

# Ibn Taymiyyah’s “Mardin Fatwa” and the Mongols: An Analysis

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**Abstract.** The so-called “Mardin Fatwa” is Ibn Taymiyyah’s (d. 728/1328) description of Mardin city’s status as an Islamic state and its Islamic population. Yahya Michot (b. 1952) and ‘Abd Allah Bayyah’s (b. 1935) modern day readings of this fatwa emphasise different attitudes towards Mongols: Michot emphasised the word *yuqātal* (should be fought) in his reading of the text while Bayyah emphasised the word *yu’āmal* (should be justly treated). This seemingly small difference has had a large impact on Muslims’ understanding of fatwa. For instance, these two readings might alter readers’ perceptions of fatwa as either a literal or metaphorical spiritual battle. This article is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach that combines the selection, translation and critical reading of the selected sources with historical research. The overall approach followed in this article is best described as inductive. This article analyses Michot and Bayyah’s readings through a close reading of the fatwa itself. It concludes by deducing that the Mardin Fatwa text really does represent Ibn Taymiyyah’s opinion and that Yahya Michot’s reading of the text is the correct one.

**Keywords and phrases:** Mardin Fatwa, Ibn Taymiyyah, Mongols, Islamic thought, *Ghulūw*

## Introduction

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), a famous Syrian Muslim scholar, conceptually divided the world into two categories—the *dār al-Islām* (house of Islam) and the *dār al-ḥarb* (house of war)—using various criteria, for instance, *dār al-Islām* comprising Islamic and non-Islamic communities that had accepted Islamic

sovereignty; and the region surrounding *dār al-Islām*, composed of all other territories that had not been brought under its rule was known as *dār al-ḥarb* (Mohd Farid 2011, 32). Although Mohd Farid's (2011) work details some of Ibn Taymiyyah's important works and his concept of *qitāl* (actual combat) jihad,<sup>1</sup> Mohd Farid does not discuss whether Ibn Taymiyyah considered Mardin city to be under the house of Islam or of war. Mardin features heavily in one of Ibn Taymiyyah's works, his so-called "Mardin Fatwa". Located in the foothills of southeast Turkey, Mardin was governed by the Mongols during Ibn Taymiyyah's time (Robinson 1994, 79; Bosworth 2004, 93). The Mongol empire was a powerful one, became the chief Muslim power in the central Islamic heartlands. The main ideology of their states was "Mongolism" (i.e., glorify the imperial and military might of the Mongols and the platform of this ideology mythologised memory of the medieval history of Mongolia, the modern symbol of which is the image of Genghis Khan (see Rodionov et al. 2018, 3). Only Egypt and Syria escaped the Mongol conquest of the Muslim empire and eventually, the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt successfully resisted the Mongols and ruled until 16th century CE. It would be superfluous to repeat here those details which have been described by others (e.g., Watt 1985; Hourani 1991; Esposito 1994; Hillenbrand 1999; Sanders 2010; Mohd Farid 2011). This article fills the gap left by previous works by discussing Ibn Taymiyyah's sophisticated views on Mardin city and whether he felt that the city was located in the house of Islam or the house of war.

## Literature Review

According to the authors' reading of the previous works, when the phrase "Mardin city" was coupled with "Ibn Taymiyyah", the results included a few modern works of literature that used the phrase "Mardin Fatwa". For example, Abd al-Wahhab al-Turayri (2010), Yahya Michot (2011) and Rahimullah, Larmar and Abdalla (2013) used the phrase to refer to the answer or legal advice written by Ibn Taymiyyah regarding the status of the Islamic population in the city of Mardin. The writings of Barclay (2010), Bori (2017) and Muhammad Haniff (2017) all used the phrase "Ibn Taymiyyah's Mardin Fatwa", which refers to the content of the same fatwa (i.e., an authoritative legal opinion given by a legal scholar in response to a question posed by an individual or a court of law) (Kamali 2019, 407).

