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Some Reflections on Timur's Invasion of Mamluk Syria

The Central Asian conqueror Timur-*i lang* (Temür “the Lame”; hence “Tamerlane”) entered the Mamluk dominions at the head of a formidable Chaghatay¹ army in the autumn of 803/1400. He had recently captured and sacked Delhi (801/1398), a goal that had eluded the Chaghadayid khans from Du'a (d. 706/1307) to Tarmashirin (d. 735/1334). Prior to that, he had deprived the Jalayirids of the former Ilkhanid residences of Tabriz and Sulṭānīyah, eliminated the Kartid dynasty based at Herat (791/1389) and the Muzaffarid rulers of Fārs, Kirmān, and ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam (795/1393), and conducted two massive campaigns in the Pontic-Caspian steppes (793/1391 and 797/1395) which effectively shattered the power of his Chinggisid Mongol rival, the Jochid khan Toqtamish.² The invasion of Mamluk Syria would have a less drastic impact. A number of cities were sacked and significant numbers of the inhabitants transported to Timur's chief residence, Samarqand, but Timur made no attempt to advance further, withdrawing across the Euphrates in Shaḅbān 803/March–April 1401. The Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj subsequently forwarded gifts and included the conqueror's name (and that of his nominal Chinggisid khan) on the coinage and in the *khuṭbah*; and Timur appears to have been satisfied with these attentions, which reduced the sultan to a tribute-paying governor. But this vassal status would lapse following Timur's death in Shaḅbān 807/ February 1405.

This paper arises out of research for my forthcoming book *From Genghis Khan to Tamerlane: The Reawakening of Mongol Asia* (Yale University Press). It is a great pleasure to dedicate it to Reuven Amitai, who has made the theme of Mamluk-Mongol relations in an earlier period so much his own.

¹I employ this form for the nomadic cavalry raised by Timur from Transoxiana, as opposed to the form “Chaghadayid,” which appears in the next sentence and denotes the dynasty founded by Chinggis Khan's second son, Chaghadai, and the Central Asian *ulus* ruled by his progeny.

²For good, succinct surveys of Timur's campaigns of conquest, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989), 69–73, and Maria E. Subtelny, “Tamerlane and His Descendants: From Paladins to Patrons,” in *New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 3, *The Eastern Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge, 2010), 174–78. A more detailed account of those in Iran is given by Hans Robert Roemer, “Timür in Iran,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge, 1986), 42–97.



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The sources available for Timur's activity in Syria—and in Damascus especially³—are more numerous and more diverse than for any of his other military operations, encompassing as they do not only the Timurid historians Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī, Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī, and Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, but also chronicles and biographical dictionaries emanating from within the Mamluk territories. In addition, we have the hostile biography of the conqueror by Ibn 'Arabshāh: although he can have remembered little of his abduction from Damascus by the Chaghatay forces as a child of six, following his return to the Near East he drew upon the recollections of others who had witnessed the cataclysm. We also have two accounts from individuals who met Timur in person (and lived to record the experience): the Syrian scholar Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥnah (d. 815/1412), who was part of a deputation to Timur from Aleppo and whose report was later reproduced, in a slightly different form, by Ibn 'Arabshāh, and the Maghribī savant Ibn Khaldūn, who was stranded in Damascus when Faraj and his army retreated to Egypt in Jumādā I 803/January 1401 and was received in audience by Timur more than once during a sojourn of some weeks in the Chaghatay encampment. Lastly, the Sieneese merchant Beltramo di Mignanelli, an inhabitant of Damascus who was fortunate enough to be absent in Jerusalem when Timur invested the city, gathered information on the episode—most probably from his Muslim fellow-citizens—after his return home in 1402 and composed his *Vita Tamerlani* (also called *De ruina Damasci*).⁴

I do not intend here to provide a narrative of the Syrian campaign, which has been dealt with very competently elsewhere.⁵ Instead I shall focus upon a number of incidents during the course of the invasion that may shed light upon the conqueror's character, outlook, and methods, and on his indebtedness to Mon-

³Stefan Heidemann observed long ago that the siege of Damascus is one of the best documented among those of Timur and of the Middle Ages as a whole: "Timūr's Campmint during the Siege of Damascus in 803/1401," in *Matériaux pour l'histoire économique du monde iranien*, *Studia Iranica* cahier 21, ed. Rika Gyselen and Maria Szuppe (Paris, 1999), 180. Timur's *fath'nāmah* for Syria, dated 8 Rabī' I 803/27 Oct. 1400 and found in BNF MS arabe 3423, fols. 398a–400a, covers events only down to the fall of Aleppo.

⁴On the author, see Angelo Michele Piemontese, "Beltramo Mignanelli senese biografo di Tamerlano," in *La civiltà Timuride come fenomeno internazionale*, *Oriente Moderno* 76, n.s. 15, part 2, ed. Michele Bernardini (Rome, 1996), 1:213–26; also the lengthy biographical notice in the recent edition by Nelly Mahmoud Helmy, *Tra Siena, l'Oriente e la Curia: Beltramo di Leonardo Mignanelli e le sue opere* (Rome, 2013), 3:87.

⁵E.g., by Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge, 2008), 187–92; Tilman Nagel, *Timur der Eroberer und die islamische Welt des späten Mittelalters* (Munich, 1993), 325–34; and Michele Bernardini, *Tamerlano* (Rome, 2022), 253–75. On the fall of Aleppo, see Élodie Vigouroux, "Comment Tamerlan a pris Alep en 803/1400," *Annales Islamologiques* 55 (2021): 303–25.



gol tradition. Timur proved himself to be highly resourceful in his ideological and diplomatic maneuvers, and one premise of this article is that his confrontation with the Mamluk regime involved various motives and aspirations that are specific to the Syrian theatre.

