The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymiyah’s Three “Anti-Mongol” Fatwas

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
The anti-Mongol fatwas of Ibn Taymiyah (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. 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.

The first invasion, led by Hülegü (r. 1256–65), was halted by the Mamluk sultan Quṭuz and the amir Baybars on 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260 at ‘Ayn Jālūt. 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. In 1281,
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-Mansūr Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90) at Hims. 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, sent two embassies to Qalāwūn to announce his desire to end hostilities. Indeed, Ghāzān Khān (r. 694–703/1295–1304), who had also converted to Islam just before his enthronement, led three major offensives against Syria. The first took place in the winter of 699/1299–1300. 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-Ṣūfār on 2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303. The last Mongol invasion of Mamluk territory was undertaken in 712/1312 by Öljeitū (r. 703–17/1304–14), who was also a Muslim. These last four Ilkhanid invasions were repelled by the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn, in the last two periods of his reign (698–708/1299–1309 and 709–41/1310–41). 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


7 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.


10 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 (nūḥ ib al-saltanah) and Baybars al-Jashnakir (ustadār); see Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army?” 226–27.
kings against the Mamluk sultanate. Abâqâ sent several embassies, notably at the time of the Lateran council of 1274. Arghûn in turn sent several missions to the West, the most important of which was headed by the Nestorian monk Rabban Šawmâ in 1287. In 1299 he sent two letters, in Mongolian and Latin, to the papacy and to King Philip IV of France. Before his campaign of 1299–1300, Ghâzân Khân contacted the king of Cyprus, Henri II de Lusignan, in the hope of obtaining military assistance. After his return to Persia without having


14Arghûn sent a letter in Latin, dated 18 May 1285 in Tabriz, to Pope Honorius IV. It is reproduced in Lupprian, Die Beziehungen der Pâpste 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 Urmîya, 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.

15Text and commentaries in Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhans Argun et Öljêitü à Philippe le Bel, ed. Antoine Mostaert and Francis W. Cleaves (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 17–53. Arghûn’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.

16After 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.\textsuperscript{17} Öljëitü 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.\textsuperscript{18}

As can be seen, Ghâzân Khân’s reign did not by any means inaugurate an era of peace. In fact, immediately after converting to Islam, he adopted the title Pâdîshâh al-Islâm (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 Bilâd al-Shâm in December 699/1299.\textsuperscript{19} He accused the Mamluks of having invaded Ilkhânid territory at Mardin, where they were supposed to have committed various acts of moral turpitude (af’âl-i makrûh). Amongst the misdeeds ascribed to them were orgies with the daughters of Muslims (dukhtarân-i musalmânân) and drinking sessions in mosques, all during the month of Ramaḍân.\textsuperscript{20} A fatwa of “the imams of the faith and the ulama of Islam”\textsuperscript{21} had entrusted Ghâzân Khân with

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{17}In spring 1302, Ghâzân Khân sent a letter to this pope in Mongol script. Text and commentaries in Mostaert and Cleaves, “Trois documents mongols,” 467–78.

\textsuperscript{18}Text and commentaries in Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhans Argun et Öljëitü 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; Abâqâ to Baybars in 1268 and 1277; Geikhetü to al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalîl in 1293. Ghâzân Khân in turn wrote to al-Nâṣîr Muḥammad ibn Qâlîwûn 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 Ilkhan 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.

\textsuperscript{19}Beyond Reuven Amitai’s studies cited in the notes above, on Ghâzân Khân’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.

\textsuperscript{20}Rashid al-Dîn, Târîkh-i Mubârak-i Ghâzânî, ed. Karl Jahn (s‘Gravenhague, 1957), 124. This information is confirmed by Abû al-Fidât, who writes that this Mamluk incursion provided Ghâzân Khân with the pretext to invade Syria; see Memoirs of a Syrian Prince: Abû’l-Fidât, Sultan of Hamâh (672–732/1273–1331), translated with an introduction by Peter M. Holt (Wiesbaden, 1983), 35.

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, 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‘ I 699/2 January 1300, some days after his victory at Wādī al-Khaznadār on 27 Rabi‘ I 699/22 December 1299.

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 amīr Quṭlugh-Shāh and a thousand horsemen, which would bear a cover (sitr) for the Ka’bah and a decorated mahmal 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. 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. In the present article, I propose to analyze the three so-called

22The account of Ghāzān Khān’s conversion is reported by al-Jazarī, on the authority of ‘Alam al-Din al-Birzālī, in his “Jawāhir 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, “Pādishāh-i islām,” 159–77.

