

BETWEEN THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN VISION AND THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST HOMELAND: FRIAR JULIAN'S MISSION TO *MAGNA HUNGARIA*

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Introduction

In the 13th century, the Hungarian Dominican Friar Julian (Julianus barát) embarked on an expedition to establish contact with the “Eastern Hungarians” (*Keleti magyarok*, also known as the Hungarians of Great Hungary, *Magna Hungaria*), identified as a segment of the Hungarian people believed to have separated from the main body of Hungarian tribes centuries earlier during their movement towards Europe. Commissioned by King Béla IV of Hungary (d. 1270) in 1235, Friar Julian's mission represents one of the earliest documented instances of Christian Europeans venturing into the depths of Asia. Friar Julian, accompanied by three fellow monks, undertook a perilous journey through uncharted territories, seeking their distant relatives near the Ural Mountains, more precisely in the southern Urals around the Belaya River Basin, the presumed location of *Magna Hungaria*.¹

It has been recently suggested that Julian participated in two of the four Dominican missions, during one of which two of his companions terminated their involvement and returned to Hungary.² Tragically, another monk who stayed with Julian, named Gerardus/Gerard, fell ill and died en route.

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¹ The terms *Hungaria Minor* and *Hungaria Nova* designate subsequent settlement regions for the Magyars. Conversely, the designation “greater” within *Hungaria Maior* or *Magna Hungaria* signifies the primordial homeland, emphasising its foundational importance within Hungarian history and collective identity. For Friar Julian's mission and the matter of the naming and location of *Magna Hungaria* especially see: Bendefy, 1937; Németh, 1930; Czeglédy, 1943; Dörrie, 1956; Györffy, 1986; Dienes, 1937; Sinor, 1952; Hautala, 2016; Rimanyi, 2018. For two studies in Turkish see, Aydın, 2021; Özcan, 2010.

² Rimanyi, 2018, 99.

Despite the challenges, Julian did not give up and continued his mission alone. He eventually succeeded in reaching his fellow Hungarians in *Magna Hungaria*. During his expedition, he encountered diverse cultures and communicated with speakers of various languages, gaining substantial knowledge of the regions. He also became cognizant of the rising threat from the Mongol Empire. Alarmed by his findings, Julian quickly returned to Hungary to inform King Béla IV (d. 1270) about the Mongols' swift westward advance and the significant threat they posed to Europe. His report allowed Hungary to implement some protective measures. However, these ultimately proved inadequate to prevent the widespread destruction of the Mongol invasion in 1241–1242.³

Friar Julian's mission in the 1230s yielded an exceptionally rare and indispensable early account of Central Asia for medieval Europe, a contribution particularly significant as it occurred just prior to, or at the very beginning of, the period when Christian Europe and Mongol Asia initiated cross-cultural and diplomatic contacts in the decades following the Mongol incursions into Central Europe in the 1240s.⁴ Friar Julian's expedition demonstrated the importance of the region, revealing it as a nexus of cultures and a locus of potential conflicts.⁵ Julian's enigmatic mission (a subject that retains a presence in popular national culture through representations such as his statue with Friar Gerard on Castle Hill in Budapest) has been the focus of considerable historical investigation, a point corroborated by the sources informing this study. Nevertheless, the broader political and religious milieus within which his report was produced have garnered significantly less scholarly attention. The two primary sources detailing Friar Julian's expedition are primarily noted for shedding light on the Mongol threat, providing key evidence for Great Hungary in the East, and mentioning groups like the Mordvins.⁶ Consequently, Julian's account invites recognition as a historiographically foundational primary source, rather than simply a supplementary one, requiring deeper contextual understanding within its religious and political setting.

³ Sebök, 2024, 17–26.

⁴ Guzman, 1996, 53–67.

⁵ Hautala argues that Julian's expedition was an explicit result of the extension of missionary work by the Hungarian Dominicans, spurred by their evangelical success among the Cumans (Hautala, 2016, 184).

⁶ Klima, 1995, 21–33.

II

Any attempt to grasp the religious and political dimensions of Friar Julian's mission must begin with a careful examination of the extant source material, with particular attention to the route by which *Magna Hungaria* was reached and to those elements of the expedition that bear directly on its political and religious significance. Information regarding Friar Julian is unfortunately limited, with only two direct primary accounts of his mission known. The first is a report by a Friar Riccardus to the Holy See, entitled *De facto Ungarie magne, a fratre Riccardo invento tempore domini Gregorii pape noni* (The Matter of Great Hungary, written by Friar Riccardus in the time of Pope Gregory IX). Details concerning Friar Riccardus are sparse, though his apparent knowledge of Julian's mission in the East suggests he was likely a Dominican like Julian, and the evidence within Riccardus's report indicates that it was composed about 1236.⁷ Riccardus's account commences with a mention of the *Gesta Hungarorum Christianorum*, also called *The Deeds of the Christian Hungarians*.

“It was discovered in the Gesta Hungarorum Christianorum (Deeds of the Christian Hungarians) that there existed another, Greater Hungary. From this place, seven leaders and their peoples had departed to seek a new dwelling place, as their own land could no longer support the large number of inhabitants. After traveling through and conquering many kingdoms, they eventually arrived in the territory now called Hungary, which at that time was known as the Pastures of the Romans. They chose this land for settlement above other regions, having subjected the peoples who were living there at the time. There, under their first king, Saint Stephen⁸, they were finally converted to the Catholic faith, while the earlier Hungarians, from whom these had

⁷ In this study, I consulted Stephen Pow's 2018 edition at <https://postponed-world-conquest.spbu.ru/en/friar-riccardus.html> titled “Friar Riccardus, *The Matter of Magna Hungaria*” (c. 1236)”, utilizing both the Latin edition and the English translation provided therein. All translations included in this study are my own. The title appears to be a later addition by a scribe in one of the manuscripts, rather than the letter's original heading (Pow, 2018, footnote 1). In addition to Pow's suggestion for the year 1236, alternative hypotheses are discussed by Rimanyi (Rimanyi, 2018, 99–100). Hautala indicates that the first Dominican expedition departed from Hungary around 1231 and the second mission can be dated to 1234–1235 (Hautala, 2016, 330).

⁸ István I (d. 1038).

descended, remained unfaithful, continuing as pagans even today”
(Friar Riccardus, 2018).

The reference in Riccardus’ report may point to *The Deeds of the Hungarians* or a lost earlier document.⁹ Another significant text, *The Deeds of the Hungarians* (*Gesta Hungarorum*), was composed circa 1200 by the author known as Anonymus. He is likely identifiable as a Hungarian chancellery clerk active in the late 12th or early 13th century, having previously been in the service of King Béla III.¹⁰ This *Gesta* has been a key source for studying Hungary’s early history, from the Magyar migration to state formation, and notably predates the Dominican missions to *Magna Hungaria*, which began in the 1230s. Beginning with the late 9th-century Magyar migration, the chronicle traces their route from the “Scythian Land” east of the Volga towards settlement in the Carpathian Basin.¹¹ This narrative gives illuminating historical insight into the origins and movements of the Magyar people. On the other hand, notably, unlike Riccardus, *The Deeds of the Hungarians* does not discuss the pagan beliefs of the old Magyars but stresses their so-called Scythian origins.¹²

The report goes on to mention a concise and rather vague description concerning the first expedition of Friar Otto, another mysterious character. In this account, Otto meets the Eastern Magyars but cannot reach their homeland.