At one level, of course, the assault on Syria was simply yet another stage in a series of campaigns designed to humble potentially rival monarchs, to secure recognition of Timur's paramountcy, to acquire copious plunder, and to extract guarantees of future tribute and military support. Can we discern any other objectives? In the secondary literature we repeatedly encounter statements that Timur was endeavoring to recreate the Mongol empire or at least that he proclaimed this as his aim. I have tried to show elsewhere that these assumptions rest on no hard evidence and that it would be more realistic to see his primary purpose in less specific terms, as the revival of a "Mongol order": the suppression of lawlessness and banditry, the creation of optimal conditions for trade and pilgrimage, and the elimination of non-Chinggisid—and indeed non-Mongol—potentates who had usurped sovereignty in Greater Iran, especially, since the death of the Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd (736/1335).⁶

What, then, were the goals of the invasion of Syria? Faraj's father and predecessor, the first Circassian Mamluk sultan, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (d. 802/1399), had undoubtedly given Timur sufficient grounds for opening hostilities. He had put to death Timur's envoys in 796/1394 and had imprisoned the conqueror's foster brother and emissary, *Atlamish. He had further offered a warm welcome to Timur's defiant enemies, the Jalayirid ruler Sulṭān Aḥmad and Qarā Yūsuf, chief of the Qarā-Qūyūnlū Türkmēn.⁷ Was the campaign designed merely to punish Faraj for his father's offenses? It seems unlikely that Timur aimed to assert his own direct rule over Syria and Egypt. His career shows that he was content to maintain a raft of client princes, where possible. Over the years, moreover, the choices he made for his field of operations display a marked flexibility—opportunism, in fact—rather than reflecting any predetermined program. Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn 'Arabshāh both say that he had broken off his campaign in India on hearing the news of Barqūq's death;⁸ and similarly he would retire from

⁶Jackson, *From Genghis Khan to Tamerlane*, chap. 14. On the restoration of a Mongol order, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian Studies* 21, nos. 1–2 (1988): 106, 111, 114.

⁷For relations between Timur and Barqūq, see Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 177–87.

⁸Aḥmad Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib al-maḥdūr fī nawā'ib Tīmūr*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo, 1399/1979), 107 (hereafter Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar); *ibid.*, ed. Aḥmad Fā'iz al-Ḥimṣī (Beirut, 1407/1986–87), 169–70 (hereafter Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī); and *idem*, *Tamerlane or Timur, the Great Amir*, trans. J. H. Sanders (London, 1936), 100 (hereafter Ibn 'Arabshāh, *Tamerlane*), adding news of the death of Burhān al-Dīn, the ruler of Sivas. Walī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Ta'rīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-riḥlatihi gharban wa-sharqan*,



Damascus in some haste in 803/1401 in order to deal with Jalayirid *revanchisme* in Baghdad.

In this context of war aims, we should probably not be misled by Timur's demand, while quartered outside Damascus, that Ibn Khaldūn furnish him with a written report on the tracts between Egypt and the Maghrib, deserts and water supplies, the Arab tribes domiciled there, and the distances involved.⁹ Some authors have assumed in consequence that Timur envisaged a military expedition along the North African coast.¹⁰ This was possibly a danger of which Ibn Khaldūn was conscious when, in writing to the Marinid sultan of Morocco after his return to Egypt, he justified his visit to Timur's headquarters on the grounds that he had been summoned and thus had no choice but to comply.¹¹ If an advance beyond Egypt was ever in Timur's mind, however, it was somewhat impractical, in view of the situation to the rear of the Chaghatay army and the need to complete the subjugation of Jalayirid Iraq. Doubtless the demand for Ibn Khaldūn's report sprang from Timur's well-attested interest in commercial opportunities rather than from plans of conquest.

ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo, 1370/1951), 365, mentions only Barqūq's death in this context.

⁹Thus Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājīm aʿyān al-mufīdah*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī (Beirut, 1423/2002), 2:397. Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʿrīf*, 370, 374; idem, *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane: Their Historic Meeting in Damascus, 1401 A.D. (803 A.H.): A Study Based on Arabic Manuscripts of Ibn Khaldūn's "Autobiography," with a Translation into English, and a Commentary*, trans. Walter J. Fischel (Berkeley, 1952), 35, 38 (hereafter Ibn Khaldūn/Fischel, *Historic Meeting*) is less specific. Ibn 'Arabshāh (*ʿAjāʿib*, ed. 'Umar, 317–18; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 453–54; idem, *Tamerlane*, 297) alleges that Timur was merely trying to test Ibn Khaldūn's knowledge, but in his *Fākīhat al-khulafāʾ wa-mufākahat al-zurafāʾ* (ed. Muḥammad Rajab al-Najjār [Kuwait, 1997], 366; *ibid.*, ed. Ayman 'Abd al-Jābir al-Buḥayrī [Cairo, 1421/2001], 357), Ibn 'Arabshāh invests the commission with a strategic purpose.

¹⁰Rafael Valencia, "Ibn Jaldūn y Tamerlán," in *Ibn Jaldūn: El Mediterráneo en el siglo XIV: Auge y declive de los Imperios*, ed. Jesús Viguera Molins, vol. 1, *Estudios* (Seville, 2006), 179; Muhsin al-Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters: Arabic Knowledge Construction* (Notre Dame, IN, 2015), 29 (suggesting designs even on Spain); Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Orange Trees of Marrakesh: Ibn Khaldun and the Science of Man* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), 149.

¹¹Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʿrīf*, 380, "sami'tu anna sulṭānahum Timur sa'ala 'annī fa-lam yasa' illā liqā'uhu" (Ibn Khaldūn/Fischel, *Historic Meeting*, 45). The story of Timur's enquiry about Ibn Khaldūn may reflect nothing more than the Maghribī scholar's desire to inflate his own importance. Elsewhere, Ibn Khaldūn gives the impression that he left for the invaders' camp from fear of an attempt on his life by those in Damascus who were opposed to surrender merely on the basis of Timur's oral assurances: Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʿrīf*, 368 (Ibn Khaldūn/Fischel, *Historic Meeting*, 31). On the circumstances of his departure for Timur's encampment, see Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research: A Study in Islamic Historiography* (Berkeley, 1967), 44–46.