In general, the Islamic concept of dividing the world into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* was inspired by the Islamic country of Medina (Mohd Farid 2011, 41; Albrecht 2018, 45). According to Hillenbrand (1999, 94) and al-Zuhaylī (1962, 85) after the hegira event (i.e., the Prophet Muhammad's migration on 622 CE

from Mecca to Medina upon invitation in order to escape persecution, symbolises the willingness to suffer for faith and the refusal to lose hope in the face of persecution; see Esposito 2003, 112), which involved the migration of the Islamic community from Mecca to Medina, they established a political unit to keep peace and arrange their affairs there. Medina began as a city-state (Hillenbrand 1999, 94; Black 2001, 69; Enayat 2005, 57) and expanded into an empire or a sovereign state through military conquest. Thus, a few regions outside of Medina city started to indirectly come under the leadership of the Islamic country of Medina and were given a few jurisdictional rights (Hillenbrand 1999, 94). Given the large-scale expansion of Medina, Islamic thinkers began to differentiate between *dār al-Islām*, regions inhabited and governed by Muslims and *dār al-ḥarb*, which were inhabited and governed by non-Muslims.

Many classical scholars were interested in the distinction between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*, including al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) (1996) and al-Sarakhsī (d. 483/1090) (1992). These two scholars suggested that the distinction was rooted in the Quran and hadith. Other scholars, such as Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) (1979) and al-Shāfi’ī (d. 204/820) (1904), suggested that the distinction was not derived from these sources (Ammaru and Mohd Farid 2020, 505). Indeed, these concepts were established and developed by scholars such as al-Māwardī through the process of *ijtihād*, or independent Islamic legal opinion. Ibn Taymiyyah, however, was only working within a framework established centuries beforehand (Maszlee 2017, 89).

Ibn Taymiyyah was also involved in debating the issue of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. However, he did not restrict himself to *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* in the so-called Mardin Fatwa (the passage of the fatwa quoted at length in the next sentence). He suggested the existence a third house, *murakkab* (more than two elements):

As for whether [Mardin] is a land of war [*dār al-ḥarb*] or a land of peace [*dār al-Islām*]? [Mardin] is a composite situation [*murakkab*]. There are two elements in it, a land of war [*dār al-ḥarb*] and a land of peace [*dār al-Islām*]. [Mardin] is not an abode of peace [*dār al-Islām*], where the legal rulings of Islam are applied and its armed forces are Muslim. Neither is it the same as an abode of war [*dār al-ḥarb*], whose inhabitants are unbelievers; rather, it is a third category. The Muslims living therein should be justly treated [*yu’āmal*] according to their rights as Muslims, while the non-Muslims living there outside of the authority of Islamic Law should be fought [*yuqātal*] according to their rights. (Ibn Taymiyyah 1998, 401)

The Mardin Fatwa was later analysed and translated into French by a Muslim scholar in Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, Michot<sup>2</sup> in his book *Mardin: Hégire, fuite du péché et demeure de l'islam*, which was published in 2004 in Paris. This book was later translated to English in 2006 with the title *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule* and was published in Oxford. The Belgian scholar Michot's (2011) reading of this passage emphasises the word *yuqātal* (should be fought). However, Bayyah (2011),<sup>3</sup> a Muslim scholar at al-Muwatta Centre, Abu Dhabi, emphasised the word *yu'āmal* (should be justly treated) in this passage. This difference in emphasis grounds different interpretations of Ibn Taymiyyah's attitude towards fatwa and the Mongols. This article analyses Michot's and Bayyah's readings of the text by comparing their readings and versions of the original text with other editions and versions and attempts to determine which reading is more accurate.<sup>4</sup> This article is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach that reflects the characteristic of the field of Islamic Studies. In particular, it combines the selection, translation and critical reading of the sources outlined earlier with historical research. As the idea of exploring this topic in contemporary Islamic thought was born out of one of the authors' previous study of the discourse on jihad, the overall approach followed in this article is best described as inductive. This article will attempt to clarify the modern day reading of the fatwa, this small difference has often caused confusion among the public and among researchers. It is also worth noting that, the aim of the analysis is to make the fatwa available to the non-Arabic readers in order to avoid unnecessary generalisation or non-accurate reading of the fatwa from the perspective of the extremist. Such a clarification is essential to demonstrate how the followers of some radical Islamic movements who have little knowledge of the religion conceal their fanatical beliefs by calling themselves followers of Ibn Taymiyyah (al-Turayri 2010, 10; Zulkarnain and Nordin 2013, 17). The general public, who do not understand the background of the fatwa, may easily recognise the struggle of these radical Islamic movements in establishing an Islamic state. This is what the article hoping to find out by way of comparison and expecting the reader to take away from this study.

