
If the Cap Fits: Going Mongol in Thirteenth Century Syria

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‘... dans le langage du Levant on compte par chapeaux et par turbans.’

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Abstract

Various Near Eastern and European writers of the thirteenth century remarked on the outlandish appearance of the Mongol warriors then rampaging across Eurasia. One aspect of this was their distinctive headgear. From our sources it is clear that Mongol costume could be exploited by non-Mongols in the Near East for a variety of purposes; how these distinctive hats were described, and how contemporary artists depicted them, will also be discussed.

On their arrival in the Near East, the Mongols certainly made an impression. This was, of course, primarily through their behaviour, which shocked, outraged and terrified observers. The Mosuli chronicler Ibn al-Athīr saw in their irruption the “obituary of Islam and the Muslims”; he could not find a suitable comparison for the disaster in history, for the Mongols had outdone the tyrants of legend; perhaps, he suggested, “humanity will not see such a calamity, apart from Gog and Magog, until the world comes to an end”. Even so, however, the Mongols were more threatening even than the apocalypse: “the Antichrist will spare those who follow him and destroy those who oppose him, but these did not spare anyone”.² It is no surprise that they could even be viewed as harbingers of the End Times – for many, of course, their arrival really did mean the end of the world. No less alien, however, was their appearance. The Armenian observer Grigor Aknerts’i writes that the first Mongols who appeared in the Caucasus were “terrible to look at and indescribable”. Nevertheless, he does attempt a description, comparing them to a variety of incongruous animals: they had “large heads like a buffalo’s, narrow eyes like a fledgling’s, snub noses like a cat’s, projecting snouts like a dog’s, narrow loins like an ant’s, short legs like a hog’s . . . with a lion’s strength they have voices more shrill than an eagle . . . they give birth to children like snakes and

¹ *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (Paris, 1852), p. 271 (n.). This essay grew out of a short section of a longer paper, different versions of which have been given at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the University of Birmingham, the University of Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews. I am grateful for the invaluable assistance and advice provided by many people, notably Reuven Amitai, Robert Bartlett, Carole Hillenbrand, Gyorgy Kara, Timothy May and Michael Talbot (whose translations from Ottoman Turkish were both invaluable and entertaining).

² Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-tārīkh*, in D. S. Richards’ translation in, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period* (3 vols, Aldershot, 2006–8), iii, p. 202.

eat like wolves”. Apart from these comparisons, Grigor also mentions that they lack beards, “appear where least expected”, and live for three hundred years. He concludes by stating that “they do not eat bread at all”.³ This last was a point noted by Western European accounts of the Mongols, such as those by John of Plano Carpini and John of Joinville, and could be interpreted as being a marker of a primitive, backward society.⁴ Even more sober accounts such as these might reveal a certain degree of horror at aspects of the steppe warriors’ appearance.⁵ The absence of beards was also noted elsewhere: John of Plano Carpini gives a long and complicated account of the Mongol hairstyle. The point the Franciscan stresses is that “in appearance the Tartars are quite different from all other men”.⁶

The complex hairstyle described by John of Plano Carpini indicates that the appearance of the Mongols was in fact carefully crafted, and was seen by them as a marker of identity. These accounts do, however, suggest that some aspects of their appearance were mutable, and affected by their encounters with other peoples – for example, they could acquire their armour from conquered peoples.⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that clothing, and especially headgear, formed another marker of Mongol ‘identity’. The Mongols were far from unique in this, of course. In mediaeval Europe hairstyle could differentiate Anglo-Saxon or Irishman from Norman, or Saxon from Wend; headgear could differentiate Jew from Christian.⁸ In the Islamic world, of course, non-Muslims were in theory expected to distinguish themselves from Muslims in their dress, often their headgear, either through form or colour.⁹ On the steppe such markers – and especially headgear – seem to have been significant from an early age.¹⁰ In this paper I would like to consider one of these key markers of Mongol

³‘History of the Nation of Archers’, translated by R. P. Blake and R. N. Frye, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12 (1949), pp. 295–297.

