

The Strategic Relations Between the Mongols and Christians: The Factor of Diplomatic Missions

Narjes Kadro^{1*}

¹ Turkey. Mardin Artuklu University. Faculty of Arts. Department of History.

*Corresponding Author: d.narjes99@gmail.com

Citation: Kadro, N. (2024). The Strategic Relations Between the Mongols and Christians: The Factor of Diplomatic Missions, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 9(2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v11i1.4258>

Published: December 31, 2024

ABSTRACT

In the 13th century, the Mongols had a significant impact on both the Muslim and Christian worlds. The rapid expansion of the Mongol Empire alarmed both communities, especially following the conquest of Baghdad in 1258 and the subsequent fall of the Abbasid Caliphate. For Christians, this created an opportunity to view the Mongols as potential allies against Muslims. Christian Europe regarded the Mongol campaigns against the Islamic world as developments that could align with their Crusader objectives. In this context, the Papacy and European kingdoms dispatched envoys to the Mongol leaders, seeking to establish diplomatic relations and secure the Mongols as allies against Islam. While the Mongols exhibited a tolerant attitude toward various religions, they leveraged these diplomatic missions to serve their own interests. Their interactions with Christians, intended to weaken the political and military power of Muslims, were strategic rather than a commitment to lasting alliances. The Mongols and Christians engaged in a diplomatic process where both sides aimed to maximize their benefits. These diplomatic missions facilitated a deeper mutual understanding between Mongol leaders and the Christian world. One notable example is the envoys sent by Pope Innocent IV to Guyuk Khan in 1245. While Christians hoped to form an alliance with the Mongols against Muslims, the Mongols aimed to strengthen their empire by fostering relations with the West. However, instead of creating a Crusader army against Islam, the Mongols pursued their expansionist policies. These diplomatic interactions also paved the way for religious exchanges. The Mongols' tolerance allowed Christian missionaries to operate within their territories. Franciscan and Dominican friars, in particular, gained access to Mongol courts and sought to spread Christianity. However, these missionary efforts remained secondary to the broader political and military objectives of the diplomatic missions. In this context, the diplomatic relations between the Mongols and Christians in the 13th century were shaped by the pursuit of strategic advantages against Muslims. Both sides hoped to gain military and political benefits from these interactions; however, these diplomatic exchanges did not result in a lasting alliance. The Mongols prioritized their own interests, while Christians, in the aftermath of the failed Crusades, continued to seek new allies. Diplomatic missions became a significant historical element reflecting the complex relationships between the Muslim, Christian, and Mongol worlds.

Keywords: Mongols, Mamluks, Europe, Papacy, Armenians, Ilkhanate.

INTRODUCTION

The medieval world was a period marked by intense interactions between different religions, cultures, and political powers. This era is particularly notable for the strategic relationships that developed among Muslims, Christians, and the Mongols. Beginning in the early 13th century, the Mongol Empire rapidly entered the political stage, leaving a profound impact on states and societies across both the East and the West with its military successes and territorial expansion. The swift conquests of the Mongols emerged as a formidable force threatening both

Christian Europe and the Islamic world. In response, various religious and cultural entities devised strategic plans to address this new power. In this context, the efforts of the Christian world to form a united front with the Mongols against Muslims became part of a complex process, in which diplomatic missions played a crucial role. The rise of the Mongol Empire caused significant anxiety in the Islamic world. The sacking of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols and the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate created a profound trauma for Muslims. During this period, the Mongols' expansion into Muslim territories was closely observed by Christian Europe. Christian kingdoms viewed the Mongols' advances in Muslim lands as an opportunity to gain a new ally against Islam within the framework of the Crusades. Consequently, the diplomatic missions established between the Christian world and the Mongols emerged as significant initiatives representing the shared interests of both parties against the Islamic world.

The diplomatic relations that developed between the Mongols and Christians were the result of mutual efforts to secure strategic advantages over Muslims. While the Mongols maintained a tolerant attitude toward various religions, Christian states sought to leverage this new military power to their advantage against the Islamic world. In particular, the Papacy and European monarchies sent envoys to Mongol leaders, aiming to recruit them as a Crusading force against Islam. These diplomatic initiatives reflect a complex process that shaped the political and religious objectives of both the Mongols and the Christians.

