ENTERING THE EXITING: THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF AL-IBĀḌĪYA

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The Islamic subdivision called al-Ibāḍīya is usually characterized as the surviving branch of the Kharijite movement (*al-Ḫāriǧīya*) by everyone else than the Ibadis themselves. Why? That is one thing that I shall try to explain in this article whose primary function, however, is to provide those who would like to find out who the Ibadis actually are, with a series of guidelines for their orientation. I shall try not to use the term 'identity' very much because it nowadays means almost anything, and therefore nearly nothing, but my intention is to go through orientalists' notions of the Ibadis and find out how they differ from the Ibadis' own conception(s) of themselves. Sometimes I shall also add to the comparative scheme some facts based on my own experiences in Jerba and Zanzibar in 1997.

In this article I shall not focus on the history of the Ibadite movement because there are already several excellent introductions to the very theme: ʿAwaḍ Ḫulayfāt (1978) on the early Ibāḍīya, Bākir bin Saʿīd Aʿūšat (s.a.) and the numerous articles by Tadeusz Lewicki (especially Lewicki 1971) in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* for a general idea of the sect and its history, Ṣābir Ṭaʿīma (1986) and Rağab Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm (s.a.) on the doctrines of the Ibadis as well as accounts of their history, and the following six books on the history of al-Ibāḍīya in the Maghreb: Werner Schwartz (1983); Ulrich Rebstock (1983), Sulaymān bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Barūnī al-Nafūsī (1986), Maḥmūd Ismāʿīl ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1985), Aḥmad al-Yās Ḥusayn (1992), and Sālim bin Yaʿqūb (1986).

ARE ABADIS IBADIS?

In a recent Ibadite exposition of the Ibadite beliefs by Maryam bint Saʿīd bin ʿAlī al-Qutbīya (1992: 6) the Ibadis are called indiscriminately both Ibadis and Abadis, which reflects the common practice in Oman. In North Africa they are, however, called Abadis as systematically as they are called Ibadis in Zanzibar. The wavering between the two alternatives is only a matter of dialectal variation.

Schwartz (1983: 23) mentions that the most commonly used name for the early Ibadis for themselves is simply *al-muslimūn*. Another expression commonly in use by Ibadis as well as other Muslim groups is *ahl al-ḥaqq* (those who follow the truth; or, as it is translated in this article, 'God's people') (ibid.). Al-Qutbīya writes on the subject as follows:

> As for the Ibadis themselves, they would call themselves 'ahl al-da'wa' [people of the call] and 'ğama'at al-muslimīn' [the community of Muslims] and 'ahl al-istiqāma' [people of integrity]. (Al-Qutbīya 1992: 8.)

According to the Ibadis whom I met in Jerba and Zanzibar, the most common expression today is the last one mentioned by al-Qutbīya.

Geographically the Ibadis are more or less relegated to the outskirts of the Muslim world, which reflects the history of Islam as they have suffered persecution by the so-called 'orthodox' Muslims. By far the most important Ibadite center is the Sultanate of Oman whose population consists mostly, albeit not totally, of Ibadis. According to al-Qutbīya (1992: 7) the Ibadis could be found in Oman, Iraq (because 'Abd Allāh ibn Ibāḍ, the founder of the sect, was an Iraqi), the Yemen and the Hadramawt (until the end of the seventh century AH), the Maghreb, Zanzibar, and numerous other God-fearing places. In comparison, according to T. Lewicki's most useful article on the Ibadis, al-Ibāḍīya is:

> one of the main branches of the Khāridjīs [q.v.], representatives of which are today found in 'Umān, East Africa, Tripolitania (Djabal Nafūsa and Zuagha) and southern Algeria (Wargla and Mzab). The sect takes its name from that of one of those said to have founded it, 'Abd Allāh b. Ibāḍ al-Murrī al-Tamīmī.[1] (Lewicki 1971: 648.)

Lewicki is cautious enough not to say whether there might still be Ibadite communities in Iraq or Central Arabia (although that most probably has been the case in the past). On the other hand, what he writes about al-Ibāḍīya in East Africa relying on the authority of Salīl ibn Rāziq does not (or no longer) tally with the statements of the present-day Zanzibari Ibadis: 'Today, the majority of the Ibāḍīs of East Africa live in Zanzibar' (ibid.: 653). It is a common assumption among the Zanzibari Ibadis and Shafi'is today that the majority of East-African Ibadis do not live in Zanzibar but on the mainland (on the Tanzanian coast), instead. As for the other Ibadite centers, the most important are the town of Ġardāya and Wādī Mīzāb[2] in Algeria, the Isle of Jerba in Tunisia, and the Nafūsa mountains in Libya. Except for Tunisia where the Ibadis seem to live solely in Jerba, there are naturally some smaller Ibadite communities around these centers such as the small Ibadite minority in the UAE. Mu'ammar (1988: 18–19) mentions that al-Ibāḍīya have spread also to some East European countries and some other African countries such as Ghana.

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1 George Percy Badger (1871: 391) elaborates on the origins of the name of the sect and its founder as follows: 'It is open to question, moreover, whether the word Ibādh proceeds from the same root (*bādha*, to surpass in whiteness), as Mubayyidhūn; it more probably comes from *ábadha* or *ábidha*, to tie or strengthen the leg of a camel. Ibādh, a derivative noun from that root, means a nerve, or a certain vein in the hind leg of a horse.'

2 In Arabic sources the name of the valley is written 'Mīzāb', although most European authors use the form 'Mzab', or 'Mzāb', according to the common pronounciation of the name. Cf. Rouvillois-Brigol 1993: 826.

