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Jihād as a Tool for Sanctifying and Constructing the Image of Quṭuz as a *Mujāhid* Sultan

Mehdi Berriah

Abstract
Analysing the Mamluk chronicles reveals the process of sanctification of Quṭuz by jihād was realised through three narratives: his leadership during the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, his alleged noble origins and his being chosen by God to fight and defeat the Mongols. The intersection and overlap of the Mamluk chroniclers' accounts of the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt fully underscore the intention of some chroniclers to sanctify the character of Quṭuz by conferring on him a particular religious aura through various literary topoi. This article highlights the process of sanctification of Qutuz by jihād in the Mamluk chronicles. Regarding the narrative sources, the first step identifies the topoï in the different narratives analysed. Then, we examine the modalities and processes of the sanctification and construction of the figure of the hero of Quṭuz through the prism of jihād. Finally, general conclusions drawn from the analysis of the collected information are proposed.

Keywords
Quṭuz - jihād; sanctification; topoï; ʿAyn Jālūt; mujāhid; furūsiyya.

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JIHĀD AS A TOOL FOR SANCTIFYING AND CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF QUṬUZ AS A *MUJĀHID* SULTAN

Mehdi Berriah*

The institutionalisation of *jihād* by the *ʿulamāʾ* – scholars – as a religious obligation within the framework of Muslim political authority, whether it be *jihād al-ṭalab* (offensive) or *jihād al-dafʿ* (defensive), has, in effect, transformed *jihād* into a tool that can be mobilised for political purposes. It was probably the Umayyads who made *jihād* central to their policy to the extent that it largely became the Umayyad *raison d'être* and the driving force of the dynasty, at least until the end of the reign of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 125/743).[1] The mobilisation of *jihād* as a political instrument is particularly evident in periods marked by acute external threats, such as during the Crusades and the Mongol invasions.[2] Yet this politicisation of *jihād* by Muslim rulers does not exclude the

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[1] K. Y. Blankinship, *The End of the Jihâd State. The Reign of Hishām Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[2] E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade. Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient), 1968, 59-130; C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 89-255; M. Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", in *Les Mamelouks: les cavaliers de l'Islam. Études sur l'art de la guerre chez les Mamelouks*, ed. Mehdi Berriah (Paris: Héritage, 2022), 176-215; M. Berriah, *L'art de la guerre chez les Mamelouks (1250-1375): stratégies et tactiques* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 152-157; M. Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya: between Praise and Criticism," *Arabian Humanities* 14 (2020): 11-28; M. Berriah, "Représentations, sunnanisation et sacralisation de la *furūsiyya* à l'époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 67 (2020): 234-237; M. Berriah, "Combattre par la plume, le prêche et l'épée: les représentations du rôle des ulémas dans l'effort du *jihād* mamelouk (moitié viie/xiiie — début ixe/xive siècles)," in *Représentations*

presence of deep religious conviction - quite the opposite: it often accompanies or reinforces it. This double register – instrumentalization and conviction – is not contradictory in the sources: it is the very grammar by which chronicles render *jihād* both politically necessary and theologically salvific.

Posthumous sanctification through *jihād* is a rarer phenomenon, exemplified most notably by rulers such as Nūr al-Dīn al-Zinkī (d. 569/1174), Saladin (d. 589/1193), and Baybars (d. 676/1277), who arguably represent its most compelling instances. This sanctification can be explained by the extent and intensity of their *jihād*-related activities as well as by the array of instruments employed in its pursuit – ranging from the mobilisation of human and material resources, to the engagement of the *ʿulamāʾ* and religious devotees, and the use of propaganda aimed at rallying support, raising awareness, and motivating as broad a spectrum of Muslim forces as possible in the struggle against the Crusaders and, in Baybars's case, the Mongols – against whom they achieved a number of significant victories.[3]

The case of Quṭuz stands apart from the examples above and is, in several respects, unique. He was the only Mamluk sultan – and likely the only Muslim ruler more broadly – whose name was sanctified through *jihād* despite a reign of less than a year, and this on account of a single major confrontation: the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt in 658/1260. It was his victory over the Ilkhanid forces commanded by Kitbugha (d. 658/1260), operating under Hülegü (d. 663/1265), and the potent symbolism associated with this triumph, that elevated Quṭuz to the pantheon of Islamic holy warriors.

An analysis of the Mamluk chronicles reveals that the sanctification of Quṭuz through *jihād* was articulated through three principal narrative strands: his leadership at the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, his purportedly noble lineage, and his portrayal as divinely chosen to confront and defeat the Mongols. Close cross-referencing of Mamluk-period accounts of the battle highlights the tendency of certain chroniclers to confer upon Quṭuz a distinctive religious aura, shaped through the use of specific literary *topoi*.

et symbolique de la guerre et de la paix dans le monde arabe, ed. Sylvie Denoix and Salam Diab-Duranton (Cairo: Ifao, 2024), 254-255.

[3] Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade*, 67-120; A. Troadec, "Baybars and the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām: The Construction of Legitimacy," *Mamluk Studies Review* 18 (2014-2015): 121-132, 137-146; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", 179-211. See also A. Fuess, "Ottoman Ġazwah- Mamluk Ǧihād. Two Arms on the Same Body?," in *Everything is on the Move. The "Mamluk Empire" as Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2014), 271-275.

While R. Chapoutot-Rémadi, in her unpublished dissertation *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamelouke*, devoted a section to this theme,[4] the present article seeks to complement her study by bringing forward a number of additional elements.

Methodologically, the sources examined here belong to distinct genres – chronicles, *furūsiyya* treatises, poetry, and biographical notices – each shaped by its own narrative conventions and rhetorical purposes. Rather than approaching them as uniform repositories of "facts," the analysis that follows treats them as constructive frameworks that selectively monumentalize Quṭuz. As far as possible, an attempt has been made to establish cross-attestation among the sources.

This article analyses the construction of Quṭuz's sanctified image through *jihād* as presented in the Mamluk chronicles. Drawing on narrative sources, the study first sheds light on the context in which Quṭuz emerges. In a second step, the study identifies the recurring motifs shared across various accounts. It then examines the modalities and narrative strategies through which the figure of Quṭuz is shaped as a heroic combatant in the cause of *jihād*. The article concludes with a synthesis of the insights gained from this textual analysis.

I. Quṭuz in the Sources

Little is known of Quṭuz's life prior to his seizure of power on 24 dhū al-qaʿda 657/12 November 1259. His name appears for the first time in the sources at the beginning of the reign of al-Muʿīzz Aybak al-Turkumānī (d. 655/1257). To better understand Quṭuz's rise to prominence and his trajectory, it is necessary to review the key events surrounding the early foundation of the Mamluk Sultanate.

