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Mamluk Legitimacy and the Mongols: The Reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn

To date scholars have established that the early Mamluk sultans legitimized their rule through the conscious use of Islamic themes.¹ As yet however, one crucial issue that has not been routinely addressed, but should be, is audience. Much of the scholarship on Mamluk legitimacy assumes that this legitimacy was asserted in relation to an internal audience, by which is meant either the military elite, the non-military populace, or both. But Mamluk legitimacy must also be examined in light of various external audiences. The most significant of these, and the one discussed here, was those Mongol sovereigns with whom the Mamluks were in the closest contact, namely, the rulers of the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanids. Mamluk assertions of legitimacy can be detected in the diplomatic letters and embassies Baybars and Qalāwūn exchanged with each Mongol power.

Furthermore, although scholars have already discussed the Islamic foundation on which Mamluk legitimacy rested, as yet no one has asked, "Why this particular

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¹Only Stefan Heidemann ventures into a discussion of the external Mongol audience; the remaining scholars (mentioned below) focus fairly exclusively on the internal audience. This focus itself is quite clear, but rarely made explicit. See Stefan Heidemann, *Das allepiner Kalifat (A.D. 1261): Vom Ende des Kalifates in Baghdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo*, Islamic History and Civilization, 6 (Leiden, 1994); also P. M. Holt, "The Structure of Government in the Mamluk Sultanate" in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades*, ed. P. M. Holt, (Warminster, England, 1977), 44-61; idem, "Some Observations on the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 501-7; idem, "The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan," *BSOAS* 38 (1975): 237-49; R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 69-119; Jacques Jomier, *Le Mahmal et la caravane Égyptienne des Pelerins de la Mecque (XIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Cairo, 1953); Remke Kruk, "History and Apocalypse: Ibn al-Nafis' Justification of Mamluk Rule," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 324-37; Wilferd Madelung, "A Treatise on the Imamate Dedicated to Sultan Baybars I" in *Proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. A. Fodor (Budapest, 1995), 1:91-102; Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris, 1968); Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. M. Holt, (London and New York, 1992); and John E. Woods, "Islamic History, 1200-1500: The Transition from Late Medieval to Early Modern," a paper presented at the Smithsonian Institution on the occasion of the opening of the Esin Atil exhibition, "Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks," 1981.



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foundation?" To address this question in part, we must first acknowledge that the ideology expressed in the diplomatic interaction was not the product of any individual Mamluk sultan alone; rather, it arose from an amalgam of existing diplomatic protocol, the wishes of the sultan and his closest military advisors, and the stylistic, rhetorical, and ideological concerns of the religiously-trained scholars who actually produced the letters. Indeed, each diplomatic mission, and thus the ideas embedded within it, must be seen as the product of a great and, unfortunately, largely indiscernible collaboration of minds. Certainly, however, the religious orientation of much of Mamluk ideology must be understood in part as a contribution from the religious scholars who wrote it.

But this alone is not enough to explain the Mamluk recourse to religious symbolism; indeed, they were hardly the first to employ it. In fact, we must also consider the influence of Mongol ideology. It must be remembered that at least until 1335 Mamluk assertions of legitimacy for the external audience were directed primarily at the Mongols on a number of levels. The Mamluk sultans came to power in an age that can be described as one of Nomad Prestige,² and witnessed the appearance of a new and powerful legitimizing ideology, that of the Mongol ruling family. In brief: Chinggis Khān and his descendants saw themselves as a divinely-favored dynasty, whose members were destined to rule the entire world through their possession of a special good fortune (the imperial *su*), which had been granted by the supreme deity Tenggeri, who represented Heaven or the Great Blue Sky itself.³ In such an ideological context, any independent ruler intent on retaining his independence was a rebel, not only against the Chinggis Khanid family, but worse yet, against the Will of Heaven as well. The wholesale and merciless slaughter of such rebels was therefore necessary and good, since it both implemented the Divine Will and provided an excellent object lesson for other would-be rebels. In addition to this clear, uncompromising, and universalist ideology of rule, the Mongols brought with them innovations in concepts of law, among which was the introduction of an all-important set of laws and decrees issued by Chinggis Khān himself, the *yāsā* (Mongolian *yasagh*). This was to play an important role in legitimizing ideology both during and after the Mongol period.⁴

²Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974), 2:369.

³I. de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chinggis Khan's Empire," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973): 21-36; J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (London, 1971), 53, 65; Bertold Spuler, *Les Mongols dans l'Histoire* (Paris, 1961), 18.

⁴I. de Rachewiltz, "Foundations," 25, 29; Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:405-6. For a discussion of the *yāsā* see: I. de Rachewiltz, "Some Reflections on Činggis Qan's Ĵasy," *East Asian History* 6 (1993): 91-104; David Ayalon, "The Great *Yāsā* of Chingiz Khan. A Reexamination," *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 97-140, 34 (1971): 151-80, 36 (1972): 113-58, 38 (1973): 107-56 (also reprinted in his *Outsiders in the Lands of Islam: Mamluks, Mongols and Eunuchs* (London, 1988); D. O. Morgan,



Mongol claims to legitimacy were made known to others in a variety of ways: first and imperfectly through the Mongols' written and verbal demands for submission from as-yet-undefeated rulers, among them the Mamluk sultans themselves. Second, and more thoroughly, the Mongols disseminated their ideology directly to the newly-subdued either through the command appearance of new vassals at Mongol courts, or through the retaining and "reeducating" of the hostage relatives of such vassals. Likewise some scholars furthered literate knowledge about the Mongols, including their ideology, by writing treatises on them.⁵

The Mamluk sultans in particular had other reasons to be familiar with the Mongol manifestation of legitimacy. Many of the early Mamluks not only had originated in lands controlled by scions of the House of Chinggis Khān, but came from a pagan steppe background similar to the Mongols' own; this the Mamluks' subsequent Arabic Islamic education could only overlay, not erase. More notably, an unspecified number of Mamluks were themselves Mongols, some of whom had fought in the Mongol conquering armies. Likewise the Mamluk sultanate received and absorbed several successive waves of immigrant Mongols in its first fifty-odd years.⁶ These were welcomed into the Mamluk military elite at all levels, including the highest. In fact, with such numbers of Mongols on hand and such a level of expertise among them, the Mamluk sultanate may have had arguably the best possible knowledge of Mongols and their ways for a region not under Mongol rule at that time.

Thus the Mamluks were faced not only with the very real, physical menace of the nearby Ilkhanids, but also with the less tangible but equally real shadow of Mongol prestige from both the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde. They had no ready ideological response to the Mongol claim of divine favor, the supremacy of the *yāsā* or the apparent superiority of the Chinggis Khanid ruling family. In fact the Mamluks were ideologically weak even without the Mongol menace. In a world where lineage had mattered and would matter for centuries, the Mamluk sultans were singularly ill-suited to justify their rule, for they uniformly suffered from the significant problem of slave origin. They were at worst men whose

"The 'Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan' and Mongol Law in the Ilkhanate," *BSOAS* 49 (1986): 163-76.

⁵I am thinking here, of course, of Juvaynī, whose work became known in Mamluk lands and was eventually the basis for much of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī's writings on the Mongols. See 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Tārīkh-i Jahān-Gushāy*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, 16 (Leiden and London, 1912); tr. J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Manchester, 1958); also see Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, *Das mongolische Weltreich: al-'Umarī's Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, ed and tr. Klaus Lech (Wiesbaden, 1968).

⁶See David Ayalon, "The Wafidiyya in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Islamic Culture* 25 (January-October 1951): 89-109.



professional careers had begun with a period of servitude, or at best, the sons and grandsons of such men. Slaves were nobodies, their origins mostly unknown and assumed to be unimportant. A slave had no illustrious lineage; if he did, few either knew about it or cared.

Admittedly the Mamluks were military slaves, not domestic or agricultural workers, and military slavery was the most elevated kind of male bondage in terms of career possibilities and relative social status. Nevertheless the stigma of servitude, combined with the resulting perceived lack of illustrious lineage, posed a real, significant, and long-term ideological problem both for Mamluk rulers and for the religious scholars who produced the actual Mamluk diplomatic missives.

