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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**The World of Ibn Taymiyya:**  
**An Analysis of the Historical Context of Ibn Taymiyya's Anti-Mongol Fatwas**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

**Jarod R. DeVogd**

Under the supervision of

**Dr. Eleonora Fernandes**

**January 2023**

## **Dedication**

To all my family

My grandparents, my parents, and my sister and her family

For being my biggest champions,

For supporting me in my far-off exploits,

And for always welcoming me when I come back.

## Acknowledgments

No one is an island. There are many people who have helped me during the course of my studies in one way or another, and for whom I am thankful: my professors, my friends, and my colleagues.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Leonor Fernandes. Dr. Fernandes was one of my earliest professors as an undergraduate student and one who encouraged me to continue in my studies. She was patient and supportive as I drew out my time at AUC and juggled university and work, and she never let me settle. As her teaching assistant, the experience I gained under her mentorship—from her vast knowledge and through her command of the classroom—have been invaluable.

I would like to thank Dr. Amina Elbendary, another of my early, inspiring professors, who has also always been very supportive. Also to Dr. Elbendary and to Dr. Hoda El Saadi for being my committee members and providing me with very helpful corrections and feedback. To Ms. Marwa Sabry, thank you for keeping me and all the students in the department on track with your vital administrative support. To all of the faculty of the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations I have had the privilege to study under, your knowledge and perspectives have opened for me a door into a rich and exciting past. And to Anthony Quickel, who has always been a friend and role model in the endless quest for knowledge.

## **Abstract**

Studies into Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas against the Mongols are relatively new, despite the increasing frequency with which they are cited by modern extremist groups. Detailed explorations into the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century are also relatively new. Ibn Taymiyya, the early Mamluk Sultanate, and the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War are intricately connected, yet they are often not studied in synthesis. Generally, works that give overviews of the history of this period lack intricate details, studies dedicated to in-depth analysis of specific events are not focused on a connection to Ibn Taymiyya's writings, and biographies on Ibn Taymiyya or works that focus on a particular aspect of his thought lack an incorporation of the historical details. Therefore, this study aims to explore and illuminate explicit linkages between actions and rulings of Ibn Taymiyya, particularly those related to war against the Mongols, with historical events of his time. Through a more thorough synthesis of historical events and Ibn Taymiyya's life in this thesis, it will become increasingly apparent how the terms of his fatwas against the Mongols were prescribed to address very specific time and place contexts. This will provide an insightful look into the past while also providing a starting point for understanding those who invoke Ibn Taymiyya in our time.

## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
Note on Transliteration and Dating .....	vii
Abbreviations.....	vii
Primary Sources and Note on Translations .....	viii
Selected Timeline .....	ix
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
The <i>Majmū` Fatāwā</i> .....	2
The Historical Setting: Summary of Major Events of the Mid-Thirteenth Century .....	6
<b>I. Ibn Taymiyya’s Early Life and Activism.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Ibn Taymiyya’s Early Life Under Mongol Attacks.....	14
From Ayn Jalut to Second Homs (658-680/1260-1281) .....	16
Ibn Taymiyya’s Early Advancement .....	20
Early Mamluk Campaigns Against Armenia, Acre, and Kasrawān .....	24
The Beginning of Ibn Taymiyya’s Activism.....	25
Mārdīn .....	31
<b>II. Ibn Taymiyya, Ghāzān Khan, and the First Two AMFs.....</b>	<b>36</b>
The Rise of Ghāzān Khan.....	36
Ibn Taymiyya’s First Anti-Mongol Fatwa (AMF 3) .....	40
Ghāzān’s First Invasion .....	45
The Mongol Occupation of Syria (699-700/1299-1300).....	48
Ibn Taymiyya’s Second Anti-Mongol Fatwa (AMF 1).....	53
Ghāzān’s Third Invasion .....	58
<b>III. Ibn Taymiyya on Christianity, Islamic Governance, and the Third AMF.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Mamluk Actions Against Christians in Egypt, Cilicia and Kasrawān .....	61
Ibn Taymiyya on Trial.....	69
Öljaitü’s Invasion and Ibn Taymiyya’s Third AMF (AMF 2) .....	75
Troubles in Ibn Taymiyya’s Later Years.....	87
Ibn Taymiyya’s Historical Legacy .....	90
<b>IV. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Appendix: Selected Arabic Passages from the MF.....</b>	<b>100</b>
The Mārdīn Fatwa ( <i>MF 28:241</i> ), page 33 .....	100
AMF 1 ( <i>MF 28:501-508</i> ).....	101
AMF 2 ( <i>MF 28:509-543</i> ).....	103
AMF 3 ( <i>MF 28:544-551</i> ).....	108

**Bibliography.....110**

## Preface

### Note on Transliteration and Dating

For Arabic words and names, this thesis follows the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* transliteration system:

Consonants								Long Vowels	
ء	’	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k	ا	ā
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l	و	ū
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m	ي	ī
ث	th	ز	z	ع	‘	ن	n	Short Vowels	
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h	َ	a
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w	ُ	u
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y	ِ	i

As an exception to the *IJMES* system, for standalone Arabic words ending in “*teh marbuta*”, the final “h” is omitted.

For non-Arabic names of Mamluk amīrs and sultans, the Arabic spelling is used. With Mongol names, an attempt was made to follow the more recent academic trend of spelling in accordance with the original East Asian pronunciation rather than traditional English spellings; for example, “Chinggis Khan” instead of “Genghis Khan” or similar variants.

For dates, the *Hijri* date is listed first, followed by the Common Era date.

### Abbreviations

- AMF      Anti-Mongol Fatwa, referring to three specific fatwas written by Ibn Taymiyya, expanded upon in detail below. They are identified as AMF 1, AMF 2, and AMF 3, as per their order of placement in the *Majmū‘ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Maṭābi‘ al-Riyāḍ, first published in Riyadh in 1961.
- IJMES*    *International Journal of Middle East Studies*
- IJRIS*    *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*
- MF*      *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, referring again to the *Majmū‘ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad

ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Maṭābi‘ al-Riyāḍ, first published in Riyadh in 1961.

*MSR*      *Mamluk Studies Review*

*SOAS*      *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

### **Primary Sources and Note on Translations**

The following primary sources in translation were consulted for historical context, especially to attempt to get closer to the original contemporary sentiment expressed in reaction to the Mongol invasions of Muslim lands, and therefore further contextualize the language used by Ibn Taymiyya in his AMFs:

Ibn al-Athir. *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil Fi’I-Ta’rikh, Part 3. The Years 589-629/1193-1231: The Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*. Translated by D.S. Richards. Crusade Texts in Translation. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Joveynī, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Atā Malek. *The History of the World-Conqueror*. Translated by John Andrew Boyle. UNESCO Collections of Representative Works: Persian Series. Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1958.

Kirakos Gandzakets‘i. *History of the Armenians*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sources of the Armenian Tradition. New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1986.

Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb. *The Successors of Genghis Khan*. Translated by John Andrew Boyle. UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Persian Heritage Series, no. 10. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

The following was referenced for contemporary opinions on Ibn Taymiyya:

Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn al-. “Nubdha Min Sirat Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya.” Translated by Caterina Bori. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 331–48.

Particular translations of excerpts of primary source text by Ibn Taymiyya, other than his AMFs, that were of significant help for analysis and context include the following:

Ibn Taymiyya. “Al-Siyasa al-Shariyya: Jihād” In *Legacy of Jihad: Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims*, edited by Andrew G. Bostom, translated by Rudolph Peters, 165–73. New York: Prometheus Books, 2005.

Murad, Hasan Qasim. “Ibn Taymiyya on Trial: A Narrative Account of His Miḥan.” *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (1979): 1–32.

Michel, Thomas F. *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya’s al-Jawab al-Sahih*. Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science. Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1984.

For the three AMFs of Ibn Taymiyya, the Arabic text of the *MF* was used. Attempts at translation and any faults therein are my own. Some mistakes or inconsistencies in the text of the *MF*, such as in the Mārdīn Fatwa, have been discovered and noted below. Secondary sources on the AMFs by Denise Aigle, Reuven Amitai, Caterina Bori, John Hoover, Henri Laoust, and Yahya Michot were valuable for consultation and analysis. Jabir Sani Maihula provided a rudimentary translation of AMF 1 and AMF 3 and was also consulted, however there are several issues with grammar and word choice. There are no critical editions of Ibn Taymiyya’s anti-Mongol fatwas in publication, something which is sorely needed.

### **Selected Timeline**

656/1258	Fall of Baghdad to the Mongols
658/1260	Battle of Ayn Jalut and the beginning of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War
661/1263	Birth of Ibn Taymiyya
667/1269	Ibn Taymiyya and his family flee Ḥarrān for Damascus ahead of Mongol attacks
678-89/1279-90	Reign of Qalāwūn
680/1281	Second Battle of Homs, ending with Sultan Qalāwūn’s defeat of the Mongol forces of Abāqā Khan
690/1291	Fall of Acre to the Mamluks
693/1293-94	First reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad
694-703/1295-1304	Reign of Ghāzān Khan
698-708/1299-1309	Second reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad
698/1299	Mamluk attack on Mārdīn
699-700/1299-1300	Ghāzān’s first invasion of Syria, including the Mongol defeat of the Mamluks at Wadi al-Khaznadār and a brief Mongol occupation of Syria
700/1300-1301	Ghāzān’s second invasion of Syria
702/1303	Ghāzān’s third invasion of Syria
703-16/1304-16	Reign of Öljaitü
709-41/1310-41	Third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad
712/1312	Öljaitü’s invasion of Syria
723/1323	Conclusion of a peace treaty formally ending the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War
728/1328	Death of Ibn Taymiyya

## Introduction

Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328) is a key and controversial figure both for our modern period and for his own time. In the modern period, he is a gateway figure key to understanding branches of conservative Islamic thought, being regularly cited as inspiration for various fundamentalist and extremist movements. In his own time, at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, he was a pivotal religious figure for defending the faith both against impure practices from within and existential attacks from without, especially in the face of the series of Mongol onslaughts against southwest Asia peaking during his most active years.

The sheer volume of texts authored by Ibn Taymiyya on a wide variety of subjects—thousands of pages of which have been published—and the number of contemporary texts written about him make him an accessible as well as an overwhelming figure for study.<sup>1</sup> To add to the challenge, many of Ibn Taymiyya's works have been referred to by multiple names, not just in the modern period but in the medieval period as well, and including by Ibn Taymiyya himself.<sup>2</sup> Studies into Ibn Taymiyya range from his views on philosophy, Sufism, divorce, and tomb visitation to his rulings on *jihād*, *bid'a*, and his Mongol and Christian polemics. Many of these topics have themselves been the focus of individual academic studies.

Of interest in this thesis are the historical contexts of some of Ibn Taymiyya's rulings against the Mongols and those associated with them during the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, which lasted for about six decades from the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 658/1260 to a peace agreement

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of almost three hundred published works authored by Ibn Taymiyya, see Abd al-Salam ibn Ibrahim al-Husayn, "A List of Sheikh al-Islam's Printed Books," Saaid.net, 2008, <http://www.saaaid.net/monawein/taimiah/34.htm>. The author also notes two studies of Ibn Taymiyya's works that include lists of over seven hundred and eleven hundred different titles, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Sahih*, Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1984), 68.

finalized in 723/1323. A study of the events of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries is essential for the understanding of how such rulings by Ibn Taymiyya were reactions to a particular setting, a time when the Islamic heartlands were under threat from all directions. In turn, the expounding nature of Ibn Taymiyya's rulings, rich in historical details, helps us to understand more about the events of his time and how the people understood and reacted to them.

Ibn Taymiyya's life parallels the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War: he was born in 661/1263 in Ḥarrān, just north of Syria, only a few years after the infamous Mamluk victory over the Mongols at Ayn Jalut.<sup>3</sup> By 667/1269, he and his family fled the area ahead of another Mongol campaign and sought sanctuary in Damascus under the Mamluk Sultanate. For the next decades, Ibn Taymiyya lived through the war, participating in notable events such as the Mamluk stands against the invasions of Ghāzān Khan (r. 694-703/1295-1304) from 699/1299 to 702/1303. He lived past the war's conclusion in 723/1323 by only a few years, passing away in 728/1328 after an active life in the matters and events around him.

### **The *Majmū' Fatāwā***

A prolific legal expert, Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas were gathered into an arrangement known as *Majmū' fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya (MF)*, put into 37 volumes—just his legal rulings—and published in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> A 2004 reprint includes some minor corrections.<sup>5</sup> These are not critical editions, but a collection of the texts, in Arabic. There is no authoritative English translation of any of the volumes. However renowned scholars including Denise Aigle,

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<sup>3</sup> H. Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Maṭābi' al-Riyāḍ, vol. 28, 37 vols. (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya wal-Da'wa wal-Irshād al-Sa'udiyya, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Muḥammā' al-Malik Fahd, vol. 28, 37 vols. (Medina: Wizārat al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya wal-Da'wa wal-Irshād al-Sa'udiyya, 2004).

Reuven Amitai, Caterina Bori, John Hoover, Henri Laoust, and Yahya Michot have studied portions of the *MF* and sometimes included partial translations. At any rate, this thesis is not meant to be a critical evaluation of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings, but an in-depth study of their relations to historical events. The fatwas range in length from a few pages to dozens of pages long, and themselves contain much historical information in the form of the recounting of events that were happening in the late 1200s and early 1300s—events and information Ibn Taymiyya recorded to explain his rulings. He did not issue rulings without providing his own contextual justifications, but rather demonstrated how he perceived the events going on around him.

Ibn Taymiyya issued fatwas on a wide range of topics, as would be appropriate for a prominent jurist. While the fatwas against the Mongols are emphasized, notes on some fatwas issued on other topics, such as divorce, are included when they shed important light on Ibn Taymiyya’s relationships with the political authorities of the Mamluk Sultanate. While the fatwas calling for *jihād* against various groups draw much of the attention today, they were not the rulings that generated the most controversy with the state. Rather, fatwas issued on the subjects of divorce and tomb visitation seem to have landed Ibn Taymiyya in the most trouble during his time, being the only fatwas that saw him imprisoned. An investigation into this series of events show an interesting side to Ibn Taymiyya’s relationship with the power of the Mamluk state.

Fatwas issued against groups include those against the enemies of his time, such as the Mongols, Nuṣayrīs, various Christian groups, Shi‘a groups, and orthodox Muslims deemed not pure, religious, or zealous enough in their practice and defense of the faith. Volume 28 of the *MF* contains three fatwas commonly referred to by scholars as “Anti-Mongol Fatwas” (AMFs), called so because they were fatwas specifically calling for *jihād* against the Mongols. They are

referenced as AMF 1, AMF 2, and AMF 3.<sup>6</sup> They are not dated, and there has been disagreement about their order, though the latest conclusion put forth by Denise Aigle and Jon Hoover is that two of them—AMF 3 and AMF 1—were written during the campaigns of the Ilkhan Ghāzān Khan (r. 694-703/1295-1304), and in that order, while AMF 2 was written during the invasion of Ghāzān’s successor, Öljaitü (r. 703-16/1304-16).<sup>7</sup>

The AMFs are perhaps the most controversial fatwas of Ibn Taymiyya for our time, not because of their language, but because of their targets. In these three fatwas, Ibn Taymiyya explains his rationale for how the Mamluks could wage *jihād* against the Mongols, who by that time claimed to be Muslim and were led by a Muslim ruler. These three fatwas are heavily cited and employed by prominent jihadist groups of the modern period, and they can all be traced to the campaigns of the Ilkhans Ghāzān and Öljaitü against the Mamluks in the first two decades of the 1300s. These and the historical events of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War will be the major focus of this thesis, although the contexts of other fatwas mentioned will also have important roles in the unfolding course of events.

Studies into Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas against the Mongols are relatively new, despite the increasing frequency with which those fatwas are cited by modern extremist groups. Detailed explorations into the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War are also relatively new, although this is an expanding field. What is even more lacking is scholarship that attempts to synthesize both together—that is, work that specifically frames the life and actions of Ibn Taymiyya within a detailed account of the events during which he acted: the war against the Mongols, Mamluk struggles against the Crusaders and Armenians, and internal matters of the Mamluks ruling the sultanate in which he

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<sup>6</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:501–53.

<sup>7</sup> Jon Hoover, “Jihad and the Mongols,” Jon Hoover, accessed October 29, 2021, <https://sites.google.com/site/jhoover363/taymiyyan-studies/jihad-against-the-mongols>.

came to live. Generally, works that give overviews of the history of this period lack intricate details in favor of broader summaries, works dedicated to in-depth analysis of specific events do not make connections to Ibn Taymiyya's writings, and biographies on Ibn Taymiyya or works that focus on particular aspects of his thought lack a wider incorporation of historical details. Reuven Amitai, for example, provides excellent accounts of various phases of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, but his purpose was not to connect those events to Ibn Taymiyya. Jon Hoover has authored insightful works into Ibn Taymiyya's life and opinions, but there is often not a marked connection to the wider events happening at that time or a detailed analysis into how they may have influenced him. Even in his major book on the shaykh, *Ibn Taymiyya*, it is only the first two chapters that are dedicated to an account of Ibn Taymiyya's actions, while the remaining chapters are organized by theme.<sup>8</sup> Denise Aigle has published some penetrating analyses of Ibn Taymiyya's AMFs, but it is sometimes difficult to ascertain distinctions between each of the fatwas and to be able to isolate them from one another, which would allow them to be more closely related to localized events. And Yahya Michot has gone to great lengths in his examinations of Ibn Taymiyya's writings to show that Ibn Taymiyya was much more moderate than he is often given credit for, but he sometimes seems to overlook some of the reasons behind and contemporary reactions to Ibn Taymiyya's words and actions, particularly when he angered those around him, in favor of a focus on how Ibn Taymiyya is often misappropriated today. Through a more thorough synthesis of historical events and Ibn Taymiyya's life in this thesis, it will become increasingly apparent how the terms of the AMFs were prescribed to address very specific time and place contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, Makers of the Muslim World (London: Oneworld Academic, 2019).

## **The Historical Setting: Summary of Major Events of the Mid-Thirteenth Century**

The Mongols were the primary foes of the Mamluks in the later 13<sup>th</sup> century, and as such were some of the main targets of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas calling for *jihād*. Understanding the threat the Mongols posed requires an understanding larger than just that of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War that dominated Ibn Taymiyya's adult life. His childhood was directly impacted by earlier Mongol invasions and the presence of the Crusaders, and the people of his father's generation would have been living with the news and memories of disastrous events such as the fall of huge swaths of Muslim lands to the east. Just as these events would have been present in the consciousness of the Muslims at that time, they framed Ibn Taymiyya's early life.

### ***Mongol Advances from the East***

The Mongol advance had been incredibly rapid. The first major Muslim state to fall to Mongol invaders was the empire of the Khwārazm. This large, eastern Sunni state—one of the largest land empires in history—was located in parts of Central Asia and nearly all of Persia, spreading from the Tian Shan mountains in the northeast to the borders of Mesopotamia and the Abbasid Caliphate to the west. The advances of the Mongols were surprising and devastating. Under Chinggis Khan and his sons, the Mongols conquered almost the entire empire by 617/1221, in less than two years, massacring and enslaving millions in what was one of the bloodiest campaigns of the pre-modern era.<sup>9</sup>

During this campaign, after the Mongols had conquered one of the major Khwārazmian cities, Persian historian 'Aṭā-Malik Juvaynī, in his *The History of The World Conqueror (Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy)*, recorded how Chinggis Khan took to one of the pulpits in a mosque and gave a

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Jackson, *The Mongols & the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017), 75–81.

speech. Whether this is apocryphal or not, Juvaynī, himself a Muslim, captures in this speech one of the only rationalizations imaginable for how such a calamity could befall the Muslims:

‘O people, know that you have committed great sins, and that the great ones among you have committed these sins. If you ask me what proof I have for these words, I say it is because I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.’<sup>10</sup>

Another contemporary historian was ‘Izz al-Dīn Abu ‘l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233). Ibn al-Athīr was an Arab historian who wrote, among other works, *The Complete History (al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh)*—multi-volume annals spanning from the beginning of the world until shortly before his death.<sup>11</sup> His writings must have been influential, as there is evidence that many Syrian sources from the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, during Ibn Taymiyya’s life, drew upon material written by Ibn al-Athīr.<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Athīr introduced the coming of the Mongols thus:

For several years I continued to avoid mention of this disaster as it horrified me and I was unwilling to recount it. I was taking one step towards it and then another back. Who is there who would find it easy to write the obituary of Islam and the Muslims?... Oh, would that my mother had not given me birth! Oh, would that I had died before it occurred and been a thing forgotten, quite forgotten!... To do it involves recounting the most terrible disaster and the greatest misfortune, one the like of which the passage of days and nights cannot reproduce. It comprised all mankind but particularly affected the Muslims. If anyone were to say that since God (glory and power be His) created Adam until this present time mankind has not had a comparable affliction, he would be speaking the truth. History books do not contain anything similar or anything that comes close to it.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Atā Malek Joveynī, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. John Andrew Boyle, UNESCO Collections of Representative Works: Persian Series (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1958), 104–5.

<sup>11</sup> F. Rosenthal, “Ibn Al-Athīr,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Jackson, *The Mongols & the Islamic World*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil Fi ‘I-Ta’rikh, Part 3. The Years 589-629/1193-1231: The Ayyubids after Saladin and the Mongol Menace*, trans. D.S. Richards, *Crusade Texts in Translation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 202.

In similar fashion, he describes the Mongols as worse than the Antichrist: “As for the Antichrist, he will spare those who follow him and destroy those who oppose him, but these did not spare anyone. On the contrary, they slew women, men and children. They split open the bellies of pregnant women and killed the foetuses.”<sup>14</sup>

When the Khwārazmian state had collapsed and the Mongols had taken over its lands during those following years, their conquest of Central Asia was complete, and the Mongols had control of a passageway south of the Caspian Sea that gave them access to the Caucasus region and then eastern Anatolia. Forces under Ögedei Khagan (r. 626-39/1229-41) (using the Turkic title) expanded further west. Georgia and Armenia fell, followed by the Seljuq Sultanate of Rum in eastern Anatolia at the battle of Köse Dağ in 641/1243.<sup>15</sup>

At Köse Dağ, despite the Seljuqs outnumbering the Mongols by around two to one, and upon their surrender being guaranteed some acceptable terms, the Mongols carried out yet another trademark slaughter.<sup>16</sup> All three of these states became vassals to the Mongols. The Zangids and Ayyūbids lost their northernmost territories as well. In 1244, the year following Köse Dağ, some of the Ayyūbid emirs in the areas north of Syria were forced to accept Mongol rule. Ayyūbid *amīrs* of northern Syria, including Aleppo, Ḥimṣ, and Damascus, were pressured to pay tribute at this time.<sup>17</sup> And Ḥarrān, the birthplace of Ibn Taymiyya and the home of his father and grandfather, was subjugated in 642/1244-45, less than 20 years before Ibn Taymiyya’s birth.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Athir, 202.

<sup>15</sup> Cl. Cahen, “Köse Dağh,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Sara Nur Yıldız, “Baiju: The Mongol Conqueror at the Crossfire of Dynastic Struggle,” in *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, Intellectuals*, ed. Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson, *The Mongols & the Islamic World*, 84.

<sup>18</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. John Andrew Boyle, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Persian Heritage Series, no. 10 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 192–93.

In 1255, the next wave of Mongol attacks on Muslim lands began. Möngke (r. 649-57/1251-59), the fourth Great Khan of the Mongols, had placed his brother Hülegü in charge of the empire's western campaigns. One of their main goals was to conquer the remaining Muslim states in the Middle East and expand the Mongol borders all the way to the Nile River in Egypt. While the Mongol incursions and occupation under Chinggis Khan were horrifying enough, the name of Hülegü—despite being comparatively unknown in other parts of the world—would be burned into the consciousness of the Middle East for the attacks on the caliphate and other Muslim states that would happen under him.

Hülegü brought a massive army down from Central Asia and across Persia—one of the largest armies ever fielded by the Mongols—and soon came to the gates of Baghdad, one of the largest cities in the world, and the main seat of the Sunni Muslim caliphate for the last five hundred years. After the Abbasid caliph, al-Musta‘şim bi ‘llāh (r. 640-56/1247-58), initially refused to aid the Mongols in their conquests or to surrender, the Mongol army defeated the Abbasid army and sieged the city before burning it to the ground and massacring a population of, according to Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318), about 90,000.<sup>19</sup> The caliph, al-Musta‘şim, was reported by contemporary Muslim sources as being executed by being rolled up into a carpet and trampled (or kicked) to death.<sup>20</sup> And so one of the main centers of civilization for the Muslims was wiped off the map, and the *umma* was left without a caliph for the first time since the election of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, in 11/632. With these central and northern Muslim lands effectively crushed, the last of the Abbasid Empire dismembered, and nothing left in the way, Syria would come next.

