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## Ibādīsm in the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Mâtūrīdite) Fıraq Tradition -With Special Reference to Abū Muṭī' Makḥūl b. al-Faḍl al-Nasafī's (d. 318/930) Kitāb al-Radd-

Doğu Hanefî (-Mâtūrîdî) Fıraq Geleneğinde İbâzîlik -Ebû Muṭî' Mekhûl b. el-Fazl en-Nesefî'nin (ö. 318/930) Kitâbu'r-Redd'ine Özel Referansla-

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## Ibādīsm in the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition -With Special Reference to Abū Muṭī' Makhūl b. al-Faḍl al-Nasafī's (d. 318/930) *Kitāb al-Radd*\*

### Abstract

Compiling the political-theological groups and doctrines that emerged within Islamic society has been a genre of literature that Muslim scholars have paid attention since the early periods. While some of these works, generally focusing on the ideas of these groups, attempt to gather data about them, others are not content with this and aim to demonstrate their erroneous views and the extent to which they have deviated from the right path. Therefore, heresiography has often proceeded not as a field study but on a theoretical basis and, at times, with ideological concerns. Various researchers have suggested that within the broader heresiographical literature, certain traditions of sect classification have emerged, distinguished by their approaches, classifying methods, and the types of information they use regarding the sects. One such classification tradition is the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, which emerged in the Khorasan and especially Transoxiana regions, developed by authors who defined themselves in terms of theological identity as Ḥanafite and, in later centuries, as an extension of this, Māturīdite. The most striking feature of this tradition is that it places the 73-sect ḥadīth at the center of its classification, reaching this number through a mathematical formulation in which six main heretical sects, each consisting of twelve sub-groups, are combined with the one saved sect:  $6 \times 12 + 1 = 73$ . This study examines how the Eastern Ḥanafite (Māturīdite) Heresiographical (Firaq) Tradition, with its distinctive characteristics, perceived Ibādīsm through the narrative found in its earliest and most comprehensive surviving example: *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-bida' wa al-ahwā' al-dālla* by Abū Muṭī' Makhūl b. al-Faḍl an-Nasafī's (d. 318/930). This work has been chosen due to its fundamental role in shaping the later heresiographical works of this tradition. The study not only analyzes Abū Muṭī's depiction of Ibādīsm; but also compares it with other examples of the same tradition when necessary. Furthermore, the accuracy of the information provided about the Ibādīs in the work is scrutinized. Although some of the views attributed to Ibādīsm may lead to misunderstandings due to omissions or inaccuracies, they can be said to largely align with actual Ibādī beliefs. However, there is one particular point that seems difficult to reconcile: the statement attributed to the famous ṭābi'ī scholar Qatāda, describing the Ibādīyya as "Magians of this ummah." In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the school that has been compared to or associated with Magianism, based on a reference to a ḥadīth narration, is in fact the Qadarīyya and its later extension, the Mu'tazila. The similarity sought to be established between these sects and the Magians is based on the dualistic belief in God held by the Magians -one god being the source of all good and the other being the source of all evil- while the Qadarīyya and Mu'tazila, regarding human actions, see God as the creator of good and humans as the bringers of evil into existence. However, there is no possibility of establishing such a similarity between the Ibādīyya and Magianism through the belief in God or human actions. This is because the Ibādīs reject the idea that humans create their own actions and attribute both good and evil to God. What is the source of this attempted connection between the Ibādīyya and the Magians, which we only encounter in the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition? The findings of our research within the scope of this study indicate that this connection is likely based on a misreading or scribal due to the similarity in the written forms of the words Ibādīyya and Ibādīyya in the works of this tradition.

A distinct characteristic of the Eastern Ḥanafite Firaq Tradition, the views of each sect are refuted, and the responses of the saved sect along with the correct view on the relevant issue are presented. At this point, Abū Muṭī' first presents the views of the Ibādīyya and then proceeds to criticize them. In conclusion, from the perspective of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, Ibādīsm is considered one of the twelve heretical subgroups of Ḥarūriyya/Nāṣibiyya (i.e., the Khārījites), which is one of the six main deviant sects among the 72 misguided ones. Based on the views attributed to it, especially the baseless analogy established with the Magians, it is understood that the authors of the tradition did not have direct knowledge of the Ibādīs or contact with them. Ultimately, within this tradition, sects like Ibādīsm are not seen as ideological formations to be understood, but rather as ones to be rejected.

**Keywords:** History of Islamic Sects, Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, Abū Muṭī' Makhūl b. al-Faḍl al-Nasafī, 73 Sects, Ibādīsm.

\* This article is the revised version of an unpublished presentation entitled "Ibadism in the Hanafite-Maturidite Firaq Tradition", delivered at the 11th International Conference on Ibadī Studies 2021: (Sacred) Texts and (Social) Contexts: Text Analysis and Hermeneutics in Ibadī Society and Tradition, held in Tübingen, Germany, from August 31 to September 2, 2021.

## Doğu Hanefî (-Mâtürîdî) Fırak Geleneğinde İbâzîlik -Ebû Mutî' Mekhûl b. el-Fazl en-Neseî'nin (ö. 318/930) *Kitâbu'r-Redd*'ine Özel Referansla-\*

### Öz

İslam toplumunda ortaya çıkan siyasî-itikadî grupları ve görüşlerini derlemek Müslüman âlimlerin erken dönemlerden itibaren ilgi duydukları bir yazın türüdür. Genel olarak itikadî grupların fikirlerine odaklanan bu eserlerin bir kısmı fırkalara dair bilgi malzemesini derlemeye çalışırken kimisi bununla yetinmeyip onların yanlış görüşlerini ve doğru yoldan ne denli sapmış olduklarını gösterme amacıyla olmuşlardır. O yüzden fırak yazıcılığı çoğu zaman bir saha araştırmasından ziyade teorik bir zeminde ve kimi zaman da ideolojik kaygılarla ilerlemiştir. İtikadî fırkaları ele alış tarzı, onları tasnif ederken izlediği metot, üslup ve onlara dair kullandıkları bilgi malzemesi bakımından fırak literatürü içerisinde birtakım fırka tasnif gelenekleri bulunduğu çeşitli araştırmacılar tarafından ileri sürülmüştür. Bu fırka tasnif geleneklerinden biri de Horasan ve özellikle Mâveraünnehir bölgesinde ortaya çıkan, itikadî kimlik bakımından kendisini Hanefî, ilerleyen yüzyıllarda da bunun bir uzanımı olarak Mâtürîdî olarak tanımlayan müelliflerin geliştirdiği Doğu Hanefî (Mâtürîdî) Fırak Geleneği'dir. Bu geleneğin en çarpıcı özelliği 73 fırka hadisini fırka tasnifinin merkezine oturturken bu sayıya her biri onikişer alt koldan oluşan altı ana sapkın fırkaya kurtuluşa eren tek fırkanın ilave edilmesi ile yani  $6 \times 12 + 1 = 73$  matematiksel formülasyon ile ulaşmasıdır. Bu çalışma kendine özgü nitelikleri bulunan Doğu Hanefî (Mâtürîdî) Fırak Geleneği'nin İbâzîliği nasıl algıladığını geleneğin günümüze ulaşan ilk ve en kapsamlı örneği olan Ebû Mutî' Mekhûl b. el-Fazl en-Neseî'nin (ö. 318/930) *Kitâbu'r-redd alâ'l-bida' ve'l-ehvâi'd-dâlle* adlı eserindeki anlatı üzerinden incelemektedir. Bu eser kendisinden sonra geleneğin diğer eserlerini etkileme ve geleneği şekillendirmede oynadığı temel rol nedeniyle seçilmiştir. Çalışmada sadece Ebû Mutî'nin İbâzîlik tasviri ile yetinilmemiş, gerektiğinde geleneğin diğer örnekleri ile de karşılaştırmalar yapılmıştır. Ayrıca eserde İbâzîlerle alakalı verilen bilgilerin gerçekliği de sorgulanmıştır. İbâzîliğe nispet edilen fikirlerin bazı eksik ve yanlış anlamaya sebep verecek yönleri olsa da gerçek İbâzî inançlarıyla büyük oranda uyduğu söylenebilir. Ancak bir husus var ki onun uzlaştırılması pek mümkün görünmemektedir. Bu da meşhur tâbiî âlimi Katâde'ye nispet edilen bir sözle dile getirilen İbâziyye'nin "bu ümmetin Mecûsîleri olduğu" ifadesidir. İslam düşünce geleneğinde Mecûsîlikle irtibatlandırılmaya ve benzetilmeye çalışılan ekol, bir hadis rivayetine referansla Kaderiyye ve onun sonraki uzantısı olarak görülen Mu'tezile'dir. Bu mezheplerle Mecûsîler arasında kurulmaya çalışılan benzerlik insan fiilleri konusunda Kaderiyye ve Mu'tezile'nin hayrın yaratıcısı olarak Allah'ı, şerri varlığa getiren olarak da insanı görmeleri ile Mecûsîlerin biri tüm iyiliklerin kaynağı olan iyilik tanrısı ile diğeri tüm kötülüklerin kaynağı olan kötülük tanrısı şeklinde dâlist bir tanrı inancı üzerine inşa edilmektedir. Ancak İbâziyye ile Mecûsîlik arasında böyle bir benzerliğin tanrı inancı veya insan fiilleri üzerinden kurulma imkânı yoktur. Zira İbâzîler insanın kendi fiillerini yaratması fikrini reddedip hayr ve şerri Allah'a isnat ederler. Sadece Doğu Hanefî (Mâtürîdî) Fırak Geleneği'nde rastladığımız İbâziyye ile Mecûsîler arasında kurulmaya çalışılan bu irtibatın kaynağı nedir? Bu çalışma kapsamında yürüttüğümüz araştırmaların bulguları, söz konusu irtibatın bu geleneğin eserlerinin İbâziyye ile İbâhiyye kelimeleri arasındaki yazım benzerliği nedeniyle muhtemelen hatalı bir okuma veya yazmaya dayandığını göstermektedir.

