

IBADISM IN ISLAMIC MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES: POLITICAL MODELS, FORMS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND INTERACTIONS.

The history of Ibadism still occupies a marginal place in the field of Islamic Medieval studies, while the corpus of Omanese and North African sources and the studies in Arabic have been considerably enriched since twenty years. Two recently published academic works (2010) do perfectly illustrate how the Ibadi case may contribute to a reflection on Medieval Islamic societies. Adam Gaiser, in continuity with Patricia Crone's first attempts, has apprehended the Ibadi imamate theory in the light of early Islamic political thought in general, insisting also on how the origins of the sect had been forged by successive rewritings. As for John Wilkinson's essay, it clearly refutes the cliché of Ibadism as a monolithic and unchanged community. What he calls the Ibadi « madhhabization » (the establishment of a standardized corpus of doctrinal and juridical norms) proves to be the consequence of a long process of social interaction and elaboration of a memory shared by the community. This congress is following the same line of comparative political and social history, but is also including the analysis of discursive patterns as social constructions among others.

The first aim of this scientific encounter is to provide a panorama of the political and social transformations experimented or promoted by the Ibadi minorities in Islamic medieval societies. The gathering of regional case studies belonging to various chronological sequences should enable us to give an overview of the territorial and social evolution that characterized the scattered communities belonging to the Ibadi archipelago. Along with an insight into the tribal patterns and power relationships that structured the societies touched by the oppositional Khariji and Ibadi movements, we will also look at the strategies of establishment and territorialization adopted by this nebula. Then we will examine how rival communities were connected through different forms of coexistence and competition and how rival orthodoxies, in particular Sunni Islam, achieved expansion or domination.

Then we would like to focus on the political and social models associated with Ibadism. Far from supporting the apologetical image of "Ibadism as a laboratory for democracy", our purpose is to open broader comparisons. We will certainly question how Ibadism justified political dissidence (*khurūj*) and interpreted the intellectual legacy of Kharijism. However, we should avoid a sterile debate on the hardly refutable relation between Ibadism and Kharijism by carrying out rather a critical approach of this highly heterogeneous ideological family which is usually apprehended through the prism of heresiography. Another major topic is how political collegiality was conceived and put into practice by Khariji and Ibadi currents, through the institution of an elective and revocable imamate and the use of specific structures for the regulation and collectivization of authority (from the *shūra* to the *ḥalqa*). The political structures born in Khariji or Ibadi communities will be examined carefully, bearing in mind that the concepts used for the analysis of state formations are not necessarily fitting with this kind of social organization. Ibadi history gives us a good example of specific state formations that seem to clash with the theoretical frame transmitted by the Orientalist historiography. Moreover, this is a unique opportunity for evaluating the role played by non-state societies in medieval Islam beyond the mechanical argument based on tribal or pre-Islamic structures or Berber tradition.

The proceedings of the Congress will be edited in a high-quality publication. They should be not only a new reference for the history of medieval Ibadism, but also open fresh perspectives for Islamic studies. Debate should be encouraged by the display of various types of sources and approaches and by the contribution of each participant to a renewal of the questions asked.