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Baybars and the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām: The Construction of Legitimacy

The Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣāliḥī al-Bunduqdārī (r. 658–76/1260–77), who had no ancestry to legitimize his reign, sought to compensate for his lack of pedigree by using other strategies. The question regarding the legitimization of his power has already been addressed in several studies. Denise Aigle showed that the textual sources as well as the sultan’s epigraphical program in Bilād al-Shām contributed to emphasizing his image as the ideal Muslim sovereign and protector of the caliphate and the holy sites, while giving his rule an eschatological dimension.¹ Anne Broadbridge examined the Mamluk strategies of legitimation in the light of an external audience, namely the Mongols, whose ideological challenge played a part in shaping the Mamluk discourse of legitimacy.² By studying diplomatic missions and letters, she also stressed the contribution of religious scholars in its elaboration.³ Following on from these studies, I would like to add a contribution focusing on an issue that has not been approached until now, namely how the propagandists of the time exploited elements in the Muslim historiography of Bilād al-Shām, particularly the narratives of some prominent figures in the Muslim conquest, in order to legitimize Baybars’s domination over this territory.⁴

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¹ Denise Aigle, “Les inscriptions de Baybars dans le Bilad al-Sham: Une expression de la légitimité du pouvoir,” *Studia Islamica* 96 (2003): 87–115; Denise Aigle, “Legitimizing a Low-Born, Regicide Monarch: The Case of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars and the Ilkâns in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Representing Power in Ancient Inner Asia: Legitimacy, Transmission and the Sacred*, ed. I. Charleux et al. (Bellingham, WA, 2010), 61–94.

² See her dissertation: Anne F. Broadbridge, “Mamluk Ideological and Diplomatic Relations with Mongols and Turkic Rulers of the Near-East and Central Asia (658–807/1260–1405)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2001); and more recently, idem, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol World* (Cambridge, 2008), 30.

³ Anne F. Broadbridge, “Mamluk Legitimacy and the Mongols: The Reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 5 (2001): 91–118.

⁴ On the links between Baybars and heroes of the past, see Anne-Marie Eddé, “Baybars et son double: de l’ambiguïté du souverain idéal,” in *Le Bilād al-Šām face aux mondes extérieurs: la perception de l’Autre et la représentation du souverain*, ed. Denise Aigle (Beirut, 2012), 33–46. On chroniclers’ use of figures from the past to legitimize current politics, in particular in relation to the



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Baybars's lack of kinship, as well as his lack of territorial roots, called for the establishment of other forms of attachment and bonds of loyalty that formed the basis of the Mamluk system.⁵ One of the essential components in Baybars's discourse was his appropriation of events that were firmly rooted in the Syrian geographical space and linked to great mythical figures, thus forming part of the "cultural memory" of Bilād al-Shām.

The concept of "cultural memory" was defined by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann.⁶ He developed the work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who considered collective memory to be a social phenomenon, a reconstruction of the past based on changes in the present.⁷ Jan Assmann adopted this idea, but defined memory as essentially cultural: narratives of the collective past are called upon, carefully arranged, and formalized according to patterns that are recognizable to "specialized carriers," "bards, griots" as well as "scribes, scholars, mandarins, and others"⁸ who are responsible for transmitting these narratives to the group. Writing, rituals, and festivals all ensure the transmission and longevity of this knowledge of identity and give coherence to the society.⁹

In this article, I propose to examine Baybars's appropriation of the cultural memory of Bilād al-Shām, a process by which the memories of his own reign were inserted into a carefully selected tradition. The article focuses on the accounts of his conquests in Syria, particularly Caesarea and Jaffa, showing them to be the result of a memory-work (*travail de mémoire*). We also see that his program

Chronicles of Saint-Denis, see Gabriel Spiegel, "Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 314–325.

⁵ "The idea that the slave has no territorial referent for belonging and instead forms other kinds of loyalties was the idea upon which the Mamluk system was built." Zayde Gordon Antrim, "Place and Belonging in Medieval Syria 6th/12th to 8th/14th Centuries" (Ph.D. diss, Harvard, 2005), 306.

⁶ Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York, 2011); idem, *Religion And Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, 2006). Assmann's reflection forms the basis of numerous studies (notably in Germany) on the notion of *memoria*. Antoine Borrut recently showed that this concept can be transposed into an Islamic context: Antoine Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: l'espace Syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)* (Leiden, 2011). See also Thomas Herzog, "La mémoire des invasions Mongoles dans la Sirat Baybars: persistances et transformations dans l'imaginaire populaire arabe," in *Le Bilād al-Šām*, ed. Aigle, 345–63.

⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950); idem, *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (Paris, 1941). For a summary of his contribution, see Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 21–33.

⁸ Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 39.

⁹ Jan Assmann, *La mémoire culturelle: écriture, souvenir et imaginaire politique dans les civilisations antiques* (Paris, 2010), 52.



of monumental construction represents a “confiscation of collective memory,”¹⁰ aimed at anchoring the new power in the Syrian landscape.

One of the main sources used here is the biography of Sultan Baybars composed during his lifetime by the religious scholar and private secretary of the sultan (*kātib al-sirr*) Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (d. 692/1293).¹¹ From a historical perspective, this text is the most comprehensive primary source on the events of Baybars’s reign, and it was consequently used and copied by numerous chroniclers: al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333),¹² Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405),¹³ who recopied certain passages directly, and al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442),¹⁴ who drew substantially from Ibn al-Furāt. The verses composed by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir in praise of the sultan, especially after his victories over the Franks, also figure in the chronicles of Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 724/1325)¹⁵ and al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451).¹⁶ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s influence was also significant in the Western historiography of the Crusades, considering that among the Arab historians, al-Maqrīzī was accessible to European scholars very early on through Quatremère’s translation.¹⁷ The *Rawḍ* was translated and edited around the same period by Reinaud.¹⁸ Given

¹⁰ According to Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris, 1988), 130, citing Paul Veyne with regards to the intense building activity of Roman emperors and their “délire de mémoire épigraphique.” See also Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 175.

¹¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. A. A. Khuwaytir (Riyadh, 1976). Partial translations: Jacqueline Sublet, *Les trois vies du sultan Baybars* (Paris, 1992) and Sayedah Fatima Sadeque, *Baybars I of Egypt* (Dacca, 1956). See also his biographical entry in: Ibn al-Suqā‘ī (d. 726/1325), *Tālī Kitāb Wafayāt al-A‘yān*, ed. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 184; al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333), *Nihāyat al-Arab fī-Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1990–92), 31:334; al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338), *Ḥawāḍith al-Zamān*, ed. ‘Umar Tadmuri (Beirut, 1998), 1:175–83; al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363), *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. ‘Alī M. Mu‘awwad (Beirut, 2000), 1:no. 222; al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362–63), *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt* (1931–2011), 17:no. 240; Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405), *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. C. Zurayq and N. ‘Izz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1939), 8:162; Ibn Taghribirdī (d. 874/1469–70), *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963–72), 8:38; Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089/1679), *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, ed. M. A. ‘Aṭā (Beirut, 1998), 5:421.

¹² Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, vols. 29–31.

¹³ Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders: Selections from the Tārīkh al-Duwal wa’l-Mulūk*, ed. M. C. Lyons, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1971).

¹⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma’rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. M. Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934). On al-Maqrīzī’s dependence on Ibn al-Furāt at the start of the Mamluk period, see Reuven Amitai, “Al-Maqrīzī as a Historian of the Early Mamluk Sultanate (or: Is al-Maqrīzī an Unrecognized Historiographical Villain?),” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): 99–118.

¹⁵ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, ed. D. S. Richards (Beirut, 1998).

¹⁶ Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Ḥumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. M. M. Amin, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1987–89).

¹⁷ Etienne Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamelouks*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837–45).

¹⁸ Joseph-Toussaint Reinaud, *Extraits des historiens arabes relatifs aux guerres des croisades, nouvelle édition* (Paris, 1829), 485 ff.



the relative brevity of the Latin accounts of the battles between the Franks and Mamluks, researchers obtained their data largely from these translated Arabic sources.¹⁹

Baybars also had two other biographers: Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285), and Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 730/1330). The former was an Aleppan scholar who sought refuge in Cairo after the Mongol conquest and stayed at the service of the Mamluks until his death. His biography, from which only a section remains, uses Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's *Rawḍ*, as well as his personal experience in the vicinity of power.²⁰ The latter biographer, the nephew of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, wrote his biography on Baybars by summarizing the *Rawḍ*.²¹ He was, however, quite critical of his uncle's work, which he claimed to have corrected. His text, which was composed under the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir ibn Qalāwūn, was perhaps sponsored by this sultan, as suggested by several details aimed at exalting the Qalawunid rulers, while calling on the memory of Baybars. Those biographies must be treated with the utmost caution required for such texts. The royal biographies of Muslim rulers are a highly codified genre: the annals are centered on the personage of the sovereign, preceded by an overview of his career prior to his ascension to power. There is also a section exalting his qualities (*akhlāq, manāqib*),²² illustrated with edifying anecdotes as well as lists of the noble deeds performed by the prince. An analysis of the sovereign's attributes uncovers a literary discourse with its own codes, intended to highlight the figure of the ideal Muslim ruler.²³ This type

¹⁹ See René Grousset, *Histoire des croisades et du royaume franc de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1936), 3:606 ff. (he draws from al-Maqrīzī based on Quatremère's translation and Abū al-Fidā' based on the translation, "Recueil des Historiens des Croisades," which is not a first-hand account of the period of Baybars's reign) or Joshua Prawer, *Histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1970), 2:451 ff.

²⁰ Ibn Shaddād, *Die Geschichte des Sultans Baibars (Tārikh al-Malik al-Zahir)*, ed. Ahmad Hutait (Wiesbaden, 1983). He was at the service of the vizier Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Ḥinnā'. For his use of the *Rawḍ* as a source see Ibn al-Dawadārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 8:99–101. See also P. M. Holt, "Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars," in *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, ed. D. O. Morgan (London, 1982), 25.

²¹ Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī al-ʿAsqalānī, *Kitāb Ḥuṣn al-Manāqib al-Sirriyah al-Muntaza'ah min al-Sīrah al-Zāhiriyyah*, ed. A. A. Khuwaytir (Riyadh, 1976). See the review by P. M. Holt, "Muhyi al-Din b. 'Abd al-Zahir: al-Rawd al-Zahir fi sirat al-Malik al-Zahir; Shafi' b. Ali b. 'Abbas al-Katib: Kitab husn al-manaqib al-sirriyya al-muntaza'a min al-sira al-Zahiriyya," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41, no. 1 (1978): 152–54, and idem, "Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars," 20–24.

²² For a history of this notion in Islamic practical philosophy, see Richard Walzer, "Akhlāq," *Encyclopédie de l'islam*, 2nd ed., 1:335–39.

²³ On official historiography under the early Mamluks, see P. M. Holt "The Virtuous Ruler in the XIIIth Century in Mamluk Royal Biographies," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 24 (1980): 27–35; idem, "Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars," 19–29. For a comparison with Ayyubid historiography, see idem, "The Sultan as Ideal Ruler: Ayyubid and Mamluk Prototypes," in *Suleyman*



of text is not specific to the Mamluk period.²⁴ By choosing this genre, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir and Baybars’s other biographers inscribed the reign of the first great Mamluk sultan in a lineage of exceptional Muslim rulers.

The text of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir also fulfills a commemorative function: the author celebrates the Islamic past rendered present, reactivated by the remarkable destiny of Sultan Baybars. In the historiographical writing, ancient history and recent past interpenetrate. The act of commemoration combined in the same recitation the great acts of the past, especially those dealing with the Muslim conquests, and those that were coming to pass, that is to say, Baybars’s successful politics against the Franks and his recapture of the territories previously in their hands.²⁵ The performative dimension of the text, whose passages were read before Baybars himself throughout the composition process²⁶ (with a court public presumably present during these readings), brought to life this fusion of the past and present. On the oral and public transmission of historiography, in the context of thirteenth-century France, Gabrielle Spiegel wrote: “All texts, to the degree that they formed part of the oral culture of lay society or entered into it by being read aloud, enjoyed a public, collective status as vehicles through which the community reaffirmed its sense of historical identity....The fundamental goal of oral recitation is precisely, to revivify the past and make it live in the present, to fuse past and present, singer and hearer, author and public into a single collective entity.”²⁷

the Magnificent and his Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London and New York, 1995): 122–37. For a perspective on the sources regarding this sultan’s reign, see also Amina A. Elbandary, “The Sultan, the Tyrant, and the Hero: Changing Medieval Perceptions of al-Zāhir Baybars,” *MSR* 5 (2001): 141–57.

