Accusations of Unbelief in Islam

A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr

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BRILL

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Discussion about the place and reputation of scholars of the non-religious sciences, among them the mathematical, in Islamicate societies often swings between three extremes. One position claims that these scholars were all Muslims (ignoring those who adhered to other creeds) and were well respected by their co-religionists, since "Islam had no problem with science," as the Catholic church did. Representatives of this belief can easily be found on the Internet as well as in print publications of differing degrees of reliability and academic standing, including those brought to the market by university presses and other publishers committed to serious academic works. The second position holds that scholars of the non-religious sciences in Islamicate societies did not mix their religious beliefs with their scientific creeds and that they understood how important it was to keep the two apart in order to achieve reliable scientific results. This is a position widespread among historians of science who specialize in Islamicate societies. The speaker most often quoted as evidence for such a view is Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (b. 362/973; d. 440/1048), with his comments on Hindu astronomy.[1] Finally, the third position maintains that scholars of the non-religious sciences in Islamicate societies were mostly under pressure, attacked for their engagement with types of knowledge regarded as either superfluous or dangerous to the pursuit of a good Muslim life. Representatives of this point of view can be found today mostly in the public sphere, among popular writers and academics who are not familiar with pre-modern Islamicate societies.

The narratives in the extant biographical and historical sources, though, speak a less unequivocal language. These sources are full of praise for many scholars of the non-religious sciences, but they also tell stories of how such interests corrupted the morals of some among them or endangered them because of the suspicions, jealousy, or greed of their peers and their superiors. Depending on the religious and political stances of their authors, these

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1　*Alberuni's India,* pp. 263–265.

sources also deliver stories about the inherently negative character of some of these sciences, in particular philosophy. Despite these narrative complexities, rarely were any of the scholars of the non-religious sciences beheaded for their engagement with them. As a rule, it was scholars of the religious disciplines who ran into severe troubles for their religious beliefs and practices. A good number of them lost their lives. Their deaths are often described with a vocabulary of "unbelief" or "heresy."

When invited to contribute to a contextualized, in-depth study of acts of *takfīr* (accusation of "unbelief"), I thought that studying a number of sources of Middle Eastern Islamicate societies during the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries would be very helpful for resolving other questions too. I hoped, for instance, that such a study could improve our understanding of the contexts in which the mathematical sciences (geometry, arithmetic, number theory, algebra, timekeeping, planetary theory, calendars, etc.) succeeded in becoming a stable and accepted part of the scholarly world of the *madrasa* and cognate teaching institutes. In addition, I expected to learn how scholars adverse to this process or at the very least not in favor of it positioned themselves in relation to these novel changes. To my utter surprise, the sources I had selected—the biographical works of Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248), Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (b. 599/1203; d. 667/1269), Ibn al-ʿIbrī (b. 622/1225; d. 683/1286), Ibn Khallikān (b. 608/1211; d. 681/1282), and Abū l-Fidāʾ (b. 672/1273; d. 732/1331)— did not prove very informative. While some stories of *takfīr* appear in their works, most of them concern pre-Islamic cultures and early Islamic history up until the early ʿAbbāsids. By contrast, the five authors tell very few such stories with regard to the dynasties in power during their lifetimes and practically none for scholars of the mathematical sciences. A glance into other historical chronicles showed, however, that accusations of *kufr* or death sentences because of a similar type of accusation, namely *zandaqa* ("concealed belief in something other than some form of mainstream Islam"), were by no means alien to the chosen period. Given these circumstances, the very first question that I wanted to investigate was how to understand the glaring silence of the five authors on the subject of *takfīr* with respect to scholars of the mathematical sciences. I approached the question first by trying to establish a quantitative survey on the use of *takfīr* and other forms of *k-f-r* for the five authors. This posed some methodological difficulties, which are not fully solvable because of the different genres of the five texts. Nonetheless, even this unsophisticated "statistical" check brought new questions to the fore, mostly of a qualitative kind. These questions I turned to next. I realized that semantically the cluster of meanings attached to *k-f-r* and its various grammatical derivatives, while heavily focused on "unbelief," also included (not surprisingly) semantic

derivations like *kaffāra* ("repentance," "atonement," "expiation") or, when used together with *niʿma* ("grace, benefit"), ingratitude. But even if the semantic focus was on "unbelief" (*kufr, kufrān*), its practice (*kafara*) and its adherents (*kuffār, kafara, kāfirūna*), the stories told by the five authors leave no doubt that their application did not signify always the same thing or things. There were clearly recognizable differences between their usage in those stories, covering not only religious matters, but issues of social relationship (loyalty towards a patron, upholding of an oath, excluding or ruining competitors for positions of power and wealth, establishing or exerting preeminence in scholarly circles, dissolving a marriage, etc.), standards of proper behavior and culture (poetry, public appearance, critique of rulers) and military conflicts and rebellions (early Islamic conquests, internal revolts, Crusaders, Mongols, Almoravids, etc.). Differences also appeared when *k-f-r* and its derivatives were used in situations more clearly defined as religious—such as in connection with tenets held by philosophers or *ahl al-dhimma*, practices observed by or ascribed to astrologers, and interpretations or evaluations of deeds by early Muslim leaders or members of different denominations within Islam. The tone infused in the descriptions of such acts and their perpetrators seems to differ not only over time and region, but also sociologically. With the label "sociological," I refer to whether individuals or groups are confronted and whether their beliefs and more so their acts are described as challenging or threatening an individual Muslim, a dynasty, the population of a state, or Islam as a belief system.

Beyond this variety of use and function of *k-f-r* in the individual stories told by the five authors, a further qualitative issue requires consideration, although it cannot be fully investigated in this paper. This issue concerns the differences in narration style the authors utilize, including such simple differences as biography writing versus chronicle writing, the main actors of the biographical entries (physicians, scholars, other important men and women), or the time frames of each work. These narrative differences also include the structural format (chronological, thematic, alphabetical), the kind of sources used, and the manner in which they are re-narrated (which parts are taken over and which functions they have in each text, throughout an entire book or in a specific textual unit. Personal beliefs and positions in scholarly, social, local, and regional networks of power and culture need to be considered, as well as individual preferences for delivering, enhancing, or downplaying messages and judgments. Such individual preferences encompass the semantic fields in which *k-f-r* and its derivatives are situated, the type and number of actors, events, and activities described in the stories, and the linkages between earlier and later stories, entries, or time periods made explicit or hidden by each author. Stories of "unbelief" are one element of the overall narrative

constructed by each author. They can be meant to deliver knowledge; establish or reinforce values; solidify or verify beliefs and judgments; or amuse, astonish, stir up gossip, scandalize, or provide other forms of entertainment. But do they also question, doubt, or challenge? Several stories are shared among all or at least some of the five authors. They are, however, not necessarily told in exactly the same manner. Does that mean that the texts the writers read differed or did they manipulate their sources in order to serve different goals? More than those that are shared are the stories that appear only once. This difference is partly a consequence of the different formats and thematic orientations of the five sources. But does this multiplicity of narrated stories also reveal other factors that motivated the authors' choices? Can one understand the meanings of stories of "unbelief" isolated from the larger networks of texts in which they circulated? Do the different stories nonetheless share some overarching beliefs in how to look at *k-f-r* that might help in understanding my original question about the glaring silence of all five authors concerning cases of *takfīr* against scholars of the mathematical sciences?

These are some of the qualitative questions that occurred to me while reading the various stories that speak through *k-f-r* and its derivatives. I will discuss them here without trying to achieve anything close to comprehensiveness and always with an eye to what they tell us (or do not) about the status, reputation, and degrees of freedom of scholars of the mathematical sciences. My central thesis regarding the silence on stories of "unbelief" in the context of the mathematical sciences is that this silence is one of the intended results of the manner in which the few stories of "unbelief" were constructed with regard to the philosophical sciences in general. My main thesis concerning the whole palette of stories of "unbelief" told by the five authors comprises two components. One claim is that *kufr* covered a much broader spectrum of meaning than religiously defined "unbelief." It often served as a surrogate for political, social, or cultural conflicts between individuals or groups. The other claim is that the language of *kufr* served as the primary marker of group identity. This usage did not entail necessarily the specification of concrete religious divergences. In this function the language of "unbelief" was applied most often in times of war. But it can occasionally also be found in stories about the long-ago past, before monotheistic religions had been "sent to man." Referencing a group from those times in such terms constitutes in my view an unfair judgment. It remains unclear whether Muslim writers genuinely did not see or simply did not wish to see the inappropriateness of applying *takfīr* to Aristotle, Plato, and other ancient philosophers.

I will begin with the very few stories, where "unbelief" is invoked with regard to any or all of the mathematical sciences. Then I will survey quantitatively

and qualitatively the usage of *takfīr* and other forms of *k-f-r* in the five sources. Finally, I will discuss some features of the narrative styles of the five authors, trying to relate them in some way to the stories of "unbelief" they tell. The conclusions I will draw from this analysis will be summarized afterwards, although they will remain tentative due to the huge methodological challenge faced by any study of local practices of storytelling and their meanings.

1   Matters of "unbelief" Regarding the Mathematical Sciences

The almost total lack of stories of "unbelief" with respect to the mathematical sciences and their practitioners is surprising, given the well-known and widespread suspicion among numerous religious scholars across Islamicate societies about the alien character of these and other non-religious sciences. While Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (b. 450/1058; d. 505/1111) exonerates these sciences from the taint of direct "unbelief," he nonetheless portrays them as roads to philosophy and consequently "unbelief."[2] Geometry was said to be dangerous to a Muslim because of its unassailable proofs. Astronomy and astrology were attacked for their unreliability. Specific beliefs were considered heretical, such as belief in planetary souls and their function as intermediaries of God's will, and the potential involvement of polytheism in adoration of the planets. Enemies of music, singing, dancing, and merrymaking could also cast their malevolent eye on music theory. Even arithmetic, while appreciated as a tool of law, when engaged with too much could ruin a believer's adherence to the right path and involve him or her too much with the material world to the detriment of preparation for the afterlife. These various misgivings about the mathematical sciences spanned a broad register for potential conflicts and could open doors to accusations of "unbelief." Indeed, there are a few stories in the five texts that confirm the existence of individual conflicts, which involved if not outright accusations, then at least suspicions of "unbelief."

The most revealing telling of a story of "unbelief" regarding the mathematical sciences takes place in reports about the burning of books in the late-sixth/twelfth century in Baghdad. Three of the five authors include fragmentary accounts of the well-known public event and its background in their books (Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn al-ʿIbrī, Abū l-Fidāʾ), while a fourth (Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa) presents a short biography of Ibn al-Māristāniyya, who presided over the event, without one word about the affair itself. The fifth author (Ibn Khallikān) ignores the entire series of happenings as well as the actors involved. Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn

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2   al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, pp. 9–10; Algazel, *Tahafot*, pp. 14–15, 20.

al-ʿIbrī report in identical words, on the authority of the Jewish physician Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā from Ceuta, that Ibn al-Māristāniyya had burned books in Baghdad, among them one of Ibn al-Haytham's works on *ʿilm al-hayʾa*, "calling out loudly by pointing to a circle that represented the universe: this is a disaster, a fatal calamity, a blind misfortune! Then he tore it apart and threw it into the fire."[3] Yūsuf comments: "this showed his ignorance and fanaticism, since there is no 'unbelief' in *al-hayʾa*, which is rather a road to belief (*īmān*) and to knowledge of the power of God Almighty and Glorious in regard to what He planned and ordered well."[4]

Abū l-Fidāʾ reports that in the year 611/1214 ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī "died in Baghdad. [He had governed] a number of administrative units (*wilāyāt*). He was suspected of belonging to the *madhhab* of the philosophers. He was imprisoned before his death. His books were [presented to the public]. One found in them matters of 'unbelief,' like a prayer to Saturn, and others regarding metaphysics (*bi-l-ilāhiyya*). They were burned. Then his father interceded for him. He was released and returned to his responsibilities (*al-aʿmāl*)."[5]

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa includes the short biographical sketch of Ibn al-Māristāniyya in his entry for Abū l-Ḥusayn Ṣāʿd b. Hibat Allāh.[6] He praises him on the authority of the secretary Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Baghdādī as skilled in medical theory and practice. At some unspecified time, Ibn al-Māristāniyya became superintendent of the endowment of the ʿAḍudī Hospital in Baghdad. Later this office was taken away from him, and he was imprisoned for two years. Equally undated is the information that he studied successfully *ḥadīth* and *adab*, and wrote an unfinished history of Baghdad (a continuation of Ibn Khaṭīb's *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*). Late in his life, the ʿAbbāsid Great Dīwān appointed him ambassador to (Queen Thamar in) Tiflis. Ibn al-Māristāniyya died on his way back from there.[7]

Richter-Bernburg's paper on Ibn al-Māristāniyya shows how much of the information on the events was left out by these four authors. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, for instance, omits biographical information such as the *madhhab* to which Ibn al-Māristāniyya belonged (Ḥanbalī), the men in the ʿAbbāsid administration with whom he was closely connected (two Ḥanbalī viziers and majordomos, Yaḥyā b. Hubayra and ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yūnus), Ibn al-Māristāniyya's family

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3 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 229.

4 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 229; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 1, p. 147.

5 Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 385.

6 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, p. 270.

7 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, p. 270.

background as a son of a couple who without formal education worked at one of the hospitals in Baghdad, and other fields of his education (logic, philosophy, the mathematical sciences). Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa also ignores Ibn al-Māristāniyya's repeated dishonesty (his invention of a dignified genealogy for himself, going back to Abū Bakr; falsifying *samāʿāt* in *ḥadīth*), and last but not least, the story about the burning of books.[8] Much of this information was easily available to Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa as well as to the other four authors. Richter-Bernburg's bibliography indicates that the book burning and its victim were discussed by several religious scholars of the time, among them Ibn al-Dubaythī (b. 558/1163; d. 637/1239; Baghdad), Ibn al-Najjār (b. 578/1183; d. 643/1245; Baghdad), and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (b. 582/1186; d. 654/1257; Damascus).[9] In addition, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa certainly knew Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Sabtī's report on the book burning, because he had read Ibn al-Qifṭī's biographical dictionary.[10]

Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn al-ʿIbrī, on the other hand, could have listed other books destroyed during this event, such as Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* and his *Kitāb al-Najāt,* or the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. They could have specified that Ibn al-Māristāniyya did not burn them by his own hand, but had an assistant to whom he gave each book after ridiculing or condemning it. Abū l-Fidāʾ could have elaborated on the matters of "unbelief" with regard to *al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*.[11] He could have clarified, on the authority of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, that the piece of paper with the prayer to Saturn, allegedly written by ʿAbd al-Salām, was considered a falsification.[12] He could have added a story told by Ibn al-Jawzī, according to which many years after the book burning, when Ibn al-Māristāniyya prepared for his march to Tiflis, ʿAbd al-Salām encountered him on the street and asked him with biting scorn: "Who has offered incense to Saturn this time, you or me?" Ibn al-Māristāniyya replied without remorse: "Me."[13]

All four authors could have quoted the previously mentioned religious scholars as well as others, some of whom were contemporaries, who lived in Baghdad, Aleppo, or Damascus, and thus could have been consulted personally. Any one of them could have given his own view on the events. Some of them might have even clarified, as they did in writing, that the book burning was part and parcel of an excessive act of revenge. It had been staged within the framework of a juridical tribunal against ʿAbd al-Salām and his larger

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8   Richter-Bernburg, "Ibn al-Māristānīya: The Career of a Ḥanbalite Intellectual."