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<sup>19</sup> René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1970), 356.

<sup>20</sup> John Andrew Boyle, “The Death of the Last ‘Abbasid Caliph: A Contemporary Muslim Account,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6, no. 2 (1961): 150.

### *Franks in the West and the Fall of the Ayyubids*

While the Mongols moved further and further westward, the new Mamluk Sultanate was in its nascency in Cairo. The Mamluks had only recently come to power; for much of the preceding 80 years the region was ruled by the Ayyūbids. In the 1240s, while many of the Muslim states were concerned with the very violent and present threat of the invading Mongols in the east, the Ayyūbids were invaded by the Franks under King Louis IX from the west. When Louis reached the shores of Damietta in the spring of 647/1249, surprising the Ayyūbids and soon capturing the city, he sent a new shock throughout Egypt and Syria.<sup>21</sup>

In the midst of this Crusade, the Ayyūbid Sultan, al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb (r. 637-47/1240-49), had died of illness. He was briefly succeeded by his unpopular son al-Mu‘azzam Tūrānshāh (r. 647-48/1249-50), who immediately slighted the Baḥrī mamluks. After Tūrānshāh was murdered by his father’s mamluk military commanders, the mamluks proclaimed al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb’s widow, Shajarat al-Durr, as the new ruler of Egypt (r. 648/1250). This in turn lasted only three months, due in large part to the refusal of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad to recognize the legitimacy of the female monarch in Egypt. The reins of power in Cairo were then taken up by the Mamluks under ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak (r. 648-55/1250-57).<sup>22</sup> Yet during these initial months of uncertainty, Cairo lost control of Syria to remnants of the Ayyūbid family. And though the army in Egypt was able to take back Damietta at the close of the Seventh Crusade, the Crusader presence still loomed large. Acre posed a persistent threat, continuing to provide a base of support for European Crusaders and entertain the possibility of a Frankish-Mongol alliance against the Muslims that would surround them from three sides.

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<sup>21</sup> Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 1st ed., vol. III (Cambridge University Press, 1951), 261–63.

<sup>22</sup> R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 315.

### ***The Clash: The First Mongol Invasion of Syria***

Hülegü, with Baghdad and eastern Anatolia out of the way and with Georgian and Armenian contingents impressed into the Mongol armies, turned his sights on Syria. The Mongols were as of yet proving unstoppable, and there seemed to be little to stand in their way. their invasion of Syria started late in 657/1259, and the fortified city of Aleppo fell in January. The Mongols spent six days massacring and looting in the city; “the streets were choked with the slain, and a vast number of women and children were seized as slaves.”<sup>23</sup> The Cilician king, Het‘um I (r. 1226 - 1270), led the destruction of the great mosque by setting it afire, and the citadel was destroyed as well. One by one, the other cities of Syria fell: Homs, then Hama, and finally, without any major fighting, Damascus; all in just a matter of weeks. The last prominent Ayyūbid, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, was captured and held, and then soon executed, by the Mongols.<sup>24</sup>

The Mongols continued spreading south toward Egypt until news of the death of the great khan, Möngke, reached Hülegü. Hülegü, a prince himself, returned to the Mongol capital of Karakorum for the *kurultai* council which was to elect the next great khan, withdrawing the majority of his forces back into Persia due to the lack of pastureland in Syria that could sustain his large army. In his absence, he left his general Kitbuqa, a Nestorian Christian, in charge with a smaller Mongol force. At this point, the Mamluks of Egypt seized their moment.

The Mamluks confronted the Mongol threat head-on. Taking advantage of Hülegü’s absence, they set aside internal differences and marched their forces north into Syria. In Ramadan 658/September 1260, the Mamluk and Mongol armies engaged each other at Ayn Jalut. This infamous battle was a decisive victory for the Mamluks, under Sultan Sayf al-Dīn Quṭuz (r. 657-58/1259-60), marking one of the few defeats of the Mongol forces up to that time.

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<sup>23</sup> Humphreys, 349.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, *The Mongols & the Islamic World*, 133.

With this victory, the Mamluks spread their territory from Egypt and gained the land in the area all the way over to the Euphrates. Yet it was too early to say that the tides had turned. The Mongols were only pushed back—they weren't vanquished. Their forces remained in the area and in direct control of Mesopotamia and Iran, and they continued to confront the Mamluk armies.

This was the beginning of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, which was to last on and off for another sixty years. Hülegü assumed the title “Il-khan,” as attested by coins as far back as 658/1260.<sup>25</sup> While the meanings of the title are debated and there is no undisputed date for the establishment of an independent khanate, the dynasty founded by Hülegü and the lands they controlled are referred to as the Ilkhanate. The border between the lands of the Ilkhanate based primarily in Persia and the Mamluks in Syria and Egypt roughly followed the course of the Euphrates River, and the Ilkhans would lead campaigns for the conquest of Syria five additional times. Sometimes they were successful in temporarily holding Syrian territories before again being pushed back by the Mamluks. Even between these six campaigns, there was no peace between these two bordering states. The main enemy of the Mamluks was the Mongol Ilkhanate, and that enemy often made use of its Christian and Shi'a vassals against the Mamluk Sultanate and its population.

Therefore the Mamluk Sultanate that had started with Aybak's rule, just ten years prior to Ayn Jalut and a dozen or so before the birth of Ibn Taymiyya, became the main resistance to the Mongol spread further into Islamic lands—the lands of a community whose strength had shrunk from what was once a unified empire spreading all the way from Spain and Morocco in the west to Central Asia in the east, to a disunited heartland centered mostly around Greater Syria and

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<sup>25</sup> Jackson, 139.

Egypt. Ibn Taymiyya inherited this setting; from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century around the time of his birth, this Muslim heartland was in a struggle against invaders from both the west and the east. As Ibn al-Athīr wrote,

Islam and all its people and its lands were on the point of foundering both in the east and the west. The Tatars had come from the eastern lands and reached districts of Iraq, Azerbaijan, Arran and elsewhere, as we shall narrate, God willing. The Franks came from the west and had conquered a city the like of Damietta in Egypt, not to mention the fact that there were no fortresses to defend the country from its enemies. Thus all the lands in Egypt and Syria were on the point of being overcome and all the people were fearful of them and had come to expect disaster at any time.<sup>26</sup>

The situation facing the core lands of Islam at this point was arguably more precarious for the Muslims as a whole than it had ever been. The Muslim states faced an existential threat, particularly from the rapid advance of the Mongol armies bringing their bloody conquests and occupation.

It was in the midst of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War that Ibn Taymiyya lived, and it was under Mamluk rule that he would find sanctuary as a youth, grow up, and become a political and religious activist. Accounts like those of Juvaynī, Ibn al-Athīr, and Rashīd al-Dīn would have been fresh in the minds of Ibn Taymiyya's contemporaries and would have served as warnings of what could come if the further Mongol incursions of the freshly begun Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, that Ibn Taymiyya would live through, were left unchecked. Having shown here how the events of the mid-thirteenth century led to a crisis for the heartlands of the Muslim world, the following chapter explores how early events during the war permeated Ibn Taymiyya's youth and his rise to prominence on the religious and political scenes.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil Fi'l Ta'rikh*, Part 3, 179.

## I.

### **Ibn Taymiyya's Early Life and Activism**

The beginnings of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War coincided with the beginning of Ibn Taymiyya's life. His early years were spent in the looming shadow of the Mongols, whose gaze never left Syria and Egypt. The regular back-and-forth assaults by the Mamluks and the Mongols caught Syria in a constant state of tension. The clash of religious ideologies wrapped up in shrewd alliances, particularly those of the Mongols and their Georgian and Armenian Christian allies against the Mamluks, undoubtably added another element to the threat to the Muslims that was not lost on Ibn Taymiyya and others living through this strife. In this chapter, Ibn Taymiyya's early life is set within the context of the ongoing struggles between the Mamluks and their aspiring Mongol conquerors.

#### **Ibn Taymiyya's Early Life Under Mongol Attacks**

All of the chaos, war, and destruction of the Mongol invasions engulfed the city of Ḥarrān, in today's southeastern Turkey, where Ibn Taymiyya was born. Ḥarrān was in the hands of the Ayyūbids, though contested by the Seljuqs, when Hülegü's army first swept through; it was one of the first cities he laid siege to, in 658/1259, on his first invasion of Syria. The town had capitulated quickly and none were harmed, though resisters in the citadel held out a little longer before surrendering. These inhabitants of the citadel were also eventually granted safe conduct, but the citadel and the battlements of the city wall were destroyed.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya was born in Ḥarrān on 10 Rabī' I 661/22 January 1263, less than three years after the Battle of Ayn Jalut.<sup>28</sup> As Ḥarrān at this time existed on the frontiers of both the

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<sup>27</sup> D. S. Rice, "A Muslim Shrine at Ḥarrān," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 17, no. 3 (1955): 447.

<sup>28</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

Mamluk and the Mongol states, and although it did come under nominal Mamluk governorship in Ibn Taymiyya's early years, it was constantly harassed by the Mongols and their allies. At age six, in 667/1269, a young Ibn Taymiyya, with his father and three brothers, finally fled Ḥarrān ahead of another Mongol assault and took refuge in Damascus, in the shelter of the Mamluk Sultanate.<sup>29</sup> Soon after, by 670/1271, the Mongols, realizing they could not securely hold Ḥarrān and not willing to leave it alone, destroyed it completely. The population was deported to other towns such as Mārdīn, the mosque was destroyed, and the city gates were walled up.<sup>30</sup> The city was never rebuilt.

Throughout the 1270s, the second half of Baybars' reign (r. 658-76/1260-77), the population of Syria lived with the constant threat of the nearby presence of the Mongols and their Armenian allies. Hostile forces regularly raided from the north, and "almost every year, there was a Mongol scare and rumors of Mongols massing on the other side of the Euphrates."<sup>31</sup> The Mamluks maintained outposts in the area, but much of northern Syria remained underpopulated and unrecovered from war and served as a sort of buffer between the Mamluks and the Ilkhans.

During this time in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya received a respectable religious education. His grandfather, Majid al-Dīn (d. 653/1255), and his father, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm (d. 682/1284), were prominent Ḥanbalī scholars, and Ibn Taymiyya followed in this tradition. Sultan Baybars instituted a reform of the courts, appointing four *qāḍī al-quḍāt*—one chief judge for each of the four main Sunni *madhhabs*—instead of having only one Shāfi'ī chief judge.<sup>32</sup> This had the effect of tempering the influence of the dominant Shāfi'ī *madhhab* among the population and opening

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<sup>29</sup> Laoust; Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, "Nubdha Min Sirat Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya," trans. Caterina Bori, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 339.

<sup>30</sup> Rice, "A Muslim Shrine at Ḥarrān," 447.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1382* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 46.

<sup>32</sup> Irwin, 43.

up a broader space for the other three schools of thought. Among Ibn Taymiyya's teachers in Damascus was the first Ḥanbalī *qāḍī al-quḍāt* there.<sup>33</sup>

### **From Ayn Jalut to Second Homs (658-680/1260-1281)**

The Mamluks, coming from their victory at Ayn Jalut, frequently harassed the Mongols and their allies. Abāqā (r. 663-80/1265-82), the second Ilkhan ruler and son of Hülegü, worked to counter Mamluk threats by attempting to form alliances with Christian leaders against the Mamluks. His entreaties were many; he allied or sought alliances to varying degrees with the Byzantines, the Franks, and Christian kings of Europe. One of his wives was a daughter of the Byzantine emperor, Michael Palaeologus (r. 1258-1282).<sup>34</sup> He also sent at least two letters to the Catholic Popes Urban IV and Clement IV, proposing a joint offensive with European forces, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ilkhans in order to surround the Mamluks and end their rule of Syria.<sup>35</sup> He also sent ambassadors into Europe to Pope Gregory X, to Edward I of England, and Louis IX of France.<sup>36</sup> Though the details of such embassies would not have been public knowledge, it was no secret that the Mongols harbored these alliances. They ultimately bore little fruit, but they exemplify some of the high political and religious tensions at the time between Muslims and Christians in the area.

The Mamluks under Baybars attacked the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, located at their northern frontier with the Ilkhanate, several times. Armenia was still a client state and a strong Christian ally of the Mongols, and frequently participated in raids with the Mongols on Ayyūbid and Mamluk territory. By the beginning of 675/1277, Baybars was ready for a more forceful

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<sup>33</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

<sup>34</sup> John Andrew Boyle, "The Il-Khans of Persia and the Princes of Europe," *Central Asiatic Journal* 20, no. 1/2 (1976): 25.

<sup>35</sup> Boyle, 29.

<sup>36</sup> B. Spuler, "Ilkhāns," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012); Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 370.

offensive to the north. This time he targeted Anatolia, where there was potential support from some local *amīrs*. A successful land grab in this area would have secured the Mamluks' northern border and also cut off the Mongols from the Armenians and the Mediterranean Sea. Baybars marched into Anatolia with the majority of the armies from Egypt and Syria and encountered the Mongol forces on 10 Dhū 'l-qa'da/15 April near a place called Elbistan (or Abulustayn).

It initially seemed as though the Mamluks might lose the battle under the Mongols' initial charge. But Baybars led the Mamluks in a counterattack, and the Mongols fought mostly to their deaths. The battle, however, was not all cause for celebration. Baybars and the Mamluks had expected the Mongol forces to number around 30,000. They intended to take them on and defeat them with their own smaller numbers of about 14,000. In reality, estimates are that the Mongols numbered less than half of what was expected, at about 14,000 soldiers including their Georgian allies, which means that the Mamluk troops would have slightly outnumbered the actual Mongol part of the opposing army.<sup>37</sup> Despite this seeming advantage for the Mamluks, who were prepared to battle twice as many Mongols, the Mamluks did not win easily. When asked why he was not celebrating their victory, Baybars is said to have replied:

How can I rejoice? I had believed that if 10,000 horsemen of my army were to meet 30,000 Mongols, I would defeat them. But I met 7000 [Mongols] with all my army. [The Mongols] aroused panic and [my] army lost heart. [The Mongols] defeated the [Muslim] Left. Without Allah's grace, they would have defeated us. If I met them, and they were equal to the [Muslims in size], or larger than they, then [the matter] would not have turned out well.<sup>38</sup>

It would seem that a major lesson to be learned here by the Mamluks is that the Mongols were not to be underestimated.

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<sup>37</sup> Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 171.

<sup>38</sup> Amitai-Preiss, 219 citing Ibn Wāṣil, MS. 1703, fol. 187a.

Another significant point about this battle is that the Mongol soldiers who were captured, as well as some of the *amīrs*, were taken and incorporated as slaves into the Mamluk army.<sup>39</sup> Among the Mongol soldiers was one named Qipchāq, who would later play a prominent role in the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War as it continued between al-Malik al-Nāṣir and Ghāzān Khan twenty years later, around 699/1299. At this later point, Qipchāq would defect over to the Mongol side of the war, incurring the anger of many such as Ibn Taymiyya, who included him in his calls for *jihād* (see below in the next chapter).

In 679/late 1280, Mongol forces pushed back and conducted a raid on Aleppo. After meeting little resistance from the Mamluks, likely due to the fairly new Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 678-89/1279-90) facing his own internal power struggles with *amīrs* in Syria,<sup>40</sup> Abāqā decided the time was right to launch a full invasion campaign. He assembled a force of 50,000 Mongols along with another 30,000 troops comprised of Armenians, Georgians, and Franks.<sup>41</sup> In 680/1281, before Ibn Taymiyya was twenty, the Mongols launched this second invasion of Syria. Abāqā put his brother, Möngke Temur, in charge of the campaign, and the Mongol troops soon occupied some of the northern Syrian lands.<sup>42</sup> They were then poised once again to take over Syria, as they had temporarily done in 658/1260.

Sultan Qalāwūn brought his army from Egypt and joined with the Syrian garrisons and a Bedouin cavalry, yet they were still far outnumbered by the Mongols. Nevertheless, they defeated the Mongols at the Second Battle of Homs, just north of Damascus, in Rajab 680/October 1281. The Mamluk victory, however, came at a great cost. The Mongol horsemen

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<sup>39</sup> Amitai-Preiss, 174.

<sup>40</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, 4th ed. (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2008), 278–79.

<sup>41</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 371.

<sup>42</sup> Carl F. Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 101.

of the right flank had obliterated the left flank of the Mamluks, which broke and fled under pursuit and slaughter. Simultaneously, however, at the other end of the vast battlefield, the Mamluk right had done the same to the Mongol left, wounding the Mongol general. Qalāwūn, narrowly escaping a slaughter himself, was able to rally his troops to pursue the Mongols and drive them out of Syria.<sup>43</sup> The Mongols were once again pushed back by the Mamluks, although again only temporarily.

Abāqā died early the following year. Upon his death, his brother Tegüder (r. 680-83/1282-84) took over leadership of the Ilkhanate. Tegüder claimed to have converted to Islam and took the name Ahmad after acceding. This is significant as he upset the previous pro-Christian, anti-Mamluk ways of the Ilkhanate and acted in the opposite manner, removing privileges of the Nestorians and offering peace and alliance with the Mamluks.<sup>44</sup> He also reached out to Qalāwūn, but Qalāwūn was not interested at this point. When Ahmad Tegüder sent a Sufi shaykh, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, as his envoy, the Mamluks imprisoned him.<sup>45</sup> It seems, according to the actions of Tegüder and later Muslim Ilkhan leaders, and also some of the writings of Ibn Taymiyya which will be discussed below, that Ilkhanid conversions to Islam were perhaps not genuine or at least not seen as orthodox. This would be a major sticking point for Ibn Taymiyya and others as time went on. It should also be noted that any overtures of peace and alliance offered by Tegüder were conditioned on the submission of the Mamluks to Mongol suzerainty.<sup>46</sup> This was not something the Mamluks were prepared to accept.

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<sup>43</sup> Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, 279–80.

<sup>44</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 371–72.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (Facts On File, 2004), 252.

<sup>46</sup> Adel Allouche, “Tegüder’s Ultimatum to Qalawun,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 4 (1990): 437–46.

We cannot know for certain if Ahmad Tegüder's conversion would have improved relations with the Mamluks over time; Tegüder was facing his own problems with Buddhist and Christian factions in his empire, and his pro-Muslim actions disturbed the Mongols enough that Tegüder was overthrown and replaced with Abāqā's son Arghūn, who resumed the religious leanings of his father and of Hülegü before him.<sup>47</sup>

Arghūn also sent multiple diplomatic entreaties to European Christian leaders in attempts to form an alliance to take out the Mamluk state. He sent ambassadors to Rome, to Philip in France, and to Edward in England, detailing how with a Crusader assault on the Syrian coastline, simultaneous with a Mongol assault from the north and east, Muslim rule could be expelled from Syria completely. He promised to deliver Jerusalem to the Crusaders while retaining Aleppo and Damascus for himself.<sup>48</sup> The Western leaders were noncommittal, and the joint offensive never happened, but the threat of a broader Christian-Mongol alliance against the Mamluks remained ever present, and these maneuvers along religious lines continued to feed sentiments that this war was not just political, but contained an element of orthodox Islam against the "other."

### **Ibn Taymiyya's Early Advancement**

Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyya received authorization to issue fatwas, from Shāfi'ī mufti Sharaf al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, by the young age of 19.<sup>49</sup> His father was the director of one of the Damascus Ḥanbalī madrasas, the Sukkariyya, and Ibn Taymiyya assumed this position when his father died in 682/1284. By 684/1285 he was teaching Qur'anic exegesis at the Umayyad Mosque, and by 1296 he was teaching at the main Ḥanbalī school in Damascus.<sup>50</sup> His continued

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<sup>47</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 372–73.

<sup>48</sup> Grousset, 373–76; Denise Aigle, "The Mongol Invasions of Bilad Al-Sham by Ghazan Khan and Ibn Taymiyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas," *Mamluk Studies Review* XI, no. 2 (2007): 91.

<sup>49</sup> Hasan Qasim Murad, "Ibn Taymiya on Trial: A Narrative Account of His Miḥan," *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (1979): 1; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 17.

<sup>50</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya"; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 17.

advancement would provide him with the following and the clout to soon be a major influence in ideological rationale for resisting the Mongols and their allies.

Many of Ibn Taymiyya's contemporaries wrote of events involving Ibn Taymiyya and perceptions of him. Important primary source material on the biography of Ibn Taymiyya include works by contemporary authors who knew him personally, such as Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1373) and Ibn 'Abd al-Hadi (d.744/1343-44). Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī wrote *al-'Uqūd al-durriyya min manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya* ("The Pearly Necklaces of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya's Virtues"), a biography that extols Ibn Taymiyya's goodness and is the "fullest contemporary biographical source."<sup>51</sup> Even figures that were against him and his ideas reported honorable impressions about him. A Maliki judge who often opposed him in court, Ibn Makhlūf (d.718/1318), is recorded as acknowledging that "There is no one more righteous than Ibn Taymiyya."<sup>52</sup> Another who attacked him multiple times, Shāfi'ī jurist Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), noted that his "admiration is even greater for the asceticism, piety, and religiosity with which God has endowed him, for his selfless championship of the truth, his adherence to the path of our forebears, his pursuit of perfection, the wonder of his example, unrivalled in our time and in times past."<sup>53</sup> It seems the majority of sources had positive things to say about Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge and virtues.

Some, however, were not always so complimentary in their writings. One of his colleagues, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d.748/1347-48), notes many commendable traits about Ibn Taymiyya, but also notes some of his more brash personality traits. Al-Dhahabī was a prominent

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<sup>51</sup> Donald P. Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?," *Studia Islamica*, no. 41 (1975): 94 citing Ibn 'Abd al-Hadi, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad. *Al-'Uqūd al-durriyya min manaqib Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya*. Ed. Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi. Cairo: Matba'at al-hijazi, 1938.

<sup>52</sup> Little, 99 citing Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, *'Uqūd*.

<sup>53</sup> Little, 100 citing Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalāni, *al-Durar al-Kāmina fl A'yān al-Mi'a al-Thāmina*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq, 1, Cairo (Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha) 1966.

historian, Shāfi‘ī theologian, and traditionalist who studied under and wrote biographies about many prominent religious figures of the time in Damascus, Cairo, and other centers of study.<sup>54</sup> He also succeeded Ibn Taymiyya in his teaching position at the Sukkariyya Madrasa.<sup>55</sup> In a manuscript referred to as *Nubdha*, al-Dhahabī wrote a biography on Ibn Taymiyya; one that was widely cited and quoted by other early biographers.<sup>56</sup> In his more famous letter, *al-Naṣīḥa al-Dhahabiyya li-Ibn Taymiyya*, al-Dhahabī passes on some final advice to Ibn Taymiyya before the latter’s death.<sup>57</sup>

Al-Dhahabī heaps praises on Ibn Taymiyya for his many qualifications and areas of expertise: “The eminent were left speechless by the extent of his intelligence, the agility of his mind, the power of his memory and his speed of perception.”<sup>58</sup> Regarding his knowledge of *ḥadīth*, he noted, “None of his contemporaries ever reached his standard nor came close to him.”<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, al-Dhahabī writes that he was sometimes “irritable, contentious, and rude,” and al-Dhahabī started distancing himself from him after “losing patience with Ibn Taymiyya’s embarrassing behavior and eccentric views.”<sup>60</sup> In *Nubdha*, he notes Ibn Taymiyya was “frequently tactless and argumentative... He could honor his companion on occasion and then offend him repeatedly in conversation.”<sup>61</sup> In the *Naṣīḥa*, al-Dhahabī chastises “his pride, his obstinacy, intolerance, captiousness, and lack of tact.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Moh Ben Cheneb and J. de Somogyi, “Al-Dhahabī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 103–4.

<sup>56</sup> Caterina Bori, “A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 321, 324.

<sup>57</sup> Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 100.

<sup>58</sup> Dhahabī, “Nubdha Min Sirat Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya,” 340.

<sup>59</sup> Dhahabī, 341.

<sup>60</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 18.

<sup>61</sup> Dhahabī, “Nubdha Min Sirat Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya,” 343–44.

<sup>62</sup> Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 100.

