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# A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Distinguishing Features Between Ibādīs and Khārijītes

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## Abstract

This paper tackles one of the most challenging topics in Ibādī studies: the association between Ibādīs and the classical Khārijītes. The chief motive of conducting the study is to refute the constant unsubstantiated association between the moderate Ibādī school of thought and a classical extremist group, the Khārijītes. The paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach, making a comparative study between the two sects. This involves a discussion of the historical, political, and theological distinguishing features of Ibādīs compared to Khārijītes in three sections. The historical section reveals that the term Khārijītes only appeared in 64 AH/684 CE, when al-Muḥakkimah split into two main sects: the moderate Ibādīs and the violent Azāriqah, Ṣufriyyah, and Najdāt. The political section makes a decisive distinction between the Ibādīs and Khārijītes in three main practical areas: the ruling of *Isti'rād*, the ruling of *Khurūj*, and the ruling on taking an opponent's property. The third section demonstrates that the theological distinction between the two sects is the main distinguishing marker and the most dangerous one. The paper concludes that there is no commonality between Ibādīs and Khārijītes apart from a historical denial of the arbitration between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah at the battle of *Ṣiffīn* (37 AH/657 CE).

**Keywords:** Oman; Omanis; Ibādīs; Khārijītes; Ibādism; tolerance, coexistence

## Introduction

The present paper tries to clear a number of misconceptions ascribed to one of the first moderate classical Islāmic schools of thought, Ibādism. The main reason beyond causing these misconceptions is the inaccurate attribution of Ibādīs to Khārijītes by many classical historians such as al-Ash'arī, al-Baghdādī, ibn Ḥazm, and more.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this essay attempts to shed light on some key differences

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<sup>1</sup>Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *The Articles Of Muslims*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: Islāmic Publications, 1980), 102; 'Abdul Qahir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bayn Al-Firaq*, 4th ed.

between the Ibādīs and Khārijītes, highlighting the major distinguishing historical, political, and theological areas of difference.

The urgency for researching this topic can be summarised in two main reasons. First, there are serious complications of this association that, in turn, inevitably lead to ascribing Khārijī thought and misconduct, such as charging other Muslims with infidelity, killing them, taking their property, and so on, to moderate and tolerant Ibādī thought. Second, and most importantly in the current time, with the recent emergence and fall of some extremist and violent groups, such as ISIS, this issue of the Khawārij was brought back to the arena of discussion, comparing contemporary moderate Ibādīs with these terrorist groups, pointing out that the current Ibādīs are an extension of the classical Khārijī movement, of which none are left except the Ibādīs, as claimed.

However, the difficulty of this research lies in the fact that there is no written extant literature for Khārijī thought recorded by the followers of this thought themselves. However, the focus of this paper is not to verify what was attributed to the Khārijītes. Rather, the paper is concerned with dissociating such radical ideologies and practices from the Ibādīs, and whether the Khārijītes, in reality, believed and did what was attributed to them or not.

However, through this paper, the researcher intends to examine the authenticity of what has been propagated for a long time by the aforementioned classical historians – that the Ibādīs are part of the Khārijītes, and to show, through the Ibādī early sources, that there have always been clear distinctions and decisive differences, historically, politically, and theologically, between the Ibādīs and Khārijītes. Those historians, and many contemporary researchers who fell into the same trap, did not follow rigid academic norms and practices by referring those opinions to the Ibādīs sources. On the contrary, they were content with transferring and quoting what the Ibādī opponents ascribed to them. To that end, the paper has been divided into three sections, the first of which serves as an introductory section to the other two, which are followed by the conclusion of the paper.

## 2. A Historical Context of the Emergence of Ibādīs and Khārijītes

After the murder of the third Caliph, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, and the appointment of the fourth Caliph, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, in 35 AH/656 CE, Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān, the governor of Levant (ash-Shām), marched with his army against ‘Alī,

