Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th Century Tabriz

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PART THREE

TABRIZ AND INTERREGIONAL NETWORKS
In his Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium Tatarorum (written before 1330), the Franciscan missionary Odoric of Pordenone (c. 1286–1331) wrote: “(...) transtuli me in Thauris, civitatem magnam et regalem, quae Susis antiquitas dicebatur. Et est una de melioribus civitatis pro mercimoniiis que potest inveniri, quia omnium rerum scilicet tam victualium quam mercimonialium ibi habetur copia perabundans et ultra quod communiter possit credi. Et est etiam optime situata. De hac civitate etiam communiter dicitur et famose quod imperator eorum plura recipit de ipsa quam rex Francie de toto suo regno.”

Judging from the number of manuscripts, Odoric’s Relatio was one of the most widely circulated texts on the Mongol sphere in Western Europe besides the works of Marco Polo (d. 1324) and Het’um of Korikos (d. c. 1310); Marco Polo and Het’um also highlight the significance of Tabriz as a central place and as nodal point of trade, where commodities from India, Baghdad, Mosul and Hormuz could be found.

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1 Odoric of Pordenone (Odoricus de Portu Naonis), Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium Tatarorum (recensio c6), edited by Annalia Marchisio. 2011, 3: 1; 2–3; see also ed. van den Wyngaert, 417 (I betook myself to Thauris, a great and royal city, which in ancient times was called Susa. And it is one of the best cities for trade which can be found, since there exists an abundant supply of all things, namely of food as well as of commodities and more than what can commonly be believed. And it is also very well situated. Of this city is also commonly said and well-known that their emperor receives more [income] from it than the King of France from his own entire kingdom.)

As has been pointed out frequently, the Mongol expansion increased the geographical range of Western merchants and missionaries and enhanced their knowledge written down in handbooks, missionary reports and treatises. Yet from a modern point of view, ancient and medieval texts often give the impression of a relatively “murky geographical imagination.”

While another prominent missionary, the Dominican Ricoldo da Monte di Croce (d. 1320) visited “Thaurisium, que est metropolis Persarum, (Tabriz, which is the metropolis of the Persians)” for instance, Marco Polo identified Tabriz as the “most noble” among the cities in the “province of Yrac,” and the Armenian Het’um stated: “In regno Armenie sunt plures magne et ditissime civitates; inter alia vero civitas Taurisii famosio judicatur.” (In the kingdom of Armenia are several large and very wealthy cities, among others actually the city of Tabriz is considered the most famous). So we find Tabriz

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located in three different regions (Persia, Iraq, Armenia) in three different texts of the same period.\(^5\)

The ‘maps in the minds’ of medieval authors, their approach to put objects in spatial relation to each other, have little connection to modern-day scaled maps.\(^6\) As research on “mental maps,” “maps in minds” or “cognitive mapping” has illustrated, humans used non-cartographic modes of the imagination and depiction of space for the “collection, organisation, storing, recalling, and manipulation of information about the spatial environment.” In ancient texts and “maps” we encounter “topological” representations of the relative position of localities, connected through routes, not their absolute position in space as indicated by coordinates in modern day cartography. Points (landmarks) and routes (paths) are essential elements of these spatial concepts, which also can be combined into relatively complex spatial relational systems in order to transmit knowledge of what is there and how to travel between places. Here, modern research on human cognition of space and on past forms of imagination and depiction of space converge—the “emphasis is on topology rather than topography.”\(^7\)

Central for the survey, description or also depiction of spaces was the definition and (re-)naming of landmarks, which stood out due to their visibility and significance; this could be larger cities, but also sites of religious relevance, such as Mt. Ararat as the landing place of Noah’s Ark, which we find mentioned in Western Christian descriptions or on medieval maps in the region around Tabriz. With the indication of such Biblical landmarks, for instance, “map drawing and naming of physical features”

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became “an act of appropriation,” of integrating space within one’s cultural framework.8

The second important element for “mental mapping” is the indication of routes, depicted as chains of landmarks; if one followed them in the indicated order, one was on the “right track” (see below the example of Pegolotti’s [d. c. 1347] route from Ayas to Tabriz, for instance). Thereby the topological structure, the relative position of points to each other was documented. As “people are supposed to be sensitive to the costs of overcoming distance,” also sometimes the duration of a journey from one point to the next was indicated. Such information was transmitted in texts (itinerarium, periplus) or in diagrams (such as the Tabula Peutingeriana or late medieval portolans). This was the pre-dominant form of description of spaces until the early modern period: a sequence of landmarks, which were also described, along a route, while spaces between them were seldom characterized in greater detail. Domesticated spaces of cultivated regions and cities served as “oases” of order within the un-ordered wilderness. Space thus was appropriated as a sum of landmarks, of significant points, whose sequence for a specific purpose was defined in texts and images.9

In what we call today topological diagrams (such as a modern day plan of the underground system of London, for instance), various routes connected by landmarks could be combined into networks (as on the Tabula peutingeriana). The centrality of a landmark depended on its position on many routes or even as single point on all possible routes from one area to another.10 Such ancient and medieval “maps” indicate that a creation

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of similar topological diagrams on the basis of information from sources in order to re-assemble spatial information can be an appropriate method for the depiction of past imaginations and conceptions of space, as Kai Brodersen has demonstrated, for instance. At the same time, the depiction of landmarks indicated in medieval texts on modern-day maps also helps to understand the connection between “imagined” and “real” space, as Caspar Ehlers has shown. In this paper we rather combine both methods to visualize the localization of Mongol period Tabriz within the spatial frameworks of the 13th and 14th century.

Mental mapping serves not only the solution of specific spatial problems, but is also useful for the generation “of frames of references for understanding and interpreting the spatial environment.” The organization and interpretation of space contributes to the cognitive construction of the world; the creation of meaning in space results in patterns of spatial behaviour. In order to reduce the actual complexity of the environment, cognitive mapping is always selective with regard to what spatial information and what types of information are chosen and how they are symbolized and arranged. Landmarks are chosen due to their functional importance (as trading post, for instance), but also due to their significance within existing cultural matrices (such as the framework of biblical history). Landmarks are also categorized; categories can refer to various aspects of the same locality (Tabriz as capital, trading post, station for mission, place of interaction with other Christians, etc.) or subsume different localities under the same label (civitates, bishoprics, etc.). Such categories allow further associations with spatial and non-spatial information (a bishop’s see should contain a cathedral) and thereby contribute to the establishment of predictive frameworks (what a traveller can expect to encounter in a specific locality, for instance). With the application of
such established patterns of spatial organization and categories to regions previously beyond the geographical horizon of a society, these spaces are pervaded and made accessible; by organising ‘wild’ or ‘foreign spaces’ in lists and diagrams of landmarks and routes, they are partly integrated into one’s own space.16

In the following, we analyse these aspects of mental mapping for the case of Tabriz with regard to the two most prominent ‘Christian’ groups active in the city in the later 13th and 14th century: merchants and (especially) ecclesiastics. Both have transmitted their spatial knowledge in texts and lists, albeit for different purposes; yet, the activities of both groups partly depended on each other, and also their ‘mental localization’ of Tabriz as nodal point of commerce respectively of ecclesiastical activity converged in some important points.

