THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN FOREST LITHUANIANS AND STEPPE TATARS IN THE TIME OF MINDAUGAS*

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ABSTRACT *This article investigates the first contacts between the Lithuanians and the Tatars in Mindaugas' time (ca. 1240–1263). In this period the role of the Tatars seems to be underestimated in historical literature. A study of the situation in the aftermath of the Tatar invasions into Rus' in 1238–1240 reveals that Lithuanian warlords exploited the chaos there by intensifying their plundering assaults. Such Lithuanian behaviour shows that they did not try to clash with the Tatars, instead, like the Germans or the Swedes, the Lithuanians also sought to strengthen their political influence in Rus. The study also reveals that the Tatars were aware of the Lithuanians, whose lands were not the main target of their aggression. A radical change in the relations between the Lithuanians and the Tatars is obvious in connection with King Mindaugas' policy (from 1253) characterised by the idea of a crusade against the Tatars, popular in contemporary Christian Europe. The nearness of the Tatar world to the Baltic countries shows that the contacts established in the thirteenth century would yield fruit only in the fourteenth century.*

The invasion of steppe nomads into the lands of their sedentary neighbours was a significant event in the history of the peoples of Europe and Asia. The proximity of sedentary and nomad societies often acquired the character of struggle for their respective place under the sun. The ecological steppe niche occupied an enormous

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space between Manchuria and the Caspian and Black Seas, and its narrow strip extended to the west as far as the Hungarian Plain. These steppes protracting for thousands of kilometres were an excellent corridor along which from time immemorial nomad tribes moved westwards. Suffice it to say that the Huns, Avars, and Hungarians made the countries of Western and Central Europe tremble in all possible senses. It is noteworthy that major nomad incursions from the expanses of Central Asia occurred periodically. The last Mongol-Tatar attacks of alarming proportions and surpassing all previous invasions by Asian nomads took place in the thirteenth century and led to the formation of the largest continental empire known in historical times.

Mongol conquests and the accompanying processes have been analysed by historians all over the world and have become a solid branch of study. The extent of the Mongol conquests is in direct proportion to related historical records. Up to now the solution of this problem has been fraught with linguistic issues, since written sources exhibit an enormous variety of languages, comprising Latin, Greek, Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Arabic, Syrian, Tibetan, Korean, and Mongolian in addition to Chinese and Persian as the key languages. The publication of these Oriental sources is impossible without specialised linguistic and historical competence, it proceeds slowly, and only a small part of these enormous records has been translated into major European languages.¹ Nevertheless, these studies are important for a better understanding of the history of the Mongol and other peoples and ensure new discoveries in the future.

In the face of extensive research carried out by the historians of Western and Central Europe, of Northern America and Russia into the 'Mongol question', it must be stated that Lithuanian historians have not produced any major work in this field for the last three decades. Romas Batūra's monograph issued in 1975 remains the only so far unsurpassed work of this kind.² The title of the book [*Lithuania in the Struggle of the Peoples against the Golden Horde*] is also symptomatic – it is indicative of the then obligatory conception of the internal struggle between 'progressive' and

¹ P. Jackson, 'The Mongol Empire, 1260-1368. The State of Research', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26, 2 (2000), pp. 189-210.

² R. Batūra, *Lietuva tautų kovoje prieš Aukso Ordą. Nuo Batu antplūdžio iki mūšio prie Mėlynųjų Vandenų* (Vilnius, 1975).

‘reactionary’ forces. Nevertheless, despite obligatory or voluntary homage to Soviet Marxism, this work contains valuable observations, significant conclusions and solid bibliography, and it is only to be regretted that these investigations were discontinued. The present paper does not aim to fill in the gap in these studies; it merely draws attention to the importance of the relations between the Lithuanians and the Tatars and presents some observations about the first contacts that, in the opinion of the author of this article, have not received proper attention.³

The First Contacts Between Forest Lithuanians and Steppe Tatars In 1206 a *kuriltai* (assembly) of Mongol tribes was held which elected Genghis Khan great khan. He brought all nomadic tribes under his rule and laid the foundations for the great Mongol empire by starting to conquer China and Central Asia. Still during his rule (1206-1227) pursuing fleeing Cumans (Polovtsy) and the khan of Khwarezm, Tatar warriors overran Georgia. Crossing the Caucasus Mountains they beat the Alans and on the way defeated the joint forces of Cuman and Rus’ian dukes in the battle of the Kalka River. After these and other campaigns Genghis’ empire extended from Manchuria in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west and from the forests of Siberia in the north to the Hindu Kush in the south.⁴ The subsequent Tatar westward campaign began in 1263. The final conquest of western steppes was conducted nominally by Genghis’ grandson Batu, Jochi’s son, who was supported by near relatives; the actual leadership, however, was in the hand of the experienced warlord Sübe’etei. During 1236-1237 Volga Bulgaria was devastated, the Bashkirs were subjugated and the resistance of the Cumans was finally crushed. The Tatars devastated northern Caucasus; in 1238-1240 they overwhelmed the lands of Rus’ and occupied Kiev and,

