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BERBERS AND BLACKS: IBĀDĪ SLAVE TRAFFIC IN EIGHTH-CENTURY NORTH AFRICA

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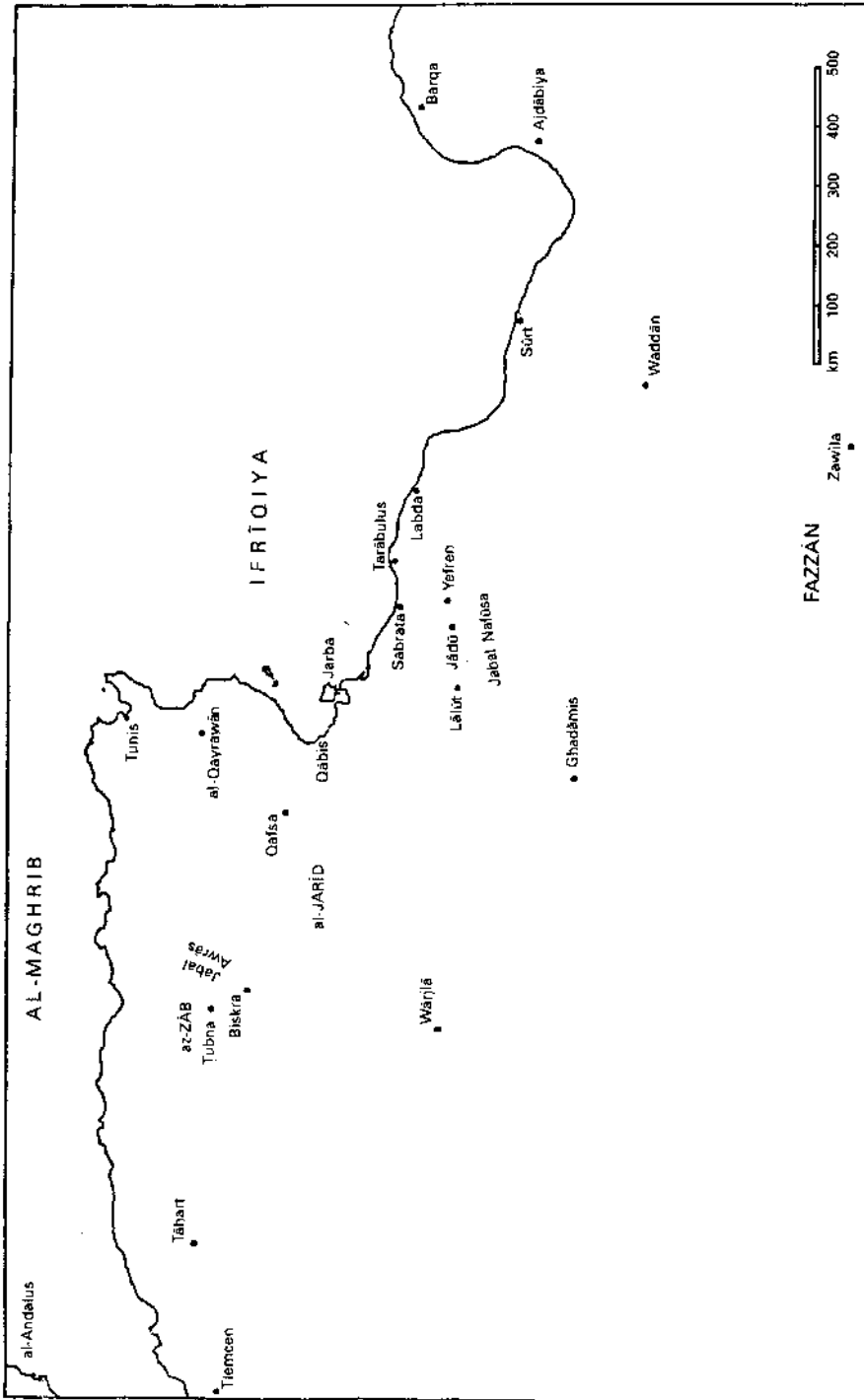
THE explosive expansion of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries spilled westward across North Africa in a series of military campaigns by Arab forces. Initial sorties gave way to methodical occupation which sought to control urban centres in the name of the caliph. Among the fruits of these campaigns and the subsequent occupation was a steady flow of booty, a large proportion of which consisted of slaves seized from the indigenous Berber population. After decades of such predation, many Berbers nevertheless adopted Islam. What appealed to them was not the mainstream Islam of the Caliphs but rather an opposing sectarian form known as Ibadism.

As Muslim Ibādī-s, the Berbers, though later routed by the caliph's armies, nevertheless succeeded in transforming their status from slaves to slavers. Between the end of the seventh century and the middle of the eighth they created a trading network that tapped the regions south of the Sahara, the Bilād al-Sūdān, as a new source for slaves. By monopolizing the supply of black slaves as well as the means by which they reached markets in North Africa, Ibādī Berber traders created a secure economic base throughout the eastern and central Maghrib.¹

The seed of this North African community came from the very heartland of Islam. As the early Islamic empire took root outside the Arab peninsula in Iraq and beyond in the seventh century, some Muslims questioned the legitimacy of the Umayyad caliphs. Authority, they argued, should be entrusted to the most qualified of Muslims and not be the preserve of a single family. Most notable and extreme among the opposition were the Khawārij. More moderate in their opposition were the Ibādiyya who, as a group, became gradually recognizable in Baṣra by the end of the seventh century.² Over the next fifty years even their moderate sectarianism caused them difficulties with the governing authorities, particularly as the Iraqi milieu grew increasingly fractious. Seeking more fertile ground for their views, the Baṣran Ibādī community sent out missionaries to the four quarters. Those who went west (c. 757-8) found eager acceptance among the Berbers of Ifrīqiya, for whom the Ibādī message of man's equality before God provided a theological shield against the military excesses of the Arab conquest.

¹ Modern scholarship on the Ibādiyya has for the most part remained marginal. Their heyday in North Africa is generally equated with the rise and fall of the Rustamid Imamate of Tāhart (763-909), after which their sect all but fades from view. Although the community has persisted to the present day, its low political profile accounts for its obscurity in non-Ibādī writings. What scholarship there is tends to draw heavily and often uncritically from Ibādī sources, which represent as much a sectarian tradition as a historical account.

² J. C. Wilkinson, 'The early development of the Ibādī movement in Baṣra', in G. H. A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies in the First Centuries of Islamic Society* (Carbondale, 1982), 135.



Map 1. Ifriqiya and environs, c. 8th century

The origins of the slave trade from North Africa to the central Islamic regions lay in the Arab conquest. The demand for slaves still remained even after the end of the conquest and was a demand that North African merchants soon came to fill. Whatever the initial political and religious appeal of Ibādī opposition to the Arab conquest,³ the movement found its subsequent economic footing by meeting the ever-growing demand for labor with slaves from the Bilād al-Sūdān. From the outset, this replacement was influenced strongly, if not instigated, by Ibādī merchant-shaykhs until they made the slave trade a predominantly Ibādī monopoly from the mid-eighth century onwards. The Ibādī community's wealth and security also provided the means for its emergence and expansion as a sect among the diverse Berber tribes,⁴ which was the beginning of their subsequent, far-flung network of trans-Saharan commerce.

At first, it might seem a massive irony that the African slave trade was the preserve of Ibādī-s, whose sectarian appeal to North African Berbers, as has been stressed by more than one historian,⁵ was based on their belief in man's equality before God. Clearly, this was not 'equality' in the late-twentieth-century sense. In the context of the late eighth century, 'man's equality' extended only to members of the Muslim community. Questions over membership in the community were often the cause of sectarian dispute. The early Baṣran and Kūfan merchants who filtered down into the Saharan fringes were more interested in the practical matter of filling a market need that called upon their talents and experience as long-distance traders. Trade was a laudable pursuit, seen as a service to one's fellow man, not devoid of religious value.⁶ This extended to supplying him with slaves.

