The Journal of North African Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fnas20

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To cite this article: Joel Pattison (2021) Trade and immigration in early Ḥafṣid Tunis: evidence from Genoa, The Journal of North African Studies, 26:4, 665-678, DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2020.1763109

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1763109

THE JOURNAL OF NORTH AFRICAN STUDIES
2021, VOL. 26, NO. 4, 665–678
https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1763109

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Trade and immigration in early Ḥafṣid Tunis: evidence from Genoa

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ABSTRACT

In the 1220s, the Ḥafṣids inherited the administration of Tunis, which was to become one of the most important port cities of the Western Mediterranean. Managing economic and political relations with a number of competing and mutually hostile European powers remained a critical task for the early Ḥafṣid rulers. Like their Almohad predecessors, the Ḥafṣids sought both to encourage foreign trade and to closely monitor the presence and activities of the merchants involved in it, particularly when these were associated with powerful and potentially antagonistic European Christian rulers. This paper analyses the relationship between the Ḥafṣids and the city of Genoa during this period (roughly 1220 to 1280 CE), deploying evidence from the Genoese state archives and from recently published letters from European mendicants active in Tunis in the early 1230s. Analysing these sources reveals the diversity of the social groups and commodities that changed hands across the Mediterranean during the early decades of Ḥafṣid rule in Ifrīqiya, and argues that Tunisian presence in Genoa, while still small, was larger and more complex than has been assumed.

KEYWORDS Ḥafṣids; ifriqiya; genoa; trade; immigration; diplomacy

Introduction

In June 1274, ambassadors of the Ḥafṣid caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 1249–1277) ransomed a Muslim slave woman in Genoa. A Genoese notary, Leonardo de Negrini, recorded the act in Latin. The ambassadors were 'Sheikh Abū Saʿīd, Saracen of Tunis, the *faqīh*' (*Scecha Bosait sarracenus de Tunexis alfachinus*) and two other men, who were passing through Genoa on a mission to King Philip III of France (r. 1270–1285). Abū Saʿīd acted through an intermediary, another Tunisian named 'Fadal,' who paid £15 to a Genoese woman named Alaxina for her slave, named Fatima. In making the purchase, Fadal swore that Abū Saʿīd would take Fatima back with him to Tunis, where he would ensure her freedom. The act was witnessed by three Genoese Christians –

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including one man who had himself been a slave at Tunis[1] – and two Muslims (ASG *Notai Antichi* 79: 168r).

Fadal and Abū Saʿīd were only two of many Tunisians who passed through Genoa during the thirteenth century, evidence of the Ligurian city's close ties to the Maghrib. Other individuals included notaries and scribes, merchants, labourers, sailors, and captives. Likewise, thousands of Genoese traded and lived in Tunis in the same period. By the early 1250s, Ḥafṣid Tunis was one of Genoa's most important trading partners. Although the value and destinations of Genoese foreign trade fluctuated significantly from year to year, between 1251 and 1259 Tunis attracted an average of over 17% of all Genoese investment in overseas trade (Balard 1978, 489; Musarra 2017, 493–494). If one includes the port of Bijāya, under Ḥafṣid rule since 1230, around one quarter of all Genoese trade in the 1250s flowed through ports controlled by the Ḥafṣid dynasty.[2] The Syrian historian al-Yūnīnī (d. 1326) called the Genoese 'the richest of the Franks' active at Tunis in the 1260s, and blamed them for inciting Louis IX to attack the city in 1270 (al-Yūnīnī and al-Jawzī 1954, 2, 454–456).[3]

European Christian merchants like the Genoese had been active in Ifrīqiya for at least a century prior to the arrival of the Ḥafṣids. Under the Almohad governors, the administrators of the customs-house (*diwān/ dugana*) established business partnerships and friendships with Pisan merchants, in particular, by 1200 (Bruce 2015, 24–25). Nonetheless, the establishment of an independent Ḥafṣid emirate by Abū Zakarīyāʾ in 1229 induced multiple European city-states and kingdoms to confirm or strengthen their ties with the new regime. Genoa, Pisa, Venice, Marseilles and Sicily all signed new commerce treaties with Abū Zakariyāʿ in the 1230s (Mas Latrie 1866, 34, 97, 116–118).