23See the discussion on this confrontation in Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army?” 221–64 (see also the bibliography, note 7).

24In 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.


“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. 27 The three fatwas in question are to be found in volume 28 (Kitāb al-Jihād). 28 They differ considerably in length. The first is seven pages long, 29 the second is unusually long for a document of this kind at thirty-five pages, 30 and the third is eight pages long. 31 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. 32 Laoust uses various passages from the fatwas to

---


29Ibid., 501–8.

30Ibid., 509–43.

31Ibid., 544–51.

32Henri 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. Thomas Raff's short monograph, published in a very limited edition, dates from 1973. The writer presents the historic context in which Ibn Taymiyah'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-Ṣuffār (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-Ṣuffār, by making exhortations to them and even participating in the combat himself.” 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 Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah's Lettre à un roi croisé, and in a twenty-page article, both published in 1995. Paradoxically, he does not study the legal arguments deployed by Ibn Taymiyah. 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” 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—kanāʾisan—wa-jankhiskhān malik.” Jean Michot demonstrates that the word kanāʾisan is in fact a corruption of ka-yāṣa, the manuscript form of which is very similar. This

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

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

34 Thomas Raff, Remarks on an Anti-Mongol Fatwa by Ibn Taimiya (Leiden, 1973).


37 Ibn Taymiyah, Lettre à un roi croisé, 9.

38 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 (ṣalāḥāt al-mushrikin)—such as the yāsā (ka-yāsā) of Chinggis Khan, king of the polytheists—is most gravely contrary to the religion of Islam.” 39 This reference to the yāsā enables us to understand Ibn Taymiyah’s argument when he refutes the political regime of the Mongols and their version of Islam.

In addition to Ibn Taymiyah’s fatwas, this article will analyze the text of the amān to Damascus’s population issued by Gḥāzān Khān and the letters exchanged between the latter and sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muhammad. These texts have been transmitted to us by a number of Mamluk chronicles, some contemporary with the events and some slightly later. 40 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. 41 For this reason I have relied here on the Dhayl Mirāt 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-Jazārī (d. 739/1338–39). 42 In all the sources, the text of the amān appears to have been faithfully transmitted, with few divergences.

39 Majmūʿ Fatāwā, 28:530.


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 Taymiyah’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 Taymiyah 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 (shahādatayn), 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 Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah’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. 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.

Ibn Taymiyah’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 Taymiyah’s arguments are aimed at bringing the Mongols within the scope of one of these categories.

Some of the groups that must be fought are classified as bughāḥ, a term which in the early years of Islam designated those who rebelled against legitimate authority. Ibn Taymiyah 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-sakāṭ), fasting (al-ṣawm), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (al-ḥājji). Those who do not take part in jihād against the infidels (al-kuffār) 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-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar), since for Ibn Taymiyah this duty is another form of jihād. In the second fatwa, Ibn Taymiyah includes in the category of groups that must be fought those who deny the free will of God (al-qadar), his decree (al-qadāʾ), his names and his attributes, as well as those who display innovation (al-bidʿah) 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 Taymiyah considered deviant with regard to scriptures and to the consensus (al-ijmat) of scholars in the religious sciences. As can be seen, this definition of the groups to be fought is a very broad one. Ibn Taymiyah takes the view that every community which is a cause of disorder on the earth must be fought, on the basis of the principle that disorder is more to be

45The term bughāḥ 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 (bughāḥ) against al-Malik al-Nāṣīr Muḥammad’s authority since they had acknowledged his power. See Laoust, “La biographie d’Ibn Taimīya d’après Ibn Katīr,” 131.

46In 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.

47In his theory of jihād Ibn Taymiyah notes that the Kharijites called themselves ahl al-daʿwah; see Laoust, Essai, 362–63.


49On Ibn Taymiyah’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. 50

The composition of Ghâzân Khân’s armies particularly inspired Ibn Taymiyâh’s anger. In their ranks, he writes, fight infidels (al-kuffâr), polytheists (al-mushrikûn), 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 Rûm and Bilâd al-Shâm’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. 51 Ibn Taymiyâh 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 Taymiyâh considered them apostates who must be made to pay the prescribed penalty. 52