“...the aforementioned friars dispatched on this mission faced considerable difficulties over land and sea routes, seeking the Eastern Hungarians for more than three years. Yet, they could not locate them because of the significant perils of the journeys, with the exception of

⁹ Hautala, 2016, 184.

¹⁰ Rady–Veszprémy, 2010, XIX–XXIV.

¹¹ *Gesta Hungarorum* 2010, 3–11.

¹² Riccardus’s report identifies the seven chieftains as the seven men from Scythian Lands, a group known as “Hetumoger,” literally meaning “Seven Magyars” (a term also in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus’s *De Administrando Imperio* (1967, Chapter 38: 170–171). About this topic, see (*Gesta Hungarorum* 2010, 3, footnote 6). Although the origins of the Hun-Hungarian identification via Attila can be traced back to the 11th century, and this association was reasserted by chronicler and cleric Godfrey of Viterbo’s *Memoria Seculorum* (MGH, Series Scriptorum 1872, 102) in the 12th century, it can be argued that the anonymous author of the *Gesta Hungarorum* introduced into the tradition of Hungarian historiography the notion that the Hungarians originated in Scythia – a region historically characterized as notably arbitrary and ill-defined (Klaniczay, 2011, 189–190).

one priest, Otto, who traveled solely under the guise of a merchant. In a certain pagan land, he encountered some individuals speaking the same tongue, through whom he learned exactly where they resided. However, he did not venture into their territory. Instead, he went back to Hungary intending to bring additional brothers who would return with him to evangelize them with the Catholic faith. Tragically, worn out by his many labors, he passed away eight days after arriving back, having first explained everything about his quest to find them.” (Friar Riccardus, 2018)

What follows in the report is a detailed narrative concerning the expedition undertaken by Friar Julian. Accompanied by three fellows, he journeyed traversing the Balkans en route to Constantinople.

“Driven by a desire for the conversion of infidels, the Dominican friars again dispatched four brothers to seek the aforesaid people. After getting a blessing from their brothers, they changed from their regular habit into secular clothing and grew their beards and hair like pagans. Aided by the leadership and expenses provided by Lord Béla,¹³ the current King of Hungary, they journeyed through the land of Asan’s Bulgaria and Romania (Byzantine territory), eventually arriving at Constantinople.” (Friar Riccardus, 2018)

Following their Black Sea crossing, the travelers arrived at Tmutarakan, a settlement on the Taman Peninsula now identified with modern Taman located approximately opposite Kerch. At the time of their arrival, Tmutarakan served as the capital of a principality under the dominion of the Kievan Rus.¹⁴ It was at this location that they ascertained their fellow countrymen were situated in a more northerly area.

“From that point, they embarked by sea and after a voyage of thirty-three days, they arrived in the territory designated as Sychia, specifically the city named Matrica. The ruler and populace of this location assert that they are Christians, possessing Greek script and clergy. It is noted that the prince reportedly maintains a hundred wives. A general custom among the men involves shaving their heads completely

¹³ Béla was crowned as King Béla IV in 1235.

¹⁴ Grinevetsky et al., 2015, 754.

while cultivating their beards meticulously. An exception is made for the nobility, who retain a small amount of hair above the left ear as an emblem of their status, the remainder of the head being entirely shaven. They sojourned there for fifty days, anticipating potential companionship. Furthermore, divine favour facilitated their encounter with a lady of higher standing than the king's numerous wives; she exhibited remarkable kindness towards them, ensuring all their necessities were met." (Friar Riccardus, 2018)

Drawing on the support and guidance of the woman previously referenced, they departed from that point. Their expedition involved traversing a barren and unpopulated expanse for a period of thirteen days. Following this arduous passage, they arrived in the territory known as Alania, the land of the Alans,¹⁵ where adherents of Christianity and pagan faiths coexisted.¹⁶ However, the brothers found themselves unable to secure any fellow travellers to continue their mission from that location, owing to the apprehension among the local populace regarding the Tartars, who were reported to be in the vicinity. After two friars had turned back and another had died, the remaining brothers confronted growing hardship. Two chose to return to Hungary, leaving only Julian and Gerardus to persevere in the mission. Travelling onward from Alania, they reached another city, where the ailing Gerardus died. He passed away in the home of a Saracen – a term used for Muslims in the Middle Ages, likely derived from a mistaken attribution of Arab lineage to Abraham's free wife Sarah, an error generally considered deliberately invented by the Arabs themselves despite their traditionally accepted descent from his concubine, Hagar¹⁷ – who, moved by religious compassion, had offered them shelter. Gerard was subsequently buried in that place.¹⁸

The narrative continues with Friar Julian proceeding by himself. In a place identified as Great Bulgaria (*Magna Bulgaria*) – a region corresponding to parts of present-day southern Ukraine and southwestern Russia, described by Fiedler as "*the steppe corridor to the east of the Sea of Azov under*

¹⁵ For Alans, see: Bachrach (1973) and (Friar Riccardus, 2018, footnote 15). Notably, the reports from the mission are silent regarding any preaching activities undertaken by Julian and his companions among the Alans and Kipchaks (Hautala, 2020, 43, footnote 15; Dörrie, 1956, 151–161; cited from Hautala's work).

¹⁶ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

¹⁷ Tolan, 2002, 10–11.

¹⁸ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

the rule of Kubrat”¹⁹ – he received assistance from a compassionate Saracen priest and his wife. While there, he encountered a Hungarian woman who was in Great Bulgaria to be married. She provided him with crucial information regarding the routes he had to take and assured him that he would indeed find the Hungarians he was seeking. Sustained by this guidance and reassurance, Friar Julian finally reached *Magna Hungaria*, situated near the Volga River.²⁰

This location may possibly be identified with Etelköz (*Atelkouzou*), a region characterized as somewhat vaguely defined and situated between the Don and the lower Danube or the Dnieper and the lower Danube. It is known as a territory from which the Magyars are believed to have migrated and which, as described by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in *De Administ-rando Imperio*, was inhabited by the Pechenegs in the 10th century.²¹

Building upon the account of Julian’s solitary expedition and fortunate encounters, the text indicates that upon his arrival in *Magna Hungaria*, near the Volga River, Friar Julian was met with a warm reception from the local inhabitants. These people were reportedly able to converse with him in his native Hungarian language. This shared tongue allowed for direct communication and likely facilitated the cordial welcome he received.

“When they saw him and understood that he was a Hungarian Christian, they rejoiced not a little at his arrival, leading him around through houses and villages and faithfully inquiring about the king and kingdom of their Christian Hungarian brothers; and whatever he wished to propose to them, as much about the faith as about other things, they listened most diligently, because they entirely had the Hungarian language; and they understood him and he understood them.” (Friar Riccardus, 2018)

However, the Magyars are characterized as pagans, distinguished from other such groups by the reported absence of idol worship.²² They are depicted as exhibiting sympathy towards Christian Julian, a disposition attributed to a perceived shared ancestry. This portrayal, which describes them

¹⁹ Kubrat died in 665 (Fiedler, 2008, 152).

²⁰ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

²¹ Porphyrogenitus, 1967, Chapter 38: 172–173.

