

Introduction

On June 2, 1949 the grand vizier of the French Protectorate of Tunisia, Muṣṭafā al-Ka‘āk, issued this circular to provincial officials all over the country:

I would like to know if there are any private endowments (*aḥbās*) established by Tunisians in the lands of the Egyptian Kingdom. It is desired that a broad search be conducted, and thorough investigations undertaken in order to obtain this information and to record it as soon as possible. If some of those under your administration possess endowments of this kind, you should let us know their type, their importance, and the names of their founders.¹

When the official from the island of Jerba responded two months later, he attached to his letter a remarkably detailed table of private endowments in Egypt owned by Tunisians from this island in the south.² The list was far longer than those from other parts of the country. It included endowed homes (*diyār*), shops (*ḥawānit*), and trade depots (*wakā'il*) in Cairo and Alexandria dating to as early as the seventeenth century, managed by prominent Jerban merchant families in Egypt. First on the list were the extensive endowments of the al-Baḥḥār family, an Ibadi Muslim family from the southern Jerban town of Ajīm (Figure 0.1).

Over three centuries earlier, on November 18, 1617, several members of the same Jerban families listed in that document had stood in the Civilian Inheritance Court (al-Qisma al-‘Arabiyya) in Ottoman Cairo. Those present, “all from among the distinguished merchants of the market of the [Ibn] Tulun Mosque,” had gathered to serve as witnesses in a case regarding the estate of a merchant from the al-Baḥḥār family named ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad.³

¹ ANT A 281 0006 (1949–1950), doc. 13 (French), doc. 14 (Arabic).

² ANT A 281 0006 (dated 25 Shaw 1368/Aug 20, 1949), doc. 4.

³ Maḥkamat al-Qisma al-‘Arabiyya, 23, case 440 (dated 19 D. al-Qa‘da 1026/Nov 18, 1617). Reproduced in ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, ed.,

[illegible]

These documents, one from the colonial-era archives of the French Protectorate in Tunisia and the other from the court registers of Ottoman-era Egypt, together capture the main themes of this book. First, they demonstrate a centuries-long presence for Jerbans and other

Wathā'iḳ al-maghārba min sijillāt al-mahākam al-shara'riyya al-mišriyya abān al-'aṣr al-'uthmānī 1604/1650 (al-juz' al-thālith), vol. 3 (Zaghwān: Mu'assasat al-Tamīmī, 1998), 55.

Maghribi Ibadis in Ottoman-era Egypt that lasted from the seventeenth century well into the twentieth. Second, the family at the center of these two documents, al-Baḥḥār, endowed the building that is the geographic anchor of my story here. In the early seventeenth century a member of the al-Baḥḥār family established a trade agency, school, and library beside the Ibn Tulun Mosque that would become known as the “Buffalo Agency” (Wikālat al-Jāmūs).

That institution would be operated and supported by the Ibadi Muslim communities of the Maghrib from the island of Jerba, the Mزاب Valley (today in Algeria), and the Jebel Nafusa (today in Libya). As in these two documents, however, the Ibadi affiliation of the Buffalo Agency and its residents over the course of its three-and-a-half centuries of operation remained hidden in plain sight. In this book I argue that this is because the Maghribi Ibadis of Cairo participated in the legal, commercial, religious, and political spheres of Ottoman Egypt to such an extent that they are only with great difficulty distinguished from their non-Ibadi contemporaries. Their unusual status as members of both the Muslim majority and a coherent minority religious community facilitated this participation and enabled them to be at once Ottoman and Ibadi. In short, this is the story of the Ottoman Ibadis of Cairo.

The two documents referred to above likewise bookend the timeframe of the story I tell here. In the following chapters I anchor the history of Ibadis in Cairo to that of the Buffalo Agency and the individuals whose commercial, scholarly, and personal lives intersected there from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries. Finally, the documents convey something of the range of materials I use to tell this story, including Ottoman shariah court records, personal documents and letters, official correspondence, colonial-era archives, and notes and marginalia from private manuscript libraries.

Ibadis as a Community

The Ibadi community constitutes a religious minority, whose history predates the Ottoman period by several centuries. Ibadi Muslims trace their own origins to the first century of Islam in the city of Basra, in what is today Iraq. By the eighth century CE they had begun to emerge as a distinct community, which would develop separately from what would become known as Sunni and Shi‘i Islam. The two spheres of

premodern Ibadi communities – one in the east, centered in the southern Arabian Peninsula, and another in the west, in the Maghrib – developed their own legal, theological, and prosopographical textual corpora that distinguished them intellectually from both one another and their Sunni or Shi'i counterparts.⁴

The two spheres also followed separate political trajectories throughout the early Islamic centuries. In the Arabian Peninsula, especially in Oman, their communities would hold political power, and in the early modern era even commanding a vast maritime empire that led to the incorporation of the island of Zanzibar into the realm of Ibadism.⁵ In the west, by contrast, there was only a brief period of Ibadi political control in the form of the Rustamid dynasty of Tāhart (778–909 CE). From the fourth/tenth century onward, Ibadis in the region lived under the control of other empires or regional polities.⁶ Over the subsequent centuries Ibadi scholars would fashion a historical narrative that drew the boundaries of an Ibadi community and distinguished it from other Muslim groups.⁷

Since the extension of Ottoman influence into the Maghrib beginning in the sixteenth century, Ibadi communities there have concentrated in three main regions: the Mzab Valley in what is today central Algeria, the island of Jerba in southern Tunisia, and the Jebel Nafusa in northwestern Libya. The Ottoman centuries would witness the continuation of a trend toward a growing familiarity among Ibadi scholars with Sunni texts, a trend that accelerated with the attraction of Sunni

⁴ Pierre Cuperly, *Introduction à l'étude de l'ibādisme et de sa théologie* (Algiers: Office des publications universitaires, 1984); Valerie J. Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibādī Islam* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012); John Wilkinson, *Ibādism: Origins and Early Development in Oman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Adam Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers: The Origins and Elaboration of the Ibādī Imamate Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ersilia Francesca, "Ibādī Law and Jurisprudence," *The Muslim World* 105, no. 2 (2015): 209–23.

⁵ Wilkinson, *Ibādism*; Amal N. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism: Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (1880s–1930s)* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁶ Virginie Prevost, *L'aventure ibādite dans le Sud tunisien, VIIIe–XIIIe siècle. Effervescence d'une région méconnue* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2008); Cyrille Aillet, *L'archipel ibadite. Une histoire des marges du Maghreb médiéval* (Lyon-Avignon: CIHAM-Éditions, 2021).

⁷ Paul M. Love, Jr., *Ibadi Muslims of North Africa: Manuscripts, Mobilization, and the Making of a Written Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

institutions of learning such as the Zaytuna Mosque in Tunis and, as this book explores, the al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo. By the end of the Ottoman centuries, Ibadis knew the Sunni postclassical canon well, and were participating in the pan-Islamic and Salafi discourses of their non-Ibadi contemporaries.⁸ One of the purposes of this book is to shed light on this long-term participation of Ibadis in the legal, intellectual, political, and religious life of the Ottoman Empire.

