

# THE MONGOLS IN CENTRAL EUROPE:

The Profile and Impact of  
their Thirteenth-Century  
Invasions



Edited by **BALÁZS NAGY**

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Edited by Balázs Nagy

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*Edited by:*

Balázs, Nagy

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## The Mongol Invasion and the Latin Empire of Constantinople

The Mongol Invasion of 1241–42 had profound consequences in Southeast Europe. It led to the inclusion of Bulgaria into their sphere of influence, and it drastically altered the existing balance of power between the Nicaean Empire and the Latin Empire of Constantinople. Nonetheless, the Mongol military operations in the region left only fragmentary notices in the sources, and they attracted little scholarly attention, at least compared to the immense research dedicated to the large-scale events in Central Europe. In general, the Mongol attack on the Latin Empire in 1242 was either omitted, or very briefly presented, in the studies and books dealing with the turbulent events of the early forties of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

As the text focuses on the conflict between the forces of the Latin Empire and the Mongol invaders, it is convenient to begin with an overview of the political conditions in Southeast Europe on the eve of the invasion. During the fourth decade of the thirteenth century, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was in political and financial dire straits. In 1235, the biggest threat to the Frankish rule in Constantinople materialized, when their two neighbours and adversaries, Nicaean ruler John III Vatatzes (1222–1254), and John Asen II of Bulgaria (1218–1241), formed a coalition, and launched a campaign against the Latin Empire. This was the conflict conveniently named in contemporary historiography as the War of the Three Johns—Vatatzes, Assen, and John of Brienne (1229–1237), co-emperor of the Latin Empire, who held the reins of power on behalf of the underage emperor Baldwin II of Courtenay (1228–1261). The Nicaean and Bulgarian army besieged Constantinople, and although John of Brienne had at his disposal only 160 knights, he organized heroic resistance; the Venetian fleet, and naval forces of the Frankish principality

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1 The only article dedicated to this issue is John Giebfried's "The Mongol invasions and the Aegean world (1241-61)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28.2 (2013), pp. 129–139. See also: Jean Richard, "À propos de la mission de Baudouin de Hainaut: l'empire latin de Constantinople et les mongols," *Journal des savants*, 84.1 (1992), p. 116; István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars. Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans 1185-1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 70; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410, Second Edition* (London–New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 72; Filip van Tricht, *The Horoscope of Baldwin II. Political and Sociocultural Dynamics in Latin-Byzantine Constantinople* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2019), p. 70.

of Achaëa assisted the besieged city on the Bosphorus. In early 1236, the Bulgarians withdrew from the coalition and Vatatzes was forced to lift the siege. However, in the course of the war the Nicaean army captured most of the Frankish fortresses on the Eastern shores of the Marmara Sea, Gallipoli peninsula, and the fortified city of *Tzouroulou* (modern Çorlu), between Adrianople (Edirne) and Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the territory of the Latin Empire was greatly reduced, and for the first time since the Fourth Crusade, its very existence hung in the balance.

Energetic John of Brienne died in March 1237,<sup>3</sup> while young Baldwin II was in the West, attempting to secure help for the survival of the Empire. Due to financial difficulties, at the beginning of 1238, and in his absence, the regency in Constantinople led by Anseau of Cayeux, had to pawn the most precious relic—the Crown of Thorns—to the Venetians; later that year, Louis IX of France (1226–1270) redeemed the Crown and made a resting place for the relic in Paris in the newly built Sainte-Chapelle.<sup>4</sup> And approximately at that time the first echoes of the Mongol campaigns reached Southeast Europe.

\* \* \*

In 1237, the unstoppable Mongol onslaught caused several waves of Cuman migrations from the Volga basin to the West. The flight of the Cumans to the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary is attested in the letter of Dominican traveller friar Julian, which reached the West in the early 1238.<sup>5</sup> Probably in the same year,

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- 2 John Langdon, “The Forgotten Byzantino-Bulgarian assault and Siege of Constantinople, 1235–1236, and the Breakup of the Entente Cordiale between John III Ducas Vatatzes and John Asen II in 1236 as Background to the Genesis of the Hohenstaufen-Vatatzes Alliance of 1242”, in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos*, ed. Speros Vryonis (Malibu: Undena, 1985), pp. 105–136; Ani Dancheva-Vasileva, *България и Латинската империя: 1204-1261* [Bulgaria and the Latin Empire (1204-1261)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1985), p. 137–143; Guy Perry, *John of Brienne (King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople, c. 1175-1237)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 174–180; Alexandru Madgearu, *The Assanids. The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 216–219.
  - 3 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, “Chronica Alberici Monachi Trium Fontium, A Monacho Novi Monasterii Hoiensis Interpolata”, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, Vol. 23, ed. Paul Scheffer-Boichorst (Hannover: Hahn, 1874), p. 941; Perry, *John of Brienne*, pp. 181–183.
  - 4 Alexandre Teulet, ed., *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Plon, 1866), pp. 391–392, no. 2744; Paul E. D. Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, vol. 2 (Geneva: I. G. Fick, 1878), pp. 118–121; Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, “Chronica”, p. 947; Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta: 46-1280*, ed. Ester Pastorello (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1938), p. 298; Benjamin Hendrickx, “Regestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople (1204–1261/72)”, *Byzantina* 14 (1988), pp. 127–131, nos. pp. 192–197.
  - 5 Heinrich Dörrie, *Drei Texte zur Geschichte der Ungarn und Mongolen: Die Missionsreisen des fr. Julianus O.P. ins Uralgebiet (1234/5) und nach Russland (1237): und der Bericht des Erzbischofs*



the Cumans appeared on the left bank of the Lower Danube. According to the Byzantine historian George Akropolites, they crossed the Danube on skin bags and passed over the Balkan mountains “together with children and wives”.<sup>6</sup> If we are to believe our source, their onslaught was so ferocious that John Asen II was unable to pacify them, although it is not impossible that the Bulgarian ruler was unwilling to provide them refuge in order not to provoke the Mongols and their leader Batu.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, several thousand Cumans<sup>8</sup> made their way to Thrace, where they plundered the countryside and several smaller towns in the vicinity of Adrianople (Edirne) and *Didymoteicho*, and made the region along the Maritsa river their grazing ground, turning it into the “proverbial Scythian desert”.<sup>9</sup> Arabic writer Ibn Taghribirdī (who drew from the thirteenth-century writer Ibn Shaddād) also recorded the Cuman migrations in the Balkans. His notices, dated couple of years later, refer to another group of refugees, who fled to the land of the “Asen khan” (John Asen II), but were treacherously captured and sold into slavery.<sup>10</sup> Ibn

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*Peter über die Tartaren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), p. 175; Roman Hautala, *От “Давида, царя Индий” до “ненавистного плебса сатаны”. Антология ранних латинских сведений о татаро-монголах* [From David, “Emperor of India” to the “Hateful Plebs of Satan”: Anthology of Early Latin Testimonies about the Tatar-Mongols] (Kazan: Institute Sh. Marjani, 2015), p. 378, p. 387.