In the wake of the failure of the Seventh Crusade, led by Louis IX, Tūrān Shāh, son and successor of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 647/1249), founder of the Baḥriyya Mamluk regiment, was assassinated by his father's Mamluks. No matter what system of government was put in place, the monopoly of power was henceforth held by the army or, in other words, by the Baḥriyya Mamluks, who constituted its main element.[5] Seeking to preserve the appearance of Ayyubid sovereignty,

[4] R. Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke sous les premiers sultans Baḥrides: 648/1250-741/1340*, PhD dissertation (Aix-en-Provence: University of Provence, 1993), vol. 1, 412-452.

[5] S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols. The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193-1260*, (Albany: New York, 1977), 303-304. On the Baḥriyya regiment see D. Ayalon, "Le régiment Bahriya dans l'armée mamelouke," in *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt (1250-1517)*, ed. David Ayalon

the Baḥriyya therefore decided to recognise as *sulṭāna* the wife of their former master al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, Umm Khalīl, better known as Shajarat al-Durr (d. 655/1257), who became one of the rare Muslim women to exercise sovereign power, after the famous example of Raḍiyya, *sulṭāna* of Delhi in 634/1236.[6] What distinguishes Shajarat al-Durr is that she was the only woman of servile origin to have exercised power in an Arabic-speaking region of the *dār al-Islām*, where Islamic religious traditions of political authority persisted uninterrupted from the period of the conquests, excluding women from any form of political governance. Nevertheless, the brief episode of Shajarat al-Durr's exercise of power had no consequences for the place of women in Muslim politics.[7]

The murder of Tūrān Shāh, followed by the appointment of Shajarat al-Durr, definitively marked the transfer of power to the Mamluks.[8] However, Shajarat al-Durr's legitimacy, which rested on her status as the wife of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, was too fragile for her power to be recognised. As a woman, she had no legitimacy to rule; Sunni Muslim tradition is clear on this point.[9]

The other Muslim rulers did not recognise Shajarat al-Durr's sultanate under any circumstances. Proof of this rejection is in the derogatory and humiliating remark made by the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿṣim (d. 656/1258), who suggested, in a letter he sent to the *sulṭāna* in 648/1250, that if there were no more men in the country, he should send one to govern Egypt.[10] However, it was above all the claim to the throne by the Ayyubids of Syria, towards whom there remained

(London: Variorum, 1977), part III, 133-141; S. Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army," *Studia Islamica* 45 (1977): 65-99; S. Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army (Conclusion)," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 147-182; L. Northrup, "The Baḥrī Mamlūk sultanate, 1250-1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Islamic Egypt*, *640-1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 247-251.

[6] M. Athar Ali, "Raḍiyya," *EI²*, vol. 8, 384. On the historical figure of Shajarat al-Durr see S. Soetens, "Šağarat ad-Durr: A comparative Study of Three Historical Sources," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 30 (1999): 97-112.

[7] A. Levanoni, "Šağar ad-Durr: A Case of Female Sultane in Medieval Islam," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras III, Proceedings of the 6th, 7th and 8th International Colloquium, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1997, 1998 and 1999*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Jo van Steenbergen (Louvain: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 209-210; 217-218.

[8] S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 304; Ammann, "Shadjar *al-Durr*", *EI²*, vol. 9, 181.

[9] The following hadith is reported: لن يُفلح قوم وَلّوا أمرهم امرأة "A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper." al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Ibdāʿ, 2020), 523, hadith 4425.

[10] إن كانت الرجال قد عدمت عندكم فأعلمونا حتى نسير إليكم رجلًا

Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1997), vol. 1, 463-464.

a certain loyalty,[11] in particular to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (d. 659/1261), that constituted the Achilles heel of the young Mamluk sultanate. Aware of her weakness, Shajarat al-Durr decided, in order to strengthen her position and consolidate the sultanate, to marry the *atabeg* (commander-in-chief of the armies) Aybak al-Turkumānī, who took the title of al-Malik al-Muʿīzz and to whom she ceded power.[12] In all likelihood, this appointment of Aybak was initially intended to be no more than a temporary solution until a more durable one could be found.[13]

However, Mamluk power was not recognised as legitimate, and Aybak was well aware of this. The Mamluks still had to try to follow in the footsteps of the Ayyubids. To this end, Aybak offered the Ayyubids a little power by elevating to the rank of sultan the Ayyubid al-Ashraf Mūsā, a young descendant of the Ayyubid dynasty, aged barely six. The latter was only a front sultan since, as al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd reports, "diplomas and rescripts were drawn up in the name of both sovereigns, but it was al-Muʿīzz [Aybak] who held the government and administration of the kingdom, and all that remained to the child was his title".[14]

This strategy was intended to counter the political plans of the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, master of Damascus, who clearly had designs on Cairo. Seeing no change in the consideration of the Mamluk sultanate by the neighbouring Ayyubid powers in Syria, Aybak was determined to fight al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, who would sooner or later attack Egypt to seize the power for which he had the most legitimate claim. As the grandson of Saladin and the most powerful Ayyubid prince in Syria, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf possessed a far stronger dynastic claim than Aybak, the former Mamluk of his late cousin and sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.[15]

Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf sent his forces to Gaza to conquer Egypt and overthrow Aybak. However, the Ayyubid troops were defeated by the emir Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy, leader of the Baḥriyya, in Rajab 648/October 1250.[16] In Dhū al-qaʿda 648/January 1251, it was again Aqṭāy who was commissioned by Aybak to fight

[11] S. Runciman, *A History of the* Crusades (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), vol. 3, 275.

[12] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Mohamed Rahim, *Die Chronik des ibn Wāṣil. Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil. Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb. Kritische Edition des letzten Teils (646-1248-659/1261) mit Kommentar. Untergang des Ayyubiden und Beginn des Mamlukenherrschaft* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 90; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra fī tārīkh al-hijra*, ed. Donald Richards (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1998), 3-4.

[13] Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 303.

[14] Al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd, *Kitāb al-majmūʿ al-mubārak, Chronique des Ayyoubides (602-658/1205-6-1259-60)*, french translation Françoise Micheau and Anne-Marie Eddé (Paris: *L'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 16, 1994), 90. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 464.

[15] Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 320-321.

