

## THE IBADHITES

(*El-Ibadhiya* or *el-Abadhiya*.)\*

This article contains nothing new in the way of research. Although I have had considerable intercourse with different Beni M'zab, the chief representatives of the Ibadhiya sect in Algeria, I have found it difficult to get anything from them but vague generalities. I have tried to unite in one view information drawn from many sources, (see Bibliography), often using the very words or textual translations of the sources I have drawn from. To treat the subject fully would be impossible within the limits of one article, while fuller details might prove wearisome or too technical to the general reader. Those wishing to study the matter further can do so by consulting the works mentioned in the Bibliography.

To understand the doctrines of the Ibadhite communities, and their attitude towards the other divisions of Islam, it is necessary to look back to the origin of the Kharijite movement in the time of the Caliph Ali. The following details are founded on Sir W. Muir's account of the movement in his "Annals of the Early Caliphate."

The battle of Siffin between the armies of Ali and Mua'wia was ended by an agreement to decide between their rival claims on the judgment of the Koran. The two parties mutually bound themselves "to follow the judgment of the Koran, and where the Koran was silent, the acknowledged precedents of Islam." The Arab tribes

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\*M. René Basset in the *Journal Asiatique* 1899 on "Les sanctuaires de Djebel Nefousa," says "In spite of Ibn Khallikan, El-Beladzori, etc., who have adopted the reading Ibadhi, I have preferred to hold to that reading which tradition has conserved among the Kharedjites up to our day and which is confirmed by a passage of El-Berradi (one of their own writers) in *Kitab el Djaouahar*, p. 155:—*Abd Allah-ibn Abadh* . . . . *en-nashah ilaihi Abadhi bifath' el-hamza*." He refers to Motylinski—"Guerara depuis sa fondation." French writers generally follow this usage, but a former Cadi of the sect whom I knew intimately, had the inscription above his Mah'kama with *Ibadhiya* and always pronounced it so himself. The pronunciation of *Abadh* would correspond to *Amarah* for *Imarah*, but this does not touch the testimony of El-Berradi.

In the "Bulletin de Correspondance Africaine" 1885 Facs. 1 et 11, pp. 149, 151, M. Basset has spelt "Ibadhite." The present Mah'kama at Constantine, Algeria, has *Ibadiya*, and the members of the community here, pronounce it so. (P. S.)

who had opposed Othman had the claims of neither Ali nor Mua'wia at heart. Their quarrel was with the pretensions of the Koraish, but this decision appeared to favour their theocratic and democratic contention that no oath of allegiance ought to be sworn but to the Lord alone (*la hukm illa lillah* the rule belongs to Allah alone). Believers being absolutely equal, there should be no Caliph, nor oath of allegiance sworn to any man, but the government should be in the hands of a Council elected by the people. The first sign of an open separatist movement was the withdrawing of twelve thousand men from Ali's army after the ruse of Mua'wia's umpire. Though the defection seemed overcome, it broke out openly when Ali began to march on Syria against Mua'wia. A great number of the rebels were slain at Nahrawan, and also many of the "companions of the prophet." (38 A. H., 658 A. D.) The remnant continued their agitation.

The final coming to terms of Ali and Mua'wia did not satisfy the theocratic Kharijites. Their hopes of the overthrow of the ungodly kingdoms of the world (including the aristocratic claims of the Koraish) and the establishment of the reign of righteousness seemed further off than ever. At last three of them determined to kill Ali, Mua'wia and his lieutenant Amru. The latter escaped. Mua'wia was wounded, but Ali succumbed.

According to the *Kitab el-Jawahir el-muntaqât* of El-Berrâdi (prob. IX Cent. A. H.), and the *Kitab es Siar* of Shemâkhi (died 928 A. H.), both of them Ibadhite historians of North African origin, the Ibadhites date the origin of their sect from the Caliphate of Othman, and give as justification of their separation, the acts of Othman, such as the deposing of governors in favor of his own relatives, the Omayyads, who according to Nöldeke were able men for the most part, but of an *intensely worldly* disposition; the scandal of el-Walid presiding at public prayer in a state of drunkenness; and various innovations (*ahdath*) of Othman, contrary to the law, his violence

with regard to Abou D'err el-Ghefari which led to the murder of Othman. Their feeling with regard to Ali has been already mentioned, and will be referred to again. On the occasion of the separation caused by the question of arbitration between Ali and Mua'wia, they appointed a temporary *Imam* for the emergency (*fi maslak id-defa'a*), Abdullah ibn er-Rasibi, who was killed at Nahr-awan.