³ In this paper the concept ‘Tatar’ is used pragmatically without any definiteness of its ethnic contents, adhering to the medieval tradition of Chinese and Muslim authors who used the word ‘Tatar’ in relation to any nomad of non-Turkic origin (Cf. P. Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410* (Harlow, etc., 2005), p. 26). It must be taken into consideration that the Mongol empire and its army were multi-ethnic, therefore a rather abstract use of the word ‘Tatar’ should be least problematic. In general, it is common practice to use the concept ‘Mongol’ in the ethnic sense and ‘Tatar’ in relation to administrative and organisational structures (see S. Krakowski, *Polska w walce z najazdami tatarskimi w XIII wieku* (Warsaw, 1956), p. 19).

⁴ Jackson, *The Mongols*, pp. 34-39.

after wintering in Halicz-Volhynia, marched in separate armies towards Poland and Hungary. In 1242 they crossed the Balkans and returned to the steppes at the Volga. After this campaign Batu founded a khanate, in historical literature known as the Golden Horde. This term is of late origin, it appeared only in the seventeenth century, therefore some researchers prefer to use the term 'the Kipchak Khanate' since, in addition to Jochi's ulus, such was the original name of the state.⁵

The first rumours about Genghis' conquests reached the Christian West during the Fifth Crusade in Egypt when the Tatars were mistaken for a Christian army, led by King David. More reliable news about the appearance of new conquerors reached the West from Georgia in 1223. In the late 1230s, the flow of information about new conquests was simply endless.⁶ Taking into account the general context it could be assumed that the first news about the Tatars reached Lithuania soon after the defeat of Rus' in the battle of the Kalka River. Besides, Lithuanian forces were frequent in Rus'ian lands and could get related information. The chronicler Henry the Latvian, having finished his work around 1227, mentioned this battle and its aftermath – the political changes in Rus'.⁷ These changes could not go unnoticed in Lithuania, though one can judge about them only indirectly.

The Lithuanians may have come into contact with the Tatars for the first time between 1237 and 1240 when the latter were conquering Rus'ian lands. Possible dealings of the Lithuanians with the Tatars were analysed in detail by Batūra under the influence of the tradition of earlier Romantic historians. Although reservedly relying on the legends in the Lithuanian chronicles of the sixteenth century he was inclined to see a grain of truth in them and speculated about 'the

⁵ D. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols. Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (Cambridge, 1998), p. xiii.

⁶ Jackson, *The Mongols*, pp. 59-60.

⁷ *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (Hannover, 1874), vol. 23: *Heinrici Chronicon Lyvoniae*, ed. W. Arndt, p. 316: *Et pervenit verbum per universam Rusciam, ut pugnarent cum Tartaris, et exiverunt reges de tota Ruscia contra Tartaros, et non valuerunt pugnare cum eis, et fugerunt coram eis*. It is noteworthy that Henry the Latvian was well informed about the actions of the Tatars, and that is indicative of the circulation of information in Livonia. He also should be considered one of the first Western authors to use the term *Tartari*, which subsequently became universal. Incidentally, it is possible to challenge Jackson's statement that the first Western writer to use this term was Quilichinus of Spoleto (1236). Cf. Jackson, *The Mongols*, p. 59. In our opinion, Henry the Latvian was no less a 'westerner' than was Quilichinus.

likelihood of the fight between the Lithuanians and Batu's forces'.⁸ These guesses based on guesses resulted in the unrecognisable distortion of the picture presented much more realistically in the sources.

The data found in contemporary sources indicate that the Lithuanians, instead of fighting against the Tatars, tried to exploit their victories against Rus'. The shock of devastating Tatar attacks and the eradication of the traditional way of life created favourable conditions for the Lithuanian warriors to gather spoils of war. Already in 1239 an unknown Lithuanian duke managed to occupy Smolensk. However, soon he was driven out by the grand duke of Vladimir Iaroslav Vsevolodovich.⁹ Around 1240 the Lithuanians invaded the land of Novgorod; the Germans and the Estonians drove out all animals, and people could not plough their fields.¹⁰ In 1241 the Volhynian duke, Vasilko had to strengthen the defence of his lands against the Lithuanians.¹¹ Since the 1219 treaty between the Lithuanians and the dukes of Halicz-Volhynia was still in force until 1243-1244¹² and in 1245 Mindaugas was still an ally of Danilo of Halicz,¹³ it is believable that the Lithuanians of whom Vasilko had to beware were independent warlords who were not subject to Mindaugas. This activity of 'free' warlords is perhaps best described by the pope's nuncio the Franciscan Giovanni di Plano Carpini who in 1245 made a journey to the Tatars:

Nonetheless, all the time we were in mortal danger of being attacked by the Lithuanians, who often made most secret sorties into Rus'ian lands and usually into the places through which we had to travel. As the majority of the Rus'ian population was either killed or taken into captivity by the Tatars, no proper resistance could be offered to them [the Lithuanians].¹⁴

This account attests to the new situation which arose after the Tatar devastation of Rus' and which Lithuanian warlords exploited extending

⁸ Batūra, *Lietuva tautų kovoje*, p. 116.

