

Recent Trends in the Studies of Ibadism in North Africa

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Abstract

This study aims to showcase a selection of recent works concerning the trends of research on Ibadism Sect in North Africa. It offers a valuable and comprehensive resource for those engaged in the studies on theological Islamic Sects as an alternative perspective to mainstream Islamic narratives. It helps address current contemporary religious tensions and understanding of modern Muslim diversity. Employing qualitative, inductive and descriptive methods, the research identifies the latest directions taken by Algerian scholars in research about Ibadism. Particularly focusing on Western Ibadi, thirty relevant papers are reviewed from the year 2015 to 2023, outlining articles on the trends of Ibadism issues addressed in each study. The findings reveal that contemporary Algerian writers concentrated on the significant aspects of Ibadism Sect studies in the focus areas of a) origins and dissemination b) biographies c) conditional description d) jurisprudence and e) interrelations of Ibadi with other sects. The limitation of this study relies on specific peer-reviewed scientific sources available online from the Algerian Scientific Journals Portal. This research focuses on relatively unexplored area within Islamic studies on North African Ibadism which offers rich potential for academic research. This study serves as a crucial framework for scholars to gain insight into contemporary trends within sectarian field of study.

Keywords: Islamic Sects, the Middle Maghreb, Ibadism of North Africa, Algerian Writers

Introduction

The study of Islamic sects has gained increasing attention in academic and scientific institutions, both in the Arab world and internationally. This trend is partly due to the expansion of universities across the Arab region (Khatib, 2019). However, despite the significance and effort invested in many studies, they often remain obscure, leading to redundant research that fails to build upon previous work (Kamel, 2019; Bilgin, 2019; Jomier, 2022). This underscores the need to compile, categorize, and disseminate these research efforts to facilitate the development of new, more informed studies.

Modern Algerian scholars have made substantial contributions to various fields, including Islamic thought and history (Brahimi & Ben Lazreg), of particular interest is their work on North African Ibadism. The Ibadi sect, which emerged from the followers of Abdullah bin Ibad, spread to North Africa when its adherents migrated from the Arab Levant due to political conflicts (Polimeni, 2019). Following the fall of the Rustamid state, Ibadis moved to south eastern Algeria, specifically the Wadi Mزاب region (Rezaei, & Khouadja, 2022). There, they established Azzaba circles, adapting to the need for secrecy due to conflicts with the Ubaidi state (Rofiq, 2018). The Ibadis have since remained an integral part of Algerian society, making Algerian writings on Ibadism particularly valuable due to their first-hand understanding of Ibadi conditions and heritage (Eickelman, 2023).

While Ibadism represents a significant contribution to sectarian studies, research on the topic suffers from inconsistency and poor archiving, partly due to limited specialized databases (Kamel, 2019). Despite being part of Algerian society, there's a general lack of awareness about Ibadism. (Mansouria, 2023), reviewing the work of Tazi & Amara (2019) and other researchers, noted that out of 1050 historical Algerian papers examined, only 14 theses were dedicated to Ibadism. This underrepresentation highlights the need for further research on this topic.

Although the study of Islamic sects such as Ibadism has gained increasing attention in academic and scientific institutions, both in the Arab world and internationally, this trend is partly due to the expansion of academic institutions across the Arab region (Khatib, 2019). Studying Ibadism promotes understanding of background diversity and can contribute to religious tolerance. Ibadism offers a different interpretation of Islamic law and theology compared to Sunni and Shia traditions. Studying it broadens our understanding of Islamic thought and provide insights into alternative models of community organization within an Islamic framework.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive inductive and descriptive analysis of research efforts focused on Ibadism. The primary research objectives guiding this investigation are:

1. Examining the focus areas of recent trends among Algerian researchers in their studies on Ibadism.
2. Formulating a conceptual framework of trends in Ibadism research among Algerian researchers.

To address the research objectives, the study selects sample studies on Ibadism, summarizing the most significant trends portrayed from the literature review. The North African Ibadism which refers to the adherents of the Ibadi sect who inhabit the regions of the Middle, Far, and Near Maghreb is the main focus in the study. The study is limited to selected research papers reviewed through the Algerian Scientific Journals Portal (ASJP) due to their relevance to the scope and timeline of this research.

Ibadism is one of the earliest branches of Islam, distinct from both Sunni and Shia Islam. The origins and history of the sect was initiated by Abdullah bin Ibad with significant presence in parts of North Africa (Souaiaia, 2013), particularly in Algeria. Ibadism emerged in the 7th century CE, stemming from the Kharijite movement. Unlike other Kharijite groups, Ibadis adopted more moderate positions and survived to the present day (Vehkavaara, 1997).

