

The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun

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Abstract. This study explores two issues. The first topic, as the title suggests, deals with the appearance of the Franciscan Order and its expansion at the expense of the Dominicans on the southern Russian steppe in the second half of the thirteenth century. The second question is tied to one of the successes of the Franciscans: the conversion to Christianity of one of the wives of Nogay, the khanmaker, the powerful lord of the western regions of the Golden Horde. I will reconstruct what can be ascertained about this khatun, based on Latin, Muslim and Byzantine sources.

The Dominicans who had settled in the Kingdom of Hungary enjoyed some success in converting the Cumans at the westernmost edge of the southern Russian steppe in the decades leading up to the Mongol Invasion. Members of the order settled in Székesfehérvár in 1221, partly because they wished to convert the Cumans. When the missionary Diocese of Cumania was founded in Milkó (or Milcov, in present-day Romania) in 1227–8 and charged with converting the Cumans, a friar—Theodorich—was selected from among them to lead the diocese in recognition of earlier Dominican successes (Pfeiffer 1913; Altaner 1924; Makkai 1936; Kovács 2005; Spinei 2008). However, in 1241, as a result of the Mongol attack, the diocese disappeared. Although it is true that it lasted on paper for a long time till the early sixteenth century, the see itself did not actually exist and did not play the missionary role that had been intended. Besides the diocese, the Cumans who converted to Christianity due to the activities of the Dominican Order between 1227 and 1241 had also disappeared. There are scattered data from the period after the Mongol Invasion about Christian Cumans who might have been converted before 1241: for example, Songor¹ may have been one of them. He is mentioned by Plano Carpini in 1247 as the Christian Cuman member of the court of Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod at the time (r. 1241–52) (Sin. fran. 128; Dawson 1955, 70; Györffy 1986, 181). It is highly likely, however, that Songor became a Christian under the influence of the Rus'. A similar item can be found in the work of Rubruk, who travelled within the Mongol Empire

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¹ The reading is suggested by Györffy (1986, 181) for the Sangor of the text because *songur* 'falcon' is a Cuman word.

between 1253 and 1255. He was on his way with the horde of Batu (d. 1255/6) along the Volga River, when they met a Cuman who greeted the friars with “*Salvete domini*” and claimed that “in Hungary, our friars”, that is, the Franciscans, had baptized him (Sin. fran. 217; Györffy 1986, 258; Jackson, Morgan 1990, 135–6). In this case, it is not out of the question that the Cuman was unable to differentiate between members of these two mendicant orders.

Thus we have reached one of the questions examined in this study: when and under what circumstances did Franciscan conversion replace that of the Dominicans? As of when do we have data on Franciscan activities on the southern Russian steppe? And, finally, how successful were they in the thirteenth century?

Here I would need to take a small detour regarding the Franciscan province in Hungary. It is known that soon after it was established, the order endeavoured to settle in the Kingdom of Hungary, but, in the end, they were only able to do so in the early 1230s.² This is important because in 1232, members of the order that had an independent province in Hungary were highly likely to have interests in evangelizing on the steppe, although I have only found a single reference to their possibly of having been on the steppe before the Mongol Invasion. This is in a letter from 1240(?), written by a so-far unknown Hungarian bishop to a French peer. In it the writer talked about a Mongol spy who had been captured and from whom he had learned that the Mordvins were the vanguard for the Mongols. The Hungarian bishop presumed that “they killed the Dominicans and Franciscans along with the other envoys whom the King of the Hungarians had sent for reconnaissance”.³

After the Mongol Invasion, conversion not only among the Cumans in Hungary, but also among the nomads of the steppes was surely part of the Franciscans’ plan. Some authors maintain that the Christian Cuman noted above who met Rubruk had indeed been converted by Franciscans (Balanyi 1925, 73).⁴ For friars working within the Kingdom of Hungary, it was easier to appear on the steppe for two reasons: one was the geographical location, the Hungarian province being the closest to the southern Russian steppe region ruled by the Golden Horde. In addition, friars active on Hungarian lands enjoyed another great advantage that emerges a number of times

² According to Balanyi (1927, 595), we can consider the existence of an independent province as early as 1232. Karácsony (1923, 14) maintained that at the time of the Treaty of Bereg in 1233 it was still only a custodia. Having mentioned former unsuccessful attempts at settling, such as the one in 1228 ordered by Plano Carpini, Moorman (1968, 166) was of the opinion that there must have been a province in Hungary before 1234.

³ “[P]er illos credo esse interfectos Praedicatores et Fratres minores, et alios nuncios, quos miserat Rex Ungariae ad explorandum” (CDH, 232–4; Katona 1981, 289–90).

