

Literary Tawqī'āt and Their Artistic Features in Classical Maghrebi Prose

التوقيعات الأدبية وسماتها الفنية في النثر المغربي القديم

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Abstract:

This study seeks to examine *tawqī'āt* (official marginal endorsements or concise written decrees) in classical Maghrebi prose, a genre that has not received an independent study highlighting its aesthetic dimensions. The research traces their development across different historical phases of Maghrebi states, while identifying their principal motivations, general themes, and artistic features, particularly in terms of language, imagery, conciseness, citation, and intertextual incorporation. It also investigates their historical significance in depicting aspects of social and political life, clarifying matters of governance, and documenting major events experienced by Maghrebi states in times of both peace and war. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the modes of thought adopted by rulers, as well as the opinions and independent judgments they advanced in pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of rights. The study also explores the sources of Maghrebi *tawqī'āt* and their interaction with their Eastern counterparts. The paper considers selected excerpts from the *tawqī'a* literature of the Maghrebi leaders. Special attention will be paid to the role of the rhetoric function, which will be enhanced with the help of different stylistic devices and techniques.

Key words: *tawqī'a* ; Maghrebi ; rhetoric ; brevity ; persuasion.

الملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى الوقوف عند التوقيعات في النثر المغربي القديم؛ ذلك أنها لم تحظ بدراسة مستقلة تبيّن جمالياتها، وقد حاولنا تتبّع تطورها عبر مراحل مختلفة من حياة دول المغرب، مع إبراز أهمّ بواعثها ومضامينها العامّة، وخصائصها الفنيّة من حيث اللّغة والصّور والإيجاز والاقْتباس والتّضمين. وقد رصدنا أيضًا أهمّيّتها التاريخيّة في تصوير ملامح الحياة الاجتماعيّة والسياسيّة، وتبيان شؤون الحكم والأحداث الكبرى التي عرفتها دول المغرب في حاليّ السّلم والحرب، وطبيعة التّفكير عند ولاة الأمر، وما يحملونه من آراء واجتهادات ترمي إلى تحقيق العدل وضمان استيفاء الحقوق.

كما تناولت هذه الدراسة مصادر التوقيعات المغربيّة وتأثيرها بتوقيعات المشرق، وعرضت نماذج مختارة من توقيعات حكام المغرب في بعدها الإقناعي الذي أسهمت في تعزيزه مختلف الأساليب اللّغويّة والبلاغيّة التي زادت هذا الفنّ وقعا وتأثيرا في المتلقّي.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: التوقيعات - المغرب - البلاغة - الإيجاز - الإقناع.

Introduction:

There is no doubt that concise writing captures the reader's attention and exerts a strong influence through the elegance of its formulation and the precision of its condensed meanings, made possible by linguistic economy. The art of *tawqī'āt* (official marginal endorsement) is one such form, characterized by persuasive brevity, subtle yet effective expression, and intellectual spontaneity. It represents a mode of thought adorned with the garb of wisdom, revealing personal experiences, daily practices, historical events, and the intellectual backgrounds of rulers, sultans, and leaders who cultivated this art through careful refinement and stylistic embellishment.

Numerous studies have addressed the history of *tawqī'āt* in the Mashreq, examining their Arabic origins and highlighting their Persian influences. These studies indicate that the *tawqī'* is typically associated with what a caliph, or his delegate, writes in response to a petition, complaint, inquiry, or similar document. It is usually placed at the bottom of the text in a brief yet eloquent statement¹

While critics have examined Eastern *tawqī'āt*, elucidating their aesthetic qualities and their connection to governance and political concerns, little attention has been paid to their counterparts in the Maghreb. Indeed, histories of Arabic literature scarcely allude to this genre in the Maghrebi context. This study, therefore, seeks to address Maghrebi *tawqī'āt* across their various historical periods, with the aim of restoring their rightful place within the history of Maghrebi literature. It also endeavors to clarify their historical significance, artistic forms, stylistic features, semantic dimensions, and the extent of Eastern influence upon them.