Diplomatic missions became one of the most critical elements of the interactions between Christians and the Mongols. In the 13th century, diplomatic contacts between Christian states and the Mongols were aimed at developing a common strategy against the Muslim world. These relationships also encompassed cultural and religious exchanges. European states dispatched various diplomatic delegations to support the Mongol Empire's progress against the Muslim world, seeking to strengthen the ties between Mongol leaders and the Christian world. Meanwhile, Mongol leaders responded favorably to these missions, recognizing the benefits of establishing good relations with the Christian world in advancing their own interests. One of the most notable examples of diplomatic missions during this period was the envoys sent by Pope Innocent IV to the Mongols in 1245. These missions aimed to convey messages of friendship from the Christian world to the Mongol leaders and to recruit them as allies against Muslims. These diplomatic interactions, particularly during the reign of Güyük Khan, reflect the high expectations Christians placed on the Mongols. However, the Mongols viewed these missions merely as strategic tools, prioritizing their own interests over forming alliances with Christians against the Muslim world. The core motivation behind the strategic relations between the Mongols and Christians stemmed from the desire to gain military and political supremacy over the Islamic world. The Mongols leveraged these diplomatic engagements as opportunities to further expand their growing empire and weaken the powerful structures of Muslim states. Conversely, Christians, amid the decline of the Crusades, sought to weaken the Islamic world with the help of a formidable ally like the Mongols. Nevertheless, both parties ultimately prioritized their self-interests, and these interactions remained short-term, transactional engagements rather than enduring alliances. Diplomatic missions held significance not only in terms of political and military strategies but also as channels for religious and cultural interactions. While the Mongols were known for their tolerance toward diverse religious beliefs, Christian missionaries used these interactions as opportunities to promote Christianity within Mongol territories. In particular, Franciscan and Dominican friars gained prominence in Mongol courts, striving to influence the Mongol elite. However, these missionary activities remained secondary to the primary political and military objectives of the diplomatic missions, as the Mongols continued to use religious tolerance as a strategic instrument. The diplomatic missions between the Mongols and Christians in the 13th century emerged as a product of their mutual pursuit to form a united front against Muslims. Both parties hoped to secure military and political gains from these interactions. However, each side maintained its self-interest as a priority. These missions left a lasting impression on the medieval world, shaping the dynamics of the Mongol Empire's expansion and the Christian world's strategic maneuvers against Islam. These interactions revealed the complexities of the relationships among the Muslim world, Christian West, and Mongol Empire, emphasizing the significance of these three major powers' engagements in medieval history.

The Impact of Byzantine Missions on the Christianization of the Mongols

The relationship between the Mongols and the Western world was marked by its complexity. How the Mongols were perceived and represented by Europeans varied depending on the period and context. At times, the Mongols were regarded as a threat in Europe, while at other times, they were seen as potential allies. This dual representation of the Mongols was shaped by the local interests and political needs of the Papacy and various European regions. This shifting portrayal reflects the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of Mongol-Western relations. (Fiaschetti, 2019, p. 181). In the period following Genghis Khan, significant diplomatic relations developed between the Mongols and Western Europe, the Papacy, and Byzantium. The Mongol court hosted numerous diplomatic missions from various nations, including the Byzantines, Armenians, Russians, and

representatives of the Christian world. Through these diplomatic missions, the Mongols were targeted for Christianization, and Mongol Christians were sought to be used as a tool to counter the Mongol threat to Europe. However, conflicts of interest and differing perspectives between the parties led to the failure of these efforts. (Muhammad , 1992, pp. 87-88)

Among the important diplomatic missions carried out as part of these efforts are the following:

The Embassy of the Portuguese Lawrence (1245): The aforementioned Franciscan friar was tasked by Pope Innocent IV with carrying a letter inviting the Mongol ruler to embrace Christianity. Lawrence traveled eastward through Armenia to fulfill this mission, but his journey ended in the city of Ayas. The following year, he visited regions such as the Eastern Mediterranean and Greece. This indicates that Lawrence did not achieve his political objectives and was unable to reach the Mongol lands he aimed for. Therefore, these travels can be regarded as a sign that his mission was unsuccessful. (Imran, n.d, p. 220)

The Embassy of Johann de Plano Carpini (1246): It is considered one of the earliest missions sent by Europe to the Mongol khans. This diplomatic mission lasted **more than fifteen months** and passed through Russia and Central Asia before reaching Mongol territories, coinciding with the accession of Güyük Khan to the throne. The envoy provided comprehensive and detailed information on the Mongols' way of life, social structures, religious beliefs, military strategies, and systems of governance. This mission was part of broader efforts to convert the Mongol leaders—especially the Tatar chiefs—to Christianity. Although it failed to convert the Mongol rulers to Christianity, Carpini succeeded in persuading two of (Muslih, 2006, p. 37) the Mongol government's viziers to embrace the faith. Additionally, it increased the interest of Güyük Khan¹ and his mother, Töregene Khatun, in Christianity, making a significant impact in this context. (Abd al-Halim, p. 43). For these reasons, Christians in the region received attention and protection. (Zarfūq, 2012, p. 86) The Pope's purpose in sending this envoy was to persuade the Tatar leaders to embrace Christianity and submit to Papal protection. This strategy aimed to secure various benefits for Europe and Catholic Christianity. Additionally, it sought to gather information about the Tatars' potential intentions towards Western Europe, prevent any possible threats, and make necessary preparations in response to those threats. (Hilal, 1997, p. 63) However, Güyük Khan asked the delegation to convey to the Pope and the kings of Europe that they must declare their submission to him in order for an alliance between the two parties to be concluded. (Abd Muhammad, 1987, p. 176) Therefore, upon his return from the journey, John of Carpini made it clear to the Papacy that the Mongols were concerned with nothing but conquest. (Runciman, 1994, p. 311)

