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## The visit of the Dominican John III of Sulṭāniyya, *bischofe von Persya*, an envoy of Tīmūr and Mīrān Shāh to the Teutonic court in 1407

Wizyta dominikanina Jana III z Sultanii, *bischofe von Persya*, posła Timura i Miranszaha na dworze krzyżackim w 1407 roku

### Abstract

The reign of Tīmūr (c. 1370–1405), particularly from the late 1390s, marked a period of intensified contact between Western Europe and his vast empire. Several factors drove these diplomatic exchanges between the West and Tīmūr, one of which was their shared interest in curbing the rising power of the Ottoman state. Among Tīmūr's envoys was the Dominican friar John, probably Italian or born into an Italian family settled in Kastamonu in Paphlagonia on the Black Sea. From around 1390 he served as bishop of Nakhchivān and was likely already in contact with Tīmūr at that time. In 1398–1399 he undertook his first mission to the West, recorded in the sources, receiving in Rome his appointment as Archbishop of Sulṭāniyya in July 1398. On his next mission, beginning in 1402, he remained in Europe until at least 1412, presenting himself as an envoy of Tīmūr and his son Mīrān Shāh and acting as an informant

on the precarious state of the missions in Persia and further east. At the same time, he sought to win cooperation with the Tīmūrīds by cultivating a favourable image of them among Western rulers. John was styled by papal cardinals *Archiepiscopus Soltaniensis seu Orientis* ("Archbishop of Sultāniyya or of the East"), and from 1410 also served as administrator of the *archidioecesis Cambaliensis* (Peking). A particularly noteworthy episode of his European sojourn was his visit to the Teutonic Order's court in Malbork in 1407. Referred to by the Teutonic Knights as the *bischofe von Persya* ("bishop of Persia") and titled by Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen *Soltaniensis sive totius Orientis primas* ("Archbishop of Sultāniyya or primate of the whole East"), he likely persuaded the Grand Master to issue a new series of letters – to the King of Cyprus (styled also as ruler of Armenia), to Timur and Mīrān Shāh, to the Byzantine emperor, and to the legendary Prester John of Ethiopia or Abkhazia – in support of his mission in Europe. Archbishop John saw himself both as a missionary and as an instrument of anti-Ottoman policy, mediating in the creation of an alliance between Tīmūr and the rulers of Western Europe, with the aim of strengthening the position of Christianity in Persia and more broadly in Asia. His trace disappears after 1412, when he was last recorded in Lviv. There is also a hypothesis that Archbishop John was a forger and that at least some of the letters addressed to Western European rulers – purportedly written by Tīmūr himself – were in fact fabrications composed by the Dominican friar. Exploiting the confusion that followed the Battle of Ankara and the general ignorance of Europeans regarding the East, he allegedly sought to present himself as Tīmūr's trusted adviser, thereby constructing the myth of a "Christian Tīmūr". In doing so, he gained access to European courts and secured financial support for his activities. The trail of Archbishop John ends in 1412 in Lviv, from where he never returned to Persia, perhaps fearing exposure at the courts of Tīmūr's and Mīrān Shāh's successors.

**Keywords:** Tīmūr, Dominican John III of Sultāniyya (*bischofe von Persya*), Mīrān Shāh, the Teutonic Knights, administrator of the *archidioecesis Cambaliensis* (Peking).

## Abstrakt

Okres panowania Timura (ok. 1370–1405), w szczególności od końca lat 90. XIV wieku, przyniósł ożywienie kontaktów Europy Zachodniej z jego rozległym imperium. Było kilka powodów determinujących kontakty dyplomatyczne pomiędzy Zachodem a Timurem, a jeden z nich to był wspólny interes w postaci powstrzymania rosnącej potęgi państwa osmańskiego. Jednym z posłów, który działał w służbie Timura, był dominikanin Jan, prawdopodobnie Włoch lub urodzony we włoskiej rodzinie osiadłej w Kastamonu w Paflagonii nad Morzem Czarnym, który

od około 1390 roku był biskupem w Nachiczewanie i najprawdopodobniej już wówczas kontaktował się z Timurem. W latach 1398–1399 odbył swoją pierwszą odnotowaną w źródłach misję na Zachód, odbierając w Rzymie nominację na arcybiskupa Sultanii w lipcu 1398 roku. W kolejną misję wyruszył w 1402 i do co najmniej 1412 roku przebywał w Europie, podając się za posta Timura i jego syna Miranszacha, a z drugiej strony informując o trudnej sytuacji misji w Persji i szerzej na Wschód oraz przekonując do współpracy z Timurydami poprzez ocieplanie ich wizerunku w oczach zachodnioeuropejskich władców. Jan był tytułowany przez kardynałów papieskich „*Archiepiscopus Soltaniensis seu Orientis*”, a od 1410 roku był również administratorem „*archidioecesis Cambaliensis*” (Pekin). Interesującym epizodem związanym z jego pobytem w Europie była jego wizyta na dworze krzyżackim w Malborku w 1407 roku. Zwany przez krzyżaków „*bischofe von Persya*”, tytułowany przez wielkiego mistrza Konrada von Jungingena „*Soltaniensis sive tocius Orientis primas*”, najprawdopodobniej nakłonił go do napisania kolejnych listów (do króla Cypru, tytułowanego również władcą Armenii, do Timura i Miranszacha, do cesarza Bizancjum oraz do legendarnego kapłana Jana z Etiopii lub Abchazji) wspierających jego misję po Europie. Arcybiskup Jan postrzegał siebie w roli misjonarza oraz instrumentu antyosmańskiej polityki, pośredniczącego w budowaniu sojuszu pomiędzy Timurem a władcami zachodnioeuropejskimi, co miało wzmocnić pozycję chrześcijaństwa w Persji i szerzej Azji. Istnieje również teza mówiąca o tym, że arcybiskup Jan był fałszerzem i jego listy do co najmniej części władców zachodnioeuropejskich, które rzekomo miał napisać sam Timur, w rzeczywistości były mistyfikacją sporządzoną przez dominikanina, który wykorzystał zamieszanie po bitwie pod Ankarą i niewiedzę Europejczyków o Wschodzie, aby wykreować się na doradcę Timura, tworząc w zasadzie mit „chrześcijańskiego Timura”, i tym samym uzyskać dostęp do dworów europejskich i idącego za tym wsparcia finansowego z ich strony. W 1412 roku we Lwowie urywa się ślad po arcybiskupie Janie, który nigdy nie powrócił do Persji, być może obawiając się zdemaskowania na dworze następców Timura i Miranszacha.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Timur (Tamerlan), dominikanin Jan (*bischofe von Persya*), Miranszah, krzyżacy, administrator *archidioecesis Cambaliensis* (Pekin).

The early Fifteenth century was a period of abrupt political upheavals across Eurasia, in which one of the central figures was Tīmūr, ruler of an empire stretching from Central Asia to western Persia. At the same time, the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402) – victory over the crusaders at Nicopolis in 1396 – provoked increasing concern among European monarchs. The two empires, Tīmūrid and Ottoman, were thus on a collision course for dominance over key territories of the Islamic world. This rivalry reached its climax on 28 July 1402, when one of the most decisive battles of the age was fought at

Ankara between the armies of Tīmūr and Bayezid I. Tīmūr's victory and the capture of the Ottoman sultan dramatically altered the regional balance of power and opened new opportunities for Europe to establish contact with the East. Against this backdrop, diplomatic exchanges between Western European rulers and Tīmūr's court intensified. One of the most fascinating, though comparatively little-studied, episodes of this diplomatic traffic was the visit of John III of Sultāniyya, a Dominican archbishop, to the court of Konrad von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem – better known as the Teutonic Order – at Marienburg in 1407.<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasised that Tīmūr did not generally employ Latins in his dealings with Western Europe, the Ottomans, or the Mamluks. The only exceptions were two Dominicans from the dioceses of Sultāniyya and Nakhchivān, one of whom was the subject of this study, John III of Sultāniyya.

John's journeys in Europe were not only an expression of missionary zeal but also an attempt to foster a broad alliance against the Ottoman Empire. His dual role as both clergyman and diplomat renders him a symbolic figure in the contemporary efforts to transcend cultural and religious boundaries in pursuit of shared political interests. His meeting with the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, and his involvement in the preparation of letters to the King of Cyprus, the Byzantine emperor, and the legendary Prester John, demonstrate that John was regarded as *totius Orientis primas*<sup>2</sup>: a figure who linked the Latin and Oriental worlds, uniting spiritual mission with political agency. This article examines Archbishop John of Sultāniyya's mission to Konrad von Jungingen, its historical context, and the significance of the encounter at Marienburg for the early stages of diplomatic engagement with Timurid Persia at a time when the Ottoman threat compelled Christian rulers to seek new, and at times exotic, allies.

Any analysis of eastern missions in the late Middle Ages must situate them within their broader historical context. The Mongol conquests of the 13th century and the subsequent interactions with Mongol states – the Golden Horde, the Ilkhanate, the Chagatai Ulus, and the Yuan Empire – had already prompted vigorous diplomatic initiatives by the Roman Curia in the lands of the East. Serving as intermediaries

1 Konrad von Jungingen (1393–1407), the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, was the brother of the famous Ulrich, who served as Grand Master from 1407 to 1410 and fell at the Battle of Grunwald on 15 July 1410.

2 The correct form is *totius*: it is the genitive singular of the adjective *totus*, *tota*, *totum* ("whole, entire"). The form *tocius* is an archaic variant found occasionally in manuscripts, including the one concerning the subject of this text.

in these exchanges were the Franciscan and Dominican orders, whom Jean-Paul Roux aptly described as the “agents of the papacy”.<sup>3</sup> In 1318, Pope John XXII, by means of the bull *Redemptor noster*, reorganised the ecclesiastical provinces: the Caucasus, Iran, Central Asia, India, and Ethiopia were placed under the jurisdiction of the newly created archbishopric of Sultāniyya, entrusted to the Dominicans, while portions of Central and East Asia were assigned to the archbishop of Khanbaliq (Peking), which was entrusted to the Franciscans.<sup>4</sup>

The figure of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya has been relatively well presented in the literature, although most earlier works tended to reproduce erroneous interpretations concerning his identification. He was first mentioned by nineteenth-century scholars: Silvestre de Sacy<sup>5</sup> and Henri Moranvillé.<sup>6</sup> Biographical information on John was collected in works by Raymond Joseph Loenertz<sup>7</sup> and Anthony Luttrell.<sup>8</sup> Other contributions that address John of Sultāniyya to some extent include the works of Michael Bihl,<sup>9</sup> Felicitas Schmeider,<sup>10</sup> Claudine Delacroix-Besnier,<sup>11</sup> and

- 3 Jean-Paul Roux, *Średniowiecze szuka drogi w świat*, transl. Tadeusz Rosłanowski (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Wiedza Powszechna, 1969), 40.
- 4 Folker Reichert, “Johannes von Soldania: Ein persischer Erzbischof in österreichischen Handschriften”, in *Österreich im Mittelalter. Bausteine zu einer revidierten Gesamtdarstellung*, Die Vorträge des 16. Symposions des Niederösterreichischen Instituts für Landeskunde Puchberg am Schneeberg, 1. bis 4. Juli 1996, hrsg. Willibald Rosner (St. Pölten: NÖ Institut für Landeskunde, 1999), 350; Felicitas Schmeider, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters, bd. 16 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994), 135–136.
- 5 Silvester de Sacy, “Mémoire sur une correspondance inédite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI,” *Mémoires de l’Institut Royal de France. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* 6 (1822): 470–522.
- 6 Henri Moranvillé, “Mémoire sur Tamerlan et sa cour per un dominican en 1403,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes* 55 (1894): 433–464.
- 7 Raymond Loenertz, “Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 10 (1940): 258–281; *idem*, *La Société des Frères pèlerins. Étude sur l’Orient dominicain* (Rome: Dominican Historical Institute, 1937), 111–112, 170–172.
- 8 Anthony Luttrell, “Timur’s Dominican envoy,” in *Studies in Ottoman history in honour of Professor V.L. Menage*, eds. Colin Heywood, Colin Imber (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 209–229.
- 9 Michael Bihl, “Excerpta de missionibus Fratrum Minorum e Libello de notitia orbis a Fr. Iohanne de Galonifontibus, O.P., archiepiscopo Soltaniensi, an. 1404 scripto,” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 31 (1938): 540–550.
- 10 Schmeider, *Europa und die Fremden*, 41, 48, 51, 56, 126, 131, 140, 150, 159, 181, 186, 203, 209, 235, 240, 284, 298, 311.
- 11 Claudine Delacroix-Besnier, *Les dominicains et la chrétienté grecque aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, Collection de l’École Française de Rome, vol. 237 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1997), 30, 49, 50, 131–134, 158, 161, 163, 164–173, 196, 206, 331; *eadem*, “Les

Folker Reichert.<sup>12</sup> John is also referenced in studies devoted to the Dominicans and to the presence of the Catholic Church in the East.<sup>13</sup> It should additionally be noted that only recently Jurij Šilc published a paper based on a document authored by John of Sultāniyya,<sup>14</sup> discovered in the archive of St. Margaret's Church in Vodice near Ljubljana. A distinct body of research on John concerns his most extensive work, the *Libellus de notitia orbis* (*Description of the World*), composed in 1404 during his stay in the German lands. The Hungarian scholar Lajos Tardy analysed the sections of this text devoted to the northern Black Sea region and the Caucasus.<sup>15</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Azerbaijani historian Ziya Musa oğlu Bünyadov likewise focused on the passages concerning the Caucasus.<sup>16</sup> In 2002, the journal "Dardania" published a substantial excerpt describing South-eastern and Eastern Europe, accompanied by a German translation.<sup>17</sup> In 2007, the English historian Stephan C. Rowell, a specialist in Lithuanian history, published the portion of the *Libellus de notitia orbis* dealing with

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missions dominicaines et les Arméniens du milieu du XIVe siècle aux premières années du XVe siècle," *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 26 (1996–1997): 173–191.