²⁴ Under the Zangids, the historian Ibn al-Athīr was commissioned to write a chronicle about the Atabeks of Mosul, *Al-Bāhir fī Tārikh Atabakāt al-Mawṣil* (“The splendid chronicle of the Atabeks of Mosul”), while Bahā’ al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād wrote a chronicle, *Al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyah wa-al-Mahāsīn al-Yūsufiyah* (“The rare and excellent history of Saladin”), dedicated to Saladin. Cf. P. M. Holt, “The Sultan as Ideal Ruler,” 126–27.

²⁵ The public reading of eulogizing poetic texts in the presence of sovereigns is attested in the Umayyad period as an essential component for establishing the legitimacy of this power: on this subject, see Suzanne Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, 2002), particularly chapter 3. Poetry played the role of historiography in the Umayyad period and of political literature in later periods. See, for example, the recent publication on court culture in the Muslim world: *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (New York, 2010).

²⁶ According to Shāfi’ ibn ‘Alī, *Ḥuṣn al-Manāqib*, 166.

²⁷ Gabriel Spiegel, “Social Change and Literary Language: The Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth-Century Old French Historiography,” in *The Past as Text: the Theory and Practice in Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), 184. Most of these texts concern ancient history, Old French epics, as well as narratives of the Crusades: for example, the vernacular translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, the (largely legendary) account of Charlemagne’s expedition to Spain,



Commemoration, by the recitation of history, in early-thirteenth-century France, as well as at the Mamluk court, rendered the past vibrant and significant in the present. The glorious conquests of the past are fully embodied in Baybars's reign and are considered by the historiography as a forewarning and an argument for legitimacy. The recitations and oral performances at the Mamluk court put forward the arguments on which the legitimacy of the new regime was founded. By calling upon figures from the past who were worthy of being remembered (heroes of the conquest and victors over the Crusaders, as we will see below) and by showing their direct relation to Baybars's reign, the chroniclers sought to give moral justification to his sovereignty. This works like the *exempla* in medieval Western texts. The use of this rhetorical argument, prevalent in both scholasticism and the chronicles, was intended for the edification of the public.²⁸ It also played a role in the definition of historical causality, and in this way, the past became an explanatory principle of the present: "The present came to be viewed as a fulfillment not only of sacred prophecies but of other events themselves."²⁹ Events and figures from the past were used to explain and legitimize the current political situation. Muslim historiography abounds in prophecies, signs, and omens that foretell the reign of a sovereign.³⁰ The evocation of *exempla* from the Islamic past of Syria reveals how the regime's main propagandist (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir) searched for historical causality to support Baybars's reign. The illustrious ancestor, from the Prophet himself to Muslim heroes of the conquest, hence foretells and legitimizes the current reign.³¹

The first part of the *Rawḍ* is devoted to establishing Baybars's legitimacy. The text is intended for an internal audience, and presents arguments of legitimation concerning Baybars's lack of filiation (*nasab*) and the circumstances surrounding

or the *Eracles*, the French translation of William of Tyre's *Historia Rerum transmarinarum*. Some authors composed their texts directly in French: Villehardouin, Robert de Clari.

²⁸ In the medieval West, it is widely used in proselytizing texts. See Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu et al., *Le tonnerre des exemples: "exempla" et médiation culturelle dans l'occident médiéval* (Rennes, 2010).

²⁹ Gabriel Spiegel, "Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch," *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 321.

³⁰ This was the case for the predecessor of Baybars, Quṭuz, whose reign was foretold in prophecies as reported by al-Jazarī, cited in al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, 24: no. 266, and al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1954), 1:368–70.

³¹ This historiographical use of *exempla* is not limited to the reign of Baybars: in the writings of the historian Ibn al-Dawādārī, we find the same concern for deciphering the signs of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn during the reign of Saladin (*Kanz*, 8:275–76). Note that the figure of Baybars (al-Zāhir) is presented in the legend between the two reigns of al-Nāṣir (Saladin and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad). See Holt, "Muhyi al-Din b. 'Abd al-Zahir," 153, and Eddé, "Baybars et son double: de l'ambiguïté du souverain idéal," 33.



his accession to power.³² His fictional claim to Ayyubid lineage, as shown in his choice of the *nisbah* al-Ṣāliḥī, compensated for his slave origin and his absence of kinship. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir depicts the connection between Baybars and his master al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ as a way of extolling Baybars as the legitimate heir of the Ayyubid sultan.³³ This detail did not escape Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, who drew attention to the conciseness of his uncle’s account of Baybars’s career before he entered into the service of al-Ṣāliḥ. This conciseness resulted from the fact that Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir had omitted any reference to Baybars’s career under the amir ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bunduqdār in order to emphasize his fictive adoption by the Ayyubids.³⁴

Besides the lack of filiation, the circumstances surrounding his accession to power formed another stigma that the propagandists of his reign attempted to do away with. Baybars took power following the assassination of Sultan Quṭuz. This assassination followed another regicide ten years prior, notably that of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ’s son, al-Mu‘azzam Tūrān-Shāh, in 648/1250, which marked the advent of Mamluk rule in Egypt.³⁵ For Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, the two regicides were in fact an expression of divine will (*qadar*).³⁶ The murder of Quṭuz was narrated in several ways by the chroniclers.³⁷ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir made Baybars bear the sole responsibility for it. In a fictional dialogue after the assassination, Baybars is said to have been brought to power for this very reason, in the absence of an heir to al-Malik al-Muzaḥḥar Quṭuz. However, according to the *Husn*, in which Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī claimed to correct the errors of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, Quṭuz had been executed

³² On this subject, see Aigle, “Legitimizing a Low-Born,” 61–94.

³³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 46. The negative image given to Tūrān-Shāh and Quṭuz and their inconsequent attitude follows the same lines: neither his legitimate son nor Baybars’s predecessor were worthy of continuing the Ayyubid legacy; see Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 48, 68.

³⁴ Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 27. See Holt, “Muḥyi al-Din b. ‘Abd al-Zahir,” 153–54.

³⁵ Here, again, the sources diverge as to the exact implication of Baybars in the assassination of Tūrān-Shāh. An Ayyubid chronicle, “Al-Majmū‘ al-Mubārak” of al-Makīn ibn al-Amīd, ed. by A-M. Eddé and F. Micheau as *Chronique des Ayyoubides, 602–658/1205–6–1259–60* (Paris, 1994), 88, does not attribute any part to Baybars in the amirs’ conspiracy, which was fatal for Tūrān-Shāh. In contrast, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, as we have seen, and even al-Maqrīzī, explicitly name Baybars as the killer (*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:359).

³⁶ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 50 and 68. See Aigle, “Legitimizing a Low-Born,” 62.

³⁷ A first group of authors, following Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, directly implicates Baybars in the assassination of his predecessor, portraying him as inflicting the first sword blow; see Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 68; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 54; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-Ibar*, ed. Khalil Shahada and Souhail Zakkar (Beirut, 2000), 24, 822. Other authors have him playing an indirect role: an alliance of amirs killed the sultan; see al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’at al-Zamān*, 2:1; Abū al-Fidā’, *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, 1907), 3:207; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Lāqadī and Muḥammad Ghāzī Bayḍūn (Beirut, 1999), 13:260–61; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:519. Finally, an intermediary version has Baybars striking the second and fatal sword blow; see Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 31; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:61–62.



by a certain ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Anās. Then, at the meeting of amirs after the assassination, the death of Quṭuz was attributed to Baybars and a consensus was reached as to his accession to power. During the meeting, the “Law of the Turks” ([y]asat al-turk) was evoked: this law stipulates that whoever assassinates a prince should be a prince himself.³⁸ The reference to the Law of the Turks, which is rarely mentioned in the historiography, was a means for establishing Baybars’s rule. As for Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, he erased the part played by Anās. Even if he did not explicitly mention the Law of Turks,³⁹ he evoked it: “The one who killed him must take his place.” The events of the past were thus manipulated to provide legitimacy in the present.

In addition to this, the danger posed by the Mongols, who occupied Syria in 658/1259–60, doubled the ideological challenge to the Mamluk ruler, as shown by recent studies.⁴⁰ The Mongols, whose dynasty descended from the imperial lineage of Genghis Khan, posed serious competition to the Mamluks in terms of legitimacy, as the Mongol lineage had received the divine favor. A section in the *Secret History of the Mongols* addresses the notions underlying their political legitimacy, in particular the concept of “heaven” (*tenggeri*).⁴¹ In their diplomatic exchanges with the Mamluk sultans, the Mongol khans claim to be assisted in their conquests by the “force” and “good protective fortune” of the eternal Heaven (*möngke tenggeri*).⁴² The Mamluks, however, were unable to rely on such good fortune and were stigmatized in the correspondence by their lack of ancestry and servile origins.⁴³ Instead, in cooperation with their religious scholarly advisors,

³⁸ Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 31–32. On this question, see Ulrich Haarmann, “Regicide and the ‘Law of Turks,’” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), 127–35.

³⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 69.

⁴⁰ Broadbridge, “Mamluk Legitimacy and the Mongols,” 91–118; idem, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol World*, 13; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “Mongol Imperial Ideology and the Ilkhanid War against the Mamluks,” in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. David Morgan and Reuven Amitai-Preiss (Leiden, 1999), 57–72; Denise Aigle, “La légitimité islamique des invasions de la Syrie par Ghazan Khan (699–700/1300–1302),” *Eurasian Studies* 5 (2006): 5–29.

⁴¹ Marie-Lise Beffa, “Le concept de tänggäri, ‘ciel,’ dans l’Histoire secrète des Mongols,” *Études mongoles et sibériennes* 24 (1993): 215–36; Igor de Rachewiltz, “Heaven, Earth and the Mongols in the Time of Činggis Qan and his Immediate Successors (ca. 1160–1260)—A Preliminary Investigation,” in *A Lifelong Dedication to the China Mission: Essays Presented in Honor of Father Jeroom Heyndricks, CICM, on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday and the 25th Anniversary of the F. Verbiest Institute K.U. Leuven*, ed. N. Golvers and S. Lievens, Leuven Chinese Studies 17 (2007), 107–44.

⁴² This was also the case in their correspondence with the Latin West; see Denise Aigle, “De la «non-négociation» à l’alliance inaboutie: Réflexions sur la diplomatie entre les Mongols et l’Occident latin,” *Oriente moderno* 88, no. 2 (2008): 395–436.

⁴³ See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol World*, 33.



they chose to emphasize their religious legitimacy and developed the concept of guardianship, promoting themselves as saviors of Islam and the Islamic lands.⁴⁴

In order to provide a response to this double challenge—internal and external—in terms of legitimacy, the propagandists collected arguments in the cultural memory of Bilād al-Shām. This program circulated in the official historiography as well as in the epigraphy and architecture.

Writing Mamluk Power into the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām: Accounts of Baybars’s Conquests

The accounts of Baybars’s conquests against the Crusaders on the coastal lands include material aside from the events of the conquests themselves: some poetry, letters addressed to Muslims or Frankish rulers, and elements of historiography. These are evocations of the city’s past in association with prior Islamic victories. This historical reminder of previous Islamic victories in places captured by Baybars acts as a sort of catalyst for the cultural memory. In the text of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, it promotes the junction between history as a historical experience (Baybars’ recent conquest of Syria) and history as a text (accounts of Muslim conquests), thus grounding the present action in a tradition. The juxtaposition of these narratives creates a cultural continuity between the past as recorded in the texts and the history that has just occurred.⁴⁵

Futūhāt and Ghazawāt: Textual Accounts of the Conquest

Baybars’s conquests are qualified by different chroniclers as *futūhāt*, a term designating the Muslim armies’ conquests over the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires.⁴⁶ Contrary to the commonly accepted view,⁴⁷ Fred Donner showed that *futūh* was a key theme in Muslim historiography that was present at an early stage and responded to the “need to develop an historical vision of how the conquered lands (individually, as part of a whole) came under Muslim control.”⁴⁸ The *futūh* ac-

⁴⁴ On the concept of guardianship in Mamluk ideology see *ibid.*, 27. On the Mamluk sultan as an ideal Muslim ruler, see Aigle, “Les Inscriptions de Baybars,” 60 ff.

