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Le développement du soufisme en Égypte
à l’époque mamelouke

بتطور النصوص في صورة في العصر الممالي

The Development of Sufism
in Mamluk Egypt

Extrait

Institut français d'archéologie orientale
Cahier des Annales islamologiques 27 – 2006
Sufis, Copts and the Politics of Piety: 
Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt

In 1307, in the Upper Egyptian town of Qīs, a group of sufis destroyed 13 churches in less than two hours.¹ In this and in similar incidents, the oft-quoted sufi aphorisms promoting syncretism and inter-faith dialogue find their limits: conflictual relations with non-Muslim communities call for a study of sufis as social agents.² Sufi acts of unauthorised moral regulation often disrupted law and order, undercutting Mamlūk political authority. Church destruction also had the direct consequences of converting not only the landscape and religious spaces, but also dhimmī populations.

Hagiographies, and biographies more generally, often invoke the piety of a sufi shaykh using the trope of dhimmīs converting at his hands.³ But it is clear from other historical sources that

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all dates cited are C.E. My thanks to Adam Sabra for his responses on an earlier draft. I have also greatly benefited from Yossif Rapoport’s generous comments, as well as from Betsy Beckmann’s lively discussions and patient editing.


3. We are thus accustomed to dhimmīs appearing in the sources by and about sufis—but these were literary dhimmīs, devices in hagiographic literature who attest to the holiness of the sufi in question. In an anecdote that constitutes Ibn Hajar’s entire entry for a fourteenth-century sufi, ‘Allī Ibn Marzūq Ibn ‘Abī al-Hasan (d. 1320), we encounter Christians and Mongols. One of the Christians began to insult the Prophet, but Ibn ‘Abī al-Hasan’s sanctity brought on such powerful punishment that the man promptly converted—and with him forty thousand Mongols. Ibn Hajar, al-Ḍurar al-khāmīsa (Beirut: 1997) 3:76 (entry #2928). Similarly, the fourteenth-century al-Kūrin is credited with converting many Jews. See al-Sha’rānī, Tilawatī (Cairo: 1850) 2:72-3. Al-Sha’rānī makes the same claim for himself; see S. D. Goitein, “A Jewish Addict to Sufism in the Time of Najid David II Maimonides” Jewish Quarterly Review 44 (1953) p. 38-39, n. 8. A mid-fourteenth-century Gentza letter does indeed suggest that sufis had dhimmī adepts who were potential converts. Here a Jewish woman addressed the Negid asking for his help after her husband abandoned her and three young children and sold their house to join sufis. At the end of the letter, she expressed her anxiety about the danger of his conversion to Islam—“taking with him the three children.” TS 82, f. 19 discussed in S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society (Berkeley: 1967-1993) 5:471-472. Links between sufis and Mongols are somewhat more historically anchored. Armitai-Preiss has examined this relationship casting doubt on the traditional account of sufis appeal to the Mongol rulers-viz., that these mystics resembled the Shamans familiar to the Mongols (“Sufs and Shamans...”). But from the Mongols, Mamlūk authors found another inspiration: their post-conversion practices of church destruction. Ibn al-Qayyīm, for example, writes, “Since even the Mongol aḥrār Nawrūz destroyed the churches, we must do the same.” Aḥkām aḥrār al-dhimmī (Beirut: 1995) 2:129-130.
sufi-led violence against dhimmī property had more immediate and enduring effects in terms of religious conversion. Church destruction was a topos of piety in its own right: the early-fifteenth-century sufi, Ahmad ibn Hasan ibn 'Abd al-Karim, was noted for being “a thorn in the side of dhimmīs” who attempted to restore or build new churches. Alongside his devotional practices, we learn that there was hardly a church or synagogue that he did not participate in demolishing or partially destroying.⁴⁵

Ibn 'Abd al-Karim was not alone in his pious pastime: in the first half of the fourteenth century, churches and monasteries throughout Egypt—especially in Upper Egypt—were destroyed by zealous mobs. Sufis played a notable role in many of these bouts of violence: a leading figure of Upper Egyptian sufism, Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī, was not only arrested on account of such an outbreak in Qūṣ in 1307, but also left us a detailed account of the events.

I will take these events and Ibn Nūḥ’s text, which belonged to an anti-dhimmī literature that emerged in the early fourteenth century,⁶ as a locus of investigation. This discourse differs from earlier polemics in being more concerned with contemporary social practices than abstract theology. Here, authors specifically targeted Coptic officials rather than dhimmīs as a whole, a reference to

4. The disappearance of non-Muslim religious structures cannot simply be attributed to “the effects of time.” For example, in his editorial notes on al-Maqrizī’s description of the demise of Coptic churches, ‘Abd al-Majīd Dīyāb asserts that their disappearance owed to structural weakness. ‘Uthmān al-ṣaḥīḥī (Cairo: 1998) p. 147 n. 3.

5. Al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw’ al-lāmī (Cairo: 1353-1355/1934-1936) 1:275-276. He led the popular attack on a Mellite church in Cairo, and converted it into a mosque. Al-Sakhāwī adds that Ahmad was also responsible for converting no less than eighty dhimmīs to Islam. Biographies of the fourteenth-century Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī similarly praise him as “he one who stood up for destroying churches.” Al-Nūḥī al-zāhirī (Cairo: 1992) 8:183.

6. The following are the main anti-dhimmī texts we will refer to (with their respective dates of composition):

–Ghāzī ibn al-Wāṣiti. al-Raḥlāt abīl al-dīnīm wa man tabārakhum. ca. 1290s-1300s.
–Anon. al-Ṣarāfī al-Saḥnāsī [Two Friday sermons against Copts, especially bureaucrats] 1301.
–Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 1308) extract from al-Wāḥidī fī sulūk al-tawhīd. 1307-1308.
–Al-Asnawī (d. 1370) al-Kalimūt al-mudhimmīn fī mudāshara abī al-dīnīm. 1354-1359.
–Ibn al-Durayhīm (d. 1364) Manṣūḥ al-sawāḥī fī qubl ishtilāb abī al-kātib. 1350s.


On Ibn Nūḥ’s text, see Denis Gril, “L’âme émue anti-chrétienné à Qūṣ au début du xvirxe siècle,” Artis 16 (1980) p. 241-74. Al-Asnawī’s text was studied by Moshe Perlman in “Notes on Anti-Christian Propaganda in the Mamlūk Empire” BSOAS 10 (1939-42) p. 843-861; one of his edition of the text appeared as “Al-Asnawī’s Tract against Christian officialz” in Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume (Jerusalem, 1958) p. 172-208. On Ibn al-Naqqaṣī, see M. Bellin’s introduction to his translation of the text as “Fetoua relatif à la condition de zimmīs, et particulièrement des chrétiens, en pays musulmans, depuis l’établissement de l’islamisme, jusqu’au milieu du xvire siècle de l’Hégire,” Journals 4th series, 17 (1851) p. 417-513. Ibn al-Durayhīm’s text has not, to my knowledge, been studied; Richards briefly refers to it in his “The Coptic Bureaucracy under the Mamluks” in Colloque international sur l’histoire du Caire/Al-Nawâḥ al-Dawwāliyyah il-Tawhīd al-Qābīlah (Cairo: n.d.) p. 375 (wrongly guessing the author), and Perlman cited it in “Notes...” p. 848, although he appears to have cited an incorrect British Library manuscript (BL Or. 23293 instead of the actual BL Or. 9264).

7. The events of 1307 in Qūṣ are mentioned in Denis Gril’s introduction to his edition of Ibn Nūḥ’s account (“L’âme émue...” p. 241-245); in Gharib’s Un centre musulman de la Haute-Egypte médiévale: Qūṣ (Cairo: 1976) p. 281; and in a note in Michael Winter’s Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Sharrāf (New Brunswick, NJ: 1982) p. 303 n. 81; and, another note by Geoffrey (Le soufi... 68 n. 24).
not only their demographic weight, but also their prominent positions in the Egyptian bureaucracy. Framed as advice for rulers against the harms and duplicity of Coptic officials, these fourteenth-century texts display a marked investment in the inalienable duty of Muslims to correct social ills [al-amr bi al-na'rif wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar]—they advocate unauthorised moral regulation, including church destruction. As such these works are of central importance to understanding the discursive and practical significance of the events of 1307 in Qūs.

Anti-dhimmī literature was not primarily a sufi or Upper Egyptian genre. Yet Ibn Nūh’s text shares much with the other treatises in this genre—from its subject matter and tone to the particular tropes it deploys. Situating Ibn Nūh in this context is indispensable to our understanding not only of his specific contributions, but also what he borrowed and inspired in the wider anti-dhimmī discourse. By investigating these texts and regulatory acts (like church destruction and official edicts), we will suggest a general scheme for a dialogic relationship of regulatory practices and discourses.

I will begin by presenting cases of violence against churches in the early fourteenth century. In the second part of the paper, I will use Coptic sources to explore the nature and activities of Upper Egyptian churches and monasteries. Against this background, I will analyse the ways in which Muslims saw and moralised these structures. In the third section, I will address the prominent position of sufis and minor ulamā’ as agents of regulation. These cases present a prism for studying moral regulation projects initiated ‘from below’ and the effects unauthorised regulatory projects have on mainstream politics. This examination of the politics of moral regulation is lent urgency by the persistence of such movements today.

I will explore certain “positive” dimensions of violence, attempting to glean from the nature of church destruction (and its representation) not only the reasons behind them, but also the social uses they were imagined to have. To this end, we must get beyond the usual (prescribed) response of indignant horror at religious violence: horror disallows analysis. Here we must examine violence as a purposeful social act intended to protect interests and advance particular social visions.

The conflictual stance taken by sufis against dhimmīs in the fourteenth century was part of a larger trend of moral regulation. By “moral regulation,” I understand a series of discourses and practices whereby some social agents problematise the beliefs and practices of others on moral grounds and seek to impose limitations upon them. It is important to note here that moral regulation is not a strictly top-down process. Instead, various groups partake in what may be understood as “governing”—with the important qualification that not all such attempts are successful or complete.

8. In terms of the regional focus, four of the seven texts had direct connections with Upper Egypt: Ibn Nūh was from Qūs and spent his whole life there until his deportation to Cairo a year before his death; a-Asnawi spent the first eighteen years of his life in Isna before migrating to Cairo; and, Ibn al-Durayhim, died in Qūs in 1361. At least one of the two 1301 sermons originated in al-Bahnasi, Upper Egypt. On the sufi dimension to this type of regulatory discourse and its regional setting, see Section III below.


10. See David Nirenberg, Communities of Violence: Persecution of Religious Minorities in the Middle Ages (Princeton: 1996). I will also refrain from using ‘social panic’ which suggests that these acts were necessarily exaggerated or irrational.
In fact, every regulatory project is a blend of success and failure: what is key here is the attempt at regulation, not its outcome; in other words, the *relational* aspect of governing. As modes of governing, these movements seek “to structure the possible field of action of others.”11

Regulatory movements are contextual and purposeful social acts, and not simply the application of a pre-existing religious ethos. Here ‘traditionalising’ programmes cannot be taken at face value: they *always* constitute projects of re-traditionalising. The (imagined) model past is always invoked for contemporaneous social critique.12

I argue that moral regulation is a symptom of some crisis in social relations. By “social crisis” I do not refer to the conflict between different classes and groups that characterises any social order. Rather, “crisis” denotes moments when earlier modes of coexistence and governance prove unsustainable or inadequate.13 Regulatory discourses and practices emerge from such contexts to advance new terms according to which social groups relate.

In the Mamlûk period, moral regulation appears in three different, yet closely related, dimensions. First, the anti-church violence that constituted the sphere of regulatory performance; second, the early fourteenth-century anti-*dhimmû* discourse consisting of treatises against Coptic officials and church construction; and, third, the official or state projects of regulation (e.g. edicts banning the employment of Copts in the bureaucracy) which developed in dialogue with the first two movements. All three trends must be differentiated from Islamic law: on numerous occasions, moral regulation directly contradicted what contemporaries understood as the prescriptions of *shari'a*. In this uneasy relationship with law, moral regulation acquires importance precisely because of its social origins. If law is alternately invoked, deployed, avoided or ignored by unauthorised acts of regulation, order is almost always threatened and this opens up the field of opposition not only against the Coptic community, but also against Mamlûk authorities. In 1292, for example, when Muslim mobs used the sultan’s edicts against Christians as alibi for their own acts of regulation—looting Copts’ houses and the Mu‘allaqa Church in Cairo—the sultan responded with a proclamation that looters would be hanged.14 Despite ostensibly agreeing with his edict, the mob had upset order and impinged on his authority.15

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12. See Hunt, *Governing Morals...* p. 5-6 and 10-11 and Clifford Geertz, “Ideology as a Cultural System” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: 1973) p. 219, where he notes that such projects of traditionalising are not simply the re-inroduction of an existing form of tradition but involve “an ideological re-traditionalism” that is “altogether different matter [from ‘traditionalism’].” This is also clear in the case of modern Islamist movements and their departures from the Tradition they purportedly seek to restore. Their contention of course, is that this entire edifice of morality and moral authority is imported intact—and is powerless. A secular example of the same dynamic appears in the inimitable Margaret Thatcher’s words, “Victorian values aren’t Victorian; they’re really, I think, fundamental eternal truths” (as in Hunt p. 192).
13. This definition is similar to Hunt’s in his discussion of 20th-century regulation (*Governing Morals...* esp. p. 200-201).
14. Al-Maqrîzî, *al-Maw’lid wa al-hilf li-dhikr al-bihunità al-ahdâr* (Bulaq: 1270/1853-4) 2:497–498. This was because the populace’s looting was unauthorised; Mamlûk authorities had no problem with the act itself when they ordered it: the 1301 edict specifying that dhimmîs must adhere to the different coloured turbans promised that transgressors “are to be plundered by the populace and that they would then have the right to [their] property and women” al-Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk li-ma’rîfâ damal al-mulâkî* (Beirut: 1997) 2: 340.
15. It was clear to observers that moral regulation bestowed authority on its actors: in 1309, when al-Nâsîr Muhammad had just returned to the throne for the third time, he considered, as rulers are wont to, reversing the edicts of his predecessor (Baybars II), including those against *dhimmîs*. Ibn Taymîyya managed to convince him to retain them only by the following...
CHURCH DESTRUCTION IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY UPPER EGYPT

It would be a mistake to assume the early-fourteenth-century incidents of church destruction in Upper Egypt were unprecedented. Inter-faith conflict often occurred around buildings and most prominently in Cairo, where the pre-plague growth of the population outpaced that of the city’s area, and where the Coptic bureaucracy was most visibly influential and wealthy. Some earlier examples from the thirteenth century contain the seeds of problems that would re-emerge later but the crucial difference appears to be the Mamluk presence in Cairo, which prevented the conflict from escalating to violence. By contrast, the relative absence of Mamluk authority in Upper Egypt was a pre-condition for the unofficial church violence.

Turning to the Upper Egyptian cases, we find an account of our central case in 'Abd al-Ghaffâr ibn Nûh al-Qâisi’s sufi text, al-Wâhid fi sulûk ahl al-tawhîd, which contains a vituperative attack on the Copts of Qâisi as the author recounts, or rather celebrates, the destruction of thirteen churches there in 1307. While the shaykh denies being involved, every other account implicates him and the town sufis [fâsrâ]—in a positive light of course. Ibn Nûh claims the destruction took a mere two hours, and he cannot help adding divine succour from the efficiency.

words: “Remember that what al-jashnâkûr had passed was essentially your edict for he was basically your deputy.” Pleased to hear this, the sultan maintained the regulations. Ibn Kathîr, al-Bidâya wa al-nihâyâ (Beirut: 1994) 14:44. Piety was clearly not the only—or even most important—variable in assessing these movements.

16. In 1184, for example, a Coptic source reports how “Muslim commoners” [waad al-muslimin] destroyed a monastery in Tam-badîn in the Middle Sa’dî. See Abu al-Malâkîrî, The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries attributed to Abû Sulûh, the Armenian B.T.A. Evets ed. and trans. (Piscataway, NJ: 2001 [1895]), (hereafter AM) 90b. Since other editions of the work provide the folio breaks of the (single) manuscript, I shall give citations to the manuscript folios (e.g. AM 90b). Similarly, after the Âyyûbid accession to power, another Coptic source speaks of “the evildoers among the Muslims” who rose against Patriarch Murqus ibn Zu’a over the case of a mosque adjacent to the Mu'allâqa Church. Yüsîb, Bishop of Fuwwa, Tâhirh al-Abâ’ al-Battâhî, Sâmîrîl al-Suryânî and Nabi‘î Kâmil eds. (Cairo: 1992), (hereafter Tâhirh ‘Yüsîb) p. 159.

17. In 1239, for example, protracted conflict emerged over a mosque adjacent to the Mu'allâqa Church in Cairo. On one portentous day, the Patriarch discovered that the disputed roof area had been attacked by the mosque attendants: the doors were ripped open, and their inner lining of fine cloth had been removed; in addition, a silver tray and crucifix had been stolen. See History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, A. Khater and O.H.E. Burmester eds. (Cairo: 1974), (hereafter HPEC), 4:2:73-74 and 88-89 (all citations to the Arabic text). When the investigation established that the break-in was from the mosque, an amir ordered the mosque closed. This agitated “Muslim commoners” who broke into the mosque and rose to its roof and loudly shouted the call to prayer until the governor came and dismissed all. Only a couple of years later, in 1252, disputes over the same church were rekindled by a “Suft of those known as the Qalândariyya” who led a group of Muslims assembled for Friday prayers into a frenzied state of righteous destruction (HPEC 4:2:118). Similarities exist between this example and the church destructions in Qâisi, for instance, the leadership of the sufs, and the claim that a mosque existed within church property (both of which were central to the mob’s sense of righteousness). But as the Coptic source insists—and as opposed to the Upper Egyptian cases—it was the governor and his troops who prevented the conflict from escalating into full-blown destruction.

18. Ibn Nûh, p. 246, where he says that an unknown man appeared at the mosque in Qâisi and roused the Muslims to correct Coptic transgressions. Ibn Nûh insists that the entire bout of destruction was unknown to the sufs who were alone, peacefully minding their own business in their hibd on the Nile.