### ***Dār al-Islām and Dār al-Ḥarb: An Overview***

This section discusses two main points: first, the opinions of a group of modern scholars regarding *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* and second, their opinions about the so-called Mardin Fatwa. As mentioned previously, discussions about *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* in modern literature have been made by a few scholars. Through those writings, a few opinions have been presented about the theory of dividing the world's countries to *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. Abū Yūsuf

(1979, 54) and al-Shāfi’ī (1904, 258) suggested that the Quran and hadith do not detail the distinction between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* and that this distinction was derived by Islamic legal scholars through *ijtihād*. In other words, they believe that classical Islamic scholars were more influenced by current affairs than religious texts when writing legal decisions regarding citizenship and political administration. Indeed, some contemporary scholars have suggested that this distinction is bound up in the military expansion of the city-state of Medina and that it is a purely historical distinction. For instance, according to Abū Zahrah (1995, 58), naming of countries of the world to *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* by classical scholars was more tinged by the agenda of expanding political power and war. This same opinion was also presented by ‘Audah (2012, 118) and Ali Nadwi (1977, 31). Abū Zahrah (1995, 58) explained that war was the foundation of the relations amongst countries in the classical era, while today, countries want to avoid war and prioritise peace. The three scholars agreed that this is the principle that has become the landscape of international relations of modern countries. Based on this premise, they saw naming *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* to the world’s countries as no longer relevant to today’s world.

Other scholars (e.g., Armstrong 2002; Bori 2017; Hamidullah 1977; Zulkarnain and Nordin 2013; Watt 1999) have suggested that although this distinction is rooted in historical politics, it holds some relevance for us today. For example, Armstrong (2002, 26) has suggested that the distinction shows us how Islamic Law provided a religious interpretation of Muslim conquest and how “in practise, Muslims accepted that they had reached the limits of their expansion by this date and coexisted amicably with the non-Muslim world”. Even so, the naming of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* has the potential to be used again by any Islamic community in the world. Bori (2017, 144) has suggested that this distinction continues to inform the ways in which the Islamic community gives meaning to *qitāl* jihad activities.

Classical and modern scholars have come up with other distinctions besides *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. For instance, al-Shāfi’ī (1904, 258) and al-Sarakhsī (1992, 8) described countries who reached a political agreement with an Islamic country as being *dār al-’ahd* (the house of covenant). These countries are under the political supervision of the *dār al-Islām* and must pay an annual tax known as *kharāj* (tax on agrarian land owned by non-Muslims; see Muchsin and Manan 2019, 4) to the government of *dār al-Islām* and follow the content of the covenant. More recently, al-Alwani (1998) suggested that countries should be categorised as *dār al-ijābah* (countries which abide by the Islamic ruling system) and *dār al-da’wah* (countries which do not and are being persuaded to). The

authors do not believe that al-Alwani rejects the concepts of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* here; on the contrary, we read him as renaming these two concepts so that they can be more readily applied in the modern era.