I Tabriz in Mercantile Space

As Nicola di Cosmo has stated, for the new Mongol rulers, “merchants were also, relatively, uncomplicated partners, since a common language could be found regardless of linguistic, religious or political barriers.”17 Thomas Allsen has highlighted the significance of Mongol agency for the establishment of commercial and other routes of exchange in the new imperial sphere; “cross-cultural relations were, therefore, subject to a process of filtering and adaptation within which the Mongol rulers occupied the most central and critical position. They controlled it inasmuch as they created the conditions for certain things and people to travel across Eurasia more quickly and in greater numbers than others.”18

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Besides Muslim traders, also merchants from the various denominations of the *Oriens Christianus* were active along the trade routes to and from Tabriz before and after the Mongol conquests. *Nestorian* merchants especially from Mosul traded in the East as well as in the West of the Middle East as far as Damascus, Acre, Cilicia and Cyprus. As Gregory Bar Hebraeus reports, the *Jacobite* bishop of Tabriz Basil in 1272 was able to renovate his church with the support of pious (presumably *Jacobite*) merchants of the city. Also Armenian merchants established far reaching networks from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea including Tabriz. *Byzantine* or *Greek* merchants from Trebizond, but also Constantinople did business in the town and augmented the community of ‘*Melkite*’ (Chalcedonensian) Christians in the city.

Newcomers, by contrast, were however the merchants from the Italian cities active in Tabriz in increasing numbers since the second half of the 13th century. Venetian merchants are documented in the city since 1263, Genoese since 1280. In 1304, a Genoese consul was established in Tabriz; in 1306 the Ilkhan Ölj̲eytü (1304–1316) issued a privilege for the merchants of Venice, who concluded also a treaty with his successor Abū Saʿīd in 1320. “As a consequence, the Genoese and Venetian communities in Tabriz flourished” until the 1330s. Rashīd al-Dīn even believed that all Western merchants active in the east came from Genoa. Besides exotic goods such as spices which found their way to Tabriz from further east, of special significance were silk and other textiles, which were produced also in factories in and around Tabriz and were demanded in the West.

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as *panni tartarici*. A more problematic aspect of Tabriz’ significance as trading point (at least from the point of view of Christian missionaries) is highlighted in the treatise *De modo sarracenos extirpandi* (from ca. 1317), which claimed that *Tauricum Persidis* served as entrepot for Greek slaves captured by Turkish pirates and that more than 200,000 of these slaves were living in in Persia.

Thus, Tabriz became an important node in the ‘mental maps’ of Italian merchants. Francesco Pegolotti in the 1330s devoted a chapter in his famous handbook of trade to *Torisi di Persia* (or: *in Cataria*) and the commodities one could buy there. Of special interest is his description of how to get to Tabriz, namely the route from *Laiazzo* (the harbour of Ayas at the Cilician Coast, normally also always indicated on contemporary portolan maps) through central and Eastern Anatolia via *Salvastro* (Sivas), *Arzinga* (Erzincan) and *Arzerone* (Erzurum) to *Torisi* (Tabriz). In total, Pegolotti listed 29 stations in his itinerary between Ayas and Tabriz and thus followed the already described conventional manner of organization of space with landmarks and routes. For the merchant the effort to get there was not measured in time, but in money; Pegolotti registered the transit fees charged at entering (and/or leaving) the various localities, which he added up to “per tutti aspri 209 la soma” (in total, 209 aspri [small silver coins] per pack animal), a considerable sum.


to Gattaio in Pegolotti’s description of the much longer and much more expansive route from Tana/Azow on the Black Sea to China)\(^{28}\) was the desired final destination in this *Anabasis* from the Mediterranean to Persia (see fig. 1).

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But if we combine the information on the commercial connections of Tabriz respectively the localities on the route from Ayas to the city spread throughout Pegolotti’s work, we also find it embedded within the larger mercantile network whose nodes Pegolotti is describing. At the end of the chapter on Tabriz for instance, he lists five cities, whose commodities could be traded in Tabriz respectively where products from Tabriz could be sold; these are Pera (near Constantinople), Ayas, Famagusta on Cyprus, Venice and Genoa.29

Pegolotti mentioned (but did not describe in detail) also the second important connection of Tabriz to the maritime network via the harbour of Trebizond at the Black Sea, which in turn profited from its position as broker between Tabriz and the Sea (Pegolotti states: “The weights and measures of Tabriz are as one with those of Trebizond”). The route from Trebizond to Tabriz joined the one from Ayas in Eastern Anatolia; it was used by emissaries, merchants and ecclesiastics from the Byzantine as well as the Latin world up to Clavijo in 1403 and still frequented by caravans in the 19th century, when it took them 32 days to master the 954 km between Trebizond and Tabriz.30

The connections from Tabriz especially to India were described by Marco Polo31 and in 1306 (respectively 1321) by Marino Sanudo Torsello (d. 1338) in the first book of his Book of the Secrets (in which he was arguing for an embargo against the Mamluks in preparation of a new crusade).

In that part [India] there are two main ports on the Ocean Sea, which are called Mahabar [Malabar Coast, the ports of Calicut and Quilon] and Cambeth [Kambayat at the coast of Gujarat]. Most of the goods in India are collected in these ports and from there loaded and transported westwards across the ocean sea to four principal ports. Three of these are in the lands and on the river banks of the Tartars who rule Persia. Of these three ports,
one is on terra firma and is called Hormus, another is an island called Kis [Kish, in the Persian Gulf] and the third is on a waterway that flows out [to the sea] from Baghdad [the port of Basra]. (…) The fourth port is called Ahaden [Aden]. (…) At present only a small proportion of the spices and goods brought to the west passes through the three first-named ports and come to Tartar territory at Baghdad and Thorisium [Tabriz]; from whence the goods can come down to the Mediterranean by many routes and every day are being transported without once touching harbours, shores and lands subject to the Sultan of the Saracens [the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt]. (…) From that region of the lordship of the Tartars as far as India even Christian merchants can direct their feet since there are many of them who already go and return. Indeed the Sultan, throughout the lands that he holds, does not allow any Christian to pass through, who would like to sail over to India.32

Sanudo’s treatise was also accompanied by maps drawn by Pietro Vesconte, the “first surviving example of maps being designed for strategic purposes in Western Europe since classical times.” On Vesconte’s worldmap also Tauris in Persia can be found.33

If we integrate the information from Pegolotti and Sanudo as well as Vesconte into one topological network, the central position of Tabriz as “broker” between (a far less clearly mapped) East and (a densely “land-marked”) West in the “mental commercial map” of the Italian traders of the time becomes clearly visible (see fig. 2/fig. 3). This image also converges with the actual concentration of Venetian and Genoese mercantile

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33 Edson, “Reviving the Crusade,” 137–149.
Fig. 2: Tabriz within the network of commercial links as documented in the works of Francesco Pegolotti and Marino Sanudo Torsello (graph created with the network analytical software ORA*).

Fig. 3: The network of commercial links around Tabriz as documented in the works of Francesco Pegolotti and Marino Sanudo Torsello in “real” space (digital base map: © Google Earth 2012).
activity in these regions. Although some Italian merchants became active east of Tabriz in China and India, these regions remained beyond the range of active state intervention by Venice or Genoa, which established consules in the city and concluded treaties with its rulers. “Tabrīz marked the limit of state interests,” as Nicola di Cosmo has pointed out.34

Yet, in Tabriz as well as in other regions, “the activities of Italian merchants depended upon the Mongol government’s [willingness and ability to promote favourable trading conditions.” With the collapse of the Il Khānid (henceforth: Ilkhanid) state after 1336, these conditions were not be guaranteed by the succeeding and rivalling dynasties, who also assaulted traders for short-term profit, leading to a Venetian devetum on trade with Tabriz in 1338, followed by the Genoese in 1340/1341. Yet, contacts between Tabriz and Venice or Venetian representatives continued in the second half of the 14th century; as Barendse indicated, “Venetian merchant houses had from the early fifteenth century, at least, established a network of correspondents and associated merchant firms stretching from Venice to Aleppo, Baghdad, and Basra, overseas to Hormuz and Diu and overland to Tabriz, and probably Mashhad [Mashhad] and Samarkand [Samarqand] as well”- and continued to do so in the 16th century.35 Once localized, Tabriz did not disappear from the mental mercantile maps, even if its relative significance as landmark declined after the fall of the Ilkhans.