⁴ Perhaps this is reinforced by the fact that the Christian Cuman Rubruck was also told the following: “He further said that Baatu had asked him many questions about us and that he told him the rules of our Order” (Sin. fran. 217; Jackson, Morgan 1990, 136).

in letters from Franciscans engaged in missionary work on the steppe: they learned the lingua franca of the contemporary southern Russian steppe,⁵ that is, the language of the Cumans (*linguam camanicam*),⁶ more easily and more perfectly. This may also be explained by the fact that they had been able to learn the basics of the language among the Cumans of Hungary, but similarities between Hungarian and the Turkic languages may also have aided them. Finally, it cannot be ruled out that converts might have come from among the Cumans who had settled in the Kingdom of Hungary.

The first Franciscans about whose travels we have surviving data actually did not journey from Hungarian lands to the steppe. In 1245, Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243–54) first wanted to send a Franciscan by the name of Lawrence of Portugal to the Mongols through Syria, but it seems that he ended up not even leaving Lyon (Guzman 1971, 234). The letter that the Pope wanted to send with him has survived.⁷ We therefore know that it contains an explanation of the Christian faith and encourages the Mongols to convert. A much better known friar, Plano Carpini, was successful and reached the Mongols.⁸ At the same time, it also bears mention that in 1245 the Pope sent not only Franciscans, but also two Dominican envoys (Andre de Longjumeau and Ascelinus).⁹ However, these missions were basically diplomatic in nature despite the fact that the friars were taking letters to the Mongols in which they were called on to convert to Christianity. The first Franciscan traveller of the age whose clear intention was conversion was the formerly mentioned Rubruk, who gave an account of his journey between 1253 and 1255. He clearly described his failure, which he openly acknowledged, at the end of his report: “I regard it as inadvisable for any friar to make any further journeys to the Tartars, as myself did or as the Preaching Friars are doing” (Sin. fran. 331; Györffy 1986, 380; Jackson, Morgan 1990, 278).

⁵ See relevant sections of the letter written by the Franciscans in Kaffa and dated 15 May 1323, according to which the Hungarian brothers and certain German and English ones learned the language rather well within a short period of time (Bihl, Moule 1923, 109). Or see also a section from a famous letter by Father Iohanca from 1320, in which he requested the minister general of the order to send as many friars as possible, mainly Hungarians, Germans and Englishmen, because they learned the language of the Tatars more quickly (Bihl, Moule 1924, 67).

⁶ See the relevant section of the letter by Paschalis de Victoria from 1338 (Wadding 1733, 7: 256; Sin. fran. 503): “[B]y the grace of God, I have learned the Cuman language and the Uyghur script, the language and the writing that is generally used in all the kingdoms, that is, the empires, of the Tatars, Persians, Chaldeans and Medes as well as in China.” This list, in fact, refers to the lands ruled by the Mongols.

⁷ *Dei Patris immensa* (5 March 1245) (Wadding 1732, 3: 116–7; MGH 72–3; Dawson 1955, 73–5).

⁸ In the papal bull, he delivered, *Cum non solum* (13 March 1245), Innocent IV directed the ruler of the Mongols to stop attacking Christian lands and made a request for peace (Wadding 1732, 3: 118), not knowing that peace for the Mongols signified surrender (Jackson 2005, 90).

⁹ These journeys are discussed in detail by Altaner (1924, 53–63; 120–38), Pelliot (1922–3, 3–30; 1924, 225–335; 1931–2, 3–84) and by de Rachewiltz (1971, 89–125).

To return to the Golden Horde territories of the Mongol Empire, we know that the Dominicans were also probably active there throughout the 1240s and 1250s since in 1253 Pope Innocent IV granted a special sanction to the Dominicans who were sent as missionaries to a number of eastern lands, including Cumania, and to the Hungarians living in Greater Hungary, that is, in territory of modern Bashkiria (*Ungarorum maioris Ungarie*).¹⁰ According to Makkai, this is the last data that indicates that Dominicans were also operating on the territory of the former Cumania after the Mongol Invasion (Makkai 1936, 45). They were replaced by the Franciscans. Although there is no information available on this, according to researchers on the Franciscan Order in Hungary, friars from Beszterce and Marosvásárhely (Bistrița and Târgu Mureș, respectively, in present-day Romania) frequented the Golden Horde to ransom prisoners. Meanwhile, they also learned the language and began to evangelize as well (Balanyi 1925, 73; Balanyi 1940, 35; Karácsony 1923, 26). Some presume that in 1267, when the head of the Rus' church, Metropolitan Cyril, received a decree (*yarlık*) from Mengü-Temür (r. 1266–80) (DeWeese 1994, 97; Pelliot 1949, 59; Richard 1977, 93; Ryan 2001, 154, 97), the Khan of the Golden Horde,¹¹ the Franciscans also received a charter, which was renewed in 1314 by Özbek, who even refers to the order of his forebears.¹² Two sections of the charter show a similarity to relevant sections of the khans' *yarliks* of the period, such as the initial words of the letter as well as its date: "In virtute eterni dei & magne maiestatis suffragio, Nos Vsbek mandamus hec verba nostra: Istud priuilegium tenentes sacerdotes latini qui suo more se fratres minores appellant..." (*From the power of eternal God and with the approval of His Great Majesty, we, Üzbek, issue these words of ours (our order):*¹³ *the Latin priests who call themselves the Friars Minor in accordance with their customs shall enjoy this privilege.*) The date is recorded as the fourth day of the third month of the Year of the

