

NEW LIGHTS ON PROPHECY-PRETENDING AND MIMETIC RELIGIONS IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC NORTH AFRICA¹

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Abstract

This paper addresses the proliferation of prophetic movements and mimetic religions in medieval Islamic North Africa, focusing on the Barghwāta and Ghumāra tribes. It critiques medieval Arabic and Orientalist terminologies used to explain this complex issue, arguing that they fail to capture the dynamics of these movements. The paper introduces the concept of mimetic religion to interpret localized prophetic movements that emerged on the periphery of the established religion, namely Islam, retaining its structure while presenting parallel, rather than counteractive, religio-cultural projects. Drawing on primary sources, it highlights how misrule and exploitative practices by early conquerors fueled North African resistance, leading to revolutionary and prophetic movements. It challenges both medieval historiographical reductions of these movements to sectarianism and modern interpretations shaped by French colonial Orientalism, which often reduced them to ethnic or religious

¹ The second part of this research explores mimetic religions in medieval North Africa, focusing on the Barghwāta and Ghumāra texts known as “Korans.” Future studies may compare them with modern New Religious Movements across different regions. Al Makin’s *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy*, is revealing in this context. See: Al Makin, *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy: Accounts of Lia Eden and Other Prophets in Indonesia* (Switzerland: Springer, 2016).



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conflicts between Arab-Muslim conquerors and indigenous North Africans. By analyzing primary sources and questioning Orientalist biases, the paper emphasizes the interplay of political, economic, social, and cultural factors in shaping North African religious settings. Ultimately, it defines new boundaries for re-contextualizing and re-interpreting mimetic religion as expressive of a complex texture framing religious, cultural, and social nomenclature rooted in local North African indigenous heritage.

[Makalah ini membahas proliferasi gerakan-gerakan kenabian dan agama-agama mimetik di wilayah Afrika Utara abad pertengahan, dengan fokus pada suku Barghwāta dan Ghumāra. Studi ini mengkritisi terminologi Arab klasik dan orientalis terkait persoalan yang kompleks ini, dengan kesimpulan bahwa terminologi tersebut gagal menangkap dinamika gerakan yang terjadi. Konsep agama mimetik diperkenalkan untuk memahami gerakan-gerakan kenabian lokal yang berkembang di samping agama yang mapan, yaitu Islam, dengan mempertahankan struktur dasar, namun membawa konsep religio-kultural yang sejajar tanpa mengambil posisi kontradiktif. Berdasarkan sumber-sumber primer, tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa ketidakadilan pemerintahan dan praktik eksploitasi oleh para penakluk awal turut memicu perlawanan di Afrika Utara yang kemudian melahirkan gerakan-gerakan revolusioner dan kenabian. Penulis menolak reduksi historiografi abad pertengahan yang memandang gerakan-gerakan tersebut sebagai bentuk sektarianisme semata, sekaligus menolak interpretasi modern ala orientalisme kolonial Prancis, yang menyederhanakan gerakan-gerakan tersebut menjadi konflik etnis atau agama antara penakluk Arab-Muslim dan masyarakat pribumi Afrika Utara. Tulisan ini menekankan pentingnya interaksi antara faktor politik, ekonomi, sosial, dan budaya dalam membentuk lanskap keagamaan di Afrika Utara. Agama mimetik adalah ekspresi dari tekstur kompleks yang membingkai nomenklatur religius, kultural, dan sosial yang berakar pada warisan budaya lokal masyarakat pribumi Afrika Utara.]

Keywords: prophecy-pretending, mimetic religion, Amāzīgh culture, Barghwāta, Ghumāra, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, Ḥāmīm.

A. Introduction

In the Arab-Islamic context, *nabiy* denotes canonical prophets such as Muhammad, Jesus, Moses, David, and Solomon.² Conversely, the term

² See “Defining Prophet and Prophethood” in Al Makin’s *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy*, p. 2-6.

mutanabbij refers to prophecy-pretenders such as Musaylima³, Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt, and Sajāh in Arabia,⁴ and Šālīḥ ibn Ṭarīf and Ḥāmīm in North Africa. The phenomenon is catalogued in an unpleasant repertoire and unrepresentative terminologies laden with pejorative religious and cultural connotations. In Arabic, terms such as *ridḍa* (apostasy) and *bidʿa* (heresy)⁵ are prevailing in tackling the phenomena; in French *faux prophète* and *prétention à la prophétie* dominate the scene,⁶ while English uses prophecy-pretending, false prophets, local prophets, and forgotten prophets.⁷ Western historiography depended heavily on ‘heresy’ to approach North African mimetic religions.⁸ B. Lewis argues that even though “there are many contexts in which the word *bidʿa* can reasonably be translated as *heresy*, the two terms are far from being equivalents”.⁹ The Christian definition of heresy primarily addresses divergences in belief, opinion, or practice concerning divinity, revelation, and prophecy.¹⁰ Consequently, he asserts that Islam lacks the conceptual framework for heresy as understood in Christianity. For this, “there has been and can be no ‘heresy’ in Islam.”¹¹ This incongruity underscores the inadequacy of applying the Western conception of heresy in analyzing prophetic movements and mimetic religion in Islam.

³ On Musaylima see: Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy: Musaylima in Muslim Literature* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), European University Studies Series 27: Asian and African Studies, vol. 106. p. 9.

⁴ Al Makin, “Re-thinking Other Claimants to Prophethood: The Case of Umayya ibn Abi Salt”, *Al-Jāmiʿah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 48, no 1 (2010), p. 165- 90.

⁵ B. Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam”, *Studia Islamica*, no. 1 (1953), pp. 53-7. Neither the Christian heresy nor the Islamic *bidʿa* applies to North African mimetic religions.

⁶ M. E. Michaux-Bellaire, *Archives Marocaines: Conférences*, vol. 27 (Paris: Direction générale des affaires indigènes, 1927), p. 17.

⁷ A. S. Tritton, “False Prophets and Others”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1-2 (1957), p. 1-9; W.A. Bijilefeld, “Islamic Studies within the Perspective of the History of Religions”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 62, no. 1 (1972), p.1-11; A. Bacha, “Prophethood in Islam”, *The Islamic Review*, 9 (1958), pp. 5-11; J. Jomier, “La notion de prophète dans l’Islam”, *Comprendre* 120 (1973), pp. 2-3 ; Makin, “Re-thinking Other Claimants to Prophethood”, p.170.

⁸ G. Camps, *Les berbères aux marges de l’histoire* (Toulouse: Hespérides, 1980), p. 257. M. Talbi, “Hérésie, acculturation et nationalisme des berbères Barghwāṭa”, in *Actes du premier congrès d’études des cultures méditerranéennes d’influence arabo-berbère*, ed. by Micheline Galley and David R Marshall (Alger: Sned, 1973), pp. 217-33.

⁹ Lewis, “Some Observations”, p. 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Instead of those unrepresentative terminologies imbued with religious, cultural, or political value judgments, this paper introduces the concept of *mimetic religion* as a novel framework for analyzing the phenomenon of prophecy-pretending in Islam. Defined herein, mimetic religion constitutes a localized religious project that emerges on the periphery of an established religion, seeking to imitate its structures and exposing itself as a parallel, rather than a counteractive, project. This concept encompasses a constellation of overlapping and enigmatic interrelated factors. Within the context of Islamic civilization, mimetic religion “lies within—on the fringes of, but not beyond—Islamic history.”¹² Building on this notion, J. McDougall suggests that “the false Islam of the Barghwāṭa”,¹³ as termed by M. Brett and E. Fentress, represents a localized “imitation” of the conquering model that the indigenous people saw triumphant around them, deemed “false” solely due to its failure to survive as a viable sectarian variant.¹⁴

Among the numerous mimetic religions that emerged in medieval Islamic North Africa, this paper focuses on the religions of the Barghwāṭa and Ghumāra tribes. Barghwāṭa, an Amāzīgh tribe dwelling in the Tāmasna region on the Atlantic coast of nowadays Morocco, were led by their prophet Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf ibn Sham‘ūn ibn Ishāq. Ṣāliḥ claimed prophecy in the mid-eighth century and succeeded in establishing a powerful kingdom that endured for four centuries before its eventual destruction by the Almohad army in 542 H/1148 AD. Similarly, Ghumāra, an Amāzīgh tribe inhabiting Morocco’s Mediterranean coast, followed their prophet Ḥāmīm who proclaimed prophecy at the beginning of the tenth century.