**Table 1.** Summary of the opinion of the scholars

<i>Dār al-Islām</i>	<i>Dār al-ḥarb</i>	<i>Dār al’ahd</i>	<i>Dār al-ijābah</i>	<i>Dār al-da’wah</i>	<i>Dār al-murakkab</i>
al-Shāfi’ī	al-Shāfi’ī	al-Shāfi’ī			
al-Sarakhsī	al-Sarakhsī	al-Sarakhsī			
Abū Yūsuf	Abū Yūsuf				
Ibn Taymiyyah	Ibn Taymiyyah				Ibn Taymiyyah
al-Alwani			al-Alwani	al-Alwani	
‘Audah	‘Audah	‘Audah			
Ali Nadwi	Ali Nadwi	Ali Nadwi			

Thus, the article can present five domains that have been used to conceptualise the world in classical and contemporary Islamic political thought: *dār al-Islām*, *dār al-ḥarb*, *dār al’ahd*, *dār al-ijābah* and *dār al-da’wah*. None of these domains are equivalent to Ibn Taymiyyah’s notion of *murakkab* described above. So far, we have not found any scholars before him who used the word *murakkab* in this context. Even though Ibn Taymiyyah did not detail what he actually meant with *dār al-murakkab*, as mentioned in Mardin Fatwa it is certain that *dār al-murakkab* is neither *dār al-Islām* nor *dār al-ḥarb*, but rather a country, region or domain that has the combination of elements of both. This formulation, which is unique to Ibn Taymiyyah, challenges the binary distinction between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* many centuries before modern scholars have done so. What does the idea of *dār al-murakkab* have to offer today? It offers us the concept of *mīzān* (balance) or *i’tidāl* (equilibrium) as a guide to rational calculation in practical affairs. The verse of the Quran, “We have already sent Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance (*mīzān*) that the people may uphold justice” (chapter 57, verse 25), was taken to mean that right must be interpreted and applied through human intelligence. *Mīzān* referred to the trader’s scales; it was the method for calculating the balance of justice. The idea of *dār al-murakkab* was related to a middle way between extremes, held to be characteristics of the wisdom of Islam. This was exemplified above all by Ibn Taymiyyah. It is the opposite of the spirit of fundamentalism. The idea of *dār al-murakkab* is quite dynamic with a fundamental unalterable feature: namely, that its guiding light is the *Sharī’ah* with no man-made law challenging it. This dynamic feature of the idea should

embrace the existing modern Muslim states so long as they regard the *Sharī'ah* as the foundation of their legal system. This seems to be consistent with what we know of Ibn Taymiyyah's personality – he has been described as a pragmatic genius who was not particularly conservative (Michot 2012, 240; Bazzano 2015, 117; Mohd Farid 2017, 57). We are fortunate in possessing much authentic material regarding his position. One of the most brilliant scholars of the Islamic world at the turn of the 14th century CE.

Regarding scholars' opinions of the so-called Mardin Fatwa, it is clear that a few scholars have used the phrase to describe the fatwa quoted at length earlier (e.g., al-Turayri 2010; Barclay 2010; Bayyah 2011; Bori 2017; Muhammad Haniff 2017; Michot 2011; Rahimullah, Larmar and Abdalla 2013). However, only Michot (2011) and Bayyah (2011) expounded upon the fatwa in more detail. As explained earlier, through Google Scholar search between 2009 and 2019, only Michot (2011) and Bayyah (2011) had discussed Mardin Fatwa in detail. Michot (2011) compiled his discussions about the Mardin Fatwa in a writing titled “Ibn Taymiyya's ‘New Mardin Fatwa’. Is genetically modified Islam (GMI) carcinogenic?”. Meanwhile, Bayyah (2011) wrote an article titled “The New Mardin Declaration” and uploaded it on a website. This article will now move on to discussing the differences between Michot's and Bayyah's readings of the fatwa and attempting to determine which is a more accurate reading.

## Two Readings of the Mardin Fatwa

In the following pages, we will present the two readings of the Mardin Fatwa. We will begin with Michot. His reading is based off the *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā*, edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim (hereafter Ibn Qāsim). This work was printed in 1981 in 37 volumes. This text uses the phrase *yuqāṭal* (1981, vol. 28, 502–503).<sup>5</sup> We compared the usage of this word in the same passage across several different, popular editions of *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* published by other publishers (as shown in Table 2). Each of these five editions uses the phrase *yuqāṭal* in this passage (1980, vol. 4, 279–280;<sup>6</sup> al-Bāz and al-Jazzār 1997, vol. 14, 380;<sup>7</sup> 1998, vol. 14, 401;<sup>8</sup> Jundī and Sharqawī 2006, vol. 14, 311;<sup>9</sup> Ibn Qāsim 1978, vol. 28, 240–241<sup>10</sup>). A few other popular editions also use the same word (1908, vol. 4, 421;<sup>11</sup> al-Bāz and al-Jazzār 2011, vol. 14, 392;<sup>12</sup> Syaikhu 2005, vol. 14, 401<sup>13</sup>). In short, all of these popular sources, including the ones used by Michot to devise his reading and translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's text, use the phrase *yuqāṭal*, which indicates that non-Muslims living outside of the authority of Islamic law should be fought.



