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IMPACT OF THE HISTORICAL SETTINGS OF IBN TAYMIYAH ON
HIS PROGRAM OF REFORM

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University
by
Mustafa Abdul-Basit Ahmed, M.A. (Distinction and Honors)

The Ohio State University
1997

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to study and analyze the program of reform of the seventh/thirteenth century Muslim scholar and activist, Ibn Taymiyah, in light of historical contexts. The three areas which are investigated in this work to best understand Ibn Taymiyah's attack on the problems of his setting are the intellectual, social, and political contexts of his time; his writings and thoughts on those contexts; and the activities he engaged in socially and politically to induce reform.

In contrast to the generally stagnant intellectual trend of his time, Ibn Taymiyah is found to be a prolific writer and original thinker, who went against many of the social and intellectual norms of his age. He wrote about the way a government based on the guidelines of the Qur'ān and Sunnah should function. He used reason to refute the kalām of the influential Ash'ari 'ulamā' and preferred ijtihād over blind following of the madhhabs (consequently coming under detention on several occasions). Ibn Taymiyah played a pivotal supportive role in the Mamlūk triumph over the Mongols both as a scholar and warrior. The Shi'ah concepts
of infallibility and an awaited imam, which were welcomed by the newly converted Muslim Mongol rulers, were refuted. He issued numerous fatwas against practices rampant in Mamlūk society, particularly among Sufis, which were innovations to the sharī'ah. Though he was not affiliated with the authorities and many of his thoughts seemed radical in his day, Ibn Taymiyah took an active role in the implementation of the reforms he proposed and even enforced the sharī'ah with the support of his followers.

This study shows that Ibn Taymiyah’s occasional agreements with the Mamlūk authorities or the populace were not based on appeasement but rather on what he deemed best for the propagation of the sharī'ah. Yet Ibn Taymiyah prioritized the expression of his views based on the political and social conditions of his society. When he did not reject Sufism completely--due to a lack of knowledge of the reality of the movement--he weakened his fight against Sufi innovations. Ibn Taymiyah’s call for a return to the way of the earliest generations caused the Salafi viewpoint to gain momentum.
To those who seek the truth with objectivity and neutrality,
attempting to liberate themselves from the influence
preconceived notions.
Acknowledgments

First I must express my heartfelt gratitude to Allah, subḥānahu wa taʿālā, for the countless times He helped me overcome seemingly insurmountable odds and for the wise twists of fate that are His signs. And certainly it was through His guidance and support that this work was accomplished. I must then convey my sincere appreciation to Prof. Jane Hathaway, who did much more than just thoroughly review this dissertation and provide many valuable recommendations. She truly went out-of-her-way to help bring this project to its completion. My thanks also extend to Prof. Joseph Zeidan for his continuous assistance, constructive suggestions and overall generosity of time. I am grateful to Prof. Frederic Cadora for his helpful advice and ongoing support. The late Prof. Marilyn Waldman deserves special recognition here. It was she who helped me plan and start this project. I thank Prof. Dona Straley for guiding me through a jungle of library sources and materials. Michael Toth, head of Loan Division at The Ohio State University libraries, made my dealings with the library swift and simple. Arif Faridi typed a considerable part of the material of this dissertation.
My wife Margaret has been, for years now, outstanding in her support of my work. I am grateful to her for typing parts of this treatise. She lent me a special hand when taking it upon herself to bear nearly all the responsibilities of the family. With her help, I was able to find the much needed time to concentrate on my research. Finally, I must acknowledge the understanding my children Fatima, Mariam, Yahya, Suhaib, and Sumaya have shown in the past four and-a-half years for dad’s inability to be with them more.
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1. Ahmed, Mustafa A., Shaykh al-Islām Taqiy-ud-dīn Ibn Taymiyah wa Mawqifuhu min at-Taṣ awwuf, The Islamic Academy for Scientific Research, Bridgeview, IL, 1994 (Arabic)


4. Zindani, A.A., Ahmed, Mustafa A., Tobin, Margaret B. and Persaud, T.V.N. (eds.), Human Development as Described in the Qur'an and Sunnah: Correlation with Modern Embryology", Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference, Moscow, Russia, Islamic Academy for Scientific Research, Saudi Arabia, 1994 (English)


**FIELDS OF STUDY**

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TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

The Anglo-American system of transliteration will be used in this dissertation. The following conventions were adopted in order to make the transliteration more compatible with the accuracy of Arabic pronunciation, and also with the general methodology followed by Western writers:

1) Names of cities, persons, or terms which are popularly known in the West are spelled according to conventional methods in English. In the cases of cities and persons, which have a different pronunciation in English, the Arabic name is provided and then the English pronunciation is given in parentheses.

2) The change in some of the Arabic vowels to denote the case of words according to their grammatical positions has been recognized when the Arabic text would require it, as in “Ṭabaqāt al-Muḥaddithīn” and “Ibn Abī ‘Abd-ir-Rahmān,” instead of the nominative case of “al-Muḥaddithūn”, “Abū” and “‘Abd-ur-Rahmān”.

3) Plurals are given in the Arabic form, except for words which have been anglicized and are popularly used, such as “Mamlūks” or “amīrs.”
4) The grammatical term ***yā’ an-nasab*** (the ending of ***yā’*** added to a noun in order to denote the origin, creed, birth place, family, etc. of the person or thing connected with it) as in ***al-‘Arabiyy or al-Harrāniyy***, is written according to the popular form, used in the Western references as a regular ***yā’*** which is similar to the other suffix of ***yā’*** of the ***manqūṣ*** as in ***al-Qādī***, in order to comply with the general methodology used in the West despite the fact it is not exactly complying with the Arabic pronunciation since ***ya’ mushaddadah*** (double) transliterated as ***ya’ mukhaffafah*** (single). In the case of words which are frequently used in the West—such as Sunni, Shi‘i and Sufi—the popular method of writing is used. Such words will thus be written Sunni, Shi‘i, and Sufi.

5) Arabic terms will be written in italic form at the first mention of them. Afterwards, the term will be provided in regular text. Excluded are well known terms such as Qur‘ān or Ḥadīth.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significance of Ibn Taymiyah’s thought

Taqī-ud-dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah (661-728/1263-1328)\(^1\) is one of the most eminent scholars in Islamic history. He was born in Ḥarrān, a town in the northwestern region of Syria, which in his day was ruled by the Mamlūks of Egypt.

By the seventh/thirteenth century, many elements foreign to the original teachings of Islam had penetrated into Muslim society. The contact with and often absorption of other civilizations by the Muslim world was partly responsible for the degeneration of purity in Islamic thought. Ibn Taymiyah began his quest to rid the society of the various un-Islamic influences from an early age (He, of course, approved of foreign imports not related to religious beliefs). His call for a return to the Qur’ān and Sunnah as understood by the Companions and other predecessors who chose that way was not

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\(^{1}\)Hijrī dates (A.H.) are provided first, and then dates marked as having taken place before Christ (B.C.) or in the Common Era (C.E. or A.D.). Abbreviations such as A.H. and A.D. will not be provided except in cases of single dates. A range between two dates after a name refers to the years of birth and death, unless preceded by “d.” which refers to the year of death, or “r.” which refers to the period of rule.
received well by those clinging to the popular trends of the time. Utilizing his literary acumen, Ibn Taymiyah wrote prolifically against the various social and political problems of his society. His literary works were numerous and often profound in content.

Ibn Taymiyah's writings are significant milestones in the history of Islamic thought. He contributed to many fields of knowledge including theology, jurisprudence, economics, philosophy, and logic. In each field he provided a new methodology by which to evaluate previous works and/or to add new dimensions to them. He did not only provide theoretical knowledge; his work rather extended beyond that, into the realm of implementation. There was a clear integration between his literary works and his active participation in the social and political arenas of his time. In Henri Laoust's thesis about Ibn Taymiyah, it is hard to recognize any points of difference between Ibn Taymiyah's thought and the practical aspects of his life. Ibn Taymiyah took it upon himself to reform his society, whether that meant writing books, fighting in wars, or even enforcing the Sharī'ah on his own. Little and Laoust agree that Ibn Taymiyah's views and actions influenced several segments of Mamlūk society. Little, quoting Laoust in his assessment of

\[\text{Laoust, Henri, } \text{Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takid-dine Ben Tayma, trans. Muḥammad 'Abd-ūl-‘Aẓīm 'Alī as Naẓariyāt Shaykh-il-Īlām Ibn Taymiyah fī as-Siyāsah wal-Ijtima‘, Dār al-Anṣār, Cairo, 1979.}\]
Ibn Taymiyah's political activity, says, "the biographers purged their works of 'signs of overly political activity and reduced his personality to a piety devoted solely to religious matters', when in reality 'he should be considered a political as well as religious reformer.'”

Ibn Taymiyah freed himself from the dominant social and cultural influences of his time. Though he did not claim to be a mujtahid, he derived his doctrines and opinions directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah. His approach was characterized by freedom from taqlīd⁴ and superficial elements as well as a commitment to the Salafi way⁵. Such an approach clashed with

---


⁴Taqlīd is the imitation of previous opinions without the recognition or examination of their evidence. This term is the opposite of ijtihād which is defined as the process through which an opinion is derived by a personal effort to understand the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah or to derive a ruling within the framework of the Sharī'ah principles.

⁵The Salafi way refers to the theological doctrines of Ahl-us-Sunnah. The word salaf linguistically means predecessors. This word is used as a term to refer to those following the religious doctrines held by the Companions of the Prophet. One of their doctrines triggering the most controversy was their understanding of the attributes of Allah. They affirmed the linguistic meaning without delving into its nature. They thus became known as as-Ṣīfātīyyah. Many sects claim to be the followers of the Salaf. The term Ahl-us-Sunnah may have two meanings as explained by Ibn Taymiyah. The first meaning limits the term to only those Muslims who oppose the beliefs of the Shi'ah, particularly the Shi'i stand on the illegitimacy of the first three Caliphs. The second meaning defines Ahl-us-Sunnah as those Muslims who are committed to the literal meanings of the passages of the Qur'an and Sunnah, thereby rejecting not only the views of the Shi'ah but the entire concept of kalām. This definition would therefore exclude the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ari or any other groups influenced by Greek philosophy. The Ash'ari would however be considered a part of Ahl-us-Sunnah according to the first definition. They generally tend to hold opinions somewhere
the popular slogan of his time, "the door of ijtihād has been closed." In fact, Ibn Taymiyah issued many fatwas which were not in agreement with any of the four madhhabs. He therefore came into conflict with many of the 'ulamā' of that time, the majority of whom considered it necessary to follow one of the standard schools of Sunni jurisprudence. Ibn Taymiyah argued against the principles of both philosophy and kalam. His Salafi approach to thought also put him in conflict with the ideas of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111) and the many people who supported his views. Al-Ghazālī's ideas had great influence over a significant part of the Muslim masses. Al-Ghazālī tried to reconcile Greek philosophy with the Sharī'ah principles. He thereby placed philosophy on an


Though Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī wrote against philosophical thought, Ibn Taymiyah and some modern researchers consider him to have been
equal footing with the Sharī'ah for the ascertaining of the truth. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyah considered the Qur'ān and Sunnah to be the basis upon which philosophy itself and all human knowledge were to be judged. Sufism, which by that time had adopted many ideas outside of Islamic teachings, ranging from neo-Platonism to Hinduism, won a great deal of attention from Ibn Taymiyah. These were some of the social problems Ibn Taymiyah tackled in his reform work. His methodology of revival may be summarized by his insistence on a return to the Book of Allah (The Qur'ān) and the Sunnah of His Messenger, beyond which there is nothing but misguidance and innovation.

Yet in challenging the many ideas contrary to the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunnah prevalent in his society, Ibn Taymiyah did not ignore his social and political setting. It was necessary to prioritize the steps for the implementation of reform according to the conditions of the society. This attitude is especially noticeable in the

influenced himself by Greek philosophy through the works of the Muslim philosophers. These philosophers included Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Al-Fārābī and Ikhwan Aṣ-Ṣafa. Badawi concludes that although Al-Ghazālī refuted Aristotelian thought and its followers from amongst Greeks and Muslims, he in turn adopted the Platonic model of philosophy. Al-Ghazālī continued to be faithful to Platonic thought till his death. (See Sālim, Muḥammad Rashād, Muqāranah bayna Al-Ghazālī wa Ibn-Taymiyah, Dār al-Qalam, Kuwait, p. 71; and Smith, Margaret, Al-Ghazali the Mystic, London, 1944 pp. 105-114.)

8 Traces of Mongol shamanism can be noticed among dervish groups during Ibn Taymiyah's time. (Little, Donald P., "Religion Under the Mamluks," History and Historiography of the Mamluks, Variorum Reprints, London, 1986, chapt. X, pp. 175-176.)
approach and degree of confrontation he took against those who opposed him.

The richness of Ibn Taymiyah's thought and reform efforts still require investigation and analysis. His ideas have had an immense influence on the Islamic reform movements of today. Ibn Taymiyah's ability to free his thought from the dominant social and cultural influences of his time, along with his methodology of deriving his doctrines and opinions directly from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, resulted in the timeless applicability of his ideas.

1.2 Research objectives, topics and methodology

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze Ibn Taymiyah's program of reform in the context of the political, social and intellectual settings during the Mamlük period. It also seeks to present his views about the Caliphate, the people of authority and the functions of the Islamic government, and how these views were influenced by his creed. This study shows that Ibn Taymiyah's relationship with the Mamlûks had two dimensions: the scholarly and the practical. The scholarly dimension may be observed in three of his main works: As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Islāh ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'iyyah (The Sharī'ah Principles for the Reform of the Rulers and the Ruled), Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām (The Administration of Ḥisbah9 in Islam) and Minhāj as-Sunnah ūn-

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9Al-ḥisbah is an administrative and supervisory authority which ensures the implementation of Islamic law commonly throughout the society. It employs people, in various fields of specialization, to oversee the
Nabawiyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām ash-Shi'ah al-Qadariyyah (Utilization of the Prophetic Way in Refuting the Shi'ah Creed). The practical dimension is expressed in his relationship with the Sultans and amīrs, as well as in his personal efforts against the Mongol advance. Ibn Taymiyah's imprisonment by the Mamlūks along with the letters he wrote on those occasions to his mother, family, the Sultan, and others also shed light on his deep involvement in political issues.

One of the important topics investigated and interpreted in this dissertation is the tension between Ibn Taymiyah and the Mamlūk rulers. We can clearly see that Ibn Taymiyah's fatwas, scholarly works and activities not only showed his tolerance towards the Mamlūk rulers but, moreover, showed support for them with the intent to maintain socio-political stability. He was very careful in addressing sensitive issues that might have caused violence against the Mamlūks. This was a result of his deep understanding of maqāṣid ash-Sharī'ah (the goals or wisdom of the Sharī'ah) and their implications in his historical context. The Mamlūks gained much by Ibn Taymiyah's support of some of their policies and their sultans often expressed great respect for him. Despite these facts, he was confronted with many pressures from the Mamlūks, to the degree that he was imprisoned in both Egypt.

religious, moral, social and economic activities of individuals within the society. It may also function in arbitrating disputes.
and Syria on six separate occasions for a total of six years between 693/1294 and 728/1328.

In order to understand the ambivalent relationship between Ibn Taymiyah and the Mamlûks, several issues need to be addressed and investigated. An examination of Ibn Taymiyah's ideology and thought; the political, social, and intellectual settings of his time; the relationship between the 'ulamâ' and the rulers; and the relationship between the 'ulamâ' and Ibn Taymiyah is necessary to discern the reasons for such discord.

The reasons for such conflicts, as will be shown in this study, were not a result of Ibn Taymiyah's political opinions or his views about the state and its functions, but rather of his theological and religious doctrines. Some of his doctrines were in contradiction with the dominant views of the 'ulamâ' and fuqahâ' at that time. His fatwas regarding at-Talaq bith-Thalâth (triple divorce)\(^{10}\) and visitation of graves, along with his doctrines concerning the attributes of

\(^{10}\) In the sharî'ah, the husband has two chances to divorce his wife and resume the marriage with her. Following each announcement of divorce there is a waiting period called 'iddah, after which the marriage is dissolved. The two can resume their marital relationship after the first or second announcement of divorce either before or after the period of 'iddah has expired. After the third divorce, the husband cannot marry his ex-wife again unless she has been remarried to another man and, in a natural way, received a divorce from him as well. Triple divorce refers to the three announcements of divorce at once. In the sharî'ah the husband cannot announce a second divorce unless he has already announced the first and they have since resumed their marriage. All the fuqahâ', including Ibn Taymiyah, consider triple divorce an impermissible act. The dispute, however, occurred with regard to its validation as one divorce or three.
Allah, were significant factors leading to his detention. Even the report in which Ibn Baṭūṭah (703-779/1304-1377), the famous traveler who claimed that he met Ibn Taymiyah in Damascus and observed his descent down a step of the minbar, allegedly illustrating the descent of Allah, might have influenced the view of the qādīs as well as the public towards Ibn Taymiyah.

However, this topic produces a significant question, why did Ibn Taymiyah stand so firmly for his views and simultaneously restrain himself from taking forceful action against his opponents despite the fact that he had several opportunities of power and public support to do so? An extensive analysis of his understanding of the sharī‘ah and the application of its rules is necessary to derive a sound conclusion to this question. One of the historical documents that has great significance in this regard is the decree that was signed by al-Malik An-Nāṣir in the year 705 A.H. (1306 A.D.). This document was distributed amongst the public and in different Mamlūk provinces to denounce the beliefs of Ibn Taymiyah concerning the essence and attributes of Allah. The letters which Ibn Taymiyah sent to his mother from the prison in Cairo are also important in this regard. Only when there is a recognition of the common thread between these historical documents will we be able to interpret the motives behind his tolerance of the Mamlūk.
As pointed out by Hodgson the historian should make a connection between the pieces of historical facts and determine the linkages between them and their method of development through the elaboration of causes and results. An effort should be made to penetrate as much as possible into the motivations and hidden goals behind recorded historical events. By analyzing the historical facts and their relationship to others preceding them or contemporaneous to them, the historian can reach the explanation of many important events. In all different matters, the historian should have a deep awareness of the nature of the society he is writing about and the attitude of the people. He should also recognize the general principles of human society and its ways of development.

Hodgson also emphasizes that we must first become acquainted with the things and ideas important to the people being studied. We may have no exact equivalent in our own culture and time but we need to take ourselves, as much as possible, into the thoughts of the people who wrote past works or expressed themselves. He expresses frustration with the fact that many writers and translators have been inconsistent in their presentation of Islamic terminology or of its names and concepts.\(^\text{11}\)

\[^{11}\text{Hodgson, Marshall G.S., The Venture of Islam, v. 1, p. 3.}\]
1.3 Previous studies about Ibn Taymiyah's thought

Many works about Ibn Taymiyah's thought have been produced since his time, both by his contemporaries, and by others through the centuries up until now. Early works clearly indicate a high degree of tension between those who supported him and those who opposed him. Although this tension loosened as the centuries went by, it may still be observed today.

As a result, many of these early studies are polemical in their approach because they concentrate on areas of either agreement or disagreement. Nonetheless, all constitute valuable historical sources of information. Manāqib sources generally should be approached with caution since they usually focus only upon the positive aspects of the figure in question. Among the writings supporting Ibn Taymiyah were the works of Ibn 'Abd-il-Hādī (704-744/1305-1343), Al-Bazzâr (688-749/1289-1348) and Ibn Kathîr (701-774/1302-1373). Among the writings opposing him were those of As-Subkî (638-756/1241-1355). As-Subkî praised Ibn Taymiyah for his book

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13 As-Subkî wrote several books criticizing Ibn Taymiyah's views, such as Ad-Durrah al-Madiyyah fī ar-Radd ‘Āla Ibn Taymiyah and Al- I’tibār bi-Baqā’ al-Jannah wan-Nār.
Minhâj as-Sunnah, but criticized him for his doctrines and beliefs concerning the attributes of Allah. As pointed out by Little, generally all historians showed a degree of admiration and respect for the personality of Ibn Taymiyah, regardless of their stands on his views. Little mentions only Adh-Dhahabi (673-747/1274-1346), Ibn Rajab (d. 795 A.H.), and Ibn Ḥajar (773-852 A.H.) as having recorded anything negative.\textsuperscript{14}

Many of the recent works about Ibn Taymiyah are less polemical in their approach, but the topic of Ibn Taymiyah’s thought is still a matter of much discussion and debate. One of the reasons for this continuing controversy is that Ibn Taymiyah confronted several schools of thought and creed, many of which continue to have impact and influence today.

Several of his opinions in jurisprudence were set apart from the general current of the fuqahā’ of his time.\textsuperscript{15} Ibn Taymiyah’s belief concerning the attributes of Allah was in conflict with the view of the Ash‘ari school, which was followed by most of the fuqahā’. Ibn Taymiyah adopted the Salafi methodology of affirming the apparent linguistic meanings of the attributes of Allah, delegating their actual nature to the knowledge of Allah. The Ash‘ari on the other hand interpreted most of the passages dealing with the

\textsuperscript{14}Little, Donald P., History and Historiography of the Mamlûks, vii, p. 319.

\textsuperscript{15}Examples provided in chapter 1.
attributes of Allah figuratively. Furthermore, his stand concerning Sufism resulted in many conflicts and disputes. He also rejected the methodology followed by the philosophers of his time, who were influenced by the Greeks. A strong stand was taken by Ibn Taymiyah against the sects that opposed Sunni belief, such as the Shī'ah and the Ismā'īlis. He debated with the Jews and the Christians as well.

In this dissertation, the goal is not just to present Ibn Taymiyah’s views and doctrines, but also to explain and understand them in light of their historical context, analyze them through the discipline of Islamic jurisprudence and investigate to what degree they are related to the Salafi or Sunni school. Many researchers have refrained from delving into this topic but hopefully this dissertation will provide insight into this enormous subject and contribute to a new participation in the history of Islamic thought.
CHAPTER 2

Ibn Taymiyah's Biographical Information

2.1 The main factors which affected Ibn Taymiyah's upbringing

Several factors were associated with the scholarly upbringing of Ibn Taymiyah. These factors include his personal characteristics, family background, and intellectual environment, as well as the general social and political settings of his time.

In the year 648/1250, the Ayyubid dynasty was replaced by the leaders of its slave-soldiers, who were known as the Mamluks. Ibn Taymiyah was born during a time in which both Egypt and Syria were ruled by the Mamluks. He was born thirteen years after the establishment of the Mamlük Sultanate. The Ayyubids, who preceded the Mamluks in rule over Egypt and Syria, had patronized Ash'ari thought and it thus became dominant in both countries. The only opposition that could be noticed against the Ash'ari school, at that time, came from the Hanbalî school, to which Ibn Taymiyah and his family belonged. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah was exposed to

and influenced by a rich theological environment. He comprehended the principles of both schools and witnessed many of the hot issues raised between them. This environment contributed to the formation of the scholarly future of Ibn Taymiyah.

The most dominant characteristic of intellectual status, during Ibn Taymiyah’s time, was the great quantity of writings and the abundance of scholarly production in different fields of Islamic knowledge. These fields included tafsīr, ḥadīth, fiqh, Arabic language and its related branches, history, etc. However, a major observation of this abundant production is the lack of originality in approach. The scholars’ approach was mainly characterized by deep studies of heritage and providing commentary works to add to those produced by previous generations or to summarize their works. A possible explanation for this phenomenon was that the necessity of following a specific madhhab in fiqh was emphasized during that period, and the dominant belief was that the door of ijtihād had been closed since the fourth century A.H. The seekers of knowledge and the scholars had no choice but to commit themselves to taqlīd (imitation of previous opinions without the recognition of their evidence) of one of the imāms who had been widely accredited and acknowledged by the ummah, and those were the four famous Imāms: Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 A.H.), Mālik (d. 179 A.H.), Ash-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204 A.H.) and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H.)
This type of thought had spread throughout the society and become integrated into standards that were accepted and upheld by everyone, without challenge, as if it had become one of the pillars of Islam, or one of its foundations. During that period, it was common that the famous scholars, in presenting themselves in their writings, would state along with their names and sometimes country of origin, their adherence to a particular madhhab. Abū Al-Ḥasan An-Nadwī states, regarding the view of the fuqahā’ towards madhhab during the seventh century:

Despite the common saying during that period that "The truth is distributed among the four madhhabas," the actual situation is that the followers of each madhhab were limiting the truth to their own madhhab, and if they wished to show more tolerance they would say "Our opinion is right with the possibility of being wrong, and the opinion of others is wrong with the possibility of being right."¹⁷

Ibn Taymiyah’s condemnation of taqīd caused severe friction between him and many of the fuqahā’.

Among the famous scholars just prior to or contemporary with Ibn Taymiyah were Ibn Aṣ-Ṣalāḥ (577-643 A.H.), Ibn Daqīq-il-Īd (625-702/1228-1302), and Muḥy-id-dīn An-Nawawī (631-676/1234-1278), and all of these were famous scholars in ḥadīth. In the field of history was ‘Īzz-ud-dīn Ibn Al-Athīr (555-630/1160-1232). Also among Ibn Taymiyah’s contemporaries were Abū Al-Ḥajjāj Al-Muzzi (654-742 A.H.),

'Alam-ud-dîn Al-Birzâlî (655-739 A.H.), and Shams-ud-dîn Adh-Dhahabî (673-847 A.H.). These scholars were also considered to be very eminent in ṣadîth. In the field of fiqh were Ibn Az-Zimlikânî (667-727 A.H.), Jalâl-ud-dîn Al-Qazwînî (d. 739 A.H.), and Taqî-ud-dîn As-Subkî (683-756 A.H.). In Arabic language and tafsîr was Abû Ḥâyyân An-Nâhwî (654-745 A.H.).

2.2 Family lineage and upbringing

Taqî-ud-Dîn Âhmad Ibn Taymiyah\(^{18}\) was born in Harrân on the 10th of Rabî‘ al-Awwal, 661 A.H. (January 22, 1263 A.D.).\(^{19}\) Harrân is a town located in northwestern Syria and a short distance south of Ar-Ruhâ (now Urfa in Turkey). The Harrân of Ibn Taymiyah is different from the city of Harrân which is near Damascus. It was known for its many religious scholars. Cheneb, in his article about Ibn Taymiyah, wrote that the birth place of the shaykh was the city of Harrân near Damascus—but this is inaccurate.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{20}\)Cheneb, Moh. Ben, "Ibn Taymiya," First Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1987, p. 422. There is also a Harrân near Ḥalab (Aleppo), and still another in Iraq—all are not to be confused with Ibn Taymiyah's birthplace. For more information about different cities
Ibn Taymiyah's father migrated with him and the family members from their native town, Harrân, to Damascus in 667 A.H. (1269 A.D.) in order to flee from the invading Mongols.

Ibn 'Abd-il-Hâdî (704-744/1305-1343) states two possible origins for the surname Taymiyah. The first is that it was the surname of Ibn Taymiyah's grandfather, Muḥammad Ibn Al-Khaḍîr. As for the second possibility, Ibn 'Abd-il-Hâdî cites Ibn An-Najjâr, who said that the mother of Ibn Taymiyah's grandfather, Muḥammad, was called Taymiyah. She used to lecture, admonishing people to recognize their Islamic obligations. She was known as a learned person. Ibn Taymiyah's name is thus descended from her.  

Historical sources do not specify whether his family was of Arab or non-Arab origin. He is only traced to his town Harrân. Abû Zahrah raises the possibility that his family was of Kurdish origin. The basis of his suggestion is that the Kurdish people were known for their audacity and power, as well as their temper. Such characteristics can be noticed in Ibn Taymiyah's personality. However this cannot be taken as sound evidence for Abû Zahrah's conclusion.  


The family of Ibn Taymiyah was deeply rooted in knowledge and scholarly activities. His father was a renowned scholar, mastered the sciences of the sharī'ah, was governor of the city, and regularly delivered the Friday khutbah. He provided fatwas (legal rulings based on Islamic jurisprudence) as well.

Ibn Taymiyah's grandfather, 'Abd-us-Salâm, was a faqīh in the Ḥanbalî madhhab, a muhaddith and an author as well. He was born in Ḥarrān (590/1194) and there he resided. He received his education from his uncle, Al-Khaṭīb Fakhr-ud-Dîn. Fakhr-ud-Dîn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Al-Qāsim, a faqīh and mufassir, was also among Ibn Taymiyah's family members.24

23Muhaddith is the title given to a scholar who has mastered the discipline of ḥadīth scholarship or Muṣṭalâh al-Ḥadîth. This discipline provides a methodology for the investigation of the degree of the authenticity of reports. Reports are either attributed to the Prophet and identified as ḥadīth marfû', or attributed to his companions and identified as ḥadīth mawqūf. Muṣṭalâh al-Ḥadîth consists of two branches: 'Īlm ad-dīṣâyah (rules of identification) and 'Īlm ar-riwāyah (rules of narrative). The first deals with the text or matn itself. The texts are examined according to specific measures. For example, the text should not be inconsistent, nor should it contradict other well-accepted, authenticated information from stronger sources. The second studies the chain of narrators, called sanad. The chain of narrators refers to the people who narrated the text of the ḥadīth (report) from one to another, until the time of recording the text in writing which began in the end of the 1st century and during the 2nd century A.H. Some ḥādīths had been recorded in writing during the time of the Prophet. This methodology is applicable in verifying the authenticity of other historical reports as well. (See Ibn Aṣ-Ṣalâh, Abû 'Amr, 'Uлūm al-Ḥadîth, ed. Nûr-ud-dîn 'Atr, Al-Madînah al-Munawwarah, Al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1966; and Ibn Jamā‘ah Al-Kinānî, Al-Manhal ar-Rawî fî 'Uлūm al-Ḥadîth an-Nabawî, ed. As-Sayyid Nûh, Al-Mansûrah, Dâr al-Wafâ’ liṭ-Ṭibā‘ah, 1981.)

Ibn Taymiyah received his education from his father and other scholars. According to Adh-Dhahabî, he was taught the fiqh of the Hanbalî madhhab by his father until he had mastered it and had begun to teach it to others, to provide fatwa, and to author books in various branches of Islamic knowledge.

2.3 Education and personal characteristics

Of all the Muslim intellects known to us, there can be no doubt that Ibn Taymiyah was one of the most gifted. Anyone who has carefully studied his life and works will attest to that. Even after making allowances for the sometimes excessive praise that appears in accounts of his youth by some contemporaries and biographers, it is obvious he was a phenomenon from the start. This is well reflected in what we know of his academic performance in early life.

His family was highly educated, as indicated previously, and he grew up in and was exposed to a scholarly environment. Before and during the time of Ibn Taymiyah, Damascus attracted many famous scholars of fiqh, hadith, and history, such as Ibn Daqîq Al-‘Īd, An-Nawawî, Adh-Dhahabî and Ibn Kathîr (701-774/1302-1373).

According to Adh-Dhahabî, Abū Al-Ḥajjâj Al-Muzzî and Ibn Az-Zimlikânî, Ibn Taymiyah had an outstanding intellect and a strong memory. He memorized the Qur‘ān at an early age.

Ibn 'Abd-il-Hādī reports an incident in which a learned man who had heard about Ibn Taymiyah's sharp memory wanted to test it for himself. The man dictated the texts of eleven or thirteen ḥadīths to Ibn Taymiyah, who wrote them on a tablet. Ibn Taymiyah read the ḥadīths once. The man took the tablet and asked him to recite them from memory. Ibn Taymiyah recited all of them back to the man in a most elegant fashion. The man then recited another set of ḥadīths along with their isnads for Ibn Taymiyah to write. Ibn Taymiyah looked at them once and again recited them from memory.26

Adh-Dhahābī and Ibn Al-Wardī (691-749/1292-1348) report that after Ibn Taymiyah had learned writing and calculations and memorized the Qur'ān under the tutelage of a shaykh during the second decade of his life, he began to study fiqh, the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh), and tafsīr with such great motivation that he exceeded all the other students. He used to attend the meetings of the scholars. He would surprise the elderly scholars with the skill and intelligence of his debates and discussions.27


23
Ibn Taymiyah received a deep foundation in Arabic language and grammar. He studied *Al-Kitāb* by Sībawayh and attained a level suitably high to criticize it. He disagreed with Sībawayh on certain issues and pointed out some of his mistakes. In addition to receiving instruction in fiqh from his father at an early age, he learned through other shaykhs as well. Ibn 'Abd-il-Hādī stated that Ibn Taymiyah's instructors exceeded 200 shaykhs. Among them were Zayn-ud-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd-īd-Dā'im Al-Maqdisī, Ibn Abī-l-Yusr, Al-Kamāl Ibn 'Abd, Al-Majd Ibn 'Asākir and Al-Jamāl Yahyā Ibn Aṣ-Ṣayraffī. Among his instructors were four women. Ibn Taymiyah studied *Musnad Aḥmad* and the six books of ḥadīth (*Aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*) several times.

Adh-Dhahabī also stated that Ibn Taymiyah had mastered many branches of knowledge, such as the fiqh opinions (rules of jurisprudence) of the saḥabah (Prophet’s Companions), the famous four schools of fiqh, language, religions and sects, uṣūl al-fiqh, tafsīr, kalām, sīrah, and history. Adh-Dhahabī added that Ibn Taymiyah was qualified for teaching and for providing fatwas at age seventeen. When he was less than

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nineteen years old, he began to compose books. Ibn Az-Zimlikânî, who was once a judge in one of Ibn Taymiyah’s trials states about Ibn Taymiyah: "If he was asked about any branch of knowledge, the witness or listener might think that he has mastered this branch of knowledge alone, as if he had specialized in this area, and the listener might affirm that no one has knowledge equal to his."^^2

His father died when he was 21 years old. Ibn Taymiyah took over his father’s position at Dăr al-Ḥadîth (the school of ḥadîth). His name became widely known, and he started to provide an interpretation of the Qur‘ān on Fridays in the mosque. We may gather that he was a good orator, for he would speak from his memory, with fluency and no hesitation. He achieved an advanced position in the discipline of ḥadîth, as an expert concerning its sources and degrees of authenticity.^^3 Adh-Dhahabî, who was one of the famous muḥaddiths of the time, remarked “One could say that any ḥadîth not known to Ibn Taymiyah is not [an authentic] ḥadîth, but absolute knowledge belongs to Allah alone.”^^4


Aside from his intellectual capacity, we must also examine aspects of his personality which relate to his dealings with others. Personal characteristics play a significant role in shaping an individual's career. Ibn Taymiyah was also described as brave and indifferent to worldly affairs. These characteristics can be illustrated through the incident in which some people falsely reported to Sultan An-Nâşir that Ibn Taymiyah had attained a position that would threaten the sultan. The sultan summoned Ibn Taymiyah and said, "I hear the people have become your followers and obey you, and that you are planning to seize the sultanate." Ibn Taymiyah replied loudly, while all of the sultan's audience could hear, "I would do that? I swear by Allah that your kingdom and the sultanate of the Tatars\textsuperscript{35} are not equal to a penny (fils) in my eyes." Then the sultan immediately recognized that the report to him had been fabricated.\textsuperscript{36}

It seems that such rumors did not prevent Ibn Taymiyah from taking an active role in political and military affairs. He urged Sultan An-Nâşir to lead the armies of both Egypt and Syria against the Mongols and contributed to their victory in

\textsuperscript{35}The word "Tatars" refers to various groups of peoples from Central Asia, their precise origins depending upon the historical period. The Tatars of the period of this study are known as the Mongols who arose out of Mongolia. They generally referred to themselves as "Tatars" and not as "Mongols." They were also known as the people of Genghis Khan. (W. Barthold, "Tatar," First Encyclopaedia of Islam, v. 8, pp. 700-702).

\textsuperscript{36}Adh-Dhahabî, Al-Kawâkib ad-Durriyyah, p. 166.
the battle of Shaqḥāb in Ramadān 702 A.H./May 1303 A.D. After defeating the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyah, according to Ibn ‘Abd-il-Hādī, entered Damascus with his battle armor on and was received with great honor. At that time he enjoyed a high degree of respect and prestige amongst the masses. Yet he told the groups of people who came to praise him: “I am merely a theologian (rajul millah), not a statesman (lā rajul dawlah).” Such a statement gives an indication that despite the opportunities to do so, Ibn Taymiyah was not interested in pursuing political status. Clearly Ibn Taymiyah’s victory at Shaqḥāb had the potential to create suspicion on the part of the Mamlūks against him. But such remarks would have eased any anxiety the sultan might have had about Ibn Taymiyah causing instability to the Mamlük kingdom.

Donald Little portrays Ibn Taymiyah as having “a violent temper and the presumptuousness noticed by Adh-Dhahabī.” He uses the following story as an illustration:

When Ibn Taymiyya was a little boy, studying with the Banū Munajjā, they supported something that he denied, whereupon they produced the text. When he had read it, he threw it down in fury (ghayzan). They said, “How bold you are to cast from your hand

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37 Ibn ‘Abd-il-Hādī, Abū ‘Abdillah Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad, Al-‘Uqūd ad-Duriyyah min Manāqib Shaykh-il-Islām Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 175-177. This does not imply that Ibn Taymiyah believed in a separation between religion and the affairs of the state (as will become clear in the following chapters). All state functions were to be under the authority of the shari‘ah.

38 Little, Donald P., “Did Ibn Taymiyya have a screw loose?” Variorum Reprints, London, chapt. viii, p. 106.
a volume that contains knowledge!" He quickly replied, "Who is better, Moses or I?" "Moses," they said. "And which is better--this book or the tablets on which the ten commandments were inscribed?" "The tablets," they replied. Ibn Taymiyya said, in words to this effect, "Well, when Moses became angry, he threw down the tablets!" 39

Though this childhood incident may not necessarily prove Ibn Taymiyah had a "hot temper" throughout his life, other incidents have been reported that would support this conclusion. This story also indicates that Ibn Taymiyah was quick-witted. His memorization of the Qur'ān at an early age also helped to provide him with the knowledge to promptly make such an observation. He was proficient in utilizing his knowledge to defend himself in a logical and sharī'ī manner.

The analogy he made with the Prophet Mūsa reflects his knowledge of the Messengers as human beings and of their human behavior under special circumstances of anger. Ibn Taymiyah's defense was that since Allah did not blame Mūsa for throwing the tablets, he in turn should not be blamed for a similar action, but the analogy does not indicate that he was considering himself similar to the Prophets or Messengers. The point he was making is that the dignity of the tablets was greater than the dignity of the board. Furthermore the personality of Mūsa was greater than his own, and since Mūsa was not blamed by Allah for his action, an

ordinary person such as himself should also be held blameless. When Mīsa threw down the tablets, his actions did not reflect a disrespect towards the content of the tablets. It was merely an expression of disapproval towards his brother's behavior. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyah's action did not reflect a sign of disrespect towards what was written on the board. It simply reflected his disturbance either with his friends' arguments or with himself for being incorrect.

As to whether or not he was arrogant; having some idea is important because it may tell us a bit about the inner motivations of some of his actions and even thought. We should be careful not to assume that the characteristics of childhood apply directly to the behavior of adulthood. The above incident occurred during Ibn Taymiyah's childhood; therefore it does not necessarily provide evidence of him having an arrogant nature. When Ibn Taymiyah's life and works from the time of early adulthood (age eighteen and beyond) are carefully examined, there is no indication that he was an arrogant man. Actually, his contemporaries are not known to have described him as arrogant; rather, there are accounts to the contrary. Even though he was an imām mujtahid, he labeled himself as simply a follower of the Ḥanbalī school. He would always provide clear and logical reasons for the 'ulamā' when explaining why their opinions or ijtihād might differ among themselves or from his. His book, Raf' al-Malām 'an al-A'immah al-A'īlām, provides clear
evidence of this point, since in it, he elaborates upon these reasons. In his writings, his arguments and debates against those who opposed his views are expressed in a scholarly manner, free of insulting comments or an arrogant tone. A full chapter of Al-Bazzār’s book (688-730/1192-1330), Al-A’lām al-’Alliyyah, provided many examples of Ibn Taymiyah’s humility with all members of the society, elite or common folk, rich or poor. It is true that he was direct in his tone with others in a manner reflecting the truth without violating the ethics of respect. Even if some of his comments could be recognized as reflecting a hot temper, such as in his response to the sultan, An-Nāṣir, as mentioned previously, he was only making manifest his zeal to enjoin what he believed to be the truth.

Also the same observation can be made about his remark to Abū Ḥayyān, who considered Sibawayah’s work, al-Kitāb, to be a high authority in grammar. Ibn Taymiyah’s response was: “Sibawayah was not the Prophet of Syntax, nor was he infallible. He committed eighty mistakes in his book which are not intelligible to you.”

It should also be noticed that he had an extraordinary level of tolerance even with those who opposed him. He wrote

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to his followers and supporters in Syria during his detention in Egypt to emphasize his forgiveness to those who brought about his imprisonment and fabricated rumors against him. He also wrote a letter to Shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī with a tone of high esteem and respect without sacrificing the theme of his letter to provide advice to him. Shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī was a great Sufi saint and had a strong influence over Rukn-ud-dīn Baybars Al-Jāshankīr (r. 708-709/1309-1310), the contemporary Mamlūk ruler. The latter issued his decree to imprison Ibn Taymiyah in Alexandria at the bidding of Shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī, who considered Ibn Taymiyah an enemy of Sufism and Ibn 'Arabī in particular. Moreover, Adh-Dhahabī described Ibn Taymiyah as a great scholar "who had a very clear mind, was witty, and had a high degree of courage and generosity. His only enjoyment seemed to have been the accumulation of knowledge, its spread, and its implementation in his life."

2.4 Activities and scholarly production

Ibn Taymiyah was qualified to teach and provide fatwas before the age of 20, as mentioned previously. His powerful

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42 The reasons for Ibn Taymiyah’s imprisonment will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.


memory helped him in writing under various circumstances, whether the sources were available or not. Al-Bazzâr states about him:

During his first affliction in Egypt, when he was taken and imprisoned, and was isolated from his books, he produced many books, both small and large. He mentioned in them whatever was required of ḥadīth, traditions, or statements of scholars, providing the names of the muḥaddithūn, the authors and the titles of their books. He referenced everything he stated by those who transmitted it and those who reported it, by name. He also mentioned the titles of the books from which he quoted and the location in the book in which the quote was found. All of that was from his memory, since no books were available to him at the time. Afterwards, his writings were verified and examined. No deviation or difference was found, by the Grace of God. Among these writings was Aṣ-Ṣārim al-Maslûl 'Ala Shātim Ar-Rasūl.45

Al-Bazzâr considered it difficult to list all of the writings of Ibn Taymiyah since his works were distributed throughout many countries, but he was able to list more than 200 of them. Some of them consisted of more than 12 volumes, and he provided the titles of 31 of these works.46

Ibn Al-Qayyim compiled a list of 350 of Ibn Taymiyah’s works. Cheneb stated that the works of Ibn Taymiyah reached 500 in number, and he provided the titles of 64 of them, along with information regarding the location of each.47 Khan


listed 180 of his works, including seven poems. According to Ibn Al-Wardî, Ibn Taymiyah’s works constituted some 500 volumes. Some of these volumes concentrated upon a single matter, as for example, his discussion about At-Tahlîl and its prohibition.