The Mongol ranks included a certain number of renegade Mamluks (al-munazzifûn), led by the former governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Dîn Qipchâq al-Manṣûrî (d. 701/1310–11). 53 In 1298, at the end of the reign of Sultan al-Manṣûr Lâchîn (1296–99), 54 news of a new Mongol attack on Syria reached Cairo. A group of high-ranking Mamluk amirs, led by Sayf al-Dîn Qipchâq, fled along with their men to the Persian Ilkhanate, hoping thereby to escape the order for their arrest issued by Mengû-Temûr al-Husâmî, Sultan al-Manṣûr Lâchîn’s nâîb in Damascus. 55 Sayf al-Dîn Qipchâq and his amirs were well received on their arrival in Ilkhanid territory, and were immediately sent to Ghâzân Khân’s court (the ordo) where the

50 Laoust, Essai, 364, n. 2.
52 Thomas Raff (Remarks, 50) writes that Ibn Taymiyâh considered the Râfiḍî (i.e., the Shi‘îtes) apostates, but the Hanbali scholar does not use the term al-murtadd for any Shi‘îte. He criticizes the Shi‘îtes for helping the polytheists, Jews, and Christians to fight the Muslims and compares them to the Kharjîjites. However, the Jews and Christians seem not to have been considered apostates by Ibn Taymiyâh. See Majmû‘ Fatâwâ (Riyadh/Mecca), 28:530.
53 Sayf al-Dîn Qipchâq had been captured in the battle of Elbistan in 1276, and was subsequently enlisted among the mamluks of Qalâwûn; 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 Hajâr al-‘Asqâlânî, Al-Durar al-Kâmînah fi A‘yân al-Mî‘âr al-Thâmînah (Hyderabad, 1348–50/1929–32), no. 612, 3:213–15.
55 In Cairo, at the same time, a conspiracy of amirs ended the rule of al-Manṣûr Lâchîn, who was killed along with his nâîb. When Sayf al-Dîn Qipchâq 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.56 At the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār, the Mongol troops were led by Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq and the Mongol amir Qutlugh-Shāh (d. 707/1307).57 The new Mamluk soldiers helped Ghāzān Khān gain victory on 27 Rabi‘ I 699/22 December 1299.58 At the beginning of Rabi‘ II 699/late December 1299, shortly before the Mongol armies entered Damascus, Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Rāfīḍī (i.e., the Twelver Shiʿites), whose heresies had been influenced by those who are amongst “the worst of all creatures: the freethinkers (al-zindiq, plural al-zanāātīqah), hypocrites, who do not inwardly believe in Islam.”59 Ibn Taymiyyah considered that the zanāātīqah weakened Sunni Islam by divulging the heresies uttered by the Shiʿites.60 Amongst the dissenting Muslims who must be fought, Ibn Taymiyyah cites the extremist Shiʿites (ghulāt al-shīʿah), in other words the

56 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.
58 On the ambiguous role Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq played during this battle, see Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 25.
59 Majmūʿ Fatwāwá, 28:520.
60 Laoust, Essai, 366.
Ismā‘īliyah and Nuṣayriyah of Syria.⁶¹ the Jahmiyah,⁶² the Ittiḥādiyah, believers in mystic union (waḥdat al-wujūd), and disciples of Ibn ʿArabi and Ibn Sabʿīn,⁶³ designated as ahl al-bidʿah. 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, ʿAli ibn Abi 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 Ṣiffin in July 657, which in turn led to the emergence of the Kharijites.⁶⁴ The precedents established by these famous battles enabled the Hanbali scholar to draw a distinction between different kinds

---

⁶¹This was an extreme Shi‘ite sect in Syria and southern Turkey, named after Muhammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Fihri al-Numayri, a disciple of the tenth or eleventh Twelver imam; see Shahrestānī, 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 Ismāʿīlīs in July 657, which in turn led to the emergence of the Kharijites.⁶⁴ The precedents established by these famous battles enabled the Hanbali scholar to draw a distinction between different kinds

⁶²Jahm 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 Qādiriyah and the Muʿtazila; see W. Montgomery Watt, “Djahmiyya,” Encyclopædia de l’Islam, 2nd ed., 2:398–99.


of rebellion against the authority of the caliph.

Ibn Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah’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.” 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 Allah.”

The battles which took place during ‘Alī’s reign allowed Ibn Taymiyah 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-ijmāʿ) as to the position to take regarding the adversaries in the battles of the Camel and Šifīn. The believers were free to side with either camp. The Battle of the Camel, which set ‘Alī against ‘A‘īshah, had seen several of the Companions of the Prophet, including Ťahlah 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‘āwiyyah, 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 (baghāt) to the other, fight that which doeth wrong (allatī tabghī) till it return unto the ordinance of Allāh.” Conversely, Ibn Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah’s reasoning is straightforward: since the ijmāʿ 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 Taymiyah relies

---

65 Majmūʿ Fatāwā, 28:505.
66 Quran 2:193.
67 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 Taymiyah 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-aṣlī). 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.68

The question of the Mamluk prisoners who were forced to fight in Ghāzān Khān’s army was a delicate point for Ibn Taymiyah. 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 Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah 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 munazzīfūn, are relegated to an even worse status, that of apostates (ahl al-riddah).

