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The Development in the Ibadi Theology during the 18th and 19th Centuries

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Introduction

Thanks are due to Allah, *Al Aziz Al Hakim* (the Might & the Wise) and prayers and peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad who has followed the rightest path and had the purist mind, and upon all his companions and followers till the Day of Judgment.

The Ibadis as a school have contributed greatly to the Islamic *'Aqidah* studies as they share schools with *Sunnah*, *Shi'ah* and *Mu'tazilah*. Even though many consider Ibadism as a *Fiqh* or a political movement, what make Ibadis so special are their *"Aqidahh* foundations and principles. All their political and *Fiqh* opinions are only reflections of their *'Aqidah* and convictions that have been established long ago on a solid ground. The disagreements between classic and modern scholars and between the *Mashariqa* and *Maghariba* (Ibadies of the east and west) are minor; most of these disagreements fall under the second or third degree *'Aqidah* issues such as the torment of the grave or Createdness of the Quran. Moreover, in many cases these disagreements stem from linguistic choices and do not touch core principles.

In the 18th and 19th centuries AD, a number of Omani scholars emerged with a qualitative shift in *'Aqidah* writing be it in presentation or content. Most notably of these scholars are four: Shaikh Abu Nabhan Ja'ed bin Khamis Al Kharousi, Al Mohaqiq Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili, Shaikh Nasser bin Abi Nabhan Al Kharousi and Shaikh Abu Muslim Nasser bin Salim bin Adai'em Al Rawahi. The writings of those

scholars were relatively contemporary in terms of the *'Aqidah* issues they tackle and the interrelated sciences they use. Their predecessors would not have touched on such issues or if they did, they would do that superficially. The efforts of those four led to an intellectual movement that remained strong till today, even if with less momentum.

In this brief paper, the researcher will try to highlight the role of those scholars in renovating the intellectual movement of the late centuries. The researcher will try to highlight the impact of their movement and how they were influenced by and did in turn influence the *'Aqidah* and intellectual principles of the Ibadi School in general.

Preface: Introduction of the scholars:

1. Shaikh Abu Nabhan Jai'ed bin Khamis bin Mubarak Al Kharousi (1147-1237 AH/ 1734-1822 AD)¹, also known as *Al Rais* (the president). He was born in Al Aliya town in Wadi Bani Kharus, and was responsible for an intellectual revolution by writing more than twenty books in different disciplines: *Tafseer, Fiqh, 'Aqidah, Nahw & Saraf* (interpretation, jurisprudence, faith, syntax and morphology). He mentored a number of famous scholars such as his son Nasser bin Ja'ed and Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili. Most

¹ See his biography: *Mujam Alaam Al Ibadiyah (Mashriq Scholars)* p. 43-44, *Daleel Alam Oman* 45, *Al Khusaibi, Shaqaiq Al Numan* 1/139-154.

notable of his books are: *Maqaleed Al Tanzeel*, *Al Diqqaq li'Ahli AnNifaq*, *Sharh Hayat Al Muhaj & Kitab Al Haj*. He passed away mid-day Thursday 3rd of *Thi Al Hija* 1237, aged more than 90 years, and was buried in his hometown *Al Aliya*.

2. Shaikh Nasser bin Abi Nabhan Ja'ed bin Khamis bin Mubarak Al Kharusi (1192-1262 AH/ 1778-1847 AD)². He was born in Al Aliya town, Al Awabi, to an educated family; his father is a well-known figure in Islamic studies. He wrote many well-known books such as: *Kitab Al Ikhlas*, *Mubtada Al Asfar* and *AtTahtheeb* and has a good question-answer collection in different issues mentioned by the author of *Qamoos Al Sharia*. He also wrote *Tarf Al Altaf* and *Diwan Al Mustafa*, a poetic piece organized in the chronology of the dictionary alphabet, and touches on philosophy and the wisdom of the Almighty Allah.
3. Shaikh Said bin Khalfan bin Ahmed bin Saleh Al Khalili (1231-1287 AH/ 1816-1870 AD)³, whose lineage goes back to Imam Al Khalil bin Shathan bin Al Imam Al Salt bin Malik Al Kharusi. He is considered one of the most well-known figures in the 13th century AH in religion and politics. He lived in Izki then moved to Baushar and finally settled in Samail. He was best

² See his biography: Al Salmi, Abdullah, Tuhfat Al Aayan 2/172-175, Daleel Aalam Oman p.159, Al Sadi, Fahad, Muajam Al Fuqaha wal Mutaklmeen Al Ibadia 3/240-247.

