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## The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's Three "Anti-Mongol" Fatwas

### INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The anti-Mongol fatwas of Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1328) belong to a precise historic context, that of the various attempts made by the Ilkhans to gain control of Syria (Bilād al-Shām) in the period following the fall of Baghdad in 656/1258 and the abolition of the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>1</sup> Between 658/1260 and 712/1312, the Mongol rulers of Persia would launch six separate campaigns in the region. On the two occasions when they succeeded in briefly occupying Syria, in 658/1260 and 699/1299–1300, the Ilkhans laid the foundations of an administrative system, indicating a longer-term project of incorporating the region into their empire.<sup>2</sup> The first invasion, led by Hülegü (r. 1256–65), was halted by the Mamluk sultan Qutuz and the amir Baybars on 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260 at 'Ayn Jālūt.<sup>3</sup> This defeat did not put an end to the Ilkhans' military initiatives, but it did establish the spheres of influence of the two rival powers. The Mamluks dominated the countries of the Levant, while on the far side of the Syrian desert the Ilkhans held Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. No official peace having been agreed upon, the deployment of spies (*jāsūs*), skirmishes, and periodic raids by both sides kept hostilities between the two states alive.<sup>4</sup> In 1281,

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<sup>1</sup>The literature concerning the life and works of Ibn Taymīyah is very extensive. The most comprehensive general books about this Hanbali scholar are: Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymīya, canoniste hanbalite né à Ḥarrān en 661/1262, mort à Damas en 728/1328* (Cairo, 1939); Victor Makari, *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series no. 34 (Chicago, 1983); H. Laoust, "La biographie d'Ibn Taymiyya d'après Ibn Kaṭīr," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 9 (1943): 115–62; Alfred Morabia, "Ibn Taymiyya, le dernier grand théoricien du ḡihād médiéval," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 30 (1978): 85–100. Ibn Taymīyah was a native of Ḥarrān, a city considered to be a Sabian city. Their presence made the city a Hanbali center. On the Sabians, see Michel Tardieu, "Ṣābiens coraniques et 'Ṣābiens' de Ḥarrān," *Journal asiatique* 274, nos. 1–2 (1986): 44.

<sup>2</sup>Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "Mongol Imperial Ideology and the Ilkhanid War against the Mamluks," in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David Morgan (Leiden, 1999), 58.

<sup>3</sup>See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "In the Aftermath of 'Ayn Jālūt: The Beginnings of the Mamlūk-Īlkhānid Cold War," *Al-Masāq* 10 (1990): 1–21; idem, "'Ayn Jālūt Revisited," *Tarih* 2 (1992): 119–50.

<sup>4</sup>Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamlūk-Īlkhānid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995).



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Hülegü's successor Abāqā (r. 663–80/1265–82) took the initiative of launching a new attack. It came to an end with the victory of the Mamluk sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90) at Ḥimṣ.<sup>5</sup> The latent state of war between the two rival powers was not ended by the conversion of the Ilkhans to Islam, despite the attempts at conciliation made by Tegüder Aḥmad (r. 680–83/1281–84), who, having converted to Islam,<sup>6</sup> sent two embassies to Qalāwūn to announce his desire to end hostilities.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Ghāzān Khān (r. 694–703/1295–1304), who had also converted to Islam just before his enthronement,<sup>8</sup> led three major offensives against Syria. The first took place in the winter of 699/1299–1300.<sup>9</sup> The second, which began in the autumn of 700/1300–1, ended that winter without any confrontation having taken place between the Mongol and Mamluk forces. Ghāzān Khān's third attempt to wrest Syria from the Mamluks began in spring 702/1303 and ended with the Mamluk victory at Marj al-Ṣuffār on 2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303. The last Mongol invasion of Mamluk territory was undertaken in 712/1312 by Öljeitü (r. 703–17/1304–17), who was also a Muslim. These last four Ilkhanid invasions were repelled by the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, in the last two periods of his reign (698–708/1299–1309 and 709–41/1310–41).<sup>10</sup>

The Ilkhans' ambitions of dominating Syria are attested by the many missions they sent to the Latin West to seek an alliance with the papacy and the Christian

<sup>5</sup>On this invasion, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 179–201; Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamlūk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998), 108–12.

<sup>6</sup>On the conversion of Tegüder Aḥmad, see Reuven Amitai, "The Conversion of Tegüder Ilkhan to Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 15–43.

<sup>7</sup>On these embassies, see Peter M. Holt, "The Ilkhān Aḥmad's Embassies to Qalāwūn: Two Contemporary Accounts," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986): 128–32. In 681/1282–83 Tegüder Aḥmad wrote a letter to Qalāwūn in which he complained that Mamluk spies disguised as *faqīrs* had been captured by a Mongol patrol. Although they should have been killed, they had instead been sent back to the sultan as a sign of good will; see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 147.

<sup>8</sup>On Ghāzān Khān's conversion to Islam, see Charles Melville, "Pādishāh-i islām: The Conversion of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān," *Pembroke Papers* 1 (1990): 159–77.

<sup>9</sup>There is a very good description of this campaign by Reuven Amitai, "Whither the Īlkhānid Army? Ghāzān's First Campaign into Syria (1299–1300)" in *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500–1800)*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Leiden, 2002): description of the campaign: 225–53; composition of the armies: 239–44; on the bibliography dealing with previous studies on Ghāzān Khān's incursions in Syria: 222, n. 7.

<sup>10</sup>At the time of Ghāzān Khān's first invasion of Syria, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (second reign, 1299–1309) was at the head of the Mamluk armies. He was only fifteen years old. The sultan's power rested in the hands of the great amirs: Salār (*nā'ib al-salṭānah*) and Baybars al-Jashnakir (*ustādār*); see Amitai, "Whither the Īlkhānid Army?" 226–27.



kings against the Mamluk sultanate.<sup>11</sup> Abāqā sent several embassies, notably at the time of the Lateran council of 1274.<sup>12</sup> Arghūn in turn sent several missions to the West, the most important of which was headed by the Nestorian monk Rabban Ṣawmā in 1287.<sup>13</sup> In 1299 he sent two letters, in Mongolian and Latin, to the papacy<sup>14</sup> and to King Philip IV of France.<sup>15</sup> Before his campaign of 1299–1300, Ghāzān Khān contacted the king of Cyprus, Henri II de Lusignan, in the hope of obtaining military assistance.<sup>16</sup> After his return to Persia without having

<sup>11</sup>On the relations between the Ilkhans and the West, see Jean Richard, “Le début des relations entre la papauté et les Mongols de Perse,” *Journal asiatique* 237 (1949): 291–97, reprinted in *Les relations entre l’Orient et l’Occident au Moyen Age: Etudes et documents* (London, 1977); idem, “D’Ālğigidaï à Gazan: la continuité d’une politique franque chez les Mongols d’Iran,” in *L’Iran face à la domination mongole*, ed. Denise Aigle (Tehran, 1997), 57–69, reprinted in *Francs et Orientaux dans le monde des croisades* (London, 2003); idem, “La politique orientale de Saint Louis: La croisade de 1248,” in *Septième centenaire de Saint Louis: Actes des colloques de Royaumont et de Paris (17–21 mai 1970)* (Paris, 1976), 197–207, reprinted in *Les relations entre l’Orient et l’Occident au Moyen Age*. For a survey of Ilkhanid-European relations, see John A. Boyle, “The Il-Khans of Persia and the Princes of Europe,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 20 (1976): 25–40; Karl Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschernein 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels*, Studi e testi no. 291 (Vatican City, 1981), 67–82. For Hülegü’s letter of 1262, see Paul Meyvaert, “An Unknown Letter of Hulagu, Il-Khan of Persia, to King Louis IX of France,” *Viator* 11 (1980): 245–59; Denise Aigle, “The Letters of Eljigidei, Hülegü and Abaqa: Mongol Overtures or Christian Ventriloquism?” *Inner Asia* 7, no. 2 (2005): 143–62.

<sup>12</sup>See Jean Richard, “Chrétien et Mongols au concile: la papauté et les Mongols de Perse dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle,” in *1274, année charnière, mutations et continuités, Lyon-Paris, 30 septembre–5 octobre 1974*, Colloques internationaux du CNRS, no. 558 (Paris, 1977), 30–44; Aigle, “The Letters of Eljigidei, Hülegü and Abaqa,” 152–54.

<sup>13</sup>On Rabban Ṣawmā’s embassy, see Morris Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West* (Tokyo/New York/London, 1992). Syriac narrative on this mission in: *Histoire de Mar Jab-Alaha, Patriarche et de Raban Sauma*, ed. Paul Bedjan (Leipzig, 1895); French translation by J.- B. Chabot, *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha III, Patriarche des Nestoriens (1281–1317) et du moine Rabban Ṣauma, Ambassadeur du roi Argoun en Occident (1287)* (Paris, 1895). There is now an Italian translation with commentaries by Pier Giorgio Borbone, *Storia di Mar Yahballaha e di Rabban Sauma: un orientale in Occidente ai tempi di Marco Polo* (Turin, 2000).

<sup>14</sup>Arghūn sent a letter in Latin, dated 18 May 1285 in Tabriz, to Pope Honorius IV. It is reproduced in Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern*, 244–46. A letter in Mongol, dated the fifth of the new moon of the first month of the Year of the Tiger (14 May 1290) in Urmiya, was sent to Pope Nicholas IV. It has been published and translated with a commentary by Antoine Mostaert and Francis W. Cleaves, “Trois documents mongols des Archives Secrètes du Vatican,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15, no. 3–4 (1952): 445–67.

<sup>15</sup>Text and commentaries in *Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhans Argun et Öljeitü à Philippe le Bel*, ed. Antoine Mostaert and Francis W. Cleaves (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 17–53. Arghūn’s letter was an answer to a promise made by the king of France to send an army should the Ilkhan launch a war against the Mamluks.

<sup>16</sup>After the fall of Acre and the loss of their last possessions in the Holy Land in 690/1291, the



as much as made contact with the Mamluk army, the Ilkhan exchanged letters and embassies with Pope Boniface VIII with the objective of forming a united front against the Mamluks.<sup>17</sup> Öljeitü too, in 1305, long before his invasion of Syria in 1312, sent a letter in Mongolian to the kings of France and England with the same purpose in mind.<sup>18</sup>

As can be seen, Ghāzān Khān's reign did not by any means inaugurate an era of peace. In fact, immediately after converting to Islam, he adopted the title *Pādishāh al-Islām* (king of Islam), thus making plain his ambition to assume the leadership of the Muslim world. The Ilkhan advanced religious justifications for his invasion of Bilād al-Shām in December 699/1299.<sup>19</sup> He accused the Mamluks of having invaded Ilkhanid territory at Mardīn, where they were supposed to have committed various acts of moral turpitude (*af'āl-i makrūh*). Amongst the misdeeds ascribed to them were orgies with the daughters of Muslims (*dukhtarān-i musalmānān*) and drinking sessions in mosques, all during the month of Ramaḍān.<sup>20</sup> A fatwa of "the imams of the faith and the ulama of Islam"<sup>21</sup> had entrusted Ghāzān Khān with

Franks had withdrawn to Cyprus.

<sup>17</sup>In spring 1302, Ghāzān Khān sent a letter to this pope in Mongol script. Text and commentaries in Mostaert and Cleaves, "Trois documents mongols," 467–78.

<sup>18</sup>Text and commentaries in *Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhans Argun et Öljeitü à Philippe le Bel*, 55–85. In parallel with this pursuit of an alliance with the Christian West, the Ilkhans sent a series of letters and embassies to the Mamluk sultans inviting them to submit: Hülegü to Qutuz in 1260; Abāqā to Baybars in 1268 and 1277; Geikhetü to al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalil in 1293. Ghāzān Khān in turn wrote to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn in 1300 and 1302, again ordering the Mamluks to submit. On these letters, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abaga Ilkhān and Sultan Baybars (A.H. 667/A.D. 1268–69)," *Central Asiatic Journal* 38, no. 1 (1994): 11–33; idem, "Mongol Imperial Ideology," 57–72, where several of these letters are the subject of a commentary.

