

**Mohd Farid Mohd Sharif. *Ibn Taymiyyah on Jihād and Baghy*. Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2011.**

This book provides a scholarly examination of two highly controversial and widely misunderstood concepts in the contemporary world: *jihād* and *baghy* (rebellion). It approaches this topic from the perspective of one of the most influential figures of classical Islamic thought, Ibn Taymiyyah, the 7–8th (AH)/13–14th (CE) scholar. Ibn Taymiyyah, a revivalist teacher and jihadist of his own day, continues to have an impact on Islamic movements of today. The author helps us to view this medieval jurist's ideas beyond the polemical discourses of our times, while noting important themes in his thought that hold special significance for our volatile world. From the outset, Mohd Farid dispenses with the false notions that *jihād* is solely military or non-military, instead showing us how classical scholars, including Ibn Taymiyyah, viewed *jihād* as a combination of both. Similarly, many are often mistaken about what constitutes *baghy* and how we should understand its status and those who perform it. This book helps to clarify these crucial matters making it an essential contribution to existing literature on medieval Islamic thought. Moreover, given the way this book situates Ibn Taymiyyah within his historical context and discusses pertinent issues in our times, it is not only an important source for religious studies but also for the sociology and anthropology of knowledge.

## **THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK**

*Ibn Taymiyyah on Jihād and Baghy* consists of five chapters including an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Mohd Farid explains the Arabic meanings of the word *jihād* and describes important aspects of Ibn Taymiyyah's biography and scholarship. The author stresses that Ibn Taymiyyah was not only a theorist of *jihād*, but an active practitioner fighting against the Mongols and heretic Shi'ah and calling for struggle against the crusading Franks (Christians). He wrote extensively about *jihād* and all aspects of Islamic thinking. For this study, the author uses Ibn Taymiyyah's primary writings, edited collections and English translations as well as several relevant modern works.

In chapter two, Mohd Farid provides a more detailed discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's biography and thought. He informs us that Ibn Taymiyyah was born in Harrān, Syria to an educated and religious family, and was forced to move to Damascus due to family problems under Mongol rule. His training was primarily in the Hanbali School of jurisprudence, but included the opinions of the other three Sunni schools. In fact, his teachers included Ahmad b. Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali School and many other prominent scholars including several women. Later, Ibn Taymiyyah taught in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus and at the Madrasah al-Salahiyya of Egypt becoming widely recognised as a great scholar of Islamic jurisprudence and *hadith*. He wrote over three hundred works in the form of letters, short treatises, books on basic principles of belief and general books. Despite his phenomenal scholarship, the author informs us that there were a few opposing views expressed describing Ibn Taymiyyah as "mentally unbalanced." Mohd Farid provides us with a fair discussion of these views and concludes that Ibn Taymiyyah had an unusual personality, expressed his temper toward heretical Sufis and was not infallible.

The author proceeds to discuss Ibn Taymiyyah's thought on various issues. In terms of *ijmā'* (consensus) and *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy), two important concepts in Islamic jurisprudence, his views differed from many other scholars. He restricted the legal category of *ijmā'* to consensus of the Companions and conceived of reasoning by analogy primarily through relating elements to Qur'anic and *hadith* rulings. Mohd Farid informs us that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote extensively about Sufism and "viewed it as an essential part of the life of Muslims" (27). He divided Sufis into three categories: the first was the masters of Islam who were never intoxicated nor engaged in actions contrary to Qur'an and *hadith*, the second was Sufis who experienced annihilation and intoxication but later viewed their expressions as wrong, and the third was the Sufis "who believed in doctrines which contradict the *shari'ah*" (29). In regards to the third category, the author notes that Ibn Taymiyyah criticised Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of *wahdah al-wujūd* (the unity of being) as pantheistic and heretical. This is particularly significant for students of Southeast Asia, since Malayo-Indonesian scholars hotly contested this doctrine.

