

قوة الصورة: مفهوم الهجرة في روايات الفاطميين والمرابطيين

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الملخص

تتناول هذه المقالة المصادر الأدبية التي تصف بروز دولتين إسلاميتين في شمال إفريقيا. كما تجري هذه المقالة تحليلاً لمصادر الأدب الأولى من خلال مقارنة صعود الفاطميين في القرن الرابع الهجري/ العاشر الميلادي (296-567 هـ / 909-1171 م) مع صعود المرابطين في القرن الخامس الهجري/ الحادي عشر الميلادي (460-541 هـ / 1068-1147 م). تلك الحركتان وثقتا في كتاب المؤرخ الفاطمي الرسمي أبو حنيفة النعمان بن محمد (ت 363 هـ / 974 م) (بداية الدعوة وتأسيس الدولة) وكتاب العالم الأندلسي أبو عبيد عبد الله بن عبد العزيز بن محمد بن أيوب بن عمرو البكري (ت. 486 هـ / 1094 م) (كتاب المسالك والممالك). ويعتبر الكتاب الأخير أقدم قطعة مكتوبة عن المرابطين. تحليل هذين المصدرين يوضح للقارئ أن بروز هذه الدول على أنه نتاج لكتابة التاريخ، ومن ثم التأريخ. ومن جانب آخر، يؤكد هذا المقال أولاً ضرورة تحليل الجوانب الاجتماعية والثقافية لهذه الدول. ثانياً، يجسد قوة مفهوم المؤلف؛ ومن ثم قدرته على التصوير في كتاباته. كما هو مبين، فإن كلا المصدرين الأدبيين يكشف كيف أن المؤلفين المعنيين قد خصصوا عنصراً مهماً للغاية في سياق الإسلام المبكر، مثل هجرة النبي محمد - صلى الله عليه وسلم - ونسبه في رواياتهم؛ وهو ما يعمل في النهاية على إضفاء الشرعية على الطابع التاريخي.

The Power of Portrayal: The Notion of the *Hijra* in the Fāṭimid and Murābiṭūn Narratives

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Abstract

This article aims to show the power of story-telling in early Muslim mediaeval sources. At the forefront of this article stands a comparison of two narratives by early Muslim mediaeval sources revolving around the emergence of two movements from the Muslim West. The paper demonstrates the genesis of these movements and analyses them against the backdrop of their socio-cultural background. Furthermore, it explores the concept of author's agency and assesses how Muslim mediaeval sources made use of their power of portrayal.

The article engages with literary sources that describe the rise of two North African movements. It conducts an analysis of primary source literature by comparing the rise of the fourth/tenth-century Fāṭimids (296–567AH/909–1171CE) as documented by the Fāṭimid's official historian, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad (d. 363AH/974CE) in *Iftitāḥ al-da'wa wa-ibtidā' al-dawla* ("The Commencement of the *da'wa* and the Establishment of the *dawla*") with that of the fifth/eleventh-century Murābiṭūn (460–541AH/1068–1147CE), as presented in *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* ("The Book of Routes and Realms"). This is the earliest written piece about the Murābiṭūn and stems from the Andalusī scholar, Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb b. 'Amr al-Bakrī (d. 486AH/1094CE).

The research sheds light into how both narratives follow an identical pattern in structure and further demonstrates how elements, considered as highly significant in the context of early Islam and ascribed in sources to the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, were incorporated into these two narratives. Ultimately, both cases historicise legitimisation.

It is recommended for further research to compare other manuscripts written in this period and see whether a paradigm in story-telling can be determined.

Keywords: Murābiṭūn - Fāṭimids- narrative- power of portrayal- *hijra*- legitimisation

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"The account that follows is a true story.

It is the story of the Almoravids¹, a Berber dynasty" (Messier xiii).

Historiography and the Image of the World

What is known about mediaeval Islamic movements stems from chroniclers who wrote in a certain socio-cultural and politico-religious environment and narrated the rise of religious movements. The profession of the historian, as known and practiced today, did not exist as such in the mediaeval environment. As jurists or scribes copying books or writing letters, mediaeval scholars were active interpreters of their cultural, political and religious environment, and thus of daily life. Accordingly, our contemporary knowledge of historical movements is a product of the process of documenting history, a process in which the chronicler played a key role. A prominent example of what this means for modern-day analysis is the fact that there is not one accepted version of the rise of the Murābiṭūn but seven literary accounts that are referred to as primary sources.² Each of these sources was written in its own specific context, the later sources including or excluding information provided by earlier accounts.

