

AT THE CROSSROADS OF COMPETING CONFESSIONS AND POLITICS: AL-TURTŪSHĪ'S EXPERIENCE IN THE FĀTIMID ALEXANDRIA

FARKLI İNANÇLARIN VE SİYASETİN KAVŞAĞINDA: ET-
TURTŪŞĪ'NİN FĀTIMĪ İSKENDERİYESİNDEKİ DENEYİMİ

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Abstract

The tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed significant social and political transformations in the Islamic World. While the Buwayhid Dynasty began to control Iraq in 945, the Fātimid Dynasty started to dominate Egypt in 969. Besides, Christian Europeans set up crusades and managed to capture important Muslim cities in al-Andalus and the Middle East during the late eleventh century. These transformations had certain impacts on the Sunnī Muslim scholars. Through examination of an Andalusian scholar, Abū Bakr al-Turtūshī's life and works, I will analyze how al-Turtūshī as a Sunnī Muslim scholar encountered different confessional groups (Shi'īs, Jews, Christians, and Sūfīs) and how he made an effort to shape the Shi'ī Fātimid politics in harmony with the Sunnī Islam. In addition, I will explore how he aimed to draw strict religious boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims in Fātimid Egypt. Furthermore, I will examine how he attempted to reconstruct the Sunnī identity and reform social life in Medieval Egypt.

Keywords: Medieval History, Egypt, the Fātimids, Sunnism, Confessional Encounters

Öz

Onuncu ve on birinci yüzyıllarda İslam Dünyası önemli toplumsal ve siyasi dönüşümlere tanık olmuştur. Bir yandan Şi'î Büveyhîler 945 tarihinde Irak'ı kontrol ederek Abbasi Halifeliğini tahakküm altına almışken, diğer yandan Şi'î Fâtımîler 969 yılında Mısır'a hâkim olmuşlardır. Yani sıra, Hristiyan Avrupalılar on birinci asrın sonlarında hem Endülüs'te hem de Ortadoğu'da Haçlı Seferleri düzenleme

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kararı almışlar ve önemli Müslüman şehirlerini ele geçirmişlerdir. İslam Dünyasındaki bu değişimler Sünnî âlimler üzerinde derin etkiler bırakmıştır. Bu makalede, Endülüslü meşhur âlim et-Turtüşî'nin hayatı ve eserlerinden yola çıkarak, Sünnî bir âlimin Fâtımî Mısır'ındaki farklı inanç grupları (Şi'îler, Yahudiler, Hıristiyanlar ve Süfîler) ile nasıl bir etkileşim içerisinde olduğu ve yine Şii Fâtımî Devleti'nin politikalarını Sünnîliğe göre nasıl şekillendirmeye çalıştığı hususu analiz edilecektir. Yanı sıra, onun Müslüman ve gayr-i Müslimler arasındaki dini sınırları nasıl inşa etmeye çalıştığı konusu tahkik edilecektir. Ayrıca, onun Ortaçağ Mısırındaki sosyal hayatı nasıl reforme etmeye çalıştığı ve Sünnî kimliği nasıl ihya etmeye çalıştığı mevzuu tahlil edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ortaçağ, Mısır, Fâtımîler, Sünnîlik, Dini Etkileşim

Introduction

In this paper, I will deal with the life and works of a famous Andalusian Muslim scholar, al-Turtūshī, whose life coincided with significant crises and changes in the Islamic world. First, I will point out what kind of political context al-Turtūshī lived in. Then, I will examine how he settled down and created his religious authority in Alexandria. Afterward, I will analyze how he engaged with the Shi'ī Fātīmids and encouraged them to follow the Sunnī principles in state affairs. Furthermore, I will scrutinize how he dealt with non-Muslims and tried to draw a strict religious boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims. Finally, I will demonstrate how he targeted Sūfī groups and attempted to reform religious life in Medieval Egypt. Accordingly, with this paper, I will highlight how al-Turtūshī as a Sunnī Muslim scholar tried to revive Sunnī Islam within the multi-confessional environment in the Fātimid Empire.

1. Political Context of the Muslim World During al-Turtūshī's Life Time

al-Turtūshī's life coincided with political instability and turbulence in the eastern and western parts of the Muslim world. In al-Andalus, after the Caliphate of Cordoba collapsed in 1031, various Muslim kingdoms (*mulūk al-tawā'if*) emerged and began to struggle with each other. In the meantime, the Christian states in the north consolidated their power and set up military operations against the Muslim south. Among these operations, the capture of Toledo in 1085 by Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile (d.1109) became a substantial gain for Christians, which the Latin Church celebrated as the first

step of the restoration of Christianity in Medieval Iberia.¹ However, the Christian army's further advancement into the Muslim lands was stopped by the Almorāvids (*al-Murābitūn*) who moved into Spain from the Maghreb in 1086. In the Council of Toulouse in 1117, the Catholic Church once again encouraged the Aragon Kingdom to create a new crusade against Muslims, which resulted in the capture of Zaragoza by Christians in 1118. After that, Tartosa fell to the Duke of Barcelona after a long siege in 1148.² Accordingly, Christians gained important parts of al-Andalus and pushed Muslims further south of Iberia in the first half of the twelfth century.

