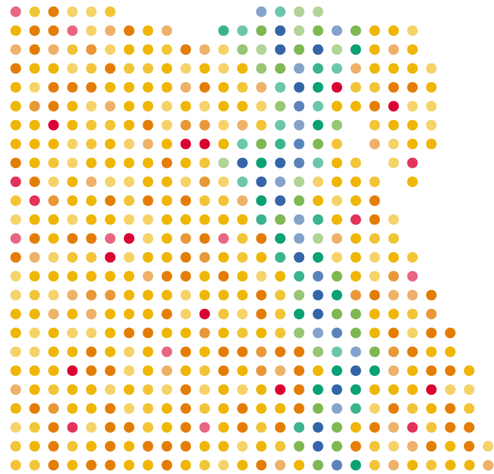

Working Paper 4

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Al-Qalqashandī's Lost Tribes: Mamluk Genealogy, Identity and Administration

April 2021

Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿarab, "The Ultimate Ambition in the Knowledge of the Lineages of the Arabs", is a genealogical treatise composed by the Mamluk bureaucrat Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418). It holds over one thousand entries for Arab tribes, sections and clans, covering nearly a millennium of Islamic and pre-Islamic history. The arrangement of the entries is alphabetical, with tribal groups that share the same name treated in separate entries. There are, for example, twenty-six different entries for tribes named Banū Thaʿlaba, each distinguished by their specific lineage.

There are two entries for the Banū Badr. The first is for the ʿAdnānī Banū Badr, who trace their lineage to the Zubayriyyūn and who dwell in the region of al-Ashmūnayn in Upper Egypt. The second entry is devoted to the Banū Badr who formed al-Qalqashandī's own tribal group:

> Another Banū Badr, of the Fazāra, of the Qays ʿAylān. We will discuss the lineage of the Fazāra in their own entry. [Ibn Khaldūn] said in his [*Kitāb*] *al-ʿIbar* that the Banū Badr were the leaders of the Fazāra during the pre-Islamic Jāhiliyya. They were leaders of the entire Ghaṭafān, while Qays and their brothers the Banū Thaʿlaba bin ʿAdī obeyed their judgments (*tadīnū la-hum*). One of their members was Ḥudhayfa b. Badr b. ʿUmar b. Ḥarba b. Lūdhān b. Thaʿlaba b. ʿAdī b. Fazāra, owner of the horse known as al-Ghabrāʾ, which raced the horse known as Dāḥis, and that was the cause of the war known as [the Day of] Dāḥis between ʿAbs and Ghaṭafān, as is recounted in the books of the *siyar* (the popular epics).
>
> I say: Those Banū Badr are our tribe (*qabīlatunā*), in which we take pride (*naʿtazī*) and from which we claim lineage (*nantasibu*). They are the most noble among the Arabs of the Qalyūbiyya province in Egypt. Their neighbours in Qalyūbiyya are their paternal cousins, the Banū Māzin of the Fazāra. Each of the Banū Badr and the Banū Māzin have their own villages (*bilād*). The two are in a constant state of enmity and bad blood, but the Banū Badr have the leadership and the upper hand. The people of our village (*balda*) of Qalqashanda

belong to one of the two groups (*firqatayn*), either the Banū Badr or the Banū Māzin.[1]

Al-Qalqashandī's entry for the Banū Badr begins with the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, citing Ibn Khaldūn on the elevated status of Banū Badr within the Fazāra confederacy in pre-Islamic times. It then reminds the reader of the heroics of most famous Badrī, Ḥudhayfa, familiar to the readers from the popular Arabic epics. Al-Qalqashandī then sharply shifts from the mythical and the heroic to the mundane, to the countryside of late medieval Egypt, and to his native village of Qalqashanda (modern Qarqashanda) in al-Qalyūbiyya, the agricultural hinterland of Cairo. The Banū Badr of Qalqashanda, like their pre-Islamic kinsmen, successfully prevail over a neighboring clan. The epic battles of pre-Islamic Arabia are played out in the provincial backwaters of the Egyptian delta.

Al-Qalqashandī wrote two other treatises on Arab tribal affairs, and he uses both to further highlight his personal identification with the Banū Badr. The genealogical section of *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá*, the mammoth administrative manual he completed in 814/1412, has the same account of the Banū Badr, minus the triumphalist tone towards the Banū Māzin.[2] Al-Qalqashandī's final genealogical treatise, *Qalāʾid al-jumān fī al-taʿrīf bi-qabāʾil ʿarab al-zamān* (The Abundant Necklaces Regarding the Knowledge of the Arab Tribes of Our Time), written in 819/1416, holds another version of the Banū Badr entry. Here al-Qalqashandī locates the Banū Māzin in the villages of Zufaytā and Sindibīs, only a few kilometers south of his native town. He also engages in more detailed account of Ḥudhayfa's race against Qays al-ʿAbsī, claiming support from books of history (*taʾrīkh*) as well as from the popular epics.[3]

The reported Arab tribal identity of the people of Qalqashanda in the delta, where our author grew up in the 1360s and 1370s, is not in itself extraordinary. In thirteenth-century and

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[1] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿarab, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Najāḥ, 1958), entry number [=Nr] 579; al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿarab*, BN MS Arabe 2049, fol. 63b.
[2] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ*, 14 vols., (Cairo, 1913-1918), 1:345. Here there is also no explicit mention of the popular epics (*siyar*) as a source for the biography of Ḥudhayfa.
[3] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qalqashandī, *Qalāʾid al-jumān fī al-taʿrīf bi-qabāʾil ʿarab al-zamān,* ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1962), 114.

fourteenth-century Egypt, the majority of Arab tribes were sedentary rather than nomadic.[4] Whenever we encounter Egyptian tribes in Ayyubid and Mamluk sources, whether in al-Nābulusī's cadastral survey of the Fayyum from the 1240s or in chroniclers' accounts of fourteenth-century Bedouin rebellions, they are primarily described as settled agriculturalists. As I had argued elsewhere, these tribal structures spread in the Egyptian countryside in the twelfth century. The phenomenon of tribal villages coincided with the virtual disappearance of private ownership of arable land and the Ayyubid imposition of collective taxation at the village level.[5]

Al-Qalqashandī is unique, however, in offering us an insider view of this tribal identity. Al-Qalqashandī's autobiographical interventions allow us to explore the meaning of tribal identity for his understanding of himself, his past and his place in society. For his entire adult life, al-Qalqashandī served the Mamluk state, which was engaged in violent suppression of numerous rebellions by Arab tribes, especially in Upper Egypt. He is the embodiment of a late medieval bureaucrat; in fact, much of what we know about the administration of medieval Muslim states comes from his pen. In what sense did he identify himself as a member of the Banū Badr? What social prestige did he derive from repeatedly flagging up his Fazārī ancestry? And how did his attachment to an Arab tribe sit alongside with his life-long service to the Mamluk regime, which was engaged in violent conflicts against Arab uprisings since its inception?

These questions regarding al-Qalqashandī's understanding of his own 'Arab-ness' are bound with the genre of genealogical writing. Al-Qalqashandī was the most prolific of Mamluk-era genealogists, but he was also heavily indebted to earlier authors. His most important sources are works by two Mamluk state officials of previous generations: the thirteenth-century al-Ḥamdānī (d. ca. 1300), and the fourteenth-century Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (d. 1349). Each of the three authors had their own agenda and ways of organizing genealogical material, but they form a coherent corpus that was closely associated with the preoccupations of Mamluk administration.