Another author, Ibn Rajab (d.795/1392), likewise includes mixed opinions on Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Rajab refers to the earlier work of al-Dhahabī, but also notes some concerns about Ibn Taymiyya’s “reputedly excessive zeal” in his critical pronouncements of some Sufis and other scholars/theologians.<sup>63</sup> D. Little notes Ibn Rajab referring to Ibn Taymiyya as “cocky, bold, and unsociable;” “impetuous” and “unpredictable;” and that “his anger turned him into a ‘raging lion’.”<sup>64</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited Damascus in 726/1326 while Ibn Taymiyya was there, wrote a passage about him in his *Rihla*. In this passage, he notes the esteem with which Ibn Taymiyya was known, but also relates how he landed himself in trouble for causing heated controversy, saying of him that he had “some kink in his brain” (“*illā anna fī ‘aqlihi shay’an*”).<sup>65</sup>

Still, the positive things said about Ibn Taymiyya and the way he lived his life far outbalance the negative, even by those who opposed him. No one in the sources surveyed who criticized aspects of Ibn Taymiyya’s behavior failed to commend him as well. Even those who disagreed with and criticized his religious opinions would admit his great qualifications. No one, however, seems to compliment his temperament.

It is significant to note that Ibn Taymiyya was a controversial figure in his own time, and there was not at all a consensus about his ideas. Likely this contemporary controversy contributed to the prolificacy of writing about him, for as Little notes, there is “a vast amount of material which has been recorded about him in chronicles, monographs, and biographical dictionaries, which is quite possibly greater in bulk and detail than that for any other medieval Muslim with the obvious exception of Muḥammad himself.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bori, “A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya,” 325–26.

<sup>64</sup> Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 104–5.

<sup>65</sup> H. A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A. D. 1325-1354*, vol. 1 (Farnham, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 135.

<sup>66</sup> Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 94.

## Early Mamluk Campaigns Against Armenia, Acre, and Kasrawān

In the two decades after the Second Battle of Homs, with Ibn Taymiyya's rise on the scholarly scene, the Mamluks, too, seemed to be gaining strength. In 682/1283 and 684/1284, after recuperating from their costly victory at Second Battle of Homs, the Mamluks under Qalāwūn launched new attacks on Cilician Armenia. The Armenians had continued supporting the Mongols in attacks on the Muslim areas, and their large presence at Second Homs had helped to inflict serious damage on the Mamluks in battle. Ilkhan Ahmad Tegüder, who had converted to Islam and reversed the pattern of Mongol favoritism of Christians which until then had been at the expense of the Muslims, did not come to Cilicia's assistance. Qalāwūn's attacks against the Armenians were quite successful, and Cilicia had sued for peace. Qalāwūn had imposed high conditions: a ten-year truce, an annual tribute from the Armenians, and guarantees of free passage and trade.<sup>67</sup>

Additionally, the Mamluks steadily worked to eliminate the presence of the Crusaders from the coastline of the Levant. The presence of the European Christian forces on the Syrian and Palestinian coastlines had been a constant liability for the Mamluks. These occupied coastal areas were a vital lifeline between Cairo and its Syrian territories, and the Crusaders had a history of and potential for collusion with the Mongols against the Muslims.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, three of the four Ilkhan leaders to date—Hülegü, Abāqā, and Arghūn—had all sought alliances with the Crusaders and the European Christian kings who supported them.<sup>69</sup>

Preparations for an attack on Acre, the last major Crusader stronghold in the area, had been made by Qalāwūn; but after his death in 690/1290, the execution of the plan was carried out

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<sup>67</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 68–69.

<sup>68</sup> Irwin, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Aigle, "Mongol Invasions," 90–91.

by his son, al-Ashraf Khalīl (r. 689-93/1290-93). The Mamluks surrounded Acre in 690/1291. After a siege of 80 days, the city surrendered. With its fall, the surrounding Crusader towns and fortresses at places such as Tyre, Beirut, and Jubayl were taken, too.<sup>70</sup> There was no significant Crusader presence left in the Levant, save for on the small island of Ruad. Campaigns of *jihād* against the Crusaders had been a frequent part of the political and religious scene for Muslim rulers in Egypt and Syria since the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and now the struggles against the Crusaders was one step closer to complete.

The successes of the Mamluks against the Crusaders at this point were tempered by their troubles in Kasrawān, however. The summer following the fall of Acre, 691/1292, there was a small Mamluk expedition from Syria to the mountains of Kasrawān, Lebanon, in order to subjugate and exact revenge on the Nuṣayrīs for their past support of the Crusaders against the Mamluks. The expedition, led by the *amīr* Baydarā, failed; the Nuṣayrīs put up a heavy resistance, ambushing the Mamluk detachment and forcing them to negotiate a withdrawal that cost the Mamluks much of their weapons and equipment.<sup>71</sup> Such actions by the Nuṣayrīs led to them being frequent targets of Ibn Taymiyya's rulings and writings.

### **The Beginning of Ibn Taymiyya's Activism**

The Mamluk sultans of this time were active in matters of religion, especially as religious and political matters were so often intertwined. Irwin writes that "the popularity or unpopularity of sultans and emirs in this period depended to a considerable extent on the stand they took on religious issues."<sup>72</sup> The early Mamluk rulers of the later 13<sup>th</sup> century were educated in matters of religion, and many patronized various Muslim religious notables. Religious figures, including

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<sup>70</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 78.

<sup>71</sup> Irwin, 79.

<sup>72</sup> Irwin, 95.

*'ulamā'*, *qadis*, and the caliphs, were likewise involved (or used) in politics. Fatwas were often very useful for the Mamluk sultans and emirs in galvanizing the population against any ethnic or religious groups the Mamluks were having problems with.<sup>73</sup> That is not to say that the Mamluks and clerics were always on the same sides of the issues, but religious decrees could be very beneficial when they were, and would have to be treaded carefully around when they were not.

Ibn Taymiyya became one of the leading clerics of this time. Although most mamluks followed the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and most of the rest of the population followed the Shāfi'ī school, Baybars' reform of the judiciary had opened up an official space for the smaller but more conservative and "rigorous" Ḥanbalī school that Ibn Taymiyya followed. As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya had become a prestigious teacher, and his reputation for religious knowledge and conviction was already apparent. He was an outspoken critic of *bid'a* (innovation) and advocated for a more conservative or traditional practice of religion, often looking back to the conduct of the first generations of Muslims. Such attitudes are part of what makes him such an inspiration for Salafist movements in the modern period.

Many of Ibn Taymiyya's opinions were popular enough to earn him a large following at the time, even amongst clerics of other *madhhabs*, and his opinions were frequently employed by the state in their struggles against various enemies, as will be seen below. Nevertheless, he could not be seen as a tool of the state. Sometimes his opinions angered people enough to incite public demonstrations and trials against him; indeed, he was imprisoned or put under house arrest for his views six times during his life, as will also be noted below. Nor could he be seen as currying favor with any of the elite.

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<sup>73</sup> Irwin, 95–96.

At the age of 31 or 32, Ibn Taymiyya had his first major clash with political authorities in an event that exemplified the many characteristics of him mentioned above: his piousness and knowledge, and also his zealousness and rigidity. In 693/1294, a complaint was lodged to the governor of Damascus that a Christian scribe of a local *amīr* had insulted the Prophet, an offense which could be punishable by death. At first the governor did not act on the complaint. Ibn Taymiyya led a public protest to the governor over his failure to address the situation adequately, and the *amīr* who employed the Christian was attacked by a mob throwing stones, escalating the situation and leading to the governor to have Ibn Taymiyya and several others beaten and temporarily detained.<sup>74</sup>

The governor assured the people that the situation would be dealt with according to the *shari‘a*. Neither the *amīr* nor the governor seemed inclined to want to severely punish the Christian scribe, but as the matter could not be put to rest, eventually the scribe converted to Islam in order to avoid a death sentence ruling—a legally acceptable outcome according to the Shāfi‘ī courts.<sup>75</sup> This, however, still did not satisfy Ibn Taymiyya and some of the others, who insisted that converting to Islam could not spare someone who had insulted the Prophet from being sentenced to death. Eventually the scribe in question had to sneak away in the night.

Ibn Taymiyya later wrote a treatise on this subject called *al-Ṣārim al-maslūl*, “The Sword Unsheathed” (*Kitāb al-ṣārim al-maslūl ‘alā shātīm al-rasūl*). The work articulated his view that “repentance and conversion do not avert the death penalty for insulting the Prophet,” and it “established his reputation as a force to be reckoned with on the Damascene scholarly and political scene.”<sup>76</sup> This harsh view—that conversion to Islam does not absolve one from past

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<sup>74</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 19–21.

<sup>75</sup> Hoover, 20.

<sup>76</sup> Hoover, 21; Laoust, “Ibn Taymiyya.”

sins, or even that it is not enough for one to be considered a true Muslim that should not be fought—will be developed and articulated further by Ibn Taymiyya in the AMFs.

Meanwhile, with the Crusaders pushed back, instead of putting to rest calls for *jihād*, pushes continued and were redirected toward the Mongols, the Armenians, and non-Orthodox Muslims such as the Nuṣayrīs. Al-Ashraf Khalīl enlisted the caliph in this effort, bringing him out of “house arrest” and using him for public preaching of *jihād*.<sup>77</sup> However his reign, which saw the conquest of Acre, lasted for less than three years before he was killed due to inter-Mamluk disputes. He was followed by the first reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 693/1292-1294), a young son of Qalāwūn aged ten, who was soon deposed by Kitbughā (r. 694-96/1294-96), a mamluk of Mongol ethnicity. Within a few years, Kitbughā, too, was deposed and replaced by al-Manṣūr Lājīn (r. 696-98/1296-99). Despite this quick succession of leaders, the Mamluks proceeded to build on their victories against their Christian enemies in the area. Lājīn called for a campaign against the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, and he enlisted Ibn Taymiyya to help preach it as a *jihād*.<sup>78</sup>

*Jihād* is a complicated topic which already by this time had developed into involving a great many considerations such as whether or not it should even involve military action, who can call for it, what kinds of actions are permissible and prohibited, who are legitimate targets, whether it is an individual or a collective duty, and what criteria exists for martyrdom. Scholars such as ‘Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 500/1106), who wrote at the beginning of the Crusader period, had preached a great deal on the obligation of Muslims to fight the European invaders.

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<sup>77</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 78–79.

<sup>78</sup> Laoust, “Ibn Taymiyya.”

His opinions were recorded in his *Kitāb al-jihād* one year before his death.<sup>79</sup> One of the main points of this work was to encourage political and religious leaders to wage military *jihād* against the Crusaders; it was their duty as rulers.

Another prominent religious scholar in the medieval period is al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who had already expressed influential positions on the development of the idea of the greater *jihād* (*al-jihād al-akbar*) and the lesser *jihād* (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*).<sup>80</sup> The greater struggle was a more spiritual struggle, mostly internal against one's own sins or temptations, although it could be waged externally in ways such as speaking out or writing in defense of Islam. The lesser struggle was the military struggle, the call to arms.

Twelfth century scholars more or less seem to agree that waging the greater *jihād* was a necessary prerequisite for waging a military *jihād*.<sup>81</sup> The majority of the opinions expressed on the subject seem to be more or less in agreement on other issues as well. Military *jihād*, the lesser *jihād*, could be both offensive and defensive, and it could be an individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*) or a collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*) depending on the circumstances involved. Offensive military *jihād* was an obligation for Muslim leaders and could be fulfilled through, for example, annual raids into the territory of *Dar al-Ḥarb*. Defensive military *jihād*, however, was an obligation for every Muslim at least until enough were involved that there was a guarantee of victory.<sup>82</sup> In this, most scholars are in agreement. One idea on which Ibn Taymiyya differs, however, is whether or not the greater *jihād* was a necessary prerequisite to a military *jihād*, with Ibn Taymiyya

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<sup>79</sup> Niall Christie, "Alī Ibn Ṭāhir Al-Sulamī," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 3 (1050-1200)*, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 15 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 307.

<sup>80</sup> Niall Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders: Christianity's Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources*, Second Edition (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 2020), 36–37.

<sup>81</sup> Christie, 89–90.

<sup>82</sup> Christie, 86–87.

downplaying the importance of the greater *jihād*.<sup>83</sup> Another idea Ibn Taymiyya differs on, which will become explicitly apparent in the AMFs, is on who are legitimate targets of military *jihād*.

In the 697/1298 campaign on Cilicia, Lājīn sent military detachments to attack the Armenians. The actual campaign did not go well, however. Despite having multiple detachments—a detachment from Cairo met up with several military detachments in Syria—the *amīrs* in charge of their units could not agree on whether to lay siege to Cilician fortresses or to just conduct raids. Eventually, during late spring and early summer, several fortresses were captured from the Armenians.<sup>84</sup> The expedition soon ran into difficulty, though, and reinforcements had to be sent.<sup>85</sup> This is when Lājīn enlisted Ibn Taymiyya to preach about the campaign as a *jihād* in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Berriah suggests that “the choice of the Umayyad Mosque, the largest and most prestigious in Syria, with its history and symbolism, shows that this preached *jihād* was important for the Mamluk authorities, probably because the situation was difficult for the troops of the mamluk army in Armenia and it was thus necessary to act quickly.”<sup>86</sup> Yet by the fall there was more bad news, with reports of an impending Mongol retaliatory invasion. Severe weather floundered any Mongol march or Mamluk continuance of their attacks on Armenia.<sup>87</sup> And then before this was taken any further, both sides of this long war suffered defections. Nevertheless, this event is significant in that it is the first known time that Ibn Taymiyya undertook such an action at the behest of the Mamluk government.

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Bonney, “Ibn Taymīyah and the Defensive Jihād: A Response to the Crusades and the Mongol Invasions,” in *Jihād: From Qur’ān to Bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 117.

<sup>84</sup> Amir Mazor, *The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment: The Manṣūriyya in the First Mamluk Sultanate, 678/1279-741/1341* (Bonn University Press, 2015), 102–3.

<sup>85</sup> Mehdi Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya: Between Praise and Criticism,” *Arabian Humanities*, no. 14 (2020): 2.

<sup>86</sup> Berriah, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 113.

In the wintertime of late 1298, disunity among the Mamluk *amīrs* led to problems. The Mamluk governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq, facing an arrest order from Cairo, led a group of Mamluk *amīrs* in a defection to the Ilkhanate.<sup>88</sup> Qipchāq was one of the Mongol soldiers who had been captured in the Battle of Elbistan in 675/1277. Reasons for his defection stem from a strained relationship with the Mamluk Sultan Lājīn. An anecdotal exchange between Qipchāq and a fellow Mamluk officer was recorded in a 14<sup>th</sup> century text by Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī (d. 164/1363), a historian who knew Ibn Taymiyya in Damascus.<sup>89</sup> In the exchange, the fellow Mamluk was trying to persuade Qipchāq not to defect, with one of the reasons being that “his defection would amount to a desertion from, and the corruption of, his Muslim faith, since in the Ilkhanate, [he] would be surrounded by Mongol infidelity.” Qipchāq replied, “I am a Muslim, wherever I may be.”<sup>90</sup> Qipchāq was stating that he believes he can still keep his faith despite being surrounded by those who are not true believers. At this point in time, the new Mongol Ilkhan, Ghāzān (r. 694-703/1295-1304), had recently converted to Islam (see below). This recorded exchange, even though anecdotal, gives an example of how even though the Mongols had begun to convert to Islam, they were not always viewed as true Muslims. Defections such as this will be a point of condemnation by Ibn Taymiyya in the AMFs.

### **Mārdīn**

While the Mamluk campaign against Cilicia did not amount to much, and the impact of the defection had not yet been a major problem, the Mamluks did attack Mārdīn in northern Mesopotamia the following summer. Mārdīn was not far from the borders between the Mamluks

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<sup>88</sup> Reuven Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winter (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 22–23.

<sup>89</sup> F. Rosenthal, “Al-Şafadī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Amir Mazor, “Sayf Al-Dīn Qipchaq al-Manşūrī: Defection and Ethnicity between Mongols and Mamluks,” in *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, Intellectuals*, ed. Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 121–22.

and the Ilkhans, but inside Mongol territory. The town had a significant Muslim population and had surrendered to the Mongols in 658/1260.<sup>91</sup> It is difficult to ascertain what exactly happened at Mārdīn. There is only one known Mamluk source to mention it at all, and not in any detail.<sup>92</sup> However based on Persian sources, the Mamluks are alleged to have committed atrocities against the people there, including destruction and looting, and notably taking their riding animals.<sup>93</sup> Boyle notes that Ghāzān received word that the Mamluk forces “had desecrated the mosques by their scandalous behavior in them, and this during Ramaḍān (falling that year in June); and they had carried off great numbers of prisoners when they withdrew.”<sup>94</sup> These claims provoked Ghāzān against the Mamluks; he would cite them as justification for his mobilization for a large-scale invasion and use them in the unfolding rhetoric about which state was the true protector of Islam.<sup>95</sup>

A fatwa by Ibn Taymiyya related to the matter, also contained in volume 28 of the *Majmū‘ fatāwā* with the AMFs, has generated significant controversy in the modern period. The “Mārdīn fatwa” was issued in response to the question of whether Mārdīn was considered to be part of *Dar al-Ḥarb* or *Dar al-Islam*, and whether the Muslim population of Mārdīn should stay there or emigrate.<sup>96</sup> This distinction could also clarify for the Mamluk campaign how the inhabitants of Mārdīn were to be treated. While the fatwa is undated, it nevertheless can give an

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<sup>91</sup> Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 356.

<sup>92</sup> Reuven Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army? Ghazan’s First Campaign into Syria (1299-1230),” in *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500-1800)*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 221 citing Abu l-Fidā’ (al-Malik al-Mu’ayyad ‘Imād al-Dīn Ism’īl b. ‘Alī), *al-Mukhtaṣar fī ta’rīkh al-bashar* (Istanbul, 1286/1869-70), p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 114.

<sup>94</sup> John Andrew Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 387.

<sup>95</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 72–73.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:240–41.

idea of how Ibn Taymiyya would have viewed the population of Mārdīn around the time of the Mamluk attack.

Ibn Taymiyya's answer is short, about four paragraphs. According to him, Mārdīn was neither fully part of *Dar al-Ḥarb* or *Dar al-Islam*, but a kind of composite of both. It does not make mention of the Mongols, nor does it accuse anyone of violating the law or of being unbelievers. However despite this, it has been frequently cited alongside of and frequently confused with Ibn Taymiyya's AMFs, both by modern scholars and by modern fundamentalist groups. The end line of the fatwa, in which Ibn Taymiyya states that Mārdīn is a composite domain, has been transcribed and translated in multiple ways.

The fatwa was analyzed and translated notably by Yahya Michot, first into French and then into English in 2006.<sup>97</sup> Michot made the argument that the fatwa was misused by modern fundamentalists, but gave a translation of the fatwa's last line that has been interpreted in problematic ways:

Rather, [Mārdīn] constitutes a third type [of domain], in which the Muslim shall be treated as he merits, and in which the one who departs from the Way/Law of Islam shall be combatted as he merits.<sup>98</sup>

When reading the text this way, fundamentalists have argued that those outside of *Dar al-Islam* and not living in accordance with the *shari'a* should be fought. This might seem in accordance with how the Mamluks treated the people of Mārdīn, if the Persian sources are to be believed.

Ironically that seemed to be far from Michot's own interpretation of his translation. He notes that

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<sup>97</sup> See Yahya M. Michot, *Mardin: Hégire, fuite du péché et « demeure de l'Islam » - Ibn Taymiyya*, Fetwas d'Ibn Taymiyya (Beirut, Paris: Albouraq, 2004); Yahya M. Michot, *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymiyya on Fleeing from Sin; Kinds of Emigration; the Status of Mardin; Domain of Peace/War, Domain Composite; the Conditions for Challenging Power* (Oxford, London: Interface Publications, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> Michot, *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule*, 65; see Michot, "New Mardin Fatwa," esp. from p.144 for debate on alternate translations of this quote. See the appendix of this thesis for both versions of the Arabic text.

“Unlike what he does in his anti-Mongol fatwas, Ibn Taymiyya, in his Mārdīn fatwa, speaks neither of anathematization (*takfīr*) nor of rebellion (*khurūj ‘alā*) against rulers.”<sup>99</sup>

In 2010, a conference of a handful of Muslim scholars was convened in Mārdīn to discuss and counter a violent fundamentalist interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya’s Mārdīn fatwa. The conference was criticized by some for being poorly organized, with several of its participants lacking expertise or showing bias.<sup>100</sup> However it did bring to light an important transcription issue of the fatwa’s original text. Using a manuscript from the Syrian National Library, dated from 1372, participants of the conference provided a corrected translation:<sup>101</sup>

[Mārdīn] is a third category. The Muslims living therein should be treated according to their rights as Muslims, while the non-Muslims living there outside of the authority of Islamic Law should be treated according to their rights.<sup>102</sup>

The different translations result directly from the different transcriptions of the medieval text. The widely circulated text of the *MF* has been transcribed with *nuqaṭ* (the diacritics that distinguish similar letter shapes), while the Syrian manuscript was not. Thus the participants of the Mārdīn Conference determined that a verb written in the *MF* as *yūqāṭalu* (be fought) should actually have been rendered as *yū‘āmalu* (be treated) (see the appendix for comparisons of the document and manuscript texts). Thus the Mārdīn fatwa is a prime example of how these medieval texts can be interpreted differently, and also why it is important that they are open for discussion and debate.

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<sup>99</sup> Yahya M. Michot, “Ibn Taymiyya’s ‘New Mardin Fatwa’. Is Genetically Modified Islam (GMI) Carcinogenic?,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 2 (2011): 144.

<sup>100</sup> Michot, 136.

<sup>101</sup> I did not have access to the original manuscript; see Michot, 146, for the facsimile of this line. It is also included in the appendix of this thesis.

<sup>102</sup> Michot, 145; Shaykh Abd al-Wahhab al-Turayri, “The Mardin Conference – Understanding Ibn Taymiyyah’s Fatwa,” *MuslimMatters* (blog), June 29, 2010, <http://muslimmatters.org/2010/06/29/the-mardin-conference-%e2%80%93-a-detailed-account/>.

After the Mārdīn affair, the next major event of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid war came immediately: the third Mongol campaign against Syria, led by the Ilkhan Ghāzān in 699/1299. The situation facing the Mamluks had become more complicated, however, because Ghāzān had converted to Islam, taking the name Maḥmūd, and the Ilkhanate elicited sympathy from some of the Syrian population who were also tired of the constant threat of continued, devastating wars. Maḥmūd Ghāzān would launch three large invasion campaigns against Syria. It is at this point that Ibn Taymiyya, now having lived through these circumstances for over thirty years, having established his reputation, and having attracted a large following, began to issue his more controversial “Anti-Mongol fatwas,” working tirelessly to rouse support for the Mamluks and their cause for *jihād* against the Mongol armies.

## II.

### **Ibn Taymiyya, Ghāzān Khan, and the First Two AMFs**

As the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War raged on, Ibn Taymiyya was increasingly vocal and forceful with his legal opinions, and a powerful force for rallying the faithful in defense of the Muslim faith. His writings provoked controversy as well as inspiration. During Ghāzān's three campaigns against Syria (699-702/1299-1303), Ibn Taymiyya issued his first two Anti-Mongol Fatwas, effectively expanding the scope of who were considered legitimate targets of *jihād*.

#### **The Rise of Ghāzān Khan**

By at least 1290, after decades of living among a Muslim-majority population, Islam was becoming increasingly common among the Mongols of the Ilkhanate—it was mainly the ruling elite who held out.<sup>103</sup> But even that tide was turning. Baidu Khan (r. 694/1295), the sixth Ilkhan, was pressured to act as a Muslim in order to appease the population, though it was reported that he privately favored Christians, had Christian tendencies, and even wore a cross around his neck.<sup>104</sup> Baidu's reign did not last long, as pro-Muslim elements of the Ilkhan state had become powerful enough to quickly encourage and aid Baidu's overthrow and replacement by a Muslim Mongol prince.

A prominent Mongol general, Nawrūz (d. 696/1297), was instrumental in the conversion of Ghāzān Khan to Islam while the latter was still a prince. While Ghāzān's conversion may have in fact been genuine, sources also note that it was opportune. Nawrūz had advised him to convert, noting that the resistance to Baidu was primarily among the Muslim officials of the state

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<sup>103</sup> Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 253.

<sup>104</sup> Atwood, 252; J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 135; Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 379.

and military, and that this would encourage Baidu's detractors to support Ghāzān.<sup>105</sup> Ghāzān's conversion was matched by the conversions of many of his officers, and Muslim officials and clerics in the Ilkhanate supported Ghāzān in a short civil war against Baidu.<sup>106</sup> Ghāzān (r. 694-703/1295-1304), the son of Baidu's cousin and the fourth Ilkhan Arghūn, became the next Ilkhan that same year.