Acknowledging the inherent challenges in reconstructing a comprehensive understanding of this complex subject, this paper recognizes the limitations of the available records and historical documents which did not cover all aspects of this complicated issue. Primary source materials are scarce, and the details provided by medieval Muslim geographers, travellers and historians often exhibit inconsistencies and incoherence.¹⁵ Despite these constraints and the

¹² J. McDougall, “Histories of Heresy and Salvation: Arabs, Berbers, Community and the State” in *Berbers and Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghrib*, ed. by K. E. Hoffman and S. G. Miller (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 15-38.

¹³ M. Brett and E. Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 92.

¹⁴ McDougall, “Histories of Heresy”, p. 26.

¹⁵ M. Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdis of the Muslim West* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 40.

pejorative framing of these movements as apostates or heretical, North African prophetic experiences exerted a profound impact on both official and popular religion and culture within the Maghreb. As Al Makin accurately demonstrated, “the ‘notion’ of prophethood, and prophet, are thus bound to a specific cultural, social and religious tradition. Indeed, each culture, political context, and religious tradition has produced-and can produce- its own model of prophethood”.¹⁶ Prophetic movements played significant roles in shaping the sectarian map of medieval Islamic North Africa and nourishing popular beliefs, rituals, and representations that persist to the present day.¹⁷

B. Approaches to North African Mimetic Religions

Medieval and modern approaches to prophetic movements in Islam vary widely.¹⁸ Medieval Muslim scholars primarily emphasized the religious dimensions underpinning the emergence and development of mimetic religions. In contrast, modern interpretations, particularly those shaped by the French colonial-orientalist traditions, have placed considerable emphasis on ethnic and religious factors. This colonial orientalist framework has had a profound influence on contemporaneous North Africanists, where many researchers, adhering closely to the intellectual legacy of French orientalism, have remained within its ideological constraints.

1. *Medieval Interpretations: Apostasy and Sectarianism*

In Arab-Islamic legal literature, the predominant conceptual framework employed to tackle the phenomenon of mimetic religion was *ridda* (apostasy), encompassing extensive religious connotations. Ibn Kathīr encapsulated this phenomenon in the Arabian context as follows:¹⁹

Upon the passing of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Arab tribes declared apostasy, except for the people of Mecca and Medina. [The tribes of] Asad and Ghatafān renounced Islam under the leadership of

¹⁶ Makin, *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy*, p. 3.

¹⁷ M. Mansouri, “Holy Time and Popular Invented Rituals in Islam: Structures and Symbolism” *Al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 56, no 1 (2018), pp. 121-54.

¹⁸ G. R. González, “Aspectos diferenciales del concepto de profecía en el Islam, Judaísmo y Cristianismo”, In *Actas de las jornadas de cultura árabe e Islámica*. (Madrid: C.S.C.M.A, 1981), pp. 359-64; R. Arnaldez, “Histoire et prophétisme dans le Christianisme et en Islam”, *Les mardis de Dar El Salem* (1958), pp. 24-54; F. Miller, “Prophecy in Judaism and Islam”, *Islamic Studies*, vol 17, no. 1 (1978), pp. 27-44.

¹⁹ Note: All Arabic, French and Spanish quotes and texts are my translation.

Ṭalḥa ibn Khuwaylid al-Asdī al-Kāhin. Similarly, the Kinda tribe and the surrounding affiliates declared apostasy, led by al-Ash'ath ibn Qays al-Kindī. [The tribe of] Madhḥijī embraced apostasy under the guidance of al-Aswad ibn Ka'b al-'Ansī al-Kāhin (...) [The tribe of] Ḥanīfa persisted in disbelief, aligning themselves with Musaylama ibn Ḥabīb, [infamously known as] *Musaylama al-Kadhdhab*, the liar... In parallel, [the tribe of] Banū Tamīm professed apostasy under Sajāḥ al-Kāhina (...) In Oman, Dhū al-Tāj (...) claimed prophecy and gained support from the Omani unlearned populace.²⁰

Similarly, in the North African context, the eleventh-century Maliki jurist al-Dāwudī classified the Barghwāṭians as *murtaddīn* (apostates), and issued a fatwa sanctioning their captivity (*saby*), enslavement, confiscation of property, and even extermination if they refuse to revert to Islam. He argued that *jizya* (poll tax) is inapplicable to them, as they neither belonged to the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) nor were they *Majūs* (Zoroastrians).²¹ Similarly, the twelfth-century North African 'Ibāḍī scholar Abū Ya'qūb al-Wārjalānī employed the concept of apostasy to draw parallels between the situation of Barghwāṭa in twelfth-century North Africa and the apostates of the early days of Islam in Arabia.²²

In the fourteenth-century, the Maliki traveler Al-Tajjānī, argued that territories not belonging to the official Hafsid political regime did not constitute part of *arḍ al-Islām* (the land of Islam) but rather *arḍ al-ḥarb* (the land of war).²³ He contended that adherence of indigenous tribes to Islam remained overwhelmingly nominal, often limited to the proclamation of Islamic testimony of faith, particularly in rural North Africa. This superficial commitment, he asserted, provided fertile soils for apostates and prophecy-pretenders. Consequently, he legitimized military campaigns against these tribes and the confiscation of their properties as a means of enforcing Islamic orthodoxy and conformity.

²⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, vol. VI, ed. by Ali Shīrī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1988), p. 363.

²¹ Quoted in Allaoua Amara, "Texte méconnu sur deux groupes hérétiques du Maghreb médiéval", *Arabica*, vol. 52, no 3 (2005), p. 352.

²² Al-Wārjalānī, *Al-'Adl wa'l-Inṣāf fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa'l-Ikhtilāf*, (Tunis: Farhat Jaabiri Library), p. 252.

²³ Al-Tajjānī, *Al-Riḥlah*, ed. H. H. Abdel Wahhab (Frankfurt: Ma'had Tārīkh al-'Ulūm al-'Arabiyyah wa'l-Islāmiyyah, 1994), p. 187. However, native Ibāḍī biographers such as Abū Zakariyya, al-Wāsiyānī, al-Shammākhī, and al-Darjīnī portrayed a completely different image to that drawn by al-Tajjānī. Prayers had been collectively established, splendidly celebrated, and well documented as a sign of indigenous Amāzīgh's belonging to Islam. See for example the Ibāḍī chronicler Al-Wāsiyānī, *Al-Siyar*, pp. 350-351.

To substantiate their perspectives, medieval Muslim scholars and jurists frequently invoked the Quran, 5:54. However, the contextual framework of this verse (*asbāb an-nuḏūl*) does not elucidate a full explanation of the scene. The awareness of this limitation led the eleventh-century Maliki scholar, al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, to divide *ridḍa* (apostasy) into three distinct groups: the first group reverted to idolatry; the second followed prophecy-pretenders such as Musaylama and al-Aswad al-'Ansī; and the third group maintained their Islam, but refused to pay zakat (almsgiving) to Caliph Abu Bakr, which could be interpreted as refusal of Qurayshite dominance motivated by tribal rather than religious pretext.²⁴ Moreover, he terminologically distinguishes between apostasy, heresy, and prophecy-pretending.

According to this medieval North African categorization, not any prophecy-pretending movement represents an act of apostasy. Indeed, most Arabian mimetic prophets had not revalued paganism. Some even declared their prophecy during the Prophet's Muhammad lifetime. They acknowledged his prophecy and tried to gain his recognition of their own as parallel rather than antagonistic projects.²⁵ Similarly, Ṣāliḥ Ibn Ṭarīf of Barghwāṭa acknowledged Muhammad's prophecy but argued that Muhammad was an envoy to Arabs only. Ṣāliḥ claimed that he was divinely appointed as a local prophet sent to the Amazigh people of North Africa²⁶. This allegation reflects a major characteristic trait of mimetic religion, where indigenous prophetic figures often adapted Islamic doctrines while aligning their projects with local cultural, political and spiritual contexts; a fact that highlights a complex interplay between theological assertions and socio-cultural dynamics in medieval Islamic mimetic religions.

Beyond the juridical framework of *ridḍa* (apostasy) and *bid'a* (heresy), sectarian dynamics prevailed in medieval historiographers' interpretations of North African prophetic movements. Historical narratives frequently attributed the proliferation of mimetic prophetic experiences to the diffusion of the so-classified as 'heterodox sects' in North Africa, particularly the Ṣufriyya subsect of Kharijism. Historical accounts posit that 'Ikrima, a disciple of Ibn 'Abbās played a catalytic role during his North African sojourn in Kairouan (93-104 AH/713-

²⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, vol. IXX, ed. by Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Bāqī et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1960), p. 381.

