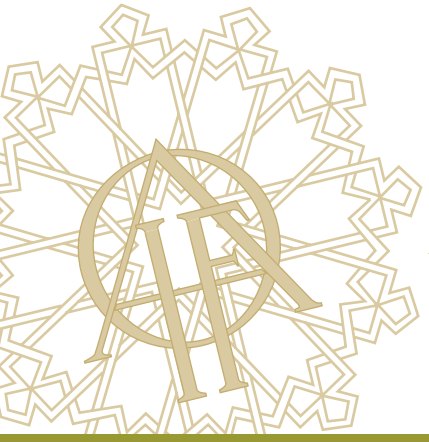
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Gowaart Van Den Bossche

The Maghrebi Vizier and the Haughty Copt. Historiography, Polemics and Narrative in a Mamluk-Period Anecdote

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GOWAART VAN DEN BOSSCHE*

The Maghrebi Vizier and the Haughty Copt

Historiography, Polemics and Narrative in a Mamluk-Period Anecdote**

ABSTRACT

In a widely cited historical anecdote from the year 700/1301, an unidentified Maghrebi vizier is portrayed as visiting Cairo where he becomes outraged at seeing inappropriate non-Muslim behavior. He then instigates an important act of sumptuary regulation by appealing to the sultan and his advisors. This study argues that the various iterations of this anecdote found in sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show how historians and other authors integrated polemical anti-*ḏimmī* discourse in narrative historical form and participated in diachronic discussions about how an ideal Islamic society should be governed. By applying many discursive elements also found in contemporaneous anti-*ḏimmī* texts to their historical narration, historians used the character of a bigoted Maghrebi visitor intervening to challenge perceived social wrongs as a rhetorical node to exemplify that ideal Islamic society in an evocative anecdotal form.

Keywords: anecdotes, *ḏimma*, discourse, historiography, literature, polemics

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✦ **RÉSUMÉ**

Une anecdote historique très répandue concernant l'année 700/1301 raconte qu'un vizir maghrébin, dont l'identité n'est pas révélée, visita Le Caire et fut profondément choqué par le comportement des non-musulmans. Il incita alors le sultan et ses conseillers à mettre en place une importante loi somptuaire. La présente étude montre comment les différentes versions de cette anecdote, présentes dans les sources du XIV^e^ et du XV^e^ siècles, nous informent sur la manière dont historiens et auteurs de tout genre intégrèrent le discours polémique anti-*ḏimmī* dans leurs récits et participèrent ainsi à des discussions diachroniques concernant le gouvernement d'une société islamique idéale. En adoptant de nombreux éléments discursifs fréquents dans les textes anti-*ḏimmī* contemporains, ces historiens utilisent le personnage du visiteur maghrébin bigot, qui intervient pour corriger les dérives sociales, comme pivot rhétorique et en font le symbole d'une société islamique idéale dans des anecdotes évocatrices.

Mots-clés : anecdotes, *ḏimma*, discours, historiographie, littérature, polémiques

* * *

In the year 700/1301, sumptuary laws for non-Muslims were proclaimed throughout the Syro-Egyptian Mamluk sultanate (1250–1517):[1] Christians, Jews, and Samaritans were obliged to wear colored turbans to distinguish them from Muslims. Many historiographical accounts of the events leading up to this proclamation start with a remarkable anecdote involving the visit to Cairo of an unidentified Maghrebi vizier, who becomes outraged upon seeing the behavior of the local Christians and Jews: they dress lavishly, ride horses, and behave as though they are superior to Muslims. Invoking an idealized situation in his homeland as a benchmark, the vizier then exhorts the authorities to follow the right path in their dealings with non-Muslims—usually referred to as *ḏimmī*'s, "protected people", in the Muslim sources. As such, the enigmatic vizier is presented in the historical accounts as the instigator of an important act of regulation.

This study argues that soon after the imposition of the sumptuary laws, historians began to use the character of this vizier, who may or may not have been a real historical agent, as a rhetorical vehicle for the dissemination of polemical discourse against non-Muslims. By comparing the information found in the accounts of the vizier with elements typical of polemical literature from the time, it will be demonstrated that there is a strong continuity between these discourses, and that the vizier's Maghrebi origin functioned as a meaningful background to narratively amplify the polemical material.

1. Dates will be given only in Common Era in the remainder of this article.

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This observation lends further support to a growing consciousness among modern historians of Islamic societies that their medieval predecessors possessed significant authorial agency and that they made much use of narrative forms and topoi to construct, indeed, emplot their accounts of history.[2] It is by now well accepted that historians did not simply record "what happened", but were instead involved in active processes of narrative meaning-making, using historical accounts to criticize perceived social wrongs and to make explicit or implicit claims about what they considered to be an ideal society. Despite an impressive abundance of surviving historiography from the Mamluk period as well as Ulrich Haarmann's seminal article on the "Literarisation" of the period's historical works, only a relatively small number of scholars, such as Konrad Hirschler and Stephan Conermann, have adequately responded to the challenges posed by the interweaving of literary form and narrative historiography in these texts.[3] Indeed, several modern-day scholars have unquestioningly paraphrased, combined or quoted different versions of the anecdotal tradition about the Maghrebi vizier as somehow representative of the period's tensions between the Muslim authorities and non-Muslim social groups, without questioning its narrative construction in any detail.[4] By way of a case study of this well-known anecdotal tradition, this article contributes to a better understanding of narrative logic in Mamluk-Period historiography. It will be argued that the construction of historical discourse by several authors was informed by broader literary and discursive developments of the period, and that historians not only recorded but also actively participated in and shaped the discussions about the social status of non-Muslims.

The Anecdotal Tradition of 1301

While almost all Mamluk historians who discuss the events of the year 1301 also mention the instatement of sumptuary laws in Cairo, it should be noted at the outset of this study that several sources do not mention the actions of the Maghrebi vizier at all.[5] Yet, the anecdote is still a widely attested one: accounts in which the Maghrebi vizier's visit to Cairo is related can be found in several historical and literary sources. Three accounts were written by authors who lived contemporary to the events they describe. Of these, Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 1336) recorded the following version of the anecdote in the ninth and final volume of

2. See, among others, Leder, 1992; Noth & Conrad, 1994; El-Hibri, 1999; 2010; Shoshan, 2004; Powers, 2014; Waldman, 1980; Meisami, 1999.