<sup>19</sup>Beyond Reuven Amitai's studies cited in the notes above, on Ghāzān Khān's campaigns in Syria, see Angus D. Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks* (Leiden, 2001), 136–46. The author emphasizes the role played by the Armenians.

<sup>20</sup>Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, ed. Karl Jahn (s'-Gravenhague, 1957), 124. This information is confirmed by Abū al-Fidā', who writes that this Mamluk incursion provided Ghāzān Khān with the pretext to invade Syria; see *Memoirs of a Syrian Prince: Abu'l-Fidā', Sultan of Hamāh (672–732/1273–1331)*, translated with an introduction by Peter M. Holt (Wiesbaden, 1983), 35.

<sup>21</sup>Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, 125. The following year, in his correspondence with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Ghāzān Khān once more condemned the Mamluk atrocities against Mardīn and its region, and affirmed that this was his reason for invading Syria; see *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*, ed. and trans. Li Guo (Leiden and Boston, 1998), vol. 1 (English translation), vol. 2 (Arabic text), 1:181–84, 2:212–14 (Ghāzān Khān's letter); 1:194–98, 2:243–47 (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reply) (hereafter cited as Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī); Mufaḍḍal Ibn Abi al-Faḍā'il, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fīmā ba'da Ibn al-'Amīd*, ed. and trans. E. Blochet as *Histoire des sultans mamluks*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 12, fasc. 3, vol. 14, fasc. 3, vol. 20, fasc. 1 (Paris, 1919–29), 20:1:549–54 (Ghāzān Khān's letter); 571–80 (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's



his mission against the perpetrators of these offences. The Ilkhan thus presented himself as the protector of Islam. It should be emphasized that his conversion had caused a considerable stir in the Muslim East,<sup>22</sup> and the population of Damascus, which had suffered from the exactions of the Mamluk ruling class, was ready to come to terms with the Mongols, particularly after the *amān* that Ghāzān Khān had caused to be read in the Umayyad Mosque on 8 Rabi' II 699/2 January 1300, some days after his victory at Wādī al-Khaznadār on 27 Rabi' I 699/22 December 1299.<sup>23</sup>

Bilād al-Shām was not the only front that Ghāzān Khān's conversion opened in the hostilities between the two rival powers; repercussions were also felt in the Hijaz. In 702/1303, when Ghāzān Khān was in the Najaf region, just before his last invasion of Syria, he issued a decree in support of the sayyids and guardians of the Ka'bah in which he declared his attachment to the two holy cities. He planned to organize a caravan under the protection of the amir Quṭlugh-Shāh<sup>24</sup> and a thousand horsemen, which would bear a cover (*sitr*) for the Ka'bah and a decorated *maḥmal* in his name. Twelve gold tomans were to be distributed to the governors of Mecca and Medina as well as to the Arab notables and tribal shaykhs.<sup>25</sup> Quṭlugh-Shāh's defeat at Marj al-Ṣuffār in April 702/1303, however, obliged Ghāzān Khān to renounce these plans. The Ilkhan's death in 703/May 1304 finally put an end to his ambitions.

Ghāzān Khān, having officially converted to Islam in 1295, attacked Syria three times. His first invasion, during the winter of 699/1299–1300, was to some extent a success, as he temporarily occupied Syria. The occupation of Damascus resulted in a crisis in the city which illuminates a number of aspects of social solidarities there, as has been demonstrated by Reuven Amitai in an article published in 2004.<sup>26</sup> In the present article, I propose to analyze the three so-called

reply).

<sup>22</sup>The account of Ghāzān Khān's conversion is reported by al-Jazarī, on the authority of 'Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī, in his "Jawāhīr al-Sulūk" (Bibliothèque nationale MS arabe 6739, fols. 155v–157v), and by the Persian sources, particularly Rashīd al-Dīn, who gives a very different version; see Melville, "Pādīshāh-i islām," 159–77.

<sup>23</sup>See the discussion on this confrontation in Amitai, "Whither the Īlkhānid Army?" 221–64 (see also the bibliography, note 7).

<sup>24</sup>In the sources, this person's name appears in two forms: Quṭlugh-Shāh or Quṭlū-Shāh. In this article I have adopted the former, which corresponds to his exact title.

<sup>25</sup>Charles Melville, "The Year of the Elephant' Mamuk-Mongol Rivalry in the Hejaz in the Reign of Abū Sa'īd (1317–1335)," *Studia Iranica* 21 (1992): 207.

<sup>26</sup>Reuven Amitai, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden and Boston, 2004), 21–39. The author studies the cases of the Mamluk amir Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq, Arjuwāsh, the governor of the citadel, and a major religious authority of the city, Ibn



“anti-Mongol” fatwas issued by Ibn Taymiyah. When read in the context of the historic circumstances in which they were written, these fatwas inform us as to Ibn Taymiyah’s attitude in face of the danger represented by the Mongol attempts to gain control of Bilād al-Shām. They reveal the great Hanbali scholar’s view of the Mongol regime as well as his position regarding Shi‘ism and certain religious communities in Bilād al-Shām, whom he considered dissidents from Sunni Islam; in other words, these fatwas acquaint us with Ibn Taymiyah’s thinking at a crucial point in the region’s history. In order to properly understand the argument that Ibn Taymiyah develops in these texts, they must be read, not only in the light of the events that took place in the region as we know them from the historical sources, but also in relation to the terms of the *amān* that Ghāzān Khān caused to be read to Damascus’s population in the Umayyad Mosque. By means of that *amān*, Ghāzān Khān expressed his vision of the role that the Persian Ilkhanate should play in the Muslim East.

#### SOURCES AND STUDIES

There is no critical edition of Ibn Taymiyah’s fatwas. The Riyadh edition, published in thirty volumes, is regarded as authoritative today.<sup>27</sup> The three fatwas in question are to be found in volume 28 (*Kitāb al-Jihād*).<sup>28</sup> They differ considerably in length. The first is seven pages long,<sup>29</sup> the second is unusually long for a document of this kind at thirty-five pages,<sup>30</sup> and the third is eight pages long.<sup>31</sup> It is possible, on the basis of the content of the fatwas, which includes numerous references to historic events attested in the chronicles, as well as the names of persons and places, to give an approximate date for the three documents. As is shown below, the order in which they appear in the Riyadh edition does not correspond to the chronological order in which they were issued.

Despite their historic interest, these three fatwas have not been the subject of many studies. The first reference to Ibn Taymiyah’s anti-Mongol fatwas appears in Henri Laoust’s *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiya*, published in 1939.<sup>32</sup> Laoust uses various passages from the fatwas to

Taymiyah.

<sup>27</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (Riyadh/Mecca, 1381–86/1961–67, repr. 1417/1995). Old edition, also not critical: Ibn Taymiyah, *Kitāb Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (Cairo, 1326–29/1908–11). In this edition, the anti-Mongol fatwas are located in vol. 4, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 289–302.

<sup>28</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:501–52.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 501–8.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 509–43.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 544–51.

<sup>32</sup>Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiya, canoniste*



illustrate the thinking of their author, but without engaging in a systematic study of them.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Raff's short monograph,<sup>34</sup> published in a very limited edition, dates from 1973. The writer presents the historic context in which Ibn Taymīyah's action took place, and then proposes an analysis of the second fatwa, long extracts from which he translates into English. Thomas Raff assumes that the fatwa was issued shortly before the battle of Marj al-Şuffār (2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303): "Ibn Taimiya devoted his efforts to inciting the fanaticism of Mamluk troops for the crucial day, i.e. the Battle of Marj as-Şuffār, by making exhortations to them and even participating in the combat himself."<sup>35</sup> Thomas Raff's analysis, which is not thematically structured, is at times somewhat confused. In addition, he commits some errors of interpretation regarding the Mongol culture and political regime that Ibn Taymīyah denounces. His study's principal aim is to present the Hanbali scholar as a fervent partisan of jihad, when in fact, as we shall see, his position was a far more subtle one, arising from the circumstances the people of Damascus were faced with due to the state of war. Jean Michot addressed the issue of these fatwas, especially the second one, in his translation of Ibn Taymīyah's *Lettre à un roi croisé*, and in a twenty-page article, both published in 1995.<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, he does not study the legal arguments deployed by Ibn Taymīyah. While Jean Michot's two publications are founded on an immense erudition, they essentially seek to highlight the role played by the Hanbali scholar their author terms "the great Damascene teacher"<sup>37</sup> during this time of crisis, when Muslims of the city came to seek his advice on how to face aggressors who had converted to Islam. We are, nevertheless, indebted to Michot for having established the correct reading of a defective spelling, something Thomas Raff had failed to do. This reading allows us to understand a passage of the second fatwa which had until then remained obscure: "*aḥkām al-mushrikīn—kanā'isan—wa-jankhishkhān malik.*" Jean Michot demonstrates that the word *kanā'isan* is in fact a corruption of *ka-yāsā*, the manuscript form of which is very similar.<sup>38</sup> This

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*hanbalite né à Harrān en 661/1262, mort à Damas en 728/1328* (Cairo, 1939).

<sup>33</sup>Henri Laoust, *Essai*, 63–65 (the Mongol danger); 117–23 (the struggle against the Tatars); 368–69 (the jihad).

<sup>34</sup>Thomas Raff, *Remarks on an Anti-Mongol Fatwā by Ibn Taimīya* (Leiden, 1973).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>36</sup>Ibn Taymīyah, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, ed. and trans. Jean Michot, *Sagesses musulmanes*, no. 2 (Louvain-la-Neuve and Lyon, 1995); *idem*, "Un important témoin de l'histoire et de la société mameloukes à l'époque des Ilkhans et de la fin des croisades: Ibn Taymiyya," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet (Louvain, 1995), 335–53.

<sup>37</sup>Ibn Taymīyah, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 9.

<sup>38</sup>See the clever reading of this passage in Michot, "Un important témoin," 346.



renders the phrase comprehensible: “that which, of the rules of the associationists (*aḥkām al-mushrikīn*)—such as the *yāsā* (*ka-yāsā*) of Chinggis Khan, king of the polytheists—is most gravely contrary to the religion of Islam.”<sup>39</sup> This reference to the *yāsā* enables us to understand Ibn Taymīyah’s argument when he refutes the political regime of the Mongols and their version of Islam.

In addition to Ibn Taymīyah’s fatwas, this article will analyze the text of the *amān* to Damascus’s population issued by Ghāzān Khān and the letters exchanged between the latter and sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. These texts have been transmitted to us by a number of Mamluk chronicles, some contemporary with the events and some slightly later.<sup>40</sup> It is, however, the historians of the Syrian school who are richest in detail concerning the occupation of Damascus. The principal source for the period is al-Birzālī, but the text is not very accessible.<sup>41</sup> For this reason I have relied here on the *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān* of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1325–26), whose authorities for the events of the period in question are al-Birzālī (d. 739/1338–39) and al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338–39).<sup>42</sup> In all the sources, the text of the *amān* appears to have been faithfully transmitted, with few divergences.

<sup>39</sup>*Majmūʿ Fatāwā*, 28:530.

<sup>40</sup>The historical sources dealing with this period are rich and plentiful. They have been analyzed by Donald P. Little in his work *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāʾūn*, Freiburger Islamstudien, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1970). The text of the *amān* has been transmitted by Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghurar*, vol. 9, *Al-Durr al-Fākhīr fī Sirat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, ed. Hans R. Roemer (Freiburg and Cairo, 1960), 20–23 (hereafter cited as *Kanz*); an anonymous chronicle published by K. V. Zetterstéén, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlukensultanane in den Jahren 690–741 der hīgra nach arabischen Handschriften* (Leiden, 1919), 66–68 (hereafter cited as *Beiträge*); Mufaḍḍal Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd*, 14:3:476–81 (hereafter cited as Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil).