Doğu Hanefî Fırak Geleneği'nin belirgin bir özelliği olarak her bir fırkanın görüşü yanlışlanmakta ve kurtuluşa eren fırkanın onlara verdiği cevaplar ve ilgili konuya dair doğru görüş sunulmaktadır. Bu noktada Ebû Mutî' İbâziyye'nin görüşlerini verdikten sonra onları eleştirmektedir. Hasılı Doğu Hanefî (Mâtürîdî) Fırak Geleneği açısından İbâzîlik 72 sapkın fırkanın içerisinde yer alan altı ana sapkın fırkadan biri olan Harûriyye/Nâsibiyye'nin (yani Hâricîlerin) sapkın oniki alt kolundan biridir. Ona nispet edilen görüşlerden, özellikle de Mecûsîlerle kurulan temelsiz benzetmeden hareketle geleneğin müelliflerinin İbâzîleri tanımadıkları ve onlarla doğrudan bir temaslarının olmadığı anlaşılmaktadır. Zaten en nihayetinde bu gelenek içerisinde İbâzîlik gibi mezhepler anlaşılması gereken değil, reddedilmesi gereken ideolojik oluşumlardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi, Doğu Hanefî Fırak Geleneği, Ebû Mutî Mekhûl b. el-Fazl en-Neseî, 73 Fırka, İbâzîlik.

### Introduction

Islamic Heresiography is a literary and religious genre in which has been interested by Muslim scholars since early times. These heresiological works aimed to compile and collect data about the sects that have emerged in the Islamic society since the first century and their theological views and classify them with various formulations they have developed. While some works sought to neutrally document these sects, others specifically aimed to criticize them,

\* Bu yazı, Almanya-Tübingen'de 31 Ağustos-2 Eylül 2021 tarihlerinde düzenlenen "11th International Conference on Ibadî Studies 2021: (Sacred) Texts and (Social) Contexts: Text Analysis and Hermeneutics in Ibadî Society and Tradition" adlı sempozyumda "Ibadism in the Hanafite-Maturidite Fırak Tradition" başlığı ile sunulmuş, ancak yayımlanmamış bildirinin, makale formatına getirilmiş hâlidir.

highlighting their perceived deviations from the 'right' belief. A particularly significant foundation for heresiographical classifications is the well-known ḥadīth of the "73 sects," which states that the Muslim community will be divided into 73 factions. This ḥadīth has provided a convenient framework for many heresiographers when categorizing sects. Given the diversity of classification methods and the sources utilized, it is possible to speak of multiple distinct firaq traditions within Islamic heresiography. This study focuses on one such tradition: the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition and its perception of Ibādīsm. Despite numerous studies on Ibādīsm and its portrayal by others, research in this field has predominantly relied on well-established and widely recognized heresiographical sources, often neglecting the contributions of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition. This omission has led to an incomplete understanding of how Ibādīsm was perceived within different intellectual traditions of the Islamic world. The Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition includes a number of heresiographical treatises, but the earliest and most comprehensive extant work from this tradition is *Kitāb al-radd 'alā ahl al-bida' wa-l-ahwā' al-ḍālla*, authored by Abū Muṭī' Makhūl b. al-Faḍl al-Nasafī (d. 318/930).

Since this work is not only the first but also the most extensive example within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition -subsequently influencing many later treatises-<sup>1</sup> this study will specifically analyze how al-Nasafī's work perceives Ibādīsm. In doing so, it will also compare *al-Radd* with other works from the same tradition to assess broader patterns in the Eastern Ḥanafite approach to sectarian classification. Additionally, the study will investigate whether the information presented, and the views attributed to Ibādīsm align with actual Ibādī doctrine.

Ultimately, as in its descriptions of many other sects, the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition exhibits a unique narrative style in its treatment of Ibādīsm. This study argues that the tradition's depiction of Ibādīs reflects a lack of direct engagement with Ibādī communities. Instead, it appears that scholars working within this tradition relied on inherited literary sources rather than firsthand encounters, leading to the construction of an Ibādī image shaped more by polemical concerns than by accurate representation.

## 1. A General Outlook on the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition

### 1.1. Definition and History

The American researcher Keith Lewinstein, in his 1989 doctoral dissertation *Studies in Islamic Heresiography: The Khawarij in Two Firaq Traditions*, examined available firaq works that discuss doctrinal groups and their theological views in Islamic society. Through comparative analysis, he identified two distinct heresiographical traditions in Islamic literature based on their classification methods, the sources they relied upon, and their overall approach to sectarian categorization. According to his classification, these two traditions are the Standard or *Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite Firaq Tradition* and the *Eastern Ḥanafite or Ḥanafite-Māturīdī Firaq Tradition*.<sup>2</sup> Lewinstein arrived at this conclusion after analysing approximately twenty-five heresiographical works.

<sup>1</sup> For the influence of *al-Radd*, see Kadir Gömbeyaz, *İslam Literatüründe İtikâdî Fırka Tasnifleri [Heresiological Classifications in Islamic Literature]* (Bursa: Uludağ University, the Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Dissertation, 2015), 110-128; The impact of *al-Radd* is manifest in the writings of Ottoman firāq authors; for a detailed assessment and illustrative examples, see. Furkan Ramazan Öge, "Fırak Literatüründen Hareketle Osmanlıda Mezhepler Tarihi Yazıcılığı: 15-16. Yüzyıllar- [Ottoman Sects Historiography Through the Literature of Firaq: 15-16th Centuries]", *Hitit İlahiyat Dergisi* 23/1 (2024), 8-46.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Lewinstein, *Studies in Islamic Heresiography: The Khawarij in Two Firaq Traditions* (Princeton: Princeton University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1989), 6.

I, in my doctoral dissertation *Heresiological Classifications in Islamic Literature*, conducted a more extensive study, focusing particularly on works written within the first seven centuries of Islam. In addition to the sources examined by Lewinstein, I also included works that had been discovered or published after Lewinstein's research, ultimately analysing approximately eighty firaq texts. Based on this broader dataset, I argued that Islamic literature contains at least five distinct heresiographical traditions.<sup>3</sup> Despite their differing conclusions on the number of heresiographical traditions, both I and Lewinstein identified a common tradition: the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition.

The Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition holds a distinct place in Islamic heresiography due to its unique style of classifying sects, referential sources, and the specific doctrinal material it presents. These characteristics establish it as an independent heresiographical tradition. The preference of "Eastern" in its name reflects the geographical region where this tradition first emerged and where its earliest examples were produced -namely, the Eastern Islamic world, particularly Khorasan and Transoxiana (*Mā warā' al-nahr*). The term "Ḥanafite" signifies the sectarian affiliation of the scholars who contributed to this tradition. It was developed by Ḥanafite scholars in the Eastern Islamic world, and its continuity was ensured by later Ḥanafite scholars who preserved and expanded upon its methodological framework.

It is important to highlight that in the Eastern Islamic world, Ḥanafism functioned not only as a school of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) but also as a theological identity.<sup>4</sup> The term "Māturīdite", which appears later in association with this tradition, specifically refers to the scholars who sustained and advanced the tradition from the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century onward. By this period, these scholars began to explicitly define their doctrinal identity as Māturīdite rather than merely Ḥanafite. Prior to this, most authors producing works within this tradition primarily identified themselves as Ḥanafite, without explicitly adopting the Māturīdite label.

## 1.2. Characteristics

The Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition is set apart from other heresiographical traditions by several distinctive characteristics, which can be outlined as follows:

1. The centrality of the 73 sects-ḥadīth and its numerical formulation. This tradition places the well-known ḥadīth that states the Muslim ummah will be divided into 73 sects at the core of its classification system. While this ḥadīth has influenced many heresiographical works across different traditions,<sup>5</sup> what distinguishes the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition is its unique numerical formulation aimed at precisely matching the number 73. Instead of treating the number metaphorically or loosely, the scholars of this tradition devised a structured formula to categorize the sects:

- They first identified six main sects (*firaq*).
- Each of these main sects was then subdivided into twelve sub-sects, yielding a total of 72 sects.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to them as 4x18 Yemen Sunnī Firaq Tradition, Eastern Ḥanafite Firaq Tradition, Ash'arite Firaq Tradition, Khurasān Mu'tazilite-Shī'ite Firaq Tradition, Number-Free Mu'tazilite Firaq Tradition; see. Gömbeyaz, *İslam Literatüründe İtikâdî Fırka Tasnifleri*, 89-206.

<sup>4</sup> Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1100) refers to this fact in his word: "We follow Abū Ḥanīfa. He is our leader and *imām* in both law and theology"; see Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss, ḍabt and ta'līq by Aḥmad Ḥijazī al-Saqqā (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, 1424/2003), 15.

<sup>5</sup> On the influence of the ḥadīth in the Islamic heresiography, see. Gömbeyaz, "The Influence of the 73 Sects Ḥadīth on the Classification of Theological Sects in Islamic Heresiographical Literature", *ULUM* 1/2 (2018), 246-259.

- Adding the one saved sect (*al-firqa al-nājiya*), they arrived at the total of 73 sects, as mentioned in the ḥadīth:  $(6 \times 12) + 1 = 73$ .<sup>6</sup>

This systematic formulation is exclusive to the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition and is not found in other heresiographical traditions. Why the 6x12 formula and why did the Ḥanafite scholars specifically adopt the 6x12 classification?

The idea that sectarian fragmentation in Islamic history occurred with mathematical precision, with exactly six major sects each comprising twelve sub-sects, is problematic. However, the Ḥanafite scholars aimed to validate the truth of the saved sect and expose the deviations of others. Their approach sought to classify the sects in a manner that aligned with the ḥadīth's numerical prediction. Their preference for this exact classification system is intriguing. Could there be a specific reference point or doctrinal rationale behind this formulation?

It is also necessary to address the question of whether the 6x12 classification was adopted by non-Ḥanafite scholars. In fact, this classification can be found in the works of some non-Ḥanafite scholars. For example, the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 591/1201) mentions the 6x12 classification in his *Talbīs Iblīs*<sup>7</sup> and the Mālikī scholar al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) refers to it in his tafsīr.<sup>8</sup> However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that these scholars did not actively adopt this classification as their own but rather included it as a transmitted idea found in earlier sources. This suggests that the 6x12 classification remains uniquely characteristic of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition. Thus, a crucial question emerges: Is there a specific connection between the 6x12 classification and the Ḥanafite school or Ḥanafite identity?

It is essentially possible to establish a connection between the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition and the Ḥanafism and Abū Ḥanīfa. This is because, in some instances within this tradition, the identification of the six principal deviant sects seems to be derived from a statement attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa. According to this attribution, when Abū Ḥanīfa was asked "what is *sunna* and *jamā'a*?", he reportedly responded: "لا نصب ولا رفض لا جبر لا قدر لا تشبيه لا تعطيل" "neither *naṣb* nor *rafḍ*, neither *qadar* nor *jabr*, neither *tashbīh* nor *ta'ṭīl*."<sup>9</sup> Based on this statement, the identity of the six main deviant sects is determined as Nāsibiyya (=Ḥarūriyya or Khawārij), Rāfiḍiyya, Qadariyya, Jabriyya, Mushabbiha, Mu'aṭṭila. However, in some examples of the tradition, especially Abū Muṭī', there is no reference to Abū Ḥanīfa and/or his mentioned word, and there is a little difference in the identity of the six main deviant sects. For example, Nāsibiyya is replaced by Ḥarūriyya and Mu'aṭṭila is substituted with Jahmiyya. In fact, these are names that can be seen as synonymous with each other. However, a more substantial discrepancy emerges where Mushabbiha is replaced with Murji'a. This substitution could

<sup>6</sup> For the details and samples of this formula, see Gömbeyaz, *İslam Literatüründe İtikadî Fırka Tasnifleri*, 103-142.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, who seems to have taken the classification that he gave after an expression such as "... said one of the scholars ...", must have seen this classification in the work of a Ḥanafite scholar; see. Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb Talbīs al-Iblīs*, ed. Ahmad 'Uthmān al-Mazīd (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Watān li-l-Nashr, 1423/2002), 1/157; For a study comparing the classification in *Talbīs* with the classification in *al-Radd*, see. Aysel Öztürk-Zeynep Alimoğlu Sürmeli, "Mezhepler Tarihi Literatüründeki Benzerlikler Üzerine Bir Çalışma "Kitābu'r-Redd ve Talbīsü Iblīs Örneği" [A Study on the Similarities in the Literature of Sects History: The Example of Kitāb al-Radd and Talbīs Iblīs]", *e-Makalat* 13/2 (2020), 669-712.

<sup>8</sup> al-Qurṭubī narrates the 6x12 classification referring to Ibn al-Jawzī in the context of the exegesis of the verse Ālu Imrān 3/103; see. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*, taṣḥīḥ by Hishām Samīr al-Bukhārī (Riyāḍ: Dār Alam al-Kutub, 1424/2003), 160-164.

<sup>9</sup> Abū Shakūr al-Sālimī, *al-Tamhīd fī bayan al-tawhīd* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2017), 194.

indicate Abū Muṭī's deliberate revision, reflecting a unique doctrinal emphasis rather than an incidental inconsistency.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, while a direct correlation between the 6x12 formula and Abū Ḥanīfa is not entirely baseless, further evidence is required to establish a definitive link. Nevertheless, this thematic connection provides insight into why the Ḥanafite scholars developed this classification framework and why it was predominantly utilized within Ḥanafite intellectual circles.

2. The Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition also distinguishes itself through the heresiographical material it presents regarding sects and their doctrinal views. Some of the sects mentioned in this tradition do not appear in other heresiographical traditions and correspond to groups that were active and influential specifically in the Eastern Islamic regions. Moreover, the information provided about certain sects in this tradition differs from that found in other heresiographical works. Additionally, a sect that is categorized as a subgroup under a major sect in other traditions may be placed under an entirely different major sect within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition.