9   Richter-Bernburg, "Ibn al-Māristānīya: The Career of a Ḥanbalite Intellectual," pp. 280–282.

10   See, e.g., Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, pp. 269, 273.

11   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 385.

12   Richter-Bernburg, "Ibn al-Māristānīya: The Career of a Ḥanbalite Intellectual," p. 277.

13   Richter-Bernburg, "Ibn al-Māristānīya: The Career of a Ḥanbalite Intellectual," p. 277.

family for some slight against the majordomo of the ʿAbbāsid court, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yūnus, when both men had been children or in their teens.[14]

This material available for constructing stories rich in detail and controversial judgments, contrasted with the infrequency with which the five authors exploited it, is strong support for my impression that they obfuscated stories of "unbelief" with regard to the mathematical sciences, while favoring stories of "unbelief" when narrating pre-Islamic and early-Islamic times. This silence is neither innocent nor the result of a lack of material. It was purposefully constructed in particular ways by which the five authors furthered their various intentions.

Ibn al-Qifṭī at least twice makes the case that the mathematical sciences, including those related to the heavens, are not carriers of "unbelief."[15] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa abstains at least twice from speaking of conflicts that involved powerful men of the Ḥanbalī persuasion.[16] Ibn al-ʿIbrī is generally less outspoken when it comes to issues of "unbelief" among Muslims. Ibn Khallikān seems to focus on issues of war and politics when speaking about "unbelievers" or matters of "unbelief" in his own time and the decades immediately preceding it. He tells only one story of "unbelief" where the focus is on the mathematical sciences as the root of such deviation from the right path.[17] Abū l-Fidāʾ chooses to present many stories of "unbelief" outside the realm of Islamicate societies, which in a sense corresponds nicely to his generalized division of the contemporary world into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-kufr*.[18]

Two sets of stories related to the mathematical sciences and involving "unbelief" concern the ancestor of one of the later dominant Sunnī schools of law, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (b. 150/767; d. 204/820), and a philosopher in Almoravid al-Andalus, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ṣāʾigh (b. 488/1095; d. 533/1138), known as Ibn Bājja. Al-Shāfiʿī is described as having practiced astrology successfully but abandoning it after what appears to have been a deep personal disappointment. Abū l-Fidāʾ quotes the jurist's grandson with the following words:

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14   Richter-Bernburg, "Ibn al-Māristānīya: The Career of a Ḥanbalite Intellectual," pp. 272–274.

15   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 52, 229.

16   The second case is the house arrest of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī ordered by al-Malik al-Ashraf, who, according to Pouzet, had strong Ḥanbalī leanings. In Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa this house arrest and the surrounding rumors and conflicts simply do not appear, as is the case with the book burning in Ibn al-Māristāniyya's short biography. Pouzet, *Damas au viiᵉ/xiiiᵉs*, pp. 36–39, 203–205.

17   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, pp. 429–431.

18   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 88.

> My father transmitted to us saying: "Al-Shāfiʿī used to observe the stars. He reported and examined only things that were extraordinary. One day he sat down, [while] his wife was in labor, reckoning, and said: 'She will give birth to a one-eyed girl with a black mole (in her face) who will die until (such a date).' And this is what happened. After this [event] he [decided] not to look into that [anymore]. He buried the books on the stars that he owned."[19]

Nonetheless, al-Shāfiʿī did not become a complete enemy of this discipline. Ibn Khallikān rather emphasizes that he held the same opinion as the Murjiʾī Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 218 or 219/833 or 834): "The adoration of the Sun and the Moon are not 'unbelief', but they are an indicator of 'unbelief'."[20]

As for Ibn Bājja, only Ibn Khallikān reports that he was accused of "unbelief." After providing his full name and the indication that he was a philosopher and a famous poet, Ibn Khallikān informs his readers that Abū Naṣr al-Fatḥ b. Muḥammad b. ʿUbaid b. Khāqān al-Qaysī (d. 529/1134 or 535/1140), the author of *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān* ("The Necklaces of Pure Gold"), had mentioned him in his book, relating to him *taʿṭīl* ("negation of God's attributes"), the doctrine of the *ḥukamāʾ* and the *falāsifa* (of the physicians/wise men and the philosophers), and *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* ("the dissolution of the creed"). Then he introduces what proves to be an almost literal quote by saying:

> He said regarding him in his book, which he called *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus* ("The ambition of the souls"), things like: "He studied the book of the mathematical sciences (*kitāb al-taʿālīm*), thought about the bodies of the orbs and about the boundaries of the geographical zones (*iqlīm*). He rejected the Book of God, the Wise. He cast it behind his back, turning proudly away from it. He wished to destroy what the destroyer could not arrive at, neither here nor there. He confined himself to astronomy (*hayʾa*). He denied that we have a return to God. He pronounced verdicts from the planets through (their) motion. He committed crimes against God, the Subtle, the Knowing. He was audacious when hearing prohibition and threat. He derided His Sublime Word: 'Indeed, He, who has assigned the Qurʾān to you, will surely bring you back to the place of return' [Qurʾān 28:85]. He believed that time is rotating (*dawr*), that man is (like) plants or blossoms, whose [fate of] death is his completion and whose forcible seizure is his fruition. Faith was erased from his heart so

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19   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, pp. 375f.
20   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 277.

that he had no vestiges of it in it. His tongue forgot the Compassionate so that no name for Him departed from it."[21]

Ibn Khallikān closed this quote with a comment of his own, disavowing it:

> Ibn Khāqān certainly exaggerates in his (presentation) and crossed the line by describing him with these vicious beliefs. But God knows best what the true nature of his position is.[22]

Ibn al-Qifṭī, who also dedicates an entry to this Andalusian philosopher, has only good things to say about him and does not waste a single word on anything suspicious about his beliefs.[23] The reason for this silence is made clear by Ibn al-Qifṭī's comment that Ibn Khāqān had asked Ibn Bājja for some of his poems to be included in his *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, but was deceived by the philosopher. This embittered the man, and he wrote a vile entry about him in his book.[24] A rhymed story of "unbelief" as a thank-you-very-much for sending the wrong poem or none at all is certainly reason enough to abstain from repeating the hilariously overblown *takfīr*. The problem with this explanation is that the Būlāq edition of the *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān* includes poems in Ibn Khāqān's extraordinarily hostile biography of Ibn Bājja.

2   Takfīr in the Five Sources

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa and Ibn Khallikān do not use the term *takfīr* even once. Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn al-ʿIbrī, and Abū l-Fidāʾ employ it only sparingly.[25] Even other forms, such as the verb *kafara* and its verbal nouns *kufr*, *kufrān,* and *kāfir* (with various plural forms), as well as the second form of the verb, i.e., *kaffara*, with the meaning of accusing someone of *kufr*, appear relatively seldom. When used, the clear preference is to apply such terms to pre- and early-Islamic religions, doctrines, schools, authors, and activists of religious movements.

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21   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, pp. 429–430. I did not use W.M. de Slane's translation, because of its interpretive character, in particular at the beginning of the quote. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 3, p. 131.

22   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, p. 430.

23   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 406.

24   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 406.

25   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 51; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 23, 49, 50; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 477; vol. 2, p. 254.

Remarkably often these notions appear in poems or direct speech and thus are often a literary or a rhetorical device employed by a poet or historian. In the rare cases of this vocabulary of "unbelief" being applied to contemporary contexts, the cases referred to are presented mostly as settled issues, that is, that there was some kind of consensus about the matter being rightfully called "unbelief." The terms appear only rarely in the context of contemporary matters of accusation, of something in dispute.

Ibn al-Qifṭī uses the term *takfīr* precisely once. In his entry on Aristotle he presents a long text with a close structural affinity to al-Ghazālī's description and condemnation of philosophy in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* ("The Deliverer from Error"). In the wording as well as with regard to its completeness, this text differs, however, quite substantially from al-Ghazālī's original. The modified Ghazālian text begins with the description of three schools of ancient Greek philosophers (believers in eternity, naturalists, students of metaphysics) and ends with the first lines of al-Ghazālī's discussion of ethics. It is in this altered Ghazālian text that the term *takfīr* appears, together with a good number of the occurrences of the verb *kafara* and the verbal noun *kufr* (six times) in Ibn al-Qifṭī's overall usage of these terms.[26] Ibn al-Qifṭī reminds his readers that Aristotle's philosophy as well as the doctrines of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā can be classified into three parts: one part that necessitates *takfīr*; one part that necessitates *tabdīʿ* ("accusation of innovation"); and one part that does not require rejection (*inkār*). Following Ghazālian lines, Ibn al-Qifṭī writes that this classification into three parts applies to six kinds of philosophy, namely, mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics (*ilāhī*), politics (city), economics (household), and ethics. His evaluation of three of the mathematical sciences (arithmetic, geometry, and configuration of the world/universe) agrees almost literally with the corresponding passage in *al-Munqidh*. It states unambiguously that there is nothing in these sciences that is linked to the religious disciplines, neither as refutation nor as affirmation, but that they are demonstrative matters, and, hence, once understood and mastered, there is no reason to repudiate them.

While such a statement cannot explain why there are no cases recorded in which someone accuses a scholar or amateur of the mathematical sciences of "unbelief," it does, though, suggest that in Ayyūbid Aleppo these fields of knowledge could be described as free of any connection with matters of "unbelief" and hence there would be no reason for repudiating them. Given that the ultimate source of this declaration was al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh*, the readers of this passage would have recognized it as not merely Ibn al-Qifṭī's personal

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26   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 50–53.

opinion. We can thus assume that this view was shared by a larger group of *ʿulamāʾ* in the Ayyūbid realm. Given the prominence of different factions of the *ʿulamāʾ*, including Ayyūbid courtiers with strong philosophical interests, it is not unlikely that members of the Ayyūbid family and their *umarāʾ* also acknowledged that at least the three specified mathematical sciences were free of elements that necessitated and justified accusations of "unbelief" and innovation. Hence, the silence on cases of *takfīr* against practitioners of such fields of knowledge might signal an unwillingness to take such accusations seriously, as matters to be resolved in public space. In Section 3 I will return to Ibn al-Qifṭī's modified Ghāzalian extract and discuss some of its alterations as expressions of Ibn al-Qifṭī's style of narration, his own choices for presenting matters of "unbelief" to his readership in Aleppo (and elsewhere).

Beyond this modified extract from *al-Munqidh*, Ibn al-Qifṭī employs *kafara/kufr/kāfir* (plus plural forms) another nine times in eight biographical entries, with the meaning of "unbelief" and once in connection with *al-niʿma*, "ingratitude." The majority of these cases (eight) relate to the period up to the fifth/eleventh century. In one of them, Ibn al-Qifṭī presents the caliph al-Maʾmūn's usage of *kufr* as an act intended to humiliate the Byzantine emperor.[27] A second case refers to Muḥammad's order to one of his Companions to consult al-Ḥārith b. Kalada about a disease that had befallen him, adding that it was lawful to consult *ahl al-kufr* in matters of medicine, when the person consulted was from the same people (as the person consulting).[28] In matters of the body, the statement suggests, shared tribal affiliation matters more than adherence to the same (correct) belief. Ibn al-Qifṭī did not present this story, however, to teach whom a sick person was allowed to approach for help, but as evidence for the claim that al-Ḥārith b. Kalada's status as a Muslim was not sound. It can thus be seen as an indirect act of *takfīr* by Ibn al-Qifṭī's source, that is, Hishām al-Kalbī (b. 120/737; d. 204/819). It was an event, though, that had happened long before Ibn al-Qifṭī compiled his collection of biographies. Its function is thus to reiterate elements of the general value system of Muslim readers, not to record recent events and offer clues for their interpretation.

A third case is connected with a physician who lived some two centuries before the author, namely Ibn Buṭlān (d. after 455/1063). It appears in a summary of Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-aṭibbāʾ* ("The Banquet of the Physicians"), written in Constantinople, well after his unsuccessful bid for Ibn Riḍwān's (d. 460/1067–68) patronage in Cairo, but reflecting on this very sharp controversy between the two men. According to Conrad, this controversy should

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27   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 29.
28   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 162.

not be read primarily as a medico-philosophical conflict, but as a contest for social recognition, with a young, newly arrived student of medicine seeking the approval of his peers—and the patronage of one in particular—and the hugely divergent means the two disputants had available.

> [T]he abuse, accusations and slander which comprise the bulk of the literary product of the controversy are very much to the point: in what amounted to a conflict over social and professional status, to fail to hold one's own against such attacks—whether real or perceived—was as much as to lose the contest.[29]

Acts of *takfīr* could and apparently did often serve such goals, in particular within the vast domain of religious knowledge, which lent itself most easily to the use of this specific tool. The use of forms of *takfīr* in the controversy between Ibn Buṭlān and Ibn Riḍwān has not drawn the attention of Conrad, who instead focuses on accusations of intellectual inferiority, shallow learning, age or status, and the power differential between the two men. In the part of the controversy recorded by Ibn al-Qifṭī, the claim of *kufr* relates to the understanding of place. It is introduced as a commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. The discussion begins with a definition ascribed to him: "It is the boundary of the encompassing concave body touching the boundary of the encompassed convex body."[30] Although this is not Aristotle's definition, the issue from which Arabic version of the *Physics* (translation, paraphrase, commentary) it is taken is of no immediate relevance here. The subsequent discussion of the perceived weakness of this definition is fascinating, but also of no immediate relevance here. The use of *kufr* does not apply directly to the various layers of mistakes the author recognizes in this definition, errors that he ascribes directly to Aristotle and summarizes as the necessity of the existence of locomotion outside of location. The ascription of *kufr* to Aristotle does not refer to these errors, but to the Greek's lack of trusting in God's support. It is thus rhetorical and even ritualistic. Accusing Aristotle of not having adhered to Muslim values and forms of speech before the Prophet brought the message cannot have been Ibn Buṭlān's or Ibn al-Qifṭī's intention, although we find the same kind of judgment in the latter's paraphrase of al-Ghazālī's classification of the types of "unbelief" found among ancient Greek philosophers. The use of this vocabulary for the pre-Islamic past and for non-monotheistic cultures raises the question of why Muslim scholars believed that accusing ancient

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29   Conrad, "Scholarship and Social Context," p. 95.
30   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 307.