³ See his biography: Daleel Alaam Al Ibadia (Mashriq Scholars) p. 132-133, Al Harthi, Khalfan, Fiqh of Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili p.35-60, Al Yahyaiya, Sharifa, Shaikh Said bin khalfan Al Khalili, Pioneer of Sufi Poetry in Oman p1
Shariaf bin Khalfan Al Yahyai Al Saadi, Fahad, Mujam Al Fuqaha wal Mutaklmeen Al Ibadia 3/240-247

known as *Al Muhaqiq*, for his dedication to *Tahqeeq* and assigning evidence and principle to different issues. He was a key member of the cabinet of Imam Azzan bin Qais in his revolution (1869-1871AD), along with Saleh bin Ali Al Harthi and Muhammed bin Saleem Al Gharbi. He wrote many books and combined poetry with science and thus was known as the most knowledgeable of poets and the most poetic of scholars. Some of his key books are: *Orjoozat Ilm AsSarf*, and he wrote a commentary for it called *Al Maqaleed*. He wrote another poem in *Aroodh* called *Al Madhar Al khafi fil Arood wal Qawafi*, another orjooza in *Zakat*, *Al Nawamees Al Rahmaniya fi Tasheel Al Turuq Ela Al Olum Al Rabbaniyya*, *Al Saif Al Muthaker fil Amer bil Maroof wan Nahi anl Munkar*, and a collection of Fatwa. He was killed together with his son in 1287 AH.

4. Scholar and poet Abu Muslim Nasser bin Salim bin Adai'em Al Rawahi (1273-1339 AH/ 1867-1920 AD). He grew up initially in Mahram town where he studied at the hands of Shaikh Ahmed bin Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili. He later moved to Zanzibar with his father who was appointed judge at that time. He returned to Oman for five years and went back again to Zanzibar to take up his father's role. In Zanzibar he dedicated his time to teaching and authoring. He combined mastery of Sharia sciences, literature and poetry. He was considered a genius of his time and deserved the title "The

poet of scholars and the scholar of poets". He died in Zanzibar in 1339AH/1920 AD. He wrote many books most notably of which are: *Nithar Al Jawhar fi Ilm Al Shara Al Zahar, Al Nashat Al Mohamadiya, Al Noor Al Mohammadi and Al Nafs Al Rahmani*. He has a big collection of poetic works⁴.

The Development in the Ibadi Theology during the 18th and 19th Centuries can be summed up in the following:

First: Development in Authoring:

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries AD witnessed a considerable development in Ibadi *'Aqidah* authoring and writing in Oman. This development can be summed up in the following:

Writing style: A considerable development has been witnessed in the style of scientific writing in general and more notably in *'Aqidah* issues. *'Aqidah* writing featured more expressive force and attention to rhetoric, especially when refuting opposing opinions. A closer look at the *Ajwiyybah* (Questions-Answers) of AlMohaqia Al Khalili will notice a great deal of rhetoric styles, especially Saj'a (rhymed phrase endings).

Use of poetry in authoring: The time of those scholars saw a new trend of authoring in different *'Aqidah* issues using poetry as a vehicle. A good example

⁴ See his biography in Daleel Alam Oman 159-160, Al Khusaibi, Shaqaiq Al Numan 2/347, Al Bahlani, Nithar Al Jawhar 1/15-20, Al Sadi, Fahad, Mujam Al Fuqaha Al Mutaklmeen Al Ibadiay 3/252-259

of this trend is the the poem written by Abu Muslim Al Bahlani in the issue of seeing Allah, in which he starts with:

Realize Allah's Transcendence from being seen to know Him. Would you be able to know Him and prove so?

Know your capacity in what you are attempting. What you are attempting is what will hurt you.

In fact, Abu Muslim used poetry a lot in expressing his *'Aqidah* and political opinions, whether for contemporary or classic issues. One famous example of classic political issues is the *Nahrawania* poem in which he expressed his opinion in the battles of *Sifeen* and *Al Nahrawan*.