The Mission of Priest Ascelinus: Ascelinus was a Dominican friar. This mission took the southern route, passing through Muslim countries via Cyprus, reaching Mongol territories before arriving in Tbilisi.[#] The mission lasted for six weeks, during which Ascelinus succeeded in visiting Baycu, the governor of the Mongols in the Iran and Caucasus regions, in 1247. (Imran, n.d, p. 224) Although Ascelinus observed that Baycu had an aggressive and discontented character, he also noted that Baycu was inclined to cooperate with the Europeans and the Ayyubids, recognizing his potential to divide the Muslims in the Levant . Consequently, Ascelinus understood that Baycu was willing to lead a Crusade. (Runciman, 1994, p. 311) However, Baycu did not take any concrete steps towards this alliance proposal. When the monk's message was translated into Mongolian and sent to the Mongol capital, Karakorum, it was met with a harsh response stating that the Pope and the Europeans must accept Mongol domination. As a result, this diplomatic initiative failed to achieve its intended goal. (Imran, n.d, p. 224)

The Mission of Andrew of Longjumeau: In 1248, the Mongol Noyan Elchigidey in Iran sent two envoys to King Louis IX of France regarding a planned Crusade against Egypt. These envoys were selected from the Nestorians, and the news they brought created great excitement in France. The message stated that the Mongol Empire protected Christians and churches and wished King Louis success in his battle against the Mamluks. Furthermore, the envoys declared that both Güyük Khan and Elchigidey had embraced Christianity. This diplomatic initiative also contained an oral offer for an alliance against the Muslims. This development was reported to the Pope, and a congratulatory letter was written due to Güyük Khan and Elchigidey's adoption of Christianity. A delegation led by Andrew of Longjumeau was sent to the Great Khan. After nearly a year-long journey, the delegation arrived in Mongolia only to find that Güyük Khan had passed away, and a struggle for the throne had begun. The envoys were received by Güyük Khan's wife, Oghul Qaimish, but they were met with an unexpected demand. Oghul Qaimish requested that King Louis of France pledge allegiance to the Mongol Empire and pay regular tribute. If these conditions were not met, the envoys were threatened with an invasion of France. (Muslih, 2006, P. 39; Lawrence, 1994, p. 209).

The Mission of William von Rubruck (1253-1255): Rubruck embarked on his mission at the request of King Louis IX, with the aim of spreading Christianity in the Mongol Empire and establishing diplomatic contact. His goal was to secure an alliance between the Mongol ruler and France and gain Mongol support against Muslim forces. Rubruck first reached Karakorum, where he had the opportunity to meet the Mongol ruler, Möngke Khan. (Hilal, 1997, pp. 76-77) However, contrary to Rubruck's hopes, establishing a Christian-Mongol alliance proved impossible. The Mongols, particularly known for their policies of religious tolerance, rejected the idea of forming a special relationship with Christianity. Rubruck discussed various religious and cultural topics with the Mongol ruler, Möngke Khan. However, Möngke Khan stated that he had no intention of accepting Christianity or establishing a special alliance with France. He only respected Christianity due to the influence of his mother, Sorgaktani Beki. As a result, Christian patriarchs and monks were treated with great care and respect. (Ibn al-'Ibrī, 1983, p. 434) The Mongol policy was inclined towards tolerance for all religions, which is why Rubruck's mission was religiously unsuccessful. (Hilal, 1997, pp. 76-79)

The following conclusions clearly emerge from the above data:

1. The Western Europeans sought to establish an alliance with the Mongols, aiming through this to strike and weaken the Islamic powers in cooperation with a strong ally at the time, represented by the Mongol forces. This was especially so since the strength of both the Muslims and the Crusaders had been weakened due to the ongoing wars between them, making the Mongols' power a motivation for the Europeans to ally with them.
2. Papal Efforts to Spread Christianity Among the Mongols: The attempts to spread Christianity within the Mongol empires are clearly evident. When difficulties arose in spreading Christianity among Mongol dynasties, efforts shifted towards spreading Christianity among Mongol women, as it was believed that women had a strong influence over Mongol rulers.
3. Arrogance and Superiority of European Missions: The European missions were characterized by arrogance and a sense of superiority. These missions prominently aimed to establish dominance over the Mongols and impose Christianity. However, the Mongols managed to overcome these efforts each time, emphasizing their independence and calling on Europeans to submit to them.
4. Shared Goal of the Mongols and Crusaders to Eliminate Muslims: Both the Mongols and the Crusaders shared a common goal of removing Muslims from the region. This reveals the extent of animosity both sides had towards Muslims.

Important Missions Between the Mongol Ilkhanate and the West:

Hulagu, as the grandson of Genghis Khan, succeeded in establishing the Ilkhanate Mongol State with its capital in Tabriz around 1253. Having ruled over the Islamic regions and developed deep hostility towards Muslims, especially after his defeat in the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, Hulagu felt compelled to form an alliance with the West against the Muslims. In this context, he began sending emissaries to seek help from Pope Urban IV in the Crusades against the Levant and to benefit from the Frankish navy's capabilities. Hulagu expressed his interest in the Christians within his state and offered to hand over Jerusalem to the Pope in the event of victory. (Kadro, 2023, pp. 109-111). Indeed, Hulagu sent his emissaries to the Papacy and the European kings in 1262, but the mission failed to achieve its goals. The reason for this was the hostility of King Manfred Hohenstaufen of Sicily towards the Papacy and his friendship with the Muslims, which led him to capture the diplomatic envoys and seize their documents. However, one of the envoys managed to escape and, after reaching Pope Urban IV, provided information about the contents of Hulagu's letter and the objectives of the mission. (Hilal, 1997, p. 107).