That this issue was perceived as an ideological weak spot can be gleaned from Mongol opinion of the Mamluks. In Hülegü's 658/1260 demand for total submission from Qutuz, for example, Hülegü denigrated the latter for his servile origins.⁷ The Ilkhanids' Armenian allies were even more insulting, according to Grigor of Akner, who relates that when Baybars attempted to correspond with the Armenian king Het'um in the early 660s/1260s, Het'um called him a dog and a slave, and refused to have any dealings with him. When Baybars subsequently took Het'um's son Lev'on captive in 664/1266, he reportedly asked the Armenian prince: "Your father called me a slave and would not make peace. Am I the slave now, or you?"⁸ Nor were later Mamluk rulers safe from such accusations—Ghazan reportedly hurled them at both al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his father Qalāwūn when conversing with local ulama during the Ilkhanid occupation of Damascus in 699/1300.⁹ Nearly a century later Tīmūr, who was not even himself a Mongol, disparaged the slave origin of sultan Barqūq in a letter to the Ottoman Yıldırım Bayazid.¹⁰

Thus given both their own lack of lineage and the awesome challenge of Mongol prestige, it is not surprising that, for the external audience, the early Mamluk sultans and the scholars around the throne turned to an ideology of legitimacy that was defined simultaneously by religion and military action. Using such concepts as Mamluk achievement on the battlefield in the name of religion, and the physical protection of Muslims and Islamic society—both officially

⁷Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, ed. Fr. Anton Salahani (Beirut, 1890), 484-85; Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1391/1971), 8:47-48; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Sinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1333/1915), 8:63-64.

⁸Grigor of Akner, "History of the Nation of the Archers," ed. and tr. Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12, nos. 3 and 4 (December 1949): 359.

⁹Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī: Dāstān-i Ghāzān Khān*, ed. Karl Jahn, E. W. J. Gibb Memorial Series, n.s., 14 (London, 1940), 127.

¹⁰Zeki Velidi Togan, "Timurs Osteuropapolitik," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (1958): 108, 279-98.



sanctioned by the Cairene Abbasid caliphs—the Mamluk sultans managed to sidestep the linked issues of slavery and unknown lineage, and respond to the ideological and military challenges of Mongol power in general. The Ilkhanid threat in particular had the unexpected positive side effect of giving Baybars, Qalāwūn, and their civilian and military advisors something on which to focus and by which to find definition. If the Ilkhanids were infidels and Slaughterers of Muslims, Murderers of the Abbasid Caliph, and so on, then the Mamluks could be Defenders of Islam, Protectors of Muslims, Friends of the Caliph, etc. The Mamluks maintained their ideology of religious guardianship in the face of Mongol prestige at least until the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.¹¹

THE MAMLUKS AND THE GOLDEN HORDE

Historians face a paucity of evidence when investigating the relations of the early Mamluk sultans to the Golden Horde. Fortunately this has not deterred the determined, and a number of authors have contributed short, medium, and even lengthy expositions of the subject, among them S. Zakirov, Reuven Amitai, David Ayalon, Stefan Heidemann, Peter Jackson, and Marius Canard.¹² Given the extensive nature of some of these contributions, I will restrict the present study to an investigation of the ideology involved in those relations, although this may still require the presentation of material well-examined elsewhere. Certainly the effort of the aforementioned scholars is to be commended, since none of the letters are preserved in documentary form, and very few remain even in literary form, despite the time, effort, and money Baybars and Qalāwūn expended on establishing and maintaining cordial ties to Saray. We must therefore rely on the particulars of behavior and event, and those snippets of messages that were provided at the discretion and literary judgement of the chroniclers. This situation is further complicated by the chroniclers' own biases, for their initially strong interest in the

¹¹This should not imply that by avoiding genealogical issues the Mamluks lost interest in them. On the contrary, all of the early Mamluk sultans made considerable efforts to develop their own dynasties, although only Qalāwūn was at all successful. Likewise examples exist of individual Mamluks whose illustrious—albeit questionable—lineage is traced in the sources. Quṭuz is one example; al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (815-24/1412-21) is another. The attempts by chroniclers to discover or uncover lineages worth the name for important Mamluk figures only highlights the concern with which contemporary society viewed the issue.

¹²S. Zakirov, *Diplomaticheskie Otnosheniia Zolotoi Ordy s Egiptom (XIII-XIV vv.)* (Moscow, 1966); Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge, 1995); Ayalon, "Yasa," parts B and C; Peter Jackson, "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire," *Central Asiatic Journal* 22, nos. 3-4 (1978): 186-244; Marius Canard, "Un traité entre Byzance et l'Égypte au XIIIe siècle et les relations diplomatiques de Michel VIII Paléologue avec les sultans mamlûks Baibars et Qalâ'ûn" in *Mélanges Gauthier-Demombynes* (Cairo, 1935-45), 197-224.



Golden Horde dwindled over the years. One might surmise that the Golden Horde could not compete with the far more absorbing and dramatic Ilkhanids, who received much more ink. Nevertheless the importance of the Golden Horde to Mamluk rulers should not be underestimated.

As early in his reign as 660/1262 Baybars sent out feelers to the Golden Horde in the form of a letter to Berke Khān, which he entrusted to a reliable merchant.¹³ This attempt was probably spurred by the news of a battle between Berke Khān and Hülegü, which Hülegü had lost.¹⁴ No full copy of the letter remains, but its author, Baybars' redoubtable biographer and head chancellor Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, cannot resist describing his work and even giving an example or two of his style. By this point, Baybars had heard rumors that Berke Khān had converted to Islam. Thus in the letter Baybars urged Berke Khān to fight Hülegü, reminding him that as a Muslim he must wage holy war against other Mongols, even if they were his relatives. (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir informs us that he himself supported this argument for Baybars by pointing out that the Prophet had fought his own relatives from among the Quraysh in order to ensure their conversion.¹⁵) Clearly as a non-Mongol trying to intervene in the affairs of the Mongol ruling family, this was the only approach Baybars could take. Further emphasizing this Muslim-infidel dichotomy, Baybars/Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir appealed to anti-Christian sentiment: "Reports have come one after the next that, for the sake of his wife and her Christianity, Hūlāwūn [*sic*] has established the religion of the cross, and has advanced the observance of his wife's religion over your religion. He has settled the unbelieving *jathliq* [Nestorian Catholicus] in the home of the [Abbasid] caliphs, [thereby] preferring her over you."¹⁶ Thereafter we learn that the letter urged Berke Khān to fight Hülegü, and discussed Baybars' own efforts as a *mujāhid*.¹⁷

Although Baybars received no immediate answer to his first effort at contacting the Golden Horde, relations nevertheless developed further later that same year, when a group of about two hundred Mongols appeared in eastern Syria, heading for Damascus. Initially their approach triggered the sending out of a Mamluk reconnaissance force, the scorching of a wide swathe of earth around Aleppo and an upsurge of panic throughout the Syrian population. When the Mamluk force actually encountered the Mongols, however, it was revealed that the infidels were

¹³ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 88-89.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā'īl Abū Shāmah, *Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi' al-Ma'rūf bi-al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawdatayn*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥassān al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1366/1947), 219; also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 81.

¹⁵ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



in fact Muslims and bore greetings to the ruler of Egypt from none other than Berke Khān. Once the religious identity of the group had been established, Baybars ordered that they be welcomed warmly, sent robes of honor to them and their wives, and had houses built for them in Cairo.¹⁸ They finally arrived in that city on 24 Dhū al-Hijjah 660/9 November 1262.¹⁹ The Mamluk sultan met them personally two days later on 26 Dhū al-Hijjah/11 November and held a great ceremony of welcome for them in which he handed out robes, horses and money, and appointed their leaders amirs of one hundred and the rest amirs of varying lesser degrees.²⁰

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Golden Horde delegation Baybars hastened to prepare envoys of his own to send to Berke Khān. He also scrambled to present the right image. A week later on 2 Muḥarram 661/16 November 1262 Baybars inaugurated a refugee Abbasid as the caliph al-Ḥākīm in the presence of the Mongol leaders, his own envoys, the senior Mamluk amirs, and the most important religious personnel in Cairo. Al-Ḥākīm's lineage was verified, and a family tree drawn up. Baybars swore allegiance to the caliph, promising to rule in a godly fashion and to fight for God's sake. In return al-Ḥākīm invested Baybars with the care of Muslim lands and Muslims in general, exhorted him to perform jihad, appointed Baybars his partner in supporting the truth [of religion],²¹ and finished by giving two brief sermons. In them al-Ḥākīm focused on the concepts of *imāmah* (leadership of the Muslim community) and *jihād* (here: military struggle against infidels). To underscore the importance of these two themes al-Ḥākīm evoked the horrors of Hülegü's sack of Baghdad, then demonstrated that Baybars had revived the imamate, driven away the enemy, reestablished the Abbasid caliphate to its exalted position, and supplied it with a willing army. Al-Ḥākīm finished by exhorting his listeners to fight the holy fight, and reminded them of their religious duty to obey those in command, i.e., Baybars.²² After the ceremony Baybars had a letter to Berke Khān drawn up, in which he urged the Mongol ruler to perform jihad against Hülegü, described the composition and strength of his own armies, enumerated his allies and enemies, and went on to reassure Berke Khān of the warm welcome the Mongol delegation had received. In addition Baybars discussed al-Ḥākīm's inauguration in Cairo and al-Ḥākīm's lineage. A copy of the caliph's family tree accompanied the letter, and the envoys were sent off in Muḥarram 661/November-December 1262.