**A TRACT AGAINST THE MONGOL REGIME**

Ibn Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah 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 Rabī‘ Il 699/1 January 1300 to ask him to spare the lives of the city’s civilian population (that is, to

---

68 Majmū‘ Fatāwā, 28:534.
grant them his ḥamān).⁶⁹ Contemporary historiography has until now maintained that this was the only occasion on which Ibn Taymiyah met Ghāzān Khān.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ He based this on the evidence of the Ilkhan’s minister Rashid al-Din, who reports a meeting between them which supposedly took place on 9 Rabi‘ II 699/3 January 1300 at the Ilkhan’s encampment at Marj al-Rāhiṭ.⁷² 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”.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ By establishing Ghāzān Khān’s prestigious nasab in contrast to that of the Mamluk sultan, Rashid al-Din 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.⁷⁵ Given that the Mamluk sources do not mention this meeting between Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymiyah, one may question whether it in fact took place. Rashid al-Din might have confused Ibn Taymiyah’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 Taymiyah 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

⁶⁹ 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; Ḫanz, 20; Beiträge, 66. A detailed account of the meeting is given in Ibn Abī l-Faḍā’il, 14:3:475. The interpreter reported Ghāzān Khān’s words to the delegation of notables, informing them that the ḥamān they had come to ask for had already been sent to Damascus before their request.


⁷¹ Michot, Lettre à un roi croisé, 75, n. 125.

⁷² Rashid al-Din speaks of a delegation of notables from Damascus (Ibn Taymiyah’s name is not mentioned), received by the Ilkhan on 6 Rabi‘ II 699/31 December 1299. He specifies that the notables had come to meet the Mongol army in order to make their submission (iš kardand); see Rashid al-Din, Tārikh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī, 128.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ The term “al-Alfī” refers to the fact that the sultan Qalāwūn had been bought for a sum of one thousand dinars. Rashid al-Din thus emphasizes that the Mamluk sultans, of servile origin, had in the beginning been mere chattel.

⁷⁵ Rashid al-Din, Tārikh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī, 128.
king is the son of a client.”76

Jean Michot assumed that the bulk of the exchanges between Ibn Taymiyyah and Ghāzān Khān occurred in the course of the interview Rashid 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-Dhahabi (d. 748/1347–48) to the effect that the Hanbali scholar had two meetings with the Ilkhan.77 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 Taymiyyah which had hitherto remained unpublished.78 This work, written by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabi, clearly states that Ibn Taymiyyah met the Ilkhan a second time: “at the time of Ghāzān Khān, he (i.e., Ibn Taymiyyah) was very active. . . . He met the king twice (ijtama’a bi-al-malik marratayn).”79 As Bori notes, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabi’s remarks as to Ibn Taymiyyah’s activity refer to the third invasion of Syria and the famous battle of Shaqhab (2 Ramadān 702/20 April 1303) in which Ghāzān Khān and his army were defeated.80 Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Ramadān.81 Given the circumstances of Ibn Taymiyyah’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 Taymiyyah did, however, have closer contacts with Ghāzān Khān’s two great amirs, Qūṭlugh-Shāh (d. 707/1307) and Mulāy (d. 707/1307),82 and with

76Majmūʿ Fatāwā, 28:542.
79“Nubdhah,” fol. 72r.
81The fast had begun on 1 Ramadān 702/19 April 1303, on the eve of the battle. Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Taymiya d’après Ibn Katīr,” 132.
82The name of this figure appears in different forms in the Arab sources consulted. Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī gives it in the form Būlāhīm 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-Din and Rashid al-Din and other important persons such as the Armenian king of Sis. The historical sources report many details of Ibn Taymiyah’s encounters with Qutlug-Shāh, which took place on 21 Jumādá I 699/14 February 1300, and the amir Mulay, when Ibn Taymiyah visited him in his tent and negotiated the release of numerous prisoners. On this occasion he had a discussion with the amir about the murder of al-Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet, by Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya on 10 Muḥarram 61/10 October 680. Not wishing to displease Mulay, Ibn Taymiyah was reserved in giving his views on this topic. Ibn Taymiyah’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 Taymiyah was well-informed as to the political views of the Ilkans, 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 Aḥāqā, but he portrayed his arrival in Bilād al-Shām as being in the name of Islam. Before analyzing the way Ibn Taymiyah 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 Rabiʿ II 699/2 January 1300, before the entry of his troops into Damascus.