⁴John of Plano Carpini, *Ystoria Mongolorum*, in ‘Nun of Stanbrook Abbey’ (translation), ‘History of the Mongols’, in *The Mongol mission: narratives and letters of the Franciscan missionaries in Mongolia and China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries*, (ed.) C. Dawson (London, 1955), p. 16; John of Joinville, *Vie de saint Louis*, (ed.) and translated by Jacques Monfrin (Paris, 1995), p. 240. On lacking bread as a sign of a backward way of life, see Robert Bartlett, ‘Illustrating ethnicity in the Middle Ages’, in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, (ed.) Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge, 2009), p. 154.

⁵For example, John of Joinville’s revulsion at the ‘horrible stench’ emanating from the meat leftover bag of a ‘Khwarazmian’: *Vie de saint Louis*, p. 242. The Mongol eating practices attracted comment from all observers: John of Plano Carpini notes that they would eat any meat, from “dogs, wolves, foxes and horses”, even, in extremis, human flesh; they would eat the afterbirth of mares, and even lice: ‘History of the Mongols’, p. 16. Ibn al-Athīr states that “they eat all animals, even dogs and pigs and others”: *Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr*, iii, p. 204.

⁶‘History of the Mongols’, p. 6; cf. William of Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, in Peter Jackson’s translation, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck* (London, 1990), p. 88. On the immediate Western reaction to the Mongol irruption, including a discussion of their place within eschatological theories, see Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 138–153.

⁷See, eg., *Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, pp. 259–260.

⁸Bartlett, ‘Illustrating ethnicity’, *passim*, especially pp. 141–145.

⁹For a variety of documents on this topic, see Bernard Lewis, *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople* (2 vols, Oxford, 1987), ii, pp. 217–235. One extract translated there is from al-Maqrīzī’s *Sulūk*, recounting how, in the Mamluk Sultanate in 700/1301, Christians were compelled to wear blue turbans and Jews yellow ones, alongside other restrictions: *Kitāb al-sulūk li-ma’rifā duwal al-mulūk*, (ed.) M. M. Ziyāda and S. ‘A.-F. Āshūr, 4 vols (Cairo, 1934–73), i, pp. 909–913. Another regulation for the clothing of *dhimmīs* was issued by al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, ruler of Egypt (637–47 AH / 1240–47 CE). For analysis of the sumptuary laws for *dhimmīs*, see, eg., Antoine Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d’Islam* (Beirut, 1958), pp. 96–112, especially pp. 106–107.

¹⁰According to Charlotte Jirousek, “the earliest ancestors of the Turks wore prominent headgear to mark status and affiliation”: “Ottoman influences in Western dress”, in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, (ed.) Suraiya Faroqhi and Christophe K. Neumann (Istanbul, 2004), p. 244. For examples, see, eg. Albert von Le Coq, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, translated by Anna Barwell (London, 1928), plates 9–10.

identity, the hat, and how it was described and represented in the Near East. Specifically, I wish to examine how, around the time of Hülegü's invasion of Syria and in its aftermath, non-Mongol individuals or groups used Mongol costume – notably headgear – for different purposes.

Going Mongol

At the time of Hülegü's invasion of Syria in 1259–60, he attracted into his service various lesser Ayyūbid princes of the region. One among them gained especial notoriety – while other princes were forgiven by the Mamluks, or even went over to their side before 'Ayn Jālūt, al-Sa'īd Ḥasan, ruler of Banyas and al-Ṣubayba, was executed immediately after the battle by Sultan Qutuz. He was accused of being too enthusiastic a supporter of the Mongols, which extended to his conduct during the battle, and, allegedly, to his conversion to Christianity.¹¹ As a sign of his affiliation, he had worn Mongol clothing, notably a cap. The context for this is provided by the Syrian scholar al-Yūnīnī, who relates that al-Sa'īd Ḥasan had been imprisoned by al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, the leading Ayyūbid in Syria, in the castle of al-Bīra, a major crossing point of the Euphrates. When the Mongols passed through, they had released him, and as a sign of great honour, Hülegü himself had presented him with Mongol clothing – a brocade mantle and a hat (*qabā' zarbaft wa sarāqūj*) – which from then on he always wore.¹²