**Table 2.** Popular editions of *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā*

Title	Publisher/Year	Editor	Word
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Maktabah al-Ma'ārif, Rabat/1981	Ibn Qāsim	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Dār al-Fikr, Beirut/1980	Not mentioned	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	No publisher/1978	Ibn Qāsim	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Dār al-Wafā, Cairo/1997	al-Bāz and al-Jazzār	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Maktabah al-'Ubaykān, Riyadh/1998	al-Bāz and al-Jazzār	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Dār al-Ḥadīth, Cairo/2006	Jundī and Sharqawī	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Dār Ibn Ḥazm, Beirut/2011	al-Bāz and al-Jazzār	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i>	Maṭba'ah Kurdistān, Cairo/1908	Not mentioned	<i>Yuqātal</i>
<i>Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā</i> (Translated into Malay)	Darul Haq, Jakarta/2005	Ahmad Syaikhu (Translator)	<i>Yuqātal</i>
Damsyik Manuscript	MS. Zahiriyya 2757, f. 192r	al-Shushtārī	<i>Yu'āmal</i>
<i>Al-Ādāb al-Shar'iyah</i>	Mu'assasah al-Risālah, Beirut/1999	al-Arnā'ut and al-Qayyām	<i>Yu'āmal</i>

By contrast, Bayyah used only two sources, neither of which were used by Michot. The first was a manuscript that, according to Bayyah, was the earliest edition of the Mardin Fatwa, in the “Damsyik Manuscript” located in the National Library of Syria (Maktabah al-Asad al-Waṭaniyyah). Figure 1 presents the final line of the fatwa:

**Figure 1.** Line from the so-called Mardin Fatwa in the *Damsyik Manuscript*  
(MS. Zahiriyya 2757, f. 192r)  
*Source:* Michot (2011)

Bayyah (2011) is the only scholar to analyse this manuscript. The manuscript is signed by the copyist Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Shushtārī al-Ba'lī al-Hanbalī with the inscription date 19th Jumādā 1 774/16th November 1372 (Bayyah 2011). Unfortunately, it cannot be determined if the manuscript is still in the library, nor can its authenticity be verified, because from May 2019 onwards, the official website of the library ([www.lassad-library.gov.sy](http://www.lassad-library.gov.sy))



has been inaccessible. The question as to how Bayyah had come to acquire this manuscript is difficult for us to answer as we have no knowledge of that. This makes it impossible to determine whether this manuscript was really copied from Ibn Taymiyyah’s original and if it was, whether it was copied faithfully. Nonetheless, as Bayyah used this source to ground his reading of Ibn Taymiyyah’s text, we must examine it. Figure 1 shows the sentence as it appears in the manuscript. There are two words that are written in a similar way: the fifth word from the top right corner and the word situated in the top left corner; they both lack diacritic signs. The similarity between them led Bayyah to read these two words as *yu’āmal* (they should be treated). The phrase situated in the top left corner became the point of contention between him and Michot.