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(Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1997), 78-103; ‘Alī Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Fiṣal Fī Al-Milali Wa-L-Ahwā’I Wa-L-Niḥal* (Damascus: Dār al-Fīkr, 2001), 4:188;

demanding that he execute the assassins of ‘Uthmān or put them on trial.<sup>2</sup> As a result of that, the battle of *Ṣiffīn* (37 AH/657 CE) took place between the two armies. Meanwhile, when Mu‘āwiyah saw that his army was being defeated by ‘Alī’s troops, he came up with the idea of arbitration, where each party would choose one of their followers as a representative and arbitrator, speaking on the behalf of his party.<sup>3</sup> When Mu‘āwiyah’s plan was disclosed by removing ‘Alī from any authority and installing Mu‘āwiyah as a new Caliph, ‘Alī refused the result of this arbitration and it became clear to him that it was no more than a scheme by his opponents to get out of that defeat. Therefore, he decided to continue fighting them.<sup>4</sup> In this ambiguous situation, the conflict that involved the shedding of the blood of fellow Muslims, a group of ‘Alī’s army seceded or ‘went out’ of the army.<sup>5</sup> In other words, those who had reservations about the arbitration in the first place withdrew themselves from any further military participation, preferring to keep themselves away from any bloodshed, in this unclear condition, especially as they had already refused the arbitration prior to ‘Alī’s final acceptance in 37 AH/657 CE.<sup>6</sup>

A summary of this scene is given by Ray F. Skinner, who says: ‘The battle had lasted for weeks – but on its decisive day, Mu‘āwiyah had his warriors put pages of the Qur’ān on their lances, thus indicating his desire to decide their differences on the basis of the Qur’ān. ‘Alī reluctantly agreed, setting up two generals, one from each side, to arbitrate. A group of ‘Alī’s soldiers, mainly of the tribe of Tamīm, saw this as elevating the decision of men over that of God and withdrew to the nearby village [an-Nahrawān]’.<sup>7</sup>

Based on this, the early Muḥakkimah declared, from the very first day, that there was no arbitration but Allāh’s, denoting that Allāh had already arbitrated and judged on this issue in the Qur’ān when he asked the believers to keep fighting the

<sup>2</sup>Huzaiifa Jangebe, “Abu Muslim Al-Khurasani: The Legendary Hero of Abbasid Propaganda,” *Journal of Humanities And Social Science* 19, no. 1 (2014): 5.

<sup>3</sup>Khodr Fakih, “A Historical Analysis Of Arbitration,” in *The Society of Business, Industry And Economics (SOBIE) Annual Meetings* (Florida: The Society of Business, Industry, and Economics, 2011), 67.

<sup>4</sup>Nāṣir as-Sābi‘ī, *Khawārij and Tte Absent Truth*, 1st ed. (Muscat: al-Gīl al-Wā‘id Bookshop, 1999), 73.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Bierschenk, “Religion and Political Structure: Remarks on Ibādism in Oman and Mzab (Algeria),” *Studia Islamica* 110, no. 68 (1988): 109.

<sup>6</sup>William Watt, *A Short History of Islām* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2002), 106.

<sup>7</sup>Raymond Skinner, *Ibādism in Oman and Development in the Field of Christian-Muslim Relationship*, 1st ed. (London: Tower Press, 1995), 19.

transgressive party until the latter repented. The verse reads: “And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allāh. And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly.”<sup>8</sup> Due to this stance, this group of people was known in Islāmic history as the al-Muḥakkimah, which means the arbitrators.<sup>9</sup>

It is argued that ‘Alī was about to fight Mu‘āwiyah’s army again, but he was eventually diverted by one of his ‘alleged’ followers, namely, al-Ash‘ath b. Qays, to fight those who left his army and isolated themselves.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, ‘Alī fought them and most of them were killed in the battle of an-Nahrawān (38 AH/658 CE) and many who survived had fled (Watt 2002, 12-13). Skinner says: “ ‘Alī was forced to move against them, and killed most of them in an attack on their main camp”.<sup>11</sup>

At this point of time, this one body of al-Muḥakkimah, the arbitrators, did not hold any distinctive political or theological thoughts other than denying the human arbitration, as they suggested. It is to be noted that the term Khawārij itself was not known during the period from the battle of *Ṣiffīn* and *an-Nahrawān* until 64 AH/684 CE, before the split of al-Muḥakkimah.<sup>12</sup> After this period of time (from 64 AH/684 CE onwards), the arbitrators divided into two main categories; first, those who decided to take military and violent actions against their opponents. Under this category, fall the *Azāriqah*, *Ṣufriyyah*, and *Najdāt*.<sup>13</sup> The second category are those who refused to take any military action and preferred to ‘sit down’, and that is why they were termed by the first group *al-Qa‘adah* or *al-Wāqifah*, meaning those who ceased from fighting others. It is only this latter group that came to be known as Ibādīs, excluding the former. This historical notion was

<sup>8</sup>Qur’ān: Hujurat 49:9.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Bierschenk, “Religion And Political Structure: Remarks On Ibādism in Oman and Mzab (Algeria),” *Studia Islamica* 110, no. 68 (1988), 109; William Watt, *A Short History of Islām*, 108-109.