As recent scholarship has shown, medieval Islamic genealogies were never simply records

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[4] Sarah Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen Der Mamluken : Beduinen Im Politischen Leben Ägyptens Im 8./14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2016).
[5] Yossef Rapoport, *Rural Economy and Tribal Society in Islamic Egypt: A Study of Al-Nābulusī's* 'Villages of the Fayyum' (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

of biological descent groups. Zoltan Szombathy and, more recently, Peter Webb argued that the science of genealogy emerged in the urban centres of ʿAbbasid Iraq as an attempt to create an exclusive Arab identity vis-á-vis recent converts of Persian origins. Scholars like Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821) sought to homogenize different lineages with Qur'anic and biblical figures, inventing a pan-Arab and universal genealogical framework.[6] Kazuo Morimoto demonstrated that the genre of Ṭālibid genealogies emerged in the tenth century in tandem with the new institution of *naqīb al-ashrāf*, who was responsible for distributing pensions and endowment benefits to descendants of the Prophet's household.[7] The visualisation of genealogical trees in the post-Mongol world has been linked by İlker Evrim Binbaş to a universalist outlook and with the rise of dynastic forms of political legitimation.[8]

Taking the lead from this critical approach to medieval Islamic genealogies, this paper assesses the purpose of al-Qalqashandī's genealogical writings and their intended audience. I will first show that Mamluk genealogical writing emerged in the thirteenth century as a branch of state administration, in response to the dominance of tribal structures in the Arabic-speaking villages of Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Mamluk-era genealogical treatises, I will argue, were a bureaucratized method of mapping relations of power in the countryside. They are focused on the tribes found within the territories of the Mamluk state and commonly list them by geographical or alphabetical order, rather than as genealogical tree.

At the same time, and despite their professional service to the Mamluk state, the authors of Mamluk-era genealogical treatises self-identified as members of Arab tribes or clans. In their writings, allegiances to state and to tribe are not in conflict, and the legitimacy of the Mamluk state is never in doubt. Instead, all three authors seek to endow tribal structures with what Frederik Barth called the 'cultural stuff': awareness of shared culture and history. Al-Qalqashandī,

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[6] Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016); Zoltán Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy: A Study in Historical Anthropology* (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003).

[7] Kazuo Morimoto, 'The Formation and Development of the Science of Talibid Genealogies in the 10th & 11th Century Middle East', *Oriente Moderno*, 79(2) (1999), 541-70.

[8] İlker Evrim Binbaş, 'Structure and Function of the Genealogical Tree in Islamic Historiography, 1200-1500', in Binbaş, Kılıç-Schubel and Togan (eds.), *Horizons of the World : Festschrift for İsenbike Togan = Hudûdü'l-âlem : İsenbike Togan'a Armağan* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2011), 465 – 544.

himself a former villager, embarked on a historiographical project of tracing back the genealogical tree that linked all tribes that existed in his own time, and of retrieving the customs and traditions of pre-Islamic times. In his writings, Arab-ness and Bedouin-ness were culturally defined, and this opened up tribal boundaries to all Muslims who wished to assume an Arabian lineage and a tribal identity. Moreover, the need to collect tribal traditions led al-Qalqashandī to adopt materials from the Arthur-like Arabic popular epics, which were otherwise spurned by Mamluk-era scholars as collections of tall-tales.

Mamluk Genealogical Literature

The distinctive genre of Mamluk genealogical writing begins with Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥamdānī (born 1205-6, d. ca. 1300), also known as *mihmindār al-ʿarab*, a state official who served several Ayyubid and Mamluk sultans. As *mihmindār*, al-Ḥamdānī was in charge of receiving delegations of Arab tribal leaders, providing them with accommodation and presenting them to the ruler. The office of a *mihmindār* was an Ayyubid innovation, possibly connected with Sultan al-ʿĀdil's appointment of "Amir of the Arabs" around the beginning the thirteenth century. The position of the *mihmindār* was then adopted by the Mamluks and is attested up to the beginning of the fifteenth century.[9] Most of what we know of al-Ḥamdānī comes from his first-person accounts of hospitality extended to Arab amirs.[10] In biographical dictionaries, al-Ḥamdānī is known primarily

[9] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:488, 5:431; A. Saleh, "Mihmindār", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition.
[10] Al-Ḥamdānī claims to first encounter an amir of the Syrian Āl Rabīʿah in the days of Sultan al-Kāmil (d. 1238). He reports spending 36,000 dinars on the entertainment of the Arab amir Faraj b. Ḥayya when the latter visited al-Muʿizz Aybak (r. 1250-1257), and meeting other amirs of the Rabīʿah under al-Ẓāhir Baybars (r. 1260-77). See Aḥmad ibn Yahyá Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-absạr fī mamālik al-amsạr: Qabāʾil al-ʿarab fī al-qarnayn al-sābiʿ waʾl-thāmin al-Hijrīyayn,* ed. Dorothea Krawulsky [= *Masālik al-Abṣār*] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī lil-Buḥūth, 1985), pp. 139-40, 148. For further reports of Arab tribal delegations met by al-Ḥamdānī, see *Qalāʾid*, p. 67 (Banū Wāṣil under Aybak), 88 (Banū Ghaziyya, dated to 603/1206-7), *Nihāyat al-Arab*, Nr 281 (delegation from Bahrayn visiting Baybars), nr1638 (delegation from the Banū Ṣakhr in Karak under al-Muʿizz Aybak). Al-Ḥamdānī also records the granting of of '*būq wa-ʿalam*' (Drum and Flag) titles to Arab tribal leaders in Syria. This is an Ayyubid honorary designation subsequently abolished by the Mamluks (*Nihāyat al-Arab*, nr 329, nr 463, nr 1623).

for his Bedouin-style poetry, as well as lines of praise for al-Ẓāhir Baybars while on campaign.[11]

Al-Ḥamdānī's genealogical treatise has not survived, but much of it was copied more or less verbatim by al-ʿUmarī and al-Qalqashandī. The passages quoted in these later sources show that al-Ḥamdānī introduced novel features that set the genealogical writing in the Mamluk period apart from earlier works in the genre. Unlike earlier genealogical treatises, al-Ḥamdānī's focus is almost exclusively on the tribes that existed in his own time, within the boundaries of the Mamluk state. Moreover, al-Ḥamdānī opted for a geographical organization of his material, proceeding by the location of tribal groups in his own day, rather than by lineage. In his account of the Egyptian Arabs, al-Ḥamdānī started with the tribes resident in Aswan, and then progressed northwards through the Nile valley.[12] He associated each tribe and clan with a territory, called *diyār* or *bilād*. The territories of the Lakhm confederacy, for example, covered a 100-kilometer stretch of agricultural land in the main Nile valley, from Biba in the south to Helwan in the north, with each of its nine subordinate tribes controlling a delimited sub-section.[13]

Al-Ḥamdānī is explicit about the agricultural activities of the Arab tribes. Five different Saʿd groups of Judhām resided in the regions of Minyat Ghamr and Ziftā in the central delta, where they held the area from Tall Ṭanbūl to Nūb Tarīf. They included the people of the villages of Barhamtūsh and its shaykhs, Taqdūs (mod. Daqados) and Damdīṭ. Al-Ḥamdānī is quoted as saying that the Banū Saʿd are "village headmen and protectors, and own fields and victuals (*maʾākil*)". He adds that they cause much mischief (*fasād*), a rare negative comment.[14] The Banu Ḥarām were *qāḍī*s, jurists, professional witnesses, village headmen and irrigation officials (*khawla*). Unlike most other tribal groups, the Ḥarām had no territory (*dār*) of its own.[15]

The localization of tribes was far more important for al-Ḥamdānī than their lineage. In fact,

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[11] The earliest biographies of al-Ḥamdānī are from the pen of the Syrian historians Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), in *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. Fāliḥ Aḥmad Bakkūr, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 5:637; and *al-Wāfī biʾl-wafayāt*, 32 vols. (Leipzig and Wiesbaden, 1931- 2013), 29:96-7, and by Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī (d. 1363), *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Ihsan Abbas (Beirut, 1974), 4:349. They quote the poetry that al-Ḥamdānī recited to Athīr al-Dīn Abū Ḥayyān (1256 – 1344) and Fatḥ al-Dīn Sayyid al-Nās (1273–1334). See also Saleh, "Mihmindār".

