

Ibādīs in Zanzibar and the *Nabḍa*

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The Ibādī *nabḍa* in East Africa must be considered in part in connection with the *nabḍa* in Oman, since the Ibādīs of East Africa all came from Omani families and remained in close contact with events in Oman. A second factor important to an understanding of the specific characteristics of the Ibādī *nabḍa* in East Africa is the close interaction Ibādīs had with the Sunnī majority in that region and the threat posed by Ibādī conversions to Sunnī Islam on the Swahili coast. Finally, by the last decade of the 19th century, Ibādī scholars in Zanzibar were more directly impacted by European colonialism and were also in closer contact with events and tendencies in other parts of the Muslim world than were Ibādī scholars in Oman, leading the *nabḍa* in Zanzibar at the dawn of the 20th century to blend sectarian polemic with pan-Islamic, anti-colonial political revivalism.

The Omani presence on the East African coast goes back centuries. The Hārithī tribe claims to have founded colonies at Mogadishu and Brava in Somalia as early as the 10th century,¹ and the Arabic version of the Kilwa chronicle notes a rebellion against the Shīrāzī governor in the early 11th century AD that installed one Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Mundhirī in his place.² We have no idea who this al-Mundhirī was, or whether his assumption of such an important post indicates a continual presence of Mundhirīs on the Swahili coast from that early date, but there is no doubt that Hārithīs and Mundhirīs—not to mention Mazrūīs, Nabḥānīs, and other prominent Omani families—were already residents of the Swahili coast well before the advent of the Būsaīdī dynasty. However, we do not know anything about any Ibādī scholarship on the Swahili coast until the time of Sayyid Saīd b. Sulṭān.

Sayyid Saīd first visited Zanzibar in 1828 and quickly realized its economic potential. He gradually spent more and more time on the island, where he built a palace for himself at Mtoni, a few miles north of Zanzibar town, and eventually transferred his *dīwān* to Zanzibar,³ transforming it from a town of a few huts into a thriving metropolis and making it a center for Islamic scholarship. Sayyid Saīd invited both Sunnī and Ibādī scholars to make their home in Zanzibar.⁴ A survey of the writings of Ibādī scholars in Zanzibar during the time of Sayyid Saīd

contradicts Richard Burton's comment that the Ibādīs of Zanzibar had 'little education and no learning', though his observation that they read Sunnī works is accurate.⁵

Among those who accompanied Sayyid Saīd to Zanzibar was Nāṣir b. Jā'id b. Khamīs al-Kharūṣī, more commonly known as Nāṣir b. Abī Nabḥān (1778–1847). Son of the famous Abū Nabḥān Jā'id b. Khāmīs (1734/5–1822), a scholar of towering eminence whom Wilkinson described as 'the father of this modern *nabḍa*,⁶ Nāṣir was also a scholar of great importance. His students included Saīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī (1816–1871), a great scholar, poet, and leader of the 1868 uprising that installed 'Azzān b. Qays of the Āl Bū Saīd as *imām*; Jumayyil al-Saīdī, compiler of the ninety-volume *Qamūs al-sharī'a*, in which Nāṣir is frequently cited, sometimes at length; and Yahyā b. Khalfān b. Jā'id al-Kharūṣī, a scholar who, like Nāṣir, migrated to Zanzibar. In his *Tuḥfat al-a'yan bi-sīrat abī 'Umān*, Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī tells us that Sayyid Saīd and his uncle Ṭālib, governor of Rustāq, hated Abū Nabḥān and his sons, but that Sayyid Saīd feared Nāṣir's manipulation of talismans and embraced the wisdom of keeping one's friends close but one's enemies closer, and so never let Nāṣir out of his sight.⁷ While other scholars had homes in Zanzibar's Stone Town, Shaykh Nāṣir lived at the Mtoni Palace.⁸

Nāṣir was the leading Ibādī scholar of his generation in the east and had a prodigious literary output. Much of this was undoubtedly done in Oman, but it is likely that his *magnum opus*, a six-volume encyclopedia of theology and *fiqh* titled *al-ʿIlm al-mubīn wa l-ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (Clear Knowledge and Certain Truth),⁹ was written in Zanzibar. This is indicated by, first, the fact that it was composed in an effort to save an Ibādī from the seductions of Sunnī Islam; second, by his specification that a coin mentioned in a story in that book was from India and was not as heavy as the identically named coin on the Swahili coast;¹⁰ and, finally, by an anecdote that describes an incident at an assembly of Sunnī, Shī'ī and Ibādī Muslims, and which notes that a Shī'ī scholar in attendance was very influential with the government.¹¹

Another work that Nāṣir clearly wrote after his move to Zanzibar is *al-Sirr al-ʿalī fī khawāṣṣ al-nabāt al-sawāḥilī*

(The Exalted Secret in the Properties of the Plants of the Swahili Coast). He collected his information from writings in Arabic and Swahili, including some in non-Zanzibari Swahili dialects, and from various Swahili oral traditions. In this book he discusses the history and sources of the science of Swahili plants and the linguistic origins of the names of the plants. The medical and magical uses of the plants are very diverse: protection from snakes and magic, particularly magic that penetrates bodies; relief of pain in the teeth, eyes, nose and head; relief for urinary retention; facilitating childbirth; casting out *jinn*; making people invisible in hostile circumstances; strengthening or severing the relationship between husband and wife (though the author notes that the latter is religiously prohibited); making a man sexually potent or impotent (also prohibited); inducing ants or people to fight one's enemies; or bringing trouble to an enemy. Despite the large inventory of uses for these plants or other natural substances recorded in the book, the author explicitly condemns some of these practices and notes that it is really God who grants illness or health. He also describes works of black magic or 'Satanic' prescriptions, which explains why a scholar in Zanzibar urged me to buy a photocopy of a manuscript of this book in order to take it out of circulation and prevent, as he said, some Omani from using it to turn a man into a goat. The book also includes various Islamic *ad'iyya* (prayers of petition), a poem on the virtues of each of the *sūras* of the Qur'an, magical squares (*awqāf*), elements of astrology, and instructions on the manipulation of letters, numbers, and the four elements.

The scholarship of Nāṣir b. Abī Nabḥān reflects the sustained efforts of a very prolific scholar with an extremely broad range of expertise and interests. His writings deal with theology, law, philosophy, Sufism, logic, rhetoric, poetry, medicine, astrology, the manipulation of letters and sand divination, and the making of talismans. His scholarship reflects enormous erudition, great originality, and a deep engagement with Sunnī religious classics, making him one of the most interesting scholars of modern Ibādism.

Sayyid Sa'īd seems to have kept Shaykh Nāṣir as a personal counselor; he never appointed him as a *qāḍī*. Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī says that the Sayyid and others treated Nāṣir gingerly, while Nāṣir showed no compunction about treating them rudely.¹² On the other hand, there are also anecdotes relating that Sayyid Sa'īd sent Nāṣir on personal errands and that Nāṣir showed concern when Sayyid Sa'īd was depressed,¹³ indicating that a level of trust had developed between them, and perhaps even affection, as al-Sālimī tells us that when Nāṣir died in 1847, Sayyid Sa'īd was cradling his head.¹⁴

Nāṣir b. Abī Nabḥān was not the only member of his family to migrate to Zanzibar and attain prominence there as a scholar and judge. His nephew, Yahyā b. Khalfān b. Abī Nabḥān, served as a judge in Zanzibar during the reign of Sayyid Barghash. Abdallah Farsy mentions him in his work on the Shāfi'ī scholars of the Swahili coast as a teacher of a well-known Sunnī scholar, Sayyid Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Jamāl al-Layl,¹⁵ and the correspondence of the great Sunnī scholar, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Amawī, indicates that al-Amawī considered Shaykh Yahyā a close friend.¹⁶

The chief Ibādī *qāḍī* in Zanzibar during the reign of Sayyid Sa'īd and most of that of his successor, Mājid, was Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Mundhirī, who more than once was referred to as *al-ustādh al-aryāḥī* (the generous teacher).¹⁷ al-Mundhirī was also well known for his powerful prayers and his knowledge of talismans. Nāṣir's book on the Swahili plants includes poems by Shaykh al-Mundhirī on practical uses of the signs of the Zodiac and the four seasons, noting how the seasons differ between Oman, Sudan, and the Swahili coast. Many of the Arabic manuscripts in the Zanzibar National Archives are part of a *waqf* (charitable endowment) established by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Mundhirī on behalf of his children,¹⁸ and a number of these were written by Shaykh Muḥammad himself, including responses to legal questions, prayers, and a poem on grammar. Abdallah Farsy tells us that, during the reign of Sayyid Mājid (1856–1870), al-Mundhirī wrote a work on theology called *al-Kbulāṣa l-dāmigha* (The Irrefutable Quintessence), which was still being read at the time of Farsy's writing in the mid-1940s.¹⁹ 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. Nāfi' al-Mazrū'ī, an Ibādī convert to Sunnī Islam, wrote a rebuttal to al-Mundhirī's book, titled *al-Durū' al-sābiḡha fī mas'alat ru'yat al-Bārī ta'ālā* (Full Armor on the Question of the Vision of the Exalted Creator).²⁰ The title of al-Mazrū'ī's book reveals that it concerns the Sunnī teaching that believers will see God in the afterlife, a doctrine rejected by Ibādīs. In 1997, Oman's *Ma'bad idād al-quḍāt wa l-khuṭṭāb* (Institute for the Training of Judges and Preachers) published an edited version of al-Mundhirī's lengthy response to a provocative question on this subject posed to him by 'Alī l-Mazrū'ī.²¹ It seems that al-Mazrū'ī had also written the same question to Shaykh Sa'īd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī, whose much shorter response is appended to al-Mundhirī's and is also published in *Tambīd qawā'id al-īmān*.²² This question is one of the most prominent in Ibādī-Sunnī polemics and I have discussed it in detail elsewhere.²³ Here I will simply make a few observations concerning al-Mundhirī's scholarship and theological premises, in order to situate his position on several points that are subjects of debate across and even within the different Islamic schools:

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First, al-Mundhirī blames Sunnīs for what he sees as their excessive loyalty to the teachings of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), regardless of their obvious intellectual flaws. He says that those who are able must struggle in the pursuit of knowledge, rather than unquestioningly accepting received doctrines.²⁴ He therefore begins by laying down the rules for arguing from evidence in order to conclusively demonstrate truth and rebut falsehood.²⁵

Second, he addresses Qurʾān III:7, which says that some verses of the Qurʾān are ambiguous or allegorical (*mutashābihāt*) and others are categorical or foundational (*muḥkamāt*), and that the perverse seek the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the *mutashābihāt*. Much space is devoted in Qurʾānic exegeses to diverse definitions of the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*. Thanks to the lack of punctuation in Arabic and the subsumption of subject pronouns in the verb, the final sentence of the verse can be understood in two very different ways:

No one knows their meaning but God. Those who are well-grounded in knowledge say, "We believe in it...."

No one knows their meaning but God and those who are well-grounded in knowledge. They say, "We believe in it...."

The majority of Sunnī exegetes have understood this verse in the first manner, but the Muʿtazila and most Ibādī exegetes include "those who are well-grounded in knowledge" among those who can understand the meaning of the *mutashābihāt*. Although the 10th-century Ibādī exegete, Hūd al-Hawwārī, does not discuss the topic in a theoretical fashion, he consistently rejects a literal interpretation of anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qurʾān.²⁶ Abū Muḥammad b. Baraka (4th/10th century), Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Aṭfayyish (d. 1914) and Aḥmad b. Ḥamad al-Khalīlī, the Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, all state that the existence of *mutashābihāt* encourages people to exercise their intellects in studying the Qurʾān.²⁷ Interestingly, in his earlier commentary, *Ḥamayān al-zād ilā dār al-maʿād* (Abundant Provision for the Afterlife),²⁸ Aṭfayyish seemed to favor the exclusion of human beings from knowledge of the meaning of ambiguous verses,²⁹ but in *Tāyīr al-tafsīr* he unequivocally states that those who are well-grounded in knowledge may know their meaning.³⁰ This question has been widely debated in Islam;³¹ al-Mundhirī clearly states that those who are well-grounded in knowledge know the meaning of the *mutashābihāt*.³²

The basis of al-Mazrūʿī's argument (in the form of a question) is that, as a prophet, Moses must have known whether or not God can be seen, so he would not have asked God to show Himself to him if it were not possible. This is a common Sunnī argument, to which there are

standard Ibādī responses, such as to argue that Moses asked the question for the benefit of his people, who had demanded that God show Himself to them.³³ al-Mundhirī replies by asking a question of his own: "What sort of knowledge do you think God's messengers have: innate (*dhātī*), necessary (*darūrī*), or acquired (*kasbī*)?" He then cites the Qurʾānic accounts of Noah's erroneous assertion that his son was one of his people (XI:46-47), Moses' repentance after requesting to see God (VII:143), and God's words to Muḥammad, "He found you going astray and guided you" (LXXXIII:7), "He taught you what you did not know" (IV:113), and "Say: Lord, increase me in knowledge" (XX:114), to prove that prophets do not have complete knowledge even after their call to prophethood. Rather, says al-Mundhirī, guidance continues to come to them "from an overflowing of the kindness of their Lord."³⁴ This goes against the more common belief that God prevents prophets from erring even before their call to prophethood.

al-Mazrūʿī had argued that the Day of Judgment will be a time when ordinary habits are broken, so God's lack of visibility in this world does not constitute proof that He will not be seen in the next. al-Mundhirī replies that it is true that ordinary habits will be broken at the time of Resurrection, but that cannot include a transformation in God's essential attributes, because any transformation would imply deficiency.³⁵

al-Mundhirī then deconstructs the syllogism that forms the basis of al-Ashʿarī's argument that God can be seen. The syllogism goes: "God exists. All existents can be seen. Hence, God can be seen." al-Mundhirī points out that the conclusion of syllogistic reasoning is only as true as its major and minor premises. In this case, the minor premise, "All existents can be seen", is false, because wind and spirits exist but cannot be seen. Therefore, the conclusion is also false, as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī recognized.³⁶ He describes the mechanism of vision as understood by Euclid and Ptolemy (though he doesn't name them), including a drawing showing how rays shoot out from the eye and come into contact with the object of vision, whereas nothing can come into physical contact with God, who is incorporeal.³⁷

Muḥammad al-Mundhirī's intellectual horizons included Swahili literature, and he interacted with Bishop Edward Steere of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, who, in his *Handbook of the Swahili Language*, thanks "Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali, a man of the greatest research" for a copy, in his own hand, of some famous Swahili poetry, with an interlinear Arabic version and a paraphrase in modern language.³⁸

What we can discern from the foregoing is that Naṣir b. Abī Nabḥān and Muḥammad al-Mundhirī are excel-

lent examples of classical-style Ibādī scholarship in the mid-19th century. Both men were highly intelligent and well equipped in the methods of reasoning used in classical theology and jurisprudence. They were also both conversant in Sunnī literature and exerted efforts to rebut Sunnī theology. But their intellectual worlds were largely informed by premodern Muslim debates and practices, and included an interest in religio-magical occult sciences.

The *nabḍa* phenomenon is not limited to scholarship and literary output, but is also closely related to the political assertion of Ibādism. Leading Ibādī scholars participated in political uprisings in the name of Islam and justice from the late 18th century, when Sayyid Sulṭān, brother of the Imam Saʿīd b. Aḥmad, wrote to the 'Muslims' (conservative Ibādīs) in Nizwā, urging them to rebel against Saʿīd. Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī writes, "They agreed, provided that the Muslims took control of affairs afterward, so they could appoint whomever they saw fit over the nation, whoever is best able to repel corruption and strongest in commanding religious observance". Sayyid Sulṭān's ambitions were thwarted by Imam Saʿīd's son Hamad, who led his own 'blessed rebellion' (*thawra mubāraka*).³⁹ al-Sālimī records the intervention of the scholars Saʿīd b. Aḥmad al-Kindī, 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Kindī, and Abū Nabḥān in events both moral and political in 1784-85, during the reign of Imam Saʿīd, and attributes Imam Saʿīd's weakened state to Abū Nabḥān's spiritual powers:

*Then the ambition of the Sultan failed and his strength weakened and his kingdom left him. His brother Sulṭān, son of Sultan Aḥmad b. Saʿīd, rebelled against him and took every place in his kingdom except Rustāq. He [Saʿīd b. Aḥmad] lost the respect of the people to the point that a fish would be taken from a dish in his hand as he carried it from the market, and he could not drive [the thieves] away. He became a warning to onlookers and a sign to passersby. All the people knew this came from the shaykh's work against him, and they all humbled themselves before the shaykh, and he became the most highly respected person.*⁴⁰

As we have already seen, although there were hostilities between Sayyid Saʿīd and Abū Nabḥān and his family into the 1820s, eventually Naṣīr b. Abī Nabḥān became the Sayyid's close companion.

After the death of Sayyid Saʿīd b. Sulṭān, his sons struggled with each other for power. Barghash, on the ship with Saʿīd when he died, concealed his death, took the body ashore in the middle of the night and buried it secretly, in the hope of seizing the throne with the aid of members of the Ḥārithī clan, an effort thwarted by

the intervention of the British Political Agent, Atkins Hamerton, who proclaimed Mājid ruler of Zanzibar.⁴¹ Thuwaynī, ruler of Oman, also threatened Mājid's rule in late 1858 after Mājid failed to send the promised annual subsidy to Oman; he announced his intention to lead a military campaign against Mājid, an effort thwarted only by the intervention of the Government of Bombay.⁴² Even more of a threat to Mājid's hold on power was Ḥārithī support of a rebellion in October 1859 in favor of placing Barghash on the throne, a threat that was again defused through British intervention, this time through bombardment of Barghash's country home, which he had named Marseille. al-Mughayrī writes:

*As a result, French influence suffered a setback, and British influence increased, not only in Zanzibar, but in all East Africa and the Arab lands. Sayyid Mājid banished his brother Barghash to Bombay, India. He had to promise never again to resist Sayyid Mājid's rule. He swore this on the Qurʾān. He also swore not to associate with the Ḥārithīs or the French consul anymore.*⁴³

According to al-Mughayrī, the Ḥārithī leaders of this movement were Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī l-Ḥārithī and 'Abd Allāh b. Sālim al-Barwānī. Mājid forgave most of the rebels and Barghash was allowed to return after 18 months.⁴⁴

Barghash's rebellion against Mājid has been variously interpreted as inspired by personal ambition, anti-colonialist nationalism and zeal for Ibādism.⁴⁵ It is likely that all these factors played a part. Mājid relied on British power to maintain his throne and gladly acquiesced in the division of his father's empire. The separation of the rule of Oman from Zanzibar under British auspices led to the emergence of rebellions marked by a convergence of religious zeal and anti-imperialist sentiment.