<sup>10</sup>Muḥammed aṭ-Ṭabarī, *The History of Nations and Kings*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Scientific Books Bookshop, 2019); 3:119.

<sup>11</sup>Raymond Skinner, *Ibādism in Oman and Development in the Field of Christian-Muslim Relationship*, op. cit., 19.

<sup>12</sup>Nāṣir as-Sābi‘ī, *Khawārij and the Absent Truth*, op. cit., 141.

<sup>13</sup>*Azāriqah*, *aṣ-Ṣufriyyah*, and *an-Najdāt* are classical Khawārij groups existed in the first and second centuries after *Hijrah*. They appeared after the split of al-Muḥakkimah in 64AH/684 CE. They are named after their founders Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq, ‘AbduAllāh b. aṣ-Ṣaffār and Najdah b. ‘Āmir. The three factions share the belief that their opponents are disbelievers. Nāṣir as-Sābi‘ī, *Khawārij and the Absent Truth*, op. cit., 179- 184.

advocated by Savage who said: ‘However, those members of Baṣrah’s ‘*Ulamā*,’ who were subsequently identified as early Ibāḍīs, had maintained a deliberate distance from the violent dissidence of the extreme Khawārij.<sup>14</sup> This very distinction was a principal characteristic of the early Ibāḍī movement in the late seventh century.’ This latter category is the one that came to be called Ibāḍīs, being named after ‘Abdullāh b. Ibāḍ, one of the followers and adherents to this thought. Therefore, from this group, in particular, the Ibāḍī school of thought emerged and, from it, their school of law flourished.<sup>15</sup>

It is argued that due to the fact that the spiritual leader of Ibāḍīs was Jābir b. Zayd (18-93 AH), the Ibāḍīs at first did not acknowledge this attribution to ‘Abdullāh b. Ibāḍ.<sup>16</sup> Hence, they did not agree to call themselves more than Muslims or people of *Da‘wah*, that is, missionary activity. That is why researchers in history never find the terms Ibāḍīs or Ibāḍism in Ibāḍī literature, until the end of the third century AH.<sup>17</sup> Afterwards, when these people saw that this term had become a ‘reality’ with others, that is, widely known and taken for granted by others, and that Ibn Ibāḍ was one of their political spokespeople, they accepted this association, as there were no dire consequences associated with it. But the Ibāḍīs never considered Ibn Ibāḍ to be their spiritual leader or religious Imām, let alone agreed unanimously on his Imāmah, as al-Baghdādī claimed.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, because attributing Ibāḍīs to the Khawārij creates confusion and mixes up their moderate thought with numerous faulty and extreme beliefs, the Ibāḍīs did not acknowledge this attribution due to the dangerous complications on both the political and theological level, unlike the term Ibāḍism. This is in addition to the fact that Ibāḍīs, historically, had never been part of the Khawārij from their emergence and split from the body of al-Muḥakkimah in 64 AH/684 CE, as discussed previously. To recapitulate, it is highly important for the objective academic researcher, in order for him/her to put things into their

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Savage, “Survival Through Alliance: The Establishment of the Ibadhiyya,” *British Society For Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 1 (1990): 7-8.

<sup>15</sup>William Watt, *The Formative Period of Islāmic Thoughts*, op. cit., 107-109.

<sup>16</sup>Raymond Skinner, *Ibāḍism in Oman and Development in the Field of Christian-Muslim Relationship*, op. cit., 17-18.

<sup>17</sup>‘Amrūs an-Nafūsī, *The Principles of the Pure Religion*, 1st ed. (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1999), 68; Husayn Ghubāsh, *Oman – The Islāmic Democratic Tradition* (Durham: Durham Modern Middle East and Islāmic World, 2006), 27.