THE IBADIS AS KHARIJIS

To call the Ibadis a branch of the Kharijite movement[3] is quite popular among European scholars[4], but if one is to believe al-Qutbīya, or Muʿammar whom she quotes, that is not quite as obvious as one might expect. Under the headlines *Al-Ibāḍīya laysū ḫawāriǧ* and *Man hum al-ḫawāriǧ iḏā kāna al-Ibāḍīya laysū minhum?* al-Qutbīya states that the Ibadis have been wrongly treated by essayists who have taken them for Kharijis. For her the Ibadis are, in fact, very distant from them and have found them disgraceful and reprehensible in many ways. Therefore, no relation should be made between the Ibadis and the Kharijis. (Al-Qutbīya 1992: 12.)[5]

Relying on Muʿammar (1988), al-Qutbīya lists the following examples of ungrounded assumptions that connect the Ibadite doctrine to the Kharijis: (1) that the Ibadis deny *iǧmāʿ* (the ijmaʿ – consensus as the third source of Islamic law); (2) that they deny stoning (as a valid punishment established by the sunna and not abrogated by the Koran); (3) that they deny the torment of grave. All of these statements are false according to al-Qutbīya (1992: 14), and stem from a lack of thorough examination.

The Ibadis are not what the Kharijis are, namely:

> ...an Islamic subdivision whose leaders were Nāfiʿ bin al-Azraq and Naǧda bin ʿĀmir and ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣuffār. Their followers rose against those adhering to the will of God at the time of the *tābiʿūn* and their followers. They judged those who had committed the grave sin of polytheism and relieved them of the excess of their wealth and shed their blood seeing that that was their duty. They were oppressive to the community of Muslims and their violence was hard to bear for those on whom they inflicted their penalties. The furor of their oppression intensified with every Muslim subjected to their severe trial which bore no likeness to the trial prescribed by God. ...they massacred people with their swords and killed those whom they were not permitted to kill. They plundered them and enslaved both women and men because in their opinion they were idolaters. (Al-Qutbīya 1992: 16–17.)

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3 The Kharijite movement was born as a protest against the acceptance of anything other than a divine settlement for the differences that had evolved around the question of leadership between the followers of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the supporters of Muʿāwīya ibn Abī Ṣufyān after the murder of ʿUṯmān, the third caliph. As ʿAlī accepted Muʿāwīya's proposal to settle the war through arbitration which finally ended in Muʿāwīya's favor, a group of extremist supporters of ʿAlī broke away – or literally, exited (*ḫaraǧa*); thence their name al-Ḫawāriǧ ('those who go out'), albeit another explanation is given by G. Levi Della Vida (1978: 1075) – shouting the slogan *lā ḥukm illā li Allāh* ('the judgment belongs to God alone'). The historical connection of al-Ibāḍīya and the Kharijite movement stems from the fact that the majority of the early dissidents were from the tribe of Tamīm to which also Ibn Ibāḍ belonged. As Ṣābir Ṭaʿīma (1986: 44) writes: 'The muslims... gathered in the mosque of Baṣra and resolved on breaking away [*ʿazamū ʿalā al-ḫurūǧ*]. Among them were ʿAbd Allāh bin Ibāḍ and Nāfiʿ bin al-Azraq and other prominent Muslim personalities...'.

4 The practice of identifying the Ibadis with the Kharijis may seem obvious for European scholars, but that does not mean that the non-Ibadite Muslims would have employed the practice any less. An ancient example is provided by al-Ǧāḥiẓ (s.a.: 347): 'Among the scholars and leaders of the Kharijis was Muslim bin Kūrin whose agnomen was Abū ʿUbayda, and he was an Ibadi.'

5 See also Muʿammar 1988: 19–23.

It seems that a distinction from the Kharijite sects[6] has become very important for the Ibadis themselves – quite likely because of both their minority-position in many countries and their not wishing to be persecuted along with the Kharijis, just as Schwartz (1983: 29) suggests. Therefore, one might very well ask why one should continue to call them a branch of the Kharijis, or even a moderate branch although their moderation clearly appears as a distinctive feature with regard to the description of the extremist Kharijis[7] above. In fact, the Jerbian Ibadis are not willing to talk about *al-maḏāhib al-arbaʿa* (the four main Sunnite schools of Islamic jurisprudence: the Hanafis, the Malikis, the Shafiʿis, and the Hanbalis) but prefer to count their own *maḏhab* as the first of the five[8], not four, main *maḏāhib*.

There seems to be little doubt of a historical connection between the founder of al-Ibāḍīya and the founders of some (other) Kharijite sects, just as Lewicki (1971: 648) and Schwartz (1983: 24) stress in their writings. On the one hand, because ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibāḍ was merely the founding father of al-Ibāḍīya as a politico-religious movement and not its leading figure in the field of jurisprudence, a title usually given to Ǧābir bin Zayd, it would make more sense to compare the Ibadite doctrines to the Kharijite and Sunnite ones than simply name the Ibadis a branch of the Kharijis on the basis of a common point of departure in their origins. On the other hand, since the task cannot be performed because the Ibadis are the only Kharijite sect whose doctrine has survived in an adequate

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6 ʿAbd al-Ḥāfiẓ ʿAbd Rabba (1986: 250) lists in his Ibadite treatise *Al-Ibāḍīya: maḏhab wa sulūk* sixteen different Kharijite sects as follows:

> ʿ1. al-Wahbīya... companions of ʿAbd Allāh bin Wahb al-Rāsibī al-Azdī;
> 2. al-Azraqīya... companions of Abū Rāšid Nāfiʿ bin al-Azraq;
> 3. al-Naǧdīya... companions of Naǧda bin ʿĀmir al-Ḥanafī;
> 4. al-ʿAṭawīya... companions of ʿAṭīya bin al-Aswad;
> 5. al-Aʿsamīya... companions of Ziyād al-Aʿsam;
> 6. al-Ṣāliḥīya... companions of Ṣāliḥ bin Masbarūḥ;
> 7. al-Buhaysīya... companions of Abū Bayhas al-Hayḍam bin Ǧabbār;
> 8. al-ʿAǧradīya... companions of ʿAbd al-Karīm bin ʿAǧrad;
> 9. al-Maymūnīya... companions of Maymūn al-Saʿdī;
> 10. Al-Ṣufrīya... companions of Ziyād bin al-Aṣfar;
> 11. al-Ḥafṣīya... companions of Ḥafṣ bin Abī al-Miqdām;
> 12. al-Ṯaʿlabīya... companions of Ṯaʿlaba bin Kārim;
> 13. al-Aḫnasa... companions of al-Aḫnas bin Qays;
> 14. al-Ḥāzimīya... companions of Ḥāzim bin ʿAlī;
> 15. al-Ḫalafīya... companions of Ḫalaf bin Ḥayiy al-Ḫāriǧī;
> 16. al-Saʿīdīya... companions of Saʿīd bin Muḥammad al-Abāǧī'.