⁴⁵ This is a distinction between two kinds of history (which in German is revealed by the distinct words *Historie* and *Geschichte*).

⁴⁶ See for instance al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān*, 1:338 (a letter written by Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-‘Ajāmī on behalf of the sultan to Ibn Khallikān about the conquest [*fath*] of Ṣafad); Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:108 (*fath* Caesarea). For a discussion of the term, see Chase F. Robinson, “Conquest,” *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, 2007, 1:387–401.

⁴⁷ Notably by Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, 1994), 31–33.

⁴⁸ Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998), 176. The term, appended to this phenomenon retrospectively by Muslim historians,



counts are important for three “main factors”: they provide “a narrative justification of the rule by Muslims and Arabs of non-Muslims and non-Arabs”; they let individuals, families, or tribes “advance a claim, true or spurious, to have participated in the stirring events of the ‘golden age’ of Early Islam”; and finally they can be considered as “pious exhortation to engage in what we may term ‘religious battle.’ Such accounts do not use the term *futūḥ*, a term which clearly has theological overtones of divine assistance to the community as a whole—but employ instead the more neutral term *ghazwah*.”⁴⁹ Mamluk chroniclers present Baybars’s conquests as a revival of *futūḥ*, which the Crusades had honored.⁵⁰ In al-Nuwayrī’s account, the series of *futūḥ* holds a special place, confirming that this theme had become an essential component for explaining the past.⁵¹

Elsewhere, the territories annexed by the Mamluk Empire were treated as lands of conquest, referring to the legal framework established in the second century of Islam to justify Muslim control.⁵² For Ibn Shaddād and al-Nuwayrī,

has a meaning much wider than the translation “Islamic conquests,” which focuses on the military dimension. The term designates the process by which the territories were incorporated into the caliphate’s sphere of influence; see Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 28.

⁴⁹ Donner, *Narratives*, 177–78.

⁵⁰ Fred M. Donner showed that the period of the Crusades coincides with the appearance of “pseudo-futūḥ” in the literature, with the *Futūḥ al-Shām* by the pseudo-Wāqidi being the most evocative example: “It is at this time and in this place—geographical Syria—that we see the appearance of a number of Arabic works ostensibly dealing, in a romanticized way, with the first great Islamic conquests.” Fred M. Donner, “Sources of Islamic Conception of War,” in *Just War and Jihad, Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*, ed. John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson (New York, 1991), 53.

⁵¹ The accounts of Baybars’s conquests were collected and inserted at the end of the year 675 (al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:255–350), that is to say, in the last year of this sultan’s reign, forming a sort of biography, as his death occurred at short notice. It transpired in the same way for Sultan Qalāwūn: his *futūḥāt* are grouped at the start of his reign (al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:30–49). For the later Egyptian author Ibn Taghrībirdī, the *futūḥ* of Baybars also hold a special place, incorporated in the year 658, at the start of his reign. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:138–73.

⁵² This is what made Baybars, based on the Hanafi jurisdiction, seize the orchards at Ghūṭah. On this affair, see Jacqueline Sublet, “Sequestre sur les jardins de la Ghouta (Damas, 666/1267),” *Studia Islamica* 43 (1976): 81–86; Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIIIe-XIIe siècles: vie et structure religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), 273–76; Yehoshua Frenkel, “Agriculture, Land Tenure and Peasants in Palestine During the Mamluk Period,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 6th, 7th, 8th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1997, 1998 and 1999*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 102 (Leuven, 2001), 197–98. Sequestre Sur Les Jardins de La Ghouta (Damas, 666/1267



the lands captured from infidels are distinguished from those captured from the Ayyubids or Ismailis.⁵³

Some authors also qualify the Mamluk victories as *ghazawāt*.⁵⁴ Even though this term had a more neutral connotation than *futūḥ* at the beginning of Islam,⁵⁵ from the Abbasid period onwards, it acquired a meaning inspired by the notion of jihad and territorial conflicts. Michael Bonner demonstrated that the rhetoric of the “*ghāzī*-Caliph” was established under the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, thereafter constituting a reference to the *ghāzī*-amirs and *ghāzī*-sultans.⁵⁶ It is in the Turkish sphere that the image of the *ghāzī*-sultan is most widespread: in the case of the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, Zāhir al-Dīn Bābur (d. 1530), similarly to the Ghaznavid sultan Yamīn al-Dawlah Maḥmūd (d. 1030) or the Ottoman sultan Murad II (d. 1451), the revival of the propaganda of the *ghāzī*-sultan was connected with the need for legitimacy and the presence of a frontier.⁵⁷ In the case of Baybars, the term *ghazawāt* not only evokes the memory of the Prophet and the Muslim rulers who led expeditions to the Arabo-Byzantine frontier, but also the literary prototypes found in the Turko-Persian world.⁵⁸ Baybars’s annual expeditions to the Syrian border, as described by his biographers, depict him as a champion of the faith as well as an aggressive hero and triumphant victor over

⁵³ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 321–24, in his list of territories annexed by Baybars. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:239 ff., establishes a distinction between the annexed territories “*min al-bilād al-islāmīyah*” and the overthrow (*futūḥāt*, *ghāzawāt*) of territories fallen into the hands of the Crusaders. On the issue of the fiscal status of territories and their administration as a historiographical theme, see also Donner, *Narratives*, 171–73 and Noth, *Early Arabic*, 35–36 and 48–53.

⁵⁴ For example: al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:239; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:328–29 (*ghazawāt* of al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn).

⁵⁵ See the citation above. The term *futūḥ* does not appear to have been used prior to Islam. The raids carried out in pre-Islamic Arabia and then at the start of Islam were known as *ghazwah*. F. M. Donner, “The Islamic Conquests,” in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef Choueiri (Malden, MA, 2005), 28.

⁵⁶ Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arabo-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996), 99–106. The context of the Crusades was particularly conducive to reviving the figure of the sovereign fighting for the faith, as shown by Linda Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 152 ff.

⁵⁷ Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (New York, 2008).

⁵⁸ Like the heroes described in the *Shahnamah* (Book of Kings), an epic poem composed in Persian around 1010 by Firdawsī and initially dedicated to Maḥmūd of Ghaznah. See *ibid.*, 27–28, 67–73, 142 ff.



the elements (snow and mountains), with just as many motifs as found in the repertoire of the *ghāzī*-sultan.⁵⁹

As to the chronicles, they unravel the series of conquests in an often stereotypical narrative with a repetitive and sequential structure. Recurrent motifs emerge in the chronicles: in the first place, the accounts are largely focused on the personage of the sultan. They stress his involvement in the siege preparations (fabricating machinery, digging ditches, etc.) or in combat by repeating the reflexive formulas, *bi-nafsihi*, *bi-yadihi*. At the siege of Caesarea, for example, Baybars remains diligently on the front (*istamarra ‘alā al-muṣābarah*) and personally participates in the destruction of the city. He was said to be covered by dust, leading to the inclusion of a hadith about being covered by dust on the path of God. The sultan, thus performing an act that was praised by the Prophet himself, makes him worthy of imitation, which is a motif that repeatedly occurs throughout the accounts.⁶⁰ In addition, incredible elements are sometimes linked to Baybars’s presence.⁶¹ His behavior during the sieges is equally remarkable: he likes going out *unaccompanied* (*bi-mufradihi*) and insists that he should not be named if recognized.⁶² The way in which Sultan Baybars “breaks ties” (to paraphrase Jacqueline Sublet’s words) to overcome space and time makes him figure as a true hero in these accounts.⁶³

Other motifs point to temporal coincidences: for example, the bastion (*bāshūrah*) of Arsūf was captured at the moment when Shaykh ‘Alī al-Majnūn fell into a mys-

⁵⁹ For the battle against the elements, see for example Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 300, 364. We also find this rhetoric in Baybars’s diplomatic correspondence composed by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (see Anne Troadec, “Une lettre de Baybars au Comte Bohémond VI de Tripoli (début shawwāl 669/mai 1271): une arme dans l’arsenal idéologique des Mamelouks,” in *La correspondance entre souverains, princes et cités-états: approches croisées entre l’orient musulman, l’occident latin et Byzance (xiii^e-début xvii^e s.)*, ed. Denise Aigle and Stéphane Péquignot (Turnhout, 2010), 37–54. For a comparison of the Iranian and Islamic motifs used in historiography, see J. S. Meisami, “The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia,” *Poetics Today* 14, no. 2 (July 1993): 247–75.

⁶⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 232, 237.

⁶¹ For example, before the siege of Caesarea in 663/1265, “four large siege machines (*manjanikāt*) were mounted in a single day, without speaking of the small ones” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 230). During the siege, Baybars fought until his shield was pierced by numerous arrows (*ibid.*, 231). See also his involvement in the siege of Arsūf (*ibid.*, 236–37) and Ṣafad (*ibid.*, 254).

⁶² For example, during the siege of Arsūf: Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 237–38.

⁶³ For the parallel between the Baybars of historiography and that of the *Ṣīrat Baybars*, the epic-fictional fresco in which he is the hero, see Jacqueline Sublet, “Le sultan Baybars, héros de roman: rupture des liens,” *Diogenes* 181 (1998): 100–11, and *idem*, “Un héros populaire dans un espace encombré,” *Arabica* (2003): 144–61. See also an interesting parallel in Baburnama, where Baybars overcomes “the barrier of time and space” in a Heideggerian process of “de-distancing” (Entfernung). See Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 27.



tic trance.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Franks of Şafad asked the sultan for protection (*amān*) at the time of the Friday sermon (*khutbah*) in the Great Mosque of Damascus.⁶⁵ The chroniclers also draw attention to the luck of the calendar, which allows the identification of certain months and days that are auspicious for conquests: notably, the month of Shawwāl when Şafad was captured by Saladin and then Baybars,⁶⁶ and Thursday, which was seen as particularly favorable for jihad, as supported by a hadith of the Prophet.⁶⁷

In a late source like the Ibn Khaldūn's *Tbar* (d. 808/1406), the systematic use of the formula *iqtaḥamahā 'alayhim* ("he snatched it from them") reinforces the narrative scheme being repeated in siege after siege.

The qualification of these conquests as *futūḥāt* or *ghazawāt* thus inscribed them in continuation with the past. A study of the chronicles shows that they not only aim to record historical facts, but to emphasize the uniqueness of the reign of Baybars, who was presented as both a hero and the ideal Muslim ruler.

The Conquest of Caesarea and Caliph 'Umar's Letter

The conquest of Caesarea in Jumādā I 663/February 1265 marked an important moment in the history of Baybars's reign, as it was his first success against the Franks and it inaugurated what would become his Syrian policy. In terms of historiography, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's account represents a form of textual appropriation of the city's past in order to legitimize Baybars's political strategy. Caesarea was the last Byzantine-held location to fall under Muslim power, as Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir recalls at the end of his historical evocation. The stylistic use of chiasmus in turn magnifies Baybars's conquest, as the city was the first place that the Mamluks recaptured from the Franks in Palestine.⁶⁸ The account of Baybars's conquest is followed by a description of the Muslim army's conquest of Caesarea in 19/640,⁶⁹ to which we shall now turn.

⁶⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 241.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁶⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13–14, 287.

⁶⁷ "The capture of Caesarea took place on a Thursday, that of its citadel on a Thursday, and that of Arsūf on a Thursday. This is a sign of the good fortune that God accords to the sultan, as it is reported that the Prophet only commenced a journey on Thursdays. The ulama stated that: 'It is preferable that the *mujāhid* only begins an expedition on Thursday following the example of the Prophet on his travels, as actions are presented to God only on Thursday.'" (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 242).

⁶⁸ "Wa šāra al-Shām kulluhu lil-muslimīn," Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 233.