¹⁸Ibid., 136-37, and copying him, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Fuṭūn al-Adab*, ed. Sa'īd 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1410/1990), 30:63.

¹⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:63.

²⁰Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 138.

²¹*Qasīmahu fī qiyyām al-ḥaqq*, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 142.

²²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 143-45.



Stefan Heidemann links the investiture of al-Ḥākim to Baybars' ideological requirements for establishing relations with Berke Khān. Baybars had already legitimized himself to the internal audience through the establishment of his first Abbasid caliph, al-Mustanṣir, whom he had then summarily disposed of by sending him off to die attempting to retake Baghdad.²³ Upon the arrival of Berke Khān's followers, Baybars found himself facing a new audience, but without a caliph. Heidemann points out that the non-Mongol Baybars had several ideological strikes against him when compared to Berke Khān, including Baybars' status as a former slave, and his origin in Qipchak lands, which at that time were subordinate to the Golden Horde.²⁴ Fortunately however, Berke Khān had converted to Islam, and luckily Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad, another Abbasid, had made it back from the debacle in Iraq and was available for the caliphate. Baybars hastily had him recognized, and thereby in his message to Berke Khān was able to refer to a number of legitimizing concepts that could be palatable both to a new believer and to a member of a major ruling house. These included al-Ḥākim's status as (albeit newly-minted) Abbasid caliph, al-Ḥākim's several hundred years of lineage, the caliph's formal recognition of Baybars' rule and Baybars' own position as a successful *mujāhid* bearing the Abbasid seal of approval. In this way Baybars managed to provide himself with enough creditability to approach the ideologically awe-inspiring Chinggis Khanid.²⁵

In all likelihood Berke Khān was willing to be approached, for a few months later in Rajab 661/May-June 1263, i.e., before Baybars' envoys could have traveled to Saray and back, an independent embassy from the Mongol ruler arrived in Alexandria by boat and was conveyed from there to Cairo. The full text of Berke Khān's letter is not included in any of the Mamluk chronicles, but Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir summarizes the contents as follows: After expressing peace and gratitude, Berke Khān got down to business by asking for Baybars' help against their common foe, Hülegü. Portraying Hülegü as defying the law/decrees (*yasaq*) of Chinggis Khān and his family (*ahl*), Berke Khān then explained that his own battles with Hülegü were motivated by the desire to spread Islam and Islamic rule, return the Islamic lands to the condition they had previously enjoyed, and avenge the Islamic community in general.²⁶ Finally he requested that Baybars send a force out to the

²³For a thorough discussion of al-Mustanṣir's disastrous campaign see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 56-60.

²⁴Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 165.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 166.

²⁶Al-Nuwayrī uses *yasaq* in *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:87; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir uses *sharī'ah* in *Rawḍ*, 171. Jackson understands *yāsā* here as meaning a single decree of Chinggis Khān; namely that Jochi and his descendants (i.e., the Golden Horde) were to enjoy the revenues of northwestern Iran. These were what Hülegü had diverted to himself. See Jackson, "Dissolution," 235.



Euphrates to attack Hülegü, and also come to the aid of the Saljuq ruler, ‘Izz al-Dīn Kay Kā’ūs.²⁷

That the message was received well can be inferred from Baybars’ response, which took up seventy half sheets of Baghdadi paper²⁸ and was again written by none other than Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir. Unfortunately like the others, no copy of this letter has been preserved, so we must rely on Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s own report of its contents. Indeed he assures us that he filled the message with Quranic *āyahs*, hadith exhorting jihad, compliments to the recipient, and heroic descriptions of the Egyptian armies and their own dedication to the holy fight.²⁹ Simultaneously sweetening and further emphasizing the message was the staggering number of gifts Baybars sent to the Mongol ruler. These included items of worship (prayer-carpets, a copy of the Quran alleged to be in the handwriting of the third caliph, ‘Uthmān), items of jihad (swords, helmets, arrows, bows and bowstrings, horses and their trappings), and more conventional gifts (clothes, slaves, candles, rare animals, and so on).³⁰

Nor was this all. In an additional demonstration of piety, manliness and religious solidarity, Baybars had al-Ḥākim invest Berke Khān’s envoys with the *futūwah* trousers during their stay in Cairo. Baybars had already initiated al-Ḥākim through the power delegated to him by his first caliph, al-Mustansir. Thus in what was to be one of only a few diplomatic encounters for the caliph, al-Ḥākim in turn performed the ceremony with both Baybars’ envoys to Berke Khān and Berke Khān’s own envoys. Then he preached a new sermon, the text of which is not recorded, and entrusted the embassy with clothes to present to Berke Khān himself, thereby including him in this special ritual.³¹ Later Berke Khān’s envoys were sent out to visit the Islamic holy cities, where Baybars had the Mongol ruler’s name mentioned in the *khuṭbah* after his own in a further show of Islamic unity.³²

Thereafter ambassadors continued to travel back and forth between the two rulers. On 10 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 662/4 September 1264 another of Berke Khān’s embassies arrived in Cairo, along with Baybars’ own returning envoys. Their arrival fortunately coincided with a comprehensive military review and extensive games, thus the Mongol ambassadors were invited to attend and watch all the

²⁷Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 171.

²⁸Full Baghdadi paper was the largest, best and most prestigious kind, and was used for caliphal documents and letters to “*al-ṭabaqah al-‘ulyā min al-mulūk ka-akābir al-qānāt min mulūk al-sharq*.” However at times smaller sizes of Baghdadi paper might be used for the same purpose, as full Baghdadi could be hard to obtain. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 6:190.

²⁹Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 171-72.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 172-73; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:97.

³¹For a more complete treatment see Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 169-71.

³²Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 174.



festivities, which included an expansive ceremony of investiture. Baybars must have hoped to impress them by displaying his resources for pursuing jihad. That the desired effect was achieved is suggested by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, who writes that the envoys asked Baybars during the military review whether these were the forces of Egypt and Syria combined, to which Baybars responded that they were only the forces stationed at Cairo. Naturally Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir portrays the ambassadors as being dumbfounded and amazed.³³

By contrast with Berke Khān’s previous ambassadors, who had met with the caliph al-Ḥākim and attended the *futūwah* initiation ceremony in 661/1263, however, these envoys had no recorded interaction with the caliph. Rather they frequented martial ceremonies and services of investiture. The only specifically Islamic event they attended was the circumcision of Baybars’ son and heir al-Malik al-Sa‘īd.³⁴ This suggests Baybars’ interest in promoting his own would-be dynasty. In fact, as a result of his achieved cordiality with the Golden Horde, Baybars was soon able to dispense with elaborate rituals involving al-Ḥākim, and eventually restricted him to a circumscribed life in the citadel. Heidemann suggests that at this point Baybars’ legitimacy needed no further help from the caliph.³⁵ In addition, al-Ḥākim represented a potential rallying point for would-be rivals in Egypt and Syria, and thus had to be kept in seclusion. Worthy of note is that the chronicles record the arrival of various other Abbasids in Damascus after al-Ḥākim’s establishment; they also report that these claimants were all intercepted and sent straight to Cairo, after which they uniformly disappear from historical view.³⁶

In 663/1265 Baybars sent his own ambassador to Saray. According to al-Nuwayrī the purpose of this embassy was to intercede with Berke Khān on behalf of the Byzantine emperor Michael Paleologus, whose lands the Golden Horde had been raiding for some time. But naturally Baybars did not let slip the opportunity to send gifts to the Mongol ruler, among them such significant religious mementos as three turbans that had been taken to Mecca on the ‘*umrah*’ expressly for Berke Khān, and a bottle of water from the well of Zamzam, as well as some nice balsamic oil.³⁷

Thus Baybars, despite his lowly origin and the tenuous nature of his ideological position, managed to establish a good rapport with Berke Khān based on Baybars’ promotion of proper Islamic military values. Or did he? The image we have is almost uniformly presented from Baybars’ own point of view, as distilled through

³³Ibid., 213, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:101.

³⁴Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 214, 218.

³⁵Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 173.

³⁶Ibid., 179-80; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 247-48; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:128.