(Cf. al-Baġdādī 1966: 14–15.) Certainly one of the most detailed expositions of the Kharijite subdivisions is by al-Aš'arī (Ritter 1963: 92–123).

7 Wilkinson (1987: 189) states accordingly that 'Absolutely central to the Ibadi tenets around which their community laws are formulated is the notion that all other Muslims are *ahl al-qibla*. ... It is in this that the Ibadis differ from the extreme Khawarij. As a result other Muslims' property may not be burnt, or plundered, or their persons enslaved, or official booty (*ghanima*) taken from them, either during or after a war. Only blood spilt in official fighting is legally forfeit for refusing to respond to the Ibadi *daʿwa* [a formal call to the true faith].' Cf. al-Aš'arī (Ritter 1963: 104).

8 In the Maghreb the Ibadis have been slanderously called the 'fifthers' meaning heretics. Wilkinson (1985: 234) has seen their independent collection of *aḥādīṯ* against this background as an attempt at getting rid of the accusation. Cf. Depont & Coppolani 1987: 51, fn. 2.

form, the comparison would have to be made between the Ibadis and the Sunnis[9]. Therefore, should it turn out that the Ibadite doctrines are actually quite close to the Sunnite ones, it would be arrogant to call the Ibadis Kharijis against their own will. Basically, one may ask oneself, why one should emphasize the historical origins of a movement under identification more than the development of its doctrines later on.

Besides, if al-Ibāḍīya continues to be a vivid political and religious doctrine, and there should be no reason to allege otherwise, the issue of naming is loaded with political significance and not just scientific interest. Since scholars writing about al-Ibāḍīya, of whom there are not so many, can and do indirectly influence the way in which the Ibadite minorities are conceived of[10], one might be able to do better than deliberately associate them primarily with the Kharijis of whose tenets the majority of Muslims disapprove.

DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES

Since a detailed study of the differences between the Ibadite *kalām* and *fiqh* and the doctrines of *al-maḏāhib al-arbaʿa* would require a lengthier treatise, I shall only refer to some central issues concerning the distinction of al-Ibāḍīya which are already recorded in the literature on the Ibadis. One of the best accounts available is by George Percy Badger:

> The doctrines of the Ibādhiyah... differ from those of the orthodox Muslims on three cardinal points. 1st. On the Imāmate, respecting which they deny the right of succession to be inherent in any particular family or class, holding, on the contrary, that it depends on the election of the people, and that there is no absolute necessity for any Imām at all. (Their denial of the Imāmate of 'Othmān and 'Ali and to their successors in the Khalīfate comes under this head.) 2ndly. Predestination and Free will.[11] Although the Sunnites differ greatly among themselves on these dogmas, the opinion more generally entertained among them is, that man has power and will to choose good and evil, and can moreover know that he shall be rewarded if he do well, and be punished if he do ill; but that he depends, notwithstanding, on God's power, and willeth, if God will, but not otherwise. The Ibādhiyah, on the other hand, are charged with holding predestination in such a sense as to make God the author of evil as well as good. 3rdly. On the merit and demerit of human actions. ...the Ibādhiyah are opposed to the orthodox in maintaining that a good intention is not necessary to render an act meritorious; ...that a man may deny the sect to which he belongs without incurring the guilt of infidelity; but that the commission of one of the greater sins places him beyond the pale of salvation. (Badger 1871: 394–395.)

Badger, too, refers first to the question of the imamate which is raised to unparalleled significance by numerous other authors. Sheriff writes:

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9 The first step that a scholar interested in such an endeavour should make is read through the short but absolutely invaluable article by J. C. Wilkinson (1979).

10 Although the best part of the discussion about the ethics of representation took place in the 70's and 80's in connection with the American storm of textual anthropology, it might still be useful for orientalists to look into these questions – it is, unfortunately, relatively common among present-day orientalists to think that such questions are no concern of theirs, or that science should not be held in any way responsible for the reception of its results.

11 On the Ibadite *qadarīya*, or its opposition, see also Madelung 1985.

> The most fundamental ideal of Ibadhism was its egalitarianism which sought to embrace in equality and fraternity all true believers. Every believer who was morally and religiously irreproachable was capable of being elevated by the vote of the community to the supreme post of the imamate, 'even if he were a black slave', although in practice succession in Oman tended to run through certain dynasties. (Sheriff 1992: 12.)

While Sheriff emphasizes the dimension of equality in much the same tone of voice as Badger, Wilkinson is already willing to reduce the Ibadite identity strictly to their political doctrine:

> Some minor variations over interpretation of the law, some small differences over ritual and a few vestiges of theological debate reflecting early issues which for long had ceased to stir Muslim thought, were all that came to distinguish the Ibāḍīs from the Sunnīs, except for one vital matter: the theory and practice of political community. To have removed that would have been to extinguish Ibaḍism itself. (Wilkinson 1990: 39.)