Demand for North African slaves lay primarily in the east, where they were sold for different purposes in the markets of the central Islamic lands. The best known historically were the female singers, *qayna*, who entertained the caliphs themselves. Though the majority of slaves was barely noticed by history, an eleventh-century writer, Ibn Buṭlān, wrote about the singers that the ideal slave was a Berber woman who from the age of nine had spent three years in Madina, three in Mecca and then nine in Iraq.⁷ What he was

³ For other factors contributing to the appeal and rapid spread of Ibadism among Berber Christians and tribes see E. Savage, 'Early medieval Ifrīqiya, a reassessment of the Ibādiyya' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1990), 182-262.

⁴ For the eighth century it is difficult to differentiate the indigenous Berbers except into very broad categories such as the Luwāta, Nafūsa, Hawāra and Mazāta, as well as some less-known groups. I refer to them as categories because affiliation would appear to have been not always genealogical but geographical or even political. For more on this, see Savage, 'Early medieval Ifrīqiya', 219-62.

⁵ E.-F. Gautier, *Le passé de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, 1952), 289; J. M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge, 1987), 37; M. and E. Gouvion, *Le Kharidjisme* (Casablanca, 1926), 34.

⁶ This attitude of the majority of Muslims is succinctly expressed in the saying attributed by Shaybānī and others to Muḥammad: 'Poverty is almost like apostasy'. See C. C. Torrey, 'The commercial-theological terms in the Koran' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Strasburg, 1892), 1-5; J. de Somogyi, 'Trade in the Qur'an and ḥadīth', *The Muslim World*, LII (1962), 110-14.

⁷ Ch. Pellat, citing Mukhtār b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Buṭlān's *Risālah jāmi'ah li-funūn nāfi'ah fi shira'l-raḡiq wa-taglib al-'abīd* (Cairo, 1954), in 'Qayna', *Encyclopedia of Islam* [hereafter EI] (6 vols., new ed.) (Leiden, 1978), IV, 823.

referring to was the intensive training girls were given in these places in both music⁸ and literature.⁹ Though some Berber women became famous singers, they were also highly regarded for housework, sexual relations and child-bearing. Black women were thought to be docile, robust and excellent wet-nurses.¹⁰ Women slaves as well as men were trained as cooks,¹¹ while male slaves worked domestically as store-keepers, porters, boatmen and even keepers of private libraries.¹²

Although there are no known references to slaves from the sub-Sahara used as agricultural labor, it does not seem unlikely that some were pressed into such work.¹³ This inference seems particularly likely in view of the early eighth-century draining of the salt marshes around Baṣra.¹⁴ These fertile plains in southern Iraq were subject to frequent flooding.¹⁵ Draining them not only alleviated the problem but provided a rich source of income from sale of the grains that would be harvested from them.¹⁶

Economically, the productivity of these estates and the maintenance of the drainage systems and canals¹⁷ demanded far more labor than could be supplied by the indigenous peasantry. Al-Ṭabarī describes gangs not only of 500–5,000 working in the Baṭīḥa but as many as 15,000 in the fields of al-Ahwāz, a port city of Baṣra.¹⁸ Working without reward, penned, homeless

⁸ Well-known artists gave lessons at the houses of great slave dealers. Abū'l-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (20 vols.) (Bulaq, 1285/1868–9), xxii, 43.

⁹ Early centres of such training were found in Mecca and Madīna and subsequently were equalled by Baṣra. Ch. Pellat, 'Ḳayna'. Cf. Zaydān, *Tarīkh al-Tammaddūn al-Islāmī* (4 vols.) (Cairo, 1902–5), iv, 44. The Baṣran poet, al-Jāhīz (d. 869), described an accomplished singing girl as having a repertoire of some 4,000 songs amounting to 10,000 verses. Such training represented a considerable investment, the return from which came later. As sources of income, these slaves, for a price, entertained in a society where women were otherwise strictly secluded. The owners of these singers, to paraphrase al-Jāhīz, sold the gusty wind for solid ore and pieces of silver and gold. A. Beeston, *The Epistle on Singing-girls of Jāhīz* (Warminster, 1980), 36. See also Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb*, xxii, 43.

¹⁰ A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. K. Bakhsh (Patna, 1937), 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 161.

¹² Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Baihaqī, *al-Mahāsin wa'l-Masāwi'*, ed. F. Schwally (Leipzig, 1902), 613; Zaydān, *Tarīkh*, ii, 104.

¹³ For the treatment of the peasants as slaves, see P. Forrand, 'The status of the land and inhabitants of the Sawād during the first two centuries of Islam', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xiv (1971), 33–5.

¹⁴ M. Morony, 'Landholding and social change: lower al-'Irāq in the early Islamic period', in T. Khalidi (ed.), *Land Tenure and Social Transformations in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1984), 210ff.

¹⁵ 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kamil fī al-Ta'rikh*, ed. C. Tornberg (14 vols.) (Leiden, 1851–76), vii, 510; ix, 159.

¹⁶ Qudāma b. Ja'far stated that a freedman of the caliph Mu'āwiya gained an annual income of five million dirhams. The work of drainage continued into the 'Abbāsīd period, Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj wa Ṣan'at al-Kitābah*, in *Bibliotheca geographorum arabicarum* [hereafter *BGA*] (8 vols.) (Leiden, 1889), vi, 181–2, as cited by H. Q. al-Sāmarrā'ī, 'Agriculture in Iraq during 3rd/9th century' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971), 57.

¹⁷ Baṣra is described by early geographers as a veritable Venice, with mile after mile of canals criss-crossing the gardens and orchards. A. al-Duri, *Ta'rikh al-'Iraq al-Iqtisādī* (Baghdad, 1948), 26, 28.

¹⁸ Baṣra had a famous slave market, *Sūq al-Rāqīq* or *Sūq al-Nakhhāsīn* (vendors of slaves), which was located in the *Sūq Bab Yāmi'* on the western side of the city and was adjacent to the money changers, book sellers and retailers of textiles. A. J. Naji and Y. N.

and hopeless they did the work of peasants and were treated like cattle.¹⁹ Just as the slaves did the work of peasants, the indigenous peasants were little better than slaves, tied to the land and so passed along also to new owners upon its sale.²⁰

Out of this misery emerged slave revolts, the best known of which was that of 869, usually referred to as the Zanj Revolt.²¹ But there had been earlier slave uprisings in the late 750s and 770s. Although the term 'zanj' initially referred to black slaves from East Africa, it seems plausible that as an appellation it soon came to have a wider connotation of those black slaves working in the marshy regions of southern Iraq. That is, the tens of thousands²² of black slaves working there may not all have originated from East Africa; some may also have been imported from the Bilād as-Sūdān. Such an interpretation seems possible when considering the often general use of the term, Zanj, as an insulting epithet²³ and the vagueness of early geographers about the origins of the slaves it denoted. The earliest geographer's reference found in Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) is possibly borrowed from Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728-9 or 732-3). His is the first reference to the peoples of the Sudan, among whom he counts the Zanj, Zaghāwa and Berber.²⁴ While subsequent geographers by the tenth century made a distinction among the African peoples, accompanied by a fictitious genealogy,²⁵ others like al-Mas'ūdī include the Zanj among the people of the Sudan,²⁶ and al-Istakhri (d. 951) describes the Sudan as the source for the black slaves sold in the Islamic countries.