Ibadi Studies

Until very recently, the scholarship on Ibadi Islam in European languages has focused on one of two periods. The first and largest has been research on the earliest history of the community, including its development in late antique and early medieval contexts. Interest in this period of Ibadi history dates back to the first half of the twentieth century in particular.⁹ Drawing on that earlier generation of scholars, more recent historians focused on these periods, including many from the contemporary Ibadi community, have made remarkable contributions to our understanding of the place of Ibadis in early Islamic intellectual and legal history.¹⁰ Historiography in Arabic has long

⁸ Augustin Jomier, *Islam, réforme et colonisation. Une histoire de l'ibadisme en Algérie (1882–1962)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2020).

⁹ On North African Ibadis, the work of Tadeusz Lewicki, Zygmunt Smogorzewski, and Pierre Cuperly merit special mention for the influence they have had on modern scholarship: Tadeusz Lewicki, “Les sources ibādites de l’histoire médiévale de l’Afrique du Nord,” *Africana Bulletin* 35 (1988): 31–42; Tadeusz Lewicki, *Les ibadites en Tunisie au moyen âge* (Rome: Angelo Signorelli, 1958); Tadeusz Lewicki, *Études maghrébines et soudanaises* (Warsaw: Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1983); Marius Canard, “Les travaux de T. Lewicki concernant le Maghrib et en particulier les Ibadites,” *RA* 103 (1959): 356–71; Marius Canard, “Quelques articles récents de l’arabisant polonais T. Lewicki,” *RA* 105 (1961): 186–92; Krzysztof Kościelniak, “The Contribution of Prof. Tadeusz Lewicki (1906–1992) to Islamic and West African Studies,” *Analecta Cracoviensia: Studia Philosophico-Theologica Editata a Professoribus Cracoviae* 44 (2012): 241–55; Zygmunt Smogorzewski, “Essai de bio-bibliographie ibadite-wahbite, avant-propos,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 5 (1927): 45–57; Cuperly, *Introduction à l’étude de l’ibādisme*.

¹⁰ For example: Prevost, *L’aventure ibādite*; Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers*; Cyrille Aillet, ed., “L’ibādisme, une minorité au cœur de l’islam,” *REMM* 132 (2012); Adam Gaiser, *Shurat Legends, Ibadi Identities: Martyrdom, Asceticism, and the Making of an Early Islamic Community* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016); Cyrille Aillet, ed., *L’Ibadisme dans les sociétés de l’Islam médiéval. Modèles et interactions*, *Studies in the History and Culture of the*

recognized and emphasized the place of Egypt as a site of transit connecting the eastern and western spheres of Ibadism. Like European-language scholarship, however, the emphasis has usually remained on the earliest centuries of Ibadi history with little attention to the Ottoman period.¹¹

Scholars have also begun to turn their attention to Ibadi history in the modern era, situating the history of Ibadis in North Africa, East Africa, and Oman in the contexts of the global events that shaped the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Demonstrating how Ibadis in different places participated in or opposed modern Islamic reform movements, for example, has done tremendous work in making Ibadis visible as distinct intellectual and political communities in the contexts of European colonialism and the early years of independence in North Africa, East Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula.¹² That scholarship has also emphasized the ways in which Ibadis, like their contemporaries, utilized the technologies of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as the printing press, steam power, and the telegraph to participate in both intra-communal and global conversations on and

Middle East 33 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018); ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Fazārī, *Early Ibādī Theology: Six Kalām Texts by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Fazārī*, ed. Abdulrahman al-Sālimi and Wilferd Madelung, Islamic History and Civilization 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Abdulrahman al-Sālimi and Wilferd Madelung, eds., *Ibādī Texts from the 2nd/8th Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018). A series of international conferences funded by the Omani government since 2011 has resulted in several publications in the series entitled Studies on Ibadism and Oman, published by the Olms Verlag.

¹¹ The two most directly relevant monographs highlighting Egypt as a point of connection are Rajab Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *al-Ibādīyya fī Miṣr wa-al-Maghrib wa-‘alāqātuhum bi-Ibādīyyat ‘Umān wa-al-Baṣra* (al-Sīb: Maktabat al-Dāmīrī, 1990); and Farhat Djaabiri, *‘Alāqāt ‘Umān bi-shimāl Ifrīqiya* (Muscāt: al-Maṭābī ‘al-‘Ālamiyya, 1991). More recently, a synthetic study in Arabic by ‘Alī al-Shillī offers a good overview of the secondary source material on Ibadis in Egypt: ‘Alī b. Sālim al-Shillī, *al-Wujūd al-Ibādī fī Miṣr* (Oman: Baseera Editions, 2018).

¹² Valerie J. Hoffman, “The Articulation of Ibādī Identity in Modern Oman and Zanzibar,” *The Muslim World* 94, no. 2 (2004): 201–16; Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism*; Valerie J. Hoffman, “Ibadi Reformism in Twentieth-Century Algeria: The Tafsir of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Bayyud,” *REMMM* 132 (2012): 155–73; Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibādī Islam*; Augustin Jomier, “Iṣlāḥ ibādīte et intégration nationale. Vers une communauté mozabite? (1925–1964),” *REMMM* 132 (2012): 175–95; Jomier, *Islam, réforme et colonisation*.

engagements with modernity.¹³ A continued engagement with globalization has also been the subject of recent scholarship on Ibadi communities in Oman and East Africa.¹⁴

Although Egypt appears frequently in this scholarship as a hub connecting different Ibadi communities in the late nineteenth and especially the first half of the twentieth century, its role as a site of Ibadi activity in the centuries of Ottoman rule that preceded those periods has gone largely unremarked. I use the history of Ibadis in Cairo throughout much of the Ottoman period to emphasize the long-term importance of Egypt as a site of Ibadi interaction stretching back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The lack of attention to Egypt in much of the historiography of Ibadi communities is remarkable, since as I demonstrate throughout this book Ibadis were ubiquitous in all aspects of everyday life in Ottoman Egypt. I argue here for recognizing the central place of Ottoman Egypt – and Cairo, in particular – in the history of generations of Maghribi Ibadi students, scholars, pilgrims, merchants, journalists, and activists from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

Ibadis as Ottomans

A history of the Ottoman Ibadis of Cairo and the Buffalo Agency offers three contributions to the historiographies of northern Africa and the broader Ottoman world. First is the transnational nature of the story told here. The Buffalo Agency's history is primarily one of Maghribis

¹³ For example, see Philip Sadgrove, "From Wādī Mīzāb to Unguja: Zanzibar's Scholarly Links," in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, ed. Scott Reese (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 184–211; Amal N. Ghazal, "An Ottoman Pāshā and the End of Empire: Sulaymān al-Bārūnī and the Networks of Islamic Reform," in *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, ed. James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 40–58; Augustin Jomier, "Les réseaux étendus d'un archipel saharien. Les circulations de lettrés ibadites (XVIIe siècle-années 1950)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 63, no. 2 (2016): 14–39. On the broader context of global Muslim engagement with modernity into which Ibadis fit see Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ Mandana E. Limbert, *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Kimberly T. Wortmann, "Omani Religious Networks in Contemporary Tanzania and Beyond" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2018).

living, studying, and working in Egypt but operating in networks linking them to the rest of the Ottoman Mediterranean and beyond. The legal, commercial, and communal ties linking Ibadis in Cairo with their coreligionists in Tunis, Jerba, Alexandria, Mecca, or Istanbul demonstrate the remarkable interconnectedness of the Maghrib to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. Ibadis share this transregional history with other Maghribis in Egypt, whose lives have captured the attention of prominent historians. The collective works of André Raymond and ‘Abd al-Raḥīm A. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, as well as the more recent work of Ḥussām ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī, have demonstrated the ubiquity of Maghribis in Ottoman Egyptian society of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁵ In this book I draw heavily on the work of these three scholars, but I also extend their arguments in two ways. First, I move beyond the general community of Maghribis in Egypt to follow the history of a particular community: Maghribi Ibadis. Second, I follow the history of Maghribis in Egypt beyond the eighteenth century and demonstrate the continuity of the Ibadi Maghribi experience into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This means that the book traces the history of Ibadis in Cairo over almost the entirety of Ottoman rule in Egypt, which I approach here as having lasted in one form or another from 1517 CE until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I.