While numerically small compared to Sunni and Shia Islam, Ibadism has a global presence, with communities in Oman, North Africa, and East Africa. Recent studies have focused on how these diaspora communities maintain their religious identity. There's a trend towards increased participation of Ibadi scholars in interfaith dialogues. This engagement is seen as part of the Ibadi tradition of moderation and peaceful coexistence.

Although there is growing academic interest in Ibadism, with more research being conducted on its history, theology, and contemporary practices, little efforts to preserve and digitize Ibadi manuscripts. It is crucial to observe the criteria of the sect, leading to new insights into Ibadi thought and history. Some scholars' emphasis on the need to focus on the trends of Ibadism research towards greater openness and engagement with other Islamic traditions and the wider academic community.

Methodology

The study uses qualitative research approaches to explore, explain, and interpret information of data from literature reviews. Purposive sampling technique is used to select specific peer-reviewed scientific sources available online from the Algerian Scientific Journals. Extracted out from the online platform for the electronic publication of Algerian scientific journals, developed and maintained by the Centre for Research in Scientific and Technical Information (CERIST). The primary mission of CERIST is to support research pertaining to the establishment and development of the national system for scientific and technical media.

Thirty (30) relevant papers from the year 2015 to 2024 are chosen particularly focusing on Western Ibadi Sect in Northern Africa. By employing inductive and descriptive methods, the research identifies the latest directions taken by Algerian university scholars in research about Ibadism. The process of data extraction and analysis are made from identifying the relevant sections formatted in the article.

To further assess each of the articles, the descriptive analysis of data was extracted on to establish the (a) focus area of research (b) trends of the studies (c) discussion of the trends (d) conceptual framework. The inductive analysis is obtained from the relevant interpretation of the trends proposed from the data patterns and flows. The discussion is made from the extracted interpretation of data and identified common and unique features of focus areas in the articles included in systematic review to come up with the trends of research on Ibadism and subsequently formulating a conceptual framework.

Findings and Discussion

The results obtained through the content analysis of thirty (30) relevant articles from the year 2015 to 2024, reflect several significant understandings of the Ibadism Sect. The purpose of analysing the content is to capture the Ibadism movements depicted from previous studies describing the focus area of concentration. The following Table 1 is the list of the articles with specific focus areas of research trends that are detected through the literature review:

Table 1

Focus Area of Trends in Ibadism Research

	AUTHOR	JOURNAL	TITLE OF ARTICLE	FOCUS AREA
01	Nasser Belhaj	Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences in (September 2015)	The Decline of the Ibadi Doctrine in Wadi Areej Through "The Answers of the Jazira Scholars" to the Questions of Sheikh Abu Abbas Ahmad Al-Tamasini	1 st Focus Area: Origin and dissemination of Ibadi Sect
02	Abdul Rahman Turki	Journal Al-Bahith in the Humanities and Social Sciences (June 2016)	The Emergence of Ibadis in the Arab Maghreb: A Historical and Sectarian Study	
03	Salah al-Din Sha'bani	Journal of Historical Studies (June 2016)	The Evolution of Ibadi Imamate in North Africa during the secret Period (03-05 AH/09-11 CE): The Azaba System as an Alternative to the Imamate of Appearance	
04	Osama Maash	Qabas Journal for Humanities and Social Studies (June 2020)	The Role of the Azaba System in confronting the Decline of the Ibadi Sect in the Maghreb from the 5th to the 8th Century AH/11-13 AD	
05	Abdul Qadir Baadani	Muqarabat magazine (March 2016)	Grammatical Issues in the Explanation of Al-Nuniya by Abdul Aziz Al-Thamini (1223 AH): A thematic Reading	2 nd Focus Area: Ibadi biographies
06	Nabil Rabie	Journal of Islamic Sciences and Civilization (May 2016)	Linguistic and Rhetorical Issues in the Interpretation of Hud bin Muhkam Al-Hawari	
07	al-Ahmar Qadah and Atalawi Abdel Razek	Al-Hiwar Al-Mutawassit magazine (March 2018)	The Reformist Approach in the Thought of Sheikh Bin Youssef Tfayesh Al-Qutb Through His Scientific Travels and Intellectual Opinions	
08	Reda Al-Abyad	Algerian Journal of Manuscripts (December 2018)	Etiquette of the Scholar and the Learner Through the Manuscript "Fi Talab ili'Im" by Abu Al-Rabi'	