20. Ibn Nûh, p. 246. The event apparently occurred after the morning prayers on Sunday (the market day in Qâisi), which may suggest that it was prompted by church bells or the assembly of Christian congregants. On the dating, see section III below.
The incident exemplifies the political clashes over moral regulation, for Mamlûk authorities subsequently arrived to defend property and publicly punished several _fuqarâ_; this act prompted popular clamour in front of the governor’s house and a little skirmish with Mamlûks ensued. Informants later led the troops to the _fuqarâ’,_ more of whom were punished before the Christians despite, according to Ibn Nûh, their denial of involvement. Our author was arrested and deported to Cairo, where he died the following year (he was prevented from returning to Qûs for fear of inciting more trouble).

The cycle of unauthorised popular violence against churches reappears in 1321 when perhaps the most widespread bout of destruction hit Egypt. The damage—mostly carried out on one Friday—involved a total of sixty churches and monasteries throughout the country and was instigated by a sufi. When this angered the sultan, again on account of his usurped authority, an advisor reasoned, much like Ibn Nûh, that the coincidence of destruction in such distant places as Qûs and Alexandria could only be explained by divine providence. Of these, the Upper Egyptian sites included: six in Bahnas, two in Itfîh, eight in Asyût, Manfalût, and Minyat Bani Khasib, and eleven in Qûs and Aswân.

The governor of Qûs had sent an official letter to Cairo reporting six churches sacked in his town in less than an hour. According to Abû al-Makârim, thirteenth-century Qûs had eleven or twelve churches; the incidents of 1307 and 1321 witnessed about nineteen churches destroyed there. The discrepancy is our first hint of renovations or constructions. Indeed we know that Mamlûk church style involves smaller spaces than in previous periods (likely due to the dwindling community, but possibly also to attempts to maintain a lower profile). But the very existence of such a distinct architectural style confirms the continuing construction. This point recalls Muslim accusations of church construction and renovation, charges often dismissed by modern scholarship.

21. Ibn Nûh, p. 249. It was only then, according to Ibn Nûh, that one of the commoners rushed to the sufi and informed him of what had happened. It was the sufi who calmed the crowds. It is important to note that it was the specific context of these events that pitted Mamlûks against sufis. Other examples of patronage by Mamlûk _umâr_ abound in the chronicles; for an example of a Mamlûk _umâr_ who personally joins the sufi and abandons his military position (an especially expensive decision to renounce the world, for it cost him a fine of some 400,000 dirhams payable to the military_ dhwâh_), see _Sûlík_ 3:403.

22. The same year (1321) witnessed another incident in Damascus, this time the official destruction of the Karaite synagogue; the Karaites argued the building was "old," the Muslims that it was new. Ultimately it was destroyed. Al-Mufaddal ibn Abî al-Fadîl, _Egipyen und Syrien zwischen 1317 und 1341_ in der _Chronik des Mufaddal ibn Abî l-Fadîl_. Samira Kortantamer ed. (Freiburg : 1973) (hereafter, _al-Nahj al-sâdîd_), p. 15 (all references to the Arabic text).

23. _Sûlík_ 3:367; _Khîtât_ 5:512-513. In the wake of this orgy of destruction, fires raged in Cairo; Christian monks were charged with the act on account of the resentment they must have harboured from the church destruction.

24. The total destruction was 60 churches. Destruction is by no means demographically representative, but if we take the randomness as a general guide, the Upper Egyptian total of twenty-seven compares with only thirteen in Lower Egypt (the balance were in Cairo). However unreliable, the relative weight is suggestive of a considerably more Christian south.

25. Other direct references exist for other regions, for example, the monastery of St. Catherine where the archive preserves _fatawas_ secured from Muslim _’ulamâ’_ allowing reconstruction. Similarly, in the fifteenth century, monks applied for—and received—permission to restore a monastery in Cairo. Ibn Hajar, _‘Ibd al-ghamr_ (Cairo : 1998) 4:69. And earlier, in 1331, a Melkite Church in Misr was burnt down in a fire—_see Coptic Historian al-Mufaddal ibn Abî al-Fadîl noting that the two neighbouring mosques were suspiciously spared any damage. The community, however, received permission to reconstruct the church as it had stood before. _al-Nahj al-sâdîd_, p. 45; _Sûlík_ 3:129.

26. Mamlûk churches had four pillars with "nine bays of approximately the same size, usually rooted with copulas, of which the central dome is emphasised..." "Church Architecture in Egypt" _Coptic Encyclopedia_ (hereafter, _CE_) p. 555-556.
historians as inflammatory and/or transparent pretexts for violence. Ibn Nūh mentions such opening and renovation of churches, citing examples in Qādis as well as other Upper Egyptian towns like Manfalut.27

Alternatively, the discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the destruction included churches within monasteries (which were not included in Abū al-Makārim’s tally).28 This is also likely given that monasteries were sometimes converted into churches.29 Thus, in treating church destruction, we will also investigate monasteries as objects of Muslim suspicion and aggression.

In 1324, violence against churches returned to Upper Egypt. In this case, conflict arose from the attempted regulation of Christian wine-sellers in Minyat Bani Khasib,30 a Mamlūk expedition fought the town’s Christian inhabitants who then fled, leaving no less than 360 of their turbans behind. When their blue colour drew the Mamlūk official’s attention to the fact that the town was predominantly Christian, and he discovered that the community possessed five churches, he raided it and destroyed them all. Al-Maqrīzī provides indirect justification for the iconoclasm by noting that the Christians had undertaken widespread restoration of Upper Egyptian churches, which were also destroyed in the wake of the incident.31

After these events, matters remained relatively calm until 1354, when various events spurred another campaign against Coptic bureaucrats, the destruction of four churches and a monastery in Cairo and special measures taken against backsliding converts. In the same year, when a survey revealed that a great quantity of agricultural land was endowed to Coptic institutions, the sultan ordered the full amount confiscated, and church destruction then ensued: “In all the provinces... no church remained that had not been razed [and] mosques were constructed on many of those sites.”32 Al-Maqrīzī gives his famous account of how many Copts converted throughout the country, lamenting how this confused lineages in Egypt. Church violence was intimately connected

27. For example, Ibn Nūh, pp. 252 and 253.
28. In his description of the widespread destruction, al-Maqrīzī mentions both monasteries and churches (Idint 1:513).
29. See, for example, Maurice Martin, “La province d’Asmûnayn : Historique de sa configuration religieuse” Al 23 (1987) p. 20. The opposite is also attested converting churches into monasteries allowed Copts to capitalise on the privileges granted to monasteries under Islamic law. See the note by Majdī Jirīs, “Aṭhar al-Ārākhina ‘alā awdâ‘ al-Qibā fi al-qzrn al-hāmin ‘ashīr” Anqūl 34 (2000), 36 n. 62. Al-Maqrīzī also notes a church resembling a monastery, then called Dayrūr Sarrām⎡⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦⎦IndexPath ‘Monasteries of the Middle So’ud’ CE p. 1654); and that the church of Abū Mīnis in Banūs later became a monastery (‘Tawwār’ CE p. 1242-1243).
30. Many campaigns of moral regulation against Copts were framed and enacted as campaigns against vices like drinking. Given the disproportionate role Copts played in the production and sale of wine, raids aiming to spill wine and destroy their vessels not only implicated the Coptic population but also reaffirmed its association with vice and social pollution. Such acts regulating consumption moralised the consumers (including other Muslims). In this sense, they fall under the wider umbrella of reforms of popular culture—the attempts by certain groups to regulate the recreations and pastimes of the poor, or of other socially visible minorities. The classic study of this type of regulation is Peter Burke’s Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (London: 1978). Mamlūk chronicles are replete with examples of such raids, many, if not most, carried out by sufis. This phenomenon deserves a study in its own right and will thus not be addressed in detail here except when it shares some of the features of the wider sufi regulatory movement in Upper Egypt. Here signs of class antagonism do occasionally emerge: Ibn Nūh identifies the informants of Mamlūk authorities (in their pursuit of the sufis) as a convert and his wife, a hashshashī-seller. While he denies any sufi involvement in church destruction, he seems certain of the culpability of “sailors, handfish and commoners” (Ibn Nūh, p. 250—on which see below). Al-Nābulusi also lumps together what must have been his least favourite groups, Copts and villagers (Tajīrī 137).
31. Sülīk 3:71. The anīr also decreed that no Christians be employed in his dhīwān. A similar incident prompted by Christian sale of wine occurred in 1343, although in this case, the violence was unauthorised: a group of sufis attacked the town’s Christian majority and the casualties and looting left the town deserted for months to follow (Sülīk 3:406-407—discussed below).
32. Sülīk 4:205.
to conversion, but as I will suggest, the relationship was complex and the causality viciously cyclical.

Before addressing the regional context of these cases, we briefly note two wider systemic causes of church destruction: the symbolic association of Upper Egypt with Pharaonic magic, and the chronic shortage of building materials in medieval Egypt.

**Church Destruction as Apotropaic Violence**

In these fourteenth-century incidents of violence in Upper Egypt, the primary object of the wrath of the Muslim mob (often headed, if not also organised, by sufis) was dhimmī places of worship: churches and monasteries. While it is unlikely that all Muslim participants in these bouts of destruction considered these edifices supernatural in power, there were—as late as the fourteenth century—various accounts of ancient magic still nestled in Upper Egypt. A direct correlation existed in the popular imaginary, as in religious discourse, between medieval Copts and Pharaonic civilisation.33

Al-Maqrīzī mentions that remnants of old black magic still persisted in Upper Egypt up to his day, supporting this with an anecdote about a sorceress in early-fourteenth-century Qūš.34 Similarly, the Copts of fourteenth-century Qīlāfā were also known for practicing magic, and a Coptic deacon there had an especially infamous reputation for it.35 Here violence against churches was akin to iconoclasm: it had an apotropaic function. Converting the landscape in this sense was a pre-requisite for, or at least integral part of, Muslim settlement.36

Haarmann has noted how Muslim iconoclasm against Pharaonic temples and statues peaked in the fourteenth century, and here, too, sufis too played a prominent role.37 In the late thirteenth century, the sufi Qutb al-Dīn al-Qastallānī battered the Sphinx with his shoes;38 in 1378, another revered sufi known as sā'īm al-dahr [Perpetual Faster] attacked the same structure, partly defacing its nose.39 The expansion of Muslim settlement during this

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33. Most medieval Arabic historical works explain the origins of the Copts as remnants of the Ancient Egyptians. This same genealogy is emphasised in anti-dhimmī works, for example, Ibn al-Naqdīsh, al-Madhana : 285.
34. The woman cast a spell on a doubting Muslim: a scorpion followed him for weeks, even when he sat on a chair whose legs stood in a basin of water. The scorpion deliberately climbed one of the walls until the ceiling, from which it positioned itself right above him and dropped on his head to sting him (Khitat 1:289-290). In al-Qaṭa’, near ṣawāqī, al-Maqrīzī was not specific but no less inflammatory when he biographically described its people as “the evildoers of the Christians, known for their evil” (Khitat 2:519). For a fourteenth-century Cairene Christian convicted and crucified for magic, see Sulak 4:335.
35. Khitat 2:519. When an alchemist on the run from al-Nasīr Muhammad went into hiding, he found no better place than Akhmīm in Upper Egypt (al-Nahj al-salīd, p. 45-46). He was executed in Cairo in 133C.
36. In this same vein al-Maqrīzī cites earlier descriptions of the marvel of birds that assembled at a monastery near Samalūt in Upper Egypt, but concludes: “This has ceased among the many other things that also ceased” (Khitat 2:503-504).
38. Ibn al-Furūt; Tārikh Ibn al-Furūt (Beirut, 1939) 8:60; Haarmann, “Regional...” p. 62.
39. Khitat 1:123. Al-Maqrīzī notes how people linked the event with the gradual submergence of Jīzā by sands. Haarmann relates another version by al-Rashīdī (d. 1400) who claims that the act caused the Frankish sack of Alexandria (“Regional...” p. 64). The arrows of causation are telling—perhaps even more given that the attack on Alexandria actually happened before the iconoclasm: the perceived link was strong enough to override this inconvenient chronological detail.
period likely created new occasion for attacks on not only what were considered remnants of paganism, but also Coptic culture.\textsuperscript{40} Stories of Upper Egyptian Coptic magic, and its links with pagan Pharaonic culture\textsuperscript{41} both reflected contemporary fears and anxieties and also produced them. Though a learned few decried iconoclasm,\textsuperscript{42} acts of destruction bespeak a more rigid view of Upper Egypt as a bastion of malignant and unpredictable powers. Converting this landscape was apotropaic; it involved an iconoclasm that hinged on producing correct faith, not disbelief in earlier powers.\textsuperscript{43} The harsh realities of famines, plague and taxation in the tumultuous fourteenth century may have prompted a return to these order symbols that “were rediscovered as protective and apotropaic talismans.”\textsuperscript{44} The sufi iconoclasts reacted to these popular practices.\textsuperscript{45}

Pious Destruction as Theft of Building Material

As in the violence against churches, a pattern of destruction followed by the construction of a mosque is found in Muslim iconoclasm against Pharaonic edifices. The ancient temple of Akhâmîm was destroyed in the fourteenth century, its material used to build a madrasa; the statue of Isis opposite Jîza was destroyed in 1311 and the “green chapel” of Memphis was pulled down in 1350, and the ruins used to build a sufi khâna in Cairo.\textsuperscript{46} In his thirteenth-century treatise on the pyramids, al-İdrîsî adduces this cannibalisation of material as one of the reasons behind temple destruction, scoffing at the practice as unsophisticated.\textsuperscript{47} These examples demonstrate that in addition to its symbolic uses, iconoclasm had material causes, namely, the famous shortage of building materials in medieval Egypt.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{40} For a more detailed account, see Haarmann, "Regional..." esp. pp. 56–58.
\textsuperscript{41} For indignant accounts of popular practices of venerating the Sphinx, see Haarmann, "Regional..." p. 62.
\textsuperscript{42} Most notably, al-İdrîsî and al-Rashîdî, on whom, see Haarmann, "Regional..." : 63–66.
\textsuperscript{43} New religions purportedly replace previous forms of belief wholesale; but seldom are these new forms adopted without adaptation or, or fusion with, older forms of religion. Haarmann notes that contemporaries’ views of Pharaonic iconoclasm were ambiguous: “They dare not flatly deny the continuing power of the old idols. Rather they report triumphantly and with obvious relief that no visible damage ensued after the destruction...” ("Regional..." p. 63)—a defensive position clearly in dialogue with a group that believed otherwise. In one account of the fourteenth-century destruction of the temple of Ikhmîm, the iconoclast died the same day and his town fell into poverty (Khitat 1:240).
\textsuperscript{44} Haarmann, "Regional..." p. 65.
\textsuperscript{45} For the mainstream religious establishment, ancient Egypt was exemplified by Frîawn’s stubborn and tyrannical unbelief.
\textsuperscript{46} G. Wiet, "Akhêmîm" EI²; Haarmann, "Regional..." 63.
\textsuperscript{47} al-İdrîsî (d. 1251), Amâr ‘alîyy al-qtran (Beirut: 1991) p. 45.
\textsuperscript{48} In 1330, al-Nâsîr Muhammad ordered the destruction of Manâzîr al-Maydân al-Zâhirî to make room for his new construction. The wood from the old structures was sold on the market for 120,000 dirhams (Sûlîk 3:144).
In the early Mamlūk period, church destruction was a tool for recovering areas from Crusader principalities: in Palestine and Syria, the Mamlūks systematically destroyed churches alongside other littoral fortifications for fear of their recapture by subsequent Crusader attacks. The building material was then sometimes triumphantly recycled in mosque construction, neatly addressing both political considerations of defence and a shortage of building materials. In the Qūs destruction, Ibn Nūh notes that many participants joined the rampage to pillage building material like wood. The shortage is underscored by an ensuing Mamlūk investigation: the governor asked for the return of stolen material, promising impunity to induce compliance. Similarly, al-Maqrizī describes the mob fleeing with “the wood of churches” in 1321. For some at least, church destruction was a function of material shortage.

THE OBJECTS OF VIOLENCE: COPTIC UPPER EGYPT IN THE THIRTEENTH-FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

To understand the Upper Egyptian incidents of violence we must first address the nature and functions of their objects: the Coptic churches and monasteries. Ibn Nūh’s text and the wider anti-ḥimmi discourse considered these sites loci of Christian wealth. The “visible” wealth of these institutions was related to Coptic officials, who sponsored restorations and secured official permission to carry them out. The practices of this class and their jāh, or social capital, were the focus of a social ressentiment that found expression in church destruction. Finally, as symbolic centres of Christian power, churches were often singled out as sites of religious subversion. The numerous pressures that triggered widespread conversion in the early fourteenth century also produced various forms of Coptic resistance—from confrontational apostate martyrs to a more clandestine ritual reversion to Christianity. Because these practices were produced by, and celebrated in, churches, Muslim observers identified these institutions as centres of religious sedition. It is to this tripartite seditious capital that we now turn.

Churches and Monasteries in thirteenth-century Upper Egypt

In order to better evaluate the abovementioned charges of Muslims, we will base our survey of Upper Egyptian churches and monasteries on Coptic sources.

49. On occasion, Coptic authors realized that some churches were destroyed for reasons of military strategy, e.g. in 1219 when a Coptic church in Alexandria was razed for fear that it could be captured by the Franks. See HPEC 4-1:30.


Churches

Abū al-Makārim’s church inventory is overwhelming. He lists hundreds of churches throughout Upper Egypt by name, occasionally including information about their congregations, relics, festivals, etc. Here I will focus on a few examples of centres with large numbers of churches, especially those where we have definitive information on church violence. Contrary to the stipulations of the dhimmi pact that disallow church restoration and construction, such practices did, of course, continue. A Coptic author, for example, would favourably describe the 1230’s as “blessed days when churches were constructed in daytime with the sultan’s permission and the fatāwa of the fuqahā’.”

Minyat Bani Ḥasib appears to have been a prominent Coptic centre at the turn of the thirteenth century, with as many as fourteen churches. In the environs, there were many more: upstream in neighbouring Tahā al-Madīna and Saft al-Muhallabi, for example, there were seven and three churches, respectively. Patriarch Tā’udūsūs III (79th Patriarch: 1294–1300) and his successor, Yū’annas VIII (80th Patriarch: 1300–1320), both hailed from this town. In 1321, as we saw, eight churches were destroyed between al-Minya, Manfalūt and Asyūṭ. In the incidents of 1324, Miniat Bani Ḥasib was still largely Coptic, but when a Mamlūk official led a detachment to destroy its churches, he found only five. Clearly some churches had eluded him, for in 1330 a bishopric of the town is attested (see below). In the early fifteenth century, al-Maqrizī reports six churches there.