The socio-political climate in the eastern Muslim world also changed at the turn of the eleventh century. The Seljuk Empire, which controlled Iraq and Iran, fell into chaos and turmoil after the sudden deaths of the important Seljuk vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, and then of the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah in 1092. A civil war broke out among the members of the Seljuk Dynasty as Terken Khātūn [Malik Shāh's wife] (d. 1094) on behalf of her son, Mahmūd (d. 1094), began to struggle with Berkyārūq [Malik Shāh's son] (d. 1105) for the Seljuk throne. Yet, she failed in her claim because she and her son died sooner in 1094. Then, Berkyārūq had to deal with other Seljuk princes who also wanted to attain the Seljuk throne. This bitter struggle somehow lasted until the succession of Muhammad Tapar (d. 1118) as the new Seljuk Sultan in 1105.³ However, the Seljuk Empire could not keep its stability and strength in the long run and entirely collapsed in 1157.

Besides, the socio-political dynamics in North Africa substantially changed in the late eleventh century. The Fātimid Dynasty that controlled Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Lands indulged in political instability and religious tensions. After the death of the Fātimid Sultan, al-Mustansir Billāh, in 1094, who reigned the empire since 1036, both of his two sons, Abū Mansūr Nizār (d. 1095) and Abū al-Qāsim Ahmad al-Musta'lī (d. 1101), claimed the Fātimid throne. Even though Nizār legally deserved the Fātimid throne as an older prince, the powerful Arminian vizier, al-Afdal Shāhanshāh (d. 1121), supported al-Musta'lī since he was married to his sister. al-Afdal's bid for al-Musta'lī caused a bitter struggle between the two factions. Together with his supporters including Abd Allāh (Nizār's half-

¹ Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest, and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, the University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2004, p. 30.

² Brian A. Catlos, *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon 1050-1300*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 13, 88, 95.

³ C. E. Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000–1217)", *The Cambridge History of Iran vol.5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1968, p. 102-111.

brother) and Ibn Masal (Nizār's trustee), Nizār moved to Alexandria in early 1095. Nizār managed to attain the support of the governor of the city, Nāsir al-Dawla Aftakīn (a ghulām soldier of Turkish origin), and of the local Alexandrians. After that, Nizār declared himself as the legitimate Fātimid caliph and minted coins for himself. At the early stage of the civil war, Nizār became successful as he defeated some of al-Afdal's forces, and advanced into Cairo. However, al-Afdal began a counter-attack, managed to push back Nizār's Army, and besieged Alexandria. Without much resistance, Nizār's forces had to surrender, and then they were chained and taken to the capital by al-Afdal's Army. Aftakīn was executed in Cairo while Nizār was imprisoned. Soon after, he also died in prison in late 1095.⁴ Similar to the Seljuks, the Fātimids could not retain their strength and power after the civil war. As a result, the Fātimids gradually declined and disappeared in 1171. To sum up, the Muslim world went through important crises and transformations in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in which al-Turtūshī lived. Along with political instability and chaos in al-Andalus, Christians began successful military operations against the Muslim lands and captured crucial parts of al-Andalus. The Seljuk and Fātimid Empires in the Middle East indulged in bitter struggles and civil wars at the turn of the eleventh century, which caused anarchy and chaos in the eastern part of the Islamic world. Accordingly, both dynasties waned their authority and power and declined soon after.

2. al-Turtūshī's Earlier Life

al-Turtūshī was born around 451/1059 in Tortosa in the northeastern part of al-Andalus. He was known as Ibn Abī Randaqa. He acquired his early education from a famous Andalusian Mālikī scholar, Abu al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 1081), in Zaragoza. After completing his education, al-Turtūshī left his homeland in 476/1084 to visit the holy places.⁵

⁴ Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 241-242; Michael Brett, *The Fātimid Empire*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2017, p. 228-229.

⁵ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa Abnā' al-Zamān*, ed. Ihsān Abbās, 8 vols., Dār Sadīr, Beirut 1978, vol. 4, p. 262; al-Dabbī, *Bughya al-Multamis fī Tārīkh Rijāl Ahl al-Andalus*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, 2 vols. Dār al-Kitāb al-Misrī, Cairo 1989, vol. 1, p. 176; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā*, ed. Shuayb al-Arnaūd, 29 vols., Muassasa al-Risāla, Beirut 1985, vol. 19, p. 490; Ibn Farhūn, *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab fī Ma'rifa A'yān Ulamā al-Madhab*, ed. Muhammad al-Ahmadī Abu al-Nūr, 2 vols., Dār al-Turāth, Cairo 2005, vol. 2, p. 244; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā al-Kabīr*, ed. Muhammad al-Ya'lāwī, 8 vols. Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, 1991, vol. 7, p. 409.