The interest and involvement in Omani affairs of Ibādīs in Zanzibar is evident again in the revolution that brought the Imam 'Azzān b. Qays to power in 1868. Sayyid Mājid deemed this movement, led by Saʿīd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī and Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī l-Ḥārithī—the same Ṣāliḥ who had fled Zanzibar after Barghash's failed coup in 1859—a potential threat to his own power. Knowing that the British preferred a more secular approach to government, in June 1869 Mājid asked the Bombay government whether he would be permitted to send an expedition against 'Azzān in order to reunite the empire under his own rule. However, the British understood that a more likely outcome would be Muscat's domination of Zanzibar, rather than the other way around. But somehow word of Mājid's request reached the Imam, who threatened a military expedition against Zanzibar, a threat that the British hastened to suppress. Mājid proceeded to

send a large sum of money to the Imam. The Imam had been living in exile in Muscat since the late 1850s. In March 1870, Mājid proclaimed himself ruler of Zanzibar, conquered Ṣūr and forced the Imam to flee. The Imam, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, was a tribal leader who resented the Imam's rule. He was killed in battle in late 1870. Saʿīd al-Khalīlī surrendered to the Persian Gulf, Col. Pelly, however, was killed within a few days both he and the Imam were dead.⁴⁸ By then, Mājid had appointed Sayyid Barghash, fired by the news of the Imam's death. He heard the news of the Imam's death and hit Zanzibar in 1872, capturing the houses, ships, trees and other property of the former residents of Zanzibar. Barghash's closest advisor, al-Mughayrī, said to him and said, "This is a great day for you, but I consider this one of the Imam's misdeeds that Barghash's joy over the Imam's death to his fear for his own power."

In early 1895, Sayyid Barghash, ruler of Zanzibar, funded a revolution led by 'Alī l-Ḥārithī and his followers to overthrow Sayyid Faysal of Oman. Faysal won after a long struggle. al-Mughayrī wonders what Barghash had done, or did the presence of the Imam Qays al-Būsaʿīdī with Sayyid Barghash indicate an intention to march on Muscat?

Although Barghash's rebellion was inspired by exile in Bombay, the Imam 'Azzān implies more enthusiasm for Ibādī ideals, his conversion to Ibādism, demonstrated by the harsh criticism of the prominent Ibādī convert, al-Mughayrī, who he founded, which was a continuation of the works of Ibādī scholars. The Imam's 'Mission to Central Africa' included printing their own press in Zanzibar. Barghash's visit to Egypt in 1895 was from his state visit to Egypt. Barghash inspected the University of Cairo where Steere showed him a printing press using

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send a large sum of money to his brother Turkī, who had been living in exile in Bombay but returned to Oman in March 1870. Mājid promised further payments if Turkī conquered Šūr and forged an alliance with the Wahhābī *amīr*, 'Abd Allāh b. Fayṣal. By distributing wealth to tribal leaders who resented the centralization of government under the Imamate,⁴⁶ Turkī was able to induce the defection of many tribes to his side. The Imam was killed in battle in late January 1871.⁴⁷ On February 13th, Sa'īd al-Khalīlī surrendered to the British Resident for the Persian Gulf, Col. Lewis Pelly, on a promise of safe passage. Pelly, however, turned him over to Turkī, and within a few days both al-Khalīlī and his teenaged son were dead.⁴⁸ By then, Mājid had died, but his successor, Sayyid Barghash, fired 101 celebratory cannon shots when he heard the news of 'Azzān's death. When a hurricane hit Zanzibar in 1872, causing devastating destruction of houses, ships, trees and clove crops, Barghash and other residents of Zanzibar took refuge in a mosque. Barghash's closest advisor, Ḥamūd b. Sayf al-Far'ī, turned to him and said, "This is [for] the 101st shot". al-Sālimī considers this one of Imam 'Azzān's miracles,⁴⁹ and wrote that Barghash's joy over the death of the Imam was due to his fear for his own throne.

In early 1895, Sayyid Ḥamad b. Thuwaynī, then ruler of Zanzibar, funded an attack on Muscat by Šāliḥ b. 'Alī l-Hārithī and his son 'Abd Allāh, in the hope of overthrowing Sayyid Fayṣal and uniting Zanzibar with Oman. Fayṣal won after a battle of twenty-two days. al-Mughayrī wonders what would have happened if the battle had gone the other way: would Sayyid Ḥamad have appointed a representative in Oman, as Sayyid Sa'īd had done, or did the presence of Sayyid Sa'ūd b. 'Azzān b. Qays al-Būsa'īdī with Šāliḥ b. 'Alī during the battle indicate an intention to make Sayyid Sa'ūd *imām*?⁵⁰

Although Barghash's anti-British sentiment was tempered by exile in Bombay, and his joy over the death of 'Azzān implies more enthusiasm for his own power than for Ibādī ideals, his continued zeal for Ibādism is demonstrated by the harshness with which he dealt with prominent Ibādī converts to Sunnism and by the press he founded, which was dedicated mainly to publishing works of Ibādī scholarship. Missionaries of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa had already been operating their own press in Zanzibar since about 1865. During Barghash's visit to Egypt in August 1875, on his way back from his state visit to England, he visited the printing press in Bulāq.⁵¹ Bishop Edward Steere reports that Barghash inspected the UMCA press on October 15, 1879, where Steere showed him how to print an Arabic couplet from the *Arabian Nights*.⁵² Barghash decided to import a printing press using Arabic and Latin letters, and re-

cruited printers from abroad. *al-Maṭba'a l-sulṭāniyya*, the first Arabic printing press in East Africa, began operations in 1880. Its first publication was volume 1 of the *Qāmūs al-sharī'a* by Jumayyil b. Khamīs al-Sa'dī, who had studied with both Abū Nabhān and Nāṣir b. Abī Nabhān. The press published 17 volumes of the 90-volume work, which was written in Oman between 1844 and 1863. Abū Nabhān's grandson, Yahyā b. Khalfān b. Abī Nabhān (1812–1905), edited the first ten volumes.⁵³ In 1884 Barghash bought another Arabic press from the Jesuit Fathers' Press in Beirut and recruited Lebanese workers to run it. Although the *al-Bārūniyya* Press in Cairo began publishing Ibādī works about the same time as *al-Maṭba'a l-sulṭāniyya*, its publications were in lithograph, whereas Zanzibar's press typeset its Arabic works.⁵⁴ Other works published by *al-Maṭba'a l-sulṭāniyya* include *Mukhtaṣar al-Bisyawī* (1886), Abū Sitta's *Kitāb ḥāshiyat al-tartīb*, 3 vols. (between 1886–87 and 1890–91), Muḥammad Aṭfayyish's *Hamayān al-zād ila dār al-ma'ād*, published in 13 volumes between 1887 and 1897, Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī's *Madarij al-kamal fi naẓm mukhtaṣar al-khiṣāl* (1898), and *Kitāb Abī Mas'ala*, a collection of responses to legal questions by the Algerian scholar, Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Bakr b. Yūsuf al-Fursuṭā'ī l-Nafūsī (d. 504/1111), published in 1900–1.⁵⁵ The fact that Barghash published Aṭfayyish's writing and that he and his successors sent him financial support indicates the ties connecting Zanzibar to the Mzab, a major intellectual center of the Ibādī renaissance.⁵⁶

A side note on another member of the royal family in Zanzibar who promoted Ibādī spirituality: Sayyid Ḥamūd b. Aḥmad b. Sayf al-Būsa'īdī (d. 1881), a pious ascetic, endowed *ribāṭs* in Mecca and Zanzibar for the Ibādīs and a Qur'anic school and mosque in Bububu, with stipends for students and teachers.⁵⁷

The reign of Sayyid Barghash marked a turning point in life in Zanzibar. Barghash was a modernizer, bringing paved streets, an aqueduct and electricity to the town.⁵⁸ His first encounter with a steam-driven train was in Egypt in 1875.⁵⁹ In 1879–80, he sent an expedition to explore the possibility of building a railroad along the Rovuma River to Lake Nyasa.⁶⁰ These features of modernization did not keep Sayyid Barghash from being interested in the more traditional Islamic sciences, however; he ordered a copy made for him of a famous text on astrology and numerology written by an earlier member of the al-Mundhirī family, 'Umar b. Mas'ūd al-Mundhirī, who lived in Oman and died in 1747.⁶¹

Although Barghash's expedition reported that the terrain was unfavorable for a railroad, whatever plans he may have had for the mainland were thwarted by the Scramble for Africa, which forced Barghash to cede Kenya to

Britain and Tanganyika to Germany,⁶² with the exception of a ten-mile strip along the coast. Even this was lost in 1890, when Zanzibar itself became a British protectorate. Zanzibar lost its territory between the Rovuma River and Tunghi Bay to Portugal in 1886 and the Banadir coast to Italy in 1888. More to the point of this paper is the fact that Zanzibar was brought into closer contact with events in the rest of the world.

