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**“Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his marvelous deeds.”**
— *Psalms 96:3 (NABRE)*

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INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1219, Saint Francis accompanied the Fifth Crusade to the East and, after the fall of Damietta, attempted to convert the Sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil, to Christianity. Subsequently, painters began to employ this theme to create works on “Saint Francis before the Sultan” as a means of commemorating and bearing witness to Saint Francis’s evangelical mission toward the East, understood as imbued with a sense of missionary triumph. In the same year, 1219, Genghis Khan launched the first westward campaign after the establishment of the Mongol Empire. After more than a century of conquests, the territories extended from Korea to Hungary and from the Russian steppe to Syria, marking the largest and most influential geopolitical transformation of Eurasia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Mongol Empire unified much of the Eurasian continent under four interconnected khanates. In these regions, unprecedented changes in populations, goods, and ideas took place: Marco Polo at the court of Kublai Khan in China represents only the most well-known example of these cultural contacts.

In the study of Eastern influence, academic research in Europe and America is mostly limited to the biblical world. The “East” mentioned is often synonymous with the “Christian East,” or “Near East” referring to regions such as Egypt, Syria, and Persia. Attention to the Islamic East occupies a marginal position in art-historical research, and even less frequent is attention devoted to the far eastern end of the Eurasian continent, commonly known as the Far East. More rarely has the historical interaction of East Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe been studied within the same context. However, as global art history becomes an increasingly important method, art historians have shown a growing interest in cultural exchanges and artistic contacts. Art historians who study Chinese and Islamic art have collaborated to demonstrate how the arts and crafts of China and Persia changed as a result of contacts between the Yuan Empire and the Ilkhanate.¹ At the same time, numerous scholars have examined the evidence of contacts, influences, and interactions between European or Italian art and Islamic art. Nevertheless, the link between medieval Italian art and the rise of the Mongols remains

¹ See Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman. “Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai: An Istanbul Album Painter and a Chinese Painter of the Mongolian Period.” *Muqarnas*, vol. 4, 1987, pp. 119–132; Kadoi, Yuka. *Islamic Chinoiserie: The Art of Mongol Iran*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009. And 杨静 [Yang Jing]. “东方造境：波斯细密画中的中国风——以大蒙古《列王纪》为例” [“Creating the Oriental: Chinese Elements in Persian Miniatures—Taking the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* as an Example”]. *艺术设计研究* [*Art and Design Research*], no. 3, 2023, pp. 5–12.

a field still little explored, though it is gradually attracting the attention of scholars. This study situates itself within the extended trajectory of research on “Eastern/Oriental influences” in Western art history since the twentieth century, while also engaging with recent discussions in Global Art History and studies of cross-cultural image transmission.

1. The Formalist / Stylistic Comparative Approach

Regarding which art historians were the earliest, since the twentieth century, to direct their attention toward the Near East or the Far East within this field of inquiry, scholarly opinions diverge. Strictly speaking, there has been no art historian who has taken the “Far East” as a sustained field of study in relation to its influence on the formation of Western art. Compared with the Near East, with which Europe maintained continuous contact, the Far East represented a far more indirect and discontinuous point of reference. Central Asia and Western Asia long functioned as mediating zones, to the extent that twentieth-century scholars engaged in the study of “Eastern art” rarely treated China or East Asia as a serious problem of origin within European art history. Nevertheless, as points of departure and sites of problematization in the early study of Eastern influences, two figures in particular merit close attention.

The first is Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), who is commonly regarded as the earliest and most radical twentieth-century art historian to challenge the notion of the autonomous origin of Western art. The central question of his work concerned whether Eastern or Asian formal systems constituted a decisive influence on the stylistic origins of medieval Western art. By treating the “Orient” as a driving explanatory force behind the origins of European art, he advanced a strongly anti-classical and anti-Mediterranean-centered genealogical narrative. As a foundational figure in the historiography of this problem, Strzygowski shifted the focus of art-historical inquiry—most notably in *Orient oder Rom* (1901) and *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* (1918)—away from internal stylistic evolution toward issues of transregional transmission, ethnic and religious factors, and the circulation of materials and techniques. He placed particular emphasis on the profound impact of Near Eastern, West Asian, Central Asian, Byzantine, Iranian, and Armenian cultures on medieval European art.

Although Strzygowski did not engage in any substantive study of China or East Asia, he was the first to explicitly reject, within art history, the narrative framework that positioned Greco-Roman antiquity as the sole point of origin. His assertion that early medieval architecture owed much of its influence to the Oriental Middle East met with sustained criticism and opposition throughout his career from members of the Vienna School, including Aloïs Riegl, Franz Wickhoff, and Max Dvořák.² Strzygowski

² Vasold, Georg. "Riegl, Strzygowski and the development of art." *Journal of art historiography* 5, 2011, pp. 103-116.

believed that Christian art, like Christianity itself, radiated outward from Jerusalem to the farthest reaches of the world. He also played a key role in facilitating the transfer of the sculpted façade from the site of Mshatta to the Berlin museums.

This façade—an “experimental field” (Versuchsfeld) that did not belong to the Christian stylistic canon and that spread eastward and westward from Mesopotamia—served as an example of the new artistic-geographical unit he proposed: North Mesopotamian art (art de la Mésopotamie septentrionale).³ Through this concept, Strzygowski elevated “Eastern influence” from a matter of stylistic comparison to one of competing formal systems. At first glance, the Mshatta complex—dated to around 743–744 CE in the late Umayyad period and located in present-day southern Jordan—appears to conform to the Roman castrum model, with its square enclosure, regularly spaced round towers, and axial organization. Upon closer examination, however, its internal structure diverges entirely from Roman military or administrative logic: room dimensions are highly irregular; spatial configurations differ markedly from known Syrian Roman castella; and the central space is not a military core but rather a tripartite hall, a large courtyard, and a triconch apse (trikonchos). On this basis, Strzygowski argued that Mshatta derived from a formal system fundamentally distinct from that of Rome.

He further proposed that the technical characteristics of the Mshatta complex were primarily of Persian origin, citing features such as alternating brick-and-stone masonry, exceptionally thin mortar layers, and the frequent use of barrel vaults. Particularly significant were the pointed arches and the decorative “bulging” moldings (bourellets) framing the arches—elements that were not standard within Byzantine practice at the time but had long-standing traditions in Persia, inland Syria, and Mesopotamia. These construction techniques, he argued, were not the result of conscious imitation but were instead embedded within the organization of craft traditions themselves.

In his analysis of Mshatta, Strzygowski also identified a distinct decorative style. He observed that the artists did not rely on color but instead created rhythm and visual tension through shallow relief, deep carving, and graduated shadow effects. This modulation of light and darkness through depth of carving, he argued, did not originate in Greek art but could be traced back to Babylonian decorative traditions. Moreover, the immediate visual impression of the sculpted façade is that of an Oriental carpet: patterns are continuous and non-hierarchical, lacking a central focal point, organized in a grid-like manner, and possessing a pronounced textile-like quality. All of these features stand in stark contrast to Greco-Roman decorative units. The Mshatta complex thus embodies a non-classical conception of space in which architecture and ornament are fully integrated, characterized by pattern continuity and a deep synthesis of Persian and local traditions—an instance of the diffusion of North Mesopotamian art toward the Arab–Roman frontier.

³ Strzygowski, Josef. “Mshatta II. Kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchung.” *Jahrbuch der königlich preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, no. 4, 1904, pp. 225–373. Strzygowski, Josef. *Vergleichende Kunstforschung auf geographischer Grundlage*. Druck von RM Rohrer in Brünn, 1918.

Contemporaneous with Strzygowski, Aloïs Riegl likewise recognized the significance of Eastern decorative arts, though from a different methodological standpoint. Riegl emphasized the long-term evolution and transregional transmission of ornamental forms. He argued that from the Old Kingdom of Egypt through the Islamic world and into the present day, a continuous, unbroken lineage could be traced in fundamental ornamental motifs. Although these motifs appear in varied forms—such as palmettes, rosettes, and tendrils—their basic schemata remain recognizable. Riegl examined vegetal ornament in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, and Persia, comparing these traditions with Hellenistic and Roman vine-scroll decoration. He maintained that Greek artists absorbed motifs and design principles from the Near East and Egypt, which then developed further during the Classical and Hellenistic periods and in Roman and Late Antique art, subsequently shaping the extension of Arabesque and geometric ornament in the medieval Near East.

This early phase of research into Eastern influences was thus primarily concerned with explaining the origins and internal development of Western art itself. In this context, the “East” largely corresponded to the *Oriente Cristiano* or the Islamic world, while China and East Asia were almost entirely absent—regarded instead as indirect, distant, and discontinuous “other” spaces.

2. Material Culture and Media Pathways (Textiles, Objects, Materials)

Regardless of their differing positions, Aloïs Riegl and Josef Strzygowski were in complete agreement on one crucial point: form has never existed in the abstract; it is always embedded in a specific medium and material. The “visual order” that emerges from this embedding may, in fact, have first taken shape within media that are movable, reproducible, and transmissible. If a formal system exists with stability across multiple media, it necessarily corresponds to a concrete network of production and circulation. It is precisely in this sense that the study of “Eastern influence” must move beyond formal–stylistic analysis and debates over origins toward an examination of the circulation networks of textiles, objects, and materials.

In the plates accompanying the *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (1913), a pioneering publication by Otto von Falke, he classifies the textiles analyzed according to geographical and chronological categories, placing at the beginning of the section devoted to Italy a few pages with the telling titles “*chinesischer Einfluss in Italien*” (Chinese influence in Italy) and “*sinopersischer Einfluss in Italien*” (Sino-Persian influence in Italy)⁴. Maria Ludovica Rosati maintains that “the derivative relationship of Western artifacts from what the scholar attributed to China emerged through an immediate visual comparison between Far Eastern prototypes and the stylistic and

⁴ Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin 1913, pp. 336-367.

iconographic reprises carried out by the weavers of Lucca and Venice in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.”⁵

Beginning with Otto von Falke’s visual-typological research grounded in textile objects, the study of Eastern influence initially constructed a stable image corpus and visual system through direct visual juxtaposition, thereby making cross-regional formal continuities “visible.”

The research conducted by Anne Wardwell between the 1970s and the late 1980s aimed to develop a classificatory system for thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Asian artifacts made of silk and gold threads, known in Western documents of the time as *panni tartarici* (Tartar cloths). Wardwell’s innovative approach opened new perspectives, shifting attention from pictorial works to the material history of textiles and making the analysis of technical structures an indispensable tool to accompany the investigation of visual forms in determining the provenance of objects. By focusing attention on silk, one can explore the correlations between decorative motifs, weave, weaving techniques, and designs; furthermore, the social implications of silk as a commodity or gift are considered, including production, consumption, and circulation. As illustrated by historian Thomas Allsen in *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, the manufacture, consumption, and use of Islamic textiles under Mongol rule are studied, assessing their cultural and political significance and the role of northern nomads in the cross-cultural transfer of goods, ideologies, and technologies.⁶

According to Anne Dunlop’s interpretation, the visual evidence of Eastern influence can be categorized into two principal groups.⁷ The first group comprises personal objects that the Mongols transported from Eurasia to Italy and Europe, as well as craft goods that entered Europe through trade. Such objects, often rare and precious, spread among the highest social elites, including kings, popes, and nobles. Among these are ceramics, textiles, metalwork, and luxurious jewelry, analogous to those reported by Marco Polo. The second group is represented by large pictorial works made by Italian artists for a domestic audience. These works, unlike smaller, portable objects, reached a wide and more general public, thus constituting effective testimony to how the Mongol world was conceived by Italian artists and viewers. The next section will be devoted to analyzing the research carried out on these two types of visual evidence, with the aim of offering a treatment as comprehensive and in-depth as possible.

In her 1987 essay, Anne Wardwell highlights three concepts that continue to dominate the field of study: “ornament studies,” “gold-brocaded silk” and “vestment studies”⁸ (Fig. I. 1). Maria Ludovica Rosati has distinguished herself as one of the

⁵ Rosati, Maria Ludovica. “Migrazioni Tecnologiche e Interazioni Culturali. Chinoiserie Ed Esotismo Nell’arte Tessile Italiana Del XIII e Del XIV Secolo.” *Rivista Dell’Osservatorio per Le Arti Decorative in Italia*, no. 2, 2011, pp. 58.

⁶ Allsen, Thomas. *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁷ Dunlop, Anne. “Artistic Contact between Italy and Mongol Eurasia.” *Ewha Sahak Yeongu*, vol. 57, 2018, pp. 1–36.

⁸ Anne E. Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix: crosscurrents in late thirteenth-to fourteenth-century silk patterns and motifs." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 74.1, 1987, pp.2-35; *Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks*

most prolific researchers in pursuing Wardwell's work. As for the ornamental motifs characterizing the *panni tartarici*, Rosati, from the sources, deduces some recurrent decorative typologies, relating both to the overall structure of the module and to the individual patterns employed.⁹ She focused on the history of the silk textile industry and on inventories of medieval ecclesiastical goods, observing that "the West moved from the role of passive final recipient of goods traded along the Silk Road to that of producer of sumptuary artifacts, becoming particularly receptive to foreign stimuli."¹⁰

Rosati adopted the concept of the "cultural migrator," a term coined by Martin Kemp to describe those works of applied art—present in great numbers in Renaissance collections of rarities—that are the product of the combination of exotic naturalia (ostrich eggs, animal horns, coconut shells, etc.) and human ingenuity with human creativity. Although Kemp used "cultural migrator" to emphasize how such objects elude conventional categorizations within the system of the arts, oscillating among multiple meanings and uses, this definition facilitates the understanding of another type of cultural movement, namely that of textiles across the Eurasian continent.¹¹ According to Rosati, by virtue of its characteristic transferability, the textile medium indeed plays a fundamental role in the migration of various elements of civilization between different geographical realities, since, through the circulation of fabrics, decorative solutions, execution techniques, as well as an entire shared attitude toward silk luxury and its social uses, spread. Rosati presented visual evidence that falls both within the first category defined by Anne Dunlop—which includes objects brought to Italy and Europe from the Eurasian continent and items introduced through trade—and within the second category, namely images as testimonies.

Historian Roxann Prazniak, within the framework of her broad research program on Islamic illustrations and paintings, introduced a methodological innovation by considering illustrations as integral elements of the text and the manuscript as a total work of art, in which text and images combine to communicate articulated messages. Fortunately, this approach is neither rare nor unknown outside of Oriental studies. Prazniak particularly examined manuscript production in the Ilkhanate, where local copyists' workshops brought together craftsmen from Persia, Italy, Greece, and beyond,

Woven with Gold and Silver (13th and 14th Centuries). Bruschetti Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, 1989; And her following publications: "The 'Kesi Thangka' of Vighnāntaka." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 80, no. 4, 1993, pp. 136–39; "Two Silk and Gold Textiles of the Early Mongol Period." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 79, no. 10, 1992, pp. 354–78.

⁹ Rosati, Maria Ludovica 2011, pp. 65. The original text reads: "Il disegno dei manufatti orientali poteva articolarsi in righe verticali o in bande orizzontali (ad listas, ad virgas, ad barras), in una maglia di medaglioni, ruote e mandorle (ad compassus, ad rotas, ad pineas) variamente abitati, essere definito dal gioco dell'armatura a spina di pesce o poteva disporsi liberamente sull'intera superficie della stoffa, sfruttando gli effetti ottici di una ripetizione continua e sfalsata del modulo compositivo di base (esemplari in questo caso le sete a piccoli motivi, ricordate nelle fonti come de opere minuto). Rispetto ai singoli motivi adottati, invece, le fonti occidentali ci tramandano un composito e variegato mondo vegetale e animale, popolato di una fauna veritiera e fantastica fatta di uccelli (falconi, pappagalli, pellicani etc.), pesci, quadrupedi (leopardi, leoni, scimmie etc.), draghi e grifoni, che animano un habitat di fiori, rose, foglie, palmette, alberi e tralci, dove compare, seppur più raramente, la stessa presenza umana. Non mancano, inoltre, neppure oggetti inanimati, quali stelle, conchiglie, cartigli o catene, ed è anche attestato un sapiente uso dei caratteri grafici in funzione decorativa".

¹⁰ Rosati, Maria Ludovica 2010. See https://oadiriv.unipa.it/?page_id=464

¹¹ Kemp, Martin. "Wrought by No Artist's Hand": the Natural, the Artificial, the Exotic and the Scientific in Some Artifacts from the Renaissance, in *Reframing the Renaissance, Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650*, a cura di C. Farago, New Haven-London 1995, pp. 177-196, 179.

highlighting a significant relationship between manuscripts produced in the workshops of Tabriz—such as the *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* and the *Great Mongol Shāhnāmeḥ*—and Italian painting.¹²

The second phase of research on Eastern influence emerged from the 1970s to the 1980s. With the growing attention in art-historical scholarship to material culture, trade networks, and historical context, the “East” was no longer regarded as a single cultural zone, but gradually came to be understood as a transregional space composed of multiple layers of mediation. Central Asia was no longer seen merely as a “corridor,” but rather as a core region of production and redistribution, while the Mongol Empire was understood as a key political structure connecting China, Iran, and the Mediterranean world. Although China and East Asia were mentioned as sites of material production or as distant points of origin, they largely remained in the background of art-historical interpretation and had not yet become objects of systematic analysis.

However, the mechanisms of transmission revealed by approaches grounded in material culture and media pathways are not sufficient to exhaust all the ways in which Eastern forms were present in medieval Italian art. As Anne Dunlop has pointed out, the Eastern luxury objects that actually entered Italy and Europe were, for the most part, precious items produced in limited quantities and circulating within restricted networks, with their audiences largely confined to courts, the papacy, and the aristocracy. By contrast, large-scale pictorial works produced by Italian artists for local audiences operated at broader and more public levels of circulation.

It was precisely in the course of this shift in medium that Eastern forms ceased to be directly appropriated in the form of objects, and instead were re-presented, reorganized, and imagined through images. Consequently, the focus of inquiry also shifted: research no longer concentrated solely on how forms were carried and replicated through material objects, but further asked how these forms were selected, translated, and re-contextualized within images, eventually crystallizing into recognizable visual motifs and iconographic patterns. For this reason, the study of Eastern influence must, in addition to pathways of material culture, incorporate an examination of mechanisms of image transmission and trajectories of motif evolution.

3. Pathways of Image Transmission and Visual Motifs (Iconography / Motifs)

Building upon object-based research by Otto von Falke and other scholars, as well as extensive museum-based studies, which classified materials according to typology, geography, and chronology and thereby established rich image corpora and visual

¹² Prazniak, Roxann. “Siena on the Silk Roads: Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the Mongol Global Century, 1250–1350.” *Journal of World History*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 177–217. And Prazniak, Roxann. “Ilkhanid Buddhism: Traces of a Passage in Eurasian History.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2014, pp. 650–680.

systems, early twentieth-century research on Eastern influence gradually formed a large-scale image archive and a relatively stable visual system. Within this research pathway, images initially functioned as visual evidence of material objects and were employed to reveal the continuity and derivative relationships of forms across different regions and media. Iconographic research is still far from concluded.

In the 1990s, Lisa Monnas drew on Brigitte Klesse's in-depth study of silk materials in fourteenth-century Italian paintings, which included a catalogue of five hundred motifs represented in paintings, illustrated through linear drawings.¹³ Building on these studies, Monnas's investigations focused on silk textiles present in Italian and Northern European pictorial works between 1300 and 1550.¹⁴ In addition, Monnas examined drawings of ancient Italian textiles held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, especially a collection of high-quality silk design projects attributed to the Venetian school of the late fourteenth century. These are connected to other pattern books or drawings from the late fourteenth century, as well as to Venetian or Lucchese silk textiles of the period, deeply influenced by Eastern models.¹⁵

In addition to the previously mentioned paintings, drawings, manuscript illustrations, and graphic compositions, Zheng Yikan has recently delved into the study of representations of the Mongols in Italian paintings between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In his doctoral thesis *Entre la terreur et l'espoir: construction de l'image mongole aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* and in the related book¹⁶, the image of the Tatars is presented in five case studies that are independent yet interconnected. The appearance of the Mongols in Italian paintings of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries constitutes a particular and marginal phenomenon. Zheng examined how artists represented this new image of the "Other," considering the formation and transformation of the image in different contexts. Under Mongol conquest, the Mongol Empire established an era of peace across vast Eurasian territories and made great efforts to facilitate trade routes and build a road network that allowed merchants, ambassadors, and missionaries to move easily between Europe and Asia. From that moment, the image of the Mongols, as a representation of the "Other," infiltrated anachronistically into the Gospel narratives, in scenes such as the Adoration of the Magi, the Crucifixion, Pentecost, and the Resurrection. The role of the Mongols was not entirely negative and varied with time and context: they were depicted as Gog and Magog of the Apocalypse; as the soldiers who divided Christ's cloak; as spectators and witnesses of the Passion or of Jesus's martyrdom; and as Eastern kings who adored the newborn Christ Child. All these representations contributed to creating an ambivalent image, generating a tension between terror and hope. Zheng highlighted the complexity

¹³ Klesse, Brigitte. *Seidenstoffe in der italienischen Malerei des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Bern, 1967.

¹⁴ Monnas, Lisa. *Merchants, Princes and Painters: Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings, 1300-1550*. Yale University Press, 2008.

¹⁵ Coutts, Howard, et al. "An Early Italian Textile Drawing in the Victoria and Albert Museum." *The Burlington Magazine*, 2008, pp. 389-92.

¹⁶ Zheng, Yikan. *Entre la terreur et l'espoir: construction de l'image mongole aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*. 2018. EHESSEcole des hautes études en sciences sociales. This doctoral dissertation's Chinese version was published in China, as referenced in: 郑伊看 [Zheng Yikan]. *来者是谁: 13-14 世纪欧洲艺术中的东方人形象 [The New Comer: The image of the Orientals in 13th and 14th Century European Art]*. 江苏凤凰美术出版社 [Jiangsu Phoenix Fine Arts Publishing House], 2023.

of context in the representation of Mongol images, demonstrating how these in turn reflect the moods and beliefs of the late Middle Ages. Through the methods of “image comparison” and “recontextualization,” this approach examines the processes through which images undergo the reconstruction of meaning within different cultural contexts and knowledge systems.

It is precisely within this line of inquiry that images are no longer regarded merely as ancillary evidence of material culture, but instead become a medium endowed with its own logic of transmission and interpretive potential. As a result, the study of Eastern influence is able to move beyond the level of objects and material circulation and further transition toward a systematic examination of mechanisms of image transmission and trajectories of visual motif evolution.

With the advent of the twenty-first century, and alongside the rise of Global Art History and studies of cross-cultural image transmission, research on “Eastern influence” has undergone a fundamental paradigmatic shift, entering a third phase. On the spatial level, China and East Asia are no longer understood merely as “endpoints” or as exotic points of origin, but are instead incorporated into a comprehensive system of Eurasian interaction. *Pax Mongolica* is viewed as a structural condition facilitating transregional mobility rather than as an incidental background. The transregional mobilization system of the Mongol Empire thus becomes a key explanatory framework, enabling art-historical analysis to situate Central Asia, China, Iran, and the Mediterranean within a single system jointly constituted by state power, craft organizations, trade networks, and monastic intermediaries. It is precisely within this historiographical context that the role of the Franciscans as cross-cultural mediators acquires new explanatory potential: they functioned simultaneously as missionaries, travelers, and diplomatic agents, as well as carriers and re-interpreters of objects, images, and knowledge.

4. Historical Networks and Mediating Pathways (Networks, Agents)

If the preceding stage of research has already revealed how Eastern forms were able to move through material media and were selected, translated, and recontextualized within image systems, the questions that follow inevitably point toward mediating mechanisms on the historical level: through whom, and within what kinds of networks, were these images and forms introduced into Italy and Europe? Images do not circulate spontaneously as autonomous sign systems; they are not only attached to material objects, but are always embedded in concrete historical agents and pathways of transmission. It is precisely in this sense that recent scholarship has increasingly shifted its focus toward mediating actors such as merchants, envoys, missionaries, and religious orders, examining their role of mediation in transregional exchanges, as well as the modes of circulation of objects, images, and knowledge within different social networks. Within this framework, images are no longer understood merely as passive

“sources” or “outcomes” of influence, but rather as *image vehicles* that are carried, interpreted, and embedded within new cultural contexts in specific historical situations.

Therefore, the study of Eastern influence must ultimately be combined with an analysis of historical networks and mediating pathways in order to understand how images acquire their concrete forms and meanings within processes of cross-cultural exchange.

Up to the present, only Lauren Arnold has undertaken an in-depth investigation of art in Italy and in Mongol Asia, using the Franciscan missionary order as the leitmotif.¹⁷ On the one hand, Arnold meticulously traced the path of Franciscan evangelization from Europe to China; on the other, she illustrated how the friars moved constantly between Rome, Assisi, Avignon, and Beijing, carrying with them gifts and letters. She formulated a bold hypothesis: a particularly fascinating aspect of Franciscan missionary activity in China is that painted scrolls were probably brought back and used as artistic models, providing another significant element for surpassing Byzantine forms and influencing Giotto and subsequent painters (Fig. I. 2).

*“The most logical place to begin looking for subtle, early signs of Chinese influence is at Assisi, which underwent several phases of decoration during the era of the Pax Mongolica. The pros and cons of whether Giotto ever painted there - quite simply, he did - are the subject for another book, but if we look with fresh eyes at two germinal scenes in the Life of St. Francis cycle - the Miracle of the Spring (Fig. I.3a) and Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds (Fig. I. 3b) - the figure forms, their proportions, and the background landscape do, indeed, indicate a striking shift to an innovative, non-Byzantine source. Consider then the possibility that we are seeing at Assisi somewhat hesitant interpretation of a Chinese landscape, introduced into western artistic conventions in the last decade of the thirteenth century via a painted scroll. This is not a new speculation: in the 1980s, Hidemichi Tanaka pointed out that, stylistically, the tree in Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds was far closer to Chinese perspective than the nearest western prototypes at the time, and theorized a possible connection between the two traditions. Certainly, if we compare the human and animal forms in Zhao Mengfu's Horse and Groom in the Wind (Fig. I. 4) and the panel of Saint Francis Giving His Cloak (Fig. I. 5) a stylistic resonance comes through in the Assisi fresco that cannot be ignored. In light of the Franciscan connection to China, this painting can be seen anew as another hesitant interpretation of a much more polished form, rather than a European innovation created in an artistic vacuum.”*¹⁸

Among the Eastern objects that enriched medieval Western collections—pride of their treasuries—were nasij silk, refined porcelain, and complex metalwork; and in one inventory there is even mention of scrolls from China—*papirum tartaricorum*. “Given as gifts, often passing from one royal collector to another or among ecclesiastical possessions, these fragile artifacts of Mongol China maintained their prestige as luxuries for over a century, until the dust of time dimmed their splendor and their distant

¹⁷ Arnold, Lauren. *Princely gifts and papal treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350*. Desiderata Press, 1999.

¹⁸ Citing Lauren Arnold 1999, pp.123.

provenance.”¹⁹ To reconnect this ancient warp and weft, Lauren Arnold introduced the archival element of the *papiri tartarici* and brought the Franciscan missionary enterprise back into focus, which intertwines around and through other diversified elements, binding them firmly together once again. As she herself emphasized, “*Without the Franciscans, this narrative would not possess a structure of its own: it is the Franciscans—travelers, missionaries, cartographers, writers, and promoters of the arts—who first led us to China and then brought China back to us in the West.*”²⁰

From the twentieth century onward, the question of Eastern influence has become a problem field understood and approached in multiple ways. As the foregoing historiographical review has shown, research on medieval Eurasian exchange and “Eastern influence” has, over the past several decades, developed several mature and mutually intersecting lines of inquiry. On the one hand, studies represented by scholars such as Thomas Allsen and David Jacoby have revealed the institutional mechanisms governing the transregional circulation of materials, technologies, and luxury goods through the political structures of the Mongol Empire and Mediterranean–Eurasian trade networks. On the other hand, within art history itself, scholarship has gradually shifted away from early theories of formal origins toward an increased focus on media, material culture, and processes of image recontextualization. Yet it is precisely at the intersection of these research trajectories that several structural gaps remain, leaving the discussion of “Far Eastern experience” in medieval Christian art still insufficiently and unsystematically explored.

This study focuses on Eastern influence in Western art history as generated through cross-cultural exchange in medieval art, mediated by religious art and missionary networks. It is characterized by a methodological framework that is distinctly transregional (Italy–Mongol world–China), cross-medial (painting–textiles–manuscripts), and cross-disciplinary (art history/global history/image transmission). Accordingly, rather than treating Far Eastern elements in Franciscan art as isolated instances of “exotic decoration,” a more productive approach is to analyze them at the intersection of institutional mediation (the Franciscan Order), material carriers (silk and manuscripts), and semantic rewriting within the Christian visual system.

¹⁹ Lauren Arnold 1999, pp. 119.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

In the 13th century, mendicant orders emerged in Europe. Inspired by the vision of Christian kingdoms in the East, they traversed vast, non-Christian lands to spread their faith to pagans. The Mongol Empire, with its religious tolerance, provided a fertile ground for the spread of Christianity. Reports of missionary work and martyrdom from these journeys significantly impacted both the religious and artistic landscapes of Latin Christianity. As Christopher McEvitt puts it, “The discourse of martyrdom and evangelization are two sides of the same coin; only one is visible at a time, but turn the coin over, and the other emerges into the light.”²¹ This statement aptly captures the essence of the historical period and its visual representations. There are two main types of evidence regarding the interactions between the Mongols and Christianity. The first consists of firsthand accounts, letters, and memoirs from Europeans who traveled to the East, including:

a. Giovanni di Pian del Carpine (1182–1252), a Franciscan friar, who traveled to the Mongol court between 1245 and 1247, meeting Güyük Khan. His account, *Historia Mongalorum*²², documented his journey.

b. Letters brought back to the Papal court in 1248 by fellow Franciscan missionaries²³, including reports from Nestorian Christian Rabban Sauma and Jacobite d'Antioche Ignace II. Later accounts of Rabban Sauma's travels were compiled in *Histoire de Mar Jab-alaha, patriarche*²⁴.

²¹ MacEvitt, Christopher. *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp. 141.

²² Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*, P. Daffinà, C. Leonardi, M.C. Lungarotti. E. Menestò, Spoleto, 2006. The English version is included in: *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941. Also referring to the Chinese translation: 耿昇, 何高济译[Geng Sheng, He Gaoyi trans.], 《柏朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行记》[*Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine. The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World*], 北京: 商务印书馆, 中国旅游出版社[Beijing: The Commercial Press, China Tourism Press], 2018.

²³ For the letters of Nicholas IV to Mark and Arghun. see *Reg. Vaticano 44*, c. 54 fol. 312 r. and 313 r.

²⁴ Bedjan, Paul, ed. *Histoire de Mar Jab-alaha, patriarche, et de Raban Sauma*. Vol. 1. Harrassowitz, 1895. For the English version, see: Bedjan, Paul, ed. *The History of Mar Jab-Alaha and Rabban Sauma: Histoire de Mar Jab-Alaha, Patriarche, et de Raban Sauma*. 1st Gorgias Press ed., Gorgias Press, 2007. For the Chinese version, see: 朱炳旭译[Zhu Bingxu trans.], 《拉班·扫马和马克西行记》[*The History of Mar Jab-Alaha and Rabban Sauma*], 郑州: 大象出版社[Zhengzhou: Elephant Press], 2009.

c. The *Itinerarium (Viaggio in Mongolia)* written by French Franciscan friar Guillaume de Rubrouck (1215–1270), based on his travels from 1253 to 1255²⁵.

d. *The Travels of Marco Polo (Il Milione)*, a narrative dictated by the Venetian merchant based on his travels to the East from 1271 to 1292²⁶.

e. Letters between Giovanni da Montecorvino and the Papal court after he was sent to establish the first archbishopric in China in 1288, *Epistola*²⁷.

f. The *Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium tartarorum* by Franciscan friar Odoric of Pordenone, who recorded his travels across China after visiting Bishop Andreas in Quanzhou from 1318 to 1330²⁸.

g. *Relatio*, a report by Giovanni di Marignolli, who was sent to China by Pope Benedict XII in 1342, in response to a request from Giovanni da Montecorvino²⁹.

h. Letters between the Franciscan bishops of Quanzhou, Andreas De Perugia and Fra Peregrino, and the Papal court³⁰.

i. *Historia Tartarorum*, compiled by Simon Saint-Quentin, a member of several Dominican missions to the East³¹.

The second type of evidence consists of historical compilations based on earlier sources:

a. Chinese Yuan dynasty historical records, such as the *History of the Yuan (元史)*³², commissioned by Emperor Hongwu of the Ming dynasty, which chronicles the activities of *Ye Li Ke Wen*³³ and missionaries like Giovanni di Marignolli. And the

²⁵ Guglielmo di Rubruk, *Viaggio in Mongolia (Itinerarium)*, P. Chiesa ed., Cles, 2014. The English version is: *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941. Also referring to the Chinese translation of the English version: *Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941. Also referring to the Chinese translation: 耿昇, 何高济译[Geng Sheng, He Gaoyi trans.], 《柏朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行记》[*Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine. The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World*], 北京: 商务印书馆, 中国旅游出版社[Beijing: The Commercial Press, China Tourism Press], 2018. This edition is a compilation of the travelogues of two Franciscan friars: Giovanni di Pian del Carpine and Guillaume de Roubrouk.

²⁶ Polo, Marco. *Il Milione*. Mondadori, 2019. Also referring to the English version: *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Edited by Manuel Komroff, Translated by William Marsden, Modern Library, 2001.

²⁷ Iohannis de Monte Corvino. *Epistolae (I-III)*, *Sinica Franciscana. Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum Saeculi XIII et XIV*, A. Van Den Wyngaert ed., I, Firenze, 1929, pp.340-355.

²⁸ Odorico da Pordonone, *Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium tartarorum*, A. Marchisio ed., Firenze 2016.

²⁹ Giovanni de' Marignolli, *Relatio. Un frate francescano nella Cina e nell'India del XIV secolo*, I. Malfatto, P. Mocella ed., Pisa, 2022.

³⁰ Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, London, University of Toronto Press, 1980, p. 224-31; Fr. Andreas De Perugia, *Epistola*, *Sinica Franciscana. Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum Saeculi XIII et XIV*, Van Den Wyngaert ed., I, Firenze, 1929, pp.369-78.

³¹ The original book has been lost, and the contents are included in the *Speculum Historiale*, compiled by Vincent of Beauvais (1184/1194-1264).

³² *History of the Yuan [元史]* is a chronicle of the rise and fall of the Yuan Dynasty, written in the early years of the Ming Dynasty. The 210 volumes of the book, including 47 volumes of Benji (biographies of emperors), 58 volumes of Zhi (specialized historical records of various systems and institutions), 8 volumes of Biao (chronological records of major events), and 97 volumes of Liezhuan (biographies of notable individuals). In this book, which is the official chronicle, contains few relevant records, except for the accounts of the Christian religion YE LI KE WEN and the Giovanni de' Marignolli mission to China, which reflects that the Ming Dynasty ignored this aspect of the history of the previous dynasty and even deliberately left it out to a certain extent.

³³ According to the *History of the Yuan*, the general name given to the various Christian sects during the Yuan Dynasty was "YE LI KE WEN". See: 陈昭吟[Chen Zhaoyin], "元朝也里可温教与世界历史发展的关系[YE LI

Secret History of the Mongols is another key source, one of the three major chronicles of Mongol history³⁴.

b. Church records, such as the *Bullarium Franciscanum*, *Les Registres de Nicolas IV*, *Sinica Franciscana*, and *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, contain letters, annals of the Christian-Mongol wars, and missionary reports.

c. The *Jami' al-Tawarikh (Compendium of Chronicles)*, written between 1300 and 1310 and commissioned by Mongol ruler Ghazan Khan and written by the Persian historian and vizier Rashid al-Din Hamadani (1247–1318), documents the history of the Mongols and other Turkic tribes³⁵.

d. The *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a collection of medieval notices of China*, a four-volume work compiled by British Orientalist Henry Yule, which gathers medieval accounts of China³⁶.

e. Manuscripts and illustrated chronicles, such as *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (1200–1259), which records the Mongol invasions, and the *Chronicom Pictum*, a Hungarian chronicle housed in the National Széchényi Library, depicting Tatar battles in Eastern Europe.

These diverse sources provide a detailed understanding of the relationship between the Mongol Empire and the Christian world, reflecting both the challenges and the spread of Christianity in the East.

1.1 From *St Francis before the Sultan to the Martyrdom of the Franciscans*

1.1.1 *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*

KE UEN (Erkeun or Arkaim) ' and the World Historical Development Relations in Yuan Dynasty], *成大宗教与文化学报*[*Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies of Cheng Kung University*], 2006, pp.59-91.

³⁴ De Rachewiltz, Igor. *The Secret History of the Mongols: Volume 1-3*. Vol. 7. Brill, 2022. The Chinese version: *蒙古秘史* [*Secret History of the Mongols*], 北京, 中央编译出版社[Beijing: China Central Compilation & Translation Press], 2011.

³⁵ The earliest version of the Latin codex is divided into two parts between the University of Edinburgh (Or Ms 20, 151 folios) and the Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (MSS 727, 59 folios). Online scan of the Edinburgh manuscript, see:

https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEsha~4~4~64742~103064?sort=work_creator_details%2Cwork_shelfmark%2Cwork_source_page_no%2Cwork_title&qvq=q:9999999;sort:work_creator_details%2Cwork_shelfmark%2Cwork_source_page_no%2Cwork_title;lc:UoEsha~4~4&mi=0&trs=1; Khalili Collection see <https://www.khalilicollections.org/collections/islamic-art/khalili-collection-islamic-art-the-jami-al-tawarikh-of-rashid-al-din-mss727/> (Accessed September 25, 2025)

³⁶ Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1-4. Digitally printed version [d. Ausg.] London, Hakluyt Soc., 1866. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 36. Cambridge New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

Between 1336 and 1340, the Sieneſe painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1290–1348) created ſeveral large narrative frescoes on the eaſtern wall of the Baſilica of San Francesco in Siena (Fig. 1.1). Two of theſe are ſtill recognizable today: *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans* (Fig. 1.2) and *Saint Louis of Toulouse before Pope Boniface VIII* (Fig. 1.3). Directly oppoſite, Ambrogio's brother, Pietro Lorenzetti, painted *The Crucifixion* and *The Resurrected Christ*, though only fragments of the latter remain. In 1857, *The Crucifixion* was moved to the Todeschini Chapel, while Ambrogio's works now occupy the eaſt and weſt walls of the Bandini Chapel. The church features a narrative cycle of Saint Francis. As noted by S. Maureen Burke, one of Ambrogio's ſurviving fragments, now in the National Gallery in London, likely depicts “a cluster of Poor Clares, tentatively identified as part of a ſcene of the Body of *Saint Francis Halted at S. Damiano, Assisi, and Mourned by Saint Clare and her Companions*.”³⁷. Furthermore, Max Seidel's reſearch indicates that Ambrogio alſo painted the martyrdom of Blessed Pietro da Siena and his companions in Tana, India, in 1321, with a ſurviving fragment now houſed in the Birmingham Muſeum and Art Gallery.³⁸

The *Martyrdom of the Franciscans* fresco was once miſtakenly thought to represent the martyrdom of Biſhop Tomasso da Tolentino and three other Franciscans in Tana (near preſent-day Mumbai) in 1321, as deſcribed by Ghiberti³⁹. However, S. Maureen Burke corrected this in 2002, ſuggeſting the fresco actually depicts the martyrdom of ſix Franciscans in Almaliq (Armalech or Almaligh, modern-day Xinjiang, China) in 1339.⁴⁰

In 1225, Genghis Khan's ſon Chagatai (r. 1225–1242) founded the Chagatai Khanate⁴¹, whoſe fieſdom was the old Weſt Liao region, including the area north and

³⁷ Burke, S. Maureen. “The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenze.” *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2002, pp.461-62.

³⁸ Seidel, Max. “Gli Affreschi Di Ambrogio Lorenzetti Nel Chiostro Di San Francesco a Siena: Ricostruzione e Datazione.” *Prospettiva*, no. 18, 1979, pp. 404. For the diſcovery of fresco remnants in the 19th century, ſee: Milanese, Gaetano. “Gli avanzi delle pitture di Ambrogio Lorenzetti nel Capitolo di S. Francesco di Siena”, *Sulla storia dell'arte toscana, scritti varj*, Siena, 1873, p. 357-61; For important interventions and transfers to frescoes, ſee: Forni, Ulisse. *Manuale del pittore restauratore, Successori Le Monnier*, 1866. p.30-31. Due to the ſheer ſize of the ſtatue to be removed, in this book Forni uſes it as an example to demonſtrate how the frescoes were transferred to the ſouth chapel of the church.

³⁹ Prinz, Wolfram. “I Tatars Nella Pittura Italiana Del Trecento.” *Studi Di Storia Dell'arte Sul Medioevo e Il Rinascimento Nel Centenario Della Nascita Di Mario Salmi. Atti Del Covegno Internazionale Arezzo-Firenze, 16-19 Novembre 1989*, Vol. 1. Edizione Polistampa Fireze, 1992; Rowley, George. *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, I, Princeton, 1958, p.79-84; Ghiberti, Lorenzo (1378-1455), *I Commentarii*, Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze, Lorenzo Bartoli ed. and trans. Florence, Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 1998, pp. 333.

⁴⁰ Burke, S. Maureen, pp.478-87 (note 17).

⁴¹ The Chagatai Khanate was one of the four main khanates of the Mongol Empire, alonſide the Golden Horde, the Ögedei Khanate, and the Ilkhanate. While nominally part of the Mongol Empire, theſe khanates operated independently and often waged war againſt each other, ſometimes leading to conqueſt and abſorption. As a reſult, the Mongol Empire functioned more as a looſe federation, with the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), founded by Kublai Khan and his deſcendants, at its core. The Ögedei Khanate was the firſt to fall, being abſorbed by the Chagatai Khanate around 1310, effectively diſappearing by the mid-Yuan period. The Ilkhanate was deſtroyed by the Timurid Empire in 1393. The Golden Horde, weakened by internal conflict, ſteadily declined throughout the late 14th century and eventually fragmented into ſmaller khanates by the 15th century. Among the four khanates, the Chagatai Khanate endured the longeſt, until its eventual conqueſt by the Dzungar Khanate in 1687. In 1365, the Chagatai Khanate ſplit into two: the Weſtern Chagatai Khanate, which was overtaken by the Timurid Empire in 1369, and the Eaſtern Chagatai Khanate, later known as the Turpan Khanate. By 1570, the Turpan Khanate was conqueſt by Abdul Karim Khan of Yarkand, a branch of the Chagatai line, marking the end of the direct Chagatai ruling houſe. The remnants of the Chagatai Khanate were abſorbed by the Dzungar Khanate around 1700. It is believed that during the reign of

south of the Tianshan Mountains, the *Semiryechye* and the area between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers (also known as the ‘Transoxiana’), with Almaliq as its capital (Fig. 1.4). Almaliq, located in the fertile *Semiryechye*, was a key center for nomadic life and equestrian culture, making it a significant hub for trade and governance. Both Roman Catholic and Nestorian bishops were stationed there, reflecting its importance.

The martyrdom of the Franciscans depicted in the fresco occurred as a result of religious conflict—specifically the tension between Christianity, apostasy, and Islamization. In the early years of the Chagatai Khanate, Mongol rulers were still Shamanists. In response to the Mongol threat to Europe, Pope Innocent IV (1195–1254) initiated a mission in 1245 to send representatives from the newly founded mendicant orders, including the Franciscan Giovanni di Pian del Carpine (1182–1252), to the Mongol court. Carpine's correspondence from this mission, preserved in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, includes a letter from Güyük Khan (c. 1206–124, r. 1246–1248) to Pope Innocent IV. In this letter, Güyük rebukes the pope's attempt to convert him, asserting that his conquests were divinely ordained:

“Though you likewise say that I should become a trembling Nestorian Christian, worship God and be an ascetic, how knowest thou whom God absolves, in truth to whom He shows mercy? How dost thou know that such words as thou speakest are with God's sanction? From the rising of the sun to its setting, all the lands have been made subject to me. Who could do this contrary to the command of God?”⁴²

During this period, Mongol rulers were engaged in continual expansion and power struggles⁴³, which required a steady supply of horses. These horses came from vast, high-quality pastures, and the cavalry itself was drawn from the nomadic population. The nomadic economy provided the foundation for Mongol military campaigns. Moreover, the recently settled Mongol nomads in Central Asia, including their rulers, had not yet adapted to agricultural or urban life. They even viewed settled peoples as degenerate and weak, believing that only nomads were noble. Although the rulers of the Chagatai Khanate controlled cities and established their capital in Almaliq, they

Tughlugh Timur (r. 1342–1362 or 1363), the city of Almaliq served as the capital of the Chagatai Khanate for the last time. For further details on the history of Chagatai, see: Biran, Michal. “Diplomacy and chancellery practices in the Chagataid Khanate: some preliminary remarks.” *Oriente Moderno* 88.2, 2008, p. 369-393.

⁴² Christopher Dawson ed., *The Mongol mission. Narratives and letters of the Franciscan missionaries in Mongolia and China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*. London and New York, 1995. This missionary effort did not achieve the desired results. In his letter to the Great Khan, the Pope invited him to convert to Christianity and cease his westward expansion and conquest of Christian territories. The Khan rejected this invitation and, in his response, demanded that the Pope and all other rulers submit to him. The exchange of letters between Pope Innocent IV and Güyük Khan in 1245 clearly illustrated the deep misunderstanding between East and West, both in terms of faith and culture. However, this marked the beginning of formal diplomatic relations between the Mongols and Rome.

⁴³ The Mongol Westward Expansion in the 13th century can be divided into three distinct phases: the first phase, led by Genghis Khan from 1219 to 1224, saw the defeat of the Khwarezmian Empire, the Caucasian states, and the Kievan Rus, leading to the establishment of the Chagatai Khanate. The second phase, from 1235 to 1241, was led by Genghis Khan's grandson, Batu, who expanded the Mongol Empire further westward. Batu's forces conquered the Eastern European nations west of the Volga River, forming the Kipchak Khanate, also known as the Golden Horde. The third phase, occurring between 1255 and 1260, was spearheaded by Hülegü Khan. Hülegü led soldiers to defeat the Mamluk Sultanate, the Abbasid Caliphate, and the Ayyubid Dynasty in Syria, thereby establishing the Ilkhanate.

primarily lived in traditional nomadic yurts near the cities rather than in them. Like all Mongol khans, Chagatai had separate winter and summer camps called ordo (royal camps).

“During the spring and summer, he resided in Almaliq and Quyash... During the fall and winter, he spent time at Marauzik on the banks of the Ila River.”⁴⁴ From Chagatai and Orghana (r. 1252-1260), many rulers continued to maintain a large nomadic camp in the Ili Valley. This prolonged adherence to nomadic traditions kept the Mongol rulers and nomads relatively isolated from the settled population, resulting in fewer cultural exchanges compared to their counterparts in China and Persia. Consequently, Shamanism persisted for a longer period in the Chagatai Khanate. However, as conquerors of more advanced regions, the Mongols could not completely avoid the influence of local civilizations, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism⁴⁵.

In Almaliq, Islam was the dominant religion, where a small Islamic dynasty ruled by the Qarluq Turkshad already emerged before the Mongol conquest. In 1209-1210, the ruler of Almaliq, Arsalan Khan (Awzar), surrendered to the Mongols, and Genghis Khan married his only daughter to the Qarluq leader⁴⁶. In addition to Islam, there was a Nestorian Christian presence in Almaliq. Japanese scholar Yoshiro Saeki collected Nestorian gravestones from the *Semirechye* region, some of which belonged to residents of Almaliq, with dates ranging from 1287 to 1300 during the Chagatai Khanate period. However, the influence of Nestorianism in Almaliq was limited, with only seven gravestones among the 568 listed, indicating its relatively minor presence⁴⁷.

In 1252, the Franciscan friar Guillaume de Rubrouck, sent by Louis IX, traveled to the Mongol Empire and was received by Möngke Khan (r.1251-1259) in 1254, Qaraqorum⁴⁸. On his journey through the Ili River region, Rubrouck visited a city called Equius, inhabited by Persian-speaking “Saracens” (a medieval term for Muslims). In Cailac, he visited several temples, two of which were likely Nestorian churches, as he noticed worshippers with inked crosses on their hands. He asked one of them why their crosses lacked an image of Christ, to which the worshipper replied, “That is not our custom.” Rubrouck was convinced they were Christians but believed their theology was flawed⁴⁹. He also described the Buddhist temples and rituals in the region, noting the presence of Muslims and the interactions between different religious communities⁵⁰.

Regarding the religious distribution in the Semirechye region surrounding Almaliq, historian Li Yixin argued that while Islam, Nestorianism, and Buddhism coexisted, they were not equally influential. West of Bishkek, Islam was dominant, while Buddhism

⁴⁴ Quyash, meaning “sun”, is in the Ili Valley, near Kok Mountain near the Almaliq. Marauzik may mean ‘near’ or ‘riverbank’, and Ila is an ancient Turkic name for Ili. Barthold, Vasilii Vladimirovich. *An historical geography of Iran*. Vol. 65. Princeton University Press, 2014, pp.112-14.

⁴⁵ 李一新[Li Yixin]. “察合台汗国的伊斯兰化[Islamisation of the Chaghatai Khanate]”, *西北民族研究[N.W. Minorities Research]*, no. 2, 1998, pp. 58–60.

⁴⁶ 宋濂[Song Lian], 《元史》[*History of the Yuan*] 卷一太祖本纪, 北京: 中华书局[Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company], 1976, pp.13.

⁴⁷ Saeki, Yoshiro, *支那基督教の研究[Studies on Chinese Christianity]*, 1, 2018, p. 541, 543, 557, 558, 569, 587.

⁴⁸ Richard, Jean. “The Mongols and the Franks.” *Journal of Asian History* 3, no. 1, 1969, pp. 45–57.

⁴⁹ Rubruk, Willelmus. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941, p.132-59.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

was more prevalent to the east. Although Nestorianism and Islam overlapped geographically, Islam was stronger⁵¹. However, according to Rubruk's account, westwards from the region of Organum was a predominantly Saracen area, and the smaller number of Nestorians were distributed only in Saracen towns in the direction of Persia⁵². Henry Yule has corrected the name Organum, suggesting that it was actually the name of Orghana (r.1252-1260), the widow of the heir to the Chaghatai khanate, Qara Hülögü (r.1242-1262, 1263), who oversaw and managed the state after her husband's death⁵³. This means that the area westwards from Alimaliq where Orghana ruled, was a predominantly Islamic area. Nestorianism was also weak in the region, as can be seen from Rubruk's account. He said: "The Nestorians there know nothing. They say their offices, and have sacred books in Syrian, but they do not know the language, so they chant like those monks among us who do not know grammar, and they are absolutely depraved. In the first place they are usurers and drunkards; some even among them who live with the Tartars have several wives like them. When they enter church, they wash their lower parts like Saracens; they eat meat on Friday, and have their feasts on that day in Saracen fashion..."⁵⁴ The Nestorian Christians had adopted many customs and religious practices similar to those of the Saracens, likely due to the growing influence of the large Saracen population in the area, which gradually shaped their traditions and way of life.

In 1318, Chagatai Khan Kebek (r.1309-10, 1318-26) moved the capital from Alimaliq to Samarkand after restoring peace with the Yuan dynasty. This shift caused tension among the eastern nobility in the Ili River region, leading to the division of the Chagatai Khanate into two parts: the eastern part, including Hashikhar (i.e. Kashgar), Turpan area, centered around Alimaliq, and the western part, centered around Samarkand and Transoxiana. When Marco Polo traveled through the region in 1255, particularly in a dispute over the central pillar of a Christian chapel, he observed a much larger Muslim population in cities like Bukhara and Samarkand compared to Christians⁵⁵. In the travel accounts of Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, it is also noted that the cities of Barchin and Ianikint, located to the northwest of the Transoxiana region, were Muslim territories. Additionally, the Ornas region to the west was controlled by the Saracens.⁵⁶

⁵¹ See: Li Xinyi, pp. 63-64.

⁵² Rubruk, Willelmus. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941, p.140-49.

⁵³ "It was during the government of the above mentioned Organam that Rubruquis passed through the country, and probably what he states of the region being called Organum originated in some misapprehension of this." Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither. Vol. 2*. Digitally printed version [d. Ausg.] London, Hakluyt Soc., 1866. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 37. Cambridge New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, pp. 522.

⁵⁴ Rubruk, Willelmus. *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941, p.158

⁵⁵ "...e alla sua morte i saraceni, che avevano sopportato con molta rabbia l'uso fatto dai cristiani di quella pietra, decisero di riprenderla con la forza; e lo potevano fare essendo in numero dieci volte superiore a quello dei cristiani." Polo, Marco and L.F. Benedetto. *Travels of Marco Polo*. Edited by Milton Rugoff, Routledge, 2004, p.90.

⁵⁶ "but they hold the religion of the Saracens. We found in that country innumerable ruined cities, overthrown villages, and many deserted towns. There is a great river in that country whose name I do not know, and on which stands a city called Ianckint, and also another called Barchin, and still another called Ornas...Ruthenians, and Slavs, and others---but also Saracens, and these latter had dominion over the city." "In the latter country a certain city called Barchin resisted them for a long time...But the people of another city called Ianckint hearing (of the capture

Nonetheless, Christian communities, particularly Nestorians, persisted in these cities. Marco Polo's account of the continued presence of Christianity in Samarkand was later confirmed by Ruy González de Clavijo, who arrived in the city in 1404, when it was part of the Timurid Empire. In his travelogue, Clavijo writes, "Among the inhabitants of Samarkand, there were also many Turks, Arabs, and Persians, each adhering to their own faiths. In addition to the Muslims, there were Armenians, Greek Christians, Jacobites, and Nestorians. Some Indians, who followed Zoroastrianism but identified as Christians, were also present in significant numbers".⁵⁷ However, the dominant group remained the Muslims. This suggests that, from the mid-13th to the 14th century, Islam held a dominant position in the region of Transoxiana (West Chagatai Khanate).

In contrast, the eastern Chagatai Khanate experienced more resistance to the spread of Islam, and Christianity held on longer. From 1335 to 1337, during the reign of Chagatai Khan Changshi, missionaries sent by the Roman Catholic Church succeeded in gaining his support for Christianity. This was largely due to the ongoing efforts of the Franciscans and other Catholic orders to spread Christianity among the Mongols during the 13th and 14th centuries. Notably, it was the friendly signals sent by Ilkhanate ruler Arghun in the late 13th century—who sought to unite Christian nations in a campaign against Jerusalem and Syria—that played a significant role in fostering such support for the Church.

In 1287, Arghun sent a Nestorian Christian, Rabban Sauma, on a mission to Europe to meet with the Pope and various kings⁵⁸. Upon arriving in Rome, Sauma was welcomed by Pope Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan to ascend to the papacy, marking a new chapter in the history of Latin missions to the East. During his papacy (1288-1292), Nicholas IV corresponded with Arghun on multiple occasions, urging him to convert to Christianity. Pope Nicholas IV engaged in at least three exchanges of letters with Arghun, the Great Khan of the Ilkhanate, in 1288, 1289, and 1291. James Daniel Ryan analyzed these correspondences, noting that the content of the first two letters was entirely pastoral and religious in nature. In one letter of 1291, for the first and only time, a pragmatic, political tone was sounded in one of two letters sent east to that monarch⁵⁹. In one of his letters to Arghun, Pope Nicholas IV fervently urged the Khan to accept baptism and convert to Christianity. The letter concluded with the Pope expressing his

of Barchin), went out and surrendered themselves into his hands, and so their city was not destroyed...And then they (ie. the Mongols) marched against a city called Ornas ..." *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine.* Hakluyt Society, 1941, pp.14-15.

⁵⁷ Ruy González de Clavijo. "VII, the city of Samarcand", *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand AD 1403-6.* Translated by Clements R. Markham. London, 1859.

⁵⁸ The journey of Rabban Sauma is recorded in the *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha, Patriarche, et de Rabban Cauma* (in Syriac), written before 1319 and first published in Europe in 1888 by Paul Bedjan. Rabban Sauma, originally from Khanbaliq (modern Beijing), was not of Han ethnicity but was a Christian, following the Nestorian tradition. He spent the first forty years of his life in Beijing, where his mother tongue was Mongolian (the language of the Yuan court), and he was also fluent in Persian (the language of the Ilkhanate court). Sauma's journey can be divided into two phases: Initially, as a Nestorian Christian, he planned to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from Khanbaliq. However, due to political instability, he ended up in Persia, where he stayed for twelve years. In the second phase, Sauma traveled to the Latin West as an envoy of the Ilkhanate, reaching Constantinople, Rome, Paris, and Bordeaux.

⁵⁹ James Daniel Ryan. Nicholas IV and the evolution of the eastern missionary effort. *Archivum historiae pontificiae*, 1981, pp. 79-95.

joy over the news that Arghun's son had been named Nicholas, though Arghun himself did not undergo baptism. In another letter, *Precurrentis fame relatibus*, the Pope not only repeated his plea for Arghun's conversion but also mentioned, “the pope has ordered the crusade preached in every land. The forthcoming expedition will be very powerful, and with the help of the Tartars, the nefarious Saracens will be crushed.”⁶⁰

In 1288, during his first year as Pope, Nicholas IV sent Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247–1328) to China. Based on two dioceses in the East: Tartaria Aquilonaris (which included the Kipchak Khanate and areas north of the Caucasus) and Tartaria Orientalis (covering Persia, Azerbaijan, and Greater Armenia). In 1307, Montecorvino established a third diocese in Khanbaliq and was appointed as its archbishop. He dedicated his life to missionary work until his death in Khanbaliq in 1328. This backdrop provides the context for both Rabban Sauma's mission and Montecorvino's reports to the papacy, in which he detailed how Ilkhan Arghun treated Christianity favorably during his time in Armenia and Persia. These events convinced the Roman papacy that the Mongol emperors and their khanates held Christian faith in high regard, leading to a temporary victory for Christianity during the reign of Chagatai Khan.

In 1338, Pope Benedict XII wrote to the Chagatai Khan, thanking him for his kindness toward Christians, particularly the archbishop Nicholas, who was en route to Khanbaliq. Who is called ‘chansi’ in the pope's letter, is clearly the Changshi Khan⁶¹. Though financial difficulties prevented Nicholas from completing his journey, letters from the Spanish Franciscan Paschalis de Victoria attest to the Khan's generosity towards Christian missionaries. One friar, Francis, even healed the Khan of a tumor, earning the missionaries land and privileges, including the right to baptize the Khan's son, who was given the Christian name John. The letter was written in August 1338 A.D. at Almaliq, and the Khan in the letter is Changshi.⁶²

Due to the lack of bishops (ten years after the death of the previous bishop Montecorvino), the local Nestorian Alans requested the Pope to send a new one⁶³. In response, Pope Benedict XII dispatched the Florentine Franciscan Giovanni de' Marignolli to Khanbaliq in 1339. Marignolli arrived in Almaliq in 1340, where he stayed for several months before continuing his mission. He later documented the martyrdom of several missionaries during his travels, though his accounts remained vague⁶⁴. Fortunately, the news had already reached the Church⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ Les Registres de Nicolas IV, ed. E. Langlois (part of the series Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome), 2 vols., Paris 1905. No. 6814, August 23. For the text. Chabot, *Relations*, pp. 619-21; James Daniel Ryan. “Nicholas IV and the evolution of the eastern missionary effort.” *Archivum historiae pontificiae*, 1981, pp. 79-95.

⁶¹ Paschalis de Victoria [Pascal de Vittoria], “Epistola,” *Sinica Franciscana. Itinera et relationes fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, Anastasius van den Wyngaert ed. Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1, 1929, pp. 503.

⁶² Les Registres de Nicolas IV, ed. E. Langlois (part of the series Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome), 2 vols., Paris 1905. No. 6814, August 23. For the text. Chabot, *Relations*, p. 619-21; James Daniel Ryan. “Nicholas IV and the evolution of the eastern missionary effort.” *Archivum historiae pontificiae*, 1981, pp. 79-95.

⁶³ On the Epistle of the Alans to the Pope and the Pope's reply: Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither, Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China: Volume III*. Hakluyt society, 2017, pp. 173-5.

⁶⁴ Giovanni de' Marignolli, *Relatio Martyrium Fr. Minorum Almaliq*, in *Sinica Franciscana. Itinera et Relationes VI Fratrum Minorum Saeculi XIII et XIV*, a cura di A. Van Den Wyngaert I, Firenze 1929, pp. 507-11.

⁶⁵ Roxann Prazniak. “Siena on the Silk Roads: Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the Mongol Global Century, 1250-1350.” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 210.

The period of peace was short-lived. In 1339, the Great Khan Ali-Sultan (r. 1339-1342) initiated a ruthless campaign to impose Islam, seeking to eliminate all non-Muslim forces. In a letter dated 1338, Pascal de Vittoria (Paschalis de Victoria) wrote to his fellow missionaries: “On his journey to Alimari, he was left alone among the Saracens. In front of the mosque, he engaged in theological debates with the Muslims on the Qur'an and its teachings, only to be attacked and insulted by them.” He continued, “Because of these Saracens, I have often suffered poisonings, been thrown into the water, and experienced blows and persecutions far beyond what this letter can describe.”

⁶⁶ This letter highlights the strength of local Muslim forces and the harm inflicted on Western missionaries by non-believers.

Returning to the painting *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans* by Ambrogio, it depicts six martyrs placed on either side of the image. On the right side, the executioner has completed his task, with three severed heads facing the viewer and corresponding bodies lying on the ground (the piece is partially damaged). Unlike Benedetto da Maiano's *Martyrdom of the Franciscans in Morocco* (Fig. 1.5), in which the severed heads are scattered, showing almost no discernible relationship to the viewers, Ambrogio's painting presents the heads all facing away from the viewer (Fig. 1.6). The executioner on the left is poised to strike, with arrows drawn. Stones are being thrown at the friars by onlookers. According to S. Maureen Burke, who referenced records of this martyrdom in 1399, Johannes Vitodurani's accounts closely align with Ambrogio's depiction, particularly regarding the number of executioners and the beheading method. Vitodurani's record is the only one that explicitly states the form of execution: decapitation. Burke also notes a prominent feature of Ambrogio's work: the stoning of the Christians⁶⁷.

Among the popular medieval martyrdom narratives, there are primarily three types of persecutors: Muslims, Jews, and heretics. Christopher MacEvitt argues that the absence of records about friars working among Muslims in Franciscan sources further proves the order's lack of interest in engaging with Islamic communities⁶⁸: “*the most obvious is that the journeys among the Mongols offered access to an entire world scarcely known to Latin Christians, and that the Mongols themselves were seen as an immediate and existential threat to western Christendom. But the fact that the Mongols did not follow a monotheistic faith also played a role. If the potential threat seemed high, so did the potential for conversion.*”⁶⁹ However, in this painting, considering

⁶⁶ Paschalis de Victoria [Pascal de Vittoria], “Epistola,” *Sinica Franciscana. Itinera et relationes fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, Anastasius van den Wyngaert ed. Quaracchi, Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1, 1929, pp. 87, 212.

⁶⁷ “...But some of the believers remained strong in the Catholic faith and were killed by various means of torture: a bishop was decapitated, many were lapidated, and others were cut into pieces”, “Friars Minor were beheaded in their own monastery. These friars had been previously kindly and lovingly asked to be willing to pretend to abnegate their faith in favor of the king's faith, so that afterwards they could do whatever they wanted. But they refused, choosing to be martyrs for Christ. They are now known as workers of many miracles...”. The Johannes Vitodurani account is published in Girolamo Golubovich, *Biblioteca biobibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, vol. II, Quaracchi 1913, pp.146-47, and by Johann Georg von Eckhart, *Corpus historicum mediaevi*, vol. I, Leipzig 1723, col. 1868; S. Maureen Burke and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. “The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenze.” *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 65, no. 4, 2002, pp. 480-81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150672>.

⁶⁸ Christopher MacEvitt. *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict*. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia (Pa.): University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp. 71.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

the tensions between Islam and Christianity in the region, the stones thrown at the friars and the executioners themselves may likely be Muslims.

Given that the martyrdom took place around 1339, the Tatar ruler depicted in the painting could either be Ali Sultan or Yesün Temür. However, because both Yesün Temür and Chagatai supported Christianity, it is more likely that the figure in the center is Ali Sultan, from the Ögedei line.

Ali Sultan forcefully ordered that all Christians must convert to Islam, with death as the penalty for those who disobeyed, “A Saracen of the royal blood, whose name was Alisolda[ie. Ali-sultan]. And as the brethren by their preaching had made many converts to the faith, this new emperor ordered that all the Christians should be made Saracens, and that whosoever should disobey the third order to this effect should be put to death. And so when the brethren aforesaid would not obey this order they were bound and all tied to one rope which was dragged along by the infuriated mob, who smote and spat upon them, stabbed and slashed them, cutting off their noses and ears, and otherwise mutilating them, till at length they fell by the sword and made a blessed migration to the Lord.”⁷⁰

In one Franciscan chronicle, *The Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Ministers-General of the Franciscan Order*, written in the late 14th century, it contains records of certain martyrdoms, although it does not include any specific documents⁷¹. John of Winterthur, the chronicler, does not mention the story of the Franciscans killed at the end of the 1330s in Tartaria. However, he indicates that in 1343, the Franciscan vicar from Tartary visited Pope Clement VI in Avignon to request the canonization of the six martyrs. During his speech, he extolled the role of the Franciscan order in spreading the faith worldwide: “*Item eodem anno post festum pentecostes venit vicarius Tartarie de ordine fratrum Minorum in Avinionem ad papam Clementem VI, petens ab eo canonizacionem VI fratrum Minorum tunc noviter passorum in Tartaria, multis claris et evidentibus miraculis coruscantium. Hiis auditis papa gaudio perfusus largifluo ordinem extulit et magnificavit dicens: “Hic est ordo precipuus, per quem ecclesia in fidei orthodoxe luce illustratur in diversis mundi partibus et robore solidatur lucrumque animarum innumerabilium inestimabile procuratur!”*”⁷² This shows that in 1343, the Church placed great importance on martyrdom, which may have played a role in the commissioning of the San Francesco church frescoes. However, this was not always the Church’s stance on martyrdom. Depicting the martyrdom of Franciscans directly as the subject of art, and placing it on the walls of churches or monasteries, was a bold choice by the artists and patrons, given the historical context. It is fair to say that such examples were rare, and we will explore the Church's past attitudes further in our discussion.

This martyrdom effectively marked the failure of Christian missionary efforts in the Chagatai region. Particularly in the 1330s and 1340s, the spread of the plague

⁷⁰ Yule, Henry ed, *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Vol. 1. Digitally printed version [d. Ausg.] London, Hakluyt Soc., 1866. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 36. Cambridge New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, P.187.

⁷¹ The chronicle of John of Winterthur (c.1300-1348) is edited by Friedrich Baethgen and Carl Brun in *Die Chronik Johans von Winterthur*, in M.G.H., *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, N.S., III, Berlin: Weidmann, 1924. [rpt. Munich: 1982]

⁷² *Die Chronik Johans von Winterthur...*, 1982, pp. 208.

among the Nestorian communities led to the death of many followers, and the influence of Nestorian Christianity began to weaken⁷³. Subsequently, the Mongol ruler Tughlugh Timur (r.1342-1362 or 1363) became the first member of the Chagatai royal family to convert to Islam. With many Mongol aristocrats following suit, the southern regions of Xinjiang, including Kashgar, Shache, Aksu, Hotan, Turpan, and Hami, all embraced Islam⁷⁴. His reign led to the complete Islamization of the Eastern Chagatai Khanate. It is said that, under his influence, 160,000 Mongols converted to Islam⁷⁵. Today, it is evident that the failure of the Franciscan mission in this region was inevitable, as it coincided with the Islamization process. However, it is precisely for this reason that the narrative of the martyrs became a vehicle for raising significant questions within the broader Christian world, and its meaning far surpasses the ordinary significance of this genre.

1.1.2 Christianity at the Mongol court

Since the 13th century, the Franciscan order has continuously sent missionaries to Mongolia, with some reaching the Yuan Dynasty, including regions such as Khanbaliq (Beijing), Zaiton (Quanzhou), Yangzhou, and Xi'an. The Yuan court underwent substantial modifications as a result of their presence.

The first issue that needs to be addressed is how we define “Mongolia.” Today, the Mongolian Plateau is home to both Outer Mongolia, which is modern-day Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia, a province-level administrative region of China. However, these do not correspond to the “Mongolia” that is the focus of this study. The “Mongolia” referred to here is the unified Mongol Empire formed around the 13th century through the westward conquests of Genghis Khan. It refers to the political entity created under Genghis Khan’s leadership, where “Mongolia” was used as the name of the state, rather than an ethnic group or people.

Before Genghis Khan (Temüjin) unified Mongolia, the Mongolian Plateau was fragmented into many different tribes. Scholars generally agree that early Mongols originated from the Donghu people⁷⁶. The “*Old Book of Tang*,” in its account of the

⁷³ Between 1347 and 1351, the plague spread across Europe. In inscriptions written in Syriac, the phrase “died of the plague” is recorded. Due to the urgency and overwhelming number of deaths, there was often not enough time to prepare separate tombstones for each individual, leading to the phenomenon where a single tombstone bore the names of three people. See: J. Halévy, *De l’introduction du Christianisme chez les tribus turques de la Haute Asie à propos des inscriptions de Sémirjetchie*, par MM. Chwolson et Radlof, “Revue de l’Histoire des Religions, tome 22, 1890, pp.292, 289-301.

⁷⁴ 杨富学[Yang fuxue], 葛启航[Ge Qihang]. “秃黑鲁帖木儿与东察合台汗国若干史事辨析[Some Problems concerning Tughluk Timur and the Eastern Chaghatai Khanate]”, *丝绸之路研究集 [Collected Papers on Silk Road Studies]*5, p. 85–101; 高彩云[Gao Caiyun]. “察合台及其后裔在中亚的统治研究[Research on Chagatai and His Descendants’ Rule in Central Asia]”. *西北民族大学学报(哲学社会科学版) [J. Northwest Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Science)]*, no.1, 2018, pp.108–13.

⁷⁵ 陈宗振[Chen Zongzhen], *维吾尔语史研究(Studies on the History of the Uyghur Language)*, 北京: 中国社会科学出版社(Beijing: China Social Sciences Press), 2016, pp.45-48.

⁷⁶ Ancient nomadic people of northeastern China, a confederation of tribes, including large and small tribes of the same ethnicity but with different names at the time.

Shiwei (941-945), provides the earliest recorded mention of the Mongols in historical texts⁷⁷. According to Tu Ji in his *History of the Mongols*, the Mongols are considered a branch of the Shiwei tribe. The Shiwei Mongol tribe began migrating westward from the right bank of the Erguna River in the 9th century. Throughout this migration, through warfare, interaction, and intermarriage with the Turks, the Mongol people gradually emerged, combining Shiwei and Turkic ancestry.

In the 14th century, Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-Tawarikh (Compendium of Chronicles)* stated that the term "Tatar" came from the name of the Tatar tribe, which is widely accepted in modern historiography: "...Despite the frequent conflicts and divisions among them, for much of ancient history, they were the conquerors and rulers of most tribes and regions, distinguished by their greatness, strength, and wide respect. Due to their high status, other Turkic tribes, despite having different types and names, gradually came to be known as Tatars, after them. These various tribes considered their greatness and nobility to be in joining their ranks, sharing their name. As in the present day, due to the rise of Genghis Khan and his family, various Turkic tribes are known by different names, but in their efforts to boast of their origins, they all called themselves Mongols, though in ancient times, the Mongols were but one tribe among many in the Turkic steppe."⁷⁸

However, the term "Tatar" used in the West did not carry the same connotations as the term in Rashid al-Din's work. Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, in his *Historia Mongalorum* wrote: "There is a certain country in the East which, as previously stated, is called Mongal. That country had once four nations: one called Yeka Mongal, or the Great Mongals, the second called vSu-Mongal, or Aquatic-Mongals, though they called themselves Tartars from a certain river which flows through their country and which is called Tatar (or Tartar); another was called Merkit ; the fourth Mecrit. All these nations had the same physical appearance and spoke one language, though they were divided among themselves into provinces and principalities."⁷⁹ According to Carpine, "Tatar"

⁷⁷ 屠寄[Tu Ji]. *元史二种 蒙兀儿史记 [History of the Mongols]*, 上海: 上海古籍出版社(Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House), 1989, p.16. In this book, in Chinese original text: "蒙兀儿者, 室韦之别种".

⁷⁸ Rašīd al-Dīn. *Jami' u't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles*. Translated by W. M. Thackston, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 37-39. Regarding the origin of the name "Tatar," there are currently four main viewpoints held within Chinese academia. The first suggests that it derives from the title "Datan" or "Tantan," a title used for the ruler of the Rouran Khaganate (tatar/tartar). The second theory links it to the "Tatabi" (Xī) from the Orkhon inscriptions of the Turkic period, where "tata" is considered the singular form. The third theory posits that it comes from the Old Turkic word "tat" (meaning foreigner or barbarian). The fourth theory associates it with the name of the Tatar tribe during the Mongol Yuan period. Among these four viewpoints, while the first theory was proposed early on, it has not received significant attention. The second theory is linguistically problematic and does not hold up under scrutiny. The third theory, although based on phonetic analysis, lacks solid historical evidence and is therefore unconvincing. The fourth theory, however, is supported by clear historical records and is considered the most reliable, making it the prevailing perspective in current scholarship (Bai Yudong, "The Origins of 'Tatar' and Yuan Dynasty Recognition of the Tatars," *Collected Essays of the Chinese Academy of History*, 2023, Vol. 1). The "Mission to Mongolia" records the history of the Mongols. Giovanni di Pian del Carpine noted that the "Water Mongols" (Su-Mongol), named themselves "Tartar" after the river called "Tartur" that flowed through their territory. However, these reports were based on hearsay and lack reliable evidence, thus their credibility is questionable.

⁷⁹ Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine*. Hakluyt Society, 1941, pp.112. The following entries have been compiled and contributed to Fra Giovanni di Pian del Carpine's missionary journeys: Pietro Messa, Un francescano alla corte dei mongoli: fra Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, in *I Francescani*

was merely one of the Mongol subgroups. Though his account did not gain acceptance in the academic community, his distinction between “Mongol” and “Tatar” reveals how Western perceptions of the term “Tatar” evolved, later acquiring connotations of a violent and tyrannical force threatening the Christian world. The history of the Mongol Empire is unique in that it forms part of both Chinese and world history. According to the historian Masamune Sugiyama, the period from 1206 to 1259, during which the Mongol Empire was united, should be regarded as part of world history, while the Yuan Dynasty, which emerged after the fragmentation of the Mongol Empire, from 1260 to 1368, is a key component of China’s historical narrative.⁸⁰

The Mongols practiced Shamanism, which held the belief that all things in nature possessed spirits, venerating the sun, moon, thunder, mountains, rivers, trees, and other natural elements. Among all these spirits, “Heaven” began to be viewed as the supreme deity. However, Mongol Shamanism was not exclusive, and early in their conquests, the Mongols adopted a policy of religious tolerance. Marco Polo, in his *Travels*, notes that the Yuan rulers, particularly Kublai Khan, observed the major holidays of different faiths: “Una cerimonia simile fa anche nelle principali feste dei saraceni dei giudei e degli idolatri. E a chi gli domandava perché, rispose: «Vi sono quattro profeti che sono adorati e venerati in tutto il mondo: i cristiani adorano come loro Dio Gesù Cristo, i saraceni Maometto, i giudei Mosè, gli idolatri Sagamoni Borcan. Io faccio onore e riverenza a tutti e quattro, e onoro in loro il dio maggiore che è in cielo e a quello faccio preghiere perché mi aiuti.»⁸¹“

Since the 7th century, many Mongols were converted to Christianity by the Nestorian Church (often called “Jingjiao” in China)⁸². In the 13th century, several wives and mothers of Genghis Khan were influential Christian figures, playing a significant role in the Mongols' conversion. The Mongol royal family had a tradition of intermarrying with the Kerait⁸³ tribe, which had converted to Nestorian Christianity as

e la Cina 800 anni di storia. Atti della giornata di studio in preparazione alla Canonizzazione dei Martiri cinesi. Santa Maria degli Angeli - Assisi, 9 settembre 2000, a cura di Messa, Assisi 2001, pp. 1-34; Stephen Bennett, The Report of Friar John of Plano Carpini: Analysis of an Intelligence Gathering Mission Conducted on Behalf of the Papacy in the Mid-thirteenth Century, in *History Studies: University of Limerick History Society Journal*, 12, 2011, pp. 1-14.

⁸⁰ 杉山正名[Masayuki Sugiyama], 乌兰译[Wulan Trans.], 《蒙古帝国与其漫长的后世》[*モンゴル帝国と長いその後, The Mongol Empire and its Long Aftermath*], 北京: 北京日报出版社[Beijing: Beijing Daily Press], 2020, pp.13.

⁸¹ Polo, Marco. “LXXXI, Perché il Gran Kan non si fece cristiano”. *Il Milione*. Mondadori, 2019.

⁸² A. Mingana, The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, vol.9, 1925, pp.302-303. J. P. Asmussen, The Sogdian and Uighur-Turkish Christian Literature in Central Asia before the Real Rise of Islam, a Survey, L. A. Hercus et al. ed., *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J.W.de Jong on His Sixtieth Birthday*, Canberra: Australian National University, 1982, pp.211-227.

⁸³ In the early period of the Mongol Empire, there was no clear division into four distinct social classes. However, by the late Yuan Dynasty, a rough hierarchy based on the order in which various ethnic groups were conquered began to emerge. The priority ranking of these groups, in order, was Mongols, Semu people, Han Chinese, and Southern Chinese. The concept of the “Four-Class System” originates from Tu Ji's *History of the Mongols* written during the late Qing Dynasty. Tu Ji believed that during the Yuan period, Mongol society had strict ethnic boundaries, which divided the population into four levels. The Mongols were referred to as “Guo Ren” (nation people), while Semu people generally referred to those from the Western Regions who were not part of the other three groups. Han Chinese referred to peoples who had lived under Jin Dynasty rule, including Han, Jurchen, Khitan, and other subject peoples. The term “Southern Chinese” mainly referred to Han Chinese and other ethnic minorities from the south who had lived under the Southern Song Dynasty. In Yuan Dynasty society, the Keraites (Kereit tribe) were considered Mongols.

early as the 11th century. Christianity gradually infiltrated the Mongol royal family. For instance, Genghis Khan's wife, Borte, was from the Kerait tribe; his son Tolui's wife, Sorghaghtani Beki⁸⁴, who was the mother of Kublai, Mongke, and Hülëgü, also came from the Kerait tribe. Doquz Khatun, the wife of Hulagu, founder of the Ilkhanate, participated in the 1258 sack of Baghdad, where the Mongol army slaughtered thousands of locals⁸⁵. However, due to her Christian faith, the Christians were spared. Rashid al-Din commented on Doquz Khatun's influence within the Mongol Christian community: "She strongly supported the Christians, so that under her protection, they had great influence. To please her, Hülëgü supported and promoted this community, so it was able to build new churches everywhere. Near her tent, a chapel was always set up, and bells were rung."⁸⁶

Women held considerable political power in the Mongol court during the 13th century. When Genghis Khan's descendants and generals were away at war, the women of the Mongol court, who were often of high rank and influence, managed the tribal and conquered territories. They would also receive a share of the spoils of war after military victories. Plano del Carpine, for instance, described the camp of Genghis's son Jochi, who died in 1227: "It is ruled by one of his wives, for it is the custom among the Tartars that the courts of princes or nobles are not destroyed but women are always appointed to control them and they are given their share of the offerings just as their lord was in the habit of giving them."⁸⁷ In the early period of the Yuan Dynasty, after the death of the Great Khan and before the kurultai (tribal council) to elect a new Khan, the former empresses, such as Naimajin Khatun and Ogul Gamish⁸⁸, often assumed political power. They wielded significant influence in determining who would succeed the Khan. In 1288, Pope Nicholas IV wrote to various Christian communities in the Tatar court, urging them to encourage conversions to Christianity, including a letter to Queen Arghun. The letter read: "*Litterac ad Tuctanem et Elogagem , reginas Tartarorum.....Carissime in Chrislo fille Tuctani, regine Tartarorum illustri, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Eam hortatur ut ad dilatandos fidei christianae, quam amplexa est, termines, operam prosequatur.*"⁸⁹ James D. Ryan notes that it was not until Nicholas IV's reign (1288-1292) that significant papal-sponsored missionary efforts to the Mongols were undertaken, including two embassies to Persia and one to Kublai's court in Cathay. Ryan believes that Nicholas IV was likely inspired by the visit of Rabban Sauma, an envoy from the East, who provided him with firsthand information about the status of Christians in the Ilkhanate and within the Ilkhan's family.

⁸⁴ Both Mongke and Kublai served as Khans of the Great Mongol Empire (the Mongol Empire), while Hülëgü established the Ilkhanate in West Asia. Kublai's younger brother, Ariq Böke, contested the position of Great Khan with Kublai from 1260 to 1264. Therefore, Sorghaghtani Beki is referred to as the "Mother of the Four Khans."

⁸⁵ Christian Wives of Mongol Khans: Tartar Queens and Missionary Expectations in Asia.

⁸⁶ Rashid al-Din, *Ta'rikh-i mubarak-i Ghazānī*, in Bertold Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, pp. 121.

⁸⁷ *Mission to Asia*, ed. Dawson, p. 60. Jochi was the father of Batu, founder of the khanate of the Golden Horde (Qipchaq khanate).

⁸⁸ *Mission to Asia*, ed. Dawson. University of Toronto Press. London. P18-19. Williams D. Phillips Jr. "Voluntary strangers: European Merchants and Missionaries in Asia during the Late Middle Ages", *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, F.R.P. Akehurst, Stephanie Cain Van D'Elden ed., University of Minnesota Press, pp.17-18.

⁸⁹ *Registres de Nicolas IV*, ed. E. Langlois (part of the séries Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome), 2 vols., Paris 1905. Nos. 575-576, 581.

This information likely motivated Nicholas to send warm, pastoral greetings to the Ilkhan's wives and other household members.

Giovanni di Montecorvino, the Franciscan friar sent by Pope Nicholas IV, arrived in the southern coastal city of Zaiton (modern-day Quanzhou) in the fall of 1293 or 1294. Among his companions was Pietro da Lucalongo, an Italian merchant who had accompanied him from Tabriz to China. In Khanbaliq, Pietro purchased a plot of land on which the first church was constructed. Montecorvino wrote in his letter: "A faithful Christian man and great merchant, who was the companion of my travels from Tauris, [who] himself bought the ground for the establishment of which I have been speaking, and gave it to me for the love of God and the working of divine grace. He continued: For a more useful and suitable place for building a Catholic Church could not be had in the whole empire of the [Emperor]. I received the place in the beginning of August, and, with the assistance and help of benefactors, up to the feast of St. Francis, it was finished with a wall all around, houses, simple offices, and an oratory that would hold two hundred persons... I tell you that it seems a sort of marvel to all who come from the city and elsewhere when they see the place newly made and the red cross placed aloft at the top."⁹⁰ Friar Andreas de Perugia also contributed to the construction of buildings on land in the Quanzhou Diocese. He reported in a letter that with "alafa imperial"⁹¹ he had built "a convenient and beautiful church... with all the necessary offices for twenty friars and with four rooms, each one sufficient for any prelate."⁹²

Montecorvino enthusiastically conveyed to his superiors in Italy the spread of Christianity in the Mongol Empire and the numerous conversions he had recorded. This led Pope Clement V (p. 1305–1314) to establish the Beijing Diocese in 1307 and send seven Franciscans to China. He appointed Montecorvino as the first bishop of Khanbaliq and the entire region of China. In 1313, the Diocese of Zaiton (Roman Catholic Diocese of Citong) was established, with three Franciscans—Andrea da Perugia, Pellegrino da Castello, and Pietro da Firenze—successively serving as bishops.

Despite the apparent progress, the Franciscans faced significant opposition in their missionary work. Even though Marco Polo had earlier requested that Pope Gregory X send missionaries to China in the 1270s at the invitation of Kublai Khan, the Mongol court continued to be a battleground between the forces of Nestorian Christianity and Catholicism. Court officials engaged in intense power struggles, and the newly

⁹⁰ Moule, Arthur C. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930, p.179.

⁹¹ The imperial subsidy bestowed on all ambassadors attending the imperial court. YE KE LI WEN, the phonetic translation of Mongolian *ärkägün*, the etymology of which is not clear, seems to have three layers of connotations in the Yuan Dynasty, not only referring to the Christian clergy, but also representing the name of the country or tribe, and as a religious group became a kind of household in the Yuan Dynasty, enjoying the privileges and advantages of tax-exempted food and grain payments. See: 殷小平 [Yin Xiaoping]. *元代也里可温考述* [*Studies on the Christians in the Yuan Dynasty*]. 兰州: 兰州大学出版社 [Lanzhou: Lanzhou University Press] in January 2012. This work is part of the *Eu*, 2012, p.30-44.

⁹² «ecclesiam convenientem et pulcram [...] cum omnibus officinis sufficientibus pro XX fratribus et cum IIII cameris, quarum quelibet esset pro quocumque prelato sufficiens» Henry Yule ed., "Letter and Report of missionary friars from Cathay and India (1305-1338)", *Cathay and the way Thither: being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, III, pp. 71-73, in part. pp. 72, n. 1.

appointed Father Giovanni found himself competing for legitimacy with the influential Nestorian Christians in the Mongol court.

The Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) lasted for 97 years, and among its 11 emperors, only Kublai Khan (r. 1260-1294) and the last emperor, Emperor Shundi (r. 1333-1368), ruled for over two decades. In the remaining 39 years, the empire saw the rise of 9 other emperors, with the shortest reign lasting just one month before the emperor fled. The frequent changes in rulers were due to various reasons: the Mongol tradition of succession through the youngest son, the influence of Han culture that promoted a legitimate heir system, and agreements between royal brothers for succession. In this chaotic system of succession, violent power struggles between brothers were common. Under the Yuan Dynasty's policy of religious freedom, different rulers favored different religions. Montecorvino's arrival in Zaiton in 1293 likely occurred before he had the chance to present his credentials to the aged Kublai Khan, who passed away on February 18, 1294⁹³. According to Lauren Arnold, "some of the trials that Fra Giovanni reported in his letters back to his order can be attributed to the turmoil at court that surrounded the death of Kublai and the ascension of his successor Temür (Emperor Chengzong)." Despite the turmoil, the Franciscans managed to gain a foothold in China, largely due to the influence of female Christians at the Mongol court. Like his grandfather, Temür was influenced by several strong women in the imperial sphere. His mother played a key role in bringing him to the throne, his favorite Bulukhan had considerable influence during his later years⁹⁴, and his daughter Aishili married a powerful Nestorian who became Fra Giovanni's first and most influential convert. Imperial patronage, in the form of official protection and financial support, was critical to the success of the early Latin Christians.

However, despite their shared Christian identity, the conflict between the Franciscans and Nestorians made missionary work difficult. In a letter to the General Minister of the Franciscans in 1305, Montecorvino wrote: "the Nestorians indeed, who bear the Christian name but deviate far from the Christian religion, have grown so powerful in these parts that they have not allowed any Christian of another rite to have... a chapel nor publish any other doctrine... so the aforesaid Nestorians... have brought the gravest persecutions on me, declaring that I was not sent by the lord Pope but was a spy, magician, and deceiver of men. And after some time, they produced other false witnesses to say that another messenger had been sent bringing the emperor a very great treasure, and that I killed him in India and took away what he was carrying. This intrigue lasted five years, and I was often dragged to the judgment seat with the threat of death. Finally, by God's providence, through the confession of certain persons, the Emperor

⁹³ The Yuan dynasty government had the following regulation regarding the reception of foreign envoys: "All envoys from foreign countries, even if they pass through the provinces, must arrive in the capital (i.e., Dadu) and be settled at the Hui Tong Guan (Assembly Hall)." See: 王士点、商企翁编, 高荣盛点校[Wang Shidian and Shang Qiwen, ed., Gao Rongsheng, collator]. *秘书监志*[*Records of the Secretariat*]. 杭州:浙江古籍出版社[Hangzhou: Zhejiang Classics Publishing House], 1992, pp.98. Two letters, from Fra Giovanni survive, the first written in January, 1305, directed to the brothers and minister general of his order; the second written in February, 1306, and delivered by the missionary Fra Tomas of Tolentrino to the papal court in Avignon in 1306.

⁹⁴ Tanaka, Hidemichi. *Giotto and the influences of the Mongols and the Chinese on his art: a new analysis of the legend of St. Francis and the fresco paintings of the Scrovegni Chapel*. Tokohu University, 1984., pp.183.

came to know of my innocence and the malice of my rivals.”⁹⁵ And this is ten years after Mendovico's arrival in China. What's more, Christians have had to be forced to move the address of their churches because of conflicting interests with other religions. For example, by 1311, the same year that Emperor Renzong came to the throne, a dispute broke out between Christians and Buddhists in Zhenjiang, near Yangzhou, over the ownership of two monasteries. Though it is unclear whether the Christians involved were Catholics or Nestorians, the outcome can be deduced from a stele erected by Zhao Mengfu, the vice-president of the Jixian Yuan, which referred to Christianity as “Ye Li Ke Wen” (which could refer to both Catholicism and Nestorianism). The stele documents how the Christian monasteries, built on Buddhist land, were destroyed, and new Buddhist images and paintings were commissioned⁹⁶.