³⁷Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:116-17.



the historical work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir and then copied by later writers. By contrast, two other Mamluk authors suggest that Baybars’ relationship to Berke Khān was anything but that of equal to equal. The first is Ibn Wāsil, who reports, when describing the contents of Baybars’ letter of Muḥarram 661/November 1262, that Baybars enumerated the glories of the Islamic armies (*al-‘asākir*) but then went on to point out that they were all obedient to Berke Khān and awaiting his command, “*fī ṭā’atihi wa sāmī‘ah li-ishāratih*.”³⁸ We discover a similar phenomenon in the work of al-Yūnīnī. In a discussion of Baybars’ subsequent embassy to Berke Khān sent later that same year (661/1263), al-Yūnīnī reports that the accompanying letter suggested that Baybars would enter into a subordinate relationship to Berke Khān. This was to be achieved through Baybars’ joining of the “*īlīyah*” (here: group of subordinates) and becoming obedient to the Golden Horde ruler: “*al-dukhūl fī al-īlīyah wa al-ṭā’ah*.”³⁹

A related point should be made here about the proposed joint Mamluk-Golden Horde campaigns against the Ilkhanids, which were a common theme of this diplomatic interaction. It is interesting to note that in one Mamluk source the Mongol envoys are made to quote Berke Khān as saying, “I will give you [Baybars] the land that your horses reach in Ilkhanid territory.”⁴⁰ The generous granting of land by one ruler to another in this fashion can hardly be described as a relationship of equals, but rather as that of sovereign and loyal subordinate. Thus whatever Baybars’ understanding of his relationship with the Golden Horde, or more precisely, whatever the view he wanted Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir to present of him, it may in fact have differed from the Golden Horde’s image of the way things were. It seems possible that, despite Berke Khān’s new-found faith and supposedly new, Islamic way of doing things, he may actually have looked on Baybars with the old Mongol world view: that is, as an obedient subject, who happened in this case to be Muslim, and whom he could order to ride out on campaign or promise land to as he pleased. True, Baybars appears to have responded favorably to these suggestions, but no actual military alliance ever took place.⁴¹ Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that Baybars was ever involved in an *actual* overlord-vassal relationship with Berke Khān. There is no evidence that Baybars sent any hostages to Berke’s court at any time or for any reason. Likewise the reports of gifts that Baybars sent to

³⁸Muḥammad ibn Sālim Ibn Wāsil, “Tārīkh al-Wāsilīn min Akhbār al-Khulafā’ wa-al-Mulūk wa-al-Salāṭīn,” Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 40477, fol. 1306.

³⁹Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1375/1955), 2:197. The full text is: “*al-dukhūl fī al-īlīyah wa-al-ṭā’ah wa-ṭalab al-mu’āḍadah ‘alā hulāku ‘alā an yakūn lahu [i.e., li-baybars] min al-bilād allatī tu’khadh min yadihi [i.e., min yad hulāku] mim mā yalī al-shām nasīb.*”

⁴⁰Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:195.

⁴¹Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:167.



Saray suggest that these were just that—gifts, and not some kind of obligatory tribute. Thus, the imbalance, if one there was, appears to have existed on a purely ideological level.

At any rate, Baybars' relations with the Golden Horde went on to survive Berke Khān's death in 665/1267, for Baybars wrote to Berke Khān's great-nephew and heir Möngke Temür and set a similar tone to that of his earlier correspondence. Since Möngke Temür was not a Muslim, however, Baybars found himself employing a more limited ideological coin. No text of this letter remains, which is unfortunate since it would be interesting to see how Baybars and his chancellery composed this missive without the religious imagery that had permeated his letters to Berke Khān. All we know is that in the letter Baybars offered his congratulations on Möngke Temür's ascension and his condolences over Berke Khān's death, and urged Möngke Temür to fight Hülegü's son Abaka, who had succeeded to Ilkhanid rule.⁴² Thereafter the two monarchs continued to exchange messages and gifts, and Baybars continued to urge Möngke Temür to attack Abaka.⁴³ In 670/1272 Möngke Temür wrote requesting Baybars' military assistance against the house of Hülegü, and proposing that all the Muslims lands in Abaka's hands be returned to Baybars' control.⁴⁴

After Baybars' death on 28 Muḥarram 676/1 July 1277, the Mamluk chroniclers report little diplomatic activity for the brief reigns of his sons, with the exception of the arrival in Alexandria of a Golden Horde embassy in Rabī' I or II 676/July-August 1277, which went up to Cairo.⁴⁵ Clearly this embassy had been sent before news of Baybars' death reached Saray. We may assume that al-Malik al-Sa'īd met with the embassy, and likewise presumably sent them home again eventually, but the sources are extremely laconic and offer no illuminating details whatsoever. The Mamluk chronicles remain silent on this subject for the rest of al-Malik al-Sa'īd's reign, which could mean that neither side sent envoys, or that diplomatic interaction did occur but the historians were too preoccupied tabulating factional strife among members of the military elite to notice it. But since diplomatic activity with the Golden Horde continued under Qalāwūn, it seems that the nearly

⁴²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 288.

⁴³Ibid., 335, 400, 404, 411; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 27:362 and 30:221; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo, 1987), 71; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:167.

⁴⁴Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1983), 36; also Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399-400, and copying him, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:192.

⁴⁵Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, "Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-I'lām," *Dār al-Kutub*, Cairo, MS 10680, fol. 7a.



three-year period from Baybars' death to Qalāwūn's ascension could not have witnessed anything too out of the ordinary.

Unfortunately none of the letters from Qalāwūn's reign have been preserved either as documents or literary works. We do know, however, that Qalāwūn sent a message and sixteen loads of cloth, clothes, objets d'art (*tuḥaf*), mail, helmets, and bows to the Golden Horde quite early in his reign.⁴⁶ Qalāwūn may have been hedging his bets with that embassy, since the gifts were for everyone and anyone of importance in Saray: the ruler Möngke Temür, his brother Töde Möngke and nephew Tölebugha, one of the major Mongol generals, Noghai Noyan, a number of royal ladies and the Saljuq sultan 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kā'ūs. We may presume that at the very least Qalāwūn intended to maintain cordial relations. He may also have hoped to keep the channels open for the importation of new mamluks from Golden Horde territory, a crucial concern for him.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the Mamluk historians took no notice of the embassy until 681/1282, when Qalāwūn received a message from his *own* envoys to the Golden Horde, who wrote to inform him that Möngke Temür had died before their arrival, so they had presented their gifts to his brother and successor Töde Möngke instead.⁴⁸

In 682/1283 Töde Möngke's first embassy arrived in Cairo. His envoys were both *faqīhs*, and bore news of Töde Möngke's conversion to Islam, his ascension to the throne, and his intention to implement the shari'ah in his lands. Töde Möngke requested that Qalāwūn provide him with a Muslim name and send him both a sultanic and a caliphal banner, as well as some small drums, with which to ride when fighting enemies of the faith.⁴⁹ Here we see Qalāwūn cast in the role of "senior in Islam," requested to provide the necessary paraphernalia for Töde Möngke so that he too could be a good *mujāhid*. Qalāwūn's response was to send the envoys to the Hijaz to perform the pilgrimage, although the sources are silent about whether he had Töde Möngke's name and titles mentioned after his own in the sermons in Mecca, as Baybars had done for Berke Khān in 661/1263. Upon the return of the two *faqīhs* to Cairo, Qalāwūn sent them back to Töde Möngke with envoys of his own in 682/1283-84. Presumably Qalāwūn fulfilled Töde Möngke's request, since there is no word to the contrary, and since such a refusal would have been significant enough to warrant one.

⁴⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif al-Ayyām wa-al-'Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961), 17-18.

⁴⁷That the slave trade was on Qalāwūn's mind is clear from his actions in Rabī' I 679/July 1280, seven months after his ascension to the throne, when he began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor Michael Paleologus over a treaty in which the free passage of slave merchants ultimately became a significant clause. For a full discussion see Canard, "Traité," 197-224.

⁴⁸Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 17-18.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 46; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:102-103.



In this way Qalāwūn not only perpetuated the relationship of solidarity in religion that Baybars had started, but also managed to establish himself as the religious senior, a concept that seems to be new and specific to him. Peter Jackson has pointed to the importance of hierarchy, status, and seniority among members of the Mongol ruling family; thus Qalāwūn's proclamation of seniority must have resonated strongly in a milieu already imbued with the weight of such claims.⁵⁰

Qalāwūn also based his legitimacy in part on his control of the Abbasid caliph, as Baybars had done before him. Of course al-Ḥākīm played no important foundational role as he had during Baybars' reign. Moreover, as Heidemann has indicated, al-Ḥākīm's activity in general under Qalāwūn was extremely circumscribed: no sermons, no *futūwah* ceremonies, no recorded relationship to the ongoing diplomacy with the Golden Horde.⁵¹ Nevertheless the figure of the caliph, at least, continued to play a role in Qalāwūn's relation with the Golden Horde, although Qalāwūn may not have wanted it to do so. But the token nature of al-Ḥākīm's role during Qalāwūn's reign is underscored by the caliph's forcibly secluded lifestyle—one wonders if the caliph was at all involved in the sending of his own banner to Saray, or whether it was done without his participation.