Ibn Taymiyah was firmly committed to the Salafi doctrines. In all of his writings and discussions or debates with others, it is clear that he sincerely followed and defended the Sunni belief particularly in accordance with the Hanbali school. He was actively involved in defending the views of the early Muslim scholars with the support of evidence from the Qur’ân and Sunnah.

The topics of the books written by Ibn Taymiyah covered various aspects of Islamic doctrine and state affairs, and in them he wrote on theology and fiqh as well as against philosophy, Sufism, Shi‘ism, the Mongols, and the Crusaders. These topics reflect the nature of the social environment in which he lived. An overview of his main works will be given below while an elaboration on his thoughts and works in relation to the social and intellectual conditions of his time will be presented in the following chapters. His

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49 At-Tahlîl refers to marriage to a woman, who has been divorced for the third time, with the intention of divorcing her so that she may be lawful for matrimony to her previous husband.

approach manifested the originality of his thought in dealing with the concerns of his society, and for providing new evidence to support and defend the Salafi belief.

As An-Nadwî explains, Ibn Taymiyah benefited greatly from the prolific scholarly production of his time, but he avoided imitating the approach of simply compiling and rearranging material popular in his time. Instead, he would first comprehend and analyze the writings of his time carefully and thoroughly, and then utilize them in his own original intellectual approach. His deep knowledge of the Qur’ân and Sunnah, his recognition of the aims of the sharî‘ah, and his great faculty in understanding uçûl al-fiqh enabled him to provide an original perspective in all of his productions.\

An illustration of his originality can be recognized in his opinions about ijmā’ (consensus) and qiyās (analogy). The four schools of fiqh considered these concepts as sources of sharî‘ah. Ibn Taymiyah, on the other hand, regarded them as merely means by which legal decisions could be extracted from the Qur’ân and Sunnah. He said that all matters related to religious affairs had already been clarified in the Qur’ân and Sunnah. He also said that the ijmā’ of the ummah is always true and their conclusions are accurate. But he made the reservation that a matter established through ijmā’ must

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have a statement from the Qurʾān or Sunnah. Some people may not have access to such a proof yet their ijmāʿ is evidence to the existence of such a statement. He stated that he examined the matters established through ijmāʿ and that each was supported with a statement from either the Qurʾān or Sunnah, or both. He also approved of qiyās when it followed the methodology put forth by the Qurʾān and Sunnah. Therefore he consigned ijmāʿ and qiyās to be subordinate to the Qurʾān and Sunnah.\textsuperscript{52} An example of Ibn Taymiyah’s original intellectual approach was that instead of utilizing rational reasons to support theological doctrines, as was the way of people of falsafah and kalām, he extracted rational evidence directly from the Qurʾān and Sunnah. For instance, in the passage “Is the One who creates like the one who does not create, do you think not?” (Surah An-Nahl 16:17), he explained that the ability to create is considered a perfect attribute and that the one who creates is greater than the one who does not create. Thus anyone making the two equivalent is wrong and irrational in his judgment.\textsuperscript{53}

Ibn Taymiyah’s independent personality was expressed in his providing new ijtihād concerning many different matters, in some of which he differed from all of the traditional

\textsuperscript{52}Mūsa, Muḥammad Yūṣuf, Ibn Taymiyah, al-Muʾssah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lit-Taʿlīf, Cairo, 1962, pp. 124,125.

\textsuperscript{53}Mūsa, Muḥammad Yūṣuf, Ibn Taymiyah, p. 151.
opinions of the four fiqhi schools. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsa divided the ijtihād of Ibn Taymiyah into three categories. The first category dealt with opinions he provided as a reflection of the opinions of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. The second category concerned the opinions he presented without commitment to any specific madhhab, but still in conformity with the opinions of the fuqahā’ of the four madhhabs. The third category concerned the opinions he provided in disagreement with all of the four madhhabs, or with the generally known opinions of the fuqahā’ of these madhhabs.

Mūsa explained that the reasons for the existence of these categories were the upbringing of Ibn Taymiyah and the development of his level of knowledge. Since he began his scholarly career as a Ḥanbalī, and he was from a family deeply rooted in this madhhab, he provided his fatwas in accordance with it. As his knowledge became more extensive, he began to seek the opinions of the other imāms, preferring what would appear to him as those in greatest conformity to evidence from the Qur’ān and Sunnah, without limiting himself to any particular madhhab. As his scholarly skills attained even greater maturity and he became qualified for ijtihād, he began to generate his own, independent fatwas through dependence on the passages of Qur’ān and Sunnah, and the aims of the sharī’ah.

Mūsa, Muḥammad Yūsuf, Ibn Taymiyah, p. 226.
However, an observation to be made about Müsa's explanation is that it should be considered cautiously, since errors could be introduced through generalized application of the categories he presented. For example, it is not necessarily correct to consider that every opinion of Ibn Taymiyah in which he agreed with the madhhab of Ḥanbal would fall into the first category, or that any opinion in which he agreed with one of the other three madhhabs would fall into the second category. The basis of distinction here should be historical factors. During the second phase of Ibn Taymiyah's production, he might provide an opinion in agreement with Ḥanbal's opinion, but the choice was the result of comparisons among the different madhhabs, and it was not provided in imitation of Ḥanbal. Similarly, if his opinion happened to agree with one of the imāms' opinions, during his ijtihād muṭlaq\textsuperscript{55} phase, it would occur as the result of his own independent interpretation which came in agreement with other opinions coincidentally and not in imitation. Therefore the phases described by Musa apply only to the evolution of Ibn Taymiyah's thought and cannot be used to classify the opinions he provided on various issues in respect to time.

\textsuperscript{55}Ijtihād muṭlaq refers to an Islamic ruling or fatwa derived from the sources of the sharī'ah, that does not have the restriction of being limited to a particular madhhab.
The phases of Ibn Taymiyah’s production, as represented by these categories, all presented difficulties for him during his life. The first phase presented only minor difficulties, since any disagreement with the society would have been due to a general reaction against the Ḥanbalī school, which as explained previously was in disagreement with the dominant Ashʿari belief. The second phase produced more reaction, since it was expected that each scholar should be committed to a particular madhhab. However, the strongest reactions against his opinions occurred when he presented fatwas that were in disagreement with all four madhhabs. It had been said that the door of ijtihād was closed and that the only method of providing scholarly opinions was merely to follow one of the previous imāms and to imitate their opinions.

Examples of some of Ibn Taymiyah’s ijtihād that differed from the four madhhabs are the following:

The shortening of prayers during traveling is associated with any type of journey, as long it is considered a journey by one’s customary understanding, regardless of its distance. The madhhabs disputed about the minimum distance required for shortening the prayer. Ibn Taymiyah considered the distinction between long and short travel commonly used by the fuqahā’ as a baseless opinion that had no evidence.


Performing tayammum (symbolic ablution by touching sand, earth, or any pure object) is permissible, even with the presence of water, for those who may miss the time of prayer if they use water.

The inheritance of a Muslim from a dhimmī is permissible.

The triple pronouncement of divorce by the husband, within the same period of 'iddah, is considered one divorce. This ruling has supportive evidence from the lifetime of the Prophet, that of Abū Bakr, and the early period of 'Umar's caliphate. Ibn Taymiyah also considered the bid'ī divorce to be invalid as a divorce while the person pronouncing it would be considered sinful.

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57 Usually dhimmī refers to a Jew or Christian under the rule of an Islamic state. In the fatwa mentioned above, Ibn Taymiyah was referring to Jews and Christians in general.

58 The 'iddah is a waiting period for a woman following the pronouncement of divorce; after which, the marital relationship is dissolved. The term for an unpregnant woman is three mense cycles, or in some opinions, three intervals between menses. For a pregnant woman the term lasts up until the time of delivery. As for those who cannot have menses or become pregnant, the duration is three lunar months.


60 Bid'ī is derived from bid'ah. It is used as an adjective here. The linguistic meaning of bid'ah is innovation. Bid'ah is a term derived by the fuqahā' from ḥadīths to describe religious practices having no basis in the Qur'ān or Sunnah.

61 The bid'ī divorce is a type of divorce announced from a husband to his wife during her menses or the period of bleeding after giving birth. It is also considered to be a bid'ī divorce if it is announced during an interval after the woman’s period where the husband has engaged in
The person who abandons his prayers intentionally is not required to replace his missed prayers if he begins to pray again, nor is it permissible according to the sharī'ah for him to do so. It is required for him to repent and to increase his performance of voluntary prayers and other good deeds.63

Among Ibn Taymiyah's writings which present his program of reform are Al-'Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyah (The Belief as Explained to the People of Wāsit), Al-Jawāb aš-Šaḥīḥ 'alā man baddala Dīn al-Maṣīḥ (The Correct Response to Those Who Altered the Religion of Christ), Iqdā' Aš-Širāt Al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Aštāb Al-Jahīm (The Straight Path requires disagreement with the People of Hell), Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fī Naqā' Kalām ash-Shiya'ah al-Qadariyyah (Utilization of the Prophetic Way in Refuting the Shi'ah Creed), As-Siyāsah ash-Shari'iyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'iyyah (The Sharī'ah Principles for the Reform of the Rulers and the Ruled), and Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Īslām (The Administration of Hisbah in Islam).

* * *

intercourse with her yet there is uncertainty about whether or not she is pregnant. On the other hand, divorce according to the sunnah, known as Sunni divorce, is when a divorce is announced during the woman's interval of purity or after cessation of post delivery bleeding with the condition that there has been no sexual relationship. It is also considered a Sunni divorce if it is proclaimed at a point when there is certainty about the woman's pregnancy.


Muslims under the rule of the Mongols in Iraq had limited access to information about their faith from the scholars since many had fled Baghdad to neighboring Muslim lands. Those who did not migrate maintained communication with the scholars of other countries. Once a qâdî from Wāsiṭ, a city in Iraq, during his journey to perform Hajj, took advantage of an opportunity to visit Ibn Taymiyah. Ibn Taymiyah relates the incident as follows:

A Shâfi'î judge from Wāsiṭ (Iraq) whose name is Raḍîy ad-Dīn al-Wāsiṭî visited me on his way to Hajj. This shaikh was a man of goodness and faith. He complained to me of the people's situation in that country under the Tatars' rule of ignorance, injustice, and loss of faith and knowledge. He asked me to write him an 'Aqîdah (creed) as a reference to him and his family. But I declined saying: 'Many creeds have been written. Refer to the scholars of the Sunnah. However, he persisted saying: 'I do not want any creed but one you write.' So I wrote this one (Al-'Aqîdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah) for him while I was sitting one afternoon. Many copies of it are dispersed throughout Egypt, Iraq, and other provinces.4

Ibn Taymiyah, in Al-'Aqîdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah (The Belief as Explained to the People of Wāsiṭ), explains the principles of faith and the approach of the Salaf in respect to the attributes of Allah. His ideas were in disagreement with the dominant Ash'ari belief, and thus this book generated much controversy. In the year 705 A.H., Ibn Taymiyah was brought to Egypt to be put on trial by the Mamlûk rulers for his

views portrayed in this book. He was consequently imprisoned in Cairo.\textsuperscript{65}

Another major political factor which ultimately affected Ibn Taymiyah's literary pursuits was the Crusades which had resulted in the presence of a large number of European Christians in Cyprus and Syria. This alongside the weakening power of the Muslim kingdoms and their wars with the Mongols had given Christians in these areas inspiration to claim the superiority of their religion over Islam, and a sort of evangelical movement began to form. Paul, a cardinal of Sidon and Antioch, wrote a booklet in which he attempted to prove the superiority of Christianity over Islam through rational and theological arguments. The book was circulated amongst Christian theologians and came to the attention of Ibn Taymiyah.\textsuperscript{66} In reaction to the cardinal's booklet, Ibn Taymiyah wrote the book Al-Jawâb as-Sahîh 'alâ man baddala Dîn al-Masîh (The Correct Response to Those Who Altered the Religion of Christ). Ibn Taymiyah's book consists of four volumes in which he states the reason for writing it. He analyzes and refutes the claims presented in the cardinal's work by first quoting and then responding to the entire text of the treatise. He writes:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65}As-Suby, Taqî-ud-dîn 'Alî, \textit{Ar-Rasâ’il As-Subkiyyah}, pp. 22-24.
\end{itemize}
One of the reasons for supporting this religion [Islam] and its dominance is that a booklet reached me from Cyprus. In it was the defense and argument of the Christians, with the evidence used by the scholars of their religion and the noble people of their creed, ancient or contemporary, with evidence from the passages and logical reasoning. Therefore it was necessary to provide a response which would resolve the issue and would distinguish between error and right, in order that it might benefit people of rationality and express what Allah sent to his messengers of the criteria for judgment and of Books. I will state what they have stated exactly in their own words, one chapter after another, and I will follow each chapter with a suitable response, either with secondary or primary evidence. Evidence provided in this booklet presents the basis of the arguments used by their contemporary scholars as well as those of previous times. This booklet is attributed to Paul, the cardinal of Sidon and Antioch. The cardinal mentions that when he traveled to the Roman territories and met the nobles and scholars he attracted their attention to the great value of his work.

The content of Paul’s writing could be concluded in six chapters. Chapter One: Their claim that Muḥammad, peace be upon him, was not sent to them, but exclusively to the people of the jāhiliyyah of the Arabs, and they stated that the Qur’ān and logical reasoning prove that. Chapter Two: Their claim that Muḥammad, peace be upon him, had praised in the Qur’ān the religion that they hold, and had commended it, thereby obligating them to stand steadfast with it. Chapter Three: Their claim that the messages of the previous prophets, such as the Torah (Pentateuch), the Zabūr (Psalms), the Injîl (New Testament), and other similar messages, prove that their beliefs in the Partners of the Deity, Trinity, Incarnation and similar aspects are true and correct. Thus, they should hold to their belief, and it is not permissible for them to deviate from it, since no law may cancel it and no logic contradicts it. Chapter Four: What they have in intellectual evidence supports their belief in Trinity, and their laws are compatible with the principles of logic. Chapter Five: Their claim that they are monotheists, and their justifying the words of preaching that indicate multi-deities,
such as the Trinity, by saying that this is similar to the passages of Muslims which indicate similitude and anthropomorphism. Chapter Six: Jesus, peace be upon him, came after Moses, peace be upon him, with the most perfected law. Thus, there is no need after attaining the summit for a new law. Moreover, any additional law would be unacceptable.67

Ibn Taymiyah discusses the claims he mentions above through an objective, rather than an extremist approach. He explains how the evidence from the Qurʾān, as well as from the Bible and other scriptures and from logic refutes Paul’s claims. For example, when Paul claimed that Muḥammad was sent only to the Arabs, Ibn Taymiyah pointed out the principles for examining this point. First, we should examine the statements proclaimed by the person and whether he claimed to be a universal messenger or a messenger to a specific group. Secondly, we should examine the degree of credibility of the person making the claims.

He further explained that such claims from them could be understood in one of two ways: either they may say that Muḥammad himself did not claim that he was sent to them but his followers only claimed that for him, or they may say that he claimed that he has been sent to them but he did not say the truth. The early sections of the booklet indicate the first possibility. The last section of the booklet could indicate the second possibility. However, they did not deny

his message to the Arabs. Yet they denied his message to them. Ibn Taymiyah then moved on from these points to provide details about the Prophet Muhammad.68

Although Ibn Taymiyah debated the Christians, he felt an influence upon the Muslims from Jewish and Christian rites, particularly their feasts and celebrations. His book *Iqtida' Aṣ-Ṣirāt Al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb Al-Jahīm* (The Straight Path Requires Disagreement with the People of Hell), was written to warn of the dangers of such imitation. In this book he introduces principles emphasizing the prohibition of inventing celebrations which imitate the holidays of the unbelievers. He explains the wisdom of the sharī'ah in enjoining distinction from the way of the non-Muslims—whether they be People of the Book (Jews and Christians), Arabs, or non-Arabs. He considers this distinction to be one of the collective rules of the sharī'ah. From the point of view of Ibn Taymiyah, there is no contradiction between this rule and showing compassion and respect towards non-Muslims. For instance, when Amir Būlai, a Mongol chief, ransacked the surrounding areas of Damascus, Ibn Taymiyah met with him and successfully secured the release of a good number of prisoners. In the negotiations, he insisted specifically on the release of the non-Muslims in addition to the Muslims.69


69Abū Zahrah, Muḥammad. *Ibn Taymiyah: Ḥayātuhu wa 'Aṣruḥ - Ārā'ahu wa Fiqhuh*, p. 35.
Also in this book, there is elaboration on the many practices imported from other faiths prevalent in his time. Ibn Taymiyah considers such practices to be *bid'ah*. He stresses the importance of pursuing knowledge and practicing according to it. He characterizes the Jews as having knowledge but not acting upon it and the Christians as acting on their faith without knowledge. He thus compares Muslim scholars not fully practicing Islam with the Jews, and Muslims who deviate in their worship from the guidelines of the *shari'ah* with the Christians. Despite the fact that this book does not put forth a direct attack against Sufism it still provoked a conflict with the Sufis. The reason is that many of the *bid'ahs* the book criticizes are defended as being legitimate from the Sufi perspective. These practices include the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet or holy men and the recitation of the Qur'ān at grave sites. Ibn Taymiyah's prohibition to travel for the purpose of visiting the Prophet's grave, in this book, brought him to trial.

One of the most important works during Ibn Taymiyah's time presenting the political theory of the Shi'ah was Ibn Al-Muṭahhar Al-Ḥillī's book *Minḥāj al-Karāmah fī Ma'rīfat al-Imāmah* (The Way of Dignity for Knowing the Rules of Imāmah).

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Ibn Taymiyah's book Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām ash-Shiya'ah al-Qadariyyah (Utilization of the Prophetic Way in Refuting the Shi'ah Creed), was a criticism of Ibn Al-Mutahhar’s work. Ibn Taymiyah in his book repudiates the Shi'ah concepts of faith and caliphate.

In contrast to the Shi'ah view about the Mamlük rulers, Ibn Taymiyah considered their rule to be acceptable under the circumstances of the Muslim ummah at that time. His book As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Islāh ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah (The Shari`ah Principles for the Reform of the Rulers and the Ruled) expresses this view implicitly. In it he presents the political and administrative principles for the functioning of the Muslim government. This book was considered as a type of advisory directed towards Ulū al-amr (the rulers), to remind them of their obligations and rights from the Islamic perspective.

In Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām (The Administration of Ḥisbah in Islam), Ibn Taymiyah explains the principles of the institution of Ḥisbah, an administrative and supervisory authority ensuring the implementation of Islamic law throughout the society. In this work Ibn Taymiyah utilizes the Qur’ān and Sunnah to present new aspects to the concept of Ḥisbah and gives further support to the legitimacy of its function in a Muslim society. Many economic concepts are also provided.
These last three books will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

In addition to his intellectual contributions, Ibn Taymiyah was often involved on a voluntary basis with various social and political activities in which he could promote the implementation of his ideas. He acted as an intermediary in political negotiations between the sultan of Egypt and Ghazān Khan as well as other leaders of the Mongols. In Ramadan 702 A.H. (April, 1303 A.D.) Ibn Taymiyah participated in the Battle of Shaqṭab against the Mongols. In this battle, he effectively motivated the Egyptian and Syrian troops. He assured the troops victory by swearing by Allah that they would triumph. The amīrs said he should add 'if Allah wills' to his statement. He replied that he would say it with the meaning of emphasis, but surely not with a meaning of condition or uncertainty. Certainly his riding his horse in the front lines against an enemy like the Mongols must have been an inspiration to the Mamlūk armies. The triumph of the Mamlūks in this battle resulted in the retaking of Damascus from the Mongols. The Mongols were unable to capture the city again.

After this battle, Ibn Taymiyah also fought against the Kasrawanis of Syria.\textsuperscript{72} The Kasrawanis were a band of

separatists composed primarily of Ismā'īlis\textsuperscript{73} and other groups holding similar views, such as Nuṣayris.\textsuperscript{74} He had previously joined a group of volunteers in a punitive expedition against the separatists when they had looted the camp of the Muslim troops following their defeat by the Mongols in 699 A.H. Actually, the Kasrawanis had a history of conflict with the Muslims. They allied themselves with the Christians of Cyprus and had aided them in the capture of the western coast of Syria. Settling in the nearly inaccessible hills of Syria, they were a constant threat to the Muslim ruled areas there. Ibn Taymiyah urged the Sultan to fight against them, pointing out their acts of violence and overall danger to Muslim habitations. A third expedition headed by Ibn Taymiyah and this time with a powerful army led by the

\textsuperscript{73}The Ismailis are sometimes known as the "Sevener" Shī'ah. They get their name from Ismā'īl Ibn Ja'far Aṣ-Ṣādiq who they consider to be the seventh imām, as opposed to Musa Ibn Ja'far Aṣ-Ṣādiq who the Twelver Shī'ah hold to be the seventh imām. The Ismā'īlis hold the opinion that the Qur'ān has hidden, figurative meanings which can only be understood by one of their imāms or other spiritual leaders. They are also known as the Baṭīnis. The Faṭimīs, Druzes, and Assassins, have their origins in Ismā'īlism. (Daftary, Farhad, \textit{The Ismā'īlis: Their History and Doctrines}, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 95-97; and Watt, W. Montgomery, \textit{Islamic Philosophy and Theology}, Edinburgh University Press, 1985, pp. 126-127).

\textsuperscript{74}The Nuṣayris are a Shī'ah group of the ghulāh (extremists) which holds the view that God may appear in the form of men. They believe that God appeared in the form of the Prophet Muḥammad as well as 'Alī and his sons. (Shahrastānī, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd-il-Karīm, \textit{Muslim Sects and Divisions} [Al-Mīlal wan-Nīḥal], trans. Kazi, A.K. and Flynn, J. G., pp. 161-163)
governor of Syria set out in 705 A.H. The expedition led the group through hilly tracts and nearly impenetrable vegetation, placing the troops in danger of possible ambush by the separatists. Ibn Taymiyah gave the legal opinion that it was permissible to cut down the vegetation as the Prophet Muḥammad had permitted the cutting of trees in the campaign against Banī an-Naḍīr. Ibn Kathīr says, "The presence of Shaykh-ul-Islām in this expedition proved propitious. Both his erudite learning and courage provided strength to the Muslims and filled the hearts of the enemies with malice and grief."76

Throughout his life, Ibn Taymiyah strove to uphold the principles he preached despite the many life-threatening dangers he faced. Even while imprisoned he did not pass up the opportunity to enlighten his fellow inmates about Islam. Once while jailed for his views on the attributes of Allah, Ibn Taymiyah managed to dramatically change the atmosphere of the prison from one of moral decadence and religious neglect amongst the prisoners to that of prayers and the remembrance of God. Some of the prisoners became his followers and even refused to leave the prison to return to their families.77

absorbed by his quest to enjoin the good and forbid the evil was Ibn Taymiyah that Little relates, "Even when he was marching through the streets of Cairo on his way to what his followers saw as certain assassination, he could not resist stopping briefly to kick over a backgammon board when he spied two men playing a game outside a blacksmith's shop!"\textsuperscript{78}

In a word, Ibn Taymiyah's approach was manifested in his public stands against all forms of deviation from the methodology and belief he promoted. He opposed the Ash'aris, the Sufis, the Shi'is, philosophers, etc. As a result, the number of his opponents increased. He was sent to jail on a number of occasions, and he died in there as well on the 20th of Dhul-Qi'dah, 728 A.H. (September 25, 1328).

2.5 Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyah's childhood environment influenced the development of his personality as a scholar committed to the Qur'an and Sunnah. He was born into a world of political and military upheaval. Syria and Egypt were suffering from the continuing attacks of the Crusaders and were under threat of a Mongol advance. Ibn Taymiyah's family was of a scholarly background. Members of his family were fuqahâ' and qâdîs in Syria. He also took an interest in the religious sciences. His genius and powerful memory enabled Ibn Taymiyah to accumulate a vast amount of knowledge in a short period, to

\textsuperscript{78}Little, Donald P., "Did Ibn Taymiyya have a screw loose?" History and Historiography of the Mamlûks, p. 107

51
the point that he could issue fatwas as early as age seventeen. His early education in the Ḥanbalī school had an impact on his scholarly production. A prolific author, Ibn Taymiyah wrote with a strong commitment to the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. He had an independent way of thinking, liberated from blind imitation of the past. In contrast to the general trend of taqlīd (imitation of previous opinions without the recognition of their evidence) among the fuqahā' of his time, Ibn Taymiyah promoted the practice of ijtihād. In many cases, he presented fatwas that differed in their views from all of the four Sunni madhhabs. The Ash'aris, who gave precedence to rationalism in their doctrines concerning Allah's attributes, were also confronted with Ibn Taymiyah's vigorous stand for a return to the understanding of the Salaf. Ibn Taymiyah strove to rid his society of the religious innovations and foreign influences contrary to the principles of the sharī'ah which had gradually crept into Muslim society. The reforms he advocated were not limited to the intellectual realm. Throughout his life he tried to elucidate his thoughts on social and religious change by taking an active role in the affairs of his society. He did not shy away from taking it upon himself to implement his ideas of reform even if they were not appreciated by the people or the government. In the process, he often found himself scorned and imprisoned.
CHAPTER 3

The Political Context of Ibn Taymiyah’s Time and the Concept of Wilāyah

3.1 The political situation

Ibn Taymiyah (661-728/1263-1328) was born five years after the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols and three years after their first conquest of Damascus. The Mamlūk victory under the leadership of Sayf-ud-dīn Quṭuz in the battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt, near Baysān in Palestine, against the Mongols occurred three years before his birth. Meanwhile, parts of western Syria were under Crusader occupation until their rule was finally brought to an end with their defeat by Al-Ashraf Khalīl Ibn Al-Mansūr Qalāwūn in 690/1291. The regime controlling the regions where Ibn Taymiyah spent most of his life was that of the Mamlūks. A brief description of their origins and history up to Ibn Taymiyah’s time, including their relations with the Abbasid Caliphs, Mongols and Crusaders in that period, can provide a better understanding of the nature of their rule over Egypt and Syria as well as their relationship with Ibn Taymiyah.
3.1.1 Development of the Mamlük regime and their relationship with the Abbasid caliphs. Muslim rulers began using slaves for the purpose of forming an elite military force whose loyalty was solely to them as early as the third century A.H. These slave soldiers are referred to as mamlûks. The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'taşim (r. 218-227/833-842) depended heavily upon the Turkish mamlûks for the construction of his military force, instead of following the previous policy of using Arabs and the Mawâli of the people of Khurasan.

These mamlûks arose from a long history of horse nomadism in the Eurasian steppe. Since the horse nomads lived apart from the agrarian societies in the area and roamed widely in their military conquests, the very structure of their society favored the development of military power. The result was that Turkish warriors spread throughout this region. Their independent, disciplined life created a group of soldiers who were loyal mainly to themselves. These characteristics of solidarity carried over into the military slaves, or mamlûks, from these regions. Being foreigners, mamlûks were generally allegiant only to each other and the

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sovereign who purchased them. They proved to be a powerful military force.\textsuperscript{80}

The influence of the Turkish mamlūks over the Abbasid caliphs quickly grew and their generals soon began to acquire power of their own. The caliph Al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861) developed conflict with his son, Al-Muntaṣir, and some of the Turkish generals of his mamlūk army. Al-Muntaṣir conspired with the generals against his father and murdered him. The generals then appointed Al-Muntaṣir to become caliph. Al-Mutawakkil was the first caliph to be killed by his own army—but not the last. Indeed from this point forward the Turkish mamlūks of the Abbasids knew they had complete control over who the caliph would be and what he would do. The caliphate thus became limited to an honorary title.\textsuperscript{81}

As a reaction against the position of the Turkish mamlūks, some rulers at the frontiers of the Islamic state began to form nearly independent states and attempted to legitimate their actions by claiming that they were preserving the Abbasid caliphate and protecting


it from Turkish soldiers. For example, in western Iran, three Shi'i brothers established what came to be known as the rule of the Buyid (Būhiyyūn) in Shīrāz, Iṣfahān, and western Iran. They continued the rule of the Abbasid caliphate, albeit as a type of figurehead government, over the eastern Islamic regions from 334 through 467 A.H.82

The Saljuqs, who were Turks from Central Asia, seized power of much of the Buyid domain in the mid-fourth/eleventh century when the caliph invited them to take control of Baghdad in exchange for his recognition and support. Mistrustful of the Arabs and Persians, the Saljuqs used primarily Turkish mamlūks in their military. These mamlūks were brought from Kipchak (southeast of Russia). Saljuq rule extended over Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The Saljuq monarchs used some of their most trusted mamlūks as teachers for their princes. These mamlūks were called atābaks. By manipulating their power and influence over the princes, the atābaks soon gained control of the Saljuq empire and divided it among themselves (except parts of the empire in Anatolia). 'Imād-ud-dīn Zengi was the atābak of Mosul and Aleppo.83


His son, Nūr-ud-dīn, managed to install a Kurd named Šalāḥ-ud-dīn Al-Ayyūbī as vizier to the caliph of the weakening Shi'i caliphate of the Fatimids. Upon the Fatimid caliph’s death, Šalāḥ-ud-dīn took over Egypt as well as the domain once ruled by Nūr-ud-dīn. Šalāḥ-ud-dīn brought Shi'i rule over Egypt to an end and the Abbasid caliphate was officially recognized throughout his dominion. Šalāḥ-ud-dīn extended his territory even further and established an empire of his own.

Though Šalāḥ-ud-dīn maintained ultimate authority throughout his empire, he delegated almost complete control of various provinces to his relatives. Upon his death, the empire became more of a federation, united by family bonds and the influence of the ‘ulamā’. The families’ dominion became known as the sultanate of the Ayyubids. The Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, Najm-ud-dīn Ayyūb (d. 647 A.H.), attempted to modify this form of rule and to centralize the state’s power to Cairo. Since he recognized that the Kurdish military leaders were not completely loyal to the Ayyubids, he formed his own military force by purchasing one thousand Turkish mamlūk soldiers. Najm-ud-dīn Ayyūb built a citadel and barracks


for his mamlûks on the island of Ar-Rawḍah,85 which was on a branch of the Nile River. Thus, they became known as al-Mamâlîk al-Bahriyyah.

As a result of the characteristics of the Turkic warriors mentioned above, and in addition to their increasing military power within the Ayyubid regime, the mamlûks began to gain power over their Ayyubid rulers until they killed Turân Shâh, the last of the Ayyubid sultans.86

Upon killing Turân Shâh, the Mamlûks set-up Shajarat-ud-Durr, the Armenian widow of Najm-ud-Din Ayyûb and stepmother of Turân Shâh, as ruler of Egypt (648/1250). Since it was not considered acceptable by the society to have a female ruler, she was married to the commander-in-chief of the Mamlûk army, 'Izz-ud-dîn Aybak. She then transferred authority to Aybak in Rabî' II, 648 A.H. (July, 1250), after having ruled for eighty days. Al-Maqrîzî considered Shajarat-ud-Durr to be the first Mamlûk ruler. Yet, she continued to exercise great influence over Aybak's rule. Shajarat-ud-Durr was ambitious and soon began to amass her own power. She

killed Aybak in her palace in Rabī‘ II, 655 A.H. (April, 1257). Aybak was succeeded by his fifteen-year-old son Al-Manṣūr ‘Alī, who had Shajarat-ud-Durr imprisoned. She was shortly thereafter killed. Amīr Qutuz became an atābak to the young sultan. In 657/1259 with the advancement of the Mongols, Qutuz had Al-Manṣūr removed and took control of the Mamlük sultanate. After his victory over the Mongols in ‘Ayn Jālūt in 658/1260, Qutuz was killed by one of his commanders named Rukn-ud-Dīn Baybars. Baybars then became the sultan.87

The ruler of Damascus and Aleppo at that time was Sultan An-Nāṣir Yūsuf, who was also a descendant of Ṣalāḥ-ud-dīn and was the cousin of Turān Shāh. The rest of the Ayyubids urged him to take revenge on the Mamlūks. During the time he was preparing for his attack against the Mamlūks, the Mongols surprised him by attacking Syria, and he found himself in Sinai between the Mongols in the East and the Mamlūks in the West. He was captured and killed later by the Mongol general Hūlākū in 659 A.H. The Ayyubid dynasty ended with his death.88


Ibn Taymiyah was born during the rule of the Mamlük sultan Az-Zāhir Baybars (r. 658-676/1260-1277). According to Ibn Kathîr and Al-Maqrîzî, Baybars was a strong leader who is generally credited with laying down the foundations of the Mamlük state. He achieved significant victories over the Crusaders and the Mongols. He also paid special attention to the internal affairs of the state in order to insure respect for the sharî'î obligations. For instance, he enforced the prohibition against alcohol and exiled those who were violating the sharî'ah laws or who were considered a source of corruption in the society. During his rule, the Mamlük empire extended from the Euphrates in the East to the southern borders of Sudan. Cairo became a center for scientific and scholarly achievements and attracted scholars from various regions of the Muslim world.

The Mamlûks did not claim the caliphate for themselves. The reason could be because the Sunni 'ulamâ' considered it necessary that the caliph be of Qurashî origin. Baybars likely felt his rule would be more secure if it were somehow recognized by the 'ulamâ' (and thereby the general masses) as legitimate. So in


90Berkey, Jonathan, The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo, p. 91.
659 A.H., he invited Ahmad Abū Al-Qāsim, who was said to be a descendant of the Abbasid family and uncle of the last caliph Al-Musta'ṣim, who had been murdered by the Mongols, to be the caliph. The first to make the pledge to the new caliph was Qādī Tāj-ud-Dīn, followed by the Sultan, Baybars, next by Shaykh 'Izz-ud-dīn Ibn 'Abd-īs-Salām91 and then by the amīrs and other leaders.92 The precedence given to Islamic scholars such as 'Izz-ud-dīn Ibn 'Abd-īs-Salām in giving bay'ah to the caliph is especially indicative of Baybar’s hope of having his subjects recognize the legitimacy of his rule from the shar‘ī perspective. Ahmad Abū Al-Qāsim was given the title of Al-Mustanṣir Billāh. Coins were minted with his name, and the pledge was announced to the various regions of the sultanate. After a few days, the caliph formally bestowed the robe of the sultanate upon Baybars and delegated responsibility for the affairs of the state to him.93 The position of the caliphate was thus filled

91'Izz-ud-dīn Ibn 'Abd-īs-Salām (578-660/1182-1262) was an influential Shāfi‘ī scholar of Ash‘ari thought. He wrote several books in tafsīr and fiqḥ. He was deported from Damascus as a result of his condemnation of As-Salih Ismā‘īl for giving up Safad and Thaqqīf to the Crusaders. Al-Malik Ašāliḥ Ayyūb welcomed him in Egypt and appointed him as chief Qādī. (Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, v. 13, pp. 235-236.)


93According to Al-Maqrīzī, the pledge was given to the Caliph on the condition that he be committed to the Book of Allah (the Qur‘ān) and
after being vacant for three and a half years. Perhaps Baybars also hoped that by re-establishing the Abbasid caliphate, after its disastrous fall to the Mongols in Baghdad, he would be able to extend his rule and sphere of influence. This, however, did not take place. Still, Egypt became the new center of the caliphate.

However, the authority of the caliph was limited and Baybars continued to be the actual ruler of the state. The position of the caliph seems to have been purely symbolic.

Aż-Żāhir Baybars ruled Egypt for 18 years until his death in the year 676 A.H. Following his death, nine sultans ruled the state successively from the year 676 A.H. until the year 709 A.H. This shows the continuous vying for power and political instability which characterized the Mamlük regime in general and in that period particularly.

The Mamlük ruler who is considered to be the main contemporary of Ibn Taymiyah was Al-Malik An-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (r. 693/1293–694/1294, 698/1298–708/1308, 709/1309–741/1340). During his reign, Sunnah of His messenger, that he implement what is good and forbid what is wrong, make jihād in the cause of Allah, and recognize justice regarding the state revenue, which was to be taken fairly from its sources and to be spent for those who deserved it. (Al-Maqrīzī, As-Sulūk lima’rifat Duwal al-Mulūk, v.1, part 2, p. 450.)

particularly in the third period, the Mamlûk sultanate achieved much in both foreign and domestic affairs. Not only were the borders of the empire expanded but many public projects such as irrigation facilities, mosques, schools, and hospitals were established. The time of his rule is also considered to be the main period of Ibn Taymiyah's programs of reform.

3.1.2 Mongols and Crusaders. Two important events occurred in Egypt and Syria during the time of Ibn Taymiyah which left a great impact upon political and social life in general, and Ibn Taymiyah's life in particular. The first major event was the invasion of the Mongols, which began in the year 617 A.H. Thirty-nine years later the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, Baghdad, fell to the Mongols. The Mongols then advanced towards Syria. Despite having embraced Islam by the end of the seventh century A.H., they continued to be in conflict with the surrounding Muslim states.

The Mongols occupied Damascus for the first time in Safar, 658 A.H. (February, 1260 A.D.) under the leadership of Kitbughâ, who was a military commander.

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under Hūlākū. Their occupation lasted for 7 months and 10 days, until they were defeated in the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt in Ramadan, 658 A.H. (September, 1260 A.D.).

A significant event during the early life of Ibn Taymiyah occurred when in the year 681 A.H. (1282 A.D.) the Mongol Khan Bakdar, Hūlākū’s son, announced his conversion to Islam. Bakdar attempted to establish relations with the Mamlūks by sending emissaries to Cairo, but his attempts did not bear fruit. The conversion of Bakdar was a major turning point for it helped break the psychological barrier towards Islam which had become rooted in the minds of most Mongols within the Khanate of the Ilkhans, the Mongol kingdom controlling the areas of Iraq and Persia from 1255-1353 A.D. Although he was overthrown within about three years, a precedent was set.

The Mongols conquered Damascus a second time under the leadership of Ghazān, in Rabī' I, 699 A.H. (December, 1299 A.D.). Ghazān, who was one of Hūlākū’s descendants, had embraced Islam in the year 694 A.H. and was known as Maḥmūd Ghazān. With the conversion of Ghazān, Islam spread amongst the Mongols of his kingdom. However, he continued to pursue his military dreams of conquest even

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if it meant fighting other Muslims in the process. Ibn Taymiyah led a delegation of ‘ulamā’ and other noteworthy citizens of Damascus to negotiate for peace with Ghazān. Kamāl-ud-dīn Ibn Al-Munajjā, a member of this delegation, gives an account of this memorable encounter:

I was with the Shaykh on this occasion. He set forth in his address to the King the Qur’anic verses and the Traditions of the Prophet enjoining fairness and just conduct. His voice gradually rising, he was drawing nearer to the king until his knees were about to touch those of Ghazān who was attentively listening to the Shaykh but did not appear to be displeased with him. He was straining his ears as if struck with awe. At last he asked ‘who is he? I have never seen a man like him--so brave and courageous; none has made a dent in my heart as he!’ The Sheikh was then introduced to the King. The Sheikh said to the King: ‘You claim to be a Muslim. I have been told that you have with you a qâdî and an Imām, a Shaykh and a mu’adhdhin; yet you have deemed it proper to march upon the Muslims. Your forefathers were heathens, but they always abstained from breaking a promise once made by them. They redeemed the pledges they made but you violate the word of honor given by you. You trample underfoot your solemn declarations in order to lay a hand on the servants of God!’

In this meeting Ibn Taymiyah successfully negotiated the release of a good number of Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners.

Ghazān returned to Iraq after his victory in Syria. However, his forces retreated within a few months when word reached them that the Mamlūks were returning to recover the land they had lost.

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In 702 A.H. news broke out of the advance of the Mongol armies towards Syria. People began to flee Damascus to Egypt and neighboring regions. At this time a major shar'i issue arose concerning the legitimacy of fighting the Mongols. Since Ghazân and many of his officers had accepted Islam, it was argued by some of the 'ulamā' that fighting against the Mongols would be impermissible. The basis of their argument was that the Mongols could be categorized neither as kāfirs nor as bughāh and therefore there existed no justifiable reason to go to war with them. Ibn Taymiyah, on the other hand, strongly opposed this opinion. Although Ibn Taymiyah considered those who ruled by the law of Genghis Khan (Yasa) to be non-Muslims, he could not say the same for Ghazân since the latter had replaced the Yasa with the sharī'ah. He put Ghazân and his followers in the same category as the Khārijīs and thus considered fighting them to be an obligation upon all Muslims.

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101 Bughāh is a fiqhi term referring to a group of people who after having given their pledge of allegiance (bay'ah) to a Caliph (Imām), rebel against his authority.


103 The Khārijīs were a group that rejected the authority of both 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah. They considered themselves to be the only qualified people for the caliphate. The term Khārijīs is also used to refer to any group of people who rebel against the legal authority (i.e., that of the Caliph, etc.)
Ibn Taymiyah successfully united the Syrian and Egyptian armies, who defeated the Mongols and freed Damascus in the battle of Shaqṭāb in Ramaḍān 702 A.H. (May 1303 A.D.).

The second formative military crisis in Ibn Taymiyah's life was the occurrence of new waves of invasions by the Crusaders. The Crusades had been initiated in the year 491 A.H. and continued intermittently until 690 A.H. The final defeat of the Crusaders came under the leadership of the Mamlūk sultan Al-Ashraf Khalīl Ibn Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 689/1290-693/1293).\textsuperscript{104}

Generally, Muslim states were passing through a state of turmoil during this period. The eastern regions were being invaded by both Crusaders and Mongols, while towards the west, many parts of Andalusia were being lost to the Spanish Christians. This situation led scholars to congregate in more stable areas such as Cairo and Damascus. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyah's family migrated to Damascus.

In 616 A.H. (1219 A.D.) the Crusaders attacked Damietta in hopes of keeping the Ayyubid forces preoccupied in Egypt so Jerusalem would become easily accessible to them. Upon capturing Damietta, the Crusaders rejected an offer by the Ayyubid ruler Al-Kāmil to give them Jerusalem in exchange for Damietta. Instead

\textsuperscript{104}Ibn Al-Athīr, 'Izz-ud-dīn, Al-Kāmil fī at-Tārīkh, v. 10, p. 272-273.
the Crusaders began to entertain hopes of taking all of Egypt in addition to Jerusalem. They were, however, unsuccessful and lost not only Damietta in the process but any hope of winning back the holy city.\(^{105}\)

Ibn Al-Athīr (555-630/1160-1232) stated with regard to the events of the year 617 A.H.:

Islam and Muslims have been exposed to severe disasters during this period, which no other nation has experienced in their history. Among them was the appearance of the Tatars, may Allah rebuke them. They stormed in from the Eastern regions and committed acts which would be regarded with shocked denial by anyone who heard about them, as will be explained in sequence, by the will of Allah, Exalted is He. Also among these disasters was the movement of the Europeans, may Allah curse them, from the West towards Syria, their march towards the land of Egypt, and their occupation of the port of Dimyāţ (Damietta). They were near to conquering the lands of Egypt, Syria, and others, had it not been for the goodness of Allah, Exalted is He, and His support against them.\(^{106}\)

Ibn Taymiyah considered the people of Syria and Egypt to be the main effective power to safeguard the affairs of the ummah, and that they had the greatest capacity to bring about change among the Muslims. He considered the remainder of the Muslim world to be in a situation of weakness and deviation from the principles of the shari'ah, summarizing the situation as follows:


Whosoever reflects upon the situation of the world today will recognize that the people of Syria and Egypt are the most ideal people to stand for the responsibilities of Islam, whether it is in regards to their knowledge, deeds, or jihād; either East or West of the land. They are fighting the people of great power from the mushrikūn (polytheists). The honor of the Muslims in the East and in the West is associated with their honor.