The Khawârij, in their fanatical zeal for a theocracy—no rule but Allah's alone—had no worldly views. Nöl-deke says of them that they “certainly had hold of a fundamental idea of Moslems (the awarding of the Imamate ‘to the best,’ though he were an Abyssinian slave). This idea they developed to the utmost; they were in a certain sense right, but on such principles as theirs it would be impossible to establish any State. They were fanatics, who sought to carry out their ideas with the wildest energy and the most desperate bravery, and to a certain extent they maintained a loyalty to conviction worthy of all admiration; but they only caused a great deal of suffering, and produced nothing.” They fought with equal bravery whatever their chances of success, but in their zeal they exercised savage cruelties on those whom they regarded as enemies of the Lord, believing that in annihilating them they did Him service. They preserved the primitive spirit of Islam, and were ardent disciples of the Koran and the traditions. It is related that one of their leaders, taken in a revolt against the Caliph Hisham, was burnt to death with a number of his followers. He died repeating the Koranic verse, “Say, the fire of Hell is fiercer in its heat, if they but know it” (Sur. IX. 82).

Sir William Muir characterizes the Khawârij as Puritan Covenanters of Islam. The Soffarides or Sofrites—a branch of Kharijism, arose in North Africa about 116 A. H. These with the Ibadhiya exercised great power, recognizing neither the claim of the Hashimites nor of any other to the Caliphate. They were democratic theo-

crats, and represented the Berber democratic spirit arrayed against the domination of the foreign invader, as well as the protestation of a persecuted sect, which claimed to represent the true spirit of Islam. In the time of the Abbaside Caliphs the Ibadiya under the leadership of Abul-Khattab, one of the five missionaries whom they call the "bearers of science," resisted the Orthodox armies. He was proclaimed *Imam* in 140 A. H. at Siad, west of Tripoli, and was killed in battle against the Abbaside forces in 144 with twelve or fourteen thousand of his followers. After him Abu Hatim was elevated to the *Imamate*, with title of "*Imam of Defence*," in 156 A. H. He was killed in battle against the Abbaside forces, with thirty thousand of his followers. An Ibadhite dynasty, the Rostemide imams, held power at Tahert (Tiharet or Tagdemt) for more than 130 years, and only disappeared when the Fatimides founded their empire in the Maghrib, (909 A. D.). Since that time they have been a minority without any political power, but as a sect they still exist, and hold strongly to their opinions. Although hated and despised by the other Moslems, they still continue to call themselves "the people of the Truth," and cherish the hope that their doctrine will triumph yet before the time of the end. In North Africa they are found in compact groups in the Jebel Nefousa (Tripoli), the island of Jerba (Tunisia), and in Algeria in the Confederation of the Beni M'zab, at Wargla and the Wad-Rir'. They are all of Berber origin.

Their name "*Ibadhiya*" comes from Abdullah ben Ibadh et-Temimy, who was chosen Imam in Arabia by the Khawarij during the reign of the Caliph Marwan (127 to 132 A. H.=744-749 A. D.).

These original Ibadhiya disallowed the claim of the Baghdad Caliph, as well in civil as in religious matters, and set up their own *Imam*, invested with corresponding powers in both capacities. Their *Imams* were elected for personal merit or popularity for nine hundred years, until 1624 A. D. The centre of their power was in Oman.

