

An Overview of Ibādī *Tafsīr*

Kahlan al-Kharusi
(Oriental Institute, University of Oxford)

Introduction

Our knowledge of the Ibādī¹ contribution to *tafsīr* is seriously defective. There are objective as well as subjective reasons for this state of affairs. The Ibādīs, despite their positive and productive role in the service of the Qurʾān and its sciences, have failed to make their works more widely known. However, during the last few years, researchers have made some progress in investigating and representing some of the Ibādī works of *tafsīr* but because of the constant tendency to treat Ibādī thought simply as a facet of Khārījī thought, the Ibādī role has not been considered in a proper manner. Muḥammad Ḥussayn al-Dhahabī,² for example, produced a huge study of *tafsīr* and *mufasssīrūn*, but when he comes to the Ibādīyya he deals with them on this basis, thus giving a distorted picture. I am not going to discuss his views here – I am only giving an example of how such a respected scholar, intentionally or inattentively, has failed to grasp the Ibādī contribution to this field. To remedy this, this paper will try, as much as possible, to take a step forward in introducing Ibādī works starting from the formative period of Ibādī thought until the late thirteenth/nineteenth century.

In these circumstances, it seems useful to set out the basic information concerning Ibādī *tafsīr* according to the latest information available. There are gaps, as some libraries still fail to provide information about, and to give access to the manuscripts they contain. However, this essay is, I believe, a step forward in providing information for all those studying the Ibādīyya.

It would appear that the following texts form the primary list of Ibādī works in the field of *tafsīr*. The list is in chronological order followed by a detailed consideration:

1. The *Dīwān* of Jābir b. Zayd al-Azdi (d. 93/711).
2. The *Tafsīr* of ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Rustam (d. 171/787).
3. The *Tafsīr* of ʿAbdu l-Wahhūb b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Rustam (d. 208/823).
4. The *Tafsīr* of Abū l-Munīb Muḥammad b. Yānis al-Nafūsī (d. the first half of the third/ninth century).

¹ This article is based on my master's thesis, written under the supervision of Professor Alan Jones. I am very grateful to him for all the help he has given me in the completion of this work.

² M.Ḥ. al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufasssīrūn* (Cairo, 1985), vol. 2, 291–323.

5. The *Tafsīr* of Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī (d. in the second half of the third/ninth century).
6. *Tafsīr al-Khams-miʿat Āya* by Abū l-Ḥawārī Muḥammad b. al-Ḥawārī (d. the fourth/tenth century).
7. *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* of Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Warjlānī (d. 570/1175).
8. A commentary on the *Tafsīr* of Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī by Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Abī Sitta (d. 1087/1676 or 1088/1677).
9. Annotation of the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* by Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Muṣʿabī l-Malīkī (d. 1187/1773).
10. *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar* by Saʿīd b. Aḥmad al-Kindī (d. at the beginning of the thirteenth/nineteenth century).
11. Partial *Tafsīr* (*sūras* 103–114) by Ibrāhīm b. Baḥmān (d. 1232/1817).
12. The *Tafsīr* of Yūsuf b. Ḥaddūn (d. 1236/1821).
13. (a) *Maqālid al-Tanzīl*.
(b) *Tafsīr Āyāt Mutashābiha min al-Qurʾān*.
Both by Jāʿid b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī (d. 1237/1822).
14. *al-Yumn wa-l-Baraka fī Tafsīr al-Hudā wa-l-Raḥma* by Muḥammad b. Sulaymān Adrīsī.
15. (a) *Himyan al-Zād ilā Dār al-Maʿād*.
(b) *Taysīr al-tafsīr*.
(c) *Dāʿī l-ʿamal ilā yawm al-ajal*.
All three are by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aṭfayyish (d. 1332/1914).

I shall now attempt to describe ascribed works in as much detail as possible.

1. **Abū l-Shaʿthāʾ Jābir b. Zayd al-Azdi³** was born in the small village of Farq near Nizwa in the interior of Oman. After receiving his early education in Oman he moved with his family to Baṣra and settled there. He studied there and in the Hijāz and is thought to have studied with such leading companions of the Prophet as Ibn ʿAbbās, Abū Hurayra, Anas b. Mālik, ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr etc.

