Tārīh

‘AYN JĀLŪT REVISITED

By Reuven Amitai-Preiss
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All accounts of pitched battles should avoid two pitfalls: dramatization and also rationalization, that is to say, reconstruction after the event of a tactic or a directing schema which was perhaps never applied or even thought of.

Phillip Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*¹

On 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260, the Mamluks, led by Sultan Qūṭuz, met a Mongol army under the general Kétbuqū at ‘Ayn Jālūt in northern Palestine, and completely defeated them. Both contemporary and modern historians have shown much interest in this battle, and recent years have seen the appearance of several new and important studies.² While these studies have enriched our understanding of the battle, much work remains to be

The Background

Hülegü Khan left Ketaqua and a corps of the Mongol army in Syria when he returned to Azerbaijan with most of his army. His withdrawal from northern Syria, in the wake of news of his brother’s death (Möngke Qa’an), would have been sometime in late winter or early spring 1260. Earlier that year Ketaqua had been sent south, gained control of Damascus, and sent raiders into Palestine. In the aftermath of Hülegü’s departure, his mission was seemingly to guard and consolidate Mongol conquests in Syria, to expand them if possible, and to keep a watchful eye on both the Franks on the coast and the Mamluks in Egypt. It appears that Hülegü’s intention was either to lead or to send a larger Mongol army back to Syria in the not too distant future, and then to continue the Mongol conquest, evidently towards Egypt itself.  


This present article is based on part of a chapter in my dissertation, The Mamluk-Ikhâniq War: Its Origins and Conduct up to the Second Battle of Homs (A.H. 680/A.D. 1281), submitted to the Senate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in February 1990, and written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ayalon and Dr. P. Jackson. I would like to record my debt to both of them for their advice and criticism. In that work I discuss in greater detail both the events leading up to the battle, and those which took place in its aftermath. I would also like to thank Prof. M. A. Cook and Prof. C. E. L. Vishni. who were kind enough to read a draft of this article and make many important comments.


The Mongols, however, were preempted. Qutuz, the Mamluk sultan, decided on an aggressive policy towards the Mongols, particularly when he received news that Hülegü had withdrawn from Syria and left only a small part of his army. His leading amirs (officers) were of a mixed mind about the wisdom of this policy, but he was able to convince them to set out. He was aided in this by the unreserved support given to him by his erstwhile enemy, Baybars al-Bunduqdâr, who had recently returned from exile in Syria in the face of the Mongol danger. Qutuz began making preparations for the campaign, ordering a general mobilization of the Mamluk army. Meanwhile, Mongol envoys had arrived with a threatening letter from Hülegü, calling on Qutuz to submit. With the agreement of the senior amirs, the sultan had the envoys executed.  

On 15 Sha’bâan 658/26 July 1260, Qutuz set out with his army. The regular Egyptian army had been swollen by the influx of refugee Syrian troops (the exact composition and numbers of the Mamluk army will be analyzed below). After a short stay at Sâlihiyya, some 120 km northeast of Cairo, where Qutuz again found it necessary to convince the amirs to follow him into Syria, the army set out. The sultan sent the advance guard ahead of the army under Baybars. At Gaza, Baybars encountered a Mongol advance guard (tal’â or yazaq) under Baydar. The sources are divided as to whether or not the Mongols attempted a stand, but in either case they quickly withdrew to the north. Baybars occupied the town and was soon joined by Qutuz with the rest of the army.  

The Mamluk army soon continued up the coast, reaching Frankish Acre, whose leaders elected to remain neutral in the upcoming battle, albeit with a pro-Mamluk slant. The reasons for...
this attitude would seem to be the Franks' well-justified fear of the Mongols, and the proximity of a large Mamluk army. The pro-
Muslim slant was expressed by the sending out of supplies to the Mamluk army. Qutuz took the opportunity to again whip up the
enthusiasm of his amirs, whose fear must have been increasing as the battle drew near. Qutuz's speech contained two main motifs:
the amirs must fight to protect their families and property (and by implication, the power they enjoyed in Egypt), and the need to
defend Islam against the infidels. The speech was effective enough;
the amirs wept and swore to each other to drive the Mongols out of
the country. While still at Acre, Qutuz sent Baybars ahead with the
vanguard (tallʿa or shafḥāsh), and he followed with the main
army.10

The Mongols in Syria had meanwhile not been idle. When Ketbuqa,11 who was in the Bīqāʾ valley,12 found out about the
impending Egyptian invasion of Syria, he gathered his troops that
had scattered all over the country, probably for both garrison and
grazing purposes.13 There is some evidence that initially Ketbuqa

Jackson (p. 503, n. 4) the Muslim army had camped outside Acre for three days.
10 Ibn al-Furat, fol. 245b (hence al-Maqrizi, 1:430); Ibn al-Dawdšārī, 8:49; al-
Yānīnī, 1:356–366; Shāfīʿ b. ʿAll, Ḥṣam al-maḏāle al-širīyiyya al-muntazaʿa min
al-strāz al-zāhīriyya, ed. Abd al-Aziz al-Khuwayri [Riyāḍ, n. d.], p. 30; Ibn Ṭābad al-
Zāhir (p. 64) writes that Baybars' force separated from the main army two days out
of Acre.
11 The information about Baydarāʾ (= Baydar) being with Ketbuqa at this stage
(Ibn al-Furat, fol. 246a; al-Maqrizi, 1:430) can be discounted, since Rashid al-Dīn
(as cited in n. 8) puts him in Gaza at this time. Rashid al-Dīn, with his access to
Mongol informants, was in a better position to know this than the Mamluk writers.
12 Al-Yānīnī, 1:360; al-Kutubi, “ʿUyun al-tawārīkh, ed. F. Sāmīr and N. ʿAbd
al-Dīn (ed. Quatremerre, p. 346; cf. ed. Alizādah, 3:73–74) Ketbuqa was near
Bulbulakh, which is in the Bīqāʾ, when he received news of the Mamluk advance.
Cf. Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, p. 358.
13 Ibn al-Furat, fol. 246a; al-Maqrizī, 1:430; cf. al-Yānīnī (1:365) and Ibn al-
Dawdšārī (8:49), who write that Ketbuqa left Hims after hearing that Qutuz was
camped outside of Acre, and then went to meet him. This is not the case. Besides
the contrary evidence about Ketbuqa's location (see n. 12, including al-Yānīnī
was unsure of the wisdom of confronting the reinforced Egyptian
army, and even contemplated a withdrawal from Syria. The
apparent reason behind Ketbuqa's hesitation was the relatively small
number of soldiers at his disposal (see below) and his awareness of
the strength of Qutuz's force. Be that as it may, Ketbuqa soon
resolved to meet Qutuz; having gathered his troops, he moved
south and took up a position at ʿAyn Jālūt.14 As will be seen
below, he reached the site before the Mamluks.

The Size of the Armies

Although it is impossible to provide exact figures for either side,
we are on more solid ground with regard to the Mongols. While
figures for the Mamluks are highly speculative, there is some
evidence as to their strength relative to the Mongols.