3. Haarmann, 1971; Hirschler, 2006; 2013; Conermann, 2008.

4. For a selection of prominent discussions, see: Fattal, 1958, pp. 106–108; Little, 1976, pp. 554–555; Ward, 1999, p. 76 (who highlights the anecdote's qualities as a "motif" and notes a similar account in an entirely unrelated context, but does not develop the implications of this observation); Yarbrough, 2016, pp. 139–140.

5. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, pp. 302–303; Abū al-Fidāʾ, *al-Muḫtaṣar fī aḫbār al-bašar*, vol. 4, p. 47; al-Ḏahabī, *Tārīḫ al-islām*, vol. 15, p. 720; *History of the Patriarchs*, vol. 3.3, p. 231; al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Tālī*, p. 58; al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, vol. 27, pp. 323–324; Ibn al-Ḥabīb, *Taḏkirat al-nabīh*, vol. 1, p. 233; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-ǧumān*, vol. 4, pp. 140–141; al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, vol. 1, pp. 503–504; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara*, vol. 2, p. 211; Ibn Iyās, *Ǧawāhir al-sulūk*, p. 157.

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his monumental chronicle of world history *Kanz al-durar wa-ǧāmiʿ al-ġurar* (The Treasure of Pearls and the Collection of Highlights). As the son of a high-ranking emir, Ibn al-Dawādārī was, of all writers from the time who mention the actions of this Maghrebi vizier, the one with the closest links to the court:[6]

> *Al-sabab fī ḏālika wuṣūl wazīr ṣāḥib al-ġarb yurīdu l-ḥaǧǧ ilā Bayt Allāh al-ḥarām, fa-waǧada al-naṣārā wa-l-yahūd bi-l-šāšāt al-bīḍ al-salʿāniyya wa-l-libs al-ḥarīr al-baqāyīr, wa-lā yufarriq baynahum wa-bayna l-muslimīn illā al-zunnār, wa-l-yahūdī al-ʿalāma al-ṣafrā fī ʿamāmatihi.*
> *Wa-qīla: kānat hāḏihi al-wāqiʿa anna-hu kāna raʾā al-ṣāḥib Amīn al-Dīn Amīn al-Mulk b. al-ʿAnnām, wa-huwa yawm ḏālika Naṣrānī wa-ʿalayhi biqyār wa-libs ḥarīr. Wa-kāna yaḥdim yawmaʾiḏin mustawfī al-ṣuḥba al-šarīfa. Wa-naẓara al-umarāʾ wa-l-nās min al-kibār yubaǧǧilūnahu wa-yaqifūn lahu qiyāman. Fa-saʾala ʿanhu fa-qīla: innahu naṣrānī. Fa-ṣaʿuba ʿalayhi wa-laḥiqathu al-ġayra al-islāmiyya.*
> *Fa-taḥaddaṭa maʿa al-amīr Sayf al-Dīn Salār wa-l-amīr Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Ǧāšnikīr. Wa uḥḍira bayna yaday al-mawāqif al-šarīfa al-sulṭāniyya—aʿazza Allāh anṣārahā. Wa-stuḥḍira aḥādīṯ ṣaḥīḥa marwiyya ʿan al-nabī—ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama—min "Kitāb al-waẓāʾif" wa-ʿan amīr al-muʾminīn ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb—raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu—anna ʿahd ḍimmatihim qad inqaḍat min sanat sitt miʾa hiǧriyya.*
>
> The reason for [the establishment of the sumptuary laws] was the arrival of a vizier of the lord of the West who wanted [to perform] the pilgrimage to the sacred House of God. [In Cairo] he found the Christians and Jews [wearing] *salʿāniyya* white cloth, silk clothing, and sleeveless bodices, and nothing distinguished them from the Muslims except the *zunnār* belt and the yellow markers on the turbans of the Jews.
> It was said that this incident happened because [the Maghrebi vizier] saw lord Amīn al-Dīn Amīn al-Mulk b. al-ʿAnnām, who was at that time a Christian and accountant of deeds in the revered financial bureau, wearing a *biqyār* turban and silk clothing. [The Maghrebi vizier] saw great men honoring him and standing up in his presence. [The vizier] then asked about him and was told that he was a Christian. This was hard on [the vizier] and he was overtaken by an Islamic sense of honor. He then conversed with the emirs Sayf al-Dīn Salār and Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Ǧāšinkīr, and was granted an audience before the revered sultan [al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, r. 1293–1294, 1299–1309, 1309–1341]—may God strengthen his helpers. [There] he evoked authentic traditions about the Prophet—may God honor him and grant him peace—[taken] from the *Book of Lessons*, and about the Commander of the Faithful ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb—may God be satisfied with him—[and he said] that the contract of their protection had ended in the year 600 of the *Hiǧra*.[7]

6. Little, 1970, p. 11. Baybars al-Manṣūrī in fact had even closer links to court, but as noted above, he did not mention the vizier.
7. Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Die Chronik des Ibn ad-Dawādārī*, vol. 9, pp. 47–48. Ibn al-Dawādārī's denotation of the vizier as *wazīr ṣāḥib al-ġarb* is somewhat ambiguous here. Further on (p. 51) this same figure is referred to as *wazīr al-Maġrib*. Other accounts are similarly imprecise and refer to a *wazīr malik al-Maġrib*, *wazīr bilād al-Maġrib*, or simply a *Maġribī*.

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At this point there is a transition in the account: the "authentic traditions" derived from the *Book of Lessons* are reproduced by way of a speech given by the vizier. Although I will return to the narrative function of this speech and the importance of its origins below, it may already be said that it consists of anecdotes about how non-Muslims were treated by the early Islamic caliphs ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb (d. 644), ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 720), and al-Mutawakkil (d. 861). These contents are not surprising: narrative representations of these caliphs' strict attitudes toward the non-Muslim residents of the lands they ruled had been continuously re-iterated in various contexts in earlier times. The speech also includes a famous hadith about the Prophet's refusal to allow a non-believer to join in the fighting at the Battle of Badr. Luke Yarbrough has argued that these stories would have been "intimately familiar" to contemporary listeners and readers, considering their appearance in polemical and other texts of the period.[8] In concluding the anecdote, Ibn al-Dawādārī stresses the causal link between the vizier's speech and the instatement of the sumptuary laws:

Wa-šaraḥa wazīr al-Maġrib min hāḏā al-taʾkīd li-ʿadam al-istiʿāna bi-l-ḏimma fī umūr al-muslimīn šayʾan kaṯīran ǧiddan bi-riwāyāt ṣaḥīḥa min ʿiddat wuǧūh fa-aṯṯara ḏālika ʿinda mawlānā al-sulṭān—ʿazza naṣruhu—wa-ʿinda al-umarāʾ. Fa-amara an yulbisūhum al-azraq wa-l-aṣfar wa-l-aḥmar li-l-Samara min al-Yahūd. Wa-aslama minhum fī tilka al-nawba ǧamāʿa, wa-minhum Amīn al-Dīn Amīn al-Mulk b. al-ʿAnnām. Wa-kāna libsuhum ḏālika yawm al-ḫamīs al-ʿišrīn min šahr Raǧab min hāḏihi al-sana.