From 1624, although elected, the preference was for one of the ruling family. The sons of the *Imam* were called *Sayyid* and the daughters *Sayyida*. Since 1804 the rulers of Oman have never taken the title of *Imam*, but only that of *Sayyid*. After his election, the first duty of the *Imam* was to lead in the Friday prayer. Sayyid Said, who ruled from 1804 to 1856, had as successor at Muscat his son Sayyid Thowani, while a younger son reigned at Zanzibar, thus dividing the former Sultanate of Oman and Zanzibar. The Ibadhiya of Oman, Zanzibar and the North African communities mentioned above sum up the adherents of the sect, with the exception of some small isolated groups. At present those of Oman and Zanzibar are practically under British control, those of Jebel Nefousa under Italy, and the rest under the French government.

Ibn Batuta gives an account of his visit to Oman. He says, "We entered the capital of the country, which is the town of Nazoua. . . . . Its inhabitants are accustomed to take their meals in the courts of the mosques, each one bringing what he has provided. They eat thus all together, and travelers are admitted to eat with them. They are strong and brave, always at war among themselves. They are of the Ibadhite sect, and go through the Friday noon-day prayers four times, after which the *Imam* reads verses of the Koran, and gives a sermon in the *Khotba* style in which he supplicates the favor of God upon Abu Bakr and Omar, but passes over in silence Othman and Ali. When they wish to mention Ali they refer to him as 'the man,' saying 'It is said concerning the man' or 'the man said—'. They implore the divine favor upon that criminal, the accursed Ibn Moljam (the murderer of Ali), calling him 'the pious servant of God, the suppressor of sedition.'"

On the Ibadhiya of Oman one can consult the "History of the Imams and Seyyids of Oman," an English translation by Badger of an Arabic work by Salil ibn-Razik. The translator added three Appendices: (A) On

the title Imam. (B) On the Ibadhiya. (C) On the murder of Ali. Badger refers to the account given by Lieutenant Wellsted on the Ibadhiya of Oman in his "Travels in Arabia" (1838). Wellsted drew his information as to the tenets of the sect from a manuscript in his possession as well as from personal observation. Badger expresses his regret that Wellsted was not able to make better use of his document, saying that the specific information which it probably contained is for the most part so abridged and mixed up with extraneous generalities that it is difficult to discriminate between them. Yet the account given by Wellsted, while not pretending to give a reasoned exposition of their doctrines, agrees fairly well with the special tenets of the North African Ibadhiya, who sum up their differences from the orthodox Sunnis under six heads. Badger gives an extract of an account furnished him by Mr. Frederick Ayrton, and taken from the *Kitab el Milal wa 'n-Nahal* by Mohammed ibn Abd el-Kerim esh-Shahristani. This account enters into theological disquisitions on predestination, etc., but does not mention the special points of difference between them and the orthodox Sunnis. One point there mentioned, however, is very distinctive of their doctrine, namely, that "the sinner of a great sin may be an attester of the Unity of God, but not a true believer, inasmuch as *acts enter into faith*," also "that he who commits the great sin of denying God's grace (i. e. a Moslem denier) is an unbeliever." Badger's account is based, not so much on Ibadhite writers, as on Orthodox Sunni sources.

Wellsted's account of the Ibadhiya of Oman is very interesting, even if fragmentary. He says, "The Khawarijites highly value themselves on being followers of the pure tenets of the prophet, unalloyed by any intermixture with the heresies which at different periods have sprung up in the Mohammedan world. As regards the ceremonial portion of the faith professed by this class their practice seems distinguished by a much greater simplicity than

