

Translation and Analyses of IbnTaymiyya's First Anti-Mongol Fatwa

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Abstract:- IbnTaymiyya's three Anti-Mongol fatwas are his most controversial treatises regarding jihad. The controversial nature of the fatwas exposed them to the exploitation by the contemporary jihadists. The three fatwas are cited in volume twenty eight of the *Majmū'fatāwā*, the first fatwa is in 28:502 - 508. This paper will translate the first fatwa into English and make some analysis on the content of the fatwa. The aim of the translation and analysis is to make the fatwa available to the non-Arabic readers to avoid accessing the fatwas from the analysis of the extremists and also to contextualize IbnTaymiyya's harshness in fatwas to the Mongol period.

Keywords: Translation, Analyses of IbnTaymiyya's, and First Anti-Mongol Fatwa

I. INTRODUCTION

The three Anti-Mongol fatwas of IbnTaymiyya are his most controversial treatises regarding jihad. The controversial nature of the fatwas exposed them to the exploitation by the contemporary jihadists.¹ Almost all the contemporary jihadists from 'Abd al-SalāmFaraj to ISIS use the fatwas as justification of the apostasy of the contemporary Muslim rulers. Moreover, ISIS uses the fatwas and IbnTaymiyya's letter about the Mongol to justify the apostasy of contemporary Muslim communities for refusing to join the Islamic State.² Prior to the emergence of the contemporary jihadists, the Wahhābi scholars used the fatwas to justify the apostasy of grave venerators and others. In some instances, the jihadists quote the fatwas through the Wahhābi scholars. The three anti Mongol fatwas are cited in volume twenty eight of the *Majmū'fatāwā*, the first fatwa is in 28:502 -508.³

This paper will translate the first fatwa into English and make some analysis on the content of the fatwa. The aim of the translation and analysis is to make the fatwa available to the non-Arabic readers in order to avoid accessing them from the analysis of the extremists. The third fatwa has already been

published by this journal. The first fatwa is second issued chronologically.

II. TRANSLATION OF THE FATWA

What would the scholars-the imams of the religion say, about those Mongols who advanced in the year six hundred and ninety nine and perpetrated the famous killing of the Muslims, enslaving their off springs and snatching the Muslims. They assaulted the sacredness of the religion by insulting the Muslims and humiliating the mosques, especially "Jerusalem" which they corrupt there in [502] and took from the wealth of the Muslims and the public wealth [*bayt al-māl*] a lot. They enslaved many men of the Muslims and ejected them from their homes. With all these [atrocities], they alleged practicing the two testimonies and claimed the prohibition of fighting their fighters, for what they alleged of following the fundamental of the religion and for resisting from eradicating the Muslims. Is fighting them permissible or obligatory, whatever maybe the case what are the reasons for permissibility or obligation? Answer us rewarded.

And he answers: All praise is to Allah. Every group that resists adhering to any law from the widely reported and manifest laws of Islam among the people [i.e the Mongols] or others, then it is obligatory to fight them until they adhere to its laws, even if they pronounce the two testimonies and adhere to some of its laws, just as Abū-Bakr al-Šiddīq and the Companions -may Allah be pleased with them- fought the people who resisted *zakāt*. The jurists after them [the Companions] agreed upon this after 'Umar's argument with Abū-Bakr -may Allah be pleased with both. The Companions - May Allah be pleased with them- agreed on fighting for the obligations [*ḥaq*] of Islam, in accordance with the book [of Allah] and the tradition [of the Prophet].

The Hadith about the Khārijīs is also established from the Prophet- Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him-from ten versions. [The Prophet] narrated that they are the worst of the creation in addition to his saying "You will trivialize your prayer compared to their prayer and your fasting compared to their fasting."⁴ It is then known that mere holding to Islam without adhering to its laws will not ward off the fighting. Fighting is obligatory until the whole of religion is for God and until there is no turmoil. Whenever the religion is not for God, [503] then the fighting is obligatory.

¹ Jon Hoover, "IbnTaymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism," in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 3.