35 Manandian, The Trade, 201–202; Stöckly, Le système, 119–124 (as mentioned above, after 1338, “Armenia,” meaning the port of Ayas, disappears from the title of the Venetian convoy line to the Levant); Barendse, “Trade and State,” 186–188 (also for the citation); Lopez and Irving, Medieval Trade, 325–326; Di Cosmo, “Mongols and Merchants,” 394, 403–405; Jackson, The Mongols and the West, 301–304, 310–311; Rota, Under Two Lions, 9–11.
II Tabriz in Ecclesiastical Space

Odoric of Pordenone in his *Relatio* stated about Tabriz: “In this city, there are many Christians from various nations who still remain, although the Saracens dominate in all things,” thus illustrating the diversity of Christian life in Tabriz, but also indicating the already less favourable conditions for them which had come along with the conversion of the Ilkhans to Islam.\(^{36}\) The position of Christian communities (as well as “heterodox” Muslim communities)\(^{37}\) had, despite all destructions, improved after the Mongol conquest. But already the conversion of Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) to Islam in 1295 was accompanied by assaults against Christians, including the destruction of churches in Tabriz and other cities; and although Christian life could continue under the traditional status of *dhimmī*, the time of a privileged position of Christians within the Ilkhanid realm had passed.\(^{38}\) During these decades, Tabriz as (one) Ilkhanid centre of power became a focus of ecclesiastical activity of various Christian denominations, of which some also integrated the city into their organizational and spatial framework by installing a bishopric there; thus, Tabriz became a landmark on ecclesiastical mental maps. For the relations between the various Eastern Christian communities in the city, the famous Maphrian of the West-Syrian Church Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) reports an episode regarding an earthquake in Tabriz in 1273, which destroyed several churches: “Our [the West-Syrian’s] church, however, did the Lord protect, and it never shook, and the performance of the service never stopped, and

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\(^{36}\) Odoric of Pordenone, *Relatio* 3: 4, ed. van den Wyngaert, 418, ed. Marchisio 3 (“*In hac civitate sunt multi christiani diversarum nationum commorantes quibus tamen sarraceni in omnibus dominantur*”); see also Marco Polo, *Il Milione*, 42. Marchisio 3 (“*In hac civitate sunt multi christiani diversarum nationum commorantes quibus tamen sarraceni in omnibus dominantur*”); see also Marco Polo, *Il Milione*, 42. See also Judith Pfeiffer, *Twelver Shi‘ism as State Religion in Mongol Iran: An Abortive Attempt, Recorded and Remembered* (Istanbul: Orient-Institut Istanbul, 1999), on the conversion to Islam.

\(^{37}\) See Pfeiffer, *Twelver Shi‘ism*.

Greeks, and Armenians, and Nestorians, and all our own peoples gathered together therein.”

II.1 Tabriz in Eastern Christian Ecclesiastical Space

The spatial organization of the Eastern Churches (as the one of the Western) since the 4th century was based on the Late Roman imperial administrative divisions—with a hierarchy of patriarchs, metropolitans (for every province) and bishops (for every civitas), who had the oversight over all ecclesiastical institutions and monasteries within the borders of their bishoprics. This ecclesiastical hierarchy was understood as effigy of the celestial one; the close connection between a bishop and his see was also symbolized through the image of bridegroom and bride. Established was also an element of collaborative management of the church by a synod of bishops at the level of the metropolitan province and of metropolitans and archbishops for an entire Patriarchate. These hierarchies were then written down in lists (in Greek for instance called “taxis”—“order, arrangement”) for each patriarchate, registering the metropolitan sees according to their rank, and below each metropolitan see its suffragan bishoprics, in return according to their rank within the metropolitan province. Thus, ecclesiastical space was also organized in lists of landmarks (episcopal sees), which were connected through ‘routes’ of hierarchy one had to follow for questions of jurisdiction or appellation. In the simultaneous definition of the same city as landmark within various hierarchical frameworks, as in the case of Antioch or Baghdad, for instance, we can also observe the competition between the various Christian denominations. In addition, we encounter lists of participating bishops at synods, in which they were also arranged according to their hierarchical ranking, but depicted as acting together—as an interconnected ecclesiastical body, united in brotherly love according to the Christian ideal. As in our example from the book of Pegolotti, this adds a network component to the ‘itineraries’ from one episcopal landmark to the next within the hierarchy. Synods also decided on the spatial organization and borders of bishoprics; in doing so, bishops should also take into consideration the status of a locality in other spatial contexts such as political one, for instance (see Canon 39 Bar Hebraeus, The Chronography of Gregory Abû ‘l Faraj (1225–1286), the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus, being the First Part of his Political History of the World, trans. Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 11, 450. 

The rise of Tabriz to the political centre thus could legitimate also a modification of ecclesiastical space as had done the establishment of Baghdad as centre of the Caliphate in the 8th century.\textsuperscript{40}

The East Syrian (“Nestorian”) Church, which was already spread across entire Asia, experienced its largest extension during the first favourable decades of Mongol rule, with 230 dioceses and 27 metropolitan sees from the Euphrates river to China; traditionally, of course, it was not possible to assemble all hierarchs from this huge territory regularly for synodal meetings, so a ‘core synod’ consisting of the Catholicos (Patriarch) with the nominal see “of Seleukia and Ctesiphon” (de facto, he was residing in Baghdad) and of the six metropolitans of Elam-Gondēşāpur, Nisibis, Prāt de Maišān/Basra, Mosul, Bēt Garmai-Bēt Šlōk and Holwān, was established.\textsuperscript{41} Following the shift of political power from Mesopotamia towards Ādharbāydjān (Azerbaijan) under Mongol rule, Catholicos Mār Yahballāhā III (1281–1317), who himself was of Mongol origin, moved his place of domicile from Baghdad towards Ilkhanid residences such as Tabriz (where a church and patriarchal residence were built) and Marāgha respectively in the monastery of St. John the Baptist built by him near these cities. In the history of Mār Yahballāhā we also encounter a Metropolitan Yohanan of Azerbaijan, but there is no indication for the existence of an East Syrian bishopric of Tabriz proper.\textsuperscript{42} Yet, Tabriz became one of the focuses of


\footnotesize{42} Anonymous, \textit{Histoire de Mar Yahballaha III et de Rabban Sauma}, 83; \textit{idem, Die Mönche des Kublai Khan}, 66 (also for the location of Soba); Selb, \textit{Orientalisches Kirchenrecht Nestorianer}, 193, 197, 223, and map 2; Baum, “Die Mongolen und das Christentum,” 27.
activity of the East Syrian Church (see fig. 4); here it also came into contact with Latin missionaries, resulting in talks about a union of churches with Rome within the framework of Papal-Ilkhanid negotiations on an anti-Mamluk alliance. As already mentioned above, in 1295 the churches in Tabriz and Marāgha were destroyed; conditions for the Nestorian communities then stabilized again, albeit on a less favourable level.43

In contrast to the East Syrian Church, the West Syrian Church (Jacobites) reacted to the rise of Tabriz as centre of power with the installation of a bishop in the city; since before 1264 until his death in 1272,

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Bishop Basil resided in Tabriz, and in 1272 was able to renovate his cathedral church with the support of the Jacobite Christian merchants of the city. His successor Severus had been already bishop of Azerbaijan (this diocese existed since the 7th century; its see in the 11th century was in Urumiyya, in the Mongol period presumably in Marāgha), which was now united with Tabriz as one episcopal province. After Severus’ death in 1277, his nephew Joseph-Denys, a monk, was elected by the West-Syrian community in Tabriz; he is attested also due to his correspondence with the Franciscans and the Pope on a union of churches.44 Within the hierarchical framework of the West-Syrian Church, Tabriz was not subordinated directly to the Patriarchate with the nominal see in Antioch in Syria, but to the so-called Maphrian, who administered the entire East of the West-Syrian sphere from Mesopotamia to Central Asia; between 1264–1286, the Maphrian’s throne was occupied by the famous Bar Hebraeus. His traditional see was in Tagrīt, later the Maphrian resided in the Mār Mattai-monastery (until its destruction in 1369) near Mosul; but as his Nestorian colleague Mār Yahballāhā III also Bar Hebraeus often dwelt in the political centres in Tabriz and in Marāgha. His ecclesiastical province at this time nominally included 18 bishoprics, but from these we find bishops only still documented for the sees of Azerbaijan—Tabriz, Baghdad, Bēt Nūhādrā—Maʿalṭā, Bēt Rāmān, Bēt Saida, Gozārtā de Qardū, Habōrā (Circesium) and Karmēh (see fig. 5)).45 These sees marked the nodes in the spatial organization and network of the West-Syrian Church in the region, into which Tabriz was integrated for some time (see fig. 5). After


