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The Ibāḍī Traders of *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

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Contents.

Introduction.

The great Saharan desert, the biggest desert on earth (measuring approximately 9,000,000 km^2), has always been seen as a natural and formidable barrier between the people living to its north and the people living to its south. It may seem as a barrier, but in reality it was not so. Although the Sahara seems daunting – it stretches all the way from Mauritania to the Red Sea (approximately 5,600km) and from the Libyan Sirtica to Lake Chad and the River Niger (approximately 2,000km) – it is lined with oases that make it possible to hop from one oasis to the next. Therefore it has always been possible to cross the Sahara, as did numerous travelling scholars and men of religion, raiding warriors and profit-seeking traders carrying ideas, influences, warfare and goods and commodities into and across the desert. The romantic images of the Sahara show it as a vast mass of sand dunes, this is incorrect; only one-fifth of the Sahara is covered with these sand dunes and only one-fifteenth of the Sahara consists of the dreaded and avoided "deserts within desert", this is considered to be the "land of fear" due to its deep sand; the Libyan Desert, the Téneré of north-East Niger and the great Ergs of the Algerian Sahara. The other four-fifth of the Sahara consists of a mixture of steppes and vast plains of gravel or broken, rocky tablelands. This is the terrain that is traversable, albeit still with difficulty, and therefore the chosen route of the people brave enough to undertake the arduous journey.[1]

Although the Sahara did not entirely cut of north from south it did only permit little interaction between the two spheres. The nomadic Berber tribes were largely responsible for these north-south interactions, they inhabited the wastelands on the fringes of the Sahara, moving from oasis to oasis and pasture to pasture to find suitable grazing lands for their herds. Centuries

[1] J.L. Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London 2007), pp. 9-10.

of navigating across the Sahara meant that these Berber tribes knew which areas to avoid, how to prepare for the tricky desert climate and, more importantly, where to find the wells needed to survive the distance between the oases. The Berbers' knowledge of the desert was and remains unparalleled, their knowledge being so great they could navigate it blindly, as the great 10th/16th century traveler Leo Africanus (901-962/c.1494-c.1554) discovered; during his trans-Saharan crossing he had a blind guide who "riding foremost on his camel, commanded some sand to be given him at every mile's end."[2] This knowledge of the Sahara made the Berber tribes invaluable allies to merchants looking for wealth across the Sahara. With the help of these Berber tribes Muslim merchants managed to set up profitable trans-Saharan commercial enterprises that would last over a 1,000 years. The main focus of this trans-Saharan trade has always been (black) slaves with gold also being an important commodity for certain periods of time.[3]

Not only did the trans-Saharan trade bring together three distinct cultures; the Arabs, the Berber tribes and the peoples of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. It also brought together three different religious views; the Sunni-Muslim Arabs, the Ibāḍī-Muslim Berbers and the animistic Sudanese. Trans-Saharan trade was a demanding and time consuming endeavor and thus it was very common for a Saharan round-trip to last more than a year. Many Maghrebi merchants also decided to settle in *Bilād al-Sūdān* and send their trade goods to their partners in the Maghreb. The interactions between the different parties led to the mixing of different cultures and religions; Maghrebi and Muslim influences would start to become the norm in the northern parts of *Bilād al-Sūdān*, eventually leading to a distinct north-south divide within *Bilād al-Sūdān* itself. This is something

[2] Leo Africanus, *History and Description of Africa*, 3 Vols. (London 1896), Vol. III, pp. 829-830.

[3] It should be noted that the trade in slaves remained a lucrative business in the Maghreb until the early 20th century, it was official abolished in Morocco in 1922, with the last Magrebi country to abolish slavery being Mauretania where slavery was abolished for the third time in 1980. See Wright, *Trans-Saharan Trade*, Chapter 12, "The delusions of abolition," pp. 153-166.

that is still very visible in many West-African countries, leading to significant cultural and religious clashes in Mali, Nigeria, and Niger.

With the Arab conquest of the Maghreb and the subsequent penetration of the Sahara there came a quick realization of the riches that could be found in *Bilād al-Sūdān*. One of the earliest Muslim participants in the trans-Saharan trade were the Ibāḍīs, who, after the founding of the Rustumid State and its capital Tahert, quickly began to dominate the majority of trans-Saharan trade. The Ibāḍī sect valued both trade and pure and ethical religion and this led Gellner to claim that "the Ibāḍīs show such strong 'Protestant' features that they may be described as 'the Calvinists of Islam'."[4] The combination of trade and religion has always played an important factor within Islam, the Prophet Muhammad being the clearest example of this. But it is the Ibāḍī community in North Africa that managed to become an essential player within the north-south trade networks of Africa. Even though the presence of Ibāḍīs in North Africa is now limited to only a few communities in Algeria, Libya and Tunisia, the Ibāḍī community in Tunisia is still famed for its merchants up to this day.

In this thesis I investigate the importance of trade and the important role that the Ibāḍī community played in this trans-Saharan trade, as well as looking at the impact of trans-Saharan trade for both the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb and the people of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. The first chapter of this thesis is an overview of the foundation history of the Ibāḍī community from its inception in Basra, the difficulties the Ibāḍī community faced there, and its first steps into the Maghreb leading to the founding of the Ibāḍī state of the Rustumids. Both phases are important

[4] E. Francesca, "From the Individualism to the Community's Power: The Economic Implications of the *walāya*/*barā'a* Dynamic among the Ibāḍis," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario orientale di Napoli*, Vol. 59, No. 1-4 (1999), p. 69.

for this thesis, because they are closely linked with trade and thus the steppingstone that led to Ibāḍī merchants becoming the biggest players in the trans-Saharan trade.

The second chapter will delve into the intimate relationship between "trade" and the Ibāḍī community. The importance of Basra plays a vital role in this relationship as the Ibāḍī community became linked to Basra's booming merchant class. The financial contributions by wealthy Ibāḍī merchants in Basra were of great importance to the organization of the Ibāḍī *da'wa*, and the commercial knowledge and experience of the Basran Ibāḍī community helped fund the young Rustumid state. Many of Basra's Ibāḍī merchants would end up moving to the Maghreb, looking for new commercial opportunities that could enhance their existing trade networks. The Ibāḍī merchants operating across the Sahara continued the practices began by their brothers before them in Basra. This chapter also discusses the importance of the Muhallabid family for the Ibāḍī community, both in Basra and in the Maghreb. From its inception the Ibāḍī community had many enemies, mainly the Umayyads and 'Abbasids, and therefore their friendly relationship with the powerful Muhallabid family played an important role in their survival, both directly and indirectly.

This chapter will be followed by an examination of what the trans-Saharan trade into *Bilād al-Sūdān* actually entailed, its importance for the Islamic world and the role Ibāḍī merchants played within the trans-Saharan networks. This chapter will lead us into the final chapter that looks at the impact of the trans-Saharan trade on the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb as well as the Ibāḍī impact on *Bilād al-Sūdān*. With the research presented here, I will show how the Ibāḍī community became the most important player in trans-Saharan trade and how they were able to hold on to this position until their demise at the beginning of the 4th/10th century. Another

significant result of trans-Saharan trade is the considerable impact that Ibāḍī traders had on both religious and cultural customs of the people of *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

As a side note I will also tentatively argue that the importance of trade for the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb must have had some influence on the way Ibāḍīsm manifested itself. The reason being that most of the trade happened outside of Muslim lands in *Dār al-Ḥarb* and therefore legal problems must have arisen that needed to be solved on the spot by Ibāḍī merchants. Another reason for this impact is derived from the fact that the Ibāḍī Rustumid state had a vested interest in trans-Saharan trade, and it would only be natural that Ibāḍī beliefs adopt a pro-trade stance. However, this argument remains a hypothesis that will require research beyond the scope of this thesis.

One of the main concerns that this thesis faces is a lack of available sources, and this will be explained – along with an elaboration of the available sources – in the next section. In my opinion it is important for scholars to be creative when they face a lack of sources, as this does not entail that historical events did not occur. In combination with this I also strongly believe in Karl Popper's criterion of falsifiability whereby "only if I can say how my theory might be refuted, or falsified, can I claim that my theory has the character of an empirical theory."[5]

A note on the Bibliography.[6]

The founding history of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb is well documented, albeit not in *many* documents. As is usual when dealing with early medieval history a lot of documents haven't survived time, this is especially the case with documents pertaining to a sect whose

[5] K.R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework. In defense of science and rationality*, ed. M.A. Notturno (London 1997) p. 88.

[6] For a general overview of all primary and secondary works that have been published regarding the Ibāḍī creed, see M.H. Custers, *Al-Ibadiyya: A Bibliography*, 3 Vols. (Maastricht 2006).

members have been vigorously persecuted by both Sunni and Shi'ite rulers and whose numbers in the Maghreb have been reduced to small communities in Algeria, Libya and Tunisia.[7]

It is known that more sources mentioning both the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb as well as Ibāḍī and Muslim merchants in *Bilād al-Sūdān* used to exist, and maybe even still exist today, as they are mentioned in the histories and biographies of later Ibāḍī chroniclers and historians. These sources might be found in private collections in either the areas in the Maghreb that still have a strong Ibāḍī presence (the Mzab, the Djerid, the island of Djerba, the Jebel Nafūsa) or in the towns on the southern fringes of the Sahara that have a strong Islāmic scholarly tradition (Timbucto, Djenna, Gao). Even if these sources can be located, the families owning them are wary of outsiders digging through their, sometimes centuries old, papers for fear of "secrets" being divulged.[8] It is hoped that one day these sources will be handed over to libraries or heritage conservation organizations so that they can be properly catalogued and conserved. I am certain that when scholars are allowed to research these sources, they will prove to be a treasure chest for the history of the Sahara and its peoples.

Nonetheless there are enough sources currently available that document the spread of the Ibāḍī creed into the Maghreb as well as the establishment of the Rustumid Imāmate in Tahert. The most extensive source available on Ibāḍī history regarding the Maghreb (as well as being one of the oldest), *Akhbār al-Ā'imma al-Rustumiyyīn*, was written at the beginning of the 4th/10th century by Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, a Shi'ite merchant who lived in Tahert during the second half of the 3rd/9th century. The earliest Ibāḍī chronicler/biographer whose work is available is that by Ibn Salām, his *Kitāb Ibn Salām al-Ibāḍī* was written at the end of the 3rd/9th century. Other important

[7] A.K. Ennami, "A Description of New Ibadi Manuscripts from North Africa," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1970), p. 63.

[8] See John Hunwick's work for more on the difficulties of researching these sources, J.O. Hunwick and A.J. Boye, *The Hidden treasures of Timbuctu: rediscovering Africa's literary culture* (New York 2008)

Ibāḍī chroniclers or biographers whose works are available and that pertain to the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb are the works by Abū Zakarriya (d. beginning of the 6th/12th century), al-Wisyānī (d. second half of the 6th/12th century), al-Darjīnī (lived during the first half of the 7th/13th century) and al-Shammākhī (d. 928/1522).

Ibāḍī sources that pertain to the spread of the Ibāḍī creed in the Maghreb and the establishment of the Rustumid Imāmate are generally available as most Ibāḍī sources are histories or biographies dealing with the establishment of the Rustumid dynasty in Tahert and its rulers. Finding references to the trade with *Bilād al-Sūdān* by Ibāḍī merchants is more difficult, especially as information dealing with this is mostly found in anecdotal form and hidden within the general histories and biographies of the Rustumid rulers. Therefore it is essential to consult non-Ibāḍī historians, chroniclers and biographers who have written general works on *Bilād al-Sūdān* as these works also contain information on Islamic merchants trading between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān* as well as references to Ibāḍī history and Ibāḍī influences on *Bilād al-Sūdān*. The most important of these writers for this thesis are al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897), al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), Ibn Baṭūṭa (703-770/1304-1368) and Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406). I have also used the works of al-Ṭabarī (224-310/838-923) on matters of general Islamic history of the 1st-4th/7th-10th centuries and that of Ibn Rushd (d.595/1198) regarding Sunni-Islamic law. The combination of medieval sources regarding the history of both the Ibāḍī-Rustumid community in the Maghreb as well as that of Islamic trade with *Bilād al-Sūdān*, should yield enough information to research this thesis.

The lack of sources also means that it is difficult to look at both specific Ibāḍī law and doctrine that might have evolved in the Maghreb or *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Early Ibāḍī sources in Oman may contain references to the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*, but I have

not been able to access these sources, whom are not easily available and, often being in Arabic, difficult to find. Another problem regarding legal texts is that the Maghrebi Ibāḍī community "tended not to preserve as detailed a legal tradition as their Omani counterparts, due in part to the fact that their imāmate effectively ended after the fall of the Rustamid dynasty to the Fātimids."[9] This makes it very difficult to do a comparison between Ibāḍī laws and Sunni laws regarding commercial issues in the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*. However, I did use secondary literature by E. Fancesca, A. Gaiser and J. Wilkinson that pertains to law and doctrine of the early Ibāḍī community and, even though it deals mostly with the situation in Oman (or earlier in Basra), it does at times reference to the Ibāḍīs of the Maghreb. It also needs to be said that the Ibāḍī communities of the Maghreb and Oman developed and evolved separately from each other, this does make it difficult to use laws and doctrine that were developed in Oman (of which more is known regarding the development of early Ibāḍī laws and doctrine) in explaining the situation in the Maghreb.[10]

The Polish scholar Tadeusz Lewicki (1906-1992) is often considered the foremost expert on Ibadi-Maghrebi history and he is one of the first European scholars who extensively used Ibāḍī primary sources.[11] Behind Lewicki the historians B. Perinbam and E. Savage are the main contributors to Ibāḍī history that deals with the relationship between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Savage focuses on both the general and political history of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb, whereas Perinbam is the only author that focuses more on the trade relations between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Although most works on the history of the Ibāḍīs in the

[9] A.R. Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers. The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibāḍī Imāmate Traditions* (Oxford 2010), p. 44.

[10] Although many aspects of Ibāḍī doctrine have their origins in Basra, they often developed differently in the Maghreb and Oman, see Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, pp. 9-11.

[11] P. Wexler, "Concerning Lewicki's Bibliography," *Folia Orientalia*, Vol. 34 (1998), pp. 203-206.

Maghreb do mention the important connection between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*, it is mostly very general and it makes for very limited reading regarding the issue of trade.

In reviewing the modern publications dealing with the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb, it is noticeable that most authors often reference back to the extensive work that was previously done by Lewicki. This not only shows the tremendous amount of work that has been done by Lewicki on this topic, but it also shows the limitations on the availability of Ibāḍī documents that pertain to trans-Saharan trade as well as the fact that most of the documents that are available have already been used by Lewicki himself. The main problem with Lewicki's work is that his articles tend to focus on a single category and, more importantly, Lewicki is considered to have approached Ibāḍī documents uncritically. Or as E. Savage puts it: "Curiously, Lewicki never takes up the theme of the historiographic context of his Ibāḍī sources but appears to have accepted them *a priori* as historical."[12] Nonetheless, the work done by Lewicki in making Ibāḍī documents available through his numerous publications has been a blessing to all scholars studying this subject, especially knowing difficulty in finding primary sources. Because of Lewicki's shortcomings, as well as the fact this subject has received little attention from Western scholars, a fresh interpretation of the sources will be beneficial to our understanding of the relationship between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*, as well as the role of Ibāḍī merchants in all of this.

Another important source for this thesis will be other secondary literature dealing with the trade between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān* that is not centered on Ibāḍī aspects but covers a more general history of this trade. The most important works of this genre are undoubtedly Austen's *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* and Boville's *The Golden Trade of the Moors*

[12] E. Savage, A *Gateway to Hell, A Gateway to Paradise. The North African Response to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton 1997), p. 13.

as well as Levtzion's *Ancient Ghana and Mali*. These works will give the thesis some added context with regard to the parts regarding *Bilād al-Sūdān* (Levtzion) as well as to the history of the trans-Saharan trade routes (Austen and Boville).

A note on the usage of the term "Ibāḍī", Transliteration and Dates.

Many non-Ibāḍī chroniclers did not differentiate between an Ibāḍī and a Muslim in their writings as in most cases the generic "Muslim" or "Islam" was used, even when dealing with specific Ibāḍī merchants or practices. While this makes it more difficult to determine if certain actions in *Bilād al-Sūdān* were either Ibāḍī or Sunni, it is generally believed that in pre-Almoravid times the majority of Muslim merchants in *Bilād al-Sūdān*, those who originated from the Maghreb, were Ibāḍī. But more on this in chapters 3 and 4.