Important Political Marriages Between the Mongol Ilkhanids and the Byzantines:

The Pope and European kings seized the opportunity to form alliances and treaties with the Mongols with the aim of eliminating Islam and Muslims. This was encouraged by many members of the Mongol family marrying Christian princesses, which increased the West's desire to acquire a powerful ally in the East. As a result, a new opportunity arose for Europeans to prepare for a new Crusade against the Muslims. (Muhammad, 1992, p. 88) During this period, the marriage of Abaka to Despina, the daughter of Emperor Michael Palaiologos of Constantinople, who had been promised to his late father Hulagu and sent as his bride (Sir Percy Sykes, p. 99), formed new political and diplomatic alliances. (Nabhan, 1998, p. 110). **Abaka's goals with this marriage were as follows:**

- To strengthen his relationships; the most notable reason for this was that Constantinople had become a political center directing the Crusades from Europe. Additionally, he sought to weaken the power of his uncle and rival, Berke Khan's children. Constantinople was a transit point for the ambassadors of allied parties and a connection hub between them. (Abd Muhammad, 1987, p. 179)
- It was used to control the dominance of the Turks in Anatolia.
- One of the prominent goals was Abaka's assistance in the wars against the Mamluks. (Iqbal, 2000, p. 219)

By marrying the Byzantine princess Despina, Abaka continued the policies of his father, Hulagu Khan, and reinforced his stance of supporting Christians. This marriage increased Abaka's sympathy towards Christians and played a significant role in the preference for Christians over followers of other faiths. (Sir Percy Sykes, p. 99; Sümer, 1989, P.177). One of Abaka's significant actions was his participation in the organized Easter ceremonies. Additionally, he allowed the construction of a small church for Despina. (Salim, 1996, p. 310) It is reported that in addition to being baptized to accept Christianity (Browne, 2005, p. 3/33), Abaka showed interest and respect to Christian priests in his palace. (Abd al-Halim, p. 35; Al-Sayyad, 1987, P.55) Additionally, Abaka succeeded in forming an alliance with his father-in-law, Michael Palaiologos, and called on King James of Aragon to join the Crusade. Palaiologos indicated that he was ready to provide food and ships for the campaign. However, the Byzantine Emperor acted cautiously, considering the strength of the Mamluks, who were allied with the Mongol Kipchaks, and the attacks launched by Berke Khan, Hülagu Khan's uncle, against the northern Persian Mongols. Moreover, during an attempted raid on the Armenian kingdom, Abaka assisted King Heysum of Armenia and managed to trap Sunkur el-Aşkar, who was subsequently handed over to Heysum. (Abd Muhammad, 1987, p. 182). **Abaka actively worked on establishing alliances with the Byzantines through embassies and missions during his reign.** The main reason for Abaka's strong relations with the Byzantines was the kinship ties. Additionally, he sent envoys to European kings, corresponded with King Louis IX of France, and requested alliances with some European kingdoms against the Muslims. To achieve this goal, the Mongols sent a delegation of 16 envoys to form an alliance with the Byzantines. The leader of this delegation, who participated in the Council of Lyon in 1274, converted to Christianity during the council. (Abd al-Halim, p. 35)

After the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, Christians took advantage of the growing animosity between the Ilkhanids in Iran and the Muslim sultans of Egypt and Syria, inciting the Ilkhanids against the Muslims. They also succeeded in securing support from the Muslim enemies of the Crusaders in Egypt and Syria. Abaka viewed these Christians as a strategic tool against the Muslims and repeatedly brought up the idea of forming an alliance with the Pope and Christian kings of Europe against the Muslims. (Iqbal, 2000, p. 219). In 1270, while King Louis IX was preparing for a Crusade to Tunisia, Abaka was planning to take action against the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in accordance with Pope Clement IV's plan. However, the failure of Louis IX's campaign prevented the realization of this alliance. Nevertheless, in 1270, when King Edward I of England landed troops at the Port of Acre, he sought the assistance of the Mongols and sent envoys to Abaka to negotiate terms of cooperation. Under this cooperation, it was planned for the Mongols to send 10,000 troops to Anatolia and invade Syria. However, despite some limited successes, the Mongol forces withdrew without encountering the Mamluk army. (Imran, 2003, P.349)