1295 the conditions for the West-Syrian sees in Tabriz and other cities also deteriorated; Bishop Joseph-Denys is still attested for the year 1302, but after him we encounter no more hierarchs for Tabriz.\footnote{Richard, “Die orientalischen Kirchen,” 215–216; Fiey, \textit{Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus}, 270.}

While the Eastern and Western Syrian Church could not rely on support from political power, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was one of the most important vassals and allies of the Ilkhans, especially against the Mamluks. Its rulers and representatives were frequently present in the Mongol centres of power, also in Tabriz, where they sometimes intervened on behalf of the Christian communities, as is mentioned in the history of Mār Yahballāhā, for instance.\footnote{Anonymous, \textit{Histoire de Mar Yahballaha III et de Rabban Sauma}, 119–120; \textit{idem}, \textit{Die Mönche des Kublai Khan}, 103–104. See in general Claude Mutafian, “The Brilliant Diplomacy of Cilician Armenia,” in \textit{Armenian Cilicia}, eds. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2008), 104–108; Dashdondog \textit{The Mongols and the Armenians (1220–1335)} (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Dashdondog, “The Mongol Conquerors,” 74–75.} Yet, the rise of Armenian statehood in Cilicia since the 11th century also entailed that the highest authority
of the Armenian church, the Catholicos, moved his centre of activity and his residence to the West, first to Hromkla at the Euphrates, and since 1292 to Sis in Cilicia, while the Archbishop of Artza served as his exarch for Greater Armenia. An important hierarch was also the Archbishop of Siunik', a province adjoining Azerbaijan; Archbishop Stephan Orbelian at the beginning of the 14th century opposed the efforts of the Catholicos in Sis to implement Union with the Roman Church. Thus, relations between Cilicia and the Armenian hierarchy nearest to Tabriz were not always at their best.48 Despite the prominent position of Armenians at the Ilkhanid court, we also find no indication of an Armenian bishop of Tabriz in the 13th/14th century; this is only the case in the later Safavid Period, when Tabriz had become home of a larger Armenian community. Of high significance were in contrast those Armenian monks who agreed on a Union of Churches with Dominican missionaries in the 1330s and were even organized in a monastic order of their own; they provided the recruitment pool for the Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy in the region in the second half of the 14th century (see below).49

As for the Armenians, also for the Byzantine-Orthodox (Melkite) Church in the East there existed a supportive political power, which attempted to establish beneficial relations with the Ilkhans: the Byzantine Empire. Already in 1261 Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259–1282) sent an embassy to Hulegu (the “archon of the Tocharians,” as the historian Pachymeres wrote).50 Another embassy is documented for early 1265, including Theodosios Villehardouin, the archimandrite of the Pantokrator-Monastery in Constantinople (and later Patriarch of Antioch from 1278–1283), and, as Bar Hebraeus informs us, the Patriarch Euthymios I of Antioch (1258–1277, living in exile in Constantinople). They accompanied Maria (a natural daughter of the Emperor), who was intended to marry Hulegu. But as Hulegu had died by the time when the embassy arrived, Maria was betrothed to Hulegu’s son Aqa instead; she brought

with her rich presents, among these (as fitting for the nomad tradition of the Mongols) a tent chapel, made “of sturdy silken cloth, embroidered in gold with the figures of saints.”  

A third embassy was sent to Media in 1272/1275. Maria stayed at the Ilkhan’s court until the death of her husband in 1282; during that time, there also was built a “church of the Greeks” in Tabriz, for whose decoration she employed two Byzantine painters, whom later (in 1285) the Maphrian Bar Hebraeus hired for the painting of a monastery.

The further existence of a Greek Christian community in Tabriz is also documented in the letters of the famous astronomer Georgios/Gregorios Ch(i)oniades (d. c. 1320); around 1295/1296 he studied with Shams al-Dīn al-Bukhārī at the observatory of Marāgha and transmitted some of its knowledge to the Byzantine world by translating texts from Arabic and Persian into Greek.

He then returned to Constantinople, where with “imperial and synodal mandate” he was ordained bishop of Taurez for the “conservation and supervision of the local Christians,” as he explains in a

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52 Dölger and Wirth, Regesten, no. 1934b (with further literature).


54 See the contribution of F. Jamil Ragep to this volume.
letter to his other patron, Emperor Alexios II of Trebizond (r. 1297–1330). Chioniades’ ordination could have been combined with two diplomatic missions of Emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282–1328) to the Ilkhan Ghazan in the spring of 1304 and to the Ilkhan Öljeytü in the spring of 1305. The concerns of the Byzantine authorities with the "conservation" of the (Greek) Christian community in Tabriz may have been connected with the conversion of the Ilkhans to Islam after 1295 (whose impact Chioniades could observe during his stay at Marāgha). But also the co-existence with non-Christians and non-Orthodox Christians as such in Constantinople was normally regarded as a threat for the salvation of the flock; Chioniades himself after his return from his studies to Constantinople had to confess and affirm his Christian faith due to his long stay among “Persians, Chaldaeans and Arabs.” The reference to the high number of “Greek” slaves sold in Tabriz in the treatise “De modo sarracenos extirpandi” may provide an additional hint for the background of the decision to establish a “Greek” bishop in the city.55

But by which Patriarch was Chioniades ordained bishop? By the Patriarch of Constantinople, as Karpov for instance assumes, or by the Patriarch “of Antioch and the entire East” (including the “far east” in Transoxania, for which the Catholicos of Romagyris, whose residence in the 14th century was possibly Samarqand, was responsible), in whose area of jurisdiction Tabriz would have been located?56 Chioniades came as bishop

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to Tabriz from Constantinople via Trebizond, but this does not exclude
the possibility that he was ordained by a Patriarch of Antioch, since—
as we have seen already for Euthymios I—the Patriarchs very often
preferred exile in Constantinople, where they possessed a comfortable resi-
dence in the Hodegon-Monastery, to residence in Antioch. Also Patriarch
Kyrill III of Antioch (1287–1308), former metropolitan of Tyre, took resi-
dence in Constantinople in 1288; but only in 1296 his transfer to the throne of
Antioch was recognized by Patriarch Ioannes XII Kosmas (1294–1303)
and the Synod of Constantinople. With Ioannes’ successor (and anteces-
sor), Athanasios I, Kyrill III then was in constant conflict, as we learn from
a letter of Athanasios to Emperor Andronikos II, in which the Patriarch
of Constantinople refers to Kyrill again only as “Metropolitan of Tyre.”
This may also provide a hint to date the ordination of Chioniades to the
throne of Tabriz still in the incumbency of Ioannes XII, during which the
Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch cooperated. As Chioniades indi-
cates, his election was also supported by the Emperor Andronikos II; a
bishop at the Ilkhanid court could serve as intermediary between emper-
ors respectively patriarchs and the rulers of Persia. At the same time, it
may have been easier to nominate a bishop for Tabriz from the Byzantine
Empire than from Antioch, which lay in the territory of the Ilkhans’ arch-
enemy, the Mamluks.57

Patriarchat von Antiocheia in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit und im Zeitalter der Kreuzzüge (969–
Trapezundskoj imperii, 460, 473–474.