It is small wonder that the demand for slaves was great. With such potential profit in sight, it is not surprising that gullible customers were sometimes duped by slave dealers whom al-Kindī thus reviles:

How many brown girls of impure coloring have been sold as gold blonde! How many decrepit ones as sound! How many stodgy ones as slim and slender! They paint blue eyes black, yellow cheeks red, ... remove the hair from the cheek ... How often then has a boy been mistakenly purchased for a girl!²⁷

All the important towns had their own slave markets.²⁸ The ninth-century geographer, al-Ya'qūbī, described the slave market in Samarra as a vast quadrilateral with internal alleys and one-storey houses containing rooms

'Alī, 'The suqs of Basra: commercial organization and activity in a medieval Islamic city', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xxiv (1981), 307.

¹⁹ Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, Annales quos scripsit Abu Djaḥar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (15 vols.) (Batavia, 1879-1901), iii, 1742, 1748, 1750-1; Abū Yūsuf, Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm (d. 798), *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Cairo, 1352/1933), 17. ²⁰ al-Sāmarrā'i, 'Agriculture in Iraq', 84.

²¹ A. Popovic, *La révolte des esclaves en Iraq au III^e siècle* (Paris, 1976).

²² B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York, 1990), 56.

²³ *Ibid.* 32, 52.

²⁴ The Zaghāwa, it should be noted, were one of those southern Saharan peoples whom the Berbers transported as slaves. Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb ibn Wādiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, 'Kitāb al-Buldān', trans. G. Wiet, in *Collection de textes d'auteurs orientaux* (Cairo, 1937), 205.

²⁵ Cf. Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 55.

²⁶ J. F. Hopkins and N. Levtzion (eds. and trans.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge, 1981), 35. ²⁷ Mez, *Renaissance of Islam*, 160.

²⁸ Baiḥaqī, *al-Mahasīn*, 616. For Kūfa's market, see Shams al-Dīn al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rīfat al-Aqālim* (Leiden, 1906), iii, 117.

and shops.²⁹ There the majority of slaves were sold, although the specially trained were purchased at private houses or through a specialist dealer.³⁰ While slaves from Eastern Africa³¹ and India³² came to the Iraqi market by sea, those from the west came overland by way of Syria³³ as well as from the Hijaz during the pilgrimage season, when commerce with Berbers from North Africa was particularly active.³⁴

Why such a movement of enslaved people is unnoticed as such by the sources is a problem. Certainly slaves are cited from the time of the Prophet onwards. But these examples refer to skilled slaves, beautiful slaves, slaves with fine voices and memories or slaves with power. The unskilled mass who worked in the pestilential climate of southern Iraq hardly would have been noticed. Reflecting the urban civilization of Islam, Muslim writers barely mention rural life, except for the occasional glimpses of revolt. Thus, as Bernard Lewis has recently suggested, the picture we have of slavery as largely domestic or military may reflect the bias of the sources rather than the reality.³⁵

The demand for North African slaves in eastern markets was initially fed by captives from the conquest.³⁶ Later, slaves were either levied by taxation³⁷ or purchased. After the second half of the eighth century, buying slaves in markets increasingly became the main source. In the late 640s during the early Arab conquest, once the initial reluctance to drive deeper into North Africa was overcome,³⁸ the caliphs and Arab generals found ample reason to

²⁹ Ahmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb ibn Wādih al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, BGA, vii, 258–63; *ibid.*, *Kitāb al-Buldān. Le livre de pays, collection de textes et translations d'auteurs orientaux publiée par l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Cairo*, trans. G. Wiet (Cairo, 1937), 52.

³⁰ Ahmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Miskawayh, *Kitāb Tajārib al-Uman*, trans. H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth (7 vols.) (Oxford, 1920), vi, 391.

³¹ Merchants went as far as Sofala (Mozambique) in search of slaves and gold. 'Alī b. Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, eds. B. de Meynard and P. de Courteille (9 vols.) (Paris, 1861–77), iii, 6; Anon., *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, ed. and trans. V. Minorsky (Oxford, 1937), 165. See also J. C. Wilkinson, 'Oman and East Africa', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies*, xiv (1981), 278–9, 281.

³² During the Umayyad period, slaves were imported from the Sind valley and were known as *zitt*. Ahmad ibn Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Dūrī, Band 28 of *Bibliotheca Islamica* (32 vols.) (Wiesbaden, 1979), ii, 109–10.

³³ Al-Muḥassin ibn 'Alī at-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-Muhādara wa akhbār al-mudhākīrah*, ed. A. Shalchy (8 vols.) (Cairo, 1970), ii, 205. This traffic was so heavy that in 918 a ferry on the Euphrates brought the governor a revenue of 80,250 dinars. A. Duri, 'Studies on the economic life of Mesopotamia in the tenth century' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1942), 168.

³⁴ A. Duri citing al-Birūnī, *al-Jamāhir fi Ma'rifa al-Jawāhir*, ed. F. Krenkow (Hyderabad, 1955), 237–8; and Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Surāt al-Ard*, trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Beirut, 1964), 61. ³⁵ Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 14.

³⁶ Zaydān, *Ta'rikh*, iv, 42.

³⁷ That is, slaves were sent as part of a governor's revenue, a practice not restricted to North Africa. For example, 'Abdullah b. Tahir, governor of Khurasān (828–44), was said to have sent the Caliph 2,000 slaves annually. Ibn Khuradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, ed. de Goeje, in BJA, vi, 39. See also Zaydān, *Ta'rikh*, v, 39; Ibn Ḥawqal, *al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, ed. J. Kramers (Leiden, 1938), 482, 494.

³⁸ Several discouraging ḥadīth, no doubt apocryphal, are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad regarding North Africa, the conquest of which began fifteen years after his death. The most grim refers to Ifrīqiya as a gate to hell. These sayings were frequently cited by Muḥammad al-Marrākushi Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, trans. E. Fagnan

press ahead. First and foremost was profit, the great wealth to be wrested from the region, with the prescribed fifth being sent to the caliph. A ninth-century scholar, Zaydān, stated that the Arabs had viewed the conquests primarily as a way to acquire more slaves.³⁹ The first and best-known example of this quest for captives occurred in 643-4, when the Egyptian governor, 'Amr ibn al-'Aṣ, concluded a treaty with the Cyrenaican town, Barqa. He levied tribute set at 3,000 dinars, with the provision that they could sell what children they wished in order to fulfill these terms.⁴⁰

The Maghrib appeared a promised land, whose fertility⁴¹ and wealth⁴² were commented upon by chronicler and geographer alike.⁴³ Commanders seized fortunes, the caliphs received their shares and the subsequent opinions of the 'ulamā', solidifying later in the ninth century, legitimized it all. We shall consider the significance of this last historiographical point below.⁴⁴

(2 vols.) (Algiers, 1901-14), i, 1; cf. Al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, ed. and trans. M. de Slane (Algiers, 1913), 51; cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifriqiya wa'l-Andalus. Conquête de l'Afrique du Nord et de l'Espagne*, trans. A. Gateau (Algiers, 1947), 41.

The Ibādī-s, naturally, took a more positive view and cited various ḥadīth in favour of Berbers. Abū Zakariyā', Yahyā b. Abū Bakr al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb al-Sira wa Akhbar al-'Imma*, ed. and trans. E. Masqueray (Algiers, 1878), 6, 12, 18; M. A. Ageil, 'Naval policy and the rise of the fleet of Ifriqiyyah' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1985), 58.

³⁹ D. Pipes, 'Mawlas: freed slaves and converts in early Islam', in J. Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (2 vols.) (London, 1985), i, 168.

⁴⁰ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifriqiya*, 36; al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique*, 14. Ibn al-Athīr, *Tarīkh*, 7. Subsequent examples are found in Al-Nuwayrī's account (drawn from al-Zuhūrī) of 'Abd Allāh ibn Sā'd's 647 campaign against the Byzantine governor, George, when his victorious troops seized captives from Qafṣa; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-'Arab*, trans. M. de Slane, as a second appendix to his translation of *Histoire des Berbères* of Ibn Khaldūn (4 vols.) (Paris, 1978), i, 322. Again, in the 660s, during Mu'āwiya b. Khadij's raid on Jalūla, the children were seized and distributed along with the rest of the booty, of which a fifth was sent to the caliph. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 10; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, ii, 325-6; Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, i, 325; al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique*, 79.