Next, Mohd Farid turns to Ibn Taymiyyah's economic and political thought. He viewed the state as playing an important role in enforcing Islamic codes of conduct, maintaining a free market, providing for society's basic needs

and keeping fair prices. Many readers will be interested to find out that Ibn Taymiyyah, "variously heralded and vilified as one of the major influences on current Islamic revivalism" (12), did not view the establishment of a Caliphate, or an Islamic state, as a fundamental duty or as inherently axiomatic in Islam. Rather, he viewed the formation of political associations as part of the natural propensity of humans, and considered it better to have religious associations. Nevertheless, he considered the leadership of *imāms* to be a religious and political necessity for organising the Muslim community, coordinating the duty of enjoining good and forbidding wrong and implementing prayer and legal penalties. The author notes that "he, furthermore, asserts that the identifying feature of an Islamic society is not its leader's character, but rather the people's responsiveness to the *shari'ah*" (34). Mohd Farid ends this chapter with a description of the social conditions of Ibn Taymiyyah's time which included the invasion of the Mongols and conflict with Christian invaders and heretical Shi'ah "rebels."

In chapter three, the author delineates in detail Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas about *jihād* following a discussion of the concept in classical texts and its definition. Ibn Taymiyyah defined *jihād* "as the struggle to remove *fitnah* and until the religion, all of it, is for Allah" (43). Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyyah posited two kinds of *fitnah*: *fitnah* of the *kuffar* or polytheists and *fitnah* of *sharr* (evil) or transgression, disobedience and ignorance. He divided *jihād* into *jihād makki*, which is struggle with knowledge, argumentation and *da'wah*, enjoining good and preventing wrong, and *jihād madani*, which is military fighting. Operating with a broad conception of *'ibadah*, similar to many contemporary revivalists, Ibn Taymiyyah viewed *jihād* as a form of *'ibadah* or engaging in actions to please Allah. Like other classical scholars, he classified it as *fard kifāyah* (collective obligation) rather than *fard 'ayn* (fundamental individual obligation), accept under certain conditions of defense of a Muslim polity when it became *fard 'ayn* for all capable Muslims. However, Mohd Farid informs us that Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas contrasted significantly with the Sufi distinction between the greater *jihād* against the lower self and the lesser *jihād* against a military foe. He considered the hadith this distinction was based upon as weak, thereby rejecting it. Instead, he viewed the struggle against the lower self as a fundamental individual obligation and the struggle against a seen enemy as a collective obligation. Nevertheless, shaped by his historical context, Ibn Taymiyyah argued that the military form of *jihād* was the greater form. He thought that the targets of *jihād* were polytheists and People of the

Book, not because of difference of belief, but due to their transgression against Muslims. In addition, individual apostates must be punished in a manner not exceeding *hadd*, and a large group of apostates, such as the Mongols, must be fought on the battlefield. Finally, criminal bandits must be punished and fought as they form a threat to the general interest of the community.

In chapter four, Mohd Farid focuses on Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas about *baghy*. Following a similar methodology as that used earlier in the book in reference to *jihād*, he first discusses the lexical meaning of *baghy* and its status in classical texts. It is defined as rebellion or political resistance against the *imām*. Ibn Taymiyyah did not consider the *fitnah* between the Companions to be an instance of *baghy* because of their special position as expressed in the Qur'an and hadith. However, he held the opinion that the Khawārij, who rebelled against Ali, possessed all the elements of *baghy*: committing acts of treason against the imam, expressing a deviant ideology and organising for its own political influence. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah argued they must be fought on the battlefield. Similarly, he called for *jihād* against the Druzes and Nusayris based on their heretical theological ideas and forms of worship, accusations of unbelief and murder of Muslims and alliance with the enemies of Muslims. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyyah called on Muslims to practice patience rather than to rebel against an unjust and cruel imam. However, Mohd Farid notes that Ibn Taymiyyah's view does not preclude the principle of enjoining good and forbidding wrong, because there are many avenues for Muslim agency short of committing acts of rebellion.

In his concluding chapter, the author demonstrates that *jihād* nowadays often takes the form of preaching Islam using mass media and communications technology and fighting for the "freedom to practice, apply and preach Islam" (112). He also argues that an international codification of Islamic law by Muslim scholars would make a major contribution to world peace and security, and that the Islamic law of rebellion "provides a framework for resolving *baghy* peacefully, democratically and through negotiation" (114). Finally, Mohd Farid closes his exposition by returning to a discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah in his historical context.

This book illuminates the thought of a great classical scholar about several crucial concepts related to *jihād* and *baghy*. It not only corrects the misnomer "holy war," but demonstrates the diverse and nuanced thinking of classical Islamic scholars. Moreover, the author's adept discussion of these notions sheds some light on critical issues of the Caliphate, Islamic state and

rebellion against unjust and cruel Muslim leaders. In the wake of several uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, this fine study should definitely be required reading for students of Islam, politics and social movements.

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