57 Athanasius I. The Correspondence of Athanasius I Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters
to the Emperor Andronicus II, Members of the Imperial Family, and Officials, trans. and ed. Alice-Mary Mafffry Talbot (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine
Studies, 1975), letter no. 69 (162–174) and 382–383; Vitalien Laurent, Les regestes des actes
1208 à 1309 (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1971), no. 1568, 1614; Korobeinikov,
“Orthodox Communities, Part 2,” 4; Todt, “Zwischen Kaiser und ökumenischem
Patriarchen,” 169–170. See also Otto Kresten, Die Beziehungen zwischen den Patriarchaten
von Konstantinopel und Antiocheia unter Kallistos I. und Philotheos Kokkinos im Spiegel des
Patriarchatsregisters von Konstantinopel (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der
Literatur, 2000) and Todt, “Zwischen Kaiser und ökumenischem Patriarchen” in general
on the relations between the two Patriarchates. For a similar case of bishops serving as
intermediaries in Byzantine-Mongol relations see Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, “Zwischen
Konstantinopel und Goldener Horde: die byzantinischen Kirchenprovinzen der Alanen
und Zichen im mongolischen Machtbereich im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert,” in Caucasus dur-
ing the Mongol Period = Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit, eds. Jürgen Tubach, Sophia G.
Vashalomidze, and Manfred Zimmer (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), 199–216, for Byzantine-
Mamluk relations see Pahlitzsch, “Mediators.”
The subordination of the “Greek” bishopric of Tabriz is also indicated in a *Notitia* of the Patriarchate of Antioch in Armenian language, which is transmitted (and was edited) as appendix to the History attributed to Smbat Sparapet (d. 1276), the brother of King Het’um I of Cilician Armenia; there we find listed among the metropolitan sees of the Patriarchate of Antioch the city of *T’avrêž* at the place occupied by the see of Dara (in Upper Mesopotamia) respectively Theodosiopolis/Erzurum in earlier Notitiae. In addition, we find this identification of Tabriz with the ancient see of Dara (“*Daras—that is, the [place] now called Taures*”) in the work of Chioniades himself. There has been some discussion on the authenticity of these pieces of information, but convincing arguments in favour of the integration of Tabriz in the hierarchy of the Patriarchate of Antioch have been presented by Westerink and most recently by Korobeinikov, who wrote: “therefore, the Notitia Antiochena in pseudo-Smbat is an authentic document of the thirteenth century, when the chronicle was composed.”

A further confirmation for this opinion we find in a later text: it is the confession of Paulos Palaiologos Tagaris before Patriarch Antonios IV of Constantinople from 1394; Tagaris had lived through an astonishing career as impostor under various episcopal titles (up to the one of Latin Patriarch of Constantinople) in Eastern and Western Christianity between 1363 and 1394. In his confession he stated that he was on his way from *Megale Iberia* (Eastern Georgia) intending to travel to Constantinople, but: “while I carried myself with these thoughts, the Patriarch of Antioch [residing since 1366

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in Damascus] sends the Protothronos [the highest ranking bishop within the hierarchy of the Patriarchate] of his metropolitan sees, namely that of Tyre and Sidon, to me, with a mandate to stop me [from fraudulent acts as bogus hierarch], if possible, or to consecrate me as Bishop of Taurezion so that my actions may receive the blessing. So I was by him now, what I should not be, Bishop of Taurezion and had the intention to reach this area there." But while Tagaris was on his way to Taurezion and “came in the region of Trebizond,” he encountered a monk with a letter of the Patriarch of Constantinople (at this time, Philotheos Kokkinos) with accusations against the Metropolitan of Tyros as well as Tagaris, which could have caused problems for him among the Orthodox communities in Trebizond as well as in Tabriz. This led to a change of Tagaris’ plans; from Trebizond he travelled across the Black Sea to the “land of the Tatans” (the realm of the Golden Horde) and from there via Hungary finally to Rome. This episode can be dated to the years 1371 to 1375.\textsuperscript{59} Nicol has spoken against an identification of Taurezion with Tabriz (also with the argument that the itinerary toward Trebizond described by Tagaris would not have led him anywhere near Tabriz—a presumption already disproved by Bryer and Winfield, who describe the various routes leading from the environs of Trebizond to Tabriz). Hunger, by contrast, as well as Karpov and Korobeinikov identify Tagaris as bishop of Tabriz. The combination with the evidence cited above supports this identification—and also again the assumption of the existence of a see of Tabriz within the Greek-Orthodox hierarchy of Antioch. At the same time we learn that the throne of Tabriz was vacant (maybe already for many years or decades) and that also Tagaris did not find his way to what may have been left of the Greek community of Tabriz, which was at this time under the rule of Uvays b. Hasan Buzurg (1356–1374) from the Jalâyirid dynasty, who had to fight several wars for the control of Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{60} Yet, Tabriz was for some time also


integrated in the framework of the Byzantine church, part of a network (see fig. 6; here depicted on the basis of the above mentioned Armenian *Notitia*) centred around Antioch respectively Constantinople—certainly a node at the periphery of the ecclesiastical space, but during its time as political centre of Persia interesting enough to attract the initiative of emperors and patriarchs.\(^{61}\)

II.2 Tabriz in the Ecclesiastical Space of the Western Church

As indicated above, the organization of space in the Papal Church of the Middle Ages followed the model of the Roman Empire with a hierarchy of authorities, which possessed competence and jurisdiction for a specific territory; the borders of dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces limited the spheres of activities of bishops and metropolitans. Only the Church

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\(^{61}\) The Armenian *Notitia* transmits an unrealistic pictures of the actual extent of the spatial framework of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, since many sees were no longer occupied in the later 13th and 14th century; see Todt, “Griechisch-orthodoxe” and forthcoming. But since we are interested in “mental maps,” this document provides an interesting example for the “ideal” or “imaginary” spatial organization of the Patriarchate.
of Rome claimed universal authority and jurisdiction, even beyond the limits of its Patriarchate (within the pentarchy of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem established at the Council of Chalcedon in 451) for the entire orbis terrarum, as is also documented in the papal correspondence with “non-Catholic” rulers in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Church of Rome was the mater omnium ecclesiarum (the mother of all churches), the Pope ruled over all reges singulorum regnorum (all kings of the respective kingdoms).62

The spatial organization of the Roman Church followed the provincial patterns of the Late Roman Empire also at a time when these had no practical significance anymore; ecclesiastical circumscriptions were thus not connected to contemporary spatial organizations such as political, ethnic or language borders; against the pressure to follow the constant changes of political life, the church maintained a “normed and hierarchically organised spatial fabric” in order to include all faithful in a consistent spatial arrangement. A dynamic element was in contrast the plenitudo potestatis of the Pope to establish new bishoprics and to fix and change the borders between dioceses and provinces. Also for the purpose of the papal financial administration new spatial entities and larger areas were defined, which partly followed contemporary political or linguistic borders. In any case, all bishoprics, monasteries (and other sources of income) were arranged in a list; again space was organized in “landmarks of hierarchy.”63 In order to actually exercise authority in all these territories, the Popes nominated delegates; they served as extensions of the Papal corpus where his corporal presence was not possible. Also for them, task and territory of jurisdiction where defined by the Papal centre in advance, which delineated competences in space and created for them a consistent space of action.64

Since the 13th century, an alternative organization of space also beyond traditional ecclesiastical borders was established by the Mendicant orders;

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their central administration defined their own organizational units in space according to the needs of mission or pastoral care—often against the resistance of the episcopacy, but legitimized by the Popes. As model for their organization served the angelic hierarchy in the same way as for the traditional hierarchy of the church. And also the founder of the new orders of the Franciscans and the Dominicans claimed universal competence for their sphere of activity beyond the borders of Western Christianity (as symbolized by the mission of St. Francis (1181–1226) to the Sultan of Egypt). Their missionary activity and mobility (the Mendicants were not obliged to maintain *stabilitas loci*) in space was equally sanctioned by the Popes, who allowed them the usage of portable altars, for instance.65