[12] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 157.

[13] *Masālik al-absạr*, pp. 167-8.

[14] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 174; *Qalāʾid*, p. 63; *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1035.

[15] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 178; *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 771.

al-Ḥamdānī is rather uninterested in tracing the ancestry of tribal groups, and al-Qalqshandī often notes that al-Ḥamdānī did not trace 'upwards' the genealogy of the tribal groups he discussed.[16] The confederacy of the Jarm in Syria included 'their allies, neighbours and those who seek protection with them'.[17] Al-Ḥamdānī also has a long list of the groupings that join the Syrian Āl Faḍl and mix with them (*yanḍāfu ilayhim wa-yadkhulu fīhim*). He fails to provide lineage to any of them.[18] Several tribal groups in the Egyptian delta are said to be allies of another clan, but again lack a genealogy of their own.[19] The same is true for the three Arab tribes located in the Sinai – the Bayāḍa, Ṣadr and the 'Ā'idh; none of the three is traced to a larger confederacy or a higher lineage.[20]

In some ways, al-Ḥamdānī's text is not strictly a genealogical treatise, even if contemporaries labelled it as such.[21] Al-Ḥamdānī did not conceive of a genealogical tree unifying all the different Arab sections he mentions. Perhaps he was unable to construct one. Instead, al-Ḥamdānī's view of the countryside has much in common with that of a tax-collector. There is much similarity here with al-Nābulusī's cadastral survey of 1245, where most villages in the Fayyum were inhabited by a named clan, with clans then forming territorially contiguous confederacies.[22]

Despite his state-centred approach, al-Ḥamdānī is mostly sympathetic to the Arab tribes. His name suggests that he claimed for himself descent from the Banū Ḥamdān, the tenth-century rulers of Aleppo. Writing to an audience of other state functionaries, al-Ḥamdānī reassures his readers of the quality and reliability of Arab troops. The Arabs are good warriors, who are willing

[16] See some examples, out of many, in *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 258, 262, 278, 296, 318, 397, 412, 547.

[17] *Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 109

[18] *Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 115-6

[19] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 438, 1059, 1104.

[20] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 616, 1136, 1201.

[21] Al-Ṣafadī reports that al-Ḥamdānī composed a treatise on *ansāb* (genealogy), as well as a work on *badī'* (figures of speech). See *A'yān,* 5:637.

[22] See Rapoport, *Rural Economy*. According al-Nābulusī, writing in 1245, the Fayyum depression was occupied by the confederacies of the Kilāb and the 'Ajlān. Al-Ḥamdānī, writing a few decades later, similarly states that the *bilād* - 'lands', or more aptly, 'villages' – of the Fayyum belong to the Banū Kilāb (*Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 175; *Qalā'id*, p. 117). Other confederacies he locates in the Fayyum are the Banū 'Awf (*Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 165; *Qalā'id*, p. 126) and the Banū Sulaym (*Qalā'id*, p. 124, *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1397).

to act as advance forces and they fight well against the Mongols, barely losing a battle.[23] He admits that the Thaʿlaba of Syria are known for collaborating with the Crusaders, but he has only witnessed them to be brave raiders and holy warriors, who inflicted heavy losses on the Franks.[24] It should be recalled that al-Ḥamdānī was writing in the aftermath of the great Arab rebellion that engulfed Upper Egypt in 1252-3, when relations between state and tribes were at a particular ebb.

The second key text in the corpus of Mamluk genealogical writings is Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī's section on the Arab tribes in his encyclopaedic *Masālik al-Abṣār*, completed near middle of the fourteenth century. In the chapter on 'The Arabs found in our present time, and their locations', al-ʿUmarī, like al-Ḥamdānī, focused on the Arab tribes of his own age, and in particular on their relationship with the Mamluk state. This section covers Arab tribes from the Atlantic to Iraq, but the vast majority of the text is devoted to the Arab tribes that inhabit Egypt and Syria.[25] In his separate administrative manual, *al-Taʿrīf*, he also deals with hierarchy of tribal amirs appointed by the Mamluk state and the proper ways of corresponding with them.[26]

Al-ʿUmarī cites al-Ḥamdānī as his main source, and follows him in arranging the discussion geographically rather than by lineage.[27] After an historical prologue about the categories of Arabs in the pre-Islamic period, he moves on to an account of the Arab groupings (*ṭawāʾif*) found in the present day.[28] He starts with the Arabs of Syria, to whom he devotes the major part of the work, and follows with shorter chapters on the Arabs of Egypt and the Maghreb, mostly progressing in geographical sequence from province to province.

Like al-Ḥamdānī, the tone of the account is positive towards the Arabs, seen as useful and loyal servants of the state and protectors of the urban population. For al-ʿUmarī, the Arabs are "the walls of the cities, the protectors of highways, and serve as guides for advance forces and as

[23] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 141.
[24] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 176; *Qalāʾid*, p. 86. See also al-Ḥamdānī's rather positive biography of Ḥiṣn al-Dīn Thaghlab, leader of the Arab rebellion (*Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 421; *Ṣubḥ*,1:359).
[25] This section has been edited by Dorothea Krawulski as *Masālik al-absạr fī mamālik al-amsạr: Qabāʾil al-ʿarab fī al-qarnayn al-sābiʿ wa'l-thāmin al-Hijrīyayn* (Beirut, 1985). See also Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-absạr fī mamālik al-amsạr*, 29 vols. (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-Thaqafī, 2003), 4:241 - 398.
[26] Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *al-Taʿrīf bi'l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* (Cairo, 1894).
[27] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 70.
[28] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 106.

auxiliary troops. In our kingdom of Egypt and Syria some of them are protectors of roads, are in charge of the horses of the post, and are commonly the drivers of cattle (*siyāq*)".[29]

Al-ʿUmarī departs from al-Ḥamdānī in three major ways. First, he displays his own tribal identity much more prominently, in a way that anticipates al-Qalqashandī's personal focus. He deliberately opens his section on the tribes of Egypt with account of the Banū ʿUmar, and reports that he is a descendant of Khalaf b. Naṣr Shams al-Dawla Abū ʿAlī, who arrived in Fatimid Egypt in the days of Ṭalāʾiʿ bin Ruzzīq in the middle of the twelfth century. This is 'my lineage and my people', he boasts, and adds that he devoted a separate volume to the noble qualities of his tribe, a work he entitled *Fawāḍil al-sumar fī faḍāʾil Āl ʿUmar* ("Valuable late-night conversations on the virtues of Āl ʿUmar").[30] This work is considered lost.[31]

Second, al-ʿUmarī places much emphasis on the Arab amirs, especially the amirs of the Āl Rabīʿah of the Syrian desert, and their interactions with the Mamluk court. This is the reason for dealing with Arab tribal affairs: "Rulers are always well-disposed towards their delegations, shower them with hefty gifts and give them the most noble parts of the land as *iqṭāʿ*".[32] The Āl Rabīʿah are the "kings of the desert"[33], who participate in military campaigns and fight each other over their herds of camels.[34] The account of the rather tumultuous relationship between the amirs of this confederacy and the Mamluk sultans takes up as much as a quarter of the entire chapter on the Arabs. For this section, al-ʿUmarī interviewed the professional genealogist of the Rabīʿah confederacy, a certain Maḥmūd b. ʿArrām, and held conversations with the amirs Faḍl b. ʿIsá and Musá b. Muhannā during their stays in Cairo.[35]