- 6 George Akropolites, *The History*, trans. Ruth Macrides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 199. The appearance of the Cuman refugees on the Lower Danube is usually dated to 1237, based on the report of Akropolites but his chronology of the events is somewhat confusing. The year of 1238 seems a more probable date considering Julian’s report and the scale and distance of the Cuman migrations.
- 7 Aleksandăr Nikolov, “Цар Йоан Асен II и ‘монголският ужас’” [Emperor John Assen II and ‘the Mongol Terror’], in *Цар Иван Асен II (1218–1241). Сборник по случай 800-годишнината от неговото възшествие на българския престол*, ed. Vasil Guzelev, Iliya Iliev, and Kiril Nenov (Plovdiv: Bulgarian Historical Association, 2019), pp. 205–211.
- 8 The fourteenth-century Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras assessed their strength at 10,000, Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhömische Geschichte*, vol. 1, trans. Jean-Louis van Dielen (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1973), p. 81. This figure is usually accepted by contemporary historians, but it implies nothing else than a ‘multitude’ and taking into account the usual exaggeration of the numbers of nomads in Byzantine sources, it is likely they hardly numbered more than several thousand people; Aleksandar Uzelac, “Cumans in the Latin Empire of Constantinople,” *Золотоордынское обозрение* [Golden Horde Review] 7.1 (2019), p. 12.
- 9 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 199; Catherine Asdracha, *La Région des Rhodopes aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles: étude de géographie historique* (Athènes, Verlag der Byzantinisch-Neugriechischen Jahrbücher, 1976), p. 81; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, pp. 63–64.
- 10 Vyacheslav G. Tizengauzen, *Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды, Т. 1: Извлечения из сочинений арабских* [Collection of Materials related to the History of the Golden Horde. Vol. 1, Excerpts from the Arab writings] (St. Petersburg, Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1884), p. 542; Plamen Pavlov, “Средновековна България и куманите. Военнополитически отношения (1186-1241)” [Medieval Bulgaria and the Cumans. Military and Political Relations (1186-1241)], *Трудове на Великотърновския университет “Св. Св. Кирил и Методий”, Исторически факултет* 27 (1989), pp. 44–46; Dimitri Korobeinikov,

Sa'id al-Maghribi, on the other hand, related how the Cumans, fleeing from the Mongols, entered the land of Constantinople;<sup>11</sup> unlike Ibn Taghrībirdī, the report of Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi probably reflected the fortunes of the same group of Cumans whose migrations were described by Akropolites, as we shall see.

In Constantinople, before December 1238, the regency of the Latin Empire passed from the hands of Anseau of Cayeux to experienced veteran Narjot of Toucy.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, in Western Europe, after difficult negotiations with Venice, Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241), King Henry III of England (1216–1272) and Louis IX, Baldwin II of Courtenay was eventually able to muster a long-awaited rescue army, although the support came at a hefty price; the emperor was forced to mortgage the county of Namur to the French king for 50,000 Parisian *livres*.<sup>13</sup> The army allegedly numbered 30,000 men and 700 mounted knights, according to the well-informed Cistercian chronicler Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, or as many as 60,000 crusaders according to Akropolites.<sup>14</sup> Both figures are undoubtedly greatly exaggerated, but the force now commanded by Baldwin II was formidable enough that he could finally return to Constantinople, via Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria.

The king of Hungary, Béla IV (1235–1270), provided necessary provisions for the emperor's army, and John Assen II, who switched sides and renounced the alliance with Nicaea, did the same. Nonetheless, according to Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, the passage of the Crusaders through Bulgaria was difficult due to the nature of the terrain and the time of year; Baldwin II and his army did not reach Bulgaria before autumn of 1239;<sup>15</sup> the date is circumstantially evidenced by the letter of

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"A Broken Mirror: the Kıpçak World in the Thirteenth century", in *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta, and Roman Kovalev (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 386–388, pp. 398–402.

- 11 Irina G. Konopalova, *Восточная Европа в сочинениях арабских географов XIII-XIV вв – текст, перевод, комментарии* [Eastern Europe in the Works of the Arabic Geographers of the 13th-14th centuries – Texts, Translation, Commentaries] (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 2009), p. 34.
- 12 Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, Vol. 2, p. 122; Jean Longnon, *L'Empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris: Payot, 1949), p. 182; Hendrickx, "Regestes," pp. 129–130, no. 195.
- 13 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 947; Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, vol. 2, ed. Frédéric A. F. T. de Reiffenberg (Brussels: Commission Royale d'Histoire, 1838), p. 663, verses 30453–30458; Longnon, *L'empire Latin*, pp. 179–181; Robert Lee Wolff, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople, 1204-1261", in *A History of the Crusades, Volume II, The Later Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 220–222; Hendrickx, "Regestes," pp. 134–135, no. 207.
- 14 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica", 946; George Akropolites, *History*, 203; cf. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 3, ed. Henry R. Luard (London: Longman, 1876), 517-518.
- 15 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 946–947; Dancheva-Vasileva, *България и Латинската империя*, pp. 148–149.

Béla IV to Gregory IX from January 13, 1240, attesting the previous papal mission to Bulgaria, with the plea to allow the passage of the crusaders.<sup>16</sup> The two seals of Baldwin II, found in Plevna and in the town of Popovo near Târgovishte, were possibly directly related to his return voyage to Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> The finds indicate that his army followed the route close to the Danube and then along the Black Sea; a fact confirmed by Alberic's words that two ships had been wrecked (on the Danube?) on their voyage through Asen's land.<sup>18</sup> Such a route was much longer than the *Via Militaris* which connected Belgrade and Constantinople; but the latter was inaccessible to the crusaders, as sections of the road between Adrianople and *Tzouroulou* were under the control of the Nicaea. After the exhausting journey Baldwin II eventually arrived in Constantinople before Easter (April 15, 1240), when he was solemnly crowned as the sole emperor of the Latin Empire.<sup>19</sup>

Even before his return, it seems that the regency in Constantinople, led by Narjot of Toucy, was quick to realize the military potential of the Cumans settled in the valley of Maritsa. According to Akropolites, the Franks "won over Asen, concluding a peace treaty with him. Then, along with him, they drew to themselves the Scythians (Cumans), barbarian men, vagrants and intruders, and made them accomplices in their deeds, with some small favours but larger promises".<sup>20</sup> Alberic of Trois-Fontaines was under impression of the high expectations that Cumans raised in Constantinople. He related how a wise man went to the city and summoned a daemon, who in return gave the laconic prophecy: "The king will execute the unjust enemies, but not through friends". These words, as our source further notes, were thought to be related to the Cumans: "There was a belief that the arrival of the Cumans announced this prophecy and that the King of Heaven would destroy the enemies of the Constantinopolitan Empire—Vatatzes and Asen—not through friends, but through the Cumans, who were infidels, and not the friends of Christ".<sup>21</sup>

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16 Jean Louis Huillard-Bréholles, *Examen des chartes de l'église romaine contenues dans les rouleaux dits rouleaux de Cluny* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1865), p. 97, no. 35 (wrongly dated to 1239); Vasil Gyuzelev, "Das Papstum und Bulgarien im Mittelalter (9–14. Jahrhundert)," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 5.1 (1977). p. 49.

17 Nikolay Kânev and Konstantin Totev, "Новооткрит оловен печат на латинския император Бодуен Втори [Newly Discovered lead seal of the Latin Emperor Baldwin II]", in *България в европейската култура, наука, образование, религия*, Vol. 1, ed. Todor Todorov, and Konstantin Konstantinov (Shumen: Association of Scientists in Bulgaria, 2015), pp. 374–380; Madgearu, *The Assanids*, p. 223.

18 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," pp. 946–947.

19 Longnon, *L'empire Latin*, p. 182; Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers de Négrepont," *Byzantion* 35 (1965), p. 245.

