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 Hanbalī 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 Hanbalī 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 Hanbalī scholar’s work, this article aims to be a preliminary study to suggest analytical and research perspectives.


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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, muḥaddiṭūn, 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 Ḥanbalīs and other scholars from his circle like al-Ḏahabī.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

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.

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: ḥayātu-hu, Muḥammad Abū Zahra (d. 1974) highlighted Ibn Taymiyya’s writing manḥaǧ in tafsīr, issues related to dogma, jurisprudence and Sufism. For Muḥammad Abū Zahra, his manḥaǧ was the same regardless of the field. In an important contribution, Ibrāhīm ʿUqaylī was interested in the importance given to revelation, reason and the Arabic language itself in Ibn Taymiyya’s manḥaǧ. The Arabic language as a reasoning tool in Ibn Taymiyya was later analysed in detail by Hādī Aḥmad Farḥān al-Šāǧirī and then ‘Abd al-Allāh b. Nāfiʿ al-Daʿǧānī. In 1999, the book Manḥaǧ šayḫ al-Islām by ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd al-Ḥaǧīlī 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. Finally, other aspects of Ibn Taymiyya’s manḥaǧ have been studied, like the issue of takfīr, dogma, innovations (bidʿa) or even knowledge in general.

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.
8 ʿUqaylī 1994, 109-76.
14 al-Muqrin 2014.
15 al-Daʿḡānī 2014.
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 Mamlūks 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.

19 Michot 1995.


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), Iqtīdā’ al-sirāt al-mustaqīm li-muhālafat aṣḥāb al-Ǧahīm (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 ḥadīṭs 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 ḥadīṭs: “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 awliyā’ of God”. Al-İstiqāma showcased the importance of tasawwuf as a spiritual path, bringing one closer to God and Ibn Taymiyya’s interest in it. Al-İstiqāma is in itself another argument refuting the false accusation that Ibn Taymiyya was staunchly anti-Sufi.

In the İntıdā’ al-şirāt al-mustaqīm li-muḫālafat așhāb 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 šarīʿa”, 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 Ğawāb 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 نقﺺ 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-taṣawwuf especially with al-Qādiriya 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-Ṫobgui 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. Šaʿūd 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.
pretation of the hadîth: “No travel except to one of the three mosques: the mosque al-Ḥarâm (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 hadîth quoted above and not with the intention of visiting the Prophet’s tomb. The same applies to Jerusalem with the al-Aqṣâ 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 Abû Bakr al-Iḫnāʾî (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 Gawâb al-bâhir 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 Ḥanbalî šayḫ of Damascus as well as his biographies when necessary.

3 \textbf{Opinions of the Companions}

After the Qur’ān 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 maḏhab. It is true that the opinions of the Companions, and to a lesser extent those of the Successors (tâbiʿūn), are of particular importance to Imam Aḥmad.

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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Narrated from Abû Hurayra, reported by al-Nasāʾî in his \textit{Sunan} (https://sunnah.com/nasai:768).
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 110, 137-41, 144, 150, 252-3, 264, 266, 300, 365-6.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Abû Zahra 1947, 284-99; al-Matroudi 2006, 33-4, 41.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Concept referring to the first three generations of Islam which is supported by several hadîths. 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”.
\end{itemize}
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 ǧumhūr al-ṣaḥāba as a Selection Criterion