In the light of present-day Omani politics, Wilkinson's academic proclamation may seem exaggerated from a theoretical perspective emphasizing the actualization of doctrines through everyday practices, since the majority of Omani people do consider themselves to be Ibadis no matter how successful the application of their political doctrine[12] has been in practice. Indeed, as Bertram Thomas (1938: 10) mentions, the practice in Oman 'has been to choose the Imam from some one family – in effect, a dynasty'. With regard to the power of the Imam the following note by Thomas (ibid.: 8) is important: 'The term Imam in Ibadhi practice is exclusively applied to the religious head of the sect – traditionally the ruler. This is in marked contrast to its common meaning in orthodox Islam where almost every prayer-leader of a mosque is called Imam.' Therefore, the principles of selecting an Ibadite imam, the kernel of the Ibadite doctrine according to these European authors, should not be confused with a trivial practice such as the selection of a prayer-leader. However, according to Schwartz (1983: 23), later Ibadite authors in the Maghreb use the term more or less as an honorary title for distinguished scholars. Thus, in the usage of the contemporary North-African Ibadis a distinction is made between *imām* as a complimentary term and *imām al-muslimīn* as a signifier for a politico-religious leader.[13]

The contrasting, as to the imams, of the Ibadite doctrine with the Sunnite and Shi'ite ones has been consisely done by E. C. Ross (1874: 189). The distinction from the Sunnis and the Shi'is is clear enough as the Ibadis, who were supporters of 'Alī until the compromise with Mu'āwīya, only accept Abū Bakr and 'Umar as the rightful caliphs among the *Ṣaḥāba*. Ross makes, however, neither a distinction between the Ibadis and the

12 The relativization of the reduction of the Ibadite doctrine into its political tenets seems to me to be rather unavoidable after I received a letter from my friend Sulaymān Mīlād who is an Ibadite *faqīh* born in Jerba, educated in Oman, and employed as a teacher in Zanzibar at the time of my visit there. He writes about the difference of opinions between the schools of law as follows: 'The Islamic jurisprudence is like any intellectual inquiry in which the affairs of a single Muslim and the community of Muslims are discussed from the perspective of religious worship and from the political, social, and economic perspectives. The schools of law devote their attention to these questions, and so does the Ibadite *maḏhab*, except that in my opinion it pays more attention to the perspectives of society, economy, and worship than to the political perspective [*min al-nāḥīyat al-siyāsīya*].'

13 For more on the title of imam see Badger (1871: 373–384) and Ross (1874: 190). The most comprehensive account of the imamate system and tradition to date is Wilkinson (1987).

other Kharijis, who also subscribed to the Ibadite recognition of only the first two caliphs, nor any actual doctrinal identification of the sect.

While the Ibadis' separation from the Kharijis is usually expressed in terms of the Ibadite moderation or their refusal of *isti'rāḍ* (religious murder quite efficiently promoted by the Azraqis), an attempt at squeezing out the essence of *al-iḫtilāf* (the ikhtilaf, doctrinal difference) between al-Ibāḍīya and the Sunnite schools is made by Schwartz:

> Die Ibaditen (*al-ibāḍiyya*), hervorgegangen aus der mit der Schlacht von Ṣiffīn entstandenen ḥārigitischen Bewegung, unterscheiden sich von den 'Sunniten' im Wesentlichen nur dadurch, daß sie kein Ende des *iǧtihād* [the ijtihad] kennen. (Schwartz 1980: 17.)

The assumption made by Schwartz may not overtly appreciate the delicacy of ikhtilaf within *fiqh* for Muslim *fuqahā'* but may very well be otherwise accurate[14], and is in conformity with the image that the contemporary Zanzibari Ibadis have of their own doctrine. When I asked them about the closing of the gates of ijtihad, the unequivocal answer was that the 'gates' have never been closed by anyone other than possibly European orientalists who have misunderstood Islam.

Turning to the original Ibadite scholarship on their own doctrines one may find different emphases. An excerpt from an important recent Ibadite treatise by Farḥāt al-Ǧa'bīrī may illustrate my point:

> The Ibadis see that al-Imān [faith] and al-Islām [Islam – submission to the will of God] are embedded in each other so that they cannot be separated. Faith means both its proclamation and the belief in one's heart [*qawl bi al-lisān wa taṣdīq bi al-qalb*] and the proper execution of one's prayer [*'amal ṣāliḥ bi al-ǧawāriḥ*]. Consequently, there is under no circumstance a division between word and deed, and Islam, and faith and religion – they are names for one single thing which is obedience to God, the powerful, the exalted. (al-Ǧa'bīrī, s.a.: 73.)

Although such a manifesto may seem for a European scholar just an example of 'a few vestiges of theological debate', I am willing to give the quoted excerpt more significance. In it is summarized in a succinct way both the legacy of a common history with the Kharijis[15] and the reason why so many European scholars have called the Ibadis either puritanical or earnest people[16]. It is furthermore not hard to understand why al-Ibāḍīya

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14 Quoting 'Abdur Rahman I. Doi (1984: 81) one may, however, pose the rhetorical question: 'was the door of Ijtihad ever closed.' Doi thinks that those [a.o. Ǧamal al-Dīn al-Afġānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh] who proclaimed that the door of ijtihad had to be reopened may have 'over-played their role' (ibid.).

15 The connection to the Kharijis whose stern doctrine of ritual purity and conception of faith, as Levi Della Vida (1978: 1076) has put it: 'demands purity of conscience as an indispensable complement to bodily purity for the validity of acts of worship', is well enough expressed by Schwartz (1983: 25), too: 'Nun war gemeinsamer Nenner dieser ersten Hārigiten nicht allein ihre Ablehnung von Waffenstillstand und Schiedsgericht [as suggested by Mu'āwīya and agreed to by 'Alī to settle the fight over the issue of the succession to the caliphate], sondern vor allem ihre strenge Auffassung in Sachen der Religion: nicht bloßes Bekennen der islamischen Glaubenssätze machte den Gläubigen aus, vielmehr gehörte entschprechendes Handeln untrennbar hinzu (*qawl wa-'amal*).'