Lauren Arnold states, “the glowing claims of the missionaries that the Yuan emperors were open to personal conversion to Christianity must be weighed against the reality of documented, consistent support by the emperors of Buddhist art and religious foundations.”⁹⁷ The Mongol Empire's attitude towards Christianity was deeply entwined with political factors. Christianity spread from the top down, with the Mongol rulers' policy of religious tolerance allowing missionaries to face obstacles not only from pagans but also from long-established religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Shamanism. The Tatar rulers, unclear in their position between Christianity and Islam, often left missionaries caught between converting pagans and enticing Eastern Churches to join Catholicism.

As Habig points out: “It is not correct to say, therefore, that the early Franciscan missions of China came to an abrupt end with the accession of the Ming dynasty. There was a gradual decline which finally resulted in the cessation of missionary work; and the principal reason for this was the lack of new recruits to take the place of the older missionaries when they died.” Very likely Latin Christians persisted in ever-smaller groups, as Nestorian enclaves did, until an official persecution caused by Muslim unrest (ca. 1543) violently ended all foreign-based religions in China.”⁹⁸

1.1.3 *Saint Francis of Assisi before the Sudan*

The fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, is deeply rooted in two main iconographic traditions: one depicting the miraculous scenes of saints being beheaded and the other illustrating missionary moments from the life of St.

⁹⁵ *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, MS Latin 5006, fol. 171r. Translated in Moule 1930, pp.172-73.

⁹⁶ “In the year of the Emperor's accession... [on] 31 May, 1311... the minister Haiyindu ... received a special communication from the Emperor: As for the Monasteries of the Cross which the... Christians trusting in their strength built on Buddhist land, now that [the images] which they modeled have been torn down and destroyed, Let new images of Buddha be made and the walls of the monastery painted afresh, that they may be regarded for ever as convents of the Buddhists ... And your servant Mengfu was ordered to write a composition and to set up a stone on Jin Hill to publish it forever...” Moule, Arthur C. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930, pp.152-53.

⁹⁷ Habig, Marion A. “Marignolli and the decline of medieval missions in China.” *Franciscan Studies*.1945, pp. 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

Francis, particularly his ordeal before the Sultan of Egypt. The composition of Ambrogio's work is notably similar to Giotto's fresco, *The Ordeal by Fire before the Sultan of Egypt* (Fig. 1.7), painted for the Bardi Chapel in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence in the early 1320s. Both use a pyramid-like structure, with the Sultan placed at the top of the composition. The image is divided into two halves: the left side shows the Moors ordering the Islamic priests to enter the fire, with one priest refusing, covering his ears, while the right side shows St. Francis raising his hand, signaling his firm resolve to the Sultan. Ambrogio's fresco also mirrors this layout, with a Tatar ruler positioned in the same place at the top of the composition. The left side depicts the scene of execution, while the right side portrays the moment before the martyrdom, thus creating a temporal contrast. A notable difference in Ambrogio's work is the inclusion of a diverse group of bystanders, dressed in various traditional garments, whose appearance and attire will be discussed further in the next section of the analysis.

St. Francis' missionary journey before the Sultan of Egypt is a significant episode in his life, particularly his attempt to convert Sultan al-Kāmil of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade, after the fall of Damietta. The chronicler Angelo Clareno describes St. Francis' martyrdom wish, noting that Francis, driven by the fire of the Holy Spirit, spoke with such fervor and eloquence that the Sultan and all those present were amazed: "*fiamma d'amore di Francesco per il martirio*": "[...] *a prezzo di molti vituperi, impedimenti, percosse e fatiche, fu condotto, per volontà di Cristo, davanti al sultano di Babilonia. Stando alla sua presenza, tutto acceso dalla fiamma dello Spirito Santo, con tale forza, vivacità ed efficacia di parola gli parlò di Cristo Gesù e della sua fede evangelica che il sultano ne restò ammirato e con lui tutti i presenti. Alla forza delle parole che Cristo proferiva per lui, il sultano, mosso a mansuetudine, gli prestò ascolto volentieri; contro il prescritto della sua nefanda legge, lo invitò con insistenza a fermarsi nella sua terra e diede ordine che lui e i suoi frati, liberamente, senza pagare pedaggio, potessero accedere al santo Sepolcro*".⁹⁹

St. Francis' yearning for martyrdom reflects a personal desire for sacrifice¹⁰⁰, but it was not a requirement for all of his followers. In Chapter 16 of the *Regula non bullata* (1221), St. Francis gave guidance for missionaries going to foreign lands. His message, drawn from the Gospel of Matthew (10:16), advised caution and simplicity when sending his followers into the midst of non-believers: "*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*"¹⁰¹ This verse underscores Francis' caution in sending brothers to preach among the Saracens (Muslims) and other non-believers, emphasizing the risks involved in preaching for Christ, including the potential for martyrdom, and urging prudence and simplicity in their approach.

⁹⁹ Angelo Clareno, Libro delle Cronache o delle tribolazioni dell'Ordine dei frati minori, *Fonti francescane*. Ernesto Caroli, ed. Padova, Editrici Francescane. 2004, pp. 1408.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher MacEvitt. *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict*. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia (Pa.): University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp. 22-23, 65.

¹⁰¹ «Ecco, io vi mando come pecore in mezzo ai lupi; siate dunque prudenti come i serpenti e semplici come le colombe». San Francesco. 1221. *Regula non bullata*. Santuario "Ecce Homo".

Francis recognized two possible approaches for missionaries: the first was to live among non-Christians, showing love for them without engaging in arguments or disputes, while simply confessing one's Christianity. The second approach, which might be adopted when appropriate, was to proclaim the word of God, calling people to believe in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the salvific role of Christ, so that they might be baptized and become Christians¹⁰².

This nuanced approach to missionary work, balancing the risk of martyrdom with strategic simplicity, reflected St. Francis' deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities of spreading Christianity in non-Christian lands, particularly within the complex context of Islamic Egypt.

The martyrdom of the Franciscans, particularly in the early years, was not always regarded as a cherished value by the Church, and the Church often warned against such actions. After five Franciscans were martyred in Morocco in 1221, several letters were sent by the Pope to the friars, outlining their conduct among non-Christians and clarifying the mission's objectives. Pope Honorius III issued two letters in 1225 and 1226 (*Vineae Domini Custodes* and *Ex parte vestra*) to the friars sent to the region of Morocco¹⁰³, including both Dominicans and Franciscans. The primary responsibility of the friars was to encourage Christian faith or gently correct errant Christians, rather than engaging in provocative or military actions. The Church cautioned that bold behavior could endanger Christian communities, emphasizing that missionary actions should be conducted within strict guidelines to avoid risks.

Under Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303), the Franciscan missionary activities faced difficulties¹⁰⁴. His stance on missions in the East greatly influenced the Order's efforts. Boniface's only decree on this issue was the 1299 *Immaculata lex Domini*, which distanced the Franciscans from missionary activities, especially prohibiting Spiritual Franciscans (who adopted a strict form of poverty) from traveling to the East.

However, the arrival of Pope Clement V (1305–1314) marked a shift. He sought to balance internal tensions within the Franciscan Order and placed greater importance on their missionary activities in the Mongol Empire. Clement V's *Dudum ad apostolates* criticized the mainstream friars and supported the Spiritual Franciscans, viewing their departure for the East as a deeply spiritual and missionary act rather than one of separation¹⁰⁵. At the Council of Vienne, Clement issued another *Exivi de paradiso* in an attempt to find a compatible course between the two minor ecclesiastical

¹⁰² «Un modo è che non facciano liti o dispute, ma siano soggetti ad ogni creatura umana per amore di Dio a e confessino di essere cristiani. L'altro modo è che quando vedranno che piace al Signore, annunzino la parola di Dio perché essi credano in Dio onnipotente Padre e Figlio e Spirito Santo, Creatore di tutte le cose, e nel Figlio Redentore e Salvatore, e siano battezzati, e si facciano cristiani »

¹⁰³ “[...] vos in regnum Miramolini Sedis Apostolice transmittit auctoritas ut evangelizantes illic Dominum Jesum Christum, quantum ipse dederit, convertatis incredulos, erigatis lapsos, sustentetis debiles, pusillanimes consolemini et fortes nihilominus confortetis. [...] Inhibemus quoque ne cui christiano liceat vos de terra illa ejicere violenter. Praecipimus autem vobis in virtute sanctae obedientiae, ut his nullatenus praesumatibus abuti; sed tamquam inconfusibiles operarii Jesu Christi ita irreprehensibiliter vos geratis quod a Summo Patrefamilias retributionis denarium mereamini.” *Bullarium Franciscanum Romanorum Pontificum... studio et labore fr. J. H. Sbaraleae*, 7 vols. Typografia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, Rome, 1759-1804, pp. 1, 24, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Di Bella, Giovanni. *Nobildonne genovesi. I. Gli interessi politici di Bonifacio VIII*, 2023, p.40.

¹⁰⁵ *Bullarium Franciscanum V*, pp. 65-66.

camps and to quell the antagonism. Furthermore, we learn from a letter written in Caffa in 1323 that many friars arrived in the Far East after the General Chapter of Toulouse, which took place in 1307, and by common agreement between the Order's Minister General and Clement V. In fact, the author of the letter confirms that during Clement's pontificate there was a notable increase in the missionary activity of many zealous Friars Minor who '*Indiam peregrini zelum veritatis cum voto celesti*', some of whom were projected towards martyrdom¹⁰⁶.

In the 1320s and 1330s, Pope John XXII (p.1316–1344) distanced himself from balancing the different factions within the Franciscans, instead supporting the conventual or “house” Franciscans and condemning the Spirituals as heretics. The execution of four Spiritual Franciscans in 1318 was a crucial moment that destabilized the Spiritual faction. The execution by fire of four Spiritualist monks, Johan Barrau, Guilhem Santon, Deodat Miquel, and Pons Roca, on 7 May 1318 in Marseille, caused panic among the Spiritualists¹⁰⁷. John XXII also established six new dioceses in Persia and India, and in 1325, he issued the *Ad nostrum nuper* papal bull, which prohibited unauthorized missions in the East by the Franciscans.

Pope John XXII (1316–1344) implemented significant changes in the Church's approach to missionary activities in Asia, marking a pivotal shift in the Franciscan Order's role in the region. As part of his broader strategy to centralize control, he established six new dioceses in Persia and India, including a new archbishopric in Sultanieh, which was placed under Dominican authority. Sultanieh, an important Muslim trade center in modern-day Iran, became a key hub for missionary efforts, reflecting the changing dynamics of the Church's strategy in the East. Although Giovanni da Montecorvino, a Franciscan missionary, still oversaw the missions in China and reported to the Beijing archdiocese, Pope John XXII issued the *Redemptor Noster* papal bull in 1318, which reorganized the Asian missionary territories. From that point, the mission areas of Baghdad, Mumbai, and Constantinople were placed under Dominican control, signaling a major shift in the balance of power between the two mendicant orders. This decision effectively ended the near-century-long dominance of the Franciscans in the East.

The closure of the Beijing archdiocese in 1385, which had been under Franciscan control, further solidified the end of their primacy in Asia. By 1514, the entire region was incorporated into the Funchal diocese, marking the final phase of the Church's reorganization of missionary territories in Asia. These shifts were not just

¹⁰⁶ Giovanni Di Bella, *La Relazione latino-mongole tra XIV e prima metà del XV secolo*. Università degli Studi di Messina. 2023, pp. 464-465; M. BIHL, De duabus documenta de Missionibus Fr. Min. Tartariae Aquilonaris an. 1323, in «AFH», 16 (1923), pp. 89-103, pubblicazione completata con la trascrizione integrale dei documenti da parte di C. Moule, Textus duarum epistolarum Fratrum Minorum Tartariae Aquilonaris an. 1323, in «AFH», 16 (1923), pp. 104-12. Also about the Franciscans: Mooran, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, pp. 193-98. Il documento è edito in Bullarium Franciscanum, IV, pp. 409-10.

¹⁰⁷ “Their heresy: belief that the friars, having vowed to follow the Franciscan rule, must live the same life of absolute poverty as Jesus and his apostles, and that not even Pope John XXII, who in his bull *Quorundam exigit* (1317) had ordered the friars to accept their superiors’ rulings on how best to observe their vow of poverty, could remove from them the obligation to own nothing.” Christopher MacEvitt. *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict*. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia (Pa.): University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp 93-94; David Burr, *Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, pp. 11–34.

organizational; they reflected the broader changes in the Church's approach to missions, as the Dominicans came to dominate the missionary efforts in the East, while the Franciscans were increasingly marginalized.

Franciscans, in contrast to other mendicant orders, had two defining features: poverty and mission, including the desire for martyrdom. They viewed poverty as a form of brotherhood and total dependence on God, and they sought to live as Christ did, suffering and even dying in foreign lands to emulate His crucifixion¹⁰⁸. Secondly, there is the tradition of missionary as well as martyrdom. By suffering and even dying in foreign lands, the monks sought to remain in communion with the crucified Christ. S. Maureen Burke cited that Olivi explicitly paralleled Franciscan missionaries with the primitive church: Just as the apostles had left Palestine after having preached among the Hebrews, so the Franciscan Order could obtain greater results upon leaving the carnal West to preach among the Greeks, Saracens, Tartars, and Jews¹⁰⁹. Perhaps in keeping with St Francis' exhortation in *Regula Non Bullata* "not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake"¹¹⁰, Franciscans seem to have been encouraged to take this approach to their mission. As Isabelle Heullant-Donat said, in the fourteenth century, "poverty and martyrdom emerge as the two facets of Franciscan identity"¹¹¹. This combined focus on missions and martyrs was reflected in the decorative program of S. Francesco in Siena.

The Church's evolving stance on martyrdom was also evident in the early 14th century, when the Church seemed to reassess and place a new value on the act of martyrdom. The new "model" that emerges contrasts with the late thirteenth-century model. Martyrdom in the context of open war between Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land – that is, a martyrdom that was endured – was replaced by voluntary martyrdom, a martyrdom sought and even provoked: the very form of martyrdom embodied by those first Moroccan martyrs. This new notion – revived from the 1220s – appears in numerous and quite varied sources: catalogues of saints, 24 letters, detailed accounts in Franciscan chronicles and Passion narratives and iconography.¹¹² The Franciscans were asked to pray for the victory of the Christians who were under armed attack by the pagans at the Franciscan Plenary Assembly in Assisi in 1340, which was also an important signal¹¹³. In a letter written in this year, Benedict XII urged religious

¹⁰⁸ André Vauchez, *La novità minoritica nella chiesa e nella spiritualità del medioevo, L'arte di Francesca: capolavori di arte italiana e terra d'Asia dal XIII secolo al XIV secolo*, Angelo Tartuferi and Francesco D'Arelli ed. Firenze, 2015, pp.23-34.

¹⁰⁹ S. Maureen Burke. 'The 'Martyrdom of the Franciscans' by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 65(4),2002, p.466-467; Raoul Manselli, *La "Lectura super Apocalipsim"* di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, Rome 1955. pp.216-17.

¹¹⁰ Chap. XVI. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. pp.74.

¹¹¹ Isabelle Heullant-Donat. "Martyrdom and Identity in the Franciscan Order (Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries)." *Franciscan Studies* 70, 1, 2012, pp. 450.

¹¹² Isabelle Heullant-Donat. "Martyrdom and Identity in the Franciscan Order (Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries)." *Franciscan Studies* 70, 1, 2012, pp.429–53.

¹¹³ Girolamo Golubovich, *Biblioteca biobibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, vol. II, Quaracchi, 1913, p.261; S. Maureen Burke. "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenze." *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 65, 4, 2002, pp. 482.

leaders and followers in Tartary and the east to be excellent examples for the pagan world by being steadfast in their religion and showing patience through hardship¹¹⁴.

Considering the backdrop of the Franciscans facing the Church's distrust regarding the issue of “poverty” and the looming heresy crisis, not only this martyrdom but also the martyrdom of 1321 in Thana, India, spread widely across Europe. In this depiction of *The Martyrdom*, when standing before the Saracens, the Franciscan friars' choices served to reconcile the Franciscan Order with both the papacy and the internal divisions within the Order. The martyrs united a disjointed order and offered a model of piety that could potentially supplant the restrictive practice of poverty.

1.2 Martyrdom Identity in Spiritualism

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned the painting *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, which has long been believed to depict the martyrdom of five Franciscan friars in Thane, India, in 1321. In late 1320, Pietro da Siena (?–1321), along with three fellow friars—Tommaso da Tolentino, Giacomo da Padova, and Demetrio da Tiflizz—and other companions including the lay brother Giordano da Sévérac, set out for China. However, a storm forced them to land in Quilon, India, after which they traveled to Thane. While there, they were executed for refusing to convert to Islam when confronted by a local Muslim ruler. Giordano da Sévérac, who had traveled separately to Baruch, did not share their fate and later sent letters recounting these events back to Europe¹¹⁵. Tommaso da Tolentino, one of the friars who suffered this martyrdom and a prominent member of the Spiritual Franciscans, had previously preached in Armenia alongside Angelo Clareno and Pietro da Macerata. Sella hypothesized that during his mission in the East, Giovanni da Montecorvino, an earlier Franciscan missionary to the Mongol court, might have encountered both Tommaso and Angelo Clareno¹¹⁶. In the early 14th century, Tommaso pushed further east from Armenia, meeting his martyrdom in 1321. Meanwhile, Giovanni, sent to China in 1288, stopped in Armenia before reaching the Mongol capital in 1293. These connections reveal a significant overlap between the Spiritual Franciscans and the broader Franciscan mission in the East.

The *Chronica XXIV Generalium* records the names of the six martyrs from *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans*: Franciscus of Alexandria, Richardus of Burgundy, Raymundus Ruphi, Paschalis Hispanus of Victoria, Laurentius of Alexandria, and Petrus Martelli of Provence. Although their exact affiliations remain unclear, the fact that many of them hailed from centers of Spiritual Franciscan activity—Provence,

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The original letter has been lost, but the pertinent contents of the letter are recorded in the Franciscan Chronicle, see: *La Chronica XXIV generalium ordinis Minorum*. Many manuscripts of the book contained appendices that preserved a variety of different material, much of it related to the martyrs.

¹¹⁶ Sella, Pacifico. *I mirabilia mundi nei viaggi e nelle permanenze dei primi frati minori in Cina (secoli XIII-XIV), I Francescani e la Cina. Un'opera di oltre sette secoli*. Atti del X Convegno storico di Greccio, (Greccio, 4-5 maggio 2012), A. Cacciotti, M. Melli ed., Milan, 2013, pp.91-148.

Spain, and possibly Ancona—suggests a possible link between the Spiritual movement and these missions¹¹⁷.

Some scholars believe that the Spiritual Franciscans and their supporters were instrumental in advancing Christian missionary efforts in Mongolia. However, evidence directly linking the Eastern missions to this faction remains elusive. After the death of St. Francis in 1226, the Franciscan Order split into two branches: the Spiritual Franciscans, who advocated for strict adherence to the 1223 Rule and the *Testament of St. Francis*, and the Conventual Franciscans, who allowed more flexibility in its interpretation. The Spiritual movement flourished particularly in Provence, Tuscany, and the Marches, with charismatic leaders such as Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, Umbertino da Casale, and Angelo Clareno emerging as key figures¹¹⁸.

The painting *Saint Louis of Toulouse before Pope Boniface VIII* is often paired with *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans* to illustrate Franciscan virtues of obedience and sacrifice¹¹⁹. Together, these works emphasize the significance of missionary work to the Franciscan identity. St. Francis, the Order's founder, sought martyrdom and believed that Franciscans should place themselves in vulnerable positions among Saracens and other non-believers¹²⁰. The protagonist of the painting, Saint Louis of Toulouse (1274-1297), is exactly a member of the Franciscan Order of Spiritualists. Louis was born in February, 1274 into an illustrious family. He was the second son of Mary of Hungary and Charles II of Anjou, whose own father Charles I, Count of Anjou and Provence and King of Jerusalem, had, in addition to these titles, been personally entrusted with the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily by Pope Urban IV. In 1326, Saint Louis voluntarily renounced his succession to the Neapolitan dynasty and was canonized in 1317¹²¹. Saint Louis eschewed power and prestige and took the Franciscan vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, while the martyrs Saint Louis rejected power and prestige and took the Franciscan vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, while the martyrs demonstrated their refusal to compromise with the secular power of the Mongol Khan and revealed the most cherished values of the Franciscan order by their sacrifice.

The internal debates within the Franciscan Order over poverty peaked between 1318 and 1328. At the base of *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans* is an inscription commemorating Pietro da Siena, one of the martyred friars, which reads: “Protege Petre

¹¹⁷ S. Maureen Burke, “The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenze.” *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 65, no. 4, 2012, pp.482.

¹¹⁸ For the theological views of these three, see: Burr, David. “The Apocalyptic Element in Olivi’s Critique of Aristotle.” *Church History* 40, no.1, 1917, pp.15–29.

¹¹⁹ Yakou, Hisashi. “Memory without Mementos: Franciscan Missions and Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s Frescoes in Siena,” *北海道大学文学研究科紀要[Bulletin of the Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University]*, 119, 2020, pp. 1–17; Zheng, Yikan, *Entre la terreur et l’espoir: construction de l’image mongole aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*. EHESS-Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales. 2018, pp.127-161; Christopher MacEvitt. *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans: Islam, the Papacy, and an Order in Conflict*. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia (Pa.): University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp.122-124.

¹²⁰ *Regula bullata*, I. 2

¹²¹ For the life of Saint Louis of Toulouse, see: Toynbee, Margaret R. *S. Louis of Toulouse and the Process of Canonisation in the Fourteenth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1929; Scotti, Suzette Denise. *Simone Martini’s St. Louis of Toulouse and its cultural context*. Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2009.

Senas, o martyr prime Senensis, Semper ab offensis protege, Petre, Senas.” It appears to be an inscription in honor of Pietro da Siena. This Pietro da Perugia was one of the Franciscan friars martyred in Thane. In the Franciscan convent of Siena, there was a group of friars who either belonged to or were closely associated with the Spiritual Franciscans. In 1314, forty “apostates, schismatics, and inventors of the new sect, who dwell in the convent in Siena” were expelled from the monastery¹²². Prazniak pointed out that the patron of the fresco might very well have been a follower of the Spirituals. The Spiritual movement was mainly active in regions like Provence in France, Tuscany, Naples, and the Ancora region of the Marches in Italy, with Siena being a central hub for the Spirituals in Tuscany¹²³.

Regarding the debate over whether Eastern missionaries like Guillaume de Roubrouk (1215-1270) and Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247-1328) were Spiritual Franciscans or their supporters, it is essential to consider both the motivation of these friars to travel such great distances and whether they lived according to the Spirituals' principles. Scholars such as Pacifico Sella¹²⁴, Raoul Manselli, and Giovanni Di Bella have all discussed whether the Spiritualist Movement was involved in the missionary work in the East.¹²⁵

In the *Regula non bullata*, St. Francis referred to the mission “among Saracens and other infidels” (*inter saracenos et alios infideles*)¹²⁶, a tradition that the Franciscan order upheld. After Francis’s death, missionary work in the East often became linked with apocalyptic visions and the prophecies of Joachim¹²⁷, stressing that these friars’ journeys to the Far East would open a path for the world’s liberation and purification amidst ongoing wars and suffering¹²⁸. Raoul Manselli analyzed the Mongol question within the eschatology of the Spiritualist Movement. According to the scholar's analysis, this theme was widespread among the followers of Angelo Clareno, among whom circulated the notion of an urgent missionary commitment to face the coming of the

¹²² Anna Ini, *Gli spirituali in Toscana, Eretici e ribelli del XIII e XIV sec. Saggi sullo spiritualismo Francese in Toscana*, ed. Domenico Maselli, Pistoia 1974: 235; V. Lusini, *Storia della Basilica di S. Francesco in Siena*, Siena 1894, pp. 213-17.

¹²³ Roxann Prazniak. “Siena on the Silk Roads: Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the Mongol Global Century, 1250-1350.” *Journal of World History* 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 210.

¹²⁴ He believed that Mendovico was close to the spiritual wing of the Franciscans. Sella, Pacifico. *Il Vangelo in Oriente: Giovanni da Montecorvino, frate minore e primo Vescovo in terra di Cina, 1307-1328*. Vol. 5. Porziuncola, 2008.

¹²⁵ On their writings, see: Manselli, Raoul. *La "Lectura super Apocalipsim" di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi: ricerche sull'escatologismo medioevale*. Vol. 19. Nella sede dell'Istituto, 1955, 214-15; Di Bella, Giovanni. “Una legazione etiopica nella Khanbaliq di Giovanni da Montecorvino: inizio di un nuovo interesse missionario.” *Humanities* 11.22, 2022, p.83-99. Giovanni Di Bella, *La Relazione latino-mongole tra XIV e prima metà del XV secolo*, Università degli Studi di Messina, 2023, pp. 445-7.

¹²⁶ San Francesco, *Regula non bullata*, in *Scritti/Francisci Assisiensis Scripta*, C. Paolazzi ed., Grottaferrata-Roma 2009, pp. 266.

¹²⁷ For a study of eschatology, see: Pietro di Giovanni Olivi. *Ricerche sull'escatologismo medioevale*, Roma 1955. Joachim's historical theory is rooted in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which he temporalized and historicized into three successive and overlapping phases of historical development: the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the age of the Holy Spirit. The age of the Father corresponds to the period documented in the Old Testament, the age of the Son to the period recorded in the New Testament, and the age of the Holy Spirit is an era that has yet to occur, following the first two. Joachim believed that history is a progressive process of perfection, moving from the age of the Father toward the eventual “Kingdom of the Holy Spirit.”

¹²⁸ Bigalli, Davide. “I Tartari e l'Apocalisse: ricerche sull'escatologia in Adamo Marsh e Ruggero Bacone.” 1971, pp.105-106.

Antichrist and to convert all the infidels: this would allow the passage to the seventh era, that of Christ.¹²⁹

Davide Bigalli noted that many English Franciscan friars viewed the Tatars as a magnificent manifestation of guilt and believed that the Antichrist would emerge from among them. It was precisely the thinking of Roger Bacon, an English Franciscan, that influenced the Spiritualist Movement's missionary push into Asia. Bacon interpreted the appearance of the Tatars as a sign of the coming Antichrist, marking the beginning of a new Joachimite era¹³⁰. Traces of this mindset can even be found in the travel accounts of Franciscans journeying eastward. Giovanni Di Bella analyzed the influence of Franciscan rigorist poverty (*pensiero pauperistico e rigorista*) on Roubrouk's travelogue. This friar adhered strictly to poverty; the entire cost of his journey was covered by the charity of Louis IX¹³¹, and he followed the *dictatum*, which allowed only for the provision of necessities and living expenses, never handling money directly. Instead, he entrusted the money chest to Gosset¹³².

In fact, considering several passages from the *Itinerarium*, one can outline the Flemish friar's tendency to strictly observe poverty and the *Regula* in his daily life. This led him, for example, to reject the possession of gifts, money, and any material goods; to prioritize religious and pastoral matters over worldly concerns; and to show more interest and care for divine offices than for political ceremonies, which he never neglected, even under unfortunate circumstances. Furthermore, the *Itinerarium* reveals a keen interest in Joachimite prophecy, which prompted him on several occasions to draft a utopian vision of a triumphant Christianity among the Tartars at the end of time¹³³.

Di Bella also suggested that if Roubrouk's eastern journey was influenced by the eschatology of Franciscan poverty, then his acceptance of Louis IX's request to preach in Mongolia might have been not only to fulfill the mission but also to distance himself from the repressive authorities oppressing the Spirituals in the West, realizing the *dictatum della Regula* in the East. "The concatenation of decisions made by the apostolic see and the superiors of the Minorite Order and the reaction to them of the spiritual religious prompts consideration of the possibility that missionary action, in addition to being an opportunity to fulfill the evangelical dictatum, was also an opportunity to move away from the repressive dynamics that animated the last half-century of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century. Incidentally, it is worth noting that this phase of internal contrasts within the Order coincides with the most proliferated period of relations between the Latin West and the Mongols, and, therefore, it is not inappropriate to assume that the spiritual friars took advantage of the

¹²⁹ Manselli, Raoul. *Spirituali missionari: l'azione in Armenia e in Grecia*. Angelo Clareno, 1979, pp.214-5.

¹³⁰ Bigalli, Davide. "Giudizio escatologico e tecnica di missione nei pensatori francescani: Ruggero Bacone", 1978, pp. 151-86.

¹³¹ Guglielmo di Rubruk, P. Chiesa ed., *Viaggio in Mongolia (Itinerarium)*, Cles 2014, pp. XXX-XXXI, p14-16.

¹³² M. Gueret-Laferte, *Le voyageur et la géographie: l'insertion de la relation de voyage de Guillaume de Rubrouck dans l'Opus maius de Roger Bacon, La géographie au Moyen Age. Espaces pensés, espaces vécus, espaces rêvés*, Paris 1998, pp. 81-96.

¹³³ Giovanni Di Bella, *La Relazione latino-mongole tra XIV e prima metà del XV secolo*. Università degli Studi di Messina.2023, pp. 443-8.

opening of routes to Asia both to bear witness to the Gospel and to get away from the difficult Western situation.”¹³⁴ Considering the suppression of the Spiritualists in the Franciscan Order from the last fifty years of the thirteenth century to the present, we cannot indeed rule out the possibility that the new situation in Mongolia was indeed a new opportunity for them, and could have pushed the Church to re-examine and re-evaluate the status of the Spiritualist Order. Looking at the missionaries' dealings with the East from this perspective may reveal that the Church's relationship with the Spiritualists can be a tiny barometer of the strength and number of missionaries.

Odorico da Pordenone (c. 1286-1331) preached in the East between 1316 and 1330. In his *Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium tartarorum*, he recounted that after hearing of the Franciscan martyrs in Thane, India, he went to Thane and took the bones of Pietro da Siena and other friars to the church in Zaiton (modern-day Quanzhou). In the *Relatio*, he wrote: “I, Brother Odorico, arrived in these regions, and after hearing of their glorious martyrdom and opening their tomb, I humbly and devoutly took their bones. Since God often works great miracles through His saints, He also seemed to wish to do so through them. So, after wrapping their bones in a clean cloth, I carried them with the help of a fellow church member and a servant to a certain place in Upper India, where I stayed with some other friars. One night, while I was sleeping in a house with the bones, or rather relics, beneath my head, the house was set on fire by Saracens. They aimed to condemn me by raising an outcry among the people, as it was decreed by the emperor that anyone whose house caught fire would be sentenced to death. The house was burning, and my companions fled, leaving me and the relics behind. I gathered up the relics and prayed to God for help, crouching in a corner of the house. Three corners of the house were burned, but the one where I stayed was miraculously preserved. As long as I stayed with the bones, the fire did not touch me, hovering above me like air. Only after I left did the house burn completely, along with several nearby houses. Thus, I was delivered safely.”¹³⁵

In the Church of San Francesco in Udine, Italy, a tomb was erected for the martyred missionary Odorico. Frescoes in the church depict scenes from his life, including two that show him recovering the martyrs' bones in Thane. The first fresco is mostly lost, but we can still see Odorico (identified by his halo) excavating the relics, with only part of the martyr's head visible, as the rest of the body has faded. In the second fresco, more of the image remains intact (Fig. 1.8): Odorico wraps the bones in a cloth, while another friar tells the surrounding crowd about the martyrdom and Odorico's recovery of the bones. The crowd reacts with a mix of fear, standing with arms crossed or pointing at the relics. The bones are shown as round and bloodless, suggesting they are part of a skull (Fig. 1.9). Yakou Hisashi thinks that in this fresco, the “Relics depicted” have replaced the real relics, and visual imagery has substituted

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Odorico da Pordenone, *Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium tartarorum*, a cura di A. Marchisio, Firenze 2016. pp. 234.

the physical remains, shifting veneration from the actual relics to their depiction in the fresco¹³⁶.

In some of these Passion narratives, Franciscan martyrs are presented as well integrated into the Greek, Armenian or Coptic Christian communities in which they lived. Members of those mixed Christian communities risked their own lives to gather and safeguard their relics. Martyrs thus served to ensure the cohesion of such multi-ethnic Christian communities, above and beyond any differences in their liturgical rites and leadership structures. For example, the account of the Passion of three Franciscans in Erzincan in 1314 reports that an Armenian priest, secretly aided by some of his parishioners, collected relics, at the risk of his own life, adding that “many Greeks” venerated them.¹³⁷

1.3 Headwear in the Martyrdom of the Franciscans

European understanding of the East was shaped by real and imagined travel accounts about Mongolia and the Orient. But before Marco Polo ventured into Asia, what did 13th-century European Christians imagine about the Mongols?

Before Christian emissaries were officially sent to the Mongol court in 1247, Matthieu Paris documented early intelligence about the Mongols in his *Greater Chronicle* (1235–1259). This helps us understand how Europeans viewed the Mongols at the time:

“That the joys of mortal men be not enduring, nor worldly happiness long lasting without lamentations, in this same year (i.e., 1240) a detestable nation of Satan, to wit, the countless army of the Tartars, broke loose from its mountain-environed home, and piercing the solid rocks (of the Caucasus), poured forth like devils from the Tartarus, so that they are rightly called Tartari or Tartarians. Swarming like locusts over the face of the earth, they have brought terrible devastation to the eastern parts (of Europe), laying it waste with fire and carnage. After having passed through the land of the Saracens, they have razed cities, cut down forests, overthrown fortresses, pulled up vines, destroyed gardens, killed townspeople and peasants. If perchance they have spared any suppliants, they have forced them, reduced to the lowest condition of slavery, to fight in the foremost ranks against their own neighbors. Those who have feigned to fight, or have hidden in the hope of escaping, have been followed up by the Tartars and butchered. If any have fought bravely (for them) and conquered, they have got no thanks for reward; and so they have misused their captives as they have their mares. For they are inhuman and beastly, rather monsters than men, thirsting for and drinking

¹³⁶ Yakou, Hisashi. “Memory without Mementos: Franciscan Missions and Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s Frescoes in Siena.”, *北海道大学文学研究科紀要[Bulletin of the Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University]*, no. 119, 2006, pp. 1-17.

¹³⁷ see Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente francescano*, II, p.66-68. The reworking of this Passion in the *Chronica XXIV Generalium* (412-16) specifies that the patriarch of the Armenians canonized them. Isabelle Heullant-Donat. “Martyrdom and Identity in the Franciscan Order (Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries).” *Franciscan Studies* 70, no. 1, 2012, pp.451.

blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men, dressed in ox-hides, armed with plates of iron, short and stout, thickset, strong, invincible, indefatigable, their backs unprotected, their breasts covered with armor; drinking with delight the pure blood of their flocks, with big, strong horses, which eat branches and even trees, and which they have to mount by the help of three steps on account of the shortness of their thighs. They are without human laws, know no comforts, are more ferocious than lions or bears, have boats made of ox-hides, which ten or twelve of them own in common; they are able to swim or to manage a boat, so that they can cross the largest and swiftest rivers without let or hindrance, drinking turbid or muddy water when blood fails them (as beverage). They have one-edged swords and daggers, are wonderful archers, spare neither age, nor sex, nor condition. They know no other language than their own, which no else knows; for until now there has been no access to them, nor did they go forth (from their own country); so there could be no knowledge of their customs or persons through the common intercourse of men. They wander about with their flocks and their wives, who are taught to fight like men. And so they came with the swiftness of lightning to the confines of Christendom, ravaging and slaughtering, striking every one with terror and incomparable horror. It was for this that the Saracens sought to ally themselves with the Christians, hoping to be able to resist these monsters with their combined forces.”¹³⁸

In *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s detailed depiction of Eastern faces, clothing, and headgear reflects that he likely encountered Tartars in Europe or, at the very least, had access to images or depictions of them. His attention to detail suggests he modeled or recorded Tartar attire, hairstyles, and accessories. In addition, the fresco’s background draws on a new classical style, blending ambitious historical and artistic precedents with newly articulated Franciscan principles¹³⁹. S. Maureen Burke notes that the creation of this *Martyrdom* fresco was closely connected to those who supported the Spiritual Franciscans. She identifies two key figures in the commission: Giacomo del Tondo and Francesco d'Altimanno Ugurgieri, whose broad perspectives and classic literary knowledge allowed the use of new themes and interpretations of martyrdom, facilitating this pioneering subject matter.¹⁴⁰

Lorenzetti also carefully imagined the appearance of the city of Almalıq. Based on the location of Tughlugh Timur's *mazar* (Mazar)¹⁴¹, the historian Huang Wenbi

¹³⁸ Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, IV, pp. 76-8.

¹³⁹ Suzanne Maureen Burke, The ‘Martyrdom of the Franciscans’ by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 65, no. 4, 2002, pp.468.

¹⁴⁰ “There were two guardians, both of whom were members of Sieneſe Noveschi families: 1) Giacomo del Tondo, with a doctorate from the Sorbonne, who was first noted as Guardianus in 1328 and reappeared as Guardianus in 1345, and 2) Francesco d'Altimanno Ugurgieri, a master of sacred theology, who was listed as Guardianus in 1330; the latter held a number of Sieneſe government positions, was sent to Avignon around 1343 to represent the city-state as an ambassador to the newly elevated Pope Clement VI, and in the same year was appointed the Inquisitor General of Tuscany. During this period evidently other members of the Ugurgieri family were professors in the Sieneſe Studio.” Suzanne Maureen Burke (2002), The ‘Martyrdom of the Franciscans’ by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 65, 4, 2002, pp.468.

¹⁴¹ A term commonly used in Xinjiang, China, to refer to the tombs or mausoleums of Islamic sages and dignitaries, derived from the Uyghur word meaning “grave.”

traced the location of Almaliq to the Altai, south of the Keken Mountain¹⁴²(Fig. 1.10). The founder of the Eastern Chagatai Khanate was buried there. Lorenzetti's rendering of the city's background shares similarities with these features. Beyond the architecture, many of the figures exhibit Tartar-like features: slanted eyes, broad cheeks, mustaches, braids down to their ears, and flat noses¹⁴³. However, Lorenzetti does not overtly distinguish between Mongols and Europeans in their appearance, instead opting for a generalized Orientalized depiction of some figures.

The Chinese historian Shen Defu, writing in the *Wanli Yehuobian*, observed that during the Yuan dynasty, nobles wore distinguished hats as symbols of rank. Nearly all depictions of Mongol nobility show them wearing hats, such as the portraits of Genghis Khan and Emperor Wenzong of the Yuan Dynasty (Fig. 1.11 and 1.12). In Lorenzetti's *Martyrdom*, all the Mongols, except the children, executioners, and Franciscans, wear headgear.

The figures wearing hats in the fresco can be divided into three groups: five figures on the left (Fig. 1.13), the Tartar ruler in the middle (Fig. 1.14), and five figures on the right (Fig. 1.15). On the left, the first figure wears a Turban, the second a two-brimmed hat with feathers, the third a silver petal-shaped helmet, and the fourth, partially hidden, wears a bronze helmet adorned with metal branches. The fifth man has a headband. They all appear tense, their brows furrowed, their lips downturned, and most avoid direct eye contact, conveying a solemn and uneasy atmosphere.

On the right, the observers appear curious and surprised. The first wears a brimmed hat with eagle-claw decorations and feathers, the second a cloth hat adorned with metal branches and band-like inscriptions, the third a Turban, the fourth a rounded hat with a protective veil, and the fifth a typical European soldier's helmet.

Comparing these figures reveals patterns: the second figure on the left and the first on the right wear similar pointed hats with feathers and bear the characteristic Mongol mustaches, thin eyebrows, flat faces, and low noses. The first figure on the left, the fifth on the left, and the third on the right all wear headbands or Turbans, while the third and fourth figures on the left and the second on the right wear helmets decorated with metal branches, suggesting they are soldiers. Three figures are worth noting individually: the fourth and fifth figures on the right, as well as the central Mongol ruler.

¹⁴² 黄文弼[Huang Wenbi], “元阿力麻里古城考” [Research on the Ancient City of Almaliq in the Yuan Dynasty] 《考古》[*Kaogu*], no.10, 1963, pp.555-561; 杨富学[Yang fuxue], 葛启航[Ge Qihang]. “秃黑鲁帖木儿与东察合台汗国若干史事辨析[Some Problems concerning Tughluk Timur and the Eastern Chagatai Khanate]”, 《丝绸之路研究集》[*Collected Papers on Silk Road Studies*], no.5, pp. 92.

¹⁴³ Zheng, Yikan. *Entre la terreur et l'espoir : construction de l'image mongole aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*. 2018. EHESS-Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales. This doctoral dissertation's Chinese version was published in China, as referenced in: 郑伊看[Zheng Yikan]. 来者是谁:13-14 世纪欧洲艺术中的东方人形象[*The New Comer: The image of the Orientals in 13th and 14th Century European Art*]. 江苏凤凰美术出版社[Jiangsu Phoenix Fine Arts Publishing House], 2023, pp.193-194. She mentioned that in the 1970s, Mario Bussagli had already noted the appearance of figures with Central Asian features in this fresco: Mario Bussagli, *Culture e civiltà dell'Asia Centrale*, Turin, 1970, pp.260.

Let's first examine the first group: the second figure on the left and the first on the right. In Rubruck's travel accounts, he describes the Tartar women he encountered as follows:

*“Furthermore they have a head-dress, which they call bocca, made of bark, or such other light material as they can find, and it is big and as much as two hands can span around, and is a cubit and more high, and square like the capital of a column. This bocca they cover with costly silk stuff, and it is hollow inside, and on top of the capital, or the square on it, they put a tuft of quills or light canes also a cubit or more in length. And this tuft they ornament at the top with peacock feathers, and round the edge (of the top) with feathers from the mallard's tail, and also with precious stones. The wealthy ladies wear such an ornament on their heads, and fasten it down tightly with an amess, for which there is an opening in the top for that purpose, and inside they stuff their hair; gathering it together on the back of the tops of their heads in a kind of knot, and putting it in the bocca. which they afterwards tie down tightly under the chin. So it is that when several ladies are riding together, and one sees them from afar, they look like soldiers, helmets on head and lances erect.”*¹⁴⁴

The “bocca” headpiece described by Rubruck is similar to the “Gugu” crown worn by the empress in this Yuan dynasty court painting (Fig. 1.16), which also features feather decorations. Beyond these court depictions, a similar headdress appears in an illustration from *Jami' al-Tawarikh*, a manuscript compiled by Rashid-ad-Din during the first quarter of the 14th century in Tabriz, Ilkhanate (Fig. 1.17). This illustration depicts the enthronement ceremony of the Ilkhan ruler, where both men and women wear side-slit cross-collar robes, tied at the waist, with minimal variation in style. The clothing of the king and queen is not significantly different from that of noble officials, reflecting the Mongol pursuit of a relatively simple and modest fashion during this period.

The use of feathers as adornments on headgear was common not only for Mongol women but also for men. Rubruck writes: “For three days, we visited him (i.e., Ögedei Khan) until he fully recovered. Then that monk made a banner full of crosses, attached it to a long spear shaft, and we raised it high. I honored him as I would my bishop because he understood the language. However, I did not approve of his actions. He made a folding bishop's chair for himself, along with gloves and a hat adorned with peacock feathers, and on the hat, a small golden cross.” This shows that feather decorations were present even in the Great Khan's court. In the *Jami' al-Tawarikh* manuscript (Fig. 1.18), in a scene depicting mounted warriors from both sides engaged in battle, many of the soldiers' helmets are also adorned with feathers. The feathers on the hats in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Martyrdom* painting, seen on two of the Mongol

¹⁴⁴ *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55: As Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine.* Hakluyt Society, 1941, pp.73-74.

figures, thus align with typical representations of Mongol soldiers from the Middle Ages.

Additionally, the double-brimmed, pointed hats featured in *Martyrdom* can be found in several medieval illustrations. In another *Jami' al-Tawarikh* illustration depicting a court celebration (Fig. 1.19), two figures in the lower left corner carrying a table are seen wearing pointed hats with prominent brims, sporting mustaches and curls, with the bottom edge of the hat's front brim colored red. This bears a strong resemblance to the hats worn by the two figures in Lorenzetti's painting. Furthermore, a 14th-century Hungarian chronicle, *Chronicom Pictum*, preserved in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest, features two illustrations of the Tartar invasion of Eastern Europe around 1240. One of these, depicting the 1241 Battle of Mohi (Fig. 1.20), shows the Mongol army on the left and King Béla IV of Hungary (1206-1270) on the right, fleeing the battlefield¹⁴⁵. One of the Mongol soldiers in this image is wearing a double-brimmed pointed hat, with the underside of the brim colored red.

In Ambrogio Lorenzetti's painting, the two Mongol figures' hats are adorned with red accents. Interestingly, the Mongol hats in several manuscripts contemporary to the painter also feature red, suggesting a common representation of Mongol attire in artistic depictions from this period. A letter written around 1550 by a Persian merchant, Hajji Mahomed, provides insight into the symbolic use of hat colors, specifically distinguishing between “red hats” and “green hats.” He writes:

“....On the other side of the desert north of Corassam as far as Samarcand, the Iescilbas or people of the green caps have sway. Those Green-caps are a certain race of Mahomedan Tartars (Uzbeks) who wear conical caps of green felt, and give themselves that name to distinguish themselves from the followers of the Sofi, their deadly enemies, who are the rulers of Persia, who are also Mahomedans and wear red caps (Kizil-bash). And these Green-caps and Red-caps are continually at most cruel war with one another on account of certain religious differences and frontier disputes. Among the cities that the Green-caps have under their rule are among others at present Bochara and Samarcand, each of which has a prince of its own.”¹⁴⁶

In the region near Samarkand, those who practiced Islam and wore green hats were subjects of the Chagatai Khanate, while those who wore red hats and adhered to Sufi Islam belonged to the Ilkhanate. The illustrations mentioned earlier, such as those from the *Jami' al-tawarikh* and *The Great Mongol Shahnameh*, were created in the Ilkhanate. The *Jami' al-tawarikh* was commissioned around 1295-96 by Ghazan, the ruler of the Ilkhanate, to strengthen the legitimacy of Mongol rule over Muslims. This work, completed around 1310-11, was produced in Tabriz, the Ilkhanate's capital and key cultural center¹⁴⁷. Thus, Mongol figures in these works are typically depicted with red

¹⁴⁵ Kalt, Marci, *Chronicon Pictum*, 1358, pp. 125.

¹⁴⁶ “Hajji Mahomed's Account of Cathay, as delivered to Messer Gio. Battista Ramusio”, Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither. Vol. 1*. Digitally printed version [d. Ausg.] London, Hakluyt Soc., 1866. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 36. Cambridge New York: Cambridge Univ. Press. 2010, pp. 227-229.

¹⁴⁷ Hillenbrand, Robert, ed. *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*. Routledge, 2017. The most comprehensive collection of illustrated *Sāh-nāma* manuscripts is the digital database *Shahnama Project*, available at: <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/shahnama/1>

hats. This may explain why Mongol figures in Persian manuscripts, like those influencing Lorenzetti's work, often wear red hats. The interesting part lies precisely in what the painter cannot faithfully reproduce.

The first observer on the right in *Martyrdom* is dressed in a Mongol-style robe, with an outer layer resembling a *dahu* (half-sleeved long robe, or *changpao*, with a cross-collar closing to the right, *jiaoling youren*). This type of garment was characteristic of the Mongol period. The *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) illustrations depict a similar style of clothing (Fig. 1.21). The Mongol rulers, adherents of Tibetan Buddhism, were also lavish patrons of luxury arts, including woven silk textiles. An example of such a luxurious textile is a *kesi*, where each colored thread is individually woven to form a pattern. Tugh Temür, great-grandson of Kublai Khan, briefly Emperor of the Yuan dynasty, and his elder brother Khutughtu Khan both sponsored these elaborate textiles (Fig. 1.22-23). In Lorenzetti's *Martyrdom*, the first Mongol figure on the right is wearing a similar robe. Scholar Zheng Yikan believes this is a "braided robe," as seen from the tightly pleated horizontal folds around the waist¹⁴⁸. During the Mongol era, there were two types of waist-securing robes (Fig. 1.24): *waistline robes* and *braided robes*. Scholars argue that a braided decoration made of silk threads was unique to the "braided robe," while bands of woven material, either silk threads or ribbons, were used on the *waistline robe*¹⁴⁹. The *Yuanshi* (*History of the the Yuan*) records the "braided tunic" as a garment "narrow in sleeve, with finely pleated braids at the waist." This type of tunic was worn with a cinched waist and tight sleeves, making it convenient for daily use in horseback riding. Lorenzetti's depiction of the first observer on the right, dressed in a braided robe and *Dahu*, aligns with the style worn during the Yuan dynasty.

Rubruck also noted the Mongol habit of wrapping their hats in precious silk fabrics¹⁵⁰. In *Martyrdom*, Lorenzetti carefully rendered the intricate details of the Mongol hat textiles (Fig. 1.25). The patterns, colors, and textures bear a striking resemblance to a 14th-century Chinese textile fragment preserved in the Berlin Museum of Decorative Arts (Fig. 1.26). This is not the first time Italian painters of the Middle Ages depicted textiles with accuracy. For instance, in 1333, Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi from the Sienese school painted the *Annunciation* for the Duomo di Siena (Fig. 1.27). Many art historians believe the white-and-gold robe worn by the angel was inspired by a tartaric silk garment, possibly Benedict XI's parament, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 1.28-29).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ See note 122, Zheng Yikan, pp.114.

¹⁴⁹ 徐文跃[Xu Wenyue]. "蒙元的服饰" [Clothing of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty], 紫禁城 [Forbidden City], 08, 2013, pp. 51-73.

¹⁵⁰ See note 122.

¹⁵¹ For the discussion of this *panni tartarici*, see: Anne E. Wardwell. *Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks Woven with Gold and Silver (13th and 14th Centuries)*. "The" Bruschetti Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, 1989; Anne E. Wardwell. "Flight of the Phoenix: Crosscurrents in Late Thirteenth- to Fourteenth-Century Silk Patterns and Motifs." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 74, no. 1. 1987, pp. 2-35; Maria Ludovica Rosati. *Panni Tartarici: Fortune, Use, and the Cultural Reception of Oriental Silks in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century: European Mindset*. Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge [...], Studies 13. Berlin: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2020; Maria Ludovica Rosati. "'De Opere Curioso Minuto': The Vestments of Benedict XI in Perugia and the Fourteenth-Century Perceptions of 'Panni Tartarici.'" *ABEGG -STIFTUNG*, 2016. Arnold, Lauren. *Princely Gifts and Papale Treasures*: Desiderata Press, 1999, pp.120-122.

In the second group, which includes the first and fifth figures on the left and the third figure on the right, all wear headwraps. The Turban, a sign of distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, reflects Lorenzetti's awareness of the Islamic influence in the region. By the early 15th century, the Eastern Chagatai Khan Muhammad Khan (r.1408-1415) had mandated that Mongols wear Turbans to consolidate Islamic faith among them. However, long before this period, as nomads transitioned to settled life and gradually embraced Islam, Turbans had become a common feature of Mongol headgear.

The third group in the fresco, which includes the third and fourth figures on the left and the second figure on the right, represents soldiers. These Eastern soldiers are identified by their egg-shaped helmets, each topped with a metal floral branch. The helmet worn by the second figure on the right resembles a "Turban Helmet"¹⁵². Due to the lack of surviving samples from the Ilkhanate period (1256-1355), there is much debate regarding when this helmet style was invented. Alexander suggests that the Ilkhanid government was among the first to use this new helmet type, which saw significant development in design and production during their rule¹⁵³. However, Russell Robinson argues that the Turban helmet emerged later, around the late 14th century. According to Robinson, Ilkhanid helmets were generally simple bowl-shaped designs.¹⁵⁴ He found a matching example of this in the *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (1300-1314) (Fig. 1.30). Garakani-Dashteh and Mortezaei align with Alexander's timeline but also cite a late Ilkhanid or early Timurid steel helmet (Fig. 1.31), which they date to the 14th century according to Sotheby's judgement¹⁵⁵. As can be observed, this helmet's design introduces a new feature where the bowl and tube are joined at the apex with a slight rise. Since this rise, which gives the helmet its conical shape, differs from the prior helmets' structural design, it can be assumed that this is one of the earliest instances of a Turban helmet. A helmet from the Blue Horde (1343-1357) further shows the development of the Turban helmet design (Fig. 1.32)¹⁵⁶. An inscription on the helmet reads: "Made at the order of his Excellency, the noble, the exalted, the holy warrior, Sultan Mahmud Jani Beg Khan," referring to Jalal al-Din Jani Beg, ruler of the Blue Horde from 1342 to 1357¹⁵⁷. Similarly, the second figure on the right in *The Martyrdom* wears a helmet with a faint golden inscription at the base. It can be seen that the tendency to increase the height of the Turban helmets, at the end of the 14th century, eventually led to the creation of long conical helmets in the first half of the 15th century

¹⁵² The historical texts from the Middle Ages do not designate this particular style of helmet. Because it was occasionally worn with a Turban and because the artists had mimicked the shape of a Turban on metal in certain samples, this style of helmet has come to be known as the "Turban helmet." Alexander, David G. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015.

¹⁵³ Alexander, D. G. "Two Aspects of Islamic Arms and Armor". *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 18, 1963, pp. 97. Garakani-Dashteh, Sh. and Mortezaei, M. "Turban Helmets, from the Il-Khanid Period to the Safavid Era." *Parseh Journal of Archaeological Studies* 7, no. 24. 2023, pp. 292.

¹⁵⁴ Russell Robinson, H. *Oriental Armour*. New York: Dover, 1967, pp. 28-31.

¹⁵⁵ Sh., Garakani-Dashteh, and Mortezaei M. "Turban Helmets, from the Il-Khanid Period to the Safavid Era." *Parseh Journal of Archaeological Studies*, vol. 7, no. 24, 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Nicolle, D. *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*. London: Greenhill Book. 1999, p. 451-452.

¹⁵⁷ Alexander, David G., Stuart W. Pyhrr, and Will Kwiatkowski. *Islamic Arms and Armor in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015, pp. 64-65.

(Fig. 1.33). Considering the time when Ambrogio painted this fresco, it's plausible that the Ilkhanate helmets were still relatively simple, bowl-shaped designs.

Why focus on the Ilkhanate rather than the Chagatai Khanate, where the martyrdom occurred? The color of the Mongol hats, as discussed earlier, suggests that Lorenzetti's exposure to world imagery likely reached as far as the Ilkhanate or the Golden Horde. However, more distant regions like the Chagatai Khanate might have been inaccurately represented. The soldier depicted in *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (Fig. 1.34)¹⁵⁸ and the helmet worn by the third figure on the left in *The Martyrdom* bear striking similarities, further indicating that Lorenzetti did not invent these helmet designs but likely based them on real or related imagery.

The fourth figure on the right wears a round-brimmed hat, with the front brim slightly longer than the back. This hat style was likely an original design created by the Yuan dynasty court. According to the *History of the Yuan*, Kublai Khan's wife designed the extended brim for archery, and the emperor loved it so much that it became an official style¹⁵⁹. However, according to the *Yuan Dian Zhang* (*元典章*, *Statutes of the Yuan Dynasty*), this type of hat was exclusively manufactured and used by the imperial court, and it was not available in the marketplace. This hat, restricted to court use, was discovered in the Yuan tombs of the Wang Shixian family in China (Fig. 1.35).

The *Yuan Dian Zhang* records an edict from the first year of the Dade reign (the second era name of Yuan Emperor Chengzong Temür), namely 1297, where the Central Secretariat (the central government institution at the time) sent to the Directorate of Utilization (*利用监*, the office responsible for manufacturing items) regarding the Miscellaneous Manufacturing Bureau (*杂造局*): "The new style black slanted leather hat with intricate floral designs was offered to the emperor. The imperial decree stated: 'Henceforth, no more of these hats are to be made for anyone else. If you give it to others, even in death you will be held accountable!'"¹⁶⁰ The strict restrictions are not only on the hat's design but also on its specific features. In the eleventh year of Dade (1307), a further restriction was imposed: "The golden-winged eagle-design hats are not to be made anymore. No one is allowed to wear them. Anyone else caught making or wearing them will be severely punished."¹⁶¹ These records highlight the popularity and exclusivity of such hat designs within the imperial court. Furthermore, individuals outside the court were strictly forbidden from wearing it.

In the first group analyzed above, including the second figure on the left and the first figure on the right, the latter is wearing a double-brimmed, pointed hat with an

¹⁵⁸ Garakani-Dashteh, Sh. and Mortezaei, M, as note 116; Nicolle, D. *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050-1350*. London: Greenhill Book. 1999, pp. 455.

¹⁵⁹ The original text reads: "帝因射，日色炫目，以语后，后因益前檐，帝大喜，遂命为式...国人皆效之。" 宋濂 [Song Lian], 《元史》 [*History of the Yuan*] 世祖昭睿顺皇后传，北京：中华书局 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company], 1976, pp. 2347.

¹⁶⁰ The original text reads: "上位新样黑糕细花儿斜皮帽子一个，进献上位看过。钦奉圣旨，今后这皮帽子休做与人者，与人呵，你死也！" 陈高华、张帆、刘晓等点校 [Chen Gaohua, zhang Fan, Liu Xiao ed.], *元典章* [*Statutes of the Yuan Dynasty*] 卷五八·工部卷之一·造作一·杂造, vol.2. 北京:中华书局 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company], 天津: 天津古籍出版社 [Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House], 2011, p.214.

¹⁶¹ The original text: "金翅雕样皮帽顶儿，今后休教做，休交诸人带者。做的人，根底要罪过者。带者的人，根底夺了，要罪过者。" Ibid.

eagle claw decoration on top (Fig. 1.36). In the previously cited Yuan dynasty regulations, the 'golden-winged eagle-design hats' were restricted to use within the imperial court. This same motif and decoration, identical to the hat style unearthed from Wang Shixian's tomb, also appears in Lorenzetti's painting.

Based on the *History of Yuan*, Wang Shixian, the tomb's owner, hailed from the Mongol Wangu tribe¹⁶². As a general for both the Jin Dynasty and the Mongols, Wang demonstrated exceptional military achievements during campaigns against the Western Xia (1038-1227), the Southern Song (1127-1279), and the Mongols (12679-1368). Eventually, he surrendered to the Mongols, and the Mongol crown prince Köden (1206-1251, the second son of Ögedei Khan) granted him Mongol attire while allowing him to retain his original position. After Möngke Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, ascended the throne in 1251, the Wang family continued to aid the Mongol conquest of key territories in Sichuan. Following Möngke's death, a power struggle ensued for the khanate, and the Wang family supported Kublai Khan, who emerged victorious and became the key military figure for Yuan Shizu (Kublai). The Yuan government rewarded the Wang family with titles and land, with many family members serving in military posts in Shaanxi and Sichuan. During the Ming dynasty, the family ultimately defected to the Ming.¹⁶³ From the Jin Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty (1249-1616), the Wang family lineage extended for 14 generations over 370 years, with more than 220 family members buried in the tomb, which remains the most concentrated and best-preserved Yuan-era burial site discovered.¹⁶⁴ From 1972 to 1990, six archaeological excavations uncovered 29 tombs and over 825 artifacts.¹⁶⁵

As officials from the Jin to Ming dynasties, the Wang family tombs yielded not only exquisite Yuan-era craftsmanship but also luxury items traded with Europe. The family's base in Gansu, a key section of the Silk Road, allowed access to such goods. Among the finds was a blue, lotus-shaped glass cup with seven petals (Fig. 1.37), believed to have been imported from West Asia and later acquired by the Wang family¹⁶⁶. Due to the rarity of the court-regulated Yuan-era hats, it is plausible that one such hat, discovered among the burial goods, could have made its way beyond the Yuan court and reached international markets. In this sense, the eagle claw decoration on the hat of the first figure on the right in the *Martyrdom* is very likely to have been

¹⁶² 宋濂[Song Lian], 《元史》[*History of the Yuan*]卷一五五汪世显传, 北京: 中华书局[Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company], 1976, pp. 3649.

¹⁶³ On the complicated relationship between the Wang family and the Mongolian nobility: see: 樊秋丽 [Fan Qiuli]. 《陇右汪氏家族兴衰研究》[*The Study of the Rise and Fall about Wang Clan at Longyou*], Ph.D. Thesis, Lanzhou University, 2011; 汪小红[Wang Xiaohong]. 《元代巩昌汪氏家族研究》[*A Study on Gongchang Wang Household*], Lanzhou University, 2007.

¹⁶⁴ 许世娣 [Xu Shidi], 《漳县元代汪世显家族墓研究》[*Study on The Family Tomb of Wang Shixian at Zhang County In Yuan Dynasty*], Lanzhou University, 2005; 东伟 [Dong Wei], 《汪世显家族墓出土随葬品调查研究》[*Investigation with Study on the Unearthed Burial Object the Tomb of Wang Shixian Family*], Northwest Normal University, China, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ For a list of burials in the Wang Shixian family tomb, see: 东伟[Dong Wei], 《汪世显家族墓出土随葬品调查研究》[*Investigation with Study on the Unearthed Burial Object the Tomb of Wang Shixian Family*], Northwest Normal University, China, 2021, p.67-71.

¹⁶⁶ 刘瑶[Liu Yao]. “从元代玻璃莲花托盏看中国玻璃器的发展” [Examining the Development of Chinese Glassware through Yuan Dynasty Glass Lotus Stem Cups], *丝绸之路* [The Silk Road], 08, 2013, pp. 51-55.

introduced to Italy through trade along the Silk Road, ultimately making its way onto the painter's canvas.

This style of hat also appears in illustrations from the “*First Small Shahnama*”, depicting Mongol scenes of the Ilkhanate (Fig. 1.38, second person from the left, first person from the right). The “*Small Shahnama*” manuscripts are the earliest known illustrated examples of the Book of Kings (*Shahnama*), the epic Persian poem composed c. 1010 by Firdausi. Two manuscripts are dispersed, and a third is in the Freer Gallery in Washington, DC. According to scholar M. S. Simpson, the creation time and place of these illustrations align with the renowned *Great Mongol Shahnameh*, another illustrated manuscript of the *Shahnama*, both dating to the 1330s in Tabriz, the capital of the Ilkhanate. Therefore, these works likely belong to the same period and share similar themes, reflecting a certain resemblance in their artistic characteristics.¹⁶⁷ In the *Small Shahnama*, several illustrations depict Mongol nobles wearing this style of hat, though they are too numerous to list individually here. The hat in these illustrations shows slight differences compared to the one depicted in *Martyrdom*: the hat unearthed from the Wang Shixian family tomb has a disconnected front and back brim, while the hat in Ambrogio’s painting presents a continuous brim. However, both hats share similarities: the front and back brims are upturned, feature a rounded top, and the front brim is longer than the back. This suggests that the artist might have referred to other Mongol hat styles. As shown in Fig. 1.12, this was likely the most popular hat style among the Mongols, even appearing frequently in the illustrations of Mongols from the Ilkhanate in Persia and surrounding regions during the 13th to 14th centuries. This assumption primarily derives from the rear covering feature in the fig. 1.12 hat style, originally designed by nomadic peoples of the steppe to protect against wind and sand. Such designs rarely appear in the headwear of European cultures.

The fifth figure in the painting on the far right wears a metal helmet and armor. The hat he is wearing, rooted in an ancient European tradition, may have been deliberately designed by Lorenzetti either to satisfy the rich imagination of Eastern kingdoms and to create a sense of familiarity that would bring the viewer closer. The helmet resembles those of the Boeotian type (Fig. 1.39) or the Apulian-Corinthian type (Fig. 1.40), dating to the mid-2nd century BC in Rome and 5th century BC in Greece and southern Italy, respectively. The only difference compared to the helmet in *The Martyrdom* lies in whether the transition between the brim and the body of the hat is smooth and seamless. In the 14th-century *La Crucifixion* from the Louvre, a soldier praying by Christ wears a helmet almost identical to that of the fifth figure in *The Martyrdom*. This indicates a stable design for helmets of that period (Fig. 1.41). Hand-drawn sketches of helmets from the 16th and 17th centuries (figs. 42 and 43), held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, retain a similar design to those seen in *The Martyrdom* and *La Crucifixion*. The high-relief decorations on these helmets absorbed motifs from

¹⁶⁷ Adamova, Adel’ Tigranovna, and Manijeh Bayani. *Persian Painting: The Arts of the Book and Portraiture*.

London. Thames & Hudson, 2015. Simpson, Marianna Shreve. "In the beginning: frontispieces and front matter in Ilkhanid and Injuid manuscripts." *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*. Brill, 2006, pp. 213-247.

ancient Roman and Greek art, eventually evolving into the Burgonet Helmet style, limited to armors intended for ceremonial wear.¹⁶⁸ (Fig. 1.44)

Finally, the central figure in *The Martyrdom* is the Tatar king (Fig. 1.14). This Mongol ruler's face expresses deep doubt and hesitation in the midst of the missionaries' martyrdom. It can be inferred that this scene represents the moment when the king, upon witnessing the courage of the martyred Franciscans, begins to waver in his resolve to continue the executions. A servant by his side, looking toward the king, awaits the command to proceed, but the king, emotionally shaken, hesitates. Lorenzetti captures the moment when the king is spiritually “conquered” by the Christian faith. The scene suggests that, in the next instant, the king might free the Christians and convert to Christianity himself. In a subtle yet bold artistic choice, Lorenzetti paints small golden diamonds on the upper part of the Tatar king's robe, with each diamond containing a cross (Fig. 1.45).

If Lorenzetti was able to accurately depict the intricate details of the soldiers' and nobles' headgear, it stands to reason that his depiction of the king's crown would be equally precise. Two sources attest to Lorenzetti's attention to detail. The crown worn by Mongol kings in the *The Great Mongol Shahnameh* and *Jami' al-Tawarikh* closely matches the one in this painting (Fig. 1.46 and 47).

The painting *Martyrdom* depicts one obvious “failure” of the missionaries in Almaliq. The earlier success of the missionaries was fleeting, as they operated in the later stages of the Chagatai Khanate's Islamization, where “failure” was almost inevitable. But did the Franciscan friars truly fail in the East? Embracing martyrdom, their deaths became not an end but a gateway to eternal life, drawing more followers through the strength of their faith. Theologically, their sacrifice held profound resonance. Through the analysis of headgear in the painting, we see numerous Eastern elements woven into Western art. This reflects the unexpected “success” of the missionaries during the *Pax Mongolica*, a period of relative peace that allowed for an exchange of ideas and culture. Their correspondence and movement between East and West exemplified a larger knowledge transfer during the medieval era.

¹⁶⁸ Pyhrr, Stuart W. *European Helmets, 1450-1650. Treasures from the Reserve Collection*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, pp.20-4.

Chapter 2

Neither Dragon, Nor Phoenix: Mongol, Armenian, and Franciscan Art in a Transcultural World

Lauren Arnold once offered a highly insightful observation. She began with a particular painting: Fra Angelico, a monk residing at the San Marco convent in Florence, created an altarpiece specifically for the Dominican members who presided over the Ecumenical Council of Florence in 1439 (Fig. 2.1). This pioneering work portrays a heavenly gathering of saints under the gentle gaze of the Virgin Mary, and in it, Fra Angelico notably placed an Oriental carpet beneath her feet (Fig. 2.2). In medieval church paintings, every decorative element as a symbolic device bore religious significance. Arnold discovered that what should have been a sumptuous pile carpet, symbolizing status and wealth, unexpectedly appeared in Fra Angelico's work as a flat-

woven piece featuring only a few folk-style animal motifs, with no hint of luxury whatsoever¹⁶⁹.

According to Western art historians, every religious painting from Italy is layered with multiple levels of iconographic meaning; everything the painter depicted—from the indigo pigment in the Virgin’s cloak (signifying her purity and acquired at great cost) to the lilies on the carpet before her—was imbued with profound theological symbolism. Early scholarship and the majority of modern carpet experts still adhere to the Muslim-origin theory established by the founders of the Berlin School, insisting that if a carpet in a Renaissance painting carried iconographic significance, it signified heavenly comfort (since pile carpets were expensive and only the wealthy could afford them) as well as a mark of secular honor (due to their production by devout, albeit rival, hands). Arnold posed a crucial question: if the carpet in the painting was the only object in this heavenly realm devoid of any Catholic connotation or iconographic meaning, how could Fra Angelico, a well-trained painter, have made such an error?

This question lingered in Lauren Arnold’s mind, motivating her to undertake a project: establishing a visual database of all Renaissance-era paintings that included Oriental carpets, which she termed the “Carpet Index.”¹⁷⁰ She found that certain identifiable carpets appeared multiple times, often enduring for centuries¹⁷¹. These repeatedly appearing carpets are among the oldest known carpets. They are not the lavish, plush pile carpets that later gained widespread renown, but rather simple, flat-woven pieces adorned with rough animal motifs—very similar to Fra Angelico’s 1439 San Marco carpet.

Researchers of the Berlin School once believed that carpet weaving suddenly emerged and rose to prominence on the Anatolian Plateau with the arrival of nomadic Muslims from the East in later periods¹⁷². The Muslim carpets appearing in Christian paintings, in their view, indicated the existence of healthy trade relations between Muslims and Christians, thereby allowing these carpets to enter the realm of Christian art.

However, Lauren Arnold offered an interesting explanation. In the 13th to 14th centuries, invasions by the Mongols and others ushered in a new wave of refugees from the Caucasus region, especially Armenians with a Christian tradition. At the same time, they faced threats from newly ascendant Sunni rulers, rejection by Orthodox Christians

¹⁶⁹ Arnold, Lauren. “The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.” *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp. 98-105.

¹⁷⁰ It can be found at the blog site run by Lauren Arnold: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/26911776@N06/collections/72157632803028991/> (Accessed by 25 sep 2025).

¹⁷¹ Arnold, Lauren. “The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.” *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp. 100.

¹⁷² At the end of the 19th century, Wilhelm von Bode, one of the founders of German carpet studies, and others proposed that Turkish/Anatolian and Persian Muslim weavers had always been the sole source of the carpets depicted in European paintings. Since the mid-19th century, when Germany began to establish carpet studies as a scholarly field, experts have turned their attention to Muslim-made artifacts appearing in European paintings from the mid-13th century. This widely accepted traditional view is commonly referred to as the Berlin School. Foundational figures of this school include prominent scholars who served at the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin and made outstanding contributions to the study of Oriental carpets, such as Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) and Kurt Erdmann (1901–1964).

in the Middle East and East Asia, and exploitation by Mongol nomadic regimes. Under these pressures, they ventured to Cilician Armenia, where the newly emerging Franciscan and Dominican orders extended assistance and helped them establish connections with Italy. Subsequently, some of them, whether for pilgrimage or to escape hardship, traveled on to Italy in search of a new life, settling in cities along the pilgrim routes.

*“we view the depictions in European paintings as historical markers in themselves. As such, I suggest that many of the carpets that we observe in early Renaissance paintings were actual revered relics brought by small groups of Eastern Christians – Syrians, Greeks, Georgians, but especially Armenians – fleeing westward in advance of Mamluk, Mongol, and Ottoman incursions into their ancestral lands. Thus the aging carpets shown over centuries in Florentine and Sieneese paintings can be seen anew as relics, historical objects of great veneration brought from the Christian East. Their repetition in paintings before 1500 implies that these carpets were recognizable entities within their new European communities and of great importance to the émigrés. Indeed, fragments of carpets which closely match the oldest depicted ones, came onto the art market in the 19th century from church treasuries in Italy, apparently after being preserved there for centuries.”*¹⁷³

In another 2019 study by Lauren Arnold, “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: Possible Religious Symbolism within the Late-Song Paintings,” she notes that Central Asian carpets not only entered the Latin Christian world but also enjoyed popularity on the opposite side of the Eurasian continent—in China¹⁷⁴. As an example, she cites the “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute” (Hu Jia Shi Ba Pai), now housed in both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This work recounts the story of Cai Wenji (177-249, Cai Yong’s daughter), a renowned female poet of the Eastern Han period (25-220), who—amid the turmoil of that era—fell into foreign lands, was abducted into marriage by the Xiongnu, later ransomed by the Han court, and ultimately separated from her children. The more complete narrative known today comes from the Tang Dynasty poet and painter Liu Shang (c. 727–805), who composed the ballad-poem “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute.”

By the Southern Song period (1127–1279), facing similarly chaotic times, people depicted Cai Wenji’s story in the “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute,” drawing a parallel between her abduction by the Xiongnu and the Northern Song emperors Huizong and Qinzong being taken captive by the Jin dynasty (1125-1127). Cai Wenji’s return to the Han thus resonated with the Southern Song populace’s longing for their emperor’s return. The title “Eighteen” derives from the work’s complete format as a long handscroll composed of eighteen painted scenes and eighteen sections of calligraphy—each inscribed with Liu Shang’s poetry. Over ten versions survive, including complete scrolls, fragments, and Ming- and Qing-era copies, their authenticity tangled and

¹⁷³ Arnold, Lauren. “The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.” *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp. 100-101.

¹⁷⁴ Arnold, Lauren. “Eighteen songs of a nomad flute: Nestorian symbolism in a late Song scroll.” *Orientalism*, vol. 46, no. 5, June 2015, pp. 64–72.

obscure. Various theories exist concerning the original author, and today it can only be considered an anonymous work¹⁷⁵.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's version may be one of the latest, as its depiction of nomadic life aligns more closely with the late Song and early Yuan periods. Initially, it was dated to the mid-13th century¹⁷⁶. In particular, the painter meticulously rendered richly detailed carpet patterns in each scene. For instance, the thirteenth scene shows an intricately decorated saddle (a carpet saddle-bag)(Fig. 2.3), while in the fifth scene, a carpet lies beneath Cai Wenji and her husband as they sit facing each other (Fig. 2.4). In both these examples appear “Greek crosses, leaf-form crosses, or a combination of the two.”¹⁷⁷

While Armenia has traditionally followed Christianity, Arnold posits that such craftsmanship was not exclusive to Muslims. It is entirely possible, then, that these carpets neither originated from the Middle East or Central Asia, nor were they produced by Muslims¹⁷⁸. By citing the cross motifs on carpets and saddles depicted in these late Song works, Arnold re-examines the perception of Christianized nomadic groups from areas adjacent to China during the era of Genghis Khan (1162–1227). Major tribal groups in the early Mongol Empire—such as the Keraites, Ongud, and Naimans—had converted to Nestorian Christianity. Thus, the appearance of Eastern Christian cross motifs in inland rather than frontier regions by the mid-13th century indicates the possibility of cultural infiltration and foreign religious influence.

Through the east-west circulation of woven carpets, one can envision the movement of Armenian populations, the spread of religious beliefs, and the incursion of new artistic elements. This is precisely the central focus of the research I aim to address in this chapter.

2.1 The Mongol Invasions: Armenia between Islam, the Mongols, and the Christian Churches

There are two types of historical sources regarding Armenian-Mongol relations. The first consists of accounts by Armenian historians from the 13th to 14th centuries¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁵ 邵彦 [Shao Yan]. “宋画里的蔡文姬—《胡笳十八拍图》与《文姬归汉图》” [*Cai Wenji in Song Painting—Illustrations to the Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute and The Return of Wenji to Han*], *中国民族博览 Chinese National Expo*, no. 2, 2022, pp. 1-10.

¹⁷⁶ Arnold, Lauren. “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: Possible Religious Symbolism within the Late-Song Paintings.” *The Silk Road*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2019, pp. 50–51.

¹⁷⁷ Gantzhorn, Volkmar. “Oriental Carpets: Their Iconology and Iconography from the Earliest Times to the 18th Century. Charles Madsen tras., 1998, pp. 143.

¹⁷⁸ Arnold, Lauren. “Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute: Possible Religious Symbolism within the Late-Song Paintings.” *The Silk Road*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2019, pp. 52.

¹⁷⁹ From the time the Mongols began their offensive against Iran (1220) up to the establishment of the Ilkhanate (1256–1355), Armenia's history and that of Iran were almost entirely interwoven within the narrative of the Mongols' westward campaigns. Both regions fell under the Ilkhanate's rule. The Ilkhanate regarded the Yuan dynasty as its

The second comes from neighboring Georgian or Persian historians, or from texts by travelers passing through these regions. Well-known examples include Ata-Malik Juvayni (1226–1283) and Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadani (1247–1318), whose writings treat Armenia as part of the Mongol conquests and the Ilkhanate. Typical itinerant authors include the Franciscan friar Guillaume de Roubrouk (William of Rubruck, 1215–1270), who passed through the Caucasus region in 1254–1255 on his way to the Mongol Empire’s Karakorum area to visit Batu (r. 1227–56) and Möngke Khan (r. 1251–1259), and the Spanish Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta (1304–1369), who described the western Armenian cities of Sebastia/Sivas, Erzinjan, and Erzerum¹⁸⁰.

Chinese scholars Liang Youyuan and Wang Xingang have divided the 13th–14th century Armenian historians into two factions: the “monastic” historians and the “noble” historians¹⁸¹. Due to religious differences and the Mongols’ economic exploitation, the monastic historians developed a strongly negative image of the Mongols, represented by Kirakos Gandzakets’i (1200 or 1202–1271)¹⁸². In contrast, the noble historians, influenced by Armenia’s diplomatic considerations, crafted a Christianized, positive image of the Mongols. Figures such as Hayton of Corycus (Het’um da Korykos, 1240–1310 or 1320)¹⁸³ and Smbat the Constable (1208–1276)¹⁸⁴ belong to this group. Interestingly, these two viewpoints follow one another chronologically: Kirakos

suzerain, and the frequent exchange of envoys between the two courts ensured that the Ilkhanate was thoroughly informed about the Yuan situation. The Ilkhanate left behind a remarkably rich corpus of historical literature. Among these Persian-language works on Mongol history, the four most important are: *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy* (“The History of the World-Conqueror”), *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh* (“Compendium of Chronicles”), *Tārīkh-i Waṣṣāf* (“History of Waṣṣāf”), and *Tārīkh-i Ghāzān* (here referred to as “完者都史”). *Tārīkh-i Ghāzān* can be regarded as the preface to the *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, and the *Tārīkh-i Waṣṣāf* can be seen as a continuation of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik Juwaynī’s *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy*. For Armenian written sources related to the Mongols from the 13th century to the mid-14th century, see: Bais, Marco. “Armenian Sources on the Mongols.”, *Bazmavep*, 2010.

¹⁸⁰ Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries*. Columbia University, Ph.D, 1979, pp. 20.

¹⁸¹ 梁有源[Liang Youyuan], 王新刚[Wang Xingang]. “13-14 世纪亚美尼亚史家著述中蒙古人形象的变迁及影响。 [The Transformation and Impact of the Image of the Mongols in the Works of Armenian Historians of the 13th–14th Centuries]” *史学月刊 [Journal of Historical Science]*, no. 6, 2023, pp. 84–94.

¹⁸² Kirakos Gandzakets’i was a 13th-century Armenian historian and Christian, author of the *History of Armenia*. Born in Ganja (Gandzak), located in present-day northwestern Azerbaijan, he was captured by Mongol forces in 1236. During his time serving as a secretary to the Mongols, he learned their language. After escaping Mongol captivity, he succeeded his teacher as a *vardapet* (a highly educated hieromonk in the Armenian Apostolic Church) and dedicated himself to missionary work. The second part of *History of Armenia* details the suffering inflicted upon Armenia by the Turkic-Mongol invasions. The English translation used as a reference for this thesis is the one by Robert Bedrosian in 1986: Ganjakets’i, Kirakos. *Kirakos Ganjakets’i’s History of the Armenians*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian, New York, 1986.

¹⁸³ Hayton of Corycus, the son of Oshin (?–1265), who was the brother of King Het’um I of Armenia (r. 1226–1269), is also known as “Hethum the Historian.” He served as the Armenian Kingdom’s court chronicler and the governor of Corycus but was later exiled for conspiring against his cousin Het’um II. During his exile, he was appointed abbot by Pope Clement V (papacy 1305–1314). After Het’um II was assassinated in 1307, Hayton returned to the Armenian Kingdom, regained command of its military forces, and held power until his death. He composed *The Flower of the Histories of the East* (Latin: *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*).

¹⁸⁴ Smbat was the brother of King Het’um I. He served as a judge, diplomat, and military commander. He married the Mongol princess Bxataxvor, who was a descendant of Chinggis Khan. Het’um I (Hethum I) once sent him to the Mongol court at Karakorum, where he met Möngke Khan. He composed an important historical work on Cilician Armenia, known in French as *Chronique du Royaume de Petite Arménie* (*Chronicle of the Kingdom of Little Armenia*). There are also other Armenian historians of noble birth who will be discussed later, such as Stepanos Orbelian (or Step’annos Orbelian), who wrote *History of the State of Sisakan*, and Het’um II (r. 1289–1293), the grandson of Hethum I and a member of the Franciscan order (OFM), who wrote a *Chronicle* in 1296.

Richard, Jean, “La lettre du Connétable Smbat et les rapports entre Chrétiens et Mongols au milieu du XIIIème siècle,” Dickran Kouymjian, ed., *Armenian Studies / Études arméniennes: In Memoriam Haig Berbérian*, Lisbon, 1986, pp. 683–696.

produced his works between 1265 and 1273, while the noble faction's Hayton dictated, between 1276 and 1307, the text later compiled by Nicholas Falcon as *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*, whose third volume details the Tatar invasion of Armenia¹⁸⁵.

As the main architects of the Mongols' negative image, the monastic historians claimed the Mongols were descended from Gog, mentioned in the New Testament's Book of Revelation. Religiously, they portrayed the Mongols as a collection of animists, practitioners of witchcraft, and idol worshipers; politically, they characterized Mongol rule as ignorant and brutal, under which Armenians were subjugated¹⁸⁶. The noble historians, however, were not unaware of the economic pressures imposed by the Mongols—specifically, a dual taxation system combining the original taxes of the settled Armenian society with those imposed by their nomadic rulers¹⁸⁷—as well as other atrocities and disasters. Yet they chose to highlight another side of the Mongols, seeing them as potential Christians or future allies of the Crusaders, thus increasing the possibility of engagement between the Western world and the Mongols. Perhaps the differing attitudes these two factions held toward the Mongols arose from Armenia's military difficulties and international political needs. They hoped that an alliance with the Mongols could halt, or at least slow down, the process of religious and social assimilation into Islamic culture.

Before proceeding, we must clarify that the term "Armenia" in this thesis refers to both Cilician Armenia (the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, 1198–1375)¹⁸⁸ during the Mongol era and Greater Armenia located in the Armenian Highlands¹⁸⁹ (Fig. 2.5).

¹⁸⁵ Liang Youyuan and Wang Xingang, pp. 84-94. See note 161.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.86. The monastic historian Vardan Areveltsi (Vardan of the East, 1198–1271), in his *Compilation of History*, connected the Mongol invasion to an earthquake occurring that same year. He believed that "these two phenomena foretold that the world's peace would be turned into turmoil by spear-bearing enemies." Another Gregory of Akner (or Grigor Aknerts'i, c.1250-1335), a monk of Akner monastery, best known for his valuable work, the *History of the Nation of the Archers*, states "...these three peoples, descendants of Hagar, Ketura, and Esau, mingled together and gave birth to another people, strange looking and wicked, called T'at'ar, which means sharp and light." From *Internet Archive*: Grigor of Akner, "Grigor of Akner's *History of the Nation of Archers*", Trans. by Robert Bedrosian, 1986, pp. 8.

¹⁸⁷ According to Grigor Aknerts'i's: "After this, when the wise princes of the Armenians and Georgians realized that it was God Who had given them the power and victory to take our lands, they went to the T'at'ars in submission and promised to pay taxes, that is, the mal and t'aghar and to go with them wherever they went, with their own cavalry. Agreeing to this, the T'at'ars stopped ruining and destroying the land and returned to their place in the Mughan country." See: Grigor Aknerts'i's *History of the Nation of Archers*, translated from Classical Armenian by Robert Bedrosian. The document is available Online.

¹⁸⁸ Two designations are associated with Armenia: "Greater Armenia" and "Cilician Armenia" (also known as Lesser Armenia). Greater Armenia refers to the ancient Armenian kingdoms. From 190 BC until 428 BC, the ancient Armenian empire in the Armenian Highlands extended from the Euphrates River to the Kura River, the Caspian Sea, and Lake Urmia. Historically, there were two "Lesser Armenia." The earlier Lesser Armenia, which existed during the Hellenistic era in the first century BC, was situated to the northwest of Greater Armenia, in the area to the south and southwest of Pontus, northwest of the Euphrates. Armenian immigrants settled there, and the region was successively ruled by Rome and Byzantium. Highly Hellenized, it was eventually annexed by neighboring kingdoms and disappeared. The later "Lesser Armenia" refers to Cilician Armenia. Unlike the earlier Lesser Armenia, this one was located on the southeastern corner of Asia Minor's Mediterranean coast, opposite the island of Cyprus. This region enjoyed a very favorable geographic location. It was founded by refugees who fled to Cilicia in the 11th century, and the kingdom gained Western recognition in 1197. It lasted until 1375, when it fell to the Mamluk invasion. Situated along Crusader routes, Cilician Armenia maintained connections with Byzantium, the Seljuks, Antioch, Egypt, the Mongols, Rome, and Venetian merchants. Bais, Marco. "Armenia and Armenians In Het'Um's *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*." *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2015, pp. 214-31.

¹⁸⁹ This study also suggests applying Burger's assessment of Cilician Armenia as a "diasporic" community as a framework for understanding the kingdom's ties and exchanges with the Armenians outside its borders. 参见: Burger, Glenn. "Cilician Armenian Métissage and Hetoum's La Fleur des histoires de la terre d'Orient." *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan US, 2000, pp. 74.

Under King Tigranes II the Great (c. 140–c. 55 BC), Armenia once became the strongest state to the east of the Roman Empire. At that time, the lands inhabited by Armenians had been divided by Rome into Greater Armenia and Sophene. Although these two regions were essentially one and had both belonged to the Seleucid Empire, after the Seleucid King Antiochus III the Great was defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia (190 BC), these territories fell within Rome’s sphere of influence and were governed separately. Upon his accession, Tigranes II worked to re-unify Greater Armenia and Sophene. Furthermore, in 83 BC, he conquered Syria and Cilicia, virtually putting an end to the Seleucid dynasty and bringing Antioch under Armenian control. Although Tigranes II lost these newly acquired Armenian territories after being defeated by the Roman general Pompeius (Pompey) in 66 BC, he had briefly established a multi-ethnic empire. During that era, the Seleucid Kingdom was a major center of Greek culture, while Greater Armenian culture under Tigranes II leaned toward Iranian influence.

As a buffer zone and frequent battleground between the Roman Empire and the Parthian (Arsacid) Empire (247 BC–224 AD), Armenia was described by the Roman historian Tacitus as an “ambigua gens” (“ambiguous people”)(*Germania* 46)¹⁹⁰, and such a historical pattern has repeatedly unfolded throughout Armenian national history.

After the fall of the Persian Arsacid Empire, under the protection of Rome, King Tiridates III of Armenia (a. 255–324) established Christianity as the state religion, making Armenia the earliest Christian state¹⁹¹. While this move offered a measure of insulation against Islamization, it also strained the previously amicable relationship with Persia, due to Armenia’s refusal to adopt Islam. From that time onward, Armenia found itself long caught between Byzantium and Persia, between Christianity and Islam, repeatedly becoming a site of contestation¹⁹².

In the 11th century, the Turkic-Seljuq invasion of Armenia further compounded the distress of a people who were already repeatedly occupied and ruled alternately by

¹⁹⁰ Tacitus. *Agricola and Germania*. Translated by Anthony R. Birley, Oxford University Press, 1999.

¹⁹¹ “veramente gli Armeni non si composero a società formata di cristiani, se non quando convertitosi anch' esso , vi si consacrò col battesimo il loro re Tiridate l' anno 311”. For Armenia's acceptance of Christianity as the state religion, cf: Da Civezza, Marcellino. *Storia universale delle missioni francescane*. Vol. 1. Tipografia Tiberina, 1859, pp. 379. And Agathangelos, *History of St. Gregory and the Conversion of Armenia*, and Bayarsaikhan, Dashdondog. *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)*. Brill, 2011. In the extant Armenian-language historical sources, the earliest mention of Christianity appears in a late 5th-century historical work composed in an epic form, *History of the Armenians*. Its author is believed to be Faustus of Byzantium. This text’s account of the spread and evolution of Christianity within the Armenian Kingdom from 317 to 387 CE was recorded in Greek.

¹⁹² A complex debate arises over whether Armenia belongs to the European cultural sphere or the Eastern cultural sphere. Up until the 15th century, Armenia had been under the dominion of Western empires—Hellenistic (including the Egyptian Ptolemies, the Syrian Seleucids, and the dynasties of Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Commagene), Roman, and Byzantine (–1071)—and had also come under the sway of Eastern empires: Iranian, Arab, Saljuq, Mongol, Timurid, and Ottoman. Geographically, it lay close to the centers of Islamic culture, yet the Christians living in Armenia maintained close connections with Latin Christians. Edmond Schütz concludes that “Since the dawn of her history, Armenia was divided into two parts: the West, subjected to the Greeks, Romans and subsequently the Byzantines, and the East, dominated by various Iranian states (the Medes, Parthians and Persians).” Edmond Schütz, Armenia: A Christian Enclave in the Islamic Near East in the Middle Ages, in Michael Gervers and Ranzi Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands: Eight to Eighteenth Centuries*, Toronto, 1990, p. 217. Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck eds. *Treasures in Heaven. Armenian Art, Religion and Society*. New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1997, pp. 1-2.

