

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹⁶Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:181, 2:243.



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

THE MONGOL POLITICAL ORDER AS SEEN BY IBN TAYMĪYAH

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

¹¹⁷Ibid., 1:181, 2:212.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 1:182, 2:212.

¹¹⁹Quran 28:15.

¹²⁰Li Guo/al-Yūnīnī, 1:182–83, 2:213.

¹²¹*Majmū' Fatāwá*, 28:531.

¹²²Ibid., 533

¹²³Ibid.



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

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

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

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

¹²⁴Ibid., 542.

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

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

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

¹²⁸Here the term *yāghī* is an equivalent to classical Mongol *bulgha*.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

¹³³*Majmū‘ Fatāwá*, 28:521–22.

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

¹³⁵*Majmū‘ Fatāwá*, 28:521.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴⁰*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 28:525.

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

¹⁴²*Majmū' Fatāwā*, 20:66.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*



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

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

¹⁶⁵See Calmard, "Le chiisme imamite sous les Ilkhans," 282–83.