The last major polemic initiated by Ibn Taymiyya in his writings concerned the ziyārāt. 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 Rāšidūn 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 fiṭra 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-Buḫrā, 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 Rāšīdūn caliphs, Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), ‘Uṯmān b. ‘Affān (d. 35/656) and ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) occupied, in regnal order, the first places. This position was supported by several hadīṯs, the best known of which was that reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmiḏī according to Abū Naǧīḥ al-ʿIrbāḍ b. Sāriya.\footnote{It is also quoted by al-Nawawī in his \textit{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 \textit{Rafʿ al-malām ʿan aʾimmat al-aʿlām}, Ibn Taymiyya stated that the Rāšīdūn 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 ‘Umar.\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, ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, ‘Uṯmān b. ‘Affān, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh, Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf, 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 \textit{Ǧawāb 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 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf and Hālid b. al-Walīd: “He [the Prophet] said in an authentic hadīṯ: ‘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 Hālid b. al-Walīd when he quarrelled with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf because the latter was among the early converts, those who spent well before al-Ǧudaybiyya, and the \textit{fath} referred to here is the pact of Ḥudaybiyya. Hālid, ‘Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ and ‘Uṯmān b. Ṭalha conversed during the truce following al-Ǧudaybiyya and before the capture of Mecca. They were among the \textit{muḥāǧirūn} followers and not like the original \textit{muḥāǧirūn}. As for those who converted in the year of the capture of Mecca, they are not considered \textit{muḥāļīf} because there was no \textit{hiǧra} after the capture of Mecca. Those who converted from among the inhabitants of Mecca are called \textit{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 ḏikr (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, ʿUmar.

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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 taslīm. 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, Ğawāb al-bāhir, 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.
and one should not take this practice of Ibn ʿUmar [that of coming to visit the Prophet’s grave] as an example or touching by brushing with one’s hand [tamassuh] the place he [the Prophet] occupied on the minbar or even seeking to pray at the places where he [the Prophet] prayed because Ibn ʿUmar liked to pray at these places while the majority of the Companions [ḡumhūr 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, ʿUmar b. 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, ʿUmar to the left.
50 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 276, 282-3.
51 Ibn Taymiyya 2011-12a/1433H, 295-6. For another account of ʿUmar’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 ʿUmar who is none other than the father of ʿAbd 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 ʿUmar in merit, supported by the words of the Prophet, meant that one had to follow him, before his son ʿAbd Allāh, despite the latter’s merits, which were certainly numerous, but lesser:

And ʿUmar enjoined upon them [the Companions and Muslims] what the Prophet taught them [sanna-hu la-hum] and ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb was one of the Rāšidūn caliphs for whom we were ordered to follow the traditions [sunnati-him]. And he [ʿUmar] 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 ʿUmar’. Taking [someone] as an example is superior to following a tradition. 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 Sahīhs, 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. ʿImrān – 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 ʿUmar’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-Ḡifārī was the son of Baṣra b. Abī Baṣra b. Waqqāṣ who was himself a Companion of the Prophet. Abū Baṣra al-Ḡifārī 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-Ḡifārī was one of the transmitters of the hadīṯ about the only permission to travel to the three mosques for the purpose of worship that Abū Hurayra would later relate. It is this hadīṯ that formed the pillar on which Ibn Taymiyya’s argument about the visitation of graves rested throughout the controversy. Although not explicit in the quoted passage, Abū Baṣra al-Ḡifārī’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 ‘Uṯmān, 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 ţumhūr al-ṣaḥāba:

وقد كره كثير من الصحابة والتابعين ما فعله عثمان من بناء المسجد بالحجرة والقَصَّة والسّاج، وهم لماأكله، وأما عمرو فإنه وسعه، لكن بناه على ما كان من بنائه من اللّبِ، وعُمده جذوع النخل، وسقفه الجريد، ولم يُفنِّد أن أحدًا كره ما فعل عمر، وإنما وقع النزاع فيما فعل عثمان والوليد.

and many of the Companions and Successors hated what ‘Uṯmān – 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 ‘Uṯmān and al-Walīd did.

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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-Aṯīr 2012, 1412.

Although the material used for the work carried out by the third caliph ʿUṭmān 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 ʿUṭmān 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 ʿUṭmān 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 ḥadīṣ. 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 *Iqtida’ 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 ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb 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 ‘Umar, 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 ‘Umar. But why quote the latter when words attributed to the second Caliph of Islam and other more illustrious Companions following the example of ‘Alī, about the importance of the Arabic language and Arabism were well-known?