⁴¹ It was called *al-khādra*, the verdant. E. Carrette, *Recherches sur l'origine et les migrations des principales tribus de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris, 1853), 318; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 27.

⁴² The source for this wealth is clearly stated by Ibn 'Idhārī in his *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 7, when Ibn Abū Sarḥ asked the Africans the source of their gold and silver. The Africans' reply was to hold up an olive pit and explain that sailors and landsmen both bought their oil there. See, too, D. J. Mattingly's study, which demonstrates that Tripolitania's wealth in Roman times was due largely to its production of olive oil: 'The olive boom: oil surpluses, wealth and power in Roman Tripolitania', *Libyan Studies*, xix (1988), 21ff.

⁴³ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, i, 314, 322, 331; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 10-11; Ibn Hawqal, 'Kitāb masālik wa'l-mamālik: les routes et les provinces', trans. M. de Slane, *Journal Asiatique*, xiii (1842), 252. The earliest detailed description is al-Bakrī's from the second half of the eleventh century. Among his sources, it is interesting to note, were two Ibādī-s: Abū Rustam from the Jabal Nafūsa and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik b. al-Nakhhās al-Garfā; Al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique*, 301, 337, 339. T. Lewicki, 'L'Afrique noire', *Africana Bulletin*, II (1965), 12-13. *Nakhhās*, incidentally, is a slave merchant. J. O. Hunwick, 'Black Africans in the Islamic world', *Tarīkh*, v (1978), 27.

⁴⁴ M. Talbi, in a careful analysis of the traditions preserved in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, al-Bakrī and Ibn al-Athīr, concluded that they dated to the period of Berber resistance in the eighth century and were created *ex nihilo* for the Arab cause; *L'émirate Aghlabide* (Paris,

The turning point of this military advance came in the campaigns of 'Uqba ibn Nāfi', who, according to time-honoured tradition, went into the very foam of the Atlantic in the 660s. 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' founded a capital in Ifrīqiya, Qayrawān. He then turned his attacks away from the Greco-Latin cities of the coast to drive deep into the interior of the Fazzān.

'Uqba's reasons for this inland campaign can only be surmised. The Fazzān was a prosperous area with a well-established population and culture going back to Roman times. His were the only campaigns to go beyond the littoral until fifty years later.⁴⁵ Unlike the earlier lightning strikes, 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' executed a systematic plan of conquest. Backed by military force, armed with a sense of religious superiority, it was he who established the Arab presence in Ifrīqiya. 'Uqba was recorded as extracting only one kind of tribute, slaves.

Slaves mentioned in this context, it should be noted, do not signify *black* Africans; black slaves from the sub-Sahara appear in North African markets only at the end of the seventh century. It is worth mentioning that their first use must have been either domestic or agricultural, since there is no mention of a 'black' military guard until the end of the ninth century.⁴⁶ In earlier periods, for example during the Third Punic War, the North Africans seized had been white Berbers. In fact, ancient Latin sources cite but six black slaves, and they were Ethiopians.⁴⁷ The Berbers whom 'Uqba captured were said to have been enslaved as a punishment for breaking faith with his predecessor, 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ. For this transgression, their enslavement was regarded as legally justified by the main-stream Islamic tradition.

In a familiar passage of the ninth-century historian, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, 'Uqba ibn Nāfi', in the course of his punitive progress in the 660s, exacted 360 slaves from Waddān, 360 from Fazzān, 360 from Jerma and finally the children of Kawār. Some scholars have interpreted this reference as indicating that Kawār was involved, at this early date, in trans-Saharan slave trading.⁴⁸ It seems less of a strain on the scant sources to conclude simply

1966), 26–31. This discussion is further developed by R. Brunschvig and M. Brett; see below n. 52. See also M. Brett's 'Islam in North Africa', in S. Sutherland (ed.), *The World's Religions* (London, 1988), 329–67.

⁴⁵ Consequently, I disagree with the Polish orientalist T. Lewicki's conclusion that 'Uqba's b. Nāfi's campaign was 'probably in order to open up the way for political and commercial expansion of the caliphate in the direction of the Lake Chad area'; T. Lewicki, *Arabic External Sources for the History of Africa to the South of the Sahara* (Warsaw, 1969), 19–20.

⁴⁶ This was created by the Aghlabid amir, Ibrahīm II, as a counterweight to the often wayward Arab military elite. M. Brett, 'The Arab conquest and the rise of Islam in North Africa', in J. D. Fage (ed.), *Cambridge History of Africa (from 500 BC to AD 1050)* (Cambridge, 1978), ii, 529; J. O. Hunwick, 'Black Africans', 30. According to al-Maqrīzī, his contemporary, Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn, had 40,000 blacks in his army; E. Ashtor, 'Un mouvement migratoire au haut Moyen Âge', *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*, xxvii (1972), 208.

⁴⁷ W. E. Boese, 'A study of the slave trade and the sources of slaves in the Roman Republic and the early Roman Empire' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1973), 85, 102, 122; M. Bang, 'Die Herkunft der römischen Sklaven', *Römische Mitteilungen*, xxv (1970), 229–30, 240–1; F. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, 1970), 184–6.

⁴⁸ T. Lewicki, 'Le Sahara oriental et septentrional dans le Haut Moyen Âge VIIIe–XIIe siècles', in Lewicki, *Études maghrébines* (2 vols.) (Warsaw, 1983), ii, 66–71;

that enslavement of one's enemies was a regular practice of the seventh and eighth centuries and that it continued even after the period of conquest.⁴⁹ The slaves 'Uqba marched back were drawn from Berber populations of the northern Sahara. Additionally, he captured other villages of the Fazzān, as well as Ghadāmis, Qafsa and Qastiliya.⁵⁰

Michael Brett has cautioned that this detailed account of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam should not be read too literally. In a careful analysis, Robert Brunschvig, followed by Brett, proposed that this account is a later, apocryphal legal justification of the enslavement of Muslim Berbers.⁵¹ Both scholars reach this conclusion by taking into account the strict Maliki milieu of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam in the late ninth century, when all schools had forbidden the enslavement of members of the *Dar al-Islam*. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam thus would have sought to excuse 'Uqba ibn Nāfi's enslavement of Muslim Berbers by depicting them as having broken faith, thereby clearly provoking the penalty of enslavement. The historiographic point is that, while the alleged offense may be fictive, the story nevertheless reflects a later *legal* justification for a practice well entrenched and of critical economic importance in the early days of Islam.⁵² In other words, while enslavement of Berbers by 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ in the 640s might have been justified on the basis of the conquest of non-Muslims, the same claim could no longer be made in later decades, after the enslaved Berbers had, in fact, accepted Islam.⁵³ The grain of truth may be that Berber slaves seized in war as punishment, as well as those enslaved for payment of the *jizya*,⁵⁴ figured prominently as tribute well past the earliest raids of 'Amr b. al-'As.⁵⁵

The early Arab conquerors and governors of the Maghrib made the most of what seemed an inexhaustible supply of slaves for oriental consumption.⁵⁶

K. Vikør, 'The early history of the Kawār Oasis: a southern border of the Maghrib or a northern border of the Sudan?', *Maghreb Review*, XII (1987), 79.

⁴⁹ Ibn 'Idhārī supplies us with examples such as the Aghlabid general, Khafadja b. Sufyān, who in 848 finally overcame a two-year revolt by Tunis, sacked the city and enslaved a great number of women; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, I, 141-2. Suffering the same fate, in 923, the Ibādī stronghold of Nafūsa was destroyed by the Fatimids, its men were killed, and the children and, presumably, the women were enslaved; *ibid.* 268.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiya*, 310-11.

