

*Denise Aigle. Les Invasions de Ġāzān Ḥān en Syrie.  
Polémiques sur sa conversion à l'Islam et la présence de  
chrétiens dans ses armées*

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# Denise Aigle. *Les Invasions de Ġāzān Ḥān en Syrie. Polémiques sur sa conversion à l'Islam et la présence de chrétiens dans ses armées*

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Denise Aigle. « Les Invasions de Ġāzān Ḥān en Syrie. Polémiques sur sa conversion à l'Islam et la présence de chrétiens dans ses armées », in : D. Aigle, dir., *Le Bilād al-Šām face aux mondes extérieurs. La perception de l'Autre et la représentation du souverain*. Beyrouth, Ifpo, 2012, p. 293-323, in 4°.

- 1 The difficult relationship between the Mongol Ilkhanids and the Mamluk sultanate always has attracted much scholarly attention, and in this framework the particular rule of the Ilkhan Ġāzān Ḥān (r. 694-703/1295-1304) is no exception. Most studies however have so far focused on the military aspects of the relations, as well as on the diplomatic exchanges that followed. The diplomatic exchanges between the Ilkhanids and Mamluks, that mirrors their difficult relations, dealt mostly with the establishment of their respective legitimacy and superiority over one another, through the use of thorough argumentation. In this article, Denise Aigle pushes the issue further, in studying the mechanisms used by both rules to discredit the other party. The basis of her argument is the polemic about Ġāzān's use of Christians troops at the time of his first campaign in Syria (699/1299-1300). The polemic and dispute regarding Ġāzān's true conversion to Islam is best seen through the diplomatic correspondence exchanged between the Ilkhanid and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 700/1301, as well as in Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* (the so-called "anti-mongol" *fatwā*). After an overview of the historical context preceding Ġāzān's letter to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, D. Aigle

concentrates on the corpus of letters kept through different versions in Mamluk sources (chronicles and chancery manual). There she shows how both rulers challenge their respective value as Muslim ruler based on a strict Koranic phrasing and argumentation. Whereas Ġāzān Ḥān's letter, drafted on the theme of the "warning" (*indār*, *naḍīr*, *mundīr*), aimed at placing the Ilkhanid ruler as the just follower of the Prophet, the Mamluk's response on the other hand, attacks Ġāzān Ḥān's true nature as Muslim. Central to the Mamluk's argumentation is Ġāzān's use of Christian troops within his army to combat Muslim brothers. The later argument is also further developed by the Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyya. In his *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to resolve to major issues: that of the status of the soldiers employed by the Mongols, and that of the nature of the Ikhanids' Islam. Basing himself on Islamic precedents and tradition, Ibn Taymiyya questions Ġāzān's conversion to Islam qualifying him as rebel (*bāghī*) and apostate, and his troops as hypocrites. Furthermore, the association of Mongolian tradition (celestial mandate) to Islamic practice is seen by the Mamluk scholar as a true heresy. Whereas the major aim of D. Aigle's article is to show how the polemic around Ġāzān's conversion emerged within the Mamluk sultanate as a tool to discredit the Ilkhanids, which is done successfully, another major asset of the article lies in the methodology used. Though the corpus under study had already been analyzed by several scholars, the use of discourse analysis methodology truly enlighten the corpus and help further understanding the building of ideology and legitimacy in Ilkhanid and Mamluk rule.

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