1. The Emergence of *Tawqī'āt* and Their Motivations in the Maghreb:

The Arabs brought their language, literature, and culture to the Maghreb, where Arabic became firmly rooted in people's hearts and minds. The population devoted itself to memorizing distinguished poetry and engaged with the corpus of speeches, epistles, debates, *maqāmāt*, and *tawqī'āt* that reached them. As political life became organized and general conditions stabilized in the region, the people of the Maghreb assimilated these literary traditions and attained a high level of creativity and excellence in both prose and poetry. This development led the critic Shawqī Dayf to assert that the Arab conquests transformed the Maghreb within a single century into an Arab society, "as if there had been a miracle that prepared the Maghreb, despite the diversity of its regions and their differences, for this transformation into Arabness and Arab identity"².

The admiration of the Maghrebis for the literary heritage of the Mashreq became evident, as they emulated its productions in both conceptual foundations and stylistic features. Literary themes remained largely similar, albeit with certain distinctions imposed by the Maghrebi environment. In reality, Arabic prose in the Maghreb did not develop at the same pace as poetry. Prose compositions in oratory, epistolary writing, debates, and related genres were largely based on transmission and a tendency toward citation and the emulation of early poetic models. 'Umar Farrūkh observes that a survey of Maghrebi and Andalusian prose works, such as *Zahr al-Ādāb* by al-Ḥuṣrī al-Qayrawānī, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, and *Amālī al-Qālī*, reveals little to distinguish them from their Eastern counterparts³. These works largely lack original Maghrebi and Andalusian material, instead featuring refined selections from the compositions of eloquent writers of the Mashreq. This phenomenon does not diminish the value of Maghrebi literature; rather, it reflects a profound admiration for the literary heritage of the East.

This context helps explain the loss of many Maghrebi literary works that were never committed to writing. There is little doubt that the rulers of the Maghreb issued *tawqī'āt* on the letters, reports, and petitions submitted to them by their officials and commanders.

Naturally, *tawqī'āt* proliferated in the successive emirates and states of the Maghreb, as rulers required them for administrative purposes within their chancelleries, which were managed by leading secretaries. These endorsements constituted a practical necessity of governance, a means of exercising authority, regulating the affairs of subjects, and organizing administrative matters. Their emergence, in general, responded to an urgent administrative need: “to meet a pressing bureaucratic demand. The expansion of the Islamic state, the vastness of its territories, the growing number of its subjects, and the multiplicity of their needs all contributed to the emergence this expressive form, given the difficulty of responding to every letter with a full reply, and in order to save time and effort while ensuring prompt attention to people’s concerns and the swift resolution of their cases”⁴.

However, the corpus of Maghrebi *tawqī'āt* that has reached us remains limited and does not correspond to the numerous reports found in various sources regarding the prominence of rulers, princes, and sultans in delivering eloquent speeches and refined endorsements. This scarcity may be attributed either to the loss of many sources over time or to the relative lack of interest in systematically recording such endorsements in the Maghreb, unlike in the Mashreq. Instead, greater attention was devoted to documenting epistles and speeches. For instance, from the Rustamid state, a number of sermons and official letters of its imams have survived, yet not a single *tawqī'* has been preserved. The same holds true when examining the prose of the Aghlabid and Idrisid states, despite the succession of rulers within them.

The Fatimid period (al-Dawla al-‘Ubaydiyya) represents one of the most fertile phases for the art of *tawqī'āt*. The work *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhar* alone contains a large number of endorsements issued by Fatimid caliphs such as al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh, al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh, and al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh. These imams were known for their appreciation of literature and their engagement with poetry, as reported in historical sources. The aforementioned work records more than eighty endorsements by al-Mu‘izz addressed to Jawdhar, reflecting the latter’s elevated status in his court.

In the Almoravid period, Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb informs us that Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn “continued to hold sessions to review grievances, read petitions, issue responses, and write *tawqī'āt*”⁵, indicating his interest with this art.

During the Almohad era, “*tawqī'āt* experienced a renewed flourishing that surpassed those of the Almoravids and the period of the Taifa kings. This revival can be attributed to two key conditions for the prosperity of the genre: the precision of administrative and political organization within the state, and the strength of the Almohad caliphate’s authority across al-Andalus and the Maghreb, along with the vast extent of the territories under its control. The Almohad caliphs, who belonged to the Masmuda Berber tribe, became renowned for eloquent endorsements that clearly demonstrate their deep assimilation of the Arab-Islamic heritage, including the Qur’ān, the Prophetic tradition, poetry, proverbs, and more”⁶. Ibn al-Khaṭīb notes that the Almohad ruler al-Ma’mūn composed distinguished *tawqī'āt*, adding, after citing one of them: “...and others which we have abbreviated”⁷, indicating their abundance. Likewise, the caliph Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Yūsuf, known as al-Manṣūr, was regarded as exemplary in the excellence and refinement of *tawqī'* writing⁸, although only two of his endorsements have survived.