Greek philosophers of "unbelief" (as well as *zandaqa*) made sense. The use of a formula such as "trusting in God's support" is but one element of this (unquestioning) application of beliefs held by medieval Christian and Muslim scholars to scholars outside their own religious frameworks.

Conrad introduces into his discussion of the controversy between Ibn Buṭlān and Ibn Riḍwān the two notions of affirmation and confirmation of scholarly authority. Affirmation is a newcomer's effort to create a space of his own in a pre-existing scholarly community by appealing to this community to acknowledge his credentials and competence. Confirmation is the acknowledgement of circulating texts (in a broad sense) as obligatory, belonging to a set of items to be taken seriously (to be read, studied, commented upon, abridged, extracted, etc.) and thus providing teachers and students alike with necessary material for education.[31] Ibn al-Qifṭī's summary of *Daʿwat al-aṭibbāʾ* provides such an act of confirmation for this work and reconfirms Aristotle's *Physics*, despite its shortcomings, as a canonical work for discussion and study. The closing statement to the discussion of Aristotle's definition of place does not take that status away. It is too limited in scope and relevance to achieve such a grandiose feat. It may have been, however, one element in an effort to undermine the Stagirite's reputation as a natural philosopher, as someone capable of providing precise, reliable knowledge about fundamental concepts of natural philosophy.

A fourth case of Ibn al-Qifṭī's use of *kufr* appears in Maimonides' biography. It describes the two other Abrahamic religions, in contrast to Islam, in the context of the persecution of Jews and Christians in al-Andalus and the Maghrib under the first Almohad caliph, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin b. ʿAlī (r. 541/1146–559/1163). Part of the story is Maimonides' forced adoption of Islam.[32] By contrast to the other usages by Ibn al-Qifṭī, here the identification of something as *kufr* is not by an individual directed towards a specific doctrine or person, but is a political act of a newly established leadership and ideology against entire groups of people.

The remaining five cases appear in the biographical entries for the secretary of the Būyid court, Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ (b. 313/925; d. 384/994), the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (4th/10th century), the druggist and later court physician Abū Quraysh (2nd/8th–9th century), and the mystic Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (b. 180/796; d. 245/859). In the case of Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ, the reference to *kufr* appears as the last bit of the biographical entry, in reply to the opening line of an elegy dedicated to the scholar on his death by the seventh Shīʿī Imām, al-Sharīf

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31   Conrad, "Scholarship and Social Context," pp. 97f.
32   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 317f.

al-Raḍī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Mūsawī (d. 406/1016): "Do you know whom they carried on the wooden slates? Did you see how the light of the assembly went out?"[33] His brother al-Murtaḍā (d. 4th/10th century) was galled by this praise and wrote a nasty reply: "Yes, we know that they carried a dog, an 'unbeliever,' on the wooden slates to rush him into the fire of hell."[34]

Ibn al-ʿIbrī, in his *Taʾrīkh Mukhtaṣar al-duwal,* uses the term *takfīr* three times, twice with respect to the *Murjiʾa* and once to state that there was no need for *takfīr* and *taḍlīl* ("accusation of deception") in public debates (*munāẓarāt*) between the various Sunnī law schools.[35] The verb *kafara* appears exclusively in the context of early Islamic history (eight times). Only twice do two verbal nouns derived from *kafara* appear in Ibn al-ʿIbrī's text, in reports that relate to events shortly before and during his lifetime. The nomen agentis *kafara* ("unbelievers") is part of a threatening letter, which Hülägü Khan (r. 654/1256–663/1265) sent to the last Ayyūbid ruler of Syria, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (r. 647/1250–658/1260), in Damascus, informing him that the Mongol army meant to attack Syria. In this letter, written in strongly Islamic terms, the Īlkhān states: "It has been confirmed amongst you that we are 'unbelievers'. And amongst us it has been confirmed that you are adulterers/shameless liars (*fajara*)."[36] A second reference to the infidels in this very same letter calls on al-Nāṣir Yūsuf to choose the ways of righteousness before the "infidels"—that is, the Mongols—kindle their fire.[37] Obviously this is meant as a threat and a taunt at the same time, since Hülägü uses here the derogatory term "infidel" for himself and his troops. As for *kufr*, Ibn al-ʿIbrī repeats verbatim the story told by Ibn al-Qifṭī of Ibn al-Māristāniyya's burning of an astronomical work by Ibn al-Haytham in Baghdad. Both authors state that this act showed the physician's ignorance and bigotry since there is no "unbelief" in astronomy, which rather is a way to faith and the knowledge of God's power.[38]

In Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's biographical dictionary of physicians, the verb *kafara* and the verbal nouns *kufr* and *kāfir* (plus plural forms) appear nineteen times in eighteen biographical entries, beginning with Pythagoras, Socrates, Aristotle, and Galen, and ending with contemporaries of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa. All except two usages of *kafara/kufr/kāfir* in the latter period are rhetorical in character, literary products, not descriptions of an act of challenging another

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33   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 76.
34   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 76.
35   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 49–50.
36   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 117.
37   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 117.
38   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 174.

person for his beliefs. These literary products encompass a rhyming jest by the oculist al-Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Sulaymān (second half 6th/12th century), a series of *ḥadīth*s transmitted by the physician Sadīd al-Dīn Abū l-Thunā' Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Shaybānī, known as Ibn Raqīqa (d. after Rabī' I 634/November 1236), and one of the sayings of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's uncle Rashīd al-Dīn 'Alī b. Khalīfa (d. 17 Sha'bān 616/28 October 1219).[39] The only exception in this group was indeed an act of *takfīr*, namely the declaration by Aleppo's *'ulamā'* of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (executed in 587/1191) alleged "unbelief." It is not, however, cited as evidence of an honest conviction on the part of the accusers that Suhrawardī's creed, religious practice, or his teachings were indeed classifiable by any solid criterion as reproachable or worse. The accusation is instead characterized as an abuse of the religious weight of *kufr* motivated by other emotions and desires. The lines that precede Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's story strongly imply such a reading, since they describe the action of Aleppo's *'ulamā'* as the result of hostility toward the newcomer and their jealousy about his good and growing standing with Aleppo's Ayyūbid ruler, al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī (r. 581/1186–613/1216).[40] The second exception, in contrast, is not a description of *takfīr*, but an expression of admiration for the Ayyūbid ruler Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. In his biographical entry for 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (b. 557/1162; d. 628/1231), Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a quotes the latter's autobiographical essay in which he states: "I have never seen a ruler whose death so saddened the people. This was because he was loved by pious and profligate alike, Muslim and non-Muslim."[41] What is translated here as "non-Muslim" is in the Arabic text *al-kāfir* ("unbeliever").[42]

Ibn Khallikān does not once use the term *takfīr*, but the terms *kafara*, *kufr*, *kufrān*, *kāfir,* and its plural forms *kuffār* or *kafara* appear fifty times in altogether fifty-two of his 855 biographical entries.[43] Most often these entries concern men outside the philosophical sciences and medicine. The distribution among these other men provides a fascinating survey of the overall cultural meaning of this vocabulary. Men of political and military power, that is, rulers, governors, viziers, and military leaders, occupy first place, with twenty-two instances. Second place goes to scholars of the religious sciences, with fifteen entries. Poets come in third, with ten cases. The remaining six entries, where *kufr* and other forms are used, are dedicated to three Companions of Muḥammad, two Ṣūfīs, and one historian. The concentration of the vocabulary

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39   Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, pp. 314, 434, 464, 485.

40   Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, p. 421.

41   Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self*, p. 163.

42   Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn*, p. 452.

43   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a'yān*, vol. 6, p. 127.

of "unbelief" in thirty-six biographical entries on rulers, governors, viziers, military leaders, and poets, against twenty-one entries for men defined primarily through their religious activities highlights the importance of the public space, whether political and military or literary, for the success of this language. If it had not been supported and reinforced by acts of public punishment by the sword and the pen, it could not have become the prevalent and in certain conditions the only language of identifying enemies. The richer differentiation in early Islamic parlance among "unbelievers," polytheists, hypocrites, soothsayers, poets, and other opponents of Muḥammad has by and large completely disappeared in Ibn Khallikān's mode of speaking. It was replaced by a general condemnation of anyone who was not a Muslim as an "unbeliever" and an apostate or godless person, even if he did not live in an Islamicate society and never had been exposed to God's message.

In the biographical entry for the Ayyūbid ruler Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the Ismāʿīlīs as well as the Crusaders, but also the local Christians, are labeled "unbelievers." The outcome of the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn, for instance, is praised with the words "nothing remained except triumph, and evil befell him who disbelieved."[44] The battle as well as the entire conflict is set up in religious terms, pitting Muslims against "unbelievers."[45] This manner of conceptualizing and phrasing war as a fight between Muslims and "unbelievers," independent of the types on both sides, is also reflected in titles of rulers. Artuqids and Mamlūks, to name only two dynasties, styled themselves as defenders of Muslims and destroyers of "unbelievers," whether they actually fought a non-Muslim enemy or not.

Ibn Khallikān's stories of "unbelief" relating to individuals show moments of hilarity but at the same time the dangers of living under the Umayyads and early ʿAbbāsids, and how meanspirited, farsighted, or cautious religious scholars could be when speaking of "unbelief." Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī (d. 126/743), governor of Iraq under the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 72/691–126/743), was "suspected for his religion," Ibn Khallikān writes with noble reservation. According to a footnote by the editor, Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (b. 284/897; d. 357/967) reports in his *Kitāb al-Aghānī* that Khālid had been suspected of *zandaqa* (here probably: "adhering secretly to his ancestral religion") and "effeminacy" (*takhannuth*).[46] The judge, Abū Umayya Sharīḥ b. al-Ḥārith (d. 80/699 or 87/705 or 89/707), when asked whether the much more famous Umayyad governor of Iraq and Iran, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (b. 41/661; d. 96/714), was

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44   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 175.

45   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 175.

46   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 228 and n. 2.

a believer, answered with malicious glee: "Yes, in al-Ṭāghūt [a name for the devil], an 'unbeliever' in God, the Great."[47]

The poet Bashshār b. Burd (b. 96/714; d. 169/784) was ordered by the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 159/775–168/785) to be beaten to death for *zandaqa*, according to Szombathy, as a result of his once too often sharp-tongued poetry against some Basran notable and the caliph himself.[48] Ibn Khallikān quotes him in the entry on the Muʿtazilite Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (b. 80/699; d. 131/748) as making fun of the scholar's very long neck, which he compared to that of a giraffe.[49] One line in this poem states: "They charged men with 'unbelief' who did not believe in a man."[50] Lines such as this pose usually three challenges for interpretation. One concerns their function in poetry aimed at assaulting people of political, social, religious, or intellectual influence. A second consists in understanding whether such lines, as part of ironic, sarcastic, or frivolous mockery, indeed reflect a highly charged, potentially dangerous play of words with regard to religion as a belief system as well as the behavior of individuals. A last issue pertains to the functions of such poems and their lines referring to "unbelief" and "unbelievers" in Ibn Khallikān's biographical dictionary as well as in the works of the other four authors. While the first two questions have been addressed repeatedly by Szombathy and thus do not need to be dealt with in this paper, the third one has so far not been studied systematically.[51]

Such a comprehensive study is not only beyond the scope of this paper, but also beyond my expertise.[52] Nonetheless, I wish to point out a few features that can be easily discovered when tracing the vocabulary of "unbelief" in the various entries. One point to make is that, in all three biographical dictionaries and to a lesser extent in the two historical chronicles, the authors leave no doubt that writing, citing, and reading poetry is a much appreciated skill in cultured men of their time. Thus choosing textual extracts from earlier sources that contain verses of different poetic genres contributes to enhancing the value of their own prose.

A second point to make is that, as a rule, Ibn Khallikān or any of the other four authors would not have searched collections of poetry to find suitable poems and particular lines from them. They would have appropriated them from earlier historical and biographical literature and thus would be following

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47   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 462.
48   Szombathy, "Freedom of Expression," pp. 19–20.
49   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 6, pp. 10f.
50   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 6, p. 11.
51   See Szombathy, *Mujun: Libertinism in Mediaeval Muslim Society and Literature*.
52   Szombathy, "Freedom of Expression," pp. 19f.

already established tastes and habits, undoubtedly including the vocabulary of "unbelief" in those poetic parts. The construction of historical and biographical works predominantly from earlier texts thus ensured at least familiarity with if not the continued appreciation of the various kinds of poetry that laughed about, scoffed at, condemned, and ridiculed a broad variety of human physical and character flaws, political preferences, personal grudges, and, last but not least, religious beliefs and behaviors. One impact that this method of constructing historical and biographical literature had upon writers and readers alike is that it confronted them with the all-too-human nature of the vocabulary of "unbelief" and its use against opponents, adversaries, competitors, men of power, and subordinate or subaltern subjects.

The conspicuous absence in all five dictionaries of cases of *takfīr* credibly grounded in religious controversies and not in other conflicts hidden behind and covered up by a religious language, compared to the number of stories or expressions of "unbelief" that serve as rhymes, irony or satire, political or social challenge, components of struggles for power, or simply as markers for a division of the world into the two camps of believers and "unbelievers," suggests in my view that the five authors themselves enjoyed these stories probably as much as I did when researching them. Some of them made me smile or laugh outright, while others aroused my ire, sympathy, or amazement.

An example of the first category is the surprise the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz bi-Llāh (r. 365/975–386/996) must have felt at the beginning of his reign, when one day he climbed up the *minbar* to deliver the Friday prayer and found the following verses, most likely by one of his Sunnī subjects:

> We have heard an objectionable genealogy being recited high on the pulpit of the Friday mosque.
>
> If you are truthful in your claim, mention an ancestor beyond the fourth ancestor.
>
> So if you want to prove right what you said, give your genealogy to us as [Caliph] al-Ṭāʾiʿ did.
>
> Or else if not, then leave all genealogies [discreetly] hidden, and be one of us within the wider genealogy.
>
> For the genealogy of the Banū Hāshim clan is beyond the reach of the ambitions [of even the most] ambitious man.[53]

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53   I thank Zoltan Szombathy for translating these lines for me. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 373.