Retrospectively, this was a pivotal moment for the region. The gradual conversion of the Ilkhanate to Islam is generally viewed by historians as complete at this point, and the religious favoritism of Christians and Buddhists comes to an end. At the time, however, with respect to the reality of the situation between the Mamluk State and the Ilkhanate, little changed; the hostilities continued. And although Ghāzān was initially advised into policies of favoring Islam and of discrimination against non-Muslims—destroying Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist houses of worship, forcing them to wear distinct clothing, and even killing religious leaders—this policy was soon reversed.<sup>107</sup>

Ghāzān turned out to be quite a competent ruler. Early in his reign he was able to eliminate some of his officials who sought too much power and influence in the running of the state; Nawrūz being one who was executed. But while he could be ruthless in consolidating and centralizing his power, his policies were sound, and he is regarded as generally looking after the people he ruled over. He enacted policies aimed at guarding the rural population from raids and extortion, and he implemented land reform policies geared toward recovering farmland that had not been worked because of years of warfare.<sup>108</sup> (It should be noted that a main contemporary source about these policies was one of Ghāzān's chief ministers who assisted in carrying them

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<sup>105</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 377–78.

<sup>106</sup> Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 135.

<sup>107</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 379.

<sup>108</sup> Grousset, 380–81.

out and recording their results: Rashīd al-Dīn, the one whom Ghāzān also commissioned to write his *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, an important primary source on the Mongols and already cited herein.)

By 699/1299, the time was due for Ghāzān to launch his invasion of the Mamluk Sultanate. In 698/1298, the Mamluks had supported a short-lived insurrection of the Mongol general Sülemish in Anatolia.<sup>109</sup> To make matters worse, they had attacked the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and also Mārdīn, also in 697-98/1298-99.<sup>110</sup> Ghāzān needed revenge. With the Mongol eye ever on Syria, Ghāzān had called for the Mamluks to submit to him as the new “Guardian of Islam.”<sup>111</sup> The Mamluks refused. And just as the Mamluks took advantage of internal Mongol and Armenian political problems as an opportunity to attack Cilicia in 1298, subsequent internal Mamluk problems soon caused conditions to look favorable to the Ilkhans: the defection of several Mamluk *amīrs* in 698/1298 led by Qipchāq, the governor of Damascus; the murder of Sultan Lājīn in 698/1299; and the reinstatement of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who was at this point still only 14 years old.

The Mamluks now found themselves in another set of hard circumstances. They were not fully unified, as evidenced by revolts on the inside that were strong enough to affect who was on the throne. Their disunity was further evidenced by defections such as that of Qipchāq, meaning that they would face Mamluk *amīrs* across enemy lines. Many in the Mongol army were Muslims, including for the first time, as he claimed, the Ilkhan himself. Could the battles any longer be framed in terms of a religious struggle? Could the Mamluks rally for another *jihād*, if this time the opposing army were fellow Sunni Muslims?

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<sup>109</sup> Peter Herde, “The Relations of the Papacy with Mongol and Muslim Rulers in the Late Thirteenth Century,” in *Crossroads between Latin Europe and the Near East: Corollaries of the Frankish Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (12th - 14th Centuries)*, ed. Stefan Leder, vol. 28, Istanbul Texts and Studies (Istanbul, Würzburg: Orient-Institut Istanbul, 2016), 216.

<sup>110</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 114.

<sup>111</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 22.

The armies that would face each other in the upcoming battle would not have stark ethnic differences, either. The Mamluks were mostly Turkic and considered the Mongols to be of the same ethnicity.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, the Mamluk state had absorbed large numbers of *wāfidiyya*, refugees from Mongol lands who had been granted asylum by the Mamluk Sultanate. They had come primarily in two waves: first during the reign of Baybars (r. 658-676/1260-1277), and second—the largest wave—during the reign of Kitbughā (r. 694-696/1294-1296) just a few years prior to Ghāzān’s first campaign. Estimates for this latter group vary, but they had several hundred chiefs and commanders among them, with perhaps 10,000 to 18,000 others, and they were primarily Oirat Mongols.<sup>113</sup> They had integrated into the Mamluk military, with some of them serving Mamluk *amīrs* in Egypt, but many being settled in Syria along the Mediterranean coast. Generally the *wāfidiyya* were looked down upon by the other Mamluks, who considered themselves superior. A key exception was Kitbughā, who himself was an Oirat Mongol, and during his brief reign as sultan, just a few years prior to Ghāzān’s first invasion, he enacted some policies designed to improve the social status of the *wāfidiyya*, though with little success before he was overthrown and himself exiled from Cairo to Syria.<sup>114</sup>

Not only was Ghāzān generally well-received as a ruler by his subjects and ethnically similar to the Mamluks, but most of his subjects were now Muslim, including the soldiers of his army. Peter Jackson rightly notes that there were always Muslims in the Mongol armies, since the days of Chinggis Khan’s first campaigns against the Khwārazmian Empire back in 616/1219.<sup>115</sup> And by the time of Hülegü’s attacks on the Abbasid Caliphate, the number of Muslims in the armies had increased. But many of these soldiers had been impressed into service

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<sup>112</sup> David Ayalon, “Wāfidiyya,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>113</sup> David Ayalon, “The Wafidiyya in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Islamic Culture* XXV (1951): 89, 99–100.

<sup>114</sup> Ayalon, 92–93; Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 92.

<sup>115</sup> Jackson, *The Mongols & the Islamic World*, 6.

and forced to fight, especially as local rulers throughout Persia, Anatolia, and Iraq were subjugated. They also made up a clear minority of the Mongol troops. Overall, the Mongols and their armies had still been considered pagan invaders who must be fought. During Ghāzān's time, however, the Ilkhans were no longer fresh invaders of Muslim lands. They had been ruling Persia and Iraq for over 40 years. The majority of the civilian population Ghāzān ruled over was Muslim, and he ruled over them well. The majority of Ghāzān's Mongol army were now Muslim converts, and Ghāzān himself had converted. This presented a huge problem for the Mamluk cause, as many Mamluk soldiers were hesitant or even refused to fight Ghāzān's army because of these reasons.<sup>116</sup> It was no longer as clear as it was before who exactly the enemy was.

### **Ibn Taymiyya's First Anti-Mongol Fatwa (AMF 3)**

Ibn Taymiyya, however, was critical of Ghāzān and his new faith. The threat posed by another Mongol invasion was real and had the potential to be devastating on a political and humanitarian level. But it was also, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, a grave threat to Islam. There were too many perversions in the newly adopted Islam of the Mongols, and their influence must be stopped. Yet the general population of Syria and Egypt was not always as convinced as Ibn Taymiyya was, particularly since the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War was looking as if it may turn into an intra-Muslim war instead of a war against infidel invaders.

Muslim soldiers facing each other across the battleline was not new, but it was also not likely to have been considered part of a *jihād*. *Jihād* in the context of military action was focused on the expansion or defense of Islam.<sup>117</sup> It should also have been undertaken by a united Muslim community under a single authority, and was not waged on those who were also considered to be

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<sup>116</sup> Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*, 1st ed., Iran Studies (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 287.

<sup>117</sup> E. Tyan, "Djihād," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

proper Muslims. Intra-Muslim warfare was supposed to be prohibited. It was certainly a tragedy to be avoided, a *fitna*, in this context a civil war that leads to schism and threatens the purity of the faith.<sup>118</sup> Such is the aversion to *fitna* as a great Muslim civil war—Muslim army against Muslim army—that Sunnis considered it to have only happened four times: first during the caliphate of Ali (r. 35-40/656-661) which led to his death, a major Sunni-Shi'a split, and the end of the Rāshidūn Caliphate; second during the Umayyad Caliphate which brought the death of Muḥammad's grandson Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) and again furthered splits between Sunni and Shi'a; the third that brought down the Umayyad Caliphate by 132/750; and fourth, the Great Abbasid Civil War, which precipitated that caliphate's decline as well. In 1260, it was easy for the Mamluks to rally against the infidel Hülegü and his army that sought the destruction or subjugation of all of Islam. Forty years later, it was not the same. The question was no longer clearly one of *jihād*, but possibly one of *fitna*. And being faced with a potential *fitna*, a competent Muslim Ilkhan, and weariness from decades of suffering through war, many on the Mamluk side were reluctant to fight again.

Ibn Taymiyya's first fatwa against the Mongols (AMF 3) was issued mainly in apparent answer to a question about what to do with Mamluk soldiers who refused to fight the Mongol army because the Mongol army was supposedly Muslim.<sup>119</sup> The fact that this fatwa was given is evidence that enough people must have been asking the question at that time for it to be considered a matter that needed clarification.

Before answering this question directly, Ibn Taymiyya first reiterates the necessity to fight the Mongols in general; it was an obligatory *jihād* undertaken for the defense of Islam. Therefore, as a defensive *jihād*, it was incumbent on all Muslims to participate. He bases this

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<sup>118</sup> L. Gardet, "Fitna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>119</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:544–51.

reasoning on the Qur'an, 8:39 and 2:278. But as the Mongols themselves at this point claimed to be Muslims, further clarification was necessary in order to establish the necessity of a *jihād* against them. Ibn Taymiyya leads with this by stating that fighting is necessary against groups who—even if they claim to be Muslim—do not follow major parts of the religion:

The *'ulamā'* have agreed that an abstaining group, if it abstained from some of the clear and accepted duties of Islam, must be fought if they pronounce the *shahādah* [but] abstain from prayer and *zakāt*, or the Ramadan fast or the *ḥajj*, or from judgement according to the book [Qur'an] and the Sunna; or from forbidding major sins, or alcohol, or sexual relations with prohibited women, or taking souls and property without right, or *ribā*, or gambling, or from *jihād* for the unbelievers, or from enforcing the *jizya* on the People of the Book, or similar things from the laws of Islam; they be fought until the whole religion is God's.<sup>120</sup>

Many of these justifications are also noted in Denise Aigle's "A Religious Response to Ghāzān Khan's Invasions of Syria" and Jon Hoover's book, *Ibn Taymiyya*.<sup>121</sup> They are not aimed at people who are already clearly legitimate targets—for example polytheists, or Christians who are outside *Dar al-Islam* and posing a threat—but at people whose status is more ambiguous, those who seem in some way to be Muslim. They have made the declaration of faith, but, just as this was not enough to spare the scribe who had been accused of insulting the Prophet back in 693/1294 (see above), it was not enough to spare the Mongols, either.

According to Ibn Taymiyya, further justification for why the Mongols must be fought, though they now claimed to be Muslims, came from historical precedent. The Muslim Mongols were in opposition to the legitimate Muslim authority, that authority being the Mamluk Sultanate with its Abbasid caliph. Ibn Taymiyya, in addition to drawing on the Qur'an and Sunna in his fatwa, makes historical comparisons of this standing with events that transpired during the time of the *salaf* after the death of Muḥammad.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:545. The translation is my own; see Appendix, entry 3.1, for the Arabic text.

<sup>121</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 283–305; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 22–26.

During the first year of the caliphate of Abu Bakr (r. 11-13/632-34), Abu Bakr led the *Ridda* Wars against those who refused to follow the caliphate. Even though those opponents of Abu Bakr had claimed to be Muslim and were adhering to some of Islam's laws, they were not adhering to all of them: they refused to pay the *zakāt* to Medina. Beginning during the caliphate of Ali (r. 35-40/656-61), the community also had to fight against the *Khawārij*. The *Khawārij*—Muslims, but among whom were none of the *Ṣaḥāba*—rebelled against the caliphate of Ali, and the Umayyads and Abbasids after them. The consensus of the rest of the community at that time was that they must be fought; Ali and his army subsequently engaged them at the Battle of Nahrawān in 38/658.

The Mongols were neither following all of the established rules of Islam nor the legitimate authority of the Mamluk sultanate and the caliph. Ibn Taymiyya states that they should be considered worse than those that rebelled against Abu Bakr and worse than the *Khawārij*, and their penalty death.<sup>122</sup> Historical precedent therefore demanded that the Mongols be fought:

The Mongols and those like them have rebelled from the *shari'a* more than the ones who resisted *zakāt* and the *Khawārij* from the people of Ṭā'if that refused abstaining from *ribā*. Whoever doubts fighting them is the most ignorant of people about the religion of Islam.<sup>123</sup>

All of the above was to impress upon the people that it was obligatory to support the *jihād* against the Mongols, on the principal level. Even though the Mongols claimed to be Muslim, they were rebels who rejected the legitimate Islamic authority of the caliph and the Mamluk sultans, they did not follow major precepts of Islamic law, and they were the attackers. Just as the first generation of Muslims fought apostates and the *Khawārij*, it was obligatory for the Muslims of Egypt and Syria to participate in the *jihād* against the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyya then

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<sup>122</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 289, 291–92.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:546. See Appendix, entry 3.2, for the Arabic text.

moved on to the main question at hand: how to deal with the Muslims on the Mongol side who were actually observant Muslims, fighting alongside the Mongols because they were forced to fight.

As for Muslims on the Mongol side who were *unwilling* participants in the war, for example if they had been impressed into the Mongol armies, they were not considered targets for *jihād*; but they were not considered cause for the Mamluks to refrain from *jihād*, either. The basis Ibn Taymiyya gave for that ruling is a comparison to the Battle of Badr in 2/624. In this battle, despite the opposing Meccans having Muslim prisoners among them, Muḥammad did not refuse to fight. If good Muslims among the enemy, who were forced to fight on the enemy's side, were killed, they would be considered martyrs.

The *'ulamā'* have agreed that if the army of the unbelievers shields themselves with Muslim captives, and there is fear of harm to Muslims if they do not fight [that army], then [that army] would be fought; *even if this leads to the killing of the captive Muslims* that were shielding them... If those Muslims are killed, they are martyrs. Do not leave the obligatory *jihād* because a martyr would be killed.<sup>124</sup>

If there was no risk in not fighting the enemy army, then fighting could be avoided so that no harm would come to the enemy's Muslim captives. But since not fighting the Mongols would be disastrous for the Mamluks, the Mongols should be fought, even if that led to the killing of conscripted Muslims on the Mongol side. In either situation—at Badr in the seventh century or in Syria during the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War more than six centuries later, if the Muslim prisoners were killed, they would be considered as martyrs.

Finally, it is important to note that Ibn Taymiyya also works to distinguish the Mongols from reputable Muslims who had also rebelled against Muslim state authority. Examples of this

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<sup>124</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:546–47. See Appendix, entry 3.3, for the Arabic text.

latter situation include Muslims who had fought against Ali at the Battle of the Camel in 366/56 and at the Battle of Şifḫīn in 37/657. In both of these cases, the Muslims opposing Ali were neither considered as apostates nor as Muslims who were not fully practicing Islam.<sup>125</sup> Rather, there were prominent Companions on the rebel side in both battles.

The trials (*fitan*) are like the wars that were between Muslim kings and Muslim sects even though each of the sects is committed to the laws of Islam. This is like what happened with the people of the [Battles of the] Camel and Şifḫīn; they fought over [unclear] issues and matters that arose. As for fighting the *Khawārij* and those refusing [to pay] the *zakāt* and the people of Tā'if that did not forbid *ribā*, they are fought until they join the established laws from the Prophet, blessings of God be upon him as well as peace.<sup>126</sup>

The word “trials” (*fitan*; sing. *fitna*) mentioned here is likened to the First Fitna (35-41/656-661). Ibn Taymiyya does not excuse the intra-Muslim fighting in the battles of the First Fitna, but they were not over as grave of issues. There were no credible accusations against the rebelling Companions that they had left or abstained from parts of the religion. The same cannot be said of the enemies of the *Ridda* Wars, of the *Khawārij*, or of the Mongols.

### **Ghāzān's First Invasion**

When Ghāzān launched his campaign in late 699/1299, it had been less than 20 years since Abāqā had launched his invasion and had been defeated by Qalāwūn at the Second Battle of Homs in 680/1281. Ghāzān set out for Syria on 16 October and crossed the Euphrates in northern Syria on 7 December with his army. The main Mamluk army was deployed from Cairo, nominally led by Sultan al-Malik al-Nāşir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, reinstated for his second reign (1299-1309). Early along the way, however, they were delayed when a group of *wāḫidiyya* attempted a coup to depose al-Nāşir Muḥammad and reinstate Kitbughā as sultan. Many of these

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<sup>125</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:551. See Appendix, entry 3.4, for the Arabic text.

*wāfidiyya* were Oirat Mongols who had been granted asylum by Kitbughā, who was also Oirat, in the first place (see above).<sup>127</sup> The attempt was put down, but it underscored the lack of complete unity on the Mamluk side and the difficulty the Mamluks faced with the large number of ethnic Mongols in their own ranks.

In just five days, by 12 December, Ghāzān reached Aleppo, assuming possession of it but not stopping to take the citadel itself. Around here he was joined by his vassal Christian forces from Armenia and Georgia, under the Armenian King Het‘um II, adding another 40,000 to his forces. He moved on to the south, passing Ḥamā eight days later, and then reaching Homs and the Mamluk forces.

Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir was still quite young, only about 14 or 15 at this time, and the real control was in a core of primarily Manṣūriyya Mamluks, a cadre of officers that had been Mamluks of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s father, the late Sultan Qalāwūn. This lack of a single, strong commander may have also hampered the Mamluks.<sup>128</sup> The Mamluk army had rushed from Egypt to meet the Mongol forces, and intended to face off with them in a similar place and fashion to how they had defeated Abāqā’s forces in 1281. Amitai also posits that the Mamluks may have been overconfident from their victories over the Mongols thus far, and perhaps underestimated the enemy forces.<sup>129</sup> Ghāzān, however, decided not to engage them there, but to move around them through the desert and attack from behind. The Mamluks, apparently misinterpreting this move as a retreat, moved to attack quickly, meeting them at Wadi al-Khaznadār, north of Homs, on 23 December.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 100; Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army,” 227.

<sup>128</sup> Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army,” 227, 229, 241–42.

<sup>129</sup> Amitai, 229.

<sup>130</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 387–88.

The Mamluks and their horses seem to have been drained by long, fast marches and several days in full battle gear.<sup>131</sup> The Mongols, too, had exhausted many of their horses,<sup>132</sup> but they greatly outnumbered the Mamluks. Estimates range from 60,000 to 100,000 Mongol troops against 20,000 to 40,000 Mamluks.<sup>133</sup> As Ibn Taymiyya had noted, Ghāzān's forces included those of King Het'um II from Cilicia, Sayf al-Dīn Qipchāq with the Mamluk *amīrs* who had recently defected to the Mongol side, and many Muslims who had been conscripted into the fight.

The Mamluks were outmaneuvered and completely defeated, marking the only time the Mongols defeated the Mamluks in a major battle. Many Mamluk soldiers were taken prisoner and sold to the Franks on Cyprus.<sup>134</sup> Sultan al-Nāṣir, on a hill away from the fighting with around a dozen guards, was abandoned during the retreat, and his group had to make their own way out. The surviving elements of the Mamluk army abandoned weapons and armor and fled south in disorganized groups, all the way back to Egypt. Along the way, some of them were attacked by Druze around Mount Lebanon, an act the Mamluks would not forget.<sup>135</sup>

This Mongol campaign is the second time the Mongols were able to take over most of Syria, repeating their first initial successes up to the year 658/1260. While the Mamluks had been able to turn the tide of the Mongol advances at Ayn Jalut in that year, this time it was they who were defeated. The original Mongol ambitions to push all the way to the Nile were moving forward again. Ghāzān marched south on to Homs, and the city with its citadel promptly surrendered.<sup>136</sup> He sent a contingent of his army (under Gen. Mulai) off to the south into

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<sup>131</sup> Aigle, "Mongol Invasions," 100; Amitai, "Whither the Ilkhanid Army," 227.

<sup>132</sup> Amitai, "Whither the Ilkhanid Army," 233.

<sup>133</sup> Amitai, 236–37.

<sup>134</sup> Hoover, "Jihad and the Mongols."

<sup>135</sup> Amitai, "Whither the Ilkhanid Army," 251.

<sup>136</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 388.

Palestine while he himself continued on to Damascus.<sup>137</sup> The contingent chased the Mamluks all the way to Gaza, forcing them out of Syria completely and back into Egypt, and the Mongols began a short occupation.<sup>138</sup>

### **The Mongol Occupation of Syria (699-700/1299-1300)**

The city of Damascus, like Homs, lay undefended.<sup>139</sup> Many of the Damascus residents and officials had already fled in fear ahead of the Mongol advance, including the Shāfi‘ī and Maliki judges.<sup>140</sup> Ibn Taymiyya stayed. There was still a small holdout in the city’s citadel, but this was not enough to be detrimental to the Mongol presence at this time.<sup>141</sup>

In Rabi‘ II 699/the end of December 1299, Ibn Taymiyya was part of a small delegation of officials left in Damascus who went to meet with Ghāzān outside the city.<sup>142</sup> With Ghāzān were Qipchāq and those that had defected with him. The delegation asked for an *amān*, a formal guarantee of safety with their opening of the city. The appeals seem to have paid off; either that or Ghāzān had planned to issue the *amān* anyway.<sup>143</sup> On 8 Rabi‘ al-thani 699/2 January 1300, Ghāzān had the *amān* announced in the mosque. It included a condemnation of the Mamluks and a proclamation of Ghāzān as “King of Islam.”<sup>144</sup> Ghāzān entered Damascus a few days later, on 6 January 1300, and that Friday, his name was read in the *khuṭba* of the Damascus mosques.<sup>145</sup>

During this Mongol occupation of Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya may have played a double game, navigating a precarious position between the Mongol occupiers, the Mamluk resistance,

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<sup>137</sup> Reuven Amitai, “Mongol Raids into Palestine (A.D. 1260 and 1300),” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1987): 244.

<sup>138</sup> Amitai, “Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 22.

<sup>139</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 388.

<sup>140</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 24.

<sup>141</sup> Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army,” 253.

<sup>142</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 290.

<sup>143</sup> Aigle, 293, see note 41.

<sup>144</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 24–25.

<sup>145</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 117.

and the local populace. On the one hand, he had just been preaching *jihād* against the Mongol invaders. With the fight lost, Ibn Taymiyya accepted Mongol rule despite his recent calls for *jihād* against them. He outwardly called for an end to the resistance against the Mongols, meeting again with either Ghāzān or some of his *amīrs*, and working to negotiate terms for the release of prisoners and for the protection of the rural population outside the cities.<sup>146</sup> This is logical but an interesting contrast to those such as Arjawāsh, a mid-level Mamluk *amīr* who was leading the last pocket of resistance from the Damascus citadel.<sup>147</sup> Ibn Taymiyya appealed to Arjawāsh to stop fighting, concerned that prolonged fighting would cause harm to fall on the local population, but Arjawāsh and those with him refused to give up.<sup>148</sup> Either way, Ibn Taymiyya was not actively fighting the Mongols himself at this point. He instead played the role of a sort of diplomat, negotiating with the Mongols, securing the release of Muslim prisoners, and looking out for the native Muslim population.

Once again, as had happened in 658/1260, much of the Mongol forces withdrew after their initial victories. By early February, with the Mamluk army chased back into Egypt, Ghāzān returned to Persia. He left Qipchāq, one of the Mamluk *amīrs* who had defected to him, in charge of Damascus alongside the Mongol general Qutlugh-Shāh, and he promised to return before the end of the year to continue his invasion all the way to Egypt.<sup>149</sup> The reasons for Ghāzān's withdrawal are not clear, but it has been suggested that it was to avoid the hot summer, or because there was not enough pastureland to support the Mongol horses, or because there may have been tensions in the east requiring his attention—on the Ilkhanate's eastern front, trouble

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<sup>146</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 295; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 25.

<sup>147</sup> Amitai, "Mongol Occupation of Damascus," 31–32.

<sup>148</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 25; Amitai, "Mongol Occupation of Damascus," 34.

<sup>149</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 388.

sprang up with the Chagatai Khanate.<sup>150</sup> Whatever the reasons, the decision would again put the Ilkhans at a disadvantage, as the similar decision by Hülegü had back in 1260.

The occupation of Syria by Ghāzān and by the few Mongol forces that remained after Ghāzān's departure was almost immediately unsuccessful. After all the killing, pillaging, and exploitation of the local populace, and the heavy taxes levied even with the issuing of the *amān* to Damascus, Mongol rule was resisted, on a small scale, anywhere possible—including the Damascus citadel and in other forts and citadels in the region. Qutlugh-Shāh soon also withdrew back to the east, about a month after Ghāzān, leaving in charge the general Mulai, who had led the pursuit of the Mamluks south through Palestine. But meeting pockets of resistance and the questionable loyalty of Qipchāq, Mulai, too, withdrew.<sup>151</sup>

With the withdrawal of the Mongols, the defense of Damascus was organized by the Mamluk Arjawāsh, who had been leading the holdout of the citadel. Aiding him was Ibn Taymiyya, who with “religious inspiration” helped encourage the Damascus residents to participate in the defense of the city until a stable garrison returned. Ibn Taymiyya also took it upon himself to resume the enforcement of the *shari‘a* among the residents, “spilling wine, breaking jars and smashing containers.”<sup>152</sup> This would imply that during the brief Mongol occupation, the Mongols were likely not as sincere in their upholding of Islamic beliefs as their adopted religion should have made them.