The Maghrebi vizier elaborated a great many authentic accounts from this, emphasizing not to employ *ḏimmī*s in the business of the Muslims. This was persuasive for the sultan—may his victory be strengthened—and for the emirs, so it was ordered that [the Christians and Jews] should wear blue and yellow [turbans], with red [turbans] for the Samaritans among the Jews. A number of them converted to Islam during these events, among them Amīn al-Dīn Amīn al-Mulk b. al-ʿAnnām. They started wearing [these] on Thursday the twentieth of Raǧab of this year [1301].[9]

Two other more or less independent contemporary accounts of these happenings survive in the chronicles of al-Yūnīnī (d. 1326) and al-Nuwayrī (d. 1333), with a possible but unattested fourth account forming the basis for al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), who mentions details not found elsewhere.[10] All later accounts seem to derive from these four primary versions, although some authors combine elements from different reports or add their own variations to the story. I have visualized the origins and developments of the different accounts analyzed here by way of a stemma in Figure 1.

8. Yarbrough, 2012, p. 201.

9. Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Die Chronik des Ibn ad-Dawādārī*, vol. 9, p. 51. The name of the Christian convert is spelled erroneously here and in the previous excerpt. The correct *nasab* is Ibn al-Ġannām, as given in various other sources, among which is the summary of Ibn al-Dawādārī's account provided by al-Mufaḍḍal b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil (d. after 1358) *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, p. 39. The Ibn al-Ġannām family would go on to furnish highly placed scribes after Amīn al-Mulk's conversion to Islam (Escovitz, 1976, p. 57).

10. His account may have been derived from the now only partly recoverable biographies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad written by al-Yūsufī (d. 1358), al-Šuǧāʿī (d. 1355/1356), and Šāfiʿ b. ʿAlī (d. 1330). (See Little, 1998, pp. 426–427).

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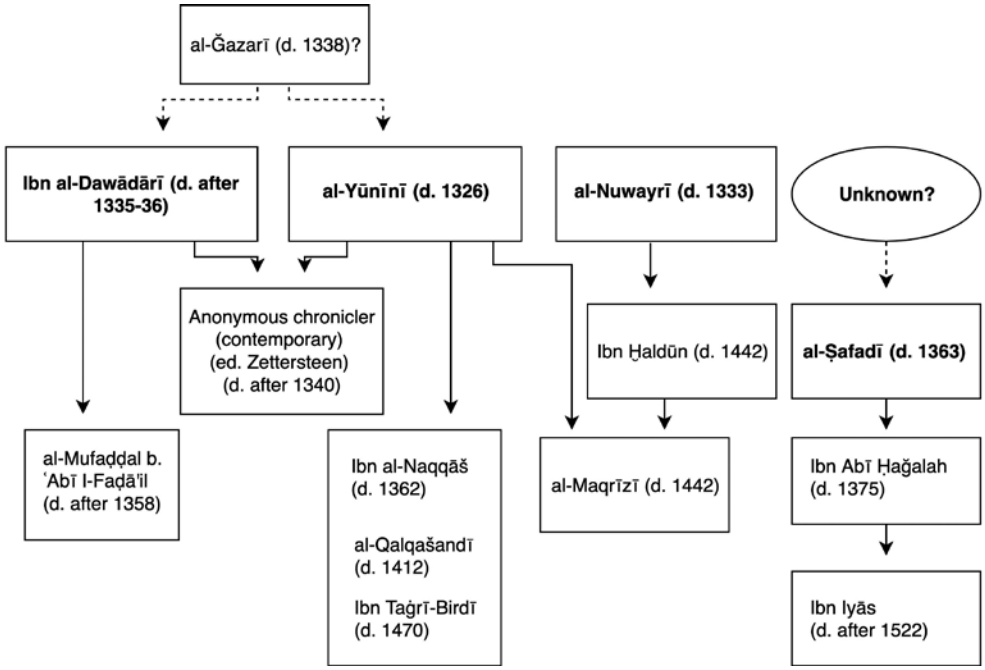


Fig. 1. Stemma of accounts featuring the Maghrebi visitor[11].

Although the independent contemporary accounts more or less agree on the role of the Maghrebi vizier as a visitor condemning the situation of non-Muslims in Egypt, they diverge on important details. In all versions the vizier remains unidentified and disappears entirely after his initial role in the events. It is possible that the basic facts regarding the visit of the Maghrebi vizier were derived from an earlier unknown or lost account. The Syrian chronicler al-Ǧazarī (d. 1338) is one potential source for this information: both al-Yūnīnī and Ibn al-Dawādārī drew on his chronicle to craft their own histories. Unfortunately, al-Ǧazarī's chronicle has not come down to us in full and his annals for the year 1301 have not survived.[12]

The three accounts produced by authors who lived contemporaneously to the time of the vizier's supposed visit to Cairo, as well as most of the later accounts, appear in the annalistic chronicles and biographical dictionaries that have been the dominant source material for Mamluk studies—or in the case of al-Nuwayrī, in that part of his voluminous encyclopaedic work which follows the format of annalistic historiography. Some of the later accounts of the story are situated within substantially different contexts. For example, Ibn al-Naqqāš (d. 1362) recorded the incident in his polemical fatwa against non-Muslims, *al-Maḍamma fī istiʿmāl ahl al-ḏimma* (Blame in the Employment of *Ḏimmīs*).[13] Al-Qalqašandī (d. 1412) included it as a reference in his monumental scribal manual *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā* (The Dawn for the Night-Blind),

11. A dotted line denotes a hypothetical relation due to earlier accounts not having survived or being unknown to me. The later authors Ibn Taġrī-Birdī and al-Maqrīzī used details from several sources, but only their main sources are noted here. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧāla and Ibn Iyās are visualized separately because the latter explicitly acknowledged having copied the anecdote from the former, unlike the other authors.