In the province of Ashmūnayn, the town of al-Qalāndūn had nine churches; and a few miles further south, in al-Ashmūnayn the town, Abū al-Makārim describes the lavish Church of the Virgin Mary with its various altars and marble columns, one of which was believed to contain an imprint of Christ’s hand. This church, he relates, had been converted into a mosque by al-Hākim.24 Outside the town stood another church perched on the mountainside (also known for a site where sand emerged spontaneously from the ground).25 An additional fifteen churches existed in the area, one of which was destroyed by “Muslim commoners” at the end of the twelfth century.

It is not surprising that in both Minyat Bani Ḥasib and al-Ashmūnayn, violence appears to have hit those churches in urban centres, for Muslim settlement in Upper Egypt was linked to urban centres and activities (especially with the rise in endowed Muslim institutions, like mosques and madāris, in these areas); it was in these areas of new contact that church violence took place.
Further south, in Sanabū (still in the province al-Ashmūnayn), Abū al-Makārim reports twenty-seven churches.\textsuperscript{60} Al-Maqrīzī notes that only a few churches remained there in the fifteenth century; but it is noteworthy that the decrease in the number of churches here (the rural Lower Sa‘īd) was accompanied by less Islamisation of the region: al-Maqrīzī calls Sanabū “full of Christians”; similarly, most of the inhabitants of neighbouring Biblāw were Christian peasants.\textsuperscript{61} This was likely due to the region’s nature: without urban centres to attract Muslims, the region remained Coptic until later periods.

The town of Asyūt had twenty-five churches, two extramural.\textsuperscript{62} Perhaps most impressive is Akhmīm, which had no less than 70 churches in the mid-twelfth century (1157).\textsuperscript{63} Al-Maqrīzī reports only a few of these in the early fifteenth century, but addsuce the prominence of the Coptic population, describing their festive Palm Sunday celebrations and public processions at the doors of Muslim notables.\textsuperscript{64} And near Qūs, Fāw had a large church that measured over 150 by 75 cubits (approximately 75 × 38 metres). Al-Hākim reportedly stole all its columns in the early eleventh century and Abū a-Makārim lamented its decrepit condition in his day. Nearby Qamūla, however, was spared, and had no less than fourteen churches.\textsuperscript{65}

These examples confirm the numerous Christian structures that populated the Upper Egyptian landscape. By the thirteenth century, the region was increasingly Islamized—not only through the conversion of Copts but also through the increased settlement of Muslims as the trade route shifted to the south in the twelfth century. These crucial demographic changes left Christian structures increasingly prominent in the eyes of Muslim beholders. Here it was less a question of physical crowding out than a degree of symbolic inequity. With the demographic balance shifting against Christianity, the visibility of these edifices inflamed the new Muslim community’s sense of injustice—in the literal Arabic sense of ‘putting things out of place.’ Here it was Muslims settling new spaces, but in their eyes, it could not appear but that churches had entered their lives, unexpected and uninvited.

\textit{Institutional Links and Bishoprics in Upper Egypt}

Abū al-Makārim’s evidence raises the question of the relationship of these Upper Egyptian centres with the central Church. Here we need to investigate the endurance of \textit{functional bishoprics} (rather than the persistence of religious structures). For it was primarily through the services provided by these bishoprics—from charity to marriage and baptism ceremonies, from priest ordination to the performance of offices—that Christianity could continue as a living practice in Upper Egypt.

\textsuperscript{60} AM 80a.
\textsuperscript{61} Khatat 4:435. Cf Garcin’s comments about the differential rate of Islamisation for Middle, as opposed to Upper, Egypt (“KGs EP”). Today the demographic weight of Copts remains higher in this region than in others: in Sanabū it is estimated at 40%, and in neighbouring al-Qāsiyya it is some 30% (as in Martin, “La province d’Ashmūnayn...” p. 17, n. 4).
\textsuperscript{62} AM 88b–89a.
\textsuperscript{63} AM 85b.
\textsuperscript{64} Khatat 2:517.
\textsuperscript{65} AM 103b–104a.
For the thirteenth-century background, the rare manuscript of the correspondence of Patriarch Kiryllus III (75th Coptic Patriarch: 1235–1243) includes several letters addressed to the bishops of the region—e.g. those of Qift, Dandara, Armant, al-Bahnsa, al-Khusus, and al-Uqsary— which testify not only to the presence of these functional bishoprics but also their link with the Patriarchs. Some of these letters include directions to carry out an inspection of the affairs and conditions of Upper Egyptian monasteries—including identifying problematic individuals, as well as establishing a system for depositing the assets of regional monasteries and churches with trusted individuals. The urgency with which the audit and restructuring were carried out attests not only the efficiency of regional links, but also what was at stake: the valuable property of monasteries and churches.

Evidence of fourteenth-century bishoprics may be adduced from another Coptic source: the liturgical manuscripts describing the important ritual of consecrating the chrism (or holy Myron, the sacred oil used in anointing and consecration). In a solemn ritual, usually performed only once after a patriarch’s ordination, chrism is consecrated. I have therefore indicated Patriarchs’ accession dates below the series of signators on the graph. Bishops from all over Egypt usually travelled to attend the ceremony (returning with a portion of the chrism for the official needs of their bishoprics). The ritual was usually recorded in a manuscript, which the attending bishops signed. I have examined the accounts of these rituals during the fourteenth century and plotted the signators’ bishoprics over time (see Graph One overleaf). The points establish the functional existence of the bishoprics these signators represented.

It is important to note that the absence of a bishop from these attendance records does not automatically signal the suspension of activity in a bishopric. The plotted points constitute positive evidence for functional bishoprics; their absence may or may not indicate disruption of a bishopric’s services. For example, a thirteenth-century letter from the bishop of Qift in Upper

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67. MK III fols. 67r–71r.
68. Letters like these also helped in lay communal matters: in the intercession or request of clergy secured jobs for unemployed Copts (for example, MK III fol. 125v–126r).
69. For more on chrism, see Ibn Kābar, Muhānaṭ al-zulma fī līdh al-khāmā, section nine. He cites the following ingredients: myrrh, sweet calamus, spring cytisus, raw amber, cinnamon, sandalwood, cassia, spikenard, saffron, cardamom, kust root, red rose petals, nutmeg, balm, balsam oil, and olive oil. The ingredients are first mixed and left overnight to filter. Ibn Kābar based his account on the consecration ritual of Theodosius II, performed during Holy Week in 1299. (Which is represented as the first set of points on the attached graph.)
70. For the liturgical details of the ritual, see Basilioς “Chrism, Consecration of the” CE 3. 522–523. After the consecration of the chrism (on the southern side of the altar), the kallexeia, or oil of the Catechumens, is consecrated on the opposite (northern) side. At the end of the ritual, the old chrism and kallexeia are added to the new.
71. But see the cautionary remarks of M. Martin on using this source as a demographic indication of the size of the Christian community. “Le Delta chrétien à la fin du xiiie s.” Orientalia Christiana Periodica 63 (1997) p.191–2 and n. 49. My point here, however, is to demonstrate the functioning presence of ecclesiastical personnel and their relations to the Central Church and not the size of the communities they served.
72. A particular bishop could have not attended owing to personal problems or communal exigencies; the may have taken a position against the newly elected/chosen patriarch; the bishopric may be temporarily without a head bishop—without this involving any suspension of services. Also, the safety of a particular journey could prevent a bishop from travelling to a ritual or council: thus in 1250, at the election of Athanasius III as Patriarchate, Bedouin skirmishes in the province of al-Buhayra prevented the bishop of Fuwwa from travelling: instead he sent a letter (Tārikh Yūsuf p. 179). In short, a host of reasons may preclude the presence of a bishop at the ritual without necessarily implying any disruption of services in his bishopric.
Egypt to the Patriarch includes his apology for not attending a council on account of a fever.\textsuperscript{73} Because we have independent evidence for various bishops who did not attend the ritual (and these have not been plotted here)\textsuperscript{74} we must therefore read the attached graph as representing a \textit{minimum} number of functional bishoprics.

The picture that emerges from studying these attendance records—given the fortuitous cluster of data arising from a specific pattern and length of tenure of fourteenth-century patriarchs—indicates a strong institutional presence in Upper Egypt.\textsuperscript{75} In particular, the later rituals testify to the resilience of the bishoprics and their continuance even after the incidents of violence in the first half of the century.

\textbf{Monasteries}

In addition to churches, monasteries were targets of Muslim suspicion, and often, violence. Contrary to their avowed distance from, and renunciation of, the material world, monasteries were often thriving centres of economic production. A few examples will demonstrate their nature and activities.

Outside Ahnās, the Monastery of Light included a church, a five-storey keep (jawża), extensive walls and no less than 400 productive palm trees.\textsuperscript{76} The Monastery of Anbā Shinūdā near Suhāj had extensive inter-mural "orchards with all kinds of trees" in the thirteenth century; by the fifteenth, al-Maqrīzī reports damages but still notes that it had 4 3/4 feddans (~ 7.5 acres).\textsuperscript{77} Perched on the mountain outside Asyūt, the Monastery of Anbā Sawrūs housed at least thirty monks and included heavy fortifications, around a keep with a large cistern filled with Nile water. Its assets included "a mill, several ovens, a linseed oil press... an orchard with mature palm trees, fields of olives, pomegranates, vegetable and legume patches." Here we have explicit reference to production for profit: the monastery was said to make "good money [fidda ḥayyīda]" that covered more than its needs, "in addition to what God provides[d]... from charities and vows."\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{MK} \textit{III} fols. 32r-v; another letter refers to the "passing of sickness that would allow meeting soon" (ibid. fol. 34v).

\textsuperscript{74} For example, the list of attendees of a council in 1086, includes a note that some bishops could not attend on account of disease: Munier, \textit{Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'Église copte} (Cairo: 1934) p. 28. There is positive evidence of the Alkhim and Abū Tit bishop, Yūsāb, around 1300, for example, although he did not attend the consecration ritual in 1299 (K. Sanir, "Yūsāb" CE p. 2359). Sanir advances the likely hypothesis that the same Yūsāb’s absence from the 1268 consecration of Patriarch Gabriel III was due to "internal conflicts in the community prompted by this election." Such an absence would logically prevent that same bishop from attending the consecration of the chrisms ritual. Similarly, we know of a bishop of Asyūt, named Kirullus, after 1347 (whereas the last Asyūt bishop on the graph appears in 1330), as well as a thirteenth-century bishop of Qūs named Ghubriyāl does not appear in the chrisms lists (on him see "Abū al-Majd ibn Yūannis" CE p. 21). Tūmā ibn al-Sā'īgh, first monk, priest and subsequently bishop of Asyūt under the name Anbā Kirullus ("Ibn al-Sā'īgh" CE p. 1270-1271). There is also a bishop who attended the renovation of a church within Dāyr Anbā Mqqirī in 1517, who is referred to as "Anbā Yūʿannas from Durunkā" suggesting that the town had a bishopric in the early sixteenth century (see "Durunkā" CE p. 927).

\textsuperscript{75} As mentioned, the sources used to compile the graph were the accounts of the ritual of consecrating the chrisms. H. Munier published the most systematic collection of these sources in his \textit{Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'Église copte} chapter 6, "La coction du chrême." Munier included the rituals of 1257, 1299, 1305, 1320, 1330, 1332, 1346 and 1703. See also Youhanna Nessim Youssef, "Les textes en dialecte sahidique du ms 106 Lit., Bibliothèque patriarchale au Caire (La coction Myron)," \textit{Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte} 37 (1998) p. 121-133, and "Le Ms. Vatican copte 44 et le livre du Chrême (ms. Paris arabe 100)" Le \textit{Musée} 45 (1932) p. 181-234. I have also examined the following manuscripts of the ritual: MSS. Old Patriarchate Library, nos. 101, 106, 108, and 286 (MSS Liturgy).

\textsuperscript{76} AM 92a-92b.

\textsuperscript{77} AM 82b-83a.

\textsuperscript{78} AM 89a-89b.
In Minyat Banā Khasīb, Dayr al-‘Asal was also fortified and included two keeps, fourteen churches, a mill and a linseed oil press. Abū al-Makārim relates how the piety of its abbot found expression both in his closeness to neighbouring animals and the fecundity of the soil, the monastery’s palm trees being particularly renown. Furthermore, his charisma drew neighbouring Copts who began to visit the monastery, making monetary vows, which they paid to the abbot.\textsuperscript{79} Here as elsewhere, the monastery was open to neighbouring communities, and the spiritual ties that bound monks to lay members engendered material obligations. This economy of salvation bears out the Muslim suspicion that churches and monasteries were storehouses of Coptic wealth.\textsuperscript{80} Al-Maqrīzī’s accounts of monasteries in the fifteenth century confirm this enduring pattern of monastic production.\textsuperscript{81}

In addition to being centres of production, monasteries were also recipients of endowments. In Daljī in the Middle Sa‘īd, the Monastery of the Martyr Abū Nafar was reported in the thirteenth century to have an endowment of no less than 100 feddans of fertile land in various provinces. The monastery was so large that it contained twenty-four churches, some of which were said to rival the beauty and size of the Church of St Sergius in Cairo.\textsuperscript{82} Although much of the agricultural property endowed to monasteries was seized by the Mamlūks in 1354, several monasteries still had sizeable endowments as late as the fifteenth century: al-Maqrīzī reports that Dayr al-Jawīliyya in Upper Egypt profited from endowed lands in addition to the funds it received from vows and revenues.\textsuperscript{83}

These regional centres appear not to have been ordinarily subsidized by the Central Church. Occasionally, it was the central authorities that tapped into their wealth. A mid-thirteenth century council ruled against such ‘encroachments’ and specified that donations collected in regional churches had to remain there to address local needs (i.e. they should not be collected by the Central Church).\textsuperscript{84}

The mobility of monks also testifies to their economic activities. In the thirteenth century, the Coptic Church issued prohibitions against monks’ residing in towns and villages, allowing them only to visit these places “during the times when taxes were collected.”\textsuperscript{85} This last condition demonstrates the role monks played in charity dispensation and may explain the traces of one peripatetic monk who left graffiti in Suhāj, Isnā and Aswān between 1301 and 1318.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{79} AM 88a-88b.
\textsuperscript{80} The endurance of this monastery likely depended on such donations: it was mentioned by ‘Abd al-Latif in 1375, Relation de l’Égype de Abū al-Latif (Paris: 1810) p. 693; by Ibn Duqmāq in the fifteenth century, Fatḥ al-‘Intīṣār (Cairo: 1893) p. 16, and in an agrarian inventory in 1505-6 (as Dayr Sa‘īd al-Khamnār, “Dayr al-‘Asal” CE p. 782.
\textsuperscript{81} Dayr al-Khādīm near al-Bahnaṣā (also attested through the fifteenth century) has an orchard with palm trees and olive groves (Khitat 2:505; Ibn Duqmāq al-‘Intīṣār p. 8; ‘Abd al-Latif, Relation... p. 689). The famous Dayr al-Qalāmūn was known for its dates from which monks made ‘ṣurā’ (pressed dates) and its many Labkh trees (a large variety of acacia; the seed has medicinal properties, and the large trunks are used for ship construction), found only in this region. The monasteries in the area also produced salt, which was sold by the monks for profit (Khitat 2:505).
\textsuperscript{82} AM 91b-92a.
\textsuperscript{83} Hitat 2:508.
\textsuperscript{84} See the laws promulgated in 1241 by the Council convened to investigate Kirillus III’s abuses, BN ms arabe 251, fol. 363r-v; the Upper Egyptian church funds from vows are not to be interfered with except after they meet all regional needs. Yūsūb also mentions the most important of these needs as church restoration, the financing of official services and the alms to the poor (HPEC 4-2:100).
\textsuperscript{85} Tahrīb Yūsūb p. 125. The prohibition also appears in twelfth-century canons (BN ms arabe 251, fols. 347r-350v).
\textsuperscript{86} “Dayr Anbā Shinūdah” CE p. 764.
All this wealth attracted the attention of the state, the 'ulamā' and the populace. Monasteries had long enjoyed tax privileges, the most important being the monks' exemption from the jizya. In the Ayyūbid period, however, we begin to notice a systematic withdrawal of these privileges.

The Monastery of Samalūt near Ashmūnayn—enclosed in high walls with an orchard of various trees and palm trees—was endowed with the income of twenty feddans of fertile agricultural land. It was then seized by an Ayyūbid administrator and converted into a mosque. As in this case, moral regulation often allowed the state to acquire valuable revenue sources. The abovementioned Dayr Abū Sāwārūs' production similarly attracted the attention of the state: the Ayyūbids revoked the monastery's kharāj [land tax] exemption, as they did with other orchards hitherto classified as monastic property, and began collecting taxes on them.

Knowledge about monastic production circulated in official and scholarly circles. In the mid-thirteenth century, al-Nābulusī, an official privy to first-hand information about the administration, recommended the restoration of taxes on industries monopolised by Copts, for example, natrān production in the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrūn. These taxes were on occasion known to have been cancelled through the intercession of Coptic officials, thus forging yet another conspiratorial link between monasteries and (allegedly embezzling) bureaucrats. Thus, Ibn Fadlallāh al-Umārī (d. 1347) cited the proverbial profit of Birkat al-Natrūn: at about 100 feddans in size, it generated no less than 100,000 dinars per annum.

The Ayyūbid tax reforms on monastic property most likely arose in the context of fiscal crises like those of the famous famine in 1201-1202 (and its echoes in the epidemics of 1217 and 1235-1236). In changing the tax status of monasteries, the reforms turned attention to their economic capacity, earmarking them as possible targets for economically driven attacks.

In the early fourteenth century, a fatwā by Ibn Tāymīyya succinctly expresses this perception by Muslim neighbours. As in many cases, the question framed its answer:

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87. For an example of the exemption at the turn of the thirteenth century, see Ibn Māmālī. Qawā'id al-dawā'ir (Cairo: 1943) p. 317-318. For the same privilege reiterated in 1228, see HPEC 4:1-50-51. Examples of other monastic tax relief include the Ayyūbid al-Mālik al-Ādil's grant in response to the petition made by the monks of Dayr al-Qusayr in the Lower Sa'īd in the mid-thirteenth century ("Dayr al-Qusayr" CE p. 853-855).