This article examines the Genoa-Tunis relationship during the early Ḥafṣid period (1220–1280 CE) through the twin lenses of immigration and trade. While the political and strategic dimensions of this relationship are well-established (Jehel 1993; Valérian 2004) there is significant room to expand our understanding of how individual Tunisians and Genoese traded and worked together. In particular, an analysis of Genoese notarial cartularies reveals the socio-economic diversity of a Genoese population in Tunis sometimes characterised broadly as 'merchants,' while also highlighting the activities of Tunisians who traded or lived in Genoa at the same time.

Sources and methodology

This analysis is based on an examination of 33 notarial cartularies preserved at the State Archives in Genoa and Savona, covering the years 1200–1300. Nine of these cartularies have been edited and published, while the rest remain in manuscript form. While Genoa was only one of several European cities whose

merchants traded at Tunis, it has some of the best-preserved notarial records, at a time period when few survive from other important commercial centres, such as Pisa or Venice. This allows us to compare normative sources on trade – in particular, the treaties – with records of what was actually bought and sold on the market. In addition, the culture of exchange at Tunis is illuminated by a letter written by a group of mendicant Christian clergy active at Tunis in the early 1230s, and addressed to Ramon de Peñafort, in which they describe a number of trade practices and ask for advice on how to minister to the Christian population of Tunis; composed mostly of merchants, but also including slaves, captives, and mercenaries (Tolan 2012). An analysis of these sources reveals an increasingly confident Ḥafṣid regime that not only embraced and promoted European trade and settlement in Tunis, but also sent its own merchants and ambassadors into the ports of the northern Mediterranean.

Diplomacy and treaties

When Abū Zakariyāʿ took power in Tunis in 1229, he inherited the administration of one of the most important port cities in the Maghrib, and in the entire Western Mediterranean. In addition to Tunis, Ḥafṣid rule over Bijāya allowed the dynasty to determine conditions of trade in two out of the three most important ports in the Maghrib. A third port, Ceuta, also briefly acknowledged Ḥafṣid suzerainty in the 1230s, but renounced it in favour of a precarious autonomy under the Banū ʿAzafī (Ferhat 1993, 222; Benramdane 2003, 86–94). The Ḥafṣids were eager to continue Almohad policies promoting overseas trade, a desire reflected in their active diplomatic efforts with European cities, such as Genoa. A close attention to the surviving Latin versions of what were originally bilingual treaties reveals the evolving Genoese understanding of Ḥafṣid rule, in particular the ever-greater claims to authority made by the dynasty. In the first treaty of 1236 the Genoese recognised 'Busacharinus, lord of Africa,' whose realm extended 'from Tripoli to the end of the kingdom of Bijāya.' The subjects of Busacharinus were referred to mainly as *Moadi*, 'Almohads,' a term that appears almost interchangeably with *Sarraceni*: 'Saracens' (Mas Latrie 1866, 116–118).

In 1250, by contrast, the Genoese claimed to be dealing with 'Mir Boabdil, king of Tunis,' whose subjects were still referred to as either *Moadini* or *Sarraceni*, and in the 1272 treaty they referred to their counterpart as *dominum Miramamolinum*, *regem Tunexis*, a direct Latin rendering of the Arabic *amīr al-muʾminīn*, 'commander of the faithful'; the title historically employed by Muslim rulers making a claim to the caliphate (van Berchem 1907, 245–345). In 1287, another treaty was signed between Abu Hafṣ ʿUmar (r. 1284–1295) and the Genoese. This treaty, although again only the Latin survives, gives the strong impression of having been originally composed in Arabic. The introduction refers to the caliph as 'our ruler and lord, the caliph, the

imam, the Victorious-through-God,' and a slew of other titles, including 'commander of the faithful' (Mas Latrie 1866, 125–126). Intriguingly, however, the term *Moadini*/Almohad is now entirely missing: the only references made to Abū Hafs' subjects describe them as *Sarraceni*. The gradual abandonment of the *Moadini* suggests intentional distancing from the Almohad movement by later Ḥafṣid rulers.

The basic outlines of Genoese and other European merchants' presence in Tunis and Ifrīqiya are well known and need not be elaborated here: they included guaranteed safety for merchants, mutually agreed rates of taxation, the presence of a *fondaco* – a large building that served as a warehouse and living quarters for visiting merchants, their goods, and their families – and the right of the merchants to organise themselves under a consul (Jehel 1993, 411–412; Chapoutot-Remadi 2000, 241; Constable 2003, 133–136). The Genoa-Tunis treaties, however, are useful in that they give us an indication of the expected nature and volume of commerce. In particular, the 1287 treaty gives a list of merchandise and the 'customary tolls' expected by the Genoese who imported or exported the goods. These included cloth, oil, raw wool, linen, hides and leather from cows, sheep and goats, and wax. Earlier treaties in 1237 and 1250 had also granted to the Genoese the right to export five ship loads of grain, duty free, in case of a famine at Genoa (Mas Latrie 1866, 118, 126–127).