The sources offer us various estimations for the size of the force
which Hūlēgū left with Ketbuqa.15 It would seem that most of
these troops would have been with Ketbuqa on the day of the
battle. The Persian Anatolian historian Ibn Bībf writes that there
were 5,000.16 Bar Hebraeus gives the figure 10,000,17 as does the
Armenian historian, Hetʿum.18 Shāfīʿ b. ʿAll, the biographer of
Baybars and Qalāwūn, writes that the Mongols had a tāmūn, “that

himself), it is logical that he would have been notified of the Egyptian invasion
soon after reaching Gaza (as Rashid al-Dīn, as cited in n. 8, states) if not before.
14 Al-Yānīnī, 1:360; al-Kutubi, 20:226; Ibn Kathīr, 13:227. There is no basis for
the statements in Chambers (The Devil's Horsemen, p. 154) and Maalouf (The
Crusaders through Arab Eyes, p. 246) that Ketbuqa was delayed from marching by
an insurrection of the Muslims in Damascus, and it took him several days to put
this revolt down. These authors evidently combined the earlier revolt of the
citadel defenders with the later anti-Christian riots. Neither of these events occurred at this
juncture. See Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 353–354; Ibn al-
Furat, fol. 250a–b; al-Maqrizi, 1:432.
15 Al-Nawawī (Nihāyât al-arab fī funun al-adab, vol. 28, ed. F. ʿĀshūr [Cairo,
1984], p. 390) writes that when Hūlēgū withdrew from Syria, he left Ketbuqa with
the number of troops which he earlier sent with him to gain control over Damascus
and southern Syria.
16 Ibn Bībf, Tawārīkh-i al-i sulqaf (Histoire des Soldéesicides), ed. T. Houtsma
17 The Chronography of Gregory Abū ʿl-Faraj, ed. and trans. E. A. W. Budge
(London, 1932), 1:436; Arabic version: Ibn al-Bībf, Tārīkh mukhtāṣar al-duwal,
ed. A. ʿṢāhilī (Beirut, 1890), p. 489.
18 Hetʿum (Hetoum) “La Flor des estories de la Terre d'Orient,” in RHC, Ar
is to say, 10,000 men."¹⁹ The figure of 12,000 horsemen is given by Baybars al-Manṣūrī, and in his wake, al-Nuwayri. The Armenians Kirakos and Vardan report 20,000. The evidence of the Persian historian Waṣṣāf that Kebuqa had three tūmëns is not applicable here, since he is referring to the supposed size of the force this general commanded when he led the Mongol vanguard into Syria at the beginning of 1260. The predominance of the evidence from such varied sources (both pro-Mamluk and pro-Mongol) for the figures of 10,000–12,000 give it the most credence, although these numbers are not a certainty.

J. M. Smith, Jr. has attempted to reconcile the figures of 10,000 and 20,000 by suggesting that the first figure represented a tūmen (theoretically 10,000 troops) of Mongol soldiers, while the second were two tūmëns, one of Mongol troops and one of locally drafted soldiers, primarily the troops of the defunct Ayyūbid principalities in Syria. Kebuqa commanded one tūmen, while Baydarā (i.e., Baydar) commanded the newly formed one. This proposal may be questioned. While accepting Smith’s suggestion that Mongol officers named in the sources are tūmen commanders, and by counting the names of these officers, we would have the numbers of tūmëns (and thus, by extension, the size of the Mongol force).³⁴ This is the case only when these names are mentioned in a pro-Mongol source, particularly a Persian writer such as Rashid al-Dīn who served the Mongols and would have been privy to their secrets. The mere mention of Mongol officers by a Mamluk source does not carry the same force. As for this particular case, there are problems with the source which puts Baydarā on an equal footing with Kebuqa, with the former named as governor of Damascus, and the latter, governor of Aleppo. The ultimate source for this information is Šārim al-Dīn ʿOzbeg al-Ashrafī, a mamluk of the Aybūbid al-Ashrāf Mūsā of Hīmṣ, who had joined the Mongols. This information was recorded by Qirāj al-Khazandārī, then by Ibn al-Furāt, and finally by al-Maqrīzī. This evidence, like so much in Šārim al-Dīn’s account, is not above question; as will be seen below, he is a less than reliable source. The present information is found in a suspicious context: after relating the above information, Šārim al-Dīn describes how he was commissioned by Hūlegū to watch over Kebuqa and Baydarā.³⁵ This would seem to be another example of Šārim al-Dīn’s tendency to exaggerate and to be less than truthful in his account. As for Baydar (Baydarā), Rashīd al-Dīn clearly puts him in a subordinate role, as commander of the small Mongol advance force at Gāzā.³⁶ At the same time, no independent source provides any evidence that he either received a governorship over Damascus or actually served in that capacity. There is thus little basis to claim that Baydar/Baydarā received command over a tūmen of Syrian troops coerced into serving the Mongols.

Yet, Kebuqa did have some local soldiers and officers serving under him at the battle. Mention has already been made of al-Ashrāf Mūsā, whom Hūlegū had reinstated as ruler of Hīmṣ. In addition, the Aybūbid al-Saʿīd Hasan b. al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān had been released from prison by Hūlegū, declared his loyalty to the Mongols, and received as a reward his former principality of

²⁰ Baybars, Zubul, idem, Tuhfa, p. 43; al-Nuwayri, 27:390.
²² Waṣṣāf, p. 46. See also Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ‘Alīzādah, 3:68.
²⁴ Ibid., p. 310.
²⁵ See the example from 699/1300 adduced in Amitai, “Mongol Raids,” p. 244 and n. 79.
Bâniyâs and Subayba in the Golan Heights. The exact number of followers and other Ayyûbid troops in Mongol service is unknown, although it probably was not high, since Ibn Kathîr reports that the majority of the Syrian army had fled to Egypt. In addition to these troops, Ketbuqa's army contained Georgian and Armenian contingents; the contemporary Armenian historian, the Constable Smbat, writes that the Armenians numbered 500 men at 'Ayn Jâlût. There is a singular report, in Baybars al-Manṣûrî's Tarîh, that unspecified Frankish troops served with Ketbuqa. If this information is true, these Franks would probably have hailed from Antioch.

However uncertain this information on the size of the Mongol force, we are on even less firm ground when it comes to the size of the Mamluk army. As mentioned above, the regular Egyptian army had been joined by the refugee Syrian troops. Ibn al-'Amîd writes that Shahrazûriyya (Kurds) and Türkmen joined Qutuz, while Ibn al-Furât states that Türkmen, bedouin ('urbân), and Kurds were enrolled in the army. The Shahrazûri Kurds had previously fled from the Mongols into Syria, and earlier in 1260

32 Ibn Kathîr, 13:226 (p. 220, he writes that all those with al-Nâṣîr Yûsuf continued on to Egypt). Ibn Shaddîd (Târîkh al-malik-al-zâhirî, ed. A. Hûtaşî [Wiesbaden, 1983], pp. 335–336) gives a list of Syrian amirs who evidently participated on the Mongol side at 'Ayn Jâlût, but were later pardoned by Baybars (in fact, Qutuz probably pardoned them).
33 Kirakos, p. 498; Smbat, La Chronique attribuée au Connestable Smbat, trans. G. Dédényan (Paris, 1980), p. 116; W. E. D. Allen (A History of the Georgian People [London, 1932]) suggests that King David Narin commanded the Georgian troops, but this is surely wrong. His source must have been the anonymous Georgian chronicle edited by M. Brosset, Histoire de la Géorgie (St. Petersburg, 1849), 1:552, whose account of the whole Syrian campaign is summary and confused. For instance, the Mongols are reported to have won the battle. No mention is made of the location of 'Ayn Jâlût or its environs. Although this Georgian chronicle cannot be regarded as a reliable source for King David's presence in the battle, it may indicate that he was found in Syria earlier in the campaign.
34 Baybars, Tarîh, p. 43.
35 These included al-Manṣûr Muḥammad, the Ayyûbid ruler of Ḥamā; Ibn Waṣîl, fol. 160a.
36 Ibn al-'Amîd, p. 175; Ibn al-Furât, fol. 244b; al-Maqriẓî copies this, but omits the Kurds from the list. Ibn al-Furât may have based his information on Ibn al-'Amîd, and added the bedouins, perhaps influenced by Abû Shâma (p. 207) who mentions the bedouins and others (min al-‘arab wa-ghâyribîn).

