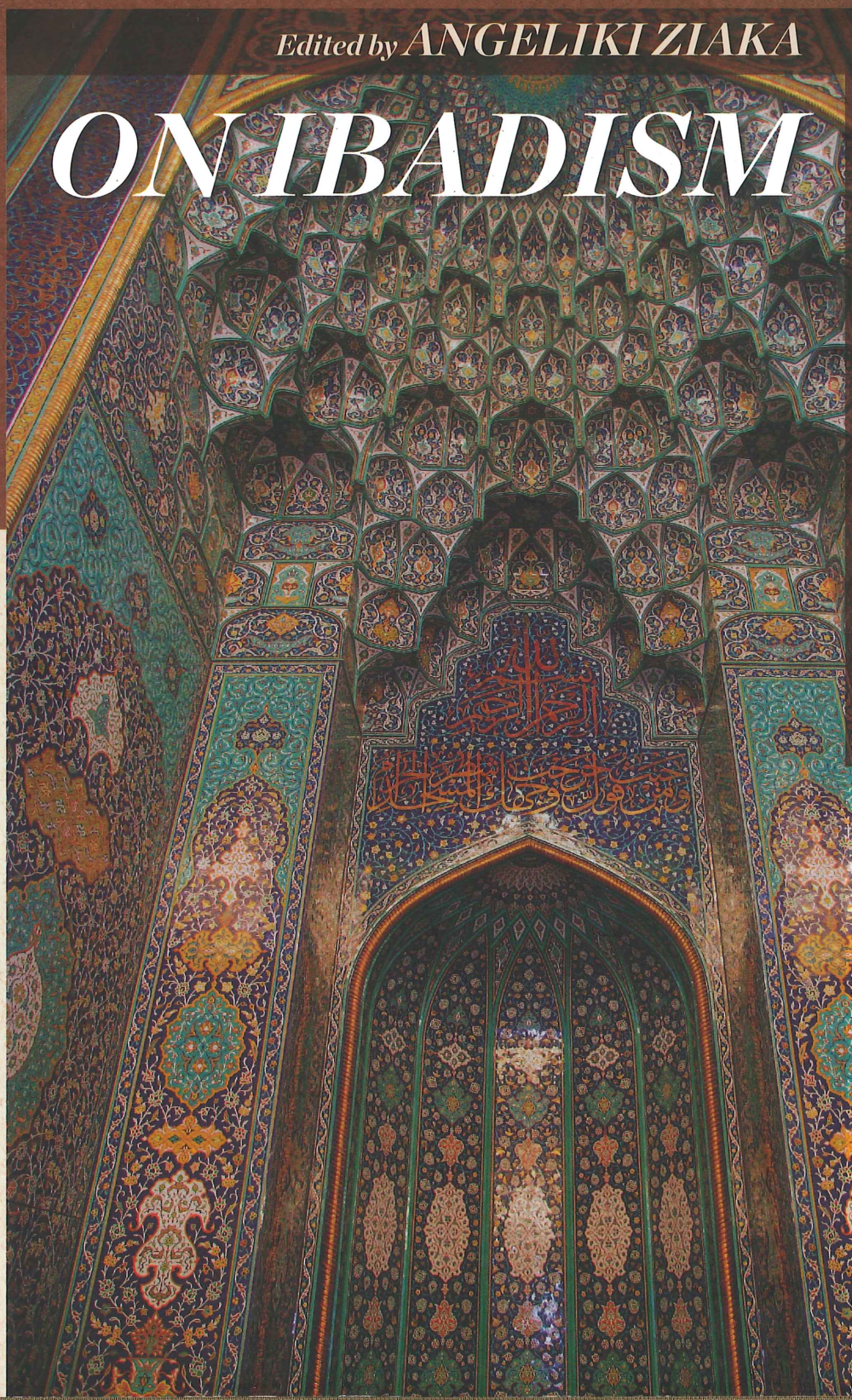
Edited by ANGELIKI ZIAKA

ON IBADISM



OLMS

STUDIES ON IBADISM AND OMAN. VOL 3

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THE MODERN FACE OF IBADISM IN OMAN*

Dale F. Eickelman**

Religious life in the northern Oman interior, 1978

Al-Hamra, a provincial capital in the northern Oman interior, was remote even by the Sultanate's standards when I first visited it in June 1978. Paved roads and electricity had not yet reached the oasis; only a few homes had generator-powered televisions, and the nearest telephone was almost an hour's drive away. It was much the same when I returned to the oasis from 1979 until 1981 to conduct field research. On this second visit, I spent a day in formal discussions with local officials and tribal leaders, and then, having missed my bus, was obliged to spend the night. Shaykh 'Abdallah Muhanna' al-'Abri, the tribal leader and a dominant figure in the region since the late 1930s, graciously invited me to stay in his guest house (*sabla*), along with several men who were visiting from outlying villages.

