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   Scott D. Westrem

DISCOVERING NEW WORLDS
Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination

edited by
Scott D. Westrem

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27. In a comment on the manuscript version of this essay, Scott Westrem notes that "all this is in the context of what sounds very like an appeal for missionaries because the attention turns to what these people *don't* know, but could—if only a crusade of priests would move East" (his emphasis). A knowledge of God through "natural reason" was commonly ascribed by medieval thinkers to the peoples of distant Asia; see Thomas Hahn, "The Indian Tradition in Western Medieval Intellectual History," *Viator* 9 (1978): 213-34, and his "Indians East and West" (above, n. 9), both of which deal in passing with *Mandeville's Travels* and therefore nicely supplement the present essay.

    Arguing that humanity uses time, as "a carrier of significance," to define the relations between self and other, Johannes Fabian distinguishes the medieval, Christian "vision of Time"—the "inclusive or incorporative" "Time of Salvation"—from the Enlightenment vision of "temporal relations as exclusive and expansive," a distinction that has obvious consequences: whereas "the pagan was always *already* marked for salvation, the savage is *not yet* ready for civilization": *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), pp. ix, 26 (his emphasis). Though perhaps overschematic, Fabian's distinction does seem to be borne out in the "other" worlds represented both on the encylopedic *mappaemundi* and in *Mandeville's Travels*: in them time is almost always a matter of space and even the most distant creatures are capable of salvation.

28. *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1978), Prol., lines 48-49.

29. On Menocchio generally, see Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (1980; repr. Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1982); "new world" (pp. 13, 77, 81); "causes of my errors"—from a letter to his judges, quoted in full by Ginzburg—(p. 88); "majesty of God" (p. 51).

The Nature of the Infidel: The Anthropology of the Canon Lawyers

James Muldoon

An historian who should have known better, Henry Steele Commager, once observed that "sixteenth-century Europeans had no compunction about killing Indians because the Indians had no souls."[1] Such an opinion is not, unfortunately, restricted to American historians. It has something of the popular modern myth about it. The massive population decline among the inhabitants of the Americas, which the conquistadores observed and modern scholars have analyzed in great detail, suggests that the Spanish invaders had no interest in the people they encountered because they did not see them as human in the first place.[2]

The view that Europeans judged non-European peoples as non-human or, at the very least, sub-human, seems to rest largely on analysis of literary and polemical texts. We often see European attitudes toward non-Europeans illustrated in chronicles that were composed hundreds of miles from any border by monks who never saw a Mongol or a Saracen.[3] These chroniclers were anxious to record contemporary responses to the horrifying tales of conquest and death associated with the terrifying invaders of Christendom. A related purpose of such discussions was to inspire Europeans to meet the dangers that would soon approach from the most distant corners of Europe unless men roused themselves from their lethargy and confronted the enemy. Other expressions of late-medieval European attitudes toward non-Europeans

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conjured up literary images of Wild Men (and Women), creatures such as werewolves, and other forms of beings who, at the very least, were incompletely human.[4] Here the medieval writers' goal was titillation, and so the strange folk were described in the most grotesque terms.

In all of these cases, accurate, informed descriptions of the peoples beyond Europe had no place. The purpose of describing the non-European in terrifying or grotesque terms was to appeal to the emotions—not the minds—of readers or hearers. Furthermore, such descriptions did not reflect first-hand experience of the non-European world, but rather second- or third-hand observations at best. They even echoed not contemporary experience but ancient experience as medieval writers drew upon a narrative tradition that ran back to Herodotus.[5] As a result, any serious discussion of medieval attitudes toward real non-European peoples as opposed to the inhabitants of a world of fantasy and imagination must begin elsewhere, away from the literary and the artistic representations of the non-European. Such discussions must also keep away from the moralists, the grotesqueness of whose descriptions of the non-European was in inverse proportion to their experience of them and to the willingness of the European warrior aristocracy to fight them.