The 1870s and 1880s were a time of economic depression and political turmoil in Oman, which led many Omanis to migrate to East Africa. Among these migrants was Shaykh Sayf b. Nāṣir al-Kharūṣī, who came to Zanzibar in the early 1880s, where he worked as a judge and wrote a number of books, including *Jāmi' arkān al-islām* (Compendium on the Pillars of Islam),⁶³ *Ḥilyat al-amjād fi l-ḥabth al-ala l-jibād* (The Ornamentation of Glories in Urging Jihād), and *al-Irsbād fi sharḥ muḥimmāt al-i'tiqād* (Guidance in Clarifying the Major Doctrines).⁶⁴ This last is a two-volume introduction to Ibādī doctrine and early history that is exemplary in its conciseness and clarity and demonstrates a broad acquaintance with the literature of diverse Islamic schools.

When Muḥammad al-Mundhirī died in 1869, his younger brother 'Abd Allāh took his place as chief Ibādī *qādī* of Zanzibar during the remaining year of Sayyid Mājid's reign, until he died late in the reign of Sayyid Barghash (1870–88). Another member of the al-Mundhirī family, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Mundhirī (1813–1914), was also a prominent *qādī* during Barghash's reign and was one of the leading men who accompanied him on his voyage to Europe in 1875. After the death of Sayyid Ḥamad b. Thuwaynī in August 1896, he was one of those who supported Barghash's son Khālīd in his efforts to seize the throne.⁶⁵ Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Alī's son 'Alī, who was born in 1866, only three years before his father's death, later became the chief Ibādī judge during the reigns of 'Alī b. Ḥamūd (1902–11) and Khalīfa b. Ḥārīb (1911–60), until he died in 1925. Although 'Alī I-Mundhirī continued his father's interest in the occult sciences,⁶⁶ his writings provide interesting glimpses of the intellectual life of Zanzibar in a time of rapid social change.

In 1880 the Turkish Mission Aid Society published a polemical treatise written around 830 AD by an Arab Nestorian Christian identified as 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Ishāq al-Kindī, a courtier of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn, in response to a letter written to him by his friend, 'Abd Allāh b. Ismā'il al-Ḥāshimī, who had invited him to embrace Islam. Sir William Muir published a commentary, summary and partial translation into English of the text in 1882, with "the primary object" of placing it "in the hands of those who will use it in the interests of the Christian faith". Although Muir found that al-Kindī's

arguments contain "a good deal that is weak in reasoning, some things that are even questionable in fact, and an abundance of censorious epithets against the Moslem, Jewish, and Magian faiths that might well have been materially softened", he nonetheless felt that the text would be useful.⁶⁷

Muir's hope that missionaries might use the text to debate with Muslims was apparently realized when an unnamed missionary brought it to 'Alī I-Mundhirī and used it to debate with him. al-Mundhirī describes the treatise as 'important' (*azīmat al-sha'n*), 'well-argued' (*qawīyyat al-burhān*), and of better quality than the polemical works the missionary had previously brought to him, which he had easily 'refuted and destroyed'. He felt obligated to respond to al-Kindī's *risāla*, though it was more than a thousand years old, because of its recent publication, its strong arguments, the lack of any other Muslim response to it, and because it is a religious obligation to refute all *bida'*—especially in this case, as the text could do great harm to Islam. He regretted that his father, 'the matchless scholar', was not alive to write this response, for then "we would have been spared the burden of its evil, for he blocked similar efforts by Christians". However, he resigned himself to the fact that the treatise had become "the responsibility of the humble, ignorant, and stupid one, after the passing of this great, perceptive man from our company", and asked God to give him insight into what in the treatise was true and what was not. He explained that, as al-Kindī's treatise employed proof texts from 'the ancient scriptures', he felt compelled to do the same, "because an argument that takes its proof from a text the opponent does not accept [in this case, the Qur'ān] is ineffective".⁶⁸

al-Mundhirī responds to al-Kindī's arguments point by point.⁶⁹ In the course of his discussion he demonstrates an extraordinarily detailed knowledge of the Bible, which he says he read in four editions, three English versions of the complete Bible and Steere's Swahili translation of the New Testament, published in Zanzibar in 1879.⁷⁰ So al-Mundhirī was apparently fluent in English as well as Swahili, but he had not read the Bible in Arabic, the language of his and al-Kindī's writings.

al-Mundhirī's arguments are often refreshingly original. He usually appears to accept the Bible as authentic, although he occasionally accuses al-Kindī of altering the text (*taḥrīf*). For example, when al-Kindī uses the word *rabb* for 'lord' in Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said to my lord", al-Mundhirī believes this should have been *sayyid*.⁷¹ Likewise, when al-Kindī tells a strange and insulting story about Muḥammad, al-Mundhirī sees this as evidence of the untrustworthiness of Christians and the need to be wary of the authenticity of their texts. But when al-Kindī

attributes words from to Jesus, al-Mundhirī to Jesus but to the God, merely the recipient of sus affirms in John 14: mine, but is from the al-Mundhirī translates indeed follow the star the promised 'Spirit of sus (John 16:12–14) and he takes Jesus' words other things that I do bear them now, but will guide you to the Muhammad brought t

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attributes words from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke to Jesus, al-Mundhirī replies that these words belong not to Jesus but to the Gospel, which is from God; Jesus is merely the recipient of his Lord's message, as indeed Jesus affirms in John 14:24 ("The word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me"—although al-Mundhirī translates 'the Father' as 'Allāh'). He does indeed follow the standard Muslim interpretation that the promised 'Spirit of truth' who would come after Jesus (John 16:12–14) was none other than Muḥammad, and he takes Jesus' words in this passage, "I have many other things that I do not tell you because you cannot bear them now, but when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you to the whole truth", to mean that, whereas Muḥammad brought the whole truth, Jesus did not.

Some of al-Kindī's arguments are strange, and al-Mundhirī has no trouble refuting them. For example, al-Kindī believed that when Genesis 15:6 said of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son at God's command that "he believed the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness", this meant that until that time Abraham had not believed in the one God, and had worshipped an idol while he lived with his father in Harran. So when al-Hāshimī summons him to be a *ḥanīf* like Abraham, al-Kindī seems to interpret this as a summons to idolatry. al-Mundhirī finds it unthinkable that a prophet could ever worship an idol, and sees al-Kindī's statement as insulting and unmanly. al-Mundhirī comments that not only does Genesis 15:6 not indicate that Abraham had been unbelieving beforehand, but that Hebrews 11:8 affirms that "[b]y faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance", indicating that he had faith when he was still living in Harran.⁷² al-Mundhirī's ability to jump from the story of Abraham in Genesis to this verse in Hebrews, which might easily be overlooked by many Christians, is truly remarkable.

Rather than finding it problematic that Jesus be called 'son' (*ibn*) of God, al-Mundhirī heartily agrees with al-Kindī that *ibn* does not mean *walad*, because the Qur'ān itself assures us of that; rather, *ibn* is used metaphorically. But others have also been called sons of God, e.g. Adam in Luke 2:38. "Does this mean that Adam also existed from eternity and is uncreated?" challenges al-Mundhirī. "Calling Jesus the son of God does not raise him above the attributes of creatures; it simply means that, like Adam, he was created without a father—and Adam also had no mother, which is even more amazing! Likewise, in Luke 4:35, Jesus tells his disciples that if they love their enemies they will be sons of the Most High..."⁷³

These are just some of the many indications that al-Mundhirī had a full command of the Bible, and was able

to use it to good and original effect in debating with Christians. It is clear that al-Mundhirī was in no way daunted by al-Kindī's attacks, despite his humble disclaimers at the outset.