Rome/Byzantium and Persia/Arab powers. According to the Turcologist Claude Cahen, two main groups took part in the conquest and invasion of Asia Minor:

*“One group, which might be called the Saljuq ‘regular army,’ consisted of elements more or less obedient to the sultans and their generals. The other group, the Turkmen nomads, appears in the sources as an almost ungovernable force, interested solely in booty.”*¹⁹³

These invasions accelerated population movements in Asia Minor and brought about further political and religious fragmentation, although for Armenia these were not unfamiliar occurrences¹⁹⁴. Bedrosian cites a typical example: in the early 11th century, the Byzantine government adopted a policy of removing powerful Armenian lords (*naxarars*) and their families from their native Armenian homelands and resettling them to the west and southwest. As a result, on the eve of the Turkish invasions, the areas of Cappadocia and Lesser Armenia (P’ok’r Hayk’), which had hosted significant Armenian populations centuries earlier, suddenly became “re-Armenized.” Beginning in this period, these *naxarars* established principalities for themselves in a vast region stretching from Cilicia on the Mediterranean coast southward to Antioch, eastward to Edessa, and northward to Samosata, Melitene, Malatya, and other places.¹⁹⁵ Bedrosian views the political system of Armenian *naxarars* establishing principalities as a key geopolitical feature of Armenian society, calling it “*naxararism*.” He believes this was a centrifugal tendency among medieval Armenians that was stimulated by Seljuq rule.¹⁹⁶

Between the late 11th and early 12th centuries, the Georgian Bagratid monarch David II “the Builder” (1089–1125) conquered parts of Armenia, reclaiming territory historically belonging to the Armenians. The Georgians drove out the nomadic Turkmen from southern and southeastern Georgia. More and more Armenians took part in Georgia’s wars against the Turkic Seljuqs, and the Georgian Bagratids, themselves of Armenian descent, explicitly supported certain Armenian nobles who had long been entrenched in Iberia and the Georgian political structure¹⁹⁷.

Contact and conquest between the Mongols and the Armenian Kingdom began during the first phase of the Mongol westward expansion¹⁹⁸. When the Mongols entered the Caucasus, Greater Armenia was politically and territorially fragmented into several parts: the Seljuqs’ Sultanate of Rūm ruled the western regions¹⁹⁹, the Georgian

¹⁹³ Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries*. Columbia University, Ph. D, 1979, p. 69-70.

¹⁹⁴ For a description of the proliferation of small and usually mutually inimical Muslim emirates, see: Bedrosian, 1979, pp. 77.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71-74.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut’iwn Matt’eosi Urhayec’woy [Hisoty of Matthew of Edessa]*, Jerusalem, 1869, pp. 447. Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries*. Columbia University, Ph. D, p. 88-89.

¹⁹⁸ See note 22 in chapter 1.

¹⁹⁹ The Great Seljuk Empire was established by a branch of the Oghuz Turks, with its territory stretching eastward to the Hindu Kush Mountains, westward to eastern Anatolia, northward to Central Asia, and southward to the Persian Gulf. Originating near the Aral Sea, the Seljuks advanced into Khorasan, then into the Persian regions, eventually conquering eastern Anatolia. Around the year 985, they converted to Sunni Islam, and culturally and linguistically,

Bagratids ruled the north and east, and the Ayyubids dominated the southern territories²⁰⁰ (Fig. 2.6). In 1220, after Chinggis Khan's conquest of the Khwarazmian Dynasty (1077–1231) in Iran, he sent generals Sübedei and Jebe and others to pursue the remnants of Khwarazmian forces²⁰¹. During their pursuit—possibly in the harsh winter of 1220–1221—while searching for winter pastures, the Mongol forces that had been sweeping through Iran suddenly turned toward Greater Armenia and Georgia. Thus began the first contact between Armenia and the Mongols, ultimately resulting in a Mongol victory²⁰².

Although their initial expedition was not aimed at conquering the Caucasus but at pursuing the Khwarazm-Shāh al-Dīn Muḥammad (r. 1200–1220), when the Mongols learned that Azerbaijan and Khlat (Xlat') had formed an anti-Mongol alliance, they started from Georgia in 1221, plundering Tabriz, Maragha, Hamadan, and other cities along northern Armenia and southeastern Georgia. Large-scale incursions occurred four times—in 1222, from 1225 to 1230, and again in 1236. By 1236, through force or treaty, the Mongols had subdued all of northeastern and northern Armenia, and between 1242 and 1245 they conquered western and southern Armenia as well²⁰³. Around the same time, in 1241, Batu Khan defeated German, Austrian, Hungarian, and Polish armies at the Battle of Liegnitz, but this also marked the tail end of the Mongol campaigns.

The Mongols governed the Caucasus from 1220 until 1334²⁰⁴. Yet, just as the Chagatai khans occupied urban settlements like Almaligh but continued to lead a nomadic life in tents nearby, the Mongol conquerors stationed troops in Armenia's major cities but never had enough forces to administer all the territories²⁰⁵. Each winter, most Mongols retreated to the warmer Mughan plain in Azerbaijan. Marco Polo recorded,

“[Armenia Major] It is very extensive, and, in the Summer season, the station of a part of the army of the Eastern Tartars, on account of the good pasture it affords for their cattle; but on the approach of Winter they are obliged to change their quarters, the

they exhibited a high degree of Persianization. In 1060, these nomadic Seljuk peoples reached central Anatolia and founded the Sultanate of Rum, which would be the last surviving Seljuk sultanate, ultimately falling in 1308.

²⁰⁰ Bayarsaikhan, Dashdondog. "The Mongol Conquerors in Armenia." *Caucasus during the Mongol Period-Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*. Ed. by J. Tubach, SG Vashalomidze, M. Zimmer. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012, pp. 53-83.

²⁰¹ Anonymous, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, trans. I. De Rachewiltz, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp.90. Bayarsaikhan, Dashdondog. *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)*. Brill, 2011, pp. 41-42.

²⁰² For a description of the war between the Mongols and the Armenian-Georgian army, see: Bedrosian, 1979, pp. 94-98.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Manandian, Hagop. "K'nnakan Tesut'yun Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmut'yan (Critical View of the History of the Armenian People)." 1952, pp. 244.

²⁰⁵ According to Atwood's hypothesis, the regular migrations following the formation of great empires were intended to monitor different parts of their subject territories. Because of the great distances between royal residential sites, he believes these periodic movements were a means of maintaining royal authority, rather than corresponding to the customary intervals between Turkic-Mongol encampments. For research on the Ilkhanate's seasonal migratory settlements, see: Atwood, C. P. "Imperial itinerance and mobile pastoralism: The state and mobility in medieval inner Asia". *Inner Asia*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2015, pp. 293-349; Dashteh, Shahin Garakani, et al. "A Comparison Between the Permanent Settlements of the Ilkhanid." *Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2022, pp. 101-22.

fall of snow being so very deep that the horses could not find subsistence, and for the sake of warmth and fodder they proceed to the southward.”²⁰⁶

In 1256, Hülegü (r. 1256–1265), the third legitimate son of Tolui and brother of Kublai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty, established the Ilkhanate (1256–1355), with its capital at Tabriz²⁰⁷. Armenia and Georgia not only had to pay taxes but also provide military service for the Mongols’ external campaigns or the defense of their conquered territories. Notably, Hayton of Corycus, an important Armenian historian, led troops multiple times in Mongol campaigns against the Mamluks of Egypt²⁰⁸. Besides external warfare, at least three large-scale rebellions occurred under heavy taxation in Armenia (1256, 1259–1261, and 1282–1284).

From 1261 onward, Armenia (and indeed the entire Caucasus) again became a battlefield between the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde occupying the lower Volga region²⁰⁹. By 1268, Abaqa (r. 1265–1282), Hülegü’s successor, had, with the help of Armenian-Georgian armies, suppressed Teguder Ahmad’s (r. 1282–1284) rebellion. However, in 1281, the Armenian-Georgian forces were defeated by the Mamluks²¹⁰. Under such circumstances, in 1273 and 1276, Abaqa sent two embassies carrying letters to the Pope and King Edward I of England, proposing joint action against the Egyptian Mamluks, but received no results²¹¹. Arghun (r. 1284–1291), who succeeded Abaqa, made four attempts (1285, 1287, 1289, and 1290) to dispatch envoys to the Papacy, England, and France with the same goal²¹².

In 1287, Arghun once again fought against the Golden Horde armies attempting to invade the Caucasus. During the reigns of Baidu, Ghazan, and Oljeitu (Hussain), that is, in the later period of the Ilkhanate, Mongol rebellions and defensive wars in the Caucasus occurred with increasing frequency. After the death of the last Ilkhan, Abu Sa’id (d. 1335), power struggles ignited a nine-year internal war among various

²⁰⁶ Polo, Marco. “Chapter 3 Of Armenia Major, in Which Are the Cities of Arzingan, Argiron, and Darziz; of the Mountain Where the Ark of Noah Rested; and of a Remarkable Fountain of Oil”, *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Translated by William Marsden, edited by Thomas Wright, Project Gutenberg, 2008.

²⁰⁷ In 1251, Möngke ascended to the throne, becoming the last universally recognized Great Khan able to exercise direct rule over the entire Mongol Empire before it fractured. In the eastern and western reaches of the empire lay the Chinese lands and Persia, among the wealthiest of all conquered and yet-to-be-conquered territories. To solidify the Tolui family’s grip on the Mongol realm, Möngke dispatched his two younger brothers to administer these regions separately.

²⁰⁸ Slave soldiers who served the Arab caliphs and the Ayyubid dynasty in the 9th-16th centuries AD.

²⁰⁹ The Golden Horde was the domain of the Jochid princes. Möngke Khan (r. 1251–1259) was able to become the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire owing to support from the Jochid faction. After his accession, he preserved the powers of the Jochid princes, including Batu’s authority in Turkestan and the territories north of the Amu Darya, while severely punishing the princes of the Ögedeid and Chagataid lines who had opposed his enthronement. As a result, two powerful political groups emerged within the Mongol Empire: the Jochid family, firmly established on the Qipchaq Steppe, and the Toluid family, which controlled the throne. This situation sowed the seeds of future conflicts between the two families over territory and resources.

The immediate causes of the Ilkhanate-Golden Horde conflict were religious tensions and territorial disputes. Berke (r. 1257–1266), the second successor to the Golden Horde, was a devout Muslim, having embraced Islam, while the Ilkhan Hülegü, a shamanist, pursued anti-Muslim policies—particularly the massacre of Baghdad’s Muslim population in 1258. Subsequently, Berke invaded the still-undefined Caucasus region and formed an alliance with the Egyptian Mamluk state, a formidable adversary of the Ilkhanate.

²¹⁰ Amitai-Preiss, Reuven. “Mongol Imperial Ideology and the Ilkhanid War against the Mamluks,” in R. Amitai-Preiss and David Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 57-72.

²¹¹ Aigle, Denise. “The letters of Eljigidei, Hülegü, and Abaqa: Mongol overtures or Christian ventriloquism?” *Inner Asia* 7.2, 2005, pp. 143-62.

²¹² Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 169-170, 173-176.

nomadic groups²¹³. With the collapse of the Ilkhanate, Armenia once again became a “no-man’s land.” The “Pax Mongolica” momentarily maintained by the Ilkhanate was shattered, and Mongols, Turkmen, and Kurds clashed over Armenian-Georgian lands. After years of warfare, the Anatolian Plateau faced even greater turmoil. In 1385, Tokhtamysh Khan of the Golden Horde invaded Azerbaijan. Timur (Tamerlane) conducted three invasions into the Caucasus (1386–1387, 1394–1396, and 1399–1403), leaving Greater Armenia strewn with corpses and grievously weakened²¹⁴. Decades of war accelerated Armenian emigration, and Cilician Armenia on the Mediterranean coast became one of their destinations.

In the 12th century, many former Armenian territories became part of Georgia. Numerous Armenians migrated to Georgia, Poland, and Galicia, while others entered Cilicia, where colonies had existed since the late 10th century. Thus, from its inception, the Cilician Kingdom’s birth was rooted in a diasporic phenomenon formed by refugee populations. During the Cilician period, two major dynasties emerged: the Ērubenids and the Het‘umids. The Ērubenid dynasty ruled Cilicia until 1226, after which the Het‘umid dynasty succeeded them and ruled until 1342²¹⁵. Since 1197, Rome and Byzantium recognized Cilicia as an independent state. As early as 1151, the Armenian Catholicos moved the seat of the patriarchate to Rumkale, a fortress city on the Euphrates, and remained there until 1295, when it moved to Sis, the kingdom’s second capital.

Although multiple faiths coexisted in the Armenian societies of the Anatolian plateau—even in the Christianized northeastern Armenian regions—the Armenian Church itself was divided between the Latinized Cilicia and Greater Armenia²¹⁶. Cilicia established a Latin episcopal see, and later Latin episcopal sees were established in Marāgha, Tabriz, and Sultaniyah in Azerbaijan²¹⁷. The Armenian port of Ayas became a crucial center for missionary activity. Cilician Armenia, an ardent ally of the European Crusaders, regarded itself as a bastion of Christianity in the East.

Though Armenia turned toward the West through Christianity as early as the 4th century, many frictions arose between the Armenian Church and the Roman-Byzantine Churches²¹⁸. In 451, at the Council of Chalcedon, five Eastern Churches—Syrian, Armenian Apostolic, Nestorian, Coptic, and Ethiopian—decided to separate from the non-Chalcedonian or Byzantine–Roman Church²¹⁹. The Armenian Church did not

²¹³ Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries*. Columbia University, Ph.D, 1979, p. 143.

²¹⁴ Peng, Lijing. “The Hand Image in Medieval Armenian Manuscript Tradition: A Case Study of Armenian Manuscripts in Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.” 史林[*Historical Review*], 2017.

²¹⁵ Ghazarian, Jacob G. *The Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia: The Integration of Cilician Armenians with the Latins, 1080-1393*. Routledge, 2000, pp. 29-53.

²¹⁶ Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane. *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter’s*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2021, p. 68.

²¹⁷ Ibid. Esche-Ramshorn describes the development of Franciscan monasteries in the Caucasus, as well as the multi-confessional mission in Armenia, which she calls “the most successful missions of the Latin Middle Ages”.

²¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of the Armenian-Byzantine Church Relations, see: Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark, 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art*, exhibition catalogue, The British Library, London, 2001, pp. 18, 51.

²¹⁹ Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane, 2021, pp. 63.

accept the Chalcedonian christological definition of the dual nature of Christ and instead adhered to Miaphysitism (considered heretical by the Council).

From the massacre of Latins in Constantinople in 1182, to the attack by Norman King William II of Sicily on Byzantium in 1185 and the plunder of Thessalonica, to the threats of the Holy Roman Emperors Frederick I and Henry VI against Constantinople²²⁰, culminating in the brutal sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, relations between Latin Westerners and Byzantine-Greek Orthodox worsened. At the same time, however, the Crusaders and other Eastern Christian groups opposed to Byzantium maintained friendly relations—particularly the Armenians, Georgians, and Syrian Christians—who had long suffered under Byzantine rule.

In 1187, Jerusalem fell into the hands of Saladin (r. 1174–1193), founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty. This event renewed Western enthusiasm for the Crusades. As the Crusaders established several Latin principalities along their routes, the Cilician Armenian nobility began to intermarry with the ruling families of these emerging Crusader states. Such matrimonial alliances created an Armenian ruling class deeply immersed in Frankish culture and society, thus introducing a substantial amount of European culture and customs into Cilicia²²¹.

At the same time, Cilicia allied with the Mongols to oppose the Muslims, particularly the Egyptian Mamluks. Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog divides Het'um I's (r. 1226–1270) steps toward submission to the Mongols into three stages²²²: first, Het'um I distanced himself from the Seljuq Sultanate by handing over the female refugees of the Seljuq royal house—who had fled to Cilicia and found temporary sanctuary at Het'um's court—during the Mongol attacks²²³. The second stage came in 1247, when Het'um I sent his brother, Smbat the Constable, as an envoy to the Great Khan's court. The third was in 1253, when Het'um I himself went to Karakorum to forge agreements with the Mongol Great Khan.²²⁴ Grigor of Akner observed:

“When the Christ-crowned, pious King Het'um heard of all these outrages being committed in the upper lands of the east, out of his love for the Christians and more so for his own country [he] went to Mongke-Khan with many gifts and concerned himself that his country not be exposed to such violence. When he reached the khan, by the will of God, he was honored by him. The khan treated the king of the Armenians with great

²²⁰ Van Antwerp Fine, John. *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*. University of Michigan Press. 1994, pp. 60.

²²¹ There were numerous intermarriages between the Crusaders (and their followers) and Armenian women, ranging from unions of high rank to those of lower status. One of the most renowned such unions was that of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem (r. 1118–1131), who, prior to his kingship when he was Count of Edessa, married the local Armenian princess Morphia of Melitene (d. ca. 1127). They had a daughter, Melisende (1105–1161), who succeeded her father and became Queen of Jerusalem. For reference, see: Steven Runciman. *The History of Crusades. Vol. 2. The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East 1100-1178*. London: Folio Society, 1994, pp. 29. Shnorhokian, Roubina. *Hayton of Korykos and La Flor des Estoires: Cilician Armenian Mediation in Crusader-Mongol Politics, c.1250-1350*, 2015, Ph.D, pp.49-50.

²²² Dashdondog, *The Mongols and Armenians*, pp.84. For Het'um I's discreet political maneuvering, see: Shnorhokian, Roubina. “Chapter 2 Hayton's World”, *Hayton of Korykos and La Flor des Estoires: Cilician Armenian Mediation in Crusader-Mongol Politics, c. 1250-1350*. 2015. Ph. D, pp. 46-108.

²²³ Shnorhokian, Roubina. *Hayton of Korykos and La Flor des Estoires: Cilician Armenian Mediation in Crusader-Mongol Politics, c.1250-1350*. 2015. Ph.D, pp.65.

²²⁴ On this trip of Het'um I to Mongolia, see: Boyle, John Andrew. “The Journey of Het'um I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke.” *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1964, pp. 175–89.

honor and homage and saw to all of his concerns in accordance with [Het'um's] wishes. Then he sent the king back to his own land with great joy.²²⁵

William of Rubruck once wrote in a letter to the Church that it was best not to bring gifts to the Mongols, as any gift—no matter how valuable—would be seen as tribute, signaling submission²²⁶. Het'um I's trip to Karakorum for negotiations was essentially a peaceful submission to the Mongols on Cilicia's behalf. Like other vassal lords and envoys who brought gifts to the khan's camp, this was virtually equivalent to acknowledging Cilicia's subordinate status²²⁷.

In general, lords who voluntarily submitted to the Mongols fared better than those who resisted²²⁸. However, some sources indicate that this was not universally the case—such as in the cities of Ani and Kars, centers of Zak'arid authority. After witnessing Ani's tragic fate, Kars, even though it surrendered, was still subjected to massacre by the Mongol army. Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan speculates that this might have been to prevent densely populated cities from future resistance²²⁹.

Cilician Armenia faced threats from the Seljuqs in the north, the Mamluks in the south, and the Mongols in the east, and lay at the crossroads of the Crusades. Its favorable geographic location brought a situation of being surrounded on all sides. During the reign of Het'um I (r. 1226–1270), Smbat the Constable, serving as a diplomat, wrote a letter in 1248 from Samarkand to his brother-in-law King Henry I of Cyprus (r. 1218–1253) and John of Ibelin, Count of Jaffa, emphasizing that an important factor in Cilicia's alliance with the Mongols was its relationship with the Latin West²³⁰.

²²⁵ Grigor Aknerts'i's History of the Nation of Archers, translated from Classical Armenian by Robert Bedrosian. The document is available Online.

²²⁶ Peter Jackson went so far as to suggest that sending envoys already meant submission: “the despatch of an ambassador to the Mongols, whatever his privileges, was taken to indicate submission – the very reason why Louis had been unwilling to send any more envoys to the Mongols after Andrew of Longjumeau's return in 1251 and why Rubruck had been at pains from the outset to deny that his was a diplomatic mission” Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 268.

²²⁷ Martini Continuaciones Anglice tells that next to the Mongolian ṯl-khān was the king of Armenia dressed in the Franciscan habit. Martini Continuaciones Anglice. Fratrum Minorum, L. Weiland ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [...], Scriptores in folio, XXIV, pp. 258.

²²⁸ Greater Armenia was conquered and incorporated into the Mongol Empire, whereas Cilicia voluntarily submitted to Mongol rule, thus maintaining its independence as a kingdom. Due to these differing modes of submission, the obligations each Armenian entity assumed and the resulting impacts were not the same. According to Bayarsaikhan's perspective, “The Greater Armenians acted as subjects of the Mongols to assist the latter with further conquests of the Middle East; the Cilician Armenians, being vassals, participated in conquests as the Mongols' partners, thus both of them enhanced Mongol imperial ideology.” Bayarsaikhan, Dashdondog. *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)*. Brill, 2011, pp. 2.

²²⁹ The lords in Greater Armenia viewed voluntary submission as a means of avoiding Mongol sieges. By expressing loyalty to their conquerors, they hoped to peacefully reclaim their lands. However, many scholars have noted that this “surrender strategy” failed in the case of the city of Kars. For further references, see: Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan, *The Mongols and Armenians*, pp.58, 65-66; Shnorhokian, Roubina. *Hayton of Korykos and La Flor des Estoires: Cilician Armenian Mediation in Crusader-Mongol Politics, c.1250-1350*. 2015. Ph.D, pp.64; Bayarsaikhan, Dashdondog. *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)*. Brill, 2011, pp.110-111.

²³⁰ According to Roubina Shnorhokian's commentary on this letter, “In a similar vein to Hayton's depiction of the Mongols as pro-Christian, Constable Smbat emphasizes that the Mongol realm was one that honored Christianity based on the presence of the descendants of the Magi and made every effort to protect its community of believers. Smbat particularly notes the presence of churches, Christian art, and even goes as far to say that the khan converted to Christianity. As a newly established ally and vassal, Smbat's pro-Christian portrait of the Mongols is unsurprising.” In his analysis of this letter, even if Smbat never explicitly argues for his relationship with the Latin West, he continuously reflects his Cilician worldview, derived from his Roman Catholic identity and closely connected to Eastern Christian communities in the Middle East and the Caucasus. For the French translation of this letter, see: Richard, Jean. “La Lettre du Connétable Smbat et les rapports entre Chrétiens et Mongols au milieu du

From the outset, Armenians were keenly aware of the advantages and common interests in cooperating with the Mongols. Their close ties to the Crusaders became leverage in forming alliances with the Mongols. From 1265 to 1270, the reign of Het‘um I overlapped with that of Abaqa Khan (r. 1265–1282), the second Ilkhan, who repeatedly sought Western cooperation to encircle the Egyptian Mamluks that frequently harassed and attacked Ilkhanate borders. Under Het‘um II (1295–1296) and Smbat I Hetumian (r. 1296–1298), Armenians also acted as messengers and intermediaries facilitating contact between the Latin Church and the Mongols²³¹. Pro-Mongol Armenian Christians sparked Western Latin interest in missionary efforts toward the East.

The Franciscan friar Andrea di Perugia (?–1332, died in Zayton [Quanzhou], China), who served as Archbishop of Quanzhou, maintained correspondence with the Papacy through Armenian bishops. Andrea wrote:

“We also send you a letter that we brought from the heart of the East, namely from Sis, the seat of the Armenian patriarch, and another letter concerning the faith from the Archbishop of Nisibi, signed by two other archbishops and three bishops. In it, we again entreat you on behalf of the Archbishop of Jerusalem, who is of our nation, as well as for our Eastern brothers in Antioch, Tripoli, Acre, and other places, that you might safeguard them against the harassment they easily suffer in these places.”²³²

In 1275, Hugh de Revel and Guillaume de Beaujeu wrote to King Edward I of England about the brutal wars between the Tatars and the Mamluks, stating that they even sought assistance from Greater Armenia. These messages, too, were shared by the Armenians with the Latin Church²³³. In July 1322, Pope John XXII wrote from Avignon to the last Ilkhan, Abu Sa‘id (r. 1316–1335), asking him to help the Armenians, evidence that Armenia and the Ilkhanate were still allied at that time.

From the perspective of the Latin West, a crucial consideration in allying with the Mongols was the possibility of converting them to Christianity. After the fragmentation of the Crusader states, the Mongols could serve as allies against the Egyptian Mamluks and, in the long run, potentially as liberators who could recapture the Holy Land. In 1299, Christians and Tatars signed an agreement on the issue of Jerusalem, listing

XIIIème siècle,” Dickran Kouymjian ed., *Armenian Studies-Études arméniennes: In Memoriam Hair Berberian, Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian*, 1986, pp. 683–696.

²³¹ Bais, Marco. “Armenia and Armenians In Het‘Um’s Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis.” *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2015, pp. 214–31.

²³² “A mezzo dei quali vi mandiamo anche uno scritto, che abbiamo portato dal cuore d’Oriente, cioè da Sis, sede del patriarca d’Armenia, e un altro scritto intorno alla fede, per parte dell’arcivescovo di Nisibi segnato da due altri arcivescovi e tre vescovi, coi quali vi facciamo una seconda preghiera per l’arcivescovo di Gerusalemme, che è della nostra nazione, e per gli fratelli nostri orientali, che sono in Antiochia, in Tripoli, in Acri, e nelle altre piazze, acciocchè vi piaccia di raccomandarli per loro sicurtà contro le vessazioni che facilmente si patiscono nei detti luoghi.” For the full text of this letter, see: Da Civezza, Marcellino. *Storia universale delle missioni francescane*. Vol. 1. Tipografia Tiberina, 1859, pp. 392. In this letter, the request from Perugia to deliver the letters from the Archbishop of Nishibi and the Armenian Catholicos is also mentioned. These letters concern the theological issues surrounding Armenian Miaphysitism, which will be discussed later. For more information on the missionary activities of Friar Andrea di Perugia, see: *Bullarium Franciscanum*, V, Romae, 1898, pp. 37s., nn. 85, 86.

²³³ Kohler, Ch., and Ch. V. Langlois. “Lettres Inédites: Concernant Les Croisades (1275-1307).” *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes*, vol. 52, 1891, pp. 46–63.

Armenians as intermediaries and recipients of the news²³⁴. According to a papal letter of 1288, nine Italian translators worked for the Mongols²³⁵. In 1307, Hayton of Corycus composed *The Flower of the Histories of the East (Flos historiarum terre Orientis)*, intended as a proposal for a new Crusade to Pope Clement V, with the aim of retaking the Holy Land with the help of Cilician Armenians and Mongol military support²³⁶. As intermediaries between the Mongols and the Latin West, the Armenians in Hayton's work presented the later Mongol westward expansions and campaigns against Syria and the Mamluks as efforts intended to reclaim the Holy Land for Christianity and return it to the faithful after victory²³⁷. The Papacy hoped to convert the Mongols to Christianity and, on this common ground, join with them to encircle the Mamluks of Egypt and regain Jerusalem. Faithful to Christianity, the Latin West and the Eastern Armenians, united under papal influence, shared the same desire to recover the Holy Land. However, during the Mongol era of the 13th century, although the early Ilkhanate rulers practiced religious tolerance (or religious indifference), the Papacy ultimately concluded that the Mongols were only interested in military alliances and support²³⁸. A stable alliance with the Latin West never materialized²³⁹.

Missionary work among the Mongols was fraught with difficulties. With the gradual Islamization of the Mongol Empire, the ruling classes of the three western ulus (Mongol states) all converted to Islam: Ghazan of the Ilkhanate (1295), Uzbek of the Golden Horde (1313), and 'Ali-Sultan of the Chagatai Khanate (c. 1338) each established a succession of Muslim khanates²⁴⁰. As revealed in Chapter One by Lorenzetti's painting *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, the intense religious clashes

²³⁴ F. Jossion, *Ex Annalibus Islandicis, Monumenta Germaniae Historica [...]*, Scriptorum in folio, folio XXIX, pp. 265.

²³⁵ Petech, Luciano. *Les marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol*. Imprimerie nationale, 1962., pp. 562.

²³⁶ For Hayton of Corycus's plans and visions for the Silesian-Mongolian Alliance, see: Hayton, La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient, *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Documents Arméniens*, XVIII, p. 283-284; Bais, Marco. "Armenia and Armenians In Het'Um's Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis." *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2015, pp. 214-31. The expatriate Armenian Hayton of Corycus wrote *La flor des estoires de la terre d'orient* in 1307 at the behest of Pope Clement V.

²³⁷ *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*, vol. III.20-21, 26: *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Documents arméniens*, pp.301-303, 305-306. Bais, Marco. "Armenia and Armenians In Het'Um's Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis." *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2015, pp. 228.

²³⁸ Urban IV finally came to renew the crusade for the defence of the Holy Land against the Mongols in the spring of 1262. Rodriguez Rodriguez de Lama, Ildefonso, and Ildefonso Rodriguez de Lama. "La documentacion pontificia de Urbano IV: 1261-1264." *Monumenta Hispaniae Vaticana/Sección Registros*, 1981, pp. 84-86.

In addition, the *Flores Historiarum*, a chronicle compiled by several authors between the 13th century and the early years of the following century, records that sixteen "Tartari" (Tartari Moal) attended the Council of Lyon as representatives. The chronicler, however, cast doubt on their sincerity in professing Christianity, although he emphasized "confederationem haberent cum Christianis venerunt" ("they came to form a confederation with the Christians"). In his analysis, Giovanni di Bella suggests that the chronicler's use of "Tartari Moal" to denote the Mongols may have been an attempt to invoke the early *odeporic* (travel) literature's meaning of "Moal" as "people of the steppe." By doing so, he stressed the delegates' linkage to the descendants of Chinggis Khan and implied that converting them would be impossible. Instead, the focus should be on the most advantageous military and diplomatic cooperation. For details, see: Giovanni Di Bella, *La Relazione latino-mongole tra XIV e prima metà del XV secolo*, Università degli Studi di Messina, 2023, pp.179-180.

²³⁹ Peter Jackson regards the failure of the Syrian Franks, who were close to the Mongols yet belonged to the Christian camp, to form an alliance with the Mongols as a "missed opportunity." First, the Mongols favored Muslims over Christians; second, without Crusader reinforcements, the Franks could no longer involve themselves in the struggles among Syrian Muslim powers. However, since they viewed the Mongols as a terrifying threat: "They had no allies, only subjects or enemies. What they offered the Latin states in Syria and Palestine was no form of coalition on equal terms, but simply a choice between annihilation and the acceptance of their overlordship." Peter Jackson. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 119-123.

²⁴⁰ Peter Jackson. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 260.

manifested in a series of martyrdom events. With the Ilkhanate's Islamization came a weakening of its political and military power, and once it ceased to provide protection, Armenia again became the eye of the storm.

Located at the frontier between Muslim and Christian worlds and frequently turned into a battlefield, Armenia in the 13th–14th centuries suffered the unstoppable, devastating plunder of the Mongols. Facing this harsh international situation, Armenians had to maneuver among multiple powers to survive in the seams between Mongols, the Papacy, and Muslims. Armenians migrated for various reasons: to escape war and massacres, to flee religious persecution, or in search of a better life overseas. In the chapters that follow, we will see traces of Armenian presence in Italy.

2.2 The Armenian Diaspora on the Italian Peninsula

2.2.1 *Vicaria Tartaria*

In 1258, after the Mongol army led by Hülegü conquered and destroyed Baghdad, they withdrew to the Persian province of Azerbaijan, settling in Marāgha. Marāgha was an important stronghold and the initial capital of the Ilkhanate during the thirty-plus years of Mongol conquest in Persia²⁴¹. Hülegü even heeded the advice of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and established an observatory there. After the fall of Baghdad, the Roman Church seized the opportunity to set up Christian dioceses. About 130 kilometers north of Marāgha lay Tabriz, which became the Ilkhanate's capital around 1265. Under Ghazan Khan's reign, large-scale reforms were implemented, and a new city, Sultanieh, was constructed near Tabriz. During the reign of Öljeitü (r. 1304–1316), the capital officially moved to Sultanieh. After 1300, all three of these cities had Roman Catholic bishoprics²⁴².

The establishment of these dioceses laid a solid foundation for the entry of missionaries and the development of missionary activities. In a favorable political and religious atmosphere, Latin merchants followed in the footsteps of missionaries along the Silk Road to explore and enter new markets. Pope Innocent IV, the first pope to write letters to Mongol rulers and dispatch envoys, was himself of Genoese merchant

²⁴¹ In a document titled "On the Seats of the Friars Minor and the Friars Preachers in Tartay," particular emphasis is placed on the fact that "the seats of the Preachers are three, namely: one in Tabriz (Taurisio), one in Maragheh (Marga), and one in Diacorogon." For information on the Franciscan dioceses established in "Tartaria Aquilonaris," see: Malyšev, Aleksej Borisovič. "Soobščenie anonimnogo minorita o missionerskich punktach franciskancev v Zolotoj Orde v XIV v." [The report of an anonymous Minorite on the Franciscan missionary settlements in the Golden Horde in the 14th century], *Archeologija vostočno-jevropejskoj stepi. Mežvuzovskij sbornik naučnyh trudov. Vyp. 4. [Archaeology of the Eastern European steppe. A Interuniversity collection of scientific papers. Vol. 4]*. Saratovskij Gosudarstvennyj universitet, Saratov, 2006, pp. 183–189.

²⁴² In addition to the Archdiocese of Soltaniyeh in the Ilkhanate, the Pope also established the Archdiocese of Khanbaliq, the Archdiocese of Quanzhou, and the Diocese of Kessan for missions in Tibet and its surrounding regions under the Yuan dynasty. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter One, there was the Diocese of Almalik, founded in 1320 in the Chagatai Khanate. See: Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane. *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter's*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2021, pp. 68.

background²⁴³. There were deep connections among mission work, trade, and the papacy. Since Eastern Latin communities did not have enough monks to carry out pastoral activities, Armenian merchants became important patrons of the local Church, making it possible for religious orders to gain a foothold²⁴⁴. In Quanzhou during the Yuan dynasty, Armenian merchants sponsored churches²⁴⁵. The Franciscan friar Pellegrino di Castello mentioned that Armenians built an excellent church for Archbishop Giovanni di Montecorvino. These Armenians were likely wealthy Christian merchants capable of constructing churches, collaborating with, and accepting Franciscan brothers in China²⁴⁶. Both Pellegrino di Castello and Andrea di Perugia, who served as bishops in Quanzhou, mentioned a church and other necessities donated by an Armenian woman. Andrea di Perugia, Quanzhou's third bishop after Pellegrino, again highlighted this Armenian woman's contribution²⁴⁷: the splendid church she endowed had been elevated by Archbishop John to become Quanzhou's cathedral²⁴⁸. Guillaume de Roubrouck noted that in Karakorum, the old Mongol capital, Armenians had a beautifully decorated church where the Great Khan's wife would often worship. Lauren Arnold suggests that some stone crosses identified in Chinese archaeology as Nestorian could be Armenian khachkars—funerary monuments of Armenian Christians brought into the Mongol world by these nomadic trading peoples of the Christian faith²⁴⁹.

Franciscan and Dominican missionaries often relied on trade networks to organize their missions. Trading hubs were also ideal locations for monasteries and residences because these populous places provided support from Western merchants and offered ample opportunities to preach the gospel to both foreigners and locals. According to key sources, such as the will of an Italian who died in Tabriz in 1292, Luciano Petech discussed the enormous risks for Italian long-distance merchants and how they conducted business in distant lands. Christians preferred trading with fellow Christians, and Cilicia served as an important reference point along the Mediterranean coast.²⁵⁰ During the periods when the papacy imposed trade embargoes on the Mamluks—such as under Pope John XXII and Pope Gregory XI—Ayas, a port in Cilicia, became the

²⁴³ Dawson, Christopher. *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Sheed and Ward, 1955.

²⁴⁴ Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane. *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter's*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2021, pp. 77.

²⁴⁵ According to archaeological discoveries in Quanzhou, the Armenian-sponsored church was located near the city's eastern gate wall. For further reference, see: 杨钦兰[Yang Qinlan] and 何高济[He Gaoji]. “元代泉州方济各会遗物考[A Study of the Franciscan Relics in Quanzhou during the Yuan Dynasty]”. *泉州文史[Quanzhou Historical and Literary Studies]*, no. 8, 1983, pp. 70.

²⁴⁶ For the correspondence on Pellegrino di Castello, see: Moule, Arthur. *Christian in China Before the Year 1550*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1930, pp. 207-213.

²⁴⁷ Fra Andreas wrote home in 1326: “There is a certain great city next to the Ocean Sea which is called in the Persian tongue Zaitun, in which city a wealthy Armenian lady built a sufficiently beautiful and large church which indeed, after it had been made a cathedral by the Archbishop, she gave of her own will while she was living and left at death with adequate endowment to Brother Gerardus the Bishop, who was the first to occupy the same see, and to our brothers who were with him”. Moule, Arthur. *Christian in China Before the Year 1550*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1930, pp. 192.

²⁴⁸ Moule, Arthur. *Christian in China Before the Year 1550*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1930, pp. 192.

²⁴⁹ Arnold, Lauren. *Princely Gifts and Papale Treasures*. San Francisco. Desiderata Press. 1999, pp. 69-70.

²⁵⁰ Petech, Luciano, *Les Marchands Italiens dans l'Empire Mongol*, *Journal Asiatique*, 1962, pp. 549–574.

safest Levantine entry port for Italian and other Latin merchants. Especially during embargoes against Muslim trade, Ayas was indispensable for Latin merchants.

The earliest evidence of Western merchants in Tabriz, the Ilkhanate capital, is a testament dated December 10, 1264, by the Venetian merchant Pietro Viglioni (or Vilioni, Vioni)²⁵¹. According to Liščák's analysis, "his will is certified by several signatures, and most of the witnesses were clearly Italians."²⁵² Some Genoese living in Tabriz even served as diplomats and interpreters representing the Mongol rulers in negotiations with Western countries, such as Buscarello de Ghisolfi²⁵³. Petech believed that studies of Italian merchants settled in Mongol cities, including Tabriz, reflect the situation in Cilicia, since those Italians must have reached there through the Cilician Kingdom, where their compatriots had already settled. As Genoese and Venetians enjoyed privileges allowing them to reside in Cilicia, many Italians followed, pursuing profitable trade²⁵⁴. Petech mentioned that in Mongol cities there were Florentines, Venetians, Genoese, Sieneese, and many others, who must have worked alongside Armenians²⁵⁵.

According to Lauren Arnold's assessment, Armenians relied on commercial and religious ties with Italy to migrate across Eurasia: "During the chaos and uncertainty that followed the fall of the Crusader kingdoms at the end of the 13th century, a new group of Armenian refugees began to arrive in Italy—these were artists and craftsmen from Armenian Cilicia, whose livelihoods were threatened by new aniconic Sunni overlords....certainly after the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187, successive small waves of Armenians and other eastern Christians with family and business ties to the west left to pursue business opportunities on the Italian peninsula along the pilgrimage roads to Rome that led directly through Tuscany."²⁵⁶

2.2.2 The Franciscans in Armenia

Just like missionary work towards the East, Saint Francis (San Francesco)'s vision of the Orient included the desire to participate in crusades. Catholic monastic orders, including the Franciscans and Dominicans, gradually extended their missionary and

²⁵¹ Archiv. Veneto, XXVI, pp. 161–165.

²⁵² Liščák, Vladimír. "Italian City-States and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries." *Anthropologia Integra*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2012, pp. 27-36.

²⁵³ Buscarello de Ghisolfi hailed from the prominent Ghisolfi family and served successively under the Mongol rulers Arghun, Ghazan, and Öljeitü. According to Liščák's research, his name appears in reports of Arghun Khan's multiple diplomatic missions, as well as in notarial documents from Genoa and Caffa. Liščák, Vladimír. "Italian City-States and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries." *Anthropologia Integra*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2012, pp. 31.

²⁵⁴ In Marco Bais's research, special mention is made of the 1288 privileges granted by Lewon III to the Genoese, as well as privileges conferred upon Montpellieran merchants by King Öšin in 1314 and by Lewon IV in 1321, and privileges given to Sicilians by Lewon IV in 1331. See: Marco Bais. "Il privilegio ai Genovesi di Lewon III di Cilicia (1288) nelle carte del barone Deodato Papasian." *Rassegna Armenisti Italiani*, vol. 10, 2007, pp. 10-16. The original parchment of the Armenian King's grant to the Genoese is preserved in the State Archives of Genoa (Archivio di Stato di Genova), discovered by the Orientalist S. de Sacy. See: Archivio Segreto, 2737 D, doc. J.

²⁵⁵ Petech, Luciano. *Les marchands italiens dans l'empire mongol*. Imprimerie nationale, 1962, pp. 562.

²⁵⁶ Arnold, Lauren. "The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings." *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp. 101.

pastoral activities to the Eastern Mediterranean during the Crusades. With the onset of the Fifth Crusade (1217–1221), Saint Francis traveled to Damietta in Egypt in 1219. By modeling dialogue and peace amid the bloody conflict of the Crusades, Saint Francis offered a spiritual paradigm reminiscent of Armenia’s 13th-century diplomatic strategies. As one of the few independent Christian kingdoms in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cilician Armenia was closely linked to the Crusader world and strove to maintain a balance between the Mongols, Mamluks, and the Latin West to avoid larger-scale warfare.

In Het‘um’s *The Flower of the Histories of the East*, Armenia’s historical narrative is recorded:

“The fourth district is called Cilicia, and there is located the impregnable city of Tarsus, where the blessed apostle Paul was born. But this district of Cilicia is called Armenia. For, after the enemies of the Christian faith took that land from the hands of the Greeks and held it a long time, the Armenians strove so much that they wrested the land from the hands of the heathens, and <now> the king of Armenia holds the lordship of that land by Grace of God”²⁵⁷.

Het‘um emphasizes that after the Byzantines lost Cilicia, Armenians took it back from the infidels, mirroring the crusading ideal of defending and reclaiming the Holy City.

In the 13th century, the mendicant orders entering the East often took Armenia as their starting point. Fra Giovanni da Montecorvino stayed in Armenia for several years before going to China. Friar Tommaso da Tolentino and Friar Odorico da Pordenone also passed through Cilicia on their way to the Far East. The French Franciscan Guillaume de Roubrouck (William of Rubruck, 1215–1270), traveling to the Mongols between 1253 and 1255, heard that King Het‘um I’s envoys had arrived in Sis, prompting him to head there. Although he failed to meet Het‘um, he stayed in Cilician Armenia for over a month. Alessia Boschis, analyzing this passage, believes this may reflect Roubrouck’s attachment to the comfort of Armenia’s environment. The poetic lines he wrote for Het‘um no longer display the obvious tension present in related contexts²⁵⁸.

In a letter witnessed by the Franciscan Andrea di Perugia, the Armenian Catholicos and the Archbishop of Nisibi wrote to the Pope:

“We say, therefore, that we Christians of the East, called Jacobites, believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one single nature and three persons... We saw how, through the voice of the high prelature of the Armenian Church and the Jacobites, the Franciscans were honored with very special commendations;

²⁵⁷ The main text adopts Marco Bais’s translation of this passage, which was originally in Latin. For reference, see: *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*, vol.1.14: Recueil des historiens des croisades. Documents arméniens, p. 273. The translation, see: Bais, Marco. “Armenia and Armenians In Het‘Um’s *Flos Historiarum Terre Orientis*.” *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2015, pp. 214–31.

²⁵⁸ Boschis, Alessia. “«Omnia depinxissem vobis si scivissem pingere!» L’Armenia nell’ *Itinerarium* di fra Guglielmo di Rubruk.” *L’arte armena e oltre. Nuovi contributi Studies in Armenian and Eastern Christian Art 2022*, by Aldo Ferrari et al., Fondazione Università Ca’ Foscari, 2023, pp. 141-142.

because, in addition to fulfilling the primary purpose of their mission among those peoples, which was to bring them into Catholic unity, they also devoted themselves to the liberation of slaves and prisoners."²⁵⁹

In this letter, the Eastern bishops affirm their belief in the Trinity and the primacy of the Roman Pope, highlighting that the Minor Friars, including Andrea di Perugia, achieved a crucial mission in Armenia—leading some members of the Jacobite or Armenian Church toward the Latin Church. Even before this, during the troubled religious period of the 12th-century Crusades, Greater Armenia reached a religious understanding with Roman Christianity, with Armenian archbishops joining the Latin Church. As Raoul Manselli reminds us, already in the 1290s Franciscans had moved to Sis in Armenia to support and spread the Catholic faith²⁶⁰.

In 1279, the Franciscans established a monastery in Sebastia(Sivas), a key Silk Road hub, and had foundations in Salmās by 1284 and Tabriz by 1287²⁶¹. In 1314, another monastery was established in Trebizond. Their missions expanded to Amisos/Samsun on the southern Black Sea coast, Erzurum by 1320, and Sinop in 1334.²⁶²

Armenia was also a place of “exile” for marginalized Franciscan Spirituals, giving Armenia a special significance for the Franciscan Order. In 1289, when the Spiritual Raymond Geoffroi became Minister General of the Franciscans, he held a provincial chapter in the Marches and examined cases of friars imprisoned for disobedience. Those convicted friars were then sent to Armenia²⁶³. King Het‘um II of Armenia (r. 1289–1293) was himself a Franciscan friar who deeply admired the spirituality of the order, accepting these Franciscan friars into his realm.

In 1913, the Franciscan historian Girolamo Golubovich compiled the “Map of the Holy Land and Franciscan East” (Carte della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano),

²⁵⁹ The original text reads, “*Diciamo impertanto, che noi cristiani d' Oriente, chiamati Giacobiti, crediamo nel Padre, nel Figliuolo, e nello Spirito Santo, una sola natura e tre persone...Vedemmo come per bocca dell'alta prelatura della chiesa armena e dei Giacohiti i Francescani vennero onorati di ben speciali commendazioni; perciocchè oltre l'adempimento del fine principale di lor missione appresso quelle genti, che era di ridurle all'unione cattolica, si aggiugne che ancora si adoperavano circa la liberazion degli schiavi e prigionieri ...*”, see: Da Civezza, Marcellino. *Storia universale delle missioni francescane*. Vol. 1. Tipografia Tiberina, 1859, pp. 392-398.

²⁶⁰ Manselli Rouel, “Spirituali missionari: l'azione in Armenia e in Grecia. Angelo Clareno”, *Espansione del francescanesimo tra Occidente e Oriente nel secolo XIII. Atti del VI convegno internazionale. (Assisi, 12 – 14 ottobre 1978)*, Assisi, 1979, pp. 271-91.

²⁶¹ Jean Richard. *La Papauté Et Les Missions D'Orient Au Moyen Age (XIIIe-XVe siècles)*. École française de Rome, 1977, pp.60-61. Peter Jackson. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 256-289.

²⁶² Refer to Preiser-Kapeller for the precise description of the Franciscan residences' locations: “*according to the list 'de locis fratrum minorum et fratrum Praedicatorum in tartaria' (from before 1318) franciscan stations at the beginning of the 14th century could be found within this custodia in tabriz, sultāniyya, salmās near lake urumiyya, erzurum, tbilisi, Porsico (according to richard, borçka or Yeni yol at the river Çoruh on the route from artvin to batumi), Carpi (garpi north-west from erewan) and in karakilise (today ağrı in eastern turkey). less clear is the spatial organization established by the dominicans in these territories*” See: Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes. “The Significance of Tabriz in the Spatial Frameworks of Christian Merchants and Ecclesiastics in the 13th and 14th Centuries.” *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th - 15th Century Tabriz*, Brill, 2014, pp. 251–99.

²⁶³ These spiritualists were previously defined as *velut heretici et Ordinis destructores*. Manselli Rouel, “Spirituali missionari: l'azione in Armenia e in Grecia. Angelo Clareno”, *Espansione del francescanesimo tra Occidente e Oriente nel secolo XIII. Atti del VI convegno internazionale. (Assisi, 12 – 14 ottobre 1978)*, Assisi, 1979, pp. 271-91. Moorman, John. *A History of the Franciscan Order*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1968, p. 193-197; Arnold, Lauren. *Princely Gifts and Papale Treasures*. San Francisco. Desiderata Press. 1999, p. 62-63.

which reconstructed key places along the main crossing routes used by Franciscans in the 1280s–1290s to enter Tatar territories, listing Franciscan and Dominican mission bases (*loca*) in various Eastern cities and settlements²⁶⁴. According to these records, the Franciscans had three vicariates within the Mongol Empire: “Northern Tartary” (*Vicaria Tartariæ Aquilonaris*)²⁶⁵, “Eastern Tartary” (*Vicaria Tartariæ Orientalis*)²⁶⁶, and “Tartary or Cathay” (*Vicaria Tartariæ seu Cathay*)²⁶⁷. Liščák’s analysis of “*De Locis Fratrum Minorum Et Prekatorum In Tartaria*” indicates that Northern Tartary had 18 Franciscan monasteries, Eastern Tartary had 12, the Khanbaliq archbishopric had four, and Quanzhou (Zaiton) had one. Meanwhile, the Dominicans had monasteries only in Caffa and Thana²⁶⁸.

At the turn of the 13th–14th centuries, just as the Franciscans were experiencing major internal ideological splits and factional struggles, the Dominicans seized the opportunity to expand. The Dominicans allied with Pope John XXII (p.1316–1334), who favored them and supported the Conventual Franciscans. John XXII inherited a dire financial situation in the Roman Curia due to the neglect of his predecessor Clement V. The absolute poverty doctrine of the Franciscan Spirituals conflicted with the “Papa banchiere” (Banker Pope) John XXII’s enthusiasm for commercial reforms. John XXII created a vast financial system, the Apostolic Chamber (*Reverenda Camera Apostolica*), closely tied to merchants in Florence, Siena, Milan, Genoa, Venice, and Marseille, collecting numerous taxes and engaging in credit transactions. Even in his missionary approach to the East, Pope John XXII preferred to send Dominican friars to Ayas, the commercial and international hotspot on the Cilician coast, to teach Latin and pursue ecclesiastical union, and also incorporated the Order of the *Fratres Unitores* into the Dominicans. Thus, the Dominicans cooperated with the Pope’s financial activities, and John XXII entrusted numerous Eastern dioceses to them.

On April 1, 1318, Pope John XXII issued the bull *Redemptor noster*, transferring the Vicariate of Tataria Orientalis, previously under Franciscan jurisdiction, to the Dominicans. To avoid serious conflict, the diocese center moved from Tabriz to Sultanieh. India, previously under the Franciscan Khanbaliq archbishopric, was also

²⁶⁴ Golubovich, Girolamo, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente francescano. Annali di Terra Santa. Addenda al sec. XIII e Fonti pel sec. XIV. Con tre carte geografiche dell’Oriente Francescano del Secoli XIII–XIV: Apud Collegium S. Bonaventuræ, vol.II, 1913, pp. 125, 262, 444.*

²⁶⁵ In 1274, following the decisions of the Second Council of Lyon, a missionary center was established within the territory of the Golden Horde, with its headquarters located in the Genoese trading colony of Caffa. Two custodies made up this vicariate: Sarai (*Custodia Sarayæ*), which included the eastern region of the Golden Horde and the North Caucasus, and Khazaria (*Custodia Gazariæ*), which included Crimea, lower Danubia, and lower Transnistria. See: Liščák, Vladimír. “Italian City-States and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries.” *Anthropologia Integra*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2012, pp. 31.

²⁶⁶ Between 1279 and 1283, a missionary center was established in the Ilkhanate and its tributary states, with its headquarters later transferred from Tabriz to Sultania in 1318. This vicariate included three custodies: Constantinople (*Custodia Constantinopolitana*), Trebizond (*Custodia Trapezundis*), and Tabriz (*Custodia Thauris*). *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Its formation is largely attributed to John of Montecorvino (1246–1328/1330), who became the Archbishop of Khanbaliq (modern-day Beijing) in 1307. *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ For the original text with English translation by Vladimír Liščák, see: Liščák, Vladimír. “Italian City-States and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries.” *Anthropologia Integra*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2012, pp. 33.

placed under Dominican jurisdiction²⁶⁹. At this point, the Franciscans were left with only “Cathay” and “Khazaria” territories.

The Dominicans achieved more notable success in Armenia in the later period. According to Peter Jackson’s research, there were debates at the Papal court involving Franciscan and Dominican friars, suggesting competition between the two orders for missionary activity in Armenia²⁷⁰. During Clement V’s papacy (1305–1314), not only did he confirm the Franciscans’ missionary efforts among the Mongols, but he also balanced the power between Spirituals and Conventuals within the Franciscan Order, allowing the Spirituals to continue their mission in Armenia. By then, the Franciscan sphere of influence in Anatolia was firmly established.

In the early 15th century, Archbishop John of Sultanieh recorded the Dominicans’ presence in the Ilkhanate, though not always accurately:

“...about the year of our Lord 1310, when there was no mention in the regions of the east of the Church of Rome and of its ceremonies, some of the Dominican Brothers went with merchants in these regions and first into Persia and Greater Armenia, (. . .), and from that time they began to preach the Catholic faith...in 1312, they founded the *societas fratrum peregrinantium propter Christum inter gentes* (society of the Brothers who pilgrimage among the pagans for Christ) for the purpose of the mission in the east. Its central bases from 1312 to 1363 were in Pera/Galata and in Kaffa, where also its vicar-general had his see....its missionary jurisdiction included “parts of Greece, Egypt, Nubia, and all Asia except Palestine, Syria and Cilician Armenia”; these areas were partly divided into sections (*contratae*)...according to “*de locis fratrum minorum et fratrum Praedicatorum in Tartaria*,” the Dominicans had convents in Tabriz, Marāgha and Dehkhārakan, in Tbilisi (since the first half of the 13th century), in Sebastopolis on the Black Sea, in Sivas (there also Franciscans could be found since before 1277) and in Baghdad (in the second half of the 13th century)”²⁷¹

In 1330, an Armenian patron established the first Dominican center in Krna in the Ernjak Valley of Nakhijevan, Azerbaijan. Other congregations spread from there, with

²⁶⁹ According to Liščák’s research he believes that “Indian lands and Indian spices were in great concern of the Pope, the Dominican Order, and Italian and French trading houses.” For details regarding Pope John XXII’s *Redemptor noster* decree, see: Liščák, Vladimír. “Italian City-States and Catholic Missions in Mongolian World of the 13th and 14th Centuries.” *Anthropologia Integra*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2012, pp. 27–36; Peter Jackson. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 259; Atamian, Ani Pauline. *The Archdiocese of Naxjewan in the Seventeenth Century*. 1984. Columbia University, pp. 16-18; Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes. “The Significance of Tabriz in the Spatial Frameworks of Christian Merchants and Ecclesiastics in the 13th and 14th Centuries.” *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th - 15th Century Tabriz*, Brill, 2014, pp. 283-84.

²⁷⁰ For the debate between the Franciscans and the Dominicans at the papal court in 1322, see: Cronica della Quistione insorta nella Corte di Papa Giovanni XXII a Vignone, circa la povertà di Cristo”, Francesco Zambrini, ed., *Storia di Fra Michele minorita come fu arso in Firenze nel 1389, con documenti risguardanti i Fraticelli della povera vita*, Scelti di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare del secolo XIII al XIX 50 (Bologna, 1864), pp.59-82. Peter Jackson. *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410*. Pearson Longman, 2005, pp. 259.

²⁷¹ [Cum anno Domini MCCCX vel circa in partibus orientalibus nulla mentio esset de ecclesia romana et de eius ceremoniis, ibidem quidam fratres Predicatores cum mercatoribus iverunt ad illas partes et primo in Persidem et armeniam maiorem, (. . .), inceperunt ex tunc predicare fidem catholicam.] Libellus de Notitia Orbis 12, lines 5–9, ed. Kern, pp. 114; Eubel, Konrad. *Die während des 14. Jahrhunderts im Missionsgebiet der Dominikaner und Franziskaner errichteten Bistümer*. 1897, pp.171-194.

the most important monasteries at Aparan, Koshkashen, Jahuk, and Shahaponk.²⁷² Yet local Christians also faced theological challenges and attacks from Muslims in Armenia, including denials of the Trinity, the Incarnation, material Resurrection, and condemnations of the Cross and holy images²⁷³. The Dominican mission in Greater Armenia's Nakhijevan introduced new saints: In 1333, Bishop Bartholomew, who died at the Holy Mother of God monastery in the Ernjak Valley, was canonized as a saint²⁷⁴.

At the Armenian monastery of K'rna near Nakhijevan, the Dominicans and local Armenians formed the *Fratres de Majori armenia unitores nuncupati* ("Brothers from Greater Armenia called Unitores") between 1337 and 1344. Between 1333 and 1356, the first bishop of Nakhichevan in Armenia was ordained as suffragan to the Archdiocese of Sultanieh²⁷⁵. Even as the Ilkhanate collapsed in 1336 and the Dominicans' influence in the Eastern dioceses declined, they provided a sustained missionary presence. As Preiser-Kapeller, quoting Loenertz, notes: "'Mission in Persia' became synonymous with 'mission in Armenia'."²⁷⁶

2.2.3 Armenian presence in Italy

According to Alessandro Orengo's research, Tuscany is a key region for studying the Armenian presence in medieval Italy. In Tuscany, monks from the Catholic Order of St. Basil (ordine basiliano) settled in strategic locations frequented by pilgrims heading to Rome²⁷⁷. After the 14th to 16th centuries, Armenian merchants also became common. From the late 16th century, when Livorno became a free port, the city attracted Armenian communities²⁷⁸. Orengo also mentioned that Armenians in Venice provided hospitality for their compatriots passing through on pilgrimages to Rome. These nodes were interconnected. A will from October 2, 1341, by Maria Armena, the

²⁷² Esche-Ramshorn suggests that "lasting until the seventeenth century, the Latin monasteries, at least 15 if not 50 Armenian monasteries". Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane. *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter's*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2021, pp. 69-70.

²⁷³ *Tathevatsi's Book of Questions*, commonly used in Armenian writings, lists sixteen errors of Islam from a Christian perspective. Jeffrey, Arthur. 'Gregory of Tathew's "Contra Mohammedanos"', *The Moslem World*, no. 32. 1942, pp.219-235.

²⁷⁴ Carlo Longo, 'I Domenicani nell'Impero Persiano: Frati Armeni e Missionari Italiani', *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano*, vol. 11. no.1, 2007, pp. 35-77, 76.

²⁷⁵ Eubel, Conrad. "Die während des 14. Jahrhunderts im missionsgebiet der dominikaner und franziskaner errichteten bishümer." Stephan Ehses ed, *Festschrift zum elfhundertjährigen Jubiläum des Deutschen Campo santo in rom.*, 171–194. Freiburg: herder, 1897, pp. 186-189.

²⁷⁶ Loenertz, Raymond. *La société des frères pèlerinants: Étude sur l'Orient dominicain*. Rome, ad s. sabinae, 1937, pp. 140; Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes. "The Significance of Tabriz in the Spatial Frameworks of Christian Merchants and Ecclesiastics in the 13th and 14th Centuries." *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th - 15th Century Tabriz*, Brill, 2014, pp. 288.

²⁷⁷ Basilian monks refer to those following the *Rule of St. Basil*, typically belonging to the Eastern Catholic Churches. These churches are in communion with the Roman Catholic Church but retain the liturgical practices and traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, particularly the Byzantine Rite. In modern times, they have also been referred to as *le bartolomiti*. For further details on the Armenian presence in Tuscany, see: Orengo, Alessandro. "Nota sulla presenza armena in Toscana.", *Memorie della Accademia Lunigianese di scienze Giovanni Capellini*, 2006, pp.153-161.

²⁷⁸ Orengo, Alessandro. "Tipografe e stampatori armeni a Livorno: una sintesi", B.L. Zekiyan ed. *Ad limina Italiae - Ar druns Italioy. In viaggio per l'Italia con mercanti e monaci armeni*, Padova, 1996, pp. 157-190. Orengo, Alessandro. "Gli Armeni in Italia, ed in particolare in Toscana, nel Medioevo ed oltre." *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, no. 130–1, Jan. 2018, pp. 85-94.

“massara” (manager) of the Casa degli Armeni di S. Zulian in Venice, reveals the institutional structure of the Armenian House and the Armenian-Venetian community that had existed for at least a century. Maria bequeathed assets to other Armenian houses scattered across the peninsula, specifically in Bologna, Perugia, Siena, Genoa, and Orvieto²⁷⁹. Michele Bacci provided examples of Armenian travelers—Davit Bijnetsi, the priest Vardan, the monk Sargis—who usually traveled to Jerusalem first, and then sailed to the Italian coast before heading to Rome or Santiago de Compostela on pilgrimage²⁸⁰.

The movement of artists and craftsmen between Armenia and Italy can also be seen from the production of Armenian manuscripts. The Armenian monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice (San Lazzaro degli Armeni Mekhitarist Congregation) holds about 3,000 Armenian manuscripts²⁸¹. Some Armenian manuscripts or fragments are also preserved in Florence²⁸².

The earliest two known Armenian manuscripts produced in Rome date from 1240 and 1254, both adorned with Armenian-style decorations²⁸³. The 1254 manuscript shows the coexistence of two artistic styles, Western canonical frameworks alongside Cilician-inspired portrait heads in the inscriptions. Esche-Ramshorn suggests this indicates that “two artists worked side by side, rather than different stylistic traditions coexisting in one manuscript.”²⁸⁴ The quality of Armenian manuscript art produced at the Dominican Armenian College in Vatican City does not match the exquisite craftsmanship of Cilician manuscripts²⁸⁵. In Sis and Hromkla, scribes and artists meticulously produced manuscripts and miniatures following the finest Cilician

²⁷⁹ Orengo, Alessandro. “Gli Armeni in Italia, ed in particolare in Toscana, nel Medioevo ed oltre.” *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, no. 130–1, Jan. 2018, pp. 85–94.

²⁸⁰ Michele Bacci. “An Armenian Pilgrim in Medieval Italy. Cult and Iconography of St. Davinus of Lucca.” *Armenian Studies Today and Development Perspectives, proceedings of the international congress (Yerevan, Armenian Academy of Sciences, 15-20 September 2003)*, 2004, pp. 548–58.

²⁸¹ Approximately 30,000 Armenian manuscripts have survived to this day and are systematically preserved in various collections. The largest repository is the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (*Mesrop Mashtots'i anvan hin dzeragreri institute*) in Yerevan, Armenia, which holds around 11,000 manuscripts. The Armenian Patriarchate of St. James in Jerusalem houses approximately 4,000 manuscripts, while about 500 manuscripts are preserved in museums and libraries across North America. In addition to public collections, a number of manuscripts remain in private ownership. For reference, see: Thomas F. Mathews, “The Art of the Armenian Manuscript,” Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck eds., *Treasures in Heaven, Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 38–53.

²⁸² According to Orengo’s account, “.....in alcune biblioteche di Firenze, la Medicea Laurenziana e la Nazionale, si conservano anche manoscritti o frammenti di manoscritti redatti in armeno o con parti in armeno: quattordici alla Laurenziana e quattro alla Nazionale. Inoltre, due fogli miniati tratti da un manoscritto armeno sono conservati presso la collezione Berenson alla villa «I Tatti»”, these manuscript fragments serve as evidence of Armenian monks residing at the Chiesa di San Basilio degli Armeni from 1321 to 1491. See: Orengo, 2018, pp.88. For the presence of Armenians in other Italian cities, see: Boffito, Giuseppe. “Gli Armeni a Firenze e Un Oscuro Passo Dell’ “Acerba” Interpretato.” *La Bibliofilia*, vol. 39, no. 7/8, 1937, pp. 282–89. Pambakian, Stephanie, and Lidia Zanetti Domingues. “Armenians on the Via Francigena: Armenian and Latin Sources on the Origins of the Armenian Community of Orvieto (Urbs Vetus): Armenian and Latin Sources on the Origins of the Armenian Community of Orvieto (Urbs Vetus).” *Armenia, Caucasus and Central Asia*, by Carlo Frappi and Paolo Sorbello, vol. 15, Fondazione Università Ca’ Foscari, 2020, pp. 11–34.

²⁸³ Esche-Ramshorn, Christiane, 2021, pp. 153.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Arlen, Jesse Siragan. “Armenian Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.” *Manuscripta*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1–31.

traditions of Toros Roslin (ca. 1210–1270), who integrated elements from Western Europe and even China into the Armenian cultural milieu.

In 1374, Pope Gregory XI prohibited Armenian *Unitores* from migrating to Italy, but this ban was lifted in 1381, allowing Armenian Catholics to move to Italy and other countries²⁸⁶. Documentary sources frequently mention Armenians from Nakhijevan’s monasteries relocating to the diaspora communities in Venice, Rome, Bologna, Pera, Crimea, and other Italian cities to live and work²⁸⁷.

Lauren Arnold notes changes in Italians’ acceptance of Armenian saints:

*“In Tuscany specifically, we should look at the emerging veneration of Armenian national saint - Bartolomeo, Taddeo, Gregorio, and lesser-known Armenian martyrs such as S. Miniato, S. Biagio, S. Vittorio – who began to have established churches from the 13th century onward”*²⁸⁸

Immigrants from Anatolia or Asia Minor, including many artists, came to Italy, bringing abundant materials (texts or artifacts) and craftsmanship. It may have been under such foreign inspiration that Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans* discussed in the last chapter.

In the preceding Section 2.2, we examined the networks of East-West contact under Mongol rule, focusing on the movements of Armenian populations, the migrations of Armenian merchants and artisans across Eurasia, and the role played by Catholic religious orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans in missionary networks spanning the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East. From this perspective, we can observe how Armenians, acting as intermediaries, introduced Eastern material culture, religious thought, and artistic elements into the Italian peninsula, reshaping the cultural landscape of the Mediterranean world. As these peoples and cultures intertwined, a new pathway of artistic exchange gradually emerged—not only a flow of material goods, but also a fusion and renewal of artistic styles, visual symbols, and religious motifs. The following Section 2.3 will delve deeper into this pathway of interaction, examining the visual cultural outcomes of the interplay between Franciscan art and Armenian art, and exploring how Eastern artistic elements left their mark on Italian and broader Christian world art, thereby enriching our understanding of cross-cultural artistic influences throughout Eurasia.

2.3 Beyond Dragons and Phoenixes: The Artistic Interactions between the Franciscans and Armenia

²⁸⁶ M. A. van den Oudenrijn, ‘Der armenische Dominikaner Fr. Awetiq Augustin von Erzerum’, *Handes Amsorya*, LXII, 1948, 588ff, pp. 592.

²⁸⁷ Esche-Ramshorn, 2021, pp. 71.

²⁸⁸ She also cited, “As an example, the Armenian patron saint Bartolomeo was added to the patron saints of Siena by 1215 (just a decade after the fall of Constantinople), and later the Cilician martyr Vittorio was added in 1308 (about a decade and a half after the fall of Acre. The civic presence of these foreign saint would suggest an influx of merchants and craftsmen from the Greater Armenian Highlands and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia” Today, San Gregorio Magno in Naples venerates St. Gregory the Illuminator (San Gregorio Armeno), an Armenian saint. Arnold, Lauren. “The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.” *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp. 101.

Hidemichi Tanaka posits that “*Silk clothes with oriental decoration were generally considered as a simple exotic motif. The Orientals with a turban, appearing in many of Giotto's paintings, are merely a symbol of heathenism. Simone Martini's work shows figures with longslitted eyes, but they do not signify an oriental element*”²⁸⁹ However, he believes that the appearance of Oriental scripts in paintings of this period offers powerful evidence of substantial Eastern influence²⁹⁰. Whether it be Islamic script, Arabic lettering, or Phags-pa writing appearing in 13th–14th century Italian painting, we cannot ascertain today whether Giotto, Duccio, Bernardo Daddi, and others understood their meaning. Were these scripts mere decorative symbols or part of a spiritual totem? Deciphering their content or providing more evidence is required to clarify their role. Nevertheless, whether through silk, Eastern facial types, or script, such elements are indicative of the profound 13th-century Western interest in the East.

Around 1270, Roger Bacon argued in his *De utilitate grammaticae* that the Latin world needed to learn Eastern languages. He recognized that much of the science practiced by Latins came from other Eastern civilizations, and being able to read original texts—not just Greek, but also Arabic and Hebrew—was extremely beneficial²⁹¹. Vrej Nersessian notes that in Filarete’s (ca. 1400–1469) bronze doors of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, on the St. Peter Panel (Fig. 2.7), there is an Arabic-Armenian inscription to the left of the saint’s left foot, and on the St. Paul Panel (Fig. 2.8), next to the arm holding St. Paul’s sword, there is also an Arabic-Armenian inscription. Esche-Ramshorn suggests that since Filarete spent his early years in Florence, where writing inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—such as the “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” trilingual inscription on the crucifix at Santa Maria Novella, similarly to Giotto’s titulus—was nothing new, he likely understood the significance of these inscriptions and may have received assistance from Armenians living in Florence or Rome²⁹².

Furthermore, Esche-Ramshorn argues that these inscriptions appearing in reliefs or paintings were not merely a quest for “exoticism,” but rather stemmed from a period of intense exchange with Eastern Christianity—through trade, church alliances, missionary endeavors, and the transfer of knowledge. The incorporation of Eastern

²⁸⁹ Hidemichi Tanaka. “Oriental Scripts in the Paintings of Giotto’s Period.” *Gazette Des Beaux Arts*, vol. 113, no. 131, 1989, pp. 214.

²⁹⁰ For analyses such as the study of Oriental inscriptions in Giotto’s Italian paintings and the recent examination of Armenian script on the lintel of *San Domenico in Orvieto*, see: Schulz, Vera-Simone. “Intricate Letters and the Reification of Light. Prolegomena on the Pseudo-Inscribed Haloes in Giotto’s Madonna di San Giorgio alla Costa and Masaccio’s San Giovenale triptych.” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen institutes in Florenz*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2016, pp. 59-93. Tanaka, Hidemichi. “Oriental Scripts in the Paintings of Giotto’s Period.” *Gazette Des Beaux Arts*, vol. 113, no. 131, 1989, pp. 214–26; Pambakian, Stephanie, and Lidia Zanetti Domingues. “Armenians on the Via Francigena: Armenian and Latin Sources on the Origins of the Armenian Community of Orvieto (Urbs Vetus): Armenian and Latin Sources on the Origins of the Armenian Community of Orvieto (Urbs Vetus).” *Armenia, Caucasus and Central Asia*, by Carlo Frappi and Paolo Sorbello, vol. 15, Fondazione Università Ca’ Foscari, 2020, pp. 11–34.

²⁹¹ Bacon, Roger. “De utilitate grammaticae.” In *Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi*, edited by Ferdinand Delorme, vol. 3, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1953, pp. 45-67.

²⁹² Esche-Ramshorn, 2021, pp. 185.

scripts in an Early Christian context is tied to the Roman Church's drive toward a unified Christendom. Artists, missionaries, and various other groups were keenly interested in Eastern languages and deeply desired to learn them²⁹³. Thus, when considering artistic exchange, cultural symbols that express a subjective intent can be seen as genuine indicators of artistic influence.

During the 12th century, the Cilician aristocracy maintained close ties not only with Byzantium and Rome but also with the Far East. The kingdom's art and literature benefited enormously from its openness and frequent cultural-political interactions. The influx of cultures from both West and East not only fostered artistic style fusion but also awakened national consciousness. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, Cilician scholars compiled and organized a large corpus of ancient and medieval Armenian literary texts and historical documents, recorded in numerous manuscripts. Artists adorned these manuscripts with richly varied artistic styles, and medieval Armenian painting developed a vast array of subtle artistic features unique to Armenian art.

Discussing Eastern motifs from the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) inevitably involves very typical and widespread images: dragons, phoenixes, and qilins, among others. When these motifs entered close contact with Armenia during the Ilkhanate period, they influenced Armenian art. For instance, three manuscripts executed for members of the Cilician royal court in 1286 and 1287 display such influence²⁹⁴. One of these manuscripts, a Lectionary commissioned by Het'um II containing over 700 illustrations, is considered "one of the most profusely and luxuriously decorated Armenian codices." On folio 294, a decorative dragon appears (Fig. 2.9), and on folio 334, both phoenix and dragon images are present (Fig. 2.10).

In the 1287 Gospel Lectionary (Erevan, Matenadaran no. 197), produced at the monastery of Akner for Archbishop John (Yovhannēs), on folio 341v Archbishop John is shown placing his left hand on the head of a youth being ordained. The Archbishop is wearing a cope with a Chinese dragon woven or painted in gold with red outlines. A single motif of a Chinese dragon appears in the lower-left corner of the page (Fig. 2.11). Dickran Kouymjian argues that, given the dating, the presence of the dragon in Armenian manuscripts cannot be explained by influence from Ilkhanid Islamic art. He suggests two possible channels for the introduction of dragon motifs into the Cilician Kingdom: through trade with the Yuan Dynasty or via gift exchanges between Armenian nobles and the Mongol rulers²⁹⁵.

Among these dragon images, some have wide-open jaws, appearing fierce, while others are less menacing. The gaping-mawed dragon aligns with Christian symbolism, where the open mouth signifies evil, hell, and destruction. These dragons often have

²⁹³ Esche-Ramshorn, 2021, pp. 126.

²⁹⁴ For the discovery of Chinese elements in these two manuscript illuminations, see: Kouymjian, Dickran. "Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting in the Mongol Period." *Armenian Studies: In Memoriam Haig Berberian*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986, pp. 417–20. Kouymjian, Dickran. "The Intrusion Of East Asian Imagery In Thirteenth-Century Armenia : Political And Cultural Exchange Along The Silk Road." *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road*, edited by Philippe Forêt and Andreas Kaplony, Brill, 2008, pp. 119–34.

²⁹⁵ Kouymjian, Dickran. "Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting in the Mongol Period." *Armenian Studies: In Memoriam Haig Berberian*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986, pp. 449.

wings to enable flight (Fig. 2. 12). In contrast, the Chinese dragon symbolizes majesty and power, often shown amidst flames or clouds, representing divine might and the mandate of heaven. As a supreme mythical creature, the Chinese dragon inherently flies without needing wings. Rarely depicted on the ground, it almost always appears soaring in the sky, exuding a sense of fluidity and dynamism. For example, in Chen Rong's *Nine Dragons* (Southern Song period, 1127–1279) (Fig. 2.13) and other works, dragons are portrayed majestically in motion. The *Book of Rites* (Liji), compiled by Confucius (551–479 BC) and his disciples, uses dragon imagery as a metaphor for governance²⁹⁶. In Chinese political mythology, the emperor's divine right to rule is closely associated with dragons. Dragons, as masters of rain and storm, symbolize imperial authority. Such court-related images, easily exchanged as gifts, may have traveled with diplomatic missions.

Under Mongol rule, the Yuan Dynasty combined steppe traditions with Chinese culture. The Mongols' shamanistic religion placed a high value on serpents, and 13th-century Chinese Buddhism also revered serpents²⁹⁷. Thus, Yuan-era Chinese dragons borrowed some serpentine traits, including a more slender head and neck²⁹⁸. In the Ilkhanid *Shahnameh* illustrations (e.g., “King Bahram defeating an evil dragon”), the dragon's form closely mirrors the Chinese-influenced dragons of that era (Fig. 2.14).

During the Yuan Dynasty, strict regulations governed the number of claws. This was because the five-clawed dragon was considered perfect and complete, representing the supreme authority of the emperor. To emphasize hierarchical distinctions, the number of dragon claws served as a clear marker of rank and status. On the cope in the Gospel Lectionary illustration (Fig. 2.11), it appears the dragon has three or four claws—fewer than the five-clawed imperial dragon of the Yuan court²⁹⁹. If this cope was a courtly gift, it may reflect Armenia's subordinate relationship with the Mongols.

Outside of China, three-toed dragons were used, for example, in the Japanese Kamakura period *Kegonshu soshi eden* (Painting Scroll of the Founders of the Kegon Sect) (Fig. 2. 15). This work, influenced by Chinese models, shows a female figure Shanmiao transforming into a dragon to escort the monk Uisang across the sea. This Eastern dragon, with three claws, fits traditional East Asian characteristics. However,

²⁹⁶ The "Four Sacred Creatures" (*Si Ling*, 四灵) refer to the Qilin (麒麟), Phoenix (凤), Turtle (龟), and Dragon (龙). According to classical Chinese texts, these mythical creatures symbolize harmony and order. The original text reads, “何谓四灵? 麟凤龟龙谓之四灵。故龙以为畜, 故鱼鲔不涂。凤以为畜, 故鸟不獠。麟以为畜, 故兽不狘。龟以为畜, 故人情不失”。

²⁹⁷ 张正旭[Zhang Zhengxu]. “浅析辽代文物上的龙凤纹饰 [A Preliminary Analysis of Dragon and Phoenix Motifs on Liao Dynasty Artifacts]”, *宋史研究论丛(第十一辑)*[*China Conferences*], 石家庄: 河北大学出版社 [Shijiazhuang: Hebei University Press], 2010, pp.311.

²⁹⁸ 刘珂艳[Liu keyan]. *元代纺织品纹样研究 [Study of Textile Patterns in the Yuan Dynasty]*. Donghua University, PhD. Dissertation. 2014, pp. 161.

²⁹⁹ The use of the five-clawed dragon likely reflected the ambitions of Mongol Yuan elites to unify China under their rule. According to Kouymjian's observation, the dragon depicted here has three claws, which more accurately aligns with the status of the Armenian king. Under the Yuan Dynasty, its rulers were regarded as successors to Genghis Khan, thus entitled to use the five-clawed dragon motif. The Ilkhanate khans, who were subordinate to the Yuan rulers, used dragons with four claws. In turn, the King of Cilician Armenia, as a vassal and tributary state of the Ilkhanate, was only permitted to use the three-clawed dragon. Kouymjian, Dickran. “The Berlin Dragon-Phoenix Carpet and Its Probable Armenian Origin.” *Armenian Rugs and Textiles. An Overview of Examples from Four Centuries. Exhibition Catalogue*, 2014, pp. 11.

the use of the three-clawed dragon here does not reflect a subordinate status, as seen in hierarchical political systems, but rather demonstrates the artistic independence of its style.

As mentioned earlier, one means by which Chinese motifs entered Armenia was through gift exchanges between Armenian nobles and Mongol rulers (though the Mongols likely considered them “rewards” for their vassals). Another possibility is that these are not true dragons but “chi-dragons” (chilong), a type of hornless, snake-like mythical creature in Chinese art. Chilong appear frequently in Chinese jade and bronze ornaments, featuring a sleek and elegant form symbolizing auspiciousness and protection (Fig. 2. 16, Fig. 2.17). Unlike the majestic imperial dragon with horns, whiskers, scales, and claws, the chilong is a lesser mythical beast, devoid of such royal attributes. In the Gospel Lectionary (Fig. 2.11) and the Lectionary of Het’um II’s folio 284 (Fig. 2. 9), the dragons lack horns, only whiskers. If these are indeed chilong motifs, it would further confirm Armenia’s subordinate status and alliance with the Mongols in the 13th–14th century.

Beyond these few manuscript illustrations incorporating Chinese elements, another miniature from the *Gospel of T’oros the Priest* (Fig. 2.18, Fig. 2. 19)—created in 1262 by T’oros Roslin at Hromkla (Rum Kalesi in present-day Turkey), which became the leading artistic center of Armenian Cilicia under the rule of Catholicos Constantine I (1221-67)—shows a scene of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. T’oros created this manuscript under commission from the nephew of Constantine, a priest also named T’oros³⁰⁰. The architectural elements in the scene are related to Byzantine style. The golden box in the image likely symbolizes the Ark of the Covenant, revered as a sacred object in the Temple, and wrapped in pure gold. According to the Bible and traditional religious art, the top of the Ark was covered with a cloth or veil, and traditionally described as featuring the “Mercy Seat,” a golden plate adorned with two cherubim (angels) facing one another with outspread wings. This design symbolized the throne of God and signified the presence of God (Shekinah) dwelling between the cherubim.

Roslin’s decorative additions on the front of the Ark include intricate *tuan-k’o* (scroll-patterned) phoenix motifs. These designs bear a striking resemblance to those found on Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white porcelain, such as a blue-and-white ewer (Fig. 2.20), and even more closely to phoenix patterns on a Tang Dynasty bronze mirror (Fig. 2.21, Fig. 2.22). Such motifs may have traveled along the Silk Road during the Ilkhanate period, transmitting their visual style across regions. From multiple perspectives—top, right, and front—it seems that the phoenix motifs likely adorned all six sides of the Ark. According to biblical accounts, contact with the Ark could lead to death. The presence of the phoenix, venerated by the Mongols as the “immortal bird,” within this scene further amplifies the Ark’s aura of sacredness and mystery. In the 13th century, these design elements likely emerged from the interplay between Christianity

³⁰⁰ Mathews, Thomas F., and Roger S. Wieck, editors. *Treasures in Heaven. Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*. The Pierpont Morgan Library, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 210, 266.

and foreign Chinese influences, as well as their integration with the artistic background of Eastern Rome (Byzantium), reflected in the composition's background.

Archaeological finds at the Takht-e Soleyman³⁰¹ site in northern Iran, an Ilkhanid period royal complex built by Abaqa Khan (r. 1265–1282) between 1270 and 1275 on a Sasanian fire temple, reveal glazed bricks with dragon motifs of two types—*descending dragons*(*jianglong*, 降龙) and *roaming dragons*(*xinglong*, 行龙). The *descending dragon* (*jianglong*) features its head in the center and tail upwards, resembling a coiled dragon descending from the heavens (Fig. 2.23), whereas the *roaming dragon* (*xinglong*) appears to move gracefully through clouds, its body curving in a dynamic S-shape with a slender neck and broader abdomen (Fig. 2.24). In contrast to the descending dragon, the *ascending dragon* (升龙, *shenglong*) has its head raised and tail lowered, with its abdomen arched in an S-shape (Fig. 2.25). The descending dragon motif can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty in China³⁰². However, compared to the dragon patterns seen on Yuan Dynasty textiles and ceramics, dragon claws were relatively small, and there were no strict regulations on the number of claws. Additionally, the dragon's head was depicted as proportionally smaller compared to later periods³⁰³.

In the 13th century, Armenia and Iran were both under Ilkhanate rule. During an era of geopolitical upheaval and expanding economic networks, Armenians—skilled in commerce, cross-cultural exchange, and with Eastern connections—settled in prosperous trading ports like Pisa. They likely carried Mongol-influenced artworks to their new homes, which may explain the presence of Oriental-looking dragons in Italian art. Between 1335 and 1340, Buonamico Buffalmacco's *Last Judgment* fresco in the Camposanto Monumentale in Pisa (Fig. 2.26) includes a monstrous figure of Lucifer in the lower right, inspired by oriental dragon imagery (Fig. 2.27). This vividly underscores the Christian medieval doctrines of the End Times and Hell. Unlike the ever-airborne Chinese dragons, this monstrous figure, in Eastern dragon forms, is frozen in Dante's infernal vision³⁰⁴. The dragon motif created by Buffalmacco closely resembles dragons prevalent in the Far East. For instance, the wooden coiling dragon (*panlong*) on the front columns of the *Holy Mother Hall* at Jin Temple, Shanxi, carved in the second year of Yuan You (1087) during the Song Dynasty, is one of the earliest surviving examples of wooden coiling dragon pillars in Chinese architecture (Fig. 2.28). Additionally, in the *Yongle Palace* murals in Ruicheng, Shanxi, dating to the Yuan Dynasty, there are also depictions of dragons facing the viewer directly (Fig. 2.29), most notably in the scene illustrating the gods worshipping the Daoist patriarch³⁰⁵ Yuanshi Tianzun. Considering that architectural and mural arts are harder to transport,

³⁰¹ In the latter half of the 13th century, Abaqa Khan designated *Takht-e Soleyman* as his summer residence. However, with the eventual decline and collapse of the Ilkhanate, the site was abandoned.

³⁰² 刘珂艳[Liu keyan]. 2014, pp. 150.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁰⁴ Dante: "Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno, uscì fuor de la ghiaccia a passo lento: quanto 'l senso più va, che 'l mover, tardo." Alighieri, Dante. *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*. Edited by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Mondadori, 1991, canto 34, vv. 28-30, 37-39.

³⁰⁵ Daoism, as an indigenous Chinese religion and one of the three major Chinese philosophical systems—alongside Confucianism and Buddhism, centers on the concept of the "Dao" (the Way), advocating for a reverence for nature, the pursuit of immortality, and spiritual elevation.

Buffalmacco's inspiration may have come indirectly—through Armenian immigrants or through intermediary trade goods like ceramics, such as the dragon motif found on this Yuan Dynasty *qinghua* (blue and white porcelain), which displays similar stylistic characteristics (Fig. 2.30). If we imagine viewing such a dragon head-on, the style would match these two prototypes.

In Chinese painting and textiles of the Yuan era and before, artists preferred side or three-quarter views of dragons on ceramics and fabrics. Additionally, dragons typically do not face the viewer directly, a convention that carries profound cultural and aesthetic considerations. This is precisely because the dragon symbolizes supreme imperial authority. Due to ritual and hierarchical restrictions, commoners or lower-ranking nobles were rarely allowed to use frontal dragon motifs. Artists often avoided depicting dragons directly facing the viewer to maintain reverence and avoid violating the dragon's sacredness, thereby reflecting both respect and cultural avoidance. For example, the *Chaoyuan Tu* mural (Fig. 2.29) in *Yongle Palace* is a Daoist painting where dragon motifs symbolize Yuanshi Tianzun and the celestial deities. The artist likely employed these dragon motifs to draw upon the authority of imperial power, legitimizing the existence and dominance of Daoism within the sociopolitical framework³⁰⁶. In contrast, Buffalmacco can freely adopt and adjust the dragon's orientation, signifying cultural appropriation in a Western context.

Researching carpets depicted in Armenian and Ilkhanid miniatures is one of the best resources to understand the Chinese-style influences. Studies have shown that the arrival of Armenian artists and craftsmen, who settled in Italian towns along pilgrimage roads, contributed to the formation of a “Byzantine flair” in Italian pre-15th-century painting³⁰⁷. However, Armenian migrants did not merely transmit Islamic influences; they also facilitated the introduction of artistic and cultural elements from the Far East.

As an artist closely associated with the Franciscan Order, Giotto di Bondone played a pivotal role in shaping the visual language of Franciscan imagery. In his late 13th-century panel painting *Stigmatization of St. Francis* (Fig. 2.31), at the bottom center is a small scene: *Approval of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Innocent III*. In this scene, St. Francis kneels on an Oriental carpet (Fig. 2.32). For the Franciscans, the “East” was not just a geographic location but tied to St. Francis's lifelong mission of evangelizing the Orient. On the carpet, the animal figure has only one head, with a curved neck, large flowing wings, and a bifurcated lower part. Even with some simplification, its dynamism and asymmetry are visible, hallmark features of Chinese phoenix patterns. Similar motifs are seen on a Yuan-era bronze mirror found in Hebei, China. Aside from the extra bifurcation at the bottom feathers, the bird's characteristics

³⁰⁶ During the Ming and Qing dynasties, emperors reinforced their monopoly on power, and dragon motifs increasingly became an exclusive imperial emblem. At this time, frontal dragon imagery emerged, characterized by dragons with glaring eyes, bared teeth, and menacing claws, exuding an aura of ferocity to symbolize the emperor's awe-inspiring authority. These dragon motifs prominently appeared on royal artifacts and architectural structures.

³⁰⁷ According to Lauren Arnold, they settled with extended families and workshops in towns along the pilgrimage routes to Rome, particularly in the conservative city of Siena. Their evolving artistic production gave rise to a distinct “Byzantine” style. Arnold, Lauren. “*The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.*” The Silkroad Foundation, 2014, pp. 104.

on the mirror's right side nearly match the simplified phoenix on the carpet (Fig. 2.33). Through trade and missionary networks, Franciscans could understand Far Eastern culture and had ambitions for conquest in the vast Tatar domains. Those elements appearing in altarpieces held particular significance for the Franciscans in the late 13th century as they expanded their mission into the pagan East.

From the 13th to 14th centuries, increasing “Oriental” lettered inscriptions appeared in Italian painting and textiles. In both Armenia and Italy, language helped identify cultural groups. In multicultural artworks, inscriptions are sometimes the only means to identify a piece's origin. Armenian carpets are a good example—often distinguishable only by Armenian inscriptions and dates. When Marco Polo passed through Turkomania in south-central Anatolia, he noted,

“*The best and handsomest carpets in the world are wrought here, and also silks of crimson and other rich colours. Amongst its cities are those of Kogni(Konya), Kaisariah(Kayseri), and Sevasta(Sivas)*”³⁰⁸

Since Islamic tradition discouraged the depiction of human and animal figures on carpets, encouraging more simplified, abstract designs, it became difficult after the Ilkhanate's 1295 Islamization to incorporate dragons or phoenixes directly. Thus, complex Chinese images underwent simplification and were integrated into the geometric patterns of carpets. An example is a 14th-century dragon-phoenix carpet from the Nakhivan province of Greater Armenia, preserved in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin (Fig. 2.34). The geometrically abstracted dragons and phoenixes intertwine, forming a circle.