One way to determine what medieval men really thought of non-Europeans is to examine the writings of those who actually dealt with such peoples. It might be pointed out that, while there were indeed medieval Europeans who did have a realistic view of the non-Europeans, there were too few of them and their information reached too few people to be of any significance. Margaret Hodgen argues similarly in her important book, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Discussing the works of Marco Polo and two nearly contemporary Franciscan missionaries, Hodgen concludes:

> Strange to say, and significant as were the reports of the three intrepid travelers for the history of European thought, they were all but forgotten in the West during the centuries that followed. The relatively truthful account written by Marco Polo attracted less attention in the later Middle Ages than the mendacious romance which appeared under the name of Sir John Mandeville.[6]

While it is true that more copies of Mandeville's *Travels* have survived than have copies of Marco Polo's book, this does not necessarily prove that Mandeville's fanciful work was more important in shaping European attitudes toward the non-European than was Marco Polo's realistic one.[7] A more important question is: who held realistic as opposed to fanciful conceptions of non-European peoples and what were the implications, if any, of that knowledge? I wish to suggest that realistic evaluations of the humanity and the rationality of non-Europeans were more common than the circulation of Mandeville's work suggests and that these realistic appraisals were of more long-term significance than were the opinions of Mandeville and similar writers.

To illustrate this argument, I wish to examine a few well-known documents from the mid-thirteenth century, materials connected with the Mongol Mission of Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254). The most important of these materials are a legal commentary, written by Innocent IV in his capacity as a canon lawyer, and two letters that as pope he addressed to the Mongol khan. The final piece of evidence is John of Plano Carpini's report of his journey to the Mongols, in the course of which he delivered the pope's letters and received in turn a response from the khan. What makes these materials important is that they contain the views, implicit and explicit, of men who actually had dealings with non-Europeans. Furthermore, the views of Innocent IV shaped ecclesiastical and legal responses to the non-European world long after his death, enjoying an important revival in the early sixteenth century as Europeans began to wrestle with the implications of the discovery of the New World and its inhabitants.[8]

Innocent IV dealt with the nature of the non-European, non-Christian in his commentary on a letter of his predecessor, Innocent III (1198-1216). The letter, *Quod super his* (X.3.34.8), was included in the second collection of canon law, the *Decretales*, in a chapter on vows. In the original letter, Innocent III dealt with what must have been a common problem, the inability of an individual who had taken an oath to go on a crusade to fulfill his vow because he was too old, too ill, or too constrained by circumstances beyond his control to travel to the Holy Land. What was to be done? Innocent III resolved the matter expeditiously, outlining a procedure for allowing the would-be crusader to compound for his vow so that a suitable warrior could replace him. After all, there was nothing to be gained by sending an old or sick man to fight.[9]

When Innocent IV came to write his commentary on the *Decretales*, he paid little attention to the actual circumstances that

generated the letter and raised instead the question of the right of Christians to wage war against infidels at all.[10] He began by accepting the legitimacy of wars to regain possession of the Holy Land. This was simply an exercise of defence and recuperation, in which the Christian inhabitants of the Holy Land were legally permitted to fight Muslims who had unjustly attacked them and unjustly dispossessed them of their lands.[11]

Of greater interest was the question of whether Christians had the right to invade, conquer, and govern any and all lands that infidels held. Innocent IV's answer was that God, who made the world and everyone in it, has so ordered matters that all men, believers and infidels alike, can legitimately possess land and property and can select their own rulers. Such "things were made for every rational creature" and so "it is not lawful for the pope or for the faithful to take sovereignty or jurisdiction from infidels, because they hold without sin. . . ."

According to Innocent IV, it was the very rationality of all mankind that meant that every human being was subject to papal jurisdiction and thus possibly subject to invasion by Christians acting under papal warrant. If, according to Innocent IV, "a gentile, who has no law except the law of nature [to guide him], does something contrary to the law of nature, the pope can lawfully punish him. . . ." For example, according to this line of argument, "if they [infidels] worship idols [the pope can judge and punish them] for it is natural for a man to worship the one and only God, not creatures." The pope cannot command the forced baptism of legitimately conquered infidels, but he "can order infidels to admit preachers of the Gospel in the lands that they administer, for every rational creature is made for the worship of God. . . ."

The emphasis upon the rationality of the infidels is important, not only because, paradoxically, it provides a justification for the legitimate conquest of the infidels, but also because it means that believer and non-believer possess the same human nature. The believer alone has the Gospel to guide him in the ways of righteousness, but both believer and non-believer possess the capacity to know the natural law through the operation of human reason alone and so are subject to its terms.