⁶⁹ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 232–33. The traditions regarding the capture of Caesarea by the Muslim armies outnumber those relating to the capture of Jerusalem. The dates vary between the years 18, 19, and 20. The seven-month siege was increased to seven years by historiographers



In his account, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir inserted a copy of the letter sent by Caliph ‘Umar to the Syrian governor, Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān:

I gave you command of all of the Syrian armies (*ajnad al-Shām*) and wrote to them saying that they should listen to you and obey you, and not refuse any order. Raise the tribute and form an army of Muslims (*akhrij fa-askir bi-al-muslimin*), then lead them to Caesarea, attack, and do not leave before God has accorded you victory. You should not conquer what you have already conquered in Syria while the population of Caesarea is present, [since] your enemies will [always] be your neighbors. The Byzantine emperor (Qaysar) will continue to pursue Syria as long as there is someone to obey him, even though you would have conquered it. May God take away from him all hope of Syria and may He, the Mighty and Great, accomplish it and be the creator of that for Muslims—God willing.⁷⁰

In the text, this letter is followed by a discourse given by one of the vanquishers, ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit,⁷¹ who cited Caliph ‘Umar’s ruling on the pillage of property following Caesarea’s capture: this misappropriation was rendered legitimate as it enabled the Muslims’ success.⁷² Caliph ‘Umar’s letter does not figure in the traditional sources on the conquest of Caesarea.⁷³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir chose to reintroduce the letter as it helped justify the financing of the war against the infidels, under the caution of the mythic Caliph ‘Umar. This was similarly the case with ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit’s discourse, which was used to legitimize the Muslim

so that its length coincided with the entire duration of the conquest of Shām. Moshe Sharon, “Ḳaysariyya,” *EI2*, 4:841. See the historical and archaeological studies of Holum: Kenneth G. Holum, “Archaeological Evidence for the Fall of Byzantine Caesarea,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 286 (1992): 73–85; idem, *Caesarea Maritima: a Retrospective after Two Millennia*, Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 21 (Leiden, 1996); idem, *Shaping the Middle East: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in an Age of Transition, 400–800 C.E.*, Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 20 (Bethesda, MD, 2011).

⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 232. The theme of divine victory constitutes one of the recurrent aspects in the accounts of *futūḥ*; see Donner, *Narratives*, 177.

⁷¹ ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit (d. 35/655), one of the *Anṣār* from the Khazraj tribe, who participated in the battle of Badr in addition to all the other battles of the Prophet. He was named qadi of Jerusalem by ‘Umar. See Jean-Louis Déclais, “La kunya du Prophète et le partage du butin: un midrash sur Josué,” *Arabica* 46, no. 2 (1999): 182–83.

⁷² “*Innī khā’if alaykum an takūnū ghallaltum, ya’nī saraqtum al-makāsib wa-lam taqsumūhā. Fa-inna ‘Umar, raḍā Allāh ‘anhu, qāla lil-muslimin fī nawbat al-Yarmūk: Subḥān Allāh, aw qad wāqafūhum, ya’nī al-mushrikīn, mā azunnu illā qad ghallū. Wa-qāla: law lam yaghullū mā wāqafūhum, walizafarū bi-him bi-ghāyr mū’umna, ay bi-ghāyr ta’ab.*” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 233).

⁷³ Al-Balādhūrī, *Futūḥ*, (Leiden, 1863–66), 140–41; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* (Leiden, 1878), 1:2396–97; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (Damascus, 1911–14), 4:395.



armies' confiscation of harvests to further the cause of jihad: seized crops were given the status of booty for the benefit of the community (*fay'*), thus helping to continue the war in defense of Islam.⁷⁴ The recollection of the past thus served a political purpose with respect to the establishment of Baybars's power in Syria.

The letter also stresses the importance of expelling the Byzantines, designated as *kuffār*, so that they could not use Bilād al-Shām as a base to reconquer other territories. As at the time of the Muslim conquest, Caesarea became the paradigm for Baybars's appropriation of the area,⁷⁵ as he systematically destroyed strongholds on the coast, where he drove away the Frankish population (or imprisoned them, as at Arsūf), and then he ensued with a settlement policy by distributing land to the amirs who had taken part in the war. This collective distribution of land was regulated by a charter (*tawqī'*) written for the occasion and inserted into numerous narrative sources.⁷⁶ The preamble of the text is a panegyric to the sultan, who is elevated to the rank of hero (*fatan*) with superhuman qualities surpassing those of his predecessors. Anne-Marie Eddé noted that the preamble emphasizes Baybars's struggle against the Mongols, his comparison to Alexander, and his fight against the infidels.⁷⁷ The charter relates to the donation of title deeds, since the land was intended to be transmitted to the sons of amirs and their descendants. It therefore concerns a property (*tamlīk*), which reveals how Baybars regarded Syria and his intended use for the territory: the land taken from the Franks was considered collective property by legal decision and distributed to the combatants on a permanent basis for the good of the community.⁷⁸ We know

⁷⁴ In the pre-Islamic period, the term *fay'* designated the "objects taken as booty and shared among the victors." However, the precedent set by the Prophet's victory over Banū al-Naḍīr (see below) modified its meaning and it referred henceforth to the booty granted by God for the benefit of the Muslim community. *Fay'* denotes what rightfully belongs to the Muslim community. Theorists, however, were subsequently at odds as to the exact content of *fay'* (four-fifths shared among the conquering army or the totality transferred to the State to finance the war effort?). "It would appear that with the notion of *fay'*, the rights of the State to raise heavy taxes are supported, the residents keeping the usufruct while their right of property is held." See F. Lookkergard, "Fay'," *EI2*, 2:889–90.

⁷⁵ On Caesarea as a paradigm for the transition of urban space between late antiquity and the Islamic period, see the studies collected in *Shaping the Middle East*.

⁷⁶ The text was composed under the supervision of the qadi of Damascus, a court clerk (*ʿudūl*), and a treasury official (*wakīl bayt al-māl*). The charter should be found in a lacuna of Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir's text, but it was taken out by Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 94 (end of the *tamlīk*); Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 98–99; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:272–81; Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʿil, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd*, ed. E. Blochet, *Patrologia Orientalis* 12 (1919), 12:479; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārikh al-Duwal*, 1:98–104, 2:78–82; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:530–34; Quatremère, *Sultans Mamelouks*, 1:2:11–15.

⁷⁷ Eddé, "Baybars et son double: de l'ambiguïté du souverain idéal," 41.

⁷⁸ The policy of distributing land to the emirs as *milk* was a milestone in the process of decline of peasant property in the Near East. This process was highlighted by Baber Johansen, *The Islamic*



that during these expeditions, Baybars surrounded himself with legal experts who could provide him with fatwas when the need arose.⁷⁹ His successors nevertheless followed a somewhat different territorial policy involving the temporary granting of *iqṭāʿ* to their amirs (*iqṭāʿ istighlāl*).⁸⁰ This change in the legal status of land, that is, the Mamluk power's ability to dispose of land and distribute it to the amirs, appears in Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir's account under the auspices of a tradition dating back to the Islamic conquest.

The political management of Caesarea inaugurated what would become Baybars's policy in the territories captured from the Franks. By using documents deemed "authentic" (ʿUmar's letter) or with an authentic quality (ʿUbādah's discourse), the past was commemorated and rendered in the present, thus rewriting Baybars into its reiteration to legitimize his politics.

The Capture of Jaffa and Memory of the Prophet

The accounts from the years 665–66/1266–68, which correspond to Baybars's great offensives against the Franks in Palestine, portray numerous parallels between the sultan and the Prophet. In Shaʿbān 665/April 1267, Baybars led four days of intensive raids in the region of Acre, which is mentioned in all of the Christian sources on the Crusades. These expeditions, accompanied by fires and the destruction of crops and orchards, were declared legal by the ulama.⁸¹ Their justification was based on the Prophet's own actions: the ravages to vineyards in the region of Ṭāʾif, leading its inhabitants to convert to Islam, or taking the date palms on the lands of the Banū al-Naḍir.⁸² Looting was similarly rendered legal, as it repeated an act of the Prophet. By the same process, the propagandists of the regime sought to give scriptural sanction to the government's appropriation of land revenues.

The conquest of Jaffa in Jumādā II 666/March 1268 presented the opportunity to write Baybars into a textual continuation with the Prophet, as shown in Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir's account of events, which markedly differs from the other nar-

Law on Tax and Rent: the Peasant's Loss of Property Rights as Interpreted in the Hanafite Legal Literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods (London, 1988).

⁷⁹ See, for example, Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 150 (the arrest of al-Malik al-Mughīth), 238 (siege of Arsūf). Other Mamluk sovereigns did the same: Ibn Taymiyah was at the battle of Shaqḥāb against the Mongols in 702/1303, where he gave fatwas (Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 14:432, Ibn Abi al-Faḍāʾil, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd*, 20:85–86).

⁸⁰ Frenkel, "Agriculture, Land Tenure and Peasants," 199 ff.

⁸¹ Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 282.

⁸² For a decryption of the affair of the cut palm trees, see Jacqueline Chabbi, *Le Coran décrypté: figures bibliques en Arabie* (Paris, 2008), 333 ff.



rative sources.⁸³ According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, the death of John of Ibelin, the Count of Jaffa, with whom the sultan had agreed to a truce, released the sultan from his commitment towards the Franks of Jaffa.⁸⁴ Their poor behavior is also mentioned by Baybars’s panegyrist in order to justify the fact that the sultan did not renew the truce. When the sultan was in his camp at al-‘Awjā’, the Castellan of Jaffa and a delegation of townspeople came to negotiate the city’s surrender and the departure of its population. The sultan accepted his demand and the city was taken without any combat. Following the surrender, the sultan then made several decisions: he prohibited looting by the army, ordered the construction of mosques, and forbade shameful acts (*munkarāt*). The citadel was destroyed, and part of its woodwork and marble was recovered to build the mosque of al-Zāhir in Cairo. Finally, the sultan sent Turkmen sentinels on coastal surveillance and proceeded to donate villages to his amirs. He decided that the revenues taken from the region should not be mixed with others, and thus asked for his food and drinks to be procured from these revenues, “as God had conquered this region with his hands.”⁸⁵

The capture of Jaffa is compared with the expeditions of the Prophet against the Jewish tribe the Banū al-Naḍīr. After their being expelled from Medina, “this was the first land granted to the Prophet by God.”⁸⁶ According to tradition, this land, which was taken by God’s will without any combat, was not distributed in the usual fashion, but instead given entirely to the *muhājirūn*.⁸⁷ This prophetic sanction allowed Baybars’s official historian to grant him the glory of conquest and legitimize his establishment of a special regime for these lands. Baybars, just as the Prophet did with the Banū al-Naḍīr’s palm trees, distributed the captured lands as he wished, although without taking into account the possible claims of their former owners. The lands thus took on the status of *fay’*, which permitted the ruling power to dispose of them. Another source, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, who relies heavily on Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir and follows his sequence of events, stresses

⁸³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 292–95, is followed by al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:298–99; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:134, 2:106; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:564–65.

⁸⁴ On the truce between Baybars and John of Ibelin, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 118.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* On the Banū al-Naḍīr, see V. Vacca, “Naḍīr (Banū l-),” *EI2*, 7:853–54.

⁸⁷ Quran 59:7–10. See Montgomery Watt, *Mahomet* (Paris, 1958, reprint 2005), 462–64; M. J. Kister, “Land Property and Jihād: A Discussion of Some Early Traditions,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, no. 4 (1991): 305. Baybars, who prohibited looting at Jaffa, also shifted the revenues of this territory from the status of *ghanimah* (booty taken from the enemy) to that of *fay’* (booty rendered to Muslims). S. Rudolph Peters, “Booty,” *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, 1:251–52. Quran 59:6–7 evokes what God accorded to the Muslims (*afā’ah*) without combat. Surah 59 is incidentally known by certain commentators as “Surāt al-Naḍīr.” See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* (1948), 4:330–44.



that it was the Mamluk army's demonstration of force by surrounding the city that drove the Mamluks to the victory. Protection (*amān*) was given to the population who had sought refuge in the citadel and chose to surrender because of the strength of the Mamluk army. Baybars al-Manṣūrī's interpretation of the conquest of Jaffa without a fight is based on the Mamluk army's intimidation of the Franks, and not on any religious considerations.⁸⁸

Other sources, however, recount a very different version of the capture of Jaffa. Two authors, al-Yūnīnī and Ibn al-Dawādārī, wrote their chronicles soon after the events.⁸⁹ According to them, the sultan detained the delegation sent from Jaffa to negotiate and then ordered his armies to prepare during the night and thereafter to march into the city. Jaffa was then seized in the early hours of the morning. The population took refuge in the citadel and asked for protection (*amān*), which was subsequently accorded. The sources also tell that the sultan gave the Franks forty thousand dirhams as compensation for what had been seized from them (*‘awwāḍahum ‘ammā nuhiba lahum arba‘in alf dirham*).⁹⁰ The amount may have been negotiated for the surrender of the citadel and taken from the booty after the city's looting. In yet another account, Ibn Kathīr reports that the sultan laid siege to the city. The population asked for protection, but the city was taken by force (*‘anwatan*).⁹¹ This term has a legal connotation, designating the appropriation of land by violence in contrast to its conquest following an accord (*ṣulḥan*). This consequently gave the rights to the new power (at the time, the caliphate power; here, the sultan) to dispose of the lands as they chose and dispossess their former owners.⁹² The fact that the Mamluk chroniclers do not follow Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir's account, unlike in the other narratives of Baybars's conquests, suggests that Ibn

⁸⁸ See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 110. “*Shāhadū tilka al-juyūsh bi-tilka.*”

⁸⁹ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān*, 2:374–76; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:124. These two texts are very close to each other, but it is impossible to establish which one was used as a source by the other. In addition to common elements, each source includes details that do not appear in the other, suggesting the use of a common source. See also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:131–32, and Ibn Abī al-Faḍā‘il, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd*, 12:503.