The Arab amirs are not only al-ʿUmarī's interlocutors, but also his audience, and he counsels them on framing their genealogical claims in the most effective way. While the Rabīʿah falsely

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[29] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 69.
[30] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 156.
[31] See editor's comments in Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Mukhtaṣar Qalāʾid al-ʿIqyā,* pp. 9-10.
[32] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 69
[33] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 112.
[34] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 118 (an anecdote in which the amir of the Āl Mirā demands one thousand camels from the Āl Faḍl).
[35] *Masālik al-absạr*, p. 70.

claimed to be descendants of the union between the Abbasid vizier Jaʿfar al-Barmakī and Hārūn al-Rashīd's sister, al-ʿUmarī advises them to opt for an alternative lineage, one that comes from a noble Ṭayy' Arab man. Al-ʿUmarī explains that it is better to claim a noble Arab lineage over the non-Arab lineage of the Barmakids, despite the latter's power and reputation.[36]

Finally, and most importantly, al-ʿUmarī projects a stark distinction between the 'true' Arabs of the desert, camel-herding and mobile like the Āl Rabīʿah, and the sedentary Arab tribes, who are no longer fully Arabs. In concluding the section on the Arabs of Syria, after dealing at length with the Āl Rabīʿah, al-ʿUmarī writes:

> In the lands of Syria there are various people of Arab stock (*min ṣalībat al-ʿarab*), who are no longer to be considered Arabs (*qad kharajū bi-hā ʿan ḥukm al-ʿarab*), as they have become settled, sedentary people (*ahl ḥāḍira sākina*), who occupy fixed abodes (*ʿummār diyār qāṭina*).[37]

Al-ʿUmarī follows up with a long list of these sedentary Arabs, starting with those who inhabit Gaza and Hebron. The list then goes on through most major cities of Syria and Palestine and their hinterlands. Al-ʿUmarī regards these settled communities with disdain, denying them the full Arab-ness he accorded to the amirs of the Syrian desert. At the same time, he also admits them as Arabs who have a tribal group identity, and who can still claim descent from the Arabian genealogical tree. This reality does not fit his idealized definition of what Arabs should be, and he therefore creates a narrative of sedentarization, telling us that the sedentary tribes are of Arab stock, but have lost their Arab-ness by becoming sedentary. This narrative is a fiction not supported by any evidence, but is rather al-ʿUmarī's way of reconciling with the realities on the ground.

When moving on to discuss the tribes of Egypt, al-ʿUmarī creates the same distinction between 'true' nomadic Arabs and sedentary Arab communities, and then links this distinction to their status in the eyes of the central government. The vast majority of Egyptian Arabs, he

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[36] *Masālik al-absāṛ*, p. 112. This is repeated by al-Qalqashandī in all his works (*Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 271; *Qalāʾid*, pp. 73-4, *Ṣubḥ*, 1:324-5). See also discussion by Zoltán Szombathy,"Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies," *Studia Islamica* 95, (2002), 5-35.

[37] *Masālik al-absāṛ*, pp. 154-55.

explains in a famous passage, are settled agriculturalists, and are therefore not held in great esteem by the court:

> The Arabs in Upper and Lower Egypt belong to many groups, peoples and tribes (*jamāʿāt, shuʿūb wa-qabāʾil*). However, despite their wealth and geographical extent, they are not held in high regard by the sultan, as they are sedentary people of the sown fields (*idh kānū ahl ḥāḍira wa-zarʿ*). None of them makes seasonal travels to Najd or Tihāma, Iraq or Syria (*lā yunjid wa-lā yutham, wal-lā yuʿriqu wa-lā yashām*), and they do not leave the boundaries of the fences.[38]

In Egypt, where the vast majority of the Arab tribes were not nomadic, the gap between the romanticised Arab constructed by al-ʿUmarī and the reality was wide. The sedentary Arab tribes of Egypt are here specifically identified as agriculturalists, people of the sown. There is not even a process of sedentarizaton. The Arab villagers of Egypt lack full Arab-ness, and that means that they do not have the same social respect and political clout accorded to the nomadic tribes who fulfilled al-ʿUmarī's Arab ideal.

Al-Qalqashandī on the Purposes of Genealogy

Al-Qalqashandī came to write about genealogy late in life. He was born in Qalqashanda in 756/1355, but after completing his education moved to Alexandria to serve the local governor there, sometime before 1380. He then got a clerical job in Cairo, thanks to the patronage of Badr al-Dīn Ibn Faḍl Allāh, another scion of the al-ʿUmarī clan. He made his home in the Egyptian capital, where he was a frequent visitor to the home of the historian al-Maqrīzī, who described him as a 'great talker and babbler.'[39] After completing his encyclopaedic *Ṣubḥ* in 814/1412, he

[38] *Taʿrīf*, p. 76.

[39] Frédéric Bauden, 'Maqriziana XIII: An Exchange of Correspondence Between al-Maqrīzī and al-

devoted the few remaining years of his life to tribal affairs. He wrote the *Nihāya* a couple of years later, and completed the *Qalā'id*, his final genealogical treatise, in 819/1416.

A bureaucrat like al-Ḥamdānī and al-ʿUmarī, al-Qalqashandī was continuing a genealogical tradition bound with the practices of the Mamluk state. The overtly administrative purpose of genealogical writing is well articulated in *Qalā'id al-jumān*, his later treatise, which is presented as a handy manual for the secretary. Al-Qalqashandī is here entirely focussed on contemporary tribes within the Mamluk realm with whom the secretary needs to correspond:

> The *kātib al-inshā'* is required to know in detail only those Arab tribesmen (*ʿurbān*) of this day and age who are within the realms of the kingdom of Egypt, and to whom royal correspondence is addressed. He also needs to know what concerns the more minor clans (*adhyāl*) of their tribes that are not of the pedigree of being addressed, or those who are in alliance with them, or take pride in a relationship with that tribe for any reason.[40]

Thus, the primary functional rationale for genealogy is epistolary. Here al-Qalqashandī formalizes the state-centred prism of the genealogical writing by al-Ḥamdānī and al-ʿUmarī. A scribe needs to know how to write to tribal people, who take pride in their lineage, and to know which tribal group is fitting of royal correspondence.

But, perhaps under the influence of Ibn Khaldūn, who died in Cairo only a few years earlier, al-Qalqashandī sought to expand the remit of genealogy to society at large. In a section on the benefits of the genealogical science, al-Qalqashandī emphasises the role of genealogy in establishing social hierarchies and political legitimacy. He opens with praising God for singling out the Arabs from the great multitude of nations and tribes, and pointing out that knowledge of the Prophetic lineage is part of Islamic belief.[41] Al-Qalqashandī then demonstrates the importance

Qalqashandī', in Y. Ben Bassat (ed.), *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History: Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 201-229.

[40] *Qalā'id*, pp. 1-2.