joined the flood of Syrian military refugees into Egypt. The exact identity of the Türkmen and bedouin is unknown. The Türkmen were surely refugees from Syria, while it is not specified whether the bedouin were Syrian or Egyptian. The fact that there is no further mention of these two groups might be an indication of their small size and insignificance in the fighting. Only Baybars al-Manṣûrî mentions that footmen were part of the Mamluk army. No Mamluk source provides numbers for this combined force. The only writer to do so is the Persian historian Waṣṣâfî, who offers the figure of 12,000 men. His source, however, is unclear, and it is unlikely that he would have had access to this information. The possibility of pure imagination on his part should not be discounted. This number, however, is not totally unreasonable. We have figures of 10,000 and 12,000 horsemen for the Egyptian army under the last Ayyûbids, but these totals should be taken with a grain of salt, especially since the Mamluk army in Egypt may have undergone many changes in the first years of its existence. However, they provide us at least with a general sense of the size of this army.

It is impossible to give even a reliable estimation of the numbers of the Syrian troops which set out with the Egyptian army. The size of the Ayyûbid armies in Syria before the Mongol invasion is uncertain. Even if a reliable figure were to be had, it is unclear how many actually made their way to Egypt; we only have the

38 Baybars, Zubârî, fol. 38b.
41 Cf. R. S. Humphreys ("The Emergence of the Mamluk Army," SFA 45 (1977): 74), who offers figures for the Syrian army; to my mind these are somewhat speculative. Thorai ("Ayn Jâlût," p. 237) uses these figures as the basis for his calculation for the size of the Syrian contingent in Qutuz's armies; he estimates the total Mamluk army at 'Ayn Jâlût to be 15,000–20,000 men.
above-cited statement by Ibn Kathir that the majority of Syrian troops fled to Egypt, a statement which precludes quantification. Finally, it is unclear how many of these refugee soldiers actually joined Qutuz's army and set out with him. In short, we are left in the dark as to the size of the Syrian contingent, and we have only a general estimation for the Egyptian army which it joined.

On the other hand, we have indications as to the relative size of the opposing armies. Several later Mamluk sources, in describing the Mamluk victory at the first battle of Hiims on 5 Muḥarram 659/11 December 1260, state that this was a greater achievement than ‘Ayn Jâlût, because at this latter battle the Muslims had a numerical advantage, whereas at Hiims the Muslims were in a clear minority. No less telling is additional information from the battle of Hiims. Ibn Wâsiil writes that among the Mongols of that battle there was a group of Mongol heroes (shu‘ân al-mughul). He then cites an amir named Mubâriz al-Dîn, the ustâdâr (major domo) of the prince of Hâmâ who was present at that battle. This amir reports that there were more “descendents of the Mongols” (dhurriyya al-mughul) at this battle than at ‘Ayn Jâlût. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze the difference, if any, between tâtar/tâtâr (the standard word for the Mongols in the Mamluk sources) and mughul, but it would seem that shu‘ân/ dhurriyya al-mughul refers to some type of first-rate Mongol troops, or even “pure” Mongols, as opposed to other types of troops of steppe origin. Al-Yûnînî and other writers state that at the battle of Hiims, there were 6,000 Mongol troops, i.e., that at the most there were 6,000 dhurriyya. If this is more than were present at ‘Ayn Jâlût, and it was estimated that the size of the Mongol army (without Syrian auxiliaries) was in the neighborhood of 10,000–12,000 troops, it would follow that much of Qutuz’s army was not composed of top-notch Mongol cavalrymen, but rather either of less elite nomadic troops (of unknown origin) or sedentary allies.

The mainstay of both the Mamluk and Mongol armies were disciplined masses of mounted archers who originated in the Eurasian steppe. There were, however, differences between the two forces. The Mamluks had been plucked out of the nomadic environment at a young age, brought as slaves to Egypt and Syria, converted to Islam, and inducted into the armies of various rulers or senior officers, where they underwent long-term military training. The Mongols, on the other hand, maintained a nomadic lifestyle. Smith has recently suggested that in general, the Mamluks were better equipped and trained and had larger horses than their Mongol counterparts. This may well be true, although it must be remembered that the political disorders in Egypt and Syria over the previous decade would not have been propitious for the orderly building of armed forces in either country.

A Note on a Source

The following reconstruction is based on Arabic sources from the Mamluk Sultanate and pro-Mongol sources which were written in Persian, Syriac, and Armenian. It is difficult to establish an acceptable and realistic account of the battle because none of the sources gives the complete picture and they often contradict each other; at the same time some events are unclear or completely unreported. In general, source criticism will be dealt with in the discussion of the battle below. At this stage I will limit myself to a

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42 Smith ("Ayn Jâlût," p. 313) wonders how many Syrian troops would have been willing to return to Syria to fight the Mongols.
43 The following information of Ibn al-Suqâ’î (Tâlî kitâb waqâyût al-a’yân, ed. and trans. J. Sublet [Damascus, 1974], p. 168) may be rejected: in the aftermath of ‘Ayn Jâlût, news reached Hîlêlî that the majority of Qutuz’s army were amirs and mamluks of al-Nâsîr Yûsuf, the last Ayyûbîd ruler of Aleppo and Damascus.
44 Mu‘âdâl, p. 75; Ibn al-Dawâdârî, 8:68; al-‘Aynî, fol. 79a (citing Ibn Kathîr, but I could not find this there). For the first battle of Hiims, see R. Amitai-Preiss, "In the Aftermath of ‘Ayn Jâlût: Three Episodes from the Early Mamlûk-Takhîînî Cold War," Al-Masâq 3 (1990): 2–5.
46 On this question, see the remarks of Morgan, Mongols, p. 57.
47 Al-Yûnînî, 1:434–435; 2:89–90; also found in Ibn al-Dawâdârî, 8:68; Mu‘âdâl, p. 71; Ibn al-Furâtî, fol. 262a; al-Maqârî, 1:442.
48 See D. Ayalon, EI, 2d ed., s.v., "Mamlûk."
49 On Mongol troops, see Morgan, Mongols, pp. 84–85.
50 Smith ("Ayn Jâlût," pp. 314–326) also presents a model for Mongol and Mamluk tactics.
comment on one author, al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1442). His work, *Kitab al-suluk*, is perhaps the most consulted account of the battle. This record, as elsewhere in his treatment of early Mamluk history, is an unattributed condensation of earlier works, not always an accurate one at that, and sometimes quite misleading. His account of the battle is essentially a much shortened version of the various reports in *Tarikh al-duwal wa-l-muluk*, by Ibn al-Furat (d. 807/1405), including that of the contemporary Sârim al-Dîn Özbek. Al-Maqrizi supplements Ibn al-Furat with selected passages evidently derived from al-Nuwayri (d. 734/1331–32). Sârim al-Dîn Özbek was present at the fighting on the Mongol side and makes a unique contribution to our knowledge of the battle, although serious questions must be raised as to the veracity of this account. This will be discussed below. What interests us here is that al-Maqrizi summarizes his and other reports collected by Ibn al-Furat in a most terse and incomplete matter. This is clearly shown in the Appendices and the following discussion. Since al-Maqrizi has shown himself to be an unreliable summarizer, and his sources have been identified and analyzed, he can no longer be considered an independent source for the reconstruction of this battle.