			Suleiman bin Yakhlef Al-Muzati Al-Qabsi
09	Al-Zarwili Saleh	Herodotus Journal of Humanities and Social Sciencesm(December 2023d)	Sheikh Ali bin Yakhlef al-Darjini and His Role in the Dissemination of Islam in the Kingdom of Mali.
10	Assistant Professor Elias Haj Issa	Journal of Historical and Archaeological Studies (January 2019b)	Ibadi Historical Studies in the Scientific Works of the Writer Muhammad Salih Nasser"
11	Zakawi Muhammad	"Anwar" series (December 2018a)	Ibadi theology in the Islamic Maghreb until the end of the sixth century AH The message of Imam al-Rustami Abu al-Yaqzan Muhammad ibn Aflah (240-283 AH/854-896 AD) on the creation of the Qur'an as a model
12	Ashour Mansouria	Al-Ihyaa' journal (October 2023)	The Sectarian History in Algerian Academic Studies: The Ibadi Case Study
13	Abd al-Ghani Isaoui	El-wahat Journal for Research and Studies (June 2023)	The Algerian Exegetical Influence of Ibadi Scholars: Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhaman as Examples.
14	Yahya bin Bahoun Hajj Muhammad	Journal of El-Wahat for Research and Studies (December 2009)	Historiography and Encyclopediatic nature among Ibadi Scholars: Al-Warjilani, Al-Mus'abi, and Al-Qutb Atfiyyash as Examples
15	Al-Zarwili Saleh	al-Haqiqa for Social and Human Sciences (June 2023c)	Abu al-Rabi' Sulayman al-Wasiani (d. 557 AH/1161 CE): His Life and Methodology in Writing History
16	Al-Zarwili Saleh and Professor Ibrahim Bahaz	University of Ghardaia (December 2022b)	Sheikh Abu Amar Abdul kafi Al warjilani (before570Ah/1174Ad) His biography and his biographical approach

17	Al-Zarwili Saleh	Rofof magazine in (July 2022a)	Sheikh Ibrahim Abu Al-Yaqzan Al-Jazaery and His Historical Contributions (1888-1973 AD)	
18	Al-Zarwili Saleh	Al-Mi'yar Magazine (March 2023b)	Sheikh Abu Al-Qasim Al-Barradi Al-Dumri (d. 810/1407 AD) and His Methodology in Jawahir	
19	Aisha Tazi and student Fatima Al-Zahraa Amara	Qabas Journal for Humanitarian and Social Studies (June 2019).	The Political and Sectarian Affiliations of Authority Between Disagreement and Coalition and Their Impact on the Reality of Cultural Communication Between the Middle Maghreb and Andalusia from the 2nd to 5th Century AH / 8th to 11th AD	3 rd Focus Area: Ibadi Conditional Description
20	Hamamad Muhammad	As-Sawra Journal for Human and Social Studies in (December 2021)	Ibadiyya: A Study in the Context of Historical and Intellectual Developments	
21	Amin Kartali	al-Bahith journal in (May 2022)	The Migration of Ibadi Tribes from the Middle Maghreb to Andalusia during the 4th Century AH (10th CE)	
22	Boumediene Hisham Nemr	'Usur al-Jadidah Magazine(May 2022)	Coexistence and Religious, Sectarian, and Ethnic Tolerance in the Rustamid State	
23	Jilali al-Mustari	Journal of El-Wahat (April 2023)	The Ibadi Community in Algeria and the Generational Issue in the 2000s: A Hypothesis for Discussion	
24	Al-Zarwili Saleh	Herodotus Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (March 2023a)	The Island of Jerba under the Rule of the Summani Family (688-967 AH/1289-1560 CE)	
25	Abdul Ghaffar bin Namiya	Algerian Journal of Manuscripts (July 2015)	The Pillars of Nawazli Jurisprudence According to the Ibadis: A Study of Notables and Calamities	

26	Zuhair Babawa Ismail.	El-Wahat Journal for Research and Studies (December 2017).	The Approach of Abu Al-Abbas Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Shamakhi in the Semantics of Words Related to Legal Rulings Through His Two Books, Mukhtasar Al-Adl and Its Explanation.	4 th Focus Area: Ibadi Jurisprudence
27	Boubidi and Abdel Hamid Mahri.	Journal of Arts and Humanities (June 2018)	The Countries of the Islamic Maghreb Between Coexistence and Sectarian Conflict: A Study of Political Exploitation and Doctrinal and Jurisprudential Influence	
28	Zakawi Muhammad	Al-Abr Journal for Historical and Archaeological Studies in North Africa (September 2018b)	Debates Between Ibadi and Mu'tazila in the Islamic Maghreb Until the End of the 5th Century AH/11 AD Through Ibadi Sources	5 th Focus Area: Ibadi and other sects Interrelations
29	Assistant Professor Elias Haj Issa	Usur al-Jadidah magazine (December 2018a)	Social Relations in the Maghreb During the Middle Ages from a Sectarian Perspective: The Dialectic of Rejection and Acceptance in the Ibadi Case	
30	Omar Zaaba	Journal of al-Mawaqif (March 2020)	Coexistence and Tolerance in the Ibadi School of Thought	

