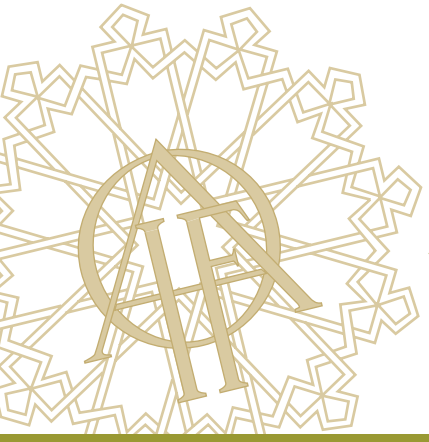
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GUY RON-GILBOA*

Pre-Islamic Brigands in Mamluk Historiography

Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's Account of "The Brigands Among the Arabs" [1]

ABSTRACT

Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's (d. 845/1442) universal history, titled *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar*, contains a chapter "On the Brigands Among the Arabs" (*faṣl fī ḏikr luṣūṣ al-ʿArab*), in which the author gives accounts of the lives and exploits of ten pre-Islamic and early-Islamic brigands. While the chapter relies on earlier sources, its subject matter has no parallel in other Arabic works of universal history, contemporaneous or earlier. My paper is a study of this chapter, based on a holograph of al-Maqrīzī's work. A close reading of the chapter's contents reveals that al-Maqrīzī compiled and edited afresh ancient narratives with the intention of exemplifying the ideological opposition between *ǧāhiliyya* and Islam. I draw special attention to al-Maqrīzī's unique report concerning the death and burial of Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, which portrays him as an antithesis to the figure of the *šahīd*. Finally, I suggest that al-Maqrīzī's chapter is a scholarly response both to the socio-political climate of al-Maqrīzī's Egypt, depicted in some of al-Maqrīzī's other works as fraught with Bedouin rebellions, as well as to the prevailing cultural climate, marked with the rise of the popular *Sīra*.

Keywords: brigands, *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar*, *ǧāhiliyya*, intertextuality, *luṣūṣ*, Mamluk historiography, al-Maqrīzī.

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✦ **RÉSUMÉ**

L'histoire universelle intitulée *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar* de Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (m. 845/1442) contient un chapitre « Sur les brigands arabes » (*faṣl fī ḏikr luṣūṣ al-ʿArab*), dans lequel l'auteur raconte les faits et gestes de dix brigands de l'époque préislamique ou du début de l'islam. Bien que le chapitre reprenne du matériel préexistant, le sujet qu'il traite n'a de parallèle dans aucune histoire universelle, antérieure ou contemporaine. Notre article étudie ce chapitre en se fondant sur un manuscrit ologaphe de l'œuvre. Une lecture attentive montre qu'al-Maqrīzī a repris et réédité des histoires anciennes dans le but d'illustrer l'opposition idéologique entre la *ǧāhiliyya* et l'islam. Nous concentrons notre attention en particulier sur les passages concernant la mort et l'enterrement de Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, dans lesquels ce dernier apparaît comme l'antithèse du *šahīd*. Enfin, nous suggérons que ce chapitre représente la réponse d'al-Maqrīzī à la fois au climat socio-politique de l'Égypte de son temps, que dans d'autres ouvrages il décrit comme troublée par les multiples rébellions bédouines, et à l'ambiance culturelle de son époque, marquée par le développement du genre littéraire populaire des *sīra*-s.

Mots-clés: brigands, *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar*, *ǧāhiliyya*, intertexualité, *luṣūṣ*, historiographie mamelouke, al-Maqrīzī.

* * *

"There are few subjects that interest us more generally, than the adventures of robbers and banditti. In our infancy they awaken and rivet our attention as much as the best fairy tales, and when our happy credulity in all things is wofully abated […] we still retain our taste for the adventurous deeds and wild lives of brigands."

C. MacFarlane, Esq.,
The Lives and Exploits of Banditti and Robbers in All Parts of the World, vol. I, 1833, pp. 3-4.

Introduction
Ǧāhilī Brigands and *Ayyām al-ʿArab* in Medieval Arabic Literature

From Middle English ballads about Robin Hood to Yaşar Kemal's *İnce Memed*, tales of bandits, robbers, and brigands are common in many literary traditions. Medieval Arabic literature is no exception: *ǧāhilī* brigands (*ṣaʿālīk*, *luṣūṣ*) such as Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, al-Šanfarā, al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka and ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward are among the most famous poets in the history of Arabic literature.[2] Their poetry (and that of others) was collected and transmitted by Arab scholars alongside reports about their lives and exploits, as part of a process of