⁵¹ A parallel argument has been lucidly developed by J. C. Wilkinson for the East African context; 'Oman and East Africa', 279-80.

⁵² M. Brett, 'The Arab conquest', 506; R. Brunschvig, 'Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord par les Arabes', *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales*, VI (1942-7), 137. See also Talbi, *L'émirat Aghlabide*, 23, 302.

⁵³ E. Savage, 'Ilm as the link to the past and future' (unpublished paper, Middle East Studies Association, San Antonio, 1990).

⁵⁴ *Jizya* was the tax or tribute levied by Muslim governments on their non-Muslim populations in exchange for the security of their property and the freedom to worship.

⁵⁵ 'Slave trade went hand in hand with the military expansion of early Islam. In fact, it was a big business of Arabian traders in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean area in the Pre-Islamic period'; S. Labib, 'Islamic expansion and slave trade in Medieval Africa', in *Mouvements de populations dans l'Océan Indien* (Saint-Denis de la Réunion, 4-9 August, 1972), 33; B. Lewis, 'The African diaspora and the civilization of Islam', in M. Kilson and R. Rotberg (eds.), *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays* (Cambridge, 1976), 40-1. Cf. D. Pipes, 'Mawlas: freed slaves and converts', 144ff.

⁵⁶ M. Talbi, *L'émirat Aghlabide*, 32-3. What caught the chronicler's eye was the demand for young women, *jawāri*. The propriety of owning slave women in addition to one's wives is touched upon by S. D. Goitein, who cites Shaybānī who pointed to the

A posting to the governorship of Ifrīqiya could be described only as 'good duty', associated, as it was, with great wealth, and jockeying for the position was undertaken at the highest levels.⁵⁷ Even after the 'conquest', when Ifrīqiya had its own caliph-appointed governor, the demand for slaves was still great.⁵⁸ They did their best to maintain the eastward flow of slaves,⁵⁹ checked only briefly by the reform-minded but short-lived caliph 'Umār II (d. 717).⁶⁰ 'Umār II's piety is well-known, as is his sending ten religious scholars (*tābi'*) to the Maghrib to teach Islam. One historian fleshed out the virtues of one of these teachers by recounting his praiseworthy actions in the very act of transporting slaves. This man, Ismā'il b. 'Ubayd, also known as *tājir Allāh* (God's merchant), transported a group of female slaves to the Orient along with some cargo. Accompanying them himself, he observed their grief and asked why they cried. He was told they cried for their fathers, mothers and brothers. Because he believed such a separation wicked, he set free those who had a father, a mother, a brother, or a sister.⁶¹

This example illustrates the sad nature of the slave trade in the first half of the eighth century. The laudable integrity of the merchant, however edifying, should be viewed as an exception among slavers and does not imply discouragement of the commerce. Ibn 'Idhārī, writing in the early fourteenth century, suggested that some governors had been driven by a desperate need to fulfill the caliphal quota for slaves. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb (734-40), for example, is described as bending all his efforts to obtain them. It was this amir who sent a campaign to Sūs in the western Sahara, ostensibly to chastise its Berbers, from whom he levied a great booty - 'a multitude of prisoners'.⁶²

precedents set by Muḥammad and 'Alī. Goitein observes that 'This practice met with less objection than any other form of luxury', which was certainly one of the reasons for the enormous expansion of the slave trade in the early centuries of Islam. S. D. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society* (Los Angeles, 1967), 590.

⁵⁷ Such as the early intrigues of 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' cited by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiya*, 66-7; and al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-tarīkh*, as *Annalō du Maghreb et de l'Espagne*, trans. E. Fagnan (Algiers, 1901), 20; cf. al-Qayrawānī, *Histoire de l'Afrique*, trans. E. Pellissier (Paris, 1845), 43-4. Another instance of such intrigues was the Umayyad, 'Abd al-Azīz b. Marwān, who manoeuvred on behalf of his favourite, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiya*, 85; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 31ff.

⁵⁸ M. Talbi, 'Rapports de l'Ifriqiya et de l'orient au VIII^e siècle', *Cahiers de Tunisie*, III (1959), 302.

⁵⁹ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 51; Abū l'Arab, *Classe des savants* (Paris, 1915), 75. One governor, Mūsā Ibn Nuṣayr, and his sons stand out for the sheer numbers they reportedly captured. The more discriminate Mūsā selected the most beautiful Berber girls as prisoners - one of whom alone would fetch 1,000 gold *mithqāls* in the eastern markets. Ibn Khaldūn, *Description de l'Afrique*, i, 206, 333, 342; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 32; al-Qayrawānī, *Histoire de l'Afrique*, 57-61; M. Talbi, 'Rapports de l'Ifriqiya', 302. On *mithqāl* (approximately 4.72 grams of gold) see B. M. Perinbam, 'Trans-Saharan and western Sudanese trade', *Comp. Studies Soc. Hist.*, xv (1973), 416-36.

⁶⁰ 'Umar ordered all Arabs who had *luwāta* (that is, Berber girls) either to take them in marriage after obtaining the consent of their fathers or to give them back to their families; al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh A. al-Ṭabbā' (Beirut, 1957), 316.

⁶¹ Abū al-'Arab, *Classe des savants*, 75. See also Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 38; and Muḥammad Ibn al-Nājī, *Ma'lim al-Imām fī Ma'rifaat Ahl al-Qayrawān* (2 vols.) (Tunis, 1320-5), i, 147.

⁶² al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, as *The Origins of the Islamic State*, trans. P. K. Hitti (New York, London, 1916-24), 231; Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, i, 219.

Only a few years later, in the 740s, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb, like him, was going farther and farther afield to satisfy the demand for slaves.⁶³ Indeed, the demand for slaves insured that slaving flourished, and Arab amirs in the western Maghrib (Algeria) in the early eighth century persisted in regarding Berbers, even Muslim Berbers, as slave potential.

Two well-known and specific incidents of enslaving Muslim Berbers were recorded in the western Maghrib. One involved the ill-advised attempt by a newly appointed amir of Tangier to tattoo the hands of his predecessor's Berber guard. The guard viewed this order as a humiliation, tantamount to enslavement, and promptly revolted.⁶⁴ The other involved a governor of Tangier who ignored the Muslim status of his Berber subjects and levied a fifth, or state's booty (*khamṣ*), consisting of the city's people.⁶⁵ This outrage raised a storm of protest from the population, who even dispatched a fruitless delegation to the caliph.⁶⁶ The revolt that ensued in 739⁶⁷ was the first uprising with a specific Kharijite association, and it also marked the earliest stirrings of what soon became the Ibādī revolt in the central Maghrib.

The exploitation of local populations continued even when black slaves gradually came to fill the market demand later in the ninth century. While there were subsequent instances of Berber enslavement by Aghlabid and even Fatimid generals in the ninth and tenth centuries,⁶⁸ such seizures were the sporadic and harsh consequences of revolt rather than the deliberate hunting for Berber slaves. There were, of course, motives other than quotas and personal profits behind the round-ups of Berber slaves. Governors throughout the Maghrib may have been attempting to force the Berber tribes into submission and so enhance their own reputation as loyal servants in the eyes of the caliph by continually forwarding tribute.⁶⁹

But while military action leading to the seizure and enslavement of captives had been justified during the period of Muslim conquest by the fact that the indigenous Berbers were regarded as not among the faithful, such reasoning became less acceptable once significant numbers had become Muslim. Alternative sources of supply had to be found to satisfy the eastern demand when attempts to continue tapping local sources failed in the face of rising Berber resistance and their widespread conversion to Ibādī Islam. It would appear, in fact, that 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb, the governor of

⁶³ See below, nn. 65-6.

⁶⁴ This governor was Yazīd b. Abi Muslim. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiya*, 113.