During the reign of Argun Khan, he embraced Christianity and, influenced by his Nestorian Christian wife, strengthened relations with the Crusaders. This interaction contributed to the revival of Nestorian Christians at Argun Khan's court. Argun Khan began cooperating with the Crusaders and made an agreement to launch an attack against the Muslims. Under this agreement, it was planned to launch an assault on Damascus, with the Mongols capturing Aleppo and Damascus, and Jerusalem falling under Crusader control. Diplomatic activity between the parties took place, and Argun Khan sent numerous envoys to Europe, including one in 1285 to Pope Honorius IV. These envoys called for joint action against the Mamluks. However, Pope Honorius IV was preoccupied with uprisings against the French rule of Charles d'Anjou in Sicily and was indifferent to this appeal. (Al-Zahawi,, 2014, p. 153). In 1287-1288, the second embassy sent from Kubilai Khan's capital, Beijing, was led by the carefully selected Christian Rabban Soma. The fact that Rabban Soma was Christian reflects the importance the Mongols placed on Christianity. The embassy conducted discussions with the kings of France and England during the period when the papal throne was vacant, presenting gifts and emphasizing the necessity of an alliance. However, the responses from these kings were negative. Subsequently, Rabban Soma presented letters and gifts from Argun Khan to Pope Nicholas IV. He requested assistance in the fight against the Mamluks and called for the liberation of Jerusalem. However, the pope's main interest in converting the Mongols to Christianity meant that the political goals of the embassy were ultimately unsuccessful. (Hilal, 1997, pp. 121-123). Argun Khan had not abandoned his hopes of forming an alliance with Western Europe. To this end, he sent another embassy, led by **Pascal de Guesclín**, who was of Genoese origin. This embassy targeted King Philip IV of France, King Edward I of England, and Pope Nicholas IV. In the embassy sent in 1290, Argun emphasized the importance of launching

a military campaign against the Mamluks and indicated his intention to move against Damascus. Additionally, he requested that the French King participate in this campaign at an appropriate time. It was stated that, should the Mongol-French campaign succeed in capturing Jerusalem, the city would belong to the French King. (Imran, *The Mongols and Europe*, n.d., p. 260).

Argun Khan expressed his willingness to provide twenty or thirty thousand horses to the French. However, the French King rejected this offer, arguing that France had suffered too many losses in the Crusades. As a result, the Pope granted Argun Khan exemption from traveling to the Holy Land. Regarding this alliance, England and the Papacy provided diplomatic responses. However, these responses did not produce satisfactory results for Argun Khan. (Hilal, 1997, pp. 125-126). Argun Khan sent his final embassy in 1291, led by Pascal de Guesclin. This embassy presented a letter to Pope Nicholas IV and King Edward I of England. However, King Edward I, who was preoccupied with the crisis in Scotland, took a long time to respond to the letter, and as a result, the delegation had to return to Rome. Consequently, there was no reason to continue negotiations with the West, especially as the fall of the last Crusader stronghold, Acre, to the Muslim armies rendered the proposed alliance a failure. (Abd Muhammad, 1987, p. 188). By the time of Ghazan Khan, unlike other Ilkhanid rulers, he embraced Islam and adopted it as the official religion of the state. Ghazan Khan, through his vizier, Newruz, led his commanders and soldiers to accept Islam. (Al-Hamadhani, 2000, pp. 415-416) The reason for Ghazan Khan's adoption of Islam remains uncertain, whether it was due to personal beliefs and desires or political motives. However, it appears that by embracing Islam, he aimed to gain the sympathy of the Muslim population and secure public support against the Mamluks. Despite converting to Islam, Ghazan Khan maintained a tense relationship with the Mamluks throughout his reign. He even launched military campaigns to invade Syria at three different times. His first victory came in December 1299 (699 Hijri). During this period, he directed his army from Tabriz towards Syria due to ongoing conflicts with the Mamluks. Ghazan Khan's forces reached Aleppo and began advancing towards other cities in Syria. Ultimately, he defeated the Mamluks near Homs and temporarily controlled Syria. (Al-Hamadhani, 2000, pp. 161-163). Ghazan Khan's campaigns continued until May 1300. In order to maintain his victories, he reached out to Europe, sending letters to the kings of Jerusalem and Cyprus to announce his successes. To secure military aid, he renewed his promise to assist the Mongol forces. This prompted Pope Boniface VIII and King James II of Aragon to take action, encouraging them to help Ghazan. However, these figures later reneged on their promises and failed to follow through with plans to assist him. (Jibran & Abd al-Karim al-'Amadi, p. 259). Gazan Khan sent several diplomatic missions to Europe in 1302, and his envoys were received in Rome. The Pope sent him a golden crown to forgive his sins and appointed Gazan as the leader to guide Christians in Syria. Gazan maintained friendly relations with Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II and strengthened these ties further by marrying the emperor's illegitimate daughter. However, due to Gazan Khan's death, this alliance was never fully realized, and the planned collaborations were never carried out. (Imran, *The Mongols and Europe*, n.d., pp. 264-265). During the reign of Oljeitu Khan (Muhammad Hudabende), several diplomatic missions were sent in 704 AH / 1305 CE. The heads of these missions were Thomas Oci es-Sini ed-Dutshi and Malg. The envoys delivered Oljeitu's letters to Pope Clement V, King Philip IV of France, and King Philip I of England. The letter sent to the King of France was a message recalling the historical relationship between the two countries. After reaching England in October 1307, the Mongol envoys held discussions with the English king and his court about internal issues in Mongolia. Pope Clement V called for the Armenian Heyton, the nephew of I. Heytun, and requested a detailed report on the advantages and dangers of cooperating with the Mongols. Following this report, Oljeitu Khan sent a letter to the Pope, Europeans, and the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia, offering to supply two hundred thousand horses and two hundred thousand sacks of wheat to help liberate the Holy Land. He also offered to assist Europeans in their fight against the Muslims, a proposal that pleased the Pope. Oljeitu's European merchant advisors encouraged the sending of these diplomatic missions. However, due to European internal conflicts and regional issues, they were not persuaded to organize a Crusade. (Hilal, 1997, pp. 141-142). During the reign of Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan (1316-1335), diplomatic missions played an important role in the relations between the Mongols and the Mamluks. Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan managed to establish friendly relations with the Mamluks and ended the war between the two sides through correspondence with Sultan Muhammad I. In 1322, letters from Europe arrived containing a request for help from the ruler of Armenia. After these requests reached Bahadur, he provided the requested assistance. This support led to the outbreak of the final war between the Mongols and the Mamluks. However, this diplomatic communication did not directly affect the Mamluk State. (Jibran & Abd al-Karim al-'Amadi, p. 262). In an effort to make peace with the Muslims, Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan proposed a peace treaty to Mamluk Sultan Muhammad I ibn Qalawun in 1321 (720 AH). Under the command of Sultan Muhammad I, the governors of Aleppo and Damascus warmly received Abu Sa'id's envoys. Among the conditions of peace proposed by Abu Sa'id was the request to keep the trade routes open between the two sides. These terms were accepted, and Abu Sa'id's envoys returned with the gifts offered to them. (Al-Maqrizi, n.d., pp. 2.part1/209-210)