Another common way of using poetry in authoring is the question-answer books, a trend which expanded on later stages⁵. The aim was to use a rhetoric appealing way of expressing *Fiqh* opinions. Full *fiqh* books were written in this style such as *Kitab Bahjat Al Majalis* by Shaikh Khlfan bin Jumayel Al Siyabi and *Al Fiqh fi Itar Al Adab* by Abi Surour Abdullah bin Humaid Al Jami'e.

Commentary expansion in *'Aqidah* issues: It is found that those four scholars (Shaikh Ja'ed bin Khamis, his son Nasser, Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili and Abu Muslim Al Bahlani) expanded commentary in some *'Aqidah* issues as a response to the Wahabi invasion of Oman and the conversion of many Omanis to Wahabism as a result of fear and desire. A lot of debates took place and much skepticism was casted on the foundation of Ibadi *'Aqidah* principles. Those four scholars took it on them to explain and counter the sceptics of Ibadi *'Aqidah* principles.

⁵ See for example: Al Khalili, Said, *Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili* 1/165, 1/187.

Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili for example expanded commentary on the issue of seeing Allah and his commentary runs to about thirty pages. He stated the evidences used by the opposition from the Quran and Sunnah and refuted every single claim of them⁶. Shaikh Abu Muslim Al Bahlani on the other hand expanded commentary on the issue of Quran createdness in his *Nithar Al Jawhar* using many Quranic and Hadith evidence to support his opinion that the Quran is created.⁷

Second: Tendency toward Rationalism:

There is no doubt that Islamic Sharia, especially in *'Aqidah* issues, is based on conclusive evidence from Quran and Sunnah. Rational is used only on what is perceivable such as knowing the existence of Allah and His attributes. Sheikh Al Khalili emphasized this opinion and said: *"One thing that must be believed in once it occurs to the mind is knowing the existence of Allah and knowing His attributes after knowing His existence ..."*⁸

During the 18th and 19th centuries AD, those scholars expanded on the use of rational evidence in *'Aqidah* issues driven and supported by extensive reading in philosophical sciences, besides their strong mental capabilities. They critically read and scrutinized what other Muslim philosophers wrote such as Abu Hamid Al Gazali. Al Khalili for example after reading Al Gazali's book rejected al-Gazali's attempt to prove the possibility of seeing Allah by using a claimed incident of

⁶ Al Khalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili 1/165, 1/187. See also: Al Khalili, Said, Tamheed Qawa'ed Al Lyman, 1/262-286.

⁷ Al Bahlani, Abu Muslim, Nithar Al jawhar, 1/92-98

⁸ Al Kkalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili, 1/79.

angel Jibril being seen in the picture of Dihyat Al Khalbi, and said: *"This man compared Allah with angels which is wrong, as Allah is not a comparable entity"*⁹.

This rational trend helped those scholars to reject some stories that were attributed to the Prophet (MPBUH) whenever they felt they contradict logic reasoning. Shaikh Nasser bin Abi Nabhan for example denied the idea of the torment of the grave and blessings¹⁰ despite many evidences from the Sunnah. In fact the abundance of evidence on the torment of the grave led some scholars to categorize the idea as *Mutawatir Manawi* (successive reporting of the same concept over time), and one of those was Al Imam Noor Al Deen Al Salmi in his Anwar Al 'Uqul, where he said"

*"and then the torment of the grave, you shall understand that stories have been successfully reported ... and you shall believe in it as a truth and do not look at other possibilities"*¹¹

Shaikh Nasser's denial of the torment of the grave, besides being a difficult to imagine, was the absence of evidence from the Quran or absolute evidence from the Sunnah. He further thinks that Quranic evidence actually says the opposite; a dead person is resurrected only on the Day of Judgment as per the verse :*"They will say, "Our Lord, You made us lifeless twice and gave us life twice, and we have confessed our sins. So is there to an exit any way?"* Ghafer:11. The common opinion of Ibadi scholars though is that the torment of the grave is true, but they don't shun opposing opinions¹².

⁹ Al Kkalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili, 1/163.

¹⁰ Al Kkalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili, 1/216.