Source: Created by Author

There has been an increase in Ibadi scholarly development, both from within the tradition and from non-Ibadi academics. The five focus areas of research trends in Table 1 detected through the literature review indicate the Ibadism movement and several challenges in maintaining its distinct identity while engaging with broader Islamic and global discourses. There is an ongoing debate about how to adapt traditional Ibadi principles to modern contexts. This has led to a more nuanced understanding of Ibadi history, theology, and contemporary practices. However, as with any religious tradition, interpretations and practices can vary, and individual Ibadi communities may emphasize different aspects of their faith. These research trends indicate a growing interest in and understanding of Ibadism within academic circles describe as follows:

First Focus Area: Ibadism Origins and Dissemination

The first focus area is the origins and dissemination of the Ibadi sect. This is illustrated from the studies conducted by Belhaj (2015), Turki (2016), Sha'bani (2016) and Maash (2020). The research emphasis on the introduction of the sects that highlights notable works discussing Ibadism dissemination. The studies explain the origin of the name "Ibadism," attributing it either to Abdullah bin Ibad or to the "Abads" from the village of Balimamah. The research discusses Ibadism as one of the doctrinal and jurisprudential schools within Islam and elaborates on the factors that led to its transfer to the Arab Maghreb as well as its subsequent spread in certain regions.

Recent scholarship has seen a renewed interest in tracing the origins and spread of Ibadism in North Africa. Researchers have employed interdisciplinary approaches, combining historical analysis with archaeological evidence and digital mapping techniques (Bonner, 2000). For instance, (Turki, 2016) used to map the early spread of Ibadism across the Maghreb, providing new insights into the movement's dissemination patterns. This work has challenged some long-held assumptions about the speed and routes of Ibadi expansion in the region. Additionally, studies like those by (Sha'bani, 2016) have delved deeper into the early developments of Azzaba Circle, exploring how local contexts shaped the interpretation and application of Ibadi doctrines. This trend has led to a more nuanced understanding of the diversity within early Ibadi communities in North Africa.

It appears that the researchers aimed to provide a concise historical overview for scholars interested in the emergence and migration of Ibadism to North Africa. Several of the studies state that the historical and literary works attributed to the Ibadis such as speeches, poems, sayings, and letters found in various historical and literary texts require compilation, research, and study (Belhaj,2015; Maash, 2020; Bonner, 2000). The emphasis of extensive scientific heritage of the Ibadis has not been sufficiently examined, despite their significant status. The researchers drew upon various Ibadi and other Muslim sources, along with translations of orientalist works, for their studies.

Second Focus Area: Biographies of Ibadi Scholars

The second area of focus is on the biographies of Ibadi scholars including their methodologies, and their writings. A significant trend in recent Ibadism studies has been the focus on biographical research, both of historical figures and contemporary Ibadi scholars and leaders. This approach has provided valuable insights into the intellectual and social networks that have shaped Ibadism in North Africa. The research on biography was described by Abdel Razek (2018), Isaoui (2023), Saleh (2022a), Saleh (2022b), Saleh (2023a), Saleh (2023b), Saleh (2023c).

The researchers provide brief biographies of several Ibadi scholars from that period, including Saeed bin Ali bin Yahya bin Yadar, Ahmad bin Musa bin Muhammad, Ayoub bin Qasim, Balhaj bin Muhammad bin Saeed Al-Yasjani, Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah Al-Yasjani, Hayya bin Dudu, Dahman bin Al-Hajj, Al-Hajj Saeed, Suleiman bin Abdullah Al-Marzouqi, Saleh bin Ami Saeed, Abdul Aziz bin Youssef bin Musa bin Afdal Al-Musabi, Issa bin Ismail bin Musa, and Youssef bin Hamo bin Youssef.

The first category of the biography discusses the intellectual life in the Mزاب Valley before the 10th century AH, examining the situation of the Ibadi community and noting that the scientific environment was not as vibrant as needed (Saleh, 2022b). It also addresses the role of the Azaba circle in improving the situation and educating the populace. The second section focuses on the arrival of Sheikh Ammi Saeed and his influence on the intellectual landscape of the Mزاب Valley (Saleh, 2023b), detailing the reasons for his migration from Djerba and his impact on the region's renaissance (Saleh, 2023b; Zidk 2018).

