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**From a Christian Saviour to a Mongol Ruler: The
influence of Prester John's Glamor on the Muslim-
Crusader Conflict in the Levant, 1140s-1250s**

Ahmed Mohammed Abdelkawi Sheir

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Special Issue

Between History, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. Some results of the ASRT / CNR Bilateral Project 'History of Peace-building: peaceful relations between Est and West (11th - 15th Centuries)'

Luciano Gallinari - Ali Ahmed El-Sayed
- Heba Mahmoud Saad (eds.)

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Table of Contents

Luciano Gallinari <i>Editorial</i>	5-6
Luciano Gallinari - Ali Ahmed El-Sayed - Heba Mahmoud Saad <i>Introduction</i>	7-11
Giovanni Serreli <i>Continuity and catastrophes in the evolution of settlement in Late Antique and Medieval Sardinia</i>	13-26
Ahmed Mohammed Abdelkawi Sheir <i>From a Christian Saviour to a Mongol Ruler: The influence of Prester John's Glamor on the Muslim-Crusader Conflict in the Levant, 1140s-1250s</i>	27-43
Anna Maria Oliva <i>Il sultanato mamelucco d'Egitto e Siria e la Curia pontificia negli anni di Innocenzo VIII. Prime ricerche</i>	45-77
Sandra Leonardi <i>The cultural places' valorization through new models of tourism</i>	79-89

Sara Carallo <i>Digital Cultural Heritage And Tourism. Valle Dell'amaseno Web Portal</i>	91-107
Luisa Spagnoli - Lucia Grazia Varasano <i>Unused railways for a planning idea. A Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage</i>	109 - 127
Heba Mahmoud Saad <i>Thematic walking tours in Alexandria as a way to discover its heritage: Case study of Italian heritage in Alexandria</i>	129-143
Heba M. Said - Sherine Abdel Hamid <i>Community Participation in Heritage Sites Tourism Planning: Case Study Dahshur Mobilization Plan</i>	145-164
Reham El Shiwy <i>Italian Egyptologists through the Ages</i>	165-189

Focus

Maily Serra <i>Archaeology and topography of Santa Gilla (Cagliari) in medieval times: a new proposal for location through GIS. First notes</i>	191-244
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Book Reviews

Antonio López Amores <i>Albareda, Joaquim - Herrero Sánchez, Manuel (eds.) (2019) Political Representation in the Ancien Régime. New York and London: Routledge</i>	247-253
Giovanni Sini <i>Basso, Enrico (2018) Donnos terramagnesos. Dinamiche di insediamento signorile in Sardegna: il caso dei Doria (Secoli XII-XV). Acireale - Roma: Bonanno Editore</i>	255-260
Luciano Gallinari <i>Igual Luis, David - Navarro Espinach, Germán (coords.) (2018) El País Valenciano en la Baja Edad Media. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de Valencia</i>	261-265

From a Christian Saviour to a Mongol Ruler: The influence of Prester John's Glamour on the Muslim-Crusader Conflict in the Levant, 1140s-1250s

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Abstract

The crusading movement influenced Muslim-Crusader thoughts and imaginations. It, in turn, changed the way in which West and East perceived each other. Thereby the legends played a role in transferring some imaginative and legendary conceptions shaped the Crusades' events. This paper studies the legend of Prester John and its development over space and time, examining how Prester John was perceived in the fact of a Christian saviour and a Mongol ruler during the 12th and 13th century. Additionally, I strive to measure the extent to which such connections and imaginations shaped the historical events of the conflict between the Muslims and the Crusaders at the time

Keywords

Crusaders; Prester John; Genghis Khan; Fifth Crusade.

Riassunto

Il fenomeno delle Crociate influenzò i pensieri e le fantasie musulmano-crociate. Esso, a sua volta, ha cambiato il modo in cui l'Occidente e l'Oriente si percepirono a vicenda. Pertanto, le leggende hanno giocato un ruolo nel trasferire alcune concezioni fantastiche e leggendarie che hanno plasmato gli eventi delle Crociate. Questo articolo studia la leggenda del Prete Gianni e il suo sviluppo nello spazio e nel tempo, esaminando come il Prete Gianni fu percepito come un salvatore cristiano e un sovrano mongolo durante il XII e XIII secolo. Inoltre, il saggio si impegna a misurare fino a che punto tali connessioni e fantasie hanno plasmato gli eventi storici del conflitto tra i Musulmani e i Crociati dell'epoca.

