

Early Ibāḍī Literature: Abu l-Mundhir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb *Kitāb al-Raṣf fī l-Tawḥīd, Kitāb al-Muḥāraba and Sīra*, introduced and edited by Abdulrahman al-Salimi and Wilferd Madelung, (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2011), xi + 80 pp., ISBN: 9783447064354, €19.80 (paperback)

Scholars of Islamic studies have increasingly come to recognize the importance of the Ibāḍiyya as a group that preserves a unique perspective on Islam: as the only surviving sectarian relatives of the Khārijites, the Ibāḍiyya offer important non-Sunnī and non-Shīʿī views on early Islamic history, theology and law. Contemporary Ibāḍīs of North Africa and Oman possess a remarkable corpus of texts, some of which date back to the early medieval period of Islamic history. Large collections of Ibāḍī manuscripts can also be found in Egypt and Tanzania (specifically in Zanzibar). Many important Ibāḍī works have become available to researchers in recent decades, due in part to the efforts of individual Ibāḍī and non-Ibāḍī scholars, but especially to the Omani Ministry of National Heritage and Culture (*Wizārat al-turāth al-qawmī wa-l-tbaqāfa*). Nevertheless, and despite these welcome strides forward, much Ibāḍī material remains in manuscript form. In the work under review, Drs. Madelung and al-Salimi present in critical Arabic edition three heretofore unpublished early Ibāḍī works by Abū l-Mundhir Bashīr ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥbūb (d. ca. 290/908): the *Kitāb al-raṣf fī l-tawḥīd* (Book of Paving about Divine Unity), *Kitāb al-muḥāraba* (Book of Warfare) and the *Sīra* (Epistle). In addition, the authors supply a short five page introduction, in English, discussing the author, the texts and manuscripts consulted for the edition, as well as a list of works cited (in Arabic).

Abū l-Mundhir was an important scholar of the late 3rd/9th century. He was the grandson of the last Baṣran Ibāḍī leader, Abū Sufyān Maḥbūb ibn al-Raḥīl (or al-Ruḥayl), who relocated the family from Baṣra to Ṣuḥār near the start of the Omani Ibāḍī Imām ʿAbd al-Mālik

ibn Ḥumayd's reign (i.e., ca. 207/823).¹ His father, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Maḥbūb, was an important scholar in his time, a participant in the Damā debate (after 230-31/844-45) over the created/uncreated nature of the Qurʾān (which nearly got him ejected from Oman), and *qāḍī* of Ṣuḥār from 249/863 until his death there in 268/881-82.² His sons, ʿAbd Allāh and Bashīr, became scholars in their own right, and ʿAbd Allāh's son (Abū l-Mundhir's nephew), Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd Allāh, became Imām in 320/932 during the restoration of the Imāmate at Nizwā. Abū l-Mundhir is said to have written several works during his lifetime, many of which are no longer extant: the *Kitāb al-bustān*, *Kitāb aḥkām al-Qurʾān wa-l-sunna*, *Kitāb al-imāma*, *Kitāb asmāʾ al-dār wa-aḥkāmihā*, and the *Kitāb al-khizāna*.³ The three works collected in *Early Ibāḍī Literature* constitute what survives of Abū l-Mundhir's work (in fact, the editors note that until recently, the *Kitāb al-raṣf* and the *Kitāb al-muḥāraba* were considered lost) (p. vii).

The *Kitāb al-raṣf fī l-tawḥīd* is a theological tract that discusses various points of Ibāḍī *kalām*: substance and accidents, God's unity, knowledge (the basis of which is sense perception and rational analogy), the Promise and the Threat, the Qurʾān, the Imāmate and the names and rules of the Abode (i.e., the *dār*, "where unbelief or grave immorality prevails and the conditions under which the believer may visit or stay in such lands") (p. viii). Against the traditionalist tendencies of earlier Omani Ibāḍī theology, Abū l-Mundhir's theological stances betray a resonance with Muʿtazilī thought – the editors compare him with his contemporary al-Jubbāʾī, a Muʿtazilī, though they are careful to note that there is no evidence that the two ever met (p. vii).

The *Kitāb al-muḥāraba* is a work dealing with proper conduct in warfare, though the author also provides a "rational proof for the origination of the world" (p. viii) and the truthfulness of the Prophets.

¹ John C. Wilkinson, *Ibāḍism: Origins and Early Development in Oman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 269.

² *id.*, 296.

³ Martin H. Custers, *Al-Ibāḍīyya: A Bibliography* (Maastricht: Universitaire Pers, 2006), I, 318-319.

The first section of this work analyzes the Qurʾānic verses pertaining to warfare, taking care to distinguish the differing rules of warfare which pertain to idolaters, unbelievers from the *abl al-kitāb* and apostates. The second section addresses the rules of warfare that can be derived from the *sunna*,⁴ followed by a chapter on commanding good and forbidding evil. The tract ends with a discussion of the proper rules regarding the treatment of rebels (*abl al-baḡhy*), including proper Ibāḍī conduct with unjust Imāms. The editors date the work to the end of the Imām al-Ṣalt ibn Mālik's reign (i.e., before 272/886).

The third tract is an epistle (*sīra*) that gives Abū l-Mundhir's legal opinion on the forced deposition of the Imām al-Ṣalt ibn Mālik al-Kharūsī in 272/886, an event which ultimately caused the dissolution of the first substantial Imāmate in Oman. Abū l-Mundhir refutes the positions of the jurist Mūsā ibn Mūsā, who was the driving force behind al-Ṣalt's deposition and who also effected the installation of his replacement, the Imām Rāshid ibn al-Nazar al-Fajḥī. Abū l-Mundhir argues that an imām can only be deposed if he is unable to perform the duties of the Imāmate, merits a *ḥadd* punishment, or has refused to repent of a serious offence. Abū l-Mundhir finds that none of these conditions were met with al-Ṣalt, making his deposition unwarranted and placing Mūsā ibn Mūsā, the Imām Rāshid and their supporters in a state of formal dissociation (*barāʿa*). References to subsequent events surrounding this conflict in Abū l-Mundhir's *sīra* allow the editors to date it to between 278-280/891-893.

The value of primary sources can hardly be understated, and it is hoped that the editors will continue their work. For those with an interest in the Ibāḍiyya, or who appreciate the importance of non-Sunnī/non-Shīʿī perspectives, the tracts contained in *Early Ibāḍī Literature* present a fascinating array of theological, juridical and historical materials from an important early Ibāḍī intellectual, and offer

⁴ The term *sunna* in this chapter seems to imply the accumulated actions of the Ibāḍī community as well as the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad (as is common in early Ibāḍī literature, ḥadīths are given without *isnāds*), a usage that accords with Wilkinson's estimation of how early Ibāḍīs were using the concept of *sunna*. See Wilkinson, 126-128, 373-378, 386-388.

significant opportunities to deepen our knowledge of early Ibāḍī thought. As more and more scholars come to appreciate the value of Ibāḍī materials to the study of Islam, collections of edited primary texts like this become all the more necessary.

Adam Gaiser

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida-USA