The theme of the rationality that all men share appeared fully developed in the two letters Innocent IV addressed to the leader of the Mongols. Parenthetically, let me note here that we do not know when Innocent IV wrote specific sections of his commentary on the *Decretales*. It does not matter for the purposes of this discussion,

however, whether he wrote the legal commentary on the common rationality of mankind before or after he sent these two letters. What is important is that the documents, taken together, demonstrate that Innocent IV thought seriously about and acted purposefully on the view that mankind shared a common rationality.

The letters that John of Plano Carpini brought to the Great Khan had different themes. The first provided an introduction to Christian doctrine, while the second focused on the pope's desire to stop the Mongol conquests of Christian lands. They shared, however, an emphasis upon the rationality of all men.

The first letter opens with a discussion of human experience that presumably should bring the khan to consider the truth of the Christian faith. The human condition is described as "the unhappy lot of the human race," a situation created by the fall of the first man. As a consequence, God became Man and "showed Himself in a form visible to all men." According to Innocent IV, the Incarnation took place because

> human nature, being endowed with reason, was meet to be nourished on eternal truth as its choicest food, but, held in mortal chains as a punishment for sin, its powers were thus far reduced that it had to strive to understand the invisible things of reason's food by means of inferences drawn from visible things.

Christ became incarnate

> in order that, having become visible, He might call back to Himself, the Invisible, those pursuing after visible things, moulding men by His salutary instructions and pointing out to them by means of His teaching the way of perfection. . . .[12]

The goal of the Incarnation was to replace the penalty of sin, which is death, with eternal life.

The point of this summary of the fundamental Christian mystery as Innocent IV presented it was that everyday experience demonstrates to any rational human being the melancholy state of human existence. He began, in other words, with an appeal to the khan's own experience. Clearly men, endowed as they were with reason, could see that they were meant for more than a short, painful life on earth. That the life men experienced was less happy than what they could imagine was due to the fall of Adam and the consequences of original sin.

weaknesses and internal divisions that separated the Christians and so upon their return to the khan would encourage an attack upon Europe.[15]

One final issue still requires some discussion. Even if the thirteenth-century papacy appreciated the rational nature of the infidel, of what significance was this perception since the descriptions of wild men, half-men, and other fantastic creatures dominated the European image of the infidel? As has been noted, more copies of Mandeville's fantastic voyage survive, and presumably circulated, than do copies of the more realistic papal materials.

The answer lies in the effect of these various perceptions of the infidel on those who went to seek him from the end of the fifteenth century. From the very beginning of the overseas expansion that began with Columbus's first voyage, missionary activity was an important aspect of the endeavor. Columbus himself emphasized the importance of missionary work, and on his second voyage he brought missionaries with him to begin the work of converting the inhabitants of the Caribbean islands. If these people were not human, such efforts would have been useless. Indeed, they would be unnecessary. Likewise, the letters of Pope Alexander VI that divided the newly discovered lands between the Castilians and the Portuguese in 1493 by means of the famous line of demarcation would have been pointless because the papal right to draw such a line was rooted in the papal responsibility for the souls of the infidel inhabitants of the newly-found lands.[16] If these people had no souls and thus could not accept the salvation that Christ's sacrifice promised, then the papacy would not have expended so much intellectual effort on achieving a solution to the Portugese/Castilian conflict.

In fact, papal and other ecclesiastical interest in the New World was rooted in the perception of the infidels as rational human beings, just like Europeans. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when ecclesiastics considered the infidel, they saw not the fantastic creatures described by Mandeville and others but rather rational creatures like themselves, for whom Christ had suffered and died. They perceived the infidel this way not from personal experience but from the line of argument that began with Innocent IV and John of Plano Carpini. It is worth noting that while Plano Carpini's manuscript may not have circulated widely, the commentary of Innocent IV on the *Decretales* most certainly did. Canon lawyers from the thirteenth- to the sixteenth-century continuously cited his discussion of the rights of infidels and with it his defense of their essential humanity.[17] In the sixteenth

century, the entire Spanish debate about the legitimacy of the conquest of the Americas was carried on in the terms of Innocent IV's commentary. In the 1500s, as in the 1200s, there was no doubt about the humanity or the rationality of the inhabitants of what to the West was a new world. The issue was not that they were somehow morally or intellectually deficient but rather that they did have souls, which it was the responsibility of Christians to save.