<sup>18</sup>‘Abdul Qahir al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bayn Al-Firaq*, op. cit., 103.

historical context, to carefully study the historical timeline of the development of the Ibādī school of thought.

Hence, it is worth pointing out that over the first centuries of Islam, Ibādīs did exist across the Muslim world including, but not limited to, Oman, Iraq, Egypt, North Africa, South East Africa, etc. The historical presence of Ibādī communities in these areas is owing the tolerant and easy-going nature of both Ibādī thought and jurisprudence. However, due to the threat posed by the development and well-reception the Ibādīs enjoyed, as perceived by many subsequent dynasties, the Ibādī presence has shrunked to mainly a limited number of areas, namely Oman, Jirbah Island in Tunisia, Nafūṣah Mountain in Libya, and Mīzāb Valley in Algeria.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the political and theological differences between Ibādīs and Khārijītes will be elaborated on in the following two sections.

### 3. The Political and Juristic Differences between Ibādīs and Khārijītes

The differences between the Ibādīs and Khārijītes are not confined to one aspect, that is, the historical one. Rather, they fall under more than one categories. This section will highlight some of the clear political and juristic differences that distinguish Ibādīs from Khārijītes.

#### 3.1 The Ruling of Revolting against the Tyrant Ruler

The Khārijītes hold that the rebellion against an unjust ruler is mandatory. Thus, the public has no choice, but to exert their utmost efforts to overthrow such rulers. In comparison, the Ibādīs do not agree with the Khārijītes in maintaining this attitude, rather they are of the opinion that it depends on the surrounding circumstances. If they are in a position of power and strength, and it is most likely that the rebellion against tyranny is going to succeed, then going against this ruler is just permissible but not obligatory, as the Khārijītes believed. On the other hand, if they are in a position of weakness and inability, and their success is not expected, then they must not rebel against the tyrant; otherwise, the affairs of Muslims would suffer at the hands of disorder and turmoil. What confirms this idea is the practical and peaceful application by Ibādī followers and leaders during the first century

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<sup>19</sup>Valerie J. Hoffman, “The Articulation of Ibad Identity in Modern Oman And Zanzibar,” *The Muslim World* 94, no. 2 (2004): 201-216, doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.2004.00048.x; Janet Peter, “Ibadi (Ibadism),” *Abilogic*, 2019, <https://articles.abilogic.com/332821/ibadi-ibadism.html>.



under the Umayyad rule, and in Oman when it was ruled by some unjust governors.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2 The Ruling of *Isti'rād*

This involved giving security to innocent people, and then killing them without any warning or legitimate reason. *Isti'rād*, a reprehensible kind of assassination, was considered to be one of the distinguishing marks of Khārijītes, especially *Azraqīs*, throughout their history. However, Ibādī writings recorded many letters attributed to multiple Ibādī scholars; most importantly, many of those scholars were contemporary to early Khārijī movements and witnessed bloody conflicts during the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century AH. These writings show how the early Ibādī scholars opposed the notion of *Isti'rād* and condemned this act in the time of war, not just in the time of peace. One of those scholars is Sālim b. Dhakwān al-Hilālī (died in 101 AH/719 CE) who, in his famous *Sīrah* treatise, said: ‘We do not approve of assassinating our people (i.e. non-Ibādī Muslims) or killing them secretly, even if they were misguided’.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3 The Ruling of *Khurūj*

This ruling aslo known as making *Hijrah*, immigration, to the Khārijītes camp. The Khārijītes introduced the doctrine of *Hijrah* from the areas of their Muslim opponents to their own camps. Furthermore, they made this kind of *Hijrah* compulsory upon every individual Muslim, and they entreated all Muslims to join them, as they considered their opponents’ abode ‘*dār al-ḥarb*’, or land of war. The Ibādīs refused this notion and did not join them, nor did they go with them to fight other Muslims, raising the Prophetic tradition as a slogan: ‘*Lā Hijrata ba’d al-Fath*’, meaning, ‘There is no immigration after the Conquest of Makkah’.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the Khārijītes called them *al-Qa’adah*, or those who ‘sat down’ and did not join them to fight other Muslims.