[16] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 465.

the Ayyubid coalition from Syria, still led by al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. The confrontation took place in a locality called Kurāʿ, near al-ʿAbāsiyya, and ended in another defeat of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, who was forced to flee the battlefield and return to Damascus, leaving several of his relatives to be captured by Aybak's army. Among the prisoners were al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrānshāh, one of Saladin's sons, his brother Nuṣrat al-Dīn Muḥammad, al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā b. al-Manṣūr, the emir of Homs, and al-Malik Ṣālih ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. al-ʿAdil, emir of Damascus.[17] In the wake of this victory, Aybak ordered Aqṭāy to seize part of southern Palestine, including Gaza, and the Syrian coast.[18] To consolidate his power in Cairo further, Aybak, in 650/1252, removed the young al-Ashraf Mūsā from the throne to take sole possession of the title of sultan of Egypt, and he appointed Quṭuz *nāʾib al-sulṭān* (vice-sultan).[19]

Aybak took a dim view of the growing popularity and influence of Aqṭāy and the Mamluk Baḥriyya after their successes against the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and the rebellion of the Bedouin of Upper and Middle Egypt led by the chief Ḥisn al-Dīn Thaʿlab in 652/1253.[20] Aybak believed the power of the Baḥriyya chief posed a threat to his authority. On Wednesday 3 Shaʿbān 652/18 September 1254, Aybak invited Aqṭāy to the citadel and had him assassinated. Among the three assassins identified by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), Quṭuz is mentioned first.[21] When rumours of Aqṭāy's murder were confirmed, the Baḥriyya Mamluks, including Baybars al-Bunduqdarī, Qalāwūn al-Alfī and Sunqur al-Ashqar, fled to Syria and the Seljuq sultanate of Rūm. Aybak ordered the plundering of Baḥriyya Mamluk properties and the confiscation of their goods, and he seized Alexandria, which Aqṭāy had owned as an *iqṭāʿ* since 650/1252. Those who could not flee were imprisoned or executed.[22]

Quṭuz returned to prominence after the assassination of his master Aybak on 23 Rabīʿ I 655/10 April 1257, commissioned by Shajarat al-Durr, who maintained epistolary relations with Quṭuz, as Youssef Ragheb has highlighted.[23] In addition, one version of the Shajarat al-Durr assassination implicates Quṭuz.[24] A few years later, the arrival of the Mongols in the region completely upset the

[17] They were released in 651/1253 as part of a truce negotiated between the two sides through the mediation of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿṣim, who sent Najm al-Dīn al-Badrāʾī to Cairo.

[18] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 472, 476.

[19] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 96; al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd, *Chroniques des Ayyoubides*, 90; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 477.

[20] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 16; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 479-481.

[21] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 483. The other two are Bahādur and Sanjar al-Ghanmī.

[22] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 12-13; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 479-481, 483-485.

[23] Y. Ragheb, "Une lettre de Šağar al-Durr au futur sultan Quṭuz," *Annales Islamologiques* 48/2 (2014): 135-165.

[24] Ragheb, "Une lettre de Šağar al-Durr," 154-155.

balance of power in the Near East and put a definitive end to the dream of the Ayyubids of Syria of one day recovering Egypt. By sweeping into Syria, Hülegü's troops abruptly and definitively changed the political situation between the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, ending the former's existence in the region.

Faced with the Mongol threat, at the end of 657/1259, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf sent the historian Kamāl al-Dīn b. ʿAdīm (d. 660/1262) to ask for help from the Cairo sultanate, which was now headed by Quṭuz. Indeed, faced with the mortal danger posed by the Mongol advance, the latter removed al-Malik al-Manṣūr, son of Aybak, from the throne and proclaimed himself sultan.[25] The request for help from al-Nāṣir Yūsuf was well received by Quṭuz,[26] as it constituted de facto official recognition of Mamluk power. When he set off for Cairo, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf stopped once he reached the border, deciding not to continue his journey. Most likely, he feared that once in Cairo, he would be at the mercy of Quṭuz, in whom he had no confidence. In the end, his torpor and indecision prevented him from reaching either destination, as he was caught by Kitbughā, Hülegü's commander, who sent him under escort to his master. He remained there until his execution, following the announcement of the defeat of ʿAyn Jālūt on 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260 in a battle in which the new master of Cairo, Quṭuz, distinguished himself.

II. Quṭuz's Reputation as a Warrior

As is evident from the preceding discussion, Quṭuz, though now a sultan, is consistently portrayed in the sources as a warrior – one whose reputation for martial prowess had been established well before the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt. Quoting al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1326), Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī (d. 8th/14th) records a depiction of Quṭuz as the most expert horseman and the most valiant among the Turks.[27] The Arabic term "Turk" or the expression "dawlat al-Turk" (dynasty of the Turks) is occasionally used by Mamluk-era chroniclers to refer to the Mamluks and the Mamluk Sultanate, which, through its campaigns against the Mongols, Franks, and Armenians, came to be regarded as "the embodiment of

[25] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 46; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 507.

[26] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1990-2000), vol. 48, 45-46; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Turkī (Giza: Dār hajr, 1998), vol. 17, 387-388; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-wathā'iq al-qawmiyya, 2010), vol. 1, 218-219.

[27] كان السلطان المظفّر رحمه الله رجلًا شجّاعًا مقدامًا حتى قيل إنه لم يركب الفرس قبله من الترك أفرس ولا أشجع منه

Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, ed. Bernd Ratke *et al.* (Cairo: al-Maʿhad al-almānī li-l-āthār bi-l-Qāhira, 1960-1994), vol. 8, 41.

the spirit of *jihād*."[28] This perception of the Mamluks as a divinely chosen martial elite is echoed in the writings of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and his contemporaries, for whom the rise of the Turks marked a providential intervention in defence of Islam. As Ibn Khaldūn writes:

> فكان من لطف الله سبحانه أن تدارك الإيمان بأحياء رمقه وتلافي شمل المسلمين بالديار المصرية بحفظ نظامه وحماية سياجه بأن بعث لهم هذه الطائفة التركية.[29]
>
> Among God's largesse and mercy, the fact that He revived the faith [Islam] when it was about to die out and that He preserved the Muslims of Egypt by protecting its state and borders by sending this group of Turks.

Within this framework, the *laqab al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn* operates as a performative title. It casts Quṭuz as a figure of salvific militancy – a role the narrative retroactively maps onto earlier episodes (acts of valour, exhortations, prayers) and then projects forward onto ʿAyn Jālūt. The title does not simply denote an accomplished status; it actively helps to authorise it by inscribing the ruler into a narrative in which victory, piety, and rightful command mutually reinforce one another.