Besides the power of portrayal, which lies initially in the hands of the author, we should take into consideration the fact that every religious movement is born into a specific social setting. It is, therefore, necessary to obtain an overview of the politico-religious environment into which the Fāṭimids and the Murābiṭūn, two religious movements from the Maghrib, emerged. The Islamic civilisation was characterised, according to Bernard Lewis, by "the revolt of Islam" (qtd. in Brett 17). The Muslim realm encompassed Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus) in the west to the Indus River in the east. The political and religious discontent is mirrored in the fact that there were three caliphates at the same time; the 'Abbāsīd, the Umayyad and the Fāṭimid, all competing for ultimate dominance. The 'Abbāsīds came to power in 132AH/750CE when the Umayyad dynasty (41–750AH/661–750CE) was overthrown. The sole survivor from the massacre was the young prince 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Mu'awiya al-Dākhil (d. 171AH/788CE), who escaped to Al-Andalus and consolidated an empire in 138AH/756CE, nominally still pledging allegiance to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. According to Gudrun Krämer, this changed in 316AH/929CE, when 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (d. 341AH/961CE) declared himself *amīr al-mu'minīn* (commander of the faithful), establishing a separate caliphate, the Caliphate of Córdoba (316–422AH/929–1031CE) (111).

The proclamation of the Caliphate of Córdoba was probably catalysed by a move that had taken place twenty years earlier. The religious and political landscape shifted by the beginning of the fourth/tenth century when a branch of the Shī'a³ proclaimed the emergence of a new caliphate in Qayrawān. This new Shī'ite Ismā'īlī⁴ Caliphate would rename itself and become known as the Fāṭimid Caliphate.

Chroniclers of the time may have been exposed to a number of aspects introducing personal bias that should not be underestimated, such as involvement in a system of patronage. The following example, which compares different countries and peoples to the anatomy of a bird, demonstrates the antagonistic character between the Muslim East (al-Mashriq) and the Muslim West (al-Maghrib) as perceived in Muslim mediaeval historiography. Ibn Faqīh al-Hamadhānī (d. 290AH/903CE) depicts the “image of the world” (*ṣūrat al-dunyā*) as a bird in *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān* (“The Summary of the Book of Lands”). The head represents China, the right wing resembles India, the left wing the Khazars, while the heart, and the chest, essentially the centrepiece, symbolise the Hijāz, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. As Ibn Faqīh al-Hamadhānī mentions, the “worst part of a bird”, i.e. the tail, was consequently al-Maghrib (96). Bearing this bias in mind, the question arises as to how the consolidation of new Muslim empires in the Maghrib would be portrayed in historiography. What information was considered worthy of documentation in a narrative that described their rise to power? Were the scriptural accounts a rendition of reality or rather a product of copying or even fabrication? To what extent was the chronicler’s participation in networks relevant, and did he pursue the power of flexibility and agency?

Of Patterns and Parallels: Paradigm?

It is necessary to investigate the literary texts describing the rise of these two new Islamic movements from the Maghrib, a place perceived as the worst in the world. *Iftitāḥ al-da‘wa wa-ibtidā’ al-dawla* (“The Commencement of the *da‘wa* and the Establishment of the *dawla*”; henceforth *Iftitāḥ*), written by the Fāṭimid’s official historian, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān b. Muḥammad (d. 363AH/974CE), gives an account of the rise of the Fāṭimids. This text will be compared to the rise of the Murābiṭūn by the Andalusian scholar al-Bakrī in *Kitāb al-masālik wa ‘l-mamālik* (“The Book of Routes and Realms”; henceforth *Al-Masālik*).

According to the Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, a figure known by the name Abū ‘Abd Allāh was trained as a *dā‘ī* (propagandist) in Yemen for the Shī‘ite mission to the Maghrib. Abū ‘Abd Allāh met members of the Banū Saktān from the Kutāma confederation during the *hajj* in Mecca. As a result of a question-and-answer interaction between the *dā‘ī* and the Banū Saktān tribes, Abū ‘Abd Allāh was invited to return with them to their native lands in the region of Ikjān, where he assumed the position of a teacher instructing on the merits of Shī‘ism. Opposition grew among some members of the emergent community, which compelled Abū ‘Abd Allāh to emigrate to Tāzrūt. He did manage, however, to unite the Kutāma and, through the prowess of these tribes, was now able to confront those who rejected him and crush the Aghlabids. The belligerent character of the Kutāma resulted in the *dā‘ī* marching into Qayrawān. Coins were minted in the name of the Mahdī, the new *imām-caliph*, and his immediate arrival was

proclaimed. This account bears similarities to the earliest primary source written about the Murābiṭūn.