<sup>41</sup>Al-Birzālī, “Muqtafā li-Tārīkh al-Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Abī Shāmah,” Topkapı Sarayı MS Ahmet III 2951/1–2; on the poor state of the manuscript, see Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography*, 46–47, and Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 41. On the events of 699/1299–1300, see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:132–65, 2:97–127. See also J. Somogyi, “Adh-dhahabīs Record of the Destruction of Damascus by the Mongols in 699–700/1299–1301,” in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Löwinger and J. Somogy (Budapest, 1948), 2:353–86 (hereafter cited as al-Dhahabī). As Reuven Amitai points out (“The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 26, n. 22), the translation of al-Dhahabī’s *Tārīkh al-Islām* is not always an exact translation of the manuscript in the British Library (MS Or. 1540, fols. 123a–131a). The sources for the events in question here have been analyzed in Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography*, chapter 1, and in Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:54–80.

<sup>42</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:139–41, 2:102–4. It seems that Ibn al-Dawādārī and *Beiträge*’s author did not utilize Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, but rather his source, al-Jazarī.



**THE MONGOLS, THE NEW DISSIDENTS OF ISLAM**

## THE FATWAS AND THE STATUS OF THE COMBATANTS

The context is one of war. The principal objective of Ibn Taymīyah's three fatwas is, *a priori*, to determine the status of the soldiers who were fighting, at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, in the armies of the two sides. In 658/1260, when Hülegü had attempted to seize Syria, fighting his soldiers did not pose any particular legal problem as the Mongols were at that time considered infidels. It was a question of repelling invaders who, like the Christian Franks, sought to capture a part of the Islamic territory, the *dār al-islām*. Jihad against the invaders was entirely legitimate. But when, forty years later, Ghāzān Khān attacked Bilād al-Shām, most of his soldiers were converts to Islam like himself. The Muslims who came to Ibn Taymīyah in search of a legal opinion did not know what stance to adopt towards this new kind of aggressor: what did the imams have to say about these Tatars (i.e., the Mongols) who were advancing towards Syria, given that they had pronounced the two declarations of faith (*shahādātayn*), claimed to follow Islam, and had forsaken the unbelief (*al-kufr*) which they had initially professed? In their ranks were Mamluk prisoners who fought against their Muslim brothers under duress; what was to be done? The Tatars were Muslims like the Mamluks; what was the status of the Mamluk soldier who refused to fight? What was the status of the Mamluk soldiers who had voluntarily joined the ranks of the Tatars?

Ibn Taymīyah was well aware of the danger that Ghāzān Khān's attacks represented, not just from the military point of view but, most of all, because many Muslims did not understand why they should fight against Muslim armies whose leader enjoyed great prestige. He had officially converted to Sunni Islam before becoming Ilkhan, he treated his Persian subjects well, and he was coming to Syria in order to put an end to the tyrannical rule of a military caste. Ibn Taymīyah's fears were also expressed by the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in his reply in Muḥarram 701/September 1301 to a letter that Ghāzān Khān had sent him in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 700/August 1301.<sup>43</sup> The sultan accused his correspondent of stressing his conversion to Islam only to gain a tactical advantage, and lamented that the majority of the heroic troops (that is, the Mamluks) believed his conversion was sincere, and thus refused to fight him.<sup>44</sup>

Ibn Taymīyah's answer to those who sought his opinion on the matter was decisive: the Mongols must be fought, just like all the groups whom it is lawful to fight. He defines these groups in his three fatwas. All of Ibn Taymīyah's arguments are aimed at bringing the Mongols within the scope of one of these categories.

<sup>43</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:181-84, 2:212; Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, 20:1:571-80.

<sup>44</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:195, 2:224; Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, 20:1:574.



Some of the groups that must be fought are classified as *bughāh*, a term which in the early years of Islam designated those who rebelled against legitimate authority.<sup>45</sup> Ibn Taymīyah also includes in the category of groups to be fought those who fail to perform any one of the requirements of Islam, such as the performance of the five canonical prayers, the payment of legally-required tax (*al-zakāt*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (*al-ḥājj*). Those who do not take part in jihad against the infidels (*al-kuffār*)<sup>46</sup> in order to make them submit and pay the poll-tax (*al-jizyah*) must also be fought. Those who engage in adultery (*al-zinā*) and the consumption of fermented drinks (*al-khamar*) must be harshly repressed as they contravene the divine order. These last two acts fall into the category of offences canonically disapproved in the Quran (*ḥudūd Allāh*). Also amongst the groups that must be fought are those who do not order good and forbid evil (*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*), since for Ibn Taymīyah this duty is another form of jihad.<sup>47</sup> In the second fatwa, Ibn Taymīyah includes in the category of groups that must be fought those who deny the free will of God (*al-qadar*),<sup>48</sup> his decree (*al-qaḍā'*), his names and his attributes, as well as those who display innovation (*al-bid'ah*) contrary to the Quran and Sunnah, those who do not follow the path of the pious forebears (*al-salaf*), and an entire assemblage of Muslim religious movements which Ibn Taymīyah considered deviant with regard to scriptures and to the consensus (*al-ijmā'*) of scholars in the religious sciences. As can be seen, this definition of the groups to be fought is a very broad one. Ibn Taymīyah takes the view that every community which is a cause of disorder on the earth<sup>49</sup> must be fought, on the basis of the principle that disorder is more to be

<sup>45</sup>The term *bughāh* also refers to those who overstep the limits in following their own interpretations of the canonical texts. It is not permitted to fight them without having first attempted to bring them back to the straight and narrow. According to Ibn Kathīr, at the time of Ghāzān Khān's third attempt to conquer Syria, the feelings of Damascus' population towards the Mongols were the same. People asked themselves: why fight them? The Mongols were Muslims; they were not rebels (*bughāh*) against al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority since they had acknowledged his power. See Laoust, "La biographie d'Ibn Taimīya d'après Ibn Katīr," 131.

<sup>46</sup>In the Quran, the term *kāfir* (plural, *kuffār*) designates: "Those who disbelieve in that which We have given to them" (*li-yakfurū bi-mā ataynahum*); see Quran 30:34. A more general use of the word to mean "infidel" subsequently became very common. Generally speaking, a *kāfir* is one who rejects a true message although knowing it to be true, whether he is polytheist, Jewish, Christian, or indeed Muslim; see W. Björhman, "Kāfir," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:425–27.

<sup>47</sup>In his theory of jihad Ibn Taymīyah notes that the Kharijites called themselves *ahl al-da'wah*; see Laoust, *Essai*, 362–63.

<sup>48</sup>This refers to theologians who proclaim the principle of God's free will; see Josef van Ess, "Ḳadiriyya," *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:384–88.

<sup>49</sup>On Ibn Taymīyah's conception of grievous sin (*fisq*), see Laoust, *Essai*, 190, 260, 313, 421, 455, n. 4.



feared than death; the public manifestation of heresy is thus to be more rigorously fought against and punished than silent heresy.<sup>50</sup>

The composition of Ghāzān Khān's armies particularly inspired Ibn Taymīyah's anger. In their ranks, he writes, fight infidels (*al-kuffār*), polytheists (*al-mushrikūn*), and Christians. The Mongol armies were indeed made up of elements of diverse origins. They included Christians such as the Armenians and Georgians, as well as Muslim soldiers who, serving local sovereigns (the sultans of Rūm and Bilād al-Shām's principalities), had no choice but to join the Mongol war machine. Reuven Amitai, however, has shown that these forces played only a secondary role in comparison to that of the original Turco-Mongol troops from Inner Asia.<sup>51</sup> Ibn Taymīyah criticizes the make-up of armies for what was, in his eyes, an even more serious reason. Side by side with the Mongol soldiers fought Mamluk amirs and troops who had voluntarily joined the ranks of the invaders. Ibn Taymīyah considered them apostates who must be made to pay the prescribed penalty.<sup>52</sup>

The Mongol ranks included a certain number of renegade Mamluks (*al-munazzifūn*), led by the former governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq al-Manṣūrī (d. 701/1310–11).<sup>53</sup> In 1298, at the end of the reign of Sultan al-Manṣūr Lāchīn (1296–99),<sup>54</sup> news of a new Mongol attack on Syria reached Cairo. A group of high-ranking Mamluk amirs, led by Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq, fled along with their men to the Persian Ilkhanate, hoping thereby to escape the order for their arrest issued by Mengü-Temür al-Ḥusāmī, Sultan al-Manṣūr Lāchīn's *nā'ib* in Damascus.<sup>55</sup> Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq and his amirs were well received on their arrival in Ilkhanid territory, and were immediately sent to Ghāzān Khān's court (the *ordo*) where the

<sup>50</sup>Laoust, *Essai*, 364, n. 2.

<sup>51</sup>See Amitai, "Whither the Ilkhanid Army?" 223–25.

<sup>52</sup>Thomas Raff (*Remarks*, 50) writes that Ibn Taymīyah considered the Rāfiḍī (i.e., the Shi'ites) apostates, but the Hanbali scholar does not use the term *al-murtadd* for any Shi'ite. He criticizes the Shi'ites for helping the polytheists, Jews, and Christians to fight the Muslims and compares them to the Kharijites. However, the Jews and Christians seem not to have been considered apostates by Ibn Taymīyah. See *Majmū' Fatāwā* (Riyadh/Mecca), 28:530.

<sup>53</sup>Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq had been captured in the battle of Elbistan in 1276, and was subsequently enlisted among the mamluks of Qalāwūn; see Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 174, n. 68. He was governor of Damascus from 697/1297 to 698/1298; see his biography in Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mī'ah al-Thāminah* (Hyderabad, 1348–50/1929–32), no. 612, 3:213–15.

<sup>54</sup>On al-Manṣūr Lāchīn's reign, see P. M. Holt, "The Sultanate of Manṣūr Lāchīn (696–8/1296–9)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 3, no. 6 (1973): 521–32.

<sup>55</sup>In Cairo, at the same time, a conspiracy of amirs ended the rule of al-Manṣūr Lāchīn, who was killed along with his *nā'ib*. When Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq and his amirs came to know of this, they realized that their desertion had served no purpose; see Amitai, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus," 22–23.



Ilkhan received them in person. Sums of money were paid to them in accordance with their military rank, and they were given Mongol women in marriage. Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq married the sister of one of Ghāzān Khān's wives.<sup>56</sup> At the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār, the Mongol troops were led by Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq and the Mongol amir Quṭlugh-Shāh (d. 707/1307).<sup>57</sup> The new Mamluk soldiers helped Ghāzān Khān gain victory on 27 Rabī' I 699/22 December 1299.<sup>58</sup> At the beginning of Rabī' II 699/late December 1299, shortly before the Mongol armies entered Damascus, Ibn Taymīyah went to meet Ghāzān Khān with a delegation of Damascene notables. There he saw the Mamluk renegades in the enemy army, which may explain his resentment towards them.

In the second fatwa, the list of those who must be fought due to their collusion with the Mongols is longer and somewhat different. Apart from non-believers of all kinds (*al-kuffār*, *al-mushrikūn*, *al-fussāq*, etc.) and the Mamluk renegades, he cites various categories which do not appear in the other two fatwas. He denounces persons ranking amongst “the worst of the innovators”, such as the Rāfiḍī (i.e., the Twelver Shi'ites), whose heresies had been influenced by those who are amongst “the worst of all creatures: the freethinkers (*al-zindīq*, plural *al-zanādiqah*), hypocrites, who do not inwardly believe in Islam.”<sup>59</sup> Ibn Taymīyah considered that the *zanādiqah* weakened Sunni Islam by divulging the heresies uttered by the Shi'ites.<sup>60</sup> Amongst the dissenting Muslims who must be fought, Ibn Taymīyah cites the extremist Shi'ites (*ghulāt al-shī'ah*), in other words the

<sup>56</sup>Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq was accompanied by ten amirs and his entourage of some 500 soldiers; see Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 23–24.