belongs to most other Mohammedan sectaries—circumcision without any other ceremony, funerals conducted with little external display. They jealously disclaim connection with any of the numerous other sects of Islam—“We approximate,” says the writer of the manuscript that Wellsted quoted from, “not to any sect, nor does any sect approximate to us. How can we be in alliance with those innovators who oppose God’s religion? We conclude such to be devoted to ruin; enemies of God; infidels whose portion hereafter shall be in Gehenna forever. *They* deny the eternity of future punishments; *they* diminish the enormity of sin; *we* enhance it. The portion of the wicked surely will be for ever, for God is great.” They apply to themselves the tradition in which Mohammed is reported to have said, “My people shall be divided into seventy-three divisions; all of them shall be in the fire (of Gehenna), except one.” They claim to be the *saved fraction* (*al-farqa en-najia*). The eternity of future punishment, even for ungodly Moslems, is one of their distinctive doctrines. Another is on the question as to whether Mohammed actually saw God (*ru’yat al-Bari’*). The other Sunnis maintain that he did, the Ibadhiya deny it, asserting that such an opinion is in fact *Kufr* (infidelity) and “to say that God can be seen, being to limit and circumscribe the illimitable and incomprehensible is therefore absurd” (Wellsted’s manuscript). They say that when Moses is said to have seen God, the meaning is that he witnessed the effects of his power and majesty, not that he viewed Him face to face. Believers in heaven will not actually see God. This principle of interpretation they apply respecting the *Scales* of the day of judgment, in which all men are to be weighed, and also the bridge, *es-Sirat*, leading over Hell to the gates of Paradise. The former, say they, is merely a metaphorical expression, and the latter means nothing more than the narrow path of truth, so difficult to follow that it is comparable to the edge of a sword. The *istiwa* (session) of God upon His

throne is also in their view, metaphorical. The other Sunnis divide the wicked into two classes, infidels and pagans in the first, and reprobates and apostates in the second, but they refuse to style the latter infidels, however unworthy as Moslems they may happen to be. The Ibadhiya, more strict and conscientious, consider all who have once renounced their faith to be unbelievers, distinguishing, however, the *infidelity of grace* from the *infidelity of reprobacy*, and look upon all pagans, including Jews and Christians, as coming under this latter class. Further, the orthodox Sunnis assert the infallibility and divine authority of the prophet's companions, saying it is a sin to disobey their concurring determination, and that they inherited the right of true judgment. This the Khawarij deny, on the plea that the son of Noah, the child of a prophet, did wrong, so might a prophet's follower. They accuse both the Sunnis and the Shi'as of error, in making certain texts of the Koran to apply only to the Prophet's descendants, while according to *their* interpretation they have reference to the faithful of every rank and station. They deny that the authority of the first four Imams is to be implicitly followed. Their doctrine on this point is regulated by the principle of the "*manifest way*" (*maslak ed-dhohour*.) ("See Aqida of the Ibadhites." Arabic text and translation into French by A. de C. Motylinski, mentioned in the Bibliography). In a note based on Ibadhite commentaries, he says, "The manifest way is the way of principle, that which is obligatory when all the conditions required for the constitution of the Imamate are united. Mohammed was in this state at the moment of his death. It was also in such conditions that Abu Bakr and Omar exercised the supreme power over all the Moslem community. They consider the princes of Oman possessed the supreme pontificate, *manifestly* as also Abu-l-Khattab el-Maaferi, their first Imam in the Maghrib proclaimed at Tripoli by the Nefousa, and also Abd er-Rahman ibn Rostem and his successors. They regard Ali to have for-

feited his right to the Imamate by accepting arbitration. They claim that rebels and sinners against God were not fit judges of the Imamate. They reproach Ali with the slaughter of many of their sect, and that he died without repentance, since he exhibited none of the evidences which are considered necessary corroborations of such a state, viz., restitution and reparation.

In the Aqida above mentioned it is said:—The ways of religion are four:—(1) *The manifest way*, mentioned above; (2) *The way of defence (maslak ed-defa'a)*, as when the Moslems, in case of danger, appoint a temporary Imam in order to defend the rights of God in fighting against His enemies. Such a case arose at the time of the separation caused by the question of arbitration between Ali and Mua'wia, when Abdullah ibn Wahb er-Rasibi was appointed Imam by the adversaries of the arbitration, the partizans of the "sole judgment of God—*la hukm illa lillah.*" (3) *The way of sacrifice (Shirâ)* that is to be followed in desperation by the faithful servants of God, in fighting for the faith to the death. The faithful when their number reach forty at least, make the supreme sacrifice of their lives for the triumph of their religion, *purchasing* from God Paradise in this way *in exchange for* their life. They cannot return to their homes till their number is reduced to three. Nöldeke says on this point (see Bibliography), . . . . . "one of the chief watch-words of the old death-defying Kharijites was the koranic verse, 'God has *bought* from the faithful their life and their goods *with this price*—that Paradise is to be their portion, and they are to fight, slay and be slain in the path of God,' and so on (Sura IX, 112). In accordance with this word '*bought*,' the Kharijites called themselves by preference '*sellers*' (or buyers) Shurat; "*for heaven as their price they gave God their souls.*" (4) *The way of secrecy (ketman)*, when it is impossible for the faithful to triumph over their enemies and to con-

stitute a state governed by a legitimate chief of their choice.