Qipchāq did in fact defect again, back to the side of the Mamluks. Although this may lead one to question his loyalties, it should be noted that when Qipchāq first defected to the Ilkhan side of the war, he had done so in opposition to Mamluk Sultan Lājīn—one of the Mamluk *amīrs*

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<sup>150</sup> Boyle, 388.

<sup>151</sup> Boyle, 388.

<sup>152</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 120.

who had deposed al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during the latter's first reign. With al-Nāṣir Muḥammad back in the ruling position, Qipchāq's return to the Mamluk side was well-received. The remaining Mongol contingents were left to retreat back across the Euphrates as Mamluk forces returned into Syria.<sup>153</sup> Before the end of spring, the Mamluks re-assumed control of all of Syria.<sup>154</sup> This time, however, the Mongols would return much sooner.

With the Mamluks back in control of Syria, an additional campaign was launched against the inhabitants of the Kasrawān region of the Mount Lebanon range. Ibn Taymiyya accompanied Aqqūsh al-Afram, the newly appointed governor of Damascus, to Kasrawān on a retaliatory expedition for support the region had given to the Mongols and their allies.<sup>155</sup> In particular, as noted before, the Nuṣayrīs there had harassed the Mamluk army during its hasty retreat following their loss at the battle of Wadi al-Khaznadār. Kasrawān was inhabited by a mix of non-Orthodox Sunni peoples—Druze, Maronite Christians, Nuṣayrīs, and Ismā'īlīs. This time, unlike the embarrassing defeat suffered by the Mamluks back in 691/1292, the region submitted. Ibn Taymiyya himself addressed the rebel leaders.<sup>156</sup> His justifications for fighting them were again that they were heretics and that they had aided the Mongols and Crusaders against the Mamluks. The Nuṣayrīs were forced to give up lands as well as weapons they had won from the Mamluks eight years prior.<sup>157</sup>

Ghāzān still wanted Syria, and he began moving toward Syria for his second invasion just months after the end of the first, in the early fall of 700/1300. The Mamluk army under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, too, set out from Cairo, but being met with incredibly bad weather, they turned

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<sup>153</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 101.

<sup>154</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 382; Amitai, "Mongol Raids into Palestine," 247–48.

<sup>155</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 26.

<sup>156</sup> Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya," 2.

<sup>157</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 131–32.

around and returned to Egypt. The people of Syria were again terrified. As the Mongols continued their march toward Syria, the *amīrs* at Damascus dispatched Ibn Taymiyya to Cairo to appeal to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to return and defend them from the Mongols.<sup>158</sup>

A letter from Ibn Taymiyya addressed to the sultan, corresponding to this visit, has been translated by Yahya Michot.<sup>159</sup> In this text, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to the sultan to lead the Mamluk army in *jihād*. There are several key elements to Ibn Taymiyya's stance in this letter. First, knowing that the Mongols were intending to attack, the Mamluks could not wait until the attack actually started (the Mongol army at this time had not yet crossed the Euphrates border): "It is not lawful for the Muslims to wait until they invade the lands of the Muslims as they did the first time."<sup>160</sup> Second, the Mongols claimed to be Muslims but were not following the religion, making them relatable to apostates and the *Khawārij*, and fighting them was therefore obligatory: "God has imposed on Muslims to wage *jihād* against those who come out of His religion even if they did not fight us."<sup>161</sup> This is the same argument Ibn Taymiyya had made in his first-issued AMF. Finally, the current timing was advantageous to the Mamluks and offered hope of success, as there were internal problems within the Mongol government and there were Muslims in and around Syria ready to assist the Mamluks in their cause.<sup>162</sup>

The position Ibn Taymiyya plays here in relation to the sultan, as he makes the case for *jihād*, contrasts with his earlier roles with the sultans regarding the Kasrawān campaigns, where in 697/1298 he was commissioned by Sultan Lājīn to preach *jihād* from the Umayyad Mosque in

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<sup>158</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

<sup>159</sup> Yahya M. Michot, "Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. Nouvelle série XXIII. Lettre au sultan al-Nāṣir concernant les Tatars," *Academia.edu*, 2017, [https://www.academia.edu/34853690/Yahya\\_Michot\\_Textes\\_spirituels\\_d\\_Ibn\\_Taymiyya\\_Nouvelle\\_s%C3%A9rie\\_XXIII\\_Lettre\\_au\\_sultan\\_al\\_N%C4%81%E1%B9%A3ir\\_concernant\\_les\\_Tatars\\_](https://www.academia.edu/34853690/Yahya_Michot_Textes_spirituels_d_Ibn_Taymiyya_Nouvelle_s%C3%A9rie_XXIII_Lettre_au_sultan_al_N%C4%81%E1%B9%A3ir_concernant_les_Tatars_).

<sup>160</sup> Michot, 6.

<sup>161</sup> Michot, 4.

<sup>162</sup> Michot, 8–9.

Damascus, and in the summer of 700/1300 when he accompanied the Mamluk army on their expedition. While in these former cases he could be seen as acting on behalf of the state in campaigns it was already directing (although surely he agreed with these course of actions), in this case it is he who is calling the sultan to *jihād*. It was a cause that was necessary to defend the realm, necessary to defend the faith, and had a likelihood of victory.

### **Ibn Taymiyya's Second Anti-Mongol Fatwa (AMF 1)**

By early winter of 700/1300, Ghāzān crossed the Euphrates border between the two realms from the north at the same point as before.<sup>163</sup> The Mongols moved quickly through northern Syria and swept south through Aleppo, with Damascus beyond it. Ibn Taymiyya again rallied the people for *jihād*, preaching sermons in the Umayyad Mosque. Again his reasoning was strongly based on the idea that the Mongols were not fully following and implementing the *shari'a*.<sup>164</sup>

He also wrote his second Anti-Mongol fatwa in this period.<sup>165</sup> Like the first, it is undated, but contextual information included in it places it then, after the Battle of Wadi al-Khaznadār (699/1299) but before another manifestation of Ghāzān's troops. The onus of AMF 1, which is about the same length as the previous AMF (AMF 3), is to answer the question of whether fighting the Mongols at this point was obligatory, or whether it was permissible but not necessarily obligatory.<sup>166</sup> Yes, the Mongol soldiers must still be fought, and Ibn Taymiyya considered it obligatory. The dangers to the integrity of Islam were so grave that not fighting them was not acceptable.<sup>167</sup> Some of the justifications for fighting the Mongol army are

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<sup>163</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 389.

<sup>164</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

<sup>165</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:501–8.

<sup>166</sup> Jabir Sani Maihula, "Translation and Analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah's First Anti-Mongol Fatwa," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* III, no. IV (2019): 140.

<sup>167</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 27.

reiterated from those that were already established, such as that the Mongols were not fully following the major precepts of Islam.

The Mongol “Muslims” were previously compared by Ibn Taymiyya to Muslims who fought against the caliphate under Abu Bakr in the *Ridda* Wars and to the *Khawārij* who fought against Ali (see above, AMF 3). The opponents of Abu Bakr had professed Islam, but they had refused to pay the *zakāt* as required by the *shari‘a*. Therefore any group professing Islam but not adhering to the law must likewise be fought. The same comparison is made again:

Regarding every group that resists adhering to the clear and accepted obligations of the laws of Islam among the people or others, it is obligatory to fight them until they adhere to [all of] its laws, even if they pronounce the *shahādah* and adhere to some of its laws, just as Abū-Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, fought the people who resisted *zakāt*.<sup>168</sup>

An additional point here is the phrase “until they adhere to its laws.” This implies the possibility that those who had never been properly instructed in how to follow the true Muslim religion may have the chance to submit and do so. This is something noted right at the beginning of the fatwa and is something which is not as explicit in the previous AMF.<sup>169</sup>

It is not just withholding the *zakāt* or refusing to give up *ribā* that would make it obligatory to fight someone even if they claim to be Muslim. In this AMF, unlike the one before it, there are other offenses as well that Ibn Taymiyya lists, all of which the Mongols could be accused of committing:

Whatever sect refrains from some of the obligatory prayers, fasting, *ḥajj*, committing to prohibitions against spilling blood and [stealing] money, alcohol, adultery, gambling, relations with prohibited women, adhering to *jihād* against nonbelievers, applying the *jizya* to the People of

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<sup>168</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:502. See Appendix, entry (1.1), for the Arabic text.

<sup>169</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 302; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:504.

the Book, and other duties and prohibitions of the religion...then the refraining group is to be fought...<sup>170</sup>

There are some lesser charges Muslims may disagree about that should not call for fighting, Ibn Taymiyya continues, such as performing two *rak'a* at the *fajr* prayer. However he notes that there is no disagreement that for disobeying the above listed obligations and prohibitions, one must be fought. And again, Ibn Taymiyya makes the distinction between Muslims who refused to follow all of the major obligations of Islam (e.g. the *Khawārij*) and Muslims who followed Islam but were in a struggle with other Muslims (e.g. the opposing armies of the First Fitna), carefully noting that the Mongols were of the former, not the latter.<sup>171</sup>

Another problem with the Mongols that Ibn Taymiyya takes up is that they mix, and even equate, non-Muslims—and in particular, Christians—with Muslims. They were not having Christians pay the *jizya*, for example. And even worse, the Mongols always enlisted major Christian military contingents and other non-Muslims in their fights against the Muslim Mamluks:

[The Mongols] enjoin Islam, but they do not fight those who leave it; rather, he who fights [on the side of] the Mongol state they glorify and let him be, even if he is an unbeliever, an enemy of God and his prophet. And anyone who left the Mongol state or goes against it, they justify fighting him, even if he was from the best of the Muslims. They do not make *jihād* against the unbelievers, or oblige the *Ahl al-Kitāb* to [pay the] *jizya*, or humble them; and they do not prohibit anyone from their military to worship anything, from the sun, the moon, or otherwise.<sup>172</sup>

To the Mongols, notes Ibn Taymiyya, it did not matter what one's religion is. What was important was one's loyalty to the Mongol state. A true Muslim ruler would never have enlisted Nestorians, Georgians, and Armenians to fight in their army against other Muslims. Nor would

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<sup>170</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:503. See Appendix, entry 1.2, for the Arabic text.

<sup>171</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:504.

<sup>172</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:505. See Appendix, entry 1.3, for the Arabic text.

they, as Ghāzān had, have sought the support of the Crusaders on Cyprus, aimed at creating an alliance that could take on the Mamluk Sultanate from both directions.<sup>173</sup>

With Ghāzān's invading force on its way, and the Mamluk army not present, the situation looked grim. Bad weather, however, caused the Mongols' operation to stall; "military operations by either side had been rendered impossible by torrential and continuous rains, and the consequent floods and the cold had caused havoc amongst the horses and camels."<sup>174</sup> On 2 February Ghāzān turned back, crossing the Euphrates at a point further south, near Raqqa. Ghāzān's second campaign ended without any actual confrontation between his army and the Mamluks.

To Ibn Taymiyya, Ghāzān's two invasions thus far were almost prophetic. Back in 3/625 at the Battle of Uhud, the Muslim army lost to a Meccan offensive when some on the Muslim side had not committed to the fighting until the end. After the battle, the victorious Meccans did not pursue the Muslims, but turned back to Mecca. When the Meccans attacked again a short time later, at the Battle of Khandaq in 5/626-7, extreme cold and wet weather was a major cause of their abandonment of their campaign.<sup>175</sup> Likewise, during Ghāzān's first invasion, the Mamluks were defeated at Wadi al-Khaznadār because not everyone had participated in the *jihād*. Yet the Mongols, too, had retreated after their victory; and after they embarked on another invasion campaign a short time later, they, too, were pushed back due to bad weather.<sup>176</sup>

At this time, Ghāzān and the Mamluks under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad engaged in some more diplomacy. That summer, Ghāzān sent a letter outlining offenses committed by the Mamluks,

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<sup>173</sup> Aigle, "Mongol Invasions," 91.

<sup>174</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 389.

<sup>175</sup> Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983), 227.

<sup>176</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 27.

calling for their submission to him, and adding threats for good measure if they refused to do so. Of particular note again is the Mamluk attack on Mārdīn in 698/1299. Ghāzān cites the actions the Mamluks allegedly committed there—the looting and destruction of the area, and the desecration of the mosques—as one of the main reasons for his invasion.<sup>177</sup>

The Mamluks responded by questioning the sincerity of Ghāzān’s religious beliefs, particularly against their own. They offered peace, but not submission.<sup>178</sup> Meanwhile, they carried out a short campaign of looting and destructive attacks on Cilicia in the summer of 701/1302.<sup>179</sup> They also captured the Island of Ruad along the Syrian coast from the Crusaders. While the Mamluks had kicked the Crusaders off the mainland with their conquest of Acre in 690/1291, the Crusaders had an island fort left near the coast that could potentially serve as a steppingstone for an invasion from their territory of Cyprus. With the taking of Ruad, the Mamluks were able to prevent this possibility.<sup>180</sup>

In the late summer of 701/1302, Ghāzān again tried his hand at diplomatic entreaties with the Mamluks. He sent an embassy once again demanding that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad submit and recognize his authority by including his name on coins and in the *khutba*.<sup>181</sup> The Mamluk diplomatic response was stronger this time, claiming themselves and not the Mongols to be Islam’s true protectors, and informing Ghāzān it was he who should include both the name of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the caliph on his coins. Additionally, the Mamluks gifted Ghāzān a box of weapons as a sort of taunt.

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<sup>177</sup> Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds*, 72–73.

<sup>178</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 126–27.

<sup>179</sup> Mazor, 128.

<sup>180</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 28.

<sup>181</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 127.

## Ghāzān's Third Invasion

Ghāzān does not at this point seem to have made the occupation of Syria a priority. He spent the interim between the second and third Syrian campaigns in various activities in his lands—dealing with some troublesome areas, yes, but also engaged in leisurely activities that included game hunts, as recorded by Rashīd al-Dīn.<sup>182</sup> It was not until early 1303 that he once more sent a large Mongol army into Syria, led by the general Qutlugh-Shāh, to face the Mamluks once again. Ghāzān himself, however, apparently did not go. After crossing the Euphrates in central Iraq, near Ḥilla, on 29 January, he followed the Euphrates north, but he then sent his troops to continue into Syria and meet up with Qutlugh-Shāh while he headed back across the Euphrates and waited on the eastern side. Reasons for this are not clear.<sup>183</sup>

Despite the absence of Ghāzān, whether or not this was known to the people in Syria, the impending arrival of the Mongol army did once again terrify the population. People fled Aleppo and Hama. “Damascus was in panic; men deserted their families and fled for protection, people were trampled to death in the crowds that thronged out of the gates, extravagant prices were paid for horses and asses to carry out the terror-stricken population.”<sup>184</sup> The Mongols continued their advance on Damascus, facing little resistance.

The Mamluk army came north from Egypt to meet them, assembling at the plains of Marj al-Ṣuffar, just outside of Damascus, at the beginning of Ramadan 702 (April 1303).<sup>185</sup> Ibn Taymiyya went with them, in the entourage of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and once again worked to motivate the Mamluk side to *jihād*.<sup>186</sup> He announced a fatwa that released any of the Mamluk

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<sup>182</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 390–94.

<sup>183</sup> Boyle, 394.

<sup>184</sup> Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, 298.

<sup>185</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 394.

<sup>186</sup> Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya,” 3.

soldiers participating in the upcoming battle from the Ramadan fasting, and he accompanied the Mamluk army all the way to the fighting, participating in the battle himself.<sup>187</sup>

The Mongol army met the Mamluks there at Marj al-Şuffar for a battle that lasted from 2-4 Ramaḍān 702/20-22 April 1303. The Mamluks originally suffered heavy casualties under a Mongol charge, with part of the Mamluks' right lines pushed into a hasty retreat. The Mamluk left and center, however, were able to push back Qutlugh-Shāh and the rest of the Mongol forces. By the end of the day, the Mongols had been routed and completely surrounded in the hills for the night. The following day the Mamluks deliberately opened a way for the Mongols to retreat, allowing for the Mamluks to then pursue and attack them all the way back to Mongol territory.<sup>188</sup> Thus the Mamluks were able to make a comeback after their defeat at Wadi al-Khaznadār, and once more push the Mongols back to the east.

The Mamluks were justifiably relieved and euphoric. But this consequential victory for the Mamluks was disastrous for Ghāzān. When news of the defeat at Marj al-Şuffar reached him, according to al-Maqrīzī, he was so angry that he suffered a severe nosebleed in his anger.<sup>189</sup> This incident is left out of Rashīd al-Dīn's writings. Although Ghāzān did at one point plan for another invasion of Syria later that fall, he fell ill. By the following spring, at age 33, he died, and the Ilkhanate lost one of its greatest leaders.<sup>190</sup>

Ghāzān was succeeded by his brother Öljaitü (r. 703-16/1304-16), known in Arabic sources as Khudābandā, who did not immediately resume hostilities with the Mamluks. In the years that followed, the Mamluks turned their focus back toward internal enemies: namely Shi'a,

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<sup>187</sup> Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 97; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 28.

<sup>188</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 394.

<sup>189</sup> Boyle, 394 citing E. Quatremère, "Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Égypte, écrite en arabe." Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1845.

<sup>190</sup> Boyle, 396.

Druze, and Christian sects in places such as the mountains of Lebanon, another activity that Ibn Taymiyya would have a prominent ideological role in. But Öljaitü would not let Syria rest for long. He would launch his own campaign within ten years of the Mongol loss at Marj al-Şuffar, and it would be the cause for Ibn Taymiyya's third and final AMF.

### III.

#### **Ibn Taymiyya on Christianity, Islamic Governance, and the Third AMF**

After the death of Ghāzān Khan (d. 703/1304), there was a period of about eight years of relative calm in the fighting between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ilkhanate, but tensions remained high. During this time, the Mamluks took measures against some of their other enemies, such as the Armenians and the Nuṣayrīs, and imposed some restrictive measures on Christians within their state—all of which Ibn Taymiyya supported. Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyya faced trial for some of his own religious and legal positions, landing him in temporary arrest, where he worked to articulate the role of religion in governance. Eventually Ghāzān’s successor, Öljaitü (r. 703-717/1304-17), prepared for his own attack against the Mamluks. In the run-up to this final campaign, Ibn Taymiyya issued his third fatwa against the Mongols—his longest, harshest, and most expansive. This fatwa stressed the requirement for governing in accordance with the *shari‘a*, and it condemned the Mongols more harshly for their association with Christians and other religious groups.

#### **Mamluk Actions Against Christians in Egypt, Cilicia and Kasrawān**

Around the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, there was a rise in anti-Christian sentiment within the Mamluk Sultanate. Following their loss to Ghāzān at Wadi al-Khaznadār, the Mamluks imposed laws on Christians related to the Pact of Umar (*al-shurūṭ ah-‘umariyya*). Ibn Taymiyya defended these decisions and advocated in their favor, writing a treatise also contained in volume 28 of the *MF*.<sup>191</sup> He argues that the stipulations of the Pact of Umar should be upheld and applied in Egypt, and decried that there were any churches at all built in Cairo, as Cairo was

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<sup>191</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 29; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:632–46; sometimes referred to as “The Question of the Churches.”

a city founded by Muslims.<sup>192</sup> Criticizing the Mongols for their favorable treatment of Christians was part of his condemnation in AMF 1; it would be again, more strongly, in AMF 2 (discussed below). It is fitting that he would work to guard the people of his own land from committing the same faults.

The extent to which the Muslims of the Mamluk Sultanate during the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War distinguished between one's religion and one's political allegiance is debated. Were Nestorian Christians in Persia, Armenian Christians of Cilicia, Frankish Christians in the Levant, and Coptic Christians of Egypt grouped first and foremost as Christians, or regarded as distinct religio-political groups whose actions did not automatically impact perceptions of the others? If an Armenian participated in the destruction of a mosque in Aleppo, would an Egyptian Copt in Cairo suffer consequences?

First, it should be recalled that the Mamluks themselves had made several strategic political agreements and overtures with external Christian groups, even groups they also fought against. The first Christian enemies the Mamluks had to deal with were the Crusaders; the state itself was born in the middle of a Crusade. The first sultans had been mamluks under al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb (r. 637-47/1240-49), who died during the Seventh Crusade against Louis IX, and when the Mamluks took over Egypt, their first task was to see that crusade to its end.

Yet interestingly, the Mamluks almost immediately negotiated an alliance with the Crusader forces. King Louis and Aybak (r. 648-55/1250-57) first worked together in 1252 against the remaining Ayyūbids in Syria, who were contesting the Mamluk takeover of Egypt, in an interesting instance of the Mamluks allying with Christians against other Muslims.<sup>193</sup> Not

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<sup>192</sup> Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350)*, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 17 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 862.

<sup>193</sup> Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, III:276.

long after that, with the Mongol army bearing down on Syria, Sultan Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz (r. 657-58/1259-60) had made a truce with the King of Jerusalem, who allowed the Mamluk army safe passage past Crusader territory on their way toward Damascus.<sup>194</sup> This had enabled the Mamluks, in 658/1260, to quickly reach Ayn Jalut, where they subsequently scored a victory against the Mongol army. The Mamluks and the Crusaders soon returned to being on opposing sides of conflict, as noted in events above, culminating with the Mamluks expelling the Crusaders from Syria completely. Yet when it was necessary or advantageous, they had at times cooperated, regardless of their religious differences.

It was not just the Crusaders with whom the Mamluks sought cross-religious political alliances. Sultans Baybars (r. 658-76/1260-77) and Qalāwūn (r. 678-89/1279-90), during Ibn Taymiyya's early years in Damascus, had maintained relations with the Byzantine emperor, France, Castile, Sicily, Genoa, and the Habsburgs in Germany. Agreements with these states were both for commercial purposes and also as defensive alliances.<sup>195</sup> These alliances and entreaties show that the Mamluks did not adopt a flatly anti-Christian stance. Various Christian groups outside the state were dealt with independently, in ways that were based on political circumstances rather than religious threats or retaliation. The Muslims were able to distinguish between Christian states that threatened them and Christian states that could be allies in their struggles, and they engaged with them accordingly.

What about their own Christian populations, such as the large Coptic population in Egypt? Christians living inside the Mamluk state would have been viewed differently than Christians living outside the Mamluk state on the basis of their status of submission. While it

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<sup>194</sup> Runciman, III:312.

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, P. M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260-1290): Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christian Rulers*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 12 (Brill, 1995).

would be permissible to call for *jihād* against Christians outside *Dar al-Islam*, those living under Muslim rule, who were paying the *jizya*, would have had status as protected peoples (*ahl al-dhimma*).<sup>196</sup> Further, not all Christian groups within the state were unified. The Christian populations of Egypt and Syria were not in communion with each other, and had not been for several centuries, due to doctrinal disagreements over the human and/or divine nature of Jesus.<sup>197</sup> The Egyptian Copts followed their patriarch of Alexandria, while the Syriac Orthodox Christians followed their own patriarch in Syria, others in Syria followed the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople in the Byzantine Empire, and the Maronites were in communion with the Latin pope in Rome. As such, there was far from a unified Christian block in the Mamluk Sultanate, and if there was a confrontation, for example, between the Mamluks and the Maronites of the Lebanese mountains, this should have had nothing to do with the Copts of Egypt. However, this period does coincide with a large increase in discrimination and polemical writing against Christianity in general, including the Copts.

Coptic officials had worked in the Muslim bureaucracy of Egypt since Umayyad times. Particularly during the Fatimid period, by reputation a time that generally displayed a high degree of religious tolerance, the Copts had thrived. It is generally assumed that Egypt's religious demographic shift, from a majority Christian population to being majority Muslim, happened during the Mamluk period. Coinciding with this shift, there was an increase of negative sentiment and tension in the Muslim sources. Various reasons are given for this—often there are accusations of fiscal impropriety or other corrupt practices by Coptic officials in the

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<sup>196</sup> Tyan, “*Djihad*.”

