Uṣul al-Din (The Fundamentals of the Faith)


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DESCRIPTION:
This study presents, in Arabic original and in a close English translation, one of the earliest statements of the fundamentals of the faith of the Ibadiyya movement of Islam. Although in continuous existence since the earliest decades following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, adherents to this belief system have generally not played major political or military roles in the history of the Arab world. Their faith has, as a consequence, received remarkably little attention from scholars both Muslim and Western. The work entitled Kitab Usul al-din is an important Ibadi theological treatise. Its author, Tibghurin b. Dawud b. 'Isa al-Malshuti, native of the Djabal Nafusa (Libya), lived in the second half of the fifth century (12th century BCE). This author enjoys a very high reputation among the Ibadi community of the Maghrib. Indeed, the Kitab Usul al-din has been the subject of many commentaries and glosses, and the main questions of Muslim theology are addressed. The book aims to highlight the foundations (usul) of religion from which, according to the author, the community has divided into rival “paths” and divergent sects. The order followed is that of the great questions of Muslim theology and, for the first ten questions, the five theses: tawhid, 'adl, wa'id and wa'id, manzila, amr and nahy. The Quran is the basis of Tibghurin’s argument. There is no chapter where it is not quoted abundantly (in total 247 citations). The unity of Tibghurin’s book is based on the fundamental principle of tawhid (divine oneness) from which all articles of faith flow and tanzih (dissimilarity of God and the creature), as well as on original fidelity to ijmā’. The credo of Tibghurin offers, in continuity with that of his predecessors, through a structured and balanced treaty, a global view of Ibadi theology of his time, on the basis of solid scriptural and rational argumentation.