[41] This is probably taken from th introduction to Ibn Ḥazm's eleventh-century genealogical treatise. See Ibn

of genealogy for maintaining social order. Knowledge of genealogy prevents false claims to lineage, with legal implications for matters of kinship, including inheritance, guardianship in marriage, the identification of beneficiaries of endowments, and the rules regarding the *ʿāqila*, or blood-money group. Another benefit is that knowledge of genealogy ensures that a prospective groom is equal in social status to the bride, under the legal principle of *kafāʾa*. Conversely, knowledge of genealogy also ensures the noble lineage of prospective brides, a matter not regulated in Islamic law. Finally, lineage determines the choice of the caliph, who, according to the Shāfiʿīs, should be a Qurashī; and if no Qurashī is found, then a Kinānī from Khuzayma.[42]

As far as we can tell, these are idealized or hypothetical objectives. Mamluk-era collections of response (*fatāwā*) very rarely contain questions regarding equality in marriage or the *ʿāqila* blood-money group.[43] Neither was the choice of a caliph a topical matter in the sultanate, where ceremonial caliphs were put in place by the sultans. Rather than taking these legal questions at face value, what al-Qalqashandī is doing here is promoting a vision of a society where every Muslim person, man or woman, belongs to a tribe. By broadening the purpose of genealogy in this way, his audience is no longer merely the chancery scribes, but all parents who wish to marry off their children. The ability to distinguish false and correct tribal lineage should be, in this re-formulation, key to social status in a Muslim society, whether urban or rural, sedentary or nomad.

Al-Qalqashandī uses his genealogical writing to draw many of his contemporaries into the orbit of tribal affiliations. The entry for the Berber Banū Ghumāra contains a biographical entry for his maternal grandfather, the companion of an itinerant Andalusi Sufi Shaykh.[44] The entry for the Banū Kināna is an occasion for mentioning al-Qalqashandī's link to the prominent jurist Abu Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 1403), a native of the village of Bulqīna and supposedly a member of the Kināna.[45] As noted above, al-Qalqashandī specifically mentions the Kināna as second only to Quraysh in their entitlement to community leadership. The entry for the Banū Mudlij includes a

Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿarab* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1983), p. 2.
[42] *Nihāyat al-arab*, pp. 6-7; *Qalāʾid*, pp. 7-8.
[43] See Nurit Tsafrir, *Collective liability in Islam: the ʿāqila and blood-money payments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[44] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1427.
[45] *Qalāʾid*, pp. 135-6.

reference to al-Qalqashandī's commentary on the legal treatise of Kamāl al-Dīn al-Nashā'ī (d. 1356).[46]

Since al-Qalqashandī projects a society where everyone has a tribe to take pride in, the intended audience of his genealogical treatises was all members of the literate elite. This is best attested by the three different dedications which envelop these works. The *Qalā'id* is dedicated to Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Bārizī (d. 823/1420), head of the Chancery (Dīwān al-Inshā'), whom al-Qalqashandī praises as being of the tribe of Juhayna, known for their trustworthiness and their noble lineage.[47] In 846/1442-3, al-Qalqshandī's son Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad dedicated a copy of the *Nihāya* to Zayn al-Dīn Abū al-Jūd Baqar ibn Rashīd, the amir of the Arab tribes (*'urbān*) in the Sharqiyya and Gharbiyya provinces.[48] The copy furnishes us with direct evidence of the consumption of the scholarly genealogical literature by the tribal elites in the countryside. Another dedication of the *Nihāya*, probably also by al-Qalqashandī's son, is addressed to a high-ranking member of the military elite, al-Mu'izz al-Ashraf Abū al-Maḥāsin Jamāl a-Dīn Yūsuf. This amir, almost certainly a *mamlūk* former slave or the son of one, is provided with an honorary and doubtlessly made-up membership in the Umayyad Banū Abān.[49]

While the act of fabricating tribal lineages is not in itself unusual, the three separate dedications demonstrate the range of the intended audience of the genealogical text, audience that included state administrators, Arab tribal leaders and Mamluk amirs. The contents were adapted to fit the alleged tribal affiliations of the patrons, who were invited to read the genealogical treatises not merely as an epistolary guide or academic exercise, but also as means of discovering their own place in society, each of them woven into the dynamic fabric of the Arabian genealogical tree.

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[46] *Qalā'id*, pp. 136-7. For the biography of this scholar, born in the Egyptian village of Nashā', see Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (Haydarabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārīf al-'Uthmānīyah, 1972-1976), 1:4.

[47] *Qalā'id*, pp. 2-4.

[48] *Nihāya*, Paris MS Arabe 2049; Frédéric Bauden, 'Like Father, Like Son. The Chancery Manual (*Qalā'id al-jumān*) of al-Qalqašandī's Son and Its Value for the Study of Mamluk Diplomatics (ninth/fifteenth century)', *Eurasian Studies* XI (2013), 181-228, 214.

[49] *Nihāyat al-arab*, p. 32.

Who is an Arab?

As al-Qalqashandī was extending the orbit of tribalism to include wider segments of society, he was also in need of a new definition of Arab-ness, a definition that would allow for his own lived experience as growing up as a tribal villager in the Egyptian delta. If al-ʿUmarī equated true Arab-ness with nomadic existence, al-Qalqashandī shifts the discussion to history, culture and language. Unlike earlier Mamluk authors, he takes time to discuss the meaning of Arab identity in some detail. This willingness to engage in theoretical definitions reveals the influence of Ibn Khaldūn, but also indicates a need to reengage with the question of Arab identity in light of changing social realities.

To the question of who is an Arab, al-Qalqashandī advances two definitions of Arab-ness, one based on ethnic origin and one based on language. The first is taken from the philologist al-Jawharī (d. ca. 1010), who states that the Arabs are a people (*jīl min al-nās*) who reside in garrison towns, while the *aʿrāb* are the people of the countryside. Al-Qalqashandī clarifies that the Arabs is the general name, and the *aʿrāb* are a category of Arabs.[50] The primordial abode of the Arabs was the Arabian Peninsula, but they had been migrating outside of it well before the advent of Islam. The Muslim conquests then allowed the Arabs to 'fill the horizons', reaching Central Asia, the Atlantic and the Sudan.[51] In a universal, post-deluge genealogy, the Arabs are descendants of Sām (Shem). Whether the Berbers are Arab or not is a matter of dispute.[52]

According to a second definition, taken from Ibn Khaldūn, the Arabs are those who speak Arabic eloquently, and among whom rhetoric and eloquence (*bayān* and *balāgha*) predominate. A person who does not speak good, clear Arabic (*lam yufṣiḥ*) is a non-Arab, an *ʿajamī*, even if he was an Arab by lineage.[53] This Khaldunian definition is not, however, followed through in the body of al-Qalqashandī's genealogical works, where poetry is actually sparse, and proficiency in Arabic

[50] *Qalāʾid*, 12; *Ṣubḥ*, 1:307.
[51] *Nihāyat al-arab*, pp. 15 - 20.
[52] *Nihāyat al-arab*, pp. 24ff.
[53] *Qalāʾid*, p. 12; *Nihāyat al-arab*, p. 11; *Ṣubḥ*,1:307.

is not used as an actual criterion of Arab-ness. One glaring example are the Banū Kilāb of northern Syria; the fact that they speak Turkish, as reported by al-ʿUmarī, does not seem to disqualify them from being Arabs.[54]

Al-Qalqashandī further articulates Arab identity by appending a section on pre-Islamic culture to his *Nihāyat al-Arab*. This section covers, in a summary fashion, *Jāhilī* religious beliefs and idols, as well as distinctively Arab sciences, such as physiognomy, dream interpretation, observation of lunar mansions, and genealogy. This appendix is concluded by a list of the Days, or battles, of the pre-Islamic Arabs (*ayyām al-ʿarab*) and a long anecdote about a poetry competition, involving al-Qalqashandī's ancestor Ḥudhayfa.[55] Al-Qalqashandī attempts here to create a link between antiquarian pre-Islamic practices, as reported by Abbasid litterateurs, and the Arab tribesmen of his time. In fact, none of these pre-Islamic sciences is reported in the entries for the tribes of his day and age. This is a deliberate attempt to construct an identity based on recourse to literary traditions, not a reflection of reality.

