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Society and Religion in 20th Century Algeria: Ibadite Reform, Between Modernization and Conservation

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Abstract

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Ibadite religious reform in the M'zab, is precocious and internal. It starts from the established fact that the Ibadite rite in its initial version doesn't correspond to the demands imposed by XXth C changes. In this sense it is closer to, the renaissance (Nahda) which germed in the orient at the end of the 19th C early 20th C. It shares many principles with the Badissian reform to which it is allied.

However, the Ibadite community's particularity, imposes the respect of community preservation on its reformers .It also finds there a powerful factor for legalizing to captivate innovations for economic and material modernization. The advancement of the religious reform doesn't happen without offending conservators of the rite in its purity and its references judged as untouchable.

This contribution intends to draw a picture which shows how little by little this reform is outlined, takes shape then takes root, opening an alternative, adapting to change, which is captivated and used as a conservation tool by this particular community.

Keywords: ibadhism - mzab - reform - conservation - modernization - dissidence.

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Résumé

Société et religion en Algérie au XXe siècle : le réformisme ibadhite, entre modernisation et conservation

Le réformisme religieux des Ibadhites du M'zab, est précoce et endogène. Il part du constat que le rite ibadhite dans sa version initiale ne correspond plus aux impératifs des changements imposés par le XXe siècle. Il rejoint en ce sens, la philosophie de la Renaissance (Nahdha) qui éclôt en Orient à la fin du XIXe-début XXe siècle. Il partage beaucoup de principes avec le réformisme badissien dont il sera un allié.

Cependant, la particularité de la communauté ibadhite, impose à ses réformateurs le respect de la préservation de la communauté. Elle trouve en lui aussi un puissant facteur de légitimation pour capter les innovations et la modernisation économique et matérielle. L'avancée de la réforme religieuse ne se fera pas non plus sans heurt avec les conservateurs du rite dans sa pureté et ses référents jugés intouchables.

Cette contribution se propose de dresser un tableau qui montre pas à pas comment cette réforme s'esquisse, prend forme puis s'enracine, ouvrant une alternative d'adaptation au changement qui est capté et utilisé comme outil de conservation de cette communauté particulière.

Mots-clés : Ibadhisme - Mzab - Réformisme - Conservation - Modernisation - Dissidence.

Resúmen

Sociedad y religión en Argelia en el siglo XX: el reformismo abadiíta, entre modernización y conservación

El reformismo religioso de los ibadistas del M'zab, es precoz y endógeno. Parte de la comprobación de que el rito abadiíta en su versión inicial ya no corresponde a los imperativos del cambio impuestos por el siglo 20. Se junta en este sentido, a la filosofía del renacimiento (nahda) que apareció en Oriente a finales del siglo 19 principios del 20. Comparte muchos principios con el reformismo badisiano de que será un aliado.

Sin embargo, la particularidad de la comunidad abadiíta, impone a sus reformadores el respeto de la preservación de la comunidad. Encuentra también en él un potente factor de legitimación para captar las innovaciones y la modernización económica y material. La avanzada de la reforma religiosa tampoco se hará sin choques con los conservadores del rito en su pureza y sus referentes juzgados intocables. .

Esta contribución se propone presentar un cuadro que muestra paso a paso cómo esta reforma se esboza, toma forma y se arraiga, abriendo una alternativa de adaptación al cambio que es captado y utilizado como una herramienta de conservación de esta comunidad particular.

Palabras claves: Ibadismo - Mzab - reformismo - conservación - modernización - disidencia.

ملخص

المجتمع والدين بالجزائر في القرن العشرين : المذهب الإصلاحي الاباضي بين التحديث والمحافظة

يعتبر الإصلاح الديني لدى الاباضيين بمنطقة المزاب سابق لأوانه وداخلي. انه ينطلق من فكرة أن الشعيرة الاباضية في شكلها الأصلي لا تتناسب مع مقتضيات التغير المفروضة في القرن العشرين. ويتفق هذا الأمر مع فلسفة النهضة التي برزت في المشرق العربي مع نهاية القرن التاسع عشر وبداية القرن العشرين. وبهذا يتفق ويشترك الإصلاح مع التيار الإصلاحي الباديسي في عدة مبادئ حيث سيصبح حليفا له.

تفرض خصوصية المجتمع الاباضي على الإصلاحيين احترام المحافظة على الجماعة. وتجد الجماعة في الإصلاح أيضا عاملا قويا لإقرار الشرعية قصد جذب الابتكارات والعصرنة الاقتصادية والمادية. إن تقدم الإصلاح الديني لن يتحقق بدون صراع مع المحافظين على الشعائر من حيث صفائها ومرجعيتها التي لا يمكن المساس بها.

ترسم هذه المحاولة لوحة تبرز شيئا فشيئا الكيفية التي يرسم الإصلاح نفسه الذي يأخذ شكلا معينا لتترسخ جذوره فيما بعد، ويفتح خيار التأقلم مع التغيير الذي تم استقطابه واستعماله كأداة للمحافظة على هذه الجماعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المذهب الاباضية - التيار الإصلاحي - محافظة - تحديث - انشقاق.

Emile Masqueray summarized the situation of the ***M'zab*** in a powerful phrase: *"This Pentapolis is religious and secular at the same time, but first and foremost religious"* (Masqueray, 1983, p. 178).

The M'zab has not gone through History, particularly since the eleventh century (when the ***Ibadites*** settled there), without upheavals. Internal tensions, fierce conflicts between the tribal factions, conflicting cohabitation with Arab and nomadic tribes (Sunni tribes, no less), and economic dependence on the outside world have all marked its history (Masqueray, 1983)[1]. From the middle of the nineteenth century, and more precisely from the moment it came into contact with the French colonization (1853), the Ibadite community was to face the first crucial issue linked to its destiny in the new century: how to remain itself and at home in a world that, from every point of view, was shaping up to be one of exchange, dependence and domination, and therefore necessarily one of change? It was indeed a crucial question, in that it was a matter of extinction for a persecuted religious community, reduced to taking refuge in the desert and imposing on itself doctrinal austerity and both moral and social rigor. From then on and throughout the century (1850-1950), the local society would be plagued by the inevitable dilemma of *either adapting to the century or disappearing. But if it had to adapt, how could it safeguard both the social body and the intangible prescriptions of the Ibadite rite?* It was in religion, but in a reformed religion, that the answers to all these questions would be worked out and implemented. Ibadite reformism played a fundamental role in the modernization of the M'zab throughout the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, ironically, it also made it possible, through laborious compromises, to preserve the social fabric.

The ambition of this article is to show how this was possible.

The origins of religious reform: the imperious necessity to survive

From the "state of glory" to the "state of defence": the construction of the Ibadite community territory

Ibadhism is the moderate branch of Kharedjism (Laoust, 1965), founded by Abdellah Ben Ibad around 747. Defeated by the Abbasids in 772, the Ibadites enjoyed a period of "glory" with the founding of the Rostemid kingdom of Tahert (Cuperly, 1991).

[1] The author even estimates that the internal conflicts were far more violent than what he found for Kabylia and the Aures.

From a doctrinal point of view, Ibadhism is based on a number of principles, the most important of which are:

-1) An egalitarianism that seems to be the same as the Berbers', who converted to it and found it a good argument for adaptation. It is an "absolute equality before God": "The only real legislative power, which belongs to the Koran, comes from God alone, and God "subrogates" the Imam, the agent of execution". (Arkoun & Gardet, 1978, p. 41).