¹¹ Al Salmi, Noor Al Deen, Mashariq Anwar Al Oqool, p.355

¹² See: Al Salmi, Noor Al Deen, Mashariq Anwar Al Oqool, p.358, Al Khalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili 1/220

Another example of rational justification is Shakh Nasser bin Abi Nabhan's rejection of the Hadith that says some Prophets are alive in the heavens and that Adam is alive in the heaven of this life and is presented with the deeds of his descendants. Shaikh Nasser said: "This is not possible. They are dead in this earth and they are not different that the prophet Mohammed MPBUH".

Shaikh Nasser also rejected the story of prophet Issa's (Jesus) second coming at the end of time, and the Mahdi's prophecy, despite the narrated hadiths such as the one narrated by Al Bukhari and others from Abu Huraira that the Prophet (MPBUH) said:

"The Hour will not be established until the son of Mary (i.e. Jesus) descends amongst you as a just ruler, he will break the cross, kill the pigs, and abolish the Jizya tax. Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it (as charitable gifts)."¹³

There is also another Hadith narrated by Abi Said Al Khudari that the Prophet (MPBUH) said: "The Hour shall not be established until the earth is filled with injustice and tyranny, and then a man from my house will rise up and fill the earth with as much justice as there was injustice"¹⁴.

However, Shaikh Nassr rejected these Hadiths casting doubt on their credibility and said: "I believe that the second coming of Jesus and the rise of the Mahdi are not true and there is no explicit or implicit evidence on that from the Quran, Sunnah or logic. After all why would they be resurrected? Why would they be resurrected together?"

¹³ Al Bukari, Mohammed, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadith No. 2476

¹⁴ Ibn Habban, Abu Hatim, Sahih Ibn Habban, Hadith No. 6823

The teachings of the prophet are clear like the sun. If the resurrection is meant to distinguish between the right and the wrong and if the right is not possible to be identified without their guidance, how would Allah leave the followers of Prophet Mohammed in their divide and chaos since the day the companions disagreed till the day of Jesus and Mahdi resurrection?

Many of Allah's servants want to worship Him with the right religion and Allah leaves them in their aberrance. The benefit of resurrecting the prophet Mohammed becomes pointless except for himself and his companions who died before the divide of the companions. And if the right truth is clear and known why would Jesus and the Mahdi be resurrected?

From whatever angle you look at it, you find it wrong. And Allah knows better.¹⁵

Third: Tendency toward Sufism:

Sufism emerged in the second century after Hijra as an independent and established movement with its own principles and terminology, focusing on cleansing one's self, drawing closer to Allah and dedicating worship for Him. Like most widespread movements, Sufism branched out to other sub-schools and despite sharing common objectives; some practices were overtaken by extremism.

There is no doubt that Sufism's ultimate goal is the cleansing of the soul and dedication of self to Allah, which is the essence of Islam that has been narrated in

¹⁵ Al Kkalili, Said, Ajwibat Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili, 1/202.

both Quran and Sunnah. For example in the Hadith Qudsi: "...And the most beloved thing with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (voluntary prayers or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) until I love him, (so much so that) I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me something, I will surely give him, and if he seeks My Protection (refuge), I will surely protect him ..."¹⁶, and this Hadith is at the core foundation of Sufism.

If we also go back to what the prophet's (PBUH) companions were described with, we find that they were described as "monks of the night", apart from being knights of the day, and this became the essence of Sufism. Ibadis however define sufism in a different original way such as what Abu Hamza Al Shari described his companions: "... young but followed the path of the wise elders, their eyes blinded from evil, their feet are heavy to walk the path of wrong doings, dedicated to worship and in love with late hours of the night. They gave away their souls that may die tomorrow in exchange for eternal souls. Allah looks upon them in the hollowness of the night and sees their bodies bent over their copies of the Quran, and if they happen to read any verse about heaven, they would cry longing for it, and if they read a verse about hell they would gasp as if the hellish fires are breathing in their ears. Earth has eaten their knees, hands, noses and foreheads, and they know no rest whether at day or night,