Regarding the transliteration of Arabic names and terminology, I have decided to use the system of transliteration that is considered the standard for Islamic and Arabic studies, namely that of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Regarding names and terminology that pertain to *Bilād al-Sūdān*, I have used the most common form of transliteration, although it must be noted that these names and terminology have often come through the works of Arab chronicles and are thus prone to double transliteration; i.e. from their original "Sudanese" language to Arabic to English. Mistakes in the transliteration of these names and terminology are therefore wholly mine. Regarding the dates, they are given as *hijri* year or century first, followed by a slash and then the common-era year or century.

Chapter 1: The Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb.

Ibāḍī Islam has its origins in the Khārijite sect that came into existence during the first *fitna* (37/657), the civil war, between the Caliph ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and Muʻāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, the governor of Syria.[13] A vital role in the history of the Khārijites was played by Basra, an important garrison town which attracted many different Arab and non-Arab (mainly *mawāli*) groups; amongst these groups were the Khārijites.[14] Basra's population consisted of many elements of the North Arabian Banū Tamīm tribe whose members formed an important and large part of the Khārijite army that confronted ʻAlī. The population of Basra was considered to be hostile towards both ʻAlī and Muʻāwiyah and therefore many Khārijites who survived the heavy defeat against ʻAlī's troops at the battle of al-Nahrawān (38/658) sought refuge in Basra.[15] This reinforced Basra as an important (and often headstrong) Khārijite center with a substantial Khārijite community that was able to develop itself as well as its views and doctrines, even though it was under Umayyad rule.

The Khārijite community in Basra was not a homogenous community and therefore ideological differences led the Khārijite sect to be split into three different sub-sects; the Azrāqites (*al-Azāriqa*),[16] the Ṣufris (*al-Ṣufriya*)[17] and the Ibāḍīs (*al-Ibāḍīyya*).[18] The precise timeline is unknown, but this split is believed to have happened during or just before 65/684. The

[13] For a more in-depth look at the history of the Khārijite sect see G. Levi Della Vida, "Khārdjites," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.
[14] For more information on the history of Basra with regard to its founding in 17/637 and the importance Basra had for the early Khārijite movement see Ch. Pellat, *Le milieu basrien et la formation de Gahiz* (Paris 1953).
[15] T. Lewicki, "The Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," trans. M. Abrahamowicz, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 13 (1971), pp. 56-57.
[16] For more information on the Khārijite Azrāqi sect see K. Lewinstein, "Azāriqa," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. THREE*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.
[17] For more information on the Khārijite Sufri sect see W. Madelung and K. Lewinstein, "Sufriyya," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.
[18] T. Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

extremist Azrāqites where the first to leave the Khārijite community after they decided to move away from Basra. The remaining, more moderate, members of the Khārijite community in Basra then divided into the Ṣufris and Ibāḍīs – more on the differences between these three sects will follow below.[19] It still remains somewhat unclear who founded the Ibāḍī sect and where the name "Ibāḍī" comes from. Different theories exist, but the consensus opinion is that the Ibāḍī sect was founded by Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udaya al-Tamīmī (d. 62/682) in the middle of the 1st/7th century and that it originated in the city of Basra.[20] It is believed that after the death of Abū Bilāl the leadership of the Ibāḍī sect fell upon ʻAbdullāh b. Ibād al-Murra al-Tamīmī (date of death unknown, his successor died in either 93, 96 or 103) and that the sect was named after him, although opinions on this differ.[21]

This chapter will be used to give a brief history of the Ibāḍī sect in Basra as well as a description of the major differences between the Ibāḍīs, the Ṣufris, and the Azāriqa . This is needed to understand the reasons why the Ibāḍī sect became accepted in the Maghreb. Therefore a brief history of the establishment of the Ibāḍī sect in the Maghreb will also be given along with its rise to prominence through its alliance with the local Berber tribes of the Maghreb.

Due to the political situation and the persecution of the Khārijites in general the Ibāḍī leadership in Basra (generally referred to as the *djamaʻat al-muslimīn*)[22]decided in 65/684-5 to go into a state of *kitmān* (concealment or secrecy) to preserve itself. This is said to have

[19] Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," p. 61.
[20] Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya".
[21] As this is not relevant for this thesis I will not discuss it here, but an interesting opinion is given by Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, pp. 65-66. For more general information about the founding history of the Ibāḍī sect see Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya".
[22] For more on the leadership structure of the Ibāḍī Imāmate and the formal rules regarding the appointment of an Imam, see J.C. Wilkinson, "The Ibāḍī "Imāma"," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1976), pp. 535-551.

happened after its leader ‘Abdullāh b. Ibād decided to break away from the more hard-line Khārijites, i.e. the Azāriqa .[23] The Ibāḍī sect shunned the extremist Khārijite notion of *isti‘rād* (religious murder): the permitted killing of Muslims and their families who did not share the same Khārijite beliefs.[24] The Ibāḍīs also did not share the extremist views that proclaimed those Muslims who refused Khārijite beliefs as either unfaithful or as polytheists (*mushrikūn*).[25] The Azraki Khārijites were very hard-lined and uncompromising when it came to Khārijite Islamic beliefs, this was contrary to the more appeasing ways of the Ibāḍī and Ṣufri Khārijites, although Ṣufri views were slightly more radical when it came to dealing with the Umayyad Caliph and non-Khārijite Muslims; the Ṣufris did favor rebelling and were not as “peace-loving and conciliatory” as the Ibāḍīs were regarding the Umayyad Caliph.[26]

Even though the Ibāḍī community in Basra was in a state of *kitmān* it still suffered under the rule of the governors sent by the Umayyad Caliphs. The Umayyad governors in Basra cracked down on anti-Umayyad Khārijite activities and most governors did not differentiate between the different Khārijite sub-sects as they considered all these Khārijite sub-sects to be similar, regardless of them being extremist Azāriqa , moderately radical Ṣufris or peaceful Ibāḍīs. It was not until 96/714-5, when Abū ‘Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma al-Tamīmī[27] (died sometime during the reign of Caliph al-Mansūr 136-58/754-75) became the leader of the Ibāḍī sect, that the Ibāḍī community in Basra managed to organize itself into an Ibāḍī political organization. Abū ‘Ubayda managed to keep the Ibāḍī sect out of trouble (and free of persecution) in times when the Umayyad Caliphs and Basran governors had anti-Khārijite or anti-Ibāḍī tendencies as well

[23] Lewicki, “al-Ibāḍiyya”.
[24] Levi Della Vida, “Khārdjites”.
[25] Lewicki, “Ibádites in Arabia and Africa,” p. 63.
[26] Ibid., p. 71.
[27] Abū ‘Ubayda, a Persian *mawāli* of the Banī Tamīm, is considered to be both the greatest scholar and political figure the Khārijite movement has ever had, see Lewicki, “al-Ibāḍiyya”.

managing to further the position of the Ibāḍī community in times when the Caliphs and governors were friendly (or simply indifferent) towards the Ibāḍī cause.

It was not until the rule of the violently anti-Khārijite Basran governor Yūsuf b. ʻUmar al-Thaqafī (appointed by Caliph Hishām in 120/738) that Abū ʻUbayda decided to form the Ibāḍī Imāmate, effectively ending the state of *kitmān* for the Ibāḍī community and entering the state of *zuhūr* (appearance).[28] Abū ʻUbayda felt that it was now time for a general uprising of the Ibāḍī community to create an Ibāḍī state. It was decided by Abū ʻUbayda that the best way to go about this was to train handpicked missionaries, the *hamalāt al-ʻilm* ("the bearers of learning"), and to send them in groups (each group contained an *imām* as well as *qādī* who had been appointed as such by Abū ʻUbayda) to the most distant parts of the Muslim Caliphate; Khurāsān, Hadramawt, Yemen, Oman and the Maghreb. The main goal of the *hamalāt al-ʻilm* was to spread Ibāḍī learning and to gain support for the Ibāḍī cause, when enough people were converted to the Ibāḍī teachings by these missionaries a state of *zuhūr* would be pronounced.[29]

This tactic became very successful in part because it targeted non-Arab Muslims (e.g., Persians and Berbers) as well as the smaller tribes of Southern Arabia and Oman who all felt disillusioned with the Umayyad Caliphate due to its discriminatory pro-(North) Arab policies. The fall of the Umayyad Caliphate and the ensuing decentralization of power also helped the conversion efforts of the *hamalāt al-ʻilm*, this led to the establishment of an Ibāḍī Imāmate in all the regions where the *hamalāt al-ʻilm* were sent, with the exception of Khurāsān as the local

[28] Although the state of *zuhūr* only pertained to those regions that would be able to establish a new Ibāḍī Imāmate, Basra itself would stay (and remain throughout its Ibāḍī history) in a state of *kitmān*, see Lewicki, "al-Ibādiyya".
[29] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, pp. 67-69; Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," pp. 69-74; Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya".

Persian inhabitants supported the ‘Abbasid insurrection. The first region that had been identified by Abū ‘Ubayda for revolt and the establishment of an Ibāḍī Imāmate was the Maghreb.[30]

The reason Abū ‘Ubayda chose the Maghreb was because the local Berber tribes were very hostile towards the Umayyad Caliphate, and it was thought that the Ibāḍī ideal of equality would appeal to the Berbers, especially since the Berbers were heavily discriminated against by the Umayyads. The second reason for choosing the Maghreb was the fact that the Ṣufri Khārijites had already managed to establish themselves in the Maghreb, but because they had not yet managed to convert the major local Berber tribes to Ṣufrism it was of the utmost importance for Abū ‘Ubayda to hasten Ibāḍī efforts in the Maghreb to ensure that the local Berbers would become Ibāḍī rather than Ṣufri.[31] The result of the Ṣufri conversions was that the more rebellious nature of the Ṣufri movement had made some headway in convincing the Berber tribes to rally against Umayyad rule and this led to a Ṣufri-inspired Berber revolt in 123/740. Even though this revolt proved to be unsuccessful it did show that the Berber tribes were willing to rise up against their Umayyad rulers and this proved to beneficial to the Ibāḍīs as the Ṣufris had sowed the seeds of unrest that would be reaped by the Ibāḍīs.[32]

Both the first and second wave of the *hamalāt al-‘ilm* that were sent by Abū ‘Ubayda to the Maghreb were successful in converting some of the Berber tribes to Ibāḍīsm. Their intended rebellion against the Umayyad forces however, after some initial success, proved to be a disaster as all the *hamalāt al-‘ilm*, as well as most of their Berber allies, died whilst fighting the

[30] Lewicki, “Ibádites in Arabia and Africa,” pp. 74-75.

[31] Prior to the arrival of the Sufri and Ibāḍī missionaries most of the Berber tribes had been converted to Sunni Islam during the initial Islamic conquest of North Africa. Although the Berbers tribes were Muslim, this was mostly in name only as most Berber tribes retained their pre-Islamic believes and practices. The Berber tribes who didn’t convert to Islam were either Christian or they followed the local religious belief system. For a history of the Berber tribes of the Maghreb see R. Montagne, *The Berbers: their Social and Political Organization*, trans. D. Seddon (London 1973) and Ibn Khaldun’s *Histoire des berbères*, trans. M. de Slane, 4 Vols. (Algiers 1852).

[32] Madelung, “Sufriyya.”

Umayyad forces. Although the Ibāḍī Berber forces were not able to defeat the Umayyad forces and were eventually destroyed, Ibāḍīsm itself remained alive in the Maghreb. This led to the decision by Abū ʻUbayda to send a new five-man team of *hamalāt al-ʻilm* from Basra to the Maghreb, this team proved to be successful and their efforts would lead to significant gains for the Ibāḍī community.[33] The new *hamalāt al-ʻilm* were led by the Yemeni Abū'l-Khattāb al-Maʻārifī (d. 142/759) who was elected Imām of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb in 140/757-8.[34] Aside from Abū'l-Khattāb, this five-man team also included three Berber missionaries as well as a Persian missionary who grew up in Qayrawān, ʻAbd al-Rahmān b. Rustum (d. 171/788), who would end up playing a major role in the history of Ibāḍīsm in the Maghreb.[35]

After his arrival in the Maghreb, Abū'l-Khattāb immediately engaged the Umayyad forces in battle, proving to be highly successful as he managed to defeat the Umayyad forces and to take the entire province of Ifrīqiya and its capital Qayrawān in 140/757-8, establishing an Ibāḍī state in Tripolitania that would last until 144/761-2 – it must be noted that Qayrawān had been briefly captured by the Ṣufris during their revolt of 123/741. Imām Abū'l-Khattāb did not survive to see this as he died shortly after the establishment of this Ibāḍī Imāmate in the Maghreb. But due to the leadership of the Ibāḍī-Berber tribal leader Abū Hātim al-Malzūzī (d. 155/772), who had assumed the title of *imām al-difāʻ* ("Imām of the Defense"), the Berber-Ibāḍī alliance that had supported Abū'l-Khattāb managed to survive until its break up in 155/772.[36]

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[33] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, pp. 71-72.

[34] For more in-depth information on Abū'l-Khattāb al-Maʻārifī see A. de C. Motylinksi, "Abū'l-Khattāb," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

[35] Abū Zakariya, Yahya b. Abī Bakr, *Kitāb al-sira wa Akhbār al-Ā'imma*, translated by R. Le Tourneau, *Revue Africaine*, Vol. 462-3 (1960), pp. 110-111. For more in-depth information on ʻAbd al-Rahmān b. Rustum see M. Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

[36] Abū Zakaria, *Kitāb al-sira* (1960), pp. 125-129 and Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," pp. 75-77, 88-89.

Abū'l-Khattāb's success was based on his ability to unite the major Berber tribes (mainly the Nafūsa, the Mazata and the Hawwāra tribes) under the flag of Ibāḍīsm and especially his espousal of the Khārijite notion of man's equality before God (*wilāya*) was what particularly attracted these Berber tribes of the Maghreb.[37] The notion of equality became important for the Berbers because they were treated as quasi-slaves by the 'Abbasid governors even though they were fellow Muslims. Therefore they were of the opinion that as fellow Muslims they should be treated as equals to their Arab counterparts. As these Berber tribes remained Muslim (and they had no intention whatsoever to apostatize from Islam) their hatred focused for the largest part on the "Arabness" of their 'Abbasid rulers. This gave the Ibāḍī (and broader Khārijite) doctrines a very disposed audience. Although it must be noted that only the Ibāḍī doctrine of "all-Muslim equality regardless of social or ethnic origin"[38] was what the Berbers cared for, they had very little interest in any of the other aspects of Ibāḍīsm and Khārijism. Because of this general feeling of unhappiness by the Berber tribes, the *hamalāt al-'ilm* sent by Abū 'Ubayda were not only able to dislodge the Ṣufri doctrine that was prevalent among most of the Berber tribes who had converted to Khārijism, and have it replaced with the Ibāḍī doctrine, but by the middle of the 2nd/8th century the *hamalāt al-'ilm* managed to convert a majority of the Berber tribes who were still non-Khārijite.[39]

Just before the fall of the first Ibāḍī state in Tripolitania (144/761-2) one of the five *hamalāt al-'ilm*, 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Rustum, founded a settlement to use as his base of operations to continue spreading Ibāḍīsm in the Maghreb. This settlement was named Tahert (in central

[37] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, pp. 113-136. I must also add that the Ibāḍī creed (as well as the Khārijite creed in general) found very little support amongst the Arabs of the Maghreb and therefore there were only a few Maghrebi-Arab converts to Ibāḍīsm.
[38] Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," p. 85.
[39] Ibn Khaldun, *Des berbères*, Vol. 1, pp. xxi, 241-243.

Algeria; it is now known as Tiaret) and it became the center of the Ibāḍī Rustumid dynasty which would last from 161/778 until 296/909.[40] The main reasons why Ibn Rustum chose this specific area to build Tahert was because the region was populated by Berber tribes who had converted to Ibāḍīsm and who were loyal to Ibn Rustum (mainly the Lamāya, the Lawāta, and the Nafzāwa tribes), the abundance of water and fertile soil, and the fact that the existence of an ancient settlement at this site gave Ibn Rustum some readymade fortifications that provided refuge in times of danger during Tahert's initial founding period. The area around Tahert already contained Berber tribes who had converted to Ibāḍīsm, but after the fall of Abū Hātim al-Malzūzī and his Berber-Ibāḍī alliance many of the Ibāḍī Berber tribes from Tripolitania and Ifrīqiya started to settle in Tahert. These new migrants led to an important population growth of Tahert and the surrounding region as well as to the strengthening of the army of Ibn Rustum. This would become crucial for the expansion of the Ibāḍī sphere of influence in the region and beyond.[41]

'Abd al-Rahmān b. Rustum was recognized by most of the Ibāḍī Berber tribes as the legitimate leader of the Ibāḍīs in the Maghreb and therefore they elected him as their Imām in 162/779.[42] Before Ibn Rustum was chosen as the Imām he was appointed by Abū'l-Khattāb as the governor of Ifrīqiya and in this position he gained wide prestige within the Ibāḍī community. Ibn Rustum election as Imām came with the consent and support (both ideological and financial) of the still prominent Ibāḍī community in Basra and in his capacity as Imām he managed to unite

[40] Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids".