²² Friar Riccardus, 2018.

as lacking knowledge of God, cultivates a perception of the Magyars as moderate kindred pagans, potentially amenable to Christian conversion. On the other hand, their way of life is concurrently presented as akin to that of beasts, a characterization consistent with the prevalent medieval Christian dichotomy that equated Christianity with civilization and relegated paganism to the realm of barbarism.²³ Their subsistence is based on a non-agricultural lifestyle, with a diet including horse and wolf meat, and the consumption of mare's milk and blood. They are noted for their abundance of horses and weaponry and are depicted as highly proficient in military endeavours. Furthermore, the account indicates their awareness, through ancestral narratives, that the Hungarians (*Ungari*) are descended from their group, although they were unaware of the Hungarians' whereabouts at that time.²⁴

Significantly, Riccardus' report indicates that while the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin maintained a persistent memory of their separation from their eastern brethren, the population in the ancestral homeland likewise appears to have retained some consciousness of this historical schism. The documented retention of knowledge concerning their separation by both the Hungarian population that migrated westward into the Carpathian Basin and the communities that remained in the ancestral territories near the Volga is presented as evidence of the profound influence this formative historical event exerted on the distinct identities of these related groups. This suggests the persistence of a shared historical awareness that was not extinguished by their physical separation. In the context of Friar Julian's mission, this reciprocal, albeit potentially imprecise, acknowledgment of a shared lineage likely served as the fundamental rationale for his undertaking to locate these eastern Hungarians, establishing a common historical ground for his interactions and inquiries.

Riccardus' narrative continues by stating that while Friar Julian was in *Magna Hungaria* among the Magyars, he received a critical warning from them concerning an impending Mongol invasion of Europe. Julian was subsequently able to deliver this crucial intelligence.²⁵ The text proceeds to clarify the relationship between the eastern Hungarians and the Tartars (Mon-

²³ For Medieval Christian identification of barbarism and paganism see: Jones, 1971, 376–401, especially 392.

²⁴ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

²⁵ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

gols) in the region. The Tartars are depicted as neighbours to these Hungarians. Despite initial military engagements, the Tartars proved unable to subjugate them, suffering defeat in their first encounter. Consequently, the Tartars opted to form an alliance with these Hungarians; together, they had reportedly devastated fifteen kingdoms. It was in this Hungarian territory that Friar Julian encountered Tartars, notably a messenger from their leader. This man was reportedly remarkably multilingual, fluent in Hungarian, Rus (*Ruthenicum*), Cuman, German, Saracen (Arabic), and Tartar. The messenger conveyed to Julian that the principal Tartar army, then located approximately a five-day journey distant, intended to advance towards the German territories.²⁶ However, this Tartar force was reportedly awaiting the arrival of another army that had been dispatched for the conquest of Persia.²⁷ The messenger further articulated the broader intentions of the Tartar populace. Accordingly, their plan was to depart from their own territories to engage in combat with any who offered resistance and to devastate any polities they could bring under their dominion.²⁸

Despite receiving an invitation to remain with the eastern Hungarians, the friar opted to return for two primary reasons. Firstly, he was apprehensive that if the neighbouring pagan polities and the Rus' territories, situated between the Christian Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin and the eastern pagan Hungarians, were to learn of the invitation extended to the latter to adopt the Catholic faith, they might perceive this as a threat. This could lead them to secure all travel routes, fearing that the conversion of the pagan Hungarians to Christianity would empower them to conquer the intervening kingdoms. His second concern was the potential failure of his mission were he to die unexpectedly or become incapacitated. In such an event, he would not only fail to complete his objectives, but his fellow Hungarians would also remain ignorant of the location of this related people. Consequently, upon

²⁶ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

²⁷ In the medieval period, the term "Persian" referred to a geographically imprecise and fluid region and should therefore be understood in a broad sense within the conceptual framework of the "Persianate," encompassing the diverse geographies and cultures across Eurasia shaped by Persian cultural influence. For a critical analysis of this concept, first articulated by Marshall Hodgson in the second volume of *The Venture of Islam* (1974); see, Green, 2019, 1–71).

²⁸ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

his resolution to return, the local Hungarians revealed to him an alternative path that would facilitate a more rapid journey back.²⁹

It can be argued that Friar Julian's decision to depart from *Magna Hungaria*, notwithstanding the warm welcome and the invitation to stay, reveals a keen understanding of the precarious geopolitical environment of Eastern Europe at that time. His rationale centred on the strategic consequences tied to religious and political alignments. He shrewdly recognized that the potential conversion of the eastern Hungarians to Catholicism and their re-establishment of ties with their western counterparts could be perceived as a significant shift in the balance of power by the surrounding non-Christian (pagan or Muslim) and Orthodox Christian (Rus') entities. This could readily provoke a hostile response, potentially resulting in the closure of essential travel routes and the isolation of the recently discovered population. This concern illustrates a complex dynamic in the region. It reflects the frequent interweaving of religious identity with political allegiances, a pattern observable historically and arguably continuing today.

On the other hand, Friar Julian's decision to depart from *Magna Hungaria* reflects the paramount importance he assigned to the successful communication of his findings regarding the existence and location of their eastern kinsmen to the wider Hungarian population in the Carpathian Basin. Having already undergone significant hardship and the loss of companions, Julian was acutely aware of the inherent vulnerability of his undertaking. A significant concern was the potential for his own demise or incapacitation to entirely prevent the critical exchange of information. His priority, therefore, shifted from prolonged interaction and potential missionary work among the eastern Hungarians to ensuring that the vital intelligence concerning their discovery was successfully relayed to his homeland. The assistance provided by the eastern Hungarians in indicating a faster return route further emphasizes the importance of this communication, as they too appear to have recognized the need for Julian to deliver his findings successfully. Consequently, his stated reason for returning presents Friar Julian not only as a missionary, but also as a pragmatic envoy aware of the political risks and the urgency of transmitting his message.

²⁹ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

Upon concluding his mission, Friar Julian returned to Hungary. His return journey constituted a land passage traversing the territories of Russia and Poland, a route reportedly indicated to him by the Eastern Magyars he had encountered. The report compiled by Riccardus concerning Friar Julian's missionary expedition includes in its final sections an observation made during Julian's passage through the territory of the Mordvins, a people identified as speaking a Uralic language.³⁰ According to Riccardus' account, the Mordvins have are depicted as pagan and exceptionally harsh, noting that the men who have not committed numerous killings are held in low regard by them.³¹

The report concludes by recounting an exchange in which the Grand Duke of Vladimir, Yuri Vsevolodovich (d. 1238) was approached by the Mordvins, who were prompted by their prophets concerning the prospect of dispatching a priest to baptize their population. The duke's purported response constituted a refusal, in which he stated that this task fell not within his jurisdiction but rather that of the Roman Pontiff. He is further quoted as stating that the time was approaching (a prospect often interpreted in the context of the period as bearing apocalyptic significance, potentially linking to the concept of the end times and viewing the Mongol invasion as a portent)³² when "*we all must adopt the faith of the Roman Church and submit to it obediently*".³³ This statement attributed to the Grand Duke of Vladimir, as presented in Riccardus's report, is profoundly significant as it clearly suggests an assertion of Papal supremacy over other Christian denominations, specifically the Orthodox Church, emanating from a ruler within the Orthodox sphere. Within the context of the Great Schism of 1054 and the ongoing theological and ecclesiastical divisions between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the 13th century, such a declaration from an Orthodox leader acknowledging the necessity of adopting the Roman faith and submitting to Papal authority would indeed represent a remarkable and perhaps unexpected perspective, particularly from a Western viewpoint.

