BOOK REVIEW

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Islam and the State in Ibn Taymiyya: Translation and Analysis
by Jaan S. Islam and Adem Eryiğit

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***Islam and the State in Ibn Taymiyya Translation and
Analysis*** by Jaan S. Islam and Adem Eryiğit. London and New
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Discussing the concept of the state from Ibn Taymiyyah's
perspective reveals a tendency toward rigidity in application (Chun-
Leung et al., 2024), even though the fundamental aim of government
is to establish justice (Malkawi and Sonn 2011). Nevertheless, his
thought can be regarded as moderate and reasonable, particularly
when viewed as a means of protecting religion (Widigdo - Awang
Pawi, 2023). The book *Islam and the State in Ibn Taymiyya:
Translation and Analysis* by Jaan S. Islam and Adem Eryiğit seeks to
position Ibn Taymiyyah's ideas precisely within the framework of
contemporary Islamic political theory and decolonial thought. By
doing so, it invites a fresh examination of how Ibn Taymiyyah's
political thought can be interpreted in light of both historical necessity
and modern theoretical discourse.

The 14th-century theologian Ibn Taymiyyah stands as a significant
figure in Islamic intellectual history and is revered for his prolific
scholarship and influential theological ideas (El-Tobgui, 2019). Rooted
in the Ḥanbalī school of jurisprudence, his thoughts continue to shape
discussions within contemporary Islamic thought, particularly in the
realms of Salafism and Jihadism (Wiktorowicz, 2005). The theoretical
backdrop against which Ibn Taymiyyah emerges is crucial for
comprehending the foundation of his ideology. Born in 1263 in
Harran, a city in present-day Türkiye, Ibn Taymiyyah navigated an era
marked by pivotal historical and geopolitical shifts in the Islamic
world. This period witnessed the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and
the rise of the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria amidst Mongol
invasions and internal Islamic conflicts (El-Tobgui, 2019).

The core of Ibn Taymiyyah's theological contributions is advocacy for a return to the pristine teachings of Islam with an emphasis on adherence to the Qurʾān, the Sunnah, and the practices of the Salaf, the early righteous predecessors. His theological convictions, often characterized as proto-Salafist, advocate for a puritanical interpretation of Islam and a direct and literal application of religious texts (Vasalou 2015; Talmon-Heller 2019). Central to Ibn Taymiyyah's theological framework is the concept of *tawḥīd* and his staunch defense of the unity of God's attributes, which became a cornerstone of his theological legacy. Moreover, his views on *jihād*, governance, and the relationship between religious authority and the state have been the subjects of extensive debate and interpretation (Kazeem, 2022; Zakariya, 2019).

However, Ibn Taymiyyah's legacy is not without controversy. His perspectives on various theological and political matters have spurred diverse interpretations and debates, with some viewing his ideas as foundational to contemporary Salafist and Jihadist movements while others critique these interpretations and emphasize his broader intellectual contributions beyond political theology (Maevskaya, 2022; Kamolnick, 2012; Farooq Abdullah et al., 2022). Indeed, the book endeavors to navigate this intricate landscape by presenting translated works and providing a theoretical analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah's political thought. It seeks not only to shed light on his primary sources but also to offer insight into how his ideas resonate within contemporary discussions in Islamic political theory and the broader field of religious studies.

The book examines the intellectual heritage of Ibn Taymiyyah, who was a pivotal figure in shaping contemporary Salafism and Jihadism. It also offers a distinctive perspective by presenting an English translation of key political treatises by Ibn Taymiyyah, including *al-Ḥisbah fī l-Islām* (*The Office of Islamic Government*), alongside excerpts from *Majmūʿ fatāwá* (*The Collected Fatwás*), *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-nabawiyyah* (*The Prophetic Way*), and *al-Siyāsah al-sharʿiyyah fī iṣlāḥ al-rāʿī wa-l-raʿiyyah* (*Islamic Governance in Reconciling between the Ruler and the Ruled*). Beyond mere translation, the book provides valuable annotations and theoretical analysis and explores the relevance of Ibn Taymiyyah's thought in current Islamic political theory. It contextualizes his geopolitical

environment and offers insight into his normative political ideologies. Moreover, the book critically examines the implications of Ibn Taymiyyah's political theology in the context of Islamic decolonial theory, making it an essential read for scholars in political science, religious studies, and Islamic history.

The book is organized into three parts: an introduction to Ibn Taymiyyah's intellectual context, translations of his works, and a comprehensive analysis. The first part, which details his historical and geopolitical background, is thorough but would benefit from a more streamlined presentation to assist readers who are less familiar with his complex ideology (pp. 1-42).

The second part contains the translations, which are well annotated, making the text accessible to a broader audience. Chapters on "The Office of Islamic Government" and "Ordering Good and Prohibiting Evil" provide valuable insights into Ibn Taymiyyah's vision of an Islamic state and emphasize moral responsibility and justice. However, embedding critical analysis more closely within the translations would improve the reader's engagement by allowing for immediate interpretation of these complex ideas. The authors' emphasis on Ibn Taymiyyah's tendency to reject non-Ḥanbalī thought (p. 195) helps readers follow the trajectory of his arguments in the later sections, especially those who are new to the subject or less familiar with his ideas.

In the third part, Islam and Eryiğit analyze the applicability of Ibn Taymiyyah's political thought in a modern context. They argue for the relevance of his ideas to contemporary governance, particularly within the framework of decolonial theory (p. 221). This perspective is thought-provoking, yet the feasibility of these ideas in a modern nation-state may seem speculative (pp. 236-237). Addressing alternative interpretations and potential critiques of Ibn Taymiyyah's relevance to today's political systems would enrich the analysis and provide a more nuanced view.

A key strength of the book is its high-quality translations along with annotations that provide clarity on Ibn Taymiyyah's intent and terminology. By bringing historical texts into contemporary Islamic political theory, the authors open a dialogue that is relevant to scholars of political science and religious studies alike. The book's focus on the political dimensions of Ibn Taymiyyah's thought also highlights his

views on governance, which remain influential. However, the book's narrow emphasis on political theory may limit its appeal to those interested in the broader spectrum of Ibn Taymiyyah's scholarship. Additionally, while the book attempts to position Ibn Taymiyyah within decolonial discourse, engaging with contrasting viewpoints would present a more balanced perspective on his legacy and relevance.

Islam and the State in Ibn Taymiyya: Translation and Analysis by Jaan S. Islam and Adem Eryiğit is a notable contribution to Islamic studies and provides English readers with essential translations of Ibn Taymiyyah's work and an insightful analysis of his political thought. Despite areas where additional perspectives could enhance the depth of the discussion, the book remains a valuable resource for understanding Ibn Taymiyyah's enduring impact on Islamic political theory. This work will particularly interest scholars and students in political science, Islamic studies, and religious history who seek a comprehensive yet accessible exploration of Ibn Taymiyyah's political philosophy.

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