⁹⁰ According to the Western sources on the Crusades, Jaffa was captured by Baybars following a betrayal. However, they do not mention the payment of this sum (*L'estoire de Eracles empereur et la conqueste de la terre d'outremer*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux* [Paris, 1844–95], 2:447, 456; *Gestes des Chyprois*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Arméniens* [Paris, 1844], 2:771).

⁹¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13:292.

⁹² Albrecht Noth, “Some Remarks on the Nationalization of Conquered Lands at the Time of the Umayyads,” in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 223–28; idem, “Futuh-History and Futuh-Historiography: The Muslim Conquest of Damascus,” *Al-Qantara* 10, no. 2 (1989): 453–62.



ʿAbd al-Zāhir manipulated his narrative in order to match his text to the image of the Prophet.

A monumental inscription at the White Mosque in Ramla, dated to 666/1267–68, outlines the expedition against Jaffa in terms similar to the account of Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir: the sultan’s departure from Egypt to fight the infidels in the frontier town (*thaghr*) of Jaffa, the city’s siege, and its capture on the same day with God’s consent (*idhn Allāh*).⁹³ This epigraphy promotes the propaganda found in the official historiography of Baybars, which seeks to illustrate God’s implication in this victory without battle. By recalling this episode, the White Mosque, constructed during the Umayyad era,⁹⁴ became a commemorative monument, a shrine (*mashhad*) or “a place that bears witness.”⁹⁵ The monument commemorates a founding event of the new regime (i.e., the conquest of Jaffa with God’s consent and the victory over the infidels). It is interesting to note that the White Mosque was located outside the urban perimeter during the Mamluk period.⁹⁶ This location, isolated yet on a highly frequented route, would have reinforced the visual effect of the edifice and its message to an even greater extent.⁹⁷ The choice of an Umayyad monument is not without meaning either. The Umayyads made a significant contribution to shaping the Syrian landscape, and architecture was considered a vital support for their *memoria*.⁹⁸ From Baybars’s perspective, the Syrian foundation of his ideological construction required him to connect with

⁹³ For the inscription, see *Répertoire chronologique d’épigraphie arabe*, ed. Etienne Combe, Jean Sauvaget, and Gaston Wiet (Cairo, 1943), vol. 12, no. 4588. On the construction of the mosque, see Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352; al-ʿUlaymī, *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl*, trans. Henri Sauvaire as *Histoire de Jérusalem et d’Hébron* (Paris, 1876), 207.

⁹⁴ The mosque was constructed under the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, according to E. Honingmann, “Al-Ramla,” *EI2*, 8:437.

⁹⁵ Christian Décobert, “Un lieu de mémoire religieuse,” in *Valeur et distance: identités communautaires en Egypte*, ed. Christian Décobert (Paris, 2000), 249.

⁹⁶ According to the findings of archaeological digs undertaken north of the mosque and the description of al-ʿUlaymī, *Al-Uns*, 296. The city, in fact, was destroyed by Saladin in 583/1191 and remained in ruin. See A. D. Petersen, “Ramla after the Crusades,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 6th, 7th and 8th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1997, 1998 and 1999*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Jo Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2001), 450, 453.

⁹⁷ The choice of Ramla as a place of memory is explained by the city’s location on the strategic Cairo-Damascus route. Following Jaffa’s destruction by Baybars, Ramla was distinguished as the second urban center in Palestine. The construction of two bridges nearby at Ludd (671/1273) and Yabnah (672/1273–74) corroborates this hypothesis. Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352; *RCEA* 12, nos. 4660–61; Charles Clermont-Ganneau, “Le pont de Baybars à Lydda,” *Recueil d’archéologie orientale* (Paris, 1888), 1:262–79; Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, *Arts et archéologie islamiques en Palestine* (Paris, 2002), 115–17 (Ludd).

⁹⁸ See Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 217 ff.



the Umayyad memory. His constructions in Syria are thus rich in quotations from the past and contain many references to Umayyad architecture, notably through borrowed stylistic motifs.⁹⁹ The monument thus became a meeting place between past and present through the use of memory and appropriation of space.

The systematic use of historiography in Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s text, always in relation to Baybars’s conquests, aims to suppress the barriers between the past and the present. The reality of the past becomes obvious and immediate. With these accounts, the past gains a political utility and becomes an explanatory principle of Baybars’s success in Bilād al-Shām. Furthermore, as the conquest of Jaffa points out, the past was recreated in the image of the present and then claimed its authority for legitimizing contemporary practices. The purpose of the religious scholar was to make Baybars’s rule acceptable to his subjects. The new Mamluk ideology based on both a religious ideal and the concept of guardianship sought to identify in the historiography of Bilād al-Shām historical precedents of the saviors of Islam on which the present relied. The recollection of figures of the past was also a strategy implemented in Baybars’s architectural program in Syria. The act of restoring buildings was thus memorial, with the selection of monuments linked to events of the past providing patterns of identification that give sense and legitimacy to the present.

Monumental Construction and Baybars’s Appropriation of the Syrian Space

Baybars invested in the construction and restoration of monuments in Syria. His projects developed in three main directions. Firstly, he restored well-known Islamic sites, such as the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and the Dome of the Rock

⁹⁹ More than straightforward *imitatio*, these motifs were a real *translatio*: “*Translatio* enables the transmission of an old structure into a new one without the latter becoming an exact imitation. The past transmits its spirit into the present, in order to reflect the same idea. Thus *translatio* is not only the act of transmitting a motif or technique from the Dome of the Rock to the new Mamluk buildings; it also transfers within it the idea of glory, rulership, and triumph of the Islamic faith, from the Umayyad period into the Mamluk one.” Hana Taragan “The Image of the Dome of the Rock in Cairene Mamluk Architecture,” *Jewish Art* 23/24 (1997/1998): 459. See also by the same author: “Sign of the Time: Reusing the Past in Baybars’s Architecture,” in *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honor of Michael Winter*, ed. David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon (New York, 2005), 54–66; idem, “Historical Reference in Medieval Islamic Architecture: Baybars’s Buildings in Palestine,” *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 25 (2002): 31–34; idem, “Doors That Open Meanings: Baybars’s Red Mosque at Safed,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden, 2003), 3–20. Nasser Rabat also studied this issue: Nasser Rabat, “The Mosaics of the Qubba al-Zahiriyya in Damascus,” *ARAM Periodical* 9, no. 1–2 (1997): 227–39; idem, “Mamluk Throne Halls: ‘Qubba’ or ‘Iwān’?” *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 201–18.



in Jerusalem, which threatened to collapse, with work beginning in 660/1260–61.¹⁰⁰ He also renovated the mosques in ‘Ajlūn in 662/1263–64¹⁰¹ and Ramla in 666/1267–68,¹⁰² in addition to the Great Mosque of Homs in 671/1273.¹⁰³ Another project initiated by Baybars was to add architectural elements to the “lieux de mémoire religieuse”¹⁰⁴ associated with the great figures of Islamic history: the mosque at the tomb of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd near Homs in 664/1266¹⁰⁵ as well as the tombs of Moses near Jericho in 668/1269–70,¹⁰⁶ Abū Ḥurayrah in Yabnah in

¹⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 89, 416; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 351; al-‘Ulaymī, *Al-Uns*, 238–39; Ibn Shaddād, *Al-A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah fi Dhikr Umarā’ al-Shām wa-al-‘Jazīrah*, ed. Sami Dahan as *Liban, Jordanie, Palestine, topographie historique d’Ibn Shaddād* (Damascus, 1963), 237; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:554, 608; Quatremère, *Sultans Mamelouks*, 1:1:140.

¹⁰¹ He built a minaret: *RCEA* 12, no. 4528. See Michael Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten Und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517)* (Glückstadt, 1992), 2:16, no. 48.

¹⁰² Baybars added two domes to the minaret and *mihrāb* of the white mosque and placed the door in front of the *mihrāb* (al-‘Ulaymī, *Al-Uns*, 207; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352). The edifice was constructed under the Umayyads, begun under Sulaymān and completed under ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. See E. Honnigman, “al-Ramla,” *EI2*, 8:437–38, and M. Rosen-Ayalon, “The First Century of Ramla,” *Arabica* 43, no. 1 (1996): 250. The inscription on the walls of the mosque that describes Baybars’s victory against the Crusaders in Jaffa was discussed above (*RCEA* 12, no. 4588).

¹⁰³ *RCEA* 12, no. 4662. See Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:38, no. 171.

¹⁰⁴ See Décobert, “Un lieu de mémoire religieuse,” in *Valeur et distance*, 247–63. See also a discussion on this French historiographical concept in the Islamic context: Nasser Rabbat, “Al-Maqrīzī’s Khītat: an Egyptian Lieu de Mémoire,” in *The Cairo Heritage: Essays in Honor of Leila Abi Ibrahim*, ed. Doris Behrens-Abouseif (Cairo, 2000), 17–30.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 263; *RCEA* 12, no. 4556–57. In 666, he established a *waqf* for the benefit of the village of Far‘am in the region of Ṣafād (*RCEA* 12, no. 4593); Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:23, no. 88; Yehoshua Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography of Bilad al-Sham: A Chapter in the Islamization of Syria’s Landscape,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 160. The mosque had already been restored by Saladin; see Nikita Eliseeff, “Hims,” *EI2*, 3:414.

¹⁰⁶ He added a dome (*qubbah*): Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 351; *RCEA* 12, no. 4612; al-‘Ulaymī, *Al-Uns*, 25–27; Ibn Shaddād, *Liban, Jordanie, Palestine*, 285. The site has been examined in numerous articles: Joseph Sadan, “Le tombeau de Moïse à Jéricho et à Damas: une compétition entre deux lieux saints, principalement à l’époque ottomane,” *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 49 (1981): 59–99; Samuel Tamari, “Maqām Nabī Mūsā (Jericho),” *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 49 (1981): 231–74; Reuven Amitai, “Some remarks on the inscription of Baybars at maqam Nabi Musa,” in *Mamluks and Ottomans*, 45–53; Leo Ari Mayer, “Two Inscriptions of Baybars,” *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 2 (1933): 27–32; Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography,” 159; Aigle, “Les inscriptions de Baybars,” 67–68.



673/1274,¹⁰⁷ Jaʿfar ibn Abi Ṭālib al-Ṭayyār near Kerak,¹⁰⁸ Abū ʿUbaydah in ʿAmatā in the Ghawr province in 675/1276–77,¹⁰⁹ and Salmān al-Fārisī in Isdūd.¹¹⁰ Lastly, Baybars initiated the construction of new mosques in Homs,¹¹¹ Ṣafad,¹¹² Ludd,¹¹³ and Qāqūn,¹¹⁴ sometimes building mosques on the sites of churches, such as at Barghās,¹¹⁵ Antioch,¹¹⁶ and Qārā.¹¹⁷ He also built numerous *zāwiyahs* for popular contemporary saints (Shaykh al-Khaḍīr¹¹⁸ and Shaykh Badr at Naplouse).¹¹⁹

Yehoshua Frenkel showed that this construction program contributed to outlining the contours of a new sacred topography in Syria.¹²⁰ It also influenced the Islamization of the territory by giving it a political dimension in the context of

¹⁰⁷ He added a portico (*riwāq*): Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 158 (*ziyārah*); *RCEA* 12, no. 4686. See also Georges Marçais, “Abu Hurayra,” *EI2*, 1:132–33; Leo Ari Mayer, *Muslim Religious Buildings* (Jerusalem, 1950), 20–24; Hana Taragan, “Politics and Aesthetics: Sultan Baybars and the Abu Hurayra/Rabbi Gamliel Building in Yavne,” in *Milestones in the Art and Culture of Egypt*, ed. Asher Oquadiah (Tel Aviv, 2000), 117–43.