88. AM 88b. Like the runours of divine retribution against anti-Pharaonic iconoclasts (see above), our Coptic source reports that the umru died that same year; his project failing and the monastery persisting.

89. AM 89b.

90. Natrūn is obtained either naturally from high sodium-content lakes or, as in the case of Egypt, by diverting water to sodium beds. ("Natrūn" EP).

91. Al-Nābulusī cites the example of an earlier re-imposition of the natrān taxes by Ibn Tūlūn (Ṭārif p. 138). The details here are incorrect: as noted by Cahen, it was Ibn al-Mudabbir who restored these taxes (on pasturages and fishing as well as natrān, all of which al-Nābulusī claims had been abolished or embezzled by Copts). See "Histoire des scribes..." p. 138-139, n. 1. In fact, it was Ibn Tūlūn who initiated a favourable policy towards Copts, including suppression of the excessive poll taxes Ibn al-Mudabbir had introduced earlier (Thierry Bianquis, "Autonomie Egypte d'Ibn Túlín au Kifur, 868-909" Cambridge History of Egypt (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1998) hereafter CHE p. 102. For our purposes however, it is the use to which this (mis)information was put that is important, namely, to enjoin contemporaneous rulers to enact similar measures.


[Ibn Taymiyya] was asked about the monks—who participate in social intercourse as much as other people, who trade, work farms, pigeon towers and other activities that people partake in [to earn a living] in our times—and whose monasticism consists of [only] adopting specific dress, abandoning marriage and eating meat... and anyone who wants to avoid [paying] the jizya from among the Christians takes these vows to avoid payment. And they take the endowed money and the money of vows... is it permissible to charge these monks a jizya or no? And is it possible for them to inhabit the lands of Muslims whilst being exempt or no?

In his answer, Ibn Taymiyya presents the earlier protection and exemption of monks as necessarily based on their seclusion and isolation from their dhimmi community, and hence their inability to aid Christians against Islam. (Here the emphasis, in both question and answer, on monks' residence echoes the abovementioned Church legislation on the mobility of monks.) Monks whose devotional practices were well known and revered by all, he argues, constitute propaganda for Christianity—especially those “who support Christianity with what they practice of illicit legal ruses [hijiyal bātīla]... and corrupt devotional practices, and accept vows and awqaf.” In his conclusion, Ibn Taymiyya preserves the exempt monk category by simply dismissing the monks of his day as “socially active men of religion.” A corollary of this definition is his reclassification of their property and endowments as taxable; at one point he even advocates its confiscation—an idea that found resonance with the Mamluks in 1354 amid the harsh conditions of the plague. Once again, like al-Nābulusī, he adduces the exemptions to the influence of the Coptic bureaucrats, complaining that in his times, the endowments of Christian institutions were greater than those of the Muslims.

In fact the resort to monastic vows to escape the jizya was embarrassingly confessed by one Coptic monk from Dayr Abū Maqqār who converted to Islam in 1224. This man told the sultan that among the monastery's monks were those “who hide behind monasticism from the weight of the jizya.” He added that monks had evaded various taxes, including those on inheritance estates. When the sultan ordered an investigation, the assigned amir confiscated a quantity of property and about 600 dinars in cash. But when the sultan returned the money to the monks, they placed it on a silver tray with candles and paraded them through the streets of Cairo. Our Coptic author notes that this was nothing short of a veritable marvel—but we wonder whether the longer-term effects, in terms of monastic visibility, were anything but a disaster. Other examples of such ruses are recorded.

This practice is echoed by suspicion in official literature. Al-Qalqashandi’s letter of appointment for Patriarchs warns against “[monastic] cells becoming mere places where people can take their ease and enjoy a leisured existence”—perhaps a reference to the exemption from jizya—and against “constructing

95. HPEC 4:1:43.
96. A few years later, in 235, a Coptic author wrote of the ruse of Christian youths who took up monks’ attire to avoiding paying the jizya in their towns; this provoked an edict proclaiming that only secluded and immobile monks were exempt from the tax. Our chronicler adds that collectors used this opportunity to enter monasteries and exact the tax from all monks, the pious as well as the deceivers. The state then established a system for recording monks in the rolls of the central dhīwān. When the ruse was discovered, the young Copts abandoned the hair-shirts (HPEC 4:1:64).
these cells merely as a bait to attract pious donations." Such privileges were increasingly annoying to Muslims. Ibn Nūh and others insist on reinstating the jīzān on monks.

The importance of economic visibility as a magnet for violence appears in al-Maqrīzī's description of an Upper Egyptian monastery, which, he notes, was "little described so as to not arouse people's greed." Not all monasteries could preserve such a low profile; indeed, at times of dearth and shortage, monks and monasteries particularly aroused popular ire. Dayr al-Qusayr, for example, was destroyed in the popular riots of 1321, and fourteen of its monks were burned by the mob. Here, gossip is also a telling index of popular opinion: a 1240 attack on a church was rumoured to have revealed a large treasure under the altar. And mob attacks on churches and monasteries in 1321 featured heavy looting, for "the greatest of churches ... had much money within it." Ayyūbīd and Mamlūk interventions then threw into relief the wealth of monasteries; Muslims seized on this and popular attacks on these institutions represented the same attempt to regulate their wealth. The interaction between these forms of regulation was dialogic. Al-Nābulusī wrote of a kātib, known as the monk (al-rāhib), who embezzled funds from the Treasury. Confiscation revealed a long list of property including shops, houses, presses, inns, mills and houses for rent, the total being 170,000 units—all had allegedly once belonged to Muslims. Regardless of whether this kātib was indeed a monk, or how inaccurate the figure was, the account directed suspicion to monastic wealth.

This imputation of Coptic wealth was not entirely mistaken. In 1354, al-Sālih ordered the confiscation of over 25,000 feddans endowed to churches and monasteries. The land was added to the iqṭā' of the senior umara. Indeed the event was spearheaded by those very umara'; they had capitalised on a young sultan and growing popular resentment to achieve personal gains. But instead of returning the purportedly embezzled funds to the public domain, they converted them into iqṭā' property that would soon find its way into private endowments by the umara' (i.e. once again siphoned into the private realm). Thus, the ostensibly pious regulation was accomplished by enlisting the private interests of the military elite.

98. Ibn Nūh, p. 255. Ibn al-Durayhim, devotes an entire section of his treatise to the jīzān. See Manḥaj al-samā̀th... BL ms. Or. 9264, fols. 43v–46v.
100. "Dayr al-Qusayr" CE 854. In 1241, Yūsūf shrewdly feared a Muslim official's restoration of a church, suspecting that its visible improvement would open eyes to its confiscation or destruction (HPEC 4-2:112).
101. HPEC 4-2:104.
102. Sūlūk 3:37. Sometimes this was very well hidden—but evidently not from looters: in the mid-thirteenth century a Cairene church was broken into, and even the door to the store-room, which had within its wooden frame many expensive garments, was looted by the crowd (Ṭāhāt Yūsūf p. 166).
103. Tājīd 141–142.
104. Sūlūk 4:201.
105. This appears to have been the case with al-Hākim's seizures of Coptic property amid regulatory movements (Halm as in Y. Lev, "Persecutions and Conversion to Islam in Eleventh-Century Egypt" Asian and African Studies 22 (1988) p. 78.) But it is important to note here, that such encroachments on communal funds were carried out just as often, if not more, against Muslim officials and endowments. For an example of a similar confiscation of a Muslim fund in 1379, see below, n. 143.
Coptic Bureaucrats

Central to Ibn Nūh’s lament of Christian power in Upper Egypt is the role of Coptic officials in church construction and renovation. He cites several examples, including how the bureaucrats al-Nashw and Hasaballāh bought property in Qūṣ on which they found an old mosque; they destroyed it and erected a church in its stead. (Indeed one of Ibn Nūh’s biographers considered the subsequent downfall and death of al-Nashw as one of the shaykh’s blessings.) This animosity towards Coptic bureaucrats and their patronage of churches is echoed in other anti-dhimmī accounts. The story of the embezzling Coptic official Ibn Dukhān, first told by al-Nābulusī in the mid-thirteenth century, reappears in the later texts of Ibn al-Wāsīṭī and Ibn al-Naqqaṣ, with interesting additions: Ibn Dukhān’s crimes now include stealing from a mosque. Similarly, Ibn al-Naqqaṣ, Ibn al-Durayhim and al-Asnawi take dodgy Coptic bureaucrats as the central theme, as evidenced by their titles.

Historical sources similarly charge Coptic officials with embezzling funds from the Muslim Treasury and using these to patronise churches. Al-‘Aynī’s account of the campaigns of 1301 emphasises how a member of the Coptic elite secured permission to open a church; when this became known, the populace assembled before Mamluk authorities, who then investigated the matter and initiated the infamous measures taken against dhimmīs that year. To understand these charges, we will present a brief picture of this class and its financial relations with churches and monasteries.

Coptic officials’ patronage of churches is plainly documented in Coptic sources. Abū al-Makārim’s early thirteenth-century history of churches and monasteries is, in fact, an indirect compendium of twelfth-century Coptic elites: because of their crucial role in financing construction and in securing permission for these efforts, these officials appear in his description of many Coptic structures. Most of the sponsors of Upper Egyptian churches and monasteries served in the bureaucracy, not only in the central administration, but also in such regional positions like inspectors and accountants. Similarly, the famous thirteenth-century Coptic elder known as Ibn al-Thubān, who had been a senior bureaucrat before taking monastic vows, was described—by a Coptic author—as having “worked on the construction of many churches and enriching their endowments.”

Sponsorship reached churches and monasteries primarily through alms and other donations. In one of his letters, Patriarch Kirillus III enjoins an archon [Coptic elder] to carry out the restorations of a dilapidated church whose condition “had deteriorated to the point that it risked endangering

108. On Coptic officials depositing embezzled funds in churches, see, for example, al-Asnawi, al-Kaliwāt, Arabic text, p. 9.
111. For example, in the mid-twelfth-century Shaykh Abū Zikrī Ibn Abī Nasr, the ‘Amlī of Ashmūnayn funded restorations in the Monastery of al-Muharrāq; the church of the Martyrs Peter and Paul, outside Qūṣ, was renovated by Shaykh ‘Izz al-Kufāt Ibn Mustafā al-Mulq Abū Yusuf in the Ayubid period. (AM 79a, 81b respectively).
112. HPEC 4:1:65.
the believer in his homeland.”

Alms were not only collected for churches and monasteries but also in them. These funds were the primary means of financing Christians in trouble with the government. Such channels of fiscal relief were crucial for the poor: a Coptic bishop insisted that funds remain in the regional churches where they were collected “to pay for the poor who cannot afford [their] jizya, using it to buy their religion.” Fund-raising in this manner was also used to meet the lump-sum exactions on the community. Here the Coptic Patriarch was responsible for the ‘distribution’ and collection of the amounts from the community and for delivering the sums to the secular authorities.

Support had both spiritual and social rewards. In a baraka [blessing] note sent to an Upper Egyptian archon with the newly elected bishop of Qift, the Patriarch spelled out the expected duties of the Coptic elite emphasising the “role of the archon in aiding the weak, supporting the head clergy... and expending his jäh [social capital] in carrying out the will of the heads of his community.”

These examples reveal the dependence the Coptic community had on its lay elite and the strong and reciprocal ties that bound different classes. But not all Coptic elites were laymen: numerous examples attest to the secular influence and power of ecclesiastical and monastic personnel. Coptic patriarchs occasionally came from this bureaucratic class and their election ceremonies and processions were public announcements of the community’s wealth.

Even the strife that preceded the final election of Kirullus III in 1235 announced Coptic influence and wealth. The role of his supporter Nashû’ al-Khilâfa Abû al-Futûh, ra’is diwân al-juyûsh al-sultânîyya, was crucial to the election and the grand public procession celebrating his consecration was a visible proclamation of Coptic influence (lay and clerical) to Muslim bystanders. In securing this appointment, Kirullus had ‘convinced’ Ayyûbid authorities of his candidacy by promising to pay 3,000 dinars. The man who vouched for him before the Ayyûbid sultan was none other than a mûrik. These accounts come from Coptic not Muslim sources, whose verdict may be considered exaggerated and inflammatory.

The pronounced links between secular and religious leadership was the hallmark of the “Coptic renaissance”—evidenced in various translations, original writings, and encyclopaedic inventories of Coptic culture at large—of the thirteenth century. Members of the famous literary family

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113. [Wasall] hâl al-bay’a... ila al-hadd alladhi lâ yastaqiq ma’âhu al-mu’tâmî fî watanihi (MK III fol. 119r).
114. A letter from the Coptic Patriarch to the congregation asks them to help a Syrian Jacobite named Barsawma by helping him raise funds to release his sons from an Ayyûbid prison (MK III fols. 19r–22v).
115. HPEC 4–2:83. Similarly, when the Ayyûbid sultan asked Patriarch Kirullus III for a share of the money he had collected (surplus church revenues), the latter replied that it had all been spent on the jizya of the poor (HPEC 4–2:123).
116. Thirteenth-century Ayyûbid exactions were met by such collections under Kirullus II. In one letter he urged the Alexandrian congregation to contribute each according to his ability, as their

117. MK III fols. 25v–26r.
118. Patriarch Yû’ânas VI (d. 1216), for example, had been a merchant from Upper Egypt. His wealth—estimated by one Coptic bishop at a staggering 17,000 dinars—was spent on charity and the renovation of churches and monasteries (Târikh Yisâb p. 159). This pattern continued throughout the later middle ages. For example, Guhriyâl V was the mûstantî of al-Jaza‘; he then took monastic vows before his election as Patriarch in 1409.
Banū al-‘Assāl occupied senior positions in the bureaucracy in addition to crucial secretarial and administrative positions within the Church. Numerous other thirteenth-century Coptic elites combined illustrious bureaucratic with literary-religious careers. There was also a pattern of bureaucrats becoming monks: al-Makīn Sam‘ān ibn Khalil, for example, became a monk after serving in diwān al-jaysh as did al-Shaykh ibn al-Thu‘bān (one of the mentors of the Banū al-‘Assāl).

To the more inflammatory observers, the Coptic elite’s success in the bureaucracy fuelled charges of embezzlement from the Treasury. This class’ religious practices (including authorship) often provided a link between such funds and the endowments of churches and monasteries. In 1309, for example, wealthy Copts proposed to lift discriminatory dress measures by paying the sultan 7,000 dinars in addition to the jizya; Ibn Taymiyya resisted this and prevented the sultan from accepting, but the offer had already publicized Coptic wealth.

Moreover, anti-dhimmi treatises sometimes attributed Coptic wealth to treason, an accusation that was accentuated by the context of the Frankish and Mongol threats. The Franks were imagined to secure Copts’ allegiance precisely through promises of allowing them to “restore churches and enrich their endowments.” Thus, a merchant who restored a church in 1291 was accused of exporting Egyptian grain to Acre as a form of support to the Franks. Thirteenth-century Coptic officials like the historian and bureaucrat Ibn al-‘Amid and his nephew Ibn Abī al-Fadā‘īl were accused of conspiring with the Mongols on the eve of their conquest of Damascus. Such charges were sometimes adopted in official policy, as in the case of the thirteenth-century threat to burn Damascene Christians for collaboration (a punishment later translated into fines).

This visibility of Coptic wealth and influence is best captured in the account of the thirteenth-century Būlus, known as al-Habīs, who originally served as a scribe in the chancery but later took

120. Al-Anjād ibn al-‘Assāl was secretary of the military diwān (“Sa‘īf ibn al-‘Assāl” CE p. 2075–2079).
121. Among thirteenth-century officials we may cite Abū al-Makārim ibn Barakāt (d. 1229): ‘Alam al-Riyāså ibn Kāṭib Qayṣar, a bureaucrat in the diwān of amir ‘Alam al-Dīn Qayṣar; and the Copt Abū al-Futūh who was a favourite of al-Malik al-‘Adil (1238–1240) and served in diwān al-jaysh (HEPC 3:2:124–125). Similarly, Iṣrās ibn al-Muṣāṣsār al-Makīn ibn Abī al-Makārim al-‘Amīd, known as Ibn al-Makīn (d. 1273), occupied the post of kāṭib al-jaysh, in addition to writing his famous chronicle.
122. The historian Ibn al-Rāhīb came from a family prominent in Church affairs: his father, al-Shaykh al-San‘ī Abū al-Majd (known as Ibn al-Thu‘bān), was summoned from his monastic life at the Monastery of St Anthony by the Ayyūbid al-Malik al-‘Adil to head diwān al-nasr ‘ān al-dīyār al-morsiyya, and later led the Cairene Coptic community during the nineteen years when the See was vacant (1216–1235). His son, the historian and encyclopaedist Nushū‘ al-Khalīfa Abū Shākir ibn al-Rāhīb, served in diwān al-jaysh (he died between 1282 and 1295). He composed important works on Coptic lexicography and grammar, Christological and exegetical works, and a philosophical and theological Summa. Johannes den Heijer, “Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods” Medieval Encounters 2 (1996) p. 84–85. This model was to continue through the early Mamlūk period. A classic example is the career of Abū al-Barakāt Shams al-Riyāså ibn Kābar (d. 13205), who, in addition to serving as secretary to the Mamlūk amir and historian Baybars al-Mansūr, composed an important work on ecclesiastical sciences, Kitāb nishābah al-zulma wa ûdāl al-khālda, and an important Coptic-Arabic dictionary. See Abdel Hamid Saleh, “Ibn Kābar” EI Supplement p. 388–389. The intimate relations between ecclesiastics and lay elites also appear in several families of Mamlūk Copts, for example, the fourteenth-century priest Abū al-Mu‘addal, whose father Amin al-Mulk Lutfallah was a senior Mamlūk bureaucrat (“Abū al-Mu‘addal ibn Amin al-Mulk” CE p. 29). The grandson Iṣrās was a copyst and artist (“Iṣrās ibn al-Qass Abū al-Mu‘addal” CE, p. 1332).
125. Al-‘Radd p. 412. Ibn al-Wasi‘ī laments that if he had enjoyed the same protection granted by Mamlūk umami to the Copts, he would have been emboldened to mention the names of the colluding officials and Mamlūk (ibid.).
126. Al-‘Radd p. 407. See also Manṣūr fols. 31r and 53r, where the Damascus examples are also cited.
monastic vows in Jabal Hilwān, south of Cairo. There, he allegedly discovered a treasure buried in the mountain and used it for charitable purposes; Muslim and Coptic sources emphasise that he dispensed alms to the poor without confessional bias and used his wealth to redeem those under confiscation. In 1265, fires broke out in Cairo and Baybars I accused dhimmīs of arson\textsuperscript{127} and ordered a large pit in which to burn them. The amirāt interceded on their behalf and, as in many cases, offered that punishment be translated into a fine—in this case the staggering sum of 500,000 gold dinars, payable in annual instalments of 50,000 dinars. Al-Habīs vouched for the community and paid the amount.

