

# The Letter of the Great Khan Guyug<sup>1</sup> to Pope Innocent IV

*The Great Khan's letter to Pope Innocent IV. John of Plano Carpini was sent by the Pope as an emissary to the Mongols. Fearing the Mongols would renew their military campaigns after their initial withdrawal from Hungary in 1241, the Pope sent Carpini to avert such possibilities. However, he undermined Carpini's mission by having him transmit two papal bulls [important letters from the Pope] to the Mongol Khan. The bulls first proclaimed the Pope to be God's vicar and requested safe passage for Carpini but then requested that the Khan cease his campaigns, which "are laying [countries] waste in horrible desolation" and "breaking the bonds of mutual ties, sparing neither sex nor age, you rage against all indiscriminately." The Mongol rulers, who perceived themselves to be superior to all others, would surely find these bulls objectionable.*

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By the power of the Eternal Sky, [We] the Oceanic Khan of the whole great people; Our command.

This is an order sent to the great Pope that he may know and understand it.

We have written it in the language of the lands of *kerel* (ie. Latin?).

Counsel was held; a petition of submission was sent; it was heard from your ambassadors.

And if you keep to your word, thou, who art the great Pope, together with all the kings, must come in person to do homage to Us. We shall then cause you to hear every command that there is of the *Yasa* (Law).

Again. You have said: "Become Christian, it will be good." Thos hast made thyself wise (*or* thous hast been presumptuous); thou hast sent a petition. This petition of thine We have not understood.

Again. You have sent words [saying]: "Thou hast taken all the lands of the Majar and the Christians; I am astonished. What was their crime? Tell us." These words of thine We have no understood either. The command of God, Chinggis Khan and Ogodei, both of them, sent it to cause it to be heard. They have not trusted the command of God. Just like they words they too have been reckless; they have acted with arrogance; and they killed Our ambassadors. The people of those countries, [it was] the Ancient God [who] killed and destroyed them. Except by the command of God, how should anyone kill, how should [anyone] capture by his own strength?

Dost thou say none the less: "I am a Christian; I worship God; I despise and..."? How dost thou know whom God forgives, to whom He shows mercy? How dost thou know, who speakest such words?

By the power of God [from] the going up of the sun to [his] going down [He] has delivered all the lands to Us; We hold them. Except by the command of God, how can anyone do [anything]? Now you must say with a sincere heart: "We shall become [your] subjects; we shall give [our] strength." Thou in person at the head of the kings, you must all together at once come to do homage to Us. We shall then recognize your submission. And if you do not accept God's command and act contrary to Our command We shall regard you as enemies.

Thus We inform you. And if you act contrary [thereto], what do We know [of it], [it is] God [who] knows.

In the last days of Jumada II of the year six hundred and forty-four (3-11 November 1246).

Source: Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 213-214

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<sup>1</sup> Son of Ogodei and grandson of Chinggis Khan