Spheres of mission were then organized into administrative provinces of the orders or even as ecclesiastical provinces within the episcopal hierarchy. For the spatial organization of these “new territories,” Mendicant and Papal authority used trial and error. For the definition of landmarks they relied on existing knowledge (missionaries, who had been there) and existing structures: following the model that they had established in Europe, the Mendicants selected localities which were already central places due to their position within existing political, mercantile and communication networks and their demographic and economic potential. Yet, such “external” circumstances could change, and accordingly ecclesiastical space was reorganized with a higher degree of flexibility than in the traditional areas of the Western Church.66 As Baldwin has stated: “The dioceses of the Orient bore only a slight resemblance to those of Europe. Bishops had no regular revenues from their sees and no cathedrals. (…)"

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Jurisdictional lines were not always observed, and as conditions changed new sees were instituted and old one transferred or suppressed.67

For their activities, Dominicans and Franciscans often relied on the networks of trade and founded their convents and stations in mercantile nodes, where merchants from the West supported them and became part of their flock besides converts from among the endogenous population; “the presence of western Christians was often the initial reason for the establishment by the friars of a station which might also serve the missions.” Also Archbishop John of Sulṭāniyya wrote in retrospective at the beginning of the 15th century: “Cum anno Domini MCCCX vel circa in parti-bus orientalibus nulla mentio esset de ecclesia Romana et de eius cerimoniis, ibidem quidam fratres Predicatores cum mercatoribus iverunt ad illas partes et primo in Persidem et Armeniam maiorem, (…), inceperunt ex tunc predic-care fijdem catholicam.” In this way, mercantile and ecclesiastical mental maps converged, and Tabriz became a landmark on both.68

A further motivator for the presence of Mendicants in Ilkhanid territory were Mongol and Western initiatives for a common attack on the Mamluks; in the treatise “De modo sarracenos extirpandi” the “imperator Tartarorum Persidis” is identified as a natural ally for a crusade due to his position between the hostile Golden Horde and the Mamluk Sultanate. Western-Mongol diplomatic activity touched Tabriz from the middle of the 13th century until the mission sent by King Henry III of Castile to Tamerlane in 1403 and was described by Ruy González de Clavijo (d. 1412). Indeed, it continued beyond this time, as exemplified by the negotiations

68 Libellus de Notitia Orbis 12, lines 5–9, ed. Kern 114 (About the year of our Lord 1310, when there was no mention in the regions of the east of the Church of Rome and of its ceremo-nies, some of the Dominican Brothers went with merchants in these regions and first into Persia and Greater Armenia, (…), and from that time they began to preach the Catholic faith); Eubel, “Dominikaner und Franziskaner,” 173; Golubovich, Biblioteca bio-bibliogra-fica, 394; Loenertz, La société, 151, 178 (also on merchants as companions of the missionaries travelling to India); Richard, La papauté, 141; Baldwin, “Mission to the East,” 453, 482 (for the citation), 515; Richard, “Die römische Kirche und die Nichtchristen außerhalb der Christenheit: Kreuzzüge und Missionierung,” in Die Geschichte des Christentums. Vol. 6, Die Zeit der Zerreißproben (1274–1449), eds. Michel Mollat Jourdin, André Vauchez, and Bernhard Schimmelpfennig (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 884; Prazniak, “Siena,” 184–185. On Archbishop John de Galonifontibus and his work see also Aleksey Martyniouk, “Rus’ i Litva v sočinenii Ioanna de Galonifontibusa,” Studia Historica Europae Orientalis 4 (2011): 79–88.
of Venice with the Aqquyunlu and later the Safavids related to an alliance against the Ottomans, for instance.69

Many of the ambassadors of kings and Popes were Dominicans and Franciscans, of course also because they hoped to convert the Ilkhans to Christianity. Yet besides the conversion of the “infidels,” especially the powerful Mongol rulers, the conversion of oriental Christians to the “Roman faith” was a central aim of the missionaries. In this regard, they may have been more successful than in other respects; in the region of Tabriz early contacts between Mendicants and indigenous Christians, especially “Nestorians,” “Jacobites” and Armenians, began already in the 1240s. But the attitude we find in the Western texts of the time towards the Christians of the East is ambiguous: while their (often exaggerated) large number was considered a chance for spiritual and also military successes in the Orient, we observe often a deep mistrust against these “falsi Christiani;” in crusading treaties such as the *Directorum ad passagium facienda*, for instance, the presence of monks and ecclesiastics of these ‘heretic’ denominations (quasi, of a competing ecclesiastical infrastructures occupying the same landmarks) was even considered an obstacle for salvation.70

As indicated above, Dominicans and Franciscans organized territories of mission according to their orders’ frameworks. The Franciscans since the 1280s (until end of the 14th century) divided their missionary

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sphere in the Mongol territories in a vicariate of *Tataria Aquilonaris* and in a vicariate of *Tataria Orientalis* with three *custodiae* in Constantinople, Trebizond and Tabriz. The *custodia* of Tabriz included Greater Armenia, Azerbaijan, southern Georgia and Mesopotamia; according to the list “De locis Fratrum Minorum et Fratrum Praedicatorum in Tartaria” (from before 1318) Franciscan stations at the beginning of the 14th century could be found within this *custodia* in Tabriz, Sultāniyya, Salmās near Lake Urumiyā, Erzurum, Tbilisi, *Porsico* (according to Richard, Borçka or Yeni yol at the river Çoruh on the route from Artvin to Batumi), *Carpi* (Garpi north-west from Erewan) and in Karakilise (today Ağrı in Eastern Turkey). Less clear is the spatial organization established by the Dominicans in these territories; in 1312, they founded the *Societas fratrum peregrinantis propter Christum inter gentes* (*Society of the Brothers who pilgrimage among the pagans for Christ*) for the purpose of the Mission in the East. Its central bases from 1312 to 1363 were in Pera/Galata and in Kaffa, where also its vicar-general had its see; but “it was, in fact, a society, a word whose meaning excluded territorial limitations,” and it had “no geographical unity, it was not organised into a province.” Its missionary jurisdiction included “parts of Greece, Egypt, Nubia, and all Asia except Palestine, Syria and Cilician Armenia”; these areas were partly divided into sections (*contratae*). The Dominicans presumably organized their missionary stations in the Ilkhanate, mostly in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, under a *vicarius* in a *contrata Persiae*, but the evidence is not as clear as for other *contratae*. According to “De locis Fratrum Minorum et Fratrum Praedicatorum in Tartaria,” the Dominicans had convents in Tabriz, Marāgha and Dekhvārakan, in Tbilisi (since the first half of the 13th century), in Sebastopolis on the Black Sea, in Sivas (there also Franciscans could be found since before 1277) and in Baghdad (in the second half of the 13th century). After 1315 they were also found in Trebizond, and after the creation of the archbishopric of Sultāniyya (1318) also in this city. Thus, the Mendicants founded their convents in the mercantile and political centres as well as along the important trade routes from Ayas and Trebizond to Tabriz (see fig. 7), following principles which were also observed in Europe (see above).71

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As Loenertz has explained, Tabriz as “capital de l’empire des Il Khân, grand entrepôt commercial sur la route qui joignait la Mer Noire au golfe persique, résidence de marchands européens nombreux, siège de plusieurs évêques orientaux” [actually not so many, as we have seen] was “naturellement le centre des missions dominicaines de Perse” (an assessment shared by contemporaries such as Ricoldo da Monte di Croce, Marco Polo, Hetʿum of Korikos or Odorico of Pordenone [*optime situate*], as we have seen above). Dominicans and Franciscans were permanently present in the city since ca. 1289/1290, as various Latin ecclesiastics passing through the city report. There the two orders obviously had to share one church building, which became an object of contest.\(^{72}\)