Al-Habīs' pious ventures took him to Upper Egypt and other regions; in all these places his charity also proclaimed his wealth. In only two years, he is said to have spent 600,000 dinars in payment orders from his accounts at the moneychangers (this in addition to what he expended in cash). Al-Habīs' wealth attracted the eye of Baybars, just as the hubūs (endowments) of churches and monasteries had that of Muslim observers at large. As with many Coptic bureaucrats, al-Habīs' wealth was known to be crucial to the support of his community; indeed, when he was arrested and questioned by Baybars about his wealth, he refused to reveal the source of his treasure, adding: "As for handing the treasure over [directly] to you, this I will not do. But [the money] will reach you in the form of payments for those whom you confiscate and who were unable to pay. So do not rush."\textsuperscript{128}

This dialogue expresses the aim of many punitive threats that were transformed into communal fines, namely, extracting the wealth of Coptic elites as they vouched for poorer co-religionists. It is likely that such practices informed the various decisions of the state to impose increasingly large fines on the Coptic community—essentially a wealth tax framed as punishment of a religious group.\textsuperscript{129}

Elite sponsorship also appears in connection with financing churches: Ibn Nūh cites the example of money collectively raised by dhimmī elites as bribes to reopen houses of worship in Qūṣ (in his example, the amount came to 4,000 dinars).\textsuperscript{130} The recommendation to audit rich Copts—or more simply to confiscate their property—appears repeatedly in anti-dhimmī texts. Al-Nābulusī related how audits like Ibn Tūlūn's uncovered stupendous amounts embezzled by the Copts and endowed for their churches. In the case of another audit by al-Ḥākim, the author adds that the caliph had issued a ban on any endowments for churches and monasteries.\textsuperscript{131} These examples served as legitimating models to be emulated by contemporaneous sultans. Similarly, when al-Yūnīnī claims that al-Habīs' treasure was buried by al-Ḥākim, he was paving the way for its legitimate reclamation by the Muslim Treasury.

\textsuperscript{127} Al-Yūnīnī adds that: Melkite Christians were the accused, although Baybars then extended his punishment to the dhimmī at large. See Dḥayf mīrāt al-zanān (Hyderabad: 1380/1961) 2:389. Al-Kutubi, Fawq al-qawmāyit 1:158; al-Safadī, al-Wāfī p. 2731–2732.
\textsuperscript{128} Al-Yūnīnī, Dḥayf 2:389. In the accounts of al-Safadī and al-Kutubi, Baybars then tortured the monk to death.
\textsuperscript{129} This helps us better understand the initial stylization of the punishment, rather than simply calling it "an insane idea" (Subhi Labib, "John VII" CE p. 1343).
\textsuperscript{130} Ibn Nūh, p. 253.
\textsuperscript{131} Tajīd p. 138 and 140, respectively.
Coptic elites’ patronage of churches and monasteries was understood to be funds siphoned from the Muslim Treasury into church coffers. Coptic wealth was inextricably tied to the bureaucracy and to taxation, since many Copts were employed as tax collectors. As shortages rendered Mamlûk taxes more burdensome, they provoked closer scrutiny of the Copts who collected them; here the relationship between Copts and Mamlûk policy came to the fore.

If anti-dhimmi authors present a picture of collusion between Mamlûk umarâ' and Coptic officials, this critique is carefully nuanced by resort to an age-old tactic of political discourse: blaming the messenger. The abuses of Coptic officials are explained as occurring outside the purview (much less the direction) of the umarâ’—and certainly outside the knowledge of the sultan.132 Deflecting the criticism to lower echelons of the government (Coptic officials) shielded upper classes by presenting them as ignorant of the predations of their agents. In reality, much of the unpopularity of Coptic bureaucrats derived from their carrying out direct Mamlûk extortionist policies.133 This triangulation was an expedient tool of political criticism.134 But while it did provoke—and sustain—numerous state edicts against Coptic bureaucratic employment, it did little to change the fiscal policy of the state; the Mamlûks capitalised on anti-Coptic sentiment to legitimate their confiscation of Coptic wealth—whilst maintaining the same unpopular taxation regimes and collection methods for the larger population. This was not necessarily a dhimmi-specific policy, for confiscation of Muslim individuals and institutional funds was also prevalent—if not more common—throughout the period.135

Furthermore, Muslim observers objected to the sheer constancy of Coptic positions of authority (as representatives of the state and the umarâ’). Copts had evidently not suffered as much as general taxpayers if their power was undiminished. Muslims pressed by economic exigencies saw identities through increasingly symbolic eyes, suspecting a Coptic conspiracy behind the financial troubles that left them feeling more disempowered than the officials who continued to exact taxes, supervise confiscations and mete out punishments.

This is the axial image of anti-dhimmi treatises: the mounted, haughty, ostentatious Coptic official dragging the supplicating poor Muslim as the latter begs for relief from exorbitant taxes. This scene was the catalyst of the first comprehensive campaign against the Coptic bureaucracy in 1293;136 it again re-emerges at the end of our period as the spark behind the last of these

132. Thus Ibn Nûh explains how Copts deluded the umarâ’ they served by presenting their honour—and interest—as compatible, if not united (esp. p. 256-257). Ibn al-Durayhim makes the same point (Manhaj fols. 5r and 54r).
134. Ibn al-Durayhim advises the Mamlûks to confiscate Coptic officials adding that the Christian wealth was threatening in that it might cause these wealthy officials to establish loci of private power, “given that most people are slaves to the dinars and dirhams” (Manhaj fol. 55v).
135. For a cursory glimpse of scores of such instances, see the collection of confiscations by al-Bayyûmî al-Shîrînî in the second volume of his Musâhkarat al-umâlîk fl al-dawla al-islâmîyya: ‘Ar salâtîn al-Mamlûk (Cairo: 1997). The majority of the cases therein pertain to estates and property of officials (military and bureaucratic)—without confessional bias.
campaigns (1354).\textsuperscript{137} Instead of complaining, as they had done in 1293, the Muslim mob attacked the Christian scribe. The following lurid description of the procession is telling:

One day, one of the haughty Copts passed before them [the Muslims] in front of the Azhar mosque in Cairo, mounted and wearing [fine] slippers [with] spurs, a fine Alexandrian shawl on his head: before him pages clearing people from his path, behind him numerous slaves on horse-drawn carts, as he processed in the highest grandeur.\textsuperscript{138}

The mob attacked conspicuous wealth—the comfort and security they lacked—for conditions were dire, with the plague mortality all around. That this response was linked to church power is evidenced in the ensuing wave of church destruction throughout Egypt in 1354.

The “haughty Copt” trope is repeatedly encountered in anti-	extit{dhimmī} treatises. Ibn al-Durayhim describes poor Muslims as 	extit{sāghirūn} when they paid the exorbitant fees of powerful Coptic officials—precisely the Qur’ānic term prescribing humiliation for the 	extit{dhimmī} paying the 	extit{jiyya}.\textsuperscript{139} The dynamic of this confrontation was clearly meant to rouse the (Muslim) reader’s passions and fuel his righteous rage against Coptic power. Here, as elsewhere, the conflict was over resources (and their presumed embezzlement, for the Copt in such texts invariably fails to deliver the collected sums to his Mamlūk employers) that accentuated power imbalances. Thus, when al-Nābulusī extols the golden days of a pious Muslim official, he explains how his justice consisted in neither abusing a Muslim for the money he owed nor asking for prompt payment from those who could not make it.\textsuperscript{140}

At moments of crisis, Muslims like Ibn Nūh undertook a certain inventory of the social order. Here it is important to note the background to the 1307 incidents. As examples, we may cite the terrible famine of 1295-1296, which paralysed economic life throughout Egypt, its effects notably continuing for several years, and the pest infestation in Upper Egypt in 1305 that ruined more than 17,000 	extit{irdabs} of grain.\textsuperscript{141} Similarly, it is not a coincidence that Ibn al-Durayhim, al-Asnawi and Ibn al-Naqqāsh wrote their treatises during the turbulent 1350’s, when the effects of the plague cast taxation in a morbidly unjust light. The 1315 	extit{rawk} (cadastre survey) was similarly read as a pro-Coptic measure. Al-Nuwayrī, the government official, considered that it lightened the tax burden of Copts: the amount was dropped from fifty-six to four dirhams. And by having it collected by the individual 	extit{umarā’} instead of the central Treasury, the new system allowed Copts to avoid payment by moving from one village to another. Once again, authors identify the true

\textsuperscript{137} Khītāt 2:499. This time, the inflammatory effect was enhanced by the setting of the abuse: outside al-Azhar mosque. In Ibn al-Durayhim’s version of this trope, the location is ‘Amr ibn al-‘As’ mosque, the procession including lanterns and many servants clearing the way for the mounted Copt (\textit{Manhāj} fol. 23r).

\textsuperscript{138} Sulhā 4:201-204.

\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Manhāj} fol. 33r. In al-Asnawi text, the scene is more inflammatory with the Muslim, a descendant of the Prophet, publicly kissing the Coptic official’s hand; \textit{al-Kalimat}, Arabic text, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{140} Tajrid p. 142.

\textsuperscript{141} Haarmann similarly adduced this as background to the wave of Pharaonic iconoclasm that peaked in the fourteenth century (“Regional...” p. 62). The destruction of the temple of Ikhmim and an attack on the Sphinx (both in 1378) likewise occurred, as has been noted, only two years after a disastrous famine (\textit{ibid.}, p. 63). For the 705 A.H. pest infestation of Upper Egypt, see al-Aynī’s chronicle, albeit under the annals of 659 A.H. when the author was reminded of the event by a similar outbreak in Syria that year (\textit{Tārīkh} 1:323).
force behind such measures as the (recent and hence suspicious) converts in the bureaucracy, in this case, one Taqīyy al-Dīn. Al-Nuwayrī concludes, “By my life, if this Taqīyy al-Muslimānī [i.e. convert] were ruler of the land... he could not treat Copts more kindly and exempt them from more than he is doing now.”

“Moralization” as has been noted, involves ‘dividing practices’, or the construction of distinctions between groups in order to isolate targets of regulation. Through such a technique, authors like Ibn al-Naqṣābī, Ibn al-Durayhim and al-Asnawi put forth religion as the primary means of social differentiation: thus, exorbitant taxation is viewed as the practice of Coptic officials, rather than the official policy of the state; the depleted Treasury is the result of Coptic embezzlement, rather than lower economic production and/or the transformation of public funds into private Mamlūk endowments. Dividing practices thus moralize the categories, delineating good and bad along religious lines, and legitimate differential treatment of the divided categories. Thus, al-Asnawi recommends expropriating Coptic officials, but does not advocate similar measures for Muslims who may practice the same embezzlement or endowment of public funds. This unequal surveillance was likely borne of a prudent grasp of political inequality: advice to hold Mamlūk accountable was unlikely to find eager ears although such an inventory did on occasion, occur.

In the fourteenth-century context of shortage, observers searched for a source of religious “pollution” that had invited the punishment of famine and plague. Famines and plagues are indiscriminate, but they foster discriminating judgement. Coptic influence and ecclesiastical wealth were identified as embezzlements from the Treasury that impoverished Muslims. It was can of wrongs. And in this is huge destruction and great corruption” (Manhāj fol. 49r).

142. Al-Nuwayrī’s account is reproduced in Ziya’ā’s edition of Sulāk (Cairo: 1939) 2:154-155 n. 7. Al-Maqridī himself calls the bureaucrat “one of muḥāsib at-ghbū,” Sulāk (Beirut: 1997) 2:290. In cases like the 1315 nawf, Copts exercised considerable influence on the Mamlūks for example, in reducing the Coptic tax burden), which raises the question of the nature and extent of their power, versus that of groups like the jurists and sufis, who denounced such measures. Here Coptic influence appears to stem from their powerful positions in the bureaucracy, as well as their personal relations with Mamlūk patrons (who sometimes pledged for them and guaranteed their safety). In other words, it was an influence that primarily hinged on personal relations. Such personal proximity also characterised the relations between some sufis and Mamlūks, but in the context of their regulatory programmes, the influence they exercised was also—and more importantly—part of a wider change in the political environment. Through their council and critique, as well as their unauthorized projects of regulation, sufis infused the prevailing political culture with a regulatory impetus that effectively spread to other groups, like the Mamlūks—but in markedly diffuse ways.


144. Ibn al-Durayhim puts it thus: “And it has reached me that the Christian in the Egyptian villages is the reason for the ruin of the countryside and its desertion by the inhabitants and the embezzlement of its wealth. He hurts the men and does all he
a short step from here to denounce the very bases of this power—to decry the elevated position and comfort of Copts and their churches. It was conflict that mobilized critical categories like religion—and not these categories that produced conflict. After all, Ibn Nūh is clear when he links fighting the evil Copts with the relief of Muslims from taxes, brokerage fees, monopolies, etc. Of course such policies did not necessarily benefit Copts, but Copts visibly administered them, and Ibn Nūh often made the explicit link between “the increase of [Coptic] wealth and the disempowerment of the Muslims.”

Seditious Capital: Coptic Upper Egypt and Apostasy

In addition to being associated with Coptic wealth and influence, churches were also considered sites of symbolic resistance. In one sense, their persisting role in converts’ lives rendered them proxies for anger against duplicitous conversion. Furthermore, by actively promoting practices like apostasy and other forms of resistance to conversion, churches were associated with religious sedition.

Throughout our period (ca. 1290-1355), Egypt underwent what appeared to be a tidal conversion wave to Islam; these conversions, reported throughout the country, were not, of course, unrelated to the contemporaneous waves of violence. But once the initial Muslim glee at conversion had subsided, it was replaced by a phase of suspicion, for conversion had not enriched the Muslim community—materially or symbolically.

Anti-dhimmi treatises often refer to converts as the most subversive element in religious and economic life. Ibn Nūh singles out one such convert [muslimān] as the informant to Mamlūk authorities pursuing the sufi for the church destruction in Qūs, implying the latter’s attachment to the destroyed churches and his persistent loyalty to Christianity. Indeed, Ibn Nūh begins his text by invoking the abominations of “those who hide unbelief and outwardly display Islam.” And it was converts, according to al-Wāṣīṭī, who “with their guile controlled the lands and embezzled the Treasury’s funds and the military’s incomes...” and who were “more impure than Christians and more treacherous.”

This condemnation of converts’ insincere Islam already appears with al-Nābulusī, who devotes an entire section to what he considered more seditious than disbelief: religious duplicity. It was in the privacy of the home that true inner belief was expressed: here al-Nābulusī invents a dialogue between the outward convert and his Coptic family, where the former tells of his strong feelings every time he passes a church though he cannot, under Muslim scrutiny, express his reverence of it. The lingering attachment to Christianity would have to manifest itself by other means: through his

147. Ibn Nūh, p. 256 and 257 (takādhur annwālim wa da‘[ al-muslimān), respectively.
149. Ibn Nūh, p. 246.
150. Al-Radd p. 402 and 406, respectively. Even assimilated Copts were destabilising entities in public life, being regularly mistaken on account of their lavish dress for Muslims. To take but one material example: they were reportedly asked to witness contracts but as non-Muslims their testimony was inadmissible and the contracts invalid (al-Radd p. 403).
social and material sponsorship of church construction and renovation. Ibn al-Wāsifī similarly elaborates the duplicity of converts by emphasising the unconverted home. And Ibn al-Durayhim addresses apostates and blasphemers in his discussion of Coptic officials.

The same sentiments emerged in Muslim readings of contemporaneous events. Observers keenly noted converts’ attachment to their former religion’s festivals when Copts enlisted musālima to intercede on their behalf in 1303 to re-introduce the Festival of the Martyr that had been cancelled that year. The connection between Coptic converts and churches reappeared in 1314: after the zealous al-Bakrī denounced Christians’ borrowing candles from the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-Ās and led his followers to attack the Mu‘allaqa church, he appeared before the sultan and harshly criticised him for employing converts (whom the shaykh identified as the cause of Christians’ power).

Violence against churches was also prompted by more active forms of convert resistance. Elsewhere I have discussed the ingenious strategy of “single-generation conversion” by which converts presented their children as having reached legal majority (bālighūn), adding proof of this to a Muslim judge and securing a mahdar to that effect. As majors, the children were spared automatic convers on to Islam following their fathers; they were, in other words, confirmed as dhimnis by their Muslim (convert) fathers through Islamic law.

Now it is important to note here that the earliest evidence for this ruse was recorded in Upper Egypt, and more specifically in Qūs: in 1226, a Coptic author welcomed the dismissal of the town’s Muslim judge, who had explicitly disallowed the practice. And at the end of the thirteenth-century, another Muslim qādī of Qūs, ‘Alī ibn Hibatallāh al-Isnāfī, issued a fatwā explicitly disallowing single-generation conversion. The significance of the ruse is illustrated in the consequences of this position: Qūs Copts united in clamour and soon the unrest coalesced into inter-confessional skirmishes. When al-Isnāfī died in 1307–1308—around the same time as the destruction of thirteen of the town’s churches—it was even rumoured that Copts had poisoned him. The link between this subterfuge and violence against churches appears in yet another dispute around single-generation conversion, this time in 1354 when Coptic officials secured the release of the convert in custody (albeit at night for ‘ear of the mob). The Muslim crowds protested, stoning the governor and his troops before attacking a nearby church, destroying all its liturgical instruments. The sentiment behind the mobs’ action echoes the accusations of anti-dhimmi treatises: that Coptic elites protected apostates and that churches were the sites of not only Christian wealth but also symbolic power.