According to al-Bakrī, the chief of the Banū Gudāla from the Ṣanhāja confederation⁵, Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm, stopped in Qayrawān after completing the pilgrimage to Mecca. Here, he conversed with the jurist, Abū 'Imrān al-Fāsī,⁶ who inquired about his tribes' country, customs and religious doctrines. While this conversation allegedly disclosed the weaknesses of Islamic knowledge practiced by the Ṣanhāja, al-Bakrī states that Abū 'Imrān acknowledged the willingness of this tribal elder to learn. Subsequently, Ibn Ibrāhīm urged Abū 'Imrān to send one of his disciples with the ability to instruct the tribes to uphold the basic tenets of the religion. The teacher named 'Abdallāh b. Yāsīn was sent by Waggāg, who himself was recommended by Abū 'Imrān. 'Abdallāh b. Yāsīn accompanied Ibn Ibrāhīm to the Banū Gudāla, where he instructed these tribes, the future Murābiṭūn, who initially showed obedience before becoming hostile towards him. 'Abdallāh b. Yāsīn was forced to flee, secretly returning to Waggāg. Afterwards, Waggāg intervened, rebuking the tribes for their disobedience. Ibn Yāsīn returned and killed those who had rebelled against him and those he thought deserved to die because of their immorality. The narrative then continues with the consolidation of the empire by means of military endeavours.

Parallels can be drawn between the individual literary elements and the structures of these two literary texts: first, the fulfilment of the *ḥajj* by tribal elders of a Berber confederation; second, the reciprocal interest between the "scholar of Islam" and the tribal elder expressed in the latter's desire to be taught in the tenets of Islam and the former's interest in the lands and customs of the tribes; third, a teacher who commences his instruction following invitation by the tribes' members; fourth, the theme of acceptance and rejection, which leads to opposition and eventually the teacher's forced departure; finally, the consolidation of a new Muslim empire through military achievements. Before we examine the theme of rejection, which is common to both accounts, the paper will begin by showing how al-Bakrī included vocabulary and devices considered to be nearly exclusively Fāṭimid rhetoric. This demonstrates not only that al-Bakrī was familiar with the narrative at hand, but also made significant use of his agency as a writer.

This brings us to the Fāṭimids' mission. The strategy of the Ismā'īlī (later Fāṭimid) movement took the form of a missionary undertaking: *da'wa* (mission) deriving from the root *da'ā* "call" or "summon" (Wehr 283). This consisted of a *dā'ī*, the propagandist, who would convey the *da'wat* (message) of the movement, hoping the "invitation" would be accepted by tribes it appealed to. Although the term *da'wa* may not be Ismā'īlī or Fāṭimid *per se*, it nevertheless conveys a religious connotation based on the calls of God and the prophets to humankind, and can thus be considered an instrument used to

vindicate a claim to religious and political authority in the Muslim realm.⁷ The role of the *dā'ī* was, according to the Qur'ān, meant to be responded to, since he was God's tool (cf. Q 46:31). In the case of the Fāṭimids, the aforementioned *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh was responsible for disseminating the *da'wa* amongst potentially receptive tribes to whom the message might appeal. In the meantime, the *imām-mahdī* remained in hiding, with his identity concealed, until the *da'wa* was strong enough. Once the message had been successfully adopted, he would appear to assert political and religious authority and to proclaim the initiation of a new movement.⁸

The Fāṭimids' mission itself is denoted by the term *da'wat al-ḥaqq*, which, according to Heinz Halm, translates as "the call to truth" (1). As Sumaiya Hamdani explains, *da'wat al-ḥaqq* was used to disseminate Ismā'īlī thought and grounded claims of the Fāṭimid genealogy to *imams* (5). Accordingly, the term *da'wat al-ḥaqq*, as stated by Heinz Halm, is derived, self-descriptively, from an expression used to denote themselves as the true or legitimate dynasty (25). In turn, it was the Ismā'īlī who denoted and acknowledged the rhetorical claim of this Shī'ite movement, for which reason any inclusion in historiography creates references to the Fāṭimids. As such, it is remarkable that al-Bakrī adopted it *verbatim* into the Murābiṭūn narrative of their rise to power.