2. See Arazi, 1997, and the literature quoted there.

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collecting and preserving the cultural heritage of the *ǧāhiliyya*. This process had its heyday during the 2nd/8th-4th/10th centuries, the so-called golden age of Arabic philology and *adab*. At its peak, the *ǧāhiliyya* transformed in the hands of Abbasid scholars into an idealized past, a model for the formation of a new cultural identity.[3]

What sort of information did early Arab scholars seek to learn about *ǧāhilī* brigands? A report preserved in Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-aġānī* may serve as an answer:

> ʿAmr b. Abī ʿAmr al-Šaybānī said: I stayed with a clan of [the tribe of] Fahm, the siblings of the [tribe of] ʿAdwān from [the tribal confederacy of] Qays, and asked them for information (*ḫabar*) about Taʾabbaṭa Šarran [their tribesman]. One of them asked me: "Why do you ask about him? Do you want to be a brigand (*liṣṣ*)?" I said: "No, but I would like to acquaint myself with reports of these runners (*ʿaddāʾīn*) in order to transmit them [to others]." They said: "We shall tell you about him."[4]

Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's tribesmen then transmit to ʿAmr b. Abī ʿAmr al-Šaybānī the reports they have about him: according to what they have been told (*fī-mā ḫukiya lanā*), Taʾabbaṭa Šarran was an exceptional runner. He was nicknamed Taʾabbaṭa Šarran (literally: "carried evil under his armpit") because he killed a ghoul in the lands of the tribe of Huḏayl at nighttime, and in the morning he carried its corpse under his armpit on his way back to his companions. Upon seeing him, his companions said to him: "Indeed, you have carried evil under your armpit (*laqad taʾabbaṭta šarran*)!" The Fahmī informants also recite to the scholar a poem composed by Taʾabbaṭa Šarran to commemorate that event.

As can be gleaned from this report, brigand narratives include, among other things, etiological explanations of peculiar nicknames; stories about raids against enemy tribes (the Huḏayl mentioned in the text were Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's chief opponents); reports on strange encounters in the wilderness of Arabia, and the like.

Many of the reports on brigands in classical sources are narratives of their raiding expeditions. In light of their subject matter and their prosimetric style, the literature on brigands can be seen as closely related to one of the most ancient genres of Arabic literature—the *Ayyām al-ʿArab* ("the battle-days of the Arabs"), a genre dedicated to accounts of the raids and battles of pre-Islamic Arab tribes and the poetry composed during or after them.[5] It is hardly surprising then that in his *Kitāb al-fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. circa 385/995) attributes a work by the title *Kitāb luṣūṣ al-ʿArab* ("Book of Arab Brigands") to the Basran scholar

3. On the different meanings of the term, see Goldziher, 1967-1971a; Pines, 1990. On the *ǧāhiliyya* as an idealized past, see Drory, 1996; and cf. Webb, 2014.

4. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 128. ʿAmr b. Abī ʿAmr al-Šaybānī (d. 232/847) was a scholar of the 3rd/9th century, son of the famous philologist, Abū ʿAmr al-Šaybānī (d. *ca*.210/825). The *ʿaddaʾūn* or *ruǧaylā*ʾ (runners, footpads) were a class of brigands who carried raids against enemy tribes unmounted, relying solely on their fleet-footedness. See Lane, *Lexicon*, vol. 3, p. 1046b, s.v. *raǧaliyy*.

5. See Caskel, 1930, esp. pp. 16-19 (on raid expeditions); Widengren, 1959; Rosenthal, 1968, pp. 19-21; Mittwoch, 1958; Jones, online 2007; Oller, 2005.

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Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar ibn al-Muṯannā (d. 209/824), known, among other things, for his uncontested authority in matters of *Ayyām al-ʿArab*.[6]

Another book on the subject, titled *Aḫbār luṣūṣ al-ʿArab wa-ašʿāruhum* ("Reports on the Arab Brigands and their Poetry") or simply *Ašʿār al-luṣūṣ* ("Poetry of the Brigands") is attributed to Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī (d. 275/888), an expert on *ǧāhilī* poetry and transmitter of several pre-Islamic *dīwān*s.[7] Abū ʿUbayda's work has been lost, and of al-Sukkarī's book only a small portion has survived apparently, but at least some of the material collected by these two scholars was preserved in later sources, most notable among them *Kitāb al-aġānī*.[8] In this context, it is interesting to mention that a unique 7th/13th century 'catalogue' of the Ašrafiyya library in Damascus contains, *inter alia*, entries for volumes titled *Aḫbār al-ʿaddāʾīn wa-ašʿāruhum* ("Accounts of the Runners and their Poetry"), as well as *Ašʿār al-luṣūṣ wa-aḫbāruhum* ("Poetry of the Brigands and their Accounts").[9]

Brigand narratives collected by early philologists thus found their way—along with the closely related *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives—into various literary compilations. One such later compilation is the subject of this article: Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's "Chapter on the Brigands Among the Arabs" (*faṣl fī ḏikr luṣūṣ al-ʿArab*), included in his universal history, *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar*.