The choice of quoting Salmān before ‘Umar 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 ‘Umar 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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60 Ibn Taymiyya 2003, 270; Ibn Sa’d 2001, 4: 69. Ibn al-ʿAṭīr reports that he may also have come from the city of Rāmahurmuz in Ḫūzistān. Ibn al-ʿAṭīr 2012, 499-500.
Persians was not insignificant since there were many great tābiʿūn and tābiʿ tābiʿīn (Successors) of Persian origin who were students of the Companions and transmitters of their opinions such as ʿIkrima, the mawlā of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbbās. 61

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 Ǧawāb 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. 62

It was after receiving a copy of the text of the Mālikī qāḍī Taqi 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. 63 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. 64

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 Ǧawāb al-bāḥir, but in al-Iḫnāʾiyya the fre-

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 in Ǧawāb al-bāḥir 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 Ḥanbali, those of his formative maḏhab? We know that he wrote a book extolling the merits of Imam Mālik’s school entitled, Taḥdíl maḏhab Mālik wa ahl al-Madīna wa-ṣīḥat usūl-hi.65 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-Iḥnāʾī, 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 Muḏawwana, Ismāʿīl b. Ishāq (d. 282/896) and his al-Mabsūṭ, the qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149), the qāḍī ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bağdādī (d. 422/1031), Abū al-Qāsim b. al-Ǧallāb (d. 378/989), Muḥammad b. al-Mawwâz (d. 269/875), ‘Abd al-Šamad b. Baṣīr al-Tanūḫī (d. first half of the sixth/twelfth century) and ‘Abd Allâh b. Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996) among others.66

By building his argument on reading texts from his opponent’s maḏhab, Ibn Taymiyya deconstructed the latter’s discourse and discredited it. Compared to the Mālikī ‘ulamāʾ, Ibn Taymiyya quoted few Ḥanbalī and even refuted some of their positions.67 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-Iḥnāʾī and those held by eminent scholars belonging to his own maḏhab. The image of an al-Iḥnāʾī who was not a ‘good’ Mālikī or, even worse, who did not know his maḏhab 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.68 It should be noted that several Mālikī ‘ulamāʾ 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 ḥadīṯs by Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ǧanā al-Maqdīṣī (d. 600/1203) advocating the ziyārāt, Ibn Taymiyya only cites the kunya and nisba which is the same for ‘Abd al-Ǧanāi and his cousin Muwaffaq al-Dīn, better known as Ibn Qudâma. The former was a ḥadīṯ scholar. Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 143. See also al-Matrûdi 2006, 97. On Ibn Taymiyya’s criticism of Ḥanbali scholars see al-Matrûdi 2006, 92-128, 172-85; Bori 2010, 33-6.
68 Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 184.
not in opposition to the šariʿa. This wide-ranging selection from the Mālikī corpus by Ibn Taymiyya and the way he used it showed his deep knowledge of the Mālikī madḥhab, as if he had been a Mālikī. In fact, an analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings demonstrates his erudition in all the madhhab and a great respect for each of the founders of the four schools of law. However, it seems that, with the exception of the Ḥanbalī madḥhab, Ibn Taymiyya’s expertise in the Mālikī madḥhab was superior to the others, for he considered it to be the most accurate in matters of uṣūl. 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 madhhab, as mentioned by his contemporaries and biographers.

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 ḥadīth over that of the people of opinion (al-raʿy). 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.

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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74 El-Tobgui 2019, 88.
4.2 Circulation Across the Maḏḥabs and Independence from the Maḏḥabs

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 maḏḥabs. 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 maḏḥabs, 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 maḏḥabs on several points of jurisprudence (masāʾil fiqhiyya). 75 I think it is possible to speak of pluri-maḏhab 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-maḏhab referencing can be read as Ibn Taymiyya’s willingness to ‘circulate’ between the maḏḥabs, to use their respective corpus when and how he saw fit. This ‘intellectual independence’ of Ibn Taymiyya from the maḏḥabs is confirmed by many of his students and biographers. 76