The term *da'wat al-ḥaqq* appears twice and with the same wording in al-Bakrī's account with regard to the Murābiṭūn. It first occurs soon after the description of the landscape and the nomadic nature of the Ṣanhāja confederation; al-Bakrī claims that these tribes would rise to proclaim the truth (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*) (164). The second occurrence is found in the *locus classicus* of the genesis; that is, in the initiation of the Murābiṭūn by Ibn Yāsīn, which reads in the original text "*da'ā al-nās ilā al-ribāṭ wa da'wat al-ḥaqq*" (Al Bakrī 164). The first part of the syntax translates as "(he) called the people *ribāṭ*"; the second part is more intricate, as *da'wat al-ḥaqq* has often been translated as "profess them truth" (Hopkins and Levzion 70). Both terms, however, *da'ā* and the *da'wat al-ḥaqq*, are tainted with the Ismā'īlī notion due to the specific rhetoric of propagation with which they are imbued. While the exact nature of the meaning of *da'wat al-ḥaqq* as intended by al-Bakrī in the context of the Murābiṭūn cannot be determined here, it is, however, important for the historiographical discussion that al-Bakrī uses the identical wording of the Ismā'īlī doctrine. We can safely assume that he would have been aware of the politico-religious implications this phrasing carried.

Returning to the historiography mentioned above, we must bear in mind that these chroniclers were recounting the rise of Berber movements from the Maghrib, a place perceived by Muslim mediaeval scholars as the worst in the world. The question arises as to whether certain elements would have been considered important when writing these accounts; perhaps even an element that would have enhanced the

legitimation of a Berber movement from the Maghrib. Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's depiction of the initial acceptance of the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh, followed by a sudden tide of opposition that culminates with his forced departure to Tazrūt, is understood through reference to secondary literature as a re-enactment of an act ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad: the *hijra*.⁹ Considering the parallel structure to be seen between the Murābiṭūn and the Fāṭimid narratives, Ibn Yāsīn's departure may also be considered against the backdrop of a *hijra*, particularly since, of all sources that recount the rise of the Murābiṭūn, the rise of opposition and forced departure is mentioned nearly exclusively by al-Bakrī. The analysis will follow a two-fold structure whereby the literary appropriation in all three accounts will demonstrate the same notion of opposition on the one hand and the correlation between persecution and a lack of protection on the other.

The Rise of Opposition amongst Tribal Elders

According to both the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān and al-Bakrī, the rejection Ibn Yāsīn and Abū 'Abd Allāh faced from the Ṣanhāja and the Kutāma was initiated by a rising tide of opposition. A closer reading of both narratives, however, reveals an identical pattern, where initially both Ibn Yāsīn and Abū 'Abd Allāh were accepted, only to be rejected thereafter. The literary appropriation of rejection encountered by both *dramatis personae* is the result of the rise of opposition, followed by their persecution. This leads to the rationale for their necessary "departure", establishing a parallel and literary allusion to accounts of the *hijra* of the Prophet Muḥammad: first, the resemblance of the literary characters accountable for rising up against Ibn Yāsīn and Abū 'Abd Allāh, as opposition appears to be evoked by the tribal elders; and second, the alleged motif as rising up against Ibn Yāsīn due to contradictions found in the judgements (*waka'annahum wajaḍū fī aḥkāmihī ba'da 'l-tanāquḍ*), according to Al-Bakrī (165).

Beginning with the notion of opposition, it is noteworthy that, as depicted in descriptions in Muslim tradition, the enmity faced by the Prophet Muḥammad came from the Quraysh. As stated by Al-Ṭabarī, this was because of the Prophet's renunciation of polytheism as practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia and due to the fact that he was not an influential member of his tribe (94). The same notion of opposition is identified by James Lindsay in the narrative of the Shī'ite Fāṭimids' account: the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān describes how the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh faced opposition from some tribal elders of the Banū Saktān, who accused him of having caused discord among the people by altering their religion (46). Subsequently, as reported by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, a coalition of influential and wealthy tribal chiefs, the lords of Mīla, Saṭīf and Billizma, and supplemented by the elders of the tribes of the Kutāma and various leaders of the latter's branches, was formed (77). Their plan, as portrayed by the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, was to seize Abū 'Abd Allāh by force from the hands of the Banū Saktān, rendering him vulnerable without

protection.