Parole chiave

Crociate; Prete Gianni; Gengis Khan; Quinta Crociata.

1. Introduction. - 2. Prester John in the Figure of a Crusading Saviour in the Twelfth Century. - 3. Associating Actual Events with the Figure of Prester John. - 4. Prester John, Genghis Khan and the Fifth

Crusade. - 5. Searching for Prester John among the Mongols. - 6. Conclusion. - 7. Bibliography. - 8. Curriculum vitae.

1. *Introduction*

The crusading movement was a medieval episode contributed to creating emotional enthusiastic imaginations that inspired the Crusades. The myths were one of the motives that stimulate the Crusaders to expand their authority over the East. Seeking to shed light on such mythological motivations of the Crusades, this paper examines the legend of Prester John and its development during the study period. It also strives to pinpoint how Prester John was perceived in the figure of an Oriental-Christian saviour in the twelfth century and in the persona Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century. Between those two perceptions, the influence of the legend allure on peacebuilding endeavours and war actions between the Muslims and the Crusaders would be studied.

2. *Prester John in the Figure of a Crusading Saviour in the Twelfth Century*

The legend of Prester John was born in the twenties of the twelfth century; it was probably associated with St. Thomas of India, Thomas the Apostle, (Zarncke, 1996a, pp. 23-38; Beckingham, 1996, pp. 6-7). According to an anonymous chronicle dated to the mid-twelfth century, an Indian man called John, who claimed to be an Indian Patriarch, reached the papal court in Rome in 1122 and disseminated stories about the miracles of St. Thomas in India. This Indian Patriarch visited Rome in 1122, the fourth year of the pontificate of Calixtus II, c. 1065 –1124, and recounted mysterious stories about a Christian community in India. (Brewer, 2015, pp. 30, 34; Baum, 1999, p. 122). It was mentioned that the Pope and all his court believed such Christian community raised their hands to heaven and glorified Christ for such divine and great miracles (Brewer, 2015, pp. 33, 38; Odo of Rheims, 2015, pp. 39, 40, 42).

Such notion about the existence of a Christian kingdom somewhere in Asia or India highlighted the crusading hope of establishing an alliance against the Muslims (Hilal, 1997, p. 17; Lach, 1994, p. 26; Slessarev, 1959, pp. 7-9). Consequently, the Indian bishop's visit to Rome was the nucleus of the story of an Asian ruler called Prester John who had defeated the Muslims in the East and governed a Christian Kingdom (Kurt, 2013, pp. 297-320; Zarncke, 1996, pp. 23-38; Bar-lian, 1995, pp. 291-98). According to the early Christian traditions, St. Thomas was martyred after establishing a Christian society in India and the rest of his disciples were then moved to Edessa after the Crusader invasion to the Levant (Baum, 1999, pp. 46-48, 56; Lach, 1994, pp. 25-26; Kerr, 1824, pp. 18-26). As a consequence, to the downfall of Edessa to the Turkish atabeg 'Imad al-Dīn Zengi in 1144, the Queen Melisende, the regent of Jerusalem, demanded

from Raymond of Poitiers, Prince of Antioch (d.1149) to dispatch an envoy to Rome to ask for a new crusade (Runciman, 1995, v.2, pp. 225, 247-248; William of Tyre, 1943, v.1, pp. 119, 142-144).