Ultimately, the quintessential Arab-ness is the tribal structure itself. Al-Qalqashandī cites hierarchies of lineage groups known from earlier genealogical works: *shaʿb* for the collective of northern or southern tribes, *qabīla* for confederacies, the intermediate *ʿimāra* and *baṭn* for tribes, *fakhdh* for sections and *faṣīla* for an extended household. But he also notes that in his own time only the terms *qabīla* and *baṭn* are in frequent use, and the generic term *ḥayy* is also commonly employed to signify any of these levels.[56] Genealogical hierarchy can also be ascertained by the name given to a tribe. In his own time, names that starts with Banū and collective names, such as al-Jaʿāfira, are used for tribes and sections. *Awlād* is used to refer to smaller groups, while *Āl*, with the meaning of *ahl*, is used for Syrian tribes and confederacies.[57]

While al-Qalqashandī defines Arab-ness through lineage and tribalism, his notion of Arab-ness is not based on nomadism. Unlike al-ʿUmarī, who regarded the seasonal migration of nomads as the ultimate sign of full and 'real' Arab identity, al-Qalqashandī rarely mentions camels or

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[54] *Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 143; cited in *Qalāʾid*, p. 116; *Ṣubḥ,*1:340.
[55] *Nihāyat al-arab*, pp. 408-410.
[56] *Qalāʾid*, pp. 14-16; *Nihāya*, pp. 13-15.
[57] *Nihāyat al-arab*, p. 23.

tents.[58] He copies some of al-ʿUmarī's passages on the Arab tribes of Syrian desert and their leaders, but he chooses not to reproduce al-ʿUmarī's passages on the distinctions between the true Arabs of the desert and the sedentary tribes who are no longer Arabs. Al-Qalqashandī's primary definitions of Arab-ness explicitly blur any line between settled and nomadic existence, and he does not deem sedentary Arabs in lower esteem.

Al-Qalqashandī was responding to wider changes in rural society. By his time, after more than two centuries in which tribal identities became common place in the Egyptian countryside, the tribal character of many Egyptian villages had become entrenched. Consequently, the tendency to call rural settlements by tribal names instead of their older Coptic names had advanced significantly, so that by the early fifteenth century the toponymy of the Egyptian countryside had become more Arab. The Fawāṭiṭa, whom al-Ḥamdānī located in the region of al-Rashīd, were in al-Qalqashandī's days associated with a village (*balda*) near Alexandria named after them, Birkat al- Fawāṭiṭa.[59] Other Egyptian villages that became known after the names of tribal units included Banū ʿAlī and Banū Nizār in al-Bahnasāwiyya, and al-Fahmīn in al-Iṭfīḥiyya.[60]

Within tribes, however, peasants may have been of lesser social status than headmen or armed protectors. This is indicated in a short passage where al-Qalqashandī notes that some Lakhm tribesmen migrated from the eastern bank of the Nile to the western bank, retaining their identification with their tribes (*maʿa shuhrati-him bi-qabāʾil-him*). Then, 'those of them who remained in their original location were people of plough and sowing. Arabs from the Halbā of Judhām came to dwell there. They (the Halbā) adorn themselves in the adornments of the Arabs (*wa-hum mutaḥallūna hunāka bi-ḥilyat al-ʿarab*)'.[61] Al-Qalqashandī seems to describe here the replacement of one tribal elite with another. When the Lakhm Arab elites moved to the western bank, the peasants in the eastern bank came to be associated with another tribal group, the Halbā of Judhām. The text here also implies that this tribal elite distinguished itself from ordinary peasants through dress or other accoutrements specifically associated with Arab culture.

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[58] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1163 (a camel in appears in an anecdote that explains the etymology of a tribal name).
[59] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 482
[60] See examples in *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1115, 1336, 1596, 1447.
[61] *Qalāʾid*, p. 71.

Another aspect of the way of life of the settled Egyptian Arabs was the constant state of conflict between neighbouring clans. We noted above the "enmity and bad blood" between the Banū Badr and their Banū Māzin neighbours. Also in the delta, al-Qalqashandī states that the Banū Saʿd are in a state of constant hostility with the Banū Wāʾil, and the fighting between the two groups involves a great number of men.[62] Ibn Khaldūn similarly comments on the settled Arabs of Upper Egypt, who cultivate the land and pay land-tax to the Mamluk sultan, yet engage in wars and conflict with each other beyond what is found among the clans of the desert.[63] This emphasis on the constant infighting among the Arab tribes is absent from the writing of al-ʿUmarī or al-Ḥamdānī.

Al-Qalqashandī, unlike al-ʿUmarī, is not overly interested in the amirs or state-appointed leaders of the tribal groups, and when he does mention them, they are not necessarily fierce warriors. An interesting example is his entry for the Banū Sulaym. Al-Ḥamdānī described the Sulaym as the most numerous and powerful of the Qays in Barqa, and al-ʿUmarī added that their amirs are of the Banū Ghirār. Al-Qalqashandī's contribution, however, is more docile. He adds on a personal note that he met the amir of the Sulaym in Alexandria in the 770s/1370s, a certain ʿArīf b. ʿAmr. He was a pious man, dressed up as a Sufi (*faqīr*), carrying an ewer (*ibrīq*) and a cane (*ʿukkāz*).[64] While al-ʿUmarī idealized on the horse-riding warriors of the Syrian desert, al-Qalqashandī presents the leader of the Sulaym as a man of peace and Islam.

History and epics

Historical memory is crucial for al-Qalqashandī's conception of Arab tribalism, as well as for the construction of his own identity. The primary definition of Arab-ness is that of people who have their origins in the Arabian Peninsula. By tracing the Arabian, pre-Islamic ancestors of current tribal communities, the genealogical tradition had the potential to root the Muslim

[62] *Qalāʾid*, p. 63.
[63] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn, *Dīwān al-mubtadaʾ waʾl-khabar fī taʾrīkh al-ʿarab waʾl-barbar* [= *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*], 8 vols, ed. Khalil Shiḥada (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 6:7.
[64] *Qalāʾid*, p. 125. See also *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1053.

societies of the present in the distant past of sixth-century Arabia. Genealogy could also bring a sense of cohesion, with different tribal groupings, despite their constant infighting, all forming branches of the same tree.

To emphasize this unity, al-Qalqashandī opts in his *Qalāʾid* for a hierarchical organization of genealogical material, listing tribes by lineage and eschewing the geographical organization favoured by al-Ḥamdānī and al-ʿUmarī. Al-Qalqashandī devotes a short section to the 'ancient dwellings of the Arabs' in the Arabian Peninsula, from which they spread to other countries, and then moves on to the Arab tribes of his own time, which are listed by order of peoples of confederacies. Al-Qalqashandī first discusses the Qaḥṭānīs and their pre-Islamic origins, and then begins to discuss the Qaḥṭānī confederacies, conveniently starting with Juhayna (the dedicatee Abū al-Maʿālī al-Bārizī was a Juhanī). The genealogical section of *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá* is similarly constructed.