²⁵ Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

723 CE), propagating Ṣufrism, and allegedly influenced five leaders of the strongest North African tribes. These leaders, as per medieval sources, subsequently spearheaded either revolutions or mimetic prophecies mirroring early Islamic paradigms.²⁷

Al-Ṭabarī's historiographical framework further entrenches this sectarian thesis, asserting that Amāzīgh tribes remained loyal and obedient to the Islamic Caliphate in Damascus until 105 AH/ 724 CE. However, due to Kharijite and Mutazilite influences, Amāzīgh declared political disobedience and religious rebellion.²⁸ Within this overwhelming medieval historiographical paradigm, sectarian affiliations- rather than sociopolitical factors or religio-cultural motives- are foregrounded as the predominant catalyst for both North African revolutionary movements and mimetic prophecies. However, this historiographical account provides no convincing proof for such an assertion. It reflects a wider historiographical strategy to harmonize historical events with the chroniclers' sectarian belonging; a way of producing representation rather than depicting historical facts. Prophetic movements were reductively ascribed to sectarian influences. By framing mimetic religion through the prism of sectarian "contamination", medieval historians elided complex local dynamics. Rather, they projected an orthodox-centric narrative that aligns with political constraints and serves to delegitimize any stray beyond the limits of the status quo and maintain political and doctrinal coherence across *dār al-Islam*.

By contrast, primary North African Ibādī sources did not mention any link between sectarianism and revolutionary or prophetic movements; a fact that underscores the necessity of critically reevaluating sectarian tropes in the light of socioeconomic and ethno-cultural pre-Islamic and Islamic North African landscape. Drawing upon convincing historical facts recorded in some medieval primary sources, authored by Sunni Arab-Muslim historians --which strengthened their credibility and mitigated accusations of being considered a North African propagandist lachrymose-- we argue that North African revolutionary and prophecy-pretending movements were articulated counterhegemonic strategies rather than mere theological deviation aiming at overthrowing Islam. Several narratives portrayed these movements as immediate outcomes

²⁷ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, vol. VI, ed. by Khalīl Shaḥāda, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), p. 107, 118.

²⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk*, vol. IV (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1967), p. 254.

of the systematic misgovernance of early conquerors and governors of North Africa, irrespective of their religious or ethnic affiliations. They featured details germane to the profound dissonance between the teachings of the religion, on the one hand, and the daily practices and discriminatory measures taken by early governors towards indigenous people, on the other.

One of the most decisive factors, primary sources suggest, is that early Arab-Muslim conquerors regarded indigenous North Africans as subjects of enslavement, war-captivity and trade commodities, even after their conversion to Islam. In his *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, al-Balādhurī recounts that during the conquest of Cyrenaica, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ ordered members of the Lawāta tribe to sell their sons and wives to pay him the *jizya* (poll tax).²⁹ Indigenous North Africans who failed to meet this tax were captured, deported to Arabia and sold into slavery.³⁰ These exploitive measures were not limited to conquerors and governors, some medieval Arab-Muslim chroniclers tell us, but were actively encouraged by Muslim caliphs, who specifically favored the trade of Amāzīgh female slaves. Medieval accounts argue that these harsh measures implemented by the governors of North Africa were often driven by the need to appease Umayyad caliphs and fulfil their demands for female slaves.³¹ As an immediate reaction against these harsh measures, North Africans rebelled against their governors and killed some of them.³²

²⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Nashr li al-Jam’iyyīn, 1957), pp. 222-23.

³⁰ Al-Mālikī, *Riḥla al-Nufūs*, vol. I, ed. by Bashīr al-Bakkūsh (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1983), p. 57.

³¹ Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa’l-Maghrib*, vol. I, 3rd edition, ed. by Gabriel S. Colin and Évariste Lévi-Provençal (Tunisia-Libya: Dār al-‘Arabīyyah li’l-Kitāb, 1983), p. 52.

³² *Ibid.*, I: 51. Such measures affected also North African former kings who deliberately converted to Islam. To quote Ibn Khaldūn, “[Arab-Muslim] conqueror Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār invaded Telemcen in 55 AH/675 CE and met Kusayla [ibn Lazam of ‘Ūrba tribe], who was the King of North Africa. Kusayla accepted to convert to Islam. Then, Abū al-Muhājir treated him respectfully. However, when ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ was nominated governor of Ifriqiyya in 62/682, he insulted Kusayla and disrespected him. One day he ordered him to skin off a slaughtered sheep. Kusayla ordered his servants to do it, but ‘Uqba insisted that he should do it by himself and rebuked him. Kusayla accepted with anger. When such behaviour reached Abū al-Muhājir he blamed ‘Uqba and said to him “The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to reconcile the hearts of Arab titans, while you deliberately insulted a newly-converted mighty-man in front of his people in his own Kingdom.” Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 193. Months later, Kusayla declared a revolution that resulted in the assassination of ‘Uqba in Tahūda.

This policy persisted into the Abbasid era, as evidenced by correspondence between Ibn Ḥabīb, the governor of Ifrīqiyya, and the Abbasid Caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Mansūr. In 136 AH/754 CE, Ibn Ḥabīb sent a letter to inform the caliph that Ifrīqiyya had been fully Islamized and that no further captives (*saby*) could be sent to Baghdad from North Africa. This declaration infuriated the Caliph who sent him a warning letter.³³ Such incidents underscore the dissonance between the Islamic religious ideals and the administrative practices; a dynamic that significantly contributed to the sociopolitical unrest during the early decades of Islam in North Africa, and to the emergence of prophetic movements in the second century AH/eighth CE.

A revealing account, consistently documented by Arab-Sunni historians in almost identical versions, underscores the pivotal role of governors’ mischief and maltreatment of indigenous populations in precipitating one of the most significant North African uprisings: the revolution of Maysara of the Maṭghara tribe in 120 AH/738 CE. In fact, before the outbreak of the revolt, historians tell us, Maysara travelled to Damascus to lodge grievances against the oppressive policies of North African governors and complain to the Umayyad Caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. Unable to meet the caliph directly, Maysara appealed to his minister al-Abrashī with the following testimony:

Inform the Caliph that we participate in the military campaigns led by our governor. Yet, when the army secures spoils of war (*ghanīma*), the governor allocates shares exclusively to his troops, [and he does not give us anything] and he justifies this by claiming it purifies our *jihād*. During sieges, he positioned us in the frontlines while he retreated his forces to the backlines and tells us: that this enhances our divine recompense. Furthermore, they have desecrated our ewes, torn their bellies before they have borne their lambs, to extract white fur cloaks to be sent to the caliph. Sometimes they kill more than one thousand sheep for a single fur. Then they seized our daughters, selling them into slavery. We have protested that such actions find no ground in the Quran and the Sunna, and *we are Muslims*. We seek to ascertain whether these measures are ordained by the Caliph or not.³⁴

Upon his return to North Africa, Maysara killed the Umayyad governor and established a tribal coalition comprising the Maṭghara,

Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. I, p. 30.

³³ *Ibid.*, I: 67.

³⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fīl-Tārīkh*, vol. III (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1979), p. 92.

Barghwāṭa, Ghumāra, Miknāsa, Zanāta, and Huwwāra tribes, subsequently declaring a full-scale revolution. In the wake of this revolution, most of these tribes proclaimed their localized prophets and launched new religions. While seventh-century North African resistance movements were less organized and had minimal impact on the religious landscapes, the eighth-century revolutions were marked by profound religious implications and were immediately followed by the invention of mimetic religions. This account not only underscores the incoherence between Islamic egalitarian ethics and the socioeconomic and political exigencies of governance, but it also reveals the profound socio-economic grievances that underpinned North African uprisings. This historical trajectory highlights the centrality of political, economic and social factors in forming and shaping revolutionary and prophetic movements in medieval Islamic North Africa, as opposed to mere sectarian or purely theological motivations.

2. *Modern Interpretations: Ethnic, Tribal, and Religious Factors*

Modern interpretations of medieval North African religious and political movements vary widely. Barghwāṭism, for example, was seen as a corruption of Islam, as part of a more general wave of ‘heretical’ movements across al-Andalus and North Africa during the Umayyad period, as a sect of the Ṣufriyya Khawārij, as an Amāzīgh national liberation movement directed against the Arab domination of North Africa, as a resurgence of a pre-Islamic association between certain Amāzīgh groups and Jewish communities in the area,³⁵ or even as a way of reasserting a latent Christianity which the Muslim conquest could not immediately extinguish.³⁶ However, these narratives cannot be considered as “conclusions of eminent and erudite scholars,” as J. Iskander has taken for granted.³⁷ Some of them stemmed either from colonial Orientalists representations,³⁸ or religious, ethnic, and cultural misinterpretations. Rather than constituting rigorous scientific analysis

³⁵ M. Mansouri, “The image of the Jews among Ibadi Imazighen in North Africa before the Tenth Century”, in *Jewish Culture and Society in North Africa*, ed. by Emily B. Gottreich and Daniel J. Schroeter (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 45-58.