In addition to fulfilling Töde Möngke's petition, Qalāwūn himself seems to have asked for something from Töde Möngke, although nowhere do we discover what that request was. Indeed we can only infer its existence from the information for the year 685/1286-87, when one of the two *faqīhs* returned from Saray to inform Qalāwūn that he had been granted all that he had asked.⁵² Given the phrasing of the report, it seems possible that Qalāwūn made a number of different requests. But what were they? What might Qalāwūn have wanted from Töde Möngke in 682/1283-84? None of the Mamluk historians tells. Perhaps Qalāwūn was once again seeking to ensure the steady flow of mamluks from the Black Sea region. In addition, it so happens that at that time Qalāwūn was embroiled in unfriendly negotiations with the Ilkhanid ruler Aḥmad Tegüder, as will be discussed below. Was Qalāwūn asking Töde Möngke for military assistance against Tegüder? Did he seek a re-creation of those grand campaigns to divide Ilkhanid territory between two Muslim warriors that Baybars and Berke Khān had discussed but never carried out? After all, Töde Möngke was portraying himself to Qalāwūn as a new convert, and had specifically requested the paraphernalia of holy war from him. What better time for Qalāwūn to encourage him to try it?

It is interesting that Aḥmad Tegüder was also depicting himself to the Mamluk sultan as a new Muslim, which may have put Qalāwūn in an odd ideological

⁵⁰Jackson, "Dissolution," 195.

⁵¹Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 177, 181.

⁵²"*Al-ijābah ḥaṣalat ilá jamī' maṭlūb mawlānā al-sulṭān*," Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 143.



position. How might he have responded to each of these two Mongol leaders? What arguments could the non-Mongol, former slave, Muslim protector of the Abbasid caliph use when faced with a friendly, newly-converted Mongol ally and a hostile, newly-converted Mongol would-be overlord who was a distant cousin to the ally? Without any documentary or much literary evidence, or even knowledge of the nature of Qalāwūn's request, we can only surmise. But one answer might well be this concept of seniority in religion, which wove through Qalāwūn's ideological interactions not only with Töde Möngke, but also with Tegüder, as we shall see below. At any rate, by the time Töde Möngke's answer arrived, Tegüder was dead, and the danger (if there had been any) had passed, which might explain the laconic quality of the Mamluk chronicles on the subject. This was to be the last substantial mention of Qalāwūn's diplomatic relations with the Golden Horde, who receded into the chronicles' background.

THE MAMLUKS AND THE ILKHANIDS

While relations between the Mamluks and the Golden Horde were characterized by mutual expressions of friendship, religiosity, and solidarity in Islam against the infidels in Iran, Mamluk relations with those very infidels were characterized by hostility, mutual mistrust, and outright warfare. Baybars' reign was largely shaped by bad news from the east, the north, or the northeast, whether reports of Ilkhanid raids, trouble with their allies the Armenians, or full-fledged military endeavors from either or both directions. Most encounters between the two sides involved battles, skirmishes, plotting and subterfuge, inciting middlemen to harass the enemy, or spying. In the interests of preserving space, I shall not here plunge into the intricacies of Baybars' hostilities towards the Ilkhanids, but refer the reader to the work of Reuven Amitai on the subject for a thorough and comprehensive view of the particulars.⁵³ Rather I shall focus on the diplomatic activity between Baybars and Abaka, that is, the exchange of messages or embassies, and the legitimizing ideology embedded within them. Here the relationship was simple and straightforward from each point of view: Baybars was a good Muslim ruler and Protector of Islam faced with a tyrannical dynasty of pagans; Abaka was a divinely-designated ruler from the princely house of Chinggis Khān against whom an illegitimate rebel of tainted slave origin had arisen.

That Abaka felt it was high time the rebel submit can be inferred from his embassy of 664/1265-66. Unfortunately the Mamluk chronicles tell us little on the subject. Abaka's ambassadors met with Baybars in Syria, bringing him a gift and asking for peace (*ṣulḥ*). As Amitai has pointed out, it was most likely that "peace" here meant no more than obedience to Abaka, especially since the Ilkhanids had

⁵³ Amitai-Preiss, *War*.



recommenced military movements against Baybars' territory at the same time.⁵⁴ Likewise the gift, whatever it was, may have been no more than symbolic, with its acceptance conveying Baybars' willingness to submit. We cannot be sure however, since we are told little more about the ultimate fate of either the ambassadors or their gift.⁵⁵

The way was prepared for the next exchange of envoys by a singular chain of events. In 664/1266 a Mamluk force sent to Cilicia captured in battle Lev'on, son of the Armenian king, along with some of his close relatives.⁵⁶ King Het'um entered into negotiations with Baybars for the conditions of his son's release. Among the conditions was that Het'um should send to Abaka and obtain from him one Sunqur al-Ashqar, a former Mamluk, who had been in prison in Aleppo in 658/1260 when Hülegü had captured the city. When Hülegü left, he took Sunqur (among others) with him.⁵⁷ Het'um traveled to Abaka's court in 665-66/1267-68 to make the petition, but Sunqur's whereabouts were unknown.⁵⁸ In the following year, 666-67/1268-69, Het'um sent an envoy back to Abaka, who by this time had managed to find Sunqur.⁵⁹ Sunqur was conveyed back to Cilicia, Baybars was informed of his arrival and the exchange of Sunqur for Lev'on was made.⁶⁰

⁵⁴Ibid., 111-14.

⁵⁵Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn al-Furāt, "Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk," Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 54251, fol. 110a; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā M. Ziyādah (Cairo, 1936), 1:553. Also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 120.

⁵⁶"La Chronique Attribuée au Connétable Smbat," tr. Gérard Dédéyan, in *Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades* (Paris, 1980), 118; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 270; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 58; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:118; Grigor, "Archers," 357; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:153.

⁵⁷For an in-depth discussion of Sunqur, Lev'on, and their exchange one for the other see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 118-120. Also see Faql Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Suqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Waḥyāt al-A'yān*, ed. and tr. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 85 (Arabic text); Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 327; and the romantic but inaccurate rendition of Grigor, "Archers," 355.

⁵⁸Amitai-Preiss discusses the various accounts of how Sunqur al-Ashqar was located or contacted in Ilkhanid lands; see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 120. Of them all, I personally find the arguments of Smbat and Grigor most convincing, namely, that Sunqur's whereabouts were at first unknown, and that in fact it took Abaka some time to find him. There was, after all, no special reason for Abaka to keep track of one person from among the prisoners his father had brought out of Aleppo nearly 10 years earlier. Likewise it is quite possible that Sunqur's new life and/or career among the Ilkhanids, whatever it was, took him to any number of locations within their territory. Het'um's request would therefore have necessitated that Sunqur be identified, located, and, if far away from Abaka, brought in to the *ordo*, all of which could easily take months.

⁵⁹Smbat, "Chronique," 120; Grigor, "Archers," 371.

⁶⁰Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:154; Smbat, "Chronique," 120; Grigor, "Archers," 371; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 64; also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 119.



By the time of his dramatic ransom for the Armenian prince, Sunqur had been living with the Mongols for several years, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that he spoke Mongolian with a degree of proficiency. Before letting him go to Cilicia, Abaka seems to have entrusted Sunqur with an oral message to deliver to Baybars. Little record of this message can be found; indeed it seems that the chroniclers were initially unaware of it, since the only reference to it appears in the text of Baybars' correspondence with Abaka in 667/1269, as discussed below.

Nevertheless this oral message reestablished diplomatic contact between the two rulers. Thereafter Baybars and Abaka established a wary, short-lived, and unfriendly set of diplomatic exchanges, facilitated in part by the Armenian king. In 667/1269, for example, Baybars permitted an Ilkhanid envoy to enter his realms bearing written and oral messages, both of which are extant today at least in part.⁶¹ A large chunk of the oral message is preserved:

The King Abaka, when he emerged from the East, took control of all the world. All entered into obedience to him, and no opposer opposed him; he who opposed him died. As for you: [even] if you rose up to the sky or sank down to the ground, you would not free yourself from us. The best policy is that you make peace (*ṣulḥ*) with us. . . . you are a mamluk and were sold in Sivas; how do you [dare] oppose the kings of the earth?⁶²

Here we see a combination of the Mongol imperial ideology of world conquest, and Mongol disdain for slave origin. In fact, Abaka took this opportunity to strike Baybars in his weakest ideological point. Apparently Abaka had as little tolerance for the Mamluk sultans' former bondage as had his own father or their mutual allies the Armenians.

Abaka's written letter was likewise short on grammar and shorter on charm.⁶³ In it Abaka acknowledged that Qutuz, not Baybars, had been responsible for executing Hülegü's envoys in 658/1260; such an acknowledgment would allow Abaka to accept Baybars as a vassal. After discussing Sunqur's children and a number of other Qipchak Turks whom Baybars had requested be sent to Mamluk realms, Abaka went on to brag that only discord among the Mongols themselves had kept him from riding towards (and presumably attacking and demolishing)

⁶¹Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 121; also see his "An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abaya Ilkhan and Sultan Baybars (A.H. 667/A.D. 1268-69)," *Central Asiatic Journal* 38:1 (1994): 11-33.