Another of al-Mundhirī's works, *Nahj al-ḥaqā'iq*, written in December 1896, is a summary of *Kitāb al-istiḳāma*, the classic Ibādī work by Abū Sa'īd al-Kudamī (4th/10th century). In his introduction, al-Mundhirī explains why he wrote this book:

I have seen that many of our brothers in religion dislike reading Kitāb al-istiḳāma because it is very repetitious, and consequently they have failed to understand it correctly. This book [that I am writing] intends to explain the meaning of Kitāb al-istiḳāma in an easier way, without leaving out any of its meanings. In fact, I have added some.

al-Mundhirī's attention to education is also evident in his short work, *Ikbtisār al-adyān li-ta'lim al-ṣibyān* (An Abbreviated Guide to Religious Practices for Boys).⁷⁴ Nasser Al Riyami says, this book was completed on November 28, 1896 and focuses on the five pillars and basic doctrinal knowledge.⁷⁵ However, the manuscript version that I read included other interesting information. For example, he says that wives are under no obligation to weave, spin, sew, bake, cook or do the laundry unless they wish, though it is recommended that spouses cooperate. He urges reconciliation with enemies and offers practical advice on how to fulfill one's obligations to command the right and forbid the wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa l-nahy 'an al-munkar*). He also stresses the importance of fighting against the defects of the soul (*jibād al-nafs*) by refraining from both overt and hidden acts of disobedience and breaking the passions of the soul through fasting and occupying oneself with worship and acts of obedience, reminding oneself of death, the deceptiveness of this world, and how quickly its pleasures vanish.⁷⁶

As mentioned earlier, one of the great challenges posed to Ibādī scholars in the second half of the 19th century was the phenomenon of conversion to Sunnī Islam. A number of scholars have discussed this, citing Farsy's account of Barghash's harshness with the *shaykhs* 'Alī b. Khamīs b. Sālim al-Barwānī (1852–1885) and 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. Nāfi' al-Mazrū'ī (1825–1894).⁷⁷ The nature of Sunnī attacks on Ibādism may be surmised from a short piece by 'Alī l-Mundhirī that was apparently prompted by Sunnī attacks and Ibādī conversions to Sunnism. Written in 1899 and titled *Kitāb al-ṣirāt al-mustaḳīm*, it is addressed to "the pure (*zaki*) young man, Shaykh Sālim b. Sulṭān b. Qāsim al-Riyāmī", to whom an Ibādī convert to Sunnī Islam had apparently given books written by non-Ibādī Muslims (*al-qaum*), "by which this *umma* was led

into deception (*futināt*) after the death of its Prophet", in order to induce him to "fall into their deviation, as he had done, saying, 'By God, I plead for brother Sālīm b. Sulṭān! Don't let him go astray without calling him to account! We counseled him and he was unable to accept it. Perhaps God will place his guidance in your hand'". Interestingly, this introduction is omitted from the published version; in a foreword, Shaykh Aḥmad b. Sa'ūd al-Siyābī simply says that al-Mundhirī wrote *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* for Shaykh Sālīm al-Riyāmī, and that it is a concise summary of Ibādī theology and jurisprudence.⁷⁸ A more accurate description of this short work is that it is a defense of Ibādī doctrine regarding the specific points on which Sunnīs and Ibādīs disagree. As al-Mundhirī said, "My intention in writing this booklet is to draw your attention to their lies when they allege that what we teach is deviation."⁷⁹

Like his father, 'Alī l-Mundhirī argues that Ash'arīs have a blind and fanatic allegiance to the founder of their theological school, although such imitation (*taqlīd*) inhibits exertion (*mujābada*), and God gives the guidance of His verses only to those who exert themselves to understand them, not to those who unquestioningly follow the understanding of others. Ibādīs are under no obligation to follow anyone who is not immune from error, and no one has this immunity but a prophet. Ibādīs are free to listen to anyone and take the truth wherever they find it.⁸⁰

al-Mundhirī begins with the same issue on which his father had written an extensive work: the impossibility of seeing God. There is no question that this and other Sunnī beliefs implying that God has a body were at the forefront of Ibādī-Sunnī confrontations in Zanzibar. In 1914, one of 'Alī l-Mundhirī's students asked him about this, expressing horror at Sunnī claims that God descends to the lowest heaven and that He created Adam in His image:

*Look at what al-Shāfi'ī and his followers say! They describe their Creator with the characteristics of creatures, saying that He sits and descends and has finite dimensions and moves and is at rest! Whoever believes such things about his Creator has abandoned the teaching of the people of truth and enters perdition, and in the afterlife he will suffer the punishment of hellfire. What a horrible teaching they have believed! We dissociate from anyone who belongs to such a school and believes such things!*⁸¹

In his response, al-Mundhirī clarifies subtleties in Sunnī doctrine not appreciated by his student: "They say that He sits, but not like human beings. Ibn al-Ḥawārī said he rises but does not sit, and that he descends but does not come down (*nazala wa mā inḥadara*). In another place he

said, 'not like the rising of the commander on his bed'". Nonetheless, al-Mundhirī firmly agrees with his student that these statements contravene the prohibition against comparing God to human beings.⁸² al-Mundhirī's rebuttal of the doctrine that God can be seen is similar to that of his father and need not be reiterated here. Like his father, he notes that al-Ghazālī inclined toward the truth when he interpreted the vision of God in the afterlife as knowledge—although, unlike his father, he did not note that al-Ghazālī said this only in *al-Iqṭisād fi l-i'tiqād*, but not in the rest of his writings.⁸³ Rather 'Alī l-Mundhirī claims broad agreement between al-Ghazālī's views and Ibādī doctrine:

al-Ghazālī saw the truth because he abandoned taqlīd and deemed those Shāfi'īs who required it to have gone astray... He also held that punishment in hellfire is eternal and did not say that one could leave hellfire. He affirmed some other beliefs of ours in which we differ from the Ash'arīs, in agreement with the Book and the sunna and the sayings of the salaf. Some of this is in his book called al-Iqṭisād fi l-i'tiqād, and some of it is in al-'Aqabāt, and some is in Kīmiyā' al-sa'āda...⁸⁴

Whereas Sunnīs take the weighing of deeds on the Day of Judgment as literally true, Ibādīs do not. al-Mundhirī counsels his student: "If the opponents say this, ask them, 'Are the deeds of people accidents or bodies?' If they say, 'Accidents', ask them, 'How can accidents be weighed? When someone says, 'Weigh the words that are said when you speak', does this mean that the speaker is literally to weigh his words?'"

al-Mundhirī also defends Ibādī insistence that only those who observe their religious obligations should be called 'believers', whereas Sunnīs acknowledge as 'believers' those who believe in the teachings of Islam but fail to observe them:

We do not say that anyone who says "There is no god but Allah" is a believer who will enter paradise, even if he has committed all the major sins and neglected to do all his obligations. We have no need to follow them in this doctrine, because the Book, the sunna, and the sayings of the salaf contradict it. The Exalted One said, "By Time (wa l-'aṣr)! Surely human beings are lost, except for those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience" (Qur'ān CIII).

He also quotes *ḥadīths* that deny the possibility of intercession for those who commit grave sins.⁸⁵ *Kufr* (infidelity), argues al-Mundhirī, is not limited to *shirk* (unbelief/polytheism):

God said, "Do We punish those who are polytheists (XXXIV:17). They [the Sunnīs] are those monotheists who die [without repentance], and God said, "The killer of 'Ammār to the Fire!" God says, "Its [the killer's] party was prepared for the infidels (aḥzab) that 'Ammār was killed by [Mu'āwiyā's party] were not..."

Among al-Mundhirī's omissions (III:97) that refers to the *ḥajj* as infidels (*kafār*) and anyone who has sexual intercourse with a woman is an infidel; and in *Nahj al-balāgha* that, al-Mundhirī abandoned the fight against the infidel—and so passed judgment on the infidel—when he abandoned the fight against the infidel (*mushrik*). "The statement that all infidels are not unbelievers but rather we say that they are not unbelievers, and that is a grave sin that does not require repentance."

Recognition of the capacity of hypocrisy or ingratitude directly to discussion of dissociation (*walāya*) and dissociation. "The believers do not associate with the infidel and "Do not befriend a polytheist" (LX:13). In theory, one should not associate with Sunnīs. However, Ibādīs were surrounded by students studied with Ibādīs. Some became friends, and Ibādīs court sessions with Sunnīs. It is surprising that Nāṣir b. 'Alī, better known in Oman as al-Nāṣirī, in his theological textbooks, the obligation of dissociation with infidels, cordial relations with infidels, and them, but that one should not do things that would imply

There is no harm in high coexistence in kindness, coexistence [from injustice, or help] as this does not strengthen harm someone else.... If he shake his hand if your heart console him in his affliction him the greeting of peace o

God said, "Do We punish any but the ingrate (kafūr)?" (XXXIV:17). They [the Sunnīs] know that God punishes those monotheists who die after committing a grave sin [without repentance], and they know that the Prophet said, "The killer of Ammār⁸⁶ and those like him are sent to the Fire!" God says, "Its fuel is people and stones; it is prepared for the infidels (al-kāfirin)" (II:24). They know that Ammār was killed by Mu'āwiya's group, and they [Mu'āwiya's party] were not polytheists.⁸⁷

Among al-Mundhirī's other proofs: 1) a Qur'ānic verse (III:97) that refers to those who abandon performance of the *ḥajj* as infidels (*kafāra*); 2) a *ḥadīth* that affirms that anyone who has sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman is an infidel; and 3) 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's statement in *Nahj al-balāgha* that, according to God's Book, if he abandoned the fight against Mu'āwiya, he would be an infidel—and so passed judgment on himself as an infidel when he abandoned the fight, although he was not an unbeliever (*mushrik*). "Therefore, we do not agree with the statement that all infidelity (*kufī*) is unbelief (*shirk*), but rather we say that there is a type of infidelity that is not unbelief, and that is the infidelity of committing a grave sin that does not reach the severity of unbelief."⁸⁸