My emphasis on the Ottoman character of this period and the Maghribi Ibadis who lived through it connects to the second contribution of the book: making Ibadis visible as a religious minority in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire, and Ottoman-era Egypt in particular. Rich and innovative scholarship on the Ottoman Mediterranean from the past several years has highlighted the histories of religious minorities such as Sephardic Jews, Armenian Christians, and Coptic Christians in Ottoman and European colonial contexts.¹⁶

¹⁵ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1 (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1973); André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 2 (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1974); ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, *al-Maghārība fī Miṣr fī al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī* (Tunis: al-Majalla al-Tārikhiyya al-Maghribiyya, 1982); Ḥussām ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa-al-thawra: al-buyūt al-tijāriyya al-maghribiyya fī Miṣr al-‘uthmāniyya* (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma lil-Kitāb, 2008).

¹⁶ Recent examples include Magdi Guirguis, “The Organization of the Coptic Community in the Ottoman Period,” in *Society and Economy in Egypt and the*

Those studies likewise draw attention to how the roles of those minorities within the Ottoman Empire varied according to time and place. Treatments of some of these minorities, as Magdi Guirguis has written, often “do not fully describe these groups of people nor ... take into consideration the changes that take place in the internal dynamics of such groups in the course of the historical process.”¹⁷ In this book I follow Guirguis’s example by tracing the history of Ibadis in Cairo to highlight elements of continuity and change both in the internal dynamics of the community and its place vis-à-vis Ottoman state and society in Egypt and beyond.

While they shared much with non-Muslim religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire, Ibadis nevertheless belonged to the Muslim majority. This unusual combination afforded them opportunities in that it gave them space to participate fully in Ottoman society in Egypt while also allowing them to draw on a vast support network of coreligionists throughout northern Africa and beyond. This dual status of minority within a majority raises two interrelated questions for my purposes here: (1) How visible as a distinct community were the Ibadis to the Ottoman authorities in northern Africa? and (2) What, if anything, distinguished the Ibadi experience in Cairo from elsewhere in Ottoman lands?

In the lands west of Egypt, Ottomans encountered Ibadis beginning with the establishment of their control there in the sixteenth century. The Mzabi community of the Sahara signed a special agreement with the Ottomans that distinguished them from other parts of the *eyālet al-Jazā’ir*, granting them autonomy in exchange for tribute and at least indirectly recognizing their identity as Ibadis.¹⁸ Internally, the Mzabis

Eastern Mediterranean 1600–1900: Essays in Honor of André Raymond, ed. Nelly Hanna and Raouf Abbas (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 201–16; Febe Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Richard E. Antaramian, *Brokers of Faith, Brokers of Empire: Armenians and the Politics of Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Dina Danon, *The Jews of Ottoman Izmir: A Modern History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Guirguis, “The Organization of the Coptic Community,” 201.

¹⁸ Yūsuf Ibn Bakīr al-Ḥājj Sa’īd, *Tārīkh Banī Mzāb: dirāsa ijtīmā’iyya wa-iqtisādiyya wa-siyāsiyya*, 3rd. ed. (Ghardāia: n.p., 2014), 68–70. Al-Ḥājj Sa’īd is referencing an agreement with the Wargala, rather than the Mzab, which is cited

were allowed to maintain their form of governance centered on local councils of scholars (*‘azzāba*). Within the territory under more direct Ottoman control in the northern tell region, especially in the city of Algiers, Mzabis held a special status and remained organized under and responsible to the leader of their community (*amīn*).¹⁹ As I demonstrate in this book, the physical separation of Ibadis in the Mzab or their “social separation” in the north contrasted with Ibadi participation in Ottoman society in Egypt.²⁰

The identity of the Mzabis as a trading community throughout the *eyālet al-Jazā’ir* resembled that of their coreligionists from the island of Jerba, whose merchant communities could be found throughout the empire. Ottoman control of Jerba began first through the island’s incorporation under the Ottoman government in Tripoli in the sixteenth century. Largely autonomous families ruled the island on behalf of the Ottomans until Jerba came under control of the Husaynid Ottoman government in Tunis in the eighteenth century.²¹ Over the period of Ottoman rule, Ibadis in Jerba watched the traditional council of religious scholars, the *‘azzāba*, progressively lose its influence as the Ottomans exercised control of the island through the appointment of officials and the establishment of courts.²² A growing rate of conversion of the island’s population to Maliki Sunnism, especially in the last two centuries of Ottoman rule, distinguished the Ibadi experience in Jerba from that of the Mzab. In Jerba people would have been very aware of the Ibadi community as a distinct one, but there is little to suggest that the Ottomans were particularly interested in the Ibadis’

in Diego de Haëdo, *Histoire des rois d’Alger*, trans. H. D. de Grammont (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1881), 86–87. Robert Brunschvig suggested that the Ibadis from both Jerba and the Mzab enjoyed “la liberté . . . pour pratiquer leur rite” beginning with the Ottoman occupation at the end of the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, he did not cite the source of that information: see Robert Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hāfšides des origines à la fin du XVIème siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1940), 1:333.

¹⁹ Donald C. Holsinger, “Migration, Commerce and Community: The Mīzābis in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Algeria,” *Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980): 61–69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

²¹ Muḥammad al-Marīmī, *Ibāḍiyyat Jarba khilāl al-‘aṣr al-ḥadīth* (Tunis: Kulliyat al-Adāb wa-al-Funūn wa-l-Insāniyāt bi-Manūba, 2005).

²² Farhat Djaabiri, *Nizām al-‘azzāba ‘ind al-ibāḍiyya bi-Jarba (L’organisation des azzaba chez les ibadhites de Jerba)* (Tunis: Institut national d’archéologie et d’art, 1975), esp. 309–10.

religious beliefs. Ottoman policies in Jerba instead reflect practical approaches to ensuring political control over a strategically valuable geography.

Jerban Ibadi communities outside of the island, in what Mohamed Merimi has called *shatāt* (diasporas), followed a structure similar to that of the Mzabis outside the Mzab. Under the leadership of a prominent individual, a group of Jerbans oversaw the wellbeing of the community. Within the *eyālet* of Tunis, Jerbans concentrated in a specific location in each city, known as the *dār al-jamā'a*.²³ Similar models were followed throughout the empire, although they took slightly different forms in Tunis, Tripoli, Alexandria, Cairo, or Istanbul. In some places, such as in Tunis or Istanbul, Jerbans appear to have been a distinct and identifiable merchant community comparable to the Mzabis in Algiers.