¹⁰ "Dilectis filiis fratribus de ordine predicatorum in terris Sarracenorum, paganorum, Greco- rum, Bulgarorum, Cumanorum, Ethiopum, Syrorum, Iberorum, Alanorum, Gazarorum, Catharum, Tartarorum, Zichorum, Ruthenorum, Iacobitarum, Nubianorum, Nestorianorum, Georgianorum, Armenorum, Indorum, Moscelitorum, Ungarorum maioris Ungarie, Christianorum captivatorum apud Tartaros, aliorum infidelium nationum orientis" (Theiner 1859, 223–4).

¹¹ For a reconstruction of the *yarlık*, see Grigorjev 1990, 53–102.

¹² "[P]riuilegium quod dederat Culuk progenitor noster & successor eius, frater noster senior, inperator" (Bihl, Moule 1924, 65; Hautala 2014a, 35). To the recent Russian translation with commentaries of the *yarlyk* see Hautala 2014a, 31–48. The word *Culuk* mentioned in the charter can be traced to the Mongol form *küliük*, which was originally a Turkic word meaning 'famous, glorious'. The word *küliük* in Mongol was a widespread personal name; for example, this was the name of the emperor of the Yüan dynasty who ruled between 1307 and 1311 and whose Chinese name was *Hai shan*. Pelliot (1949, 59) believed that "Culuk progenitor noster" is a reference to Möngke Temür, while "successor eius" may signify Özbek's uncle, Toqta (Sinor 1993, 112).

¹³ The phrase *verba nostra* is identical to the Mongol phrase *üge manu* meaning 'our word (order!)', which can be found in a letter written by the Ilkhanid Arghun (r. 1284–91) to Philip IV (the Fair) in 1289 as well as in a letter by Öljaitü (r. 1304–16) sent to the same ruler in 1306.

Panther/Tiger in accordance with the animal cycles used among the Mongols (*anno pardy mense 3^o, 4^a die mensis*), which, according to the issuer of the charter, meant 20 March 1314 (Bihl, Moule 1924, 65; Hautala 2014a, 36).¹⁴

To return to the thirteenth century, there is a clear reference to Franciscans having replaced the Dominicans on the southern Russian steppe from 1278. In that year, Pope Nicholas III (r. 1277–80) received a letter from the Franciscan provincial in Hungary, in which he requested that the pope restore the Diocese of Milkó, which had been destroyed, because many of his fellow friars were among the Tatars but there was no bishop to ordain them to the priesthood (Balanyi 1925, 73; Karácsony 1923, 26). The pope therefore ordered his legate to the Kingdom of Hungary¹⁵ to examine the situation and report to him (Wadding 1733, 5: 42; Theiner 1859, 337).¹⁶ The document includes the words “*civitas de multo*”,¹⁷ but in 1901 Nicolae Iorga corrected this to “*civitas de Mylco*” (Iorga 1901, xix). Despite the fact that the restoration of the diocese did not come to pass in the end, the request from the provincial seems to represent a definite dividing line between the evangelizing efforts of the Dominicans and those of the Franciscans since the Franciscans were requesting the restoration of a diocese that had formerly been under Dominican rule.

From the scattered information, therefore, we can conclude that the Franciscans had engaged in successful missionary activities for a number of years on the territory of the Golden Horde. According to certain assumptions, in the 1270s—partly perhaps because of these results—*Vicaria Tartaria Aquilonaris*, that is, the Northern Tatar vicariate, was also established.¹⁸ In 1287, the vicariate was certainly in place and there

¹⁴ The introductory and closing sections of the documents at the Mongol chancellery are very similar. In the introductory section, we see the opening formula, the name of the khan, and, finally, the name of the addressee. The closing formula contains when and where the document was created (Ligeti 1981, 121–3). To the place mentioned at the end of Özbek’s yarlık (*apud croceam arundinem*) see Bihl, Moule 1924, 58; Hautala 2014a, 40.

¹⁵ The legate was the Bishop of Fermo, Philip, who was entrusted by the pope on 22 September 1278 to deal with the ecclesiastical situation in Hungary. The legate only appeared in the country in early 1279 (Szűcs 2002, 418–9), and therefore he had received his order while still in Viterbo.