Well before dawn, these other guests—observant Muslims to a man—rose for morning prayer, and one of them called to me to ask whether I intended to perform my ablutions. 'Not yet,' I replied, and went back to sleep. Some minutes later, Shaykh 'Abdallah gently prodded me with the muzzle of a machine pistol. In Oman after all, it is bad manners to touch a sleeping person with one's hands, and Shaykh 'Abdallah was a model of politeness.

* The author would like to thank Laurel Stavis and Marc Valeri for their comments on a prior draft.

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'Are you sick?' he asked. 'You're not getting ready to pray.' Half asleep, I mumbled, 'I'm Christian; we pray differently.' Shaykh 'Abdullah looked momentarily puzzled and then went away.

His puzzlement was no mystery. He had naturally assumed that a speaker of Arabic with a reasonable command of Omani etiquette would also rise to pray. In the late 1970s, he and the other inhabitants of the oasis had no pressing cause to think about any faith beyond Islam. Such terms as 'Muslim' and 'Christian' scarcely entered their minds.

Yet al-Hamra (pop. 2,600 in 1980, 6,000 today), then a compact town of mud-brick buildings on a rocky slope next to an underground irrigation canal (*falaj*), was changing—just how profoundly, I did not then grasp. A decade earlier, the oasis's habitable limits, still defined by the watchtowers used to guard against rival tribes, had begun to push outward as new diesel-driven pumps brought water from privately owned wells to previously uncultivated lands far away from the head of the town's *falaj* where, the water being purest, the tribal aristocracy lived.

By the late 1970s, schools and government offices were being built beyond the marketplace, once the far end of the town. By then, too, nearly all school-age children in al-Hamra attended elementary school. Government jobs and wage labor quickly surpassed agriculture as the inhabitants' foremost source of income. The mud-brick profile of al-Hamra was fast being altered, and I had come—and would return again and again over the ensuing years—to study the transformation.

I returned with my wife and daughter in 1979 to spend a year in al-Hamra. Adjusting to a rhythm of life marked by the five daily prayers and, for men, the weekly congregational prayer, we soon learned to distinguish the voices of neighbors calling the faithful to mosques throughout the oasis. Islamic rituals were so thoroughly woven into the daily life of the community that everyone took them for granted.

Explaining Islam in the 1980s

That was why, on a return visit in 1988, I was startled when a young relative of the tribal leader—a high school student when I'd first met him in 1979 but now a university-trained civil servant—announced to me that the people of al-Hamra, his own relatives included, were 'ignorant' of Islam and therefore acted 'like animals' (*mithl hayawanat*)—that is, unthinkingly. "Sure," he said, "they pray and fast, but they can't explain why. Muslims must explain their beliefs." He went on to indicate how mosques must have sermons that people could understand and that related to their lives. At the time, no sermons were offered in Ibadi mosques. Until 1955, only the *imam* himself, generally in Nizwa, offered Friday sermons.

My Omani friend's striking observation on the practices of his fellow townspeople in 1988 was a concrete indication of the new way in which an increasingly literate Omani youth, familiar with the practices of Muslims and non-Muslims elsewhere in the world, were taking charge of their religion. Beginning in the 1970s, a quiet transformation has been taking place in how the Ibadiyya in Oman practice and talk about their faith.

Three kinds of questions have become foregrounded in the consciousness of large numbers of people: 'What is my religion?' 'Why is it important to my life?' and 'How should my beliefs guide my conduct?' These explicit and objective questions are distinctively modern ones that increasingly shape the discourse and practice of all Omanis, as they do Muslims throughout the world.