The people of Yemen at this time are weak, unable to stand for jihād, or they are abandoning this obligation. They are in obedience to whosoever rules their land. The majority of the people of Hijāz, or many of them, are in violation of the shari'ah. Among them are innovation, deviation, and corruption of which none knows [the extent] except Allah. The people of faith, and the pious among them, are degraded and helpless. Thus, if the people of Syria and Egypt were to be humiliated, the people of the Hijāz would be the most humiliated people. The authority of those Tatars who are fighting Allah and His messengers is rejected, and if they become victorious, the Hijāz will become completely corrupted.

The people of Africa are dominated by the Bedouins among them, and they are of the most evil of people. Moreover, they deserve jihād and conquest. Although the Europeans have occupied many of the lands of the people of the most distant West, they are not standing for jihād. If the Tatars were to conquer their land, these people would be the most humiliated people. All of this illustrates that the people of Syria and Egypt are today the battalion of Islam. Their honor is the honor of Islam, and their humiliation is the humiliation of Islam.108

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107Here Ibn Taymiyah is referring to not only the Mongols as polytheists but the Crusaders as well. The Crusaders, being Christian, are considered polytheists for their belief in Trinity. The Qur‘ān refers to this doctrine as an association with the oneness of God and it is thereby considered a form of shirk (polytheism).

In the above quote, Ibn Taymiyah is referring mainly to the society and the overall situation with regard to comprehension and practice of the Islamic principles. No doubt the leaders had a significant role in the political activities and social achievements. When Ibn Taymiyah praised the people of Syria and Egypt his commendation carried an implicit message about the rulers as well.

Yet conflict often arose between the Mamlūks and Ibn Taymiyah. In the year 705/1306, Ibn Taymiyah was summoned to Egypt by Baybars Jāshankīr for what his friends thought was surely a tribunal in which his life would be in great danger. People gathered to bid him farewell while some wept. The governor of Syria, Ibn Al-Afram, advised him not to go to Egypt. He, instead, offered to write to Baybars to clarify and reconcile the matter. Ibn Taymiyah, however, insisted on going to Egypt saying that "my traveling there will be beneficial and will produce many positive results." It is possible that Ibn Taymiyah’s view that Egypt played a significant role in the welfare of the ummah may have influenced his decision to travel to Cairo.

The reaction to the Mongol invasion in Syria varied according to the religious beliefs of the inhabitants. The majority of the population consisted of Muslims. Other religions, such as Judaism and Christianity, were

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present as well. The populations of each religion were divided into sects. The Muslims, for example, were divided between Sunni and Shi' i.

The scholars were also influenced by the situation of divided loyalties according to belief. For example, after the victory of Sultan Qutuz against the Mongols, the Sultan entered Damascus, and the people of Damascus rejoiced and celebrated the victory. They also took the opportunity to punish scholars who had supported the Mongols. They killed Fakhr-ud-din Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Al-Kanjî in the mosque of Damascus, he had been one of the Shi'i scholars who had allied himself with the Mongols.\footnote{Ibn Taghri Birdî, Jamâl-ud-dîn Yusuf, An-Nujûm az-Zâhirah fî Mulûk Mîşr wal-Qâhirah, v. 7, pp. 80-81.}

Some of the Christians had also assisted the Mongol invasion. When the Mongols entered Damascus, these Christians raised slogans against Islam, and they celebrated by going into the street with their crosses and throwing wine against the doors of mosques and over people. After the Mongols were defeated, some of the Muslims ransacked Christian houses, killed some of the Christians, and burned some of the churches.\footnote{Ibn Taghri Birdî, Jamâl-ud-dîn Yusuf, An-Nujûm az-Zâhirah fî Mulûk Mîşr wal-Qâhirah, v. 7, pp. 80-81; Al-Maqrîzî, As-Sulûk lima'rîfât Duwal al-Mulûk, v.1, part 2, p. 425.}
3.2 Life of the Mamlûks

The Mamlûk rulers and aristocracy were former mamlûks themselves. The primary military force was exclusively made up of mamlûks. Leaders of various factions within the Mamlûk military became the sultans. The sultanate was not for the most part dynastic. Yet there was no clear system of transferral of power. Thus there was often fighting amongst the Mamlûk nobility and bloodshed before a new ruler came to power. However there was greater stability in the early Bahri Mamlûk period due to the long reigns of the rulers and the control over the throne the family of Al-Manšûr Sayf-ud-dîn Qalâwûn maintained. Qalâwûn’s family held power for over one century (678-784/1279-1382).\footnote{The early Mamlûks did not adopt a policy of transferring authority through heredity. In the year 679/1280 Qalâwûn abdicated the throne and appointed his eldest son ‘Alâ’-ud-dîn to succeed him as sultan. ‘Alâ’-ud-dîn died eight years later. Qalâwûn was still alive at this point, but did not delegate Khalîl, his other son, to be the next sultan. A document delegating the sultanate to Khalîl was written but not signed by Qalâwûn. Some historians consider the reason to have been the accusation that Khalîl had poisoned ‘Alâ’-ud-dîn (Al-Malik As-Sâlih) in addition to the former’s harsh nature and lack of commitment to the Islamic obligations. Other historians interpreted Qalâwûn’s position to be due to his involvement in fighting the Crusaders, during which he died suddenly. The Mamlûk amîrs chose Khalîl (Al-Malik Al-Ashraf) to be the sultan in 689/1290. Khalîl led the army, prepared by his father, to a final victory over the Crusaders in 690/1291. In 693/1293, while on a hunting trip, Khalîl was killed by his chief deputy Baydîrà. Baydîrà was killed by Khalîl’s mamlûks, led by Zayn-ud-dîn Kitbughî, even before he was able to return to Cairo to become sultan. Kitbughî returned to Cairo to assume the sultanate but was opposed by ‘Alam-ud-dîn Sanjar Ash-Shujâ’î who had been appointed by Khalîl as his vicegerent at the citadel before leaving for his hunting trip. Kitbughî and Sanjar resolved the conflict by choosing another son of Qalâwûn, Muḥammad (Al-
is considered the most splendid period in the Mamlûk sultanate’s history.

Even after their ascension to power, the Mamlûks continued the policy of isolation and segregation initiated by Aş-Şâliḥ Ayyûb. The Mamlûks spoke a Turkish dialect, in contrast to the Arabic spoken predominantly by the Egyptian population. The lack of a common language between the rulers and the ruled helped in minimizing intermingling among the two. The Mamlûks also wore Turkish dress and maintained Turkish names. Non-Turkish mamlûks were given Turkish names as well. Arabic nicknames such as Sayf-ud-dîn (Sword of Islam), Rûkn-ud-dîn (Pillar of Islam), Ḥusûm-ud-dîn (Lance of Islam) were additionally taken. These Arabic names carried meanings of valor and had religious connotations. Some powerful Bedouin shaykhs would adopt Turkish first names as acts of defiance against the Mamlûks. This phenomenon was

Malik An-Nâşir), to be the next sultan. Muḥammad’s age did not exceed nine years upon his ascension to the throne. Their decision to choose Muḥammad was not based on respect for his personality nor on the fact that he was a son of Qalâwûn, but rather on a traditional policy of the Mamlûks to choose a relative of the previous ruler as a temporary sultan until a powerful personality would appear from amongst them to take the throne. Ash-Shujâ’î became a guardian for Muḥammad but was soon killed by Kitbughâ. Kitbughâ maintained Muḥammad as sultan. Kitbughâ’s forgiveness of some of the amîrs who were associated with the murder of Khalîl resulted in a revolt by the mamlûks of Khalîl. Among those who were forgiven was Ḥusûm-ud-dîn Lâjin. Ḥusûm-ud-dîn urged Kitbughâ to take advantage of the revolt and assume the sultanate for himself. In 694/1294, Kitbughâ declared himself sultan. (‘Âshûr, Sa’îd, Miṣr wash-Shâm fî ‘Asr al-Ayubiyyin wal-Mamâlik, pp. 211-225.)
more common in Syria than Egypt. Certain privileges such as the purchase of slaves from the Eurasian steppe and even riding on horseback were almost exclusively granted to Mamlūks.

The Mamlūks would either be married to slave-girls of their own origin or daughters of other Mamlūks. Marriage outside of this group was rare. Their children were however free to intermarry with the general population.\textsuperscript{113}

The progeny of Mamlūks could not become Mamlūks nor did they belong to the ruling class. The immediate offspring of Mamlūks formed an intermediary class between the Mamlūk nobility and the civilian population. This class was gradually absorbed into the civilian population.\textsuperscript{114} The sons of Mamlūks were not permitted to join the main military force. It was however possible for them to enlist in another force formed for them and other free-born Muslims.\textsuperscript{115} A special cavalry unit called \textit{ajnād al-ḥalqah} (soldiers of the circle) was designed specifically for this purpose.\textsuperscript{116} The


\textsuperscript{115}Hourani, Albert, \textit{A History of the Arab Peoples}, p. 131.

grandsons of Mamlūk nobility did not have any military privileges.117

Cultural elements of Mongol life penetrated into the life of Mamlük society through the mamlūks imported from the Kipchak steppe. Al-Maqrīzī explains this phenomenon as follows:

Genghis Khan delegated the rule of the Yasa to his child Jagatai. Upon his death, his children continued to follow the rule of the Yasa. Their commitment to the Yasa is similar to the Muslims' commitment to the Qur'ān. They consider it as a religious obligation. None of them is known to have violated this principle. When the battles against the Tatars intensified, in the eastern and northern regions of the Islamic state and in the land of Kipchak, many of the Tatars were taken prisoner and sold. Thus, they were distributed in the various regions. Sultan Najm-ud-dīn Ibn Ayyūb bought a group of them, and they became known as al-Baḥriyyah. Among them were those who became rulers of Egypt. The first of them was Al-Mu'izz Ibn Aybak. Then Sultan Qutuz, who led the famous battle against the Tatars in 'Ayn Jālūt, defeated them and took a tremendous number of them as prisoner. These prisoners became residents of Egypt and Syria. The number of Tatars increased during the time of Az-Zāhir Baybars, and the lands of Egypt and Syria became filled with them. Their habits and customs spread. From this group, came the sultans of Egypt, rulers, and military power, but their hearts were filled with terror from Genghis Khan and his children. The fear and the glorification of the Tatars were mixed with their flesh and blood.

They [the Mongol prisoners] grew up in the land of Islam, and they received the Islamic teachings and the laws of the Islamic creed. Thus [due to their non-Islamic backgrounds], they combined truth and

falsehood and mixed the good with the bad. They delegated to the chief of the qādis, the religious affairs related to prayer, fasting, zakāh, and ḥajj, as well as the affairs of waqf and the orphans. They also delegated to him some civil matters, such as family affairs, resolution of debts, etc. For themselves, they returned to the time of Genghis Khan, and they followed his law of Yasa. They appointed a Ḥājib to rule among themselves with their revenues and to enforce the justice among them, in accordance with the law of yasa, and they delegated to him all authority for governmental affairs in order to implement their rules in property matters.¹¹⁸

3.3 Ibn Taymiyah’s concept of Wilāyah and its necessity

"Wilāyah" is a term used by the Sunni fuqahā’ to refer to the concept of state authority. It includes all different ranks of the administrative positions or governmental system, starting from the imāmah ‘uzmā, or caliphate, till the lowest position or occupation in the state.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the position of imāmah ‘uzmā (caliphate) is a part of the administrative structure of wilāyah.

There are different meanings for the word “wilāyah,” but all of them are related to the authority of the state. As early as the time of the four caliphs, the word “wilāyah” was used with the meaning of “department” or “public function.” For example, ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb appointed ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir as head of the wilāyah for the prayers and the army, and


appointed 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd as chief of the wilāyah for judicial and financial affairs.\textsuperscript{120} The governor of a specific region is called "Wālī"—for example, 'Amr Ibn Al-‘Āṣṭ was the Wālī of Egypt—while the ruler of a specific city is called "Amīr"—for example, the Amīr of Basrah or Amīr of Kufah. Ibn Qutaybah (213-276/828-889) used the words "wilāyah" and "imārah" with the meaning of "caliphate" or "time of ruling".\textsuperscript{121}

Al-Māwardī (370-450/980-1058) in Al-Aḥkām as-Sultāniyyah, used the word "wilāyah" with the meaning of "department" or "public function," such as wilāyat-ul-Qaḍā' (Department of Justice) or wilāyat-ul-Ḥajj (Department of Pilgrimage Affairs) as titles for some chapters of his book.\textsuperscript{122}

Ibn Taymiyah used "wilāyah" in its general sense referring to all of the administrative positions of the state. He also considered the wilāyah as one of the most important of religious obligations, as established upon both

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121]Ibn Qutaybah Ad-Daynūrī, 'Abdullāh Ibn Muslim, Al-Imāmah was-Siyāsah (Tārīkh al-Khulafā'), Maṭba‘at Al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, 1957, v. 1, p. 21.
\item[122]Al-Māwardī, Abū Al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad, Al-Aḥkām as-Sulṭāniyyah wal-Wilāyāt ad-Ḏiniyyah, Dār al-Fikr, Cairo, 1983, pp. 59, 94.
\end{footnotes}
the shar'i evidence (passages from the Qur'an and Sunnah) and reason. Ibn Taymiyah states:

It should be known that the wilâyah (the exercise of authority for the benefit of the people) is one of the greatest of religious obligations. Moreover, there can be no establishment of the Islamic way of life without it. The children of Adam cannot insure the realization of their common interests except through gathering together in society, due to the need of each one of them for the other. When they gather together, it is inevitable for them to have a head. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If three people are on a journey, they should choose one from amongst themselves as an amîr (leader)" (narrated by Abû Dâwûd through the narrative of Abû Sa'îd and Abû Hurayrah).

Imâm Aḥmad has narrated in his musnad on the authority of 'Abdullâh Ibn 'Amr that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If three people are in a desolate tract of land, it is not permissible for them to stay without choosing one of them as Amîr." The Prophet, peace be upon him, has thereby enjoined that even in a small group on a transient journey, there should be one chosen as chief, implying that in all other kinds of communities, people should behave in this way.

He further explains the reasons for the appointment of imârah (authority) by presenting the goals of the wilâyah and its necessity in implementing religious obligations. His

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124 Al-Mâwardî (370-450/980-1058) considers the wilâyah to be one of the paramount Islamic duties because it safeguards the Islamic obligations and their implementation. (Al-Ahkâm as-Sultâniyyah wal-Wilâyât ad-Dîniyyah, pp. 5-6.)
view was that an unfair ruler was preferable to no ruler, as stated in the following:125

Allah, Exalted is He, has ordered that people should enjoin good and prohibit evil, and this duty cannot be accomplished without power and authority. Also, all that Allah has enjoined, such as undertaking jihād, administering justice, performing pilgrimage, establishing Friday prayer and the days of ‘Īd (feast), as well as relieving the oppressed and implementing penalties, cannot be accomplished without power and authority. Therefore, it is narrated that the ruler is Allah’s shadow on earth. Also, it was said: "Sixty years domination of a despotic ruler are better than one single night without a ruler." Experience has proven this. Consequently, establishing authority is a religious obligation and a method of drawing closer to Allah.

The statement that the ruler is the “shadow of Allah on earth” does not mean that Ibn Taymiyah is promoting a theocratic type of system, since in a theocracy, full authority is accorded to the ruler, whose rule is considered a reflection of God’s words and is absolutely perfect and infallible. In Ibn Taymiyah’s assessment, as will be elaborated upon in this and the following chapter, the ruler is an ordinary person nominated by the society and controlled by the condition that he should rule the ummah in accordance with the sharī‘ah. Obedience to him is limited only to his following the commandments of the Qur’ān and Sunnah. He is not considered to be perfect or to carry any special delegation from God.

125Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar‘iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā‘ī war-Ra‘iyyah, p. 139.

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Among the Islamic sects, the only exception to this concept is the Shī'ah belief that the ruler (imām) is infallible. Also, while we find refutation for the right of the society to evaluate the rulers or control them in the theocratic system, we find with Ibn Taymiyah and the Sunni school in general, that society is encouraged to evaluate the rulers' performance, to advise them, and to attract their attention to their errors. Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyah, this responsibility is considered an obligation upon them towards their rulers. In further contrast to a theocratic system, the society has the right to remove the sultan or caliph if he does not comply with the conditions of the bay'ah (contract of allegiance). Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah's statement is meant to emphasize the significance of the role of the ruler for implementing the commands of Allah on earth. He also explains that the ruler, as the "shadow of Allah on earth," shelters the weak and those in need. Since the ruler holds power and authority, he can provide protection and support for others who are in need. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah concludes that if the ruler is

126Muhammad Al-Khidr Husayn also explains this statement: "The meaning of 'the ruler is Allah's shadow on earth' is correct, and its wisdom can be recognized. The expression here is merely a metaphor. The aspect of similitude is that, just as people seek shelter from the heat of the sun in the shade, similarly they seek shelter with the sultan or ruler from oppression and harm. The sultan cannot be considered a shadow traced to Allah unless he rules the people with justice and wisdom." (Husayn, Muhammad Al-Khidr, Naqâd Kitâb al-Islâm wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm, p. 237, as cited in: Abū Jayb, Sa'dī, Dirāsah fī Minhāj al-Islām as-Siyāsī, Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, Beirut, 1985, p. 120.)
straight and correct, the affairs of society will be corrected, and if he is corrupt, his corruption will be spread throughout the land. He is the "shadow of Allah" only to the degree of his sincerity in this regard.\textsuperscript{127}

Ibn Taymiyah's understanding of history becomes apparent when he states that experience has proven the fact that the ruler is needed even if he is an oppressor. He considered the harm to society greater in the absence of a Muslim ruler than in the presence of an oppressive one.

Ibn Taymiyah had recognized the nature of social interaction in a community and the necessity of authority to administer the affairs of that community so that the mutual benefits could be had by all. He mentions that men cannot live without gathering in communities, and if two or more people have gathered, a code of commands and prohibitions should emerge among them.\textsuperscript{128} He states:\textsuperscript{129}

\textit{The perfection of the welfare, in this world and the next, of the children of Adam, cannot be accomplished without community, mutual aid and mutual support; mutual aid to provide benefits, and mutual support to prevent harm. Therefore, man is said to be civil by nature. Now, when men group}
together, they are required to do some things in order to procure their welfare, and to avoid other things as being harmful, and they will be obedient to one who ordains those desirable matters and who proscribes what is injurious.

All children of Adam, then, are bound to obey the category of those who ordain and proscribe. Those people who have not the divine scriptures, nor any religious faith, obey their kings (rulers) insofar as they consider it conducive to their worldly welfare, correctly in some cases and mistakenly in others. The adherents of the corrupt religions of the polytheists and the People of the Book who are committed to it after deviation and change, are obedient when they consider it conducive to their welfare, both religious and worldly. Of those without a Divine Scripture, some believe in requital after death and some do not believe in it. But, as for the People of the Book, this belief is held unanimously. All people on earth agree on requital in this world, for no one disputes that the consequence of wrong is dreadful and that the result of justice is noble. Thus it is related: “Allah aids the just state even if it be infidel and does not help the tyrannous even if it be believing.”

After providing the social foundation for human authority, Ibn Taymiyah concludes his argument by stating the necessity of the obedience to Allah and His Messenger as a logical result. He states:  

Since obedience to one who ordains and proscribes is necessary, it is evident that the best thing for a man is to enter into obedience to Allah and His Messenger, namely the illiterate Prophet foretold in the Torah and the Gospel, who ordains what is proper and proscribes the improper, who commands what is good and forbids what is bad.

The Mamlūks used titles such as sultan, nāʿib as-salṭanah (vice sultan), Atābak (Commander-in-Chief), Amīr, 

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130Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Īslām, p. 10.
Naqīb or Nāzīr (Inspector) to refer to various positions within their governmental system. For example those holding some sort of office within the sultanate were divided into three groups, each of which began with the prefix “arbāb” (Men of). These categories were: Arbāb as-Suyūf (Men of the Sword), Arbāb al-Aqlām (Men of the Pen), and Arbāb al-Wazā’if ad-Dīniyyah (Men of the Turban).

3.4 Basis of the relationship between the ummah (society) and the people of wilāyah.

The concept of wilāyah and the system of administration are addressed in four main works by Ibn Taymiyah. The first work, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar‘iyyah fī Ḥisāb ar-Rā‘i war-Ra‘iyyah, addresses the application of Islamic constitutional principles to the relationship between the rulers, or government, and the citizens. The purpose of this book, as stated in its introduction, is to provide advice for both the ruler and the ruled. The second work, Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām, discusses the degree of permissible involvement by the state in the economic affairs of the society in order to ensure justice. This is the goal of Prophethood and of


all its Messages, as stated by Ibn Taymiyah. In the third work, \textit{Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām ash-Shiya'ah al-Qadariyyah},\textsuperscript{134} he presents a Sunni perspective on the imāmah. It was written as a response to the work by Ibn Al-Muṭahhar,\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Minhāj al-Karāmah}. Ibn Al-Muṭahhar presented in his book the Shi'i theory of the imāmah and the necessary attributes of the imām. In the fourth work, \textit{Al-Khilāfah wal-Mulk},\textsuperscript{136} Ibn Taymiyah deems imitation of the ruling system established by the Prophet, or khilāfat an-Nabuwwah, to be an obligation upon all generations of the ummah. He describes the administrative system of the first four caliphs, known as khilāfah rāshidah, as the ideal form of khilāfat an-Nabuwwah. He therefore considers the khilāfah rāshidah to be the most exemplary model of rule and the standard upon which all other ruling systems are to be based.\textsuperscript{137} Ibn Taymiyah further


\textsuperscript{135}Detailed discussion about Ibn Al-Muṭahhar and his work is provided in chapter 3.


\textsuperscript{137}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Al-Khilāfah wal-Mulk}, pp. 28-29.
discusses the mulk\textsuperscript{138} (monarchy) as a deviation from the khilâfah, though he considers it tolerable if Islamic conditions of justice are met.

From these works, Ibn Taymiyah's theory regarding wilâyah and the system of governmental administration can be extracted. Ibn Taymiyah's approach can be characterized as based upon both the Qur'ân and Sunnah, either directly from passages or through inferences therefrom, and as one in line with the principles of Ahl-us-Sunnah. Additionally, it may be noticed that Ibn Taymiyah placed greater emphasis on certain topics, such as his defense of Ahl-us-Sunnah's theory of imāmah from the Shi'i conception, yet treated other issues lightly, owing to the social and political situation of his time.

Ibn Taymiyah's theory, which describes the nature of the relationship between the ummah and the rulers, was established upon two passages from the Qur'ân, āyahs 58 and 59 from the fourth Sūrah, An-Nisā'. He derived principles from them as a foundation for his political thought. Those in positions of responsibility should deliver their trusts to the people and rule with justice as an obligation upon the ulū-al-amr (people of authority) on one hand, while the ummah should obey their rulers on the other. However, this obedience is limited to the ruler's obedience to Allah's orders. The ruling of the Qur'ān and Sunnah should be

\textsuperscript{138}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Al-Khilāfah wal-Mulk}, pp. 31-32.
applied to resolve matters of dispute. Ibn Taymiyah states in the introduction of his book *As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah*:¹³⁹

This epistle is based upon the āyah (passage) of the Amīrs (concerning the rulers) in the book of Allah. It reads: "Surely, Allah commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. Surely, Allah admonishes you with what is excellent. Truly, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from amongst you; then if you quarrel about any matter, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest [way] to achieve the end" (An-Nisā’ 4: 58-59).

The scholars said that the first āyah was revealed concerning those in authority: They should deliver trusts back to their owners and should administer justice fairly; while the second āyah was revealed with reference to the ruled, in armies or elsewhere. They should obey those in authority over them who are actually in command of that which concerns the division of booty, the decision on general policy and in the sending out of expeditions. An exception is made in obeying an order that is in disobedience to anything Allah has enjoined. If they are commanded with disobedience, then the governing rule is: "No obedience for any created being in any matter that constitutes disobedience to the Creator." If they [the ruler and the ruled], on the other hand, should dispute about anything, they should refer it to the Book of Allah [to the principles revealed in the Qur'ān] and the Sunnah of His Messenger, peace be upon him. If those in authority do not comply wholly with the orders of Allah, you should obey them anyway in what you deem to be in accordance with the injunctions of Allah. To be obedient to them in this restricted form is obedience to Allah and His Messenger. In this way you would also have delivered the trusts to their owners, as Allah and His Messenger have enjoined: "And help one another

¹³⁹Ibn Taymiyah, *As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iḥlāth ar-Rā'i wa-Ra'īyyah*, pp. 4-5.
in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression" (Al-Ma'idah 5:2). And if this Ayah of the Qur'an enjoins the deliverance of trusts to their owners and the administration of justice in all fairness, then these are the essential principles of equitable policy and good government.

Here Ibn Taymiyah explains that the obligation of "deliverance of trust" is not only limited to the rulers towards the ruled, but extends to the ruled as well. Therefore, the ruled have fulfilled their trust when they comply with all the commands of their leaders that are not in contradiction with the sharī'ah.

This was an explicit message from Ibn Taymiyah to the Mamlūk rulers that their legitimacy merely rested upon a commitment to administer justice throughout their domain in a manner acceptable by the sharī'ah.

Ibn Taymiyah emphasizes justice as an unwavering requisite for rule, and considers ruling with justice the main principle for establishing the state, as in the following:¹⁴⁰

The affairs of humanity can function properly with the implementation of justice, even if members of the community are associated with sins, more than they can function in the absence of justice even if there are no sins. Therefore, it has been said that Allah supports the just state even if it be infidel, while He does not support the oppressive state even if it be believing. It has been said that the affairs of this world could continue with justice and disbelief, while they do not continue with oppression and belief.

¹⁴⁰Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām, p. 91.
Since the regime of the Mamlûks did not rest totally upon shar'î principles to begin with, it is likely that Ibn Taymiyah wanted such principles to be at least exercised in the dealings of the Mamlük government with its subjects. The threat of a non-Muslim invasion on Islamic territory from the Crusaders coupled with the newly and perhaps not fully Islamized Mongols, demanded unity and cohesion within the Mamlûk empire for a successful defense of the Muslim world.

3.5 People of wilāyah or ulū-al-amr (authority)

Ibn Taymiyah defined the people of authority or ulū-al-amr, whom Allah commanded to be obeyed, as consisting of two categories, the umarā' (rulers) and the 'ulamā' (scholars). The range of authority of the ulū-al-amr is controlled through their obedience to Allah.

In contrast to the general trend of the Ḥanbalī school, whose followers were distinguished by their abstention from serving in positions of authority, Ibn Taymiyah explicitly emphasizes the positive role of the 'ulamā' in participating in state affairs.

Ulū al-amr, according to Ibn Taymiyah, includes everyone to whom obedience is due, and thus they could include governors, chiefs, bureaucrats, and "Ahl-ush-Shawkah" (people of leadership and influence) in general. The ulū-al-amr should command what Allah commanded and forbid what Allah forbade. Members of society should obey the ulū-al-amr in all matters conforming to the commands of Allah and disobey
them in any matter considered to be in disobedience to Allah. Thus he gives sovereignty to the Qur‘ān and Sunnah, and considers the relationship between the rulers and the ummah a contract in which each party should recognize its duties.

Ibn Taymiyah states:141

In His Book, Allah has commanded obedience to Him, obedience to His Messenger and obedience to those of the believers who are in command. As the Exalted One said: “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who hold command. If you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and fairer [in the end]” (4:59).

“Those who hold command” are those who wield authority and possess it; they are the ones who govern people. Such command is shared by men of authority and power and men of knowledge and theological learning. Therefore, those in command are of two classes: the scholars (‘ulamā’) and the rulers (umarā’). If they are sound, the people will prosper, but if they are corrupt, the people will also be corrupted. When Abū Bakr was asked by a pious woman: “How long shall we continue like this?” he replied: “As long as your leaders keep to the straight path.” They include governors, chiefs, and bureaucrats. Everyone to whom obedience is paid is one of those in command. Every one of them is under obligation to command what Allah has ordained and to forbid what He has forbidden. And everyone who owes them obedience is obliged to obey them in obedience to Allah, and not to obey them in disobedience to Allah. As Abū Bakr the Veracious, may Allah be pleased with him, said in his address to the people, on assuming command of the Muslims: “People! The strong among you is weak in my sight, so I shall exact from him what is due. And the weak among you is strong in my sight, so I shall exact to him what is due. Obey me as long as I obey Allah! But if I disobey Allah you no longer owe me obedience.”

Ibn Taymiyah elaborated about the role of 'ulamā' as part of the state's authority. He did not consider them to be in the category of saints, or to occupy a special holy position in society. Their role was to be advisors to the rulers, clarifying for them the decisions that should be made to properly administer the sharī'ah. He emphasized that the rulers were obligated to consult the 'ulamā'. In As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah, Chapter Seven, titled "al-Mushāwarah" (Consultation), he considers consultation to be one of the fundamental principles of rule. Laoust goes further by stating that Ibn Taymiyah held that the 'ulamā' should share power with the ruler in order to ensure efficient implementation of the sharī'ah.142

Khan143 considers both Laoust and Rosenthal to have erred to some extent when they concluded that the 'ulamā' in the Islamic state, according to Ibn Taymiyah's thought, enjoy individual magistracy144 or collective sovereignty.145 He also considers Laoust to be confused in understanding Ibn

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143Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 137-139.

144Laoust, H., Les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques d' Ibn Taymiyah, Cairo, 1939, p. 201, as cited in Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, p. 137.

Taymiyah’s statement, “The holders of authority are of two kinds: the rulers and the scholars (‘ulamā’). When they are sound, the people will prosper.” Laoust stated, “The Sovereignty, in the doctrine of Ibn Taymiyah, is a diffuse sovereignty; it is as a result of this that the ‘ulamā’ constitute, in law, the premier directive class of the community and the state.” Khan argues that Ibn Taymiyah meant the rulers should involve the ‘ulamā’ in ruling the state through seeking their advice and cooperation for the benefit of the society. He further supports his argument by quoting a passage from one of Ibn Taymiyah’s works:

And the imāms [scholars] have said: “Indeed the holders of authority are of two kinds, the scholars and the rulers.” In this authority are included the leaders of religion (mashā’ikh al-din) and the Kings of the Muslims. Each one of them shall be obeyed in matters which relate to him. The former [the mashā’ikh] shall be obeyed when they order about worship (‘ibādāt), and to them shall be referred the interpretations of the Qur’ān, the ḥadīth and the messages of Allah; the latter [the Kings] shall be obeyed in matters of jihād, enforcement of canonical punishments (al-ḥudūd) and similar acts, the execution of which is enjoined on them by Allah.

However, I tend more towards the conclusions of Laoust and Rosenthal with respect to Ibn Taymiyah’s view on the matter.

Ibn Taymiyah states clearly that ulū-al-amr, to whom Allah ordered all people to be obedient, consist of two

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146 Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Majmū‘ah al-‘Ilmiyah, Cairo, 1953, pp. 10-11, as cited in Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 138-139.
categories: the 'ulamâ' (scholars) and the umarâ' (rulers), and that they do not comprise the rulers alone. He emphasizes this point in many parts of his writings and fatâwa. In addition, the passage which Khan quoted from Ibn Taymiyah defined areas of direct obedience and authority for either the 'ulamâ' or umarâ', but this passage did not explain the nature of the relationship between the 'ulamâ' and umarâ'. This statement also implied that the authority of the 'ulamâ' involves continually informing the rulers of the sharî'ah (what is enjoined on them by Allah).

Ibn Taymiyah also states\(^\text{147}\) that during the time of the four caliphs, the caliph himself was both a scholar and an amîr, with variations existing between one and another, and therefore the characteristics of both were combined in the authority of the state. In later times, the amîrs were no longer scholars, and the role of the scholars became that of an advisor regarding information about lawful and prohibited matters, and about good and evil actions. The role of the rulers, including the caliph, was to implement the decisions of the sharî'ah. If they deviated from the Book (Qur'ān) they would be straightened with "iron" (power or force), and there is no obedience to them in cases of disobedience to Allah. The question, however, was who was to define the deviation of the amîrs from the Book, and to determine

\(^{147}\text{Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Muntaqa, p. 77, as cited in: Al-Mubarak, Ad-Dawlah wa Niţâm al-Ḥisba 'inda Ibn Taymiyah, p. 32.}\)
disobedience or obedience to Allah. Obviously, only the ‘ulamā’ were qualified for this role, since they are considered the “heirs of the Prophet” according to hadīth. This reasoning clearly presents the sovereignty of the shari‘ah in the state, and therefore the position of the ‘ulamā’ is superior to that of the umarā’.

In the program promoted by Ibn Taymiyah the relationship between the amīrs and the ‘ulamā’ involves both consultation, since the amīrs should consult the ‘ulamā’, and advice, since the ‘ulamā’ are obligated at times to advise the amīrs. The advice of the ‘ulamā’ is not limited to being informative, but also must be followed by the amīrs at times, since the ‘ulamā’ are more knowledgeable concerning the shari‘ah. If the rulers deviate from the shari‘ah, then the ‘ulamā’ should withdraw their allegiance to them and correct them by force, if necessary. In such a case, there is no room for dictatorship from the rulers. In Sunni belief neither the rulers nor the ‘ulamā’ are infallible, but collectively, the ummah is considered infallible. In contrast, the imām is considered infallible in Shi‘i belief.

Therefore, the opinions stated by Laoust and Rosenthal more accurately describe the view of Ibn Taymiyah than does the opinion stated by Khan that the scholars are limited to a consultative role only.

It should also be noted that Ibn Taymiyah considers rulers to be legitimate, whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs,
as long as they rule according to the sharī'ah. During his time, the rulers were Mamlûks of non-Arab origin, while the ‘ulamā’, who often occupied public positions, that of qaḍā’ and ḥisbah in particular, were mainly of Arab origin and lived in the urban centers. In Hourani’s view, Ibn Taymiyah’s requirement that the ‘ulamā’ actively share in the government was a means of promoting feelings of political unity with the Muslim urban elite. However, this aspect of political unification is more likely to be the result of Ibn Taymiyah’s recommendation rather than a basis for his view, and it seems clear that Ibn Taymiyah’s suggestions are based upon the requirement that good, Islamic government should be established upon the sharī'ah. Thus, the contributions of the ‘ulamā’, regardless of their social status or ethnic background, were essential ingredients of the government.

The Mamlûk government was military in nature. The main power in the society was held by the Mamlûk aristocracy, who were headed by the sultan. This group was followed by the ‘ulamā’ and the qāḍīs who were influential in the society. There was no clear political system to organize the relationship of the ‘ulamā’ with the umarā’. The Mamlûk rulers however generally tried to gain the support of the ‘ulamā’, particularly during times when public support was critical. They needed the cooperation of the ‘ulamā’

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especially for fighting wars and collecting taxes. It was
critical to insure the satisfaction of the 'ulamā' as much as
possible or at least avoid any serious arguments with them.
Generally, the judicial system was independent and held
authority in the state. The decisions of the qādīs were
enforced without interference by the Mamlūk amīrs.

There are examples of opposition from the 'ulamā' on
certain occasions. Some 'ulamā' freely expressed their
opinions even if they contradicted the known practices of the
rulers. Ibn Taghrī Birdî narrates an incident in which
Sultan An-Nāṣir of Aleppo sent a messenger to Sultan Aybak
and Amīr Quṭuz of Egypt to request assistance against the
Mongols. Quṭuz gathered the qādīs and the rest of the
'ulamā' to meet with the Sultan and the messenger to discuss
the situation. Quṭuz consulted them about collecting a tax
from the public in order to strengthen the state revenues for
the purpose of preparing a powerful army for jihād against
the Mongols. Al-'Īzz Ibn 'Abd-is-Salām (578-660/1182-1262)
replied: "It is true that when the enemy attacks the land of
Islam, it is the obligation of the ummah to fight them, and
it will be permissible for you in such a case to collect from
the public that which will assist you in jihād. However,
there is a condition that nothing should be remaining in the
state treasury first, and you should sell your golden
trophies and valuable equipment. Every one of your military
leaders should be limited to his own mount and his own weapon
at a level equitable to the public. If you attempt to ask from the public while wealth and valuable wares remain with the military, it will not be accepted.” A few days later, Qutuz became the sultan, and implemented this policy.¹⁴⁹

The position of the scholars is also recognizable when Muḥy-iddīn An-Nawawī (631-676/1234-1278) did not approve of the decision of Aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars to confiscate the large properties of some of the very wealthy members of the society in Egypt and Syria. As a result, Baybars retracted his decision and did not confiscate the property for the state. No changes regarding the properties were carried out.¹⁵⁰

The judicial affairs were delegated to the Great Qâdî, who used to rule according to his madḥhab. The policy during that period was that the Great Qâdî should be a Shāfi‘ī. This situation continued until the year 663 A.H. when Aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars appointed qâdîs from the four madhhabs, and each was free to rule in accordance with his own school. The Shāfi‘ī qâdî still maintained certain privileges though. The Mamlûks also appointed various judges in different cities, and this policy led to the spread of the Sunni schools.

Al-Malik An-Nāṣir even once suspected Ibn Taymiyah of trying to take control of the Mamlûk sultanate. Ibn Taymiyah


was careful to suppress any such ideas. After the victory of Shaqîb, which was in great part due to his efforts, Ibn Taymiyah addressed the multitude of people who came to greet him by saying: "I am a man of religious learning not a statesman." From this statement it may be gathered that not only was a message implicitly being sent to assure Al-Malik An-Nâşir that there would be no popular revolt against the Mamlûks, but also that the personality of Ibn Taymiyah was resigned from worldly pursuits.

Historically, the principle of power sharing promoted by Ibn Taymiyah did not result in empowering the scholars to positions of state authority. Yet, perhaps the opinions of the 'ulamā' came to be taken more seriously by the Mamlûks.

3.6 Purpose of wilāyah

The purpose of wilāyah, according to Ibn Taymiyah, is to implement the sharī'ah and to rule the ummah according to it, in order to insure fairness and justice. The theological basis for this role is that the worship of Allah is expressed through the implementation of His Word, and this worship is the ultimate purpose of the creation of man. The implied message then, since everyone is obligated to worship Allah, is that the establishment of state authority is an obligatory matter dependent upon each member of the society.

\[\text{151Ibn 'Abd-il-Hâdî, Abû 'Abdillah Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad, Al-'}\text{'Uqūd Ad-Duriyyah min Manāqib Shaykh-il-İslâm Ibn Taymiyah, p. 177.}\]
Ibn Taymiyah also defined the purpose of the wilāyah as "enjoining good and prohibiting evil." He states:

The first essential (of hisbah) is to understand that the aim of all authority in Islam is to ensure that all obedience is for Allah, and that the Word of Allah shall be all-high. For Allah, Glorified and Exalted is He, created His creation for this purpose alone. To make it known He revealed the Scriptures and sent the Messengers. In this cause the Messengers and the believers strove. Allah, Exalted is He, said: "I created jinn and men solely to worship Me." (51:56) And: "We sent no Messenger before you without inspiring in him: 'There is no god but I, therefore worship Me!'" (21:25) And: "We sent forth in every nation a Messenger to tell them: 'Worship Allah and shun the tyrannical transgressor.'" (16:36)

Every messenger is reported to have told his people: "Worship Allah. You have no deity but Him. To worship Him is to obey Him and to obey His Messenger." This is goodness, piety, devotion, good works, noble deeds, and proper conduct."

Ibn Taymiyah also states:

Since the whole of the religion of Islam and all authority is a matter of ordaining and forbidding, then the ordaining which God sent His Messenger with is the ordaining of what is proper (ma‘rūf), and the prohibition which He sent him with is the prohibition of what is improper (munkar).

All Islamic authorities have the sole aim of ordaining what is proper and forbidding what is improper, whether it be the Greater Military Authority (wilāyat al-ḥarb al-kubra) like the Prime Ministry (niyābat as-salṭanah), or lesser offices such as the Police (shurtah) and the Magistracy (wilāyat-ul-ḥukm); or the public revenue (wilāyat-ul-Māll) and the hisbah authority.

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The integration and mutual support between the religious affairs and worldly affairs is a clear concept for Ibn Taymiyah. He considers the reform of religious life to be a way of prosperity in this life and in the Hereafter. On the other hand, he considers the reform of worldly affairs to be required by the sharī'ah, which would then be better implemented through this reform. Therefore, the authority of the state (people of wilāyah) should recognize both dimensions. He explains the purpose of the wilāyah as follows: 154

The aim of the wilāyah is to try to reform the religious life of the people, otherwise they (the people) would be at a great loss, and would not benefit by what they may enjoy in this world. Also, a reformation of the worldly affairs is necessary for the establishment of the Religion. The discharge of wilāyah is two-sided: to divide the sums [provided by the state or won on the battlefield] among those to whom the sums are due, and to punish the aggressors. For the one who does not transgress the limits [between good and evil, set by Allah], his worldly and lay conditions will be improved [by Allah]. In this respect, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb used to declare: "I send my viceroys to teach you the Book of your Lord and Sunnah of Allah's Messenger, and to establish amongst you your Religion."

Ibn Taymiyah's view is that in order to establish this type of authority, it is necessary to have both "the Book," or the sharī'ah, and "the Iron", or power, in combination, as indicated from the Qur'anic passage. Anyone who deviates

154 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Islāh ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'īyyah, p. 23.
from the "Book" should be adjusted with "Iron." This statement of Ibn Taymiyah reflects that his tolerance of unfair rulers is not absolute, but is limited to a specific degree. Ibn Taymiyah states:  

The real aim of the people of wilayah is that obedience should be solely for Allah and that the word of Allah is uppermost. The word of Allah is a generic name for all Allah’s words which are included in His Book. So He said: "We have sent Our messengers with clear signs, and We have sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that men might uphold justice" (57:25). So, the aim of sending messengers and revealing Books [to them] is to enable men to be fair in performing the duties due to Allah and those due to His creatures. Allah has said: “And We have sent down iron wherein is great might, and many benefits for men, and so that Allah might know who helps Him, and His Messengers, in the Unseen” (57:25). He who deviates from the [injunctions of the] Book [the Qur‘an] will be corrected with iron [the sword]. Thus, the core of Islam is established upon the Book and the sword. It is related from Jābir Ibn ‘Abdillah, may Allah be pleased with them both, that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, enjoined us to strike with this [pointing to the sword] him who deviates from this [pointing to the Qur‘an].