Additionally, Isaoui's (2023), examines the contributions of Ibadi scholars to Quranic exegesis methodologies beyond the description of biographies, with a focus on Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhama. The author introduces the efforts of Ibadi scholars in exegesis, noting that Imam Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam had treatise in exegesis that preceded the interpretation of Mahkam al-Huwari. The article delves into the exegetical imprint of prominent Ibadi scholars, represented by Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhama, relying on manuscript sources for their interpretations (Isaoui, 2023).

The researchers (Isaoui, 2023) conclude his study by highlighting the key findings, including: Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhama played a significant role in interpreting the Quran through his work, which still require modern printing, as most of them are in manuscript form. Unlike their predecessors, who focused on transmitted exegesis, Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhama emphasized rational interpretation, engaging with the interpretations of scholars from other schools of thought, responding to and discussing their views, and adopting what aligned with their approach.

While engaging in dialectical reasoning and evidence-based argumentation, the tone of sectarian bias was diminished, and an attempt was made to collect a large corpus of interpretations that concurred or diverged within a single classification, as seen in Imam al-Mus'abi's work, which occasionally responded to Imam Hud ibn Mahkam al-Huwari, and preferred the views of opponents in some matters (Isaoui, 2023). The presence of al-Zamakhshari, al-Baydawi, and al-Tabari in his interpretation was notable. This study sheds light on the significant contributions of Imam al-Mus'abi and Ibn Bayhama to the field of Quranic exegesis, highlighting their emphasis on rational interpretation and engagement with diverse scholarly perspectives.

Ghazal's (2021), work on the lives of 20th-century Ibadi scholars in Algeria and Tunisia has been particularly noteworthy. By examining personal papers, correspondence, and conducting interviews with family members and students, Ghazal has illuminated the role of key individuals in maintaining and adapting Ibadi traditions in the face of modernization and political changes. The researchers' methodological approach encompasses the following elements: context, definitions, attribution of sayings, and sources for explanation. The researchers briefly address each of the topics on grammatical issues in the explanation, likely due to the scarcity of resources on the subject.

Third Focus Area: The Description of Context

The third area of concentration is the description of the context within the cultural, social, religious, and political conditions in Ibadi regions. The studies from Tazi & Amra (2019), Hamamad, M. (2021). Kartali (2022), Nemr (2022), Mustari (2023), Saleh (2023) describe the

contexts in Ibadid regions and explore the understanding of the environment to which the sect is embodied. The process of data extraction and analysis mentioned above identifies the behaviours of Ibadidism Sect inter-related with the environmental conditions.

Recent trends in Ibadidism studies have seen increased attention to what scholars term "conditional description" - the examination of how Ibadid communities have adapted to and described their changing social, political, and economic conditions over time (Marks, 2015) work has been influential in this area, examining how Ibadid scholars and communities in North Africa have conceptualized and responded to colonial rule, independence movements, and post-colonial state formation. This research has revealed sophisticated strategies of negotiation and adaptation, challenging earlier portrayals of Ibadid isolationism.

Anthropological approaches have also contributed to this trend (Boumediene, 2022) ethnographic study of contemporary Ibadid communities in the Mزاب region of Algeria has provided valuable insights into how traditional Ibadid values and practices are being reinterpreted in the context of globalization and modernization. The research is organized into three main sections. The first section discusses the impact of the Rustamid sectarian orientation on cultural relations between the Middle Maghreb and Andalusia during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH (8th-9th AD). It reveals that political, economic, and historical factors, along with the intrinsic nature of the Ibadid doctrine and the policies of both Ibadid and Umayyad rulers, fostered robust alliances between the two regions (Tazi & Amara 2019).

The second section examines the influence of the Ubaidis' sectarian orientation on cultural relations between Central Maghreb and Andalusia. The researcher notes that the exclusionary characteristics of the Ismaili doctrine, coupled with a reliance on force and violence, met with significant resistance from North African and Umayyads in Andalusia Hamamad, M. (2021). This period saw the Ubaidis relocating their shrine to Egypt and the establishment of Fatimid al-Mu'izz in Cairo (Tazi & Amara 2019).

The final section explores the areas of cultural communication between Central Maghreb and Andalusia during the 4th and 5th centuries AH (10th-11th AD). It addresses the scientific centers that contributed to intellectual advancement, the effects of sectarian unity on Central Maghreb politics, and the cultural exchanges that occurred between Andalusia and this region (Kartali, 2022).

The authors present several findings, including that the Rustamid sectarian orientation did not significantly impact its external scholarly relations, particularly with the Umayyad Maliki state in Andalusia. They emphasize that cultural connections between the Central Maghreb and Andalusia were embodied in scholarly exchanges between the two regions. Additionally, the hostility between the Ubaidid state and the Umayyads in Andalusia was attributed to the sectarian policies pursued by the Ubaidid state, as well as their ambitions to annex Andalusia (Tazi & Amara 2019).

