongols wanting a military union and Latins wanting baptised allies, see especially Jean Richard, “Chrétiens et Mongols au Concile 1274: la papauté et les mongols de Perse dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle” (1977), in: id., *Croisés, missionnaires et voyageurs. Le perspectives orientales du monde latin médiéval*, London 1983, Nr. XV, 35 : «Aux invites à une collaboration militaire qui viennent du côté mongole, l’invitation à embrasser le christianisme répond du côté pontificale».

had usually been quite nebulous and, moreover, Latin Christians had been more or less clearly convinced that most of the world was already Christian anyway. The crusades, with their lesson of invincible (or at least not easily defeated) Muslim opponents, the Mongol appearance as an army of yet another huge, strong, heathen nation, and the very size of Asia that Latin travellers had started to experience made at least some people in the Latin West explicitly change their minds. They either turned towards pessimism or towards a new plan for the time until the final baptism of all the world.

A few years after the Mongol onslaught on Central Europe and seemingly reacting directly to it, pope Innocent IV (1243 – 1254), had exposed the legal framework of a Christian-dominated world of not-yet-entirely but future Christians. The fact that Innocent seriously considered the status of different cultures interacting in one world makes his outline a very important first step up to the later concepts of international law.

In his commentary on the canonical law collection of the *Liber Extra*<sup>11</sup> Innocent states that in the beginning of all times, when all territory was still common property, anybody who first took possession of a piece of land owned it legally from then on and forever or until he gave it up voluntarily, be he Christian or not (a very unusual idea in Innocent's time which even his own pupil Hostiensis denounced, stressing that Christ's first coming had reorganised all property rights so that legal sovereignty can only lie in Christian hands). Thus, a non-Christian ruler could rule his realm legally and it could not be taken away from him, but crusades against, for example, the Holy Land were allowed since there old Christian heritage had been illegally taken away by the Muslims. The heathen ruler could even rule legally over Christian subjects as long as he treated them well. All this was not derived from a Christian legal basis – which Innocent well knew was not accepted by non-Christians – but from natural law to which all living beings are bound. But Innocent as well as all other political-legal thinkers was well aware of the fact that among humans there is need of a controlling and judging authority. In spite of all real attempts, Innocent's solution to this problems makes the whole concept very Christian again: Since the pope is Christ's vicar on earth, and Christ is the natural Lord, *dominus naturalis*, of the World, the pope must clearly be the one authority to supervise right or wrong behaviour, to punish heathen rulers who treat their Christian subjects badly (or do not allow Christian missionaries to preach in their realms), but also Christians who illegally attack heathens who never did anything wrong (Christianity, by the way, was

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<sup>11</sup> Innocentius <Papa IV.>, *Commentaria apparatus in V libros decretalium*, Francofurti ad Moenvm: per Martinvm Lechler, impensis Hieronymi Feyerabend 1570, reprinted Frankfurt am Main 1968, fol. 429v – 430v: X.3.34.8 (*de voto*), § 4, *verbo compensato*.

not obliged to admit Muslim preachers, for "they are in error, and we are on the way of truth").

Although it is difficult to prove that Innocent IV has formulated these ideas under the direct impact of the Mongol onslaught or as a consequence of reflections on it, his long and systematic comments are written when he was already pope, thus after the Mongol incursion, and they were (and remained for centuries<sup>12</sup>) very unusual. Innocent used the same basic arguments (the natural legal bond of mankind and the therefore clear determination of right and wrong in attacking neighbours) in a famous letter he sent with his ambassadors to the Mongols in 1245.<sup>13</sup>

Though still a lonely voice in the wilderness among lawyers, this kind of optimistic vision of a final Christian world that took into account the actual events and political circumstances in the real world – conscious of the huge world the Latin Christians had just begun to discover – was taken up, not in legal but in world historical terms close to the crucial year 1260. For this kind of extraordinary attempt, prophecy was the most obvious genre of sources at that time, culturally as well as politically important. In general, eschatological considerations – attempts to explain at least major present events by God's plan for mankind – mirrored well the views on society and politics *sub specie aeternitatis* of contemporaries in the highest social ranks. New prophecies or interpretations of older ones tried to read the signs of the times in order to find out how things would go on following God's plan and how to deal with them. They wanted to warn and to counsel, and they were listened to. Moreover, since outlining a hoped-for future is exactly what prophecy does, these texts are among the best and most progressive, even daring, witnesses for ideas on ideal world order.