The inclusion of brigand stories in a historiographical work raises, among others, the following questions: what are the functions of these stories in the framework of a Mamluk universal history? Why did al-Maqrīzī include these in his treatise? My purpose in this paper is twofold: firstly, I offer some answers to these questions through an investigation of al-Maqrīzī's chapter. Secondly, by doing so I aim to revise some accepted notions regarding al-Maqrīzī's originality as a historiographer. Following an exposition on the author and his work, I offer a close reading of some of the narratives recounted by al-Maqrīzī, while delineating the moralistic narrative embedded within the chapter as a whole.

6. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, p. 77; and cf. Yāqūt, *Iršād*, V, p. 2704; Ibn Ḫallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, V, p. 235; Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kašf al-ẓunūn*, II, p. 1550. For information on Abū ʿUbayda see Oller, 2005, pp. 233-236; Madelung, 1992; Lecker, 1995; Weipert, online 2007.

7. See Leder, 1997.

8. The title of the work appears *inter alia* in Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXIV, p. 169; al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Taʾrīḫ Baġdād*, VII, p. 307. A manuscript of al-Sukkarī's work, comprising the *dīwān* of the Umayyad brigand-poet Ṭahmān ibn ʿAmr al-Kilābī, was edited and published by William Wright in his *Opuscula Arabica*, pp. 75-95. See also Brockelmann, *GAL*, vol. 1, pp. 12-13; Sezgin, *GAS*, vol. 2, p. 63. One of Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī's teachers, Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/859-860), was himself among the pupils of Abū ʿUbayda. It may well be that the book attributed to al-Sukkarī is a recension of the work carried by his teacher's teacher, Abū ʿUbayda, or that it at least relies on it; cf. Oller, 2005, pp. 233-236.

9. Süleymaniye Library, Ms Fatih 5433, fol. 247b; for a discussion, a facsimile, and an annotated translation of this document see now Hirschler, 2016, esp. p. 155, § 78 (*Aḫbār al-ʿaddāʾīn wa-ašʿāruhum*); p. 156, § 79 (*Ašʿār al-luṣūṣ wa-aḫbāruhum*); p. 163, § 130 (*Aḫbār al-ʿaddāʾīn wa-suʿāt al-ʿArab*), § 131 (*Aḫbār al-luṣūṣ*); p. 422, § 1650b (*Aḫbār al-luṣūṣ*). I wish to thank Prof. Hirschler for his help and for his willingness to share with me his unpublished work. As mentioned above, Taʾabbaṭa Šarran (and not only he) was both a brigand and a "runner"; one may assume therefore that both works contained reports on him accompanying his verse.

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Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's *al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar*

Al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar is one of the last major works composed by Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī (766-845/1364-1442), the "most famous of medieval Egyptian historians"[10] and "dean of Egyptian historians".[11] Planned as an introduction to al-Maqrīzī's work on the Prophet Muḥammad's Sīra, *Imtāʿ al-asmāʿ*, and following the general scheme of other medieval Arabic universal histories, it opens with a lengthy discussion on the creation of the world and contains *inter alia* chapters on the genealogy of Arab tribes, pre-Islamic religions, Arabian idolatry, *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, Visigothic Spain, pre-Islamic Iran, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine history, Biblical history and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*.[12]

Despite al-Maqrīzī's fame, and although manuscripts of the work have been known to exist for quite some time, it has attracted little scholarly attention and until recently remained in manuscript.[13] It was only published for the first time in 2013.[14] This oversight is perhaps due to a critical opinion, shared by several scholars, that al-Maqrīzī is somehow lacking in originality. The scant references to the *Ḫabar* that can be found in modern scholarship highlight its merit in preserving reports lacking in other sources, but ignore al-Maqrīzī's skills as a historiographer.[15] The attitude towards al-Maqrīzī and his works seems to range between admiration for his "great erudition" to accusations of "wholesale plagiarism" and "sloppiness".[16]

However, as I intend to show here, a close reading of a single chapter of the *Ḫabar* reveals that al-Maqrīzī was not merely a copyist or plagiarist (whether gifted or sloppy) of earlier sources, but rather a historiographer endowed with a keen literary awareness and a clear

10. See Little, 1970, p. 76. For general information on al-Maqrīzī see e.g. Rosenthal, 1987; Rabbat, 2003.

11. Little, 1970, p. 77 (quoting—somewhat disapprovingly—Sadeque, S.F., *Baybars I of Egypt*, Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 1956, p. 23).