Trade and controversy

Due to the nature of the notarial sources, virtually all of which were produced in Genoa itself, we know much more about what was exported from Genoa to Tunis than vice-versa. One type of contract, the *commenda*, was a partnership in which one partner provided capital that another promised to trade on his or her behalf at a given location (Lopez and Raymond 1955, 174–184; Pryor 1977). Although Genoese notaries recording financial transactions did not usually specify the type of commodities destined for overseas trade, they did so often enough that we can glimpse the contours of international commerce. For instance, of 362 *commenda* contracts for Tunis included in this study, 72 separate acts mention at least 81 specific commodities to be exported to Tunis from Genoa, worth a combined total of 4,701 Genoese *lire*. The following table is intended to give an idea of the most commonly traded types of commodities (Table 1).[4]

As the table indicates, the Genoa-Tunis trade was dominated by textiles, although this is a broad category that deserves greater scrutiny. Northern European cloth was already a major Italian import to North African markets by the late twelfth century (Reynolds 1929, 831–852; Krueger 1987, 722–750). In general, the Genoese carried a variety of wool, cotton and linen-based textiles produced all over Western Europe into Tunis for sale or re-

Table 1. Genoa- Tunis Exports, 1200-1300.

Commodity Type	Number of Acts Mentioned
Textiles	46
Food products (inc. wine)	10
Industrial products and tools	6
Arms and Armour	5
Jewelry	4
Spices	4
Metals	2
Miscellaneous	4

export. These included both luxury items such as English Stamford wools as well as scarlet and green cloth from Flanders and northern France, but also coarser, humbler materials like *bifa*, and woollen products produced by the *Humiliati*, an Italian religious movement known for weaving simple, sturdy fabrics (ASG *Notai Antichi* 21/I: 73v; Epstein 1991, 93–95). The presence of humbler textiles alongside their luxury counterparts suggests the consumption not only by the Tunisian elite, but a broader spectrum of society.

In turn, North African marketplaces like Tunis were major sources of raw materials used in the textile trade, particularly in Italy. Most important was raw wool, but sheepskins (*boldrones*) and other animal products such as hides were also purchased in large quantities. Wool from Tunis was often marketed in Genoa as *lana africana* or *lana de tunexis*, and it was in high demand in the mid-thirteenth century. In July 1252, for instance, a series of acts drawn up in Genoa involved the sale of large quantities of *lana de tunexis* to several dozen weavers in which the seller formally swore that the wool was imported directly from Tunis (ASG *Notai Antichi* 24: 150r -151v). Another important type of Tunisian wool was the so-called *lana matalafa*, a term commonly used for wool designated not for clothing but for mattresses and cushions, perhaps deriving ultimately from the Arabic *muṭraf* (Aprosio 2002, 2, 73).

Thus far, the textile trade reflects a wider pattern of European economic activity in the medieval Maghrib: exporting raw materials and importing finished products (Valérian 2004, 838). However, a number of other acts raise intriguing possibilities for the textile trade in Ḥafṣid Tunis. For one thing, there is considerable evidence of at least some form of textile production going on in Genoese *fondacos* of the Maghrib. Far from merely importing finished cloth for sale on the Tunisian market, Genoese merchants also imported a range of products for use by spinners, weavers, dyers and embroiderers. At Tunis, this included gold thread (*canonos auri filati*), and at Bijāya and Ceuta included dyes such as madder (*roça*), indigo, alum, and also cream of tartar (*fegia*), a by-product of wine fermentation that was used as a mordant in cloth dyeing, a fact that had attracted the concern of the Ifriqīyan jurist al-Māzarī in the twelfth century (al-Wansharīsī 1981, 6, 314). It is possible that many of these products were intended to be sold

directly to Maghribi buyers, but I would suggest that at least some of them were designed to be used in the Genoese *fondacos* to produce finished cloth for sale.