It is also said:—Three things concur to complete Islam:—*Revelation, Sunna* and *Rai*. Under *Rai* comes the question of the Imamate. The Imamate becomes obligatory upon a people when they possess in men, arms, horses, provisions, etc., a quantity equal to the half of what the enemy possesses. But the Imam must also have sufficient Knowledge (science). It is not necessary that he should be a Korashite. It is sufficient that he be virtuous and pious, and rule in conformity with the Koran and the Sunna. If he deviate from that he should be deposed.

They hold it to be the duty of each believer to enjoin the good and reprove the evil. It is only possible to do this fully when the sovereign power is established openly, for then only can the penalties prescribed in the Koran and Sunna be applied. Thus the prescription which enjoins the good and reproves or represses the evil can only receive its perfect application by the constitution of the Imamate. In this case evil is fully repressed by the *hand*, the learned repress it with the *tongue* (or by writing), the people by the *heart*.

They are opposed to the doctrine that the Koran is uncreated. In the *Aqida* mentioned above it is said, "He is not of us who says that the names of God are created, (the *vocables* are created but the *ideas* they represent, the *attributes of God*, are uncreated, being of the essence of God); neither is he that says the Koran is uncreated. El-Berrâdi in his *Catalogue of the books of the sect*, (See *Books of the Ibadhite sect in Bibliography*) mentions a work by Abu Ibrahim el-Ghadamesi, in which are refuted the arguments in favor of the Koran being uncreated. In the *Djawahir of Berrâdi* there is a *Risala* of the Rostemide Imam Aflah ibn Abd el-Wahab on the subject.

M. A. de C. Motylinski sums up their chief distinctive

doctrines in the Encyclopedia of Islam (Article Abadhite) as follows:—

(1) The Koran is the word of God, created by him. (2) God cannot be seen in Paradise. (3) Recompenses and punishments in the other world are both eternal, (even for professing Moslems if they get there). Hell will not be destroyed any more than will Paradise. (4) God pardons venial sin; but grievous sin (*kabâir*) cannot be pardoned, unless they are blotted out by repentance. (5) It is the duty of every Moslem to enjoin the good and reprove the evil as far as he is able. (6) All Moslems are strictly compelled to acknowledge their solidarity, which they express by word and action, but the individual who acts contrary to the prescriptions of the religious law loses all claim on the friendship of his coreligionists, and should be treated as an enemy, until he performs the act of repentance. There is a kind of religious excommunication which has grave religious and civil consequences." (Under this head comes all that is included in the doctrine and practice of *Walaya* and *Barâa*).

"The Ibadhites of Algeria affect a great austerity of morals, at least in the K'sur of the M'zab. Here the religious chiefs exercised a veritable tyranny before the annexation by the French Government, and in purely religious matters they still exercise a tyrannical supervision. In the towns of the Algerian Tell, where they congregate for the purpose of commerce, the practice is not always in accordance with the theory. It must, however, be admitted that generally they keep their beliefs very jealously. Except for the exigencies of their very brisk commerce, they do not mix with orthodox Moslems; marriages with the latter are rare exceptions, and are reprobated by the whole community. This puritanism has formed them into a homogenous and compact group, clearly distinguishable by their behaviour, character and

tendencies amidst the orthodox Arabs or Berbers of North Africa."