**Pre-Battle Maneuvering and the Location of the Battle**

We last left the Mamluks at Acre. Baybars had been sent ahead with the vanguard, and the main body under Qutuz followed. At some point, the Mamluk force came into contact with Mongol troops and skirmishing commenced. The Mamluk vanguard defeated its Mongol counterpart, and Baybars sent word to Qutuz that contact with the enemy had been established. Some sources report that the skirmishing was fairly wide ranging, with Baybars alternatively advancing and retreating, eventually enticing the Mongols to ‘Ayn Jalût. The last part of this statement, at least, can be rejected, because there is clear evidence in independent

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51 Most of the studies cited in n. 2 above are based on al-Maqrizi. Only Herde and Tharau attempt to relegate that work to a secondary position.

52 Al-Maqrizi based much of his history of the first decades of Mamluk rule on Ibn al-Furat; see Amitai-Preiss, "In the Aftermath of 'Ayn Jalut," pp. 12–13. My general impression from comparing the annals of these two writers for the twenty-two year period between 'Ayn Jalût and the second battle of Hims (680/1281) is that Ibn al-Furat is virtually the only source for al-Maqrizi. D. P. Little (*An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography* [Wiesbaden, 1970], pp. 76–80) has shown that al-Maqrizi based his annals for 693/1292–93 on Ibn al-Furat, although in later annals (699/1299–1300, and 708/1308–9), al-Maqrizi is more eclectic in his sources.

53 For the two examples of al-Maqrizi’s evident direct use of al-Nuwayri, see nn. 83 and 93.

54 Al-Safadi, 10:332; Ibn al-Furat, fol. 245b (cf. al-Maqrizi, 1:430, for shortened version).

Mamluk sources that the Mongols reached the battlefield first. For instance, Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir reports that when Baybars climbed a hill near ʿAyn Jālūt, he found the Mongols below. According to al-Dhahabi, the Mongols spotted the Mamluk force and started up the hill towards them. Realizing his perilous position, Baybars beat a hasty retreat back down, but not before sending a messenger to Qūţuz, who was one day's march away. Having succeeded in escaping the Mongols, Baybars was soon reinforced and finally joined by Qūţuz with the main army.

The battlefield was in the environs of ʿAyn Jālūt ("Goliath's Spring"), an all-year spring at the foot of the northwest corner of Mt. Gilboa, about fifteen km northwest of Baysān (Beit Shan) and eight km to the southeast of Afuza, just west of the modern village of Gidānīn. Today the spring is known as ʿAyn or Maʿayn Ḥarūd. It is clear why the Mongols picked this particular place to

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56 Since the Mongols reached the site of the battle first, the suggestion made in several studies that the Mamluks prepared an ambush at ʿAyn Jālūt for the Mongols can be rejected. See n. 113 below and the accompanying text there.


58 Al-Dhahabi and Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, as cited in n. 57. The latter writer states that Baybars went up the hill and remained there all night on horseback.

59 The following description is based on Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," p. 326, with some additions and changes. The Arabic sources are less than specific about the exact location of the battle. Yaḥyā (Muṣjam al-buldān, ed. F. Wientzenfeld [Leipzig, 1866–73], 3:760) states that ʿAyn Jālūt is in "the Land of Canaan" (miḥd ar-dawrān) near Baysān. Ibn Wāṣil (fol. 160b) writes that ʿAyn Jālūt was in the gawhar, a term usually reserved for the Jordan River Valley; see also ibid., fol. 166b–167a; Ibn Taghārī Birdī, 7:79. Al-ʿAynī (fol. 76a) writes that the battle was at the marzila (stage of journey) of ʿAyn Jālūt (i.e., this was a regular stopping point for travelers), which is in Marj Bābīn Amīr (Arabic for the Jezreel Valley).

60 For the identity of ʿAyn Jālūt with the modern ʿAyn Ḥarūd, see L. Press, A Topographical-Historical Encyclopaedia of Palestine [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 709. For a discussion of whether ʿAyn Jālūt corresponds to Biblical ʿAyn Harōd, await the Mamluks. Along the northern foot of Mt. Gilboa runs Wādī Jālūt (Nahal Harūd), which would provide watering for the horses, and the adjacent valley offers both pasturage and good conditions for cavalry warfare. Other advantages are evident. The Mongols could exploit the proximity of Mt. Gilboa to anchor their flank. It also offered an excellent lookout advantage, as did the nearby Hill of Moreh (Givʿat ha-Moreh). In addition, it provided the possibility that the Mamluks could be caught by surprise as they rode towards Beit Shan, because the northwest spur of Mt. Gilboa would provide cover for the Mongols. Finally, the general location permitted maximum flexibility and control over a large area. According to need, the Mongols could deploy in any direction. They had not gone too far from Damascus, and likewise they had not drawn too near the Crusaders on the coast.

The Battle

Fighting commenced on Friday, 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260, at dawn according to both Sārīm al-Dīn Özbeg and the contemporary Armenian historian, Snbāt. Ibn Kathīr writes that Qūţuz, upon seeing the Mongol banners, had ordered the amirs: "Don't fight until the sun has [begun to] set [from its noontime high], the shadows have shifted [from west to east], the wind has begun to blow, and the khafṣūs (preachers) and people have prayed for us." It appears that Qūţuz may have originally envisioned an attack in the early afternoon. However, given the reports in two independent contemporary sources, there can be

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62 Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir (p. 64) writes that the Mongols had tried to hide their position at ʿAyn Jālūt. It is difficult, however, to see how they could possibly have intended to catch the Mamluks coming out of the Hadera road (I presume that the reference is to Wādī Ṭirās) as Smith ("ʿAyn Jālūt," p. 326) suggests, since this road is some fifteen km away in a straight line.

63 Sārīm al-Dīn, in Ibn al-Furūṭ, fol. 247a; Snbāt, La Chronique (n. 33, above), p. 106. Cf. Herder, "Taktiken muslimischer Heere," p. 86, and Thorau, Baybars, p. 94 and n. 21, which will be discussed below.

64 Ibn Kathīr, 13:226. Qūţuz is of course referring to the Friday noon prayers.
little doubt that the battle was fought in the early morning. Perhaps Qutuz had changed his plans. Yet, since the Mongols attacked first (see below), it appears more likely that Qutuz’s plans were preempted.65

The position of the two sides and the subsequent events cannot be established with certainty. The evidence of Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg, who was with the Mongols, has been the basis for several modern studies.66 This source tells us that the battle began with the descent of the Mamluks from an unspecified mountain (jabal). The Mamluks were organized into squadrons (atlab) and advanced under their banners. The Mongols, initially disconcerted by the large numbers of the Mamluks, responded by moving towards (isthāʿāt) the mountain. The Mongols were in the sun, while initially the Mamluks were in the shade. This must have been of short duration, because Şārīm al-Dīn reports that soon afterwards the equipment of the Mamluks was dazzling in the sun. No information of the actual battle itself is given. Şārīm al-Dīn reports that at the early stages of the battle he was with Kethbuqa and informed him of the identity of each Mamluk squadron.67

Some modern scholars have identified this jabal with Mt. Gilboa, which rises above ‘Ayn Jālūt to the south, and thus the Mamluks were descending from the northern slope of the mountain, while the Mongols were in the plain below, ʿat the south.68 However, this identification and subsequent positioning of the forces is problematic. It is extremely difficult to descend from

65 Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg (in Ibn al-Furat, fols. 246b–247a; also cited in Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:57) relates that he wrote to the Mamluk amirs to inform them that the Mongols planned to attack in the morning. See below.


