Ibn Taymiyya’s Methodology Regarding his Sources. Reading, Selection and Use
Preliminary Study and Perspectives

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Abstract
Over the past two decades, the growing number of works on Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) has confirmed the ever-growing interest of scholars in the famous Hanbali theologian of Damascus, who is undeniably one of the most studied and well-known medieval Muslim theologians. In addition to the diversity of the subjects covered, the analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings demonstrates the author’s vast erudition and his argumentation methodology, which was both efficient and complex. Even though he has been the subject of research in both the Arab world and Western scholarship, grey areas remain regarding what can be called Ibn Taymiyya’s source methodology. Based on a close reading of a sample of the Hanbali theologian’s writings, this article attempts to provide some preliminary information on Ibn Taymiyya’s way of reading, selection and use of sources in his argumentation methodology. Far from being an exhaustive study that would require a complete analysis of the Hanbali scholar’s work, this article aims to be a preliminary study to suggest analytical and research perspectives.

Keywords

Summary
1 Introduction. – 2 The Texts. – 3 Opinions of the Companions. – 3.1 Pre-Eminence According to Merit and Ğumhūr al-ṣaḥāba as a Selection Criterion. – 3.2 Relevance of the Source at the Expense of Its Pre-Eminence. – 4 Use Your Opponent’s Corpus of Texts. – 4.1 Capacity to Use the Opponent’s Corpus. – 4.2 Circulation Across the Madḥabs and Independence from the Madḥabs. – 4.3 Ambivalence in Ibn Taymiyya’s Treatment of the Writings of Āṣārī Mutakallimūn Authors. – 5 Rigour and Criticism in the Reading of Sources. – 6 Conclusion.
1 Introduction

Ibn Taymiyya is undeniably one of the most studied medieval Muslim theologians and one who raises the most interest among researchers both in the Arab world and in the West. This is due to his numerous works on a wide range of subjects, in which a rich and complex writing still influences to a certain extent contemporary Islam. As a result, Ibn Taymiyya is more often (mis)quoted than understood.¹

The flowering of works over the last two decades has broadened our knowledge of the theologian’s work and thought including his position in matters of dogma, Sufism, logic, philosophy, politics but also the later reception of his writings and principles. However, the significant number of works on Ibn Taymiyya is still insufficient to hope to propose a definitive introduction to his thought and writings.² Ibn Taymiyya’s enormous body of work was due to his vast erudition that came from the study and knowledge of a corpus of sources as wide as they were varied, just like the diversity of the subjects he dealt with in depth. In his writings, Ibn Taymiyya quoted jurists, theologians, exegetes, muḥadditi, Sufi masters, philosophers, historians – whether he liked them or not – and their works, sometimes to support his opinion and elsewhere to criticise and refute the views of his opponents. The fact that Ibn Taymiyya used such a corpus of sources confirms his “intellectual independence”.³ It is also because of his views and his profound knowledge of Aristotelian logic, Greek philosophy and kalām, but also because all these elements influenced his methodology, that Ibn Taymiyya was criticised by some traditionalists, including the Hanbalis and other scholars from his circle like al-Dahabi.⁴

One only needs to read Ibn Taymiyya’s magnum opus Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ to be made aware of his vast erudition, which many of his contemporaries acknowledged, whether they were close to him or adversaries, an erudition before which, in the words of Yahya Michot, “on ne peut rester que pantois”.⁵ Recently, Carl Sharif El-Tobgui has shown that the Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ reveals a broadly coherent system of thought that draws on diverse intellectual resources. Ibn Taymiyya synthesized these resources and, combining them with his own unique contributions, created an approach to the question of reason and revelation that stands

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¹ Rapoport, Shahab 2010, 4; Michot 2020b.
² Rapoport, Shahab 2010, 5; Michot 2020a, VI-VII.
³ Anjum 2012, 184; El-Tobgui 2019, 87-93.
⁵ Michot 2000, 599.
in marked contrast to previously articulated approaches. Through this ambitious undertaking, Ibn Taymiyya develops views and arguments that have implications for fields ranging from the interpretation of scripture to ontology, epistemology, and the theory of language.\(^6\)

It is true that Ibn Taymiyya’s rather dry writing style, as well as his repetitive digressions and tangled discussions that overshadow the internal structure of his arguments, coupled with an uninterrupted flow of detailed information and quotations, often make his writings difficult to read – the level of difficulty varying from work to work. However, despite these difficulties, one can analyse Ibn Taymiyya’s discursive strategy and some of these aspects have already been studied.

In his book *Ibn Taymiyya: hayātu-hu*, Muḥammad Abū Zahra (d. 1974) highlighted Ibn Taymiyya’s writing *manhaǧ* in *tafsīr*, issues related to dogma, jurisprudence and Sufism. For Muḥammad Abū Zahra, his *manhaǧ* was the same regardless of the field.\(^7\) In an important contribution, Ibrāhīm ʿUqaylī was interested in the importance given to revelation, reason and the Arabic language itself in Ibn Taymiyya’s *manhaǧ*.\(^8\) The Arabic language as a reasoning tool in Ibn Taymiyya was later analysed in detail by Hādī Aḥmad Farḥān al-Šāǧirī\(^9\) and then ‘Abd al-Alāh b. Nāfiʿ al-Daʿḏānī.\(^10\) In 1999, the book *Manhaǧ šayḫ al-Islām* by ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-Haǧīlī attempted to highlight the various aspects of Ibn Taymiyya’s written output, the historical context, the number of writings, the date and place of production.\(^11\) Finally, other aspects of Ibn Taymiyya’s *manhaǧ* have been studied, like the issue of *takfīr*,\(^12\) dogma,\(^13\) innovations (*bidaʿ*)\(^14\) or even knowledge in general.\(^15\)

Undeniably, Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation strategy in the fields of philosophy and rationalism, particularly in his *Darʿ al-taʿārud*, attracted much scholarly interest and fostered a substantial scientif-

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\(^{6}\) El-Tobgui 2019, 4-5.
\(^{7}\) Abū Zahra 1991, 180-1.
\(^{8}\) ‘Uqaylī 1994, 109-76.
\(^{10}\) al-Daʿḏānī 2014, 537-649.
\(^{11}\) al-Ḥaǧīlī 1999.
\(^{12}\) al-Mišʿabī 1997.
\(^{13}\) al-Barīkān 2004.
\(^{14}\) al-Muqrin 2014.
\(^{15}\) al-Daʿḏānī 2014.
Authors as Readers in the Mamlûk Period and Beyond, 45-82

ic output to this day. Following Syed Nomanul Haq, Nadjet Zouggar pointed out that the digressions that characterise Ibn Taymiyya’s writing style allowed him to discuss various topics and were in a way “dans le champ du kalâm auquel il refusait pourtant d’appartenir”. The idea of a Taymiyyan kalâm would however certainly deserve further investigation.

While Ibn Taymiyya was an important historical source for his time, he also knew how to use history in his argumentation strategy in order to corroborate his religious arguments as Sa’d b. Mūsā al-Mūsā and Daniella Talmon-Heller have demonstrated. Geography was not left out. In her article, Zayde Antrim highlighted Ibn Taymiyya’s “discourse of place” concerning the Šām region. He highlighted the region’s merits and history to encourage the Mamlûks to defend it as the territory of Islam against the danger of Mongol invasion. The complexity of Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation methodology and discursive strategy should not obscure the fact that he was also capable of simplifying particularly sibylline theological subjects for the sake of the popular masses.

While all these works provide insight into Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation methodology and discursive strategy, his source methodology is less well known. This paper intends to explore this issue in further depth. I mean by source methodology how Ibn Taymiyya, on the one hand, selected, read his sources and dealt with them, on the other, how he integrated them into his argumentation strategy. This is not an exhaustive study of Ibn Taymiyya’s source methodology based on a complete analysis of all his works, which would require a collective effort as with so many other aspects of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought and writing methodology. This article is a preliminary study to suggest analytical perspectives and provide initial findings.


17 In the preface of the book Ibn Taymiyya and His Times, Syed Nomanul Haq already questioned whether Ibn Taymiyya should be considered a philosopher or a neo-mutakallim. Rapoport, Shahab 2010, IX.

18 Zouggar 2010, 198.


22 Bori 2013, 78-80; 2018, 301-2.
based on the examination of a selection of passages taken from different works among the writings of the Ḥanbali theologian and dealing with various subjects. These thoughts, which came to light on reading some of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings, will be further developed at a later date by analysing some of his other writings.

2 The Texts

This study is based on five of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings: *al-Fatwā al-ḥamawiyya* (The Fatwā for the People of Hama), *al-Istiqāma* (The Rightness), *Iqtiḍā’ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-muḥālafat aṣḥāb al-Ǧaḥīm* (The Necessity of the Straight Path in Distinction from the People of Hell), *al-Ǧawāb al-bāhir fī zuwwār al-maqābir* (The Outshining Answer About the Visitors of Graves) and *al-Iḥnā’iyya* (The Iḥnā’īs [title referring pejoratively to the Mālikī Taqī al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Iḥnā’ī]).