Hugh Bishop of Jableh (a coastal city in Syria), was dispatched to the court of Pope Eugenius III (1145-1153) in Viterbo in 1145 (Runciman, 1995, v.2, pp. 225, 247-248; William of Tyre, 1943, v.2, pp.119, 142-144). Otto of Freising, (1111-1158), a German bishop and historiographer, was witness to the report of Hugh of Jableh and was the first extent to record Prester John's legend in the seventh book of his chronicle the two cities "Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus." According to Hugh of Jableh's reports, there was a mysterious king called Prester John, who was also a Nestorian preacher, governed a kingdom beyond the Armenian and Persian lands in the Far East. He was powerful enough to assist the Crusaders and to attack the Muslims, having fought against the so-called Samiardi brothers, kings of Persia, in Media in today's western Iran and stormed the royal city of their kingdom, "Ebactana" or "Ekbatana," - nowadays the city of Hamadan in Iran (Beckingham, 1996, p. 3). This alleged Prester marched to assist the Crusaders, but he could not cross the Tigris River, which was frozen in the winter. Consequently, he returned to his country promising that he would return to fight the Muslims. Otto of Freising, however, apparently had some doubts about the legend authenticity saying enough is enough "Sed hechactenus," (Ottonis Episcopi Frisingensis Chronica, 1912, pp. 363-367).

3. Associating Actual Events with the Figure of Prester John

There was a real historical event other than that of the fall of Edessa to Zengi contributed to flourishing the European-Levantine imaginings about such heroic figure. The Muslim sources recorded that Sultan Sanjar, ruler of Khorasan and Ghazni (died 1157), was defeated by Yelu Dashi of the Qara Khitai State at the ferocious battle of Qatwan in 1141-42 /536 AH, which took place in central Asia. The said battle was so tremendous, and Sanjar apparently lost a countless number of his people (Ibn al-Āthir: 2003, v. 9/p. 319; Ibn-al-Jauzī, 1992, v.18/pp. 17-19).

As consequence to that, the reports of Yelü Dashi became conflated with the figure of Prester John believing that Prester John was the leader who defeated Sultan Sanjar in 1142 and would, therefore, come to overthrow Zingi in Edessa in 1144. Nevertheless, Yelu Dashi was not a Nestorian, but in fact Buddhist (Hilal, 1997, pp. 19-21; Hamdi, 1949, p. 51).



Fig. 1. Asia, ca. 1142 CE: The Qara Khitai (Western Liao) Empire (Amitai and Birn, 2004, p.193)

The fall of Edessa to the Muslims' hands in 1144 coupled with the fiasco of the Second Crusade, contributed to thriving the glories of the legendary King-Priest (Frimmer, 1976, p. 177). Prester John's glamour was perpetuated in an anonymous letter sent to the Byzantine Emperor, Manuel I (1142-1180), between 1165 and 1170. Such letter stated that Prester John was the "Lord of Lords, by the power and virtue of God" (*Epistola Presbiteri Iohannis*, 2015, pp. 44-46, 66-67; Zarncke, 1996, pp. 40, 77; Röhricht, 1893, p. 67, no. 264). It was said that such spurious letter was first sent to Emperor Manuel I and forwarded to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1222-1190) and Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) (Baum, 1999, 127-28, de Reachewiltzy, 1971, p. 35; Ross, 1930, p. 178). It seems that Pope Alexander did not give credence to the boastful letter ascribed to Prester John in circulation. In September 1177, he addressed his Physician Phillip to search for Prester John (Papa Alexander III, 2015, pp. 92-96; Röhricht, 1893, p. 145, no.544; Roger of Hovden, 1853, pp. 491-93), but he disappeared somewhere and did not leave any tangible evidence of his travels (Hilal, 1997, 22; Ross, 1930, p. 179).

Briefly, Prester John was sensed as zealous Christian saviour who had great authorities in the Far East and would assist the Christians of the holy land. Otto's report described him as a ruler "beyond Persia and Armenia from the furthest east" (*Otonis Episcopi Frisingensis Chronica*, 1912, pp. 363-367). In the letter sent to the Byzantine Emperor, it was stated that Prester John dominated lands of the three Indias crossing from the furthest India (*Epistola Presbiteri*

Iohannis, 2015, pp.46, 68). Therefore, the scenarios of such legend took place in the Far East, of which the Mongols emerged and then advanced to attack the Muslims lands in coinciding with the fifth crusade on Egypt. As consequence to that, the Mongols fantastically were associated with the charm of Prester John.