Yet this hierarchical organization of the genealogical material did not fit the information available to al-Qalqashandī about contemporary tribal groupings. His main source, al-Ḥamdānī, found it sufficient to list names of clans and tribes, without tracing their lineage upwards. His material was organized geographically, with fragments of tribal groups dotted all over Egypt and Syria. Al-Qalqashandī is often perplexed by al-Ḥamdānī's omissions, and repeatedly expresses frustration with his inability to fix a tribal name into the correct branch of the genealogical tree. This also leads him to confusion about the lineage of numerous groups. He doesn't know, for example, whether Thaʿlaba of Upper Egypt belong to the same section as Thaʿlaba in Gaza.[65] The Banū Naṣr, who give their name to a town near Asyut, may or may not be part of the Lakhm confederacy.[66] The Kalb in Manafalūṭ may be Quḍāʿa, may be not.[67]

In the *Nihāya*, al-Qalqashandī chose an alphabetical order that allowed the reader to easily access the tribal name in which he was interested, even if the ancestry of the tribe was uncertain. This attempt to make it easier to retrieve information on each tribe reveals al-Qalqashandī's

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[65] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 660.
[66] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1599.
[67] *Qalāʾid*, p. 48.

bureaucratic mind.[68] But, unlike the hierarchical organization of the *Qalāʾid*, the alphabetical order of the *Nihāya* lacks the coherence of a unified genealogical tree. Here, each tribal grouping floats in its own bubble of time and space – half located in Pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia, half in late medieval Egypt, Syria and north Africa.

The crux of the problem was that al-Qalqashandī did not have at his disposal a historiographical tradition that could bridge this gap between his present day and the pre-Islamic past. Al-Qalqashandī lists the names of tribes that came to Egypt in the wake of the seventh-century conquest, as reported by the Fatimid author al-Quḍāʿī. These include the Judhām, said to be the first Arabs to settle in Egypt.[69] But, apart from the Judhām, the current location of these tribal groupings is generally unknown. Authors sometimes state that these Arab conquerors mixed up (*ikhtalaṭū*) with other tribes.[70]

In fact, few historical events pre-date the sixth/twelfth century, and one gets the impression that the formative period of most Mamluk-era tribal groups was in the late Fatimid period. As mentioned above, al-ʿUmarī claimed that his ancestor, Khalaf b. Naṣr, arrived in Egypt under Talāʾiʿ bin Ruzzīq, vizier in Cairo from 1154 to 1161. Shāwar (d. 1169), another later Fatimid vizier, was member of the Saʿd Judhām, or perhaps the Saʿd of Hawāzin. He was born in Ithmīda, a village in Ḥawf al-Sharqiyya.[71] Even the all-important Āl Rabīʿah confederacy was not named after any Arabian ancestor, but was rather the progeny of an Arab man called Rabīʿah, who attached himself to the twelfth-century rulers Zengi and Nūr al-Dīn.[72] One also finds a reference to the Fatimid Famine (*ghalāʾ*) of 1068-1073, when Ṭarīf b. Maknūn of the Judhām showed his generosity by distributing food to thousands of men. Like the pre-Islamic Hāshim, Ṭarīf is said to have distributed *tharīd* broth, a dish not actually prevalent in eleventh-century Egypt, so the anecdote is

[68] *Nihāyat al-arab*, p. 4. On the connection between the bureaucratic practices of the Mamluk state and the encyclopedic genre, see Elias Muhanna, *The World in a Book : Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[69] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 689.
[70] See examples in *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 133, Nr 177, Nr 574, Nr 922.
[71] *Masālik al-absāṛ*, p. 174; *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1037.
[72] *Masālik al-absāṛ*, p. 112; *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 271.

definitely a trope.[73]

Al-Qalqashandī does not explain how the Fazāra came to dominate his home village of Qalqashanda in the Egyptian delta. Al-Ḥamdānī, in the thirteenth century, attests that groups of Fazāra were found in Qalyūb, and that the town called Kharāb Fazāra is named after them. Al-ʿUmarī, perhaps still citing al-Ḥamdānī, adds that there is a group of the Fazāra in Upper Egypt and another in Qalyūb and its surrounding area.[74] Al-Qalqashandī, following Ibn Khaldūn, knows that there are numerous Fazāra tribes all over north Africa. Trustworthy informants from Barqa provided him with the names of the Fazāra clans there, and he knows that a group of Fazāra from Barqa came to live in the region of al-Bahnasā, south of Giza, where they became powerful.[75] While the association of the Fazāra with the region of Qalyūb appears to have been established by the Ayyubid period, al-Qalqashandī is silent about the origins of this association.

If anything, al-Qalqashandī promotes the view that Qalqashanda had been inhabited by another tribal group, that of the Banū Fahm. He claims this was the birth place of the Abbasid-era jurist al-Layth b. Saʿd al-Fahmī (d. 791), even though the dominant view in the biographical tradition was that al-Layth was a native of Isfahan. Al-Qalqashandī disputes that, and states that al-Layth's house was in al-Qalqashanda, and that it was repeatedly destroyed by his cousin, the amir of Egypt.[76] The association with al-Layth certainly helped to raise Qalqashanda's Islamic pedigree, but still did not link the town to the Banū Fazāra. The high tradition of Islamic historiography was only a limited guide to lineage and ancestry.

Ultimately, in the absence of useful material in the chronicles, al-Qalqashandī's generated the historical memories of his own tribal group through the battle lore of the Arabs (*ayyām al-ʿarab*) and the popular epics. As seen in the beginning of this paper, his entry for the Banū Badr relates the elevated status of the clan in the Jāhiliyya, when they were leaders of the Fazāra, and even of the wider Ghaṭafān confederacy. The evidence for this prominence comes from the

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[73] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 198; BN MS Paris, fol. 29a. Al-Qalqashandī links him to the village of Nūb Ṭarīf in Sharqiyya (modern Nob Tarif south of al-Mansura in the delta).
[74] *Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 165, 175; *Qalāʾid*, p. 114.
[75] *Qalāʾid*, pp. 113-4.
[76] *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nr 1449; *Qalāʾid*, p. 111.

accounts of the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā', one of the of most famous 'Days' of the battle lore tradition. This pre-Islamic forty-year war was triggered by a race between Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā', the two respective horses of the chiefs of the ʿAbs and the Badr. Al-Qalqashandī finds it useful to reproduce Ibn Khaldūn's interpretation of the *ayyām al-ʿarab* material.[77] But he then ends with a reference to 'the books of the *siyar*', or popular epics, as his ultimate source of knowledge about the pre-Islamic Fazāra.

Al-Qalqashandī is undoubtedly referring here to Sīrat ʿAntar, one of the most popular Arabic epics of the Mamluk period. The epic is set in tribal, pre-Islamic Arabia, and follows the adventures of its hero, the black warrior and poet ʿAntar b. Shaddād of the tribe of ʿAbs, with the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' forming the backbone of a long segment of the plot. While the basic contours of the War of Dāḥis are known from Abbasid classical sources, starting with Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (d. 953–4 or 966–7)[78], the epic version develops and embellishes it exponentially. It is to this epic re-telling that al-Qalqashandī is pointing the reader. We know that manuscripts of Sīrat ʿAntar were circulating in Mamluk lands since the early fourteenth century. An epic segment dealing with the race of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' is preserved in a manuscript copied in the Mamluk domains in 1444, and elements of the epic version of the Day of Dāḥis and Ghabrā' are already incorporated into the universal history by Ibn al-Dawādārī, composed in the 1330s.[79]

While the popular epics were in wide circulation in Mamluk Egypt, al-Qalqashandī is, to the best of my knowledge, the first Mamluk author to refer to the epics in an unqualified positive way. A range of fourteenth-century authors, from Ibn Taymiyya to Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, decry the popular epics as fabrications, and warn the pious against reading or copying them. The main subject of their ire are the two tribal epics of ʿAntar and of Dhāt al-Himma, also known as Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl.[80]

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[77] Ibn Khaldūn, *ʿIbar*, 2:365.