20 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 200.

21 'Ante paucos annos quidam bonus magister et sapiens venit Constantinopolim. Qui rogato

The initial contacts between the Franks and the Cuman fugitives took place in 1239, or as Alberic of Trois-Fontaines relates referring to the prophecy, “*paucos annos*”, before 1241.<sup>22</sup> However, the ceremony that cemented their mutual agreement happened in early 1240, after the emperor’s return, and it was described in detail by Jean of Joinville, the famous biographer of Louis IX. Joinville mentioned Narjot of Toucy as his informant, but this is a mistake, because Narjot was dead at the time, so it must have been his son Philip of Toucy who was with Louis IX and his entourage in Caesarea in Palestine in July 1251,<sup>23</sup> and who probably on that occasion related the fascinating story of how the emperor of Constantinople and his magnates were in league with Cumans (“*people que l’on appelloit Commaïns*”) against John III Vatatzes. As Joinville adds, “the Emperor of Constantinople and the nobles in his company had submitted to being bled, and their blood had been put into a great silver goblet. The King of the Cumans (“*li roys des Commaïns*”) and the nobles with him had done the same in their turn, and had mingled the blood with the blood of our people. After water and wine had been added both parties had drunk from the goblet and had thereupon declared themselves blood-brothers”. The ceremony also included a sacrifice of a dog, which both sides slashed and cut to bits with their swords “at the same time vowing that whoever failed the other in this alliance would be cut to pieces in the same way”.<sup>24</sup>

The establishment of the sworn brotherhood by blood was strengthened by mutual marital ties. According to Alberic, two Cuman “kings” (*reges*), Iona and Saronius, gave their daughters in marriage to the magnates of the Latin Empire. The older and more respected Cuman chief Iona, obviously identical to Joinville’s unnamed Cuman king, gave his daughter to Narjot of Toucy, while two daughters of Saronius, who were baptized in Constantinople, were married to William (Guillaume), son of constable Geoffroy of Merry, and the emperor’s cousin Baldwin of

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quorundam per suas incantationes coegit demonem respondere sibi certa et vera, cui demon tale dedit responsum: Rex inimicos / Perdet iniquos / non per amicos. Quo dicto demon obmutuit, et ulterius non respondit. Interrogatus vero magister de interpretatione versus, dicebat: ‘Quoniam vos ipsi per vos cito interpretationem videbitis et cognoscetis sine iudicio alicuius.’ Creditur autem quod in adventu Comanorum illud vaticinium sit completum: Nam rex celestis perdet et destruet iniquos inimicos imperii Constantinopolis, videlicet Vastagium et Alsanum, non per amicos, id est Comanos, qui sunt infideles, nec sunt amici Christi’, Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, “Chronica,” p. 949.

- 22 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, “Chronica,” p. 947, p. 949; Uzelac, “Cumans in the Latin Empire,” p. 12.
- 23 Joseph Laborde, ed., *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Plon, 1875), p. 138, no. 3934.
- 24 Jean de Joinville, and Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Margaret R. B. Shaw (London: Penguin, 1963), pp. 289–290; See also Peter Golden, “Wolves, Dogs and Qipchaq Religion,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 50 (1997), pp. 95–96.

Hainaut.<sup>25</sup> Marital ties between the Cumans and the Franks are also recorded in the French continuation of *The History of William of Tyre* (the so-called *Eracles*).<sup>26</sup>

In such a way, while the last stage of the Mongol campaign in the Pontic-Caspian steppes was taking place, the Franks in Constantinople secured the support of the western knights and the Cumans, aiming to reconquer lost possessions in Thrace. Preparations for the campaign seem to have been launched immediately after the emperor's coronation. At the beginning of May 1240, near the imperial capital, Baldwin II issued rights of the Kingdom of Thessaloniki to Guglielmo da Verona, triarch of Negroponte.<sup>27</sup> Possibly, he was already in the field, training the troops. The main target of the campaign was the fortress Tzouroulou, which fell under the rule of Nicaea four years earlier. It was besieged by the forces of the Latin Empire in the summer of 1240. According to Akropolites, "the infinite number of Scythians, and the quantity and strength of the siege towers" had forced the Nicaean commander Petralyphas to surrender the city; the defenders were taken as captives to Constantinople.<sup>28</sup> Baldwin II enthusiastically informed his cousin, the King of England, of the capture of an important fortress not far from Constantinople, together with surrounding lands.<sup>29</sup>

The war continued the following year. After the loss of *Tzouroulou*, Vatatzes intended to counterattack with both his army and the navy, while Baldwin II kept his knights behind the walls of the capital and the forts in eastern Thrace. In the spring of 1241, the Nicaean fleet sailed from Nicomedia towards Bosphorus, while the army captured three remaining Frankish outposts on the shores of Marmara: Dakibyza (modern Gebze), Niketiatou (Eskihisar), and Charax.<sup>30</sup> The Greek navy was, however, defeated in the vicinity of Constantinople by the approximately half as large Venetian fleet of 16 ships led by Podestà Giovanni Michele. The battle

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25 'Saronius insuper traditor quidam duas habebat filias baptizatas in Constantinopoli, quarum unam duxit Guillelmus conestabuli filius, alteram Balduinus de Haynaco. Filiam vero regis lone, qui videbatur esse maior in regibus Cumanorum, duxerat domnus Nargoldus balivus', Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 950.

26 "Guilelmi Tyrensis Continuata belli sacri historia," in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, Vol. 201, ed. Jean-Paul Migne (Paris: Petit Montrouge, 1853), p. 1010. The continuator of William of Tyre speaks of the marriage between Anseau of Cayeux and a daughter of a Cuman. However, Anseau of Cayeux was at that time married to a Greek princess Eudokia Laskarina, so he could not have had a Cuman wife, cf. Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 911; George Akropolites, *History*, p. 173, p. 245. Evidently, the two consecutive regents of the Latin Empire, Anseau of Cayeux and Narjot of Toucy, were conflated in the source.

27 Loenertz, "Les seigneurs tiersiers de Négrepont," p. 268, no. 1.

28 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 203.

29 Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 4, ed. Henry R. Luard (London: Longman, 1877), pp. 54–55.

30 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 203.

probably took place in May of 1241.<sup>31</sup> The war ended soon, or as Alberic states, around the feast of St. John the Baptist (June 24), John Asen II died and the Latin Empire concluded a two-year truce with both Bulgaria and Nicaea.<sup>32</sup> The Bulgarian emperor probably died sometime earlier, in May or early June, as the date in Alberic's chronicle refers to the conclusion of the truce.<sup>33</sup> It was usually observed from the perspective of the conflict between Nicaea and the Latin Empire. Nevertheless, it is conspicuous that Bulgaria was also included in the tripartite agreement, and that its date coincided with the important events taking place in Pannonia; namely, the Mongol invasion over the Carpathians, their victory at the *Sajó* river (April 11, 1241), and the establishment of their control over the eastern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. It is quite plausible that the news of the Mongol threat was also a factor that led to a temporary halt in the hostilities in Thrace.<sup>34</sup>

Narjot of Toucy died in the same year, probably soon after the conclusion of the truce. His Cuman wife afterwards took monastic vows.<sup>35</sup> In the same year, she lost not only her husband, but also her father Iona, another man who was responsible for the establishment of the Frankish-Cuman alliance. Iona was not baptized and he was buried in accordance with nomadic customs. His body was put under a high tumulus just outside of the walls of Constantinople, while the funeral ceremony was followed by a voluntary sacrifice of eight of his men, and 26 horses, according to Alberic.<sup>36</sup> Joinville also described in detail a funeral of a certain Cuman magnate, evidently none other than Iona, by relating how his folk dug a grave, and put him inside in rich attire. The Cumans also "lowered the best horse he had, and his best sergeant into the grave alive" and raised a great mound of stones and earth above the tomb in memory of those they had thus buried".<sup>37</sup> Joinville's informant Philip of Toucy was obviously present at the funeral. He and the other dignitaries

31 Martino da Canale, "La Chronique des Veniciens," in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Vol. 8, ed. Filippo-Luigi Polidori (Firenze: G.P. Vieusseux, 1845), p. 366; Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica*, p. 298; George Akropolites, *History*, pp. 203–204; Giebfried, "The Mongol Invasions," p. 131.