Ibn Khallikān or his source(s) commented on this anonymous barb by point-ing out that the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Ṭāʾiʿ (r. 336/947–381/991) had been incorpo-rated into the verses, since the confrontation took place during his reign.[54] He failed, however, to transmit the reply of the Fāṭimid caliph, continuing rather with the follow-up by the anonymous adversary, who had the courage to place a further note on the *minbar* the following Friday: "We are resigned to oppres-sion and injustice, but not to 'unbelief' and stupidity."[55]

An example of the second category are the well-known stories about the power struggles between the governors of Iraq, Khurasan, and regions in between—al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, his brother-in-law Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (b. 52/672; d. 102/720), and Qutayba b. Muslim (b. 50/670; d. 97/715). Ibn Khallikān picks bits and pieces from earlier historians, in particular Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (b. 224/838; d. 310/923), to survey the difficult relationships between these three men and several Umayyad caliphs. Yazīd, who had been governor of Khurāsān, had survived an earlier attack on his life by al-Ḥajjāj, who had accused him in a letter to the caliph al-Walīd (r. 81/705–96/715) of squandering God's property. The caliph's brother Sulaymān (r. 96/715–98/717), a friend of Yazīd, sent his own son, chained to Yazīd, to the caliph in order to intercede for Yazīd. When Sulaymān followed his brother as the new caliph, Qutayba b. Muslim, who had himself meanwhile been appointed governor of Khurāsān, tried to prevent Yazīd's return as governor, since he wished to keep this office for himself. For this purpose he wrote a series of letters to Sulaymān, in which he denounced Yazīd and threatened the caliph with withholding his allegiance should he not be reinstated. Al-Ṭabarī reports, on the authority of Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. 209/824–25), that the "first letter contained slan-derous remarks about Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, noting his perfidy, infidelity, and ingratitude."[56] Sulaymān ignored the first two letters, but seems to have felt shaken by the third one, in which Qutayba b. Muslim renounces his loyalty. Yazīd, on the other hand, served the caliph well, but ran again into difficulties over withheld booty with the next caliph, ʿUmar b. al-ʿAzīz (r. 99/717–101/720). In the end, Yazīd rebelled, calling for comrades-in-arms, in religious terms common for the period, and receiving the support of Khārijites and Murjiʾites.[57]

The elements of this complex story that amazed me concern first the highly unspecific references to Yazīd's treachery (*ghadruhu*), his "unbelief" (*kufruhu*), and his ingratitude (*qillat shukrihi*), and the notion that these should be

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54   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 373.
55   This is my own translation. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 373.
56   Powers, *History*, p. 7.
57   Powers, *History*, p. xvi.

considered sufficient evidence to achieve the writer's goal of removing from a patron's favor this competitor for an office, while the attacked person (Yazīd) had—in my view—committed so many foul deeds that he should have been banned for life from holding office.[58] The second aspect that amazed me time and again is the fragmentary nature of the stories told by historians and biographers. As a rule, there is much more material to be found in earlier histories than is used by any of the five authors. Presenting a rounded case and telling a complete story was evidently not a primary goal when telling stories of "unbelief." As a result, judgments of whether the accusations were justified and the punishment fair, if meted out and described, are found only rarely. Telling incomplete stories, abstaining from inquiries into participants, consequences, and circumstances, and avoiding a firm stance are general features of narratives of conflict in the works of the five authors. Szombathy has interpreted similar features of ʿAbbāsid and Būyid poetry as forms of self-censorship and control of public voices.[59]

Speaking the language of "unbelief" was not only convenient for threatening an adversary or ridiculing an unloved ruler, it was also relied upon for reprimanding allies or students, for celebrating the conquest of Jerusalem, and generally for narrating the Ayyūbid struggle against the Crusaders. These examples confirm that the language of "unbelief" served primarily to set boundaries for the political and the discursive, the public and the private. The shades of meaning and the layers of emphasis are often highly complex. Their interpretation depends not only on "objective" aspects, such as the knowledge of historical circumstances or the authenticity of a particular phrasing, but at least as much on "subjective" impressions caused by the sequences of words, metaphors, and images invoked by a particular poetic line or story. The founder of the Fāṭimid caliphate, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh (ʿUbayd Allāh) al-Mahdī bi-Llāh (r. 297/910–322/934), lashed out in religious terms at the Qarmatian ruler of Bahrain, Abū Ṭāhir Sulaymān al-Jannābī (r. 311/923–333/944), after his sack and defilement of Mecca in 317/930, although he himself was by no means a stranger to political and religious violence when it served his ends: "You brought on our party and our dynasty's mission the labels of "unbelief" and godlessness with what you have done."[60]

The religious implications of the encounter between a cherished legal scholar and ascetic famous for the miracles he performed and a little nobody

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58   See the descriptions of Yazīd's activities in his various positions by Ulrich, *Constructing Al-Azd*, pp. 147–194.

59   Szombathy, "Freedom of Expression," pp. 5–16.

60   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 148.

are plainly delineated in the following story. Yūsuf b. Ayyūb b. Yūsuf b. al-Ḥusayn b. Wahra al-Hamadhānī (d. 535/1140), one of the great figures of Ṣūfism and ancestor of two Ṣūfi orders (Naqshbandī and Bektashī), had held, beginning in 515/1120, a prayer assembly at the Niẓāmiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad, attended by many listeners. One day, as Ibn Khallikān's source Abū l-Faḍl Ṣāfī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣūfī recounts, a legal scholar (according to another of Ibn Khallikān's sources, a reader of the Qurʾān) by the name of Ibn al-Saqqāʾ stood up during the oration and importuned the master by asking his opinion about some problem. "The Imām Yūsuf said: 'Sit down, because in truth I find in your words the odor of unbelief. Perhaps you will die without the religion of Islam.'"[61]

There could be no doubt, of course, that Yūsuf al-Hamadhānī had seen the future correctly. According to Ibn Khallikān's source, a short time later the Byzantine ambassador came to Baghdad and was approached by Ibn al-Saqqāʾ, who implored him to let him travel with him to Constantinople, because he allegedly had renounced Islam and embraced the ambassador's religion. The ambassador accepted the request, Ibn al-Saqqāʾ journeyed with him to the Byzantine capital, met the emperor, and died there as a Christian.[62] But he did not die in peace. He died in hardship, as Ibn Khallikān found out from Ibn al-Najjār al-Baghdādī's (d. 643/1245) [*Dhayl*] *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* ("[Appendix to the] History of Baghdad"). The historian had talked in Baghdad to another reader of the Qurʾān, one Abū l-Karīm ʿAbd al-Salām b. Aḥmad, who had allegedly met some unnamed visitor to Constantinople. This man had met the convert sick, sitting on a bench holding a tattered fan in his hand, with which he chased the flies from his face. He asked him whether he still remembered anything from the Qurʾān. When Ibn al-Saqqāʾ admitted to having forgotten all but one verse, one of the four narrators, possibly Ibn Khallikān, added contemptuously that it might have been the verse: "Again and again those who disbelieve will wish they were Muslims."[63] No wonder then that the story ends with the invocation: "May God save us from a fate like that and the disappearance of His grace and the descending of His wrath. We implore Him for firmness in the religion of Islam. Amen, amen, amen!"[64] Whatever the degree of historical truth that may or may not inhere in these layers of storytelling, Ibn Khallikān clearly presents the story with a moralizing edge. Edifying as well as admonishing readers is certainly one function of several stories of "unbelief" in his biographical dictionary, but perhaps most clearly so in this one.

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61   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 78.
62   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 79.
63   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 79.
64   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 7, p. 79.

In his *Taʾrīkh*, Abū l-Fidāʾ reports two cases of *takfīr* and three cases of *kaffara*, in the sense of declaring someone an "unbeliever." The first does not constitute an act of one person declaring another an "unbeliever," but a description of the views of a sub-group of the Khārijites toward all other Muslims. Abū l-Fidāʾ writes that Abū Yazīd (Makhlad b. Kayrād) (b. 260/873; d. 336/947) left his hometown, went to Tahert (today Tiaret, in Algeria), and joined the *Nukkāriyya madhhab*, "which is *takfīr* of the *ahl al-milla*," that is, which identified as "unbelievers" all other members of the Islamic *umma*.[65] The second case refers to the beliefs and activities of a warlord in the area around Zabīd, in Yemen, ʿAlī b. Mahdī (d. 554/1159), who was a Ḥanafī. "He killed [those] who differed from his belief among the *ahl al-qibla*."[66] His companions considered him a prophet. They killed everybody who drank and listened to music. Abū l-Fidāʾ calls this position and the ensuing activities *takfīr* by disobedience (or rebellion) (*wa-kāna madhhab ʿAlī b. Mahdī takfīr bi-l-maʿṣiyya*).[67] This formulation indicates two issues in the usage of the term *takfīr*. One is of a semantic nature, the other concerns degrees of legal interpretation. Semantically, as most of the examples found in the five works prove without doubt, the term means declaring someone an "unbeliever." This someone is usually someone other than the accuser, but can also be the person who undertakes *takfīr*. In rare cases, as far as my five sources are concerned, *takfīr* indicates also the seduction of others to "unbelief." *Takfīr* by disobedience (or rebellion) can include both layers of meaning. In ʿAlī b. Mahdī's case it encompasses without doubt both of them, since not only did he himself violate rules of Ḥanafī law by ordering those Muslims who did not follow his teachings killed, but he also seduced his followers to accept beliefs contradicting basic tenets of Sunnī Islam, such as the belief that Muḥammad is the seal of the prophets. In addition, *takfīr* can also mean repentance, expiation, and atonement. This increases the narrative ambivalence considerably. I will come back to these semantic issues in Section 3.

The three cases of *kaffara* in the sense of declaring someone an "unbeliever" describe al-Ghazālī's interpretation of the philosophical doctrines of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā as *kufr*, and the equally well-known competition in al-Fusṭāṭ between al-Shāfiʿī and Ḥafṣ al-Fard (fl. *ca* 184/800–215/830) on the createdness of the Qurʾān, which al-Shāfiʿī terminated by accusing his opponent of *kufr*.[68] By placing the accusation at the end of the description of the competition,

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65   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 477.
66   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 254.
67   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 254.
68   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 85.

Abū l-Fidāʾ implicitly indicates one aspect of its function—the breaking off of a public debate if one of the disputants either had become exasperated with the other or did not know what reply to give, having exhausted all his arguments. As for the philosophers' articles of "unbelief," Abū l-Fidāʾ adds a kind of disclaimer, in the sense that he refers to unnamed people, according to whom Ibn Sīnā had returned to the prescriptions of the *sharīʿa* and its beliefs.[69]

The verb *kafara* and the verbal nouns *kufr* and *kāfir* and its plural forms appear in Abū l-Fidāʾ's *Taʾrīkh* altogether fifty-two times. A good number of these occurrences (forty-two times) happen in the early history of the Jews and in Islamic history up to the fifth/eleventh century.[70] Some also concern ancient Egyptian history and oriental Christians (five times).[71] Five cases refer to events in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries.[72] In the eighth/fourteenth century, two more stories can be found, but they were added by ʿUmar b. Muẓaffar, known as Ibn al-Wardī (d. 748/1348), who continued Abū l-Fidāʾ's *Taʾrīkh* until the year of his death.[73] The usage and meaning of these terms again cover a fairly broad spectrum. The language of "unbelief" is used to report who went over to Muḥammad and who remained dedicated to his ancestral religion; to humiliate the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros I (r. 802–811), heap scorn on the Mongols, and praise the Mamlūks; to highlight tensions between what was considered legal and what was considered politically doable or wise; to record popular sayings, recite Qurʾānic verses against Christian tenets, or alert readers to the dangers of excessive panegyrics and flattery of rulers.

When any of the five authors talks of early Islamic history (1st/7th century), the terms *kafara/kufr/kāfir* are limited to the immediate opponents of Muḥammad in Mecca and the Arab tribes, except where the terms appear in quotes from the Qurʾān. In their representation of the late Umayyad period, this vocabulary had already found a wider use, although *zandaqa* seems to have been the preferred term to speak of internal adversaries and dissidents. In the view of Abū l-Fidāʾ, the early ʿAbbāsids spoke of and to the Byzantine emperors using the language of *kafara*. On the back of a letter to Emperor

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69   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 85.

70   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, pp. 9, 11, 12, 27, 29, 32 (2 times), 126, 178, 179, 188, 195 (2 times), 206, 222, 230 (2 times), 267, 268, 290, 291, 307, 320, 326, 331, 359, 375, 376, 419, 428 (2 times), 473 (4 times); vol. 2, pp. 8, 33, 80, 88 (2 times), 109, 164.

71   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, pp. 45, 78, 79, 131, 133.

72   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, pp. 286, 353, 385, 396; vol. 3, p. 35.

73   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 7, pp. 258, 278–279. I did not include in the count above those and other stories by Ibn al-Wardī.

Nikephoros I, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 160/776–194/809) had scribbled: "Basmallāh, from Hārūn, *amīr al-muʾminūn*, to Niqifūr, the dog of Byzantium (*kalb al-Rūm*)*:* I have read your letter, oh son of a female 'unbeliever' (*ibn al-kāfira*)."[74] In his domestic policy, the caliph was more prudent, as the story about a *fatwā* by Abū Yūsuf, a follower of Abū Ḥanīfa (b. 80/699; d. 148/765), suggests.[75] A Muslim had killed an "unbeliever" and the victim's family came to the *fāqih* to ask for justice. Abū Yūsuf ruled that they had a right to retaliate in kind. This judgment roused the ire of an unknown Muslim, who accosted the judge on the street with the words: "Oh killer of a Muslim by an 'unbeliever,' you strayed! The just is not like the tyrant! Oh, there [should be] in Baghdad and her provinces a scholar of the people or (at least a) knowledgeable person!" Hārūn, when informed about this incident, called Abū Yūsuf to him and demanded: "Correct this affair by a trick (*ḥīla*), so that there will be no rebellion (*fitna*)!" Abū Yūsuf falsified a document of protection, which halted the retaliation.[76]

The story of the Seljuq sultan Malikshāh (r. 465/1072–485/1092) serves to prepare the reader for what we would call today a political jest. The sultan went hunting one day near Isfahan with a Byzantine ambassador. One of his dogs ran away and climbed up to a certain place, where the sultan then erected a fortress, because the ambassador had praised the spot saying: "If this happened in our country, we would build a fortress in that place."[77] After the sultan's death this and other fortresses in and around Isfahan were in the hands of the Ismāʿīlīs and from these points, they were empowered to inflict much suffering on their enemies. As a result, a wrathful saying made the rounds among the city's population: "A fortress pointed out by a dog and recommended by an 'unbeliever' [leads] necessarily at the end to a disaster/evil."[78] The Mongols, finally, were mocked in rhyme in Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Munshī al-Nasawī's (d. 647/1249–50) *Taʾrīkh ẓuhūr al-Tatar* ("History of the Emergence of the Tatars"), claiming that the succession of their rulers did not proceed through the eldest of their line, but from one "unbeliever" to the next.[79] Abū l-Fidāʾ must have liked this mockery quite well, because he did not quote much else from this source.