The next step was the integration of these territories in the Roman episcopal hierarchy. Since 1253, there existed plans for the installation of bishops in the territories under Mongol rule, but only the establishment

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of a considerable number of “Latin Christians” (merchants, converts) and of the Mendicants in various cities provided something like a minimum of necessary infrastructure. Still, the peculiarity of circumstances in “partibus infidelium” as remote from the Roman centre as Persia or even China, necessitated the granting of special privileges to these new bishops beyond the norm in Western Europe. In 1307, John of Montecorvino (d.1328) was ordained Archbishop of Chanbalyq (Beijing) by Pope Clemens V (1305–1314) with six suffragan bishops, for whom there were not assigned sees by the Pope; on the contrast, the metropolitan could exercise his own judgement in this matter, thus receiving total freedom to organize the space of his province.\(^{73}\)

While the province of Chanbalyq was a Franciscan project, on April 1st 1318 Pope John XXII with the constitution *Redemptor noster* created a new ecclesiastical province in favour of the Dominicans; Pater Franco of Perugia was ordained archbishop of Sulṭāniyya, which was then residence of the Ilkhan Abū Saʿīd (thus, the archbishop should also serve as “ambassadeur permanent du pape auprès du khan de Perse”). Franco also received six suffragan bishops with the freedom to install them where it seemed proper for him. This and other privileges where justified “propter loci distantiam, pericula maris et terre, expensas et alia que de necessitate ipsum oporteret subire.” (on account of the distance of the place, the dangers of the sea and land, the expenses of himself and other things that it would be necessary to take upon himself) The new ecclesiastical province was created “ad gubernationem fidelium et conversionem infidelium.” (to the government of the faithful and the conversion of unbelievers) The “locus Soltaniensis” was selected as see for the archbishopric, since “in partibus Persidis constitutes inter alia loca popolosa illarum partium sit insignis, nobilis et famous habensque populum copiosum;” (in the regions of Persia, situated between other populated places of these regions, it is distinguished, noble and famous and has a large population) [hence the Pope “de fratrurum nostrorum consilio et apostolicae plenituddine potestatis” (by advice of our brethren, and the fullness of the apostolic power) elevated Sulṭāniyya “in civitatem metropolitam.” Thus, the Pope not only installed a bishop in the city, he rather transformed the “locus Soltaniensis”—taking into account its already existing advantages as centre of power and population—into a

proper “civitas Soltaniensis,” as the city is referred to in the rest of the text and in further documents. Only by Papal privilege could a city achieve this status within the spatial order of Western Christianity; a settlement without a bishop could also not be considered a civitas. Francis of Perugia was installed as “archiepiscopus et pastor” and received “curam et administrationem et sollicitudinem animarum omnium existentium in eisdem partibus, quae subduntur imperatorio Tartarorum Persidis, principis Chaydo et Doha et Aethiopiae et Indiarum regum,” (the care and administration and advice of all souls existing in these regions, which are under the control of the Emperor of the Tatars in Perisa, the princes Chaydo and Doha and of Ethiopia and the kings of the Indians) which would include the territories of Anatolia, the Persian Khanate with Georgia, Transoxania, India and Ethiopia in delineation to the ecclesiastical province of Khanbaliq.74 A very similar wording we find in further letters sent by the Pope, also to the presumptive suffragan bishops, among these William Adam, who later became archbishop of Sultāniyya himself. Their future sees were similarly established as “civitates,” and the churches in these localities became “cathedrals.” To the archbishop, the Pope also awarded the pallium, explaining in detail at which ecclesiastical feast it should be worn; thus also the (public) celebration of these feasts and the sanctification of the public space thereby was intended. It was also declared that the ecclesia Soltansiensis had become the “sponsa” (the bride) of the archbishop. Sultāniyya and the other bishoprics, among these Tabriz, thus became limbs of the ecclesiastical corpus, landmarks on the map of Western Christianity.75 But their position remained peculiar; in his letters to Archbishop William Adam, Pope John XXII localized the new bishoprics “inter barbaras nationes” (among barbarian nations) and “ad remotissimas partes infidelium nationum” (in the most extreme parts of the pagan nations) We observe an “amalgam between physical and social distance;” the real as well as the cognitive distance between Avignon and the new ecclesiastical province necessitated special measures.76

Within the metropolitan province of Sultāniyya, six suffragan bishoprics were created in 1318: in Smyrna (Izmir at the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, whose harbour was under Genoese control from 1317 to 1329),

75 Charles Kohler, “Documents relatifs a Guillaume Adam archevêque de Sultanieh, puis d’Antivari, et a son entourage (1318–1346),” Revue de l’Orient latin 10 (1903–4): 18–29 (esp. letters I, IV, V); see also Kantorowicz, Die zwei Körper des Königs, 227, for this image.
76 Kohler, “Documents relatifs,” 29, 36 (letters VIII and XII).
Sebastupolis (Sochumi, a significant harbour at the Black Sea in Abkhasia), Sivas, Tabriz, Marāgha and Dekhvārakan. Thus, the central region of the Ilkhanid Empire and of Dominican activity in Azerbaijan and northern Jibāl became also the core of the ecclesiastical province with the metropolitan see and three suffragans. The other three suffragans had also been sites of missionary stations and/or nodes along the mercantile networks connecting the interior of the Ilkhanate to the Mediterranean and Black Sea (as indicated above) (see fig. 8). Also in other respects, the archbishopric was to exist in symbiosis with the Dominican infrastructure already established: not only were all new hierarchs members of the order, they also should remain in obedience to their vicars; the Dominican convents were to serve as chapters of the bishoprics. The bishops in turn should serve as electoral college in case of a vacancy of the archbishop’s see.77

Already in 1329, the spatial organization of the province of Sultāniyya was modified, possibly following the initiative of John de Cori, vicarius

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of the Societas Peregrinantum, who also was ordained Archbishop of Sultāniyya in that year: the see of Smyrna (whose harbour was conquered by the Emirate of Aydın in that year) was transferred to Tbilisi in Georgia (where Dominicans had been active since the 13th century) and disappeared from the list of bishoprics of the province, as did Sivas. Due to successes of mission, new bishoprics were established in Semiscantensis (Samarqand, which was located at this time in the Chagatai Khanate and on the extension of the route from Tabriz via Sultāniyya and Bukhara further to the east) and in Columbensis (the harbour of Quilon in India, which was connected to Sultāniyya and Tabriz over the sea via Hormuz, as we have seen). Between 1333 and 1356 also a first bishop for Nachvanensis (Nakhichevan) in Armenia was ordained as suffragan of the Archbishofric of Sultāniyya.78 Thereby, the ecclesiastical province of Sultāniyya finally included the entire South-western Asia (see fig. 9). Archbishop John of Sultāniyya wrote at the beginning of the 15th century: “Tunc enim instituit ecclesiam Soltaniensem in archiepiscopatum quasi totius Orientis ut patet