After performing the pilgrimage, al-Turtūshī did not return to his country, but traveled around southern Iraq, and then moved to Baghdad around 482/1089. During his visit, he was able to study with important scholars such as Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Shāshī (d. 1114) and Abū Ahmad al-Jurjānī. After that, he moved to Syria around 485/1092.⁶ For a certain period of time, al-Turtūshī stayed in Syria and taught religious sciences, during which a famous Andalusian Muslim scholar, Abū Bakr ibn al-Arabī (d. 1148), attended his lectures in Quds.⁷ After a while, al-Turtūshī moved to Jabal Lebanon, where he came to be acquainted with Abd Allāh al-Sāih, and then they traveled to Egypt together. They decided to settle down in Rashīd (Rosetta) in Egypt, adopted an ascetic lifestyle, and earned their living by selling salt and wood that they obtained in the wilderness. While they had been living in isolation in Rashīd, the notables of Alexandria including the Mālikī chief judge of Alexandria, al-Makīn b. Hadīd (d. 1135), came to where they lived and invited them to dwell in Alexandria. Finally, al-Turtūshī decided to move there around 490/1096.⁸

When he arrived at Alexandria, the city was not in good condition because it was badly affected by the aforementioned civil war. The Fātimid vizier al-Afdal destroyed the city with catapults while besieging the Nizar's Army and punished many people including religious scholars and notables because of their loyalty to Nizār.⁹ Accordingly, after the decline and suffrage of the city, Alexandrian people would have invited al-Turtūshī expecting him to contribute to the restoration of the city's social and political stability.

3. al-Turtūshī's Life in Alexandria

One of the reasons why al-Turtūshī wanted to live in Alexandria would be because it was located in an important locale in the Eastern Mediterranean. Many Muslims from al-Andalus and North Africa dropped by Alexandria while traveling to the Middle East for religious purposes such as pilgrimage and religious education, some of whom settled down in Alexandria. Muslims in Alexandria were governed by Mālikī judges because people in North Africa and al-Andalus mostly adopted the Mālikī School of

⁶ Ibn Khallikān, 1978, vol. 4, p. 262; al-Dhahabī, 1985, vol. 19, p. 490; Ibn Farhūn, 2005, vol. 2, p. 244; al-Maqrīzī, 1991, vol.7, p. 409.

⁷ Sa'īd A'rāb, *Ma'a al-Qādī Abī Bakr b. al-Arabī wa Kitābihī Tartīb al-Rihla li-Targhīb al-Milla*, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut 1987, p. 205.

⁸ al-Dabbī, 1989, vol. 1, p. 176-177.

⁹ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *A'lām al-Iskandariyya fī al-Asr al-Islāmī*, Maktaba al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, Port Sa'id 2001, p. 70.

Law.¹⁰ Thus, following the same school of law, al-Turtūshī would have felt more comfortable living in this city with his co-religionists.

Another reason why al-Turtūshī picked Alexandria for a living would be because the city brought new opportunities to his life. For instance, after settling down in Alexandria, he got married to a rich widow, the aunt of his student, Abū Tāhir Ibn Awf (d. 1185). His wife had a two-story building, in which al-Turtūshī used the first floor as a madrasa and the second floor as a dwelling.¹¹ Through teaching at his madrasa, al-Turtūshī's fame spread around the city. When he had a growing number of students, he started to teach outside by wandering around gardens in Alexandria.¹² Afterward, al-Turtūshī created a mosque located in *Bab al-Bahr* (the sea gate) in Alexandria around 1123,¹³ which provided him more popularity and prestige that he would circulate his messages to more people. Consequently, together with teaching at his madrasa and preaching in his mosque, al-Turtūshī became a very influential figure in Alexandrian religious life.

After firmly establishing his religious authority in Alexandria, al-Turtūshī planned to visit Fātimid viziers in Cairo. He was welcomed and respected by the Fātimid authorities. For example, when al-Turtūshī, one time, met with the Vizier, al-Afdal in the Fātimid court, he was honored by him.¹⁴ Other than the viziers' respect, al-Turtūshī also gained their financial support. For instance, when he met the vizier al-Ma'mūn al-Batā'ihī (d. 1125) and presented his magnum opus (*Sirāj al-Mulūk [A Lamp for Rulers]*) to the

¹⁰ Subhī Labīb, "al-Iskandariyya", *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Second Edition), Brill, Leiden 1997, vol. 4, p. 132-137.