From the 1970s to the present, Ibadism has become increasingly objectified in people's consciousness. To state the obvious, religion must be discussed, and this entails discourse. If people do not discuss doctrine and practice directly, then 'experts,' like *mufti*s, or those empowered to offer religious advice, express these issues for them, although silence in the face of experts does not necessarily imply agreement.

Some people claim that their practices and beliefs contain nothing new but are merely a return to authentic established traditions. Even in this case, the fact that large numbers of people argue about the tenets of their faith and think about it as a system make the claim of return to tradition a distinctly modern one.

Religious discourse has entered the political arena, even. Oman was never in imminent danger of being swept away on a tide of radical Islam. Nonetheless, Islamic ideas and practices from outside of Oman since the late 1970s have profoundly influenced how Omanis think and speak about religion.

What has contributed to change in beliefs

The most profound element of change is associated with the spread of modern literacy and the new media through which ideas can be communicated. Mass literacy came late to Oman. Schooling became widely available only after 1970 when Qaboos bin Said replaced his father, Said bin Taimur (r. 1932–1970), as Sultan. In 1972–1973 there were 25,000 students at all levels in Oman. By 1982–1983 there were 142,000, and 276,000 by 1987–1988. In 1975–1976, a mere 32 students completed the cycle of secondary education. By 1987–1988 this number had risen to 13,500. The first large numbers of students to benefit from this nearly universal primary education completed the secondary school cycle in the early 1980s. In post-secondary education, a critical mass among Omanis emerged only in the late 1980s, and progressively

increased to current levels, in which secondary school attendance reached 338,000 students by 2007, and over 50,000 students enrolled in tertiary education.[1]

By the early 1980s Oman had a sufficient number of secondary school graduates, members of the armed services and civilian government with in-service training, and university students abroad (and, since the opening of Sultan Qaboos University in 1986, in Oman itself) to engender a transformation in what constitutes authoritative religious discourse. The shift to a print, cassette, and now CD and Internet-based religiosity and the exposure of large numbers of young Omanis to a written, formal, 'modern standard' Arabic through schooling and the mass media in the 1980s altered the style and content of authoritative religious discourse and the role this discourse plays in shaping and constraining domestic and regional politics.

Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination

Years from now, we will look back on the latter half of the 20th century as a time of profound religious change—as profound for the Muslim world as for other faiths. Like the printing press in the 15th century, the combination in Oman of mass education and mass communication has transformed the Sultanate as much as other parts of the world. In unprecedentedly large numbers, the faithful –whether abroad or in Oman's capital, in its state university and its private counterparts such as the University of Nizwa, and the inhabitants of formerly remote oases such as al-Hamra– are examining and debating the fundamentals of Muslim belief and practice in ways that their less self-conscious predecessors would never have imagined. Ordinary people now have direct access to sources of information and knowledge about their faith and other aspects of their society that they never had before. Government officials, traditional religious scholars, and officially sanctioned preachers are finding it harder to monopolize the tools of literate culture.

'News' has ceased to be a monopoly of the few, and satellite TV images (available since 1994) bring people and places previously at the margin of awareness into the foreground. Today, as a result, numerous private universities compete with the state university because of the strong demand for higher education, and quality university education for an oasis such as al-Hamra is as close as the nearby University of Nizwa.

One sign of this shift in consciousness and has been the reemergence of sectarian discourse, although I shall argue that contemporary sectarian discourse differs significantly from the sectarian divisions of earlier generations and has been overwhelmingly tolerant. For most Omanis until the 1980s, Ibadi, Sunni, and Shi'i doctrines and practices were not explicitly thought of as systems that could be

compared and contrasted. What was practiced was assumed to be Islamic, pure and simple. Omanis were of course aware of other Muslim communities, some very close at hand, but these other communities and their interpretations of doctrine and practice were at the periphery of the moral imagination.