While it is essential to consider this statement a fictional element, potentially filtered through Riccardus' report and contextualized by Yuri's pro-

³⁰ Klima, 1995, 21–33.

³¹ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

³² Yuri would be killed by the Mongols at the Battle of the Sit River in 1238.

³³ Friar Riccardus, 2018.

hibition on their preaching the Roman faith in his principality as can be seen in Friar Julian's letter that will be discussed later,³⁴ its inclusion remains significant.³⁵ This is particularly true when considering the possibility that the report was intended for a Catholic Christian audience, potentially reflecting a Western interpretation or emphasis rather than a direct representation of Yuri's own views. The mere presence of such a quote within the report is, therefore, noteworthy for understanding the potential biases and narrative strategies at play. This narrative element indicates at least a perception or aspiration within certain Western circles concerning the potential future reconciliation or submission of the Eastern Church to Roman authority. Furthermore, the purported action of the duke deferring responsibility for the baptism of neighbouring pagans to the Roman Pontiff emphasizes an acknowledgment of the Papacy as possessing a superior authority in matters of faith and evangelization. Such a position is congruent with the central tenets of the Roman Church's assertions of universal jurisdiction and the function of Dominican missionary activities in advancing these claims.

III

The second primary source concerning Friar Julian's mission is the *Epistula de vita Tartarorum* (Letter on the Life of the Tartars), an account by Julian detailing his second expedition, addressed to the bishop of Perugia and the papal legate in Hungary, Benedictus Salvius de Salvis, and likely composed in 1238.³⁶ In contrast to his earlier expedition, Julian's second mission successfully reached Vladimir-Suzdal, a principality that controlled the Volga River region.³⁷ Upon his arrival, Julian ascertained that *Magna Hungaria* had been annihilated by the Mongol forces in the intervening period. In this context, the author's subsequent report provides a detailed account outlining the strategic movements and political ambitions attributed to Chinggis Khan (re-

³⁴ Friar Julian, 2018; Hautala, 2016, 190.

³⁵ Certain scholars assert its authenticity. (Maiorov-Pow, 2018, 21).

³⁶ In this study, I consulted Stephen Pow's 2018 edition titled "Friar Julian. 'Letter on the Life of the Tartars' (1238)" utilizing both the Latin edition and the English translation provided therein. All translations included in this study are my own.

³⁷ Rimanyi, 2018, 100. However, the precise number of expeditions in which Julian participated remains a subject of scholarly controversy (Friar Julian, 2018, footnote 12).

ferenced as *Gurgutham*, who died in 1227) and his successors, commencing from the initial emergence of the Mongol people.³⁸

Friar Julian's letter delineates the Khan's articulated objective of universal dominion and his consolidated authority within the eastern territories, subsequently detailing the Mongol subjugation of the Cuman confederation (identified by various names including Cumans by the Byzantines, Qipchaqs by Muslims, Polovtsians by the Rus, Kún by Hungarians, and Valwen or Falones by Germans),³⁹ a military success Julian attributes, in part, to the Mongols' strategic exploitation of pre-existing factionalism among the Cuman leadership,⁴⁰ a vulnerability rooted in a polity characterized by internal fragmentation⁴¹ and already weakened by earlier incursions from the Rus' principalities and persistent internal strife, factors culminating in their decisive defeat by Mongol forces at the Battle of the Kalka River in 1223.⁴² Crucially, Friar Julian also reports on the Mongols' devastating defeat of both the Bulgars and the Magyars residing in *Magna Hungaria*, confirming the destruction of the community he had previously visited.⁴³

In subsequent passages, Friar Julian writes that Chinggis Khan, characterized therein as a prominent leader of the Tartars, initiated a swift military offensive targeting what Julian termed the "Persian realm" (a designation likely referring collectively to Muslim powers, particularly the Khwarazmians, given contemporary sources' frequent use of "kingdom of Persian" for the Khwarazmian Empire and "king of the Persians" for its sultans),⁴⁴ with the objective of resolving existing protracted disputes between the involved entities. This venture was reportedly motivated by the objective of resolving existing protracted disputes between the two entities.⁴⁵ With regard to this, the account indicates that this campaign resulted in a decisive and widely acknowledged victory, leading to the complete subjugation of the Persian state under his authority (Mongol Invasion of Khwarasmian lands between 1219–1221).

³⁸ Friar Julian, 2018.

³⁹ Jackson, 2018, 19.

⁴⁰ Friar Julian, 2018.

⁴¹ Jackson, 2018, 19.

⁴² Curta, 2008, 10.

⁴³ Friar Julian, 2018.

⁴⁴ Jackson, 2018, 146, 160, footnote 99.

⁴⁵ Friar Julian, 2018.

Friar Julian also reports that leveraging these preceding successes, Chinggis Khan's ambition intensified.

“Rendered bolder by these events and deeming himself stronger than all on earth, he commenced his advance against kingdoms, proposing to subjugate the entire world to himself” (Friar Julian, 2018)

In this respect, believing himself to be without equal in the world, he embarked on a project to establish universal dominion and extend his rule over all kingdoms. However, the idea that the Khan's actions were propelled by an aspiration for universal rule, a view supported by Friar Julian and many modern historians, exists alongside the strong probability that the concept of a divine mandate for world dominion originated during Chinggis Khan's lifetime.⁴⁶

Friar Julian recounts that upon reaching Cuman territories, Mongol forces decisively defeated them⁴⁷ subsequently integrating their lands into the nascent empire; this victory likely corresponds to the Battle of the Kalka River in 1223, preceding the more intensified Mongol campaigns against the Cumans from 1236 to 1242. Following this, the Mongol armies advanced towards *Magna Hungaria*, recognized as the ancestral territory of the Hungarian people. Here, they engaged in an extended period of conflict with the local populace. According to the narratives shared by the pagan Hungarians encountered by Friar Julian, this fierce struggle persisted for fourteen years before the Mongols finally achieved victory in the fifteenth year.⁴⁸

Friar Julian's letter also incorporated a very crucial document, namely an ultimatum addressed to King Béla IV of Hungary. Although Julian's account does not explicitly identify the sender, the report posits its potential origin from either Batu Khan, Chinggis Khan's grandson and founder of the Golden Horde, or from Ögedei Khan, Chinggis's son and the Great Khan at the time.⁴⁹ Julian states that he received this document from (Yuri Vsevol-

⁴⁶ Maiorov–Pow, 2024, 10. This article offers significant insights as a historiographical investigation into the genesis of the Mongol understanding of universal rule.

⁴⁷ Friar Julian, 2018.

⁴⁸ Friar Julian, 2018. Contrary to Riccardus's account, which posits a Magyar–Mongol alliance culminating in victory over fifteen kingdoms subsequent to the Magyars' purported defeat by the Mongols, the conflict between the Magyars and the Jochids indicates that hostilities were likely concentrated in the border regions of “Great Hungary” (Hautala, 2016, 188).