4. *Prester John, Genghis Khan and the Fifth Crusade*

During the fifth crusade (1217–1221AD/ 612-618 AH), the legend was revived and the spheres of Genghis Khan traditionally corresponded Prester John. The bulk of the texts and news of Prester John were, in fact, the actual activities of the Mongol ruler and his army that mythically transferred to the persona Prester John or his son King David. Jacques de Vitry, Bishop of Acre, was the first one to believe in, and refer to, Prester John in 1217. He wrote a letter to various ecclesiastics in Europe; claiming that many Christian kings who lived in regions next to the land of Prester John, had heard of the advent of the Crusaders, “crucesignatorum,” and were about to come to help them against the Muslims “Sarracenis.” (Jacques de Vitry, 2015, pp. 98-99; and 1960, pp. 95-98).

The Crusader army arrived on the coast of Egypt at Damietta on May 27th, 2018/ late Şafar 615 AH. Sultan al-Kāmil of Egypt offered to deliver the crusaders Jerusalem; Tibnān, Tiberius as well as the other cities that had been taken by Salah al-Dīn, except for the castles of Karak and Montreal “Shoubak.” In return, the Crusaders should have withdrawn from Damietta (al-‘Ainī, 2010, v.4/p. 57; Ibn al-‘Ibrī, 1994, p. 413, Oliver of Paderborn, 1971, pp. 84-86, 89-90). However, the papal legate Pelagius refused to hold peace (Ibn-al-Athīr, v.10/379; Cole, 1991, pp. 143-144; Donovan, 1950, 62-63).

It seems that the Crusaders were waiting for the coming oriental hero before engaging in any peace negotiations, and then they might be able to conquer the Ayyubids. In 1219, Oliver of Paderborn, a German ecclesiastic and historian, wrote that the Crusaders received a letter written in Arabic, whose author was neither a Jew or a Christian nor a Muslim. This anonymous letter mentioned that son of Prester John, King David, sent his envoys to release the Christian captives captured in Egypt during the Crusaders’ siege of Damietta, and then they were sent to the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad as gifts (Oliver of Paderborn, 2015, pp. 135-39, and 1971, pp. 89-91). Consequently, in August 1219/Jumada al-Thani 616, the Crusaders refused a second peace offer from al-Kāmil, who sent two Crusader prisoners, Andrew of Nanteuil and John of Arcis, to renew his recent peace offer (Omran, 1985; p. 264; Vitry, 1960, p. 150; Donovan, 1950, p. 62).

During the siege of Damietta, May 1218-August 1219, there were some internal disorders in the Ayyubid camp. The people of Damietta suffered indescribably starvation and Ibn-al Mashtūb with other princes led a conspiracy to depose al-Kāmil. This caused a sort of chaos inside the Muslim army on the eastern side of Nile River. Thus, in February 1219/Zulqīda 615, the Crusaders marched and took control of the Muslim camp (al-Maqrīzī, 1997, v.1/p. 314; Ibn-Wāṣil, 1960, v.4/pp. 16-17; Röhrich, 1893, p. 246.no.924; 270). As always, the third peace-making attempt failed a few days before the fall of Damietta in November 1219 (Omran, 1985, p. 270; Ibn-Wāṣil, 1960, v.4/p. 23; Roger of Wendover, 1849, v.2/pp. 421-422).

Meanwhile, Genghis Khan's attacks against the Khwarezm State in 1219-1221 took place only in part with the fifth crusade against Damietta. Thus, there was, in a sense, a natural association between the old tradition of Prester John and the victorious Mongol army under Genghis Khan (who died 1227). Sweeping victories by the Mongol armies in Asia under the leadership of Genghis Khan thus gave the legend new stimulus and life and it was believed that Prester John's forces would join the crusade against Egypt (Claverie, 1999, pp. 603-04; Papacostea, 1998, p. 166).