3. In the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, sects are primarily examined with the purpose of refuting them and demonstrating their deviation from right beliefs. Typically, only one doctrinal position is attributed to each sect. After presenting the attributed belief, the correct view -as upheld by the saved sect (*Ahl al-Jamā'a* or *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a*)- is introduced along with arguments and evidence supporting it.

These characteristics collectively define the distinctive nature of the the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition.

## 2. The Depiction of Ibādīsm in the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition

### 2.1. Abū Muṭī Makhūl al-Nasafī and *Kitāb al-Radd*

In this study, we aim to examine the perception of Ibādīsm within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, specifically through Abū Muṭī Makhūl al-Nasafī's (d. 318/931) *al-Radd*, as it represents the earliest and most comprehensive extant example of this tradition. Therefore, it is appropriate to provide a brief overview of both the author and his work.

Abū Muṭī was the great-great-grandfather of the renowned Ḥanafite-Māturīdite scholar Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1115). He is thought to have originated from the city of Nasaf, near Bukhara, though little is documented about his life. Two of his works have survived to the present day: *al-Lu'lu' iyyāt*, an anthology of Sufi thought, and *al-Radd*, a heresiographical treatise.<sup>11</sup>

*Kitāb al-Radd* is the earliest surviving work of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition. It was first edited and published by Marie Bernand in 1980,<sup>12</sup> based on two manuscripts housed in the Oxford Bodleian Library, one of which is incomplete. Due to the numerous textual and

<sup>10</sup> Since it is not very relevant to the main scope of the present article, we refrain from discussing the reasons for this preference of Abū Muṭī here. It can be referred to the article (in Turkish) questioning the possibility of linking the 6x12 classification with Abū Ḥanīfa; see. Gömbeyaz "Doğu Hanefi Fırak Geleneğinin Ebū Hanife ile İrtibatlandırılmasının İmkânı [The Possibility of Engagement of Eastern Ḥanafite Firaq Tradition with Abū Ḥanīfa]". ed. Ahmet Kartal-Hilmi Özden, *Devirleri Aydınlatan Meş'ale: İmâm-ı A'zam -Ulusal Sempozyum Tebliğler Kitabı 28-30 Nisan 2015 Eskişehir* (Eskişehir: Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 505-511.

<sup>11</sup> Further information about Abū Muṭī's personal and scholarly life and his writings, see. Seyit Bahcivan, "al-Qism al-awwal", *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā ahl al-bida' wa-l-ahwā al-ḡalla*, mlf. Abū Muṭī al-Nasafī (Konya: Kitap Dünyası Yayınları, 2013), 29-102; Ulrich Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, trans. by Rodrigo Adem (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 81-97.

<sup>12</sup> In "Le Kitab al-radd 'ala l-bida' d'Abu Muti' Makhul al-Nasafi", *Annales Islamologiques* 16 (1980), 51-126.

orthographic errors present in Bernard's edition, a more accurate and revised critical edition was later produced by the Turkish scholar Seyit Bahçivan in 2010, using the same manuscript sources.

Given the highly systematic and comprehensive nature of Abū Muṭī's classification, both in terms of structure and content, it is plausible that his work was not the first example of this tradition but rather a continuation of an earlier lineage of heresiographical writings.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it would be more appropriate to describe *al-Radd* not as the first work of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, but rather as the earliest surviving example that has reached us.

It would be relevant here to bring up an interesting point regarding Abū Muṭī. Although he lived in a Ḥanafite environment and likely adhered to Ḥanafite jurisprudence, some scholars have suggested that he may have been a Karrāmīte who concealed his true identity. Louis Massignon argued that Abū Muṭī was a student of Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, who in turn was a disciple of Muḥammad b. Karrām, the founder of Karrāmīsm.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, in his Sufi anthology *al-Lu'lu' iyyāt*, Abū Muṭī transmits some statements of Ibn Karrām. However, in his work *al-Radd*, he does not mention Karrāmīyya among the deviant sects nor refer to them anywhere in the book. Furthermore, some figures he cites in *al-Radd*, such as 'Uthmān b. 'Affān al-Sijzī and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Sijzī, have been linked to Karrāmīsm.

Another point that strengthens this argument is that certain doctrinal positions defended in *al-Radd* bear similarities to Karrāmīte beliefs. These include the notion that "faith consists of speech", the idea that "capability (*istiṭā'a*) precedes action", the claim that "God is in direct contact with the Throne", and the doctrine of *tahrīm al-makāsib*.<sup>15</sup> Based on these elements, Massignon suggested that Abū Muṭī was, in fact, a Karrāmīte. However, if this claim is true, it indicates that Abū Muṭī deliberately concealed his Karrāmīte identity. This could be attributed to the fact that Karrāmīsm later faced condemnation and persecution by the state, leading him to avoid open affiliation with the movement. Nevertheless, these indications alone do not definitively establish that Abū Muṭī was a Karrāmīte.

Alternative interpretations suggest that there might have been other reasons for his omission of Karrāmīyya in *al-Radd*. Some scholars argue that the evidence put forth to suggest his Karrāmīte affiliation is not strong enough. There are also passages in *al-Radd* that support the argument that Abū Muṭī was more likely a Sunnite-Ḥanafite rather than a Karrāmīte. Moreover, later Ḥanafite scholars did not associate him with Karrāmīsm nor question his doctrinal affiliation. On the contrary, some arguments have been put forward suggesting that Abū Muṭī could not have been a Karrāmīte, emphasizing that he was recognized as one of the pioneering scholars of the Ḥanafite school. Based on this perspective, he is regarded as a Sunnite-Ḥanafite scholar, and the claims of his affiliation with Karrāmīsm are considered unsubstantiated.<sup>16</sup>

In determining Abū Muṭī's sectarian identity, one might expect *al-Radd* to clarify the matter by explicitly identifying which group he considered the "saved sect" (*al-firqa al-nājiya*). However, the author employs an ambiguous term, "Ahl al-Jamā'a", without providing a clear definition of

<sup>13</sup> Muzaffer Tan, "Hanefi-Māturīdī Fırak Geleneği Bağlamında Mezheplerin Tasnifi Meselesi [The Problem of Classification of Islamic Sects in the Context of Hanafite-Maturidite Heresiography]", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 49/2 (2008), 123.

<sup>14</sup> Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane* (Paris: Geuthner, 1922), 241.

<sup>15</sup> Lewinstein, *Studies*, 158-159.

<sup>16</sup> For a separate article particularly for this issue, see. Züleyha Birinci, "Ebū Mutī' en-Nesefī'nin Mezhebî Kimliği: Mürcî ve ya Kerrāmî Olduğuna Dair İddiaların Değerlendirilmesi [The Sectarian Identity of Abū Mutī' al-Nasafī: Evaluation of the Allegations that He is a Member of Murji'a or Karrāmīyya]", *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 20 (2021), 226-257. Birinci has also attempted to substantiate this argument by comparing Abū Muṭī's theological views with those of Muḥammad b. Karrām; see. Züleyha Birinci, "Muhammed b. Kerrām ile Mekhūl en-Nesefī'nin Kelāmî Görüşlerinin Karşılaştırılması [A Comparison of the Theological Views of Muḥammad b. Karrām and Makhūl al-Nasafī]", *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 58 (2023), 63-95.

which theological school he is referring to. This lack of specificity unfortunately makes it difficult to definitively determine his theological stance based solely on *al-Radd*.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2. The Depiction of Ibādīsm in Abū Muṭī's *al-Radd* and Its Comparison with Other Works of the Tradition

### 2.2.1. The Description of Ibādīsm in Abū Muṭī's *Kitāb al-Radd*

In his *Kitāb al-Radd*, Abū Muṭī mentions the Khārijites with the name “Ḥarūriyya” as the first of the six main deviant sects that make up 72 deviant sects and states that it consists of twelve sub-branches. In the list of sub-sects, there are shared ones as Azraqiyya, Ibādiyya etc., in other firaq traditions as well as some sects that appear only in the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, such as Kūziyya, Kanziyya etc. In addition, it should be noted that the information given about some sects in other firaq traditions can be very different.