Let us next consider the economic aspects of the invasion. Our sources testify that Timur's practice was to levy an indemnity on the population of cities that capitulated—what Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī terms, in the context of Isfahan, “horseshoe money” (*naʿl-i bahā*).¹² But one account describes in unusual detail the unscrupulous method by which Timur maximized the quantity of wealth extracted from Damascus. Mignanelli learned that initially, in his dealings with the four qadis who had been sent out to negotiate with him, Timur professed to be interested only in confiscating the goods of Sultan Faraj and those who had fled prior to the invaders' arrival; his agents also compiled inventories of the citizens' property, purportedly as a precaution against looting by his men. Once the citadel had fallen, however, Timur claimed to be disappointed that so little of the sultan's wealth had been unearthed there and demanded monetary compensation for the exertions of his troops. A large quantity of money having been produced, he found fault with the coins, which were of debased silver (in sharp contrast with the Chaghadayid issues), and required a still larger sum. When this was agreed, he raised two fresh issues in succession: the need to compensate the Khurasanian troops in his army and the expenses he would incur in leaving the city and marching home to Samarqand. Spurred on by the expectation of seeing Timur depart at last, the qadis collected a further contribution, only to be confronted with a sudden and unexpected change of tactic. The conqueror handed the city over to his troops, who entered Damascus armed with the inventories and proceeded to extort wealth from the citizens by means of various torments. Finally, he had the young men and women and skilled craftsmen gathered and brought to his camp prior to his departure for Iraq.¹³ These details are sufficiently corroborated in the reports of the Arabic sources—notably al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*¹⁴—for us to regard Mignanelli's narrative as trustworthy in its essentials. They agree on the successful extortion of enormous sums from the Damascenes, and Timurid authors tell us that the alloyed silver was melted down in Timur's camp and reminted in purer metal for ease of

¹² Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, *Zafarnāmah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abbāsī (Tehran, 1957), 1:312; *ibid.*, ed. Sa'īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq and 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā'ī (Tehran, 2008), 1:586. Examples in Jean Aubin, “Comment Tamerlan prenait les villes,” *Studia Islamica* 19 (1963): 97–104. For “horseshoe money” in an earlier period, see 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Tarikh-i jahān-gushā*, ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazwīnī (Leiden, 1912–37), 2:147, and trans. J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Manchester, 1958, repr. in 1 vol. [Manchester, 1997]), 415 and n. 14.

¹³ Mignanelli, *De ruina Damasci*, Latin text in Helmy, *Tra Siena*, 322–31, and trans. Walter J. Fischel, “A New Latin Source on Tamerlane's Conquest of Damascus (1400/1401) (B. de Mignanelli's 'Vita Tamerlani' 1416),” *Oriens* 9 (1956): 217–25. Timur's treatment of Damascus is also examined in Aubin, “Comment Tamerlan,” 100, 106–7 and *passim*.

¹⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ziyādah and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1934–72), 3:3:1039–46; summarized in Heidemann, “Timūr's Campmint,” 182–85.



transportation back from Syria¹⁵—an expedient not encountered in the context of the conqueror's other sieges. Whether we can take Timur's conduct on this occasion as otherwise typical, however, is hard to judge. It was rare, certainly, for a city that had surrendered peaceably and offered an indemnity to then suffer a violent sack.¹⁶ Perhaps we need to entertain the possibility that Damascus received harsher treatment in view of Timur's marked antipathy towards its people, which will be noticed below.

Though Timur is known to have had a strong interest in history,¹⁷ he was first and foremost a Mongol amir, and Beatrice Forbes Manz has demonstrated how (like the Jochid Toqtamish) he acted out his career on a stage set by Chinggis Khan.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that his biographers point out the parallel between the execution of Timur's envoys and the detention of *Atlamish, on the one hand, and the murder in ca. 1219 of Chinggis Khan's envoys at the instigation of the Khwārazmshāh Muḥammad ibn Tekish, on the other.¹⁹ Unlike Chinggis Khan, however, Timur was a Muslim, and the sources also compare him, as a warrior on behalf of the faith, with the celebrated eleventh-century Muslim conqueror Maḥmūd of Ghazna.²⁰ Whereas it is an established fact that Timur's son and effective successor, Shāhrukh, would take the Muslim convert Ilkhan Gha-

¹⁵ Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:243; *ibid.*, ed. Ṣādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1081. Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, ed. Sayyid Ḥājj Kamāl Sayyid Jawādī (Tehran, 2001), 2:926, is briefer. Heidemann, "Timūr's Campmint," 190–96.

¹⁶ Aubin, "Comment Tamerlan," 97, asserts categorically that there were *no* exceptions to this rule.

¹⁷ Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 1:15; Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 316, 318, 319; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 452, 453, 455; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 296, 297, 299.

¹⁸ Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Mongol History Rewritten and Relived," in *Figures mythiques des mondes musulmans*, ed. Denise Aigle, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89–90 (Aix-en-Provence, 2000), 129–49.

¹⁹ Nizām al-Dīn Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. Felix Tauer as *Histoire des conquêtes de Tamerlan intitulée Ẓafarnāma par Nizāmuddīn Ṣāmī, avec des additions empruntées au Zubdatu-t-tawārīḥ-i Bāysunḡurī de Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū* (Prague, 1937–56), 1:221–22; Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:199; *ibid.*, ed. Ṣādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1040–41; Nagel, *Timur der Eroberer*, 322–23; Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 180 and n. 64.