<sup>197</sup> Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate*, 260.

government. Markedly less often, as Carl Petry proposes, were discriminatory measures taken against Christians in Egypt directly connected to any foreign Christian threats.<sup>198</sup>

Despite that lack of an overt connection, and allowing that allegations of corruption by Coptic officials may have been legitimate complaints, it is difficult to separate the increase of discrimination against Christians and other religious groups in this period from the fervency demonstrated by those such as Ibn Taymiyya in his exhortations on *jihād*. That is to say, with the gravity of the situation facing the Mamluk Sultanate during the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, particularly after the Mongols had converted to Islam and the differences between the two sides had become so blurred, there was an increase in strong Islamic rhetoric. Ibn Taymiyya was an active agent in this rhetoric, continuously denouncing anything he deemed not purely Islamic, and rallying the population and even the government into action against anything that deviated from the right path. He widened the scope of *jihād* when many were unsure of what action to take against the Mongol army, and he exalted the Mamluks as the last defenders of the faith. Once started, such passions are difficult to stem.

In 700/1301, during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's second reign and in the immediate aftermath of Ghāzān's initial campaign to take Syria, discrimination against non-Muslims and in particular against the Copts in Egypt was amplified. The laws adopted in accordance with the Pact of 'Umar placed many restrictions on the Christians, as Stanley Lane-Poole notes:

The Christians throughout the empire were to adopt blue turbans, and the Jews yellow, and neither were permitted to ride horse or mule; they must ride asses and yield the middle of the road to the Muslims; must ring no bells, nor raise the voice, with sundry other humiliating restrictions. Many Christians who valued their appearance became Muslims. Some churches were demolished

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<sup>198</sup> Petry, 261.

by the gratified mob at Alexandria and elsewhere, and all the churches in Egypt remained closed for the year.<sup>199</sup>

Many Christians (and Jews) were also removed from government positions, particularly if their office put them in any authority over Muslims.<sup>200</sup>

While there is no clear reasoning given for why these actions were taken, due to the timing, it seems probable that it had something to do with the invasion of the Mongols and their Christian allies, and the fear that Christian subjects of the Mamluk state may be sympathetic to the invading Mongols.<sup>201</sup> As an example of this association, in the aftermath of Ghāzān's invasion, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad sent a dispatch to Ghāzān that criticized his use of Christians in his campaigns:

You came against the Lands of Islam with an army composed of groups professing different religions. Worshippers of the Cross trod on pure places and they defiled the holiness of Jerusalem, which is second [in importance] to the house of Allah [in Mecca] and its brother, the Mosque of the Prophet of Allah [in Medina]. . .<sup>202</sup>

It is clear from this that the Mamluks felt the Christians played a visible role in Ghāzān's campaign, and that they were sometimes identified by the Mamluks according to their religion, rather than being identified as a political group.

Ibn Taymiyya was one of the strongest advocates for instituting fully the Pact of 'Umar and its restrictions on Christians. He wrote frequently against Christianity in many instances, including his previous fatwa against the Armenians and also his comparisons between Christians and the Mongols in his AMFs. This anti-Christian rhetoric fits in with a broader pattern at this

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<sup>199</sup> Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, 301.

<sup>200</sup> Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 78.

<sup>201</sup> Michel, 78.

<sup>202</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Maqrīzī, *Kitāb Al-Sulūk Li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah, vol. I (Cairo: Matba'at Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1934), 422–23; See also Amitai, "Mongol Raids into Palestine," 246.

time. Other notable figures, for example Ghāzī al-Wāsiṭī (d. 711-2/1312), Ibn al-Naqqāsh (d. 763/1362), and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Asnawī (d. 772/1370), wrote highly inflammatory tracts and fatwas against Christians, and particularly the Copts who were most visible in Egypt. Perlmann, too, connects these polemics to the wars against the Crusaders and the Mongols.<sup>203</sup> Yet even among them, Ibn Taymiyya stands out. According to Michel, “He far surpasses, both in the number of separate works which he wrote about various aspects of Christianity and in the volume of pages devoted to this subject, any other scholar before or since in the Islamic tradition.”<sup>204</sup>

In or after 717/1317, Ibn Taymiyya compiled his expositional critique of Christianity in *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddal dīn al-masīḥ* (*Answering Those Who Altered the Religion of Jesus Christ*). This work alone is longer and greater in scope than any other medieval Muslim critique of Christianity.<sup>205</sup> One of the main purposes of this work is to warn Muslims against falling into errors that he criticizes Christians for. In AMF 2, discussed more below, Ibn Taymiyya uses condemnations of Christians in connection with criticisms of the Mongols, arguing that the Mongols have succumbed to Christian influences and Christian errors in their own state. While he calls the Mongols out for not holding Islam and Muslims above other religions and their followers, he also compares the way that the Mongols exaggerated their beliefs about Chinggis Khan with the way he says Christians have done with their beliefs about Jesus:

The belief of these Tatars about Chinggis Khan has been extreme. They believe that he is the son of God similar to what the Christian believes about Christ. They claim that the sun impregnated

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<sup>203</sup> M. Perlmann, “Notes on Anti-Christian Propaganda in the Mamlūk Empire,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942): 843–44.

<sup>204</sup> Michel, *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity*, 68, 80.

<sup>205</sup> Michel, vii.

his mother. It descended through an aperture in her tent and entered her and thus she became pregnant. It is obvious to any religious person that this is a lie.<sup>206</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya noted that Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God, and the Mongols had a similar belief about Chinggis Khan that they were using to elevate his status vis-à-vis the Prophet Muḥammad. This type of influence, Ibn Taymiyya readily points out, is not acceptable for a state whose rulers call themselves Muslims.

One of Ibn Taymiyya's frequent concerns is that the Mongols would spread their perversions of Islam to the rest of the Muslim lands. By drawing attention to errors in the Christian religion, *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* could also serve to raise awareness of errors in the practices of the Muslim Mongols as well. While this polemical work against Christianity is not focused on the Mongols, then, it is connected to the time of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, and it is certainly part of the anti-Christian sentiment in Egypt and Syria in the early 8th/13th century.

During al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's second reign (698-708/1299-1309), the Mamluks raided Cilicia again in 704/1304 and 705/1305. The first campaign was particularly destructive, seeing the destruction of a large number of villages, the burning of crops, and the taking of loot and prisoners.<sup>207</sup> But during the second campaign, the Mongol army came to the aid of the Armenians and pushed the Mamluks back, and the Mamluks suffered many casualties.<sup>208</sup> Even though the Muslim Öljaitü, when he began his rule, had offered peace to the Mamluk state, he still sided with his Christian allies against his supposed co-religionists.

The Mamluks turned from Armenia to Kasrawān. Although the Mamluks had carried out a successful attack on the Kasrawān a few years prior, in 699/1300 (discussed above), sentiment against the Nuṣayrīs there still ran high. They were considered heretics who abandoned orthodox

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<sup>206</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:521. See Appendix, entry 2.2, for the Arabic text.

<sup>207</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 129.

<sup>208</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 384–85.

Islam, and they were also still not forgiven for their attacks on the Mamluk army as it retreated from its loss at Wadi al-Khaznadār during Ghāzān Khan’s first invasion. Almost immediately after their attacks on Armenia, in 705/1305 the Mamluks returned to Kasrawān with a larger force than they did in 1300, and as before, Ibn Taymiyya accompanied them.<sup>209</sup> The campaign saw the looting and destruction of many Nuṣayrī settlements and also the taking of a large number of prisoners.

### **Ibn Taymiyya on Trial**

During this campaign in Kasrawān, as during the years of intense fighting with the Ilkhanate under Ghāzān, Ibn Taymiyya had an active role with the Mamluk state in preaching against common external enemies. But as military campaigns slowed starting around 704/1305, he began to more strongly criticize local Muslim practices and doctrines that he viewed as deviant, and he began to run into serious problems with the government. His condemnations of a number of Sufi shaykhs in Damascus led to several complaints being lodged against him with the governor there.<sup>210</sup> Then, with his condemnation of writings by Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240), he began to run into trouble with the government in Cairo. Ibn Taymiyya disapproved of Ibn ‘Arabi’s “unconventional” interpretations of Qur’anic scripture, which the latter had written in his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam (The Bevels of Wisdom)*. Ibn Taymiyya so strongly criticized the following of Ibn ‘Arabi’s views that he blamed it as one of the causes for God’s wrath that resulted in the coming of the Mongols in the first place. Likewise, he compared resisting Ibn ‘Arabi to resisting the Mongols.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya,” 2.

<sup>210</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 31–32.

<sup>211</sup> Hoover, 33.

In 1305, Ibn Taymiyya wrote his condemnation of Ibn ‘Arabi in a critique to Naṣr al-Dīn al-Manbijī (d.719/1319), an influential shaykh followed by Baybars al-Jāshnakīr (r. 708-09/1309-10), who at that time was the vice-sultan for the young al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and one of the real holders of power in the state. Ibn Taymiyya’s letter was taken as an indirect attack on al-Manbijī and Baybars al-Jāshnakīr.<sup>212</sup> In response, Baybars al-Jāshnakīr and al-Manbijī had leading clerics condemn Ibn Taymiyya’s *al-‘Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*—the “Creed of the People of al-Wāsiṭ”—with charges of anthropomorphism, which contradicted the Qur’an and the Sunna according to Ash‘arite views. The charges and political connections of the people making them were enough to have Ibn Taymiyya summoned to Cairo, put through a series of court hearings, and sentenced to arrest in the Cairo Citadel.<sup>213</sup>

The hearings themselves were at times quite heated. A personal recounting of the trial, written by Ibn Taymiyya himself afterward, notes several times that he and other participants raised their voices in argument with each other.<sup>214</sup> At one point, writes Ibn Taymiyya,

I remember becoming extremely angry... I said, Who, other than me, has stood up for Islam in its time of need? And who has clarified its proofs and made clear its essence, and fought against its enemies? Who straightened its back when it began to slope, when everyone else had abandoned it and there was no one to enunciate its plea nor to fight in its defense...?<sup>215</sup>

This incident is indicative of the role he saw himself having in the defense of Islam, no matter who was against him. It is true that he had run into trouble with local authorities back in 693/1294, when he had protested against what he viewed was too light a sentence against the Christian scribe accused of insulting the prophet (discussed above). However this time, in 1305,

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<sup>212</sup> Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya,” 8.

<sup>213</sup> Sherman A. Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* XXXIX, no. 1 (1994): 41.

<sup>214</sup> Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial;” see, for example, pp. 58, 59, 60, 67, 68, 76, 79.

<sup>215</sup> Jackson, 58–59.

he almost goes out of his way to provoke higher-ranking officials over matters that were acceptable to the majority of clerics at that time. Framing his theological differences with his opponents within the context of the Mongol invasions, which was already viewed by the populace as an existential crisis, Ibn Taymiyya creates in his opinions and in his followers an increasingly radical dichotomy of either fully following a conservative interpretation of Islam or being an enemy.

Ibn Taymiyya was imprisoned for about a year and a half, from Ramadan 705/April 1306 to Rabi‘ al-thani 707/October 1307.<sup>216</sup> Eventually he was released by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Refusing to relent, he continued his criticisms of Sufi practices. After a large demonstration of around five hundred Sufis in Cairo, he was put on trial again and landed himself back in prison the following year, for another sixteen months.<sup>217</sup> This time al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, due to his own political problems, was unable to intervene.

Despite the major successes in his name, like the victory over the Mongols at Marj al-Şuffar, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s second reign (r. 698-708/1299-1309) was far from secure. Real power was still concentrated in the hands of senior Manṣūrī *amīrs* such as Baybars al-Jāshnakīr and Sayf al-Dīn Salār. By 708/1309, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad left Cairo under the guise of making the *ḥajj*, but instead left for the Syrian stronghold of Kerak, where he renounced the sultanate.<sup>218</sup> Here he worked to consolidate his own power base, but officially he denied any intention of one day returning to rule.

Baybars al-Jāshnakīr (r. 708-09/1309-10) took over. The following day, Ibn Taymiyya was moved out of imprisonment in the Cairo Citadel and sent to Alexandria, where he was

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<sup>216</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 36.

<sup>217</sup> Donald P. Little, “The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 3 (1973): 312.

<sup>218</sup> Mazor, *Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment*, 111–12.

confined to the sultan's palace there. But the rule of Baybars II was short, unpopular, and unsuccessful. The population clearly favored al-Nāṣir Muḥammad over Baybars, and some of the *amīrs* did as well.<sup>219</sup> Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was seen as a just and legitimate ruler, and favored as a son of Qalāwūn. Further, the dislike of Baybars al-Jāshnakīr was exacerbated by droughts and epidemics during his short rule. The people of Cairo openly protested against him, and with rapidly declining support, he tried to flee. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad returned for his third and longest reign (r. 709-41/1310-41), and Baybars al-Jāshnakīr was captured and executed. Ibn Taymiyya was released from arrest in Alexandria and brought back to Cairo, and even given a public audience with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. He lived in Cairo for the next three years before returning to Syria.<sup>220</sup>

During these periods of detention, Ibn Taymiyya continued to write his views. One of the treatises he began at this time was *al-Siyāsa al-shar'iyya fī iṣlāḥ al-rā'ī wa-l-ra'iyya* (*Islamic Governance for the Betterment of the Ruler and the Ruled*), his own version of a book on advice to those in power.<sup>221</sup> This work, while not criticizing the idea of caliphate, emphasized the importance of rule based on Islamic law, regardless of who the Muslim powerholder was. This was perhaps a reflection of the reality of the time, in which the role of the caliph was significantly diminished from what it had originated as several centuries earlier. The work also perhaps helped the Mamluk regime, whose officials began as slaves with no historical family claims, to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim subjects as long as they ruled in accordance with the *shari'a*.<sup>222</sup> And thirdly, a clear articulation of what a Muslim state should

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<sup>219</sup> Mazor, 137–38.

<sup>220</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

<sup>221</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 102–8.

<sup>222</sup> Baber Johansen, "A Perfect Law in an Imperfect Society: Ibn Taymiyya's Concept of 'Governance in the Name of the Sacred Law,'" in *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari'a*, ed. Paul Bearman, Wolfhart Heinrichs, and Bernard G. Weiss, vol. In honor of Frank E. Vogel (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 259–61.

look like also served to show what the Mongol state was not. In his last Anti-Mongol Fatwa (AMF 2), Ibn Taymiyya would more strongly condemn the Mongols for not ruling in accordance with the *shari'a*.

In his section on justice in *al-Siyāsa al-shar'iyya*, Ibn Taymiyya expanded on his views regarding *jihād*. While the outer *jihād* was primarily seen as a struggle against Islam's enemies, either offensively or defensively, Ibn Taymiyya, as Hoover notes, adds to this dimension a punitive aspect directed toward Muslims who refuse to follow Islam's precepts: "Going beyond the typical medieval doctrine, Ibn Taymiyya also calls for jihad against those who identify as Muslims but do not adhere to well-known laws of Islam."<sup>223</sup> Such laws included, in particular, the mandatory prayers. Those Muslims could be considered rebellious (referred to as *ṭawā'if mumtani'a*), and fighting them was justified.<sup>224</sup>

Is Ibn Taymiyya selective in enforcement of this idea? The idea of *jihād* against those who claimed to be Muslim but were not fully practicing Islam was already established in Ibn Taymiyya's first two AMFs, during the offensives the Mamluks faced by Ghāzān Khan. These rulings helped clarify why it was a religious duty to treat the resistance to the Mongols, though they claimed to be Muslim, as a *jihād*. Yet the same punitive principle does not seem to have ever been directed against Mamluk leadership, when certainly there were offenses the Mamluks could have been accused of.

The style of the text of *al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya*, according to some analyses, is not as harsh as that of the two AMFs that preceded it, or especially as that of the final AMF that would come

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<sup>223</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 107.

<sup>224</sup> Caterina Bori, "One or Two Versions of Al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya of Ibn Taymiyya? And What Do They Tell Us?," *ASK Working Paper*, History and Society during the Mamluk Era (1250-1517), 26 (2016): 14.

after.<sup>225</sup> Bori draws attention to part of the text that notes that for Muslims who do not follow basic Islamic laws, such as mandatory prayer, an attempt must be made to force them to do so before they are punished for being rebellious. Then, they should be fought until they come back from rebellion. The following is an excerpt from the text:

There is... unanimity that it is allowed to fight people for [not observing] unambiguous and generally recognized obligations and prohibitions, until they undertake to perform the explicitly prescribed prayers, to pay *zakāt*, to fast during the month of Ramadan, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and to avoid what is prohibited, such as marrying women in spite of legal impediments, eating impure things, acting unlawfully against the lives and properties of Muslims, and the like. It is obligatory to take the initiative in fighting those people...<sup>226</sup>

This excerpt would make it seem that declaring *jihād* against non-practicing Muslims is not automatically prescribed, although it seems to be in the AMFs. The work was well-received during the Mamluk period and the Ottoman period that followed, and is one of Ibn Taymiyya's major works that is not as controversial as many of his other works have been.<sup>227</sup>

It is perhaps significant to note that *al-Siyāsa al-shar'īyya* was written at a sensitive time in Ibn Taymiyya's relationship with the state, begun while he was under arrest for stirring up trouble with the authorities over his objections to certain Sufi practices. Also, unlike the time of the issuing of the AMFs, the sultanate at this time was not under attack or immediate threat of invasion. This, however, was about to change, as the Ilkhans under Öljaitü would launch another invasion of Syria.

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<sup>225</sup> Bori, 14–15. See also Henri Laoust, "Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymīyya," Cairo: Imprimerie del'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939.

<sup>226</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, "Al-Siyasa al-Shariyya," in *Legacy of Jihad: Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims*, ed. Andrew G. Bostom, trans. Rudolph Peters (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005), 171.

<sup>227</sup> Derin Terzioğlu, "Ibn Taymiyya, al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya, and the Early Modern Ottomans," in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, vol. 177, *Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020), 104.

## Öljaitü's Invasion and Ibn Taymiyya's Third AMF (AMF 2)

Öljaitü had been baptized in the Christian faith, his mother being a Nestorian princess. He later converted to Islam after taking a Muslim wife.<sup>228</sup> Yet by 709/1309, Sunni Islam had grown unpopular among Öljaitü's court for a number of reasons. First, there was a growing distaste for the fighting between different schools of Sunni jurisprudence, causing many to challenge why they had begun to follow a religion that was divided into so many sects.<sup>229</sup> They had also recently failed in a campaign to pacify Gilān, near the Caspian Sea, in 706/1307. Also around this time, several of Öljaitü's companions were struck and killed by lightning.<sup>230</sup> Some of the senior officials questioned whether Öljaitü's conversion to Sunni Islam may be to blame for these misfortunes. During the winter of 709/1309-10, then, Öljaitü traveled to Najaf and converted again, this time professing to follow Twelver Shi'ism.<sup>231</sup> Within the following two years, he prepared for his own invasion campaign against the Mamluk Sultanate, prompting another fatwa from Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Taymiyya's AMF 2 is the final of his three AMFs.<sup>232</sup> Like the others it is undated, but Aigle and Hoover place it around 1312, on the eve of Öljaitü's major attack on the Mamluks, because of indirect references to that ruler's ties to Shi'ism.<sup>233</sup> This fatwa is also the longest AMF, at 35 pages in volume 28 of the *MF*, compared to eight and seven pages for the previous two. It also contains the harshest rhetoric and the most expansive language of against those whom it is obligatory to fight.

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<sup>228</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 383.

<sup>229</sup> A. Bausani, "Religion Under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 544.

<sup>230</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 402.

<sup>231</sup> Boyle, 402.

<sup>232</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:509-43.

<sup>233</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 28.

This fatwa answers several questions at the same time. Some of the questions are repeated from the earlier two AMFs, such as questions about whether or not the Mongols should be fought, and if so, why. Ibn Taymiyya answers these questions with the same arguments he made before, but he adds new reasons, bringing in criticisms of Shi‘a and other groups that were not mentioned in the previous AMFs. An additional question of significance addressed in this fatwa is how to deal with anyone who defects from the Mamluk side to the Mongol side, something that had been an irritating problem for the Mamluks.

Ibn Taymiyya’s answer begins with reiterating the argument that it is obligatory to fight the Mongols, even though they have pronounced the *shahādah* and claimed to be Muslims, because they were not following all of the major laws of Islam. The same examples are given here that were given before: not praying the five daily prayers, not paying the *zakāt*, not fasting during Ramadan or performing the *hajj*, not abstaining from alcohol and gambling, etc.<sup>234</sup> He also repeats the argument that the Mongol army must be fought even if there were good Muslims impressed to fight in the Mongol army, again noting that not fighting the Mongols would be the greater danger and evil, and it would be impossible for the Mamluks to distinguish between all the proper and the improper Muslims during the war. Instead, it was certain that if good Muslims fell, they would be considered martyrs in the eyes of God.<sup>235</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya justified the importance of these specific obligations of the *shari‘a* by noting that they are mentioned in the Qur’an. It is over matters such as these that the Companions fought against the *Khawārij* and the people of Tā’if. And again, that is something that distinguished those campaigns from the fighting at the Battle of the Camel or the Battle of

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<sup>234</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:510–11.

<sup>235</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:537–38.

Şiffin—the fighting in the battles of the First Fitna could not be considered as a *jihād*. They were regrettable *fitan*, but they were over less serious matters.<sup>236</sup>

However, this fatwa greatly expands the list of categories of people who must be fought from those mentioned in the previous AMFs. Included here are “those who deny the free will of God (*al-qadar*), his decree (*al-qaḍāʾ*), his names, or his attributes, as well as those who display innovation (*al-bidʿa*) contrary to the Qurʾān and the Sunna, those who do not follow the path of the pious forebears (*al-salaf*), and an entire assemblage of Muslim religious movements which Ibn Taymiyya considered deviant with regard to scriptures and to the consensus of scholars in the religious sciences.”<sup>237</sup>

Some of those movements include the Shiʿa and some Sufis. Referring to the *jihād* against the Mongols, he wrote that:

There is not with [the Mongols] in their state [anyone] except those who were among the worst of creation: either a hypocritical heretic who does not believe the religion of Islam on the inside; or someone who is from the worst of the people of heresy, such as the *Rāfiḍa*, the *Jahmiyya*, the *Ittiḥādiyya*, and those like them; or someone who is from the most wicked and sinful of people. And while they are in their state with the ability [to do so], they do not perform the *ḥajj*, and if there are among them those who pray and fast, it is not the majority for them to establish the prayer or pay the *zakāt*.<sup>238</sup>

The term *al-Rāfiḍa* (pl. *Rawāfiḍ*) here refers to the Twelver Shiʿa.<sup>239</sup> The Mongols are heavily criticized for Shiʿa influences in this fatwa, with Ibn Taymiyya noting at one point that “the doctrine of the *Rāfiḍa* is worse than the doctrine of the rogue *Khawārij*.”<sup>240</sup> Their inclusion here in AMF 2 makes sense, given Öljaitü’s conversion to Twelver Shiʿism, and it contributes to

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<sup>236</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:512 ff.

<sup>237</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 288.

<sup>238</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:520. See Appendix, entry 2.1, for the Arabic text.

<sup>239</sup> E. Kohlberg, “Al-Rāfiḍa,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012); Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 290.

<sup>240</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:527.

modern interpretations that parts of the AMFs target Mongol (Muslim) rulers directly. The term *Jahmiyya* refers to a historical sect of Islam whose followers, among other differences, held that the Qur'an was created and deny the names of God.<sup>241</sup> Aigle notes that the term *Ittihadiyya* refers to followers of the doctrine of “the oneness of being,” a Sufi belief connected to Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240).<sup>242</sup> Christians are frequently criticized throughout the text, and the Nuṣayrīs are mentioned directly on p.528. And, to sum it up, Ibn Taymiyya includes in his list of sins anyone who abstains from enjoining good and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-al-nahī 'an al-munkar*).<sup>243</sup>

Along with the influences that other religious groups may have had on the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya takes issue again with the levels to which non-Muslims are equated with Muslims. There are many examples of how the Mongol leaders enlisted non-Muslims into their service, especially in their fighting against the Mamluks. The quest of the Mongols was one of domination for the sake of their domination, Ibn Taymiyya argued, not one of spreading and defending Islam. They enlisted non-believers and fought believers according to what was in their best interest as conquerors:

Whoever enters into their ignorant obedience and infidel ways is their friend, and whoever opposes them is their enemy, even if he is one of the prophets, messengers, or devotees of God.<sup>244</sup>

Observant Muslims should work together against common enemies. The Mongols, however, did not take such a concept into consideration. Not only were the Mongols not fighting unbelievers such as polytheists and enemy Christian groups, but they were incorporating them into the Mongol army in their fight against the Muslim Mamluks. Whoever joined them would be treated

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<sup>241</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, “*Djahmiyya*,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012).

<sup>242</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 290.

<sup>243</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:511.

<sup>244</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:525. See Appendix, entry 2.4, for the Arabic text; Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 298–99.

well, even if they weren't Muslim; and whoever opposed them would be their enemy, regardless of how holy they were. How, then, could the Mongol leaders be seen as legitimate Muslim rulers?