Recognition of the category of *kufī ni'ma* (the infidelity of hypocrisy or ingratitude for God's blessings) leads directly to discussion of the concepts of association/affiliation (*walāya*) and dissociation (*barā'a*). The Qur'an says, "The believers do not take infidels as friends" (III:23) and "Do not befriend a people with whom God is angry" (LX:13). In theory, this means that Ibādīs should not associate with Sunnī Muslims. In Zanzibar, however, Ibādīs were surrounded by Sunnī neighbors, Sunnī students studied with Ibādī teachers, Ibādīs and Sunnīs became friends, and Ibādī judges sometimes held joint court sessions with Sunnī judges. So perhaps it is not surprising that Nāṣir b. Sālim b. 'Udayyim al-Ruwāḥī, better known in Oman as Abū Muslim al-Bahlānī, wrote in his theological textbook, *al-Aqīda l-wahbiyya*, that the obligation of dissociation does not mean one cannot have cordial relations with infidels, or even real affection for them, but that one should be careful not to do certain things that would imply affiliation:

There is no harm in high morals, gentleness, polite speech, coexistence in kindness, cooperation, rescuing [a non-affiliate] from injustice, or helping him in a pious deed, as long as this does not strengthen him in rebellion against God or harm someone else.... If he is a monotheist, greet him and shake his hand if your heart is safe from religious love, and console him in his afflictions. If he is a polytheist, do not give him the greeting of peace or console him, except to counsel

patience and contentment and to admonish him kindly. If he greets you with the greeting of peace, reply, 'And on you'.⁸⁹

As European imperialism impinged more and more directly on Ibādīs, especially in North Africa and Zanzibar, Ibādī-Sunnī differences sometimes receded into the background in light of the overwhelming imperative to join forces to combat the common threat that Muslims faced all over the world. Muḥammad Aṭfayyish's *Izālat al-i'tirād 'an muḥiqqī Āl Ibād* (Eliminating Opposition to Ibādīs) was published in Zanzibar during the reign of Ḥamūd b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd (1896–1902). Aṭfayyish wrote this brief work both to explain Ibādism to non-Ibādīs and to find common ground with Sunnīs; as Amal Ghazal points out, only two of the 56 pages of this short work deal with areas of disagreement between Sunnism and Ibādism.⁹⁰ The imperative to defend Ibādism against its detractors never disappeared, but Ibādī sponsorship of Muslim scholarship was not limited to Ibādī works; according to Sadgrove, the Sultans of Zanzibar funded the publication even of non-Ibādī books in Cairo, Beirut, Tripoli, Alexandria, Istanbul, London, Paris and Marseille.⁹¹ Indeed, one of the books published in 1895 by *al-Maṭba'a l-sultāniyya* was *al-Manyal al-warrād*, by the great Sunnī scholar of Zanzibar, Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Sumayṭ. Abū Muslim al-Bahlānī wrote a celebratory poem for that book that is included in the published version.⁹² Abū Muslim was also the author of the only contemporary Zanzibari work published by *al-Maṭba'a l-sultāniyya*, his account of Sayyid Ḥamūd's trip to East Africa, *al-Lawāmi' al-barqīyya fī riḥlat mawlānā l-sultān al-mu'azzam Ḥamūd b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Sultān fī l-aqtār al-Ifriqiyya l-sharqīyya sanat 1316 hijriyya*, published in 1899.⁹³

Abū Muslim is perhaps the most interesting figure of the modern Ibādī renaissance in Zanzibar: a scholar, teacher and judge, author of an ambitious legal work⁹⁴ and a theological primer, and a uniquely gifted poet who expressed both a deeply mystical vision and ardent enthusiasm for the Ibādī *nahda*. He was strongly influenced by the life and poetry of Sa'īd b. Khalīl al-Khalīlī, the great scholar, mystic and poet who led the movement that brought Imam 'Azzān b. Qays to power in 1868. Abū Muslim felt a deep affinity with al-Khalīlī, on a number of whose poems he wrote a *takhmīs*—that is, an expansion by which three verses are added to each two verses from the original poem, to make a group of five lines.⁹⁵ He explains why he wrote a *takhmīs* on one of al-Khalīlī's poems, *Sumūṭ al-thana'* (Strings [as in a necklace] of Praise):

of Salafi reformism.¹⁰⁵ He wrote about 'Abduh's chapter on knowledge that Abū Muslim saw Muslims everywhere who were under the colonialist yoke.

He was the undisputed leader of the movement in al-Bahlānī was its undisputed leader. He suffered for this, because he was not a judge and prevented his preferred calling as a scholar. He was Sālim, as Sa'īd al-Khalīlī. At his forced retirement from the concerns of the community, he devoted his time and energy to devote himself to the nabaḍa. He was grateful, as his literary works are of great value. He was able in its ability to move beyond the struggle of the nabaḍa, as he did in his book, *Nabaḍat al-Nahda*. Rise of the Notables for a struggle between worldly rule and godly rule, and the struggle between worldly rule, the struggle of Abū Muslim's writings and the ungodliness of which all the members of the community.

scholars in Zanzibar in demonstrates how closely Zanzibar was linked to the community. Zanzibar meddled in Omani affairs and to bring about uprisings and to bring about the rebellion against the British for an authentic Omani state to reunite the Omani community was deeply influenced by Sa'īd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī. He was the nabaḍa in Oman as a movement of people everywhere as they were under European imperialism. He was the 19th and early 20th century. He was an Ibadī scholar more than similar efforts in Oman. But Ibadī scholarship in Zanzibar was of its engagement with the community to rebut Sunnī criticisms and the threat Sunnism's at-

traction posed to the Ibadī community. This theme is prominent in some of the works of Nāṣir b. Abī Nabhān, Muḥammad al-Mundhirī and 'Alī l-Mundhirī. Finally, Christian missionaries forced Muslim scholars of Zanzibar to respond to Christian texts and arguments, leading 'Alī l-Mundhirī to study the Bible in considerable detail and respond to a thousand-year-old Christian polemical work. The unusually cosmopolitan social milieu in Zanzibar forced Ibadī scholars in this period to go beyond the revivalist concerns of their colleagues elsewhere, and to struggle in their writings against Sunnīs and Christians, as they sought to establish an Ibadī identity and polity in the modern world.

Notes

- 1 Gray 1962: 22; Grandmaison 1989: 176.
- 2 Gray 1962: 12.
- 3 There are conflicting dates for this event. Farsi (1986: 76) and Mughayrī (1986: 238) both say he moved to Zanzibar in 1832. Gray (1962: 130), on the other hand, says that when Sayyid Sa'īd left Zanzibar in April 1828, he was not able to return until November 1833. He also says (133) that Captain Hart of H.M.S. *Imogene* visited Sayyid Sa'īd at Mtoni on January 30, 1834 and wrote, "It has been supposed that His Highness will on some future day make this his chief residence in preference to Muscat". Coupland (1967: 44) gives 1840 as the year that Sayyid Sa'īd made Zanzibar his capital. Landen subscribes to a less formal perspective (1967: 63): "From 1803 to 1856 Masqat retained its position as the leading entrepôt in the Persian Gulf, but by the late 1820s Oman's ruler, Sayyid Sa'īd ibn Sulṭān (1804-56), began to divert much of his energy away from Omani affairs in an effort to consolidate his hold over Africa's east coast. Absenting himself from Masqat for long periods Sa'īd virtually moved the capital of his empire to Zanzibar".
- 4 Farsi 1989: 2; Riyamī 2012: 70.
- 5 Burton 1872, I: 405.
- 6 Wilkinson 2015: 151.
- 7 Sālimī 2000, II: 212-224, 228.
- 8 Farsi 1986: 49.
- 9 Nāṣir b. Abī Nabhān sometimes referred to this work as *al-Haqq al-mubin wa l-ilm al-yaqīn*, and other authors have sometimes referred to it as *al-Haqq al-mubin wa l-baqq al-yaqīn*.
- 10 Kharūṣī [n.d.]: 425.
- 11 Ibid.: 415.
- 12 Sālimī 2000, II: 228.
- 13 Farsi 1986: 49; Ibn Ruzayq 1992: 531.
- 14 Farsi 1986: 49.
- 15 Farsi 1989: 80.
- 16 Amawī 1882: document #18 in ms. #1459 in the library of Sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Busa'īdī is a legal question al-Amawī posed to Yahyā b. Khalfān al-Kharūṣī. al-Amawī posed a more intimate question to Yahyā after his wife died in 1884, asking about the efficacy of a living person's intercession for the dead in diminishing the dead person's culpability, repelling punishment, and increasing the dead person's rank in paradise. It is rather strange that al-Amawī should address such a question to an Ibadī scholar, for this is one of the points of difference between Ibadīs and Sunnīs—Ibadīs do not recognize the efficacy of intercession on behalf of sinners—but al-Amawī may have forgotten this at the time that he sent his question to al-Kharūṣī because of the closeness of their friendship. al-Amawī's question and al-Kharūṣī's response, in a different handwriting, may be found in a collection of manuscript fragments bundled as *Majmū'a min ta'liq Abī Burhān 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Amawī*. In a theological work, *Taqrib 'iqd al-la'āl ila fahm al-aṭfāl* (Amawī 1885: 241-253), al-Amawī informs us that, after receiving Shaykh Yahyā's response, he readdressed the question to the Sunnī scholar, Sayyid Ahmad ibn Sumayt, and received a response more to his liking.
- 17 This is how he is described at the beginning of Mundhirī 1884, and he is again called this in Kharūṣī 1936: 82.
- 18 See O'Fahey & Vikør 1996. There are some errors in the article, which was based on a very preliminary review of the manuscripts in the Zanzibar National Archives, but it is an interesting survey of the contents of the *waqf* and indicates the collection's eclectic nature.
- 19 Farsi 1986: 42. I have not found a copy of this work, and Omani authors who refer to it have also not seen it.
- 20 Farsi 1989: 30-32; Farsi gives only *al-Durū' al-sābiḡa* as the title of al-Mazrū'ī's book; the fuller title is given in the editor's introduction to Mundhirī 1997: 10.