151. Tājfrād p. 150.
152. Al-Radd p. 406 and Muhafiṣ fols. 30r-v
153. Sulāk 2:362-363 calling them “those who had publicly proclaimed Islam.”
154. To the speaker, these converts were essentially Christian; by employing them, the sultan had made Muslims subject to Copts and strengthened their [Copts’] religion (Sulāk 2:495-496; Durar 3:82-83, #2954).
155. Note that the 1354 case was not in Qūs but rather in al-Nahrīyya. Other indications of the Coptic community in al-Nahrīyya include the evidence of a bishopric at the town less than ten years earlier, in 1342 (the bishop was present at the consecration of the Chrism ritual—see Munier, Recueil p. 41). Al-Maqriṣī calls it a “Coptic town” and its first mosque was built only in 1286 (Khitat 1:250). For these incidents and a full discussion of the phenomenon, see my dissertation, “Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo” (Princeton University, 2005) chapter two.
Churches and monasteries also fomented Muslim anxiety and violence by their active role in patronising apostates. Some strategies to return to the disavowed religion were clandestine, performed within the walls of the church. In the late eleventh century, one Baq̣ār ibn Baq̣ūra had converted to Islam and subsequently wished to return to Christianity. His first offer of protection came from a monastery, where monks offered to take him in and shelter him from the Muslims. Baq̣ār refused, and the next line his influential father took was to seek the intercession of a bureaucrat friend who agreed to help, suggesting that Baq̣ār adopts an insanity plea: as a madman, his words—conversion and apostasy—would be invalid and the state would then be forced to release him. In prison, however, Baq̣ār decided to take the path of martyrs and frustrated investigators with his impervious sanity; this left them no choice but to execute him. The episode confirms the intercession of influential Copts for apostates as well as the sanctuary offered them behind monastery walls.

This role of Christian officials and churches in aiding apostasy appears in numerous anti-*dhimmī* treatises. The Coptic official Ibn Dukhān appears in al-Nābulusī’s *Tajrīd* (as well as al-Wāsiṭī’s *Radd*) as a patron of apostates who used his influence in court to secure them protection and even official permission to revert to Christianity. In the late fourteenth century, some convert bureaucrats, like ʿIrāhīm ibn Burayniyya, themselves reverted to Christianity.

Churches also performed more directly subversive acts of promoting apostasy, like the “ritual of the jar”, a Coptic rite specifically designed to reintegrate those who had converted to Islam back into the Coptic community. Our earliest direct evidence of the ‘ritual of the jar’ comes from a liturgical manuscript dated 1374, and it is likely to have been practiced earlier that century. The ritual was performed within the church—especially given that it constituted a flagrant prosecutable transgression of a vital condition of *dhimmīna* (both the priest as a proselytiser to a “Muslim”, and the Copt, as an apostate, would be liable for the death punishment) —and this likely contributed to Muslims’ association of such institutions with apostasy.

That such practices were common in Upper Egypt is indirectly revealed in the martyrlogy of St John of Phanidjīt (martyred in the early thirteenth century). John was originally a linen merchant from the Upper Egyptian village of Phanidjīt (El-Zaitoun) who converted to Islam.

156. Ibn al-Wāsiṭī advocated destroying Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre for fear that Muslims would believe in the miracles that allegedly occurred there (*al-Radd* p. 412-413). He also proposes exposing the tricks behind such “miracles”: a lamp that produces the purportedly heavenly light shining in certain churches, and the magnets used to prop up metal crosses so that they appeared suspended in mid-air, awing viewers and confirming their Christian faith (*ibid.* 413).


158. *Tajrīd* p. 146-147; *al-Radd* p. 400-401.


160. The ritual was a quasi-re-baptism (as a sacrament, of course, baptism was technically neither reversible nor repeatable). See MS Cairo Coptic Museum, Liturgy 331. The ritual is described in O. H. E. Burmester, *The Egyptian or Coptic Church: A Detailed Description of Her Liturgical Services and the Rites and Ceremonies Observed in the Administration of Her Sacraments* (Cairo: 1967). See also L. MacCoul, “The Rite of the Jar: Apostasy and Reconciliation in the Medieval Coptic Orthodox Church” in *Peace, Negotiation, and Reciprocity: Strategies for Co-existence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* D. Wolfhall ed. (Turnhout, 2001). For a discussion of the ritual in the context of fourteenth-century conversion, apostasy and martyrdom, see chapter three of my dissertation (cited above).

161. As Muslims, converts were protected from Christian proselytising under the conditions of the *dhimmī*—indeed, it stipulates that *dhimmīs* “not prevent any of their relatives who may wish to join Islam” (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ahkām* 2:164).
repented, hid in Upper Egypt—in a village called Peleu, which the author described as a haven for apostates—and then returned to publicly proclaim his reversion to Christianity before Muslim officials in pursuit of martyrdom. While the martyrlogist held Upper Egyptians in especially high esteem, calling them “the [most] faithful among the Christians,” it was the church at Peleu that played a crucial role in shoring up John’s courage to seek martyrdom as well as resisting the temptations of riches he was offered should he remain Muslim.\(^{162}\) It is likely that his and similar apostasies confirmed and entrenched Muslim suspicion—not only of Coptic converts but also of churches as sites producing apostasy.

The fourteenth-century mass conversions engendered similar responses on a wider level. Under Patriarch Matthew I (87th Patriarch: 1378–1409), a new wave of martyrs swept Egypt. These Copts, many of whom had converted to Islam but subsequently repented and reverted to Christianity, appeared before Muslim judges and ritually insulted Islam in a flagrant bid for martyrdom. Many of these martyrs hailed from Upper Egypt, for example, al-Qalandūn and Daljə (near Ashmûnayn); Durunka (near Asyût); Munsha’at al-Nasârâ; Qâmûla (near Qûs); Minyat Bâni Khasîb; and, Hiww (upstream from Qûnà). Matthew himself was also considered a martyr; he also came from Bâni Rûh (near Ashmûnayn). Among the Coptic saints of this period, we also find various references to Coptic Upper Egypt. St Philotheus (d. 1396), for example, came from Durunka.\(^{163}\) St Murqus al-Antûnî (d. 1386) hailed from Munsha’at al-Nasârâ, near Asyût. His contemporary St Faraj Ruways (d. 1404) was born to a Coptic convert in Lower Egypt, but when he decided to revert and live as a Christian, he fled to Upper Egypt.\(^ {164}\) And after our period, the Coptic martyr Sâlib (d. 1512) also hailed from al-Ashmûnayn.\(^ {165}\)

These cases demonstrate not only the persistence of Coptic communities in these areas of Upper Egypt but also that conflicts around conversion and apostasy there engendered a confrontational form of resistance. While the powerful and public statements made by these martyrs countered the Muslim violence against churches, they also furthered Muslim suspicion of these places as sites for the production of dissent.

These dimensions of churches and monasteries explain the religious resentiment of Upper Egyptian Muslims. In addition to being storehouses for Christian wealth and symbols of Coptic officials’ influence, these institutions were associated with religious subversion, their personnel implicated in the most seditious act against Islam: converting a Muslim (however nominal his faith) to Christianity.

\(^ {163}\) See the Coptic Synaxarium (Cairo: n.d.) 2:145, his feast day is the 2nd of Bashans.
\(^ {164}\) Vita of Anûb Ruways, Abû Sirjû (St Sergius) Church, Ms. 111 (Theol. 8), fols. 89v–90r. 
\(^ {165}\) Vita of Anûb Sâlib, BN ms arabe 152, fol. 92v. For a discussion of these martyrs see my dissertation, cited above.
THE AGENTS OF VIOLENCE: WHY SUFIS? WHICH SUFIS?

If we have resisted hypostatising ‘society’ as the agent of regulation, we must now explore why it was that specific groups like sufis led particular campaigns. Here it is also crucial to interrogate our sources’ use of the term "sufis" (fuqarā)—what it occludes, as well as what it reveals.

Sufi Settlement in Thirteenth-Century Upper Egypt

The prominent role of sufis in Upper Egyptian regulation derives from the particular settlement pattern of Muslims in the region. In the twelfth century, the Crusades threatened the safety of the mainland trade and pilgrimage route through Sinai and southern Syria; in its stead, a new route was forged through Upper Egypt, and especially Qūs, from whence the traffic proceeded to the Hijāz by crossing the Red Sea. This caused an economic influx into Upper Egypt, which prompted settlement of merchant and sufi communities.

In the case of the latter, holy men attracted adepts who soon settled around them, founding small communities. With the spread of the sufis’ reputation, visitors flocked in search of the blessings of living saints or their shrines. The famous sufi masters Abū al-Hajjāj al-Uqṣurī, Abū al-Hasan al-Ṣāhīhī, and Abū al-Abbās al-Mulāththam, to name but a few, all died in thirteenth-century Upper Egypt.166 Around these holy men (and their tombs), mosques and other institutions emerged. Traffic to these places and their festivals increased Muslim settlement.167

Such changes in a region’s religious demography had direct effects on inter-faith relations. Settlement was sometimes accompanied by the destruction of churches and synagogues and/or their conversion into mosques. In some cases settlement came in the wake of destruction. The thirteenth-century enigmatic sufi Khārīr al-Mihrānī used his proximity to Baybars I, as well as the context of the Crusades, to initiate a series of church and synagogue destructions throughout Egypt and Syria. In their place, he established Muslim institutions and made provisions to employ salaried fuqarā or sufis there.168 Even in Cairo, sufi settlement was not unrelated to converting spaces: in 1337, for example, ʿamīr Bashṭāk built his complex, including a khānqāh with salaried sufis, at Qābī al-Kirmanī, which caused Christians to convert and Franks to move to other areas.169 Other examples may be cited for the Delta where sufi tombs and institutions near Coptic churches played a role in converting the landscape.170

166. Garcin, Qūs p. 167 end 280. A generation younger, Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī’s circle was equally prominent and active in the region. See for example the biography of ʿAll ibn Ahmad al-Ḥāshimī al-Jafrī al-Qūṣī (d. 1301) who settled in Ǧūmāmī (where he built a riḥāṭ, after studying in Qūṣ with the sufi ʿAll al-Kūrdī who had settled there in the late thirteenth century). His study circle included Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dishnawī, Ibn Daqlq al-ʿĪd and Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir (Durr al-Khulq 3:1-8, 2653).
167. Alternatively, sufis settled areas in Upper Egypt upon their desertion by the indigenous population (for the case of Maghribīs settling in Qīnā, see Garcin, Qūṣ p. 160-161).
170. See Catherine Mayeux-Jaouen, "Les compagnons de la Terrasse, un groupe de soufis ruraux dans l’Égypte mamelouk" in Histoire comparée de l’Islam (Rome: 1995) p. 173-4. The author rightly singles out the fourteenth century as a period of “strong confessional tensions” including many forced conversions, suggesting that Delta sufi groups like the Sutūlīya may have played an important role in the Islamisation of the countryside.
In other areas, sufi settlement sometimes precipitated church destruction, depriving resident dhimmi communities of vital religious and social services and encouraging migration or conversion. Parallel examples include the fourteenth-century conversion of the villages outside Jerusalem, which appears to have been accomplished by sufi settlement. And an early-sixteenth-century Ottoman waqf for sufis which also gradually displaced the original Christian inhabitants of the area around Dayr al-Asad in Palestine.

Confrontations between sufis and indigenous Christian communities took various regulatory forms—from the denunciation of influential Coptic officials to the regulation of non-Muslim practices like drinking and religious festivals. An example of such conflicts occurred on a Friday in 1343, when a group of sufis attacked wine-sellers outside Cairo, injuring several Christians. Skirmishes ensued with the predominantly Coptic population that soon mobilised the Muslims at large: Coptic houses and churches were looted. The governor was forced to intervene, and soon the Mamlûk troops arrived to arrest and punish offenders. Further inquiry reveals that the village was home to a revered sufi, Sâlih ibn Najm ibn Sâlih, who had a zâviya in his name and whose pious reputation attracted visitors and adepts from distant areas. As in other cases, the occasion for the inflamed zeal was the Friday prayers—the time when Muslims were united across the various social divides that otherwise separated them (rich and poor; âlim, sufi, and commoner; military and civilian). At the forefront of the fray were the sufis revered by all; in the background was the absence of Mamlûk authorities from the village. This event was not in Upper Egypt, but the same dynamics of settlement, occasion of regulation, and initial absence of authorities obtained.

The Maghribī Influence

The sufis who came to settle in Upper Egypt included a sizeable Maghribī contingent. These individuals brought to Egypt a particular experience of Muslim defeat and the reconquista in al-Andalus. Their outrage at Coptic influence was loud and constant throughout the period. It also seamlessly slipped into Egyptian Muslims’ denunciation of Coptic (and convert) power:
for example, in reporting the case of one convert succeeding another in the upper ranks of the bureaucracy, the fifteenth-century Ibn Taghribi Birdi evoked a satirical poem written in Granada on the occasion of a Muslim ruler’s appointment of Jew to the vizierate after a Christian.179

For some in Egypt, this position was exemplary: Ibn Nūh singles Maghrībis out as “particularly zealous in the defence of God’s religion and the aid of Muslims.”180 And Ibn al-Durayhim, for example, cites an anonymous Maghrībi poet’s denunciation of “the Egyptian custom of elevating the Christians above the descendants of the Prophet [asbnāf].”181

Such Maghrībi sentiments were well known to dhimmis too: in 1219, a Coptic bishop wrote of Muslims, “most of whom were Maghrībis who... destroyed every church in their path.”182 In 1222, he also noted how “a Maghrībi to whom nothing was more odious than Christians arrived in Egypt and arrested a group... of Christians and Jews and ordered their punishment and humiliation until he extracted... some 11,000 dinars from them.”183 This model of a rigidly righteous visitor precipitated the cataclysmic anti-dhimmī campaigns of 1301, which took place at the behest of a visiting Maghrībi vizier who harshly denounced the power of Coptic bureaucrats. “In our lands,” he boisterously added, “dhimmis were as demure and humiliated as the shari'a dictated.”184 His words implied Mamlūk culpability for irreligious governance; his outrage thus spread to Mamlūk authorities, who enacted harsh anti-dhimmī measures that triggered numerous conversions.185

Maghrībis were also active in Egyptian politics. In the early fifteenth century, a Maghrībi named Surūr publicly decried official injustices, seizing upon the identity of the chamberlain Ibn al-Kuwayz as a Coptic convert. Surūr went on the pilgrimage and returned to inform the sultan that in a vision, he had seen the Prophet gouging the convert’s eyes and exclaiming, “You have undermined my shari'a.” He used this vision to launch a campaign to dismiss Ibn al-Kuwayz and another official.186

Several anti-bid'a treatises took up these same themes. Prominent among these voices were Maghrībi (and Andalusian) Egyptian authors like al-Turtūshi (d. 1126), who settled in Alexandria and wrote one of the first anti-bid'a texts, Kitāb al-hawādith wa al-bida'. He was known for denouncing al-Afdal Ibn Amīr al-Juyūsh for employing a Christian;187 indeed, his uncompromising position is cited by Ibn al-Durayhim in his arguments against employing dhimmis in the administration.188

179. “Every day we regress, going from piss to shit. For our times have converted to Judaism and Christianity, and if the shaykh lives to see it, we will [soon] aspire to be Magians” (Manṭalī 5:289, #1016).
180. One of the few words he reserves in praise of the Fatimids; in his review and praise of al-Ḥākim, Ibn Nūh is momentarily willing to dispense with their Shi'tism (ibn Nūh, p. 252).
181. Manṭalī fol. 23r.
182. HPEC 4:1-29. Here he context was one Maghrībi found familiar: the preparations for a battle against Frankish Crusaders.
183. HPEC 4:1:33-34.
186. Ibn Hajar, Isbā' 3:303. Earlier the same year, a man from Ramla petitioned the sultan against the same Ibn al-Kuwayz, accusing him and other officials of supporting a contender to the sultanate, but coming clean with his agenda in his formal petition: “The chamberlain ought not be a convert...” (Isbā' 3:300). For a Coptic account of a mid-thirteenth-century anti-dhimmī campaign that was similarly prompted by a vision of the Prophet; see HPEC 4:2-92.
187. “Al-Turtūshi” EP.
188. Manṭalī fol. 20r.
Ibn al-Hājî (d. 1337) was of North African origin, but lived in Egypt where he composed his Madkhal, a treatise on the bida' of his time, in which he expresses strong anxiety about the polluting effects of syncretic practices like festival attendance.\footnote{189}

The convergence of Maghrībi and Sufi anti-dhimmī movements is clearest in the regulatory career of the North African Qādīrī sufi, al-Maghīlī (d. 1505). Although later than our period, his anti-dhimmī treatise against the Jews is structurally similar to the Egyptian parallels: it proceeds from the same premise of powerful dhimmīs; it invokes the same image of a mounted haughty dhimmī abusing humble Muslims; it contains arguments about dhimmīs having broken their pact by their wealth and close association with the Muslim rulers; and it identifies Jewish power behind various social ills and locates religious subversion behind the closed doors of dhimmī houses.\footnote{190} Al-Maghīlī’s practices also resemble those of Upper Egyptian sufis: around 1490, he led a Muslim mob in destroying the synagogue of the Touat oases and physically attacking and killing many of its Jews.

As in Upper Egypt, there was a demographic spur to al-Maghīlī’s vociferous regulation: in the second half of the fifteenth century, the Jewish community in Touat had sizably increased on account of migrants fleeing persecutions in Spain.\footnote{191} Upper Egyptian sufi settlement brought Muslims in contact and conflict, with Coptic officials and their power; similarly, Jewish migration to North Africa and their trade monopolies increased friction with sufis like al-Maghīlī.

An anti-dhimmī discursive and practical space extended from al-Maghrib through Egypt, facilitated by Muslim scholarly travel, migration and settlement. The above examples bespeak the tropes of Maghrībi outrage et dhimmī conditions in Egypt, a position that 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. The imagination of Christian power is better understood against the background of the thirteenth-century Muslim defeat in Andalusia, when numerous mosques were converted into churches.\footnote{192} Interestingly, Ibn Nūh and others justified their own acts of destruction and conversion by claiming that churches had originally been mosques—precisely the claim advanced by the Spanish Christians who converted mosques by arguing that they had formerly been churches.\footnote{193}

\footnote{189} The link between Maghrībī and Egyptian anti-dhimmī discourses is also illustrated in a modern editorial error: Ibn al-Durayhīm’s mid-fourteenth-century treatise against Coptic officials, Minhaj al-sawīb was edited in 1998 but mistakenly attributed to “an anonymous Maghrībī author” presumptively due to the author’s harsh tone against dhimmī bureaucrats. The editor similarly misidentifies the period as the eleventh century Hijrī. The edition is further marred by various errors.