⁴⁹ Friar Julian, 2018, footnote 43.

dovich), the Duke of Suzdal, who had acquired it from imprisoned Mongol emissaries whom Julian himself reportedly saw. This documented chain of custody, particularly Julian's personal sighting of the envoys, thus served to corroborate the letter's authenticity, directly linking it to the Mongol court and its regional representatives. The letter itself was reportedly composed in the Tartar language using a non-alphabetic script; its contents were rendered intelligible to Julian through the interpretation provided by a Cuman individual.⁵⁰ The ultimatum reads as follows:

"I, Chayn, representative of the heavenly king, to whom he gave power over the earth to exalt those submitting to me and to humble those opposing, I wonder about you, King of Hungary, that although I have already sent emissaries to you for the thirtieth time, why you send none of them back to me; but you neither send your messengers nor letters back to me. I know that you are a rich and powerful king, and you have many soldiers under you, and you alone govern a great kingdom. And therefore, you subject yourself to me with difficulty of your own will; it would be better and more salutary for you, however, if you would subject yourself to me of your own will! I have understood moreover that you hold the Cumans, my servants, under your protection. Wherefore I command you that you do not keep them with you hereafter, and that you do not have me as an adversary to you on account of them! For it is easier for them to escape than for you, because they, traveling without houses but with tents, can perhaps escape. You however dwelling in houses, having castles and cities, how will you flee my hands?" (Friar Julian, 2018)

The content of the ultimatum provides valuable insights into the Mongol perspective, their diplomatic norms (or the contrast with European expectations), and their immediate demands and threats. The opening declaration, identifying the sender as the "representative of the heavenly king" vested with universal authority to elevate the submissive and humble the defiant, encapsulates the core Mongol justification for their conquests, grounded in a belief in a divinely sanctioned mandate to govern the world. This ideological foundation is discernible in other surviving Mongol ultimatums like the one

⁵⁰ Friar Julian, 2018.

allegedly sent to Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II by the Mongols in 1238⁵¹ and became more explicitly articulated in communications dispatched to the West in the 1240s.⁵² Such assertions served as a customary introduction in Mongol correspondence with foreign rulers, functioning to assert their claimed legitimate authority over all earthly kingdoms. Moreover, the expression of “wonder” at the King of Hungary’s failure to respond to previous embassies (stated as the thirtieth and this is an expression, within the framework of diplomatic correspondence, that implies the closure of avenues for diplomatic compromise and constitutes a challenge) or dispatch his own envoys or letters operates as both a statement of grievance and an assertion of the Mongol expectation for prompt and obedient communication from other potentates. It frames the Hungarian king’s lack of response less as a diplomatic oversight than as a potential act of defiance.

However, while appearing to constitute an acknowledgment of a formidable adversary, the explicit recognition of Hungary’s wealth, power, military strength, and the King’s independent rule paradoxically magnifies the Khan’s inherent arrogance and unwavering confidence in demanding unconditional submission, effectively dismissing Hungary’s demonstrated capabilities. This strategic presentation of voluntary submission as the “better and more salutary” option functions not as a genuine path toward negotiated settlement, but rather as a clear articulation of the Mongol operational paradigm of conquest, establishing a stark dichotomy solely between coerced integration into the Mongol Empire and inevitable violent annihilation.

A particularly significant demand within the ultimatum was the directive for King Béla IV of Hungary to cease providing refuge to the Cumans, whom the Khan explicitly designated as “my servants”. This designation is highly revealing of the Mongol perspective, viewing conquered or displaced populations as their subjects, whose allegiance and location remained under Mongol jurisdiction irrespective of where they sought safety. Consequently, the demand for their expulsion constituted a direct challenge to Hungary’s sovereign authority and its prerogative to grant asylum to the fleeing Cumans. However, King Béla IV disregarded this ultimatum and actively pursued a policy of strengthening relations with the Cumans. A notable instance

⁵¹ Hautala, 2016, 192.

⁵² Maiorov–Pow, 2024, 5–7. For the subject of Mongol ultimatums also look at Richard, 1973, 212–222.

occurred in 1239, when the Hungarian king granted refuge within his territories to a substantial group led by Kuthen (Köten, killed by the Hungarians in 1241), who had previously engaged in hostilities against the Mongols at the Battle of the Kalka River.⁵³ In this regard, this specific stipulation in the ultimatum concerning the protection of the Cumans evidences the Mongols' persistent and far-reaching pursuit of those who resisted or escaped their control and clearly establishes the non-negotiable nature of submission within the Mongol imperial order.

The ultimatum's concluding threat served as a potent articulation of Mongol military doctrine and inherent self-assurance. This was achieved by drawing a clear contrast between the nomadic lifestyle of the Cumans – whose potential for successful evasion the Khan explicitly acknowledged – and the fixed, sedentary existence of the Hungarians, anchored in permanent settlements such as houses, castles, and cities. This juxtaposition effectively conveyed Hungary's fundamental vulnerability to a highly mobile invading force. In this respect, the accompanying rhetorical question, “how will you flee my hands?”, shows the perceived inevitability of conquest for a settled society unable to readily disperse and thus escape the swift and devastating operational reach of the Mongol armies. Consequently, this final point encapsulated the core message that resistance was futile, positioning Hungary's sedentary nature as a critical liability that rendered it an unavoidable target if the King chooses opposition over submission. However, in direct response to this Mongol ultimatum, King Béla IV of Hungary elected not to comply. Instead, he chose to persist in granting asylum to the Cuman refugees, as indicated previously, and in safeguarding his kingdom's autonomy. This act of defiance directly contributed to the Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241. The ensuing military campaign witnessed the Hungarian forces suffering catastrophic defeats, most notably at the Battle of Mohi in April 1241, which resulted in the temporary subjugation of significant territories within the Hungarian realm under Mongol authority.⁵⁴ The concluding section of Julian's report presents a condensed overview of his own exploratory mission and the preceding expedition by the Dominican friar, Otto. This is followed

⁵³ Maiorov–Pow, 2024, 19; Korobeinikov, 2008, 389–390.

⁵⁴ Negyési, 1997, 296–310; Lendvai, 2021, 49–50; Jackson, 2018, 68–79; Korobeinikov, 2008, 389–390.

by final comments on the Tartars and concludes with the explicit statement that the letter's intention is to detail the "life, sect, and origin of the Tartars".⁵⁵

IV

Based on the evidence presented in both of the aforementioned texts, Friar Julian's expeditions hold substantial historical significance, attributable to several principal factors. A primary contribution lies in his confirmation of the continued existence of Hungarians in *Magna Hungaria*. While earlier intimations of this eastern branch of the Hungarian people were present in oral traditions and vaguely implied in some written sources – characterized by scholars as "entirely medieval constructions"⁵⁶ – Friar Julian's mission provided the first-hand account of their presence, although its complete veracity calls for careful consideration.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Dominican Friar Julian's designation of *Magna Hungaria* may have influenced 13th-century Franciscan friars such as Johannes de Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck, who also identified Bashkiria as *Magna Hungaria*.⁵⁸ Beyond the terminology, Julian's observations concerning the Eastern Hungarians offered crucial insights for reconstructing the early history and migratory patterns of the Hungarian people, contributions that remain highly relevant for contemporary academic pursuits in Hungarian history and cultural studies.

It is evident that a significant dimension of the historical importance of Friar Julian's letter derives from his role in providing an early warning regarding the impending Mongol expansion. His direct observations concerning the Mongol Empire's burgeoning power and military capabilities furnished European leaders, most notably King Béla IV of Hungary, with critical intelligence that could have facilitated the anticipation of and preparation for the Mongol invasion of Europe in 1241. However, despite the perceived urgency of Julian's report on the Mongol threat, this intelligence initially elicited an insufficient response from European rulers, including Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX, who were, as Vercamer

⁵⁵ Friar Julian, 2018.