[41] Al-Bakrī, Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik*, translated by M. de Slane as "Description de l'Afrique septentrionale" (Algiers 1913) pp. 140-141; M. Talbi, "Tāhart (or Tīhart, Tāhert)," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011; Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," pp. 90-91.

[42] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, "Akhbār al-Ā'imma al-Rustumiyyīn," republished in *Les Cahiers de Tunisie*, Nos. 91-2 (1975), pp. 321-322, Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya" and Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids."

the majority of the Berber tribes in the Maghreb around the banner of Ibāḍī Islam.[43] It is known that Ibn Rustum was a very pious man who lived an ascetic life and lived in a simple house containing only the barest necessities. According to Ibāḍī historians and chroniclers, Ibn Rustum did his own manual labor when he was building his house and always finished his daily errands before turning to matters of state. Whether this anecdote is true or not, it showed the importance that the principle of equality held within Ibāḍī society. With regard to state affairs, Ibn Rustum's priority lay with helping the poorer members of society; grain taxes were redistributed to the poor, while other taxes were used to buy wool and oil which was distributed among the people of the Rustumid Imāmate, with the main focus on the poorer segments of society. Ibn Rustum also ensured that budget surpluses were used for public works that benefited the Ibāḍī community. In general it can be said that his personal situation (and wealth) was secondary to that of the needs of society.[44]

Modern scholars who studied the Rustumid Imāmate often considered Tahert the "Geneva of the Maghreb" due to its "Puritan" beliefs that led to a censorship of public morals.[45] Although the perceived state of religious and moral bliss that often accompanies puritan views of society was not always the case in Tahert, as is illustrated by one of Tahert's former inhabitants, Ibn al-Ṣaghīr[46] (written in 290/903):

> The inhabitants made public and scandalous use of intoxicating liquors, and of young men for the satisfaction of their vices. But when order was established once more, morality was restored

[43] Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya," Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids" and Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," p. 102.
[44] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, "La chronique d'Ibn Ṣaghīr sur les imams rustumides de Tahert," translated and edited by A. de C. Motylinksi, *Acted du XIVe Congrès International des Orientalistes* (Algiers 1905) pp. 64-72.
[45] C.A. Julien, *History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, from the Arab Conquest to 1830*, translated and edited by J. Petrie, C.C. Stewart and R. Le Tourneau (London 1970), p. 31.
[46] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr's chronicle is the oldest known surviving work on the Ibāḍī sect in the Maghreb, see T. Lewicki, "Ibnal-Saghīr," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

by means of blows, imprisonment and throwing into irons. The wine jars were broken and the sodomites had to flee to the tops of the mountains or the depths of the valleys.[47]

It is generally thought that money corrupts society and the fact that Tahert and the Rustumid Imāmate became rich because of the trans-Saharan trade (more on this in Chapter 3) would ultimately lead to its downfall. Another important contribution to this downfall was major infighting between the different dynastic and court factions combined with irreconcilable differences regarding religious matters, this led to religious confrontations and several schisms, which interacted with dynastic rivalries.[48] All of these problems within the religious and ruling establishment of the Rustumid Imāmate led to the weakening of its alliance with the Berber tribes and ultimately this made Tahert and the entire Rustumid Imāmate an easy target for neighboring states to attack, cumulating in the defeat by the Fāṭimid forces in 296/909.

After the death of Ibn Rustum in 171/788 a council of wise men who had been appointed by Ibn Rustum before his death, chose Ibn Rustum's son ʻAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʻAbd al-Rahmān (r. 168-208/784-823) as the new Imām of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb. This was the beginning of a dynastic tradition that would continue to place the offspring of Ibn Rustum and his successors in the position of Imām of Tahert, lasting until the fall of Tahert in 296/909. Ibn Rustum's first two successors, ʻAbd al-Wahhāb and his son Aflah b. ʻAbd al-Wahhāb (r. 208-258/824-872) reigned for nearly a 100 years and they were considered responsible for what is known as the "Golden Age" of the Rustumid Imāmate, during which Tahert and the Rustumid Imāmate experienced times of great prosperity. It was ʻAbd al-Wahhāb who, towards the end of

[47] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, "La chronique," p. 123 (Translation taken from Julien, *History of North Africa*, p. 31).
[48] For an in-depth historical account on the weakening of the Rustumid Imāmate see Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Ahkbar al-Ā'immah al-Rustumiyīn*, ed. Hasan ʻAlī Hasan (Cairo 1984), Chapter IV, The Weakness of the State and its fall, pp. 157-176.

the 2nd/8th century, managed to unite all the Berber tribes of the Maghreb under the banner of the Rustumid Imāmate. ʻAbd al-Wahhāb also nearly succeeded in conquering Ifrīqiya in its entirety, this led to the Rustumid Imāmate negotiating a peace-deal with the Aghlabid rulers, who was the official representative of the ʻAbbasids in Ifrīqiya. Looking at Aflah's reign it is said that it was "…relatively peaceful. He was able, by a combination of pliant policies and largesse, to impose his authority on the nomadic tribes, which were quarrelsome by nature."[49]

After Aflah died in 258/872 the Rustumid Imāmate experienced weak leadership in both religious and secular affairs. This led to increased tension between different royal heirs as well as between different Ibāḍī Berber tribes. Added to this was an increasing amount of hostile pressure from other Maghrebi states, mainly the Aghlabids, which led to a rise in military confrontations. The weakening of the state and leadership structure meant that the Rustumid Imām was unable to unite all the Ibāḍī Berber tribes in defense of the Rustumid Imāmate and this led to an overall weakening of the Rustumid armies and, consequently, to very costly losses against the Aghlabids. When the Fāṭimid armies came to Tahert at the end of 3rd/ beginning of the 10th century they did not find much resistance and Tahert was easily overrun.[50]

The majority of Tahert's surviving Ibāḍī population fled to either the southern oasis town of Wargla or to the Jebel Nafūsa and from there they continued their trading activities and practicing their Ibāḍī customs. There were several attempts at restoring an Ibāḍī Imāmate, both by former members of the Rustumid dynasty and their followers as well as by members of the Ibāḍī sects that had broken away from the Rustumid Imāmate during the earlier schisms, but none of these Ibāḍī revolts proved to be successful. Because of this the Ibāḍī community in the

[49] Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids." See also Abū Zakaria, *Kitāb al-sira* (1960), pp. 133-134, 165-172 and Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya."

[50] Abū Zakaria, *Kitāb al-sira* (1960), pp. 333-339, Ibn Khaldun, *Des berbères*, Vol. 1, p. 243, Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya" and Talbi, "Rustumids or Rustumids."

Maghreb aborted any new attempts at establishing an Ibāḍī Imāmate and instead they decided to revert back to a state of *kitmān*.[51] This state of *kitmān* led to Wargla, the Jebel Nafūsa, the island of Djerba and other Ibāḍī refuges to become (and remain for many years, even up till now) important Ibāḍī centers of learning. Because of their isolated location and general accommodation with the ruling forces (be it the Fāṭimids, the Zīrids, the Almohads, the Ḥafṣids, or the Ottomans) the Ibāḍī communities were for the most part left alone and able to preserve Ibāḍī religion and customs.[52]

[51] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, p. 50.
[52] For more information on the Ibāḍīs in the Maghreb after the Rustumid Imāmate see Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya".

Chapter 2: The early Ibāḍī community in Basra and its trade connections.

You will not find any town, however small…not even on the confines of the earth, where you will not meet a Basrian or a Medinese.

Basrians and Himyarites are readiest of all men to emigrate in search of profit. If one goes to Ferghana or to Sus al-Aqsa, he is bound to find there always a Basrina or a Himyarite.[53]

Basra became known as a major trading hub that connected the trade networks of the eastern and western parts of the Islamic Caliphate (first under the Umayyads and afterwards under the ‘Abbasids) and it was not long before its merchants gained a glowing reputation in the Islamic world for their commercial acumen as they founded business opportunities in the furthest corners of the known world. It is therefore not surprising that from its inception the Ibāḍī sect in Basra became linked to Basra’s booming merchant class and that financial contributions made by wealthy Ibāḍī merchants in Basra helped the organization of the Ibāḍī *da‘wa* in Basra and their subsequent diffusion into the Maghreb. The commercial background that the Khārijite and early Ibāḍī communities developed while still in Basra would prove to be significant for the early survival of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb.

As the next chapter focuses on the trade networks between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*, this chapter will not mention trans-Saharan relations, but focus instead focus on the Ibāḍī community’s commercial operations in Basra, as well as Tahert’s early commercial history. The final part of this chapter will deal with the Muhallabid family and the relationship they had with the early Ibāḍī community, both in Basra and the Maghreb. To understand where and how the

[53] Lewicki, “Ibāḍītes in Arabia and Africa,” p. 65, footnote 50. Quoting from Ibn al-Faḳīh al-Hamadhānī, “Kitāb al-Buldān”, ed. De Goeje in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Vol. V (Leiden 1885), p. 51.

Ibāḍī community started to develop as an important trading and merchant society we must first look at Basra, the city where Ibāḍīsm originated.[54]

Basra was founded as a garrison town during the initial phases of the Islamic conquests and experienced a rapid growth of its population due to its commercially and militarily strategic location, which made it attractive for settlers from all over the Middle East. As Basra was located on several trade routes it developed into an important trading town which attracted merchants from all over the region, from East Africa to India. The renowned French historian Charles Pellat said the following about Basra:

> The town reached its zenith in the 2nd /8th century and the beginning of the 3rd/9th century. At this period it was fully developed and its population had increased to considerable proportions. Although the figures given are wildly divergent (varying from 200,000 to 600,000), Basra was, for the Middle Ages, a very great city and, what is more, a "complete metropolis": it was at the same time a commercial centre, with its Mirbad which was halting place for caravans and its river port, al-Kallaʾ, which accommodated ships of fairly large tonnage; a financial centre, thanks to the Jewish and Christian elements and the bourgeois of non-Arab stock; an industrial centre with its arsenals; even an agricultural centre with its numerous varieties of dates; and finally the home of an intense religious and intellectual activity.[55]

Due to its location and its initial founding as a garrison town Basra attracted a lot of merchants, who in turn made it a wealthy town. The Khārijite community in Basra was very numerous and many of their members belonged to the merchant class. This gave the Ibāḍī leadership many

[54] My focus of attention on Basra is solely as a commercial centre relevant to the later development of the Ibāḍī sect in the Maghreb. For a general history of Basra see Pellat, *Le milieu basrien*.
[55] Ch. Pellat and S.H. Longrigg, "al-Basra," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

options from which to tap funds, especially since some of its members were amongst the wealthiest merchants in the city.

The merchants of Basra traded on a large and distant scale, trading both within the Islamic Caliphate and all its provinces, no matter how far away these provinces were, as well as trading across continents to the towns on the Indian Ocean, which the merchants of Basra reached through the ports of Oman. An example of this is given by al-Aḥnaf b. Qays'[56] anecdote that mentions that "the riches of Basra included equally a great amount of teak wood and ivory." This anecdote shows the connections that Basra's traders had with the teak producing lands of Konkan on India's west coast as well as with the East African coast, which had been the main source since the 1st/7th century of the ivory that was imported by Basra's merchants. Al-Ahnaf b. Qays continues his anecdote by also mentioning the large sums of money available in Basra, noting that some of Basra's inhabitants had personal capitals that were estimated to amount to one million *dirhams*. Amongst the merchants of Basra during the second half of the 1st/7th century there was a sizeable number of Khārijite merchants who had an influential presence in the trans-continental trade. A century later these Khārijite merchants would become the core of the Ibāḍī mercantile class that provided the necessary wealth for the Ibāḍī *da'wa*.[57]

From the moment the Ibāḍī community was founded it quickly developed a bond with merchant community of Basra, as both community's were suspicious of the Umayyad rulers. The cooperation between the merchants of Basra and the Ibāḍī community led to an increased collaboration between each other's trade networks resulting in a greater role for Ibāḍī merchants within these "global" networks. It was not long before Ibāḍī merchants could be found all the

[56] Emir al-Aḥnaf b. Qays al-Tamīmī al-Sa'dī (d. 67/686-7) was the leader of the Basran Tamīmītes and an important general and politician during the first decades of Islam.
[57] Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," pp. 64-65.

way from the Maghreb to India, and it is even alleged that Ibāḍī merchants were amongst the first to set up business ventures in China.[58] These Ibāḍī merchants would end up maintaining an extensive network of trade contacts that would also prove valuable in their dealing with *Bilād al-Sūdān* (but more on Ibāḍī traders in *Bilād al-Sūdān* in Chapter 3).

The Ibāḍī merchants became the main source of funding that was needed to organize and maintain the Ibāḍī *da'wa*. From its inception the Ibāḍī community relied on the generosity of its wealthy merchant members and therefore the Ibāḍī leadership set up a specific *bayt al-māl* (treasury) to collect all the necessary funding for the Ibāḍī *da'wa*.[59] Because it was supported by the wealthy Ibāḍī merchants this *bayt al-māl* contained vast sums of money (a sum of 10,000 *dirhams* was donated by one of its main contributors, the merchant Abū Tāhir).[60] The Ibāḍī historian al-Shammākhī (d. 928/1522) reports in his *Kitāb al-Siyar* that the *bayt al-māl* had managed to collect more than 100,000 *dirhams* from the Ibāḍī merchants by the middle of the 2nd/8th century. More anecdotes are found about the wealth of some of the Ibāḍī merchants of Basra in al-Shammākhī's *Kitāb al-Siyar*; one of these anecdotes tells the story of a pious Ibāḍī living in the late 2nd/8th century, Abū Sālim, "whose wealth enabled him to supply camels to his fellow Ibāḍīs to make the pilgrimage."[61] Another anecdote recalls the wealthy Ibāḍī merchant, Abū al-Hurr (d. 130/747-8), who "arrived in Mecca from Basra with a gold ingot, of which he gave half to the poor and kept a quarter for his needs, with a quarter given to Arabs in China."[62]

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[58] Al-Mas'ūdī mentions merchants from Basra in the Chinese port of Khanfou; Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, "Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'adinal-jawhar," translated by C. Barbier de Maynard and A. Pavet de Courteille, *Les prairies d'or*, 7 Vols. (Paris 1861-1877), Vol. 1, pp. 303-308. For more on Arab trade with China, see T. Lewicki, "Les premiers commerçants arabes en Chine," *Rocznik orientalistyezny*, 11 (1936), pp. 173-186.

[59] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, p. 68.

[60] Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya."

[61] Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Sa'īd al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, ed. Aḥmad b. Sa'ūd al-Siyābī (Musqat 1987), p 106.

[62] Francesca, *Walāya/barā'a*, p. 72.

One can safely assume that the *bayt al-māl* also benefited from the financial kindness of Abū al-Hurr.

A major part of the income for the *bayt al-māl* came from funding through self-imposed taxes and subsidies (*ma'ūna*), this funding came for the largest part from the many wealthy Ibāḍī merchants that were living in Basra at the time (2nd/8th century). It was the Ibāḍī merchant class who played a very important role in the success of the *bayt al-māl*, and therefore the *bayt al-māl* could be seen as a reflection of the commercial success of the Ibāḍī merchants of Basra. One of the most lucrative commercial enterprises for merchants (not only for Ibāḍī merchants, but in general for all Middle Eastern merchants) was the trade expeditions to China. One of the merchants who traded with China was Abū 'Ubayda 'Abd Allāh b. al-Qāsim, who traded in aloes wood and other articles. Another Ibāḍī merchant trading with China, al-Naẓar b. Ma'mūn, was rich enough to offer a gift of 40 dinars to one of the poorest Ibāḍī shaykhs so that he was able to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.[63]

It was not only the rich Ibāḍī merchants who contributed to the *bayt al-māl*. The entire Ibāḍī community at Basra played their part and donated funding. The mainstream, non-rich section of the Ibāḍī community was taxed[64] by the Ibāḍī leadership and one anecdote tells us that the above-mentioned merchant Abū Tāhir, who was also an appointed tax-collector, managed to collect 10,000 *dirhams* from the common men and women of Ibāḍī society in a single day. Abū

[63] Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," pp. 73-74.