<sup>57</sup>See his biography in Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Durar al-Kāminah*, no. 648, 3:225; see also David Morgan, “Quṭlugh-Shāh Noyan,” *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., 5:559.

<sup>58</sup>On the ambiguous role Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq played during this battle, see Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 25.

<sup>59</sup>*Majmūʿ Fatāwā*, 28:520.

<sup>60</sup>Laoust, *Essai*, 366.



Ismā‘īliyah and Nuṣayriyah of Syria,<sup>61</sup> the Jahmiyah,<sup>62</sup> the Ittiḥādiyah, believers in mystic union (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and disciples of Ibn ‘Arabī and Ibn Sab‘īn,<sup>63</sup> designated as *ahl al-bid‘ah*. In this second fatwa, the Ilkhan’s Christian allies are omitted from the list of groups to be fought although they are denounced in the other two fatwas. It may be supposed that in drawing up this long fatwa, Ibn Taymiyah’s objective was to set out his view of the Mongol regime, which he saw as undermined by Shi‘ah subversion, and to denounce Syria’s Muslim sects, against whom he was engaged in a relentless struggle because he considered them a danger to Sunni Islam.

#### JIHAD AGAINST THE MONGOLS FROM THE LEGAL POINT OF VIEW

Ibn Taymiyah, in order to justify the practice of jihad against Muslim invaders, relies on the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, but he also sought out historic events from the early years of Islam which could serve as paradigms to support his argument. A case in point was the reign of the fourth caliph, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (656–61). It was during this period that the first great sedition (*al-fitnah*) in the history of the Islamic community took place: the Battle of the Camel in November/December 656 and the Battle of Ṣiffīn in July 657, which in turn led to the emergence of the Kharijites.<sup>64</sup> The precedents established by these famous battles enabled the Hanbali scholar to draw a distinction between different kinds

<sup>61</sup>This was an extreme Shi‘ite sect in Syria and southern Turkey, named after Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Fihri al-Numayri, a disciple of the tenth or eleventh Twelver imam; see Shahrastānī, *Le livre de religions et des sectes*, trans. Daniel Gimaret and Guy Monnot (Paris, 1986), 542, n. 255. Laoust (*Essai*, 124–25) refers to this text. This fatwa was edited and translated into French by M. S. Guyard, “Le fetwa d’Ibn Tamiyyah sur les Nosairis,” *Journal asiatique* 18 (1871): 158–98. It was issued after the raid by Baybars (d. 676/1277) on the Ismā‘īliyah fortresses in Syria; see H. Halm, “Nuṣayriyya,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 8:148–50. As Yaron Friedman points out, Ibn Taymiyah confuses the Nuṣayriyah and the Ismā‘īliyah in this fatwa, no doubt because in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Nizārī branch of the Ismā‘īliyah had taken over a number of fortresses in the mountains where the Nuṣayriyah lived, the Jabal Anṣariyah; see Yaron Friedman, “Ibn Taymiyya’s *Fatāwā* against the Nuṣari-‘Alawī Sect,” *Der Islam* 82, no. 2 (2005): 353. It is the only branch of the *ghulāt* still in existence; see Kais M. Firro, “The ‘Alawis in Modern Syria: From Nuṣayriya to Islam via ‘Alawiya,” *Der Islam* 82, no. 1 (2005): 1–31.

<sup>62</sup>Jahm ibn Safwān (d. 128/746) is the presumed founder of the Jahmiyah sect. From the doctrinal point of view, they held that the Quran had been created, and denied the existence of the attributes of God. They are known primarily from the works of their critics, such as the Hanbalis, foremost among them Ibn Taymiyah, who associates them with the Qādiriyyah and the Mu‘tazilah; see W. Montgomery Watt, “Djahmiyya,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:398–99.

<sup>63</sup>On this personage, see A. Faure, “Ibn Sab‘īn,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:945–46.

<sup>64</sup>On ‘Alī’s caliphate, see H. A. R. Gibb, “‘Alī,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:392–97; E. Kohlberg, “‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1:843–45. On the Kharijites, see G. Levi Della Vida, “Khārijites,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:1106–9.



of rebellion against the authority of the caliph.

Ibn Taymīyah links those rebels, who introduced sedition into the Islamic community in its early years, with the events taking place in his time. Islam, after six centuries of undivided supremacy, was being shaken by these new Muslims whose political ideology permitted them to strike deals with Christians, the heretical sects of Islam, and the Shi‘ah. Ibn Taymīyah’s principal grievance with the Mongols of Iran was their collusion with—in his view—all these infidels. He uses this as the basis for justifying jihad against those who declare that it is permitted “to kill the best of the Muslims.”<sup>65</sup> Since Bilād al-Shām was the scene of a new *fitnah*, he reasons, the Quranic prescription must be followed: “And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allāh.”<sup>66</sup>

The battles which took place during ‘Alī’s reign allowed Ibn Taymīyah to draw a distinction between the different internal conflicts suffered by the young Muslim community. Scholars in the field of religious science had not come to any consensus (*al-ijmā‘*) as to the position to take regarding the adversaries in the battles of the Camel and Şifīn. The believers were free to side with either camp. The Battle of the Camel, which set ‘Alī against ‘A’ishah, had seen several of the Companions of the Prophet, including Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr, take the side of his widow and as it happened, the battle came to an end with the death of those two Companions. At the moment of confrontation between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah, there were those who protested against human arbitration between the two parties, citing the Quranic verse: “And if two parties of believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them. And if one party of them doeth wrong (*baghat*) to the other, fight that which doeth wrong (*allatī tabghī*) till it return unto the ordinance of Allāh.”<sup>67</sup> Conversely, Ibn Taymīyah states, there was indeed consensus among the believers to support ‘Alī in his struggle against the Kharijites. Among their ranks there was no Companion of the Prophet. Since they called for obedience to the prescriptions of the Quran, they could not be excluded from the Islamic community. However, they asserted what was not permitted, that part of the Sunnah of the Prophet contradicted the Book of God. Ibn Taymīyah’s reasoning is straightforward: since the *ijmā‘* of the scholars called for the Kharijites to be fought, it was all the more legitimate to pursue jihad against the Mongols who, while adhering to the laws of Islam, continued to follow the precepts of Chinggis Khan.

At the top of the hierarchy of the groups to be fought within the army of Ghāzān Khān are the Mamluk renegades (*al-munazzifūn*). Ibn Taymīyah relies

<sup>65</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:505.

<sup>66</sup>Quran 2:193.

<sup>67</sup>Quran 49:9.



on the position of the pious forebears (*al-salaf*), who at the beginning of Abū Bakr's caliphate (632–34) termed those who refused to pay the *zakāt* (the legally-mandated alms) apostates, even though they fasted, prayed, and did not fight against the Muslim community. Ibn Taymīyah recalls that according to the Sunnah of the Prophet, the penalty set out for the apostate (*al-murtadd*) is harsher than that which applies to those who are unbelievers (*al-kāfir al-aṣli*). The apostate must be put to death, even if he is incapable of fighting, whereas many jurisconsults do not decree the execution of the unbeliever.<sup>68</sup>

The question of the Mamluk prisoners who were forced to fight in Ghāzān Khān's army was a delicate point for Ibn Taymīyah. Many Muslims were unsure as to whether it was justifiable to kill Mongol soldiers who were Muslims, or worse still, their Mamluk brothers who had been taken prisoner and impressed into the enemy army. Here too, Ibn Taymīyah has recourse to the outstanding events of the first centuries of Islam. He uses the Prophet's first great battle against the Meccans, that of Badr in 624, to justify jihad against Ghāzān Khān's soldiers. During that famous battle, a Companion of the Prophet and several of his followers had been taken prisoner. Ibn Taymīyah considers that if, as at Badr, the Mamluk prisoners fighting in the Mongol army are killed in the battle they will be considered martyrs for God's cause.

As can be seen, Ibn Taymīyah uses the classic procedure of reasoning by analogy in his argument to justify jihad against the Muslim Mongols, transposing to his own time the known cases of *fitnah* that had pitted different groups of Muslims against one another. By virtue of this relatively simple argumentation, the Hanbali sage establishes a typology of the sorts of *bughāh* that must be fought, in order to convince those Muslims who were still hesitating to take up arms to repel Ghāzān Khān's armies. The Mongols are likened to the Kharijites, while the renegade Mamluks, the *munazzifūn*, are relegated to an even worse status, that of apostates (*ahl al-riddah*).

#### A TRACT AGAINST THE MONGOL REGIME

Ibn Taymīyah had numerous contacts with the Mongol authorities, which he reports in his fatwas. His claims are borne out by the historic sources, which give many details on the matter. These contacts are undoubtedly the source of his information on the Ilkhanid political regime and various aspects of Mongol culture. Ibn Taymīyah did not have the opportunity to have a long conversation with Ghāzān Khān; he met the Ilkhan briefly when, accompanied by a group of religious figures from Damascus, he went to meet him on 7 Rabi' II 699/1 January 1300 to ask him to spare the lives of the city's civilian population (that is, to

<sup>68</sup>*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 28:534.



grant them his *amān*).<sup>69</sup> Contemporary historiography has until now maintained that this was the only occasion on which Ibn Taymīyah met Ghāzān Khān.<sup>70</sup> Jean Michot, in 1995, drew attention to the fact that the two might have met again subsequently and suggested that the question deserved to be studied.<sup>71</sup> He based this on the evidence of the Ilkhan's minister Rashīd al-Dīn, who reports a meeting between them which supposedly took place on 9 Rabī' II 699/3 January 1300 at the Ilkhan's encampment at Marj al-Rāhiṭ.<sup>72</sup> The Mongol sovereign asked his visitors: "Who am I?" They replied as one voice, listing his genealogy as far back as Chinggis Khan. In reply to his question as to the name of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's father, they said, "al-Alfī".<sup>73</sup> The Mongol sovereign then asked them the name of the father of "al-Alfī," a question which the Damascene notables were unable to answer. Ghāzān Khān's noble lineage thus could not be compared with the ancestry of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Alfī, that is, the son of a Turkish slave, with no noble lineage.<sup>74</sup> By establishing Ghāzān Khān's prestigious *nasab* in contrast to that of the Mamluk sultan, Rashīd al-Dīn clearly sought to elevate the Ilkhan's prestige in the eyes of the Damascene delegation. This lack of lineage was proof that the Mamluk regime was a mere product of chance, devoid of any right to rule.<sup>75</sup> Given that the Mamluk sources do not mention this meeting between Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah, one may question whether it in fact took place. Rashīd al-Dīn might have confused Ibn Taymīyah's meeting with Ghāzān Khān with the discussions the scholar held with various Ilkhanid authorities, such as his interview with the great amir Quṭlugh-Shāh which took place after Ghāzān Khān's withdrawal from Damascus. Indeed, in his second fatwa, Ibn Taymīyah remarks that a Mongol leader addressed him, saying, "Our king is the son of a king, the son of seven generations of kings, while your

<sup>69</sup>The interview took place in the village of Nabk, near the Ilkhan's camp at Marj al-Rāhiṭ; see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:138–39, 2:101–2; *Kanz*, 20; *Beiträge*, 66. A detailed account of the meeting is given in Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, 14:3:475. The interpreter reported Ghāzān Khān's words to the delegation of notables, informing them that the *amān* they had come to ask for had already been sent to Damascus before their request.

<sup>70</sup>Laoust, *Essai*, 117–20; Raff, *Remarks*, 20–24.

<sup>71</sup>Michot, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 75, n. 125.

<sup>72</sup>Rashīd al-Dīn speaks of a delegation of notables from Damascus (Ibn Taymīyah's name is not mentioned), received by the Ilkhan on 6 Rabī' II 699/31 December 1299. He specifies that the notables had come to meet the Mongol army in order to make their submission (*ilī kardand*); see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, 128.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>The term "al-Alfī" refers to the fact that the sultan Qalāwūn had been bought for a sum of one thousand dinars. Rashīd al-Dīn thus emphasizes that the Mamluk sultans, of servile origin, had in the beginning been mere chattel.