In Cairo, by contrast, the Ibadi community was not made up only of Jerbans, but also included Mzabis and Nafusis. In later centuries these communities were in regular contact with their coreligionists in the Arabian Peninsula and on the East African coast. While they shared features of social organization with the Jerbans in Tunis or the Mzabis in Algiers, part of what I suggest distinguished Ibadis in Cairo from their coreligionists in many other Ottoman cities was the greater degree to which they participated in all aspects of Ottoman daily life. The community in Cairo was more diverse than Ibadi communities in the lands to the west. As I show in Chapter 1, the city was home to Maghribi Ibadis from different regions who came to Cairo for a variety of reasons beyond trade, including education or pilgrimage. Many Ibadis spent years or even decades in Egypt. Their diversity of backgrounds and motivations for being there also meant that the visibility of Ibadis to the Ottoman government as a distinct religious minority community differed from the Maghrib.

Whether the Ottoman authorities in Egypt regarded Ibadis as a heterodox religious community was largely irrelevant in the everyday life of Ibadis for much of the period covered here, since it did not prevent their full participation as Muslims in the political, legal, commercial, or religious life of Ottoman Egypt. Still, it merits consideration how and why the Ottoman authorities dealt with Ibadis in the ways that they did, and how the situation in Egypt resembled or differed

²³ Ibid., 258.

from their circumstances elsewhere in the empire. This is especially true because Ibadis had that unusual status of being at once part of the religious majority and a religious minority community.

In this, Ibadis resembled Shi'i communities in the empire. In his work on Shi'ism in Ottoman-era Lebanon, Stefan Winter noted that "if the Empire, having formally espoused Sunni Islam, could not explicitly tolerate religious dissidence, the pragmatism sometimes shown in accommodating and indeed integrating deviant groups and individuals is no less a defining feature of its history."²⁴

For much of that history, Winter goes on to say,

the Sunni clerical establishment, much less the Ottoman state authorities, rarely made it their business to inquire into the hearts and minds of Muslims simply in order to discover and uproot heretical belief. . . . Many Ottoman government officials . . . who were well appraised of the confessional identity of their charges . . . chose not to make an issue of it in day-to-day administration.²⁵

The same was likely true for the Ibadis of Cairo, whose religious affiliation to a non-Sunni Muslim community was known to many of their contemporaries in the markets, courts, and madrasas of Egypt. As I explore in subsequent chapters, many of their Maliki Muslim contemporaries who also came to Egypt from the Maghrib would have known well the religious affiliation of Ibadis in Cairo. As for the Ottoman authorities, Winter points out that even with a community as well-known as the Shi'is, "the Ottoman state, contrary to conventional assumptions, was ideologically too heterogenous and politically too pragmatic to follow an actual policy against Shiism."²⁶ The same applies to Ibadis, who were far less numerous than Shi'is in the empire and had the benefit of not being indirectly affiliated with any political rivals to the Ottomans (as was the case with Shi'is and the Safavids, for example).

Examples from the Ottoman provinces to the west of Egypt, where Ibadis would have been more visible as a distinct community because of their long-term concentration in particular geographic centers, demonstrate these points well. For example, in a letter from the mid-tenth/sixteenth century, a Mzabi Ibadi scholar wrote to the acting Ottoman

²⁴ Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–19. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

ruler in the north, a man named Yūsuf Āghā, to protest comments made by the latter about Ibadis during a military expedition to the region in 971/1563.²⁷ The campaign, aimed at the extraction of resources from the region, does not appear to have targeted the Mزاب for any religious reasons. This suggests that the region's Ibadi affiliation was known from the beginning, but it does not evidence any discriminatory treatment of them by authorities.

This kind of letter, in which Ibadi scholars addressed their complaints to the Ottoman authorities, became a kind of literary genre over the next few centuries in the lands west of Egypt.²⁸ Two other letters from an Ibadi scholar in Jerba during the eighteenth century, one addressed to the 'Alī Pāshā Bey of Tunis (r. 1725–56) and the other to the ruler of Tripoli, Aḥmad al-Qaramanlī (r. 1711–45), provide lengthy complaints over allegedly discriminatory practices against the Ibadi communities in the two Ottoman cities. In the first case, the issue was a man who had slandered the Ibadi community in a public hammam in Tunis.²⁹ In the case of the letter to Tripoli, the issue specifically addressed Ibadi participation in an Ottoman court there. Evidently, a Maliki judge had refused to accept Ibadis as witnesses at the insistence of some local jurists.³⁰ The long definitions and descriptions of the Ibadi community and its history that accompany these letters suggest that the Ottoman authorities in these provinces had only a vague notion of who the Ibadis were and had no systematic policies discriminating against them. This helps to contextualize the Ibadi experience in Egypt, where Ibadis were even less visible, operating under the radar of the Ottoman authorities altogether. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, in Cairo Ibadis belonged to the broader Maghribi community. This status as a minority within the majority proved important to the history of Ibadis in Cairo.

²⁷ Nāṣir Bilḥāj, “‘Alāqāt Ibādiyyat Wādī Mizāb bi-al-‘Uthmāniyyīn fī iyālat al-Jazā’ir min khilāl risālat al-shaykh Abī Mahdī ‘Īsā ilā Yahyā Aghā,” *al-Majalla al-tārīkhiyya al-‘arabiyya li-al-dirāsāt al-‘uthmāniyya* 47 (2013): 113–138, at 125. Bilḥāj has used this example to emphasize the importance of the distinction between the Ibadis in the north and those of Mزاب in the Mزاب itself.

²⁸ Ibrāhīm b. Bakīr Baḥḥāz, “Thalāth rasā’il makhṭū’a ḥawl al-ibādiyya al-mizābiyyīn bi-al-jazā’ir fī-al-‘ahd al-‘uthmānī,” *Revue d’histoire maghrébine* 89–90 (1998): 239–52.

²⁹ Sālim Bin Ya‘qūb, *Tārīkh jazīrat Jarba*, 1st ed. [independently published], 138.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as notions of belonging changed in the competing imperial and later nascent nationalist landscapes of northern Africa and western and central Asia, the Ottoman position toward Shi'ism shifted to one of political suspicion.³¹ Ibadi communities, by contrast, appear not to have represented much of a political or religious threat to either the Ottoman authorities or religious scholars. This was especially true because by the late nineteenth century French colonial forces had taken control of and formed administrations in most places where Maghribi Ibadis lived. In Algeria, Mzabis negotiated a place for themselves as a distinct minority community, both in the Mزاب and throughout Algeria, from 1853 onward.³² In the French Protectorate of Tunisia from 1881 forward, they continued much as they had under the Ottomans in that Jerbans maintained their roles as a merchant community and Ibadis in Jerba continued to operate their local religious educational system – although they increasingly lost pupils to French schools in the twentieth century.³³ By the end of the nineteenth century, Ibadis in the Jebel Nafusa had also joined an Ottoman administrative framework as part of the Tanzimat reforms. Ibadis served in Ottoman offices there into the twentieth century.³⁴ As I show in the later chapters of this book, Ibadis in Egypt were active at the highest levels of Ottoman regional politics in these places. But it was also in late nineteenth-century Egypt, as elsewhere in the empire, that Ibadis became enmeshed in global conversations on and networks of Pan-Islamism and, in the twentieth century, anticolonial resistance.