In al-Bakrī's account of the growing opposition to Ibn Yāsīn, the same motif of tribal opposition arising as a result of the alterations of the religious system may be identified in the Murābiṭūn narrative. Beginning with the notion of tribal opposition, it is noteworthy that, according to al-Bakrī's description, those who rose up against Ibn Yāsīn are described as the *raḡulayn min kubarā'ihim* (two of their elders), whose names are rendered as Ayyār and Īntakkū and a *faqīh*, referred to as Ibn Sakkum (165).

A synoptic reading of all primary sources that relate the rise of the Murābiṭūn reveals that the *raḡulayn min kubarā'ihim* are only mentioned by al-Bakrī. All other accounts exclude this information. According to Norman Stillman, the literary onomastics of the name Ayyār bears similarity to the Berber word for the moon, *ayyūr*, worshipped in the ancient Berber religious cult (833). Although the exact meaning of Īntakkū remains unclear, it seems to resemble a compound consisting of a genitive construction in Berber, namely *īn* and *takkū*. It is, however, significant that both names attributed to these tribal elders, who are meant to have instigated opposition against Ibn Yāsīn, carry Berber connotations. All three accounts show how the notion of opposition on the part of the tribes and the alterations with regard to the religious system in the respective environments leads to the reason for rejection portrayed in the account attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad.

Lack of Protection and Rise of Opposition

Muslim tradition recounts that the Prophet Muḥammad was granted protection as long as Abū Ṭālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, his paternal uncle and clan leader of the Banū Hāshim, was alive. The status of the Prophet Muḥammad is said to have changed when the clan leadership of the Banū Hashīm, following the death of Abū Ṭālib, was transferred to another paternal uncle of the Prophet, namely Abū Lahab (d. 2AH/624CE). According to Al-Ṭabarī, the discontinuation of clan protection and the rise of opposition is, therefore, explained in the case of the Prophet Muḥammad with the death of his paternal uncle (115). As Montgomery Watts argues, "the loss of security was on the surface a great disaster for Muḥammad for the cause of Islam [...] and the increased hostility from the Quraysh now forced him to seek support elsewhere than Mecca" (qtd. in Al-Ṭabarī 137). His protection seems to have been granted as a result of blood kinship.

Similarly, in the account of the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, a correlation is apparent between the rise of opposition and a lack of protection. The status of Abū 'Abd Allāh is explicitly defined by the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān as a guest (*ḡayf*) of the tribal elder Bayān b. Ṣaqlān. However, as stated by Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, Abū 'Abd Allāh had no kinship

relation on Kutāma territory as he is referred to as *al-Mashriqī* (the Easterner) (77). As a result, James Lindsay mentions that protection, contrary to the situation of the Prophet Muḥammad, was not granted through a blood relationship (49). The notion of clan protection is crucial, for Ibn Ṣaqlān is portrayed as one of the most distinguished notables of the Banū Saktān and the other tribes feared that the teachings would unify the tribes, thereby creating an empire. As the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān explains, when Ibn Ṣaqlān was approached by opponents of Abū 'Abd Allāh, he was overwhelmed with gifts and even offered the position of leader of the tribal confederation if he expelled the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abd Allāh. He declined the generous offer and explained it would be a "blemish upon us and a disgrace" (Qāḍī al-Nu'mān 83) since he had settled amongst them as a guest. It would be more appropriate to have the '*ulamā*' decipher errors in his teaching. They made a second attempt to convince Ibn Ṣaqlān. Yet, they felt unable to prevail in a debate with Abū 'Abd Allāh. Finally, they asked why he, as the *dā'ī*, had not (refusal or inability) revealed the identity and the whereabouts of the Maḥdī.¹⁰

As maintained by al-Bakrī, the rise in opposition is portrayed as a result of inconsistencies in Ibn Yāsīn's tenets (*aḥkām*) (165). While this explanation concurs with previous accounts, it nevertheless appears rather inconclusive to explain the rise of opposition against Ibn Yāsīn from this perspective, as all accounts of the rise of the Murābiṭūn claim that it was the tribal elder who explicitly requested, during the conversation with the *faqīh* Abū 'Imrān, to be taught in the "*aḥkām al-sharī'a*" (165). Al-Bakrī explicitly states that these tribes were ignorant of religious knowledge and emphasises that these deficits were the reason for Ibn Yāsīn's presence amongst these tribes. This begs the question as to which member of the Ṣanhāja tribes would be able to decipher contradictions (165). Perhaps a more plausible explanation for the sudden rise in opposition after the initial acceptance lies in the significance attributed to a lack of protection, rather than in the notion of alleged contradictions.