<sup>75</sup>Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, 128.



king is the son of a client.”<sup>76</sup>

Jean Michot assumed that the bulk of the exchanges between Ibn Taymīyah and Ghāzān Khān occurred in the course of the interview Rashīd al-Dīn recounts between these two great figures of the age. He based his hypothesis on a later writer, Ibn Yūsuf al-Karamī al-Marī (d. 1033/1624), who reports the explicit evidence given by the Syrian historian Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347–48) to the effect that the Hanbali scholar had two meetings with the Ilkhan.<sup>77</sup> But the second meeting Michot refers to in this regard does not appear to have happened at the time of Ghāzān Khān’s first invasion of Bilād al-Shām, but rather during his third and final incursion into the region.

Caterina Bori has recently edited and translated a short biography of Ibn Taymīyah which had hitherto remained unpublished.<sup>78</sup> This work, written by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, clearly states that Ibn Taymīyah met the Ilkhan a second time: “at the time of Ghāzān Khān, he (i.e., Ibn Taymīyah) was very active. . . . He met the king twice (*ijtima‘a bi-al-malik marratayn*).”<sup>79</sup> As Bori notes, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī’s remarks as to Ibn Taymīyah’s activity refer to the third invasion of Syria and the famous battle of Shaqḥab (2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303) in which Ghāzān Khān and his army were defeated.<sup>80</sup> Ibn Taymīyah took part in this battle, bearing arms and urging the combatants to engage in jihad. During the fighting he issued a fatwa exempting the Mamluk soldiers from the ritual fast during the month of Ramaḍān.<sup>81</sup> Given the circumstances of Ibn Taymīyah’s meetings with Ghāzān Khān, he can hardly have had the opportunity to engage in a long conversation which could be the basis of his knowledge of the Mongol regime. Ibn Taymīyah did, however, have closer contacts with Ghāzān Khān’s two great amirs, Quṭlugh-Shāh (d. 707/1307) and Mulāy (d. 707/1307),<sup>82</sup> and with

<sup>76</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:542.

<sup>77</sup>Michot, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 75–76, n. 125, citing Ibn Yūsuf al-Marī, *Al-Shahādah al-Zakiyah fi Thanā‘ al-A‘immah ‘alā Ibn Taymīyah*, ed. Najm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khalaf (Amman and Beirut, 1404/1983), 42.

<sup>78</sup>Caterina Bori, “A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 321–48. The manuscript is preserved in the Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus (*Majmū‘* 3128) and is identified, on the basis of its incipit: *hādhihi nubdhah min sirat shaykh al-islām Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymīyah*. See *ibid.*, 321.

<sup>79</sup>“Nubdhah,” fol. 72r.

<sup>80</sup>Bori, “A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya,” 343, n. 29.

<sup>81</sup>The fast had begun on 1 Ramaḍān 702/19 April 1303, on the eve of the battle. Ibn Taymīyah relied on a hadith of the Prophet dating from the year of the conquest of Mecca to excuse the combatants from the ritual fast; see Laoust, “La biographie d’Ibn Taymīyah d’après Ibn Katīr,” 132.

<sup>82</sup>The name of this figure appears in different forms in the Arab sources consulted. Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī gives it in the form Būlāhim or Būlāy, 1:163–64, 2:124; *Beiträge*, 78–79 (Būlay); *Kanz*, 36



various major figures of the Ilkhanid state, including the viziers Saʿd al-Dīn and Rashīd al-Dīn and other important persons<sup>83</sup> such as the Armenian king of Sīs.<sup>84</sup> The historical sources report many details of Ibn Taymīyah's encounters with Qutlugh-Shāh, which took place on 21 Jumādā I 699/14 February 1300,<sup>85</sup> and the amir Mulāy, when Ibn Taymīyah visited him in his tent and negotiated the release of numerous prisoners.<sup>86</sup> On this occasion he had a discussion with the amir about the murder of al-Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet, by Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah on 10 Muḥarram 61/10 October 680. Not wishing to displease Mulāy, Ibn Taymīyah was reserved in giving his views on this topic.<sup>87</sup> Ibn Taymīyah's information on the Mongol regime was undoubtedly based on the discussions he had with important figures in the Ilkhanid state rather than on the conversations he may have had with Ghāzān Khān.

From a reading of these fatwas, it appears that Ibn Taymīyah was well-informed as to the political views of the Ilkhans, but he interprets them according to his own interpretive system—that of the rigorist Islam he symbolized—and from a polemical perspective. Ghāzān Khān, in his three attacks on Syria, was continuing the policy of his predecessors Hülegü and Abāqā, but he portrayed his arrival in Bilād al-Shām as being in the name of Islam. Before analyzing the way Ibn Taymīyah describes the Mongol regime in his second fatwa, it is necessary to consider the *amān* Ghāzān Khān caused to be read in the Great Umayyad Mosque on 8 Rabīʿ II 699/2 January 1300, before the entry of his troops into Damascus.<sup>88</sup>

#### GHĀZĀN KHĀN, LEADER OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

Following his official conversion to Islam, Ghāzān Khān wished to present himself as leader of the eastern Muslim world. Some Persian sources adopt millenarian motifs in dealing with his conversion.<sup>89</sup> He is depicted as renewing Islam, while (Bulāy); Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:504–5 (Mūlāy); Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, 130 (Mūlāy).

<sup>83</sup>According to Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī (1:158, 2:119), those present included: the treasurer Sharīf Qutb al-Dīn and his secretary (*al-mukātib*) Ṣadr al-Dīn, Najīb al-Kaḥḥāl al-Yahūdī, the *shaykh al-mashāʾikh* Nizām al-Dīn Maḥmūd, and the *nāzir al-awqāf* Aṣīl al-Dīn ibn Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī.

<sup>84</sup>On this interview, see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī (1:157–58, 2:119).

<sup>85</sup>Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī recorded the testimony of Ibn Taymīyah on 25 Jumādā 699/18 February 1300; see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī (1:157, 2:119).

<sup>86</sup>He went to his camp on 2 Rajab 699/24 March 1300 and returned to Damascus on 4 Rajab/26 March; see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:163–64, 2:124; al-Dhahabī, 377.

<sup>87</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:163–64, 2:124; *Kanz*, 36; *Beiträge*, 78–79; al-Dhahabī, 379; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:668–69.

<sup>88</sup>The decree had been promulgated on 5 Rabīʿ II 699/30 December 1299, just before the delegation's mission to Nabk on 7 Rabīʿ II 699/ January 1300. Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:142, 2:104.

<sup>89</sup>Melville, “*Pādshāh-i islām*,” 170.



his great amir Nawrūz, who had encouraged him to convert, is described as a second Abū Muslim.<sup>90</sup> After the Abbasid conquest of Syria and Egypt, Abū Muslim had wanted to put an end to the curses uttered against the family of the Prophet.<sup>91</sup> The famous Iranian theologian Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī in his *Nizām al-Tawārīkh*<sup>92</sup> also highlights the figure of the Ilkhan after his conversion to Islam: “Ghāzān Khān has rendered obsolete the bravery of Rūstam [the legendary champion of Iran], the generosity of Ḥātīm al-Ṭā’ī [the epitome of magnanimity in pre-Islamic Arabia],<sup>93</sup> and the justice of Anūshirvān [one of the outstanding pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs].” As Charles Melville quite rightly notes, “Ghāzān Khān puts a seal on these separate strands of Irano-Islamic history.”<sup>94</sup> Ghāzān Khān also had black banners made, resembling those of the Abbasid caliphs, and made Christians and Jews pay the poll tax (*al-jizyah*), from which they had been free since the abolition of the caliphate at Baghdad.<sup>95</sup> The Ilkhan intended, by this series of symbolic actions, to pose as leader of the Muslim community. One can even see in the coupling of Ghāzān Khān and the amir Nawrūz a desire to present the Ilkhanid Islamic regime as successor to the Abbasid caliphate. By denouncing, as we have seen, the misdeeds committed by the Mamluks at Mardīn, he based the legitimacy of his Syrian campaign on Islam. Ghāzān Khān’s position as “king of Islam” (*pādishāh al-islām*) is clearly visible in the text of his *amān* to the population of Damascus, which is laden with Quranic quotations cited in support of his claims.<sup>96</sup>

The text of the *amān* starts with a preamble quite similar to those that open the letters the khans sent to the popes and to Western and Muslim rulers. It begins by praising God: “By the power of God Almighty,”<sup>97</sup> followed by the names of

<sup>90</sup>Melville, “*Pādshāh-i islām*,” 170.

<sup>91</sup>Jean Calmard, “Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans,” in *L’Iran face à la domination mongole*, ed. Denise Aigle, Bibliothèque iranienne 45 (Tehran, 1997), 281.

<sup>92</sup>It is a universal history. Three sets of manuscript versions exist, which have been studied by Charles Melville, who shows that the second set was drawn up by al-Bayḍāwī himself at the beginning of the reign of Ghāzān Khān. Al-Bayḍāwī was undoubtedly in Tabriz and witnessed the events himself; see Charles Melville, “From Adam to Abaqa,” *Studia Iranica* 30, no. 1 (2001): 70. On the different versions, see idem, “From Adam to Abaqa: Qāḍī Baiḍāwī’s Rearrangement of History, Part II,” *Studia Iranica* 35, no. 1 (2007), in press.

<sup>93</sup>C. Van Arendonk, “Ḥātīm al-Ṭā’ī,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:282–83.

<sup>94</sup>Melville, “From Adam to Abaqa: Qadi Baidawi’s rearrangement of history, Part II.”

<sup>95</sup>Melville, “*Pādshāh-i islām*,” 164–70; Calmard, “Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans,” 281.

<sup>96</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:139–42, 2:102–4; *Kanz*, 20–23; *Beiträge*, 66–68; Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, 14: 3:476–81.

<sup>97</sup>Despite its clearly Islamic tone, the text of the *amān* is in line with the documents of Mongol chancelleries. *Beiträge*’s author and Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, who transmit the text in its entirety, differ only in a few minor details. Conversely, in the text transmitted by Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn Abī



the addressees: “The amirs of ten thousand (*umarāʾ al-tūmān*), of one thousand, of one hundred, and all our victorious troops: Mongols, Persians,<sup>98</sup> Armenians, Georgians, as well as all those who have come under the yoke of our obedience (*tāʿatnā*) should be informed.”<sup>99</sup> There then follows Ghāzān Khān’s declaration, divided into three parts.

The first part is dedicated to recalling the great event for the Islamic world that was represented by the Ilkhan’s official conversion to Islam just before his enthronement. Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd al-Dīn Muḥammad, who had heard his profession of faith, had recounted it five years earlier on his return from the pilgrimage, in the Ribāṭ al-Sumaysāṭi beside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. The text of the *amān* emphasizes that Ghāzān Khān had been chosen by God, who had illuminated his heart with the light of Islam. This claim is illustrated with a Quranic quotation: “Is he whose breast God has expanded unto Islam, so he walks in a light from his Lord?<sup>100</sup> But woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! Those are in the manifest error.”<sup>101</sup>

Ghāzān Khān then denounces the Mamluk regime whose governors (*al-ḥukkām*)<sup>102</sup> had left the way of Islam (*khārījūna ʿan ṭarīq al-islām*): they are no longer tied to the commandments of Islam (*bi-ḥukm al-islām*). By their lack of faithfulness to each other, they sow disorder among the population.<sup>103</sup> This last claim is also illustrated by a Quranic quotation: “When one of them turns his back, he would hasten about the earth, to do corruption there and to destroy the tillage and the

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al-Faḍāʾil the eulogy of God which opens the text of the *amān* includes the additional sentence fragment: “Through the power of God Almighty and the good fortune of the reign of the sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān” (*bi-quwwat Allāh taʿālā wa-iqbāl dawlat sultān Maḥmūd Ghāzān*). This second part of the eulogy could be described as a calque of the preambles of the letters sent by the Mongol khans. The Mongolian equivalent of the introduction of Ghāzān Khān’s *amān* would be *möngke tenggri kücündür qaʿan-u süü-dür* (with the force of Eternal Heaven, with the good fortune of the great khan). Here the great khan is replaced by Ghāzān Khān himself.