Dickran Kouymjian discussed the dragon-phoenix motifs in the 1286 *Lectionary of Het'um II* (Fig.2.10), noting that these Armenian illustrations predate the Ilkhanid dragon-phoenix tiles at Takht-i Sulaymān, implying independent stylistic origins³⁰⁹. Such Armenian dragon-phoenix motifs appear in Bartolomeo degli Erri's *Scenes from the Life of St. Vincent Ferrer* (ca. 1460) (Fig. 2.35). In that painting, the dragon motif dominates, with the phoenix motif occupying a small disconnected section (Fig. 2.36). Around the same time, Gentile da Fabriano painted the *Annunciation* in Rome (Fig. 2.37)—one of the Armenian pilgrimage destinations—where the Virgin Mary stands on an Oriental carpet (Fig. 2. 38). The leftmost portion of this carpet's design is lost, but the rightmost black-background figure resembles the geometricized dragon-phoenix pair seen in Bartolomeo degli Erri's painting, forming a circle with one large and one small figure. Similar imagery appears even earlier in Taddeo Gaddi's *St. Eloi in the Silversmith's Workshop* (ca. 1360) (Fig. 2. 39). Taddeo Gaddi, Giotto's pupil, worked with him for over twenty years, continuing Giotto's naturalistic style while adding refined decorative details and Oriental carpets. In Gaddi's painting, the carpet's patterns have become highly geometric. One red motif in the top-left section resembles the

³⁰⁸ Polo, Marco. *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Edited by Manuel Komroff, Translated by William Marsden, Modern Library, 2001.

³⁰⁹ Kouymjian, Dickran. “The Berlin Dragon-Phoenix Carper and Its Probable Armenian Origin.” *Armenian Rugs and Textiles. An Overview of Examples from Four Centuries. Exhibition Catalogue*, 2014, pp. 16-31. Kouymjian, Dickran. “Chinese Elements in Armenian Miniature Painting in the Mongol Period.” *Armenian Studies: In Memoriam Haig Berberian*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986, pp. 8.

abstracted dragon-phoenix forms(Fig. 2.40). The curled, bifurcated shape suggests a creature with wings and a tail. By deduction, the smaller figure paired with the larger one is likely a phoenix, and the larger figure is a dragon, making sense in the context of sacred carpets repeatedly depicted in medieval painting with patterns that feature a coiled body and claws.

As previously discussed, contacts between Italy and the Eastern Christian world (including Byzantium and Armenia) were greatly enhanced during the early Crusades, allowing Italian artists direct contact with Armenian and Byzantine artworks. In the 13th–14th centuries, Franciscan and Dominican missions sent by the Papacy to Greater Armenia and Italian merchants trading in Western Asia established ties with the Armenians. Meanwhile, Armenian diaspora communities settled in Italy, bringing with them Armenian art influenced by Chinese motifs. Lauren Arnold suggests that

*“Carpets in early Renaissance paintings can now be understood as visual markers of a demographic shift across the Mediterranean basin. Westward migrations of small communities of eastern Christians occurred over several centuries, as families of merchants, painters and craftsmen from Cilicia and the Armenian Highlands resettled in the hill towns of Italy along the pilgrimage roads to Rome. They brought their relic carpets with them and, over time as they assimilated into the sacraments of the Latin Church, the paintings with carpets became proud, familial reminders of their eastern past.”*³¹⁰

We can thus reassess the impact of the Armenian diaspora. Beyond the well-known trade, diplomacy, and religious interactions with the East, it hints at a previously unnoticed but plainly visible path of artistic influence—one rooted in ancient Eastern immigration, long overlooked in the historical narrative. Yet, when we rediscover it, it is no longer what it once was.

³¹⁰ Arnold, Lauren. “The Carpet Index: Rethinking the Oriental Carpet in Early Renaissance Paintings.” *The Silkroad Foundation*, 2014, pp.100-101.

Chapter 3 A Million Craftsmen: The Oriental Style of Franciscan Gold-Woven Silk in the 13th–14th Centuries

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Mongol Empire—for the first time in history—connected the China Seas and the Mediterranean, two maritime regions situated at the farthest ends of the Eurasian continent. Silk and textiles imbued with Chinese artistic sensibilities traveled along both land and sea routes to reach Italy, giving rise to what has become a familiar phenomenon: the appearance of “Chinoiserie” in Italian silk design. These imported Eastern fabrics, complex and resplendent in their craftsmanship, came to symbolize elite status, political authority, and immense wealth in Western society. In Venice, during the 16th and 17th centuries, the fascination with such luxurious silks prompted the issuing of over a hundred sumptuary laws aimed at regulating specific styles, fabrics, and dyes—an attempt to curb the culture of conspicuous silk consumption³¹¹. In this context, silk was not merely a textile; it became a pervasive visual and material phenomenon. Its circulation was facilitated not only by merchants and trade networks but also through the migration of craftsmen.

This chapter begins with an analysis of four silk textiles preserved by the Franciscan Order, the first Catholic mendicant order to undertake missionary work in China. It explores the extent to which these preserved silks were directly or indirectly influenced by the East, particularly by China. How were such influences transmitted,

³¹¹ Molà, Luca. “A Luxury Industry: The Production of Italian Silks 1400–1600.” Lambert, Bart and Wilson, Katherine Anne, (Eds.) *Europe’s Rich Fabric : The Consumption, Commercialisation, and Production of Luxury Textiles in Italy, the Low Countries and Neighbouring Territories (Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries)*., Routledge, 2016, pp. 205–35.

and through what specific routes or mechanisms did they operate? Today, silk textiles produced in Yuan-dynasty China and in other Mongol khanates can be found—more or less abundantly—in major museums across the world. How did the unprecedented flourishing of the silk industry during the 13th and 14th centuries come into being?

Rather than attributing this solely to the tastes of Mongol rulers or to inherited traditions of textile production, this chapter focuses on a group whose historical presence has often been marginalized due to their low social status: textile craftsmen. Just as the migration of 13th-century Lucchese weavers led to the diffusion of Lucchese silk patterns throughout Europe, so too did the Mongol khans—during their westward campaigns—capture, recruit, and relocate hundreds of thousands of craftsmen from Central and Western Asia. What did this vast movement of skilled labor bring about, and how did it shape the silk industries of both East and West?

3.1 The “Oriental Taste” in Franciscan Textiles

3.1.1 Two Silk dossals in the Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi

In the 13th century, driven by their mission to disseminate Christian doctrine, the Mendicant Orders—particularly the Franciscans—imposed strict limitations on the cost of artistic patronage. From its inception, the Franciscan Order was characterized by an ethos of poverty and austerity, embracing a beauty rooted in simplicity. It advocated for the use of fabrics that evoked the natural world (such as *Damasch*) rather than materials that deliberately displayed luxury in pursuit of admiration.

However, in 1230, Pope Gregory IX (1170–1241) issued a papal decree declaring that the Franciscan Rule, with its core emphasis on poverty, was not binding in matters of artistic production. This decree effectively legitimized the Order’s possession of property and marked the end of financial constraints on the creation of art³¹². It represented a decisive turning point: the Church officially permitted—and indeed encouraged—the Franciscans to employ the patronage of paintings, sculptures, architecture, illuminated manuscripts, textiles, and other forms of artistic production as a means of preaching and promoting the Christian faith.

The principal surviving collections of 13th- and 14th-century Franciscan textiles are preserved in two major locations: the *Basilica Papale e Sacro Convento di San Francesco* in Assisi, and the *Basilica di Sant’Antonio* along with the *Museo Antoniano* in Padua. The *Museo del Tesoro* in Assisi currently houses a catalogued collection of 412 textile pieces, including 73 chasubles, 47 dalmatics, 47 copes, 96 stoles, 6 humeral

³¹² Gregory IX. *Quo elongati*. 28 Apr. 1230. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. 1, edited by Ioannes Hyacinthus Sbaralea, Rome, Typographia Vaticana, 1759, pp. 74–79.

veils, 12 chalice veils, 8 albs, 8 mitres, 27 altar frontals (antependium), 3 dorsal hangings, 8 tapestries, and 1 processional banner³¹³.

Of these, five textile pieces dating to the 13th–14th centuries have been preserved in relatively complete condition: two are housed in the *Museo del Tesoro* in Assisi, and two others are located in the *Basilica di Sant'Antonio* in Padua. A fifth object, a mitre (*mitra*) dating to the late Middle Ages, is associated with the Franciscans and is currently housed within a reliquary in Pisa.

The two Assisi examples consist of 13th-century altar dossals (*paramenti d'altare*), currently displayed on the south wall of the Gothic Hall (*Sala Gotica*) in the *Museo del Tesoro della Basilica*. One of these is a yellow silk dossal embroidered in gold, featuring leopards, parrots, and griffins (Fig. 3.1). The other is a red silk woven with gold thread, adorned with floral motifs and interlaced chain-like patterns (Fig. 3.2).³¹⁴

Compared to other mendicant orders, the number of surviving silk textiles associated with the Franciscans is relatively limited. As a close disciple and devoted companion of Saint Francis, Brother Leo (*Frate Leone*) offers critical insight into the order's early attitude toward clothing in his *Specchio di perfezione* (*Speculum perfectionis*), written shortly after Francis's death. He recounts:

*“In no case would [Francis] allow the friars to possess more than two tunics, although he did permit them to be patched. He said he abhorred fine fabrics and harshly reproached those who sought them out. To encourage others by his own example, he always wore tunics patched with coarse sackcloth. And on his deathbed, he commanded that his burial garment be covered with sackcloth.”*³¹⁵

This testimony reflects the Franciscan ideal of poverty and humility, which profoundly shaped the community's material culture. The use of liturgical garments in the Franciscan tradition carries different theological and historical meanings depending on context. The critical issue was not the garment itself, but how its luxury was

³¹³ In addition, the museum preserves several textile relics associated with Saint Francis himself—including his tunic and hood, under-tunic, slippers, burial shroud, fragments of rope, and hairshirt—as well as relics of Saint Joseph of Cupertino (fragments of his tunic and two chasubles), and some commemorative garments of Pope Clement XIV (r. 1769–1774), including his *saturno* (a wide-brimmed clerical hat) and shoes.

³¹⁴ For research on these two textiles, see: Fratini, Giuseppe. *Storia della Basilica e del Convento di S. Francesco in Assisi*. Ranieri Guasti, 1882, pp. 171; Venturi, Adolfo. Un drappo prezioso del secolo XIII nella Basilica di San Francesco d'Assisi, 1906, pp. 217; Gnoli, Umberto. *L'arte umbra alla Mostra di Perugia*. Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1908, pp. 82; Bonaventura, Marinangeli. “I drappi detti di S. Francesco”, *Miscellanea francescana di storia, di lettere, di arti*, vol. 16, 1915, pp. 26-29; Kleinschmidt, Beda. Die Basilika San Francesco in Assisi, 1915, vol. 1, pp. 296; Zocca, Emma. Assisi. Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia, 1936, pp. 154; Ricci, Elisa. Ricami italiani antichi e moderni, 1925, Fig. 3.1; Santangelo, Antonino. *Tessuti d'arte italiani dal XII al XVIII secolo*. Milano: Electa Editrice, 1958, pp. 17-18, tav. 19; Schuette, Marie; Müller-Christensen, Sigrid. *Il ricamo nella storia e nell'arte*, 1963, figg. 76-77; Von Wilckens, Leonie. *Die textilen Künste: von der Spätantike bis um 1500*. CH Beck, 1991, pp. 187-188, tav. 209; Scott, Philippa. *The book of silk*, 1993, pp. 153; D'Agostino, Maria Rosa. *La seta e la sua via*, 1994, p. 191, n. 121, tav. pp. 216.

³¹⁵ “In nessun caso [Francesco] ammetteva che i frati avessero più di due tonache, che però concedeva fossero rattoppate con pezze. Diceva che le stoffe ricercate le aveva in orrore, e ruvidamente rimproverava quelli che facevano il contrario. E per eccitarli con il suo esempio, portava sempre cuciti sulla sua tonaca dei pezzi di sacco grossolano. E, morente, comandò che la tonaca per le esequie fosse ricoperta di sacco”. Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, a leading authority on historical textiles, has proposed that the patches and mends found on the tunic of Saint Francis—currently housed in the *Sala delle Reliquie* of the Basilica in Assisi—were likely sewn by Saint Clare. She outlines possible scenarios supporting this claim in her studies: *Textilkonservierung*, part of the *Schriften der Abegg-Stiftung* series, Bern, 1988.

understood: if it served to express personal vanity or accumulate wealth, it was firmly rejected. However, if rich textiles were used to glorify God—without detracting from the Church’s care for the poor or compromising the humility of Christ—they might be deemed acceptable under certain circumstances. Indeed, medieval Franciscan friars continued to permit the use of fine artistic objects in the context of altarpieces and sacred vessels, provided that such beauty was directed toward the service of faith rather than personal luxury.

Among the two textiles preserved in the Franciscan Basilica of Assisi, the yellow silk fabric in Figure 3.1 was first woven using fine yellow threads in the *Sciamito* technique (also known as *Shamito*)³¹⁶, a diagonal twill weave. The decorative motifs were then outlined using multicolored silk threads embroidered in *punto erba* (stem stitch), while the gold areas were filled using the *or couché* (couched goldwork) technique to enhance the visual richness and luminosity³¹⁷. Additional details and border embellishments were created using gold and silver threads (wrapped around a yellow silk core) and multicolored silk threads applied with *punto catenella* (chain stitch). According to an inventory dated 1338—specifically Section VIII: *De dossalibus pro altaribus conventus* (no. 126)—the red silk dossal depicted in Figure 3.2 is listed alongside the yellow textile in Figure 3.1:

“*De dossalibus pro altaribus conventus, 126 [¿] unus magnus pannus zallus, cum grifonibus et aliis bestiis et avibus de auro*”³¹⁸
 (“*One large yellow cloth, decorated with griffins, other beasts, and birds in gold.*”)

The inventory states that these two large dossals, along with a now-lost third piece—“One red cloth, with leopards in large roundels, entirely gilded”—were donated by the “Emperor of the Greeks” (*Imperator Grecorum*)³¹⁹. Scholarly consensus identifies this donor as John of Brienne (*Giovanni di Brienne*, ca. 1148–1237), who appeared in Umbria in 1229 and was known to be a devoted follower of Saint Francis. In 1228, he was named regent of the Latin Empire; given this historical context, it is plausible that he donated these two textiles, likely produced in Palermo³²⁰. According to Marinangeli’s 1915 study, the two dossals were probably used during the 1230 translation ceremony of Saint Francis’s body from the Church of San Giorgio to the Lower Basilica of San Francesco. This liturgical use is believed to be the reason they were later venerated as relics and preserved for centuries³²¹. The animal motifs on the

³¹⁶ Sciamito, known in the Arabic or Islamic world as *Shamito*, is a double-faced textile woven using an ancient technique that originated during the Byzantine period. This weaving method produces a fabric with a distinctive dual surface: one side is typically smooth and lustrous, while the other reveals subtly emerging patterns. The term *Sciamito*—derived from the Italian word for “shadow”—refers to these “shadow-like motifs” or “dimly perceptible designs” that appear to hover beneath the surface of the textile. See Cigada, Sara. “Note sullo «sciàmito» a partire dal “Galateo” e dalle sue prime traduzioni.” *Il nostro sogno di una cosa*. Archinto, 2015, pp. 65-78.

³¹⁷ The gilding technique referred to here involves gold threads made by wrapping gilded silver foil (or gilded white-metal foil) around a yellow silk core, which are then laid onto the surface and couched with yellow silk threads. See: Fanelli, Rosalia Bonito, and Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal Poggetto. *Il Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*. Vol. 3, Casa Editrice Francescana, 1980, pp. 79.

³¹⁸ *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*[AFH]. Vol. 7, 1914, pp. 82.

³¹⁹ “*Item unus pannus rubeus, cum leopardis in rotis magnis, totus deauratus*” Ibid.

³²⁰ see Fanelli, Bonito. *Il Tesoro e la Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi: Saggi e catalogo*. Assisi, Casa Editrice Francescana. 1980, pp. 80-81.

³²¹ Fanelli, Bonito. 1980, pp. 79-80.

textile in Figure 3.1 primarily include confronted griffins, confronted parrots, and a third species that closely resembles the griffin motif. These animal figures are framed and interconnected by scrolling vegetal tendrils, which serve both as ornamental framing and to fill the negative space. Scholarly debate continues as to whether the birds depicted in the silk are eagles or parrots; however, the identification of the griffins is generally undisputed.

Three other Italian textiles from the same period share similar iconographic features. One is the papal cape of Boniface VIII from Anagni Cathedral (Fig. 3.3); the second is the decorative hanging (*telo da parato*) from the Basilica of Sant'Antonio in Padua, discussed later in this chapter (Fig. 3.4); and the third is the *Piviale dei pappagalli* (Parrot Chasuble) housed in the Vicenza, Church of Santa Corona in Vicenza (Fig. 3.5).

The *Papal Cape of Anagni* was a gift from Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303) to the cathedral of his birthplace, the Cattedrale of Santa Maria Annunziata. It can be dated to before 1300 and is recorded in the papal treasury inventory between 1298 and 1303 as an “*aurifrisio de samito laborato de auro et lapidibus pretiosis*”—a brocade woven with gold and adorned with gems³²². The circular medallions on the cape feature alternating double-headed eagles (*aquila bicipite*), winged griffins, and confronted birds, matching the pattern found on the dossal of the cathedral's high altar (Fig. 3.6). Silks used in liturgical vestments or church furnishings tend to be better preserved, and the identical iconography and stylistic features of these two textiles suggest they may have been cut from the same bolt of cloth, or at the very least woven within the same production context. This supports the hypothesis that both the Papal Cape of Anagni and the dossal from Anagni Cathedral were woven in Rome. The winged griffins and double-headed eagles on the cape appear individually within two concentric decorative registers. The double-headed eagle, framed within roundels, clearly reflects a Byzantine visual model³²³. Antonio Santangelo argues that the Latin inscriptions, as well as the decorative motifs featuring pearls and gemstones, reveal strong continuity with the metalwork traditions of Palermo, thereby ruling out the possibility that the textile is of Greek origin (“*escludono a priori che si tratti di un'opera greca*”). He proposes instead that it may date to the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1261–1282).³²⁴

The roundel motif (or *rotulus*) has its origins in Persian Sasanian art, and its appearance in Italian textiles is generally understood to have entered through Byzantine influence. This is largely due to the Byzantine Empire's long-standing control over key

³²² Molinier, Émile, ed. *Inventaire du trésor du Saint-Siège sous Boniface VIII (1295)*. Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes, vol. 43, 1882, pp. 19–310, 626–646; vol. 45, 1884, pp. 31–57; vol. 46, 1885, pp. 16–44; vol. 47, 1886, pp. 646–667; vol. 49, 1888, pp. 226–237. For a study on the textiles donated by Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) to the Cathedral of Anagni, see: Elster, Christiane. *Die textilen Geschenke Papst Bonifaz' VIII. (1294–1303) an die Kathedrale von Anagni: päpstliche Paramente des späten Mittelalters als Medien der Repräsentation, Gaben und Erinnerungsträger*. Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018.

³²³ Regarding the introduction of the double-headed eagle motif into Europe, Giorgio Vespignani argues that it was through contact with the Anatolian Seljuk Turks that this emblem began to spread into the Romano-Byzantine world between the 12th and 13th centuries, and subsequently expanded into the western Mediterranean regions. See: Vespignani, Giorgio. “*Per lo studio della influenza turca nell'impero dei Romani: il caso dell'aquila bicipite (secc. XII–XIII)*.” *Porphyra*, no. 25, 2016, pp. 132.

³²⁴ Antonino, Santangelo. *Tessuti D'arte Italiani: Dal XII al XVIII Secolo*. Milano: Electa Editrice, 1958, pp. 17–8.

nodes in the East–West silk trade, including cities such as Constantinople, Acre, and Tabriz, which served as critical intermediaries for the transmission of silk and other luxury textiles to the West. In contrast, Iranian silks typically reached the Mediterranean via Central Asia, the Abbasid capital of Baghdad, and Egypt, rather than through direct routes to Italy. Italian city-states such as Venice and Genoa did not establish relatively stable and direct trade links with the Eastern Mediterranean until the 12th and 13th centuries, and even then, they remained heavily dependent on Byzantine commercial networks. An illustrative example of this mediated transmission can be seen in the cape from Anagni Cathedral, as well as in the red silk dossal from the Basilica of Sant’Antonio, both of which feature confronted birds within roundels. In these designs, the incorporation of grapevine leaves and palm motifs between the birds demonstrates a distinctly Italian reinterpretation of the otherwise Eastern roundel pattern.

Textiles with roundel-based decoration are relatively rare in late medieval Italy. In my survey of over 160 extant Italian figured silks from the 13th and 14th centuries, only nine examples feature this motif. Among them is a fragmentary liturgical vestment from the Sangiorgi Collection in Rome, decorated with red parrots enclosed within tangential roundels set against a green background. The birds are finely rendered, with heads and claws outlined in gold thread. Another piece closely related to the parrot-patterned silk preserved in Assisi is the Parrot Chasuble in the Museo Diocesano Pietro G. Nonis in Vicenza—one of the museum’s most important holdings (Fig. 3.5). This chasuble may be produced in the *tiraz* royal workshop in Palermo³²⁵. Its provenance has given rise to two main hypotheses. One suggests that it was a gift from King Louis IX of France (1214–1270) to several Franciscan friars and to Bishop Bartolomeo da Breganze of Vicenza (ca. 1200 – ca. 1270, canonized in 1793), during the Seventh Crusade (1248–1254). In 1266, Charles I of Anjou (r. 1266–1282), the brother of Louis IX, defeated Manfred (r. 1258–1266) of the Hohenstaufen dynasty—then ruler of Sicily—at the Battle of Benevento. Manfred was killed in the battle. With the support of his elder brother Louis IX, Charles became King of Sicily and, in return, Louis—himself a devout Franciscan and papal loyalist—launched the Eighth Crusade in 1270 with Charles's military assistance. Charles I established a new seat of power in Naples, effectively shifting the political center of the Kingdom of Sicily to the Italian mainland—a state henceforth known as the "Kingdom of Naples." During the 12th and 13th centuries, Vicenza was a member of the Lombard League and a long-standing supporter of the Guelph (papal) faction. Following the Angevin conquest of Sicily in 1266, political relations between Vicenza and the newly established Angevin Kingdom of Naples transitioned from hostility to alignment due to their shared papal allegiance. Although Charles lost control of the island of Sicily during the Sicilian Vespers of 1282,

³²⁵ The precise location and workshop where this textile was produced remains undocumented in current scholarship. However, according to scholars, the expulsion of Muslims by Frederick II in 1220, along with the influx of Christian settlers, led to a significant decline in silk workshops in the region. As a result, silk production began to shift toward the use of alternative fibers such as cotton and linen. See: Smit, Timothy. “Weaving Connections: Sicilian Silk in the Medieval Mediterranean.” *Textile History*, vol. 52, no. 1/2, May 2021, pp. 5–22.

it remains plausible that the Parrot Chasuble may have arrived in Vicenza during this period of improved relations.³²⁶

A second hypothesis proposes that the chasuble was a gift from Frederick II (r. 1198–1250) to Ezzelino III da Romano (1194–1259), who ruled Vicenza between 1236 and 1259. In 1236, Frederick II launched a campaign against the Lombard League, beginning with the invasion of Verona and Vicenza. After conquering Vicenza, he appointed the Ghibelline Ezzelino III da Romano as its governor, effectively bringing the city under direct imperial control. Upon Frederick’s death in 1250, Vicenza quickly reverted to its former Guelph alignment, rejoining the Lombard League and opposing the Hohenstaufen succession until reconciliation with the Angevin regime later in the century. Of particular note is Ezzelino’s marriage in 1238 to Frederick’s daughter, Selvaggia. This close personal alliance would have provided ample opportunity for the exchange of gifts, including luxury textiles³²⁷. While neither hypothesis is supported by direct documentary evidence, both reflect broader patterns of textile circulation from the Mediterranean south to northern Italy.

The red silk textile preserved in the Basilica of Assisi (Fig. 3.2) was embroidered using various threads: silver threads wrapped around white silk cores, gold-silver threads wrapped around yellow silk cores, and multicolored threads in shades of blue, purple, white, and yellow. Embroidery techniques employed include couched goldwork, flat stitch, and chain stitch³²⁸. One notable feature of this red-ground textile is the near absence of repeated floral branches—each tendril appears unique—and in certain areas, the preliminary designs for the embroidery, drawn with silver dots, remain visible. The 1338 inventory refers to this textile as follows:

De dossalibus pro altaribus conventus, 126 [¿] unus magnus pannus rubeus, cum vitibus aureis (“One large red cloth, decorated with golden vines”)³²⁹.

A distinctive characteristic of this textile lies in its deliberate emphasis on texture and dimensionality rather than on a smooth, flat surface. The gold threads remain consistently on the surface of the fabric, never piercing through, creating a subtle relief in the floral motifs that enhances their splendor and luminosity. When used in religious rituals or liturgical vestments, such gold embroidery rendered garments resplendent with divine brilliance. Because of the stiffness and difficulty of sewing with metallic threads, which require significantly more skill than silk embroidery, and because of the

³²⁶ Elster, Christiane, and Susan Luther. “Introduction: Towards an Unpacking of the Medieval Textile Gift.” *Textile Gifts in the Middle Ages: Objects, Actors, and Representations*, Bibliotheca Hertziana, 2022, pp. 7–23.

³²⁷ Conti, Susanna, and Azelia Lombardi. “Il frammento con i pappagalli. L’intervento conservativo.” *Il piviale dei pappagalli: Dal trono all’altare*, Vicenza, Museo Diocesano di Vicenza, 17 dicembre 2014 - 12 aprile 2015, *Quaderni della Fondazione Giuseppe Roi*, Fondazione Giuseppe Roi, 2014, pp. 89-113.

³²⁸ For analyses of this silk textile, see: Umberto Gnoli, *L’arte umbra alla Mostra di Perugia*. Bergamo, Istituto italiano d’arti grafiche, 1908, pp. 82; Marinangeli Bonaventura, “I drappi detti di S. Francesco,” 1915, pp. 26–29; Kleinschmidt, Beda. *Die Basilika San Francesco in Assisi*, vol. I (Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1915), pp. 297; Alessandri, Leto and F. Pennacchi, “Inventari della sacristia del Sacro Convento di Assisi,” in *Atti della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani in Assisi*. Assisi, Quaracchi, 1920, pp. 17; Fanelli, Rosalia Bonito. *Tessuti e ricami del monastero di S. Vincenzo in Prato*, 1988, pp. 80-81, no. 18.

³²⁹ AFH. Vol. 7, 1914, pp. 82. Following restoration by the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg in 1978, both the red and yellow textiles have largely been withdrawn from public display due to their delicate condition. To date, the only approved loan for exhibition has been *La seta e la sua via* (The Silk and Its Road), held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome from January 23 to April 10, 1994.

use of multiple colored threads, the production of such a textile would have demanded exceptional craftsmanship and technical complexity.

A comparison with a 14th-century turquoise blue silk, woven in Iran and now preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 3.7), reveals a symmetrical arrangement of grapevines and leaves, whose repetition can be clearly counted. In contrast, the red silk in Assisi displays tendrils remarkably similar to those found in the yellow-ground textile also preserved there (Fig. 3.8), suggesting more than mere coincidence—possibly indicating a shared place of production, likely Palermo. Unlike the naturalistic rendering of grape leaves typical of the later medieval period, this embroidered textile emphasizes an abstract, stylized approach to vegetal structures. The deviation from realism is consistent with the influence of foreign design vocabularies, which often reshaped local aesthetic traditions. In the scrollwork of this textile—combining floral and geometric motifs—one can discern a blend of Far Eastern, Byzantine, and Islamic elements. The use of couched gold embroidery (*Cujin embroidery*) especially resembles the *zhezhi hua* (“folded-branch floral”) or *chazhi hua* (“entwined-branch floral”) common in Yuan dynasty China.

In Chinese brocaded textiles from the Tang dynasty onward, especially in *zhézhī huā* (“folded-branch floral”) patterns, abstraction in the representation of leaves and branches became widespread under the conditions of increasingly sophisticated embroidery techniques. One could even argue that abstraction itself came to constitute a tradition. A notable example is a brocaded couching textile excavated in 1987 from the underground crypt of Famen Temple, dating no later than 874 CE. This artifact—a miniature funerary *banbi* jacket made of crimson gauze with gold-thread embroidery—was part of a set of micro-scale votive garments, each no larger than the palm of a hand (Fig. 3.9). The neckline of the garment is embroidered with cloud motifs on either side, while the rest of the surface is densely adorned with folded floral patterns. An inscribed stone inventory found in the crypt, titled *Inventory of Garments Accompanying the True Relic* (*Suizhenshen Yiwuzhang*), records over 700 items of silk clothing offered as burial goods, among which five are explicitly described as brocaded with gold threads (*cujin jin*)³³⁰. Like the red silk textile preserved in Assisi, the *zhézhī huā* motif on the Famen Temple piece is formed using gilt thread wound around a silk core, which is then fixed to the fabric surface in the *or couché* (or brocaded couching) technique. The gold threads are secured by a secondary thread (usually silk) passing over them at regular intervals, creating raised, gleaming designs on the surface. This method of gold-thread ornamentation evolved throughout the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties and remained a hallmark of high-quality textile craftsmanship. Famen Temple, a royal Buddhist temple during the Tang dynasty, also yielded 20 pieces of glassware from Eastern Roman and Islamic origins. These objects likely reached China via the Silk Road, carried by merchants and travelers from distant western regions. Once imported into the Chinese imperial court, such precious artifacts were frequently dedicated to Buddhist temples as acts of religious devotion. Among the 20 pieces, approximately two-thirds are typical

³³⁰ Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology [陕西省考古研究院]. *Famen Temple Archaeological Excavation Report* [《法门寺考古挖掘报告》], Vol. 2. Cultural Relics Publishing House [文物出版社], 2007, pp. 254–258.

Islamic glass; two bottles and two beakers display a fusion of Eastern Roman and Sasanian Persian elements; and a set of teacups, saucers, and two shallow dishes with ring feet are in Chinese style³³¹. These latter items may have been specifically produced for the Chinese market, reflecting Tang tastes and indicating the extent to which cross-Eurasian trade enabled the circulation of fashionable textiles and luxury goods between the far ends of the continent³³². By the Yuan dynasty, a distinction had emerged between *brocaded couching* (or *couché*) and *nasīj*, a type of gold-thread fabric in which the metal thread was typically woven directly into the textile structure rather than applied later via embroidery. *Nasīj* employed a *weft-faced brocade* technique, in which gold threads functioned as wefts interwoven with silk warps during the weaving process. Nonetheless, some *nasīj* textiles also exhibit traces of *or couché* embroidery, suggesting hybrid or complementary techniques. From a purely technical perspective, the red silk preserved in the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi appears to have been produced using the same technique as that found in *Nasīj* textiles, with floral motifs rendered on the fabric surface.

Within the *Cappella del Tesoro* in the apse of the Basilica of Sant'Antonio in Padua, two funerary covering cloths dating from the 13th to 14th centuries are on display (Figs. 3.4 and 3.10)³³³. In addition to these, four other textiles from the same period survive, including white linen cloth, a monastic tunic, and a chasuble, though all are in a severely deteriorated condition³³⁴.

The more intact of the two shrouds—restored and preserved—is executed in pink and yellow grounds, with confronted birds facing away from each other in body but turned toward one another in head, enclosed within roundels (Fig. 3.11). Between the birds appears a palm motif, while grapevine leaves decorate the exterior of the roundels. The second textile, worked on a red ground, features yellow lozenge-shaped patterns framed by jagged lines and arranged in a horizontal checkerboard formation. Each unit contains a stylized palm leaf composed of twenty sections, enclosing a central eight-petaled rosette, creating a highly geometric composition (Fig. 3.12). Textile historian Doretta Davanzo Poli (1945–2020) argued that in considering the origin of such fabrics, one must "give due consideration to technical data, such as the weight and thickness of

³³¹ According to the inventory inscription (*wuzhang bei*) found in the underground palace of Famen Temple, various silk textiles were offered by members of the Tang imperial family, including Empress Wu Zetian, Emperor Yizong, Emperor Xizong, Empress Dowager Huian, Zhaoyi, and the Lady of Jin State. See: 韩伟[Han Wei]. "A Study of the Tang-Dynasty Inventory of Vestments Accompanying the True Relic Found in the Underground Palace of Famen Temple." [法门寺地宫唐代随真身衣物帐考]. *Wenwu* [《文物》 Cultural Relics], no. 5, 1991, pp. 30.

³³² For the full text of the inscription, see: 韩伟[Han Wei]. "法门寺地宫唐代随真身衣物帐考 [A Study of the Tang-Dynasty Inventory of Vestments Accompanying the True Relic Found in the Underground Palace of Famen Temple]". *Wenwu* [文物], no. 5, 1991, pp. 27–37; and 刘薇[Liu Wei]. *从法门寺地宫物帐碑看唐代佛教供养* [Study on Buddhist Support in the Tang Dynasty from the Clothing Account Tablet of the Famen Temple Underground Palace]. Master's thesis, Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology [北京服装学院], 2021, pp. 24–26.

³³³ For a technical analysis of these two textiles, see: Poli, Doretta Davanzo, editor. *Basilica del Santo. I tessuti*. Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995, pp. 59–61.

³³⁴ In the thirteenth century, Padua was primarily known for its wool production. When restoring a damaged *tonaca*, textile conservator M. Flury-Lemberg described the condition as follows: "The wool fabric had been destroyed by oxidation. Nevertheless, it was still possible to distinguish part of the hood, fragments of the two sleeves, and some remnants from the lower edge of the garment. All the pieces of fabric were flattened with the help of distilled water, dried, and arranged according to the shape of a *tonaca*, and finally protected by a transparent glass-like covering." *Bulletin CIETA*, nos. 61–62, 1985, pp. 62.

the fabric, the density and quality of the materials, the height of the piece, and the execution of the work, particularly in cases where it has been preserved."³³⁵ Decorative style alone, she warned, is insufficient to determine provenance or place of manufacture. The confronted bird textile (Fig. 3.11) measures 122 x 314 cm, with its post-restoration dimensions recorded as 123 x 323 cm. Although these dimensions are nearly identical to a comparable textile from Forlì, Poli points out that the measurements do not conform to the standard widths established in the *Capitolare dei Samiteri* (1265), the Venetian statute regulating silk production. According to this text, *sciamiti* silks were expected to measure two *braccia* in height (ca. 136 cm), while *azze* were required to reach three *braccia* in width (ca. 192 cm). Furthermore, the presence of linen threads along the borders—prohibited for *sciamiti* under the 1265 statute—effectively excludes the possibility of Venetian manufacture for these pieces³³⁶. Nevertheless, Poli proposed a hypothesis that these textiles might still have been woven in Venice, tentatively dating their production to around 1268. In 1256, the Venetian nobleman Marco Quirini was appointed *podestà* of Padua, following the long-standing tradition, dating back to 1175, of inviting a "man of integrity and wisdom" from outside the city to govern it. In 1265, another Venetian, Lorenzo Tiepolo, was elected to the same office. During his administration, chronicles praised him for his moral uprightness and generosity, and credited him with fostering good relations between the two cities—though the relationship was not always peaceful. According to civic records, Padua was obligated to spend 4,000 lire annually on "the works and the church of Sant'Ammoneus"³³⁷ By the time of the second archaeological survey in 1310, however, the possibility of transporting Venetian textiles to Padua was virtually nonexistent. The cities had become nearly hostile entities: in 1309, Padua aligned with the papacy and took part in anti-Venetian actions, while Venice, during this period, was even declared under interdict.³³⁸ Despite their geographic proximity, the two cities functioned as if they were on separate planets—isolated from each other not only in terms of commerce, but also in intellectual, political, and religious discourse.

Therefore, if these two textiles were indeed produced in Venice, the most plausible timeframe would fall between 1265 and 1300, during a period when political and commercial exchanges between the two cities were still relatively active. Although the textiles in question do not fully conform to the technical standards prescribed in the *Capitolare dei Samiteri* for *sciamiti* or *azze* fabrics, it is worth considering that the enforcement of such regulations may have allowed for a certain degree of flexibility—particularly in the case of commissions by aristocratic patrons or ecclesiastical institutions, where exceptions to normative practices were not uncommon.

More importantly, a technical analysis of the textiles reveals that despite certain features inconsistent with Venetian norms—such as the use of linen threads along the borders—the fabrics nonetheless exhibit a high level of technical sophistication and compositional refinement, closely aligned with the craftsmanship of high-end products

³³⁵ Poli, Doretta Davanzo, editor. *Basilica del Santo. I tessuti*. Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995, pp. 59-61.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Gennari, Giuseppe. *Annali della città di Padova*. dalla tipografia Remondini, vol. I, 1804, pp. 8.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

from the Venetian *Samiteri* guild. This apparent tension between “stylistic conformity” and “technical deviation” may in fact point to the likelihood of custom-made production outside the strict regulatory framework. In other words, the official standards outlined in contemporary statutes should not be treated as the sole criterion for determining a textile’s provenance. Instead, we must consider the intersection of material technique, intended function, and historical context in order to reassess the trajectories and cultural identities of these two fabrics.

3.1.2 The Eagle, the Parrot, and the Phoenix: Avian Motifs in Franciscan Textiles

Avian motifs constituted a shared visual language among Chinese, Iranian, and Italian weavers. In 13th–14th century Italian silk textiles, bird motifs are ubiquitous, depicting species such as falcons, phoenixes, parrots, swans, pelicans, doves, peacock-like birds, winged *qilin*, and other ordinary birds whose species are indistinguishable. In the Middle Ages, birds were often associated with spirituality and the sacred—for example, in the New Testament account of Christ’s baptism, birds became symbols of the Holy Spirit³³⁹. The Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in China exhibited a distinctly multicultural character in its textile production, shaped by the combined influences of Mongol steppe culture, the Islamic world (including the Ilkhanate and Chagatai Khanate), Song and Jin traditions from the Central Plains, as well as techniques from Central Asia and Tibet. Bird motifs appeared on ceramics, textiles, and metalwork, with representative patterns including phoenixes, parrots, cranes, wild geese, mandarin ducks, peacocks, eagles, magpies, and swans. Several notable changes emerged in the avian decorations of 13th–14th century Iranian and Chinese textiles:

First, more refined techniques enabled the creation of increasingly complex bird imagery, with greater use of brocade and compound weave techniques. Second, the rise of the Mongol Empire led to the flourishing of Silk Road trade and intensified East–West cultural exchange, resulting in hybridized design styles. Bird representations in Iranian silks—more strongly influenced by Central Asian styles—tended to be more ornamental (Fig. 3.13), whereas those influenced by Chinese aesthetics leaned toward realism, emphasizing dynamic motion (Fig. 3.14). Third, the development of a market economy led to increased demand for luxury textiles among royal courts, religious institutions, and the merchant class. From this period onward, precious textiles began

³³⁹ “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.” *The Holy Bible*. Authorized King James Version, Thomas Nelson, 1987. Matthew 3:16. See also: Clason, Christopher R. “Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages.” *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 46-47.

to appear frequently in paintings by contemporary artists, serving as significant visual elements.

Among the textiles preserved in the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi and the Basilica of Sant'Antonio, the most striking feature is the motif of confronted birds, which appears in both collections. Regarding the question of whether the birds depicted are parrots or eagles, Rosalia Bonito Fanelli, in her 1980 study, described the motifs on the Assisi textiles as paired griffins and double eagles (*aquile*), referring to a “rose window with eagles”³⁴⁰. In contrast, Antonio Santangelo identified the birds on the same textile as parrots³⁴¹. Some scholars, such as Maureen C. Miller, refer to similar patterns more ambiguously, describing them as “griffins, double-headed eagles, and two birds facing some kind of flower.”³⁴² A 1311 papal inventory also describes a “cope made of red samite of Cyprus work” with large roundels and intricate ornamentation. This entry likewise mentions the presence of paired “parrots.”

*“Cope: beautiful, made of red samite of Cyprus work with a pattern of large roundels with two circles of gold and silk, and within these circles are vines and leaves in gold thread, and in the middle of some roundels are griffins, in others double parrots, and in others double-headed eagles.”*³⁴³

In the 1361 textile inventory of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, a white *diasper* cope woven in the Lucchese tradition is recorded with a pattern of “birds and deer” (*laborato ad aves et cervos*), where the term “deer” should likely be interpreted as referring to gazelles.³⁴⁴ Another entry from the same inventory reads:

*A red diasper chasuble, decorated with parrots, whose heads, roundels of wings, and feet are woven in gold thread; and with deer, whose heads and feet are also worked in gold; with certain flowers in the center ... in the Lucchese style.]*³⁴⁵

Here again, the term *cervis* (deer) is more accurately interpreted as “gazelle.” What becomes apparent is that the identification of the bird species in such textiles was often vague and inconsistent for the compilers of these inventories. In the former entry, the

³⁴⁰ Fanelli, Rosalia Bonito, and Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal Poggetto. *Il Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*. Vol. 3. Casa Editrice Francescana, 1980, pp. 79, Fig. 3.XCII, Tavola 14.

³⁴¹ In his description of this textile, Santangelo refers to it as a “*dossale in seta gialla a ricami in oro, con leopardi, pappagalli e grifi*” (“yellow silk dorsal embroidered in gold, featuring leopards, parrots, and griffins”), and attributes its place of origin to Palermo. See: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII al XVIII Secolo*. Electa Editrice, 1958, pp. 14–15, 236.

³⁴² Miller, Maureen C. “A Descriptive Language of Dominion? Curial Inventories, Clothing, and Papal Monarchy c. 1300.” *Textile History*, vol. 48, no. 2, July 2017, pp. 178.

³⁴³ *Regesti Clementis Papae V*, p. 419. ‘unum pulcrum pluviale de samito rubeo de opere cipri, laboratum ad magnos compassus rotundos cum duobus circulis de auro et serico, et inter ipsos circulos sunt vites et folia de auro filato, et in medio aliquorum compassuum sunt grifones, et in aliquibus aliis sunt pappagalli duplices et in aliis aquile cum duplice capite. Et inter dictos compassus sunt alii minores compassus cum quatuor foliis, que folia habent lilium in capite. Et habe aurifrigium laboratum ad multos compassus de perlis et in medio compassuum sunt cruces de serico rubeo, viridi et indico. Et habet caputium de dico opere cum perlis et aquila in medio’.

³⁴⁴ Müntz, Eugène, and Arthur Lincoln Frothingham. *Il Tesoro della basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano dal XIII al XV secolo con una scelta d'inventarii inediti*. Soc. romana di storia patria, 1883, pp.39. “*Una planeta de dyaspero albo de opere Lucano laborato ad aves et cervos cum capitibus et pedibus et rotunditatibus alarum avium et quibusdam parvis floribus de auro.*”

³⁴⁵ Molinier, Émile. “Inventaire du trésor du saint siège: sous bonface VIII (1295).(Suite).” *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* vol.46, 1885, pp. 33. “*Una planeta de dyaspero rubeo, cum pappagallis, cum capitibus, rotunditatibus alarum, et pedibus de auro, et cervis cum capitibus et pedibus de auro, et certis floribus in medio ... de opere Lucano.*”

birds are omitted entirely; in the latter, they are described as parrots based on the writer's own interpretation. In fact, no textual evidence exists that allows for a definitive classification or identification of the species.

The bird imagery on the Parrot Chasuble preserved in Vicenza, which closely resembles that on other textiles, is generally believed to represent parrots. In the 1361 textile inventory of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome alone, there are no fewer than seven entries describing textiles as being decorated with "parrots."³⁴⁶ However, in the case of the textiles from the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, the Basilica of Sant'Antonio, and the cape of Boniface VIII from Anagni, there is no definitive textual evidence to support what kind of birds are actually depicted on the fabrics. Identification can only be made through iconographic analysis of the compositional elements or scenes, or through physical and technical comparison with contemporary textiles of the same origin. Classifying 13th–14th century Italian silks featuring birds according to style or provenance may help clarify the symbolic meanings of these avian forms as they appeared in medieval liturgical vestments and religious settings.

Confronted-bird motifs are often flanked or centered by varying vegetal elements—frequently including palm motifs, pomegranate motifs, or pinecone motifs—that resonate with the prototype of the Iranian Tree of Life. Just as the double-headed eagle—possibly influenced by Babylonian traditions and appearing atop the Tree of Life in depictions dating back to the 18th to 13th centuries BCE—became the state symbol of Byzantium from the 13th century onward, so too may the confronted-bird motif have entered European visual culture through its association with the Tree of Life³⁴⁷.

One category of confronted-bird silks appears frequently in this period. Inventory records from the 12th and 13th centuries often mention *lucani*, that is, Lucchese cloths, decorated with griffins, gazelles (referred to as "deer" in the inventories), or eagles. The eagles usually appear in pairs, with their bodies and heads facing in opposite directions. These fabrics were referred to as *diasperati* or *diaspri*, made using a very particular and refined weaving technique, and were among the most precious silks of the time.

On these Lucchese silks, the heads, legs, and sometimes the upper wings of the eagles are outlined in gold or silver thread, distinguishing them from the rest of the body.

The tail feathers are rendered in two or three layered bands, resembling the *Accipiter striatus* (Sharp-shinned Hawk) (see Fig. 3.15). In addition to *Accipiter striatus*, other raptors such as *Erythrotriorchis radiatus* (Red Goshawk) and *Micronisus gabar* (Gabar Goshawk) also exhibit similar tail-banding. The Sharp-shinned Hawk prefers mountainous or rocky environments, and suitable habitats are found across the Anatolian plateau, Iranian plateau, Mesopotamia, and the broader Mediterranean region. Similar patterns can also be observed in Iranian silks from the same period (Fig. 3.16). In this lampas brocade, a pair of confronted raptors is enclosed within a dodecagonal

³⁴⁶ Müntz, Eugène, and Arthur Lincoln Frothingham. 1883.

³⁴⁷ Vespignani, Giorgio. "Per lo studio della influenza turca nell'impero dei Romani: il caso dell'aquila bicipite (secc. XII-XIII)." *Porphyra*, no. 25, 2016, pp. 129-30.

frame, surrounded by three-clawed ascending dragon motifs—an icon commonly associated with the falconry culture of the West Asian aristocracy. According to Vespignani, the double-headed eagle began to spread across the western Mediterranean only after its appearance in the Eastern Roman Empire.³⁴⁸

The wings of the hawks in these patterns often contain inscriptions in Arabic script, and their tails are rendered in two horizontal bands of feathers, suggesting a visual convention in the representation of eagles or falcons. Similar textiles also appeared in Yuan China during this period (Fig. 3.17). A fragment of a hood with such design elements was unearthed in the Mingshui Tomb in Damao Banner, Inner Mongolia. Marco Polo's *Description of the World* recounts the grand hunting expeditions involving falcons and eagles organized by Kublai Khan:

*“When his Majesty has resided the usual time in the metropolis, and leaves it in the month of March, he proceeds in a northeasterly direction, to within two days' journey of the ocean, attended by full ten thousand falconers, who carry with them a vast number of gerfalcons, peregrine falcons, and sakers, as well as many vultures, in order to pursue the game along the banks of the river”*³⁴⁹

Among surviving 13th–14th century Italian textiles, there are several examples in which the eagle motif appears to be almost identical³⁵⁰. The *Causula disperata* from the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena (Fig. 3.18) is labeled as depicting an “eagle”; the *Causula* from the Museo di Palazzo Venezia in Rome (Fig.19) is described as a “peacock”; the Metropolitan Museum of Art holds several brocade fragments (Figs. 20, 21, 22, 23) that are either unlabeled or generically referred to as “birds”; and the Victoria and Albert Museum preserves a fragment of lampas (Fig.24) labeled as a “parrot”. On all these Italian textiles, the eagle's tail features three distinct horizontal layers of feathers. The beaks are sharply pointed, and the eyes are rendered either in almond-shaped or fully round forms. The circular embroidery on the bird's body is generally tortoiseshell-like in pattern (with slight variations), and the distance from the head to the central circular motif on the body—indicating the length of the neck—is roughly the same across the examples. Despite these strong visual similarities, the birds depicted on these nearly identical textiles have been variously identified as parrots, eagles, or peacocks.

A typical example of peacock-patterned brocade from this period in Italy is the green peacock and griffin *diasper* preserved in Aachen Cathedral, recorded by von Falke in *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei* (Fig. 3.25). The peacock in the image has an elongated neck, and its tail is not decorated with stripes but with a wave-like pattern,

³⁴⁸ Vespignani argues that Christianized Seljuk soldiers serving in the Byzantine army played a role in introducing Turkish cultural elements into Eastern Christianity. See: Vespignani, Giorgio. “L'Aquila bicipite simbolo della Basileia dei Romani tra oriente e occidente (Secc. XIII–XVI).” *Erytheia: Revista de estudios bizantinos y neogriegos*, no. 27, 2006, pp. 95–127; and Vespignani, Giorgio. “Per lo studio della influenza turca nell'impero dei Romani: il caso dell'aquila bicipite (secc. XII–XIII).” *Porphyra*, no. 25, 2016, pp. 125–131.

³⁴⁹ Polo, Marco and Rustichello. “How the Great Khan goes Hunting”. *The Travels of Marco Polo (Chinese-English dual-language format)*, book 2. China Book Publishing House, 2009, pp.210–211.

³⁵⁰ According to my current findings, there are likely more than eight extant examples. In addition to the textiles already listed, this number includes a *diasper* featuring gazelle and eagle motifs held in the collection of the Hamburg Museum.

which corresponds to the most distinctive feature of the peacock's display plumage. In Christian symbolism, the peacock came to represent immortality due to the belief that its flesh was "incorruptible."³⁵¹ A 14th-century chasuble is officially described as featuring "peacocks" in the fabric pattern (Fig. 3.26). However, the birds' necks are slightly longer than those found in the eagle-patterned textile mentioned earlier, yet shorter than the highly elongated necks of the Aachen Cathedral peacocks. Moreover, the tail feathers on the chasuble textile are arranged in striped, tiered bands—a tail pattern that is typical of eagle species. In other words, even among textiles from the same period, highly similar figures may be identified as different bird species based on minor morphological details (such as neck length), or birds may be classified as peacocks based on general visual resemblance. There has been ongoing debate regarding whether these textiles were in fact produced in Lucca. Beyond the most precious examples, printed textiles from Lucca were widely imitated, and a number of these copies were likely produced in the Veneto region. This is detailed in Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte*, which provides a precise account of how techniques of manufacture contributed to confusion and imitation.³⁵²

One securely attributed example of a parrot-patterned textile is a red-and-green silk from the first half of the 14th century, preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 3.27). This brocade, attributed to Lucca, features a parrot motif set within roundels and shows strong Byzantine influence. Notably, the parrots on this textile have undulating crests atop their heads. While some parrot tails may display slight layering, no known parrot species exhibits the clearly banded tail markings seen in raptors such as the sharp-shinned hawk. This biological distinction further complicates the iconographic identification of birds on medieval textiles.

Parrots depicted in Yuan dynasty textiles from China—the other end of the Silk Road—exhibit a distinct tendency toward realism. A notable feature is the crest on top of the head, similar to that seen in the red-and-green parrot brocade. On a brocaded *bianxian* robe from the Yuan dynasty preserved in the Xilin Gol Museum, the parrots retain the layered tail feather design, while the crested head feathers are clearly rendered, and the tail feathers are curled (Fig. 3.28). This parrot-patterned brocade *bianxian* robe was restored in 2004; the robe is largely intact, with damage only to the back, the back braid, the hem, and the cuffs. A partial restoration technique was applied, with the damaged braid on the back reconstructed strand by strand. A piece of brocaded silk with tortoiseshell ground and coiled dragon patterns in the collection of Museo di Arte Islamica in Doha exceeds two meters in length. The textile features three distinct types of roundels: the largest contains confronted parrots, the second-largest contains coiled dragons, and the smallest contains phoenixes (Fig. 3.29). The overall composition of the textile is characteristic of Islamic design. The confronted parrot motif, which reflects a Central Asian aesthetic, is rarely found in Chinese-produced textiles, though the coiled dragon and phoenix motifs are typical of Chinese design. Structurally, the

³⁵¹ Christopher R. Clason. "Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages." *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 46-47.

³⁵² Cennini, Cennino. *Il libro dell'arte. o trattato della pittura, di nuovo pubblicato con molte correzioni e coll'aggiunta di piu capitoli... per cura di Gaetano e Carlo Milanese*. Felice Le-Monnier, 1859, pp. 126.

textile is an example of *tejiejin*—a compound brocade technique introduced into China from Central Asia during the Mongol-Yuan period. It provides evidence of the presence and work of Central and West Asian craftsmen in China.

Among the ornamental changes introduced by these craftsmen, one of the most significant was the shaping of the phoenix motif. The *Simurgh* (Persian: سيمرغ) is a mythical bird in Sasanian Persian mythology and Islamic literature, combining features of the eagle, peacock, and lion, with brilliant plumage. In the Persian epic *Shahnameh*, the *Simurgh* raises the hero Zal, offering wisdom and guidance, and later aids his son Rustam in battle (Fig. 3.30). Islamic weavers captured during the Mongol conquests were brought into China, and the *Simurgh* motif transformed into the Chinese phoenix during this period. Traces of the *Simurgh* can be found in Yuan dynasty silk textiles (Fig. 3.31). Through the dissemination of Chinese silks, the phoenix motif entered Italy as well, and a group of Eastern-influenced silk textiles emerged that featured both Chinese-style phoenixes and beast-like traits derived from the Iranian *Simurgh* (Fig. 3.32).

Regarding the origin and development of the phoenix motif, Chinese scholar Liu Keyan has argued that the Chinese phoenix originated from the *makara* in Buddhist iconography. She contends that the formation of the phoenix design was shaped primarily by Shamanic and Buddhist veneration of the eagle and Garuda³⁵³. During the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (220–589 AD), when Buddhism became widely practiced, *makara* motifs were introduced into China. Liu’s innovative thesis includes an interpretation of gender in phoenix images, based on her reading of early *Purāṇa* texts from the Indus Valley Civilization (c. 2500 BCE), which recount the myth of Kadru, Garuda, and dragons. According to her, phoenixes appear in paired compositions in Yuan dynasty textiles and can be divided into two types based on their tail feathers: those with coiled, vegetal-style tails represent male phoenixes, while those with long, toothed feathers signify female phoenixes³⁵⁴. She also discusses how eagle imagery influenced the formation of phoenix motifs in the Yuan, arguing that the weakening of raptor-like features in the phoenix was the result of Han cultural aesthetics, while the accentuation of raptor traits stemmed from nomadic cultural traditions³⁵⁵.

Von Falke offered a comprehensive summary of the stylistic revolution in silk textiles produced in 14th-century Lucca and Venice. First, the closed circular medallion was abandoned. The design no longer relied on heraldic framing; static presence gave way to lively vitality. Scenes of beasts battling, chasing, flying, or colliding began to appear on woven textiles. He observed: “Among the animal motifs, what is especially striking are the creatures commonly found in Europe—hunting dogs, eagles, wild boars, ducks, bears, deer, and others. These animals are rendered in extraordinarily vivid and lifelike ways.”³⁵⁶ He considered the origin of this naturalistic style to be China, citing

³⁵³ 刘珂艳 [Liu Keyan]. “元代纺织品中凤尾造型特征 [Phoenix Tail Modeling Features of Textile in Yuan Dynasty]”. *装饰 [Art & Design]*, no. 10. 2015, pp. 129.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Otto von Falke. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*. Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1912, pp. 34-35.

as convincing evidence the frequent appearance of Chinese motifs—such as the qilin, phoenix, and lotus-scroll vines—in hundreds of late medieval Italian textiles.

Returning to the debate over whether the birds on the textiles from the churches of Assisi and Sant’Antonio depict parrots or eagles, we find that a key issue lies in the fact that these avian motifs are neither typical representations of parrots nor of eagles. In the case of the former, the birds lack the characteristic crest feathers on the heads of parrots; in the case of the latter, their tails do not feature the distinctive tiered stripes commonly found in eagle iconography. The birds in the Assisi church display circular appliqués in gold and silver thread, a feature characteristic of Lucchese textiles, though on a much smaller scale. The so-called Parrot Chasuble, also produced in Palermo like the Franciscan textiles, displays tail shapes more consistent with eagle imagery, yet it has traditionally been referred to as showing parrots. Likewise, the birds found on the *Papal Cape* of Boniface VIII, also woven in Palermo, possess neither the crests of parrots nor the tail decorations of eagles. These discrepancies illustrate that due to regional variations in weaving and design—along with the differing influences to which they were subject—later observers may have interpreted the species of these birds quite differently. This situation exemplifies a form of iconographic ambiguity.

All four of these textiles were produced in Sicily for the Franciscan order and, to varying degrees, incorporated elements from the East. But how exactly did these Eastern-style motifs find their way onto silks woven in Italy? Maria Ludovica Rosati has addressed the marked increase in Chinese silk in Italy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by attributing it to political transformations in Asia—namely, the Mongol conquests and the establishment of the four khanates, which enabled direct communication between Europe and China. Italian weavers, upon encountering new textile vocabularies and design templates, appropriated and imitated these motifs and embroidery techniques, giving rise to a novel aesthetic in Italian textiles of the period.³⁵⁷ As Walker noted in his discussion of the transmission of the phoenix motif into Byzantium, it may not be necessary to unpack the semantic content behind these transmissions. Rather, they may simply reflect a desire for exotic styles, their aesthetics, and their associated prestige. The birds and floral motifs from distant lands conjured up an imagined paradise.³⁵⁸

The near-identical visual features shared by eagles and phoenixes not only led to cross-cultural misinterpretations but may also have bolstered the confidence of Chinese textile artisans in the marketability of such designs. That is, it was precisely the Chinese artisans' familiarity with phoenix motifs—together with their accumulated pattern books and technical mastery—that enabled textiles with phoenix (or eagle-like) motifs to enter Western markets with relative ease, being received and preserved under the guise of eagle imagery. In the first chapter of *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, titled “The Conditions of Trade,” Michael Baxandall uses a series of

³⁵⁷ Rosati, Maria Ludovica. “Panni Tartarici: Fortune, Use, and the Cultural Reception of Oriental Silks in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century: European Mindset”. *Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*, 2020, pp. 75.

³⁵⁸ Walker, Alicia. Patterns of Flight, "Middle Byzantine Adoptions of the Chinese Feng Huang Bird", in *ARS Orientalis*, 2010, Vol. 38, pp. 188-216.

terms to describe the relationship between society and painting. He writes that “painting is a deposit of a social relationship,”³⁵⁹ that “the economic activities of a period are accurately reflected in its paintings,”³⁶⁰ and that “compared to other things, paintings are living fossils of economic life.”³⁶¹ These assertions reinforce a direct connection between cultural-economic activity and artistic production. In a similar sense, artists can be seen as executors of art, and weavers as visual chroniclers of social relations. Just as the migration of Armenian artists to Italy—prompted by centuries of warfare on the Armenian plateau—shaped local artistic production, the transregional movement of Asian weavers, though not directly, exerted a far-reaching influence on Italian textile practices. In the following section, I attempt to reconstruct, from the perspective of the weavers themselves, how Eastern influences entered Italy. I will also argue that these influences contributed to the diversity—or, more precisely, the visual confusion—of textile decorative styles during this period.

3.2 The Migration of Asian Textile Craftsmen Across Regions

Before analyzing the transregional movement of Asian textile artisans, it is essential to understand the potential sources of silk production in late medieval Italy, as well as the current methodologies used to determine the provenance of these textiles.

Silk textiles circulating in Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries can generally be categorized into two primary sources: first, silks produced outside Italian territory—such as those from the Yuan dynasty (China), other Mongol khanates, West Asia, or the Western Islamic world—that entered Italy via the Silk Road or through other channels such as international trade, diplomacy, military expeditions, or migration; second, textiles produced and circulated within the Italian peninsula itself. The motifs and scenes found on these textiles may originate from Central or West Asian Islamic traditions, from the Sinosphere, from the Arab world, or from local European sources. David Jacoby identifies three crucial coordinates necessary to reconstruct the diffusion of Eastern silks—especially those woven within Mongol domains—into the Latin West: *identifying the nature of the pieces and the specific group to which they belong, dating their arrival at their destination, and tracing their itinerary.*³⁶² In addition to these considerations, the weaving techniques and loom types (such as drawlooms) associated with certain textile fragments can offer important insights into their period and place of

³⁵⁹ Baxandall, Michael. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 1.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² Jacoby, David. “Oriental Silks Go West: A Declining Trade in The Later Middle Ages.” *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World. Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, Marsilio, 2011, pp. 88.

production. For example, the identification of *Zandaniji* textiles—characterized by specific compound weave structures introduced during the Mongol-Yuan period—has allowed scholars to attribute griffin-patterned silks excavated from the ruins of ancient Jining in China to this particular type³⁶³. Scientific methods also assist in this process. Radiocarbon dating (Carbon-14 dating) of organic silk fibroin can yield chronologically precise data, while spectroscopic analysis techniques—such as X-ray fluorescence or Raman spectroscopy—can determine the chemical composition of dyes, contributing further to regional or chronological identification. As discussed in the previous chapter, the study of Eastern influence often relies on comparative and stylistic analyses of patterns and decorative motifs, some of which even find echoes in the paintings of Italian artists.

Regarding the origin and producers of certain silks, written and archival sources—such as medieval trade records, account books, wills, and ecclesiastical documents—provide useful, though limited, information on the approximate date and provenance of production. Often, the actual weavers were of extremely low social status—slaves or prisoners of war—resulting in a lack of first-hand textual records from the producers themselves. Jacoby notes the difficulties presented by the inconsistent terminology used in medieval silk records³⁶⁴. For instance, the majority of silks listed in 14th-century Western inventories and account books lack any indication of provenance. In a 1295 ecclesiastical inventory, all Eastern silks acquired over a span of thirty-five years through purchase or as gifts were collectively labeled as *panni tartarici*. Thus, geographic names recorded in textile inventories often do not indicate the place of origin but rather refer to a category of silk marked by certain cultural characteristics. Jacoby also highlights another challenge in interpreting written records: a significant temporal gap often exists between the production of imported Eastern silks and their documentation or use in Western contexts³⁶⁵. The presence of an artifact in a specific region does not necessarily imply local production, as luxury textiles frequently passed through multiple stages of commercial redistribution. This complicates efforts to determine the precise production date of a given textile.

3.2.1 From Asia to Europe

The trade routes through which textiles from the East entered northern Italy unfolded in two distinct phases. In the first phase, prior to the 13th century, important Italian centers of silk production such as Lucca and Venice were heavily influenced by the design and import of Byzantine silk. However, by the 13th century, Oriental silks arriving through the ports of Genoa and Venice began to be redistributed from these hubs into the Italian hinterlands and even beyond the Alps. David Jacoby argues that,

³⁶³ Zhao, Feng. *Treasures in silk [zhi xiu zhen pin]*. Hong Kong: ISAT/Costume Squad Ltd, 1990, pp. 190.

³⁶⁴ Jacoby, David. 2011, pp. 88.

³⁶⁵ The silk worn by Emperor Rudolf IV of Habsburg at his burial in 1365 was woven in Tabriz, Iran. However, according to David Jacoby, the Arabic inscription on the textile indicates that it was produced at least thirty years earlier, between 1319 and 1335. *Ibid.*

prior to the mid-14th century, silks produced within Mongol territories could only reach Europe via maritime routes, given “the absence of regular overland trade between Southeastern and Central Europe until ca. 1350.”³⁶⁶ The forces shaping the transmission of silk patterns and weaving technologies during this period were not uniform. While the wide circulation of motifs originating from the Far East was primarily driven by trade—though not exclusively, as the dissemination of pattern books also played a role—the emergence of richly brocaded textiles such as *nasij* in Italy, followed by the local development of new varieties like *diasperati*, was closely tied to the mobility of weaving technologies and labor, particularly the transregional movement of Asian weavers. These artisans played a central role in the technological and stylistic transformation of silk weaving.

The migration of weavers from Lucca offers a paradigmatic example that illustrates how vital skilled labor was to the development of the silk industry. Northern Italy’s long-established textile centers included Lucca, Venice, and Genoa, while southern centers were found in Messina, Reggio, Catanzaro, and Palermo³⁶⁷. In the 12th century, Lucca was the only significant silk center in Italy, using Genoa as a key port for both importing raw materials and exporting finished silks via maritime routes³⁶⁸. In 1314, the city was plundered by Ugucione della Faggiuola, a Ghibelline leader from Pisa. This was followed by internal strife between the Black and White Guelph factions, which forced a large number of textile artists and silk merchants into exile. Some of the exiled merchants eventually returned to Lucca, while others relocated permanently to different cities³⁶⁹. As Lucca’s weavers dispersed in the early 14th century, they continued to engage in silk production elsewhere, forging strong connections with the silk industries of cities such as Venice, Florence, and Bologna. The migration of Lucchese artisans played a crucial role in the development of silk production in these cities, to the extent that certain textiles from this period, though sharing consistent and distinctive features, cannot be definitively attributed to a single city³⁷⁰.

While textile tools such as spinning wheels and looms contributed to production to some extent, technical innovation in weaving equipment progressed relatively slowly

³⁶⁶ Jacoby, David. “Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols: Patterns of Trade and Distribution in the West.” *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, vol. 21, Abegg-Stiftung, 2016, pp. 105-6.

³⁶⁷ For studies on the history of medieval Italian silk, see: Molà, Luca. “A Luxury Industry: The Production of Italian Silks 1400–1600.” Lambert, Bart and Wilson, Katherine Anne, (Eds.) *Europe’s Rich Fabric: The Consumption, Commercialisation, and Production of Luxury Textiles in Italy, the Low Countries and Neighbouring Territories (Fourteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)*. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 205–35; Tognetti, Sergio. “La diaspora dei lucchesi nel Trecento e il primo sviluppo dell’arte della seta a Firenze.” *Reti Medievali Rivista*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp. 41-91.

³⁶⁸ Tognetti, Sergio. “La diaspora dei lucchesi nel Trecento e il primo sviluppo dell’arte della seta a Firenze.” *Reti Medievali Rivista*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp.56.

³⁶⁹ Regarding the outward migration of Lucca’s textile workshops or silk merchant families (setaioli), such as the Buonvisi, Cenami, Fatinelli, Guidiccioni, Guinigi, Sercambi, Rapondi, Spada, and Trenta families, extant documents and surviving textiles fail to provide precise data on their individual trade volumes or technological innovations. According to Santangelo’s research, it was precisely these families that established Lucca’s silk as the dominant product in European markets, disseminating it to northern France, Burgundy, Brabant, Flanders, Hanseatic cities, Scandinavia, and Baltic states. The best-preserved examples of Lucchese silk are still found in these regions today. See: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d’Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, 1958, pp. 14; Tognetti, Sergio. “La diaspora dei lucchesi nel Trecento e il primo sviluppo dell’arte della seta a Firenze.” *Reti Medievali Rivista*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp.11; Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*. Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1912, pp. 29-37.

³⁷⁰ Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d’Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, 1958, pp. 14.

during the medieval period. By the 14th century, loom improvements had indeed enhanced efficiency, but such technological advancements did not determine the quality and innovation of silk production to the same extent as the artisans' skills did. Weavers' expertise encompassed not only technical weaving skills but also dyeing, printing, and the crafting of metallic threads and gold leaf. Under the hands of such craftsmen, Italian carpets and figured silks could achieve distinct styles and high levels of artistry. The exodus of major silk merchants (*setaioli*) and specialized silk artisans from Lucca not only involved textile production but also encompassed the entire silk trade network. Consequently, their departure precipitated a dramatic decline in Lucca's economic and industrial prominence.³⁷¹

Concerns surrounding the migration of weavers became even more pronounced during the 13th and 14th centuries. A set of early 15th-century Florentine regulations for silk industry governance reveals how strictly the sector controlled labor, even resorting to eliminating future competitors through violence. The Florentine Republic, learning from the experiences of other silk-producing cities, formulated policies aimed at both protecting and expanding this emerging industry. These included:

- (1) encouraging the immigration of skilled labor, particularly from Venice, Genoa, and Lucca;*
- (2) impeding the reverse process in all possible ways, by offering tax remissions, by freezing and cancelling debts, and even by decreeing the death penalty for anyone who emigrated to work in another city;*
- (3) the elimination of all competition within the Florentine state, effectively prohibiting silk manufacturing in the subject cities; and*
- (4) the promotion of the cultivation of mulberry trees and silkworm breeding in the Tuscan countryside so as to be less dependent on expensive imported raw materials.*³⁷²

Beyond the migration of Lucchese weavers, one of the most notable examples of artisan and textile technology transfer in the later Middle Ages was the movement of Asian weavers to Sicily. From 831 onwards, Sicily came under Arab rule, which introduced advanced textile techniques, particularly in the production and weaving of silk. In the Islamic world, embroidery and weaving workshops known as *tirāz* were established within the courts of emirs (*Amīr*, meaning “commander” or “ruler”) by Arab craftsmen. These workshops were intended for the production of ceremonial and diplomatic gifts and did not operate as commercial enterprises. After the Norman conquest of Sicily in 1091, *tirāz* workshops continued their operations under new patronage, employing both Arab craftsmen and Byzantine captives brought from major silk centers such as Thebes and Corinth in the Peloponnese. According to the Arabic registers (*jarā'id*), which recorded demographic and occupational data for Muslim

³⁷¹ Tognetti, Sergio. “Attività industriali e commercio di manufatti nelle città toscane del tardo Medioevo (1250 ca. - 1530 ca.)” *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 159, no. 2 (588), 2001, pp. 434.

³⁷² Although Florence possessed a robust wool industry, its nascent silk sector in the early fifteenth century remained almost entirely dependent on imported raw materials. Consequently, this final initiative unsurprisingly failed to succeed. Sergio Tognetti. “The Development of the Florentine Silk Industry: A Positive Response to the Crisis of the Fourteenth Century.” *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 31, no. 1, Mar. 2005, pp. 62-63.

populations on royal estates in 12th-century Sicily, the most commonly listed occupation was that of silk worker, referred to as *al-ḥarīrī*.³⁷³ Timothy Smit identified this profession appearing 57 times in the registers, accounting for approximately 22% of all recorded occupations.³⁷⁵ These silk workers were distributed across eastern, southern, and western Sicilian estates, and production continued from the Muslim period into the 12th century, though the scale remained modest and no large, centralized weaving district is evident. In 1147, following his campaigns in Thebes, Corinth, and Athens, Roger II of Sicily transported a large number of Byzantine and Greek silk weavers to Palermo. A 1158 agreement between William I of Sicily and Byzantine emperor Manuel I stipulated the release of noble and military captives—but not weavers—highlighting the critical importance of textile artisans to Sicilian society³⁷⁶.

Nevertheless, the scarcity of surviving commercial documents related to the silk trade in 12th-century Sicily suggests that the island's silk manufacturing faced increasing marginalization during this period, particularly under the Normans, who showed greater preference for imported woolens³⁷⁷. Timothy Smit points out that, despite the influx of weavers from Byzantium and Greece, the silk produced in *tirāz* workshops was generally of low quality and aimed at everyday use³⁷⁸. In contrast, ecclesiastical institutions, affluent monasteries, and noble courts preferred imported luxury woolens or high-grade silks produced in royal ateliers. It was not until the 14th century—when Genoese merchants began importing superior textiles from the Caspian region, Persia, China, and Syria—that Sicilian silk production and trade began to recover.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Republic of Genoa established an extensive network of colonies across the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. Rather than pursuing territorial conquest, Genoa engaged in what may be termed “commercial colonization,” securing strategic privileges in key trade and transport nodes. These included cities such as Caffa (modern-day Feodosiya in Ukraine), Amastris (now

³⁷³ The *jarā'id* were the principal written instruments of the Arab-Norman *Dīwān* (the royal fiscal administration) established after the Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily in 1090. This institution managed the estates and personnel of the royal demesnes in Sicily and Calabria. In Arabic, such records were referred to as *jarā'id al-rijāl* (literally “lists of men”) and *jarā'id al-ḥudūd* (“lists of boundaries”). See: Metcalfe, Alex. “Orientation in Three Spheres: Medieval Mediterranean Boundary Clauses in Latin, Greek and Arabic.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, no. 22, 2012, pp. 37–55. For further discussion of the two types of *jarā'id*, see: Johns, Jeremy. *Arabic administration in Norman Sicily: the royal diwan*. Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 39-62, 91-169.

³⁷⁴ Regarding Roger II's capture of prisoners “who are accustomed to weave silken goods” during his campaigns against the Greeks and the Byzantine Empire, see: Choniates, Nicetas, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. H. J. Margoulias. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984, pp. 44–45; Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. C. C. Mierow. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953, p. 69; and Turnator, Ece Gulsum. *Turning the Economic Tables in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Latin Crusader Empire and the Transformation of the Byzantine Economy, ca. 1100-1400*. 2013. Harvard University, PhD dissertation, pp. 368.

³⁷⁵ Smit, Timothy. “Weaving Connections: Sicilian Silk in the Medieval Mediterranean.” *Textile History*, vol. 52, no. 1/2, May 2021, pp. 10-11.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Abulafia, David. *The two Italies: economic relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the northern communes*. No. 9. Cambridge University Press, 2005. pp. 256.

³⁷⁸ Smit, Timothy. “Weaving Connections: Sicilian Silk in the Medieval Mediterranean.” *Textile History*, vol. 52, no. 1/2, May 2021, pp. 14.

Amasra in Turkey), Tana at the mouth of the Don River, and Trebizond in Asia Minor³⁷⁹. According to the records of the Republic of Venice, these areas employed Armenian, Georgian, and Tatar craftsmen³⁸⁰. As the Mongol armies advanced into Europe, they gradually conquered Central Asian territories such as the Khwarazmian Empire (1219–1221), Volga Bulgaria and Kievan Rus (1236–1241), and invaded Poland and Hungary (1241). In 1242, Batu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, established the Golden Horde with Sarai on the lower Volga as its capital. Later, Möngke and Hülegü Khan led campaigns into Persia, toppling the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) and founding the Ilkhanate (1256–1335) with Tabriz as its capital (Fig. 3.33). By the 13th century, much of the Black Sea basin was under Mongol control, giving rise to a competitive and shifting political landscape. It was within this geopolitical framework that direct communication and trade between Italian city-states and the Mongol khanates became possible.

Trade between Asia Minor and Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries was largely conducted by Armenians under Ilkhanid rule³⁸¹. According to the accounts of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, cities in Greater Armenia were renowned for producing high-quality woolens and silks, which were then sold to European merchants. Marco Polo notes that Armenians and Greeks lived alongside Turkmen villagers, who subsisted on sheep-herding, wore leather garments, and resided in felt or hide tents. In addition to farming, the Armenians were engaged in commerce and craftsmanship. Polo adds,

*“The other classes are Greeks and Armenians, who reside in the cities and fortified places, and gain their living by commerce and manufacture. The best and handsomest carpets in the world are wrought here, and also silks of crimson and other rich colors.”*³⁸²

Situated at the crossroads of East and West, Armenia also absorbed Chinese artistic influences through trade. White porcelain excavated from Dvin dating to the 11th–12th centuries exhibits stylistic features of Chinese origin³⁸³. Similarly, under Ilkhanid rule in Iran, as noted by Sakamoto Masaru in *The Mongols Who Changed the World*, the Mongol preference for blue and white aesthetics led to the fusion of Chinese porcelain techniques with Persian cobalt pigments, giving rise to the famed blue-and-white ware³⁸⁴. According to the *Shahnama Project*, a digital database of illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, banquet scenes in early 14th- to 15th-century copies

³⁷⁹ Jacoby, David. “Oriental Silks Go West: A Declining Trade in The Later Middle Ages.” *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World. Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, Marsilio, 2011, pp. 87-104.

³⁸⁰ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Arte della Seta*, b. 682, reg. 1, fol. 106v, 14 May 1515.

³⁸¹ Boghos Levon Zekiyani (ed.), *Ad Limina Italiae, ‘In viaggio per l’Italia con mercanti e monaci Armeni, Eurasiatica/Quaderni del Dipartimento di studi eurasiatici dell’Università degli studi di Ca’ Foscari di Venezia*, Venice, 1996, pp.253.

³⁸² Polo, Marco and Rustichello. “of the Province called Turkomania”, 2009, pp.30.

³⁸³ Helen C. Evans ed., *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*. New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008, p. 64.

³⁸⁴ Sugiyama, Masaki. *The Mongols Overturn World History* [モンゴルが世界史を覆す]. Translated by Zhou Junyu, SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2016, pp. 139–41.

increasingly depict Chinese-style porcelain vessels replacing earlier metalware—evidence of the growing popularity of Chinese ceramics³⁸⁵.

Given the low status of artisans during the wars of the 13th and 14th centuries, it is worth considering whether silk or porcelain craftsmen were themselves trafficked into Europe through the Black Sea and Mediterranean slave trade. In his study of notarial documents from Tana and Venice in the 14th–15th centuries, which illuminate the slave trade in the Black Sea region, Sergei Karpov identifies several primary sources of slaves:

The capture of people in the course of a raid or military invasion;
The acquisition of slaves as tribute from vassal territories under Mongol or regional control;
The sale of children by parents or relatives, often under economic duress or social pressure;
Self-sale (voluntary enslavement) due to poverty;
Piracy along slave-trading networks in the Black and Caspian Seas;
*Debt slavery, in which individuals became enslaved through failure to repay loans.*³⁸⁶

Based on notarial document data, Sergei Karpov's analysis of the ethnic composition of slaves in the Tana region during the 14th century reveals that 75% were Tartars and 9% were Mongols, with women comprising 77% of the enslaved population. These slaves were subsequently transported to Western Europe and the Latin regions, particularly to Venetian-controlled Crete, or to Mamluk-ruled Egypt³⁸⁷. In such locations, they likely participated in labor-intensive industries such as silk weaving and wool production—sectors in which female labor was often preferred. In this way, Eastern slaves provided a crucial labor force for the development of textile and shipbuilding industries in 14th- and 15th-century cities such as Florence and Genoa³⁸⁸. In Genoa, a skilled artisan could purchase a slave with the wages earned over approximately 100 days.³⁸⁹ Karpov notes that although slaves were socially marginalized, it was rare to find a noble household in Venice or Genoa without at least one slave—especially female slaves, who fulfilled a variety of domestic and specialized roles³⁹⁰. These women served as domestic servants (handling household tasks such as cleaning and cooking), were subject to sexual exploitation, or, if educated, worked as

³⁸⁵ 郭洋梦莎[Guo, Yangmengsha]. “东风西渐：《列王纪》细密画中的青花陶瓷初探[The East Wind Blows Westward: A Preliminary Study of Blue-and-White Porcelain in Persian Miniatures of the Shahnameh].” *The Forbidden City*, no. 12, 2021, pp. 116-29.

³⁸⁶ Regarding Sergei Karpov's research on Black Sea slave trade, which encompasses gender studies, origins and destinations of slaves, ethnic studies, and economic measurements of the slave trade. See: Sergej. P. Karpov, *Schiavitù e servaggio nell'economia europea. Secc. XI–XVIII. Serfdom and Slavery in the European Economy 11th–18th Centuries. Atti della “Quarantacinquesima Settimana di Studi” 14–18 aprile 2013. Fondazione Istituto Int. di Storia Economica “F. Datini”, Prato, ed. S. Cavaciocchi*, Florence, 2014. Sergej P. Karpov, “Hunting for People: Black Sea Piracy in the XIVth–XVth Centuries”, in Peirates kai Koursaroi, 10th Symposium of History and Art, Monemvasia, 1997 (Athens, 2003), pp. 66–72; Barker, Hannah. *Egyptian and Italian Merchants in the Black Sea Slave Trade, 1260-1500*. Diss. Columbia University, 2014, pp. 140–151.

³⁸⁷ Karpov, Sergei. “Slavery in the Black Sea Region in Venetian Notarial Sources, 14th–15th Centuries.” *Slavery in the Black Sea Region, c. 900–1900*, BRILL, 2022, pp. 42,46.

³⁸⁸ Epstein, Steven A. “Labour in Thirteenth-Century Genoa.” *Mediterranean Cities*. Routledge, 2015. 114-140.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Sergei Karpov. 2022, pp. 56.

nurses and tutors. Others were employed in handicraft production, including weaving and leatherworking.³⁹¹

The silk industry in Lucca, which emerged in the late 12th century, relied on raw materials imported from renowned production regions around the Caspian Sea and Persia—such as Talich, Lahidjan, and Asterabad³⁹². Thanks to Genoa's maritime networks, most raw silk reached Genoese ports in the form of bundled threads (*matasse*)³⁹³. If Lucca was the manufacturing center of silk in 12th- and 13th-century Europe, then Genoa was the undisputed hub of its trade. Genoese merchants did not supply Lucca alone. When passing through Sicily, the port city of Messina served as a vital commercial crossroads in Mediterranean maritime trade. It became a major distribution center for Eastern silks, English wool, and raw silk from Calabria. Messina long benefited from its role as a key trading station for Genoese, Venetian, Catalan, and Florentine merchants, who often represented transregional commercial enterprises³⁹⁴. The richly brocaded silks preserved by the Franciscans provide tangible evidence of the development of the Sicilian textile industry during the 14th century.

However, by the late 14th and early 15th centuries, the raw silk used in Lucca's textile production was almost entirely imported from the East, including the Caspian region, Persia, China, and Syria³⁹⁵. The volume of raw silk and finished Chinese textiles entering Italy increased significantly during the 13th and 14th centuries. In notarial registers dating from the latter half of the 13th century onward, raw silk imported through the Genoese port into Tuscany is often described using the term *cattua silk*.³⁹⁶ Inventories of ecclesiastical and monastic treasuries from the 13th and 14th centuries further attest to this trend. One of the most detailed records of ecclesiastical property from the 13th century is the 1295 inventory of the Vatican Treasury, which includes an entire section describing Tartar fabrics. In this document, Tartar silks are ranked second in quantity, following those from Romania (*de opere Romanie*) and preceding English

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Balbi, Giovanna Petti. *La presenza lucchese a Genova in età medioevale. Banca del Monte di Lucca, 1990, VII, atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, Lucca. Banca del Monte di Lucca, 1990, pp. 29-43; 以及 Molà, Luca. "A Luxury Industry: The Production of Italian Silks 1400–1600." Lambert, Bart and Wilson, Katherine Anne, (Eds.) *Europe's Rich Fabric: The Consumption, Commercialisation, and Production of Luxury Textiles in Italy, the Low Countries and Neighbouring Territories (Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries)*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 213.

³⁹³ The commercial networks of Genoese merchants primarily extended across the internal markets of the Italian peninsula, the Islamic world and Byzantine Empire in the eastern Mediterranean, and the Black Sea region—including trade routes connecting Slavic, Mongol, and Turkic territories. See: Tognetti, Sergio. "Uomini d'affari e mobilità sociale in Italia tra metà Trecento e primo Cinquecento." *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 651, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, pp. 20.

³⁹⁵ Tognetti, Sergio. "Attività industriali e commercio di manufatti nelle città toscane del tardo Medioevo (1250 ca. - 1530 ca.)." *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 159, no. 2 (588), 2001, pp. 458.

³⁹⁶ Luca Molà makes a noteworthy observation that these Chinese silks were not of the highest quality. [*Contrary to what one might believe, it was not of the highest quality. Raw materials of different origins cost more, perhaps because during the long journey involving all kinds of transport across the roads of Central Asia – going from one region to another it was loaded on horses, river boats, donkeys, camels and oxen-pulled carts – the packaging would be ruined and by the time the Chinese silk had reached its destination it was frayed, that is, worn (at least this is the warning Francesco Pegolotti gives purchasers in his famous Pratica di mercatura)*] Molà, Luca. "A Luxury Industry: The Production of Italian Silks 1400–1600." Lambert, Bart and Wilson, Katherine Anne, (Eds.) *Europe's Rich Fabric: The Consumption, Commercialisation, and Production of Luxury Textiles in Italy, the Low Countries and Neighbouring Territories (Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries)*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 212.

textiles³⁹⁷. According to Ece Gulsum Turnator's study of six 14th-century church and royal inventories, approximately 40% of the textiles came from Lucca, followed by those from Romania and "Tartary."³⁹⁸ Lucca appears to have established itself as a key center for the production of high-quality silks sought after by churches, monasteries, and royal households. However, it is important to note that a substantial portion of the textiles listed in these inventories were still imported from outside Italy through various channels.

A comparison of raw silk and finished textiles exchanged between Asia and Europe from the 12th to the 14th centuries reveals a clear increase during the 13th and 14th centuries—not only in the volume of raw silk imports but also in the direct use of high-quality Chinese-made textiles. This shift may reflect a major structural transformation in the Chinese silk industry at the opposite end of the Eurasian continent—namely, the expansion of the workforce to nearly one million artisans.

3.2.2 The Circulation of Silk, Patterns, and Artisans across Asia

The Mongols, who sustained themselves through hunting and pastoralism, inhabited a harsh and resource-scarce steppe environment. In particularly difficult years, they even relied on foraged roots to survive. However, the strategic location of the steppes along major East–West trade routes provided them with access to external contacts and commerce, exposing them early on to the allure of luxury goods. According to the *Secret History of the Mongols*, when Genghis Khan launched a military campaign against Zhongdu, the capital of the Jin dynasty, in 1211, the Jin chancellor Wang Jing advised the emperor to offer silver, gold, and silk textiles in exchange for peace.³⁹⁹ Genghis Khan accepted the Jin tribute and agreed to a truce, thereby halting the war—suggesting that even during his reign, silk was already

³⁹⁷ Müntz, Eugène, and Arthur Lincoln Frothingham. *Il Tesoro della basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano dal XIII al XV secolo con una scelta d'inventarii inediti*. Soc. romana di storia patria, 1883. 以及 Molinier, Émile. "Inventaire du trésor du Saint Sièfe sous Boniface VIII(1295)(Suite et fin)." *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, vol. 49, 1888, pp. 226–37.

³⁹⁸ The six ecclesiastical and royal inventories under examination are: 1314 Inventory of the Avignon Papac, 1317 Inventory of Philip the Tall (1317-1322), 1318-1376 Wills from Venetian Crete, 1343 Inventory of the Cathedral Church of Notre Dame of Paris, 1369 Inventory of the Cathedral Church of Pisa, 1387 Inventory of items belonging to Charles V (1364-1380). Regarding these inventories and Turnator's research, see: Turnator, Ece Gulsum. *Turning the Economic Tables in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Latin Crusader Empire and the Transformation of the Byzantine Economy, ca. 1100-1400*. 2013. Harvard University, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 405; Hoberg, Hermann. "Die Inventare des päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon: 1314-1376." *Studi e testi/Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, 1944 ; Douët-d'Arcq, Louis. *Nouveau recueil de comptes de l'argenterie des rois de France*. BoD—Books on Demand, 2024; McKee, Sally, ed. *Wills from Late Medieval Venetian Crete, 1312-1420*. Vol. 1. No. 1-363. Dumbarton Oaks, 1998; Cecchetti, Bartolomeo. *La vita dei veneziani nel 1300: le vesti*. Tipografia emiliana, 1886, pp. 113-129; Fagniez, Gustave. *Inventaires du trésor de Notre-Dame de Paris de 1343 et de 1416*. Didier, 1874, pp. 249-259; Barsotti, Riccardo. *Gli antichi inventari della cattedrale di Pisa*. Vol. 7. Istituto di storia dell'arte, Università di Pisa, 1959; Labarte, Jules, ed. *Inventaire du mobilier de Charles V, Roi de France*. No. 107. Imprimerie nationale, 1879.

³⁹⁹ Rachewiltz, Igor de, translator. *The Secret History of the Mongols. A Mongolian Epic chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*. Vol. 1, Brill, 2004, pp. 176-7.

acknowledged as being of equivalent value to gold and silver. A similar pattern can be seen in the Mongol campaigns against the Western Xia. In order to avoid conflict, the Western Xia ruler Yiluhu offered tribute that included not only camels and eagles but also silk and brocade:

*“We shall bring forth many camels
Reared in the shelter of the tall feather-grass:
We shall turn them into government property,
And we shall give them to you.
We shall weave woollen material and make satin,
And we shall give them to you.
Training falcons to fly loose at game.
We shall gather them”*⁴⁰⁰

In 1214, when Genghis Khan once again advanced on the Jin capital for diplomatic reasons, the Jin emperor fled and ordered General Heda to guard Zhongdu. As Genghis Khan approached, Heda emerged from the city bearing “gold-woven silk” as a sign of surrender⁴⁰¹. These incidents illustrate the Mongol recognition of silk’s symbolic and material value in diplomatic contexts.

European missionaries traveling in the East frequently commented on the prosperity of Yuan China, especially its production and export of textiles such as silk. Even Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan friar, could not resist extolling the great wealth of the Great Khan and the affluence of the East in his travel account. According to Liu Dinan’s comparative study of 13th–14th century European travelogues, later accounts such as *The Travels of Marco Polo* and *The Eastern Journey of Odoric* show a notable shift in emphasis away from earlier interests in Mongol religion or military-political strength. Instead, they focus more extensively on the wealth and commercial vitality of Mongol territories⁴⁰². As military conquest receded from the foreground, trade and economic descriptions—especially those concerning luxury goods like silk—took center stage in European narratives.