In Oman, like most other countries of the Arabian Peninsula, explicit controversy over political and religious issues does not form part of the standard fare of local newspapers or the broadcast media. The ruler's National Day speeches, the major annual occasion during which he addresses the Omani people, scrupulously avoid religious issues except to invoke 'our heritage' (*turathuna*) and to pray to God "to guide us for the glory and prosperity of our dear countrymen."[2] Likewise, Islam forms part of the school curriculum at all levels. Public mention of sectarian differences is carefully avoided, as is also true with the model nonsectarian Friday sermons that the state has distributed for the guidance of preachers in Oman since 1982.[3]

Reticence in articulating sectarian matters would at first appear only prudent in Oman. Roughly 50–55 percent of its citizenry is Sunni, 40–45 percent Ibadi, and less than three percent Shi'a. Until 1955 the Ibadiyya of the northern interior were governed by a semi-autonomous theocracy.[4] In Nizwa, as a sign of the post-1970 order, the imam's former congregational mosque, in which sermons were offered until the imamate was assimilated into the sultanate in 1955, was razed in the mid-1970s so that a Qaboos mosque, similar to those established elsewhere in the major towns of the Sultanate, could be built on its exact site.

In the late 1970s, Omanis followed the Iranian revolution with considerable interest, although none expressed explicit analogies with their own situation. By the early 1980s, however, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, a long-standing popular Omani mistrust of Iranian intentions, the small size and fragmentation of Oman's Shi'i communities—most lacking close links to their Iranian counterparts, awareness of the perceived excesses of the revolution, and, of course, a heightened state surveillance of religious activists—combined to dampen enthusiasm. Many young Omanis—Sunni, Ibadi and Shi'i alike—remained committed to an increased role for Islam in politics and society, but separated this ideal from the Iranian model. More so than the Iranian revolution, the siege of the Great Mosque in Mecca on 20 November 1979[5] brought a heightened focus on religious expression to Oman. Ibadi, Sunni, and Shi'i mosques were monitored and, for the first time in Oman, the state ordered an inventory of mosques, and monitored what was said and organized in them. For a time after the attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca, uniformed police were posted for a period outside of Nizwa's Qaboos mosque. Local religious leaders interpreted this act as a sign that the government had lost touch with religious sentiment in the northern interior because of political unrest elsewhere. As one religious scholar commented: "The government now knows so little of what we think in the interior that they believe we want the imamate restored."[6]

Taking Charge of the Faith from Above: A Televised Lesson, 1987

The state has tried to exercise top-down control of religion by offering a generic, non-denominational Islam in schools, building a series of imposing Sultan Qaboos mosques in Oman's major cities, and training religious teachers for state schools since the 1980s. The same generic Islam is propagated in Omani newspapers, periodicals, and Friday sermons carried on Oman radio and television. In schooling, making Islam a subject alongside many others in the curriculum implicitly makes it a subject that must be explained, understood, and thus objectified.

Sectarian discussions continued and secondary schools were their incubators. In the 1970s, for example, secondary school students from the northern Oman interior were lodged in dormitories in the capital, together with Sunni and Shi'i students. Outside of the formal classroom, students engaged in long discussions and debates on sectarian differences, "not to convince the others to change their sect (*madhhab*), but to maintain our side (*tarafina*)."[7] Such discussion requires participants to emphasize the 'distinctive features' of their respective beliefs. Former students told me that the lessons were strictly nonsectarian, but at night they would argue the Sunni, Ibadi, and Shi'i tenets, not to persuade others of the error of their ways, but to 'hold up our side.'

Pressure to explain Ibadism also emerged on the international scale. The upsurge in Ibadi students studying abroad, especially at U.S. and other foreign universities, produced a demand for guidance on how to explain their faith. Oman's grand mufti, Shaykh Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili, provided such guidance in an audio cassette in Arabic, subsequently published in booklet form in English translation, as *Who are the Ibadis?*[8] Both the cassettes and the booklet were widely distributed through Omani embassies abroad. The English booklet was helpful because Ibadi students often had to explain the tenets of their belief to non-Arabic speaking Muslims.

The mufti's cassette/booklet responds to a letter from an Omani student in the United States, who wrote the mufti that some of our 'Sunni brothers' have warned against allowing Ibadis to lead prayers or participate "in the administration of our mosques and Islamic Centers in this place on the claim that they are a section of the Khawarij."[9] The student asks for guidance in responding to such claims and "the reason for not circulating [Ibadi] books and references in the libraries and in the Muslim Universities."

The booklet serves as a short catechism of Ibadi doctrine and history. The mufti cites recent doctoral dissertations and books on Ibadism in various languages, although he reads only Arabic. His themes of tyranny, corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, injustice, oppression, and infighting within the Muslim community

are situated strictly in the past, but his audience can be expected to make analogies with more contemporary situations.