[64] It is my belief that the Ibāḍī taxes were levied by the Ibāḍī leaders in Basra specifically for the Ibāḍī community without an "official" decree by the rulers of Basra, being the Umayyad government. Therefore one can assume that these were secret taxes, whereas the taxes levied by the Umayyads (and after them the 'Abbasids) where official taxes, payable by all inhabitants of Basra. However, as this is not the focus of this thesis, I have not looked at the specific primary sources that might mention this, the sources I have looked at are more aimed at trade and the Maghreb and they only mention either the *bayt al-māl* or isolated anecdotes.

Tāhir also managed to collect 8,000 *dirhams* that was owed to the *bayt al-māl* by a man of "smaller fortune."[65]

The presence of many rich Ibāḍī merchants in Basra not only benefited the *bayt al-māl*. The Ibāḍī leadership was also able to extract a 250,000 *dirham* loan from these merchants that was used to fund their war efforts; the purchase of horses and weapons, finances to support the poor Ibāḍī community in those areas where there was (anti-Ibāḍī) conflict as well as funding Ibāḍī uprisings in different parts of the Islamic Empire (although the majority of funding for these uprisings came from the *bayt al-māl*).[66] An example of this came in 144/762 when Abū 'Ubayda and the Ibāḍī leadership decided to send extra funds to the Abū'l-Khattāb led *hamalāt al-'ilm* that had been sent to the Maghreb. These extra funds consisted of three "loads" (*ḥiml*) of silver, which is equal to about 750 kilograms of silver or a quarter of a million *dirhams* of legal weight. This special funding was to be used to purchase horses and arms and to relieve the poor who were living in the area of the *hamalāt al-'ilm's* operations.[67]

The last leader of the Ibāḍī community in Basra was a disciple of Abū 'Ubayda, the historian Abū Sufyān (d. 210/825), who migrated to Oman at the end of the 2nd/8th, where there was a sizable Ibāḍī colony living in relative peace. Because many prominent Ibāḍī *'ulamā'* had left Basra for either Oman or the Maghreb, its Ibāḍī community went through a period of intellectual decline which ultimately meant that it lost its position as the most important center of theology and jurisprudence in the Ibāḍī world. By the beginning of the 3rd/9th century almost all of the Ibāḍī *'ulamā'* now resided in Oman or the Maghreb, leaving no noteworthy Ibāḍī *'ulamā'*

[65] al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, pp.114-115.
[66] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, "La chronique," pp. 65-68 and Yahya b. Abi Bakr al-Warjalānī Abū Zakariya, *Kitāb al-sira wa Akhbār al-Ā'imma*, translated and edited by E. Masqueray as "Chronique d'Abou Zakaria" (Algiers 1878), pp. 51-53.
[67] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, "La chronique," pp. 65-68.

remaining in Basra. The Ibāḍīs of Basra now looked to Oman for their leadership.[68] Not only did Basra suffer from intellectual decline, it also suffered a more general decline because of its decreasing importance as the main political and economic centre in the eastern part of the Caliphate. After its founding in 144/762, Baghdad became the political capital of the 'Abbasid Caliphate and an important center of trade. Although Basra was still able to maintain its importance as a trading town, (because it connected the Arab trade with East Africa, India, and China) it lost its position as the preeminent commercial center in the Middle East. With the rising importance of Baghdad many of Basra's Ibāḍī traders decided to leave Basra and move their business to other important trading towns, with the main beneficiary being the Ibāḍī town of Tahert.[69] The remaining Ibāḍī community of Basra managed to survive until the *Zanj* rebellion of 256/868-869, which ultimately led to its destruction.[70]

Tahert became an important trading town in the Maghreb in large part due to the mercantile background of its inhabitants, with many members of its merchant class originally coming from Basra but moving to Tahert after the establishment of the Rustumid Imāmate. Because of Tahert's growth as a commercial center it started to attract people from all over the Islamic world (Kūfa and Qayrawān amongst others) which aided in its development. Yet Basra always remained a focus of Tahert's Ibāḍī community as Tahert maintained a strong link with the remaining Ibāḍīs in Basra, especially as the Ibāḍī community in Basra was to a large extent still responsible for funding Tahert's growing prosperity. This excellent relationship between Basra and Tahert led to a regular exchange of envoys and the first envoy who arrived from Basra brought both gifts and money, both readily accepted by Tahert's leader Ibn Rustum. When a

[68] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, p. 70.
[69] al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, pp.102-105.
[70] For an in-depth look at the *Zanj* rebellion and its alleged links with Khārijitism, see A. Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton 1998).

second envoy from Basra arrived in Tahert a few years later, also bearing gifts and money, Ibn Rustum refused to accept its offerings, stating that the Ibāḍī community in Tahert was now no longer poor, therefore there was no more need to accept gifts from Basra. The growth of Tahert occured so rapidly and in such a short space of time that the envoys from Basra who initially saw Tahert hardly recognized it when they returned to Tahert a second time.[71] The initial rise of Tahert, as well as its quick population growth and accumulation of wealth, was due in large part to the sizeable amount of Ibāḍīs from Basra who moved there after its founding. Amongst these Basran Ibāḍīs were numerous merchants who used their trade knowledge and networks to accumulate wealth. Tahert as a city profited immensely from this.

The Ibāḍī community in Basra has always had very friendly ties with the rich and powerful house of Muhallabid whose original founders belonged to the Banū Azd tribe which had settled in Basra during the early parts of the 1st/7th century.[72] At the head of the Muhallabid family stood the famed general al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣuffrah (c. 10-82/c. 632-702)[73] who was governor of Khurāsān from 78/697 until 82/702, and his son Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (52-102/672-720) played an important role in the direction the Ibāḍī community was forced to take at the beginning of the 2nd/8th century. The Muhallabid family became closely connected to the Ibāḍī cause through it female members; four of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab's sisters had known Ibāḍī sympathies and were accused of being Ibāḍīs themselves, with 'Ātika bt. al-Muhallab being considered to have the closest ties to the Ibāḍī community as she knew and associated with many prominent Ibāḍī scholars who lived in Basra. The Ibāḍī sympathies of these four sisters where rivaled by another

[71] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Les Cahiers*, pp. 324-325.
[72] P. Crone, "Muhallabids," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.
[73] For more on al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣuffrah, see P. Crone, "al-Muhallab.Abi Sufra, Abū Sa'id al-Azdi al-Ataki," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

female member of the Muhallabid family, Halbīya, who according to al-Shammākhī, participated in the 128/746-7 Ibāḍī attack on Mecca.[74] Even though the Sunnite Yazīd b. al-Muhallab himself didn't harbor any religious or ideological sympathy for the Ibāḍīs, he did value their trade connections as well as their financial might and, as a result, he developed a strong bond with the Ibāḍī community of Basra.[75]

The Ibāḍī community not only became linked with the Muhallabids because of trade but they also developed political connections. This was for a large part because of the animosity between Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqāfi (40-95/661-714).[76] The fact that the Muhallabid family, especially the female side, developed friendly connections with the Ibāḍī community drew the ire of al-Hajjāj, partly due to the fact that he was still fighting the remnants off the Azraki Khārijite rebellion. Therefore the bond between his political rivals, the Muhallabid family, and the Ibāḍī community in Basra became worrisome for al-Hajjāj, although the Ibāḍīs were not Azraki they were still a Khārijite sub sect. The Ibāḍīs were in all likelihood considered a subversive element prone to rebellion against Umayyad rule in Iraq.[77]

Due to the growing fanaticism that Basra's Ibāḍī community displayed in their anti-Umayyad politics and their friendly ties with the family of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, al-Hajjāj

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[74] Abū al-'Abbas Ahmad b. Sa'id Al-Shammākhī, "Extraits de L'abrégé d'ech Chemakhi," in *Chronique d'Abou Zakaria* (Algiers 1878), p. 383.

[75] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, pp. 31-32.

[76] Al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf was an important Umayyad statesman and general as well as the governor of Iraq and the main political advisor to Caliphs Abd al-Malik (r. 65-86/685-705) and al-Walīd I (r. 86-96/705-715). His wife was Hind bt. al-Muhallab, sister of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, and of whom it was known that she had sympathy for the Ibāḍī cause. For more on al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqāfi, see A. Dietrich, "al-Hadjdjajd b.Yūsuf b. al-Hakam b. 'Akil al-Thakafi, Abū Muhammad," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.

[77] Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, edited and translated as "The History of al-Tabari," 39 vols. (New York 1985-1998), Vol. 22, trans. E. K. Rowson, pp. 3-5, 25-28, 177-181 and Vol. 23, trans. M. Hinds, pp. 33-34. Ṭabarī's history also contains more details on the relationship between Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (and the Muhallabids in general) and al-Hajjāj. For the original Arabic text, see the edited version by M.J. de Goeje, 4 Vols. (Leiden 1879-1901).

finally decided that action had to be taken against Basra's Ibāḍīs. The measures taken by al-Hajjāj's resulted in a large scale persecution of the Ibāḍīs, with many Ibāḍīs being either imprisoned or expelled to Oman. It wasn't only the Ibāḍī's who suffered at the hands of al-Hajjāj as his main enemy. Yazīd b. Muhallab, was removed from his post as governor of Khurāsān in 85/704 and subsequently jailed and tortured. The entire family of Yazīd b. Muhallab also suffered as al-Hajjāj had many members of the Muhallabid family jailed and tortured, and he divorced his wife Hind, Yazīd b. Muhallab's Ibāḍī sister. But Yazīd b. Muhallab managed to flee al-Hajjāj's prison soon after and he sought refuge with Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, then governor of Palestine. Al-Hajjāj died in 95/714 and this was followed by the ascension of Sulaymān as the new Caliph (r. 96-99/715-717), who duly appointed his protégé Yazīd b. Muhallab as the new governor of both Iraq and Khurāsān.[78] As governor, Yazīd b. Muhallab maintained the same friendly bond with the Ibāḍī community in Basra, and he released all the imprisoned members of the Ibāḍī community.[79]

The favorable position of the Muhallabid family declined again under Caliph 'Umar II (r. 99-101/717-720) who accused Yazīd b. Muhallab of financial mismanagement during his tenure as governor of Khurāsān. As a result Yazīd b. Muhallab was imprisoned by Caliph 'Umar II, but he again managed to escape from captivity. The position of Yazīd b. Muhallab further deteriorated under Caliph Yazīd II (r. 101-106/720-724) which led to the decision by Yazīd b. Muhallab to lead a revolt against the Caliph, during which he managed to seize control of Iraq in 101/720. The Ibāḍī community in Basra fully supported Yazīd b. Muhallab's revolt, but when the army of the Umayyad Caliph managed to crush the revolt, the new governor of Iraq started his governorship by persecuting all of Yazīd b. Muhallab's followers, including the Ibāḍīs. This

[78] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 23, pp. 83-88, 156-163, 216 and Vol. 24, trans. S, Powers, pp. 31- 38.
[79] Lewicki, "Ibádites in Arabia and Africa," p. 69.

persecution of the Ibāḍīs by the Umayyad authorities led the Ibāḍī community in Basra to become more aggressive and assertive in their dealings with the Umayyad rulers. Eventually this would lead to the ending of the state of *kitmān* in 120/738. The Ibāḍī community in Basra benefitted from the warm relationship it held with the Muhallabids, but this also meant that the Ibāḍīs became politically tied to the Muhallabids, with the consequence of being persecuted by the Umayyad authorities whenever the Muhallabids fell out of favor with the Caliph.[80]

The link between the Ibāḍī community and the Muhallabid family did not end with the persecution suffered by both groups in Basra, as friendly ties between the two continued in the Maghreb, where, during the 2nd/8th century, several members of the Muhallabid family were appointed to the position of governor of Ifrīqiya. Even though the Muhallabid family suffered intense persecution under al-Hajjāj, the change from Umayyad rule to ‘Abbasid rule proved to be a blessing as it rejuvenated the position of the Muhallabids, who were staunch supporters of the early ‘Abbasids, as important players on the (‘Abbasid) political scene. Multiple members of the Muhallabid family were appointed as governors of different provinces simultaneously. The province of Ifrīqiya being the most important for the Muhallabid family where six of its members were appointed governor between 151/768-9 and 174/790-1.[81] The main evidence of the connection between the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb and the Muhallabid family was a piece of correspondence between the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775) and the Ibāḍī leader Abū’l-Khattāb, with the intermediary between the two being Yazīd b. Hātim al-

[80] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Vol. 24, pp. 79-81, 89-90, 111-126, 137-138 and Lewicki, “Ibádites in Arabia and Africa,” pp. 68-71.

[81] E. Savage and A.A. Gordus, “Dirhams for the Empire,” in P. Cressier and M. Garcia-Arenal (eds.), *Genèse de la ville islamique en al-Andalus et au Maghreb occidental* (Madrid 1998), p. 378.

Muhallab.[82] It is thought that the correspondence between the Ibāḍī leader and ʻAbbasid Caliph occurred because "Caliph al-Manṣūr was not only aware of this [the arrival in the Maghreb of the five *hamalāt al-ʻilm* led by Abū'l-Khattāb] but actually encouraged the introduction of a moderate Khārijite element (friendly to himself) in turbulent Ifrīqiya."[83]

An important reason why the Ibāḍī community and the Muhallabids became connected to each other in the Maghreb was because of their mutual interests in trade, through the many trade connections between Basra and the cities in Ifrīqiya, the heartland of the Ibāḍī community. The importance of trade was apparent in Tahert, as most of its neighborhoods were named after the resident Kūfan or Basran merchants that lived and operated from these neighborhoods. And even though most of these merchants were Ibāḍī, Tahert became such an important center of politics and trade that it attracted merchants from all denominations. The importance of trade for the region was also noticed by governor Yazīd b. Hātim al-Muhallab when he came to office in 155/772 as he "immediately set about the re-establishment of markets, commerce, and production with the objective of satisfying local trading interests."[84]

The friendly relationship between the Muhallabids and the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb became an important factor in ensuring that the Ibāḍī community was able to focus on their conversion efforts of the Berber tribes as well as on establishing themselves in Tahert without having to deal with a potentially hostile ʻAbbasid authority. This alliance came to fruition during the governorship of Yazīd b. Hātim and it would ultimately prove to be key to the survival of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb. This alliance also allowed the Muhallabid governors to have some form of control, albeit indirect, over the Ibāḍī-led Berber groups of the Maghreb. The reign

[82] Yazīd b. Hātim al-Muhallab was the ʻAbbasid governor in Egypt (145-149/762-766) and Ifrīqiya (155-170/772-787).
[83] Savage and Gordus, "Dirhams," p. 379.
[84] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, pp. 41-42.

of the Muhallabid governors led to a sustained period of stability which in turn led to a significant increase in trans-Saharan trade during the 1st-2nd/8th-9th centuries.[85]

Examining the relationship between the Muhallabids and the Ibāḍīs is difficult due to a lack of evidence as there is hardly any information available on this connection in the primary sources (especially on the Ibāḍī-Muhallabid connections of the 2nd/8th century). But the sparse information that is available does show that the bonds between the Muhallabids and the Ibāḍīs were very strong as they managed to survive all the problems and persecutions that took place at the end of the 1st/7th century in Basra and that continued in the Maghreb until the end of the 2nd/8th century. The strong bonds that existed between the Ibāḍīs and the Muhallabid governors helped the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb to establish itself. This would eventually lead to the building of their capital, Tahert, and the founding of an Ibāḍī Imāmate that would last for 150 years. With the establishment of an Ibāḍī Imāmate in the Maghreb the commercially orientated inhabitants of Tahert set up an extensive trading network across the Saharan desert into *Bilād al-Sūdān* that would lead to Ibāḍī traders holding a commercial monopoly in trans-Saharan trade from the second part of the 2nd/8th century until the 4th/10th century.

[85] Savage and Gordus, "Dirhams," pp. 384-385.

Chapter 3: The Ibāḍī community within the trans-Saharan trade networks.