⁹ *Lavrent'evskaia letopis'*, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei* (henceforth PSRL) (St Petersburg, 1846), vol. 1, pp. 200-201.

¹⁰ *Novgorodskaiia pervaiia letopis' starshago i mladshago izvodov*, ed. A. N. Nasonov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), p. 295.

¹¹ *Ipat'evskaia letopis'*, PSRL (St Petersburg, 1843), vol. 2., p. 180.

¹² M. Bartnicki, *Polityka zagraniczna księcia Danila Halickiego w latach 1217-1264* (Lublin, 2005), p. 159-160.

¹³ PSRL, vol. 2, p. 183.

¹⁴ *Mindaugo knyga. Istorijos šaltiniai apie Lietuvos karalių*, comp. and transl. by D. Antanavičius et al. (Vilnius, 2005), p. 57.

their plundering inroads between Poland and the Tatar lands.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Giovanni di Plano Carpini, excusing himself for the poorness of his gifts to the Tatar leader Curomza, as one of two reasons indicated the hazard posed by the Lithuanians ransacking on the roads.¹⁶ According to the *Ipatevskaia Chronicle*, when Tautvilas, Gedvydas and Vykintas were sent to Rus', they were told that *shto kto priemlet, sobe derzhit* 'will keep whatever [land] he takes for himself'.¹⁷ All this shows that Lithuanian resistance to the Tatars in Rus'ian lands was simply not possible. Confrontation with the Tatars would have been senseless, taking into account that (a) the contemporary Tatar army was an effective offensive military machine and was resisted only by those peoples which refused to surrender to the Tatars and defended their lands, and (b) during Batu's campaigns in Eastern and Central Europe the Lithuanians were not interested in an encounter with the Tatars. Instead, as is indicated by the sources describing contemporary and later events, they preferred to exploit the situation created by Tatar actions by expanding their pillaging marches. The Tatar interest in Lithuania and in conquering the Baltic lands was another matter. However, in this case the initiative would have been in Tatar hands.

The Tatars and Lithuania between 1238 and 1242 Theoretically, the Tatars must have been interested in Lithuania as a part of their plans for world domination. Certainly, before they reached Rus'ian lands they did not know Lithuania. Besides, neighbouring countries of Central and Western Europe, such as Poland, Hungary, and others interested the Tatars far more than Lithuania. Similarly, the conquest of China was given priority over the subjugation of a distant Europe. Theoretically, the Tatar hordes devastating Rus' could descend on roaming Lithuanian forces, but nothing definite can be said about such 'contacts'. On the other hand, it must be noted that military campaigns broadened the geographical horizons of the Tatars. Although the Tatars surely did not reach Novgorod, there are some indirect hints that during one campaign to the north of Rus' they could have gone as far as Karelia and possibly the Baltic Sea.¹⁸ The devastation

¹⁵ Dzhovani del' Plano Karpini, *Istoriia Mongalov. Gil'om de Rubruk, Puteshestvie v vostochnye strany*, trans. N. P. Shastina (Moscow, 1957), p. 69.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *PSRL*, vol. 2, p. 187.

¹⁸ Jackson, *The Mongols*, p. 40, and a reference to P. Aalto, 'Swells of the Mongol-storm around the Baltic', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 36 (1982), pp. 5-15,

of Hungary in 1241 and 1242 produced an overwhelming impression on contemporaries. Thus there appeared a necessity to learn about a dangerous, suddenly emerging enemy. Therefore, in addition to diplomatic and missionary aims, the Franciscan friar Giovanni di Plano Carpini had an intelligence task. Staying in Karakorum, he learned that the *khagan* (the great khan) Güyük developed plans to send two armies to attack Poland and Hungary. He was said to have talked personally about his intention to send his troops to Livonia and Prussia.¹⁹ These accounts show clearly that the Tatars' global plans involved the territory of Lithuania, too. Information about Livonia and Prussia could reach the Tatars in various ways, mainly through prisoners and their own intelligence. According to Stefan Krakowski and other authors, preparing for the great invasion of Poland in 1240-1241, Karakorum could have sent its reconnaissance expedition towards Lithuania as well.²⁰ In any case, it is clear that the Tatars were more interested in Poland than in Lithuania, Prussia or Livonia. The attack on Poland was only an interim measure to achieve the main aim – the conquest of the kingdom of Hungary. It is difficult to say how reliable was Giovanni di Plano Carpini's information from Khagan Güyük's milieu. However, on its basis one can draw a conclusion that the Tatars did not see Lithuania as a serious enemy against whom an army should be sent. It seems that in Güyük's view Prussia and Livonia could be annexed without any major resistance.