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<sup>12</sup> Sandra Brand-Pierach, „Ungläubige im Kirchenrecht. Die kanonistische Behandlung der Nichtchristen als symbolische Manifestation politischen Machtwillens,“ electronic Dissertation publication Konstanz 2004: <http://www.ub.uni-konstanz.de/kops/volltexte/2004/1300>.

<sup>13</sup> The ambassador was the famous Franciscan traveller John of Plano Carpini, who wrote a long and systematic report on all his findings, obviously following an inquiry system Innocent IV had drawn up (cf. Johannes Fried, „Auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit. Die Mongolen und die abendländische Erfahrungswissenschaft im 13. Jahrhundert,“ in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 243, 1986, 287-332); the pope's letter ed. Karl Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels*, Città del Vaticano 1981 (Studi e testi. 291). The report has been edited as *Ystoria Mongalorum*, ed. Paolo Daffinà/ Claudio Leonardi/ Maria Cristina Lungarotti/ Enrico Mene-stò/ Luciano Petech, *Storia dei Mongoli*, Spoleto 1989 (on a still more restricted manuscript basis also ed. in the *Sinica Franciscana* quoted in N. 8).

At the very same time that bishop Thomas of Bethlehem feared the end to be approaching, the *Livre de la fontaine de toutes sciences* appeared,<sup>14</sup> presumably written in the Latin East and originally in French, presenting a wise man Sidrac, living long before Christ's birth, being asked a long series of questions by a pagan king, including some about the future history of mankind. In this *ex eventu* prophecy the antedating of the questioning enables Sidrac to correctly prophesy all that had actually happened until the date of the real composition of the book. All the names of places and peoples could be easily recognised by Sidrac's thirteenth century audience (although all are mysteriously encoded, such as *ceuls de Ponnant* for those from the West/Latins or *la cite du Fils de Dieu*, "the city of God's son" for Jerusalem).

Yet Sidrac is not only telling, he is giving a meaning to all that has happened, he is interpreting history according to God's plan; he does this full of knowledge not only of Western, but of Oriental events, geography, and peoples. For thousand years and more, according to him, history will be determined by the Christian-Islamic dualism. Some time after the first coming of Christ, a man will be born who will be poor and like a shepherd of camels (*pasteur de chameaux*, the old description of Muhammad as *pastor camelorum*), and will be chosen by the devil who makes him his prophet, allows him to collect many followers and seduces him to give them a devilish law. They will conquer most of the Eastern part of the world; then the Latins will successfully raise against them but will soon be beaten by a victorious king from the East named *Salehadin*. After some time *unne orde gent d'entre deus montaignes* will come, a wild people from between two mountains (at that time an easily comprehensible description of the Mongols) who will take the whole East from the Saracens and kill their head (the caliph) – which actually happened when Bagdad was conquered in 1258.