Bayyah’s second source is a passage of scripture titled *al-Ādāb al-Shar’iyyah* (hereafter *al-Ādāb*), written by Shams al-Dīn b. Muflīḥ (hereafter Ibn Muflīḥ; d. 763/1362). According to al-Turayri (2010), Ibn Muflīḥ was one of Ibn Taymiyyah’s students. Bayyah claimed that this scripture includes the text of the Mardin Fatwa and that Ibn Muflīḥ used the phrase *yu’āmal* for both situations. We have examined an edition of the *al-Ādāb* (Ibn Muflīḥ 1999) and found that it did contain the text of the Mardin Fatwa with the phrase *yu’āmal*. This scripture helps fuel a difference in Bayyah’s reading. He has challenged Michot’s reading, arguing that the word without diacritic signs found in the “Damsyik Manuscript” could be read as *yu’āmal* (Bayyah 2011). However, Bayyah does not fully explain why he relies too heavily on the Ibn Muflīḥ’s *al-Ādāb*. The study would have been far more interesting if he had included further investigation.

As can be seen, editions of *Majmū’ah al-Fatāwā* published in five different countries and edited by five different editors are all consistent in their use of the phrase *yuqātal* and only the Damsyik Manuscript and the *al-Ādāb* used the phrase *yu’āmal*. There have been no editions of the *Majmū’ah al-Fatāwā* from 1908 until 2011 that mention the phrase *yu’āmal*. There are two possibilities as to why this is so. First, none of the five editors were aware of the “Damsyik Manuscript” or the *al-Ādāb*. Second, they might have known about these sources and employed the phrase *yuqātal* anyway as they felt that it was the most valid term. We are of the opinion that the second possibility is most likely true. It is probably true that Bayyah was the first scholar to report on the “Damsyik Manuscript” and the *al-Ādāb*, given that no other publications or commentaries mention these documents or the phrase *yu’āmal* – even those which cover Ibn Taymiyyah’s work in detail (e.g., Kokoschka and Krawietz 2013; Mohd Farid 2017). In addition, because there have been no recent efforts to rephrase *yuqātal* as *yu’āmal*, we can deduce that Bayyah’s reading has not been accepted in

the literature. This section has analysed the readings of the Mardin Fatwa and has argued that Bayyah's reading is unlikely the correct one. The next section addresses why this is the case by situating both the original text and Bayyah's interpretation in historical context.

### **The Mardin Fatwa and the Mongols**

Hillenbrand (1999) suggested that we can derive Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion about the Mongols from some of his other work. Ibn Taymiyyah composed two major works on the Mongols namely *Thalāth Rasā'il fī al-Jihād* (1993), a useful collection of Ibn Taymiyyah's writing on jihad and Mongols and *al-Siyāsah al-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāh al-Rā'i wa al-Ra'iyyah* (1955), another useful work contains an explanation of the nature of the Mongols. But, a closer examination of Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion about the Mongols would belong to the vast subject of history, which we must leave aside. Our aim was only to make clear that Ibn Taymiyyah did explain his opinion on the status of the Mongols in some works. Also, to lay to the reader that Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion about the Mongols is contextualised within his time for the danger they pose to Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that the Mongols were apostates and they endanger the Muslims (Ibn Taymiyyah 1993, 28; 1955, 123). Here, the authors suggest that we can look at Ibn Taymiyyah's other works to get a sense of his opinion of the Mongols and that this can give us some clues as to whether *yuqātal* or *yu'āmal* is the proper term to use in the previously quoted passage.

Mohd Farid stated that Ibn Taymiyyah released a fatwa which decreed that Muslim Mongol soldiers could be battled in *qitāl* jihad. This was considered one of his biggest achievements at the time:

Ibn Taymiyyah's most significant achievement was his key role in initiating *jihād* against the Mongols. At that time, the Mongols were the greatest danger facing the entire Muslims, because of their military power and the terrifying nature of their warfare. Ibn Taymiyyah was not satisfied with simply appealing to the *sultāns* only, but he also addressed the public and gave the *fatwā* necessitating the defending of Islam against the Mongols. (Mohd Farid 2011, 37)

In addition, Hoover (2019) has suggested that other Muslim scholars during Ibn Taymiyyah's time reacted strongly to his fatwa which permitted Muslims to initiate *qitāl* jihad against the Mongols; not least because the Quran prohibits war among Muslims (chapter 4, verse 93).