Denise Bezzina (2015) has shown the extent to which Genoese artisans and craftsmen not only invested in the Maghrib trade during the thirteenth century, but also personally travelled there in large numbers (120–122). My own analysis of the personnel in the Genoese *fondaco* bears out her findings. In 1288 and 1289 we find a shearer (*accimator*), a dyer (*pulperius*), seven tailors or cloth-cutters (*sartores/ taliatores*) and a master tailor, in addition to tanners or leather-workers (*peliparii*), and shoe-makers (*calegarii*) all active in the Genoese *fondaco* (Battifoglio and Pistarino 1986, 213, 232, 234, 235–236).[5] Evidence from other Genoese *fondacos* in the Maghrib further suggests what took place at Tunis: in March 1252, Ogerio de Fontana purchased control of the *scribania* of the Genoese *fondaco* at Bijāya; that is, the right to control leases and collect rental fees. In turn, he then leased out two shops to a leather worker and a draper for a two-year period (ASG *Notai Antichi* 18/II: 49r, 49v). In April of that year, another wealthy merchant travelling to Ceuta, Lanfranco Adorno, hired two men as his servants, including one whose job would be 'to prepare and sew cloth' (*incidere et suere pannos*) for a period of twenty-five months (ASG *Notai Antichi* 34: 54r). A clear pattern emerges: wealthy Genoese merchant capitalists hired craftsmen and artisans to accompany them to the Maghrib and work for them there. When it came to European textiles on sale in Tunis, some of them may have been produced, or at least finished, in Tunis itself.

While important, textiles were not the only commodities imported into Tunis. The Maghrib formed an important secondary market for re-exported Eastern goods such as cotton, sugar and spices, some of which came directly from Egypt and the Levant, and some of which first passed through Genoa before being re-exported (Valérian 2004, 838–839). The evidence from the notarial sources gives the impression of a lively if somewhat opportunistic trade composed of small investments by Genoese across the social spectrum, from the mercantile élite like the Doria and Spinola families, down to humble craftsmen and women. They range from a massive investment of £1562 by the banker Raynaldo Pinello in April 1263 to a tiny investment of £2 in varnished ceramics (*vernigatos*) made by a potter, Pietro di Casalegio, in May 1236 (ASG *Notai Antichi* 29: 206r; 17: 19v). Furthermore, despite the official treaty language allowing Genoese merchants to export grain from Tunis in time of famine, there is little evidence of this. On the contrary, Tunis was an attractive destination for foodstuffs imported from Sicily, Genoa, and elsewhere in the Maghrib: grain, nuts, honey, fruit and dried meats all arrived at Tunis in Genoese ships.

Trade and religious authorities

The widespread trade in foodstuffs provoked consternation among both Christian and Muslim religious authorities, albeit for different reasons. In 1234, the Dominican and Franciscan orders at Tunis wrote to Ramon Peñafort, canonist and chaplain to Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241). In their letter, they complained about Pisans and Genoese selling 'grain, wine, beans, chestnuts and hazelnuts' to Muslims in Tunis, and inquired whether these merchants should be excommunicated (Tolan 2012, 10). Another point of concern was the weapons trade. In the same letter, the mendicants castigated Christian sailors who exchanged weapons, even 'very small knives or tiny iron nails' (*cultellos parvissimos et clavos minutissimos*) with Muslims at Tunis (15). Genoese notarial contracts bear out their concerns, with a number of very small *commenda* for swords, knives, and tools going to Tunis, such as Giovanni Antico, a locksmith in Genoa who in 1244 sent 40 *soldi* worth of iron tools (*ferramenta*) to Tunis in trade, or Vexino the swordsmith, who in 1252 sent a shipment of swords worth £ 4 to Tunis (ASG *Notai Antichi* 34:74v). These small-scale artisan investors seem to have been unconcerned with the possibility that their wares would end up in Muslim hands, despite decades of papal decretals reiterating the principle of a total embargo on selling weapons to Muslims, and the use of excommunication by local Franciscans even for licit trade (Stantchev 2014, 62–63).

Mālikī legal scholars from Ifrīqiya were less concerned about local Muslims purchasing food from Christians in Tunis, but they did worry about Muslim merchants travelling to Christian lands to buy grain, and thus having to pay taxes to Christian rulers, as the famous *fatwā* of al-Māzarī, written in the early-to-mid 12th century, suggests (al-Burzulī 2002, 1, 596). It is difficult to know how seriously al-Māzari's concerns were taken by the Ḥafṣid-era religious and mercantile elite, but as we will see, there is abundant evidence that Tunisian merchants did, in fact, travel to Genoa, Pisa, and other ports to trade.