-2) The power to appoint the Imam lies with the assembly of the faithful. The Imam may be any Muslim recognized for his ability to guide the community. Spiritual communion "*walâya*" is granted only to members of the sole Muslim community, that of the Ibadites "(Arkoun & Gardet, 1978. p. 41) who must have a deep hatred of the infidel and fight him. In this sense, it is a duty to isolate oneself from elements likely to contaminate the purity of the rite, therefore leading to the dissolution of the community. This principle will be systematically put forward by the religious assemblies of the M'Zab (*Halqa* of the '*Azzabas* or I'azzaben) and, at the time of the emergence of reformism, constituted the essential point of rupture between conservatives and reformists, as well as the object of bitter struggles and searing disputes between the two tendencies. This aspect of the Ibadite doctrine was exacerbated by the main features of the social organization, which consolidated the religious prohibitions through the practice of restrictions that enclosed the world of the community. This incitement to fuel hatred and excommunicate the "infidel" (*barâ'a or tebriya*) is combined with other forms of social and community exclusion incurred by any Ibadite deemed to have broken the rules after an offence codified by the religious assemblies.

Considering the persecution to which it was subjected, the Ibadite community defined legal modes or procedures compatible with the situation and state in which it found itself at different times.

The "path of glory or manifest path" or "*wilayât adhuhur*" refers to the path adopted by the triumphant community when the conditions required for the application of Quranic principles are met and the "infidels" are in a weak position. This was the situation in which the Rostemid kingdom of Tahert found itself until it was ousted by the Fatimids in 909.

The "path of defence" or "*wilâyat al difa*" is the approach adopted by the Ibadites when the community is in a state of danger but can still survive by adopting a way of life that enables it to cope with the danger. This was the case for the community that settled in the Chebka of the Oued M'zab at the turn of the 11th century. This state of defence implied

isolation and vigilance, limiting contact with the community's enemies or non-believers to a strict minimum. The Ibadites have followed this same approach up to the present day. However, significant changes occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The "sacrificial path" or "wilayat al-sira" is a path adopted by the most radical sects, such as the Azraqites or the Qarmatians. It involves seeking martyrdom through combat for the triumph of the divine path.

The *way of secrecy*, "*wilâyat al kitmân*". The community is in an adverse situation, dominated or hunted. In this case, the believer must continue to live his faith intensely, but without any outward manifestation. He resorts to dissimulation, and may even obey those in power (or the Sunnis).

Driven out of Tahert, the Ibadites, who had converted Berber tribes, moved to South-East Algeria in Sedrata (Oued Righ), where they were again driven out from by the triumphant Hilalian Arab tribes (1051). The harsh Oued M'zab valley will be chosen as the community's territory in a "state of defence". Physically isolated, the Oued M'zab valley was a naturally protected refuge, even if the nomadic Arab tribes imposed compromises[2] until the decline of nomadism and the loss of the tribes political pre-eminence after 1914[3]. The Ibadite community, in a posture of survival, grappled with the harsh conditions of the desert. Cities emerged within a competitive struggle for water[4]. According to Emile Masqueray's penetrating observations, it was the vital issue of water that controlled both the distribution of the *ksours* and their respective power.

It was also this factor that fuelled the "relentless conflicts and everlasting grudges" between the Mozabite cities (Masqueray, 1983). E. Masqueray's description will certainly prove useful when we need to analyze the distribution of conservatives and reformists on the religious and political map of the M'Zab in the period 1930-1950: "Ghardaïa captured everything. Beni-Isguen must be content with a side ravine of which it has managed to make admirable use. The same applies to Bounoura. Mélika would be condemned to the worst if it had nothing else. Hence the ancient and vivid competitions, fights, revenge, and the implacable common hatred of Melika and El Atef" (Masqueray, 1983).

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[2] For more on these aspects, see: M'zab, E.I, Addoun- Aïcha (1977). Moltinsky (1885); Mercier (1932). Grossman (1976). Chenaf (1961).

[3] For an example of this situation, see Carreau- Gashereau (1960). On the situation of the Chaambas, an Arab tribe living in the M'Zab region, see in particular *Monographie des Chaambas de Metlili*. 1960. Archives du SHAT, Vincennes, 1H 14804, dossier n° 2.

[4] The Oued M'Zab in particular.

El Atteuf was precisely the first city founded by the Ibadites of the Algerian M'zab in 1001. The "shining" city, Bounoura, was founded in 1048, followed by the three other cities that complete the pentapolis: Ghardaïa, Beni-Isguen and Melika (all three in 1053). Guerrara, 100 km north of the pentapolis, will be founded in 1651 at the same time as Beriane. These two cities were founded by a group of dissenting factions from Ghardaïa, the Affaras and Ouled Bakha. Other dissenters from the cities of the pentapolis joined these outlying cities, cut off from the bulk of the Ibadite community[5]. It was this dissident area that would become the territory « par excellence » of reformism. The classification and reclassification of the status of cities characterized the centuries that followed the settlement of the Ibadites in the M'zab Chebka and on the banks of the Oued Righ to the north. Overall, Ghardaïa, with its strategic position for north-south trade, acquired the status of an "opulent" city very early in its history. Beni-Isguen, the "learned", became the guardian of the "dogma" through the monopoly it exercised over knowledge and the safeguarding of the Ibadite rite. A citadel of historical conservation, it has retained this status to this day, and the reformers have never been able to impose much influence on it. In many ways, the face-off between the "learned city" and the "city of dissent" (Guerrara) symbolizes the entire evolution of the M'zab from the end of the 19th century to 1960 and certainly beyond.

Bounoura, the "luminous", would soon die away, victim of feuds and tribal conflicts, as it is explained by E. Masqueray. Melika, who allied itself with the Chaa'mbas Arabs who gave her protection in return for large subsidies, earned a reputation as "bellicose" but lost out in terms of religious status. El Atteuf, the founder, would not gain much legitimacy from her antecedent: "Science withdrew to Beni-Isguen and wealth to Ghardaïa." (Masqueray, 1983) In short, it was around the three main centers of Ghardaïa, Beni-Isguen and later Guerrara that the major movements that would determine the destinies of the Ibadite community were concentrated: economic wealth, rigor and conservatism, and reform-modernization corresponded respectively to each one at the time of the great upheavals (1900-1960). But if this situation may suggest a high degree of diversity, it should immediately be emphasized that these cities, whatever their itinerary, were all solidly united, even in the wake of the religious and political strife of the mid-20th century, on the

[5] Notably fractions from Melika, Bounoura and Ghardaïa. For a long time, the Ibadhites were confronted to the maraboutic tribe of the Ouald Sayah, which would be progressively ousted before it was wrecked by the stockbreeding crisis and the settlement of the nomads consecutive to the colonial occupation. See Carreau- Gashereau (1960).

intangible principles of the safeguard of the social and religious order as it was codified in their doctrine.

It is worth noting that Ibadite reformism presented a significant challenge in reconciling innovation, reform and community preservation. For this social and religious order was developed and implemented in very specific, particular conditions, with the crucial aim of safeguarding the community, which found itself in a defensive position. Any new element is identified as a potential threat. Any deviation in the behaviour of believers is considered a very serious, unacceptable and intolerable subversion.

The assembly of clerics among the Ibadites of the M'Zab as seen by Sheikh Brahim Bayoud[6]

The relationship between the assembly of clerics and the assembly of the 'Ashira

Without being able to determine exactly the period when the two councils appeared, and on the basis of the sources he consulted, Sheikh Brahim Bayoud gives the following explanation:

"I think that the organization of the 'Azzabas refers to the mosques, the Mahâdir schoolsand the religious affairs. In other words, the functions of prayer, the Imâmat, the call to prayer, the preparation of the dead, the religious teaching and especially the teaching of the Koran, all these functions fall within the remit of the 'Azzaba and are interrelated. The Fractional Council, owing to its nature, is closely linked to the Council of the 'Azzabas. The qualities required of a cleric wishing to join the Halqa are "Above all, competence, good conduct, fears of God and righteousness. The 'Azzaba work for God, without ever receiving a salary, either from the Government, or from the fraction, or from anyone else. In other words, they sacrifice their lives in the name of God".