The sources depict Quṭuz as invoking precisely this image of the divinely sanctioned warrior-ruler in legitimising his seizure of power. In justifying the dethronement of the young al-Malik al-Manṣūr, he is represented, in the accounts, as arguing that, given the gravity of the Mongol threat, the state required not a child at its head, but a seasoned military commander – an image the sources attribute to him and that chroniclers were keen to reinforce. As al-Yūnīnī writes:

> كان السلطان المظفّر رحمه الله رجلًا شجّاعًا مقدامًا حتى قيل إنه لم يركب الفرس قبله من الترك أفرس ولا أشجع منه.
>
> Sultan al-Muẓaffar – may God have mercy on him, was a brave man and a great leader, so much so that it is said of him that none before him rode among the Turks as good a horseman and as brave as he.[30]

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[28] P. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades. The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517*, (London: Longman, 1986), 95.

[29] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar wa dīwān al-mubtadaʾi wa l-khabar fī ayyām al-ʿarab wa l-ʿajam wa l-barbar wa man ʿāṣarahum min dawī al-sulṭān al-akbār*, ed. Khalīl Shaḥḥāda and Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 2000-2001), vol. 5, 418.

[30] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 41 quoting al-Yūnīnī.

Quṭuz is described in the sources as demonstrating considerable mastery in the discipline of *furūsiyya*. Two sources in particular advance this depiction. Baybars al-Manṣūrī notes that one of the principal factors contributing to Quṭuz's acceptance among the emirs was his renown for personal bravery (*al-shajāʿa*) and his expertise in *furūsiyya*. In this context, the term denotes not simply horsemanship in the literal sense, but a codified martial discipline aimed at cultivating a broad array of military skills. It encompassed proficiency with multiple weapons, versatility in combat across various terrains and conditions, and the ability to fight both mounted and on foot.[31] Further evidence is provided by the prominent Syrian lance-master of the early Mamluk period, Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ (d. 695/1296), who credits Quṭuz with the authorship of a tactical procedure in his treatise *Kitāb al-furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya* ("*The Book of Furūsiyya and Warlike Procedures*"). This attribution is used to associate Quṭuz with the codification of military knowledge in the early Mamluk era. In one passage of the treatise, al-Rammāḥ refers explicitly to Quṭuz in the following terms:

الباب السابع
من تصنيف الأستاذ الأجَلّ، المجاهد المرابط في سبيل الله – تعالى – سيف الدين قطز أحد مماليك المقرّ العالي، الشمسيّ، شمس الدين، نائب السلطنة المعظمة بحلب المحروسة. قال الأستاذ: أذا كنت أنت قدّام، وجاءك خصمك من خلفك بقبض الروماني فيكون عملك أنّك ترمي رمحك (ب)تبطيل إلى خلفك أكثر من ثلثيه، فإذا أقرب إليك رأس رمحه وصار عند كتفك (ف)بطّل رمحه، وأسْبح رمحك، فما يخطئُ صدره أبدًا، إن شاء الله – تعالى – واطلب رأس الميدان، وانظر الأقران.

[31] For more information on the *furūsiyya* see D. Ayalon, "Notes on the Furūsiyya Exercises and Games in the Mamlūk Sultanate," in *The Mamlūk Military Society*, ed. David Ayalon (London: Variorum 1979), part II, 31-62; S. Conermann, "Muḥammad zu Pferde im Kampf. Ein Beispiel für das Genre der *Furūsiyya an-nabawiyya* während der Mamlukenzeit (1250-1517)," in *Pferde in Asien: Geschichte, Handel und Kultur*, ed. Bert G. Fragner *et al.* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschafter, 2009), 51-61; A. Carayon, *La Furūsiyya des Mamlûks : une élite sociale à cheval (1250-1517)*, PhD dissertation (Aix-en-Provence: university of Provence, 2012); A. Zouache, "Une culture en partage : la *furūsiyya* à l'épreuve du temps," *Médiévales* 64 (2013): 57-75; A. Carayon, "Représenter son identité, imposer son pouvoir. Les jeux guerriers des Mamelouks et la symbolique de la *furūsiyya*," in *Guerre et paix dans le Proche-Orient medieval (Xe-XVe siècle)*, ed. Mathieu Eychenne, Stéphane Pradines and Abbès Zouache (Cairo: Ifao, 2019), 87-133; M. Berriah, "Représentations, sunnanisation et sacralisation de la *furūsiyya*", 229-246; M. Ibrahim, "Les manuscrits à peintures de *furūsiyya* : illustrations d'un art militaire équestre de la période mamelouke," *Les Cahiers de l'École du Louvre* 21 (2023) http://journals.openedition.org/cel/29244; M. Ibrahim, "Dirāsa li-makhṭūṭāt ʿilm al-ramy bi-l-qaws wa l-sahm fī al-ʿaṣr al-mamlūkī (648-923/1250-1517)," in *Représentations et symbolique de la guerre et de la paix dans le monde arabe*, ed. Sylvie Denoix and Salam Diab-Duranton (Cairo: Ifao, 2024), 305-332.

> Chapter Seven
> From the work of the illustrious master, the diligent fighter in the path of God – the Most High – Sayf al-Dīn, Quṭuz, one of the Mamluks of very high rank, al-Shamsī, sun of religion, *nā'ib* of the honourable sultanate, in Aleppo, the guarded. The master said: when you are in front and your opponent comes at you from behind holding his spear in the manner of the Romans, you must act as follows: place more than two-thirds of your spear towards the back, and when he (the opponent) approaches the tip of his spear until it reaches the level of your shoulder blade, then pare his spear (by striking it) and extend yours, and under no circumstances miss his chest if God, the Most High, wills. Reach the entrance of the *maydān* and look at your opponents.[32]

Although the existence of this tactical procedure and its attribution to Quṭuz are attested solely by Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, and the accuracy of such a solitary claim may reasonably be questioned, the very fact that a renowned master of *furūsiyya* – specifically of the spear tradition – cites Quṭuz and credits him with a warlike innovation is itself revealing. It speaks to the level of expertise and the martial reputation that Quṭuz had evidently come to embody within the culture of *furūsiyya*.[33]

In this light, attributions in the *furūsiyya* corpus likewise participate in the sacral-martial construction of authority: technical expertise, tactical invention, and bodily discipline are folded into a pious politics of war. The ascription to Quṭuz in al-Rammāḥ's *Kitāb al-furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya* thus reads less as neutral reportage than as a generic gesture that binds technical mastery to righteous rule. Given that this attribution is uniquely transmitted by al-Rammāḥ, its evidentiary value is limited; its rhetorical value, however, is clear, especially in the case of Quṭuz, whose reputation relied heavily on narrative and symbolic markers of legitimacy.