The wine trade

Another interesting problem for religious law was the importation of wine. Multiple acts from Genoa attest the presence of wine in cargoes destined for Tunis and Bijāya. Wine was widely consumed on medieval European galleys as part of the crew's rations, and there was a lively trade in supplying other ships' needs in ports like Tunis. In 1204, for instance, two Savonese merchants quarrelled over a cargo of wine that they had sold to another Ligurian merchant in Tunis. The large community of Christian mercenaries at the Ḥafṣid court would have represented another market, as would the thousands of

Europeans living and working in the *fondacos* (Fancy 2013, 121; Lower 2014, 601–631). However, it is also clear that wine was being sold to Tunisian Muslims as well as Christians. The Dominican letter of 1234 mentioned wine as a substance sold 'to the Saracens' by Genoese and Pisans in Tunis, and in 1228 the city of Marseille attempted to regulate its merchants in Ceuta, Bijāya, Tunis and Oran, by permitting a single shop in each Marseillais fondaco 'to sell wine to the Saracens' (*ad vinum vendendi Sarracenis*) (Mas Latrie 1866, 89–90).

Forbidden to Muslims but permitted to Christians and Jews under Mālikī jurisprudence, the presence of wine and wine merchants in Muslim space could be contentious (Hernández López 2013, 249–250). The Tunisian jurist al-Hamayrī (d. 1320) had argued that Muslims should not have dealings with Christians who persisted in selling wine to other Muslims; an opinion employed by al-Burzulī (d. 1438) to push for the exclusion of Christian bakers, launderers, oil and vinegar merchants from the markets of Tunis (al-Burzulī 2002, 3, 222–223). For their part, the Ḥafṣids were well aware of the lucrative possibilities of the wine trade and sought to profit from it. They imposed a *gabella*, or tax, on the importation of wine, and sold the right to collect it to a variety of European merchants who paid a lump sum for the privilege. Naturally, this gave Europeans an incentive to increase the importation of wine into Tunis, in order to profit from the tax. In 1289, the Genoese Bertramino Ferrario held the wine tax farm from the Ḥafṣid customs, which he had purchased for the imposing sum of 18,000 besants, and a few years later the Venetian Marco Cayroso was only able to purchase the tax farm for 34,000 besants.

The Ḥafṣid authorities kept a close eye on just how much wine was being imported: they were perfectly prepared to revoke the wine *gabella* if they felt that the revenues being collected were significantly higher than the price they had accepted for the farm. This was the fate that befell Cayroso shortly before 1300, when the Tunisian customs, realising that the Venetian had massively increased the importation of wine, took the farm away from him to re-sell it to a Pisan merchant for 44,000 besants (Mas Latrie 1866, 208). In December 1288, Bertramino lodged a formal complaint after officials from the customs entered his shop in the Genoese fondaco to inspect it (Battifoglio and Pistarino 1986, 3–4). Intriguingly, in the Latin translation of the act granting Bertramino the *gabella*, the 18,000 besants paid to the Ḥafṣid authorities were officially earmarked as a salary for the pay of the Christian soldiers of the caliph (*militibus clistiannis domini regis tunexis*). This may have been a way for the Ḥafṣids to profit from the wine trade while mitigating the stigma of accepting money from a source that was impure (Khaldūn 1958, 499).

Slave trade

In addition to these inanimate goods, there was also a thriving trade in human beings. Although it probably did not approach the scale of the well-attested slave trade between the Black Sea and Egypt during the late thirteenth century (Barker 2019), there is abundant evidence of the importation into Tunis of slaves captured elsewhere, either through warfare or piracy. Sometimes Genoese merchants sought ransoms in Tunis for Muslims captured elsewhere in the Maghrib; in May 1289, for instance, the Genoese merchant Niccolo Gattilusio gave Ibn Marwan, *mushrif* of the customs, one day to ransom Mallorcan Muslim captives onboard his ship, before he sailed out of Tunis (Battifoglio and Pistarino 1986, 118). On other occasions, European merchants imported slaves from elsewhere to be sold to Tunisian buyers. To the horror of the Dominican friars, European merchants sometimes attempted to pass off Jewish or Muslim slaves as Christians, allegedly hoping to get a higher price for them from Tunisian buyers (Tolan 2012, 11).