⁶²Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:140. For a translation of a slightly different version of the text, see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 121.

⁶³For a translation and commentary see Amitai-Preiss, "Exchange."



Baybars. Abaka then reached the crux of the letter, his call for Baybars to become a vassal: "You suggested that 'We [i.e., Baybars] become subject (*naṣīr īl*) and give power [over to Abaka]'; we deem that appropriate from you."⁶⁴ Abaka went on to emphasize the universal obedience enjoyed by his family, then ordered Baybars to send representatives from among his brothers and sons to the Mongol court, where they would learn about the *yāsā* and then be returned to Baybars (presumably to teach him in turn). This was standard Mongol procedure to initiate subordinates.

Baybars' response was even shorter than Abaka's initiative, and was equally unfriendly. It opened with a disinterested tone, saying that only because of "what Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Ashqar said to us"⁶⁵ had Baybars expressed interest to the Armenian king in exchanging embassies. The reference here must be to the oral message sent to Baybars via Sunqur from Abaka, although this is one of the only instances in the histories that we find even this roundabout mention of it. The letter carefully distanced Baybars from Quṭuz (the Envoy Murderer) by emphasizing how Baybars had sent Abaka's embassy back unharmed. The letter then mocked Abaka's attempts to persuade Baybars to any kind of agreement. As evidence for the impossibility of a relationship between them, it attacked the issue of Chinggis Khanid law by arguing that Baybars' *yāsā* was greater than that of Chinggis Khān.⁶⁶ The use of the word *yāsā* here must be understood as a reference to the shari'ah with its concomitant religious supremacy (to Muslim eyes) over any pagan dynastic law. Certainly there is no evidence that Baybars attempted to found or promulgate a set of laws or decrees similar to the *yāsā* of Chinggis Khān; indeed, such developments in legitimizing strategy appeared much later.⁶⁷

Baybars further belittled the Mongols in his response to Abaka's proclamation of universal obedience by pointing to the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt and the death in it of Hülegü's general Kitbugha. He also reminded Abaka of Abaka's intention to send one of his own relatives to Baybars, and Baybars' willingness to trade the favor. This is a startling statement, since the sending of relatives was one way that the Mongols themselves established their vassals. Combined with Baybars' proclaimed

⁶⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 340.

⁶⁵Ibid., 341.

⁶⁶For the *yāsā* see the references in footnote 4.

⁶⁷The Ottomans, for example, did not develop a special law code until Fatih Mehmed promulgated the *kanunname* and *yasakname* during his reign (1449-80). See Halil İnalçık, "Suleiman the Lawgiver and Ottoman Law," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 1 (1969): 105-38.



superiority of the shari‘ah, this statement suggests that Baybars was envisioning at the very least a relationship of equals, if not even that Abaka should be inferior to him.⁶⁸

Unlike in his letters to Berke Khān, the specifically Islamic content of Baybars’ message to Abaka is noticeably muted. Rather he seems in this exchange to have relied ideologically on evocation of military victories over the Ilkhanid forces, denial of interest in relations with Abaka and allusions to his own equality to the Ilkhanid ruler. Although he asserted the supremacy of his own *yāsā* (the shari‘ah) over that of Chinggis Khān, he did not refer to it by its Islamic name. Nor did the letter mention the Abbasid caliph at any point, which was a significant departure from the correspondence sent to Berke Khān. One probable reason for this omission was the hopelessly un-Islamic nature of the recipient. Berke Khān had presented himself as interested in nothing but Islam, which allowed Baybars and his ideologues to sidestep the daunting issues of Mongol legitimacy and prestige that might otherwise have been raised. But it must have been clear that Islamic terminology would be meaningless to Abaka, which thus led to the use of phrasing that would resonate properly. That the embassy led to nothing positive can be inferred from the events of the next year, in which a Mongol force raided the area around Aleppo.⁶⁹

It was not until 670/1272 that a second attempt at so-called diplomacy took place between the two rulers, again through intermediaries. In that year Baybars received envoys from the chief Mongol in Anatolia, Samaghar, and the chief Anatolia minister, Mu‘īn al-Dīn the Parvānah, who were seeking a peace agreement.⁷⁰ Ibn Shaddād reports that Samaghar invited Baybars to send him envoys for Abaka, with whom Samaghar himself would intercede for the Mamluk sultan.⁷¹ Accordingly Baybars chose two amirs and sent them off via the horses of the *barīd*. They went first to Anatolia, where they met with Samaghar and the Parvānah, and from there were conveyed to meet Abaka. The Persian historians mention nothing of the envoys’ audience with Abaka, or even the presence of Mamluk envoys at the Ilkhanid court. If the Mamluk sources are to be believed, however, the meeting was just as unfriendly as the previous one. If there was a written letter no copy remains, thus our information is confined to snippets of the oral message preserved in the chronicles. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir credits the Mamluk amirs with saying to Abaka: “The sultan sends greetings to you and says that the

⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 343.

⁶⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:170; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 361-62; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 33; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 73.

⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:191.

⁷¹ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 34.



envoys of Möngke Temür [of the Golden Horde] have come to him repeatedly [saying] that the sultan [Baybars] should ride from his side, and the king Möngke Temür should ride from his side. Wherever Baybars' horse reached would be his, and wherever Möngke Temür's horse reached would be his.⁷² Clearly the riding out and taking of land would be at the expense of Ilkhanid sovereignty. Abaka's response, also as recorded by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, indicates that he understood this point quite well, for he reportedly became enraged and stormed out of the audience.

Ibn Shaddād presents an alternate, more convincing view: in the oral message Baybars refused vassalage but, in an assumption of personal responsibility for all Muslims, asked Abaka to give back the Muslim lands he held.⁷³ Not surprisingly Abaka found this to be a non-viable option, but suggested that each ruler retain what he already had (and, presumably, refrain from trying to take any more land from the other).⁷⁴ In this report Abaka comes across as willing to consider the establishment of some kind of status quo. Although discussions continued for a time, in the end Baybars' envoys were sent back without any agreement having been reached.⁷⁵

That the negotiations were theoretically still open is indicated by the fact that Abaka sent a second embassy to the Mamluk sultan in the following year; it arrived in Damascus in Šafar 678/August-September 1272. That Baybars was uninterested in an agreement can be inferred from the fact that he seems to have been determined to put the Mongol envoys in their place. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir indicates that they were required to perform the *jūk* three times before Baybars' governor in Aleppo, likewise in Ḥamāh and so on.⁷⁶ Since the *jūk* was a sign of deference and respect to high-ranking Mongols, Baybars indicated his assumption of at least equal status to Abaka by making the Mongol envoys perform it in front of his own local governors.⁷⁷ There was no celebration upon the embassy's arrival, but Baybars had troops brought in and paraded in front of them to impress or awe them.

⁷²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399-400, and copying him, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:192.

⁷³Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 35.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.; Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 128.

⁷⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 404.

⁷⁷Here Baybars may well have been portraying his strength to his own troops by using the *jūk*, which involved getting down on one knee and putting an elbow on the ground. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 27:339. Certainly there might be no small psychological gain for Baybars' own followers from seeing him treat the Mongol envoys in this fashion. For psychological warfare see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 129. Unfortunately, however, in the interest of space I must leave the subject of Baybars' relation to his own troops for a later endeavor.



No copy remains of Abaka's second letter, if there was indeed a written document in addition to the oral message. We know from Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, however, that Abaka wanted a peace agreement (*ṣulḥ*) with Baybars, engineered through the mediation of Sunqur al-Ashqar. But Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir goes on to tell us that Abaka wanted to ratify this treaty by having either Baybars or his heir come to his court. Thus the peace treaty Abaka sought seems to have been no more than the relationship of vassalage he had previously attempted to create. Baybars was not interested, and replied with an echo of his former statement: Abaka might come to Baybars' own court if he desired a peaceful agreement. This reinforced the Mamluk presentation of the relationship as one in which Abaka was at best of equal standing, if not even inferior to Baybars. Of course from Abaka's point of view such a relationship was inconceivable.⁷⁸ Only a few days after Baybars sent the embassy back towards the borders, he himself set out to engage and defeat a Mongol force at the Euphrates. Baybars al-Manṣūrī considers this battle and Baybars' victory in it to have been a turning point for the Mamluk sultan, after which Baybars' reputation increased greatly and his fear of Ilkhanid strength decreased.⁷⁹ Certainly this marked the end of Baybars' attempts at diplomatic interaction with the Ilkhanids as well.