The Ibadhiya give themselves the name of *ahl el-haqq* (the people of the truth), *ahl ed-d'awa*, *ashab ed-d'awa* (the people of the doctrine, possessors, or companions, of the doctrine) *ahl el-wifaq* (the people of conformity, conformists); they call their sect *ed-d'awa* (the doctrine), *madhab el-haqq* (the sect of truth); *el-farqa el-muhiqqa* (the true fraction), *el-farqa en-najia* (the saved fraction). Those who do not belong to their sect are called *mukhâlifuna* (opposers, non-conformists), *ahl el-khilaf* (the people of the opposition, of dissent).

Besides "selling their lives to God in exchange for Paradise" the Ibadhiya have waged war with the pen, both to justify their obstinate resistance to the official rites, and to maintain intact in their communities the principles of their faith. They have a considerable religious literature, as well as historical writings, which are of value to check the accounts given by orthodox writers on events in the maze of Moslem North African history. The following Bibliography will enable those who have the time, opportunity and desire, to study this movement more thoroughly. Those first mentioned and marked with an asterisk have been used for the purposes of this article, in many places textually, which I have not been able always to acknowledge in the text.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

"Les livres de la secte Abadhite" by M. A. de C. Motylinski,—Bulletin de Correspondance Africaine. 1885, pp. 15 ff. This contains a list of Ibadhite works given by Abu 'l-Qasem ibn Ibrahim el-Berrâdi, also author of the "*Jawahir el-Muntaqat*," dealing with the history of the sect. There is another historical work—*Kitab es-Siar*, by Esh-Shemakhi. The first of these published in Cairo 1301, A. H. the other in 1302, A. H.

"L'Aqida des Abadhites," by M. de C. Motylinski, published in the Recueil de Mémoires et de Textes publié en l'honneur du XIV Congrès des Orientalistes. (Algiers 1905.) There is a short introduction. The Arabic text is given, which was itself a translation of a composition in the Berber dialect of the Ibadhites of the Sahara region, made by Abu Hafis 'Amr ibn Djami'a Nefousi. It is a sort of catechism, summarizing

the beliefs and duties of the Ibadhite Moslem. In reading it, the style reminded me of the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." There are a good number of notes to the French translation, taken from Ibadhite commentaries and translated into French. In the Appendix there is a list of their chief religious works.

Ibn Batuta's account of his visit to Oman. Edition of the Societé Asiatique, vol. ii, p. 227.

Mr. Percy Badger's translation of the "History of the Imams and Seyyids of Oman," with Appendices.

Lieutenant Wellsted's "Travels in Arabia."

Nöldeke's "Sketches of Eastern History."

"Arabia the Cradle of Islam," by S. M. Zwemer.

"Les Sanctuaires de Djebel Nefousa," by M. René Basset. *Journa Asiatique*, 1899.

"La Zenatia du M'zab de Ouargla et de l'Oued Rir'." Paris, 1892.

Masqueray. "Chronique d'Abu Zakarya." Alger, 1878.

"Le Djebel Nefousa" by M. A. de C. Motylinski, 1898. This is a translation of the narrative written, I believe, at the instigation of M. de C. Motylinski, in the Tamazirt of Jebel Nefousa by Brahim Ou Sliman Chemmaki. Algiers 1885.

"Encyclopedia of Islam." Article "Abadhites" by M. de C. Motylinski. Algiers 1885.

"Islam et la Politique des Allies." By Mr. Insabato. French translation from Italian.

It may be interesting to note, from a missionary and Christian point of view, the remark made by M. René Basset in his study on "Les Sanctuaries de Djebel Nefousa." This work is in the form of annotation and commentary to an appendix found at the end of the "Siar" of Shemakhi, mentioned above, which M. de C. Motylinski considers to be not by that author. M. Basset says, "It will be noticed that in this enumeration, a certain number of places still bear the name of *Church (kenisa)*; they are evidently ancient churches transformed into mosques. Here archæological exploration would probably make some interesting discoveries. Tradition reports, that the Nefousa were Christians, and helped in the defence of Tripoli against the Moslem invasion." In one of the places enumerated we find the name of "Church of Temezda."

When will Churches of Christ be found again in these countries and gather these hardy sectaries for the worship of God and the service of his Christ?

PERCY SMITH.

*Constantine, Algeria.*