- 12 Reichert, "Johannes von Soldania", 349–365; *idem*, "Los viajes políticos. Embajadas y diplomacia," in *Viajes y viajeros en la Europa medieval*, coord. Feliciano Novoa Portela, F. Javier Villalba Ruiz de Toledo (Barcelona: Editorial CSIC-CSIC Press, 2007), 227, 232.
- 13 Marcus-Antonius van den Oudenrijn, "Bishops and archbishops of Naxivan," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 6 (1936): 167; Anna-Dorothee Von Den Brincken, *Die 'Nationes Christianorum orientalium' im Verständnis der lateinischen Historiographie von der Mitte des 12. bis in die zweite Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne-Vienne: Böhlau, 1973), 75, 135, 138, 140–141, 193, 209, 261, 285–286, 326, 380, 442–443, 450; Giorgio Fedalto, *La Chiesa latina in Oriente*, vol. 2, *Hierarchia Latina Orientis* (Verona: Mazianna, 1976), 162, 211–212; Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au moyen âge (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Roma: École française de Rome, 1977), 155–156, 181–182, 193, 195, 221, 245, 256–259, 261; Thomas Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4 (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1993), 172; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1405* (Harlow: Pearson. Longman, 2005), 242–244, 246–248, 260, 300, 302, 329, 345, 360.
- 14 Jurij Šilc, "Nadškof iz Perzije podeli v Celju odpustek šmarnogorskim božjepotnikom Listina nadškofa Janeza iz Sultanije, spisana v Celju leta 1411," *Zgodovina za vse* 2 (2006): 5–16. Obecnie jego oryginał znajduje się w Archiwum Archidiecezji w Lublanie.
- 15 Lajos Tardy, "The Caucasian Peoples and Their Neighbours in 1404," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32/1 (1978): 83–111.
- 16 Зия Мусаевич Буниатов, *Иоанн де Галонифонтибус. Сведения о народах Кавказа (1404 г.) (из сочинения «Книга познания мира»)* [= Ioan de Galonifontibus. Information on the Peoples of the Caucasus (1404) (from the work "The Book of Knowledge of the World")] (Баку: Издательство «ЭЛМ», 1980).
- 17 M. Kamptner, "Südost- und Osteuropa in der Beschreibung von Iohannes III (de Galonifontibus), Erzbischof von Sulthanyeh zwischen den Jahren 1377–1403," *Dardania. Zeitschrift für Geschichte, Kultur, Literatur und Politik* 11 (2001): 61–84.

Eastern Europe.<sup>18</sup> S. Rowell, however, limited himself to the Latin source text without providing a translation into any modern language; only later did the Belarusian scholar Aleksei Viktorovich Martynyuk publish the sections concerning Rus' and Lithuania in a Russian translation from the Latin.<sup>19</sup> A major study offering a different perspective on Archbishop John is that of Abolala Soudavar, who argues that the archbishop may have been both a forger and an impostor, having himself authored at least two of the supposed letters from Tīmūr to Western monarchs. Presenting himself as Tīmūr's ambassador, he sought to gain prestige, wealth, and influence at European courts by promoting a favourable image of Tīmūr as an ally of Christendom and a savior of Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> In this context, Juan Carlos Bayo Julve discusses Archbishop John's visit to Martin I, ruler of the Crown of Aragon, in 1404. In his interpretation, the Dominican emerges as a figure full of contradictions, and Bayo Julve redefines the role of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya as a false yet effective cultural mediator between East and West.<sup>21</sup>

Laura Carbó examines John of Sultāniyya in the context of his diplomatic mission to the king of France on behalf of Tīmūr and his role in shaping a historiographical narrative intended to provide ideological foundations for the emerging Timurid dynasty.<sup>22</sup> Daria Barow-Vassilevitch discusses John of Sultāniyya in connection with the fate of the Teutonic Order's archival materials, especially the letters linked to his

18 Stephen C. Rowell, "Naujieji kryžiaus žygiuotojai: LDK ir Bizantijos santykiai XIV–XV a. sandūroje. Ar Vytautas Didysis buvo Lietuvos kryžiaus žygių prieš turkus bei totorius pradininkas?," in *Kryžiaus karų epocha Baltijos regiono tautų istorinėje sąmonėje. Mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys*, sud. Rita-Regina Trimonienė, Robertas Jurgaitis (Šiauliai: Saulės delta, 2007), 181–205.

19 Алексей Викторович Мартынюк, "Русь и Литва в сочинении Иоанна де Галонифонтибуса" [= Rus' and Lithuania in the opus of Johannes de Galonifontibus], *Исследования по истории Восточной Европы = Studia Historica Europae Orientalis* 4 (2011): 79–88.

20 Abolala Soudavar, "Histoire d'une imposture ou naissance d'un mythe: Tamerlan," in *Le Pouvoir en actes. Fonder, dire, montrer, contrefaire l'autorité*, ed. Elsa Marguin-Hammon (Paris: Archives nationales-Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2013), 186–191.

21 Juan Carlos Bayo Julve, "The letters of King Martín I of Aragon to Amir Temur and Mironshoh following the visit of the Archbishop of Solṭāniye (1404)," *O'zbekiston Tarixi Jurnalı* 2 (2022): 22–63.

22 Laura Carbó, "La correspondencia entre Tamorlán y el rey Carlos VI de Francia en 1403. La labor del dominico Juan, obispo de Sultania como traductor, editor, informante, misionero," in *Pastores, misioneros, inquisidores, jueces y administradores: el clero del antiguo régimen (siglos XV–XIX)*, coords. Guillermo Nieva Ocampo, Henar Pizarro Llorente, ed. María Noelia Mansilla Pérez (Salta: La Aparecida, 2021), 35–60; eadem, "Un relato para las cortes occidentales las bases del poder de Tamorlán según la reelaboración del obispo Juan de Sultania (1403)," *Incipit* 44 (2024): 79–104.

stay in Marienburg, their transfer to Russia, and the role of the Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826) in copying, interpreting, and incorporating them into his *Istoriya gosudarstva Rossiyskogo* (*History of the Russian State*).<sup>23</sup> The most recent biographical article on John, authored by Chiara Casali, was published in the prestigious dictionary from the series *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History Online* (CMR Online), issued by Brill.<sup>24</sup> Within Polish scholarship, the author of this text has also addressed this topic.<sup>25</sup> Jerzy Strzelczyk mentions the letter of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Konrad von Jungingen, to Prester John, sent on January 20, 1407, which in fact was entrusted to John of Sultāniyya, who was to take it with him to the East. However, he does not mention the person of the Archbishop of Sultāniyya himself, suggesting that the idea of writing the letter may have arisen under the inspiration of one of the prominent Teutonic guests from the West who participated in campaigns against the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians.<sup>26</sup>

We have no information about the youth of John of Sultāniyya. He most likely came from an Italian family that had settled in one of the merchant colonies on the Black Sea, perhaps, as Chiara Casali suggests, in Kastamonu in Paphlagonia.<sup>27</sup> Luttrell, however, argues that John was from Padua, since in some sources he introduced himself as *Johannes de Padua*.<sup>28</sup> One of his works – a brief account of Timūr, to which we will return later – was composed in French, which may point to his French

23 Daria Barow-Vassilevitch, “Nikolaj Karamzin und der *bärtige Johannes*, Erzbischof von Sulthanien. Die langen Wege der Deutschordensüberlieferung in Russland,” *Preußenland* 12 (2021): 8–25.

24 Chiara Casali, “John of Sultāniyya,” in *Christian Muslim Relations Online I*, ed. David Thomas (brill.com) (access: 17.07.2025).

25 Łukasz Burkiewicz, “Rola arcybiskupa Jana z Sultanii w stosunkach dyplomatycznych pomiędzy Mongołami a Europą Zachodnią na przełomie XIV i XV w.,” *Prace Historyczne Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* 144/1 (2017): 25–42.

26 Jerzy Strzelczyk, “Król-Kapłan Jan. Rzeczywistość i legenda,” in *W poszukiwaniu Królestwa Kapłana Jana*, wybór, wstęp i redakcja naukowa Jerzy Strzelczyk (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Novus Orbis, 2006), LXXV.

27 Casali, “John of Sultāniyya.” This interpretation is further supported by a letter dated 12 December 1423, sent by the Dominican friars of Persia to Pope Martin V, in which they petitioned for the appointment of a new archbishop to the vacant see of Sultāniyya: “Cum vacante ecclesia Soltanien, per obitum fratris Johannes de Castamon.” See: Thomas Kaeppli, Emilio Panella, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4 (Roma: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticanis, Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1993), 172.

28 Luttrell, “Timur’s Dominican envoy,” 211–212, 224; Johannes Vincke, *Briefe zum Pisaner Konzil* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1940), 201.

origins. Yet since John's nomination as archbishop of Sulṭāniyya took place during the Great Western Schism, and the appointment was made by the Roman and not the Avignon pope, it is more likely that he was Italian than French.<sup>29</sup> Additional confirmation of his Italian background is found in the *Chronographia regum Francorum*, where he is described as wearing a long white beard in the Greek style, though explicitly identified as Italian by origin.

In the following year, 1403, in the month of May, there arrived in Paris a certain envoy of Timūr, from the Order of Friars Preachers, bearing open letters of credence written in golden letters and sealed with Timūr's small seal. This friar looked like a Greek, though by birth, as he testified, he was Italian. He had a great white beard and claimed to be archbishop of the city of Sulṭāniyya, which – as he himself said – was in the land of Persia.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 1. No attempt has hitherto been made to render the figure of John of Sulṭāniyya visually. The above illustration is the first artistic-historical reconstruction of his likeness, depicting the archbishop with a characteristic Greek-style beard, surrounded by the Chagatai attendants of Timūr (1402). Author: Andrzej Zaręba, 2025.

29 Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 212.

30 *Chronographia regum Francorum*, ed. Henri Moranvillé, vol. 3 (Paris: Publications de la Société de l'Histoire de France, Librairie Renouard, 1897), 205.