- 21 Mundhiri 1997.
 22 Mundhiri 1997: 119–127; Khalili 1986, I: 175–186.
 23 See Hoffman 2015.
 24 Mundhiri 1997: 21–38.
 25 Mundhiri 1997: 37–41.
 26 Gilliot 1997: 202–204.
 27 Ibn Baraka 1971, I: 56–57; Atfayyish 1988, IV: 15; Khalili 2004: 31–34.
 28 This book is usually referred to as *Himyān al-zād*, although the source and meaning of the *zād* inserted in the word is unclear. It has been published as both *Himyān al-zād* and as *Himyān/Hamayān al-zād* (since Arabic has no vowels). *Himyān* means a purse for coins, according to *Lisān al-ʿArab*; *hamayān* means an overflow, as of tears. Either word would be possible in this context, and the meaning remains the same, but I have preferred *hamayān* as more in keeping with the common use of water metaphors in Arabic titles; it is not common to refer to a purse.
 29 Atfayyish 1988, IV: 19.
 30 Atfayyish 1996, II: 244.
 31 During a gathering in August 2014 at the home of a scholar in Ankara attended by several Ibadī visitors from Oman as well as a follower of Fethullah Gülen and another Turkish scholar of distinctly *salafī* leanings, the scholars engaged in a debate on this subject that lasted well over two hours. One of the Ibadī scholars insisted that those who are well-grounded in knowledge know the meaning of the *mutashābihāt*, while the *salafī* Turkish scholar took the opposite position. The follower of Fethullah Gülen seemed to be wary of openly stating his own point of view, in view of the persecution of Gülen's followers by the Turkish government at the time, and played a mediating role.
 32 Mundhiri 1997: 36–37.
 33 Hoffman 2015: 248.
 34 Mundhiri 1997: 45–49.
 35 Ibid.: 72.
 36 Ibid.: 97–99; Rāzī 1992: 54.
 37 Mundhiri 1997: 100–103.
 38 Steere 1924: viii.
 39 Salimi 2000, II: 186.
 40 Ibid., II: 188–203.
 41 Coupland 1967: 16; Kelly 1968: 534.
 42 Kelly 1968: 535.
 43 Mughayrī 1986: 293–294.
 44 Mughayrī 1986: 294; Salimi [n.d.]: 84.
 45 Riyami 2012: 74–77.
 46 As J.B. Kelly commented, “They were eager for a return to the laxity and inefficiency of normal Al Bu Sa’id rule” (Kelly 1968: 707).
 47 Salimi 2000, II: 296. In Arab parlance, ‘the night of 29 January’ would correspond to the night of 28 January or the pre-dawn hours of 29 January, but Kelly gives 30 January as the date of the Imam’s death (Kelly 1968: 707). al-Salimi also informs us that the Imam’s body remained unburied for three days, without suffering any obvious decomposition—a classic sign of sainthood in Islam.
 48 Pelly’s communication with British authorities in India indicates that he did not see Britain as providing any guarantee of al-Khalilī’s safety, but Kelly, who is very critical of Pelly’s conduct in Oman, wrote that al-Khalilī certainly thought that Pelly was providing him with just such a guarantee (Kelly 1968: 708). Nūr al-Dīn al-Salimi saw Pelly as betraying al-Khalilī’s trust, and did not know what had happened to al-Khalilī after he was turned over to Turkī (Salimi 2000, II: 296). Turkī told Pelly that al-Khalilī and his son had died of diarrhea (Kelly 1968: 699), but according to Muḥammad al-Salimī, they were buried alive (Salimi [n.d.]: 82). According to Ḥamza b. Sulaymān al-Salimī, the great-grandson of Nūr al-Dīn al-Salimī, it was Abū Muslim al-Bahlānī who discovered what happened to them (personal communication with the author, Nov. 2000). Abū Muslim was hosting a visitor in his home, a Shīʿite from the Maṭraḥ area of old Muscat. The guest was entertain-

ing his host with stories from Oman. Among these stories was one about how Sultan Turkī brought out Shaykh Sa’id b. Khalifān and his son and placed them in a hole. The crowd began to mock them and throw stones at them, and Abū Muslim’s Shīʿite guest also threw his sandal at Shaykh Sa’id’s face. As Abū Muslim heard this story, he began to tremble. He rose and told his guest, with the utmost gravity, “Get out, before I kill you”. The Shīʿite knew this was no joke, and fled. Abū Muslim later lamented the tragedy and the contemptible treatment of a noble scholar and leader with whom he closely identified, in a poem entitled *Waṭanī* (My Country) (Ruwāḥī 1986: 321). Although Pelly was able to shrug off any sense of responsibility for what happened, it may be that the British Political Agent in Muscat, Major A. Cotton Way, had a livelier conscience and was conflicted over the role he was forced to play in the debacle, for he committed suicide in May of that year (Kelly 1968: 708).

- 49 Salimi 2000, II: 301; Mughayrī 1986: 340.
 50 Mughayrī 1986: 337–338.
 51 Ibn Sa’id 2007: 267.
 52 Heanley 1888: 249.
 53 Sadgrove 2005: 154, n. 5.
 54 Sadgrove 2004: 189–192. A list of works published by the press may be found on pages 192–193.
 55 Sadgrove 2005: 154–155.
 56 Ghazal 2010: 41–48; Sadgrove 2004: 201.
 57 Mughayrī 1986: 362; Riyami 2012: 296–297.
 58 Mughayrī 1986: 336–337.
 59 Ibn Sa’id 2007: 38.
 60 Hoffman 2006: 258.
 61 Mundhiri 1983. This work, copied for Barghash by Rāshid b. Sayf b. Ḥasan al-Ḥāmidī on 8 Muḥarram 1295 (January 12, 1878), was published by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture but later pulled from circulation by order of Sultan Qaboos bin Sa’id, who disapproves of this type of literature.
 62 Lady Genesta Hamilton wrote (1957: 166), “Barghash was thunderstruck at the news that the Germans, using agents who had only been able to penetrate the interior under letters of protection from the Seyyid, were now seizing his land”.
 63 Kharūsi 1987.
 64 Kharūsi 1999.
 65 Mughayrī 1986: 388; Riyami 2012: 324–327. On Khālid’s rebellion, see Riyami 2012: 89–95.
 66 Mundhiri 1934.
 67 Muir 1882: v, vii.
 68 al-Mundhiri’s original manuscript, *Kitāb fī l-radd ‘alā l-naṣāra*, is in the Zanzibar National Archives, #ZA 8/10, written in his own hand, 316 pages, including many crossed-out pages, but it is incomplete: pages 80–281 are missing. He says that he wrote it from 19 Rajab to 23 Ramaḍān 1308 (February 28 – May 2, 1891), and adds that it took him so long to write it because he was busy teaching Islamic law at the mosque. A complete copy of the manuscript is in Oman’s Ministry of Heritage and Culture, #2089, 295 pp., copied by ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṣbiḥ al-Ṣawāfi for Shaykh ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Mundhiri on 21 Muḥarram 1309 (August 26, 1891). All references to page numbers here are to this manuscript, unless otherwise stated. Sulṭān al-Shaybānī edited the book and it was published under the title *Jawāb al-risāla l-nasṭūrīyya* (Response to the Nestorian Treatise) by Maktabat Musqaṭ in 2012, but I have not been able to consult it.
 69 For a more thorough analysis of this text, see Hoffman 2005b.
 70 “Know that I have read four editions of the Torah: The first was published by ‘Rigarn’[?] Watts in London in 1831 AD, based on the text published in Rome in 1471; the second edition was published by William Watts, also in London, in 1857 AD; the third was published by Oxford University Press in 1871 AD; and the fourth is a Swahili translation of the Bible published in 1879” (Mundhiri 1891: 30). An

online search for information to which he refers to a “Missionary Register of the various institutions of the Church Mission Society in London.”