Regarding the presentation of Ibādīsm, Abū Muṭī categorizes it as the second subgroup of the Ḥarūriyya, following the Azāriqa. A distinctive feature of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition is its lack of historical or contextual information regarding the founder, historical development, or geographic spread of the sect. Instead, the work directly presents the doctrinal views of the sect and follows them with a refutation by the saved sect, identified as Ahl Jamā'a.

Here, we aim to first quote all the information provided by Abū Muṭī regarding Ibādīsm and then examine each statement in detail. Accordingly, Abū Muṭī, in identifying Ibādiyya as the second subgroup of the Ḥarūriyya, recorded the following:

زعمت الإباضية أن الإيمان قول وعمل وسنة. ولا نشهد على أهل القبلة بالإيمان إلا من أخذ بمحبتنا، ولا نكفره لأنهم لم يكفروا بالله وبرسوله، ولكن نشهد عليهم بالنفاق، لأنهم أثبتوا ببعض وكفروا ببعض، ويريدون أن يتخذوا بين ذلك سبيلاً. وما السبيل بين الإيمان والكفر إلا النفاق، كما وصفهم الله ﴿مذبذبين بين ذلك لا إلى هؤلاء ولا إلى هؤلاء﴾ الآية.

قال أبو مطيع: وقالت الجماعة: الإيمان قول، والعمل شرائعه، وإن النفاق كان في زمن النبي والوحي منزل، والنبي أسره إلى حذيفة، وعلى هذا خرج من الدنيا. فكذلك هو باطن لا يتعدى حكم الله ورسوله، بل أهل القبلة عندنا مؤمنون، لأن القول ظاهر معروف، والإخلاص باطن، والنفاق باطن، فليس لأحد غير النبي ﷺ ولا غير ما أسر إليه النبي ﷺ أن يشهد على أحد بالنفاق بأن لا يتولى الأمة ولا يتبرأهم.

وما قالت الإباضية: "أن لا يتولاهم ولا يتبرأهم" بدعة، وهو الإرجاء بقول الزهري وغيره من الأئمة. عن سلمة بن كهيل قال: اجتمع أبو البختري، والضحاك المشرقي، وميسرة، وبكير الطائي من الجماعة أن البراءة بدعة، والشهادة بدعة، والولاية بدعة، والإرجاء بدعة. وإنما قالت الإباضية قوله تعالى ﴿ويريدون أن يتخذوا بين ذلك سبيلاً﴾ لأهل التوحيد، وإنما نزلت في اليهود، حيث قالوا لرسول الله ﷺ: نؤمن بك وبكتابك ونكفر بالإنجيل ويعيسى بن مريم، فنزلت فيهم ﴿ويقولون نؤمن ببعض ونكفر ببعض﴾ الآية. فتأولت الإباضية في أهل التوحيد حتى غلط في تأويله، واجترأ على الله بتحويل تفسيره، حتى ضل وأضل وعن قتادة أنه قال: "مجوس هذه الأمة الإباضية".<sup>18</sup>

Abū Muṭī said: “Ibādiyya claimed that: Faith (*īmān*) is word, deed and sunna. We do not accept that the people of the qibla are believers, except for those who have attained our love; However, we do not declare them disbelievers since they do not deny Allah and His Messenger. Instead, we label them as hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) because they accept certain things while rejecting others. They seek an intermediate path; however, between faith and disbelief, there is no path other than hypocrisy. This is exactly as described in the Qur’ānic verse: “[The hypocrites] wavering between this and that, [true] neither to these nor those.” (al-Nisā 4/143).

<sup>17</sup> According to Rudolph, ‘Abū Muṭī’ was certainly Ḥanafite in fiqh; in theology, however, he did not follow Abū Ḥanīfa, but rather Ibn Karrām; see. Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunni Theology in Samarqand*, 85.

<sup>18</sup> Nasafi, *Kitāb al-Radd*, 151-152.

Abū Muṭī' said: Ahl al-jamā'a said: Faith is the word; deeds are merely its implementation. Hypocrisy existed during the time of the Prophet. Revelation was still being revealed, and the Prophet secretly disclosed the names of hypocrites to Ḥudhayfa. In this state, the Prophet departed from the world, and hypocrisy remained hidden. The ruling of God and His Messenger cannot be transgressed or altered. Rather, according to us, the people of the qibla are believers, for word is clear and manifest, while sincerity (*ikhhlās*) is hidden, just as hypocrisy is hidden. Therefore, no one, except the Prophet and those to whom he confided this knowledge, has the right to declare someone a hypocrite or to decide whether the ummah should befriend or distance themselves from a person.

Ibādīyya's position that "one must neither befriend them nor disavow them" is a *bid'a* (innovation). According to the views of al-Zuhrī and other imams, such a stance constitutes "*irjā'*" (postponement of judgment on individuals' faith). It has been narrated from Salama b. Kuhayl that Abū al-Bakhtarī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk al-Mashriqī, Maysara/Muyassara?, and Bukayr al-Ṭā'ī -all of whom belong to Ahl al-Jamā'a- shared a consensus on the following: "*Barā'a is a bid'a, shahāda is a bid'a, walāya is a bid'a, and irjā' is a bid'a.*"

Ibādīyya interpreted the verse "and want to pursue a path in-between" (al-Nisā 4/150) as referring exclusively to the people of tawḥīd. However, this verse was actually revealed concerning the Jews who said to the Prophet: "We believe in you and your book, but we do not believe in the Gospel or Jesus, son of Mary." That's why the verse "We believe in the one, but we deny the other" (al-Nisā 4/150) was revealed about them. By interpreting this verse about the people of tawḥīd, Ibādīyya committed a misinterpretation (*ghalaṭ*), altering the true meaning of the verse, and thus acted audaciously against God. In doing so, they deviated and misled others.

It has been narrated from Qatāda that he said: "The Magians (Majūs) of this umma are Ibādīyya."

Let us now closely examine and analyze Abū Muṭī's depiction of Ibādīyya in these passages:

### 2.2.1. Ibādīsm in the Context of the Definition of Faith (Īmān)

Abū Muṭī' begins his presentation of Ibādīsm by citing their definition of *īmān* which he attributes to them as *īmān* as "word [*qawl*], deed [*amal*], and *sunna*". However, in the firaq treatise of 'Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), which can be considered either an abridgment of *al-Radd* or a summary of the source upon which *al-Radd* was based, Ibādīyya's definition of *īmān* is given as "word, deed, intention [*niyya*], and *sunna*."<sup>19</sup> This discrepancy raises the possibility that the element of "intention" may have been omitted in the manuscript tradition of *al-Radd*. The key question, then, is whether Ibādīyya actually hold such a definition of faith.

This definition of faith (*īmān*) can indeed be found in certain Ibādī sources. For example, Abū Muṭī's contemporary, the Ibādī jurist Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Izkawī (d. 4th/10th century), defines faith in his work *al-Jāmi'* as follows: "*īmān* consists of *qawl*, *amal*, *niyya*, and *sunna*."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Abū Ḥafṣ Najm al-Dīn 'Umar al-Nasafī, *Risāle fī bayān al-firaq wa-l-madhāhib* (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Fatih, 5436), 46b.

<sup>20</sup> Abū Jābir Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Izkawī, *al-Jāmi'*, tsh. Aḥmad b. Sāliḥ Shaikh Aḥmad (Oman: Oman Saltanate Wizārat al-Turāth wa-l-Thaqāfa, 2018), 1/103.

In response to this Ibādī conceptualization,<sup>21</sup> Abū Muṭī presents his counterargument, asserting that faith is word, while actions are merely legal (*shar'ī*) applications. The claim that Abū Muṭī defined faith as “word” (*qawl*) alone has led some scholars to argue that his theological stance aligns with Karrāmīsm, as the Karrāmīyya held that faith consists solely of verbal affirmation, regardless of internal conviction or deeds. On the other hand, that Abū Muṭī's position does not necessarily indicate Karrāmīte influence but rather reflects the Ḥanafite doctrinal position could be considered.