A final element of particular significance is Quṭuz's choice of *laqab* (honorific title): al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn ("The Triumphant One, the Sword of Religion"). This designation is read in the sources as an effort on Quṭuz's part to present himself as the new defender of Islam and the Muslim community – a role that, especially in times of crisis and external threat, was among the most crucial sources of political legitimacy available to a Muslim ruler. Beyond the image of the warrior that emerges from cross-referenced accounts, Mamluk authors

[32] Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, *al-Furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya*, ed. Fārūq Aslīm (Abu Dhabi: Zayed Center for Heritage & History, 2007), 275.

[33] Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, *al-Furūsiyya*, 275.

further contributed to Quṭuz's sanctification by constructing his persona as a hero of Islam, drawing upon well-established literary and ideological *topoi*.

Recent scholarship has underscored that the sacralization of military leadership through *jihād* rhetoric took shape well before the Mamluk ascendancy, most clearly in twelfth-century Damascus, and was later systematised under Mamluk rule. Early programmatic texts such as ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir al-Sulamī's *Kitāb al-jihād* cast warfare as both a communal obligation and an act of piety, offering a repertoire of legitimising motifs that rulers and scholars would continue to draw upon.[34] Under the Mamluks—especially from Baybars onward – *jihād* discourse became constitutive of state ideology and public ritual, integrating chancery language, *khutba*, and ceremonial into a coherent grammar of rule.[35] Against this broader backdrop, the image of Quṭuz as divinely sanctioned warrior-ruler belongs to a well-attested idiom, even if the brevity of his reign renders the narrative scaffolding unusually prominent in his case.

III. First *Topos*: The Hidden Noble Lineage of Quṭuz

Among the Mamluk authors who most actively contributed to shaping the image of Quṭuz as a hero of Islam, two figures stand out: Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī and al-Maqrīzī. Their efforts begin with an attempt to ennoble Quṭuz's origins, as evidenced in a vivid anecdote related by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī. He recounts that, long before his arrival in Egypt, Quṭuz was in Damascus in the service of a man named either Ibn al-ʿAdīm or Ibn al-Zaʿīm. One day, over a minor fault, his master struck him in the face and uttered curses against the Mamluk's parents.[36]

[34] Al-Sulamī, ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir, *Kitāb al-jihād*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, *Arbaʿa kutub al-jihād min ʿaṣr al-ḥurūb al-ṣalibiyya* (Damascus: al-Takwīn, 2007), 41-165; ed. N. Christie, *The Book of the Jihād of 'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106)* (Burlington: Ashgate, Farnham: Surrey), 2015; N. Christie and D. Gerish, "Parallel Preachings: Urban II and al-Sulamī," *Al-Masāq* 15/2 (2003): 139-148; N. Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders. Christianity's Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources* (London/New York: Routledge, 2014), 43-62, 153-155; S. Mourad and J. Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsakir and the Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihād Ideology in Crusader-Era Syria," in *Just Wars, Holy Wars & Jihāds. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges*, ed. Sohail Hashmi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 107-124; S. Mourad and J. Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihād Ideology in the Crusader Period. Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (1105-1176) and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn ʿAsākir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihād* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), 2013; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks," 176-215.

[35] S. Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 89–90; J. Berkey, "Mamluk Religious Policy," *Mamluk Studies Review* 13/2 (2009): 9-10; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", 176-215.

[36] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 39.

Quṭuz withdrew to a corner, wept profusely, and refused to eat. As the master was about to depart on a journey, he entrusted the care of the young Mamluk – whom he favoured more than others – to one of his servants, al-Ḥājj ʿAlī al-Farāsh, instructing him to look after the boy. Attempting to console him, al-Ḥājj ʿAlī told Quṭuz that the blow he had received was insignificant compared to one delivered on the battlefield by a sword. But Quṭuz replied that he was not grieving because of the physical pain, but because of the insult to the memory of his parents – who, he asserted, were nobler than those of his master. At that point, the servant remarked that Quṭuz was merely a Turkish slave, born of infidel stock like so many others, with no claim to honourable ancestry. Quṭuz, however, revealed that he had always been a Muslim, and that his family had belonged to Islam for generations. His real name, he said, was Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd, and he was, in fact, the son of the sister of the ruler of the Khwarezm Shāh.[37]

Another account worth mentioning in this context is likewise transmitted by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī. In this version, Quṭuz is said to have consulted an astrologer (*munajjim*) from the Muslim West, asking him to foretell who would rule Egypt after his master, Sultan al-Muʿīzz Aybak, and who would be the one to halt the Mongols. The astrologer performed a divinatory reading in the sand but was perplexed by the presence of five undotted letters. He explained to Quṭuz that, since his name comprised only three letters, he could not be the one indicated by the signs.

At that moment, Quṭuz smiled and asked whether the name appearing in the sand might in fact be Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd. The astrologer, astonished, confirmed that this was indeed the name he had discerned. Quṭuz then revealed his true identity as Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd and, by implication, the one destined to overcome the Mongol threat.[38]

IV. Second *Topos*: Quṭuz the "Chosen One" to Fight the Mongols

In the image constructed by Mamluk authors, Quṭuz's claim to legitimacy was not limited to his alleged descent from the Khwarezm Shāh family. Another account, preserved by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, combines this political dimension with religious legitimation. According to the narrative, while al-Nāṣir Yūsuf was encamped at al-Birza toward the end of 657/1259, several couriers arrived from Egypt with the news that Quṭuz had seized power. Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf instructed his secretary, Tāj al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, to read him the letter. When the secretary left the sultan's tent, Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī

[37] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 40.
[38] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 40-41.

came to meet him and asked if he had heard the news that Quṭuz had become sultan. The secretary, who had to keep the information secret, did not confirm this. Nevertheless, Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī persisted and confirmed the information to the secretary without having read or listened to the contents of the letter. Intrigued, Tāj al-Dīn b. al-Athīr asked Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī what could make him think that. It was then the emir, who was Quṭuz's former *khushdāsh*[39] (companion, brother-in-arms) during their childhood, who told him that, one day, when he was delousing Quṭuz, the latter confided to him that in his dream he was to become an emir of fifty. Quṭuz replied that he would give him that rank. When pressed about the basis for such a prediction, Quṭuz confided that he had seen the Prophet in a dream, announcing that he would take power in Egypt and defeat the Mongols.[40]

The invocation of dreams and visions to justify political action and sanctify leadership is a well-attested narrative device in medieval Islamic historiography.[41] In particular, dreams of the Prophet serve as signs of divine favour and as instruments that bridge the gap between providential design and concrete rule. The Quṭuz dream account thus belongs to a broader typology in which visionary experience supports claims to righteous warfare and providential authority, rather than offering direct access to "what actually happened."