³⁶ John Iskander, “Devout Heretics: The Barghawata in Maghribi Historiography”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2007), pp. 37-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁸ On Orientalist representations, see: Ahlam Sbaihat, “Khadijah’s Image in 19th Century Orientalism”, *Al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 60, no. 2 (2022), pp. 399-426.

of medieval North African religious and cultural settings, they often functioned as projections of their authors' ideologies, reflecting wider colonial agendas and echoing Orientalist biases.³⁹

Modern historiography has often reflected the influence of French colonial orientalism, which highlighted ethnic, tribal and religious interpretations of revolutionary and prophetic movements in the region. Within this colonial-orientalist framework, the phenomena were reduced to a two-fold conflict: an ethnic conflict between indigenous Amāzīgh and Arab conquerors and a tribal conflict between Christianized or Judaized tribes and Islamized ones. French Orientalists frequently framed these movements as a rejection of Islam and Arabism, portrayed as imposed on indigenous populations of North Africa. Such reductive elucidations typify a colonial predisposition to oversimplify complex sociopolitical and religio-cultural dynamics in favour of dichotomous paradigms that align with imperialist agendas. The aim of prophetic movements had become, in this new interpretation, to establish a local autonomy and a national identity away from Arab-Muslim autocracy, dominance, or hegemony. Thus, the history of North Africa, to quote Hannoum, has become “a history not only of a ferocious opposition between two races, Arabs and Berbers, but also, equally importantly, the history of an Arab domination of Berbers”.⁴⁰

However, this ethnic explanation, in which colonial-orientalists portray these, and later, revolutionary movements as an Amazigh-Arab confrontation, proves inadequate in this regard. Historical evidence provides us with many cases in which these movements were led by diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, including Amāzīgh, Africans, Persians, and even Arabs. For example, following the death of Maysara, the leader of the Matghara revolution in 122 AH/740 CE, leadership transitioned to an Amāzīgh figure: Khālid ibn Ḥumayd of Zanāta and an Arab leader: 'Ukasha al-Fazzārī. Similarly, during the siege of Tripoli in 126 AH /744 CE, the Amāzīgh tribes of Nafūsa and Zanāta were led by the Yemeni Abdullah al-Tujaybī.⁴¹ Moreover, several key dynasties in the early centuries of North Africa, such as the Ibāḍi dynasty in Tāhart, the Zaydi dynasty in Marrakesh, and the Fatimid dynasty in Mahdiyya, were established by Arab leaders who successfully mobilized

³⁹ A. Hannoum, “Faut-Il Brûler L'Orientalisme? On French Scholarship of North Africa”, *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 16, no 1 (2004), pp. 71-91.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴¹ A. Khalifāt, *Nashat al-Ḥaraka al-Ibāḍiyya*, (Amman: Dār al-Sha'b, 1978), p. 138.

and led indigenous Amāzīgh tribes. These, and many others, examples, underscore that North African revolutionary and prophetic movements were far more complex than simplistic French Colonial-Orientalism suggests. They express intricate socio-political and cultural dynamics that transcend reductive interpretations based on ethnic factors. Consequently, framing this “complex whole”, in Taylor’s words, of socio-political, economic, cultural and religious events as a mere reflection of an ethnic factor fails to grasp its multifaceted nature and historic-cultural significance. Events are much more complicated than being an echo of an orientalist-overloaded ethnic factor.

To heighten the religious explanations for North African revolutionary and prophetic movements, French colonizers, and their orientalist ideologues employed by the *Bureau Arabe* created and disseminated the notion of a European origin for indigenous North Africans and depicted Christianity and Judaism as the predominant pre-Islamic religions in the region. In doing so, they positioned themselves as emancipators of the Amazigh people from Arab-Islamic hegemony. To enhance this colonial ideology, French colonialism interpreted almost every aspect of North African local history and culture as a representation, a derivative or an echo of European heritage.

An astonishing example of this approach is the misinterpretation of the Tamazight term designating deity: Yākush, which translates to *Ilāh* (God) or *Rabb* (Lord). French Orientalists speculated that Yākush was a borrowing from Greek, Latin or Hebrew exemplifying North African local adaptation of deities such as Bacchus, Dionysus, Yusha or Jesus. At the dawn of the twentieth century, N. Slouch projected that Barghwāṭa was a Jewish dynasty, and Yākush was an Amazigh version of Isaiah.⁴² On the other hand, George Marcy asserted, based on Orientalist philological speculation, that Yākush represented Jesus Christ in a localized form. He argued that Barghwāṭians and even Ibadi Muslims were essentially Christians exalting Jesus Christ. According to these reveries, “Yākush was neither the Latin god Bacchus [hypothesis of De Slane] nor the Muslim god Allah adopted by the Ibādites which means the Giver, [hypothesis of Basset], but rather Jesus Christ: the deity of the Romanized Christianized North Africans.”⁴³ Consequently, G. Marcy interpreted the Almohad’s

⁴² N. Slouch, “L’empire des Berghouata”, *Revue du monde musulman*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1910), p. 396 ; H. N. Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature* (London: Longman, 1982), p. 95.

⁴³ G. Marcy, “Le Dieu des Ibadites et de Bargwata”, *Hesperis*, no. 22 (1936), p. 46.

extermination of the Kingdom of Barghwāṭa in 534 AH/1139 CE as an Islamic victory over Christianity in North Africa; as a religio-tribal conflict between the Southern branch of the Maṣmūda —converted to Islam and founded the Almohad dynasty—and the Northern branches of the same tribe, which he prescribed as the “last Christianized North African tribe.” Marcy’s assumption asserts that it is an Islamic war on Christianity in North Africa. To quote him:

The destruction of Barghwāṭa in the twelfth century by the [Almohad] troops of Abdul Mu’min takes, in the Maghribi context, the symbolic meaning of the decisive triumph of the Southern [branch of] Maṣmūda [tribe]; fiercest champions of the new Islamic dogma against their brothers of the Northern [branch of] Maṣmūda: the last holder of Christianity in the Maghreb.⁴⁴

Such interpretations illustrate the ways in which French colonial historiography reframed North African revolutionary and prophetic movements as tribal, ethnic or religious uprisings against what they called “Arab-Islamic hegemony”. This reductionist orientalist narrative aligned with wider colonial objectives by legitimizing French intervention in North Africa as an emancipatory civilizing-mission.

However, when the French colonial-orientalist discourse failed to effectively Francize and Europeanize North Africa or prove Phoenician, Greek, or Roman origins for the Indigenous North African peoples, their cultures, and religions,⁴⁵ the focus shifted towards the concept of ‘Barbarizing Islam’. This new notion arose as a discursive apparatus to reconcile the perseverance of local religious structures and symbolism⁴⁶ with the colonial narratives, effectively reframing North African Islam within the framework of Barbarization. The French *Direction générale des affaires indigènes* declared in 1927, for example, that Barghwāṭa is “the most important of these heresies which vainly sought to create a Berber unity by expanding religious principles of a distorted and Berberized Islam.”⁴⁷ According to Hannoum:

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Hannoum, “Faut-Il Brûler L’Orientalisme?”, p. 79.

⁴⁶ M. Mansouri. “Cynophagy, Homosexuality and Anthropophagy in Medieval Islamic North Africa as Signs of Hospitality”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2014), pp. 128–42.

⁴⁷ *La plus importante et la plus puissante de ces hérésies... qui a duré plus de quatre siècles et qui a disparu définitivement sous les Almohades après avoir vainement cherché à créer une unité berbère par l’extension du principe religieux d’un Islam déformé et berbérisé?* Michaux-Bellaire, “Conférences”, p. 129.

In the 1930s ... a sense of failure arose from a situation that the French colonialist knew that North Africa would get out of his control. At this point, colonial discourse changed concerning the origins of the Berbers ... instead of the theory of the European origin of the Berbers, colonial discourse stressed rather the particularity of the Berbers, meaning that the Berbers had an identity of their own. The cornerstone of this colonial identity project was, of course, religion.⁴⁸

Astonishingly, until recent days, many Western scholars operating within the colonial-Orientalist framework still propagate the notion that the Barghwāta project aimed “to radically Berberize Islam in a local and wholly independent form”.⁴⁹ This interpretation, framing the ‘Berberization of Islam’ as a manifestation of emancipation and a strategy of resistance against the processes of ‘Islamization of Berber’ and ‘Arabization of Berber’, reflects an Orientalist vision of religio-cultural and ethno-religious clashes between Arab-Muslims and Amazīgh populations. Interestingly, these interpretations have not only continued to nourish post-colonial studies on North Africa but have also influenced some native North African scholars, who have uncritically adopted these ethnoreligious Orientalist frameworks.