Immigration

A vibrant trade in textiles, foodstuffs, wine, and human beings provided the economic backdrop to relations between Tunisians and Genoese in the thirteenth century. By the 1280s, the Genoese community at Tunis may have reached 300 individuals, residing in two *fondacos* and other houses by the Sea Gate (*Bab al-Baḥr*) of the walled city (Jehel 1993, 411–412). The sources also reveal a Genoese community that was by no means limited to transient merchants: several individuals owned property in Tunis outside the *fondacos* designated for their use (ASG *Notai Antichi* 28: 139v). Some Genoese artisans settled in Tunis for long enough to feel at home there, to the point of identifying Tunis as their place of origin in contracts, such as 'George of Tunis,' a shipwright hired to build a rowboat back in Genoa in February 1253 (ASG *Notai Antichi* 18/I: 19r).[6]

Although it has received less attention than the Genoese presence in Tunis, travel and immigration also took place in the opposite direction. Georges Jehel has presented evidence of Muslim and Jewish merchants active in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Genoa, some from Tunis, correcting earlier assumptions that both groups avoided the city (Slessarev 1967, 39–85; Jehel 1995, 122–123). As I have shown, there is evidence of Tunisian traders, ambassadors, and even craftsmen trading and travelling in Genoa throughout the thirteenth century. Moving beyond trade, notarial documents record instances of Tunisians working in Genoa in a variety of capacities. In 1238, an individual identified as 'Reza Omar, Saracen of Tunis' loaded a cargo of cloth and wooden kitchenware onto a ship in Genoa, for which he received payment. In 1251, another Tunisian, a merchant known in Latin as

'Bocherius,' received £25 in compensation at Genoa for his cargo, which had been stolen by pirates, and the document recording his collection of the money was officially registered by another Muslim, master Abul Faihli Lesedi (Mas Latrie 1866, 121). A man from Bijāya named Sabi agreed to work with a Genoese butcher in 1274, an unusual case that would have likely have bothered the Ifrīqiyan jurists, concerned as they were with Christians who failed to uphold *halāl* standards of animal slaughter (ASG *Notai Antichi* 79: 100v).[7]

In addition to merchant travellers, some Tunisians worked in Genoa as official scribes for the commune. In January 1247 a man named Moise of Tunis was in Genoa to do business with Paul 'who used to be called Abdallah' (*qui eram vocari Abdi Alacis*), a Mallorcan convert to Christianity (ASG *Notai Antichi* 31-I:18r). Moise was described as the 'former scribe of the commune of Genoa in Arabic letters,' (*olim scriba comunis Ianue littere sarracene*). It would appear that the commune of Genoa sought out skilled Tunisian translators to help compose and translate diplomatic correspondence and commercial documents in Arabic.[8] In the early 1270s, another Tunisian, 'Asmetus Abderamen' (*Aḥmad ʿAbd al-raḥmān*) was employed as 'scribe of the commune,' and he at least seems to have been well integrated into Genoese society. In April 1274 he entered a partnership with a local cleric, Guglielmo di Brugnacello, to exploit a mine or excavation (*quidam cava*) in the mountain parish of Ottone, and later on the same day, he made a small loan of 8s to a man named Giovanni de Valle Viridis, 'who used to be from Tunis' (*qui fui de Tunexis*). Like Fadal, the Ḥafṣid ambassador mentioned in the introduction, Asmetus also served as a go-between for Muslim captives in Genoa and their families seeking to ransom them. Three years earlier, in July 1271, Asmetus borrowed £12 to help ransom a Muslim slave woman from Murcia named Fatima at the request of her mother.

Unlike the Genoese who traded in Tunis, Tunisian merchants and sailors arriving in Genoa do not seem to have had the benefit of any formal institution or locations designed to welcome or house them. There is no evidence of any Tunisian *fondaco*, nor a designated space for religious use. Instead, visitors from Tunis bought, sold, and traded in the homes of local Genoese, their trusted business partners, such as Conrado de Castro or Ugo de Fornari (ASG *Notai Antichi* 34: 195r; Mas Latrie 1866, 120). This raises the possibility that Tunisian arrivals in Genoa, though fewer in number than their Genoese counterparts in Tunis, were much more immersed in the foreign society in which they operated.