Jābir is generally reckoned to be one of the greatest of the early Ibādīs. Due to his tact and organising ability, he effectively became the real founder of the Ibādī sect. He was particularly well known for his learning and piety, winning the regard of such a notable as Anas b. Mālik.⁴

Jābir was probably the author of one of the earliest collections of *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, correspondence and legal opinion (*fatwā*), known as the *Dīwān*.⁵ It is not clear whether

³ See A. al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar* (Oman, 1992), vol. 1, 67–72; A.H. al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut, 1948), vol. 2, 34.

⁴ al-Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (Beirut, 1986), vol. 1, part 2, 204.

⁵ The *Dīwān* has been ascribed to Jābir b. Zayd by many writers such as Abū Zakariyya Yaḥyā b. Abū l-Khayr (d. shortly after 474/1082) in *Siyar al-aʾimma wa Akhbārūhum* (Beirut, 1982), 33–5; A.S.

this work was originally committed to writing or not – there are arguments on both sides – though it should be noted that Jābir flourished at a time when there was a great surge in the use of written Arabic during the Caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik (with whom Jābir was on good terms, on the surface at least). But even if Jābir transmitted his knowledge verbally, his work was recognised as a discrete entity, and sooner or later it was committed to writing.

There appear to have been several copies, with one perhaps having gone to the Ibādīs in North Africa. However, by the third/ninth century the sole known copy was in the libraries of the Abbasids in Baghdad, where al-Maʿmūn is said to have set great store by the work. Some time later it was lost. The importance of the oral transmission of Jābir’s *Diwān* must be stressed. It should be remembered that his successor as *imām*, Abū ‘Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma al-Tamīmī was his student, and students, especially at that time, learned aurally and not from books.

Unfortunately, it does not seem that any part of this work still exists, unless the *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ* and *Kitāb al-Ṣalāh* by Jābir b. Zayd, which Ennami⁶ found in North Africa, might be parts of his *Diwān*. This is just an assumption and cannot be proved yet. Beyond that we can look to the work of Pakoosh,⁷ who brought together more than forty examples of Jābir’s *tafsīr* (*tafsīr* is of course subsumed in any major collection of *Ḥadīth*). The examples show him to be a disciple of Ibn ‘Abbās but his crucial scholarly importance is in the transmission of this learning to the Ibādī community.

2. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam and his *Tafsīr*. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam (date of birth unknown) came from a Persian family that was stranded in Mecca when his father died on the Pilgrimage. Later his mother married a man from Qayrawān, and the family moved there. As a young man he traveled to Baṣra to study with Abū ‘Ubayda, the second Ibādī *imām*.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān was elected *Imām* in Tāhert in 160/777. He died in 171/787,⁸ having composed numerous works on *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and other Islamic sciences.

Most Ibādī sources⁹ agree that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān did write *tafsīr*, but there is disagreement about the time of its loss and the reason for it. One view is that it was lost when the ‘Ubaydīs sacked Tāhert in 296/909 and burnt the Maʿṣūma Library there. A second view is that it survived but was sold on to someone who would not

al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mashāyikh* (Algeria, 1974), vol. 2, 205; and a non-Ibādī, Ḥājī Khalifa also mentioned it, probably from non-Ibādī sources, in his book *Kashf al-Zunūn* (Beirut, 1982), vol. 1, 781.

⁶ Ennami, *Studies in Ibādīsm* (Cambridge: Ph.D. thesis, 1971), 53.

⁷ Y.M. Pakoosh, *Fiqh al-imām Jābir b. Zayd* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 79–91.

⁸ Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār al-aʿimma al-Rustumiyīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 28–41.

⁹ al-Darjīnī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, 23; al-Barrādī, *Risāla fī Kutub al-Iḥādīyya* (Cairo, 1994), 66; Abū Zakariyā, *Siyar*, 37. There is also a mention of this work in some non-Ibādī sources, such as al-Zarkalī, *al-Aʿlām* (7th ed. Beirut, 1986), vol. 3, 306.

grant access to it. There is slightly more support for this view.¹⁰ The end result, however, was the same – the work was lost.