¹⁶ On the same day on 7 October, the pope also wrote a letter to his provincial in Hungary, in which he ordered him to send some of his brothers to the province of the Cumans (*provincia ad Cumanos*) (Wadding 1733, 5: 42; Theiner 1859, 337).

¹⁷ “[E]t ciuitas de multo posita in confinibus Tartarorum...” (Wadding 1733, 5: 42).

¹⁸ A vicariate is a province of an order established on missionary territory. Information on this vicariate appeared for the first time in a letter from 1287 to be discussed in what follows, but the precise date of its formation is unknown. Golubovich’s (1913, 262) suggestion that the decision on its establishment would have been made in 1263 at the general chapter in Pisa is unlikely since there is no sign of such a decision. Some are of the opinion that it existed as early as 1272 (Balanyi 1925, 72). Others maintain that it was established based on a decision made at the Second Council of Lyon (1274) (Liščak 2012, 31). Even information in the chronicle written by Elemosina Gualdensis (Ioannes Elemosina) around 1335 entitled *Liber Historiarum sancte Romane Ecclesie* supports the notion of the establishment of the vicariate around 1274. This Franciscan friar who lived in the fourteenth century recounts that the “Tartars” (*Tartares*), that is, the Ilkhanid Abaqa (r. 1265–82), sent envoys

were two custodias¹⁹ in operation on its territory: one of them, the *Custodia Gazzariae*, controlled the area of the Crimean Peninsula and environs, while the jurisdiction of the other, *Custodia Sarayae*, spread to the further north-eastern territories. We know this from a letter written by Ladislaus Custos in Kaffa and dated 11 April 1287. In this, the author of the letter recounts to his fellow brother Laurentius—who was sent to the leader of the order at some point in 1286²⁰—that the Khans Telebuga (r. 1287–91) and Nogay (d. 1299) (*imperatores enim Thelebuga et Nohay*) sent three envoys, the third of whom arrived at the town of Solkhat in August (*intravit civitatem Solhatensem*) (Старий Крим, Eski Qırım, on the Crimean Peninsula) with a cross and symbols of the power of the khan as well as flags. Latin and other Christians gathered to receive him, but the Muslims living in the town fled to the nearby forest.²¹ This envoy, who actually was himself a Muslim **as well**, greatly pleased the local Christians by placing three bells where there previously had been one, which had been removed earlier because of the **Muslim population**.²² In the letter, the friar also reports that the “Empress” Yaylak, “the great and powerful” wife, that is, the chief wife, of Nogay (*Iaylak imperatrix, maior et potencior uxor Nohay*) also appeared in the town and presented gifts to the church. Afterwards, she asked the friars to baptize her. In the town of Kerqueti (Qırq Yer,²³ near Bakhchysarai on the Crimean



to Lyon, where they were baptized. The baptized envoys returned to Tartaria, where they proclaimed the greatness of Christ's faith and the Holy Roman Church to their king and their peoples and as of that point the church of the faithful was established in Tartaria Aquilonaris. Here the Friars Minor established ten monasteries, five in towns and five mobile monasteries with the purpose of following the nomads (Golubovich 1913, 125). However, the author must have mixed something up since it is not clear how the conversion of Abaq's envoys to Christianity can be linked to the monasteries founded on the territory of the Golden Horde. Elemosina supposedly could not differentiate between the two empires, the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanid Empire, and saw them as one whole. It is beyond doubt, however, that if we consider a vicariate that was divided into two custodias as early as 1287, then the Franciscans would have started their activities decades earlier and the organisational frameworks would already have been in place. Thus, perhaps they would have been established sometime after 1274.

¹⁹ This was a relatively small district among the mediaeval Franciscans that included a few monasteries headed by a custos.

²⁰ On the arrival of Brother Laurentius in the West, however, the order had no minister general. The divided Franciscans only elected Matteo d'Acquasparta to head the order in May 1287, that is, not much after his response to the Custos of Kaffa, Laurentius.

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²² The tasks of the first two envoys was to punish those who were responsible for destroying the church and removing the bell. For the text of the latter, see Golubovich 1913, 444–5; Vat. Arch. 248–50.

