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Bethany Walker

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## « The Mongol Invasions of Bilad al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymiyya's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas ». *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 11/2, 2007, pp. 89-120.

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- 1 The military campaigns launched by the Ilkhanids against the Mamluk state between 1260 and 1312 presented numerous ideological challenges, not the least of which hinged on the justness of one Muslim nation to wage war on another. The conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam in the late 13th century launched a bi-lateral campaign of religious propaganda aimed at validating to fighting forces and civilians alike the invasion of Syria by the Mongols, on one side, and the necessity of confronting such aggressions, on the other. Such efforts culminated with the reign of Ġāzān Ḥān who presented himself as the protector of Islam while leading three attacks on the city of Damascus.
- 2 It is against this background that D.A. examines three anti-Mongol legal opinions (*fatwā*) written by Ibn Taymiyya. In order to contextualize the *fatwā* – to more fully understand their objectives and meaning – she pulls on two extra-judicial sources, the text of the guarantee of protection (*amān*) made by Ġāzān Ḥān to the people of Damascus on the eve of his campaign against the city in 1300 and letters exchanged between this Mongol ruler and the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The resulting analysis reveals the attitudes of the Syrian jurist towards a range of religious heresies, as well as gauges the political climate of the day, at a critical point in Syrian history.
- 3 As not only an eye witness to the conquest of Damascus, but a participant in Mamluk-Mongol diplomacy (shuttling messages between officials of the two courts), Ibn Taymiyya's legal opinions are molded by his meetings with imperial officials on both sides, his familiarity with Mongol political ideology, and his personal zeal for socio-religious reform at home. Although none of the texts of the *fatwā* bear dates, D.A. suggests

they were issued in response to specific political events: the first in 1299, following the Mamluk defeat at Wadī al-Khaznādār; the second in 1312, before Öljeitü's advance on Syria. According to D.A., the first and third *fatwā* are fully juridical texts, seeking to define the religious status of the soldiers on each side of the conflict. To this end, Ibn Taymiyya draws on early Islamic history and contemporary religious schisms to define orthodoxy, distinguishing between true Muslims (represented by the Mamluk state) and heretics (Mongol converts). The second *fatwa*, on the other hand, falls more into the category of a historical text, as it is a broad polemic against the Mongol state, critiquing the Mongol world order (the heavenly mandate) and their deviant theology (Chinggis Khan as son of God), religious innovation (*yasa* as opposed to *šarī'a*), and a religious tolerance that compromises the status of Islam in the state.

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**Thèmes** : 4.1. Histoire médiévale

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