² "Lessons from the Fitnah of the Mongols," *Dabiq* 14, (April/May 2016): 47. Last accessed 25/04/2017 <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/the-islamic-state-22dacc84biq-magazine-1422.pdf>

³ IbnTaymiyya, Aḥmad' Abd al ḤalīmShaykh al-Islām, *Majmū'fatāwā* ed. 'Abd al-RahmānibnMuḥammadibnQāsīm and Muḥammadibn' Abd al-RahmānibnMuḥammad. (Riyadh: Maṭābi' al-Riyād, 1961-67). (*Majmū'fatāwā* will be referred in the subsequent citations as MF)

⁴Muslim 1066.

So any group that refrains from the obligatory prayers, fasting, Hajj or resists abiding by the prohibitions against spilling blood, looting wealth, alcohol, adultery, gambling, incest or resist adhering to jihad against the non-believers or collecting the poll-tax upon the People of the Book or abiding by anything else from the obligations and prohibitions of the religion—those rulings that no one has excuse to deny or abandon— and which a denier [commits] disbelief by denying; then the resisting group is fought on account of it even if it acknowledges it. This is part of what I know [regarding which there are] no differences of opinion among the scholars.

The jurists differed in opinion only on a resisting group if it insists on abandoning some supererogatory acts such as *raka'atāyifajr* [the two rak'as of dawn prayer], *azān* and *iqāma*- for those who do not view it obligatory- and other similar acts. Would the resisting group be fought for that or not? But for the aforementioned obligations and prohibitions there is no dispute on fighting for it.

These [Mongols] according to the most judicious scholars – are not on the same level as the rebels (*bughāt*) resisting a leader or resisting obedience to him, like the people of Syria with the Commander of the Faithful 'AlībnAbīṬālib—May God be pleased with him. But the aforementioned [Mongols] rebelled from [504] Islam just like those who resisted *zakāt*, and in position of the Khārijīs that 'AlībnAbīṬālib -may Allah be pleased with him- fought.

Because of this, 'AlībnAbīṬālib [took different pattern] in fighting the people of Basra and the Syria from the pattern of fighting the people of Nahrawān: his relation to the people of Basra and Syria was that of a brother to his brother, but with the Khārijīs it was different. There are established traditions from the Prophet—Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him – [supporting] the consensus of the companions for [AbūBakr] al-Ṣiddīq fighting [those who resisted *zakāt*] and fighting the Khārijīs, unlike the *fitna* that occurred with the people of Syria and Basra; the traditions in it showed what it showed, the companions and the followers differ [in opinion] on it.

Among the leading jurists, some are of the opinion that, the rebels that are obligatory to be fought are those who rebelled against the *imām* with permissible interpretation not those who denied him obedience, and others made both types rebels. There is a clear difference between the rebels and the Mongols. For those that do not adhere to the widely accepted and manifest Islamic law I do not know of any difference of opinion with respect to the obligation of fighting them.

If this rule is established, then those people [i.e the Mongols] questioned about their army consisting of non-believers from the Christians and the polytheists, and people who are associated with Islam – and these are the majority of the army— they pronounce the two testimonies if they are requested to, they exalt the Prophet, but very few of them pray. They fast Ramadan more than they pray and they value a Muslim more than a non-Muslims.

[505] they respect the pious Muslims, they have part of Islam, they differ in [adhering to] it, but what the majority of them are or fighting for constitutes of abandoning much of the Islamic law or even most of it. Firstly, they saw Islam as an obligation but they do not fight whomever abandons it, rather they ennoble whoever fights with the Mongol empire even if he was a non-believer, an enemy of God and His Messenger. And they permit fighting whomever rebels against the Mongol Empire even if he was the best of the Muslims. They do not fight non-Muslims; they do not enforce the poll-tax and humility upon the people of the book. They do not prohibit anyone in their army to worship what he wants either sun, moon or anything, rather what is manifest from their pattern is that; they consider as a Muslim as a just or pious of the Muslims and as non-Muslim as immoral of the Muslims or one who abandons the supererogatory acts.

And also majority of them do not prohibit the blood and wealth of Muslims except if the sultan prohibits them from it. [That is] they do not abide by its prohibition. If he [the sultan] prohibits them from it or other things they obey him because he is the sultan not because of the religion. And the majority of them do not adhere to obligations; neither the prayers nor *zakāt* nor the pilgrimage nor anything else. And they do not adhere to judgement according to the judgement of Allah, rather they judge according to their laws which sometimes agree with Islam and sometimes oppose it. The only one who adheres to the Islamic law is *shaiḡburūn*, he is the one who practices the part and is circulated among people from the Islamic law. But those [majority of the Mongols] embraced it [Islam] but do not adhere to its laws.

