

## **Islam and the particularities of the Ibadi denomination**

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### Islam

The Islam is one of the 5 main religions of the world which is based on the teachings of Muhammad in the 7th century. World wide more than 1.2 billion Muslims dominating in East- and North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia and Indonesia belief in their one and only God Allah. According to Paret (1957) the translation of the word roots "salima" means "to be entire", "to be completed" and "to be salvaged" meaning the "total surrender of one's self to God". Islam means getting salvation under the will and guidance of God referring to the original Arabic word (s-l-m) which carries the basic meaning of "salam," peace, and "salama" safety and security (Lexicorient).

### Origins

In 570 Muhammad was born as son of Abdallah and Amina in Mecca. With the age of 40, during the month of Ramadan in 610, he received the revelation of God through the archangel Gabriel. The revelation was dictated to him through verses which he had to memorize and to pass on (Bihl, 2003). The authenticity and reliability towards Muhammad's words was strengthened through the circumstance that Muhammad was not either introduced to poetries nor in writing, he was an Analphabetic.

The Muslims belief, that Muhammad is the restorer of the original monotheistic faith other than Judaism and Christianity which have been misinterpreted over time by the people. Islam is seen as the original heavenly message where God sent Muhammad as the only and last prophet who announced God's final message. Therefore Muhammad is not seen as the founder of a new religion but as the finisher of the present belief in God.

Referring to Bihl (2003) and Küng (2004) the basic message which was brought to Muhammad was to call attention to polytheism and the lack of ethical norms of the society in Mecca which strongly developed disadvantages for the defenceless poor, woman and orphans. His revelation which he brought to the people in Mecca caused distrust to the wealthier inhabitants because they achieved financial benefits from religious celebrations and trade in and around Mecca. Muhammad had to leave Mecca and found supporter. Years later, in 630 the inhabitants of Mecca finally accepted Muhammad and his followers unresisting.

From now on, to be different from Christians and Jews, Muhammad enforced to change the praying direction facing not Jerusalem but Mecca which became the centre of Islam, where Abraham once built the Ka'ba, the first place to worship God.

After Muhammad's religious, political and exemplary life he died after his pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca and was buried in Medina 632. Muhammad had several wives but no legal male offspring to be his follower. The night after his death this certainty caused discussion about the righteous follower and later pushed the development of numerous denominations.

### The basis of Islam

Muhammad's messages were collected in the Quran in 853 (Bihl, 2003). The central religious text of Islam, the literal words of God enfolds today 114 chapters (Sura) which are divided into 6666 verses. The Quran is the origin, source and normative differentiation of all Islamism, Islamic believes and life which is the absolute authority (Küng, 2004).

Amongst others the Quran describes the five core aspects which affect and order the life of Muslims. The "pillars of Islam" represent the creed, the daily prayers, fasting, financial alms and

the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a Muslims life. The intentional aspects are oriented to the social community. A Muslim believes in the only God, his angels, his holy books, his prophets and the last judgement and predestination (Küng, 2004). The primary sources of Islam are the Quran and the Sunnah which literally means "trodden path" (Wikipedia) describes the exemplary path of the prophet Muhammad within the community and how to fulfil the duties being an exemplary man. Sunnah is seen as a measurement to live a religious and faithful life as a Muslim. The basis for the Sunnah refers to a large collection of scriptures (Hadith), theological works, law scriptures (Sharia) and commentary scriptures (Lexicorient). Muhammad's ordinances, directives, valuation, comments and opinions of several questions which refer to reports and narratives of companions are recorded in the Hadith (Bihl, 2003). The Hadith is the theology and moral of Islam (Lexicorient).

The law scriptures, the Sharia, are based upon the core Islamic text, the Quran. The issues, several public and private aspects, of the Sharia or 'Muslim Law' are a legal framework to a Muslims life.

#### Central elements in a Muslims life

The first pillar of Islam is the creed, where the Muslim states that "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his messenger" (Paret, 1957). The daily ritual prayers are the second main duty in a Muslims life. Five times a day following the official call of the Muezzin before sunrise, noon, afternoon, around sunset and in the evening, Muslims pray. The precondition for praying is the lustration of any sins symbolized by the ritual lustration of the face, hands, forearm and feet symbolizing the lustration of the soul from sins. According to Küng (2004) the daily praying ceremonies are disciplined, concentrated and universal. To be thankful for the goods in life, Muslims are committed to give alms. It is seen as a "social tax" symbolizing also to be repentant for omission and to ask for forgiveness, for mutual respect and solidarity and as compensation between the poor and wealthy Muslims. The fourth pillar is the religious fasting, the entire abstinence of food, drinks and intercourse which is held during the month of Ramadan. During the day, from sunrise to sunset, the Muslims practise the abstinence but celebrate eating during the nights. Collective fasting and celebrating socializes the Muslim community. The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Mecca. It is an obligation to Muslims, adult men and women of a mighty mind and free according to health and sufficiently good economic situation. The pilgrimage is only valid if the pilgrim follows strict ritual rules from the start to the end in Mecca (Bihl, 2003 and Küng, 2004). Other daily commandments concerning the consumption of alcohol and blood, meaning carnivores and animals which not have been killed under the ritual of shehitah, are recorded in the sharia.