Map 1: West Africa
Source: E.W. Bovill, The Golden Trade of the Moors (London 1958)

Trans-Saharan trade has existed for many centuries and it has long been connected with the trade for gold and (black) slaves. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 BCE) first described the peoples of West Africa and their trade connections with the Carthaginians, and it is in Herodotus that we find mention of the oldest known trading route in the Sahara: the Garamantian road from Tripoli to the Fezzan. This trade route was originally used by the

Carthaginians to acquire slaves and precious gems (mainly red garnet), and its longevity and importance is also attested to by the fact that it is mentioned in the writings of Pliny (23-79 CE). In later times this route would also be used to acquire slaves and gold, and from that point onwards it lost its exclusivity as the sole trans-Saharan route as it started facing competition from the more westerly Taghaza road that went from Sijilmasa to the Niger.[86] After the Carthaginians were defeated by the Romans the activity on the trans-Saharan trade routes declined considerably as the Romans had little interest in acquiring black slaves or African gold. The Romans preferred gold that came from Spain or the Urals, although they still acquired sub-Saharan gems and ivory in exchange for glassware, pottery, cloth, wine, and oil.[87] It was not until the Arab conquests that trans-Saharan trade increased again and from this point these trade networks became an important source of wealth for the Islamic world. The main focus of this chapter will be on the history and importance of trans-Saharan trade networks for the Islamic world as well as the role Ibāḍī traders played within these networks.[88]

With the Arab conquest of the Maghreb at the beginning of the 2nd/8th century, trans-Saharan trade got a significant boost. Already in the mid-1st/7th century the Arab armies penetrated into the central parts of the Sahara and there they discovered a surplus of available (black) slaves to be had from the oasis towns, as tribute paid by both these towns as well as by the Berber tribes inhabiting them. Slaves became the most important trading commodity coming out of the Saharan desert. Initially these slaves were needed as agricultural labor working the marshes of southern Iraq, but subsequently their "use" became more varied, from personal bodyguard to the

[86] R.A Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* (Oxford 2010), pp. 13-15; E.W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London 1958), pp. 23-26; N. Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London 1973), pp. 124-126.
[87] Bovill, *Golden Trade*, pp. 45-46.
[88] For a more recent and very well researched look at pre-Islamic trans-Saharan trade, see Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa*, Chapter 1 "Introduction to the Sahara: From Desert Barrier to Global Highway," pp. 1-22.

eunuchs protecting the harem, and from household servants to specialized singers and performers.[89]

Tales of gold also started to emerge and by the end of the 2nd/8th century the first of the great Sudanese states, the Empire of Ghana, became known in the Muslim world as "the land of gold." The Islamic Caliphate as well as the later Islamic Maghrebi states became dependant on this sub-Saharan gold for their monetary system because gold started to become the standard currency. Generally the price of goods would be quoted in *mithqals* – gold bars weighing 4.25 to 4.725 grams – or in its equivalent coin, the golden *dinar*.[90] The large amount of gold that seemed readily available in *Bilād al-Sūdān* and the way Maghrebi merchants acquired this gold was very complex and it was, and still is, shrouded in mystery. The story relating to the goldfields of Ghana was a major part of all medieval Arab accounts of trans-Saharan trade and all these tales share similarities. The mysterious silent trade in gold was already mentioned in the works of Herodotus, but it was not until al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956) that we find the first references to this phenomenon in Arabic sources. The following extract is from al-Mas'ūdī's work *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'adinal-jawhar* (translated by C. Barbier de Maynard and A. Pavet de Courteille):

> The Maghrebi merchants bargain with them without seeing them or talking with them. The Maghrebi merchants leave the goods and on the next morning these merchants go to their goods and find bars of gold left beside each commodity. If the owner of the goods wishes he chooses the gold and leaves the goods, or if he wishes he takes his goods and leaves the gold. If he

[89] Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa*, pp. 15-16, 31.
[90] Wright, *Trans-Saharan trade*, pp. 18-19; Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, pp. 9-10, 120.

> desires an increase he leaves both gold and goods. This is well known in the land of the Maghreb and Sijilmasa. From there the merchants carry goods to the shore of that river.[91]

A more detailed version regarding the gold miners and the wares brought by the Maghrebi merchants is found in the writings of Ya'qūt (575-626/1179-1229), although I have omitted the actual trade procedure as it is similar to that mentioned above in al-Mas'ūdī, with the addition of the beating of drums to signify the conclusion of the trade:

> Merchants travel from Sijilmasa to a town on the frontiers of the Sudan, called Ghana. Their ware are salt, bundles of pine wood (*sanawbar*), blue glass beads, bracelets of red copper, bangles and signet rings of copper, and nothing else. (…) They reach Ghana after enormous exertions. They halt there and recover, and then take the guides to accompany them. They make great provision of water and take with them men of intelligence and go-betweens, in order to effect transactions with the owners of the gold. (…) They strive onwards with much suffering until they reach the place which separates them form the owner of the gold. When they arrive there, they beat great drums which they have brought with them, and which may be heard from the horizon where these peoples of the Sudan live. It is said that they dwell in underground hiding places and burrows, and that they are naked, like animals, covering [of the body] being unknown to them. This how their manners are reported though those people never allow a merchant to see them.[92]

Boville added an interesting section on the capture of one of the gold miners, describing how

> The merchants once tried to discover the source of the gold by treacherously capturing one of the timid negroes. He pined to death without saying a word, and it was three years before the

[91] al-Mas'ūdī, "Murūj al-dhahab," p. 303.
[92] N. Levtzion and J.F.P. Hopkins (eds.), *A Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (New Jersey 2006), pp. 169-170.

> negroes would resume the trade, and then only because they had no other way of satisfying their craving for salt.[93]

"Wangara" was the name of these mysterious goldfields, but nearly all Arabic sources would call every place in *Bilād al-Sūdān* where gold was found "Wangara", leading to great confusion as to the true whereabouts of this mysterious silent trade. The fact that this story received so much attention in nearly all the Arab histories and chronicles of *Bilād al-Sūdān* shows the mystery that surrounded not only the gold trade but trade in *Bilād al-Sūdān* in general, especially regarding the lack of knowledge of the local inhabitants of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. In my opinion this century-old story shows how the gold merchants tried to keep the mystery of "Wangara" alive as a means of protecting their gold trade from outsiders.

It was not until the 13th/19th century that the British explorer Major Dixon Denham finally realized that "all gold countries, as well as any people coming from the gold countries…are called 'Wangara'." The true location of the goldfields mentioned in the Arab chronicles remained a mystery for many years and it led to many expeditions by European explorers trying to locate the exact position of these "Wangara" goldfields.[94]

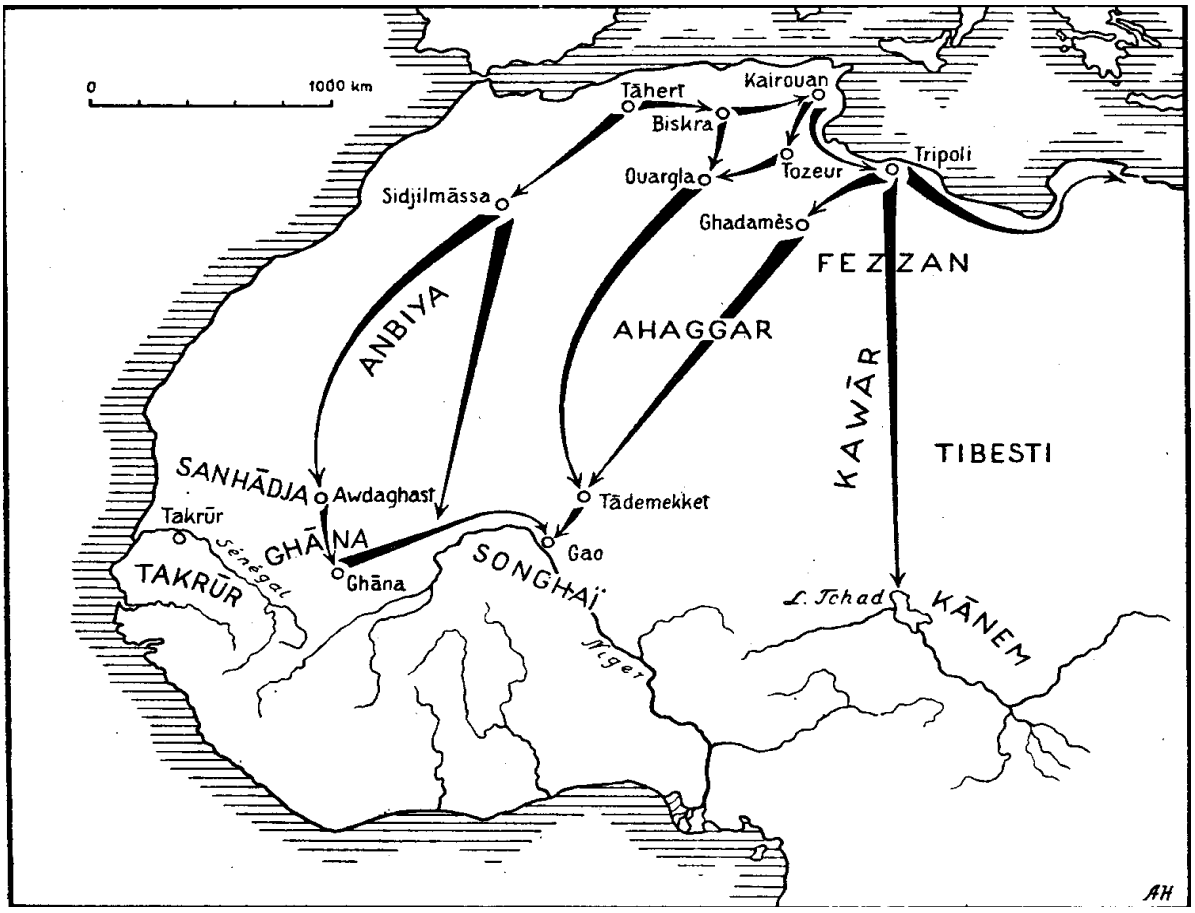
Slave trade formed the early basis of Ibāḍī expansion in the second half of the 2nd/8th century. Initially slaves came through the central and eastern routes of the Sahara and consisted of pagan Berbers and oasis inhabitants who were considered legal booty as they had not yet been converted to Islam. With the conversion to Islam of most of the pagans peoples inhabiting the Sahara as well as the realization that black slaves from *Bilād al-Sūdān* were more plentiful and

[93] Bovill, *Golden Trade*, p. 83.
[94] Bovill, *Golden Trade*, p. 202. For an overview of the exploring done to find the actual location of the "Wangara" goldfields, see *Golden Trade's* chapter 19, "Wangara," pp. 191-202.

thus more profitable, there arose a significant increase, from the 2nd/8th century onwards, in raiding parties into the Saharan desert to "hunt" for black slaves.[95] This combined with the allure of the "Wangara" goldfields led to a big expedition by Ḥabīb b. Abī 'Ubayda al-Fihrī (d. 130/747) in 117/734 that "attained a success the like of which had never been attained before and seized whatever he wished," seizing and bringing back large quantities of gold and slaves.[96]

But the Arab governors of Ifrīqiya started to realize that these raids would not lead to a continuous flow of gold, and the ever-increasing demand for slaves by the Caliphal court could also not be met by either raids, tribute payments from the oasis towns or a combination of both. Therefore the governors of Ifrīqiya started to encourage trading expeditions from the Maghreb across the Sahara towards *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Substantial steps were taken by the then governor of Ifrīqiya, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb al-Fihrī (r. 130-138/747-755), son of the abovementioned Ḥabīb b. Abī 'Ubayda al-Fihrī (and great-grandson of 'Uqba b. Nāfi'(d. 63/683),[97] the Umayyad general who began the conquest of the Maghreb), who ordered the systematic digging of wells along the trading routes leading from the oases in the southern Maghreb to *Bilād al-Sūdān*.[98]

[95] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, pp. 86-87.
[96] Levtzion & Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 158.
[97] Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa*, p. 20.
[98] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, p. 126.



Map 2: Main trans-Saharan Trade routes, 3rd/9th – 6th/12th Centuries
Source: T. Lewicki, "Traits d'histoire du commerce transsaharien. Marchands et missionnaires Ibadites en Soudan occidental et central au cours des VIII^e – XII^e siecles," Etnografia Polska, Vol. 8 (1963), p. 293.

There were four important routes that linked the Maghreb southwards with *Bilād al-Sūdān*: the Sijilmasa – Walata route leading to the gold-bearing countries of the Senegal and upper-Niger; the Ghadames – Ghat route to Air and the rich Hausa country; the route Tripoli – Fezzan – Kawar (formerly known as the Garamantian road) to Bornu and Lake Chad; the Cyrenaica – Kufra – Wadia route in the extreme east. The first three routes mentioned were (and for a large part still are) under the control of Berber-Tuareg tribes,[99] and it was these Berber tribes who maintained and dug new desert wells, as well as securing them and the surrounding pastures for

[99] For more information on the Tuaregs who inhabited the Saharan regions, see H.T. Norris, *The Tuaregs. Their Islamic Legacy and Its Diffusion in the Sahel* (Warminster 1975)

the passing caravans. The Berber tribes also arranged transport logistics for merchants at both the trading towns on the northern and southern edges of the Saharan routes. The control and maintenance of these trade routes was an important source of income for these Berber tribes, either through the levying of tolls or through the blackmail of merchants travelling the roads under their control. Berber tribes realized the importance of these trade routes for their economic prosperity and therefore they were careful not only to ensure that the volume of trade going through their lands suffered no harm by overcharging the merchants, but that the frequent inter-tribal conflicts linked to the control of the wells and pastures along the trade routes were not allowed to interfere with trade.[100]

By the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries the majority of merchants participating in the trans-Saharan trade were Muslim, mostly Ibāḍī, and the growth in trade volume had led to political development in the western part of *Bilād al-Sūdān* which became known for its export of gold. In the centuries preceding the Arab conquest of the Maghreb there had already been significant developments that stimulated political reorganization of the Sahel, this was in large part due to introduction of the camel as a beast of burden for trans-Saharan trade. Before the introduction of the camel there was rather limited trans-Saharan trade and its introduction led to a very significant growth in trade volume.[101]

The rising importance of trade led to Gao, Takrur, Kumbi and the city of Ghana – the main trading towns of the Sahel – becoming major commercial entrepôts as well as political centers. Besides the wealth this provided, the local rulers of these towns also realized the importance of trade for their own position of authority. Effective control of these strategic centers, as well as

[100] Bovill, *Golden Trade*, pp. 52-53.
[101] Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa*, pp. 16-17.

their hinterlands, was needed to ensure control of the trade that passed through their lands. This led to an increase in political organization and the emergence of different states in *Bilād al-Sūdān*. These states were able to provide for a better level of security that in turn ensured the continuous flow of trade, i.e. gold in the western *Bilād al-Sūdān*, through the Sahara.[102]

The establishment and organization of these early political entities enabled the rulers of the different "countries" in *Bilād al-Sūdān* to set up uniform rules and regulations. For example, there was such an abundance of gold in the Empire of Ghana that its rulers had to enforce strict controls regarding the amount of gold that was supplied to the markets, fearing a collapse of the gold price if the amount of gold offered on the markets was too great. An effective method to control the gold supply was to make all nuggets of gold crown property, this left only gold dust (*tibar*) for the trade. The main trading item for gold was salt, as there was a dire need for salt in *Bilād al-Sūdān* due to its hot and humid climate. According to the famous 5th/11th century chronicler Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), at times local Sudanese merchants were in such need of salt that they would exchange it for an equal weight of gold.[103]

By the 4th/10th century one of the principal markets for Wangara gold was Tādmekka on the southern fringes of the Sahara. It is here that in the 6th/12th century an Ibāḍī trader from the Banū Wisyān of the Jarīd region, named Tamli, made his fortune through his annual trips to Tādmekka to trade "Wangara" gold. According to the anonymous Ibāḍī treatise *Siyar al-mashāyikh*, Tamli's profits were great enough for him to send 8,000 *dinars* a year back to the Jarīd to be redistributed among the poor:

[102] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, pp. 9-10.
[103] Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb*, pp. 176-177.

> [Tamli] began to travel to Tadmakkat where he attained great wealth…He began to send from Tadmakkat every year sixteen bags, each bag containing 500 *dinars*. These bags were of cowhide and on each of them was written "This is God's Property." He used to send them to Abū 'Imrān for him to distribute among his dependants until Abū 'Imran wrote saying: "God's property is much but your dependants are no longer in need." So Tamli wrote to him: "Give of it to such of the *ahl al-da'wa* as you know to be free of major sin."[104]

One can imagine that this philanthropy accounts for his appearance in the *Siyar al-mashāyikh*.

Ibāḍī traders were a visible majority amongst Muslim trans-Saharan traders from the inception of Ibāḍī influence in the Maghreb, and even after the disappearance of the independent Ibāḍī states in the 3rd/10th century, Ibāḍī traders continued to play an important role in the trans-Saharan trade. The significant position of Ibāḍī traders within these trade networks was in large part due to the Ibāḍī sense of profitable commercial enterprises and the knowledge their Berber allies had of the Sahara. Combined with the loading and long-distance capacity of the camel, the increase in trans-Saharan trade led to an economic and commercial revolution as well as the emergence of political organization. The Ibāḍī traders and their Berber allies managed to establish a monopoly on the central and western Saharan trade routes which ensured the economic predominance of the Ibāḍī communities in the Maghreb.