67 Şārīm al-Dīn, in Ibn al-Furat, fol. 247a–b. Cf. al-Maqrīzī (1:431) who confuses the reader by rendering this account in an incomplete manner. It is clear that al-Maqrīzī is based on Ibn al-Furat by the comparison in Appendix I. Al-Maqrīzī states simply that the Mongols “were disposed (tabayyāzū) towards the mountains,” without mentioning previously that the Mamluks were already there, as does his source, Ibn al-Furat. M. E. Quatremère (trans., Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l’Égypte [Paris, 1837–45], I, pt. 1:104) did not understand the passage in al-Maqrīzī, evidently misreading al-khayl for al-jabal in the MS, and writing “Les Tatars montèrent alors à cheval.” Thorau (“Ayn Jālūt,” p. 238) cites the mistaken translation.

68 See n. 66 above.

Mt. Gilboa in the vicinity of ‘Ayn Jālūt, because of the steepness and rockiness. A descent can be made, but only with great care, and probably only on foot; the horses would probably have had to be led by the reins. It is difficult to imagine an organized movement of the Mamluk squadrons on such a slope, yet Şārīm al-Dīn describes what must have been an organized advance of Mamluk troops. In addition, it is difficult to understand why an army based on cavalry would have tried to attack from a steep slope. Any mobility it possessed would thus be neutralized, and it would take some time to reorganize at the foot of the mountain. Meanwhile, the Mongols, with their horses rested and watered, would be ready and waiting to attack below.69 Finally, the wādī at the foot of the hill would also have limited the maneuverability of the Mamluks, just as they were preparing to attack.70

Those scholars who placed the Mamluks on Gilboa and the Mongols on the plain to the north also used Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg’s information on the sun and shadow, arguing that the Mongols thus had the sun in their faces while the Mamluks were in the shade, protected from the light either by Mt. Gilboa or the trees in the area. Herde has even proposed, on the basis of Şārīm al-Dīn’s description of the sun and shadows, that the fighting was actually in the late afternoon instead of during the early morning, as Şārīm al-Dīn himself states.71 For the sake of argument, let us assume for a moment that the Mamluks were on Mt. Gilboa. Even so, Şārīm al-Dīn’s evidence on the sun and shadow cannot be used to determine what time of the day the battle occurred. Generally, Mt. Gilboa runs southeast to northwest. On the third of September, at
the latitude of “Ayn Jālūt (32° 32’), the sun would have risen and set at an angle of approximately 81° east and west respectively of north,72 i.e., the sun would thus have been at the back of the Mongols and shining on the Mamluks both in the early morning and late afternoon. It has been suggested that the Mamluks were in the shade of trees.74 But it is not clear if there were trees on this part of Mt. Gilboa in the thirteenth century.75 In addition, soon after he reports that the Mamluks were in the shadows, Şārīm al-Dīn informs us that their equipment was shining. So if there were trees, they had suddenly disappeared. All of this, of course, is academic, since as shown above, it would seem that the Mamluks were not on the mountain above “Ayn Jālūt, but were approaching the battlefield from a different direction. If Şārīm al-Dīn’s evidence on the jabal is to be believed, it must be found elsewhere.

This touches on the general problem of Şārīm al-Dīn’s veracity. Elsewhere, I have attempted to show that his report of his own activities in the events leading up to the battle at “Ayn Jālūt is exaggerated and even contains falsehoods.76 (Another example of this tendency on his part is found below.) Given his poor credibility, and the contradictions within his account, I would suggest that this version should not be used as the basis for the reconstruction of the battle, but only as an ancillary source.

Unfortunately, other contemporary writers are less than explicit with regard to the positions of the two armies. It would seem logical, however, that the Mamluk army, composed primarily of horsemen, would have ridden in from the northwest (i.e., the direction of Acre) through the Jezreel Valley.77 The Mamluks thus encountered the Mongol army somewhere in the vicinity of “Ayn Jālūt, where the latter had already taken up position. That the battle was near the spring, but not actually at it, is hinted at by Ibn al-Furāt, who writes78 that Qutuz initially took up position across from “Ayn Jālūt. Elsewhere this author states that the battle was at Nahr (= Wādī) Jālūt.79 The contemporary Abū Shāma reports that the battle was “at “Ayn Jālūt and its environs.”80 This is, of course, to be expected, because with the armies each numbering ten thousand or more, the lines must have been fairly widespread. I would suggest then that the armies were drawn up facing each other more or less from the north to the south. Perhaps the Mamluk Right was positioned on the northwest corner of Mt. Gilboa, near the former village of Zar’in, in order to anchor the flank.81

This might have given rise to Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg’s claim that the Mamluks came down a mountain; the slope at Zar’in is somewhat less steep than that above “Ayn Jālūt. Alternatively, Şārīm al-Dīn may have been referring to the higher position of the Mamluks as compared to the Mongols, because to the west of “Ayn Jālūt, the Jezreel Valley begins to slope to the southeast at a relatively steep rate, although it is fairly straight and can be negotiated easily by a horseman. From below, at the Mongol lines, it would appear that the Mamluks were indeed descending from a hill or a mountain.82

We are still left with Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg’s statement that the Mamluks were initially in the shade, while the Mongols were in the sun. If the Mamluks were coming in from the west in the early morning, they would have been facing the sun. Only in the late afternoon would they have had the sun at their backs, and the Mongols would have had it in their faces. Yet, Şārīm al-Dīn himself (as well as his contemporary, Smbat) states that the battle was in the early morning. In addition, while Şārīm al-Dīn reports that the sun rose upon the Mongols while the Mamluks were shaded, he immediately contradicts himself by stating that the sun

72 I would like to thank Mr. Miles Grosbard, AIA, of Philadelphia, for this information, which is derived from E. Mazria, The Passive Solar Energy Book (Emmaus, PA, 1979), pp. 267–287, esp. 281–282.
73 Herde, “Taktiken,” p. 86; Thorau, “‘Ayn Jālūt,” p. 239.
74 The woods that are found there today are relatively new. There are no trees on the slope in a photograph accompanying the article by C. Weidenkaff, “Ist ‘en dechhāld die altestamentliche Harodquelle?” Palästinajahrbuch des Deutschen evangelischen Instituts für Altertumswissenschaft des heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem 17 (1921): 18–31.
76 This direction was also suggested in Smith, “‘Ayn Jālūt,” p. 327.
77 Ibn al-Furāt, fol. 245b–246a.
78 Ibid., fol. 249b.
79 Abū Shāma, p. 207.
80 Smbat (La Chronique, p. 106) writes that the battle was at Prr, which the translator writes corresponds with Zar’in.
81 E. W. Lane (An Arabic-English Lexicon [Cambridge, 1984], s.v. jabal) states that this word is “also applied to a rocky tract; any rocky elevation, however little elevated.”
was shining on the equipment of the Muslims. Sārīm al-Dīn’s information concerning the light and shadow is somewhat confused, and should be rejected as a red herring, perhaps deliberately added for effect. This might call into question Şārīm al-Dīn’s evidence about the battle beginning in the morning, but since this is confirmed by the Armenian Smbat, it should be accepted.