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74   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 164.

75   This is, however, one of the stories, Ibn al-Wardī tells. Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 273.

76   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 273.

77   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 164.

78   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 164.

79   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 396.

Like Ibn Khallikān, Abū l-Fidāʾ uses this vocabulary of "unbelief" to label any non-Muslim group and praises rulers and military commanders for clearing entire regions of *kufr*. The Qarakhānid ruler of *Mā warāʾ al-nahr* (Transoxania) Qadr Khān Yūsuf b. Bughrā Khān (r. 409–423/1018–1051) "had healed the city of al-Tīra (?) from 'unbelief.'"[80] After the Mamlūk sultan al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn Quṭuz (r. 657/1259–658/1260) had defeated the Mongols at ʿAyn Jālūt, poets celebrated him, including in their panegyric the line "'unbelief' perished in Syria."[81] Abū l-Fidāʾ also lists at least once in the context of his employment of the vocabulary of "unbelief" specific beliefs and practices that were in conflict with those of Sunnī Muslims. The person who was the adherent of such beliefs was Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (b. 336/973; d. *ca* 449/1057). He is described as a follower of Indian doctrines, refusing to eat meat, eggs, and milk, and to inflict pain on animals. "His 'unbelief' was obvious. He was called a 'Muslim in hiding' (*muslim fī l-bāṭin*)."[82]

While most of the stories and quotes told by the five authors are either funny, moralizing, mocking, or mean, they rarely reflect cruelty, even if they speak of executions and death. Ibn al-Wardī, appalled by one case full of cruelty, decided to present it. The story he tells for the year 747/1346 reflects social strictures and gender inequalities, but at the same time shows the courage and compassion of women and the horror that gripped the men. Ibn al-Wardī calls it a "strange" (*gharīb*) event. The eldest daughter of the family of ʿAmrū l-Tīzīnī, a most beautiful young lady, had just been married. She loathed the groom so much that she searched for a way to be released from the contract before the marriage was consummated. She was told to present herself as an "unbeliever," and she uttered the words even though she did not comprehend their meaning.[83] This was a legal trick (*ḥīla*) applied often by Muslim families who wished to dissolve a marriage contract without too many problems. As a rule, both sides understood the implications of such a declaration. The contract would be dissolved on grounds that a Muslim should not be married to an "unbeliever." Afterwards the former bride would speak some religious formula and return to the *umma*. This case, however, is unusual, since it went against

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80   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 80. The ruler in question was most likely Yūsuf Qādir Khān, who belonged to the branch of the Qarakhānids, which ruled in Kashghar. The form of his name varies from author to author as Nazim has pointed out. Nazim, *Life and Times*, p. 50, fn 1.

81   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 35.

82   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 109.

83   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 278.

this social practice.[84] The groom was offended and seems to have bribed the judge to exact revenge. A man named al-Badrī, probably the judge, dragged the bride to court, granted the divorce, and ordered a most severe punishment for her: "Her ears and hair were cut off and hung around her neck. Her nose was slit. She was to ride around on a beast in Aleppo and Tizin. This was unbearable to the people. The women in all districts of Aleppo, including those of the Jews, came to bring her comfort. Hearts rejected the ignominy of that. Al-Badrī did not prosper afterwards."[85] The extraordinary character of this event is highlighted by Ibn al-Wardī's direct comment: "I say: the people staged an uproar, because a luminous full moon had to ride condemned (*musharraʿan*) among the men. I think that nothing like this [happens] to prisoners of war. They ride with them around on camels."[86]

This last story shows that the language of "unbelief," despite its many shades and varieties, always carried with it the threat of bodily harm. The punishment inflicted on the young woman is not backed by the legal rules of any of the Sunnī law schools that were active in Aleppo in the eighth/fourteenth century. A few men had exacted revenge in the cruelest of manners. The story, together with Ibn al-Wardī's comment, also indicates that the five authors singled out here to explore the vocabulary of "unbelief" with regard to scholars of the mathematical sciences were apparently very guarded in their choices of what to tell. The majority of the stories of "unbelief" they selected are neither as detailed nor as cruel as the one transmitted by Ibn al-Wardī. Many of them express the infatuation that members of Islamicate elites felt towards risqué puns and the courting of danger. Others reflect the increasingly binary perception of the world that guided them. They leave no doubt that the stories' authors, their recyclers, and the actors as set up in them considered themselves superior to all who did not share their beliefs. Even if they did not always condone persecution and violence, they refused to consider people believing in other creeds as legally and morally equal and scorned those who left the *umma* trusting that their fate on earth could be anything other than misery. Again other stories document the efficacy of the vocabulary of "unbelief" as a language of political protest, ridicule, and personal revenge. It was perhaps this latter aspect that motivated the five authors to abstain from telling too many stories of "unbelief" for the period of their own lives and the centuries immediately preceding them. After all, they wanted to be seen as historians, not as social reformers.

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84   I thank Zoltan Szombathy for informing me about this social practice.
85   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 278.
86   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 279.

3   Narrative Styles for Representing *kufr*

In this section I will focus on four elements of narration. I will begin with the echoes that stories of "unbelief" evoke within a single work. Then I will turn to the manner in which stories resonate among the five texts. Thirdly, I will discuss the ways in which the authors appropriated stories from other chronicles or dictionaries. I will then pay particular attention to the semantic fields of *k-f-r*. Two things should be made clear before I plunge into this exploration of narrative styles used by the five authors. There are many more facets to the texts than the stories of "unbelief" and the ways in which these stories are integrated into their entire narratives as well as in the subunits where they appear. Hence there are more questions that could at least be asked, even if not always answered. I am fully aware that I have presented here rather limited efforts to find clues as to why the five authors did not tell many stories of *takfīr* in general and even less so for their own lifetimes and none for scholars of the mathematical sciences. A single article on the silence of five authors of this period on stories of "unbelief" regarding scholars of the mathematical sciences cannot compensate for all the facets that need to be investigated if this silence is meant to be understood in its specific context for each one of these authors, not to speak of the communities in which they lived and with whom they communicated and the traditions which they drew upon, modified, subverted, or (occasionally) broke with. Furthermore, what I lightheartedly call in this paper "stories of unbelief" are very often not stories in the precise sense of the word. They are rather elements in a different story and thus often just data or even only sound bites. Some of them are fragments of stories of "unbelief," which are not told by the five authors because they wished to use these very fragments for a purpose different than telling the original story. The very few stories that are in a limited sense complete—that is, that are stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end, like the stories about the *fitna* in Firuzkuh or the fate of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī—are, as a rule, not narrated by the five authors themselves, but recycled by them from previously constructed narratives. That is why studying features of intertextuality, which are present in any text, acquires an additional relevance for understanding Arabic, Persian, or Ottoman Turkish histories. The still widespread practice of using such histories primarily or even exclusively as sources of information is methodologically inadequate.

Stories told by Ibn al-Qifṭī are challenging examples of the three kinds of intertextuality (echoes, resonance, and appropriation). Since the background information on the author himself and the conditions in Aleppo where he compiled his dictionary are incomplete, it is not really possible

to deduce motivations with certainty from his kind of storytelling. But what can be done in this paper is to analyze similar kinds of statements about the relationship between the mathematical sciences and *kufr* and the manner in which they are embedded in the larger story, either as told by Ibn al-Qifṭī or hidden away.

As stated in Section 2, Ibn al-Qifṭī uses the word *takfīr* first and last in his biography of Aristotle. The passage where it appears is important because of its content and source, but not because of its placement within the biography. Given the scholarly profile of Aristotle, the focus of the discussion is on philosophy and its various subdisciplines. The source is Chapter 2, *Falsafa*, from al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh*. Surprisingly, Ibn al-Qifṭī does not quote al-Ghazālī's text verbatim, but appropriates it by substantially summarizing and modifying the original. The extent to which he interferes with the original wording, while preserving its content and structure, is impressive and fairly unusual when compared, for instance, with the practice of literal quote employed by Ibn al-ʿIbrī with regard to Ibn al-Qifṭī, or Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa with regard to Galen. The paraphrase of al-Ghazālī's text is placed, again surprisingly, at the very end of Aristotle's biography, as if being appended to the long quote of a list of Aristotle's works from a third/ninth-century Arabic translation of a Greek text. The unusual placement of such an important quote, if Ibn al-Qifṭī had indeed aspired to again drive home the point that philosophers are "unbelievers," is highlighted by its deviation from what is the widespread norm in biographical entries of Arabic dictionaries of scholars. As a rule, the list of works is either the ultimate or the penultimate item presented. If it is not the last item, then either the day of death or some poetry or a wise saying ends the text. Another feature that may have decreased the relevance of the message in the reader's mind is the lack of any reference to its parent text and its author. By not naming his illustrious model, Ibn al-Qifṭī loses a rhetorical tool for enhancing the status of his paraphrase. His far-reaching interference with the original text leaves no doubt that Ibn al-Qifṭī was well aware of what he was doing and did so anyway.

Rewriting a long passage from Chapter 2 of *al-Munqidh*, Ibn al-Qifṭī presents the classification of ancient Greek philosophy as comprising three schools (those who believe in eternity, the naturalists, and the theists). The members of the two first schools are declared *zanādiqa* ("crypto believers"?). Aristotle is praised for having refuted them as well as his predecessors from among the theists, such as his teacher Plato and Plato's teacher, Socrates. Although Aristotle is declared the leading philosopher, he is also labeled an "unbeliever," and al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā as his followers are thus like him "unbelievers." Ibn al-Qifṭī reinstates economics as a philosophical discipline, omitted by

al-Ghazālī—without correcting, however, the resulting numerical change from six to seven subdisciplines—and also calls ethics political.[87]

By contrast to this paraphrase, Ibn al-Qifṭī now follows al-Ghazālī's text almost verbatim, when he repeats al-Ghazālī's determination of the status of the subdisciplines of philosophy plus logic with regard to *kufr*. He lists the three points of *kufr* (eternity, resurrection, and universals) with regard to metaphysics and natural philosophy, exempting logic and the mathematical sciences from *takfīr*. One of the exceptions in this almost verbatim reproduction of this passage is Ibn al-Qifṭī's treatment of the mathematical sciences. Here, he cuts out most of al-Ghazālī's elaborations about the perils emanating from them and alters even the beginning of this critique by speaking explicitly of only one harmful effect:

> The doctrine of Aristotle and their doctrines [i.e. al-Fārābī's and Ibn Sīnā's] consist of three parts: one part which needs to be declared 'unbelief' (*takfīr*); one part which needs to be declared innovation (*tabdīʿ*); one part which does not need to be rejected (*inkār*) at all. These three parts are distinguished in six [sic] domains: mathematical, logical, natural philosophical, metaphysical, political of the city, domestic, politico-ethical. As for the mathematical (domain), pertaining to arithmetic, geometry and the knowledge of the configuration of the world, there is nothing in those that is connected with the religious disciplines through refutation or affirmation. They are rather demonstrative matters with no reason to repudiate them after one has understood and comprehended them. They are, however, connected with a detrimental evil. This is [the following]: he who looks into them, when he sees their subtleties and the validity of their proofs, opines that all the disciplines of philosophy (*ḥikma*) are in regard to certitude as they are, but he errs and the matter is not so.[88]

The main message with regard to this group of sciences is strong and clear: they have nothing to do with "unbelief." The worst that can be said of them is that they mislead by their certitude. Although weaker than the later rejection of Ibn al-Māristāniyya's burning of Ibn al-Haytham's astronomical work and his denigrating words about its diagram of the heavens, the narrative strategy applied in both cases is the same: an older text, a witnessed account of an event, and perhaps also the available descriptions of this event in

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87   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 51f.
88   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 51f.

contemporary written sources are reduced such that the mathematical sciences appear either fully or largely free of blame.

Abū l-Fidāʾ's manipulation of the famous story of the clash between adherents of the Karrāmiyya and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) in Firuzkuh (today Jam, in central Afghanistan) in the year 595/1198–99 exemplifies the active interference of an author into the textual body of a story he appropriates from an earlier narrator. In his approach, the structure of the story remains unaltered, while certain parts of its message are lost or restated differently. As a result, the story's overall gist is modified. Members of the Karrāmiyya, the dominant religious group in the Ghūrid realm (Delhi to Nishapur), provoked an open conflict between adherents of different theological interpretations of basic Islamic concepts.[89] While the ruler of Firuzkuh and Herat, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (r. 558/1163–599/1203), had received Fakhr al-Dīn in 595/1189–90 in Herat with open arms, his cousin, brother-in-law, and successor in Firuzkuh, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAlī (r. 599/1203–616/1219–20), opposed him and continued his support of the Karrāmiyya. In cooperation with the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī adversaries of the scholar from Rayy, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn convinced his brother to invite all of them to a public debate at the summer court in Firuzkuh. The representative of the Karrāmiyya was one of their most cherished leaders, Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Qudwa (6th/12th century). The debate went well for his party, in the story transmitted by Abū l-Fidāʾ, but did not bring the hoped-for result, the banning of Fakhr al-Dīn from Ghūrid territory. All it achieved was to make Ghiyāth al-Dīn send him back to Herat. The Ghūrid ruler did not take this decision because he was convinced of Fakhr al-Dīn's *zandaqa*, as his cousin charged at the end of the debate. He rather had to yield because the people of Firuzkuh staged violent protests, which he had to suppress militarily. The violence broke out after Ibn al-Qudwa riled up the populace during Friday prayer, accusing Ibn Sīnā of unbelief and al-Fārābī of doing philosophy. The overall outcome for Fakhr al-Dīn of this unpleasant event was, however, very positive. Except for Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn and the Ghūrid branch of Bāmiyān, the dynasty's members and its administrators highly appreciated the scholar, who became rich and socially prominent in their service.[90] The refusal of Ghiyāth al-Dīn to fulfill the wishes of his cousin and the Karrāmī scholars in their entirety is seen by Griffel as one element of what he considers the religious policy of this ruler as well as other members of the family. They wanted to overcome the anthropomorphism of the Karrāmiyya and, being impressed by Fakhr al-Dīn's broad education and his reputation among competing rulers from Central Asia

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89   Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life," pp. 335f.
90   Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life," pp. 337f.

to Syria, they opted for a rational theology and Shāfiʿī's legal doctrines, that is, Fakhr al-Dīn's beliefs and convictions.[91] Flood proposes a different intepretation of this shift of the ruling Ghūrid elite from affiliation with and support of one particular religious group to another. In his view, the shift happened before Fakhr al-Dīn's arrival in Herat, as a result of a re-orientation from a more local to a more cosmopolitan outlook, which the Ghūrids wished to project after having transformed themselves from local warlords to rulers of a large empire.[92] In this perspective, Fakhr al-Dīn was viewed as a highly appreciated gift for lending support and respectability to a political shift already underway.