16 Referring to the Ibadite subdivision of al-Ḥāriṯīya, whose dogmatic relation to al-Mu'tazila is touched upon by al-Aš'arī (Ritter 1963: 104, 124), Depont & Coppolani (1987: 51) provide a typical, yet probably quite accurate, example of the European image of al-Ibāḍīya: 'Victimes constantes de la tyrannie des khalifes, écrasés par le nombre, ils ne voulurent jamais rien sacrifier de leurs

has seemed quite appealing for many an observer: such a strict rejection of dissimulation and hypocricy[17] which has been later on combined with an exceptional open-mindedness and tolerance of foreign beliefs[18] – something that may quite well stem from their own experiences as a persecuted people – obviously makes an inviting mixture of elements for people who subscribe to the tenets of Islam or have an otherwise religious mind. Albeit one of the central tenets of al-Ibāḍīya has been from the very beginning what already ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibāḍ quoted from *Sūrat al-Mā'ida* in a letter of his to ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn Marwān, namely that 'those who do not judge by that which Allāh has sent down are wrongdoers..., sinners..., and disbelievers' (Ḫulayfāt 1978: 172)[19], the interpretation of what the verse actually entitles *ahl al-ḥaqq* to do with the infidels has varied a great deal both locally and during the history of the Kharijite movement[20]. Thus the controversial statements as made by Badger and Thesiger are possible:

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doctrines, et leur puritanisme outré est encore aujourd'hui la principale règle de leur dogme.' R. Strothmann (1961: 494) has seen the ethics of al-Ibāḍīya as their central distinctive tenet as follows: 'Der Unterschied in Glaubens- und Rechtsfragen gegenüber den anderen Muhammedanern ist sehr gering mit Ausnahme der Ethik. Die Ibaditen erkennen den bloßen Glauben nicht als genügend an, sondern verlangen die Guten Werke als Bedingung zur Rechtfertigung. So sind sie Pietisten, gar Perfektionisten des Islams geworden.'

17 Although a clear rejection of dissimulation (not referring to *taqīya*, the principle of religious dissimulation in order to protect oneself) is, at least in theory, such a central Ibadite tenet, the following excerpt from al-Baġdādī's (d.1037) treatise *Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* may give us an example of either the difficulty that always accompanies the human application of ethical dogma, or the inevitable influence of political realities on such matters: 'Another point in which they [=the Ibadis] agreed was the view that the unbelievers of this community, i.e. those of their community who differed from them, were both free from polytheism, and at the same time wanting in faith, thus being neither believers nor polytheists, but unbelievers. They accepted the testimony of such however, and secretly forbade the shedding of their blood, although publicly claimed it was lawful' (al-Baġdādī 1966: 105). Perhaps al-Baġdādī implies that the early Ibadis resorted to such a polemical bluff in order to gain some political, or psychological, advantage in a situation where they were threatened. See ibid. 107–108 for al-Baġdādī's exposition of the complexity of the Ibadite views on hypocrisy, and their connection to the central Kharijite passtime: deciding on who is a sinner and to what extent.

18 The tolerance and open-mindedness that I witnessed both in Jerba and in Zanzibar is echoed by some writings (see Harries 1954: 68 for P. W. Harrison's enthusiastic impressions) but bluntly opposed by some others (see Thesiger as quoted above). The discrepancy cannot be solely explained by the geographical dispersion of al-Ibāḍīya – although my impressions are based on experiences in Jerba and Zanzibar while Harrison's and Thesiger's were acquired in Oman – since both Harrison and Thesiger write on Omani Ibadis. The obvious explanation seems to be the non-uniformity of Ibadis among themselves, which can be expressed as the influence of the cultural and temporal context on any community of believers. Just as in every community there are those who are firm enough in their belief not to find differing beliefs a threat, there are also those whose religious identity needs to be defended by hostility addressed at 'non-believers'. As a clear *ḫurūǧ* from the Kharijis has come to mean a great deal to the Ibadis, it is also not surprising that tolerance of foreign beliefs has been given some greater significance among them.

19 Cf. al-Aš'arī (Ritter 1963: 102).

20 Although the following tenets explicated by Ahmad Ubaydli (1995: 158) are of great importance in understanding the communal history of al-Ibāḍīya, I would still emphasize the rupture between a theory and actual practice that so often takes place in any community, and not least in a community whose foundation lies in a theological creed: 'Guided by their creed, Ibāḍīs adopt one of three modes of association with outsiders: association (*walāyah*), hostile avoidance (*barā'ah*) from them, or they may take a neutral stand (*wuqūf*) if it is difficult to reach a decision.'

> In their religious toleration of all other sects, which, as Wellstedt justly remarks, 'forms one of the most prominent features of the government,' they are – to use an Arabic phrase – a conspicuous example to those who possess discernment. (Badger 1871: 398).

> Oman is largely inhabited by the Ibadhis, a sect of the Kharijites who separated themselves from the rest of Islam at the time of Ali, the fourth Caliph, and have been noted ever since for their condemnation of others. (Thesiger 1991: 273).

If one wants to express the non-uniformity of Ibadis' attitude towards the foreign in terms of moral conduct, I subscribe to the following quotations that seem to apply well enough to the Ibadite tolerance/intolerance, too:

> Whether from religious scruples or through a prudential deference to the dreaded Wahhābis I cannot say, but I know from familiar personal experience with the late Seyyid Thuwainy, the Seyyid Mājid at Zanzibar, and several of their brothers and near relatives, that none of them smoked or drank coffee. Coffee, indeed, is regarded as a lawful beverage by the Ibādhiyah, and is therefore in universal use among the people. It is notorious, moreover, that many of that sect at Máskat and in other parts of the country indulge in wine and spirituous liquors, but they do so as do many Turks and other Muslims, in direct violation of the laws which they profess to regard as sacred... In point of morals, I am persuaded that the Ibādhiyah are on a par with Muslims generally. If they are less moral, as some writers seem to hold, it cannot fairly be attributed to their peculiar tenets, which, if anything, inculcate greater severity of conduct under more awful sanctions. (Badger 1871: 397–398.)

While the Ibadite doctrine demands a lot from the adherents to the creed, they are, of course, no less imperfect human beings than any other religious community, which means that in practice there are bound to be local and temporal and individual divergences from the doctrine.