Mindaugas' Challenge and Burundai's Blow The 1242 unexpected retreat of the Tatars to the Volga steppes was conditioned not only by the news of Khagan Ögödei's death on 11 December 1242 and the problem of the election of his successor but also due to the fact that in the aftermath of their campaigns the Tatars tapped all the forage resources of the conquered countries and could no longer feed their horses. After their withdrawal Europe began searching feverishly for ways to preclude the possibility of another similar disaster. To this end the then head of Christendom Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254)

¹⁹ Karpini, *Istoriia Mongalov*, p. 60,

²⁰ Cf. Krakowski, *Polska w walce*, pp. 129-130. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Krakowski plays it safe and indicates that he quotes earlier authors who in their turn uncritically used the sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In our opinion, the very idea of a reconnaissance expedition seems plausible since before an intended campaign the Tatars used to examine the situation in a particular country. In this case, in 1240-1241, they had a camp not far from Lithuanian lands, and after several years the information about Prussia and Livonia reached Karakorum.

tried to establish diplomatic contacts with the Tatars and create a belt of buffer states, separating the nucleus of Christian Europe from the areas directly subject to the Tatars.²¹ In this context the rise of Mindaugas' Lithuania was gratifying for the pope; it was also opportune for the first and last Lithuanian ruler to wear the royal crown. A common Christian interest accounts for a not quite typical benevolence and aid of the Livonian master Andreas von Stierland for Mindaugas both in his becoming a Christian and a crowned king in 1251 and 1253 respectively. Mindaugas' ties with the Roman Curia have been investigated quite thoroughly by Juozapas Stakauskas and Edvardas Gudavičius, and consequently no particular attention is paid to this issue in the present study.²² It is worth taking into consideration that in the contemporary Western Europe Mindaugas was not the only ruler of pro-Western orientation. King Danilo of Halicz-Volhynia, having accepted a crown from the pope in the same year as Mindaugas, also pursued a similar policy for some time. He wanted to get rid of the subordination to the Tatars, which he was forced to acknowledge already in 1245. In 1254, when peaceful relations were established between Mindaugas and Danilo, and when Europe was getting ready for a possible second Tatar onslaught, they naturally became allies, albeit short-term.

In historical literature attention is paid to attempts to organise crusades against the Tatars, however, cooperation between Mindaugas and Danilo is ignored in this respect. The well-known Lithuanian-Ruthenian campaign of 1255 to Vozvyagl is simply neglected in the context of the crusading movement. However, taking into account the fact that this campaign was directed against the Tatars and was organised by the forces of Christian rulers acknowledging the pope's authority, it is possible to treat it against a background of the Crusades. Endeavours to organise a crusade against the Tatars are also attested by series of bulls issued by the popes Innocent IV and Alexander IV (1254-1261) in the 1250s. The Vozvyagl campaign, viewed from this vantage point, should not be underrated by the *Ipatevskaia Chronicle* presenting the Lithuanian army as entirely pagan since (a) such manner of depiction reveals a tendency of the author of the chronicle to show Mindaugas as a bad Christian and a real pagan, and (b) the

²¹ Jackson, *The Mongols*, p. 95.

²² J. Stakauskas, *Lietuva ir Vakarų Europa XIII a.* (Vilnius, 2004; first ed. Kaunas, 1934); E. Gudavičius, *Mindaugas* (Vilnius, 1998), pp. 215-240, ff.

same tendency makes the author hide the Christian aspect of Mindaugas' Lithuania and expose its pagan features.²³ Opinions differ as to who was the initiator of this joint campaign – Mindaugas or Danilo of Halicz. Without going into details revealing both different and common interests of the two rulers, it is worth citing Mindaugas' words in the chronicle allegedly addressed to Danilo through envoys: 'I shall send you Roman and the Novgorodians so that he can get to Vozvyagl and from there to Kiev'.²⁴ This phrase reflects quite a different conception than the one expressed in the words 'he who takes something will keep for himself'. The essence of the difference is the change in the policy with regard to the Tatars – the search of confrontation instead of the former evasion. The change of the direction of the political vector indicates the change in Lithuanian policy. This change should be attributed to Mindaugas' susceptibility to the then current ideas of crusades against the Tatars. Historical literature has shown that Bishop Christian of Lithuania taught Mindaugas the truths of faith.²⁵ A general picture of the royal neophyte Mindaugas and Bishop Christian teaching him the truths of faith and politics was peculiar to contemporary Europe.²⁶ It was not by accident that a punitive Tatar campaign simply drove out bishop Kristijonas from Lithuania.