The exact status Ibn Yāsīn held amongst the tribes is unclear. He is portrayed by al-Bakrī as having accompanied the tribal elder Ibn Ibrāhīm back to the Ṣanhāja. Analogous to the Shī'ite Fāṭimid account of Abū 'Abd Allāh, Ibn Yāsīn was not connected through blood ties to the Ṣanhāja and may similarly have obtained the status of a guest (*ḍayf*). Bearing in mind the significance of tribal hospitality, it appears inconclusive whether opposition could have arisen while Ibn Yāsīn was a guest of the tribal elder.

Al-Bakrī is silent with regard to the whereabouts, role, and authority of the tribal elder Ibn Ibrāhīm after returning to his native lands with Ibn Yāsīn, which ultimately suggests that he lacked clan protection. Nehemia Levtzion explains that "the Juddāla [Gudāla] rebelled, following the death of their leader, Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm [...]" (92). Analogously, Harry Norris finds an explanation for the weakened position of Ibn Yāsīn in the death of Ibn Ibrāhīm and the transfer of power from the Banū Gudāla

through the matrilineal line of succession to the Banū Lamtūna. “[A]t such a time,” he claims, i.e. upon the death of a tribal elder, “al-Jawhar b. Sakkum would have cause to act” (102). Similarly, Ivan Hrbek and Jean Devisse explain that the opposition was presumably motivated by “a struggle for power after the death of Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Djuddālī” (344).

Even though the whereabouts of the tribal elder Ibn Ibrāhīm in al-Bakrī’s account cannot ultimately be explained, a correlation between the absence of clan protection and the rise of opposition can be discerned. This would be in line with the accounts of the *hijra* of the Prophet Muḥammad and Qāḍī al-Nu’mān’s description of Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s flight to Tazrūt. As a result, the similarities between these accounts with regard to the rise of opposition and rejection suggest that al-Bakrī and the Qāḍī al-Nu’mān drew on elements ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad to create connections aligning these *dramatis personae* in light of the Prophet Muḥammad.

The *Hijra* in Comparison

Bearing in mind the aforementioned parallels between al-Bakrī’s and the Qāḍī al-Nu’mān’s literary appropriations, can al-Bakrī’s portrayal of Ibn Yāsīn’s retreat to Waggāg and the Qāḍī al-Nu’mān’s departure to Tazrūt be considered as resembling the *hijra* ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad?

All three accounts share the same motif of each protagonist’s relief upon departure. Uri Rubin, for example, claims that “Muḥammad’s emigration to Medina forms the finale of the Meccan chapter in the Prophet’s life, and brings him definite salvation from persecution” (223). With the retreat to Tazrūt, the *dā’ī* was likewise saved. According to al-Bakrī, this notion of salvation is equally apparent in the literary appropriation of Ibn Yāsīn’s departure, which signifies an immediate truncation of persecution and deliverance from harm. Consequently, these three literary appropriations of retreat from danger concur in that they are portrayed as signifying a turning point in the protagonists’ fate. Their departures can be ultimately understood as an escape representing salvation.

Regarding the notion of menace in the literary appropriations of the respective departure episodes, it is notable that Muslim tradition correlates menace and threat revolving around the events that occurred immediately before the *hijra* to Medina. According to Al-Ṭabarī as well as Ibn Hishām, the tribal elders of the Quraysh plotted an insidious plan to murder the Prophet Muḥammad and assembled outside his house waiting for him to emerge (144 and 222). Gabriel, however, is said to have instructed the Prophet not to sleep in his bed that night and so ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib disguised himself as the Prophet Muḥammad by wearing the latter’s coat and lying in his bed.¹¹ As mentioned by

Al-Ṭabarī as well as Martin Lings, Muslim tradition holds that God took away the sight of the Prophet's opponents when 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib left the house, enabling him to leave without being seen and harmed (142 and 116).

The Shī'ite Fāṭimid account is considered in secondary literature to be a re-enactment of the *hijra* ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad. This is most prominently underlined by the fact that the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān relates that Abū 'Abd Allāh established a *dār al-hijra* in this new place (99-102). However, the details reveal considerable differences with regard to the incidents that preceded the actual departure of the *dā'ī*. James Lindsay argues that "Abū 'Abdallāh was not actually driven from the place of his original success, but he was astute enough to recognize its very real threat to his safety" (48).