What confirms this clear difference between the Ibādīs and the Khārijītes is the fact that readers of Ibādī literature never find a single war initiated by Ibādīs

<sup>20</sup>Nāṣir as-Sābi‘ī, *Khawārij and the Absent Truth*, op. cit., 175; ‘Amr an-Nāmī, “Studies In Ibādism” (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1971), 25; ‘Alī Mu‘ammar, *Ibādism Among The Islāmic Sects* (London: Dār al-Ḥikmah, 2001), 499, 502-505.

<sup>21</sup>‘Amr an-Nāmī, “Studies In Ibādism,” op. cit., 25, 34-36.

<sup>22</sup>Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq an-Najāh, 2002), 4:15.



on a sectarian basis.<sup>23</sup> Hence, all Muslim lands, including non-Ibāḍī lands, are considered by Ibāḍīs to be lands of peace and Islām, not lands of war and disbelief.<sup>24</sup> The first-century Ibāḍī scholar Sālim b. Dhakwān al-Hilālī says: ‘We do not maintain the emigration from the home of our people [meaning the non-Ibāḍīs] like the emigration of the Prophet and his Companions from the home of their people’.<sup>25</sup>

On the contrary, over the course of their history, Ibāḍīs have been known for being tolerant and welcoming to their fellow Muslims from other Islamic denominations, so much so that they would call them *Qawmunā*, meaning ‘our people’, and they would also call them ‘the people of *Qiblah*’, as stated by Shaykh as-Sālimī and found in almost all Ibāḍī juristic and theological compilations.<sup>26</sup> This principle of tolerance with followers of other Muslim groups resulted in many other examples of the harmonious and peaceful coexistence of Ibāḍīs with non-Ibāḍī communities, especially in Oman, where Ibāḍīs form a majority.

Among the religious minority communities living in Oman are Shī‘ahs. There are many stories of coexistence and the implementation of justice with members of this Islamic group. Among these stories is the story of a Shī‘ah man who moved to Samā’il, a village in the interior of Oman. Upon his arrival in Samā’il, the Shī‘ī man started a business and opened his shop during the reign of Imām Sālim b. Rāshid al-Kharūṣī (ruled from 1331 AH/1913 CE to 1338 AH/1920 CE). However, the shop was robbed by an unknown person. This led the head of the Omani State at the time, the Ibāḍī Imām Sālim, along with the country’s spiritual leader, Shaykh Nūr ad-Dīn as-Sālimī, to come all the way to Samā’il and lead the investigation themselves until the thief was caught and punished justly.<sup>27</sup> Here, readers of Omani history note that when a member of a minority group within the wider Omani community experienced an act of injustice, he was defended by the supreme authority of the state itself until the perpetrator was found and brought to justice.

<sup>23</sup>Khālīd Al-‘Aḍāḍ, “About Oman and Tolerance, I Speak,” *Al-Waṭan Online*, 2018; Sa‘ūd al-Hārthī, “Religious Tolerance,” *Al-Waṭan*, 2017.

<sup>24</sup>Amr an-Nāmī, “Studies In Ibāḍism,” op. cit., 27-28.

<sup>25</sup>Aḥmed al-Khalīlī, “The Islamic Unity through Sālim Bin Dhakwān al-Hilālī Treatise,” in *Understanding Between The Islamic Schools* (Algeria: The Islamic Supreme Council, 2014), 18.

<sup>26</sup>Abdullah as-Sālimī, *Kashf Al-Ḥaḳīqah*, 2nd ed. (Muscat: aḍ-Ḍāmīrī Bookshop, 1991), 66.

<sup>27</sup>Aḥmed Al-Khalīlī, *Liqā’Āt Samāḥat Ash-Shaykh*, 1st ed. (Muscat: al-Anfāl Bookshop, 2008), 212.

Another example of implementing the principles of tolerance, justice, and equality within the Shī‘ah minority in the Ibādī context is that when the Portuguese were defeated, they asked the Imām’s army leader to sign a treaty with them. The Imām’s leader stipulated a condition in order for him to agree to signing the treaty with the Portuguese. The condition stated that the Portuguese would have to restore the Shī‘ah properties that they had taken in Suḥār. Only after accepting this precondition, the Omani and Ibādī leader signed the treaty. The fact that some theological differences exist between the two Islamic schools of thought, Ibādīsm and Shī‘ism, did not prevent the leader of the Omani army from caring about all Omani citizens and treating them equally, despite their religious affiliations.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.4 The Property of the Opponents