John certainly spoke Italian and French, probably also Arabic and Persian, and may even have had some familiarity with Tatar, as suggested by the detailed accounts of Tīmūr's personality and life offered in his writings.<sup>31</sup> His Latin, according to the first editor of one of his works, Anton Kern, was at times obscure and difficult; Kern characterised it as *völlig verwildert*, i.e., "completely wild".<sup>32</sup> We do not know when John entered the Dominican Order. By the end of the 14th century, probably around 1390, he was appointed bishop of Nakhchivān, succeeding Johannes de Galonifontibus (Jean de Gillefontaine), who had held the office since 1377. John was long confused with his predecessor due to an early misinterpretation by Anton Kern, who had discovered one of John's works, which was subsequently repeated by later authors.<sup>33</sup> Without entering into a detailed discussion of this matter here, I refer the reader to the findings of Raymond Loenertz, Anthony Luttrell, and, more recently, Chiara Casali. The Dominican John III, who in 1398 was transferred from the bishopric of Nakhchivān to the archbishopric of Sultāniyya (as will be mentioned below), was not the same person as Johannes de Galonifontibus, appointed bishop of Nakhchivān in 1377. First, they differed in origin: the former was most probably Italian, while the latter was a Frenchman from Normandy. Second, even if one were to assume that John III and Johannes de Galonifontibus were indeed the same individual, it would be difficult to account for the unusually long interval between 1377 and 1398, during which no formal change occurred in the episcopal succession at Nakhchivān. The confusion was easily made, for all bishops of the Nakhchivān diocese were Dominicans, and the name John was among the most frequent – if not the most frequent – used among them. Third, a papal bull of Boniface IX, dated 20 October 1400 and confirming the appointment of a new bishop of Nakhchivān, recorded that John III had been transferred to the archbishopric of Sultāniyya on 26 August 1398. This dating, however, proved erroneous, as the scribe had confused John's nomination with that of his predecessor. In fact, John was already styled archbishop of Sultāniyya in a papal letter of 23 August 1398, while he himself later gave the correct date of his promotion, i.e., 20 July 1398, in a document from 1409. The clerical error in the bull thus misled later scholars, and the incorrect date of John III's appointment

31 Carbó, "Un relato para las cortes occidentaleslas," 81.

32 Anton Kern, "Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III (de Galonifontibus?) O.P. Erzbischofs von Sulthanyeh", *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum* 8 (1938): 93; Мартынюк, "Русь и Литва в сочинении Иоанна де Галонифонтибуса," 85.

33 Kern, "Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III (de Galonifontibus?)," 81–123.

was long perpetuated in subsequent research.<sup>34</sup> To summarise, John of Sultāniyya was most likely the successor of Johannes de Gaillefontaine at the bishopric of Nakhchivān, and the identical names, coupled with the scribal error in the papal bull, led to a cascade of mistaken interpretations in later historiography.<sup>35</sup>

After assuming the diocese of Nakhchivān, John established his first contacts with Tīmūr. He undoubtedly travelled widely across Asia, his routes often intersecting with Tīmūr's campaigns. Between 1390 and 1402 – most likely during Tīmūr's conquest of the Golden Horde in 1395–1396 – John of Sultāniyya stayed in Circassia and at Caffa in Crimea, where he recorded the presence of thirty-five languages then in use.<sup>36</sup> His association with Tīmūr during this period is further suggested by a work composed in 1410 by the papal official Dietrich of Niem, who, when reading and commenting on Tīmūr's letters, cited information provided by his *amicus meus specialis* – almost certainly John of Sultāniyya.

“For I have read in the letters which he wrote concerning his victories, written not yet six years ago, that, warring with various kings and mighty rulers in the northern and eastern regions of Asia, he had brought nearly all into subjection and seized the power and spoils of those kingdoms and provinces, amassing wealth unheard of for centuries (...). For I have seen his likeness through a certain Catholic bishop, my close friend, who resided with him for more than twelve years (...).<sup>37</sup>”

The letters in question (Latin translations of Persian originals) were written in 1402 by the chanceries of Tīmūr and his son Mīrān Shāh, and were later circulated in Europe by John. From Dietrich of Niem's account, it appears that before he set off to Europe, John of Sultāniyya had spent twelve years – roughly from 1390 to 1402 – in Tīmūr's entourage, accompanying him through Turkestan, the Golden Horde, southern Rus', Georgia, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

34 Luttrell, “Timur's Dominican envoy,” 211, note 10.

35 Loenertz, “Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies,” 258–259; Casali, “John of Sultāniyya.” It is equally mistaken to identify John of Sultāniyya with the English Franciscan John Greenlaw, who on 20 September 1400 was nominated in Rome by Pope Boniface IX as bishop of Soldayensis (Sudak) in Crimea. In this case, the locality accompanying the archbishop's title, *Soltaniensis* – that is, Sultāniyya – is often confused with *Soldayensis*, that is, Sudak in Crimea, which leads to further erroneous interpretations. See Burkiewicz, “Rola arcybiskupa Jana z Sultanii,” 30–31.

36 Kern, “Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III (de Galonifontibus?),” 107, 111.

37 Theodoricus de Nyem, *De Scismate libri très*, recensuit et adnotavit Georgius Erler (Lipsiae: Veit & Comp., 1890), 305–306.

His first mission to the West recorded in the sources took place in 1398–1399. Already at that time John seems to have acted, at least in part, on behalf of Tīmūr, with political and commercial objectives. At the same time, his travels also aimed at improving the conditions of Dominican – and perhaps also Franciscan – missions in the East and at publicising their precarious situation at Western courts and within the papal curia. John was in Rome on 20 July 1398, when Pope Boniface IX (1389–1404) transferred him to the archbishopric of Sultāniyya, in present-day Zanjān province in Iran.<sup>38</sup> He was probably still in Rome between 23 September of the same year, when, at his request, Boniface IX issued bulls against those who had usurped many liturgical items from the church of Sultāniyya, and 11 December 1398, when the pope announced (in his letters) the dispatch of a group of Dominicans to Armenia to evangelise unbelievers and empowered Archbishop John to grant twenty Armenian Catholics the right to choose their own confessors.<sup>39</sup> On 28 April 1399, the pope instructed the archbishop of Sultāniyya and the bishops of Tana and Caffa to prevent abuses by Dominicans who were exceeding their visitatorial authority over the Dominican Uniates in Armenia and at Caffa.<sup>40</sup> It is also likely that during this period John used his presence in Italy to help foster contacts between Genoa and Venice and Tīmūr. This, at least, may be inferred from the 1402 letters of Tīmūr and Mirān Shāh to European rulers, which imply that some years earlier Mirān Shāh had dispatched John of Sultāniyya to Genoa and Venice, and that the Dominican had delivered to Tīmūr messages from certain *Francis*, that is, Frankish rulers, among them Henry IV of Lancaster (1399–1410), King of England, whom John himself is reported to have visited in late 1399<sup>41</sup> – perhaps with the aforementioned Genoese and Venetians. The letters further suggest that at about the same time another Dominican, Franciscus Ssathru, delivered Tīmūr's letters to the King of France.<sup>42</sup>

38 Casali, "John of Sultāniyya"; Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 213.

39 Loenertz, "Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies," 264–266; Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 213.

40 Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 213.

41 "Letter XXV. King Henry the Fourth to Timur Beg. A.D. 1402 [MS. Cotton. Nero B. XI. Fol. 172]," in *Original Letters Illustrative of English History; Including Numerous Royal Letters; from Autographs in the British Museum, the State Paper Office, and One or Two Other Collections*, with notes and illustrations by Henry Ellis, 3rd ser., vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), 56.

42 The text of the letter, in Persian together with its Latin translation, is preserved in Sacy, "Mémoire sur une correspondance inédite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI," 473–474, 478–480.

In this way, John of Sultāniyya was at once fulfilling the diplomatic tasks entrusted to him by Tīmūr and seeking to strengthen the Latin presence in Persia, fully aware that the merchant republics were deeply interested in trade with Asia. Merchant colonies and missionary stations were usually established along the same routes, so the promotion of commerce in Asia was a natural objective for Christian missionaries. Moreover – like John of Sultāniyya – Venice and Genoa were eager to restore peace in the East, which was essential for the renewal of commercial ties with Asia.<sup>43</sup> Most likely in the latter part of 1399 he visited England, where he met Henry IV, who had ascended the throne in September of that year. Soon afterward he returned to Asia, where he seems to have faced certain difficulties, since on 31 December 1401 Boniface IX authorised him to exercise his archiepiscopal functions outside the boundaries of his own diocese.<sup>44</sup>

After returning to Asia, John of Sultāniyya was with Tīmūr in western Karabakh in early 1402, where he witnessed the arrival of an Ottoman embassy bringing a tribute of 100,000 slaves.<sup>45</sup> Following the Battle of Ankara, Tīmūr extended gestures of goodwill toward Western rulers, among other things releasing Christian captives, and dispatched John of Sultāniyya on another diplomatic mission to the West. He carried with him a likeness of Tīmūr together with two letters for Western rulers – one from Tīmūr himself and the other from his son Mīrān Shāh – intended to encourage political and commercial relations.<sup>46</sup>

John of Sultāniyya reached Venice from Constantinople at the end of December 1402 or the beginning of January 1403 and spent several months there, probably residing in a Dominican convent.<sup>47</sup> In March or April he left Venice, perhaps spending some time in Rome. He certainly travelled to Milan and Genoa, where he acted as Tīmūr's envoy.<sup>48</sup> In May 1403 he was in Paris, where he appeared before King Charles VI the Mad (1380–1422) and the accompanying princes, reading aloud the letters of

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43 Casali, "John of Sultāniyya."

44 *Ibidem*.

45 Kern, "Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III," 104; Marie-Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur en Anatolie (1402)* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial si. Imprimeriile Statului, 1942), 50.

46 Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 216–217.

47 Loenertz, "Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies," 261; Delacroix-Besnier, *Les dominicains*, 168; Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 220.

48 Delacroix-Besnier, *Les dominicains*, 164.

Timūr and Mīrān Shāh.<sup>49</sup> This stay in the French capital is relatively well documented in surviving accounts, including the chronicle of the monk of Saint-Denis, and therefore need not be discussed here in detail.<sup>50</sup>

It is, however, worth noting the nature of the letter from Timūr which Archbishop John of Sultāniyya brought with him, a document that has survived to this day together with its Latin translation and a copy of Charles VI's reply to Timūr. For centuries its authenticity went unquestioned, until the recent studies of Abolala Soudavar revealed the supposed letter from Timūr to the King of France to be a clear forgery, evident both in its physical characteristics and in the linguistic and stylistic inconsistencies of its content. Soudavar emphasises that the author of this forged document – either John of Sultāniyya himself or someone within his entourage, possibly an Armenian with only rudimentary knowledge of Persian – did not fully understand the administrative terminology of the Persian chancery. Lacking access to any genuine documents, the forger produced a clumsy compilation of miswritten and misinterpreted expressions, entirely inconsistent with the formal conventions of Timurid bureaucracy. The falsified letter served John of Sultāniyya's interests well. Travelling through Europe with what he claimed to be an authentic missive from Timūr to the Western rulers, he received gifts and financial rewards at every court he visited. Intriguingly, the forged Persian text differs from the French and Latin translations prepared by the archbishop himself. In the Persian version, John of Sultāniyya is merely styled “bishop,” whereas in the French (and Latin) versions he ostentatiously assumes the title “archbishop of the whole East” (“archevêque de tout l'Orient”), presenting himself as Timūr's trusted adviser. It is most likely that the Persian text was composed before his departure for Europe, and that after his arrival, perceiving the fascination he aroused among his Western hosts, Archbishop John revised or expanded the translations to enhance his own prestige.<sup>51</sup>

During his time in Paris, the Dominican composed one of only two works attributed to him, a text noteworthy for the substantial knowledge it demonstrates of the East and of Timūr himself, whose origins, family,

49 *Chronographia regum Francorum*, vol. 3, 205–206, 211; Sacy, “Mémoire sur une correspondance inédite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI,” 519–521; Reichert, “Johannes von Soldania,” 353–355.

50 *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys, contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, publiée en latin pour la première fois et traduite par Louis Bellaguet, vol. 3 (Paris: Impr. Crapelet, 1841), 134–136.

51 Soudavar, “Histoire d'une imposture ou naissance d'un mythe: Tamerlan,” 186–191.

customs, and conquests he described with considerable precision.<sup>52</sup> This short biography, written in Old French, had no formal title, but from its closing lines has been referred to as *Les ordonnances de Temir Bey; Histoire de Tamerlan* (*The Orders of Timur; The Life of Timur*).<sup>53</sup> In John of Sultāniyya's account, the work presents Tīmūr in a favourable light – as a ruler sympathetic to Christians and open to dialogue with the West – thereby supporting the pursuit of alliances and the development of trade routes.<sup>54</sup>

The king of France sent John of Sultāniyya back with a reply to Tīmūr, dated 15 June 1403.<sup>55</sup> However, John did not return but continued his journey through Europe. From Paris he travelled to Valencia, where he arrived in early 1404 and appeared before Martin I (1396–1410), ruler of the Crown of Aragon and king of Majorca, Sardinia, and Corsica. John's visit to the Aragonese court resulted in Martin I sending letters to Tīmūr and Mīrān Shāh in April 1404, written in a cordial tone and offering to establish commercial relations and conclude an alliance with the Chagataid ruler.<sup>56</sup> We possess neither the Persian originals nor the Latin or vernacular translations of the documents that John of Sultāniyya presented to King Martin I of Aragon and other Christian rulers, with the exception of those addressed to the King of France. It is highly probable that these letters were very similar in content, perhaps even identical.<sup>57</sup> While the authenticity of the letters allegedly brought from Tīmūr and Mīrān Shāh – as in the case of the correspondence shown in Paris – may be doubted, no such doubts surround the genuine reply of the King of Aragon.<sup>58</sup>

52 Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 212.