### 2.2.2. Ibādīsm in the Context of the Status of the Perpetrator of Major Sins (Murtakib al-Kabīra)

Abū Muṭī presents the Ibādī position on the status of those who commit major sins (*murtakib al-kabīra*). According to this view, such individuals cannot be classified as disbelievers (*kuffār*) or polytheists (*mushrikūn*) since they do not deny God or His Messenger. However, because they accept some aspects of religion while rejecting others, they lose the status of being believers (*mu'minūn*). As a result, they occupy an intermediate position between faith (*īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*), which is hypocrisy (*nifāq*).

While Abū Muṭī accurately conveys the general outline of the Ibādī stance on this issue, it is noteworthy that he does not explicitly refer to these individuals as “perpetrators of major sins” (*murtakib al-kabīra*). Instead, he describes them as “people who have obtained our love from people of the qibla”. This wording is intriguing, as it suggests that the Ibādīs define hypocrisy (*nifāq*) based on whether individuals belong to those whom they love. However, the actual subject under discussion here is sinners who have committed major sins.

When considering this point alongside the Ibādī doctrine that major sinners must be disavowed (*tabarrī*), it follows that those who commit major sins are regarded as individuals who should not be befriended.<sup>22</sup> According to Ibādīyya, a person who commits a major sin is neither a believer nor a disbeliever. Rather, they are considered a monotheist (*muwahhid*) but not a polytheist (*mushrik*). The implication of this classification is that such a person falls into hypocrisy (*nifāq*). In other words, although faith (*īmān*) exists in their heart, they fail to act in accordance with its requirements.

Abū Muṭī's statements rejecting the Ibādī view indicate that he understands hypocrisy differently than Ibādīyya. According to Abū Muṭī, *nifāq* is an internal condition, referring to a state in which a person harbors disbelief in their heart while outwardly appearing as a Muslim. From this perspective, he argues that the Prophet was able to recognize the hypocrites of his time through divine revelation (*waḥy*) and that he confided this knowledge as a secret to Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān. However, after the Prophet's passing, the true identity of a hypocrite became unknowable to people, as it is a hidden reality. Based on this reasoning, Abū Muṭī asserts

<sup>21</sup> The definition of faith based on these four elements is not exclusive to Ibādīsm, as it has also been attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Sahl al-Tustarī. Moreover, some contemporary Salafī websites also adopt this definition, arguing that Ahl al-Sunna is positioned between the two extremes of the Murji'a and the Khārijites. The fundamental meaning underlying this definition is as follows: Speech alone is not sufficient for faith; action is also necessary, thereby distancing this view from that of the Murji'a. On the other hand, actions without intention hold no value, as they would constitute hypocrisy (*nifāq*) rather than true faith. Furthermore, if speech, action, and intention are present but not in accordance with the Sunnah, then it results in innovation (*bid'a*). In this way, this definition also avoids alignment with the Khārijites.

<sup>22</sup> al-Jannāwunī states that the basis of *īmān* is being friend for Muslims and to dissociate itself from unbelievers and *zālīm*s who commit major sins. al-Jannāwunī classifies in detail those people to whom should be friend or enemy in his *Aqīda*; see. Abū Zakariyya Yaḥyā al-Jannāwunī *Aqīdat al-tawḥīd*, in Pierre Cuperly. “Une Profession de Foi Ibādīte: La Profession de Foi d'Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥayr al-Ḡannāwunī”, *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 32-33 (1981-1982), 47-48; also see. Ulvi Murat Kılavuz, “Kuzey Afrika İbāzī Akidesi: Cenāvünî Örneği”, *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 24/2 (2015) 92-100.

that it is impossible to judge someone as a hypocrite solely based on external appearances, and therefore, no one has the right to declare another person a friend (*walī*) or an enemy (‘*aduww*) based on such a judgment.

The Ibādī concept of *nifāq*, however, differs significantly. According to Ibādīyya, a hypocrite is someone who internally believes in God but fails to act in accordance with this belief, either in faith or in practice. This definition suggests that *nifāq* is not about concealing disbelief but rather about failing to fulfill the obligations of faith.

Abū Muṭī' further criticizes the Ibādī interpretation of Qur'ān 4:150, which they use to support their doctrine of hypocrisy. He argues that they have misinterpreted the verse, and he proceeds to present what he considers to be the correct explanation.

### **2.2.3. Ibādīsm in the Context of *Tawallī* and *Tabarrī***

One of the views that Abū Muṭī' attributes to Ibādīyya is their stance regarding individuals whose faith status is uncertain, meaning it is unclear whether they are believers or disbelievers/polytheists. According to him, the Ibādīs refrain from declaring such individuals as either allies (*awliyā'*) or enemies (*a'dā'*), choosing instead to withhold judgment. However, Abū Muṭī' does not specify that this hesitation applies only to those whose status is unknown, which is a crucial detail within Ibādī doctrine on *tawallī* and *tabarrī*.<sup>23</sup>

Within Ibādī theology, the principle of *tawallī* and *tabarrī* mandates loyalty to those who are definitively known to be believers and disassociation from those who are definitively known to be disbelievers or major sinners. However, in cases where a person's status remains unclear, neither *tawallī* nor *tabarrī* is considered appropriate. This distinction is fundamental to Ibādī thought, but Abū Muṭī' does not explicitly acknowledge it in his critique.

Interestingly, Abū Muṭī' labels the Ibādī stance on uncertain individuals as “*irjā'*” (postponement of judgment). While their hesitation in ruling on such individuals bears a resemblance to the Murjī'ite doctrine, the term “*irjā'*” as used in classical theology typically refers to the belief that a major sinner remains a believer in this world, while their true status and afterlife judgment are left to God. The Ibādī approach, however, differs in that it does not affirm the faith of such individuals outright but rather suspends judgment until certainty can be established.

In rejecting Abū Muṭī''s understanding of Ibādīyya, he quotes a word with reference to some people from the Jamā'a. According to this saying, “*barā'a* [to say that one is distant from some of the Muslims and to cut off one's relations with them], *shahāda* [to decide what one's faith status is], *walāya* [to befriend only some of the Muslims, those who think like oneself], and *irjā'* [not to decide who is a believer, who is a disbeliever, who is a hypocrite, etc., but to leave it to God] are *bid'a*.”

### **2.2.4. Ibādīsm in the Context of Its Alleged Resemblance to the Magians (*al-Majūs*)**

Although some of Abū Muṭī''s descriptions of Ibādī views on faith, major sin, and *tawallī*-*tabarrī* may contain elements of manipulation, it is generally possible to say that his attributions are largely accurate. However, at the conclusion of his discussion on Ibādī beliefs, Abū Muṭī' records an extremely peculiar statement, which appears disconnected from the previous passages. This

<sup>23</sup> For the view of wuqūf of Ibādīyya, see: 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī, “Kitāb al-futyā”, *Early Ibādī Theology: Six Kalām Texts* by 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī, ed. Abdulrahman al-Salimi-Wilferd Madelung (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014), 152.

statement is attributed to the well-known ṭābi‘ī scholar Qatāda, who is cited as saying: “The Magians (*al-Majūs*) of this ummah are Ibāḍiyya.”

Abū Muṭī does not provide any explanation regarding the context or reasoning behind Qatāda’s statement, nor does he offer any commentary on it. The association between Ibāḍism and Magianism appears highly unusual and demands further clarification.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the group that has most commonly been associated with the Magians (*al-Majūs*) is the Qadariyya. This comparison is even attributed to the Prophet in a well-known ḥadīth, which is narrated in two variations: “The Qadariyya are the Magians of this ummah” and “The Magians of this ummah are those who deny God’s decrees (*qadar*).”<sup>24</sup>

The rationale behind this association in the ḥadīth is explained as follows: The Qadariyya hold that God is not the creator of evil actions, but rather human beings themselves bring their evil deeds into existence. They adopt this position to absolve God from being attributed with evil. However, their opponents, particularly Sunnī theologians, frame this doctrine as implying that God is the creator of good, while human beings are the creators of evil. This dualistic understanding of divine agency is then likened to the Magian belief in two cosmic deities, one for good and one for evil. Since the theological parallel is clear, the analogy between the Qadariyya and the Magians is grounded in a logical and doctrinal framework.