Ibn Taymiyyah further explained his opinion on the status of the Mongols in his scripture *Thalāth Rasā'il* (Ibn Taymiyyah 1993). Here, he invoked two historical precedents to explain why making war against the Mongols might be permissible: Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddiq's (d. 14/634; first Sunni caliph and one of four “rightly guided” caliphs in Sunni Islam) war against those who refused to pay the *zakāh* (a form of alms-giving tax; see Mohd Farid 2019) and Caliph ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's (d. 40/660; fourth Sunni caliph and one of four “rightly guided” caliphs in Sunni Islam) war with the *Khawārij* (early sectarian group in Islam and the group survives today, known as the Ibadis; see Mohd Farid 2011). In the first case, Caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddiq argued that those who refused to pay *zakāh* jeopardised the unity of Muslims and had decided to turn their backs on Islam. In the second case, the *Khawārij* group held *ghulūw* (i.e., extreme beliefs) and practised *takfīrī* (i.e., the word *takfīrī* is derived from the word *takfīr*, which means pronouncing someone an unbeliever and no longer Muslim), which justified Caliph ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's war against them. Ibn Taymiyyah drew two conclusions from these historical precedents. First, that the Mongols could be considered apostates who posed a danger to the unity of the Muslim community; and second, that the Mongols could be considered to hold *ghulūw*. Given these premises and Ibn Taymiyyah's other writings on the Mongols, the authors believe that Bayyah's reading of the fatwa and insistence that Ibn Taymiyyah used the phrase *yu'āmal* is inaccurate.

How, then, can we explain Bayyah's logic? It appears as though his reading was deeply affected by the politics of the contemporary Middle East. Bayyah may have been concerned with the appropriation of the term *yuqātal* by the extremist ‘Abd al-Salām Faraj (hereafter Faraj). Faraj, an Egyptian electrician and the founder of Jama'ah al-Jihad who is suspected to have been involved in the assassination of Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, in 1982, used “the corrupted text of the Mardin Fatwa” (the one using the term *yuqātal*) has become the basis for the legitimisation of many violent and militant groups within Muslim society. Among those who used the fatwa in this manner was Abdussalam Faraj in his book, *al-Farīdah al-Ghā'ibah*, which has become a manifesto for militant groups (al-Turayri 2010, 10). According to Jansen (1986, 45), the text of the Mardin Fatwa was mentioned more than once in Faraj's book. Although we cannot tell whether Bayyah had read Jansen's analysis, he probably knew of Faraj's book. Thus, concerned about the potential for the original text to justify terrorist acts, Bayyah probably opted to seek and argue for a softer, less militaristic and violent interpretation of the original. Indeed, early in his own work Bayyah suggested that “Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwa concerning Mardin can under no circumstances be appropriated and used as evidence for levelling the charge of *kufīr* (unbelief) against fellow Muslims” (Bayyah 2011, 4). As it turns

out, his fears were well-grounded; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has since interpreted the Mardin Fatwa to justify terrorist activities and to legitimise many violent and militant groups within Muslim society (Muhammad Haniff 2017, 5).

## Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion in the Mardin Fatwa is a response to the following questions:

Is [Mardin] a war domain (*balad ḥarb*) or a peaceful domain (*balad silm*)? And do the Muslims living in [Mardin] have an obligation to migrate to an Islamic country or not? And if migration is obligated and they migrate and they assist the enemies with their bodies or properties, are they in sin for committing it? And are those accusing them as hypocrites (*nifāq*) and mocking them [calling them hypocrites] in sin or not? (Ibn Taymiyyah 1998, 401)

Ibn Taymiyyah did not limit his responses to those questions. He took the opportunity and reflected further on the status of Mardin city, which had been ruled by Mongols and its inhabitants. These reflections led him to propose a third domain, *murakkab*, to indicate the nuance of the city's situation, for it combined the characteristics of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of *dār al-murakkab* needs to be developed. Thus, this article may not only be understood as a contribution to the field of Islamic Studies and to the growing body of research on Muslims in the Asian context. As it sets out to offer a new perspective to the study of the history of ideas in Islamic thought.