- 71 Mundhiri 1891: 264.
 72 Ibid.: 6–8.
 73 Ibid.: 19–23.
 74 Although this was published in Culture in 1986, I have not seen a manuscript of this work in Muscat, where it is called *Mintirib*, where it is called *Mintirib*.
 75 Riyami 2012: 339.
 76 Mundhiri 1921: 38–43.
 77 Farsy 1989: 20–22, 30–32. For an analysis of Ibadī conversion, see Farsy 1989: 20–22, 30–32.
 78 Mundhiri 1980: 3. al-Mundhiri’s Sunnī Islam may be found in his *Kitāb al-Ḥadīth*.
 79 Mundhiri 1980: 23.
 80 Ibid.: 5–6.
 81 The student’s question and the same bound manuscript of al-Mundhiri’s response to it is an Ibadī scholar named Ibadī called ‘Abū l-Ḥawārī’ and the scholar. It is possible that Ibadī (643–713 AD), an eminent theologian, al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwāmm, was
 83 Mundhiri 1997: 49.
 84 Mundhiri 1980: 10.
 85 Ibid.: 10–13.
 86 Abū l-Yaqẓān ‘Ammār b. Yaqẓān, Companion of the Prophet, suffered torture for his faith, in Abyssinia. After the *hijra* to Medina, the Prophet in all his battles. Ibadī was killed by Mu’awiya’s forces.
 87 Mundhiri 1980: 13–14.
 88 Ibid.
 89 Hoffman 2012: 201–204; Riyami 2012: 201–204; Riyami 2012: 201–204; Riyami 2012: 201–204.
 90 Ghazal 2010: 44–45; Sadgrove 2005: 156–157.
 91 Sadgrove 2005: 156–157.
 92 ‘Isarī 2014.
 93 Sadgrove 2004: 192.
 94 *Nithār al-jawbar* (Ruwāḥī 2012). Salimi’s *Jawbar al-nizām*. The book consists of twenty-one sections he intended to die before he could complete.
 95 Mahrūqī 2000: 67.
 96 *Quṭb*, meaning axis or pole, is the highest rank in the hierarchy of the channel through whom God communicates with the world around whom the world turns. Ibadīs, who refer to Muḥammad as the *imāms* (*quṭb al-ʿimam*), considering the immersion of al-Bahlānī into Shīʿite thought, Muslim meant that al-Khalilī was of the rank, as well as the ultimate authority.
 97 *Dīwān Abī Muslim al-Bahlānī*. National Heritage and Culture. The comments on the miracle of the recitation of the poem are by Jum’a b. Khuṣayf.
 98 For example, Nāṣir 1996: 6.

1. Among these stories was
 out Shaykh Sa'īd b. Khalīfān
 le. The crowd began to mock
 Abū Muslim's Shī'ite guest
 l's face. As Abū Muslim heard
 rose and told his guest, with
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 d suicide in May of that year

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r Barghash by Rāshid b. Sayf b.
 195 (January 12, 1878), was pub-
 d Culture but later pulled from
 bin Sa'īd, who disapproves of

166), "Barghash was thunder-
 using agents who had only
 der letters of protection from
 ."

1-327. On Khalīd's rebellion,

Kitāb fi l-radd 'alā l-naṣāra, is in
 8/10, written in his own hand,
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text, see Hoffman 2005b.

of the Torah: The first was
 don in 1831 AD, based on the
 econd edition was published by
 17 AD; the third was published
); and the fourth is a Swahili
 179" (Mundhirī 1891: 30). An

online search for information on the English-language Bible trans-
 lations to which he refers was unsuccessful, but there is a reference
 to a "Missionary Register for 1830 containing the principal transac-
 tions of the various institutions for propagating the gospel",
 issued by the Church Missionary Society and printed by an R.
 Watts in London.

71 Mundhirī 1891: 264.

72 Ibid.: 6-8.

73 Ibid.: 19-23.

74 Although this was published by Oman's Ministry of Heritage and
 Culture in 1986, I have not seen the published version. I read a
 manuscript of this work in the library of Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī in
 Mintirib, where it is called *Kitāb mukhtaṣar al-adyān*, ms.#209.

75 Riyami 2012: 339.

76 Mundhirī 1921: 38-43.

77 Farsy 1989: 20-22, 30-32. Wilkinson (2015: 147-150) offers an
 analysis of Ibādī conversions to Sunni Islam.78 Mundhirī 1980: 3. al-Mundhirī's reference to the Ibādī convert to
 Sunni Islam may be found in Mundhirī 1932: 2-3.

79 Mundhirī 1980: 23.

80 Ibid.: 5-6.

81 The student's question and al-Mundhirī's response are included in
 the same bound manuscript as Mundhirī 1921 and Mundhirī 1932.82 al-Mundhirī's response to student's question, 4. Although there
 is an Ibādī scholar named Muhammad b. al-Ḥawārī, he is usually
 called 'Abū l-Ḥawārī' and the context seems to indicate a Sunni
 scholar. It is possible that Ibn al-Ḥawārī is 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (ca.
 643-713 AD), an eminent traditionist and legal scholar whose father,
 al-Zubayr b. al-'Awāmm, was nicknamed *al-ḥawārī*, 'the disciple'.

83 Mundhirī 1997: 49.

84 Mundhirī 1980: 10.

85 Ibid.: 10-13.

86 Abū l-Yaḥyā 'Ammār b. Yāsir b. 'Āmir b. Mālik, a *mawlā* and
 Companion of the Prophet, who was an early convert to Islam, suf-
 fered torture for his faith, and was among those who emigrated to
 Abyssinia. After the *hijra* he came to Medina, and fought with the
 Prophet in all his battles. He became an ardent partisan of 'Alī and
 was killed by Mu'āwiya's forces at the Battle of Siffin in 657 AD.

87 Mundhirī 1980: 13-14.

88 Ibid.

89 Hoffman 2012: 201-204; Ruwāhī 2004: 310-315.

90 Ghazal 2010: 44-45; Sadgrove 2004: 201. It was published in 1898-9.

91 Sadgrove 2005: 156-157.

92 'Isarī 2014.

93 Sadgrove 2004: 192.

94 *Niḥār al-jawhar* (Ruwāhī 2001), a prose version of Nūr al-Dīn al-
 Sālimī's *Jawhar al-nizām*. The author completed only three of the
 twenty-one sections he intended to write. It is assumed that he
 died before he could complete it.

95 Maḥrūqī 2000: 67.

96 *Qutb*, meaning axis or pole, is a Ṣūfī term for the person occupy-
 ing the highest rank in the saintly hierarchy—such a person is the
 channel through whom God's blessings flow into the world, the axis
 around whom the world turns. This usage is not common among
 Ibādīs, who refer to Muhammad b. Yūsuf Aṭfayyish (d. 1914) as 'axis
 of the imāms' (*qutb al-a'imma*), or simply as 'the Qutb'. However,
 considering the immersion of both Sa'īd al-Khalīlī and Abū Muslim
 al-Bahlānī into Ṣūfī thought and practice, it is possible that Abū
 Muslim meant that al-Khalīlī had achieved the ultimate spiritual
 rank, as well as the ultimate scholarly rank.97 *Diwān Abi Muslim al-Bahlānī*, ed. 'Alī al-Najdī Nāṣif (Ministry of
 National Heritage and Culture, Muscat 1980), I:153-4.The comments on the miraculous events accompanying al-Khalīlī's
 recitation of the poem are drawn from a commentary on it written
 by Jum'a b. Khusayf.

98 For example, Nāṣir 1996: 6.

99 For a thorough analysis of Abū Muslim's poetry in light of his
 career, see Ghazal 2010: 66-90.

100 Ḥassān b. Thābit was the Prophet Muḥammad's personal poet.

101 Sālimī [n.d.]: 337-355.

102 Ghazal 2010: 68-69.

103 Maḥrūqī 2000: 72; Ghazal 2010: 87-89.

104 Ghazal analyzes the letter in detail (2010: 82-87). She writes that
 none of the scholars who have written about Abū Muslim have
 noted this letter, but it was printed *in toto* in Nāṣir 1996: 198-207.

105 Ghazal 2010: 86-87.

106 Maḥrūqī 2000: 72.

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“The origins of Ibādīs are rather obscure”, Encyclopaedia of Islam. Similar claims are found also in the cultural memory as the shared singles out certain historic heroes while other

By the advent of Islam al memory got split among tribesmen, *qabā'il*, during the Arab conquests of the north Arabian genealogy the *sayyid* Ahmad b. 'Isa whose new home in al-Muhājir is believed to be (in Wādī l-Ayman, the tributary of Wādī Daw' Husayyisa between Sayyid

Weakened after the the noble Kinda tribes central Ḥaḍramawt to of the al-Sakūn tribal however, the Kinda so (*thawra*) against the U ership of the *qāḍī* 'Abd imām Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq (the tribes of al-Sakūn The uprising was inspired movement originated from branch of Islam. Ṭālib Medina but later was d

Fighting the Umayyad forces, the Ibādīs managed In Wādī Daw'an they Kinda and al-Ṣadaf; in in Wādī 'Amd by the ographer al-Hamdānī