However, what justification exists for equating Ibāḍism with Magianism? The reasoning that applies to the Qadariyya does not hold for the Ibāḍiyya, because unlike the Qadariyya and Mu‘tazila, the Ibāḍiyya explicitly reject the idea that humans create their own actions. Instead, they maintain that God is the sole creator of both good and evil, as well as all human actions.<sup>25</sup> Given this fundamental theological divergence, the question remains: In what way could Ibāḍiyya be compared to the Magians?

It is not possible to find an answer to this question within Abū Muṭī’s text alone. However, a detailed investigation of other works within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition may provide an explanation. In some heresiographical works written within this tradition, the name of Ibāḍiyya (الإباضية) is sometimes written as Ibāḥiyya (الإباحية) under the category of the Khārijites. Interestingly, while some works of the tradition refer to the sect as “Ibāḥiyya,” they still attribute Ibāḍī beliefs to them,<sup>26</sup> indicating a textual inconsistency that later scholars seem to have noticed.<sup>27</sup>

Some authors, having identified this discrepancy between the name “Ibāḥiyya” and the views attributed to them, introduce the concept of *ibāḥa* (permissiveness) in their discussions. For instance, Abū Muḥammad ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Kirmānī (d. 642/1245), after presenting the Ibāḍī stance on the perpetrator of major sins (*murtakib al-kabīra*), makes the following statement: “They permit marriage with one’s mother and sister. In this regard, they

<sup>24</sup> Abū Dāwūd, “Sunna”, 17.

<sup>25</sup> For details see. Kılavuz, “Kuzey Afrika İbāzī Akidesi”, 109.

<sup>26</sup> For instance see, ‘Umar al-Nasafī, *Risāle fī bayān al-firaq wa-l-madhāhib*, 46b.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, see. Ibn Kemal Pasha, “Risāla fī tafṣīl al-firaq al-Islāmiyya”, *Khams rasā’il fī l-firaq wa-l-madhāhib*, ed. Seyit Bahçivan (Qairo: Dār al-Salām, 1425/2005), 132. Although this treatise is attributed to Ibn Kemal Pasha, it is in fact not his work; it is highly likely that it may actually belong to Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384); see. Gömbeyaz, “Bābertī’ye Nispet Edilen Bir Fırak Risalesi Hakkında Tespitler ve Mülâhazalar [Notes on a Heresiographical Epistle Attributed to al-Bābartī]”, *e-Makalat* 5/1 (2012), 7-33. Although the treatise does not originally belong to Ibn Kemal Pasha, it is nonetheless possible that he might have reproduced or reiterated its content; see. Furkan Ramazan Öge, *İmparatorluk Çağında Osmanlı Mezhepler Tarihi Yazıcılığı [Ottoman Sects Historiography in the Age of Empire]* (Ankara: Fecr Yayınları, 2024), 60.

are equivalent to the Magians, who allow such unions. They reject the verse in which God Almighty states: 'Your mothers and your sisters are forbidden to you for marriage.' (al-Nisa 4/23)<sup>28</sup>

From this, it is evident that the comparison between Ibādīyya and the Magians differs entirely from the analogy made between Qadariyya and the Magians regarding human actions. Instead of a doctrinal resemblance in theological determinism, Ibādīyya are accused of sharing with the Magians the permissibility of incestuous relationships, specifically marriage between a man and his mother or sister. The critical question, then, is: Did Ibādīyya actually hold such a belief?

When examining other heresiographical traditions, we find that al-Ash'arī, 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, and al-Shahrastānī -all of whom reference al-Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī's (d. 248/862) work on Khārijite sects- attribute the view that marriage with one's own daughters or granddaughters (rather than mothers and sisters) is permissible not to Ibādīyya, but rather to the Maymūniyya, a subgroup of the 'Ajārīda, which was counted among the Khārijites.<sup>29</sup> Given that this belief has no connection to Ibādīyya, the question arises: How did such a claim come to be falsely attributed to them?

When examining Islamic sources, it becomes evident that Magianism (Majūsiyya) was generally associated by Muslims with two main characteristics: A dualistic concept of divinity, in which there is a god of good and a god of evil and the permissibility of sexual relations and marriage with close relatives, including those whom Islam explicitly prohibits, such as one's mother, sister, daughter, granddaughter, and paternal or maternal granddaughters.<sup>30</sup> This perception is further reinforced by a statement attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, in which he allegedly recounts that

<sup>28</sup> Abū Muḥammad 'Uthmān b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Kirmānī al-'Irāqī, *al-Kanz al-Khafī*, Riyad: al-Malik 'Abd al-Azīz Manuscript Library, 3570, 355a. A firaq treatise attributed to 'Uthmān al-Kirmānī al-'Irāqī's was first published with its Turkish translation by Yaşar Kutluay in 1961, based on the manuscript he found in the Süleymaniye Library, Süleymaniye, 792; see. al-'Irāqī, *el-Firaku'l-müfterika beyne ehli'z-zeyğ ve'z-zendeka: Sapıklarla Dinsizlerin Çeşitli Mezhepleri*, ed. and trans. Yaşar Kutluay (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1961). Kutluay identified the author's name and the treatise's title based on a note written on the manuscript's cover page. While Ritter dated the author to around 500 AH, Kutluay recorded the time period as after the 5th/11th century but was unable to determine the author's exact identity. During my doctoral research, I discovered that the treatise published by Kutluay was not an independent work but was instead the 115<sup>th</sup> chapter (Bāb) of the author's larger Sufi treatise, *al-Kanz al-Khafī*, which originally contained 114 chapters. al-'Irāqī, initially intended to structure his work with an odd number of chapters with the intention of obeying the Prophet's word: "Allah is odd, and He loves odd number", but realized two years later that it had an even number. To maintain his intended structure, he added an extra chapter, resulting in the firaq treatise as an appendix to *al-Kanz al-Khafī*. I discovered, also, two more manuscripts of *al-Kanz al-khafī* and additionally clarified the identity of the author. I determined that the author was originally from Kirmān, travelled to 'Irāq, and spent a significant part of his life and died in Shīrāz after 641/1244; see. Gömbeyaz, *İslam Literatüründe İtikadi Fırka Tasnifleri*, 131. Duran Eski, who prepared a master's thesis on the author and his firaq work in 2017, not only determined the exact date of death of the author as 642/1245 but also discovered two other manuscripts of *al-Kanz al-khafī*; see. Duran Eski, "Bir Mezhepler Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Fıraku'l-Müfterika [al-Firaq al-muftariqa As a Source of Islamic Sects]", *e-Makâlât* 11/1, 2018, 147-176; Duran Eski, *Mezhepler Tarihi Yazıcılığında Doğu Hanefî Geleneği: Ebû Muhammed Osmân el-Kirmanî Örneği [The Eastern Ḥanafite Tradition in the Historiography of Islamic Sects: The Case of Abū Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Kirmānī]* (Ankara: Kitap Dünyası, 2023). Eski, also, translated the work into Turkish; Ebu Muhammed Osman el-Kirmānī, *Zikru'l-Firak ve esnāfu'l-kefera: İslam Mezhepleri ve İslam Dışı Gruplar* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2025). Another critical edition of the work was produced in 2018 as part of a master's thesis by M. Sâlim, see. Mohammed Meelad Saeid Salim, *Safiyuddin Ebu Muhammed el-Kirmanî'nin "el-Kenzü'l-Hafî fî İhtiyârâtî's-Safî" Adlı Kitabının 115. Babının İnceleme ve Tahkiki* (Kastamonu: Kastamonu University the Institute of Social Sciences, MA Thesis, 2018). Another example who echoed 'Irāqī's expressions on Ibādīyya is an Ottoman author, Derviş Ahmed Dilgîr; see. his *Mir'ât-i 'Aqâ'id* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Hacı Mahmud Efendi, 1514), 40b.