Ibn Taymiyah also says:  

Through the Book, knowledge and religion would be established; through the Balance, the financial contracts and exchanges would be established; and through Iron, the penalties would be implemented against the disbelievers and hypocrites. In recent times, the Book has become an area of specialization for scholars and the pious; the Balance has become an area of specialization for ministers, clerks and people of bureaucracy; and

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the Iron has become an area of specialization for the amīrs and the military soldiers. Thus, the Book controls the affairs of prayer, and the Iron controls the affairs of jihād.

Ibn Taymiyah places the responsibility upon the Mamlūks to make sure the shari'ah is enforced since they are "the people of iron" in this case. Here his mention of the division of administrative functions within the state is pointing out the agreement between the ideal and reality and thereby his acceptance. Ibn Taymiyah's acceptance of the various areas of specialization reflects his approval of the administrative developments. This would be with the qualification, of course, that they have a shar'i basis.

3.7 Practice of wilāyah (state authority)

According to Ibn Taymiyah, one of the main obligations of the imām is that he should be extremely critical in choosing people of wilāyah. The imām should choose those who are definitely qualified to serve the positions which they are nominated for. These positions include all administrative offices in the state such as the deputies of the imām, treasurer of the state, qādis, military leaders, clerks, and postal workers.

Ibn Taymiyah provided four principles for the correct practice of state authority, which are as follows:

1. Choosing and appointing the best qualified person for the position of wilāyah: Ibn Taymiyah stated the passages from the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, and sayings of 'Umar which
emphasize the necessity of choosing the most qualified people for the positions of wilāyah and warn against choosing someone based upon other factors such as kinship or tribe. The Qur’anic passage, “Surely, Allah commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners” (An-Nisā’ 4:58), according to Ibn Taymiyah has a general application. He states: “This indicates that anyone carrying out a public function should entrust the affairs of the Muslims to the best person capable of managing these affairs.”

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyah emphasizes his understanding by quoting the ḥadīth: “He who is invested with any authority over the Muslims, and delegates a part of this authority to a person, while at the same time he knows of a better person for that position, then he is a traitor of the trust delegated to him by Allah and His Messenger.” In another version: “He who invests a person with an office in a community, while he knows in this community a better person for that office, he is a traitor of the trust delegated to him by Allah, His Messenger and the believers” (narrated by Al-Ḥākim). ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattāb also said: “Anyone invested with an authority over the Muslims, who then delegates a part of this authority to another because of some friendship or relationship, is a

\[157\text{Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāh ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'īyyah, p. 9.}\]
cheater of the trust delegated to him by Allah, His Messenger and the Muslims." Ibn Taymiyah states:

It is the duty of the man in office to look for the best of Muslims when he delegates the subordinate offices under him: to his viceroy in the provinces and to representatives in the administration and the courts of justice; to the commanders of the armies high and low officers; to the exchequers comprising the viziers [associates and helpers]; to scribes; to accountants and to the collectors of taxes and tithe, and similar incomes of the Muslim state. Every one of those named above should try to choose his representative and employees from among the best available at his disposal. Even the leaders in prayers, the call to prayer, the reciters [of the Qur'ān], the teachers, the leaders of the pilgrims [of the different provinces], the heads of the post offices, those engaged in the intelligence office, the treasurers, the guards, the blacksmiths who keep up the gates of the castles and cities, the high and low overseers of the soldiery, the notables of the tribes, the experts of the markets, and the chiefs of the villages who are great landowners. Anyone in a position of authority, either from those or others, should choose their representatives from among the best at their disposal.

Ibn Taymiyah concludes that any person of authority should recognize the following considerations:

a. The most capable person must be chosen for the position of wilāyah, by placing the right person in the right post.

b. None should be invested with an office on the pretext that he had sought that position, or was eager to have

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158Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'īyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'ī War-Ra'īyyah, p. 10.

159Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'īyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'ī War-Ra'īyyah, pp. 10-14.
it. Such a demand should prevent the person from occupying an office or position of wilāyah according to the ḥadîth that when a group of men visited the Prophet and asked him to appoint them to a position of wilāyah, the Prophet replied: "We do not install in authority those who ask for it" (narrated in Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn).

c. There should be no deviation from choosing the best for choosing another, as a result of considering a special relationship such as kinship, friendship, race, nationality, or bribery in the form of either money or favor, or as a result of hatred against the one who is most qualified.

d. The wilāyah is a trust that should be delegated honestly, either from the caliph to others, or from the ummah to the caliph who is considered an employee hired by them.

2. Choosing the best man available, in case of the absence of the most ideal person: The imām, according to Ibn Taymiyah, is strongly obligated to choose the best person who is ideally qualified for the administrative position. However, since it is not always possible to find the most ideal person, in this situation the imām should choose the best person available, taking into consideration the nature of the position and its requirements.

Having chosen the most qualified person available and assigned him to a suitable position, the imām would have
completed his duty honestly. In this way he will be honest and righteous in the eyes of Allah. If, however, there is some corruption in the government not involving the imām, and he had no way of knowing about or correcting it, he will not be held responsible, since responsibility is equivalent to the authority available or delegated.\(^{160}\)

3. Recognition of the qualifications of wilāyah; capacity (quwwah) and trust (amānah): Ibn Taymiyah pointed out, according to the aḥādīth (pl. form of ḥadīth), that the wilāyah is a trust, stating:\(^{161}\)

It is indicated by the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, that wilāyah is a trust which must be placed where it belongs as indicated previously. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said to Abū Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, about the imārah [authority]: “Indeed it is a trust, and on the Day of Resurrection it will cause shame and disgrace, except to one who accepted it with its conditions and fulfilled the obligations which were due on him because of it” (narrated by Muslim).

According to Al-Bukhārī through the narrative of Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “When the trust is violated [lost], wait for the last Hour.” When he was asked: “O Messenger of Allah, what is the violation of it? ” he replied: “When authority is assigned to people not worthy of it, wait for the Last Hour.”


\(^{161}\)Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāh ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'iyyah, pp. 12-13. (Translation from Khan (with modification), The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah and Farrukh, Ibn Taimiyya on Public and Private Law in Islam or Public Policy in Islamic Jurisprudence.)
Ibn Taymiyah also considers the wilāyah to be established upon two principles: capacity, or power (quwwah), and trust (amānah). He states:162

The wilāyah is established upon two principles: capacity and trust, as Allah, Exalted is He, said: "Surely the best of those that you can employ is the capable [powerful], the trustworthy one" (Surah al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:26), and the king of Egypt said to Yūsuf, peace be upon him: "Surely you are in our midst today powerful and trusted" (Surah Yūsuf, 12:54).

Ibn Taymiyah defined the trust as follows:163

Trust is derived from the fear of Allah, from not selling His instructions for paltry sums, and from abandoning the fear of men; these three things Allah has made incumbent on everyone who judges among men... And qāḍī (judge) is a word that applies to anyone who adjudicates between two persons, and decides between them, whether he is a Caliph, or a sultan, or his deputy, or a governor. Even a schoolmaster who decides between the writings of two children as to which of them is better is a qāḍī. This information was mentioned by the Companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and this aspect is obvious.

The nature of the capacity, or power (quwwah), varies according to the nature of the job or career position that will be delegated to a person. He explains:164

162 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah, p. 15.

163 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah, p. 16.

164 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah, pp. 15-16.
Further, capacity or power for each function (wilāyah) is measured according to its nature. The power or capacity for the command of war (imārat-ul-ḥarb) is derived from the bravery of heart, the experience of battles, the practice of stratagems, from the ability to launch different kinds of war, etc., and capacity or power for adjudication between the people is derived from the knowledge of justice, as defined in the Book and the Sunnah, and from the ability to enforce decisions.

Ibn Taymiyah was realistic in his view; while he considered these two conditions, capacity and trust, to be ideal qualities which should be available in every person who occupies any position of wilāyah, he admitted that it is extremely rare to find these characteristics available at the ideal level within a single person. Thus, he recognized the degree of variation in each element, which should be recognized for the wilāyah, depending upon the nature of the position itself. Ibn Taymiyah states:

It is rare that we find capacity and trust side by side in one person. In this respect, 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, has said: "O my Lord, only to you I complain of the endurance of the wanton and the incapacity of the trusted."
The best man for the wilāyah (public function) is the man having a suitable capacity for it. When two men are candidates for the same public function, one of greater trust and the other of greater capacity or power, we choose the one more useful for this wilāyah and less harmful. In the case of the command of battle, we prefer the strong and brave, though he may be brazen, to the weak, who is incapable, though he may be trusted.

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165 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Islāh ar-Rā'I war-Ra'iyyah, pp. 16-17.
Ibn Taymiyah further supported his view by the fatwa of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal when he was asked: "Who of the two should lead an expedition? The strong and brazen, or the weak and righteous?" Ahmad replied: "In the case of the brazen and strong, his strength would be at the service of the Muslims, while he alone suffers from his wantonness. The righteous and weak, on the other hand, enjoys the results of his righteousness, while the Muslims suffer from his weakness. Thus, expeditions are preferred to be under the leadership of the strong and wanton."

He further supported his argument by quoting the hadîth of the Prophet which states: "Allah would support this religion [Islam] by [even] the brazen person."

Ibn Taymiyah also pointed out that the practice of the Prophet himself illustrated this method. For example, he appointed Khâlid Ibn Al-Walîd, after he became a Muslim, to the Wilâyah of War, although Khâlid violated some Islamic rules of which the Prophet disapproved. On the other hand, Abî Dharr, who was more qualified in trust and honesty than Khâlid, asked the Prophet to appoint him to a position of wilâyah, but the Prophet rejected his request due to his lack of capacity or power to fulfill the demands of the post. Therefore, even if the capable one is brazen, he would be preferred in the Wilâyah of War to a more pious and righteous man, who lacks capacity in affairs of war. Through the generalization of this rule,
we should look to the qualifications which are required for the nature of the wilāyah (public function) and nominate people according to them. Thus Ibn Taymiyah was tolerant with the Mamlûks, who fulfilled the condition of quwwah (capacity) despite their lacking the other condition of amānah (trust). Here there is an implied message urging the ummah to accept the regime of the Mamlûks despite their failure to meet all the criteria of an Islamic government. The Sunnis' tolerance for the shortcomings of the rulers, as manifested here by Ibn Taymiyah's view, is in contrast with the more uncompromising stand taken by the Shi'i in regard to their rulers.166

He further elaborated that the position of wilāyah may require more than one person, in order to have mutual benefits and complementary effects between them. He states:167

If the need for the position of wilāyah requires trust [more than capacity], the trustworthy would be preferred, as in the case of a treasurer. Yet collecting revenue and guarding it require both power [capacity] and trust. [In such a case two people are needed.] A capable and powerful collector is needed to collect the revenue, and a trustworthy scribe to protect it, through his experience and honesty. The same is true of leadership in war. If the Amīr held a council with

166 Elaboration about this point will be presented in the following chapter.

167 Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'iyyah, p. 19.
the men of knowledge and piety, he would gather benefits between the two. The same applies to other public functions. If one man only cannot ensure efficiency, more than one man should work on the problem. Thus, either the best man for the job must be chosen, or more men should be appointed to the same office.

In the Wilāyah of Qaḍāʾ (jurisprudence), if we have two candidates, one more versed in knowledge and the other more pious, in this case, the pious should be preferred if the cases to be judged are straightforward and caution should be exercised against personal favoritism. On the other hand, if the cases to be judged are complex and of an equivocal nature, then we should prefer the more versed in knowledge.

Khan asks whether Ibn Taymiyah extends this view of sharing responsibility of one office to the position of the Caliph. He mentions that Ibn Taymiyah did not explain this matter and there is no indication towards it in his writing. He excludes the idea that Ibn Taymiyah proposed a “council of rulers” to rule the state, since Ibn Taymiyah believed in a powerful central authority and such an idea is far from his thought. Khan’s view seems reasonable, as it is true that Ibn Taymiyah did not suggest a “council of rulers,” nor did he suggest that more than one person should occupy the position of the caliph, even in cases in which all the required qualifications for the imām are lacking in one person. Numerous statements found in the Minhāj indicate Ibn Taymiyah’s advocacy of a strong central authority. Additionally, Ibn Taymiyah placed the principle of shūra

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168 Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 148-149.
as one of the main foundations of the state’s rule. Furthermore, he considered the opinion of the shūra not merely of advisory (mu‘limah) status, but enforceable (mulzimah) as well.169 Thus, the caliph, according to Ibn Taymiyah, even if fully qualified for his position, is obligated to consult the scholars (‘ulamā‘) and other experts of the society. It is obvious that the need for such consultation will become even more urgent and frequent if the imām lacks any of the required qualifications for his position. Yet the Abbasid Caliph installed by the Mamlūks in Egypt hardly made any political decisions, so his qualifications were therefore irrelevant and any consultations made by him with the ‘ulamā‘ were politically impertinent.

4. Recognition of the criteria for choosing the best man available: Choosing the best man available, according to Ibn Taymiyah, depends upon two principles: the purpose of that particular wilāyah and the means for accomplishing its objectives. He states:170

The important point in this chapter is to understand how to choose the best [man for the office]. This is attained by knowing the aim of the wilāyah and the means of achieving its aim. Thus, if we know the aims and means, the matter is easy to accomplish. Since most of the kings pursue


worldly interests, and not those encouraged by
religion, they employ in their kingdoms those who
may help them in attaining these worldly interests.
Everyone who seeks authority for himself employs
those who may support his authority. The customary
tradition was that he who used to lead the Muslims
in the Friday prayer, and in the other regular
prayers, and deliver the sermon [on Friday], was
the man usually appointed to lead the Muslims in
battles, as these were the representatives of the
Caliphs in the armies. When [during his last
sickness] the Prophet, peace be upon him, said Abū
Bakr should lead the Muslims in prayers [in his
stead], the Muslims accepted Abū Bakr as the
authority for war and as the authority for other
functions as well [and thus as Caliph].

Ibn Taymiyah defines the purpose of the wilāyāt (pl. of
wilāyah), according to his statement quoted previously, as
the reform of the religious life and worldly affairs of
the people, the distribution of state revenues amongst
those in need, and the punishment of those who violate the
law.171

Ibn Taymiyah recognizes the impact of the social
construction of his time and its deviation from the ideal
situation of the khilāfah rāshidah, with regard to the
relativity of standards of governing. He states172:

When the people have changed [from the previous
situation] in some way, and the rulers have changed
as well, a contradictory situation arises. If the
ruler does his best to improve both the religious
and civil conditions of his subjects, he would be
considered one of the noblest of his time and

171Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah, p. 23.

172Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'i war-Ra'iyyah, p. 23.
amongst the best of those who strive hard in the cause of Allah.

So if a righteous, well-intentioned ruler is unable to find people who adequately meet the criteria for the job, he will have done well to choose the most suitable from amongst them.

3.8 Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyah’s ideas on the wilāyah provide a practical theory by which a government can function in a shar‘ī manner. Far from being removed from reality, the concepts put forth in As-Siyāsah ash-Shar‘iyyah would have been quite applicable to the governmental system of the Mamlûk sultanate. Moreover, the general principles behind the specifics were meant to apply to any society in any time period. This theory reflects Ibn Taymiyah’s desire to move his society towards an ideal Islamic governmental system. He thus proposed the idea that religious, political, and social life in the Muslim world, particularly within the realm of the Mamlûks, could be reconstructed on the basis of the guidelines set forth by the sharī‘ah. He was suggesting a system of government in which even those who did not hold power through ideal means by shar‘ī standards, would nevertheless operate under the precepts of the sharī‘ah. The rulers would have to accept advice and cooperate with the ‘ulamā‘ and other influential people, who were at that time the standard bearers of the sharī‘ah as well as public concern. This regard for moral and public concern in turn
would give strength to the relationship between the rulers and their subjects. Such a system would thereby be in the interests of the rulers and the masses alike. Indeed, internal stability was a critical issue during that time, for there were many external forces to reckon with.

There was a wide gap, however, between his program of reform and the existing governmental systems of the time. It was therefore impossible to fully implement his proposed reforms without certain fundamental changes being brought about in the political and military institutions of the Mamlûk sultanate. The traditional way of acquiring power and its distribution in the Mamlûk system of rule were a major obstacle in the implementation of Ibn Taymiyah's ideas of political reform.
CHAPTER 4

Ibn Taymiyah's Refutation of the Shi'i Concept of Imāmah
(caliphate)

4.1 Cause of the Confrontation

It is likely that when Ibn Al-Mutahhar Al-Ḥillī succeeded in converting the Mongol Il-Khan, Uljaytu Khudabandah (r. 703/1304-1316), from Sunnism to Shi'ism, the Sunni 'ulamā' of the Mamlūk dominion were alarmed. This was an especially disturbing development after the wars which had recently been fought between the Mamlūks and Khudabandah’s predecessor, Ghazān.173

Khudabandah, who was initially a Buddhist, had accepted Sunni Islam at the urging of his wife and Ghazān. He later converted to Shi'ism through the influence of Ibn Al-Mutahhar. Al-Khawansārī mentions two versions of the initial encounter between the two. The first states that Khudabandah had curiosity about the Imāmiyyah madhhab.174 A group of


174The Imāmiyyah are one of the Shi'i madhhabs. The Shi’ah in general believe that the imāmah is the main pillar of Islam. It is not a matter to be determined through the ijtihād of the ummah. According to their
Shi'i scholars, headed by Ibn Al-Muțahhar, debated a shafi'i scholar. The debate ended with Ibn Al-Muțahhar proving 'Alî's right to the caliphate and the baselessness of the claims of the other three caliphs. According to the second version, Khudabandah pronounced divorce on his wife three times at once in a fit of anger. He regretted his action and sought the opinions of the 'ulamā'. The Sunni scholars held that there was a necessity for a muḥallil. Ibn Al-Muțahhar's response that the divorce was invalid for the lack of belief, the Prophet named 'Alî to be the imâm who should succeed him, and then 'Alî named his successor, and so forth. The Shi'ah are divided into two groups regarding the matter. One group, the Imāmiyyah, claims that the Prophet explicitly named 'Alî as Imâm (caliph), and thus, they reject the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. The other group, the Zaydiyyah, claims that the Prophet implicitly indicated that 'Alî was to succeed him, and thus, they regard the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar as valid, although 'Alî was superior to them. The name of this faction is traced to their leader, Zayd Ibn 'Abî Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alî Ibn Abî Tālib. Among the Imāmiyyah factions is the Ithnā 'ashriyyah, who believe that the Twelfth Imām, Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan Al-'Askarī, entered a subterranean cave after he was arrested with his mother and that he will return to rule the world with justice. Ibn Khaldūn wrote that a group of the Ithnā'ashriyyah stands every night after sunset at the entrance of the cave, calling Al-'Askarī's name (the Mahdī) and appealing for his return, until total nightfall comes and they leave. Ibn Khaldūn reported that they had continued to do this nightly until his time. (Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd-ur-Rahmān Ibn Muḥammad Al-Muqaddimah, Ad-Dār at-Tūnisiyyah lin-Nashr, Tunis, 1984, v. 1, pp. 250-252.)

175 Muḥallil is a man who marries a woman divorced from her husband for the third time with the prior intention of divorcing her so that she may lawfully re-marry her previous husband. However this form of marriage is not considered lawful by the shafi'ah. The opinion presented by the Sunni scholars in the incident above was probably a sarcastic remark said with the intent of making it clear that there was no legal action that could be taken at that point to resolve the matter.
of two witnesses pleased Khudabandah more. Thereafter Khudabandah is said to have arranged for some debates between Sunnis and Shi'is. Nevertheless, after the initial encounter, Ibn Al-Muţahhar wrote Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma‘rifat al-Imāmah (The Way of Dignity for Knowing the Rules of Imāmah) to explain the Shi'i concept of imāmah to Khudabandah. Ultimately, Khudabandah became a Shī'ah. He enforced the Shi'i law in parts of his kingdom, ordering the khutbah (Friday speeches) to be said in the name of the twelve imāms of the Imāmiyyah madhhab. He also had their names engraved on mosques and shrines. The content of Ibn Al-Muţahhar's book and its impact on the ongoing wars between the Mongols and the Mamlūks would make us hesitant to believe any of the previous stories as the real cause for Khudabandah's adoption of Shi'ism. It seems that both stories would present an oversimplification for interpreting the reason behind Khudabandah's shift to Shi'ism as will be further explained at the end of this chapter.

Ibn Al-Muţahhar was a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyah. He was known among the Shī'ah as al-'Allāmah (The Most

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176 Al-Khawansārī, Rawdāt al-Jannāt, p. 175; as cited in Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj as-Sunnah, p. 22m.

177 Ibn Al-Muţahhar’s full name is Jamāl-ud-dīn Abū Manṣūr Al-Ḥasan Ibn Yūsuf Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Al-Muţahhar Al-Ḥillī. He was born in 648 A.H. and died in 726 A.H., two years prior to the death of Ibn Taymiyah. He was from al-Ḥillah as-Sayfiyyah, a city between an-Najaf and al-Khār by the Euphrates in Iraq. According to Ibn Al-Wardī, Ibn Al-Muţahhar’s works numbered about 120. Among his works are Taḥrīr al-Aḥkām ash-Sharʿiyyah
Knowledgeable). His book *Minhāj al-Karāmah* elaborated on the Shi'i theory of imāmah and ‘Alī’s right to have been the first caliph. The legitimate caliphate only existed, according to Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, from ‘Alī to the twelfth Imām. The Shī'ah were quite proud of this work and believed its contents to be irrefutable. Khudabandah is elaborately praised in the introduction of the book. It seems likely that Ibn Al-Muṭahhar occupied a distinguished position in Khudabandah’s court.

Ibn Taymiyah, on the other hand, did not honor Khudabandah or any of the Mongol Il-Khans. He considered them to be like the Khārijīs because they had rebelled against the legal authority, and thus deserved to be fought.

Probably due to the great prestige of Ibn Al-Muṭahhar’s work and its obvious political success, Ibn Taymiyah wrote a response entitled *Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fī Naqḍ Kalām ash-Shiya'ah al-Qadariyyah* (Utilization of the Prophetic Way in Refuting the Shī'ah Creed). Since it is known that Khudabandah began his rule in the latter part of the year 703 A.H., and that he became a Shī'ah in 709 A.H., we assume that Ibn Taymiyah wrote his book *Minhāj as-Sunnah 'a la Madhhab al-Imāmiyyah, and Talkhīṣ al-Marām fī Ma'rīfat al-Aḥkām.*


around this time. In Minhāj as-Sunnah, Ibn Taymiyah wrote that the Shī'ah believe the awaited Imām (the Mahdī) to have entered a subterranean vault 450 years prior to the time of his writing, or in the year 260 A.H. Thus, we can assume that Minhāj as-Sunnah was written around the year 710 A.H. Ibn Taymiyah was in Egypt during this time, since we know he arrived in Cairo in 705 A.H. and returned to Damascus in 712 A.H.

In his response, Ibn Taymiyah analyzes Ibn Al-Muţahhar’s work, section by section, and responds to each aspect raised in it. He criticizes the Shī'ah theory of imāmah and validates the Sunni view through evidence from the Qur’ān and Sunnah, as well as critical analyses of historical reports. Since Ibn Al-Muţahhar’s argument reflects his particular belief, which was a combination of the Rāfiđah\(^{179}\) and Mu‘tazilah,\(^{180}\) Ibn Taymiyah’s response focuses upon the Shī'ah

\(^{179}\)When the Imāmiyyah debated Zayd Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Al-Ḥusayn Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib about the imāmah and found that he approved of the caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, and that he did not distance himself from any loyalty to them, the Imāmiyyah rejected Zayd as Imām, and therefore came to be known as the Rāfiđah (defectors). (Ibn Khaldūn, ‘Abd-ur-Raḩmān Ibn Muḩammad Al-Muqaddimah, v. 1, pp. 250-252.)

\(^{180}\)The Mu‘tazilah were a rationalist school of theology, best known for their use of kalām. Amongst their main doctrines were: 1) Any Muslim committing a major sin was eternally doomed to punishment in the hellfire, as also held by the Kharijīs. 2) The attributes of Allah were taken figuratively. 3) They held the Qur’ān to be the created words of Allah, not his spoken words. 4) God will not be seen by the believers in the hereafter. Sunni scholars including Ibn Taymiyah rejected all of these doctrines. Instead of accepting the apparent meaning of the passages of the Qur’ān and Sunnah which relate to Allah’s attributes; the Mu‘tazilah give priority to the use of their rational premises.
Qadariyyah and their view about the attributes of Allah and qadar (fate).

4.2 Definition of imāmah and khilāfah

Ibn Taymiyah in his book As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah did not discuss the topic of imāmah (caliphate) as an independent subject, but treated it within his discussion of wilāyah. However, he provided a detailed and extensive discussion about the imāmah in Minhāj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fī Naqād Kalām ash-Shiya'ah al-Qadariyyah. Al-Hillî’s book focuses upon the most important principle of Shi'i belief, the imāmah. It consists of an introduction and six chapters, organized as follows: the opinion of different sects about the imāmah; the necessity of following the Imāmiyyah madhhab; evidence that 'Alī was nominated to be Imām after the Prophet; the imāmah of the successors of 'Alī from amongst the Twelve Imāms; invalidation of the imāmah of those who preceded 'Alī; and evidence against the imāmah of Abū Bakr. The main theme of the book is to emphasize that the imāmah is the most important issue in religious matters.\(^\text{181}\) Its purpose is to prove that the only legitimate imām among the first

With some passages they claim the Messengers to have merely simplified the issue for the people, even if it was in contradiction to reality. They abstain from comment on other passages for which they find no apparent rational explanation. According to Ibn Taymiyah, the Shi'ah shield themselves with the arguments of the Mu'tazilah. (Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 2, pp. 78-80.)

\(^{181}\)Al-Hillî, Ibn Al-Mutahhar, Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma'rīfat al-Imāmah, p. 77. (The book, which consists of 126 pages, is included with the first volume of Minhāj As-Sunnah, which consists of 391 pages in volume 1, and 521 pages in volume 2.)
four caliphs was 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. It emphasizes the merits of the Twelve Imāms and their infallibility. The extensive knowledge of Ibn Al-Muṭahhar concerning the Qur’ān, Sunnah, Sīrah, and history was reflected in this work.

Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, like other Shi‘i scholars, uses the words imâm and imāmah throughout most of his book to refer to khalīfah and khilāfah respectively. In rare situations, he uses the words khalīfah and khilāfah instead of imām and imāmah. The Sunni scholars generally use khalīfah and khilāfah.

Either term is used to refer to the government of the state or to the ruling political system. In general, the word “khilāfah” has been used to refer to the ruling system of the four caliphs who succeeded the Prophet, and the period of their rule is known as the khilāfah rāshidah (Rightly-Guided Caliphate). Sunni scholars have regarded the khilāfah rāshidah as the ideal model of government for the Islamic state, as required according to the teachings of the Qur’ān, and the practices (teachings) of the Prophet. The Shī‘ah do not honor the first three caliphs nor look to their style of government as a model for the imāmah.

The use of the word imāmah as a political term is derived from the word’s meaning of leadership of the prayer. The political meaning of the term indicates that the leader of the state is delegated with the responsibility of
implementing the sharī'ah and leading the Muslims in various affairs.\textsuperscript{182}

In Qur'anic usage, the word "khalīfah," or related terms such as istikhlāf or yastakhlīf, occurs with two types of meaning: "successor" or "vicegerent". The first meaning is mainly a linguistic one, while the second indicates that all human beings are obligated to carry out the commandments of Allah on the earth and that the earth has been placed under their rule. It also indicates that certain human beings have been chosen to carry out the commands of Allah through their political rule over others.\textsuperscript{183}

The opinions of Muslim scholars have varied regarding whether "khalīfah" means the successor of a previous person or group, or the vicegerent of Allah. The reason for the difference is that the meaning of "successor" is not applicable with respect to Allah.\textsuperscript{184} Ibn Taymiyah considers

\textsuperscript{182}Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 65-67.

\textsuperscript{183}Examples of the first type are: Al-An'ām 6:165, Sūrah An-Nūr 24:55. Examples of the second type of meaning are: Sūrah Al-Baqarah 2:30, Sūrah Sād 38:26. Several passages in Ḥadīth refer to the political meaning of khilāfah as well. Two examples are: "The caliphate of Prophethood after me will last for thirty years, and then Allah will deliver a monarchy to whomever He wishes," and "Follow my example and the example of the rightly guided Caliphs who will succeed me." (Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 358.)

\textsuperscript{184}Al-Qalqashandī (d. 821 A.H.) refers to two meanings for the word khalīfah. Through understanding the term grammatically as ism fā'il (active participle), the first meaning is understood as "the one who succeeds others." Through understanding the term as ism maf'ūl (passive participle), the second meaning is understood as "the one who will be succeeded by others." (Al-Qalqashandī, Aḥmad Ibn 'Abdillah, Ma'āthir al-
the meaning of khalîfah in the Qur'ân to refer to a successor of those who have preceded, as he states:185

Khalîfah means the successor of those who preceded, whether people or creatures. It does not mean that man is the khalîfah [meaning "successor"] of Allah, nor does it mean that the relationship of man with Allah is similar to the relationship between the iris of the eye and the eye, as stated by some of the heretics who avowed waḥdat al-wujūd (unity of existence) and ittihād (incarnation), such as the author of Al-Futūhât al-Makkiyyah [Ibn 'Arabî]....

The conclusion here is that Allah cannot be replaced by a representative, since representation exists in cases of the absence of another, and Allah, Glorified is He, is Ever-Present, controlling the affairs of His creatures, and Self-Sufficient, with no need of others. He, Glorified is He, is the Creator of all the causes and their results. Moreover, He, Glorified is He, will take the place of his believing servant if he is absent from his family [providing them with care and guardianship]. It is narrated that someone called to Abū Bakr: "O Khalîfah of Allah!" He replied: "Nay, I am the Khalîfah of the Messenger of Allah, and this is sufficient for me."

The word imâm also has political dimensions in the Qur'ân and Sunnah in some of its usage.186 In general, the political meaning of the two words, khilāfah and imāmah, is specific in ḥadîth, while broader in the Qur'ân.


^186Examples from the Qur'ân are Sūrah Al-Qasas 28:5, As-Sajdah 32:24. An example from ḥadîth is "The imāms [leaders] are from the Quraysh." (Al-Mawardi, Abū Al-Ḥasan 'Alî Ibn Muḥammad, Al-Aḥkâm as-Sulṭāniyyah wal-Wilāyāt ad-Dīniyyah, p. 6.)
A debatable issue in which Sunni scholars held three differing opinions about the definition of "khilāfah" was reconciled by Ibn Taymiyah. The first opinion was that the caliph is a representative of Allah for ruling and judgment. Among the scholars who held this opinion were Ibn Al-Jawzî (d. 597 A.H.), Ar-Râzî (d. 606 A.H.), and Al-Qarâfî (d. 684/1285). The second opinion was that the caliph is a representative of the Prophet for protecting the religion and ruling the world according to it. Among the scholars who supported this opinion were Al-Mâwardî (370-450/980-1058), Abû Ya'lā Al-Farrā' (380-458 A.H.), and 'Aqûd-ud-Dîn Al-Ījî (d. 756 A.H.). Ibn Al-Jawzî supported this opinion as well as the first. The third opinion was that the caliph is a representative of the ummah. Those who held this view considered that the imâm acts on behalf of the ummah, and therefore the impact and results of his behavior continue even after the end of his rule or after his death. Among the scholars who supported this opinion were Al-Mâwardî, and Al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd-is-Salām (578-660/1182-1262). This view was also indicated by Ash- Shâfi'i in his writing. From the dawn of Islamic history, the Companions of the Prophet used the

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term "caliph" to refer to the "representative of the Prophet."\(^{188}\)

These three opinions apparently vary to a great extent, but by considering the basis of each view, we can recognize that the differences are actually very minimal, and that they merely reflect the examination of the issue from different perspectives.

The basis of the first opinion, that the caliph is the vicegerent of Allah, is that the Sunni scholars limited the caliph's position to the implementation of the sharī'ah given to human beings by Allah. Yet the caliph has no authority to initiate, change or violate the laws. Therefore this system differs from the theocratic system, which grants authority to the ruler to execute laws as he desires, as if he is divine.

The second opinion, that the ruler is the vicegerent of the Prophet, means that the position of the caliph is to insure that the members of the state act according to the sharī'ah without disobedience or innovation. According to the Qur’ān, the leadership of the Prophet has two aspects:

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\(^{188}\)For example, Abū Bakr protested being called the "Caliph of Allah," as previously indicated in Ibn Taymiyah's writing. In addition, when 'Umar found the people calling him the "Caliph of the Caliph [Abū Bakr] of the Messenger of Allah," he began to reflect upon the continued succession in the caliphate and the repetition of the word "caliph." Therefore, he changed the title of the leader to be "Amīr Al-Mu'mīnīn" (Amīr of the Believers). (Al-Qalqashandī, Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd-ullah, Ma'āthir al-Ināfah fl Ma'ālim al-Khilāfah, ed. ‘Abd-us-Sattār Farrāj, Wizārat al-Irshād, Kuwait, 1964, v. 1, pp. 26-28, 92.) Although the title had been changed, the concept itself remained that the leader was a caliph, or representative, of the Prophet.
receiving the revelation and conveying it to others, and implementing the teachings of the revelation. Since there is no revelation after the Prophet, the leaders who succeed him can be considered his representatives with respect to the second aspect of his leadership.

The third opinion considers the relationship between the imām and ummah as a contract, in which the role of the imām is to implement the sharī'ah. Consequently, the three opinions are actually in agreement with regard to the role of the caliph in the state. There is thus no advantage for the caliph in one opinion over the other, since his actual role in the state is the same in all cases. Ibn Taymiyah, in As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah, considers the caliph and all the people of government (wālīs) as vicegerents of Allah in their leadership over the ummah, and as representatives of the ummah to rule on their behalf. Ibn Taymiyah's view that the caliph cannot be the khalīfah (successor) of Allah reflects his stand against the position of the Imāmiyyah scholars who hold that the imām is capable of acquiring the attributes of Allah, such as infallibility and knowledge of the future--this was the opinion of Ibn Al-Muṭahhar as well.

Historically, the first four successors of the Prophet, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids used the title khalīfah to

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refer to the head of the state. Though the Mamlûk state did recognize a khalîfah, actual authority lay with the sultan. The title imâm was only used by the Twelver Shī'ah for the twelve individuals whom they considered legitimate leaders. Of them only 'Alî held political power.

It could be noticed here that the Mongols would rejoice at the usage of imâm and imâmah since the words khalîfah and khilâfah were associated with the position of their enemies. It would also release them from the defensive stand against those scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyah, who considered them rebellious against the Caliph. The sharp sarcastic remarks made by Ibn Al-Muṭahhar against the Sunni scholars for honoring the first three caliphs as well as Umayyad and Abbasid rulers\(^\text{190}\) would have substituted a strong political support for the Mongols against the Mamlûk rulers.

4.3 Position of imâmah (khilâfah) according to Ibn Taymiyah

Ibn Taymiyah, in Minhâj as-Sunnah, strongly criticizes the Shī'ah concept that the imâmah is "the most important aspect in religious matters and the most honorable subject in Islam," as stated by Ibn Al-Muṭahhar. He considers such a claim baseless according to all Muslim belief, whether Sunni or Shi'i, and moreover, he considers such a claim to be not only a mistake, but kufr (blasphemy). Ibn Taymiyah points out that belief in Allah and His Messenger is the most

\(^{190}\)Al-Ḥillî, Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, Minhâj al-Karâmah fî Ma'rifat al-Imâmah, pp. 79-80.
important aspect of Islamic belief, and not the imāmah. He provides an abundance of evidence from the Qur’ān and Sunnah to support his argument. In the many passages of the Qur’ān which describe the characteristics of righteous believers with whom Allah is pleased, belief in the imāmah is not included in any of them. In the Sunnah, the Prophet defines the pillars of Islam, Imān, and Ihsān; and again, imāmah is not included in any of these categories.

Additionally, Ibn Taymiyah presents rational arguments against the Shī'ah claim. He points out that the Prophet did not mention anything about the imāmah to the many people who became Muslim during his lifetime, and some of them died without hearing of the imāmah at all. Therefore, how could it be imagined that the imāmah is the most important issue in religious matters?

Also, according to the Imāmiyyah belief, 'Alī designated his son Al-Ḥasan as his successor, Al-Ḥasan designated his brother Al-Ḥusayn as his successor, Al-Ḥusayn designated his son 'Alī Zayn-ul-‘Ābidīn and so forth, until the awaited Twelfth Imām, Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan, who they claimed entered the cave when he was between two and five years old and is still absent. Ibn Taymiyah raises the argument of how the

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imām can be considered luṭf (Benevolence of Allah), while nothing is known of his instructions and teachings? He further directs the Shī'ah to consider the inconsistencies and contradictions of their belief. Ibn Taymiyah asks how Ibn Al-Muṭahhar can make the claim that imāmah has the highest status in religion when the Imāmiyyah themselves rank imāmah last--behind tawḥīd (the Oneness of God), justice, and prophethood--amongst what they believe to be the four fundamentals of Islam.

The Mamlūk rulers, who already limited the real authority of the caliph or the imām, would appreciate Ibn Taymiyah's treatment of the priority of the imāmah as a means of justification for the distribution of power in their society.

Ibn Taymiyah's awareness of the history of the development of various sects enabled him to support his arguments. He writes that the early Shī'ah, who accompanied 'Alī, had no dispute about the merits of Abū Bakr and 'Umar and their superiority over 'Alī. The dispute arose regarding the preferences between 'Uthmān and 'Alī, and this fact has been acknowledged by prominent Shī'ah scholars themselves, both predecessors and contemporaries of Ibn Taymiyah. He states:

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194 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 65.  
195 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, pp. 7, 8.
Abū Al-Qāsim Al-Balkhī narrated that someone asked Shurayk Ibn 'Abdillah Ibn Abī Namir: "Who is more superior, Abū Bakr or 'Alī?" He replied: "Abū Bakr." Then he asked him: "Do you say that and you are Shi'i?" He told him: "Yes, and if someone will say differently, he is not Shi'i." He continued: "By Allah, 'Alī stepped onto the minbar and said: 'Surely the best of this ummah, after its Prophet, is Abū Bakr and then 'Umar.'" Shurayk continued: "Then how can we refute his ['Alī's] words, and how can we accuse him of lying? By Allah, he was never a liar!"

Laoust understands from Ibn Taymiyah's refutation of the Shī'ah's view about the imāmah that Ibn Taymiyah's position is inclined towards that of the Khārijīs who reject the necessity of the imāmah. Ibn Khaldūn elaborated about the belief of some of the Khārijīs on the need of having a khalīfah. He said that all the Islamic sects regard the

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197Shurayk Ibn 'Abdillah Ibn Abī Namir Al-Qurashi died in 140 A.H. (Al-Khaṣrajī, Tahdhīb al-Kamāl, p. 140, as cited in Minhâj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 8.)

198Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, p. 38.

imāmah as an Islamic obligation, and they support their view with either transmitted evidence (adillah naqliyyah) or with rational arguments (adillah 'aqliyyah), or both. The only exceptions to this view are Al-Asamm from the Mu'tazilah and a group of the Khārijīs, who believe that the imāmah is not a requirement. The basis of their argument is that since everyone among the ummah is obligated to act according to the sharī'ah, there is no need then for an imām when the ummah is acting correctly and with justice. This view is based upon their contention that authority usually leads to dictatorship and to the hedonistic enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Since this type of behavior is condemned by the sharī'ah, they attempted to avoid the establishment of authority as much as possible.200

Since Ibn Taymiyah opposes the importance the Shi'i assign to the imāmah, it might seem as if he contradicts himself when he states in As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah:201 “It should be known that the exercise of authority (wilāyah) is one of the greatest religious obligations. Moreover, there

200Ibn Khaldūn argued against this view by stating that authority itself is not condemned, but condemnation is directed towards the corruption which could result from the misuse of authority. On the other hand, he argued that justice, fairness among members of society, the establishment of religious affairs, and providing a correct social environment are all praiseworthy and result from the correct use of authority. Therefore, authority is condemned only under specific circumstances of misuse. (Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Al-Muqaddimah, v. 1, p. 245).

201Ibn Taymiyah, As-Siyāsah ash-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ ar-Rā'ī war-Ra'iyyah, pp. 138-139.
is no establishment of Islamic life without it." This apparent contradiction is resolved when we consider that while Ibn Taymiyah rejects the concept of the imāmah as being one of the main pillars of Islam, or the most important aspect of religion, he also views it, and the wilāyah in general, as an emphatic duty, without which many other obligations could not be accomplished. The principle he applies in this case is that whatever is required for fulfilling an obligation is itself also an obligation. Ibn Taymiyah concludes that authority or imāmah is not an article of faith, but rather a means of implementing the obligations of Islam, such as the establishment of religion and providing the welfare of the people. Therefore, his opinion differs sharply from both the Khārijīs, who ignored its significance, and the Shī'ah, who, relatively speaking, exaggerated it.

4.4 Appointment of the imām and his source of authority

According to Ibn Taymiyah, the imām should be nominated and elected by the Ahl-ush-Shawkah (people of leadership and influence), and thereby be approved by the ummah in general. Ibn Taymiyah states:

The imāmah is established upon the agreement of Ahl-ush-Shawkah. The person is not an imām until he gains their approval. Through the allegiance of Ahl-ush-Shawkah, he attains the goal of imāmah, since this goal is accomplished through power and authority. If someone has received a pledge by

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Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 365.
which he has attained power and authority, then he is an imām.

In contrast, Al-Māwardī considers there to be two legitimate methods for validating the contract of imāmah: the pledge of Ahl-ul-‘Aqd wal-Ḥall, and the ‘ahd, or waṣiyyah (directive to specify a caliph), of the previous imām. Ibn Taymiyah considers the ‘ahd as merely a nomination from the previous imām, and not a valid means of transferring the authority of imāmah to a successor. This nomination has no binding authority over Ahl-ush-Shawkah, except as an important recommendation, and it will not result in the appointment of the new imām except through their approval, and then the pledge of the ummah in general. The scholars of Ahl-us-Sunnah commonly used the ‘ahd of Abī Bakr to ‘Umar for succeeding him in the position of caliph as evidence for this type of transfer of leadership. Ibn Taymiyah does not accept this point of view, and he explains that ‘Umar did not become an imām through the ‘ahd of Abī Bakr, but only through the pledge of Ahl-ush-Shawkah and of the Companions in general. A pledge of allegiance given by a single individual, without consultation or consideration of the opinion of the ummah or their representatives, is considered a major crime in the shari‘ah. A ḥadīth, narrated through ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb,

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204 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 367-368.
states: "For anyone pledging allegiance to another person, without consultation with fellow Muslims, no pledge will be authorized to the one who received it, nor to the one who gave it to him, and both of them are endangering themselves for capital punishment." 205

It may be observed here that these views and arguments presented by Ibn Taymiyah could be interpreted as strongly critical of Mamlûk rule and even an attempt to incite sedition in the society against the Mamlûks. This seems likely, especially because their power was essentially transferred through revolts among themselves, without recognition from the Ahl-ush-Shawkah or pledges of allegiance from the society in general. Such a view is inconsistent with Ibn Taymiyah's doctrines or approaches. However, the main theme of Minhâj as-Sunnah is to disprove the Imâmiyyah view.