Written in 698/1298, the *Fatwā al-ḥamawiyya* was Ibn Taymiyya’s response to a question by inhabitants of the city of Hama about the verses and *ḥadīth* mentioning names and attributes of God.23 This *fatwā* by Ibn Taymiyya, in the form of a treatise, was not to the liking of the Ašʿarī *ʿulamāʾ* and followers of the *kalām*, some of whom tried to have him judged and condemned.24 The second work is *al-Istiqāma*, probably written between the years 708-09/1308-09 during his incarceration in Egypt.25 In *al-Istiqāma*, Ibn Taymiyya emphasised the need to follow the right and just path with regard to the divine names and attributes as well as the oneness of God via the observance of the precepts of the Qurʾān and the Sunna in order to avoid *in fine* any innovation.26 One of the characteristics of the book is that most of it was actually a commentary on Abū al-Qāsim al-Qušayrī’s *Risāla* (d. 465/1072-73).27 Ibn Taymiyya acknowledged that this work contained much that was good and true but it “lacks the path fol-

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23 The verses concerned are as follows: S20/V5; S57/V4; S41/V11. For the *ḥadīth*: “Verily, the hearts of all the sons of Adam are between the two fingers out of the fingers of the Most Gracious”; “Al-Ǧabbār will put his Foot in the fire of Hell.” Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 61-2 (if not otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author). According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, Ibn Taymiyya’s student and biographer, there are two *fatwā-s* al-ḥamawiyya: a small one (*suġrā*) and a large one (*kubrā*). Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 16.


26 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 35.

27 On al-Qušayrī, his work and thought see Chiabotti 2008-09; 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2016.
lowed by the majority of the awliyāʾ of God”. Al-Istiqāma showcased the importance of tasawwuf as a spiritual path, bringing one closer to God and Ibn Taymiyya’s interest in it. Al-Istiqāma is in itself another argument refuting the false accusation that Ibn Taymiyya was staunchly anti-Sufi.

In the Iqtīḍā’ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-muḥālafat aṣḥāb al-Ǧaḥīm, written around 715/1315-16, the third writing selected from his corpus, Ibn Taymiyya dealt with “a very important rule among the rules of šari‘a”, the danger of imitating the People of the Book or polytheists in their practices. These included, for instance, going on pilgrimage to visit the tombs or mausoleums of saints or prophets, or celebrating non-Islamic festivals in the company of infidels and polytheists.

The last two works of Ibn Taymiyya I have selected for this study are al-Ǧawāb al-bāhir fī zuwwār al-maqābir and al-Iḫnāʾiyya, both of which concern visiting the tombs. In his ġawāb al-bāhir, Ibn Taymiyya defends the following position: it is possible to visit graves (even those of non-believers in order to remember the dead) as the Sunna authorises (ziyāra šarʿiyya) and avoiding introducing into this practice innovations (ziyāra bidʿiyya) that can lead the Muslim to the širk (polytheism/associationism) particularly through the veneration of the dead or imploring their help and/or intercession. The other important point that Ibn Taymiyya emphasises is the prohibition to travel to visit the tombs of the saints and prophets according to his inter-

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28 “ولكن فيه تقص عن طريقة أكثر أولاية الله” , Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 89.
29 The ill-established hypothesis that Ibn Taymiyya was a stubborn opponent to Sufism no longer holds as Henri Laoust, George Makdisi, Thomas Homerin and more recently Assef Qays clearly demonstrated his links with al-tasawwuf especially with al-Qādiriyya Ḥanbali brotherhood. Laoust 1960, 35; Laoust 1962, 33; Makdisi 1973, 118-29; Homerin 1985; Assef 2012. In reality, Ibn Taymiyya only strongly condemned certain practices such as samāʿ which he considered an innovation to which he was vehemently opposed in contrast to al-Ǧazālī who considered it licit on condition that certain rules were strictly observed: Ibn Taymiyya 1991. See also Michot 1988; Ibn Taymiyya 2001. The words of Carl Sharif al-Tobgui in his recent book sum up the issue quite well: “Ibn Taymiyya’s reputation for being implacably anti-Sufi is inaccurate and misleading when indiscriminately generalized, but it is not entirely without foundation as he was indeed staunchly – and very vocally – opposed to discrete ideas and practices that were widely associated with Sufism in his day. For Ibn Taymiyya’s critiques of such aspects of contemporary Sufism, critiques that are responsible not only for the stereotype we have inherited of him today but also for a considerable amount of the opposition and tribulations he faced in his own day” (El-Tobgui 2019, 88 fn. 32).
30 Estimate made from the copy that was originally kept at Chester Beatty Library but was later purchased by al-Imām Muhammad b. Saʿūd University. Nowadays, the manuscript is conserved at the Central Library of Riyadh under the number 4160. Ibn Taymiyya 2003, 18, 20.
31 Ibn Taymiyya 2003, 51.
32 In addition to al-Ǧawāb and al-Iḫnāʾiyya, see Ibn Taymiyya 2001b, vol. 14, t. 27. See also Ibn Taymiyya 2007, 131-7. For more information see Taylor 1999, 179-94; Olesen 1991; Munt 2014, 227-51; Berriah, forthcoming.
interpretation of the ḥadīṯ: “No travel except to one of the three mosques: the mosque al-Ḥarām (Mecca), this mosque which is mine (Medina) and the mosque al-Aqṣā (Jerusalem)”.

Ibn Taymiyya considered travelling to visit the tombs of the prophets and saints as an innovation since it was neither encouraged by the Prophet nor even practised by the Companions except for very rare exceptions. Moreover, this innovative practice is dangerous since such visits can, over time, turn into a kind of pilgrimage like those of the Christians. For Ibn Taymiyya, whoever goes to Medina must go there with the intention (al-niyya) of praying in accordance with the ḥadīṯ quoted above and not with the intention of visiting the Prophet’s tomb. The same applies to Jerusalem with the al-Aqṣā mosque and the tombs of the prophets present in the area. In his voluminous al-Iḫnāʾiyya, written during his last stay in prison in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya, on the one hand, retorts to the accusations of the Mālikī qāḍī al-quḍāt Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Iḫnāʾī (d. 750-751/1350-51) against him and, on the other hand, refutes the latter’s positions which encourage visiting the tomb of the Prophet Muḥammad, other prophets and saints in general. Ibn Taymiyya takes up the arguments already present in his Gawāb al-bāhir which he develops further while bringing in new ones.

In addition to Ibn Taymiyya’s writings, I also make use of contemporary chroniclers of the Ḥanbalī šayḫ of Damascus as well as his biographies when necessary.

3 Opinions of the Companions

After the Qurʾān and the Sunna, the opinions of the Prophet’s Companions constitute the third source of reference in Islam, both for dogmatic issues, belief/creed and Muslim law with differences in their consideration according to the Sunni madhabs. It is true that the opinions of the Companions, and to a lesser extent those of the Successors (tābiʿūn), are of particular importance to Imam Aḥmad.

Like the founder of his formative madhab, Ibn Taymiyya quoted extensively the so-called al-salaf (ancestors or predecessors) or al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ (pious predecessors) in his arguments, especially the Com-

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33 Narrated from Abū Hurayra, reported by al-Nasāʾī in his Sunan (https://sunnah.com/nasai:760).
34 Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 110, 137-41, 144, 150, 252-3, 264, 266, 300, 365-6.
36 Concept referring to the first three generations of Islam which is supported by several ḥadīṭs. Among the best known is that reported by al-Buḫārī, according to ʿImrān b. al-Ḥusayn, the Prophet said: “The best people are those of my century, then those of the next two centuries”.
panions of the Prophet. What interests us here is how Ibn Taymiyya chose the opinions of the Companions and quoted them to support his ideas as well as to refute those of his opponents. While it is not possible to carry out a complete analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s works, we will focus on two themes that he dealt with in two of his works: the first concerns the visitation of the tomb of the Prophet, the prophets and the saints in general. This is one of the topics on which Ibn Taymiyya wrote extensively, especially towards the end of his life, and for which he repeatedly used the opinions of the Companions. The second theme deals with the merit of Arabs over other peoples and of the Arabic language over other languages. Initially, Ibn Taymiyya approached the subject through a sociological prism before ‘Islamising’ it by inserting it into religious discourse.

The examination of these two themes will allow us to compare Ibn Taymiyya’s use of the Opinions of the Companions. Of course, the results presented here are only preliminary and far from definitive; they will be supplemented by further analyses.