⁶⁵ This was 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh Murādi; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 50-2; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 63; Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, 359; Talbi, *L'émirat Aghlabide*, 31-2.

⁶⁶ C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, trans. J. Carmichael and M. Perlmann (New York, 1960), 98.

⁶⁷ Led by the Šufrite, al-Maysara; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiya*, 123.

⁶⁸ Ibn 'Idhārī supplies us with examples such as the Aghlabid general, Khafadja b. Šufyān, who in 848 finally overcame a two-year revolt by the city of Tunis, sacked the city and enslaved a great number of women. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 141-2. Suffering the same fate, in 923, the Ibādī stronghold of Nafūsa was destroyed by the Fatimids, its men and children were killed and its women presumably enslaved; *ibid.* 268.

⁶⁹ Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr's almost desperate determination is quoted by Ibn Qutayba: '... By God, I will never leave these fortresses and these impregnable mountains until God depresses their lofty summits and overcomes their strongest to be taken by the Muslims'; 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad ibn Qutayba, *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah* (2 vols.) (Cairo, 1967), ii, 51.

Ifrīqiya, may have sought to diversify his sources of supply by trade with the western Sahara in the late 730s.⁷⁰ However, towards the middle of the eighth century, the trading alternative had already fallen into other non-official hands. Ibādī merchants had beaten him to it and were gaining control of a black slave trade along the eastern and central Saharan routes.

The Berber-Ibādī community seized the opportunity to develop supplies of slaves across the Sahara in the Sudan during the middle of the eighth century, during the decades of widespread Berber revolt. Resistance to Arab authority under Ibādī leadership dated to the 740s when the central authority was facing collapse and the province had degenerated into a 'theatre of war'.⁷¹ The governor in Ifrīqiya, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb Fihri, was beset on all sides by a Berber revolt that lasted nearly a generation.⁷² The Berber population, converging first behind Ṣufrī and later behind Ibādī leaders,⁷³ could no longer be exploited, and the consequences of trying to do so were clearly volatile. The basic appeal of the Ibādī premise of *wilāya*, which stressed the equality of all men within the Muslim community,⁷⁴ led to increasing Ibādī involvement and leadership in the Berber insurrection.

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb temporarily gained the upper hand and turned to attack Sicily, Sardinia and France, which yielded tributary payments of prisoners.⁷⁵ In 752, he undertook yet another campaign against Christian lands for his new 'Abbāsīd master, Abū al-'Abbās, again with the objective of seizing captives and booty.⁷⁶

The crisis came when the 'Abbāsīd Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr became caliph (754) and the governor 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb failed to send the customary gift of slaves with his oath of loyalty, *bai'a*. Since Ifrīqiya had become completely Muslim, he explained, it could no longer be a source of slaves, and thus the caliph must not expect what could no longer be had.⁷⁷ The caliph's reply was menacing; 'Abd al-Raḥmān's days were numbered.⁷⁸ Ifrīqiya, no longer able to supply the oriental demand, was a region stripped of its chief resource, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥabīb's authority as governor of Ifrīqiya collapsed in 756. Consequently, by the time the 'Abbāsīd general Muḥammad Ibn al-Ash'ath was sent to recover the situation in 762-3, Berber and Ibādī interests were tightly intertwined.

It is at this time in the mid-eighth century that I would place the first Ibādī presence in towns on the southern fringe of the Sahara. Already skilled

⁷⁰ T. Lewicki, 'Les origines d'Islam chez les tribus berbères du Sahara occidental', *Studia Islamica*, xxxii (1970), 213. The Arab geographer al-Bakrī refers to the remnants of a camp occupied by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥabīb, or perhaps his army, in the Sūsī plain. But what is more indicative of a continuing interest was his having three wells dug en route between Tāmadūlt and Awdaghast (Taghaoust); Al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique*, 296-9, 306.

⁷¹ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 64.

⁷² P. L. Cambusat, *L'évolution des cités du Tell en Ifriqiya* (Nanterre, 1970), 101.

⁷³ Most notably, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, about whom see Abū Zakariyā', *Kitāb al-Sira*, 21ff.

⁷⁴ See A. Ennami's chapter on *Wilāya* in his *Studies in Ibadism* (Benghazi, 1972), 193-225.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, i, 64. These campaigns took place in the 740s.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 70; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil fī Ta'rikh*, 77.

⁷⁷ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 73; al-Nuwayri, *Nihāyat*, i, 367; al-Athīr, *Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh*, 74-78; Talbi, *L'émirat Aghlabide*, 36; Cambusat, *L'évolution des cités*, 101.

⁷⁸ The account of this exchange by Ibn 'Idhārī, al-Nuwayri and al-Raqīq was compiled by H. R. Idris in his 'L'Occident musulman', *Revue d'Études Islamiques*, xxxix (1971), 256-7.

at long-distance trade, Ibādī merchants originally from Baṣra and Kūfa established a foothold among the Berber tribes of the eastern Maghrib. The resulting Ibādī-Berber fusion incorporated all the elements necessary for a successful long-distance trade network. Ibādī commercial expertise, combined with the indigenous tribesmen's local knowledge, created the basis for rapid Ibādī economic expansion. Their monopoly of the eastern and central Saharan routes, passing as they did through Ibādī towns, ensured the economic underpinnings of the Ibādī community.

It could be argued, in fact, that Ibādī control of the trans-Saharan slave trade, particularly via Zawīla, figured among the reasons for Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath's military expedition of 762-3. Ibn al-Ash'ath not only recovered the government seats of Qayrawān and Tripoli from militant Ibādī-s, but he also sent a punitive expedition south to Zawīla.⁷⁹

Although temporarily effective, 'Abbāsīd military control could not be sustained indefinitely beyond the coastal cities. By the end of the decade, a new amir was appointed who was able to exercise authority in the name of the caliph but who pragmatically recognized the effective control of the hinterland by Berber Ibādī-s. This amir, Yazīd b. Ḥātīm, of the celebrated Muhallabid family, came to a lasting understanding with the Ibādī imām 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Rustām within two years of coming to office in 763. As I have shown elsewhere,⁸⁰ there had been an association in Baṣra between the Ibādīyya and the Muhallabids that went back to the Umayyad Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik at the end of the seventh century. It is no doubt significant for this alliance that both the Ibādīyya and Muhallabids had been extensively involved in trade.⁸¹ Despite the upheaval of the 'Abbāsīd revolution in mid-eighth-century Iraq, this association survived and was, in fact, the basis on which Yazīd b. Ḥātīm, as amir, was able to placate and negotiate a lasting peace between the central 'Abbāsīd authority and Ibādī Berbers in North Africa. As a consequence,⁸² the Ibādī imamate at Tāhart (in modern Algeria) was given *de facto* recognition as an autonomous community.⁸³ The commercial foundations laid earlier in the century then made possible the subsequent growth and prosperity of the Ibādī community as described by Ibādī and non-Ibādī sources; market towns were founded,⁸⁴ and the stage was set for the 'renaissance'⁸⁵ of the ninth century.

⁷⁹ Abū Zakariyā, *Kitāb al-Sira*, 34-7; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 376. al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa-Kitāb al-Qudāt*, ed. R. Guest (Leiden, London, 1912), 109. Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, 220-1.

⁸⁰ E. Savage, 'Survival through alliance: the establishment of the Ibādīyya', *British Middle East Studies Bulletin*, xvii (1990), 1-15.

⁸¹ H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (London, 1981), 82.

⁸² Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-Maghrib*, 104; Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, 223. For a modern Ibādī view see, A. W. Khleifat, 'Ibadī political and administrative organizations in the stage of secrecy with special reference to North Africa', *Maghreb Review*, xi (1986), 82.

⁸³ Tāhart, the Ibādī capital, had been established (in modern Algeria) on the defeat of the Ibādī revolt at the hands of Muḥammad Ibn al-Ash'ath in 762. For more on the formation of the imamate, see Savage, 'Early medieval Ifriqiya', 101-46.