Mongol costume could also be adopted as a disguise. There are several incidents recorded in the Arabic sources where one group or other dressed as Mongols, specifically including hats, in order to conceal their true identity. The earliest of these are recorded in the *Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, the extensive official biography of Sultan Baybars by the head of his chancery (and that of his successors), Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir. The first incident recorded took place in the winter of the year 662 AH, early 1264 CE. Following the defeat of Hülegü's forces in Syria in 1260, there was a period of cross border raiding, in which the Ilkhan's subjects in northern Syria, King Het'um I and Prince Bohemond VI of Antioch, were used. On his return from a visit to Hülegü, Het'um began to assemble a raiding party. This included local Bedouin, and a detachment from the Mongol army in al-Rūm; the king also requested support from Antioch, and the prince sent 150 mounted soldiers. We are told that these “all wore Mongol hats in imitation of the Tatārs”.¹³ Stuck in the vicinity of Ḥārim because of bad weather, the assembled army was defeated by a Mamluk detachment sent by Baybars. Later in the same year Het'um resumed his efforts to organise a raid into Syria. Reassembling his troops, we are told that he had had made “a thousand Tatār mantles and a thousand Mongol hats, clothing his followers with them”. While the purpose of the Antiochenes assuming this disguise is unclear – were they disguised in order to ease their journey across possibly hostile territory to their assembly with King Het'um? – the reason for

¹¹On these events and al-Sa'īd Ḥasan, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānid war, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 32, 45.

¹²*Dhayl mir'āt al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-a'yān* (part ed. in 4 vols, Hyderabad, 1954–61), ii, p. 16. Al-Makīn b. al-'Amīd reports some of the charges against al-Sa'īd – wearing Tatar clothes, drinking wine in Ramadan, transgressing the laws of Islam – but does not specifically mention headgear: *Kitāb al-majmū' al-mubārak*, in C. Cahen (ed.), 'La Chronique des Ayyoubides', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, XV (1955–57), p. 175.

¹³*Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, (ed.) 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (al-Riyāḍ, 1976), p. 193.

the Armenians' more extensive use of the disguise later on is provided by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir. He states that the Armenians were dressed like this "in order to frighten [observers] into thinking that they were Tatār reinforcements".¹⁴ Baybars certainly took the threat of this raid seriously, ordering detachments from Damascus and Ḥamāh to reinforce the garrison at Ḥims, while instructing the Syrian Bedouin not to move to their normal pasture lands. Mamluk forces were sent on counter-raids, the effect of which caused the Armenians to retreat. Whether Baybars saw through Het'um's subterfuge is not clear – his response may suggest that he initially feared a Mongol incursion, though the raids, targeted at Armenian territory, would suggest that he quickly came to understand the truth about his assailants.¹⁵

The next example of this disguise given by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir is to be found in the entry for the year 672 (1273–74), though later writers place the event in the year preceding.¹⁶ Sultan Baybars sent one of his commanders to capture the fortress of Kaynūk (Armenian: Göynük), to the north-east of Marash.¹⁷ The reason for this campaign may have been the strategic value of this fortress, which commanded routes from Syria into Anatolia both in the direction of Elbistan and of Malatya, but a different explanation is provided in the *Rawḍ al-zāhir*. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir reports that, despite the Sultan's protests to the Armenian king, now Lewon II, the garrison of Kaynūk had engaged in attacks on caravans coming from Mamluk territory. Their method is described: they had taken to wearing Mongol headgear in their adventures against the passing merchants. In response, the Mamluk force took the fortress, killing the men and enslaving the women they found within it, while other Mamluk parties extended the campaign. While it is clear that the attacks on the caravans is given as the main reason for this campaign, that the use of Mongol disguise is noted may be significant, perhaps in so far as it made the actions seem even more reprehensible. The reason for the Armenians taking to wearing Mongol hats is not provided at this point; it seems, however, that their aim was to terrify the merchants into flight, abandoning their property and making it easier to chase them down. A later reference in the next year would suggest that this was the case. As background to Baybars's campaign against Cilicia, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir lists the crimes of King Lewon: he had violated the terms of the treaty between them, by rebuilding fortresses, not supplying required information – presumably about Ilkhanid matters – and, additionally, he had "clothed the Armenians in Mongol hats, and terrorised the caravans with them, pretending that they were the army of the Qān [the Ilkhan Abagha]". This seems to be a reference to the same events: Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir goes on to remind his reader of the crimes committed by those in Kaynūk, and how it had been reduced.¹⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's nephew, Shāfi' b. 'Alī, in his biography of Sultan Qalawun, provides a similar example, but

¹⁴ *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, p. 196.