Al-Mâwardî explicitly defines the conditions of Ahl-ul-‘Aqd wal-Ḥall, also known as Ahl-ul-Ikhtiyâr (People of Nomination and Election or council of scholarly leadership), and provides three criteria for their qualifications. They should be people of ‘adālah (integrity), with knowledge of both the conditions of the imāmah and awareness of those qualified for it, and of judiciousness and wisdom, which

205 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhâj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 3, p. 386.
would lead them to choose the best. Ibn Taymiyah, on the other hand, does not explicitly specify the conditions of Ahl-ush-Shawkah, but we can understand through his descriptions of their duties that he is referring to Ahl-ul-‘Aqd wal-Ḥall, according to the qualifications specified by Al-Māwardī. In addition, we can understand through Ibn Taymiyah’s use of the word “shawkah” that the Ahl-ush-Shawkah should be people of influence and leadership who have gained the respect and support of society.

The word “shawkah” seems to have been first developed as a legal term by Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī. He used the term to describe the establishment of the imāmah by the Ahl-ush-Shawkah, and then he described the establishment of the Ahl-ush-Shawkah by the society. According to Khan, Al-Ghazālī developed the term to justify the rule of the Saljuq Turks, and Al-Ghazālī considered the role of the Ahl-ush-Shawkah as one of influence and persuasion on the ummah to hasten their pledges of allegiance to the imām.

In the time of Ibn Taymiyah, only the Mamlūks were making the decisions as to who would be the caliph. For instance, in 658 A.H., the first Abbasid caliph of Cairo was appointed by Baybars. The caliph was killed in a battle against the Mongols which Baybars had sent him to fight.

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207 Khan, Qamaruddin, The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 136-137.
Within a few months Baybars brought a fifteen-year-old from Baghdad to become the next caliph.\textsuperscript{208} Therefore the sultan and the Mamlûk aristocracy were playing the role, more or less, of Ahl-ush-Shawkah.

Ibn Taymiyah sharply criticizes the Shi'i theory of the imāmah with its three dimensions: the luţf (Benevolence of Allah), the 'īşmah or infallibility of the imām, and the naşş or wasiyyah. According to the Shi'i belief the imām is chosen by Allah Himself, and his source of authority is divine. Ibn Al-Muţahhar explains this view, as follows:\textsuperscript{209}

\begin{quote}
The Imāmiyyah believe that Allah, Exalted is He, is truly the Most Just, Most Wise. He does no evil nor breaches an obligation. All His actions occur for good and wisdom. He commits neither injustice, nor frivolity . He is Merciful with His servants, does the best for them and what benefits them. He, Glorified is He, made them accountable through providing them with free will, and not by imposing a specific way upon them. He has promised them rewards and threatened them with punishments, through His infallible prophets and messengers. Error, forgetfulness, or disobedience could not occur from them. Otherwise, the veracity of their words or actions could not be insured, and the purpose of their message would be discredited. Then, He succeeded the message [prophethood], after the death of the Messenger, with the imāmah. Thus, He appointed infallible trustees (imāms) in order that people might be safe and secure from their errors and forgetfulness, or mistakes. Thus, they [the people] will submit themselves to their commands. Therefore, Allah, Exalted is He, would
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}

\textsuperscript{209}Al-Ḥillî, Ibn Al-Muţahhar, Minhâj al-Karâmah fî Maʻrifat al-Imāmah, pp. 78-79.
\end{footnotes}
never let the world be deprived of His Benevolence (lutf) and Mercy. When Allah sent His Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him, he accomplished his duty by conveying the Message, and he designated 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon them, to be the caliph after him; then, after 'Alī, his son, Al-Ḥasan Az-Zakī (the Pure); then, his brother Al-Ḥusayn the Martyr; then, 'Alī Ibn Al-Ḥusayn; then, the Ḥujjah [Authority] Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan, peace be upon them. Therefore, the Prophet did not die until he established a waṣiyyah [directive] for the imāmah.

This quote from Ibn Al-Muṭahhar illustrates the theological basis of the Shi'i view of the imāmah. Their view is deeply rooted in the principles of their faith, since they believe that the appointment of the imām is an obligation upon Allah Himself and associated with His attributes of Benevolence and Mercy. It is not a matter delegated for the choice of human beings, but is a part of the destiny determined by Allah. The concept of lutf (Benevolence) of Allah is presented through His choosing the imām. Therefore, rejection of the Shi'i concept of imāmah means the rejection of these attributes of Allah. Since the imāmah is a continuation of the prophethood, denial of the imāmah means the denial of prophethood. The infallibility of the imāms is an aspect of Allah's Mercy. Otherwise, if they were like any other human being, chosen by the people and capable of erring, there would be no special advantage for Allah's choice of the imām over the choice of human beings. Consequently, since the imāms are infallible and divinely
guided, their designation of their successor is the only valid one for choosing the imām.\textsuperscript{210}

Ibn Taymiyah utilizes his deep knowledge of the Qurʿān, Sunnah, and history, in addition to rational arguments, to discredit Ibn Al-Muṭahhar’s writing. With regard to the Shiʿi theory of luṭf,\textsuperscript{211} Ibn Taymiyah points out a contradiction between their view and the actual situation of their imāms. He questions the meaning of the Shiʿah’s claim that Allah “appoints His infallible trustees.” If they mean that Allah has provided their imāms with power and leadership over people, in order that people could benefit from their authority, they are contradicting reality. The Shiʿah admit that their imāms were oppressed and tyrannized, possessing no authority, and thus, the understanding of their claim from this perspective is invalid.

An alternative understanding of the Shiʿi view is that Allah has obligated people to obey the imāms, and that when the people obey them, they will be guided, but people did not comply with Allah’s commands to obey these imāms. Ibn Taymiyah again points out the contradiction in their arguments, since no Benevolence or Mercy occurred in the

\textsuperscript{210} A great disparity exists between these principles and those of the Sunni belief. It can be noted here that Ibn Al-Muṭahhar’s presentation suffers a major deficiency, according to the sharīʿah point of view, since it is established upon rational arguments (adillah ‘aqliyyah) only and does not present naqṣ or evidence from the Qurʿān and Sunnah (adillah naqliyyah).

\textsuperscript{211} Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, pp. 78-88.
ummah through these imāms, and instead, the people denied the imāms and disobeyed them. Even those who believed in them, and who awaited the Twelfth Imām, gained no benefit from these imāms, and no mercy occurred to them. Thus, there is no benefit or benevolence for either those who believe in the Imām, or for those who deny him.212

Ibn Taymiyah also distinguishes between belief in Prophethood and the Shi'i belief in imāmah. Belief in Prophethood results in guidance and benefit for those who obey the Prophets. The benefit obtained from believing in the Twelve Imāms, except for 'Alī, is the same as that which could be obtained from any scholar, while the benefit which would be expected from an imām with political authority is lacking.

Ibn Taymiyah's practical view for dealing with the real situations experienced in society and for appointing the best imām available is illustrated in his presentation of the inconsistency of the Shī'ah in their reasoning. According to their belief, the awaited Imām entered the cave at the age of two or slightly older. A child of this age requires a guardian to safeguard his welfare. A child in this age range is not yet accountable for his prayers, but by the age of seven he should be directed on how to perform them. He is still under the custody of his guardian, regarding himself

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212 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 88.
and his welfare, according to the Qur'anic teachings. Even if such a child were to exist and be seen, he would not be permitted to be an imām for the Muslims, let alone a child who either does not exist or has been lost for all of these centuries. If the wali\textsuperscript{213} of a woman is known to exist, yet is absent, and she wishes to get married, the ruler should replace her wali so her marriage may be performed. In this way the woman's best interests are not neglected merely because her wali is not present. How then, inquires Ibn Taymiyah, can we neglect the interest of the entire ummah through this long wait for a lost Imām?\textsuperscript{214}

With regard to the concept of 'ismah, or infallibility of the imāms, if we consider that Ibn Taymiyah's methodology about all matters of belief is to establish his arguments upon clear evidence from the Qur'ān or Sunnah, such a concept is baseless and warrants no further discussion, from his point of view. Ibn Al-Muṭahhar argues that the infallible imām is required, in order to maintain the sharī'ah after the death of the Prophet and the cessation of Revelation. The imām is there to insure the issuance of accurate fatwas for new issues that arise during the centuries.\textsuperscript{215} Thus, if the

\textsuperscript{213}Legal representative of a woman to be married. He takes care of some of the legal processes related to the woman's marriage.

\textsuperscript{214}Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{215}Al-Ḥillī, Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Maʿrifat al-Imāmah, pp. 146-147.
Imām is not infallible, he would be in need of an infallible imām, due to the possibility of error occurring from the ummah.  

Ibn Taymiyah states that the Imāmiyyah of the Shī'ah is the only group to claim infallibility for the imāms. Other factions of the Shī'ah do not share this concept, except those who are worse than them in their belief, the Ismā'īlis, who are considered heretics and hypocrites. The 'ismah (infallibility) of the Prophets, according to Ibn Taymiyah, does not involve every aspect of their lives, but is limited to matters associated with the content or essence of the Message. He emphasizes that not only the Ahl-us-Sunnah, but all Muslims, are in full agreement that the Prophets are infallible in conveying the message. No error or mistake could be associated with the message, and they should be obeyed in every command they convey from Allah. All information they provide which is related to the message should be trusted. All Muslims agree, except for a faction of the Khārijīs, that the commands of the Prophets should be obeyed as well. This group of Khārijīs claim that the Prophet is infallible with regard to the news he conveys from Allah, but not in respect to his own commands, but the Ahl-

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216 Al-Ḥillī, Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma'rīfat al-Imāmah, p. 146.

us-Sunnah disagree and consider this group to be misguided.\textsuperscript{218}

This discussion has a significant political implication. The limited infallibility of the Prophets indicates that there is room for shūra (consultation with people of specialization and intellect) in order to correct any error in their more mundane decisions, and to obtain the opinion that would be best suited to a particular circumstance. Since this is the case related to the political leadership of the Prophets, the concept of shūra is thus even more applicable to the leadership of the imāms.

Additionally, the concept of infallibility of the imāms or caliphs is directly associated with the scope of authority permitted over members of society. In the Sunni view, as stated by Ibn Taymiyah on several occasions, authority or right of obedience of the imām and the people of wilāyah in general is limited to permissible matters only. In other words, they will be obeyed in matters that constitute obedience to Allah and His Messenger. The Shi'i view is that absolute obedience is given to the imām without the right to evaluate any type of command. Evidence from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth support the Sunni view, which is based upon the concept that there is no obedience for any created being in

their disobedience to Allah, and obedience is to be for the permissible matters of the sharī'ah only.

Ibn Taymiyah refutes the argument of the Imāmiyyah by asserting that the obligation of maintaining the sharī'ah is not a duty upon the imām alone, but upon the entire ummah including the imām. He postulates that otherwise, if maintenance of the sharī'ah is the responsibility of an infallible imām, how can we then interpret the continuation and preservation of the sharī'ah during all these centuries after the absence of the Twelfth Imām? He explains that 'īsmah is guaranteed for the ummah as a whole, collectively, and not for any individual, including the imām.219 His argument is established upon two ḥadīth of the Prophet: "The ummah will not agree [overall] on an error," and "Continuously, there will be a group among the ummah committed to the truth. Those who dispute with them, or abandon them, will not affect them, until the Day of Judgment arrives." Therefore, if the imām errs we find those among the ummah who may correct him, just as any individual of the ummah could err and the imām or his deputy could correct him. Thereby the 'īsmah is attributed collectively to the members of the society, and their overall agreement will not be in error.220 Ibn Taymiyah further points out the irony of the

219Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 3, pp. 457-465; v. 6, p. 408.

220Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 3, p. 408.
Rāfiḍah of the Shī'ah who assert that there always exists a single, infallible individual of the ummah, while they consider that the entire ummah is subject to erring.  

Ibn Taymiyah also discusses the Shī'ah principle of naṣṣ or waṣiyyah for the appointment of the imām. According to Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, the naṣṣ was initiated through Allah’s appointment of 'Ālī as Imām, and he cites forty passages from the Qur’ān and twelve passages from the Sunnah to prove his claim. Ibn Taymiyah responds to each of these claims, point by point. He also criticizes him for his lack of recognition of the linguistic difference between the words "wilāyah," which means “public function” or “authority,” and "walāyah," which means “friendly affection” or “devotion.” This confusion led Ibn Al-Muṭahhar to misunderstand the Qur’ānic passages related to “walī” (friend) as referring to “wālī” (Amīr or leader). 

Ibn Taymiyah also explains that the Ahl-al-Sunnah believe in naṣṣ but define it differently with regard to the legitimacy of the caliphate of 'Ālī, according to the ḥadīth.

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221 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhaj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 6, p. 49.
224 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhaj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 7, pp. 5-297, 297-479.
225 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhaj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 7, p. 28.
"The caliphate of Prophethood after me will last for thirty years," which means that 'Alī is included among the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. The Ahl-us-Sunnah narrate many other ḥadīth validating 'Alī's caliphate and the caliphate of the other three caliphs. However, the number of ḥadīth about the other three is greater than those about 'Alī. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyah explains that the purpose of imāmah clearly is accomplished more thoroughly in the caliphate of the three who preceded 'Alī than in the caliphate of 'Alī, which is associated with a number of internal political conflicts.226

Ibn Taymiyah also does not agree with the Shi'i statement that all of the Ahl-us-Sunnah believe that the Prophet died without making waṣiyyah (naming a person to be an imām after his death).227 He explains that among the Ahl-us-Sunnah is a group who claim that the Prophet nominated Abū Bakr explicitly, and others say that he indicated his nomination implicitly. Ibn Ḥazm was one of the scholars who supported the view that the Prophet nominated Abū Bakr explicitly. In addition Ibn Taymiyah's reply to Ibn Al-Muṭahhar's view that the Prophet designated 'Alī by name, he argues against Ibn Ḥazm's conclusion, after quoting him and providing all of his evidence. He concludes:228

228 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 348.
It is now proven that many of the Salaf [early Muslim scholars] and khalaf [Muslim scholars who followed the Salaf] said concerning it [the imâmah of Abû Bakr] that the naṣṣ for it was either explicit or implicit, and thus, the charge of the Râfiḍî [Ibn Al-Muṭahhar] against the Sunni people is disproven, as when he stated that the Sunni people say that the Prophet did not name anyone as imâm after him and that he died without waṣiyyah [directive to specify a caliph], since this was not said by all of them. If such a view is true, a group of them [Ahl-us-Sunnah] has said it, and if the truth is with the opposing view that the Prophet did not make a waṣiyyah, still a group of them [Ahl-us-Sunnah] has said it. Therefore, in any case, the truth did not escape the position of the Ahl-us-Sunnah. Additionally, if the opinion in respect to the naṣṣ is true, the Shī‘ah have no advantage in it, since the Rawandiyyah [a faction of the Shī‘ah] claim that the naṣṣ designated Al-‘Abbās, just as they [the Imāmiyyah] claim that the naṣṣ designated 'Alī.

And he continues: 229

The conclusion is that the Prophet indicated for the Muslims his nomination of Abû Bakr, and he indicated this to them through several statements and actions, and he informed them [his Companions] about his [Abû Bakr’s] caliphate with pleasure and satisfaction. He [the Prophet] intended to write a delegation for him, then he realized that the Muslims would choose him anyway, and thus he abandoned the written delegation.

Since Ibn Taymiyah argues against the validity of naṣṣ in general as a means of transferring authority from one leader to another, he did not approve of a caliph designating

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229 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhâj As-Sunnah, v. 1, p. 359.
another person as his successor to be a legitimate transfer of power. It is only a suggestion worthy of consideration.

Ibn Taymiyah also distinguishes between the actual situation and its legitimacy from the shar'i point of view, such that the imâm fills his position through receiving a pledge of loyalty from the ummah in general and not necessarily from each individual of the society. For example, 'Umar was not considered the caliph simply through Abü Bakr's nomination but through the pledge of the ummah and their obedience to him. If it is assumed that they did not implement the nomination of Abü Bakr and did not pledge their loyalty, 'Umar would not have been an Imām, whether their action had been permissible or not. The permissibility is associated with the action itself, but the wilāyah or authority is associated with the actual power that is delegated to the imâm. Thus, the wilāyah could occur through a means that is permissible and pleases Allah and His Messenger, as that which occurred with the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, or it could occur through a means associated with disobedience, as in the authority of oppressors. In his discussion, Ibn Taymiyah reveals his interpretation of history through the implication that the authority of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs was not attained through permissible means.

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The opinion of Ibn Taymiyah concerning this point, that a leader who assumes power through force and who oppresses the society should still be considered the legitimate ruler, reflects the political situation of his time. Other scholars contemporary to Ibn Taymiyah, such as Ibn Jamā'ah (639-734/1241-1333), shared this particular view. Mamlûk rule could be associated with oppression, and the transfer of their authority through force is well known. It is likely that Ibn Taymiyah took this stand in order to facilitate stability in the society, as will be discussed in a later section concerned with his position regarding leaders who lack qualifications for the imāmah.

In conclusion, Ibn Taymiyah's view is that the source of authority for the imām is the ummah through its pledge to the leader. Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyah considers the entire ummah, including the imām, as the protector of the sharī'ah, and not the imām alone, as the Shī'ah believe. The authority of the imām is limited to affairs that are permissible according to the sharī'ah, and thus the real sovereignty in the Islamic state lies with the sharī'ah or Allah's word.

4.5 Qualifications and conditions of the Imām

Ibn Taymiyah, in his book As-Siyāsah Ash-Shar'iyyah, as discussed previously, provides two conditions for holding any

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of the public offices of the wilāyah, including the position of caliph: al-quwwah (capacity) and al-amānah (trust). In this work, Ibn Taymiyah does not discuss the position of imām separately, and thus he does not elaborate further as to whether other conditions would be required for this position. Since he does not address this subject directly, nor does he discuss the condition that the caliph be of a particular familial lineage, Laoust concludes that Ibn Taymiyah's opinion concerning the imāmah is inclined towards the opinion of the Khārijīs, who did not consider that the imām should be from the tribe of Quraysh or from their descendants.\(^{232}\)

Khan seems to have been misled even further by his understanding of As-Siyāsah Ash-Shar'īyyah and by Laoust's view. He also seems to have developed his opinion based on only a portion of Minhāj As-Sunnah.\(^{233}\) Makari also interprets Ibn Taymiyah's writing to mean that he rejects the concept of Qurashiyyah.\(^{234}\)

Actually, Ibn Taymiyah explicitly states in a number of places in his works that the condition of Qurashiyyah is required for the imām, since it is stated by the Ahl-us-


\(^{233}\)Khan, Qamaruddin, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah*, pp. 144-145.

Sunnah. For example, he states: «The caliphate should be in the Quraysh, and this was an obvious fact in the sharī'ah and in the religion of Islam. Many statements [from ḥadīth and from the Companions] about it have been known and transmitted. However, no statement was transmitted from any of the Companions to specify that the caliphate should be in a specific family of the Quraysh, or in another tribe instead of the Quraysh.» He also quotes several ḥadīth that assert that the caliphate will be in the Quraysh, as in: "This affair [caliphate] is in the Quraysh." Nor does Ibn Taymiyah ever state that the condition of Qurashiyyah is applicable to the first four caliphs only.

He accepts the authority of some of the rulers who were in violation of the conditions of the caliphate as long as they rule in accordance with the sharī'ah. The Umayyads and Abbasids, for example, were tolerated by Ibn Taymiyah; though they achieved their power by hereditary means, did not seek the approval of the ummah after their ascension to power and were not the most capable people for the office of caliph. In contrast, the Khārijīs did not consider these rulers to be legitimate at all, beginning with 'Alī and beyond, and they called upon the ummah to overthrow them. Ibn Taymiyah explicitly states that the ummah should respect and obey these rulers even if they were not the best choice.

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Ibn Taymiyah's position regarding ethnic preferences is moderate, between those who completely eliminate such distinctions and those who believe that Allah prefers one man over another due to his family or tribe. The praise for any specific family or tribe applies in a general sense to what may be expected of them, while praise for faith and good deeds applies to individuals as the actual measure of distinction among individual people and is associated with reward or punishment.\textsuperscript{236} This opinion of Ibn Taymiyah is also stated in his book \textit{Iqtidā' as-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqlīm}.\textsuperscript{237} However, without delving into an evaluation of the degree of influence of Ibn Taymiyah's madhhab upon his opinion in this case, it is clear that he supports the concept of Qurashiyyah as a condition for the caliph, and this position is in contrast to the interpretations of his writings by Laoust, Khan, and Makari. A significant point that can also be noted here is that despite Ibn Taymiyah's preference for the Quraysh or Arabs as more qualified for the leadership or imāmah, his approach was still supportive of the actual, non-Arab, Mamlûk rulers of his time, as long as they fulfilled the \textit{maqāṣid al-wilāyah} (purposes of the wilāyah).

Thus, Ibn Taymiyah did not argue against the condition of Qurashiyyah for the imām, but he did refute the idea that

\textsuperscript{236}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Minhāj As-Sunnah}, Cairo, v. 4, pp. 599-606.

a particular family of the Quraysh were to be preferred for
the imāmah.238

Another condition for the imāmah stated by Ibn Taymiyah
is that the person to be imām should hold real authority in
the government, and this opinion is held by the Ḥanbalī
school as well.239 Ibn Taymiyah states: "Anyone who does not
hold actual power and authority would not be an imām, even if
he were to deserve support until gaining this power. The
circumstance of his deserving power is not the same as his
actually having it. The imām is he who is firmly standing
with authority, and none of them [the Twelve Imāms of the
Shī‘ah] fulfilled this condition except ‘Alī."240

It is obvious that this condition is a clear response
from Ibn Taymiyah against the Shi‘i theory of caliphate, in
which those believed to be their imāms were oppressed and
disabled, and they gained no real power. He stresses this
requirement of holding real power several times241 in his
response to Ibn Al-Muṭahhar. Moreover, the Shi‘i theory
about the awaited Imām, who disappeared at age two, means
that they invalidate any other possible imām until this child


239 Al-Mubārak, Muḥammad, Ad-Dawlāh wa Niẓām al-Ḥisbah 'inda Ibn
Taymiyah, p. 43.

240 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 4, p. 106.

241 See foreexample: Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Beirut, v. 1, p. 76.
will appear, and they regard the political history of Islam as one of oppression and defiance against Allah.

Also, Ibn Taymiyah's emphasis of real power may reflect the influence of his historical settings, through his recognition of the Mamlük rule and the real authority the Mamlûks held in society. He was a scholar who was considering the real essence of the sharî'ah, which is to gain benefit while avoiding harm as much as possible. He therefore recognized that he should be careful not to disrupt their rule while the Muslim world was passing through a critical period of invasions by the Crusaders and Mongols. The emphasis on the right of a legitimate ruler to have his authority respected would result in a more stable society and facilitate unity against outside aggression.\textsuperscript{242}

Other conditions required for the imâm by Ibn Taymiyah are 'ilm (knowledge), 'adl (justice), and 'adâlah

\textsuperscript{242}Ibn Khaldûn seems to have been influenced by Ibn Taymiyah's concept of the necessity of real power or shawkah in developing his theory of 'ašabiyyah (political partisanship). He interprets the Qurashiyyah condition through a rational understanding of 'ašabiyyah, which was attained by the Quraysh during the early centuries of Islam or even before Islam. This 'ašabiyyah is required to bestow might and honor, through which no dispute might exist, and therefore unity and cooperation prevail in the society. The Arab tribes were willing to be ruled by the Quraysh, but not by other tribes. Later, with the diminution of the power of the Quraysh and their loss of 'ašabiyyah, the condition of Qurayshiyyah for the imâmah no longer applies to the Quraysh, according to Ibn Khaldûn, and thus the imâmah is open to the current people of 'ašabiyyah in the society, since the purpose of the rulings in the sharî'ah that the imâmah be held by people of 'ašabiyyah is being served. (Ibn Khaldûn, 'Abd-ur-Raḥmân Ibn Muḥammad, Al-Muqaddimah, v. 1, pp. 248-249.)
(integrity). The practical nature of Ibn Taymiyah’s thought can be noted here, since the conditions of justice and integrity that apply to the imām are not any greater than those required for testimony in a shari'ah court. He explains that the witness provides information that was previously unknown, and if he is not characterized by justice and integrity, we cannot trust his testimony, while the situation is easier with regard to the imām, since his commands can be verified according to the shari'ah, and thus, recognizable in their compliance or noncompliance with obedience to Allah.243

The notion of verifying the orders of the imām according to the shari'ah, as described by Ibn Taymiyah, sharply contrasts with the Shi'i perspective of the infallibility of the imām. In their view, the orders of the imām are divine and cannot be questioned or even suspected of being associated with error, as discussed previously.

He also regards the nature of the relationship between the ummah and the ruler as a significant indicator of the stability between them, since the pleasure and satisfaction of the ummah with their ruler or imām is a sign of the righteousness of the imām and a real validation of his authority.244 He supports this opinion with the ḥadīth “The


244 Al-Mubārak, Muḥammad, Ad-Dawlah wa Niẓām al-Ḥisbah 'inda Ibn Taymiyah, p. 37.
best among your rulers (imāms) are those whom you love, and they love you; you pray for them and they pray for you. And the worst of your rulers are those whom you hate, and they hate you; you curse them and they curse you."

Thus, rather than emphasizing the lineage of the imām, as was the Shi’i tradition, Ibn Taymiyah emphasizes the imām’s attributes and characteristics.

It is obvious that the Mamlūk rulers gained tremendous benefit from appointing an Abbasid caliph in Cairo after that caliphate’s fall in Baghdad. The caliphate, on the other hand, did not gain any new prestige. This action portrayed the Mamlūks to be people who were protectors of the tenets of Islam. With the caliph in Cairo, the Mamlūk sultan was not obliged to send any kharāj (land-tax) outside of his dominion and there was no threat of the caliph attempting to establish his own sovereignty. The Cairo caliphs used to move in a narrow circle, joining parties thrown by the sultans and celebrations of appointments of heirs to the throne, and they used to grace the sultan’s receptions of visitors. Their involvement in the affairs of the Mamlūk sultanate was greatly limited. Despite this, the Mamlūk sultans never felt secure from them. The caliphs were kept as virtual prisoners in specially designated homes in the towers of the Citadel or

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245 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 4, p. 460.
In this way, the Mamluks managed to suppress any potential rebellion against them launched by a call for a return to rule by the caliphate.

4.6 Lack of qualifications in the Imam and position of the ummah in such cases

Ibn Taymiyah elaborates upon the position of the ummah towards the imam in situations of his violating the criteria for the imamah. Muslim sects are in agreement that the candidate for the imamah should be just and knowledgeable, for example, yet they disagree regarding the position of the ummah towards the imam if he is found to lack these requirements. Ibn Taymiyah states that the Muslims hold three opinions concerning this situation. The first opinion is that the ummah should not obey any order from this type of imam, whether his orders are in obedience or disobedience to Allah, since his wilayah (authority) is one of oppression, and to obey his commands implies approval of his tyranny. The second opinion is that the imam should be obeyed in matters that comply with the commands of Allah, and disobeyed when his orders conflict with obedience to Allah. The third opinion distinguishes between the caliph and other

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rulers under his authority. If the person in error is the caliph, he should be obeyed when his orders comply with the shari'ah and disobeyed when they do not. If he holds authority under the caliph, he should be disobeyed and rejected completely, regardless of his commands. The reason for this distinction is that removal of the caliph may produce greater harm or disruption (fitnah) to the society than allowing him to continue despite his deficiencies, while the possibility of such harm occurring through the dismissal of a person under the caliph is less. Of course, the application of this third opinion would not only have jeopardized the power of the Mamlûk sultan, but would not have been quite compatible with the principles of Mamlûk succession either, which favored military power over shar'î qualifications. Ironically, during Ibn Taymiyah's time, the caliph was the one who could be disobeyed or removed without fear of fitnah (since he was not the actual ruler) while there was a potential danger in disobedience or rebellion to the Mamlûk sultan.

Ibn Taymiyah supports the second opinion, and he states that, in general, the Ahl-us-Sunnah prohibit rebellion against the rulers and fighting them, even if they are associated with injustice, in order to prevent the greater harm of fitnah befalling the society. As evidence, he refers to events in history, stating, "Almost never has a group
rebelled against the ruler, except that their rebellion has produced corruption greater than that which was removed.\textsuperscript{248}

Ibn Taymiyah analyzes cases in which the imām lacks other conditions, such as not being of the Quraysh, according to the principles of the Ahl-us-Sunnah and the lessons of history. He also addresses situations in which the imām may have obtained authority through illegal means, such as taking office without receiving the nomination from the Ahl-ush-Shawkah or the pledge of the ummah.

He divides the rulers into two categories: the first are the caliphs of Prophethood, and the second are kings who gained authority through force. The category of the caliphs of Prophethood consists of those with whom all conditions of the caliphate are available and who attain authority through legitimate and legal means. Historically, the period of rule for the first category lasted for only thirty years after the time of the Prophet (11-40 A.H.) and was represented by the rule of the four caliphs, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. Their administration is considered an exemplary model which all Muslims throughout the centuries should seek to recreate and imitate. In the category of kings, the system of a monarchy or the method of the monarch’s appointment may violate some or all of the conditions of the caliph. This system was initiated by the Umayyad rulers and then taken up by the Abbasids. Ibn Taymiyah usually refers to those rulers

\textsuperscript{248}Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 4, p. 528.
as “kings,” or occasionally “caliph-kings,” even though they used the title “Caliph” for themselves. They used this title so that the ummah would feel they were being ruled by the caliphate system and to imply that they represented a continuation of the ideal caliphate. Ibn Taymiyah’s use of the word “kings” indicates his recognition of the reality of the system and the disparity between it and the caliphate as specified in the sharī'ah. His use of the title “Caliph” for this second category could have misled the ummah, and thus Ibn Taymiyah recognized his responsibility towards the sharī'ah, which he was obligated to protect, and towards the ummah, whom he was obligated to advise.

However, this stance does not mean that Ibn Taymiyah is in agreement with the position of the Khārijīs, who considered it a duty to rebel against these rulers and considered them to be infidels, nor does he agree with the Shi'ah who share the view of the Khārijīs, even though the basis of each view is different. Ibn Taymiyah warns against revolt and asserts that it is necessary to obey the rulers and cooperate with them in all matters permissible in the sharī'ah. His opinion is that the rulers should be disobeyed only in cases of their violating the sharī'ah.

It can be observed that Ibn Taymiyah’s application of this condition is not limited to the second category of ruler, but it is a general requirement applicable to rulers of the first category as well. This would then even include
the first four caliphs. He only states the condition in relation to the category of kings, because the expectation that they might not apply the sharī'ah honestly and accurately is greater for them than for the rulers in the category of caliphs.

Despite the fact that the Mamlūks were often guilty of violating the sharī'ah, it is rare to find any reports of uprisings in the Mamlūk dominion by its constituents. This may have been partly due to the position of the Sunni scholars that the harm of a rebellion would outweigh the benefit. Al-Maqrīzī however reports that a Shi‘i leader named Al-Kurānī led some servants of the sultan and others to rebel against Baybars. They succeeded in capturing some military bases, shouting “O family of ‘Alī,” before the revolt was rapidly subdued.249

Ibn Taymiyah disagrees with a violent revolt or overthrow of the leadership as long as the rulers admit to the sovereignty of the sharī‘ah. His views still encourage a type of civil disobedience, due to his opinion that the ummah should overtly disobey any order in violation of the principles of Islam. Ibn Taymiyah’s doctrine is established mainly upon the following three aḥādīth (pl. form of ḥadīth):

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1. "The caliphate of Prophethood after me will last for thirty years, and then it will be changed into a monarchy."\textsuperscript{250}

2. Narrated by Ḥudhayfah Ibn Al-Yamān:

"People used to ask the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) about the good times, but I used to ask him about the evil times, fearing lest they overtake me. I said: 'Messenger of Allah, we were in the midst of ignorance and evil, and then God brought us this good [time through Islam]. Is there any evil time after this good one?' He said: 'Yes.' I asked: 'Will there be a good time again after that evil time?' He said: 'Yes, but in it will be a hidden evil.' I asked: 'What will be the evil hidden therein?' He said: '[That time will witness the rise of] the people who will adopt ways other than mine and seek guidance other than mine. Good things will occur from them, and evil things will occur from them as well.' I asked: 'Will there be an evil time after this good one?' He said: 'Yes. [A time will come] when there will be people standing and inviting at the gates of Hell. Whoever responds to their call will be thrown into the fire.' I said: 'Messenger of Allah, describe them to us.' He said: 'All right. They will be a people having the same complexion as ours and speaking our language.' I said: 'Messenger of Allah, what do you suggest if I happen to

\textsuperscript{250}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Minhāj As-Sunnah}, Cairo, v. 4, p. 522.
live at that time?" He said: 'You should stay with the main body of the Muslims and their leader (imām).’ I said: 'If they have no [such thing as the] main body and have no leader?’ He said: 'Separate yourself from all these factions, though you may have to eat the roots of trees [in a jungle] until death comes to you when you are in this state’" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Imārah).

3. Ibn ‘Abbās narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "If some of you observes something he might hate from his amīr, he should restrain himself with perseverance towards him (the amīr), since anyone who deviates from the authority of the ruler by even a handbreadth, and then if he were to die, his death will be out of Islam."

Ibn Taymiyah developed his theory from these passages. Since the Prophet said the caliphate period was to last thirty years and called the system that would follow mulk (monarchy), Ibn Taymiyah identified the rule of the kings as mulk. Indeed it was a monarchy, historically as well. He understood from the second ḥadīth that the period referred to as the first good time was the time of the Prophethood and the early caliphate, during which no disunity occurred. The time of the first evil, as stated in the ḥadīth, occurred with the assassination of 'Uthmān and the disunity among the people. The development of internal fighting among the ummah became similar to the situation of the pre-Islamic period.

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Hudhayfah, who narrated this hadīth, commented after the death of 'Uthmān that this event signaled the beginning of the evil time. He died forty days prior to the fitnāh (battle between 'Alī and Muʿāwiyyah). Ibn Taymiyah next considers the times of the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers as the time in which good and evil were mixed. The good of their time was their governing with the sharīʿah in general and their support of the Islamic duties and jihād, and the evil was their violation of the correct system of rule. From the third hadīth, Ibn Taymiyah understands that these rulers should still be obeyed, even if some aspects of their rule could be hated.251 He states:252

The Ahl-us-Sunnah do not say that any one of those rulers [of the Umayyads and Abbasids] was the one who should be appointed exclusively to the others. Neither do they say that he should be obeyed in all of his orders, but they describe the real situation, and they guide towards the correct action. Thus they testify for what had occurred, and they command with what Allah and His Messenger commanded with. They say that those rulers occupied the position of the wilāyah, and their authority and power enabled them to accomplish the purposes of wilāyah, such as the implementation of legal punishments, allocation of revenue, appointment of governors, jihād against the enemy, performance of Hajj, performance of the ‘Īd and Fridays prayers, and other similar functions of wilāyah. They [Ahl-us-Sunnah] say that any one of those and their assistants should not be obeyed for any disobedience to Allah, Exalted is He, but they [Ahl-us-Sunnah] joined [the rulers] in their


252Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Beirut, v. 1, p. 379.
obedience to Allah, such as in fighting the infidels, joining the prayers... They [the rulers] will be assisted in acts of good and righteousness, and will not be assisted in evil or aggression.

Ibn Taymiyah considers Mu‘awiyah to be the best king to rule the state in comparison to his successors, but he cannot be compared with those who preceded him. Ibn Taymiyah states:253

There was no king among the kings of the Muslims who was better than Mu‘awiyah. People did not experience a time under any king better than his time, which is the case if we compare his time with the times that succeeded him, but if it is compared to the time of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, a distinction will appear.

In addition, Ibn Taymiyah demonstrates a particular partiality towards ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd-il-‘Azīz, whose rule of justice and fairness nearly results in his being ranked among the khulafā’ rāshidün.254

He therefore asserts the necessity of choosing the best person for the imāmah. If it so happens that one who is unqualified holds authority, then he should be accepted as long as he generally rules according to the sharī‘ah. There should not be a rebellion against him in order to avoid a greater harm. He writes:255

If it is possible to appoint an imām of integrity, it is then prohibited to appoint a depraved person

253 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 6, p. 232.
254 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 4, p. 107.
255 Ibn Taymiyah, Minhāj As-Sunnah, Cairo, v. 4, pp. 526-528.
or someone making religious innovations and expressing them openly. We should reproach these types of rulers as much as possible, and appointing them is not permissible... In general, the Ahl-us-Sunnah attempt to express their obedience to Allah and His Messenger as much as they can. As Allah, Exalted is He, said: "Then fear Allah as much as you can" (Sūrah At-Taghābun, 64:16). And the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If I issue an order to you for something, accomplish as much as you can from it." The Ahl-us-Sunnah knew that Allah, Exalted is He, sent Mūhammad, peace be upon him, with the integrity for men in this world and the world to come. They knew that he commanded integrity and prohibited corruption. If the action involves both integrity and corruption, they will evaluate the matter for what dominates in it. If integrity exceeds corruption, they will give the preference for doing it. If corruption exceeds integrity, they will give the preference for abandoning it. Allah, Exalted is He, sent His Messenger, peace be upon him, to obtain benefits and maximize them, and to seize harm and minimize it. If a caliph such as Yazīd, 'Abd-ul-Malik, Al-Manṣūr, or others held office, it might be said that they should be prevented from authority (wilāyah) and should be fought until someone else would be appointed, as those supporting the sword say. This is however an erroneous opinion because the harm of such an action outweighs the benefit. It has almost never occurred that someone rebelled against authority, except that the resulting evil exceeded the good.

While Ibn Taymiyah warns strongly against revolting against these rulers, he vehemently stresses the need for the scholars to admonish these unfair rulers with the best advice and convey the word of truth to them, even if it means imprisonment or death. He supports his view with the ḥadīth of the Prophet, "The utmost jihād is expressing the word of truth to an unjust ruler."256 Ibn Taymiyah put this into

practice throughout his life. Scholars like 'Izz-ud-dīn Ibn Abd-is-Salām and An-Nawawī had taken such a role with the Mamlūk rulers prior to Ibn Taymiyah.

In contrast to his position toward rulers who lack qualifications but still rule under the sovereignty of the sharī'ah, Ibn Taymiyah's position greatly differs towards any rulers who disregard the sovereignty of the sharī'ah. In such a case, there should be no obedience to them, and they are no longer considered Muslims. The ummah is obligated to fight such rulers. This is the only situation regarding the rulers for which the view of Ibn Taymiyah is similar to the position of the Khārijīs. He states:

257 We can not conclude from this agreement that Ibn Taymiyah was influenced by the Khārijīs in this concept, since all of the Ahl-us-Sunnah as well as all the Muslim sects were in agreement that sovereignty is for the sharī'ah only. Violation of this concept means rebellion against Allah and violation of Islam itself. For example, Ibn Kathīr states: "Whosoever abandons the revelation sent down to Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdillah, the Seal of the Messengers, and seeks a judgment in one of the abrogated laws becomes an infidel, leave alone someone who seeks a judgment in the Yasa and gives preference to it over the sharī'ah. Such a person is an infidel through the consensus of all Muslims." Ibn Al-Qayyim states: "For whosoever believes in the obligation of seeking judgment in accordance with what Allah has revealed in a specific incident, but he deviates from it in disobedience, admitting his guilt and deserving punishment, his action is a minor disbelief. But if he believes that he is not obligated to follow the judgment, and that he has the choice between the judgment from Allah, which he clearly knows, and another judgment, it is a major act of disbelief." Ibn Abī Al-'Izz states: "If someone believes that judging in accordance to what Allah has revealed is not an obligation, and that he has a choice in the matter, or if he considers it carelessly while knowing that it is the ruling of Allah, it is a major form of disbelief." (As cited in Aṣ-Ṣāwī, Ṣalāḥ, Naṣariyyat as-Siyādah wa Atharuhā 'ala Shar'iyyat al-An'īmah al-Waḍ'īyyah, Dār al-I'lam ad-Dawlī, Cairo, 1992, pp. 47, 56.)

Muḥammad, peace be upon him, was sent to all beings, both human and jinn. Anyone who believes that it is permissible for a person to not be in submission to his ṣharī'ah or in obedience to him, is an infidel who should be executed.

With regard to the practice of the rulers and the implementation of the ṣharī'ah, Ibn Taymiyah states:\(^{259}\)

When any human being makes the prohibited which has been agreed upon to be lawful, or makes the lawful which has been agreed upon to be prohibited, or replaces what has been agreed upon in the ṣharī'ah with other laws, such a person is an infidel and apostate, according to the consensus of the scholars. Allah has revealed about such a person, according to one of the opinions: "Whosoever rules not according to what Allah has sent down—they are the unbelievers." That person is he who considers it lawful for him to rule according to something different from what Allah has sent down.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah regards those who do not believe in the sovereignty of the ṣharī'ah, as well as those who replace the ṣharī'ah with other laws, to be committing a major sin, which removes them from Islam.

Ibn Taymiyah obeyed and supported Mamlūk policies as long as he felt they were in compliance with the ṣharī'ah. He was known to have openly rejected the Mamlūks on occasions when their decrees were found by him to not be in compliance with the ṣharī'ah. He even implemented ḥudūd (sharī'ī punishments for criminal acts) when the Mamlūks were found wanting in their execution of it. Yet the fact that he never

urged the ummah to revolt and overthrow the Mamlūks would indicate that he did not reject the Mamlūks totally. Rather it was an inescapable reality that the Mamlük sultans were empowered with authority which rightfully belonged to the caliph. So despite their violations of the shari'ah in the administration of the state and even their blatant disregard for the authority of the caliph, the Mamlūks at least—officially anyway—accepted the shari'ah as the sovereign law of their land.

On the other hand, he considered the Mongols to be non-Muslims despite their claims of having accepted Islam. This was because they ruled according to law of Genghis Khan, called Yasa, instead of the shari'ah. Ibn Taymiyah urged the ummah to fight them. He himself also participated in the battles against them and issued fatwas proclaiming that they were out of Islam.