In order to carry out its "orders", the Halqa must "find several members from each faction, provided they are capable" and is necessarily bound to the factional council in so far as: "the orders of the Halqa of the 'Azzabas are meant to educate, to reform[7]. The halqa is supposed to control people's behaviour by forbidding them to indulge in scandals, illicit activities [Illegal with regard to the rite] and drinking [The list of

[6] Text of an interview with Pierre Cuperly « Guerrara, 13 Mars 1971 ». Institut Pontifical d'Études Arabes. Rome. 1971/3, p. 40-52.

[7] This attribution is, of course, the one introduced by the reformists in the 20^{s} and 30^{s} and constitutes a point of discord with the conservatives. It is not surprising that Bayoud, Sheikh-Brahim, introduced it as a matter of course in 1971, at a time when, as we shall see below, the conservative Halqa totally rejected any reform of the Ibadite rite.

prohibitions is obviously not exhaustive. Depending on whether one is dealing with reformist or conservative clerics, the list of prohibitions is much longer and affects all areas of the believer's life, who is crushed by the "prohibitions" of both]. These injunctions are the responsibility of the 'Azzabas, but they are always carried out with the help of the factional council. This is the reason why, except in cases of absolute necessity where there is no competent person, the faction must always be represented in the halqa of the 'Azzabas".

According to Sheikh Brahim Bayoud, the Fractional Council precedes the Council of the 'Azzabas. Thus during the Rostemid period ("state of glory") the Council of the "achira" was the only council insofar as the religious power was openly exercised by the Imam who, in his position as guide of the community, both passed laws and directly decreed the enactment of decisions. The Council of the achira executes.

In the "state of defence", the Council of 'Azzabas, the sole and supreme moral and religious authority, takes the place of the Imam and therefore assumes pre-eminence. The Council of the "achira" is vested with the authority bestowed upon him by the clerics and within the limits imposed by the religious rules which inspire the clerics alone. In the day-to-day life of the community, believers at fault are first accountable for their offences to the Fractional Council. But the strength of this council lies in the fact that it can refer the guilty party to the assembly of the clerics, if he does not comply or is liable to the punishment of tebriya[8]. *All such decisions are launched inside the mosque and have the force of law.* As a matter of fact, "The Fraction is independent in its functioning, but it needs the Halqa of the 'Azzabas to fulfill its mission. The 'Azzabas in their turn need the Faction to fulfill theirs".

Organization and functioning of the Halqa of the 'Azzabas

Each Mozabite town has its own halqa and the community as a whole appoints a *madjliss* where each halqa is represented.

Sheikh Brahim Bayoud gives the following indications, which help to define the functions of the assembly of clerics: "In principle, the organization of the 'Azzabas should comprise twelve members, each of whom has a deputy. Their number can go up to twenty four. These are: the Imâm, the Muezzin, the president of the council who is preacher, spiritual guide, scholar and Muphti**;** Five are attendants in the preparation of the funeral; Three teach the reading, writing and memorizing of the Koran".

[8] In that it can take initiatives related to the ordinary life of the believers.

In addition to these three fundamental functions, there is the more general function of guiding people along the right path, which is the spiritual power of the city: monitoring people's actions, suppressing the rebellious and the instigators of corruption, using the means at their disposal, the most powerful being excommunication (*barâ'a*, *tebriya*).

It was in 909, after the destruction of the Rostemid state of Tahert that the councils of clerics were set up in Jebel Nefoussa and in the M'Zab. In the absence of a powerful authority, the community had to substitute councils to continue the work of guidance of the Ibadhites: "This council would be in charge of what used to be called the Hisba, an institution aimed at mandating Good, forbidding Evil and maintaining noble and beautiful ethics". The clerics who are members of the community are the only ones who can sit in the halqa, to the exclusion of any foreigner, even if they live in one of the towns of the M'zab, as is the case with the so-called "aggregated" Malekite Arabs. The choice of new members is subject to lengthy observation and testing of the candidate:

> "As soon as a member of the halqa learns, for example, about the death of one of the members, or becomes aware of the absolute incapacity of one of them, the halqa considers replacing him. They know everyone, so they discern, choose and take advice for one, two or three years, all while sounding out the individual without his knowledge. They observe him while discussing his case".

A candidate thus selected, after long discussions about him and many trials, must accept the seat:

> "When someone is called to the halqa, he has no possibility of refusing. He is even forced to enter. It has happened more than once in history that some people, despite their competence and aptitude, vehemently refused: they themselves felt that they did not have the strength to take on the responsibilities and shunned them.
>
> There comes a time when the members of the halqa hold the strong conviction that the waverers' excuse is well-founded. After additional investigation, they declare: "The truth is that we are dealing with a weakling who is incapable of taking responsibility", and they grant a pardon.

> This happened once or twice during my term of office".

Sheikh Brahim Bayoud reaffirms the kinship of the halqa as known in the M'zab with the doctrinal teachings of the past. It is "the Way (*târiqa*)" which "was brought there by Sheikh Abou Abdellah Ben Abi Bakr"[9].

Finally, as far as the madjliss of the pentapolis is concerned, its foundation could date back to the 15th century, with the arrival in the M'zab of the theologian from Djerba, 'Ammi Saïd. It was in memory of this leading ibadhist that the clerics decided to give the name of Madjliss "'Ammi Saïd" to the council of M'zab towns and to establish its meeting place in the mosque of the cemetery where he was buried. In addition to paying tribute to this prominent figure, the various halqas also had to reach a consensus on neutral areas at the boundaries of the towns to avoid any disputes.

All in all, it was a social organization dominated in practice by the assembly of clerics. For centuries, the community's survival depended on its ability to fend off the threat of dissolution caused by excessive proximity to anything foreign to Ibadhism. This social and religious self-sufficiency was combined with a determination to find means of subsistence so as not to jeopardize the group's physical survival.

The Ibadites of the M'zab will clear and develop this "chebka" of the M'zab. A passion for agriculture, followed later by a real and lasting success in trade, gave this community the means to overcome the economic and material threat that was hanging over it at the time of its foundation (arrival in the M'zab valley).

In the name of an inevitable adaptation to the upheavals that had begun at the end of the nineteenth century and were already looming at the gates of the desert at the beginning of the twentieth, the religious reform largely accompanied, stimulated and legitimised the economic ingenuity of the Ibadhites. Naturally, the fate of this opening up of the community was bitterly debated within the Halqa.

Mid-nineteenth century: when danger comes knocking at the gates of the M'zab

As mentioned earlier on, the Mozabite Ibadites fought hard against very hostile natural conditions. Through serious infighting, they succeeded in making the most of the desert by growing palm groves. But

[9] An Ibadhite theologian who died in 1049 and was responsible for the conversion of the Berbers of the M'zab to Ibadhism.

very rapidly they positioned themselves in the north-south caravan trade. For the chebka is located on the Algiers meridian axis, an ideal gateway to the south. The Ibadites grabbed this opportunity and from the 14th century onwards, they would never let it go.

The first move to capture the North-South trade, after the construction of the main cities and the establishment of palm groves, consisted of in channeling towards the markets of the M'zab valley "the caravans coming from Sudan which transported gold powder, ostrich feathers, various goods and above all slaves, of which the M'zab was a very big consumer, and negotiator as well" (Vigouroux, 1945, p. 87-102). Ghardaïa, the "opulent", was one of the main cities to benefit from this heavenly gift until the 14th century.

The M'zab, with its limited natural resources, found compensation in economic resources. The profile of the desert as a "great reservoir" took shape. The caravans returning from the North, mainly from Algiers, brought back the food products (tea, cereals, etc.) needed by all the regions to the south of the M'zab chebka and the surrounding area. The trading establishments in the valley began to exert a monopoly on trade with the south.