32 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 950.

33 Madgearu, *The Assanids*, pp. 225–226.

34 Uzelac, "Cumans in the Latin Empire," p. 17.

35 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 950; Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, Vol. 2, pp. 673–674, verses 30747–30758. Mouskes reported that the news of death of John Assen II and Narjot de Toucy came from Constantinople at the same time. See also: Pierre Courroux, "Philippe Mousket, Aubri de Troisfontaines et la date de composition de la 'Chronique rimée'," *Medioevo Romano* 39.2 (2015), 429–431.

36 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, "Chronica," p. 950.

37 Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, p. 290; Yuriy K. Guguev, "Рассказ Жана де Жуанвиля о похоронах знатного кумана" [Jean de Joinville's Story about the Funeral of a Cuman Noble], in *Тюркологический сборник. 2007–2008: история и культура тюркских народов России и сопредельных стран*, ed. Sergey G. Klyashtornyy, Tursun I. Sultanov, and Vadim V. Trepavlov (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 2009), pp. 124–145.

of the Latin Empire had every reason to mourn Iona, as after his death the alliance between the Franks and the nomads was effectively terminated.

Following the truce, John III Vatatzes directed his attention to Thessaloniki, ruled by the Epirote prince John Doukas Angelos (1237–1244), who styled himself emperor. Akropolites recorded that when Vatatzes launched the campaign in 1242, he had “a battle-worthy army” of Cumans at his disposal. He “had won [them] over a short time ago with gifts and manifold liberalities” and settled them in the eastern regions of his state.<sup>38</sup> Akropolites does not mention who was the leader of these Cumans, but it is noteworthy that Alberic branded Saronius a traitor,<sup>39</sup> and that later Byzantine emperor and writer John VI Kantakouzenos (1347–1354) mentioned Cuman leader Sytzigan as being in the service of Vatatzes; Sytzigan is probably just a variant of the same name that Alberic recorded as “Saronius”, as *István Vásáry convincingly argued*.<sup>40</sup> Evidently, either in late 1241 or at the beginning of the next year, Saronius switched his allegiance and led the Cuman host under the banner of Nicaea. Vatatzes took care of their provisions and settlement in Asia Minor,<sup>41</sup> before he called his new allies to join the march against Thessaloniki. Some Cumans may have stayed in Constantinople; such was the case of Perrin the Cuman, a sergeant in the service of Narjot’s younger son Anseau of Toucy, mentioned by the fourteenth-century Chronicle of Morea in some later events,<sup>42</sup> but his example was rather the exception than the rule.

Besides the death of Iona, the lack of resources for the sustenance of a large nomadic group—as the Latin empire was limited to a small, largely urbanized territory in the vicinity of Constantinople—undoubtedly played a role in the decision of the Cumans to switch their allegiance to Nicaea. Another reason that influenced such a move was fear of the Mongols.<sup>43</sup> Béla IV received serious threats from the Mongol leader Batu on the eve of the invasion, because he was sheltering a large group of Cumans led by Cuthen,<sup>44</sup> and it is not impossible that similar warnings arrived in Constantinople. As Peter Jackson rightfully pointed out, the Mongols attacked Baldwin II because, in all probability, like the King of Hungary he had

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38 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 215.

39 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, “Chronica,” p. 950.

40 Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, trans. Georgios Fatouros and Tilman Kirscher (Stuttgart: Anton Hierseman, 1982), p. 22; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, pp. 67–68.

41 Dimitri Korobeinikov, “Кыпчаки в Пафлагонии” [Kipchaks in Paphlagonia], in *Кипчаки Евразии: история, язык и письменные памятники*, ed. Bulat E. Kumekov (Astana: Eurasian National University Lev Gumilev, 2013), pp. 100–108; Dimitri Korobeinikov, *Byzantium and the Turks in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 76–78; Rustam Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 92–93.

42 John Schmitt, ed., *The Chronicle of Morea* (London: Methuen, 1904), p. 353, verse 5420.

43 Uzelac, “Cumans in the Latin Empire,” pp. 16–17.

44 Dörrie, *Drei Texte*, p. 179; Hautala, *От “Давида, царя Индий,”* p. 380, pp. 388–389.

given asylum to the Cumans.<sup>45</sup> An identical motive for the Mongol attack was unintentionally provided by two other Balkan countries, Serbia and Bulgaria, to where the Cumans, who left Hungary after the treacherous murder of Cuthen, fled in the spring of 1241.<sup>46</sup>

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In 1242, Baiju, commander of the Mongol forces in Armenia, launched a campaign and captured Erzurum after a prolonged siege.<sup>47</sup> This was an ominous announcement of further Mongol penetration into the heart of Anatolia. The news reached Vatatzes in his camp near Thessaloniki. The emperor initially kept the information secret in order not to erode the morale of his troops. Nonetheless, fearing trouble on the eastern borders, he accepted the formal submission of John Doukas Angelos and left in haste to Asia Minor to prepare defences in case the Mongols threatened his domains.<sup>48</sup> In the meantime, at the end of January or early February of 1242, Batu's war machinery in Pannonia had already pushed over the frozen Danube. The detachment, led by prince Qadan, descended on the Adriatic coast in an attempt to capture Béla IV, who found refuge in the town of Trau (Trogir). Unsuccessful in this task, Qadan stayed in Dalmatia through the course of the winter and thoroughly devastated the countryside. The Mongol leader then left towards southern Bosnia and the maritime regions of the Serbian medieval state, where his forces stormed a few towns on the way. After arriving in the vicinity of Scutari (*Shkodër*), the Mongols turned to the interior of the Balkan Peninsula, eventually reaching northwest Bulgaria. Archaeological traces of the Mongol campaign are particularly

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45 Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, p. 72.

46 Anonymi Bele regis notarii, *Gesta Hungarorum*. Anonymus Notary of King Bela, *The Deeds of the Hungarians*. Edited, translated and annotated by Martyn Rady and László Veszprémy, Magistri Rogerii, *Epistola in miserabile carmen super destructione regni Hungarie per Tartaros facta*. Master Roger's, *Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*. Translated and annotated by János M. Bak and Martyn Rady, (Central European Medieval Texts, 5) (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2010), pp. 176–177 (hereinafter Anonymus and Master Roger); Gerard de Frachet, "Vitae fratrum ordinis Praedicatorum," in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, Vol. 1, ed. Benedict M. Reichert (Leuven: Charpentier & Schoonjans, 1896), p. 307; Haultala, *От "Давида, царя Индий"*, p. 349, p. 351.