NOTES

1. Henry Steele Commager, "Should the Historian Make Moral Judgments?" *American Heritage* 17[2] (Feb. 1966): 27, 87-93 at 91.

2. On the debate about the biological effects of the discoveries, see Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972), and *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).

3. See, for example, Charles W. Connell, "Western Views of the Origins of the 'Tartars': an Example of the Influence of Myth in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 3 (1973): 115-37.

4. See Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952); Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); and John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981).

5. "If antiquity confers respectability, some of Mandeville's stories came from the most impeccable sources, the cream of the flamboyant anthropogeography of Pliny, Solinus, Mela, and Isidore. . . . There are the Albanians, who made their first bow to the European reading public in the pages of Herodotus." See Margaret Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1964; repr. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 70.

6. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, p. 103.

7. Scholars differ on the number of manuscripts involved. A recent editor of Mandeville's work declares that "some three hundred" manuscripts

of the work have survived while "only about seventy" of Polo's work have survived. See *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. C. W. R. D. Moseley (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1983), p. 10. Other writers indicate that as many as 138 copies of Polo's manuscript survive; see Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Early Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955; repr. New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 22.

8. On the later use of Innocent IV's legal opinion, see James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels: The Church and the Non-Christian World 1250-1550*. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), esp. ch. 7; and Kenneth J. Pennington, "Bartolome de Las Casas and the Tradition of Medieval Law," *Church History* 39 (1970): 149-61.

9. James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 77.

10. Innocent IV, *Commentaria Doctissima in Quinque Libros Decretalium* (Turin: apud haeredes Nicolai Beuilaque, 1581), fols. 176-77.

11. For a fuller discussion of Innocent IV's commentary, see Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, ch. 2. The most important discussion of the just war tradition is Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975).

12. *Mission to Asia*, ed. Christopher Dawson, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 8 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 73; this work was originally published as *The Mongol Mission* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), and was reprinted for the first time in 1966 as *Mission to Asia* (New York: Harper and Row). The original texts are in: *Epistolae saeculi XIII e registis pontificum romanorum*, ed. G. H. Pertz and C. Rodenberg, MGH, *Epistolae*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883-94), 2:72-3 (nu. 102) and 2:74-5 (nu. 105).

13. Pertz and Rodenberg, *Epistolae*, 2:75.

14. Pertz and Rodenberg, *Epistolae*, 2:75, 76.

15. Pertz and Rodenberg, *Epistolae*, 2:68.

16. See James Muldoon, "Papal Responsibility for the Infidel: Another Look at Alexander VI's *Inter Caetera*," *Catholic Historical Review* 64 (1978): 168-84.

17. Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels*, pp. 141-45.

Ptolemaic Influence on Medieval Arab Geography: The Case Study of East Africa

Marina Tolmacheva

Claudius Ptolemy made a profound impression on the development of Arabic geographic science which goes far beyond mere translations of his *Geography*. From as early as the ninth century to as late as the fifteenth century, most Arabic authors writing in the genres of descriptive and mathematical geography echoed Ptolemy as a source for systematic description of the habitable earth. The major areas in which Ptolemaic influence made an impact on Islamic scholars include geographic data (description of continents and seas, as well as the coordinates of settlements and of topographic features), geographic theory, and cartography. (Ptolemaic mathematics and astronomy are not discussed here.)

This paper reexamines the nature and extent of the Greek influence traditionally ascribed to Ptolemy on early medieval Arabic works which demonstrate a recognized familiarity with Ptolemy on each of these levels, including writings by the early mathematician, astronomer, and geographer Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khorezmi (d. c. A.H. 232/A.D. 846-847), and his less well-known editor Suhrab (first half of the tenth century A.D.), and the *Kitab al-zij al-Sabi'* by the astronomer al-Battani (d. A.H. 317/A.D. 929). Data relevant to the historical geography of East Africa will be explored below. In addition, questions of general methodology of interpreting data derived from Arabic manuscript sources will be considered.

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