

« A reconsideration of Ibâdi origins »

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In my forthcoming book I use contemporary Mashriqi sources to deconstruct the standard model of Ibâdi origins, which largely stems from late Maghribi sources, and attempt to replace it with a new interpretation .

Ibâdism's evolution into a madhhab and its activation can only be understood in a wider historical perspective, and in particular a study of the tribal dimension. The whole line of khurûj the Ibâdi s recognized before their own ca 128AH, from the first Muhakkimma/Khawârij of Kûfa down to the last of A. Bilâl in 61AH came from elements of Iraqi Nizâri tribes; likewise, those leaders who went to Ibn Zu- bayr in 64AH, including Ibn Ibâd . The subsequent split, with the Azâriqa and Ibâ dis at opposite poles and Sufris somewhere in the middle simply does not stand up to analysis. The so-called Sufris represented the moderate activists, whose revolts preceded the Ibâdi da'wa because they continued to operate among the "Nizâri" tribes in Iraq. The Ibâdi movement had its roots in Basra and only found fertile ground to exploit after the two great "Yamani" revolts of Ibn al-Ash'ath and Yazîd b. al-Muhallab had been crushed.

An examination of the leading figures in Basra make clear that there was no Imam in kitmân. The ideology gradually gelled in majlises and that the role of A. 'Ubayda has been considerably exaggerated, both in the activation of the movement and as a transmitter of the 'ilm. Particularly interesting for studying beginnings is Jâbir b. Zayd's correspondence, as too the addressee of IB1. Also the authorship of the K. A. Sufyân, a primary source for Darjîni and Shammâkhi. Transmissions from Basrans, like Jâbir's collected opinions, K. Dumâm, K. A. Nûh, the Athâr of al-Rabî', were almost certainly recorded by pupils or even later and some specifically for the Maghribis. I believe its author was the same as the recorder of the Athâr, and I also believe that the Mudawwana essentially recorded the al-Fazâri Kûfan school.

Another strand followed, is how Ibâdi kalâm evolved and reacted to Qadari, Mu'tazili, Murji'i and extremist Khâriji dogma, and how its own fiqh developed from the early ra'y as exhibited by Jâbir and al-Rabî's futya, to conform increasing-

ly to Shâfi'i-Ash'ari norms, except with respect to Sunni isnâd scholarship. Sunna and hadîth were absorbed into the âthâr of the community, passed down through the generations, with respect to dogma, amr bi-'l ma'rûf, and those accorded preeminence. Solidarity was enshrined in walâya, the spiritual and physical cement binding the community to God, and barâ'a its opposite. But the development of a formal line of hamalat al-'ilm was the culmination by al-'Awtabi (late 5/11th century) of a process whereby Ibâdism emerged as a madhhab, with its own transmission line, the equivalent of the Sunnis' isnâd (and in which al-Rabî' plays A. 'Ubayda's role). In North Africa, the Imamate never revived, and it was there the idea of the Imam in kitmân really developed and the past rationalized accordingly. To ensure the survival of its scattered communities, a tension arose between those who only studied Ibâdi works, and those who opened to the outside world, as in Oman, and prepared to do battle. One leading figure was the cosmopolitan A. Ya'qûb Yûsuf al-Warjlâni (d. 570/1174) under whose wand the appropriately named Tartîb of hadîth transmitted by A. 'Ubayda's pupil al-Rabî' (d. ca 170!) came into existence. It did a great disservice to Ibâdism and, like the rest of the Maghribi model, only really became accepted in Oman with the modern nahda. It is not the true 'ilm. That was like a bird, "the egg was laid in Madina, hatched in Basra and flew to Oman".