¹⁶ Al Bukhari, Mohammed, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadith No. 6502

their bodies have turned yellow and withered from long standing and fasting. They do all this for the sake of their promise to Allah. However, if they see the arrows, spears and swords of the enemy approaching and the thunder of war calls out, they take the fear of legions lightly for the sake of their reward from Allah; they never take the promise of Allah lightly in fear of legions of the enemy. They take spears and arrows heads on with their chests and faces. A young man (such as them) moves ahead with his head high and when he falls down and the earth dirties his handsome face and the birds and predators prey on his body ...”¹⁷

However, the relation between Ibadis and Sufism was barely notable with the early Ibadi scholars; there are no books on Sufism and they didn't use Sufi terminology in their books. This relationship thrived though in the 18th century with many scholars such as Shaikh Ja'ed and his son Nasser, Al Mohaqiq Al Khalili and Abu Muslim Al Bahlani embracing Sufism and producing some of the most influential and hard core Sufism writings. The contributions of those scholars can be summed up in the following:

Books: Those four scholars added a number of rich books in Sufism and behavioral science (*'ilm al-suluk*), most famous of which are:

¹⁷ Safwat, Ahmed Zaki, Jamharat Khutab Al Arab, 2/469-476

1. Commentary on *Hayat Al Mohaj* poem and the poem itself by Shaikh Ja'ed bin Khamis Al Kharusi: *Hayat Al Mohaj* poem is a lengthy poem in sufism and behaviors, and starts with:

My brothers in Allah listen to me,

as I am always advising for the Sake of Allah till He is pleased.

2. Other poems of Shaikh Ja'ed: He wrote other poems in sufism, and one of them starts with:

The sun of the enlightened is above all,

and they are abstinent from the love of anything but Allah

3. *Al Nawamees Al Rahmaniya fi Tasheel Turuq Ela oloum ArRabaniya*, a book by Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili. This book was described by Shaikh Khalfan Al Harthi as: "This book tackles issues of knowledge acquisition tools. He started by talking about the brain and the beneficial food and drugs. After that the book talks about the secrets of verses, prayers and divine names of Allah. In doing so, Shaikh Said quotes *Al Antaki*, *Al Ghazali*, *Al Boni* and others¹⁸.

4. *Iydah Nudum AsSoluk Ela Hadarat Malik AIMolok* by Shaikh Nasser bin Ja'ed Al Kharusi in which he gives extensive commentary on *Ibn Al Faridh's* "T rhyming" poem in Sufism, a lengthy poem that runs to about 759 lines, and starts with:

¹⁸ Al Harthi, Khalfan, Fiqh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili p.56

Yes, my heart has longed for my beloved...

This book was printed in 2011 in 786 pages with an introduction by Dr. Waleed Mahmood Khalis. This is a valuable and unique book that reflects deep understanding and knowledge of Shaikh Nasser.

5. Poems of Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili in Sufism and behavior:

Shaikh Said Al Harthi says: “He wrote many poems in the divine love, supplication, prayer, motivation and guidance to the path of the enlightened”¹⁹. Some of the poems are very lengthy; one of them runs to 220 lines. Shaikh Abu Muslim Al Bahlani did *Takhmis* (extension of a poem line by adding one and a half line to an existing line) of one of those poems.

6. Poems of Abu Muslim Al Bahlani in Sufism: Lengthy poems that can reach to 1000 lines. The total number of lines in prayer poems of Abu Muslim reached about 5500 lines²⁰, which can be considered a full book on their own. Dr. Mohamed Nasser says about these poems: “All these poems can be categorized under the supplication, because they were simply written for this purpose as can be seen in the introductions. The author puts forward a certain behavior before and during the poems which means he used to practice a certain ritual. He

¹⁹ Al Harthi, Khalfan, Fiqh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili p.69

²⁰ Nasser, Dr. Mohammed, Abu Muslim Al Rawahi Hassan Oman p.39

would prepare himself by Ablution, supplication and prayer at midnight.