¹⁵ While Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir reports that raids were carried out "continuously, one after another, and from all directions", the only place mentioned is Marzabān, to the west of the Armenian Catholicos's fortress of Hromkla, on the Euphrates: *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, p. 196. On Armenian raids in the 1260s, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "In the Aftermath of 'Ayn Jalut: The Beginnings of the Mamlūk-Īlkhānid Cold War", *Al-Masāq: Studia Arabo-Islamica Mediterranea*, III (1990), pp. 10–12; and M. Canard, "Le royaume d'Arménie-Cilicie et les Mamelouks jusqu'au traité de 1285", *Revue des études arméniennes*, IV (1967), pp. 223–227.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the dating for this expedition, see Canard, "Le royaume", pp. 237–238, n. 81. On this engagement, see also Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, pp. 131–132; Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, translated by P. M. Holt (London, 1992), pp. 232–233.

¹⁷ *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, p. 417.

¹⁸ *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, p. 432.

this time involving not Armenians but Franks. In 1281 it was reported that the Franks of Tripoli, seeking to sow confusion, had emerged dressed with the distinguishing features of the Tatars, such as their hats – though Qalawun was assured of the truth in the matter by his spies.¹⁹

A decade later, in 1292, there was another incident involving the adoption of Mongol disguise, again involving the Armenians. A full account is provided in the *‘Iqd al-jumān fī ta’rīkh ahl al-zamān* by the later Mamluk historian, al-‘Aynī – though he was writing a century or more after the event, his version draws on a variety of contemporary accounts.²⁰ The context is the attack by the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl on the Armenian Catholicos’s seat at Hromkla, in the year following his successful extirpation of the Franks from Palestine. Hromkla, modern Rumkale, perched above the Euphrates, was somewhat isolated from the core lands of the Armenian kingdom in Cilicia some distance to the west; it was effectively an independent territory under the Catholicos, acquired in the aftermath of the collapse of the county of Edessa in the mid-twelfth century. Nevertheless, when faced with a full siege led by the Mamluk sultan in person, the Catholicos sent to the king, now Het‘um II, for assistance. The latter “knew that he was incapable of [providing] it, so he devised a ruse”: he sent four of his commanders with 5,000 cavalymen, “all of whom were dressed in Mongol clothing, and they put caps on their heads until they rode as if they were Mongols”, accompanied by banners and drums resembling those of the Mongol army. Their orders were to halt before the Euphrates, before encountering the Mamluk army, “as they were very cautious”. As intended, this group was seen by villagers and the local Āl Muhannā Bedouin, who fell for the ruse and forwarded the report to the sultan before Hromkla that about a *tūmān* of the Mongols were approaching. News of this reached the besieged inside the fortress, causing them to ring out their church bells in joy. Rather than acting rashly, however, the sultan despatched a force to investigate, who discovered the truth about the Armenian king’s plan. When this news was brought back to Hromkla, the defenders became disheartened, and the attackers correspondingly encouraged, so that the resistance soon crumbled in the face of the renewed Mamluk assault. So, while Het‘um II’s subterfuge initially seemed promising, in the end it proved counter-productive, at least in this version of events.²¹ What is clear, however, is that the king’s intention was certainly not that his force should engage with the Mamluks, as then the cat would be very quickly out of the bag, but rather that locals, perhaps used to passing Mongol raiders, should be confused and raise the alarm, as, in fact, happened.

¹⁹ *Faḍl al-ma’tūir*, in Paulina B. Lewicka (ed.), *Šāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī’s biography of the Mamluk sultan Qalāwūn* (Warsaw, 2000), pp. 278–279.

²⁰ Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-jumān fī ta’rīkh ahl al-zamān*, (ed.) M. M. Amin, 4 vols to date (Cairo, 1987–92), iii, pp. 114–115. On these events, see Angus Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 78–79.