3.1 Pre-Eminence According to Merit and ḥumr al-ṣaḥāba as a Selection Criterion

The last major polemic initiated by Ibn Taymiyya in his writings concerned the ziyrāt. Scholars have seen Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya (d. 751/1350) as the trigger for this controversy. The works and letters Ibn Taymiyya wrote during his last term of imprisonment reveals the extent of the polemic, its violence as well as the animosity of his opponents towards him, especially the Mālikī Abū Bakr al-Iḫnāʾī. In fact, his supporters and their opponents kept it going, with Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 744/1343) and others even later. When writing on the visitation of tombs, Ibn Taymiyya called tirelessly on the Opinions of the Companions quoting them to support his statements and deconstruct the discourse of his opponents. One of his chief arguments, which he often insisted upon in his various writings, is that no Companion from the time of the Rāšīdūn caliphs or later rulers made journeys for the sole purpose of visiting the tomb of a prophet or a saint. The Companions who travelled to Jerusalem went there to pray in the al-Aqṣā Mosque, the third mosque after that.

37 For example, on the ḥtra see Holtzman 2010, 163-88. See also Anjum 2012, 215-32.
38 Berriah, forthcoming.
39 Berriah, forthcoming. See also El-Rouayheb 2010, 288-95.
of Mecca and Medina for which the Prophet authorised the journey.\footnote{Ahmad, al-Buḫārī, Muslim and others reported from Abū Hurayra: "لا تشد الرحال إلا إلى ثلاثة مساجد المسﺠد الحرام، ومسﺠد الرسول صلى الله ﻋليه وسلم، ومسﺠد الأقصى ( "No travel except to one of the three mosques: the mosque al-Ḥarām [Mecca], the mosque of the Prophet [Medina] and the mosque of al-Aqṣā [Jerusalem]).}

According to Ibn Taymiyya, none of the Companions who travelled to Jerusalem visited the tomb of Abraham.\footnote{For a quotation of this argument see Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 195.}

Not all the opinions of the Companions were of equal value for Ibn Taymiyya and he ranked them by merit. The four Rāšidūn caliphs, Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), ʿUtmān b. ʿAffān (d. 35/656) and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) occupied, in regnal order, the first places. This position was supported by several ḥadīṯs, the best known of which was that reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmiḍī according to Abū Naǧīḥ al-ʿIrbāḍ b. Sāriya.\footnote{It is also quoted by al-Nawawī in his Fourteen hadīṯs: “I advise you to fear Allah, listen, and obey, even if an Abyssinian slave is put in charge of you. Whoever lives after me will see many conflicts. You must adhere to my Sunna and the Sunna of the righteous, guided successors. Hold firmly to it as if biting with your molar teeth. Beware of newly invented matters, for every new matter is an innovation and every innovation is misguidance” (translated by Sunnah.com, https://sunnah.com/nawawi40).}

In his Rafʿ al-malām ʿan aʾimmat al-aʿlām, Ibn Taymiyya stated that the Rāšidūn caliphs were the most knowledgeable about the Prophetic Sunna, especially Abū Bakr who was most often in the company of the Prophet, then came the turn of ʿUmar.\footnote{Ibn Taymiyya 1992-93, 10. Ibn Taymiyya always quotes the opinion of each of the four caliphs in the chronological order of their reign, which also corresponds to their merits. See 11, 16-17.} Then came the “ten promised to Paradise” (al-ʿašara al-mubaššarīn bi-l-ǧanna),\footnote{Abū Bakr, ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, ʿUṭmān b. ʿAffān, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh, Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Abū ʿUbayda b. al-Ǧarrāḥ, Saʿīd b. Zayd.} followed by precedence in conversion, the Hijra, participation in the first battles of Badr, Uḥud, etc.\footnote{In his Ġawāb al-bāhir fī zuwwār al-maqābir, Ibn Taymiyya indicates this ranking of the Companions according to their merits by reporting a dispute that broke out between the two Companions ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf and Ḥālid b. al-Walād: “He [the Prophet] said in an authentic ḥadīṯ: ‘Do not insult my companions, by the one who has my soul in his hands, if one of you gives in alms the equivalent of Mount Uḥud in gold, it would not reach the [amount] of the mudd of one of them or even half of it.’ This was said to Ḥālid b. al-Walād when he quarrelled with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf because the latter was among the early converts, those who spent well before al-Fatḥ [the conquest of Mecca], who fought, and the fatḥ referred to here is the pact of Ḥudaybiyya. Ḥālid, ʿAmr b. al-ʾĀṣ and ʿUtmān b. Ṭalḥa converted during the truce following al-Ḥudaybiyya and before the capture of Mecca. They were among the muḥāǧirūn followers and not like the original muḥāǧirūn. As for those who converted in the year of the capture of Mecca, they are not considered muḥāǧirūn because there was no ḥiǧra after the capture of Mecca. Those who converted from among the inhabitants of Mecca are called al-ṭulaqāʾ because the Prophet let them go in peace after the capture of the city by arms in the image that the prisoner of war is released” (Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 260-1).}
Ibn Taymiyya put forward this pre-eminence of the Rāšidūn caliphs in several passages. According to him, during the reigns of the four Rāšidūn caliphs, the Companions who travelled and stayed in Medina, when they had finished praying behind the caliph who occupied the place of imam, would either greet the latter and keep him company for some time, or leave the mosque, or else they remained seated in the mosque while making dikr (the remembrance of God). In any case, and Ibn Taymiyya insisted on this point, there was no account according to which the Companions visited the Prophet’s grave. Saying the taṣliyya (uttering the salutation over the Prophet) in the tašahhud in prayer or outside of it, was the practice that the Prophet had recommended for himself and was therefore far more meritorious.

Similarly, in response to those who considered that the mosque in Medina had more merit since it enshrined the Prophet’s tomb, Ibn Taymiyya argued that the Prophet’s mosque in Medina already had more merit at the time of the Rāšidūn caliphs before it included his tomb for one good reason: that era had more merit – because closer to the time of the Prophet – than later times when the expansion of the mosque was carried out by integrating the Prophet’s tomb within its walls.

The proponents of visiting the Prophet’s grave relied, among other things, on a narrative that ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb, one of the most illustrious Companions and considered to be among the most learned, used to go to the Prophet’s grave after returning from a journey to visit the Prophet as well as Abū Bakr and his father, ‘Umar,

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46 The tašahhud is the part of the Muslim prayer where the person kneels facing the qibla after two rounds of prayer (rakʿāt), holding out the index finger of the right hand, leaving it either motionless or performing with slight circular movements to the right. At this point, the believer utters a formulation glorifying and praising God, greeting the Prophet followed by the two attestations of faith. The second tašahhud, which closes the prayer, is performed before the taslim. In this second tašahhud, an invocation of blessings and peace upon the Prophet Muḥammad and Abraham is added. This invocation is known as the taṣliyya. Sābiq 2009, 119-23.

47 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 205, 258-9; see also 277 et 292. For Ibn Taymiyya, the devil did not try to trick the Companions by making them hear some voice that would make them believe that the Prophet had responded to their greeting or had spoken to them from his grave, a belief and superstition that came after the Companions. Nothing is reported about the Companions in this regard, which makes them a reliable and fundamental source for Ibn Taymiyya regarding the visit to the Prophet’s tomb. Ibn Taymiyya, Ġawāb al-bāḥir, 260-1. In his book The Holy City of Medina, Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia, Harry Munt states that a kind of “pilgrimage” existed in Medina from the second/eighth century onwards, which consisted of visiting sites related to the Prophetic story. However, it was not until the fourth/tenth century that the visit to the Prophet’s tomb became increasingly popular and can be considered ritual. Munt 2014, 141-3.

48 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 304.
both of whom were placed on either side of the Prophet’s grave. Ibn Taymiyya at no point questioned the veracity of this account of Ibn ‘Umar’s well-known practice. To refute the opinion of his opponents, Ibn Taymiyya initially invoked the ġumhūr al-ṣaḥāba (the majority opinion of the Companions) to show that the case of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar was, in fact, an exception among the majority of the Companions for whom there was no testimony attesting to this practice.

Later in his al-Gawāb al-bāhir, he mentions another practice of Ibn ‘Umar which was also considered to be an exception. It was reported that he sought to pray in the exact location where the Prophet had prayed in the Medina mosque in order to pray there in turn. This practice of Ibn ‘Umar could be seen as, implicitly, seeking some baraka (blessing) from the Prophet in the locations where the latter had prayed. To show that this practice was an exception, that it was not in line with the Sunna and that it was not to be followed, Ibn Taymiyya summoned both the ġumhūr al-ṣaḥāba as well as the pre-eminence of the Rāšidūn caliphs:

وَلَمْ يَأْخَذْ فِي هَذَا بَعْلَ اِبْنِ عُمَرْ، كَمَا لَمْ يَأْخَذْ بِفَعْلِهِ فِي التَّمَسْحُ بِمَعْقُودٍ عَلَى الَّذِي، وَلَا بِفَسَاحَةِ قَصُدِ الأَمَانِكَ

Firstly, no one would have touched the place he [the Prophet] occupied on the minbar or even seeking to pray at the places where he [the Prophet] prayed because Ibn ‘Umar liked to pray at these places while the majority of the Companions (ġumhūr al-ṣaḥāba) did not like to do this but instead they liked what he [the Prophet] liked, that is, to pray wherever one was when the hour of prayer arrived. His father, ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb forbade seeking out these places to pray and he said, ‘Surely those who preceded you perished because of this; they took the footsteps and relics [ātār] of their prophets as places of worship. Let him who is in a place at the time when the hour of prayer has arrived, let him pray there, or else let him go!’