An anecdote provided by Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) tells of a previous exchange between Ghāzān, during his brief occupation of Syria, and officials from Damascus, which would have included Ibn Taymiyya, just after the Mongol victory at Wadi al-Khaznadār (699/1299):

The Mongol sovereign asked his visitors: "Who am I?" They replied as one, listing his genealogy as far back as Genghis Khan. In reply to his question as to the name of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's father, they said, "al-Alfī." The Mongol sovereign then asked them the name of the father of "al-Alfī," a question which the Damascene notables were unable to answer. Ghazan Khan's noble lineage thus could not be compared with the ancestry of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn al-Alfī, that is, the son of a Turkic slave, with no noble lineage.<sup>245</sup>

This passage demonstrates a view of the high standing of the Mongols' claim to lineage versus the lack of any sort of lineage on the Mamluk side, since the Mamluk leaders originated as slaves. While this account is unverified in the Mamluk sources, Ibn Taymiyya does address it in AMF 2:

Some of them addressed me by saying, Our king is the son of a king, who was the son of a king, back seven generations, and your king is the son of a slave. So I told him that the fathers of that king are all unbelievers, and there is no pride in the unbeliever. Rather, a Muslim slave is better than an infidel king.<sup>246</sup>

And there were several examples to choose from for how Ibn Taymiyya worked to prove that Mongol leaders such as Ghāzān and Öljaitü, despite their claims to be great Muslim rulers, rather were infidels.

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<sup>245</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 293–94 citing Rashīd al-Dīn, *Ta'rikh-i mubārak-i Ghāzānī*, ed. Karl Jahn. s'Gravenhague: Mouton, 1957, p.128.

<sup>246</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:542. See Appendix, entry 2.10, for the Arabic text.

While the Mongol rulers converted to Islam and claimed to be new defenders and upholders of the religion, they did not relinquish all of their old Mongol traditions and laws of the *yāsā* with the adoption of the *shari‘a*. Rather, the Mongols often tried to merge the two.<sup>247</sup> For example, it was Mongol custom for a son to marry the widow of his father, something that was not unheard of in pre-Islamic Arabia as well; but this is explicitly forbidden in the Qur’an (4:22). However in a brazen contradiction to this law, Ghāzān had married the widow of his father Arghūn in 1294. The woman in question, Princess Bulughan, was Ghāzān’s chief and favorite wife.<sup>248</sup> Mongol conduct such as this was another major sticking point noted in AMF 2. Therefore Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Mongol leaders, despite professing Islam, break its laws and uphold traditions from the time of ignorance (*al-jāhiliyya*). In another example, Ghāzān had worked to build his relationship with the Shi‘a in southern Iraq, even making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Ḥusayn in Karbala.<sup>249</sup> Tomb visitation (*ziyāra*) would be the subject of major condemnation by Ibn Taymiyya in the following decade, not long before his death (see the final chapter).

Another problem with the Mongol rulers not following all precepts of the *shari‘a* was that the potential existed for an authoritarian corruption of power. Despite historians’ perceptions of the Ilkhanate generally becoming a majority Muslim state with Muslim rulers, its rulers had not definitively made Islam the state religion. For Ibn Taymiyya, the state’s political power must not be separated from religious authority.<sup>250</sup> As noted, there was, in Ibn Taymiyya’s view, unacceptable influence from both the Mongol *yāsā* and now Shi‘ism. If Islamic law was not

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<sup>247</sup> Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 135–37.

<sup>248</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 380, 396.

<sup>249</sup> Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 136.

<sup>250</sup> Abdessamad Belhaj, “Law and Order According to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya: A Re-Examination of *Siyāsa Shar‘iyya*,” in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013), 401.

enforced, and laws outside of the *shari‘a* were, Ibn Taymiyya argued that this could lead to a form of state tyranny, where the state held its subjects, even Muslims, accountable to non-Islamic practices.<sup>251</sup>

In AMF 2, we can see how Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Mongols for still implementing the Mongol *yāsā*, when the *shari‘a* should have been the basis of the law:

The Muslims have all agreed that it is obligatory to fight the Khawārij and the Rawāfiḍ and those like them if they separate from the Muslim community, as Ali, may God be pleased with him, fought them. So if they [the Mongols] further add to that the laws of the polytheists—such as the *yāsā*—of Chinggis Khan, king of the polytheists, who is one of the greatest opposers of the religion of Islam, then for everyone who went to him [Chinggis Khan] from the military officials and the others [on the Mamluk side], his ruling is their ruling, so there is in them [the defectors] apostasy from the laws of Islam to the extent that he [Chinggis Khan] apostatized from the laws of Islam.<sup>252</sup>

This, no doubt, constituted a grave threat to the integrity of Islam; Muslim governance must be based on the *shari‘a*, not the laws of other religions.

Additionally, this passage also condemns anyone who defects from the side of the Mamluks to the side of the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyya addresses strongly in his final AMF the status of Muslims who defected. Defections had happened just prior to Ghāzān’s first invasion, when Qipchāq in 698/1298 led a group of *amīrs* from Syria over to the Mongol side (noted above). Öljaitü’s invasion of Syria was preceded by another defection of Mamluk *amīrs* from Syria to the Mongol side—this time led by the governors of Damascus and Tripoli, Qara-Sonqur and Aqqūsh al-Afram, in 712/late 1312.<sup>253</sup> These *amīrs* helped convince Öljaitü to launch his

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<sup>251</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 303.

<sup>252</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:530. See Appendix, entry 2.5, for the Arabic text.

<sup>253</sup> Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History,” 403.

campaign against the Mamluks. These defections were likely the cause for Ibn Taymiyya mentioning the judgment on defectors in AMF 2, noted a second time four pages later:

Whoever runs from [the Muslims] to the Mongols is more deserving of being fought than many of the Mongols; for among the Mongols are those being compelled, and the Sunna has settled that the punishment of the apostate is greater than the punishment of the original unbeliever in multiple ways...<sup>254</sup>

The condemnation of such people is harsh. Not only would such defections have seemed particularly egregious, given all the religious arguments Ibn Taymiyya had made against the Mongols, but it would likely have made the situation more confusing for common people living in Syria and Egypt and fighting in the Mamluk army. Defectors must be held accountable.

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya mentions several times in AMF 2 grievances of how the Mongols were equating Christians with Muslims:

[The Mongols] claim the religion of Islam yet glorify those unbelievers over the religion of the Muslims, and they obey [other religions] and are loyal to them much more than obedience to God and his messenger and loyalty to the believers; and the judgment in disputes between their senior officials is by the rule of ignorance (*al-jāhiliyya*), not by the rule of God and his messenger.

Likewise, the senior officials from their ministers and others make the religion of Islam like the religion of the Jews and the Christians (*Naṣārā*), like all of them are paths to God in the same manner as are the four *madhāhib* of the Muslims.

Then some of them give preference to the religion of the Jews or religion of the Christians...<sup>255</sup>

There are certainly a large number of examples to draw from for how the Mongols gave preferential treatment to Christians.

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<sup>254</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:534. See Appendix, entry 2.9, for the Arabic text.

<sup>255</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:523. See Appendix, entry 2.3, for the Arabic text.

The Mongols are often noted for their religious tolerance within their lands, and there is no real indication of a religious zeal being the driving factor of their huge conquests. And although Morgan attributes the Mongols' tolerance to religious indifference rather than an idealism,<sup>256</sup> this was likely hard to see for Muslims in Syria and Egypt on the outside of Mongol domains because of the influential Nestorians in the Mongol Royal Family, prominent Nestorian officials in the Mongol government and military, the Christian vassal states that took part in Mongol campaigns against the Muslims, and the many overtures made to Crusaders and European rulers. These conditions were present from the beginning of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, and there was no marked change in them after the Ilkhans converted to Islam.

First, there was the recognition that several important and influential women of the Mongol royal family, since before Hülegü's campaign against Syria, were Nestorian Christians. Often these women would intervene for Christian populations in conquered cities so that they be spared from slaughter while their Muslim compatriots were not. Hülegü's chief wife, Doqz Khatun, was Nestorian, and had wielded considerable influence in the activities of Hülegü. This is noted by Rashid al-Dīn in his *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh (The Compendium of Chronicles)*:

Doqz-khatun made it her constant care to protect Christians, and throughout her lifetime they prospered. To please his princess, Hulāgu heaped favors upon them and gave them every token of his regard, so that all over his realm new churches were continually being built, and at the gate of Doqz-khatun's *ordu* there was always a chapel, where bells were rung.<sup>257</sup>

When Hülegü and his forces besieged and destroyed Baghdad, ending the Abbasid Caliphate and bringing a tragedy for the Muslim world, Christians of Baghdad were spared of the massacre. An important early Christian source we have is from Kirakos Ganjakec'i, a prominent

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<sup>256</sup> David O. Morgan, *The Mongols*, 2nd ed, The Peoples of Europe (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 38.

<sup>257</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 357.

Armenian figure in his own time, and a historian who wrote the *History of the Armenians* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>258</sup> Kirakos records that Doquz Khatun interceded for all of the Christians in Baghdad, and that subsequently they were not only spared in the ensuing massacre, but they were allowed to keep their property.<sup>259</sup> Grousset cites this and other primary source evidence, from Vardan Arevelc'i and the monk Hayton, noting that churches were spared and that a Christian patriarch was even given one of the Abbasid palaces.<sup>260</sup> Kirakos records the “joy and even triumph” with which he expressed the sparing of the Christians and the fall of Baghdad:

Five hundred and fifteen years had passed since the founding of this city. Throughout its supremacy, like an insatiable leech, it had swallowed up the entire world. Now it restored all that had been taken. It was punished for the blood it had shed and the evil it had done; the measure of its iniquity was full. The Muslim tyranny had lasted 647 years.<sup>261</sup>

Sentiments like this would not have gone unnoticed to the Muslims of the former Abbasid lands.

Second, there were also several prominent Nestorian officials in the Mongol government and army. Hülegü's top military commander, Naiman Kitbuqa (d. 658/1260), was a Nestorian. Kitbuqa was not only instrumental in the destruction of Baghdad, but in the subsequent invasion of Syria. When Hülegü departed from the campaign to go back to Karakorum, it was he who was put in charge of the Mongol detachment left there; he was killed in the fighting when the Mamluks defeated the Mongols at Ayn Jalut.

Third, in addition to the threat of the Crusaders and alongside the Christian officials with the Mongols, the Christian Georgian and Armenian kingdoms regularly fielded troops in support of the Mongols against the Muslims all throughout their campaigns. Baiju Noyan (d. ca.

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<sup>258</sup> S. Peter Cowe, “Kirakos Ganjakec'i or Arewelc'i,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 4 (1200-1350)*, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 17 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 438–42.

<sup>259</sup> Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert Bedrosian, Sources of the Armenian Tradition (New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1986), 334.

<sup>260</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 356–57.

<sup>261</sup> Grousset, 357.

(656/1258), the fearsome Mongol military commander instrumental in the conquest of Anatolia, the slaughter of the Seljuqs at Köse Dağ in 641/1243, and the sack of Baghdad in 656/1258, regularly employed the Georgian and Armenian military contingents in his campaigns (he was also married to a Nestorian).<sup>262</sup> At Baghdad, “the Georgian troops, who had been the first to break through the walls, were particularly fierce in their destruction.”<sup>263</sup> They and the Armenians were major antagonists to the Muslims of Egypt and Syria throughout the whole Mamluk-Ilkhanid War. When Hülegü and his forces marched on Syria, he had Georgian and Armenian forces fighting alongside him. Starting with Diyarbakir and the surrounding cities, the Mongols had massacred their enemies. Large numbers of the Diyarbakir area’s Muslim population were killed, while Christians were spared.<sup>264</sup>

When Hülegü continued south toward Aleppo and Damascus, he had been supported strongly by the Armenian King Het’um I. Notes from the contemporary Christian historians Hayton (d. ca. 710/1310) and Vartan (d. ca. 670/1271) record that Hülegü aimed to take Jerusalem from the Muslims and hand it back over to local Christian control. And Grousset notes that “this association of cross and Jenghiz-Khanite standard should be borne in mind: the eastern Christians felt that in marching with the Mongols against Muslims of Syria, they were taking part in a sort of crusade.”<sup>265</sup> When the Mongol army with these Christian elements had originally marched into Syria, they received the submission of Ḥarrān (Ibn Taymiyya’s hometown) along the way.

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<sup>262</sup> Yıldız, “Baiju: The Mongol Conqueror,” 55.

<sup>263</sup> Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, III:303.

<sup>264</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 360–61.

<sup>265</sup> Grousset, 360.

At Aleppo, amidst the killing during Hülegü's campaign, Armenian King Het'um I himself reportedly set fire to the great mosque, while the Jacobite church was spared.<sup>266</sup> Kitbuqa led the assault on Damascus, and he himself carried out the execution of its governor. It apparently seemed that tides had turned for at least the Eastern Christians in the region:

To the native Christians, whether of the Syriac-Monophysite or Greek rite, the entry of the Mongols into Damascus appeared as just retribution for six centuries of oppression. They organized street processions in which they sang psalms and carried crosses before which the Muslims were forced to stand up in respect. They went so far as to 'ring bells and cause wine to flow even in the mosque of the Umayyads.'<sup>267</sup>

These images would have been hard for Muslims in Syria to shake.

During Ibn Taymiyya's early years, Hülegü's successor, Abāqā, also favored alliances with Georgian, Armenian, and other Christians against the Mamluks. Every successive Mongol ruler allied with the Armenians and Georgians; even after Ghāzān's conversion to Islam he utilized them in his attacks against the Mamluks. They never renounced such a policy. Ibn Taymiyya worked to define the enemy in part based on their mixing with non-Muslim groups and employing them in war against the Muslims of Syria, as we have seen in AMF 1 and AMF 2.

Finally, Mongol rulers corresponded many times with European and Byzantine Christian leaders, searching for alliances against the Mamluks. Abāqā, Arghūn, Ghāzān, and Öljaitü all corresponded with the Latin pope and/or European kings and plotted joint attacks on the Mamluks.<sup>268</sup> Abāqā wed a daughter of the Byzantine emperor in the same year he took over Hülegü's forces.<sup>269</sup> Öljaitü, too, married a Byzantine princess and worked an alliance with the Byzantines to help attack another rising Muslim group, the Ottomans.<sup>270</sup> It is fair to point out, as

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<sup>266</sup> Grousset, 362.

<sup>267</sup> Grousset, 363.

<sup>268</sup> Boyle, "The Il-Khans of Persia."

<sup>269</sup> Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 368–69.

<sup>270</sup> Grousset, 385.

Amitai does, that these “infidel” groups overall played a relatively minor role in the Mongol army compared to the rest of the Mongol troops. However all of these points—the prominent Christians in the Mongol royal family, government, and military; the Christian military units fielded by the Mongols’ Georgian and Armenian vassal states; and the constant overtures to European and Byzantine Christian rulers would nevertheless have been a major cause of concern for Ibn Taymiyya and the Mamluks, particularly if there was no apparent change after the Ilkhanate’s supposed conversion to Islam.<sup>271</sup>

Fortunately for Ibn Taymiyya and the Mongols, Öljaitü’s invasion campaign was very ineffective and short-lived. The Mongol army crossed the Euphrates into Mamluk territory in 712/1312, but they met stronger than anticipated resistance from the Mamluk fighters in Syria. Perhaps Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwa had accomplished its mission. The Mongols were not well supplied, and getting virtually nowhere less than two months after the start of the campaign, the Mongols withdrew back across the Euphrates. Within a few years after that, around 716/1316, Öljaitü died. There were no subsequent Mongol invasions of the Mamluk Sultanate after this point, and no more famous anti-Mongol fatwas by Ibn Taymiyya; he kept his attention to other matters.

### **Troubles in Ibn Taymiyya’s Later Years**

As the war between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ilkhanate once again came to a lull, Ibn Taymiyya again clashed with the courts on another issue not at all related to the threats posed by the Mongols and their allies: divorce. Ibn Taymiyya disagreed with the prevailing legal opinions on how oaths of repudiation were counted; the opinions he disagreed with had made it easier for a Muslim man to divorce his wife when pronouncing the oath of repudiation. Ibn

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<sup>271</sup> Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army,” 223–25.

Taymiyya was obstinate enough in his stance that in 718/1320 the situation escalated to several hearings and his imprisonment, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad intervened to ban Ibn Taymiyya from issuing any legal opinions on the matter.<sup>272</sup> Ibn Taymiyya was released after six months, but when he refused to follow the sultan's order for his silence on the matter, he was again imprisoned in 720/1320 for another five months. Once again, then, Ibn Taymiyya was in a serious enough dispute with the authorities over a matter related to the law that he was imprisoned. Notably this time, Ibn Taymiyya was also in disagreement with his fellow Ḥanbalī clerics on this topic.<sup>273</sup>

The Mongol leader Abu Sa'īd (r. 716-136/1316-1335) never attempted a takeover of Syria and Egypt. Instead, facing internal power struggles and financial troubles in his empire, he sought a final peace with the Mamluk Sultanate. In 720/1321, he initiated the diplomacy by sending a proposal to Cairo offering terms such as stopping cross-border raids, opening trade, and canceling calls for extradition of rebels from either side. The proposal also called for an annual caravan to Mecca for the *ḥajj* that would be under the banners of both the Mamluk sultan and the Mongol Ilkhan.<sup>274</sup> Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad agreed, and the two sides further negotiated the terms of the treaty until it was ratified in 723/1323. With it, the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War that had spanned six decades and so strongly threatened the Mamluk Sultanate and the Muslim community came to an end.

Around 726/1326, only five years after his last imprisonment over the issue of divorce, Ibn Taymiyya had major run-ins with the authorities one last time. This time the subject was his

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<sup>272</sup> Little, "Detention," 312.

<sup>273</sup> Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya."

<sup>274</sup> Reuven Amitai, "The Resolution of the Mongol-Mamluk War," in *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai, and Michal Biran, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 367–69.

stance on *ziyāra*, or tomb visitation—something that was quite common at the time. Ibn Taymiyya took on the Maliki chief judge, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ikhnāʿī (d. 750-751/1350-51), with very strong criticisms, blasting his words as “ignorance, lies and misguidance.”<sup>275</sup> The judge, in addition to being a very influential religious figure, was also close to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Ibn Taymiyya was arrested on 16th Shaʿbān 726/18 July 1326 and detained without trial in the Damascus citadel. His authority to issue fatwas was revoked, and then his writing materials were confiscated, and he would remain imprisoned for the last few years of his life.

Ibn Taymiyya’s death on 9 Jumādā II 728/21 April 1328 was a significant event. Despite his legal controversies and his living out the last of his years under imprisonment, he still had quite a large following, including in the Mamluk government. “At his funeral, some *amīrs* carried his coffin on their heads seeking his *baraka*... [and] a large tent was set up over the tomb of Ibn Taymiyya and the food of the readers of the Quran was at the expense of some *amīrs*.”<sup>276</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya in a way rose and fell with the Mongol Ilkhanate as its antithesis. The Ilkhanate was born with Hülegü in the 1260s, the same decade of Ibn Taymiyya’s birth. Some of the strongest fighting between the Ilkhans and the Mamluks coincided with, uncoincidentally, some of the most heated and controversial writings and opinions of Ibn Taymiyya. By Ibn Taymiyya’s later years, spent mostly imprisoned or under house arrest, the last real Ilkhanid ruler, Abu Saʿīd, had very little power left. And any semblance of the Ilkhanid state was gone upon Abu Saʿīd’s death in 1335, less than ten years after the death of Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Taymiyya clearly had a purpose as a critical defender of the faith in a time when the continued

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<sup>275</sup> Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya,” 8.

<sup>276</sup> Berriah, 3.

existence of the Muslim Middle East was in jeopardy. Yet that crisis was gone by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, and Ibn Taymiyya's works faded from prominence in the early modern period.

### **Ibn Taymiyya's Historical Legacy**

Ibn Taymiyya has a troubled legacy. There were several points in time during his life that his actions and opinions presented problems for the ruling authorities and caused disturbances in the order of society. As far back as 693/1294, in his early 30s, Ibn Taymiyya led public opposition to the death penalty not being applied to a government scribe accused of blasphemy; this event led to a stone-throwing mob that convinced the governor of Damascus that Ibn Taymiyya needed to be beaten and detained for his first time (see chapter one). In 704/1305, his run-ins with prominent Sufi figures and practices escalated to the point of his detention of almost three years by the government in Cairo (chapter two). He was again imprisoned in Damascus in 720/1320 for refusing the government's cease-and-desist order to stop contradicting the courts on a divorce matter (chapter three). And finally, he was imprisoned in 726/1326, eventually even being stripped of his authority to issue fatwas and the materials to write at all up to his death while still under imprisonment.

Despite problems like the above that Ibn Taymiyya caused or fed, his presence was crucial for the success of the Mamluks in continuing to halt the advance of the Mongol conquest of the Muslim world. At Ayn Jalut in 658/1260, immediately before Ibn Taymiyya's birth, the Mamluk forces are famously remembered for dealing a historic blow to the Mongols. But that was only the first battle of the six-decade war, and it was fought against an enemy that was very clearly an army of infidels.

When the enemy, primarily after the conversion of Ghāzān Khan, also presented themselves as Sunni Muslims, the subsequent Mongol campaigns of Ghāzān and Öljaitü were

not as clearly permissible from a religious standpoint. That Ibn Taymiyya had to even answer such questions in his fatwas is a testament to this. The Muslims of Syria and Egypt needed a clearer justification for fighting back. Ibn Taymiyya's anti-Mongol fatwas provided that justification—the justification for declaring *jihād* on others who claimed to be Muslims, and the justification for declaring *jihād* on Muslim leaders. Jansen notes this also:

Ibn Taymiyah, when he was writing about the conflicts between the Mamluk and the Mongol armies, had a terrible problem. The armies that fought against each other equally consisted of Muslims and non-Muslims... Ibn Taymiyah had to make invalid the argument that you couldn't kill a Muslim even when he fought in the army of your enemy... He had to develop a theory that justified fighting against other Muslims.<sup>277</sup>

Without this, the Mamluks may not have been able to rally their followers using the zeal of religion, and the outcome of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid War may have been quite different.

Ibn Taymiyya, too, knew the critical nature of that time. In his final AMF, he highlighted the precarious situation facing the Muslim world. The Muslims of the east under Mongol rule had already fallen to the rule of false religions, the people of Yemen and the Hijaz were too weak and misguided to defend the faith, and the Muslims of the west around the Maghreb and Spain were falling to the Christians:

The population of Yemen in our time is weak, unable to carry out *jihād* or not interested in it. They obey the sovereign of these territories, and it is even reported that they sent a messenger to act in obedience and submission to [the Mongols], whereas when the king of the polytheists came to Aleppo, killing happened there. As for the inhabitants of Hijaz, most of them, or a large number of them, have abandoned the precepts of Islamic law and left the religion. There are innovations, misguidance and debauchery among them, which God knows. And people of faith and religion are weak and helpless in these countries; strength and glory are clearly, in our time, among those not belonging to Islam. If this group [the Mamluks] falters—God Almighty forbid—

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<sup>277</sup> Johannes J. G. Jansen, Faraj and 'The Neglected Duty' – Interview with Professor Johannes J.G. Jansen, December 8, 2001, <https://english.religion.info/2002/01/15/faraj-and-the-neglected-duty-interview-with-johannes-jansen/>.

the believers in the Hijaz will be among the most humiliated people, especially as Shi‘ism prevails among them, and the rule of these Mongols who are warring against God and his Messenger are now Shi‘i. If they falter, all the Hijaz will be corrupted. As for *Ifrīqiyya*, the Bedouins have taken over; they are the worst creatures and deserve *jihād* and raids against them. In the Maghreb, most of the territories are under the domination of the Franks, and they do not make *jihād* against the Christians there, but on the contrary, in their armies fight many Christians who carry the Cross. If the Mongols seize these countries [of Egypt and Syria], the people of the Maghreb will be among the most degraded people, especially if the Christians are allied with the Mongols, and are one against the people of the Maghreb.<sup>278</sup>

It was up to the Mamluks and their subjects to stop the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes that the Mamluk Sultanate and its people are the last defenders of Islam:

If these warriors against God and his Messenger, opposers of God and his Messenger, and enemies of God and his Messenger seized the land of the Levant and Egypt at a time like this, it would lead to the demise of the religion of Islam and the lessons of its laws...<sup>279</sup>

And again, a few pages later:

This group that is in the Levant and Egypt at this time is the battalion of Islam, and their glory is the glory of Islam, and their humiliation is the humiliation of Islam. If the Mongols took over them, Islam would not remain almighty, or an exalted word, or a supreme sect that would be feared by the people of the earth that would fight it.<sup>280</sup>

The Mamluks must prevail—Islam itself was at stake.