The Khawārij consider their opposition’s property as a legal wealth for them to take and a kind of permitted spoil. Hence, we find in Khārijī history that the Khārijītes would wage wars against their opponents and take their belongings as booty of war. However, this extreme action would not have been accepted by the Ibādī community at all. As such, it is clear with the Ibādīs that a Muslim’s property, regardless of whoever he/she is, is unlawful for them as long as he/she declares the testimony of *Tawḥīd*, or the Oneness of God. They base this firm stance on the Prophetic saying: ‘Verily, your blood, your property and your honour are as sacred and inviolable as the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours and in this town of yours’.<sup>29</sup> This Ibādī principle was reflected in their behaviour with their fellow Muslims over the course of Ibādī history, where the researchers have failed to find one single incident in the history in which the Ibādīs took another Muslims’ belongings as spoils, even in times of war. A clear instance of this is when the Ibādīs took Ṣan‘ā’, in Yemen, and liberated its people from the tyrant ruler of Banī Umayyah in 129 AH/ 746 CE. The Umayyad’s illegal wealth was brought before the Ibādī conqueror, Ṭālib al-Ḥaq, who did not take anything for himself or for any of his followers. On the contrary, he distributed all of it to the people of the city.<sup>30</sup>

Another example of this principle is when Shaybān al-Khārijī, the head of the Ṣufriyyah in his time, came fighting to Oman in 132 AH/ 749 CE. The Omanis, under the leadership of the Ibādī Imām al-Julandá b. Mas‘ūd al-Ma‘walī, defended

<sup>28</sup>‘Abdullah As-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat Al-A‘Yān Fī Sīrati Ahli ‘Umān* (Muscat: al-Istiqāmah Bookshop, 1997), 10.

<sup>29</sup>Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, op. cit., 1:24.

<sup>30</sup>‘Abdullah as-Sālimī, *Jawhar A-Nizām* (Muscat: Nūr ad-Dīn as-Sālimī Bookshop, 1989) 512-513.

their land and defeated Shaybān, who was killed in combat. Shortly afterwards, the Abbāsīd army came chasing Shaybān al-Khārijī. When the Abbāsīds found out that Shaybān had been killed by the Ibādī Imām, they asked for his belongings, such as his sword and ring. Imām al-Julandā and the other Ibādī scholars refused to give the Abbāsīds Shaybān's belongings without any legitimate reason, based on the fact that these belongings must be returned to Shaybān's inheritors; and therefore, it is illegal to give to or be taken by anybody other than his heirs. So, the Abbāsīds fought the Omanis and Imām al-Julandā and many of his followers were killed.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, what negates the association between Ibādīs and Khārijītes is the fact that it was the Ibādīs who fought off the Khārijītes and eradicated their threat in different parts of the Muslim land. For example, it was al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufrah al-Ibādī who put an end to the Azāriqah presence in al-Başrah after their emergence in 64 AH/684 CE, and it was two Imāms, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma'āfirī and 'Abu-al-Raḥmān b. Rustum, who repulsed the Ṣufriyyah invaders from al-Qayrawān in 141 AH/758 CE.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. The Theological Differences Between Ibādīs and Khārijītes

Beside the historical, political and juristic differences that set Ibādīs apart from Khārijītes, there are some key theological differences between the two factions. In this section, the researcher contends that the preceding Khārijī characteristics are just symptoms of a more problematic theological beliefs, with which this section will be concerned.

##### 4.1 Accusing Their Muslim Opponents of *Kufr*, Disbelief

The main distinguishing feature of Khārijī thought is that they accuse their opponents of being *kuffār*, or infidels. This feature can be considered the key marker of Khārijītes and the most dangerous one, owing to the fact that many of the theological and political Khārijī thoughts and practices, such as *Isti' rād* and the despoiling of another's property, were built on this extreme and radical thinking. Hence, the researcher in this field should be careful when dealing with this sensitive issue, especially in relation to Ibādī theological thought, for two main reasons. The first reason is that this term, *kufr*, is used in the original textual sources, the Qur'ān and Sunnah, for more than one meaning. Firstly, major *shirk*, which takes one out of the fold of Islām. Secondly, committing *Kufr Ni'mah* (ingratitude to Allāh's favours), which simply means 'sin', does not remove the description of Islām from the one who committed this type of *kufr*. Hence, it is

<sup>31</sup>Abdullah As-Sālimī, *Tuḥfat Al-A'Yān Fī Sīrati Ahli 'Umān*, op. cit., 77-78.