The account of this premonitory dream endows Quṭuz with the image of a divinely chosen warrior, sent by God to deliver Islam from a threat foretold – according to several *ʿulamāʾ* – by the Prophet himself. As reported by Abū Hurayra, the Prophet said:

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[39] A kind of "Mamluk companion pact". For more information see K. Yosef, "Ikhwa, Muwākhūn and Khushdāshiyya in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 346-352. Julien Loiseau writes: "La fraternité d'armes des jeunes esclaves soldats, faite tout à la fois d'intimité, de rivalité et de solidarité, représentait une puissante logique d'intégration à la société militaire – dont le caractère spécifique se marquait par l'emploi d'un mot persan (*khushdash* ou *khujdash*) pour désigner ce lien exclusif." Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks XIII^e^-XVI^e^ siècle. Une expérience du pouvoir dans l'Islam médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 76. See also M. Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya: between Praise and Criticism," §36.

[40] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 41-42. There are two other accounts of the preaching of the Mongol defeat. See Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke*, vol. 1, 433-445.

[41] M. Hanaoka, "Dreaming of the Prophet" in *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries*, ed. Mimi Hanaoka (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 70-98; J. K. Weststeijn, *A handful of red earth: dreams of rulers in Tabari's history of prophets and kings*, PhD thesis (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2009).

لا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حتَّى تُقاتِلُوا التُّرْكَ، صِغارَ الأعْيُنِ، حُمْرَ الوُجُوهِ، ذُلْفَ الأُنُوفِ، كَأنَّ وُجُوهَهُمُ المَجانُّ المُطْرَقَةُ، ولا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حتَّى تُقاتِلُوا قَوْمًا نِعالُهُمُ الشَّعَرُ.

> The hour will not be established until you fight with the Turks; people with small eyes, red faces, and flat noses. Their faces will look like shields coated with leather. The hour will not be established until you fight with people whose shoes are made of hair.[42]

Dreams involving the Prophet occupy a special status in Islam, as affirmed in the well-known prophetic tradition: "Whoever sees me has truly seen me, for Satan does not assume my form." Such visions are regarded as signs of divine favour: the one who sees the Prophet in a dream is understood to be beloved of God, who conveys glad tidings through the noblest of His messengers and the most exalted of His creatures. In this light, the vision attributed to Quṭuz reinforces his image as the chosen saviour of Islam at a moment of existential threat.

Later *ʿulamāʾ*, including figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), would echo the idea that Quṭuz and the Mamluks had saved Islam from the Mongols.[43] This type of premonitory dream narrative, linking rulers to divine guidance in moments of crisis, appears elsewhere in Islamic historiography and is often associated with other sultans and major turning points in the history of the Muslim world.[44]

Another account likewise presents Quṭuz as the one appointed to fight the Mongols. During his return journey from Syria to Cairo, Quṭuz was assassinated by his peers, leaving the throne vacant – soon to be claimed by Baybars. Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī preserves a particularly intriguing narrative, attributed to the emir Badr al-Dīn Baktūt al-Atābikī, who had been a *khushdāsh* of both Quṭuz and Baybars. One day, the three of them – Quṭuz, Baybars, and Badr al-Dīn – are said to have visited an astrologer. Quṭuz went first. The astrologer, after a moment of silent observation, told him that he would one day rule Egypt, defeat

[42] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 349, hadith 2928. See also hadiths 2927 and 2929. Muslim reports several slightly different versions of this hadith. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Ibdāʿ: Cairo, 2020), 677-678, hadith 2912.

[43] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, ed. ʿĀmir al-Jazār and Anwār al-Bāz, (Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2011), vol. 14, t. 28, 289-290; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, vol. 5, 428. For more information on Ibn Taymiyya's perception of the Mamluks as the saviours of Islam see Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya", §11-28.

[44] Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ʿalā al-rawḍatayn* (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2002), vol. 5, 336-337; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān*, vol. 3, 434-435.

the Mongols, and be assassinated.[45] Did this story emerge only after Quṭuz's death, perhaps as a means of reinforcing the salvific dimension of his character? There is no definitive evidence to confirm or disprove such a hypothesis.

V. Third *Topos*: Quṭuz, the *Mujāhid* Par Excellence

A close analysis and cross-examination of Arabic sources reveals that some authors present Quṭuzas the archetypal *mujāhid* – a fighter wholly devoted to the cause of God, fearless and above reproach. This image of the *mujāhid* par excellence is constructed primarily through the prism of the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, one of the most celebrated engagements in the history of Islam.[46] The Mamluk victory at ʿAyn Jālūt occupies a central place in the chronicles of the seventh-ninth/thirteenth-fifteenth centuries. On the one hand, the battle was exalted by Muslim ulama and historians; on the other, it was strategically instrumentalised by the Mamluks for political purposes. The victory at ʿAyn Jālūt came to be seen not merely as a military success, but as tangible proof of the Mamluks' devotion to the defence of Islam.[47] For Amalia Levanoni, the battle constitutes the cornerstone of the Mamluk political edifice.[48] Being the ultimate symbol of triumph over the Mongols - who, in the eyes of contemporary observers, represented a mortal threat to Islam - the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt continues to be cited in modern religious discourse. Multiple sources emphasise the piety and courage of the sultan.[49] Abū Shāma, for instance, highlights Quṭuz's "diligence in prayer, his bravery, and the fact that he did not drink wine."[50]

During the army's halt at al-Ṣāliḥiyya, a group of Mamluk emirs told Quṭuz of their reluctance to fight the Mongols, whom they regarded as an "invincible" enemy. The sultan rebuked them sharply, accusing them of clinging to the comforts of worldly life and preferring the illicit appropriation of funds from the *bayt al-māl* over fulfilling their obligation to fight for the cause of God.[51] He concluded his harangue by insisting that anyone who failed to perform *jihād* in such circumstances would be held accountable on the Day of Judgement. These few words touched the reluctant emirs, who dispersed in silence. That same

[45] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 43.

[46] S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3, 313.

[47] M. Berriah, "ʿAyn Ǧālūt (658/1260): Re-evaluating of a So-Called Decisive Battle," *Annales islamologiques* 55 (2021): 65.

[48] A. Levanoni, "The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt: A Paradigmatic Historical Event in Mamlūk Historical Narratives," in *Ulrich Haarmann memorial lecture* 11, ed. Stephan Conermann (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2014), 14.