47 Ibn Bibi, *Die Seltshukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi*, ed. and trans. Herbert W. Duda (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1959), p. 227; Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 256; John Langdon, "Byzantium's initial Encounter with the Chinggisids. An Introduction to the Byzantino-Mongolica," *Viator* 29 (1998), pp. 113–114.

48 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 216.



noticeable in the northern parts of the Asenid state, between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains.<sup>49</sup>

There are some clues that help us to determine the directions of the Mongol campaign in Bulgaria. Persian writer Rashīd *al-Dīn* mentions that Qadan attacked the cities of Qīrqīn and Qīla; the first city is usually assumed to be the Bulgarian medieval capital Tārnovo, while the second one was identified with Kilia, at the mouth of the Danube.<sup>50</sup> However, Kilia was an insignificant place at the time, and another proposed identification of Qīla with the major port of Anchialos (also known as Ahilu, Asilo, Achillo) or modern Pomorie, further south, seems much more credible.<sup>51</sup> If such identification is correct, it would suggest that the Mongols, similarly to the Crusading army in the late 1239, used the ancient coastal route leading from Anchialos through Pirgos (Burgas), Agathopolis (Ahtopol) and Midye (Kiyıköy) towards Constantinople in order to reach the Latin Empire.<sup>52</sup>

The Mongol attack on the Latin Empire of Constantinople is attested in two sources. The first is a well-known entry preserved in the anonymous Chronicle of Heiligenkreuz Abbey, dated *sub anno 1243*, and repeated in the early fourteenth-century Chronicon Austriacum, the Chronicle of Leoben, and the Chronicle of Klosterneuburg: “The Tatars and the Cumans, without resistance and unopposed, returned from Hungary with innumerable spoils in gold and silver [...] After

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49 Plamen Pavlov and Georgi Atanasov, “Преминаването на татарската армия през България (1241-1242 г.)” [The passage of the Tatar Army through Bulgaria (1241-1242)], *Военноисторически сборник* 63, no. 1 (1994), pp. 5–20; Plamen Pavlov and Georgi Vladimirov, *Златната орда и българите* [The Golden Horde and Bulgarians] (Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 2009), pp. 77–89; Aleksandar Uzelac, *Под сенком Пса. Татари и јужнословенске земље у другој половини XIII века* [Under the Shadow of the Dog. Tatars and South Slavic Lands in the Second half of the Thirteenth Century] (Belgrade: Utopia, 2015), pp. 47–52; Panos Sophoulis, “The Mongol Invasion of Croatia and Serbia in 1242,” *Fragmenta Hellenoslavica* 2 (2015), pp. 251–278; Dejan Radičević, “Археологические следы монгольского нашествия на территории Сербии” [Archeological traces of Mongol Invasion on the Territory of Serbia], *Stratum Plus*, 7.5 (2020), p. 231–247.

50 Rashīd al-Dīn, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. John Andrew Boyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 71. Aurel Decei, “L’invasion des Tatars de 1241/1242 dans nos régions de selon la Djamiot Tevarikh de Fazl ol-lah Rashid od-Din,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 12 (1973), pp. 120–121.

51 Silvia Baraschi, “Izvoare scrise privind aşezările dobrogene de pe malul Dunării în secolele XI-XIV” [Written Sources about the Dobrogean settlements on the Danube in the Eleventh-Fourteenth Centuries], *Revista de istorie* 34.2 (1981), p. 323; Madgearu, *The Assanids*, pp. 229–230. On medieval Anchialos see also Krasimira Gagova, *Тракия през българското средновековие. Историческа география* [Thracia in the Bulgarian Middle Ages. Historical Geography] (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2002), pp. 163–168.

52 On this route see: Dimităr Angelov and Boris Cholpanov, *Българска военна история през средновековието (X-XV век)* [Bulgarian Military History in the Middle Ages (Tenth-Fifteenth century)] (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1994), p. 324 and Gagova, *Тракия*, p. 101.

entering Greece, they laid waste to the entire country, apart from the fortresses and well-fortified cities. The king of Constantinople, named Baldwin, confronted them, being victorious in the first battle and suffering defeat in the second one.”<sup>53</sup>

The report presents a couple of problems to researchers: the first is the mention of Cumans as the attackers, together with the Mongols, and the second is the recorded date of the incursion. In fact, both are mistakes, which can be easily explained. In the Austrian chronicle, the role of the Cumans in these turbulent events is garbled; considering that they are mentioned as the invaders in Hungary as well, it is not surprising that they appear as Mongol allies in their march to Thrace. Their mention thus seems to have no connection to the earlier Cuman settlement in the Latin Empire. Moreover, the previous entry in the Chronicle dates the “Cuman and Mongol invasion” of Hungary and death of Pope Gregory IX in 1242 instead of 1241,<sup>54</sup> and it is necessary to apply the same correction (i.e. the subtraction of one year) to the passage dealing with the Mongol incursion into the domains of Baldwin II.

A more detailed note about the chronology needs to be inserted here. It is known that Baldwin II was in Constantinople on February 12, 1242, when he wrote a letter to Louis IX regarding his dispute with countess Matilda of Nevers about the ownership of several castles.<sup>55</sup> Another piece of documentary evidence comes from August 5, 1243, when he sent a letter to Queen Blanche of Castille, mother of Louis IX, in which he defended himself from the accusations that he had surrounded himself by Greeks and had tried to win her for a particular political project of which more will be said below.<sup>56</sup> His clashes with the Mongols took place in the time span between these two dates, and considering that there was no mention

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53 ‘Tartari et Chumani nemine resistente et occurrente, recesserunt ab Ungaria cum infinita preda auri et argenti, vestium, animalium, multos et captivos utriusque sexus ducebant in obproprium christianorum. Qui intrantes Greciam totam terram illam depopulabant, exceptis castellis et civitatibus valde munitis. Rex vero Constantinopolitanus nomine Baldwinus, congressus est cum eis, a quo primo victi in secunda congressione victus est ab eis,’ “Anonymi Chronicon Austriacum”, in *Rerum Austriacarum scriptores*, vol. 2, ed. Adrian Rauch (Vienna: J. Stahel, 1793), p. 245. For other chronicles where the same passage is repeated: Joseph von Zahn, ed., *Anonymi Leobiensis Chronicon*, (Grätz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1865), p. 8; “Chronicon Claustro-neuburgense”, in *Rerum Austriacarum scriptores*, vol. 1, ed. Adrian Rauch (Wien: J. Stahel, 1793), p. 85; “Continuatio Sancrucensis II,” in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 9, ed. Wilhelm Wattenbach (Hannover: Hahn, 1851), p. 641. See also Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, p. 70.

54 “Anonymi Chronicon Austriacum,” p. 244; cf. “Chronicon Claustro-neuburgense,” p. 84; “Continuatio Sancrucensis II,” p. 640.

55 Teulet, *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, vol. 2, p. 464, no. 2954; Hendrickx, “Regestes,” p. 138; no. 213.

56 André Duchesne, *Historiae Francorum Scriptores*, vol. 5 (Paris: Sebastian Cramois, 1649), pp. 424–426; Teulet, *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, vol. 2, pp. 518–519, no. 3123; Hendrickx, “Regestes,” p. 143, no. 221.

or any reminiscence of the invaders in the latter document, it would indicate that they had taken place at least several months earlier.<sup>57</sup> The chronology of Qadan's activities is more helpful in this aspect. An eyewitness of Mongol action in Dalmatia, Thomas of Spalato, remembered that the Mongols had stayed there until the end of March, 1242.<sup>58</sup> Qadan then passed through Bosnia and Serbia and arrived in Bulgaria during the spring of the same year. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the Mongols ended their campaign in the Balkans in January, 1243.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, their inroads into the territory of the Latin Empire should be dated either as summer or the autumn of 1242 at the latest.