¹¹ Ibn Farhūn, 2005, vol. 2, p. 245-246; Gary Leiser, *The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisūn 495-647/1101-1249*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1976, p. 114-126.

¹² Ibn Farhūn, 2005, vol. 2, p. 246.

¹³ al-Maqrīzī, 1991, vol. 7, p. 413-414; al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-Hunafā bi-Akhhār al-A'imma al-Fātimīyyīn al-Khulafā*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, Dār al-Fikr al-Arabī, Cairo 1996, vol. 3, p. 92. The Wall of Alexandria had five gates in medieval times. *Bab al-Bahr* was located on the northern side leading to the port. Miriam Frenkel, "Medieval Alexandria-Life in a Port City", *al-Masaq*, vol. 26/1, 2014, p. 10-11. During the Mamluk Dynasty, the mosque of al-Turtūshī was still standing. However, it was destroyed and vanished after a certain period. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Abū Bakr al-Turtūshī: al-Ālim al-Zāhid al-Thāir*, Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī, Cairo 1968, p. 60. The Tomb of al-Turtūshī is located in the western part of Alexandria, which was close to the *Bab al-Ahdar* (the green gate). al-Sayyid Abd al-Azīz Sālim, *Tārīkh al-Iskandariyya wa Hadarātuhā fi al-Asr al-Islāmī*, Muassasa Shabāb al-Jāmiā, Alexandria 1982, p. 229.

¹⁴ al-Turtūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, ed. Muhammad Fathī Abū Bakr, 2 vols., al-Dār al-Misriyya al-Lubnāniyya, Cairo 1994, vol. 1, p. 146-148.

vizier in 1122, he was appreciated and rewarded with daily payment.¹⁵ Accordingly, al-Turtūshī created strong relationships with the Fātimid bureaucrats in the capital, which provided him with political and financial gains for his future career.

4. al-Turtūshī's Engagement with the Politics

Rather than challenging the Shi'ī Fātimid authorities as a Sunnī Muslim scholar, al-Turtūshī preferred to negotiate with the Fātimids and compel them to support the Sunnī faith. For example, in his book, *Sirāj al-Muluk*, instead of talking about the Sunnī-Shi'ī controversy on the subject of caliphate and imamate, al-Turtūshī focused on sultanic qualities required for perfect rulership and gave political advice on such themes as how the sultan must treat his subjects, how the sultan conduct war and impose a duty and so forth.¹⁶

In his book, al-Turtūshī particularly showed his sympathy for Ali (d. 661), whereas he seemed to display a negative attitude toward Muāwiya (d. 680), who was the main rival of Ali. For example, he shared an anecdote that when Ali took the caliphate, his advisors suggested keeping Muāwiya as a governor until he would secure the full authority of the Muslim state, but he responded that he could not reach just with unjust (*a ta'murūnī an atluba al-adl bi al-jawr*), then ousted Muāwiya from his position,¹⁷ which implied that Muāwiya was not appreciated in his governorship. Besides, in some of his anecdotes, al-Turtūshī clearly stated that the Umayyad Dynasty declined because of their disregarding political and religious responsibilities and indulging in worldly life.¹⁸ From these anecdotes, we would imply that his attitude toward Ali was positive while his outlook toward Muāwiya and other members of the Umayyad Dynasty was quite negative.

However, his antipathy toward the Umayyads did not necessarily mean that al-Turtūshī's view of early Muslim caliphs was negative as Shi'ī scholars were. Instead, in some parts of his book, he touched upon the four rightly-guided caliphs and other prominent Sunnī political figures from the Umayyad and the Abbāsī Dynasties such as Omar b. Abd al-Azīz (d. 720)

¹⁵ al-Maqrīzī, 1996, vol. 3, p. 88; al-Shayyāl, 1968, p. 57-59.

¹⁶ See the content of his work, al-Turtūshī, 1994, vol. 2, p. 867-871. For a general evaluation of al-Turtūshī's political thoughts, see Abdulsait Aykut, "Turtūshī ve Ortaçağ İslam Dünyasında Siyāsī Realizm", *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, S. 26, 2021, s. 81-114.