53 MS Paris, BNF – fr. 5624, fols 63v–72r; MS Paris, BNF – fr. 12201, fols 84r–97r. For the French text of the work, see: Henri Moranvillé, "*Mémoire sur Tamerlan et sa cour par un dominicain en 1403*," pp. 441–464. For the Latin translation made by the translators of Charles VI, see: *Chronographia regum Francorum*, vol. 3, 206–225.

54 Chiara Casali, "Les ordonnances de Temir Bey; Histoire de Tamerlan," in *Christian Muslim Relations Online I*, ed. David Thomas (brill.com) (access: 17.07.2025).

55 *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. 3, 136; Sacy, "Mémoire sur une correspondance inédite de Tamerlan avec Charles VI," 472, 473–474, 478–480, 486, 521–522, 476–477.

56 *Diplomatari de l'Orient català: (1301–1409)*; col·lecció de documents per a la història de l'expedició catalana a Orient i dels ducats d'Atenes i Neopàtria, publ. Antoni Rubió Lluch (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1947), 700–701.

57 Bayo Julve, "The letters of King Martín I of Aragon to Amir Temur," 30.

58 *Ibidem*, 38.

Interestingly, John of Sultāniyya did not proceed to the court of King Henry III of Castile and León (1390–1406), despite the cordial relations that existed between Henry and Martin I, which would have made such a visit seem natural. Moreover, Henry III was at that time in communication with Tīmūr, and the ambassador of the Chagataid ruler, Muḥammad al-Kašī, was present at his court.<sup>59</sup> It is tempting to speculate that John of Sultāniyya may have feared exposure, lest the contents of his letters be compared with the testimony of Tīmūr's trusted envoy.<sup>60</sup> Instead of journeying to Castile, John left the Iberian Peninsula and travelled toward Central Europe.

He travelled to Germany and Bohemia, where he remained for an extended period, devoting himself to the composition of his second work. The *Libellus de notitia orbis* (*Description of the World*), written in 1404 in Latin, was most likely composed during his stay in Germany, as indicated by the provenance of all six surviving manuscripts.<sup>61</sup> This text is a substantial ethno-geographical description of the world, with particular emphasis on the eastern regions. It is based largely on the author's personal experience, without direct reference to other authors or known sources, which lends the work its distinctive character.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, John of Sultāniyya mentions the city of "Mosco," that is, Moscow, from which the shortest trade route to "Catay" leads, thus presenting the route known as "Iter Moscovia," which in the following centuries would gain increasing significance.

59 Łukasz Burkiewicz, "Two Christian princesses offered as Timur's present for King Henry III of Castile. The analysis of the introduction to Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo's narrative (1403–1406)," *Perspektywy Kultury* 13/2 (2015): 165.

60 Bayo Julve, "The letters of King Martín I of Aragon to Amir Temur," 28.

61 MS Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek – 1225, fols 182r–221v; MS St. Pölten, Diözesanbibliothek – 63, fols 1r–112v; MS Basel, Universitätsbibliothek – A V 25, fols 120r–157v; MS Basel, Universitätsbibliothek – E III 17, fols 92r–116v; MS Graz, Universitätsbibliothek – 1221, fols 41r–127r; MS Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibliothek – 1099, fols 175r–242v.

62 The text of the *Libellus de notitia orbis* was discovered in 1937 by Anton Kern, librarian of the University of Graz. He prepared a partial edition of the text, which remains to this day the only available version of the work. See Kern, "Der *Libellus de notitia orbis Iohannes III*," pp. 81–123; for the critical commentary, see *ibid.*, pp. 81–94; for the text of the work, see pp. 95–123. Ten years ago, Nadia Tarfaoui produced, as a master's thesis, a complete edition of the work in Latin, together with a French translation and commentary, based on five of the six manuscripts currently known. See Nadia Tarfaoui, "Le *Libellus de notitia orbis* de Jean, Archevêque de Sultanieh," in *Positions des thèses soutenues par les élèves de la promotion de 2015 pour obtenir le diplôme d'archiviste paléographe* (Paris: École Nationale des Chartes, 2015), <http://theses.enc.sorbonne.fr/2015/tarfaoui#3>.

Further north lies Rus', or Ruthenia, a very large land. It is divided into two parts: the greater and the lesser, and they have many rulers, etc. The lesser of these is the emperor of Rus', and in their language he is called Susmanos. There is also an Inner Rus' and an Outer Rus'. In Inner Rus' there is a great city called Moscow. From there merchants may and do travel into Cathay, and the route is short.<sup>63</sup>

In 1405 John of Sultāniyya was still within the Holy Roman Empire, where, on 5 July in Heidelberg, King Rupert III of Wittelsbach (1400–1410) conferred upon him the title of Count Palatine of the Lateran (*comes palatinus lateranus*). This dignity empowered him to legitimate individuals, grant coats of arms, and exercise other such prerogatives even in Byzantium and overseas territories (*in terris et partibus Grece et ultramarinis*).<sup>64</sup> In February 1406 he visited Henry IV in London and perhaps also at Hertford.<sup>65</sup> From the collection of royal manuscripts published by Sir Henry Ellis (1777–1869), we know that John delivered to the English king letters from Timūr and Mirān Shāh and, in return, carried back royal correspondence, including letters addressed to other Christian rulers, namely the Doge of Venice Michele Steno, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, the Emperor of Trebizond Manuel III Megas Komnenos, the King of Cyprus Janus II of Lusignan, the King of Georgia George VII Bagration and to the King of Abyssinia, the country referred to by Europeans as Ethiopia, then known by the legendary name of Prester John in Western Europe. Henry IV's letters also refer to John of Sultāniyya as a trusted intermediary, and through this exchange the monarch signalled his willingness to maintain political and commercial relations with the Orient.<sup>66</sup>

Despite Timūr's death in 1405, John continued his mission and in all likelihood never returned to Sultāniyya. It is unclear when he left England or what he did during the year before arriving in Marienburg at the beginning of 1407. It is also uncertain how he financed his travels, though it is possible that they had a partly fund-raising character and

63 Kern, "Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III (de Galonifontibus?)," 104–105.

64 *Regesta chronologico-diplomatica Ruperti regis Romanorum: Auszug aus den im k. k. Archive zu Wien sich befindenden Reichsregistraturbüchern vom Jahre 1400 bis 1410; mit Benutzung der gedruckten Quellen*, hrsg. Joseph von Chmel (Frankfurt am Main: Varrentrapp, 1834), 121; *Regesten der Pfalzgrafen am Rhein: 1214–1508. 2*, hrsg. von der Badischen Historischen Kommission. Unter Leitung von Eduard Winkelmann (Innsbruck: Wagner 1912), 290.

65 Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 221–222.

66 "Letter XXV. King Henry the Fourth to Timur Beg. A.D. 1402," 54–58.

that he simply received support in the places he visited. In this regard, valuable information is provided by the *Marienburger Tresslerbuch* (*The Treasurer's Book of Marienburg*), which contains detailed records of the expenditures of the grand masters, their court, and their administration. Entries dated 7 and 23 January 1407 record the exemption of the “bishop with the beard from Persia” (*bischofe von Persya mit dem barthe*) from payment for lodging, while on 23 February a payment of 600 Prague groschen (10 scores) was issued to him.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 2. Archbishop John of Sultāniyya entering Malbork (Marienburg) in 1407. Author: Andrzej Zaręba, 2025.

<sup>67</sup> *Das Marienburger Tresslerbuch der Jahre 1399–1409*, ed. Erich Joachim (Königsberg: Verlag von Thomas & Oppermann, 1896), 416–418.

The episode of John of Sultāniyya's stay in Marienburg is among the final testimonies to the Teutonic Order's active eastern policy on the eve of the Battle of Grunwald, which effectively ended such ambitions once and for all. When the archbishop of Sultāniyya arrived in Marienburg, Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen was already gravely ill; he died shortly thereafter, on 30 April 1407. In a curious twist of events, his illness had recently directed his attention eastward in another way. On 4 July 1406, the Order's procurator in Rome, Peter von Wormditt, had sent him a medicine prepared by a physician from India. This physician, originally named Theodorus Medesen, had been baptised in Rome as Johannes Speoborus. He styled himself *rewardt* (probably *regardus*, meaning "over-seer") of all the Indies belonging to Prester John and expressed a particular desire to enter the Teutonic Order. He was most likely an impostor, as neither his advice nor his medicine helped the grand master.<sup>68</sup> Yet the episode undoubtedly prepared Konrad to receive another emissary from the East shortly thereafter.<sup>69</sup>

On 20 January 1407, five letters addressed to various Eastern rulers were prepared by Grand Master of the Teutonic Order Konrad von Jungingen for John of Sultāniyya and entrusted to him for delivery.<sup>70</sup> The archival manuscripts containing copies of these letters were initially stored, together with many other Teutonic Order documents, in the Königsberg State Archives (*Staatsarchivs*). At the end of the Second World War, they were transferred to the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (GStA PK) in Berlin-Dahlem. The oldest and most valuable materials – the *Ordensfolianten* (OF) – which include the letters relevant here, are now accessible to scholars under the designation XX. *Hauptabteilung, Historisches Staatsarchiv Königsberg* (HA XX). *Ordensfoliant* 3 contains the copies of the letters entrusted to John of Sultāniyya. They begin with a short preface (preamble) explaining the circumstances of the event, often transmitted alongside the correspondence itself in the letter registers (*Briefregistrenten*).<sup>71</sup> The preamble records that in 1407 an

68 Paul Nieborowski, *Peter von Wormditt. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Deutsch-Ordens. Mit Regesten und ungedruckten Archivalien* (Breslau: Breslauer Verlagshandlung, 1915), 72.

69 Kurt Forstreuter, "Der Deutsche Orden und Südosteuropa," *Kyrios* 1 (1936): 267–268.

70 The first discussion of these letters was undertaken by Johannes Voigt in his *Geschichte Preussens: von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Untergange der Herrschaft des deutschen Ordens*, bd. 6, *Die Zeit des Hochmeisters Konrad von Jungingen, von 1393 bis 1407; Verfassung des Ordens und des Landes* (Koenigsberg: Gebrueder Borntraeger, 1832), 364–367. The letters were published in Forstreuter, "Der Deutsche Orden und Südost-europa," 268–272.

71 Barow-Vassilevitch, "Nikolaj Karamzin und der *bärtige Johannes*," 9.

archbishop *Johannes Zoltaniensis seu totius orientis*, a Dominican distinguished by his beard and by celebrating the liturgy according to a rite practiced by other priests, arrived *ad Prussiam* from the East.<sup>72</sup>

The next section of this collection includes Konrad von Jungingen's letter to the king of Cyprus and Armenia, Janus of Lusignan (1398–1432).<sup>73</sup> In light of its significance and historical context, this appears to have been not only the first but also the most important of the letters prepared by the grand master for John of Sultāniyya. It should be remembered that until the late 13th century the Teutonic Order had maintained strongholds in Cilician Armenia and, given the dominance of the Hospitallers and Templars in Syria and Palestine, had consolidated its position there. The collapse of the Frankish states in Palestine and Syria at the end of the 13th century ultimately brought an end to the Teutonic presence in Armenia.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, the grand master did not refer to the king of Cyprus and Armenia by the additional title of king of Jerusalem, which Janus also bore and to which he held legitimate claim. The Lusignan dynasty, descending from Guy of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem, had ruled Cyprus since the late 12th century, uniting the Cypriot and Jerusalemite crowns and steadily gaining political and economic influence in the region, particularly after the fall of Acre in 1291. In the 14th century, Cyprus became a major hub of commerce and politics in the eastern Mediterranean. King Hugh IV of Lusignan (1324–1358) established a maritime league against the Beylik of Aydin under Umur Ghazi, which in 1344 captured the port of Smyrna.<sup>75</sup> His son, Peter I of Lusignan (1358–1369, crowned in 1359), continued an active crusading policy: he toured Europe in search of allies and, in 1365, organised the expedition against Alexandria. The sack of the city served both an economic purpose – eliminating a commercial rival to Cypriot ports – and an ideological one, linked to the project of recovering Jerusalem.<sup>76</sup> At the beginning of the 15th century,

72 GStA PK, HA XX, OF 3, 287.

73 *Ibidem*.

74 Maciej Janik, *Świat łaciński i Królestwo Armenii cylicyjskiej w latach 1199–1375* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2014), 164–167; Kristian Molin, “Teutonic Castles in Cilician Armenia: A Reappraisal,” in *The Military Orders*, vol. 3: History and Heritage (London: Routledge, 2008), 131–137.