Historical and literary sources provide little record of the *tawqī'āt* of the Zayyanid, Hafsid, and Marinid rulers, despite noting aspects of their correspondence and their skill in composing endorsements. For example, the Marinid sultan Abū 'Inān is described in *al-Istiḡṣā'* as “eloquent in writing, a skilled and articulate author, proficient in composing fine *tawqī'āt*, and a poet”⁹. Researchers seeking Maghrebi *tawqī'āt* will not typically find them in purely literary sources; rather, they are mostly scattered within historical works such as *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb* by al-Maqqarī, *al-Iḥāṭa fī Akhbār Gharnāṭa* by Ibn al-Khaṭīb, and *al-Mu'jib* by al-Marrākushī, as well as sources documenting the Fatimid state, including *Sīrat Jawdhar*, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā'* by al-Maqrīzī, and *al-Majālis wa al-Musāyarāt*, among others. This may be explained by the fact that *tawqī'āt* constituted an integral part of official state functions.

2. The Themes and Artistic Styles of Maghrebi *Tawqī'āt*:

Tawqī'āt constitute a salient feature of refined artistic prose and serve as a mirror reflecting the personalities of caliphs, sultans, and princes, as well as their cultural formation, creative spirit, and the characteristics of their era. They also capture elements related to the Maghrebi environment, social life, political responsibilities, personal interests, and the challenges faced by the general populace. For this reason, the horizons and structural forms of Maghrebi *tawqī'āt* expanded, and their purposes diversified in accordance with the wide range of issues addressed across different spheres of life.

Most of the *tawqī'āt* of the Banū 'Ubayd, despite their abundance, are marked by prolixity and a tendency to privilege meaning at the expense of stylistic formulation. They often depart from the original conception of the *tawqī'* and exhibit limited artistic refinement, lacking a clear literary inclination. Moreover, it is difficult for researchers attempting to classify them to distinguish precisely between those composed in the Maghreb and those written in Egypt, particularly in the case of the endorsements of al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh al-Fāṭimī.

An illustrative example may be found in a *tawqī'* by al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh al-Fāṭimī, which conforms to the conventional model of Eastern *tawqī'āt* and falls within the domain of administrative guidance. When al-Manṣūr appointed al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363 AH) as judge in al-Manṣūriyya, some individuals objected to his rulings. He wrote to the caliph complaining, and al-Manṣūr appended the following endorsement at the bottom of the document: «¹⁰ يا نعمان، ما أقمت نفسك بحيث أقمناك، ولا كنت في الضبط عند ما رجوناك، بل نرى معلم كتاب الله أهيب منك!» “O Nu'mān, you have not upheld yourself in the manner we entrusted you, nor have you demonstrated the ضبط we expected of you; indeed, we find a teacher of the Book of God more imposing than you.”

This *tawqī'* represents a model of concise sovereign endorsement. It is presented in a declarative tone, devoid of imagery, and structured as a response imbued with reproach and admonition. Its brevity and directness serve to achieve its purpose with maximum efficiency. Al-Manṣūr reminds al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān of his status and his qualification for the judicial office, given his central role in the Fatimid state as a leading authority in doctrine and authorship, and as a spokesman for Ismā'īlī thought, while reproaching him for his failure to exercise the firmness, authority, and strength of character required to preserve the dignity of the judiciary. By holding him accountable, the caliph signals that allowing public contestation of judicial authority would undermine the institution itself. The endorsement concludes with a striking rhetorical reversal, presenting a Qur'ān teacher as more awe-inspiring, especially considering the traditionally diminished status

of elementary teachers in Arabic cultural heritage, often portrayed unfavorably in proverbial discourse and in the writings of al-Jāhiz.