Alongside religious and communal affiliations, the geography of Ibadi communities in the Ottoman context also merits consideration. Despite the concentration of their communities in Maghribi

³¹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "The Caliph and Muftahids: Ottoman Policy towards the Shiite Community of Iraq in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 4 (2005): 561–74.

³² Amal N. Ghazal, "Tensions of Nationalism: The Mزاب Student Missions in Tunis and the Politics of Anticolonialism," *IJMES* 47, no. 1 (2015): 47–63; Jomier, *Islam, réforme et colonisation*; Amal Ghazal, "Self-Minoritization: Performing Difference in Colonial Algeria," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 41, no. 3 (2021): 355–61.

³³ Ḥamādi al-Wātī, *Madāris jazīrat Jarba tuḥaddith akhbārāhā* (Jerba: n.p., 2011).

³⁴ Ghazal, "An Ottoman Pāshā and the End of Empire"; Paul M. Love, Jr., "Provenance in the Aggregate: The Social Life of an Arabic Manuscript Collection in Naples," *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 334–56.

geographies (oases, mountains, islands) that lay distant from the major centers of Ottoman imperial power or commerce, Ibadis traveled and conducted business throughout the Ottoman world in much the same way that their Jewish, Christian, or non-Ibadi Muslim contemporaries did. The history of the Buffalo Agency shows that Ibadis, far from being a minority on the margins of the Ottoman world, had a sustained presence in the empire's richest province for centuries. Moreover, the nature of their presence in Egypt was multifaceted, with Ibadis working, living, and studying in Cairo for many different reasons.

Geography often appears as a defining feature in discussions of Ibadi history in the Maghrib, whether as an explanation for their relative isolation from other Ibadi communities in the Arabian Peninsula before the nineteenth century or even their geographic distribution in the Maghrib as an "Ibadi archipelago."³⁵ While this is a productive way of understanding Ibadi communities as connected through a dense network, it is important to remember that this network extended well beyond the Maghrib to the east.³⁶ Moreover, as the individuals in this book show, the Ibadi community in Cairo was not always a transient one. Egypt was home to a sizeable community of Ibadis for three centuries, including many who made their careers, families, and lives there.

This all leads to the central argument and contribution of the book. I argue that the Ibadis of Cairo should be understood as Ottomans. These were not outsiders who existed on the margins of empire. Instead, they operated within the legal structure of the Ottoman sharia courts, the culture of Islamic education centered on al-Azhar, and the commercial landscape of Egypt and the broader Mediterranean in precisely the same ways as their non-Ibadi contemporaries did. At the same time, the Ottoman Ibadis of Cairo also relied upon their community's networks in Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean to facilitate the exchange of capital, books, goods, and ideas. In this way, the history of Ibadis in Egypt both intersects with and diverges from that of other Ibadis in the Maghrib, that of other religious minorities, and that of other Maghribis in the overlapping contexts of the Ottoman Empire and early European colonialism in northern Africa and western Asia. That unusual status of belonging to the

³⁵ Aillet, *L'archipel ibadite*. ³⁶ Jomier, "Les réseaux étendus."

Muslim majority while also constituting a distinct religious minority played a crucial role in enabling the Ibadis of Egypt to be Ottomans.

The Wikālat al-Jāmūs

To situate Maghribi Ibadis in this Ottoman context and to demonstrate the importance of Cairo to their history, I follow the story of an Ibadi institution known as the Wikālat al-Jāmūs – what I have called “the Buffalo Agency.” The original reason for its name (literally, “the water buffalo agency”) may have been its specialization in the trade of the skins of the water buffalo native to the Nile River Valley, but by the seventeenth century no evidence for that connection survives beyond the name itself.³⁷ Located in the Tulun district of Cairo, the Buffalo Agency served the Ibadi community of Egypt in different ways at different times. Over the course of its history from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, it would function as a trade depot, a school, a library, and, in the latest stage of its history, as a memorial to the legacy of the Ottoman Ibadis of Cairo. Despite its centrality in the intellectual, religious, commercial, and political lives of generations of Ibadis over these centuries, the Buffalo Agency has received surprisingly little attention from historians of Ibadi Islam.

Although several Ibadi historians and a handful of authors writing in European languages have recognized the importance of the Buffalo Agency, only one published Arabic-language study of its history exists. The author of that study, the Tunisian historian Aḥmad Muṣliḥ, originally wrote it as a master’s thesis and subsequently revised it as a book, published under the title *al-Waqf al-jarbī fī Miṣr* (The Jerban waqf in Egypt: the example of the Wikālat al-Jāmūs.)³⁸ Notably absent from the title is any reference to Ibadis. The emphasis on the geographic origins of the community in Jerba, rather than their religious affiliation, in part reflects the challenge of identifying Ibadis in the

³⁷ This claim is usually traced (orally or in writing) back to Sālim Bin Ya‘qūb. For example, see Martin H. Custers, *Ibādī Publishing Activities in the East and in the West, c. 1880–1960s: An Attempt to an Inventory, with References to Related Recent Publications* (Maastricht: n.p., 2006), 39.

³⁸ Aḥmad Muṣliḥ, *al-Waqf al-jarbī fī Miṣr wa-dawruhu fī ‘l-tanmiya al-iqtisādiyya wa-al-ijtimā’iyya wa-al-thaqāfiyya min al-qarn al-‘āshir ilā ‘l-qarn al-rābi‘ ‘ashar al-hijrīyayn (Wikālat al-Jāmūs namūdhajan)* (Kuwait: al-Amāna al-‘Amma lil-Awqāf, 2012).

historical sources produced outside the community that I discuss below. Muşliḥ's book is a remarkable journey through the history of a central feature of the Buffalo Agency: the waqf endowments that supported the upkeep of both the institution and its residents over much of its history.

Muşliḥ's study draws on a rich body of materials, ranging from court documents and manuscript notes to the author's own written exchanges with some of the last residents of the Buffalo Agency from the 1950s. He argues for the importance of the waqf in ensuring the longevity of the institution over several centuries, which he demonstrates by analyzing the key surviving endowment document of the institution from the mid-eighteenth century as well as other smaller private endowments. These latter include the endowment of books, documented in the manuscript notes of texts that survive from the Buffalo Agency's library. Most of the book relies on two main bodies of sources. The first are the surviving manuscripts from the library of the Agency that are today held in private collections in Oman and Tunisia, to which he had at least partial access. The second are the unpublished notes and the published work of the historian Shaykh Sālim Bin Ya'qūb (d. 1991), under whom Muşliḥ studied as a young man in Jerba, Tunisia.³⁹ I also draw on these sources, although as I explain in Chapter 6, the circumstances of my accessing them were quite different.