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. He is depicted as renewing Islam, while

(Bulāy): Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾīl, 14:3:504–5 (Mūlāy); Rashid al-Dīn, Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī, 130 (Mūlāy).


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

Alam al-Dīn al-Bīrzālī recorded the testimony of Ibn Taymiyah on 25 Jumādá 699/18 February 1300; see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī (1:157, 2:119).

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.


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


©2007 by Denise Aigle.
DOI: 10.6082/M1JW8C1S. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1JW8C1S)

DOI of Vol. XI, no. 2: 10.6082/M19021V0. See https://doi.org/10.6082/Z7BW-SQ52 to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html for more information about copyright and open access.
his great amir Nawrūz, who had encouraged him to convert, is described as a second Abū Muslim.\textsuperscript{90} 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.\textsuperscript{91} The famous Iranian theologian Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī in his \textit{Nizām al-Tawārikḥ}\textsuperscript{92} 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 Ḥātim al-Ṭā’ī [the epitome of magnanimity in pre-Islamic Arabia],\textsuperscript{93} 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.”\textsuperscript{94} Ghāzān Khān also had black banners made, resembling those of the Abbasid caliphs, and made Christians and Jews pay the poll tax (\textit{al-jizyah}), from which they had been free since the abolition of the caliphate at Baghdad.\textsuperscript{95} 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 Mardin, he based the legitimacy of his Syrian campaign on Islam. Ghāzān Khān’s position as “king of Islam” (\textit{pādīshāh 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.\textsuperscript{96}

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,”\textsuperscript{97} followed by the names of

\textsuperscript{90}Melville, “\textit{Pādīshāh-i islām},” 170.
\textsuperscript{92}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 Aqqaq,” \textit{Studia Iranica} 30, no. 1 (2001): 70. On the different versions, see idem, “From Adam to Aqqaq: Qādī Baidawi’s Rearrangement of History, Part II,” \textit{Studia Iranica} 35, no. 1 (2007), in press.
\textsuperscript{94}Melville, “From Adam to Aqqaq: Qādī Baidawi’s rearrangement of history, Part II.”
\textsuperscript{95}Melville, “\textit{Pādīshāh-i islām},” 164–70; Calmard, “Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans,” 281.
\textsuperscript{97}Despite its clearly Islamic tone, the text of the amān is in line with the documents of Mongol chancelleries. \textit{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 (umārāʾ al-tūmān), of one thousand, of one hundred, and all our victorious troops: Mongols, Persians,98 Armenians, Georgians, as well as all those who have come under the yoke of our obedience (tāʾatnā) should be informed.”99 There then follows Ghazān Khan’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 Sa’d al-Dīn Muhammad, who had heard his profession of faith, had recounted it five years earlier on his return from the pilgrimage, in the Ribāṭ al-Sumaysātī beside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. The text of the amān emphasizes that Ghazān Khan had been chosen by God, who had illumined 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?100 But woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! Those are in the manifest error.”101

Ghazān Khan then denounces the Mamluk regime whose governors (al-ḥukkām)102 had left the way of Islam (khārijūna ‘an tarīq 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.103 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

100 This sentence implies: “Is it he who has remained a non-believer?”
101 Quran 39:22.
102 The term used in the sources is neither al-malik nor al-sulṭān, terms which designated the supreme holder of power in the Mamluk state; al-ḥukkām (Li Guo/al-Yūnī, 1:102; Beiträge, 62; Kanz, 21; and Ibn Abī al-Fadā’īl, 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 Ghazān Khan employs this term to testify to the superiority of the Ilkhanid regime compared to that of the Mamluks.
103 Ghazān Khan 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!”

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. 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.”

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.”

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.”

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.”

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-muqāṣitūn) will enjoy God’s favor.

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-ṭāḥiyah) shows, he is aided by God: “tore them utterly to pieces” and then “the truth (al-ḥaqq) has come, and falsehood (al-bāṭil) has vanished away; surely falsehood is ever certain to vanish.”

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 Sabean, as since they pay the poll tax (al-jizyah), defending them is one of the legal obligations (al-waṣāʾif al-sharʿīyah).”

In this case, the authority invoked in support of this declaration is a hadith of the

104 Quran 2:205.
107 Quran 17:81.
109 Quran 39:19.
110 Quran 17:81.
111 Here the term Sabians perhaps is an allusion to the Sabians of Ḥarrān; see Tardieu, “Ṣābiens coraniques et ‘Ṣābiens’ de Ḥarrān.”
Prophet: “The imam in charge of people is their shepherd, and every shepherd is responsible for the flock he has under his command.”  