As far as I can see from my reading, no trace of the work has survived. It has been suggested that Shaykh Hūd b. Muḥakkam may have drawn on the *tafsīrs* of both ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and his son ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and this may be indicated by the phrase “in the *tafsīrs* of our sect ...” This is an ingenious suggestion but lacking in proof and we must assume that this first complete *tafsīr* by a renowned Ibādī scholar has been lost without trace. The loss is particularly regrettable, as we can tell from his correspondence¹¹ that he was an excellent scholar.

3. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam. The son of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (end of the second century and beginning of the third century) is said to have written a book of *tafsīr*. The only possible indication of this comes from the redactor¹² of the *tafsīr* of Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī but he provides insufficient evidence to show that the book existed. It remains only a supposition.

4. Shaykh Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī and his *tafsīr*. Hūd b. Muḥakkam was a Berber tribesman from what is now Algeria. He is a third century figure, who probably died some time between 280/893 and 290/903.¹³

There is no doubt that he put together a book known as *Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-‘Azīz*, as it has survived and been published.¹⁴ However, there has been dispute about the extent of Shaykh Hūd’s role in the book. It is clearly based in part on the *tafsīr* of Yahyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī (d. after 273/887). Close examination of the work shows that Shaykh Hūd is far more than a summarizer. Crucially, he adds Ibādī views whenever they are needed and he recasts and explains difficult passages and produces a *tafsīr* that may be considered Ibādī. It is, thus, the earliest extant Ibādī *tafsīr* and as such is extremely important.

The published edition relies on one manuscript only in which the first few pages are lost. As a result, we are lacking Shaykh Hūd’s *Introduction* and thus any remarks he might have made about his aims and methods. Nor is there any clarification in the marginal commentary by Shaykh Abū Sitta.¹⁵ It seems to me to be important to search for other copies of the manuscript which may well exist in private libraries.

¹⁰ The first view is adopted by contemporaries like Y. Dabbūz Bū Tardīn, *al-Shaykh Afṣyāsh wa madhhabuhu fī l-tafsīr* (unpublished thesis), 132 but he did not state his sources while the other view is adopted by early sources like al-Barrādī and al-Darjīnī.

¹¹ See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Dalīl wa-l-Burhān* (2nd ed., Oman, 1997).

¹² B. Sharīfī in H.M. al-Hawwārī, *Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-‘Azīz* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), vol. 1, 15–25.

¹³ al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, vol. 2, 59.

¹⁴ In 4 volumes edited and commented on by B.S. Sharīfī, (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990).

¹⁵ See section 7 of this article.

5. *Tafsīr al-Khams-mi'at Āya*. There is a difficulty with the authorship of this work. It has been published three times, first in *facsimile* by Sālim b. Ḥamad al-Hārthī in 1974, then by Muḥammad Zanāṭī in 1991, and then by Walīd 'Awjān of the University of Mu'ta in 1994. All three editions give the name of the book as *al-Dirāya wa Kanz al-Ghināya wa Muntahā al-Dirāya fī Tafsīr al-Khams-mi'at Āya* and say that the author was the third century Omani scholar Abū l-Ḥawwārī Muḥammad b. al-Ḥawwārī b. 'Uthmān, who studied at Nizwā under Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb (d. 250/864) and whose principal teacher was al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī (d. 278/891). He was certainly the author of numerous works.

However, the ascription to Abū l-Ḥawwārī is based on one sentence that occurs frequently throughout the work: 'Abū l-Ḥawwārī said'. What the sentence really indicates is that the opinions of Abū l-Ḥawwārī are frequently quoted. Sometimes authors do refer to themselves in this way but it does not appear likely that this was so in this case.¹⁶ Another suggestion is that the author was al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī. This seems anachronistic and even less likely.¹⁷

Finally,¹⁸ there is a suggestion that this is simply the work of Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Azdī (d. 150/767) because he has a work of *tafsīr* with exactly the same name, '*Tafsīr al-Khams-mi'at Āya*'. So in order to judge this opinion I carefully compared the texts of the two works. From the first few pages, I discovered how very similar the *tafsīr* ascribed to Abū l-Ḥawwārī was to that of Muqātil b. Sulaymān. The only significant difference was the additional Ibādī juristic opinions in Abū l-Ḥawwārī's work and also the expurgation of the non-Ibādī ones. This makes me confident that the basic author of this work is not the Omani scholar Abū l-Ḥawwārī but Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the role of Abū l-Ḥawwārī is no more than a juristic refutation.

6. Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Warjlānī. This Ibādī scholar was born in the Algerian town of Wargla at the beginning of the sixth century. After initial education in his home town, he studied for several years in al-Andalus. He died in 570/1175 after composing many significant works for the Ibādī school. One of these was a

¹⁶ The first page of the ms. says: 'this is the refutation of the outstanding scholar Abū l-Ḥawwārī' but if the author were Abū l-Ḥawwārī he would not have described himself thus. See also the way he has been quoted in 144-47. Walīd 'Awjān, ed., *al-Dirāya wa Kanz al-Ghināya wa Muntahā al-Dirāya fī Tafsīr al-Khams-mi'at Āya* (Jordan, 1994).

¹⁷ This view is adopted by al-Barrādī in his brief epistle about Ibādī works at the end of al-Qalḥātī, *al-Jawāhir al-Muntaqā'ī* (Cairo: lithograph, n.d.) but, unlike other places, without mentioning that he saw the book or even that it has been described for him. However, he did not mention it at all in his latest epistle, *Risāla fī Kutub al-Ibādīyya*. Also al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs is Abū l-Ḥawwārī's teacher and it is unusual for the teacher to quote his student as would be the case here.

¹⁸ There is indeed another opinion by Ennami, *Studies in Ibādism*, that the author is al-Ṣalt b. Mālik al-Kharūṣī. But this seems to me to be a false impression occurring to Ennami due to the similarity between the two names, otherwise his source here was al-Barrādī who ascribed it to al-Ṣalt b. Khamīs not Mālik.

tafsīr, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* as al-Sālimī calls it.¹⁹ Both al-Barrādī²⁰ and al-Shammākhī²¹ saw this work, but despite much searching, no manuscript has been found.

Some idea of al-Warjlānī's method may be gleaned from al-Barrādī's description²² and from passages found in other works by him, such as *al-Dalīl wa-l-Burhān* and *al-'Adl wal-Inṣāf*. However, the information is fragmentary, and any views about it must remain tentative.

7. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Abī Sitta. This eleventh century Ibādī writer (d. 1087/1676 or 1088/1677) earned the name *al-Muḥāshshī* for the large amount of marginal annotations that he wrote on important Ibādī works. The most important of these was on the *tafsīr* of Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Ḥawwārī. It stops part way through *Sūrat al-Baqara*, and was probably interrupted by the author's death.

Several copies of this work survive in a number of libraries in North Africa but there has been no access to any of them so far. Obtaining a copy of the manuscript is important, as it would throw light on the lost first few pages of the original work of Hūd b. Muḥakkam.

8. Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Muṣ'abī l-Malīkī (d. 1187/1773). This twelfth century Tunisian scholar is known as al-Muḥāshshī l-thānī because like Abū Sitta he wrote marginal annotations on various books. One of these, in two volumes, was on the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, a copy of which is extant in al-Bārūniya Library in Libya.²³

9. Sa'īd b. Aḥmad al-Kindī. al-Kindī is a member of a family of famous scholars in Oman. Amongst his ancestors were Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kindī (d. 507/1113) author of the *Bayān al-Shar'* in 73 volumes and Aḥmad b. 'Abdullāh al-Kindī (d. 557/1162) who wrote a *Kitāb al-Muṣannaḥ* in 42 volumes.

Sa'īd b. Aḥmad appears to have been born between 1130/1718 and 1139/1727 at Nizwa. He was a pupil of the outstanding scholar of the twelfth century in Oman, Sa'īd b. Bashīr al-Ṣubḥī (d. 1150/1737). He wrote various works including a refutation of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and a *tafsīr* entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. The manuscript states that the work was completed on the second of Dhū l-Ḥijja, 1181/1757.²⁴ It was published in Oman in three volumes as

¹⁹ A. H. Salīmī, *al-Lam'a al-Mardiyya* (Oman, 1983), 23.

²⁰ Barrādī, *Risāla fī Kutub al-Ibādīyya*, 70.

²¹ al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, vol. 2, 105.

²² He saw the first volume of the book and described it as such a comprehensive commentary that he has never seen such a detailed *tafsīr* before. Barrādī, *Risāla fī Kutub al-Ibādīyya*, 70.