With the decline of the caravan trade from Sudan in the 14th-15th centuries, and faced with the need to support a landlocked population with limited natural resources, the Ibadites of the M'zab turned more resolutely towards northern Algeria and Tunisia.

In an Algeria under Ottoman domination, the Mozabites negotiated the conditions under which they could carry out their commercial activities and stay in the towns, particularly Algiers[10]. The first Mozabite communities were formed in Algiers, with a special status. In addition, this community had its own representative to the "*deylical"* authorities in the person of an "*amin" (*De Paradis, 1885; Lespès , 1925).

Forced to send its members outside the territory it held under strict control, the Ibadite community took steps to ensure absolute respect for its migrants. Initially chosen from among those deemed to be most familiar with its rules and whose ethics were deemed irreproachable, these migrants were then brought together in the towns of the Tell or in Tunisia to be placed under the control of those mandated by the community to ensure their subordination to the social and religious principles of the community. Migration would never be a family affair, as women would never be allowed to leave the M'Zab under any

[10] By signing treaties with the Deys of Algiers.

circumstances whatsoever. Periodical return is an obligation. Migrants have their own places of worship.

The whole logic of conservatism is put into perspective by a framework for migration that gives the image of a community that expands beyond its territory through outgrowths firmly linked to the territory of origin. From then on, the Mozabite centres which multiplied during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also acted as cultural and religious hubs.

Scattered throughout the Algerian Tell, the Mozabite migrant clusters were also present in the south-east (Touggourt, Biskra, etc.), the east (Constantine, Sétif, etc.) and also in Tunis. Traffic between the M'zab and all these regions increased after the First World War with the introduction of modern means of transport[11]. A full-blown network was set up, which was a purveyor not only of goods but of information as well.

After 1918, writes G. Meynier, "Information from the East was concentrated in Jebel Nefoussa and Zouara. Others also came regularly from Djerba. From the two centres of the little Syrte they were redistributed towards Tunis and the west thanks to relay informants who were stationed at the main distribution crossroads: the Nefta oasis, the important border market of El Meridj, Touggourt" and eventually ended up in the M'Zab" (Meynier, 1981 p. 624). Similarly, a correspondent based in Tunis sent news from France to the Mozabites in Constantine, news which were then redirected to the M'zab valley.

In fact, the economic needs represented by the migratory networks meant an exposure to external cultural, religious and political realities as well.

Among the Ibadite clerics, the trends that were to materialize later, i.e. Reformism and Conservatism, could be perceived in the background. The advocates of change were already contemplating the seething of ideas in the Middle East and keeping a close eye on the progress of the Revival ideas through contacts in Tunisia. The conservatives, somewhat skeptical, put forward the sacrosanct principle of the purity of the rite and scrutinized the slightest innovation in customs or the slightest swerve off the doctrine. With the development of commercial exchanges, some were already expressing concern about the ability of the community to cope with the inevitable adaptation to a changing world. The others, while aware of the need to survive through commercial exchanges, were

[11] The first bus network between the north and the M'zab was inaugurated in 1915. See Meynier (1981). p. 623 et sq.

pushing through a number of decisions (such as the re-socialisation of migrants, the ban on the introduction of technical innovations, etc.) to tighten their grip on what they considered the undeniable assets of the community, and therefore on moral, cultural and religious impenetrability.

But this debate, which would become meaningful just before the First World War, was overshadowed by a unifying and crucial issue throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. It was the French occupation of Algeria.

The M'zab would witness the slow progression of the French towards southern Algeria with alarming concern. From the point of view of this community, which had taken refuge in the desert, this was the worst possible ordeal: to be placed under the rule and supervision of the "infidel". When Laghouat fell in 1852, the alternatives for the Ibadite community narrowed considerably: Resist, with the certainty that it would be no match for them or negotiate. For the halqas, the shockwave was enormous, because in one way or another, their religious and cultural autarcy, including the refusal of any contact with the "infidel", was undermined. However, after lengthy discussions, the halqas agreed to Marshal Randon's Treaty of 24 January 1853[12].

The French occupying authority, while asserting that the M'zab was now under its supervision, vouched for its non-interference in the internal affairs of the community. Furthermore, if it subjected the Mozabites' vital trade to the duties and taxes that had been imposed since the beginning of the occupation, it did in no way curb the flow of migration and trade. This partial autonomy was, of course, subject to the principle of non-assistance to the Algerian rebels and insurgents attempting to seek refuge or support in the M'zab valley.

For the time being, the "infidel" was not in the house, Despite controlling access and movements. Almost 20 years later, using various subterfuges as convenient pretexts, the colonial authorities decided to place the M'zab under direct military control. However, the Proclamation of the Annexation pledged to impose "no agha, no caïd, no Arab cadi". The Ibadite community was to retain its traditional institutions "as far as possible", in particular the "Ibadite sheikhs who were to administer justice" (Grossman, 1969, p. 7-8). Despite this provision, the halqas believed that the seeds of dissolution into their community had now been introduced into the Ibadite movement. They opposed a really tight closure of the community by prohibiting any contact, any borrowing from the

[12] See the text of this treaty in Grossman, 1969. p. 6.

new standards conveyed by the "infidel". The French soldiers in the Ghardaïa military circle had to be isolated. The occupation of 1882, however, coincided with an upturn in the M'zab trade with the North at the same time as profits were reinvested in the development of the palm groves. Furthermore, as we have seen above, the migratory flows were opening a window on the outside world. Potential dynamics were emerging within the community in favour of greater integration into the new realities. On the other hand, the French presence 'intra muros' had fostered religious resistance and thwarted all economic initiatives as well as any connection with the technical innovations they had generated. The decisions taken by the French administration in terms of compulsory schooling (1893) in the French system, the control of religious education in the community, and later (in 1912) compulsory conscription, were seen as genuine attacks on the core principles of the community. In the halqas, the most virulent clerics, those least inclined to openness, triumphed over the positions of the less hard-lining pioneers of the reformist current. Those measures were excellent arguments for pointing at the "corruption of minds and moral". Indeed, the measures intended to supplement the presence of the troops caused a cataclysmic reaction among the clergy. In 1901, for example, the opening of a brothel for the soldiers of the "Cercle" and the circulation of alcoholic beverages in Ghardaïa confirmed to the 'Azzabas that an intolerable and destructive pollution had made its way into the heart of the community (Grossman,1969, p. 12)[13]. Is this the price for entry into modernity then? The passions of the conservative clerics were stimulated. The reformists were obliged to respect the consensus of the community; all the more so as, in their eyes too, all those measures were downright intolerable. But unlike their conservative peers, they will in no case give up on trying to find the most "reasonable" way of getting the community out of a rigid stance which, from their point of view, threatens both its economic survival (by blocking vital emerging dynamics) and its religious existence. For even the Islamic world, which was beginning to resonate in the M'zab, was grappling with the problem of intellectual, cultural and religious renewal. Should the Ibadites of the M'zab cling to an unbending austerity and a rigid stance that is drying them out?

[13] This measure, which sparked strong anger and protest, was withdrawn in 1908 by order of the General Government.

Early 20th Century: Religious Reform in Defense

The precursors of religious reform

Home-grown and precocious, the Religious Reformation in the Ibadite milieu was, as we have already noted, stimulated by a debate caused by the pressure that external factors such as colonization and the contacts brought about by the very strong movement of Ibadites outside the Algerian borders, particularly in Tunisia, had imposed on them.

However, a minority of clerics within the community had already begun taking action in the mid-nineteenth century to shake off the paralyzing inertia of the halqas. These halqas held absolute power over the Ibadhites of the Oued M'zab valley and the two outlying cities of Bériane and Guerrara.

A cleric of great erudition, Muhammad Atfayyach, initiated the first brainstorming sessions and the approach to the reformist movement. Born in 1818 in Béni-Isguen, he lived until 1914. His life was therefore marked by the greatest ordeals of the community and the periods when the migratory waves of the Ibadites of the M'zab were becoming tangible.