¹⁰⁸ The *mashhad* was extended: see Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:194; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13:319; Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:16, no. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Construction of a dome (*qubbah*): see Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 351; *RCEA* 12, no. 4714, and 13, no. 4901; al-ʿUlaymī, *Al-Uns*, 240; Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography,” 159–69.

¹¹⁰ Construction of a mosque (*masjid*) above the tomb: see *RCEA* 12, no. 4600; M. Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 1997), 1:124–28; Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography,” 158, 165.

¹¹¹ Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 307; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:305; Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:32, nos. 131–32.

¹¹² Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 263; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 353; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:548; Quatremère, *Sultans Mamelouks*, 1:2:30; Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:23, nos. 89–90; Mayer, *Muslim Religious Buildings*, 44–46; Taragan, “Doors that Open Meanings,” 3–20.

¹¹³ Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 293; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352; Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:32, no. 132.

¹¹⁴ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 358.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:293; *RCEA* 12, no. 4554; Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:24, no. 97.

¹¹⁸ On this surprising figure who was both the advisor and double of Baybars, see Louis Pouzet, “Hadīr Ibn Abī al-Mihranī (m. 7 muh. 676/11 juin 1277), šayḥ du sultan mamelouk al-Malik az-Zāhir Baībars,” *BEO* 30 (1978): 17–83, and more recently Eddé, “Baybars et son double: de l’ambiguïté du souverain idéal.”

¹¹⁹ *RCEA* 12, no. 4673; Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography,” 167.

¹²⁰ Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography,” 153–70.



the fight against the Crusaders and Mongols.¹²¹ The choice of these sites revealed Baybars's strategy to create a new cultural landscape in which Syria's recent history, strongly marked by the idea of jihad, was superimposed on the commemoration of certain events from the past. As for jihad, the titles given to Baybars in the monumental inscriptions confirm this to be one of his priorities. For the most part, his titles are all variants on the theme of jihad: the fighter of the Holy War (*al-mujāhid*), the fighter against of the unbelievers and the polytheists (*qātil al-kaḡarah wa-al-mushrikīn*), the conqueror of the citadels and the cities (*ḡātiḡ al-ḡusūn wa-al-qilā' wa-al-amṡār*), the annihilator of the Franks and Mongols (*mubīd al-Franj wa-al-Tatar*), the one who wrests castles from the hands of the unbelievers (*muḡtali' al-qilā' min yaddi al-kuffār*), and the border warrior (*al-muḡḡāzī, al-murābiṡ, al-muthāḡhir*).¹²² In addition, the inscriptions testify to the special status of the Syrian province, as it is principally in Syria where the sultan's titles form part of the jihadist propaganda.¹²³ Bilād al-Shām was thus the favored place for expressing the anti-infidel rhetoric.¹²⁴

Jan Assmann highlights the major role played by the landscape as an anchor of memory. The culture of remembrance functions by demarcating the natural space: "The art of memory works with imaginary settings and memory culture with signs based on Nature. Even, or indeed especially, entire landscapes may serve as a medium for cultural memory. These are not so much accentuated by signs ('monuments') as raised to the status of signs".¹²⁵ With Baybars, the Syrian landscape as a whole was fashioned as a commemorative space, with monuments and texts providing the public with the opportunity to understand the direction

¹²¹ On the Islamization of the countryside around Jerusalem during the Mamluk period, see Nimrod Luz, "Aspects of Islamization of Space and Society in Mamluk Jerusalem and its Hinterland," *MSR* 6 (2002): 133–54.

¹²² Denise Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars," 87–115. On the titles of Muslim sovereigns, see the pioneering study of Nikita Elisseeff, "La titulature de Nur al-Din d'après ses inscriptions," *BEO* 14 (1952–54): 155–96. On Baybars, see also Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "An Arabic Inscription at Al-Subayba (Qal'at Namrūd) from the Reign of Sultan Baybars," in *The Al-Subayba (Nimrod) Fortress: Towers 9 and 11*, ed. M. Hartal (Jerusalem, 2001), 109–23.

¹²³ A clear imbalance between Syria and Egypt should be highlighted—Baybars had only a dozen inscriptions engraved in Egypt, while Syria was dotted with numerous inscriptions, gradually marking the advancement of the reconquest and presence of the new Islamic power. This contrasts with the Mamluks' predecessors, the Fatimids and Ayyubids, who left behind numerous inscriptions in Egypt. Baybars's inscriptions in Egypt are the following: *RCEA* 12, nos. 4485, 4501, 4552, 4554, 4562, 4563, 4563, 4564, 4564, 4565, 4565, 4586, 4608, 4723.

¹²⁴ This is not new to the Mamluk period. On the foothold of jihad at the Syrian borders, see Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arabo-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996). Under the Mamluks, however, the presence of the enemy (Crusaders and Mongols) within the Syrian territory made Bilād al-Shām the focal point of the holy war.

¹²⁵ Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 44.



of the new regime. From this perspective, the commemoration of the past, as expressed through the restoration of a monument, translated into a desire to express an affiliation with the Syrian territory and entrench the new power therein.¹²⁶

Places of Prophetic Memory: Jerusalem and Yabnah

Baybars's investment in building and restoring monuments may be seen as a desire to associate himself with key figures of Islamic history: in the first case, the Prophet, and in the second, his Companions. This is at once evident in his restoration of the Medina Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. In his titles, Baybars frequently refers to the *qiblatayn*, Mecca and Jerusalem, presenting himself as their protector (*ṣāhib al-qiblatayn, mālik al-qiblatayn*).¹²⁷ The reference to Jerusalem as the first *qiblah* concerns an ancient prophetic tradition before Muḥammad changed its status.¹²⁸ The use of this designation for Jerusalem as the "first of the two directions of prayer" (*ūlā al-qiblatayn*) along with the epithets the "second of the two sanctuaries" (*thānī al-masjidayn*) and the "third after the two places of pilgrimage" (*thālith al-ḥaramayn*), spread throughout the Ayyubid period, and continued to do so during the Mamluk period and then under the Ottomans.¹²⁹ The affirmation of Jerusalem's sacredness and its ritual importance to Islam, which had witnessed two decisive moments, first in the Umayyad period and then during the Crusades, became amplified during the Mamluk period.¹³⁰

Baybars likewise sought to promote the memory of the Companions. For example, he had the tomb of Abū Hurayrah restored at Yabnah, close to Ramla. Muslim tradition regards Abū Hurayrah as a close Companion of the Prophet, attributing the transmission of 3,500 hadiths to him. He was buried at Medina,

¹²⁶ Jan Assmann, "Remembering in Order to Belong," in *Religion And Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, 81–100; Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, esp. Ch. 4: "L'espace syrien du IIe/VIIIe siècle: entre souvenir et oubli."

¹²⁷ RCEA 12, nos. 4476, 4556, 4557, 4593, 4612, 4890, 4732, 4733, 4734. This title is peculiar to Baybars and does not figure in any Zangid or Ayyubid titles. See Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars," 66.

¹²⁸ See A. J. Wensinck, "Kibla," *EI2*, 4:64–85; R. Kimber, "Qibla," *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, 6:325–28. On the change of the *qiblah* at the time of the Prophet, see Shimon Shtober, "La jajuz an yakun fi alam lil-llahi qiblatayn": Judeo-Islamic Polemics Concerning the *Qibla* (625–1010)," *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 1 (1999): 85–98.

¹²⁹ See Angelica Neuwirth, "Jerusalem in Islam: the Three Honorific Names of the City," in *Ottoman Jerusalem, the Living City (1517–1917)*, ed. Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand (London, 2000).

¹³⁰ There is an extensive bibliography on the holiness of Jerusalem in Islam. Here, we cite only M. J. Kister, "You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques: A Study of an Early Islamic Tradition," *Le Museon* 82 (1969): 173–96; Paul M. Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality: Making Muslim Syria Sacred before the Crusades," *Medieval Encounters* 8, no. 1 (2002): 35–55, on the age of the traditions concerning Jerusalem as a place of devotion. See also Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden, 1995).



but numerous tombs are found in his name throughout Palestine.¹³¹ Baybars visited his tomb (*ziyārah*) in 661/1262–63, the year before his great offensive against the Frankish states.¹³² At the same time, he visited the tomb of Ḍiḥyah al-Kalbī, another Companion with links to Syria.¹³³ The proliferation of tombs dedicated to the Prophet's Companions, sometimes with several attributed to the same person, is explained by a hadith: "None of my companions will die in a [certain] country, but each of them will be sent as a leader [i.e., for the inhabitants of that country] and as an *illuminato* of the Day of Judgment."¹³⁴ The Companions, who were depicted in the most ancient sources (such as the *Maghāzī*) as ordinary human beings, in time became extraordinary figures, being presented as actual saints. In turn, these places of memory of the Companions imparted Baybars with a sacred character himself, as the commemorative inscriptions figuring on the monuments allowed their sacredness to land on their benefactor. The restoration work initiated by the sultan along with the idea of him being a "roaming saint" during these *ziyārahs* to the tombs created a new cultural space linked to the memory of the Prophet.¹³⁵

The Appropriation of Memories of Conquest: Ja'far al-Ṭayyār and Khālīd ibn al-Walīd

Baybars associated himself with places of memory connected with the Islamic conquest of Syria. Such is the case for the tomb of Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ṭayyār, the Prophet's cousin. He was appointed as army commander by Muḥammad in the event that Zayd ibn Ḥārithah should perish during an expedition to the Byz-

¹³¹ See Taragan, "Politics and Aesthetics," 132

¹³² Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 158.

¹³³ He was sent to Syria by the Prophet on account of his in-depth knowledge of the area, according to Henri Lammens, "Diḥyah al-Kalbī," *EI2*, 2:274.

¹³⁴ "Mā min aḥādīn min aṣḥābī yamūtu bi-arḍin illā bu'itha qā'idan (*ya'nī li-ahlihā*) wa-nūran yawm al-qiyāmah," M. J. Kister, "Sanctity Joint and Divided: on Holy Places in the Islamic Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 42, cited by Taragan, "Politics and Aesthetics," 132. See also Albrecht Noth "The Ṣaḥāba Topos," in *History and Historiography in Early Islamic Times: Studies and Perspectives*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, forthcoming). On the development of the traditions linked to the stay of the *aṣḥāb* in the given locations, see M. Muranyi, "Sahaba," *EI2*, 8:856–57.

¹³⁵ See a parallel with the travels of the Carolingian sovereign, analyzed by Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La construction biographique du souverain carolingien," *Annexes des cahiers de linguistique et de civilisation hispaniques médiévales* 15, no. 1 (2003): 197–224: "La sainte itinérance du souverain carolingien de sanctuaire en sanctuaire met en valeur des pôles sacrés dont le parcours est constitutif d'une mouvance 'patriotique,' c'est-à-dire d'une dynamique créatrice d'espace au gré des déplacements du roi et de l'empereur," 214.



antine frontier. Jaʿfar finally died at the Battle of Muʿtah in Jumādā I 8/629.¹³⁶ The traditional accounts highlight his bravery in combat, while the Prophet, who had a vision of the battle from his pulpit (*minbar*), described Jaʿfar as “The Flyer in Paradise” (*al-ṭayyār fī al-jannah*).¹³⁷ According to the textual sources based on Ibn Shaddād’s account, Baybars wanted to enlarge Jaʿfar’s shrine (*mashhad*) near Kerak and establish a *waqf* to fund the reception of pilgrims.¹³⁸ On the site, however, there is no inscription dating to Baybars’s reign. Al-Ḥarawī and Yāqūt refer to the existence of tombs at the site of the Battle of Muʿtah,¹³⁹ as confirmed by an inscription fragment mentioned by Charles Clermont-Ganneau. For the Orientalist, the fragment is “of exceptional interest, as it allows us to authenticate one of the oldest sanctuaries, one of the most glorious relics of Islam at its infancy, and a well-known saying attributed to Muhammad by the tradition.”¹⁴⁰ Despite the absence of archaeological evidence for Baybars’s restorative work, the historian Ibn Kathīr judged the fact sufficiently important to make it figure prominently in his biography of Baybars. If the tomb restored by Baybars is indeed the one bearing the inscription with the Prophetic hadith, then we can see the superimposition of several strata of memory.