12. Guo, 1998, p. 94; Little, 1998, pp. 59, 425.

13. Ibn al-Durayhim, Ibn al-Naqqāš & Kisrawī, *Manhaǧ al-ṣawāb*, pp. 319–325.

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among other anecdotes in a chapter entitled "What Should be Written in *Ḏimma* Contracts" (*Fī mā yuktab fī ʿaqd al-ḏimma*).[14]

These contexts suggest that already early on this anecdote was considered to be precedential to some degree and worthy to stand side by side with famous normative anecdotes of the early caliphs, such as those found in the vizier's speech and polemical literature in general (see below). Perhaps most interesting is its appearance in *Sukkardān al-sulṭān* (The Sultan's Sugar Bowl), a literary offering by the renowned litterateur Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Abī Ḥağala (d. 1375) to his patron the Qalāwūnid sultan Ḥasan (r. 1347–1361).[15] The anecdote is the first of several in a chapter in which Ibn Abī Ḥağala summarizes "happenings in Egypt and other such things, briefly related" (*al-ḥawādiṯ al-wāqiʿa bi-Miṣr wa-mā fī maʿnāhā ʿalā sabīl al-iḫtiṣār*), and which itself immediately follows a chapter dealing with various accounts of the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh, which is described as "contrary to revealed law" (*muḫālifa li-l-šarīʿa*).[16] This position gives the impression of symmetry: the chapter on al-Ḥākim as an illustration of undesirable rule, and the chapter containing the Maghrebi anecdote as a repository of examples of good practice.

The Narrative Construction of the Anecdote of 1301

Despite their differing contexts, all accounts share the fact that their narrative structure is anecdotal. Unlike the majority of the accounts that only mention the instatement of sumptuary laws and not the vizier's actions, our authors provide us with a story in which a variety of characters are shown to interact, often in a specified place. Joel Fineman has famously described the anecdote in historical writing as:[17]

> the literary form that uniquely *lets history happen* by virtue of the way it introduces an opening into the teleological, and therefore timeless, narration of beginning, middle, and end. The anecdote produces the effect of the real, the occurrence of contingency, by establishing an event as an event within and yet without the framing context of historical successivity, i.e., it does so only in so far as its narration both comprises and refracts the narration it reports.

In the following paragraphs the ways in which these anecdotes "produce the effect of the real" will be shown to function through assigning clear roles to characters, utilizing direct speech and specific, recognizable settings, and including clear causes and motivations, along with at least basic plot developments. The fact that not all contemporary historians include the actions of the Maghrebi vizier in their accounts is significant here, for it is his presence that, to

14. al-Qalqašandī, *Kitāb ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, vol. 13, pp. 377–378.
15. For this translation of the title and a discussion of the structural motifs in this text, see Gruendler, 2017.
16. Ibn Abī Ḥağala, *Sukkardān al-sulṭān*, pp. 179–180, 167. Note that *muḫālifa* and *ḫalīfa* (caliph) derive from the same root letters and may have been consciously used as wordplay. Only one of the anecdotes recorded in the chapter preceding our anecdote deals with al-Ḥākim's famous measures against non-Muslims (p. 171).
17. Fineman, 1989, p. 61.

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quote Fineman again, "establishes [the] event as an event within and yet without the framing context of historical successivity". This is illustrated by the later appearances of the anecdote in non-chronographical contexts: here the anecdote has achieved its value outside of its specific historical context (i.e. Fineman's "successivity"), and is inserted into other contexts as a stand-alone story exemplifying the particular points made by the authors who re-iterated the anecdote.

The Maghrebi vizier's story is a good example through which to explore this anecdotal intersection of history and narrative, as it works both in a historical framework as a verisimilar account of what happened, and on a narrative level as an emplotment of the happenings in the form of a story that makes a point about how an ideal society should be run. It is my contention that the purpose of the story is rhetorical in the sense that it aims to instill a sense of cause in its readers by way of an exemplifying anecdote. For this reason, the various authors who re-iterated the anecdote, expanded on it and added certain narrative details to enhance the story's tellability.[18]

The relatively late account given by al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) is a good illustration of this process. Although relying on al-Nuwayrī and to a lesser extent on al-Yūnīnī, al-Maqrīzī greatly enlivened the narrative, perhaps most clearly in the first lines where he deals with the vizier's outrage. His account is the only one in which the vizier is described as crying (*wa-bakā bukāʾan kaṯīran*) and in which the following line of direct speech occurs:[19]

> *Kayfa tarǧūn al-naṣr wa-l-Naṣārā tarkabu ʿindakum al-ḫuyūl wa-talbasu al-ʿamāʾim al-bīḍ, wa-tudillu al-muslimīn wa-tušbihuhum fī ḫidmatikum?*
>
> How can you hope for victory when the Christians ride among you on horseback, wear white turbans, humiliate the Muslims, and be like them in your service?

Because of such authorial elaborations, the Maghrebi vizier becomes even more of a *character* than he was in Ibn al-Dawādārī's earlier quoted account, a distinct actor in the story who performs the role assigned to him by the author. As a personification of polemical discourse, he drives the plot toward a first resolution in the form of the instatement of sumptuary laws. At this point, his purpose in the story has ended, and indeed, none of the accounts feature the Maghrebi vizier beyond the proclamation of the new laws, even though several historians do mention various subsequent happenings.

Other historical reports showcase further elements that strengthen the Maghrebi vizier's character. An important aspect of these is the symmetrical opposition of the Maghrebi vizier to what Tamer el-Leithy has called the "haughty Copt trope": "the mounted, haughty, ostentatious Coptic official dragging the supplicating poor Muslim as the latter begs for relief from exorbitant taxes." El-Leithy calls this trope "the axial image of anti-*ḏimmi* treatises" and notes how it is often used as

18. "The idea that some configurations of facts make better stories than others", Ryan, 1986, p. 319.
19. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, pp. 337–339. Notice the wordplay between *naṣr* (victory) and *naṣārā* (Christian). Bernard Lewis incorrectly translates the last part as "and have them run in their service." (1974, p. 230).

