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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

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Panel 56

Ibadites from East and West

Political commitments and religious sociabilities (8th-20th c.)

With its roots in the Basra at the end of the 7th century, Ibadism was crossed, from the decade of the 740s, by a groundswell of protest that led to the foundation of imamates in areas weakly attached to the Iraqi imperial structure, in the Maghreb and in the south of the Arabian Peninsula.

From then on, the Ibadites of the Maghreb and Oman experienced autonomous historical trajectories. Components of Islamic societies, these populations also distinguished themselves by a common resistance to the hegemony of the regional macro-powers.

This workshop aims to examine over a long period the modalities of the political and religious organization of the Ibadite groups. In Oman, the tradition of the imamate continued uninterrupted until 1957, becoming an institution of resistance to foreign initiatives, both Portuguese and British. In the Maghreb, after being swept away by the Fatimid *da'wa*, the Ibadites reorganized themselves into small communities revolving around learned circles, in Djerba and in the pre-Saharan oases. Thanks to the increased circulation of people and ideas at the beginning of the 19th century, the Mزاب and Oman became part of the global dynamics of the pan-Islamic renaissance.

We will examine the resilience of these religious communities and their capacity to integrate into economic and cultural networks. Faced with the conquering Abbasid and then colonial companies, the Ibadites knew how to show pragmatism and adapt the defense of their particularisms to the geopolitical evolutions that affected their settlement areas.

Person in charge : Baptiste Enki (University Lumière Lyon-2, Ciham Umr-5648)

Discussant : Aillet Cyrille (University Lumière Lyon-2, CIHAM UMR-5648)

Program

Bahmani Salah (EPHE – PROCLAC UMR 7192)

The Nukkari, the first Ibadi protest movement in North Africa (2nd/8th century)

Following political protest movements, North African Ibadism in the Middle Ages experienced several internal splits. We will discuss the first dissent: the Nukkari movement. We will talk about Yazīd b. Fandīn and the two new questions that his opposition to Imam 'Abd al-Wahhāb generated in Ibadi political thought: the investiture of the inferior in the presence of the better (*walāyatu al-mafḍūl fī wuḡūd al-afḍal*) and the impossibility for the imam to make a decision alone without consulting a known council (*an lā yaqta'a amran dūna ḡamā'a ma'lūma*). We will analyze in particular the political and social organization of this first dissidence and its impact on the future of the Ibadi community in Maghreb.

Baptiste Enki (University Lumière Lyon-2, CIHAM UMR-5648)

Oriental Ibadi Imamates: local resistance and political pragmatism

This talk will be concerned with Ibadi political entities in the Arabian Peninsula (Oman and Hadramawt). We will observe over a long period what J. Wilkinson named the imamate cycles, focusing on medieval imamates, but also evoking the contemporary period. Imamates grew up, fall down, were rebuilt: all these special times were periods of cohesion and decay of the Ibadi community. The sources testify of these moments when Ibadism was a powerful movement in the region.

This will allow us to show that the imamate quickly embodied this pragmatic Ibadi Islam, able to deal with tribes, to rally military forces to face Abbasid or British armies, as well as to play a substantial role in the economic and religious networks. Throughout times, this flexibility has been a guarantee for the community to survive even isolated in this marginal Arabian region.

Jomier Augustin (INALCO-CERMOM)

Ibadism, an Islamic democratic tradition?

From the late 19th-century orientalist scholar Émile Masqueray (1843-1894) to the contemporary militants of the Berber cause, a topos has flourished which sees in the political and religious institutions of the Ibadi and Berber populations of the Mزاب, in Algeria, an example of democracy grounded in the egalitarian Ibadi ideal. Tracing the birth and the course of this myth, this talk proposes to show how, from the colonial period to the 2000s, the memory and practice of local institutions constituted a political tool for Mozabite actors, shaping them in return.

Merimi Mohamed (former teacher at the University of La Mannouba - associate researcher at Ibadica)

Modern Era Djerba Ibadism: What Does It Mean?

Djerbien Ibadis inherited Oriental Ibadi thought, that local shaykh al-'ilm managed to do their own. These men of science crafted the 'azzāba, who were in charge of shaping the social and political organization of the island, its hinterlands inhabitants as well as the diaspora.

Ibadi society was organized according to the vertical and horizontal relationship. This social order has become the backbone of community life. It was built around the idea of a pious foundation, al-masjīd, and was governed by values, rules and laws that shaped its territory. The social link in effect inside the island has also been adapted to a diasporic context.

In this case, the Ibadi thought has been used to facilitate the creation of a jobs market including all its legal, social and cultural conditions. It allowed the setting up of mutual aid and support mechanisms through community institutions. Thanks to their membership, Ibadis have managed to amass wealth, even if their religious rigorism caused them to be labeled Islamic "puritans".

From the 17th century onwards, the influence of the Maliki neighborhood and of ghurabā' (outsiders), who were Makhzen's allies and whose number grew up gradually, impacted the Ibadi community. It started to affect local notables and the institutions they controlled. From that time on, the Ibadi society has changed forever.