Born into a family of intellectuals, attentive to the teachings of the first theologians of the community who were the precursors of the Reformation, and whose writings he had commented on[14], he received his training in his native M'zab, at Mélika to be precise. It was his brother, another scholar from the community, who perfected his training[15]. At the age of 20, the man gained prominence through his knowledge[16] and his ambition to have an influence on the destiny of the community by introducing ideas which sounded subversive in the eyes of the clerics, in particular the "guardians of the purity of the rite" of Beni-Isguen. As soon as he mentioned the combat against religious innovations and clearly stated his ambitions to debate certain aspects of the rite, the 'Azzabas of the "learned city" attacked him in the most ruthless manner, thus forcing him to take refuge in the "city of light" (Bounoura). Brahim Bayoud, the spiritual heir to this religious figure, writes on this subject:

> "If we had to mention names whose fame spread to the whole of the M'zab, we could name among those we know and who became famous:

[14] Especially Tamini, Abdelaziz, (1718-1808) author of the famous legal treatise *Kitâb al Nil*.

[15] On Atfayyach, Mohamed, see: Pierre Cuperly 1972; Debouz, 1980. Grossman, 1969.

[16] "A tireless worker, by the age of twenty he had read the entire library of Ben Youcef, Ibrahim and his ancestor "Abdel Aziz Al Tamini and was already recognised as the greatest scholar of the M'zab". (Cuperly, 1991).

> Sheikh "Ammi Saïd" of Djerba, of course, Sheikh "Abderahamane Al Kurti", and Sheikh "Abou Mahdi Aïssa Ben Ismaïl". Among the men of science, Sheikh "Abdel 'Aziz Al Tamini" is also still very much alive.... Finally, the renown of Sheikh Atfayich overwhelmed and, so to speak, eclipsed the other scholars' notoriety in this last period, the 19th century, since he died in 1914, shortly before the Second World War.
>
> The most prominent figure in the M'zab, both from a scientific point of view and in terms of the influence of his personality, was Atfayich.... Although he was recognized as a leader in the fields of science and religion, he was not immune to attacks from enemies and opponents[17]. Put to the test, he was indeed… and sorely, by a cabal set up against him[18]. He was even challenged by his students. Despite this opposition, his personality eclipsed the others'. As a matter of fact, it was a monument of science he left behind"[19] .

In fact, the "Pole of Imâms" (*Qutb al imâmat*), as M. Atfayich was called, attracted criticism as soon as he decided to "revive the old ways of thinking and reasoning in order to give religion a modern structure while safeguarding the unaltered crucial principle..." (Grossman, 1969). Moreover, his own training and intellectual work predispose him to open-mindedness. With the ambition of linking Ibadhism to the Islamic *Nahdha*, he forged himself a profile as an intellectual passionate about Arabic literature, keen on a perfect mastery of the grammar of the language and above all open to the circumstances of the century. He was a very prolific writer. (Cuperly , 1991). This cleric, who was convinced of the need to break free of his torpor and routine, held in suspicion by his conservative peers, finally ended up back to Beni-Isguen where he was admitted to the halqa of the "learned city". He founded a school and won the loyalty of students who would later continue his work and his ideal of Reformation. His activities were concentrated mainly in Guerrara and Bériane, which he often visited. Anyway, in spite of important exchanges of letters with religious figures from the Middle East (Mohamed Abdou

[17] These were the conservative clerics of Beni-Isguen in particular.
[18] Which led him to flee to Mélika.
[19] Bayoud, Brahim, *op., cit*.

in particular), he travelled very little outside the community. He also travelled to Constantine, Ouargla and Annaba, where his disciples were based, forming the first framework of the reformist network to come.

Experiencing repulsion towards the foreign domination and, in particular, its excesses, which he witnessed in practice with the arrival of the French in the M'zab (1883), he developed a strategy different from the conservative clerics'. In his view, the occupying authorities had to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the community and stop governing with "zeal". This is how he vehemently denounced both the provisions of 1892, placing the educational system of the community under supervision, and the provocation of the military hierarchy of the Ghardaïa circle (House of Tolerance, 1901). He also harshly criticized compulsory conscription. On the other hand, however, he called on the Mozabite Ibadites to "shake things up", to stop shutting themselves off from any contact and any appropriation of modernity. He particularly believed it necessary to move away from the "old fashioned" ways of transmitting knowledge and to open up to new methods and new knowledge. Needless to dwell on the certainties of the traditional rite any longer, it had to be revitalized and made more capable of adapting to the realities of the new century.

After all, it was implicitly a similar compromise that the reformist majorities ("Sunnis") proposed, but a little later. From the very beginning, the conservative clerics pointed to a compromise that was all the more unacceptable as it showed itself to be pragmatic by claiming to capture the benefits of the culture, be it material, of the "infidel". In their eyes, this was the worst the community could accept.

Mr. Atfayich died in 1914, without having really structured a movement or even federated the energies going in that direction. But he did have the foresight to build up a small core of committed followers. Reformation was underway in a community still run by the halqas, at the hands of traditionalist clerics determined to oppose" intellectual, religious and material corruption".

Guerrara: a city of dissent and a privileged space for reformation

Far from the pentapolis, which was born long after it, Guerrara was a community-based territory through which subversion had made its way. Indeed, after the death of its initiator, the religious reform marked a retreat. Dispersed, fought over within the halqas, with very little control over the traditional education network, it was doomed to invent everything and above all to conquer a stronghold. Teachers committed to

Atfayich's reformist ideas pursued his mission. A pupil, Brahim Bayoud, emerged at the turn of the 1920s, with the ambition of "guiding" the community along the path of religious (and therefore social) reform, while justifying its economic expansion as legitimate.

Brahim Bayoud was born in 1899 in Guerrara. At the age of 6 he began his Koranic studies in a school that was sensitive to the teachings of Atfayich[20]. He completed this initiation cycle in 1908 and began a cycle of perfection which put him in direct contact with Mohamed Atfayich's former pupils, notably El Hadj Benyoucef, Sheikh El Abriki and above all El Hadj Amar Yahi. It was the latter who introduced the young Brahim Bayoud to the world of modern knowledge and religious reform. According to the various biographical texts about him, the young pupil had a studious and ambitious profile. He was keen on acquiring not only the religious knowledge necessary for a man who aspired to become a cleric, but also the knowledge of Arabic literature that the reformist masters were committed to introducing in the community schools they controlled[21].

At the age of 20, Brahim Bayoud had already travelled extensively, first in the company of his father (a shopkeeper) and then for training purposes. Naturally, it was Tunis that gave him his intellectual structure. During his time at Zitouna in 1920-1921, he was exposed to reformist ideas through the press and personal connections.

Contacts with the Tunisian Destour brought him closer to the political struggles underway in the Arab world. But it was in his native M'zab and in Guerrara that his vocation would take shape and consolidate, and that the project of conquering wider areas for the benefit of religious reform would clearly materialize.

Brahim Bayoud was initially appointed as assistant to his master in charge of teaching. At the time, his only interest was concentrated on the mosque, a crucial lever in the exercise of religious power over society. Thus, the halqa of the 'Azzabas was already becoming a serious matter of concern. The progress of the reformist project depended on its conquest. Brahim Bayoud devoted his teaching to disseminating reformist ideals

[20] Ben Youcef, Mohamed-El Hadj, on the life and work of Bayoud, Brahim, in addition to his interview already cited, see Hamou, Mohamed, Nouri, Aïssa (1987). See also the autobiographical writings of Bayoud, Brahim, A'malî fî al thawra. Ghardaïa, Imprimerie arabe, 1990. Al mudjtama'u al masdjidî. Ghardaïa, Imprimerie arabe, 1989. There is a large body of literature produced by literate Mozabites and academics in the many libraries in Mozabite towns. Most of this literature is in Arabic.