None of these explanatory elements, however, can be found in Abū l-Fidāʾs version of the story about the *fitna*. He describes the disputation and its outcome in the following manner:

> Report on the *fitna* of Firuzkuh: In this year there was a great rebellion among the soldiers of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, *malik* of the Ghūriyya, and this happened in Firuzkuh. Its cause was that the Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Ḥusayn al-Rāzī, the famous *imām*, had come to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who did his utmost to honor him and to show his respect. He built a *madrasa* for him in Herat, near the Friday mosque. This antagonized the Karrāmiyya, who were (numerous) in Herat. Their *madhhab* was that of making alike (*tajnīs*) and assimilating (*tashbīh*) [i.e. anthropomorphism]. All of the Ghūriyya [adhered] to the Karrāmiyya. They loathed Fakhr al-Dīn, because he was a Shāfiʿī and contradicted their *madhhab*. They agreed that the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī legal scholars of Firuzkuh should meet for a disputation [under the auspices] of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, [together with] Fakhr al-Dīn and the judge ʿAbd al-Majīd Ibn ʿUmar, known as Ibn al-Qudwa. He belonged to the Hayṣamiyya [branch of the] Karrāmiyya and had a high rank among them for his asceticism and his knowledge. Fakhr al-Dīn spoke [about *kalām*?]. Ibn al-Qudwa raised objections against him. The speech became long. Ghiyāth al-Dīn rose [to break it off]. Fakhr al-Dīn displayed an arrogant behavior against Ibn al-Qudwa, scolded him, and overdid his performance. Ibn al-Qudwa did not add to that, but merely said: "O Mawlana, may he only accept God!" This embarrassed al-Malik Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, the son of the uncle of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and

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91   Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life," pp. 337, 339f. What Griffel does not address, though, is why these Ghūrids wished to overcome the beliefs held by the majority of the scholars living in their realm. Reflections on this point can be found in Flood, "Islamic Identities and Islamic Art," pp. 105f.

92   Flood, "Islamic Identities and Islamic Art," pp. 105f.

husband of his daughter. He complained to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, finding Fakhr al-Dīn blameworthy and linking him to the *zandaqa* and the *madhhab* of philosophy. But Ghiyāth al-Dīn did not [agree with] him. The following day, Ibn ʿUmar b. al-Qudra [sic] preached to the people, saying after the *ḥamdallāh* and the eulogy for Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him salvation: "Our Lord bade us to believe in what has been revealed, to follow the Prophet and to inscribe us with the witnesses. O people: We only say what we think is true of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him salvation! As for the knowledge of Arisṭū [i.e. Aristotle] and the matters of 'unbelief' of Ibn Sīnā and the philosophy of al-Fārābī, we know nothing of them! For which reason was yesterday one of the sheikhs of Islam vilified for defending the religion of God and the Sunna of his Prophet?!" He bemoaned and bewailed the Karrāmiyya. The people came streaming in (*istaghāthū*) and rose from all sides. The city was filled with rebellion (*fitna*). This reached the sultan. He sent a squad to calm down the people and promised them [his] expulsion.[93]

Although Abū l-Fidāʾ does not indicate his source for this account, it seems to have been Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī l-Taʾrīkh* ("The Complete on History"). Griffel's account of the events, based on Ibn al-Athīr's telling, agrees in principle with the story told by the Ayyūbid ruler of Hama. Moreover, Abū l-Fidāʾ knew Ibn al-Athīr's *History*.[94] Hence, a comparison between the two forms of narrating the events will provide clues for understanding Abū l-Fidāʾ's approach to relating a story about "unbelief." This comparison reveals thirty differences between the two texts. Five of them are probably the result of losses or changes through copying. Examples are, for instance, the loss of *baytihi* ("his house," meaning his family) in the description of the rank that the Karrāmī disputant held in his community, and the loss of the conclusion of the story.[95] It is also possible that the misspelling of Qudra instead of Qudwa in the preacher's name is due to a copyist's error, not to the text's modern editor. Other changes are unmistakably signs of an editing procedure, undertaken most likely by Abū l-Fidāʾ himself.

Some parts of this editing look like cutting down and weeding out a slightly longer text. An example of this kind is the shift from "*fī hādhihi l-sana kānat fitna ʿaẓīma bi-ʿaskar Ghiyāth al-Dīn malik al-Ghūr wa-Ghazna, wa-huwa bi-Fīrūzkūh ʿammat al-raʿīya wa-l-mulūk wa-l-umarā*" ("in this year,

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93   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, pp. 353–354.

94   Griffel, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, pp. 335–336; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 380.

95   Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 262.

a great rebellion took place among the soldiers of Ghīyāth al-Dīn, the ruler of al-Ghūr and Ghazna, who was in Firuzkuh, (undertaken by) the subjects, the rulers, and the emirs") to *"fī hadhihi l-sana kānat fitna ʿaẓīma fī ʿaskar Ghiyāth al-Dīn malik al-Ghūriyya wa-huwa bi-Fīrūzkūh"* ("in this year, a great rebellion took place among the soldiers of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the ruler of the Ghuriyya, who was in Firuzkuh").[96]

Other deviations resulting from an editorial process appear more clearly imbued with other intents. Fakhr al-Dīn's former involvement with Bahāʾ al-Dīn Sām, the ruler of Bāmiyān, another supporter of the Karrāmiyya and a nephew of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, has completely disappeared. The role of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's cousin as a head of the party inimical to Fakhr al-Dīn and intent on driving him away is downplayed, thanks to the change from Ibn al-Athīr's to Abū l-Fidāʾ's formulation: *"wa-kāna ashadda al-nās ʿalayhi al-malik Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, wa-huwa ibn ʿamm Ghiyāth al-Dīn wa-zawj ibnatihi. Fa-ttafaqa an haḍara al-fuqahāʾ min al-Karrāmiyya wa-l-Ḥanafiyya wa-l-Shāfiʿiyya ʿinda Ghiyāth al-Dīn bi-Fīrūzkūh li-l-munāẓara . . . fa-infaṣalū ʿalā hadha wa-qāma Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn fī hadhihi l-ḥāditha wa-shakara ilā Ghiyāth al-Dīn wa-dhamma al-Fakhr, wa-nasabahu ilā l-zandaqa wa-madhhab al-falsafa . . ."* ("The people pressed charges against him with Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, the cousin of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and the husband of his daughter. It was agreed that the Karrāmī, Ḥanafī, and Shāfiʿī jurists should meet for a disputation in the presence of Ghiyāth al-Dīn at Firuzkuh. . . . Then they broke off with this. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn stood up at this [point], thanked Ghiyāth al-Dīn, and blamed Fakhr al-Dīn. He related him to the *zandaqa* and the school of philosophy . . ."); *"Fa-ttafaqa an haḍara al-fuqahāʾ min al-Karrāmiyya wa-l-Ḥanafiyya wa-l-Shāfiʿiyya bi-Fīrūzkūh ʿinda Ghiyāth al-Dīn li-l-munāẓara . . . fa-ṣaʿuba ʿalā al-malik Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, wa-huwa ibn ʿamm Ghiyāth al-Dīn wa-zawj ibnatihi. Wa-shakkā ilā Ghiyāth al-Dīn wa-dhamma Fakhr al-Dīn, wa-nasabahu ilā l-zandaqa wa-madhhab al-falsafa . . ."* ("It was agreed that the Karrāmī, Ḥanafī, and Shāfiʿī jurists should meet for a disputation in the presence of Ghiyāth al-Dīn at Firuzkuh. . . . This shocked Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, the cousin of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and the husband of his daughter. He complained to Ghiyāth al-Dīn and blamed Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, relating him to the *zandaqa* and the school of philosophy . . .").[97] While in Ibn al-Athīr's description, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn plays the role of a leader in an intrigue, he appears in Abū l-Fidāʾ's story as an innocent bystander who did not know what to expect and was badly surprised by Fakhr al-Dīn's misbehavior. Hence the conflict is portrayed as one of socially improper behavior, not one of plotting. Another change seems to pursue a similar purpose. In Abū l-Fidāʾ's

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96 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 262; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 353.
97 Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 353; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 262.

description, namely, the revolt includes no bloodshed. Hence, the rebellious populace appears to behave in a much less violent and improper manner than in Ibn al-Athīr's rendering of the events.[98]

Since there is no reason to see Abū l-Fidāʾ defending anthropomorphism or revolt and abuse of the pulpit, or as an enemy of Fakhr al-Dīn, the downplaying of intrigue and bloody rebellion must have had a different purpose. The only option for interpreting these changes in Ibn al-Athīr's story by Abū l-Fidāʾ (if he was indeed the story's editor) is to assume that he wished to adapt it to an overall more irenic tone of narration. The silence about stories of "unbelief" with regard to scholars of the mathematical sciences could be placed into an overall narrative style of restraint, if this could be confirmed by an analysis of other stories about conflicts.

A second example of appropriation is Ibn Khallikān's reproduction of a part of Ibn Bajjā's biography as told by al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān. The story as told by Ibn Khallikān was already presented in Section 1. Here I will explore its relationship to the texts Ibn Khallikān names as his two sources. The first thing to note is, as the modern editor of Ibn Khallikān's biographical dictionary already indicated, Ibn Khallikān seems to have mixed up the two books by Ibn Khāqān. The extract he ascribes to the latter does not figure in the printed version of the *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus*, which has no biography of Ibn Bājja at all. It rather appears in at least two printed versions of the *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*. In the Būlāq edition, to which I had access, the philosopher's biography is the book's last entry under the heading *al-adīb al-wazīr Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh*.[99] It begins full force with a salvo of amazing hostility:

> He is the soreness on the eyelid of religion and the grief of the souls of the rightly guided. He was famous for his feeblemindedness and dementia. He renounced the assigned [i.e. the Qurʾān] and the Sunna. He did not subscribe to the *sharīʿa*. [He strayed from the right path time and again]. He did not [behave according to the *sharīʿa*].[100]

On it goes for another three lines in rhymes of vitriolic speech before Ibn Khāqān's passage quoted by Ibn Khallikān begins. The two texts agree except for four minor deviations: *kitāb al-taʿālīm* ("book of the mathematical sciences") instead of *tilka l-taʿālīm* ("those doctrines"); the loss of *al-ʿalīm* after *al-ḥakīm*; the change of *lahu* ("it has") by *aw* ("or") in the description of man

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98   Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 262; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 354.

99   al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, pp. 102, 296–304.

100   al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, p. 296.

as a plant; *ḥamāma* ("dove") instead of *ḥimāmuhu* ("his (fate of) death"; this may be a printer's error).[101] There is, however, no indication in Ibn Khāqān's diatribe that the seven and a half lines had a special status in his text. Hence, there is no particular or easily recognizable reason why Ibn Khallikān applied his scissors to this very spot. Since he believed it came from Ibn Khāqān's other work, I am inclined to assume that he did not cut the passage out from the *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, but from a text that quoted this passage and ascribed it to Ibn Khāqān's *Maṭmaḥ al-anfus*. A situation like the one in Ibn al-ʿIbrī's literal quote of Ibn al-Qifṭī's entry on ʿAbd al-Salām al-Jīlī (see below) can be easily assumed as the cause for Ibn Khallikān's epitome of Ibn Khāqān's harangue. Ibn Khallikān's claim that, in the *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, Ibn Khāqān "related him (i.e. Ibn Bājja) to *taʿṭīl* ("denial of God's attributes"), the *madhhab* of the physicians/wise men and the philosophers, and *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* ("destruction of the creed")" is, moreover, not a verbatim repetition of words used by that writer. Since Ibn Khallikān uses this kind of terminology when telling the story of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's (b. 551/1156; d. 631/1233) treatment in and flight from Cairo, it is not implausible to assume that this description of the gist of Ibn Khāqān's biographical entry on Ibn Bājja reflects the semantic field of "unbelief" in Ibn Khallikān's own time.[102] Ibn Khallikān's rejection of the passage he quoted from Ibn Khāqān's tirade as an exaggeration is exclusively phrased in terms of content, that is, that Ibn Bājja could not possibly have believed the bizarre things ascribed to him by Ibn Khāqān. Ibn Khallikān did not consider it necessary though to buttress his argument by simply pointing to the rhyming format of the entire text by Ibn Khāqān. This format unmistakably conditioned the choice of words, expressions, and phrases, including which Qurʾānic verse to use. The content was subordinate to the form as well as to the intention of Ibn Khāqān to vilify Ibn Bājja. Ibn Khallikān, a shrewd master of insult and praise, undoubtedly would have understood these two points. Thus, his decision to use this passage has nothing to do with a serious condemnation either of Ibn Bājja or of the role of the mathematical sciences in his alleged "unbelief." This role of the mathematical sciences in the literary accusation of Ibn Bājja for "unbelief" itself is the result of Ibn Khāqān's choice to represent himself as a gifted poet. It is constructed by rhyming *hayʾa* ("astronomy") with *fayʾa* ("return"),

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101   al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, *Qalāʾid al-ʿiqyān*, pp. 298f.; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, pp. 429f.

102   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 3, p. 293: "*wa-nasabūhu ilā fasād al-ʿaqīda wa-inḥilāl al-ṭawiyya wa-l-taʿṭīl wa-madhhab al-falāsifa wa-l-ḥukamāʾ*" ("and they related him to the corruption of the creed and the destruction of [true belief] and the denial of God's attributes and the doctrines of the philosophers and the physicians/wise men").

selecting "*wa-fakara fī ajrām al-aflāk wa-ḥudūd al-aqalīm*" ("and he thought about the bodies of the orbs and the boundaries of the geographical zones") as correspondent to "*naẓara fī tilka l-taʿālīm*" ("he reflected on those doctrines") and opposing "*wa-ḥakama li-l-kawākib bi-l-tadbīr*" ("and he pronounced verdicts from the planets through (their) motion") to "*wa-ḥtarama ʿalā llāh al-laṭīf al-khabīr*" ("and he committed crimes against God, the Subtle, the Knowing"). Hence, Ibn Khallikān's repetition of this passage is not about its particular content as such, but about its form and its hyperbole. It is an example of entertainment through gossip. In this sense, Ibn Khallikān's approach is indeed one of appropriation, not one of resonance, as is the case with Ibn al-ʿIbrī's repetition of a story told by Ibn al-Qifṭī.