This *tawqī'* had a decisive and powerful effect on its recipient. Al-Nu'mān himself describes its impact, stating:

«فلما قرأت توقيعه أسقطت في يدي وأظلمت الدنيا علي¹¹»

“When I read his endorsement, I was utterly confounded, and the world darkened before me.”

Turning to the Almoravid period, we encounter the *tawqī'* of Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn (d. 500 AH), issued in response to a threatening letter from his adversary Alfonso. Ibn Tāshfīn ordered that the following be written on the back of the letter:

«جوابك يا أذفونش، ما تراه، لا ما تسمعه إن شاء الله»

“Your answer, O Alfonso, will be what you see, not what you hear, God willing.”

He appended to it a verse by Abū al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī:

«ولا كُنْبُ إِلَّا المَشْرِفِيَّةُ وَالْقَنَا وَلَا رُسُلٌ إِلَّا الخَمِيْسُ العَرْمَرْمُ¹²»

“There are no letters but the blades of swords and the spears, and no messengers but the vast and surging army.”

This *tawqī'* reveals the character of a confident military leader prepared to confront his Spanish adversary. It reflects the noble mission undertaken by Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn in defending the frontiers of Muslim al-Andalus and resisting the advancing Christian forces, whose power had grown following the formation of a strong alliance that sought to reclaim influence and subjugate the Taifa kings. It is reported that Ibn Tāshfīn declared:

«لئن عشت لأعيدن جميع البلاد التي ملكها الرّوم في طول هذه الفتنة إلى المسلمين، ولأملأها عليهم -يعني الرّوم- خيلاً ورجالاً لا عهد لهم بالدّعة»¹³

“If I live, I shall restore to the Muslims all the lands seized by the Byzantines during this turmoil, and I shall fill them, meaning the Byzantines, with cavalry and men unaccustomed to ease.”

This endorsement constitutes a direct threat grounded in brevity, the elimination of superfluity, and reliance on a decisive response in place of elaboration. The restrictive style confines the reply to action rather than mere words. The transition from prose to the citation of a verse by al-Mutanabbī, apt to the context, reinforces its argumentative function, intensifies the tone of threat, and elevates it to an epic register. In this way, discourse is replaced by the heroism of the sword as a symbol of strength and fortification, while the great army assumes the role of messengers. This signals that the ruler does not resort to correspondence or delay, but rather to imminent and forceful confrontation and a decisive war. Indeed, Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn achieved what he intended in the Battle of al-Zallāqa, whose severity is unanimously attested by historians.

There is no doubt that this *tawqī'* ignited enthusiasm and inspired determination. Historical accounts show how such expressions mobilized fighters from every direction, how the Taifa kings supported him, and how people became convinced that he was the long-awaited savior. Likewise, these responses instilled fear in the Christian rulers, “so that their panic increased, and their despair grew stronger, whether regarding what was in the hands of the Muslims or even what remained in their own possession”.¹⁴

Among the most famous *tawqī'āt* of the Almohad period is that of the caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn 'Alī, written in response to a letter of supplication and apology sent by Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn 'Atīyya (d. 553 AH). The latter had enjoyed a distinguished status at court and attained a rank unmatched in the state¹⁵, but envy and intrigue led to his downfall (reportedly after revealing a secret), and he was executed by the caliph. Prior to this, he had sought pardon through a letter and a long poem, including the following verses:

عَطْفًا عَلَيْنَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، فَقَدْ بَانَ الْعَزَاءُ لِقَرْطِ الْبَيْتِ وَالْحَزَنُ
قَدْ أَعْرَقْتَنَا ذُنُوبٌ كُلُّهَا لَجَجٌ وَعَطْفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ أَنْجَى مِنَ السُّفُنِ

“Have mercy upon us, Commander of the Faithful, for all consolation has vanished under the weight of anguish and sorrow.

Our sins have engulfed us like overwhelming waves, and a single act of your mercy would be more saving than ships.”