²¹ Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-jumān*, iii, pp. 114–115. While not explicitly referring to Mongol hats, another Egyptian historian, Ibn al-Dawādārī, is perhaps also referring to this counter-productive subterfuge when he writes that “Satan suggested their actions to [the Armenians], and they spread out their hopes in the market place of error”: *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmi‘ al-ghurar*, (ed.) U. Haarmann, viii (Freiburg, 1971), p. 330. Ibn al-Dawādārī includes a passage from the Qur’ān, from *sūra* viii, 48: “But when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels” – see Abdullah Yusuf Ali (editor and translator), *The Holy Qur’ān* (London, 1975). In the Qur’ān, the one turning to flight is Satan, but in the context of Ibn al-Dawādārī’s passage, it is clear that a rather unflattering comparison with King Het‘um is implied.

Shortly afterwards, it seems, the Mamluks sought to make use of the same manoeuvre. Following the capture of the fortress, whose name was ceremonially changed from Qal'at al-Rūm (Hromkla) to Qal'at al-Muslimīn, it was repaired and a Mamluk governor was installed. It seems to have been intended as a forward base for gathering intelligence concerning the Ilkhanate, and there are signs in the sources that this is how it was used. An early example of this is to be found in the year following its capture, 692 AH, 1293 CE. The governor, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Rūmī, requested that the sultan send him thirty Mongol caps, in order to provide a disguise for the spies he was ending out.²²

It can be seen that putting on Mongol costume could have a variety of meanings – even contradictory ones – according to context. Mongol costume could be intended to make a statement about the individual wearer, or it could be used as a disguise for a group. Clearly, here, the aim was to exploit the fearsome reputation of the Mongol soldiery. While for Mamluk border raiders the disguise was to facilitate their movements behind enemy lines in case of encounters, for the Franks and Armenians the disguise was meant to create rumours that would head off the need for actual conflict. They may have put on Mongol hats, but that does not mean that they had become Mongols – as would have been obvious had their forces been challenged, or even, as at Hromkla, investigated carefully. The point is, though, that these disguises were intended to work *at a distance*, much more than at close quarters. The aim was for reasonably distant observers – local villagers or tribesmen – to see the force and make the false identification, as, indeed, happened near Hromkla. Mongol costume, then, must have been singularly distinctive, and from a distance, and generally familiar. The key element, in the accounts of our sources, is the hat.

The Mongol hat

This characteristic Mongol hat must have been well known to all observers in the region: Mamluk, Arab, Frank, Armenian, etc. Not only was it distinctive in form, but it was also given a distinctive non-Arabic name in the Arabic sources: *sarāqūj*, plural *sarāqūjāt*.²³ This name is not explained by the Mamluk historians, either the contemporaries of these events, such as Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir and al-Yūnīnī, or later compilers, writing some time after the end of the Ilkhanate, but who used earlier works, such as al-'Aynī and al-Maqrīzī. One can conclude, it seems, that, like the hat itself, its name was familiar enough to have been understood by the intended readers of these works – primarily, of course, the Mamluk court, but also the wider scholarly community. Its meaning is fairly clear from the sources – it must be some sort of garment – but its root, nevertheless, remains uncertain. Mayer, in his survey of costume in the Mamluk Sultanate, implies that the original meaning of the word was for a Mongol-style hat, but that this lost currency after the early Mamluk period, and when the word reappeared in the later Mamluk period it had become attached to a style of woman's

²²See, e.g., the account of al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, i, p. 783.

²³The singular form *s(ar)āqūj* is used by al-Yūnīnī, ii, p. 16 (where the editor, in n. 3, glosses the word as 'Mongol cap'); by al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, i, p. 783; and by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir in one instance, *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, p. 196. In the other cases discussed above, the plural form is used: *Rawḍ al-zāhir*, pp. 193, 417 (glossed at n. 1 as 'headgear of the Mongols'), 432; Shāfi' b. 'Alī, *Faḍl al-ma'thūr*, p. 278; al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-jumān*, p. 115.

headgear.²⁴ Reinhart Dozy simply defines the word as ‘un bonnet tatar’ in his *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*; he repeats this in a note in his work on Arab clothing, explaining that this – it being ‘tatar’ rather than Arab – is why he chose not to include a full entry.²⁵ Various other Persian and Turkish dictionaries do include entries for this word, or similar ones.²⁶ Two meanings are consistently given: firstly, a woman’s headdress or veil; secondly, a crest or plume of feathers, again worn on the head.²⁷ Neither of these seem to relate to the hats worn by Mongols or their imitators. The origin of these words is also uncertain. While frequently a Turkic origin is described for words with both meanings, Steingass proposes a derivation from the Persian *sar-āghosh*, that is, ‘head-embrace’. In the texts from the Mamluk sultanate it is clear that the *sarāqūjāt* are specifically associated with the Mongols, rather than any more familiar Turkic groups, and it may well be that a Mongol origin for the word should also be sought.