In some respects, the mufti is distinctively modern. Rather than cite a closed set of agreed-upon commentaries, the mufti draws on the Qur'an, the sayings of the prophet Muhammad, a Jordanian doctoral dissertation, and contemporary news magazines to lend authority to his arguments.

Response to a Saudi Fatwa

The most spectacular instance of direct, state-sanctioned discussion of sectarian issues occurred with an unprecedented live, two-hour television 'lesson' (*dars*) by Oman's Grand Mufti, Shaykh Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili, on 2 February 1987.[10] To emphasize the event's significance, it was broadcast live from Sultan Qaboos University in Omani prime time, 9 p.m., and aired simultaneously both in Dhofar and in northern Oman—an unusual occurrence at the time. The mufti's appearance on weekday television—his Friday sermons are broadcast regularly—was an unusual event signaling approval at the highest levels of the state. The subsequent distribution of videotapes of the mufti's lesson to Omani student communities throughout the Arab world, Europe, and the United States further suggests the significance attributed to it.

The televised religious lesson resembled the traditional form of religious commentary except for its scale—the unannounced live broadcast reached virtually every Omani household with electricity. As mufti, al-Khalili is Oman's senior religious authority. Appointed by the ruler, his responsibilities include advising citizens on private matters of religious conduct and advising the state on religious issues. The fact that the broadcast was live and touched on Oman's relations with a neighboring country was a first which buttressed the mufti's authority.

The mufti's on-camera audience included the vice-chancellor of the then-new Sultan Qaboos University and other notables, although no members of the government or royal family were present. The Omani audience and the local Arab diplomatic community immediately noticed such matters of protocol. There were perhaps two hundred young men in the audience, university students by appearance. No one took notes, and the mufti spoke without notes except when reading directly from the 1986 Saudi *fatwa*, or authoritative religious opinion, on which al-Khalili commented.

After preliminary remarks, the mufti continued: "We all study together and although there are differences among the community (*umma*) of Muslims, God makes no such distinctions." He proceeded to read a long religious decree (*fatwa*)

issued 12 December 1986 (8 Rabi'a II 1407) by a senior Saudi religious scholar and member of the Saudi Higher Council of 'Ulama, 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Baz (b. 1912). The Saudi *fatwa* replied to a letter from a Shaykh 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, who asked whether people could accept an imam, or religious/prayer leader, who does not believe in seeing God on Judgment Day.

Ibn Baz reviewed the positions of various Muslim legal schools, and cited Shaykh Malik (d. 795) to the effect that those who say that God will not be seen on Judgment Day deserve to be put to the sword. Ibn Baz continued that the "mufti of the Ibadis [a derogatory way of referring to the mufti of Oman] told me personally that the Ibadis do not believe that God will be seen on Judgment Day. I tried to advise the Ibadis to abandon this belief."

Setting down a copy of Ibn Baz's fatwa on the podium, Shaykh al-Khalili continued:

> *We have listened to that fatwa. Why has [Ibn Baz] issued it? [He] wishes to separate Muslims from one another. God says that the community of Muslims is one, and that everyone should obey him. Why doesn't Ibn Baz mention instead what God says in the Qur'an [here al-Khalili cited appropriate verses], instead of citing various religious scholars whose views coincide with his own? Our obligation as Muslims is to follow the Qur'an, and Ibn Baz refers only to scholars who agree with him, not to Qur'anic precedents. Religious scholars are also human beings who make mistakes, but even though they are in error, we should still respect them.*

Throughout his lesson, Shaykh al-Khalili shifted between several levels of Arabic, including classical Arabic, full of citations from theological treatises, which even members of his audience educated in modern, secular Arabic admitted that they could not readily follow, and an Omanized but correct modern standard Arabic. The following critical episode is entirely in modern standard Arabic. Unusual for an Omani public appearance, the mufti used gestures, and his voice registered anger. Intertwined with the theological issue was the claimed insult to the mufti while an invited guest of the Saudi Ministry of Justice. He describes his visit with a delegation of other Omanis to the office of Shaykh al-Baz on 13 January 1986 (2 Jumada I 1406), the second day of his official visit to Saudi Arabia:

> *We were anxious to benefit from [Shaykh al-Baz] and to listen to his advice and to learn from his words, but we were taken by surprise. ... Immediately upon entering his office he took us to a narrow place and began ... to shout [about] what he had heard [of my fatwas]. ... He referred to Ibadism as astray and far from the truth which was brought by the prophet from God. I replied first by thanking him for his advice and then said: 'Truth is claimed by everybody and everyone who*

opposes his opponent's claims that he is right and his opponent is wrong. But truth is not arrived at through presumptions but through correct proof. It is therefore our duty to reveal the truth through quite objective discussion to be transmitted to the people through the voice of the Qur'an in Mecca, and through Saudi television. Also other radio stations and televisions. ... The Shaykh strongly refused this suggestion. I asked him what he wanted and he said he wanted us to abandon our [beliefs] and to adopt their [beliefs].' ... "I told him that if a Christian or a Jew or a Magian came to you and criticized Islam, would you refuse to discuss with him before listeners and viewers? He replied that in that there is a call to Islam.

As one Shi'i Omani commented to me at the time: "All Omanis stood with the mufti after his televised address. Before it, we heard rumors of what happened between him and Ibn Baz. The attack on him had nothing to do with sects in Islam. He was attacked as an Omani, and that is how we understood Ibn Baz's words. It was a national issue."[11]

The mufti as a bridge between generations

Al-Khalili was in top form in presenting his 1988 live televised lesson—the right person at the right time. Rumors of his rude reception in Riyadh had been circulating for months in Oman and, at one point, some senior officials said off the record that the possibility of a break in diplomatic relations had been discussed. The abrupt curtailment of an official visit was an unequivocal and public signal. Omanis did not need a carefully supervised press to explain events.

Shaykh al-Khalili was ideally positioned in the 1970s and 1980s to offer a bridge between these older understandings of Islam and the current, objectified ones. In his 40s at the time of the 1988 address, he came to Oman after Zanzibar's 1963 revolution. Upon Shaykh Ahmad's arrival in Muscat, he taught at the al-Khawr mosque. In contrast to some Omanis of Zanzibari origin, he formed close associations with Omanis from the northern interior. He took part in the lesson circles then regularly conducted in Muscat by Ibrahim Sa'id al-'Abri, then chief qadi of Muscat and chief of the court of appeals, and subsequently the first *mufti* in post-1970 Oman. After the death of Shaykh Ibrahim, al-Khalili became his successor in 1975. Even in the pre-1970 period Shaykh Ahmad was known for familiarity with what some of his associates term 'modernist' European and Muslim thought, although he was respected by traditionalist scholars.

Taking Charge of the Faith: The Fragmentation of Religious Authority

By the 1990s, however, it was clear that many of Oman's newly educated had become increasingly disenchanted with the lack of open discussion of religious values. Indeed, on 30 May, 1994, Omani authorities arrested over 300 Islamic 'activists,' including government officials, the majority of whom were highly educated. Several were subsequently released, but 120 were held in custody pending trial by a hastily organized State Security Court and a separate religious court. Their de facto crime was discussing religious texts and ideas in the context of a formal unauthorized organization.[12]

Subsequent arrests in 1997, 2002 and again in 2005, underscore the sensitivity of the state to the possibility of religiously based protest.[13] Some observers suggest, as was the case in 1994, that Egyptian security personnel exaggerated the significance of the trans-national contacts of alleged conspirators in order to sustain their own influence in Oman. The 2005 arrests included Ibadi faculty members in Arabic and Islamic studies at Sultan Qaboos University. For example, one of the faculty members arrested, tried, and later pardoned, was involved in setting up a public library in his town of origin and also had a role in running summer camps in which schoolchildren were taught the basic precepts of Ibadi faith and practice.[14] There were public demonstrations against the verdicts in late April 2005, and Omanis recognized the significant role of university graduates and government officials in the alleged conspiracy.[15]

At the time of the arrests, as a secondary school student explained to me, the first intimation that something major had occurred was the sudden closure of popular Oman-specific Internet discussion boards. The closure of the Internet discussion forums merely drew attention to the event, which then quickly spread by word of mouth, telephone, and mobile telephone text messages.[16] In a small country such as Oman, word-of-mouth dissemination of news, including in the 1990s the dissemination of anonymous leaflets, is a major complement to closely monitored public discussion. As for the accusations against those arrested, many Omanis and other observers inferred only that the government remained highly sensitive to any form of organized activity not explicitly authorized and closely monitored by state authorities.