[78] Driss Cherkaoui, 'Historical elements in Sīrat ʿAntar', *Oriente moderno* 83 (2003), 407-25.

[79] BN MS arabe 3798, copied 848/1444, containing the fifteenth part of Sīrat ʿAntar b. Shaddād. Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd ʿAllāh ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, Volume 2: *al-Durra al-yatīma fī akhbār al-umam al-qadīma*, ed. Edward Badeen (Cairo, 1994), 395 - 419. On Ibn Dawādārī, see Li Guo, "Ibn al-Dawādārī", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE.

[80] The evidence is summarized in Thomas Herzog, "Mamluk (Popular) Culture", in S. Conermann (ed.), *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus. Mamluk Studies – State of the Art* (Göttingen: Bonn University Press. V & R Unipress , 2012), 131-158; and Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), chapter 5 ("Popular reading

Al-ʿUmarī likewise expresses scepticism about the epics in his genealogical section. In his entry for the Banū Kilāb, al-ʿUmarī says the epic of Dhāt al-Himma and al-Baṭṭāl was composed about the Kilāb because of their constant incursions against Byzantium. But the epic distorts the historical figures beyond recognition, and contains beautiful talk (*mulaḥ al-ḥadīth*) that is predominantly lies and legends (*khurāfa*). Al-ʿUmarī warns the reader that he searched in vain for any reference to Dhāt al-Himma in reliable historical sources, but could not find any.[81]

Al-Qalqashandī, on the other hand, puts his faith in the epics. Not only does he refer to Sīrat ʿAntar as the basis for information on the pre-Islamic Fazāra, but he also creatively adapts al-ʿUmarī's dismissal of the Dhāt al-Himma epic so that it becomes an endorsement: 'The author of *Masālik al-Abṣār* says: informants told me that the Banū Kilāb trace their lineage to the ʿAbd al-Wahhāb mentioned in Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl. [Al-ʿUmarī] found this ʿAbd al-Wahhāb mentioned in sources other than the Sīra, and said that his name was ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Nawbakht'.[82] Al-Qalqashandī is evidently keen to reconcile the popular epics and the high historiographical tradition. As we have seen, he does so also in his entry for the Banū Badr in the *Qalāʾid*, where he claims support from both the epics and 'the books of history' (*taʾrīkh*).

Al-Qalqashandī may have encountered Sīrat ʿAntar in Cairo, or may have grown up with it in his native Qalqashanda. While I have yet to find direct evidence for the circulation of the popular epics in the Egyptian countryside, Ibn Khaldūn thoughtfully considers the hold of the Banū Hilāl epic cycle on north African tribesmen. Ibn Khaldūn refutes the poems of the Hilālī cycle as unreliable historical sources, invented generations after the events they purportedly portray. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldūn also admits that the Banū Hilāl tribesmen are unanimous in strongly believing the truth of the epic version, being transmitted from one generation to another, and 'they would dismiss as utter lunatic and a complete fool anyone casting any doubt or expressing any disbelief in the story, because of its overwhelming popularity among them'.[83]

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practices").

[81] *Masālik al-absạ̄r*, p. 143.

[82] *Qalāʾid*, p. 116.

[83] Ibn Khaldūn, *ʿIbar*, 6:25-26. This passage is translated and discussed by Saad Sowayan, "The Hilali Poetry in the Muqaddimah and its links to Nabaṭī poetry", *Oriente Moderno*, 22 (83), no. 2 (2003), pp. 281-2; and Dwight F. Reynolds, "Epic and History in the Arabic Tradition", in *Epic and History*, edited by David Konstan

Al-Qalqashandī's credulous attitude to Sīrat ʿAntar seems to replicate the attitude of these contemporary Hilālī tribesmen. In the account of his Badr clan, the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrāʾ is the one singular component of historical memory that linked fourteenth-century Qalqashanda to its Arabian roots. Al-Qalqashandī doesn't seem to mind that in the epic Ḥudhayfa is actually ʿAntar's enemy, a flawed hero who wins the horse race by cheating and causes the eventual bloodshed by his inability to resist the scolding of his wife and critics from among his tribe. For the purpose of identity construction, the sprawling epic had sufficient raw materials to provide tribal heroes of choice to all who so wished.

Conclusion

The Mamluk genealogical genre emerged in the late thirteenth century, coinciding with the increasingly tribal character of many village communities across Egypt and Syria. The three authors discussed here – al-Ḥamdānī, al-ʿUmarī and al-Qalqashandī - were Mamluk officials, and the genealogical literature they produced was a distinct branch of Mamluk state administration. The most characteristic feature of the Mamluk genealogical literature is the geographical mapping of tribal grouping, with most groups located somewhere within the Mamluk realm. While all three authors were sympathetic to the Arab tribes and self-identified as Arabs themselves, the primary axis of these works is the relationship between the tribes and the state, and they advised chancery scribes on the correct titles and lineage to be used in correspondence with tribal amirs leaders.

Al-Qalqashandī was the most prolific of the three authors, and also the most ambitious. Probably influenced by Ibn Khaldūn's elevation of tribal solidarity as the principal vector of history, al-Qalqashandī sought to expand the remit of the genre to encompass broader segments of Egyptian society. Rather than merely taking the perspective of the state, al-Qalqashandī sought to connect members of both urban and rural elites through a unified Arab genealogical tree. The branches of this tree included himself, as well as his teacher, the jurist Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī of the

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and Kurt A. Raaflaub (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 392–410.

Kināna, and his boss, the head of the chancery Abū al-Maʿālī al-Bārizī of the Juhayna. Al-Qalqashandī brushed aside al-ʿUmarī's distinction between the 'true' Arabs of the desert and the Arabs of villages and towns. For al-Qalqashandī, scholars, bureaucrats, tribal amirs, village headmen and irrigation officials were all equally Arab.

The shared roots of the tribes laid in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. For al-Qalqashandī, the epic narrative of Sīrat ʿAntar seems to have played an important role in constructing tribal identity, not least his own. However, the history of the tribes since that primordial era, that is between the Muslim conquest of Egypt and Syria in the seventh century and the fourteenth century, is pretty much a black hole. This absence is not accidental but an act of deliberate erasure. The Mamluk genealogical tradition Arabizes the landscape and the inhabitants of late medieval Egypt and Syria, and simultaneously erases the pre-Arab, pre-Muslim past of these rural communities. Christianity is not mentioned even once in al-Qalqashandī's genealogical corpus, despite its dominant presence in many Egyptian villages at least until the late Fatimid period. As David Nirenberg has shown for fifteenth-century Spain, the elevation of genealogy to a primary form of communal identity may well be a result of mass conversions, giving rise to new forms of historical consciousness.[84]

Al-Qalqashandī's articulation of his tribal identity could also be seen as a reclamation and celebration of his own rural roots. He was already in his sixties when writing these genealogical works, after having resided in Cairo for decades. Although he achieved moderate respect as a professional administrator, he never forgot his village upbringing (or maybe was not allowed to forget it). He constructs a heroic narrative of his village community, a narrative that implicitly mirrors the epics. His Badr clan was the most noble among the clans of the Fazāra, both in pre-Islamic Arabia and in contemporary Qalyūbiyya. They triumph over their cousins the Banū Māzin. One could imagine the Badrī villagers of Qalqashanda in Arab attire, riding their horses to battle, and forget the reality: that these were peasants working the land of the fertile Egyptian delta.

[84] David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain", *Past & Present* 174 (1) (February 2002), 3–41.

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