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, it would appear that Ibn Taymiyah 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 firman naming Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq representative (al-nāʿīb) 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 Taymiyah’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 Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah’s beliefs in this regard. 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 Diyyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, a descendant of the Prophet, and the great Mamluk amirs. Diyyāʾ 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. 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

113 Al-Bukhārī, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ (Bulaq, 1311–13/1893–95), Ahkām, 1, Istiqrāḍ, 20; Muslim, Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ (Istanbul, 1334/1916), Imārah, 20; Ibn Ḥanbal, Al-Musnad (Cairo, 1313/1896), 54, 111.
114 Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:139; Kanz, 20; Beiträge, 62; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾīl, 14:3:476.
115 On these events and the letter see Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, vol. 1; Kanz; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾīl, 20:1: 547–54. According to Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾīl, 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.
and of his free will (qadāʾ Allāh wa-qadarīhi).  

117 The Ilkhan reminded the Egyptian sovereign that the basis of the confrontation between the two parties was the Mardin affair which had taken place during the month of Ramaḍān the previous year, when Satan had entered the city.  

118 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.”  

119 Ghāzān Khān added: “It was the rule of Islam [to be understood as he who directs the ummah] to fight against rebels (hukm al-islām fi qitāl al-bughāh).”  

120 For Ghāzān Khān, the rebels in question were the Mamluk soldiers, who were to blame for the disturbances in Mardin.

**The Mongol Political Order as Seen by Ibn Taymiyyah**

Ghāzān Khān’s arguments against the Mamluks are a mirror image of the criticisms Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Taymiyyah, 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.”  

121 From Yemen to Andalusia, Ibn Taymiyyah 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.  

122 Similarly, in the Hijaz, the people were straying and the believers were being degraded, all the more so since Shiʿism was gaining the upper hand.  

123 Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Zaydi Shiʿism. 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 sharifs (descendants of the Prophet) of Mecca and Medina. Ibn Taymiyyah 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
this reason he argued in favor of the Mamluk regime. The Mongols looked down on al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Alfī’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. 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-jāhiliyyah) and into their infidel way (al-kufriyyah) is their friend (ṣadiquhum), even if he is an infidel (al-kāfir), a Jew, or a Christian. Whoever refuses to submit is their enemy (‘adāwuhum), even if he were to be one of the prophets of God.”

This second fatwa, indeed, represents the world order as the Mongols imagined it: they were invested with the mandate of eternal Heaven (möngke tenggeri). The realization of this world order involved drawing a distinction between peoples “in harmony” (il) and those in a “state of rebellion” (bulgha). 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 khudây), 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 (iḷī)’ . . ., 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 (yāghi).”

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

---

124Ibid., 542.
125Ibid., 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.
126On these two terms see Gerhard Doerfer, Türkische und mongolische Elemente in Neupersischen (Wiesbaden, 1963–75), vol. 2, no. 768 and no. 653.
127The original Mongolian text probably included the formula möngke tenggeri küncündür (with the force of Eternal Heaven), the Turkish equivalent of which appears in the preamble to the letter: mängü tängri küncündä (in the Latin version: dei fortitudo).
128Here the term yāghi is an equivalent to classical Mongol bulgha.
of God (fatahnhā h bi-sayf Allāh), we are the army of God (nahu jund Allāh).”

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 mōngke, it does not evoke the Christian idea of an eternity with neither beginning nor end, but rather solidity and durability. In the Secret History of the Mongols, 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.

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 (khārijīn ʿan sharāʿī 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 amatān. The Hanbali scholar explains the deviant theology of the Mongols as follows: “It is that the Tatars believe grave things about Chinggis


130Françoise 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 Tāʿarʿacʿ Patmutʿīwnk (History of the Tatars), the Armenian historian Grigor Akanci (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.


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

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. 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 Taymiyah, 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 Taymiyah, 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.”