⁸⁴ T. Lewicki, *Études ibadites nord-africaines. Partie I: Tasmīya šuyukh Jabal Nafusa wa-qurahum* (Warsaw, 1955).

⁸⁵ G. Marçais, in his *La Berbérie musulmane* (Paris, 1946), coined the phrase by which he was referring to the economic, religious, artistic and military successes of the Aghlabids during the ninth century; ch. 2 'La renaissance du IXe siècle', 55ff.; Cambusart, *L'évolution des cités*, 125.

By the time of the second Rustamid Imām, 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Rustam (784–824), Ibādī merchants had a firm grasp on trade with the Bilād al-Sūdān. Though sources are thin for the late eighth century, later authors indicate that this trade was well established in the centuries immediately following. One ninth-century source, the *Mudawwana*⁸⁶ of the Ifriqiyan judge, Saḥnūn (d. 854), sheds light on this transitional period in the eighth century when Ibādī merchants began to tap the sub-Saharan regions as a source for black slaves. Though Saḥnūn was writing in the ninth century, he cites a legal opinion of the famous eighth-century jurist, Mālik (d. 795).⁸⁷ Thus Saḥnūn repeats an *eighth-century* textual source that specifically links the Ibādīyya with the Fazzān and the early slave trade with the Bilād as-Sūdān. In the passage, Saḥnūn had been questioned about the legality of attacking the 'Abyssinians', that is, the black inhabitants of the Fazzān. Citing Mālik, he had replied that they should first be invited to embrace Islam; failing that, they then should be allowed to pay the *jizya*.⁸⁸ Though initially one might suppose that the attack referred to was the conquest of 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' in the 660s, Robert Brunschvig has argued that Mālik was addressing a more contemporary event. In fact, he suggested that Mālik was referring to the subjugation of the Fazzān in the punitive campaign of the 'Abbāsīd general Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath against the Ibādī-s of Zawīla in the 760s.⁸⁹

In addition to establishing the historical context of Malik's opinion, Brunschvig also focused on the identity of the Fazzānī-s, who are referred to in the tradition as '*al-fazzāniya wa-hum jins min al-ḥabish*'. That is, the Fazzānīs were people from the Ḥabash, 'Abyssinian'. This is of particular interest to the thesis that Ibādī-s were already active in the slave trade during the second half of the eighth century. The textual confusion over whether or not the Fazzānī-s were Abyssinian, could, in fact, be explained chronologically. That is, while the Fazzānī-s were regarded in classical sources as distinct from the Abyssinians, a slow infiltration of a black population subsequently mingled with that of the Fazzān, a process that may have been accelerated in the hundred years since 'Uqba ibn Nāfi'. In the passage from Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam referring to the 660s, cited earlier, 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' was recorded as seizing captives from the Fazzān. That the author felt it necessary to justify this on the ground of their breaking faith suggests a late-ninth-century exoneration from the enslavement of Muslim Berbers, an illegal act inappropriate for a hero of the conquest. However, the question put to Mālik earlier, in the late eighth century, would indicate the presence of blacks residing in Zawīla at the time of Ibn al-Ash'ath's attack in the 760s. Despite the fact that the Ibādī-s were undoubtedly Muslim, albeit sectarians,

⁸⁶ A 'definitive version of Malikite teaching upon which all subsequent elaboration was based. Jurists (like Saḥnūn) were indisputably supreme in matters of faith'; M. Brett, 'Islam in North Africa', 329–67.

⁸⁷ This passage is not to be confused with the earlier passage by Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, who was also writing in the ninth century and was associated with the Mālikī school of law.

⁸⁸ This passage is cited fully in R. Brunschvig's 'Un texte arabe du IX^e siècle intéressant le Fezzan', *Revue Africaine*, LXXXIX (1945), 21.

⁸⁹ Abū Zakariyyā, *Kitāb al-sira*, 34–7.

Sahnūn's ruling justified the campaign against the Ibādī-s on the grounds that, as blacks, the 'Fazzānis' were regarded as non-Muslims who refused to embrace Islam or recognize its authority and pay the *jizya*. Although we must wait until the early ninth century for explicit references to Ibādī associations with the Fazzān⁹⁰ and the slave trade,⁹¹ it seems likely that Ibn al-Ash'ath's campaign had two objectives. The first was a punitive measure against rebellious non-conformists and, as such, was a continuation of his persecution of Ibadism. Ibādī subjugation would, by implication, accomplish the second objective imputed to him, that of securing control over the supply of black slaves.

Though Ibn al-Ash'ath's attack on the Ibādī-s of Zawīla in the 760s was described as a massacre, the Ibādī presence survived, and three references dating to the second Ibādī imām, 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Ruṣṭam (784-824), suggest diplomatic relations with the kings of the Sudan at that time. The first reference praises a contemporary of the imām, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Abū 'Ubayda 'Abd al-Ḥāmīd al-Janūnī, of whom it was said that in addition to Berber and Arabic he spoke the language of Kanim. Valued for his abilities, he was appointed to the sensitive and important post of 'amil of the Jabal Nafūsa, the heartland of Ibādī support.⁹² In the second reference, Aflah, the son of this same imām, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, even proposed to travel to the Sudan in the first quarter of the ninth century, very likely in connection with trade. His father, however, refused and sent an ambassador instead.⁹³ Finally, a third source refers to Muḥammad b. 'Arfa, both wealthy and distinguished, who was sent by the fourth imām, Abū Bakr b. Aflah (864-68), as ambassador to an unspecified king of the Sudan.

A passage from the writings of the late ninth-century geographer, al-Ya'qūbī, gives an insight into this period of transition from the time when Berbers submitted to Islam and when Ibādī merchants began to import slaves. It seems likely that we see in this description a collapse of an earlier tradition of raiding into a later trading practice of purchase and exchange.

Beyond Waddān to the south is the town of Zawīla. Its people are Muslims, all of them Ibādīyya, and go on pilgrimage to Mecca... They export black slaves from

⁹⁰ By the time of the second Rustamid imām, 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān (784-823), Ibādī sources refer to Fazzānī Ibādī-s among their notables as well as among their schismatics; T. Lewicki, 'Le Sahara oriental et septentrional', ii, 62. For the ninth century, Ibādī sources are rich in references to Ibādī-s involved with the Bilād al-Sūdān; e.g. T. Lewicki, 'Ibadica, tasmīya shuyūkh nafūsa', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, xxv (1961), 99, 101.

⁹¹ There are references in the sources to slaves within the Ibādī community from the time of the first Imām. Ibn Ṣaghīr 'Chronique d'Ibn Saghīr sur les Imams rustumides de Tahert', ed. and trans. A. de C. Motylinski, in *Actes du XIVe Congrès International des Orientalistes* (Algier, 1905), 65, 84-6. Upon arrival at Tāhart, during the Imamate of 'Abd al-Wahhāb (784-823), newcomers were struck by its great prosperity and great number of slaves and servants ('*abid wa khadām*'); *ibid.* 69/14; Abū Zakariyā', *Kitāb al-Siwa*, 94-6.

⁹² Lewicki, 'Ibadica, tasmīya shuyūkh Nafūsa', 99, 101; Lewicki, 'Le Sahara oriental', 342; Lewicki, 'Encore sur les voyages Arabes aux Canaries au moyen âge', in Lewicki, *Études maghrébines et Soudanaises* (2 vols.) (Warsaw, 1983), ii, 92-3.