12. On the contents of the work, see Bauden, 2013; Tauer, 1924-1925; Brockelmann, *GALS*, vol. 2, pp. 37-38. On the genre of universal history in medieval Arabic historiography see Rosenthal, 1968, pp. 129-150; Radtke, 1992. See also Guo, 1997, pp. 33-36. The material adduced by al-Maqrīzī on pre-Islamic idolatry was discussed by Lecker, 1993.

13. See Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kašf al-ẓunūn*, III, p. 130, § 4680; Nöldeke, 1886, pp. 306-307; Tauer, 1924-1925; Brockelmann, *GALS*, vol. 2, pp. 37-38.

14. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-ḫabar*. Unfortunately, this recent edition is marred by lacunae and erroneous readings, rendering parts of it rather unintelligible. These faults are evident in the editors' treatment of the chapter on the brigands (V, pp. 281-309). Because of the poor state of this edition, I base my arguments on my own edition of the chapter, as per the author's holograph (Ms Fatih 4340, fols 1b-15b), and incorporate extensive citations from it in the course of the discussion.

15. Note, for example, Nöldeke, 1886, pp. 306-307 (repeated in Tauer, 1924-1925, pp. 363-364); cf. Lecker, 1993.

16. In addition to the references quoted above, see e.g. Guest, 1902, p. 106: "[T]he diligence and learning of the writer of *El Khiṭaṭ* cannot but command admiration. He has accumulated and reduced to a certain amount of order a large quantity of information that would but for him have passed into oblivion"; Nicholson, 1941, p. 453: "[H]e was both unconscious and uncritical, too often copying without acknowledgment or comment, and indulging in wholesale plagiarism when it suited his purpose"; and cf. Rosenthal, 1987; Little, 1998, p. 437; Rabbat, 2003, p. 5; Amitai, 2003; Bauden, 2010.

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authorial voice. To use Konrad Hirschler's term, al-Maqrīzī appears as an actor, as evinced by what he chose to include or omit, and by his deliberate use of sources to his own ends, whether quoted or paraphrased, in composing the chapter under discussion.[17]

On the Brigands Among the Arabs

The first chapter of the fifth volume of the *Ḫabar* holograph, titled *Faṣl fī ḏikr luṣūṣ al-ʿArab*, is dedicated to accounts of the lives, deaths, exploits, sayings and poetry of ten brigand-poets of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. The chapter is fifteen folios long and is divided into subchapters dedicated to each of these brigands. The lengths of these subchapters vary from a few lines to five folios. Between the folios of the manuscript, the author inserted notes in his own handwriting; in several places, he left blank spaces for later, but seems never to have filled these in. The brigands dealt with in the chapter are ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb, Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, al-Šanfarā, al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka, al-Muntašir al-Bāhilī, Awfā ibn Maṭar, ʿAmr ibn Barrāqa, al-Uḥaymir al-Saʿdī, Niẓām ibn Ǧušam, and Yazīd ibn al-Ṣiqqīl (or: al-Saqīl) al-ʿUqaylī.[18]

Most of the material utilized by al-Maqrīzī in composing the chapter is traceable to earlier sources (some of which are paraphrased, while others are cited with relative accuracy), all of them of a belletristic-*adab* character (alongside philological and lexicographical works), mostly from the 3rd/9th-4th/10th centuries.[19] Although the distinction between *taʾrīḫ* and *adab* may appear tenuous at times, conspicuously none of these sources is historiographical *sensu stricto*, that is, none of them is a work of universal or annalistic history. Furthermore, in comparison with other medieval Arabic universal histories, the subject matter of this chapter seems unique to the *Ḫabar*. To the best of my knowledge, no earlier work of this historical genre (nor, for that matter, of the annalistic genre) contains a comparable chapter.