The news spread quickly among the Christians of the medieval world of the time about the presence of a Christian sovereign in the Far East, King Prester John/King David, who governed large numbers of people and had enormous wealth (Oliver of Paderborn, 1971, pp. 91, 112-113). Jacques de Vitry in Egypt received a copy of a letter dated 1220 or early 1221 that supposedly transferred the initial movements and victories of the Mongols to the imagined person King David, son or grandson of Prester John. Such letter referred that King David had controlled many places in the Far East, which the Mongol, in reality, took hold. When they invaded Inner Asia and the steppes. (*Relatio de Davide*, 2015a, pp. 101-122; Aigle, 2014, p.49; Ibn-al-Athīr, 2003, v. 9/ pp. 401-407).

The Mongols invasion of the Khwarezm lands had terrified the Muslims in the Levant (Ibn-Wāṣil, 1960, v.4/p. 41). By contrast, the same news revived the crusading spirit. Once again, *Relatio de Davide's* text represented King David as a Nestorian Christian, who freed the Christian captives sent by al-Kāmil of Egypt, "Sultan of Babylon" as a gift to the Caliph of the Muslims in Baghdad (*Relatio de Davide*, 2015a, pp. 105-106, 112-113). Attaching further dramatic materials, Jacques de Vitry in his Letter dated 18th April 1221 said that Sultan al-Kāmil had heard about the marvels of King David, Prester John's son. He, as consequence, contacted John of Arques-la-Bataille, Odo of Chatillon, and Andrew of Carignon, who were captives in Cairo. He also reached some Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights, through them he offered new peace agreement, for the fourth time, that was refused by the Crusaders.

(Jacques de Vitry, 2015b, pp. 128, 132, Röhricht, 1893, p. 250/no. 941). It seems that Jacques de Vitry did trustworthily consider this legendary letter, translated it into Latin, and “Christianized” the Mongols (Jacques de Vitry, 2015b, pp. 128, 132; Taylor, 2010, pp. 8-9).

In Genghis Khan (1206-1226 AD/ 603-623 AH) the Crusaders' advocates of the legend in Egypt waited to for Prester John considering him a divine ally (Omran, 1985, p. 236, Hassan, 1933, p. 28). It could be argued that the Crusaders in Damietta used, even partly, such legendary figure as an emotional instrument to discourage any attempts to make peace with the Muslims and led the Crusaders' rejection of peace with the Ayyubids of Egypt.

It was claimed that King David insulted the Muslims' Caliph and demanded to deliver Baghdad. He sent his messengers to Abbasid Caliph saying, through an interpreter, “Our king (...) wants to have Baghdad so that the seat of our Patriarch might be there.” The Caliph answered them “the king must set up his stewards throughout the conquered lands. I, therefore, ask humbly that he make me his steward in this land, and I will give him as much money as he wants” (Relatio de Davide, 2015a, pp. 105-106,112-13).

Supposing that Genghis Khan dispatched such letter to the Abbasid Caliph al-Nāṣṣir (named "Alnazer" in Davide's letter) and subsequently the events were mythically transferred to the figure of King David. However, the historical resources did not record something about such letter or another similar corresponds at the time. In contrast, It was mentioned that the Caliph al-Nāṣṣir requested the assistance of Genghis Khan against the Sultan Mohamed Ibn Khawarizm, who was in disagreement with the Caliph and was about to attack Baghdad. Al-Nāṣṣir demanded Genghis Khan to enlist him as an ally against the Khwarezmid Sultan. Ibn-al-Athīr said that al-'Ajam "Persians" were right when they said that Caliph al-Nāṣṣir, who communicated with the Mongols, was the reason of the latter's greediness in the Muslims' lands (Ibn-al-Athīr, 2003, v.10/p. 453; Saiād, 1980, vol1/ p. 72).

Ibn al-'Ibrī mentioned that the Tatars under the leadership of Genghis Khan conquered the lands beyond the river, called "Alaanar" in the Relation de Davide's letter, in 1219/ 616 AH with about 200,000 soldiers. He subsequently captured the lands of the Khwarezmid state, named “Chavarsmisan” in David's letter, as well as Samarkand, and other cities up to the borders of Iraq, Baghdad, and the Muslim Caliphate (Ibn al-'Ibrī, 1994, pp. 407-411, Fahmy, 1981, pp. 57-70). Subsequently, in reality, there are no mentions about such letters dispatched from Genghis Khan, who was received in the romantic persona of King David, to the Abbasid Caliph at the time. This illustrates that the writer of King David/Prester John letter and the Crusaders added imaginative and

dramatic materials to the legend by attributing the exploits of the actual historical Genghis Khan to the non-existent Prester John and his son David.