For members of such groups and for other Omanis increasingly interested in 'taking charge' of their lives—discussing faith and practice as they would other aspects of community and society—existing forms of 'authoritative' discourse serve only to restrict public debate of religious ideas at a time when the ability to explain and debate such issues has become increasingly important. Oman's mufti was 'authorized' to enter into debate with his Saudi counterpart, and could do so in a

distinctively contemporary mix of citation of Qur'anic text, medieval commentary, and contemporary writings, but the lack of questions in his public commentary and the authoritative sanctions against others speaking in the same way communicate to most Omanis a form of privileged, state supported religious authority insecure about its fate if subjected to open discussion and debate.

The mufti, trained in Zanzibar and Egypt, emulates the forms of modern religious discourse, equally citing traditional commentaries and university dissertations, but because of his close identification with the state and easy access to the media, he no longer is the uncontested voice that he was in an earlier era. Young Omanis, from students to taxi drivers, often listen to CDs not aired on public and private radio and television. In taxis and in private homes, one can listen to Omani 'rap,' and some CDs touch on religious themes as well.

Discussions of sectarian issues in the 1970s occurred only at the margins of the public sphere. In Oman, as elsewhere in the Muslim-majority world, younger Omanis want a greater say in what their faith means to their lives. Talking about such identity does not in itself challenge state authority or lead to religious conflict. As a senior official of another GCC country commented to me recently,[17] the rising tide of Ibadi expression is neither a threat to the Omani state or to neighboring ones. It is an element of modern, 'objectified' senses of self, society, and faith, in which Omanis speak openly and with civility about what brings them together and their points of difference. In the increasingly fragmented and contested arena of modern religious authority, the state and the 'official' voices of Islam have only gained by allowing a wider range of religious expression and practice.

NOTES

1 Sultanate of Oman 1979–2005.
2 Text of the seventeenth annual National Day speech, 15 November 1987, as reported in the *Times of Oman*, 19 November 1987, p. 2.
3 The 1983 sermons have been collected in a book with a traditional alliterative title, *al-Muwahab al-Sunniyya fi al-Khutab al-Jam'iyya* [The Sanctioned Traditional Gift of Friday Sermons]. part 1. Ed. Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili (Muscat, 1983). Later sermons have been issued in monthly booklets.
4 See Eickelman 1985: 3–24.
5 See Trofimov: 2007.
6 Interview, Nizwa, January 1980.
7 Interview with an Omani student, 20 May 1985.
8 Khalily 1988: 23–24.
9 The letter is reproduced on p. 1 of the pamphlet. The charge that the Ibadis are part of the *khariji* movement originating in the first Islamic century is standard in sectarian polemic. Actually, the Ibadiyya originated as a breakaway sect from the *khariji* movement and rejected the *khariji* tenet that all non-*khariji* were infidels who merited death. Except for strict Ibadi adherence to the early traditions of the Muslim community and the *sunna*, and Ibadi views on religious and political leadership, Ibadi and Sunni doctrine coincide in most major respects. Other minor differences include the required movements during the obligatory prayers, the lack until recently of minarets in Ibadi mosques, and the absence, again until the 1980s, of Friday sermons (*khutbas*). See Eickelman 1987: 31–50.
10 See Eickelman 1990: 103–28, for a more extended discussion of the mufti's telecast. Parts of this chapter are adapted from this earlier discussion.
11 Interview, London, 16 June 1987.
12 For accounts of the incident, see Solidarity International for Human Rights 1994. Also interviews in London, Paris, and New York, September-November 1994. The majority of those apprehended were pardoned.
13 For the best discussion of these incidents, see Valeri 2009, especially pp. 184–201. Of all recent publications on Oman, Valeri strikes an appropriate balance between a critical reading of recent developments, including how younger Omanis perceive their own society, and an appreciation for what the state has achieved since the 1960s.
14 Interview with the author, 17 March 2006.
15 Valeri 2009: 195.
16 Interview, 17 July 2006.
17 E-mail correspondence, 13 October 2009.

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