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in bulla limitans de Thurkia usque ad Indiam et Ethiopiam, pluresque episcopos dans ei in adiutorium et gratias singularissimas ei concedens.” (Then [the Pope] installed the Church of Sulṭāniyya as Archbishopric quasi of the entire Orient as declared in a bulla and set its borders from Turkey until India and Ethiopia and gave many bishops to it for support and granted very unique graces.) Yet, the core of his province consisted still of the “Persian Empire” whose borders (and at the same time those of his ecclesiastical province) he describes self-confidently as following: “Incipit ab India minori et durat per occidentem usque ad Armeniam maiorem. Infra istos terminos omnes provincie et regna sunt sub imperatore ipsorum [= of the Persians]. Et quidquid est sub eo, omnes sunt in spiritualibus sub iurisdictione archiepiscopi Soltaniensis, nunc ego, licet indignus sum.” (It begins in India minor and extends to the West until Greater Armenia. Within these very borders provinces and kingdoms are under [the rule] of the their [= the Persians] Emperor. And whatever is under him, all of them are under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Sulṭāniyya in spiritual things, now me, although I am unworthy)79 Although John of Sulṭāniyya still referred to the huge extension of his ecclesiastical province as established after 1329, the sustainability especially of the new sees in Samarqand (which is documented until 1342) and in India (for which no bishop is documented after the first in 1329) was very limited; also for Dekhvārakan (Diargorganensis), bishops are documented only until 1349. Bishops of Marāgha we find listed until 1374/1384, for Sebastopolis until 1450/1472, for Sulṭāniyya until 1425, for Tabriz even until 1476 and for Tbilisi until 1507, although later hierarchs were often only titular bishops and did not reside in their sees in remotissimas partes infidelium nationum (in the most remote parts of the pagan nations) anymore.80 The collapse of the Ilkhanate after 1336 (with the partial withdrawal of Italian merchants), the Black Death after 1347 and especially “the absence of any association between the mission and political power,” as Peter Jackson has demonstrated, very much limited the chances for a sustainable or even growing ecclesiastical life.81

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79 Libellus de Notitia Orbis 12, lines 38–41 and 13, lines 5–8, ed. Kern 116 and 117.
which would regenerate itself on the basis of the Mendicant infrastructure in these regions, did not work out, neither in China nor in Iran, as for instance is documented by the frequent demands for new bishops in Avignon or Rome from these regions.82 Yet the actual survival of Roman ecclesiastical infrastructure ultimately depended on local Christians: on the basis of contacts between the Armenian monastery of Kʿrna (near Nakhichevan) and the Dominicans (especially Bartholomew of Poggio, bishop of Marāgha, and John of Florence, Bishop of Tbilisi), between 1337 and 1344 there was found the order of the Fratres de Majori Armenia Unitores nuncupati (“The Brothers from Greater Armenia called Unitores”) [(in Armenian: Unitorq)], which in 1356 received papal approbation. At its apogee, more than 50 Armenian monasteries around Nakhichevan, but also around Sivas, in Cilicia and on the Crimea accepted the rules of the order (there also existed a convent in Tabriz), which in partial substitution of the weakened Dominicans provided the personnel for the continued existence of some of the bishoprics installed in 1318/1329 until the 15th century; “mission in Persia” became synonymous with “mission in Armenia,” as Loenertz has explained.83 Our last eyewitness for the ecclesiastical province of Sulṭāniyya is its Archbishop John (de Galonifontibus), who in 1403 served as ambassador of Tamerlane to Western Europe; he mentions “multa loca (...) Predicatorum et Minorum” in the regions of Georgia, the successes of the Dominicans in Armenia and the establishment of the order of the Unitores and also the significance of Tabriz and Sulṭāniyya, “civitas imperialis, (...) metropolis totius Orientis,” but he has nothing to say on the strength of Roman Christianity or of the Mendicants in the bishoprics in the former core of the Ilkhanid Empire in Azerbaijan. Tabriz was still a landmark within the ecclesiastical space of Rome, but the human resources of its existence were dwindling by the second half of the 14th century.84

82 Loenertz, La société, 140, 170; Richard, La papauté, 172–173; Richard, “Die römische Kirche,” 884.
III Tabriz as Landmark on the Biblical and Apocalyptic Christian Topography

As indicated above, the localization of sites of Biblical history contributed to the imagination and appropriation of space by the Christian tradition. One site which served as important landmark for the positioning of Tabriz in Christian space in various reports and treatises of Western contemporaries was Mt. Ararat with Noah’s Ark; it was also a common feature on the Mappae mundi of the time, which (with the exception of Vesconte’s map, see above) otherwise demonstrated “no awareness of the range of new knowledge” documented in the various abovementioned texts.85

But we also encounter an identification of Tabriz proper with a Biblical site: as we have already read, in his Relatio de mirabilibus orientalium Tatarorum Odoric of Pordenone wrote: “(. . .) transtuli me in Thauris, (. . .) que Susis antiquitus dicebatur.”86 Archbishop John of Sulṭāniyya elaborated this identification even more: “Thauris—que olim Susis dicebatur, ubi Assuerus convivium magnum fecit ut in libro Hester habetur.”87 With this identification of Tabriz with the ancient Achaemenid residence of Susa, whose prosperity and magnificence is described in detail at the beginning of the Book of Esther (esp. I, 1–8), Ilkhanid Tabriz became not only a landmark in Christian topography, but was also equated with the older Persian imperial centre; thus also imaginations and expectations of grandeur and luxury were evoked in the reader (and again, the mental maps of merchants and missionaries could converge in this regard).

Yet, Tabriz occupied an even more significant place in some Christian imaginations of the 13th and 14th century. William of Rubruck reports a prophecy told by an Armenian bishop “about a race of archers who would

86 Odoric of Pordenone, Relatio, 3: 1, ed. Marchisio 2–3; see also ed. van den Wyngaert, 417.
87 Johannes de Galonifontibus, Libellus, 117, lines 12–14 (Thauris—which once was called Susa, where Ahasuerus made a great feast as related in the Book of Esther.).
come from the north, saying that they would conquer the whole of the east but would spare the eastern kingdom so that it could make over to them the kingdom of the west; “though our brethren, the Catholic Franks,” he says,

will not trust them. They will occupy the countries from the north down to the south, will advance as far as Constantinople and will seize its harbour; and one of them, who will be known as the Wise Man, will enter the city and, on seeing the Frankish churches and their rite, will have himself baptized, and he will advise the Franks how to kill the ruler of the Tartars and thereby cause chaos among them. On hearing this, the Franks in the centre of the world—namely Jerusalem—will fall upon the Tartars on their borders and, aided by our own people (the Armenians, that is), will pursue them, with the result that the king of the Franks will establish his royal throne in Tauris in Persia. Then will follow the conversion to the Christian faith of all the peoples of the east and all the unbelievers, and such peace will reign in the world that the living will say to the dead: ‘Alas for you who have not lived to see these times’.

Prophecies about the monarch of the end time and his battle against the Muslims (referring ultimately back to the 7th century Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius) were widely spread among Christians in West and East; in another version which became popular in Western Europe since ca. 1300, this king after his victory over the enemies of the cross will hang his shield on a sere tree (arbor sicca), which will then begin to green again. Then Jews and pagans will convert to the Christian faith. While this tree was often localized in or near Jerusalem, some authors located it more to the east; Odorico of Pordenone (and after him further authors) finally state that, “ut dicitur,” it can be found in Tabriz “in una mosceta, id est in una ecclesia sarracenorum.” (“in a mosque, which is a church of

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The spatial dimension of apocalyptic Tabriz also crossed religious borders.\(^89\)

Ilkhanid Tabriz became not only a nodal point in the spatial imagination of Christian merchants and missionaries, but was promoted even to a significant landmark in the Biblical and apocalyptic topography of 13th and 14th century Christianity. As these processes were very much connected to the rise of the city as centre of Mongol Iran, its prominence on the (mental) maps dwindled with its political and mercantile importance; yet, the case of Tabriz provides a most interesting example for the imagination and organization of space respectively the modification and adaptation of these phenomena within the Christian communities confronted

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with the rise and fall of Mongol power in Iran. If we combine all information on the localization of Tabriz within one network, its position as nodal point of encounters between the various Christian denominations becomes obvious, too (see fig. 10). Further research by scholars acquainted with the sources in Persian and Arabic on the position of Tabriz in the spatial imagination of late medieval Muslim authors may also provide some interesting results for a comparative analysis of the significance of the city in the mental maps of the 13th to 15th century in order to establish a more complete picture (see also the papers by Patrick Wing and Judith Pfeiffer in this volume).

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