Shortly after that, the confidence-building *ex-eventu* prophecy stops. And at the time, the history of the Islamic-Christian dualism as the dominating factor in world history has nearly come to an end as well. Now the actual prediction of future events starts, telling the story of a

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<sup>14</sup> The latest attempt of an edition of Sidrac's "Fontaine des toutes sciences" is based on a restriction to the three largest manuscripts of only the second version of the book (Ernstpeter Ruhe, *Sydrac le philosophe: le livre de la fontaine de toutes sciences. Edition des enzyklopädischen Lehrdialogs aus dem XIII. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2000). For the events in and after 1260, cf. questions no. 1145-1154, p. 404-409. – Unfortunately, the tradition of Sidrac is so multiple that it is still necessary to turn to the manuscripts themselves (such as the much shorter and older manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS franc. 1160, fol.108v), none of which has the same number of questions, especially not in the historical part. On questions of original language, etc. see Beate Wins, „'Le Livre de Sidrac' – Stand der Forschung und neue Ergebnisse,“ in: *Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Bedingungen, Typen, Publikum, Sprache*, ed. Horst Brunner/ Norbert Richard Wolf, Wiesbaden 1993, 36-52.



Mongol-Christian dualism as the dominating force until, finally, the Antichrist appears. Soon, a Christian crusade will finally bring Islam (decisively weakened by the Mongols) to its end. In the following period, the fighting will shift here and there between Christians and Mongols, who will, in the toughest battle of all times, be beaten and driven away to the Arid Tree – and finally, the Latins (who will have ended their internal wars) will govern the entire land ... all over the world there will be peace under Latin rule until the final emergence of the Antichrist.

Co-operation with a strong and potentially either baptised or defeatable enemy of the Muslims (especially after 1260) was an idea fascinating enough to support half a century of diplomatic contacts between Latin rulers and popes and the Mongol Il-khans of Persia – without real consequences and dying down when the Il-khanat weakened and finally disappeared. At least one other prophetic text, considerably later, returned to a comparable ideal world order.<sup>15</sup>

The Carmelite John of Hildesheim wrote his widely read *Historia trium regum* (the legend of the three magi whose relics are worshipped at Cologne cathedral) at Cologne at about 1364.<sup>16</sup> Since the magi had been kings in the East, the author was drawn by his Oriental topic and the deeply rooted Western knowledge about Asia to a large-scale plan for peace all over the world – in the future, but not only briefly before the end of the world, so not in eschatological but in hagiographic terms with a prophetic touch. Once again, heretic Christians will have been punished by God through a savage people, this time the Asian Nestorians through the rising Mongols. The latter defeated the heretics – with the help of the magi – several times and now rule all their land, which is roughly identified with Asia. They are especially ruling Tabriz (in Persia) where the famous Arid Tree stands in the Mongol temple. They guard it well, since a ruler powerful enough to hang his shield at the Arid Tree will once be Lord over all, as is true for the great emperor of the Mongols. The much older and well-known eschatological point also considered by Sidrac is here made a symbol of world rule by mingling with the Last Emperor's laying down his shield at Golgatha, which would make the tree (the Cross) green again.

Fortunately, John's emperor of the East is already very close to becoming formally Christian, and at a time which God will choose there will be a marriage between the son or daugh-

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<sup>15</sup> For the interdependence of political-diplomatic contacts and all kinds of political propaganda, among them prophecy, Felicitas Schmieder, *Nota sectam maometicam atterendam a tartaris et christianis* – The Mongols as non-believing apocalyptic friends around the year 1260?, in: *Journal of Millennial Studies* 1, 1 (1998) = <http://www.mille.org/journal.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Johannes von Hildesheim, *Historia trium regum*, ed. Latin and old English C. Horstmann, London 1886, p.298/ 300.

ter of the Roman Emperor and the Mongol Emperor, and thus the Holy Land will be returned to the Christians and everything will be re-established as it had been before. As in Sidrac's book, a shared world rule between the two empires of the West and the East is considered. But unlike Innocent's IV legal framework of an international world order, this one was too specific Mongol-bound to be revived in later times when the Mongol power had long faded and other factors accompanied the Latin expansion.