49 Abū Bakr to the right, ‘Umar to the left.
50 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 276, 282-3.
51 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 295-6. For another account of ‘Umar’s disapproval of praying in a place because the Prophet had prayed there see 304.
In this and other passages, Ibn Taymiyya relied on the opinion of one of the Rāšidūn caliphs, in this case that of ‘Umar who is none other than the father of ‘Abd Allāh. Since the father’s position and merit was superior to that of the son, so were his opinions, sayings and practices. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya ended his argument by explaining that this pre-eminence of ‘Umar in merit, supported by the words of the Prophet, meant that one had to follow him,\(^\text{52}\) before his son ‘Abd Allāh, despite the latter’s merits, which were certainly numerous, but lesser:

And ‘Umar enjoined upon them [the Companions and Muslims] what the Prophet taught them [sanna-hu la-hum] and ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb was one of the Rāšidūn caliphs for whom we were ordered to follow the traditions [sunnati-him]. And he [‘Umar] has a peculiarity in this from the fact that he and Abū Bakr are to be taken as an example since he [the Prophet] said: ‘take as an example the two who are after me: Abū Bakr and ‘Umar’. Taking [someone] as an example is superior to following a tradition.\(^\text{53}\)

This criterion of merit also applied to less illustrious Companions. Ibn Taymiyya reported the discussion between Abū Hurayra, one of the greatest narrators of ḥadīṯ, and Abū Baṣra al-Ġifārī about visiting Mount Ṭūr:

And it is according to him [the Prophet], in the two Ṣaḥiḥs, that he [the Prophet] said: ‘One does not undertake a journey except to three mosques: the holy mosque [Mecca], this mosque which is mine [Medina] and the mosque al-Aqṣā [Jerusalem’]. So much so that Abū Hurayra travelled to Mount Ṭūr where God spoke to Moses b. ‘Imrān – upon him be Peace – and that Abū Baṣra al-Ġifārī said to him, ‘How I wish I had joined you before you left. I heard the Prophet of God – may the prayers and salvation of God be upon him – say: ‘One does not use a mount [for travelling] except for

\(^{52}\) On ‘Umar’s authority see Hakim 2008; 2009a; 2009b. I thank Hassan Bouali for his precious remarks and these references.

\(^{53}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 296.
three mosques: the Holy Mosque, this mosque which is mine [Medina] and the al-Aqṣā Mosque [Jerusalem’].

While he was not among the best-known Companions, Abū Baṣra al-Ġifārī was the son of Baṣra b. Abī Baṣra b. Waqqāṣ who was himself a Companion of the Prophet. Abū Baṣra al-Ġifārī was raised in the Muslim religion. As for Abū Hurayra, Muslim historians and biographers reported that he converted only late, in year 7 of the Hijra. In addition, as the passage indicates, Abū Baṣra al-Ġifārī’s remark to Abū Hurayra shows implicitly the precedence of the former over the latter, justified by the primacy of his conversion to Islam. On the subject of the expansion of the Medina mosque carried out during the reign of ‘Utmān, Ibn Taymiyya again invoked both the criterion of precedence of the Companions according to their merits, in this case with the character of ‘Umar, as well as that of the ǧumhūr al-ṣaḥāba:

وقد ﻛره ﻛﺜير من الصحابة والتابعين ما ﻓعله ﻋﺜمان من بناء المسﺠد بالحﺠارة والقَصَّة والسّاج، وهؤلاء لمِا ﻓعله الوليد أﻛْرَهُ، وأما ﻋمر فإﻧه وسّعه، لﻜن بناه علﻰ ما كان من بنائه من اللّبِ، وﻋُمده جذوع النخل، وسقفه الجريد، ولم يُنقل أنّ أحداً ﻛره ما ﻓعل ﻋمر، وإنما وقع النزاع ﻓيما ﻓعله ﻋﺜمان والوليد.

and many of the Companions and Successors hated what ‘Utmān – may God be pleased with him – did by building the mosque with stone, plaster and teak wood, and hated even more what al-Walīd [d. 96/715] did [in the matter of works]. As for ‘Umar – may God be pleased with him – he enlarged the mosque using the same materials already present in its [original] construction namely: mud bricks, its pillars with trunks and its roof with palm branches. It has not been reported that anyone [among the Companions] disliked what ‘Umar did but rather the disagreement was about what ‘Utmān and al-Walīd did.

54 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 189-90.
55 Some versions state that Abū Hurayra was present (ṣahīda) at Ḫaybar’s expedition although it is not known whether he fought or not. According to other versions, Abū Hurayra arrived in Medina after the Prophet had gone on an expedition against Ḫaybar. Ibn Sa`d 2001, 5: 232-3; Ibn al-Atīr 2012, 1412.
Although the material used for the work carried out by the third caliph ʿUtmān was of better quality and far stronger than that used under ʿUmar, the latter’s work on the Medina mosque was considered to be better by Ibn Taymiyya for two reasons: ʿUmar used the same type of material constituting the initial structure of the mosque. Although Ibn Taymiyya did not directly mention the Prophet here, ʿUmar seemed to be presented as imitating the Prophet, the best of men, in his choice of building materials for the mosque; second reason: according to Ibn Taymiyya there was no account of a Companion criticising ʿUmar’s expansion work unlike those of ʿUtmān and al-Walīd. Therefore, the lack of criticism of ʿUmar’s works by Companions seemed to stand for Ibn Taymiyya as an approval of the latter towards ʿUmar’s works. Although the works of ʿUtmān and al-Walīd made the building stronger, enlarged it and thus allowed more believers to come and pray in the mosque, Ibn Taymiyya considered the quality of the works not in terms of their material result, but according to the time, rank and merits of the one who ordered them, all echoing the Prophetic ḥadīṯs. This dual recourse to the Companions as a source, a use that was both vertical (criterion of precedence according to merit) and horizontal (majority of the Companions) was a fairly effective method to refute the opinions of opponents who relied on isolated opinions and/or practices of illustrious Companions. By quoting the opinion of a more illustrious Companion and then the ǧumhūr al-ṣaḥāba (majority of the Companions), Ibn Taymiyya made it very difficult for any counter-argument to be made even on the basis of Companions’ opinions. Ibn Taymiyya really stands out due to the frequency with which he used this dual criterion. Further analysis of his other writings would confirm this trend. In the following lines, I will try to show that Ibn Taymiyya did not always follow this methodology scrupulously in referring to the Companions and that he proceeded in a different way depending on the subject matter.
3.2 Relevance of the Source at the Expense of Its Pre-Eminence

In his *Iqtiḍaʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, Ibn Taymiyya devoted about thirty pages to the question of Arabness, the merits of Arabs and the Arabic language, approaching the subject through a religious and, to a lesser extent, sociological and cultural prism. By way of introduction, Ibn Taymiyya offered an interesting ‘ḫaldūnian’ sociological analysis of the different peoples before Ibn Ḫaldūn, each of whom had two components: nomadic living in the *bādiyya* (steppe/desert) and sedentary living in the *ḥadāra* (city/town).

At the beginning of his argument, Ibn Taymiyya reported two sayings attributed to Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 33/654) followed by one by ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb to show the superiority of Arabs and the Arabic language over non-Arabs. Given the manner, seen above, in which Ibn Taymiyya used the Companions, one would have expected ʿUmar, the second *Rāšidūn* caliph, to be cited before Salmān since he occupies a higher rank as having the most merits in the Sunni tradition. However, Salmān was cited before ʿUmar. But why quote the latter when words attributed to the second Caliph of Islam and other more illustrious Companions following the example of ʿAlī, about the importance of the Arabic language and Arabism were well-known?

The choice of quoting Salmān before ʿUmar was due to Ibn Taymiyya’s need to build a more relevant and compelling argument. Salmān was of Persian origin and his testimony in favour of the Arabs constituted a stronger, more ‘hard-hitting’ argument than that of an Arab ʿUmar from the Quraysh. Here, the criterion for selecting sources was no longer precedence and merit but relevance. The word of a non-Arab Companion who lived among the Arabs and who defended Arabness was a far more relevant testimony than that of one of the most illustrious Arab Companions.

Ibn Taymiyya followed the same method when highlighting the merits of Muslim Persians, particularly those of Isfahan from where the Companion Salmān al-Fārisī was said to be originated. Ibn Taymiyya reported the words of the one who was considered the best of the Successors, and who was an Arab, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib who praised the merits of the Muslim Persians, especially those of Isfahan. Ibn Taymiyya’s choice to devote a section to the merits of the

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Persians was not insignificant since there were many great ṭābiʿūn and ṭābiʿ ṭābiʿīn (Successors) of Persian origin who were students of the Companions and transmitters of their opinions such as ‘Ikrima, the mawlā of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās. As these few elements show, Ibn Taymiyya’s selection and use of the opinions of the Companions and Successors was not only based on the criterion of merit but also on the relevance of his argument and to ensure his discursive strategy was more effective.