Although the campaign of Vozvyagl was abortive and did not yield any positive results due to internal discord it was remembered by the Tatars. Before dealing a blow to Poland, Khan Berke of the Golden Horde sent his military leader Burundai who forced the army of Halicz-Volhynia to take part in the winter campaign of 1258-1259 against Lithuania.²⁷ A joint Tatar-Rus'ian army devastated Lithuania and the land of Nalšia unopposed.²⁸ This Tatar assault, deep into Lithuania's territory, has been researched by historians a number of times. Nevertheless, it seems that long-term consequences of this campaign were not discovered even when it was treated possibly the most horrible event of the thirteenth century.²⁹ This viewpoint is

²³ In greater detail, see Baronas, 'Karalius krikščionis Mindaugas popiežių akimis' (in preparation).

²⁴ *Mindaugo knyga*, p. 113,

²⁵ Gudavičius, *Mindaugas*, p. 247,

²⁶ Cf. R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: from Paganism to Christianity* (New York, 1998), p. 124,

²⁷ *PSRL*, vol. 2, p. 197; Gudavičius, *Mindaugas*, pp. 256-262.

²⁸ *PSRL*, vol. 2, p. 197.

²⁹ Gudavičius, *Mindaugas*, p. 262,

substantiated by the following phrase: 'The kingdom of Lithuania sustained tremendous losses, but it survived'.³⁰ Doubtless, this is partially a true characteristic of the situation: Lithuania really did not disappear, the Tatars did not introduce their *baskak* government system there, etc. Nevertheless, certain data indicate that Burundai's attack was a turning point in the life of Mindaugas' Lithuania. Contemporary sources speak about an awful situation in the Tatar-devastated Lithuania. According to the Novgorod chronicler, 'That same winter the Tatars conquered the whole land of Lithuania, and slaughtered them [the Lithuanians]'.³¹ Pope Alexander IV informed the margrave of Brandenburg that the Tatars had already destroyed much of Lithuania.³² Therefore the bulls of the popes Innocent IV and Alexander IV, in which the changing situation in the Eastern Baltic influenced by 'the dreadful Tatar neighbourhood', is felt, are worth closer research.

Already on 9 May 1254 Pope Innocent IV urged the clergy of Livonia, Estonia and Prussia to launch a crusade against the Tatars and their accomplices (*complices*).³³ This initiative must be associated with the information reaching the Roman Curia about increasing Tatar activity in the westward direction in particular after the election of Khagan Möngke (1251-1259).³⁴ After 1256 a new series of bulls was issued by Alexander IV, in which a new crusade against the pagans (i.e. the Prussians, Lithuanians, Yatvingians, et al.) or Tatars was promoted and coordinated.³⁵ It is noteworthy that this movement was directed against pagans in general, making no distinction between the Tatars and the Balts, since viewed at from the Western angle they all belonged to the same camp. The situation in Lithuania after

³⁰ Ibid. A particularly striking example of disastrous consequences of a Tatar invasion is Hungary in the thirteenth century; cf. N. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 163-166.

³¹ *Mindaugo knyga*, p. 131,

³² *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1 (1093-1300), (henceforth *LUB*), ed. F. G. Bunge (Tallinn, 1853), no. 354, col. 453: ...*quod saepedictis fratribus, quos et continua paganorum affligit crudelitas ac exterret etiam crudelis vicinitas Tartarorum, qui contiguam praefatae Prusciae Lettoviam iam pro maiori parte destruxisse noscuntur*....

³³ Ibid., no. 268, col. 350.

³⁴ Jackson, *The Mongols*, pp. 104-105.

³⁵ *LUB*, vol. 1, no. 293, cols 381-382 (1256.09.16); no. 311, cols 398-399 (1257.08.07); no. 314, cols 401-403 (1257.08.08); no. 323, cols 412-413 (1258.05.11); no. 326, col. 413 (1258.05.11); no. 328, cols 414-416 (1258.07.15).

the Tatar raids in the winter of 1258-1259 and possibly even in Poland in the winter of 1259-1260 is recorded in Alexander's bulls of 1260. Of particular interest is the bull of 25 January 1260, by which the Pope took care of all Order's possessions, donated to him in Rus' or in the lands occupied by the Tatars.³⁶ The same safety guarantee was extended to the lands donated by Mindaugas – that was indicated in Alexander IV's bull of the same date in which the lands donated by Mindaugas and the bishop of Lithuania were attributed to the Teutonic Order.³⁷ It is noteworthy that in the first of these bulls Lithuania was not mentioned, and reading it one gets the impression that the legal validity of the former papal safety guarantees issued to the king of Lithuania were upheld and directly transferred to the Order. Taking into consideration that in the bull of 25 January 1260 (*LUB*, no. 345) Lithuania was not mentioned and that the bull held good for the territory of Lithuania as well, a conclusion can be drawn that after Burundai's invasion Lithuania was obliterated from the political map, and its status, in the eyes of the Roman Curia, was equal to that of Rus', i.e. a territory subject to the Tatars. Subsequent bulls were again directed against both the pagans and the Tatars, and these actions should be treated as non-reconciliation with the new situation. Direct confrontation between the crusaders and the Tatars was avoided not only due to the complications after the Battle of Durbė (13 July 1260) and the beginning of the Great Prussian Uprising in the same year but also because the Tatars left for their steppes early in 1261. The papal bull of 8 April 1261 stated that the situation of the Christians improved after the retreat of the Tatars.³⁸