\footnote{191} Batrān, “A Contribution...” p. 383.

\footnote{192} J. Harris, “Mosque to Church Conversions in the Spanish Reconquest” \textit{Medieval Encounters} 3 (1997) p.158–172.

\footnote{193} Ibn Nūh, p. 246. For earlier incidents featuring the same claim in 1241, see \textit{HPEC} 4-2:104 and 120.

\footnote{194} The language was derived from the biblical model in the \textit{Book of Maccabees} where the Temple of Jerusalem was cleansed and redecorated after its despoliation by the Syrians. To sustain this parallel, reconquest warriors argued that the mosques they were converting had originally been churches that the Muslims converted (Harris, “Mosque...” p. 170–172).
Regional Politics in Upper Egypt

Another reason for the prominence of Sufi activism was the relative absence of official Mamluks power in the region. The incidents in Qus could reveal that the juriacting in the absence of Mamluks forces, who appeared late on the scene to punish transgressors in an effort to reclaim the political authority they had lost.

The effect of Mamluks presence appears in the ways edicts, like the church closure edict of 1301, were enforced in different locations. In Cairo, these were obeyed; even when the crowds relied on a fatw to destroy churches, a council was held in which judges decreed this position and Mamluks forces prevented the crowds from destruction. However, when the same edict was read outside the capital, the crowds usurped the edict's legal language, claiming that the churches had been "newly" restored, and rushed to destroy several of them (in Alexandria and Fayyum, for example) without authorisation. At times and places when political authority was absent or weak, then, cultural and religious movements emerged from lower social groups. As we shall see, in fourteenth-century Upper Egypt, the social fabric of Muslim society often placed Sufis at the forefront of these groups.

Religious violence in Upper Egypt was also affected by the role of Bedouins in the region. An example of the recurring insubordination by Upper Egyptian Bedouins occurred in 1302, when their exactions were even described as a "quasi-j tila [poll-tax]." The ensuing battle with the Mamluks left several Upper Egyptian villages virtually deserted. The violent encounters between Bedouins and the numerous Mamluks expeditions sent to quell their rebellions were centrifugal forces that polarised Muslim society in the region. In one sense, regulatory projects against Christians provided a unifying force for a Muslim society otherwise riven with internal strife. For example, in 1240, a Coptic source reported how a detachment sent against rebellious Upper Egyptian Bedouins got involved in a church dispute between Muslims and Christians. And Bedouin rebellions were harshly suppressed in Upper Egypt only a few months before the anti-dhimmi campaigns and church destruction in 1354.

Sufis were not always completely outside these conflicts. In 1242, for example, troops near Qus declared insubordination and it was through the intercession of an Upper Egyptian Sufi—identified by a Coptic author as "an ascetic [zahid] Muslim... revered by Muslims and renowned for his

196. Sulak 2:346. Some 10,000 Bedouins were reportedly killed by the Mamluk detachment.
197. Earlier, in 1238, a Coptic chronicler described how Upper Egyptian Bedouins had raided property and even took prisoners. The disturbances caused a sharp rise in the price of agricultural products, especially grain (HPEC 4-2:84). For other examples of unruly Bedouins in fourteenth-century Upper Egypt, see Sulak 3:375, 407.
198. HPEC 4-2:104. On occasion, the state exacted fines from the Bedouins, as happened in 1241 when the Upper Egyptian Bedouins were obliged to pay 80,000 dinars for their earlier transgressions. The Coptic author keenly notes how with the collection of these funds from Upper Egypt, the sultan began a campaign of spending huge sums on the construction and restoration of Muslim institutions in Cairo (ibid. p. 108). In other words, the fines for the destruction were used for construction in the capital, and not in Upper Egypt.
karamat"—that they were reconciled with the sultan.\textsuperscript{200} In this role as mediators of conflict, sufis stood closer to the general Muslim population of Upper Egypt than the Bedouins who raided their lands, or the Mamluks who taxed its diminishing production. As such, they could mobilise and lead popular movements, serving as protectors of local interests.\textsuperscript{201} Even sufi violence was a form of conflict resolution that emerged in the absence of dysfunction of political and legal arbitration.

The southern Christian border also complicated inter-faith politics in Upper Egypt. In 1326, for example, the Abyssinian king had sent a message threatening to persecute Muslims in his land and destroy their mosques if discriminatory measures against the Copts were not lifted and their churches reopened; in addition he threatened to dam the Nile and bring drought in Egypt. Even if the proposal was laughed away in Cairo, it could not but strengthen popular suspicions about the potentially subversive contact of the Coptic Church with Abyssinia.\textsuperscript{202} (The immediacy of such conflicts was clear to authors of anti-\textit{dhimmit} texts: Ibn al-Durayhim, for example, was sent by al-Nâsir Hasan as an envoy to Abyssinia in 1361 and it was this journey that brought him to Qâsî, where he died.)\textsuperscript{203}

Similarly, until the early fourteenth century, Muslim rulers of Egypt had repeatedly raided the southern border but with little success; Nubia had not been converted to Islam in any meaningful way. With the Mamluks, however, this picture changed: repeated campaigns were launched against Nubian kingdoms, partly due to the increased importance of the south for mercantile and pilgrimage routes to Aydhab (and from there to the Hijaz and Indian Ocean).\textsuperscript{204} These conflicts were, of course, waged on confessional terms and added a hostile dimension to inter-faith relations in Upper Egypt. They were also mobilised at the expense of the local population: in 1307, the same year of the Qâsî church destruction wave, the governors of Qâsî and Idfû sent letters to Cairo, each complaining of the other’s depredations: the latter, for example, was accused of “injustice against his peasants, [including] taking their cattle” amid his preparations for a southern expedition. The journey was called off, but the example reveals that the political context of moral regulation was often that of Mamlûk depredations against, and impoverishment of, the local population.\textsuperscript{205}

The relative political absence of Mamlûk authorities, the conflictual encounters with rebellious Bedouins and the developments across the confessionally charged southern border thus produced a particular political configuration in fourteenth-century Upper Egypt. This environment not only allowed sufi activism, but also provided for its positive reception by other Muslims in the area.

\textsuperscript{200} \textit{HPEC} 4:2:115.
\textsuperscript{201} For a discussion of the protection afforded by sufis to Lower Egyptian peasants, see Mayeur-Jaouen, "Les compagnons de la Terrasse..." p. 174–9. For religious edicts as a force strengthening fragmented political power, see Little’s reading of the 1301 anti-\textit{dhimmit} edict ("Coptic Conversion..." p. 555).
\textsuperscript{202} Al-\textit{Aynî} as in Little, "Coptic Conversion..." p. 566. In 1327, a similar envoy came from Rome with a gift seeking amelioration of the conditions of Egyptian and Syrian Christians—and promising that however they were treated, so too would the Muslims in Roman territories. The sultan received them well and accepted their requests (\textit{Sulûk} 3:100).
\textsuperscript{203} Dârur 3:64, #2874.
\textsuperscript{204} See Joseph Cuq, \textit{Islamisation de la Nubie chrétienne: vif–xvi siècle} (Paris, 1986), esp. 69–90. The Mamlûks also aided factions in internal Nubian struggles: see, for example, the expedition sent from Qâsî in 704/1305 in support of the ruler of Dunqula (\textit{Zulida} 381–2). The force included Upper Egyptian Bedouins and was headed by the governor of Qâsî.
\textsuperscript{205} \textit{Sulûk} 2:415.
Which Sufis?

As noted, sufis' proximity to the population derived in part from their lack of formal ties to the taxing regime that was often considered an ally of Coptic officials.²⁰⁶ Sufi popularity also derived from certain ideological positions. Despite their reputation for other-worldliness, sufis like Ibn Nūh and his followers were not, like contemporary 'ulamā', formal adherents of an ideology of pacifism. In contrast to the insistence on social peace at any cost, fiqārā' appear in the sources as some of the most vocal critics of Mamlūk authority and its inequities. And unlike some 'ulamā' who were tainted by institutional and professional links to political authority, the earlier fiqārā'—especially those who eschewed salaried positions in patronised khānqāhs—reserved an idealised distance from power. This earlier sufī distance bred sufficient political autonomy that allowed—and was evidenced in—acts of unauthorised moral regulation.²⁰⁷ Given this disregard not only for political authority, but also the fiqārā's rulings on the (il)legality of church destruction, the sufis in question belonged to a particular anti-establishment variety—one that placed the precepts of ordering good and forbidding wrong above any and all considerations for social and political expedience (or peace).

This general outlook still leaves the question of the exact identity of the agents of violence. The accounts of church destruction present the fiqārā' as an amorphous and anonymous group. There is no identification of a particular sufī order, and, with the exception of Ibn Nūh, no names of individual leaders.²⁰⁸ This raises the question of who these fiqārā' and their followers were.

Accounts of the 1307 incidents refer to 'the masses' under sufī leadership.²⁰⁹ While he refuses this allegation, Ibn Nūh is hardly specific about the real culprits, except in a rare mention of sailors, "harāfish and commoners."²¹⁰ Crucial here is the tantalising reference to the harāfish. According to William Brinner, these were "impoverished, uprooted former artisans and peasants" who begged when out of work,²¹¹ but it has also been suggested that they occupied the same social space as better-known mendicant sufis, like the Qalandariyya.²¹² It is significant here that the single case in which sufis were identified by order was a Coptic author's account of the Qalandariyya's leadership of a mob attack on a church in 1242.²¹³ The harāfish were likewise central in the 1301 official

²⁰⁶. Grill notes how Ibn Nūh was a recourse for the population and a danger to the Mamlūk authorities: "Une émeute..." p. 245.
²⁰⁷. This of course would change in the case of some orders, which gradually accepted elite, and especially Mamlūk, patronage. See the comment ḥy Adam Sabra on this development as well as the gradual "merging of the sufi and larger 'ulamā' communities" especially given "the increasing professionalization of the latter (group)." Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam, Mamlūk Egypt 1250-1517 (Cambridge: 2000) p. 172. Now this convergence was linked to the economic structures of patronage in highly urbanised contexts like Cairo and Damascus; it is likely that such a development was slower in regional towns like those of Upper Egypt.
²⁰⁸. For a Coptic reference to the Qalandariyya, see below. Coptic sources are generally more precise in distinguishing different Muslim groups, especially in the context of violence. In some cases, Coptic authors explicitly excluded 'sensible [al-'uqalā'] Muslims' from the destructive cohort (HPEC 4-2:119).
²⁰⁹. For these accounts, see n. 19, above.
²¹³. He was identified as "rajd min al-sīyās wa ajham wusum-man al-qalandariyya" (HPEC 4-2:118).
campaigns: it was they who protested to the viceroy Salār against the relaxation of the anti- dhimmī edicts. And when the governor proclaimed that those in defiance of the edict "would be plundered by the populace," it was the ḥarāfīsh who were explicitly mentioned as attacking and abusing dhimmīs.214 That Ibn Nūḥ characterises them in opposition to the sufis he defended (and led) indicates their difference, but the possible overlap is also suggestive.

One arena in which sufis and ḥarāfīsh could converge was the dispensation of charity where both types of ḥojqātā' would have received alms. For example, the Mamlūk ʿamīr ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Afram al-Ṣāliḥī established a mosque in late-thirteenth-century Qūs where the Qalandariyya sufis received food.215 It is likely that the recipients were not limited to members of this order—and even here, it has been convincingly shown that the Qalandariyya may have included ḥarāfīsh.216 In the context of charity dispensation, the unemployed poor (ḥarāfīsh) melded with sufi ḥojqātā'.217

A more direct context for the recruitment of popular elements was the inclusive religious rituals. Here we must note that Ibn Nūḥ's followers were not strictly sufis: we read that he had "followers [ṭabātā], adepts [muṭīdān] and people had much reverence for him [li al-nās ṣafī ṭiḡād]."218 The last group was undoubtedly inclusive and informal. Another point of contact and solidarity was the Friday sermon that we repeatedly encounter as the spur to incidents of sufi regulation: all accounts agree that the 1307 violence was initiated at a regular assembly in a mosque in Qūs; al-Uḍḍuwī goes further in specifying that the attendants came from all parts of the town and its hinterland. In Ibn Nūḥ's version, the events transpired on a Sunday, "the day of the town's market, where people assemble from various towns and rural areas from every direction and place."219 In both descriptions, however, the striking feature is the heterogeneity of the so-called masses and their diverse backgrounds.

Even in some accounts where the leader of these congregants was neither the khatib, imām, or sufi, he spoke from a position—and in the language—of religious authority. For example, in the 1307 incident, an unidentified man quoted Qur'anic verses on divine succour alongside an enthusiastic assertion that "Church destruction constitutes prayer."220 This was an almost direct echo of the Qalandari sufi who mobilised congregants after a Friday sermon in 1242 by shouting, "Whoever wants to perform the jiḥād for God, then off you go to the Mu'allaqa Church."221 And in 1321, it was similarly after the Friday prayer that an excited man described as a faqīr incited the congregants at

214. Al-ʿĀynī as in Little, "Coptic Conversion" p. 557. Al-Maqrīzī uses the term ṣimmā (populace) in describing the same incident (Ṣilāḥ 2.340). This leads Little to argue that "the main source of anti-Coptic sentiment lay not with the Mamlūks ... but with the general Muslim population of Cairo, especially with the lower elements of society." "Coptic Conversion" p. 557.
215. As in Sabra, Poverty p. 28. The food was distributed during the month of Ramadan but note that none of the sources describing the incident spell out the exact date of the church destruction in 1307.
216. Note that our case is from a period before the ḥarāfīsh became organised and headed by sultan al-ḥarāfīsh in the late fourteenth century; W. Brinner, "Significance" p. 202-203.
217. For example, in 1264, during a food shortage, the sultan assembled the poor below the Citadel for recording and assignment of their responsibility to the amara'. The poor were described by various terms including ḥojqātā' and ḥarāfīsh (as in Sabra, Poverty p. 138). For ḥarāfīsh violence in the context of food shortages in 1336, see ibid., p. 144-145.
218. Najar 8.182.
221. HPEC 4:2:118.
the Citadel mosque to destruction; significantly, when the sultan asked for him, he was nowhere to be found. That same day at al-Azhar mosque, another faqīr rose and “like thunder” yelled “God is great” and called for the destruction of the churches of tyrants and unbelievers. Once again, the man disappeared before his identity could be confirmed: some reasoned that he was mad while others took his act as a sign of something deeper. Apparently it was on that same day that the 1321 Qūs church destruction occurred: here again, it was at the communal Friday prayer that a faqīr rose and addressed the crowd, “O fuqarā’ go out to [pursue] church destruction” and when the people left with him, they found the violence had already begun.

In both contexts—charity and prayer—sufis brushed with lower ranks of the economy: the uprooted and unemployed. This confirms our earlier suggestion that the violence against churches was partly economically inspired: given their association with Coptic wealth, churches and monasteries were lightening rods for the anger of the poorer classes.

Sufis also served as literary tropes for the quintessential and exemplary model of renouncing wealth. As such, their appearance in historical and anti-Coptic literature—as both subjects and objects of the violence—had social uses. When al-Nābulusī steps up his rhetoric, he cites the depredations of Copts “that harmed Muslims until they even extended... to the residents of zawāyā and pious hermits.” Al-Asnawī accuses Coptic officials of stealing sufī endowments and depositing these funds in churches and monasteries. Here sufis functioned as a revered social group that needed the defence and material protection of other Muslims; as such they united them.

It was this appeal that Ibn Nūh would capitalise on when he recounted the events of Qūs: denying any involvement of the sufis in the destruction of churches, he emphasises how their punishment by Mamlūk authorities was “only intended to humiliate the people of religion and those known for their piety, and to raise the words of unbelief over those of Islam.” Ibn Nūh’s revered sufis furthered his cause of denouncing Copts and Mamlūks. Thus, it does not seem to have concerned most authors which sufis were involved in church destruction, or even if they were truly sufis. Here, “sufi” was a useful social category to sanitise and sanctify popular acts that were often performed for secular reasons and against the prescriptions of political, and sometimes legal, authorities. By joining sufī regulation, participants effectively became “sufis” in the eyes of beholders.
Literacy, Class and Critique

As members of a literate class (albeit often at the lower end of that stratum), sufis also constituted a crucial link between the discursive fields of regulatory discourse and its more socially inclusive active expressions. Ibn al-Durayhim began his text by explaining that his aim was not to present a comprehensive review of the position of dhimmis but rather an accessible account, “understandable by all who read it.” Here it is perhaps more accurate to speak of regulation “from the middle” rather than “from below” since literacy and access to anti-dhimmî writings was a central component of this group’s action. The author of one the anti-dhimmî texts cited here, Ibn al-Naqqâsh, inhabited this milieu: as a khattîb and wâlî’iz [preacher], he had much occasion for wider interaction with congregants than senior judges had (his sermons were noted for their “effect on the heart”).

Sermons, obviously, were the channel of transmission from the literate to the illiterate population—and it was in the context of Friday prayers, as noted, that most incidents of church destruction were initiated. From 1301, we have two examples of the kind of sermons that stirred passions and sparked popular violence against Christians—one from Bahnasa in Upper Egypt. They include the standard elements of the more elaborate anti-dhimmî texts: the Qur’anic verses against employing dhimmis; 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.

Projects of moral regulation tend to often have an “umbrella effect,” mobilising support not only from various ideological trends, but also diverse social groups—groups which are often united in their experience of social crises. Indeed, the capacity to bring together such disparate social groups is what distinguishes successful projects of moral regulation. In the case of Upper Egypt, sufis and other Muslim groups shared the reception of problems of conversion and apostasy. On another front, disparate groups like Mamlûk umarâ’ and the salaried sufis of the khânaqâhs both stood to benefit from the confiscation of Coptic endowment lands in 1354, for example: the former receiving direct allotments added to their existing iqtiṣî lands, the latter receiving stipendiary positions from institutions endowed by confiscation. Al-Udfuwwî noted Ibn Nûh’s material poverty; the shaykh’s grand ribât in Qûs, he explained, had been financed by his companion, one Zayn al-Dîn, who worked as the collector of the jizya levied on the region’s Christians. Ibn Nûh loved this man and praised him, and mentioned him in his work on sufism. This friendship

229. Manhaj fol. 4r-v.
230. Manhal 10:221-222, #2278.
231. As in Zetterstén, Beiiträge p. 88-89 and 91-92.
232. See Hunt’s comment that “moral regulation becomes pos­
sible where some specific social anxiety serves to mobilise an
array of different issues and alliances of disparate social forces”
(Governing Morals p. 214-215).
233. Ibn al-Durayhim proposed raising the jizya and confiscating
Christian officials—things he likely considered would appeal
to his Mamlûk audience (Manhaj fols. 43v and 55r, respectively).
and patronage illustrates how moral regulation was the meeting-point between a poor secluded sufi and an active Muslim tax collector. (Even in death, the ascetic was implicated in a particular economy: his clothes were sold to a Mamluk amir for fifty dinars, the proceeds going to the sufi of Cairene zāwiyyas.)