Ibn al-Āthīr also wrote that people came from China to the lands of Turkistan, including Kashgar and Blasagun. They then headed to areas beyond the River, including Samarkand and Bukhara, among others. Some of these Tatars marched on Khorasan and devastated it, after which they conquered the cities from Khorasan up to the border of Iraq. Then, a group of them advanced to Ghazni, India, Sajestan, Kerman and towns and other countries, committing atrocities and crimes (Ibn-al-Athīr, 2003, v.10/pp. 399-401). It seems that the said text regarding King David/Prester John had attached fabricated and dramatic materials to the legend by attributing the exploits of the actual historical Genghis Khan to the non-existent Prester John and his son David.

The second version of *Relatio de Davide's* letter described the advent of Genghis Khan, but presented him, as always, as King David referring to the capture of Khwarezm state and other cities (*Relatio de Davide*, 2015b, pp. 114–17). The third version of David's letter was written by anonymous clergymen whose names are abbreviated to W. and R. in the manuscript copies. They were probably privy to one of the earlier David letters and circulated the story among their ecclesiastic followers in the German city of Münster. They express their excitement at the news brought from Egypt and the victories of Genghis Khan, or as they thought, "David, son of Prester John of India," who had come to the Holy Land after capturing many cities in the East. They did not fail to mention that, at the time of the writing of the text, King David was himself in Baghdad (*Relatio de Davide*, 2015c, pp. 118-122).

The perception of Prester John and his dynasty in a real victorious king or leader, such the Mongol leader, or in the structure of a historical Christian king or priest, would support the belief in the existence of Prester John or the called King David. The prediction of Prester John's arrival during the fifth crusade was transmitted in the letters of the Oriental-Crusaders to Europe and Pope; reflecting the actual political occurrences in the East, in which the Mongols played a key-figure. Therefore, the relations between the Latins (Europe and the Crusaders in the Levant) and the Mongols first relied on the association between Prester John and the Mongol king, in turn; such relations and connections reflected on the Crusades and the Mongol-Muslim conflict as well (Knobler, 2017, p. 8).

After an extended waiting period, during which four peace overtures from the Muslims were refused, Prester John did not reach Egypt. This interval of time in which the Crusaders waited for Prester John enabled the Muslims to regroup themselves. The Crusaders marched towards Cairo in July 1221 and the Egyptian forces repulsed them. The Ayyubids were thus able to besiege the

crusader forces between the two main distributaries of the Nile River, Damietta, and Rosetta. After several clashes between the two sides, the Crusaders eventually did come to hold a peace agreement and left Egypt on September 7th, 1221/Rajab7th, 618 (Al-'Ainī, 2010, v4/p. 57; Ibn al-Muqaffa, 2006, v.3.2/p.1539; Ibn-al-Athīr, 2003, v.10/p. 380)

Matching Prester John with the fact of Genghis Khan was used to boost the Crusaders against the Muslims. However, the Crusaders eventually sought to peace without any of the advantages they initially had. Such setback did not eradicate the belief in the existence of Prester John and his kingdom. The perception of Prester John was developed and revived by dispatching Catholic-papacy missions to search for Prester John or his ancestors among the Mongols in the 1240s.

5. *Searching for Prester John among the Mongols*

As a Justification for the fiasco of Prester John to join the fifth crusade, the Alberic's chronicle (1232-41) recorded that King David returned to his fatherland when he heard the frustrated outcomes of the fifth crusade. However, Alberic persisted in matching Prester John with the Mongol ruler. He mentioned that the Hungarians and Cumans called the army of King David the "Tartars," and this was at the time of writing his Chronicle between 1232 and 1241 (Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, 2015, pp. 142-149). As soon after the Mongols conquest of Russia, Hungary and Poland, the Latins in West and Levant realized that they had exaggerated in their aspiration toward Prester John and his troops (Baum, 1999, pp. 152-53). Nevertheless, Alberic defended Prester John saying that the Tatars had killed their lord Priest John, who would have come to the aid of the Latin Christians and their kings in the Levant (Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, 2015, pp. 142-149; Baum, 1999, pp. 152-153).