For instance, H. Monès, relying on the above-mentioned al-Tajjani’s text without any critical scrutiny, concluded that North African revolutions were merely aimless political agitations devoid of any religious grounds.⁵⁰ In his *Al-Khawārij fī Bilād al-Maghrib*, Ismail Abdul Rāziq described these movements as “Kharijite revolutions targeting the Arabic rule”,⁵¹ a vision repeated verbatim by M. Garcia-Arenal.⁵² She asserted, without substantial proof, that Matghara, the tribe of Maysara, the leader of the first North African revolution in the 7th century, converted to Kharijism,⁵³ and that the Warfajuma tribe embraced Sufism, portrayed as one of the “most extreme and outraged sects of Islam”.⁵⁴ Consequently, the Barghwāta

⁴⁸ Hannoum, “Faut-Il Brûler L’Orientalisme?”, p. 79.

⁴⁹ Norris, *The Berbers in Arabic Literature*, p. 94.

⁵⁰ H. Monès, “Le malikisme et l’échec des fatimides en Ifriqiya”, in *Etudes d’orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi Provençal*, vol. I (Paris : Maisonneuve, 1947), p. 201.

⁵¹ A. Abdel Rāziq, *Al-Khawārij fī Bilād al-Maghrib ḥattā Muntaṣaf al-Qarn al-Rābi’*, (Casablanca: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1976), p. 103.

⁵² Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, p. 78.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42. By contrast, she demonstrated that “In most areas, it appears that the rate of conversion to Islam showed its steepest growth not during the 1st/7th century, but rather in the late 3rd/9th century and all of the 4th/10th.” *Ibid*, p. 31. How, then, did *Al-Jāmi’ah*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 2025 M/1447 H

movement, according to her, “grew out of the great Kharijite upheaval of the mid-8th century among the Maṣmūda tribes of the Tāmasna region, in the Atlantic plains of Morocco, where Ṭarif, a companion-in-arms of the famous Kharijite rebel Maysara.”⁵⁵ Garcia-Arenal’s view echoed G. Camps’s colonial-Orientalist endeavour to propagate that Barghwāṭa doctrine was “a direct outcome of Khārijism, which tore the Maghribi Islam in the eighth century.”⁵⁶ However, as structural and symbolic analysis in the second part of this research will reveal, there is no evidence of Kharijite influence, whether Ibadī or Sufri, on the structure and symbolism of North African mimetic religions.

Mohamed Talbi, another prominent North Africanist, interpreted Barghwāṭa’s mimetic religion as a manifestation of Amazigh nationalism, framing it as an emancipatory strategy from Arab dominance. For him, it is “a kind of medieval decolonization” and “defensive acculturation” that appropriated elements “from the enemy arsenal” to achieve “complete national liberation.”⁵⁷ Consequently, Barghwāṭism represented “an anti-colonial nationalist movement ... expressing an essential and insurgent Berber personality.”⁵⁸ Yet, as critics have noted, Talbi’s analysis is heavily overloaded with modern concepts, ideologies, and frameworks reflecting more “about the intellectual context of the 1970s, than the historical realities of the ninth to the eleventh centuries.”⁵⁹ This critique extends to other North Africanists, such as A. Laroui, whose accounts for North African revolutionary movements and local mimetic religions remain entangled with colonial Orientalist legacies. As Hannoum inferred, post-colonial North African historiography was not fully emancipated from colonial Orientalist legacy; “however different this nationalist history is from the colonial one, it still owes its very existence to colonial historiography, for it was written within it, as a reaction to it, and even with its language-French.”⁶⁰

This critique underscores the necessity that scholarly interpretation of mimetic religions should not be overlaid with the projection of modern concepts and frameworks that were out of concern of

she estimate that Matghara and Warfajjuma were Kharijite Muslims in the early 2nd/8th century? Which seems to echo the medieval projection of events.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ G. Camps, *Les berbères*, p. 257.

⁵⁷ M. Talbi, “Hérésie, acculturation et nationalisme”, pp. 217-33.

⁵⁸ McDougall, “Histories of Heresy”, p. 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁰ Hannoum, “Faut-Il Brûler L’Orientalisme”?, pp. 83-4.

medieval North Africans, such as ethnicity, nationalism, colonization and emancipation. The reasons behind such awareness vary:

“First of all, because it attributes to the actual content of the movement a mere instrumentality that cannot be justified except by modern conceptions of political ideology that do not belong in the story, and secondly because it is far from clear that the movement was conceived of as a departure from, a revolt against, an Islam identified as a foreign and ‘alienating spiritual domination.... Most importantly, this story --to the extent that its sources can safely be interpreted-- is not about decolonization or cultural liberation.”⁶¹

New approaches in North African religious studies have emphasized the academic need to accurately scrutinize the ‘heterodox’ religious movements themselves, as well as “their underlying political, national, popular, or intellectual motivations” that stirred those movements. Taylor, for example, insisted on dealing with all these motivations as a “complex whole” because:

“Economic, sociological, or political explanations are as inadequate as doctrinal if they are taken in isolation... Schism, sect, and heresy are not merely expressions or pretexts for economic, social, and political fermentation; they are that fermentation, something so integral that often only the mysteries and esotericism of theological language can attempt articulation.”⁶²

Mimetic religions in North Africa are inherently multifaceted. They consist of several overlapping and enigmatic interrelated factors. A mimetic religion cannot emerge on the periphery of an established religion without the existence of specific religious, cultural and social factors. While they drew upon pre-Islamic sacred systems, their development was shaped by the spread of Islam in North Africa and the new socio-political structures associated with it. One of the most decisive paradigms that paved the way to the emergence of North African mimetic religions is continuity—*survivance* in Lewicki’s term⁶³—of pre-Islamic sacred rituals and social structures. Even after Islam gained ground, North Africa preserved many of its indigenous social, religious and cultural elements,

⁶¹ McDougall, “Histories of Heresy”, pp. 25-6.

⁶² J. Taylor, “An approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Medieval Islam”, *Religious Studies*, vol. 2, no 2 (1967), pp. 197- 210.

⁶³ T. Lewicki, “Survivances chez les Berbères médiévaux d’ère musulmane de cultes anciens et de croyances païennes”, *Folia Orientalia*, no. 8 (1967), pp. 5-37.

which became symbolic of the dialectics of religion and local identity.⁶⁴ This interplay between continuity and transformation underscores and exemplifies the complexity of North African mimetic religions, which cannot be reduced to simplistic Orientalist narratives, representations, and projections of their ideologies.⁶⁵ Such decolonization or emancipation must be understood within their historical and cultural contexts.

C. North African Mimetic Religions and Social Structures

The social structure that enhanced prophetic projects of medieval North Africa heavily relied on tribal strength. Most medieval mimetic prophets and revolutionary leaders were supported by tribal solidarity (*‘aşabiyyah*) as articulated by Ibn Khaldūn. Both Barghwāṭa, the tribe of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, and Ghumāra, the tribe Ḥāmīm, are tribal sub-branches of Maṣmūda: the largest and powerful Amāzīgh tribe.⁶⁶ In the early days of Islam, Barghwāṭa was in its top tribal-strength.⁶⁷ Consequently, it tried to maintain its leading-role and to preserve its former cherished authority, by adopting Islam and participating in key historical events, including the early Islamic conquest of Andalusia in the seventh century. Then, it joined the revolutionary tribal confederation of Maysara al-Maṭgharī, before ultimately establishing its own religion and autonomous kingdom that endured for four centuries.

The question of whether Barghwāṭa should be understood as a single tribe or a broader tribal confederation has been a point of contention among both medieval historians and contemporary North

⁶⁴ See, for example, Sekar Ayu Aryani, “Dialectic of Religion and National Identity in North Sulawesi Jewish Communities in the Perspective of Cross-Cultural and Religious Psychology”, *Al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 60, no. 1 (2022), pp. 199-226.

⁶⁵ Mabrouk Mansouri, “German Contemporaneous Orientalism and Quran Studies: A Critique of Christoph Luxenberg’s ‘Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart Des Koran’”, *Al-Qanātir: International Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2020), pp. 119–53; Mabrouk Mansouri, “The Deliberation of Occidentalism in Contemporary Global Thought: A Comparative Study of Japanese and Western Thoughts”, *Journal of College of Sharia and Islamic Studies of Qatar*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2021), pp. 135-71.