Ibn al-ʿIbrī, like Ibn Khallikān, had a certain fondness for the literal. The case of "unbelief" that he copied from Ibn al-Qifṭī verbatim is the latter's brief story about Ibn al-Māristāniyya's bonfire involving Ibn al-Haytham's astronomy, abstaining from mentioning that books on Ibn Sīnā's philosophy and the Sincere Brethren's encyclopedia also were destroyed. As before, several questions need to be asked about form and function of such a literal quote. Does Ibn al-ʿIbrī tell only this abbreviated story or is it part of a longer description of what had happened? If the latter is the case, at which moment in his story does Ibn al-ʿIbrī introduce Ibn al-Qifṭī's report? Does he borrow the writer's entire presentation of the affair or only its climax? How does he introduce the quote and its author? Does the quote escalate or soften the tale of "unbelief"? Other questions could also be asked that involve issues of comparative appropriation, that is, differences between Ibn al-ʿIbrī's approach to different stories and different authors. Here, the focus on resonance between his storytelling and that of Ibn al-Qifṭī must suffice.

Ibn al-ʿIbrī tells of the events as part of his note on the caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh's death, in the year 622/1225. Notably, it is the first story he tells about the reign of this ʿAbbāsid caliph, although the events had taken place eleven years earlier. It is also remarkable that he connects them by placement and reference to the caliph's reign (*wa-kāna fī l-ayyām al-imāmiyya al-nāṣiriyya,* "it was in the days of al-Nāṣir's leadership"), despite the fact that he does not mention any other participant in them except for Ibn al-Māristāniyya and the victim, ʿAbd al-Salām al-Jīlī. In particular, he does not mention the main instigator, the caliph's majordomo.[103] In a sense, it is also the last and only story that he tells about this caliph's reign, since all the other paragraphs refer either to others who also died in this year or to two physicians of the caliphal court, who are

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103   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh,* vol. 1, pp. 146f.

simply praised for their education, skills, and activities.[104] Ibn al-ʿIbrī introduces Ibn al-Qifṭī with his full paraphernalia as a judge and a vizier, but does not mention his book's title, although he provides it some twenty-five pages later, in the entry for the year Ibn al-Qifṭī died.[105] As a direct quote, he marks only the part ascribed to Ibn al-Qifṭī's friend, the Jewish physician and merchant, Yūsuf from Ceuta. In truth, however, the beginning as well as the end of Ibn al-ʿIbrī's report also comes from Ibn al-Qifṭī's entry on ʿAbd al-Salām al-Jīlī. This means that he copied by and large the complete entry, together with the basic idea of ascribing the event to the caliphal reign. Hence, all Ibn al-ʿIbrī did on his own was to emphasize the somewhat vague link made by Ibn al-Qifṭī between the caliphal court and the fate of ʿAbd al-Salām by placing the story after noting the caliph's death, to highlight Ibn al-Qifṭī as his source for a short eyewitness report and to omit a few words or short sentences. To place Ibn al-Qifṭī as an author, judge, and vizier in the middle of his very own story enhances the drama of the story and directs the reader's attention especially to the book burning and its evaluation as improper. In this sense, Ibn al-ʿIbrī's little gimmick emphasizes Ibn al-Qifṭī's message without saying so. Altogether, Ibn al-ʿIbrī's approach to the story told by Ibn al-Qifṭī is a kind of cheap purchase of dramatic entertainment.

The second case whose resonance across the works of the five authors shall be discussed is a reference most likely made by the prophet Muḥammad, although one source identifies his mother as the speaker, to the healer al-Ḥārith b. Kalada. Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn Khallikān are the only two who present this case in what is possibly its original form. Ibn al-ʿIbrī reformulates it in such a way that the statement of "unbelief" disappears. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, not surprisingly, does not present this case at all, despite his rather longish biographical entry dedicated to the physician.[106] Abū l-Fidāʾ limits it to a story about adultery, concerning the sons of a slave girl of Ibn Kalada, and a story about the death of Ibn Kalada's son on the day of Badr. As is argued in Section 2, the story of "unbelief" as transmitted by Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn Khallikān is evidence for another claim, namely that "his Islam was not sound." Each of them refers the story to the same source, even if this reference is phrased differently: Abū Mundhir Hishām al-Kalbī's *al-Jamhara* on genealogy.[107] Ibn al-ʿIbrī found these two claims not to his liking though. He restates both in a positive form, even altering the second one in such a way that what had been in the reading

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104   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 1, p. 147.
105   Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 1, p. 170.
106   Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, vol. 1, pp. 92–95.
107   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 162; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 6, p. 362.

of Ibn al-Kalbī an implied permission now becomes a Prophetic command: "*fa-raja'a ilā l-Ṭā'if wa-shtahara wa-adraka l-Islām. wa-kāna al-nabī 'alayhi al-salām ya'muru man kāna bihi 'illat an ya'tīhi fa-yastawaṣafuhu*" ("Then he returned to Ta'if, became famous, and grasped Islam. The Prophet, Peace be upon Him, commanded that he who was sick should go to him and consult him").[108] The phrasing and context of this reformulation leave little doubt that Ibn al-'Ibrī was inspired, as in other cases too, by Ibn al-Qifṭī's biographical entry for Ibn Kalada. Hence, a reader would have recognized at the very least a standard Muslim storyline about al-Ḥārith b. Kalada, if not Ibn al-Qifṭī's variant more specifically. The change of this story's message though is rather amazing. The preference for a Muslim physician and, if this is impossible, at least for one of the same family, tribe, or clan expressed in Hishām al-Kalbī's version of the story is replaced by the command, clear and simple, to consult a physician in case of sickness. Thus, while resonating with Muslim narrative tradition, Ibn al-'Ibrī restates this tradition as the Prophet's blessing of medical treatment of any patient by any doctor.

The three forms of intertextuality (echoes, resonance, and appropriation)—even when explored only in a limited manner as done here—highlight differences and commonalities among the five authors in their telling of stories of "unbelief." The differences concern the presence or absence, the content and form, as well as the temporality and locality of the stories. Their commonalities consist in shared networks of texts and words. They also coincide more often than not in the fact that many of what I call stories of "unbelief" are not stories in the sense that they have a beginning, a middle, and an end, or that they have actors, a plot, and actions. Most of the stories of "unbelief" are rather snippets of conversation turned into a reservoir of data open for arbitrary recirculation. They are sound bites in a larger story, not a story themselves. Only a few of the examples found in the five books qualify indeed as something that can justifiably be called a story. There are certainly many reasons for this lack of narrative density in representations of *k-f-r*. One major reason is the difference between the types of genre to which the five texts belong—biographical dictionaries and historical chronicles in annalistic format. In the biographical dictionaries, each entry is the overarching story, which is the main narrative object. One needs to investigate all those entries to understand the roles, functions, and formats of storytelling in them. It is certainly not the case that there are no stories told in those entries. In particular Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a was an eager storyteller. But he is also the one author who most often abstains from delivering any information about a conflict that involves accusations of "unbelief"

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108   Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 1, p. 46.

or its cognate expressions, such as *zandaqa* ("heresy," "hiding one's true belief"), *ridda* ("apostasy," "defection of Bedouin tribes from the *umma* after Muḥammad's death"), *ilḥād* ("godlessness," "apostasy"), *taʿṭīl* ("denial of God's attributes"), and *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* ("destruction of the creed"). In the annalistic chronicles, the part on scholars of whatever discipline is almost always an appendix for each year. The main stories about rulers, governors, wars, or revolts are told before the information that someone (a scholar, a prince, an emir, etc.) had died. Then some additional data is presented. This summary is often much shorter in length than the preceding description of the year's events. There is often simply no space—material or mental—for telling another story or two.

Beyond this issue of genres and the spatial structuring of a narrative, the lack of adventure, excitement, fear mongering, mystery, or moral, alongside the preference for information, education, confirmation, affirmation, and propaganda in the reports on "unbelief" presented by the five authors is probably caused by the shared practices of compiling such historical works through appropriation of pieces of text told by earlier authors and information provided by eyewitnesses and hearsay, and via transmitter chains. A study of the written and oral sources and the different forms in which they were used by each author will certainly improve our grasp of this peculiar lack of storytelling in their works where issues of "unbelief" are concerned.

A third type of reason for the seemingly factual nature of the reports on "unbelief"—which on closer inspection turn out to be fragments of stories that could have been told, but were not, as I have shown for a few examples—are the messages each author wishes to impart to his readers with his entire work as well as in every single narrative unit (biographical entry, events of a year, subunits). These messages are not always very clearly formulated and need to be reconstructed through a study of their intertextual features, as I have done here, or by investigating the complexity of the reports.

Means for uncovering layers of complexity that these reports may embrace are provided by various methods used in the humanities. I borrowed the concept of *semantic field* from Isutzu's studies of Qurʾānic terminology, finding it useful for exploring shades of meaning of a key term when combined with similar as well as dissimilar expressions.[109] All I intend to argue for here is that it is insufficient to study merely statements of "unbelief" and their immediate narrative contexts. As the various examples presented in this as well as in other papers indicate, content, texture, implications, and scope of *k-f-r* and its derivatives vary among authors, genres, functions, localities, and times. The ambiguity of language and the brevity of many examples make a precise

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109   Isutzu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*.

understanding of the shades of meaning of many of them a difficult undertaking. Lack of loyalty and gratefulness, the breaking of an oath and repentance or expiation, all expressed by forms of *k-f-r*, reverberate in several of the examples found in three of the five works (Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Ibn Khallikān).[110] A few cases remain unclear to me as to whether the intended meaning was "unbelief" or disloyalty, or perhaps ingratitude.

In Ibn Khallikān's entry on the Sabian secretary Hilāl b. al-Muḥsin, the religious meaning of the statement about "unbelief" seems to be clear. But because it is qualified by a subsequent statement about secular knowledge, this impression of easy certainty evaporates:

> The mentioned Hilāl [converted] to Islam at the end of his life. He learned from the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) by [the method of] listening (*samāʿ*) about the state of his "unbelief" (*ḥāl kufrihi*), because he was searching for *adab* (education in literature or stylish comportment?).[111]

Why Hilāl would have studied with Muslim scholars matters of Sabian and/or Muslim religion in order to acquire knowledge of *adab* is not easy to understand. One possibility for avoiding such a literal interpretation and its problems is to assume that the pair *kufr* and *adab* opposes ignorance and knowledge (of a particular kind, of course). The order of the short bites of information implies, however, that the instruction happened at the end of Hilāl's life, when he had been established for a long time as an excellent writer, secretary, and historian. Thus, it is highly unlikely that he was looking for instruction on the kind of knowledge that *adab* usually signifies. The other possibility for avoiding this implausible interpretation of the two phrases is to assume that the pair *kufr* and *adab* is used here in a purely religious sense, putting in opposition "unbelief" and belief. In such a case, *adab* would signify something akin to *īmān* (faith, belief).

This and other examples contained in the five works point to the necessity of exploring not only the elements of narration studied so far, but also of gaining a certain grasp of each author's usage of the vocabulary of "unbelief" and its companions. This task is hampered by the fact that most of the rather few stories of "unbelief" that the five authors tell in their dictionaries and chronicles are situated in periods before 1100 CE. As a result, the primary usage of the vocabulary of "unbelief" is not that of the authors, but that of their sources. The

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110   Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 303; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, vol. 1, p. 434; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 70; vol. 2, pp. 33–34; vol. 5, p. 98; vol. 6, pp. 25, 311.

111   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 6, p. 101.

authors' own understanding cannot be read off directly from the stories they tell. Piercing the surface of the language used, with the purpose of gauging the authors' perception of an earlier lexicon, presupposes a comparative analysis of the represented stories in their form in their original setting and a study of the contextual constructions of each. Such an undertaking exceeds the limits of this article. What can be done to some degree, however, is to describe the lexical neighborhood of *k-f-r* and its derivatives in the five works.

One method of defining the semantic value of *k-f-r* or one of its derivatives is to pair it with an opposite. Such an approach is primarily chosen here for the noun *kufr* and occasionally for the verb *kafara*. The opposite of the first is usually *īmān* ("faith," "belief") and that of the second is *āmana*.[112] In a few cases, this pair appears in the texts of Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn al-ʿIbrī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, and Ibn Khallikān.[113] Their character as opposites—with a positive meaning for *īmān* and a negative meaning for *kufr*—is illustrated in a short and sweet manner by Ibn Khallikān's quote that *īmān* is *abyaḍ* ("white," "bright," "noble," "sincere," etc.), while *kufr* is *aswad* ("black," "unlucky").[114] In a similar manner, this contrary relationship is brought to the fore by Ibn al-Qifṭī's eyewitness of the book burning in Baghdad, and his comment, as quoted above, that there is no *kufr* in astronomy, but that astronomy is a road to *īmān* and to the recognition of God's power.[115] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa employs the pair in the same connotation as the two previous authors for a (repeatedly misidentified) Roman emperor, specifying that he returned to adoring statues and unbelief after having believed. Thus, in this case, he makes no difference between adherents of different religions.[116] His specification that the return to unbelief is synonymous with worshipping statues suggests furthermore that *kufr* was thought of as polytheism, at least where non-Muslim groups were concerned. Indeed, Abū l-Fidāʾ and in particular Ibn Khallikān pair *īmān* also with *shirk* ("polytheism").[117]

Socially, however, *īmān* was not always a strict opposite of *kufr*. The two terms rather shared important social functions. Like *kufr*, *īmān* was used for

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112 The semantic opposition of this pair is confirmed by the first definition of *kufr* given in *al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ fī l-lugha* (*ḍidd al-īmān* = against *al-īmān*) and *Lisān al-ʿarab* (*naqīḍ al-īmān* = opposite of *al-īmān*). http://baheth.info/all.jsp?term=كفر .

113 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 229; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 37, 49, 147; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, pp. 61, 265; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 394; vol. 5, pp. 243–244; vol. 7, p. 183; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 307, vol. 2, p. 286.

114 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 394.

115 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 229; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 147.