[506] Fighting this type of people is obligatory by the consensus of the Muslims. Whoever knows the religion of Islam and the reality of their [i.e., the Mongols'] situation will not doubt this; the religion of Islam and the treaty they are in will never be combined. If the Kurdish, Arab villagers and other villages that do not adhere to the laws of Islam were fought, even if their evil was not transgressing, then what of those [Mongols]? Yes, a legal way should be followed in fighting them, by calling them to adhere to the Islamic laws if the *da'wa* did not reach them, just as the non-believing fighters are called first to the two testimonies if the *da'wa* did not reach him.

If the one fighting them (i.e. the Mongols or un-believers in general) fulfils the utmost conditions of pleasing Allah, strengthening His words, establishing His religion and obeying His messenger [then it is better]. If they were overcome by libertinism and false intention- fighting for leadership or transgressing (the law) in some issues, yet the evil of abandoning the fight would be greater than the evil of fighting those with the corrupt habits, then it is obligatory to fight them to repel the greater of two evils by committing the lesser one. This is part of the fundamentals of the religion that must be observed.

For this, it is part of the fundamentals of *ahl al-Sunnawa al-Jamā'a* to fight alongside the good and the bad [Muslims], for Allah will make His religion victorious via a bad person and with people that have no share [in the hereafter], just as the Prophet–Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him– said. This is because if the fighting cannot be achieved except with the bad leaders or with an army whose majority are immoral, then one thing must happen [507] of two:

Either to abandon the battle with them (i.e., with the Mongols and the un-believers in general), and then the most harmful (thing) will overcome [the Muslims] in this world and in the hereafter, [the Muslims] or to engage in the battle alongside the bad ruler in order to repel the lesser of the two evils and to establish most of the Islamic rulings if establishing all is not to be achieved. And this is obligatory in this form and in similar ones. Rather, most of the battles that took place after the Rāshidūn are of this type.

And it is established from the Prophet–Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him– that “There is goodness tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection.”⁵ This authentic hadith indicates the meaning of what AbūDāwūd reports in his *Sunan* from the statement of the Prophet–Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him– which “Jihad continues from the day I was sent as Prophet to the day that the last members of my community fight with the Dajjāl. The tyranny of any tyrant and the justice of any just ruler will not invalidate it.”⁶ And what is circulated from him, Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him that he said:” There will always be a group amongst my *umma* who is triumphant upon truth, abandoning them will not harm them, until the day of resurrection”⁷ and other text that *ahl al-sunnawa al-jamā'a* from different groups agreed to apply in fighting who deserves to be fought, [while fighting] alongside the good and bad leaders. Unlike Rāfiḍa and Khārijīs who rebelled against the Sunna and the jamā'a

[Having said] This, with the statement of the Prophet–Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him– that “There would be leaders who are transgressors, traitors and immoral. Whoever trusts their lies and aids them is not from me and I am not from him [508] and he will not come to my fountain [*hawḍ*]. Whoever does not trust their lies and does not aid them on their wrong is from me and I am from him and he will come to my fountain [*hawḍ*].”

If a man knows what the Prophet–Peace and Blessings of Allah be with him– commands of fighting alongside the leaders until the day of judgement, and what he forbade aiding them in their wrongs, he would know that the moderate way that is the pure religion of Islam is fighting whomever deserves to be fought like those people asked about [i.e. the Mongols], [by cooperating] with every leader and party that is more close to Islam than them [i.e. the Mongols], if they

[Mongols] cannot be fought alongside which you are fishing. And to distance [oneself from] aiding the group fighting with on any sin. Rather he [the one fighting] obeys them in obeying Allah and disobeys them in disobeying Allah, for there is no obedience in disobeying Allah.

This is the path of the best of this *umma* in the past and present. And it is obligatory upon every adult [Muslim]. It is the moderate way between [on the other hand,] the path of Harūriyya⁸ and their likes who follow corrupt devoutness because of the dearth of [their] knowledge and the path of Murji'a and their likes [on the other hand] who follow the path of obeying the rulers indiscriminately even if they are not pious.

We pray to Allah to lead us and our Muslim brothers to what He loves and pleases Him be it speech and actions. Allah knows best. May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his household and his Companions.