[49] Berriah, "ʿAyn Ǧālūt (658/1260)", 65-66.

[50] Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ʿalā al-rawḍatayn*, vol. 5, 321. بمواظبة الصلاة والشجاعة وتجنب الخمر

[51] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 515.

evening, Quṭuz made a solemn declaration: he would go to meet the Mongols, and anyone who wished was free either to follow him in *jihād* or to return home. As soon as the emirs saw him depart, they followed him back onto the road.[52]

An analysis can be significantly enriched when multiple sources recount the same event. Within the Arabic corpus, Quṭuz is consistently depicted as exemplary and resolute. Al-Maqrīzī narrates that upon leaving Gaza, the army followed the coastal road and passed near Acre, where they encountered representatives of the Franks. In al-Maqrīzī, the Franks are portrayed as cooperative and even offering military aid, which Quṭuz politely refused, handing out robes of honour to some.[53] However, this amicable depiction is contradicted by contemporary Christian sources. Indeed, al-Maqrīzī himself notes another, more confrontational aspect to the encounter: according to his account, before departing, Quṭuz sternly warned the Franks of Acre that should even a single Frankish soldier attack his forces, he would immediately turn back and engage them, postponing his confrontation with the Mongols until he had dealt decisively with this threat.[54]

Quṭuz is also presented as a fervent *mujāhid*, reckless and risking his life without hesitation for religion. Again, according to al-Maqrīzī, prior to the battle, Quṭuz gathered his emirs and passionately exhorted them to *jihād*, reminding them of the atrocities and devastation wrought by the Mongols throughout the Muslim lands they had conquered. He sternly warned the emirs of divine retribution awaiting anyone who fled the battlefield and urged them instead to fight wholeheartedly for the triumph of Islam. Moved by the sultan's speech, the emirs wept and swore to fight the Mongols and deliver Syria.[55]

Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī reports that, on the day of the battle, the young Mongol – formerly attached to Hülegü's envoys and later incorporated into Quṭuz's Mamluk corps – tried to kill the sultan by shooting an arrow at him. Miraculously, the arrow struck only his horse, which collapsed beneath him. The young Mongol was immediately seized and killed by the emirs and soldiers. In the heat of the moment, the emir Fakhr al-Dīn Māmā offered Quṭuz his own horse, but the sultan refused.

When the battle was at its height, some turned to Quṭuz and warned him that if any misfortune were to befall him, it would spell the end of Islam. To this, he is said to have replied:

[52] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 515.
[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.
[54] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.
[55] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.

> أما أنا فكنت أروح الجنة، وأما الإسلام فما كان الله ليضيعه، فقد مات السلطان الملك الصالح رحمه الله، وقتل ابنه المعظم، والأمير فخر الدين بن الشيخ مقدم العساكر، وبعد ذا نصر الله الإسلام وحده بغير ملك بعد اليأس.
>
> As for me, [if I die], I go to Paradise; as for Islam, God will not make it disappear; Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ is dead – may God have mercy on him – his son al-Muʿaẓẓam has been killed, as has Fakhr al-Dīn b. al-Shaykh, leader of the armies, and despite this, God caused Islam to triumph alone, without a king, and after despair.[56]

Another symbolic episode that powerfully encapsulates the ideal of sacrifice for the sake of Islam is the way the sources narrate Quṭuz's victorious charge. When the Mongols charged the Mamluk army and one of its wings was in trouble and seemed almost to give way, Quṭuz, in a last burst of hope, took off his helmet, threw it down, and led a charge, shouting *wa Islāmāh* (*Oh Islam*).[57] Following the Mamluk victory, the sultan is said to have performed two units of prayer (*rakʿatayn*), giving thanks to God for having granted him success at such a critical moment.[58] The narrated shout *wa Islāmāh* and the post-victory *rakʿatayn* turn the battlefield into liturgical space: they ritualise violence as worship, recentre the community's salvation on the ruler's embodied courage, and close the action with thanksgiving that ascribes the outcome to divine favour. Such ritual cues are integral to the sacralization of leadership; they convert contingency (a turning charge, a narrow escape) into signs that the ruler fights as Islam's servant and is rewarded accordingly.

This narrative assigns Quṭuz the image of a believer full of humility and grateful for God's favours, as opposed to that of a self-centred triumpher full of pride. To complete this depiction, one may cite the verses of Baybars al-Manṣūrī, who, in poetic form, contributes to the sanctification of Quṭuz's character as portrayed in the narratives above:

هلك الكفر في الشآم جميعًا واستجد الإسلام بعد دحوضه
بالمليك المظفر البطل الأر وع سيف الإله عند نهوضه
ملك جاءنا بعزم وحزم فاعتززنا بسمره وببيضه
أوجب الله شكر ذاك علينا دائمًا مثل واجبات فروضه

[56] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 50.

[57] This cry passed into posterity, as it was used as the title of the film produced in 1961 by Enrico Bomba and Andrew Marton in which Quṭuz and the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt feature prominently.

[58] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 517.

Unbelief has perished throughout Syria
Islam has been renewed, after declining

By al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, the pious hero
Sword of God, on his awakening
A ruler came to us resolute and determined
And we were honoured by his spears and swords

God has made it obligatory for us to thank for this
Forever, like the religious obligations He has prescribed for us[59]

Although these words are undoubtedly dithyrambic in tone, they nonetheless reflect the central place the sources accord to Quṭuz as the architect of victory at ʿAyn Jālūt, whose leadership was widely regarded as one of the decisive factors in the outcome of the battle.[60] Less well known is the account of Quṭuz's allegiance to Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, who had been invested as Abbasid caliph under the title *al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh*, as well as his expressed support for restoring the caliphate in Baghdad in the aftermath of the victory.[61] Taken together, such narratives make it clear that the defence of Islam constitutes the central motif in the construction of Quṭuz's image – a

[59] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 52.

[60] R. Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: the Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44-45; R. Amitai, "'Ayn Jālūt Revisited," *Tārīḫ* 2 (1992): 144-145; Berriah, "'Ayn Ǧālūt (658/1260)", 77.