The above positioning of the two armies is admittedly speculative, but taking into consideration the needs of cavalry warfare, it seems more logical than placing the Mamluks on Mt. Gilboa. Whatever the exact positioning of the two armies, it is clear that initially the battle did not go well for the Mamluks. The Mongols responded to the Mamluk advance by attacking. The extent of their attack is unknown but it included at least the Mongol Right, since the Mamluk Left was defeated and disintegrated. But Qutuz, who was in the Center, was not disconcerted. He rallied his troops—if the reports are to be believed—with the cry of “Oh Islam!” (wa-islāmāh) and then launched a frontal attack, which led to a Mamluk victory.83 Ibn Taghri Birdi, a later writer, even describes a series of repeated attacks led by Qutuz, who first succeeded in rallying his shaken Left Wing.84

The pro-Mongol Rashid al-Dīn describes the course of this battle in a quite different fashion: Qutuz had placed himself in a forward position with a small number of troops, and after the initial encounter, he fell back, drawing the Mongols into an ambush.85 Neither Mamluk (contemporary or later) nor pro-Mongol sources come close to offering some type of corroboration to this version.86 The credence given to Rashid al-Dīn’s account of the battle must be influenced by evidently spurious information about Kethbuqa’s fate (see below). Perhaps he was trying to explain away the Mongol defeat in a way acceptable to his Mongol masters, or possibly this was his interpretation, fleshed out by his imagination, of the initial Mongol victory and subsequent defeat. To his mind, the Mamluks were using the classic steppe tactic of the feigned retreat, just as the Mongols had often done. Since Rashid al-Dīn’s account has little apparent veracity, there is no need to attempt to confute it with the Mamluk accounts.87

For the sake of completeness, the account of the other major pro-Mongol Persian historian, Waṣṣāf, should also be reviewed. This writer tells how the “Egyptians” under Qutuz prepared a ruse by unfurling white flags like those of the Mongols. They succeeded in surprising the unsuspecting Mongols, who were camped at the edge of the desert, were indulging in drinking, and had let their guard down. The Mongols made an effort to resist, but Kethbuqa and his troops, after fighting bravely, were defeated, and only a few escaped to tell Hūlegū the news of the disaster.88 The fantastic and unsubstantiated information about the Mamluk ruse and the Mongols’ drunkenness on the eve of the battle can generally be discounted.

One factor which contributed to the Mamluk victory was the timely desertion of al-Asphalt Mūsā, who was in the Mongol Left with his troops at the beginning of the fighting. Şārīm al-Dīn Özbeg, his mamluk, claims responsibility for this action and states that he secretly sent to the Mamluk amirs ahead of time so they could exploit this desertion by strengthening their Right.89 Al-Nuwayry, on the other hand, tells us that it was Qutuz who sent to al-Asphalt, calling on him to desert during the battle, and this call

83 Al-Yūnūsī, 1:361; 2:35; al-Kutubi, 20:227; Ibn Kathīr, 13:221, 225, 227; al-Nuwayry, MS, Leiden Or. 2m, fol. 132a (citing, as does Ibn al-Furāt, an unnamed eyewitness, who was behind the sultan during the battle); Ibn al-Furāt, fols. 247b; al-Maqrīzī, 1:431. It would seem that in this case al-Nuwayry was the direct source for Ibn al-Furāt and al-Maqrīzī, since both share certain details with him, but not with each other.
84 Ibn Taghri Birdi, 7:79.
85 Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ‘Alīzādah, p. 74.

Chérifois, RHC, Ar. 2:754; MS de Rothein, in RHC, historiens occidentaux [Paris, 1844–95], 2:638–638) are of little use for determining the course of the battle, but provide some details; see Thorau, “‘Ayn Jallūt,” p. 238.
87 See Thorau, “‘Ayn Jallūt,” p. 237, for a reasonable criticism of Rashīd al-Dīn’s report; see also Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, p. 470, n. 75.
88 Waṣṣāf, p. 48.
89 Sārīm al-Dīn Özbeg, in Ibn al-Furāt, fols. 246b–247a; cited also in Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:57. The version taken from Ibn al-Furāt says that the Mamluks were told by Sārīm al-Dīn to strengthen their Left, while the version in Ibn al-Dawādārī states that it was their Right. The latter must be correct, as both versions say that al-Asphalt would be in the Mongol Left, and it would have been logical to advise reinforcing the Mamluk corps across from it.
was heeded accordingly, to great effect. Ibn Wāṣil simply says that al-Ashraf left during the battle and only then asked for an amān.  

To further complicate matters, al-Yūnīnī goes as far as to state that al-Ashraf was not even present at the battle; having been secretly contacted by Qutuz, he pleaded sick and remained in Damascus when Kebuqa went off to fight. In his stead, his troops were led by his cousin al-Muʿāẓzam and Sārīm al-Dīn ᪠began al-Ḥimṣī (i.e., our oft-cited source). Upon hearing of the Mongol defeat (there is no mention of the desertion of his troops during the battle), al-Ashraf fled with the Mongol officials in Damascus and reached Tadmor before writing to Qutuz and requesting an amān. Elsewhere, this author relates that al-Ashraf remained in Damascus with the Mongol commissioners (nuwāḥ) until the Mongol defeat. Thereupon, he fled with them to al-Rahba on the Euphrates, from where he sent Sārīm al-Dīn ᪠began and Ḥusām al-Dīn Luʾlūʾ to Qutuz, who granted an amān to their master.

Even without taking into consideration al-Yūnīnī’s interesting and singular report, the weight of evidence is against Sārīm al-Dīn ᪠began. This would not be the first time he is guilty of fudging the facts to extol his own role in the events he describes (see above). His motive here is clear: He hoped thus to absolve himself and his patron, al-Ashraf, from the embarrassing connotation of having cooperated with the hated Mongols by showing how they had really assisted the Muslims. But Sārīm al-Dīn’s account, exaggerated as it is, has a basis in some type of desertion by al-Ashraf, for which we have the accounts of al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Wāṣil, the latter of which is contemporary. There is a certain logic in Sārīm al-Dīn having taken a real event, known by all, and embellishing it for his own purposes, rather than fabricating a story from scratch.

The death in action of a general almost invariably meant the breakup of his army and its subsequent rout. Thus it was a fortunate occurrence for the Mamluks that Qutuz emerged unscathed after his horse was shot down from under him. Qutuz remained on foot for a while until a mount was provided for him. It was also to the Mamluks’ advantage that Kebuqa was killed during the fighting. The amir Akkush al-Shamsī is credited with the kill. After the battle, Kebuqa’s corpse was found on the field, and his head was sent to Cairo. It was still hanging at Bāb al-Zuwayla at the end of 661/1263. Rashīd al-Dīn’s story of Kebuqa’s heroism and capture, the verbal repartee between him and Qutuz (in rhymed Persian prose), and his subsequent execution,  can be relegated to the realm of fiction because of the mass of evidence which contradicts this in the Arabic sources. The author’s obvious intent was to extol the Mongols and to disparage the Mamluks. There is, however, an element of truth in Rashīd al-Dīn’s account: even in the Mamluk sources, mention is made of Kebuqa’s courage and his fighting on after most of his soldiers had fled.