<sup>98</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 2:102 (*al-bārik*), perhaps for *al-tājik*; *Beiträge*, 62, and *Kanz*, 20 (*al-tatār*); Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:477 (*al-tāzik*).

<sup>99</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:139–40, 2:102; *Beiträge*, 62; *Kanz*, 21; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:476.

<sup>100</sup>This sentence implies: “Is it he who has remained a non-believer?”

<sup>101</sup>Quran 39:22.

<sup>102</sup>The term used in the sources is neither *al-malik* nor *al-sultān*, terms which designated the supreme holder of power in the Mamluk state; *al-ḥukkām* (Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:102; *Beiträge*, 62; *Kanz*, 21; and Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:476) is a term which rather alludes to the governors appointed by the Mamluk sultans. Blochet’s translation is thus not entirely accurate. But it may be possible that Ghāzān Khān employes this term to testify to the superiority of the Ilkhanid regime compared to that of the Mamluks.

<sup>103</sup>Ghāzān Khān here denounces the rivalries and treachery between the various amirs and their houses of mamluks, which led to considerable instability in the power structure.



stock, and God loves not the corruption!”<sup>104</sup> Ghāzān Khān alludes here to the instability of power in the Mamluk state at the time, notably due to the youth of the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.<sup>105</sup> He also criticizes the Mamluks for violating the wives of the Muslims and their goods: justice and equity were absent from the kingdom. Ghāzān Khān’s aim is to justify his Syrian campaign: “our fervor for Islam has urged us to march against this land with a host of soldiers in order to put this aggression to an end and pull this tyranny away.”<sup>106</sup> A further Quranic quotation is enlisted to support this claim: “Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonor, and insolence, admonishing you, so that haply you will remember.”<sup>107</sup> He had come to spread justice (*al-ʿadl*) and charity (*al-iḥsān*), an assertion illustrated by a prophetic hadith saying that those who render justice with equity (*al-muqṣitūn*) will enjoy God’s favor.<sup>108</sup>

The text of the *amān* presents Ghāzān Khān as a sovereign boasting all the qualities of the ideal prince portrayed in the Islamic “mirrors for princes” genre. As his resounding victory over the rebellious enemy (*al-ʿadūw al-tāghiyah*) shows, he is aided by God: “tore them utterly to pieces”<sup>109</sup> and then “the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) has come, and falsehood (*al-bāṭil*) has vanished away; surely falsehood is ever certain to vanish.”<sup>110</sup> Ghāzān Khān is thus presented as the protector of his new subjects, the Muslim populations of Bilād al-Shām. Here we again find the image, presented in both the “mirrors” literature and the prophetic traditions, of the sovereign as shepherd of his flock. It is the duty of the Ilkhan to punish those of his soldiers who had carried out reprehensible acts against the population: “In the confusion, some soldiers engaged in pillage; they have been killed as an example, so that they may cause no harm to the men who practice different religions (*ahl al-adyān*), under the pretext that their beliefs are different from theirs, whether Jewish, Christian, or Sabeian,<sup>111</sup> as since they pay the poll tax (*al-jizyah*), defending them is one of the legal obligations (*al-waḏāʿif al-sharʿiyah*).”<sup>112</sup> In this case, the authority invoked in support of this declaration is a hadith of the

<sup>104</sup>Quran 2:205.

<sup>105</sup>On the lack of sultan’s authority, see Peter M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East From the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), 107–13.

<sup>106</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:140, 2:103; *Beiträge*, 62; *Kanz*, 21; Ibn Abi al-Faḏāʿil, 14:3:477.

<sup>107</sup>Quran 16:90.

<sup>108</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:140, 2:103; *Beiträge*, 62; *Kanz*, 21; Ibn Abi al-Faḏāʿil, 14:3:477.

<sup>109</sup>Quran 39:19.

<sup>110</sup>Quran 17:81.

<sup>111</sup>Here the term Sabians perhaps is an allusion to the Sabians of Ḥarrān; see Tardieu, “Šābiens coraniques et ‘Šābiens’ de Ḥarrān.”

<sup>112</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:141, 2:103; *Beiträge*, 62; *Kanz*, 22–23; Ibn Abi al-Faḏāʿil, 14:3:480.



Prophet: “The imam in charge of people is their shepherd, and every shepherd is responsible for the flock he has under his command.”<sup>113</sup> As can be seen, Ghāzān Khān in this *amān* follows the Mongol tradition that puts all religions on the same footing, all the more important since there were Christians amongst his soldiers and he undoubtedly hoped to win the Christian populations of Bilād al-Shām over to his cause.

Although he is not mentioned by name in the sources,<sup>114</sup> it would appear that Ibn Taymīyah was one of the group of religious figures who attended the reading of this *amān*, as well as the official proclamation, also at the Umayyad Mosque, of the *firmān* naming Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq representative (*al-nāʿib*) of Ghāzān Khān in Syria and governor of Damascus, a position he had held before fleeing to Ilkhanid territory. The aim of these texts was to convince the people of Damascus that the Ilkhan had come to Syria to protect the civilian populations, victims of the Mamluk regime. Ibn Taymīyah’s second fatwa is to some extent a response to the Ilkhanid political ideology, as he saw it through his personal contacts with various Mongol authorities. The official texts which had been read in public during the brief occupation of Damascus in 1300 confirmed for Ibn Taymīyah the danger posed to Islam should Syria come under the control of the Mongols, despite the fact that the latter were themselves Muslims. The letter Ghāzān Khān addressed to al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, some months later, doubtless reinforced Ibn Taymīyah’s beliefs in this regard.<sup>115</sup> On 16 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 700/20 August 1301 a meeting took place in the Citadel of Cairo between the envoys of Ghāzān Khān, including the qadi Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, a descendant of the Prophet, and the great Mamluk amirs. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad made a short speech, studded with Quranic citations, about peace and consensus between Muslims. It was well received by those present. The qadi prayed for the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and then for Ghāzān Khān. The envoys then presented a letter from the Ilkhan sealed with his seal. On 18 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 700/23 August 1301, the letter was read before al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the great amirs, and the rank-and-file Mamluk soldiery.<sup>116</sup> In it, Ghāzān Khān recalled that all that had passed between him and the Mamluk sultan was nothing other than the application of the decree of God

<sup>113</sup>Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Bulaq, 1311–13/1893–95), Aḥkām, 1, Istiqrād, 20; Muslim, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Istanbul, 1334/1916), Imārah, 20; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad* (Cairo, 1313/1896), 54, 111.

<sup>114</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:139; *Kanz*, 20; *Beiträge*, 62; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 14:3:476.

<sup>115</sup>On these events and the letter see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, vol. 1; *Kanz*; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, 20:1:547–54. According to Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, the letter was in Mongol script; see *ibid.*, 549. The text of this letter sometimes differs slightly from al-Yūnīnī’s version. We use here the account of this Syrian historian.

<sup>116</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:181, 2:243.



and of his free will (*qaḍā' Allāh wa-qaḍarihi*).<sup>117</sup> The Ilkhan reminded the Egyptian sovereign that the basis of the confrontation between the two parties was the Mardīn affair which had taken place during the month of Ramaḍān the previous year, when Satan had entered the city.<sup>118</sup> Once again, a Quranic verse was used to support Ghāzān Khān's statements: "[They, i.e., the Mamluks] entered the city, at a time when its people were unheeding."<sup>119</sup> Ghāzān Khān added: "It was the rule of Islam [to be understood as he who directs the *ummah*] to fight against rebels (*ḥukm al-islām fi qitāl al-bughāh*)."<sup>120</sup> For Ghāzān Khān, the rebels in question were the Mamluk soldiers, who were to blame for the disturbances in Mardīn.

#### THE MONGOL POLITICAL ORDER AS SEEN BY IBN TAYMĪYAH

Ghāzān Khān's arguments against the Mamluks are a mirror image of the criticisms Ibn Taymīyah levels against the Mongols; here, the *bughāh* are the Mamluks themselves. For the Hanbali scholar, the danger was pressing, and in the fatwa he therefore presents the Egyptian sultans as the true champions of Islam. According to Ibn Taymīyah, they are part of the group made victorious whom the Prophet referred to when saying: "A group of my community will never cease to show their support for the victory of right, and neither those who oppose them nor those who betray them shall cause them any harm, until the hour passes."<sup>121</sup> From Yemen to Andalusia, Ibn Taymīyah observes, the Muslim world was weakened by disunity, the poor participation in jihad against the Franks, Tartars, and sectarian religious movements. Worse still, those who were in authority in Yemen had sent a message of submission and obedience to the Ilkhans.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, in the Hijaz, the people were straying and the believers were being degraded, all the more so since Shi'ism was gaining the upper hand.<sup>123</sup> Ibn Taymīyah here refers to the difficulties the Mamluks had encountered in imposing their rule in the cities of the Hijaz and Yemen, a region with a long tradition of Zaydī Shi'ism. Since the conquest of Yemen in 569/1174 by Saladin's son Tūrān-Shāh, it had been the duty of the "Sultan of Islam" to protect the holy places of the Hijaz and settle succession disputes between the *sharīfs* (descendants of the Prophet) of Mecca and Medina. Ibn Taymīyah saw Ghāzān Khān's claims over the holy places, as well as those of Öljeitü at a later stage, as a grave danger for Sunni Islam, and for

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 1:181, 2:212.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 1:182, 2:212.

<sup>119</sup>Quran 28:15.

<sup>120</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:182–83, 2:213.

<sup>121</sup>*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 28:531.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 533

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.



this reason he argued in favor of the Mamluk regime. The Mongols looked down on al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Alfi's lack of noble lineage. But in a polemical spirit, Ibn Taymiyah retorted that Ghāzān Khān's ancestors were without doubt all sons of kings, but they were all sons of infidel kings. There was nothing to be proud of about being the son of an infidel king; a Muslim Mamluk is better than an infidel king.<sup>124</sup> In Ibn Taymiyah's view, the Mongol dynasty of Iran is thus personified by infidel kings and impious Muslims.

Through his contacts with a number of high-ranking figures in the Ilkhanid state, Ibn Taymiyah gained information about the Mongol political ideology. The Hanbali scholar reproaches the Ilkhans for not fighting on behalf of Islam, but rather in order to gain the submission of peoples, whoever they might be: "Whoever enters into their obedience of the Age of Ignorance (*al-jāhiliyah*) and into their infidel way (*al-kufriyah*) is their friend (*ṣadīquhum*), even if he is an infidel (*al-kāfir*), a Jew, or a Christian. Whoever refuses to submit is their enemy (*adūwuhum*), even if he were to be one of the prophets of God."<sup>125</sup>

This second fatwa, indeed, represents the world order as the Mongols imagined it: they were invested with the mandate of eternal Heaven (*mōngke tenggeri*). The realization of this world order involved drawing a distinction between peoples "in harmony" (*il*) and those in a "state of rebellion" (*bulgha*).<sup>126</sup> In 1246 the great khan Güyük had sent a letter to Pope Innocent IV, of which we have a Persian copy. He wrote, "By divine power (*bi-quvvat-i khudāy*),<sup>127</sup> from the rising to the setting of the sun, all territories have been granted to us. . . . You must now say, with a sincere heart, 'We are in harmony with you (*īli*)' . . . , then we will know of your submission. . . . And if you do not observe God's order, and contravene our orders, you will be our enemies (*yāghī*)."<sup>128</sup>

The Ilkhans adopted for themselves the idea of the heavenly mandate enunciated by the great khans. In a letter in Arabic which Hülegü addressed to the Ayyubid ruler of Syria, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, inviting the latter to join his forces with Hülegü's, he wrote: "We have conquered Damascus by the sword

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 542.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 525. Giovanni de Plano Carpini, citing the laws and ordinances (*leges et statuta*) of Chinggis Khan, was one of the first writers to mention this obligation of submission; see Iohannes de Plano Carpini, *Ystoria Mongalorum*, vol. 1 of *Sinica Franciscana*, ed. P. Anastasius Van den Wyngaert (Quarrachi-Firenze, 1929), 64.