The impression of Christian Lithuania's fall in the aftermath of Burundai's invasion in the eyes of the Roman Curia only partly reflected Mindaugas' awkward situation at that time. In any case, Burundai's raid did not destroy his power at one go. Nevertheless it started processes which soon led to Mindaugas' assassination which should be conceived as the last toll in the funeral knoll of the Christian

³⁶ Ibid., no. 345, cols 440-441. A bull of this kind was secured by the Order most probably in order to avoid any interpretational ambiguities – the pope took care of those pagan lands which the Order managed to occupy; *ibid.*, no. 346, cols 441-442 (1260.01.25).

³⁷ Ibid., no. 347, cols 442-443 (1260.01.25).

³⁸ Ibid., no. 360, col. 458: ... *quod Tartari omnino de regionibus ipsis abierint, nullusque timor vel dubietas a fidelibus regionum ipsarum de illorum incursibus habeatur.*

Lithuanian kingdom. The expulsion of Bishop Christian from Lithuania also shows that Burundai's raid rocked Lithuanian church organisation. In the aftermath of the Tatar attack the adherents of the pro-pagan orientation regained their strength; the first among them was Treniota, Mindaugas' nephew. The Žemaitians and Treniota made Mindaugas renounce his union with the Order for the alliance with Aleksandr Nevsky, who distinguished himself among Rus'ian dukes as the most docile subject of the Tatars.³⁹ The 1261-1262 raids of Mindaugas and Aleksandr Nevsky on Livonia can be treated as a continuation of Tatar attacks against the Catholic countries of Europe.⁴⁰

During Burundai's invasion Mindaugas was supported by his son Vaišvilkas and nephew Tautvilas.⁴¹ However, soon afterwards Vaišvilkas changed sides and joined Danilo of Halicz, Mindaugas' enemy.⁴² Henryk Paszkiewicz noted that dissension between Vaišvilkas and Mindaugas, referred to in the *Ipatevskaia Chronicle*, should be attributed to the last years of his rule.⁴³ According to historians Vaišvilkas could have become an Orthodox monk already around 1256-1257, and his active support of Mindaugas during Burundai's raid is accounted for by his (temporary) retreat from the monastery.⁴⁴ In our opinion, this dating of events is not at all clear. An account about Vaišvilkas' retirement to a monastery is found in the *Ipatevskaia Chronicle*; however, as the story is semi-hagiographic it does not keep to a strict chronology. More typical of *Chronicle* accounts is the information that during Burundai's raid Vaišvilkas acted as a layman and that at that time he was *not yet* a monk. In our opinion, he became a monk shortly after Burundai's raid, when he sided definitely with Danilo of Halicz. This chronological correction of Vaišvilkas' biography makes redundant

³⁹ Cf. Dzh. Fennel, *Krizis srednevekovoi Rusi 1200–1304*, ed. A. L. Kho-roshkevich, A. I. Pliguzrov (Moscow, 1989), pp. 149-150; [the Russian translation of I. L. I. Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200-1304* (London, 1983); R. O. Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy 1304–1613* (London, 1987), p. 30.

⁴⁰ Cf. H. Paszkiewicz, *Początki Rusi*, ed. K. Stopka (Cracow, 1996), p. 341.

⁴¹ *PSRL*, vol. 2, p. 197.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 201. However, it must be taken into consideration that the chronology of the account is not clear.

⁴³ H. Paszkiewicz, *Jagiellonowie a Moskwa*, vol. 1: *Litwa a Moskwa w XIII i XIV wieku* (Warsaw, 1933), p. 96.

⁴⁴ M. Grushevskii, 'Khronologiiia podiy Galytsko-Volynskoy litopysy', *Zapysky Naukovogo Tovarystva imeny Shevchenka*, (Lvov, 1901), vol. 41, p. 43; Gudavičius, *Mindaugas*, pp. 258-259. See also T. Vilkul, 'Haličo-Voluinės metraštis apie kunigaikščio Vaišelgos vienuolystę', *Naujasis Židinyš-Aidai*, 6 (2004), pp. 263-267.

an artificial hypothesis about his temporary withdrawal from the monastery about which no hints are found in the Ipatevskaja Chronicle.