[21] In 1920, the teachers from the Atfayich school were in the minority but still present in the M'zab towns. In El Attef, Ghardaïa, Melika, Bounoura and Bériane, as well as Guerrara, there was a reformist personality.

and, according to Atfayich's intentions, his aim was to train an Ibadite religious elite committed to those ideals: "My ambition, through my teaching and related activities, is that of Sheikh Mohamed Abdou: to train minds committed to the Koran, and reformist disciples who would be the soldiers of the religion thus reformed"[22].

From 1921 onwards, Brahim Bayoud multiplied his activities and proclamations in favour of his project. The halqa of Guerrara was not spared by his critics, but he avoided confronting it directly and head-on. He preferred to use his skills as a cleric to gain membership. The man who was "highly educated, intelligent, knowing how to captivate his audience, having made many information trips..." [23] also illustrated himself by challenging the various provisions of the colonial authority and its military representatives in the territory of Ghardaïa. This action caused trouble on this side of the border, but it granted him legitimacy among the Guerrara halqa clerics.

They accepted him as a member and, in 1923 entrusted him with the responsibility inside the mosque of the precious task of "mouderes" and preacher. The reformist project had found its first foothold and its first ground. It began to take off.

The divide: Reformers versus Conservatives

It was on the grounds of a complete revision of the teaching system, with a view to modernizing it and overcoming the inertia of the halqa clerics, that the newborn reformist movement based its approach. But very quickly the area of reform embraced other issues linked to the economic and social life of the Ibadites, through the demand for access to the "benefits of technical progress". At this point, the reformist ethics converged with and recognized as legitimate the aspirations of a merchant elite that was undergoing rapid change and growing in power.

From 1920 to 1940, the clerics who embraced the reform were mainly occupied with conquering the pentapolis from the dissenting stronghold of Guerrara. In addition, the networks formed by the Ibadite communities outside the M'zab had to be rallied to the new religious movement. It was therefore a period of pooling energies, expansion and, above all, confrontations with the halqas who, understanding what was at stake, threw down all their authority and also mobilized powerful networks to maintain their power over the community.

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[22] Quoted in Nouri (1973, p. 43).

[23] Monographie économique et politique du territoire militaire de Ghardaïa. 1952-53. Chapter on the reformist party and reformist personalities. Archives du SHAT, 1H 4804, dossier 4.

In 1925, the first Higher Reformist Institute opened in Guerrara. The El Hayat Institute, directed by Brahim Bayoud, had the ambition of offering training beyond the rudimentary curricula of the communal schools. Its main objective was to create a reformist elite by recruiting from all the towns in the M'zab. At the same time, another leading figure in the movement, Abou L'yakthan, launched a newspaper, Oued M'zab, designed to give visibility and audience to Reformism.

This strong personality also undertook, with the help of shopkeepers who were receptive to new ideas, to run training courses for students at the Zitouna**.** The new movement began to open up. The major objectives of the reformation were clearly spelt out:

- Reject the isolation of the Ibadite community, as this led to stagnation and risk of its demise:
- Religion is not opposed to progress as long as it glorifies God and not His creature.
- Adopt the principle of French-Muslim education for children and reduce the number of illiterates.
- Reform community education in Arabic by modernizing its methods and opening up its programmes to secular disciplines (mathematics, natural sciences, literature, etc).
- Improve the economic and social conditions of the Mozabites by adopting technical progress.
- Educate girls in the reformed system and in Arabic.
- Possibility for local literates, by virtue of their competence, to access positions in the civil service.
- Protect the community from the contagion of foreign practices by preserving its ancestral structures.

In the process, the reformers made the implicit compromise of not rejecting the realities of the century, by putting the community in battle array to capture modernisation. It should be noted, however, that these objectives did not go far in terms of social reorganisation per se, and therefore remained very limited in this respect. From the very beginning, the vital issue of preserving the social body was very clearly stated. For the Ibadite reformers, it was possible to remain oneself while opening up to others, just as progress was not incompatible with religion insofar as it was an instrumental value "reappropriated" from intellectual, cultural and religious places that had been carefully chosen and controlled by the group. In the new economic context, the group cannot remain inert and passive. Its survival depends on its realistic capacity to accumulate goods, to trade and to break away from precariousness.

The clerics of the halqas reacted all the more violently as the matter was not one of detail, particularly in terms of technical progress. In their eyes, the reformists had made a clean break by not only accepting to coexist with the "infidel", but also by opening the doors of the community to corruption and pollution through teaching, changes in lifestyle and, worst of all, by consenting to being enlisted into administrative functions.

Thus they multiplied threats against the believers who wished to place their children in the French educational system, and adamantly rejected the schooling of girls, even in the traditional and reformist systems. They reiterated the ban on women travelling outside the M'zab. The new means of transport that were appearing were considered to be contrary to tradition insofar as they encouraged closer relations and exchanges with the "infidels". They shunned the introduction of electricity and, in 1931, protested against the introduction of the telephone, which they considered as a reprehensible innovation, particularly when, as the reformists would do, it was used to check the appearance of the lunar crescent to determine the start of Ramadhan.

When the reformists approved the collection of taxes and market duties to fund the budgets of the official Jema'as councils, the clerics expressed indignation at this act, which, in their view, consisted of "padding the pockets of the infidel"[24].

Naturally, the reformist supporters were badly treated but persisted. Sheikh Brahim Bayoud notes the difficulty of the early days of religious reform: "All the mosques of the M'zab were opposed to reformism. While this movement relied on law, argumentation, reason and demonstration, the opposition used its material resources, the relief of a religion quick to hurl anathemas and other less avowed means" (Grossamn).

The controversy was fierce and the rupture was quickly sealed as the conservative clerics pronounced the tebriya against Sheikh Brahim Bayoud in 1935. The latter persisted in reaffirming his project:

> "Adopt the practical means of present-day civilization, and as far as possible, in a progressive manner, the forms of modern life with their benefits, in particular the methods that are appropriate today in terms of agriculture, crafts, industry, trade, education and intellectual culture. Methods based on experimentation and

[24] On the counter-fires of the conservatives see Grossaman, and Ba El Hadj (1972).

> observation of actions. Declare routine and scholastic procedures to be sterile and reject them as outdated and retrograde. Pay no attention to the hateful and impotent recriminations of the ignorant monks back home and stick to the universally accepted view that science belongs to no particular country or religion" (Gasherau-Carreau,1968).

Those ideas were developed in detail in memoirs submitted throughout the 1930s and 1950s. In particular, in 1938, 1944 and 1947, charters of demands were presented by the reformists, who had conquered a large part of the M'zab and exerted a definite influence there, including within certain halqas. Concretely and roughly speaking, after gaining a strong position in Guerrara, whose halqa was converted to the new current, the reformists gained ground and an audience in Ghardaïa (1928, ***Association El Islah***), in Beriane, El Atteuf and Mélika. In Beni-Isguen, the city of conservation, they succeeded in gaining sympathy but found no serious support to shake up the conservative clerics who held the "holy" city in their tight grip.

The reformist school network made considerable progress. In the communities settled in Algeria, the reformist movement succeeded in rallying large sections of Mozabite traders, particularly in Algiers and Constantine. As early as 1929, the Oued M'zab Party, which had reformist leanings but was founded by Mozabites wishing to fight the decisions of the French authorities (taxes, military service, etc.), received the support of the Bayoudist reformists. Politically, the *Bayoudists*, unlike the *Badissian* reformists, were fully involved in the affairs of the century. They ran for elected offices, first at the local level (official Djem'as, municipal councils) and then in Algeria (delegate to the Algerian Assembly)[25].

The reformists were to demand that the M'zab be tied back to the north of Algeria and that the military administration be brought to an end; and in 1950 they finally won their case. This sparked the fury of the conservatives, who accused them of forfeiture, as this attachment was seen as an assimilation of the community into the civil laws in force, thus putting an end to the system of relative and protective autonomy as it had been set out in 1882.