75 Alexios G.C. Savvides, “Smyrna Crusade (1344),” in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan V. Murray, vol. 4 (Santa Barbara-Denver-Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing), 1116–1118.

76 Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, *The Life and Reign of Peter I of Lusignan (1329–69, crowned 1359). Chronology in Crusading, Society, and Politics in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of King Peter I of Cyprus*, eds. Alexander D. Beihammer and Angel

despite earlier setbacks in the war with Genoa (1373–1374), Latin Cyprus remained a key gateway to Asia and an important political and economic centre, attracting Western merchants and supporting eastern missions. It is therefore unsurprising that Konrad von Jungingen, under the influence of John of Sultāniyya, recognised the need to involve Janus of Lusignan both in the matter of the union of the Armenian Church with Rome and in commercial initiatives that could strengthen the stability of the kingdom and maintain communication with the East through the port of Ayas (Laiazzo) on the Cilician coast. Ayas, a vital node on the Silk Road, illustrates the Dominican view that the presence of Western merchants along trade routes reinforced missionary activity. It is also noteworthy that the kings of Cyprus bore the title of kings of Armenia, and in the fifteenth century still controlled a small remnant of the former Cilician Armenian kingdom in the form of the fortress of Corycos (Gorigos), captured by Peter I in 1360 and held until 1448.<sup>77</sup> In 1367, while in Venice, Peter I received an invitation from a group of pro-Western Armenian barons to come to Cilicia and assume the throne; before he could act, however, he was assassinated in Nicosia in January 1369.<sup>78</sup> The fall of the Cilician capital Sis in 1375 and the captivity of the last king, Leo V of Lusignan (1374–1375), ended the kingdom's existence. As Leo left no heir, the title passed to his cousin James I of Lusignan (1382–1398), king of Cyprus, who three years later crowned himself king of Cilician Armenia.

Turning to the content of the grand master's letter, it highlights both his own role and that of the Teutonic Order in the necessary reunification of Christendom, including the need to stir the rulers of the East – *animas orientalium principum* – such as the king of Cyprus, to joint action for union in the face of the ongoing schism, which distracted attention from the loss of the Holy Land to the Muslims.<sup>79</sup>

Konrad von Jungingen emphasised that Archbishop John of Sultāniyya had repeatedly recommended the king of Cyprus as someone who could assist in persuading the patriarchs and nobility of Armenia to embrace union with the Catholic Church – a matter to which I will return shortly. In this context, it is also worth mentioning Tīmūr's invasion of Cilician

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Nicolaou-Konnari, *Mediterranean Nexus 1100–1700*, vol. 10 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2022), 13–27; Łukasz Burkiewicz, "Podróż króla Cypru Piotra I z Lusignan po Europie w latach 1362–1365 i jego plany krucjatowe," *Studia Historyczne* 197/1 (2007): 3–29.

77 Peter W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 90.

78 Janik, *Świat łaciński i Królestwo Armenii cylicyjskiej*, 89.

79 GStA PK, HA XX, OF 3, 287.

Armenia in 1402–1403, which prompted an Armenian migration to Cyprus, then under Janus of Lusignan, the letter's addressee. The well-known account of Johann Schiltberger, a Bavarian squire captured by the Ottomans at the Battle of Nicopolis, describes Cilician Armenia after Timūr's incursion. The region had fallen under non-Christian control, yet Armenians remained and, notably, were said to be well disposed toward Germans. This may have reflected a historical memory that, in times of attack, the local population could seek refuge in Teutonic fortresses – few in number but a source of support.<sup>80</sup>

In his letter, the grand master requested the addressee's support for the archbishop's mission, which aimed to convince the Armenian patriarchs and magnates of the merits of ecclesiastical union. The letter also recalled that similar discussions had taken place under Pope John XXII (1316–1334) but had never been brought to completion.<sup>81</sup> Konrad likely had in mind John XXII's appeal of December 1322, issued after the destruction of the port of Ayas by the Mamluks a few months earlier. At that time, the idea of a crusade was revived; the pope urged Christians in Armenia to resist the Mamluks and Turks, rebuking them for their passivity.<sup>82</sup>

At the end of his letter, the grand master appealed for renewed negotiations with the Armenian leadership, stressing that the disunity of the Church was like a ship without a helmsman, vulnerable to destruction amid the waves. The question of union between the Church of Armenia and the Roman Church already had a long history. The Kingdom of Cilician Armenia, created during the Crusades under the increasingly Latinised dynasties of the Rubenids (1080–1226), Hethumids (1226–1341), and finally the Lusignans (1342–1375), together with Armenian communities in Syria and Palestine, sought close ties with Frankish princes and Latin bishops, and relations with the Armenian Church had generally been positive. Reinforced by the threat from Byzantium, these relations encouraged both military and religious cooperation and fostered reliance on Rome. Armenian-Byzantine relations deteriorated sharply after the campaign of Emperor John Komnenos in 1137–1138, during which the Rubenid state was destroyed, monasteries plundered, and books deemed heretical burned, which pushed Armenians closer to Rome. The idea of ecclesiastical union was first articulated in the 1140s in response to

80 *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger. A Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, 1396–1427*, transl. J. Buchan Telfer, ed. Philip Brunn (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1879. Reprint, Farnham–Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 86.

81 GStA PK, HA XX, OF 3, 287.

82 Janik, *Świat łaciński i Królestwo Armenii cylicyjskiej*, 112–113.

political and religious threats from Byzantium and advanced in 1184, when Pope Lucius III (1181–1185) placed the Armenian Church under the tutelage of the Roman Church (*tutela Romanae ecclesiae*). Many earlier scholars, such as Peter Halfter, believed that a formal union was concluded in 1198, but as Krzysztof Stopka has shown, the negotiations at that time concerned only the conditions for granting a royal crown.<sup>83</sup> In the following years, relations between the Church of Armenia and the Roman Church remained positive. The Armenian political and ecclesiastical elite voiced no objection to papal primacy, and the Latin rite exerted a strong influence on Armenian liturgy. The Armenian Church enjoyed the status of a partner, and Rome regarded the Armenians as papal allies in its disputes with the Greeks. A formal union of the Church of Armenia and the Roman Church was finally concluded at the Council of Florence in 1439, after the union with the Greek Church had been ratified. On 23 November 1439, Pope Eugene IV (1431–1447) announced the union with the Armenians to various European princes, urging them to organise special processions to mark the occasion and granting participants a seven-year indulgence. This, however, provoked a strong reaction from opponents of the union, leading to schism within the Armenian Church.<sup>84</sup>

It is most likely that in calling for the renewal of union, the grand master was advocating the revival of earlier cooperation and the idea of a close alliance between the Church of Armenia and the Roman Church – founded on shared faith and political-military collaboration – which in the past had provided both sides with tangible support against threats from Byzantium, the Mamluks, and the Turks. His intent was that, through the support of the king of Cyprus and his influence in Armenia, Christian unity in the East might be restored, a common front against the Muslims strengthened, and the Armenian Church secured a lasting place within the Latin ecclesiastical community.

The next letter was addressed to Mīrān Shāh, son of Tīmūr, who ruled over the territories formerly belonging to the Mongol Ilkhanate in Persia. This part of Tīmūr's empire, conquered by 1393 and known as “the throne of Hülegü,” encompassed northern Persia and Transcaucasia, including

83 Peter Halfter, *Das Papsttum und die Armenier im frühen und hohen Mittelalter. Von den ersten Kontakten bis zur Fixierung der Kirchenunion im Jahre 1198* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996).

84 Krzysztof Stopka, *Armenia Christiana: Armenian Religious Identity and the Churches of Constantinople and Rome (4th–15th Century)*, transl. Terasa Bałuk-Ulewiczowa, Jagiellonian Studies in History, vol. 8 (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2017), 113–142, 301, 312.

the cities of Baghdād, Tabrīz, and Sultāniyya.<sup>85</sup> Konrad von Jungingen begins with a universalist message: the diversity of laws, customs, and languages should not impede the pursuit of the common good of rulers or the beneficial unity of their subjects. Drawing on the testimony of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya, he praises the addressee's tolerant and peaceful policy toward Christians, emphasising that under his rule both religious life and preaching flourished freely. The grand master requests that clergy and scholars be guaranteed full security within his domains, analogous to the protection afforded merchants, thereby linking missionary concerns with economic interests.

The letter also contains a clear biblical reference, comparing the addressee to King Cyrus, God's chosen instrument for carrying out His plans for nations. Konrad recalls the joint victory of Mīrān Shāh and Tīmūr over Sultan Bayezid I and the liberation of numerous Christian captives, interpreting these events as signs of divine grace. He expresses the hope that, through his wisdom and piety, the addressee will remain a steadfast defender of Christian interests in the East. In its economic dimension, the letter calls for reciprocity in the treatment of merchants – so that the Muslim ruler's subjects might enjoy in Christian lands the same freedoms granted to Christians in his own territories. The closing paragraphs commend Archbishop John as a “faithful herald” (*fidelem preconem*) and emissary of apostolic truth.

Another letter was addressed to Tīmūr himself and closely parallels the one prepared for Mīrān Shāh.<sup>86</sup> Here too the central theme is the victory over Sultan Bayezid I and the release of Christian captives, presented as an event of great importance for the entire Christian community. A further key element is the praise of tolerance toward Christians, expressed in the guarantee of their security, extended, like that of merchants and church representatives, throughout the ruler's realm. Both letters underscore the principle of reciprocity in interstate relations, declaring that the ruler's subjects would enjoy in the lands of the Order the same privileges granted to Christians in his. Each document concludes with an explicit commendation of the archbishop, accompanied by a request that he be supported in carrying out his mission.

Konrad von Jungingen's letter to the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos focuses on the question of Christian unity and the overcoming of the schism.<sup>87</sup> The Grand master of the Teutonic Order stresses

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85 GStA PK, HA XX, OF 3, 287.

86 *Ibidem*, 288.

87 *Ibidem*, 288–289.

that the love of Christ is the highest bond uniting peoples of different nations and confessions, and that ecclesiastical division must therefore be overcome.<sup>88</sup> He then, citing the information provided by Archbishop John of Sultāniyya, expresses admiration for the emperor's intention to pursue union with the Roman Church. At the same time, he criticises the stance of certain hierarchs, especially the patriarch of Constantinople, who, instead of supporting the work of reunification, obstruct the preaching of the Gospel. The Order points to the hospitality extended to Byzantine envoys in Rome and appeals for reciprocity in the reception of papal emissaries. The letter closes with a request for support of the archbishop's mission, which was to eradicate heresies and strengthen ecclesiastical unity, while the emperor, as guardian of the faith, should remove obstacles to full communion with Rome. It is uncertain whether John of Sultāniyya personally met Emperor Manuel II, but such an encounter was certainly possible during his journeys from the East to Western Europe – in 1398 (and on his return in 1399), in 1402, and perhaps also in 1408–1409, when he was entrusted with delivering invitations to various rulers for the council, including one to the Byzantine emperor.

Konrad von Jungingen's letter to the king of Abyssinia – identified with the legendary Prester John – has an explicitly programmatic and missionary character.<sup>89</sup> The grand master underscores the symbolism of the cross as the emblem of the Order, whose mission was to fight for the faith of Christ and to defend the Church. He calls upon the ruler of Abyssinia to direct his military strength against the occupiers of the Holy Land, stressing the duty of all Eastern kings to recover the heritage of Christ. Drawing on the account of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya, the letter depicts the king as a zealous Christian, committed to Catholic teaching, open to adopting its rites and discipline, and generous toward both the faithful and papal envoys. Konrad presents the archbishop as a custodian of the Gospel and a “man of apostolic spirit,” whom the ruler should regard as a messenger of God and support in his missionary endeavours. The letter concludes with an appeal for the unity of the Church and a request that the Abyssinians return to full communion with Rome, casting the Order as a promoter of church union on a global scale.

It should be noted, however, that nineteenth century historians held divergent views about the addressee of this letter. The Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin argued that the “Abassia” mentioned should not be

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88 *Ibidem*, 288.