260 The laws of the Yasa were compiled and developed by Genghis Khan. Many of these laws are in conflict with those of the shari'ah. For example, the Yasa states that if a person takes a loan for business, and then he fails in his investment, the person is allowed to take a second loan, and if he fails again, he is allowed to take a third loan, but if his business loses for a third time, he is to be killed. Another law states that if the load falls from someone’s beast of burden, and another person passes by him without offering assistance, that person is to be killed. Yet another law is that if anyone provides food, drink, or any assistance to a prisoner of war without permission that person is to be killed. In some cases, their law partially agrees with the shari'ah, such as in cases of adultery, where the adulterer is to be killed. (Al-Qalqashandī, Aḥmad, Ṣubḥ al-A'sha fī Ṣinā'at al-Insha, Al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah, Cairo, 1964, v. 4, pp. 310-311.)

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah classifies rulers into two categories. The first category consists of those who believe in the sovereignty of the sharī'ah, and they in turn consist of two types, those who attain all the qualifications of the caliph and those who lack some of the requirements. The authority of the rulers in this first group should be respected and obeyed, within the limits of the obedience to Allah, since they are accomplishing the purposes of the wilāyah. The second category of rulers are those who reject or disregard the sovereignty of the sharī'ah, either at the level of belief or in the implementation of laws. According to Ibn Taymiyah, these rulers are infidels, and the ummah is obligated to revolt against them.

4.7 Conclusion

The works of Ibn Al-Muṭahhar and Ibn Taymiyah provide a depth of understanding on the Shi‘i and Sunni perspectives regarding imāmah. The two books not only addressed an important theological debate, but played key roles in the political stage of the time. Their books play a significant role in the politics of today as well.

Ibn Al-Muṭahhar's book suggests Sunni doctrines on khilāfah to be baseless. One of the primary reasons for its political significance during Ibn Taymiyah's time was that it provided a defense for the Mongols against the opinions of Sunni scholars like Ibn Taymiyah who said they should come under the Mamlūk-led caliphate of the Abbasids. It went
further, too. The Il-Khan Mongols had reason to rejoice at Ibn Al-Muṭahhar’s book since it was a severe criticism of the Abbasid caliphate and thereby an assault on the authority of the Mamlūk sultanate. Since the twelfth Imām had not resurfaced at that point, Khudabandah could maintain all power and authority over the khanate, unlike the corner the Mamlūks were put in when they had to have a caliph owing to their Sunni tradition. These political implications of Minhāj al-Karamah probably played a major role in Khudabandah’s conversion to shi‘ism.

The Mamlūks favored Ibn Taymiyah’s work because it favored the Sunni viewpoint and gave support to the military cause of the Mamlūks against the Mongols. The book also implicitly said that the Mamlūk regime should be tolerated. Yet the book is also advice to Muslim rulers such as the Mamlūks that they should follow the shari‘ah.

In this case these two men played a significant role for the stability of the relationship between the rulers and society and served as important tools in rallying support for the causes of the rulers of their respective states.

The realism of Ibn Taymiyah was realized when he tolerated the conditions not met by the Mamlūks and limited the conditions of the imām to be a Muslim and recognize the sovereignty of the shari‘ah in his domain.

Just as Al-Māwardī’s work al-Aḥkām as-Sulṭāniyyah had given support to the concept of khilāfah in a time when its
very existence was coming under question, Ibn Taymiyah's thought produced significant results in strengthening the position of the Caliph and in transferring his position from a mere honorary title to one of authority. This type of trend indicates the desire on the part of scholars like Ibn Taymiyah to bring the model of the khilāfah rāshidah to the society again.

Many of Ibn Taymiyah's opinions reflect the impact of his contemporary historical setting, since he expressed his support for the Mamlûk rulers as legitimate rulers who, in general, were implementing the sharī'ah and defending the Muslim World against attack from both the Mongols and the Crusaders. Ibn Taymiyah supported the Mamlûks even though they lacked many of the requirements for the wilāyah. Despite the fact that the Mamlûks did not claim the title of caliph or imām for themselves, it was still possible for people to bring them under the scrutiny of the conditions of the khalīfah since they were the real holders of power. Through the same type of methodology, he seems to have intentionally attempted to avoid raising issues such as the conditions of Qurashiyyah and not being enslaved, which could have led to instability of Mamlûk rule. He stressed certain other conditions for the imām, such as the control of real power in the society, which would also implicitly provide supportive evidence for the legitimacy of Mamlûk rulers. Although he was compelled to discuss issues which
contradicted the Mamlūk position in his response to Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, Ibn Taymiyah asserted the necessity of obeying the rulers, as long as they upheld the implementation of the sharī'ah.

Ibn Taymiyah’s theory is shaped through his careful recognition of the maqāṣid ash-Sharl'ah (purposes of the laws) and deep awareness of lessons gained through his observations of the past and of the present. Therefore, despite his support for the ideal system of the caliphate and his endorsement of the conditions and qualifications of the imām as addressed by Ahl-us-Sunnah, he regarded the ruling systems to be legitimate of those which deviated from the khilāfah, and of the rulers who lacked the proper qualifications for the imāmah, or who rose to power through illegal means. According to this view, the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers had been legitimate rulers for the ummah. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyah’s view concerning Islamic political history differs fundamentally from the views of both the Khārijīs and the Shi‘is, since they denied the legitimacy of the rulers of the ummah during much of the past. Ibn Taymiyah sharply criticizes the Imāmiyyah of the Shi‘ah theory as introduced by Ibn Al-Muṭahhar Al-Ḥillī, holding it to be baseless, lacking any evidence, either naqlī or 'aqlī, through the sharī'ah view.

His theory of rule in Islam is established upon the sovereignty of the sharī'ah, and tolerance and acceptance of
the rulers, even though they may violate many of the conditions stated by the fuqahā' as requirements for legitimate rule. He promoted the ideal caliphate position, but understood the necessity of dealing with the political reality of his time and much of previous time, in order to support stability and cooperation in Muslim society.
CHAPTER 5

The Intellectual context of Ibn Taymiyah's time and his confrontation with the fuqahā’

5.1 Philosophy and kalām

Syria, prior to Islamic conquest, was under Roman (Byzantine) occupation and had maintained a Hellenic culture. Under the Byzantines, Hellenic culture, art and science were integrated with Christianity. The Hellenic tradition was also maintained in the Sasanian empire, especially by Nestorian Christians and even a group of Hellenic pagans in Harrān (Iraq).262 The capitals of both the Umayyads and Abbasids (Damascus and Baghdad respectively) came to be situated in areas of former Byzantine and Sasanian rule. Thus, it was perhaps only a matter of time before some form of influence from the previous traditions of the newly conquered peoples would take place. By the end of the second century A.H., Greek works in philosophy and science began to be translated into Arabic in significant numbers.263 During Al-Ma‘mūn’s time (r. 198/813-218/833) translation work

263 Hourani, Albert, A History of the Arab Peoples, p. 76.
reached its peak.\textsuperscript{264} There was more of a concentration on philosophy, medicine, the physical sciences, astrology, and alchemy than on Greek poetry, drama, and history. Muslims made advances in the fields of science as well as other fields of knowledge they learned from the Hellenistic tradition. Though there were problems in the harmonization of Islamic teachings and Greek thought, it was philosophy that caused the most friction.\textsuperscript{265}

Greek philosophy was introduced to Islamic society by the Mu'tazilah in the second century A.H.. Its study spread quickly amongst scholars in the Muslim world. The ideas of Aristotle and Plato became a topic of much discussion amongst intellectuals. Philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (520-595/1126-1198), restricted their views to those they considered the intellectual elite because they thought philosophical ideas to be dangerously disruptive to the general masses.\textsuperscript{266} During the seventh century A.H., one of the most famous philosophers was Naṣīr-ud-dīn Aṭ-Ṭūsī (d. 672 A.H.). He was a close counselor to Hūlākū. Among his students were Qūṭb-ud-dīn Ash-Shirāzī and Qūṭb-ud-dīn Ar-Rāzī. Naṣīr-ud-dīn Aṭ-Ṭūsī held to Aristotle’s view on intellectual evidence, and supported Aristotle’s philosophy


\textsuperscript{265} Hourani, Albert, \textit{A History of the Arab Peoples}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{266} Hodgson, Marshall G.S., \textit{The Venture of Islam}, v. 2, pp. 319, 322.
against the attacks of Fakhr-ud-dīn Ar-Rāżī (d. 606 A.H.).267 He also defended the ideas of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, 371-428 A.H.), whom he regarded as almost a Sufi.268 A group of philosophers during Ibn Taymiyah's time considered philosophy to be an independent branch of knowledge and free from the control of the principles of religion and the teachings of the Messengers. Another group considered philosophy to be the basis of an absolute standard and tried to adjust it to religious thought. Both currents generally expressed their views to the society and were preaching the ideas of Aristotle and Plato.

The earliest Muslim generations understood the Qur'anic passages referring to the attributes of Allah in their apparent linguistic meanings without delving into any further analyses. Essential differences between the philosophers and the Sunni fuqahā' should be noted here. The philosophers based all of their arguments and evidence upon reason itself. Therefore they believed in whatever they concluded from their use of reason. In order to fit with their rationalistic views, they regarded revelation as a representation of symbolic events or as some type of personal experience, such as dreaming.269 The well-known theologian Abū Ḥāmid Al-


Ghazâlî, whose ideas held sway over many Muslims in Ibn Taymiyah's day, maintained similar views.270 The Sunnis, or traditionalists, established their faith upon revelation, while they still utilized reason as a tool for proving or understanding revelation.

With the incorporation of Greek philosophy into the intellectual circles of Muslims, along with the expansion of the Islamic state and the conversions of people from various cultural and religious backgrounds, the discipline of kalâm developed. Kalâm was the use of rational arguments to discourse on religious matters. Discussions regarding the attributes of Allah arose as a result. Those following kalâm used reasoning from the basis of believing in a historical, revelatory event, while those following philosophy used reasoning on the basis of believing in certain patterns of thought which they regarded as rational.271

The Mu'tazîlîs were a group who utilized kalâm to compose the basis of their Islamic theological doctrines. The Mu'tazîlîs elevated the use of reason to the point of regarding rationalistic thought as equivalent or superior to revelation. The Mu'tazîlîs however debated many aspects of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, many Mu'tazîlî doctrines were deemed unacceptable by the Sunnis. The primary Sunni

270 Al-Ghazâlî, Abû Hâmid, Fâyṣal at-Tafriqah, p. 151.

opposition to Mu'tazilî thought came from Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and his followers. The Ḥanbalîs rejected the use of kalām in matters dealing with the fundamental articles of faith.

The third century theologian Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'ari (260-324/874-936) broke away from the Mu'tazilî school, adopting a more Sunni path. Al-Ash'ari announced in his book Al-Ībānah 'An Uṣūl ad-Diyānah his commitment to the belief of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. Yet he used kalām to defend Sunni doctrines.

The application of kalām to discourse on the articles of faith was considered by Ibn Taymiyah to have been deemed impermissible by the Salaf.

5.2 Relationship between the Ash'ari and Ḥanbali schools

The Ash'ari school traced their origins to Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'ari. Al-Ash'ari received his early education in kalām from Abū 'Alî Al-Jubbâ'î, head of the Mu'tazilî school of Basrah. Upon choosing the Sunni viewpoint, he used his proficiency in kalām to defend many traditionalist doctrines from the attacks of the Mu'tazilah. Yet he maintained differences of opinion with the traditionalists on certain issues. His use of rationalism to understand and interpret

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274 Watt, W. Montgomery, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, p. 64.
points of 'aqīdah (articles of faith) placed his ideas somewhere between those of the Mu'tazilīs and the Sunnis.

A dispute about the use of kalām resulted in a division between the Ash'ari and the Ḥanbalī schools of thought. The Ash'aris, most of whose early leaders had their background in Mu'tazilī currents, incorporated kalām heavily in their debates against the Mu'tazilah. Kalām was thus used in laying down Ash'ari doctrine.\(^{275}\) Though the Sunnis, particularly the Ḥanbalīs, generally did not indulge in kalām, they did not ignore the use of reason altogether. Makdisi explains the distinction between the use of kalām by the rationalists, and the use of reason by the traditionalists:

The traditionalists made use of reason in order to understand what they considered as the legitimate sources of theology: scripture and tradition. What they could not understand they left as it stood in the sources; they did not make use of reason to interpret the sources metaphorically. On the other hand, the rationalists advocated the use of reason on scripture and tradition; and all that they deemed to contradict the dictates of reason they interpreted metaphorically in order to bring it into harmony with reason.\(^{276}\)

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\(^{275}\)Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'arī, to whom the madhhab was traced, initially held to the Mu'tazilī school of thought, which depended mainly upon logic and reasoning regarding matters of faith. Later, he shifted to the Sunni belief, but elements of his background still influenced his thought. (Al-Ash'arī, Abū Al-Ḥasan, Al-Ibānah, p. 35.)

Makdisi therefore states that reason and kalâm served different aims:

Now Ash'ari could have been a rationalist, who became a traditionalist. Or a traditionalist, and later a rationalist. But he could not have been both at one and the same time. There is nothing inconsistent in an Ash'ari who was a traditionalist using reason in defense of orthodoxy. There would definitely be something inconsistent in an Ash'ari who was a traditionalist using kalâm in defense of orthodoxy. For between reason and rationalist kalâm there was a difference. It was all the difference between Muslim traditionalism and Muslim rationalism.277

The Ash'arites were thus contradicting themselves by claiming to defend orthodoxy with kalâm.

The systematized doctrines of the Ash'ari school were developed by Abū Bakr Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 A.H.), Al-Ghazālī (d. 505), Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 701 A.H.), and others.278 The Ash'aris debated many of the fundamentals of Mu'tazilī doctrine, yet had major differences with the mainstream Sunni current. For instance, in cases of contradiction between the meanings of the transmitted passages of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and what would be considered as reason or rational evidence, the Ash'aris would give preference to the latter. This was in contrast to the Sunnis who gave primary importance to the passages.279 Most Ash'aris considered faith


\[278\text{Abū Zahrah, Muhammad, Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah, Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, Cairo, 1963, v. 1, pp. 202-205.}

\[279\text{Al-Ḥawālī, Safar, Minhaj al-Ashā'irah fī al-‘Aqīdah, pp. 18-34.}

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to be limited to the heart. Al-Ash'ari agreed with Jahm Ibn Şafwân that faith did not necessarily go beyond the heart, as did most Ash'aris. Some included a requirement that faith be attested with the tongue. The Sunnis agreed in this regard, but added to it the necessity to act in accordance with what was attested. Followers of the Ash'ari school held that the speech of Allah is created while the meanings of the speech are eternal. Al-Ash'ari himself had however agreed with the Sunnis that the speech of Allah is uncreated.

The Ayyubids had adopted the Ash'ari belief from the time of Şalâh-ud-dîn. Scholars, such as Al-'Izz Ibn 'Abd-Is-Salâm (578-660/1182-1262), Al-Fakhr Ar-Râzî (544-606/1150-1210), Al-Âmidî (d. 631 A.H.), Ash-Shahrastâni (d. 548/1153), Al-İjî and many others, held this belief. The Hanbalî school was in conflict with some of the main points of the Ash'ari doctrines, such as the methodology of understanding Allah's attributes. Sultan Al-Ashraf of Damascus supported the Hanbalî school. He therefore issued a decision to prevent Shaykh Al-'Izz from providing any fatwas, ordering him not to meet with anyone, and to remain at his home. On the other hand, Sultan Al-Kâmil, who was the sultan of Egypt and Sultan

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Al-Ashraf’s brother, supported the Ash'ari belief, and therefore canceled his brother’s decision.\textsuperscript{282}

Ibn Taymiyah wrote many books in which he debated and refuted the Ash'ari doctrines.\textsuperscript{283} \textit{Dar’ Ta‘āruḍ al-‘Aql wan-Naql} (The Removal of the Contradiction Between the Rational Evidence and Transmitted Passages) is the most extensive work of Ibn Taymiyah in which he provides an extensive response to the Ash'aris’ doctrines about ‘aql (reasoning). He discusses Ar-Rāzī’s ideas as presented in \textit{Asās at-Taqdīṣ fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām}. Ibn Taymiyah explains the relationship between rational arguments and the meanings of the passages of the Qur’ān and Sunnah. He explains the rules for resolving conflicts in cases of contradiction. He begins his book by stating the problem, which is called by Ar-Rāzī and his followers “The Comprehensive Law.”\textsuperscript{284} Ibn Taymiyah presents this law as follows:

If traditional proofs and rational arguments are opposed to each other, or if tradition opposes reason, [there exist three possibilities]: either a. both [elements] should be combined, which is inconceivable, for it is a combination of contraries, or b. both [elements] should be canceled, or c. tradition must be preferred (yuqaddamu), which is inconceivable, for reason is


\textsuperscript{283}Examples are \textit{Dar’ Ta‘āruḍ al-‘Aql wan-Naql}, \textit{Al-Fatwa al-Hamawiyyah al-Kubra}, \textit{Al-‘Aqīdah al-Wāsīṭiyyah} and \textit{Al-Imān}.

the basis of tradition. If we preferred tradition to reason it would infringe on reason, which is the basis of tradition, and the infringement of the basis of a thing means the infringement of the thing itself. Consequently, preference to tradition infringes on both tradition and reason. Therefore reason should be preferred, and as for tradition, it is to be either interpreted or entrusted [to God]. If both [elements] are in opposing contradictions, combining them is inconceivable, but the removal of both of them is possible. 285

Prior to Ar-Râzî’s statement of this law, others such as Abū Bakr Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 A.H.), Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 505 A.H.), Abū Bakr Ibn Al-ʿArabī (d. 543 A.H.), and Al-Juwaynī (d. 478 A.H.), had also presented this law, but they differed in the consequential details of it. 286

In his book, Ibn Taymiyah presents forty-four arguments in refutation of The Comprehensive Law. His basic premise was that the rational process of developing a proof could result in falsehood, the reasons being, "1) It is false due to the falseness of one of its premises; 2) Its spokesman has no knowledge; 3) It contests a truth which has been already made clear." 287 Thus, he distinguished between clear, rational arguments and unclear ones, on the basis that the truth of revelation was the foundation upon which all

285Abrahamov, Binyamin, "Ibn Taymiyya on the agreement of reason with tradition," The Muslim World, The Duncan Black Macdonald Center, Hartford, Connecticut, 1992, v. 83, p. 257 (The last sentence was added by me to his translation).


arguments should be made, and against which all of them should be tested. He also presented evidence for the view that revelation is true. Therefore, his arguments held that there was no contradiction between revelation and clear, accurate reason.288

The confrontation between the traditionalists and the rationalists goes back to the debates between Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Kullāb. Ibn Kullāb is known best for his thoughts on the attributes of Allah. Prior to Al-Ashʿari, Ibn Kullāb used kalām to support some Sunni doctrines.289 Al-Ashʿari seems to have associated himself with a group that followed Ibn Kullāb’s doctrines, known as the Kullābiyyah.290 The premises used by Al-Ashʿari and his later followers have their origins in the opinions of Ibn Kullāb.

Ibn Taymiyah did not accept the Ashʿaris’ and Māturīdis’291 claim to be of the Sunni current. According to Ibn Taymiyah, the Ashʿaris held a position somewhere between

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291The Māturīdis were the followers of Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd (d. 333 A.H.). He was known as Abū Maṣūr al-Māturīdī. Al-Māturīdī was born in Māturīd of Samarqand. The Māturīdis held views which were somewhere between those of the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿaris. (Abū Zahrah, Muḥammad, Tārīkh al-Madḥāhib al-Islāmiyyah, pp. 207-212.)
the Mu'tazilah and Ahl-us-Sunnah. It is interesting to note that once some of the Mu'tazilî scholars, who were debating the traditionalist doctrines of the Sunnis, became Ash'aris, they were often identified as Sunnis. Thus both Ash'aris and traditionalists were lumped together as Sunnis--this, despite the major differences of opinion the Ash'aris maintained with the traditionalists.

Ibn Taymiyah considered only those following Al-Ash'ari's book Ibânah to be Sunnis. He did not approve the name Ash'aris for those who followed the Ibânah since it could confuse them with those who did not limit themselves to it.

5.3 Ibn Taymiyah's understanding of Allah's attributes

One of the most controversial aspects of kalâm, debated by Ibn Taymiyah, was the understanding of the attributes of Allah. Ibn Taymiyah's views on this issue resulted in his detention in Egypt. In order to appreciate Ibn Taymiyah's

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292 Al-Kawtharî states, “The Ash'aris are between the Mu'tazilah and the Muḥaddithūn (Salafis), while the Māturīdīs are between the Ash'aris and the Mu'tazilah”. (Abū Zahrah, Muḥammad, Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah, p. 213.)

293 In Al-Azhar University and Cairo University now the term “Ahl-us-Sunnah” is used to refer exclusively to Ash'ari and Māturīdī doctrines. For example Jalāl Musâ in his Ph.D. thesis, attempted to prove that the term “Ahl-us-Sunnah” describes only the Ash'ari school. (Musâ, Jalâl Muḥammad, Nash'at Al-Ash'ariyyah wa Taṭawwurūhā, Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānî, Beirut, 1975, pp. 15-82.)

294 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū' Fatāwâ Shaykh-īl-Islâm Āḥmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 9, p. 359.
stand on this issue it would be beneficial to briefly examine the dominant schools of thought in his time.

The earliest Muslim generations understood the Qur'anic passages referring to the attributes of Allah in their apparent linguistic meanings without delving into any further analyses. In the early second century A.H., with the development of kalām, discussions arose regarding the attributes of Allah. Four main currents appeared: the Mushabbihah, the Mu'attilah, the Salaf, and the Khalaf.

The Mushabbihah (Anthropomorphists) understood the meanings of the attributes to be similar to those of human beings, and therefore claimed that Allah had a face, hands, laugh, speech, etc., until they reached a point where they imagined Allah as either an elderly man or a strong youth.

The Mu'attilah (Figurative group) understood the meaning of the attributes to be allegorical or symbolic only, and they thus negated the qualities of speech, hearing, and sight for Allah, since such attributes would require, according to them, the presence of the related sense organs of tongue, ear, and eye. Since Allah should be glorified above having such physical organs, they concluded that Allah does not see, hear, or speak. The first to bring prestige to these claims was Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān⁹ and his followers became known as

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⁹Al-Ja'd Ibn Dirham, who was the teacher of Marwān Ibn Muḥammad (the last Ummayad caliph), was the founder of the Mu'attilah madhhab. Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān, who was in Tirmidh, spread the teachings of Al-Ja'd. Jahm
Jahmiyyah. The Mu'attilah accepted the names of Allah, but arrived at the seemingly contradictory conclusion of rejection of the apparent meaning of these names. For instance, they accepted that Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful, All-Hearing, and All-Seeing but would not affirm the meanings associated with each name such as those of knowledge, power, hearing, and sight.

The Salaf believed in the names of Allah and His attributes through the affirmation of their apparent linguistic meanings, without investigating the manner in which they function. They accepted, for example, that Allah has speech but that it is not similar to the speech of human beings. They rejected the related notions of a mouth, tongue, lips, etc., since the "how" of His speech is unknown. Regarding the other attributes of Allah, they used similar lines of reasoning to assert both the passages affirming Allah's attributes as well as those glorifying Him above the similitude of human attributes.

The Khalaf emphasized that the meanings of the attributes of Allah are not intended to be apparent, but are symbolic and should be interpreted. Thus, they interpreted the word "face" of Allah as a reference to Allah himself, and the "hand" of Allah as referring to power, and the "seating upon the throne" by Allah as a reference to Allah's

also denied that man has any free will. (Mūsa, Jalāl, Nash'at Al-Ash'ariyyah wa Taţawwuruţah, pp. 19,96.)
occupation of the throne. Here, they differed from the Salaf by rejecting both the apparent meanings of the attributes and the "how" of them. The Salaf did not reject the "how", but they considered it something unknowable to us. The Khalaf limited their figurative understanding to those attributes related to physical characteristics and did not apply this understanding to the other attributes, as did the Mu'attilah, who considered all of the terminology to be symbolic. The Ash'ari school tried to reconcile the differences between the Salaf and the Mu'tazilah who were in agreement with the Mu'attilah on this issue. In consequence, the Ash'ari accepted some of the apparent meanings of the attributes, in accordance with the Salafi view, and agreed with the Mu'tazilah in applying figurative meanings to others.

Ibn Taymiyah wrote that all Muslims fell into one of three categories concerning their stand on the attributes of Allah. Each category had two groups. The first category included those who accepted the apparent, linguistic meanings of the passages dealing with the attributes of Allah. The second was composed of those who rejected the apparent meanings. Those who abstained from giving any type of meaning to the passages fell into the third category. One of the groups in the first category made the attributes of Allah

to be similar to creation, and were referred to as the Mushabbihah (Anthropomorphists). The other group that accepted the apparent meanings of the passages, did not apply any similitude in Allah's attributes to creation. This group is known as the Salaf. In the category of those who rejected the apparent meanings of the attributes was a group that substituted a figurative meaning for the linguistic definition found in the passages. They dismissed any form of physical or literal meaning to the passages since that was considered by them to be anthropomorphic. The other group in this category abstained from such substitution. In the last category was a group that claimed that it was possible that the attributes may have either an apparent meaning or a figurative one, delegating the true meaning to the knowledge of Allah. Ibn Taymiyah states that many of the fuqahā' were in this group. The other group in the third category abstained completely from dealing with the matter.297

According to Cheneb,298 Ibn Taymiyah wrote about fifty-four titles in which he expressed and defended the belief of Ahl-us-Sunnah. As a result of this, Ibn Taymiyah often found himself in conflict with scholars who held Ash'ari299 beliefs.


299The name of the Ash'ari school is derived from the name of 'Alī Ibn Ismā'īl Ibn Ishaq who was known as Abū Al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'arī. According to Ibn 'Asākir, Abū Al-Ḥasan was born in Basra in year 260 A.H. (874
This type of conflict occurred regardless of the technical classification of the Ash'ari school as either a part of Ahlus-Sunnah or as a midway point between the Sunni and Mu'tazili schools.

Ibn Taymiyah explains the belief of the Salaf as follows:

The madhhab of the Salaf is that they describe Allah with what He describes Himself or with what His messengers described Him, negation or affirmation, without distortion or ta'\textsuperscript{\textregistered}il [negation of applying attributes], and without taky\textsuperscript{\textregistered}if [investigation of the "how" of the attributes] or similitude... Thus, they would approve of the names and attributes without resorting to similitudes, and glorify Him without ta'\textsuperscript{\textregistered}il. As the Exalted is He said, "Nothing is similar to Him and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing." In the words "nothing is similar to Him" is a refutation of the likeness and similitude, and in the words "He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing" is the refutation of distortion and ta'\textsuperscript{\textregistered}il.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyah, Majm\textsuperscript{\textregistered}i Fat\textsuperscript{\textregistered}aw Shaykh-il-Isl\~am Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, ed. 'Abd-ur-Rah\textsuperscript{\textregistered}man Ibn Muhammad Ibn Qasim, Maktabat al-Ma'\textregistered{\textregistered}rif, Rabat, n.d., v. 3, pp. 3-4.}

We can also recognize that Ibn Taymiyah adopted the Salafi view through careful analysis and investigation. He accepted the Salafi view through recognition of evidence and

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A.D.) and died in the year 324 A.H. (936 A.D.). Al-Ash'ar\~I held the belief of the Mu'tazili school until he reached age of 40, when he changed his stand to the Salafi school until his death. His book al-Ib\~anah is considered a milestone; in it he announced a new trend in his thought and raised arguments against Mu'tazili beliefs. (Ab\~u Al-\~Hasan Al-Ash'ar\~I, Al-Ib\~anah 'an U\textsuperscript{\textregistered}ul ad-Diy\~anah, ed. Fawq\textsuperscript{\textregistered}iyah Husayn Ma\textsuperscript{\textregistered}m\~ud, D\textsuperscript{\textregistered}\textsuperscript{\textregistered}r al-An\textsuperscript{\textregistered}\textsuperscript{\textregistered}r, Cairo, 1977, pp 9-19, 20.)
proof, and not through blind imitation. He stated, "You should know that there is basically nothing in manifest logic or authentic reports which would contradict the views of the Salaf." \(^{301}\)

He further explained that the attributes of Allah are divided into the two categories of affirmation and negation. The first category includes the characteristics of All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful and so forth. An example of negation of attributes is "no slumber can seize Him, nor sleep." He emphasized that the negation of attributes involves attributes of perfection since it includes the meaning of the affirmation of attributes. The absolute negation would not constitute perfection, since this concept would apply to things that do not exist or to the impossible, but the negation of the characteristics of slumber and sleep includes the meanings of the perfect life and continuous sustenance of heaven and earth. \(^{302}\)

Ibn Taymiyah became sensitive to this matter to the point that he modified his expression after he had often used the traditional statement transmitted by the Salaf as a rule for dealing with the attributes of Allah. This statement was


as follows: "Ithbāt bilā tashbih wa tanzīh bilā ta‘wil" ("affirmation without comparison, and transcendence without figuration"). He shifted from using this traditional statement to using another expression that states, "Ithbāt bilā tamthīl wa tanzīh bilā taḥrīf" ("affirmation without similitude, and transcendence without deviation"). The reason for his modification was that the new expression he used was directly derived from the Qur’anic passages. He said, in explaining the usage of this terminology in his book Al-‘Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah, "It is preferable for me to use words that are derived from the Book of Allah and from the Sunnah of His Messenger, rather than using other words or terms even if they contain almost the same meaning."

Not only did he depend upon the passages of the Qur’ān, but he also utilized intellectual evidence to refute the claims of the Mushabbihah and the Mu‘attilah. There was no contradiction to Ibn Taymiyah between the correct, affirmative intellectual evidence and the affirmative, direct meanings of the Qur’anic passages or of the authentic Ḥadīth.

Ibn Taymiyah pointed out how either view, anthropomorphic or figurative, incorporated aspects of the

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other view and therefore was self-contradictory. The figurative school did not understand the names and attributes of Allah except as terms that were compatible with similar characteristics of created beings. Therefore, they attempted to negate these concepts completely, and thus they combined negation with anthropomorphism. They first applied anthropomorphism and then concluded with negation. The reverse process occurred with the opposing group that held anthropomorphic views. They reasoned that if they applied the Qur’anic terminology figuratively, then the attributes of Allah would have no essential meaning, and thus they concluded with the anthropomorphic understanding of the attributes. Each attempted to escape from the critical point of the other, but the result of both was a combination of both points.

In four full volumes of his fatāwā, Ibn Taymiyah provided and explained in detail the belief of the Salaf and their method of approaching the attributes of the Deity. Ibn Taymiyah had been asked to define the beliefs of the Salaf and Khalaf, to determine which of them was more appropriate, and to state to which school he belonged. He began by providing the Qur’anic passages which praised the first generation of Muslims (the

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305 Ibn Taymiyah, Majnū' Fatawa Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 5, p. 27.
Prophet's Companions) and the necessity of following their way as examples of those who obtained the pleasure of Allah.

He stated that their way of belief in the attributes of Allah was to believe in His attributes and the names which Allah used to describe or name Himself, as revealed in His Book or through His messenger, and with neither additions to nor omissions from them. They neither exceeded these terms nor did they interpret them or make figuration of the meaning, which may differ from the apparent meaning, nor did they consider the attributes and names to be similar to those of the created beings, or of the characteristics of transient beings. They accepted these terms at face value, literally as they were transmitted, and they delegated the significance of the terms to the knowledge of their Source. Ibn Taymiyah went on to say, "And we hope that Allah will make us among those who considered the manifestation of the early Muslim generation to be examples for them, and to follow their footsteps through the way they passed."307

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyah considered those who rejected affirmation of the attributes of Allah to be worshippers of inanimate objects or non-existent beings. On the other hand, he considered those who held the attributes of Allah to be similar to the attributes of a human being to be worshippers of objects or creatures. Thus, the rule for understanding

these attributes is "affirmation without comparison, and transcendence without figuration."\textsuperscript{308} When Ibn Taymiyah was asked directly how the lord descends to the sky of this world, he replied, "We do not know the how of his descent, since the knowledge of meanings of the characteristics require the knowledge of the Owner of these characteristics. His descent is a fact, and He is described with the perfection of His attributes, and none of the attributes of His creatures is similar to His."\textsuperscript{309}

Ibn Taymiyah and Salafis in general accept and believe in the apparent meanings of the names or deeds related to Allah, as given in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and reserve the "how" of the functioning of these attributes to the knowledge of Allah. Thus, their approach is to accept what Allah has described Himself with and to glorify Him as being above and beyond any similarity to His creation.

Nevertheless, Cheneb states about Ibn Taymiyah:

An inveterate anthropomorphist, Ibn Taimīya interpreted literally all the passages in the Qur'ān and tradition referring to the Deity. He was so imbued with this belief that, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, he said one day from the pulpit in the mosque of Damascus: "God comes down from heaven to

\textsuperscript{308}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah}, v. 3, p. 16.

earth, just as I am coming down one of the steps of the pulpit staircase.\textsuperscript{310}

Since this information raises an important historical issue regarding the belief of Ibn Taymiyah, which would obviously contradict Sunni belief, it is worth examining this point. Cheneb's statement indicates that Ibn Taymiyah was extreme in attributing anthropomorphic characteristics to Allah and that he interpreted passages from the Qur'ān and Sunnah dealing with the attributes of Allah literally, or according to their apparent meaning. Cheneb further accepts Ibn Batūṭah's (703/1304-779/1377) report that he witnessed Ibn Taymiyah stepping down from the minbar with the words: "God comes down from heaven to earth, just as I am coming down..."\textsuperscript{311}

This statement can be examined in three dimensions. Cheneb's report about the essence of the belief of the Salaf, historical credibility of Ibn Batūṭah's accounts, and the 'aqīdah of Ibn Taymiyah as stated in his writings and debates can shed light on the merit of Cheneb's understanding of Ibn Taymiyah's beliefs.

Let us first examine Cheneb's presentation of the Salafi school's stance on the attributes of Allah. Cheneb attributes pure Salafiyyah beliefs to Ibn Taymiyah and


asserts that he took a strong stand against innovations. Cheneb states that Ibn Taymiyah "defended the sound tradition of the earlier Muslims by arguments, which although taken from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, had hitherto been unknown," and that he was "a bitter enemy of innovations." These statements alone from Cheneb are inconsistent with the idea that Ibn Taymiyah held anthropomorphic views about the attributes of Allah, since the beliefs and principles derived from the sound traditions, or the Salafiyyah, are extremely opposed to this type of anthropomorphism. In fact, these contradictory statements are apt to mislead the reader who has no detailed knowledge about these matters, by implying that the Salafi belief is anthropomorphic. Additionally, the term Salaf or As-Salaf Āṣ-Ṣāliḥ, which Cheneb referred to as "sound traditions," is used only to describe those with the belief of Ahl-us-Sunnah. Indeed this resembles the Ash'ari view that the belief of Ibn Taymiyah in respect to Allah's attributes was tantamount to anthropomorphism.

If, for the sake of argument, we assume that Ibn Baṭūṭah's claim is true, the action claimed for Ibn Taymiyah would constitute direct evidence that Ibn Taymiyah was an extreme Mushabbih (anthropomorphist). On the other hand, those following the Salaf glorified the essence, attributes,

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and actions of Allah as being well over and above those of His creation. Therefore, a more cautious approach would be to examine directly the writings of Ibn Baṭūṭah in order to evaluate the credibility of his claim. Ibn Baṭūṭah narrates:

In Damascus, there was one of the eminent fuqahā’ of the Ḥanbalī madhhab. His name was Taqī-ud-dīn Ibn Taymiyah, the Great of Ash-Shām. He was able to lecture in different types of fields of knowledge, but there was something about his mind. The people of Damascus were praising him to the highest level, and he was instructing from the pulpit.

He continues to speak about Ibn Taymiyah’s imprisonment by Al-Malik An-Nāṣir and then his release. He then says:

It happened that I was in Damascus at that time, and I was present during his Friday speech, while he was admonishing the people from the pulpit of the mosque and reminding them. Among his words, he said: ‘Allah truly descends to the sky of this world in a way similar to this, my descent.’ Then he descended one step of the minbar. A faqīh of the Mālikī madhhab, called Ibn Az-Zahrā’, opposed him and denied what he had said. The public headed towards this faqīh and beat him severely with their hands and shoes until his hat had fallen...

This report directly indicates an accusation against Ibn Taymiyah that he was adopting a belief contradictory to the belief in the sound traditions held by earlier Muslims. Nothing in Ibn Baṭūṭah’s narrative would indicate that he heard the account from anyone else, and the wording asserts that he witnessed the incident himself. Some observations

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can be made regarding the credibility of this account. Firstly, the reference to “Allah truly descends to the sky of the world” mentioned in the report is consistent and correct according to the wording of the ḥadīth being referred to. Yet the translation of Ibn Baṭūṭah’s wording offered by Cheneb, “Allah descends from the sky to the earth,” is incorrect. Secondly, the incident is said to have occurred in the main mosque of Damascus, or al-Masjid al-Jāmi‘, during the Friday prayer, which is a time when the mosque was most likely very crowded. The fight which broke out after Ibn Taymiyah’s statement was said to involve hands and shoes being used against the Mālikī faqīh. It should have been a rather memorable sight and witnessed by the many people in attendance at the mosque. Therefore, we might assume that the incident was widely reported and known in the society and that some sort of account of it would be accessible through various sources. However, the only report of the incident appears to originate in Ibn Baṭūṭah’s chronicle. Thus his report should be approached cautiously. Thirdly, as Little observed in his article, the problem began with Ibn Baṭūṭah’s narration that he witnessed Ibn Taymiyah descending from the pulpit of the mosque. Little commented that a discrepancy concerning the account is that Ibn Baṭūṭah arrived in Damascus in Ramadan 9, 726 A.H. (August 8, 1326

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A.D.). However, Ibn Taymiyah was already in prison at that time for proclaiming his fatwa of prohibiting the visitation of graves, and he was not permitted to go to the mosque while imprisoned. Little then attempts to explain this discrepancy by proposing that Ibn Baṭṭūṭah used a similar incident which supposedly took place in 705 A.H. and was claimed by a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyah, like the one cited by Ibn Ḥajar. It is likely that Ibn Baṭṭūṭah claimed to have witnessed the incident personally. He states "Since Ibn Ḥajar's authority for this incident was a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyah, it is quite possible that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also borrowed this account from the earlier source and claimed that he witnessed the incident himself in order to heighten the dramatic effect of the ḥikāyah." However, the evidence remains that it was not possible for Ibn Baṭṭūṭah to have witnessed or even met Ibn Taymiyah, because Ibn Taymiyah had entered prison in Sha'ban, one month prior to the arrival of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah. He remained imprisoned until his death on Sunday evening, Dhul-Qi'dah 20, 728 A.H. (September 25, 1328 A.D.).

Ash-Sharcī commented as well about the impossibility of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah seeing Ibn Taymiyah, although he said that it does not necessarily mean that Ibn Baṭṭūṭah

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316 Little, Donald P., "Did Ibn Taymiyya have a screw loose?," Studia Islamica, issue 41, 1975, p. 97-98.

intentionally fabricated his report, but that his writing of the journey, through later recollection, contained many discrepancies and errors, resulting in confusion about this matter.  

It seems more likely that the source of Ibn Baṭūṭah’s report was the same as that of the story mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar, as indicated by Little. However, it seems that he would have heard it from the Sufis who hosted Ibn Baṭūṭah in their khānqāhs during much of his journey. Ibn Baṭūṭah regarded these saints with a high degree of belief and trust, and he attributed many miracles to them, as reported throughout his book. The enmity of the Sufi saints towards Ibn Taymiyyah is well documented. They were eager to propagate any report which could be harmful to Ibn Taymiyyah’s reputation. Therefore, Ibn Baṭūṭah most likely heard the report from them and claimed later to have witnessed it himself. Further support for this possibility is the fact


319 See also Mu‘nis, Ḥusayn, Ibn Baṭṭuṭah wa Raḥalātuh: Taḥqīq wa Dirāṣah wa Taḥlīl, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1980, pp. 26, 38-40.

320 It is important to point out here that this incident is not the only one reported by Ibn Baṭṭuṭah that raises questions of credibility. Some historians, both recently and in the past, have regarded many of the reports about his journey as suspect. Among those who were contemporaries of Ibn Baṭṭuṭah and heard some of his reports directly from him is Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406). (Ash-Sharqāwī, Maḥmud, Riḥlah Ma‘a Ibn Baṭṭuṭa, Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1968, p. 15.) Even the writer and scribe Ibn Juzay, who recorded the oral reports from Ibn Baṭṭuṭah, commented that he would record all the stories
that Ibn Ḥajar referred to the incident in order to discredit it and to defend Ibn Taymiyah. He stated that the person who invented the story was Shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī, who was a Sufi shaykh, a defender of Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought, and close to Baybars Jāshankīr. Ibn Taymiyah’s book attacking pantheism had come to Shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī’s attention, and thus the story about the descent from the pulpit was fabricated to implicate Ibn Taymiyah with anthropomorphism, according to Ibn Ḥajar in Ad-Durar al-Kāminah.

and reports he was listening to without being held accountable for their degree of authenticity. This would indicate that he was absolving himself of any responsibility for these accounts. (Ibn Baṭūṭah, Rihlat Ibn Baṭūṭah al-Musammāh Tuḥfat an-Nuẓẓār fī Gharā‘ib al-Amṣār wa ‘Ajā‘ib al-Asfār, ed. ‘Alī Al-Muntaṣir Al-Kattānī, Mu‘assat ar-Risālah, Beirut, 1975, v. 1, p. 26.) Among the recent historians and writers who regarded the accounts as suspect are Shawcf Dayf, Husayn Fawzī, and the Russian orientalist Khraschoveski. Another point to be considered is that Ibn Juzay began writing the journey of Ibn Baṭūṭah in the year 754 A.H. In other words, it was written about twenty-eight years after the claimed time of the incident. Such an interval of time could raise some doubt about the degree of authenticity of this report. (Ash-Shirqāwī, MaWud, Rihlah Ma‘a Ibn Battuta, Maktabat al-Anglo al-Misriyyah, Cairo, 1968, pp. 16-21.)

321 The Ibn Ḥajar referred to here is Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī (773-852 A.H.), who was one of the strong supporters of Ibn Taymiyah. According to As-Sakhāwī, his full name was ʿAbd Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad Al-Kinānī. He was born in Egypt and received his early education in Egypt, Hijāz, and Syria. He studied under eminent scholars such as Al-‘Irāqī in ḥadīth, Al-Balqīnī in fiqh, and Al-Fayrūzabādī in the Arabic language. He was the author of approximately 150 works, the majority of them in ḥadīth. His best known works are Fatḥ al-Bārī and Ad-Durar al-Kāminah fī A‘yān al-Mi‘ah ath-Thāminah. (As-Sakhāwī, At-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhayl as-Sulūk as cited in Al-‘Asqalānī, Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī, Bulūgh al-Ma‘rām min Adillat al-Ahkām, ed. Ṣafiy-ur-Rahmān Al-Mubārakfürī, Dār as-Salām, Riyadh, 1992, pp. 5-6.) Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī differs from Ibn
Whatever the truth of Ibn Baṭūṭah’s account may be, there is an abundance of writing by Ibn Taymiyah available, written on various occasions, to verify his views on 'aqīdah in general and the attributes of Allah in particular. In all of his writing, he explains his belief in the “sound traditions” of the Salaf and his strong commitment to what he considered the Salafi belief. His writings contained many quotations from the scholars of the Salaf, such as Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H.), Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 A.H.), Mālik (d. 179 A.H.), Ash-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/878), Ibn Al-Mājishūn (d. 212 A.H.), Ibn Al-Madīnī (d. 234 A.H.), and others. In all of the known writings of Ibn Taymiyah there is never a contradiction of the general principles of Sunni belief. He was confronted by a number of hardships as a consequence of expressing beliefs in opposition to the dominant creed of the Ash'aris, which was followed by many rulers and scholars during his time.