Despite these shared bodies of materials, the present study of the Buffalo Agency differs from Muşliḥ's in important ways. First of all, the history of waqf is not my priority. I fully agree with Muşliḥ's arguments for the centrality of the mechanism of waqf in the Agency's history, but I am interested in using those endowments to demonstrate only one of several aspects of Ibadi participation in Ottoman culture in Egypt. Muşliḥ's study showed the ubiquity of Ibadis in Ottoman Cairo, but I seek here to document their engagement with Ottoman law, politics, commerce, and religious life. The present book also distinguishes itself from that and previous studies in its attention to the citation of and specific referencing to individual manuscript notes and court records. Muşliḥ's rich study often contains oblique references to manuscripts or court cases, the origins of which

³⁹ Sālim Bin Ya'qūb, *Tārīkh jazīrat Jarba wa-madārisihā al-'ilmiyya*, ed. Farhat Djaabiri, 2nd ed. (Tunis: Cérès Editions, 2006).

are not clear. Nevertheless, his study served as a foundational starting point for my own, and it is difficult to imagine having completed this book without the leads offered to me there.

Muṣliḥ's is not the only study to address the history of the Buffalo Agency. A few other important studies have also taken up the topic and have influenced my arguments here. The first is the work of the Tunisian historian Mohamed Merimi, who has focused on the Ibadi communities of the island of Jerba, in particular. Merimi emphasized the need to understand the history of Ottoman-era Ibadi communities in Jerba as an interplay between religious and economic power, since it was both religious scholars and prominent merchants who shaped the organization of communities there and their relationship to Ottoman rule.⁴⁰

He emphasized that this same dynamic was present in Jerban communities outside the island, in what he calls their diaspora communities (*shatāt*) throughout the Mediterranean.⁴¹ In this he drew on the earlier scholarship of Farhat Djaabiri, who noted the importance of networks of Ibadis outside Jerba. His book on the history of the *'azzāba* in Jerba mentioned the central place of the Buffalo Agency for Jerbans in Egypt but limited the discussion of it to a couple of pages. In those pages, Djaabiri hinted at the rich engagement of Ibadis in Cairo with the Sunni religious circles that I explore here when he wrote: "We should not understand [the presence of the Agency] as the desire of the Ibadis to close in on themselves. In addition to the classes they attended there, [Ibadi] students also attended lessons at the al-Azhar Mosque."⁴² In this book I demonstrate that the Buffalo Agency confirms Djaabiri's point on its importance as a site of religious learning and conforms in some ways to Merimi's model of a Jerban diaspora community, especially in the importance of understanding the complementary roles of merchants and religious figures. At the same time, the community at the Buffalo Agency was not limited to Jerban Ibadis but included their Mzabi and Nafusi confreres.

In his more recent work Merimi also used the extant waqf statement of the Buffalo Agency from the eighteenth century (discussed in Chapter 3) to bolster his overarching argument that Ibadis from Jerba adapted to the legal norms of Maliki Sunni law in their

⁴⁰ Al-Marīmī, *Ibādīyyat Jarba*. ⁴¹ Ibid., 42–44.

⁴² Djaabiri, *Nizām al-'azzāba*, 258–59.

Mediterranean diasporas.⁴³ Convinced by this argument, I found it applicable in the context of Ibadis living in Ottoman Egypt during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In some ways, this book is an attempt to demonstrate an analogous, long-term adaptability of Ibadis in Egypt to an Ottoman context in all aspects of everyday life. It diverges from Merimi's argument only in my way of understanding the Ibadis of Egypt not as a diaspora but instead as a diverse group of people bound not by regional origins but by communal belonging.

There is also a short but valuable treatment of the Buffalo Agency's history by Martin Custers. Although best known for his work in compiling an exhaustive bibliography of primary and secondary sources for the study of Ibadism, Custers also authored a slim volume entitled *Ibadi Publishing Activities in the East and in the West, c.1880–1960s*.⁴⁴ This volume contains what is to my knowledge the only other treatment of the Agency's history in English.⁴⁵ Although less than five pages long, his short account of the Buffalo Agency carries tremendous value in that it draws on his extensive bibliographic work and his fieldwork in North Africa in the 1970s. Many of the materials he collected then and for his bibliography have been key to my own reconstruction of events over the course of the Agency's history, as so many of the footnotes below attest.

Sources and Method for this Book

When I set out to write this book I had a clear idea of the source material on which I intended to draw. These included first and foremost as many of the extant books from the Buffalo Agency's library as I could find. I knew from my previous work on the Ibadi prosopographical corpus that many of these texts were to be found in two places: (1) the private library of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Khalīlī in Muscat, Oman and (2) the private library of Shaykh Sālim Bin Ya'qūb in Jerba,

⁴³ Muḥammad al-Marīmī, *Ahl jazīrat Jarba min khilāl awqāf al-ibāḍiyya wa-hakdāsh bay'at al-gharība al-yahūdiyya* (Tunis: Markaz al-Nashr al-Jāmi'ī, 2018). See also Mohamed Merimi, *Juifs de Djerba et stratégies identitaires* (Tunis: Diraset études maghrébines, 2011).

⁴⁴ Martin H. Custers, *al-Ibāḍiyya: A Bibliography*, 2nd ed., vols. 1–3 (Hildesheim: George Olms Verlag, 2016).

⁴⁵ The section on Egypt, which is clearly of relevance, is quite a bit longer. On the Wikāla, specifically, see Custers, *Ibāḍi Publishing Activities*, 38–42.

Tunisia.⁴⁶ My aim was to visit both collections and to examine as many texts as possible by physical autopsy.

In my previous work I have been insistent upon this need to examine, whenever feasible, the physical objects themselves. This stems first from my conviction that the manuscripts are themselves actors alongside the people who create, transport, and use them, and second from the evidence (such as watermarks and bindings) that illuminate the history of these manuscripts but can be difficult to examine in digital facsimiles.⁴⁷ Despite all these intentions and convictions, in the end I examined in person only a handful of individual manuscripts that originated in the Buffalo Agency. Instead, I was able to draw extensively on digital facsimiles. This affected my method and approach to using these sources in unexpected ways that deserve some attention here.

The first and largest body of extant manuscripts from the Buffalo Agency's library is today found in the private library of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Khalīlī, who is also currently the Grand Mufti for the sultanate of Oman. Unable to obtain leave or funding for an extended stay in Oman, I had to make recourse to other means of examining these texts. The Omani Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs has offered digital facsimiles of many of the texts in the al-Khalīlī Library on its "Electronic Library" website, but the online reader that must be used to view them is difficult to work with and the images are often distorted.⁴⁸ Fortunately, the Ibadica centre des études et de recherche sur l'ibadisme in Paris has in its collection an additional set of digital facsimiles of much of the library. It is from those images that I have analyzed the manuscripts from the al-Khalīlī Library, and it is to the shelf marks in the Ibadica collection that I refer throughout the book. While the use of digital surrogates meant I was unable to study some physical features such as watermarks and bindings, spending several months with those images allowed me far more time to study their contents and even some aspects of their physical features than even an

⁴⁶ Love, Jr., *Ibadi Muslims of North Africa*, esp. 140–42 on the Wikāla.

⁴⁷ On these issues see Eryn Kropf, "Will That Surrogate Do? Reflections on Material Manuscript Literacy in the Digital Environment from Islamic Manuscripts at the University of Michigan Library," *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 52–70.