The Qāḍī al-Nu'mān relates neither the notion of ultimate menace nor the element of disguise, which would resemble elements reflecting the biographical accounts ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad. In contrast, a series of negotiations between the tribal elders and Ibn Ṣaqlān after the increasing opposition towards Abū 'Abd Allāh enabled him to leave. Accordingly, before the *dā'ī* could be discreetly expelled by Ibn Ṣaqlān, a man referred to by the name al-Ḥasan b. Hārūn al-Ghashmī, portrayed as one of the most sincere believers, intervened and promised to grant Abū 'Abd Allāh protection for his person, family and possessions if he moved with him to the village of Tāzrūt (84-87). The Qāḍī al-Nu'mān recounts that some members of the Banū Saktān showed their willingness to protect Abū 'Abd Allāh, inferring a strong sense of loyalty and conviction amongst these tribes. Abū 'Abd Allāh, however, accepted al-Ghashmī's offer in order to seek refuge (*hājara*) in Tāzrūt, his *dār al-hijra*.

As portrayed in the earlier biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad and discussed earlier in this article, the *hijra* is one consequence of an ultimate menace. Whereas the Shī'ite Fāṭimids' account depicts Abū 'Abd Allāh's departure as the result of negotiations, we find the similar correlation of menace and departure in al-Bakrī's account. Accordingly, the opponents are described as having gained access to the house of Ibn Yāsīn and looted his possessions. His life is ultimately threatened, in turn enhancing the notion of suspense (71). Even though it may be argued that these two accounts do not concur in all aspects, they can be considered similar.

One example in al-Bakrī's account reminiscent to the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad can be seen in the notion of leaving without being seen. In his literary appropriation, al-Bakrī describes how Ibn Yāsīn left for Waggāg in Malkūs, not only concealing his identity but also disguised or hidden. The adjective used to describe Ibn Yāsīn's disguise here is "*mustakhfī*" (166), which in connotation and vocabulary resembles Q 13:10 and means "to be hidden." In this verse it occurs as an active

participle where it reads *wa-man huwa mustakhfin bi-l-layl wasāribun bi-l-nahār* “[...] whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day” (*The Holy Qur’ān*, 605), which denotes the early teachings and the precarious environment ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad.

Return as a “Quasi *Hijra*”

The discussion so far has shown that, in terms of the rise of opposition, persecution and the emergence of violence, both al-Bakrī’s account and the Qāḍī al-Nu’mān’s account bear meaningful similarities to the description of elements that preceded the *hijra* ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad. However, the notion of the return of Ibn Yāsīn to the Ṣanhāja tribes cannot ultimately be considered a re-enactment of the *hijra*, but perhaps rather as a mere re-affirmation of the Golden Age.

When looking at the etymology of the term *hijra*, it is apparent that this verbal noun derives from the root verb *h-j-r*, which nearly always denotes the meaning of “to emigrate.” The semantics implied in the root verb *h-j-r* are significantly connected to the departure of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca. Further meanings taken from *Lane’s Lexicon* that are associated with *h-j-r*, are “cutting off from friendly communion,” “to forsake,” or “to abandon” (2940). As Muhammad Masud argues, this root verb signifies in its very essence breaking the bond of kinship (29). This means that, along with the *hijra* of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina, a severance of bonds of kinship to the Meccan tribes is also implied. The Shī‘ite Fāṭimid account, in comparison, even designates Abū ‘Abd Allāh’s departure from the Banū Saktan to Tazrūt using the verb root *h-j-r*, which is subsequently reinforced by the name attributed to the new abode, Tazrūt as *dār al-hijra*, in itself the epithet of Medina.

Bearing in mind that the Shī‘ite Fāṭimid account called the departure of the *dā’ī* a *hijra*, it is noteworthy that al-Bakrī refrained from the usage of the term *hijra* and the verb form *h-j-r*. The departure of Ibn Yāsīn from the tribes after his persecution is described by al-Bakrī using the verb form *kh-r-j*, which translates to “to go out”, “to leave”, “to depart” (*Lane’s Lexicon* 2879). The literary appropriation of Ibn Yāsīn by al-Bakrī is that he “departed” (*kh-r-j*) in order to join Waggāg and was subsequently ordered “to return” (*r-j-*) to the Ṣanhāja tribes (166). This ambiguity has even led secondary literature, Ivan Hrbek and Jean Devisse for instance, to suggest that “Ibn Yāsīn’s retreat and then his return for a second mission can be considered ‘a sort of *hidjra*’” (344).