¹⁷ al-Turtūshī, 1994, vol. 2, p. 554.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 225-227, 231.

and al-Ma'mūn (d. 833), whom the Sunnī community deeply respected.¹⁹ Besides, al-Turtūshī talked about his sympathy for other Sunnī political authorities who lived in later periods. For example, he praised Nizām al-Mulk and presented him as the epitome of the Muslim rulers by stating that Nizām al-Mulk perfectly served the Muslim community, opened new *madrasas*, and took care of scholars and Sūfīs in the Seljuk Empire.²⁰ Accordingly, from these anecdotes, we would conclude that even though al-Turtūshī seemed to be quite critical of the Umayyad Dynasty, he was positive toward early Muslim caliphs and other important Sunnī political rulers, unlike the Shi'ī perspective.

al-Turtūshī also negotiated with Fātimids on some legal matters, which became a part of the Sunnī-Shi'ī tension in medieval times. For example, al-Turtūshī argued with the vizier al-Batā'ihī on Fātimid inheritance law that a daughter would inherit fully from her family if she does not have any brother or sister in the current law, but it was not compatible with the Sunnī inheritance code. Thus, al-Turtūshī claimed that according to the Sunnism (probably Mālikī school of law), a daughter could not get more than half. al-Batā'ihī did not agree with him saying that it had been practiced for a long time; therefore, it was not an easy process to change it. As al-Turtūshī insisted on his point, the vizier conceded that the inheritance code would be implemented in compliance with the dead person's belief. That is to say, if he/she were a Sunnī person, Sunnī legal code would be applied; otherwise, the Fātimid code would be enforced accordingly. There was another controversial legal subject that the Fātimid officials extracted 10/4 from the inheritance of orphans as an extra duty. Yet, al-Turtūshī argued that this practice was an unjust act for orphans and incompatible with the Sunnī law. Completely agreeing with al-Turtūshī, al-Batā'ihī decided to revoke this law code.²¹ Accordingly, rather than defying the Fātimid authorities on political and legal matters, al-Turtūshī followed a more neutral way, which gave him more flexibility to negotiate with Fātimids and successfully opened new venues to implement the Sunnī principles in public affairs.

5. al-Turtūshī's Engagement with non-Muslims

Other than engaging with Shi'ism in politics, al-Turtūshī also became concerned with the prominent status of non-Muslims in the Fātimid Empire. In *Sirāj al-Muluk*, he created a specific chapter for the treatment of

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 350, vol. 2, p. 500.

²⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 513-514.

²¹ al-Maqrīzī, 1991, vol. 7, p. 410-413.

Christians and Jews (*fi ahkām ahl al-dhimma*). After making references to Muslim leaders' general thoughts about *dhimmīs* and the pact of Umar given to *dhimmīs* during the conquest of Jerusalem in 638, al-Turtūshī emphasized that Muslim rulers would neither trust nor employ them in the government. He also argued that non-Muslims should be segregated and humiliated in the Muslim community; they should practice their religion in a restricted way, and fully pay *jizya* to the Muslim government.²² Besides, he proposed discriminatory penal law against non-Muslims in the Fātimid courts. For instance, he stated that if a non-Muslim broke his oath, the sultan would either kill him or take him as a slave.²³ Consequently, believing in the supremacy of Muslims in the Muslim State, al-Turtūshī suggested that the Fātimids should create a strict boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims, and follow discriminatory policies against them.

One reason why al-Turtūshī became so concerned with non-Muslims might be because they managed to attain high political and social status in the Fātimid Empire. Some historical anecdotes imply how al-Turtūshī became frustrated with the prestigious positions of non-Muslims in the Fātimid bureaucracy. For example, when al-Turtūshī, one time, visited the vizier al-Afdal, he saw a Christian person sitting very close to al-Afdal, which made him so disappointed that he immediately composed a couplet criticizing the prominent status of the Christian man. Afterward, al-Afdal had to express his regret for what he did and removed the Christian man from the Fātimid court.²⁴

The Fātimids were comfortable employing Christians in the government. For example, al-Afdal charged Abū al-Barakāt Yūhannā b. Abū al-Layth al-Nasrānī with leading *Dīvān al-Tahqīq* (The Office of Verification created for inspecting the financial affairs). al-Nasrānī kept his position until 1134. al-Afdal also employed Abū al-Fadl known as Ibn al-Usqf (bishop's son), as his privy chamber as well as making him responsible for *Dīvān al-Majlis* (the chief council) and *Davāvīn al-Istifā* (tax offices). Further, the vizier appointed Abū al-Yumn Vizier Abd al-Masīh, who had a Coptic origin, as a member of the *Dīvān* of Lower Egypt.²⁵ Other than Christians, the Fātimids

²² al-Turtūshī, 1994, vol. 2, p. 542-550. See also Alex Mallett, "Two Writings of al-Turtūshī as Evidence for Early Muslim Reactions to the Frankish Crusader Presence in the Levant", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 107, 2017, p. 159-160; Alex Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions to the Franks in the Levant, 1097-1291*, Routledge, London 2004, p. 72-73.

²³ al-Turtūshī, 1994, vol. 2, p. 547.

²⁴ Ibn Khallikān, 1978, vol. 4, p. 263.