Although Ibn Taymiyya was trained as a Hanbali from his youth, he was not always careful to emphasise his membership of the maḏhab and to identify himself with it in his positions. Let us keep in mind that Ibn Taymiyya, besides eliciting criticism from other Ḥanbalīs, 77 also criticised the methods and opinions of several great Ḥanbali scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Ḥallāl (d. 311/923), or Abū Yaʿlā (d. 458/1066) to name but a few, 78 just as he criticised some of the principles of the Ḥanbali maḏhab including some that he considered to be innovations (bidaʿ). 79 Caterina Bori suggests “that Ibn Taymiyah’s detachment from the authority of the four maḏhab-s and his challenge to judicial authority became socially and politically inconvenient at some point, as his death in prison shows”. 80

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77 Bori 2010, 33-6.
79 al-Matroudi 2006, 92-8. For what he considers to be erroneous rules in the maḏhab (ġalat), see also 107-15. For some maḏhab rules that he refutes, see 122-5.
80 Bori 2009, 67.
His independence from the *maḏhab* was well-known, especially towards the end of his life, when he sometimes seemed to place himself above the *maḏhab*, 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 *maḏhab* be explained? First of all, it is the result of a long intellectual journey and a solid expertise in the *maḏhab*. 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 *maḏhab* 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 (*uṣūl*) 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 [‘*umda*] for giving *fatwā*.” He replied: ‘concerning the branches (*al-furūʿ*) the matter is simple. If a Muslim follows and applies (*qalla-da*) the opinions of one of the ‘*ulamā*’ 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 (*uṣūl*), 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, Ṣufis, Ḥulūliyya, those who refute divine Names and Attributes [al-muʿaṭṭila], anthropomorphists [al-muǧassima wa-l-mušabbiha], the supporters of al-Rawāndī, 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 (*uṣūl 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 *zindīq* 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 (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Ibn Taymiyya 2011a, 243-256; Ibn Rušayiq 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 *muqtahids* since they would be rewarded for their reasoning even if they were wrong in their thinking and judgement. 84 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”. 85

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya’s circulation across the *maḏḥabs* and independence from the *maḏḥabs* lead to another question – raised by several scholars 86 – namely that of Ibn Taymiyya’s level of *iǧtihād* but which will not be addressed here. 87

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

Ibn Taymiyya’s critical stance on certain points of the Ašʿarī doctrine, particularly with regard to the Ašʿarite scholars who followed the *kalām*, is becoming better known thanks to recent scholarship. 88 Despite his disagreements and criticisms, Ibn Taymiyya still acknowledged that the Ašʿarī 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.
86 For Muhammad Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya is a *muqtahid muntasib* in the Hanbali *maḏḥab*. Abū Zahra 1991, 347-8, 372-8, in particular 375-8. For al-Matroudi, Ibn Taymiyya should be considered a *muqtahid mutlaq* but who wanted to depend on Imam Ahmad’s sources. al-Matroudi 2006, 21-2, 49-54 in particular 54. See also Rahāl 2002.
87 The question is whether or not Ibn Taymiyya should or could be considered a *muqtahid mutlaq*. For many of his biographers and students, there is no doubt that Ibn Taymiyya was a *muqtahid*. Some of them, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya, al-Birzālī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, al-Bazzār and Ibn Kaṯīr had much admiration for their *šayḫ*, which may explain the praise. Others such as Šams al-Dīn al-Dahabī did not share all his views and even seem to have distanced themselves from the *šayḫ* for various reasons. Despite this, for al-Dahabī, Ibn Taymiyya reached the level of *muqtahid mutlaq*. His greatest opponents of the Ašʿarī school among his contemporaries such as Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ibn Zam lakānī (d. 727/1327) or other later *‘ulamā* 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-Dahabī, 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 ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Salām and successor of Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz as ʿIzzī qādī al-ṣaqāt. According to Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Sukī (d. 771/1370), the *‘ulamā* did not disagree that Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd was considered the *muqaddid* 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 iḫtilāf al-muṣallīn of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ašʿarī (d. 324/936) about the ʿiṣma (impeccability/infallibility) of the Prophet especially in his Minhāǧ al-Sunna; the Tahāfūt of al-Ġazālī (d. 505/1111) in his Radd ‘alā al-Mantiqiyyīn and other writings; he took up some of the positions of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) whom he contrasted with other positions of al-Ġazālī 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-Ġazālī’s works, like Masāʾil al-ḥamsūn and Taʾsis al-taqdis.