89 *Ibidem*, 290.

understood as Abyssinia but as the Caucasian Abkhazia.<sup>90</sup> He suggested that the name derived from the Abazins, a people whose language is related to Abkhaz and Circassian (Cherkess), who inhabited the north-western Caucasus with access to the Black Sea. In his work, Karamzin also examined the identity of the addressee of the fifth letter – whether the king of Abkhazia or Prester John – and engaged in debate with various scholars who identified the figure as a Tatar khan converted by Nestorian missionaries, a Nestorian patriarch, or the Abyssinian priest-king. This may therefore provide yet another argument in efforts to clarify the elusive legend of Prester John.<sup>91</sup>

The five letters of Grand Master Konrad von Jungingen to Eastern rulers reveal the wide scope of the Teutonic Order's political and religious aspirations at the beginning of the fifteenth century. They are united by the consistent recommendation of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya as both herald of the Gospel and emissary of the Order, tasked with promoting ecclesiastical union and forging a common front against the Muslims. Taken together, the letters form a coherent ideological programme, combining crusading traditions with diplomacy and geopolitical reflection, while also underscoring the significance of the Teutonic Order at the height of its power. This initiative, inspired by the activity of Archbishop John of Sultāniyya, soon lost momentum in the wake of the Order's defeat at Grunwald in 1410.

After his stay in Venice in 1407, John of Sultāniyya appears to have aligned himself with the conciliarist camp. He was in Pisa in 1408 and took part in the council held there in 1409, where he was granted the title "archiepiscopus Soltaniensis seu Orientis" and entrusted with the mission of inviting rulers to participate in the proceedings.<sup>92</sup> Among the addressees were King Sigismund of Luxembourg, the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, the Wallachian voivode Mircea, the Moldavian prince Alexander, as well as representatives of the clergy from the "Orientales," "Tartaria Aquilonaris," "Gazaria," "Comania," and "Romania." Whether John of Sultāniyya reached all these recipients is unknown, but he certainly met with Emperor Manuel II.<sup>93</sup> Although he had lost effective control over

90 Nikolaj M. Karamzin, *Geschichte des Russischen Reiches*, bd. 3 (Riga: Hartmann, 1823), 191, 315–316.

91 Barow-Vassilevitch, "Nikolaj Karamzin und der bärtige Johannes," 15–17.

92 As noted by Luttrell, the title "Archiepiscopus Soltaniensis sive totius Orientis" was not conferred upon him by any papal chancery; it appears rather to have emerged gradually in documents addressed to him or influenced by him. See: Luttrell, "Timur's Dominican envoy," 220.

93 Loenertz, "Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies," 262–263.

his diocese in Persia, he retained prestige as an archbishop and played a role in the council's activities. On 26 July 1409 he was already in Braşov (German *Kronstadt*), on the frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary, Wallachia, and Moldavia, where he used his customary title as Archbishop of Sultāniyya in granting an indulgence to a local church.<sup>94</sup> By the end of that year he was in Italy, and on 29 December 1410 in Bologna Pope John XXIII appointed him apostolic administrator of the archbishopric of Cambaliensis (Khanbaliq), i.e., Peking, which, after the death of its last archbishop, had remained vacant owing to distance and the dangers of missionary activity.<sup>95</sup> On 14 May 1411, in Celje (German *Cilli*), he granted indulgences to pilgrims visiting the church on Šmarna Gora, or Mount Saint Mary (*ecclesia gloriosissime Virginis Marie in monte Kollenperg*).<sup>96</sup> In 1412 he was in Lviv, where on 12 February, introducing himself as “archiepiscopus Solthaniensis et administrator ecclesie Gambaliensis,” he granted indulgences to the faithful of the local Dominican church.<sup>97</sup> The year 1412 is the last point at which his activity can be traced; from the same year survives a copy of his *Libellus* preserved in the Dominican convent in Leipzig.<sup>98</sup> Nothing is known of his activities between that time and 12 December 1423, when the Dominicans petitioned Pope Martin V to appoint a new Archbishop of Sultāniyya following his death.<sup>99</sup> John had most likely died before this date, though it remains uncertain whether he ever returned to Persia.

Recent studies by Abolala Soudavar and Juan Carlos Bayo Julve have shed new light on the figure of John III of Sultāniyya, tarnishing his image by demonstrating that he presented forged letters of Tīmūr to the rulers of Western Europe. Archbishop John proved to be a cunning fabricator who skillfully exploited the historical context to secure a favourable reception across Europe. The international situation was increasingly desperate, and Constantinople stood on the brink of falling to the Ottomans. Then, as if by divine intervention, Tīmūr appeared – a conqueror who dreamed of restoring the empire of Chinggis Khan and who detested the presence of another Turkic warlord in his vicinity. After Bayazid's crushing defeat at

94 Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, Georg Müller, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, Band 3: 1391 bis 1415 (Hermannstadt: In Kommission bei Franz Michaelis, 1902), 481.

95 Loenertz, “Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies,” 267–268.

96 Šilc, “Nadžkof iz Perzije podeli v Celju,” 10.

97 Loenertz, *La Société des Frères pègrinants*, 111–112; *idem*, “Evêques dominicains des deux Arménies,” 268.

98 Kern, “Der *Libellus de notitia orbis* Iohannes III,” 88.

99 Kaeppeli, Panella, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 4, 172.

Ankara, Europe awaited news of these events with intense anticipation. Tīmūr himself was little known in the West, as the long conflict between the Ottomans and Byzantium had stifled the circulation of reports concerning his earlier conquests and his reputation for cruelty. It was in this vacuum that John III of Sultāniyya fashioned the image of Tīmūr as the friend of Christians and savior of Constantinople.<sup>100</sup> In this project of rehabilitation, he was aided by the contacts between Henry III of Castile and León and Tīmūr. The Castilian ambassadors, who were present in the Timurid camp after Ankara, witnessed the release of Christian women held captive by the Ottomans.<sup>101</sup> The diplomatic exchange between Castile and Tīmūr, including the celebrated mission of Ruy González de Clavijo to Samarkand (1403–1406), further enhanced the favorable perception of the Chagataid ruler in Europe.<sup>102</sup> With each passing year, John's self-presentation grew more exalted, from "Soltaniensis sive totius Orientis primas" to "archiepiscopus Solthaniensis et administrator ecclesie Gambaliensis." As Tīmūr's self-proclaimed ambassador, he sought to elevate his status through works such as the already mentioned *Les ordonnances de Temir Bey; Histoire de Tamerlan*, which glorified his supposed role in the Timurid Empire and portrayed Tīmūr not only as a Christian ally but as a near-romantic conqueror.

One may therefore surmise that Archbishop John's actions stemmed from genuine concern for the fate of Christendom, even if he employed manipulative means, such as the fabrication of Tīmūr's letter, to pursue his aims. It seems likely that he presented these same letters at every European court he visited, including that of the Teutonic Order in Malbork (Marienburg), though this remains unconfirmed. His objective was to halt Ottoman expansion and to cast Tīmūr as a potential ally of the West. Yet it cannot be denied that these efforts also served his own material security. With his profound understanding of the political realities of the East, particularly those of Persia and the Ottoman realm, he deliberately shaped a new, advantageous image of the ruler of Samarkand, acting in the spirit of diplomacy and in the hope of forging a union against a common foe.

Nevertheless, archbishop John III of Sultāniyya was a Dominican with wide-ranging political and religious connections, well known at

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100 Soudavar, "Histoire d'une imposture ou naissance d'un mythe: Tamerlan," 190–191.

101 Burkiewicz, "Two Christian princesses," 159–178.

102 *Idem*, *Życie codzienne w podróży na przykładzie Ambasady do Tamerlana (1403–1406). Z badań nad relacjami międzykulturowymi* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2019).

European courts and in contact with Tīmūr and Mīrān Shāh. He envisioned peace in the East as the condition for reviving trade along the Silk Road, which would attract merchants from Venice and Genoa and strengthen the position of Christians in the cities of Persia and Central Asia. Although he never visited China, in 1410 he was appointed administrator of the archbishopric of Peking by Pope John XXIII, having earlier worked to revitalise the missions within the Timurid Empire. He most likely remained faithful to his ideals and to his mission of consolidating the Christian presence in Asia until the end of his life. Research on the itinerary of Archbishop John III of Sultāniyya cannot, however, be regarded as complete, particularly since Jurij Šilc has relatively recently discovered a related document that added yet another site to the Dominican's map of travels. There is also some sense of regret regarding the content of the *Libellus de notitia orbis*, completed in 1404 rather than, for example, in 1412, after John III's visit to Marienburg, Lviv, or possibly other cities in Poland and Lithuania such as Kraków or Vilnius. One can readily imagine the extraordinary value such a work, produced by so observant a Dominican, would have held for historians of Eastern Europe.

It is not known whether John of Sultāniyya actually delivered the Grand Master's letter to King Janus of Lusignan of Cyprus. If he did, it is important to recall that after the Teutonic Order's defeat at Grunwald in 1410, Janus may have regarded the Order's power differently – perhaps in light of Władysław II Jagiełło's (1386–1434) victory at Grunwald over Ulrich von Jungingen, Konrad's brother. It may indeed have been Poland's rising prestige and the stature of its king that prompted the Cypriot court to seek closer ties, as reflected in the embassy of some 300 members sent to Wislica in early 1432.<sup>103</sup> This mission sought both a marriage alliance between the son of the king of Cyprus and Hedwig Jagiellon, daughter of Władysław II, and military assistance against the Mamluks

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103 *Idem*, "Two Cypriot royal missions to Poland in 1364 and 1432," *Επετηρίς της Κυπριακής Εταιρείας Ιστορικών Σπουδών* 9 (2010): 21–40; *idem*, "A Cypriot royal mission to the Kingdom of Poland in 1432," *Crusades* 10 (2011): 103–112.

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### Appendix

#### Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, XX. Hauptabteilung, Historisches Staatsarchiv Königsberg, Ordensfolianten, Berlin

Anno domini MCCCCVII venit ad Prussiam quidam archiepiscopus de partibus orientalibus dominus Johannes Zoltaniensis seu totius orientis et habuit habitum et ordinem fratrum predicatorum, sed barbatus fuit, et celebravit divina more aliorum presbiterorum, plurima et diversa narravit de dictis partibus orientalibus, de variis sectis et eciam de christianis et visitavit multos reges, principes et dominos petiitque a magistro generali consimiles litteras ut infra sequitur, et date fuerunt iuxta modum infrascriptum

In the Year of Our Lord 1407, an archbishop from the eastern regions arrived in Prussia, Master John of Sultāniyya, that is, of the whole East. He wore the habit and observed the rule of the Friars Preachers, yet he bore a beard and celebrated the liturgy in the manner of other priests. He recounted many matters concerning those eastern lands, their sects, and also their Christians, and he had visited many kings, princes, and lords. He requested from the general of the Order letters of the kind set out below, and they were issued according to the following form.

1407 Januar 20, Marienburg

1407, 20 January, Malbork. Letters of the Grand Master

Serenissimo magnificoque principi ac domino,  
domino regi Cypri et Armenie, domino nostro  
nobis in Christo dilecto

To the most illustrious and noble sovereign  
and lord, the King of Cyprus and Armenia, our  
beloved lord in Christ.

Serenissimo ac magnifico principi, regi Ciprie et Armenie, frater Conradus de Jungingen, magister generalis ordinis beate Marie hospitalis Jerosolimitani domino Th[eu]ntonia, benivola affectu et quolibet gratia vestræ regiæ maiestati. Illibate fidei devocio, plurimorum dispendorum et periculorum constancia, sacre militie propinqua servitio nos instanter oportuit tales decessisse animas (?) orientalium principum ad consilandum super unione, ne chasmosis tantam terre jherosolymitane amissionem conquiescant. — Hinc est quod veniebat, pro dilectis personis consolans animo adqueuescat. — Hic est quod veniebat, pater, frater Johannes archiepiscopus Zoltaniensis sive totius orientis, periculosam et longinquam navigationem multum magnificenciam multipliciter recommendavit, exponens eadem fore vestram utilitatem auxilii quam consilii ad alios, videlicet patriarcharum ceterosque maiores Armenie inducendum. Quare, serenissime princeps et domine magnifice, permoti his que preemisimus, suppliciter petimus et instanter vestra preclaram maiestatem, quatenus eundem dictum archiepiscopum in hac parte et ceteris ad favorabiles negociationes uniam tam sanctam dirigendo et promovendo. Nec mirum, si ceterum pene orientalibus patriis aut moribus in agendis sit sollicitor, cum ipse exportunit et dexteritatem animi pro grege suo discurrit festivant, sicut amicos fidei oportum, incedunt bene; illaqueatus est enim verbis usi suspicionis se in pondos officii inuncti rationem pro his omnibus reddituratis. Intelleximus eciam ab eodem patre necnon rabili, quod dudum temporibus Johannis XXII fuerunt quedam tractatus habiti pro unione cum patriarchis Armenorum illius gentis orientalibus, sed forte ex fortibus non erant deducti. Placet vestræ magnificentie idoneo tractare cum patriarcha Armenorum et maioribus, ut bene consultum fiat, non invertent est laborum recognicque, quam publice sit sine nave sancte matris ecclesie et remige navis perlaboret in maris fluctibus ambulare.