The verb form with which al-Bakrī describes Yāsīn’s departure is *kh-r-j*, which, besides the notion of Ibn Yāsīn returning, demonstrates that al-Bakrī purposely refrained from using *h-j-r*. Given that al-Bakrī was familiar with the Fāṭimids’ narrative, his use of

the term *da'wat al-ḥaqq*, a lexical correlation with Fāṭimid doctrine and furthermore the adoption of the element of “return”, suggests that this divergence from the paradigm of the Prophet Muḥammad’s *hijra* was intentional.

Conclusion

This article demonstrated the significance of historiography in regarding literary text as the product of writing history. As such, the chronicler possessed the power of portrayal by selecting what to include or exclude as he perceived necessary for a story to be told to a contemporary audience or passed on to posterity. The information included or the gaps left bare are significant indicators as to how the chronicler made use of his agency and his individual room for manoeuvre.

The discussion focused on literary accounts of two religious movements from the Maghrib amongst Berber tribes in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh-centuries in a time when the Islamic civilisation was in schism. Both descriptions provide an invaluable insight into the socio-cultural and politico-religious environment from which they emerged. A direct comparison between both movements on the basis of a literary source analysis, however, demonstrated the evident similarities with regard to structure and vocabulary, which ultimately suggest how al-Bakrī’s account of the rise of the Murābiṭūn drew on the earlier text of the Shī’ite Fāṭimids.

What these chroniclers effectively endeavoured to achieve was the power of portrayal. Despite similarities in the general patterns of the narratives, this article has unveiled how meaning was created through the inclusion of elements that were considered formative in the early Islamic community, namely those attributed to the Golden Age of Islamic history. By inserting these references, a connection was established in the act of writing history between the schismatic present and a foundational moment in the past. The reference included in both narratives was that of the *hijra*, a defining moment in Islamic history. The Shī’ite version appears to be a re-enactment of the *hijra* as attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. The analysis of the Murābiṭūn literary account, however, deliberately avoided certain terminology which would have followed the Shī’ite model and subsequently aligned with the Prophet. The detailed study of the text shows that al-Bakrī re-affirmed the Golden Age through historiography, portraying this Berber movement from the Maghrib as the early community of Islam.

Notes

- (1) When referring to the movement, the name most frequently encountered is Almoravids, the Spanish derivative of the Arabic original *al-Murābiṭūn*.
- (2) Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, *Madārik wa taqrīb*; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Tārīkh al-dawla al-lamtūniyya*; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī 'l-tārīkh*; Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-bayān*; Ibn Abī Zar', *Kitāb al-anīs*; Anonymous *Al-Ḥulal*; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*.
- (3) Leaders in Shī'ite Islam are referred to as *imāms* and their genealogies are traced to the descendants of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40 AH/661CE) and Fāṭima (d.10AH/632CE), his wife and the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad.
- (4) The Ismā'īlī, later known as Fāṭimids, are a sub branch of the Shī'a (*Sevener*) who recognise the seventh *imām* Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Mubārak (d. 137AH/755CE), as the "hidden *imām*" who will reappear as the redeemer (Mahdī).
- (5) A prominent tribe that belonged to the Ṣanhāja confederation, see Colin 526.
- (6) The influential role in the Sunnī revivalism in North Africa and the travels to the Muslim East attributed to him suggest he may have been a historical figure, see Pellat 26.
- (7) The *da'wat al-Islām* or *da'wat al-rasūl* were regarded as the Prophet Muḥammad's call or invitation to Islam and the 'Abbāsids used a *da'wa* likewise to consolidate their political power and spiritual authority.
- (8) In the case of the Fāṭimids, this Mahdī-to-be would be the *imām* Sa'īd b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 322AH/934CE), who carried the throne name 'Abdallāh al-Mahdī, see Halm 6.
- (9) See Lindsay, Donner.
- (10) In 292AH/ 905CE, according to the Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, 'Abdallāh al-Mahdī retreated to a hiding place near Sijilmāsa where he led an inconspicuous life and concealed his identity as a merchant while keeping in contact with the *dā'ī* Abū 'Abdallāh.
- (11) Uri Rubin points out that the element of concealment is lacking in the Qur'ānic verse that relates this episode but exists in the biographies, see Rubin 44.

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