In response, ‘Abd al-Mu’min inscribed upon the poem the following Qur’ānic verse:

الْآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ { (يونس: 91) 16
“Now?,when you had disobeyed before and were among the corrupters.” (Qur’ān 10:91)

In truth, what inspired the caliph to employ this Qur’ānic endorsement was the second verse of the poem, particularly its allusion to Noah’s Ark. The *tawqī’* thus draws upon the Qur’ānic text for its persuasive, rhetorical, and emotional force. The caliph found in the story of Pharaoh an apt objective correlative for his anger, projecting it onto the circumstances of the situation. Through this concise formulation, he achieved a powerful impact akin to a swift judgment, revealing both sharp insight and artistic intelligence. Just as Pharaoh proclaimed belief at the moment of drowning, Abū Ja’far sought mercy when he sensed the imminence of his death. In both cases, repentance at the moment of punishment is futile after prolonged disobedience. The caliph’s response mirrors the divine rebuke addressed to Pharaoh, producing a forceful discourse that conveys decisiveness and severity, implying the rejection of the plea and the impossibility of pardon, while also reflecting the authority of the Almohad caliphate. By invoking Pharaoh’s *النهاية*, the caliph dispenses with all elaboration and detail.

Among the Almohad *tawqī’āt* concerned with critique and administrative guidance is that of Abū al-Rabī’ Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd Allāh (d. 604 AH), addressed to a governor against whom numerous complaints had been raised:

«قد كثرت فيك الأقوال، وإغضائي عنك رجاء أن تتيقظ فتتصلح الحال، وفي مبادرتي إلى ظهور الإنكار عليك نسبة إلى شر الاختبار وعدم الاختبار، فاحذر فإنك على شفا جرف هار»¹⁷

“Much has been said about you. I have overlooked this in the hope that you might awaken and reform. To hasten openly to censure you would imply poor judgment and lack of discernment on my part. Beware, for you stand on the brink of a crumbling precipice.”

This *tawqī’* is a concise text characterized by linguistic economy, concentration, semantic density, and rhymed prose. It reflects an interplay between creative formulation and interpretive reception. Abū al-Rabī’ carefully weighed his options and concluded that his governor had proven unworthy of trust through negligence, thereby undermining the image of authority and the dignity of rule. The expression «قد كثرت فيك الأقوال» “Rumors and accusations about you have become widespread.” confirms the occurrence of the accusations through the use of the particle *qad* with the past tense, leaving no room for denial. Before outlining the consequences, the ruler reminds the official of his patience and favor in appointing him, thus reinforcing the argumentative force of the endorsement. He ultimately concludes with a warning of imminent downfall, dismissal and punishment, by invoking a Qur’ānic expression: { أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَى مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٍ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ } (التوبة: 109)

“Is one who lays the foundation of his building upon piety from God and His good pleasure better, or one who lays his foundation on the edge of a crumbling precipice so that it collapses with him into the Fire of Hell? And God does not guide the wrongdoing people.” (Qur’ān 9:109)

The Qur'ānic citation grants the *tawqī'* both rhetorical force and stylistic distinction. Its gradual progression of argument suggests that the decision is just and that the punishment is deserved, especially since the ruler had exercised restraint and allowed an opportunity for reform.

Among the *tawqī'āt* addressing grievances is the case of a woman who submitted a complaint against a soldier who had unlawfully occupied her house. The Almohad caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 629 AH) endorsed her petition with the following:

«يخرج هذا النازل، ولا يعوّض بشيء من المنازل»¹⁸

“This occupant shall be expelled and shall not be compensated with any residence.”

Whereas the previous *tawqī'* relied on reasoning and persuasion, this one is direct and highly condensed, consisting of only a few words. Even though it includes elements of rhyme and paronomasia (*al-nāzil* / *al-manāzil*), it resembles an administrative decree aimed at firm execution rather than persuasion. The situation does not require preambles or elaboration, and delay would neither serve the case nor relieve the injustice suffered by the woman. As al-Qalqashandī notes, one of the conditions of responding to grievances is that “*tawqī'āt* should be sufficient in meaning, comprehensive in addressing injustice, and indicative of the fulfillment of requests”.¹⁹

Among the *tawqī'āt* that fall within the domain of humor and satire is what Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb recounts: al-Manṣūr requested two tutors for his son, one “a land in his craft” and the other “a sea in his knowledge.” When the two men proved otherwise, he wrote to the one who had presented them:

«ظهر الفساد في البرّ والبحر»²⁰

“Corruption has appeared on land and sea.”