<sup>32</sup>Aḥmed as-Siyābī, *Insights Into the Life of Imām Al-Julandā B. Mas'ūd*, video, 2019.

sometimes called minor *kufir* or practical *kufir*, as opposed to major *kufir* or doctrinal *kufir*. Therefore, this kind of *kufir* does not get one out of the religion of Islām. The second reason is that it is well known from historical sources that the first one to use this term *kuffār*, intending to mean a major *kufir* or *shirk*, to label other Muslims was Nāfi‘ b. al-Azraq, the head of *Azāriqah*, and that was only after the split of al-Muḥakkimah in 64 AH/684 CE. With all that in mind, it becomes clear that there is nothing reported authentically to prove that the early Muḥakkimah, which includes Ibādīs, used this term against any Muslim. However, if we were to say, for the sake of argument that some of the early Muḥakkimah had used it, we would interpret that to be a minor *kufir*, which could be termed to any sinful Muslim as well, as the textual evidence did and legitimised.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.2 Accusing Anyone Committing a Major Sin of Being *Kāfir Kufir Shirk*

That is, committing a major infidelity. The Khawārij based their ruling upon a misinterpretation of the Qur’ānic verse in which Almighty Allāh says: ‘If you were to obey them, you would indeed be infidels’.<sup>34</sup> They claimed that this verse means that if you obey the disbelievers in eating carrion, or non-slaughtered animal meat, you would be considered disbelievers like them.<sup>35</sup> However, the Ibādīs disagree with this interpretation and argue that the ruling of the verse ‘disbelief, infidelity’ is not built on the eating of dead animal meat, but rather on believing the definite unlawful thing lawful. This Ibādī argument is widespread in Ibādī literature, including theological and Qur’ānic commentaries. Shaykh Aṭfayish, a late Algerian Ibādī scholar (died in 1385 AH/1965 CE), says: ‘However, the correct understanding of this verse is that those who make carrion lawful are heretics.’<sup>36</sup>

Over the course of Omani history, the scholars of the Ibādī school of thought made it crystal clear that no one has the right to accuse other Muslims, from any other Islamic school or denomination, of being *Kāfir*, that is, a disbeliever or infidel, as long as they declare the testimony of faith – that there is no God worthy of worship but Allāh and Muḥammad is Allāh’s messenger. The bearer of this testimony is a part of the religion of Islam, regardless of whether he is a faithful and practising Muslim or not, and regardless of whether or not the Ibādī Omanis

<sup>33</sup>Nāṣir as-Sābi‘ī, *Khawārij and the Absent Truth*, op. cit., 131, 176; Nāṣir al-Masqārī, *Ibādism in the Arena of Truth*, 4th ed. (Muscat: al-Anfāl Bookshop, 2011), 121.

<sup>34</sup>Qur’ān: Al-An’ām 6:121.

<sup>35</sup>Aḥmed al-Khalīlī, *Sharḥ Ghāyat Al-Murād* (Muscat: Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, 2003), 152-153.

<sup>36</sup>Ibrāhīm Aṭfayish, *The Differences between Ibādīs And Khawārij*, 1st ed. (Muscat: aḍ-Ḍamrī Bookshop, 2015), 18.

agree with him in more detailed theological issues. The bearer of this testimony is entitled to be called a brother or sister in Islam. The reference Ibādī scholar, Shaykh Nūr ad-Dīn as-Sālimī, a late Omani scholar (died in 1332 AH/1914 CE), states this notion explicitly saying: ‘We do not ask the servants [of Allāh] a belief beyond the two testimonies [of *tawhīd*]. Thus, whosoever bears the two testimonies we shall call him our brother, and shall fulfil his rights [upon us]’.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, this notion was emphasised by other prominent scholars throughout Omani history. Of these other examples is the statement of the Ibādī scholar, Shaykh Sa‘īd b. Khalfān al-Khalīlī (died in 1287 AH/1871 CE), who was asked about the religious ruling on anthropomorphists, that is, those who attribute to God human organs/parts or other human attributes. In his answer, he strongly warned his fellow Omani people of accusing them of disbelief saying: ‘Beware then beware of giving the ruling of *Shirk*, disbelief, to the people of *Qiblah* [the direction of Makkah, meaning all Muslims]... as this is a cause of destruction and being destroyed’.<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that this answer was given while the anthropomorphists, the people in question, were waging a war against Oman and its people. Yet, that did not prevent the Ibādī scholar at that critical time from being just towards them and from severely cautioning his students not to charge them with infidelity. If this is the Ibādī attitude towards others during wartime, what would their attitude be during peacetime? Hence, the strict prohibition of accusing other monotheists of *Kufr*, infidelity, is one of the many distinguishing markers between Ibādīs and the classical Khārijītes.