²⁰ Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, 1:283. Michele Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande à l'époque timouride*, *Studia Iranica*, cahier 37 (Paris, 2008), 90, 95–100. For Maḥmūd's posthumous reputation, see C. E. Bosworth, "Maḥmūd of Ghazna in Contemporary Eyes and in Later Persian Literature," *Iran* 4 (1966): 85–92 (esp. 87–90), and repr. in *idem*, *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London, 1977); and Charles Melville, "The Royal Image in Mongol Iran," in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville (Leiden, 2013), 355–56.



zan Maḥmūd as a model,²¹ what tends to be ignored is that Timur had himself looked back to Ghazan. In 806/1404, troops he had sent to escort the pilgrimage to Mecca stayed behind after the conclusion of the rites in order to measure the Kaʿbah for a cover he planned to donate, and he reportedly intended to send a force of ten thousand with the *maḥmil*.²² Ghazan had made a similar donation in 702/1303.²³ Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī even included details of Timur’s boyhood games reminiscent of those of Ghazan as they are recounted by Rashīd al-Dīn.²⁴

It was important for Timur—and his panegyrists—that he be depicted as greater than his exemplars. Early Timurid authors took care to point out that his exploits in India surpassed those of the Chaghadayid khan Tarmashirin, who had invaded the subcontinent in ca. 1330,²⁵ and to proclaim his superiority even over Chinggis Khan.²⁶ In much the same way as Timur’s capture of Delhi falls within the context of long-standing Chaghadayid aspirations, so one impulse behind his campaign against the Mamluks, perhaps, was to realize Ilkhanid ambitions unfulfilled a century earlier, when Ghazan had presided over no fewer than three invasions of Syria. Of these, only one, headed by the Ilkhan in person in 699/1299–1300, had resulted in the (short-lived) subjugation of the country and it had, in any case, failed to establish a tributary relationship.²⁷

²¹ Manz, “Mongol History,” 143–45; İlker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī and the Islamic Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, 2016), 262–64, 265.

²² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1166. Timur’s plan was possibly prompted by overtures from the rulers of Mecca and Medina in 801/1398, on which see n. 67.

²³ See Charles Melville, “‘The Year of the Elephant’: Mamluk-Mongol Rivalry in the Hejaz in the Reign of Abū Saʿīd (1317–1335),” *Studia Iranica* 21 (1992): 199.

²⁴ Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. ʿAbbāsī, 1:11–12; *ibid.*, ed. Şādiq and Nawāʾī, 1:238; passage translated in Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande*, 64–65. See also Beatrice Forbes Manz, “Family and Ruler in Timurid Historiography,” in *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWeese (Bloomington, 2001), 62. For Ghazan, cf. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārikh*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafā Mūsawī (Tehran, 1994), 2:1210; *ibid.* (as *Dzhāmiʿ-at-tawārikh*), a partial edition by A. A. Alizade (Baku, 1957), 251–52; and *ibid.*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, *Classical Writings of the Medieval Islamic World: Persian Histories of the Mongol Dynasties III* (New York, 2012), 417.

²⁵ Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī, *Rūznāmah-i ghazavāt-i Hindūstān*, ed. L. A. Zimin (Petrograd, 1915), 72, 133, 136; *ibid.*, ed. Īraj Afshār as *Saʿādat-nāmah yā rūznāmah-i ghazavāt-i Hindūstān dar sālhā-yi 800–801 hijrī* (Tehran, 2000), 80, 126, 128; and trans. A. A. Semenov as *Dnevnik pokhoda Tīmūra v Indiū* (Moscow, 1958), 84, 129, 131; Shāmī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, 1:194; Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. ʿAbbāsī, 2:45, 99–100; *ibid.*, ed. Şādiq and Nawāʾī, 1:893, 944, 946.

²⁶ Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, facsimile edition by A. Urnunbaev (Tashkent, 1972), fol. 82a; *ibid.*, ed. ʿAbbāsī, 2:41; *ibid.*, ed. Şādiq and Nawāʾī, 1:221, 887; Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 1:13–14; cited (from the Istanbul ms. of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū’s *Majmūʿah*) by Manz, “Family and Ruler,” 64.

²⁷ Reuven Amitai, *Holy War and Rapprochement: Studies in the Relations between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Mongol Ilkhanate (1260–1335)* (Turnhout, 2013), 27–28. On the first of these invasions, see



In certain other respects, Timur's campaign in Syria strikingly evokes memories of Ghazan's dealings with the Mamluk regime. The Mamluk sultan had affected to believe that the Ilkhan's conversion to Islam was spurious, and the celebrated Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymīyah had issued no fewer than three fatwas enumerating the shortcomings of the Ilkhanid Mongols as Muslims.²⁸ Ghazan for his part had impugned the Mamluks' faith.²⁹ In much the same way, Barqūq denounced Timur and his soldiers as infidels and Timur riposted with the charge that the Mamluks were bad Muslims.³⁰ In the confrontation with the sultanate, Timur further drew upon the Ilkhanid rhetoric that had denied the Mamluk sovereigns' qualifications to rule on the grounds that they were slaves (and the Mongols' "runaway" Qipchaq slaves at that).³¹ He could do so all the more plausibly since Barqūq, a Circassian slave, had recently supplanted the dynasty founded more than a century before by the Qipchaq slave Qalāwūn (d. 689/1290)—though Barqūq had not in fact murdered his Qalawunid predecessor as Timur alleged.³² Timur frequently expressed his contempt for the slave rulers in Cairo in his correspondence with other princes.³³ He had manifested this same prejudice with regard to the former slave officers of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq who had become the effective masters of the Delhi Sultanate since that ruler's death in 790/1388.³⁴

idem, "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, 2004), 21–41.

²⁸Denise Aigle, "A Religious Response to Ghazan Khan's Invasions of Syria: The Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwās of Ibn Taymiyya," in *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*, ed. Denise Aigle, (Leiden, 2015), 283–305 (esp. 287–302). See also Amitai, *Holy War and Rapprochement*, 78–80.

²⁹Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 75–78.

³⁰E.g., *ibid.*, 178–79, 182, for Timur's accusations, 184–85 for Barqūq's.