In fact, it was a bad trial. The reformists and their leader had always cherished the hope that their approach, while linking the M'zab with the rest of Algeria, would lead to genuine autonomy for the community. But

[25] Won by Sheikh Bayoud in 1947 and 1951.

in a strong position, i.e. a community that will have reaped enough of the benefits of modernization to govern itself:

> "We wish to turn the M'zab into a modern country, not to set it back to a medieval age, and freeze it into a narrow, anachronistic conservatism. All the structural reforms that we are calling for today are essentially inspired by this principle, which consists of honouring the legitimate feeling and the inalienable right of a people that wants to remain itself and to govern itself democratically and internally,, a principle which, in our opinion, is the only road to salvation"[26].

Behind the scenes, the reformists set up a project, based on strong economic and social positions, to lead the M'zab towards a situation of autonomy, even if this did not really mean severing it from Algeria. In fact, after 1954, they gradually shifted towards an outright support for the independence movement and joined the FLN. The reformists were to throw their full weight and their moral and religious authority behind the structures of the FLN, particularly after 1959/60.

A "secret committee" chaired by Sheikh Brahim Bayoud was set up in 1960. According to the few sources available on this subject, the aim was, in addition to solidarity with the global community, to prepare for the advent of independence and to negotiate a "place of choice" in the national game of cards which preserved the autonomy of the Ibadite community[27]. In fact, the Mozabites were able to preserve a relative autonomy with a very subtle balanced game and very little political ostentation.

Reform Ethics between the Local and the Universal: Education, Trade and Self-Reliance

The strength of Bayoudist reformism undoubtedly lies in its capacity at justifying, as legitimate, the aspirations of a trading bourgeoisie which

[26] M'zab charter of demands, presented by the permanent delegation of the Mozabite people to the Governor General of Algeria. 10 June 1944.

[27] A report on *Les Mozabites et la rébellion* (14 September 1960, no. 5000/État-major Interarmées/2/Études générales) pro M'Zab vides detailed information on this issue. According to this report, the reformists' "secret committee" even discussed or considered the possibility of an independent M'zab from Tilghment to Metlili. This committee was chaired by Sheikh Bayoud, Brahim, and included the most prominent figures in the ibadhite reform movement. In SHAT archives, 1H 2106

had been gaining considerable prominence since the turn of the 1920s. In the Ibadite community, the fight of the reformists in defence of up-to-date knowledge largely won over convictions, especially as the reformed schools had a profile that was fully compatible with the requirements of modern teaching methods and provided the Ibadites with the social standards in line with their rite.

The French network is taking part in this window of opportunity for dialogue with a technical civilization, which had been vigorously reclaimed as property since the birth of the reformist movement. Finally, if we were to assess both the economic and social situation between 1920 and 1960, as well as their evolution over the decades following independence, we would easily conclude that the reformers, such as Sheikh Brahim Bayoud, did not preach in vain to this community living in the Algerian desert. In 1938, the reformists detailed their project in a text known as "Our guiding ideas on the reform of the M'zab"[28]. This text is very well analyzed by Grossman.

Those ideas, defended in the 1930s and 1940s, were taken up again much later (1971) by Brahim Bayoud, who gives details of his arguments and sheds light on the intellectual dispositions of the movement he formally founded in the 1920s. We shall therefore run the risk of making our statement rather lengthy by quoting a long passage from the statements of this leading figure. It is highly plausible that these remarks, made in 1971, are part of the current debate on the dialogue of civilizations and the position of Muslims in the 21st century. Even if we note some very conservative social inflexions directed at the Ibadites of the M'zab, the discourse strikes us as being, on the whole, truly insightful[29]*:*

> "The greatest problem today is to reconcile the survival of religion with modern evolution. In my opinion, this poses no problem to intelligent people who have grasped the essence of religion, on the one hand, and the reality of scientific and technical

[28] Full text in Grossman (1969). It is very often reproduced in summary form in various archive reports. This text is in fact a summary of the full report presented by a delegation to the Military Commander of the Southern Territories in Laghouat on August 15, 1938.

[29] As a reminder, radical Islamists targeted Algerian schools and universities in the 1990s, calling for a boycott on the pretext that the secular teaching given there undermined the purity of the Muslim religion. Several hundred schools, colleges and technical training centres were burnt down and dozens of teachers were murdered. In the light of those events and actions, it is easy to understand the reason why we believe that the words of Bayoud Brahim, who died in 1989, on the eve of the great turmoil, are so insightful.

> evolution, on the other. If we understand religion and science according to the reality of what they are, there is no contradiction, no opposition: there is no problem. In other words, man can be religious and even extremely attached to his religion, and at the same time be involved in his use of reason, his use of recent discoveries and scientific progress in every field. Science is opposed to religion only in the eyes of the ignorant, and, except in the case of false beliefs, we have never, in the history of the world, seen science set against religion, or vice versa. As for us, we have models in these very churches. In fact, I have spent considerable time studying this problem. One of the things that truly impressed me was that, although they were religious, the Men of Church had an uncommonly high profile in scientific and technical knowledge that is in the most diverse sciences. Yet, they have not restricted their work to theology.
>
> We will never find in technology or in any other science, a philosophy which runs contrary to this view".

Nor shall we find in religion any reason for the prohibition of the use and benefit of the latest discoveries of recent times.

Religion does not have to tell you: "Don't sit on a chair when our ancestors used to sit on the floor"; or "Don't wear a wristwatch, don't put a clock on the wall", that was never done before; nor again: do not use this tape recorder to record, nor electricity to light you... Undoubtedly if these devices had existed at the time of 'Isâ son of Mary - upon him be salvation - and of Mohamed - upon him be prayer and salvation - they would have used them to propagate their religion....Thus, man can have the fear of God - may He be praised and glorified! - to the point of scrupulousness, and at the same time enjoy all that civilization produces, provided that he understands that drinking wine is not civilization; it is in fact forbidden in Islam and is in no way a sign of progress. The same is true of tobacco: science now declares that it is forbidden because it damages health and also leads to excessive expenditure. We could make similar remarks about debauchery and adultery: such vices run counter to religion and have nothing to do with civilization.

Religion forbids lying, usury, slander, turpitude, theft, unjust oppression, monopolization and wrongful acquisition of other people's property. It forbids despising the poor and gobbling up their property. These acts are forbidden in any religion. What's more, they are the antithesis of civilization. And despite all this, people are now claiming that religion is preventing us from achieving civilization!".

Brahim Bayoud takes up the arguments that his movement, which had conquered a large part of the M'zab in the mid-twentieth century, had hammered onto the "ignorant monks" of the halqas. The belief that progress should be appropriated to preserve the morals of the community is clearly underlined. Brahim Bayoud believes that this approach has paid off:

> "Personally, I've observed an evolution since the First World War, especially in industry and trade. The Mozabites were in a weak position. But civilization has made its way and, especially today, the Mozabite people are successfully integrating their attachment to religion with the use of recent discoveries and the resources of authentic civilizations, not those falsely appearing to be so".
>
> "From the beginning of the 20th century to this day, he has used, in commerce and education, modern means and recent discoveries with regard to housing, schools, mosques: loudspeakers, tape recorders, appliances, tables, chairs, etc…
>
> Besides it all he is very attached to religion. He reconciles religion and life on this earth, not turpitudes and reprehensible things."

This assessment is not far from reality. At the turn of the 1920s, the M'zab was going through a genuine economic transformation, which the reformist movement had strongly endorsed as legitimate and had even encouraged initially.

Reformism and Modernization: Progress harnessed and validated

From 1910 onwards, the Mozabite trading migrations became a signal of the real change within the community which had taken refuge in the arid chebka of the Oued M'zab and was mainly concerned with clearing and developing the palm groves. In fact, the funds accumulated in the

early days of emigration to the Tell often returned to the palm groves where they were reinvested.