²³ Bell ringing on the Crimean Peninsula led to a number of disputes, according to sources. In his charter granted to the Franciscans in 1314, which has already been mentioned, Özbek forbade anyone from preventing the Franciscans from bell ringing (Bihl, Moule 1924, 65). This, however, did not last long since, in a letter dated 5 February 1318, Pope John XXII, after having expressed his joy

Peninsula), the head of the Franciscans, namely Ladislaus Custos with the assistance of Stephanus, the guardian of Kaffa (*cum fratre Stephano gardiano de Capha*) baptized Yaylak in the presence of the Armenians and their archbishop as well as the Greeks and their priests.²⁴ Yaylak asked the members of the order to remain in Kerqueti, but since they had no monastery there, she found them a place to stay, which then Ladislaus Custos consecrated with Brother Paul, the former guardian of Sarai. At the same time, Yaylak entrusted Ymor, the son of Molday, lord of the land, to protect the friars from the violence of the Muslims. The other interesting element of the letter is that it makes mention of a leader called Argum in the area of Vicum (which might be identical with the locality called Vicina, which also appeared in various charters in the 1320s and is situated in the Lower Danube region). He was a pagan and requested through his son that two friars be sent to them (*duos fratres mittere dignaretur*) to baptize him and his family. This clearly indicates that the Crimean custodia provided missionaries for the Lower Danube region as well. The letter also bears relevance to Hungary since two of the Franciscans discussed in it (Ladislaus and Stephanus) were in all likelihood Hungarians since these names were quite common among Hungarian friars at the time (Takács 1942, 7), while a third one, Karichinus (Karácsony?), who was the interpreter in their community (*Karichinus Ungarus interpres noster*) and is mentioned at the end of the letter, was surely Hungarian.

During the period under examination, that is, the second half of the thirteenth century, Yaylak's baptism can be considered the greatest missionary success because of the significance of her husband Nogay. As the true lord of the western territories of the Golden Horde, Nogay can be considered a true khanmaker, since three consecutive rulers, Tuda Mengü (r. 1280–7), Telebuga (r. 1287–91) and Toqta (r. 1291–1312), ascended to the leadership of the Golden Horde through his support. Moreover, according to findings from recent research, in the last decade of the thirteenth century, he was also a khan for a short time (Vásáry 2005, 71–91). According to attributes used by the Crimean friar (*maior et potencior uxor*), Yaylak was the Nogay's chief wife. Her name, which in the Turkic languages means 'summer quarters', appeared in other sources besides this letter.²⁵ It was mentioned once in the work of Rašīd al-Dīn,

about all the good the khan had done for the Christians, reminded the khan of the three-year-long ban on bell ringing (Golubovich 1919, 178). The warning went unheeded, according to the pope's letter of 23 September 1323, which was practically identical word for word to the previous one. In it the pope asked that the khan ensure justice for the Christians of Sudak (Судак, Sudaq, in the Crimea), who were being harassed by Muslims and whose churches were being converted into mosques, and repeated his request about bell ringing (Golubovich 1919, 179).

²⁴ Perhaps this is what Rubruck may have been referring to when he stated: "and between Kerson and Soldaia lie the Forty Settlements" (Sin. fran. 170; Jackson, Morgan 1990, 69).

²⁵ This fact, noted in the letter, is important because the Franciscans were granted privileges with the knowledge of the other Christian (Armenian and Byzantine) churches.

written in the early fourteenth century (Yāylāq, يايلاق).²⁶ Then it also appeared in the works of the Egyptian historiographer, Baybars al-Manšūrī (died in 1325),²⁷ as well as in those of another Egyptian author, al-Nuwayrī,²⁸ as Baylaq and Baylaq Khatun (بيلق خاتون) (Tiesenhhausen 1884, 86–7*, 136–7).²⁹ According to the Byzantine author Georgios Pachymerés, the mother of Nogay's son, Čeke (Τζακῶς), was Alakke (Ἀλάκκη).³⁰ Alakke is usually identified as Yaylaq (Brătianu 1929, 232; Pelliot 1949, 79; Vásáry 2005, 92). Based on the various sources, it is clear that Yaylak was one of the wives of this powerful lord of the Golden Horde. Besides her, we know of two of

²⁶ For the year 1288, Wadding reported “de paptizatis jam Tuctane & Elegage reginis” (Wadding 1733, 5: 169). This Elegag, who was baptized, was identified as Yaylaq as well (Vat. Arch. 250). However, the context refers to the Ilkhanids, based on which Tuctan, to whom Pope Nicholas IV (r. 1288–92) wrote a letter on 2 April 1288—just as he did to Elegag (Wadding 1733, 5: 172)—was the widow of Abaqa (r. 1262–82) and mother of Gaykhatu Khan (r. 1291–5) (Ryan 1988, 417). Some believe that Elegag was probably one of the wives or concubines of Arghun (Soranzo 1930, 268), while others say she was one of Arghun's daughters, whose mother was the Christian Uruk Khatun (Chabot 1894, 584–5).