³¹On Ilkhanid disdain for the Mamluk sultans as slaves, see *ibid.*, 13, 29–30, 33–34, 74–75, 79; Amitai, *Holy War and Rapprochement*, 50. For the Mamluks as runaways, see Charles J. Halperin, "The Kipchak Connection: The Ilkhans, the Mamluks and Ayn Jalut," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63 (2000): 229–45.

³²On Barqūq's rise to power, see Carl F. Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History* (Cambridge, 2022), 23–25; and for Timur's attitude, Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:201–2; *ibid.*, ed. Ṣādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1042–43; cited in translation by Michele Bernardini, "Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī's Description of the Syrian Campaign of Tīmūr," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies: Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics*, ed. Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche (Leiden, 2019), 386–87.

³³Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 170, 174, 179–80, 188, 194.

³⁴Timur's *fath'nāmah* for Delhi, sent to his grandson Pīr Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Shaykh, in *Asnād wa mukātabāt-i tārikhī-yi Īrān az Taymūr tā Shāh Ismā'īl*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Nawā'ī (Tehran, 1962), 70.



No less importantly, Timur's conduct in Syria yields insights into his perspectives as a Muslim. He professed veneration for the fourth caliph, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib;³⁵ and on more than one occasion he is said to have voiced anger at the usurpation of the caliphate by the Umayyad Mu'āwiyah in 40/661 and the killing of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī at the hands of the caliph Yazīd's representatives at Karbala in 60/680.³⁶ Timur broached these matters in discussion with the ulama at Aleppo, where he was mollified, we are told, by the response of Ibn al-Shiḥnah.³⁷ The ulama at Damascus, whose history was more intimately linked with the Umayyads, had a rougher passage, despite Timur's initial declarations of esteem for the city.³⁸ Here a delegation of local scholars, headed by the Hanbali chief qadi, Ibn Mufliḥ, who visited his headquarters to negotiate terms, were first grilled about the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī at the hands of Umayyad forces and were told that as Syrians they were of the same persuasion as the perpetrators. When Timur next put to them the question whether knowledge or birth was the more important, they sensed that they were being drawn still further onto hazardous terrain and fell silent. Only the Hanbali Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Nābulusī had the courage to stand his ground, asserting the superiority of the caliph Abū Bakr over 'Alī. He further declared that Timur's forces included Shi'is and those who "contrived innovations" (*ibtada'ū bida'*) and voiced his readiness to suffer death and martyrdom at the hands of those who were Shi'is in reality. Timur ordered that al-Nābulusī be excluded from his presence henceforward.³⁹

The conqueror's sentiments on the subject of the Prophet's family, the *ahl al-bayt*, had dire consequences indeed for Damascus. Falling gravely ill shortly after the city's surrender, he denounced the Syrians for supporting the Umayyads against 'Alī and others of the Prophet's family. Yazdī says that Timur's loathing for the Umayyads and their Syrian supporters was thereupon transferred, by some kind of contagion (*sirāyat*), as it were, to his troops and sparked the wholesale looting and burning of the city, in which the Umayyad Great Mosque

³⁵E.g., *ibid.*, 69.

³⁶Ibn al-Shiḥnah, *Rawḍat al-manāzīr fī 'ilm al-awā'il wa-al-awākhir*, printed in the margin of Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārikh* (Būlāq, 1873), 9:216–17, 221–22. Hence Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 140, 141–42, 159–60; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 216, 217, 261; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 129, 130, 147.

³⁷Ibn al-Shiḥnah, *Rawḍat al-manāzīr*, 216, 217. Hence Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 140, 141–42; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 216, 217; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 129, 130.

³⁸Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1049.

³⁹Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 159–62; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 261–65; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 147–49. For "innovation," see J. Robson, "Bid'a," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1199; the rendering by Sanders (Ibn 'Arabshāh, *Tamerlane*, 149) is somewhat free.



caught fire and suffered considerable damage.⁴⁰ Ibn 'Arabshāh blames the fire specifically on “the Refusers (*rawāfiḍ*) of Khurāsān” (i.e., Shi'is), seeking revenge for al-Ḥusayn's death;⁴¹ indeed, the desecration of the Umayyad tombs at Damascus is known to have been the work of a contingent from Khurāsān under Shi'i Sarbadār leadership, who hailed Timur as al-Ḥusayn's avenger.⁴² The same author says that Timur executed those responsible for the city's sack, but Mignanelli (or his Damascene informants) put a different construction on the episode, alleging that those executed were Muslim peasants dressed up as Chaghatay troopers to fool the populace into believing in Timur's justice.⁴³ In Shāmī's account, which says nothing of Timur's illness, the conqueror merely expresses disgust that the Damascenes had neglected their duty to care for the tombs of the Prophet's wives; unidentified persons are blamed for the conflagration.⁴⁴ Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, who otherwise follows Shāmī, repeats Timur's fulminations against the Umayyads.⁴⁵

Ibn Khaldūn confirms that Timur's views regarding al-Ḥusayn and his killing by the Umayyads gave rise to the imputation of Shi'i leanings (*rafḍ*),⁴⁶ and Timur had been taken for a Shi'i by one of the groups from Aleppo whom he received in audience along with Ibn al-Shiḥnah,⁴⁷ but we should recall that in the reigns of

⁴⁰ Yazdī, *Zafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:243–45; *ibid.*, ed. Šādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1082–83. The extent of the damage to the mosque is unclear: see Elodie Vigouroux, “La Mosquée des Omeyyades de Damas après Tamerlan: Chronique d'une renaissance (1401–1430),” *Bulletin d'Études Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas* 61 (2012): 125–27.

⁴¹ Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 171–72; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 285; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 158; Robert McChesney, “A Note on the Life and Works of Ibn 'Arabshāh,” in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (Wiesbaden, 2006), 210–11.