4 Use Your Opponent’s Corpus of Texts

4.1 Capacity to Use the Opponent’s Corpus

Certainly, one of the characteristics of Ibn Taymiyya’s source methodology was his ability to use his opponent’s sources at his own advantage. This could only be carried out by someone who had a good knowledge of his opponent’s corpus. The writings that probably best highlight Ibn Taymiyya’s use of his opponents’ sources in order to deconstruct their discourse were probably those on the visitation of tombs, particularly his Ğawāb al-bāḥir and al-Iḫnāʾiyya. Composed at the very end of his life, the latter were the culmination of Ibn Taymiyya’s art, having reached the peak of his erudition, which fed into a solid and effective argumentation methodology built up over a lifetime of writing, discussion, debate and polemics.

It was after receiving a copy of the text of the Mālikī qāḍī Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Iḫnāʾī that Ibn Taymiyya responded to the latter’s very virulent criticisms and false accusations in a work that he would entitle after his opponent’s name. In al-Iḫnāʾiyya, Ibn Taymiyya reviewed each of al-Iḫnāʾī’s criticisms and remarks point by point, refuting them and deconstructing his discourse on the basis of arguments and information of all kinds drawn from a large and varied body of sources.

In addition to the verses of the Qurʾān, the ḥadīṯs, and the words of the Companions and Successors that he cited in a jumble, Ibn Taymiyya relied very frequently on the Mālikī corpus. This phenomenon is already observable in his Ğawāb al-bāḥir, but in al-Iḫnāʾiyya the fre-

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61 Ibn Taymiyya 2003, 269-70.
62 He is said to have started writing at a fairly early age, in his early twenties. Al-Ḥaǧīlī 1999, 16-17.
63 For more information about this polemic see Berriah, forthcoming.
64 In particular, pointing out the weak, deficient and fabricated nature of the ḥadīṯs referred to by al-Iḫnāʾī encouraging the visit to the Prophet’s tomb. Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 110, 137-41, 144, 150, 252-3, 264, 266, 300, 365-6. See also Ibn Taymiyya 2003, 509; 1997, 81-3.
quency is higher and the process more obvious. Why did Ibn Taymiyya quote Mālikī scholars and not Ḥanbalī, those of his formative madhab? We know that he wrote a book extolling the merits of Imam Mālik’s school entitled, Tafḍīl madhab Mālik wa ahl al-Madīna wa-ṣiḥhat usūli-hi. But the primary reason for selecting the rich Mālikī corpus on the visitation of graves was not Ibn Taymiyya’s respect and admiration for Imam Mālik, but rather because his opponent Tāqī al-Dīn al-Iḫnāʾī was the qāḍī al-quḍāt of the Mālikis.

To support his positions and refute those of al-Iḫnāʾī, Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly quoted, in addition to Imam Mālik, the various Mālikī authorities who shared his own position on the ziyārāt: the qāḍī Ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191/806) and his Mudawwana, ʿIsāʾil b. ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149), the qāḍī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Baġdādi (d. 422/1031), Abū al-Qāsim b. al-Ǧallāb, Muḥammad b. al-Mawwāz (d. 269/875), ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. Bašīr al-Tanūḫī (d. first half of the sixth/twelfth century) and ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) among others.

By building his argument on reading texts from his opponent’s madhab, Ibn Taymiyya deconstructed the latter’s discourse and discredited it. Compared to the Mālikī ʿulamā, Ibn Taymiyya quoted few Ḥanbalī and even refuted some of their positions. In doing so, Ibn Taymiyya showed on the one hand that his position on the issue was the same as those of Imam Mālik and the leading Mālikī authorities. On the other hand, he highlighted the opposition between the positions of his opponent al-Iḫnāʾī and those held by eminent scholars belonging to his own madhab. The image of an al-Iḫnāʾī who was not a ‘good’ Mālikī or, even worse, who did not know his madhab well, while he was its most illustrious representative by virtue of his high position of qāḍī al-quḍāt, seemed to be Ibn Taymiyya’s methodological trademark. It should be noted that several Mālikī ʿulamā living in Damascus supported Ibn Taymiyya during his incarceration. They wrote a letter confirming that his opinion on the ziyārāt was

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67 As the authentication of ḥadīṯ by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ǧanī al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203) advocating the ziyārāt, Ibn Taymiyya only cites the kunya and nisba which is the same for ‘Abd al-Ǧanī and his cousin Muwaffaq al-Dīn, better known as Ibn Qudāma. The former was a ḥadīṯ scholar. Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 143. See also al-Matroudi 2006, 97. On Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism of Ḥanbalī scholars see al-Matroudi 2006, 92-128, 172-85; Bori 2010, 33-6.

68 Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 184.
not in opposition to the šari‘a.69 This wide-ranging selection from the Mālikī corpus by Ibn Taymiyya and the way he used it showed his deep knowledge of the Mālikī madhab, as if he had been a Māliki. In fact, an analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings demonstrates his erudition in all the madhabs and a great respect for each of the founders of the four schools of law.70 However, it seems that, with the exception of the Ḥanbalī madhab, Ibn Taymiyya’s expertise in the Mālikī madhab was superior to the others, for he considered it to be the most accurate in matters of uṣūl.71 All these elements, to which we could add others, show that Ibn Taymiyya, by the end of his life, had become, as was already the case in the field of heresiography, an expert in the madhabs, as mentioned by his contemporaries and biographers.72

I would like to take this opportunity to add a few remarks on a point related to Ibn Taymiyya’s reading his sources and dealing with them. Ibn Taymiyya remained faithful to the Ḥanbalī school of law, favouring the approach of the people of ḥadīṯ over that of the people of opinion (al-ra‘y).73 In his recent book, Carl Sharif El-Tobgui writes:

> Despite his intellectual independence, Ibn Taymiyya maintained his affiliation with the Ḥanbalī school throughout his life, an affiliation that implied as much a theological outlook as an approach to law and legal theory.74

While one cannot but agree with these statements, a close examination of some of his writings like *al-Ǧawāb al-bāhir* and *al-Iḫnāʾiyya*, shows that, at the end of his life, Ibn Taymiyya no longer wanted to put forward his affiliation to Hanbalism in his arguments, or at the very least did not find it necessary.

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69 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥadī 2002, 278-84.
74 El-Tobgui 2019, 88.
4.2 Circulation Across the Madhabs and Independence from the Madhabs

The contents of al-Ǧawāb al-bāhir and al-Iḫnāʾiyya testify to the high degree of scholarship and mastery achieved by Ibn Taymiyya in the knowledge of the madhabs. As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya quoted extensively from the Mālikī ʿulamāʾ to refute the positions of Abū Bakr al-Iḫnāʾī on visiting the graves. He did the same with the ʿulamāʾ of the other madhabs, whether of law or thought, quoting, discussing and commenting on their opinions as if he was affiliated with each of them although it was known that he opposed the four official madhabs on several points of jurisprudence (masāʾil fiqhiyya). I think it is possible to speak of pluri-madhhab referencing use in Ibn Taymiyya.

This can certainly be explained, in our case-study, by pragmatic reasons linked to the polemic and by a concern to effectively refute and deconstruct the discourse of his opponents with relevant arguments. But there is more: combined with other examples that cannot be discussed here, this pluri-madhhab referencing can be read as Ibn Taymiyya’s willingness to ‘circulate’ between the madhabs, to use their respective corpus when and how he saw fit. This ‘intellectual independence’ of Ibn Taymiyya from the madhabs is confirmed by many of his students and biographers.

Although Ibn Taymiyya was trained as a Hanbali from his youth, he was not always careful to emphasise his membership of the madhab and to identify himself with it in his positions. Let us keep in mind that Ibn Taymiyya, besides eliciting criticism from other Ḥanbalis, also criticised the methods and opinions of several great Ḥanbali scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Ḫallāl (d. 311/923), or Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066) to name but a few, just as he criticised some of the principles of the Ḥanbali madhab including some that he considered to be innovations (bidaʿ). Caferina Bori suggests “that Ibn Taymiyah’s detachment from the authority of the four madhab-s and his challenge to judicial authority became socially and politically inconvenient at some point, as his death in prison shows.”