⁹³ G. Dangel, 'L'imam ibadite de Tahert, 761-909: contribution à l'histoire de l'Afrique du Nord durant le haut moyen âge' (thèse du 3e cycle, Strasbourg II, 1977), 284; T. Lewicki, 'L'État nord-africain de Tahert et ses relations avec le Soudan occidental à la fin du VIIIe et au IXe siècle', *Cahiers d'Études Arabes*, II (1962), 527.

among the Miriyyūn, the Zaghawiyyūn, the Marwiyyūn and from other peoples of the Sūdān, because they live close to Zawīla, whose people capture them... The kings of the Sūdān sell their people without any pretext or war... Zawīla is a land of date-palms, where sorghum and other grains are sown. Various people live there from Khurasān, al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa. Fifteen days' journey beyond Zawīla is a town called Kawār, inhabited by Muslims from various tribes, most of them Berbers. It is they who bring in the Sūdān [slaves].⁹⁴

From this we learn that the people of Zawīla were Ibādī and that many came from the east. It also becomes apparent that the slaves were captured, as well as bought, through the agency of Berbers further to the south in Kawār, who, one assumes, bought them from the kings of the Sudan with whom, as we have seen, they had diplomatic relations maintained by the Rustamid imāms themselves. Al-Ya'qūbī also suggests a nuance of legal exoneration in his phrase, 'the kings of the Sūdān sell their people without any pretext or war', whereby the onus of enslavement is shifted to an authority outside *Dār al-Islam* before their purchase by Muslim masters.⁹⁵ Al-Ya'qūbī as well as Saḥnūn, although a century apart, establish an Ibādī-Berber presence actively engaged in bringing slaves from Bilād al-Sūdān.

We may draw some tentative conclusions. It seems plausible that in the second half of the eighth and in the early ninth centuries the tribes between Zawīla and Kawār controlled the connecting route and that Berber co-operation was thus essential both for passage and transport.⁹⁶ For their part, the Ibādī merchants may have introduced a measure of uniformity and predictability to the procedures of long-distance trade.⁹⁷ Entrepôts such as Zawīla would have performed many of the same functions, including that of depôt,⁹⁸ as the modern *zāwiya* described by Evans-Pritchard.⁹⁹

Ibn Ṣaghīr's *Chronicle* (c. 902), written a generation after al-Ya'qūbī,

⁹⁴ Excerpt of al-Ya'qūbī from Hopkins and Levtzion (eds.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 22. ⁹⁵ I am grateful to M. Brett for identifying this point.

⁹⁶ E. Evans-Pritchard, writing on the expansion of the Sanusiya among the tribes of Libya and the relations between the oases-dwellers and the tribes of the interior, wrote that the nomads of Libya 'controlled the routes and to a large extent supplied the transport for the caravans. These connections allowed an easy ingress to the Sanusiya'. *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford, 1963), 16.

⁹⁷ Of the Tuareg scholars of Aïr, Barth wrote in the mid-nineteenth century: '... under the authority of these learned and devout men, commerce is carried on with a security which is surprising. Indeed, in Walata, the seasonal caravan which was mounted across the Sahara to Tuat was led by a full-fledged scholar who was dreaded by robbers and feared by tyrants'; *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, as cited by E. N. Saad, 'Social history of Timbuktu, 1400-1900: the role of Muslim scholars and notables' (Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1979), 219.

⁹⁸ As depôts, the *zāwāya* (sing. *zāwiya*) were used 'for the storage of goods and their subsequent distribution north and south depending upon the conditions of supply and demand. Huge fluctuations in prices were a yearly, and sometimes a monthly... feature which required constant knowledge of the markets elsewhere'; E. N. Saad, 'Social history of Timbuktu', 223. As for Kawār, K. Vikør described its duality as part of a local as well as international trade, as a point of production and consumption as well as a place of transit or even just resting, essential for the trade in an inhospitable region; 'Early history of the Kawār Oasis', 2.

⁹⁹ The *zāwāya*, besides catering for religious needs, were 'schools, caravanserai, commercial centres, social centres, forts, courts of law, banks, store houses, poor houses, sanctuary and burial grounds, besides being channels through which ran a generous stream of God's blessing'; Evans-Pritchard, *Sanusi*, 79.

confirms the opulent prosperity of the Ibādī capital, Tāhart, whose merchants by that time traded with the Bilād al-Sūdān and all countries to the east and west. This prosperity had begun with the first imām, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ruṣṭam (d. 784), and continued to increase so that by the time of his successor caravans came from all points of the horizon. In the *Chronicle*, growing materialism appears as an ever-present threat over which the good imām triumphs.¹⁰⁰ As an important entrepôt in the central Maghrib, Tāhart attracted not only Ibādī merchants from the orient and Ibādī Berber tribesmen but non-Ibādī-s as well. It provided a favourable commercial environment enhanced by the rectitude of their Ruṣṭamid imams. Out of the widespread Ibādī militancy of the mid-eighth century there had also evolved a loose federation of communities in the eastern and central Maghrib which recognized Ruṣṭamid authority in matters pertaining to the law. Later still Ibn Hawqal, writing in the mid-tenth century, observed in Tāhart resident merchants from Baṣra and Kūfa, who were most likely Ibādī-s:¹⁰¹ 'Their trade flourishes, their light caravans are constantly on the move and their heavy caravans are incessant to obtain enormous profits, fat gains, and abundant benefits. Merchants in the countries of Islam seldom approach them in affluence'.¹⁰²

A final passage from the Arab geographer Al-Bakrī, written in the mid-eleventh century, refers to the merchants of Zawīla but does not distinguish them as Iraqī but simply as Ibādī, which could reflect the subsequent assimilation of the Ibādī Berber community. These Zawīla Ibādī-s are described as having a thriving trade in slaves supplied by their Ibādī confrères from the Bilād al-Sūdān via Kawār.¹⁰³

The purpose of this discussion has been to suggest that the slave trade formed the basis of Ibādī expansion in the second half of the eighth century, with particular reference to trade along the routes of the eastern and central desert.¹⁰⁴ Responding to the pressing eastern demand for slaves, Ibādī merchants later began to fill the need with black slaves in place of Berbers who, in the earlier days of the conquest, had been licit booty. With the conquest over, however, Berber tribes, if not yet actually Muslim, at least recognized the value of supporting Ibādī opposition. Initial Berber resistance became more clearly defined by the middle of the eighth century as Ṣufrī and Ibādī. It was the Ibādī-s, however, who by the last quarter of the century had a firm hold of trade with the hinterland and beyond across the Sahara. The resulting prosperity of their monopoly consolidated their community and made it an economic force to be reckoned with from the eighth century onwards.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Ṣaghīr, 'Chronique', 65-71, 85.

¹⁰¹ Hopkins and Levzion (eds.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 381, nn. 5, 45.

¹⁰² Though falling somewhat after our period, another passage gives us some idea of the extent of this wealth. This sixteenth century Ibādī writer, al-Shammākhī, described a merchant who lived during the second quarter of the ninth century and who possessed 30,000 camels, 300,000 sheep and 12,000 donkeys; Lewicki, 'Le Sahara oriental', 76-81.

¹⁰³ Hopkins and Levzion (eds.), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources*, 64.

¹⁰⁴ Trade along more westerly routes was a later development of the late ninth and tenth centuries, when Ibādī communities in the Mzab, Wārljā, Sadrāta, Oued Righ and Tādmakka were active.

¹⁰⁵ A brief word of sincere thanks to Dr Joe Miller of the University of Virginia who kindly encouraged this study.

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to illustrate the process whereby certain Berber tribes during the eighth century A.D. substituted slaves from the Bilād al-Sūdān for Berber slaves from North Africa. From the outset, this conversion was influenced strongly, if not instigated, by Ibādī merchants until the slave trade became a predominantly Ibādī monopoly from the mid-eighth century onwards. The slave trade along the central Sudan route in particular provided the increase in the community's wealth and security, as well as the means for its establishment and expansion as a Muslim sect among diverse Berber tribes and, finally, as the origins for the subsequent, far-flung network of trans-Saharan trade.