How laws and dogma are applied in practice may and does differ from time to time, but so do the doctrines themselves and their interpretation. The Ibadite *maḏhab* is also doctrinally dispersed into various groups, albeit the differences of opinion within al-Ibāḍīya do not seem to be of much importance to the present-day Ibadis. Rather, the division of the Ibadite movement simply illustrates the historical development of the dogma and the history of the movement. Mu'ammar (1988: 42–49) distinguishes six subdivisions within his *maḏhab* as follows.

(1) al-Nakkār: A political division whose leader Abū Qudāma Yazīd bin Fandīn denied the imamate of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Rustamī. A central belief among the tenets introduced to them by 'Abd Allāh bin Yazīd al-Fazāzī[21] and later on adopted by them was the conviction that the names of Allāh are created.[22]

(2) al-Ḥusaynīya: The founder of this division, namely Abū Ziyād Aḥmad bin al-Ḥusayn al-Aṭrābulusī, lived in the third century AH. A tenet of theirs is that one is not a polytheist as long as one refuses to acknowledge an equality between Allāh and the Prophet, between the Koran and its imitations, or between Heaven and Hell.

(3) al-Sakkākīya: A division whose leader was 'Abd Allāh al-Sakkāk al-Lawātī. The tenets of the sect include the rejection of *al-sunna* (the sunna of the

21 Or perhaps 'al-Fazārī' as written in Lewicki (1960: 113) and Schwartz & ibn Ya'qūb (1986: 17).

22 See also Rebstock 1983: 173–183.

Prophet), the ijmaʿ, *al-qiyās* (the qiyas, the method of analogical deduction), the Friday prayer and the call to prayer, and all prayers other than those mentioned in the Koran.

(4) al-Naffāṯīya: The founder of the sect Farğ bin Naṣr al-Naffāṯī was as much a political agitator as he was a scholar. He claimed that the Muslim Friday sermon is an innovation and is thus to be rejected. He also thought that the nephew (on the paternal and the maternal side) should get a bigger share of the inheritance than the uncle.[23]

(5) al-Farṭīya: The name of this sect founded by Abū Sulaymān bin Yaʿqūb bin Aflaḥ comes from his belief in the impurity of the large intestines of animals, their meat and everything that is cooked with them. He also believed in the impurity of menstruation.

(6) al-Ḫalafīya: This division was founded by Ḫalaf bin al-Samḥ ibn Abī al-Ḫaṭṭāb al-Maʿāfirī, the son of a governor of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Rustamī. He was asked by local people to take care of his father's territory in Libya, which he agreed to do. When he found out that that was not the will of the Rustamid imam who had appointed another governor, he was shocked, but found soon solace in declaring Libya independent from Algeria.[24]

Although the above-mentioned subdivisions may not be important today, one subdivision of al-Ibāḍīya, namely al-Wahbīya, 'was the most numerous and the most important of all the Ibāḍī subdivions, and... has been almost the only one of all the Khāridjī branches to continue to exist until the present day' according to Lewicki (1971: 659). The insignificance of the Ibadite subdivisions is reflected in the obscure use of their names by various authors. While Muʿammar (1988) does not explicitly count al-Wahbīya among the six Ibadite divisions, ibn Yaʿqūb (1986: 67) does. On the other hand, he (ibid.) considers al-Ḫalafīya (see above) and Mistāwa (adherents to the teachings of the above-mentioned ʿAbd Allāh bin Yazīd al-Fazārī al-Baṣrī) as subdivions of al-Nakkār, whereas Lewicki (1960: 112; 1971: 659) thinks that Mistāwa[25] is just another name for al-Nakkār. Al-Ḫalafīya, unlike for ibn Yaʿqūb, is a separate subdivision for Muʿammar and Lewicki. Al-Aš'arī (Ritter 1963: 102–105) does not include any of the above-mentioned six subdivisions in his list of the Ibadite factions.

After all, the divergence of Ibadite beliefs within al-Ibāḍīya, although that may partly explain the divergence of western notions concerning the Ibadis, would seem to be less substantial than the doctrinal differences between al-Ibāḍīya and the rest of the Muslims. Cyril Glassé states that:

> apart from a sectarian spirit due to historical isolation from other communities, there are today only minor differences between the 'Ibādites and the Sunnīs. Although they constitute their own *madhhab*, or school of law, 'Ibādite law resembles the Mālikī school. They are, more-

23 Cf. Rebstock 1983: 248–256.

24 Cf. Rebstock 1983: 239–247.

25 The naming of the Ibadite subdivisions has been a 'zone nuageuse' for earlier Muslim historians, too, as can be concluded on the basis of Rebstock (1983: 173, fn. 5).

> over, often confused with Mālikīs because both pray with their hands at their sides (as do the Shī'ites) whereas all the other Sunnīs clasp their hands in front of them in prayer. (Glassé 1991: 165.)

When I asked the Jerbian Ibadis to tell me what the central difference between the Ibadite and the other doctrines actually is, the recurring answer, apart from the rather frustrating conviction of theirs that there is no difference, was that the Ibadis pray in the manner described by Glassé above. However, when I repeated my question in Zanzibar and tried to offer the prayer ritual as the obvious solution, I was turned down by the Ibadis who not only told me once again that there is no difference but also informed me that such a trivial matter as the position of hands makes no difference to them.