While distinctive and distinctively Mongol headgear, with a distinctive name, was seen – at least by their contemporaries in the Near East – as being a key part of Mongol identity, the texts do not reveal what this headgear actually looked like. Latin and Armenian literary descriptions of Mongol headgear are not altogether helpful at providing supporting detail on this distinctive, typical Mongol headgear. The Franciscan visitors to the Mongols provide accounts of the Mongols’ facial appearance and their distinctive hairstyle, and they also describe one item of Mongol headgear, the *boghto* or *boghtagh*, also described by Grigor Aknerts’i.²⁸ The *boghto* was a complex superstructure made of wood, covered in fine fabric, increasing in width as it grew taller, and topped with a plume of feathers (a *sorguç?*). This was, however, the headdress of married elite women, not the normal headgear, as the sources make clear.²⁹ With regard to the ordinary hats as worn by girls and men, however, John of Plano Carpini is more unforthcoming: he reports that “the caps they [the Tartars] have are different from those of other nations, but I am unable to describe what they are like in

²⁴L. A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume* (Geneva, 1952), pp. 30–31.

²⁵R. P. A. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Leiden, 1881), i, p. 644; *idem.*, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les arabes* (Amsterdam, 1845), p. 379, n. 1, in which to demonstrate its use he includes a passage from the work of al-Nuwayrī which reproduces, with some variation, the last passage from Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s *Rawḍ* discussed above.

²⁶See, for example, F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1892), pp. 668 (*sarāghuj*, *sarāghoch*, *sarāghosh*, *sarāghosh* [woman’s headdress]; *sarāqūch* [female head-gear]), 676 (*surqūj* [plume of feathers as a headdress]); Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* (4 vols, Wiesbaden, 1963–75), iii, pp. 242–243 (*sarāqūč*, from a proposed Turkish root *sarayuč*); Ömer Asım Aksoy and Dehri Dilçin (eds), *XIII. yüzyıldan beri Türkiye Türkçesiyle yazılmış kitaplardan toplanan tanıklariyle tarama sözlüğü* (8 vols, Ankara, 1963–77), v, p. 3513 (*sorguç*, *sorkuç*, and citing fifteenth- and sixteenth-century texts); Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* (Oxford, 1972), p. 848.

²⁷The sense of ‘plume’ seems to have inspired Lewicka’s interpretation of the word. Glossing Shāfi’ b. ‘Alī’s use of *sarāqūjāt*, she suggests it “apparently stands for [the] Tatar horse-tail ensign”. This is a logical interpretation of the text here, with the troops described as having the “emblem [or ‘distinguishing mark’: *shī’ār*] of the Tartars”. The uses of the word elsewhere – such as for a squad of 150 with *sarāqūjāt* – suggests headgear is a more likely interpretation: *Šāfi’ ibn ‘Alī’s biography*, p. 278, n. 2.

²⁸John of Plano Carpini, ‘History of the Mongols’, pp. 6–8; William of Rubruck, *Mission of Friar William*, pp. 88–89, and n. 1 for a full list of sources; Grigor Aknerts’i, ‘History of the Nation of Archers’, p. 295, and p. 385, n. 18.