<sup>29</sup> See. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. İsmâ'il al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-İslamiyyîn wa ikhtilāf al-muṣallîn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), 95; Abū 'l-Manşūr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥy al-dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-'Asriyya, 1995), 281; Abū al-Faḥḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa l-nihal*, ed. Amīr 'Alī Mahnā-'Alī Ḥasan Fā'ūr (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1996), 1/149.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, the famous Mu'tazilite theologian al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, who tries to show that the meant group in the ḥadīth "The Qadariyya is the Magians of this umma", is those who have the idea of *jabr*, states that "The Magians adopt to marry daughters and mothers and consider this as God's predestination"; see. Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1996), 773.

Zoroaster (Zarathustra) once became extremely intoxicated, engaged in sexual relations with his own mother, and upon awakening, sought a justification for his actions by claiming that it had been divinely revealed to him. He then introduced this practice as a fundamental tenet of Magianism. Given this understanding, it is not surprising that a group accused of permitting sexual relations with one's mother or daughter would be likened to the Magians. However, Ibāḍiyya have never held such a belief. This raises the question: How did such an accusation come to be attributed to them?

One plausible explanation lies in the textual transmission of sectarian heresiographies, particularly within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition. As observed in certain works of this tradition, the name Ibāḍiyya (الإباضية) appears to have been mistakenly written or read as Ibāḥiyya (الإباحية). Given that Ibāḥiyya derives from *ibāḥa*, meaning permissiveness or unrestricted licentiousness, it is possible that this scribal or phonetic error led to a major distortion in how the sect was represented.

It is likely that in the sources consulted by Abū Muṭī, 'Uthmān al-Kirmānī al-'Irāqī, and other scholars of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, the name of Ibāḍiyya was mistakenly recorded as Ibāḥiyya, and as a result, they were misrepresented as advocating unrestricted permissibility in sexual relations. To further align this misreading with the meaning of "Ibāḥiyya," a narrative was constructed associating them with the belief in incestuous relationships.

If the statement attributed to Qatāda -"The Magians of this ummah are Ibāḍiyya"- is genuine, then it is possible that Qatāda actually said "Ibāḥiyya" rather than "Ibāḍiyya", drawing a parallel between a group known as Ibāḥiyya and the Magians, both of whom supposedly permitted marriage with prohibited close relatives. However, if at some point this reference to "Ibāḥiyya" was misread or miscopied as "Ibāḍiyya", then the false attribution of this view to Ibāḍiyya may have become widespread in heresiographical literature.

What is particularly noteworthy is that none of the heresiographers who transmitted this claim appear to have noticed or corrected this confusion.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that the heresiographical tradition did not prioritize accuracy in documenting the beliefs of sects they considered deviant. Instead, the goal of these works was to reinforce a sectarian framework that aligned with the ḥadīth of the 73 sects, which classified all but one group as deviant and destined for Hellfire. From this perspective, whether a claim was historically accurate or not was of secondary importance; what mattered was affirming the sectarian narrative of deviation and condemnation. Thus, for heresiographers, attributing an incorrect belief to Ibāḍiyya would not alter the fundamental reality that they were already considered a misguided sect.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> One exception should be noted here. Although drawing on other firāq works, the 18th-century Ottoman scholar 'Umar al-Chorūmī (d. 1207/1792), who classified sects in accordance with the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, appears to have recognized the inconsistency between the Ibāḥiyya and the Ibāḍiyya. Accordingly, he refers to them as two distinct sects under the Khārijites—one being the Ibāḥiyya and the other the Ibāḍiyya. However, he does not imply that the two have been confused with one another in the heresiographical works. See: 'Umar al-Chorūmī, *al-Urwat al-munjiya fi'l-firqa al-nājiya* (Istanbul: Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Âşir Efendi, 189), 51a, 51b. For details about al-Chorūmī and his heresiological classification, see: Ahmet Selim Harputlu, "Ömer Çorumî'nin el-Urvetü'l-Münciye Fi'l-Firkati'n-Nāciye Adlı Fırak Risalesinde 73 Fırka Rivayetini Dâir Dilsel Analizler ve İslam Fırkalarının Tasnifi [Semantic Analysis of Seventy-three Sects Hadith and The Classification of Islamic Sects in Omar Çorumî's Heresiographical Epistle al-Urwa al-Munjiya fi'l-Firqa al-Najiya]", *Bayburt Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 14 (2021), 55-80.

<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, al-Ash'arī states that he wrote his firāq work on these problematic situations that he saw in the firāq sources; Ash'arī, *Maqalat*, 1.

## Conclusion

In the works of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, Ibāḍiyya are primarily introduced through their views on the definition of faith (*īmān*), the status of the perpetrator of major sins (*murtakib al-kabīra*), and the criteria for determining whom to befriend or disassociate from (*tawallī* and *tabarrī*). While some manipulative presentations can be observed, in general, there is a degree of alignment with Ibāḍī sources. However, it can be argued that the Ibāḍī view that major sinners are hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) has been misunderstood. Moreover, as a defining characteristic of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, it is evident that Ibāḍī views are frequently refuted using Qur'ānic verses and ḥadīths.

The most problematic aspect of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition's portrayal of Ibāḍīsm is its comparison to the Magians (Majūs), attributed to the well-known ṭābi'ī scholar Qatāda. This likely stems from a scribal or phonetic confusion between the names Ibāḍiyya (الإباحية) and Ibāḍiyya (الإباضية). The potentially justifiable analogy between Ibāḍiyya and Magianism -due to their alleged permissiveness in sexual relations- was misattributed to Ibāḍiyya due to a copying or reading error. The comparison of Ibāḍiyya to the Magians appears exclusively within the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition and is not found in any other tradition or source.

The fact that heresiographers failed to recognize or correct it suggests not only a lack of concern for accuracy but also limited direct knowledge about Ibāḍiyya. This lack of familiarity may be explained by the absence of Ibāḍī communities in the authors' immediate environments<sup>33</sup> or the possibility that existing Ibāḍīs concealed their identities. This phenomenon is not unique to the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition; rather, it reflects a broader issue in heresiographical literature. Most firaq authors did not conduct field research to verify the beliefs of the sects they described. Instead, they relied on compiling information from earlier texts, often perpetuating errors, distortions, and polemical biases. Their primary goal was not to document the actual beliefs of various groups, but rather to demonstrate the correctness of their own sect while refuting the errors of others.

From this perspective, the authors of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition did not pursue the question of why Ibāḍiyya were likened to the Magians or whether such a comparison was even justified. Their writings suggest that they had little to no direct contact with the Ibāḍīs, and even if Ibāḍī communities existed in their regions, these groups may have deliberately concealed their identities.

In the works of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, it is seen that Ibāḍīsm was introduced with his views on the definition of faith, the status of the major sinner, and the people to be made friends or enemies. At this point, it can be seen that there are some manipulative narrations. However, in general, there may be overlap with the Ibāḍī sources. Nevertheless, it can be said that Ibāḍī view that the person who commits a major sin is a hypocrite is not

<sup>33</sup> The majority of heresiographers did not live in regions where they could have had direct interaction with the Ibāḍiyya. As a result, most firaq works tended to rely heavily on earlier data in the books rather than first-hand engagement; see: Muhammed İkbāl Çoban, *Firaq Literatüründe İbadiyye Mezhebi [Ibāḍiyya in Islamic Heresiography]* (Kocaeli: Kocaeli University, the Institute of Social Sciences, M.A. Thesis, 2024), 118.

understood correctly. It is seen that the views of Ibāḍism, as a characteristic of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition, are tried to be refuted with Qur'anic verses and ḥadīths.

The most problematic aspect in the perception and presentation of the Eastern Ḥanafite (-Māturīdite) Firaq Tradition is that it is compared to the Magians in comparison to the famous ṭābi'ī scholar Qatāda. This is probably due to the confusion between Ibāḥiyya and Ibāḍiyya due to the similarity in spelling and writing. A reasonable relationship that can be established between Ibāḥiyya and the Magians could be established between Ibāḍiyya and the Magians as a result of incorrect reading/spelling. The fact that the authors were not aware of this confusion and did not make a correction can be explained by their ignorance of this situation, as well as the fact that they did not have sufficient knowledge about Ibāḍiyya and probably there were no Ibāḍīs in their close circle.

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