Now, three things seem obvious: one, there are no huge differences between the Ibadite and the Sunnite doctrines; two, even if such differences existed, the ordinary Ibadite Muslim is not juridically informed or theologically educated enough to be able to figure out what exactly the differences might be; and three, the doctrinal differences form a totally academic question, while the actual Ibadite understanding of what makes them Ibadis has to be extracted from their everyday practices and beliefs and oozed out of the meanings that they attach to them.[26]

Because in this article we are merely trying to find ways of approaching the academic question let us now make a final attempt at finding out where the distinctive nature of the set of Ibadite dogmas could be found. The following excerpt from the incredibly large (92 volumes) dictionary of Islamic law – modestly characterized by its author in its poetic introduction as 'the jewel of an open sea of meanings,' and 'the book for people of integrity... in which is properly laid down the complete Ibadite religion' (al-Sa'dī 1297 AH) – should pave the way for us:

> Some followers of Abū Ḥanīfa said: 'Every mujtahid who occupies himself with the legal branches [*al-furū' al-šar'īya*] is suited for his ijtihad and should be able to correctly form his legal opinions and judgments and will be rewarded for that. ' So he [Abū Ḥanīfa] disagreed with Mālik [ibn Anās]. But God's people [*ahl al-Ḥaqq* – the Ibadis] said that the mujtahid is charged with his ijtihad and rewarded for it and for his correct deeds and opinions and judgments. (al-Sa'dī 1298 AH: 4–5.)

If we start from Schwartz's above-mentioned assumption about the importance of the ijtihad for the Ibadis as an independent division, and as it is the duty of every Ibadite mujtahid to form independent[27] judgments in legal and theological questions, and to occupy

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26 When discussing the insensitive administration of justice under the Ottoman period, Coulson (1978: 183) has come to much the same sort of conclusion: '...for it was primarily in regard to matters of cult and ritual practice that Muslim populations identified themselves with a particular school or rite, and on technically legal issues they were prepared to accept the jurisdiction of tribunals applying the tenets of some other school.' If that is true, it seems obvious that there cannot be any major difference between the interpretational practice of the *maḏāhib*, or that the common basis of the schools of law, namely the cornerstone of their *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the Koran and the sunna, and the close connection and affinity that the founders of the *maḏāhib* enjoyed, leave relatively little room for interpretational manoeuvring.

27 The ijtihad is one of the features in which the Ibadis seem to stand together with the Shi'is apart from the Sunnis. Lippman et al. (1988: 110) contrast the Shi'is against the Sunnis as follows: 'Khomeini, as a Shi'i imam, has taken the function of mujtahid, one who can interpret the Koran

himself with the details of the subdivisions of Islamic law, is it not there that we must look for the heart of al-Ibāḍīya? We shall find it in the area of details instead of the area of fundamentals (*uṣūl*). We shall come across it in the multitude of the everyday practices rather than solely in the proclamations made by the ancient authorities, albeit their insights and syntheses should hardly be totally ignored either. Although the ijtihad means the formation of analogical decisions in the light of the sources and specifically the current situation, and not the application of laws in practice, every application requires an interpretation of both the requirements of the situation and the underlying principles stated in the sources and the legal practice and tradition. Therefore, if a mujtahid – or in actual practice any judge – comes to the interpretations every time through a contextualized analogy, and not through a thematic quotation from earlier authorities, it means that also the application of laws should be a dynamic meandering process. If one of the most comprehensive Ibadite collections of juridical and theological wisdom urges the doctrinally most important adherents to the creed to actively practice ijtihad, surely, then, the Ibadite doctrine should be in a state of constant change as an artefact crafted by the ancient and more recent authorities. That is why the Ibadite doctrine, as far as its contemporary relevance and state is under surveillance, ought to be most conveniently tracked not only in the most recent Ibadite scholarship but also and especially in the legal practice of presently functioning Ibadite courts, and in its everyday application by the local authorities, and naturally, in the thoughts and habitual religious practices of every Ibadite intellectual where it, unfortunately, may be harder to reach it than, say, in the courts who have to deal with Ibadis.[28]

FURTHER CONCLUSIONS

Relying on the European sources, the older ones of which are usually based on only a few old Ibadite sources, the distinctive nature of al-Ibāḍīya seems to consist first of all of their political doctrine and secondly of their religious puritanism. Thus one may see the Ibadis as a sectarian revolutionary movement that has its origins in one of the great turning points of the history of Islam, namely the battle of Ṣiffīn and the battle for the succession

and make judgments independently of other scholars... By contrast, orthodox Sunni Islamic scholars must make their judgments according to scholarly argument and analogical reasoning.' Indeed, al-Sa'dī (1298 AH: 2) writes that the Ibadis think that a mujtahid's independent judgment is the best solution when neither the Koran nor the sunna nor the ijma' provide one. However, the mujtahid is not allowed to make judgments concerning the *uṣūl*, the roots of the law, according to the Ibadite doctrine, and he must thus confine his efforts to the *furū'*, the branches of the law.

28 Zanzibar town is an outstanding example of a community in which the Ibadis are a significant minority. Despite their minority-position, their doctrine is actively being studied by the Shafi'ite judges, lawyers, and other government officials who have to give legal counselling to the Ibadis. Albeit most of the shari'a courts, in which the shari'a is applied mainly to matters of inheritance and family law, are Shafi'ite, some of them are also Ibadite and have Ibadite staffs – while Eduard Sachau could write at the end of the nineteenth century that 'gegenwärtig hat Zanzibar acht Ibaditische und zwei Shafiitische Richter...' (Sachau s.a.: 162), presently there is one judge (*qāḍī*) for each of the 10 districts plus a chief *qāḍī* and an assistant chief *qāḍī*, which makes a total of 12 judges, the majority of whom are Shafi'is. And to make the task of the Zanzibari legal counsellors even more difficult, they not only have to keep up with the latest Ibadite scholarship but also be informed in the doctrines of the other Muslim minorities present, such as the Shi'ite ones.

to the kaliphate. However, if one wants to appreciate the contemporary Ibadite sources, the picture is slightly different. Not only is the sectarian nature of al-Ibāḍīya not so obvious but the Ibadite distinction may be rather conceived of in terms of internal Islamic diversity of doctrinal beliefs. If one is to agree with the following statement by Harries, the Ibadis may not be a sect at all:

> The Sunnis, orthodox followers of the sunna, or custom, of the Prophet, are divided into four schools of jurisprudence. These schools are not sects, for a man may transfer his allegiance from one to another without being guilty of schism. (Harries 1954: 69.)