<sup>126</sup>On these two terms see Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente in Neupersischen* (Wiesbaden, 1963–75), vol. 2, no. 768 and no. 653.

<sup>127</sup>The original Mongolian text probably included the formula *mōngke tenggeri künciindiür* (with the force of Eternal Heaven), the Turkish equivalent of which appears in the preamble to the letter: *māngü tāngri künciündä* (in the Latin version: *dei fortitudo*).

<sup>128</sup>Here the term *yāghī* is an equivalent to classical Mongol *bulgha*.



of God (*fataḥnāhā bi-sayf Allāh*), we are the army of God (*naḥnu jund Allāh*).”<sup>129</sup> As the letter was addressed to a Muslim sovereign, the term *Allāh* replaced the Mongolian *tenggeri* so as to make sense in the addressee’s culture. The intention is to affirm that the Mongols enjoyed a divine mandate.

The concept of Eternal Heaven was readily understood by the Christians, and by the Muslims, as a metaphor for a personalized God. But the *tenggeri* of the mediaeval Mongols referred as much to the physical sky as to the supernatural entities that might reside there, and was not worshipped at all. As for the term *möngke*, it does not evoke the Christian idea of an eternity with neither beginning nor end, but rather solidity and durability.<sup>130</sup> In the *Secret History of the Mongols*,<sup>131</sup> the influence of this concept is clearer from the reign of Chinggis Khan’s successor Ögödei on, and we subsequently find the formula repeatedly used to indicate that the ruler enjoyed the protection of the *tenggeri*.<sup>132</sup>

This Mongol political theocracy was, of course, sharply rejected by Ibn Taymiyah who found in it a weighty argument against Ilkhanid Islam. The Tatars may have pronounced the Muslim declaration of faith, he writes, but they have deviated from the laws of Islam (*khārijūn ‘an sharā‘i al-islām*) by keeping their ancient beliefs from the Age of Ignorance. One observes that Ibn Taymiyah is addressing the same reproaches to the Ilkhans that Ghāzān Khān levelled against the Mamluks in his *amān*. The Hanbali scholar explains the deviant theology of the Mongols as follows: “It is that the Tatars believe grave things about Chinggis

<sup>129</sup>Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, ed. A. Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut, 1890), 277. On this letter see also Hein Horst, “Hülagüs Unterwerfungsbriefe an die Machthaber Syrien und Ägyptens,” *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 150, no. 2 (2000): 429–34.

<sup>130</sup>Françoise Aubin, “Some Characteristics of Penal Legislation among the Mongols (13th–21st Centuries)” (paper presented at the conference Central Asian Law: An Historical Overview, Leiden, October 2003). In his *Tat’arac’ Patmut’iwnk’* (History of the Tatars), the Armenian historian Grigor Akanc’i (d. 1335) wrote: “When they [i.e., the Mongols] unexpectedly came to realize their position, being much oppressed by their miserable and poor life, they invoked the aid of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and they made a great covenant with him to abide by his commands . . . These are the precepts of God which he imposed on them and which they themselves call *yasax*”; see “History of the Nation of the Archers,” ed. and trans. Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12, nos. 3–4 (1949): 289–91.

<sup>131</sup>This text is the first to have been written in Mongolian. It is the bearer of Mongol identity and includes much information on Mongol social and political organization; see Igor de Rachewiltz, “Some Remarks on the Dating of *The Secret History of the Mongols*,” *Monumenta Serica* 24 (1965): 185–205; William Hung, “The Transmission of the Book known as *The Secret History of the Mongols*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14 (1951): 433–92; Larry Moses, “The Quarreling Sons in the *Secret History of the Mongols*,” *Journal of American Folklore* 100 (1987): 63–68; idem, “Epic Themes in the ‘Secret History of the Mongols,’” *Folklore* 99 (1988): 170–73.

<sup>132</sup>See Marie-Lise Beffa, “Le concept de *tänggäri*, ‘ciel’ dans l’Histoire secrète des Mongols,” *Études mongoles et sibériennes* 24 (1993): 215–36.



Khan. They believe that he is the son of God, similar to what the Christians believe about the Messiah (*al-maṣīh*). The sun, they say, impregnated his mother . . . , he was a bastard (*walad ziná*), despite which they hold him to be the greatest messenger of God.”<sup>133</sup>

The reference to Chinggis Khan as the son of God is based on the Mongols’ legend of their origin. According to that legend, Alan-Q’oa, their mythical ancestor, gave birth to three sons after the death of her husband. A being with “pale yellow” skin had crept into her tent three times and its light had penetrated her stomach.<sup>134</sup> Since the *tenggeri* was seen by Christians and Muslims as a personalized God, there was only one step needed to consider Chinggis Khan the son of God. This, for Ibn Taymīyah, was a grave heresy. But, worse yet in the eyes of the Hanbali scholar, since the Mongols considered Chinggis Khan son of God, they elevated him to the rank of a law-giving prophet. Thus the greatest of their leaders in Syria, writes Ibn Taymīyah, when he addressed the Muslim envoys and was trying to find common ground with them declared, “Behold two very great signs (*āyah*) come from God: Muḥammad and Chinggis Khan.”<sup>135</sup>

The information Ibn Taymīyah relied on in denouncing Mongol Islam was based on his interview with the Mongol amir Quṭluḡ-Shāh, converted to Islam under the name Bahā’ al-Dīn.<sup>136</sup> He declared to Ibn Taymīyah he was a descendant of Chinggis Khan and that his illustrious ancestor had been a Muslim (*kāna musliman*).<sup>137</sup> He also said that God had sealed the line of prophets with Muḥammad and Chinggis Khan, the king of the earth (*malik al-basīṭah*); anyone who did not obey him was

<sup>133</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwá*, 28:521–22.

<sup>134</sup>The Mamluk historian al-‘Umārī (d. 1349) reports this legend, which undoubtedly circulated orally in the Muslim East and whose origin is to be found in the *Secret History of the Mongols*; see al-‘Umārī, *Das Mongolische Weltreich: al-‘Umārī’s Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-abṣār wa mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. Klaus Lech (Wiesbaden, 1968), Arabic text: 2–3. Thomas Raff sees in this legend the concept of the immaculate conception, which exists in both Christianity and Islam and would on this basis be present also in the Genghiskhanian tradition. This analysis is not quite accurate, as Raff (*Remarks*, 46–47) repeats the point of view of the Muslim authors themselves. The present writer has shown elsewhere that this legend is part of a wider context of miraculous births attributed to heroes in the East since antiquity. The legend was subsequently Islamized by the Timurid historical tradition, since Timur was presented as the descendant of Chinggis Khan. On the development of this myth, see Denise Aigle, “Les transformations d’un mythe d’origine: l’exemple de Gengis Khan et de Tamerlan,” in *Figures mythiques de l’Orient musulman*, ed. D. Aigle, *Revue des Mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89–90 (2000): 151–68. Ibn Taymīyah muddles Alan-Q’oa, the mythic ancestor of the Mongols, with Chinggis Khan’s mother.

<sup>135</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwá*, 28:521.

<sup>136</sup>According to Thomas Raff (*Remarks*, 46), the leader here is Ghāzān Khān himself at the time of the interview at Nabk.

<sup>137</sup>*Beiträge*, 76; *Kanz*, 32. According to Li Guo/al-Yūnīni (1:157, 2:119) Chinggis Khan was not a Muslim.



considered a rebel (*man kharaja min ṭā'atihi fa-huwa khārijī*).<sup>138</sup> Here again one notes that Ibn Taymīyah's arguments against the Mongols are the same as those used by Ghāzān Khān to denounce the Mamluk regime.

Religious tolerance, or rather the Mongol khans' pragmatism displayed in dealing with the various religious communities of their empire, was another basis for polemics against the Mongols. All the sources are indeed unanimous that Chinggis Khan made it a rule not to give any religion pre-eminence over any other and granted tax immunity for the churchmen if they accepted Mongolian authority.<sup>139</sup> Ibn Taymīyah describes the Ilkhanid regime in the following terms: "Every person who lays claim to a branch of learning or to a religion, they consider him a scholar, whether the jurist (*al-faqīh*), the ascetic (*al-zāhid*), the priest (*al-qīsis*) and the monk (*al-rāhib*), the rabbi (*danān al-yahūd*), the astrologer (*al-munajjim*), the magician (*al-sāhir*), the physician (*al-ṭabīb*), the secretary (*al-kātib*), or the keeper of the accounts (*al-ḥāsib*). They also include the guardian of the idols (*sādin al-aṣnām*)."<sup>140</sup>

In the categories listed by Ibn Taymīyah we find the representative authorities of the three monotheistic religions found in the Ilkhanid empire, but also representatives of important positions in every princely court: administrative officials, physicians, and those charged with determining whether the conjunction of the stars favored the prince in his political and other actions. The reference to the guardian of the idols has a polemic function here. Ibn Taymīyah emphasized the Mongols did not make any distinction between believers who had been granted a divine book and others.

Ibn Taymīyah issues fatwas to construct a typology of religious matters (*'ibadāt wa-sā'ir al-ma'mūr*) amongst Adam's progeny (*min Banī Ādam*).<sup>141</sup> He considers that every act of worship whose origin is a divine order includes three categories (*aqṣām*): the rational (*'aqlī*), the confessional (*millī*), and the legal (*shar'ī*).<sup>142</sup> He considers the rational to be "what the followers of reason among the sons of Adam agree on, whether they have been granted a book or not."<sup>143</sup> The confessional is "what the believers of varied religious confessions (*ahl al-milal*) granted a divine book agree upon," in other words both Muslims and Quranic People of the Book

<sup>138</sup>Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:158, 2:119; *Beiträge*, 76; *Kanz*, 32.

<sup>139</sup>There is a good discussion of the origin of this policy in Yao Tao-chung, "Ch'iu Ch'u-chi and Chinggis Khan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (1986): 201–19. Thanks to Thomas Allsen for this reference.

<sup>140</sup>*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 28:525.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 20:66 (*Kitāb Uṣūl al-Fiqh*). On these fatwas, see also Michot, "Un important témoin," 351–52.

<sup>142</sup>*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 20:66.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*



(*ahl al-kitāb*).<sup>144</sup> The legal is “what is exclusive to the followers of Quranic law.”<sup>145</sup> Lastly, Ibn Taymīyah deals with the question of royal politics (*siyāsāt al-malakīyah*) which come not under a confession or a divine book, but in which the rational and the legal are necessary.<sup>146</sup> To illustrate this type of government, the Hanbali scholar gives the example of the Chinggiskhanid regime.<sup>147</sup>

Chinggis Khan had conceived a law, the *yāsā*, according to “his reason (*‘aqlihi*) and his own opinion (*dhīhnihi*).”<sup>148</sup> On this basis Ibn Taymīyah develops an argument that the Mongols were guilty of blameworthy innovation (*al-bid‘ah*): “He has caused men to leave the ways of the prophets in order to take up that which he has innovated: his way of the Age of Ignorance (*sunnat al-jāhiliyah*) and his infidel law (*sharī‘atihi al-kufrīyah*).”<sup>149</sup> With this reasoning, Ibn Taymīyah argues against the Mongols’ political system. The Ilkhans’ Islam, according to Ibn Taymīyah, exposes the Muslim religion to a grave risk because in it the rational (*al-‘aqli*) had replaced the legal (*al-shar‘i*).<sup>150</sup>

The Mongols of Iran were promoting a modern Islam: they advocated religious freedom and claimed to follow the *yāsā*, the law established by Chinggis Khan. In other words, although they had converted to Islam, the Mongols did not comply with the principles of Islamic law. Ibn Taymīyah denounces a form of Islam where the authority of the *yāsā* perpetuates submission to an indeterminate divinity, the *tenggeri*, at the cost of strict obedience to the shari‘ah.