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"catalyst" or "spark" for anti-*ḏimmī* actions. The "haughty Copt" trope is a crucial aspect in most of the accounts on the Maghrebi vizier, providing the reason why the Maghrebi vizier decides to take his case to the sultan and the emirs.[20] The second paragraph of Ibn al-Dawādārī's version identifies this Christian as the powerful state agent Amīn al-Mulk b. al-Ġannām. Al-Maqrīzī's narrative once again elevates the drama, although he eliminates the specific identification:[21]

> *Wa-baynā huwa taḥta al-qalʿa iḏā bi-raǧul rākib farasan wa-ḥawlahu ʿidda min al-nās mušāt fī rikābihi, yataḍarraʿūn lahu wa-yasʾalūnahu wa yuqabbilūn riǧlayhi, wa-huwa muʿriḍ ʿanhum lā yaʿbaʾu bihim bal yanharuhum wa-yaṣīḥ fī ġilmānihi bi-ṭardihim. Fa-qīla li-l-Maġribī anna hāḏā al-rākib Naṣrānī fa-šaqqa ʿalayhi.*
>
> While he was below the Citadel, all of a sudden a man riding a horse [appeared] surrounded by a number of people walking by his stirrup, begging him, imploring him, and kissing his feet while he turned his back on them and took no notice of them—rather, he rebuffed them and called on his slaves to drive them away. The Maghrebi was told that this rider was a Christian. This was unbearable for him.

In some accounts this first encounter is amplified even further, with the Maghrebi visitor at first taking the Coptic rider for a Muslim, which creates a classic narrative situation of mistaken identity.[22]

Although the Haughty Copt trope's formulation varies from account to account, its presence is nearly always used as an important narrative signifier, representing as it were an ideal-type non-Muslim that is contrasted to the Maghrebi visitor who represents an ideal-type personification of the Muslim community. Within this binary structure, the "haughty Copt" as a trope can be argued to embody such negative categories as indulgence and corruption, while the Maghrebi visitor trope by contrast connotes religious zeal and strict adherence to law, showing the right way for Muslims through his disapproval of the actions of non-Muslims and his righteous exhortation to the authorities.

The above-quoted passage from al-Maqrīzī includes another important narrative element: the setting below the Citadel, the seat of power of the sultan. This area was the place where official processions marched, where public executions were held and edicts proclaimed. Clearly, this was a place rich in symbolic power, directly contrasting the non-Muslim's inappropriate behavior with a symbolized setting of the state as regulator of such behavior. This specific setting

20. El-Leithy, 2006, pp. 97–98. The "haughty Copt" trope is only absent from the versions given by al-Yūnīnī, the anonymous chronicler, Ibn al-Naqqāš, and al-Nuwayrī. The last does include a similar anecdote from Syria in which a group of rich Christians provokes the anger of local officials, resulting in sumptuary laws being instated. I am grateful to Amir Mazor for drawing my attention to this. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, vol. 31, p. 419.

21. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, p. 337. My emendation of Lewis' translation (1974, pp. 229–230).

22. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧala, *Sukkardān al-sulṭān*, p. 179; al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, vol. 5, p. 83; Ibn Taġrī-Birdī, *al-Nuǧūm al-zāhira*, vol. 8, p. 107; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, vol. 1, p. 408.

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as an element of the tale appears relatively late in the historical tradition, and it is not found in any of the contemporary accounts; the first to include it was al-Ṣafadī, in his biography of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn that is found within his biographical dictionary *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr* (The Nobles of the Age and Helpers of Victory).[23] It was then copied by all those relying on al-Ṣafadī's account (Ibn Abī Ḥaǧala and Ibn Iyās), but also by al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taġrī-Birdī. By the fifteenth century, this aspect must have worked itself into the common tradition of the story.

Polemical intersections

The description of regulations for non-Muslims, instated upon the Maghrebi vizier's instigation, is not uncommon in the Mamluk period, which is often recognized as a time of heightened interreligious tensions.[24] Although the matter is contested, it is widely believed by most scholars that Egypt in this era finally made the transition to a Muslim demographic majority after mass conversions among Coptic Christians.[25] However, Copts were still present in important bureaucratic positions, such as the one mentioned above in the second excerpt from Ibn al-Dawādārī, and they faced increasing pressure to convert. Their prominence in government work had long angered local *ʿulamāʾ*, many of whom saw themselves as being in direct competition for the same jobs.[26] Tamer el-Leithy has argued that the high-profile conversions of such well-to-do Copts who had previously supported the entire community with their wealth eventually pushed socially vulnerable members of that community to convert as well.[27] The Maghrebi vizier arrived in Egypt at a time when non-Muslims in general had a visible presence in the public arena, and as that presence was being intensely debated among important segments of the local Muslim population.

These debates are also evident from a loose corpus of "anti-*ḏimmī* treatises" which started to appear in the early Ayyubid period and continued to be written in the following centuries of Mamluk rule. Some are large, systematic treatments of the issues of non-Muslims' social status,[28] while others consist mostly of assorted anecdotes about non-Muslim misbehavior.[29] Although polemical writing was not new by any means, the early Mamluk period did see a remarkable boost in the production of such texts.[30] El-Leithy notes that "this [early Mamluk] discourse differs from earlier polemics [which often consisted of doctrinal disputation] in being more

23. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr*, pp. 83–84.

24. For a recent perspective which also argues that historical anecdotes bespeak contemporary social relations and anxieties, but which takes the present anecdote's narrative character and claim to veracity to be unproblematic, see Hofer, 2017.

25. Little, 1976.

26. Richards, 1972; Yarbrough, 2012, pp. 300–302.

27. El-Leithy, 2005.

28. Ibn al-Durayhim, *Manhaǧ al-ṣawāb*; Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya, *Aḥkām ahl al-ḏimma*.

29. al-Nābulusī, *The Sword of Ambition*; Ibn al-Naqqāš, *al-Maḍamma*; Perlmann, 1958.

30. L. Yarbrough (2016) argues that parts of the Mamluk-period texts are derived from an unidentified "common source," most probably dating from the Fatimid period.

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concerned with contemporary social practices than abstract theology."[31] The social practices that were the concern of the particular polemics studied here can be filed under two main headings: first, the role of non-Muslims in state chancery; and second, the legal status of their houses of worship, i.e., whether they should be allowed to be built, rebuilt, or renovated. The argumentation is usually predicated on moralizing anecdotes, but some texts also refer extensively to juridical discussions. Luke Yarbrough has argued that the political authorities were the primary intended audience of these polemics, and that these works should be considered as part of a broad tradition of advice literature.[32]