²⁷ Rašīd al-Dīn (1247–1318), the Jewish physician who converted to Islam, was vizier to Ghanzan Khan (r. 1295–1304) as of 1298. By order of the ruler, he began writing his world history, The Compendium of Chronicles, which is the most significant source on this period. The second and third volumes of his work deal with the history of the Mongols. He stated that Nogay's daughter Qiyan married a man named Yaylaq (يايلاق Yāylāq) but that their marriage was not devoid of problems. Indeed, Yaylaq was Uyghur and perhaps a Buddhist, while Qiyan was a Muslim. Later, however, he also called one of Nogay's wives Yaylaq (Blochet 1911, 145–50; Thackston 1999, 364–5; Tiesenhhausen 1941, 70–2).

²⁸ Baybars began his career as a slave to the Mamluk al-Manšūr Qalā'ūn (r. 1279–90), who was of Kipchak Turkic descent. He accompanied his lord on a number of military campaigns. Then, after his lord had become sultan, he appointed Baybars as governor of al-Karak. He held high offices. Later as well, during the reign of Qalā'ūn's son, al-Nāšīr Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn (r. 1293–4, 1299–1309 and 1310–41), he was also head of the chancellery. Baybars, who died on 4 September 1325 (4 Ramadan 725), was a merciful Muslim, delved into theological studies and found time to write historical works in addition to his military and political activities, in which his Christian secretary also assisted him. His most important work (Zubdat al-fikra fī ta'rīkh al-ḥiğra) covers the history of Islam from the beginnings to 1324 (724 AH), during the first part of which he relied on the work of Ibn al-Aṭīr, but the second part is a valuable source for the history of Egypt in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (E. Ashtor: Baybars al-Manšūrī. See EI, 1: 1127–8).

²⁹ al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) was engaged in administrative activities during the time of al-Nāšīr Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn noted above and wrote a major encyclopaedia entitled Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab between 1314 and 1320. The fifth part of this work—which is a summary of world history—contains important details about the Mongols. The author himself named the sources for these sections (among them Ibn al-Aṭīr) and added that he used other sources as well, including information he had heard from envoys and others travelling to Egypt (Amitai 2001, 27). At the same time, if we compare the approximately 20-page part on the Golden Horde to the work of Baybars al-Manšūrī noted above, we find that he relied heavily on Baybars's book in the final sections (Amitai 2001, 33). This is particularly true with regard to details relevant to the topic at hand because in these cases there are only very slight differences between the works of the two authors (Tiesenhhausen 1884, 86*, 137*, 108–9, 157–8).

³⁰ The difference between the forms Yāylāq, used by Rašīd al-Dīn, and Baylak, used by the two authors noted above, stems from the difference between the Arabic script versions of the Turkic word *yaylaq* ‘summer quarters’. In the work of the Persian author, the vowels are written out (Yāylāq= يايلاق), while they are missing in the writing of the later Arab authors (b.j.l.k= بيلق). In the case of the initial consonant, the difference is merely one dot (b=ب, vs. j=ج), which most likely results from a copying error.

Nogay's wives by name: one of them was *Čübäi (Pelliot 1949, 76),³¹ and the other was Euphrosyne, the natural daughter of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–82). As for whether Yaylak had a son or not, the sources are contradictory, but it is highly likely that she did.³² If we accept the identification of Alakke~Yaylaq, then, according to the Greek source, Čeke was Yaylaq's son. Rašid al-Dīn, at one point, noted that all three of Nogay's sons were born to *Čübäi, noted above (Blochet 1911, 146; Thackston 1999, 364; Tiesenhausen 1941, 70). However, only a few lines below, he contradicted himself and mentioned one of the sons, Būri (بورى), as Yaylaq's son (Blochet 1911, 150; Thackston 1999, 365; Tiesenhausen 1941, 72).³³

Based on the texts by the two Egyptian historiographers, Nogay had a high opinion of Yaylaq, who was once sent sometime in 1293 as an envoy to Toqta (r. 1291–1312), Khan of the Golden Horde. After Toqta had welcomed her as his guest and presented her with gifts, Yaylaq passed her husband's message on to him. It directed Toqta to deal with 23 noyons—the sources even list them by name—who had supported Telebuga over Nogay. Toqta obeyed, ordering the 23 nobles to come to him one by one and then killing them (Tiesenhausen 1884, 86*, 136–7*, 108–9, 157–8).³⁴ The khatun is mentioned once more by Baybars al-Manšūrī and, following him, by al-Nuwayrī. In my view, it was partly the khatun who created tensions between Toqta Khan and Nogay in 1297–8. According to the story, Yaylaq feared Nogay's two sons, Čeke (چكا) and Teke (تك),³⁵ who showed disrespect and contempt for her, and therefore she (according to the source, where she is mentioned as Baylaq) turned Toqta against them (Tiesenhausen 1884, 87*, 137*, 109, 158). Perhaps Nogay's two sons were hostile toward their father's wife because she was Christian (Pelliot 1949, 79).