Just as the Ibadis think that their school of law is the first of the five main *maḏāhib*, or six *maḏāhib* if one is to include, and generalize on, the Shi'is, they conceive of their 'Ibadity' more or less in terms of their own descent, and not as if they could not respect the Sunnite authorities. On the contrary, many Ibadis whom I met were openly enthusiastic about some Sunnite scholars and their teachings. They do not blindly repeat the slogans of their own school. Instead, the only thing that really seems to matter to them, is the sincerity of one's faith in Allāh and the respect paid to the Prophet, i.e. the very basic piece of dogma common to all Muslims. If the Kharijis were utterly hostile towards the Muslims who did not subscribe to their particular tenets, that seems like another reason not to call the Ibadis Kharijis, since they tolerate differing religious practices both inside and outside of Islam. But of course, atheism is a totally repulsive and odd way of thinking for them, just as it is for all Muslims.

To sum up, the Ibadite understanding of al-Ibāḍīya withholds:

(1) some minor divergences from the Sunnite rituals such as, sometimes, the position of the hands in prayer;
(2) the inseparability of one's faith, its proclamation, and one's corresponding action;
(3) a clear dissociation from the Kharijite movement;
(4) the belief in predestination, which means keeping away from those who say that man determines his own action;
(5) initiation into the Muslim community through one's confession of the following three tenets only:
   (a) there is no God other than Allāh alone and He has no companion,
   (b) Muḥammad is His servant and messenger, and
   (c) what he has brought forth, and what these three clauses indicate of him, is the divine truth;[29]
(6) pious behaviour as the condition for one's remaining within the scope of al-Islām;
(7) the basis of legislation as:
   (a) *al-Qur'ān* – the word of God,
   (b) *al-sunna* – the tradition of the Prophet[30],

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29 See Mu'ammar 1988: 53. In a letter from Sulaymān Mīlād (see above fn. 12) he explains that some Ibadis continue their *šahādatān* [*Ašhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh wa ašhadu anna Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*] as follows: *wa anna mā atā bihi Muḥammad, ṣallā Allāh 'alayhi wa sallama, ḥaqq min 'inda Allāh.* According to him, however, that is a consolidation of their doctrine rather than a sign of ikhtilaf.'

(c) *al-iğmāʿ* – the consensus of juristic opinions of the learned Muslim *'ulamā'*,
(d) *al-qiyās* – analogical deduction in the constant striving to find a solution that meets with the changing requirements, (if there is no applicable decision already in (a) or (b) or (c), and
(e) *al-istidlāl* – the process of seeking guidance – which includes:
(i) *al-istiṣḥāb* – the legal presumption (of, for instance, innocence until the guilt is established),
(ii) *al-istiḥsān* – the preference to find an equitable solution, and
(iii) *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala* – the public interest and benefit[31].

The newer European sources such as Schwartz (1983) are somewhat closer to the Ibadis' self-understanding than the older ones, which is only natural as they cover more original material than their predecessors. Besides, the political doctrine of al-Ibāḍīya is naturally not quite as important for the contemporary Ibadis as it was for the first adherents to this revolutionary doctrine. But to state my own conviction once more, the ikhtilaf between al-Ibāḍīya and the other Muslim doctrines is best seen against the Ibadis' actual contemporary adherence to their dogmas which are constantly applied according to the changing requirements. That, however, does not mean that it would not be meaningful and interesting to also study the ikhtilaf in the literary canon of the various schools in order to gain a better understanding of the sources of the Ibadite distinction. The development of the dogma can naturally be seen apart from the development of its application in practice which would have also other than purely academic significance. Given the common rupture between the actual, so often rather pedestrian, power politics and the dogmatic basis of a theocratic society, it may, depending on one's theoretical perspective, be even quite necessary to hold both lines in hand at the same time.

From another perspective, the same may be put as follows. The distinctive nature of al-Ibāḍīya may be looked at from at least two different angles: either emphasizing how an Ibadi conceives of his/her belonging to al-Ibāḍīya or stressing how the community of Ibadis as a whole gains its doctrinal independence. Concentrating on the former one ought to study the habitual practices of the Ibadis and their rituals because it is probable that an individual identifies himself with a group more in terms of *similarity* rather than difference. Being interested in the latter one should pay attention to the immense question of the ikhtilaf, the *difference* of opinions between the Ibadis and the other Muslim divisions as manifested in their scholarship touching upon doctrinal issues. Not wanting to deprive a historian's approach of its due advantages – for instance, it may not be possible to thoroughly understand and relativize doctrinal proclamations without a temporal and political contextualization – I would, once more, like to emphasize the importance of also including

30 Muʿammar (1988: 31) states one of the central tenets of the Ibadite *uṣūl al-fiqh* as follows: 'If the word of the Prophet... and his action are incompatible... then the word prevails...' They hold the word of God for the prime criterion of what the man ought to do, not the action of the Prophet who, after all, was only a human being.

31 See Muʿammar 1988: 30. He mentions that the Ibadis use the term *al-ra'y* ('opinion') instead of *al-iğmāʿ*, *al-qiyās*, and *al-istidlāl*. That, he thinks, may be the reason why some authors have thought that the Ibadis reject *al-iğmāʿ* as a source of law.

the recent Ibadite scholarship in an account of the Ibadis' self-image because of the above-mentioned centrality of the question of the ijtihad for the Ibadis.

Finally, let us not forget the other side of the question. Since what is usually called an 'identity' is assumed to be formed in and as a result of dialogue and interaction, it is quite important to find out about the other Muslims' ideas of the Ibadis, too. For example, it may be quite difficult to understand some defensive Ibadite statements without studying first the way in which the Ibadis have been represented by the non-Ibadite Muslims. Realizing that one may as well extend one's scope to the home territory and acknowledge the influence, albeit not utterly crucial, of non-Muslim scholars who write about the Ibadis. Even if our writing may not greatly matter to the Ibadis themselves, it is a fairly important ingredient of the non-Muslim and non-Ibadite understanding of al-Ibāḍīya.

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