Datum in castro sancte Marie vicesima die ianuarii sub anno domini M C C C C VII.

To the most illustrious and noble sovereign, the King of Cyprus and Armenia, Brother Konrad von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary of the Teutons in Jerusalem, sends greetings and goodwill in all things pleasing to Your Royal Majesty. Devotion to the undefiled faith, consideration of the many costs and dangers, and the ungodly devastation of the Holy Land urgently summon us to appeal to the most gracious souls (?) of the rulers of the East, that they may turn their minds toward union, lest the confusion of schism, after so long a time, deepen still further, and lest Rachel – that is, the most holy Roman Church – weeping for her children – remain without comfort and peace. – Therefore the venerable father Brother John, Archbishop of Sultāniyya, that is, of the whole East, who strives with great zeal for this cause, has earnestly recommended to us Your renowned Majesty, declaring in many ways that you would be helpful both through support and counsel in persuading others, namely the patriarch and the other dignitaries of Armenia. For this reason, most illustrious sovereign and noble lord, moved by the considerations set forth above, we humbly and earnestly beseech Your Excellency to show favour and kindness to the aforesaid archbishop in this matter, guiding and supporting so holy a cause of union. Nor is it surprising if he proves more zealous in action than almost all the eastern church superiors and dignitaries, since he has bound himself and offered his very soul for his flock: he runs, he hastens, he stirs up the friends of the faith in season and out of season – and rightly so, for he has been caught in the snare of his own words, having taken upon himself the burden of this duty, and he must give an account of it all. We have also learned from this venerable father that already in the time of John XXII certain discussions concerning union were undertaken with the patriarchs of Armenia and the dignitaries of that people, yet perhaps they were not fully brought to completion. May Your Highness therefore be willing to renew negotiations with the patriarch of the Armenians and their

Serenissimo clementissimoque principi ac domino, domino Myranza Armirza, filio Themerbei, domino nostro nobis sincere dilecto

Serenissimo ac clementissimo principi domino Miranscha Anirza filio Themerbey, frater Conradus de Jungingen, magister generalis ordinis beate Marie hospitalis Jerusalemiani etc. salutem et eterne salutis agnoscere salvatorem. Nec legum nec morum nec ydeomatum diversitas temporalium principum animos debet dividere ac distigvere quovismodo, ubi communis speratur utilitas regnorum et utilis communitas queritur subditorum. Eapropter per venerabilem patrem, fratrem Johannem ariepiscopum Soltaniensem sive totius orientis primatem nuper advertentes accepimus ad honorem vestre celsitudinis quedam preclara preconia nobis et cunctis Christi fidelibus laudibus extollenda, qualiter sub alis vestri felicitis regiminis coltores Christi in pacis pulchritudine usquequaque sedeant, verbi Dei vigor et fidei fervor apud plurimos eluceat ad liberandas terras Jidelium una cum ceteris sacre milicie principibus votiva vestra intencio fuerat. Et quatenus fides nostra lacius refulgeat, doctores, magistros aliosque literatos pro defensione eiusdem cum omni securitate dominia vestra intrare

liceat, pariter et mercatores. Quid horum non laude dignum, cum talium felicitum exordiorum senciamus aptissima fidei argumenta, potissime si promissa cum operum executione adiuvante altissimo fuerint subsecuta. Non dubium quin rex regum et dominus dominancium prevalens poterit circa magnificenciam vestram facere et perficere, que dudum circa Cyrum regem quondam Persarum fecit, ut promisit per prophetam sic inquires: Christo Cyro meo apprehendi dexteram et subiciam ante faciem eius gentes et dorsum regum vertam. Ceterum intelleximus celsitudinis vestre facta multis graciaram accionibus digna, qualiter altissimo adiuvante de Bayzatho Turcorum duce una cum patre vestro

dignitaries, that they may humble themselves, hasten toward union, take up the effort, and again reflect on how perilous it is to walk upon the waves of the sea without the boat of holy Mother – Church – and the helmsman, the venerable shepherd.

Given at the castle of Saint Mary, on the twentieth day of January, in the Year of Our Lord 1407.

To the most illustrious and most gracious sovereign and lord, Lord Mīrān Shāh, son of Tīmūr, our most sincerely beloved lord.

To the most illustrious and most gracious sovereign, Lord Mīrān Shāh, son of Tīmūr, Brother Konrad von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary in Jerusalem, etc., sends greetings and the wish that he may come to acknowledge the Saviour of eternal salvation. Neither difference of laws, nor of customs, nor of languages ought in any way to divide or estrange the souls of the rulers of this world, when the common benefit of kingdoms and the profitable concord of their subjects is at stake. Through the venerable father Brother John, Archbishop of Sultāniyya, that is, primate of the entire Eastern Church, we have recently learned, to the glory of Your Highness, certain excellent tidings which deserve the praise of ourselves and of all the faithful of Christ: namely, that under the wings of your fortunate rule the worshippers of Christ dwell everywhere in the peace of concord, that the power of the word of God and the fervour of faith shine forth among many for the liberation of the lands of the faithful – this having been your pledged intention together with the other rulers of the holy knighthood. And in order that our faith may shine forth more widely, may it be permitted, for its defence, that teachers, masters, and other learned men enter your dominions in full security, as likewise merchants. What in this does not merit praise, since in such auspicious beginnings we perceive the truest proofs of faith – especially if, with the aid of the Most High, promises are thereafter confirmed by deeds? There is no doubt that the mighty King of kings and Lord of lords can accomplish for Your Highness what long ago He did for Cyrus, the ancient king of the Persians, as He

illustrissimo gloriosam victoriam obtinueritis plurimosque christianos captivos ab illius durissimo iugo cripueritis, quo erant mancipati et afflicti. Cum igitur ad orientalium regna oriens ex alto verus sol iusticie vestram celsitudinem habenda et possidenda transmiserit talemque ingenii et devocionis spiritum inspiraverit, non dubium quin habere vos velit fidelem ac strenuum nostrorum defensorem. De mercatoribus vero addicimus dignum esse quali libertate christiani in terris vestre dominacionis prerogati fuerint, eadem in terris christianorum vestras equitatis lege quomodolibet perfruantur. Ceterum supradictum venerabilem patrem archiepiscopum fidelem preconem vestre serenitatis et egregium ewangelizatorem apostolice veritatis cum omnibus Christi fidelibus subiectis vestre eximie elemencie suppliciter recommendamus. Cum gracia Dei omnes sumus in uno corpore Christi mistico tanquam membra, ideo cum ipsis nobis in ipsum communicamus eorundem prospera et adversa. Parcite audacie, quod tarn fiducialiter vestre serenitati scribimus exceptis relatus referendariorum nobis penitus ignore, cum scribendo nihil adquerimus quam orthodoxe fidei salubrem profectum pariter et augmentum. Datum in castro sancte Marie, ut supra etc.

foretold through the prophet: "This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour"<sup>108</sup>. We have further heard of deeds of Your Highness worthy of lasting gratitude: how, with the help of the Most High, together with your most illustrious father you won a glorious victory over Bayezid, commander of the Turks, and delivered many Christians from the harshest yoke of captivity, under which they were enslaved and afflicted. Since, therefore, the true Sun of Justice rising from the sea has sent Your Highness to the kingdoms of the East to claim and possess them, and has breathed into you such a spirit of wisdom and piety, there can be no doubt that He wills to have in you a faithful and valiant defender of our cause. As for merchants, we declare it just that your subjects dwelling in Christian lands should by right of equality enjoy the same freedom that Christians enjoy by privilege in the lands of your dominion. Moreover, the aforesaid venerable father, the archbishop, a faithful admirer of Your Highness and a noble herald of apostolic truth, together with all the faithful subjects of Christ, we humbly commend to your extraordinary graciousness. By the grace of God we are all one mystical body of Christ, as members thereof, and thus we share with them both prosperity and adversity. Pardon our boldness in writing with such confidence to Your Highness, known to us only through the reports of envoys; yet in so writing we seek nothing else than salutary progress and the growth of the true faith. Given at the castle of Saint Mary, as above, etc.

Serenissimo ac victoriosissimo principi, domino Themberbey, domino nostro sincere dilecto etc. Littera Themberbeio antiquo

To the most illustrious and invincible ruler, Lord Tīmūr, our most sincerely beloved lord, etc. A letter to the elder Tīmūr.

Illustriissimo ac victoriosissimo principi domino Themberbeio frater Conradus de Jungingen, magister generalis ordinis beate Marie hospitalis Jerusalemiani de domo Theutonica salutem et benevolentiam ad omne bonum. Reipublice et civilibus utilitatibus expedi reges et principes temporales, quamquam natione, fidei, religione ac sermone dispares sint et diversi, conciliates unum esse, dummodo intencione communis boni agatur, que ad politicam utilitatem cedant et ad commodum subditorum. H inc est, serenissime ac victoriosissime princeps, quod nuper per venerabilem in Christo patrem ac dominum Dei gracia archiepiscopum Soltaniensem sive tocius orientis primatem, quedam preclara vestre celsitudinis facta intelleximus multis graciaram accionibus digna, qualiter altissimo adiuvante de Bayzatho Turcorum duce gloriosam victoriam obtinueritis plurimosque christianos captivos ab illius durissimo iugo eriperitis, quo erant in ancipati et afflicti. Adiecit autem vestra celsitudo, quod mercatores christiani, quocumque ad vestra dominia mercandi gracia transeunt, undique habeant securitatem et pacem, potissime doctores et nostre fidei defensores proculmota omni violencia eisdem pariter perfruantur pro comodo et qualitate sui status. Pro hiis omnibus grates agimus vestre magnificencie perimmensas, volentes vicaria recompensa vestros homines et mercatores in nostris terris consimilibus beneficiis contractuum confovere. Ceterum dictum venerabilem patrem archiepiscopum, insignem veritatis ewangelice et doctrine apostolice annunciatorem, vestre sincere recommendamus pietati, supplicantes quatenus eidem velut benemerito sitis indefessus patronus et protector omniumque christifidelium inibi degencium clementissimus gubernator apud altissimum pro hiis premia accepturus. Idem quoque apud nos vidit et audivit ordinem et nostri ordinis condicionem et statum, clarius vestre serenitati exponet oraculo vive vocis, cui fidem adhibeatis creditivam nostri ob respectum. etc. Datum ut supra.

To the most illustrious and invincible sovereign, Lord Tīmūr, Brother Konrad von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary of the Teutons in Jerusalem, sends greetings and goodwill for every good endeavour. It is most beneficial for states and for the commonwealth that kings and temporal rulers, though differing in nation, faith, religion, and language, should nonetheless agree in unity whenever the common good is at stake, for such concord leads to political advantage and the happiness of their subjects. Therefore, most illustrious and invincible lord, we have recently heard, through the venerable father in Christ, Archbishop of Sultāniyya and primate of the entire Eastern Church, of certain splendid deeds of Your Highness, worthy of lasting gratitude: how, with the aid of the Most High, you gained a glorious victory over Bayezid, commander of the Turks, and delivered many Christians from the harshest yoke of his captivity, under which they had long been enslaved and afflicted. Your Highness further declared that Christian merchants, wherever they travel within your dominions for trade, enjoy security and peace everywhere; and that scholars and defenders of our faith, free from all violence, may likewise enjoy such liberty in accordance with the dignity and needs of their calling. For all this we render to Your Excellency boundless thanks, desiring in return to grant to your people and merchants within our lands the same benefits and privileges. Furthermore, the aforesaid venerable father, the archbishop, a distinguished herald of the Gospel and of apostolic teaching, we most earnestly commend to your piety, humbly requesting that, as one so worthy, he may find in you a steadfast protector and patron, and that all the faithful Christians dwelling there may recognise in you their most gracious ruler, destined to receive reward from the Most High. He himself has seen and heard among us the order, condition, and state of our Order, which he will explain to Your Highness more clearly by the living word. For our sake, deign to place your trust in him. Etc. Given as above.

Serenissimo ac victoriosissimo principi, domino Manueli in Christo Deo fideli Grecorum im peratori semper augusto, domino nostro in Christo nobis dilecto

To the most illustrious and invincible sovereign, Lord Manuel, faithful to God in Christ, ever venerable Emperor of the Greeks, our dearly beloved lord in Christ.