⁴⁸ Online at elibrary.mara.gov.om/en/.

extended visit to the library would have allowed. The ability to manipulate the color, contrast, and size of images often proved invaluable in identifying difficult-to-read passages or other features of texts that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

A comparison of the images and numbering systems in different facsimiles from the manuscripts in the al-Khalilī Library and references to them in other studies quickly demonstrated to me that I did not have the whole picture. Shelf marks differed depending on which source or collection of images I referred to, and even the contents of particular volumes differed. I have reconstructed much of the library and its history through the use of these digital facsimiles. Despite a few volumes that may be missing, the overall picture of the collection emerges quite clearly, and it is in large part due to the flexibility of being able to move among facsimiles from different collections that I was able to reconstruct it.

That said, the veritable key to reconstructing the skeleton of the Buffalo Agency's library was an additional set of photographs taken by Martin Custers in a visit to the library of Sālim Bin Ya'qūb in Jerba. In that case, it was not facsimiles of the books in the Agency's library that proved so valuable but instead images of a hand list of those books recorded by Bin Ya'qūb during his residency at the Agency in the 1930s. Discussed in detail in Chapter 6, Bin Ya'qūb's time in Cairo and efforts to document the Buffalo Agency's history have proved invaluable to writing this book. In part for that reason, his own private library constituted the second-largest collection of manuscripts on which I have drawn here.

Sālim Bin Ya'qūb is a prominent figure in the modern history of Ibadi Islam in the Maghrib, and his influence is felt in the work and careers of his students and friends. As noted above, these include Aḥmad Muşliḥ, whose study of the Buffalo Agency's waqf draws heavily on his teacher's library and scholarship. Muşliḥ also had access to a version of the list of endowed books recorded by Shaykh Sālim, although it differs somewhat from the version I have used. This list represents only one instance of the many sources from the Bin Ya'qūb family library on which I have drawn for this book. Here again, the Ibadica Center facilitated my access by providing me with its own collection of digital facsimiles of much of the Bin Ya'qūb Library, and it is to that numbering system that I refer throughout. In my own reconstruction of the Buffalo Agency's library and its history,

I have triangulated these different digital facsimiles of manuscripts, documents, and books from these two collections.

Despite their centrality, the books originally held in the Buffalo Agency's library constitute only one piece of the body of source material I used in this book. Also important was the large extant corpus of manuscripts produced by Ibadis while resident at the Agency. Manuscripts transcribed in the Agency or at nearby locations (such as al-Azhar) by its residents are housed in private and public libraries across the Maghrib and elsewhere. A large number, for example, are housed together in the El Barounia (al-Bārūniyya) Library in Jerba, Tunisia. The curator of that collection, Sa'īd al-Bārūnī, provided me with digital facsimiles of those texts and, in a handful of cases, direct access to the physical objects themselves during my fieldwork in Jerba. Alongside that collection, many manuscripts connected to the Agency are also today housed in the private libraries of the Mزاب Valley in Algeria. As I discuss in the following chapters, Ibadis originally from the Mزاب were among the most frequent visitors and residents at the Buffalo Agency, especially from the late eighteenth century onward. The number of copies of manuscripts transcribed at the Agency by Mزابis over a period of three centuries is considerable, and so a visit to the many libraries of that region seemed in order.

Here came another snag in my original plan. I had intended to visit the Mزاب for a research visit in 2019 but political events in Algeria prevented me from traveling there. With generous help from colleagues there, I obtained the electronic catalog entries for the manuscripts I had hoped to examine. While for the Bin Ya'qūb and al-Khalīlī Libraries I had been able to rely on digital facsimiles, for dozens of other manuscripts from the Mزاب I have relied on the remarkably detailed catalog entries produced by Ibadi research organizations there. References to many of these manuscripts appear in the notes of this book as they do in those catalogs, since I accessed them through data provided to me from the al-Barrādi Database, a central database of manuscripts in the Mزاب Valley operated by the Association Abou Ishak Tafeyeche in Ghardaia. The analytical value of these catalog entries, which number in the hundreds, was tremendous. They provided me first with a sense of how significant the Agency's role was as a site of Ibadi manuscript production. Second, these catalog entries allowed me to identify individuals in time and space who appeared obliquely in other sources, whether court cases, private letters, or manuscript notes.

Still more digital facsimiles, produced in a very different context, proved invaluable. When I was unable to travel to Algeria in 2019, I extended my stay in Tunisia to conduct additional research at the Tunisian National Archives (ANT). The visit was aimed at examining the correspondence of the commercial and diplomatic agent for the Husaynid bey of Tunis, Saʿīd al-Shammākhī (d. 1883), the subject of Chapter 5. The correspondence belongs to the archives' "Historical" (i.e. precolonial) series, meaning that it is accessible only through digital facsimiles. The ANT archivists and staff, always generous with their time, were especially patient during this visit as they allowed me to print copies of the entire 300-page correspondence on their office's desktop printer. This allowed me to work with the letters after leaving Tunisia and to reconstruct al-Shammākhī's career with great detail, which would have been impossible for me to do in a few weeks on site at the archives.

With a handful of exceptions, then, digital surrogates and catalog entries make up most of my primary source material here. The large amount of data that I was able to obtain via digital facsimile speaks to a remarkable sea change in how research can be conducted. As a result, this book is, I think, a good example of the tremendous value and exciting potential for the fruits of the many ongoing projects aimed at digitizing Arabic manuscript and early print collections, whether Ibadi or otherwise. Moreover, the catalog data I use here serves as an important reminder that good metadata are worth their weight in gold for research!

Finally, the first two chapters of the book draw heavily from a particularly Ottoman kind of source for the study of Egypt: the registers of Ottoman shariah court cases, known as *ṣijillāt*, dating from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries. Here I owe a great debt to the work of Egyptian historian ʿAbd al-Raḥīm A. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (1936–2005), who spent decades identifying cases involving Maghribi litigants and publishing them serially in journal articles and five large volumes (the final one posthumously).⁴⁹ These published

⁴⁹ ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, "Wathāʾiq tuwaḍḍiḥ dawr al-jāliya al-maghribiyya fī tārikh Miṣr fī-al-ʿaṣr al-ʿuthmānī," *Revue d'histoire maghrébine* 7–8 (1977): 99–105; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, "Wathāʾiq ʿan dawr al-maghārība fī tārikh Miṣr fī-al-ʿaṣr al-ʿuthmānī," *Revue d'histoire maghrébine* 10–11 (1978): 99–105; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, "Wathāʾiq ʿan dawr al-maghārība fī mujtamiʿ"

collections of sources, which remain underutilized by historians due to their rarity, allowed me to look for Ibadis in over two thousand cases from Ottoman courts in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt. Without their publication, I would not have had the time or the ability to study the original registers in Egypt.

Chapter Outlines

This book covers some 300 years of history, which (as is evident from its length) it does unevenly. This resulted in part from the nature of my source materials. I was, for example, able to say far more about Ibadi engagement with the world of law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than I could for later periods because of the published court registers. Rather than attempt a comprehensive historical survey, I follow a chronological arrangement, highlighting specific themes or historical figures in each of the chapters.