As we can see, this second fatwa goes far beyond a normal fatwa. It is an outright condemnation of the politico-Islamic order founded by the Ilkhans. The Hanbali scholar seems to synthesize all the information which he can gather on

<sup>144</sup>The Quran and Islamic tradition thus designate the Jews and Christians, holders of an ancient book. The designation was later applied to the Sabeans (Ṣābi‘ūn) of the Quran (the Sabeans of Ḥarrān were considered star-worshippers) and to the Zoroastrians; see G. Vajda, “Ahl al-Kitāb,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:272–74.

<sup>145</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 20:66.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>148</sup>This information regarding the manner of legislating on the basis of Chinggis Khan’s reason is only to be found in the Islamic sources, evidence that Muslim authors saw in the *yāsā* the equivalent of religious law, contrary to the shari‘ah; see David O. Morgan, “The ‘Great Yāsā of Chingiz Khan’ and Mongol Law in the Īlkhānate,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986): 163–76; Denise Aigle, “Le ‘grand yasa’ de Gengis-khan, l’Empire, la culture mongole et la shari‘a,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 1 (2004): 31–79; idem, “Loi mongole vs loi islamique: Entre mythe et réalité,” *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 5, no. 6 (2005): 971–96.

<sup>149</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:523.

<sup>150</sup>Jean Michot, risking anachronism, speaks of “secularization through Genghiskhanian rationalism”; see Michot, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 66; idem, “Un important témoin,” 252–53.



the Mongols. In these fatwas, Ibn Taymīyah refers to persons of high rank and events attested in the historical chronicles. This information allows us to give an approximate dating to these three texts.

#### ATTEMPTING TO DATE THE FATWAS AND CONCLUSION

The first and third fatwas are clearly fatwas that seek to define the status of the combatants in the armies of the two sides. The first fatwa, whose content regarding the Mongols is not as virulent as that of the second, may well have been issued after the Mamluk defeat at Wādī al-Khaznadār, at the time of the occupation of Damascus by the Ilkhanid troops, when Ibn Taymīyah was acting as an intermediary between the local population and the Mongol authorities. This fatwa takes a more conciliatory tone towards the Mongol soldiers. Ibn Taymīyah recognizes that the fact that they are Muslims must be taken into account. While they must be fought, they first must be called to respect the prescriptions of Islam; the *kuffār* who are amongst their ranks must be invited to convert.<sup>151</sup> The third fatwa is dedicated to considering the status of the Mamluks who fought, under duress or willingly, in the Mongol armies. It may have been issued at the time of the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār which was won partly due to their presence in the Mongol ranks.

The “second” fatwa, on the other hand, unusually long, is an outright condemnation of the Ilkhanid regime and Shi‘ism. It addresses the problem posed by the Mongols and their conversion to Islam, but goes far beyond this topic since Ibn Taymīyah also brings up many religious sects in Bilād al-Shām, such as the Ismā‘īliyah, the Nuṣayriyah, and Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers, religious tendencies against which Ibn Taymīyah fought incessantly throughout his life.

Nevertheless, this criticism of the Mongol regime, accused of being under the influence of major Shi‘ite figures, is the essential topic of the fatwa. Thomas Raff cites the absence of any reference to Ghāzān Khān’s third invasion of Syria, on 12 Rajab 702/2 March 1303, or to the Mamluk victory at Marj al-Ṣuffār on 2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303, and on this basis concludes that the fatwa was undoubtedly proclaimed in Rajab or Sha‘bān 702/1303, just before that battle. However, as Jean Michot points out in his translation of Ibn Taymīyah’s *Lettre à un roi croisé*,<sup>152</sup> Thomas Raff missed a clear allusion in the fatwa to Öljeitü’s conversion from Sunni Islam to Twelver Shi‘ism. The king of these Tatars has now been won over to Rāfiḍism, writes Ibn Taymīyah; the Hijaz, if they capture it, will be “entirely corrupted.”<sup>153</sup> Öljeitü’s conversion to Shi‘ism probably took

<sup>151</sup> *Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:404.

<sup>152</sup> Michot, *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 74, n. 125.

<sup>153</sup> *Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:533.



place at the end of 708/1308 or the beginning of 709/1309.<sup>154</sup> The fatwa cannot, therefore, have been written before this date. It may have been written in Cairo, where Ibn Taymiyah was staying, just before the new Mongol threat on Bilād al-Shām in 1312 led by the Ilkhan Öljeitü. At that point Ibn Taymiyah left Cairo to support the jihad in Syria.<sup>155</sup>

Troubled by the establishment of a new political system in a large part of the Muslim world, Ibn Taymiyah denounces the theocratic conception of power based on a law created through the reason of one man, Chinggis Khan. According to the Hanbali scholar, Ghāzān Khān, despite his conversion to Islam, had remained faithful to the Mongol *yāsā*, raising the danger that malign innovations could be introduced into legalistic, shari‘ah-based Islam. The Mongols of Iran, even after their conversion to Islam, had not perpetrated any religious persecutions. They had not made their Islam a “state religion.” Ibn Taymiyah, as a militant Hanbali scholar, was deeply convinced that religion and state were inextricably linked; without the discipline imposed by revealed law, the state would become tyrannical. Ghāzān Khān’s form of Islam, based on the rational (*‘aqlī*), risked competing with the true religion (*dīn al-ḥaqq*),<sup>156</sup> which was based on the legal (*shari‘ah*). Viewed in this light, Ilkhanid Islam was the bearer of a conception of power that did not accept the Quran and the interpretation thereof as its sole source of political legitimacy.

However, Ibn Taymiyah’s “second fatwa” can only be understood in the historical context in which it was written. This was the time of Öljeitü’s conversion from Sunni Islam to Shi‘ism in 709/1309 and his moves to gain control over the Hijaz and the holy places of Islam. For Ibn Taymiyah, the Ilkhanid regime was perverted by Shi‘ite tendencies from the time of its establishment. These began after the fall of Baghdad with the intrigues of Mu‘ayyad al-Dīn ibn al-‘Alqamī (d. 656/1258), minister of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Musta‘ṣim.<sup>157</sup> As far as Ibn

<sup>154</sup>The Ilkhan’s conversion to Shi‘ism was followed by the mass conversion of his amirs, with the exception of the two most powerful, Sa‘id Chūpān and Isen Quṭlugh. From this date forward, the *khutbah* was given in the name of the Shi‘ite imams, and coins struck in their name. See Judith Pfeiffer, “Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeitü’s Conversion to Shi‘ism (709/1309) in Muslim Narrative Sources,” *Mongolian Studies* 22 (1999): 41. As Jean Calmard (“Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans,” 283) points out, the proclamation of Shi‘ism aroused violent opposition in Sunni strongholds in Iran (Isfahān, Qazwin, and Shirāz), despite the fact that the *khutbah* did not include any execration of the Sunnism of the first caliphs.

<sup>155</sup>He returned to Damascus on 1 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 712/28 February 1313, after a brief stay in Jerusalem; see Henri Laoust, “Ibn Taymiyya,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:977.

<sup>156</sup>Quran 9:59.

<sup>157</sup>*Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 28:528. He corresponded with the Mongols prior to their attack on Baghdad and contributed to Hülegü’s victory over the caliph’s army; see John A. Boyle, “Ibn al-‘Alqamī,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:724.



Taymiyah was concerned, this Shi'ite perversion could only lead to a complete Shi'ite takeover of the Ilkhanid regime, a takeover that was consummated with the conversion of the "king of the Tatars to Rāfiḏism." Although he is not named, this assertion relates to Öljeitü. Ilkhanid Rāfiḏism was for Ibn Taymiyah an even greater danger than the Chinggiskhanian rationalism of Ghāzān Khān, for it could spread throughout *Dār al-Islām*, and most of all to the Hijaz. The Mamluk regime was the only bastion against this menace. The situation in Mecca provided the Ilkhan with the opportunity to intervene and to widen the influence of Ilkhanid Shi'ite Islam. Since the death of Abū Numayy, head of the Zaydī Shi'ite Banū Qatādah family, in 701/1302, the struggle for power between his four sons had affected the stability of the holy city.<sup>158</sup> As a result, the Mamluks had considerable difficulty in retaining their influence there. In 705/1306, Öljeitü sent an Iraqi caravan with a *maḥmal*<sup>159</sup> to Mecca, just as Ghāzān Khān had tried to do in 702/1303 shortly before his death. In 710/1310, Öljeitü proclaimed his Shi'ite profession of faith on his future mausoleum at Sulṭāniyah, then capital of the Persian Ilkhanate.<sup>160</sup> In the foundation inscription on the mausoleum, he styles himself "*sharīf al-islām wa-al-muslimīn*," a play on words alluding to his control of the Hijaz through his domination of the *sharīfs* of Mecca.<sup>161</sup> A number of inscriptions engraved on this Sulṭāniyah mausoleum, such as "may God give him victory" and "may God spread his shadow and glorify his lands"<sup>162</sup> clearly refer to the Ilkhan's desire to extend his domain, and by implication to dominate Bilād al-Shām. In Ibn Taymiyah's view, Shi'ism was once again a real danger in the region, all the more so as there were already present numerous Shi'ite sects who were ready to strike deals with the enemy. In this "second fatwa," the virulence of his attacks against the Ilkhanid regime is a response to the Ilkhans' attempts, since their conversion to Islam, to present themselves as leaders of the Muslim world. Öljeitü's future mausoleum in Sulṭāniyah—built with certain parallels with the Ka'bah in Mecca—and its epigraphic program symbolized the Shi'ite Ilkhan's desire to occupy the position of protector of the holy places of Islam, hitherto held by the Mamluks.

In drawing up this fatwa, Ibn Taymiyah was highly conscious of the danger that the Ilkhans' Shi'ite Islam represented for the Sunni Muslim *ummah*. Öljeitü's claims to Syria were to bear no fruit, however: his campaign, launched in 712/1312, would spend a month besieging Raḥbah and never cross the Euphrates.<sup>163</sup> His

<sup>158</sup>Melville, "The Year of the Elephant," 199.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Sheila Blair, "The Epigraphic Program of the Tomb of Uljaytu at Sultaniyya: Meaning in Mongol Architecture," *Islamic Art* 2 (1987): 61.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>Melville, "The Year of the Elephant," 199.



claims to the holy places also came to nothing. His great amir Ḥājjī al-Dilqandī was sent at the head of a thousand troops to the aid of Ḥumayḍah ibn Abī Numayy, who had come to the Ilkhan's court in 716/1316 requesting military assistance against his brother so as to establish his authority in Mecca. News reached Ḥājjī al-Dilqandī on the road that on 30 Ramaḍān 706/16 December 1316 the Ilkhan had departed from this world.<sup>164</sup> As Jean Calmard emphasizes, Öljeitü's religious policy had aroused considerable fears in the Sunni world Ibn Taymīyah so fervently defended. It is in this context that this long fatwa must be read. It is one of the numerous texts that the Hanbali polemicist drew up at the request of the Mamluk authorities, notably in opposition to the great Shi'ite 'ālim Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, to whom the Shi'ite sources attribute the credit for Öljeitü's conversion to Twelver Shi'ism.<sup>165</sup> Finally, while the first and third fatwas are clearly juridical texts, the "second fatwa" is a text that, taking into account the other sources and its markedly polemical character, we might describe as being of a historical nature.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 200. It was reported that Ḥājjī al-Dilqandī had been given orders by Öljeitü to exhume the bodies of the first caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar from their place alongside the Prophet Muḥammad; see *ibid.* Moreover, Öljeitü had in mind to transfer the mortal remains of 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn to his future mausoleum at Sulṭānīyah; see Calmard, "Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans," 284.

<sup>165</sup>See Calmard, "Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans," 282–83.