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77 Caterina Bori 2010, 33-6.
79 al-Matroudi 2006, 92-8. For what he considers to be erroneous rules in the madhab (ġalat), see also 107-15. For some madhab rules that he refutes, see 122-5.
80 Bori 2009, 67.
His independence from the madhabs was well-known, especially towards the end of his life, when he sometimes seemed to place himself above the madhabs, wishing maybe to detach himself from them for certain issues. The example of his two works on visiting the tombs are noteworthy in this respect. Let us recall in passing that Ibn Taymiyya wrote an epistle on the abandonment of taqlīd in which he said that there was no need to follow the opinions of the four schools.81

How can this circulation across the madhabs be explained? First of all, it is the result of a long intellectual journey and a solid expertise in the madhabs. But above all, it is motivated by Ibn Taymiyya’s primary concern to protect the principle of tawḥīd against all deviant practices that could lead to the širk (polytheism/associationism), a leitmotiv that he hammers tirelessly in his writings. This desire to defend the Islamic creed of divine uniqueness, the spread of heterodox practices and beliefs that can lead the believer to the širk explains why Ibn Taymiyya devoted most of his writings to issues related to dogma and belief.82 For Ibn Taymiyya, the search for the truth, the need to protect the tawḥīd, the interest of Muslims and not that of a madhab or a school of thought, are the most important things.83 Despite his admiration for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya


82 “He [Ibn Taymiyya] - May God be pleased with him - has written a great deal on the founding principles [usūl] in addition to other sciences. I asked him about the reason for this and to write me a text on law, which would group his choices and preferences so that he would serve as a support [ʿumda] for giving fatwās. He replied: ‘concerning the branches [al-furūʿ] the matter is simple. If a Muslim follows and applies [qala-da] the opinions of one of the ‘ulamāʾ who is authoritative, then he is allowed to practice his religion based on his words [of the scholar] and for what he is not certain that this scholar made a mistake. As for the founding principles of religion [usūl], I have seen people of innovation, bewilderment and passions like followers of philosophy, bāṭiniyya, heretics [malāḥida], supporters of the unity of existence [waḥdat al-wuǧūd], Dahriyya, Qadariyya, Nusayris, Ṣaḥmīyya, Ḥulūliyya, those who refute divine Names and Attributes [al-muʿāṭṭilah], anthropomorphists [al-muǧassima wa-l-mušabbiha], the supporters of al-Rawaḍī, those of Kullāb, the Sulamiyya and others among the people of innovation [...] and it was clear that many of them sought to nullify the sacred šarīʿa of Prophet Muhammad, which prevails over all other legislations, and that they put people in doubt regarding the founding principles of their religion [usūl dīni-him]. This is why from what I have heard or seen, it is rare that the one who opposes the Book and the Sunna and is favourable to their words does not become a zindiq or has no longer the certainty [yaqīn] about his religion and belief. When I saw this situation, it seemed obvious to me that it was up to anyone who had the capacity to combat these ambiguities, these trivialities, to refute their arguments and errors, to strive to expose their vile and low character as well as the falsity of their evidence in order to defend the religion of pure monotheism and the authentic and illustrious prophetic tradition”. Al-Bazzār 1976, 33-5. See also al-Ḥaǧīlī 1999, 37-43. Nevertheless, he devoted several writings to jurisprudence (al-fiqh) and the foundations of jurisprudence (usūl al-fiqh). Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12b/1433; Ibn Rušayyiq 2001-02/1422H, 306-9. See also al-Matroudi 2006, 23-9; Rapoport 2010; al-ʿUṭayšān 1999; ʿUlwān 2000; al-Barīkān 2004; Abū Zahra 1991, 350-65, 378-405.

83 Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 11, 243, 276-82, 286, 451, 466, 468-72.
did not follow him blindly. Conversely, he had great respect for all *muğtaḥids* since they would be rewarded for their reasoning even if they were wrong in their thinking and judgement. George Makdisi summarised very well Ibn Taymiyya’s understanding of the schools of law and thought: “chaque groupe n’a de mérite en islam que dans la mesure où il s’est fait le défenseur de la foi islamique”.

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya’s circulation across the *madhabs* and independence from the *madhabs* lead to another question – raised by several scholars – namely that of Ibn Taymiyya’s level of *iǧtihād* but which will not be addressed here.

### 4.3 Ambivalence in Ibn Taymiyya’s Treatment of the Writings of Aš’arī *mutakallimūn* Authors

Ibn Taymiyya’s critical stance on certain points of the Aš’arī doctrine, particularly with regard to the Aš’arite scholars who followed the *kalām*, is becoming better known thanks to recent scholarship. Despite his disagreements and criticisms, Ibn Taymiyya still acknowledged that the Aš’arī scholars had produced many good results. Some of their interpretations of the Divine Names and Attributes were correct, despite the influence of Ǧahmite and Muʿtazilite

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84 al-Matroudi 2006, 45.
87 The question is whether or not Ibn Taymiyya should or could be considered a *muğtaḥid muṭlaq*. For many of his biographers and students, there is no doubt that Ibn Taymiyya was a *muğtaḥid*. Some of them, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya, al-Birzālī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, al-Bazzår and Ibn KatIr had much admiration for their šayḫ, which may explain the praise. Others such as Šâms al-Dīn al-Dahabi did not share all his views and even seem to have distanced themselves from the šayḫ for various reasons. Despite this, for al-Dahabi, Ibn Taymiyya reached the level of *muğtaḥid muṭlaq*. His greatest opponents of the Aš’ari school among his contemporaries such as Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ibn Zamlakānī (d. 727/1327) or other later *ʿulamā* such as Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), in spite of their virulent criticism, acknowledged his immense scholarship. The laudatory remarks, reported by al-Dahabi, allegedly made by Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1302) about Ibn Taymiyya, constitute one of the most important testimonies in his favour. Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd was a pupil of the famous ‘Īzz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-ʿAzīz b. ‘Abd al-Salām and successor of Ibn Bint al-ʿAzz as al-Šāfiʿi’s *qāḍī al-qaḍāt*. According to Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), the *ʿulamā* did not disagree that Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd was considered the *muğaddid* of the seventh/thirteenth century. As will be clear, the question of Ibn Taymiyya’s level of *iǧtihād* is still far from being decided.
thought. To better refute the views of his opponents, Ibn Taymiyya does not hesitate to quote and incorporate Ašʿarite authors and their works into his argument: the *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa iḥtilāf al-musallīn* of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ašʿarī (d. 324/936) about the ḫisma (impeccability/infallibility) of the Prophet especially in his *Minhāǧ al-Sunna*; the *Tahāfūt* of al-Ḡazālī (d. 505/1111) in his *Radd ‘alā al-Mantiqiyyīn* and other writings; he took up some of the positions of Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) whom he contrasted with other positions of al-Ḡazālī on the issue of the priority of reason over revelation, just as he found inspiration in the structure of the arguments from some of al-Ḡazālī’s works, like *Masāʾil al-ḥamsūn* and *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*.

In his *al-Iḫnāʾiyya*, in addition to Mālikī scholars, Ibn Taymiyya quoted famous Ašʿarī scholars such as Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ḡazālī (d. 505/1111) and Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) to corroborate his statements even though this did not prevent him from criticising these same authors elsewhere and disagreeing with them on various issues. This ambivalent method of Ibn Taymiyya in dealing with Ašʿarī authors by criticising them on the one hand, and using them to refute other opponents on the other, comes out quite well in his *al-Fatwā al-ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*.

At the beginning of his *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya criticised the position of the *mutakallimūn* who considered the ḥalāf to be more learned than the salaf. To show the vain nature of the practice of kalām, Ibn Taymiyya reported words that he attributed to great *mutakallimūn* such as Abū al-Fatḥ al-Šahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī or

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89 For Ibn Taymiyya the interpretations found in the *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* of Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in Abū al-Wafāʾ b. ‘Aqīl as well as in Abū Hamīd al-Gazālī are those of Bišr b. Giyāt al-Marīsī who, according to Ibn Taymiyya, was implied in the spread of the doctrine of taʿṭīl al-ṣifāt (denial of divine attributes) of the Ǧahmiyya. Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 86-7.

90 Zouggar 2011, 84-5.


94 Generic term for the generations following the salaf. In other words, from the third/tenth century onwards.

Abū al-Maʿālī al-Ǧuwaynī, who were said to have expressed, at the end of their lives, their doubts, their remorse, their dissatisfaction – for some of them even their repentance\(^96\) – for not having succeeded in finding the ‘way’ despite they made great efforts, implicitly by practising the kalām.\(^97\) As usual, Ibn Taymiyya left the best argument for last and quoted a saying he attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ǧazālī:

> أكثر الناس شكاً عند الموت أصحاب الكلام.

The people most prone to doubts when death presents itself to them are the people of the kalām.\(^98\)

Ibn Taymiyya presented the saying he attributed to al-Ǧazālī as an acknowledgement, a kind of *mea culpa* of these *mutakallimūn* for practising kalām and considering it the way forward. Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism would not prevent him from using, later in the *fatwā*, these same authors and other Ašʿarīs to corroborate his opinion on the ‘uluww (height, altitude) of God who was on his throne, the latter situated above the seven heavens.\(^99\) Ibn Taymiyya quoted the *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* of Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ašʿarī (d. 324/936) and the *Kitāb al-asmā’ wa al-ṣifāt* of Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).\(^100\)

Further on, Ibn Taymiyya defended the idea that the term al-*istiwāʾ* in verse 5 of Sura 20 could not be interpreted\(^101\) and refuted the interpretation of the term *yad* as *niʿma* (benefit).\(^102\) To support his position, he quoted once again Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ašʿarī and his work *al-Ibāna* as well as the Mālikī qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Baqillānī (d. 402/1013) – with his work also titled *al-Ibāna* – the best Ašʿarī *mutakallim* who existed according to Ibn Taymiyya.\(^103\) A little further he used the words of al-Baqillānī to refute the belief that God, by virtue of His Being, was

\(^{96}\) It is the case for Faṣr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

\(^{97}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 68-70.