The historical accounts about the Maghrebi vizier can be directly connected to these social tensions and share a number of links with this polemical material. This is especially pronounced in the speech the vizier is said to have given in front of the sultan and his advisors. Although most authors mention his exhorting role, only two authors purport to give his exact words in this context. The first of these is Ibn al-Dawādārī, who attributed the content to a book entitled *Kitāb al-waẓāʾif*, which Luke Yarbrough has identified as *Kitāb al-waẓāʾif al-maʿrūfa li-l-manāqib al-mawṣūfa* (The Book of Lessons Benefiting the [Development of a Ruler's] Characteristic Virtues), a work in the mirror-for-princes genre written by Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḫaḍir b. Abī Bakr b. Aḥmad (d. 1262). Unfortunately, this text survives only in an abridged form that does not include the full material on which the vizier's speech is based.[33] The vizier's speech is reproduced by one later author: the anonymous historian whose chronicle was edited by Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen. Interestingly, this is the only element that he copies from Ibn al-Dawādārī. In the remainder of the anecdote he relies on the account by al-Yūnīnī.[34]

Like other polemical texts, the vizier's speech draws heavily from a constantly reused source repertoire of Qur'ānic verses, hadiths, and moralizing anecdotes about earlier rulers. These are here given a narrative boost by being presented as the words of a judgmental foreign visitor and through its role in legitimizing further events. The anonymous chronicler takes the polemical association a step further by appending an anonymous sermon and a preamble thereto to his account, one of which he claims to have heard during this period in the area of Bahnasā in Upper Egypt. Like the vizier's speech, both of these *ḫuṭba*s contain material typical of anti-*ḏimmī* polemics.[35] By including both the speech and the sermons, the author stresses the wide distribution of anti-*ḏimmī* sentiment in the Mamluk sultanate, expressed both at court and in the provincial Friday mosque. Similar material is also used in the *ḥisba*

31. El-Leithy, 2006, p. 106.
32. Yarbrough, 2012, pp. 236–305.
33. Yarbrough, 2016, pp. 140-141.
34. Zetterstéen, 1919, pp. 84-93.
35. Tamer el-Leithy (2006, p. 113) summarizes the contents of the *khuṭba*s as follows: "They include the standard elements of the more elaborate anti-*dhimmî* texts: the Qur'ânic verses against employing *dhimmîs*; the charges of treason and espionage; the insincerity of Coptic bureaucrats' conversion; and, most importantly, the injunction to (unauthorised) regulation in the form of ordering good and forbidding evil."

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manual written by the *muḥtasib* Ibn Uḫuwwa (d. 1329), who was a contemporary of the events described by the anecdote but does not refer to them.[36]

The contents of the vizier's speech as recorded here, in conjunction with the sermons, function to strengthen the report's discursive authority. Because both the speech and the sermons contain much material that is also commonly cited in polemical literature, they grant an aura of received truth to the narratives. Each of the authors embedded within their version of the anecdote elements that had circulated widely at the time, most prominently in polemical literature but also elsewhere, and as such explicitly legitimized their version of the anecdote through reference to outside authorities: the writer of *Kitāb al-waẓāʾif*, the Upper Egyptian *ḫaṭīb* who delivered the sermon in the anonymous chronicler's account, and, ultimately, the Maghrebi vizier himself. The fact that such material appears in an anecdotal context is important, as it forms a movement complementary to Fineman's anecdotal "production of the real", introducing into a historical narration timeless discursive elements that link the "happening" of history to authority claims based on relatively widely dispersed discourses on the social position of non-Muslims.

This interplay between the "realistic effect" of the anecdotal form and the timeless authority of received truth is a theoretically fruitful way to conceptualize the continuity between the polemical material and historical narration in general. Consider al-Nuwayrī's account of the Maghrebi vizier in the historiographical part of his encyclopedic work *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition).[37] From the start, the narrative is framed in language that is reminiscent of the foundational Pact of ʿUmar.[38] This is clearest when al-Nuwayrī describes how a gathering (*maǧlis*) of scholars who had convened after the vizier's visit to discuss and resolve the non-Muslim issue questioned Christian and Jewish leaders and notables on the transgressions of their communities:[39]

> *Wa-suʾillū ʿammā aqarrū ʿalayhi fī ḫilāfat amīr al-muʾminīn ʿUmar b. al-ḫaṭṭāb—raḍiya Allāh ʿanhu—min ʿaqd al-ḏimma, fa-lam yaʾtū ʿan ḏālika bi-ǧawāb. Wa baḥaṯa al-fuqahāʾ fī ḏālika, fa-iqtaḍat al-mabāḥiṯ al-šarīfa bayna al-ʿulamāʾ, an yumayyiza al-Naṣārā bi-libs al-ʿamāʾim al-zurq ġayra al-šaʿrī, wa-l-yahūd bi-libs al-ʿamāʾim al-ṣufr. Wa tumayyiza nisāʾ ahl kull milla kaḏālika bi-ʿalāma taẓharu, wa-lā yarkibūn al-ḫuyūl wa-lā yaḥmilūn silāḥan.* […] *Wa-yataǧannabūn awsāṭ al-ṭuruq li-l-muslimīn fī maǧālisihim ʿan marātibihim, wa-lā yarfaʿūn aṣwātahum ʿalā aṣwāt al-muslimīn.*
>
> They were asked about what they agreed upon during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ʿUmar b. al-Ḫaṭṭāb—may God be pleased with him—in the *Ḏimma* Contract [The Pact of ʿUmar], and they could not provide an answer. The jurisprudents examined this, and the

36. Ibn Uḫuwwa, *Maʿālim al-qurba*, pp. 92-99.
37. For this rendering of the title, see Muhanna, 2016.
38. As defined by Milka Levy-Rubin, this is the "canonical text that defines the status of non-Muslims under Muslim rule and the restrictions imposed upon them." (2009, p. 360).
39. al-Nuwayrī, pp. 417-418; see also Little 1976, p. 556.

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> exemplary investigations among the *ʿulamāʾ* concluded that it would be required of the Christians to distinguish [themselves from Muslims] by wearing unlatticed blue turbans, and the Jews by wearing yellow turbans. The women of each community should also distinguish [themselves from Muslim women] with a visible sign. Nor should [the non-Muslims] ride horses, or carry a weapon, […] they should avoid the middle [parts] of the roads while gathering according to their ranks, and they should not raise their voices above those of the Muslims.