Qalāwūn had no diplomatic exchanges with Abaka, but Mamluk-Ilkhanid relations in general under Qalāwūn did pick up where they had left off under Baybars: in a state of open hostility and an ideological relationship of good Muslim vs. bad infidel on the one hand and Glorious Khān vs. lowly rebel on the other. This culminated in Qalāwūn's defeat of Abaka's brother Möngke Temür⁸⁰ at the battle of Homs in 680/1281. It was only when both Abaka and Möngke Temür died later that same year and another one of Hülegü's sons, Tegüder, converted to Islam that a wrench was thrown into the Mamluk ideological works.

In Jumādā I 681/August 1282 the newly-named Aḥmad Tegüder sent envoys to Qalāwūn. Modern scholars have interpreted this in various ways, for which see the pioneering work of P. M. Holt in particular, as well as the revision of Adel Allouche.⁸¹ Holt points out the caution, hostility, and fear the Mamluks manifested

⁷⁸Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 404.

⁷⁹Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 76.

⁸⁰Not to be confused with the Golden Horde ruler of the same name.

⁸¹P. M. Holt, "The Ilkhan Aḥmad's Embassies to Qalāwūn: Two Contemporary Accounts," *BSOAS* 49 (1986): 128-32; Adel Allouche, "Tegüder's Ultimatum to Qalāwūn," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1990): 437-46. Also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 147, 211; Peter Jackson, "Aḥmad Takūdār," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London, 1984), 1:661-62; J. A. Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns," *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1968), 5:365; Bertold Spuler, *The Mongols in History*, tr. G. Wheeler (London, 1971), 44-45; Denis Sinor, "Les relations entre les Mongols et l'Europe jusqu'à la mort d'Arghoun et de Béla



towards the Mongols in general and Tegüder's envoys in particular, but ultimately suggests that Tegüder was seeking some kind of a truce with Qalāwūn.⁸² Allouche proposes a revision of this view by arguing that Tegüder's purpose in contacting the Mamluk sultan was to establish Qalāwūn as a subordinate to himself.⁸³ Here I will follow Allouche's assessment, namely that Tegüder's first communication to Qalāwūn was a call for the latter to become Tegüder's vassal, since divisions of religion no longer separated them.⁸⁴

Tegüder's first set of ambassadors were Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī and Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Taytī al-Āmidī. They were brought under close escort to Cairo, where they met with Qalāwūn in the autumn of 681/1282. According to Shāfi' ibn 'Alī the embassy was received in great style, at night, in an audience lit by numerous candles.⁸⁵ Tegüder had sent both oral and written messages. The letter proclaimed the good news both of Tegüder's conversion and his accession to the throne, from which he intended to set right Muslim affairs. This established Tegüder immediately as a rival to Qalāwūn in the realm of virtuous Muslim rulership, and thereby added a new ideological dimension to the weight of Mongol prestige and Ilkhanid hostility. Tegüder informed Qalāwūn of a Mongol *kuriltai* that had taken place in which all the participants had wanted to attack the Muslims, but he alone had dissented out of a sense of moral good. Here Tegüder may have been hoping to intimidate Qalāwūn with the image of Mongols united against him, while simultaneously reinforcing the portrayal of his own moral integrity.

Thereafter Tegüder's letter included a lengthy section on the various deeds the new Ilkhan had performed for the good of the Muslim community. First and foremost was his establishment of the rule of Islamic law (*nawāmīs al-shar' al-muḥammadī*), which may have functioned as his substitute for the *yāsā* vaunted by Hülegü and Abaka. (It is significant that Tegüder and his cousin Töde Möngke both began their reigns in this fashion, and at approximately the same time.) The letter went on to talk about Tegüder's pardoning of criminals, his inspection of the organization of pious endowments, his construction of new buildings for religious use, and the regularization of protection for the pilgrimage caravans. Particularly in these last two areas Tegüder threatened Qalāwūn's legitimacy, for Qalāwūn was a great founder of religious building projects, and was also responsible not

IV," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 3, no. 1 (1956): 54.

⁸²Holt, "Embassies," 128, 132.

⁸³Allouche, "Ultimatum," 438.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 438.

⁸⁵Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-Faḍl al-Ma'thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām al-Tadmūrī (Sidon/Beirut, 1418/1998), 101; also see Holt, "Embassies," 129.



only for the pilgrims who passed through his own realms, but for all pilgrimage activities in the Hijaz as well.

The letter went on to inform Qalāwūn that Tegüder had ordered his soldiers not to harass merchants travelling back and forth between his lands and Qalāwūn's territory. Then it reported that Tegüder had caught Qalāwūn's spy disguised as a dervish, whom out of the goodness of his heart he had sent back to Qalāwūn rather than execute. This allowed Tegüder to arrogate the moral high ground to himself, from which he (or his scribes) proceeded to lecture Qalāwūn about the evil effect spies had on the Muslim community. The letter then summed up with the point of Tegüder's message, in which he demanded that Qalāwūn submit to his authority and enter into a vassal-overlord relationship with him.⁸⁶

In his response Qalāwūn was faced with the ideological ramifications of Tegüder's conversion, which denied him the easy defense of a good Muslim ruler facing a non-Muslim foe, and presented him with an imposing rival in the realm of responsible Islamic rule. The Mamluk response was twice as long as the Ilkhanid letter, and it addressed not only Tegüder's written letter point by point, but also the oral message (*mushāfahah*) that accompanied it.⁸⁷ Qalāwūn's letter opened with an acknowledgment of Tegüder's conversion and his emergence from the ways of his relatives. The letter expressed Qalāwūn's relief over Tegüder's new-found faith, then introduced a critical point in the Mamluk sultan's ideological self-defense by praising God that Qalāwūn had converted first and thus had seniority in religion: "We thanked God for making us among the predecessors and first ones to this station and rank [or: to this religion, station, and rank⁸⁸], for making firm our feet in every situation of endeavor (*ijtihād*) and holy fight (*jihād*) where without Him feet would quake."⁸⁹ Ideologically this projected religious primacy was akin to Qalāwūn's status vis-à-vis Töde Möngke of the Golden Horde, and gave the Mamluk sultan a base from which to withstand the Muslim Tegüder's call for vassalage.

Qalāwūn's letter went on to acknowledge the various ways Tegüder had acted as a good Muslim ruler, and assured him that this was correct procedure. Coming on the heels of his assertion of religious seniority, this had the effect of reinforcing

⁸⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 9-10; Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Faql*, 94-100; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:249-54; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 506-10; 'Abd Allāh ibn Faḍl Allāh Vassāf al-Haḡrat, *Tajziyat al-Amṣār wa-Tajziyat al-A'ṣār*, ed. by Joseph Hammer-Purgstall as *Geschichte Wassaf's: persisch herausgegeben und deutsch übersetzt* (Vienna, 1856), 234-39; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:978-80; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḡ*, 8:65-68. Also see Allouche, "Ultimatum," 438-40.

⁸⁷This allows us to reconstruct much more of the oral message than usual.

⁸⁸Mufaḡḡal Ibn Abī al-Faḡā'il, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fīmā ba'da Tārīkh Ibn al-'Amīd* (Paris, 1911, 1920, 1932), 512.

⁸⁹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 11.



Qalāwūn's image as a Muslim ruler who already knew what he was doing, and was therefore superior to a newcomer like Tegüder. The letter's tone became critical when it castigated previous Ilkhanids for taking control of other rulers and their kingdoms, notably the Saljuqs, without due cause, and warned that this kind of oppression was not the behavior of a pious king. Such a statement contributed to the image of Qalāwūn as knowledgeable advisor, while further setting the stage for his later treatment of the question of vassalage.

On the freedom of merchants the letter asserted Qalāwūn's own sovereignty by assuring Tegüder that Qalāwūn, too, had ordered his governors not to harass them; this had the effect of making their free passage a matter requiring the attention of both rulers. It is significant that the letter specifically mentioned the governors of al-Raḥbah and al-Bīrah, both of which forts were thorns in the Ilkhanids' military side. Turning to the question of the alleged spy, the letter cast doubts on Tegüder's projection of moral superiority by charging that real dervishes had been mistaken for spies and murdered in Mongol lands, and that Tegüder himself had sent quite a few actual spies into Qalāwūn's territory.

Thereafter Qalāwūn's letter came to the questions of vassalage. Carefully it avoided a direct answer but intimated a certain lack of interest on Qalāwūn's part by going on at length about the importance of true friendship. That Qalāwūn had some misgivings about Tegüder's understanding of the nature of friendship was then made clear when the letter condemned Tegüder for using inappropriately harsh and threatening language in an ostensibly cordial message.