One of the most elaborate displays of Yuan luxury silks occurred during the *zhama* banquets, which were the most richly documented ceremonial feasts in Yuan sources. Also known as *zhisun* banquets (from the Mongolian *Jisun*, meaning “single color”), these three-day events were hosted by the Yuan emperors to reward ministers, receive vassals, and entertain foreign envoys. According to Zhou Boqi, who served as a *Censor* (responsible for monitoring officials and correcting court conduct) and as an *Academician of the Hanlin Academy* (tasked with compiling official histories and drafting key documents), these banquets were characterized by extraordinary sartorial pageantry and court rituals. In the preface to his poem *Zhama Xing* (The Zhama March), Zhou Boqi offers a vivid description of the spectacle:

⁴⁰⁰ Rachewiltz, Igor de, translator. 2004, pp. 178.

⁴⁰¹ Rachewiltz, Igor de, translator. 2004, pp. 179-80.

⁴⁰² 刘迪南 [Liu, Dinan]. “13 世纪至 14 世纪欧洲人游记中的蒙古人形象[Mongolian Image in Travel Notes of European from 13th Century to 14th Century].” *Journal Northwest Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Science)*, no. 5, 2011, pp. 21.

"According to state custom, when the emperor travels north to the Upper Capital, he commands on an auspicious day in the sixth month that the senior commanders of the imperial guard and his personal attendants don the resplendent garments granted by imperial favor—robes inlaid with pearls, gold, and precious stones, along with formal headdresses and belts—and adorn their noble steeds. At dawn, they process from outside the city, bearing colorful standards, entering the palace in formation. The emperor, dressed in ceremonial attire, ascends the throne to observe the festivities. Lavish banquets and performances are held, with princes, imperial kin, and senior guards offering toasts in order of rank. Others take their seats according to official status and partake in the feast. Grand music is performed, and a hundred kinds of entertainments—song, dance, acrobatics—are presented. These celebrations continue for three full days. Attire and accessories are changed daily. The imperial kitchens prepare 2,000 sheep and three horses per day, along with corresponding provisions. This grand banquet is called *zhisun*, meaning 'uniform-colored clothing' in Chinese, and is colloquially known as the *zhama* banquet. In the sixth year of the Zhiyuan reign [corresponding to 1269], while serving in the Hanlin Academy, I accompanied the emperor to the Upper Capital. On the twenty-first day of the sixth month, together with Luo Junshu, Assistant Instructor of the National University, I had the fortune to witness the occasion. I thus composed the poem *Zhama Xing* to record what I saw."⁴⁰³

These banquets not only reflected the court's political hierarchy but also provided a rare public platform for the display of imperial textiles, including the famed *nasij*—gold and silver-woven silks often mentioned in both Chinese and Islamic sources. The emphasis on costume changes, fine materials, and performance arts during these courtly feasts highlights the Mongol rulers' commitment to ceremonial grandeur and the high symbolic value placed on textile craftsmanship and luxury.

In *The Travels of Marco Polo*, the Venetian merchant famously wrote:

"The wealthy shoemakers are exceedingly well dressed, wearing garments made of fabrics woven with gold and silver threads, or of black chamois leather, Shao leather, or other animal hides—exceedingly magnificent and costly."⁴⁰⁴

Similarly, Ye Ziqi, in the Qing-era compendium *Siku Quanshu*, refers to the *zhisun* banquet, noting that "in the north, there is the *zhama* feast, the most splendid of all banquets. Princes, nobles, and aristocratic youths compete in extravagance through their garments and horses."⁴⁰⁵ Lavish costumes were a central element of the *zhisun* feasts, and among these, *jinjin* (gold-woven brocade) and *nasij* textiles played a prominent role.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ 顾嗣立 [Gu Sili]. *元诗选 [Yuan Shi Xuan]*, Siku Quanshu edition, vol. 1, chap. 52, pp. 36.

⁴⁰⁴ Polo, Marco and Rustichello. "of the Feast Held on the Great Khan's Birthday", 2009, pp.200-1.

⁴⁰⁵ 叶子奇 [Ye Ziqi]. *草木子 [Caoshuzi]*, vol. 3, "杂制篇" [Zhazhi pian] Siku Quanshu edition, pp. 42.

⁴⁰⁶ 韩儒林 [Han Rulin]. "元代诈马宴新探 [A New Study on the Zhamayan Banquet in the Yuan Dynasty]." *历史研究 [Lishi Yanjiu]*, no. 1, 1981, pp. 143–147.

The Travels of Marco Polo describes a scene during the Great Khan's birthday festivities, when nobles and military officials were awarded *zhisun* robes:

*“All the Tartar and other subjects of the Great Khan celebrate as a festival the day of his Majesty's birth, which took place on the twenty-eighth day of the month of September. This is their greatest festival, excepting the one kept on the first day of the year... Upon this anniversary the Great Khan appears in a superb dress of cloth of gold, and on the same occasion full twenty thousand nobles and military officers are clad by him in dresses similar to his own in point of colour and form; but the materials are not equally rich. They are, however, of silk, and of the colour of gold; and along with the vest they likewise receive a girdle of chamois leather, curiously worked with gold and silver thread, and also a pair of boots. Some of the dresses are ornamented with precious stones and pearls to the value of ten thousand bezants of gold, and are given to those nobles who, from their confidential employments, are nearest to his Majesty's person. These dresses are appointed to be worn on the thirteen solemn festivals celebrated in the year... When his Majesty assumes any particular dress, the nobles of his court wear corresponding, but less costly, dresses... They are not annually renewed, but on the contrary are made to last about ten years. From this parade an idea may be formed of the magnificence of the Great Khan, which is unequalled by that of any monarch in the world.”*⁴⁰⁷

However, since such ceremonial garments were largely restricted to high-ranking officials within the Yuan central government, archaeological or iconographic evidence remains limited. As a result, scholars often refer to works such as *Khubilai Khan Hunting* as key visual sources for Yuan court dress.⁴⁰⁸ The *Yuan shi* (*History of the Yuan*), in its description of the emperor's most formal ceremonial robe—the *gunlong fu*—explicitly notes the use of *nasij*: “The jade-ring sash was made of *nashishi* (i.e., *nasij*), a golden brocade.”⁴⁰⁹ This suggests that the state-controlled production of court attire and the bestowal of gold-woven robes by the emperor constituted the core of Mongol sartorial policy. Moreover, punishment for disobedience to the emperor could include the confiscation of such garments, effectively barring the individual from participating in court rituals. As Marco Polo records, the imperial guards would “take away [the offender's] clothes, and to have them again he must redeem them.”⁴¹⁰

According to Yuan regulations, private production of *zhisun* garments was strictly forbidden, and government-woven *zhisun* robes were not for commercial sale or public use. Commoners were expressly prohibited from wearing them, though records indicate that some artisans secretly produced and traded gold brocade in defiance of these

⁴⁰⁷ Polo, Marco and Rustichello. “Of the Festival That Is Kept Throughout the Dominions of the Great Khan Every Year on His Birthday”. 2009, pp.200-202.

⁴⁰⁸ Shea, Eiren. “Yuan Court Dress and the Formation of a Global Mongol Aesthetic.” *The Mongol Empire In Global History And Art History*, I Tatti, 2023, pp. 115–35.

⁴⁰⁹ 宋濂 [Song Lian]. *Yuan shi* [元史], Treatises, vol. 28, “Carriages and Dress I” [輿服一]. *Bainaben* edition [百衲本], pp. 2.

⁴¹⁰ Marco Polo and Rustichello. “of the style in which Khan holds Court”. *Travels of Marco Polo*. China Book Publishing House, 2009, chapter 12, pp. 198.

rules.⁴¹¹ Nonetheless, robes (*pao*) and short jackets (*ao*) remained the most common attire across all social strata in the Yuan period. In the early Mongol period, men's robes were primarily made of felt, wool, and leather, supplemented by ramie, silk, and gold threads.⁴¹² Only after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty did the widespread use of silk and cotton fabrics in clothing begin to grow, although fur and leather continued to dominate winter wear for insulation. Before the Yuan, clothing materials in China primarily consisted of silk, hemp, leather, and wool, with cotton being rare. Cotton, originally from the Americas, Africa, and parts of Asia such as India and Iran, entered China via northern and southern routes.⁴¹³ According to the *Yuan shi* (*Annals of Shizu*), in the 26th year of the Zhiyuan reign (1289), the Yuan government established *Mumian Tiju Si* (Cotton Supervision Offices) throughout China's interior, collecting over 100,000 bolts of cotton cloth annually as tax.⁴¹⁴ The Franciscan missionary Rubruck similarly described Mongol clothing:

“As regards their clothing and appearance, you should know that cloth of silk, of gold and of cotton [tele de wambasio] reaches them from Cataia and other regions in the east, and from Persia and other southern parts in addition, and these they wear in the summer. From Russia, the Moxel, Great Bulgaria, Pascatu (namely Greater Hungary) and the Kerkis - all of them regions in the north and heavily forested - and from many other northerly tracts which are subject to them, they are brought many kinds of valuable furs which I have never seen in our part of the world, and which they don in winter. They always make at least two skin garments in the winter; one with the fur against the body, the other with its fur exposed to the wind and snow - often the pelt of a wolf or fox or lynx [papiro]. For these external [garments] the poor use dog or goat.”⁴¹⁵

This illustrates that while common clothing was practical and adapted to climate, textiles such as *nasij* and gold brocade were exclusive luxury goods, whose production and circulation were strictly limited. Where, then, did the production of such luxurious garments originate?

Prior to the expansion of the Mongol Empire, Central Asia—particularly Khwarazm, Samarkand, and Bukhara—was already renowned for its exquisite textile production. As the Mongol conquest extended into Central and Western Asia, large numbers of Mongols settled in these regions and became the new ruling elite. According to scholar Ma Jianchun, *nasij* and *zandanjī* weaving techniques in the Western Regions during the Yuan dynasty were introduced and preserved in official state-run workshops

⁴¹¹ 陈高华[Chen Gaohua], editor. *Yuan Dianzhang* [元典章]. Zhonghua Book Company [中华书局], 2011, vol. 4, p. 1965.

⁴¹² 李薏[Li Hong] and 曹喆[Cao Zhe], editors. *中国北方古代少数民族服饰研究: 6 元蒙卷* [*Zhongguo Beifang Gudai Shaoshu Minzu Fushi Yanjiu: 6 Yuan Meng Juan*]. 东华大学出版社[Donghua University Press], 2013, pp. 102, 155.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ 何焯[He Zhuo] and 陈鹏年 [Chen Pengnian], editors. *Yuding Fenlei Zijin* [御定分类字锦], juan 36, Siku Quanshu edition [四库全书本], p. 24. Accessed via Chinese Text Project:

<https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=279623&remap=gb>. (Accessed by 25 sep 2025).

⁴¹⁵ Ruysbroeck, Willem van, et al. *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*. The Hakluyt society, 1990, pp.

precisely due to the sartorial needs of the Mongol nobility.⁴¹⁶ In the Ilkhanate's history, *The Compendium of Chronicles* (*Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*) recounts that the powerful statesman Buqa orchestrated a coup against Tegüder Ahmad (r. 1282–1284), the first Ilkhan to openly convert to Islam. The subsequent enthronement of Arghun (r. 1284–1291)—grandson of Hulagu and son of Abaqa—marked a period of intense political and religious tension. Tegüder's promotion of Islamization alienated the Mongol aristocracy, while Arghun, advocating a return to a more "Mongolized" rule, gained support from military and noble factions.⁴¹⁷ One passage highlights the role of textile production in these political struggles:

*"[Tegüder Ahmad's troops] galloped as far as Varamin, seized and plundered three hundred households of artisans who belonged to Arghun Khan, and returned to the camp. When Arghun was apprised of this event he sent envoys to the treasury at Garrakan to bring everything that was available. He also sent to the workshops at Nishapur, Tus, and Isfarayin to have cloth brought. Within twenty days quantities of gold, jewels, and textiles were delivered to Adiliyya in Jurjan and he distributed it among the amirs and soldiers."*⁴¹⁸

This account reveals that high-quality textiles—on par with gold and jewels—were regarded as spoils of war and objects of political contention. The luxurious cloth used by Ilkhanid elites was produced in specialized workshops by artisans who likely participated in broader East–West transfers of weaving expertise. The widespread use of Persian language and calligraphy across the Mongol Empire, including in the Yuan dynasty, offers further evidence of these transregional connections. Persian—known as *yisiti'fiy* in Chinese documents—became a major administrative and written language throughout the western Mongol realms, including the Ilkhanate and Chagatai Khanate. Persian script was even used in customs, taxation, and audit functions. The numerous Islamic tombstones found in Quanzhou, engraved with Arabic alongside Chinese, attest to the migration and presence of West and Central Asian populations in Yuan China⁴¹⁹.

The Persian word *khan* (خان), originally meaning "ruler" or "chief," came to be used in Chinese Islamic communities as a respectful form of address akin to "sir."⁴²⁰ Sino-Persian commercial relations began as early as the 7th century. The *History of Sui*

⁴¹⁶ 马建春[Ma Jianchun]. "元代的西域工匠[The Craftsman of Western Regions in Yuan Dynasty]". *回族研究* [*Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Study*], no. 2, 2004, pp. 78–81.

⁴¹⁷ al-Din, Rashid. [Rashiduddin Fazlullah]. *Jami' u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles – A History of the Mongols* trans. W.M. Thackston, *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures* 45, Ed. Sinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin, *Central Asian Sources IV*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998-1999. vol. 3, pp.553.

⁴¹⁸ al-Din, Rashid. *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, pp. 553. Also cited in Shea, Eiren L. *Fashioning Mongol Identity in China (c. 1200-1368)*. 2016. University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. dissertation, pp.205.

⁴¹⁹ 黄忠杰[Huang Zhongjie]. *A Research on Some Related Problems of Quanzhou Islamic Stone Carving* [关于泉州伊斯兰教石刻艺术若干问题的研究], 2007, pp. 45.

⁴²⁰ The term *Huihui* (回回) in the Yuan dynasty referred broadly to Muslim populations originating from the Islamic world, particularly Central Asia and Persia. This category encompassed Persians, Arabs, and Central Asian Turkic peoples, most of whom adhered to Islam. Designated as *Semuren* (色目人), they generally occupied higher ranks in the Yuan social hierarchy. Many Huihui served as officials, physicians, astronomers, and interpreters. Their native languages may have included Persian, Arabic, or Turkic, and Persian-language documents, inscriptions, and commercial records were widespread throughout the Yuan empire—especially in port cities and Huihui residential enclaves such as Quanzhou and Yangzhou. See: Huang Zhongjie 2007, pp. 43–52. Note 399.

(compiled 629–639) provides detailed descriptions of Persian goods, including luxurious textiles such as *jindie* (gold brocade), fine cloth, *qushu* (felt rugs), *ta'er* (pile rugs), *huna*, *yuenuobu*, and “gold-threaded fabrics.”⁴²¹ It even uses Persia as a geographical point to calculate distances to other regions, such as the Byzantine Empire (“Fulin”), noting: “From the sea westward, several hundred *li*; eastward, over 4,000 *li* to Mu; northwestward, 4,500 *li* to Fulin; and 11,700 *li* eastward to Guazhou.”⁴²²

In the *History of Later Tang*, Byzantium (Fulin) is described as a polity with whom Emperor Yang of the Sui attempted to establish diplomatic contact: “Emperor Yang of the Sui often attempted to open relations with Fulin, but ultimately failed. In the seventeenth year of Zhenguan (643), the king of Fulin, Botoli, sent emissaries bearing red glass and green gold essence. Emperor Taizong responded with an imperial letter and bestowed brocades and silks.”⁴²³ By the Yuan dynasty, the presence of Arabs and Persians arriving in coastal cities like Quanzhou via maritime trade was substantial⁴²⁴. In the eastern suburbs of Quanzhou, Islamic funerary architecture—known as *mazār*—was established, such as the revered tombs (*maqāmāt*) of the “Three Worthies” and “Four Worthies,” companions of the Prophet Muhammad, located in the northwestern suburbs of Fuzhou (Fig. 3.34). And in the center of the corridor of the Islamic tomb complex at Lingshan, Quanzhou, dating to the Yuan dynasty, there is a stone inscription in Arabic. (Fig.35). The *mazār* architectural style originated in Khurasan under the Seljuk Turks (1038–1194) and flourished under the Timurids in the mid-13th century. Today, seven major Islamic cemeteries remain in Quanzhou, containing over 400 stone tombs. Many stone inscriptions were destroyed during the Muslim uprisings at the end of the Yuan and the anti-Muslim campaigns of the early Ming, making their original number incalculable.⁴²⁵ According to Huang Zhongjie’s analysis of over 200 extant tombstones inscribed in Arabic and Persian, the stone carvers must have had a deep understanding of the Qur'an and Islamic rituals. These artisans were also skilled in Arabic calligraphic styles such as *naskh*, *kufic*, and *rayhani*. In contrast, the Chinese script on some bilingual tombstones is often poorly executed, with frequent errors—suggesting that the stonecutters were likely not Han Chinese⁴²⁶. Instead, it is likely that Muslim artisans were directly responsible for the architectural and funerary needs of local Islamic communities, including the design and decoration of mausolea and other religious structures.⁴²⁷

⁴²¹ 魏征[Wei Zheng]. *隋书* [*Sui shu*], “Biographies,” chapter 48, entry on Persia [“西域·波斯”], compiled during the Tang dynasty. Baina edition, pp. 14–15. The original text:“境内有很多良马、大驴、狮子、白象、鸵鸟蛋、珍珠、颇黎、兽魄、珊瑚、琉璃、玛瑙、水晶、瑟瑟、呼洛羯、吕腾、火齐、金刚、金、银、瑜石、铜、镔铁、钊、锦叠、细布、毳(叟毛)毳(登毛,)护那、越诺布、檀、金缕织成、赤麋皮、朱沙、水银、薰陆、郁金、苏合、青木等各种香料、胡椒、毕拔、石蜜、半蜜、千年枣、附子、诃黎勒、无食子、盐绿、雌黄”。

⁴²² *Ibid.* *Li* is an ancient Chinese unit of distance, approximately equal to 0.5 kilometers.

⁴²³ 刘昫[Liu Xu]. *旧唐书* [*Jiu Tang shu*], “Biographies,” chapter 148, “Western Rong” [“西戎”]. Compiled during the Five Dynasties period. Baina edition, pp. 16.

⁴²⁴ Huang Zhongjie. 2007, pp. 43.

⁴²⁵ 吴文良[Wu Wenliang]. *泉州宗教石刻* [*Quanzhou Zongjiao Shike*]. China Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1954, pp. 42.

⁴²⁶ Huang Zhongjie. 2007, pp. 43–47.

⁴²⁷ Based on Chinese and foreign historical sources, Ma Jianchun compiled a list of Persian places of origin whose inhabitants were either forcibly relocated or voluntarily migrated to China during the Mongol period. These include: Tusi, Mayida'er, Lai, Humu, Hamadan, Zanzhang, Naishabur, Marv, Sarakhs, Baward, Barikh, Kejiyun, Keshang,

Further evidence of organized artisan transfer and management is found in the *Collected Writings of Gui Zhai* by Ouyang Xuan, who in 1334 submitted a memorial requesting an official stele be erected in honor of the Arab Muslim artisan and Minister of Revenue, Huduruša⁴²⁸. His grandfather, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, and father, Mahamaša, both originated from the Western Regions—referred to as *Dashi* (i.e., Arab lands)⁴²⁹ in Tang sources—and served the Yuan court for three generations. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn was appointed in 1260 as *darughachi* (imperial supervisor) of the *Chadian'er* Bureau, overseeing all artisans affiliated with princely households, including tent-makers and palace builders. His son Mahamaša held the same position until his death. Huduruša himself was responsible for the construction of imperial buildings and received numerous honors:

*“From the main gates and ceremonial avenues, to the side courts of the subsidiary halls; from ancestral temples to the guard quarters, from kitchens and textile workshops to officials’ residences, as well as gardens, pavilions, and leisure spaces—multi-storied towers, flying eaves, and elaborate corridors—all were built in accordance with precise standards.”*⁴³⁰

The inscription also notes that Huduruša’s son was appointed co-supervisor of the Yangzhou Weaving and Dyeing Bureau upon reaching adulthood⁴³¹. This hereditary appointment of a foreign Muslim family across four generations—engaged in court construction, artisan administration, and textile manufacture—demonstrates the Yuan dynasty’s systematic incorporation and management of foreign craftsmen. Through the hereditary *jianghu* (artisan household) system, the emperor effectively transformed his personal entourage into an institutionalized bureaucratic apparatus.

Anne E. Wardwell, in her analysis of a gold-thread brocade textile from early Mongol Central Asia (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art)(Fig. 3.36), argues that a piece featuring a winged lion motif was likely woven by Muslim artisans forcibly relocated from Central or Western Asia to the East by the Mongols. The cloud-scroll terminus on the wings—never before seen in Chinese textile traditions—suggests an imaginative hybrid, a masterpiece of Muslim artisans experimenting with Chinese visual grammar and structural composition. The textile reflects a moment of aesthetic encounter, where artistic innovation arose precisely through cultural displacement.⁴³² The fusion of patterns and technical innovations seen in Yuan dynasty silk textiles did not merely result from the transmission of stylistic motifs; rather, they were often closely linked to the physical movement of artisans themselves. In fact, as the Mongol

Alamut, Kazalon, Khufah, Mawsil, Qilimanshaheng, Marakhe, Tebrilisi, Khwarazm, Shiraz, and Isfahan. See: 马建春[Ma Jianchun]. “蒙·元时期的波斯与中国” [Persia and China during the Mongol-Yuan Period]. *回族研究* [Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Study], no. 1, 2006, pp. 103–108.

⁴²⁸ 欧阳玄[Ouyang Xuan]. 圭斋文集 [Guizhai Wenji], chapter 9, “Beiwén” [“碑文”]. *Sibu Congkan*, Jingming Chenghua edition, Yuan Dynasty(1279-1368). pp. 49.

⁴²⁹ “Dashi” [大食] commonly refers to the Ilkhanate (the Mongol-ruled Persian-Arabic region) or, more broadly, to West and Central Asia, where Arab merchants were particularly active.

⁴³⁰ Ouyang Xuan, pp. 49. The original text: “魏阙端门，正朝路寝，便殿掖庭，承明之署，受厘之祠，宿卫之舍，衣食器御，百执事臣之居，以及池塘苑囿游观之所，崇楼阿阁，幔庑飞檐，具以法故。”

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² Wardwell, Anne E. “Two Silk and Gold Textiles of the Early Mongol Period.” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 79, no. 10, 1992, pp. 364.

Empire expanded across Eurasia from the early 13th century onward, a large number of skilled craftsmen from Central and Western Asia were forcibly relocated to East Asia. Among them were many Muslim artisans proficient in gold brocade weaving, embroidery, dyeing, and other textile techniques. Their migration not only reshaped the geographical distribution of silk production, but also profoundly influenced the diversity of Yuan silk textiles in terms of design, structure, and craftsmanship. It is within this historical context that we now turn to a closer examination of the transregional relocation of artisans under the Mongol Empire.

3.3 A Million Artisans: The Transregional Movement of Silk in the Mongol Empire

The transregional movement of textile artisans offers an essential point of entry for studying the provenance of silk and the transmission of textile imagery. Mapping the concentrations and migratory routes of weavers allows for the reconstruction of a relatively clear westward trajectory. This chapter begins with the regional redistribution and relocation of artisans within the Yuan dynasty, and proceeds to analyze how craftsmen based as far east as East Asia ultimately influenced silk production in Italy.

In the fourth year of the Zhiyuan reign (1267), Kublai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty, accepted the strategic advice of the surrendered Southern Song general Liu Zheng and launched a campaign to seize the critical military site of Xiangyang and Fancheng. By the tenth year of Zhiyuan (1273), the city had fallen. This opened the gateway to the Lower Yangtze region, and in the thirteenth year of Zhiyuan (1276), the Yuan army captured Lin'an (modern-day Hangzhou), marking the formal surrender of the Southern Song. Three years later, in 1279, following the decisive naval Battle of Yashan, the last vestiges of the Song resistance were extinguished, and the Yuan dynasty completed its unification of China. Subsequent historical records occasionally document the presence of artisans from the Western Regions who had been relocated eastward within the territory of the Yuan Empire. Such mentions are found in official Yuan sources including the *Yuan shi* (History of the Yuan)—specifically in the annals (*benji*), biographies (*liezhuan*), Treatises on Official Posts (*baiguan zhi*), and the Treatise on Food and Economics (*shihuo zhi*)⁴³³. Rashid al-Din's *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (Compendium of Chronicles) preserves a wealth of concrete accounts of artisans captured during Mongol westward military campaigns, making it one of the most valuable sources for reconstructing the eastward relocation of skilled workers from Central and Western Asia. The *Collected Writings of Gui Zhai* (*Guizhai wenji*) by Ouyang Xuan also includes references to artisans from the Western Regions brought

⁴³³ 宋濂 [Song Lian]. *Yuan shi* [元史], Benji [本纪/Annals]. Baina edition [百衲本], Liezhuan [列传 Biographies], Baiguan zhi [百官志/ Treatise on Governmental Offices], Shihuo zhi [食货志/ Treatise on Food and Economy].

eastward⁴³⁴. In addition, two major legal compendia from the Yuan period—the *Tongzhi tiaoge*[通制条格] and the *Zhizheng tiaoge*[至正条格]—offer insights into the legal and administrative frameworks governing Yuan society, including detailed regulations on station management, land disputes, and artisan households. These texts are indispensable for understanding the institutional context in which the relocation and management of foreign artisans occurred.

3.3.1 The *Zhuse huji* System: Textile Production under the Yuan Dynasty

Scholarly estimates suggest that more than one million *jianghu*—hereditary artisan households—came under the jurisdiction of the Yuan government⁴³⁵. During Mongol conquests, especially in the West and in northern China, artisans were frequently spared from mass executions, along with women and entertainers. The Mongols, as a nomadic society, valued individuals skilled in textile production, weapon manufacturing, and architectural construction. According to the account of Juvayni, in 1221 the Mongol army, under the command of Tolui, captured the Persian city of Merv (present-day Mary in Turkmenistan). Due to its resistance, the city suffered a devastating assault. During the massacre that followed:

*The Mongols ordered that, apart from four hundred artisans whom they specified and selected from amongst the men and some children, girls and boys, whom they bore off into captivity, the whole population, including the women and children, should be killed, and no one, whether woman or man, be spared.*⁴³⁶

Juvayni recorded that during the siege of Khwarazm in 1219, Genghis Khan gave explicit orders to separate over 100,000 artisans from the general population before executing the rest. Women and children were enslaved and deported, while the remaining adult males were handed over to soldiers, each of whom was ordered to kill twenty-four captives⁴³⁷. Juvayni states that over 100,000 artisans were taken on this occasion. When Samarkand fell in 1220, some 30,000 artisans were counted and relocated⁴³⁸.

⁴³⁴ 欧阳玄[Ouyang Xuan]. *Kuizhai Wenji* [奎斋文集], juan 9 “Beiwén” [“碑文”] and juan 10 “Gongmu Beiming” [“公墓碑铭”]. *Siku Quanshu* edition, pp. 67–71.

⁴³⁵ Gao Rongsheng. “元代匠户散论” [A Brief Discussion on Artisan Households in the Yuan Dynasty]. *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences)* [《南京大学学报(哲学·人文·社会科学)》], no. 1, 1997, pp. 123–9.

⁴³⁶ Juvaini, ‘Ala-ad-Din ’Ata-Malik. *The History Of The World Conqueror*. Translated by John Andrew Boyle, vol. 1, Harvard University Press, 1958, pp. 162.

⁴³⁷ Juvaini, ‘Ala-ad-Din ’Ata-Malik. 1958, pp. 127-8. “Then they drove the people out into the open ; those that were artisans or craftsmen, of whom there were more than a hundred thousand, were separated from the rest; the children and the young women were reduced to slavery and borne off into captivity ; and the men that remained were divided among the army, and to each fighting man fell the execution of twenty-four persons.”

⁴³⁸ Juvaini, ‘Ala-ad-Din ’Ata-Malik. 1958, pp. 122. “When the town and the citadel equalled each other in ruin and desolation and many an emir, and soldier, and townsman had taken a sip at the cup of destruction, on the next day, when the eagle which is the heavenly Jamshid had raised its head above the mountain-tops of the earth and the fiery countenance of the sun was lit up upon the round tray of the sky, the people who had escaped from beneath the sword were numbered; thirty thousand of them were chosen for their craftsmanship, and these Chingiz-Khan distributed amongst his sons and kinsmen, while the like number were selected from the youthful and valiant to form a levy.”

In northern China, the scale of artisan conscription was also vast. As Genghis Khan's five generals took up posts in key northern cities—including Yidu, Jinan, Pingyang, Taiyuan, Zhending, Daming, and Dongping—they seized a total of 720,000 households of civilians and artisans, of which 3,000 were distributed among the five generals as rewards⁴³⁹. The *Collected Works of Jingxiu* recounts the testimony of Yang Jifu (also known as Yang Weng), who witnessed the Mongol massacre in Baozhou. He observed that only those who could identify themselves as craftsmen—such as those able to operate a saw—were spared. Many people pretended to be artisans in order to survive⁴⁴⁰.

During the Mongols' subsequent second westward campaign, further waves of artisans were forcibly relocated from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In 1385, Tokhtamysh Khan of the Golden Horde, facing internal instability in the Caucasus and Asia Minor, led a force of 50,000 troops through Derbent and Shirvan into Azerbaijan. After capturing Tabriz, his forces deported approximately 200,000 people, including tens of thousands of Armenians from regions such as Parskahayk', Syunik, and Artsakh⁴⁴¹. The *Tarikh Nama-i-Harat (The History of Herat)*, written by Sayf ibn Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Harawī, recounts how Prince Tolui, son of Genghis Khan, forcibly relocated 1,000 weaving households from Herat to Beshbalik (modern-day Jimusaer in Xinjiang)⁴⁴². These artisans and slaves arrived in large numbers in China alongside the Mongol military campaigns. Many of them, along with their descendants, later served in official workshops during the Yuan dynasty.

According to Yuan legal codes, "Children of artisan households must follow their family's trade: sons must learn crafts, and daughters must learn embroidery and needlework."⁴⁴³ Although not all individuals from artisan households were engaged in silk weaving, a significant portion of these craftsmen specialized in sericulture and textile production. The *Nancun Gengdu Lu* records that over a quarter of the departments under the Ministry of Works during the Yuan dynasty were related to textile manufacturing, including the General Bureau of Embroidery, the Embroidery Office, the Capital Felt Bureau, the Weaving and Dyeing Bureau, the Tapestry and Waxed Cloth Bureau, the Curtain Bureau, and the Bureau for Woven Damasks (Zoudaciqi, transliteration of foreign terms)⁴⁴⁴. In the poem *Minzhou Ge* by the Yuan poet Fan Wo, a large-scale mobilization of weavers is described: "Since antiquity, women in the

⁴³⁹ Song Lian, et al., compilers. *Yuan shi. Liezhuan*, juan 123, "Kokochu" ["阔阔不花"]. Baina edition, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁴⁰ During the massacre at Baozhou, only craftsmen were spared. I pretended to be one and joined their ranks—there were many others who did the same. At the time, an official sought to distinguish the true craftsmen from impostors. An anonymous individual quietly advised him: "Anyone who can hold a saw is a craftsman." This method of identification allowed many to escape death by posing as craftsmen. I deeply regretted not learning the name of that anonymous man. See: *Jingxiu Xiansheng Wenji*, juan 21, "Zazhu" ["杂著"], *Sibu Congkan* Jingyuan edition, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁴¹ Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries*. 1979. Columbia University, Ph.D dissertation, pp.146-147.

⁴⁴² Also cited in: Wardwell, Anne E. "Two Silk and Gold Textiles of the Early Mongol Period." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 79, no. 10, 1992, pp. 364; Allsen, Thomas. *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*. Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 39; Shea, Eiren L. *Fashioning Mongol Identity in China (c. 1200-1368)*. 2016. University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 151.

⁴⁴³ Song Lian, et al., compilers. *Yuan shi*, juan 164 (vol. 51), "Xingfa II". Baina edition, pp. 18–22.

⁴⁴⁴ 陶宗义[Tao Zongyi]. *南村辍耕录[Nancun Chuo Geng Lu]*, juan 21. Jingyuan edition, pp. 13.

boudoirs adorned themselves with needle cases and musical instruments, but now they are conscripted as textile workers for the military... Last year, five thousand weavers were recruited into official workshops, and the expenditure of government resources vanished like smoke and clouds.”⁴⁴⁵ This suggests that at certain points, as many as five thousand weavers could be conscripted simultaneously into various levels of textile institutions.

Given the vast number of artisans integrated into the Mongol administrative system, one may ask: how did Genghis Khan and other Mongol rulers organize and manage the vast numbers of craftsmen they captured? There were two primary strategies for managing craftsmen from Central and Western Asia: first, incorporating them into the household registry system as hereditary artisan households (*jianghu*), and second, establishing dedicated state institutions to manage their labor. Yuan population policy, known as the *Zhuse Hukou Ji* (“Census of Various Households”), categorized the population into functional groups to facilitate conscription, taxation, and social control. These included: military households (*junhu*, responsible for military duties), civilian households (*minhu*, primarily farmers responsible for taxes and corvée), artisan households (*jianghu*, engaged in skilled craft production and liable for labor service), official households (*guanhu*, families of government officials who enjoyed certain privileges), clerical households (*senghu*, associated with Buddhist or Daoist temples, with some tax exemptions but labor obligations), medical households (*yihu*), salt households (*zahu*), Confucian households (*ruhu*), and the lowest-ranked *qukouhu*, laborers or slaves captured in military campaigns. These *qukou*—captured as war prisoners during the Mongol conquests—are sparsely recorded in historical sources⁴⁴⁶. According to the *Yuan Shi*, during the second month of the fourth year of Zhiyuan (mid-March to early April 1267), when Kublai Khan carried out a military recruitment, exemptions were granted primarily to individuals engaged in religious occupations, including those from Christian, Islamic, and native Buddhist or Daoist traditions⁴⁴⁷. Artisan households were further subdivided based on specialization—such as weavers, goldsmiths, potters, tanners, brewers, confectioners, cannon makers, and builders. The range of handcrafted products they were responsible for was extensive, including fine textiles, weaponry, gold and silver goods, ceramics, and various foods and beverages.

⁴⁴⁵ 范椁[Fan Guo]. 范德机诗集 [Fan Deji Shiji], juan 4, “Gexing qu lei” [“歌行曲类”]. *Sibu Congkan Jingyuan* manuscript edition, pp. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ In Yuan dynasty sources, the terms “*gong*” (工) and “*jiang*” (匠), both commonly translated as “craftsman” or “worker,” referred to distinct categories of labor. *Gong* denoted conscripted laborers or hired workers mobilized by the state. They were temporary, auxiliary, and unskilled laborers recruited through the corvée system and placed under the supervision of local officials or the Ministry of Works; their service ended upon the completion of a specific project. By contrast, *jiang* referred to skilled, often hereditary artisans registered as members of *artisan households* (*jianghu* 匠户). Their status was fixed, and they were subject to close state control. In the mid to late Yuan period, as state construction demands grew increasingly burdensome, *gong* laborers were often forcibly reclassified as *jianghu*, resulting in a gradual blurring of the distinction between the two categories.

⁴⁴⁷ Song Lian, *Yuan shi*, juan 98 (Treatises), vol. 46, Baina edition, pp. 7. “In the second month, the emperor issued an edict dispatching officials to select military households (*junhu*) from among the common households in Pingyang and Taiyuan. Exempt from selection were military households, postal households (*zhanhu*), Buddhist and Daoist clergy households, Yelikewen (Nestorian Christian clerical households), Dashiman (Muslim religious households), and Confucian households.2,000 soldiers were to be selected and organized into *baihu* (commanders of one hundred) and *paizitou* (subordinate officers), to be dispatched to the Eastern Sichuan front under the jurisdiction of the Western Sichuan Branch Secretariat (*xing zhongshu sheng*) of the Shaanxi Five Circuits.”

These items were typically reserved for the Mongol elite and were monopolized by the state. Commoners had limited access to them. As stated in the legal codes, “Commoners were only permitted to wear damask silk or plain woven fabrics; ochre-dyed furs were prohibited. Straw hats could not be adorned with gold or jade; boots could not feature decorative patterns. Jewelry was restricted to one gold hairpin or ornamental comb with emerald flowers, and earrings were allowed to use gold beads or turquoise—other accessories had to be made of silver.”⁴⁴⁸

Under the *Treaty of Chanyuan* in 1055, the Northern Song dynasty agreed to deliver 200,000 bolts of silk annually to the Liao dynasty. In 1174, during the *Longxing peace negotiation* [隆兴合议], the government of Southern Song (1127-1279) not only renounced territorial claims to vast northern regions lost to the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), but also pledged to send 250,000 bolts of silk annually.⁴⁴⁹ During the Yuan dynasty, one form of corvée or “levy tax” (*kecha*) imposed on the populace involved raw silk materials and silver payments. Raw materials included silk, gauze, and cotton. According to the *Yuan Shi*, around one million jin (roughly 640 metric tons) of raw silk were collected annually⁴⁵⁰. Additionally, in the first and second years of the Tianli reign (1328–1329), 350,530 and 407,500 bolts of gauze were levied respectively, along with over 70,000 jin of cotton (44.8 metric tons)⁴⁵¹. Much of this raw material was sent to official craft institutions and aristocratic workshops for the production of luxury textiles. Why then was there such a large demand for silk despite its limited availability to the general populace?

The production of brocade and patterned silks using gold and silver threads required an enormous labor force. These threads were made by hammering gold and silver into thin foil, slicing them into tiny strips, and meticulously winding them around silk yarns—a highly labor-intensive process. It is estimated that only about one-tenth of the captured craftsmen were directly engaged in textile production. Beyond state labor deployment, craftsmen captured in wartime often held low social status and were redistributed within the ruling elite as personal property. Wang Hongguang classifies the destination of these western artisans (from regions west of Dunhuang, including Central Asia, the Middle East, and India) into three categories: first, those conscripted into the military as artisans, gunners, or auxiliary soldiers; second, those assigned to designated production workshops in specific regions; and third, those distributed as personal retainers to Mongol nobles and commanders (Noyans)⁴⁵². The historian Fazlallah Rashid al-Din recounts the 1219–1220 Mongol conquest of Khwarazm and describes how artisans were handled:

⁴⁴⁸ Song Lian, et al., compilers. *Yuan shi*, juan 105, vol. 53, “Xingfa IV”. Baina edition, pp. 16–18.

⁴⁴⁹ 曹家齐[Cao Jiaqi]. “从宋、金国力对比看绍兴和议的签订[On the Signing of the Shaoxing Peace Treaty in Light of the Power Comparison between the Song and Jin Dynasties]”. *Journal of Jiangsu Normal University: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*, no. 3, 1997, pp. 118–121.

⁴⁵⁰ Song Lian. *Yuan shi*, juan 93 (vol. 42), “Shihuo I: Kecha”. Baina edition, pp. 14.

⁴⁵¹ Song Lian compilers. *Yuan shi, Zhi*, juan 93 (vol. 42), “Shihuo I: Kecha”. Baina edition, pp. 14. The original text reads: “天历元年，包银差发钞九百八十九锭，一百一十三万三千一百一十九索，丝一百九万八千八百四十三斤，绢三十五万五千三百疋，绵七万二千一十五斤，布二十一万一千二百二十三疋。”

⁴⁵² Wang Hongguang 2021, pp. 8-11.

“The citadel and the walls were levelled with the street and the Mongols departed. And those of the common people and artisans that had escaped the sword they bore away with them, either to serve in the levy (hashar) or to practise their trade. And when Chingiz-Khan had come from Bokhara to Samarqand they proceeded thither also.” ⁴⁵³

In the campaigns along the Syr Darya in 1220, particularly during Ala al-Din Noyan’s conquest of Fana-Kat, it was recorded:

“Soldiers and burghers (arbāb) were placed in separate groups ; whereupon the former were executed to a man, some by the sword and others by a shower of arrows, while the latter were drafted into hundreds and tens. The craftsmen, artisans and keepers of hunting animals (ashāh-i-javārih) were assigned [to appropriate employment]; and the young men amongst those remaining were pressed into the levy (hashar).” ⁴⁵⁴

It is therefore unsurprising that the Yuan state textile sector included a significant number of craftsmen from the western regions and the northern frontiers who had been taken as captives and assigned to imperial workshops.

The distribution of silk and other luxury goods was formally codified alongside precious metals in imperial household regulations. One statute reads:

*“All princes, empresses, and princesses were granted estates and fiefdoms, and their appointed stewards could nominate trusted retainers as supervisors, whose ranks and salaries matched those of royal officials, but who were exempt from rotational appointments. Taxes levied included one jin of silk per five households, and unauthorized collection was prohibited. All contributions were delivered to government agencies and distributed accordingly. Annual silver stipends were fixed during Emperor Taizong’s reign and increased under Emperor Xianzong. After the conquest of southern China by Emperor Shizu, additional households were allocated. Initially, each household paid five zhongtong notes (a form of paper money), but during Emperor Chengzong’s reign, this amount increased to two guan. Such familial favoritism illustrates the regime’s deep loyalty to kin. The same policies applied to meritorious officials, as a form of substantial reward.”*⁴⁵⁵

The Yuan rulers allocated annual stipends, silk quotas (such as the “five-household-per-jin” system), and southern household corvée to various members of the imperial clan, including empresses, princesses, and meritorious officials. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of these resources within the family of Genghis Khan as recorded in the *Yuan Shi*.

Table 1. Annual Stipends and Household Allocations for Members of Genghis Khan’s Lineage during the Yuan Dynasty (Partial Data)

⁴⁵³ Juvaini, ‘Ala-ad-Din’ Ata-Malik. 1958, pp. 85-6.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 91-2.

⁴⁵⁵ Song Lian and Wang Hui, compilers. *Yuan shi*, juan 95, vol. 44, “Shihuo IIP”. Baina edition, pp. 1.

Title/Rank	Annual Stipend	"Five-Household per Jin" Silk Allocation (Year / Location / Households)	Jiangnan Household Currency Allocation (Year / Location / Households / Amount)	Yanyou 6 (1319) Record (Households / Silk in jin)
Tali Zhen (Uncle of Taizu, titled "Guanren")	30 silver ingots, 100 bolts of silk	1236 (Bingshen): 10,000 households in Ninghai Prefecture	1281 (Zhiyuan 18): 11,000 households in Nanfeng Prefecture (440 ingots)	4,532 / 1,812 jin
Shuchi Hasar (Brother of Taizu, Prince of Zichuan)	100 silver ingots, 300 bolts of silk	1236: 24,493 households in Banyan Circuit	1276: 30,000 households in Xinzhou Circuit (1,200 ingots)	7,954 / 3,656 jin
Hachiun (Brother of Taizu, Prince of Jinan)	100 silver ingots, 625 jin cotton, 5,000 jin raw silk, 300 bolts of silk, 1,000 sheepskins	1236: 55,200 households in Jinan Circuit	1281: 65,000 households in Jianchang Circuit (2,600 ingots)	21,785 / 9,648 jin
Ochen Noyan (Brother of Taizu)	100 silver ingots, 5,098 bolts of silk, 5,098 jin cotton, 300 bolts, 120 ingots in paper currency, 500 sheepskins, 16 ingots 45 liang of gold	1236: 62,156 households in Yidu Circuit	1281: 71,377 households in Jianning Circuit (2,855 ingots)	28,301 / 11,425 jin
Borokhu (Brother of Taizu, Prince of Guangning)	300 bolts of silk, 1,000 bolts regular tribute	1236: 41,302 households in Pingyang; 1238: 10,000 households in Zhendin and Jinzhou	1281: 60,000 households in Yongzhou (2,400 ingots)	—
Chagatai (Second son of Taizu)	100 silver ingots, 300 bolts of silk, 625 jin cotton, 6 ingots 6 liang gold tribute	1236: 47,330 households in Taiyuan; 1238: 10,000 in Zhendin and Shenzhou	1281: 67,330 households in Lizhou Circuit (2,693 ingots)	17,211 / 6,838 jin

Title/Rank	Annual Stipend	"Five-Household per Jin" Silk Allocation (Year / Location / Households)	Jiangnan Household Currency Allocation (Year / Location / Households / Amount)	Yanyou 6 (1319) Record (Households / Silk in jin)
Dingzong (Third son of Taizu, son of Emperor Taizong)	16 ingots 33 liang silver, 50 bolts of silk	1236: 68,593 households in Daming	—	12,835 / 5,193 jin
Ariq Böke (Fourth son of Taizu, son of Emperor Ruizong)	100 silver ingots, 300 bolts of silk	1236: 80,000 households in Zhending Circuit	1281: 104,000 households in Fuzhou Circuit (4,160 ingots)	15,028 / 5,013 jin
Khulgen (Sixth son of Taizu, Crown Prince, Prince of Hejian)	100 silver ingots, 300 bolts of silk	1236: 45,930 households in Hejian Circuit	1281: 53,930 households in Hengzhou Circuit (2,157 ingots)	10,140 / 4,479 jin

- Note:** a. “jin” is a traditional Chinese weight unit, approximately 0.64 kg;
b. Paper currency referenced is *Zhongtong chao* used in the Yuan dynasty.
c. Data compiled from *Yuan Shi*, chapter 95 and other related sections.

In the table above, three pivotal years in the taxation and distribution of silk textiles under the Yuan dynasty are compared. The year 1236, under Ögedei Khan, marks the first large-scale allocation of Han Chinese civilian households in North and Central China—recently conquered from the Jin dynasty—as silk-tax households (*wuhu si*, “five-households-per-jin”). According to this policy, every five registered households were required to contribute annually one *jin* (approximately 640 grams) of raw silk to the Mongol princes and high-ranking officials as a form of tribute⁴⁵⁶.

In 1281 (the 18th year of Zhiyuan, under Kublai Khan), following the completion of the southern conquest, the “Jiangnan household paper currency” (*Jiangnan hu chao*) system was implemented, replacing the raw silk tax in the northern regions with monetary levies from newly registered households in the former Song territories⁴⁵⁷. By

⁴⁵⁶ According to Yuan dynasty official silver ingots unearthed in Inner Mongolia, no unified or strictly enforced weight standard appears to have existed at the time. The recorded weight range spans approximately from 31.3 grams to 40.08 grams per tael (*liang*). Given that one *jin* was equivalent to 16 *liang*, this would correspond to approximately 640 grams per *jin*. For more on the measurement of weights in the Yuan dynasty, see: 王斌[Wang Bin]. “上海市金山区博物馆馆藏至元十四年银锭考 [An Examination of a Silver Ingot from the Fourteenth Year of the Zhiyuan Reign in the Collection of Jinshan District Museum, Shanghai].” *Identification and Appreciation to Cultural Relics*, no. 8, 2020, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁷ In the Yuan dynasty, households in the Jiangnan region (formerly under the Southern Song) were required to pay monetary taxes in the form of *Zhongtong chao* (paper currency). Each household was obligated to remit one *guan*, equivalent to one *liang* of silver. As Yuan dynasty silver currency was typically cast in the form of fifty-*liang* sycee ingots, this amount corresponded to 0.02 of a standard ingot.

1319 (the 6th year of Yanyou, under Emperor Renzong), a comprehensive national census revealed a significant reduction in the actual number of registered households due to flight, concealment by the nobility to evade taxation, and large-scale land consolidation. While noble families retained the right to levy taxes on their allocated households, they no longer exercised direct administrative control over them, leading to a severe attrition of taxable base. In 1236, during the early Yuan period, approximately 1.7 million households were distributed as enfeoffments. However, by the mid- to late Yuan period, specifically in 1319, the number of households under actual control had declined to less than 40% of the original allotment. For example, from the table 1, the number of households assigned to the Muqali family in the Dongping Circuit fell from 39,000 to just 8,354.

During the early Yuan period, the collection of raw silk served not only as a practical tax medium but also reflected the regime's broader effort to expand textile production in support of a *silk-based monetary standard*. The Yuan empire spanned a vast and diverse territory with highly uneven regional economies and a complex currency system incorporating silver, silk, cowries, copper coins, and paper money. In 1227—the year Genghis Khan conquered Western Xia and the Jin dynasty retreated to Henan and Shaanxi—He Shi, a local governor of Bozhou (modern Liaocheng, Shandong), introduced silk-backed paper currency (*huizi*) to revive the local economy⁴⁵⁸.

In order to supervise artisans and regulate their output, the Yuan government established the *General Directorate for Artisans of Various Ethnicities* (*Zhuse renjiang zongguanfu*) in 1275, headed by a high-ranking official of third rank⁴⁵⁹. In 1284, a further administrative position was created: *Darughachi in Charge of Artisans*, with fifth-rank status and jurisdiction over 1,525 artisan households⁴⁶⁰. The *Yuan Shi* notes:

*“First, children, girls, and craftsmen from across the empire were gathered and stationed at Hongzhou. Later, over 300 households of Western Region artisans skilled in brocade weaving were brought in, along with 300 households of artisans from Bianjing [Kaifeng] specializing in woolen cloth. All were placed under the jurisdiction of Hongzhou and managed by Zhenhai Shi.”*⁴⁶¹

Located in present-day Yangyuan County, Zhangjiakou City, Hebei Province, Hongzhou became a major production center for brocade under the Yuan, and also one of the early resettlement sites for captured artisans from the western campaigns. Following the first western expedition, Qianzhou, Ximolin, and Beshbalik (present-day Changji, Xinjiang) also served as designated settlement areas for Central and West Asian craftsmen. Marco Polo mentions a town between Fengzhou and Xuandezhou

⁴⁵⁸ 李小萍 [Li Xiaoping]. “试论元代海外贸易下的几个货币问题 [A Tentative Discussion on Several Monetary Issues under Yuan Dynasty's Overseas Trade]”. *区域金融研究*[*Journal of Regional Financial Research*], no. 12, 2016, pp. 79–85. After founding the Yuan dynasty, Kublai Khan initiated the printing of *Zhongtong Jiaochao* in the first year of Zhongtong (1260), a paper currency explicitly backed by silk. The exchange rate was set at 1,000 *liang* of silk equaling 50 *liang* of silver, or 1 *liang* of silver to 20 *liang* of silk.

⁴⁵⁹ Song Lian. *Yuan Shi*, Treatises, vol. 35, *juan* 85, Baiguan 1. *Bainaben* edition, pp. 30.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ Song Lian. *Yuan shi*, Biographies, vol. 7, “Zhenhai”, *Yuan Shi* 120. *Bainaben* edition, pp. 10.

known for producing woven *nasij* textiles, likely referring to Ximolin (modern Ximalin, western Zhangjiakou)⁴⁶². Juvaini also records that:

*“The Mongols named it Ma’u-BaKgh, and Qa’an caused a town to be built on it, which they called Ordu-Baligh, though it is better known as Qara-Qorum. Hither artisans of every kind were brought from Khitai, and likewise craftsmen from the lands of Islam ; and they began to till the ground. And because of Qa’W’s great bounty and munificence people turned their faces thitherward from every side, and in a short space of time it became a city.”*⁴⁶³

Yuan state-run workshops also recruited wool weavers from the Western Regions; both the Capital Felt Bureau (*Dadu Zhanju*) and the Shangdu Felt Bureau employed such artisans. This demonstrates that artisans from Central and West Asia worked alongside Han Chinese craftsmen in government-controlled production institutions. This setting provided a rare opportunity for technological exchange, collaborative specialization, and cross-cultural innovation in textile craftsmanship. Regardless of whether artisans were permanently stationed or rotated on temporary assignments, many maintained independent households and were permitted to engage in private production to supplement state provisions⁴⁶⁴. Therefore, we must acknowledge the strong possibility that these *state-affiliated artisans* transmitted technical knowledge—including the making of high-grade goods—from imperial workshops into the civilian sector.

As the Mongol Empire expanded, artisans from southern China also began to be incorporated into the production system. Based on this foundation, the next section focuses on the evolution of southern textile artisans and the relationship between state textile production and overseas trade.

3.3.2 Northern and Southern Artisans: The Transregional Movement of Craftsmen and Maritime Transportation

The Yuan dynasty’s administrative strategies for organizing and relocating skilled artisans were not limited to land-based reallocations. In addition to the large-scale west-to-east movement of Central and Western Asian craftsmen during and after the Mongol conquests, the Yuan state also facilitated the north-south redistribution of Chinese artisans within the empire’s vast territory. This included the transfer of textile workers from southern China—particularly from the former Song regions—into northern

⁴⁶² The identification of the place name rendered variously as *Hsin-ma-lin*, *Hsiun-ma-lin*, or *Simalr* can be traced back to early scholarship, most notably Paul Pelliot’s pioneering study: Pelliot, Paul. “Une ville musulmane dans la Chine du Nord sous les Mongols,” *Journal Asiatique*, no. 211, 1927, pp. 261–79. Further discussion and categorization of three major communities of Near Eastern textile artisans in Yuan China can be found in: Allsen, Thomas. *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 39–45.

⁴⁶³ Juvaini, ‘Ala-ad-Din ’Ata-Malik. 1958, pp. 236.

⁴⁶⁴ Gao Rongsheng 1997, pp. 123–29.

production centers and vice versa. Such movements were often orchestrated to meet the needs of imperial workshops and military supply chains. This section explores the geographic and institutional mechanisms of artisan relocation across regions and analyzes the role of sea routes in sustaining the empire's textile economy and labor distribution.

In 1279, following the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song and the unification of southern China, the *Yuan Shi* records that Zhang Hui (张惠), then serving as Right Chancellor of the Central Secretariat and charged with managing all fiscal and grain matters in the Jiang-Huai region, was tasked with auditing the Southern Song's imperial archives and treasury. Upon the surrender of the Song court, he oversaw the inventory of land registers, the confiscation of ritual instruments, ceremonial treasures, and court regalia from the imperial ancestral temple and the Jingling Palace. In the process of registering southern artisans, a total of 300,000 artisan households were recorded. Among these, Zhang Ji retained approximately 110,000 households deemed to possess technical skills, while petitioning the court to restore the status of the remaining unskilled artisan households to that of commoners⁴⁶⁵. Thus, with the fall of the Southern Song capital, the Yuan regime acquired in one stroke over 100,000 skilled artisan households from Jiangnan. Despite having already captured hundreds of thousands of artisans during the reign of Khubilai Khan (r. 1264–1294), the Mongol aristocracy's demand for highly skilled craftspeople remained unmet. At least three organized campaigns to recruit artisans were launched under Khubilai: in the third month of Zhiyuan 16 (1279), again at the end of that same year, and later in Zhiyuan 24 (1287)⁴⁶⁶.

The integration of southern Chinese artisans into the Yuan textile production system had significant consequences, not only for Chinese silk manufacturing but also for visual and decorative trends beyond China. During this period, even Italian textile designs began to exhibit new motifs. In previously established state-run textile workshops in Qianzhou, Ximolin, Beshbalik, and Dadu—where Central Asian, West Asian, and northern Chinese artisans had traditionally worked—new influences emerged following the unification of the south. These regions, all situated in relatively arid inland areas, had produced textiles characterized by the visual languages of steppe and desert cultures. With the addition of artisans from Jiangnan (the geographic and cultural region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, primarily encompassing parts of modern-day southern Jiangsu, northern Zhejiang, and Shanghai), textile production began to incorporate elements reflective of the refined and urbanized aesthetics of southern China. In contrast to the iconography shaped by the pastoral and nomadic cultures of the north, southern painters and artisans—steeped in the vibrant commercial and urban culture of the Jiangnan region—introduced alternative decorative styles into the textile tradition. One prominent transformation was the shift from the so-called "Spring Waters and Autumn Mountains" (*chunshui qiushan*) motif

⁴⁶⁵ Song Lian, *Yuan shi*, Liezhuan vol. 54, "Zhang Hui". Bainaben edition, pp. 11.

⁴⁶⁶ A Yuan dynasty record notes: "In the third month, 600 newly surrendered military artisans capable of manufacturing Huihui pao (Muslim cannons) were conscripted from the Two Huai region, along with Mongols, Huihui, Han, and other newly surrendered individuals skilled in cannon-making, and sent to the capital." See: Song Lian. *Yuan sh*, Treatises, Zhijuan vol. 46, in total vol. 98, *Bainaben* edition, pp. 12. Two additional instances are discussed in: Gao Rongsheng, 1997, pp. 123-29.

to the "Prosperity in the Lotus Pond" (*manchi jiao*) motif, which featured mandarin ducks in lotus-filled ponds⁴⁶⁷. The "Spring Waters" segment depicts falcons preying on swans during the first and second lunar months, while the "Autumn Mountains" presents scenes of deer and bears in forested landscapes around the seventh lunar month. These seasonal hunting motifs reflect the land-based hunting practices of northern nomadic peoples, who in spring would hunt swans, hares, wild geese, and eagles (Fig. 3.37). In contrast, the popular decorative motif known as "Manchi jiao" (满池娇) centers on aquatic birds such as paired mandarin ducks, domestic ducks, egrets, and pelicans (*Pelecanus*). (Fig. 3.38).

This transition is also evident in surviving textile fragments from both the Song and Yuan dynasties. A comparison between an 11th–12th century tapestry fragment from the Song period (960–1276) (Fig. 3.37) and a 13th-century *kesi* (silk tapestry) fragment from the Yuan (Fig. 3.38) reveals shared botanical backgrounds but different thematic emphases. The Song example features a terrestrial setting with galloping deer, flying phoenixes, and flocks of wild geese—typical of the "Autumn Mountains" motif and closely aligned with Central Asian tapestry traditions. The Yuan fragment, by contrast, presents a compositional balance between land, water, and air: ducks gliding across a pond, deer resting ashore, and phoenixes soaring above. Such changes reflect deeper cultural transformations. The Mongol empire, originally rooted in the pastoralist civilization of the steppe, gradually transitioned to a more sedentary and production-oriented mode of governance following the founding of the Yuan dynasty. Consequently, hunting-themed motifs like "Autumn Mountains," once emblematic of elite nomadic identity, began to recede from daily life and visual culture. In their place emerged gentler, more idyllic scenes evocative of bourgeois prosperity and peaceful domesticity—intimate vignettes of life beside the lotus pond.

A similar transformation in textile iconography occurred contemporaneously in Italy. During the 13th century, woven textiles produced in Lucca and Venice frequently featured motifs derived from hunting scenes, such as eagles, griffins, and hounds (Fig. 3.39), or depictions of birds of prey attacking animals mid-flight—compositions (Fig. 3.40) in which eagles and gazelles appear together were especially prevalent during this period. These images reflected both the aristocratic culture of the hunt and a strong influence from Eastern design traditions, underscoring the prominence of cross-cultural hunting iconography in textile art of the time. However, by the second half of the 14th century, Italian textiles began to shift toward representations of everyday life. A notable example is a brocade depicting a female hunter beside a fountain, in which traditional hunting imagery is interwoven with architectural and domestic motifs such as the fountain itself—a symbol unrelated to hunting yet rooted in lived experience (Fig. 3.41)⁴⁶⁸. Likewise, decorative elements such as rabbits and deer—present in the Chinese motifs "Spring Waters and Autumn Mountains" and *manchi jiao* (Prosperity in the Lotus Pond)—reappear in 15th-century Italian lampas broché silks (Fig. 42). In

⁴⁶⁷ Liu Keyan 2014, PhD dissertation, pp. 65–66.

⁴⁶⁸ For similar hunting-themed textiles produced in Italy during this period, often combined with architectural elements such as buildings and fountains, see: Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*. Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1912, abb.374,376,380,381,394,398,400.

one example, a rabbit is shown leaping to the right through a dense background of overlapping flora, turning its head as if glancing back—closely resembling similar animal figures in Chinese Figure 3.37 and Figure 3.38 compositions.

This simultaneous evolution in Eastern and Western textile iconography—from pure hunting imagery to hybrid motifs combining the hunt with domestic or pastoral themes—can be explained, at least in part, by developments in maritime trade. While overland trade routes were repeatedly disrupted due to internecine warfare among Mongol khans, maritime networks flourished, linking China's southeastern coast with the broader Indian Ocean and Mediterranean worlds. During this period, maritime merchants from Central and West Asia, particularly from the Ilkhanate, came to dominate the east–west sea trade through ports such as Quanzhou. This rise in seaborne commerce coincided with the emergence of a group of powerful foreign merchants known as Ortoq (lit. "partners"), who operated both as high-interest creditors under state patronage and as active participants in international trade⁴⁶⁹. The majority of these merchants were Muslims, and their economic activity was substantial enough to necessitate the establishment of a special bureau to oversee their affairs—the Quanfusi (泉府司), or "General Directorate for Ortoq across All Routes" or Zhi Yong Yuan, depending on the administrative context. It is important to note that the Quanfusi was not merely an administrative body but a court-controlled institution with direct ties to the Yuan imperial household. It had its own cadre of professional merchants (the Ortoq) and operated a substantial revolving fund that could not be disbursed without imperial sanction⁴⁷⁰. This arrangement allowed the Yuan court to dispatch emissaries to purchase foreign goods on behalf of the royal family. A vivid record from 1309, for instance, describes how over 1,200 foreign merchants passed through the Hangzhou courier station (yizhan) within just six months. The burden placed on the station was so great that a memorial was submitted to Emperor Wuzong (Haidu's son, Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan):

*"In the second year of Zhida (April 1309), the ministers of the Central Secretariat reported: 'In Jiangzhe's Hangzhou courier station, over 1,200 emissaries passed through in just half a year. Among them, individuals such as Sangwu and Baoheding presented lions, leopards, crows, and falcons, and stayed for twenty-seven days, during which people and animals consumed over 1,300 jin of meat. We request that in future, emissaries from distant lands presenting rare animals and treasures be accommodated according to established courier regulations. However, merchants who offer gifts while conducting trade should bear their own expenses.' The proposal was accepted."*⁴⁷¹

Many of these foreign merchants had been active since the early Mongol Empire, serving as agents for Mongol nobility and military leaders in acquiring precious metals, luxury items, and foreign goods. A Southern Song envoy to the Mongol court, Zhao Qi,

⁴⁶⁹ Jin Zhengjie. 2023, pp. 1-9.

⁴⁷⁰ 高荣盛[Gao Rongsheng]. 元代海外贸易研究 [A Study of Overseas Trade in the Yuan Dynasty]. 四川人民出版社[Sichuan People's Publishing House], 1998, pp. 147.

⁴⁷¹ Song Lian. *Yuan shi*, Basic Annals, vol. 23, "Wuzong II". Bainaben edition, pp. 3.

noted: “All merchants, from the Khan downward, trade only with Huihui [Muslim] merchants, using silver in exchange for goods. These Huihui then either resell the goods themselves or engage in further trade by various means.”⁴⁷² These “Huihui” were the Muslim Ortoq merchants, who constituted the majority of foreign traders. In addition to these professional merchants, the Yuan maritime trading class included aristocratic officials, bosang (maritime traders)⁴⁷³, and overseas Chinese merchants.

During the Yuan dynasty, maritime trade was organized along three principal sea routes: the Eastern Route, which facilitated commerce with Goryeo (Korea), Japan, and other Northeast Asian polities; the Southern Route, connecting China with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean world, including Zhenla (Cambodia), Wenlaogu (Vientiane), and Xiaonannan (likely Champa); and the Western Route, which extended from the port of Quanzhou across the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and northeastern Africa, ultimately reaching the Mediterranean. It was along this Western Route that the trade of textiles—including silk goods—could reach the Ilkhanate and European markets directly⁴⁷⁴.

Although Yuan maritime commerce experienced intermittent disruptions—including three bans and three restorations—the very structure of its administration reflected this cyclical volatility. The frequent establishment and subsequent dissolution of institutions overseeing overseas trade reflected a shifting imperial attitude toward global commerce. For instance, in Zhiyuan 7 (1270), the Yuan court issued a prohibition forbidding coastal merchants from trading silk, silver, and refined handicrafts (such as ceramics) with foreign countries⁴⁷⁵. Despite such regulations, Yuan dynasty handicraft industries—particularly ceramics and silk—remained among the most technologically advanced and commercially productive in the premodern world. Longquan celadon, for

⁴⁷² 彭大雅[Peng Daya] and 徐霆[Xu Ting]. 黑鞑事略校注 [A Detailed Account of the Black Tatars, Annotated Edition]. Edited by 许全胜[Xu Quansheng], Lanzhou University Press, 2014, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁷³ The term *boshang* (舶商) referred to independent maritime merchants who held a distinct legal status. In the Yuan dynasty, a dedicated household registration category (*huji*) was established specifically for *boshang*. Alongside *shaoshui* (梢水, seamen), they were classified as technical specialists in government service and were thus granted exemptions from miscellaneous corvée labor as a form of preferential treatment. See: Gao Rongsheng, 1998, p. 147.

⁴⁷⁴ In the second year of Yuanzhen (1296), a ban was issued prohibiting maritime merchants from trading luxury goods with regions such as Ma'bar, Bainan, and Fandachiyina (Southern India and Southeast Asia). In place of this trade, 50,000 strings of paper money were issued, and officials such as Shabuding[沙不丁] were tasked with devising new transport regulations. This marked the beginning of an official prohibition on overseas commerce. See: Song Lian, “Food and Economics II”, *juan* 94, p. 26.

In the first year of Dade (1297), the *Xing Quanfu Si* (Bureau of the Silver Treasury) was abolished. The following year (1298), the *Zhiyong Yuan* was established in its place (*Ibid*). In the seventh year of Dade (1303), the bureau was again dissolved in connection with renewed restrictions on maritime trade (*Ibid*). However, in the ninth year of Dade (1305), the *Zhiyong Yuan* was reinstated (Song Lian, “Chengzong IV”, in total vol. 21, p. 22). In the first year of Zhida (1308), the *Quanfu Yuan* (Bureau of the Silver Treasury) was likewise reestablished. (Song Lian, “Food and Economics II”, *juan* 94, p. 26.)

Between the reestablishment of the *Zhiyong Yuan* in 1305 and the reestablishment of the *Quanfu Yuan* in 1308, no official record notes the dissolution of the *Zhiyong Yuan*. However, the pattern observed in earlier entries from 1297 and 1298—where the abolition of one bureau coincided with the creation of the other—strongly suggests that the two institutions were not intended to coexist. Both agencies served similar functions: overseeing maritime trade and managing *ortoq* (merchant-financier) affairs. The repeated abolition and reestablishment of such offices reflects the Yuan government's difficulty in managing the powerful class of overseas merchants it had helped foster. These merchants frequently profited through illicit means—smuggling, tax evasion, price manipulation, excessive intermediation, and money-lending—leading to a significant depletion of state revenues. Faced with growing fiscal instability, the government was compelled to impose increasingly strict prohibitions on foreign trade.

⁴⁷⁵ Song Lian and Wang Hui. *Yuan shi*, Treatises, vol. 43, “Food and Economics II”. *Bainaben* edition, pp. 26.

example, was exported in large volumes from Quanzhou and has since been recovered at numerous archaeological sites across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa⁴⁷⁶. The widespread presence of such goods overseas, despite legal bans, suggests a high degree of regulatory inconsistency and the persistent reality of smuggling and illicit trade⁴⁷⁷. Indeed, by the mid-Yuan period, annual maritime tax revenues collected by the *Shibosi* (Maritime Trade Supervisory Office) reportedly amounted to hundreds of thousands of *ding* (ingots), further indicating the vitality of oceanic commerce⁴⁷⁸.

Wang Dayuan, a Yuan-era traveler and geographer, documented the extent of such trade in his *Daoyi Zhilüe* (Brief Records of Island Barbarians). This work records commodities exchanged at nearly one hundred international destinations along the Southern and Western Routes. While the text does not offer precise prices or quantities, nor does it distinguish between imported, exported, or transshipped textiles, it nonetheless enumerates numerous silk products among the traded goods. The trade network extended across Southeast Asia—including the Philippine archipelago (Sandao, Mayi), Borneo (Goulanshan, Boni, Wannian Harbor), and Sumatra (Xuwendala, Sanfoqi)—as well as the Malay Peninsula (Pengcheng), South Asia (Wudai, Tefanli, Tianzhu/India), Vietnam (Jiaozhi, Champa), and reached as far as Mosul (*Maheheli*) in present-day northwestern Iraq⁴⁷⁹. Based on textile-historical analysis, scholar Jin Zhengjie has speculated on the directional flow of goods, arguing that raw silk and silk fabrics such as *ling*, *juan*, *duan*, and *jin* were most likely exported from Yuan China. Yet why, despite this evidence, were silk goods formally listed as prohibited exports? As previously discussed, the Yuan dynasty's reliance on silk as both a material and symbolic resource placed enormous pressure on domestic production. Given its use in currency systems, court tribute, and imperial textiles, silk consumption was vast and strategically prioritized for internal use. Furthermore, luxury brocades and gold-threaded fabrics—textiles emblematic of elite status—were subject to state monopolization. The restriction on silk exports was therefore not only an economic decision but also a political one, intended to preserve the exclusivity and prestige associated with high-end silk within the Yuan ruling class.

⁴⁷⁶ Zhang, Ran, et al. "Longquan Celadon: A Quantitative Archaeological Analysis of a Pan-Indian Ocean Industry of the 12th to 15th Centuries." *World Archaeology*, vol. 54, no. 5, 2022, pp. 700–722.

⁴⁷⁷ The *ortoq* merchants, who were entrusted with acquiring rare treasures and luxury goods on behalf of the imperial household, enjoyed privileges comparable to those of official envoys. With substantial capital and imperial backing, they frequently circumvented the regulations imposed by agencies such as the Maritime Trade Office (*shibosi*) and justified their actions by appealing to the tastes of the ruler. As one source records: "When they prepare to present themselves and engage in commerce or go overseas, they carry off with them horses, bows, arrows, bamboo shafts, and other military supplies. Once abroad, these are exchanged for items such as elephants, which are then presented as offerings for high-ranking officials. The local leaders in Xindu [possibly 'Xindu' or another regional center] are in fact colluding with them and lying about it." See: Chen Gaohua, editor. *Yuan Dianzhang*. Zhonghua Book Company, 2011, vol. 4, p. 1223. The emperor's fondness for elephant-drawn carriages also prompted tributary states to offer elephants as gifts. As noted in the *History of the Yuan Dynasty*: "At the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, after the conquest of Champa, Jiaozhi and Zhenla offered elephants annually. They were raised south of the Haizi at Xijin Fang. When the emperor went on tour, foreign officials led the procession on horseback. The elephants pulled grand chariots and camel drums, adorned with golden fittings, flower-patterned felt saddle pads, and decorative bags." See: Song Lian. *Yuan shi*, *juan*. 29, "Carriages and Dress II". *Bainaben* edition, p. 13.

⁴⁷⁸ Song Lian [宋濂]. *Yuan shi* [《元史》], Basic Annals, vol. 26, "Renjong III". *Bainaben* edition [百衲本], pp. 19.

⁴⁷⁹ 汪大渊[Wang Dayuan]. 岛夷志略校释 [*Daoyi zhilüe, Collated and Annotated Edition*]. Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.

The transformation of motifs such as eagles, parrots, and peacocks in Italian textiles may offer a valuable thread through which to observe broader shifts in ornamental language during this period. Initially shaped by nomadic and steppe cultures, these hunting-related images appear to have gradually given way to aesthetic tendencies more closely aligned with the agrarian and urban sensibilities of settled Chinese society—particularly in the wake of the Yuan dynasty’s rule over China, which arguably introduced new patterns of cultural assimilation. Although geographically distant, Italy maintained sustained access to Chinese textiles through maritime trade, and it is not implausible to suggest that Italian visual preferences were, to some extent, influenced by the ornamental transitions taking place in the East. Franciscan silks may also reflect this subtle shift. Situated within the broader networks of both overland and maritime exchange, these textiles simultaneously preserved certain stylistic features associated with “Chinoiserie” while gradually eliminating overt hunting motifs such as falcons and eagles. Instead, they began to favor gentler images associated with domestic life or religious symbolism. While this shift may not have been the result of deliberate iconographic policy, it nonetheless appears to resonate with the broader transformations in visual culture and social aesthetics on both sides of Eurasia.

Chapter IV. Exotic Beasts and Beastly Foreigners: Strategies of Othering in Franciscan and Chinese Manuscripts. *Studies in Franciscan Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Illumination*

After the An Lushan Rebellion (A.D. 755–763) in Tang China, when migrants from the north began to encounter the vast tropical regions of the south—Lingnan, Jiaozhi, Hainan, the so-called *Nanman*, and the South Sea islands—their surviving imaginaries often reveal a complex blend of exotic overtones, legends of miasma, tropical species, fears of barbarity, and visions of wondrous landscapes⁴⁸⁰. This southward migration continued during the Song dynasty, especially after the Jingkang Catastrophe (1127), when large numbers of northern scholars and commoners moved into Jiangnan. In poetry, such imaginations are richly articulated: the poet Li Shen (772–846), while en route to his place of exile in Lingnan, wrote, “A thousand cliffs rise steeply with the mournful cries of apes; scarlet serpents and jet-black vipers slither and coil in hidden places”⁴⁸¹. Liu Zongyuan (773–819) depicted the lurking dangers of Lingnan’s humid heat: “After rain clears on the mountain’s flank, fresh tracks of elephants appear; within the pool’s sun-warmed heart, the venomous spittle of dragons spreads”⁴⁸². Even Han Yu (768–824), anticipating the southern wilderness and the terrors of tropical disease as he was banished to Chaozhou (modern Guangdong), wrote upon reaching Lan Pass: “I know why you’ve come so far—Here, by the miasmatic river, you’ll bury my bones.”⁴⁸³

The frequent wars among the Song, Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties compelled masses of common people, driven by a desperate will to survive, to form great waves of refugees. At this time, imaginaries of distant and overseas lands became inscribed in artistic production. The fear of far-off wildernesses, and the proclivity to envision them as inhabited by strange beasts, was of course not confined to the East; in Western illuminated manuscripts, such imaginings were given even fuller rein.

The global spread of the Franciscans was accompanied by the Franciscan *scriptura* of global imagination—especially that of the East—leaving their traces most vividly in manuscripts, whose production was less rigidly controlled than cathedral art. The first question that this study must confront is to what extent the images that appear in such manuscripts can be regarded as expressions related to the East. Do they represent actual scenes that historically occurred in the East, figures who had journeyed there, imagined portrayals of the East, or rather visual expressions conveying political or religious purposes associated with the East? All of these, in truth, are bound up with how the West conceived of the East.

⁴⁸⁰ 葛承雍[Ge, Chengyong]. “唐代移民与社会变迁特征[The Characteristics of Immigration and Social Change in the Tang Dynasty].” *中国经济史研究* [*Chinese Economic History Studies*], no. 4, 2000, pp. 49–56. and 赵炳林[Zhao, Binglin]. “唐朝对岭南民族地区的经略和开发 [The Planning and Development of the Lingnan Ethnic Minority Areas in the Tang Dynasty].” *民族学刊* [*Journal of Ethnology*], vol. 12, no. 8, 2021, pp. 93–103, 130.

⁴⁸¹ “千崖傍猿猿啸悲，丹蛇玄虺潜蛟涎”。徐倬 [Xu, Zhuo], ed. *御定全唐诗录* [*Imperially Commissioned Complete Tang Poetry Anthology*], juan 69. 四库全书本[Siku Quanshu Edition], Qing Dynasty, pp. 7. From 〈逾岭峒止荒陬抵高要〉。

⁴⁸² “山腹雨晴添象迹，潭心日暖长蛟涎”。柳宗元[Liu, Zongyuan]. 《唐柳河东集注》 [Annotated Collection of Liu Hedong of the Tang], juan 42. 四库全书本[Siku Quanshu Edition], p. 25. From 〈岭南江行〉。

⁴⁸³ “知汝远来应有意，好收吾骨瘴江边”。韩愈 [Han Yu]. *韩愈集* [*Collected Works of Han Yu*], annotated by Zhu Xi (Southern Song). juan 10, *Lüshi fan bashi shou* [Eighty Regulated Verses]. 四部丛刊景本[Sibu congkan]. facsimile of the Yuan edition held at Shanghai Hanfenlou Library, p. 8. From 〈左迁至蓝关示侄孙湘〉。

Through the repeated waves of the Crusades in the thirteenth century, the Mongol conquests, and the missionary networks, Eastern artistic forms entered Italy and Europe. Profoundly shaped by the contemporary political-military order and religious ideology, they came into contact with local decorative idioms and visual systems within manuscript illumination, resulting in a proliferation of fantastical images. These drew densely upon both past and present, East and West, while at the same time retaining a distinctly Western style. In order to examine the decorative language of Franciscan manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this chapter draws upon two principal sources: the manuscripts preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and those held in the Library of the Sacro Convento of San Francesco in Assisi.

4.1 The Franciscan Manuscript Collections

4.1.1 The Emergence of Manuscripts in the Mongol World

Although in the past two decades scholarship has shown increasing interest in the production and patronage of Franciscan art—not only in traditional and prestigious forms such as panel painting, fresco cycles, and architecture, but gradually shifting toward the study of manuscripts—this research has rested on a solid philological foundation. On the one hand, it has continuously “tightened the weave” of institutional history, thought, and cultural networks of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries; on the other hand, it has deliberately sought to connect the Franciscan tradition with broader humanistic and European contexts, and even with contemporary concerns.

The Gutenberg Bible printed by Johann Gutenberg (ca. 1400–1468) in Mainz between 1453 and 1455 was not only the first printed Bible but also the first book produced with movable type. Movable type printing only reached Italy in the mid-fifteenth century. Before that long epoch, manuscript production in the scriptoria (writing rooms) constituted the foundation of monastic libraries⁴⁸⁴. These manuscripts formed an integral part of monastic property: they embodied the cultural and economic capital of monastic communities, while also functioning within wider circuits of circulation. As Franciscan missionaries and explorers traveled far beyond Europe, Christian manuscripts were gradually carried across the continent and appeared within the Mongol Empire, thereby linking the knowledge traditions of monasticism with the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange.

In Marco Polo’s *Travels*, one finds records of Christians at the Great Khan’s court employing biblical manuscripts, and of how Christians in the Yuan imperial court carried Gospel manuscripts on major feast days, treating them as central objects of worship and devotion:

⁴⁸⁴ Beyond the manuscripts produced within the scriptorium, other sources included external purchases, donations, and copies financed by individual friars; monasteries might also have commissioned illuminated books for prominent non-religious patrons. See: Cavallo, Guglielmo. “Dallo “scriptorium” senza biblioteca alla biblioteca senza “scriptorium”. *Dall’Eremo al cenobio. La civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all’età di Dante*, 1998, pp.356.

*“The grand khan, having obtained this signal victory, returned with great pomp and triumph to the capital city of Kanbalu [Peking]. This took place in the month of November, and he continued to reside there during the months of February and March, in which latter was our festival of Easter. Being aware that this was one of our principal solemnities, he commanded all the Christians to attend him, and to bring with them their book, which contains the four Gospels of the Evangelists. After causing it to be repeatedly perfumed with incense, in a ceremonious manner, he devoutly kissed it, and directed that the same should be done by all his nobles who were present. This was his usual practice upon each of the principal Christian festivals, such as Easter and Christmas.”*⁴⁸⁵

When the Franciscan friar Giovanni arrived in Beijing in 1294, he possessed almost nothing apart from a breviary and a small missal. He even produced illustrated didactic materials of the Old and New Testaments for the unlearned, rendering them into Latin, Turkic, and Persian so that multiple communities might read them together. In his letter of 1305 he wrote:

“...for I have nothing but a portable breviary with the short lessons [Lectio Brevis] and a small missal.”

As Lauren Arnold has argued, “these books he either brought to China himself, were supplied by his companion traders, or were brought to him by Friar Arnold of Cologne, who joined him ca. 1303.” In a subsequent letter to the Church, Giovanni wrote:

*“I have had... pictures made of the Old and New Testament for the instruction of the unlearned; and they are written (upon) in Latin, Turkic, and Persian letters so that all tongues may be able to read....”*⁴⁸⁶

This reveals that by that time, Christian images were already circulating in Beijing and serving as tools of evangelization.

In the Itinerarium of William of Rubruck, one finds mention of an illuminated missal from France, gifted by King Louis IX (later canonized as Saint Louis) to the

⁴⁸⁵ Polo, Marco. *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Edited by Manuel Komroff, Translated by William Marsden, Modern Library, 2001. Chapter 6, “Of the Return of the Great Khan to the City of Kanbalu After His Victory, and of the Honour He Confers on the Christians and the Jews, and Other Subjects”. For the original passage and its interpretation, see: Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 151.

⁴⁸⁶ Arnold, Lauren. *Princely gifts and papal treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350*. Desiderata Press, 1999, pp. 49.

Franciscan envoy, who in turn presented it to the Mongol Khan. Guillaume de Rubrouck reported:

“The Khan had our books brought to him, the Bible and the breviary, and he asked with much curiosity what meaning the images had. The Nestorians answered whatever they wanted to, for our interpreter did not come with us.... I also had the Bible and he asked to see it and examined it a long while. Then he left, but the queen remained, and distributed presents to all the Christians there.... Before us she had placed a nasic, which is a large drape, very long.... I did not think I had to accept [it, so] they gave [it] to the interpreter, who carried [it] to Cyprus where he sold it for eighty Cyprian bezants.”⁴⁸⁷

An illustration in Marco Polo’s travel manuscript, MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 242v, preserved in the Bodleian Library, depicts the Khan’s courtiers, merchants, or envoys presenting tribute to him (Fig. 4.1). The scene represents a typical audience in a Mongol court tent: while the Khan’s garments reference Eastern attire, the background is rendered in fully Romanesque style. On the right, a red-robed envoy presents the Khan with a book, very likely one of the liturgical manuscripts brought by missionaries from the West. By this period, illustrated biblical manuscripts had already entered, by various channels, into the visual field of Mongols and Chinese alike. For friars and the faithful, such manuscripts were not merely reference tools for preaching or material objects, but embodiments of faith and testimonies of salvation.

Against this background, Aby Warburg’s concept of the “image-vehicle” (*Bildvehikel*) offers a new perspective for understanding these manuscripts. As he demonstrated in his study of tapestries, images could migrate as intermediaries between wall painting and printmaking. Their function as “image vehicles” meant that what migrated was not only the information conveyed by images but also the very presence of the image as an “image-object” (*Bildobjekt*)⁴⁸⁸. In this sense, the manuscripts carried by Franciscan missionaries may likewise be regarded as quintessential “image-vehicles”: in their circulation between monasteries and the Mongol world, they tightly bound materiality and conceptuality, bearing witness to the cross-cultural migration of medieval knowledge and faith.

4.1.2 Contents, Types, and Modes of Reading in Franciscan Manuscripts

According to the Census of Medieval Franciscan Manuscripts, approximately 1,600 Franciscan codices from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have survived to

⁴⁸⁷ Rubruck, William of. *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253–1255*. Translated by Peter Jackson and edited by Peter Jackson with David Morgan, Hakluyt Society, 1990, pp. 157–58.

⁴⁸⁸ For the discussion of the image as *Bildvehikel* (“image vehicle”) and *Bildobjekt* (“image object”), see: Andreas Beyer, Horst Bredekamp, Uwe Fleckner, Gerhard Wolf, *Bilderfahrzeuge: Aby Warburgs Vermächtnis und die Zukunft der Ikonologie*, Wagenbach, 2018, pp.10.

the present⁴⁸⁹. Within the collection of the Sacro Convento at Assisi (Fondo Antico presso la Biblioteca del Sacro Convento), out of more than seven hundred volumes, 169 manuscripts can be assigned to the thirteenth century (24.03%), 389 to the fifteenth century (55.33%), and 119 to the sixteenth century (16.92%).⁴⁹⁰ In Franciscan libraries, catalogues of books and documents were largely written in Latin,⁴⁹¹ and a significant development may be observed: by the thirteenth century, in response to the needs of the mendicant orders and of the university faculties of theology for preaching, single-volume, portable Bibles produced on thin parchment sheets had begun to appear.⁴⁹²

The contents of Franciscan manuscripts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were remarkably diverse, including the writings of St. Francis and St. Clare, hagiographies of the Franciscan and Poor Clare saints, lives of other Franciscan holy men, the Bible, chronicles, commentaries on the Rule, constitutions of the Order, travel narratives, papal bulls, and liturgical books.⁴⁹³ In monastic ritual, the Psalms of the Old Testament were the central text; the Psalter was also frequently used as the principal medium for images of the life of Christ, often in introductory cycles placed outside the main text. Because they were destined for collective use, Franciscan liturgical books were often richly decorated. Monumental manuscripts (monumentale) such as missals (messali) and antiphonaries (antifonari), whether for private reading or liturgical

⁴⁸⁹ This is a research project on the manuscript tradition of medieval Latin Franciscan sources, initiated by the International Society of Franciscan Studies (SISF) in Assisi. The project involves the cataloguing of more than 5,000 manuscripts. Relevant images can be consulted in the *Iter Franciscanum*, preserved in the Fondo Antico Comunale of the Biblioteca del Sacro Convento in Assisi.

⁴⁹⁰ Here I adopt Giovanni Abate's definition of what constitutes a Franciscan manuscript: "*A manuscript may be classified as 'Franciscan' for one or more of the following reasons: its material production, its formal characteristics, its content, or its ownership. That is, if it was written by the hand of a Franciscan friar; if it contains the literary production of a Franciscan; if its subject matter concerns Franciscan themes; and, finally, if its ownership belonged to a Franciscan institution.*" Since medieval manuscripts rarely contain explicit references to the name of the scribe, the date and place of copying, or other details of production, the definition of a Franciscan manuscript is in practice largely limited to codices that transmit Franciscan texts. See: Abate, Giuseppe. *Manoscritti e biblioteche francescane del Medio Evo*. P. Athenaeum Antonianum, 1950, pp.80.

⁴⁹¹ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the documentary tradition of monasteries and the Franciscan Order also included texts written in the vernacular. Such manuscripts were often employed for liturgical readings in the dormitory, refectory, or cloister, as well as for guiding the laity in devotional practice within the sacristy (*sagrestia*) under the direction of Franciscan friars. For the catalogues of Franciscan manuscripts, particularly those preserved at Assisi, see: Cenci, Cesare. *Bibliotheca manuscripta ad Sacrum conventum Assisiensem*. Vol. I-II. Regione dell'Umbria; Assisi, 1981; For the catalogue of manuscripts preserved in Naples, see: Cenci, Cesare. "Manoscritti francescani della Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli". Vol. I-II. Quaracchi-Grottaferrata 1971. For the catalogue of manuscripts preserved in Padua, see: Giuseppe Abate, Giovanni Luisetto. *Codici e manoscritti della Biblioteca Antoniana col Catalogo delle miniature*. Vol. I-II. Vicenza, 1975; Giovè, Nicoletta, and Stefano Zamponi. "Manoscritti in volgare nei conventi dei frati Minori: testi, tipologie librarie, scritture (secoli XIII - XIV)." *Francescanesimo in Volgare (Secoli XIII - XIV)*. *Atti del XXIV Convegno Internazionale. Assisi, 17-19 ottobre 1996.*, Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1997, pp. 312.

⁴⁹² By the fourth century, manuscript production had shifted from the *scroll* to the *codex* format. Between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the growing demand for Bibles in emerging intellectual centers such as Paris, Bologna, and Oxford led scholars and students to seek versions that were easier to consult and transport. As a result, divided Bibles or manuscripts containing only selected portions of Scripture began to circulate. For the changes in biblical manuscripts in the thirteenth century, see: Light, Laura. "What was a Bible for? Liturgical texts in thirteenth-century Franciscan and Dominican Bibles." *Lusitania sacra* 34, 2016, pp. 165-182.

⁴⁹³ In the Catholic tradition, liturgical books include texts connected with the Mass, such as the *Evangelarium* (Book of the Gospels) or the *Lectionarium* (Book of Readings); books related to the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office); texts for the sacraments (such as baptism, matrimony, or the anointing of the sick) and other liturgical rites; as well as ordination rites (the consecration of bishops, priests, and deacons, the blessing of oils, or the dedication of churches). Art historians and historians often determine the dating of a manuscript by examining the sequence in which specific feast days of saints are included in the liturgical calendar. See, for example: Campopiano, Michele. "St. Francis and the Sultan: The Franciscans and the Holy Land (14th-17th Centuries)." *The Muslim World*, vol. 109, no. 1-2, Mar. 2019, pp. 82.

performance, played a central role; among them, the large laudario of lay confraternities occupied a special place. These were preaching books—volumes designed for collective reading, chanting, and listening—that were thicker and larger than the standard library book, splendidly illuminated, with elaborate pictorial cycles and musical notation. The Bible and its commentaries also held a prominent position, especially within other mendicant orders, such as the Dominicans.⁴⁹⁴

From as early as the eleventh century, Franciscan hermitages possessed scriptoria (*scriptorium avellanita*)⁴⁹⁵, although direct evidence of such workshops remains elusive. Some scholars argue that even by the thirteenth century, the Order lacked an organized system of scribes for the production of liturgical manuscripts.⁴⁹⁶ In keeping with the Franciscan commitment to poverty, many codices were compiled as miscellanies incorporating pages from diverse sources; often only the finest or most essential leaves of a book were copied, particularly in private manuscripts, which bore the distinctive character of compilations (*miscellaneae*). Interestingly, this phenomenon was not unique to Franciscan books; many medieval manuscripts were organized and redacted to bring together partially related, though not fully uniform, contents.⁴⁹⁷ In the Byzantine world, for example, the majority of luxurious codices were religious in nature, with the Bible occupying pride of place. Yet the compilation of the entire Bible into a single volume or a few volumes was exceedingly rare.