⁵⁶ Berend–Urbańczyk–Wiszewski, 2013, 67–70.

⁵⁷ Berend–Urbańczyk–Wiszewski, 2013, 70.

⁵⁸ Carpini, 1996, 68, 82, 102; William of Rubruck, 2009, 138, 201.

notes, “intensely occupied amongst themselves”.⁵⁹ This apparent lack of prioritization is notable, particularly given that Frederick II had reportedly received an ultimatum from Batu Khan as early as 1238, according to the account of French monk and chronicler Alberic de Trois-Fontaines.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Pope Gregory IX, who was likely aware of Friar Julian’s report through intermediaries such as the Hungarian king’s uncle, Berthold of Andechs, Patriarch of Aquileia,⁶¹ simultaneously urged King Béla to participate in a Crusade against Frederick II.⁶² This demonstrable lack of preparedness undoubtedly contributed to the calamitous Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1241. It was primarily in the aftermath of this devastating incursion that the Mongol threat was accorded the requisite seriousness across Europe.⁶³

As noted in the introduction, Friar Julian’s mission is commonly acknowledged for its contribution to documenting the presence of Hungarian communities in *Magna Hungaria* and for issuing some of the earliest alerts regarding the burgeoning Mongol threat. However, the broader religious and political milieu in which this mission unfolded has received comparatively less scholarly attention. A more comprehensive investigation of this wider context is needed, as it is crucial for illuminating Friar Julian’s motivations and understanding the mission’s full significance when analysed through the dual lenses of medieval Dominican missionary activity and the prevailing geopolitical landscape of the era.

The Dominican Order, to which both Friar Julian and Riccardus belonged, played a crucial role in advancing the missionary goals of the Papacy, which aimed to spread Christianity globally. These efforts gained significant momentum in the early 13th century. Successive Popes, including Innocent III, Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV during the 13th century, demonstrated a strong commitment to the Papacy’s mission of evangelizing non-Christian populations.⁶⁴ Their initiatives sought to integrate those identified as infidels and pagans into Catholic Christianity. This drive was fuelled by a dual purpose, particularly after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, involving the expansion of Christendom’s geographical reach through the re-

⁵⁹ Vercamer, 2021, 236.

⁶⁰ Hautala, 2016, 192.

⁶¹ Jackson, 2018, 68.

⁶² Vercamer, 2021, 238.

⁶³ Jackson, 2018, 69–78.

⁶⁴ Ryan, 2017, xvii–xiv.

conquest of the Holy Land and the conversion of Eastern Christians, Muslims, Jews, and pagans, as the eschatological end times were perceived to be approaching.⁶⁵ Furthermore, as Christopher Tyerman observed concerning the Crusades against Muslims, conversion rather than conquest became a more appealing strategy for removing threats to Christendom. This shift occurred as Western Europeans gained a greater awareness of the world's scale, as well as its racial and religious diversity during the 13th century, coinciding with the limited success of military campaigns in achieving crusading objectives.⁶⁶ In this respect, Saint Francis, the founder of the Franciscan Order, travelled to Egypt to present the Christian message to the Ayyubid sultan, Malik Al-Kamil. Concurrently, following the Mongol invasions of Europe, the mission of the Mendicant Orders expanded to address the significant threat posed by the Mongols, leading to the selection of the first papal emissaries to the pagan Mongols from their ranks.⁶⁷

Consequently, both the Dominicans and Franciscans were actively involved in promoting missionary endeavours aimed at extending Christian influence through outreach to distant territories and diverse populations. The Papacy specifically entrusted this task to these newly established mendicant orders. Founded by Saint Dominic in 1216, the Dominican Order emphasized preaching, intellectual training, and missionary work. These characteristics made the order particularly well-suited for disseminating Christianity beyond Europe's traditional borders by using logical arguments to persuade non-believers.⁶⁸ For this purpose, they would learn other languages as needed, enabling them to engage in debate and comprehend sermons.⁶⁹ In contrast to the military religious orders of the era, which were perceived as less effective in expanding Christianity, the Dominicans, alongside the Franciscan order founded in 1209, were expected to succeed in converting non-Christians. The mendicant orders thus received substantial support. For instance, in 1233, Gregory IX secured Emperor Frederick II's favourable disposition towards the Dominicans planning to preach in Lucera, a settlement of Sicilian Muslims established by the emperor in southern Italy.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Bird, 2017, 42.

⁶⁶ Christendom, 2006, 638–639.

⁶⁷ Jackson, 2018, 13.

⁶⁸ Stamatov, 2013, 70.

⁶⁹ Tolan, 2002, 233.

⁷⁰ Kedar, 1984, 137.

The Dominican Order was formally established within the Kingdom of Hungary in 1221, during the pontificate of Honorius III and the reign of King András II (Andrew II; d. 1235), father of King Béla IV. This development occurred shortly after the Order's foundation by Saint Dominic in 1216. The presence of Dominicans in Hungary was a direct consequence of the Order's general chapter meeting held in Bologna in 1221. Notably, Paul of Hungary (*Paulus Hungarus*), then a professor of Roman law at the University of Bologna, returned to his native country accompanied by four fellow Dominicans. While their initial presence was recorded in Győr, the Order's first priory in Hungary was formally established in Székesfehérvár. The Dominican Order experienced rapid expansion within Hungary during this period, successfully founding approximately 25 priories between 1221 and 1241.⁷¹ Paul of Hungary initiated missionary endeavours directed towards the pagan Cuman people situated beyond the Carpathian Mountains. This mission aligned with a vision attributed to Saint Dominic (d. 1221), who was likely motivated by the Cumans' proximity as the nearest pagan group on Christendom's eastern frontier.⁷² Driven by the desire to spread the Christian faith, he sought and received permission from Pope Innocent III to undertake a mission to the Cumans.⁷³ Concurrently, King András II of Hungary actively supported the expansion of the Dominican Order, particularly following his decision to expel the Teutonic Knights from Transylvania in 1225.⁷⁴

On the other hand, prior to his accession to the throne in 1235, Béla IV, during his tenure as Duke of Transylvania from 1226, implemented a policy of territorial expansion targeting areas beyond the Carpathian range. A central element of this strategy consisted of fostering the missionary activities undertaken by the Dominican Order in *Cumania*, located beyond the Carpathian Mountains, which commenced in the 1220s.⁷⁵ A significant event presenting this initiative occurred in 1227 when Bortz (also known as Burch or Boricius), a prominent Cuman chieftain, decided to convert to Christianity. Drawing upon Master Roger's *Carmen miserabile*, a principal eyewitness

⁷¹ Curta, 2019, 491–492.

⁷² Berend, 2001, 215.

⁷³ Spinei, 2008, 414.

⁷⁴ Curta, 2019, 564.