The information Ibn Taymiyah relied on in denouncing Mongol Islam was based on his interview with the Mongol amir Qūṭlugh-Shāh, converted to Islam under the name Bahāʾ al-Dīn. He declared to Ibn Taymiyah he was a descendant of Chinggis Khan and that his illustrious ancestor had been a Muslim (*kāna musliman*). 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

---

134 The Mamluk historian al-ʿUmarī (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-ʿUmarī, *Das Mongolische Weltreich: al-ʿUmarī’s Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-ḥaḍār wa mamālik al-ʿamār*, 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 Gengishkhanian 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 Taymiyah muddles Alan-Q’oa, the mythic ancestor of the Mongols, with Chinggis Khan’s mother.
136 According to Thomas Raff (*Remarks*, 46), the leader here is Ghāzān Khān himself at the time of the interview at Nabk.
137 *Beiträge*, 76; *Kanz*, 32. According to Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī (1:157, 2:119) Chinggis Khan was not a Muslim.
considered a rebel \((\text{\textit{man kharaja min t\'\'atihi fa-huwa kh\'ariji}})\).\footnote{Li Guo/al-Y\'unini, 1:158, 2:119; \textit{Beitr\'age}, 76; \textit{Kanz}, 32.} Here again one notes that Ibn Taymiy\'ah's arguments against the Mongols are the same as those used by Gh\'az\'an Kh\'an to denounce the Mamluk regime.

Religious tolerance, or rather the Mongols' 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.\footnote{There is a good discussion of the origin of this policy in Yao Tao-chung, “Ch\'iu Ch\'u-chi and Chinggis Khan,” \textit{Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies} 46 (1986): 201–19. Thanks to Thomas Allsen for this reference.} Ibn Taymiy\'ah 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 (\textit{al-faqi\'h}), the ascetic (\textit{al-z\'ahid}), the priest (\textit{al-qis\'is}) and the monk (\textit{al-r\'ahib}), the rabbi (\textit{dan\'an al-yah\'ud}), the astrologer (\textit{al-munajjim}), the magician (\textit{al-s\'a\'hir}), the physician (\textit{al-\'ab\'ib}), the secretary (\textit{al-k\'atib}), or the keeper of the accounts (\textit{al-h\'asib}). They also include the guardian of the idols (\textit{s\'adin al-a\'sn\'am}).”\footnote{\textit{Majm\'\u{u} Fat\'\u{w}a}, 28:525.}

In the categories listed by Ibn Taymiy\'ah 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 Taymiy\'ah emphasized the Mongols did not make any distinction between believers who had been granted a divine book and others.

Ibn Taymiy\'ah issues fatwas to construct a typology of religious matters (\textit{\'ibad\'at wa-s\'a\'ir al-ma\'mu\'r}) amongst Adam’s progeny (\textit{min Bani \'Adam}).\footnote{\textit{Majm\'\u{u} Fat\'\u{w}a}, 20:66.} He considers that every act of worship whose origin is a divine order includes three categories (\textit{aq\'as\'am}): the rational (\textit{\'aqli}), the confessional (\textit{mil\'li}), and the legal (\textit{shar\'i}).\footnote{\textit{Majm\'\u{u} Fat\'\u{w}a}, 20:66.} 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.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} The confessional is “what the believers of varied religious confessions (\textit{ahl al-mil\'al}) granted a divine book agree upon,” in other words both Muslims and Quranic People of the Book

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 20:66 (\textit{Kit\'ab U\'s\'ul al-Fiqh}). On these fatwas, see also Michot, “Un important t\'emoin,” 351–52.}
\item \footnote{\textit{Majm\'\u{u} Fat\'\u{w}a}, 28:525.}
\item \footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 20:66.}
\end{itemize}

\normalsize

©2007 by Denise Aigle.
DOI: 10.6082/M1JW8C1S. (https://doi.org/10.6082/M1JW8C1S)
DOI of Vol. XI, no. 2: 10.6082/M19021V0. See https://doi.org/10.6082/Z7BW-SQ52 to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html for more information about copyright and open access.
(ahl al-kitāb). The legal is “what is exclusive to the followers of Quranic law.”

Lastly, Ibn Taymiyah deals with the question of royal politics (siyāsāt al-malākiyyah) which come not under a confession or a divine book, but in which the rational and the legal are necessary. To illustrate this type of government, the Hanbali scholar gives the example of the Chinggis Khanid regime.

Chinggis Khan had conceived a law, the yāsā, according to “his reason (ʿaqlīhi) and his own opinion (dhīnīhi).” On this basis Ibn Taymiyah develops an argument that the Mongols were guilty of blameworthy innovation (al-bidʿāh): “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 (sunūnat al-jāhilīyyah) and his infidel law (sharīʿatihi al-kufrīyāh).” With this reasoning, Ibn Taymiyah argues against the Mongols’ political system. The Ilkhans’ Islam, according to Ibn Taymiyah, exposes the Muslim religion to a grave risk because in it the rational (al-ʿaqlī) had replaced the legal (al-sharīʿī).