\(^{98}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 70.

\(^{99}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 127-37. It is on this last point that several Ašʿarī scholars have accused Ibn Taymiyya of anthropomorphism. This accusation is based on the following syllogism: if God is attributed a direction (in this case al-*uluw*), this amounts to saying that He is therefore contained in a space and only a body can be contained in a space. God cannot therefore have a direction as is asserted in the Muršida of Muḥammad b. Tūmart (d. 524/1130), often, and wrongly, attributed to Ibn ʿAsākir, one of the reference texts of the Ašʿarī belief: "ليس له قبل ولا بعد ولا فوق ولا تحت ولا شمال ولا شمالي ولا خلف أو غيره الجهات السبعة كلها المبتدعات" (al-Qāḍī 1999, 312, 46). In another version, we find: "لا تتعلق معناه معناه لسواếc المبتدعات".\(^{102}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 186, 190.

\(^{100}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 200.

\(^{101}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 202.

\(^{102}\) Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 203.
present everywhere (fī kulli makān bi-dāti-hi). Ibn Taymiyya concluded his line of reasoning with his most relevant argument, namely a passage from the *Risāla al-nizāmiyya* of Abū al-Maʿālī al-Ǧuwaynī (d. 478/1085) in which the author explicitly stated that the best path to follow regarding the interpretation of divine names and attributes was that of the *salaf*. These few examples illustrate this ambivalent attitude of Ibn Taymiyya’s towards certain Ašʿari-*mutakallimūn* ulamas: on the one hand, refuting some of their opinions, on the other hand, integrating them into his discursive strategy and using them to refute the opinions and arguments of other opponents. Ibn Taymiyya did not shy from this ambivalent use of the texts of the *mutakallimūn* to support his theses. On the contrary, shortly before the end of his *fatwā*, Ibn Taymiyya explained in no uncertain terms why he quoted them:

And his [Abū Bakr al-Baqillānī’s] sayings and similar sayings of others among the *mutakallimūn* on this subject are numerous for anyone who wants to know them. And certainly, we could have been content only with the Qurʾān, the Sunna, the traditions of the *salaf* and dispensed with reporting their [the *mutakallimūn*’s] sayings. But the main thing is that God grants the servant’s wisdom and faith to have reason and religion so that he can understand and profess religion. Thereafter, the light of the Qurʾān and Sunna will suffice for him and he will not need anything else. Nevertheless, most people have become affiliates of certain groups of *mutakallimūn* for whom they have a good opinion at the expense of others. They are convinced that they [the *mutakallimūn*] have achieved in this regard what no one has done apart from them and that even if one were to come to them with a verse, they will not follow it until one of their [the *mutakallimūn*’s] words is presented to them.

There is no denying that Ibn Taymiyya exhibits a certain transparency and intellectual honesty in this passage. Nevertheless, on careful examination it also turns out to be yet another argument against the *mutakallimūn*: by explaining that he used the words of *mutakallimūn*

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104 Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 204.
105 Ibn Taymiyya criticises this position at the beginning of the book, see fn. 95.
106 Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 205.
to speak to those who follow the kalām, Ibn Taymiyya showed on the one hand that he held the same opinion as the earlier great šuyūḥ mutakallimūn on crucial points relating to dogma and that on the other hand, the proponents of the over-interpretation of divine names and attributes among the neo-mutakallimūn were innovators. This process was quite similar to that employed in al-Iḫnāʾī’s refutation of the visitation of the tombs with the use of Mālikī-ʿAshʿarī sources; or that of al-Qušayrī, regarding the kalām as the path of the great Sufi masters, with the use of a Sufi corpus.

5 Rigour and Criticism in the Reading of Sources

In addition to transparency in his choice to use mutakallimūn authors in his Fatwā al-hamawiyya al-kubrā, a certain rigour in the reading, treatment and validation of texts which are used as sources seems to emerge from the analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings. Given the impossibility of conducting an in-depth analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s entire output, I will limit myself to his work entitled al-Istiqāma. One of Ibn Taymiyya’s criteria of source validation that recurred quite often in this work was isnād (chain of transmission). Although less well known and less presented as a muḥaddid, Ibn Taymiyya was competent in the science of hadīṯ and the so-called science of narrators (ʿilm al-riǧāl). He emphasised the importance of the isnād and lamented that in his time, “many among the servants did not memorise the hadīṯ or their isnād and consequently, there were many errors made in both the isnād and the matn [text] of the hadīṯ”. Ibn Taymiyya sifted through the passages of al-Qušayrī’s Risāla with particular attention to those in which the author reported the sayings attributed to different Sufi masters, validating them or not after analysis of the isnād.

Al-Qušayrī reported that Dū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī was said to have been asked about verse 5 sura 20 and replied that God confirms His Being there and refutes any place for Him. God exists by His Be-

107 On Ibn Taymiyya’s position on the different types of interpretations see Zouggar 2010, 198-204.
109 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 159:
لﻜن ﻛﺜيرًا من العباد لا يحفظ الأحاديث ولا أساـﻧيدها فـﻜﺜيرًا ما يغلطون في إسناد الحديث أو مـنه.
110 His full name Abū al-Fayḍ Tawbān b. Ibrāhīm, born in Aḫmīm in Egypt in 179/796. Great Sufi scholar and master who died in Egypt in 245/859. For more information see Chiabotti, Orfali 2016, 90-127.
111 “The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established”.

Authors as Readers in the Mamlūk Period and Beyond, 45-82
I say: he [al-Qušayrī] does not cite any isnād going back to Dū al-Nūn for this saying. In these books, there are many stories/anecdotes reported with an isnād that has nothing true. So, what about this evil saying reported without an isnād which makes one attribute to šuyūḥ something a reasonable person would not say. This word has nothing to do with the verse, on the contrary it opposes it. This verse does not in any way refer to the affirmation [ittībāt] of the Being of God [dāti-hi] or even to the refutation that it is contained in a place. So how can this verse be explained in this way?! When it says ‘that He exists by His Being and things exist by His command [ḥukm]’, it is a word of Truth but this is not the meaning of this verse.113

Further on, we find this same problem of the isnād concerning a saying which al-Qušayrī attributed to Dū al-Nūn and according to which he praised the merits of the beautiful voice and the samāʿ which pushes and directs hearts towards the truth (al-ḥaqq).114 For Ibn Taymiyya:

This saying has no isnād going back to Dū al-Nūn but he [al-Qušayrī] reports it without quoting its main narrator [arsala-hu īrsālan].115 Many of what he reports in this book are actually false words that are

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112 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 150. This position echoes what is also found in the Murāsida: 

113 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 151.


115 Although it is not a prophetic ḥadīṯ, Ibn Taymiyya treats this ḥadīṯ (narrative) attributed to Dū al-Nūn using the nomenclature of ḥadīṯ scholarship. By the expression īrsālāt Ibn Taymiyya refers to the mursal ḥadīṯ, characterised by the lack of the last person to hear the ḥadīṯ directly from the Prophet.
falsely attributed to these people; either Abū al-Qāsim [al-Qušayrī] heard it from some people and considered it true or he found it written in some books and considered it authentic [...].

Ibn Taymiyya went on to highlight the phenomenon of attributing false and misleading words to the most illustrious šuyūḥ and ‘ulamāʾ for the purpose of legitimising a particular belief or innovative practice:

And among the most numerous lies are those about the famous šuyūḥ and we have seen and heard what only God is able to count. And Abū al-Qāsim despite his erudition and his reported versions with an isnād, in his book al-Risāla, there is a significant portion of the false narratives about which there is no need to polemicise for the one who has a minimum of knowledge of the reality of the narratives that are reported about them [the šuyūḥ].

Ibn Taymiyya did not merely note the absence of the isnād or criticise its authenticity. In the discussion that concerns us, Ibn Taymiyya cited the texts in which, according to him, many stories and narrations related to the samāʿ were found:

As for the one who supports, with an isnād, narrations related to the samāʿ then most of the time he uses two works: the book al-Lamʿ by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāḡ which reports after Abū Ḥātim al-Siǧistānī, after Abū Naṣr, after ‘Abd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī that he heard from him directly.