The poem lines would flow in his tongue and he uses them to call upon his creator in moments of spiritual highness and emotional fulfillment”²¹

Uniqueness of Ibadis Sufism: Despite embracing, practicing and writing in Sufism, those scholars did not follow that path blindly without critique. In fact, they created their own Sufism as Dr. Waleed Khalis says: “It is important to note that, in embracing Sufism, those Omani scholars and poets chose only what aligns with their *Aqidah* and sect principles. We did hint to this earlier. That is why they used the concept of *Suluk* not *Holol* or *Wihdat AlWojood* (unity of existence) or other concepts embraced by some Sufis. Ibn Al Faridh in fact himself falls under a conservative group that keeps the Quran and Sunnah always a super guide. Omani scholars and poets expressed interest in Al Faridh’s works because they share common foundations objectives”²²

This uniqueness can be summed up in the following:

Their definition of Sufism: Those scholars defined Sufism in a unique way that moves away from extremism, trying to repel the stereotype that had become a norm. They stressed that Sufism in its essence calls for good and virtue, and all impurities have to be ruled out. Shaikh Nasser bin Ja’ed said: “A person shall not overlook

²¹ Nasser, Dr. Mohammed, Abu Muslim Al Rawahi Hassan Oman p.39-40

²² Khalis, Dr. Waleed, Iyadah Nudum Al Soluk, p.32

Sufism; even if he couldn't reach its peak he should pray and supplicate with whatever is possible to him. Sufism cannot be achieved by roaming the lands, but by the dedication to Allah in everything and following the straight path. Then a person needs to ask Allah and supplicate by abandoning bad habits and traits and embracing the steps of Iman after completing the mandatory prayers and worships ...”²³

Sufism doesn't mean solitude and escape from other religious duties, and it doesn't mean monasticism; it is rather a state of the heart that a Muslim tries to deepen by drawing closer to Allah through prayers and supplications. This is clearly noted by Shaikh Nasser bin Abi Nabhan when he said: “You should know that supplications to Allah is the tool of Sufism and it works even if a person sleeps with four women at night, righteously fight the infidels during the day, helps people and works in Sharia; all of this can't spoil Sufism. No one knows that a person is Sufi without a revelation from Allah or by direct hearing from the mouth of a prophet as Sufism is a hidden state in the heart. Naming someone 'Sufi' on the basis of outlooks is allowed ...”²⁴

This precise understanding of the essence of religion and Sufism is what is clearly referred to by many verses of the Holy Quran and many Hadiths. In the days of the prophet Mohammed (MPBUH) some people misunderstood religion for

²³ Al Kharusi, Nasser, *Iyadah Nudum Al Soluk*, p.482

²⁴ Al Kharusi, Nasser, *Iyadah Nudum Al Soluk*, p.485

monasticism but the prophet explained to them that religion is not about solitude and worship only. Anas bin Malik said: "Thus, it has been narrated that a group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (MPBUH) asking how the Prophet (MPBUH) worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said: "Where are we in comprise to the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven." Then one of them said: "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said: "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said: "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." Allah's Messenger (MPBUH) came to them and said: "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers)."²⁵

This definition and conception of Sufism by these scholars is not theoretical but had been their way of living, despite having been very active in political, social and intellectual life. Sufism didn't restrain them from engaging in life activities. Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili was the strongest pillar of the Imamate of Azzan bin Qais Al Busaidi; he was the one backing the Imam, the one who appointed him and the one who fought his wars and battles until he got killed for the sake of his principles.

²⁵ Al Bukhari, Mohammed, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadith No. 5063

Shaikh Ja'ed bin Khamis and his son were very active in political, social and intellectual life in their days. This is evident in their multidisciplinary books; Shaikh Ja'ed himself left behind more than 20 books.

On the other hand, Abu Muslim Al Bahlani played a critical role in the intellectual renaissance in Zanzibar and his newspaper (Al Falaq) was one of the first Arabic newspapers at that time. He printed a number of books and his deep devotion to Sufism didn't withhold him from writing poetry in other fields such as praise, ghazal, humor and obituary.

Sufism terminology: Those four scholars used in their books and poems many Sufi terms. Dr. Sharifa Al Yahyai said: "The pioneering of Al Khalili in Sufi poetry made his poems a reservoir of Sufi terminology, a rich pool for research on Sufi language. Moreover, his poems acquired some linguistic alienness as a result of the deep connection with Sufism literature and this influence is demonstrated in complex structures, a common feature of Sufi poetry. He was also influenced by Ibn Al Faridh, one of the most prominent Sufi poets"²⁶. However, they also tried to avoid misleading terms, such as the word 'Sufi' itself and replaced it with 'Soluk' which denotes the objective of this movement, to reach to the ultimate understanding of Allah and His attributes and get His blessings.