²³ Abū l-Yaqzān Ibrāhīm (d. 1393/1973), *Faḥḥ Nawāfīdh al-Qur'ān* (Oman, 1991), 68.

²⁴ I did not see the ms. itself but the last page of it is photocopied in the printed work, 21.

recently as 1998. It is fortunate that the manuscript has survived, as the work is not referred to either by his contemporaries or by later scholars.

Sa'īd b. Aḥmad sets out clearly in the introduction to his *tafsīr* the main sources that he uses, and reading of the work corroborates this. They were:

1. *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī (d. 526/1132).
2. *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Bayḍāwī (d. 682/1283), particularly important in vol. 3.
3. *Madārik al-Tanzīl* by al-Nasafī (d. 707/1307).
4. *Jawāmi' al-Jūmi'* by al-Ṭabarsī l-Imāmī (d. 548/1153).
5. *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī l-Mu'tazilī (d. 538/1144), important in vols. 2 and 3.

In addition to these non-Ibādī sources, he drew on most of the earlier Ibādī sources, including Abū Sa'īd al-Kudāmī (fourth/tenth century) and Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb b. al-Ruḥayl (d. 260/874) and Ibn Baraka (fourth/tenth century). For lexicographical problems he drew on the *Qāmūs* of al-Fayrūzabādī.

Sa'īd b. Aḥmad shows broad, eclectic views in his *tafsīr* in drawing on the non-Ibādī authorities quoted above and others, as well as Ibādī sources.

The work is not particularly systematic. Sometimes the writer refers to many authorities and summarizes them. Elsewhere he quotes a single text *in extenso* and without any change. Nor does he show clearly when he is paraphrasing and when he is quoting exactly. Nevertheless, Sa'īd b. Aḥmad produces a valuable work, which may properly be considered to be the earliest Mashriqī Ibādī *tafsīr* that we have.

10. Jā'id b. Khamīs al-Kharūsi. This author was an outstanding Omani scholar at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century (b. 1147/1734, d. 1237/1821). His scholarly abilities were noted at an early age and he soon attained a position of respect among his contemporaries. He wrote widely on many different subjects but most of his surviving works have not yet been published.²⁵

His son Nāṣir b. Jā'id reports that his father was always criticizing Omanis for their neglect in not writing a comprehensive Ibādī *tafsīr* and a complete reference work on *Ḥadīth*.²⁶

Jā'id himself did not fill this gap, though he might have intended to do so. Two works of *tafsīr* survive. The first is called *Maqālid al-Tanzīl*, of which I possess the autograph manuscript (there are many other copies in Omani libraries). As it stands, the work covers only the interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* consisting of 17 pages with 18–30 lines of writing. Nevertheless, Jā'id states in his *Introduction* that it was his aim to write a complete Ibādī *tafsīr*.²⁷ At present we can only assume that most of the work is lost or that he died before he could complete the bulk of the work.

Study of the text shows that Jā'id was not content to reproduce the work of his predecessors, but brought a sharp critical and analytical mind to the subject. It would

²⁵ More details about the author and his works can be found in my graduating paper on *Maqālid al-Tanzīl*, submitted to the Institute of Jurisprudence, Oratory and Guidance (Oman) in 1996.

²⁶ N.J. al-Kharūsi, *al-Ḥuqq al-Mubīn* (uncatalogued ms.), vol. 3, 3.

²⁷ J.Kh. al-Kharūsi, *Maqālid al-Tanzīl* (uncatalogued ms.), 2.

appear that among his sources he referred to the *Jāmi' al-Bayān* of al-Ṭabarī and the *Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī.

There is a certain Ṣūfī coloration to Jā'id's language, most probably derived from the study of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. This puts him just slightly outside orthodox Ibādī tradition, though he is strongly critical of Ṣūfī analyses and of non-Ibādī works of *tafsīr*. Even this fragment is an important work.

Jā'id's other work on *tafsīr* is a collection of about forty verses from *al-Mutashābihāt* (where there is uncertainty on the meaning established by the verses) with a full explanation.²⁸ He shows briefly the Ibādī views on these verses and more importantly how they are to be linked with the *Muḥkams* (clear or perfect verses) to reveal their dogmatic dimension. This collection is still in manuscript form and, unlike the *Maqālid al-Tanzīl*, has not been seriously studied yet, though there are various manuscripts in Oman. A good part of it also appears in the printed *Qāmūs al-Sharī'a* by Jumayyil b. Khamīs al-Sa'ādī (fourteenth/twentieth century).