⁷⁵ Master Roger, 2010, 138, footnote 3.

source for the Mongol invasion (1241–1242) and the preceding political climate in the Hungarian Kingdom, it can be discerned that King Béla IV's response to the conversion of the Cumans was notably positive, reflecting his prevailing political and religious agenda:

“...hearing this, the king was filled with exceeding great joy, partly because a prince who hitherto was as equal to him was prepared to submit to his power and partly because he was thus able to fulfil his plan of winning so many souls for Jesus Christ.” (Master Roger, 2010, 139)

Notwithstanding potential opposition among his magnates “to the emergence of the king's new allies who possessed significant military capabilities”⁷⁶ King Béla IV accommodated the Cumans on the recommendation of the Dominicans.⁷⁷ Empowered by authorization from Pope Gregory IX's papal legate, Archbishop Robert of Esztergom proceeded to the Cuman territories and officiated the baptism of Bortz and his followers in the presence of Béla IV. This event held dual religious and political importance, as Bortz concurrently acknowledged Béla's suzerainty. The subsequent establishment of a Cuman bishopric in 1227 or 1228 served to extend Hungarian secular influence into the regions inhabited by the Cumans.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that the conversion of the Cumans did not inherently lead to their automatic submission to Hungarian authority. The process of integrating the Cumans into Hungarian society subsequently created tensions, notably demonstrated by the killing of the Cuman leader Kuthen (Köten) on March 17, 1241, and the Cumans' leaving for Bulgaria only four weeks before the decisive Battle of Mohi.⁷⁹

It can thus be argued that religious conversion and missionary activities were integral components of King Béla IV's political objectives. Hungarian policies before the Mongol Invasion of 1241–1242 were largely directed

⁷⁶ Hautala, 2016, 195.

⁷⁷ Master Roger, 2010, 38, footnote 3. King Béla IV's daughter, Margaret (Margit, 1242–1270), who later became known for her sainthood and her association with *Margitsziget* (Margaret Island), was dedicated to a Dominican nunnery in 1245 in thanksgiving for the end of the Mongol Invasion. This act, however, does not signify the King's exclusive affiliation with the Dominican Order, as he also extended considerable support to the Franciscans (Niessen, 2016, 88–89).

⁷⁸ Kovács, 2005, 261.

⁷⁹ Lendvai, 2021, 52.

towards the consolidation and expansion of the Hungarian kingdom's influence across Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁰ In this respect, the period of his reign preceding the Mongol onslaught was characterized by deliberate efforts to enhance royal authority, integrate peripheral territories into the kingdom's structure, and cultivate Hungary's standing as a preeminent Christian regional power. Therefore, his overarching goal was the establishment of a defensive buffer zone against external threats, particularly nomadic groups originating from the East, while simultaneously incorporating these lands into Hungary's expanding dominion. Through this strategic purpose, Béla sought to strengthen Hungary's frontiers and promote stability by integrating newly acquired regions into the political, economic, and spiritual fabric of the Hungarian kingdom, which was conceived as the protector of the Eastern frontier against perceived infidels. In this sense, Hungary's self-representation as the *Antemurale Christianitatis* (bulwark of Christianity)⁸¹ would become firmly established through the Hungarians' genuinely strong resistance against the Mongols within Western Christendom, but its origins are to be found in the earlier construction of the image of the Kingdom of Hungary as the protector against Eastern pagans and the idea that the spread of religion served as a tool for this political objective.

Given the prevailing religious and political climate of the era, it is pertinent to observe that the Papacy formally endorsed the missionary efforts carried out by the Dominican and Franciscan orders through the issuance of the papal bull *Cum hora undecima* ('Since the eleventh hour') in 1235. This mission bull, addressed to friars active in and en route to mission fields in western Asia, was subsequently reissued by Pope Innocent IV in 1245. In the opening lines of this bull, the pope conveyed a sense of eschatological urgency and the need for renewed missionary activity, stating:

⁸⁰ Berend–Urbánčzyk–Wiszewski, 2013, 441–442.

⁸¹ According to János M. Bak, the notion that Hungary was left in isolation to defend the Christian West against external threats, although its precise origins and context remain somewhat unclear, appears to have been anticipated in a letter dispatched by King Béla IV to the apostolic See in 1242 (Bak, 2004, 118). This sentiment would subsequently be reasserted, often alongside complaints regarding the Hungarian Kingdom's solitary efforts in defending Christendom. For a comprehensive analysis of this concept and the aforementioned letter within the broader context of King Béla's rule and the influence of frontier ideology on the consolidation of Hungarian royal authority; see Berend, 2002, 195–215.

“Since the eleventh hour has come in the day given to mankind [...] spiritual men [...] must go forth again [...] to all peoples of every tongue and every kingdom to prophesy because [...] the remnant of Israel will not be saved until [...] the fullness of peoples first enter the kingdom of heaven” (Ryan, 2000, 249; Schmieder, 2000, 259–265)

The denomination of *Cum hora undecima* carries significant symbolic biblical resonance, directly referencing the concept of the “eleventh hour” found in the Gospel of Matthew (20:6). This signifies a critical, final juncture for salvation before its opportunity closes, thus serving as a compelling call for the immediate and widespread expansion of Christian evangelization. This also reflects the Papacy’s broader objective of propagating Christianity as a preparatory measure in anticipation of the Second Coming and heightens the sense of temporal pressing necessity concerning religious and spiritual preparedness. It is significant that this papal bull was promulgated around 1235, a period that approximately coincided with King Béla IV’s sponsorship of Dominican missions, though it was not specifically directed towards *Magna Hungaria*. Situated within this timeframe, the bull mirrored the Church’s ambition to broaden its geographical reach while concurrently addressing the growing menace posed by the Mongol Empire. From a political standpoint, these missions were closely connected to King Béla IV’s efforts to fortify Hungary’s Christian identity in the face of increasing external threats.

In sum, the convergence of religious objectives, potent symbolic meanings, and pragmatic political considerations offers a far richer understanding of Friar Julian’s mission. It emerges as far more than an isolated act of exploration or evangelization, appearing instead deeply embedded within the intellectual and strategic currents of the medieval world. The missionary impulse of Latin Christendom toward pagan populations, the Papacy’s eschatological expectations, and King Béla IV’s strategic aim of consolidating a Christian frontier against eastern threats intersected within the wider framework of Dominican activity carried out in the service of papal policy.

The perception of the Mongols as possible harbingers of the apocalypse further intensified the perceived necessity of conversion and political consolidation. Conversion was conceived as a means of securing souls before the anticipated end times, while the strengthening of Christian polities such as Hungary functioned as a defensive bulwark against the enemies of the

faith. Julian's reports, which attested to the existence of the eastern Hungarians and warned of the approaching Mongol danger, would therefore have been interpreted within this complex context, demonstrating the mission's importance for the spiritual and temporal safeguarding of Christendom. In this sense, recognizing this intricate interplay of religious belief, symbolic interpretation, and political strategy remains essential for a full appreciation of the broader significance of Julian's pioneering mission within the interconnected religious and geopolitical landscape of the 13th century.

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Küresel Hristiyan vizyonu ile kayıp yurt arayışı arasında: Rahip Julian'ın *Magna Hungaria* misyonu Genişletilmiş özet

Bu çalışma, 13. yüzyılda Macar Dominiken rahibi Julian'ın (*Julianus barát*) *Magna Hungaria*'ya yönelik misyon faaliyetlerini ve buna ilişkin birincil kaynakları, yalnızca “kayıp soydaşları bulma” amacıyla yapılmış bir keşif girişiminin göstergeleri olarak değil, aynı zamanda kimlik, misyon, sınır siyaseti ve Moğol tehdidi eksenlerinde şekillenen ve farklı veçhelere sahip bir tarihyazımsal olgu olarak değerlendirmektedir. Çalışma, temel olarak iki tane birincil kaynağa dayanmaktadır. Bunlardan biri, rahip Riccardus'un *De facto Ungarie magne* (1236 civarı) ve diğeri ise rahip Julian'ın ikinci misyon faaliyetinin ardından kaleme aldığı *Epistula de vita Tartarorum* (1238 civarı) başlıklı metinlerdir. Bu iki metin birlikte okunduğunda, Julian'ın “Doğu Macarları” (*Keleti magyarok*) ile temas kurma çabasının, Papalığın Hristiyanlığı yayma misyonu ve IV. Béla (1235–1270) döneminde Macar Krallığı'nın doğu sınırını tahkim etmeye dönük politik hedefleriyle iç içe geçtiği görülür.