The various obligations and prohibitions listed here by al-Nuwayrī go well beyond the instatement of sumptuary laws noted by other writers. Rather, these restrictions, many more of which appear in the passage, are directly related to the Pact of ʿUmar. In some other anti-*ḏimmī* texts, the Pact of ʿUmar and the actions of the second caliph are a mainstay: for example, two important writers of extensive treatises, Ibn al-Durayhim (d. 1361) and Tāqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355), devote an entire chapter each to discussion of the Pact, as does Ibn Qayyim al-Ǧawziyya, who comments extensively on three different versions of the text.[40]

By recognizably furnishing his version of the anecdote with explicit references to the Pact of ʿUmar, al-Nuwayrī, too, embeds his anecdotal realism in a framework of timeless authority. Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 1406) picks up on this in his *History*, in which he relies on al-Nuwayrī's version of the account. Although Ibn Ḫaldūn eliminates much material from al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedic report, he leaves intact the phrasings reminiscent of the Pact of ʿUmar, even copying al-Nuwayrī's list of restrictions in full.[41]

The other historical accounts of the incident of the Maghrebi vizier, which neither feature the speech nor refer as extensively to the Pact, also tap into an authoritative framework shared with the polemical corpus. They do so by giving the Qurʾānic concept of *ḥisba* (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*, "to command good and to forbid evil") a central place in their narratives. Al-Maqrīzī describes how the visitor, upon seeing the situation of the *ḏimmīs* in Cairo, "denounced this" (*Ankara ḏālika*) and "kept on preaching in disapproval [of it]" (*wa-aṭāla al-qawl fī al-inkār*).[42] Similarly, al-Yūnīnī and Ibn Taġrī-Birdī convey the visitor's disapproval with the verb *ankara* (*wa-ankara ʿalā naṣārā diyār miṣr wa-yahūdhā*, "he disapproved of the Christians and Jews of the Egyptian lands").[43] A derived form of this verb also appears in one of the sermons recorded by the anonymous chronicler, where the preacher fulminates against the "reprehensible things" (*munkarāt*) that *ḏimmī*s are allowed to perpetrate without anyone protesting.[44]

In the polemical texts, references to the *ḥisba* are extremely common. Ibn al-Durayhim, for example, devotes the entire first chapter of his *Manhaǧ al-ṣawāb fī qubḥ istiktāb ahl al-kitāb* (The Correct Way Concerning the Infamy of Employing People of the Book as Scribes)

40. Ibn al-Durayhim, *Manhaǧ al-ṣawāb*, pp. 146–164; al-Subkī, *Īḍāḥ*, pp. 253-285; Hoover, 2012, p. 992.
41. Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Tārīḫ Ibn Ḫaldūn*, vol. 5, p. 476.
42. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, pp. 337–338.
43. Al-Yūnīnī, *Ḏayl mirʾāt al-zamān*, vol. 1, p. 460; Ibn Taġrī-Birdī, *al-Nuǧūm al-zāhira*, vol. 8, p. 107.
44. Zetterstéen, 1919, p. 88.

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to this theme.[45] Ibn al-Rifʿa (d. 1310), who wrote a treatise arguing for the legitimacy of destroying churches and synagogues in Cairo during the Mamluk period, and who served as *muḥtasib* of Fusṭāṭ, also commences his juridical discussion by invoking the *ḥisba*.[46] His student Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Asnawī (d. 1370) does the same in his *al-Kalimāt al-muhimma fī mubāšarāt ahl al-ḏimma* (Important Words Concerning the Practices of *Ḏimmī*s).[47] The Upper Egyptian Sufi sheikh Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 1308) wrote a Sufi manual in which he discusses at some length a confrontation between Christians and the common people in Qūṣ, which he most probably instigated himself. The editor and translator Dennis Gril notes that al-Qūṣī saw himself as a righteous defender of the *ḥisba*. Like one of the *ḫaṭīb*s in the anonymous chronicler's account, al-Qūṣī complained that the Christians were guilty of carrying out reprehensible things (*munkarāt*), without anyone protesting (*yunkir*).[48] The *ḥisba* served as perhaps the most central authoritative concept informing the writers of both the historical accounts and the polemical texts. Indeed, the Maghrebi vizier's actions can be interpreted as embodying the very essence of the concept: he arrives in Egypt, forbids what he considers to be wrong (the indulgence of the authorities toward the position of non-Muslims in society, a role recognizably performed by the "haughty Copt"), and commands what is right (submissiveness toward Muslims).

The Maghrebi element

It is clear that for the authors of these accounts, the Maghrebi vizier embodied the polemics of an anti-*ḏimmī* position. The vizier himself remains an enigma, however. If he did indeed exist, why did no writer give any more precise details about him? That al-Yūnīnī does not give a name or precise affiliation for the Maghrebi vizier is remarkable, as at the beginning of his annals of the year 700/1300–1301—only a handful of pages before he reports the vizier's visit—he provides a detailed list of the rulers of different polities in the Maghreb.[49] Ibn Ḫaldūn, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧala, and Ibn al-Naqqāš who were all of Maghrebi background, do not illuminate matters either. The first, who served various Maghrebi rulers during his lifetime, does change the vizier's objective in traveling to Cairo from one of pilgrimage to that of having been sent to deliver a diplomatic message (*ḥaḍara* […] *fī ġaraḍ al-risāla*), but he does not add details on what his message consisted of or from whom it might have been sent.[50]

It is of course not uncommon for official visitors not to be identified in detail in chronicles, and it must remain a possibility that a real Maghrebi visitor to Cairo around that time did express outrage at the behavior of Cairene non-Muslims, providing the basic inspiration for all of these accounts. The situation of non-Muslims in the Maghreb was indeed quite different from that in Egypt. Although some Jews and Christians were able to regain important

45. Ibn al-Durayhim, *Manhaǧ al-ṣawāb*, pp. 204–313.
46. Ibn al-Rifʿa, *Kitāb al-nafāʾis*, p. 63; see for a summary of the text, Ward, 1999.
47. Perlmann, 1942, 1958.
48. Gril, 1980, p. 246.
49. Guo, 1998, pp. 172–173.
50. Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Tārīḫ Ibn Ḫaldūn*, p. 476.

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positions at Maghrebi courts in the aftermath of the Almohad caliphate's dissolution, especially in the Marīnid context, their situation was still that of a marginal minority.[51] As noted above, Coptic Christians, by contrast, still made up a significant segment of the Egyptian population in early Mamluk times and were especially visible in high positions.

The Egyptian situation goes some way toward explaining why certain historians—some of whom were themselves active in administration, and nearly all of whom were Muslim—transformed the vizier into a vehicle of anti-*ḏimmī* polemics.[52] In this context, the vizier's intervention would work in defense not only of their own positions in various chancery bureaus but also of their ideal conception of how a society should be governed (i.e., by *siyāsa šarʿiyya*, or worldly rule based on the principles of Islamic law),[53] while the "haughty Copt" trope represented their opponents. Perhaps this is why Baybars al-Manṣūrī and Abū al-Fidāʾ, both important historians who lived contemporary to the events, do not mention the vizier, as both of them were members of an established elite—Baybars being a highly placed emir himself and Abū al-Fidāʾ a member of a small Ayyubid hereditary dynasty—who did not have to compete with non-Muslims for their positions. Furthermore, using the character of a Maghrebi vizier to voice opinions potentially critical about the state's policies, may have worked as a lightning rod of sorts: authors could criticize the authorities by way of the actions and sayings of an outsider without actually putting themselves in danger for voicing such critical opinions.