The Armenian Kingdom's Alliance with the Mongols Against the Islamic World

After the emergence of Mongol power in the region, the Armenians recognized the importance of the Mongols and the necessity of forming an alliance against the Islamic powers. In this context, King Hetoum of Armenia began sending envoys to the Mongol rulers, greeting them with respect and admiration in order to establish an alliance with the Mongols. (Al-Zubaidi, 2005, p. 286). The aforementioned envoys were sent after the battle in 1243, where Seljuk Sultan II. Gıyâseddin Keyhüsrev fought the Mongols near Armenia. Sultan II. Gıyâseddin Keyhüsrev fought the Mongols near Erzincan, close to Mount Koç, and was defeated in this battle. As a result of this defeat, his kingdom became subordinated to the Mongols. (Ibn al-‘Ibrî, 1983, pp. 440-441). After this victory, King Hetoum of Armenia sent envoys in 1244 with many valuable gifts to show his allegiance and congratulate the Mongol commander Baycu. However, Baycu demanded the surrender of the mother and sister of Seljuk Sultan II. Gıyâseddin Keyhüsrev, who had fled to Armenia after the Battle of Köse Dağ and sought refuge there. Despite the tradition of protecting refugees and the moral objections, Hetoum handed over these women to the Mongols. (Zarqūq, 2012, pp. 80-83). Hetoum not only wrote a letter to Baycu but also sent envoys led by his brother Smbat to the Mongol capital, Karakorum, in 1248. This mission aimed to strengthen the ties between the Armenian Kingdom and the Mongols and further solidify their alliance. (Ibn al-‘Ibrî, 1983, p. 448). This journey took four years, and valuable gifts were presented to the Mongol ruler. The Armenians hoped for Mongol support against the Seljuk Turks in the Cilician Armenian region. In this context, King Smbat of Armenia noted that they had secured a promise from the Mongols to assist in reclaiming the castles and cities seized by the Seljuk Turks. The agreement aimed to help the Mongols achieve their strategic objectives in Armenian territories. (Zarqūq, 2012, pp. 85-86)

As the visits of Armenian envoys to the Mongols became more frequent, King Hetoum I of Armenia made a direct visit to Mengü Khan in 1254 (650 AH) to request assistance and security. Hetoum secretly left his country, fearing that the Seljuk Sultan of Anatolia would see him. (Ibn al-‘Ibrî, 1983, p. 460). Mengü Khan gave King Hetoum of Armenia a document stamped with his seal, assuring him that he would not be harmed. Additionally, in another document, he pledged that all churches would be exempt from Mongol restrictions. In return for this assurance, Hetoum made several requests to Mengü Khan: the safety of Christian priests and churches in lands occupied or to be occupied by the Mongols; and assistance for Christians in the liberation of Jerusalem. Hetoum's efforts to initiate a joint campaign against the Muslims were successful, and Mengü Khan persuaded his brother Hulagu to attack Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate. After this development, Hetoum returned to his country happily and swore allegiance to Hulagu after he conquered Iraq and Syria. In return for this loyalty, Hulagu allowed Hetoum to remain in power. (Ibn Husayn, 2009, pp. 97-98) After Hulagu's invasion of Iraq and Syria, he pledged allegiance to him. In this way, Hulagu kept him in power. (Ibn Khaldun, 2007, p. 5/386). As can be understood from the above data, the Armenians and Western Christians viewed their ties with the Mongols as an effort to achieve a common goal of launching attacks against Islamic powers in the East and freeing themselves from Muslims through Mongol military superiority. Regardless of whether Hetoum contributed to directing the Mongols towards Baghdad, the Mongols' ambition to completely conquer the world and the major victories they achieved since their establishment demonstrate this ambition. However, this Mongol superiority was later neutralized by the Mamluk forces of Egypt, and it showed the result of the conspiracies against the Islamic world, particularly the efforts of Europe and the Armenian Kingdom to infiltrate Muslim lands and spill blood in these territories. After the Mongols attacked Syria and were defeated, Mamluk Sultan Baybars directed his forces towards Sis, the Armenian stronghold, around 664 AH (1265-1266) and succeeded in defeating the region. The Muslims besieged and destroyed Sis, killing those who had conspired against them and taking their spoils. (Ibn Khaldun, 2007, p. 386). The Muslims captured Hetoum's son and killed his other son. Baybars, in exchange for releasing his son from Heysum, requested the surrender of Sungur al-Ashkar, who had fled from the Mamluks of Egypt and was living with the Armenians. Hetoum complied with the demands, and thus his son was freed. (Ibn al-‘Ibrî, 1983, pp. 498-499). The monitoring of these embassies reveals that the communication difficulties between Europe and the Mongols were caused by various factors such as language, religion, and geographical distance in Iranian territories. The round-trip process of embassies between Europe and Iran typically took about two years. This situation affected the understanding and response speed between the parties, making communication more difficult. Furthermore, the Mamluks' efforts to gain full control over Syrian territories and reinforce their dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean from 1291 onwards further complicated the communication between Europe and the Mongols. The Mamluks also succeeded in imposing their power over the region through a series of decisive victories, beginning with the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt in 658 AH / 1260 CE and the Battle of al-Abulustaynⁱⁱⁱ in 1276 CE, followed by the First Battle of Homs in 1281/1282 CE, and later the Battle of Marj al-Şuffar (Şaḩḩab)