Hajar Al-Haythami Al-Makkī, who was born in Egypt in 909 A.H. and died in Makkah in 973. Al-Haythami was the author of Tuhfat al-Muḥtaj and other books. He did not agree with Ibn Taymiyah and issued severe fatwas against him. An-Nadwā states that it is apparent from the words of his fatwas that he did not read Ibn Taymiyah’s books. Rather, he depended upon reports and rumors that were transmitted to him. (An-Nadwā, Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 150-151).

5.4 Cause of confrontation with the fuqahā’

In 698 A.H., the 'ulamā’ reacted against Ibn Taymiyah’s book Al-Fatwa al-Ḥamawiyyah al-Kubra. The book presented his views on the attributes of Allah. The ‘ulamā’ conspired against him and convinced the chief Ḥanafi qāḍī to declare a condemnation against Ibn Taymiyah and prevent people from seeking fatwas from him. In the year 705 A.H. Baybars Al-Jāshankīr, who had been delegated authority of the Mamlûk realm by Al-Malik An-Nāṣir Ibn Qalâwûn, sent a message to the governor of Damascus ordering him to establish a council to question Ibn Taymiyah about his beliefs. After three sessions of debates, the ‘ulamā’ bore testimony that Ibn Taymiyah’s beliefs were indeed Salafi. According to Ibn ‘Abd-il-Hâdî some of the ‘ulamā’ admitted to Ibn Taymiyah’s Salafism halfheartedly. Yet the scholars of Egypt were not pleased with the result. Baybars Jāshankīr by the urging of the ‘ulamā’ had him summoned to Egypt, as stated by Ibn Rajab, and had him debate the qāḍīs and scholars at the citadel. The qāḍīs read Ibn Taymiyah’s book Al-‘Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyah in the presence of Ibn Taymiyah and the Sultan in three debating sessions. The most significant point in this book was his statement that, “this is the belief of al-firqa

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an-nājiyah\textsuperscript{325} (the saved sect).\textsuperscript{326} Since the contents of the book were in contradiction with Ash'ari doctrine, the 'ulamā' concluded that Ibn Taymiyah was implying that they were not of al-firqah an-nājiyah. Yet at the conclusion of these debates, all of the scholars and qādis in the debate declared that his writings were of Sunni origin. He was however imprisoned when he refused to accept the Mālikī qādī, Zayn-ud-dīn Ibn Makhlūf, as the judge for his case. Ibn Taymiyah said, "How can you rule in this matter when you are my opponent?" Afterwards, in Ramadan 705 A.H. (April 1306 A.D.), a decree was issued by Sultan Al-Malik An-Nāṣir condemning Ibn Taymiyah for his stand on the attributes of Allah, portraying the process by which he was tried as just, announcing his sentence to be imprisoned, and forbidding all subjects from adopting his doctrines. The proclamation gave special warning to the Ḥanbalīs to abstain from supporting Ibn Taymiyah in this regard. The Ḥanbalīs were informed that if any one of them were found asserting this belief, a dismissal from all public religious function would result. The decree also carried a warning of the death penalty. The

\textsuperscript{325}The reference for Ibn Taymiyah's statement is the Ḥadīth of the Prophet which states, "The Jews were divided into seventy-one sects. The Christians were divided into seventy-two. And my ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the fire save one. [They will be] the ones who follow my way and the way of my companions today."

\textsuperscript{326}Ibn Taymiyah, Majnū' Fatāwā Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 3, pp. 169, 217.
proclamation also stated that it should be announced in the Mosques of Egypt and Syria.\textsuperscript{327}

Therefore, the core of the problem lay in Ibn Taymiyah's insistence that his belief was the belief of Ahl-us-Sunnah. The governor of Damascus had suggested to Ibn Taymiyah to change his statement from "this is the belief of al-firqah an-nâjiyah" to "this is the belief of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," so as to remove the conflict with the other fuqahā'. Ibn Taymiyah however insisted that he was following the belief held by Abū Ḥanîfah, Mâlik, āfî'I, and all of the other Salaf. Ibn Taymiyah did not consider the Ash'ari 'ulamā' to be of Ahl-us-Sunnah. Thus Ibn Taymiyah was putting the Ash'aris in the category of the sects who the Prophet had mentioned would go astray. This obviously alarmed the Ash'ari 'ulamā'. However, Ibn Taymiyah had explicitly assured them that despite his opinion that they were in error, he was not saying that they would certainly go to hell. When he was being questioned, Ibn Taymiyah said: "I told them not everyone who may differ in some aspects of this belief will be punished. It could be that the one who disputes this is a person who tried his best [to reach the correct understanding] yet still erred. Allah will therefore forgive him... I conclude that anyone who will believe in

\textsuperscript{327}As-Subkî, Taqī-ud-dīn 'Alī, Ar-Rasā'il As-Subkiyyah, pp. 17-20; and Little, Donald P., "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya" History and Historiography of the Mamlûks, sect. vii, pp. 320-321.
this will be saved, and whosoever believes differently may only possibly be saved.\textsuperscript{328}

5.5 Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyah's opposition to kalām resulted in a severe confrontation with the Ash'ari belief of the fuqahā'. Ibn Taymiyah opposed kalām as an extension of Greek influence and foreign to the methodology of the Qur'ān. As a consequence, he was in conflict with the Ash'ari school which valued kalām as one of the important means of establishing and defending 'aqīdah.

During Ibn Taymiyah's time the Shāfi'i school of fiqh and Ash'ari thought were dominant in Egypt and Syria primarily due to Ayyubid patronage. The Ash'ari view had been decreed by the Ayyubids to be the single, correct Sunni doctrine. The only significant opposition to the Ash'ari creed came from the Ḥanbalīs. Followers of the Ash'ari school relied mainly on philosophical reasoning and rational evidence to support their positions in 'aqīdah (theological doctrines). The Ḥanbalīs, on the other hand, gave precedence to the Qur'ān and Sunnah to substantiate their views.

Ibn Taymiyah was strictly committed to the Salafi belief and to the school of Ṭāhāf Ibn Ḥanbal in particular, including his approach in understanding the attributes of Allah. The claim of Ibn Baṭūṭah that Ibn Taymiyah was one

\textsuperscript{328} Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh-il-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah}, v. 3, p. 179.
who held strong anthropomorphic views about Allah is, from all evidence, a baseless claim.

The confrontation intensified between Ibn Taymiyah and the fuqahā’ because he introduced his doctrines as the correct version of the Sunni belief. He denounced other forms as a deviation from the belief of al-firqah an-nājiyah. The conflict gives a clear example of the nature of the underlying principles of both schools—reason and revelation. Variations in the use of reason led to the differences in the conclusions of both sides. Ash'ari dominance over the society put pressure on the rulers to punish Ibn Taymiyah.
CHAPTER 6

Social context: Trends in Sufism and Ibn Taymiyah’s opposition

6.1 Roots of Sufi trends existing in Ibn Taymiyah’s time

Sufism (Taṣawwuf) was quite prevalent throughout the Muslim world prior to and during Ibn Taymiyah’s time. It is usually referred to in Western literature as the mystical spirituality in Islam. A Sufi sought to establish a relationship with Allah by performing spiritual exercises under the instruction of a spiritual guide (murshid).

Asceticism, or zuhd, first appears as a trend in the second century of Islamic history. Zuhhād sought to get closer to Allah and achieve a higher moral consciousness by way of worship, contemplation of God, and rejection of unnecessary worldly pleasures. Later, Sufis would build on this concept for a different aim—mystical perception.

Though the point at which Sufism began has not been definitively determined, the word “Sufi” first appears to name the Shi‘i alchemist and ascetic Jābir Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 199/815) and the mystic, Abū Ḥāshim (d. 159/776). Both were of Kufah. There is however disagreement about considering
Abū Hāshim as the first to be called a Sufi, since he died forty years before the time the classical sources specify as the first appearance of the term. The word “Sufism” first appears in history in 199 A.H. to describe a Shi'i school of asceticism in Kufah. The early development of mysticism in Islam can be divided into two main trends, best represented by the personalities of Abū Yazīd Ṭayfūr Al-Bistāmī (d. 260/874) and Abū Al-Qāsim Al-Junayd (d. 298/910). Al-Bistāmī’s mystical path was characterized by sukūr (spiritual intoxication) and isolationism amongst its adherents. Followers of this trend were known as Malāmatiyyah (Malāmatīs). They preferred keeping their spiritual endeavors concealed and thus strove not to attract attention.

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331 "Sukūr is a state," writes Al-Kalābādhī, "in which the Sufi no longer recognizes the distinction between something and its exact opposite. The domination of God’s existence prevents him from distinguishing what is painful from what is joyful. Ṣaḥw follows sukūr. During it, recognition of the difference between the painful and joyful comes into existence. The Sufi will choose what is painful since it is Allah’s wish. He will not feel pain. Nay, he will find joy in the pain.” (Kalābādhī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad, At-Ta’arruf li-Madhhab Aḥl At-Taṣawwuf, ed. Maḥmūd Amīn An-Nawwī, Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah, Cairo, 1980, pp. 138, 139.). For more detailed information about sukūr and Ṣaḥw as well as other Sufi terminology see Al-Qushayrī, Abū Al-Qāsim ‘Abdu-Karīm, Ar-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah, ed. ‘Abdul-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd et al., Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthhah, Cairo, 1966.

332 The word Malāmatīs literally means blameworthy ones.
to themselves, thereby taking part in congregational religious prayers and the like—though they rejected such forms of worship. Their name is derived from their practice of deliberately incurring the censure of the public to avoid any possibility of being praised. They did this for themselves, for pride would have been a hindrance in perfecting sincerity to God alone. Al-Junayd’s teachings encouraged ṣaḥw (spiritual sobriety), which was thought to be a level beyond sukr, and companionship among its adherents. The followers of Al-Junayd’s path and the trend he represented are considered to be amongst the early Sufis. However, by the fifth century, the term Sufi came to apply to all Muslim mystics.³³³ In contrast to Malāmatis, Sufis were inclined to seeking spiritual training from their shaykhs. Malāmatis were further from the teachings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah than Sufis of Junaydi influence. Some Sufi orders such as the Naqshabandiyyah absorbed aspects of Malāmāti thought.³³⁴

Sufis wandered throughout Muslim lands and often gathered in khānqāhs (Sufi hostels), or ribāṭs (Sufi

³³³Massignon, Louis, "Taṣawwuf," First Encyclopaedia of Islam, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1987, p. 681. We will refer to Malāmātis and Sufis, collectively, as mystics.

hospices), and zâwiyahs (retreats of Sufi shaykhs).

Khânqâhs were usually endowed by governments or aristocrats and were rest-houses for mystics of various orientations. The Saljuqs founded many khânqâhs. These state-supported khânqâhs were often beautifully embellished as described by Ibn Jubayr: "They are ornamented palaces through all of which flow streams of water, presenting as delightful a picture as anyone could wish for."

From the type of mystic thought popularized by Al-Junayd and other early Sufi masters, ṭarîqahs (Sufi orders, literally, 'ways') arose sometime after the sixth/twelfth century. Ṭarîqahs were systems, associated with a particular Sufi shaykh and his disciples, by which one could experience the mystical path. The head of an order was usually part of a chain (silsilah) of Sufi shaykhs, supposedly going back to Al-Junayd or Al-Bistâmî to 'Alî Ibn Abî Tâlib and finally to the Prophet himself. The chains were, however, not necessarily linked by physical association, so the transmitter could receive the ṭarîqah merely by way of mystical contact with his predecessor in the chain, even if they were not contemporaries. Many Sufis welcomed elements which had been developed by the Shī'ah, particularly the

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335 All of these terms referred to a Sufi convent and were used, more or less, interchangeably. (J. Chabbi, "Khankâhs," The Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1978, v.4, p. 1025.)

notion that 'Ali had received secret teachings from the Prophet. Sufis identified such teachings with their own traditions though.\textsuperscript{337}

The aim of Sufism, as indicated previously, was initially to experience communion with God. From the days of Al-Junayd and Al-Bistâmî, Sufis believed it was possible to achieve \textit{fanā'\textsuperscript{338}}, annihilation of the self, and its complement \textit{baqā'}, remaining in God.\textsuperscript{338} Al-Junayd's definition of \textit{fanā'} as the highest form of \textit{tawḥīd}\textsuperscript{339} paved the way for ideas revolving around the notion of a total union with God.\textsuperscript{340} An


\textsuperscript{339}Al-Junayd describes this level of \textit{tawḥīd} as follows: "The second type of esoteric \textit{tawḥīd} consists in existence without individuality (\textit{shabah}) before God with no third person as intermediary between them, a figure over which His decrees pass according as He in His omnipotence determines, and that one should be sunk in the flooding seas of His unity, completely obliterated both from himself and from God's call to him and his answer to God. It is a stage where the devotee has achieved the realization of the oneness of God in true proximity to him. He is lost to sense and action because God fulfills in Him what He hath willed of him. This implies in his final state the worshipper returns to his first state, that he is as he was before he existed." (Al-Junayd, Abu Al-Qāsim, \textit{Rasā'il Al-Junayd}, ed. and trans. 'Ali Ḥasan 'Abd-ul-Qādir as \textit{The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd}, Luzag & Company Ltd., London, 1962, p. 177, Arabic Section pp. 56-57. On the other hand it is reported by Ibn Al-'Imād and Abu Ya'la that Al-Junayd distinguished between the Creator and the creations and had opposed the idea of pantheism. (Ibn Al-'Imād, \textit{Shadharāt adh-Dhahab}, v. 2, p. 228 and Abu Ya'la, \textit{Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah}, v. 1, p. 128 as cited in Hilmi, Mustafa, \textit{Ibn Taymiyah wat-Tasawwuf, Dār ad-Da'wah}, Alexandria, 1982, p. 214.) Such contradictory information is common in the works of the major Sufi figures.

\textsuperscript{340}Al-Junayd, Abu Al-Qāsim, \textit{Rasā'il Al-Junayd}, collected by 'Ali Ḥasan 'Abdul-Qādir with English translation titled \textit{The Life, Personality and
example of this is best depicted by the claim of ḥulūl (incarnation) made by one of Al-Junayd’s own disciples, Al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). Pantheism[^341] became very popular, and after the sixth/twelfth century, a unity of existence concept, known as waḥdat al-wujūd, came to be adopted by many Sufis.

The various ṭarīqahs had developed stages by which a novice Sufi could ascend towards fanā’. Ecstatic states indicated advancement from one stage to a higher one. **Ma'rifah,**[^342] knowledge of spiritual truths acquired through


[^342]: Sufis were ready to adopt almost any means from any source (even if the means were otherwise unlawful in the shari‘ah) by which to ease the way towards experiencing ecstatic states and achieving ma'rifah, which ultimately leads to fanā’. Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (d. 161/777) for example, learned the way of acquiring ma'rifah from a Christian monk. He states “I gained the way of ma'rifah from a monk named Sam'an. I entered his hermitage and asked him 'How long have you been in your hermitage?' 'For seventy years,' he replied. ‘What has been your food?’ I asked him. Slightly annoyed, he asked 'Oh my guest, what causes you to ask such a question?' ‘Curiosity’ I answered. ‘A chickpea every night,’ he answered. I enquired of him 'What makes your spirit such that a chickpea is sufficient for you?’ Signaling with his hands, he said ‘Do you see those who are facing you?’ referring to the angels. I answered ‘Yes.’ He said ‘Every year they come visit me for a day. They decorate my hermitage, circumambulating around it as an expression of glorification for me. Whenever my spirit weakens to worship, I remember this hour. Therefore I bear the struggle of a year for the glory of that day.’ Thus the ma'rifah penetrated my heart.” (Ibn Al-Jawzî, Writings of Al-Junayd, pp. 55-57 (Arabic Section); Inati, Shams C. and Omran, Elsayed M. H., “Al-Junayd on Unification and Its Stages: A Critical Examination,” Digest of Middle East Studies, Summer 1994, v. 3, No. 3, pp. 23-35.)
divine revelation, could be gained if one adhered to the Sufi Path. Ma‘rifah was not gained through intellectual means but rather through fayḍ (lit. emanation), or divine grace.

Sufis developed various dhikrs, repetitive invocations of God’s names, along with their accompanying rhythmic forms of breathing to focus their attention on God. Many other rituals, including special ceremonies, incantations, music, invocations of angels and other spirit beings, alcohol and drugs, came to be employed in pursuing the Sufi path. Indeed, almost any practice which could aid the Sufi in accomplishing his mission was utilized by some order or another. By the sixth/twelfth century, Sufis had developed methodical procedures by which the objectives of the mystical experience could be accomplished utilizing special dhikrs and physical exercises. Members of the public, who were not Sufis at all, often took part in musical gatherings for spiritual elevation and a relief from the pressures of everyday life. Much of Muslim society throughout the world came to be influenced by Sufi practices.

Jamāl-ud-Dīn ‘Abd-ur-Raḥmān, Ṭalḥīs Iblīs, ed. Muḥammad Aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, Beirut, 1989, p. 218; and Ghannām, Ṣal‘at, Aḏwā’ ‘Ala at-Taṣawwuf, ‘Ālam al-Kutub, Cairo, n.d., pp. 30-31.) This shows that asceticism is an important means of gaining ma‘rifah, while being a Muslim is not necessarily an essential factor.


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During the first five centuries of Islamic history, these Sufi trends were approached with condemnation by the Sunni ‘ulamā’ since many of them were in plain contradiction to the shari‘ah. But Sufis felt that the shari‘ah addressed outward aspects of human life, while the understanding of the ḥaqīqah (Reality) of the shari‘ah and of existence in general could be attained by the practice of Sufism. This left room for their ideas to go in any direction, since they were, in their view, immersed in a field separate, and even independent, of the shari‘ah. Feelings of superiority over the shari‘I minded arose because the ends of Sufism were thought to be the ultimate objectives of life. Tendencies arose amongst many Sufi groups to ignore the obligations of the shari‘ah after attaining a certain stage on the mystical path. By Ibn Taymiyah’s time, as we shall see, many antinomian tendencies had sprouted in popular Sufism.

Al-Junayd had played an early role in making Sufi doctrines acceptable within the realm of orthodoxy. He succeeded to some extent in giving the impression to the ‘ulamā’ that Sufism could function within the framework of the shari‘ah. But he also tried to justify the views of ittiḥād held by Al-Bistāmī and Al-Ḥallāj. By the end of

34\textsuperscript{5} For detailed information about Al-Junayd’s defense of Al-Bistāmī and Al-Ḥallāj, see Aṭ-Ṭūsī, Abū Naṣr As-Sarrāj, Al-Luma’, ‘Abdul-Ḥalîm Maḥmūd et al., Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, Cairo, 1960, pp. 461-501. Aṭ-Ṭūsī reported that it was said that Al-Bistāmī said: ‘He raised me once and put me to stand in front of Him and told me: ‘O Abī Yazīd my creations wish to see you’. I replied: ‘Decorate me with your Oneness.}
the fifth/eleventh century a change of attitude by the Sunni 'ulamā' towards Sufism began as a result of the works of As-Sulamī (330/941-412/1012) and his disciple Al-Qushayrī (376-465/986-1073). This steady process of acceptance reached a climax in the sixth/twelfth century through the efforts of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 505 A.H.). Al-Ghazālī's background in Greek logic, in addition to his education in fiqh from an early age, helped him to present Sufism to the fuqahā' in a more persuasive and palatable form. Sufism then gained acceptability amongst most of the Sunni 'ulamā' and masses. One of the major differences between Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyah is that the first considers those seeking the truth to be limited to one of four groups: mutakallimūn (people of kalām), Bāṭinīs (those who believe the Qur'ān to have hidden meanings), falāsifah (people of philosophy), and Sufis. Al-Ghazālī concluded after examining each of them

Dress me with your Selfhood. Raise me to your Singleness. So when your creatures will see me, they will say we see Thou. Thus You will be the manifested One. As for me, I will not be there. (At-Ṭūṣ, Abū Naṣr As-Sarrāj, Al-Luma', p. 461.) Al-Bistāmī is quoted by Hodgson to have said, 'I gazed upon Him with the eye of truth, and said to Him: Who is this?' He said: 'This is neither I nor other than I. There is no god but I.' Then He changed me out of my identity into His Selfhood... Then I...communed with Him with the tongue of His Grace, saying: 'How fares it with me with Thee?' He said: 'I am thine through thee; there is no god but Thou.' Al-Junayd approved of Al-Bistāmī's expressions but felt that a Sufi should ascend towards a higher state in which sobriety would resume and the sufi would thereupon have a more perfected self. Later, this concept would be expressed by Al-Ḥallāj in his statement "Anā al-ḥaqq" or "I am the Truth [God]." (Hodgson, Marshall G.S., The Venture of Islam, v. 1, pp. 404-405, 408-409.)

that truth could only be found in the way of the Sufis. Ibn Taymiyah, on the other hand, rejected such a limitation and refuted the ideologies of each of these groups, pointing out their deficiencies. He admitted some truth did exist with each, but held absolute truth to only be in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

6.2 The Mamlûks and Sufis

Prior to the Mamlûk rulers of Egypt, Šalaḥ-ud-dîn and the Ayyubids did much to support Sufism. They built khanqâhs, zâwiyyahs, and ribâts. Šalaḥ-ud-dîn welcomed Sufis from Asia into Egypt.

In the seventh/thirteenth century, many Sufi shaykhs of note migrated to Egypt from Morocco and Spain. Amongst them were Ibn 'Arabî (560/1165-638/1240), Abû Al-Ḥasan Ash-Shâdhîlî (d. 656/1258), Abû Al-‘Abbâs Al-Mursî (616-1220/686-1288), and Aḥmad Al-Badawî (596/1199-675/1276). All of these Sufis were popular in Egypt either just prior to or during Ibn Taymiyah’s life.

In Ibn Taymiyah’s Syria, the Rifâ‘iyyah and Naqshabandî ṭarîqahs, amongst others, were prevalent. Egypt played host to many Sufi ṭarîqahs from the east, becoming a home to a vast assortment of mystical ideas and practices. Two Sufi

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347 Al-Ghazâlî, Abû Ḥāmid, Al-Munqîdh min aḍ-Ḍalâl, pp. 22-23, 44-49.
349 'Âshūr, Sa'id, Miṣr wash-Shâm fī 'Aṣr al-Ayyubiyyin wal-Mamâlik, pp. 291-292.
orders founded in Egypt around Ibn Taymiyah’s time were the Badawiyyah and Dasüqiyyah, founded by Ahmad Al-Badawî and Ibrâhîm Ad-Dasüqi (644/1246–687/1288) respectively. Both Al-Badawî and Ad-Dasüqi had once been affiliated with the Rifâ‘î order. The Badawî order spread out of Egypt and branched out into other orders. It spread into Hijâz, Syria, Turkey, Tripolitania, and Tunisia. Ad-Dasüqi’s ṭarîqah also spread outside of Egypt. It came to be known as Ibrâhîmiyyah and was later called Dasüqiyyah.\(^{350}\)

The practice of state support for Sufi convents was continued by the Mamlûk sultanate of Egypt. The Mamlûk sultans and aristocracy founded and supported Sufis khângâhs. Support took the form of endowments for the building and maintenance of the khângâhs. Rukn-ud-dîn Baybars Al-Jâshankîr founded a khângâh in Cairo in 705/1306-1307 before becoming sultan. The khângâh was embellished with golden verses of the Qur‘ân. Food and financial support were provided for its Sufi inhabitants.\(^{351}\) Sultan Al-Malik An-Nâṣîr built a khângâh in Siryâqûs in 723 A.H. With the completion of the khângâh, An-Nâṣîr spent the night there

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reciting the Qur'an. It seems the Mamlüks had a special, spiritual appreciation for Sufism.

The historical period of Ibn Taymiyah was considered a golden age of Sufism. Sufis occupied positions in the state and some exercised influence over leaders. Sufis during Ibn Taymiyah's time were often community leaders as well. The inhabitants felt protected by the barakah, or blessings, of their local Sufi saints. Sufi shaykhs are even known to have been associated with groups of people of a specific profession, such as scribes and butchers, to provide blessings and protection. For instance, dancing girls ('awālim and ghawāzin) in Egypt were devoted to Aḥmad Al-Badawī.

Though the peculiar and anti-shar'I practices of Sufis were often tolerated, the Mamlüks were very strict about maintaining political, social, and religious stability in their sultanate. Endorsing what the society supported was to their benefit and thus they utilized this principle efficiently; though in the religious aspect, personal piety was also involved. At any rate, religious practices falling outside of what was mainstream and institutionalized were

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often disapproved of or banned. So although Sufism was generally accepted and patronized, some of its more peculiar practices were just as open to discretion as the fatwas of Ibn Taymiyah. It mainly depended on the personal and political feelings of a specific Mamlûk amîr.\textsuperscript{355}

The ideas of Muḥy-idd-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638 A.H.), waḥdat al-wujūd in particular, expressed in Al-Futūḥat al-Makkiyyah, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam and other works, were held in high esteem by many Sufis. The writings of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111), Ibn Al-Fārîq (d. 632/1235), and other Sufi thinkers were popular with many rulers and scholars. From such influences, mystic beliefs and practices, viewed by many Sunni scholars—particularly Ibn Taymiyah—as forms of bidʿah (innovation) or shirk (association of partners with Allah), became prevalent.

6.3 Ibn Taymiyah's position towards Sufism

6.3.1 Zuhd and Sufism. Contrary to the popular belief that Ibn Taymiyah was a great enemy of Sufis, careful examination of Ibn Taymiyah’s opinions reveals him to have taken a moderate position. Ibn Taymiyah’s main concern was that Sufis regulate their practices with the Qur‘ān and Sunnah. Volume eleven of his Fatāwa concentrates upon his views regarding Sufism and its practices.

\textsuperscript{355}Little, Donald P., "Religion Under the Mamluks," History and Historiography of the Mamluks, pp. 175, 181.
Ibn Taymiyah presents the dispute among the scholars regarding Sufism as follows:

People have disputed about their way. A group of the scholars condemned Sufis and Sufism, describing them as innovators and violators of the Sunnah. What the scholars of fiqh and kalâm have said about them previously has been transmitted to us. Another group viewed the Sufis in an extreme manner and considered them to be superior over all human beings after the rank of the prophets. Neither extreme view is an appropriate position... The appropriate stand is that they are a people who seek methods to be in greater obedience to Allah, similar to other people who seek to be in greater obedience to Allah. Among them are those who are outstanding in accordance with the degree of their efforts, and among them are people who are average and considered of the "people of the right." Among these two categories are those who try their best and may err, and there are also those who may commit sin and then repent or not repent. Also, among those associated with the Sufis are those who wrong themselves and are in disobedience to their Lord.356

So the positions of the Sufis vary according to the degree of obedience and disobedience to Allah. Just as there is no infallible person among the Muslims, there are no infallible Sufis. All are qualified to do good or to have shortcomings. Thus, Ibn Taymiyah considers the Sufis to be similar to other Muslims in falling into one of three categories--the outstanding in righteousness, those who wrong themselves and those who are somewhere between the two. Of course, for Ibn Taymiyah, the best Sufis were those whose dedication to the sharī'ah took priority over all other

spiritual pursuits. 'Abd-ul-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, for instance, was a personality Ibn Taymiyah favored due to his allegedly strict adherence to the sharî'ah.

The religious conviction and sharî devotional of the zuhhâd of the first three centuries of Islamic history were praiseworthy to Ibn Taymiyah. The zuhhâds' asceticism and renunciation of unnecessary worldly pursuits was tolerable. Asceticism was also a way of life for many Sufis. This had been borrowed from the zuhhâd. But the zuhhâd sought moral purification and salvation from the Hellfire. For mystics, asceticism and poverty were important means by which to attain shuhūd (witness of the presence of God) or fanā’. In order to avoid any uncontrolled interpretation or innovation, Ibn Taymiyah did not leave the definition of zuhd ambiguous. He states:

The permissible form of zuhd is the abandonment of anything that is not beneficial for the Hereafter. The abandonment of anything else that would be considered as a means of assistance in the obedience to Allah is not of the permissible zuhd. Restraint of oneself from activities which might attract away from obedience to Allah and His messenger is the permissible form.

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357 Some writers express doubt as to whether Al-Jîlânî was a Sufi or not. But in his book al-Ghunyah, Al-Jîlânî explains the rules and manners of the Sufis in a style similar to that found in the writings of the fuqahā’ and muḥddithūn. He also provides statements attributed to the early zuhhâd. In his other known work, Futûh al-Ghayb, Al-Jîlânî presents his thoughts on fanā’ along with his experiences of divine grace. (Hîlmî Muṣṭafâ, At-Taṣawwuf wal-Ittijâh as-Salafî fî al-‘Aṣr al-Ḥadîth, pp. 20-25.)

358 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmû‘at ar-Rasâ’il wa al-Masâ’il, p. 226.
It was not uncommon for ascetic Sufis to engage in extreme acts of self-restraint. The Prophet stressed not to neglect physical needs and avoid totally withdrawing from the world. Ibn Taymiyah held that all exercises of self-discipline designed to please Allah or draw nearer to Him had to be from the Sunnah of the Prophet. Thus, any rituals introduced as worship by Sufis were bid'ahs (innovations in the religion)—which are forbidden in Islam. He cited ḥadîths of the Prophet emphasizing monasticism (rahbânîyyah), in any form, to be prohibited. Ibn Taymiyah pointed out that bid'ah in the Islamic rituals first came into existence during the lifetime of the Prophet, and were strongly disapproved. Ibn Taymiyah elaborates thus:

Continuous silence is not permissible and is a form of bid'ah. Abstention from eating bread, meat, and drinking water are forms of rejected bid'ahs as well. It is narrated in Şâhîh al-Bukhârî, through the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs, may Allah be pleased with them, that the Prophet, peace be upon him, saw a man standing under the sun. He asked "What is this?" They [his companions] replied "This is Abû Isrâ'îl. He has made a vow to stand under the sun, not to be shaded, not to talk, and to fast the day." The Prophet replied, "Tell him to sit, to be shaded, to speak, and to continue fasting the day."

Also, it is narrated in Şâhîh Al-Bukhârî and Şâhîh Muslim, through the authority of Anas that "A company of men inquired about the worship of the Messenger of Allah. [When they were informed about it] They saw it as something little and said, "Who amongst us is similar to the Prophet, peace be upon

him [in that his sins have already been forgiven]." One of them said "As for myself, I will fast perpetually, never breaking my fast." The second said "As for me, I will stand in prayer all night, never to sleep." The third said, "As for me, I will never eat meat." The fourth said, "As for me, I will never marry." The Prophet, peace be upon him, declared "What is wrong with that company of men? They say so and so. As for myself, I fast [on some days] and break my fast [do not fast on some days]. I pray at night and sleep. I eat meat. And I marry women. Whosoever will deviate from my way, he is not of me." Therefore anyone who may follow a path thinking it is preferable to the path of the Prophet, he is not on the way of Allah and His Messenger.\(^\text{360}\)

He further says:

If those who follow the way of poverty, Sufism, zuhd, and worship [of Allah] do not establish their way through knowledge that is compatible with the sharî'ah, they will be astray from the [straight] way. Their corruption will exceed the good that they might do.\(^\text{361}\)

The Sufi concept of zuhd was not like Ibn Taymiyah's, as the following quote attributed to Al-Junayd demonstrates: "I would prefer for the [Sufi] beginner that he should not keep his mind preoccupied with the following three affairs to save his ḥāl (lit. status, as a Sufi term it refers to a transitional state of spiritual enlightenment) from being corrupted: means of livelihood, seeking the knowledge of ḥadīth, and marriage. I would like for the Sufi that he should not read or write in order to be more focused in his

\(^{360}\)Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū' Fuḥūla Shaykh-il-Īslām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 11, pp. 200-201.

\(^{361}\)Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, p. 225.
pursuit."\(^{362}\) Al-Junayd's discouragement of interaction with society in matters of trade and marriage, both of which run contrary to teachings found in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, indicate an element of Christian monastic influence. Indeed, such a monastic bent is characteristic of Sufism throughout its history. The Sufi concept of zuhd reflected here was well developed and practiced by Ibn Taymiyah's time.

Though Ibn Taymiyah's definition of zuhd varied from the Sufi one, he tolerated the idea that Sufism had roots in the zuhd. Ibn Taymiyah's view regarding the relationship between zuhd and taṣawwuf was in contrast to that of the Ḥanbalī faqīh, Abu Al-Faraj Ibn Al-Jawzī (d. 597 A.H.),\(^{363}\) who made a clear distinction between the two. Ibn Al-Jawzī stated that the word Sufism did not exist during the zuhhad period. He also wrote that taṣawwuf was a more encompassing, complex ideology than zuhd. He held that Sufism was a sharī'ah,

\(^{362}\)Al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib, Qūt al-Qulūb, Cairo, 1351 A.H., v. 3, p. 135.

different from the sharī'ah of the Prophet Muḥammad. He further supported his argument by citing the rejection of Sufism by notable Sunni scholars of earlier times such as Ash-Shāfi‘ī. Ash-Shāfi‘ī, who permitted the practice of zuhd, had rejected taṣawwuf, saying, “Sufism is established on laziness,” and “If someone becomes a sufi early in the day he will be a fool by mid-day.” Yet when Ibn Taymiyah identified good Sufis of the past, the zāhid Al-Ḥasan Al- Başrî (d. 110/728) was mentioned, though neither the word Sufi nor Sufism came into existence until the end of the second century A.H. Ibn Taymiyah mainly looked to the specific doctrines of the Sufis, which he wanted to bring within the confines of the sharī'ah, regardless of what they called themselves. When he described the Sufi target as being in greater obedience to Allah, he was not quite right, since Sufism during his time was pivoted towards attaining fanā’. As Ibn Taymiyah himself elaborated, there are two stages to be passed prior to the attainment of shuhūd. The first is the shar‘ī target of recognizing obedience and disobedience to Allah in one’s actions. The next stage is achieved when the Sufi sees only obedience in his actions, regardless of how they may be classified from a shar‘ī

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perspective—all his deeds being a manifestation of God’s will. Finally, when shuhūd is attained, there is no consciousness of obedience and disobedience. Only awareness of God remains. However, Ibn Taymiyah argued that those trying to achieve the highest level of shuhūd were followers of the doctrine of wahdat al-wujūd. Implications of the monism of existence concept posed potential social dangers as we shall see in the next section. Severe social consequences could result from shuhūd and the stage just prior to the “witness” of God. Individuals would have license to commit any actions—including crimes—in the name of obedience to God, since no one has the right to object to God’s will or even has the ability to do anything contrary to what He has predetermined. The distinction between the permissible and impermissible would be meaningless since all actions were already predetermined by God.

According to Ibn Taymiyah those among the mystics who indulged in bid‘ahs and allowed themselves to pursue ideas that contradicted the Qur‘ān and Sunnah, as understood by the Salaf, were not following the spirit of the teachings of the classical Sufi masters, as Ibn Taymiyah explains:

Groups of the people of bid‘ah [religious innovation] and zandaqah [free thought] have claimed to be of them [Sufis]. The knowledgeable leaders of the Sufis, such as Al-Junayd Ibn

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Muḥammad, master of the ṭāʾīfat (group of Sufis), did not consider these people to be among them [Sufis]. This is cited by Ash-Shaykh Abū 'Abd-ir-Raḥmān As-Sulāmī in Ṭabaqāt āš-Ṣūfiyyah and the Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb in Tārīkh Baghdād.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyah, Majnūʿ Fatawa Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. II, p. 18.}

The bid'ah and zandaqah Ibn Taymiyah refers to took the form of rituals as well as doctrines. The primary aim of Sufism (and life, for Sufis) was to bring individuals in contact with God and mystically experience His Divinity. Yet the original purpose of Islam was to draw people into submission to God and strive to please Him (thereby attaining peace and reward in the present life and the Hereafter, as well as harmony with the natural state of existence). Contrary to Islam, the concept of reward and punishment in the Hereafter holds little significance to Sufis. Instead, the target is to achieve farā' in God. It was therefore inevitable—for as the ḥadīth hints: “Indeed, every innovation is misguidance”—that most, if not all, of the fundamental doctrines of Sufis would conflict with those of the sharī'ah, for different means must be utilized to achieve

\footnote{Ḥāfiẓ is a title used by the 'ulamā' to identify a scholar who has mastered the discipline of ḥadīth (Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth). The Ḥāfiẓ has memorized and has knowledge of the majority of ḥadīths; little can escape the knowledge of the Ḥāfiẓ. A Ḥāfiẓ is more knowledgeable than a muḥaddith, whose knows more than he does not. Ḥākīm is a level beyond the Ḥāfiẓ. The Ḥākīm has memorized and has knowledge of almost all ḥadīths in existence.}
different ends. So, any time scholars, like Ibn Taymiyah, call for a return to the understanding and practice of Islam in its original form, their reaction against Sufis engaging in extra-shar'ī practices is a logical consequence.

6.3.2 **Ittiḥād and wahdat al-wujūd.** Two concepts prevalent in Sufi circles which found difficulty mixing with the sharī'ah were ittiḥād and wahdat al-wujūd. Ibn Taymiyah was quite critical of both and issued the most severe of his criticisms of Sufi beliefs upon them. He explicitly condemned those Sufis who held and had propagated belief in ittiḥād (union of the Divine and the creation) and wahdat al-wujūd (unity of being or existence), such as Al-Ḥallāj (d. 309 A.H.), Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638 A.H.), Ibn Sab'īn (d. 673 A.H.), Ibn Al-Fāriḍ (d. 632 A.H.) and At-Tilimsānī (d. 690 A.H.).

Ittiḥād fit well with the bent of mind of those engaging in mystically ecstatic experiences. To have the mind completely absorbed by a state of ecstasy into some idea can lead one to lose conscious recognition of the existence of anything but that notion. Thus in the case of mystics, one’s own existence is forgotten while engrossed in his focal point. The Sufi states of farā' and baqā’, where it was said awareness of one’s own existence was totally replaced with

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that of God's, exemplifies an ultimate state of ecstasy. Such experiences led some Sufis to claim Divine incarnation within themselves and adopt pantheism. Ittihād was put into two categories by Ibn Taymiyah: either limited (ittihād muqayyad khāṣṣ), which means Divine incarnation in an individual or limited number of things, or absolute (ittihād muṭlaq 'āmm). The first type is also known as ḥulūl (incarnation) and is illustrated in the Christian doctrine that God is incarnate in Jesus or the Holy Spirit, or in the belief of some of the more extreme Shi'ah sects that Allah is incarnate in their imāms. Ibn Taymiyah mentioned that some Sufis believed Allah to be incarnate in their shaykhs. The second division of ittihād means that the Essence of Allah is incarnate in everything, like the pantheism of the Hindus. The early Jahmiyyah believed in pantheism as well. Evidence of absolute ittihād can be found in Al-Ghazālī's thought. Al-Ghazālī divided the concept of tawḥīd into four levels.

Of the highest level he said:

...At this rank, the person wouldn't see in the existence except One. This is the rank of the šiddiqlūn [those with firm belief]. The Sufis call it fanā' (annihilation). ...Therefore he does not bear witness to any but One. He doesn't see the images in their multi-existence, but observes their Oneness. This is the highest rank of tawḥīd. You may ask how it is that he does not see but One while he can see heaven, earth, and all physical objects--and they are many. How can all these multiple forms of existence be counted as one? You should know that this is the top of the knowledge through kashf [the removal of the veils between the Sufi and divine knowledge]. The secrets of this
knowledge cannot be written in a book. As the ‘arifs have said, ‘revealing the secrets of God’s lordship is an act of disbelief’.

Al-Ḥallāj occupied this fourth level from Al-Ghazālī’s perspective. Another analogy Al-Ghazālī provided to illustrate this concept was that just as a human’s body consists of different organs and is described as a single body, similarly the Creator and the creations are a single whole. At the early steps of Sufism, according to Al-Ghazālī, the Sufi is qualified for mushāhadah (witnessing the presence of God) and kashf (removal of the veil preventing vision of the unseen). He will see, while awake, the angels and the spirits of the Prophets and receive knowledge from them. Afterwards, he elevates to higher ranks, attaining the level of qurb (proximity). At this rank the Sufi could imagine ṭulūl, ittiḥād or wuṣūl (union). Again, he did not approve of revealing the experiences of these ranks. Ibn Taymiyah considered Al-Ghazālī’s doctrines to be mere imitations and extensions of Greek philosophical ideas. He said Al-Ghazālī was confused, for his ideas contradicted each other. In some parts of his writing Al-Ghazālī criticized certain philosophical ideas, considering them to be

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tantamount to disbelief. In other parts of his works, he adopted and defended exactly what he condemned elsewhere.\textsuperscript{372}

The term waḥdat al-wujūd means that the Essence of Allah is the same as the essence of everything in existence. Therefore those holding this belief conclude that Allah did not create anything different from Himself. The concept of waḥdat al-wujūd was formally developed by Ibn 'Arabī. Ibn 'Arabī wrote that all existing things constitute the Supreme Being, and thereby rejected any distinction between Creator and creation. He puts it thus: "The 'ārif [Sufi saint] sees Allah in everything; nay, he sees Him as being everything,"\textsuperscript{373} and "Glorified is He who manifested all things and He Himself is them."\textsuperscript{374} Thus, he wrote in the introduction of al-Fuṣūṣ, "The servant is the lord and the lord is the servant...." Furthermore, he elaborates on his ideas by stating, "Our existence is His existence. We are in need of Him for our existence and He is need of us for His manifestation. ...Therefore I praise Him and He praises me and I worship Him and He worships me."\textsuperscript{375} Accordingly, he considered Christians to be infidels since their Trinity limited God to only three


\textsuperscript{373}Ibn 'Arabī, \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam}, Matba'at Al-Ḥalabi, Cairo, n.d., p. 374.