Ibn Taymiyya saw himself as one of the few defenders of Islam at such a difficult time, as recounted in the transcript of the 705/1306 trial mentioned above. This helps to show the uniqueness of the time and context in which Ibn Taymiyya wrote his fatwas. The threat of the Mongols was not only directly in his face, but the circumstances facing the whole of *Dar al-Islam*, from east to west, were part of Ibn Taymiyya’s consciousness as well. There was, then, a

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<sup>278</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:533–34. See Appendix, entry 2.7, for the Arabic text; Berriah, “The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya,” 5–6.

<sup>279</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:531. See Appendix, entry 2.6, for the Arabic text.

<sup>280</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, 28:534. See Appendix, entry 2.8, for the Arabic text.

wartime mentality at play. I believe it could be argued that without all of these circumstances, Ibn Taymiyya's rulings on *jihād* may have looked quite less radical.

Yet for all the importance of his role in the defense of the Mamluk Sultanate, Ibn Taymiyya could not stay out of trouble with Mamluk leaders. It may seem at first puzzling why Ibn Taymiyya, having such a critical, active role in matters of dire importance to the survival of the Muslim lands—which even he notes—would have brought so much serious trouble upon himself over matters that, while they were indeed offenses against the religion in his eyes, do not seem to have been as pressing as the threat of the Mongol onslaught. Ibn Taymiyya's "pugnacity" and his "unwillingness to appease his adversaries" could be tiresome, and they were a root of his confrontations with the 'ulamā' and the Mamluk government.<sup>281</sup> Why push and push, to the point of imprisonment, over things that were so much less critical?

Perhaps Ibn Taymiyya approached everything he thought was wrong with the same amount of vigor, and the *jihād* pronouncements never landed him in any trouble since he was on the same side of the issue as the state. However, it is difficult to see that Ibn Taymiyya speaks against issues like repudiation with the same intense rhetoric as he did with matters that threatened the existence of the 'last true Muslim state,' which would make it seem that even to him there were varying levels of seriousness when it came to crimes against the integrity of *Dar al-Islam*. While one can certainly appreciate the zeal and dedication in Ibn Taymiyya toward righting every religious wrong, one could certainly also wonder why he didn't pick and choose his battles, or at least handle some of them a little more tactfully.

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<sup>281</sup> Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya," 9.

## IV.

### Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyya was a complex figure, certainly worthy of further concentrated studies for multiple reasons. First, the value of using Ibn Taymiyya's writings as a historical source cannot be understated. His fatwas and other writings are packed with details that inform us what was happening during his time. His reactions to the threats posed by the Mongols, the Crusaders, and others are insightful indicators of how events and circumstances were perceived by those who lived them. His critiques on the actions of others around him shed light on practices and beliefs that must have been common at that time.

Another important reason to study Ibn Taymiyya and his rulings is because they have been used controversially and frequently by so many radical, fundamentalist groups in modern times. Richard Bonney, through his studies on *jihād*, notes that "No other Muslim writer, medieval or contemporary, has exercised as much influence on the modern radical Islamist movement as Ibn Taymīyah."<sup>282</sup> Why has Ibn Taymiyya proved so popular with and so effective for these groups? Johannes Jansen, who has studied the application of Ibn Taymiyya's writings to the 1981 assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, has also deliberated this question.

"The answer is that he is a very good writer. He was the theologian of war in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Anger drops from the pages of his books, formulated so beautifully, in such general terms, that when a modern Muslim reads it, or even when I read it myself, it is impossible not to think of present-day Muslim society. The effect of his work is electrifying."<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Bonney, "Ibn Taymīyah and the Defensive Jihād," 111.

<sup>283</sup> Jansen, Interview.

Part of the appeal is the style of Ibn Taymiyya's writing and his frustration with events and behaviors around him. For fundamentalists angry at conditions of the modern world, Ibn Taymiyya provides an affirmation and a solution.

To take the extremist route, all one has to do to apply Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas of the fourteenth century to the setting of today is to make comparisons of actors today with the enemies of Ibn Taymiyya's time. For example, Muslim leaders of Muslim-majority states are made comparable to Mongol "Muslim" leaders such as Ghāzān Khan if they are not in strict compliance with Islamic rule. Westerners such as Americans are made comparable to the Crusaders. The Alawis of Syria are connected to the Nuṣayrīs, and so on. This is what Yahya Michot, in his works *Against Extremisms* and *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule*, refers to as "Mongolization."

This is also the concept applied by Sayyid Qutb in the twentieth century, who was followed by Muḥammad Faraj, who wrote "The Neglected Duty" (*Al-Farīda al-ghā'iba*) citing Ibn Taymiyya's AMFs. In "The Neglected Duty," Faraj argued that 'revolutionary force' was needed to topple the leadership of Muslim countries that were not governing according to the *shari'a*, and that these governments could then be replaced with a more pure, observant Islamic state.<sup>284</sup> Faraj then used that argument, a persuasive application of "Mongolization," to coordinate President Sadat's assassination.

To counter the extremist route, we should not hesitate to engage with the same texts. Jabir Maihula, who worked on his own partial translations of the *MF*, stated plainly that the principal aim of his translations and analyses was to make Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas available to non-Arabic readers. This, he believed, would help others to be able to contextualize his

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<sup>284</sup> Johannes J. G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), vii.

harshness, and would help avoid a setting where the primary way to access the fatwas was from the midst of extremist propaganda.<sup>285</sup> Continued studies on Ibn Taymiyya, his fatwas, and his polemical writings will no doubt bring forth more diversity of thought and opinion.

And there is already much diversity in thought on Ibn Taymiyya. For example, when does it really become a duty to fight against a ruler who claims to be Muslim? Those like Faraj obviously believed the time was now. On the other hand, one could also explore the argument that Ibn Taymiyya never advocated for the killing of one of the Muslims' own rulers. For example, Ibn Taymiyya had many criticisms of the Mamluk *amīrs*. He was critical of military music and the Mamluk *khushdashiyya*. He was strongly against Mamluk practices of pederasty. He criticized *amīrs* for using money from the treasury to purchase more mamluks, and for canceling punishments after receiving money or gifts.<sup>286</sup> He at times directly and intentionally disobeyed the sultans, as in 720/1320 when he violated the sultan's ban on him issuing fatwas related to divorce. It seems that it would have been easy to condemn the Mamluk rulers for violating the religion and the *shari'a* as he had with the Ilkhans.

Despite their "sins," however, Ibn Taymiyya never challenged the ruling legitimacy of a Mamluk sultan. Ibn Taymiyya maintained, as is evident in his AMFs, that the Mamluk state was the defender of orthodox Islam in his time.<sup>287</sup> Yes, the Mamluks had their shortcomings—they succumbed to corruption at times and were accused of violating the *shari'a*. Ibn Taymiyya acknowledges this, for example in AMF 1, but notes that the Mongols presented the greater evil:

To fight [the Mongols] is the ultimate aim, fulfilling conditions pleasing God, honoring His word, establishing His religion, and obeying His messenger. And if there were among those [fighting the Mongols] that are immoral and have corrupt intent—fighting for leadership or transgressing

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<sup>285</sup> Jabir Sani Maihula, "Translation and Analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah's Third Anti-Mongol Fatwa," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* II, no. XII (2018): 263.

<sup>286</sup> Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks Seen by Ibn Taymiyya," 6–8.

<sup>287</sup> Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 304.

[the law] in some matters—and leaving the fight [against the Mongols] would be a greater evil for the religion than the danger of fighting them for corrupt reasons, then it is obligatory to fight [the Mongols] in order to repel the greater of the two evils by adhering to the lesser of them. This is one of the principles of Islam that must be observed.<sup>288</sup>

As long as that greater evil existed, it was obligatory to follow the Mamluks in their *jihād* against the Mongols, even though the Mamluks were not perfect. There may be no agreed upon answer to that debate on whether a ruler should be targeted or not, but at least, through studying Ibn Taymiyya’s works and the events of his life, one would understand how to engage in the debate and allow it to take place.

And there already is much diversity of opinion and opposing arguments regarding Ibn Taymiyya. What is perhaps most incredible about Ibn Taymiyya is the apparent ease with which his opinions can be used by groups on starkly different sides of an argument. It has already been noted above, in chapter one, how completely different interpretations of the Mārdīn fatwa have been advanced. Some have also used that fatwa to call Muslims living in non-Muslim lands to emigrate; others have used it to justify how Muslims can live peacefully in non-Muslim lands.<sup>289</sup> Due to his harsh criticisms of many Sufi practices of his time, Ibn Taymiyya was previously considered to be strongly against Sufism—this is no longer the case, as studies by those such as George Makdisi argue.<sup>290</sup> Different interpretations of *al-Siyāsa al-shar‘iyya* have led to people debating whether or not Ibn Taymiyya was for or against the idea of a caliphate.<sup>291</sup> Past views that Ibn Taymiyya was frequently against the Mamluk leadership or things they were doing

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<sup>288</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ fatāwā*, 2004, 28:506. See Appendix, entry 1.4, for the Arabic text.

<sup>289</sup> Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 2019, 96.

<sup>290</sup> George Makdisi, “Ibn Taymīya: A Šūfī of the Qādiriya Order,” *American Journal for Arabic Studies* 1 (1973): 118–29.

<sup>291</sup> Terzioğlu, “Al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya,” 104–5; Mona Hassan, “Modern Interpretations and Misinterpretations of a Medieval Scholar: Apprehending the Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya,” in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Philosophy* 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 338–39, 344.

(probably due to his multiple arrests, trials, and imprisonments) are now being challenged.<sup>292</sup> Indeed, in this thesis it has been noted several times where Ibn Taymiyya was working directly with the Mamluk leadership in military campaigns. There have been views that Ibn Taymiyya was quick to violence, fanaticism, or advocating for *jihād*.<sup>293</sup> This is probably due to his passionate writing and appeals, such as the appeal to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 700/1300-1301, or his participation in the military campaigns such as in 699/1300 in Kasrawān and 702/1302 against Ghāzān, all of which have been discussed above. Yet we have also seen Ibn Taymiyya advocate for diplomacy and peace, such as during the 700/1300 Mongol occupation of Damascus. Michot, in *Against Extremism*, writes this whole book painting Ibn Taymiyya as an ‘extreme moderate.’<sup>294</sup> On the other hand, we must keep in mind again that Ibn Taymiyya’s views were so inflammatory to other jurists and officials that he was imprisoned several times. And there are countless more examples.

But one of the most consequential unresolved debates surrounding Ibn Taymiyya in the present time is how to characterize his Anti-Mongol Fatwas. Are they a timeless *casus belli*, or are they a product of finite circumstances? It is worth reflecting again on events during Ghāzān’s occupation of Syria in 699-700/1299-1300. As noted, Ibn Taymiyya bravely stayed in Damascus when others fled, went out to negotiate with Ghāzān and his officials for the safety of the population and the release of prisoners, and discouraged further resistance against the Mongols. These actions were done despite his own impassioned fatwas, before and after this occupation, laying out the obligation the Muslims had to fight the invading Mongols. The AMFs were

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<sup>292</sup> Caterina Bori, “The Collection and Edition of Ibn Taymiyah’s Works: Concerns of a Disciple,” *Mamluk Studies Review* XIII, no. 2 (2009): 48–49.

<sup>293</sup> Thomas Raff, *Remarks on an Anti-Mongol Fatwā by Ibn Taimīya* (Leiden, 1973); Jon Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism,” in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 178.

<sup>294</sup> Yahya M. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Against Extremisms* (Beirut: Albouraq Editions, 2012).

designed to arouse the people and rally the Mamluk side to war, but they were not indefinite; when the situation called for moderation, a more pragmatic approach won.

Again, the focus of this study was to draw out the circumstances and events that seem to have most strongly impacted Ibn Taymiyya's opinions expressed in his AMFs. Perhaps the most important idea to remember when undertaking any analysis of the AMFs of Ibn Taymiyya is that he wrote them under very explicit, extreme circumstances in response to specific questions about how to face the Mongol invasions. The shaykh remains a revered figure in Islamic history but an incredibly complicated one for study. Given the revival of interest in Ibn Taymiyya's opinions in the modern period, we must endeavor to continue to explore the historical context of his time and then debate where, and to what extent, his opinions can be applied to today.

## Appendix: Selected Arabic Passages from the *MF*

Entries here are arranged in the order in which they appear in Volume 28 of the *MF*, not the chronological order in which they were believed to have been written. The page number of the Arabic text as found in the *MF* is given in parenthesis, followed by the page number where the translation is given in this thesis.

### The Mārdīn Fatwa (*MF* 28:241), page 33

The last line of the Mārdīn fatwa, as contained in the text of the *Majmū' fatāwā*:<sup>295</sup>

بل هي قسم ثالث يعامل المسلم  
فيها بما يستحقه ، ويقاتل الخارج عن شريعة الإسلام بما يستحقه .

Michot thus translated the text as:

Rather, [Mārdīn] constitutes a third type [of domain], in which the Muslim shall be treated as he merits, and in which the one who departs from the Way/Law of Islam shall be combatted as he merits.<sup>296</sup>

The last line of the Mārdīn fatwa, as contained in the Zāhiriyya 2757 manuscript of the Syrian National Library, dated from 1372:<sup>297</sup>

بل هم قسم ثالث يعامل المسلم فيها بما يستحقه  
الخارج عن شريعة الإسلام بما يستحقه

The Mārdīn Conference thus translated the text as:

[Mārdīn] is a third category. The Muslims living therein should be treated according to their rights as Muslims, while the non-Muslims living there outside of the authority of Islamic Law should be treated according to their rights.<sup>298</sup>

The controversy over the discrepancy in translations is centered on the verb *yuqāṭalu* (يقاتل) (be combatted) vs. *yu'āmalu* (يعامل) (be treated), circled in each text.

<sup>295</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 2004, 28:241.

<sup>296</sup> Michot, *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule*, 65.

<sup>297</sup> I did not have access to the original manuscript; see Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'New Mardin Fatwa'. Is Genetically Modified Islam (GMI) Carcinogenic?," 146, for the facsimile of this line.

<sup>298</sup> Turayri, "The Mardin Conference," 3.

AMF 1 (MF 28:501-508)

1.1 (MF 28:502), page 54

كل طائفة ممتعة عن التزام شريعة من شرائع الإسلام الظاهرة المتواترة من هؤلاء القوم وغيرهم فإنه يجب قتالهم حتى يلتزموا شرائعه ، وإن كانوا مع ذلك ناطقين بالشهادتين ، وملتزمين بعض شرائعه ، كما قاتل أبوبكر الصديق والصحابة رضي الله عنهم مانعي الزكاة .

1.2 (MF 28:503), page 54

فأما طائفة امتعت من بعض الصلوات المفروضات ، أو الصيام ، أو الحج ، أو عن التزام تحريم الدماء ، والأموال ، والخمر ، والزنا ، والميسر ، أو عن فكاح ذوات المحارم ، أو عن التزام جهاد الكفار ، أو ضرب الجزية على أهل الكتاب ، وغير ذلك من واجبات الدين ومحرماته — التي لا عذر لأحد في جحودها وتركها — التي يكفر الجاحد لوجوبها . فإن الطائفة الممتعة تقاتل عليها وإن كانت مقرة بها . وهذا مما لا أعلم فيه خلافاً بين العلماء .

فإنهم أولاً بوجوب الإسلام ولا يقاتلون  
من تركه ؛ بل من قاتل على دولة المغول عظموه وتركوه وإن كان  
كافراً عدواً لله ورسوله ، وكل من خرج عن دولة المغول أو عليها استحلوا  
قتاله وإن كان من خيار المسلمين . فلا يجاهدون الكفار ، ولا يلزمون  
أهل الكتاب بالجزية والصغار ، ولا ينهون أحداً من عسكرهم أن يعبد  
ما شاء من شمس أو قمر أو غير ذلك ؛

فإن انفق من يقاتلهم على الوجه الكامل فهو الغاية في رضوان الله ،  
وإعزاز كلمته ، وإقامة دينه ، وطاعة رسوله ، وإن كان فيهم من فيه فجور  
وفسادنية بأن يكون يقاتل على الرياسة أو يتعدى عليهم في بعض  
الأمر ، وكانت مفسدة ترك قتالهم أعظم على الدين من مفسدة قتالهم  
على هذا الوجه : كان الواجب أيضاً قتالهم دفعاً لأعظم المفسدتين  
بالتزام أدناها ؛ فإن هذا من أصول الإسلام التي ينبغي مراعاتها .

AMF 2 (MF 28:509-543)

2.1 (MF 28:520), page 77

ولم يكن معهم في دولتهم إلا من كان من شر الخلق . إما زنديق منافق لا يعتقد دين الإسلام في الباطن ، وإما من هو من شر أهل البدع كالرافضة والجهمية والاتحادية ونحوهم ، وإما من هو من أفجر الناس وأفسقهم . وهم في بلادهم مع تمكنهم لا يحجون البيت العتيق ، وإن كان فيهم من يصلي وبصوم فليس الغالب عليهم إقام الصلاة ولا إيتاء الزكاة .

2.2 (MF 28:521), page 67

وذلك أن اعتقاد هؤلاء التار كان في جنكسخان عظيما ، فإنهم يعتقدون أنه ابن الله من جنس ما يعتقد النصارى في المسيح . ويقولون إن الشمس حبلت أمه ، وإنها كانت في خيمة فنزلت الشمس من كوة الخيمة فدخلت فيها حتى حبلت . ومعلوم عند كل ذى دين أن هذا كذب .

فهم يدعون دين الإسلام ، ويعظمون دين أولئك الكفار على  
دين المسلمين ، ويطيعونهم ويوالونهم أعظم بكثير من طاعة الله ورسوله  
وموالاته المؤمنين ، ويحكمون فيما شجريين أكارهم بحكم الجاهلية ، لا  
بحكم الله ورسوله .

وكذلك الأكار من وزرائهم وغيرهم يجعلون دين الإسلام كدين  
اليهود والنصارى ، وأن هذه كلها طرق إلى الله ، بمنزلة المذاهب الأربعة  
هند المسلمين .

ثم منهم من يرجح دين اليهود أو دين النصارى ،

فمن دخل في طاعتهم الجاهلية وسنتهم  
الكفرية كان صديقهم . ومن خالفهم كان عدوهم ولو كان من أنبياء الله  
ورسله وأوليائه .

2.5 (MF 28:530), page 81

وقد أجمع المسلمون على وجوب قتال الخوارج والروافض ونحوم  
إذا فارقوا جماعة المسلمين ، كما قاتلهم علي رضي الله عنه ، فكيف إذا  
ضموا إلى ذلك من أحكام المشركين — كنائساً — وجنكسخان ملك  
المشركين : ما هو من أعظم المضادة لدين الإسلام ، وكل من قفز إليهم  
من أمراء العسكر وغير الأمراء فحكمه حكمهم ، وفيهم من الردة عن  
شرائع الإسلام بقدر ما ارتد عنه من شرائع الإسلام . وإذا كان السلف

Note the corrupted text: (—*kanā'isan*—). The text was corrected by Yahya Michot to read (—*ka-yāsā*—), referring to the *yāsā* of Chinggis Khan.

2.6 (MF 28:531), page 92

ورسوله قاتلا للمسلمين؟! مع أنه والعياذ بالله لو استولى هؤلاء المحاربون  
لله ورسوله ، المحادون لله ورسوله المعادون لله ورسوله ، على أرض الشام  
ومصر في مثل هذا الوقت ، لأفضى ذلك إلى زوال دين الإسلام  
ودروس شرائعه .

وذلك أن سكان اليمن في هذا الوقت ضعاف ، عاجزون عن الجهاد أو مضيعون له ؛ وهم مطيعون لمن ملك هذه البلاد ، حتى ذكروا أنهم أرسلوا بالسمع والطاعة لهؤلاء ، وملك المشركين لما جاء إلى حلب جرى بها من القتل ما جرى . وأما سكان الحجاز فأكثرهم أو كثير منهم خارجون عن الشريعة ، وفيهم من البدع والضلال والفجور ما لا يعلمه إلا الله ، وأهل الإيمان والدين فيهم مستضعفون عاجزون ؛ وإنما تكون القوة والعزة في هذا الوقت لغير أهل الإسلام بهذه البلاد ، فلو ذلت هذه الطائفة — والعياذ بالله تعالى — لكان المؤمنون بالحجاز من أذل الناس ؛ لاسيما وقد غلب فيهم الرفض ، وملك هؤلاء التتار المحاربون لله ورسوله الآن مرفوض ، فلو غلبوا لفسد الحجاز بالكلية . وأما بلاد أفريقية فأعراها غالبون عليها ، وهم من شر الخلق ؛ بل هم مستحقون للجهاد والغزو . وأما المغرب الأقصى فمع استيلاء الإفرنج على أكثر بلادهم ، لا يقومون بجهاد النصارى هناك ؛ بل في عسكرهم من النصارى الذين يحملون الصليبان خلق عظيم . لو استولى التتار على هذه البلاد لكان أهل المغرب معهم من أذل الناس ، لاسيما والنصارى تدخل مع التتار فيصرون حزبا على أهل المغرب .

2.8 (MF 28:534), page 92

فهذا وغيره مما يبين أن هذه المعصاة التي بالشام ومصر في هذا الوقت هم كتيبة الإسلام ، وعزهم عز الإسلام ، وذلمهم ذل الإسلام . فلو استولى عليهم التتار لم يبق للإسلام عز ، ولا كلمة عالية ، ولا طائفة ظاهرة عالية يخافها أهل الأرض تقاتل عنه .

2.9 (MF 28:534), page 82

فمن قفز عنهم إلى التتار كان أحق بالقتال من كثير من التتار ؛ فإن التتار فيهم المكروه وغير المكروه ، وقد استقرت السنة بأن عقوبة المرتد أعظم من عقوبة الكافر الأصلي من وجوه متعددة .

2.10 (MF 28:542), page 79

وقد خاطبني بعضهم بأن قال : ملكنا ملك ، ابن ملك ، ابن ملك ، إلى سبعة أجداد ، وملسكم ابن مولى . فقلت له : آباء ذلك الملك كلهم كفار ، ولا فخر بالكافر : بل المملوك المسلم خير من الملك الكافر

AMF 3 (MF 28:544-551)

3.1 (MF 28:545), page 42

وقد اتفق علماء المسلمين على أن الطائفة الممتعة إذا امتعت عن بعض واجبات الإسلام الظاهرة المتواترة فإنه يجب قتالها ، إذا تكلموا بالشهادتين وامتنعوا عن الصلاة والزكاة ، أو صيام شهر رمضان أو حج البيت العتيق ، أو عن الحكم بينهم بالكتاب والسنة ، أو عن تحريم الفواحش ، أو الخمر ، أو نكاح ذوات المحارم ، أو استحلال النفوس والأموال بغير حق ، أو الربا ، أو الميسر ، أو عن الجهاد للكفار ، أو عن ضربهم الجزية على أهل الكتاب ، ونحو ذلك من شرائع الإسلام ، فإنهم يقاتلون عليها حتى يكون الدين كله لله .

3.2 (MF 28:546), page 44

والتار وأشباههم أعظم خروجاً عن شريعة الإسلام من مانعي الزكاة والخوارج من أهل الطائف ، الذين امتنعوا عن ترك الربا . فمن شك في قتالهم فهو أجهل الناس بدين الإسلام

3.3 (MF 28:546-7), page 44

وقد اتفق العلماء على أن جيش الكفار إذا ترسوا بمن عندهم من أسرى المسلمين ، وخيف على المسلمين الضرر إذا لم يقاتلوا ، فإنهم يقاتلون ؛ وإن أفضى ذلك إلى قتل المسلمين الذين ترسوا بهم . وإن لم يخف على المسلمين ففي جواز القتال المفضى إلى قتل هؤلاء المسلمين قولان مشهوران للعلماء . وهؤلاء المسلمون إذا قتلوا كانوا شهداء ، ولا يترك الجهاد الواجب لأجل من يقتل شهيدا .

3.4 (MF 28:551), page 45

فالقتن مثل الحروب التي تكون بين ملوك المسلمين ، وطوائف المسلمين ، مع أن كل واحدة من الطائفتين ملتزمة لشرائع الإسلام . مثل ما كان أهل الجمل وصفين ؛ وإنما اقتتلوا لشبه وأمر عرضت . وأما قتال الخوارج ومانعي الزكاة وأهل الطائف الذين لم يكونوا يحرمون الربا ، فهؤلاء يقاتلون حتى يدخلوا في الشرائع الثابتة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم .

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