The monastic mode of reading was known as *meditatio*: each word of the manuscript was repeatedly chewed over and digested in the course of loud recitation, so as to commit it to memory.⁴⁹⁸ By the late twelfth century, however, as cultural literacy expanded in both religious and secular domains, and as new textual forms and analytical methods emerged, page layout or textual “organization” (*ordinatio*) gradually supplanted the monastic practice of *meditatio*. Guglielmo Cavallo, in comparing the

⁴⁹⁴ “Even among the mendicant orders, however, attitudes toward the production of books diverged. While both rejected luxury books (*preziositas*), the ‘beauty’ of books (*pulchritudo*), and the ‘excessive multitude of books’ (*nimia multitudo librorum*), privileging instead their practical utility (*utilitas*), the Franciscans and the Dominicans nonetheless adopted different approaches to scribal work. The Dominicans regarded preaching and teaching as an institutional obligation; books thus served as authoritative textual tools, and the Order allocated specific budgetary resources to guarantee both the personnel and the labor required for book production, often carried out by external scribes (*scriptores*). Moreover, the Dominicans established formal centers of study (*studia*) dedicated to training new preachers, theologians, and teachers, institutions that were soon integrated into and reshaped by the emerging university system.” See: Cavallo, Guglielmo. “Dallo ‘scriptorium’ senza biblioteca alla biblioteca senza ‘scriptorium’.” *Dall’Eremo al cenobio. La civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all’età di Dante*, 1998, pp.400.

⁴⁹⁵ No extant document confirms the actual existence of such a *scriptorium*, yet many scholars have supported this hypothesis, particularly on the basis of colophons or signatures left by friar-scribes in a number of manuscripts. See: Sesti, Emanuela. “I manoscritti italiani del Duecento e del Trecento”. Poggetto, Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal, et al. ed. *I Libri miniati del XII e del XIV Secolo*. 1990, pp.63; and Rapone, Costanza. *Tra Italia e Inghilterra nel medioevo: storie di codici e di uomini giunti da Oltremarica tra i secoli XII e XIV*. Università della Tuscia di Viterbo. 2014. pp. 403.

⁴⁹⁶ Welch, Anna Elizabeth. *Franciscan Liturgy and Identities. The Codex Sancti Oaschalis and Networks of Manuscript Production in Umbria, 1380-1350*. 2011. Melbourne College of Divinity, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 131.

⁴⁹⁷ At the same time, because liturgical readings were performed in the dormitory, refectory, or cloister, manuscript leaves were dispersed throughout the monastic space, with the result that many medieval library catalogues, inventories, and book lists of monasteries are inevitably incomplete. Marino, Bigaroni. “Catalogo dei manoscritti della Biblioteca storico-francescana di Chiesa Nuova di Assisi”, *Atti dell’Accademia Properziana del Subasio di Assisi*, ser. 6a, vol.I, 1978, pp. 9-43, 10-11.

⁴⁹⁸ Camille, Michael. “Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy.” *Art History* 8.1, 1985, pp. 26-49.

Benedictine monasteries of the early Middle Ages with the mendicant orders of the later Middle Ages, pointed out that in the former, book production was a central task, whereas in the latter, the emphasis shifted to reading. Manuscript production was carried out in dispersed locations, by individuals or hired scribes, giving rise to what he called the model of a “library without a scriptorium” (*biblioteca senza scriptorium*).⁴⁹⁹

In his seminal work *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, the French art historian Émile Mâle explored how the mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans, employed the practice of contemplation to “imagine what the Virgin Mary saw” in the course of their missionary activity, and emphasized how artists drew upon such imaginative exercises for visual creation. Here it is apt to recall Ernst Gombrich’s late reflection on Mâle:

*“The great French art historian Émile Mâle wrote a book on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century art, in which he discussed in detail the various techniques of contemplation. A good Christian, he argued, was to meditate upon the stories of the Bible, for instance the Passion of Christ. By the thirteenth century, certain books had appeared to aid in such meditation. One, said to have been written by St. Bonaventure, urged: ‘Imagine this scene: the Virgin Mary sits there; she hears a sound and asks, “What is that?” At this moment the three Magi arrive, and she is startled.’ Mâle considered this book a crucial source for artists. Later critics faulted him for emphasizing too much a single textual source. But this matters little: Mâle was surely right to stress the importance of these techniques for Franciscan and Dominican preachers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Their aim was to move great crowds of the faithful. From one town to another they traveled, using precisely this method—‘imagine what Mary saw’—as a means of preaching. I believe this movement to render the scenes more vivid and visual had a profound impact on artists, and was surely connected to the expansion of towns and the growth of population.”*⁵⁰⁰

Within such an atmosphere of emphasis on meditation and visualization, the Franciscans’ engagement with visual art and manuscripts revealed a distinctive depth. Not only did they employ images extensively in preaching to stir the senses and emotions of their audiences, but they also incorporated images into their own practices

⁴⁹⁹ The final and most radical transformation of monastic manuscript culture in the Middle Ages was brought about by the thirteenth-century mendicant orders (*ordini mendicanti*). Medieval monastic book production underwent two major reforms. The first was the twelfth-century Cistercian reform, which marked the high point of the *scriptorium*–library model but simultaneously signaled the decline of the Montecassino system founded by St. Benedict. Advocating a return to the austerity (*austeritas*) of early monastic life, the Cistercians introduced changes that profoundly altered the internal functions of the monastery. Architecturally, this reform manifested itself in the separation of the *scriptorium* from the library: the library was reduced to a small recess (*armarium*) carved into the wall near the cloister, fitted with a door, no longer serving as a space for reading but merely as a repository for books; the *scriptorium*, too, ceased to exist as an independent room, becoming instead a communal space within the church. See: Cavallo, Guglielmo. *Dallo “scriptorium” senza biblioteca alla biblioteca senza “scriptorium”*. In *Dall’Eremo al cenobio. La civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all’età di Dante*, 1998, pp.402. And Aubert, Marcel. “L’architecture cistercienne en France.” *L’architecture cistercienne en France*. II, Paris 1947, pp. 39 s.

⁵⁰⁰ Mâle, Émile. *L’art religieux du XIIIe siècle en France: étude sur l’iconographie du Moyen Age et sur ses sources d’inspiration*. Leroux, 1898; Gombrich, Ernst Hans. *Reflections on the history of art: views and reviews*. University of California Press, 1987. Chinese version: 贡布里希[Gombrich, E. H]. *艺术与科学: 贡布里希谈话录和回忆录* [*Art and Science: Dialogues and Memories*]. 浙江摄影出版社[Zhejiang Photography Publishing House], 1998, pp. 64–65.

of reading and contemplation. Manuscripts, by virtue of their portability and relatively low cost, became ideal instruments for meditation, teaching, and preaching. In these decorated codices, historiated initials, marginal imagery, and full-page miniatures functioned not merely as explanatory supplements to the text but as media through which friars could guide the faithful to “enter the scene” and relive the biblical narrative. In other words, through their manuscripts the Franciscans combined meditation with visualization: images became aids for the friars’ own spiritual exercises as well as the most effective bridges for popular preaching. This heightened sensitivity to the image and its practical use not only profoundly shaped the decorative traditions of Italian manuscripts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but also contributed to establishing the centrality of visual art within medieval religious life.

4.1.3 A Discussion of Decorative Styles

This chapter focuses on historiated initials, marginal imagery, and miniatures in manuscripts.

In Western art history, the manuscript production of Italy from around 1240 through the entire fourteenth century is conventionally designated “Gothic.” During this period, Italian manuscript decoration was influenced to varying degrees by France, England, and other regions.⁵⁰¹ Yet within Italian art it is in fact quite rare to identify works that can be traced with precision to specific foreign sources. Even styles originating north of the Alps underwent processes of translation and inversion once they entered Italy. After Innocent IV convened the First Council of Lyon in 1243, he began sending Franciscan missionaries to attempt to establish diplomatic relations with the Mongols; over the subsequent century, exchanges between Europe and the Mongol world intensified, involving not only embassies, evangelization, and trade, but also contacts and transfers at the levels of imagery, manuscripts, and material culture. In this cross-cultural context, Italian book art was inevitably stimulated—albeit indirectly—by Mongol and Eastern artistic elements. Consequently, the development of Gothic manuscripts in Italy was not merely a one-way extension of French and English influence, but a multi-directional interaction shaped by the Eurasian reach of the Mongol Empire and mediated through Franciscan missionaries, merchants, and material exchange.

The narrative programs found in extant Franciscan panel paintings are highly diverse, suggesting that in the decades following Francis’s death the Order did not impose strict centralized control over this medium. On the contrary, it was a period of

⁵⁰¹ Especially after the Norman conquest, the role of collaborative workshops producing illuminated manuscripts in Italy, and their contact with artistic traditions north of the Alps, was crucial for the transition from Romanesque to Gothic styles. See: Rapone, Costanza. *Tra Italia e Inghilterra nel medioevo: Storie di codici e di uomini giunti da Oltremarica tra i secoli XII e XIV*. Università della Tuscia di Viterbo, 2014, p. 293. Angela Daneu Lattanzi, in her description of a Bible preserved in Palermo (Sicily Regional Library, MS I.E.4), now regarded as of French origin, likewise observed: “The book reveals an English mode of expression in the rendering of faces and gestures, while French influence is evident in the refined, silken character of the costumes and in certain ornamental details.” See: Lattanzi, Angela Daneu. *Manoscritti di origine inglese a Palermo*. Palermo, 1946.

pronounced innovation and experimentation, in which local religious communities exercised considerable agency over the art created for their churches.⁵⁰² By the later Middle Ages, manuscript copying in scriptoria had matured, techniques of production tended toward standardization, hands alternated with harmonious regularity, and page design followed clearly defined visual guidelines.⁵⁰³ This was very likely connected to the mid-thirteenth-century consolidation of papal authority, which relied upon substantial reforms of liturgical practice and upon the Roman Church's strong desire to institute a unified rite throughout the Latin West. These reforms are reflected in pontifical and ritual books, whose cycles of illustration became standardized in accordance with new doctrinal aims. Moreover, in pursuit of *legibilitas* (clarity) and *emendatio* (correctness), books had to be collated and reviewed; consequently, doctrinal content within the texts came under close supervision.

At the same time, the thirteenth century introduced an intriguing and unexpected shift for manuscripts: the separation of text and image. In designing decorative imagery for written pages, the usual stages included drawing in graphite, painting the miniature, laying gold leaf, ornamenting borders, and embellishing initials; yet every element of the page was subordinated as far as possible to the central conception.⁵⁰⁴ The earlier model—where text and image were often the work of a single individual—gave way to a division of labor among distinct roles, notably the scribe and the illuminator. Paradoxically, this difference in status afforded images a distinctive expressive space. Images could function as adjuncts and supplements to the text (for instance, “supplying” meaning where the wording was lacunose), but they could also generate tension with the text, becoming a form of visual commentary, critique, or even dissenting voice. This configuration fostered a flourishing of decorative illustration in medieval art. Marginal imagery, initials, and miniatures ceased to be merely ornamental fillers; they became the most creative and experimental zones of the page, important stages upon which social tensions, cultural conflicts, and even heterodoxies and sardonic humor were performed. In documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, miniaturists are commonly called *pictor*, bringing them into the same historical frame of scrutiny, reflection, and study as artists working in other media.⁵⁰⁵ The prosperity of manuscript

⁵⁰² Franco, Bradley R. "The functions of early Franciscan art." *The World of St. Francis of Assisi*. Brill, 2015. pp. 19.

⁵⁰³ Prior to the ninth century, Italian manuscripts employed the uncial (*onciale*) and semi-uncial (*semionciale*) scripts. After the phase of Lombard writing, the Lombard region developed a more distinct script known as the *minuscola di Nonantola*. In southern Italy, the script evolved into a standardized form, the *beneventana*, which from the late eleventh through the twelfth century remained dominant. In northern and central Italy, however, this tradition was gradually replaced by the Carolingian minuscule (*minuscola carolina*), also known as the *romanesca*. From the late twelfth century onward, a more unified language and script, the Gothic (*gotica*), became established across the Italian peninsula. For the evolution of manuscript scripts, see: Cavallo, Guglielmo. *Dallo "scriptorium" senza biblioteca alla biblioteca senza "scriptorium"*. In *Dall'Eremo al cenobio. La civiltà monastica in Italia dalle origini all'età di Dante*, 1998, pp.354.

⁵⁰⁴ In the case of decorated manuscripts, the embellishment was often relatively simple and executed by the scribe himself (or by one among several scribes). More elaborate decorative programs and full iconographic cycles, however, were entrusted to craftsmen who had undergone long and specialized artistic training. In all cases—and especially within well-organized scriptoria, such as that of Montecassino—there existed a remarkably close collaboration among scribes, draftsmen, and decorators. Their work was so tightly interwoven that it is often difficult to distinguish the respective phases and sequences of execution, although it is generally assumed that decoration followed the transcription of the text. For further discussion, see: *Ibid.* pp. 355-6.

⁵⁰⁵ Welch, Anna Elizabeth. *Franciscan Liturgy and Identities. The Codex Sancti Oaschalis and Networks of Manuscript Production in Umbria, 1380-1350*. 2011. Melbourne College of Divinity, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 94.

decoration thus refracts the multilayered complexity of medieval culture: in the interplay of text and image, and in the confrontations between authority and critique, manuscript images articulated another voice of society.

In 1260, at the General Chapter presided over by Minister General Bonaventure, it was decreed that no one should entrust a new work to a non-Franciscan scribe unless it had been strictly examined by the General and provincial ministers.⁵⁰⁶ As for the identity of the artists who executed book decoration, existing Franciscan liturgical manuscripts indicate that, compared with friar-artists within the Order, a larger number of illuminators were professionals engaged in this commercial craft. Perugia was the city where Benedict XI—a pope from the Order of Preachers—was elected; he died there in 1304 after a pontificate of less than a year. Although the papal court moved from Perugia to Avignon in May of that same year, papal legates were frequently stationed in Perugia, such as Cardinal Gentile da Montefiore. Owing to the city's privileged status within the papal system, it hosted several renowned workshops for manuscript binding and decoration and played a distinctive role in the book-ornament market of central Italy. Orders from religious communities were common within these commercial ateliers; for example, Venturella di Pietro executed work for the Franciscans of Perugia.⁵⁰⁷ As listed by Anna E. Welch, scholars generally regard the Franciscans as important patrons for manuscripts decorated by the Maestro di Deruta, Salerno, Venturella di Pietro, and their respective ateliers.⁵⁰⁸

Scholarly discussion of manuscript decoration has likewise concentrated on initials, bookbinding, and page layout—that is, on analyses of the styles of manuscript illustration. Research has broadly followed the relationships of the Umbrian Assisi school to the Florentine, Bolognese, and Perugian schools, or has explored other external artistic influences reflected therein.⁵⁰⁹ The present study aligns with the latter approach and attempts to direct attention to the distant Mongol world. Even with respect to Assisi alone—the mother church and artistic center of the Franciscan Order—the Franciscan manuscripts held in the library of the Sacro Convento largely originated in various parts of central Italy (Bologna, Arezzo, Siena, Rome, and so on). Because the working friars themselves came from diverse cultural and artistic backgrounds, the decorative styles of manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are far from uniform. Yet these codices—acquired through external donation, purchased from other scriptoria, or commissioned from outside craftsmen—nonetheless, under the

⁵⁰⁶ Senocak, Neslihan. "Book acquisition in the medieval Franciscan order." *Journal of religious history*, vol. 27. No. 1, 2003, pp. 14-28.

⁵⁰⁷ Anna E. Welch notes that Subbioni employs the adjective "*pauperistico*" to describe the works of Maestro Venturella di Pietro, suggesting that his style was particularly suited to the distinctive spiritual ethos of his most frequent patrons—the Franciscans. For this discussion, see: Welch, Anna Elizabeth, 2011, pp.96; Subbioni, *Le Miniature Perugina del Trecento*, pp.4.

⁵⁰⁸ Welch, Anna Elizabeth, 2011, pp.36-8.

⁵⁰⁹ For discussions of the pictorial style of Franciscan manuscripts in Assisi, see: Previtali, Giovanni. "Due lezioni sulla scultura umbra' del Trecento: II. L'Umbria alla sinistra del Tevere. 1. Maestri "espressionisti" tra Assisi, Foligno e Spoleto. 2. Verso Ascoli e Teramo: il Maestro della Santa Caterina". *Prospettiva*, 38, 1984; Todini, Filippo. "Pittura del Duecento e del Trecento in Umbria e il cantiere di Assisi." *La pittura in Italia del Duecento e del Trecento*. 1986, pp. 375-413. Emanuela Sesti has focused in particular on the manuscripts of the Bolognese school: Sesti, Emanuela. "I manoscritti italiani del Duecento e del Trecento". Poggetto, Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal, et al. ed. *I Libri miniati del XII e del XIV Secolo*. 1990, pp.71-3.

Order's unified prescriptions for decoration, present a character of restraint and simplicity quite unlike the contemporaneous love of pictorial abundance found in the arts north of the Alps.⁵¹⁰

Among the manuscripts preserved at Assisi, the visual language employed in decoration is more narrative in tendency and appears relatively formulaic, serving chiefly to explicate the text rather than to provide sensory delight. Visual focus centers on two modes of decorated initials: geometrically patterned forms, and vegetal scrolls and foliage (including vines and palm fronds, “exploding” palm leaves, and acanthus). There are no figure images; decorative scenes are rare; the use of gold leaf is minimal; and *drôleries* are scarcely to be found.

Among the Franciscan manuscripts in the Assisi collection is a missal produced in Hungary, now is numbered ms. 61 (formerly ms. 607). The codex dates to between 1234 and 1260; its main text and appendix clearly include the arrangement of feasts, allowing its liturgical function to be firmly established. The decoration is extremely austere: miniatures are few; classical traditions are scarcely invoked. This style reflects the early Franciscan commitment to the Rule of poverty: friars still understood themselves primarily as missionaries and permitted images only within narrow limits as offerings to the Lord. At the same time, it displays characteristic Franciscan decorative conventions, including rubricated initials in red ink, pen-flourished filigree initials, and four pen-drawn ornamental capitals—features typical of late medieval textual embellishment.

A fourteenth-century ownership note records that the book once belonged to a friar named Lazzaro da Sarai.⁵¹¹ This Roman-rite missal marks the feast of St. Francis with special emphasis and can therefore be identified as a Franciscan manuscript; it has been attributed to the hand of Galfredus Aleviantus. In 1381, the Assisi friar Giovanni Ioli compiled a manuscript catalogue at the behest of the Venetian magister generalis Ludovico, in which the presence of this codex is explicitly recorded.⁵¹²

Sarai—capital of the Golden Horde—was situated on the lower Volga and served, in the history of medieval Christian missions, as one of the easternmost outposts on the Eurasian steppe. Surviving documentation, though fragmentary, indicates that the earliest Franciscans to reach Sarai came from Hungary; among them, a friar named Stefano Ungaro suffered martyrdom there. In 1253, the Franciscan William of Rubruck also visited the city. By the late thirteenth century (around 1286), the Franciscans had established a permanent residence in Sarai and gradually expanded their influence.

⁵¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that some scholars have argued that the supposed “simplicity” of Franciscan manuscripts reflects more an impression—shaped in part by assumptions about Franciscan aesthetics—than a conclusion drawn from systematic comparison with contemporary manuscript illumination. Moreover, it remains uncertain to what extent illuminators were actually influenced by internal Franciscan prescriptions regarding decoration. On the basis of her study of the *Codex Sancti Oaschalis*, Welch compared works by the same illuminator (Venturella di Pietro) produced for both Franciscan and non-Franciscan patrons. Her findings suggest that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the most significant features of these manuscripts were linked primarily to the personal style of the miniaturist rather than to the spiritual identity of the commissioner. For this discussion, see: Welch, Anna Elizabeth. *Franciscan Liturgy and Identities. The Codex Sancti Oaschalis and Networks of Manuscript Production in Umbria, 1380-1350*. 2011. Melbourne College of Divinity, Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 125.

⁵¹¹ Poggetto, Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal, et al. *I Libri miniati del XII e del XIV Secolo*. 1990, pp. 36.

⁵¹² IOLI, Invent. an. 1381. Assisi, Com., cod. 691; Toledo, Bibl. del Cabildo, cod. 41-41.

From 1308 onward, following the conversion to Christianity of the Kipchak khan Toktai, Sarai briefly became an important missionary center. When Toktai died in 1313, he even requested burial in the church of San Giovanni at Sarai, clothed in a Franciscan habit. With Timur's destruction of Sarai in 1394, however, traces of Franciscan activity in the region disappeared entirely.⁵¹³

On folio 135, an initial is formed by a blue winged serpent whose head bites into its own neck. The tail terminates in a spiral and is adorned with rŭmī-style voluted leaves (Fig. 4.2). This is a common mode of decorated initial in Franciscan manuscripts, although it is already comparatively elaborate within the Assisi holdings. Typically, scribes encircle the letter with slender curving bands or vegetal forms and draw serrated leaf-edges around it, favoring vivid blues and purplish reds in the palette.

The earliest extant manuscript of Marco Polo's text was copied around 1310 in Franco-Italian (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. fr. 1116). Together with other now-lost exemplars, it formed the basis for the eighteen surviving Old French manuscripts, including Royal 19 D I and Bodley 264. Both the British Library's Royal MS 19 D I and the Bodleian Library's MS. Bodl. 264 preserve variant versions of the Alexander Romance and of Marco Polo's Travels.

London British Library Royal MS 19 D I represents the English version of Marco Polo's narrative.⁵¹⁴ It compiles the *Vraie hystoire du bon roi Alixandre* [The True History of the Good King Alexander], the *Venjançe d'Alexandre* [The Vengeance of Alexander], and the *Livres du Grant Caam* [The Book of the Great Khan].⁵¹⁵ This manuscript contains 164 miniatures. Michael Camille assessed its illustrations as "the mediocre work of a group of poorly supervised artists unable to respond to details in the texts they illustrate."⁵¹⁶ The painters produced images based on marginal prompts, but the results often diverge from the text, rife with inconsistencies. Yet precisely this discrepancy has drawn the attention of so many scholars: the paucity of textual reference meant that the artists projected their own subjective impressions and perceptions onto the imagery.

Oxford Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264 transmits the so-called "French court" version of Marco Polo's narrative, copied from the British Library manuscript Royal MS 19 D I. Folios 218r–271v preserve the text, whose incipit reads: "*Ci commence li livres du graunt Caam qui parole de la grant Ermenie de Persse et des Tartars et d'Ynde. Et des granz merveille qui par le monde sont*" ("Here begins the Book of the Great Khan, which speaks of Greater Armenia, Persia, the Tartars, and India, and of the great marvels that are in the world"). This version of Polo's Travels, also known as *Le devisement du monde* ("The Description of the World") or *Le livre des merveilles* ("The Book of Marvels"), is written in Old French (ca. 842–1400). Its illuminator, Jehan de Grise, produced one of the most sumptuous and complexly illustrated manuscripts of

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Quigley, Maureen. *Romantic Geography and the Crusades: British Library Royal Ms. 19 D I*. 2009, pp.57-9.

⁵¹⁵ Dutschke, Consuelo-W. "The Truth in the Book: The Marco Polo Texts in Royal 19. DI and Oxford, Bodley 264." *Scriptorium* 52.2. 1998, pp. 278-300.

⁵¹⁶ Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp.152-3.

the Middle Ages. Because its subject matter abounded in exotic elements, the illuminator enjoyed enormous latitude in invention. The codex combines the Roman d'Alexandre [Alexander Romance], Alexander and Dindimus, and Marco Polo's Travels.⁵¹⁷ Of these, the Roman d'Alexandre is the most richly decorated section.⁵¹⁸ According to Mark Cruse, the manuscript rivals the finest liturgical books of its time, "a 'chivalric bible' that celebrates the memory of Alexander the Great".⁵¹⁹ The juxtaposition in Bodley 264 of the Western emperor Alexander the Great with the Eastern Mongol emperor Kublai Khan further directs readers toward comparison—a visual and textual parallel to which more detailed analysis will be devoted in the discussion that follows.

Traditional theological approaches to images regarded them as instruments of visual doctrine: tools of admonition, mirrors of the soul, and conduits to the heavenly realm. Significant differences existed between Eastern and Western attitudes toward theological imagery.⁵²⁰ Yet Michael Camille argued that manuscript images in the Middle Ages were not merely "acts of pure decoration." Drawing upon Freud, he interpreted these embellishments as realizations of the illuminators' unconscious fantasies, suggesting that manuscript ornamentation often reflected aspects of lived reality. Indeed, around the fourteenth century, marginal imagery flourished most fully in Paris, Ghent, Bruges, and London—the busiest commercial centers of Western and Northern Europe. The city itself, as an artistic hub, implied a locus where exotic and local commodities converged. Parisian marketplaces abounded with richly varied goods: luxurious textiles, pigments, and colors—all of which found their way into the margins of manuscripts.

Camille draws particular attention to the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux, Queen of France*. In its margins, nearly seven hundred illustrations depict the figures that populated the streets of medieval Paris—bishops, beggars, street dancers, maidens, and musicians—as well as apes, rabbits, dogs, and creatures of sheer fantasy.⁵²¹ Whereas thirteenth-century manuscript figures tend to be more schematic and reductive, by the

⁵¹⁷ The so-called *Alexander B* version, composed in Middle English, represents one of the medieval evolutions of the *Alexander Romance*. It consists of five letters exchanged between Alexander and Dindimus, the "King of the Brahmins" living in India. The Brahman community of Dindimus upheld a highly spiritual and ascetic way of life, rejecting the value of worldly power and wealth. In the confrontation between Alexander the Great and Dindimus, Alexander's army halted at the borders of the Brahman realm; yet Dindimus could neither compel Alexander to yield nor alter his mindset. This episode thus stages a collision between Christian ethics and monastic ideals on the one hand, and the imagined Eastern Other on the other. As a moral supplement to the earlier French versions of the *Alexander Romance*, its function was not merely to recount "adventure" and "conquest," but to employ the image of an Eastern city-state of moral and philosophical purity as a means of reflection and critique. Göller, Karl Heinz. *Alexander and Dindimus: West-östlicher Disput über Mensch und Welt*. Thorbecke, 1989, pp. 105-119.

⁵¹⁸ Including nine full-page illustrations and 175 text and marginal images.

⁵¹⁹ Cruse, Mark. "Un monumento in pergamena. Testi, immagini e storia del manoscritto Bodley 264". *Il Manoscritto Bodley 264. Il Romanzo di Alessandro. I Viaggi di Marco Polo. Saggi e commenti*. 2014, pp. 72.

⁵²⁰ In the Christian East, particularly Byzantium, images were regarded as authoritative representations of sacred prototypes, and a complex theology of the image had already developed prior to the outbreak of Iconoclasm. In the Latin West, by contrast, art was often considered an impediment to mystical experience; while narrative images were tolerated as a concession for preaching to the illiterate, few medieval authors explicitly advocated or acknowledged the possibility that liturgical images might themselves function as symbols or likenesses of the divine. See: Hamburger, Jeffrey M. "The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions." *Viator*, vol. 20, 1989, pp.162.

⁵²¹ Camille, Michael. *Image on the edge: The margins of medieval art*. Reaktion books, 1992. pp. 129-30.

fourteenth century they acquire stronger volumetric presence, with imagery rendered in fuller and more rounded form.

In 14th century, the paradox inherent in Franciscan illuminated manuscripts arises from the fact that, on the one hand, their primary users—or readers—were friars literate in Latin. In the context of early monasticism, the circulation of books and texts was limited to the Bible, liturgical books, ascetic writings, and the Rule of the Order, all cultivated in a spirit of unadorned reading.⁵²² The “*usus pauper*” principle, authorized by Pope Nicholas III in 1279, stipulated that friars should employ only the cheapest and simplest of objects.⁵²³ Spiritual Franciscans such as Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, Ubertino da Casale, and Angelo Clareno opposed the construction of monumental churches richly adorned, and the rigor of the poverty they espoused left little room to justify the possession of luxurious books. Yet set against this ascetic ideal was the Franciscans’ profound sensitivity to, and reliance upon, the language of images.

As the first preachers to enter both urban and rural milieus, they emphasized the transmission of the Gospel through visual means—partly because images, more than words, were capable of stirring resonance and memory among the faithful. Manuscripts thus assumed a new role: no longer merely tools for internal monastic reading, they became low-cost yet image-rich vehicles serving wider purposes of preaching and spiritual instruction. In the context of the Spiritual Franciscans in particular, images functioned to situate friars within biblical history and the eschatological plan of salvation, visually underscoring their place within apocalyptic narratives.

It follows that the emergence of Franciscan illuminated manuscripts was the very product of the tension between the “ideal of poverty” and the “need for images.” They contravened the extreme rigor of ascetic poverty, yet simultaneously furnished, through the spiritual power of the visual, an indispensable instrument for Franciscan preaching and identity-formation.

4.2 Exotic Beasts: The Eastern Imagination in Franciscan Manuscripts

From the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, Franciscan aesthetics underwent a gradual shift: from the symbolic theology of images—where visual representations were regarded as “visual scriptures” for the illiterate, capable of stirring emotions and aiding memory—or from the patristic theology of sacred images, toward a reliance on

⁵²² Cavallo, Guglielmo, 1998, pp.334.

⁵²³ “Clerici faciant Divinum Officium, ex quo habere poterunt Breviaria: ex hoc patenter insinuans, quod Fratres sui habituri essent usum Breviarii et librorum, qui sunt ad Divinum Officium opportuni ... In praedicatione, quam faciunt, sint examinata et casta eorum eloquia ... Sed constans est, quod haec supponunt scientiam; scientia requirit studium; exercitium vero studii convenienter haberi non potest sine usu librorum: ex quibus omnibus satis claret ex Regula, ad victum, vestitutum, Divinum cultum et sapientiale studium necessarium rerum usum esse concessum Fratribus”. *Bullarium* 1759-1765, III, pp. 408b-409a.

artifacts and images as concrete, “secular” sensory experiences designed to evoke wonder and curiosity about knowledge.⁵²⁴

Missionary work directed toward the East constituted the distinctive significance and value of the Franciscan presence within the Catholic Church. It is well known that St. Francis was remembered as one who conversed with wolves and birds, scorned the powerful, wore patched garments, and lived solely on alms—a rebel and a “madman.” Yet it was precisely this distance from the world that enabled St. Francis to embody most fully the spiritual essence pursued within Christian theology: according to Scripture, God works in mysterious ways, and divinity frequently stands in stark contrast to the secular. Among all the acts of apparent folly and rebellion performed by Francis in the eyes of the world, the conquest of faith directed toward the East was grounded in his audacious ambition for Christendom and in his extraordinary imagination. Had it succeeded, it would have constituted the highest vision and apparition—a wholly new set of religious horizons.

The year 1219 marked Francis’s journey with the Fifth Crusade to Egypt, where he sought to persuade Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil to embrace Christianity. That same year also saw Chinggis Khan’s first western campaign across Central Asia. Never had Francis been so resolute and urgent in advancing such a plan. (Here, biographical references should be cited.) The fourteenth century unfolded against the backdrop of Europe’s relentless military campaigns and missionary endeavors in the Holy Land, following its loss to the Mamluks in 1291. Manuscripts served as instruments of mission, but also as tools of military and political propaganda. The figures and places represented in these manuscripts—such as the Holy Land in the Crusades or the adventures spanning the Eurasian continent—constructed, for the laity, their earliest imaginative landscapes through romanticized and encyclopedic travel narratives.

As Maureen Quigley observes, given the state of geographical knowledge at the time, “In 1332, when Philip VI of Valois declared an overseas crusade only a few years after his accession to the throne of France, few people actually knew the physical location of the Holy Land; it was, rather vaguely, ‘overseas.’”⁵²⁵

By the fourteenth century, Franciscan theologians had abandoned the purely symbolic interpretation of art and natural beauty, turning instead to concrete sensory experience. The Franciscans’ pioneering and exotic imagery offered new forms of sensory stimulation in both art and religious devotion, becoming fresh instruments of meditation.

4.2.1 Connections with Animals

⁵²⁴ Bychkov, Oleg. “‘He Who Sees Does Not Desire to Imagine’: The Shifting Role of Art and Aesthetic Observation in Medieval Franciscan Theological Discourse in the Fourteenth Century.” *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 3, Mar. 2019, pp. 205.

⁵²⁵ Quigley, Maureen. *Romantic Geography and the Crusades: British Library Royal Ms. 19 D I*. 2009, pp. 55.

In depictions of Franciscan theophanies, visions, apparitions, and mystical experiences, the exchanges between St. Francis (and the friars of the Order) and the natural world often carry allegorical meanings grounded in the Gospel. In the Upper Basilica of San Francesco at Assisi, three frescoes executed by Giotto and his workshop between 1290 and 1300—*The Christmas Mass at Greccio* (Fig.4.3), *Francis Preaching to the Birds* (Fig.4.4), and *Preaching to the Sultan*—emphasize key aspects of the Franciscan missionary vocation: supplementing the work of the *clerus saecularis*, living according to the Gospel, and leading the missionary endeavors of the Church⁵²⁶. Within these images, the recurring presence of animals—lambs or birds—serves as visual testimony to miracles and visions involving creatures. The monastery was conceived as a terrestrial paradise; both Francis and Anthony of Padua became renowned for their capacity to charm animals and to preach to them. In the Upper Basilica, scenes such as *The Miracle of the Spring*, *St. Francis Giving His Cloak to a Poor Man*, and *The Vision of the Fiery Chariot*, as well as in the Lower Basilica *The Division of the Cloak*, *St. Martin Renouncing Arms*, and *The Crucifixion of Christ*, repeatedly incorporate the image of horses.

From the earliest missions, Catholic literary and artistic traditions were closely intertwined with animals—a connection rooted both in the agrarian-pastoral context of the biblical world and in the pastoral convenience of reaching audiences in a largely illiterate society.⁵²⁷ Thus Christian theology developed an elaborate allegorical and symbolic system around animals. In the *Physiologus* and related bestiary traditions, mysterious creatures were employed to convey moral and religious meaning: the pelican feeding its young with its own blood symbolized Christ’s redemption of humanity, while the unicorn subdued by a virgin prefigured the Incarnation.⁵²⁸ Animals in these collections were divided into “clean” and “unclean” categories, representing the struggle between righteousness and evil. Although extant Franciscan manuscripts contain no such explicitly moralizing bestiary texts, friars—given their

⁵²⁶ Thomas of Celano’s *Vita prima* recounts that during the Mass Francis beheld a vision of the Christ Child in the manger, thereby reinforcing the correspondence between the Eucharist and the infant Christ. This episode clearly provided ordinary believers with a direct and affective form of Eucharistic instruction that surpassed the dryness of verbal preaching. In this way, it supplemented the deficiencies of the secular clergy in preaching and teaching, functioning as a pastoral exegesis of “real presence.”

⁵²⁷ In church art, representations of animals were not based directly on Scripture but rather on the bestiary tradition then in wide circulation. The bestiaries assigned strict symbolic meanings to each animal and provided detailed explanations. For instance, the lion could symbolize Christ because, according to the bestiary, lion cubs were born lifeless and only received true life three days later through the breath of the male lion—an allegory of Christ’s three days in the tomb before the Resurrection. Such examples are countless. Émile Mâle made the important observation that the influence of bestiaries on art was not direct but mediated through Honorius of Autun’s *Speculum Ecclesiae*, since in the great cathedrals no animal imagery appears that is present in the bestiaries but absent from the *Speculum*. See: Mâle, Emile. *The Gothic image religious art in France of the thirteenth century*. Translated by Dora Nussey, Harper Torchbooks, 1958, pp. 35-46; Clark, Willene B., and Meradith T. McMunn, eds. *Beasts and birds of the Middle Ages: the bestiary and its legacy*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

⁵²⁸ Clark, Willene B., Meradith T. McMunn, “Introduction”, *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and Its Legacy*, 1989, University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 1-11.

training in clerical education and preaching—must have been exposed to this allegorical tradition.

In the *Legenda Maior*, Bonaventure recounts how Francis compared himself to an ass: “Thus he called his body ‘Brother Ass,’ as if it ought to bear heavy burdens, suffer frequent beatings, and be sustained by the meanest food.” Traditional Catholic animal imagery, such as lambs and birds, appears repeatedly in hagiographical narratives: “This little lamb, as though trained in spiritual matters by the saint himself, accompanied the lady inseparably whenever she went to church, stood in prayer, or returned home.”⁵²⁹ Or again: “On that same lake, someone offered him a large, living fish. He addressed it, as was his custom, with the title of ‘Brother,’ and then released it at the side of the boat. The fish lingered before the servant of God, playing in the water as if drawn by his love, refusing to depart until he blessed it and gave permission.”⁵³⁰

Beyond lambs and birds, the Franciscan world became a kind of natural history of theophany, in which cicadas, pheasants, falcons, and wolves were drawn into sacred narratives. “One day he called to a cicada, and it seemed as if taught from heaven; it flew into his hand. He said to it: ‘Sing, my sister Cicada, praise the Lord your Creator with your song of joy!’ At once the cicada obeyed, singing ceaselessly until the saint commanded it to return to its place.”⁵³¹ “While ill at Siena, a nobleman gifted him a live pheasant freshly caught. As soon as it heard and saw him, it attached itself to him with deep affection, refusing to be parted from him.”⁵³² “At another time, while residing in a certain place, a falcon nesting there became his close companion.”⁵³³ “During his stay at Greccio, the inhabitants were beset by calamities: ravenous wolves devoured not only livestock but also people, while annual hailstorms destroyed crops and vineyards. From then on, at his exhortation they performed penance; the disasters ceased, the dangers were removed, and neither wolves nor hailstorms caused further harm.”⁵³⁴

In the Lower Basilica of San Francesco at Assisi, these scenes were re-enacted. *The Sermon to the Birds* and *The Taming of the Wolf of Gubbio* (Fig. 4.5) visually reflect the mendicant orders’ habitual use of allegory and natural metaphors, embedding mystical visions within the saint’s life as a means of edifying the faithful. Notably, *The Taming of the Wolf of Gubbio*, painted before Giotto’s cycle in the Upper Basilica

⁵²⁹ “Agnus vero, quasi in spiritualibus eruditus a sancto, dominae ad ecclesiam eunti, stanti et revertenti societate inseparabili cohaerebat...Propter quod agnus, Francisci discipulus, devotionis iam magister effectus, ut mirabilis et amabilis a domina servabatur.”

⁵³⁰ “In eodem lacu similiter oblatus fuit ei piscis magnus et vivus, quem more solito fraterno nomine vocans, in aquam reposuit iuxta navem. Piscis vero coram viro Dei in aqua ludebat, et quasi amore ipsius allectus, nullatenus recessit a navi, nisi prius ab eodem cum benedictione licentia sibi data.”

⁵³¹ “Cui cum dixisset: ‘Canta, soror mea cicada, et Dominum Creatorem tuo jubilo lauda!’, sine mora obediens canere coepit nec destitit, donec iussu patris ad locum proprium revolavit.”

⁵³² “Eidem Senis infirmo phasianus quidam de novo captus a nobili quodam transmissus est vivus. Qui continuo, ut virum sanctum audivit et vidit, tanta illi amicitate cohaesit, ut nullo modo pateretur ab ipso seiungi.

⁵³³ “Cum igitur contraheret ibi moram, falco ibidem nidificans magno se illi amicitiae foedere copulavit.”

⁵³⁴ “Moram eo faciente tempore quodam in eremitorio Graecii, loci illius indigenae malis multiplicibus vexabantur. Nam et luporum rapacium multitudo non solum bruta, sed et homines consumebat, et grando annua tempestate blada et vineas devastabat...Ab illa itaque hora, poenitentiam ad exhortationem ipsius agentibus illis, cessaverunt clades, periire pericula, nec molestiae quidquam lupi intulere vel grandines.”

(1290–1300), is considered among the earliest pictorial renderings of Francis’s “animal miracles.” Johannes Scotus Eriugena had written that “creation is a theophania,” and the images of animals were “exempla” inscribed by the finger of God in the great book of creation.⁵³⁵ Yet animals were not depicted merely as obedient subjects of God.

In the Lower Basilica’s *Allegory of Obedience* (Fig. 4.6), for example, a horned centaur—the embodiment of Presumptuousness—is excluded from the divine presence in the lower right corner. In contrast, on the left appears a monstrous yet prophetic figure with two faces, capable of perceiving both past and future, holding a mirror—symbol of knowledge, truth, introspection—and an astrolabe—symbol of her ability to discern cosmic order and to chart the course of the wider world. Her two faces represent Prudence and Humility (Fig. 4.7). Under her guidance, an angel grasps the wrist of a friar within the gate, seemingly signifying that he has been chosen by God through prudence, humility, and obedience. In Giotto’s rendering, the division between good and evil hinges on whether the human body is augmented with divine faculties or encumbered with animal traits.

In Franciscan manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as noted earlier, the overall sobriety of decoration meant that animal imagery appeared infrequently. In MS. 394, among the few extant illuminations, hybrid forms of men and animals are depicted—for instance, a man-serpent figure (Fig. 4.8). The accompanying text reads: “*Spiritus Dei est substantia divina, incomprehensibilis, immutabilis. Spiritus hominis est pars anime rationalis per quam homo Deo coniungitur.*” [“The Spirit of God is a divine substance, incomprehensible, immutable. The spirit of man is that part of the rational soul through which man is joined to God.”] This passage distinguishes the *Spiritus Dei* (the divine Spirit) from the *Spiritus hominis* (the human spirit), emphasizing reason as the bond linking humankind to God. It reflects the Augustinian-scholastic understanding of the union between reason and faith, presenting a Christian position that the soul is an immaterial entity bestowed by God. Here the main text pursues rational, theological argumentation, while the margins and decorations release a freer, even admonitory imagination. In scholastic manuscripts of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries—Bibles and theological compendia alike—decorated initials often contained hybrid creatures (such as human figures with serpent tails). In medieval iconography, the serpent almost invariably carried negative connotations: original sin, temptation, the devil. When combined with the human body, serpent tails symbolized human reason fettered by base desire or demonic influence. Such imagery served as a warning: even in contemplating exalted themes of soul and reason, humanity remains inescapably entangled with the “lowly, corporeal, and perilous” forces.

At the same time, some illustrations depicted animals simply as animals—whether real creatures or beings of imagination and legend. Behind all these decorative choices lies a fundamental question: why did scribes and illuminators so often populate

⁵³⁵ John Scotus Eriugena, *The Age of Belief*, Anne Freemantle, ed., Mentor Books, 1954, pp. 78-87.

manuscript margins with such fantastical beasts? And what, in turn, was their relation to the East?

In *Contra Faustum (Against the Heresies)*, Augustine traces the etymology of “monster” (*monstrum*) back to the Latin verb *monstrare* (“to show, to demonstrate”):

“And to us the monsters, signs, portents, prodigies, as they are named, ought to demonstrate, ought to signify and portend and prophesy that God is going to do with the bodies of men what he foretold he was able to do, with no difficulty to impede him, with no laws of nature dictating to him.”⁵³⁶

In manuscripts, depictions of animals and humans initially appeared separately as ornamental initials.⁵³⁷ Over time, however, they developed into scenes of interaction—animals with animals, humans with humans, and humans with animals—whether in conflict or coexistence. Eventually, the imagination of certain illuminators led to striking compositions in which humans and beasts were fused into hybrid forms.

The long-distance travels that spanned Eurasia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not dispel such imaginings; rather, this premodern period was marked by a proliferation of rumors, legends, and conflicting reports concerning peoples of diverse races. Unlike the classical Greco-Roman hybrids such as the Minotaur, Pan, or the Sphinx, medieval manuscripts introduced a new class of monsters, largely secular in type. As Bao Huiyi has shown in her research on European *mappae mundi*, the diverse “humanoids,” “fantastic animals,” and “hybrid monsters” represented in these works drew extensively on earlier sources such as Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* (77 CE, VII.2–5), the anonymous Greek *Physiologus*, the Latin *Liber Monstrorum*, and the *Marvels of the East*.⁵³⁸

One striking example appears in a ninth-century Psalter produced at Corbie Abbey in northern France. The historiated “D” initial depicts animals and humans together: on a boat equipped with wheels and a mast surmounted by a cross sits a helmsman wearing a Phrygian cap, whose peak connects to the arc of the prow; the horse’s tail hair is

⁵³⁶ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, VII. London: William Heinmann, Ltd., 1965, pp. 56–8. Mittman, Asa. *Maps and monsters in medieval England*. Routledge, 2006, pp.105. And 包慧怡[Bao, Huiyi]. “定位自身：古英语《东方奇谭》手稿中的东方想象与怪物生成” [“Orienting Oneself: Imagination of *Oriens* and the Production of Monsters in the Old English *Wonders of the East* Manuscripts”]. *外国文学评论* [*Foreign Literature Review*], no. 4, 2023, pp. 87–108.

⁵³⁷ For the evolution of initial decoration styles north of the Alps, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, see: Pächt, Otto. *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages*. Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History. Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 45-128.

⁵³⁸ Bao Huiyi also provides numerous examples of monstrous races frequently appearing in the imagined East: the Panotti (big-eared people), Cynocephali (dog-headed men), Sciapods (monopods with umbrella-like feet), Blemmyae (headless men), Troglodytes (cave dwellers), Astomi (mouthless people), and Antipodes (backward-footed men). She further notes that the images are often accompanied by Latin inscriptions identifying their names and meanings, which create an intriguing intertextual dialogue with contemporary *mirabilia* or ethnographic writings that describe such monstrous beings. See: 包慧怡[Bao, Huiyi]. “描摹东方：中世纪《世界之布》上的异域想象” [“Depicting the Orient: Exotic Imagination in the Medieval *Mappa Mundi*”]. *世界美术* [*World Art*], no. 2, 2022, pp. 65–71. And 包慧怡[Bao, Huiyi]. “定位自身：古英语《东方奇谭》手稿中的东方想象与怪物生成” [“Orienting Oneself: Imagination of *Oriens* and the Production of Monsters in the Old English *Wonders of the East* Manuscripts”]. *外国文学评论* [*Foreign Literature Review*], no. 4, 2023, pp. 87–108.

linked to the opposite curve of the stern (Fig. 4.9). Such designs, in which animals or humans form the very structure of the initials, permeate medieval manuscript illumination. By the thirteenth century, manuscripts such as Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* at Cîteaux (the cradle of the Cistercian order) featured vivid combinations of humans and beasts (Fig. 4.10), especially in representations of infernal scenes. In the tail of the initial "P," a dog- or wolf-like creature supports a horned, long-eared human figure, who looks upward toward another man whose neck is about to be bitten through by a serpent-headed beast. The whole forms a vertical chain of devouring and dependency. Such Cistercian illuminations were strongly moralizing and grotesque, frequently employing hybrid creatures to signify sin, temptation, folly, or theological aphorisms: beasts devouring one another symbolized sin consuming itself.

In Franciscan manuscripts, however, depictions of animals and humans take a somewhat different form. Most initials are marked only by simple red and blue ink with vine-scroll ornament, while more elaborate animal-human scenes appear in marginalia or illustrations. One example occurs in the thirteenth-century Franciscan manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (ms. Latin 757), within the Mass and commemorative prayers for the feast of St. Anthony Abbot (ca. 251–356)(Fig. 4.11). At the center of the miniature is Anthony himself, elderly, bearded, wearing a black monastic robe and a saint's golden halo. He is besieged by beasts and grotesques: antelopes, lions, dogs, serpents, and dragon-like monsters. Stretching out his hands in pain, yet in prayerful endurance, Anthony embodies the legend of his temptations in the desert, where demons appeared as animals to assail him. Ultimately, by prayer and divine aid, he triumphed over temptation and fear. This is a paradigmatic scene in which animals—real and imagined—signify sin and temptation.

Such images, where animals symbolize evil, often provide only an indirect or softened opposition to the goodness embodied by God and the saints; the pictures themselves are not overtly terrifying. In contrast, images of hybrids—half-human, half-beast—directly visualize evil itself. In the same manuscript appears a miniature of St. Michael's combat with the dragon (ms. Latin 757, fol. 357v)(Fig. 4.12), illustrating Revelation 12.⁵³⁹ The scene, located at the opening of the office for the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, is set against a Gothic diapered background of gold lozenges on blue, filled with floral motifs and the letter "S." Michael appears in armor, with a blue cloak and a red cross-belt, raising his sword to strike the demon below. The demon is a black, semi-human monster with bat-like wings, claws, and tail, its mouth agape with fangs bared, depicted in rage and agony as it staggers backward, being driven into a fiery pit—hell itself. The theme is unmistakably eschatological, offering the viewer an immediate and unambiguous contrast between good and evil. Such demonic imagery, however, is not the focus here. Rather, attention is given to a more ambiguous category of images—hybrids of man and beast—whose moral value is not readily discernible

⁵³⁹ "7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." KJV, King James Version, *Revelation* 12, pp. 7-9.

from Scripture. These marginal figures seldom occupy the visual center but instead reveal, at the edges of the page, the illuminator's unconscious choices.

Another Franciscan Psalter in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (ms. Latin 1076), used by the friars, can be securely identified through its obituaries for Innocent III (1198–1216, who approved the Franciscan Rule) and Gregory IX (1227–1241, who confirmed the Rule in 1223 and canonized Francis). The manuscript's original core included illuminated initials and a calendar of Franciscan feasts; copperplate engravings of saints were later added in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and eventually the volume entered scholarly and aristocratic collections before being acquired by the French royal library. Its initials are modestly decorated, typically in red and blue ink, but one border miniature depicts a knight slaying a dragon (Fig. 4.13). The accompanying text is Psalm 118 (119), verse 119: *Praevaricantes reputavi omnes peccatores terrae: ideo dilexi testimonia tua* ("I have regarded all sinners of the earth as transgressors; therefore I have loved thy testimonies"). Here, the knight—whose lower body is equine—embodies undisputed justice, striking down evil in harmony with the Psalm's theme. The hybrid form was perhaps a practical expedient of the illuminator, conserving space and pigment.

On fol. 164v of same codex (ms. Latin 1076), a grotesque initial depicts a hooded human head on a monstrous body (Fig. 4.14); fol. 47v of Ms. 757 contains another hybrid initial, with a human head on an unidentifiable animal form (Fig. 4.15).

Europe was not a world rich in animal species; thus, whether seen or unseen, common or exotic, beasts themselves carried an aura of alterity. The manuscript, in this sense, became a palace constructed according to the friars' tastes, expectations, and needs, its texts furnishing the chambers, its illuminations serving as ornament. As Huiyi Bao notes, "When Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan friar, returned from Asia in the fourteenth century, he reported that in India rats were as large as dogs, and that elephants feared rats. What he may have seen were statues of the elephant-headed god Ganesh seated upon a mouse throne. This did not prevent bestiary illustrators from conflating cats, rats, and elephants into a single chase scene."⁵⁴⁰

These hybrid figures—half-human, half-beast—occupy a liminal zone in Franciscan manuscripts: neither purely decorative nor explicitly doctrinal, they reveal both the illuminators' imaginative impulses and the cultural anxieties of their age. Their ambiguity distinguishes them from the moralized animals of the bestiary tradition and from the overt demons of apocalyptic imagery. Instead, they point toward a more elusive realm of visual thought, in which monstrosity served as a vehicle for negotiating alterity. In this sense, the imagery of humans, animals, and hybrids provided fertile ground for shaping perceptions of the unfamiliar—linking the marginal grotesques of manuscripts to broader medieval imaginaries of the East.

⁵⁴⁰ Bao, Huiyi. "Between Reality and Illusion: Medieval Bestiaries". *Dushu*, no. 9, 2020, pp. 153-60.

4.2.2 Apocalyptic and Soteriological Tendencies, and Eastern Sacred Beasts

In the Franciscan tradition of interpretation, St. Francis was identified with “the angel rising from the East, bearing the seal of the living God” (Rev. 7:2), a role mentioned in Bonaventure’s *Legenda Maior* as well as in other Franciscan texts of the mid-thirteenth century. This reading cast Francis as *Alter Christus* (“another Christ”), corresponding to the angel of Revelation who “sealed the servants of God upon their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3). Notably, this passage stands as the prelude to the catastrophic trumpet visions of chapters 8–9, and in close parallel with chapters 10–11, where the “two witnesses” confront “the beast that rises from the abyss.” From the earliest patristic commentaries, the beast from the sea was consistently interpreted as the Antichrist, while the beast from the land was taken as his disciple or “false prophet” (“Seste beste signifie Antechrist. The sixth seal reveals the Antichrist”)⁵⁴¹.

Within the specific historical context of the thirteenth century, such interpretations were often linked to contemporary politics. Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), for example, was accused by the papacy of embodying the “beast rising from the sea” in Revelation, owing to his persecution of Franciscans⁵⁴². Matthew Paris, in his *Additamenta to the Chronica Maiora*, and Roger Bacon, O.F.M., in his *Opus Maius*, both drew connections between the Tartar invasions and the advent of the Antichrist.⁵⁴³ Bacon emphasized that if the Church failed to reform itself promptly in matters of faith, learning, and mission, the expansion of the Mongols and the ensuing apocalyptic calamities would be inevitable. He urged that science—including linguistics, natural philosophy, and theology—together with missionary efforts, should be employed to counter the crisis that the coming of Antichrist might bring. The Franciscans, moreover, were deeply engaged with the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, who predicted the end of the world in 1260, preceded by the reign of Antichrist. Joachim envisioned the rise of the *virii spirituales* (“spiritual men”), who would stand against and ultimately overcome the Antichrist at the end of time. This was the Franciscan vision of salvation. What arrived together with the 1260s was the mounting threat of the Mongols advancing into Europe. Roger Bacon, along with Joachim and other Franciscan theologians, endeavored to place the “rise of Eastern and Northern peoples” within the apocalyptic scenario of the approaching Antichrist.

In Matthew 24, Jesus warns humanity above all to “beware of being deceived”: the defining feature of Antichrist is not sheer wickedness, but the fact that he will gain immense influence and obstruct human discernment.⁵⁴⁴ In the geographical section of

⁵⁴¹ Van De Water, Rick. “Reconsidering the Beast from the Sea (Rev 13.1).” *New Testament Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, Apr. 2000, pp. 245–61.

⁵⁴² In the first epistle of John 2, 18 and 22; and 4, 3 and Cusato, Michael & Michael J.P. Robson. *Testimony, Narrative and Image: Studies in Medieval and Franciscan History, Hagiography and Art in Memory of Rosalind B. Brooke*. Brill, 2022, pp.385-6.

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⁵⁴⁴ Matthew 24, 21-24: ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again. ²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or,

the *Opus maius*, Bacon cites ancient authorities (such as the peoples imprisoned by Alexander) and explicitly states that these nations will emerge and wreak havoc in the days surrounding the coming of Antichrist:

*Moreover, in his Cosmography Ethicus the astronomer says that various races must come forth around the days of Antichrist, and they will call him God of Gods who is destined to lay waste the regions of the world.*⁵⁴⁵

Immediately afterward, the same passage states that Alexander discovered these peoples imprisoned, and that at the end of time they would break out and slaughter multitudes—this is precisely the medieval topos commonly associated with the “enclosed nations of the North / Gog and Magog.” Although “Tartars (Tartari)” are not named explicitly here, Bacon places the peoples breaking forth from the North and East directly alongside the period of the approaching Antichrist.

Bacon writes: “*Tartari, Pagani, Idololatrae, Judaei, Christiani. Non enim sunt plures sectae principales, nec possunt esse usque ad sectam Antichristi.*”⁵⁴⁶ In this passage, he lists the “Tartars (Tartari)” on the same level as pagans, idolaters, Jews, and Christians as “principal sects” (*sectae principales*), and he observes that there are not many such sects in structural terms, until the “sect of Antichrist” (*secta Antichristi*) appears as the final one. This statement does not assert directly that the Tartars are Antichrist, but it does place them within a classificatory system that culminates in Antichrist.

He also explicitly links the “nations that will invade the world” with the coming of Antichrist:

*“Those nations that will invade the world—for example, the Jews imprisoned in the mountains of Hyrcania, and Gog and Magog, and the nations enclosed by Alexander at the Caspian Gates—are appointed because of Antichrist and his followers; these peoples will break forth at the time of Antichrist and at the boundaries of the end of the world ... from this we can consider from which direction Antichrist will come.”*⁵⁴⁷

By citing this tradition, Bacon was arguing that the study of geography and the distribution of nations could serve to calculate the timing and the origin of the Antichrist’s appearance.

On this basis, it can be stated with accuracy and caution that Bacon in the *Opus maius* did not simply equate the “Tartars” with Antichrist. Yet, within a discussion that combines geography, politics, and eschatological concern, he does place the passage on

‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

⁵⁴⁵ Burke, Robert Belle, trans.. *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon*. I, University of Pennsylvania Press. 1928, pp. 322.

⁵⁴⁶ Bridges, John Henry, editor. *The “Opus Majus” of Roger Bacon*. Clarendon Press, 1897, pp. 367.

⁵⁴⁷ Matus, Zachary. “Reconsidering Roger Bacon’s Apocalypticism in Light of His Alchemical and Scientific Thought.” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 105, no. 2, Mar. 2012, pp. 199, note 50, 51, 52. Cites: *Ut isti gentium quae invadent mundum, ut sunt Judei inclusi in montibus Hircanorum et Gog et Magog, et nationes inclusae ab Alexandro ad portas Caspiae, et propter Antichristum et suos ... isti exhibunt contra dies Antichristi et fines mundi ... possumus considerare quod parte contraria veniet Antichristus.*

the “eruption of nations at the end of time” directly alongside the days of Antichrist, while at the same time giving detailed attention to the Tartar invasions and their circumstances. In this way, the Tartar onslaught becomes incorporated into his vision of the approaching Antichrist as a sign of the age. Scholarly debates over Bacon’s “apocalyptic consciousness” are precisely based on these passages when analyzing his view of history.

Against this theological and political backdrop, the Franciscans not only emphasized the spiritual tradition of *imitatio Christi* but also actively inscribed themselves into the apocalyptic struggle through visual art. Then in what kinds of images did the Franciscans represent the figure of the “Antichrist”? In certain manuscript illuminations, friars appear as *milites Christi* (“soldiers of Christ”), confronting dragons and monstrous beasts with crosses or codices in hand. Such images are not merely allegorical annotations but assign to the friars an active combatant role, situating them simultaneously within theological symbolism and historical conflict. In his hymn *Ultimus draconis caput* (“The Last Dragon’s Head”), Pope Gregory IX went so far as to portray Francis as Christ’s new messenger, brandishing the sword against the dragon, thereby reinforcing the Franciscan Order’s active role and salvific mission within the apocalyptic narrative.⁵⁴⁸ But this manner of constructing the image of an eschatological counterfigure is already all too familiar.

In this way, the Franciscans were not merely passive readers of apocalyptic prophecy, but active participants in its imagery and meaning—placing themselves at the very center of the struggle against evil. This apocalyptic self-fashioning also provided a fertile framework through which encounters with the unfamiliar, the monstrous, and the exotic—particularly in the imagined landscapes of the East—could be visualized and understood. Unlike the images that associate the “Antichrist” with the evil dragon, in what follows we will reconsider, from both Eastern and Western perspectives, the ways in which beasts were used to construct the figure of the Other.

⁵⁴⁸ On Joachim of Fiore’s eschatology and the writings concerning the Antichrist, see R.E. Lerner, “Antichrist and Antichrists in Joachim of Fiore,” *Speculum*, vol. 60, 1985, pp. 553–70; R. Rusconi, “Antichrist and Antichrists,” in B. McGinn, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 2, New York, 2000, pp. 287–352; and H.M. Schaller, “Endzeiterwartung und Antichrist-Vorstellung in der Politik des 13. Jahrhunderts,” in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel*, vol. 2, Göttingen, 1971, pp. 924–47.

4.3 Mirroring the Other: Zoomorphic Depictions in Chinese Manuscripts

4.3.1 Zoomorphic Imaginaries in Chinese Manuscripts

In premodern China, knowledge of foreign worlds derived primarily from three types of sources. The first consisted of travel accounts—records by monks, envoys, or merchants of their experiences abroad, often transmitted in the form of travelogues or tribute reports. The second was the visual representation of foreign peoples and tribute missions, most notably in successive versions of the *Zhigong tu* (“Tribute Figures”), which visually constructed China’s relationship with the outside world. The third was the reservoir of ancient mythological and allegorical imagination, such as the *Shanhai jing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), with its depictions of marvelous regions, strange flora and fauna, and exotic human groups. A significant portion of this knowledge circulated through the manuscript tradition, which encompassed Dunhuang scrolls, Buddhist sutras, Daoist scriptures, genealogies, contracts, notebooks, and manuscript fiction. Before the widespread adoption of printing in the Song dynasty—and indeed even after the rise of print—manuscripts remained the primary medium for textual transmission, a practice of hand-copying that persisted into the Qing dynasty and even the Republican period.⁵⁴⁹

The *Shilin guangji* (*Extensive Records of the Forest of Affairs*), a practical encyclopedic handbook compiled by Chen Yuanjing in the Southern Song (1127–1279) and later expanded and block-printed under the Yuan with material drawn from multiple sources, records numerous exotic creatures inherited from the *Shanhai jing* (*山海经*, *Classic of Mountains and Seas*). It contains some forty entries adapted from the *Shanhai jing*, including descriptions of distant foreign peoples, marvelous birds, and fantastic beasts. Among extant editions, the Japanese woodblock version produced in the second year of the Taiding reign (1324) is considered closest to the original appearance of the work.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ Chia, Lucille. *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th–17th Centuries)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002, pp.65-71.

⁵⁵⁰ *Shilin guangji* (事林广记) exists in numerous editions, primarily concentrated in the Yuan and Ming dynasties, with most Ming editions being reprints. The major extant editions include: (1) The Japanese reprint of the Yuan Taiding second year edition (1325). Although this was published in Japan in Genroku 12 (1699, Kangxi 38), scholars traditionally treat it as a Yuan edition. (2) The Yuan Xiyuan jingshe edition (Zhishun period, 1330–1333), now preserved in the Naikaku Bunko of the National Diet Library, Japan. (3) The Yuan Chunzhuang shuyuan edition (Zhishun period, 1330–1333), now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. (4) The Yuan Zhengshi Jichengtang edition (1340). (5) The early Ming Meixi shuyuan edition, preserved at Keio University. (6) The early Ming Yongle edition, National Palace Museum, Taipei. (7) The mid-Ming Chenghua edition, National Taiwan Library. (8) The mid-Ming Hongzhi edition, Naikaku Bunko, Japan. See 王珂 [Wang, Ke]. “元刊《事林广记》插图考论 [An Investigation of the Illustrations in the Yuan Editions of *Shilin guangji*].” *古典文献研究* [*Journal of the Institute for Chinese Classics Studies*], vol. 18, no. 2, 2015, pp. 1–14. The work was originally titled *Bowen lu* (博闻录), but after the Yuan dynasty it was renamed *Shilin guangji* because the original title violated the taboo of Genghis Khan’s name and included prophetic illustrations and genealogies of the Mongol imperial family that were proscribed. From Yuan 31 (1294) to Taiding 2 (1325), it was repeatedly banned from publication. Later, however, *Shilin guangji* reappeared in the commercial book market with numerous revisions and expansions under its new title. See 李晓明 [Li Xiaoming]. “和刻本《事林广记·岛夷杂志》再探——宋代海上丝绸之路与中外交往史文献确证 [A Further Study of the Japanese Printed Edition of *Shilin guangji·Daoyi zazhi*: Documentary Evidence of the Maritime Silk Road and Sino-Foreign Contacts in the Song Dynasty].” *Wenxian*, no. 2, 2023, pp. 9–25.

The section “Beasts and Domestic Animals” (*Shou chu lei*) in the *Shilin guangji* not only sought to satisfy curiosity with accounts of mythical beings endowed with supernatural powers, but also reflected contemporary perceptions of the exotic. The criteria for selection—clouds, marvels, and anomalies from the *Shanhai jing* [山海經]—may broadly be grouped into three categories: divinities, beasts, and birds (including those of feather, scale, or shell).⁵⁵¹ Within this taxonomy, the composite human-beast creatures included such figures as the *taowu* (橐杻), *chiyu* (赤鱗), *yayu* (猓兪), *kuiqi* (夔魃), *heyu* (合麻), and *bi* (獬). These hybrid beings were typically represented with certain human traits—faces, feet, or hands—and perhaps shared with humans the capacity for movement, yet crucially they lacked the ability of human speech.

As its title suggests, the *leishu* (“classified compendium”) was by its very nature a method of defining categories of knowledge through systematic organization.⁵⁵² Even in the Ming, works such as the *Moxu zhaochao* manuscript (the so-called *Códice Boxer* in Spanish) continued to borrow imagery of foreign peoples and fantastic beasts from the *Shanhai jing*.⁵⁵³

Through successive editions, *Shilin guangji* achieved wide circulation; by the Yuan dynasty, at least four versions are known. Owing to its quasi-*bestiary* or *natural history* character, it also exerted influence on other Mongol khanates. For instance, in the Zhiyuan era (1335–1340), the Xiyuan jingshe edition included a section entitled “Ceremonial Rites: New Rites of Audience,” depicting a banquet scene. The costumes of the figures, however, were not those of Yuan Mongols, but of Han Chinese. Wang Ke has argued that this image likely originated in the Southern Song and was reproduced without alteration in the Zhiyuan edition of *Shilin guangji*, thereby preserving a Song banquet scene. (Fig. 4.16)⁵⁵⁴

When transmitted westward under the unified Yuan, this image informed the banquet illustrations of the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* (*Compendium of Chronicles*), which borrowed both composition and format but substituted Mongol costume for Han attire (Fig. 4.17). The borrowing is especially evident in the central animal motif beneath the banquet scene: in *Shilin guangji* it is a crane, symbol of the refined scholar-official and emblem of lofty detachment; in the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* it becomes a hunting dog, emblematic of Mongol hunting culture. The cultural divergence is equally clear in the

⁵⁵¹ 邱玉凡[Qiu Yufan]. “<事林廣記·獸畜類>研究 [Shi Lin Guang Ji of Beast Livestock Chapter Research].” Soochow University, 2017, pp. 130.

⁵⁵² In European medieval manuscripts, similar classifications can be found. For example, the Latin manuscript *Bodley 764* (Bodleian Library, Oxford) divides animals into categories of beasts, birds, serpents, and fish, treating both real creatures of the natural world and legendary beings—such as unicorns, griffins, or phoenixes—equally as parts of the cosmos. Their behavior was explained indiscriminately through natural knowledge, Biblical texts, or the writings of the Church Fathers. 许晖林[Hsu, Hui-Lin]. “朝贡的想象：晚明日用类书《诸夷门》的异域论述 [Imaging the Tributaries: The Exotic Discourse in the Late-Ming Daily Encyclopedias].” *中国文哲研究通讯* [Newsletter of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy], vol. 20, no. 2, 2010, p. 5. And Bao, Huiyi. “Between Reality and Illusion: Medieval Bestiaries”. *Dushu*, no. 9, 2020, pp. 153–60.

⁵⁵³ 鹿憶鹿[Lu, Yi-Lu]. “晚明《山海經》圖像的南傳—以《謨區查抄本》為例 [The Southward Transmission of the *Shanhai jing* Illustrations in the Late Ming: A Case Study of the *Codex Boxer*].” *中國學術年刊* [Chinese Academic Annual], vol. 46-1, no. 3, 2024, pp. 49–77.

⁵⁵⁴ Wang, Ke 2015, pp. 9.

settings of the banquet: Song gatherings took place in refined mansions, with separate tables for hosts and guests and musical accompaniment, while Mongol banquets were more rustic, staged outdoors upon the grasslands.

Xu Huilin has observed that in the Japanese woodblock edition (*hekibon*⁵⁵⁵), juan 8 of the “Xinji” section (*Shinji*, “Miscellaneous Records of the Islands and Barbarians”) specifies the countries accessible by ship, while the first half of juan 9 lists various fantastic beasts from the *Shanhai jing*, and the second half includes its humanoid beings—such as the “deathless men” (*busi ren* 不死人), the “three-bodied men” (*sanshen ren* 三身人), the “Dingling people” (*Dingling ren* 丁灵人), and the “little people” (*xiaoren guo* 小人国). In this way, the edition distinguishes between real countries and legendary, non-human realms.⁵⁵⁶ By contrast, in the Xiyuan edition and the Zheng family’s Jichengtang edition, the section on exotic peoples was removed from “Beasts and Domestic Animals” (*Shou chu lei*) and reassigned to “Miscellaneous Records of Foreign Lands” (*Fangguo zazhi*). Such editorial changes, Xu argues, reflect different modes of imagining foreign geography.

Particularly striking is the motif of the “Dog-Headed People” (*gouguo* 狗国), an example of imagining foreign others as non-human. Legends of such a realm were not confined to Chinese sources. In the *Book of Marvels* attributed to Hayton of Corycus, the king is said to have heard: “*The king heard, too, of a people beyond Cathay whose women had the use of reason like men, whilst the males were great hairy dogs.*”⁵⁵⁷ Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, during his residence in Qaraqorum, likewise collected popular stories from Central and Northern Asia and recorded similar tales in his travel account: “*The Tatars, advancing further, came to a region by the sea. According to others who affirmed it with certainty, there were monsters there, fully human in shape but whose legs ended in bovine hooves; they had human heads but faces like dogs.*”⁵⁵⁸ He also noted reports of Samoyedic peoples and others living on the ocean shore and in the desert, said to have “dog heads,”⁵⁵⁹ as well as the Cynocephali.⁵⁶⁰ The earliest known mention of dog-headed peoples dates back to the early fourth century BCE, when Ctesias of Cnidus, in his treatise on India, described them as inhabiting the subcontinent, unable to speak clearly and only barking like dogs.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁵ his edition of the *Shilin guangji*, Fascicle 8 of the *Xin ji*, entitled *Dao yi zazhi* (Miscellaneous Records on the Island Barbarians), constitutes a distinctive section not found in other extant versions. Preserved among overseas collections of Chinese texts, this geographical treatise on foreign lands records the historical facts of maritime exchanges conducted by the Song dynasty Maritime Trade Supervisorate. It documents China’s interactions with Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Arab states of West Asia and Africa along the Maritime Silk Road, while also preserving numerous anecdotes concerning Song-era expeditions abroad and the experiences of overseas Chinese communities.

⁵⁵⁶ Hsu, Hui-Lin 2010, pp. 175.

⁵⁵⁷ Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Digitally printed version [d. Ausg.] London, Hakluyt Soc., 1866, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Vol.1, pp. 164.

⁵⁵⁸ 耿昇, 何高济译[Geng Sheng, He Gaoyi trans.], 《柏朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行记》[*Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine. The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World*], 北京: 商务印书馆, 中国旅游出版社[Beijing: The Commercial Press, China Tourism Press], 2018, pp. 49.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁶¹ Wittkower, Rudolf. "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5.1, 1942, pp. 159-197.

In the French “court version” of Marco Polo’s *Travels* (Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264), fols. 260r and 262r contain illustrations of unusual Eastern peoples that do not correspond to the accompanying text. These images depict scenes not described in Marco Polo’s narrative and may derive from other oral or textual sources about the East.⁵⁶² Fol. 260 shows a one-eyed hairy man, a headless man, and dog-headed figures (Fig. 4. 18). Fol. 262r depicts, on the left, a hairy man holding a severed hand and foot—possibly suggesting cannibalism—while in the center stands a figure with deer antlers and hooves, bent over and grasping a deer’s leg.

The figure of the dog-headed man was not limited to France but circulated widely. In twelfth-century English manuscripts, dog-headed peoples were described in detail, with emphasis on their habits (Fig. 4. 19):

“In alia regione nascuntur homines statura pedum VII, barbas habentes usque ad genua, comas usque ad talos, quos homodubii appellant, et pisces crudos manducant.”

[“In another region, there are men seven feet tall, with beards down to their knees and hair down to their ankles. They are called ‘homodubii,’ and they eat raw fish.”]

In one such illustration, the central figure is a *cynocephalus* (dog-headed man): his body is entirely human in form—with arms, torso, and legs—while his head is that of a dog, with upright ears and an elongated snout, shown using his hands to bring food to his mouth. Beside him stands a tree with a curved trunk and three large clusters of leaves, perhaps symbolizing his habitat or food source. In the Old English *Vitellius Manuscript* (British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv, commonly known as the *Beowulf* manuscript), the *Passio sancti Christophori* recounts the story of St. Christopher, himself a dog-headed saint (*cynocephalus*), who converted a pagan king to Christianity on the island of Samos, near the Anatolian coast of Turkey.⁵⁶³

The widespread circulation of legends about the dog-headed people—across Chinese texts, medieval travel accounts, and Western manuscript illuminations—thus reveals a shared cultural mechanism: the tendency to animalize foreign others as a way of negotiating alterity. In both East and West, the *cynocephalus* served as a liminal figure, blurring the boundaries between human and beast, civilization and barbarity, familiar and alien.

⁵⁶² Cruse, Mark. “Un monumento in pergamena. Testi, immagini e storia del manoscritto Bodley 264”. *Il Manoscritto Bodley 264. Il Romanzo di Alessandro. I Viaggi di Marco Polo. Saggi e commenti*. 2014, pp. 141-7.

⁵⁶³ Paul Beekman Taylor and Peter H. Salus, “The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A. xv”, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 69, 1968, pp. 199-204; Kemp Malone, *The Nowell Codex (British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. XV, Second Manuscript)*, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile* 12, Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1963, pp. 96, 119.

4.3.2 Zoomorphic Palimpsests in Scroll Paintings

Chinese painters in antiquity developed different strategies for representing body hair. Because of cultural taboos surrounding the human body, paintings seldom exposed nudity; and even when parts of the body were revealed, hair was either left unmarked or rendered only sparingly. Yet in depictions of non-Chinese peoples, bodily hair often became a conspicuous marker of difference. In the American-held version of the *Fan wang lifo tu* (“Foreign Kings Paying Homage to the Buddha”, Fig. 4.20) such features are not always distinct, but in the Palace Museum version, the body hair of foreign figures is strikingly emphasized. These subtle differences, alongside facial features and costumes, could serve as another means of articulating the boundary between the “Chinese” and the “barbarian.” Similarly, in Bodley 264, figures covered in long white or blue hair visualize foreign peoples as described in rumor and hearsay. Whether the illuminator faithfully reproduced reports or introduced imaginative invention cannot be known; what is clear is that such exotic imaginings were received and affirmed.

In the first section of this manuscript, the Old French Roman d’Alexandre, one miniature depicts a “wild man” covered in blue and white hair (Fig. 4. 21). Positioned beneath the text in a small rectangular frame, the image accompanies a set of moral verses:

*Et front noir comme mûre, los resplendissant,
Et loiauté et bonté, ses hault parlant,
Vient plus d’aumosne, li sens bons fuist garant.
Li tors puet estre, sens est bon enseignant,
Li sens est lumière qui tient l’âme ardant,
Car li sens boins met l’omme en bon tenant.*

*[“A forehead black as a ripe mulberry, yet shining with glory;
Loyalty and goodness are the highest of words.
Charity gains assurance through wisdom.
Deceit may exist, but wisdom is the true teacher.
Wisdom is the light that keeps the soul aflame,
For wisdom alone places man upon the right path.”]*

In the margin to the right, the text emphasizes that “wisdom is light, more precious than diamonds or gold and silver,” and that “a foolish man, however wealthy, is nothing.” The accompanying miniature shows a bishop, wearing mitre and crozier, locked in combat with a horned “wild man” whose body is covered in black and blue-white hair. Here the illustration functions allegorically, aligning the wild man with the devil of folly and envy.

Similar exoticized depictions appear in other manuscripts. John Mandeville’s *Travels*, written in French ca. 1356 and drawing upon Odorico da Pordenone (1300),

William of Boldensele (1336), and Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Maius*, describes such marvels. In the English version (British Library, MS Royal 17 C. XXXVIII), when passing through India, Mandeville notes the cult of a deity or ruler depicted as half man and half ox, with a crowned human head, beard, and carefully styled hair joined to a bovine body: "they represent their God as half man and half ox, for man is the loveliest and best creature that God made and the ox the holiest."⁵⁶⁴ The Bibliothèque nationale de France preserves another important fifteenth-century manuscript (fr. 2810), which combines Marco Polo's *Travels* with Odoric's *Relatio*, illuminated by the Boucicaut Master, and likewise filled with exotic imaginings (Fig. 4.22).

In China, Zhao Rushi, superintendent of the Quanzhou Maritime Trade Office, compiled the *Zhufanzhi* (1225), based on interviews with visiting merchants. He recorded, with careful selection and translation, both factual information and hearsay. The section on "Sijialiye guo" describes Sicily and its active volcano, making this the earliest Chinese account of Italy's Sicily and Mount Etna. Yet even after the collapse of the tributary system in the Ming, foreign peoples continued to be imagined within a sinocentric framework of graded alterity, until Jesuit missionaries like Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) introduced Western geography.

In Ming encyclopedic texts such as the *Wanbao quanshu*, foreigners were linked ever more explicitly with animals. In the section *Zhuyi men*, certain "barbarian" ancestors are traced to birds and beasts; their temperaments and customs are described as bestial—cruel, licentious, homeless, or non-agricultural.⁵⁶⁵ Medieval Christian tradition, too, equated sin and carnality with beasts, employing animal imagery to embody vice and the demonic. In both cultures, the visual language of bestialization carried a negative force, becoming a weapon of exclusion, demonization, and religious self-definition.

In Chinese painting, scrolls such as the *Soushan tu* ("Searching the Mountains", 搜山图), narrating the story of the god Erlang subduing demons, exemplify this imagery of hybrid beings. The subject was painted by Gao Yi in the Northern Song, with versions continuing into the Ming—for instance, Lu Zhi's sixteenth-century version in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.⁵⁶⁶ According to legend, certain demons

⁵⁶⁴ Mandeville, John. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Edited by C. W. R. D. Moseley, Penguin Classics, 1983, pp. 178.

⁵⁶⁵ 邵小龙 [Shao Xiao-Long]. "禽兽之性与羸虫之相——明代万宝全书诸夷门中图像与观念的互动 [The Nature of Beasts and the Appearance of Naked Creatures: Interaction of Images and Ideas in the 'Zhu Yi Men' Section of the Ming Encyclopedia Wanbao Quanshu]." *民族艺术 [Ethnic Art]*, no. 6, 2017, pp. 106–14.

⁵⁶⁶ Among the extant "Searching the Mountains" (*Sou shan tu*, 搜山图) paintings are: the *Daozi Mobao* [道子墨宝] from the Song dynasty (unsigned, ink outline album leaf, 37.7 × 33.5 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art); the *Sou shan tu* [搜山图] from the Southern Song (attributed to Su Hanchen [苏汉臣], colors on silk, fragment, 53.3 × 533 cm, Palace Museum, Beijing); a Yuan/Ming version (unsigned, colors on silk, fragment, 61 × 806 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); the *Guankou Sou shan tu* [灌口搜山图] from the Ming dynasty (signed by Ding Yefu [丁野夫], ink on silk, 48.2 × 935.9 cm, Princeton University Art Museum); a Ming version (unsigned, ink on silk, 49 × 1008 cm, Luo Yuanjue collection); a Ming version (unsigned, colors on paper, 37.5 × 910.5 cm, University of California, Berkeley); a Ming version (unsigned, colors on silk, 44.3 × 606 cm, Yunnan Provincial Museum); a Ming version (colors on silk, 40.5 × 468 cm, Shandong Museum); a Ming version [signed by Zheng Zhong (郑重)], colors on paper, 27 × 847 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); and a Ming version (signed by Li Zai [李在], attributed to Li Song (李嵩), ink on paper, 46.9 × 807.2 cm, Freer Gallery of Art). The earliest textual record of paintings on the "searching the mountains" theme can be found in Liu Daochun [刘道醇]'s *Shengchao minghua ping* [圣朝名画评]

gathered in the mountains and forests, wreaking havoc upon the people. The Jade Emperor therefore issued a decree, commanding Erlang Shen to “search the mountains” (sou shan, 搜山) and capture the monsters. Erlang Shen dispatched the heavenly soldiers and generals to guard each mountain pass, preventing the demons from escaping. The monsters transformed themselves into mountains, rivers, trees, and grasses, or revealed their original forms, or assumed the appearance of women, or even of half-human, half-animal beings. Erlang Shen, however, opened his “divine eye” to discern the truth, driving his celestial hound to assist in battle. The divine generals wielded swords, spears, sabers, and halberds, released hawks and loosed hounds, blocking the way in front and behind, leaving the monsters no avenue of escape. The composition of the scroll painting is arranged so that Erlang Shen and his retinue of attendants occupy the foreground, while the central focus of the work lies in his subordinates seizing demons in the mountains and forests, including such figures as the Ox-Demon and the River-Dragon (Fig. 4.23, 24). Yet, regardless of which extant version of the *Searching the Mountains* (Sou shan tu, 搜山图) is considered, the pictorial effect always appears as human-shaped monsters striking and chasing another group of purely bestial creatures—tigers, serpents, monkeys, bears, and the like. The distinction between the two is meant to signify that certain animals have already metamorphosed into spirits, and thus wear an additional layer of human clothing over their animal bodies; yet the divine generals under Erlang Shen, though robed in yellow garments, armored in cuirasses, and armed with spears and halberds, nonetheless retain their green faces, tusks, and grotesque, semi-human appearances (Fig. 4.25). The protagonist of the *Searching the Mountains* theme, Erlang Shen himself, by contrast, is consistently represented as majestic, awe-inspiring, and embodying both authority and justice in the form of a human figure (Fig. 4.26).

This hierarchy of human and beast—humans in the superior position, beasts subject to human control, and animals relegated to an even lower rank beneath beasts—reveals the stratified order of relationships between human, beast, and animal. By shaping the heavenly soldiers and generals as hybrid human-animal beings, the artists enhanced their power as guardian deities, rendering Erlang Shen’s authority even more fearsome.

Chinese figural representation is characterized by a style that fuses *form* (xing 形) and *spirit* (shen 神). In the skeletal structures and facial musculature of the generals under Erlang Shen, animalized traits emerge: the brow-ridges, cheekbones, and eyeballs are accentuated; the bodies bulge with swelling forms and scales. These physical features also correspond to certain physiognomic traits attributed to foreign peoples of the Khitan and Mongols during the Yuan and Ming periods. The Khitan or Mongols, dwelling in the colder northern regions beyond the Great Wall, were regarded as possessing a more rugged appearance. Considering that the *Searching the Mountains* theme originated in the late Song and early Yuan periods, it is not difficult to discern the influence of the Mongol and Khitan steppe warriors north of the frontier—clad in armor and armed with cold weapons—upon its visual imagery. Implicitly, the paintings

(also known as *Songchao minghua ping* [宋朝名画评], which notes that the Northern Song painter Gao Yi (高益) once painted a *Ghosts and Spirits Searching the Mountains* [鬼神搜山图] to repay the favor of the aristocrat Sun Sihao [孙四皓]. That version has long since been lost. See: 刘道醇 [Liu Daochun]. *Shengchao minghua ping* 《宋朝名画评》. Zhonghua Guji Ziyuan Ku [中华古籍资源库], Ming shanben [明善本 15125], juan 1, p. 9.

convey the Han Chinese people's continued sense of oppression under foreign invasions.⁵⁶⁷

During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, under the influence of Buddhist culture, sculptural images frequently represented gods combined with beasts, and the beasts themselves were often extremely ferocious.⁵⁶⁸ A particularly noteworthy detail is that the depiction of Erlang Shen's subordinate soldiers in these paintings may simultaneously have drawn upon two sources: the Buddhist iconography of deities seated upon beasts, and the physiognomic traits of foreign "barbarians." By combining animal heads with the attire of outsiders, the artists created the composite images of the generals that populate the pictorial scenes.

Another pictorial type from the same period is the Buddhist painting *The Scroll of Raising the Alms Bowl*. (*Jiebo tu juan*, 揭钵图卷). This composition follows a visual model similar to that of the *Searching the Mountains* (*Soushan tu*, 搜山图) and originated in the late Yuan dynasty⁵⁶⁹. In the scroll, Śākyamuni Buddha, together with his retinue of monks and dharma protectors, is placed at the very beginning of the painting (i.e., the front section), while Hārītī—the demon mother—and her demonic hosts occupy the middle and end of the scroll, with the central focus devoted to the climactic scene of "The Demons Lifting the Alms Bowl" (*zhongmo jiebo* 众魔揭钵). Within the composition, the Buddha appears in an upright, majestic, and unshakable human form surrounded by heavenly beings (*devas*) who have attained enlightenment (Fig. 4.27), while the lesser demons are rendered in hybrid forms, half-animal and half-human (Fig. 28,29,30).

Hārītī (also known in Chinese as Guizi mu, 鬼子母 or Helidimu, from the Sanskrit *Hārītī*), originally appears in Buddhist scriptures as the mother of yakṣas (netherworld spirits akin to ferocious demons or ghouls). She is said to have given birth to five hundred or even one thousand demon-children. Of cruel disposition, she frequently abducted and devoured the infants of humankind. In order to bring her to repentance, the Buddha hid her most beloved son under his alms bowl (Fig. 4. 28). When Hārītī searched in vain, she lamented in pain and despair. The Buddha said to

⁵⁶⁷ For an analysis of the costumes represented in the *Searching the Mountains Scroll* (*Soushan tu* 搜山图), see 沈可 [Shen Ke]. *世情与隐衷: 北京故宫博物院藏《搜山图》新探* [*Explicitness and Implicitness: New Exploration on the Mountain Searching Painting Scroll in Beijing Palace*], 2023, pp. 19-40.

⁵⁶⁸ For research on the combination of human and animal forms in Buddhist statuary, see: 胡刚帅 [Hu Gangshuai]. *象征与超越——中国佛教造像中人兽结合造型研究*. [*Symbol and Transcendence—A Study on the Combination of Human and Animal in Chinese Buddhist Statues*]. 中国美术学院 [China Academy of Art], 2020.

⁵⁶⁹ Here, two versions of *Jiebo tu* (*The Bowl-Lifting Scene*) attributed to Qiu Ying and preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, will serve as examples. At present, more than thirty extant scrolls of *Jiebo tu* are held in museums in China and abroad, with dates ranging from the Yuan dynasty to the Ming and Qing dynasties. Scholars generally classify these paintings into three categories according to the placement of the Buddha, the celestial beings, and the demonic retinues. Representative versions include the ink-outline scroll on paper by Zhu Yu in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum; the anonymous (formerly attributed to Zhao Gongyou) colored silk version in the British Museum; the signed and inscribed colored paper version in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the colored silk scroll attributed to Qiu Ying in the National Palace Museum, Taipei; the colored silk scroll inscribed as a Yuan work in the Palace Museum, Beijing; and the colored silk scroll attributed to Qiu Ying in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington. See: 宋艳玉 [Song, Yanyu]. "分化与再造:《揭钵图》图式来源新探" [*Differentiation and Reformation: A New Exploration of the Imagery in 'Jiebo Tu'*]. *美术观察* [*Art Observation*], no. 9, 2024, pp. 51-59. And 刘建龙 [Liu, Jianlong]. "传世《揭钵图》卷的版本与年代考辨" [*On the Versions and Dating of Extant Scrolls of Jiebo tu*]. *辽宁省博物馆学术论文集(1999-2008)第2册* [*Collected Academic Essays of the Liaoning Provincial Museum (1999-2008), vol. 2*]. Edited by Liaoning Provincial Museum, Liaohai Press, 2009, pp. 179-197.

her: “Since you grieve so bitterly over the loss of one child, how much greater must be the suffering of worldly parents who lose their beloved children?”⁵⁷⁰ At once, Hārītī repented, converted to the Dharma, and vowed henceforth to protect all infants and never again to harm them. Buddha, seated upon a lotus throne in calm majesty, returned the child from beneath the bowl. Accordingly, *The Scroll of Lifting the Bowl* depicts precisely this scene, in which the Buddha raises the vessel to reveal Hārītī’s hidden child. As a result, in later imagery Hārītī often appears as a beautiful woman holding an infant, surrounded by many children.

Earlier scholarship has observed that the *Jiebo tu* contains numerous motifs identical or closely related to the well-known Buddhist iconography of “Subjugation of Demons and Attainment of Enlightenment” (*xiangmo chengdao*, 降魔成道).⁵⁷¹ The consensus is that the *Jiebo tu* appropriated or borrowed from this earlier visual repertoire, which was filled with demonic figures.⁵⁷²

It is also important to note that in much of the painting there appear small demons who, although clad in human attire, nevertheless display grotesque, semi-human features. These “demonic troops” incorporate elements of birds and animals. For example, one such demon retains avian wings, a beak, and claws (Fig. 4.28). Others are even mounted on wholly imaginary creatures. The Ming painter Qiu Ying (1494–1552), for instance, frequently selected *exotic beasts* as mounts for demons: in one case, a human-shaped demon without lower limbs rides upon a qilin; in another, a massive elephant is reduced to the size of a porcupine to serve as a mount; in yet another, a black, fur-covered creature resembling a leopard (though lacking its spots) has its face grotesquely exaggerated into that of a demonic black lion (Fig. 4.29).

In Qiu Ying’s paintings, within the retinue of Hārītī there appears a particularly terrifying guardian figure standing at her side: a colossal being with multiple heads and multiple arms, wielding weapons, its entire body covered with faces. This monstrous image symbolizes the dreadful capacity to “see all and devour all.”(Fig. 4.30)⁵⁷³.