Greater attention was given to Vaišvilkas here in order to illustrate the decreasing number of Mindaugas' allies. The fact that in the winter of 1258-1259 Tautvilas was still on Mindaugas' side and afterwards was in league with Treniota shows that at some time *after* Burundai's invasion he joined the opposition to Mindaugas. The events in the life of Eustatii Konstantinovich, a fugitive from Riazan, also witness dramatic changes: a former military leader of Mindaugas (1262) was killed by his son Vaišvilkas in 1264 to take revenge on his enemies and those of his father.⁴⁵

It is worth mentioning that in recent works dealing with relations between the West and the Tatars, Lithuania is not passed by. Commenting on Burundai's raid and subsequent news in papal bulls about the Lithuanians as Tatar allies Peter Jackson concludes that in the early 1260s Lithuania became dependent on the Tatars.⁴⁶ The viewpoints of the Roman Curia and of the modern scholar have a certain basis. It has been noted long ago that the Yatvingians and other Baltic tribes took part in the Tatar attacks on Poland. Attempts to refute suggestions about Lithuanian participation in onslaughts against Poland are not convincing enough since they are based on the theory of 'the struggle of peoples' against the Tatars rather than on in-depth researches of sources and an unbiased analysis of the general political situation.⁴⁷ The annals of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter mention Lithuanians, Rus'ians and representatives of other peoples as participants of the Tatar raid against Poland in 1259.⁴⁸ The chronicle of the Greater Poland also talks about Prussians, Ruthenians and Cumans among the Tatars.⁴⁹ According to Krakowski, the term 'Prussians' could cover some Yatvingian and Lithuanian units which were forced by the Tatars to take part in their raids.⁵⁰ Commenting on the variety of opinions, Gregorz Błaszczyk concludes

⁴⁵ *PSRL*, vol. 2, pp. 200, 202.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *The Mongols*, p. 202.

⁴⁷ Batūra, *Lietuva tautų kovoje*, pp. 144-147.

⁴⁸ 'Rocznik kapitulny krakowski', *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, ed. A. Bielowski (Lvov, 1872), vol. 2., p. 806: *Tartari siuiugatis Bersabenis, Litwanis, Ruthenis et aliis gentibus, Sandomirz castrum capiunt, et multis Christianis occisis, alios abducunt.*

⁴⁹ 'Kronika Godysława Paska' *MPH*, vol. 2, p. 585: *...intraverunt Tartari cum Pruthenis, Ruthenis, Comanis et aliis gentibus terram Sandomiriensem...*

⁵⁰ Krakowski, *Polska w walce*, p. 185.

that this question belongs to the sphere of hypotheses.⁵¹ Both the note of the Cracow Chapter and the success of Burundai's invasion in Lithuania indicate that certain Lithuanian military forces did take part in the Tatar attack on Poland. It must be remembered that from the very first conquests the Tatars used to incorporate soldiers of subjugated tribes into their forces.⁵² Neither the Lithuanians nor the Yatvingians could be an exception here, the more so that it is known that the Volhynian duke, Vasilko, sent Lithuanian captives to Burundai.⁵³ Thus, Krakowski's conjecture can be quite correct. Besides, a forced participation of Yatvingians and Lithuanians in the Tatar troops could also be challenged. Describing Yatvingian hosting of Burundai's army, the Ipatevskaja Chronicle does not report any pillage or Yatvingian resistance.⁵⁴ In our opinion, this was not accidental. Firstly, the Yatvingians could in no way resist the Tatar army. Secondly, they lived surrounded by enemies – the Poles, the Order, the Lithuanians, and the Rus'ians; consequently the Tatars simply were their allies. Thus, the land of the Yatvingians was a bridgehead furnishing the Tatar army with human and material resources (e.g. forage for horses).

Bearing in mind the hostility of the Tatars towards Catholic Europe, it can be maintained that those Baltic elements, which felt repressed by the crusades, were inclined to join the Tatars. Previous research shows that the people in opposition to Mindaugas also favoured this attitude.⁵⁵ Thus the information in the 4 June 1264 bull of Pope Urban IV (1261-1264) about the Rus'ians and Lithuanians having formed a 'damnable' union with the Tatars were not plucked out of thin air.⁵⁶ It must also be emphasised that that Mindaugas did his best

⁵¹ G. Błaszczuk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności* vol. 1: *Trudne początki*, (Poznań, 1998), p. 41.

⁵² Krakowski, *Polska w walce*, p. 33.

⁵³ *PSRL*, vol. 2, p. 197.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 188. It should be remembered that in the thirteenth century Tautvilas successfully cooperated with the Cumans in his fight against Mindaugas in Žemaitija. The Cumans were considered experienced steppe warriors (more on this, see Berend, *At the Gate*, pp. 142-143). It can be supposed that the ties established between some Lithuanians and Cumans were maintained for some time in the future.