III. ANALYSES

According to Aigle, the first anti-Mongol fatwa printed in *Majmū'fatāwā* is the second issued chronologically. The wording of the fatwa indicates that it is after the first invasion of 699/1299-300. It is dated 702/1302 when IbnTaymiyya was mediating between the Mongols and local population sorting ways to end the crisis diplomatically, but to no avail, the Mongols insisted on the invasion. Like the third fatwa, the first fatwa seeks to define the status of the combatants in the armies of the two sides.⁹ In the seven-page fatwa, IbnTaymiyya was asked only one question; whether fighting the Mongols is obligatory or permissible?¹⁰ From the tone of the question, the populace had no doubt about the status of the Mongols or permissibility of fighting back due to what they perpetrated in 699/1299-1300; the only question was whether it is obligatory to fight or just permissible. In this fatwa, IbnTaymiyya addressed three issues: the status of the Mongols and obligation of fighting them, differentiating between Khārijīs and people of the Camel and Šiffin [*bughāt*], and the status of the Mamlūk Sultans fighting the Mongols. In the following paragraphs, we shall state how IbnTaymiyya addresses the three issues citing quotations from the fatwa and the secondary sources.

After praising Allah, IbnTaymiyya makes an opening statement establishing a general principle that legalizes fighting any group that resists adhering to the Islamic law. The statements however, became the most frequent quotation from the anti-Mongol fatwas by all those who use the anti-Mongol fatwas outside the Mongol context.

Every group that resists adhering to any law from the widely reported and manifest laws of Islam among the people [i.e the Mongols] or others,

⁵Saḥīḥ Muslim 4612.

⁶SunanAbīDāwūd 2532.

⁷Saḥīḥ Muslim 1037.

⁸The Harūrī were one branch of the Khārijī

⁹Aigle, “The Mongol Invasions of Bilād Al-Shām,” 117.

¹⁰IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:502.

then it is obligatory to fight them until they adhere to its laws, even if they pronounce the two testimonies and adhere to some of its laws, just as AbūBakr al-Ṣiddīq and the Companions – may Allah be pleased with them- fought the people who resisted *zakāt*. The jurists after them [the Companions] agreed upon this after ‘Umar’s argument with Abū Bakr –may Allah be pleased with both. The Companions – May Allah be pleased with them – agreed on fighting for the obligations [*ḥaqq*] of Islam, in accordance with the Book [of Allah] and the tradition [of the Prophet].¹¹

On the status of the Mongols and the obligation of fighting the Mongols, IbnTaymiyya maintains the same views as in the third fatwa: the Mongols are Khārijīs and should be fought. The Mongols should not be treated as *bughāt*, rather, they are Khārijīs:

Therefore, fighting them is obligatory by the consensus of the Muslims. Whoever knows the religion of Islam and the reality of the situation of the Mongols will not doubt the obligation of fighting them, IbnTaymiyya argues.¹² Unlike in the third fatwa where IbnTaymiyya did not cite any example of the deviation of the Mongols, in this fatwa IbnTaymiyya mentions a number of reasons obligating to fight them not mentioned in the first fatwa. These reasons include: their army consist of people from different religion. They pledged allegiance to their dynasty and fought for that instead of Islam, they violated the sacredness of wealth and blood of Muslims, and the majority of them do not adhere to obligations. They do not adhere to verdict according to the judgement of Allah, rather they judge with their laws.

In this fatwa unlike the two others, IbnTaymiyya argues that *da‘wa* should be given to the Mongols before fighting them: “Yes, a legal way should be followed in fighting them, by calling them to adhere to the Islamic laws if the *da‘wa* did not reach them, just as the non-believing fighters are called first to the two testimonies if the *da‘wa* did not reach him.”¹³

The second issue in this fatwa is the difference between the Khārijīs and *bughāt*. As in the third fatwa, IbnTaymiyya argues that the Khārijīs and *bughāt* are two different entities and should not be treated equally. He mentions similar reasons to those in the third fatwa with a slight difference in presenting the reasons. In both fatwas IbnTaymiyya stated that the hadiths about fighting Khārijīs differed from those of fighting the rebels. The Prophet commanded fighting the Khārijīs and preferred a treaty with the *bughāt*. In addition, in the third fatwa, he states that the Companions differed in fighting the *bughāt* and united in fighting the Khārijīs, therefore, fighting the Khārijīs is by the consensus of the Companions. While in this fatwa, he states that