11. Ibrāhīm b. Biḥmān al-Thamīnī. This scholar is largely unknown, as most of the sources that introduce him are still unpublished. What I know about him is that he is an Algerian scholar from Mzāb born in the second half of the twelfth century who studied with the famous Ibādī scholar, his uncle, Diyā' al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Thamīnī (1223/1808). After a scholarly life, he died in 1232/1817 leaving many works and a great library in Bani Yaşjin in Mzāb. One of his works of *tafsīr* is *al-Ma'dan al-Masūn 'alā Sūrat al-Kanz al-Madfūn* which consists of a *tafsīr* of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*.

He also wrote *Aşḍāf al-Durar wa Akmām al-Zahr al-Mawḍū'a 'alā Sūrat al-'Aşr* which is again a *tafsīr* of one *sūra* (*al-'Aşr*). The third work is a marginal annotation on the *tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī's *Anwār al-Tanzīl*. A copy of the manuscript of this work is kept in al-Istiḳāma Library in Mzāb. Finally, there is *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Nūr min Sūrat al-Nūr*, which is correspondence he wrote in 1225/1810.²⁹

12. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aţfayyish. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. 'Isā b. Şālih Aţfayyish, from the Mzāb in Algeria, was born in 1237/1821 and died in 1332/1914 at the age of 96.³⁰ He is considered, with justification, to be one of the greatest and most productive of all Ibādī scholars. He appears to have started teaching and writing at the age of sixteen and by the end of his long life he had written about three hundred works on a wide range of subjects: language, philosophy, dogma, jurisprudence, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* etc.

²⁸ I possess a photocopy of this collection which is in 19 folios, each of 17 lines in a clear *naskhī* script.

²⁹ A.U. Bakallī, in his introduction to *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Nūr* by Bayyūḍ (Algeria, 1998), 14.

³⁰ Yahyā b. Şālih Bū Tardīn, *al-Shaykh Aţfayyish wa Madhābahu fi l-Tafsīr* (University of 'Ayn Shams, Egypt, master's thesis, 1989), 103.

Also known as al-Qutb, Afḡayyish wrote three works of *tafsir*. Only two of them are complete. The incomplete work, entitled *Dā'i l-'Amal li-Yawm al-Ajal*, was his first attempt at *tafsir*. He intended to write it in thirty three volumes. However, he changed his mind and started a second *tafsir*, *Himyan al-Zād ilā Dār -al-Ma'ād*. Only four volumes of the *Dā'i l-'Amal* were completed. They start with *Sūrat al-Rahmān* proceeding to the end of the Qur'ān and then back to *Sūrat Ṣād*, with which the work stops.

His second *tafsir*, *Himyan al-Zād* was also written when he was quite young. The book shows his immaturity in various respects. In particular, he was not aware of some sources and reference works. Also he included weak traditions and *Isrā'iliyyāt*.³¹ Nevertheless, the work has been published twice, first in Zanzibar, and then in Oman in 1986.

Towards the very end of his life, al-Qutb wrote his last *tafsir*, entitled *Taysir al-Tafsir*. This is a great refinement of his earlier work, and deals with a much wider range of issues, problems and ideas. It is thus a good example of Ibādī *tafsir*. The *Taysir al-Tafsir* has been published twice already but without any redactory study. A critical edition is now being made in Algeria and the first volumes have been published. In addition, there are various studies of al-Qutb and his works.³²

al-Qutb's works enrich the Ibādiyya intellectually, and they have had a strong influence. Many of his pupils³³ have turned their hands to *tafsir* and similar works but they only appear to continue the Qutb school.

Doubtful Works

During my investigation of Ibādī works of *tafsir*, I have encountered some doubtful works, or more precisely, I could not find sufficient details to make accurate judgments about them. Though some of them seem to be Ibādī works and others are claimed to be so, I found it hard to accept them as such. These works can be presented by dividing them, according to the availability of information, into three categories, even if each category consists of just one work.