The same fascination with monstrous forms is found in medieval European manuscripts of the *mirabilia* tradition, or in bestiaries such as the *Liber Monstrorum*. One famous example is the legend of the “headless men” (Blemmyae), whose heads are absent from their necks and whose eyes and mouths instead are located upon their

⁵⁷⁰ Shixi Xinyue[石溪心月]. 石溪心月禅师语录[*Shixi Xinyue chanshi yulu*], juan 3. In *Zokuzōkyō* 《卍新续藏》, vol. 71, Cangjing Shuyuan [藏经书院] edition, Xin Wenfeng Publishing Co., 1983, pp. 1405.

⁵⁷¹ The term “Jiangmo tu” (降魔图, “Demon-Subjugation Painting”) generally refers to Buddhist wall paintings or pictorial works depicting Śākyamuni’s conquest over heretics and demonic hosts. For instance, on the south wall of Cave 254 at Dunhuang appears the “Śākyamuni Subduing the Demons and Attaining Enlightenment” (释迦降魔成道图). The narrative illustrates how, while meditating beneath the Bodhi tree, the Buddha was harassed by Māra Papiyān, who sent armies of demons and seductive daughters to disturb him. Yet Śākyamuni remained unmoved, seated in meditation for seven days. On the morning of the seventh day, as the sun rose in the east, he proclaimed, “The lamp is on the Bodhi [tree],” thereby attaining enlightenment and realizing Buddhahood. Within this thematic framework of Jiangmo tu, various ranks of Māra’s troops and demonic figures are typically depicted.

⁵⁷² 张薇[Zhang Wei]. “佛传‘降魔成道’的文本与图像流变 [The Textual and Visual Transformations of the Buddha’s ‘Subjugation of Demons and Attainment of Enlightenment’]”. *Chinese Art Research*. no. 4, 2018, pp. 32–41.

⁵⁷³ In the Gandhāra region of India, depictions of such demon armies with ‘faces on their abdomens’ had already appeared; after being introduced into China, these images became even more elaborate, forming a typical motif within the Buddha’s ‘Subjugation of Demons and Attainment of Enlightenment’ iconography. *Ibid.*

chests. In the first half of the twelfth-century Latin manuscript Bodley 614 (Bodleian Library, MS. Bodl. 614), there appears an image of this kind (Fig. 4. 31), accompanied by explanatory text that situates the creatures geographically on islands lying south of Britain:

Est et alia[n] insula in Britonie ad meridiem in qua nascitu[r] homines sine capitibus, qui in pectore habent oculos et ora. Ita sunt pedum occidentium similes.
[“There is also another island to the south of Britain, where men are born without heads, having their eyes and mouths upon their chests. They closely resemble the peoples of the West in stature.”]⁵⁷⁴

A similar monster also appears in the so-called “Beowulf manuscript,” within the Anglo-Saxon travel literature and bestiary texts *Wonders of the East* (*Mirabilia Orientis*) or *Marvels of the East* (Fig. 4.32). In that manuscript, the Blemmyae are further described in terms of size: “*They are eight feet tall and eight feet wide.*”⁵⁷⁵

In the *Jiebo tu*, among Hārītī’s entourage there also appears a bull-headed, human-bodied demon, crowned with gold, clad in armor and brightly colored battle robes, and holding a spear or halberd. This figure stands in stark contrast to the surrounding lesser demon soldiers, who are depicted either naked or in simple clothing, armed only with clubs, chains, or ropes, and tasked with carrying burdens, beating drums, or carrying out punishments. The composition thus reveals a hierarchical “underworld army” structure: Hārītī at the center, flanked by high-ranking demon generals, mid-ranking retainers (such as the soldiers mounted on black panther-like demonic beasts), and finally low-ranking troops (naked or clad in white skirts, armed with crude instruments).

The protagonists of this scroll are clearly “Hārītī and the Buddha.” The higher-ranking, more virtuous side is consistently depicted in full human form, while the lesser, more bestial demons are given semi-animal traits. In other words, whether a figure is represented as closer to human or closer to animal serves to construct a hierarchy of morality and cosmic order. For instance, though Hārītī was originally a “demon,” the painter renders her as a beautiful lady in red garments and crown, indicating her capacity for repentance and conversion to Buddhism. Her elevated status is clearly set above that of her attendants, who remain more bestial, enslaved to desire, and further removed from humanity.

Zhou Zhizhong’s *Yiyuzhi* (*Record of Foreign Lands*), compiled during the Yuan dynasty, made no clear distinction between legend and reality, instead blending the imaginative accounts of classical texts with reports derived from contemporary travel. As a result, his work abounds with references to places such as the “Country of Dog-Headed Men” (*gou guo* 狗国), the “Country of Women” (*nüren guo* 女人国), the “Country Without Bellies” (*wufu guo* 无腹国), the “Country of Long-Armed Men” (*qigong guo* 奇肱国), the “Country of Backward-Eyed Men” (*houyan guo* 后眼国),

⁵⁷⁴ van Dijk, S. J. P. *Latin Liturgical Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, vol. 3: Rituals and Directories (typescript, 1957), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 129; Ford, A. J. *Marvel and Artefact: The “Wonders of the East” in Its Manuscript Contexts*, pp. 103-110.

⁵⁷⁵ Orchard, Andy. *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-manuscript*. University of Toronto Press, 2003. pp. 184-203.

the “Country of Pierced-Chest Men” (*chuangxiong guo* 穿胸国), the “Country of Feathered People” (*yumin guo* 羽民国), the “Country of Pygmies” (*xiaoren guo* 小人国), and the “Country of Neck-Linked People” (*jiaojing guo* 交颈国), most of which can be traced back to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing* 山海经).

The structure of the text reflects this conflation: the earliest entries describe countries already known through concrete experience; the middle section introduces states mentioned in more recent notes and hearsay, composed of both human and nonhuman beings; and the final entries derive from the archaic accounts in the *Shanhai jing*, populated by wholly nonhuman creatures. This editorial method reproduces a traditional spatial imagination: the closer a land lay to China, the more it was thought to share in the pure vital forces of heaven and earth, thereby producing “ordinary humans”; conversely, the farther away a land was, the more it partook of turbid and chaotic forces, yielding beings that were human-like yet not fully human. Such a worldview is consistent with the traditional Sino-centric geographical imagination, which expanded outward from the “civilized” center of the *Huaxia* realm to the surrounding “barbarian” peripheries in an ethically ordered cosmos.

As Edward Said has argued in *Orientalism*, the “East” often existed less as an empirical reality than as a conceptual counterpart to the “West.” Ge Zhaoguang has noted, if we revisit the premodern Chinese imagination of the *tianxia* (“all under Heaven”), we find the same process at work: accounts of distant lands were less records of the real world than projections of a sinocentric order of tribute and difference. In this sense, China’s view of the “West” was structurally parallel to the West’s view of the “East.”⁵⁷⁶

In the medieval context, Western attitudes toward Eastern peoples were likewise constructed upon fear and exclusion of the “Other.” Such imaginings were not only about geographical remoteness and cultural difference, but were transmuted into a form of “moral panic”: Eastern infidels, Saracens, and Tatars were represented as mortal threats to Christian faith and Western order. In other words, the exclusion of outsiders and the drawing of enemy lines formed a cornerstone of the Latin world’s strategy to uphold its religious and political legitimacy.

It must be emphasized, however, that this fear of the Other was grounded precisely in the tangible possibility of invasion. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries marked a late premodern phase of intense intercultural contact, enabled by the Mongol Empire’s unification of diverse peoples and religions. The Mongols ruled Persia from 1221 to ca. 1335, for roughly a century, and occupied Asia Minor for about ninety years from the Battle of Köse Dağ in 1243 until the collapse of the Ilkhanate in 1335. Beginning in 1260, Christian strongholds in the Eastern Mediterranean steadily fell: cities such as Damascus, Tripoli, and Acre were lost, and in 1291 the fall of Acre—the last capital of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the core of Latin Christianity in the Levant—marked the definitive end of the Crusader states.

⁵⁷⁶ 葛兆光[Ge Zhaoguang], ed. *宅兹中国: 重建有关“中国”的历史论述* [*Zhai zi Zhongguo: Reconstructing Historical Discourses on “China.”*]. 中华书局[Zhonghua Book Company], 2011, pp. 83.

The human reaction to fear is often described as the “fight-or-flight response,” a concept first formulated by the American physiologist Walter Cannon in the early twentieth century to characterize animals’ instinctive reactions to threat. In medieval manuscripts, the hybrid images of men and beasts can be read as visual crystallizations of the sweeping political, territorial, and confessional crises confronting Christianity between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries. Humanity’s innate response to crisis compelled Christians to attack the Other—whether through desecration of their faith or through visual alienation and degradation of their very image.

Feuerbach, in the preface to the second edition of *The Essence of Christianity*, remarked: “Religion is the dream of the human spirit. But even in dreaming we are not in nothingness or in heaven, but still on earth, still in reality; only, instead of seeing real things in the light of reality and necessity, we see them in the deceptive forms of imagination and arbitrariness... For the present age, it is certain that they prefer the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality, the appearance to the essence... illusion alone is sacred, truth is profane. Nay, sacredness increases in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness.”⁵⁷⁷

Punishment and demonization of the Eastern “Other” often took highly theatrical forms: in Crusader chronicles and manuscript illuminations, Easterners were rendered as monsters, beasts, or servants of Antichrist. Such visual and narrative exaggerations not only satisfied the Western audience’s appetite for spectacle and terror, but also reinforced internal discipline and collective identity. Whereas in early biblical exegesis and apocalyptic tradition the “Other” was primarily equated with heresy and the demonic, in the cross-cultural encounters of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Muslims, Tatars, and Eastern migrants were likewise subsumed into this system of othering. Their capacity to evoke fear and insecurity was ceaselessly mobilized and exploited, serving as a renewable source of energy for political propaganda, religious preaching, and artistic representation.

⁵⁷⁷ Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. 2nd ed., Preface. Translated by George Eliot, Harper & Row, 1957, pp. xii–xiii.

CONCLUSION

When we look back at Franciscan art of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, what first comes into view is not simply religious imagery or material remains, but rather a worldview hidden within them: how to regard the unfamiliar, how to deal with those different from oneself. The Orient in Franciscan art was not a fixed geographical concept, but a space of the “Other” that was constantly imagined and reshaped. As the “Orient” waiting to be conquered and converted in the eyes of Franciscan friars, it was unrelated to the Orient itself, but rather a necessary element for the self-identity construction of Franciscan art. This study begins with martyrdom paintings in Italy, follows the migrations of Armenians and the movements of Central and West Asian craftsmen, and extends to Yuan dynasty silk production and Chinese manuscript traditions. Through different media—murals, carpets, silks, and manuscripts—it seeks to trace a cultural trajectory from West to East. And along this trajectory, Franciscan friars and their art were always grappling with the same question: when we encounter people different from ourselves, are we truly seeking understanding, or merely reinforcing boundaries?

The first chapter examined *St. Francis and the Sultan* and *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans*. On the surface, these works praise the courage of missionaries and the firmness of their faith, but at a deeper level, they establish the “martyr identity” of the Franciscans through the depiction of infidel rulers and violent enemies. The Orient here is the stage of martyrdom, the symbol of Antichrist forces, and the reflection of the West’s own salvation narrative. A dialogue of mutual tolerance may once have appeared, but in artistic representation, such dialogue more often turned into a strategy of emphasizing difference. Religious tolerance was not the goal, but rather an unrealized illusion.

The second chapter further shifted perspective toward West Asia, focusing on Armenia under Mongol rule and discussing Armenia’s situation after the Mongol conquest and its relationship with the Franciscans. The conquest placed Armenia between the triple forces of Islam, the Mongols, and Christianity, creating a unique cultural tension. At this historical juncture, Armenian artists and craftsmen were compelled or chose to migrate to the Mediterranean world, with some entering the Italian peninsula and coming into contact with the Franciscans. The picture here was more complex than in Italy: Armenia was not only a land caught in the cleft between

three powers, but also an active node of artistic and craft exchange. The activities of Armenian artists on the Italian peninsula brought Oriental motifs into contact with Christian imagery. Yet this exchange did not imply a truly “equal coexistence,” but was founded on asymmetrical power relations and religious expectations. The Franciscans’ patronage of Armenian craftsmen was not motivated by cultural inclusivity, but rather by considerations of religious community and artistic needs.

Research has shown that in Italian altar decorations and textiles, one can discern the handiwork and decorative traditions of Armenian craftsmen. The dragon-and-phoenix motifs on carpets and textiles are particularly typical: they originated from Oriental visual languages, yet in the Western liturgical environment they were endowed with new interpretations. For instance, the dragon in the Christian context was often associated with Satan or the Antichrist, whereas in Armenian and more Eastern traditions it carried connotations of protection and auspiciousness. By sponsoring Armenian craftsmen, the Franciscans allowed such double-coded symbols to enter the visual system of European churches. In other words, Oriental elements were received in Western art, but their meanings were still determined by Western theology and authority. What might be called “cross-cultural fusion” in this historical context remained difficult to detach from the structure of othering. This phenomenon demonstrates that cross-cultural exchange did not mean “understanding” or “integration.” Armenian art was absorbed into Franciscan art, but its meaning was re-contextualized through Western theology, becoming a tool for reinforcing Franciscan religious narratives. Here again, religious tolerance proved to be an illusion: what appeared to be an acceptance of foreign craftsmen and imagery was in fact a process of re-assigning meaning that integrated them into the Western system.

The third chapter turned to silks and the transregional network of the “one million craftsmen.” The establishment of the Mongol Empire broke the boundaries of the Eurasian continent, and large numbers of craftsmen were captured or relocated to different regions. Under the Yuan dynasty’s *zhuse huji* (register of people of various categories), official workshops became major nodes for silk production and circulation. These institutions and practices allowed luxurious textiles from Central Asia, Persia, and even China to flow continuously into Europe, so that Franciscan churches came to house splendid silks adorned with Oriental beasts. These textiles stood in tension with the Franciscan ideal of poverty, yet were legitimized through their “sacrality.” In other words, the value of these fabrics lay not only in their material and craftsmanship, but also in their embodiment of “exotic” meanings and religious symbolism.

Here, the meaning of the Orient shifted: dragons, phoenixes, and parrots, on the one hand, bore theological significance, while on the other hand they became synonymous with exotic luxury and visual pleasure. The sacredness of religion gave way on the textile to the allure of the secular. The Franciscans had once regarded the Mongols and Tartars as the Antichrist, but in their most solemn liturgical occasions they unconsciously relied on motifs and crafts from the land of the Antichrist. The Orient here was no longer merely a dangerous Other, but had become an object of beauty and

a medium of sanctity. This transformation reminds us that attitudes toward the “Other” were not fixed, but were constantly reinterpreted in different contexts.

In the fourth chapter, the imagination of the Orient reached a new level. In Franciscan manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, depictions of exotic beasts appear frequently: griffins, dragons, unicorns, and even unidentifiable monsters. These images drew not only on biblical and classical sources, but also on reports about the Mongols and more distant lands. For the manuscript’s readers, such images were at once theological admonitions and windows into a world filled with exotic fantasy. The exotic beasts in Franciscan manuscripts and the anthropo-zoomorphic images in Chinese manuscripts reveal that both sides, even without having truly met, constructed the Other in strikingly similar ways. Whether in European manuscripts where the East was monstrified, or in Chinese paintings where the West was alienated, human beings in the face of crisis and the unknown adopted comparable strategies: transforming the unfamiliar into beasts, turning the incomprehensible into monsters. This is not merely an iconographic coincidence, but also a reflection of cultural psychology. It reminds us that religious tolerance in history was more often an ideal in self-narration than a reality. What actually occurred, more often, was the continuous reinforcement of difference between peoples through images, texts, and crafts.

From the Italian martyrdom frescoes of the first chapter, to the Armenian and Mongol worlds of the second, to the network of silk craftsmen in the third, and finally to the manuscripts and mutual othering of the fourth, this study has traced a path from West to East. This trajectory was not a successful missionary history—in fact, in the long run, the expansion of Christianity into the East ended almost in failure. Yet from another angle, it was a precious history of cultural contact, which for the first time allowed Europeans to perceive the Orient at such close range.

It must be constantly reminded, however, that the Orient at that time was not a “global South” waiting for conquest or conversion. It was itself a highly developed civilization, with independent and complex historical logics. The Oriental influences in Franciscan art should not be simply understood as “imports” or “transplants,” but as images of the Other that were continuously reconstructed in difference and imagination.

When faced with the Orient, eight hundred years ago Franciscan friars set foot upon Oriental lands, carrying the conviction of bringing all humanity to the Christian faith. Today, in the discourse of modern science, religion, and governance, when referring to the so-called “primitive” mentality of global peoples conquered and/or converted by Europe, the term “magic” is often employed. Magic would be erased or transformed into a charming spectacle of mystery and entertainment—an object of pleasure and exotic allure, a tempting object of the anthropology of Otherness, but certainly not of the viewers themselves. The magic of art and religion: is it only to provide us with a false fantasy, or is it a tool of political interest?

APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF ITALIAN SILK TEXTILES OF THE 13TH–14TH CENTURIES

Num.	Description	Time	Collection	Description o resource
1	Woven Silk	1200-1300	V&A Museum	A woven pattern in silk and gold thread; a bishop seated and wearing a pallium (cloak-like garment) and mitre (headgear) https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O118365/woven-silk-unknown/
2	The Veglia Altar Frontal	ca. 1330	V&A Museum	By Paolo Veneziano, or his workshop, for the Cathedral in Veglia, Croatia. Saint Querinus, patron of Veglia, and Saint Gaudentius, patron of neighboring Ossero; Saints Peter and Paul; Saint John the Evangelist; and Saint John the Baptist. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O118420/the-veglia-altar-frontal-altar-frontal-veneziano-paolo/
3	Woven Silk Velvet	ca. 1450 - ca. 1500	V&A Museum	Pomegranate motif https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O130054/woven-silk-velvet-unknown/#object-details
4	Burse	1335-45	V&A Museum	Red velvet, imported from Italy. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O15365/burse-unknown/
5	Apparel Set	1335-45	V&A Museum	Red velvet from Italy; ‘opus anglicanum’ (Latin for ‘English work’). Narrative scenes: the Annunciation to St Anne (the Virgin’s mother), the Birth of the Virgin, the Annunciation to the Virgin, the Nativity of Christ, and the Journey of the Magi. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O93206/apparel-set-unknown/
6	Cope of Benedict XI		Perugia, San Domenico.	Le stoffe di Cangrande. Lucca

7	Dalmatic (Tunicle), Mitre and Stole Fragments from the Vestments of Benedict XI		Perugia, San Domenico.	Le stoffe di Cangrande. Lucca
8	Buskins from the Vestments of Benedict XI		Perugia, San Domenico.	Made with a Tartar cloth; lampas weave, silk and gold thread. Le stoffe di Cangrande
9	Buskins from the Vestments of Benedict XI		Perugia, San Domenico.	Made with a Lucchese diasper. Le stoffe di Cangrande
10	Mitre from the Vestments of Benedict XI		Perugia, San Domenico	Le stoffe di Cangrande; From Arnolfo di Cambio, p. 176
11	Fabric Between the Horns of the Mitre of Bishop Oddone da Colonna		Urbino, Museo Diocesano Albani.	Chinese manufacture (late 13th or first half of the 14th century)
12	Chasuble (diasper) with Horizontally Opposed Eagles and Gazelles	Late 13th century	Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.	White on white, with heads, paws, and wings highlighted in gold. Fifteenth-century red stole with gold embroidery (detail). Lucca
13	Chasuble (diasper) with Confronting Peacocks and Gazelles (detail)	Early in the 14th century	Roma, Museo di Palazzo Venezia.	Heads, paws, and wings highlighted in silver. Lucca

14	Silk Fragment, light blue ground, gold weft, with light gray ornaments	Early in the 14th century	Firenze, Museo Nazionale	Confronting dogs; alternating stripes with medallions woven in gold. Lucca
15	Silk with the same motifs as plate 14	Early in the 14th century	Berlin, Ehem. Staatl. Museen.	Blue ground woven with gold; white and red ornaments. Lucca
16	Silk with gray-blue ground	14th century	Stralsund, Museum der Stadt.	Decorated with pelicans and panthers in wood-rose with gold and olive-green threads. White motifs. Lucca
17	Red wood-toned silk with figures brocaded in gold	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin, Ehem. Staatl. Museen.	Faces and hands grey-white. Palms and animals, light olive-green. Lucca.
19	Silver silk brocade	14th century	Berlin, Ehem. Staatl. Museen.	Originally a red ground, now faded. Palmette decorations, birds and dogs. Lucca
18	Sleeve of a dalmatic in silver brocade on a secure gray-blue silk ground	14th century	Stralsund, Museum der Stadt.	Lucca.
20	Altar frontal in silk and gold with double register of figures, beneath ogival and trilobed arches	Late 13th century	Anagni, Museo della Cattedrale.	Above, the Madonna and Saints. Below, the Crucifixion and stories from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul. Rome
21	Liturgical pouch embroidered in silk and gold, with the Flight into Egypt	Late 13th century	Anagni, Museo della Cattedrale.	Rome

23	From the Tomb of Cangrande della Scala	Before 1329	Verona, Museo Civico.	Green brocade with rhomboid panels and four types of golden palmettes on a silver field. The panels are joined by interlace knots, among fish, hares, birds, lions, and the recurring motif of the crescent moon.
24	From the Tomb of Cangrande della Scala. Cloth of gold brocade with Arabic inscriptions in parallel friezes alternating with lesser friezes	1323-1340	Verona, Museo Civico.	Double blue borders with dragons and pairs of ducks among rosettes. Laminar and parchment-like gold. China for Egypt, period of Muhammad al-Nasir.
25	From the Tomb of Cangrande della Scala	Before 1329	Verona, Museo Civico.	Fragment of an over-garment in blood-red silk brocaded with raised pomegranates, with lotus buds on a granulated gold field. Venice
26	Detail of an ivory linen alb or shirt with bands embroidered in gold with small designs with pelican figures	14th century	Viterbo, Capitolo del Duomo.	Venice
27	Gold brocade on red ground	14th century	Stralsund, Museum der Stadt.	Blue compartments. Venice
28	Pink-ground dalmatic with gold-woven vine scrolls and dragons	14th century	Halberstadt, Duomo.	Under Chinese influence. Venice.

29	Blue silk chasuble with palmettes and double feathers springing from a scroll, in silver metal	Early in the 14th century	Halberstadt, Duomo.	Venice.
30	Venetian tunicle brocaded in gold	Early in the 15th century	Lyon, Musée Historique des Tissus.	Venice.
31	Silk with pairs of eagles and lions	Early in the 15th century	Wien, Oesterreichisches Museum.	Venice
32	Pink-ground chasuble brocaded in gold and green with white highlights and parallel friezes of falcons alternating with foliage, dogs crouching on nests, flowers and leaves	15th century	Duomo of Halberstadt	Venice
33	Lateral part of a dalmatic	14th century	Stralsund, Museum der Stadt.	Silk with a faded red-brown ground. Grass-green ornaments, pelicans brocaded in gold, white flowers at the pelicans' feet.
34	Green silk cope	14th century	Torino, Museo Civico.	Garlands in golden-yellow silk, central motifs in gold. Palermo.
35	Brocade and embroidered altar frontal with stories from the life of the Virgin in the friezes	1366	Firenze. Museo degli Argenti.	Detail of the Coronation. Jacopo Cambi

36	Garment in bird-patterned drapery	14th century	Roma, Collezione Sangiorgi.	Lampas weave, silk and gold thread
37	Launched lampas and brocade in blue, white, sky blue and spun gold with small animals and Arabic inscriptions	First half of the 14th century	Modena, Museo Civico di Modena	
38	Striped Fabric	13th century	Liège	Italian textile influenced by Byzantine style From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
39	Brocade with Griffins	13th century	London	Roundel griffin motif. Italian textile influenced by Byzantine style From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
40	Brocade with Griffins	13th century	Bergen	Roundel lion motif. Italian textile influenced by Byzantine style From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
41	Brocade with Griffins	13th century	Berlin	Roundel eagle motif. Italian textile influenced by Byzantine style From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
42	Lion Brocade	13th century	Berlin,	From Halberstadt From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
43	Lion Fabric	13th century	Vatican	Byzantine style From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
44	Animal patterns in rhombi and polygons	13th century	Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum	Under Saracenic influence From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
45	Animal patterns in rhombi and polygons, brocade	13th century	Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum	Under Saracenic influence From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
46	Diasper with peacocks and griffins	13-14th century	Aachen Cathedral	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

47	Diasper with gazelles and eagles	13-14th century	Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
48	Fleur-de-lis pattern	13th century	Berlin	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
49	Fleur-de-lis pattern	13th century	Berlin	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
50	Floral pattern	13th century	Berlin	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
51	Fleur-de-lis and eagle motifs	13th century	Berlin	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
52	Double-headed eagle in roundels	13th century	Cologne Museum	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
53	Golden brocade with birds and qilin	13th century	Loire Valley, France	A fragment of a chasuble From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
54	Golden brocade with birds and beasts	13th century	Braunschweig	A fragment of a chasuble From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
55	Chalice cloth with double-headed eagle	13th century	Halberstadt Cathedral	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
56	Peacock pattern	13th century	London	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
57	Striped confronted-birds pattern	Early in the 13th century	Berlin or St. Trond.	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
58	Striped confronted-birds pattern	Early in the 13th century	Berlin or St. Trond.	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
59	Falconers and riders	Early in the 13th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
60	Castles and birds	Early in the 13th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
61	Parrot Pattern in Red and Green	First half of the 14th century	London	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

62	Basilisks and Gazelles	First half of the 14th century	Sens	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
63	Peacock and Griffin Pattern	ca. 1350	Danzig. Chasuble fragment	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
64	“Ad Agnos Dei” Diasper	14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
65	Fine Pattern Diasper	14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
66	Casula made by Brienon	Second half of the 14th century	Trésor de la Cathédrale de Sens?	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
67	Qilin Pattern Textile	First half of the 14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
68	Silk with Turtle and Duck Patterns	First half of the 14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
69	Chasuble (Kasel)	First half of the 14th century	Köln	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
70	Phoenix Pattern Dalmatic	First half of the 14th century	Halberstadt	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
71	Oblique Vine Pattern	14th century	Düsseldorf	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
72	Phoenix and Basilisks	14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
73	Striped Phoenix Brocade	14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
74	Leopard and Lotus-Palmette Pattern	14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
75	Chasuble with Qilin and Phoenix Patterns	14th century	Danzig	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

76	Qilin and Elephant Brocade Textile	14th century	Krefeld	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
77	Cranes and Lions Brocade	14th century	Stralsund	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
78	Crane Pattern Damask	14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
79	Silk with Paired Birds	13-14th century	Florence, Museo di Bargello Inv. 618	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
80	Phoenix Pattern Damask Textile	14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
81	Qilin and Dragon- Horse (Lungma) Brocade	14th century	Halberstadt	Lucca. Chinese influence. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
82	Phoenix and Dragon- Horse (Lungma) Brocade	14th century	London	Lucca. Chinese influence. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
83	Phoenix and Dragon- Horse (Lungma) Brocade	14th century	Danzig	Lucca. Chinese influence. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
84	Qilin and Mythical Beast Pattern	14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. Italian style. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
85	Phoenix and Qilin Pattern	14th century	Danzig	Lucca. Italian style. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
86	Eagles, Hounds and Qilin Pattern	14th century	Stralsund	Lucca. Italian style. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

87	Opposing Phoenix Vine Patterns	14th century	Berlin	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
88	Opposing Phoenix Vine Patterns	14th century	Krefeld	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
89	Lampas Silk Fragment with Paired Parrots, Gazelles and Palmette Ornaments	1275-1325	London. V&A Museum	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
90	Lotus-Vine Phoenix Brocade	14th century	Berlin	Venezia. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
91	Pomegranate Animal Pattern	14th century	Perugia, San Domenico	Lucca. On Pope Benedict XI's burial garments. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
92	Pomegranate Animal Pattern	14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
93	Pomegranate Animal Pattern	14th century	Wartburg	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
94	Pomegranate Animal Pattern	14th century	Nürnberg, German Museum	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
95	Phoenix Pattern	14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
96	Chasuble Brocade with Palmettes, Birds and Elephant-Headed Griffins	14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
97	Brocade with Castles and Phoenix	14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

98	Pomegranate Castle Pattern Brocade	14th century	Halberstadt	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
99	Castles, Griffins and Basilisks	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
100	Chasuble Brocade with Lotus Variants, Winged Dogs and Deer	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
101	Striped Brocade with Palmettes and Animals	Second half of the 14th century	London	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
102	Silver Brocade with Dogs, Dragons and Phoenix	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig and Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
103	Gothic Ship Pattern Brocade	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
104	Brocade with Monkeys, Dogs, Elephants and Pseudo-Arabic Inscriptions	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig, Chiesa di Santa Maria	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
105	Brocade with Parrots, Qilin, Dogs and Pseudo-Arabic Inscriptions	Second half of the 14th century	Stralsund	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

106	Asymmetrical Procession of Animals Brocade	Second half of the 14th century	Breslau	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
107	Brocade with Qilin and ? Pattern	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
108	Capricorn Pattern Brocade	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
109	Chasuble with Lion Pattern Brocade	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
110	Brocade with Phoenix, Lions and Script	Second half of the 14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
111	Brocade with Qilin and Radiating Clouds	Second half of the 14th century	Braunschweig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
112	Brocade with Deer on Rocks, Dogs and ?	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
113	Brocade with Phoenix, Qilin and Radiating Clouds	Second half of the 14th century	Düsseldorf	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
114	Brocade with Animal and Tree Motifs	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
115	Brocade with Phoenix, Dogs and ?	Second half of the 14th century	Krefeld	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
116	Brocade with Castles and Falcons	Second half of the 14th century	Halberstadt	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

117	Phoenix and Tree Pattern Brocade	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
118	Brocade with Huntress	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. Huntress, falcons, hounds and hares
119	Brocade with Huntress under Palm Tree	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
120	Brocade with Huntress by a Fountain	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
121	Queen of Courtly Love (Königin Minne)	Second half of the 14th century	Frankfurt	Lucca. Style echoes Northern Italian Castelli d'Amore frescoes
122	Annunciation Scene	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
123	Chormantel with Mary Magdalene	Second half of the 14th century	Danzig	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
124	Brocade with Angel Motifs	Second half of the 14th century	Berlin	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
125	Animal Pattern Brocade	End of the 14th century		Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
126	Variant Chasuble Brocade with Winged Elements instead of Birds	End of the 14th century	Danzig	From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei

127	Brocade with Birds and Fountain Bands	End of the 14th century		From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
128	Brocade with Birds and Fountain Bands	End of the 14th century		From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
129	Annunciation Scene	End of the 14th century	Danzig, Chiesa di Santa Maria	Lucca. From Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei
130	Parrot Cope	1225-1250	Vicenza, Museo diocesano Pietro G. Nonis	Sicilian Tiraz workshop. Bartolomeo di Breganze.
131	Deep Red and Orange Double-weave Brocade	1270-1350	Triveneto	Byzantine manufacture. Lamb with Greek cross staff
132	Chasuble of Boniface VIII, Cyprus Style Embroidery	13th century	Treasury of Anagni, Cattedrale di Santa Maria Annunziata	Rome. Textile gift by Pope Boniface VIII
133	Fragmentary Chasuble with Woven Orphrey Band	14th century	Cleveland Museum of Art	Exported to Germany. Chinese phoenix with pseudo-Kufic script
134	Silk Fragment	c. 1360s-1380s	Cleveland Museum of Art	
135	Silk Fragment	last quarter of the 14th century	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade fragment
136	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade with peonies and vines
137	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Lucca
138	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
139	Silk Fragment	1375-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
140	Brocaded Silk Fragment	1360-1390	Cleveland Museum of Art	

141	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	
142	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
143	Silk Fragment	1360-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
144	Exotic Gold-patterned Silk	1360-1400	Cleveland Museum of Art	Venice. Lampas. International style with mythical beasts
145	Silk with Dogs and Birds amid Vines	1350-1400	Cleveland Museum of Art	Palmette leaves adapted from Islamic silk. Dogs, birds and deer
146	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	
147	Silk with Dogs and Arabic Script in Swaying Bands	1370-1400	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
148	Silk Fragment	1350-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	Gold brocade
149	Silk Fragment	1360-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	
150	Silk and Gold Textile	14th century	Cleveland Museum of Art	
151	Cloth of Gold with Felines and Eagles	1360-1400	Cleveland Museum of Art	
152	Silk Fragment	1360-1399	Cleveland Museum of Art	
153	Silk Fragment with Scrolling Vines, Grapes and Birds	1325-1350	Cleveland Museum of Art	Italian staggered design
154	Textile Fragment with the Annunciation	1370-1400	Cleveland Museum of Art	Luxury silk with Annunciation scene
155	Lucchese Casula	14th century	Lanciano-Ortona	Embroidered with figures and pseudo-Kufic monogram
156	Pallium of Pope John XXI	1277	Viterbo	White silk embroidered with gold

157	Mitra	1200-1299	Verona	With Apostles and Christ, decorated stars and moons
158	Piviale of Saint Basso	13th century	San Benedetto del Tronto	Lucca
159	Shoes of Saint Basso	13th century	San Benedetto del Tronto	Venice
160	Orphrey Band of Saint Basso with Birds	13th century	San Benedetto del Tronto	Sicily
161	Green Chasuble with Peacocks and Gazelles	14th century	Diocese of Arezzo	Lucca
162	Green Stole with Peacocks and Gazelles	14th century	Diocese of Arezzo	Lucca
163	Green Burse with Peacocks and Gazelles	1300-1349	Diocese of Arezzo	Lucca
164	Cotton Brocade Chasuble	14th century	Diocese of Anagni-Alatri	Lazio. With angels supporting crosses
165	Stole	14th century	Diocese of Anagni-Alatri	Lazio. With angels supporting crosses
166	Altar Frontal	14th century	Diocese of Sorrento-Castellammare di Stabia	Southern Italy. Vines forming medallions with animals
167	Italian Brocade Textile	13th century	Metropolitan Museum of Art	—

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF SILK TERMINOLOGY IN CHINESE, ENGLISH, AND ITALIAN

English	Italian	Chinese	English Explanation
alb	camice	白色祭衣	A long white robe reaching the ankles, worn under chasubles.
antependium	paletot	祭坛前帷	Decorative textile or panel covering the front of the altar.
banner	stendardo	旗帜	Processional or decorative flag used in religious or civic ceremonies.
brocade	broccato	织锦 / 锦缎	A rich fabric, often with gold or silver threads creating raised decorative patterns.
burse	borsa corporale	圣体布包	A stiff square case used to hold the corporal cloth.
camoca / camuca	camoca / camuca	卡莫卡绸 / 卡穆卡绸	An expensive monochrome or multicolored silk, sometimes woven with gold threads in brocade patterns; originally produced in China, later also in Mongol territories; related to taffeta.
chalice veil	velo del calice	圣爵覆帕	A cloth covering the chalice during Mass.
chasuble	pianeta / casula	祭披	A large sleeveless vestment worn by priests at Mass or Eucharistic liturgy.
cloth	drappo	布料	General term for a piece of textile or fabric.
cope	piviale	肩斗篷	A large semicircular cloak worn during liturgical ceremonies.
corporal	corporale	圣布	A square linen cloth spread on the altar during Mass for placing chalice and host.
dalmatic	dalmatica	达尔马提卡 袍	A wide-sleeved liturgical vestment, usually worn by deacons in church ceremonies.

English	Italian	Chinese	English Explanation
de Tarsico	de Tarsico	塔尔苏斯布	Cloth from Tarsus (modern-day Turkey), usually made of silk, sometimes mixed with gold threads or decorative fibers; variants include de Tarsico / de Tars / de Tarze / de Tarsen.
diasper	diaspro	金银锦缎 / 织锦纹锦	A brocaded silk interwoven with gold or silver threads, decorated with geometric, vegetal, or religious patterns; name from Greek διάσπαρτος (“scattered” or “sprinkled”).
dossal	dossale	祭坛背帷	Decorative textile or panel hanging behind the altar.
humeral veil	velo omerale	肩帔	A long cloth worn around the shoulders during liturgical ceremonies (e.g., when handling the monstrance).
kilims	kilim	基里姆地毯	Flat-woven rugs without pile, handmade with geometric designs and bright colors, typical of Central Asia, Anatolia, and Persia.
lampas	lampasso	灯芯绸 / 锦缎	A figured fabric with a complex weaving technique, frequently used for sumptuous textiles.
mamluk silk	seta mamelucca	马穆鲁克丝绸	Fine silk produced in the Mamluk Sultanate, often with intricate geometric, floral, or Arabic calligraphic designs.
mitre	mitra	主教冠	A ceremonial headdress worn by bishops and high-ranking clergy.
nassic	nasicci	纳石矢布	A type of fabric with variant spellings in different texts (Nak, Nach, Nassic in English; nacchi, nachetti in Italian).
pall	palla	盖杯片	A square stiffened cloth placed over the chalice to protect it from dust or insects.

English	Italian	Chinese	English Explanation
pannus tarsicus	panni tartarici	鞞鞞布	Fabric of “Tartar” origin.
patterning	disegno tessile / lavorazione a motivi	提花 / 织纹	Decorative motifs created by weaving techniques (e.g. figured weaving, jacquard).
samite	samito	锦缎 / 花缎	A rich silk fabric, usually patterned, widely used in noble clothing and ecclesiastical vestments.
satin	raso	缎 / 缎纹	A smooth, shiny-surfaced textile, often used for luxurious garments and decoration.
stole	stola	司铎带	A long narrow silk band worn over the shoulders by priests.
surplice	cotta / surplice	白袍	A loose white outer vestment with wide sleeves worn by clergy.
tabby	tela	平纹	The simplest weaving structure, interlacing warp and weft alternately.
taffeta	taffetà	塔夫绸 / 平纹绸	A lightweight plain-woven fabric, usually of silk or synthetic fibers, smooth-surfaced with slight sheen and crisp texture; origin in Persia (from <i>taftah</i> , “to weave”).
tapestry	arazzo	挂毯	Woven wall-hanging used for decoration.
tiraz	tiraz	提拉兹织物	Luxurious textiles produced in Islamic court workshops, often inscribed with Arabic calligraphy.
tunic	tunica	长衣 / 长袍	A long garment common in early Christian and Roman times, also the basic undergarment for clergy.

English	Italian	Chinese	English Explanation
twill	saia	斜纹	A fabric weave characterized by diagonal rib patterns.
velvet	velluto	天鹅绒 / 丝绒	A luxury textile with a dense surface of short cut piles.
vestment	paramento	法衣 / 祭布	General term for liturgical vestments used in church ceremonies.
warp	ordito	经线	The vertical yarns in woven fabrics.
weft	trama	纬线	The horizontal yarns in woven fabrics.

Note: Chinese terminology is primarily based on the terminology adopted by the China National Silk Museum in Hangzhou. The museum's director, Zhao Feng, has employed these terms in his scholarly works, such as *Treasures of Weaving and Embroidery: An Illustrated History of Chinese Silk Art* (1999) and, in collaboration with Dieter Kuhn, *Chinese Silks* (2012). In addition to these sources, the present thesis further supplements its vocabulary by consulting the appendices of Zhao Feng's *Treasures of Weaving and Embroidery: An Illustrated History of Chinese Silk Art*; *Geschichte der Textilkunst*; and *Die textilen Künste. Von der Spätantike bis um 1500*.

APPENDIX 3: CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE OF THE FRANCISCANS AND THE MONGOLS

1202–1204: The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) plundered the capital of the Orthodox Byzantium—Constantinople—of the Catholic brethren. From 1096 to 1291, there were nine Crusades. The Seventh Crusade (1248–1254), and then in 1271 the Ninth Crusade, formed an alliance with the Persian Mongol regime, the Ilkhanate (founded by Hülegü), to attack the Muslim Egypt together.

1205: The conversion of Francis.

1209: St. Francis explicitly defined the ideal of holy poverty as the programmatic guiding spirit, and in the same year obtained Pope Innocent III's oral approval of his rule (*Regula non bullata*).

1215: Pope Innocent III (1160–1216) convened the Fourth Lateran Council (*Le Quatrième concile du Latran*) in the Lateran and promulgated a series of restrictive policies against the Jews. During his reign, the centralization of the Church reached its peak; papal power was stronger than imperial power. He practiced the famous theory that “the pope is the sun, and the emperor is the moon,” becoming the true lord of Europe.

1218–1221: The Fifth Crusade.

1219: St. Francis, accompanying the Fifth Crusade, after the fall of Damietta, attempted to convert the Egyptian Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil; painters used this subject to create the theme “St. Francis before the Sultan.”

1219–1225: The first western campaign of Genghis Khan (also known as the Mongol conquest of Khwarazm) began, led by Genghis Khan, conquering the countries of Central Asia. In 1220, they captured Samarkand, the capital of Khwarazm; its king fled westward, and Genghis Khan ordered Subutai and Jebe to pursue relentlessly, continuing west past the Caspian and Black Seas deep into Eastern Europe and other regions. The Mongols' western campaigns from the 1220s to the 1260s can be roughly divided into three phases: the first phase was Genghis Khan's western campaign (1219–1224); the second phase was the Eldest Son's campaign (1235–1241); the third phase was Hülegü's western campaign (1255–1260).

1220: Five minors were martyred in Marrakech, Morocco.

1220: A group of Franciscan missionaries preaching in Africa were killed; when the news reached Portugal, St. Anthony of Padua was moved and joined the Franciscan Order, preparing to go on distant missions. Later he was sent by the Order to preach in Africa, but because Anthony contracted a serious illness en route, he had to go to Sicily to recuperate. The abbot then discovered Anthony's skill in expounding Catholic doctrine and reassigned him to preach in northern Italy. Anthony was adept at exegesis; whenever he preached, the crowds were immense, and even Pope Gregory IX from the Papal States personally came to

hear him. In his later years, Anthony retired to Padua and devoted himself to promoting relief for the poor. On one journey, Anthony lodged in a count's castle; at night he prayed and chanted all night, and suddenly his room shone with light. The count rushed in and saw Anthony radiant, holding the Holy Child in his arms. Afterwards Anthony asked the count to keep this secret until his death. In early summer 1231, on the way back to Padua, he died at the Convent of St. Clare in Arcella (now part of Padua), at the age of 36. At the time of his death, Anthony was still hurrying to finish his catechetical writings. June 13 is the memorial day of St. Anthony of Lisbon each year. In the 2007 poll of the greatest Portuguese, he ranked 13th.

1221: Pope Honorius III (Honorius III, 1148–1227) endorsed St. Francis's intention and established administrative rules for the yet-to-be concretely organized Third Order of St. Francis.

1223: He obtained Pope Honorius III's written approval of his rule (*Regula bullata*), which was more lenient than the orally approved rule fourteen years earlier.

1225: St. Francis composed the "Canticle of the Creatures." This is one of the most direct representatives of St. Francis's theological thought. In the work, St. Francis praises the Creator and calls for love to be given to all things in the world. This is an important supplement to Christian doctrine. Jesus emphasized God's love for all people regardless of nation or race, whereas St. Francis went further, emphasizing the beauty of the Creator and praising all living beings in the universe.

1226: After Francis's death, two voices gradually formed within the Church: the Spirituels, who demanded strict observance of the 1223 Rule and the "Testament of St. Francis" (*Testamento di san Francesco*), and the Conventuals, who allowed the pope to interpret the Church more flexibly.

1227: Genghis Khan destroyed Western Xia; the local population plummeted to one percent of the original, the northwest region collapsed and became desert. In the same year he destroyed Western Xia, Genghis Khan died.

1227: Six Franciscan friars were killed in Ceuta, North Africa.

1227: Brother Elias sent seven friars from Tuscany to Morocco. They likewise preached to Muslims, were immediately captured, imprisoned, and eventually killed. A letter written from prison to Father Hugo of Genoa survived; in it, they regarded their own sufferings as an imitation of Christ's Passion.

1228: Pope Gregory IX (1170–1241) canonized St. Francis, who had died only two years earlier, and on the second day of the ceremony personally participated in the laying of the foundation for the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

1229: Thomas of Celano's "Life of St. Francis" was completed and confirmed by Pope Gregory IX on February 25, 1229. See "Early Documents," vol. 1, Thomas of Celano's "Vita Sancti Francisci," p. 172. Celano wrote three versions recounting the life and miracles of St. Francis: the First Life (*Vita prima*, 1228–29), the

Second Life (*Vita secunda*, 1244–47), and the “Treatise on Miracles” (*Tractatus de miraculis*, 1250–52).

1230: Gregory IX signed a papal bull declaring that the Franciscan constitution, centered on strict observance of holy poverty, did not bind the Franciscans with regard to artistic production. The legalization of property ownership by the Franciscans was confirmed, and the premise for artistic production was secured. From this bull as a turning point, it was officially permitted, even encouraged, in an official sense, for the Franciscans to sponsor painting, sculpture, architecture, manuscripts, and all works of art to propagate doctrine and conduct religious evangelization.

1231: St. Anthony died on the way back to Padua, at the Convent of St. Clare in Arcella (now part of Padua), at the age of 35.

1235: Ögedei Khan (1186–1241) resolved to inherit his grandfather’s ambition to expand territory and to campaign in Europe, sending Batu (1205–1255) to begin the second western campaign. The Mongols conducted three western campaigns in the early to mid-13th century: the first (1219–1225) led by Genghis Khan, conquering Central Asian states and in 1220 taking Samarkand, the capital of Khwarazm, then pressing west past the Caspian and Black Seas into Eastern Europe; the second (1235–1242), also called the Eldest Son’s campaign under Batu, in which Moscow fell and the Mongol army pushed further into the heart of Europe, attacking Central and Southern European countries; the third (1253–1260) led by Hülegü, who, after annihilating the state of the Assassins near the Caspian, continued westward to subdue Persia and the Middle East.

Autumn 1237: The Mongol army crossed the Volga River.

Spring 1238: The Mongols invaded the various Rus’ principalities.

1240: The Mongol army again besieged and took Kiev, continuing west into Central European cities.

Between 1240 and 1241: Poland and Hungary fell successively; the Mongol army crossed the Danube, pressing toward Austria, Italy, and other places.

1241: Ögedei died; internal fierce struggles for power broke out, and the western campaign was forced to stop.

1243–1254: The pontificate of Innocent IV. From this pope onward, diplomacy began between the Mongols and Rome, with the exchange of gifts. The Curia considered this because it realized that both had a common enemy—the Muslims.

June 25, 1243: After a painful conclave, the cardinals elected Innocent IV. Twenty-six days later, the pope wrote to the Patriarch of Aquileia in northern Italy, instructing him to call upon “the Christian faithful of Germany” to take up the Crusader’s cross and defend Hungary, already grievously struck. Emperor Frederick II, who was also King of Germany, did not support such a crusade and soon quarreled

fiercely with the pope. Although Innocent's Mongol crusade came to nothing, the new pope was determined to meet the Tartar threat.

June 26–July 17, 1245: Innocent IV (1195–1254) convened the First Council of Lyon. The primary purpose of this council was to deliberate on how to handle the power struggle between the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), whose growing power was threatening the papacy. Innocent IV called for the deposition of this King of the Romans and excommunicated him, expelling him from Rome. At the same time, the council helped display the supreme authority of the pope and reinvigorate the morale of the Church. About 250 bishops from Italy, France, Spain, England, and Germany attended this great Christian assembly. On June 28, when Pope Innocent IV preached in the Church of St. John, he mentioned his “five sorrows,” corresponding to the “five holy wounds” received by Jesus in the Passion: first, the inhuman ravages of the Tartars on Hungary and other regions; second, the threat to the unity of the Church posed by the schismatics of the Greek Church; third, the heresies and corruption within the Christian community; fourth, the threat to the Holy Land by the Saracens; fifth, the conflict between the Church and the emperor.

1245: During the Council of Lyon (concilio di Lione), the Franciscan friar Giovanni di Pian del Carpine (ca. 1182–1252) set out as Innocent IV's envoy, traveling through the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Poland, and Kievan Rus', visiting Güyük Khan; upon returning he wrote the *Historia Mongalorum* (The Mongol Mission). He witnessed Güyük's election on August 24, 1246, and left a vivid description: “At the time of his election, he was about forty, at most forty-five. He was of medium stature, very intelligent, exceedingly shrewd, and of extremely serious and dignified bearing. He was never seen to laugh loudly or to seek pleasure.” In the end, he failed to persuade Güyük to convert to Catholicism. After receiving Güyük's reply, he left the Mongol steppe on November 13, 1246, set out westward on the return, passed by Batu's camp on the lower Volga, returned westward, reached Batu's camp again on September 5, 1247, and then returned via Kiev to the West. In 1247, after they returned to the papal court, they submitted the letter from Güyük demanding the submission of the pope and all Western princes.

After the Council of Lyon, Innocent IV decided to send the first group of missionaries formally to the Mongols. Two Dominican missionaries—Ascelin de Lombardie (?–1247) and André de Longjumeau (1200–1271)—set out successively toward the northern steppe.

March 1245: The Dominican friar Ascelin de Lombardie departed Lyon with Simon of Tournai (1130–1201) and three other friars. On May 24, 1247, they reached the camp of Baiju, the Ilkhanid military commander. Not only did Ascelin fail to obtain a positive response from the khan, but by refusing to perform the act of submission he angered the Mongols, and for a time he fell into great peril. Finally, with the help of the high Mongol official Aljigiday, who wished to establish cooperation with Western Christians, he returned safely westward.

Another Dominican missionary, André de Longjumeau, set out for the East on March 25, 1245 from Lyon, passing through Antioch, Aleppo, and Mosul, and in 1246 reached Tabriz. It is said that on the journey he met some Nestorian leaders and the patriarch of the Syrian Jacobite Church. In 1248, when he returned to the Curia, he brought back several letters, among which the two most famous were written respectively by the Nestorian Rabban Šauma and the Jacobite (Ignatius II) Patriarch of Antioch. In their letters, the two confirmed their Christian faith and expressed the hope for the union of the Eastern and Western Churches.

1250: After continuous efforts, the Franciscans obtained approval from Innocent IV, receiving the faculty to preside over funerals.

1251–1259: Möngke Khan reigned.

1252: Florence officially issued the gold florin, which became the most important international currency of the time. The massive accumulation of wealth was the foundation for large-scale artistic creation; a group of bankers and merchants became patrons of the arts.

1253–1255: Louis IX (Luigi IX) sent the Frenchman/Franciscan friar Guillaume de Rubruck (Guillaume de Roubrouk, 1215–1270), who wrote the *Viaggio nell'impero dei Mongoli / Itinerarium*.

1256: Hülegü Khan invaded Persia and established the Ilkhanate. After entering Iran, the Mongols ruled Iran from 1256 to 1335 for a total of 79 years. The Mongols and their Persian administrators revived the idea of Iran's political and cultural autonomy and restored Iran's connections with the Central Asian world, thereby laying the foundation for Iran's potential and talents to be exerted. The common enemy, the Egyptian Mamluks, engendered political and commercial relations between the Iranian government (especially the Ilkhanate) and Italy.

1258: The Mongols, together with Georgia and Armenia, formed an alliance and conquered Damascus; this was the reason for the fervor toward the eastern lands. But the Mongol army was checked by the Mamluks in Galilee; their general was captured and beheaded, and they soon had to retreat.

1258: The Mongols sacked Baghdad (Iraq / Ilkhanate) for a whole week.

1260–1294: Khubilai Khan (Yuan Shizu, brother of Möngke & his successor) reigned; the mother of his two sons / Töregene's legitimate wife, Sorghaghtani Beki, wielded some influence and was a Nestorian Christian.

1269: The Talas Alliance. The major Mongol khanates, disdaining Khubilai's seizure of the throne, became completely independent; Khubilai had neither the intention nor the power to subdue them. In spring of Zhiyuan 6 (1269), the Golden Horde (Qipchaq Khanate), the Chagatai Khanate, and the Ögedeid Khanate signed a pact, swearing to uphold Mongol tradition and oppose the tradition-betraying Khubilai, and they demarcated their spheres of influence. This is the famous "Talas Alliance," marking the split of the Great Mongol Empire in world history. Later, in Dade 8 (1304), under Emperor Chengzong of Yuan, the khanates jointly recognized the

Yuan dynasty's nominal suzerainty. In Zhida 3 (1310), under Emperor Wuzong, the Yuan and the Chagatai Khanate jointly destroyed and divided the Ögedeid Khanate.

In addition, there were many of our Order's members such as Andrea di Longjumeau and Ascelino da Cremona, and the chronicler Simone di San Quintino, but their efforts ended in failure.

1270: A Tibetan monk, Phags-pa (who had converted Khubilai's wife Chabi to Buddhism), invented the Phags-pa script.

1271: Khubilai (1215–1294) changed the state name to “Great Yuan,” establishing the Yuan dynasty, and in the following year moved the capital from Karakorum to Khanbaliq.

1271: Marco Polo and his uncles set out for China and, in 1275, arrived at the Yuan Upper Capital (Shangdu). In 1292, Marco Polo, his father, and his uncle, commissioned by Khubilai, departed from Quanzhou by sea escorting the Mongol princess Kōköchin to the Ilkhanate for marriage; in 1295, Marco Polo returned to Europe.

May 7 to July 17, 1274: Pope Gregory X (1271–1276) convened the Second Council of Lyon. At that time, Abaqa Khan sent a group of Tartar envoys to Lyon to meet the pope and Edward I. The mission comprised six members, including several Tartars, the Dominican friar David who resided in the Ilkhanate, a notary named Richard, and a translator. They brought Abaqa's letter to the pope, which mentioned plans for an alliance against the Saracens. There were also rumors that the son of Prester John had miraculously persuaded these Tartars to convert to Christianity and that they would be baptized at this council.

1276: Khubilai's Mongol army captured Hangzhou, the last capital of the Southern Song; thus it fell.

1278: Nicholas III sent five Franciscan friars to the East—Gerard de Prato, Antoine de Parme, Jean de Saint-Agathe, André de Florence, and Matthieu d'Arezzo. In the late 13th century, news circulated in Iran and Georgia that the new emperor, under the guidance of his Nestorian mother Sorghaghtani, had followed Christianity and had been baptized in 1276 or 1277. This rumor greatly encouraged Pope Nicholas III (1225–1280), who immediately decided to send five Franciscan friars to the East. The friars carried letters from the pope to Abaqa Khan and Khubilai Khan, in which the pope congratulated the khan on his conversion and introduced the basic beliefs of Christianity. The missionaries met Abaqa Khan in 1278 and persuaded him to convert to Christianity.

1279: Nicholas III (reigned 1277–1280, born Giovanni Gaetano Orsini) issued a bull named “Exiit qui seminat” (He that soweth went forth) as a compromise. The papal bull was written mainly on the advice of the Minister General Girolamo d'Ascoli (who, for his contributions, was created a cardinal). It adopted Bonaventure's earlier description. He distinguished between the ideal of the Franciscans'

complete non-possession and the reality of the Order's "moderate use" of property received by the Order. The bull declared that material wealth enabled the Franciscans to fulfill their mission; from then on, all wealth and property obtained by the Franciscans "belonged" to the pope, but the pope ordered the Franciscans to use these properties moderately to carry out their mission of preaching and conversion. If simple material goods such as food and shelter were not used, this constituted disobedience, which in the eyes of the papal hierarchy was the greater sin. This compromise sowed the seeds of the Spirituals' resistance.

1279: The Southern Song collapsed; at this time the Yuan dynasty had already been established.

1281: Abaqa Khan died; his brother Ahmed Tekuder (1247–1284) succeeded. At birth he had been baptized a Nestorian Christian, but he soon converted to Islam. During his rule (1282–1284), Christians in the Ilkhanate suffered religious persecution. However, Abaqa's son Arghun (1250–1291) overthrew his uncle and succeeded as the Ilkhanid ruler. Under his rule, the Christian communities of the Ilkhanate revived. Arghun, son of Abaqa, though himself a Buddhist, maintained a friendly attitude toward Christianity like his father. Likewise, to forge an alliance with the Crusaders to conquer the Saracens in the Near East, in 1285 Arghun sent the Nestorian Christian Rabban Şauma to lead a mission to Europe to meet the pope and kings. This famous mission in history passed through Rome, Paris, Bordeaux, and other places, receiving the Eucharist before the pope and bishops. After the envoys returned, it is said that Arghun ordered Rabban Şauma to baptize his own son, giving him the Christian name Nicholas, to show respect for the pope. At the same time he wrote to the pope promising that when Jerusalem was retaken, he himself would be baptized in the Holy Land.

1282: The Sicilian Vespers; an uprising broke out locally, Sicily was seized by the Aragonese, and the Angevin dynasty continued to rule Naples for the next century and a half.

April 3, 1287: Pope Honorius IV died; Cardinal Girolamo d'Ascoli went to St. Peter's to meet with Rabban Şauma and Mark.

1287: Rabban Şauma visited Philip IV of France, Edward I of England in Bordeaux, and Nicholas IV in Rome.

1288 (some say 1289): The Franciscan Giovanni da Montecorvino was sent to China, establishing two ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the East: *Tartaria aquilonaris* (including the Golden Horde and the regions north of the Caucasus) and *Tartaria orientalis* (Persia, Azerbaijan, and Greater Armenia). It is said that Father Montecorvino went to the Ilkhanate as a Franciscan missionary in the early 1280s and was well-tested in diplomacy. For nearly two years before going to China, Father Giovanni likely received instruction in the Mongol court's language and customs in Persia, possibly tutored personally by Mark and Rabban Şauma, although this is only conjecture.

- 1288: The first Franciscan to become pope, Nicholas IV, came fully to control the Curia; under his governance, Assisi and Rome, the center of Christendom, were linked more closely. Nicholas IV launched bold artistic patronage in the two cities of Rome and Assisi.
- 1289: Refusing Nicholas IV's nomination, the annual chapter of the Franciscans elected the Spiritual Raymond Geoffroi as their Minister General. Upon taking office, the first thing he did was to promote Pierre Jean Olivi (whose writings distinguished use/possession). Later, he convened a provincial chapter in the Marches, where he reviewed cases of friars imprisoned for disobedience. When he heard that their "crimes" were merely attempts to keep the Rule, he wept; afterwards he sent several condemned Spiritual friars to Armenia, where King Hetum II was very interested in Franciscan missionary assistance.
- 1291: Arghun (who succeeded as the fourth ruler of the Ilkhanate, reigned 1284–1291); his son Ghazan succeeded, abandoning Buddhism and turning to Sunni Islam.
- 1291–1345: After Muslims captured Acre, the pope imposed sanctions on the Egyptian Mamluks until 1345.
- 1292: Nicholas IV died; the Franciscan Order was deeply divided. Boniface VIII appointed Geoffroi as Bishop of Padua; Geoffroi declined on grounds of incompetence; Boniface then deposed him from the office of Minister General of the Franciscans and appointed Giovanni da Morrovalle as the new General Minister. In autumn 1293, Montecorvino reached Zaytun (modern Quanzhou) on the southern coast of China, when Khubilai was gravely ill in Dadu (Beijing). Since the journey to the capital took another three months, Giovanni likely had no chance to deliver letters of introduction to the old khan, who died on February 18, 1294. In fact, some of the difficulties reported by Giovanni in his letters to the Church can be attributed to the court turmoil surrounding Khubilai's death and the succession of his heir Temür (Emperor Chengzong). Power struggles among courtiers were intense, and the newly arrived Father Giovanni found himself competing with high-ranking Nestorian Christians at court for legitimacy.
- July to December 1294: The pontificate of Celestine V. Celestine V was originally a monk and hermit, founder of the Celestine branch of the Benedictines. Before his election, the conclave had been deadlocked for two years; he became pope as an unwitting compromise candidate. He was deceived by Boniface VIII into believing that after resigning he could leave Naples and return to Abruzzi, but in fact he was confined by Boniface VIII on a hill in Ferentino (now Campagna), where he died two years later. A protector of the Franciscans.
- 1294–1304: The reign of Boniface VIII. His birth name was Benedetto Caetani. He alienated the Colonna family, supporters of the Franciscans in Rome, arousing the Franciscans' hatred. In 1296 he clashed with King Philip IV of France—royal versus papal power. He helped his own family, especially his nephew Cardinal Stefaneschi, in ecclesiastical career. This Cardinal Stefaneschi was a scholar, a

protector of the Franciscans, a devotee of Pope Celestine, and the wealthy grandson of Pope Nicholas III.

1294–1304: The papal court moved from Rome to Avignon.

1296: Giovanni da Murro became the Franciscan General Cardinal and began directing the creation of the “Life of St. Francis” cycle on the lowest level of the Upper Church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

1296: Shortly after the imprisoned Celestine V’s death, the papal treasury suffered the first raid. The Colonna family then openly opposed Boniface VIII; their hatred reached a peak in May 1297 with the hijacking of the papal treasure convoy. Whether the lost treasures were recovered is unknown, but Boniface VIII deposed two Colonna cardinals and expelled them from the Church, while forbidding the entire family from enjoying the abundant indulgences he had planned for his greatest project—the Jubilee of 1300.

1299: Giovanni da Montecorvino built the first church in Beijing. Franciscan missionary activity in China entered its most active phase.

From the late 13th century to the early 15th century, a new crisis emerged between the Mongols and the Mamluks ↓

1299: The Ilkhanid khan Ghazan, together with Armenian and Georgian allies, conquered Damascus. But this was only a groundless hope, for in 1303, as the Mongols retreated back to Persia/Ilkhanate, the invasion ended.

1300: Pope Boniface VIII planned to grant special indulgences to all Christian faithful this year and organized them to make pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Rome (Jubilee). A German chronicle records that people saw Tartars from distant China participating in the celebrations [a Mongol horseman—undoubtedly drawn from contemporary figures in the Roman processional scroll prior to the Jubilee—pays homage in Giotto’s altar painting for the Martyrdom of St. Peter]. The decoration works of the Upper Church in Assisi also fell into a period of stagnation. The papal court moved to Avignon, and ecclesiastical patronage ceased—only a small part of the reason for the artistic decline in Assisi in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. For decades the Franciscans had struggled over the issue of poverty; now their private doctrinal disputes erupted in public. During his brief reign, Pope Celestine V had openly encouraged a small group of iconodules and ascetics within the Franciscans—the Spirituals—to confront publicly and try to draw a clear line with the Conventuals, who made up a larger proportion of the Order. All Christian Europe watched the Franciscans’ struggle over the meaning of “not to own property.”

1300: One of the envoys who came to celebrate the Jubilee was a man named Guicciardi de’ Bastardi, representing the Mongol Ilkhanate, accompanied by one hundred people dressed in “Tartar” attire.

1302: Boniface VIII issued the papal bull *Unam Sanctam*.

1303: The Franciscan Arnold of Cologne reached Beijing.

September 1303: Just as Boniface VIII was preparing to excommunicate the king, unexpectedly he was attacked at his summer palace in Anagni on the outskirts of Rome; Boniface was seized by a marshal sent by King Philip (Philip IV) to Italy to arrest him. In a strange twist of fate, the once formidable Boniface VIII suddenly became like the pitiable Celestine—forcibly detained and powerless to save himself. After Boniface VIII, the papal power declined rapidly.

October 1303 to July 1304: The pontificate of Benedict XI; a number of our Order's friars. Born Niccolò Boccasini, he died of dysentery in Perugia in July 1304 (the Curia moved to Perugia in May).

May 1304: The Curia moved from Perugia to Avignon. Until 1376, the Curia remained at Avignon, known as the "Babylonian Captivity," like the Israelites' seventy-year captivity in the Old Testament. Seven successive popes served, all French.

November 1305 to April 1314: The pontificate of Clement V; among the cardinals, the pro-French Archbishop of Bordeaux, Bertrand de Got.

1307: Emperor Chengzong Temür of the Yuan died (not Tamerlane), the second emperor of the Yuan dynasty and the sixth Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, grandson of Khubilai. Emperor Wuzong Khaishan succeeded; by 1311, at Khaishan's death, the Yuan dynasty had fallen into a severe financial crisis.

1308: A great fire destroyed the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran (San Giovanni in Laterano), obliterating the medieval arts of the time of Nicholas IV, which Dante called the "wonder of the age."

1308: With the support of Clement V, the Count of Luxembourg of Germany became Henry VII of the Holy Roman Empire and in 1312 was crowned in Rome. The political situation throughout Italy immediately fell into turmoil, reigniting the long-standing conflict between the Guelfs (supporters of the pope) and the Ghibellines (supporters of imperial power). The Hohenstaufen intervention in northern Italy began centuries earlier with the Norman invasion of Sicily. By the mid-13th century, imperial influence and intervention had spread to many continental regions, triggering the famous power struggle.

September 1309: Clement V established the papal court in Avignon (1309–1378). The Avignon Papacy, also called the "Captivity of Avignon," refers to the period when the Holy See moved to Avignon, France (then a territory of the Kingdom of Arles under the Holy Roman Empire). During this time, seven popes and most cardinals were French. It is also called the period of Babylonian Captivity.

November 1312: Clement V issued *Exivi de Paradiso*, attempting to bridge the conflict between the Spirituals and the Conventuals to repair the internal division of the Franciscans, but the split within the Order was too deep to mend. The Franciscans began to yield to internal and external pressures; many spiritual leaders withdrew from Europe by undertaking missions to the East.

1312: Clement V ordered Cardinal Gentile da Montefiore to speed up packing and transport. Cardinal Gentile had just finished a difficult mission in Hungary and was ordered to go directly to Perugia to take charge of the entire treasure transport. As the cardinal's convoy went north, Henry of Luxembourg was heading to Rome, which heightened the struggle between papal and imperial factions across the peninsula. Nevertheless, Montefiore's transport team safely reached Lucca, and the pope's treasures were temporarily stored in the sacristy of San Frediano.

1313: Cardinal Montefiore died en route to Avignon; the treasures stored in the sacristy of San Frediano were looted by the imperial faction.

1313: Henry VII fell in battle; imperial succession again fell into dispute.

1313: Reinforcements of the Franciscans arrived; Montecorvino was able to expand missionary work to the southern coastal cities of Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou. Montecorvino served as Archbishop of Beijing; Fra Gerardus was sent to Quanzhou as Archbishop of Quanzhou.

Spring 1314: Pope Clement V died at the age of 50; six months later, the Minister General of the Franciscans also died. For two years, neither position was filled, giving zealots the opportunity (did the Spirituals thus flourish?).

August 7, 1316: John XXII (Giovanni XXII, 1316–1334, born Jacques Duèse) succeeded as the new pope.

1317: John XXII chose to support the Conventuals and denounced the Spirituals as heretics. The pope burned extreme Spirituals at the stake; the harsh policy led to the decline of this faction. About half a century later, a milder branch within the Franciscan Order—the Observants—emerged and coexisted peacefully with the Conventuals. The missionary style and theoretical outlook of the Observants were neither humanist nor scholastic: it was mainly aimed at reforming social and moral behavior.

May 1318: Five friars who refused to obey the instructions of the Minister General, Father Michele, were burned to death in Marseille. This was a turning point in the relationship between the Order and the Curia; both Conventuals and Spirituals bore resentment against John XXII. At the same time, John XXII was also suspicious of the Franciscans' missions in the East (a precious tradition of the Order).

From 1318: All missionary jurisdictions in Baghdad, Mumbai, and Constantinople were to be administered by the Dominicans, with the center in Sultaniyya, an important Muslim hub on the trade routes of modern Iran. This was a major shift in papal policy, marking the end of the Franciscans' near-century hegemony in the East.

1318: The Bishop of Quanzhou, Fra Gerardus, died; Fra Peregrino succeeded.

May 7, 1318: The Inquisition of Marseille burned four Franciscan friars.

1319: In Beijing, Father Andreas joined Father Peregrino. Peregrino presided over the main Franciscan seat in Quanzhou, while Andreas built another Franciscan seat

outside the city; because the land used originally belonged to Buddhists, friction arose.

1319: Ghibelline troops from Perugia broke into the sacristy of the Upper Church of the Basilica in Assisi and robbed many treasures. Most of the stolen items were quickly pawned or sold in Spoleto and Florence, and the proceeds were used to pay for further fighting against the papal guards. Some of the finest objects ultimately fell into the hands of the raiders, including Muzzio. In the same year, four hundred Guelfs in Spoleto were rounded up and dragged to the stage of the Roman theater in the central square, where their throats were cut and their bodies thrown into a great pyre.

1320: John XXII demanded that the bishops of Catania and Soana return important fragments of the True Cross and some other relics, all of which came from the stolen treasures of San Frediano in Lucca. Even by 1325—twelve full years after the plunder—the pope was still following leads and writing to demand the return of St. Peter’s desecrated relics, but by then that portion of the treasure was irretrievably lost. Whether any important parts of the ancient manuscripts could be sent to Avignon in response to the pope’s written orders is doubtful.

1320–1328: Equivalent to the reign of Emperor Taiding; Oderic resided in the Yuan dynasty. Oderic was a Franciscan friar, ordered by the Curia to go to the Yuan to preach. Before Oderic came to China, Marco Polo’s book had already circulated in Europe. Before setting out, Oderic likely had read or knew of the contents of Marco Polo’s book.

From 1321 (why?): Relations between John XXII and Minister General Michele deteriorated. The pope intended to use the disobedience of the Spirituals to curb the Franciscans’ gradual growth and broad influence.

1322: Four Franciscan friars were killed by Muslims at Tana near Mumbai; the response at the time was to glorify them as holy martyrs. Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted them as martyrs in frescoes in the churches of Siena.

1322: John XXII appointed Michele da Cesena (1316–1328) as Minister General of the Franciscans; this friar opposed the claims of the Spirituals. In the same year, John XXII issued the constitutions *Sancta Romana* and *Gloriosam Ecclesiam* (Giovanni XXII), considering the reasonableness of the Franciscan ideal of moderate poverty: “Great is poverty; greater still is chastity; but the greatest good of all is obedience if it is strictly kept.” Due to persecution, the Spiritual leaders Ubertino da Casale and Angelo Clareno had to leave the Order.

1322: Father Peregrino died; Father Andreas, persuaded by Montecorvino, succeeded as Bishop of Quanzhou. In the same year, a Franciscan named Odorico da Pordenone visited him; Odorico traveled to many places in China and, upon returning to Italy around 1330, wrote of his experiences in the “Travels of Odoric” (*Itinerarium*).

1323: Emperor Taiding ascended the throne. During his reign there were no great political changes; the state was generally stable, but the Yuan entered a troubled season. In 1328, Yesün Temür died in Shangdu at age 36; after his death, a struggle for the throne erupted.

1333: The Curia continued to pressure the Eastern dioceses, including Tabriz; twelve “Spiritual” friars were expelled from Tabriz.

1323: John XXII abolished the provisions of Pope Nicholas III’s 1279 bull *Exiit qui seminat*, which stipulated that the Franciscans, whether as individuals, convents, or as an Order, did not own any property; only the Roman Curia owned all their properties, then administered by procurators. John XXII upheld as orthodox the theory of Christ and the apostles’ absolute poverty (that Christ possessed no property), which had been condemned by the Inquisition as heresy; whereas the Franciscans believed that Christ possessed property of his own, which was one of the Order’s basic doctrines.

By 1325: The majority of Franciscans had declared obedience to the pope; only a very few continued to fight, and the Franciscans basically “returned to orthodoxy.”

1327: John XXII invited Father Michele to Avignon to monitor his enemy—Louis of Bavaria, a staunch supporter of the Spirituals—who was advancing through Italy toward Rome. Although Michele was unconnected to these political events, the increasingly paranoid pope suspected disloyalty in the Minister General and sympathy for the empire, and soon turned his invitation to visit the papal court into Michele’s actual imprisonment; he, together with three other suspicious members of the Order—Bonagrazia da Bergamo, Francesco d’Ascoli, and the English friar William of Ockham—was imprisoned.

1328: Louis of Bavaria entered Rome and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor.

April 1328: Louis of Bavaria deposed John XXII (Jacques de Cahors) and declared the Spiritual Nicholas V (?) pope, reappointing Michele da Cesena as Minister General.

1328: Montecorvino died. News of Father Giovanni’s death reached the West through a report (ca. 1330) by the Franciscan Giovanni da Cora. But until 1333, when news of his death reached Avignon, his successor Nicola Parigi had not reached Beijing.

1335: The Ilkhanate split and disintegrated; the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia lost its ally.

Around 1340: Political and military developments in Central Asia are thought to have led to the collapse of the “Pax Mongolica.”

1334: Benedict XII was elected pope (1334–1342), the twelfth pope and the third of the Avignon Papacy. During his reign he maintained peace with Louis IV and had good relations with the Franciscans.

1336: Benedict XII formulated new statutes for the Franciscans, detailing their daily life (mainly modeled on the Cistercian way). Of the Franciscan great ideals—poverty, preaching, and helping the poor—little or nothing was said, as the basic

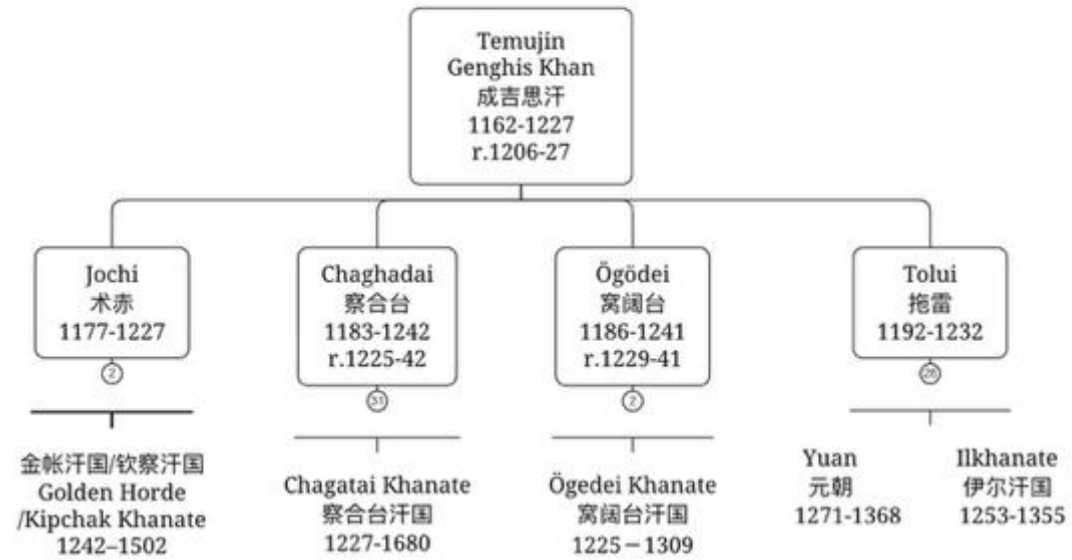
assumption was that the friars would spend most of their time in the monastery, dedicating themselves to activities suitable for those far from the world.

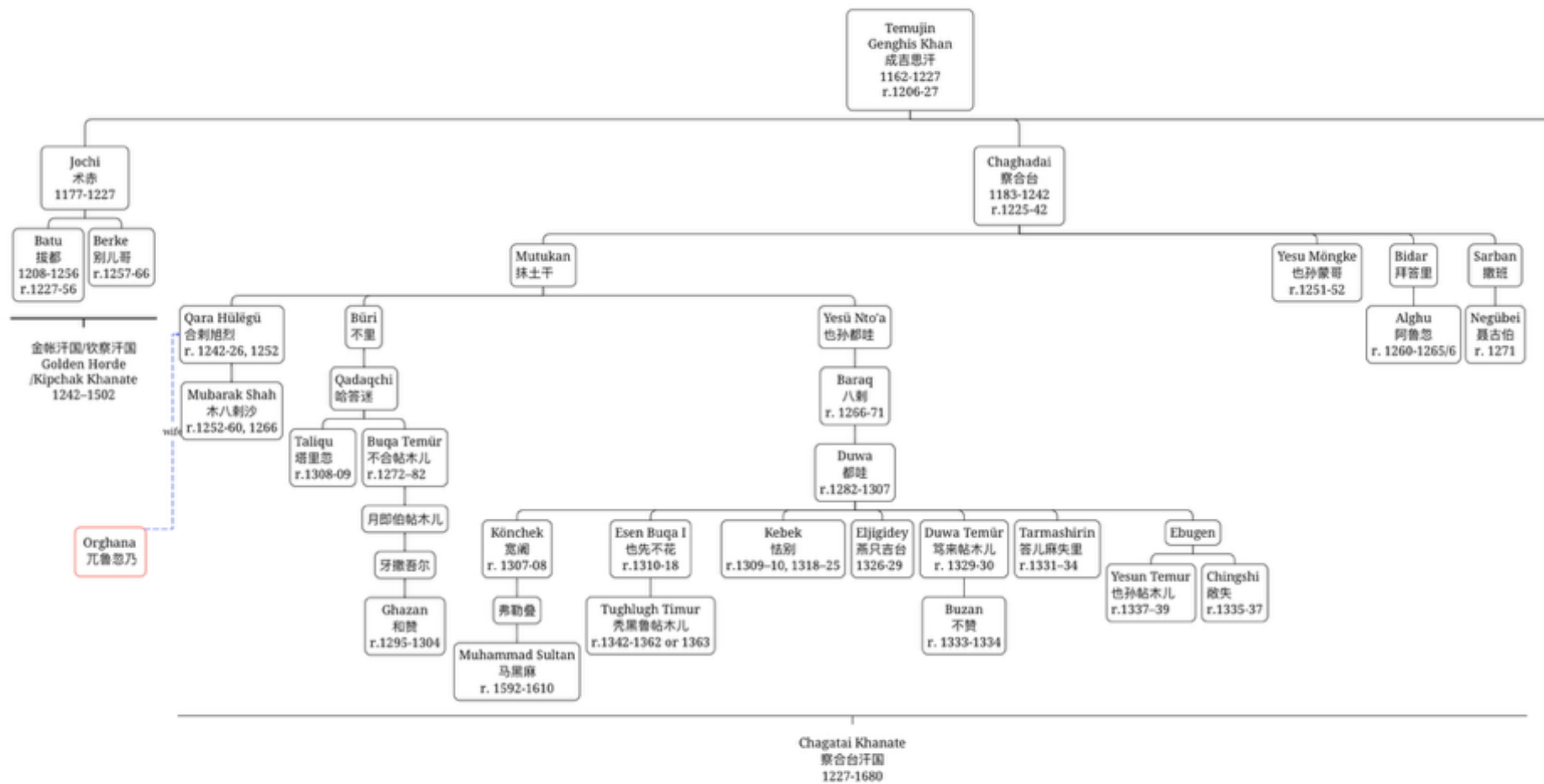
- 1337: The almost paralyzed Order was summoned to hold the annual chapter not in Assisi but in Cahors, France. This chapter was led by a despised Minister General personally chosen by their old nemesis, Pope John XXII. The Spirituals' strength was exhausted, the leadership alienated and cynical, and the once powerful and visionary Lesser Brothers of the Franciscan Order retreated from the world stage.
- 1338: A team of sixteen people (a Genoese Andolo da Savignone, a merchant from Beijing, and fifteen Alani Christians, the hereditary guards of the Great Mongol Khan whose tribe had long supported Montecorvino's mission) arrived in Avignon, bringing a letter to the pope (????).
- 1339: The Spanish Franciscan Pasquale di Vittoria was martyred while preaching, at Almaliq. At that time Almaliq was a transit station between the Persian khanate and China.
- 1342: Pope Benedict XII quickly responded to the requests in the 1338 letter. To make relations with the Franciscans more harmonious, he chose one of the Franciscans, Fra Giovanni de' Marignolli, to lead companions to China. The pope presented the companions with generous gifts, including authorizing them to purchase the best horses at the emperor's request, and to buy a magnificent crystal vase in Venice, then sent them overland to China. After great hardship, Marignolli's entourage arrived in Beijing in 1342.
- 1345: The pope ceased sanctions against the Mamluks; Italian merchants remaining in the Levant were forced to expand their business scope to other parts of Asia. During the Ilkhanid rule in Iran, because of conflicts with the Egyptian rulers, Venetian merchants shifted their activity center from Egypt to Iran, especially Tabriz, acting as commercial intermediaries between Asia and Europe, exchanging Chinese and Indian goods (including Iranian-produced textiles) for Italian (or other European) manufactures.
- 1346: The Franciscan pilgrim Niccolò da Poggibonsi set out on his journey, providing us with a detailed fresco-like depiction of the situation in the Holy Land and of Franciscan settlements there. The pilgrim's account contains the stages of his travel, descriptions of the churches he encountered, and a list of indulgences.
- 1348: Marignolli left China. Giovanni de' Marignolli was the successor of Giovanni da Montecorvino in Khanbaliq (Beijing).
- 1348–1368: The Han Chinese ultimately could not endure the brutal rule of the Mongol rulers and rose in resistance. Over the following twenty years, regional separatist powers and warlords engaged in constant warfare; the Yuan state power declined sharply, and the Mongol rulers were powerless. In 1368, the Mongols fled north, and the Mongol regime collapsed.
- 1348–1363: The Black Death spread across Europe and the Ming dynasty's isolationism (isolationist Ming).

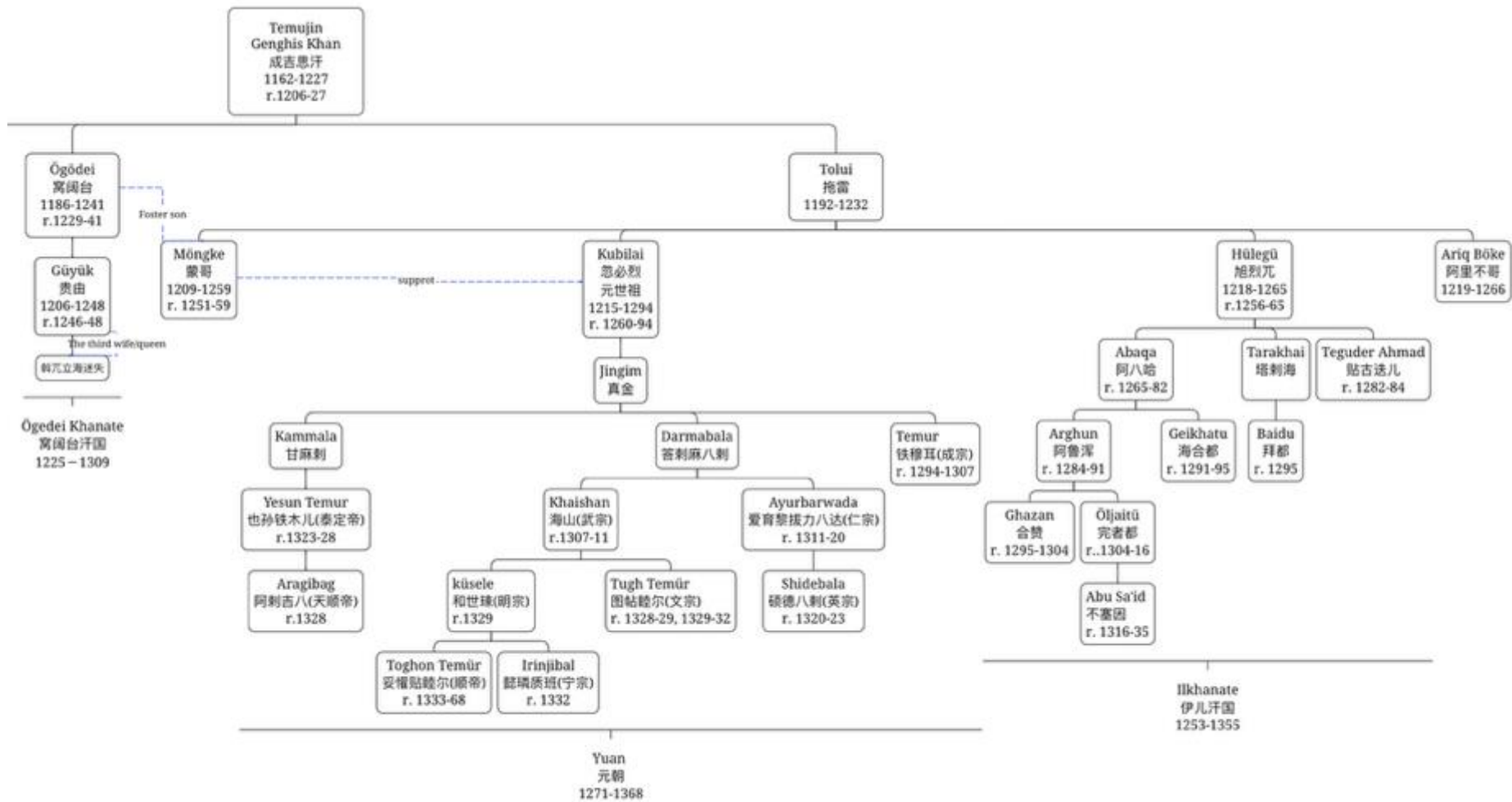
- 1368: The last emperor, Yuan Shundi; the Yuan dynasty fell.
- 1369: Tamerlane (Timur) took control of the Western Chagatai Khanate and conquered Transoxiana (i.e., the whole of modern Uzbekistan and southwestern Kazakhstan; Transoxiana was an important corridor of the overland Eurasian Silk Road).
- 1370–1507: Timur established the Timurid Empire; Samarkand became the capital of the empire, ruling Iran for more than a century; afterwards, through seven campaigns, he subjugated the Eastern Chagatai Khanate and incorporated it into his territory.
- 1380–1444: Bernardino da Siena.
- 1381: Timur conquered eastern Iran.
- 1387: Timur conquered Khwarazm.
- 1390: Another highly influential work appeared besides Bonaventure's biography: the "Liber de conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Jesu" by the Franciscan Bartolomeo of Pisa. He compared every legend in St. Francis's life with episodes in Christ's life. This work became the medium informing representations of St. Francis in 15th-century art.
- 1391, 1394–1395: Two expeditions against the Golden Horde; at the same time, alien rebellions erupted in Iran. Timur's direction of warfare shifted from the Mongol khanates to the surrounding foreign states.
- 1393: He finally conquered western Persia and occupied Baghdad.
- 1394 and 1398: Campaigns against the Delhi Sultanate, following the Mongol-style strategy of massacre and plunder.
- 1401: The Mongol ruler Timur captured Damascus, subjected it to devastating destruction, and deported qualified craftsmen, including silk weavers, to Samarkand, the capital of Central Asia.
- 1402: At the Battle of Ankara he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ottoman Empire, capturing its sultan Bayezid (the "Thunderbolt," Bayezid I), making his imperial domain stretch from Delhi, India, to Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. He defeated the then rising and expanding Ottoman Empire, indirectly alleviating the penetration of Islamic culture into Christian culture and the whole of Europe. The artists, craftsmen, and scholars he brought back from Asia Minor left innumerable priceless architectural monuments to Samarkand (Uzbekistan), making it, under his grandson Ulugh Beg's management, the center of Central Asian Islamic culture.
- 1404: He began an invasion of the Ming; in 1405 he died en route.
- 1450: Pope Nicholas V canonized Bernardino da Siena, only six years after his death.
- 1472: The Franciscan pope Sixtus IV issued a papal rescript declaring that only the stigmata of St. Francis were true and forbidding claims in literature or art that other saints had received the stigmata.

- 1481: Sixtus IV (Sisto IV, b. 1414–1484) issued a decree, canonizing the Franciscan friars who were martyred in Marrakech in 1220.
- 1513: The Portuguese re-established contact with China.
- 1543: After more than ten years following brutal religious persecution, Gaspar da Cruz arrived in China; many of our Order and the Jesuits began missionary work in China.
- 1698: The Franciscan friar Kang Hezi (Antonio Orazi, 1673–) came to China. In the spring of 1702 he arrived in Linqing, Shandong, which at that time was the episcopal see of Bishop Ildebrando of the Vicariate Apostolic of Zhili, where he assisted in diocesan administration and preached in surrounding areas. After Yongzheng ascended the throne in 1722, Kang Hezi was permitted to come to Beijing and lived in the residence of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Haidian. In 1733, at the request of the Franciscan apostolic vicars Francesco Saraceni da Conca (1679–1742) of Shaanxi and Shanxi, Kang Hezi returned to Rome to report the situation of the Chinese Church to the Curia, prompting the Holy See to forbid the “Eight Permissions” established by special envoy Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba (1685–1741) on his visit to China, insisting on the 1704 decree prohibiting the Chinese rites. Thus, on December 12, 1733, Kang Hezi reached Guangzhou, and on January 26, 1734, he ended his 30-year missionary career in China, boarding a ship back to Europe. He never returned to China thereafter.

APPENDIX 4: SUCCESSION TREE OF THE MONGOL KHANATES







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2.2 Asian language bibliography

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Figures of Introduction



Fig. I. 1 Fragment of the *paramentum* of Pope Benedict XI, ca. 1303. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This sleeve from a papal *paramentum*, a fragment of a liturgical garment preserved in the church of San Domenico in Perugia, is the oft-cited *panno tartarico*, woven in Mongol-ruled Central Asia. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 19.191.3.



Fig. I. 2. Angel unrolling the heavens, detail of the *Last Judgment*, Giotto, ca. 1306, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua. One of the intriguing aspects of the Franciscan mission in China is the likelihood that painted scrolls were brought back home and used as artistic models, adding another significant stylistic element to Giotto's and the next generation's shift away from Byzantine forms. Photo: Arnold, Lauren. *Princely gifts and papal treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350*. Desiderata Press, 1999. pp. 118.



a



b

Fig. I.3a. *Miracle of the Spring*, Giotto, ca. 1295–1299, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. Photo: Arnold, Lauren. *Princely gifts and papal treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350*. Desiderata Press, 1999. pp. 123.