The aesthetic of this *tawqī'* rests on brevity, condensation, and quotation, which enhances the authority of the speaker. Its rhetorical charm derives from the double entendre in the words *al-barr* (land) and *al-baḥr* (sea), producing a witty and ironic contrast that exposes the exaggeration in praising the two men. It reflects sharp insight, quick wit, and a skillful manipulation of oppositional meanings, transforming praise into satire. Rather than offering a direct judgment, the caliph delivers a brief, symbolic, and amusing endorsement. As Max Beerbohm notes, irony consists in “producing the greatest effect with the least expenditure of means”²¹.

A humorous poetic *tawqī'* related to responses to requests for patronage is reported in *Zād al-Musāfir*, where a poet appealed to Abū al-'Abbās al-Jarāwī (d. 609 AH), who responded with the following lines:

يَا مَنْ يُجِدِّي لِمَنْ يُجِدِّي أُسْرَفَتْ وَاللَّهِ فِي التَّعَدِّي
أَنَا أُجِدِّي الْأَنْتَامَ طَرًّا وَأَنْتَ تَبْغِي النَّوَالَ عِنْدِي !!²²

“O you who beg from one who himself begs,
By God, you have gone too far in transgression!
I beg from all people,
Yet you seek generosity from me!”

These lines are marked by sharp irony and semantic opposition, revealing a reversal of roles. The petitioner's condition is no worse than that of al-Jarāwī, who, despite being a prominent court poet, finds himself in a position of need. This paradox deepens the sense of contradiction in his life. The irony operates both at the lexical and contextual levels, producing surprise and subverting expectations, reinforced by the oath (*By God*), which lends seriousness and strengthens the tone of reproach. Although it resembles a humorous anecdote, it contains an

undercurrent of subtle tragedy rooted in the contrast between appearance and reality. Rather than responding directly, al-Jarāwī implies that their relationship is one of equality. Interestingly, despite his well-known arrogance, described in the sources as “exceedingly proud, self-conceited, intensely envious of other poets, and unwilling to concede superiority to anyone”²³, he here portrays himself as dependent. This apparent contradiction is explained by the decline of his status toward the end of Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr’s reign, when Andalusian poets overshadowed him. He is reported to have said:

«تعبساً لطول العمر الذي أخرجني لمعاشرة هؤلاء الأندال! وعهدي بالخليفة عبد المؤمن يقول لي في جبل الفتح: يا أبا العباس، إننا نُباهي بك أهل الأندلس»²⁴

“Wretched be the long life that has left me to associate with such base men! I remember when the caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min said to me at Jabal al-Faḥ: ‘O Abū al-‘Abbās, we take pride in you before the people of al-Andalus.’”

Among the later *tawqī‘āt* responding to enemies and rebels is that of al-Manṣūr al-Dhahabī al-Sa‘dī, written in reply to a report from his commander Jawdhar, informing him of victory over the ruler of the Sudan, who then sought peace in exchange for tribute. The caliph endorsed the letter as follows:

«أتمدوني بمالٍ فما أتاني الله خير مما أتاكم»²⁵

“Do you offer me wealth? What God has given me is better than what He has given you.”

This Qur’ānic adaptation (from Sūrat al-Naml) is contextually appropriate, generating a new meaning suited to the situation and conferring upon the decision an unquestionable religious legitimacy. Just as the Prophet Solomon refused the gifts of the Queen of Sheba, valuing what God had granted him above material offerings, al-Manṣūr rejects any attempt at negotiation or appeasement by a defeated opponent lacking legitimacy. Sources indicate that al-Manṣūr sought to extend his authority over neighboring lands and had even consulted scholars regarding his right to control the resources of the Western Sudan, who affirmed his authority as caliph.²⁶ Thus, the offered tribute appears trivial and inappropriate to his sovereign position. The *tawqī‘* begins with a rhetorical question (*a-tumiddūnanī*), conveying strong rebuke, which may also extend to Jawdhar for having accepted the offer.