The first category includes works that have been mentioned in Ibādī sources merely by name. The only work I found in this category has been referred to by Jumayyil b. Khamis al-Sa'dī (the thirteenth/ nineteenth century) twice³⁴ in his book *Qāmūs al-Sharī'a*. He gives the book the title of *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf al-Muntazā min Maghāṣāt al-Kashshāf*. From the way al-Sa'dī presents his quotation from this book, as well as the contents of the quotations, it seems reasonable to say that this work is an

³¹ The author realized this himself as he stated in the *Taysir al-Tafsir* (Oman: Ministry of National Heritage, 1986), vol. 1, 7.

³² The most advanced study is Bū Tardīn, *al-Shaykh Afḡayyish*.

³³ Such as Sāliḡ b. 'Umar La'li (d. 1347/1928) who wrote *al-Qawl al-Wajīz fi Tafsir Kalām Allāh al-'Azīz* (ms.) and Ibrāhīm Abū l-Yaqzān (1393/1973) who has many works of *tafsir*; e.g. *Faṡḡ Nawāfiḡh al-Qur'ān, Ashī'at al-Nūr min al-Nūr*.

³⁴ J.K. al-Sa'dī, *Qāmūs al-Sharī'a* (Oman, 1982), vol. 1, 26 and vol. 4, 50.

Ibādī *Tafsir*. From the title of the book and by comparing it with other works of *tafsir*, one can deduce that it is an annotation on the *Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī. But all these remain uncertainties as the work is not referred to except in *Qāmūs al-Sharī'a*, where the information given is insufficient to draw a clear picture about the work and its author.

The second category consists of works indicated by their authors' names. The example I found in this category is *Tafsir 'Amr b. Qā'id*, which is quoted by Ibn Ja'far (end of the third/ninth century) in his *Jāmi'*.³⁵ Although not so much can be gleaned from what has been quoted there to reveal whether this 'Amr b. Qā'id is an Ibādī or not, there appear distinct similarities between his opinions and those of Ibn Ja'far. But I discovered in a recently published volume of the same source that Ibn Ja'far referred to him as a non-Ibādī author.³⁶ I then found that al-Jāhīz refers to him with the name of Abū 'Alī 'Amr b. Fā'id al-Aswārī.³⁷ There is also a short biography of him in Ibn Ḥajar in which he quoted many authorities describing him as a Mu'tazilite and Qadarite who lived in al-Baṣra and died shortly after the year 200/815.³⁸ This makes it clear that he is not an Ibādī, although quoted in Ibādī sources, and that his name is 'Amr b. Fā'id and not Qā'id.

Lastly, some researchers³⁹ claim that Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī (d.210/827), who wrote a *tafsir* called *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, is an Ibādī scholar. But there is no substantial evidence for such a claim and none of the Ibādiyya say this, nor does his work indicate that he adopts any distinctly Ibādī view. Similarly, Walīd 'Awjān claimed⁴⁰ that Muqātil b. Sulaymān is an Ibādī scholar and that the Ibādiyya consider him to be so but none of the Ibādiyya, as far as I know, has agreed with him. Even when I referred to the source⁴¹ on which he drew, I did not find any mention of Muqātil there.

³⁵ M.J. Ibn Ja'far, *al-Jāmi'* (Oman, 1983), vol. 1, 91.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 319.

³⁷ A.B. al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-Tahyīn* (Beirut, n.d.), vol. 1, part 1, 368-9; *al-Huḡaywān* (3rd ed. Beirut, 1969), vol. 6, 191; vol. 7, 203.

³⁸ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalanī, *Lisān al-Miẓān* (3rd ed. Beirut, 1986), vol. 4, 372-3.

³⁹ M.F. Sezgin, *Majāz al-Qur'ān of Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā* (2nd ed. Cairo, 1970), 10.

⁴⁰ 'Awjān, ed., *al-Dirāya wa Kanaz al-Ghināya*, 10.

⁴¹ S. Kāshif, ed., *al-Sīyar wa-l-Jawāhāt al-'Umāniyya* (Oman, 1989), 352.