The Byzantines<sup>17</sup> or the Greeks and their re-conquest of Constantinople, one other factor that could have been of special importance for a Latin political analyst of the Eastern movement around 1260, did not really have a place in this highly dualistic world view – nevertheless their fate is considered. The Greek people, once the richest and mightiest people of all the world, who first of all other peoples turned towards God, will turn away from him. This will be the immediate reason for God to let that *homme de Berie* be born, the man from Arabia, Mohammed, in order to punish them. He achieved this successfully, thus chasing the Greeks out of the higher ranks of world history.

That is not so clear in another interpretation of the events of the time in eschatological terms by the German cleric from Cologne, Alexander of Roes, in his *Notitia saeculi* written in 1288, some 30 years after Sidrac.<sup>18</sup> Methodically, Alexander includes a circular concept of history (well-known from antiquity) into the usual progressive medieval concept. As on the Wheel of *Fortuna*, those who have reached the top have to fall deeply, but while rolling on its way history is at the same time turning like a screw towards the Last Judgement. Alexander interprets history in the framework of an elder prophecy, *de semine Scripturarum*, "The seed of Characters," which prophesied the approach of the end in steps of 100 years, each matching one letter of the alphabet: The century between 1215 and 1315 corresponded to the letter X, so the end was close, though not to be expected immediately.

The Mongols as well as the Greeks (and others) play only an instrumental role in the struggle between the two principles of world history – unlike Sidrac, Alexander is very Latin-focused and for him, the only dualism that counts in world history is that between pope and emperor (in which he himself decidedly sides with the latter). The fact that the *reges mundi*,

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<sup>17</sup> Sidrac, ed. cf. n. 14, no. 538, p.206, and more extensively no. 1145/ 46, p.404.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander von Roes, *Noticia Seculi*, ed. Herbert Grundmann/ Hermann Heimpel, Stuttgart 1958 (MGH Staatsschr.1,1), p.149-71. – Harald Horst, *Weltamt und Weltende bei Alexander von Roes*, Köln 2002 (Libelli Rhenani. 2); Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, „Zur „Notitia Saeculi“ und zum „Pavo“. Mit einem Exkurs über die Verbreitung des pseudojoachimistischen Büchleins „De semine scripturarum,““ in: *MIÖG* 38 (1920) 571-610.

all the peoples of the world, bowed their necks before the Holy See at the second council of Lyon in 1274,<sup>19</sup> when the Mongols sent envoys to be baptised and the Greeks had come for a church union, is one of the signs that the Roman church is at the climax of power – and that it will soon fall deeply!

Time is also running towards its end in Alexander's view, and also he outlines a concept of how to get the world into order – but it looks considerably different from what we have seen up to now. He shares the view into the world as a real and larger one, but he sees the dangers more than the opportunities. Alexander was actually very well informed and aware of the momentous events and forces in and from the East: He even remarked that certainly many more things would have gone on and would still go on in Africa and Asia, though he himself could not know all this – better none-knowledge is added to better knowledge (and this makes the wider world even more threatening). The Mongols were considered important, but just as one among other threats from outside for the one thing that really counted: *Europa*. While Sidrac and Innocent IV accepted the challenge of all the new peoples, especially the Mongols, by including them into their concept of order, Alexander drew the opposite conclusion and opted to leave all these dangerous foreigners out and move closer together as Europeans – while they see the chance and an open future, he is worried by crisis. Time had passed, inner crisis was much more obvious in the Latin West, thus Alexander was much more pessimistic – he did not seek world rule but called for contemplation and reinforcement of the Latin West's own basis.

All the *tribulationes* expected to hit the world in the X-century were already jeopardising European soil. The Mongols had once again attacked Hungary and Poland in the 1280s, the Muslims had fought for the strait of Gibraltar from 1275 on (thus not only in the East, but at all the rims of Europe the danger was obvious), and the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palaiologos, *violentus occupator imperii Grecorum*, had violently occupied the Greek realm in 1261.<sup>20</sup> Even from the North dangers threatened the centre, and since there were not heathens left in these places, the sea itself arose in a destroyinf flood at the seashore.