in 1303 CE^{iv}. At the same time, they dealt crushing blows to the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia and ultimately succeeded in expelling the Crusaders from the Levant (Binayra, , pp. 49-50).

CONCLUSION

As a result, the findings obtained during this research reveal that the Mongols, the Papacy, European kingdoms, and the Armenians aimed to free the eastern regions of the Islamic world from the Mamluk power. These forces developed various strategies to overthrow the Mamluks. However, these alliances were unable to eliminate the influence of the Mamluks. The Mamluks, especially after the weakening of the Ayyubid state and the debilitating effects of the wars against the Crusaders, filled the political vacuum and established dominance in the Levant region. This demonstrates that the Mamluks were successful in their struggle against the forces that formed alliances against the Islamic world. The success achieved by the Mamluks not only made them a regional power but also highlighted them as a significant defense force within the Islamic world. Furthermore, this process clearly shows how the Mamluks' military and diplomatic strategies shaped the political dynamics in the region and the power struggles.

Another finding of the research was the instability and distrust among the allied groups. The embassies and alliances formed by these parties failed to provide genuine and decisive coordination in the struggle against the Muslims, thus preventing them from moving beyond promises. Each side insisted on protecting its own interests and power claims, which hindered the practical implementation of these alliances. Additionally, the weakness of Western Europe at that time and its preoccupation with internal issues prevented it from adopting a more active stance against the Muslims. Western European countries generally limited themselves to observing the movements of the Mongols and failed to develop an effective strategy against the Muslims. The decline of the Mongol threat is related to the Ilkhanid Mongols adopting Islam and integrating with Muslim civilization. As the Ilkhans formed alliances with the Muslims and became part of them, the Mongol threat diminished, and the political balances in the region changed. This alliance led to a reduction in previous tensions and threats, establishing an alliance based on common interests for both the Mongols and the Muslims.

REFERENCES

- ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, Rajab Muḥammad. *Intishār al-Islām bayna al-Mughūl*. Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabiyya, n.d.
- ‘Abd Muḥammad, Sawādī. “Highlights on the Crusader–Mongol Alliance against Iraq and the Arab Mashriq.” *Iraq*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1987).
- Al-Maqrīzī. *Al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*. Edited by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda. 2 vols. Cairo.
- Al-Ṣafadī. *Masālik al-Absār fi Mamālik al-Amṣār*. Edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Kharīsāt et al. United Arab Emirates: Zayed Center for Heritage and History, 2001.
- Al-Zahāwī, ‘Abbās ‘Abd al-Sattār ‘Abd al-Qādir. “The Crusader–Mongol Alliance against the Islamic World.” *Journal of Arab Scientific Heritage*, no. 1 (2014).
- Al-Zubaydī, ‘Abbās Khāmīs. “The Role of Christian Powers in the Fall of the Abbasid Caliphate at the Hands of the Mongols (656 AH / 1258 CE).” *Al-Qādisiyya Journal for Islamic Sciences*, nos. 3–4 (2005).
- Barthold, W. “Abaka.” *İslām Ansiklopedisi (İA)*. Istanbul, 1978, vol. I.
- Binayra, Huwayda Muḥammad Aḥmad. “The Armenian Military Alliance against the Mamluks (699–707 AH / 1299–1307 CE) in Light of *Zahrāt Tawārīkh al-Sharq* by Hayton of Corycus.” Cairo: Egyptian Society for Knowledge.
- Browne, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia: From Sa‘dī to Jāmī*. Translated by Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Maṣṣūr. 3 vols. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 2005.
- C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society*. London: Longman, 1994.
- Hilāl, ‘Ādil. *Al-‘Alāqāt bayna al-Mughūl wa-Europe wa-Atharuhā ‘alā al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*. Cairo: ‘Ayn for Studies and Research, 1997.
- Ibn al-‘Ibrī. *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*. Edited by Antoine Ṣāliḥānī, S.J. Beirut: Dār al-Rā‘id al-Lubnānī, 1983.
- Ibn Ḥusayn, Muṣṭafā. *The Mongols and Their Relations with Christian and Islamic Powers in Europe and the Mashriq (612–659 AH / 1215–1260 CE)*. Master’s thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Algeria, 2009.
- Ibn Khaldūn. *Al-‘Ibar*. Introduction by ‘Ubāda Kahīla. 5 vols. Cairo: General Organization of Cultural Palaces, 2007.