Analysis and Comments

Before ending this paper, I think it is essential to remember that although there are some important points in the field of Ibādī *tafsīr* that need to be dealt with in detail, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to do so without having an overview of the whole field, which is precisely what I have tried to give. However, from this basic outline some points emerge. Not least of all is the richness of the Ibādī Maghribī works compared to the Mashriqī (from our list, twelve works are Maghribī whilst five are Mashriqī). This phenomenon requires some explanation. It appears that at least one of the Omani scholars⁴² realized this fact and tried to fill the gap but to no avail, and even had he succeeded it would have been too late (the thirteenth/nineteenth century). Some writers try to give explanations such as the fear of entering this field, or the political events that lead to many attacks on Ibādī literature.⁴³ Personally, I am not convinced of these reasons and if I am to give a superficial answer it is, I think, that the aural method was followed more extensively by Mashriqīs to transmit knowledge from one generation to another.

Another interesting observation is that a line of separation could be drawn after the sixth/twelfth century down until the thirteenth/nineteenth century on the quality of the works. One can see that the works before the seventh/thirteenth century were creative works, while those afterwards are mostly in the form of marginal annotations or fragmentary works until the appearance of Jā'id b. Kharrīs in Oman and Ibrāhīm b. Bihmān al-Thamīnī in Algeria.

Also related to this issue, in one way or another, is the influence of al-Zamakhshari on the Ibādī works of *tafsīr*. Due to the similarity in many dogmatic questions between the Ibādīyya and Mu'tazila and because of his intellect as well as his linguistic skill, his influence is obvious but needs detailed study. This leads to another important point, which is how the general features of Ibādī *tafsīr* compare to the Sunni, bearing in mind that some Ibādī works are based on Sunni ones – as shown earlier. One can fairly say that Ibādī *tafsīr* falls in the middle of two extremes. On the one hand, the Mu'tazila, who over-used *al-'aql* (rationality, reasoning) in interpreting the Qur'ān, a method which has been widely rejected or at least criticised by Sunnis and is thought to have led Mu'tazila to contradict many explicit texts of the Qur'ān, and on the other hand, the many Sunnis who rely largely on *al-Naql* (tradition or irrationality) which leads to insufficient use of the intellect and limiting the text to superficial interpretations. This is what makes Ibādī *tafsīr* distinctive.

These are complex issues which I am not competent to deal with at present, but they open the door for more detailed studies to be carried out at a later stage.

⁴² See section 10 of this article.

⁴³ Bū Tardīn, *al-Shaykh Afīyūsh*, 104–5.

Some reflections on the use of the Qur'ān in monumental inscriptions in Syria and Palestine in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries¹

Carole Hillenbrand
(University of Edinburgh)

"You live in a transient world, with but a brief span of life. So forestall your latter end with the best deeds you can accomplish.....Cast away this world where God has cast it, and seek that which is to come".²

Introduction

Any overall analysis of the use of Qur'ānic quotations in monumental epigraphy is fraught with pitfalls. Accidents of survival, the size of the sample chosen and other problems discourage generalisations. The scattered inscriptions which *have* survived may present an incomplete or misleading picture of a much more complex situation which is now, after the passage of so many centuries, impossible to reconstruct. Moreover, if a given area of the medieval Islamic world is taken in isolation from others, the conclusions drawn may well be skewed. Similarly, to take a limited period of time, ignoring the evidence of what precedes and follows it, will also produce faulty conclusions.

Moreover, the study of how the Qur'ān is used in monumental inscriptions is still at a very rudimentary stage. The sheer size of the medieval Islamic world and the number of extant monuments make such a task extremely daunting. Dodd and Khairallah have made a number of grandiose and exciting statements about Qur'ānic inscriptions on monuments in their book, arguing that layers and layers of meaning lie beneath the surface, layers which scholars must uncover and interpret. Indeed, they suggest that such inscriptions correspond to icons and images in Christian churches. Having promised a great deal, they failed to extract much from their evidence³ and indeed to prove their own hypotheses. In any case, their sample was seriously flawed.

¹ Dedication – This short piece is affectionately dedicated to my esteemed friend and colleague Alan Jones, a devoted teacher who instilled in us all his fascination with Arabic. It is in his honour that I have strayed a little from my usual areas of research in search of a subject which I hope will interest him.

² From the *khutba al-wilāya* of the caliph 'Uthmān, trans. A.F.L. Beeston, *Samples of Arabic prose* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), 7.

³ E.C. Dodd and S. Khairallah, *The image of the word*, 2 vols. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981).