Additional studies examine the themes of religious, sectarian, and ethnic tolerance within the Rustamid state, structured around elements of tolerance and coexistence in political arena. The research discusses the establishment of the Rustamid state and the various circumstances that facilitated its formation. In analysing the factors contributing to ethnic, sectarian, and

religious diversity within the Rustamid state identifying several crucial elements within the political system (Nemr, 2022). Other research specifies description of the context of social issues beyond political conflicts (Mustari, 2023). The research traces the conflicts between Ibadis and Malikis in Wadi Mzab from 1974 to the present and discusses the internal conflict within the Ibadi community itself between the young generation and the sheikhs.

The description of all the above research is adjacent to the study conducted by Saleh (2023a) who critically analyse the narrative from several perspectives: methodological, and its historical, economic, and religious implications. It was indicated from all analysis that those significant factors concluded on the description of context from the Ibadi school of thought. Saleh (2023a) was among the earliest to establish a presence in West Africa, and this presence endured for a considerable duration, facilitated by the importance of context in the Ibadism trading.

Fourth Focus Area: Jurisprudence

Ibadi jurisprudence (fiqh) is distinct from both Sunni and Shia schools. They rely heavily on hadith and use ijihad (independent reasoning) in legal matters. The research conducted from Namiya (2015), Ismail (2017), and Boubidi & Mahri (2018). The introduction discusses the encouragement of Sharia law to inhabit the earth, emphasizing it as one of the purposes of human existence. The research highlights the significance of the book and its connection of Sharia law to the realities and livelihoods of people.

The study of Ibadi jurisprudence has seen significant developments in recent years, particularly in the context of North Africa. Scholars have been revisiting classical Ibadi legal texts and examining how they have been interpreted and applied in different historical and geographical contexts (Ismail, 2017; Boubidi & Mahri, 2018; Francesca, 2021). Comparative study of Ibadi fiqh in Oman and North Africa has been particularly influential, highlighting both commonalities and divergences in legal interpretation between these two major centers of Ibadism. Their work has also drawn attention to the ongoing process of ijihad (independent reasoning) within contemporary Ibadi legal thought. Another important trend has been the examination of how Ibadi jurisprudence interacts with state legal systems in countries like Algeria and Tunisia. Bouzenita's (2023) research on the role of Ibadi family law in the Algerian legal system has provided valuable insights into the negotiations between religious and secular legal frameworks.

Other studies put forward the findings that emphasized the critical role of the Azzabah system and the geographical land issue recognized by Ibadi scholars in the Ajlo region, which significantly influenced fatwa determinations and jurisprudential thought among Ibadi scholars. It also noted that Imam Muhammad bin Bakr Al-Farasta'i, along with other Ibadi scholars, played an essential role in laying the groundwork for calamity jurisprudence in that region Namiya, 2015).

Fifth Focus Area: Interrelations with other Sects

Recent studies from Muhammad (2018), Issa (2018) and Zaaba (2020) highlight Ibadi emphasis on peaceful coexistence with other Islamic sects and non-Muslims and the tolerance and Coexistence with other sects. Ibadism culture, which they generally adopt a non-violent approach to disagreements, preferring dialogue and debate. There is a trend towards

increased participation of Ibadi scholars in interfaith dialogues. This engagement is seen as part of the Ibadi tradition of moderation and peaceful coexistence.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the historical and contemporary interactions between Ibadi communities and other Islamic sects in North Africa. This trend has helped to situate Ibadism within the broader landscape of Islamic thought and practice in the region. Amal's (2022) work on intellectual exchanges between Ibadi and Maliki scholars in medieval North Africa has revealed a history of engagement and mutual influence that challenges simplistic narratives of sectarian isolation. Similarly, Savage's (2023) study of Ibadi-Sufi interactions in Tunisia has highlighted complex patterns of both competition and cooperation. In the contemporary context, researchers like Djaballah (2024) have examined how Ibadi communities navigate their identity and relationships with majority Sunni populations and governments. This work has provided valuable insights into the strategies of minority religious communities in negotiating recognition, rights, and social integration. This research conducted by Muhammad (2018) begins with the emphasis of co-existence in Islam. The introduction discusses the fall of the Rustamid state at the hands of Abu Abdullah al-Shi'i, who established the Ubaid state in North Africa. They then explore the scientific movement in Warjlaan prior to the formation of the Azaba circle, detailing notable figures from the area and how Warjlaan emerged as the centre for the Ibadis once they entered a phase of secrecy. The authors further analyse the establishment of the Azaba circle as a system designed for education, upbringing, and the reinforcement of Ibadism. They describe the Azaba's structure, its members' characteristics, and the responsibilities of its sheikh, along with various regulations governing the circle.