One of the most important Ibāḍī commercial centers was the central Saharan oasis town of Zawīla. As an important entrepôt for the trade in slaves, Zawīla would become an important commercial center for over a thousand years until slave trade was outlawed in the 13th/19th century. Zawīla was located at the point where the most important east-west route for trade and pilgrims crossed with one of the main north-south routes from the Maghreb into *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

[104] Levtzion & Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 90.

This east-west route reached Fāṭimid Cairo, where it entered the city through the *Bab Zawīla*, the "Zawīla Gate."[105] Because of Zawīla's strategic location at the crossroad of two important trans-Saharan east-west and north-south routes, some authors considered Zawīla to be "at the heart of the commercial revolution that made the traffic in black slaves the mainstay of all trade."[106] The slave trade was being facilitated and run by the Ibāḍī Berber tribes that controlled the area surrounding Zawīla. Further evidence that Zawīla was an Ibāḍī town is shown in the writing of al-Ya'qūbī (d. 279/892), who wrote that "all the inhabitants of the oasis of Zawīla were Ibāḍī. They along with merchants from Khurāsān, Basra, and Kūfa, were involved in the slave trade with the Lake Chad region."[107]

Nearly all of the Ibāḍī traders (and Maghrebi traders in general) preferred to have their commercial base on the edge of *Bilād al-Sūdān* where it would still be in the domain of the Berbers and the lands of Islam. One such commercial town was Awdaghust (also known as Aoudaghost) whose population was mainly Ibāḍī until its capture by the Almoravids in 447/1055. Al-Bakrī mentions the following about its pre-Almoravid past: "The people of Awdaghust [mainly from Ifrīqiya] enjoy extensive benefits and huge wealth. The market there is at always full of people. (…) Awdaghust exported both the best and purest gold in the world as well as ambergris of excellent quality."[108] Tādmekka was also an important commercial center on the fringes of the southern Sahara and *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Through its commercial link with Tahert and Wargla its inhabitants were in all likelihood converted to Ibāḍīsm when they converted to Islam. After the rulers of Ghana were defeated by the Almoravids and forced to

[105] B.G. Martin, "Kanem, Bornu, and the Fazzan: Notes on the Political History of a Trade Route," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1969), pp. 17-18.
[106] Wright, *Trans-Saharan trade*, pp. 25-26.
[107] Levtzion & Hopkins, *Corpus*, pp. 19-22.
[108] Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb*, pp. 158-159.

convert to Sunni Islam, halfway through the 5th/11th century, Tādmekka became one of the many towns in the western part of *Bilād al-Sūdān* that was cleansed of all Ibāḍī influences.[109]

Most towns in *Bilād al-Sūdān* had "Muslim quarters" that were either adjacent to or near the existing local settlements and in some case these Muslim quarters were integrated into the "pagan town" as a separate and semi-autonomous component. However, in the first decades of the Maghrebi commercial expansion into *Bilād al-Sūdān*, both the kings of Ghana and the Muslim merchants preferred to live apart. The more drastic form of "Muslim quarters" was found in the town of Ghana, one of the main commercial centers of *Bilād al-Sūdān*, which had a sizeable Islamic merchant community.[110] Here the Islamic merchants lived under a non-Muslim, animistic king. But the Islamic merchants did not live in the same town as the local population as they were forced to live in a specific Muslim "sister"-town that was separated from the king's town. This is mentioned by al- Bakrī as he states that "'The city of Ghana consists of two towns….One, inhabited by Muslims, is large and has twelve mosques" along with various kinds of Islamic officials and clergy. "The king's town is six miles distant" and contains, among other features, "the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cults," as well as "their idols and the tombs of their kings."'[111]

The reason for this occurrence was because the merchants wanted to maintain an autonomous Islamic community, and the local kings tried to restrict the influence of Islam and other foreign practices on his subjects. This did not mean that there was no contact outside of the commercial sphere. The kings of Ghana employed literate Muslims to work in their courts, as interpreters, in the treasury, and whenever a knowledge of writing was needed. In general

[109] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, p. 45.
[110] B.M. Perinbam, "Soninke-Ibāḍiyya Interactions in the Western Sudan *c*. Ninth to *c*. Eleventh Century," *The Maghreb Review. Majallat al-Maghrib*, Vol. 14 (1989), p. 73.
[111] Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa*, p. 78.

Muslims were welcome almost everywhere in *Bilād al-Sūdān* as long as they did not represent an obvious threat to the local political system.[112] In return most kings of *Bilād al-Sūdān* were comfortable with Muslim merchants applying their own laws; when a merchant from Ifrīqiya died in *Bilād al-Sūdān*, the local king appointed a Muslim to decide, according to Muslim law, what should happen with the deceased merchant's properties. In general this amount of latitude towards Muslims was only found in those areas of *Bilād al-Sūdān* that were involved in the trans-Saharan trade.[113]

There are a number of sources that make reference to there being official diplomatic relations between the Ibāḍī Rustumid Imāmate in the Maghreb and the kings of Ghana. During the time of the second Ibāḍī Imām, ʻAbd al-Wahhāb (r. 168-208/784-823), there was an Ibāḍī Imām, Abū ʻUbayda ʻAbd al-Ḥāmid al-Janāwunī, who apparently not only spoke Berber and Arabic but also the language of Kanim. These linguistic skills were important for dealing with the many different linguistic groups that were part of the trans-Saharan trade network, therefore he was appointed to the important post of governor (*ʻāmil*) of the Jebel Nafūsa, the heartland of Ibāḍī support. Another sign of official court links between the rulers of Tahert and *Bilād al-Sūdān* was that Aflah, the son of ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, proposed that he should travel to travel to *Bilād al-Sūdān*. This happened during the first quarter of the 3rd/9th century and it was probably for commercial reasons. His father refused, however, and sent an ambassador instead.[114] A third source tells us about a wealthy and distinguished merchant, Muhammad b. ʻArfa, who was sent

[112] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, p. 186.
[113] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, p. 163.
[114] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, p. 83.

by the fourth Rustumid Imām, Abū Bakr b. Aflah (r. 250-254/864-868), as ambassador to an unspecified king in *Bilād al-Sūdān*.[115]

Not only did Ibāḍī merchants establish themselves south of the Sahara, they also established a prosperous trading community on the Mediterranean island of Sicily. The Ibāḍī merchants on Sicily had close ties with their brethren in the Maghreb and especially with the island of Djerba, which became the Ibāḍī spiritual center in the Maghreb after the fall of Tahert. One of the main reason for Ibāḍī merchants to settle in Sicily was its location and the economic benefits associated with being within the trade network that connected the Maghreb with Europe and the Arab East. Sicily became a major transit point, not only for sub-Saharan gold and slaves, but also for wheat which it exported to the Maghreb.[116] The presence of an Ibāḍī trading community on Sicily shows how extensive the Ibāḍī trade-networks were as they ranged all the way from China, through Oman and Basra, to the west coasts of the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*, and from the Mediterranean to the river Niger. It was an extensive network that led to many riches for both the Ibāḍī community as well as the Islamic world in general.

After the Fāṭimid conquest of Tahert in 296/909 the Rustumid state ceased to exist, leading to a decline in Tahert's fortunes as well as to the impoverishment of its inhabitants. The last Imām of Tahert, Yaqẓān b. Muhammad (r. 294-296/907-909) fled to Wargla, making it the new center of the Ibāḍīs in the Maghreb as well as the new main Ibāḍī entrepôt for trade with *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Wargla also connected other Ibāḍī settlements that survived the Fāṭimid conquest, like those in the Djerid, Tādmekka and Zawīla. An important role of the Ibāḍī merchants in Wargla was played by monopolizing both the trade from Tādmekka to the Niger bend and, in

[115] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Ahkbār* (1984), p. 158.
[116] L. Chiarelli, "The Ibāḍī Presence in Muslim Sicily," *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2005), pp. 77-79.

cooperation with the Ibāḍī merchants in Zawīla, the trade on the Fezzan route. This was combined with a significant Ibāḍī presence on the Awdaghust-Sijilmasa route, in large part possible due to their strategic and cordial relations with the Ṣufri rulers of Sijilmasa. Given that these three routes can be considered the main trading routes after the fall of Tahert in 296/909, one can conclude that the Ibāḍī grip on trans-Saharan remained strong even though the Maghrebi Ibāḍīs were now stateless.[117]

For most merchants living and traveling in foreign lands it was important to have trustworthy agents, contacts, and representatives at the different stages and locations of their trading routes. Because of the vast distances, the general lack of regular and reliable communication, the ever-present trading risks, and all the difficulties that came with trans-Saharan travel, most merchants organized themselves through personal, ethnic, and clientelistic ties, utilizing the knowledge of their networks to ensure not only maximum profits, but also their own safety and well-being. For Ibāḍī merchants this meant that they closely cooperated with other Ibāḍīs merchants, as well as with the Ibāḍīs located at the different stages of their trade routes. In the larger scheme this applied to all Muslim who would often work together in the more far-flung destinations of the trade networks. Islam was an uniting factor for many merchants of the trans-Saharan trade.

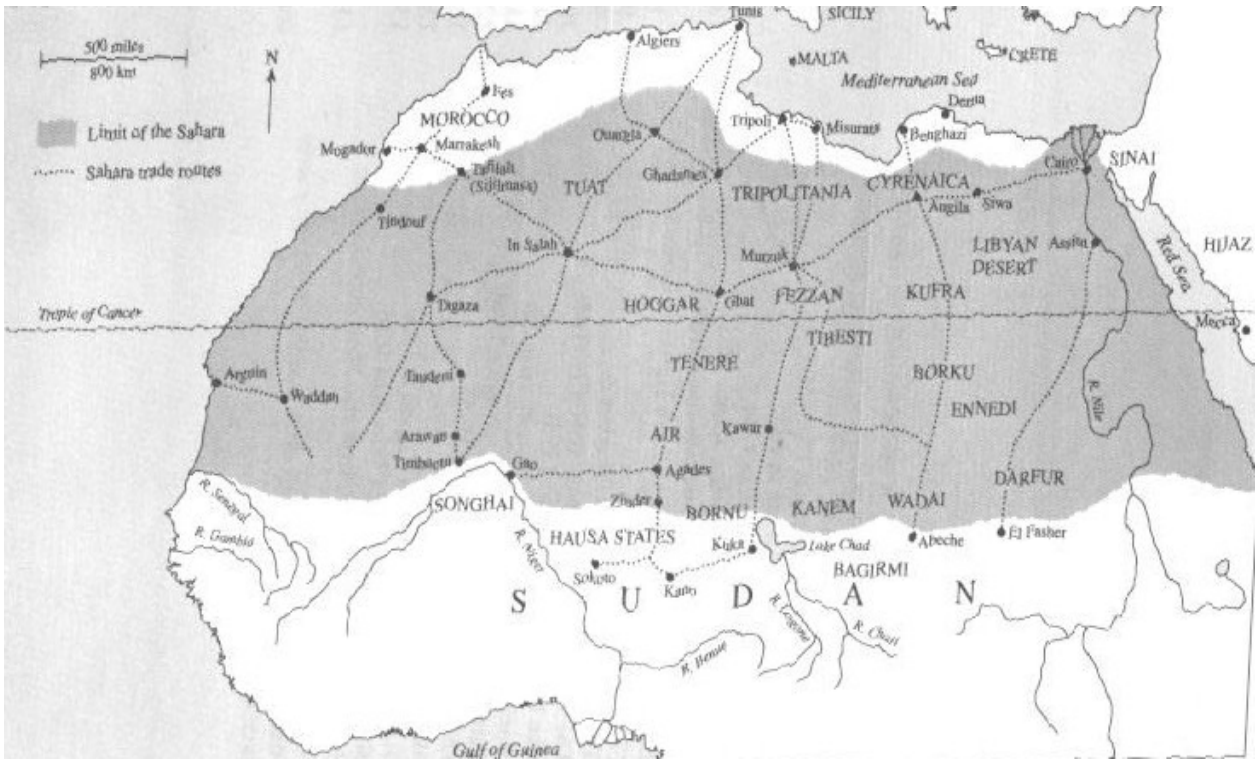
Even though they had different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, most merchants still had a common commercial and moral code (based on Islam) which was understandable and known to all. This allowed merchants to cooperate for their own material well-being as well as that of the entire community. An important aspect of long-distance trade relied upon the credit system as

[117] M. Brett, "Ifriqiya as a Market for Saharan Trade from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century A.D.," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1969), pp. 356-357.

trans-Saharan trade expeditions required significant investments that would not pay out until the trade caravan returned to the Maghreb form *Bilād al-Sūdān*, often a year later. The issue of trust was also important for Maghrebi merchants with investments in *Bilād al-Sūdān*, as they needed to be sure that both their investment and their reputation (i.e. their creditworthiness) would be in good hands at the different stages of their trade network.

When law became involved it was often handled according to *Sharī'a* law and traders also acted as arbiters in commercial disputes, settling controversies in accordance with commonly held beliefs. Islamic traditions were also used to provide regional uniform weights, measures, currencies, and reasonably stable exchange rates. In short, the common Islamic bonds, and more specifically, the common Ibāḍī bonds, provided a model for trading procedures, acceptable commercial practices, and the means to enforce them, as well as a code for interpersonal relationships within mercantile communities.[118] The importance of the trans-Saharan trade for the wealth and prosperity of the Islamic world is undeniable, and at the center of these trade networks we find the Ibāḍī merchants, who along with their Berber allies controlled most of it.

[118] B.M. Perinbam, "Social Relations in the Trans-Saharan and Western Sudanese Trade: An Overview," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 15, No.4 (Sept. 1973), p. 421-426.



Map 3: Trans-Saharan trade routes
Source: J.L. Wright, The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade (London 2007)

Chapter 4: The Ibāḍī impact on the trans-Saharan trade.

The increased realization by both Arab merchants and rulers of the riches available and the wealth that could be attained on the other side of the great Saharan desert led to a marked increase in trade with the non-Muslim inhabitants of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. In return for Sudanese gold and slaves the Maghrebi merchants brought salt, trade goods, and Islam. A large role in the trade to *Bilād al-Sūdān* was played by Ibāḍī merchants and the Rustumid Imāmate due to their monopolization of the trans-Saharan trade routes. The Ibāḍī merchants combined their missionary zeal with their quest for slaves and gold and this led to great riches for the Ibāḍī state of Tahert, riches brought by trade connections that were necessary for its survival in competing against other Islamic states. Even though Ibāḍī merchants were not the first Muslims to reach *Bilād al-Sūdān*, they did end up staying to ensure that the trans-Saharan trade became a constant source of gold and slaves for the north and salt and other general trade goods for the south. Because Ibāḍī merchants traversed and settled in the lands of *Bilād al-Sūdān* they ended up having a significant impact on both the local inhabitants and its rulers. In this chapter I will examine the impact that Ibāḍī merchants had on *Bilād al-Sūdān* in terms of tangible goods. Religious and legal issues that arose due to trading with non-Muslims in *Dār al-Ḥarb*, as well as the issue of *ribā* (usury) is also mentioned in this chapter. Finally, I will end this chapter by looking at the effects the trans-Saharan trade had on the Ibāḍī community of the Maghreb.