116 Ibn abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, p. 61.

117 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 471; vol. 4, p. 231; vol. 5, p. 91; vol. 6, pp. 63, 418; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 1, p. 382.

castigating social behavior perceived as improper. In the story told by Ibn Khallikān about the caliph al-Muqtafī bi-Llāh (r. 530/1136–555/1160), Hibat Allāh b. Ṣāʿd, known as Ibn al-Tilmīdh (b. 465/1073; d. 560/1165), and Abū Manṣūr al-Jawālīqī (b. 465/1073; d. 540/1145), the perception of impropriety was not that of the whole of society, but that of a single person, namely al-Jawālīqī, the caliph's *imām*. Hence, the act against which the language of *īmān* as well as the language of *kufr* was used was not per se improper. It became improper because of the religious affiliation of the actor, who was Ibn al-Tilmīdh, the caliph's main physician and well recognized at court for his service and companionship. But because he was a Christian, the Muslim whose manner of addressing the caliph the physician criticized—that is, al-Jawālīqī—felt it appropriate to reply to him in religious terms. Al-Jawālīqī turned to the caliph saying: "Oh, *amīr al-muʾminīn*, my *salām* is that which comes from the *Sunna* of the Prophet."[118] Then he quoted from the *Sūrat al-Salām*, before continuing his address to the caliph: "Oh, *amīr al-muʾminīn*, if someone swore that a Christian or a Jew had no connection between his heart and any kind of knowledge in a satisfying way, since the charge of oath-breaking sticks to him because God has sealed their hearts, then God's seal will only be untied by belief." The caliph answered: "You are speaking the truth and acted well in what you did!" In all likelihood the first narrator of this event commented: "It was as if he had silenced Ibn al-Tilmīdh by prohibition with his virtue and the abundance of his knowledge (*adab*?)."[119]

A second method by which *kufr* is defined in the five works is by comparing it with doctrinal as well as operational terms that carry a negative value. These terms are mainly, albeit not exclusively, applied to Muslims. The list includes *zandaqa* ("adhering secretly to a different belief, while outwardly professing Islam"; "heresy"?), *bidʿa* ("innovation"), *ilḥād* ("apostasy," "godlessness"), *taḍlīl* ("misguidance," "straying from the right path"), *taẓāhur* ("dissimulation," "hypocrisy"), *jaḥd* ("disavowal," "rejection," "unbelief"), or more concretely *jaḥd rubūbiyya* ("disavowal," "rejection of or unbelief in a deity"), *ghadar* ("betrayal," "treachery"), *taqṣīr* ("negligence").[120] Moreover, in his modified extract from al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh*, Ibn al-Qifṭī accepts that doubt (*shuhba*) is something than can push a person towards *kufr*.[121] The use of *jaḥd* and *taqṣīr* and their individual contexts indicate the continued reverberation of the pre- and

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118 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 343.
119 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 343.
120 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, pp. 50–52; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, pp. 196, 265; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, pp. 166, 534; vol. 4, p. 465; vol. 6, p. 136.
121 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, p. 52.

early-Islamic connotations of gratitude and disavowal or rejection in the term *kufr*. Hence the religious and the secular, the divine and the princely seem to continue to overlap. An example for such a connotation is Ibn Khallikān's quote of one of Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī's (d. 189/805) sayings: "*Dhikr al-niʿma min al-munʿim takdir, wa-nasyān min al-munʿim ʿalayhi kufr wa-taqṣīr*" ("When the donor mentions benefits it is an indignity. But if (someone who received a benefit) forgets it, it is ingratitude (*kufr*) and negligence.").[122]

Never made explicit as equivalents to *kufr*, but clearly meant in such a manner by their specified religious content as well as the death penalty ascribed to them, are terms such as *taʿṭīl* ("denial of God's attributes"), *fasād* or *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* or *al-iʿtiqād* ("corruption" or "destruction of the creed or the faith/doctrine/dogma"). The only two authors of the five studied here who used these terms are Ibn Khallikān and Abū l-Fidāʾ.[123] Again, the cases told by them are few in number, five for Ibn Khallikān and six for Abū l-Fidāʾ. They refer to four famous scholarly "dissidents," one famous poet and two political cases: Ibn al-Rawandī (d. c. 298/911), Abū ʿĀlaʾ al-Maʿarrī, Ibn Bājja, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, the Seljuq vizier al-Ṭughrāʾī (executed in 515/1121), and the last Fāṭimid ruler, al-ʿĀdid (r. 555/1160–567/1171).

The additional case reported by Abū l-Fidāʾ concerns an ironic rebuttal of a student by his professor. The student was Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (b. 577/1181; d. 643/1245), who tried to learn the basics of logic with his teacher, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus, but was a hopeless case. Hence, Kamāl al-Dīn recommended that he give up his efforts, pointing out that he would lose his good name and be accused of the "corruption of the creed" should he engage further with this kind of knowledge.[124] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn later became an eminent transmitter of *ḥadīth*, a famous *muftī* issuing hostile *fatwā*s against logic, philosophy, and Ibn Sīnā in particular, and an influential man in Ayyūbid politics in Damascus.

Ibn al-Wardī adds an event for the year 740/1339–40—recent history for him—that, like the story about the mutilated young woman, sounds akin to something that indeed took place rather than a matter of rhetoric or ritual. As in many other stories, very few participants in the event are named—in this case, the victim and two judges. By providing the latters' names, the author indicates that the case proceeded beyond mere declarations to the juridical stage. He also signals that the majority of judges in Latakia in all likelihood

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122   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 6, p. 226.

123   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 3, pp. 111, 293; vol. 4, p. 429; vol. 6, p. 272; Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 428; vol. 2, pp. 109, 199, 329, 452, 476; vol. 3, p. 256.

124   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 2, p. 476.

frowned upon the decision, since one of the two explicitly named judges was from a different town. Moreover, both men were Mālikīs. The instigators, in contrast, remain unnamed. Speaking of them in the plural, Ibn al-Wardī says that they are from Tripoli, which probably was the provincial center. These unspecified men were most likely some of the *ʿulamāʾ* in collusion with one or more Mamlūk officers, since they are said to have feared the victim's sharp tongue and his connections to the *aʿyān* (leading men of the civilian elite) in Cairo. The victim was the preacher, market inspector, and deputy governor of Latakia, Ibn al-Muʾayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Bakr (hanged in 740/1339–40). He was accused of *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* ("dissolution of the creed") in some apparently forged document. The two Mālikī judges, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, were pressured into pronouncing the death penalty. "They were, however, weary of his crime and [became] sufferers of misfortunes."[125] The language Ibn al-Wardī uses in this story leaves no doubt that even when the act was not called *takfīr* and no explicit use of *k-f-r* or any of its derivatives occurs, the lesser accusation of *inḥilāl al-ʿaqīda* was considered sufficient for demanding the death penalty. While accusations of *kufr*, at least in some of the stories, involves the option of repentance, lesser accusations are never combined with this way out of the conundrum, as far as the five authors and their stories are concerned. Not even Ibn al-Wardī brings up this point, although he clearly alerts his readers to the machinations going on here. The appearance of lesser accusations of alleged religious misbehavior may thus reflect efforts to overcome or at least avoid the legal obstacles against condemning a man for *kufr*. The two reasons provided by Ibn al-Wardī as central to the affair have, however, nothing to do with religious beliefs or obligations. As in many of the other cases told by the five authors, the tribunal against Ibn al-Muʾayyid was set up in response to the man's power in his hometown and the danger that apparently resulted from it for the instigators in Tripoli.

A look into the terms used in association with the label *kāfir* brings about further shades of meaning attributed to people either seen as enemies—like the Crusaders or the Mongols—or as adherents of suspicious beliefs or doctrines. It seems undeniable that nothing good could be said about such a person, but every bad thing that could be imagined was considered applicable. Hence notions of dishonesty and sexually frowned upon behavior can be found, as well as lack of maturity and manliness. An "unbeliever" was not merely defined as someone who adhered to a wrong belief, but as someone who more or less constantly violated social norms with regard to gender and, in some situations, also age. According to Ibn al-ʿIbrī, the Ilkhān Hülägü used the words *kāfir* and

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125   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 3, p. 256.

fājir (libertine, profligate, adulterer, shameless liar, etc.) to taunt the Muslim ruler whom he wished to frighten into submission and surrender. Both terms were clearly meant as invectives and served to ridicule the Muslim opponent. Ibn Khallikān, in contrast, uses *fājir* as synonymous with *kāfir*.[126] A second synonym is *ʿilj* ("infidel," "uncouth youth"), which he uses to describe members of the Crusader army in Egypt.[127] A third term is *zindīq*, which is perhaps the most opaque of all the terms used. In what I perceive as a rather weird story, Ibn Khallikān reports how the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785) one day asked the police chief of Baghdad how he felt about Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet. The man answered that he loved not her, but her father, to whom he gave his full praise. The caliph replied that he loved both. Then he asked the officer about his birthplace. Once this was established he accused him of being a *zindīq*. The head of the police asked, I assume with some surprise and shock, what the signs for his *zindīq*dom were. Al-Mahdī listed drinking red-colored spirits and beating the tambourine.[128] In the libertine atmosphere of the early ʿAbbāsid court, this seems to be a rather unusual definition. Even in later centuries, rulers, courtiers, and other members of the elite, including scholars, continued to drink different kinds of alcohol and of course not every law school forbade music. Thus, *zandaqa* and its related terms need to be studied on their own in order to understand why this particular accusation continued to be indiscriminately applied and why it was rather effective for meting out the death penalty, even during the times of the five authors.[129]

Properties that flesh out the negative character of an "unbeliever" are reflected in terms like *kādhib* ("liar"), *fāsiq* ("profligate," "sinner"), *shaqī* ("culprit," "scoundrel," "rogue," "criminal"), *ahl al-baghī* ("people of injustice," "rebel") or simply *baghīy* ("prostitute").[130] They all contain strong moral connotations and do not pertain to doctrinal points. Thus, a *kāfir* was not portrayed merely and simply as someone who did not believe in God's message, but much more so as someone who violated norms of proper social behavior. This is, however, primarily the case for Ibn Khallikān and to a much lesser extent for Abū l-Fidāʾ. The three other authors neither used the word *kāfir* nor any of the other listed terms except very rarely.

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126   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 70; vol. 4, p. 231; vol. 5, p. 91.

127   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 70; vol. 4, p. 231; vol. 5, p. 91; Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 117.

128   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 467.

129   Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 1, p. 427; vol. 2, pp. 153, 467.

130   Abū l-Fidāʾ, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 1, p. 313 (part of a Qurʾānic verse); vol. 2, p. 106; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, p. 267.

Even this very limited and superficial look at the semantic fields that surround *k-f-r* and its derivatives uncovers a few aspects of the language of "unbelief" that a focus on stories of *takfīr* alone or even the broader set of stories on *kufr* would have concealed. It demonstrates that in order to understand the functions and roles of the vocabulary of "unbelief" it is necessary to include also other modes of creating and organizing otherness, victimhood, and danger, by repudiation, mockery, denigration, and vilification. Laughter and death were the two extreme results of the reign of this vocabulary. In the early times of the caliphates, the two populated the same space, although the balance between them could easily change. In the times of the five authors, though, the willingness and capacity to use the vocabulary of "unbelief" for purposes other than defining enemies and strangers and legitimizing the killing of members of the own group seems to have vanished. What remained was a consciousness of the vocabulary's appropriation to cheat and deceive.

4   Conclusions

Taking as a starting point the major beliefs subscribed to during the last fifty years by historians and amateurs alike about the relationship between religion and science in past Islamicate societies, I have been challenged by the material I have studied in some of the convictions I acquired as a student and during the many years of my professional activity. I have struggled with the central question that the five authors and books I had chosen for studying this relationship in a limited period of time and space (Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Egypt and Syria in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries) posed to me when I prepared my talk for the conference in Madrid in 2011: why did they not incorporate stories of "unbelief" that involved scholars of the mathematical sciences? The absence of such stories about a particular slice of the scholarly communities of the period and region forced me to change time and again the material I was willing to study, the methods I found suitable for their analysis, and the interpretations I felt entitled to offer. I feel I found some elements of a satisfying answer.

A major element is that complete stories of "unbelief" would have been difficult to tell, since the legal stipulations of proving somebody an "unbeliever" are difficult to satisfy. Hence, other accusations were formulated early on, which were enriched in additional, more specific terms. But even when taking this legal side of "unbelief" into consideration there are simply not very many stories that the five authors tell either by using the vocabulary of "unbelief" or one or more of its associated terms. Other factors contribute to this paucity of

stories of "unbelief." One of them was clearly the political and military situa-tion during these two centuries. The vocabulary of "unbelief" served first and foremost to draw boundaries between the Ayyūbids on the one side, and the Crusaders and to a lesser degree the Mongols on the other. It was a vocabu-lary that regulated world order (not systems of religious belief), that is, that separated "us" from the "others." When applied to "us," this vocabulary had a parallel, if different, function of socio-cultural separation. It allowed catering to personal grudges and persecuting (mostly) men who were perceived as a threat to one's own beliefs as well as status and power. Thus, not completely stripped of religious content, the vocabulary of "unbelief" served—according to the stories told by the five authors—more often for punishing competitors and socially improper behavior either rhetorically or physically. A second fac-tor was created by the ways of storytelling used by each of the five authors according to the genre of their works. Mainly aiming at education and infor-mation, the stories of "unbelief" remain often incomplete, serve as markers of opinions and positions, and are loose threads that are woven together from other texts and authors. Edifying and entertaining clearly played a lesser role than educating and informing. Thus, there was little formal need for a plot with action, tension, laughter, shock, climax, and resolution. Formally edifying com-ments turn out to cover up gossip, irony, and sarcasm. Laughter and gasps are reproduced by recycling snippets of poetry, dialogue, and reports about past events from earlier sources. These borrowings are, however, not simple acts of copying previous texts. All five authors reshaped the borrowed texts in their own manner where they cut and pasted them, how they altered and embedded them, or which comments they adjoined to them.

A third factor resulted from the purpose of their writing biographical dic-tionaries or historical chronicles. In particular the dictionaries focusing on a particular group of scholars would not sit well with certain audiences if too many negative stories about the people with whom they identified were told. Other groups of readers, in contrast, would clearly have enjoyed a thorough bashing of the philosophers, astrologers, or physicians. But it was clearly not for them that Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa wrote their books. Ibn Khallikān had a wider array of people in mind with his collection of famous sons of all times. This does not imply though that telling too many stories of exclusion and otherness would have contributed to the undeniable success of his biographies. Ibn al-ʿIbrī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, and Abū l-Fidāʾ were serious writers on mathematical, medical, and philosophical topics. They would not have desired to portray too often the sciences they pursued as unsupportable knowledge or activities, nor their peers as unsupportable people. Their clear reluctance to tell stories of "unbelief" or related themes would have received

additional encouragement from their scholarly personas. Last, but not least, they seem to have been put off by the odor of pretense, deceit, and duplicity that was attached to many of these stories, and of which they were so clearly aware.

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