Prester John had a great allure on the western imaginations, especially the papacy that craved for conquering the Muslims and expand the Catholic authority. The Mongols, thus, were deemed as natural allies against Muslims. All such aspects combined with the internal crusader turmoil in the Levant stimulated Pope Innocent IV (1195-1254) to hold the council of Lyon in 1245 and then sent four missions to the Mongols to open a direct conversation with them (Jackson, 1994, pp. 15-32; Guzman, 1968, pp. 34-35).

The Franciscan monk Lawrence of Portugal was the first Papal Envoy to the Mongols and departed from Lyon on March 5th, 1245. However, the outcomes of this embassy are unknown and it was said that Lawrence probably misled his path or might never go out Europe (Guzman, 1968, pp. 34-35; Dawson, 1955, pp. 73-75; Carpine, 1913, p. 5). Between 1245 and 1247, the Franciscan John of

Plano Carpine (ca. 1180- c. 1250) travelled to the court of Cuyuk Khan (1241-1246) in the Karakorum. He aimed to preach for Christianity among the Mongols and to hold an alliance against the Muslims (Carpine, 1913, pp. 4-5, 129-30)

Carpine's account, *Historia Mangalorum*, was dedicated to reporting stories about Genghis Khan and the war between Mongols and Prester John that certainly made his account distinguished (Carpine, 1913, pp. 7-8, 74, 170-177; Beazley, 1903, pp. 83, 116-117). He stated that there was a war was between the Mongol forces and an Indian king called Prester John, "Qui vulgö Presbyter Iohannes appellatur." Prester John governed the Indians, who were black Saracens and called Ethiopian who were defeated by the Mongol ruler. (Ruotsala, 2001, pp.40-41; Carpine, 1913, pp. 74,170; Beazley, 1903, pp. 83, 17).

The term of three Indias, *Tribus Indies*, that meant Nearest India, Furthest India, and Middle India, was a clear indication of where the kingdom of Prester John was assumed to be. It is supposed that the Nearest India meant the North of the sub-continent that was known as infertile lands, according to what was ascribed to Alexandria the Great. The Furthest was the south India, which was accessible to some Europeans through East Africa and Arabian ports. Middle India was an indication to Ethiopia as determined by Marco Polo. However, Middle India was not a synonym for Ethiopia as it self-nowadays. The geographers of the twelfth and thirteenth century implicitly assumed Ethiopia to be situated in Middle India between Nearer and Further, North and south, Lesser and Greater India, somewhere near Nagpur (Heng, 2003, pp. 437, 453; Beckingham, 1997, pp. 14-15, 17; Brooks, 1898, pp. 30-33, 231-232)

Therefore, it could be argued that the term of black Saracens "nigri Sarraceni" used by Carpine, was synonymous with the Ethiopians as being the black Indian who might have dwelled somewhere near to the Muslim lands (Carpine, 1913, p. 170, Beazley, 1903, p. 278). This might illustrate the medieval combination between India and Ethiopia, considering the latter the minor or middle India. Such conception of India might interpreter the transition of the legend scenarios to Ethiopia in the Fourteenth-century.

It was reimagined that the ancestors of Prester still existed among the Mongols. Such perception acted as a transition phase in the discourse of the legend. In 1247, while King Louis IX (1226-1270) was in Cyprus heading to attack Egypt in the called seventh crusade, he received two Nestorian envoys, named David and Mark sent by Eljighidei, the Great Khan's commissioner at Mosul. They expressed the Mongol sympathy with Christianity and that the Mongol Khan would assist King Louis IX to recapture Jerusalem (Joinville and Villehardouin, 1973, p. 197; Edues de Châteauroux, 1723, pp. 624-626).