⁶⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 427. Tribal strength as one of the most influential factors of prophecy pretending applies also to Arabian experiences. *C. f.* Musaylama relied on Rabī‘a and Ḥanīfa tribes. Al-Aswad al-‘Ansī relied on the Yemenite tribes and Dhū al-Tāj on the Azd tribes of Oman. These tribes were among the most powerful Arabic tribes during the Jāhiliy and early Islam.

⁶⁷ Ibn ‘Idhārī, *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. I, p. 73; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 428.

Africanists.⁶⁸ For Ibn Khaldūn, Barghwāṭa “consists of various scattered people inhabiting regions such as Tāmasna, Salā, Azmūr, Āsfī, and Ānfā.”⁶⁹ Yet, his phrasing, “the tribes of Barghwāṭa which owe allegiance to them follow their religion (*Qabā’il Barghwāṭa al-ladhīna yadīnūna labum wa hum ‘alā millatibim*),”⁷⁰ introduces ambiguity and confusion regarding tribal identity and cohesion. Some historians have concluded that Barghwāṭa was not an ethnically homogeneous group but rather a coalition of diverse tribes.⁷¹ For instance, among the many tribes, Ibn Khaldūn associates with Barghwāṭa are Jirāwa, Waghmūr, Dimmir, and Maṭmāṭa, which are branches of the Zanāta tribe, not Maṣmūda.⁷² The author of *Mafākhīr al-Barbar* even ranked Barghwāṭa as a Zanātian tribe rather than a sub-branch of Maṣmūda.⁷³ Al-Silāwī supports Ibn Khaldūn’s account by describing Barghwāṭa as “a tribal confederation comprising various tribes of Amāzīgh gathered around Ṣālīḥ ibn Ṭarīf following his claim to prophecy in Tāmasna in 124 AH/742 CE.”⁷⁴ Al-Bakrī even added, “the Muslims who owe to their allegiance and live in their kingdom.”⁷⁵

The controversy lies in the inadequacy of the Arabic term *qabīla* (tribe), frequently employed in medieval sources, which does not accurately represent Amazigh social structures. For example, some sources portray the Zanāta tribe—spanning from the Nafūsa Mountains in nowadays Libya to the Atlantic coast of Morocco—as a unified entity with

⁶⁸ M. Godelier, *Un domaine contesté: l’anthropologie économique*, (Paris: Mouton, 1974), pp. 236-64.

⁶⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 427.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, VI: 432.

⁷¹ Talbi, “Hérésie, acculturation et nationalisme”, p. 225. Some studies even doubted the etymological root of their name. See for example M. Redjala, “Les Barghwāṭa: origine de leur nom”, *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, vol. 35, no 1 (1983), pp. 115-25. E. Pritchard argued about the Nuer: “Political and lineages groups are not identical, but they have a certain correspondence and often bear the same name, for a tribal area and its divisions are often called after the clans and lineages which are supposed to have first occupied them.” E. Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 194.

⁷² Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. 7, pp. 103-8.

⁷³ E. Levi-Provençal, “Six fragments inédits d’une chronique anonyme du début des Almohades”, in *Mélanges René Basset* (Paris: Leroux, 1925), p. 347.

⁷⁴ Al-Silāwī, *al-Istiḳṣā li’l-Dīwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, vol. I (Egypt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Miṣriyyah), p. 103.

⁷⁵ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa’l-Mamālik*, vol II, ed. by Andriyan van Luven and André Ferry (Tunisia-Libya: Dār al-‘Arabiyyah li al-Kitāb, 1992), p. 853.

a monolithic cultural, economic, and political fabric.⁷⁶ Such depictions risk oversimplifying or even legendizing historical realities.⁷⁷ Laroui has particularly doubted the adequacy of *qabīla* to designate North African societal fabric and its usage as an analytical code. He argued that the term is consequently vague as it was employed by medievalists to allocate different social structures that vary significantly in size, organization and function. It is a word void of any specific sense and could not be used to interpret historical events.⁷⁸ As Laroui contends, scholarly interpretations must move beyond treating *qabīla* as a fixed or factual category that represents the base of North African history.⁷⁹

Most sources, I argue, speak of Barghwāṭa after they had established their mimetic religion, consolidated political power and erected a strong dynasty. Yet, scientific research had to distinguish between Barghwāṭa before their religious innovations and their later development as a dynastic power. Barghwāṭa's religious ideals and ideas garnered numerous tribes who converted to Barghwāṭism and coalesced into Barghwāṭa's social structure, transforming it into an ethnonym encompassing groups acquiring the religion of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf. Similar tribal dynamics apply also to Ghumāra under Ḥāmīm's leadership, which belongs also to Maṣmūda. Al-Qādirī claims that Ḥāmīm is not original Amazigh name but a combination of the disjointed Arabic letters at the beginning of certain Quranic chapters (*Ḥā mīm*). The Arabic names appearing in Ḥāmīm's genealogy presume that his family was well-versed in Islam.⁸⁰ However, Al-ʿAlawī argued that his original Amāzigh name

⁷⁶ J. Berque, "Qu'est-ce qu'une tribu Nord- Africain", in *Hommage à Lucien Febvre*, (Paris : n.p. 1954), vol. I, pp. 261-72.

⁷⁷ C. López-Morillas, "Los Bereberes Zanāta en la Historia y la Leyenda", *Al-Āndalus*, vol. 42, no. 1 (1977), pp. 301-22.

⁷⁸ Abdallah Laroui, *Mujmal Tāriḫ al-Maghrīb*, vol I (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1994), p. 99.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1: 101. For M. Garcia-Arenal, the Arabic term *nabīy* should also be put into question. For her "The fact that such records are always written in Arabic also brings me to address the conceptual problem of the terminology to be used in this chapter: to give one example, when an Arabic source accuses a Berber enemy of acting as a *nabīy*, or prophet, it is difficult to know exactly how that concept would have been understood by those who followed or supported the *nabīy* in question. What virtues would they have attributed to him, and what might they have expected from a man described in such a way?" Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, p. 39.

⁸⁰ I. Boutchich, "Intiḫāl al-Nubuwwah wa Mumārasah al-Siḥr bi Mīntaqah Ghumāra khilāl al-Qarn al-Rābī' al-Hijrī", *Miknās: Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa al-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyyah bi-Miknās*, no. 4-5 (1990-91), p. 168.

was Ḥammū ibn Hannū, and suggested that Ghumāra, like Barghwāṭa, was not a homogenous tribe but rather a tribal confederation of various branches.⁸¹ Most of them were characterized by frequent rebellions and strong associations with sorcery and witchcraft.⁸²

Some medieval Arab-Islamic sources attributed a Jewish genealogy to Ṣāliḥ of Barghwāṭa, positing that his father Ṭarīf was a descendant of Sham‘ūn ibn Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq (Simon, son of Jacob, son of Isaac). This genealogy was notably reported by Zammūr al-Barghwāṭī, a prayer-priest (*ṣāḥib al-ṣalāt*) envoy sent by Barghwāṭa’s king, Abī ‘Īsā ibn Abī al-Anṣār to the Umayyad Caliph in Cordoba in 351 AH/963 CE,⁸³ with whom Barghwāṭa dynasty had strong economic relations.⁸⁴ However, Ibn Khaldūn rejected this Jewish genealogy, labelling it “an apparent falsification” (*al-aghālīṭ al-bayyinah*), referring to his theory of *‘aṣabiyyah*—the social cohesion and solidarity that underpins tribal and dynastic power. To quote him:

People disagree about the genealogy of the Barghwāṭa tribe. Some link it to the Zanāta [rather than the Maṣmūda], while others claim that Ṣāliḥ is a Jew, being the grandson of a certain Simon son of Isaac However, the Barghwāṭa do not belong to the Zanāta; their dwelling [in Tāmasna] and neighbouring to their Maṣmūdian kin confirm this [affiliation with the Maṣmūda]. As for Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, it is well established that he is one of them; he belongs to Barghwāṭa, not to any other [group]. Kingship and governance over territories and tribes cannot be achieved by an outsider lacking kinship [ties] or tribal support, or whose lineage is uncertain Ṣāliḥ is unequivocally a Barghwāṭian, and the Barghwāṭa are [certainly] a branch of Maṣmūda.⁸⁵

Ibn Khaldūn’s skepticism towards Ṣāliḥ’s Jewish ancestry was grounded in his understanding of leadership and power dynamics which could not be achieved without strong tribal backing. This perspective underscores the centrality of kinship and tribal support in medieval North African governance, where outsiders lacking such ties were unlikely to ascend to positions of authority or leadership. Consequently, he argued that Ṣāliḥ was unequivocally a Barghwāṭian, belonging to the strongest

⁸¹ Al-Taḳī al-‘Alawī, “Uṣūl al-Maghāribah: al-Qism al-Barbarī, Ghumāra wa Ḥulafā’uhā”, *Majallat al-Baḥṭh al-‘Ilmī bi Rabat*, no. 31 (1980), p. 29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 428.