Unlike the well-known entry from the Austrian chronicle, another source in which the conflict between the Mongols and the Franks was recorded is generally neglected. This is the *Chronography* of Syriac writer Gregory Abulfaraj (1226-1286), better known as Bar Hebraeus. In a passage of this work that deals with the Mongol invasions, Bar Hebraeus noted how Batu "prepared to attack Constantinople from the quarter of the Bulgarians. And the kings of the Franks heard [of this], and they gathered together and they met Batu in battle, and they broke him and made him flee. And no man of the Tatars afterwards went to the country of the Franks, but they dwelt in the plain of Cappadocia."<sup>60</sup> Almost the same text is repeated in the *History of Dynasties*, an Arabic rendition of *Chronography* written by Bar Hebraeus himself, where it is added that the battle between the Franks and the Mongols took place within the borders of Bulgaria.<sup>61</sup> It is certain that "Bulgaria" in this section

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57 Giebfried, "The Mongol Invasions," p. 133.

58 Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, *Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum*. Archdeacon Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*. Latin text edition by Olga Perić. Edited and English translation by Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and James Ross Sweeney (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), pp. 300–301.

59 Rashīd al-Dīn, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, p. 71; Roman Nautala, "Ездил ли Александр Невский в Монголию? Несколько замечаний о поездках Александра Невского и его отца к монгольским правителям" [Did Alexander Nevsky go to Mongolia? Some Remarks on the Travels of Alexander Nevsky and his Father to the Mongol Rulers], in *Александр Невский: личность, эпоха, историческая память. К 800-летию со дня рождения* [Alexander Nevsky: Personality, Era, Historical Memory. To the 800th Anniversary of his Birth], ed. Elena L. Konyavskaya and Leonid A. Belyaev (Moscow: Indrik, 2021), p. 200. A marginal note in a manuscript from the Vatican archive attests that a book was bought from a certain Theodore Gramatikos at the time of the reign of Kaliman Asen (1241–1246), son and successor of John Asen II in Bulgaria in the year 6751 of the Byzantine calendar (September 1, 1242–August 31, 1243) "after the attack of the godless Tatars", Peter Schreiner, "Die Tataren und Bulgarien. Bemerkungen zu einer Notiz im Vaticanus Reginensis gr. 18," *Études balkaniques* 21.4 (1985), 25–29.

60 Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l Faraj, the son of Aaron, the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, Vol. 1, trans. Ernest A. W. Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 398.

61 'Batu autem, quae ad Sclavos spectarent peractis, ad partes Constantinopolis invadendas se accinxit: quod cum auditione accepissent Francorum Reges, illi unanimiter congregati Mo-

of the *Chronography* (and *History of Dynasties*) is the Danubian Bulgaria, not its counterpart on the Volga, while the puzzling mention of the plain of Cappadocia should probably imply “the plain of Kipchaks”—that is, the steppes to the north of the Black Sea, not the Anatolian region.<sup>62</sup> As with the Austrian Chronicle, the chronology in the report of Bar Hebraeus is wrong; the event is dated in “the year 1542 of the Greeks”; that is, 1231/32.

How this information came to the Syriac chronicler will be discussed later. Before that, it is necessary to look at another alleged piece of evidence of the Mongol inroads into the territory of the Latin Empire. John Giebfried recently brought into argument an intriguing rumour that circulated in the West about the death of the Latin Emperor Baldwin II, connecting it with the defeat of the Frankish knights in the second battle against the Mongols. The rumour is recorded in no less than two instances. The first is the *Chronique Rimée* of Phillippe Mouskes, who conveys how “from Greece the news came [...], that emperor Baldwin, brother of Robert was dead”.<sup>63</sup> Allegedly, hearing the news, Geoffroy of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaëa, sailed to Constantinople to take over the regency on behalf of Baldwin’s wife Marie of Brienne and their underage son Philip.<sup>64</sup> Another notice is preserved in documents from the Papal chancery. Namely, in two letters of Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254), dated April 23, 1244 and confirming Baldwin’s grants in the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, the emperor was mentioned as deceased (“*clare memorie Balduinus, imperator Constantinopolitanus*”).<sup>65</sup> The papal documents are unfortunately omitted by Giebfried, who instead focused on another piece of information preserved in the poem *De triumphis ecclesiae* by John of Garland (ca. 1190–1270), a university teacher in Paris. In the passages of his poem reflecting on the Mongol campaigns in the Black Sea region, John of Garland noted that the Caucasus and the Danube bowed to the Mongols, while “defeated Thrace mourned its leader”; the leader of Thrace was recognized as none other than Baldwin II.<sup>66</sup>

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gulisibus in Bulgariae finibus occurrerunt; ubi frequentium quae commiserunt praeliorum exitus fuit, ut victi Mogulenses terga darent, atque in fugam se converterent’, Bar Hebraeus, *Historia compendiosa dynastiarum auctore Gregorio Abul-Pharajjo, Malatiensi Medico*, trans. Edward Pococke (Oxford: H. Hall, 1663), p. 310.

62 Petâr Goliyski, “Древните и средновековните българи в сирийските и сирийско-арменските извори” [Ancient and Medieval Bulgarians in Syriac and Syriac-Armenian Sources], *Епоху* 27.2 (2019), 466–467.

63 ‘De viers Grisse revint noviele / Assés périllouse et non bieles / Que mors estoit li emperère Bauduins / ki fu Robiert frère / L’emperéour mort devant lui’, Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, vol. 2, p. 689, verses 31181–31185.

64 Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, vol. 2, p. 689, verses 31191–31198

65 Loenertz, “Les seigneurs tiersiers de Négrepont”, pp. 267–270, nos. 1–2.

66 ‘Armenie proceres pereunt, Syrieque tyranni / Succumbunt; Pontus colla subacta gemit. Caucasus inclinat sese, sua porrigit Hister / Arma, suum luget Thracia victa ducem’, John of

The hypothesis that the rumour emerged as an echo of Baldwin's defeat in the second battle with the Mongols is tempting, but to test its validity we must again turn to chronology. Mouskes' report about the alleged death of the emperor is present in the final sections of his work that refers to various events from 1242 and 1243, but independently of his short notices about the Mongol campaigns and the spurious battle between the "King of the Vlachs" (Bulgarians) and the invaders.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, John of Garland noted the death of the "leader of Thrace" in connection with the Mongol invasion, but he finished his poem in 1252, when Baldwin II was safe and sound in Constantinople, and many years after the rumour proved false. Therefore, the man in question whose death was recorded in Garland's poem seems to be John Asen II, who indeed died at the time of the Mongol invasion, not the emperor in Constantinople. The most important argument for the rejection of the hypothesis is the date of the papal documents. They show that the rumour of Baldwin's death did not emerge at the time of the conflict with the Mongols, but rather in the second half of 1243, and after Baldwin's letter to Blanche of Castille, as convincingly argued by Filip van Tricht.<sup>68</sup> Whether the rumour was an echo of a new Nicaean attack against Constantinople following the expiry of the truce concluded in 1241, as van Tricht thinks, or is due to a possibly otherwise unrecorded illness of the emperor, is something that can only be speculated about. However, for the purpose of this article, it is sufficient to note that the proposed connection between the Mongol inroad into Thrace and the rumour of Baldwin's death can be dismissed altogether.