Finally the letter addressed Tegüder's oral message, which can be reconstructed to include three points. First Tegüder said that he would stay in his own territory (and not attack Qalāwūn's lands) if Qalāwūn would reach an agreement with him (*ittifāq*), i.e., become his vassal. In response Qalāwūn's letter suggested that an agreement could only be reached if Tegüder had true friendship in mind, i.e., if it were in fact a peaceful agreement and not a vassal-overlord arrangement. Second, Tegüder suggested that if Qalāwūn were not really interested in expansion, he should stay within his own territories (and stop raiding into Tegüder's territory). In reply the letter lambasted Tegüder for the conduct of his governor and brother Qunghurtai in Anatolia, claiming that Qunghurtai was shedding blood, wreaking destruction, enslaving innocents, selling free persons as slaves, and all while the Islamic tax (*kharāj*) from that land was coming to Tegüder.⁹⁰ This portrayed Tegüder as the bad ruler oppressing Muslims, and left the door open should Qalāwūn decide later to present himself as the virtuous Muslim savior-king freeing the oppressed in Anatolia. Third, Tegüder challenged that if Qalāwūn refused to

⁹⁰Tegüder actually did execute Qunghurtai later, but this had no particular effect on Qalāwūn's letter.



stop raiding into Tegüder's land, he should choose a battlefield (and they would settle the matter that way). In response Qalāwūn's letter ridiculed the Ilkhanid armies by pointing out that they had seen battlefields in Syria before, and were afraid to come back to them any time soon.⁹¹

In this exchange, as in his relationship to the Golden Horde, Qalāwūn's legitimacy rested primarily on the new concept of religious seniority. Nevertheless he and his chancellery did not hesitate to refer to past Mamluk military victories over the Ilkhanids as Baybars had done. Allouche has argued that Qalāwūn may also have relied on the position of the Abbasid caliph, to whom all Muslims (and therefore presumably Tegüder as well) owed allegiance. Allouche's argument centers on the fact that the caliph was in fact mentioned early in the correspondence, for a sentence to this effect was preserved in those copies of the letters found in Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, Vassāf, and Bar Hebraeus.⁹² Reasons for the omission of the caliphal reference from the copies in Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Ibn al-Dawādārī, and al-Maqrīzī are worth investigation, although we shall not be able to do so here.⁹³ But if the caliph was indeed included in the correspondence, then this confirms that al-Ḥākim continued to play an ideological role in foreign diplomacy, just as he did in Qalāwūn's relations with the Golden Horde. And if the deletion of the caliphal reference in Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (and through him many of the other Mamluk chronicles) was deliberate, then this could support the thesis that Qalāwūn was uneasy about that caliphal role.

Nevertheless Qalāwūn's ideological position as (potentially) caliph-brandishing religious senior was still tenuous, at least to some minds. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir went to the trouble of shoring up Qalāwūn's arguments in his biography of the sultan, where he discredited Tegüder at length by portraying his conversion as fake and an attempt to dupe Qalāwūn.⁹⁴ By contrast, other Mamluk historians (especially those not writing under sultanic patronage) were either neutral or even convinced of the genuineness of Tegüder's conversion.⁹⁵ Regardless, this marked the beginning of a trend for Qalāwūn, his descendants, and their ideologues, who were reluctant to believe that any Ilkhanid conversion to Islam could be genuine, although they were quick to believe it from the Golden Horde. Such a point of view was ideologically advantageous for the Qalawunids, since it allowed them to revert to

⁹¹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 15-16.

⁹²Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Faḍl*, 102-3; Vassāf, *Tajziyah*, 234; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 510-18; also see Allouche, "Ultimatum," 442.

⁹³Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 8; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:249-54; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:978-80.

⁹⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 4.

⁹⁵Al-Dhahabī, "Ṭabaqāt," *Dār al-Kutub*, Cairo, MS 10682, fol. 24b; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:211.



the older model of Mamluks protecting Muslims from infidels or, in this case, false converts.

Tegüder's second embassy arrived in Damascus on 12 Dhū al-Hijjah 682/2 March 1284. The Ilkhanid's spiritual advisor Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān was in charge, riding with a large, armed escort and the *jitr* or royal parasol.⁹⁶ In Mamluk lands only the sultan rode with the *jitr*, thus Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān's appearance with it was a challenge to Qalāwūn's sovereignty. The shaykh refused to relinquish the parasol at the border, but was deprived of it and of his armed escort against his will by the Mamluk governor of Aleppo, who had gone to meet him.⁹⁷ This cold welcome was designed to convey Qalāwūn's rejection of any further thoughts of vassalage, should Tegüder entertain them. Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the truncated remainder of his entourage were conveyed secretly and under heavy guard to Damascus "in the medieval equivalent of a sealed train," as Holt has so aptly put it.⁹⁸ There they were lodged in the citadel and given considerable daily stipends—the shaykh himself reportedly received 1,000 dirhams per day⁹⁹—but were nevertheless forced to cool their heels for six months. During this period their sender Tegüder died, and Qalāwūn met with them only after verifying this fact.

Qalāwūn then received the embassy at night in early Jumādā II 683/August 1284, surrounded by an impressive display of lighted candles (reportedly 1,500¹⁰⁰) and his best mamluks, dressed in their finest. Without telling the envoys of Tegüder's death, Qalāwūn heard the content of the letter.¹⁰¹ It had been dated Rabī' I 682/May-June 1283, and in it Tegüder outlined the way he and his Mongol cousins in various khanates had managed to shelve their past disagreements and agree to return to a state of unity.¹⁰² As in his first letter, Tegüder may have been trying to present a united Mongol front in order to awe Qalāwūn. Tegüder's letter went on to point out that the Ilkhan's sending of the shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān had been at Qalāwūn's request,¹⁰³ then finished by dropping the references to obedience and submission (*tā'ah*) that had been used in the first letter, and requested only a peaceful agreement (*ṣulḥ* and *ittifāq*). Allouche suggests that this change in wording reflected Tegüder's new interest in negotiations as opposed to his previous demand

⁹⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 49.

⁹⁷Ibid.; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:261.

⁹⁸Holt, "Embassies," 132.

⁹⁹Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:261.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 265.

¹⁰¹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 68.

¹⁰²Ibid., 70.

¹⁰³Ibid., 71.



for Qalāwūn's vassalage.¹⁰⁴ But immediately thereafter came a warning to Qalāwūn to ignore naysayers: "Perhaps a small group of fools from among those who like discord and hypocrisy will not agree to an accord ([since] their dispositions are incompatible with peaceful agreement), desiring [thereby] to put out the light of God with their mouths (but God's light is complete!), and to go against their community out of a greedy ambition to accomplish their desire. What is required here therefore is that their words not be heard and their deeds left [alone]."¹⁰⁵ If Tegüder had been interested in negotiations then this type of closure, combined with the grandiose manner in which Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān crossed into Qalāwūn's realm, does not suggest negotiation between equals, but rather between superior and subordinate.

Obviously Qalāwūn and his ideologues were saved from the necessity of working out an ideologically appropriate response to Tegüder by the happenstance of the latter's death. Shortly after hearing the content of Tegüder's message Qalāwūn demonstrated the depth of his antagonism towards his deceased co-religionist by moving Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the other envoys into different quarters in the citadel, drastically reducing their stipends, relieving them of the bulk of their possessions, and leaving them to languish. Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān himself died shortly thereafter; his cohorts remained incarcerated until most of them were eventually freed dramatically by the intervention of a sympathetic poet and one of the Mamluk amirs.¹⁰⁶ Thereafter Qalāwūn returned to ideological business as usual with Tegüder's pagan successor Arghūn.

To conclude: early Mamluk assertions of legitimacy for the external audience were primarily directed at and defined in relation to the Mongols. For the Mamluk sultans the basic threat of Ilkhanid hostility was further complicated by the more abstract problem of Mongol prestige. Nor was this prestige an issue merely with the Ilkhanids, but also had a significant effect on Mamluk relations with the rulers of the Golden Horde. As former slaves in a world obsessed with genealogy, and as Qipchak Turkish nobodies faced with the weight of the divinely-ordained Chinggis Khanid dynasty, its impressive military legacy, and its obsession with the position of laws and decrees, Baybars, Qalāwūn, and their ideologues turned to a combination of military action and religious principles for definition. These included the manipulation of the Abbasid caliph and his own prestige, an emphasis on those military aspects of the faith in which the Mamluks could excel, proclamation

¹⁰⁴Allouche, "Utimum," 443.

¹⁰⁵Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 71.

¹⁰⁶Al-Suqā'ī, *Tālī*, 107; Al-Dhahabī, "Ṭabaqāt," Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 10682, fol. 26b with 11 lines of the poetry itself; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:217 has 20 lines.



of the shari‘ah’s superiority over the *yāsā*, and, when matters were complicated by Ilkhanid conversion and religious rivalry, the concept of seniority in religion.



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