²⁹On the *boghto* / *boghtagh* and its wider influence, see Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London, 2012), pp. 253–254; Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and exchange in the Mongol empire* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 16–18; Schuyler Cammann, “Mongol Costume – Historical and Recent”, in Denis Sinor (ed.), *Aspects of Altaic Civilization* (Bloomington, 1963), pp. 161–162.

such a way as you would understand”.³⁰ William of Rubruck is no more helpful: addressing Louis IX, he merely reminds the king that he has seen the men’s costume for himself, clearly seeing no point in describing them for him.³¹

To attempt to identify the normal everyday hat of the Mongol soldier, it might seem helpful to turn from the literary to the visual record. The period of Ilkhanid rule in Iran was, paradoxically, one of great cultural efflorescence. Persian emerged from the shadow of Arabic as a literary language, and the Ilkhanid court was a major centre of artistic patronage. Especially famous are the illustrated volumes of works such as the *Shahnama*, the classic Persian epic, and a great many figures of Mongol appearance are depicted in the illustrations. For their models of rulers and warriors the artists chose the obvious contemporary examples, and the illustrations reflect Mongol, or Ilkhanid style. Indeed, many of these Mongol figures wear headgear – which often distinguishes them from their civilian Persian counterparts. These plentiful Persian miniatures have been examined for what they reveal about Mongol costume, but while the Mongol figures are distinct, and while they are frequently hatted, this does not necessarily help us narrow down what these *sarāqūjāt* would have looked like. In 1939, Schroeder, examining a variety of artwork from the Ilkhanid period, noted the great variety of styles of headgear worn by Mongol figures. To illustrate this, he reproduced line drawings of well over 100 styles of hats from fourteenth century Persian miniature paintings: the styles vary greatly.³²

This discrepancy, between on the one hand in the literary sources an agreed ‘characteristic’ style and on the other great variety of actual depiction, requires some consideration. The Persian examples come from the later Ilkhanid period, mostly from the fourteenth century. It might be more appropriate to look for representations closer in time to the arrival of the Mongols in the Near East and the onset of the Mamluk–Ilkhanid conflict. One work recently confidently dated to 1260 – the year of Hülegü’s invasion of Syria – survives in the monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. This is an iconostasis beam, and one of the scenes depicted – a combined Nativity and Adoration – has a figure identified as a Mongol. Unusually, the three Magi are distinguished from each other not merely in terms of age but also in appearance: one is conventionally depicted, the second is dressed in a Frankish or Italianate style, and the third Magus, according to Weitzmann, “with a drooping moustache, sparse beard, slit eyes, and strange headgear is obviously a Mongol”.³³ For Weitzmann this Nativity icon, with a Mongol and a Frank side-by-side, was “an expression of the oecumenical hopes of the Pope, St. Louis, and all the Crusaders that an alliance with the Mongols would be a first step toward making Christianity the world religion”.³⁴ Folda dates this icon confidently to 1260, on the basis that it commemorates a Frankish–Mongol alliance, between Bohemond VI of Antioch and Kitbugha, identified as the Latin and Mongol Magi (with the ‘Near Eastern’ Magus being

³⁰ ‘History of the Mongols’, p. 8.

³¹ *Mission of Friar William*, p. 87.

³² Eric Schroeder, “Ahmed Musa and Shams al-Dīn: A Review of Fourteenth Century Painting”, *Ars Islamica*, VI (1939), pp. 120–121.

³³ Kurt Weitzmann, “Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XX (1966), p. 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

King Het'um).³⁵ Given the predominantly hostile attitude to the Mongols and the threat of their overlordship among the Franks of southern Outremer in 1260, but also the subsequent attempts at alliance in the decades that followed, a later date might seem more realistic – assuming that the icon does indeed represent a specific alliance, rather than merely Weitzmann's vaguer ecumenical spirit. Indeed, on style grounds alone a later date has been suggested.³⁶

Another representation of Mongols, certainly dating from 1260, is to be found in a Gospel Book produced by the Armenian artist T'oros Roslin.³⁷ This was commissioned by the Armenian Catholicos, Constantine, and was completed at his headquarters, the fortress of Hromkla. Hromkla was one of the crossing points over the Euphrates used by Hülegü's forces in the course of their invasion of Syria late in 1259; the relevant image presumably dates from shortly after this encounter. Interestingly, the scene in which the Mongols appear is another depiction of the Adoration of the Magi – the most renowned Gospel account of visitors coming from the East, so perhaps the most likely place to find depictions of these new arrivals. Here, however, the actual Magi themselves are depicted in a conventional manner, but, very unusually, they are accompanied by a retinue, and this group of men are explicitly labelled as Mongols.³⁸ Nevertheless, that both of these images present the Mongols in a familiar Christian religious context is significant: the artists, perhaps, sought to bring these threatening invaders into the Christian context of the Near East. It may be, of course, that these images represent a belief, or hope, that the Mongols were or would prove to be especially sympathetic to Christianity – a reputation that the Mongols seem to have been keen to develop themselves.³⁹