Initially trans-Saharan trade revolved around gold, slaves, and salt, but after the trading networks became more established the types of trading goods became more luxurious. This was the case with the goods flowing from *Bilād al-Sūdān* to the Maghreb (e.g. ivory and ostrich feathers) as well as with the goods being traded in the other direction (e.g. cotton and wool cloth,

horses, jewelry). Of the items that were new to *Bilād al-Sūdān* cloth started to play an increasingly important role in Sudanese society, which did not go unnoticed with the Arab chroniclers. According to Ibn Sa'īd (610-685/1214-1287) the rural inhabitants of *Bilād al-Sūdān* used to go naked, but when Muslim traders came they taught them to cover their private parts. Generally most Sudanese people just wore animal skins, but when they were in contact with the foreign traders they would put on imported clothes of cotton and wool.[119] Al-Bakrī describes the urban population of Ghana as wearing robes of cotton, silk, or brocade (depending on what they were able to afford), but only the king and the crown prince were allowed to wear sewn clothes according to "the Muslims' fashion."[120] Al-Idrīsī (wr. 548/1154) describes how initially the king of Malal (and his people) were naked, but when the king converted to Islam he was given a cotton dress. With the arrival of Maghrebi traders both Islam and its customs, as well as the traders' appearance, were adopted by the local population and hence Levtzion's statement that "Islam helped in creating a market for clothes and encouraged the increase of imports as well as the expansion of local manufacturing."[121]

Besides clothing another important life-style change was brought from the Maghreb by Ibāḍī traders: Maghrebi food crops. B.M. Perinbam argues that due to the large amount of traveling by Ibāḍī (and in general all) traders between the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān* as well as within *Bilād al-Sūdān*, it is very likely that Maghrebi traders would have introduced their own food crops, especially given the repeated statements describing the local cuisine as "horrid" in the Arab chronicles. One can assume, as does Perinbam, that as the Maghrebi traders started to settle more permanently in the trading towns of *Bilād al-Sūdān* they would start to try to grow their

[119] Levtzion & Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 185.
[120] Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb*, p. 175.
[121] Levtzion & Hopkins, *Corpus*, p. 110.

own food crops. Even though Perinbam doesn't have concrete evidence of exactly which food crops Ibāḍī merchants imported from the Maghreb, archeological evidence found in *Bilād al-Sūdān* show that the irrigation schemes that were in use there had its origins in the Ibāḍī Maghreb areas.[122] Perinbam's hypothesis is linked to the emergence of an Ibāḍī diaspora in *Bilād al-Sūdān* due to the increase of Ibāḍī traders settling there, which makes for a very compelling and plausible argument.

Another important Ibāḍī import from the Maghreb was its religious architecture. Renowned orientalist Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) concluded from his fieldwork and research that it was the Ibāḍī traders from Wargla and the Mzāb who introduced the design of the very distinctive staircase-minaret across the Sahara; this design became very common in the western parts of *Bilād al-Sūdān* along with the equilateral *miḥrāb* originally found in the Mzāb.[123] Examples of both are still found today in the towns on the southern fringes of the Sahara, with the most famous example being the Great Mosque of Gao.

By the mid-5th/11th century trans-Saharan trade had developed into a dynamic network where trade going both directions became dependant on each other and encouraged each other's growth. According to Michael Brett

> By the 4th/10th century at least, it seems possible to envisage the network as an elastic mechanism capable of transmitting new demands across the desert and expanding accordingly. Such indeed might be the interpretation put upon the gold trade itself, and on the Awdaghust-Sijilmasa route with which it is initially associated. This may perhaps be considered as developed or greatly expanded by members of the Ibāḍī community under the auspices of the

[122] B.M Perinbam, "Were the Maghribi Ibāḍiyya contributers to West African food production?: An evaluation of the Evidence," *The Maghreb Review. Majallat al-Maghrib*, Vol. 12, No. 3-4 (1987).
[123] Francesca, "Religious observance," pp. 192-193.

> Fāṭimids of Ifrīqiya, not out of regard for any fleeting political control of Sijilmasa, but in response to a sharp demand for gold to further imperial design in the east. The Ibāḍī merchant would then be acting in effect as a Fāṭimid agent, although the route once exploited and colonized might be expected to develop a life of its own.[124]

In hindsight one can say that the most important commodity that was traded from the Maghreb across the Sahara and into *Bilād al-Sūdān* was Islam. As the Ibāḍīs initially entered the Maghreb as missionaries originating from one of Islam's main commercial centers (Basra) the combination of religion and trade became a perfect match. The spread of Ibāḍīsm from the Maghreb southwards coincided with the growing trans-Saharan trade. The combination of religion and trade manifested itself in the merchant-shaykh. These Muslim travelers combined both business and scholarly objectives, whereby it was often difficult to make a clear distinction between the "merchant" and "shaykh" activities.[125]

The additional role as merchant allowed Ibāḍī missionaries to use their trade network for both travel and communication. The non-Ibāḍī rulers of the Maghreb (initially the 'Abbasids, afterwards the Fāṭimids) were suspicious of all movement by "heretic" sects outside of the season of *hajj*. Therefore the combination of missionary and commercial activities depended on the Ibāḍīs' ability to organize long-distance journeys and their familiarity with the various trade routes, leading to relative freedom of movement at a time when this was met with suspicion from authorities.[126] According to Professor T. Lewicki's research the Ibāḍī merchant-shayks where very active missionaries who tried to convert the pagan populace in *Bilād al-Sūdān* to Ibāḍīsm.

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[124] Brett, "Ifriqiya as a Market for Saharan Trade," pp. 358-359.
[125] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, p. 142.
[126] E. Francesca, "The Formation and Early Development of the Ibāḍī Madhhab," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, Vol. 28 (2003), p. 271; Francesca, *walāya/barā'a*, p. 72.

And Lewicki continues by stating that these Ibāḍī merchant-shayks represented "the only form of Islam in West Africa, until the Almoravids brought their Sunni-Islam."[127]

As with most merchants the Ibāḍī merchant-shaykhs were received with open arms by the local, non-Muslim rulers of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. These rulers wanted to attract Maghrebi merchants to their capitals because the wealth of their kingdoms depended on the trans-Saharan trade, especially the trade in gold. The kings of Ghana, for example, allowed the Muslim merchants trading in their lands to practice their religion without interference, accepting Islamic law when it came to deciding how to handle the property of Muslim merchants who died in *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

It was not long before the first Sudanese kings converted to Islam. In general the Arab chroniclers do not attribute these conversions to the efforts of Ibāḍī merchant-shaykhs or mention whether the Sudanese kings converted to Ibāḍī Islam as they just use the generic term "Muslim". However, it was known that because of the significant presence of Ibāḍī merchant-shaykhs most conversions in pre-Almoravid times were to Ibāḍī Islam. A very detailed account of the conversion of the king of Malal is given by al-Bakrī (with the translation by Levtzion):

> Opposite Yaresna, on the other side of the Nile, is a great kingdom…the title of its king is Do…Beyond it is a country called Malal, the king of which is known as al-Muslimani. He was so called because his country once became afflicted with drought one year following another. They prayed for rain through their sacrifices, to the extent that they almost exterminated the cattle, but the drought and distress only increased. The king has a Muslim guest with him, who read the Quran and studied the Sunna. The king complained to this Muslim of the calamities that assailed them. The Muslim said: 'O king, if you only believed in Allah the exalted, and testified Him being One, and to the prophetic mission of Muhammad, and if you accepted all the

[127] T. Lewicki, "Traits d'histoire du commerce transsaharien. Marchands et missionnaires Ibadites en Soudan occidental et central au cours des VIII^{e} – XII^{e} siecles," *Etnografia Polska*, Vol. 8 (1963), pp. 296-298.

> religious laws of Islam, I would pray on your behalf for deliverance from your plight. You would bring Allah's mercy upon the people of your country, and your enemies and adversaries would envy you on this account.' He persisted with the king until the latter sincerely adopted Islam. He taught him to recite some easy passages from the Quran and instructed him in those religious obligations and practices which one ought to know. Then the Muslim asked the king to wait until the night of the following Friday, when he told him to be purified by a complete ablution, and clothed him in a cotton robe he had with him. They set out to a mound of earth, where the Muslim stood praying and the king, on his right, followed his example. They prayed throughout the night; the Muslim reciting invocations, and the king saying amen. The dawn had just begun to break, when Allah brought down abundant rain. Then the king ordered that the idols be broken and the sorcerers expelled from his country. He, together with his descendants and the nobility, became sincerely attached to Islam, but the common people of his kingdom remained pagans. On this account, their kings have since been given the title of al-Muslimani.[128]

Just like the stories about the goldfields of "Wangara" this royal conversion tale, in some form or another, but containing all the necessary elements showing the significance of Islam, is also found in numerous Arab histories and chronicles as it represents one of the earliest stories of royal conversion coming out of *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

Some of the most significant rulers that the Ibāḍī merchant-shaykhs were able to convert to Islam were the kings of Ghana. The reason why it is generally accepted that the kings of Ghana were converted to Ibāḍī Islam was because of the combination of Ibāḍī architecture used for the Grand Mosque of Gao, the capital of Ghana, and because of the historically close ties between Gao and Tahert, since the 2nd/8th century, that still existed when the kings of Ghana converted to

[128] Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana*, pp. 188-9.

Islam. It is again in al-Bakrī's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* (wr. 460/1068, by the time he wrote this the kings of Ghana were already Muslim) that we find more mention of the nature of the Islam practiced by the kings of *Bilād al-Sūdān*: "Their king is a Muslim, for they entrust the kingship to Muslims only. When a king comes to power, he is given a signet-ring, a sword, and a copy of the Koran, which they claim were sent by *amīr al-mu'minīn* [the caliph]." However, al-Bakrī also states that even though the king was Muslim and used Islamic royal emblems, "the common people worshipped idols as did the other Sudanese people. (…) When the king sits down to eat a drum is beaten… and no one in his town may go about until the king has finished his meal [This is a pagan tradition]."[129] This anecdote shows to that local practices and methods of worship remained the normal way of life, the king and his people were Muslim in name only.

As trans-Saharan trade entailed long distance travel to *Dār al-Ḥarb* to do business with pagan peoples, it posed legal problems. Especially since trade with the local, and mostly non-Muslim, people of *Bilād al-Sūdān* resulted in the accumulation of large amounts of wealth for many Ibāḍī merchants. This was something that clashed with the Ibāḍī notions of religious austerity, even though the Ibāḍīs were of the opinion that their religious ethics coupled with ascetic living encouraged their commercial activities. One prime example of Ibāḍī austerity was given by the Rustumid Imāms themselves; Imām Ibn Rustum held money in contempt and he also sent back money to Basra as he felt that Tahert did not need it, and Imām Ya'qūb is known to have "touched neither *dinar* nor *dirham* with his hands."[130] The disconnect between commercial endeavors and maintaining religious austerity should be explained by regarding the profits made of trade, as well as the movement by Ibāḍī traders into non-Ibāḍī lands, as being

[129] Al-Bakrī, p. 183.
[130] Julien, *History of North Africa*, p. 29.

beneficial and tantamount to the spread of Ibāḍīsm. As long as trade was for the greater good of the Ibāḍī community it was considered both acceptable and necessary, although some commercial and economic issues remained controversial.

A sensitive topic when it comes to commercial enterprises and profit-making within Islam is the issue of *ribā* (usury).[131] In Ibāḍī law *ribā* garners widespread condemnation due to the moral stance regarding the religious ethics as Ibāḍī authorities considered *ribā* to be an atrocious sin and a deplorable crime that deserved "the most severe punishment both in this and future life."[132] According to Dr. E. Francesca this tough stance stemmed from the fact that Ibāḍīsm attached great importance to religious principles that stressed the responsibility of individuals, such as the obligation of "promoting good and preventing evil." But, even though Ibāḍī authorities condemned the practice of *ribā* from a moral perspective they did not "take the prohibition of *ribā* to its extreme consequences, namely, including those transactions that they did not perceive as illegal."[133] In the case of *ribā* the Ibāḍī authorities clearly chose the side of commercial enterprises and the accumulation of profits that it leads to, mainly because of the importance of trade for the Ibāḍī way of life as well as trade being a necessary part of its survival.

The Ibāḍīs did accept the notion of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* (*ribā* of credit) for gold and silver. This was because they considered the finished product, being gold and silver coins, as being worth more than unmanufactured gold and silver, even if both were of the same weight, due to the costs of minting these coins. This was an ancient Arab custom that pre-dated Islam (*jāhiliyya*).

[131] For a summary and explanation from an Islamic point of view regarding the negative aspects of *ribā*, see Imtiaz 'Alī, *Ribā. Usury or Interest* (Riyadh 2006).

[132] E. Francesca, "Religious observance and market law in medieval Islam. The controversial application of the prohibition of usury according to some Ibâḍî sources," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, Vol. 99-100 (2002), p. 194.

[133] Francesca, "Religious observance," p. 200. For an excellent exposition on the different types of *riba* and how they were viewed by the different *madhabs*, see M. Fadel, "Riba, Efficiency, and Prudential Regulation: Preliminary Thought," *Wisconsin International Law Journal*, April (2008).

However, Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, and later Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), were both against this custom as they considered it a form of *ribā*, the reason being that it was susceptible to abuse. This became the prevailing position of the Sunni jurists regarding this form of *ribā*.[134] Instead the Sunni jurists decided that gold or silver coins were to be exchanged for the same amount (by weight) of unmanufactured gold or silver *and* a minting fee, this minting fee could be regulated and/or fixed and therefore it was not considered *ribā*.[135] Another important aspect that plays a role in the Ibadi acceptance of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* was that some Omani Ibāḍī scholars were of the opinion that the exchange of gold for silver on credit was allowed.[136]

These two aspects of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* combined, unmanufactured metal for coins and the exchange of gold for silver on credit, can easily be explained from a commercial standpoint. The Ibāḍīs controlled most of the gold trade, and their Sufri and Ibāḍī Lawāta-Berber allies controlled many lucrative silver mines as well as the most important mints in the Maghreb.[137] It seems likely that Ibāḍī merchants planning on making the trans-Saharan crossing would trade their unmanufactured gold from *Bilād al-Sūdān* for an advance in silver coins, these coins would have been used to outfit their trading expedition. Simply put this was a credit loan. If the Ibāḍīs would have prohibited *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* the trade of gold for silver on credit would not have been possible, and the trade of unmanufactured metal for coins would have required a fixed fee to cover the minting costs. This fixed fee would not have reflected the risks of giving credit (or a loan) to a trans-Saharan trade expedition. Therefore the Ibāḍī acceptance of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* would have made it easier for Ibāḍī traders to acquire these loans as the merchants giving these

[134] Ibn Rushd, "Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid," *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, 2 Vols., translated by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee and reviewed by Mohammad Abdul Rauf (Reading 2010), Vol. 2, pp. 233-234.
[135] Francesca, "Religious observance," pp. 199-200.
[136] Since the end of the 13th/19th century *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* has been prohibited and the Sunni position regarding *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* has been accepted by Ibāḍī jurists, see Francesca, "Religious observance," pp. 200-201.
[137] Savage and Gordus, "Dirhams," pp. 382-384.

loans would be able to negotiate realistic terms covering their credit risk. In a commercial, trade oriented society the ability for merchants to acquire loans for their trade expeditions is important, and the Ibāḍī acceptance of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* clearly supports this.

A different subject that pertained more to trans-Saharan trade in general, but that was still regarded as being slightly contentious for Ibāḍī merchants, was the issue of *qirād*: money or goods to buy or sell on behalf of the owner with the profit to be divided between the owner and the agent or broker in some previously agreed proportion upon completion of the business. According to a *mālikī* judge from Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya, al-Qābisī (324-403/935-1012) "The giving of a *qirād* which stipulates a journey to *Bilād al-Sūdān* is not permissible. It is not, in my opinion, like the giving of a *qirād* for a journey to the cities of Islam. In my opinion *Bilād al-Sūdān* is not trustworthy for the *qirād* and not satisfactory." The reason the judge came to this conclusion was because the *qirād* would not be enforceable in *Bilād al-Sūdān* as it was outside of *Dār al-Islām*, although the judge also stated that "this doesn't invalidate the basic responsibility of a merchant to repay what he had in fact borrowed." A stronger anti-*Bilād al-Sūdān* stance was held by al-Qābisī's contemporary, Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawāni, who was of the opinion that "trade with the land of enmity (*'adw)* and *Bilād al-Sūdān* is wrong and hateful. The Prophet said: 'the journey is a part of the punishment'."[138]

Al-Qābisī's ruling that trade with *Bilād al-Sūdān* was not permissible stemmed from a period where there was still little trans-Saharan trading by Sunni Muslims. The prohibition on trade in precious metals stemmed from the early Islamic period when the Muslim community was still trying to establishing itself in Arabia. This prohibition meant that Muslim traders could not trade in silver and, more importantly for the trans-Saharan trade, gold with non-Muslims, i.e.