This emperor Michael, who in his own view of course was a legitimate re-conqueror of his heritage, was seen as an occupier from outside, an interpretation crucial for Alexander's view. Very different from Sidrac's view of a Greek people left behind by history, the Greek (under the right, thus the Latin rule) were part of Alexander's Europe – a Europe deep in crisis not the least because the Greeks as its most threatened part were floating between inside and

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<sup>19</sup> On Lyon 1274 *Noticia Seculi*, cf. n. 18, p.154.

outside. The Greek empire was, as Alexander stressed, one out of four major realms (*regna principalia*) of Europe, adjoining from the East the three others: *regnum Romanorum* in the South, *Francorum* in the North and *Hispanorum* in the West.<sup>21</sup> For other contemporaries, the loss of Constantinople was one of several setbacks for a Latin Christianity moving eastwards, and it was usually not considered comparable to those of Jerusalem in 1187 and again 1239. These, as well as the dreading final of the scarce rests of the Latin Holy Land, are not mentioned at all by Alexander – while he, due to his concept of *Europa*, does consider the loss of Constantinople crucial.

Alexander outlined a new concept of Europe long before it became common among Latin thinkers. Not surprisingly this kind of daring proposal was best made in an eschatological context:<sup>22</sup> the empire is down, the papacy is about to fall, and though the empire may and shall raise again, Europe is strong as a community of several different actors (a concept which would have a great future), including all the Christian nations. Alexander presumably called this *Europa* because he intentionally wanted to contrast with the *Christianitas* dominated by the pope, but maybe also because he had to describe a new position in a world that had grown so much wider. *Christianitas* became too huge to provide a safe shelter; the growing knowledge about the wide world brought about a counter-reaction in order to describe a smaller, more limited and thus safer space for “the own”. It is this wider, too wide world Alexander excluded; he was drawing the border line (*terminos Europae*) excluding several real, well-known foreign peoples, among others the Mongols – in this respect, Alexander gave another and very different answer on opening up the Far East for the moving Europeans. It is, however, an answer as well as a border line that would have been impossible without the Latin movement to the East.

When the Mongols’ incursion hit Europe, the Latin Christians, in terms of their chance to soon achieving rule over all the world, did not seem to be in a very favourable position, politically, militarily or even culturally. As one possible consequence of all that happened in the East, at Constantinople and in the Holy Land, especially around 1260, pessimism struck hard;

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<sup>20</sup> On Manuel and the other *tribulations* see *Noticia Seculi*, cf. n. 18, p.152/3.

<sup>21</sup> On the four parts of Europe see *Noticia Seculi*, cf. n. 18, p.155.

<sup>22</sup> A scrutinised analysis of Alexander’s concept of Europe compared with older ones from antiquity through the Middle Ages, and with an overview of fifteenth century “Europa”, has been made by Manfred Fuhrmann, Alexander von Roes: ein Wegbereiter des Europa-gedankens? Vorgetragen am 16. Februar 1991, Heidelberg 1994 (Sitzungsberichte Akademie Heidelberg, phil.-hist. Klasse. 1994, 4).

the time of the Apocalypse, predicted for 1260 anyway, must then have seemed to have arrived already. In a way the awareness of external threat, even combined with inner crisis, served the emergence of an early new definition of political-cultural unity in a Europe of differences. At the same time, even in moments of eschatological fear, ideas of a new era having dawned with the appearance and establishment of the Mongols could be outlined in prophetic writings, and a “realistic” concept for the newly found wider world of differences could be laid down in legal theory. Knowledge about peoples and events far away, beyond the own Latin sphere, remained alive and was used by later Europeans in order to somehow consciously acquire all the world – although still in vision more than in reality. Thus, despite all setbacks, for the Latin West gazing East and on the move eastwards, the moment of the Mongols developed heavy momentum in the future of Europe as we know it.