In Homs, Baybars had the tomb of Khālid ibn al-Walid restored. Khālid was a champion of the Muslim conquests in northern Syria but he was also a controversial figure because he led the conquests on his own without the consent of the caliph. Although the exact identification of this tomb is uncertain for the Muslim

¹³⁶ See L. Veccia Vaglieri, “Djaʿfar Ibn Abī Tālib,” *EI2*, 2:372.

¹³⁷ David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, 2007), 25–26.

¹³⁸ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 352; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:194, Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13:320. See Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur*, 2:16, no. 43.

¹³⁹ Al-Ḥarawī, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt*, ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine as *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage* (Damascus, 1953), 19. See also Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* (Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1890), 479, 510.

¹⁴⁰ On the age of the tomb attributed to Jaʿfar, see Charles Clermont-Ganneau, “Le tombeau de Gaʿfar cousin-germain de Mahommet,” *Recueil d’Archéologie Orientale* 3 (Paris, 1900): 278–82. The tomb was subsequently restored under the reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir by the governor of Kerak and Shawbak in 727/1327, and then in 752/1351 (*RCEA* 14, no. 5545, and 16, no. 6169).



authors,¹⁴¹ Baybars nevertheless decided to attribute it to Khālid, resuming the use of his disputed title “Sayf Allāh” in the inscription.¹⁴²

From 664/1265, immediately after the capture of Ṣafad, Baybars desired to take control of this newly conquered area, so he constituted a *waqf* for Khālid’s presumed tomb by assigning it the village of Far‘am, located several kilometers northeast of Ṣafad.¹⁴³ In the inscription figuring on a marble slab of the tomb, dated to Rabī‘ I 666/November 1267, the religious merits of the sultan are extolled in Quranic terms as the custodian of God’s blessings (*ni‘mah*; in this context, the fertile lands reclaimed from the infidel Franks).¹⁴⁴ The sultan also decided to render perpetual alms (*ṣadaqah khālidah*) to the tombs of prophets and honest men located in the vicinity of these conquered lands.¹⁴⁵ This ritual endowment was the subject of an oath upon his person (*ashhada ‘alā nafsihi*) in which the sultan imitated a prophetic gesture by dividing the conquered territory (*qasamtu*) between those who were entitled, i.e., warriors on the path of God (*mujāhidūn*), and those who had assisted in his conquests among the ascetics and saints. In the inscription, the relation to the territory is expressed using a fixed vocabulary inherited from the time of the conquest and, as in the case of Ja‘far, the memory of the Prophet is never entirely absent.

To honor the remains of Khālid, Baybars erected a cenotaph of carved wood on which two almost identical inscriptions were appended. The inscriptions recall the sultan’s journey to Homs during the expedition against Sīs in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 664/August 1266.¹⁴⁶ The text gives the illusion that the sultan participated in the

¹⁴¹ Yāqūt attributes the tomb to either Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah, an Umayyad prince who built a palace nearby, or Khālid ibn ‘Iyād ibn Ghanm, the conqueror of Jazīrah; see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1995), 2:248; Elisseeff, “Hims,” 3:414; Le Strange, *Palestine*, 356. As to al-‘Umarī, who composed his text several decades after Baybars’s reign, there is no doubt that the tomb is that of the Umayyad prince, and not Khālid ibn al-Walīd’s (al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, ed. A. Basha [Cairo, 1924]), 221.

¹⁴² According to Patricia Crone, the title *Sayf Allāh* appears in the same context as *Fārūq* for ‘Umar or *Jund Allāh* for the Syrian armies. See Patricia Crone, “Khalid Ibn al-Walid,” *EI2*, 4:928, and al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, vol. 8, trans. M. Fishbein (New York, 1997), 158.

¹⁴³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 263. Baybars’s policy with regard to the appropriation of conquered territory following the capture of Ṣafad consisted of two parts: the donation of *iqṭā‘* to the amirs who participated in the conquest and the establishment of *waqfs* for the tombs of Muslim saints. On the location of Far‘am, see René Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), Map I, C-2.

¹⁴⁴ *RCEA* 12, no. 4593.

¹⁴⁵ On the relationship between these terms in the Quran and their connection with the practice of warfare, see Christian Décobert, *Le mendiant et le combattant: l’institution de l’islam* (Paris, 1991), 194 ff.

¹⁴⁶ *RCEA* 12, nos. 4556–57. See also Abu al-Faraj al-‘Ush, “Les bois de l’ancien mausolée de Khālid ibn al-Walīd à Homs,” *Ars Orientalis* 5 (1963): 111–39.



Sīs expedition in person (*ʿinda ʿubūrihi ʿalā Himṣ lil-ghazāt bi-bilād Sīs*), and in doing so, it deliberately merges the memory of the Islamic conquest with recent events.¹⁴⁷ Yet Baybars did not take part in the attack against Sīs, which was commanded by al-Malik al-Manṣūr, the Ayyubid prince from Hama.¹⁴⁸ After learning of the victory, Baybars set off from Damascus to go and meet the armies. No chronicler mentions this journey to Homs, although the cities of Hama and Apamea are sometimes cited.¹⁴⁹ It was in the proximity of Apamea that Baybars proceeded to share the booty amassed during the expedition in accordance with the tradition of the good Turkish prince.¹⁵⁰ Whether or not Baybars really travelled to Homs at this time hardly changes the fact that he sought to associate the victory of the armies commanded by al-Malik al-Manṣūr with the memory of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd’s victories. Baybars thus enabled his armies to benefit from Khālīd’s blessing in their fight against the infidels, a gesture that was later imitated by al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl ibn Qalāwūn, who restored the tomb on his way to the conquest of the Qalʿat al-Rūm, perhaps as a way of associating his own reign with the memory of his predecessor Baybars.¹⁵¹

ʿAyn Jālūt and the Construction of Memory

In 658/1261, shortly after his rise to power, the sultan ordered the construction of a monument (*mashhad al-naṣr*) at ʿAyn Jālūt.¹⁵² According to Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, he wanted to build a commemorative monument on the site of the Mongol defeat to express his thanks to God for granting him the victory. The location is cited in the *Quran* as the place of the mythical combat between Ṭālūt and Jālūt.¹⁵³ As in

¹⁴⁷ For an analysis of the phraseology of the inscription, see Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), 206, 230.

¹⁴⁸ On the expedition, see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 105–6; Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 269; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mirʿāt al-Zamān*, 2:343–44; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:290–92; Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar*, 3:3–4; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13:288; Quatremère, *Sultans Mamelouks*, 1:2:33–36.

¹⁴⁹ Notably by Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar*, 4:4, and al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:294.

¹⁵⁰ On the redistribution of riches as an essential duty of a prince, see Jurgen Paul, “Perspectives nomades: état et structures militaires,” *Annales, histoire, sciences sociales* 59, nos. 5–6 (2004): 1074; R. Dankoff, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Chicago, 1983).

¹⁵¹ The inscription mentions two facts: the restoration and his journey to Homs with the armies; see *RCEA* 13, no. 4956.

¹⁵² On this type of construction in the medieval Islamic world, see Thomas Leisten, “Mashhad al-Nasr: Monuments of War and Victory in Medieval Islamic Art,” *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 7–27.

¹⁵³ *Quran* 2:247–52. For an analysis of the Biblical-Quranic myth and its connection with the *mashhad* of Baybars, see Aigle, “Les inscriptions de Baybars,” 66–68; Frenkel, “Baybars and the



the previous examples, recent events were reconciled with the Islamic past (here, the Biblical-Quranic myth of the victory over Goliath).

The passage from the Quran dedicated to the figure of Ṭālūt combines two Biblical myths. On the one hand, there is Gideon's battle against the Midianites to deliver the Israelites. His victory resulted from God's counsel to put his army to the test and retain only the best part, despite it numbering less than the enemy.¹⁵⁴ Baybars was thus associated with a lineage of kings who were aided by God in their fight against the infidels.¹⁵⁵ The Quran merges this story with King Saul's battle against the Philistines and David's victory over Goliath. In the story of David, the kingdom fell to him as he was able to overcome the giant Philistine.¹⁵⁶ The figure of Ṭālūt (Saul) in the Quran, however, differs from the Biblical figure. The theme traditionally associated with Saul (i.e., his kingdom) plays a secondary role in the Quran, where his principal function is rather to lead his people to victory. This military motif thus dominates the Quranic passage on Ṭālūt.¹⁵⁷ The Quran's use of this myth can be understood in the context of Muḥammad's life at the time, as the Prophet sought divine sanction to justify the resort to arms to impose his policies, particularly with regard to taxation. In this story, the presentation of the Israelites being expelled from their lands became a paradigm for the birth of the Muslim community: "The Quran in this passage links the political authority with the command to take arms."¹⁵⁸ In the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr,¹⁵⁹ Ṭālūt is presented as a soldier who has neither *nasab* (*lam yakun min bayt al-mulk*) nor wealth (*lā māl lahu*), but is instead a king chosen by God on account of his military capabilities (*quwwah wa-ṣabr bi-al-ḥarb wa-ma'rifah bihā*). According to the myth, the crown was given to the bringer of victor.¹⁶⁰

Whether the edifice desired by Baybars was in fact constructed is another issue. Baybars al-Manṣūrī confirms that the edifice did exist at the start of the eighth/

Sacred Geography," 156–57.

¹⁵⁴ Judges 7:4–7. See Quran 2:250: "When Ṭālūt left with his soldiers, he said to them: 'God is going to test you by a river. He who quenches his thirst will no longer be mine; he who refrains (except for scooping [some water] into the palm of the hand) will be counted as mine.' Apart from a small number, the others drank to their thirst."

¹⁵⁵ Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars," 67.

¹⁵⁶ 1 Samuel 17:31. See Quran 2:252: "They put to flight with the permission of God, and David slew Jālūt. God gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him what he wanted."

¹⁵⁷ See W. A. Saleh, "What if you refuse when ordered to fight? King Saul (Ṭālūt) in the Quran and Post-Quranic Literature," in *Saul in History and Tradition*, ed. C. S. Erlich and M. C. White (Tubingen, 2006), 261–83; Chabbi, *Le Coran décrypté*, 297–300.

¹⁵⁸ W. A. Saleh, "What if you refuse when ordered to fight?," 274.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1:300–1.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Shaddād also compares Baybars to Ṭālūt (*Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 318).



fourteenth century,¹⁶¹ but Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir tells us that the materials intended for ‘Ayn Jālūt had all been used at Kerak.¹⁶² No structure resembling a building has been found on site.¹⁶³ The monument, however, still merits our attention as it is important in terms of memory. In addition to the celebration of Ṭālūt, whose parallel with Baybars is striking, the monument refers to the Dome of Victory (*qubbat al-naṣr*) constructed by Saladin after his victory at Ḥaṭṭīn in 583/1187.¹⁶⁴ By ordering the construction of this monument, Baybars perhaps sought to reiterate the act of his illustrious predecessor. Yet Saladin’s Dome of Victory had a rather short existence, as it was described as ruined and abandoned in 1217 by a Western traveler,¹⁶⁵ and it is only mentioned in the Arabic sources by al-Dimashqī.¹⁶⁶ The impact of Saladin’s monument was thus relatively minor. In contrast, Baybars’s monument had a more solid textual basis as it is mentioned in every narrative source on the sultan. The symbolic importance of the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt, which far surpassed its military significance, is hence reflected. It seems that these commemorative monuments, which were paradoxically relatively rare in the medieval Islamic world despite the importance of memory, aimed not to mark the area over the long term, but to celebrate a precise event, namely, a military victory.¹⁶⁷ As the significance of the event diminished in the eyes of its contemporaries, the monument lost its function and fell into ruin. In contrast, the importance of the event was much more durable on the textual level as it continued to be mentioned by historians two generations after Baybars’s reign. This textual existence alone can thus be seen as a realm of memory (“lieu de mémoire”).