Prester John did not distinctly state in the mutual letters between the Mongols and King Louis IX. However, it was claimed that the mother of the Great Khan Kiokai was the daughter of a Christian King called Prester John (Ruotsala, 2001, p. 45; Edues de Châteauroux, 1723, pp. 626-627). Subsequently, rumours were raised that the Mongol King Sartaq son of Batu Khan (1227-1255) converted to Christianity. On May 7th, 1253, therefore, King Louis IX dispatched the Franciscan monk William of Rubruck (1220-93) to propose an alliance with Mongols, hoping that he can return to conquest Egypt after his defeat in the seventh crusade (Aigle, 2014, p. 47; Beazley, 1903, pp. 144-147, 184-188, 168, 214, 216).

However, Rubruck realised that the Mongol Sartaq never believed in Christianity, he reported that there was a Nestorian shepherd lived in a central Asia and was the ruler of the Naimans; one of the Mongols tribes ruled by Genghis Khan. This shepherd became the governor over the entire kingdom after the death of "Con Khan," (Ong Khan) who was the king of the Cathay "Cataya," and Khan of the Kerait tribe. Such shepherd called King John by his people, "Vocabant eum Nostoriani Regem Iohannem," It seems that the Franciscan Rubruck did not trust in the reports of the informants about this king John. As a result, he concluded that the Nestorian people exaggerated the said John's powers and marvels. They reported made great rumours about nothing (Beazley, 1903, pp. 168, 214, 216).

The bulk of the travellers' accounts frequently associated between presented Prester John and Genghis Khan. The common pattern was that the Tatars or the Mongols were the vassals of Prester John and then Genghis marched to Prester John's lands and caused him a disastrous defeat. Thus, the transmission process of the legend through the texts led to enrich the knowledge about Prester John. The legend was subjected to the diversity of the transmitters' perspectives and how they saw and transferred the events over space and time (Aigle, 2014, pp. 48-49, 52; Guzman, 1986, pp. 34-55).

The Europeans, Kings and Popes, were keen to negotiate with the Mongols as a possible partner against Mamlukes, which contributed over time to refresh the Latin-crusading memory of Prester John. The legend's memory was transported spatially and temporally to be revived in Ethiopia. In the figure of the Ethiopian King, the Prester John's adherents imagined their divine ally against the Mamluks of Egypt during the 14th and 15th centuries.

6. Conclusion

The legend of Prester John was an imaginary conception acted as an emotional motive for the crusade advocates after the fall of Edessa to Imad al-Dīn Zengi in

1144. The legend was created on a mixture of actual and mythical spheres took place in the Far East, such as transferring the conflict between the Sanjar Sultan and Qarakhitai ruler to the legendary persona of Prester John. By Otto's report of 1145, the legend was persisted and survived for centuries. The legend was used as an enthusiastic instrument to boost the Crusaders in the Levant. Being a powerful motive, the military activities of the Mongols in the far east were attached to the alleged figure Prester John. The Crusaders understood the Muslims' actions as a fear of Prester John and converted the Mongols' victories into such imaginary king John and his successor David. Such legend contributed to obstruct the peaceful negotiation during the fifth crusade.

After the fifth crusade, the impact of the legend on Latin-Muslim conflict and the Mongol-Muslim conflict developed by dispatching envoys to build an alliance with the Mongols. Assuming that Prester John was the Mongols; ruler, or, at least lived in the Mongols' lands. The previous tradition knowledge about Prester John affected the travellers and missionaries reports. Therefore, they were imagined that Prester John was defeated by the Mongol ruler. The legend then remained as a key-figure of the travellers' accounts throughout the forthcoming centuries to end up with associating Prester John with the reality of the Ethiopian King, starting from the 14th up to the 16th century.

7. Bibliography

Abbreviations

PJLIS: *Prester John: The Legend and Its Sources*, trans. Keagan Brewer.

Setton: *The History of the Crusades*, ed. Setton.

PJMILT: *Prester John: The Mongols and the Ten Lost Tribes*, ed. Charles Beckingham and Bernard Hamilton.

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