AlībnAbīTālib took a different pattern in his fight against the Khārijīs from the pattern of fighting the *bughāt*:

The third issue in the fatwa is defining the status of the Mamlūk sultans. After arguing the obligation of fighting the Mongols, IbnTaymiyya then argues that, if the one fighting the Mongols fulfils the utmost conditions of pleasing Allah, strengthening His words, establishing His religion and obeying His messenger then it is better. However, if they were overcome by libertinism and false intention- fighting for leadership or transgressing the law in some issues, yet the evil of abandoning the fight would be greater than the evil of fighting those with the corrupt habits, then it is obligatory to fight them to repel the greater of two evils by committing the lesser one. This is part of the fundamentals of the religion that must be observed.¹⁴ Here IbnTaymiyya is attempting to admit that the Mamlūks are also corrupt and guilty of violating *sharī‘a*; nevertheless, the crimes of the Mongols outweigh theirs, and therefore joining the Mamlūks in fighting the Mongols is taking to the lesser evil. According to Aigle, GhāzānKhān considers the Mamlūks as *bughāt* and sought a fatwa from some Islamic scholars to fight them. He accused them of having invaded the territory of Mardin, where they committed various acts of moral turpitude. Amongst the misdeeds ascribed to them were orgies with the daughters of Muslims and drinking alcohol in the mosques, all during the month of Ramadan.¹⁵ But IbnTaymiyya had a different view of them. He admitted a fault in the Mamlūks yet presents them as the true champions of Islam. According to him, they are the victorious group whom the Prophet referred to when saying: “A group of my community will never cease to show their support for the victory of right, and neither those who oppose them nor those who betray them shall cause them any harm, until the hour passes.”¹⁶

Although IbnTaymiyya did not mention the above atrocities of the Mamlūks reported by Aigle, yet considering the Mamlūks as lesser evils indicates that IbnTaymiyya admits fault in them, but he considers the Mongols’ fault to be greater. Consequently, to IbnTaymiyya, fighting the Mongols alongside the Mamlūks is for the good of the religion. It is established in the religion that committing the lesser of two evils is obligatory. IbnTaymiyya stated that:

It is part of fundamentals of *ahl al-Sunnawa al-jamā‘a* to fight alongside the good and bad [Muslims] for Allah will make his religion victorious via a bad person and with people that have no share [in the hereafter], just as the Prophet – the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him– said. This is because if the fighting cannot be achieved except with the bad leaders or with army whom the majority are immoral then there must happen one of the two: either to

¹¹IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:502.

¹²IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:506.

¹³IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:506.

¹⁴IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:506.

¹⁵Aigle, “The Mongol Invasions of Bilād Al-Shām,” 92.

¹⁶IbnTaymiyya, MF 28:531. And Aigle, “The Mongol Invasions of Bilād Al-Shām,” 111.

abandon the battle with them, then the most harmful in the here and the hereafter will overcome [the Muslims], or to engage in the battle alongside the bad ruler to repel the lesser of the two evils and to establish most of the Islamic rulings if establishing all is not achieved. And this is obligatory in this form and its likes. Rather, most of the battles that took place after the *Rāshidūn* [rightly guided Caliphs] are of this type.”¹⁷

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper translates and analyses the first anti-Mongol fatwa of IbnTaymiyya. The aim of the translation and analyses is to make the fatwa available to non-Arabic reader, to avoid accessing it through the extremists’ translation. Also, to lay to the reader that IbnTaymiyya’s harshness is contextualized within the Mongol period for the danger they pose to Islam.

The seven-page fatwa like the two others addressed questions posed to IbnTaymiyya. In this fatwa, IbnTaymiyya was asked only one question; whether fighting the Mongols is obligatory or permissible?¹⁸ In answering the fatwa, IbnTaymiyya addressed three issues: the status of the Mongols and obligation of fighting them, differentiating between Khārijīs and people of the Camel and Ṣiffīn [*bughāt*], and the status of the Mamlūk Sultans fighting the Mongols.

The paper addressed and analysed the above issues in detail.

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¹⁷IbnTaymiyya, *MF* 28:506-7.

¹⁸IbnTaymiyya, *MF* 28:502.