This article's analysis suggests that the Mardin Fatwa text really does represent Ibn Taymiyyah's opinion and that Michot's (2011) reading of the text is the correct one. So far, we have not found any disputes among scholars about the validity of the fatwa text. Nevertheless, the controversy about the Mardin Fatwa text is only regarding the terms *yu'āmal* or *yuqātal*, especially between Michot and Bayyah. Nine *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* writings from several printed and edited editions, including translations into Malay, were analysed. All writings consistently wrote the phrase *yuqātal*. So far, we have not found any serious discussions among scholars in Arabic countries, copyists and manuscript experts, especially editors of Ibn Taymiyyah's writing, to correct the available phrase. This article appears to be the first study to compare the difference emphasised of reading in Mardin Fatwa. Next, the Mardin Fatwa text was compared with other relevant texts and it was determined that Ibn Taymiyyah was of the opinion that

the status of the Mongols during his time was divided into two, which depended on their actions, whether to become apostates or *ghulūw*. This approach proves useful in expanding our understanding of how we can get some clues as to whether *yuqātal* or *yu’āmal* is the proper term to use in Mardin Fatwa. With those findings, we have determined that Michot’s reading using the phrase *yuqātal* is more precise. Therefore, we suggest that the term *yuqātal* as read by Michot to be maintained and used in the Mardin Fatwa text.

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## Notes

1. Jihad in the view of Ibn Taymiyyah is the lawful effort of the heart, tongue or hands to spread Islam. Jihad of the heart is directed against the lower self by fighting temptation through purification of the soul. The jihad of the tongue is undertaken by commanding good and forbidding wrong. And the jihad of the hands is employed by military means or *qitāl* jihad. The meaning of jihad is in fact, much broader with a wide range of connotations and it includes many activities unrelated to military fighting. The term *qitāl* means fighting in the battlefield and has been mentioned 42 times in the Quran (e.g., chapter 2, verse 190 and 216; chapter 22, verse 39). From these verses, the words used to describe “to fight” are *qātilū*, *qitālu* and *yuqātalūna*. In every case, the carrying out of a *qitāl* is enjoined and it is definitely means “fighting in the battlefield”. Thus, the word *qitāl* further narrowed the broad definition of jihad. For further discussion, see Mohd Farid (2011, 52), Bonner (2008, 2) and Firestone (1999, 18).
2. Yahya Michot is Emeritus Professor of Islamic Thought and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary. He is an internationally known scholar who taught at the same institute for more than 10 years. For more detailed information, see <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/our-faculty/yahya-michot> (accessed 10 March 2021).
3. Abdullah b. Bayyah is Mauritanian political and religious activist. He served as president of Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies in Abu Dhabi, representative of the Muslim League’s International High Council of Mosques in Mecca and member of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan. For more detailed information, see <http://binbayyah.net/english/bio/> (accessed 10 March 2021).
4. As the discussion that lies at the heart of this article is ongoing, this article is not confined to an analysis of published material, but is complemented by insights one of the authors gathered during his stay in London in May/June 2016. One of us had the opportunity to attend lectures by Yahya Michot and Abdullah b. Bayyah

which allowed us to open a fresh window into the study of this topic. We deepened our understanding of their approaches and gained insight into how they position themselves in this discussion.

5. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1981), edited by Ibn Qāsim (vol. 28, 502–503). Rabat: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif.
6. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1980), no editor's name (vol. 4, 279–280). Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
7. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1997), edited by al-Bāz and al-Jazzār (vol. 14, 380). Cairo: Dār al-Wafā.
8. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1998) edited by al-Bāz and al-Jazzār (vol. 14, 401). Riyadh: Maktabah al-'Ubaykān.
9. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (2006), edited by Jundī and Sharqawī (vol. 14, 311). Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth.
10. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1978), edited by Ibn Qāsim (vol. 28, 240–241).
11. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (1908), no editor's name (vol. 4, 421). Cairo: Maṭba'ah Kurdistān.
12. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (2011), edited by al-Bāz and al-Jazzār (vol. 14, 392). Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm.
13. Refer *Majmū'ah al-Fatāwā* (2005), edited by Syaikhu (vol. 14, 401). Jakarta: Darul Haq.

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