[61] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan had managed to escape the massacre of his family during the capture of Baghdad by Hülegü in 656/1258 and found refuge with the tribe of the Khaffāja, to whom he claimed he was a descendant of the caliph al-Mustarshid (d. 529/1135). The emir of the Khaffāja had the new caliph and his companions accompany him to Syria, where they met ʿĪsā b. Muhannā, an influential chief of the powerful Āl Faḍl tribe, who granted them safety and hospitality. After the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, ʿĪsā b. Muhannā informed the Mamluk authorities of the presence of the new caliph. Qutuẓ is said to have instructed the emir Sayf al-Dīn Qilij al-Baghdādī to pledge allegiance on his behalf to the new Abbasid caliph answering to the name of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh and to escort him with the aim of recovering Baghdad. After some initial successes, including the capture of a number of towns in the Euphrates region, al-Ḥākim was forced to withdraw and return to Salāmiyya in Syria in the face of the advance of a large Mongol force commanded by Qarābughā. Writers of the eighth/fourteenth century report that Qutuẓ ordered ʿĪsā b. Muhannā to send the new caliph to Cairo to be invested with the caliphate in an official ceremony. Qutuẓ was assassinated two months later without it being possible to fathom his intentions towards the new caliph in the long term. See M. Banister, *The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo 1261–1517. Out of the Shadows* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 29-34.

representational pattern that echoes the depictions of other celebrated figures such as Saladin and Baybars.

When set against figures such as Nūr al-Dīn, Saladin, and Baybars, Quṭuz stands out less for the repertoire of symbols he employs than for the intensity with which they are concentrated: *laqab*, visionary claims, exhortations, poetic consecration, and a single emblematic victory are all compressed into one tightly woven narrative. Whereas longer reigns permitted the gradual routinization of authority through chancery style, *khutba*, and ceremonial codification, Quṭuz's sacralization relied instead on narrative force and ritual intensification. This economy of signs helps explain both the exceptional prominence of ʿAyn Jālūt in his legacy and the relative absence of durable institutional imprints linked to his name.

Within this historiographical frame, Quṭuz neither inaugurates nor concludes the sacralization of *jihād* leadership. Rather, he illustrates an escalating pattern in which military triumph, ritualised piety, and narrative sanctification converge. In contrast to Baybars – whose longer tenure allowed *jihād* to be systematically institutionalised as a state idiom – Quṭuz's profile appears more narratively compressed. This does not reduce the historical significance of ʿAyn Jālūt; instead, it clarifies the ways in which the sources invest that victory with meaning.

VI. Conclusion

Was Quṭuz truly a descendant of the Khwarezm Shāh, as some of the accounts above claim? It is difficult to offer a definitive conclusion. The claim of Islamic ancestry tied to the family of the first Muslim ruler to resist the Mongols, whose lands fell under the Mongol yoke, would indeed provide Quṭuz with political legitimacy in addition to the religious legitimacy conferred by his duty to lead *jihād*. However, despite the complex framework of legitimacy surrounding Quṭuz, there remains considerable room for doubt and caution regarding the veracity of these genealogical assertions. It is not impossible to think that what we have here is an attempt to construct a legend around the Mamluk sultan – similar to the way the figure of Saladin was mythologised in Arab narratives.[62] While the myth of Saladin is often regarded as a "political construction",[63] as noted by Rachida Chapoutot-Rémadi, in the case of Quṭuz, it may be more accurately described as "political recuperation".[64] Given that religious

[62] A.-M. Eddé, *Saladin* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008), 575.

[63] Eddé, *Saladin*, 575.

[64] Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke*, vol. 1, 428. The author sees this anecdote as both a political and a religious recuperation.

legitimacy played a central role in consolidating political power, it is unsurprising that authors would emphasise this aspect in their portrayals of Quṭuz.

The narrative in which Quṭuzis presented as a *mujāhid* chosen by God casts him, in a way, as the embodiment of the divine sword – striking down idolatry while also enacting divine justice. By defeating the army of Hülegü, grandson of Genghis Khan, who invaded and ended the dynasty of the Khwarezm Shāh, Quṭuzavenged his supposed forefathers. Therefore, the authors of the Mamluk period contributed to a posthumous mythification of Quṭuz, constructing the figure of a heroic defender who triumphs over the pagan Mongols and saves the *dār al-Islām*, thereby securing him a place in the pantheon of Islamic holy warriors. However, this position remains markedly inferior to that of Saladin, whose image resonated with enduring force in both East and West and continues to occupy a prominent symbolic place in the Arab world today.[65] Compared to other Mamluk sultans, Quṭuz's position is not the same as that of Baybars, who is compared to the great figures of the past and became the central character in a popular novel bearing his name during the Circassian period from the ninth/fifteenth century onwards.[66]

Furthermore, these narratives served to confer both political and religious legitimacy upon the Mamluk sultanate. Cast as a divinely chosen warrior, victorious in a battle foretold by the Prophet himself, Quṭuz triumphed over the infidel Mongols – Islam's most formidable enemy at the time. In the wake of this

[65] Eddé, *Saladin*, 541-582. See also A. Zouache, "Saladin, l'histoire, la légende", in *Le Bilād al-Šām face aux mondes extérieurs. La perception de l'Autre et la représentation du souverain*, ed. Denise Aigle (Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012), 41-72.

[66] An edition is in progress, several parts of which have already been published by Georges Boas, Katia Zakaria, Salam Diab-Duranton, Iyas Hasan et *al*. See also J. Sublet, *Les trois vies du sultan Baïbars* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992); A.-M. 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 (Damascus/Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012), 73-86; R. Amitai, "Some remarks on the inscription of Baybars at Maqam Nabi Musa," in *Mamluks and Ottomans. Studies in honour of Michael Winter*, ed. David J. Wasserstein and A. Ayalon (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 45-53; D. Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars in le Bilād al-Šām. Une expression de la légitimité du pouvoir," *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 68, 74-77; Y. Frenkel, "Baybars and the Sacred Geography of Bilād al-Shām: a Chapter in the Islamization of Syria's Landscape," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 153-170; F. De Polignac, "Une rencontre en Syrie: Alexandre le Grand, Baïbars, Tamerlan et autres conquérants à Homs," in *L'Orient au cœur en l'honneur d'André Miquel*, ed. B. Halff, et *al*. (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001), 237-245; Troadec, "Baybars and the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām", 137-140; J.-C. Garcin (ed.) *Lectures du roman de Baybars* (Paris: Parenthèses/MMSH, 2003).

victory, the Mamluk regime positioned itself as the new and legitimate standard-bearer of Islam in the Near and Middle East.

In sum, Quṭuz's case clarifies how Mamluk texts make *jihād*-leadership signify: through titles that prefigure piety, visions that authorise command, battle scripts that moralise obedience, and technical attributions that embody righteous skill. The sanctified ruler emerges at the intersection of these operations, not apart from them.

The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, described by some as a "paradigmatic historical event,"[67] provided the Mamluks with a foundational moment of legitimation - one that would be further reinforced and ultimately solidified by the military campaigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn.

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[67] A. Levanoni, "The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt", 6.

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