Accordingly, we are left with the short entry from the Austrian chronicle and the neglected passage from the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus. Both sources were written long after the events, but they are also independent of each other. Their information about the battle(s) in the open field between the Mongols and the Franks from Constantinople can be accepted as trustworthy. Even after the departure of Cumans, Baldwin II still had at his disposal the knights he led from the West two years earlier, or at least parts of this army. A year before, he had kept his military resources behind the walls of fortresses against the superior forces of the Empire of Nicaea, and his decision to meet the Mongols on the battlefield indicates that the number of the invaders was small; it was probably just a raiding party, or a reconnaissance force. On the other hand, the location of the battle(s) between

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Garland, *De triumphis ecclesiae libri octo. A Latin Poem of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Nichols & Sons, 1856), p. 108; Giebfried, "The Mongol Invasions," p. 132.

67 'Des Tartares revint noviele / Ki par tot le monde fu biele / Que li rois de la tière as Blas / Les ot descomfis à l pas', Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, vol. 2, p. 681, verses 30959–30963.

68 van Tricht, *Horoscope of Baldwin II*, pp. 69–70; cf. Courroux, "Philippe Mousket," pp. 432–433.

the Mongol marauders and the Franks is somewhat differently presented in the two sources. The Austrian chronicler speaks of the encounters after the Mongols entered “Greece”, or the territory of the Latin Empire, while remarks of Bar Hebraeus imply that the battle took place within Bulgaria, or in the border region between the two states. Based on this information and the previously supposed route of the Mongols, it may be suggested that the confrontations took place in the vicinity of the Bulgarian town of Agathopolis and the Frankish fortress of Midye further south.<sup>69</sup>

The Syriac chronicler claimed that Batu personally led the assault, which is impossible to accept at face value. However, it is conceivable that he ordered Qadan to send a part of his force to Thrace, either before or after the two Mongol leaders joined their forces in northern Bulgaria, probably near the mouth of the Danube.<sup>70</sup> Eventually, after testing the strength of the Latin Empire in the two battles—if we are to believe the Austrian chronicler—or rather skirmishes with the crusaders, the Mongols withdrew. In the same source it is stated that the attackers did not storm any of the cities or fortresses, and considering that the land of the Latin Empire was heavily fortified it is doubtful that they could have caused much damage. Finally, it may be supposed that the Mongol defeat in the first encounter served as a basis for the story that spread from Constantinople to Levant, in which it grew into a decisive battle, whose outcome forced the defeated Mongols and Batu himself to return to the East, thus earning its place in the opus of Bar Hebraeus.

The two short conflicting reports about the clashes between the Mongols and the Franks do not offer the possibility to reconstruct the course of events in more detail. However, it can be concluded that the effects of the Mongol attack were limited, at least compared to the devastation that the neighbouring Bulgaria suffered. It was due to the small number of attackers, the readiness of Baldwin II and his knights to meet them in the open field, and the strong fortifications that guarded the roads to Constantinople. Thus, the Mongol inroad to Thrace seems to have been a minor episode in the history of their invasion of Europe, without serious direct repercussions on the Latin Empire of Constantinople. The long-term effects of the Mongol invasion on the region and on the Latin Empire were, however, tremendous, and they will be discussed in the last part of this text.

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69 On medieval Agathopolis: Gagova, *Тракия*, 154-156. Midye was under Frankish control until 1247, when it was conquered by the Empire of Nicaea, see *infra*.

70 Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, *Historia Salonitanorum*, pp. 302–303.

After 1242, the political map of the Southeastern Europe drastically changed. Bulgaria, won for the Frankish cause near the end of John Asen's reign, was thoroughly ravaged by the Mongols, and was eventually forced to become their tributary in ca. 1247.<sup>71</sup> The majority of the Cumans, whose affection the Franks in Constantinople so painstakingly tried to win, eventually settled within the empire of Vatatzes, and thus strengthened the power of their bitter rival. And in the early forties, another political project of Baldwin II was destined to fail due to the impact of the Mongol invasions: his attempt to secure the alliance with the Seljuk sultanate of Rum and its ruler Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw II (1237–1246).

The only trace of the contacts between the Latin Empire and the Seljuks is preserved in the above-mentioned letter of Baldwin II to Blanche of Castille from August 5, 1243. In the letter, the emperor described his negotiations with the Turks which led to the conclusion of the pact of friendship. Baldwin II also tried to use the influence of the Queen mother to convince his sister Elizabeth of Montaigu to send one of her daughters to marry the sultan and thus cement the alliance.<sup>72</sup> The contents of the letter show that such idea was motivated exclusively by the intent of suppressing the threat of John III Vatatzes ("*ad inimicum nostrum Vastachium deprimendum*"). The initial negotiations of Baldwin II with Kaykhusraw II were probably set in motion several months earlier when the tripartite truce with the Nicaea and Bulgaria was approaching an end, but it was the Mongols that again came into play and shattered to pieces the prospects of the alliance.

After the conquest of Erzurum, Baiju made preparations for a further campaign in Anatolia. Kaykhusraw II realized the magnitude of danger and sent pleas for help in all directions. According to Dominican friar Simon of St. Quentin, Vatatzes answered the call and sent 400 lancers, while Persian historian Ibn Bibi mentions 3,000 Franks and Greeks in the Seljuk army in the decisive battle of Köse Dağ (June 26, 1243).<sup>73</sup> The presence of the Frankish mercenaries on the Seljuk side is also attested by Bar Hebraeus,<sup>74</sup> and by Armenian nobleman and historian Hayton of Korikos; according to Hayton, they were led by a certain John of Liminati from Cyprus and Boniface de Molinis from Venice.<sup>75</sup> It seems that no help came to the

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71 On the date: Pavlov and Vladimirov, *Златната орда и българите*, p. 89 and Uzelac, *Под сенком Пса*, pp. 74–75.

72 Duchesne, *Historiae Francorum Scriptores*, Vol. 5, pp. 424–426; Hendrickx, "Regestes," pp. 141–143, nos. 219–221.

73 Simon of Saint-Quentin, *Histoire des Tartares*, ed. Jean Richard (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1965), p. 70; Ibn Bibi, *Seltschukengeschichte*, p. 227.

74 Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, Vol. 1, p. 406.