\textsuperscript{375}Ibn 'Arabī, \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam}, v. 1, p. 83.
divisions. Pagans erred when they limited their worship only to specific objects.\(^{376}\) However, Ibn 'Arabī warned against revealing such knowledge to those who were not qualified to understand it. Further systemization and development of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas was carried out by his disciples Sadr-ud-dīn Al-Qawnawī and 'Afif-ud-dīn At-Tilimsānī. Ibn Taymiyah referred to the latter as the most deviant of the three.\(^{377}\)

There is a significant difference between pantheism and wahdat al-wujūd. Ibn Taymiyah explained that while in the former Allah is said to have an essence separate from His essence in creation (in all of which he is said to be incarnate) in the latter, no distinction is made between the essence of creation and His essence.\(^{378}\) Of course, wahdat al-wujūd was just as removed from the sharī'ī conception of tawḥīd as ittihād was. It provided a host of startling paradoxes such as the Pharaoh of Moses being a true believer, and Satan as one who was in obedience to Allah for not prostrating to Adam as well as being bound for Paradise. In his refutation of wahdat al-wujūd, Ibn Taymiyah referred to the many inconsistencies in the doctrine, mentioning this exchange to illustrate the paradox: “One of them [believing

\(^{376}\) Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Furğān Bayna Awliyā' Ar-Raḥmān wa Awliyā' Ash-Shayṭān, p. 90.

\(^{377}\) Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, pp. 178-184.

\(^{378}\) Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, pp. 178-184; see also Baldick, Julian, Mystical Islam, p. 84.
in the unity of existence] said to his companion [in belief], 'If anyone claims that there is nothing except Allah existing in the universe, he is a liar.' The other told him, 'Who is that who lied?'

Similarly, some of the conclusions Ibn 'Arabi reached were obvious contradictions of his premise. For instance, how could Christians be infidels, for any reason, when they were supposed to be the Deity as well? Ibn Taymiyah concluded that not only was waḥdat al-wujūd in contradiction with the sharī'ah but with logic as well. Yet advocates of waḥdat al-wujūd justified such inconsistencies by claiming kashf (acquisition of divine knowledge) could only make one fully comprehend the reality of the unity of existence. At-Tilimsānī said in this regard, "It has been proven to us that with kashf is acquired such knowledge which is in clear contradiction with logic and intellectual evidence." Ibn Taymiyah quoted a Sufi saying, "Whosoever aims to achieve the ḥaqīqah should abandon both logic and the sharī'ah." However, though Ibn Taymiyah believed that the Qur'ān and Sunnah could have information which was beyond the

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379 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, p. 117.


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capacity of human intellect, he asserted that it ultimately could not be contrary to reason.\textsuperscript{381}

Many potentially severe social and practical consequences of the doctrine of wahdat al-wujūd existed. The line of separation between what is socially acceptable and objectionable ceased to exist because of the essential similarity of everything in existence. Thus, there was not necessarily any distinction between what was generally considered right and wrong by the sharī'ah or by the society. Laws prohibiting marriage between certain relatives, as specified in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, could be considered meaningless. If all of life should be an experience of the Divine Reality and all things were in fact merely manifestations of that Reality, then for what reason should marriage\textsuperscript{382} (being no exception) be limited to any particular type of partner. When someone inquired of At-Tilimsânî: “Since the Creator and the creation are the same [single being], why then, is the wife lawful for marriage, while the daughter and the mother are not?” He replied: “Daughter, mother, and non-relative—all are the same [for marriage]. None of them are prohibited for us. But those who are veiled

\textsuperscript{381}Ibn Taymiyah, \textit{Al-Furqān Bayna Awliyā' Ar-Raḥmān wa Awliyā' Ash-Shayṭān}, pp. 91.

\textsuperscript{382}Ibn 'Arabī said "Allah can never be recognized except through objects. The recognition of Allah as manifested in the form of the female is the most greatest and most perfected one. And the greatest connection [with Allah] is during sexual intercourse." (Ibn 'Arabī, \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam}, v. 1, p. 217.)
[lacking in this spiritual knowledge of Sufism] have said it is prohibited. We say that it is prohibited for you."

With such potential to pervert society from commonly accepted social norms, it was important for Ibn Taymiyah to openly condemn wahdat al-wujūd. Ibn Taymiyah considered Sufis holding such views to be unbelievers. Additionally, some Sufis refused to fight the Crusaders, with the apology that they could not fight Allah. It was therefore a potential danger to the purity of the original Islamic belief. Ibn Taymiyah felt Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers had given a Sufi light to ideas adopted from Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus, through the translations of Ibn Sīnā. He termed them ṣufiyyat al-malāḥidah al-falāsifah (Sufi heretical philosophers) and said their beliefs were further astray than those of the Jews, Christians, and even the Pagan Arabs. Because ittihād and wahdat al-wujūd struck at the heart of Islamic monotheism (and were classified by the Sunni ‘ulamā’ as shirk, the greatest of sins in Islam), we may easily understand why Ibn Taymiyah’s attack was so severe.

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384 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘ Fatāwa Shaykh-il-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 11, p. 74; and Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘at ar-Rasa‘īl wa al-Masā‘īl, p. 117.
6.3.3 Sufi rituals and practices. There were many Sufi practices and beliefs which were in conflict with or different from those of the sharī'ah aside from those resulting directly from the doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd. From the beginning of their history, Sufis had practices and rituals alien to orthodox Islam. As long as the focus remained God, many Sufis did not limit themselves to dhikr or any such practices of Islamic origin in their spiritual journeys. The sharī'ah was removed from the mystic realm, or at best, was a mere starting point. Therefore, Sufi rituals took on myriad forms, while their practices were often not in line with the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

However, the spirit of Al-Junayd's school to avoid outward conflict with the sharī'ī mandates not only won Sufis a degree of acceptance from members of the 'ulamā' like Ibn Taymiyah, but also provided some sharī'ī control over Sufism. For this reason too, Sufism grew in popularity and maintained an Islamic-type identity throughout its history. This was despite the fact that Al-Junayd himself believed in the notion of a distinction between sharī'ah and ḥaqīqah. It was due to the different objectives of the sharī'ah and mystic ḥaqīqah that different practices and rituals arose between Sunni Islam and Sufism. But such control, practically speaking, ultimately took the form of mere acknowledgment of the obligation of following the sharī'ah. After agreeing to outwardly respect the sharī'ah, Sufi orders were left to
their privacy by most of the 'ulamā' to do as their shaykhs dictated. The secrecy which orders maintained in regard to their practices and doctrines from the un-illuminated public helped to keep anti-Sufi reaction to a minimum (at least when considering how prevalent Sufism became after the fifth century A.H.).

In time, many Sufi practices which were once vehemently opposed by the 'ulamā', such as music and saint-veneration, came to be more or less tolerated (particularly by government authorities) and became popular with the general masses. Throughout the Muslim world by Ibn Taymiyah’s time, it was not rare for Sunni scholars themselves to be Sufis. Increasing approval amongst the 'ulamā' and society for Sufi practices signified the acceptance of the Sufi belief of a dichotomy between the aims of sharī'ah and ḥaqīqah. But the Sunni scholars, as a group, never totally accepted Sufism, as indicated from the scarcity of 'ulamā' who were also murshids.\textsuperscript{386} Restrictions on Sufi practices and rituals were eased further by this development. But for Ibn Taymiyah, anyone claiming that the Prophet Muḥammad was sent with only the outward aspects of faith, and therefore his message is incomplete or that a way to Allah can be followed other than

\textsuperscript{386}Trimingham, J. Spencer, \textit{The Sufi Orders in Islam}, pp. 243-244.
what was in the Sunnah, was not a Muslim. This is illustrated in an argument he had with a Rifā‘ī shaykh:

Shaykh ‘Abdullah raised his voice and said: “We have our own hāl (mystical affair) and divine matters not recognizable.” He continued to mention some things, the exact words of which I did not catch, such as meetings, schools, bātin, ḥāqīqah. His conclusion was that they have hidden (bātin) knowledge which should not be objected to by the people of apparent (ẓāhir) knowledge. Angrily, I told him bātin, ẓāhir, meetings, schools, sharī‘ah, ḥaqīqah, all of these should be referred to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His messenger. It is not permissible for anyone to violate them, neither the shaykhs and Sufis, nor kings and amīrs, nor scholars and qādīs, nor anyone else. Nay, all human beings are obligated to obey Allah and His Messenger.

Justification for their practices was not limited to claims of being bātinī. Biblical passages were utilized as well. A Rifā‘ī shaykh defended his use of iron collars with reports from Biblical sources. Ibn Taymiyah did not think Muslims needed to follow accounts from previous Scriptures, even if they were accurate, since all were canceled by the Qur‘ān and Sunnah.

There were some scholars prior to Ibn Taymiyah who opposed aspects of Sufi doctrines and practices. In his

387 Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Furqān Bayna Awliyā’ Ar-Rahmān wa Awliyā’ Ash-Shayṭān, pp. 74, 110.
388 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘at ar-Rasā’il wa al-Masā’il, pp. 147-148.
389 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘at ar-Rasā’il wa al-Masā’il, pp. 146-147.
book At-Tanbīh war-Radd 'Ahl al-Ahwā' wal-Bida', Abū Al-
Husayn Al-Maštî (d. 377 A.H.) criticized a mystic group
called Ar-Rūḥāniyyah, who claimed their spirits would travel
to heaven, thereat talking and shaking hands with Allah. As
they considered themselves friends of Allah, stealing,
adultery, and drinking were lawful for them. Wider
criticism is given by the Ḣanbālī faqīh Abū Al-Faraj Ibn Al-
Jawzî (d. 597 A.H.) in Taḥīs Iblīs. Ibn Al-Jawzî criticizes
music and dancing, accompanying young children, and
abandoning means of livelihood. He is critical of the Sufi
call for a life of poverty. Miracles attributed to Sufis are
attacked. Ibn Al-Jawzî holds that the Sufis had abandoned
knowledge of the Qurʿān and Sunnah for their stories. The
rejection of pantheistic notions is especially strong. He
considers Sufis to have separate identity, far from Sunni
belief. Ibn Taymiyah's approach to the problem was
moderate in comparison.

390 Al-Maštî, Abu Al-Ḥussayn, At-Tanbīh war-Radd 'Ahl al-Ahwā' wal-
Bida', Cairo, 1949, pp. 92-93 as cited in: Badawi, 'Abd-ur-Rahmān,
Tārīkh at-Taḥawwuf al-Islāmī, 70-71.

391 Beautiful young boys were added to a spiritual concert (sama') to
help induce ecstasy. (Schimmel, Annemarie, Mystical Dimensions of Islam,
p. 181.)

criticisms of Sufism.
The practices which aroused the most attention and criticism upon Sufis were those which directly conflicted with the sharī'ah and were generally not practiced by the society. In the case of Ibn Taymiyah, however, even some of the most commonly accepted Sufi practices came under attack. Much can be learned from the Sufi-related matters for which Ibn Taymiyah's legal opinions were sought. Dervishes known as Qalandaris were distinct from both Malāmatis and Sufis. Qalandaris went out of their way to be social misfits, often taking on outrageous, socially detestable appearances and behavior to stand out from the rest of the society. They were known for going out of their way to incur blame and public disapproval more than the Malāmatis. The Qalandaris and Malāmatis came to be known for their antinomian, un-sharī'ī practices amongst mystics early on. They continued thus well into Ibn Taymiyah's time. Ibn Taymiyah states:

As for the Qalandaris with shaved beards, they are from the people who have gone astray. The majority are disbelievers in Allah and His messenger. They do not have regard for the obligations of prayers and fasting. They do not prohibit what Allah and His messenger prohibited. Nor do they follow the religion of truth... They are not from the ummah or Ahl-us-Sunnah... Moreover, they have abandoned the obligations and committed the prohibitions, similar to the Malāmatis who try to conceal righteousness and display signs of corruption. They deserve

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394 Karamustafa, Ahmet T., God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1994, p. 36.
blame and punishment from Allah in this world and the world to come. They should all be punished.”

Some Sufis felt they were no longer obligated to perform Islamic obligations such as the five daily prayers. Hajj was abandoned since the Ka’bah itself revolved around them, while fasting too was no longer necessary since their spirits had already been liberated from physical desires. Even the use of intoxicating drugs was thought to be acceptable by some. Alcohol, for example, was considered lawful, since its prohibition was for the common folk, who could lose their minds and get into fights. A Sufi shaykh wearing a large, patched cloak named Ibrâhîm Al-Qattān was brought to Ibn Taymiyah in 704 A.H. Ibn Taymiyah ordered his garment to be torn up, hair be shaved, long nails be cut, and mustache, which was falling over his mouth in defiance of the Sunnah, be trimmed. He told him to repent from saying indecent words and using hashish and other intoxicants. Another Sufi shaykh was brought before Ibn Taymiyah shortly afterwards and was also told to desist from substance abuse. In the same month Ibn Taymiyah went to a mosque and ordered his companions and stone cutters to remove a rock by the river at the Mosque which people used to visit and provide vows for.

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395 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘at ar-Rasā‘il wa al-Masā‘il, pp. 64-65.
these incidents, we can also see that Ibn Taymiyah was recognized as a legal authority whose rulings were implemented by his followers and respected by the Mamlûks despite his not being directly affiliated with the state. These types of antinomian practices are known to have not been exclusive to Ibn Taymiyah’s time or land. They were mostly a result of the Sufi belief that it was possible to become far more pious than an average Muslim following only the shar‘î prescriptions. It may also be noted that in the second level of shuhûd and beyond, as mentioned earlier, some Sufis saw whatever they did as nothing but obedience to God. Therefore shar‘î restrictions could become irrelevant.

Ecstatic states took the mystic to higher stages on the path to fanâ’. But rapture could be achieved in many ways. So, various forms of dhikr were devised and usually complemented with rhythmic forms of breathing (of ascetic eastern Christian influence), to increase the individual’s absorption into the remembrance of God.

Music was accompanied with the singing of poems by Sufis to heighten the ecstasy during their dhikr gatherings. The form of dhikr accompanied with music and dancing is mentioned in the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{398} According to Al-Harawî Al-Anşârî

\textsuperscript{398}The Sufi dhikr with songs and music has an antecedent description in the following passages: “Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged
a Hanbali Sufi, music was an important means by which to attain sukūr. There was a debate between the fuqahā' and Sufis as to whether music was permissible even for those who were using it for spiritual purposes. Ibn Al-Jawzī had attacked samā' (lit. listening), which was a spiritual concert involving music, songs and dancing, while the famous Sufi teacher, Ahmad Al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) wrote a defense of samā'. Ibn Taymiyah agreed with Sufis like Al-Harawi that samā' could produce a case of intoxication similar to or greater than alcohol. He distinguished between the permissible music and the prohibited kind. Listening to

sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." (The Holy Bible International Version, International Bible Society, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1984, Psalms: 149-150.)

Al-Harawi Al-Ansārī was a famous Hanbali Sufi. He wrote Manāzil as-Sā'irīn. Al-Harawi’s concept of fanā’ was criticized by Ibn Taymiyah. Madārij as-Sālikīn is commentary by Ibn Al-Qayyim on Al-Harawi’s book. Ibn Al-Qayyim defends Al-Harawi’s thoughts as being free of pantheism. (See Hīlmi. Muṣṭafā, At-Taṣawwuf wal-İttijāh as-Salāfī fī al-‘Aṣr al-Ḥadīth, pp. 3-16.)


the Qur'ān would produce perfection in a person's character and khushū' (humility) in the heart. But Ibn Taymiyah maintained the opinion of other Sunni fuqahā' that, other than the use of a drum, musical instruments were not permissible, as supported by various ḥadīth. Ibn Taymiyah said the Prophet did not allow even his most righteous Companions to listen to songs with music. He refuted a claim made by Sufis that the Prophet was once listening to a Bedouin and became so emotional as a result that his cloak fell from his shoulders. He clarified that the muḥaddithūn were in full agreement that the ḥadīth was falsely attributed to the Prophet. Thus even Sufis who were considered to have attained a high spiritual status would not be permitted to listen to music. Such methods were only promoted by the zanādiqāh (apostates) of the Sufis and the philosophers.

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405 Ibn Ar-Rawāndī states "The fuqahā' have disputed about songs and music. A group has deemed it permissible, while another has considered it something despised. As for me, I consider it an obligation." (Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū' Fatāwa Shaykh-il-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 11, p. 570.)

Due to the popularity and respect Sufism enjoyed with the masses in the Mamlük dominion, Ibn Taymiyah’s rejection of music, an essential part of the rituals of some Sufi circles, had the potential for reaction from the society as well as political authorities.

Next, let us briefly examine some of Ibn Taymiyah’s legal opinions on the individuals who came to epitomize the prestige of the mystic way of life to the common people and Sufis alike—the Sufi shaykhs. Sufi shaykhs were highly venerated by their disciples. The murīd (disciple) was expected to blindly submit himself to the training principles of his murshid, who would guide him with the methods of the ṭarīqah through the unknowns of the mystic path. The wearing of khīrqat at-Taṣawwuf (the patched cloak of Sufism) symbolized the submission of the murīd to the murshid. The murīd would thereupon surrender his opinions and accept all the commands of his shaykh as being perfect.407 Ibn Taymiyah explicitly condemned the concept of khīrqat at-taṣawwuf.408


408 George Makdisi interprets Ibn Taymiyah’s tolerance towards some Sufi aspects as approval of Sufism. Furthermore, he introduces a theory—or an assumption—that Ibn Taymiyah was a Sufi engaged with a Sufi ṭarīqah and that khīrqat at-Taṣawwuf was transferred to him. Makdisi claims that Ibn Taymiyah was one of the links in a chain of Sufi genealogy (silsilah), and that Ibn Taymiyah said, “I wore the blessed Sufi cloak of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī, there being between him and me two (Sufi shaikhs).” (Makdisi, George, “The Hanbali School and Sufism,” Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam, Part V, p. 123.) As his reference, Makdisi cites a manuscript entitled Targhīb al-Muṭahābbīn fī labs khīrqat al-mutamaiyīzin. by Jamāl-ud-Dīn Aṭ-Ṭalyānī, available in
He considered the isnād of the khirqah, which allegedly went back to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, then to the Prophet and on to Jibrīl (Gabriel), who was said to have received it from Allah in a box, to be an absolute fabrication. He also stated that the Sufi claim that the Prophet or 'Umar wore the khirqat at-taṣawwuf was completely a lie. Ibn Taymiyah commented about the oath of allegiance that the Sufi shaykh would take from the new recipient of the khirqah, stating that while some of the conditions of the pledge were part of the beliefs of every Muslim, others were in contradiction with Islamic principles. For example, honesty, truthfulness, and forgiveness of oppressors were part of the tenets of Islam.

the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin as Ms. 3296 (8), folios 49a-70b, sec. fol. 67a. Ibn Taymiyah's severe condemnation of the khirqat at-taṣawwuf means that Makdisi's claim is completely inconsistent with Ibn Taymiyah's principles and with all of his writings. Furthermore, Makdisi admits the source of the quote mentioned above is lost. He gives no further information on this lost work. In none of Ibn Taymiyah's writings, nor in the writings of those who wrote biographies of him, such as Ibn 'Abd-il-Hādī, Al-Bazzār, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Yūsuf Al-Hanbālī, are there statements or even indications that Ibn Taymiyah was Sufi or associated with any tariqah in any phase of his life. Ibn Taymiyah participated in a number of debates with Sufis. The Qādirīs themselves came under attack for their attribution of supernatural powers to 'Abd-ul-Qādir Al-Jilānī. (Nizami, Khāliq Ahmad, "The Qādiriyyah Order," Islamic Spirituality, Seyyed Hossein Nasr ed., p. 9.) In none of these debates did any Sufi claim that Ibn Taymiyah himself was a Sufi. Ibn Taymiyah was even imprisoned at the Sufi leader Shaykh Manbījī's urging of Sultan Baybars Jāshankīr. We can conclude from these points that the authors of the sources used by Makdisi are most likely Sufi and that they are attempting to justify their practices by attributing their practices to a known scholar such as Ibn Taymiyah.

Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū' Fatāwa Shaykh-il-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 11, pp. 85-105; and Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, pp. 157-158.
Blind loyalty, on the other hand, was not. The Sufi shaykh was the bridge between the murīd and God. Thus the awe that existed for the shaykh as spiritual director along with his own nearness to God, God being said to speak to the shaykh and providing revelation to him, could lead to an elevation of near Deity status. Ibn Taymiyah was asked to give fatwas regarding those whose hearts were filled with passion for their shaykhs to the point that if one of them stumbled over something they would call out to their shaykh for help, in the shaykh's absence. Prostrations were also said to be made to the shaykh once in his presence and once in his absence.

Some Sufi shaykhs were revered as much in death as in life—and in many cases more so—as their reputations became legendary. In life, they were often thought to have the ability to cause benefit or harm, knowledge of the unseen, and control of the worldly affairs of the universe. There was a Sufi congress or diwān, which was thought by Sufis to wield invisible control over the world. Ibn Taymiyah

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410 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū‘at ar-Rasa‘il wa al-Ma‘āil, pp. 158-159.

412 According to Sufi belief, the diwān consists of the ghawth, who is said to be a resident of Makkah, the four awtād, who each have authority over a fourth of the world, the seven aqāb, the forty abdāl, and three hundred nujabā'. The members of this congress include Sufi saints who may be among the living of the particular time, or they may also include some who died in previous times. Ibn Taymiyah also considered this idea to be similar to the concept of the Imām among the Shi‘ah, who believe that there is no period of time in which there is not an infallible imām.
completely rejected this concept. He considered it to be a fabrication with no basis in the Qur'an or Sunnah. To ascribe such powers to anyone other than Allah was tantamount to shirk. For the common man, the shaykh was a source of barakah and means by which a supplication would be answered. After a shaykh departed from the world, it was still believed by some who knew him in life or had heard of the piety and miracles attributed to him that it was possible to continue to receive his blessings and favors. People would visit the shrines of Sufi saints to pray for the removal of afflictions and the like. Some shrines became the centers of major pilgrimages and tomb-worship. People would either seek intercession from the saint with Allah or make requests directly to the saint. Shrines were distributed throughout Syria and Egypt, and vows to them were approved by many scholars, many of whom were beneficiaries of these funds. Sometimes the shrines were not tombs of the saints believed to be there. These practices were considered shirk by Ibn Taymiyah. In his refutation, Ibn Taymiyah quoted Ibn 'Abbās existing somewhere on the earth. (Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū' Fatāwa Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, v. 11, pp. 433-444; Ibn Taymiyah, Majmū'at ar-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il, pp. 57-64; and Nizami, Khaliq Ahmad, "The Qādiriyyah Order," Islamic Spirituality, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, pp. 12-13.) According to Ibn 'Arabī each qūṭb receives a pledge from all of creation except human beings and jinn, for few of them give it. He mentioned that he met a qūṭb in Morocco and received divine knowledge from him. Yet was ordered to conceal it. (Ibn 'Arabī, Muḥy-īd-Dīn, Rasā'il Ibn-il-'Arabī, Dār Iḥyā' at-Turāth al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1361 A.H, pp. 4, 14 Section of "Manzil al-Qūṭb").
as saying idolatry began with tomb-worship.\textsuperscript{413} Since these practices were widespread among non-Sufis in Syria and Egypt, Ibn Taymiyah was taking a chance of offending a large number of people.

Sufis were thought to be able to perform miracles by the general masses. This should not be surprising due to the status they were thought to have with God. There are many legends of the miraculous and supernatural feats performed by Sufis. When discussing the topic of mystics in the Muslim world also being saints, Nicholson writes, "Whilst still living, they are canonized by the people; not posthumously by the Church. Their title to saintship depends on a particularly intimate relation to God, which is assisted by fits of ecstasy and, above all, by thaumaturgic gifts (\textit{karāmā} = \textit{xapīqūra}, grazie). Belief in such gifts is almost universal...."\textsuperscript{414} To the common folk, the value of knowing a Sufi in life or death was the barakah and possibly miracles which could be acquired. One order which specialized in performing seemingly superhuman feats which dazzled the public was the Rifā'iyyah. They were known to eat snakes and walk through fire without being burned. Their piety was


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displayed in such astonishing feats for large numbers of spectators of all backgrounds. Ibn Taymiyah saw them as frauds. He challenged them to wash themselves with vinegar, before walking through fire, to remove the protective chemicals they had applied to themselves. The Mamlûks sent a delegate to observe a debate between the Rifâ'îyyah and Ibn Taymiyah at al-Ablaq palace. In Jumâda al-Ūlā, 705 A.H., the confrontation took place. The Rifâ'îs requested a decree to be issued to have Ibn Taymiyah leave them alone. Ibn Taymiyah replied that all were subject to the sharî'ah. He went on to claim that the practices the dervishes indulged in were nothing but tricks. One of the Rifâ'î shaykhs stepped forward and said, "Our practices work before Mongols, not in the face of Islamic Law." At this, the Sufi shaykh was denounced by everyone. Consequently, a law was passed stating that any of the Rifâ'îyyah found acting contrary to the Qur'ân and Sunnah would face execution.\(^{415}\) The significance of this encounter is heightened when we consider that the Rifa'iyyah tariqah had been introduced to Syria and Egypt about the early part of the seventh/thirteenth century. It had spread successfully in both regions. Yet the tariqah's rapid growth came to a halt in the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries. Subsequently, decline set in.\(^{416}\)

\(^{415}\)Ibn 'Abd-il-Hādī, Al-'Uqūd ad-Durriyyah min Manāqib Shaykh-il-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, pp. 194-195.

The decree issued against the Rifā'iyyah may have contributed to such decline. Though Ibn Taymiyah was not closed to the possibility that miracles could occur, he did not limit their occurrence to Sufis. Furthermore, such supernatural wonders were not necessarily favors from God, for they could be the work of devils.417

Denouncements by Ibn Taymiyah, as with those before him, did not succeed in eradicating un-shar'i Sufi practices altogether. Legal rulings by the Sunni fuqahā' opposing Sufi practices did raise shar'i awareness in some Sufi circles but did not succeed in eradicating most practices.

An overall view of Ibn Taymiyah's stand regarding Sufism shows that he was careful to begin his argument by first indicating points of agreement between some Sufi beliefs and the Islamic beliefs, and by praising the positive concepts or elements they carry. This approach reflects his care in presenting an objective view and also his intention to influence them favorably. He was constant in his insistence upon the affirmed authority of the Qurān and Sunnah, the necessity of the obligations and the avoidance of the prohibitions in the sharī'ah. However, the spirit of his overall approach was to eliminate the theological foundations

417Ibn Taymiyah, Al-Furqān Bayna Awliyā' Ar-Raḥmān wa Awliyā' Ash-Shayṭān, pp. 147-151.
of Sufism and therefore to sever its roots and transfer them to the Salafi foundations of belief.\(^{418}\)

Although Ibn Taymiyah had carefully distinguished among the various currents of Sufism and had qualified his criticisms according to compatibility with Islamic teachings, the majority of Sufis during his time were followers of the practices or of the Sufi shaykhs he criticized. Therefore, it became common for Sufis to regard Ibn Taymiyah as their enemy.

6.4 Trials and imprisonment.

Ibn Taymiyah went to prison several times as a result of his fatwas and actions he took against Sufis mentioned above. Though Ibn Taymiyah was officially imprisoned in Shawwāl 705 A.H. for his fatwas on the attributes of Allah, Ibn Kathīr claims that the Sufi shaykh Naṣr Al-Manbījī had played a supporting role in the prison sentence. Al-Manbījī was a devout supporter of waḥdat al-wujūd and thereby wished to see Ibn Taymiyah detained. He worked with the Ash'ari legalist Qādī Ibn Makhlūf, who conducted a trial against Ibn Taymiyah despite the differences Sufis and Ash'aris had on the monism of being doctrine. Subsequently imprisoned, Ibn Taymiyah was given an opportunity to be released if only he would renounce his beliefs, yet he is said to have turned down the offer six times, saying, "The prison is dearer to me than what I am

\(^{418}\)Aḥmad, Muṣṭafa ʿAbdul-Bāṣīṭ, Shaykh-ul-Islām Taqīy-ud-dīn Ibn Taymiyah wa Mawqifuhu mina at-Taṣawwuf, p. 55.
asked to affirm." Amīr Ḥusain-ud-Dīn Muhannā Ibn 'Isā finally had Ibn Taymiyah released in 707 A.H. 419 Five hundred Ithnā'īyyah Sufis demonstrated against Ibn Taymiyah's release in front of the Cairo citadel. 420 Al-Manbījī later urged Sultan Baybars Al-Jāshankīr to have Ibn Taymiyah sent to trial again. Al-Jāshankīr, who held shaykh Al-Manbījī in high esteem, followed through with the idea. As a result of the trial Ibn Taymiyah was given the choice to go back to Damascus, move to Alexandria with conditions, or go to jail. Choosing imprisonment, Ibn Taymiyah was released seven months later when Al-Jāshankīr lost the sultanate to Al-Malik An-Nāṣir in 709 A.H. 421

Ibn Kathīr narrates that Al-Malik An-Nāṣir after his arrival from Damascus for his third reign, asked Ibn Taymiyah, in a private meeting at his palace, to issue a fatwa to execute the qādis who were Al-Jāshankīr's allies. Ibn Taymiyah refused and instead advised him to be good to them. Ibn Makhlūf commented, "We never saw one like Ibn Taymiyah. We pursued [harm] against him and we failed. When he was in a position of power over us, he forgave and


420 Little, Donald P., "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," History and Historiography of the Mamlūks, sect. vii, p. 312.

defended us.\footnote{Ibn Kathîr, \textit{Al-Bidâyah wan-Nihâyah}, v. 14, pp. 54-55.} Afterwards, Sultan An-Nâşir permitted Ibn Taymiyah to teach his ideas freely for a time. It seems that Ibn Taymiyah considered the period of his stay in Egypt fruitful and productive, as he had expected. In a letter he wrote to his mother, after showering her with very nice greetings and expressing his anxiousness to see her, Ibn Taymiyah said: "... Truly Allah has opened for us gates of goodness, mercy, guidance, and blessings..."\footnote{\textit{’} Abd-il-Hâdi, \textit{Al-’Uqûd ad-Durriyyah min Manâqib Shaykh-il-Islâm Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyah}, pp. 257-258.}

Following two imprisonments on the issue of half biṭ-ṭalāq,\footnote{When he issued his fatwa about the invalidation of conditional half biṭ-ṭalāq (divorce), and he was imprisoned in Damascus in 718 A.H. for six months. In 720 A.H. he was imprisoned for a few months for the same reason. (Abû Zahrah, \textit{Ibn Taymiyah}, pp. 69-71; and Cheneb, Moh. Ben, \textit{“Ibn Taymiya,” First Encyclopaedia of Islam}, pp. 421-422.)} freedom for Ibn Taymiyah lasted about five years before he found himself in trouble with the authorities on another Sufi-related issue. His opposition to the visitation of shrines caused Al-Malik An-Nâṣir to have a group of qâdîs make a decision on the matter. The verdict found Ibn Taymiyah to be in the wrong. His imprisonment in Damascus in 726/1326 was to be his last. Petitions were sent from far-off Muslim lands to Al-Malik An-Nâṣir, the one-time champion of the shaykh, to revoke the sentence. Ibn Taymiyah continued to write on various issues of fiqh. Soon his pen
and paper were taken away at a complaint lodged by the Mālikī Qādī ‘Abdullah Ibn Al-Ikhnā‘ī, against whose opinions on pilgrimage to tombs Ibn Taymiyah had written a scathing attack.\(^{425}\) He then took up charcoal and whatever paper was available.\(^{426}\) He said, “The battle we are fighting here is not a bit lower in order than our previous warfare against Ghazān, the heretics of the hills and the propagators of pantheistic monism.” “Their greatest charge against me,” he wrote from prison, “is that the orders given by a man were disregarded by me. But, if the order given by a human being, whether he be a master or king, contravenes the commandments of God and His Prophet, then that should never be obeyed. On the contrary, the entire Muslim community is agreed on the view that no obedience is permissible in anything opposed to an express mandate of God and the Prophet.” Thus his own words summed up his life struggle best. He died on the night of Monday,\(^ {427}\) the 20th of Dhul-Qi‘dah, 728 A.H. (Sept. 25, 1328), twenty days after his pen and paper were taken away.\(^ {428}\)


\(^{427}\)In the Arabic calendar the new day begins immediately after sunset and ends with the sunset of the next day. It differs from the contemporary system in which the new day begins after what is known as midnight. According to the Arabic calendar the night comes before the day. Therefore, night of Monday refers to what is now known as Sunday evening.

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6.5 Conclusion

Though the Ḥanbalī school is characterized as traditionalist, many of its scholars were influenced by Sufism. Al-Harawi Al-Anṣârî even held belief in pantheism. As for those opposing Sufism from the school, Ibn Al-Jawzî represents the greatest opposition, while Ibn Taymiyah, though quite severe in some matters, was moderate in comparison. It is possible that Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal’s book Az-Zuhd allowed the Ḥanbalī school to be receptive to Sufi thought. However, Ibn Ḥanbal was himself strongly opposed to Sufism.

Ibn Taymiyah’s fatwas on Sufi issues helped draw attention to mystic doctrines and practices contrary to the Qur’ān and Sunnah. The various Sufi groups were divided into two main categories by Ibn Taymiyah. There were those whom he considered to be an extension of the zuhhād of earlier times, and those whose doctrines were influenced by Greek philosophy and other non-Islamic influences. The former could be tolerated if they abided by the sharī‘ah. The latter, claiming ittiḥād and wahdat al-wujūd, were apostates. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyah used the Sufis whom he characterized to be influenced by zuhd as examples for those who believed in ittiḥād and wahdat al-wujūd.

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The type of methodology which led Ibn Taymiyah to condemn the taqlīd of the fuqahā' also led to a confrontation with Sufism. For example, the murshid-murīd relationship in Sufi circles which was based on blind imitation—with sometimes blatant disregard for the sharī'ah—was rebuked.

While Ibn Taymiyah recognized the self-contradictions in Al-Ghazâlî’s writings, he apparently did not realize similar tendencies in other important Sufi figures like Al-Junayd and 'Abd-ul-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî. This hints at a possible reliance on secondary sources whose primary aim it was to present a positive image of the earlier Sufi masters as supporters of the sharī'ah, to the 'ulamā'.

Much of the credit for Sufism’s wide acceptance in Ibn Taymiyah’s period goes to Abū Ḥamīd Al-Ghazâlî. Al-Ghazâlî’s experience with atheism along with his journey in philosophy, helped him to bridge Sufism to Islam. The significance of Al-Ghazâlî’s role in Islam was similar to Paul’s in Christianity. Both succeeded in providing new versions of the original theologies of their respective religions. The doctrines of both spread widely and dominated the mainstream.

Although with Sufism the nature of his criticism was otherwise characteristic, Ibn Taymiyah did not make an attack at the roots of the ideology. His attack in this case was thereby less severe than in others. He seems to have failed to realize that the target of all Sufi currents was to achieve fanā’—an aim distinct from the sharī'ah’s. Thus, in
contradiction to the Islamic teachings, service and obedience to Allah were ordinarily given little weight in mystical life. There was little desire for Allah’s reward or fear of His punishment. In comparing the zuhhād with Sufis, Ibn Taymiyah wrongly ascribed the same objectives to both groups. This led him to tolerate Sufism in general. His strategy was to Islamize any shortcomings in the more acceptable “zuhhād-Sufis” and eliminate the “heretical Sufis” holding beliefs in pantheism and monism of being. This, however, excluded the issue of Islam versus Sufism, as distinguished systems, from coming up. It was merely a matter then of two conflicting points of view by two groups working within the same framework (not unlike the disagreements between fuqahā’ of different Sunni madhhabs). Thereby, his condemnations were likely taken more lightly in terms of implementation by his followers and political supporters. Pantheism and waḥdat al-wujūd continued to flourish in the Muslim world long after Ibn Taymiyah.
GENERAL CONCLUSION

Becoming part of his family's scholastic tradition from an early age provided Ibn Taymiyah with the background which would shape his program of reform in later life.

The path to be followed for the success of the members of his society, on an individual as well as collective level, was that of the Prophet and those who followed his teachings from the early generations. He considered the example of the Prophet and his successors to be the one with which Allah was pleased, hence their success on a moral and material level in a very short period of time. The base of Ibn Taymiyah's program of reform was to eliminate the gap between the status of his society and the Islamic ideal which he was striving to implement all around him. To achieve his aim, Ibn Taymiyah recognized that two things would have to be undertaken simultaneously: the elaboration of the doctrines of the proper Islamic principles and their implementation. For the first element, he emphasized the necessity of recognizing the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the source of guidance on all issues and the basis of every argument. In regard to implementation, he felt submission must be given to the rules of the sharī'ah in all aspects of life. Thus all matters contrary to the rules
of the sharī'ah would have to be eradicated for a healthy individual and society. Ibn Taymiyah frequently emphasized that any form of worship not controlled by the Qur'ān and Sunnah is a deviant way. He introduced this principle of control as a method for every Muslim to distinguish between the true and false.

He ended up opposing almost all of the dominant beliefs, thoughts, and philosophies of his society. He openly attacked concepts which were in contradiction to his theories, not hesitating to confront the rulers or the masses for their violations of the sharī'ah. Consequently, he found himself in conflict with the fuqahā', Shī'ah, philosophers, ahl-ul-kalām, Sufis, and Christians amongst others.

His strategy was to take the key issues which were at the heart of the division between him and his opponents and insist on their reform. With the rulers, he insisted on the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil on a systematic, administrative level. With the fuqahā', Ibn Taymiyah called for the re-opening of the doors of ijtihād. From the philosophers and Ash'aris, he expected the utilization of the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the basis of all arguments. With the Sufis, he urged the abandonment of any anti-sharī' practices and beliefs. He expected the Shī'ah to accept the generation of the Prophet's companions as the most exemplary, though not infallible. Infallibility was to be expected only from the ummah collectively. So with each group, the condition set

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forth would lead either directly or indirectly to the utilization of the Qur‘ān and Sunnah as the basis for their doctrines. It was a call to examine doctrines of debate from a purely traditionalist standpoint, with the use of the highest forms of human reason, of course.

His concepts and ideas on wilāyah provide a specific, realistic program of reform through which the symptoms of social and administrative corruption may be removed. His insistence that ulū-al-amr consists of both umarā’ and ‘ulamā’ proposes a power-sharing role for the ‘ulamā’ with the sultan and ruling elite. This was in contrast to the position generally taken by the Ḥanbalīs of abstention from state offices.

Ibn Taymiyah’s writings about the concept of imāmah, extended the role of Sunni doctrines about this issue to the conflict between the Mongols and Mamlūks. The Mongol khan’s acceptance of Shi‘ism could have implied discredit to the Abbasid caliphate set up by the Mamlūks, which did not have the characteristic Shi‘i qualifications of infallibility and the like. Ibn Taymiyah’s response to this political situation pleased the sultan and even rivals like the Ash‘ari scholar As-Subkī. This was probably of little concern to Ibn Taymiyah, however, for he does not seem to have had any political ambitions. It was the defense of the Sunni doctrines and then the political stability within the Mamlūk realm which Ibn Taymiyah wanted to maintain. Indeed, Mongol
rule would likely have presented greater obstacles for Ibn Taymiyah's projects. Ibn Taymiyah's acceptance of sultanate rule, like that of the Mamlūks, so long as it recognized the sovereignty of the sharī'ah, his support of the war against the Mongols and his support of the Sunni concept of imāmah, likely played a significant role in the Mamlūks' giving less weight to the 'ulamā's pressure to punish him.

There was a severe reaction from those who refuted the total sovereignty of the sharī'ah in their thought— that is, those who had deviated from the sharī'ah, either through disobedience or an interpretation of the passages in a manner contrary to the understanding of the Salaf. Ibn Taymiyah sometimes used harsh and sharp language against some of his opponents. These exchanges often heightened hostility against him, particularly from other scholars who were already furious with his unusual ideas and perhaps a bit envious of the attention he was attracting.

Normally, Ibn Taymiyah was quick to denounce various forms of bid'ah. It is therefore surprising that he did not reject Sufism altogether, since the fundamentals of the movement were obviously without sound basis in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. We can only attribute this anomaly to a lack of understanding of the true nature of mystical thought as manifested in Sufism. The scale of conflict with movements like Sufism by any shar'i-minded individual depends on the degree of deviation from the Qur'ān and Sunnah in that
movement, along with his or her knowledge of it. But Sufism and the sharī'ah, based upon our knowledge of them in general, can never be completely unified—it is only an alliance at best. In fact, thorough analysis reveals Judaism and Christianity to be closer to Islam in terms of fundamental goals and doctrines. Mysticism, whose historical characteristic even prior to Prophet Muḥammad is to attach itself to organized religions, cannot logically be used to achieve the same conclusion. Ibn Taymiyah’s idea that they could be merged was an erroneous one and little fruit can be gained from such an endeavor.

The political and social contexts of his time caused Ibn Taymiyah to prioritize the elements of his program of reform. Both the attacks from the Mongols and the Crusaders caused him to strive to keep the society united under the rule of the Mamlūks. Yet he did not sacrifice his principles in the process, and continued to provide the rulers with stern advice.

Ibn Taymiyah stood firmly on his principles with powerful opponents like the fuqahā’ and Sufis, in spite of the punishment he faced for it. The causes of the opposition to Ibn Taymiyah, which led to his detention on several occasions, can be categorized into three areas. First, his strong condemnation of bid‘ahs in Islamic practices, notably those that had pervaded society as a result of the widespread popularity of Sufism. Second, the fatwas he issued which
differed from the opinions of the four fiqhi schools. Third, his approach in understanding the attributes of Allah. Though generally not well educated Islamically, some members of the Mamlük elite had strong religious feelings. Most were, however, very concerned with keeping religious order and stability. This fueled their conflict with Ibn Taymiyah. Contemporary leaders, political and otherwise, who held the views Ibn Taymiyah opposed were significant antagonists. They placed many obstacles in the way of Ibn Taymiyah’s reform efforts. Still, there were amīrs who sided with Ibn Taymiyah and came to his aid. Even Al-Malik An-Nāṣir was an ally to Ibn Taymiyah for a time, especially since it had just so happened that they were both opposed to Al-Jāshankîr and the Mongols. But ultimately he could not tolerate Ibn Taymiyah’s unyielding disposition. The Mamlük rulers’ desire to keep an increasingly diverse society religiously institutionalized would probably have resulted in a clash with such a unique personality in any case.

Yet the dual role of controversy cannot be ignored. Although his calls for Islamic justice, valiant military activities against the Mongols, and shunning of worldly gains all raised Ibn Taymiyah’s standing in the eyes of the masses and even his opponents, his fatwas did sometimes go against the current. Yet there can be no doubt that Ibn Taymiyah’s bold stands for his beliefs were admirable in the eyes of rulers and populace alike (however radical his ideas may have
seemed). We know he was quite popular with the common folk. For it was, after all, quite clear that he was a man of learning, promoting the values of the Qur‘ān and Sunnah—something everyone supported fundamentally. Moreover, there are always segments of the population that make a champion out of almost anyone who stands up to the authorities. The content of the hero’s message is of secondary importance, especially when it is of a technical or scholarly nature. Ibn Taymiyah’s imprisonments must have done much to magnify the prestige of his reputation. Popularity with the people and respect of the rulers won Ibn Taymiyah opportunities to have his ideas taken seriously, and, to some degree, implemented in his own lifetime. Thus, all of his struggles and conflicts, popular or not, contributed to the weight his words carried.
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