³¹ PLP no. 536; Failler 1999, 290–1. According to n. 80, Alakke had two children, one of whom was named Τζακῆς (cf. PLP no. 27696).

³² Blochet (1911, 146) offered another reading (Čānī چابى) with the remark that it is highly uncertain. He therefore listed other versions in a note. Like Pelliot, Thackston (1999, 364–5) uses the form Čübäi. Like Blochet, Tiesenhausen (1941, 57, 70, 72) also offered various readings: Чаби/Джану/Хани/Хании/Чуби.

³³ According to the Egyptian authors, Nogay had three sons. We learn from Baybars that two of them were born to one wife and the third, Turāy (طراى), to another. Al-Nuwayrī also lists the names of the three sons, but, like Baybars, he fails to name their mothers (Tiesenhausen 1884, 86*, 137*, 109, 158). If we compare this to information provided by Rašid al-Dīn, then the mother of the third son can only be Yaylaq.

³⁴ According to Vásáry (2005, 92), Alakke had two sons, one of whom was Čeke, mentioned earlier. The contradictions in the sources are resolved by Pelliot (1949, 77) with his presumption that the three sons were all born of different mothers.

³⁵ However, according to Rašid al-Dīn, Nogay sent his other wife, *Čübäi, to Toqta as an envoy (Blochet 1911, 146; Thackston 1999, 364). In Tiesengauzen's reading: "она ездилa с посланными Ногая" (Tiesenhausen 1941, 70). At the same time, the Persian author also mentions that this wife was sent with Būri to the Ilkhanid Abaqa to request that his daughter marry Būri (Blochet 1911, 151; Thackston 1999, 365–6; Tiesenhausen 1941, 72). Here the author was again a bit confused since a few lines earlier, he referred to Būri as Yaylaq's son.

The Muslim sources are therefore quite confused, but there are two other sources that may support the idea that it may have been Yaylaq who visited Toqta as an envoy. In a letter dated 15 May 1323, the Franciscans gathered in Kaffa wrote to the cardinals and the participants at the general chapter in Lyon. They made mention of the fact that the ruler who passed away recently died a Christian and left three Christian sons behind, two of whom later renounced their faith to attain power more easily, yet in the end were executed (Bihl, Moule 1923, 111; Hautala 2014b, 93, 99). Because of the timeframe, this recently deceased ruler mentioned in the letter could be none other than Toqta. Whether Toqta was Christian or not is still debated (Hautala 2014b, 88), but it is a fact that, according to certain Muslim sources, he had three sons (DeWeese 1994, 108), one of whom was killed by Özbek,³⁶ thus possibly bearing out the authenticity of the information contained in the source. The other source I must cite may refer to Toqta's son, who remained a Christian in his faith or perhaps to Toqta himself. According to a Franciscan report from the 1320s, the grave of Coktogan, son of the ruler, was in St John's monastery near Sarai (*In Sancto Johanne, ubi est sepulcrum Coktogani filii Imperatoris*) (Golubovich 1913, 72). The identity of this Coktoganus is still debated (Hautala 2014b, 90). According to Pelliot, it is uncertain whether we can identify Coktoganus as Toqta (Pelliot 1949, 71). Others, such as Richard and Sinor, maintained that Coktoganus was one of Toqta's baptized sons (Richard 1977, 157; Sinor 1993, 113). DeWeese thought that the most likely explanation is that Coktoganus—which is an erroneous form of Toktoganus—is in fact Toqta, who received the name Iohannes in Christianity (DeWeese 1994, 99). There is an alternative identification of this Jochid with Kutukan, the younger brother of Toqta (Hautala 2014c, 317). According to a Franciscan chronicle from the fourteenth century, Iohannes, the ruler of the Tatars—who once was converted to the Catholic faith by the Friars Minor along with his mother—was buried after his death at St John's monastery three miles from Sarai.³⁷ At the same time, we know for certain that one of Toqta's wives, Maria, was the natural daughter of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos Palaiologos II (r. 1272–1328). Therefore, even if it cannot be decided with confidence whether Toqta was Christian or not,³⁸ it is clear that he

³⁶ According to the Egyptian authors, these two sons were born of the same mother, but the authors failed to specify which of Nogay's wives this was (Tiesenhausen 1884, 86*, 137*, 109, 158).

³⁷ Various sources are contradictory in this regard as well. There is a Persian source from the 1360s entitled *Tārikh-i Shaikh Uvais*, according to the author of which, al-Azharī, Özbek himself killed one of the sons: “В одно время Узбек ударил ножом Илбасмыша...”. The name *Ilbasmiš* appears elsewhere in the form *Il-basar* (DeWeese 1983, 115). However, Baybars claims that he died before his father Toqta sometime in 1309–10 (Tiesenhausen 1884, 98*, 123). Cf. Hautala 2014b, 88–9.