75 Hayton of Korikos, "La flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient", in *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Documents arméniens*, vol. 2, ed. Charles Kohler (Paris: Imprimerie nationale 1906), pp. 158–159, pp. 292–293; Korobeinikov, *Byzantium and the Turks*, p. 178, n. 62.

sultan from Constantinople. The “betrayal” of the Cumans, followed by the losses in the campaigns against Nicaea in 1240–41, and the Mongol marauders in 1242, probably depleted the military resources of the Latin Empire to a great extent, and Baldwin II was in either unwilling, or more probably unable, to send military support to his desired ally when he desperately needed it.<sup>76</sup>

As many historians agree, the disastrous Seljuk defeat at Köse Dağ opened a new chapter in the history of Asia Minor. It initially made the sultan and his subjects fully dependent on aid from Vatatzes, but eventually the weakened Seljuk state had no other choice but to become a Mongol vassal.<sup>77</sup> As a result, in the mid-thirteenth century the Mongol sphere of influence encompassed the whole basin of the Black Sea, with the exception of the Latin Empire and the Empire of Nicaea,<sup>78</sup> and the latter was the only state in the region not directly affected either by the Qadan’s operations in 1242, or by Baiju’s campaign in 1243. In fact, in the long run, as Giebfried rightfully argued, the Mongol invasions benefited Vatatzes and his state by weakening his rivals and allowing him to make great advances.<sup>79</sup>

In 1244, Baldwin II set out again for Europe in a desperate attempt to secure help against the threat to Nicaea that seemed imminent. He left his domains in the hands of empress consort Marie of Brienne, Philip of Toucy, and Anseau of Cayeux. He participated in the Council of Lyons (1245), where he sat at the right hand of Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) in the place of honour among secular princes, but despite the initial hope this time no help came from the Pope, Louis IX, nor representatives of the Military order of Saint James; while the attention of Western Europe was directed at the events in the Holy Land and the Mongols, there was not much sympathy for the cause of the Franks in Constantinople. Besides, neither Baldwin II nor the regency on the Bosphorus had anything to offer in return as the state treasury of the Latin empire was again empty.<sup>80</sup>

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76 The so-called Minstrel of Reims remarked that many Baldwin’s knights and followers left him before he left on a second journey to Europe in 1244, because he was bankrupt, Natalis de Wailly, ed., *Récits d’un ménestrel de Reims au treizième siècle* (Paris: Renouard, 1876), p. 224.

77 Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, p. 234; Langdon, “Byzantium’s initial encounter,” pp. 114–117; Korobeinikov, *Byzantium and the Turks*, pp. 178–180.

78 On the Mongol sphere of influence in the Black Sea region, see the report of Flemish Franciscan and traveller William of Rubruck to Louis IX, Peter Jackson and David Morgan, trans., *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253–1255* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990), pp. 65–66.

79 Giebfried, “Mongol Invasions,” p. 135. A similar conclusion is arrived at by van Tricht, *Horoscope of Baldwin II*, p. 68, n. 44.

80 Longnon, *L’empire Latin*, pp. 184–185; Eloy Benito Ruano, “Balduino II de Constantinopla y La Orden de Santiago. Un proyecto de defensa del Imperio Latino de Oriente [Balduin II of Constantinople and The Order of Santiago. A project for the defense of the Eastern Latin Empire],” *Hispania: Revista española de historia* 12 (1952), pp. 3–36; Wolff, “Latin Empire,” pp. 224–225.



Meanwhile, Vatatzes waited for an opportune moment to exploit the power vacuum created by the Mongols and the weakness of his neighbours. In September 1246, upon hearing the news of the (possibly violent) death of the underage Kaliman Asen (1241–1246), he turned against Bulgaria. With little effort, northern Thrace and Eastern Macedonia were taken from the Asenid state, and the Bulgarians were forced to conclude a peace and to officially recognize the territorial changes.<sup>81</sup> In December of the same year, almost without resistance, Vatatzes entered Thessaloniki in triumph.<sup>82</sup> In the spring of 1247, he directed all his power against the Latin Empire of Constantinople, adding to his army auxiliary forces of Bulgarians and his newly-acquired Cuman allies. The desperate efforts of Anseau of Cayeux to organize a defence were futile due to the lack of manpower. Tzourulou, where Anseau had left his Greek wife and Vatatzes' sister-in-law Eudokia, hoping thus to deter the enemy, was stormed; Eudokia was captured and by the orders of her brother sent to her husband in Constantinople unharmed. The cities of Midye, Vizye (Vize), and Derkos (Durusu) also fell into Greek hands,<sup>83</sup> while the Cumans dragged off more than twenty thousand prisoners into captivity.<sup>84</sup> In the course of the campaign, the Latin Empire not only lost all its gains from 1240–1241, but its domains were even further reduced to the port of Selymbria (Silivri) and the imperial capital. Baldwin II returned to Constantinople before October 1248,<sup>85</sup> but faced with the lack of funds he even had to pawn his own son Philip to Venetian merchants not long after his return.<sup>86</sup> As curious as it may be, in such dire circumstances the Franks in Constantinople put their last hopes for salvation in the Mongols, and in ca. 1250–1251 a cousin of the emperor, Baldwin of Hainaut, the same man who married a daughter of a Cuman chief Saronius, travelled as far as Mongolia, meeting on the way Batu's son Sartaq and probably the Great Khan Möngke (1251–1259).<sup>87</sup>

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81 George Akropolites, *History*, pp. 225–232.

82 George Akropolites, *History*, pp. 235–238.

83 George Akropolites, *History*, p. 245; Wolff, "Latin Empire," p. 226; Dancheva-Vasileva, *България и Латинската империя*, pp. 158–159.

84 Demetrios Polemis, "A Manuscript note of the year 1247," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 1 (1966), pp. 270–271; Florentia Évangélatou-Notara, "Πολεμικές επιχειρήσεις στη Θράκη το θέρος του 1247 [Military Operations in Thrace in the Summer of 1247]," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 14.1 (1989), p. 189.

85 Laborde, *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, vol. 3, p. 50, no. 3727; van Tricht, *Horoscope of Baldwin II*, p. 49, n. 54.

86 Robert Lee Wolff, "Mortgage and Redemption of an Emperor's son: Castile and the Latin Empire of Constantinople," *Speculum* 29 (1954), pp. 45–84; van Tricht, *Horoscope of Baldwin II*, pp. 85–89.

87 The mission of Baldwin of Hainaut is recorded only by William of Rubruck, who followed the footsteps of the knight from Constantinople, Jackson, and Morgan, *The Mission of Friar*

The liberation of the imperial capital and liquidation of the Latin Empire remained an unfulfilled dream for Vatatzes, who died in 1254. However, seven years later, learning that the city was almost undefended and that the Venetian fleet was far away, the Nicaean general Alexios Strategopoulus managed to achieve this goal and to capture Constantinople. He led a small contingent of soldiers, consisting mostly of Cumans.<sup>88</sup> It was a bitter irony that nomads from the Pontic steppes and fugitives from the Mongols, whom the prophecy recorded by Alberic of Trois-Fontaines claimed to be the instrument of salvation of the Latin Empire, ultimately served as the means of its downfall; or as Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani summed it up: “*il detto imperio fu sconfitto e morto da’ Cumani*”.<sup>89</sup>

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*William of Rubruck*, p. 115, 200. On its importance and consequences see: Richard, “À propos de la mission de Baudouin de Hainaut,” pp. 115–121; Aleksandar Uzelac, “Latin Empire of Constantinople, the Jochids and Crimea in the Mid-Thirteenth Century,” *Золотоордынское обозрение* 3.3 (2015), pp. 62–75; John Giebfried, “Diplomacy, Black Sea Trade, and the Mission of Baldwin of Hainaut,” in *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, and Intellectuals*, ed. Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2020), pp. 160–174.

- 88 Georges Pachymeres. *Relations historiques, vol. 1: livres I-III*, ed. and trans. Albert Failler, and Vitaliy Laurent (Paris: Société d’édition “Les Belles Lettres”, 1984), pp. 190–191.
- 89 Giovanni Villani, *Nuova cronica, vol. 1: Libri I-VIII*, ed. Giuseppe Porta (Fondazione Pietro Bembo – Ugo Guanda Editore: Parma, 1990), p. 254; cf. Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, pp. 54–55.

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