⁸⁴ R. Abdul-Ḥalīm, *Dawlat Banī Ṣālah fī l-Maghrib al-Aqṣa*, (Cairo: Dār al-Thaḳāfah, 1961), p. 12; Talbi, “Hérésie, acculturation et nationalisme”, pp. 217- 33.

⁸⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 280.

Amazigh tribe: Masmuda. However, I argue that Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *'aṣabiyya* extends beyond ethnic or tribal boundaries, as founders of several autonomous dynasties in North Africa, such as the Ibaḍī Rustomid, the Zaydi Idrisid, and the Ismaili Fatimid, lacked indigenous roots and ethnic or tribal *'aṣabiyya* as they were not autochthonous of North Africa, yet managed to establish themselves through other forms of cohesion.

Ṣāliḥ's own identity was complex and multifaceted. He overpassed his belonging to a particular ethnic group and claimed various names across different languages. His Arabic name is Salih, his Syriac name is *Mālīk*, his Latin name is *'Alī*, his Hebrew name is *Yariba*, and his Tamazight name is *Uryāwara*.⁸⁶ The term *Uryāwara* means 'the last prophet'. The prefix (*ur*) and the suffix (*wara*) are still used as forms of negation. (*Yā*) seems to be lexically ambiguous and may be related to the verb (*y*) in central Moroccan dialects meaning (to do, to be done, or to be), or related to the Touareg verb (*b*) which means 'be in, stay in'. Be it *ur(ya)wara* or *ur(ba)wara*, the term denotes the meaning of the closure of prophecy.⁸⁷ Yet, Ṣāliḥ's claim of being 'the last prophet of the religion of Barghwāta' was overthrown by his son Ilyās (176-227 AH/793-842 CE), and his grandson Yūnus (227-270 AH/842-884 CE), who claimed prophecy after Salih's mysterious disappearance in 176 AH/793 CE. Some historians suggest that this religion was kept secret until Yūnus revealed it. Mohamed Talbi discussed the possibility of considering Yūnus, not Salih, the inventor of this religion, without providing firm evidence for such a claim.⁸⁸ Many elements seem to be later fiction than expressing historical facts. The available records significantly limit our ability to reconstruct these events with certainty, leaving many aspects of Barghwata's religious history open to interpretation.

In conclusion, while sources often portray tribes like Barghwata and Ghumara through reductive frameworks influenced either by medieval Arabic historiographical conventions, or modern colonial-Orientalist biases, these groups were far more complex than such categorizations suggest. Their histories reflect dynamic processes of religious adaptation, social integration, and political confederation that challenge both medieval and modern simplistic representations of ethnic or tribal homogeneity. This complexity emphasizes the necessity for comprehensive scrutiny of

⁸⁶ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. 2, p. 820. Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 277.

⁸⁷ S. Chaker, "Données sur la langue berbère a travers les textes anciens", *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 31 (1981), p. 44.

⁸⁸ Talbi, "Hérésie, acculturation et nationalisme", p. 223.

medieval sources, and objective methodological engagement with modern historiographical assumptions when interpreting the social structures of mimetic religions.

D. Mimetic Prophecy, Augury, and Witchcraft

In the context of medieval North Africa, the concepts of prophecy, magic and leadership were deeply intertwined. Weber astutely argues that religious authority can hardly be imposed on a given group without being supported by charismatic or supernatural empowerment,⁸⁹ a phenomenon evident in the widespread use of astrology, sorcery, witchcraft, and augury (*kibāna*) as effective supernatural means of leadership legitimation and empowerment.⁹⁰ “According to Weber”, Al Makin wrote “the two essential elements of ‘charisma’ and ‘divine commandment’ mark the prophets’ legitimacy before their people. It is these two elements that differentiate prophets from magicians or from priests”.⁹¹ For Marcel Augé, the concepts of prophet, magician, and leader among African tribes are almost identical and frequently overlap,⁹² a perspective supported by Doutté, in his seminal work *Magie et religion dans l’Afrique du Nord*, which highlights the blurred distinction between the concepts of priest, magician, and prophet.⁹³ Lewicki further reinforced this idea in his study *Prophètes, devins et magiciens chez les Berbères médiévaux*,⁹⁴ affirming that many who claimed prophecy in Arabia and North Africa possessed magical capabilities.⁹⁵ Al Makin discussed the relationship between four interlinked concepts in this regard: *kāhin* (soothsayer), *sāḥir* (magician), *nabiy* (prophet) and *rasūl* (messenger).⁹⁶

⁸⁹ M. Weber, *Economie et Société*, trans. by Julien Freund et al. (Paris: Pocket, 1995), p. 465.

⁹⁰ Jean-Charles Coulon, “Sorcellerie berbère, antiques talismans et saints protecteurs: La magie dans le Maghreb médiéval d’après les traités d’histoire et de géographie islamiques”, in *Dynamiques religieuses et territoires du sacré au Maghreb médiéval: Eléments d’enquête*, ed. by Cyrille Aillet and Bulle Tuil Leonetti (Madrid: CSIC, 2015), pp. 103-47.

⁹¹ Al Makin, *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy*, p. 2.

⁹² M. Augé, *Génie du Paganisme*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 248.

⁹³ E. Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Alger: Typographie Adolphe Jourdan, 1909), p. 418.

⁹⁴ T. Lewicki, “Prophètes, divins et magiciens chez les berbères médiévaux”, *Folia Orientalia*, no. 7 (1965), pp. 3- 27.

⁹⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, vol. VI, p. 430.

⁹⁶ A detailed discussion on *kibāna* and *nubunna* with regards to the cases of Muhammad and Musaylima, see: Al Makin, *Representing the Enemy*, pp. 9-24.

Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf, a “charismatic prophetic figure,” as described by Fromherz⁹⁷ exemplified this blend of prophecy and versatile magic capabilities.⁹⁸ He was renowned for his ability to predict eclipses and for the healing properties of his saliva,⁹⁹ a practice that continues to hold the same social functions and cultural connotations across North Africa. Similarly, Ḥāmīm’s family also had a long tradition of witchcraft and astrology, with his paternal aunt Ṭānfit and his sister Dajjū mastering these skills. Al-Bakrī reported that Dajjū’s tribe often sought her transcendental abilities during times of war and hardship.¹⁰⁰ Even in the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldūn observed that Ghumāra women continued to practice magic and astrology, demonstrating immense spiritual power that defied natural laws.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Lewicki visited Dajjū’s tomb in 1965 and noted that women aspiring to become sorceresses and soothsayers still visited this site, located in the province of Jebala, Banū Ḥassān in Northern Morocco, believed to be descendant of the tenth-century Ḥāmīm’s family.¹⁰²

Medieval historians often portrayed sorcery and astrology as salient traits of North Africans in general and mimetic prophets in particular. Ibn Khaldūn argued that these practices were widespread and highly mastered among the Amāzigh,¹⁰³ who assumed protective and healing functions along with their role in social planning and legislation.¹⁰⁴ Al-Bakrī highlighted the unique respect accorded to sorcerers in North Africa, citing the example of Abū Kaysa, a veteran sorcerer in Majkasa Mountain whose authority was unquestioned by his people. He noted that his sons and grandsons were still respected, honourable and socially ranked above all during Al-Bakrī’s days.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, augury and idolatry assumed similar functions in North Africa and Arabia, reflecting similar local socio-cultural symbolism. While Arabs sought idols’

⁹⁷ A. Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire* (New York: Tauris, 2012), p. 144.

⁹⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥayāt), p. 82; J. Iskander, “Devout Heretics”, p. 41.

⁹⁹ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. II, p. 825.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. II: 776.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, vol. VI, p. 446.

¹⁰² T. Lewicki, “Prophètes, divins et magiciens”, p. 62.

¹⁰³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, vol. I, p. 43; vol. VI, p. 220.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Ṭajjānī, *Al-Riḥlah*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. II, p. 777.

blessings during war times and drought,¹⁰⁶ Amāzīgh populations sought cures and blessings for property.¹⁰⁷ Both representations are expressive of symbolism grounded in local socio-cultural structures. Since Arabs witnessed endless wars across their Saharan peninsula, they assumed that the main function of idols is to provide them with strength and water. By contrast, Amāzīgh were living in apparent peace prosperity, so they sought their idols and augurs' blessings and cure.