Fig. I. 3b. *Hospitality in the Mountains*, detail. Yan Ziyou, Southern Song dynasty, late twelfth century. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art, 35.10.



Fig. I.4 *Saint Francis Giving His Cloak to a Poor Man*, Giotto, ca. 1296–1299, Upper Basilica of Assisi, Assisi. Photo: Arnold, Lauren. *Princely gifts and papal treasures: The*

Franciscan Mission to China and its influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350. Desiderata Press, 1999. pp. 125.



Fig. I. 5 *Horse and Groom* (also known as *Groom and Horse*), Zhao Mengfu, ca. 1305. Handscroll, ink and colors on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei. Photo: Taipei National Palace Museum.

Figures of Chapter I

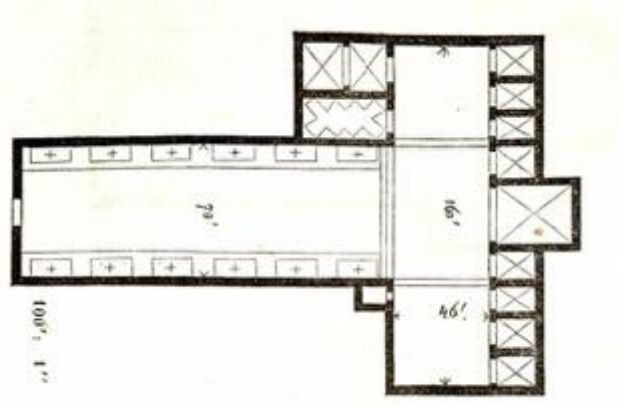


Fig. 1.1 Basilica of San Francesco in Siena and its ground plan, from Wilhelm Lübke, 1860. Photo: Wilhelm Lübke. Mittheilungen der kaiserl. königl. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale Band 5, 1860.

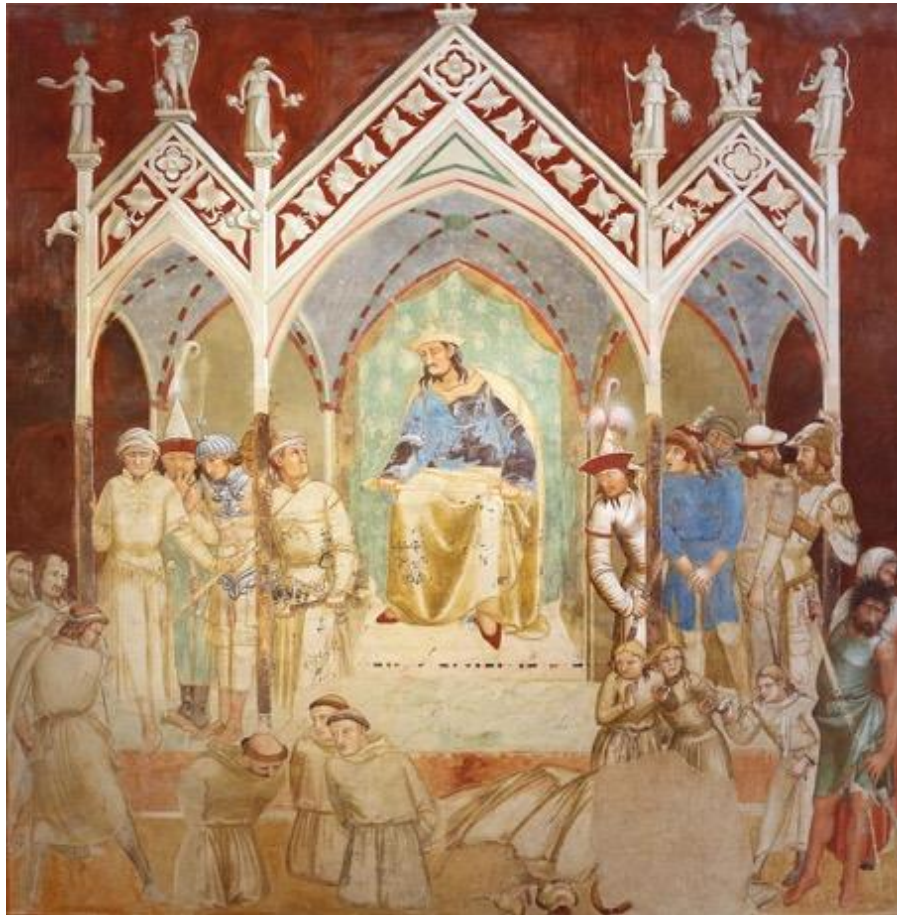


Fig.1.2 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.

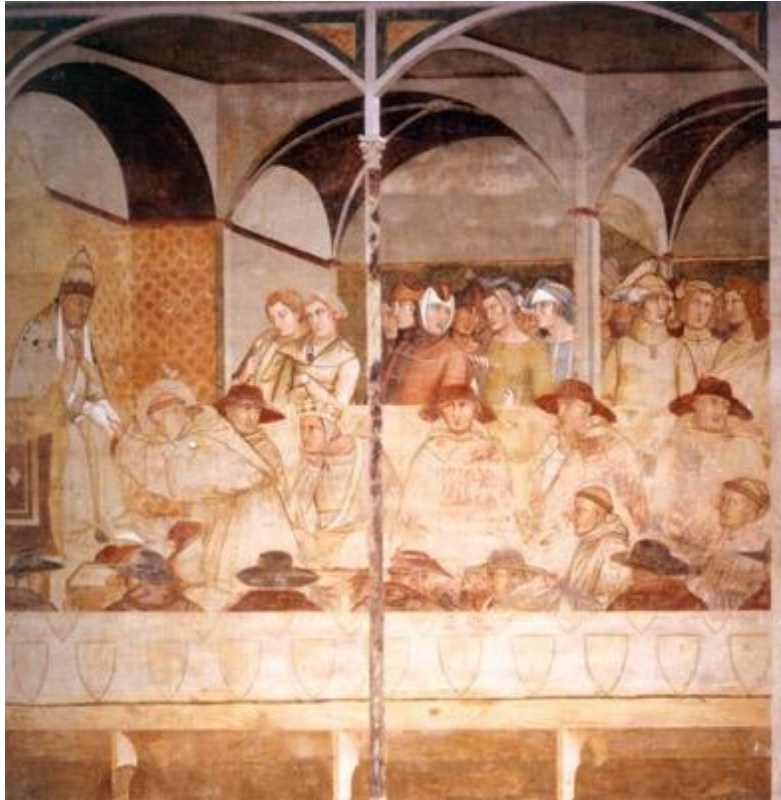


Fig.1.3 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Saint Louis of Toulouse before pope Boniface VIII*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Web Gallery of Art.



Fig. 1.4 The Chagatai Khanate in the 13th century. Photo: Wikipedia Commons, MapMaster.



Fig. 1.5 Benedetto da Maiano, Martyrdom of the Franciscans in Morocco, Santa Croce, Florence, 1480-85. Photo: Opera di Santa Croce.



Fig. 1.6 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.7 Giotto di Bondone, St Francis before the Sultan (Trial by Fire), Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence, 1325-28. Photo: Opera di Santa Croce.



Fig. 1.8 Odorico da Pordenone Collects the Bone of Franciscan Martyrs, Chiesa di San Francesco, Udine. Photo: Mediecal Histories Ltd.



Fig. 1.9 Odorico da Pordenone Collects the Bone of Franciscan Martyrs, Civici Musei, Udine. Photo: Carta Archeologica del Friuli-Venezia Giulia(<https://www.archeocartafvg.it/portfolio-articoli/udine-gli-affreschi-nella-chiesa-san-francesco/>) (Accessed by 25 September 2025)



Fig.1.10 The ancient city of Almaliq, Tughlugh Timur Mausoleum in Huocheng, Xinjiang. Photo by Bao Muping.

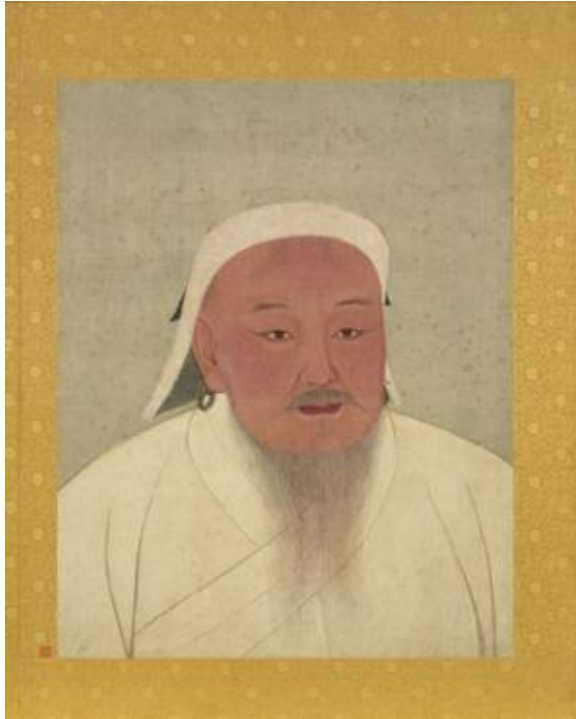


Fig. 1.11-12 Bust of Genghis Khan, Bust of Emperor Wenzong, *Bust Album of Yuan Dynasty Emperors*, National Palace Museum, Taipei. Photo: Inv. nr. zhonghua 000324 of website in National Palace Museum in Taipei(www.npm.gov.tw, accessed by 25 September 2025)



Fig. 1.13 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.14 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.15 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.16 Empresses of Yuan Shizu and Yuan Shunzong, *Bust Album from the Yuan Dynasty*, National Palace Museum, Taipei. They are depicted wearing the *Gugu* crown, which is a transliteration from Mongolian. Photo: inv. nr. zhonghua 00032500013 of website in National Palace Museum in Taipei(www.npm.gov.tw, accessed by 25 September 2025)

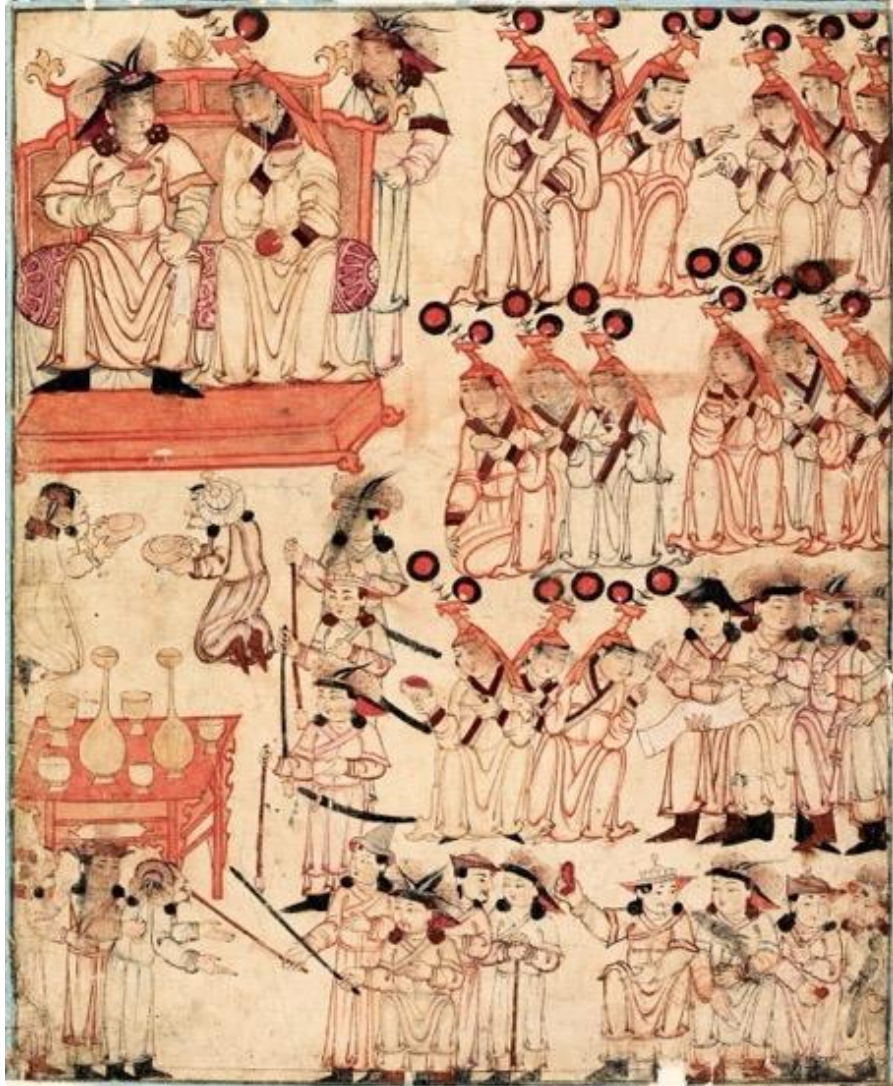


Fig. 1.17 A celebration of the court. Illustration of Rashid-ad-Din's *Jami' al-tawarikh*. Tabriz (?), 1st quarter of 14th century. Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Orientabteilung, Diez A fol. 70, p. 23.no.1. Photo: Diez Albums



Fig. 1.18 Equestrian combat, Diez Albums Battle Scene, c. 1335–1355. SBB-PK, Diez Album fol. 70, p. 17, no. 1. Photo: O’Kane, Bernard. "The great jalayirid shāhnāma." *The Diez Albums*. Brill, 2017, pp.478.



Fig. 1.19 Enthronement of a Mongol ruler and its detail. Right part of a double-page illustration of Rashid-ad-Din's *Gami' at-tawarih*. Tabriz (?), 1st quarter of 14th century. Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Orientabteilung, Diez Album fol. 70, p. 21. Photo: Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Diez A Fol. 70.



Fig. 1.20 Battle of Mohi, Tartar raids, *Chronicon Pictum*, 1358, fol.125, The National Széchényi Library, Budapest. Photo: Zheng Yikan, *The New Comer. The image of the Orientals in 13th and 14th Century European Art*, 2023.



Fig. 1.21 Foot washing, Illustration of *Shahnama*, Diez Album A Fol.70, p.16, No. 1. Photo: Staatsbibliothek Berlin



Fig. 1.22-23 Vajrabhairava mandala and its detail, 1330–32, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 1.24 Robe with silk braiding decoration(left) and robe with ribboned waist decoration(right), Yuan dynasty, Rossi&Rossi Gallery. Photo: Rossi & Rossi.



Fig. 1.25 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.

Fig. 1.26 14th-century Chinese brocade. Berlin, Museum of Decorative Arts. Photo: Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*. Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1912. Abb. 275.



Fig. 1.27 Simone Martini, *Annunciation and Two Saints*, 1333, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Photo: Le Gallerie degli Uffizi (<https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/annunciation-with-st-margaret-and-st-ansanus>) (Accessed by 25 set. 2025)



Fig. 1.28 Simone Martini, detail of *Annunciation and Two Saints*, 1333, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Photo: Le Gallerie degli Uffizi.



Fig. 1.29 fragments of Benedict XI's parament, late 13th–mid-14th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Object Number 19.191.3.

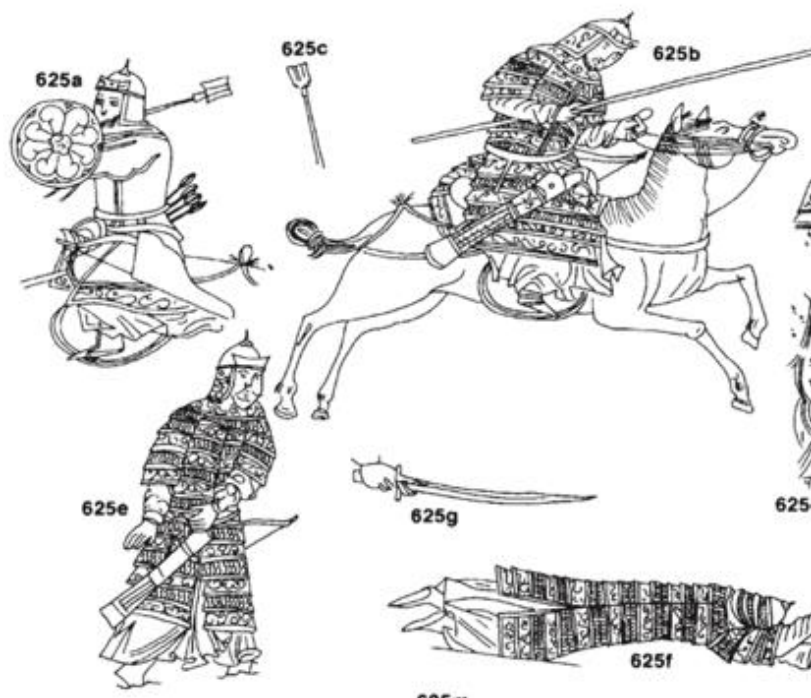


Fig. 1.30 *Jami al-tawarikh* manuscript, Tabriz, Iran, 1306-14. 625a and 625b, Battle of Pandavas and Kauravas, f.25r. 625e: Death of Ravana, king of Lanka, f.30v. Illustrations from: Nicolle, David. *Arms and Armor of the Crusading Era*.



Fig. 1.31 A late Ilkhanid or early Timurid steel helmet, Persia, 14th century, Sotheby's collection. Photo: Sotheby's collection, lot 376.



Fig. 1.32 Central Asian or Russian Helmet, Blue Horde, ca. 1342–57, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Object Number 2007.86.



Fig. 1.33 Turban Helmet, Iranian, late 15th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, object Number 04.3.462.

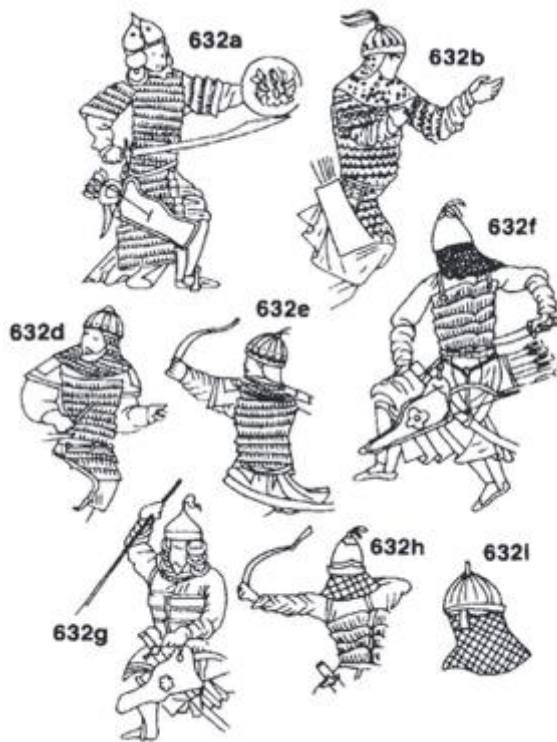


Fig. 1.34 *The Demotte Shahnamah*, Adharbayjan, 1335: 632b, Faridun captures the Palace of Zahak, Kevorkian Collection, New York; 642e, Faridun tests his sons, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. Pers. 111, Dublin, Ireland. Illustrations from: Nicolle, David. *Arms and Armor of the Crusading Era*.



Fig. 1.35 Forward-brimmed hat, excavated from the Wang Shixian family tomb, Yuan Dynasty, Gansu Provincial Museum. Photo: Gansu Provincial Museum.



Fig. 1.36 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.37 Lotus-shaped Glass Stem Cup, excavated from the Wang Shixian family tomb, Yuan Dynasty, Gansu Provincial Museum. Photo: Gansu Provincial Museum.



Fig. 1.38 Zakhak (1000 years). The tyrant Zakhak is imprisoned under Mount Damavand. First Small *Shahnameh*. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Per 104.3. Photo: Cambridge University Digital Library. Link to the digitized folio: <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-DUBLINCB-PER-00104/3>.



Fig. 1.39 Helmet of Boeotian Type, mid-2nd century BC, Rome, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 23.190.21.



Fig. 1.40 Helmet of Apulian-Corinthian Type, Fifth century BC, Greek, South Italy, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 1.41 *La Crucifixion*, School of Taddeo di Bartolo, 1300-1400, Italy, Lovre Museum. Photo: Lovre Museum. Main number MI 383.



Fig. 1.42 Designs for Nine Helmets (recto), 16th century, Italy, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 52.570.70.



Fig. 1.43 Giovanni Battista Foggini, Two Studies for Helmet Designs Presented En Profil, 1652–1725, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 52.570.226.



Fig. 1.44 Filippo Negroli, Burgonet Helmet, 1543, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 17.190.1720.



Fig. 1.45 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, detail of the *Martyrdom of the Franciscans*, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Siena, 1336-1340. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko, 2023.



Fig. 1.46 Seljuk Sultan Berk-Yaruq ibn Malik-Shah Enthroned, *Jami' al-tawarikh*, 1307, Tabriz. Photo: Edinburgh University Library, Or.Ms.20, f. 139v.



Fig. 1.47 Iskandar (14 years). Iskandar and the talking tree. *Great Mongol Shahnama* manuscript, Tabriz, Persia, c.1335. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art. F1935.23.

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Fig. 2.1 Fra Angelico, San Marco Altarpiece, c. 1439, Museo San Marco, Florence. Photo: Gallerie degli uffizi. Inventario 1890, nn. 8506, 8495.



Fig. 2.2 Fra Angelico, detail of San Marco Altarpiece, c. 1439, Museo San Marco, Florence. Photo: Gallerie degli uffizi. Inventario 1890, nn. 8506, 8495.



Fig. 2.3 Horseman with carpet saddle-bag. Detail from song 13 in the *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*, “The Farewell.” Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 1973.120.3



Fig. 2.4 Cai Wenji sits with her barbarian husband on a pile carpet in the nomad’s yurt. Detail from song 5 in the *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*, “The Encampment by the Stream.” Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number 1973.120.3.

Armenia through out the history



Fig. 2.5 Armenia's borders throughout history. Photo: Hewsen, Robert. "Historical Armenia," in *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.



Fig. 2.6 The Ilkhante(1253-1353). Photo: *New approaches to Ilkhanid history*, p.10.



Fig. 2.7 Filarete, detail of St. Peter panel, bronze doors of St. Peter's, 1433–1445, Rome, Basilica di San Pietro. Photo: *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter's*, pp.123.



Fig. 2.8 Filarete, detail of St. Paul panel, bronze doors of St. Peter's, 1433–1445, Rome, Basilica di San Pietro. Photo: *East-West Artistic Transfer through Rome, Armenia and the Silk Road: Sharing St. Peter's*, pp.124.



Fig. 2. 9 Headpiece with Christ Emmanuel and Chinese animals, detail. Erevan, Matenadaran, M979, Lectionary of Het'um II, 1286, fol. 284. Photo: *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, pp.311.



Fig. 2. 10 Headpiece with dragon and phoenix motif, detail. Erevan, Matenadaran, M979, Lectionary of Het'um II, 1286, fol.334. Photo: Kouymjian, Dickran. “The Berlin Dragon-Phoenix Carpet and its Probable Armenian Origin”, 2014, fig. 7b.



Fig. 2.11 Archishop John, brother of King Het'um, ordination scene. Erevan, Mantenadaran, M197, Gospels, 1289, fol. 341v. Photo: Kouymjian, Dickran. "The Berlin Dragon-Phoenix Carpet and its Probable Armenian Origin", 2014, fig. 11.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Latin 10538.

Fig. 2.12 Heures dites de Joseph Bonaparte. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Latin 10538, fol. 22v. 15th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 2.13 Chen Rong, Nine Dragons, Southern Song Dynasty(1127-1279), Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Photo: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 17.1697.



Fig. 2. 14 King Timurid Bahram slays a dragon, 1371. Shahnama of the Shiraz School, (Topkapı Palace Museum Library. Photo: Cambridge Shahnama Project.



Fig. 2.15 Detail of *Kegonshu soshi eden*, illustrated Biographies of the Kego School Patriarchs. Kamakura period (1185–1333). Tokyo National Museum. Photo: Tokyo National Museum, A-1604.



Fig. 2.16 White Porcelain Plate with Incised Coiled Chi Dragon Design, Ding Ware, Northern Song(960-1127). Taipei National Palace Museum. Photo: Yang Junyan. “The Design of A One—legged Monster and the Design of Hornless Dragon on Porcelains in Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties.” *Collections*. No. 6, 2020. pp. 20.

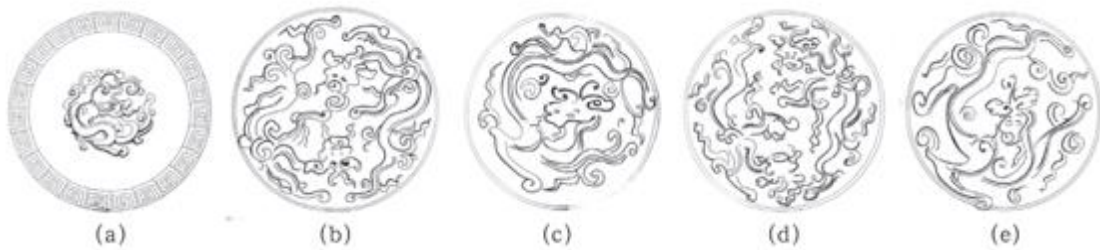


Fig. 2.17 “Chi Dragon” pattern carved in flat bottomed dish of Ding ware. (a) Oblique knife carving in the late Northern Song Dynasty (The Palace Museum) ; (b) Double line marking of oblique knife in middle Jin Dynasty(The Palace Museum); (c) (d) Double line marking of oblique knife in middle Jin Dynasty(Taipei Palace Museum); (e) Double line marking of oblique knife in middle Jin Dynasty(Cleveland Museum of Art), cite from *Yuan Dynasty Textile Pattern Research*, 2014.



Fig. 2. 18 T'oros Roslin, *Presentation*, 1262. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W.539, fol. 211r. Photo: Digitized Walters Manuscripts.
<https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W539/description.html>
(Accessed by 25 sep 2025)



Fig. 2. 19 T'oros Roslin, detail of *Presentation*, 1262. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 539, fol. 211r. Photo: Digitized Walters Manuscripts.
<https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W539/description.html>
(Accessed by 25 sep 2025)



Fig. 2.20 Blue-and-white ewer. Yuan Dynasty(1279-1368). Photo: Lin Ying, “The Standing Phoenix: Exploring the Means of the Spread of the Phoenix Motif on Middle Byzantine Artworks”, in *Hunan Provincial Museum*. 2019, p.33.



Fig. 2. 21 Gold and Silver Mirror with Phoenix Pattern, 618-907, Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art, F1944.8.



Fig. 2. 22 Gold and Silver Mirror with Phoenix Pattern, 618-907, Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art, F1944.8.



Fig. 2. 23 *descending dragon*. Hexagonal tile with dragon, Iran, Takht-i Sulaiman, 1270s. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum for Islamische Kunst. Photo: Museum-digital Deutschland. Museum for Islamische Kunst. Object 430399.



Fig. 2. 24 *roaming dragon*. Frieze tile with dragon, Takht-i Sulaymān, 1270s. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (541-1900). Photo: *Legacy of Genghis Khan*, fig. 100.



Fig. 2.25 Ascending dragon. Cloud and dragon motif blue-and-white porcelain, Topkapi Palace Museum, Turkey. Photo by Dick Osseman, 2018.



Fig. 2.26 Bounamico Buffalmacco, *The Last Judgment*, Fresco, 1335-40. Camposanto, Pisa. Photo: *Journeys of the Soul. Multiple Topographies in the Camposanto of Pisa*, 2021.



Fig. 2.27 Buonamico Buffalmacco, detail of The Last Judgment , Fresco, 1335-40. Camposanto, Pisa. Photo: *Journeys of the Soul. Multiple Topographies in the Camposanto of Pisa*, 2021.



Fig. 2.28 Wooden coiled dragon sculpture, Shanxi Jinci Temple, Hall of the Holy Mother (Shengmu Dian), 1087. Photo: Shanxi's Ancient Architecture in Archival Records, from Development Research Center of the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Shanxi Province.

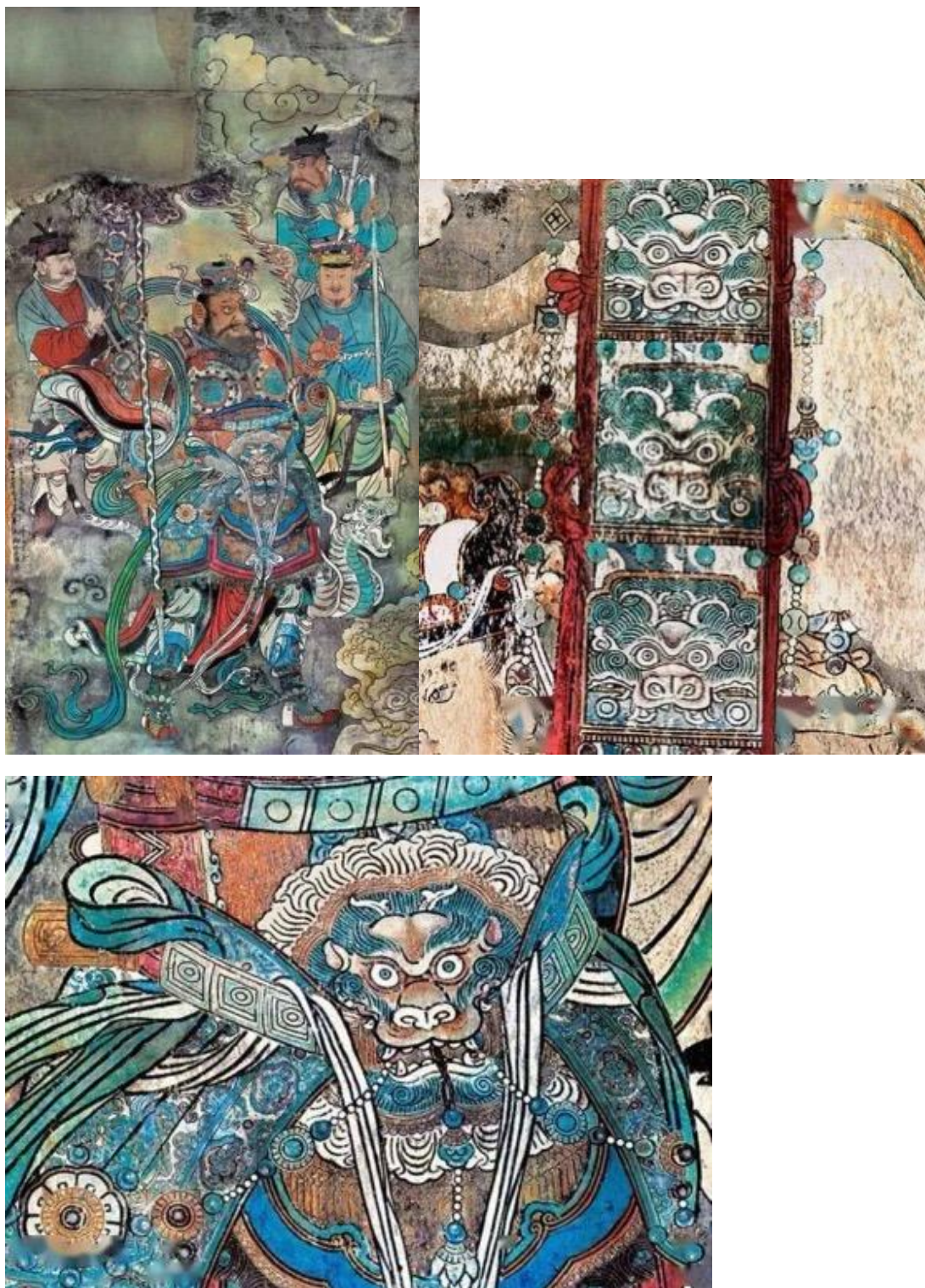


Fig. 2.29 *Chao Yuan Tu*, Yongle Palace, Shanxi Ruicheng, Yuan Dynasty(1279-1368). Photo: Jin Weinuo. *The Wall Paintings of Yongle Palace, Ruicheng, Shanxi Province*.



Fig. 2.30 Blue and White Dragon porcelain jar, Yuan Dynasty(1279-1368), Jingdezhen Institute of Ceramic Archaeology Collection. Photo: Hunan Provincial Museum, China.



Fig. 2.31 Giotto di Bondone, *Stigmatization of St Francis*, Firenze, c 1297-99, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: Digitalized picture of Musée du Louvre.

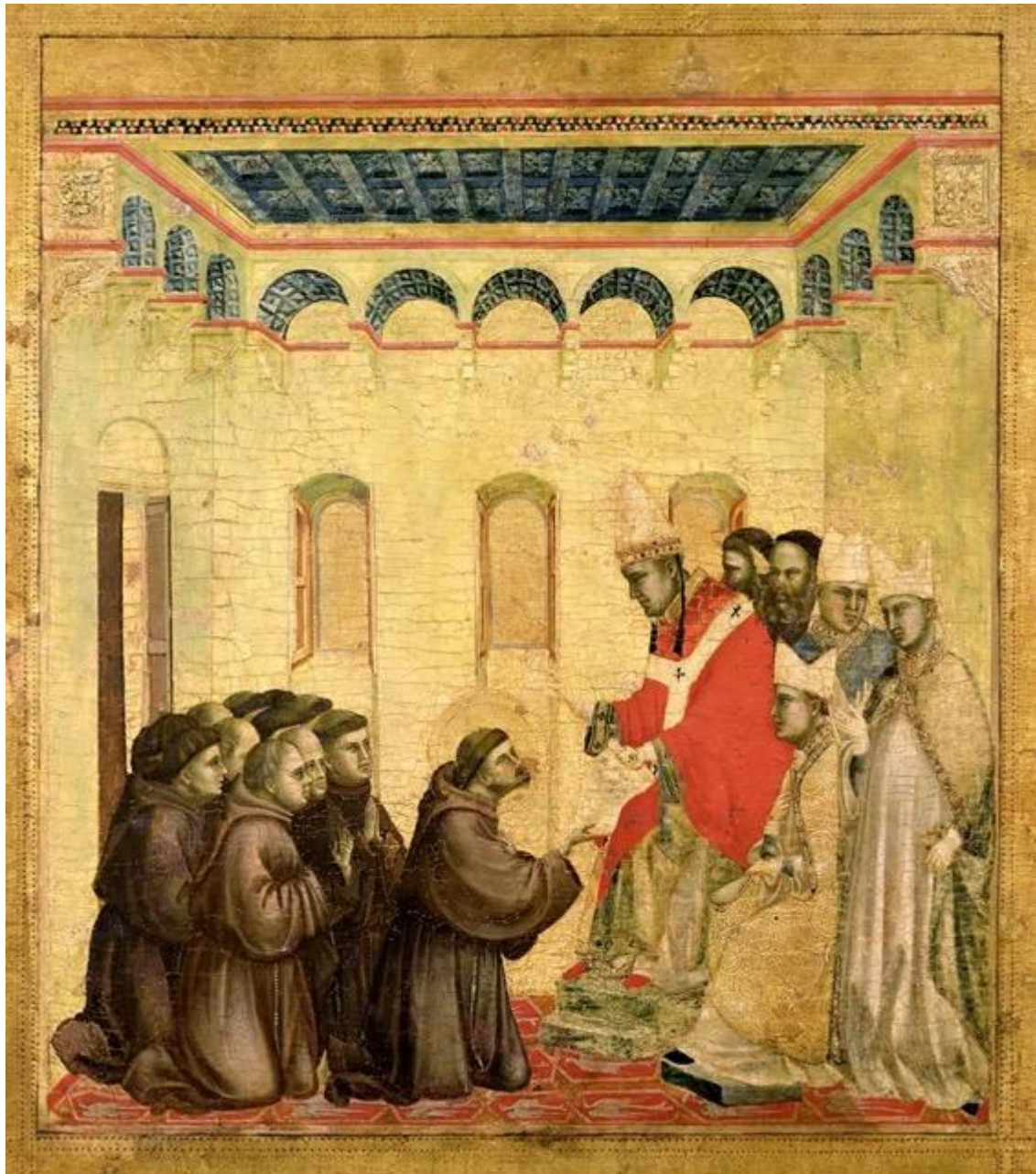


Fig. 2.32 Giotto di Bondone, detail of *Stigmatization of St Francis*, Firenze, c 1297-99, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo: Digitalized picture of Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 2. 33 Bronze mirror with dragon and phoenix. Xuanhua, Hebei, China, tomb M10, pre-1093. Photo: *Excavation Report Xuanhua*, 2003, vol. I, 49.



Dragon-Phoenix carpet (Ident. Nr. 1, 4)

Fig. 2.34 Dragon-phoenix carpet, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, 14 century, Nachivan province of Greater Armenia. Photo: Museum für Islamische Kunst.



Fig. 2.35 (left) Bartolomeo degli Erri, *Scenes from Life of St. Vincent Ferrer, Modena, act. 1460-79*, ca. circa 1460, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Museum. Inv. Nr.Gemäldegalerie, 6696.

Fig.2.36 (right) Bartolomeo degli Erri, *Scenes from Life of St. Vincent Ferrer, Modena, act. 1460-79*, ca. circa 1460, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Museum. Inv. Nr.Gemäldegalerie, 6696.



Fig. 2. 37 Gentile da Fabriano, *Annunciation*, c. 1425, Pinacoteca, Vatican. Photo: Pinacoteca Vaticana.



Fig. 2.38 Gentile da Fabriano, detail of *Annunciation*, c. 1425, Pinacoteca, Vatican. Photo: Pinacoteca Vaticana.



Fig. 2.39 Taddeo Gaddi (1300-1366), *St Eloi in the Goldsmiths Workshop*, c. 1370, Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain. Photo: Museo del Prado in Madrid.



Fig.2.40 Taddeo Gaddi (1300-1366), detail of *St Eloi in the Silversmiths Workshop*, c. 1360, Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain. Photo: Museo del Prado in Madrid.

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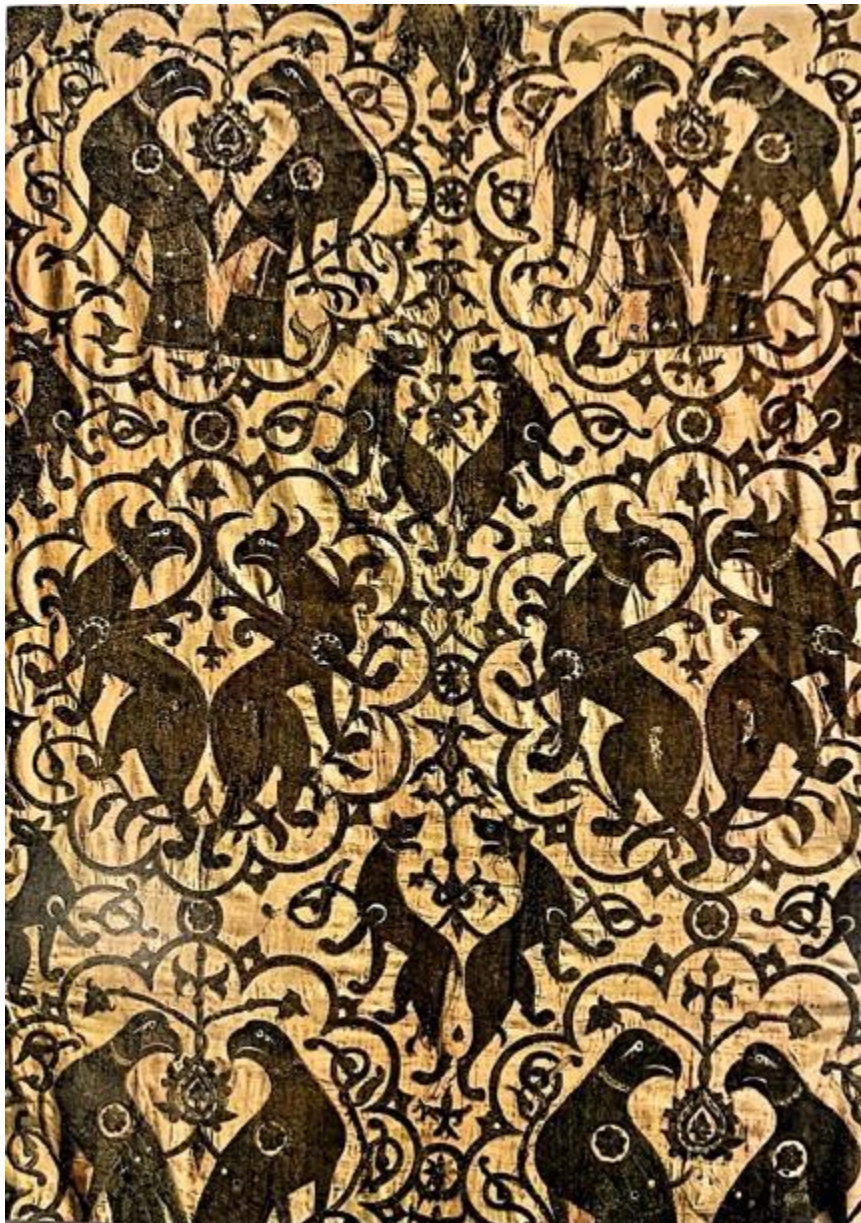


Fig. 3.1 Silk dossal embroidered in gold, featuring leopards, parrots, and griffins silk dossal embroidered in gold, featuring leopards, parrots, and griffins. Palermo, 13th Century. Assisi, Museo del Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco. Photo: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Tav. 4.

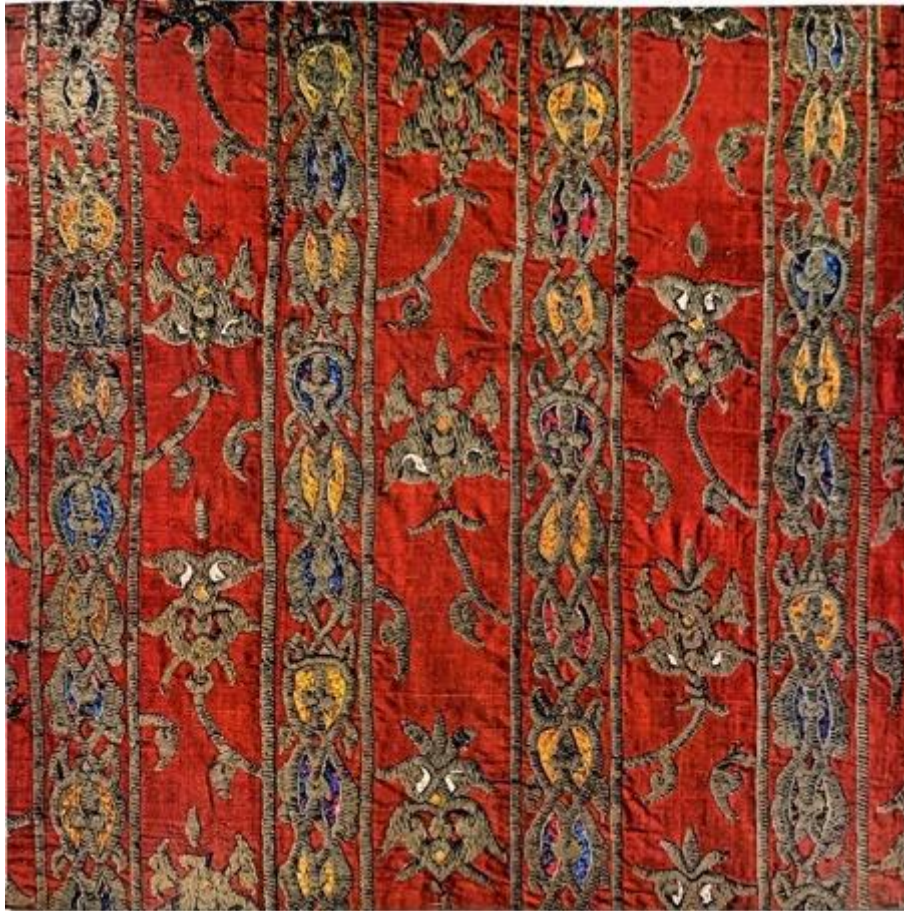


Fig. 3. 2 Red silk dossal woven with gold thread, adorned with floral motifs and interlaced chain-like patterns. Palermo, 13th Century. Assisi, Museo del Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco. Photo: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Tav. 5.



Fig. 3.3 Papal cape of Boniface VIII, embroidered in opus cyprensi. 13th century. Treasury of Anagni, Cattedrale di Santa Maria Annunziata. Photo by Shawn Tribe.



Fig. 3. 4 Liturgical hanging. Palermo, 13th–14th century. Basilica di sant'Antonio, Padua.
Photo: Basilica di sant'Antonio, Archivio Fotografico.



Fig. 3. 5 Parrot Chasuble (Piviale dei pappagalli). 13th century. Chiesa di Santa Corona, Vicenza. Photo: Chiesa di Santa Corona, Vicenza.



Fig. 3. 6 Dossal of Cattedral of Anagni. 13-14th century. Photo: Cattedral of Anagni.



Fig. 3. 7 Turquoise blue silk woven with gold pattern of eagles and vine leaves; probably Iranian, 14th century; V&A Museum. Photo: V&A Museum.



Fig. 3. 8 Comparison of Floral Motifs in Two Textiles Preserved in the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi. Photo: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo.*Tav. 4, 5.



Fig. 3. 9 Miniature funerary *banbi* jacket of Tang Dynasty(619-907). Earlier than 874 CE. Museum of Famen Temple. Photo: Museum of Famen Temple.



Fig. 3. 10 Liturgical hanging. Palermo, 13th–14th century. Basilica di sant’Antonio, Padua.
Photo: Basilica di sant’Antonio, Archivio Fotografico.



Fig. 3.11 Detail of the liturgical hanging. Palermo, 13th–14th century. Basilica di sant'Antonio, Padua. Photo: Basilica di sant'Antonio, Archivio Fotografico.



Fig. 3.12 Detail of the liturgical hanging. Palermo, 13th–14th century. Basilica di sant'Antonio, Padua. Photo: Basilica di sant'Antonio, Archivio Fotografico.

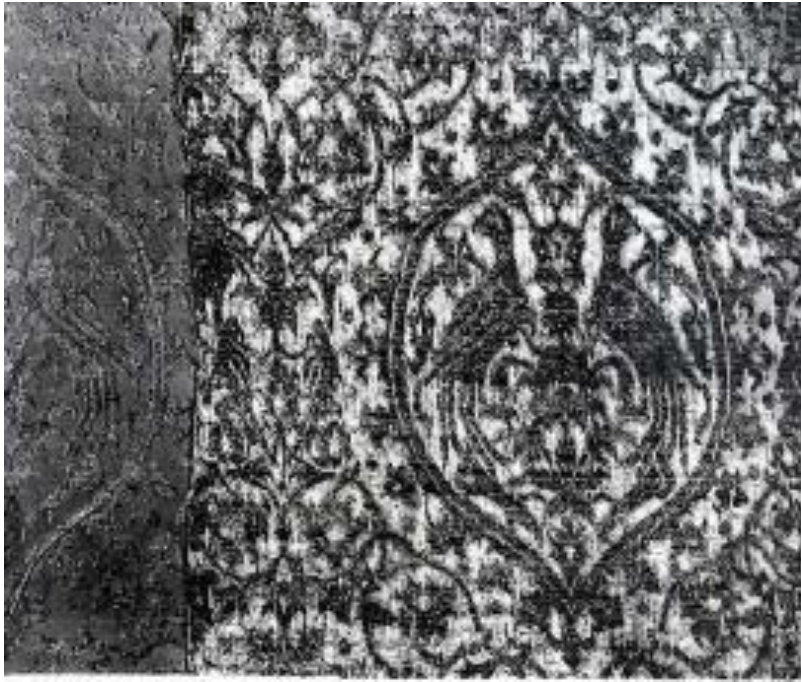


Fig. 3.13 Bird-patterned silks from Iran with stronger Central Asian influence. 13th-14th century. Berlin. Photo: Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*.



Fig. 3.14 Bird-patterned silks from Iran with stronger Chinese influence. Lampas with phoenixes amid undulating vines. 13th-14th century. Cleveland Museum of art. Photo: Cleveland Museum of art. Object number 1985.4.



Fig. 3. 15 *Accipiter Striatus*. Photo: Louis Agassiz Fuertes. United States Department of Agriculture Yearbook (or Report), 1908.



Fig. 3. 16 Fragment of brocaded silk fabric, Eastern Iranian territories or Central Asia. First half of the 14th century. Hanover, Union of Evangelical Churches in the EKD (UEK); on permanent loan to the St. Annen Museum, Lübeck. Inventory no. M1. Photo by Author.

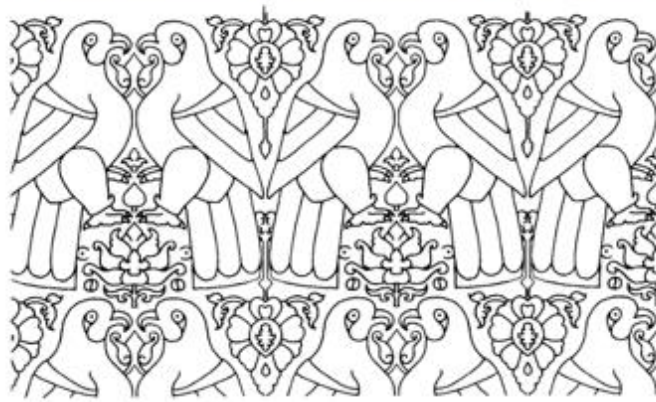


Fig. 3. 17 Fragment of a hood with eagle motif. Yuan dynasty(1279-1368), Inner Mongolia Museum. Photo: Zhao Feng, *Zhixiu zhenpin* [*Textile Treasures*], pp. 195.



Fig. 3. 18 Causula disperata, with horizontally opposed rows of eagles and gazelles. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. Photo: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Tav. 6.

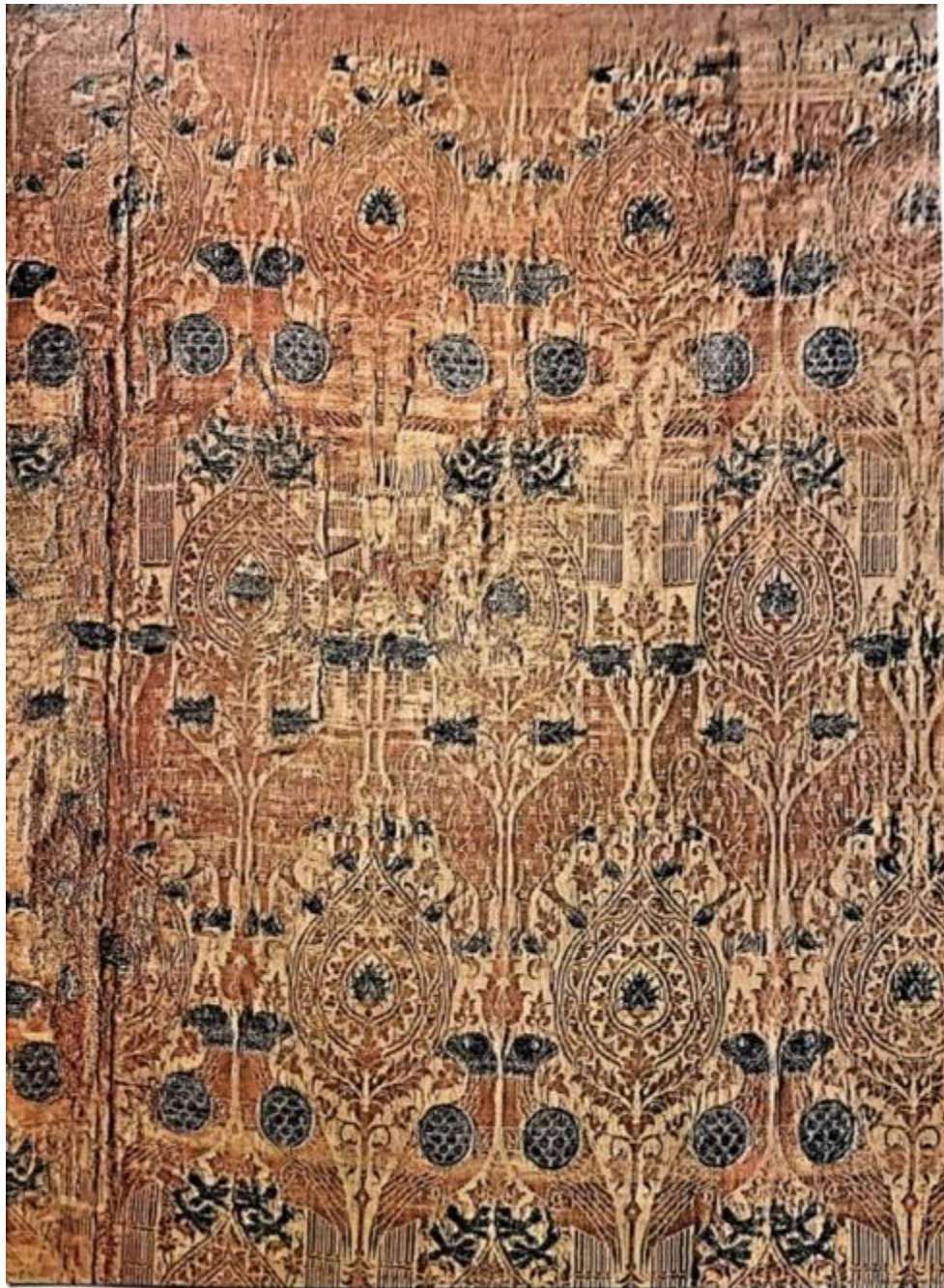


Fig. 3. 19 *Causula diasperata* with confronting peacocks and gazelles (detail). Lucca. Heads, legs, and wings highlighted in silver foil. Rome, Museo di Palazzo Venezia. Photo: Santangelo, Antonio. *Tessuti d'Arte Italiani. Dal XII Al XVIII Secolo*. Tav. 7.



Fig. 3. 20 Italian textile with Animals. Late 13-14 century. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number: 31.69



Fig. 3. 21 Italian textile with Animals and Birds. Ca. 1250–1300. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number: 07.178.



Fig. 3. 22 Italian Textile with Brocade. 13th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object Number: 12.166.3.



Fig. 3. 23 Textile, Birds, Dragon, and Palmette Motives. Italian textile, 13-14th century. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Object number: 46.156.27



Fig. 3. 24 Fragment of lampas (diasper) silk showing paired parrots and gazelles with details in brocaded silver. Lucca. 1275-1325. V&A Museum. Photo: V&A Museum.

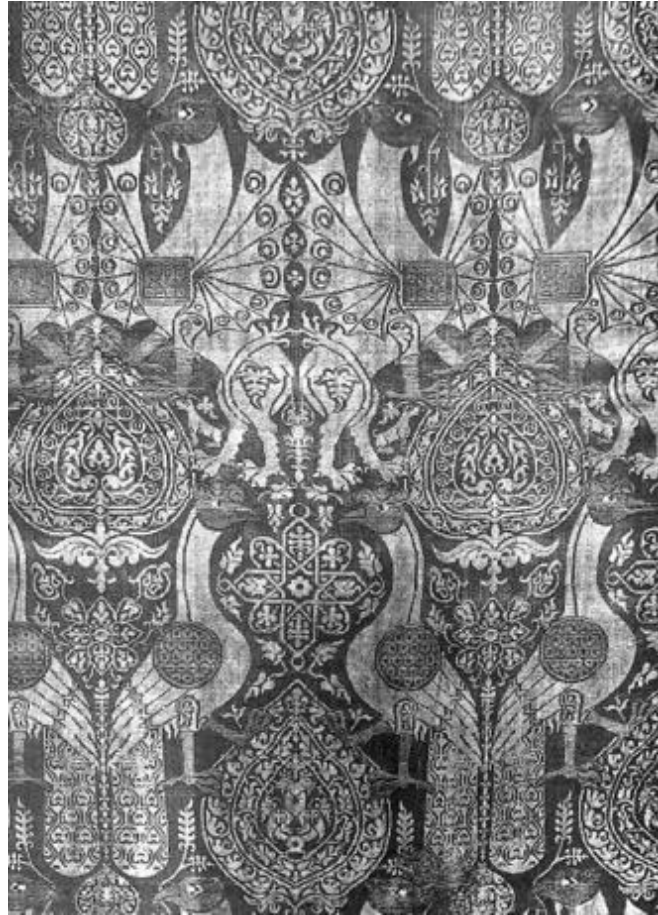


Fig. 3. 25 *Diasper* with peacock and griffin motifs, Aachen Cathedral, 13th–14th century.
Photo: *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*.

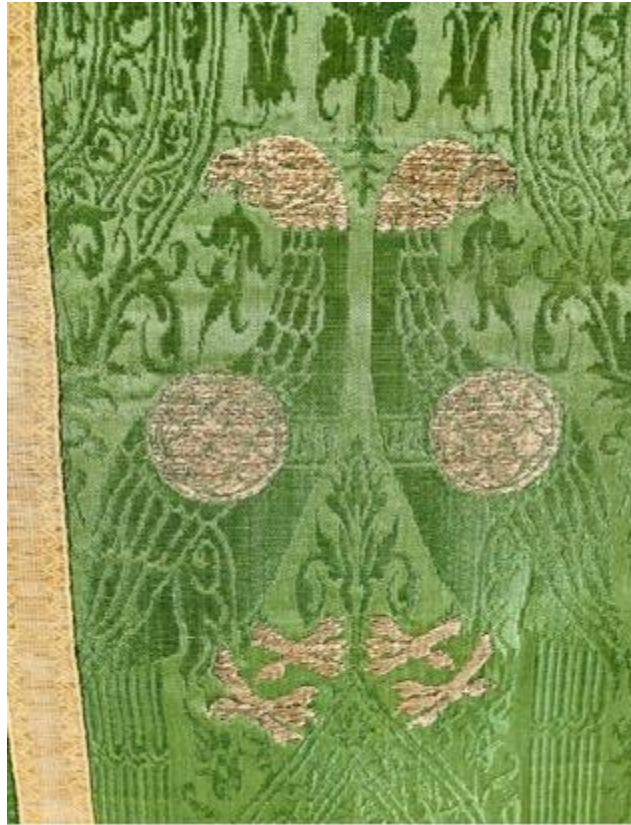


Fig. 3. 26 Green chasuble with peacocks and gazelles, 14th century. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, collection Franchetti. Firenze. Photo: Catalogo generale dei Beni Culturali italiano.



Fig. 3. 27 Silk with red and green parrot motifs. Early 14th century, produced in Lucca. London, V&A Museum. Photo: V&A Museum.



Fig. 3. 28 Gold brocade robe with braided bird motifs, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Xilinhot Museum. Photo: Xilinhot Museum.



Fig. 3. 29 Silk woven curtain panel, Central Asia, 13th–14th century. Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, Inv. TE 40.2002.3; TE 40.2002.5–6. Photo by Pernille Klemp.



Fig. 3. 30 Folio from a *Shahnameh*. Death of the giant Simurgh. Early 14th century. Freer Gallery of Art Collection. F1945.22.1. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art Collection.

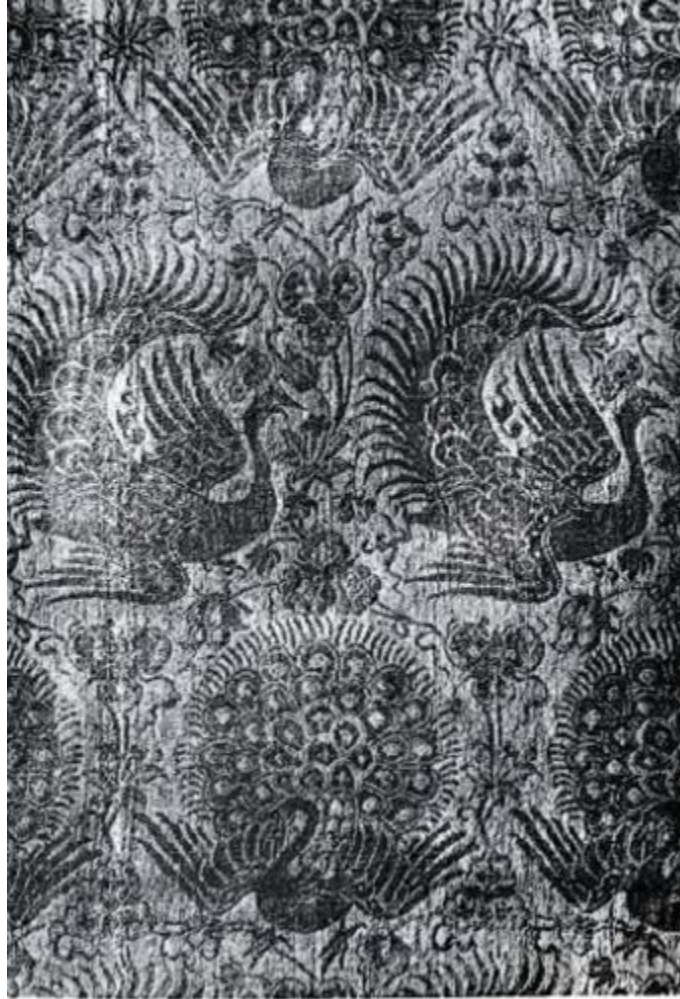


Fig. 3. 31 Chinese brocade with peacock and Simurgh motifs, 14th century. Braunschweig.
Photo: Falke. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*.

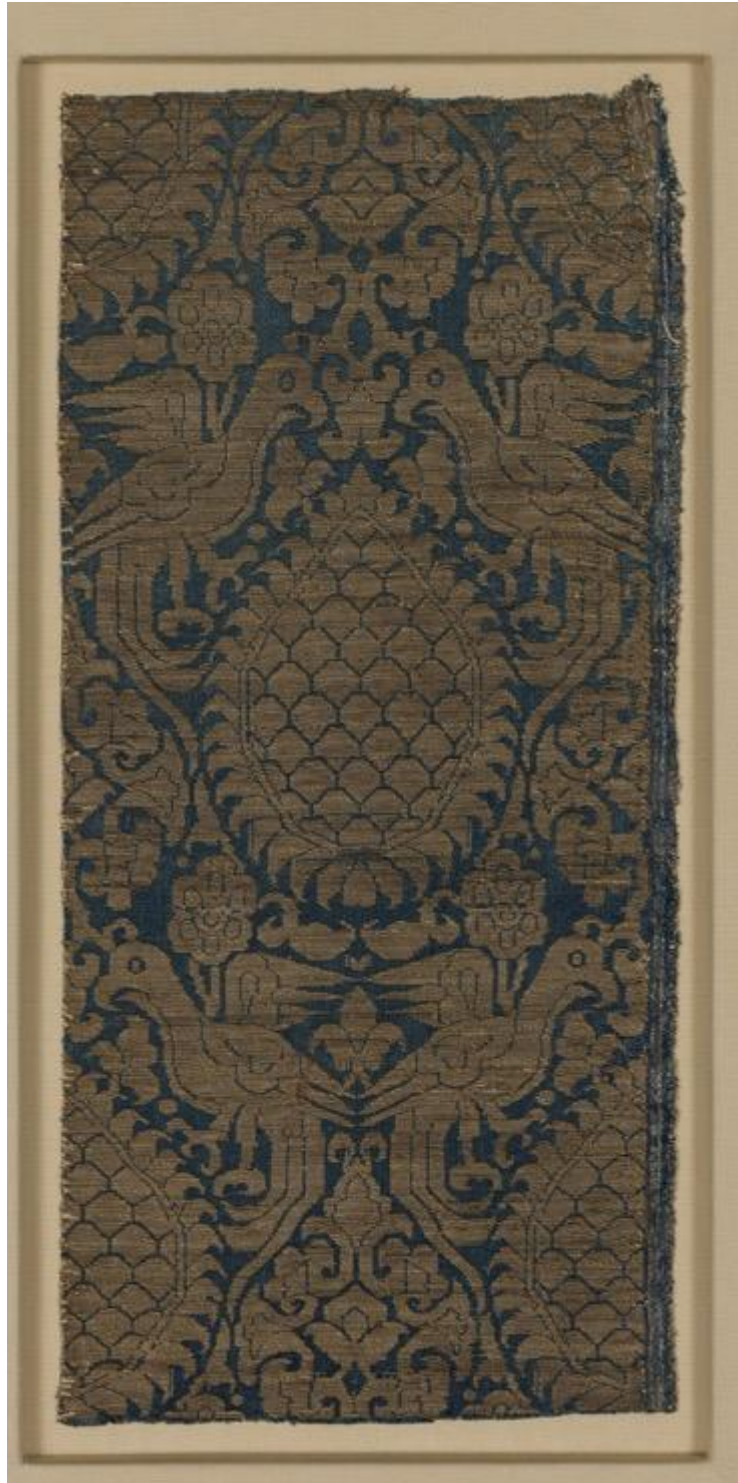


Fig. 3. 32 Italian textile Fragment, second half 13th–14th century, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 3. 33 The Golden Horde, the Ilkhanate, and the Black Sea Region in the Late 13th Century.



Fig. 3. 34 *Maqāmāt* of the “Three Worthies” and “Four Worthies”. Yuan Dynasty(1279-1368). Fuzhou, China. Photo: Official Website of Quanzhou's Application for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).



Fig. 3. 35. Arabic Inscription Stele at the Islamic Sacred Tomb. Yuan Dynasty. Lingshan, Quanzhou. Photo: Vmenkov.



Fig. 3. 36 Cloth of gold with winged lions and griffins, 1225–75. Central Asia. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1989.50. Photo: The Cleveland Museum of Art.

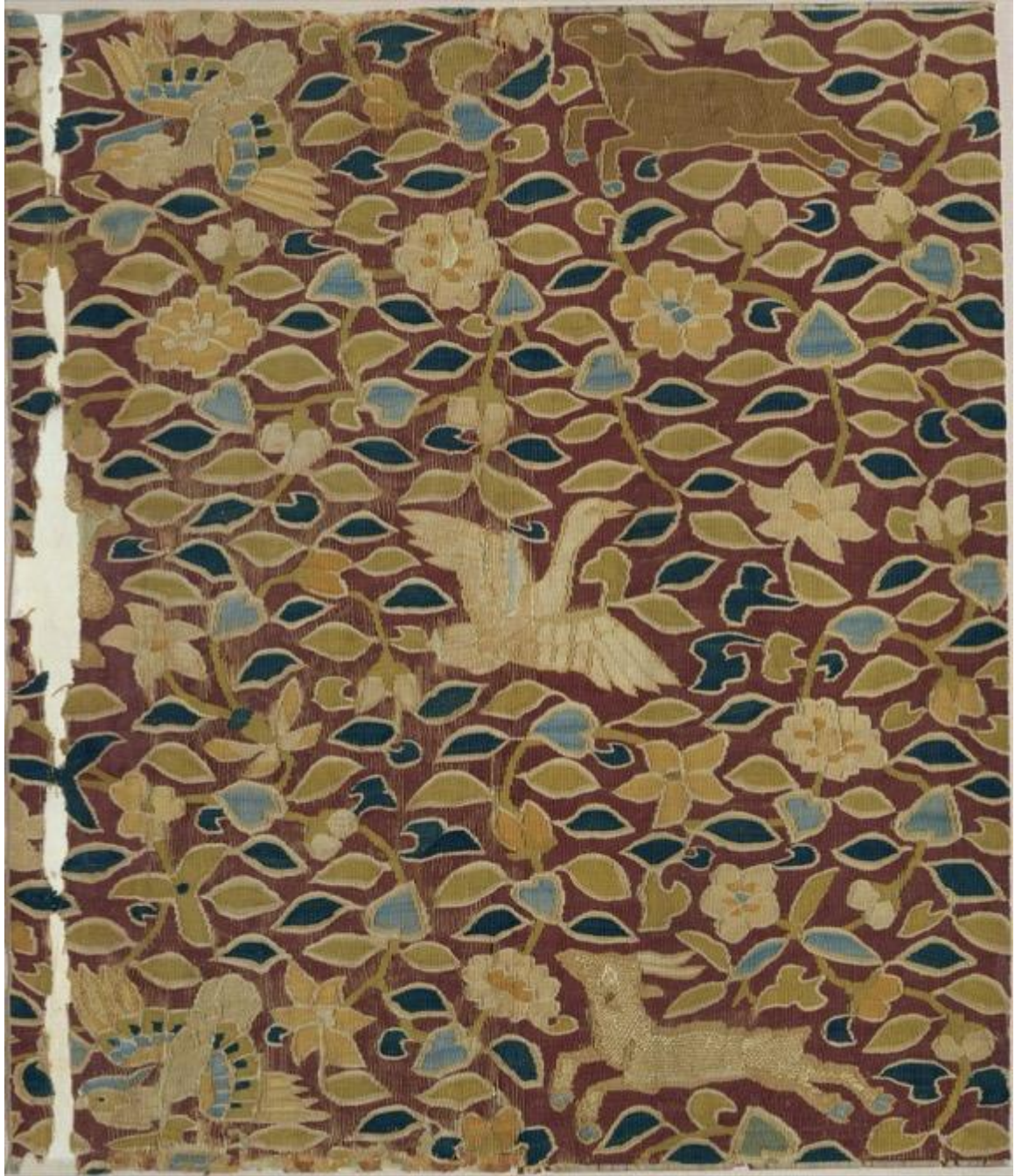


Fig. 3. 37 Scroll Cover with Animals, Birds, and Flowers. China, Song dynasty (960-1279) . The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Inv. 1983.105.



Fig. 3. 38 Fragment of tapestry with duck, phoenix and deer among plant motifs. Polychrome "cut silk" (kesi) . China, Yuan dynasty(1279-1368). Shanghai Museum. Photo: Author.



Fig. 3. 39 Eagle, hunting dog, and qilin motifs. Lucca, 14th century. In Italian style. Stralsund. Photo: Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*.



Fig. 3. 40 Fragmentary Chasuble with Woven Orphrey Band. Italy, 14th century. Exported to Germany. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Photo: The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 3. 41 Brocade with a Female Huntress beside a Fountain. Lucca, second half of the 14th century. Berlin. Photo: Falke, Otto von. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*.



Fig. 3. 42 Lampas broché. Italy, around 1400. Photo: *Italienische Seidengewebe Des 13.,14. Und 15. Jahrhunderts*. Inv. Nr. 04004.

Figures of Chapter IV



Fig. 4.1 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264. Fol. 242v. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of MS. Bodl. 264, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

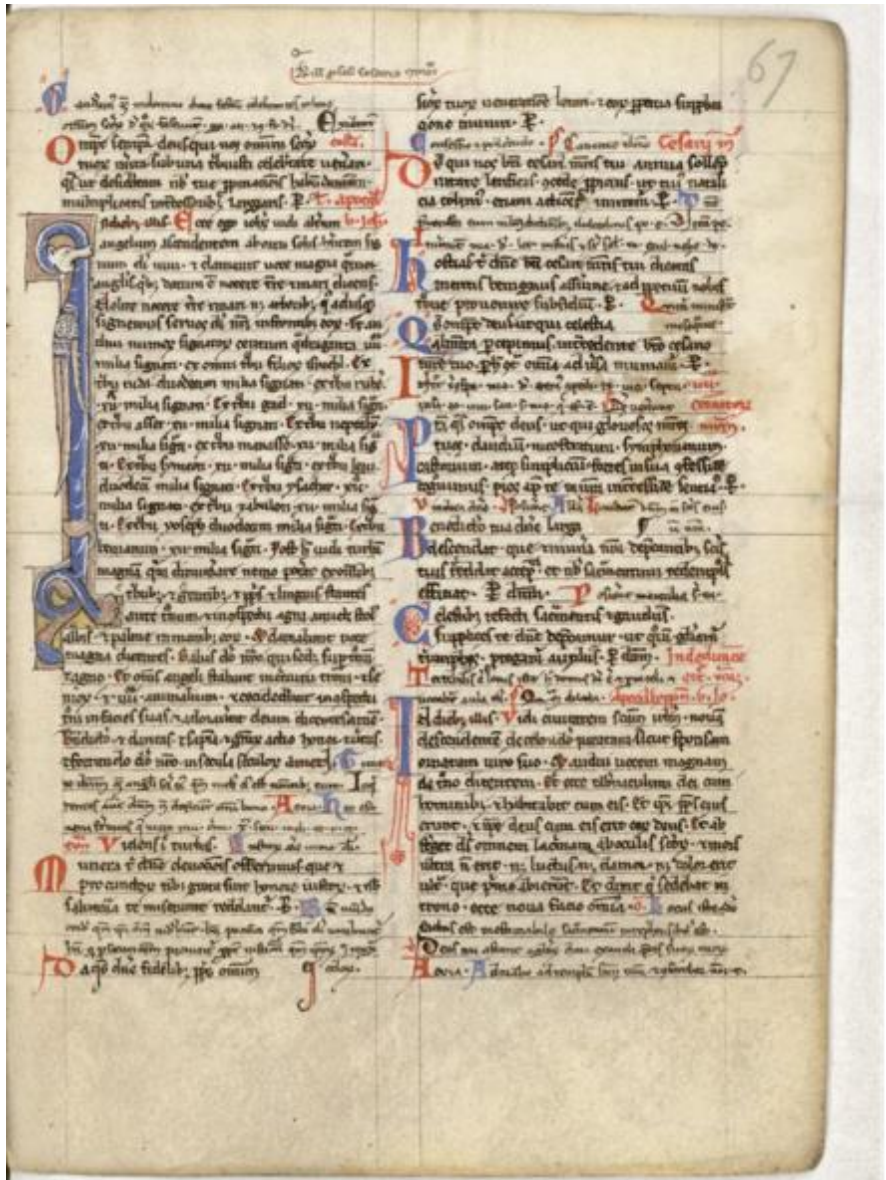


Fig. 4.2 Basilica del Santo Convento, Assisi. Ms. 607. Folio. 135. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of Ms. 607, on the website *Internet Culturale*.



Fig. 4.3 *The Christmas Mass at Greccio*. Giotto. Upper Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi. 1290-1300. Photo: Web Gallery of art.



Fig. 4.4 *Francis Preaching to the Birds*. Giotto. Upper Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi. 1290-1300. Photo: Web Gallery of art.



Fig. 4.5 *The Taming of the Wolf of Gubbio*. Maestro di San Francesco. Lower Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi. 1270–1280. Photo: Photo: Web Gallery of art.



Fig. 4.6 Detail of *Allegory of Obedience*. Giotto. Lower Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi. ca. 1330. Photo: Web Gallery of art.



Fig. 4.7 Detail of *Allegory of Obedience*. Giotto. Lower Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi. ca. 1330. Photo: Web Gallery of art.



Fig. 4.8 Assisi, Biblioteca del Sacro Convento, ms. 394, fol. 18. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of Ms. 394, on the website *Internet Culturale*.

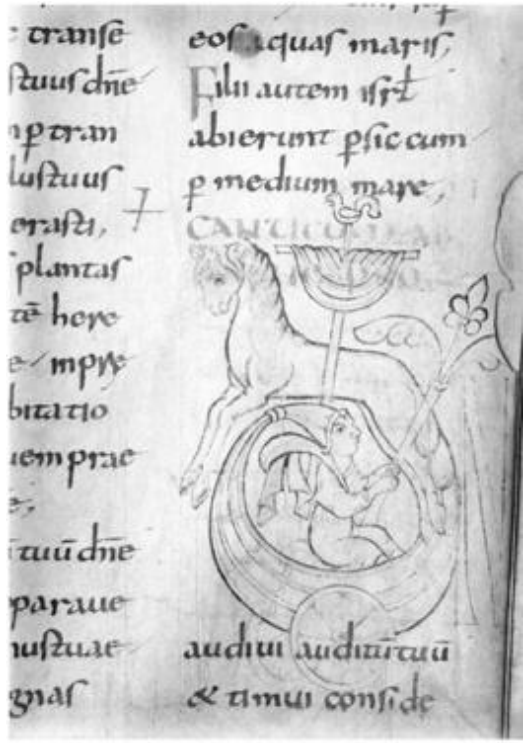


Fig. 4.9 Figure initials: Habakkuk's thanksgiving. Corbie Psalter. Corbie, c. 800. Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 18. Amiens. Photo: Deutsche digital Bibliothek, Psalter von Corbie, folio 133 recto.

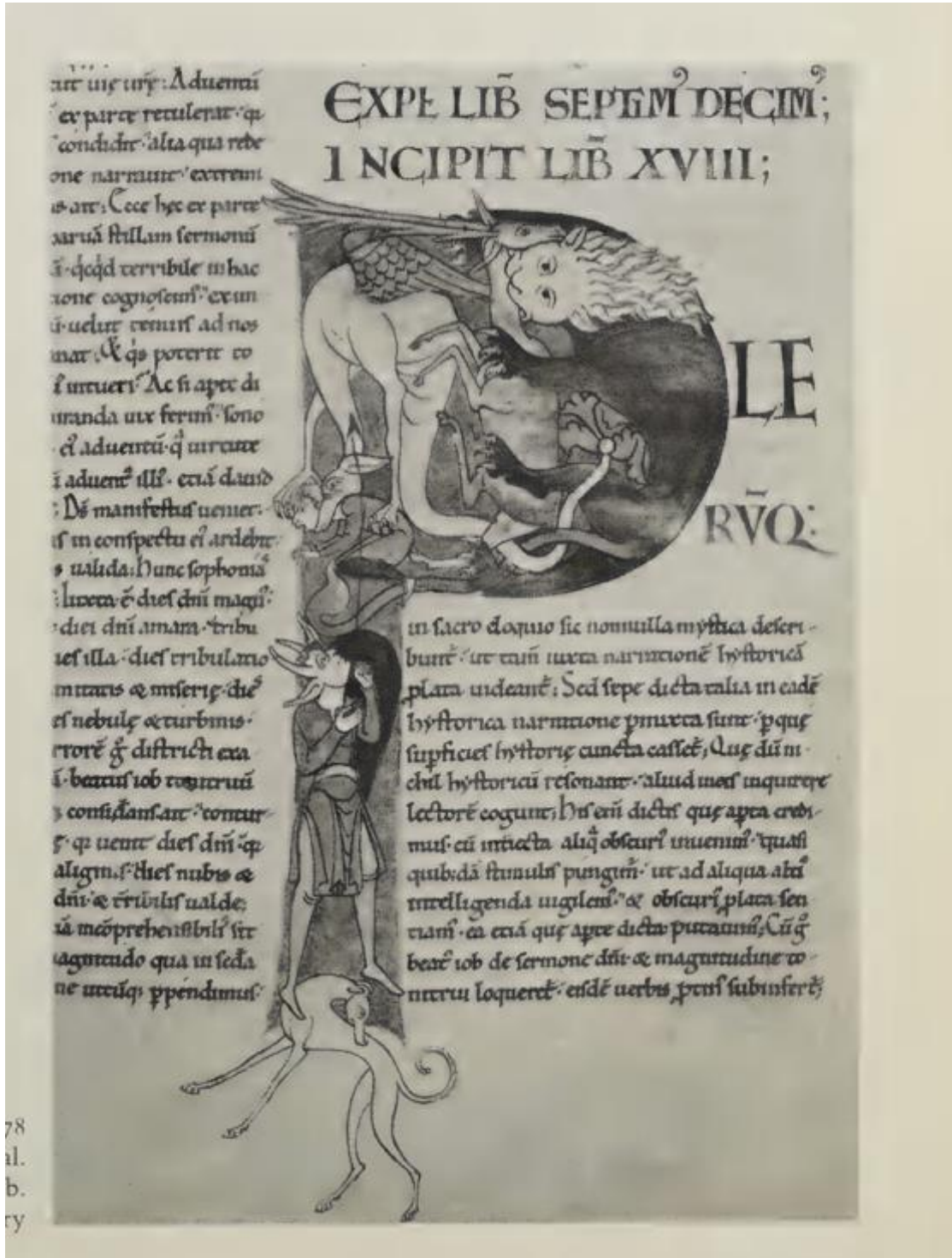


Fig. 4.10 Initial. Gregory. Moralia in Job. Cîteaux, early 12th century. Photo: Bibliotheque Municipale, Dijon, France. Bridgeman Images.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Latin 757

Fig. 4.11 Latin 757 c. 296v, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 14th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 4.12 Latin 757. Folio 305v. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. 14th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 4.13 Ms. Latin 1076. BnF. Département des Manuscrits. 14th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 4.14 Latin 1076. Folio 164v. BnF. Département des Manuscrits. 14th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 4.15 Latin 757. fol. 47v. BnF. Département des Manuscrits. 14th century. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 4. 16 Shilin guangji, Preface Collection, juan 11. Xiyuan jingshe woodblock edition. Yuan Zhishun period (1330–1333). Fu Sinian Library. Photo: Fu Sinian Library.

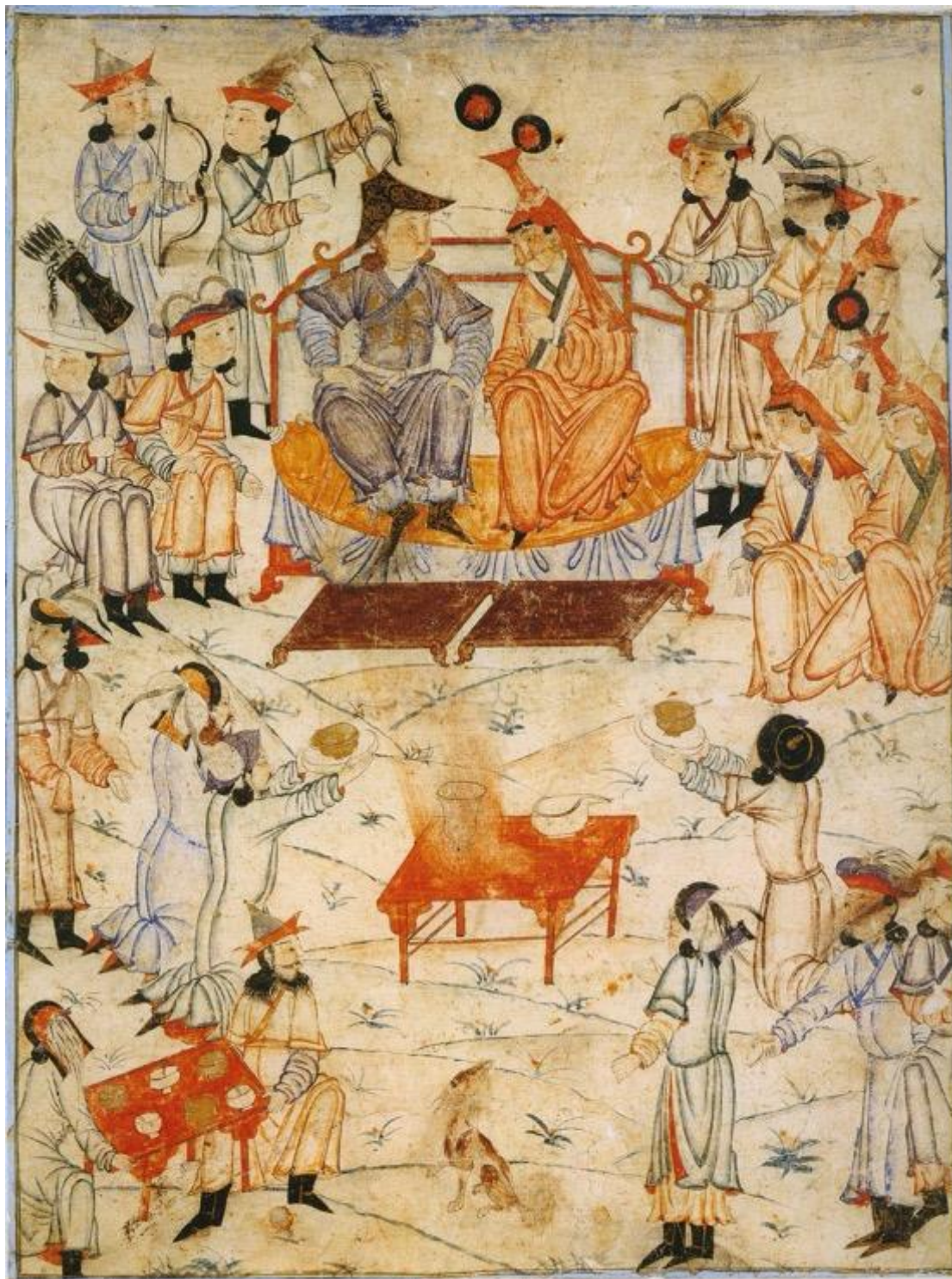


Fig. 4. 17 A celebration of the court. Illustrations in an early 14th century copy of Jami' al-Tawarikh, *The Diez Albums*. Water colours and gold on paper. Original size: 33.8cm × 25.8cm. Photo: Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Diez A Fol. 70.



Fig. 4. 18 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264. Fol. 260r.



Fig. 4.19 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264. Fol. 262r. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of MS. Bodl. 264, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.



Fig. 4.20 *Fanwang lifo tu* (*Foreign Kings Paying Homage to the Buddha*), ink drawing on paper, late Song–early Yuan period, Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4.21 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 66v. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of MS. Bodl. 264, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

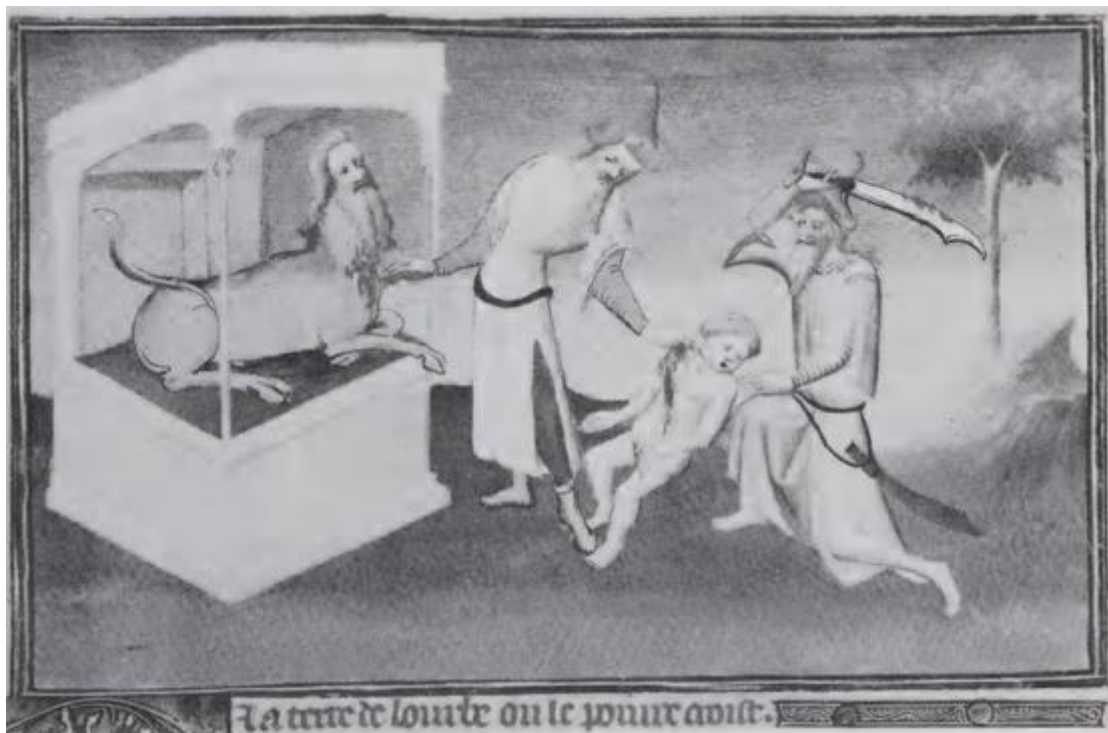


Fig. 4.22 Child sacrifice to Muhammad. Ms. Fr. 2810(the Duc de Berry's Livre des Merveilles du Monde), fol. 185r. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



Fig. 4.23 *Fragment of "Searching the Mountains" (Sou shan tu)*, fragmentary handscroll, color on silk, anonymous, Song dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4.23 *Fragment of "Searching the Mountains" (Sou shan tu)*, fragmentary handscroll, color on silk, anonymous, Song dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4.24 *Fragment of "Searching the Mountains" (Sou shan tu)*, fragmentary handscroll, color on silk, anonymous, Song dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4.25 *Fragment of "Searching the Mountains" (Sou shan tu)*, fragmentary handscroll, color on silk, anonymous, Song dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing. Photo: Palace Museum, Beijing.



Fig. 4. 26 Detail of Revealing the Alms Bowl (Jiebo tu juan), handscroll, ink and color on silk, by Qiu Ying (Ming dynasty), 138.3 × 29.1 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4. 27 Detail of Revealing the Alms Bowl (Jiebo tu juan), handscroll, ink and color on silk, by Qiu Ying (Ming dynasty), 138.3 × 29.1 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4.28 Detail of Revealing the Alms Bowl (Jiebo tu juan), handscroll, ink and color on silk, by Qiu Ying (Ming dynasty), 138.3 × 29.1 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4.29 Detail of Revealing the Alms Bowl (Jiebo tu juan), handscroll, ink and color on silk, by Qiu Ying (Ming dynasty), 138.3 × 29.1 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4.30 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 614. Fol. 041r. 13th century. Photo:



Fig. 4.31 British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A XV, f. 102v. "Beowulf manuscript", 12th century. Photo: Digitalized manuscript, British Library.



Fig. 4. 32 Bodleian Library MS. Bodl. 614. fol. 038v. 12th century. Copies a prototype of 11th century, probably London, B.L., Cotton MS. Tiberius B. V. Photo: Digitalized manuscript of MS. Bodl. 614, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.