⁴² Mu'īn al-Dīn Naṭanzī, *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*, partial edition by Jean Aubin, *Extraits du Muntakhab al-tavarikh-i Mu'ini (Anonyme d'Iskandar)* (Tehran, 1957), 379; cited by Aubin, “La fin de l'état sarbadār du Khorassan,” *Journal Asiatique* 262 (1974): 115; repr. in Aubin, *Études sur l'Iran médiéval, géographie historique et société*, ed. Denise Aigle (Paris, 2018), 327; see the more recent edition of Naṭanzī by Parwīn Istakhrī (Tehran, 2004), 280. For the Sarbadār presence at the siege of the citadel, see Yazdī, *Zafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:241; *ibid.*, ed. Šādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1079; and for their views, Kazuo Morimoto, “An Enigmatic Genealogical Chart of the Timurids: A Testimony to the Dynasty's Claim to Yasavi-'Alid Legitimacy?” *Oriens* 44 (2016): 169–70, citing Jean Calmard.

⁴³ Fischel, “A New Latin Source,” 220. Cf. Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 159; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 260; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 146.

⁴⁴ Shāmī, *Zafarnāmah*, 1:235–36; Bernardini, “Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī's Description,” 403–4.

⁴⁵ Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, 2:924.

⁴⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rif*, 382 (Ibn Khaldūn/Fischel, *Historic Meeting*, 47).

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Shiḥnah, *Rawḍat al-manāẓir*, 218. Hence Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 140; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 216; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 129.



Ghazan and his successor Öljeitü, who for some years embraced Twelver Shi'ism, Shi'is had played upon Mongol veneration of the imperial dynasty. They dexterously drew a parallel between the status of the *ahl al-bayt* and that of the *altan urugh*, and reasoned that Sunni Muslims, in recognizing the Umayyad caliphs and even the Abbasids (descended, of course, not from the Prophet but from his uncle), had chosen to give their allegiance to the equivalent of a mere *noyan*.⁴⁸ There are signs that this analogy with the *altan urugh* had previously been presented to Ghazan, who voiced his determination to right the wrongs done to the Prophet's line. If he made use of Shi'i symbolism, however, he probably stopped short of becoming a Twelver Shi'i.⁴⁹ Timur's diatribe at Damascus echoes Ghazan's sentiments and is also redolent of the antipathy towards Yazīd and the Syrians expressed by Ghazan's *noyan* Mulai in conversation with Ibn Taymīyah following the capture of the city,⁵⁰ but Timur was no more a Shi'i than Ghazan was. His championship of 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn was surely the devotional counterpart of his political allegiance to the *altan urugh*.⁵¹

The treatment meted out to many of the Syrian ulama sits ill with Timur's reputation as one who favored the company of learned men and enjoyed debate with them.⁵² It further throws into sharp relief the hardships undergone by the many scholars whom he carried off to Samarqand from captured cities in Iran

⁴⁸Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd-Allāh ibn 'Alī Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Uljāytū Sulṭān*, ed. Mahin Ham-bly (Tehran, 1969), 99; Judith Pfeiffer, "Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate," in *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th Century Tabriz*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden, 2014), 145, 159, and idem, "Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeitü's Conversion to Shi'ism (709/1309) in "Muslim Narrative Sources," *Mongolian Studies* 22 (1999): 40, 41; Nagel, *Timur der Eroberer*, 71–73.

⁴⁹Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Uljāytū Sulṭān*, 93; *ibid.*, 99, Öljeitü is told that Ghazan had chosen Shi'ism. See Pfeiffer, "Confessional Ambiguity," 143–48, and idem, "Conversion Versions," 40. On Ghazan's views, see Michael Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhānate of Iran* (Oxford, 2016), 174–77; more briefly, Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 68.

⁵⁰Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd-Allāh ibn Aybak Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmi' al-ghurar*, part 9, ed. Hans Robert Roemer (Cairo, 1960), 36; Quṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*, ed. and trans. Li Guo (Leiden, 1998), 1:163–64 (trans.), 2:124 (text); K. V. Zetterstéén, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlükensultane in den Jahren 690–741 der Hīgra nach arabischen Handschriften* (Leiden, 1919), 78–79; Aigle, "Religious Response," 295.

⁵¹This is possibly what underlies Ibn 'Arabshāh's somewhat inapposite analogy (in 'Ajā'ib, ed. 'Umar, 16; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 56; idem, *Tamerlane*, 13) between the status of the Chinggisids and that of the Quraysh tribe in Islamic society.

⁵²For examples, see Yazdī, *Zafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:268, 396; *ibid.*, ed. Ṣādiq and Nawā'ī, 2:1105, 1229. Cf. also Ibn 'Arabshāh, 'Ajā'ib, ed. 'Umar, 318; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 454; idem, *Tamerlane*, 298; John of Sulṭānīyah, *Mémoire sur Tamerlan et sa cour par un Dominicain, en 1403*, ed. H. Moranvillé, *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 55 (1894): 461: "et se delicté moult en argumens et questions."



and elsewhere and whose situation is recounted in laconic and neutral terms by the Timurid sources. Ibn 'Arabshāh describes the cruel beating, in Timur's presence and on his orders, of the Shafī'ī qadi Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Munāwī, apprehended while attempting to follow Sultan Faraj in flight to Egypt.⁵³ The Hanafi qadi Taqī al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Kafrī died as a prisoner after suffering all manner of humiliations.⁵⁴ Many of the ulama had perished in the course of the city's sack. Ibn Ḥijjī names several lawyers and scholars in Damascus who were tortured or killed during the occupation and furnishes a list of those who were later found to be missing.⁵⁵ Ibn 'Arabshāh names the Hanbali chief qadi, Ibn Mufliḥ, who had headed the negotiations with the conqueror, as one of those slain during the crisis, but adds that he was killed in error.⁵⁶ Persuaded by Timur's professions of good will to work for a negotiated settlement, Ibn Mufliḥ had continued to travel back and forth between the city and Timur's encampment, and Ibn Ḥajar pays tribute to his unsuccessful efforts, drawing a parallel with Ibn Taymīyah's visits to Ghazan's headquarters in 1299.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 157–58; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 256–57; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 145.