However, the Maghrebi visitor's role goes beyond the actual contrasts between Egypt and the Maghreb and a simple narrative lightning rod; rather, his function in the story is at least as much an embodiment of the ideal type for such a contrast. For some time already, stories about bigoted Maghrebis had been circulating in historiography and literature, and the Maghrebi vizier of the 1301 anecdote fits well among these characters. El-Leithy has gathered many accounts of such "agents of moral regulation" who visited Egypt. In evaluating these accounts, he observes that:[54]

> an anti-*dhimmî* discursive and practical space extended from al-Maghrib through Egypt, facilitated by Muslim scholarly travel, migration and settlement. […] The tropes of Maghribî outrage at *dhimmî* conditions in Egypt […] informed the perceptions and acts of Upper Egyptian sufis, who found it an expedient lens for social critique, and a model for their struggle against Christian power.

Large numbers of Maghrebi migrants had fled to the central Islamic lands during this period after Christian advances in the Iberian peninsula. El-Leithy argues that these migrants "brought to Egypt a particular experience of Muslim defeat and the *reconquista* in al-Andalus," which led

51. Lassner, 2012, pp. 202–203.

52. Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Nuwayrī, al-Ṣafadī, and al-Qalqašandī all held functions in various administrative bureaus, and thus were in indirect competition professionally with *ḏimmī*s (Little, 1970, pp. 11, 24, 102; Bosworth, 1978) The one non-Muslim historian is the Coptic al-Mufaḍḍal b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil.

53. On the ways that this concept influenced medieval historical writing, especially in this period, see Khalidi, 1994, pp. 193–200.

54. El-Leithy, 2006, p. 106.

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them to engage with perceived social wrongs, such as the comportment of non-Muslims.[55] Additionally, the Almohad caliphate (1121–1269) that had recently ruled in the Maghreb was well known for its harsh treatment of non-Muslims, informing a stricter appraisal of societal roles by many Maghrebis. A small but significant corpus of treatises against *bidʿa* (innovation in religious thought) written by authors with strong links to the Maghreb, or at least with a Mālikī inclination, is illustrative of these attitudes. Similarly to the writers of the anti-*ḏimmī* texts from the time, and indeed rather like our Maghrebi vizier, the authors of these treatises fulminate from a moral high ground against a perceived lack of proper Islamic behavior, and often compare the Maghrebi situation favorably to Egypt.[56]

A larger study of Maghrebi migratory patterns to medieval Egypt and Syria has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet been undertaken, but it is clear that Maghrebis played important roles in these societies.[57] This in turn profoundly informed the portrayal of such individuals in narrative sources. In later centuries we can even trace the elaboration of such stereotypes into an outright literary trope in the *Sīrat Baybars*. This epic tradition, which was mostly orally performed, describes the fictionalized adventures of the early Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars (r. 1260–1277) and a host of companions. Here, a minor but important "Maghrebi element" appears as one of the thematic strata pervading the narrative. Ana Ruth Vidal Luengo describes the stereotyping of Maghrebi actors in this story tradition as (among other things) pious, zealous, and combative. This equation, she argues, was itself informed by the actions of Maghrebis in earlier times, and contributed to "a collective memory of a community which distinguished itself by its spiritual zeal."[58] While there is no evidence that the *Sīrat Baybars* as such was already circulating in 1301, Thomas Herzog has argued that its oldest layers correspond to the early period of the Mamluk sultanate.[59]

Undoubtedly, the fundaments of the collective perception of Maghrebi agents, which would grow to such importance in the elaboration of the epic, were already present at the time when our earliest authors wrote their accounts of the Maghrebi vizier's alleged 1301 visit. Stereotypes of zealous Maghrebi traditions and regulatory practices were widely diffused and presumably also widely recognizable to a Mamluk audience. These traditions were based on an actual reality, but evolved into a narrative trope. The Maghrebi vizier's role in the accounts is a prime example of this process, and functioned as a rhetorical node around which a complex web of signification was built.

55. El-Leithy, 2006, p. 105.
56. Fierro, 1992; Berkey, 1995.
57. For a rather dated but still useful overview of Maghrebi migration, settlement, and activities in thirteenth-century Damascus, see Pouzet, 1975. For the fifteenth century, see Petry, 1981, pp. 74-77.
58. Vidal Luengo, 2004, p. 187.
59. Herzog, 2003, p. 148.

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Conclusion

The linking of common polemical discursive elements and topoi found in the anti-*ḏimmī* texts to the character of a judgmental Maghrebi visitor made for a powerful narrative construction. In this connection, the polemical content of the story was amplified through recourse to a stereotype that was at the time already well on its way to becoming a common narrative trope. Contrasting this construction with the complementary trope of the "haughty Copt" served to give the account a narrative symmetry and framed the anecdote as one in which the important Islamic principle of the *ḥisba* was personified and performed. In this way the authors of these anecdotes linked their stories to the authority of a set of discourses on the social status of non-Muslims that by 1301 was circulating quite widely. When the chroniclers gave the Maghrebi vizier such a central place in the narrative, they referred not only to the alleged actions of such a person, but also to a broader discursive category implying religious zeal and strictness in the application of Islamic law in dealing with non-Muslims. It is impossible to say to what extent these authors believed that what they were recording actually took place or whether they indeed made use of the vizier as a "lightning rod" for criticism, but it is in any case clear that many of them grasped the opportunity to link the historical account to the discursive space also inhabited by anti-*ḏimmī* polemics.

In the end, these anecdotes tell us more about how historians conceptualized an ideal society than about the actual making of political decisions in the Citadel. Historians did not simply convey what happened, but used an array of narrative and rhetorical elements common to a wide range of cultural productions of the period to translate this wave of anti-*ḏimmī* sentiment, which contributed to an enormous change in Mamluk society, into convincing narrative. The fact that the historiographical account afterward appeared in works as diverse as those of Ibn al-Naqqāš, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧala, and al-Qalqašandī shows that the historians' writing not only reflected but ultimately contributed significantly to the spread of such sentiment.

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