²⁶ Al Yahyaiya, Sharifa, Al Shaikh Said bin Khalfan Al Khalili, Doyen of Sufi Poetry in Oman, p.3
Sharifa bint Khalfan Al yahiyai for Saidi, Fahad, Mujam Al Fuqaha wal Mutaklmeen Al Ibadia 3/240-247

Holding on to the Ibadi 'Aqidahh: The Sufi movement emerged and grew in non-Ibadi cultures and no Ibadi scholar wrote on this field before those four who remained rooted and firmly holding their Ibadi 'Aqidah principles. Whenever they felt something contradicting the Ibadi 'Aqidah, they would promptly reject it and rectify it. Two examples of this are:

- **The meaning of (unity) with Allah in Sufism:** One of the extreme thoughts of Sufism is the actual unity between the creator and the created, which is claimed to happen when a person rises high in love and closeness to Allah. However, Shaikh Nasser bin Ja'ed explains that Sufism (or the correct Sufism) doesn't actually mean so²⁷. What it actually means is not a unity of entities but rather of attributes, as a believer takes on the attributes of Allah when he draws closer to Him. With this explanation, Shaikh Nasser may be referring to the hadith: "And the most beloved thing with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (voluntary prayers or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) until I love him, (so much so that) I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me something, I will

²⁷ Al Kharusi, Nasser, *Iyadah Nudum Al Soluk*, p.315

surely give him, and if he seeks My Protection (refuge), I will surely protect him"²⁸

- **Seeing Allah:** Ibadis believe that Allah cannot be seen by the eye sight in this world or in the after life. The common Sunni opinion is that Allah can be seen, and most of them agree that this seeing happen only in the after life as a reward for believers. When Ibadis faced the paradox of seeing Allah with the eye sight, they were firm about their opinion and emphasized that whatever revelation happens is only a revelation of His attributes. Shaikh Nasser bin Ja'ed said in the context of explaining the concept of seeing Allah in this life and the life after: "It is not Allah's entity that will be seen, it is only His attributes. In the after life, paradise dwellers will have Allah always with them, and they will feel His mighty presence and His attributes, but they won't be seeing His entity. In the same context, Shaikh Abu Nabhan said: "they feel His attributes in their hearts. In the after life the sighting of Allah is conceived by the mind just like the prophet (MPBUH) sees Allah in his mind all the time and sees His attributes not His entity ... and some people believe in seeing Allah's entity which is not possible and not right to believe. Allah's entity is and will not be

²⁸ Al Bukhari, Mohammed, Sahih Al Bukhari, Hadith No. 6502

conceived or seen by anyone but Allah only, and not even prophets or angels can do that. It is just impossible and believing otherwise is a delusion”²⁹.

And he also said: “i swear that ultimate joy in paradise is to comprehend the attributes of Allah not seeing Him by the eye. Seeing Allah is something that we reject anyway. When we say ‘seeing’ we mean the presence of the mind with Allah and seeing his attributes”³⁰.

Conclusion

This paper concludes with the following findings:

1. A considerable development has been witnessed in theology (*‘Ilm Al Kalam*) with the Ibadis in the 18th and 19th centuries AD, in terms of the style or writing and expansion in the issues that have not been touched by other Ibadi scholars in Oman before.
2. The authoring style in *Ilm Al Kalam* saw some development with the use of more expressive and rhetoric force.
3. Poetry was used to refute the opinions of the opposition in ‘Aqidah issues.
4. Some scholars expanded their commentary in some ‘Aqidah issues and in response to opposing opinions.
5. Many scholars wrote on *Ilm Al Suluk* (Sufism) whether in poetry or in prose.

²⁹ Al Kharusi, Nasser, *lydah Nudum Al Soluk*, p.328-329

³⁰ Al Kharusi, Nasser, *lydah Nudum Al Soluk*, p.136

6. The writing on Suluk (Sufism) was done with due consideration of Ibadi 'Aqidah principles, and without deviating from the founding principles of the Ibadi school.

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