After their defeat, the Mongols seem to have split up and fled in different directions. One group went up a nearby hill and attempted to make a stand. They were pursued by a force under Baybars which killed and captured most of them. Many of those who managed to escape were caught and slaughtered by local villagers. The exact identity of the hill remains unclear from the sources, but it could have been the nearby Hill of Moreh, Mt. Gilboa, or the nearby Givʿat Qumʿ (northeast of ʿAyn Jālūt). Rashīd al-Dīn reports how some Mongol survivors sought refuge

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90 Al-Nuwayrī, MS. Leiden Or. 2m, fol. 131b.
by hiding in a field of reeds in the area. This might refer to reed beds in either the Wadi Jallut area or in the environs of the Jordan River. These fugitives met their end, however, when these fields were set on fire by the Mamluks.99

There is a report, found only in al-Maqrizī, that the Mongols regrouped at Baysan, and a second engagement, even more intense than the first, was fought there. The Mamluk forces were shaken, and again it was Qutuz’s personal example, accompanied by three cries of “wa-islāmāh” and “Ya Allāh, help your servant Qutuz against the Mongols,” which led to victory. After this, Qutuz dismounted and prayed.100 This report, however, is based on a faulty condensation of two accounts in Ibn al-Furat. Al-Maqrizī’s dependence on Ibn al-Furat is clearly seen in Appendix II. Ibn al-Furat, citing parallel passages in Nuzhat al-anām by Ibn Duqmāq and Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, writes something different: Ibn Duqmāq reports that after the first Muslim victory near Baysan (“Ayn Jallut was near Baysan”),101 the Mongols came back (i.e., regrouped), and there was a second clash that was even greater than the first. It was then that Ketibūqa was killed and his head was brought to Qutuz. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, citing someone who was behind the sultan, states that when the Mongol army came back, Qutuz let out the three cries of “wa-islāmāh,” etc., threw off his helmet, and attacked. Only then did he get off his horse to give his thanks to Allāh.102 Al-Maqrizī has succeeded in misleading generations of scholars with his haphazard edition, and it can be stated in categorical terms that there was no second battle at Baysan.

Ibn Duqmāq and Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s evidence, as conveyed by Ibn al-Furat, can be conflated with the information already related in the following manner: The Mongols attacked first, dislocating the Mamluk Left. Qutuz succeeded in reorganizing and launched a counterattack, which shook the Mongols. They in turn regrouped and attacked anew, again threatening the Mamluks. Seemingly at this point, Qutuz threw off his helmet, gave the shout or shouts, and led the final charge which decided the outcome. It was evidently during this second Mamluk push that Ketibūqa was killed, thereby sealing the fate of the Mongol army and leading to its complete rout.

The number of Mongol dead in the battle must have been large: the MS de Rotrélion gives the figure of 1,500.103 ʿṢarīm al-Dīn ʿƏzīz b. al-Ḥṣīb’s claim that the entire Mongol army perished is surely exaggerated.104 No figures for Mamluk casualties are given. The Mongol survivors fled north; among them was Baydar, formerly commander of the Mongol advance guard at Gaza, who must have joined Ketibūqa just before the battle.105 The historian Hetʿum writes that the Mongol survivors of the battle found refuge with King Hetʿum of Lesser Armenia.106 A Mamluk force under Baybars was dispatched by Qutuz after the routed Mongols, and he chased them up through northern Syria. At ʿĔmān he caught up with a group of them and dealt them another beating. It is also reported that Baybars met there a fresh contingent of Mongols, numbering 2,000 troops, which had been sent by Hulegu to reinforce Ketibūqa. These were also dispersed by the Mamluk force.107 Baybars reached as far as Aleppo before turning back to join the main Mamluk army, now camped at Damascus.108

100 Al-Maqrīzī, 1:431.
101 See Ibn al-ʿĀmirī et al., as cited in n. 59 above.
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103 In RHC, historiens occidentaux (see n. 86 above), 2:638. This source also speaks of the battle taking place over three days in three different places, each time with the Mongols being defeated. This conceivably might refer to the pre-battle skirmishing, the battle itself, and the mopping up operations.
104 Cited in Ibn al-Furat, fol. 247b. Al-ʿĀmı fol. 76a) writes that most of the Mongols were killed in the battle.
105 Ibn al-ʿAmīrī, p. 174; Ibn al-Ṣuqūlī, p. 50. Baydar was the commander of the Mongol force which raided north Syria later in the year and was defeated at ʿĔmān; see Amīrat-Preiss, “In the Aftermath of ʿAyn Jallut,” p. 2.
106 Hetʿum in RHC, Ar, 2:175.
108 Al-Dhahabi, fol. 254a; Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. Al-Fīzādāh, p. 75; Ibn Wāṣil, fol. 160b–160a. Al-Ṣāfādī (10:332), along with al-Yūnīnī, al-Kutbū, and Ibn al-Furat, as cited in the previous note, state that the Mongols were followed only up to ʿĔmān. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir (p. 65) writes that Baybars reached as far as ʿĒtim and ʿĀfamiya, where the fresh Mongol force was defeated.
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101 See Ibn al-‘Amid, et al., as cited in n. 59 above.
102 Ibn al-Furat, fol. 248a. The cited part of Nuzhat al-anām is not extant, and the related account of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir is not in the version of his Rawd which has come down to us. The latter version resembles al-Nuwayri’s account (and hence Ibn al-Furat and al-Maqrizi) cited in n. 83. Is it possible that Qutuz let out the cry wā-islāmāh on two separate occasions? Perhaps these two accounts have a common source, and al-Nuwayri’s evidence actually refers to the second round of the battle.

103 In RHC, historiens occidentaux (see n. 86 above), 2:638. This source also speaks of the battle taking place over three days in three different places, each time with the Mongols being defeated. This conceivably might refer to the pre-battle skirmishing, the battle itself, and the mopping up operations.

104 Cited in Ibn al-Furat, fol. 247b. Al-‘Aynī (fol. 76a) writes that most of the Mongols were killed in the battle.

105 Ibn al-‘Amid, p. 174; Ibn al-Suqaṣī, p. 50. Baydar was the commander of the Mongol force which raided north Syria later in the year and was defeated at Hīm s; see Amitai-Preiss, “In the Aftermath of ‘Ayn Jālūt,” p. 2.

106 Het’um in RHC, Ar, 2:175.


108 Al-Dhababī, fol. 254a; Rashid al-Dīn, ed. ‘Allāzādah, p. 75; Ibn Wāṣīq, fol. 16b–160a. Al-Saṣadī (1032), along with al-Yūnī, al-Kutubi, and Ibn al-Furat, as cited in the previous note, state that the Mongols were followed only up to Hīm s. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir (p. 65) writes that Baybars reached as far as Hārim and Afāmiya, where the fresh Mongol force was defeated.
Analysis of the Mamluk Victory

In spite of probable later eulogistic accretions, to a certain degree, the Mamluk victory can be attributed to the decisive leadership of two men, Qutuz and Baybars. Qutuz succeeded in dragging the recalcitrant amirs out of Egypt, and right up to the time of the battle he was constantly haranguing them about the holy war and the need to drive out the Mongols. At the battle itself, he showed himself to be a cool-headed commander, and—if the reports are true—he personally led the charge that decided the battle. He also had the insight to make his peace with Baybars, in spite of the long-standing feud between them and the probable apprehension about the future (justified by events), and to delegate to him major responsibility during the campaign (command of the vanguard, and later, the mopping-up operations). The exact role of Baybars during the battle proper is uncertain, although the sources mention his personal bravery in the fighting.109 This is more than just panegyrics from a long period, although certainly Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir's account is greatly exaggerated; according to him Baybars won the battle almost single-handedly.110 With regard to Baybars' bravery, at least, the Arabic sources are confirmed by the Frankish Gestes des Chipreus.111

Still, in spite of their leadership skills, it is an exaggeration to see "the Mamluk victory as the result of a deliberate, calculated strategy and the clever, tactical positioning of separate bodies of troops."112 Seeing Qutuz's achievement as a consequence of a well-planned ambush, as suggested by several authors,113 is not warranted by the evidence. The course of the battle was certainly not determined only by Mamluk planning. Yet, the battle's outcome was influenced by clever on-the-spot decision making by Qutuz and Baybars, their personal courage and example, along with the timely desertion of al-Ashraf and his troops. Ketubqa's death in the fighting was also very opportune from a Mamluk point of view. There is much in the battle of 'Ayn Jalut which lends credence to the late R. C. Smail's statement: "The result of the battle must then be left to the interplay of morale, individual prowess, and good fortune."