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 Taymiyah 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 shariʿāh.

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

---

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


146 Ibid.

147 Ibid., 67.


149 Majmūʿ Fatāwā, 28:523.

150 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 Taymiyah 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 Wādi al-Khaznadār, at the time of the occupation of Damascus by the Ilkhanid troops, when Ibn Taymiyah 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 Taymiyah 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.  151  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 Wādi 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 Shiʿism. It addresses the problem posed by the Mongols and their conversion to Islam, but goes far beyond this topic since Ibn Taymiyah also brings up many religious sects in Bilād al-Shām, such as the Ismāʿiliyyah, the Nuṣayriyyah, and Ibn ʿArabī’s followers, religious tendencies against which Ibn Taymiyah fought incessantly throughout his life. Nevertheless, this criticism of the Mongol regime, accused of being under the influence of major Shiʿite 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-Ṣuﬄār on 2 Ramaḍān 702/20 April 1303, and on this basis concludes that the fatwa was undoubtedly proclaimed in Rajab or Shaʿbān 702/1303, just before that battle. However, as Jean Michot points out in his translation of Ibn Taymiyah’s *Lettre à un roi croisé*, 152  Thomas Raff missed a clear allusion in the fatwa to Öljeitū’s conversion from Sunni Islam to Twelver Shiʿism. The king of these Tatars has now been won over to Rāfiḍism, writes Ibn Taymiyah; the Hijaz, if they capture it, will be “entirely corrupted.” 153  Öljeitū’s conversion to Shiʿism probably took

---

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

Troubled by the establishment of a new political system in a large part of the Muslim world, Ibn Taymiyyah 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 Taymiyyah, 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 (‘aqūl), risked competing with the true religion (din al-haqq), 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 Taymiyyah’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 Taymiyyah, 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-ʿAlqamī (d. 656/1258), minister of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Musta‘ṣim. As far as Ibn

---

154 The Ilkhan’s conversion to Shi‘ism was followed by the mass conversion of his amirs, with the exception of the two most powerful, Sā‘īd Chūpān and Isen Quṭlugh. From this date forward, the khuṭbah 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 Ilkans,” 283) points out, the proclamation of Shi‘ism aroused violent opposition in Sunni strongholds in Iran (Īsfahān, Qazwīn, and Shīrāz), despite the fact that the khuṭbah did not include any execration of the Sunnism of the first caliphs.


156 Quran 9:59.

157 Majmūʿ Fatawā, 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-ʿAlqami,” 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 Rāfiḍîm.” Although he is not named, this assertion relates to Öljeytü. Ilkhanid Rāfiḍîm 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.158 As a result, the Mamluks had considerable difficulty in retaining their influence there. In 705/1306, Öljeytü sent an Iraqi caravan with a mahmal159 to Mecca, just as Ghāzān Khān had tried to do in 702/1303 shortly before his death. In 710/1310, Öljeytü proclaimed his Shi‘ite profession of faith on his future mausoleum at Sulṭānīyah, then capital of the Persian Ilkhanate.160 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 sharīf of Mecca.161 A number of inscriptions engraved on this Sulṭānīyah mausoleum, such as “may God give him victory” and “may God spread his shadow and glorify his lands”162 clearly refer to the Ilkhan’s desire to extend his domain, and by implication to dominate Bilād al-Şām. 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 Ilkhan’s attempts, since their conversion to Islam, to present themselves as leaders of the Muslim world. Öljeytü’s future mausoleum in Sulṭānīyah—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 Ilkhan’s Shi‘ite Islam represented for the Sunni Muslim ummah. Öljeytü’s claims to Syria were to bear no fruit, however: his campaign, launched in 712/1312, would spend a month besieging Raḥbah and never crossed the Euphrates.163 His

159 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 73.
162 Ibid.
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 Ḥumaydāh 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 Ramadān 706/16 December 1316 the Ilkhan had departed from this world.⁶⁴ As Jean Calmard emphasizes, Öljeitū’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 ʿālim Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, to whom the Shi‘ite sources attribute the credit for Öljeitū’s conversion to Twelver Shi‘ism.⁶⁵ 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.

---

⁶⁴Ibid., 200. It was reported that Ḥājjī al-Dilqandī had been given orders by Öljeitū to exhume the bodies of the first caliphs Abū Bakr and ‘Umar from their place alongside the Prophet Muḥammad; see ibid. Moreover, Öljeitū had in mind to transfer the mortal remains of ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn to his future mausoleum at Sultāniyāh; see Calmard, “Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans,” 284.