²⁵ Muhammad Suhayl Taqqūsh, *Tārīkh al-Fātimīyyīn fi Shimālī Ifrīqiyyā wa Misr wa Bilād al-Shām*, Dār al-Nafā'is, Beirut 2007, p. 394-395; Samīr Khalīl Samīr, SJ.

were also content with employing Jews in the state bureaucracy. For instance, Jewish physicians had been employed in the Fātimid court since the emergence of the Fātimids in North Africa.²⁶ From these accounts, we would assume that al-Turtūshī was disturbed by the high status of Jews and Christians in the Fātimid Empire that he encouraged the Fātimids to fully implement the *sharī'a* law on non-Muslims so that they would be discriminated against and marginalized in the social and political life.

6. al-Turtūshī's Engagement with Muslims' Social Life

In addition to involving in political life, al-Turtūshī also became concerned with the social life in Fātimid Egypt, since Muslims and non-Muslims lived together, economically and culturally interacted with each other, in which case Muslims did not pay attention to religious sensitivities as much as al-Turtūshī would have expected. Thus, he attempted to make social life more compatible with Islamic principles. As a part of this attempt, he composed an epistle, in which he legally prohibited Greek cheese.

Why al-Turtūshī declared the Byzantine cheese unlawful was because he believed that this product went through non-Islamic processes while it was made, stocked, and transported. He supported his stance by referring to some people who were quite familiar with the Byzantine-Fātimid trade. For instance, Ibn Iskandar, who was a supervisor of unloading the Byzantine cargo ships in the Alexandrian port, and carrying the news of the Byzantine Empire to the Alexandrian governor, stated the Byzantine cheese was piled, packed, and carried together with pork on the cargo ships.²⁷ Another man from Sicily (*ahl-i saqāliyya*) also stated that there was no good in this product since the Byzantines got moldy and non-fresh cheese, and mixed it with the bacon and lard. Besides, slaves and translators, who worked in the harbor, pointed out that the Byzantines mixed the bacon with the cheese.²⁸ Based on his references, al-Turtūshī concluded that the way the Byzantine cheese was produced, stuffed, and transported was not compatible with Islamic regulations; therefore, consuming the Byzantine cheese was illegal for Muslims. al-Turtūshī further stated that because of the same reasons,

"The Role of Christians in the Fātimid Government Services of Egypt to the Reign of al-Hafiz", *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 2/3, 1996, p. 184-185.

²⁶ Johannes den Heijer-Yaacov Lev-Mark N. Swanson, "The Fātimid Empire and its Population", *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 21, 2015, p. 335.

²⁷ al-Turtūshī, "Risāla fī Tahrīm al-Jubn al-Rūmī", *al-Hawādith wa al-Bid' wa yalīhi Tahrīm al-Ghinā' wa al-Samā' wa yalīhi Risāla fī Tahrīm al-Jubn al-Rūmī*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Muhammad Hasan Ismā'īl, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut 2003, p. 206.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

either buying or selling it was also unlawful for Muslims.²⁹ Accordingly, with this epistle, al-Turtūshī particularly talked about his concern with Muslims' consumer culture and gave them religious advice on what to do in their daily life. More broadly, circulating this epistle, he would want to create a strict religious and cultural boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims so that these people would not exchange with each other.

The socioeconomic context of medieval Alexandria would give us some insights into why al-Turtūshī was worried about social and economic activities between Muslims and non-Muslims. Alexandria played important role in the Eastern Mediterranean trade since it became a distributing center of imported goods from Southern Europe and the Byzantine Empire in the middle ages. Merchants from Venice and Amalfi created a triangular trade network including Constantinople and Alexandria.³⁰ Crete especially became a dominant trading partner of Alexandria because of its geographical proximity. Wheat, oil, cheese, and wine were the basic trading goods from Crete to Alexandria. The trade between those cities kept its prevalence during the late middle ages (from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries).³¹ Intensive trading relations of Alexandria with its partners enabled merchants from different backgrounds including Jewish, Christian, and Muslims culturally and religiously engaged with each other. For example, Abraham L. Udovitch states that "unruliness and unrest" became prevalent in Alexandrian life during the high Middle Ages because of its cosmopolitan character and a central position for Mediterranean trade.³² Even though

²⁹ Ibid., p. 208. After penning this epistle, al-Turtūshī had a small controversy with the Fātimid authorities. The Vizier, al-Afdal forced him to stay in Fustat for a while. He was able to return to Alexandria when al-Ma'mūn al-Batā'ihī was appointed as the new Fatimid vizier in 1121. al-Shayyāl, 1968, p. 55-57.

³⁰ David Jacoby, "Venetian Commercial Expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean, 8th-11th Centuries", *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-Eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004*, ed. Marlia Mundell Mango, Ashgate, Aldershot 2009, p. 386.

³¹ Monique O'Connell, "Venice: City of Merchants or City for Merchandise?", *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade Around Europe 1300-1600*, ed. Wim Blockmans, Mikhail Krom, and Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, Routledge, New York 2017, p. 108; Georg Christ, "Collapse and Continuity: Alexandria as a Declining City with a Thriving Port (Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)", *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade Around Europe 1300-1600*, ed. Wim Blockmans, Mikhail Krom, and Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, Routledge, New York 2017, p. 126.