⁵⁴ Abū al-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1929–72), 13:21, and *ibid.*, trans. William Popper as *History of Egypt 1382–1469 A.D.* (Berkeley, 1954–63), 2:109; *idem*, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn, Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Ashūr, et al. (Cairo, 1984–2002), 7:131 (no. 1353). Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr bi-ibnā' al-'umr fī al-tārikh*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1969–72), 2:166, and *ibid.*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān et al. (Hyderabad, 1967–76), 4:285, says that he died after the ordeal (*miḥnah*) of Timur; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1072, that he died when it was underway. The former testimony is supported by the late dates given for his death, Dhū al-Qa'dah or Dhū al-Ḥijjah 803 [June or July 1401], in al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqūd*, 2:342 (no. 664), and Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Aḥmad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārikh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, ed. 'Adnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1977–97), 4:217.

⁵⁵ Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Ḥijjī, *Tārikh Ibn Ḥijjī*, ed. Abū Yaḥyá 'Abd Allāh al-Kundarī, (Beirut, 2003), 1:483–85, 487–88, 490–91, and 509–10 for those missing. Others are named by Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, ed. al-Ḥabashī, 2:167, 189; *ibid.*, ed. Khān, 4:285, 329–30; Badr al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, "Iqd al-jumān fī tārikh ahl al-zamān," BNF MS arabe 1544, fol. 52a; Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 174–75; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 293; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 160; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārikh*, 4:240; and al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1071.

⁵⁶ Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 175; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 291–93; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 160–61. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, ed. Ḥabashī, 2:150–51; *ibid.*, ed. Khān et al., 4:248, refers briefly to Ibn Mufliḥ's death in the Biqā' region towards the end of Sha'bān 803/early April 1401. Al-Maqrīzī (*Sulūk*, 3:3:1075, and *Durar al-'uqūd*, 1:125 [no. 43]) and Ibn Taghrībirdī (*Nujūm*, 13:25; *ibid.*, trans. Popper, 2:111; and *idem*, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, 1:165) likewise date his death in that month.

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, ed. Ḥabashī, 2:150; *ibid.*, ed. Khān et al., 4:248; hence Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārikh*, 4:196–97. For Ibn Mufliḥ's efforts, see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1046–47; Joseph Drory, "Maqrīzī in *Durar al-'uqūd* with regard to Timur Leng," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. 7, *Proceedings of the 16th, 17th and 18th International Colloquium Organized at*



We learn, too, of other ulama who died during the journey east as captives in the conqueror's train. Ibn 'Arabshāh includes in his list al-Nābulusī and al-Munāwī,⁵⁸ each of whom had offended Timur but whose lives had been temporarily spared. Al-Munāwī drowned in the Zāb River during the march.⁵⁹ But it seems that Ibn 'Arabshāh was mistaken regarding al-Nābulusī, who was certainly carried off but escaped from the Chaghatay army after its sack of Baghdad and returned to Damascus in late Muḥarram 804/early September 1401 to report his colleague's fate.⁶⁰ On leaving Syria in Sha'bān 803/March–April 1401, Timur is said to have ordered the release of some of his prisoners, among them the qadi of Aleppo, Mūsá ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī; he was, however, in poor health and died the following month.⁶¹ According to al-Maqrīzī, a number of individuals for whom Ibn Khaldūn had interceded accompanied him back to Egypt in Sha'bān,⁶² but they surely constituted a minority of the captives.

Whatever his opinions on the denial of 'Alid rights to the caliphal throne, it is conceivable that in attacking Mamluk territory Timur contemplated turning the fortunes of the caliphate to his own advantage. One particular distinction enjoyed by the Mamluk regime was the presence in Cairo from 659/1261 of a nominal Abbasid caliph installed by the sultan and in turn providing legitimation for his rule. During his negotiations with al-Nāṣir Faraj, if we can believe Ibn 'Arabshāh, Timur asserted his own right, as the paramount ruler within the *dār al-Islām*, to appoint the caliph.⁶³ It is difficult to judge how this might have played out. Would the appointee have lent additional legitimacy to Timur (and his khan)? Or would the Great Amir have been affronted by that very sugges-

Ghent University in May 2007, 2008 and 2009, ed. Urbain Vermeulen, Kristof D'Hulster, and Jo Van Steenberghe (Leuven, 2013), 397.

⁵⁸ Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 174; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 291–93; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 160, states that both al-Munāwī and al-Nābulusī drowned, but cf. below and n. 60. Both appear in the list in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 4:183, of those removed from Damascus.

⁵⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1073; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 4:234–35; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 13:25; *ibid.*, trans. Popper, 2:111; *idem*, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, 9:215–16 (no. 1990). Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqud*, 3:31–32 (no. 914), gives a fuller account of al-Munāwī's treatment.

⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥijjī, *Tārīkh*, 1:515; hence Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 4:255. See al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-'uqud*, 3:324 (no. 1249), for his return and his death in Muḥarram 805/August 1402; also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*, 9:280 (no. 2043), with 22 Muḥarram; more briefly, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, ed. Ḥabashī, 2:250; *ibid.*, ed. Khān et al., 5:116, 119. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1108, records merely the date of his death, as 12 Muḥarram (11 August).

⁶¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr*, ed. al-Ḥabashī, 2:195; *ibid.*, ed. Khān et al., 4:345; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 4:249–50; Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudṣī (Cairo, 1934–36), 10:190 (no. 796).

⁶² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:3:1056.

⁶³ Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib*, ed. 'Umar, 130; *ibid.*, ed. al-Ḥimṣī, 198; *idem*, *Tamerlane*, 119.



tion? Timur's claim could betray jealousy of the prerogative enjoyed by Barqūq and Faraj of nominating the caliph, and perhaps also an uncharacteristic sense of inferiority, reinforced by his enemies' charge that he was an infidel.