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-Ġazālī (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 ḥalaf 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

89 For Ibn Taymiyya the interpretations found in the Taʾsis al-taqdis of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in Abū al-Wafāʾ b. ‘Aqīl and in Abū Ḥamīd al-Gazālī are those of Bišr b. Gyiāṯ 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.
95 Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 68. In his Rafʾ al-malām, Ibn Taymiyya writes:
Abū al-Ma‘ālī 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— for not having succeeded in finding the ‘way’ despite they made great efforts, implicitly by practising the kalām. As usual, Ibn Taymiyya left the best argument for last and quoted a saying he attributed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ǧazālī:

أكبر الناس شكاً عند الموت أصحاب الكلام.

The people most prone to doubts when death presents itself to them are the people of the kalām.

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 Aš’arīs to corroborate his opinion on the ʿuluww (height, altitude) of God who was on his throne, the latter situated above the seven heavens. Ibn Taymiyya quoted the Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥassan al-Ašʿarī (d. 324/936) and the Kitāb al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt of Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).

Further on, Ibn Taymiyya defended the idea that the term al-istiwāʾ in verse 5 of Sura 20 could not be interpreted and refuted the interpretation of the term yad as niʿma (benefit). To support his position, he quoted once again Abū al-Ḥasan al-Αšʿarī 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. A little further he used the words of al-Baqillānī to refute the belief that God, by virtue of His Being, was

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96 It is the case for Faḥr 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 Aš’arī 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-ʿuluw), 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 ‘Asākir, one of the reference texts of the Aš’arī belief: "ليس له قبل ولا بعد ولا فوق ولا تحت ولا يمين ولا شمال ولا أمام ولا خلفه" (al-Qāḍī 1999, 31-2, 46). In another version, we find: "لا تحوه الجهات السبعة كسائر المبتدعات".
100 Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 186, 190.
103 Ibn Taymiyya 2015, 203.
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present everywhere (fī kulli makān bi-ḏāti-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 ulemas: 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

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 šuyūḫ mutakallīmūn 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-mutakallīmūn 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-Quṣayrī, 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 mutakallīmūn authors in his Fatwā al-hamawīyya 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 muḥaddīṯ, 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-Quṣayrī’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-Quṣayrī reported that Ḏū 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-

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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 أسانيدها فكثيرًا ما يغلطون في إسناد الحديث أو منه.

110 His full name Abū al-Fayḍ Ṯawbān 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”.
ing and things exist by His command (ḥukm) and as He Wills.\textsuperscript{112} But for Ibn Taymiyya, the problem of the isnād arose already before analysing its content:

I say: he [al-Qušayrī] does not cite any isnād going back to Ḍū 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 šuyūḫ 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 [iṯbāt] of the Being of God [ḏāti-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.\textsuperscript{113}

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

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

\textsuperscript{112} Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 150. This position echoes what is also found in the Muršida:

\textsuperscript{113} Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 151.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 275.

\textsuperscript{115} Although it is not a prophetic ḥadīṯ, Ibn Taymiyya treats this ḥadīṯ (narrative) attributed to Ḍū al-Nūn using the nomenclature of ḥadīṯ scholarship. By the expression arsala-hu ʿirsālan 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 šuyūḫ and ‘ulamā’ for the purpose of legitimising a particular belief or innovative practice:

And among the most numerous lies are those about the famous šuyūḫ 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 samā’ were found:

As for the one who supports, with an isnād, narrations related to the samā’ then most of the time he uses two works: the book al-Lam’ by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāḏ which reports after Abū Ḥātim al-Siǧistānī, after Abū Naṣr, after ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī al-Ṭūsī, and also reports from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tamīmī; the book al-Samā’ of Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān 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 furūsiyya, 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 *samāʿ* practised by some *mutasawwifa* with all the turpitudes and perversions committed therein that he strongly denounced and condemned. However, Ibn Taymiyya’s position on the *samāʿ* 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 *muhaddīth*, 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:

> قال أبو القاسم: “حدثنا الشيخ أبو عبد الرحمن، سمعت أبا العباس بن الخشّاب البغدادي، سمعتُ أبا القاسم بن موسى، سمعت محمد بن أحمد، سمعت الأنصاري، سمعتْ الخرّاز يقول: حقيقة القرب فَقْد حُسْن الأشياء من القلب، وهدوء الضمير إلى الله”.

Abū al-Qāsim said: ‘the *šayḫ* Abū al-Rahmān reported to us’: ‘I heard Abū al-ʿAbbās b. al-Ḥaššāb al-Baġdādī who heard Abū al-Qāsim b. Mūsā who heard Muḥammad b. Aḥmad 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 *ʿulamāʾ* music could be a psychological weapon in the service of Muslims. For the Ḥanafī 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 (*makrūh*) 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 *samāʿ*. 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 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, a great Sufi šayḫ 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:

لا أعرف حاله. وقد رأيت أشياء – والله أعلم – هذا الكلام كثيرة منسوبة إلى الحلاج من مصنفاته وكلماته و رسائله، وهي كاذبة عليه لا شك في ذلك، وإن كان في كثير من كلامه الثابت عنه فساد واضطراب.

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.130 For some sayings reported by al-Qušayrī from Sufi masters, Ibn Taymiyya did not limit himself to refuting the authenticity of the 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:

هذا الكلام ليس له إسناد عن سهل، وكلام سهل بن عبد الله وأصحابه في السنة والصفات والقرآن أشهر من أن يُذكر هنا. 

This saying has no 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 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. Isḥāq al-Kalābāḏī has mentioned in his book al-Taʾarruf fi maḡhab al-taṣawwuf according to al-Ḥāriṯ al-Muḥāsibī and Abū al-Ḥasan b. Sālim that both say: ‘surely God speaks through a ṣawṭ.’ The maḡhab of the Sālimiyah and the companions of Sahl is clear on this and it is not appropriate to bring a mursal narration without an isnād for this type of thing that is clear and well-known.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.

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

131 Ibn Taymiyya 2005, 163.
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. De-
pending on the subject matter, the relevance of the word reported
by the Companion could prevail over the order of merit of the Com-
panions. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya gave priority to the word of Salmān al-
Fārisī over that of ʿUmar, the second caliph of Islam and who occu-
pied 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 knowl-
dge of the different maḏhab and schools of thought, the sources of
his opponents regardless of their maḏhab of affiliation. Ibn Taymiyya
built his arguments on sources from his opponent’s maḏhab and used
it against him to deconstruct his discourse and discredit him. His
expertise in the maḏhab in general, and the Mālikī maḏhab in par-
ticular, allowed him to discuss and quote the opinions of the ‘ulamā’
of the different maḏhab as he wished. Although he was attached
to the Ḥanbali maḏhab 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 affil-
iated with his maḏhab prevailed, particularly towards the end of his
life. This pluri-maḏhab referencing and selection of sources, which he
practiced at the end of his life, was the result of both his expertise in
the maḏhab and a long intellectual journey. It was a further indica-
tor of his independence from the maḏhab, an independence that was
evident in his later writings: Ibn Taymiyya wanted to place himself
above the maḏhab, to detach himself from them in the treatment of
certain issues because quite simply the struggle to defend his concep-
tion of orthodoxy went beyond the maḏhab and concerned all Mus-
lims without distinction. In line with the work of other scholars, the
passages analysed in this study confirm Ibn Taymiyya’s ambivalent at-
titude towards certain Ašʿāri-mutakallimūn ‘ulamā’: 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 ele-
ments regarding his source methodology, which remains to be stud-
ied in depth as well as the idea of a Taymiyyan kalām.
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