3. General Artistic Features:

Maghrebi *tawqī‘āt* appear to preserve the major conventions established by their Eastern counterparts, adhering to their principal artistic features. There is no doubt that Maghrebi writers assimilated and imitated the *tawqī‘āt* of the ‘Abbāsids and their stylistic modes. Indeed, some Maghrebi endorsements reproduce well-known Eastern ones. Among these is “an endorsement attributed to several rulers, including Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn and the Almohad caliph al-Manṣūr Ya‘qūb ibn Yūsuf, in response to a threatening message from the King of Castile, reading: ‘The answer is what you see with your eyes, not what you hear with your ears.’ This endorsement resembles a famous Eastern *tawqī‘* variously attributed to the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs al-Rashīd and al-Mu‘taṣim, in reply to a threat sent to them by the Byzantine emperor”²⁷. It seems that the admiration of Maghrebi authors for such *tawqī‘āt*, deeply embedded in their literary memory, prompted them to draw upon and adapt them in contexts where they proved particularly fitting. In general, *tawqī‘āt* tend toward brevity, the incorporation of poetic heritage, and quotation from the Qur’ān. As seen above, some endorsements consist solely of a Qur’ānic verse that effectively fulfills the communicative and persuasive purpose with powerful impact. However, the dominant tendency in ‘Ubaydid *tawqī‘āt* is toward length, dictated by context and subject matter. Their

function often involves offering advice, issuing guidance, or promulgating detailed administrative decisions requiring explanation and elaboration, even though concision remains one of the defining characteristics of the literary *tawqīʿ*, ideally appearing as a brief yet meaningful flash.

Most *tawqīʿāt* favor a straightforward style, simple language, and a decisive tone, avoiding artificiality in a manner befitting the authority of rulers. They convey confidence and exercise effective rhetorical force, with the occasional presence of unforced rhymed prose that produces an internal rhythm. An example is the *tawqīʿ* of the Almohad caliph Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿmin (d. 580 AH), addressed to the rebellious tribes of Ghumāra:

«أنتم أيها الفرقة الناشرون بين أمرين إما أن تكونوا عند المؤجدين بمنزلة الضيوف، وإما أن تستمروا على غيكم، وما زرعه فيكم شياطينكم فتحصدكم السيوف»²⁸

“You, O rebellious faction, stand between two options: either you be among the Almohads as honored guests, or persist in your error, then what your devils have sown within you shall be reaped by the swords.”

The majority of the Maghrebi *tawqīʿāt* that have reached us were authored by caliphs, sultans, and rulers. Sources do not indicate the existence of a specialized chancery for *tawqīʿāt* comparable to that of the ʿAbbāsīd period, where such writing was often entrusted to leading litterateurs and eloquent secretaries.

Although Maghrebi *tawqīʿāt* include notable and aesthetically valuable examples, they rarely attain the same level of refinement, craftsmanship, and technical completeness as their Eastern counterparts. In the East, people eagerly sought after such endorsements, particularly those attributed to figures like Jaʿfar al-Barmakī, which were widely admired.

Conclusion:

In this study, there has been a general introduction to *tawqīʿāt* in Maghrebi literature, where they have been analyzed in various eras based on their primary purposes, topics, and features of artistry. This study has also shown how significant these endorsements were because they portrayed social and political conditions as well as tools used to reflect actual governance conditions during peaceful and tumultuous times as well as in crucial historical events. In these endorsements, the ideology of the ruling class is revealed, along with their judgments made to ensure justice and rights preservation.

The Maghrebi *tawqīʿāt* represent a compelling discursive genre characterized by an intense persuasive element. The employment of linguistic and rhetorical devices has been instrumental in reinforcing the clarity of these *tawqīʿāt* and boosting their effectiveness, since they function concurrently at the levels of rational deliberation and emotional appeal.

In addition, the Maghrebi *tawqīʿāt* reflect a broad array of political, religious, ethical, and social values, but they are also literary and historical sources of immense importance. They do not depend exclusively on the creativity of their authors, since they often incorporate verses from the Qurʾān, the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad, and poetry. There is also the influence of the Mashreq, which the authors of the *tawqīʿāt* aimed to mimic.

To summarize, the investigation of Maghrebi *tawqīʿāt* holds significant value in terms of contributing towards a holistic view of the history of literature in this region. The process of examining the emergence and evolution of the *tawqīʿāt* through different phases can be quite difficult, but it is clear that this research does not allow enough room to thoroughly examine many examples of *tawqīʿāt*s. Still, although this study provides a base for exploring Maghrebi

tawqī'āts, there certainly are other ways in which tawqī'āts could be looked at to uncover even more about their artistic nature.

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