

Religious Conflict and Coexistence in the Central Mediterranean Sea: The Case of Djerba Island

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Central Mediterranean was in political chaos when Islam was first introduced to the region. The natives, Berbers, were fascinated by this new religion but were continuously in conflict with the Arabs, who were their ruling class for their identity. The sect of Islam Berbers embraced was the Khawarij. The Berbers continued internal competition and conflict even after the acceptance of Khawarij. Existing sects of Christianity in the region, namely the Arianism and the Donatus Sect, intensified the conflict and rivalry between religions. Even with Judaism present in the region, the conflicts between religions were rather common in the central Mediterranean region, at least during the Middle Age. However, during the times infested by the Suprism and Ibadism, it was the Islamic sects that caused the majority of conflict. The rivalry between the Sunni Islam and the Shi'a dynasties, instigated the confrontational atmosphere. With such chaotic atmosphere in the region, Ibadi Islam took their advantage to attract believers.

In this presentation, the researcher will discuss the time when the Ibadi Islam gained control over the region. Especially, around the time before and after the rule by the Rostem Dynasty, the researcher will discuss the process of conflict between Shi'a and the Sunni Islam. It is noticeable to see that the Ibadi Islam expanded only in Oman considering the Sunni Islam expanded to the Mediterranean and the Shi'a expanded across the Persian region. Besides, it is interesting that history shows quite the opposite. These three sects continued their fight against each other until they were integrated into one religion of Islam in the Maghreb region. The Umayyad Dynasty of Sunni and the Fatimid Dynasty of Shi'a conflicted with each other against the Suprism and Ibadi Islam of the Kawari sect. Meanwhile, it was Berber-tribal issue that lied under the conflict between Sufism and Ibadi-Islam. The Islams of the Zenata Berbers and Sanhaza Berbers built Al-Mohade Dynasty, Al-Moravide Dynasty, and Jirid Dynasty, respectively, during the Middle Age. Also, the Malachi fact of the Aghlabide-Berber Dynasty, had conflict with the Rostem Dynasty. Each sect utilized forced conversion or coercion on others during these conflicts as such.

Today, Ibadi Muslim in Djerba Island show peaceful relationship with existing Sunni Muslims despite their social status as not only former mainstream but current minority. It is the intent of the researcher to examine the difference in the form of presence between the Ibadism of this region with that of other regions, such as M'zab, based on the cases of studies in these regions.