#### 4.3 Denying Some Islāmīc Forms of Punishments, *Hudūd*

*Hudūd* have not been mentioned in the Qur’ān, such as denying the *had* stoning, entirely. Furthermore, it is attributed to the Khārijītes that they do not acknowledge stoning as an Islāmīc punishment anyway. The argument given for their opinion is the fact that this kind of punishment is not mentioned in the Qur’ān, the first source of Islāmīc legislation. However, early Ibādī writings approve of stoning for the married adulterer or adulteress as a legitimate punishment in Islāmīc penal law. In fact, the Ḥadīth collection of ar-Rabī‘, a second-century Ibādī scholar, has a number of narrations attributed to the Prophet (*PBUH*) proving the

<sup>37</sup> Abdullah as-Sālimī, *Kashf Al-Haqīqah*, op. cit., 66.

<sup>38</sup> Sa‘īd Al-Khalīlī, *Tamhīd Qawā‘Id Al-Īmān* (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1986), 1: 224.

point in discussion. Consequently, all Ibādī jurists have agreed unanimously over the general legitimacy of stoning in Islām.<sup>39</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, it has been made clear by this concise discussion that one should deal with the books of history carefully, as each historian embarks on his writing from his own political or sectarian background, especially when it comes to describing or evaluating one's adversaries, and this is totally consistent with the research hypothesis suggested in the introduction of this paper. The paper also shows some outcomes. Part of these is the fact that although the Ibādīs share with the so-called Khārijītes the denial of arbitration, they differ with them in most decisive political and theological points.

On top of these key differences is that the Khārijītes describe their opponents as being unbelievers which is, as far as the paper is concerned, the prime reason beyond the other political and theological extreme approaches of Khārijītes. Therefore, it is historically inaccurate to give one group, Ibādism, all of the descriptions, practices, and ideologies of another group, or even to consider it part of that group because of the fact that it had agreed with that group on one single *ijtihādī*, or arguable, issue, especially when it comes to a classical Islāmic school considered as the 'quietest and pietist third branch of Islām', according to Gaiser's description.<sup>40</sup> It is worth noting that this fact has been acknowledged even by many non-Ibādī scholars, such as at-Tanūkhī, who is a specialist researcher in literary and religious Ibādī heritage (died in 1966 CE). At-Tanūkhī stated: 'Indeed, attributing the word 'Khawārij' to Ibādīs is one of the unjust claims which stemmed from the political aggression first, and religious fanaticism second. They were confused regarding differences between the Ibādīs on the one hand, and *Azāriqah*, *Sufriyyah* and *Najdāt* on the other hand. However, there is no commonality between Ibādīs and Khārijītes apart from denying the arbitration between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah'.<sup>41</sup>

It is hoped that this paper will open the door for subsequent research to investigate the Islāmic historical heritage and to reread it in an unbiased way. More importantly, to clear the misconceptions and correct the misunderstandings that

<sup>39</sup>ar-Rabī' Al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb At-Tarīb*, 1st ed. (Muscat: Muscat Bookshop, 2003), 272-275; Nāṣir al-Masqrī, *Ibādism in the Arena of Truth*, op. cit., 125.

<sup>40</sup>Adam Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers: The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibādī Imāmate Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 206.

<sup>41</sup>'Alī Mu'ammār, *Ibādism among the Islāmic Sects* (London: Dār al-Ḥikmah, 2001), 150.

occur between the current Islāmic denominations, which might result in narrowing the differences, bridging the gaps, and letting the various legal Islāmic schools lead a more tolerant and harmonious common life.

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