³⁸ “[D]ominus Iohannes, imperator Tartarorum, qui cum matre sua olim fuerat per fratres Minores ad catholicam fidem conversus, baptizatus et nutritus, ex hac vita migrans fuit in loco fratrum, qui Sanctus Iohannes vocatur, prope Saray ad tria milliaria, more imperiali solemniter tumulatus”

was surrounded by Christians. In his charter mentioned earlier, Özbek referred to a renewal of the privileges granted by his predecessors. As I have previously noted, Toqta tends to be identified as one of the granters. All this points to the fact that Toqta was on good terms with the Christians. Therefore, it is not out of the question for Nogay to have sent his Christian wife to him, the khatun having been on good terms with the Franciscans as well, since Nogay thought they would understand one another more readily.

According to Rašīd al-Dīn, the influential Yaylaq met an unhappy end. After Nogay's death, a number of people—Yaylaq among them—suggested to Nogay's son Čeke that he should cease hostilities and approach Toqta. (Perhaps this also confirms the assumption that the khatun and Toqta had enjoyed a good relationship earlier.) The son, however, did not like the idea, so he killed his father's wife (Blochet 1911, 150; Thackston 1999, 365; Tiesenhansen 1941, 72).³⁹

In conclusion, I would like to summarize my points as follows: based on the various sources, the Dominicans had been engaged in successful missionary work on the southern Russian steppe before the Mongol Invasion pushed them out, but this does not mean that they disappeared completely. Clearly, they remained in the region in small numbers,⁴⁰ but our sources report on the appearance of the members of another mendicant order from the late thirteenth century and throughout the next, the Franciscans. It is therefore partly thanks to them that one of the most important sources for the Cuman language, the *Codex Cumanicus*, was created. The Franciscans reported on successful conversions as early as the 1270s; however, they were unable to achieve the restoration of the Diocese of Milkó (partly because of the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary),⁴¹ a bishopric which had been in operation between 1228 and 1241. It is true that when the news of the Chinese successes enjoyed by the Franciscan Ioannes de Monte Corvino reached the West in the early fourteenth century, Pope

(Golubovich 1919, 170–1; cf. *Analecta Franciscana*, 456). On the Christianity of possible members of Toqta's family, see a summary by DeWeese 1994, 98.

³⁹ Balanyi (1925, 83) also believes that Toqta was a Muslim as a child, later returned to the ancient religion of the Mongols, and was baptized in the twilight of his life.

⁴⁰ I agree with Pelliot (1949, 77) that the khatun is unlikely to have been killed by her own son. None of the sources makes reference to this. Moreover Rašīd al-Dīn made mention of stepmother.

⁴¹ A source from the 1320s or 1330s (*De locis Fratrum Minorum et Predicatorum in Tartaria*) provides clear evidence of the Dominican presence. It is supposedly a report on the eastern activities of the Franciscans prepared for the leadership of the order and perhaps for the pope. Besides the 18 Franciscan monasteries in Northern Tartaria, it also makes mention of two Dominican monasteries, one in Kaffa and the other in Tana (near Azov, in present-day Russia), located by the mouth of the River Don (Golubovich 1913, 266–9). In the early fourteenth century, a language school was operated in the Dominican monastery of Kaffa for friars who had recently arrived in the Golden Horde and wished to engage in missionary work (Schmieder 2005, xxvii). The presence of the Dominicans is also indicated by the fact that in the 1310s the diocese of Kaffa was first headed by a Franciscan, who was then replaced by a Dominican (Richard 1977, 157–9).

Clement V (r. 1305–14) established an archdiocese in 1307 with a seat in Beijing (Khanbaliq).⁴² Its jurisdiction covered the entire Mongol world until 1318.⁴³

In the region and period under investigation, that is, on the southern Russian steppes in the second half of the thirteenth century, the greatest success enjoyed by the Franciscans would certainly have been the conversion of Nogay's wife. Hungarian Franciscans played an important role in this, a small group of whom seem to have worked together in the Crimea. At the same time, it must be noted that the conversion of Yaylak could not have taken place without the knowledge and acquiescence of her husband. It is highly likely that Nogay's political efforts lay behind the conversion of the khatun to Christianity and her support of the Franciscans. This is a question that I wish to investigate in more detail in another study.

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⁴² As I have already noted, the pope charged the Bishop of Fermo, Philip, with investigating the situation in the diocese. The papal legate, misunderstanding the essence of the politics of the King of Hungary, Ladislaus IV the Cuman (r. 1272–90), engaged in completely different affairs. On this, see Szűcs 2002, 418–29.

⁴³ On the papal sanctions granted to Ioannes de Monte Corvino, see Wadding 1733, 6: 93–6.

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