Serenissimo ac victoriosissimo principi domino Manueli, in Christo Deo fideli im peratori Grechorum semper augusto, frater Conradus de Jungingen, magister generalis ordinis beate Marie hospitalis Jerusalemiani do domo Theutonica affectum benevolencie ad quelibet vestre beneplacita maiestati. Cum in universe nihil sit, quod nationis differenciam ita compaginat in homine quantum Christi amor, quia est debitor sapientibus et insipientibus et omnibus, que sub celo sunt, nacionibus, et quantum in ipso est communicat bona sua sive sui detrimento rapit aliena sive suo dampno omnium intendit utilitati et saluti, ad legem illius, qui omnes homines vult fieri salvos. Hinc est, serenissime princeps et domine victoriosissime, licet scisma in parte nos disiungat, lex tarnen Immaculata Dei caritas nos coniungit, ita ut iugiter vestre regali celsitudini et vestris bonum unionis catholice petimus et oramus. Dudum siquidem requievit archa Noe figura ecclesie in montibus Armenie, verum in electis Dei, quare adhuc durat diluvii cathaclismus, domus Raab cum omnibus inclusis salva est, quare ab extra trucidat gladius Josue et apostolus Corinthis exprobrat scisma, ne unus sit Cephe et alius Pauli, alius Christi. Nunquam, inquam, Christus divisus est, vere iocundum esset nos habitare in unum, ut essemus in domo domini unius moris et unius legis. De vestro proposito laudabili quoad unionem antedictam procurandam nobis diligenter exposito per venerabile patrem ac dominum fratrem Johannem archiepiscopum Soltoniensem sive tocius orientis primatem salutem omnium verbo et opere, ut intelleximus desideno desiderantem, multum letificati sumus, et utinam nos quandoque in unanimitate spiritus et in uno gremio sacrosante matris ecclesie videamus, hautdubium quin essemus cunctis inimicis forciores, nec Turcus nec Scita vel qui vis barbarus molestaret. Sane audivimus qualiter quidem maiores de vestris, precipue patriarcha Constantinopolitanus, Dei agricultores et cooperatores apostolice sedis Romane in pluribus partibus ultramarinis molestant et male tractarent, ymmo verbum Dei adulterant et quasi despectu habent, regnum

To the most illustrious and invincible sovereign, Lord Manuel, faithful to God in Christ, ever venerable Emperor of the Greeks, Brother Konrad von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Mary of the Teutons in Jerusalem, sends goodwill and regard for all the resolutions of Your Highness. For in the whole world nothing so unites the differences of nations as the love of Christ, as it is debtor to the wise and to the unwise, and to all the nations under heaven; and whatever it possesses in itself, it shares with others, or, to its own loss, it gathers what belongs to others, or, to its own detriment, it strives after the benefit and salvation of all, according to the law of Him who wills that all men be saved. Therefore, most illustrious and invincible lord, although schism has in part divided us, yet law and pure love of God unite us, so that we continually pray and intercede for the good of Catholic union on behalf of Your Royal Highness and your subjects. Long ago the ark of Noah – the symbol of the Church – rested on the mountains of Armenia, yet for many of God's chosen the flood of destruction endures still. The house of Rahab, with all who were within, was saved, but outside the sword of Joshua slew, and the Apostle reproved the Corinthians for schism, lest one should say, "I am of Cephas," another, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Christ." Never, I say, was Christ divided. Truly, it would be sweet for us to dwell together, that in the house of the Lord we might be of one custom and one law. We greatly rejoiced at your glorious intention to labour for this union, as it was clearly reported to us by the venerable father, Brother John, Archbishop of Sulṭāniyya and primate of the entire Eastern Church, who – as we understand – ardently desires by word and deed the salvation of all. May we one day behold one another united in the concord of the Spirit and in the bosom of the most holy Mother – the Church. Then indeed we should be stronger than all our enemies, and neither Turk, nor Scythian, nor any barbarian would trouble

celorum claudent nec intrant nec alios intrare permittunt, et quibus dominus mandavit laxare recia verbi Dei in capturam, ipsa plicate faciunt in orthodoxe fidei extremum et iacturam in chamo et freno prohibitionum constringunt maxillas eorum. Et quos elegit dominus celos ad enarrandum gloriam suam et velud terram irriguam ad fecundandum et procurandum fidei semina, illi e contra eis imprecantur. Forte dicunt facto, si non verbo: sit celum, quod supra te est, eneum et terra, quam calcas furca, videlicet per sterilitatem. Et ita non sinunt in fructum crescere verbum Dei. Conswevit enim ecclesia Romana ceterique principes illius multo studio pietatis excipere vestros nuncios tam spiritualis quam temporales in legacionibus suis humane eos tractando, precipue qui veniunt, ut plantent et edificent ad bonum commune. Ita vice reciproca petimus et nostros admitti pacifice et quiete, potissime quando funguntur predicationis officio, plantantes et irrigantes, propter ilium qui superius addicit incrementum. Dictus venerabilis pater de persona et statu ordinis nostri lacius vestram celsitudinem informabit, ad quem affecti sumus sicut ut ad electum, ut speramus a Deo, ad omnes partes orientales, ut multum fructum afferat zyzama heresum destruens et evellens et triticum domini in horrea fideliter recolligens. Propter que humiliter supplicamus vestre serenissime maiestati nobis predilecte, quatenus illi sitis amore Dei et nostri ob respectum favorabiles et exorabiles, misericorditer tollentes impedimenta antedicta, ne obstruatur in deserto presentis vite vox clamantis ac viam domino Deo sabaoth preparantis. Datum ut supra.

us. Indeed, we have heard how your dignitaries, especially the Patriarch of Constantinople, labourers in God's field and fellow workers of the Apostolic See in Rome, harass and mistreat in many overseas lands, and even falsify the Word of God and treat it with contempt, closing the Kingdom of Heaven: they do not enter themselves, nor do they permit others to enter. To those whom the Lord commanded to cast forth the nets of the Word for a catch, they order the nets to be drawn in, to the ruin of the true faith; with bridle and bit of prohibitions they silence their mouths. And those whom the Lord has chosen for heaven so that they proclaim His glory and, like watered ground, be filled with and tend the seeds of faith, these men instead revile. In deed if not in word, they seem to say: "Let the heaven above you be of bronze, and the earth beneath your feet a trident," that is, barren. And thus they do not allow the Word of God to grow to fruition. For the Roman Church and her rulers have long been accustomed with great devotion to receive your envoys – both clerical and lay – in their embassies, treating them with due humanity, especially those who come to plant and to build for the common good. Therefore, in reciprocity, we ask that our own likewise be received in tranquillity and peace, especially when they exercise the preaching office, planting and watering, for the sake of Him who grants the growth from above. The aforesaid venerable father will inform Your Highness more fully about the character and condition of our Order, to which we are bound as to one chosen by God – as we firmly trust – for all the lands of the East, that it may bring forth abundant fruit, destroying and uprooting the weeds of heresy, and faithfully gathering the Lord's wheat into His granaries. For this reason we humbly entreat Your Most Illustrious Highness, our beloved, that for the love of God and in regard for us you may show him favour and kindness, mercifully removing the aforesaid obstacles, so that in the desert of this present life the voice of one crying and preparing the way of the Lord God of Hosts may not be silenced. Given as above.

Serenissimo ac magnifico principi et domino,  
domino A., regi Abassie, sive presbitero Johanni,  
domino nostro nobis in Christo dilecto

To the most illustrious and noble ruler and lord,  
Lord A., King of Abyssinia, also known as Prester  
John, our beloved lord in Christ.

Serenissimo ac magnifico regi Abassie sive Johanni presbitero frater Conradus de Jungingen, — et ubi supra —, salutem et pietatis affectum ad quelibet condecencia vestre regie maiestati. Cum ordinis nostri signifera religio ab initio dedicate sit crucis caractere et figura ad designandum nos, desudari debemus in militia Christi pro fide eiusdem et contra timores nocturnos adversaries cum fortissimis ex Israel excubando ambire lectulum Salomonis, sacrosancte matris ecclesie, que militia a dudum usi sumus et hodie utimur ad gloriam summe imperatorie maiestatis. Quanto magis, o rex illustrissime, expedit fulgurancia et elimata armorum vestrorum insignia erigi contra occupatores terre sancte et lectuli dominici sepulchri, quia vestri et omnium regum orientalium interest hereditatem Christi, quam dudum errore vastaverant, fervore fidei reparare. Hinc est quod exhilarati animo quedam nobis iocundissima preconia de vestre maiestatis statu et persona gratissime accepimus a venerabili patre, fratre Johanne, archiepiscopo Soltaniensi sive tocius orientis, qui zelum vestrum et fervorem oraculo vive vocis nobis per ordinem preclare multipliciter peroravit, qualiter vestra magnificencia ad sacrosanctam ecclesiam catholicam et ad doctrinam apostolicam miro modo sit affecta, ymmo cathezisari sive instrui cum effectu eiusdem cupiat ritibus et disciplinis et quod summum amplissimum liberalitatis et elemencie ad Christi fideles et ad nuncios sedis apostolice habeat ipsis munifice providendo et consultissime dirigendo, que omnia cedunt ad titulum glorie vestre serenissime maiestatis, pro quibus referimus nos grates perimmensas. Ceterum dictum venerabilem patrem fidecommissarium ewangelii ac operosum satorem seminum fidei orthodoxe vestre celsitudini devocione, qua possumus recommendamus, cum illi a dicta sede apostolica credita sint talenta doctrine et preceptorum pro usura spirituali ceteris impercienda, ymmo nuncius domini missus ad dominicam cenam nationes externas evocandas invitandas, quem qui recipit, recipit cum qui misit illum. Ideoque ipsum ut virum apostolicum a Deo vestris regnis destinatum dignetur vestra magnificencia tractare et habere. Ipse

To the most illustrious and noble King of Abyssinia, also known as Prester John, Brother Konrad von Jungingen — as above — sends greetings and expressions of affection in all things fitting to Your Royal Majesty. For the religion of our Order, bearing its sacred sign, has from the beginning been consecrated by the image of the Cross, that we might be marked as those bound to labour in the service of Christ, to guard His faith, and — despite the nocturnal terrors of the enemy — to keep watch with the most valiant of Israel about the couch of Solomon, that is, the most holy Mother — the Church. From this service we have long benefited, and we continue in it to the glory of the supreme imperial majesty. All the more necessary is it, O most illustrious king, that the gleaming and polished standards of your arms be raised against the invaders of the Holy Land and of the Lord's Holy Sepulchre, for it is of great importance to you and to all the kings of the East to recover, in the zeal of faith, the inheritance of Christ which in former times was laid waste through error. Therefore, with joy of spirit and with deepest gratitude, we received the most welcome tidings concerning the person and estate of Your Highness, brought to us by the venerable father Brother John, Archbishop of Sulṭāniyya, that is, of the whole East, who has often and clearly set before us, in living words and in due order, your zeal and fervour: how greatly Your Excellency is inclined toward the most holy Catholic Church and apostolic teaching, and even desires to be thoroughly instructed and catechised in its rites and rules of conduct, and how you show the greatest generosity and kindness toward the faithful of Christ and the envoys of the Apostolic See, providing for them abundantly and guiding them with exceptional prudence. All this contributes to the glory of Your Most Illustrious Highness, for which we render boundless thanks. Moreover, the aforesaid venerable father, trustee of the Gospel and diligent sower of the seed of true faith, we commend to Your Highness with all the devotion in our power, as it is for to him

siquidem, qui in curia nostra et mensa fuit, statum ordinis nostri clarius enodabit, cui etiam commisimus, quatenus de suis successibus et inibi rerum eventibus dignetur, quam primum poterit, nos informare. Nec imputet nobis vestra magnificencia inclita, quod talia eidem scribere audeamus. Urget nos pietatis et unionis affectus, quo ab alienatis retrorsum compatimur, cupientes eosdem redire ad ecclesie unitatem. Datum ut supra. Etc.

that the Apostolic See has entrusted the talents of teaching and commands for the distribution of spiritual benefit to others, moreover, he is a messenger of the Lord, sent to summon and invite foreign nations to the Lord's Supper. And he who receives him, receives Him who sent him. Therefore may Your Highness deign to regard and treat him as an apostolic man, appointed by God for your kingdoms. For he, who has been present in our assembly and sat at our table, will explain more clearly to Your Highness the condition of our Order. To him also we have entrusted the charge of informing us, as soon as he is able, concerning your successes and the outcome of affairs in your lands. And may Your Excellency not take it amiss that we dare to write such things. We are compelled by a sense of piety and unity, whereby we grieve for those who are separated, desiring that they may return to the unity of the Church. Given as above, etc.