Çalışmanın ilk bölümleri, Riccardus'un raporunun sunduğu güzergâh ve anlatı örgüsünü ayrıntılandırarak Julian'ın misyon yolculuğunu kronolojik olarak yeniden kurmayı hedeflemektedir. Riccardus'un metni, önceki Dominiken misyon faaliyetlerini (özellikle Otto'nun başarısız misyonu) anarak Julian'ın misyonunun istisnai niteliğini vurgulamaktadır. Julian'ın İstanbul üzerinden Karadeniz'e açılıp Tmutarakan hattına ulaşması, ardından *Alania* üzerinden ilerlemesi ve nihayet İdil çevresinde *Magna Hungaria*'ya varmasına ilişkin verilen bilgiler ve yapılan yorumlar, o dönemin bir Macar Dominiken rahibi tarafından hem coğrafi hem de kültürel “sınır bölgeleri”nin nasıl tasvir edildiğini ortaya koyması açısından oldukça önemlidir. Riccardus'un anlatısı, Julian'ın başarıya ulaşmasını çoğu zaman beklenmedik karşılaşmalarla, yerel araçlarla ve özellikle dil üzerinden kurulan yakınlıkla açıklar. Doğu

Macarları ile aynı dili konuşabilme, Julian’a yalnızca iletişim kolaylığı sağlamamıştır. Daha önemlisi, Julian’ın gözünde “ortak köken” fikrinin somut bir niteliğe kavuşmasına ve Julian’ın bilgi edinmeye yönelik araştırma ve soruşturmasını derinleştirmesi ve meşrulaştırmasına imkân tanımıştır. Bu noktada “ortak köken” bilgisinin iki tarafça da hatırlanıyor olmasına yönelik iddia (Karpas Havzası’ndaki Macarlar ile Volga çevresindeki topluluklar) Macarların tarihsel sürekliliğini meşrulaştırmak açısından da önem arz etmektedir.

Bununla birlikte Riccardus’un metni, Doğu Macarlarını, bir anlamda, “ortak köken” dolayısıyla adeta “ılımlı paganlar” şeklinde resmederken, eşzamanlı biçimde Orta Çağ Latin Hristiyan zihniyet dünyasındaki medeni/barbar ikiliğini de yeniden üretir. Paganlığın “barbarlık” ile özdeşleştirilmesi, beslenme biçimi ve yaşam tarzı üzerinden yapılan betimlemelerde açıkça görünür. Makale, bu söylemsel çerçevenin yalnızca etnografik bir ayrıntı değil, aynı zamanda misyonerlik hedefini (ihtida etmesi mümkün Pagan) ve Latin Hristiyanlığı’nın kendine ilişkin tanımını (medeniyet taşıyıcısı) güçlendiren bir anlatı stratejisi olduğunu ileri sürer. Bu bağlamda Julian’ın misyon faaliyeti, salt coğrafi bir bulgu olmaktan çıkar ve Hristiyan evrenselliğinin sınır bölgelerinde nasıl oluşturulmaya çalışıldığına dair bir örnek haline gelir.

Çalışmanın ikinci önemli boyutunu, Julian’ın 1238 tarihli mektubunun ortaya koyduğu Moğol imgesi ve tehdidi oluşturmaktadır. Julian’ın ikinci misyon girişiminde *Magna Hungaria*’nın Moğollar tarafından tahrip edildiğini öğrenmesi, metnin tonu ve içeriğini doğrudan belirlemiştir. Julian için artık mesele yalnızca soydaşlara ulaşmak değil, yaklaşan Moğol saldırısına dair bilgi üretmek ve bu bilgiyi Avrupa’ya taşımaktır. Mektupta aktarılan Moğol ultimatomu, Moğol imparatorluk ideolojisini “evrensel hükümlanlık” iddiası üzerinden tanımlar. Bu anlamda, Moğol hakimiyetine itaat etmeyenlerin tehdit edilmesi ve koşulsuz teslimiyet talebi, Moğolların, en azından retorik olarak, diplomatik pazarlığa kapıları kapattıklarını da gösterir. Özellikle Kumanların Macar topraklarında himaye edilmesine karşı gösterilen tepki, Moğolların, yıkıcı istilalarından kaçan veya bunlara direnenleri de kendi boyundurukları altına mutlak şekilde girmesi gereken topluluklar olarak gördüklerini ve bu nedenle de Kumanları himaye eden Macarların egemenliğine doğrudan meydan okuduklarını gösterir. Böylece, IV. Béla’nın bu tehdide rağmen Kumanlarla ilişkileri güçlendirmesi, 1241–1242 felaketinin arka planındaki siyasal kararlar zincirini anlamak açısından da önem taşır.

Çalışmanın üçüncü ve en önemli yönünü, Julian’ın misyonunun değerlendirilmesine tarihyazımsal bir derinlik kazandırma iddiası oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Julian’ın misyonunu belirleyen üç temel motivasyon bir arada ele alınmaktadır. Bunlardan birincisi, Dominikenler ve Fransiskanlar gibi dilenci (mendicant) tarikatların Hristiyanlığı küresel düzeyde yayma programı ve bunun Papalığın Hristiyanlığın yayılmasına ilişkin kendi politikası ve Kıyamet beklentisinin yarattığı eskatolojik havayla örtüşmesidir. İkincisi, özellikle IV. Béla’nın Macar Krallığı’nın doğu sınırı-

nı Hristiyan bir “tampon” bölge olarak tahkim etme stratejisi ve bunun Macar Krallığı’na yönelik *Antemurale Christianitatis* (Hristiyanlığın kalesi) anlayışının Yeni Çağ’dan çok önce görülen erken bir imgesi olmasıdır. Üçüncüsü, Avrupa’da Moğolların muhtemel kıyamet habercileri olarak algılanmasıyla güçlenen zaruri ve acil savunma ihtiyacının Julian’ın raporunun içeriğini belirlemesidir. Bu çerçevede Julian’ın misyonu ve buna ilişkin burada değerlendirilen metinler, yalnızca dönem hakkında bilgi kaynağı belgeler şeklinde görülmemelidirler. Daha önemlisi, bunlar tarihyazımsal bir perspektifle dini, politik ve sembolik anlamların kesiştiği bir bağlamda üretilmiş anlatı stratejilerine dayanan metinler olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Böyle bir okuma, rahip Julian’ın misyonunun tarihsel önemini hem Orta Çağ Avrupası’nın Asya’ya açılımında erken bir örnek, hem de 1241–1242 öncesi Latin-Hristiyan dünya-siyasetinin potansiyellerini ve sınırlılıklarını açığa çıkaran bir olgu olarak eleştirel biçimde irdelemeyi sağlayacaktır.