Conclusion

Peaceful trade and relatively open immigration were not the only feature of the Genoa-Tunis relationship in the thirteenth century. Trade between Tunis

and European ports took place against a backdrop of persistent tensions between Christianity and Islam in the Western Mediterranean, from rhetorical confrontation to actual violence. As the Dominican letter of 1234 clearly demonstrates, many aspects of Christian–Muslim trade were deeply upsetting to the Christian religious authorities, and the papacy in particular had ambitious plans for the expansion of Christianity in the Maghrib throughout the thirteenth century (Maillard 2014, 20–21). The same Genoese families who traded intensively with Tunis also helped fund and equip Louis IX's crusade against the city in 1270. Furthermore, trade with Ifrīqiya took place as part of a wider Mediterranean strategy adopted by individual families and by the city of Genoa. Tunis and Bijāya had benefited from instability at Ceuta in the 1230s and 1240s, and also from Genoa's disastrous war with Venice and Pisa in the 1250s, which made travel to Syria and Palestine especially hazardous. Conversely, in the decades after 1290 Genoese merchants increasingly invested elsewhere; especially in the Black Sea region and in Mamluk Egypt, while the rulers of Aragon and Castile pursued closer relations with the Maghrib (Balard 1978, 680–682; Gourdin 2007, 595–602). The Ḥafṣids had also to manage constant fighting between the Europeans: warfare between Genoa and Pisa frequently led to fighting in the gulf or even the harbour of Tunis itself (di Sant' Angelo and Belgrano 1890, 28, 72–73, 132).

Nonetheless, despite periodic violence, whether from piracy or crusade, under the early Ḥafṣids Tunisian ties with European cities such as Genoa became deeper and stronger than they had been under the Almohads. Trade and even immigration became possible for a wide range of Genoese and Tunisian society by no means limited to wealthy merchants. It is to be hoped that future research, both in Genoa and in Tunisian sources, will continue to explore the nuances of this important Mediterranean relationship.

Notes

1. 'George, banker of Tunis, I who was a slave' (*Georgius bancherius de Tunexis qui fui sclavus*). Unfortunately, little else is known of this individual's background. He might have been a banker of Genoese origin who had resided in Tunis for a long time, including as a slave, or possibly a Tunisian Christian who came to Genoa, or even a Tunisian Muslim enslaved in Genoa who had eventually gained his freedom, acquired a Christian name (through baptism) and then worked as a banker.
2. These figures are based on analysis of surviving Genoese notarial records by Antonio Musarra (2017, 493–494) and Michel Balard (1978, 488–489). For a slightly different interpretation of the thirteenth-century data, see Georges Jehel (1993, vol 3, 67) and Dominique Valérian's contribution to this collection.
3. According to al-Yūnīnī, this was done in revenge at the caliph al-Mustanṣir's decision to confiscate Genoese goods in Tunis as punishment for Christian counterfeiters introducing debased dirhams and copper currency into the local

economy, which had become endemic by the 1260s (al-Yūnīnī and al-Jawzī 1954, 454–455; Lower 2018, 168; Spufford 1988, 172–173).

4. Several acts include multiple commodities traded together, without a precise indication of the value per item; i.e.: 'two hundred *lire* in cloth and saffron.' (ASG *Notai Antichi* 29:75r), a fact that makes a precise accounting of the monetary value of individual commodity types difficult. As a result, this table is intended to be merely suggestive of general trends.
5. Identification of individuals by trade must be understood as suggestive, since descriptors of a person's occupation sometimes became family names over time, even as family members entered other professions: two medieval Genoese noble families were the 'Smiths' (*Ferrari*) and Bakers' (*Fornari*). Nonetheless, clues from context (work contracts, social ties with professionals in related disciplines) can establish high likelihoods that individuals did practice these trades. See discussion by Denise Bezzina (2015, 22–30).
6. As with his fellow 'George of Tunis' in note 1 above, it is possible that George the shipwright was originally a Tunisian-born artisan who emigrated to Genoa.
7. A lively and contested discourse existed in Islamic law on the permissibility of consumption of meat slaughtered by Christian butchers, which sought to reconcile the Qur'an's explicit grant of permission for Muslims to accept Jewish and Christian food, alongside a parallel injunction against eating animals who had been slaughtered improperly. See discussion by David Freidenreich (2011, 114–121).
8. Georges Jehel (1995, 123) has suggested that these men were hired by the commune as professors of Arabic, that is, to teach the language. However, there seems to be little evidence to support this in the actual notarial documents, which merely refer to them as 'scribe[s] of the commune'(*scriba communis Ianue*) without any mention of teaching responsibilities.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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