Next, they focus on the founder of the Azaba, Muhammad bin Bakr, and his efforts to promote Ibadi teachings. The researchers briefly summarize the contributions of prominent scholars within the Azaba, including Abu Al-Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Bakr, Abu Al-Rabi' Suleiman bin Ikhelif Al-Mazzati, and Abu Zakaria Yahya bin Abi Bakr, as well as key figures from the second generation such as Tabgurin bin Issa Al-Malshouti, Abu Ammar Abdul Kafi, Abu Yaqoub Yusuf bin Ibrahim Al-Warjalani, and Abu Amr Othman bin Khalifa Al-Sufi.

The researchers present several findings, indicating that the Azaba circle exemplified the richness of the Ibadi heritage and was well-suited to the secrecy of the period. They assert that this system successfully achieved its primary aim of preserving the doctrine from extinction by establishing a clear framework that included membership requirements, internal regulations, and other essential elements needed to fulfil its objectives.

Similar study from Issa (2018) provided examples of both conflict and cooperation among all Muslim sects in Maghreb, emphasizing that the relationships were not purely antagonistic. He also examined the interactions within the Ibadi sect, particularly focusing on the relationship between the Wahhabi and Nukkar communities, drawing from both Ibadi and other sources. In the conclusion, the researcher offered several insights, indicating that the study of sectarian knowledge through medieval historical sources reveals numerous inaccuracies that require scrutiny and rectification. He attributed this to a lack of familiarity and understanding among the sectarian followers, which has contributed to conflicts on political and military intellectual fronts. He noted that the estrangement between the Ibadis, the focus of the study, and other sects was prevalent in many instances. The jurists were primarily concerned with delineating

the lines of disagreement rather than fostering unity. Furthermore, the Rustamid Imamate served as a model for encouraging collaboration among different groups, with positive outcomes evident in various areas, including mixed marriages between sect members.

Zaaba (2020), research paper aims to highlight the images of tolerance among the followers of the Ibadi doctrine, particularly in the Arab Maghreb. The researcher begins by introducing the concept of tolerance and defining the Ibadi doctrine, its origins, and the types of imamates within it. The author also discusses the intellectual legacy left by Ibadi scholars, citing examples such as the works of Jabir ibn Zayd and Jamil ibn Khumays al-Sa'di. The researcher then explains the importance of tolerance in Islam, citing verses from the Quran and the Prophetic tradition. The paper provides examples of tolerance among the Ibadis in the religious sphere, highlighting their moderation and tolerance in religious matters. The author notes that the Ibadis were accepted in many non-Arab countries, citing examples such as the acceptance of Islam by the people of Mali and Ghana through the efforts of Sheikh Ali ibn Yahya al-Warjilani in 575 AH, and the spread of Islam to India through Omani traders who integrated into Indian society and promoted tolerance and cooperation.

The researchers also discuss tolerance among the Ibadis in the political sphere, particularly during the Rustamid state, which led to many visitors building homes and settling among the Rustamids, intermarrying with people from other schools of thought, and engaging in social and economic activities. The author provides examples of tolerance in the economic sphere, citing instances of joint ventures between Ibadis and followers of other schools of thought, such as the Malikis. Finally, the paper highlights examples of tolerance in the intellectual sphere, where Ibadi scholars borrowed from and engaged with the works of scholars from other schools of thought, sometimes even preferring the views of opposing schools over those of their own Ibadi doctrine.

After reviewing and analysing the aforementioned studies, it can be determined that contemporary Algerian writers, based on the chosen sample, have concentrated on the significant aspects related to the Ibadi sect in North Africa. The description of each focus area of trends in the Ibadism studies is describe using the conceptual framework as follows:

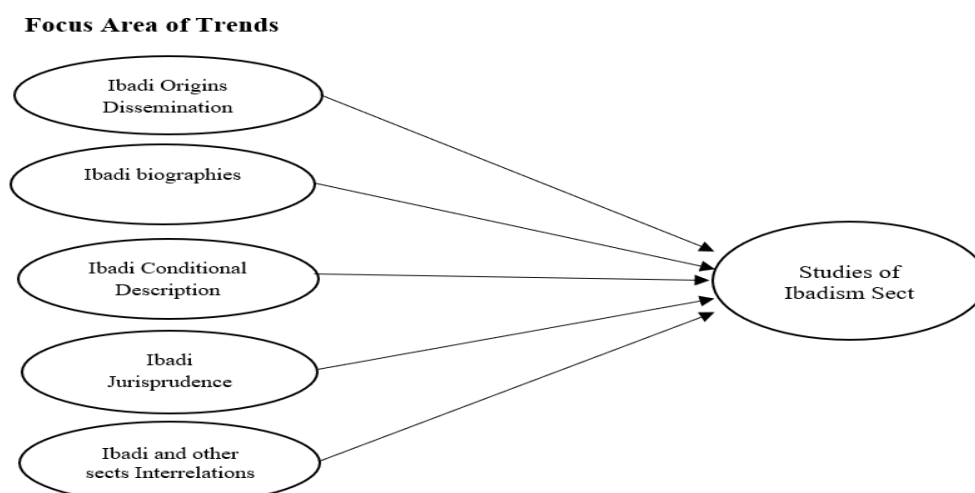


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework on the trends in the studies of Ibadism Sect (Source: Created by Author)

Practical Implication

The recent surge in academic interest in Ibadism in North Africa has profound practical implications for religious studies, cultural preservation, and contemporary interfaith dialogue. It enhances cross-disciplinary collaboration between historians, theologians, and social scientists in the development of new frameworks for studying minority Islamic traditions. The collections of studies conducted by the 30 research from the 2015 to 2024, conclude with 5 main focus of Algerian scholars' contemporary thoughts of Ibadism sectarian. The implication to the sectarian studies is to develop new frameworks for studying minority Islamic traditions. It is to shed light for a deep understanding of other Muslim's practices other than the mainstreams ideology.

The cultural implication is to raise the awareness on the importance of the development on the specialized conservation techniques for hand fragile manuscripts written by Ibadi scholars. The importance of the development of Ibadi thoughts over the centuries is to have a clear understanding of the genesis and the development of Ibadi culture. Through the preservation knowledge and heritage of Ibadi way of life, other sects could have a clear idea which have the supports of co-existence and tolerance between Ibadi and other sects. The co-existence could be implemented through interface dialogs between Ibadi society and the neighbouring sects. The knowledge of cultural tolerance between Ibadi and non-Ibadi communities subsequently establish recognition of Ibadi contributions to Islamic thought.

Contribution

This analysis demonstrates the significant motivations driving recent Ibadism studies and their substantial contributions to academic knowledge, cultural understanding, and contemporary discourse. The findings on the trends of Ibadism studies provides alternative perspectives to mainstream Islamic narratives. The results assist in understanding of modern Muslim diversity and helps address current contemporary religious tensions. The significant finding from the analysis on the trending areas of a) origins and dissemination b) biographies c) conditional description d) jurisprudence and e) interrelations of Ibadi with other sects, is crucial to enhance community identity understanding and promote religious tolerance.

The research findings on the trends from multidisciplinary scope spanning Islamic jurisprudence, scriptural interpretation, historical documentation, and linguistic analysis, play a vital role in strengthening the comprehension of community identities while cultivating religious tolerance and mutual respect. The study focuses on publications from 2015 to 2024 ensures a comprehensive examination of recent scholarly developments and current academic trends in Ibadi studies. Its emphasis on scholarship by Algerian researchers leverages their deep regional expertise and cultural understanding, resulting in more precise and contextually informed analysis of North African Ibadi traditions. Since this research focuses on relatively unexplored area within Islamic studies, North African Ibadism offers rich potential for academic research. This study serves as a crucial framework for scholars pursuing research in other sectarian traditions.

Conclusion

The main findings of the present study focus on the contemporary Algerian writers concentrated on the significant aspects of Ibadism Sect studies in the five focus areas of a) origins and dissemination b) biographies c) conditional description d) jurisprudence and e)

interrelations of Ibadi with other sects. These recent thirty (30) scholarships on Ibadism in North Africa from the year 2015 to 2024 reveal a significant contribution in the trends and developments of the field. There has been a notable shift from purely theological and legal studies toward more interdisciplinary approaches incorporating five of the focus areas. This broadening of methodological framework has enabled researchers to better understand Ibadi communities within their historical and contemporary contexts. The contemporary scholarship addresses important gaps in literature, particularly regarding the implication of the roles in Ibadi societies, urban-rural dynamics, and the impact of modernization on traditional Ibadi institutions. However, these areas still require further investigation, especially through comparative studies with other Islamic traditions in North Africa. Future studies would benefit from continued methodological innovation and increased collaboration between researchers across disciplines. Such efforts will not only enhance the understanding of Ibadism but also contribute to broader discussions about religious minorities, Islamic diversity, and social change in North Africa.

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