Ṣafad and Quranic Legitimacy

Baybars’s conquest of Ṣafad took place in Shawwāl 664/July 1266. On the strategic level, its capture was the centerpiece in the Mamluks’ plan to regain the coast. After the victory, as with the other coastal fortresses, Baybars decided to restore it

¹⁶¹ Baybars al-Mansūrī, *Zubdah*, 71.

¹⁶² Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 163, in Jumādā II 661.

¹⁶³ Taragan, “Sign of the Time: Reusing the Past in Baybars’s Architecture,” 57.

¹⁶⁴ Anne-Marie Eddé, *Saladin* (Paris, 2008), 252; Z. Gal, “Saladin’s Dome of Victory at the Horns of Hattin,” in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. Benjamin Kedar (London, 1992), 213–15.

¹⁶⁵ Thietmar in *Croisades et pèlerinages: récits, chroniques et voyages en terre sainte, XIIe-XVIe siècle*, ed. Danielle Régnier-Bohler (Paris, 1997), 933. According to A-M. Eddé, “A monument erected in non-urban zone, away from the population, could only subsist if it became a place of attraction and pilgrimage.” Now, this was not the case for military commemorative monuments, which were in fact relatively rare (Eddé, *Saladin*, 252).

¹⁶⁶ Al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-Dahr fī ‘Ajā’ib al-Barr wa-al-Baḥr*, ed. M. A. F. Mehren (St. Petersburg, 1866), 212. See also Leisten, “Mashhad al-Nasr,” 19.

¹⁶⁷ Leisten, “Mashhad al-Nasr,” 22.



and conduct major improvements.¹⁶⁸ The following year, in Rajab 665/March 1267, he went to Ṣafad to take part in the building work. The account of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, as summarized by numerous chroniclers, depicts the sultan’s participation in the work, transporting stones and sand on his back, his energy surpassing the mamluks and amirs present on the site.¹⁶⁹ The effect of the scene is accentuated by the arrival of Frankish messengers, who had come to Ṣafad to negotiate the sharing of revenue for the region of Saydah; the Franks thus became involuntary witnesses to the sultan’s personal involvement in the management of his kingdom. On the ideological level, Ṣafad was presented by the chroniclers as a “bone in the throat of Muslims,” and the narrative of its conquest is recorded by all Syrian and Egyptian authors. Later sources, including administrative and geographical sources, also mention this victory, so that the memory of the conquest of Ṣafad thus forms a part of Syrian textual memory, in the same way as the architectural vestiges left by the sultan.¹⁷⁰

Baybars had an inscription commemorating the conquest engraved.¹⁷¹ It differs from the other inscriptions initiated by him in Syria due to its distinct prose: the inscription opens with two Quranic citations,¹⁷² and is composed for the most part in rhymed prose (*saj‘*), a genre rather associated with the victory bulletins composed by chancellery secretaries. The inscription describes the region’s return to Islam by using the stylistic device of inversion, as all that was Christian henceforth became Muslim. The entire territory, visual and sonorous, passes from one allegiance to another, with the new Mamluk order replacing the infidel domination. The inscription also contains expressions identical to those found in a

¹⁶⁸ For an analysis of the implications of constructing the mosque in Ṣafad in terms of the politico-religious propaganda, see Taragan, “Doors that Open Meanings,” 3–20.

¹⁶⁹ See Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 280; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 107; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān*, 2:361; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 13:289; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:137–38; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 1:128; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:558.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbah*, 210; Abū al-Fidā’, *Taqwīm al-Buldān*, trans. M. Stanislas Guyard as *Géographie d’Aboulféda* (Paris, 1883), 22; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A’shā fī Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’* (Cairo, 1914), 4:150. This was also the case for a later author from the Ottoman period, the qadī Shams al-Dīn al-‘Uthmānī, author of a *Tārīkh Ṣafad*: Bernard Lewis, “An Arabic Account of the Province of Ṣafad I,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15 (1953): 477–88.

¹⁷¹ RCEA 12, no. 4589. The inscription was certainly destroyed by an earthquake, similarly to the citadel (see Gaston Wiet, “Inscriptions arabes de Syrie,” *Mélanges de l’Institut d’Égypte*, 3:464 no. 4; Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, Addendum [Leiden, 2007], 153). The inscription was nonetheless recopied in several Mamluk chronicles: Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 109; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:137–38; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:563. The publication in the RCEA is based on the version of al-Maqrīzī, which is similar to that of Baybars al-Manṣūrī (apart from several grammatical variants). Al-Nuwayrī provides a more complete, though relatively different version (see below).

¹⁷² Quran 21:105 and 58:22.



letter written by Baybars to Prince Bohemond VI of Antioch.¹⁷³ The most complete version of the inscription appears in the text of al-Nuwayrī:

For We have written in the Psalms (*Zabūr*), after the Remembrance, “The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants.”¹⁷⁴ Those are God’s party; why surely God’s party—they are the prosperous.¹⁷⁵ This well-guarded citadel was restored, reinforced, embellished, and finished after he had delivered it from the hands of the cursed Franks and given it to the hands of the Muslims, transferred from the domain of the Templars to the domain of the brother believers. He returned it to the faith of its infancy, causing loss and grief to the infidels (*khasārah wa-ḥasrah*), and as a result of his efforts and fighting, he substituted mosques for churches and synagogues, replaced infidelity by the faith (*al-kufr bi-al-īmān*), the ringing of bells by the call to prayer (*al-nāqūs bi-al-idhān*), the Gospel by the Quran. He rose in all his glory to the extent that he and his people (*khawwāṣṣahu*) carried the earth and stones from ditches on their heads by order of the sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir, sultan of Islam and Muslims (*sulṭān al-islām wa-al-muslimīn*), he who brings back the lost followers of religion (*mustaridd dawāl al-dīn*), destroyer of the Mongols (*mubīd al-Tatar*), conqueror of cities and fortresses (*fātiḥ al-qilā‘ wa-al-ḥuṣūn wa-al-amṣār*), heir of the kingdom (*wārith al-mulk*), sultan of Arabs, Persians, and Turks (*sulṭān al-‘arab wa-al-‘ajam wa-al-turk*), the Alexander of his time, born under the conjunction of auspicious stars (*iskandar al-zamān ṣāhib al-qirān*),¹⁷⁶ Abū al-Faḥ Baybars, associate of the Commander of the Believers (*qasīm amīr al-mu‘minīn*), may God eternalize his reign. May every prince of Islam who possesses this citadel, may every champion of the faith (*mujāhid, muthāghir*) who forever dwells there, accord to this sultan the reward due to him for his conquest and restoration, and not fail to implore for him, in secret as in public, God’s

¹⁷³ It concerns the famous letter sent to Bohemond VI after the fall of Antioch in 666/1268 (Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ*, 309–13; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:128–31). The theme of the inversion is already found in the letters written by the chancellery of Saladin; see Troadec, “Une lettre de Baybars au Comte Bohémond VI de Tripoli (début Shawwāl 669/mai 1271): une arme dans l’arsenal idéologique des Mamelouks.”

¹⁷⁴ *The Quran Interpreted*, trans. A. J. Arberry (New York, 1955), 21, 105.

¹⁷⁵ Quran 58:22.

¹⁷⁶ Anne-Marie Eddé analyzed the introduction in the titles of Baybars, notably at Ṣafad, of this “Alexander with the stars predicting his destiny.” She observes the influence of Shaykh al-Khāḍir: Eddé, “Baybars et son double: de l’ambiguïté du souverain idéal,” 41–42.



mercy throughout his life. For he made it the center of prosperity and protection (*yumn wa-īmān*), after being the center of infidelity and oppression (*kufr wa-ṭuḡhyān*) when everyone said, “May God rebuild this citadel,” after saying “May God hasten the capture.” The real believers must triumph until the day of the Last Judgment.¹⁷⁷

The first Quranic citation (“For We have written in the Psalms (*Zabūr*), after the Remembrance, “The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants”) indicates the desire to affirm the Quran’s superiority over the other revealed religious texts (the *Zabūr*), a premise subsequently developed in the inscription with the Gospel’s replacement by the Quran and God’s delivery of the earth to the Mamluks.¹⁷⁸ In his commentary to the verse, Ibn Kathīr recalls that the earth belonged to God, but that he bequeathed it to the pious.¹⁷⁹ He also links this verse with Quran 7:128: “Surely the earth is God’s and He bequeaths it to whom He will among His servants. The issue ultimate is to the god-fearing.” This Quranic reference is without doubt a way of lending scriptural support to the Mamluk regime and its domination of Syria. The second citation (“Those are God’s party; why surely God’s party—they are the prosperous”) is an extract of a verse evoking the divine victory accorded to the party of God. Those who chose the party of God were assured victory, as they refused to befriend the infidels. The preceding verse, revealed in a context of tensions between believers and unbelievers, mentions that the believers will not become friends with those who oppose Allah and his Messenger.¹⁸⁰ At the time of the inscription’s composition, the reference to the unbelievers designated the Frankish enemies of the Muslims. Baybars sought to eliminate all challenges to his negotiation policy with the Franks, and his conduct led to certain hostility towards the Christian powers with respect to the path of God. The victory over the Franks in Ṣafad is presented as God’s decree, foretold in the Quran. The Quranic citations are thus used here to legitimize Baybars with regard to his policy towards the Crusaders. The end of the inscription, by its eschatological dimension, also gives legitimacy to Baybars, ensuring that he as well as his partisans triumph in this life and in the Hereafter.

The titles, appearing only in al-Nuwayrī’s version, borrow from those figuring in Baybars’s other inscriptions in Syria. However, the inscription only includes titles specific to the new Mamluk ideology, used for the first time by Sultan Bay-

¹⁷⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:137–38.

¹⁷⁸ For an analysis of the occurrences of *Zabūr* in the Quran, see Jacqueline Chabbi, *Le Coran décrypté*, 292–95.

¹⁷⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 2:201.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Kathīr’s *Tafsīr* indicates that it was revealed in the context of Muslims’ killing of their relatives at the Battle of Badr (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 4:329).



bars following his victories over the Franks.¹⁸¹ These titles appear several decades later in the manuals of the chancellery, where several became the protocol for designating the sultan in diplomatic correspondence.¹⁸² The title, *mustaridd dawāl al-dīn*, is the exception, being found in no other inscriptions.¹⁸³ The ideological proximity of this inscription to the official correspondence suggests that the instigators of the epigraphical programs were indeed chancellery secretaries.¹⁸⁴ Al-Nuwayrī's inclusion of the complete version of the inscription suggests that he perhaps had access to a chancellery document containing the written version of the text prior to its engraving, a probable hypothesis given his career in the Mamluk administration in Syria.

Conclusion

In this study, Syria was shown to be the territory promoting the legitimacy of Baybars's power. With arms in hand, the sultan won victories on the battlefields in Syria, which allowed him to establish his dominance. This was publicly proclaimed both in a historiographical initiative that resembled a textual reconquest of Syria's past and in the sultan's investment in monumental construction. The choice of places, dedications, and inscriptions raised these monuments to the rank of veritable signs. They also became realms of memory ("lieux de mémoire"), which is not to be understood as places of remembrance, but rather as places where memory is at work ("là où la mémoire travaille")¹⁸⁵ and an integral part of the propaganda campaign used to legitimize Baybars's rule. This use of memory was designed to associate the recent victories in Syria with a cultural memory specially revived for the occasion. A new collective memory was thus created, centered on the new regime. The aim was not only to connect Baybars's reign with the recent past, but to establish retrospectively causal links, using history to sanction a monarch without a past. The use of memory by the regime's propagandists involved selecting and identifying certain figures from among the heroic conquerors of the past who could herald the reign of Baybars. Of course, the text of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir should not be removed from the milieu of its composition since the author was a close friend of Baybars, and his *sīrah*, intended to be publicly read at court, was a commemorative initiative (in the sense of rendering the past alive in the eyes of the public). With this public recitation and the cre-

¹⁸¹ For an analysis of Baybars's titles in Syria, see Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars."

¹⁸² See, for example, al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'ṣhā*, 7:378, based on al-'Umarī's *Ta'rīf*.

¹⁸³ I would like to thank A-M. Eddé for the interpretation of this title, which appears with *ṣ* (*ṣawāl* instead of *dawāl*) in al-Nuwayrī's edition.

¹⁸⁴ See the remark of Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 232.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1997), 1:17–18, cited by Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 180.



ation of a textual community, the Mamluk power sought to win the loyalty and allegiance of its subjects and create a sense of attachment to the new regime.



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