Chapter 1 offers a *mise en scène* by introducing the larger context of Maghribis in Ottoman-era Egypt in which Ibadis lived. In particular, it focuses on the neighborhood around the Ibn Tulun Mosque, where the Ibadi community of Cairo was centered and where the Buffalo Agency was located. Known as the Tulun district (*ḥayy Ṭūlūn*), this area of town was home to a community of Maghribis for the entirety of the

al-Iskandariyya fī-al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī ‘alā ḍaw’ wathā’iq al-sijill al-awwal min sijillāt maḥkamat al-Iskandariyya al-shara’iyya,” *Revue d’histoire maghrébine* 15–16 (1979): 119–28; ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, “Wathā’iq maḥkamat al-Iskandariyya al-shara’iyya al-muta’alliqa bi-al-jāliya al-maghribiyya fī madīnat al-Iskandariyya fī-al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī al-sijill al-thālith,” *Revue d’histoire maghrébine* 19–20 (1980): 301–07; ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, ed., *Wathā’iq al-maghāriba min sijillāt al-maḥākam al-shara’iyya al-miṣriyya abān al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī (al-juz’ al-awwal)*, vol. 1 (Zaghwān: Centre d’études et de recherches ottomanes, morisques de documentation et d’information, 1992); ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, *Wathā’iq al-maghāriba min sijillāt al-maḥākam al-shara’iyya al-miṣriyya abān al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī (al-juz’ al-thānī)*, vol. 2 (Zaghwān: Centre d’études et de recherches ottomanes, morisques de documentation et d’information, 1994); ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, ed., *Wathā’iq al-maghāriba min sijillāt al-maḥākam al-shara’iyya al-miṣriyya abān al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī 1604/1650 (al-juz’ al-rābi’)*, vol. 4 (Tunis: Mu’assasat al-Tamīmī, 2004); ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, ed., *Wathā’iq al-maghāriba min sijillāt al-maḥākam al-shara’iyya al-miṣriyya abān al-‘aṣr al-‘uthmānī 1676/1689 (al-juz’ al-khāmis)*, vol. 5 (Tunis: Mu’assasat al-Tamīmī, 2016).

Ottoman period. The chapter also lays out the geographic distribution of Maghribis in Cairo, their principal professions, and their ties to other regions, as well as where their stories fit in the historiography of Ottoman-era Egypt.

Turning more specifically to the Ibadi community, Chapter 2 examines the early history of the Buffalo Agency in the seventeenth century. It focuses its attention on shariah court records from that century to highlight Ibadi participation in Ottoman legal culture. The first of the two main characters is the founder of the Agency's first endowment: 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Baḥḥār. The example of al-Baḥḥār emphasizes the key role of Ibadi merchants in supporting the Agency from the very beginning, as well as demonstrating the reliance of those merchants on Ottoman courts to adjudicate commercial and personal matters and to formalize endowments. The second character of the chapter, a young Ibadi scholar named Muḥammad al-Sidwīkshī, plays a complementary role. His prominence as an Azhari scholar, his appearances in a series of probate and inheritance court cases, and his scholarly output together show how Ibadi scholars also participated in Ottoman religious and legal culture in Cairo. The chapter also uses shariah court records to identify the first appearance of the Buffalo Agency by name in the historical record.

Chapter 3 continues with the theme of the symbiotic relationship between Ibadi merchants and scholars by focusing its attention on the Buffalo Agency's manuscript library in the eighteenth century. The survival of much of that collection allowed me to tell the story of some of the most prominent students, scholars, and merchants connected to the Agency in that period, as well as to demonstrate more precisely the importance of the support of merchants for the accumulation of a library there. The contents of the library likewise convey the multiple roles played by the Buffalo Agency as a school for Ibadi studies and a residence for Ibadi students studying at the Sunni madrasa of the al-Azhar Mosque.

In Chapter 4 I transition into a discussion of the early nineteenth century, which demands the inclusion of a new set of actors. The first was the French army and its brief occupation of Egypt under Napoleon Bonaparte (d. 1821). The second was the arrival to power of the new Ottoman governor of Egypt, Muḥammad 'Alī (d. 1849). Europeans had long been present in Ottoman lands, but the French invasion marked the beginnings of European imperial (and later colonial)

activity in Egypt and the Maghrib that would characterize the rest of the nineteenth century. Ottoman governors had likewise come and gone, but Muḥammad ‘Alī would prove different. I follow the lives of two Ibadis who lived and studied in Egypt during this period as a lens through which to view how Ibadis experienced the dramatic events of the first half of the nineteenth century. A new type of source material for this chapter, personal letters authored by student residents of the Agency, complements other evidence from the margins of manuscripts copied or used by students and teachers there. Finally, the chapter highlights the key role of Egypt as a site of increasing contact among the Ibadi communities of the Maghrib and those in both the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa.

Chapter 5 focuses on the lives of two individuals in the second half of the nineteenth century to show how Ibadis interacted with two key components of Ottoman culture in Egypt during that period: ruling household politics and print culture. The first character, Sa‘īd al-Shammākhī (d. 1883), had earlier served as the director of the Buffalo Agency during the period covered in Chapter 4. His appointment to the role as the commercial and diplomatic agent (*wakīl*) of the Husaynid bey of Tunis from 1871 to 1881 demonstrates the links between the Ibadi community and the Ottoman ruling households of Egypt and Tunisia. The second key figure of the chapter, Muḥammad al-Bārūnī, founded the first Ibadi print house in northern Africa. Known as al-Maṭba‘a al-Bārūniyya (al-Bārūnī Press), it pioneered the printing of both classical Ibadi texts and new works by Ibadi authors living in the Maghrib, Oman, and Egypt. Ibadis shared an enthusiasm for print culture with their non-Ibadi contemporaries, and the chapter shows how Ibadis used the business and culture of printing in ways comparable to other Ottomans.

With the dawn of the twentieth century, the attention and activities of Ibadi Muslims in Cairo turned to the transregional worlds of pan-Islamist discourse, nascent nationalist movements, and Islamic reform. The events of the interwar years, in particular, represent a key turning point in the history of Ibadi communities throughout northern Africa and beyond, but that was a story in which the Buffalo Agency would play no major part. This is not to say that there was a fundamental break with the past. Work by Amal Ghazal and Augustin Jomier on the interwar period has already demonstrated its remarkable continuities

with the Ibadi past.⁵⁰ But a detailed study the events of that period are beyond the scope of this book.

The final chapter instead looks at the twilight decades of the Buffalo Agency's operation as an institution of Ibadi learning and commerce in Egypt by following the journey of a young Jerban student named Sālim Bin Ya'qūb to Cairo in the 1930s. Bin Ya'qūb arrived in Cairo to find that the Buffalo Agency had been deserted for years. His efforts to collect the fragments of the Agency's history represents a reenactment and a memorialization of the Ibadi experience in Cairo, which he would later seek to record in the form of a book about the history of the community there. This book follows his efforts to do so, reconstructing much of the work he did and drawing on many of the same documents to tell that very story. As a result, the chapter also reflects on Bin Ya'qūb's career and how it overlaps and at times intersects with my own experience researching and writing a book about the Buffalo Agency.

⁵⁰ Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism*; Amal N. Ghazal, "The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafī Press in the Interwar Period," *IJMES* 42, no. 1 (2010): 105–22; Jomier, "Iṣlāḥ ibāḍīte et intégration nationale"; Ghazal, "Tensions of Nationalism"; Jomier, *Islam, réforme et colonisation*.