³² Abraham L. Udovitch, "Medieval Alexandria: Some Evidence from the Cairo Genizah Documents", *Alexandria and Alexandrianism: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and Held at the Museum, April 22-25, 1993*, Malibu, CA 1996, p. 281.

Alexandria had two separate harbors (one for Muslim ships and another one for Christians),³³ merchants freely interacted with others after they passed through the customs. Additionally, the Fātimids encouraged the Jewish communities to participate in international trade around the Mediterranean so they settled down in major towns of the Middle East including Alexandria, and created a well-connected trade network.³⁴ Accordingly, there were well-structured and lucrative commercial activities between the Fātimids, Byzantines, and Venetians in the middle ages. Even though Muslim rulers imposed certain rules on different merchant groups in Alexandria, they would have exchanged not only their goods but also their political, religious, and cultural ideas. Thus, al-Turtūshī would have felt uncomfortable with intensive social and economic activities between Muslims and non-Muslims that he reminded Muslims of the religious boundaries and urged them to keep religious responsibilities in their social life.

7. al-Turtūshī's Engagement with Sūfis

Along with concerning inter-communal relations with Muslims and non-Muslims, al-Turtūshī also dealt with Muslims' religious life in Fātimid Egypt, since Muslims began to follow popular religion, and particularly participate in Sūfī activities,³⁵ some of which were not in harmony with Islam in al-Turtūshī's thought. Thus, he attempted to reform Muslims' religious life and make it more harmonious with Islam. As a part of his attempt, al-Turtūshī composed an epistle about the prohibition of the Sūfī dance and music (*Tahrīm al-Ghinā wa al-samā'*). al-Turtūshī pointed out why he penned it was because Sūfī Muslims succumbed to the devil's temptation, and fashioned unlawful activities during their rituals in public such as making dances, playing a kind of flute (*al-zamr*) and listening to a rhythm or music (*al-taqtaqa*), which al-Turtūshī considered illegal.³⁶

³³ Paula A. Sanders, "The Fātimid State, 969-1171", *The Cambridge History of Egypt vol. 1*, ed. Carl F. Petry and M. W. Daly, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 167.

³⁴ den Heijer-Lev-Swanson, 2015, p. 335. Jewish people's lives and commercial activities were well-attested in Geniza documents explored in the Ben Ezra Synagogue located in Old Cairo. See Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols., the University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967-1993.

³⁵ For a general survey of Sufism in Egypt during the Fātimid times, see Nathan Hofer, "Sufism in Fātimid Egypt and the Problem of Historiographical Inertia", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 28/1, 2017, p. 28-67.

³⁶ al-Turtūshī, "Tahrīm al-Ghinā' wa al-Samā'", *al-Hawādith wa al-Bid' wa yalīhi Tahrīm al-Ghinā' wa al-Samā' wa yalīhi Risāla fī Tahrīm al-Jubn al-Rūmī*, ed. Muhammad Hasan Muhammad Hasan Ismā'il, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut 2003, p. 141.

Then, al-Turtūshī talked about other illicit practices in the Sūfī gatherings such as making tap dance (*al-daqqu bi al-rijl*) and shaking heads (*kashf al-ra's*), and tearing down the clothes (*tamzīq al-thiyāb*),³⁷ which he also thought illicit and foolish.³⁸ al-Turtūshī further highlighted other unlawful activities of Sūfī groups such as bringing groomed and beardless young boys to their meetings and gazing at their faces for meditation, which he described as a heinous act, arguing that the prophet and scholars of the earlier generation strictly prohibited Muslims from doing this kind of evil practice.³⁹ Accordingly, fighting with religious innovations and illegal practices of Sūfī groups, al-Turtūshī wanted to redesign the Muslim communal life in Medieval Egypt. Thus, with his work, he attempted to create strong religious boundaries about what was lawful and what was unlawful in Islam.⁴⁰

Conclusion

al-Turtūshī's life coincided with socio-political crises and changes in the Muslim world. Muslim Empires in the Middle East such as the Seljuks and Fātimids had political instability and civil wars in the late eleventh century, whereas Muslim small kingdoms in al-Andalus bitterly struggled with each other, and lost important parts of Muslim lands to Christian Europeans in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. After spending early life in al-Andalus, al-Turtūshī traveled to different parts of the Middle East, then settled down in Alexandria. Establishing a madrasa and mosque, he served the Sunnī Muslim community there. After creating his religious authority in Alexandria, he wanted to engage in politics. Despite their Shi'ī background, al-Turtūshī negotiated with the Fātimids and encouraged them to support the Sunnī cause. Besides, he wanted to redesign social life under Sunnī Islam because he became uncomfortable with the high status of non-Muslims in Fātimid Egypt. Thus, he attempted to create a strict religious boundary

³⁷ Ibid., p. 187-188.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 192-193.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 182-187.