In 803/1401, Ibn Khaldūn tells us, a scion of the Abbasid line presented himself to Timur at Damascus and claimed for himself a better right to the caliphate than al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh, the figurehead in Cairo. His argument rested primarily on a hadith of the Prophet whereby (he alleged) the office of caliph was to remain with the Abbasids. Timur delegated the case to a committee of jurists, including Ibn Khaldūn, putting them in an uncomfortable situation, but at the instigation of Timur's imam and chief adviser, 'Abd al-Jabbār Khwārazmī, they found against the claimant on the pretext that the hadith itself was spurious, rather than by weighing his right against that of the incumbent.⁶⁴

Given Timur's known views on the history of the caliphate, it is hard to imagine that he would have found any Abbasid acceptable. Perhaps he wished to keep his options open; perhaps he was reluctant to jeopardize the chances of success against the Mamluks by challenging the highly popular al-Mutawakkil. In a letter to Bayezid, he drew attention to the caliph's sufferings at Barqūq's hands.⁶⁵ He may have hoped that al-Mutawakkil—banished, imprisoned and twice deposed⁶⁶—might be ready to accept his protection. This would have enhanced Timur's prestige considerably, further offsetting his status as a mere *qarachū* (commoner) and lieutenant to a Chinggisid khan. Such a hope would not have been by any means unrealistic if we can trust Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's assurance that in early Muḥarram 801/late September 1398 Timur had received an embassy from the rulers of Mecca and Medina (hitherto under the Mamluk sultan's protection) expressing the desire to be brought under his guardianship.⁶⁷ The fact that in recent decades a wider circle of Muslim monarchs (among them the Muzaffarid Shāh-i Shujā', the Jalayirid Sulṭān Aḥmad, and the Ottoman Bayezid)

⁶⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rif*, 374–76 (Ibn Khaldūn/Fischel, *Historic Meeting*, 39–41). On this episode, see Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton, 2016), 125–26.

⁶⁵ Sarī 'Abd-Allāh Efendi, *Munsha'āt*, in Zeki Velidi Togan, "Timurs Osteuropapolitik," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 108/n.s. 33 (1958): 298.

⁶⁶ On the vicissitudes of al-Mutawakkil's career and on his growing popularity, see Hassan, *Longing*, 89–93; more briefly, Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 150, 171 and n. 12. There is a biography of this caliph in al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3:292–95 (no. 1234). For the functions of the later caliphs in general, cf. Mustafa Banister, "Nought Remains to the Caliph but His Title': Revisiting Abbasid Authority in Mamluk Cairo," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 18 (2014–15), 219–45.

⁶⁷ Yazdī, *Zafarnāmah*, ed. 'Abbāsī, 2:41; *ibid.*, ed. Šādiq and Nawā'ī, 1:887. Authority over the two Hijaz cities would be disputed between the Mamluk sultans and Timur's successor Shāhrukh: Malika Dekkiche, "New Source, New Debate: Re-evaluation of the Mamluk-Timurid Struggle for Religious Supremacy in the Hijaz (Paris, BnF MS ar. 4440)," *MSR* 18 (2014–15), 247–71.



had sought the caliph's recognition and sanction⁶⁸ could have furnished a rationale for bringing al-Mutawakkil within Timur's orbit—and perhaps, equally, another disincentive to antagonize him unnecessarily. Even had Timur contemplated taking al-Mutawakkil under his protection, however, we might well doubt that he would have permitted the caliph to reciprocate with confirmation of his rulership.

Much of the foregoing paper is speculative. We cannot, of course, be certain what was in Timur's mind when he entered the Mamluk dominions. Indeed, both Beatrice Manz and Anne Broadbridge have shown how the appeals he made to Mongol history, for instance, were not merely distorted but inconsistent and self-contradictory.⁶⁹ He may in fact have aimed primarily at establishing his paramountcy through the insertion of his name in the *khuṭbah* and on the coinage and mulcting the Syrians of as much of their property as possible, but I have tried to demonstrate that certain episodes during Timur's operations in Syria seem to betray a wider range of motives than can be detected in his other campaigns. Even if we discount the conversations related in Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography, this expedition throws fresh light on the inspiration that Timur drew, as a Mongol amir, from the Chinggisid past and on his outlook as a Muslim potentate. In particular, his letters and propaganda demonstrate that he was deeply conscious of following in the steps of the Ilkhans, notably Ghazan Maḥmūd. Most obviously, he borrowed from Ghazan the denunciation of the Mamluk sultans as disqualified for rule by their slave status. Additionally, however, the presence in Cairo of a nominal caliph under the sultan's protection can be seen to have constituted a distinct challenge to Timur's own perception of his role as the paramount Muslim monarch (and of course a challenge without parallel in his dealings with other Muslim realms), and the conqueror's views regarding early Islamic history (which in turn might be seen as echoing those of Ghazan) may have determined the unenviable fate of Damascus. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the rich trove of sources for his invasion of the Mamluk

⁶⁸Hassan, *Longing*, 97; Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 150, 175, and n. 40. Ibn Khaldūn (*Kitāb al-ʿibar*, ed. Yūsuf Asʿad Dāghir as *Tārīkh al-ʿallāmah Ibn Khaldūn* [Beirut, 1956–61], 3:1113) was aware of princes in India having done so. Foremost among them were the Delhi sultans Muḥammad ibn Tughluq (d. 752/1351) and his successor Fīrūz Shāh (d. 790/1388). The idea of obtaining caliphal endorsement (and thereby effectively flouting the Chinggisid dispensation) was even mooted after 1405 at the court of Timur's grandson Pīr Muḥammad in Shiraz: Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 3:44 (vol. 3 [Tehran, 1380/2001] was first issued in 1372/1993 as vol. 1); John E. Woods, "Timur's Genealogy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michael M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), 115.

⁶⁹Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," 113–14; Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 168–69, 178–79, 181.



realm can furnish us with opportunities for a fuller understanding of Timur than we can hope to find in any of his other campaigns.



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