No less important for the Mamluk victory was the relatively larger size of the Mamluk army, who were ignited by a sense of mission and a "no choice but to win" attitude which had been successfully instilled by Qutuz. Last, but not least, was the similarity of fighting methods of the Mamluks and Mongols: both armies were mainly composed of mounted archers, and thus the Mongols did not enjoy any inherent superiority of mobility and firepower. The similarity of fighting methods was due to the common origin of most of the Mamluk and Mongol troops—the Eurasian steppes—a fact discerned by several writers from the Mamluk Sultanate.114 As Ayalon has noted, "In the battle of 'Ayn Jalut, which had been fought out between the people of the same race, the infidels of yesterday had defeated the Muslims of tomorrow."

Conclusions

Many details of the battle, including the exact course of the actual fighting, remain unclear, due to the partial evidence left to us by the sources. In spite of the incomplete state of our knowledge, the salient features of the battle emerge as follows:

1) Al-Maqrizi is to be rejected as a source for the battle. At best he is merely a shortened form of other sources, mainly Ibn al-Furât, and is, at times, inaccurate. Şârin al-Dîn Özbek's value as a source has been overrated in previous scholarship; he deserves to be used only as an auxiliary source.

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109 Al-Nuwayri, MS. Leiden Or. 2m, fol. 132a; Ibn al-Furat, fol. 247b; al-Maqrizi, 1:431; Ibn Kathir (13:221) reports the valour of al-Manzir of al-Hamam, as does Ibn Wasi (fol. 161a), and Aga (Akat) al-Mustasirib, the Azabeg, but he does not mention Baybars. Ibn al-Dawdari (8:60) reports from his father, who received information from the amir whom he served, Balabun al-Rum, that during the battle a group of Baybars' khushdaghiya (i.e., Bahri) Red from the battle. This could refer to the setback on the Left Wing: plain anti-Bahri slaughter on Ibn al-Dawdari's part should not be discounted.


112 Thoroar, "'Ayn Jalut," p. 239.


116 Ibid.
2) While the exact sizes of the opposing armies cannot be established with certainty, it appears that the Mamluks enjoyed some type of numerical superiority.

3) The battle was fought on the morning of 25 Ramadān 658/3 September 1260, on the plain to the north of Mt. Gilboa. The Mamluks probably rode in from the west. The suggestion that the Mamluks descended from Mt. Gilboa (i.e., attacked from the south) is untenable.

4) There was no Mamluk ambush engineered by Qutuz and Baybars. The Mongols were already at ‘Ayn Jālūt when the Mamluk advance forces arrived on the scene.

5) There was no second battle at Baysān, as al-Maqrīzī would have us believe. Rather, there were at least two Mongol attacks at the original battlefield.

6) Factors contributing to the Mamluk victory were: the “do-or-die” attitude of the Mamluks, inculcated by Qutuz; his personal example and his rallying of the shaken Mamluk troops; the death of Ketbuq in the fighting; the defection of al-Ashraf and at least some of the Syrian troops who were fighting on the Mongol side; and the apparent numerical superiority of the Mamluks.

7) The similar composition of both armies—masses of mounted archers—meant that the Mamluks were able to meet the Mongols on their own ground. This, taken together with the reasons adduced in no. 6, led to the Mamluk success on the battlefield.
APPENDIX I

Comparison of Ibn al-Furât (based on Sârim al-Dîn Özbeg, via Qirţay al-Khazandarî) with al-Maqritzī for early events at ʿAyn Jâlûṭ

This is one of the passages edited by Levi della Vida, “L’invasione dei Tartari,” [n. 27 above] p. 366. There is no doubt that Ibn al-Furât was the main source here for al-Maqritzī, as he was for most of the events relating to ʿAyn Jâlûṭ. The latter generally follows Ibn al-Furât’s arrangement of the material. In addition, most of this particular information is found only in these two sources.

1 This sentence is not in Ibn al-Furât; cf. Ibn Wâṣîl, fol. 160b: waṣâla [al-sulṭâr] lâ ghâzza wa-t-qadib waṣlilâ khâṣîya [sic].

2 Read: waṣâla, or wâṣâla.

3 This important sentence is missing in al-Maqritzī. Without it, al-Maqritzī’s statement wa-taḥrûr waṣa al-salâr lâ ilâ al-Jabal (≈ Ibn al-Furât, thumma irna al-taṣâr inbažâ ilâ ilâ al-Jabal) cannot be properly understood.

APPENDIX II

Comparison of Ibn al-Furât and al-Maqritzī for the Mongol counterattack at ʿAyn Jâlûṭ

1,431

وقد امتلا ʿAyn Jâlûṭ 4

واثبطها، ولم يبق من العبدل من القلقلون، ولا من الفلاحين، ولا من النصارى، حلب، وركب جُزءًا بمعة

ومن فرسة أي شيء.

فاجزَ النصر إلى الجبل

ثم ان ʿAyn Jâlûṭ انتهت انحلالها، والعمليه، وانقلقت في 4

APPENDIX II

Comparison of Ibn al-Furât and al-Maqritzī for the Mongol counterattack at ʿAyn Jâlûṭ

4 Read: الطبطيات.

5 MS: مع نب. Levi della Vida wrote: “non son sicuro dell’interpretazione,” but this line seems clear. The peasants and villagers had made themselves absent (because of the impending battle).

6 N.B. Al-Maqritzī has used words found in Ibn al-Furât, but rearranged them for a different meaning. Again al-Maqritzī skips a line in Ibn al-Furât (war-ñhadàrî min safî al-jabal).

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Comparison of Ibn al-Furât and al-Maqritzī for the Mongol counterattack at ʿAyn Jâlûṭ

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وقد امتلا ʿAyn Jâlûṭ 4

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ومن فرسة أي شيء.

فاجزَ النصر إلى الجبل

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الأولى فقتل كعباً مقدماً
جيوش التحوار وتالي براً
بهذههم الله وقاتل أكبهم
وعدد منهم
إلى الملك الموظف فطر وكانت
الدافعية على الكفارة والله الحمد
وأسر المسلمين منهم خلق
كثير قال القاضي الجليل
ابن عبد الظاهر بن من
كان خلق السفاح الملك
المحفوظ قاتل لما جاء
عساكر التحوار الباقية إنه
صبر صربة غزية معتمع
معظم عسكره وقال
فصيح الساطر صربة
وإسلاماه ثلاث مرات
ثم قال يا الله انصر
عبدك قطع على هولا
التتار وأمي [في]этتاء
من على رأسه وحمل بنفسه
حمة الإسم والامير
ركن الدين يبيرس
البندقدي كان في
ذلك اليوم من الأعظم
المجاهدين وليمة تصرف الله
تعال نصرة لإسلام
وكسر عساكر التتار
لما انكسر التتار الكسرة
الثانية نزل السلطان
على فرسه فمر على
الجريف وسله وصلى
ركنين شكرى الله ثم
ركب قاتل السحار
مقدمة من المكاسب
بالmalink

1 Cf. supra in al-Maqzaf أرجع (التلتو) وصاعداً مباليةً.
2 Not in Ibn al-Furat. 
3 According to the editor, MS: الإسلاماه.