⁵⁶ *Preußisches Urkundenbuch. Politische Abtheilung*, Bd. 1, Hft. 2, ed. A. Seraphim (Königsberg, 1909), no. 222, p. 166: *Accepimus enim, quod Rutheni scismatici et Litvani ac alii habitantes in eorum confinibus, qui Deum non colunt, sed blasphemant potius nomen eius, una cum Tartharis eorum complicitibus, quibus sunt federe dampnato coniuncti, Poloniam hostiliter frequenter invadunt eis nemine resistente.*

to avoid the danger of a creeping subjection to the Tatars. That is best illustrated by his attacks on the dukes of Halicz-Volhynia in revenge for their raids jointly with the Tatars over Lithuania.⁵⁷ It is also emblematic that Mindaugas was killed at the time when his army was going on a military expedition against the duke of Briansk, Roman, an ally of the Tatars.⁵⁸

The fact that the Tatars abandoned their attempts to subjugate Lithuania (as they had done with Rus') can be interpreted variously; here suffice it to say that in general they could be satisfied by having ruined the Catholic kingdom of Lithuania. Due to a certain political regime that appeared in Lithuania already in 1264 the country became a target of the Crusaders and willy-nilly a shield for the Tatar lands.⁵⁹ Only in the aftermath of Lithuania's baptism did the political climate change and Lithuanian rulers, and primarily Jogaila and Vytautas, became open to crusading ideals. The era of pagan Lithuania was characterised by close contacts, both hostile and friendly, with the Golden Horde. These contacts have not yet been investigated properly; nevertheless, recent research increasingly rejects the paradigm of 'the struggle of peoples' against the Tatars and the legend about the Lithuanian liberation of the Rus'ian lands from Tatar rule. Investigations indicating the political condominium of Lithuania and the Golden Horde in Rus'ian lands up to the year 1362 are well-substantiated.⁶⁰

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⁵⁷ *PSRL*, vol. 2, Ipat'evskaia letopis', p. 200.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, see note 49.

⁶⁰ F.M. Šabuldo, 'Lietuvos ir Ordos kondominiumas Ukrainos žemėse XIV a.', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2 (2005), pp. 5-26.

MIŠKO LIETUVIŲ IR STEPIŲ TOTORIŲ SUSIDŪRIMAS
MINDAUGO LAIKAIS

Santrauka

DARIUS BARONAS

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami pirmieji lietuvių ir totorių kontaktai Mindaugo laikais (apie 1240–1263). Tiriant šią problematiką, išryškėjo dvi pagrindinės sritys, kurios reikalauja iš naujo permąstyti „seniai žinomus“ dalykus: a) išaiškėjo, kad lietuviai nedalyvavo „tautų kovoje“ prieš Aukso ordą taip, kaip šį reikškinį vaizdavo R. Batūra, kuris iki šiol yra vienintelio monografinio tyrimo autorius mums rūpima tema; b) atrodo, kad totorių vaidmuo paskutiniaisiais Mindaugo karalystės gyvavimo metais buvo kur kas reikšmingesnis, negu paprastai teigiama istoriografiniuose veikaluose. Tiriant situaciją, susiklosčiusią Rusioje po totorių invazijos 1238–1240 m., išaiškėjo, kad lietuvių kariaunos siekė pasinaudoti Rusioje kilusiu chaosu plėsdamos savo grobiamuosius žygius. Toks lietuvių elgesys rodo, kad jie neieškojo progos susiremti su totoriais, bet elgėsi panašiai kaip vokiečiai ar švedai, kurie tuo pat metu stengėsi Rusioje plėsti savo politinę įtaką. Tyrimo metu paaiškėjo tai, kad totoriai neabejotinai disponavo žiniomis apie lietuvius, ir tai, kad jų gyvenamos žemės nebuvo pagrindinis totorių agresijos taikiny. Turime pagrindo reikšmingas lietuvių ir totorių santykių permainas sieti su Lietuvos karaliaus Mindaugo (nuo 1253 m.) vykdyta politika, kurioje galime atpažinti to meto katalikiškoje Europoje propaguotą Kryžiaus žygio prieš totorius idėją. Mindaugas buvo šios idėjos šalininkas, kaip ir derėjo Apaštalo sosto globotiniui. Mindaugo priešiška totoriams laikysena, kurios turbūt geriausia išraiška buvo 1255 m. jo ir Danieliaus Haličiečio žygis prieš Vozviaglio pilį, paskatino totorių karvedį Burundajų 1258–1259 m. žiemą įsiveržti į Lietuvą. Mūsų nuomone, ši invazija sudrebino Mindaugo valdžios pamatus tiek, kad prasidėjo krikščioniškosios valstybės žlugimas, pasibaigęs karaliaus nužudymu 1263 m. Būtina atkreipti dėmesį į tai, kad XIII a. šeštojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje–septintojo dešimtmečio pradžioje dalis lietuvių (ir jotvingių) buvo pasidavę totorių valdžiai ir dalyvavo jų puolimuose prieš Lenkiją. Totorių pasaulio artumas baltų kraštams XIII a. rodo, kad jau tuo metu tarp jų užsimezgė kontaktai, kurių rezultatai bus geriausiai matyti tik kitame – XIV amžiuje.