Ibn Taymiyya was ardently opposed to singing, which he considered a perversion and a danger for the heart. Although he was an enthusiast for warrior arts like furūšiyya, Ibn Taymiyya had no taste for military music, a military practice for which there is no trace either
in the Prophet or the salaf. But it was above all the samā’ practised by some mutasawwifīn with all the turpitudes and perversions committed therein that he strongly denounced and condemned. However, Ibn Taymiyya’s position on the samā’ should in no way be taken as a condemnation of Sufism as such or of the brotherhoods as has already been well demonstrated by several scholars.

In other passages of his al-Istiqāma, Ibn Taymiyya pointed out the absence of isnād which was one of the first criteria - if not the first - for validating a reported saying even before analysing its content. Even for a saying that he considered good, Ibn Taymiyya did not fail to point out the absence or lack of knowledge of the isnād. Like a muhaddith, Ibn Taymiyya analysed in depth the isnāds quoted by al-Qušayrī and did not hesitate to point out when one of the narrators was unknown:

Abū al-Qāsim said: ‘the šayḫ Abū l-Raḥmān reported to us’: ‘I heard Abū al-‘Abbās b. al-Ḥaššāb al-Baġdādī who heard Abū al-Qāsim b. Mūsā who heard Muḥammad b. Ahmad who heard al-Anṣārī who heard al-Ḫarrāz say, ‘the real closeness [to being with God] is not losing the attachment for the good things in one’s heart and the serenity of mind towards God’.

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120 According to Ibn Taymiyya, the origin of the military music would come from Persian kings. This tradition would have spread through the conquests of the Persian armies during Antiquity. Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 238. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Prophetic tradition at war is “خفض الصوت”. Poetry is acceptable for motivating and exciting the combatants’ ardour to fight. Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 238, 242, 279. For more information see Michot 2016, 8-10 and Frenkel 2018, 5-12. It should be noted that for some ‘ulamā’ music could be a psychological weapon in the service of Muslims. For the Hanafi Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), banging the drum was allowed in the context of war to gather the fighters and as a signal for combat readiness. Although it is detestable (makrūḥ) to use bells (al-aǧrās) in the territory of Dār al-ḥarb to avoid detection by the enemy, there is no harm in hanging them on the horse harness for frightening the enemy before the fight. Al-ʿAynī 2014, 1: 452-3.

121 In many passages of his writings, Ibn Taymiyya denounces the contemplation and penchant for hairless young people in the circles of samā’. See also Pouzet 1983, 132; Homerin 1985, 226 fn. 32; Berriah 2020.

122 See fn. 30.

123 Here are just a few examples. Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 157-8.

124 (And this saying is a good saying even if its isnād is not known) (Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 379).
I say, ‘this story has in its isnād someone whose degree of trust [ḥāl] is not known and even if it is true that this saying is from Abū Saʿīd al-Ḥarrāz, it does not mean that closeness to God is achieved only by this means’.  

One might think that Ibn Taymiyya raised this criterion of a narrator’s lack of knowledge in the isnād to protect the reputation of Abū ’Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, a great Sufi šayḥ whom he greatly revered and whom he quoted extensively in his writings. Yet, Ibn Taymiyya also raised the problem of isnād and was equally dubious about a saying on divine attributes that al-Qušayrī attributed to al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr, better known as al-Ḥallāǧ, and whose reputation as a misguided person, heretic and even apostate was well known and which Ibn Taymiyya did not forget to mention.  

Regarding the words of al-Ḥallāǧ, Ibn Taymiyya wrote:

Is this saying – and God is more Knowledgeable – really from al-Ḥallāǧ or not? In the isnād there is a narrator whose degree of trust [ḥālu-hu] I do not know and I have seen many things attributed to al-Ḥallāǧ in books, epistles and statements when they are lies without any doubt, even though it is true that in many other sayings attested to be those of al-Ḥallāǧ, there is corruption, disorder and disruption.

We must acknowledge here a certain rigour and objectivity on the part of Ibn Taymiyya, which were not always present, if we take into consideration the criticisms he made of al-Ḥallāǧ in other fatwās.  

It is clear that no matter which author al-Qušayrī attributed a saying to, whether he was appreciated or not by Ibn Taymiyya, the isnād was the first element to be analysed. This way of proceeding was later confirmed when Ibn Taymiyya expressed doubts about the isnād of a saying he considered to be ‘good’ and which was attributed to al-

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125 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 154. See page 158 for another example of criticism of the absence of an isnād.
126 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 106.
128 See for example the false accusations against Rašīd al-Dīn, highlighted by Michot 1995.
129 Massignon 1975. Nevertheless, he agrees on several points with al-Ḥallāǧ and his perception of al-Ḥallāǧ and his creed seems to have evolved over time. See Michot 2007.
Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), a famous Sufi šayḫ whom he particularly liked.\textsuperscript{130} For some sayings reported by al-Qušayrī from Sufi masters, Ibn Taymiyya did not limit himself to refuting the authenticity of the \textit{isnād} but made corrections and clarifications. This is the case with a saying attributed to Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh about the created character of the letters of the Qurʾān:

\begin{quote}
هذا الكلام ليس له إسناد عن سهل، وكلام سهل بن عبد الله وأصحابه في السنة والصفات والقرآن أشهر من أن يذكر هنا. 

\end{quote}

This saying has no \textit{isnād} from Sahl. The saying of Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh and his companions about the Sunna, the Attributes and the Qurʾān are so well known that there is no need to recall them here. Sahl is among the most illustrious people who claimed that the Qurʾān in its entirety consists of \textit{ḥurūf} and that its meanings are not created. Moreover, his companion Abū al-Ḥasan b. Sālim – the most knowledgeable of Sahl sayings – and his companions, are known for his words on this subject. Abū Bakr b. Ishāq al-Kalābādī has mentioned in his book \textit{al-Ta’arruf fī madḥab al-taṣawwuf} according to al-Ḥārit al-Muhāsibī and Abū al-Ḥasan b. Sālim that both say: ‘surely God speaks through a ʂawt.’ The \textit{madḥab} of the Sālimiya and the companions of Sahl is clear on this and it is not appropriate to bring a \textit{mursal} narration without an \textit{isnād} for this type of thing that is clear and well-known.\textsuperscript{131}

Ibn Taymiyya’s methodological process demonstrates both a scientific rigour and a vast erudition, which were unanimously accepted by his contemporaries, whether those in his circle or his fiercest opponents.

\section*{6 Conclusion}

The analysis of a sample of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings has shed light on some aspects of his source methodology. Of course, these results are only preliminary and, given the limited corpus, need to be completed. The example of the visit to the tombs shows how Ibn Taymiyya used the Companions in order to disprove his opponents who based their arguments on the opinion or word of a Companion. In the first instance, Ibn Taymiyya invoked the authority of a Companion who

\begin{footnotes}
131 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 163.
\end{footnotes}
was higher in the ranking of merits. If it was an isolated opinion as in the case of Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn Taymiyya opposed it in a second step to the ǧumhūr al-ṣaḥāba (majority of the Companions).

Ibn Taymiyya did not follow this methodology in every case. Depending on the subject matter, the relevance of the word reported by the Companion could prevail over the order of merit of the Companions. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya gave priority to the word of Salmān al-ʿFārisī over that of ʿUmar, the second caliph of Islam and who occupied the second place in the ranking of the Companions in the Sunni tradition, on the subject of the superiority of the Arabs and the merits of Arabness since it made his argument more relevant and effective.

The examination of the Ǧawāb al-bāhir and al-Iḫnāʾiyya, writings dealing with the visitation of graves, showed Ibn Taymiyya’s ability to use to his advantage, thanks to his vast erudition and sound knowledge of the different madhabs and schools of thought, the sources of his opponents regardless of their madhab of affiliation. Ibn Taymiyya built his arguments on sources from his opponent’s madhab and used it against him to deconstruct his discourse and discredit him. His expertise in the madhabs in general, and the Mālikī madhab in particular, allowed him to discuss and quote the opinions of the ʿulamāʾ of the different madhabs as he wished. Although he was attached to the Ḥanbali madhab and admired its founder, it would seem that Ibn Taymiyya was not concerned with necessarily appearing to be a Ḥanbalī scholar and/or ensuring that the opinions of the scholars affiliated with his madhab prevailed, particularly towards the end of his life. This pluri-madhab referencing and selection of sources, which he practiced at the end of his life, was the result of both his expertise in the madhabs and a long intellectual journey. It was a further indicator of his independence from the madhabs, an independence that was evident in his later writings: Ibn Taymiyya wanted to place himself above the madhabs, to detach himself from them in the treatment of certain issues because quite simply the struggle to defend his conception of orthodoxy went beyond the madhabs and concerned all Muslims without distinction. In line with the work of other scholars, the passages analysed in this study confirm Ibn Taymiyya’s ambivalent attitude towards certain Ašʿarī-mutakallimūn ʿulamāʾ: on the one hand, he criticised them and disagreed with them on several points, on the other hand, he did not hesitate to use them against his opponents.

The examination of other writings of Ibn Taymiyya would allow us to potentially corroborate these results but, above all, bring new elements regarding his source methodology, which remains to be studied in depth as well as the idea of a Taymiyyan kalām.
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