Witchcraft and astrology, according to Medieval Arab historians were not local skills but Eastern sciences acquired by North Africans during travels to Arabia. For them, North African prophecy-pretenders depended on witchcraft and astrology to mimic the miracles of Prophet Muhammad, as they lacked any divine support. Ibn Ḥawqal claimed that Ṣāliḥ ibn Ṭarīf's studied astrology (*ilm al-nujūm*) and mystical arithmetic (*ḥisāb al-taqāwīm*) during his travel to the East.¹⁰⁸ To quote him:

“Ṣāliḥ [ibn Ṭarīf] travelled to the East and promised his son Ilyās that he would return during the reign of their seventh king. He claimed to be the *Mahdī*, who would appear on the last day to fight the Antichrist, and Jesus would be one of his men and pray behind him. He confirmed this by sayings he attributed to Moses, Saṭīḥ al-Kāhin, and Ibn ‘Abbās.”¹⁰⁹

Among Salih's teachers, al-Bakri mentioned the renowned Arab augur: Saṭīḥ al-Kāhin and Ibn ‘Abbās, an influential scholar of Islam. Moses refers to Judaism, the presumably prevailing religion in Tāmasna during Ṣāliḥ's days. The claim of Mahdism reflects possible Shiite influences on North African mimetic religions,¹¹⁰ as Salih claimed to be the Mahdī, prophesying his return during the reign of Barghwata's seventh king and asserting that Jesus would be among his followers.

Arabian mimetic prophets also were well known as sorcerers with powerful credentials.¹¹¹ Musaylama, for example, used to visit the Souks of Yemen, al-Abala, al-Anbār and al-Ḥīra seeking “tricks, *nīranjāt*, and stories of astrologers and prophecy-pretenders.”¹¹² Prophet Muhammad

¹⁰⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, ed. by Aḥmad Zaki Basha (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 2000), p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. II, p. 660.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ard*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. II, p. 820.

¹¹⁰ M. Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, p 100.

¹¹¹ Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik*, vol. II, p. 820.

¹¹² Al-Jāḥiḍ, *Kitāb Al-Ḥayawān*, vol. IV, ed. by A. A. Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1969), p. 369.

himself was believed to be an augur (*kaābin*) and a sorcerer (*sāḥīr*).¹¹³ In addition to witchcraft, augury, and astrology, Arabian mimetic prophets possessed demons and jinn as helpers.¹¹⁴ In contrast to Arabian mimetic prophets, who often claimed support from jinn and demons, North African mimetic prophets derived their divine power mainly from magic and astrology.¹¹⁵

Barghwāṭians and Ghumarans have been misrepresented as heretic groups in North African historiography. The Almoravids played a major role in the anti-Barghwāṭian propaganda as they considered themselves the sole representatives of true Islam in North Africa. During the Almoravids and the Almohad eras, the ethnonym Barghwāṭa had been associated with pejorative religious, political, and social nonconformity and wrong deeds. However, an in-depth scrutiny of some North African manuscripts from that very period offers significant exceptions, such as the example of Skūt al-Barghwāṭi, the King of Ceuta, who promoted Arabic and Islamic studies during his reign 452-475 AH/1061-1083 CE.¹¹⁶ Ironically, when Arab-Muslim governors of Andalusia were seeking female musicians and dancers, King Skūt was seeking Quran teachers.¹¹⁷

The Almohad eventually exterminated the Barghwāṭa kingdom in the mid-twelfth century, leading to its dispersal and gradual forgetting of its religion. Nonetheless, I assume that contemporary Moroccan tribes like Awlād Ṣabbāḥ, Awlād Ḥrīz, and Mdhakhra, belonging to the Shāwiyya tribal gathering, inhabiting the Atlantic coastal region formerly known

¹¹³ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, vol. III, pp. 80-1.

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Mamdhū'āt*, vol. I (Mecca: Al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1966), p. 419. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. III, p. 93. Interestingly, Arabic culture correlated religious, magical, and literary genius to demons. Each Arab poet in the *jābiliyya* was believed to have a poetry demon (*shayṭān al-shi'r*). Literary genius, *'abqariyyah*, etymologically derives from *wādī 'abqar*, the valley of demons where poets frequently flocked to improve their poetic skills. See also: Al Makin, "Re-thinking Other Claimants to Prophethood", pp. 171-72.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ard*, p. 82.

¹¹⁶ S. A'rāb, "Jawānib mina al-Ḥayāt al-Fikriyyah bi-Sabta fi 'Ahd al-Barghwāṭiyyīn wa al-Murābiṭīn", *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adāb bi-Taṭwān*, no. 3 (1989), p. 230.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240. Ibn 'Idhārī reported that Abū al-Walīd ibn Jahwar, the ruler of Cordoba, for example, received three letters on the same day. The first letter was from Ibn Ṣamādiḥ, the governor of Almeria, asking for a female servant who could play the 'ūd (*jāriya 'awnāda*). The second letter was from Ibn 'Abbād, the governor of Seville, asking for a female singer-servant. The third letter was from Skūt of Barghwāṭa asking for a Quran reciter. Ibn Jahwar sent him 'Awn-Allah ibn Nūḥ, a Cordovan Quran student. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, vol. III, p. 250.

as Tāmasna, may be descendants of medieval Barghwāṭians.¹¹⁸ Such an assumption deserves socio-anthropological scrutiny to explore potential continuity of Barghwāṭism in modern Shāwiyya popular culture as a kind of harmonizing local socio-cultural heritage with Islam,¹¹⁹ as the second part of this work will display.

E. Concluding Remarks

The study of revolutionary and prophetic movements in medieval Islamic North Africa revealed a complex interplay between religion, politics and socio-cultural factors. The experiences of the Barghwāṭa and Ghumara tribes exemplify how mimetic religions emerge on the periphery of an established religion, in response to local systematic religious and cultural prerequisites. The paper challenged the simplistic categorizations of these movements as mere acts of *ridḍa* (apostasy), *bidʿa* (heresy), or sectarian manifestations, as medieval historians portrayed them, and argued that they were, rather, expressive of ethnic, religious, and cultural interaction between the new system of faith and local religiosity. It proposed ‘mimetic religion’ as a nuanced conceptual framework for tackling this complex phenomenon. Unlike traditional labels such as “false prophets”, “local prophets”, or “prophecy pretenders”, ‘mimetic religion’ captures the adaptive strategies employed by marginalized groups to assert their spiritual agency within dominant religious paradigms. To my mind, mimetic religions are not outright rejections of established faiths, but localized reinterpretations that blend indigenous traditions with elements of Islam.

Delving into primary sources from the period reveals how economic and political oppression—such as the imposition of *jizya*, enslavement, and discriminatory practices—played a crucial role in sparking prophetic movements among leading North African tribes. The early Islamic revolution led by Maysara al-Maṭgharī exemplifies how political misrule and economic injustice fueled a broad-based rebellion, though some medieval historiography reduced it to a sectarian Kharijite uprising against

¹¹⁸ D. M. Hart, “Scission, Discontinuity and Reduplication of Agnatic Descent Groups in Pre-Colonial Berber Societies in Morocco”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1999), p. 28.

¹¹⁹ The case of Pancasila in Indonesia is revealing in this context, with awareness of the differences between the two settings. See, Badrun Badrun, et al., “Pancasila, Islam and Harmonizing Socio-Cultural Conflict in Indonesia”, *Al-Jāmiʿah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2023), pp. 137-56.

the central rule in Damascus. In modern times, interpretations of such prophetic movements have been significantly shaped by French colonial orientalism, which frequently depicted them as anti-Islamic and anti-Arab decolonial efforts driven by nationalism and counter-hegemonic impulses. Some French orientalist even went so far as to promote the idea of a Roman origin for North Africans and reframe their religious expressions as localized forms of Christianity or Judaism—an approach that reveals ideological bias rather than objective analysis, and reflects a broader orientalist tendency to impose Eurocentric frameworks and perspectives on North African Islamic history.

To end up, prophetic movements in medieval Islamic North Africa were not merely deviations from orthodoxy but creative responses to systematic challenges. Recognizing their complexity enriches our understanding of the region's religious history while challenging reductive narratives perpetuated by both medieval scholars and modern orientalist historiography. The study underscores the need to move beyond medieval sectarianism and colonial orientalist biases when analyzing North African official and popular Islamic cultures. By focusing on socio-political contexts and indigenous agency, it becomes evident that prophetic movements were multifaceted phenomena shaped by both internal dynamics and external pressures. Interdisciplinary approaches incorporating anthropology, sociology, and linguistics will deepen our understanding of how local cultures adapted Islamic frameworks to their unique contexts when dealing with mimetic religions' structures and symbolism of invented religious texts, rituals and legislations in the second part of this study.

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