⁴⁰ al-Turtūshī also composed a book titled *Kitāb al-Hawādith wa al-Bid'* (*The Book of Novelties and Innovations*), in which he warned against various religious innovations. See Maribel Fierro, *Kitāb al-Hawādith wa al-Bida'*, trans. to Spanish. *El Libro de las Novedades y las Innovaciones*, CSIC, Madrid 1993. Maribel Fierro argues that al-Turtūshī designed this book to respond to social crises and religious controversies formed by the Shi'ī Fātimids. Maribel Fierro, "al-Turtūshī and the Fātimids", *The Fātimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Shainool Jiwa, I. B. Tauris, London & New York 2018, p. 118-163. For the religious dissension between Sunnīs and Shi'īs in Medieval Egypt, see Devin J. Stewart, "Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt: Vestiges of Islamic Sectarian Polemics in Egyptian Arabic", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 84, 1996, p. 52-61.

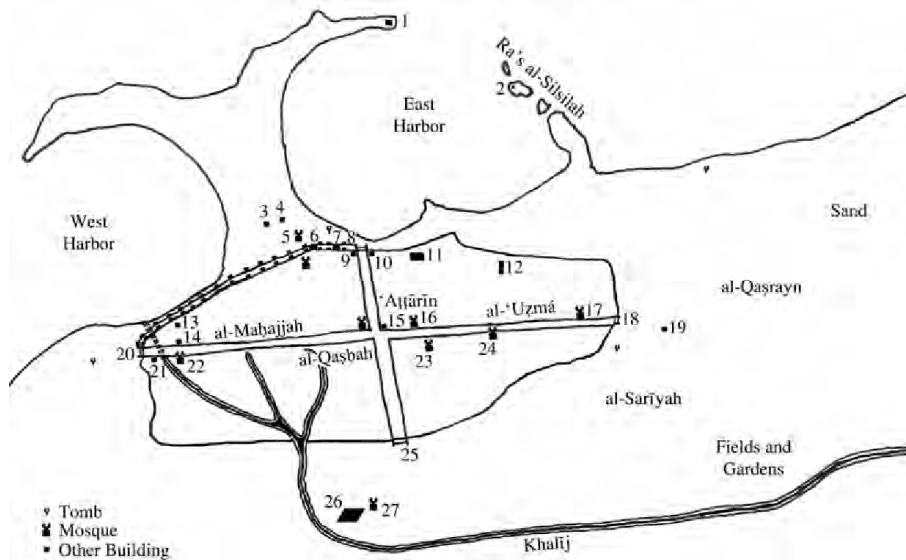
between Muslims and non-Muslims emphasizing Muslim supremacy over non-Muslims. Furthermore, he aimed to reform the Muslim religious life in harmony with the Sunnī principles because he found some Sūfī practices such as dance and music non-Islamic. Accordingly, engaging different confessional groups (Shi'īs, Sūfīs, and non-Muslims) al-Turtūshī tried to shape socio-political and religious life following the Sunnī Islam so that he would revive Sunnism in Fātimid Egypt.

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Figure 1: Alexandria during the Mamluk reign.⁴¹

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| 1. Pharos | 16. East Mosque (Mosque of al-Attarin) |
| 2. Tower of al-Nasir Muhammad | 17. Mosque of Ibn al-Ashhab |
| 3. Ribat al-Siwar | 18. Rosetta Gate |
| 4. Ribat al-Wasit | 19. Ribat al-Hakkari |
| 5. Mosque of al-Turtūshī | 20. Green Gate |
| 6. Arsenal (Dar al-Sina'ah) | 21. Tomb of al-Turtūshī |
| 7. Textile factory (Dar al-Tiraz) | 22. West Mosque |
| 8. Sea gate | 23. Mosque of Dhu al-Qarnayn |
| 9. Center for exports (al-Sadir) | 24. Mosque of al-Mu'tamin |
| 10. Jafar al-Qasarin | 25. Gate of the Pillars |
| 11. Governor's Palace (Dar al-Niyabah) | 26. Cavalry Pillars |
| 12. Obelisk | Spice Gate |
| 13. Weapons Depot (Qasr al-Silah) | 27. Mosque of the Cavalry (al-Sawari) |
| 14. Sultan's Palace (Dar al-Sultan) | |
| 15. Dar Ibn al-Jiyab | |

⁴¹ Cited from Niall Christie, "Reconstructing Life in Medieval Alexandria from an Eighth / Fourteenth Century Waqf Document", *MSR*, vol. 8/2, 2004, p. 180.