- Ibn Taghrī Birdī. *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*. 7 vols. Cairo: General Organization of Cultural Palaces, 2008.
- Imran, Mahmoud Saeed. *The Mongols, Europeans, the Crusaders, and the Question of Jerusalem*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿrifa al-Jāmiʿiyya, 2003.
- Iqbal, Abbas. *Tārīkh al-Mughūl min Ḥamlat Jinkīz Khān ḥattā Qiyām al-Dawla al-Ṭimūriyya*. Translated by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAllūb. Abu Dhabi: Cultural Foundation, 2000.
- Muhammad, Muhammad Abbas. *Al-Mughūl bayna al-Masiḥiyya wa-l-Islām*. Kuwait: Al-Waʿy al-Islāmī Magazine, vol. 27, no. 322, 1992.
- Muslih, Ḥifz Allāh Nāṣir ʿAbd Allāh. *Relations between the Mongols and the Crusaders and Their Impact on the Islamic Ummah*. Master's thesis, Damascus, 2006.
- Nabhan, Fatima. "The Jews of Iran in the Ilkhanid Period through the Book History of the Jews of Iran by Habib Levy." *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University*, vol. 26 (1998).
- Rashīd al-Dīn al-Hamadhānī. *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh (Tārīkh Ghāzān)*. Translated by Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Muṭī al-Ṣayyād. Cairo: Al-Dār al-Thaqāfiyya li-l-Nashr, 2000.
- Runciman, Steven. *The Crusades*. Translated into Arabic by Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī. Cairo: Egyptian General Book Authority, 2nd ed., 1994.
- Salīm, Ṣabrī. *Political and Sectarian Conflict between Shiʿa and Sunni during the Period of Ilkhanid Mongol Rule in Iran*. PhD dissertation, Cairo University, 1996.
- Sümer, Faruk. "Abaka, Argun, and Ahmed-i Jalayir among the Ilkhanid Rulers." *Belleten* 53, no. 206 (1989): 177.
- Sümer, Faruk. "Abaka." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*. Ankara, 1988, vol. I.
- Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. *Muʿjam al-Buldān*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
- Zarqūq, Muḥammad. *The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia between the Mongols and the Mamluks (623–776 AH / 1226–1375 CE)*. Master's thesis, University of Algiers, 2012.

ⁱ - Güyük: He was a Khan of the Mongol dynasty. After the death of his father, Ögedei, he ascended to the throne in 644 AH / 1246 CE. Güyük was notable for his preference for Christianity. Christianity had a profound impact on him, and this led to priests and pastors coming to him from various places. (Narjes Kadro, *Religions and Beliefs of the Ilkhanid Mongols*, Ankara: Sonçağ, 2023, 86-87).

ⁱⁱ - Tbilisi: It is a city in the region of Armenia. It is also said to be one of the cities in the Arran region. Tbilisi is considered one of the ancient cities. Muslims conquered the city during the time of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, vol. 2. 35-36).

ⁱⁱⁱ - Al-Abulustayn: The battle took place between the Muslim forces led by Baybars and the Mongol forces under their leader Abāqā, who had allied themselves with the Pervāneh, the Mongol deputy in the Seljuk Sultanate of Rūm. The Muslims achieved a decisive victory over the Mongols, killing and capturing large numbers of them. Baybars then advanced toward Kayseri, to which large groups of Tatars had fled together with the Pervāneh. He continued his march in order to protect the Muslim population. The inhabitants of Kayseri received him warmly, and he sat in the seat of Seljuk authority, where he was congratulated by the townspeople as well as by jurists, judges, and Sufi shaykhs. Coinage was subsequently struck in the name of the sultan. (Ibn Taghrī Birdī al-Atābakī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, Cairo: General Organization of Cultural Palaces, 2008, vol. 7, pp. 168, 170, 173; Al-Ṣafadī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, ed. Muhammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Kharīsāt et al., United Arab Emirates: Zayed Center for Heritage and History, 2001, pp. 193–203.)

^{iv} - The Battle of Shaqhab: This battle took place between the Muslim forces led by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn and the Mongol forces led by Ghāzān. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya participated in this battle. On that day, the Muslims fought valiantly, and God granted them victory after they killed a large number of Tatars. The glad tidings of victory spread among the people, and tears flowed from their eyes out of intense joy. (Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, part 3, pp. 933–934.)