[138] M. Brett, "Islam and Trade in the Bilād al-Sūdān, Tenth-Eleventh Century A.D.," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1983), pp. 433-435.

the local non-Muslim rulers and populace of *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Initially the majority of the gold trade during the 1st-2nd/7th-8th centuries was handled by Jewish merchants, but once the Rustumid Imāmate established itself in Tahert, its merchants started to establish themselves in the trans-Saharan trade. The Ibāḍī merchants gradually took over the trade in gold until they established a monopoly by the mid 2nd/8th century.[139] Although the prohibition of trading in precious metals was ignored in large part by the Ibāḍī merchants, it did not change the fact that they were initially trading both with non-Muslim as well as outside of *Dār al-Islām*. Therefore the Ibāḍī merchants had to be able to deal with the legal difficulties that this presented, especially since the riches that could be gained in *Bilād al-Sūdān* were very substantial. This led E. Savage to conclude that the rapid expansion of the Ibāḍī in *Bilād al-Sūdān* came about because the Ibāḍī merchants "were not so constrained and that the network of Ibāḍī merchant-shaykhs were in a position to make legal decisions for the community or were in regular contact with those jurists and experts on law who could."[140]

After trans-Saharan trade became more established and the number of Muslim traders increased (approximately from the 5th/10th century onwards) it became common for Islamic jurists to "exclude trade across the Sahara from the elaborate provisions made by the Law for commerce within the *Dar al-Islām*, but to offer those engaged in this trade some elementary guarantees in respect of debts."[141] One can imagine that the wealth trans-Saharan trade brought the Islamic Caliphate combined with the possible expansion of *Dar al-Islām* and the conversion of its pagan peoples correlated directly with the more positive stance of trans-Saharan trade by

[139] E. Savage, "Early medieval Ifrīqiya, a reassessment of the Ibāḍiyya" (PhD diss, University of London, 1990), pp. 294-295; p.294, footnote 99.
[140]Savage, Medieval Ifrīqiya, pp. 294-295.
[141] Brett, "Islam and Trade," p. 435.

the jurists. Either way, the early foundations had been laid by the Ibāḍī merchants and the mercantile inclinations of the Ibāḍī authorities, both in Basra and Tahert.

The trans-Saharan trade brought a lot of wealth to the Rustumid Imāmate and its capital Tahert. Because the Ibāḍī merchants who moved to Tahert had already established commercial enterprises and trade networks from their Basran background, Tahert became a thriving and wealthy city quickly after its initial founding as the Rustumid capital in 161/776. It was not long before the trade caravans would bring their wealth from all over *Bilād al-Sūdān*. According to Ibn al-Ṣaghīr (who, it must be noted, wrote on the Rustumid Imāmate not long before it was conquered by the Fāṭimids in 296/909) one of the main reasons why Tahert managed to become so prosperous was because of its favorable commercial environment, which was enhanced by the morality of the Rustumid Imāms. Even at times when it seemed that a growing amount of wealth would lead to an increase in the materialism, vice, and moral corruption of society, the moral and religious righteousness of the Rustumid Imāmates would always prevail.[142] Whilst this latter comment by Ibn al-Ṣaghīr may be considered sarcastic, having written it when the Rustumid Imāmate was in considerable decline, it is wholly possible that the early Rustumid Imāms used their religious divinity and authority to attain the most positive commercial environment possible, both for its traders as for its own long-term survival.

The early Rustumid Imāms were also aware of the strategic importance of political alliances for both its own survival and for its trade networks, the alliance with the Muhallabids, in both Basra and the Maghreb, being a prime example of this. The Rustumids also carved out alliances with other smaller Ibāḍī groups and semi-states, which evolved into a loose federation that

[142] Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Ahkbar*, pp. 200-201 ; "La chronique," pp. 65-73.

recognized Rustumid authority in matters pertaining to the law.[143] But probably its most important Maghrebi alliance was with the Ṣufri Khārijite state of the Midrārids (r. 140-366/759-977).[144] The main reason why this alliance was important for the Rustumids was because of the significance of the Midrārid capital Sijilmasa and its strategic location on a main trans-Saharan trade route used by Ibāḍī merchants.[145] This commercial alliance allowed Ibāḍī merchants to operate from Sijilmasa and use it as a staging point for their travels into *Bilād al-Sūdān*. The importance of this Ibāḍī-Ṣufri or Tahert-Sijilmasa alliance is underscored by the fact that the ruling Rustumid and Midrārid families intermarried to strengthen the bonds between the two states. It is ironic that Sijilmasa was captured by Fāṭimid forces only months before they captured Tahert. But unlike Tahert, Sijilmasa was not burned to the ground. This was either due to the low-profile the Midrārid rulers kept in comparison to the Rustumid Imāms, who in all likelihood were seen as a greater religious threat (compared to the Ṣufris who were just a small and insignificant sect and were less organized than the Ibāḍīs in both trade and their missionary work). Or due to the fact that Sijilmasa was a very important commercial center that brought in a lot of gold for the Fāṭimid rulers. Either way, the Fāṭimids initially allowed the Midrārids to hold "power" in Sijilmasa for nearly another 70 years after they had conquered it.[146]

Even though the Rustumid Imāmate was part of the larger Ibāḍī Imāmate, and as such, connected with the Omani Imāmate, there was a remarkable contrast between the political organization of both Imāmates. The Rustumid Imāms ruled as a dynasty, passing the office of

[143] Savage, *Gateway to Hell*, p. 85.
[144] For more information on the Midrarids sect see Ch. Pellat, "Midrār (Banū) or Midrārids," eds. P. Bearman et al, *Encyclopaedia of Islam. 2nd Edition*, Brill Online, Leiden 2011.
[145] T. Lewicki, "L'État nord-africain de Tahert et ses relations avec le Soudan occidental à la fin du VIIIe et au IXe siècle," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, Vol. 2, Cahier 8 (1962), pp. 527-528.
[146] T. Lewicki, "Quelques extraits inédits relatives aux voyages des commerçants et des missionnaires Ibāḍites Nord-Africains au pays du Soudan occidental et central au moyen age," *Folia Orientalia*, Vol. 2 (1960) p. 21.

Imām down from father to son during the entire existence of the Rustumid Imāmate. The Imāms did seek formal approval from and confirmation by the *umma* before their succession came into force (which remained a formal requirement), and all successions also received the support from the Ibāḍī leadership in Basra. Besides the creation of a dynastic lineage the Rustumid Imāmate could "also boast embryonic forms of a formal administrative apparatus within which the role of the Imām's advisers seems to have been much stronger than that of their counterparts in Oman where the Imām was not supposed to delegate any political authority."[147] Even though the Ibāḍī community riled against Caliphal rule which they considered un-Islamic, the Rustumid Imāms ruled with the same divine authority and dynastic tendencies that led Arabic sources to refer to them simply as kings (i.e. *mulūk*). Therefore it is ironic that an important 2nd/8th century Ibāḍī *ḥadīth* warns the Ibāḍī community against the temptations of kinship by criticizing the Umayyads for usurping "the legitimate leadership of the Muslim community while simultaneously transforming it into kingship."[148] One has to wonder if the trans-Saharan trade's riches shifted the Rustumid State's priority away from its religious origins in favor of commercial gains for its ruling house.

During the 5th/11th and 6th/12th centuries Ibāḍī merchants were still very active in the gold and slave trade from *Bilād al-Sūdān*. But because *Bilād al-Sūdān* became more accessible and more known as the "promised land" where riches were abundantly available, the amount of Arabs travelling there steadily increased. By the end of the 6th/12th century this led to most Ibāḍī merchants becoming gradually integrated into Sunni Islam (partly due to Almoravid's missionary zeal and partly due to the entry of the Banū Hilāl in the Maghreb and the pressure

[147] T. Bierschenk, "Religion and Political Structure: Remarks on Ibadism in Oman and the Mzab (Algeria)," *Studia Islamica*, No. 68 (1988), p. 114.
[148] Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*, p. 42.

they exerted). This, however, did not change the position of Wargla, as it remained the main gateway through the Sahara into *Bilād al-Sūdān* for the traders of the Maghreb.[149] As the Ibāḍīs still wielded considerable influence in Wargla and its environs they were able to maintain an important grip on trans-Saharan trade, albeit under the guise of mainstream Islam. With no official Ibāḍī state in the Maghreb the Ibāḍī traders understood that they had to conform themselves to both the religion (be it Sunni or Shīa) and the rule of the lands they traveled through and traded with, even if it meant that they had to hide the fact that they were Ibāḍī. This was only way that they were able to survive. Thus, the individual Ibāḍī merchants continued trading goods and making money whilst spreading Islam amongst the pagans of *Bilād al-Sūdān*.

[149] Ibn Khaldun's *Histoire des berbères*, p. 287.

Conclusion.

Even though the history of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb is not well known and the independent Ibāḍī state, the Rustumid Imāmate, did not last more than 150 years, it did manage to play a very important role in both the history of the Maghreb and *Bilād al-Sūdān*. In this thesis I have given a brief summary of the founding history of the Ibāḍī community in Basra as well as its development as an important merchant community. As trade would become imperative for the survival of the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb, the importance that Basra has within the foundation history of the Maghrebi Ibāḍīs is very significant. Basra supported the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb and their newly found state financially, and Basra remained important as the Rustumids looked towards Basra for advice and approval on matters regarding both state and religion, including the succession of the Ibāḍī Imāms.

From Basra the *hamalāt al-'ilm* were send to the Maghreb to try and establish an Ibāḍī Imāmate. One of the members of the *hamalāt al-'ilm*, 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Rustum, founded the Rustumid Imāmate in Tahert in 161/778. This Ibāḍī Imāmate lasted a 150 years and it emulated Basra in also becoming a mercantile society. Through its merchant class it managed to control most of the trans-Saharan trade, even long after Tahert and the Rustumid Imāmate had been destroyed by the Fāṭimids in 296/909. Probably the single most important factor for Ibāḍī success in the Maghreb was the acceptance by the Berber tribes of Ibāḍīsm due to its notion of equality. With the conversion of important Berber tribes to Ibāḍīsm, the *hamalāt al-'ilm*, and later the Rustumid Imāmate, gained valuable allies. These Berber allies gave the Ibāḍīs fighting power against both Umayyad and 'Abbasid rule and against other Islamic Maghrebi states. And, more importantly, these Berber allies provided protection and guides for the Ibāḍī merchants

participating in trans-Saharan trade. The historical Ibāḍī focus on trade combined with the knowledge of Saharan travel by the Ibāḍī Berbers led to the monopolization of trans-Saharan trade by Ibāḍī merchants, and to considerable wealth for the Rustumid Imāmate and its allies.

A more minor, but still important, factor was the alliance between the Ibāḍīs and the influential Muhallabid family, both in Basra and the Maghreb. This strategic alliance valued the importance of trade and it came to fruition in the Maghreb. Here the Muhallabid governors accepted the existence of the Rustumid Imāmate in large part because the trans-Saharan trade network of the Ibāḍīs brought in considerable wealth. Besides the obvious benefit of not being persecuted by the ‘Abbasids, the Ibāḍīs valued the fact that the Muhallabid governors presided over a period of stability, which in due turn benefited trade. Besides the Berbers and Muhallabids, the Rustumid Imāmate was also in alliance with other Islamic Maghrebi states. The alliance with the Ṣufri Midrārirds was the most important of these Maghrebi alliances as the Midrārirds controlled Sijilmasa and it is hinterlands. To ensure that Ibāḍī traders were not restricted in and around Sijilmasa, to the commercial and financial advantage of both the Rustamids and Midrārirds, the two ruling houses frequently intermarried with each other, even though they were of rival Khārijite sects.

The Ibāḍī merchants and their commercial enterprises and trade networks played an important role in the establishment and initial survival of the Rustumid Imāmate. But more important than the role these Ibāḍī merchants played for the Rustumid Imāmate was the role they played in the trans-Saharan network. The Ibāḍīs who traversed the great Saharan desert did so not only as merchants but also as shaykhs, and in this combination the merchant-shaykhs brought Maghrebi and Arab goods, culture and Islam across the Sahara. It were these merchant-shaykhs that played an important role in the initial spread of Islam in *Bilād al-Sūdān*, leading to the mass-

conversion of the Sudanese peoples to Islam in later times, or as B.M. Perinbam states: "Available evidence suggests, however tentatively, that some pre-Almoravid conversions to the Ibāḍī doctrine occurred in the Sudan, which was in most cases the work of merchants who functioned as missionaries. Accordingly, as with trade, the Ibāḍīs were among the precursors laying the foundations on which Sunni-Mālikī merchants-missionaries later built."[150]

The importance of these Ibāḍī merchant-shayks converting the local rulers of *Bilād al-Sūdān* must not be underestimated as it was, in general, good for business. Both in terms of friendly relations leading to more freedom of movement for Ibāḍī merchants, commercial partnerships between Ibāḍī merchants and the converted local rulers, or simply ensuring that Ibāḍī traders were now trading with *Dār al-Islām* instead of the forbidden *Dār al-Ḥarb* (and all the legal ramifications that entailed). Although this final point did not seem to matter that much, especially since the majority of the population of *Bilād al-Sūdān* remained pagan until later times. Those who did convert to Islam often retained some of their pagan rituals, a reality that also applied to their rulers. And even though the Arab chroniclers would want to have the their readers believe that the local rulers of *Bilād al-Sūdān* were Muslim (and converted in a most spectacular fashion) they were in most cases Muslim in name only. But, the fact that these rulers did convert to Islam shows that they were in large part at least amenable to Muslim traders, and this certainly did not harm Maghrebi commercial interests.

When also taking into account the Ibāḍī influence through architecture and the Maghrebi food crops found in *Bilād al-Sūdān*, it can be noted that trade had both a religious and secular impact on *Bilād al-Sūdān*. Trade with *Bilād al-Sūdān* certainly impacted the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb, and one could say that it led to the transformation of the Ibāḍī Rustumid Imāmate

[150] Perinbam, "Soninke-Ibādiyya Interactions," p. 79.

from a religious state into a mercantile state. Therefore, and although it is difficult to prove due to a lack of available sources, I do believe that the importance of trade for the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb meant that it *should* have influenced both law and Ibāḍī doctrine. One reason being that in early Islam, before the consolidation of *madhabs*, both general Islamic laws and doctrine where still fluid and susceptible to the differing opinions of the jurists. Therefore the moral and religious austerity of the Ibāḍī community would have been the guide for how trade in *Bilād al-Sūdān* was to be conducted. But where a conflict between religion and trade arose it would make sense for religion to accommodate trade and not vice-versa. The acceptance of *al-ribā fi l-nasi'a* for unmanufactured gold and silver is one of the clearest examples of favoring trade over religious edicts. Also, another important issue is that in essence what the Ibāḍīs did was trade with *Dār al-Ḥarb* and this had to have had significant bearings on the formation of early Ibāḍī laws and doctrine, especially since this trade with pagans in pagan lands was considered acceptable by both the Ibāḍī religious and secular authorities. It is not hard to believe that the Ibāḍī penchant for trade made them more moderate compared to the other two main Khārijite sects, i.e. the Azraki and Ṣufri Khārijites, especially regarding their interactions with non-Ibāḍīs (both Muslim and non-Muslim peoples).

In conclusion one can say that the main reason why the Ibāḍīs and the Rustumid Imāmate were able to establish, maintain and sustain their trans-Saharan mercantile exploits was because they were able to put commercial interests at the forefront of their society. Even after the fall of the Rustumid Imāmate, Ibāḍī merchants still played an important role in trans-Saharan trade. This was in large part because the Ibāḍī community in the Maghreb reverted back to their state of

kitmān, and as such they were able to adapt to political and religious changes, even if this meant professing not to be Ibāḍī.[151]

The most intriguing part of the research I have done for this thesis is that the role Ibāḍī merchants, and the Ibāḍī Rustumid state, played in the interaction with *Bilād al-Sūdān* can be, and probably should be, seen as a main factor leading to the opening up of *Bilād al-Sūdān* for foreigners. Therefore the lack of available and known sources should not be considered "the end of the line," but rather as a starting point for further research on this topic. As I have said in my introduction, I am convinced more sources are out there, either hidden in private archives in the Ibāḍī areas of the Maghreb or in the Islamic towns on the southern fringes of the desert (for example in Timbucto, Gao or Djenna) or in the archives of the Ibāḍī Sultanate of Oman. Either way, more research needs to be done on this topic, as it an important part of the histories of both the Maghreb, *Bilād al-Sūdān* and early Islam.

[151] This thesis is about the success of Ibāḍī mercantilism in the Maghreb and the impact of trans-Saharan trade on *Bilād al-Sūdān*, it is not about the downfall of the Rustumid Imāmate. However, as a side note I should mention that even though mercantilism played a very important role throughout Ibāḍī history from its inception in Basra, it must not be forgotten that the initial success of the Ibāḍīs in the Maghreb came from their alliances with local Berber tribes. These alliances were initially formed on religious grounds, predominantly the sense of equality that espoused from Ibāḍī teachings. Thus, one has to wonder if religious neglect in favor of commercial gains was what led to the alienation of the Berber tribes, and ultimately the downfall of the Rustumid Imāmate. Especially in light of the religion-inspired success of both the Fātimids and Almoravids and their Berber allies, Berber allies that once supported the Rustumid Imāmate.

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