#### The denominations of Islam

Discordance arose after Muhammad's death concerning the right follower of Muhammad's messages and community.

Different divisions of the Islam developed characterized through different theological and legal differences but related beliefs. The main branches of Islam are the Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi Muslims but numerous schools, sects and traditions belong also to the Islam.

The Sunni are in number the biggest division with more than 1.2 billion Muslims world wide (Lexicorient). They believe that there was no one appointed by Muhammad to be his representative and to guide his community. Therefore Muhammad's faithful companions, his father in law named Abu Bakr was elected to lead the Muslim community. The further representatives of the prophet Muhammad are called Caliphs. Meanwhile an originally democratic election of Abu Bakr became a hereditary rule for the caliphate (Küng, 2004).

The Shi`a denomination is the second largest branch of Islam. Shi`a Muslims believe that Muhammad appointed Ali as his righteous representative and consider him as the Imam, which is also a hereditary position.

The Sufi Muslims belong to an Islamic school which developed out of a state with political compulsions, with an own piety, institutions and theology. In the 10th -14th century it became one of the most widespread and known denomination. Sufis believe to find Gods salvation and unity in ones own intuitive mind. The origin leads to Muslims who lived an ascetic life, people who spurned society (Küng, 2004). Today Sufis define themselves by a more Sunni oriented or Shi`a oriented view therefore they do not belong to a separate major branch of Islam.

Ibadism

What is the importance of the Ibadism in Oman and the rest of the world?

Ibadism is a denomination of Islam distinct from the two main denominations Shi'ite and Sunni and exists mainly in Oman (Hoffmann, 2004). In Oman 86 percent of the population are Muslims. Three-fourths of the Muslims are Ibadis. The other Muslims belong to Sunni Islam and the rest to Shia Islam. Moreover, Indian Hindus account for 13 percent of the population and there live also small numbers of non-Omani Christians in Oman.

Apart from the Ibadhis in the Sultanate of Oman some smaller communities can only be found in Zanzibar, in Libya, Tunisia (Jerba Island), and in Algeria (Hoffman, 2001). According to Lexicorient only 1,325,000 adherents distributed over the whole world belong to this branch of the Islam.

Where does the Ibadism originate from?

The origins of the Ibadis go back to not much more than twenty years after Muhammad's death. The Ibadism developed out of the seventh-century Islamic sect known as the Khārijism (Hoffman, 2004). The basic doctrinal beliefs of the Kharijites were the same as those of all Muslims: the five pillars of Islam. According to Jones (2005), what split the early Islamic community in the first instance were views about the actions of the third caliph, Uthman (raa), and the fourth caliph, Ali (raa). There was much opposition to both of them and Ali (raa) was even killed by a Kharijite activist in 661 CE. Following, the Umayyad dynasty came to power, and for a time some stability was imposed. It appears that this was the period when there was a growth in the number of the adherent of the Kharijism. Only, by the time of the Second Civil War (688-692 CE), the principal quietist group, living mainly in Basra, had become known as the Ibadiyya (Jones, 2005). This name derives from Abdallah b. Ibad, who appears to have been the political mentor of the group, though its spiritual leader was Jabir b. Zayd, a man universally recognized for his learning and piety, who became the first imam of the group (Hoffman, 2001, Hoffmann 2004, Jones, 2005 and Wikipedia).

How does Ibadism differ from Kharijism?

Although Ibadism emerged from Kharijism, the Ibadis see themselves as quite different from the Khawarijites: They - in contrast to the Khawarijites - regard other Muslims not as kuffar "unbelievers", but as kuffar an-ni ma "those who deny God's grace" (Wikipedia and Hoffman, 2001). The Ibadi attitude toward "those who deny God's grace" is that one should practice "dissociation". However, the practice of dissociation does not imply enmity (Hoffman, 2005) and the Ibadis reject violent methods of promoting their interests. The only circumstance in which an Ibadi is allowed to use violence is when there is a need to remove an unjust despot from power (Lexicorient).

What is special about the prayers of the Ibadis?

There are minor differences between the prayer observance of Ibadis and other Muslims. The Ibadis pray with their arms down at their sides. Moreover, they do not say Amin after the Fatiha (main prayer in the Islam), and they do not say the qunut (invocation) in the fajr prayer. In addition, they believe that Friday prayer should be held only in major cities in which justice prevails (Hoffman, 2004). Ibadis may pray together with Muslims of other branches, sharing their food and even marrying them (Lexicorient). Ibadis - like other Muslim groups - have mosques, minarets and religious leaders in mosques.

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