Quite apart from the label in the Gospel Book, in both this and in the Sinai icon the relevant figures are clearly identifiable as Mongols. The key elements enabling identification are the facial appearance and costume of the figures. Sirarpie Der Nersessian refers to how T'oros Roslin “has represented the bodyguard with the facial type and costume of the . . . Mongols”.⁴⁰ Folda, discussing the Sinai Magus, describes how “his physiognomy is characterized as Mongol, and he wears a typical Mongol cap” (elsewhere he refers to it as “a characteristic Mongol cap”).⁴¹ Mongols do seem always to be shown with hats in visual depictions. From Mount Sinai to Japan, as seen in the “Takezaki Suenaga Scroll”, Mongols wear headgear that distinguishes them from those around them. As we've seen with the

³⁵Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land, from the Third Crusade to the fall of Acre, 1187–1291* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 320–324; *idem.*, “The Figural Arts in Crusader Syria and Palestine, 1187–1291: Some New Realities”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, LVIII (2004), pp. 323–329

³⁶Valentino Pace, “Italy and the Holy Land: Import Export. I. The Case of Venice”, in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, (ed.) Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo, 1986), p. 333.

³⁷Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia* (2 vols; Washington, 1993), ii, fig. 212.

³⁸In fact, the relevant label actually states “the T'at'ar came today”: while what this might have meant remains unclear, the relationship of the label with these figures makes their identification as Mongols certain. For discussions of this label, see Claude Mutafian, *L'Arménie du Levant* (Paris 2013), p. 147; Bazalel Narkiss (ed.), *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1980), p. 52

³⁹Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, pp. 174–177; also, *idem.*, “Hülegü Khan and the Christians: the making of a myth”, in *The Experience of Crusading, 2: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, (ed.) Peter Edbury and Jonathan Phillips (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 196–213.

⁴⁰*Miniature Painting*, p. 60.

⁴¹Folda, ‘Figural Arts’, p. 326; Folda, *Crusader Art*, p. 321; see also Weitzmann, ‘Icon Painting’, p. 63.

Ilkhanid material, however, these hats are not always uniform. All of the Mongol retinue in T'oros Roslin's Gospel Book illustration are wearing hats, of course, but of the same sort: with a folded brim at the front, open at the back where the hat extends as if to protect the back of the neck, and with a tassel of some sort on the crown. These are also close in style to the hat borne by the Mongol Magus in the Sinai icon. Furthermore, these hats are very close in style to those depicted in the famous Chinese imperial portraits of the Great Khans.⁴² Firmly dated to 1260, to the year of Hülegü's invasion of Syria, and by an artist who certainly would have had the opportunity to see Mongol warriors close to hand for himself, and very recently – can we assume that these hats are in fact representative of the normative Mongol style of the time? Would these hats have been recognised by Louis IX from his encounter on Cyprus? Did the Armenian soldiers seeking to raise the siege of Hromkla in 1292 wear hats similar to those depicted in the Magi's retinue by an artist working there 32 years previously? Are these hats, in fact, the *sarāqūjāt* named in the Arabic histories? Could it be that these hats, uniform in style and comparable to those on the imperial portraits, but contrasting with the varied headgear shown in the Ilkhanid illustrated works, imply that, while the distinct Mongol identity may have become diluted later in Iran, in 1260 Mongols still looked like Mongols? If so, therefore, others could too. Clothing could not in itself, of course, make a Mongol; but it is clear that, in later thirteenth century Syria, dressing as a Mongol – putting on the Tatar cap – could have a variety of symbolic and practical meanings. ads@st-andrews.ac.uk

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⁴²Presumably these are also the same as the “lightweight summer hats with wide brims; the latter sometimes split at the sides, so the front could be worn down as an eye-shade, or the back down to protect the back of the neck”, described as typical of early Mongol costume by Cammann, ‘Mongol Costume’, p. 160.