The Mozabite trade was steadily becoming a mainstay of the region's economy and expanding rapidly. It even took over certain sectors in Algerian cities such as Algiers. At the turn of the 1920s, the Mozabite grocery shop was the emblematic sign of the pre-eminence of this communal trade. Then, the first innovations gave a boost to these activities. The first large Mozabite companies were created. Transport activities, which encouraged the movement of people and goods, were launched in the 1910s between Algiers and Ghardaïa, and Ghardaïa and Laghouat (Meynier, 1980). The transport lines not only opened up the M'zab but also enabled the capitalization of the ancient traditions and networks of the caravan trade.

The Mozabite trading bourgeoisie, whose innovations provoked strong reactions from the clerics of the Halqas, was very enterprising and it quickly integrated the new forms of economic organization. As a result, Mozabite businesses with a wide outreach were created through the formation of groups and associations[30]. Between 1920 and 1930, the Mozabites began to make a breakthrough in the industrial and wholesale sectors. 18.5% of the large traders and industrialists recorded for this period were of Mozabite origin[31]. Even then, the economic survival of the Mozabites depended on trade for 70% of their income. The farmers who were the Ibadites of the M'zab rapidly and impressively converted to industrial and commercial activities. Aspirations for social change were also apparent among the big traders, who wanted to send their children to modern schools. Their networks will be funding the first training courses at the Zitouna from 1914 onwards. Without going into any further detail, we can say that the period from 1930 to 1950, i.e. around twenty years, saw the economic reorganisation of the Mozabite community. A significant proportion of traders joined the ranks of the reformers who provided them with moral and religious backing. In return, they provided substantial funding for the reformist enterprise, in particular for the development of its educational and cultural network. The most famous example is that of Khobzi Aïssa from Guerrara, who was gaining an imposing economic stature and was the main supporter of the reformists.

[30] This is the case of “Société des transports du sud algérien” and the company “Feth Enour”. See Meynier (1981, p. 665).
[31] 31% are Kabyle and 13% are from Tlemcen.

After 1940, Guerrara itself very quickly caught up with the other towns of the M'zab[32].

It should be noted that thanks to the reformists, who made it a motif of their struggle against the conservatives, the Mozabites adopted the conveniences of modern life, in particular electricity, the telephone and the use of passenger transport. In reformist strongholds such as Bériane and Guerrara, women began to join their husbands in the towns of the North, and school attendance was by and large making considerable progress. In the retail trade sector, over 60% of the activities are monopolized by the Ibadites, compared with 20 to 21% for the "aggregated" Arabs of the M'Zab. Food distribution and the cloth trade are the two activities most favoured by the Ibadites, who are very poorly represented in the licensed beverage sector. Depending on the rite, there is a clear division of labour in the M'zab.

The Mozabite community, which at the turn of the 1930s was prohibited by the conservative clerics of the Halqas from using modern techniques (cars, electricity, etc.), finally adopted the approach of the reformists and gained access to them, as can be testified by the businesses set up by a vast majority of Ibadites (electricity, fuel, etc.). In addition, during the 1950s, the M'zab economy moved from a commercial phase to a phase of a quite significant industrial production.

As to Education, by removing the obstacle of the ban traditionally brandished by the conservatives, Reformism gave rise to a trend of school attendance which very quickly made up for the delays accumulated before the First World War. But the conservative clerics of the Halqas will succeed in blocking the access to education for girls for quite a long time. At the end of the 1950s, when Kabylia, for example, began to send its girls to school, the M'zab had only 20 Ibadite girls attending school out of a total of 882 pupils. Aggregated Arabs and Israelites were quicker to adopt schooling for girls. The towns most committed to reform, Bériane and Guerrara, provided all of the 40 Ibadite girls attending school. As for the Ibadite boys, 90% of them attended school, while the overall school attendance rate for all the populations of the M'zab was 80%[33].The M'zab school network was relatively well developed, with 13 schools in 1958/59 admitting 3,895 boys and 882 girls. Naturally, the reformist and traditionalist networks duplicated this network while

[32] In 1959-60, the Guerraris owned 270 commercial businesses in the north. The "Khobzi & frères" company employed 400 people and had a network spread between Algiers, Biskra, Touggourt and Ouargla. On the whole, this reformist bastion began to make commercial inroads from 1940 onwards. See Carreau-Gasherau (1968).

[33] *Ibid., Monographie des Chaambas de Metlili, 1960.*

effectively and vigorously enforcing the "counter-socialisation" deemed imperative for the preservation of the rite. Broadly speaking, there are 4 very large medersas providing reformist teaching: El-Hayat in Guerrara, El Feth in Bériane, El Nahdha in El Atteuf and El Islah in Ghardaïa. More than a dozen Koranic schools are controlled by the reformists.

The conservatives have no higher-ranking medersas, to the exception of the medersa in the "holy" city of Beni-Isguen. That one has 10 traditionalist Koranic schools out of the 24 controlled by the conservative clerics in the M'zab towns[34]. That these networks were far from being downgraded by the French network is an important fact to remember. Most of the Muslim clerics and magistrates were trained there and the mission of these institutions was far from being a simple conservative support. A genuine cultural and intellectual life revolved around them, which neither colonial domination nor the advent of a National State would uproot.

By way of conclusion, we may briefly summarize the main features of this religious Reform movement. Ibadite Reformism has been going hand in hand with real modernization in the economic sphere. Given the particular nature of this Community, its very existence depended on the capture of progress. It was therefore in order to preserve itself as such that this Community adopted Reformism, the discourse and practice of which legitimately lifted its reticence about innovation. But as we have seen, this could only be effective if the protagonists of Reformism agreed to the commitment of being thoughtful spokespersons caring for the preservation of the social body, in other words protecting its values, preserving its morals; in short, keeping it out of the reach of disbanding elements. It was also from Guerrara and as Chairman of the assembly of clerics ('Azzabas), who guaranteed the group its identity, that Brahim Bayoud conquered a large part of the M'zab, without however undermining the virtual monopoly of the conservatives in one of the oldest towns in the M'zab: Béni-Isguen. Moreover, the reformist audience was weak in Melika and Bounoura, where the conservatives held strong positions. Ghardaïa and El-Atteuf were equally divided between the two currents. Béni-Isguen had thus gained an image, carefully sustained, of being the "Heart" of Ibadite authenticity and of "Holy City".

Home-grown, precocious, built around the very strong personality of Brahim Bayoud and the stronghold of Guerrara, distant from the five founding towns of the community, Ibadite reformism would coordinate

[34] *Monographie des Chaambas de Metlil, 1960.*

its action with the Association of Reformist Ulemas in 1931. However, this link should be seen as a means of representing the Ibadite Community and a means of gaining recognition at a global level.

On a strictly religious level, the Algerian reformists understood how difficult it would be to bypass the autonomy of the Ibadite community with such a distinctive character, and respond to their eagerness to integrate it symbolically, at the same time.

The articulation between the Ibadite Reformism and the Reformism initiated by Ben Badis**,** between the local and the global, can be identified as a compromise in which everyone finds something to his liking (symbolic integration of the local, of specificity for the Badissians, recognition and legitimization at a global level for Bayoudism) without, however, ceasing to be oneself (Ibadite) and at home (M'zab).

Finally, it should be noted that a process of elevation also emerged in the wake of Ibadite Reformism. Brahim Bayoud, even beyond the colonial situation, appeared less as a party leader than as a prominent dignitary, at least in Guerrara and in the towns that followed his preaching. He was a notorious figure, deeply invested in challenging long-held beliefs while maintaining the community organization that the Ibadite Berbers had established in the 11th century to ensure their survival in the Chebka of the Oued M'zab.

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