Many influential anti-şahhīmī texts had their origin in individual reversals of fortune. Of course, this movement was more than a collection of personal grudges; the frustrations of these authors display common features, and as such, bespeak the concerns of a wider declining social group. An examination of the biographies of our authors reveals that they all belonged to lower cadres of the ‘ulamā’ class; many of them served as officials in the bureaucracy themselves; all had significant conflicts with state authorities, ranging from confiscation, to imprisonment to exile; and, all wrote their texts in an embittered state after their fall from power. It is likely that the anonymous author of a note slipped to the sultan in 1320, accusing him of advancing Christian scribes over their Muslim counterparts came from this class who increasingly felt crowded out of government employment by Copts (and later, converts). The moralising anti-şahhīmī texts then, were an example of a movement that derived from “status anxiety,” wherein declining social groups exhibit symptoms of ressentiment.

236. This is similar to Bourdieu’s thesis that moral revolts emanate from declining groups, in his case, the “declining fractions of the petty bourgeoisie.” Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (London: 1979/1984) p. 435.
237. Al-Nābulusī’s criticism of Coptic officials must be read against his own position in the Ayyūbid administration (as well as that of his grandfather who also served in the bureaucracy): he qualifies “the correct path [al-suwwālī]” by mentioning how it included “Muslim kutbāh.” Having composed his text when he had fallen out of favour with al-Kāmil and been imprisoned, al-Nābulusī reveals the self-interest behind his position in his declairal of Coptic bureaucrats’ outward conversion simply to compete with “notable Muslims of older Islam” (Ta’rif p. 142). The same competition colours Ghāzī ibn al-Wāsī’s vocal denunciation of Coptic bureaucrats, for he was an official himself (al-Raḍī p. 409). As mentioned, it was after Ibn Nūh was exiled from Qīs to Cairo after the events of 1307, that he wrote about them, embittered about his inability to return home for the remaining year of his life. While Ibn al-Naqṣabī had reportedly good relations with al-Nāṣir Muhammad and his umārī, his position declined dramatically after the sultan’s death in 1341, and it was during this latter period that he composed his vociferous text (Durar 4:45-47, #4189). Ibn al-Durayhim’s text likely arose in similar circumstances: as a merchant and then administrator, he was heavily fined and his property confiscated before being sent, against his wishes, to Upper Egypt. He composed his attack on Coptic officials as he reflected on his fall from favour and the injustices that accompanied his dismissal. Durar 3:63-64, #2874. Through his rebuttal of the argument that Copts possessed special administrative skills, we mostly see a bureaucrat’s profound disappointment at his failed career; his text includes a detailed section on the ideal candidates for bureaucratic employment—a description that neatly fits him and other authors of anti-şahhīmī works (Manhāj fols. 46v-53r, esp. 50r).

Similarly, the man who denounced the appointment of the convert Ibn al-Kuwayz as chamberlain, described the ideal candidate in no uncertain terms: Ibn Hajar commented that the qualities he extolled were intended to suggest his friend and the chamberlain’s bitter enemy. The sultan, however, had been informed of the personal nature of the accusation and ordered that the petitioner be exiled to Upper Egypt, although he was released a few days later (Isḥāq 3:300-301). Al-Asnawi had similarly served in the administration but resigned after a conflict with the vizier, at which time he devoted himself exclusively to writing. See his biography in Permann, “Notes...” p. 844-845.

239. For a similar argument about the effects of the madrasa, see G. Leiser, "The Madrasa and the Islamization of the Middle East. The Case of Egypt" Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 22 (1985) esp. p. 46 where he extends his argument about the twelfth century to the Mamluk period. See also Catlos, "To Catch a Spy" p. 101. Ward makes a similar but less likely or supported argument for the competition coming from second-generation mamlūks (Ward, p. 73-74).
The Circulation of Regulation: Texts, Acts, Laws and Back

Ibn Nūh's focus on churches was part of a larger social anxiety about these structures; this concern appears not only in the abovementioned anti-ʾdhimmī texts, but also in a contemporaneous group of Muslim treatises regarding church construction and renovation.240 These treatises offered a discursive parallel to both popular acts and official policies for closing or destroying churches.

Like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Riḍa, Ibn Nūh resurrected the old debate as to whether Egypt was conquered by force or treaty.241 By insisting that it was the former, these authors gave a Muslim ruler the implicit right to confiscate and destroy churches. Authors also argued that the so-called Pact of ʿUmar no longer obtained: some claimed that the pact had already expired or that Christians had violated its terms through acquiring exclusive power or by having sex with a Muslim woman.242 Others claimed that Christian wealth now called for the jizya levels to be drastically raised.243 Despite their purported aim of returning to the Prophetic model, these authors advanced novel policies for a strict new world that was incomprehensible in, much less inspired by, the golden days of early Islam.

Church violence and confiscation was also textually legitimated by historical anecdotes. Ibn Nūh accused Qūš Christians of destroying mosques and stealing Muslim property, just like a Cairene mob had done in 1239. In his note on this text, Gril doubted the relevance if not the veracity of this charge, suggesting that it was disingenuous.245 Perhaps. But an earlier aetiology of similar conflicts helps better explain the social uses of such charges. Ibn al-Wāsiti and al-Nābulusi, for instance, insist that the Fatimid al-Hākim had ordered a mosque built adjacent to every church and inside every monastery.246 By invoking an edict issued centuries earlier (and one unlikely to have been enforced), these authors legitimized violence against the churches as a

240. Following the 1301 campaigns, a number of ʿulamāʾ issued fatwās and wrote treatises on the increasingly controversial question of churches. Ibn al-Riḍa issued a popular and inflammatory fatwā advocating wide campaigns of destruction, but this was promptly answered by Ibn Daqlq al-Ty’s counter-fatwā, which protected churches that might be of pre-Islamic origin until it was proven that they were established more recently (Ward, p. 74). Around 1305, Ibn Taymiyya wrote his Masʿūlat al-ḥanāfīs (Benjamin O’Keeffe, ed. and trans. in Islamochristiani 22 (1996) p. 53-78.

241. Ibn Nūh, p. 267-8; Ibn Taymiyya, Masʿūlat p. 60; Ibn al-Riḍa as in Ward, p. 81; see also Asnawi, al-Kāmilīt Arabic text, p. 11. Ibn al-Qayyim succinctly states that with their conquest and ownership of land, Muslims came to own all that was on it, including churches (Athbar 2:147). During the eighth century, jurists transformed the classification of Egypt’s conquest from sultan [by treaty] to ʿummāt [by force], thereby doubling the tax rate by holding all of Egypt as kharijī land. See Gladys Franz-Murphy, “Conversion in Early Islamic Egypt: The Economic Factor” in Yusuf Raghib ed., Documents de l’islam médiéval: nouvelle perspective de recherche (Cairo: 1991) p. 11-12.

242. Ibn Nūh, p. 257; al-Madhabalwa p. 321; Ibn al-Riḍa as in Ward, p. 81. This expiration of the Pact was also cited during the campaigns of 1301 (mentioned by the Maghrīb vizier) and 1321.

243. Ibn Nūh, p. 247 (where the evidence consists of their influence and wealth, their dress and residence, their acts and those conditions they reveal and hide!) and p. 257. See also Manāhīj fol. 23v, where sexual intercourse with a Muslim woman is what violates the pact.

244. Ibn al-Durayhim suggested the absurd figure of 1,000 dinars. (Manāhīj fol. 43v-44r).


246. Tājīd p. 140; al-Radd p. 395. The authors cite the example of Deyr al-Qusayr, where an ‘add-on’ mosque of this sort had first been hidden and then destroyed by Christians in the mid-thirteenth century, but was once again restored under Baybars I. Ibn al-Wāsiti cites another conflict arising from this policy of al-Hākim, this time in the Muʿallaqa Church: once again the Christians were accused of covering the minaret and laying claim on the land. It was only after decades that a muʾallaqa discovered this; the Copts allegedly used their influence to have him publicly punished.
mere reclamation. In their accounts of violence then, authors like Ibn Nūh aimed at more than documenting events. Instead, they translated the popular sentiments of the fuqarā’ into familiar discourses of rights (legal, historical and spiritual).

A fascinating example of this type of textual framing is the account of a fourteenth-century Sufi who wanted to destroy a church in Nāhiyyat Abu al-Numrus south of Jīza in 1379. The man had taken residence near the church and heard its bells drowning out the Friday sermon. When his formal appeal to the sultan went unnoticed, the faqīr’s compulsive virtue led him to symbolic appeal to an even higher authority. He travelled to al-Hijāz and returned with a document testifying that he had sought the direct intercession of the Prophet on the matter of destroying the church and received his blessing on the project. He presented this extraordinary document to then-amīr Barqūq, who first ordered the church closed and then destroyed it. In this case, as in the above-mentioned case of the Maghribī Surūr, the Sufi’s desire was grounded in Prophetic tradition, but that purely spiritual authority was then legitimated by an official document—a curious amalgamation of holy and legal authority. (Ibn Nūh employs this trope of Prophetic vision no less than three times in his account.)

While individual popular acts of church destruction were tactics (short-term manipulations), their repeated, formalised performance and subsequent narrativisation changed their significance. In moving accounts like Ibn Nūh’s, legal justifications for destruction like Ibn al-Rif‘a’s, or credulous reports of intercession writs like al-Maqritzī’s, popular and illegal acts were sanitised and legitimated by borrowing the idiom of more formal discourses of right (in both senses of the word—of entitlement and correctness). This narrative framing produced models for later readers and observers.

Once recorded, these initially transgressive acts of violence redounded on the larger discourses—polemical, hagiographical, historical and legal systems—whose terms were borrowed to justify the acts. Such accounts gradually opened within legal discourse, for example, a space from whence certain forms of violence were not only normalised but also advocated. The result was the gradual development (not displacement or replacement) of the law to allow for new possibilities along the lines of these regulatory acts. Through their repeated performance and their sanctification in

247. Ibn Nūh mentions that the mosque was "within [Christians'] property, amid their churches and residence" (p. 246).
248. Sulīk 5:53-54. The church was converted into a mosque.
249. The first version, attributed to "a man of well-known piety," featured the injustice of the Mamlūk punishment of church destroyers; he also mentions another version by an Upper Egyptian Sufi in lament of the passing away of the edicts against dhīnnīs; and, finally, a third by which a pious man learned about an old mosque within the Christian quarter which Qūsī Copts had allegedly covered with dirt. (Ibn Nūh, p. 250, 246 and 254, respectively). On another writ of Prophetic intercession, see the case of the Maghribī Surūr (above).
250. In 1321, the numerous incidents of destruction were justified and promoted on different registers: thus a Cairene mob gradually enlisted passers-by with the claim that their act had been authorised by the sultan (which it hadn’t), while an advisor calmed the sultan by insisting that the remarkable coincidence of destruction from Alexandria to Qūs, and all in the same afternoon, demonstrated that it was divine providence that was at work punishing the corrupt Copts (Khitāb 2:513).
251. Legal discourse also developed in relation to these campaigns: we have noted the novel prescriptions regarding the jīza made by some jurists like al-Asnāwī and al-Rāfi‘ī, who advocated instating the jīza on the weak, the poor, the monk, etc. (as in Ibn Nūh, p. 256). Regarding church renovations, the innovative rulings of Ibn al-Rif‘a similarly entered into the legal domain, most notably, his proposal to place the burden of proof on dhīnnīs to show that their churches were pre-Islamic (rather
religious and political idioms, regulatory acts gradually assumed a place in mainstream politics, occasionally even inspiring similar acts by the state. Indeed by adopting these popular campaigns and capitalising on their symbolic effect, the state used moral regulation as an effective tool in consolidating its own authority. The ‘trickle up’ of such acts of regulation legitimated power, extended authority and redefined the terms on which the state related to its subjects.252

Regulatory discourses and practices were mutually infectious. The trope of rowdy Christian celebrations that drew out the Muslim calls to prayer is a case in point. The scene is laid out not only in the Pact of ‘Umar as elaborated by jurists253 but also in state documents that appointed the head of dhimmī communities: “Be careful not to allow the Christians in their churches to bang the clappers (nāqṣa) [violently] nor to raise their voices in a loud clamour, especially at the times of the Muslim call to prayer.”254 Here we have a state proscription of precisely the conditions encountered in narrative accounts of church (and wider confessional) violence—in Ibn Nūh’s account of several Qūfī Christian celebrations in 1307,255 in the case of the sufi who slept by the church in Nāhiyat Abu al-Numrus in 1379, in two weddings in 1383,256 etc. Of course, this is no coincidence but neither is it simply a form superimposed on an event by its narrators. Such scenes were thoroughly disseminated in popular discourses, like the sermons of 1301, which spelled out these conditions in graphic detail. Listeners were conditioned to seek out these scenes as archetypes of dhimmī transgression, and were likely to import this particular frame to occasions they generally considered offensive.

Regulatory discourses, then, not only framed events within the existing idioms of right, they also educated the imagination and sensibility of the moralised reader/listener by producing idealized tropes, which were then repeatedly sought—and found—in social practice.257 Thus, in 1383, it was only a few months after one Coptic wedding had aroused communal violence that another wedding attracted Mamlūk attention to a covert bureaucrat’s wealth, leading to its confiscation.258

than the customary position, which asked for proof from those who wanted to destroy churches. While later jurists like al-Suhki disagreed with Ibn al-Riṣāla, they felt compelled to cite him, on occasion, admiringly (Ward p. 71); but note that this opinion was quoted as an undisputed authority by Ibn al-Durayhim in Manṭaq... fol. 42v–43r. Ward suggests that “Ibn al-Riṣāla is among the earliest of the Shāfi‘īs to propose so radical a reshaping of the status of dhimmīs” (Ward p. 82).

252. For this argument in the English context, see Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution (Oxford: 1985).

253. For the limits on Christian ritual in the Pact, see Ibn al-Qāyyim, Akhādat 2:151ff. The author in fact, wishes to do away entirely with the nāqṣa since its function was originally to hang above the church and be rung loudly so that congregants would hear it from a distance; Ibn al-Qāyyim thus finds “ringing it quietly” something of an oxymoron (ibid. p. 152).


255. Here the transgression was exacerbated by the fact that the loud Christians were (allegedly) celebrating the conversion of a mosque into a church (Ibn Nūh, p. 246). The cycle reappears in more than one celebration narrated by Ibn Nūh in this passage.

256. In 1383, a rowdy Coptic wedding—which typically became louder than the Muslim call to prayer—prompted violence between Muslims and Copts, and was raised to the authorities; when converts tried to intercede for their former co-religionists, a group of them were tried and executed for apostasy. (Ibn Hājar Inbāṭ 3:273–274; Sulāk 5:150–151). At another “visible” wedding the same year the convert Ibn al-Saqqārī was arrested and his property was confiscated when officials noted the jewellery the women were wearing (Inbāṭ 3:276–277; Sulāk 5:155). In both instances, the visibility of converts made them targets for regulation, both religious and political.

257. Similar indignation motivated a suit to spearhead the destruction of a Lower Egyptian monastery in 1438 where Christians became too rowdy at its widely attended annual festival. See Sulāk 7:351–352, Baddāl 2:183.

258. See above, note 256.
The circulation of regulatory tropes in legal and anti-\textit{dhimmī} discourse—as in practices of church destruction and their subsequent historical representation—is a hallmark of Mamlūk moral regulation. The arbitrary nature of dominion and destruction was naturalised through legal discourse: as we have seen, anti-\textit{dhimmī} authors selectively deployed the law and inserted social commentary through which they advanced changes in legal and political practice. Through the mediatory social position of sufis and minor \textit{ulamā'}, anti-\textit{dhimmī} discourses reached and mobilised Muslim observers. Finally, it was in acts like church violence—often unauthorised by the State and sometimes in direct violation of religious and secular law—that non-\textit{ulamā'} participated in regulation, articulating discontent against a host of perceived injustices, a contribution that was then elaborated and rehabilitated in various literary genres.

\textbf{Violence as Identity Performed}

In the emerging fragmentation of Upper Egyptian society, violence represented a force of cohesion that united participants and fostered communal identity. I have mentioned Muslims and Copts; but under the rubric of Muslim settlement, one must consider not only geographical newcomers, but also converts, for whom violence was a visible means of performing a new Muslim identity, both before themselves and under the suspicious gaze of older Muslims. For the moralisation of anti-\textit{dhimmī} discourse worked in a double-manner: not only are Copts moralized as agents of pollution and corruption, but Muslim readers/listeners were also moralised as agents focused on public morality.

What led many participants to join the waves of determined destruction was the sense that they could publicly perform their identities in communally sanctioned ways. This is especially interesting because those who carried out the violence were at once visible (as Muslims) and anonymous actors without individual responsibility (as part of “the mob”). Such desperate measures were especially needed at a time of disturbing fluidity, syncretism and unregulated passage from one religious community to another. Violence sharpened these fuzzy boundaries. It produced that which it claimed to spring from. Here, violence was “productive” in constructing what appeared to be more stable and distinguishable identities—in short, it produced difference. In this sense, conversion was not only a product of violence (against individuals and structures) but also its cause.
Coptic Bishoprics in 14th-Century Upper Egypt.
Based on bishops' signatures at the Ritual Consecration of the Chrism.
Édité par Richard McGregor et Adam Sabra
avec la collaboration de Mireille Loubet

Le développement du soufisme en Égypte
à l’époque mamelouke

ATTR

The Development of Sufism
in Mamluk Egypt

Extrait

Institut français d’archéologie orientale
Cahier des Annales islamologiques 27 – 2006
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