This ostensible novelty calls for some explanation: first, why were brigand narratives customarily restricted to non-historiographical belletristic sources? Second, why would al-Maqrīzī choose to include this material in a work on universal history, with apparently no precedent in earlier Arabic literature? As mentioned earlier, brigand narratives are closely related to the genre known as *Ayyām al-ʿArab*. A further indication of the strong link between the two is the fact that the chapter on *Ayyām al-ʿArab* in the *Ḫabar* follows immediately after the chapter

17. See Hirschler, 2006; 2013, p. 166ff.

18. ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb: Ms Fatih 4340, fols 1a-2a; Taʾabbaṭa Šarran: fols 2b-7b; al-Šanfarā: fols 8a-8b; al-Sulayk: fols 9a-10a; al-Muntašir: fols 10b-11a; Awfā ibn Maṭar: fol. 11b; ʿAmr ibn Barrāqa: fols 12a-12b; al-Uḥaymir: fol. 13a; Niẓām ibn Ǧušam: fols 13b-14b; Yazīd: fol. 15a.

19. Among the sources and scholars al-Maqrīzī cites in the chapter are Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-amālī*; Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-aġānī*; Ibn al-Kalbī's (d. 204/819 or 206/821) now lost *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ*; Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām al-Harawī's (d. 224/838) *Kitāb al-amṯāl*; Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *Kitāb al-šiʿr wa-l-šuʿarāʾ*; al-Ǧāḥiẓ's (d. 255/869) *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*; Kušāǧim's (d. 350/961) *Kitāb al-maṣāyid wa-l-maṭārid*; al-Mubarrad's (d. 286/900) *Kitāb al-kāmil*; al-Muʿāfā b. Zakariyyā's (d. 390/1000) *al-Ǧalīs al-ṣāliḥ*; and al-Marzubānī (d. 384/994, apparently quoting from the lost part of his *Muʿǧam al-šuʿarāʾ*).

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on the brigands.[20] While some of the more famous *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives did find their way into pre-Mamluk universal or annalistic histories, pre-Mamluk historians apparently deemed neither *Ayyām al-ʿArab* nor brigand narratives important enough as to dedicate whole chapters to either of these genres in their works.[21] Franz Rosenthal's remarks on this are noteworthy:

> Those [= the *Ayyām al-ʿArab*] narratives were not originally intended to be historical material. The earlier Muslim historians usually restricted themselves to brief references to the battle-days. According to W. Caskel, the elaborate battle-day narratives were fully accepted in historical literature no earlier than the thirteenth century. The historians thus showed themselves hesitant to adopt material which they recognized as belonging to the domain of philologists and littérateurs. And in fact, in their origin, the battle-day narratives belonged rather to literature in the narrow sense than to history. They primarily served for the entertainment of the listeners and for their emotional enjoyment.[22]

Rosenthal's explanation seems sufficient in answering the first question posed above, to wit, why brigand narratives (like *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives) were restricted to belletristic sources. However, neither Rosenthal nor Caskel explain why the *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives were accepted in historiographical literature from the 7th/13th century on. Significantly, Ulrich Haarmann notes that during the same period historical writing shifted from traditional standards towards a more literarized mode. This literarization (*Literarisierung*) entailed *inter alia* an increasing assimilation of belletristic-*adab* elements such as poetry, rhymed prose, and witty sayings and anecdotes, as well as the introduction of so-called popular elements borrowed from folk epics, *ʿaǧāʾib* literature etc., into the writing of history.[23] Similarly, Bernd Radtke notes that from the 7th/13th century onward "a mixture of salvationist, cultural, and world history as entertainment became the norm".[24]

20. Ms Fatih 4340, fols 16a-75a.

21. The chapters on *Ayyām al-ʿArab* in al-Yaʿqūbī's (d. 284/897) *Taʾrīḫ* seem to be an earlier exception; al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) gives a detailed account of the *Yawm Ḏī Qār*, see *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, I, 2, pp. 1015-1037 (= trans. Bosworth, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 5, pp. 338-370). However, unlike other *Ayyām*, the battle at Ḏū Qār was rather more than a tribal feud, as there were Persian troops involved in the clash; see Vaglieri, 1961.

22. See Rosenthal, 1968, pp. 20-21; cf. Caskel, 1930, p. 8.

23. See Haarmann, 1971. Interestingly, Haarmann mentions al-Maqrīzī among several other Mamluk historiographers operating in a period later than the 7th/13th century, in whose writing there is "an unmistakable conservative, anti-literary historiographical ethos" ("ein konservatives, literaturfeindlich Geschichtsethos"). Haarmann sees the literary material found in the works of these historians as evidence of the strength of literarization during the period, labeling it "Literarisierung wider Willen"—literarization against one's will (p. 54).

24. See Radtke, 1992, pp. 543-544. Radtke, however, perceives this new norm not as a deviation from classical standards but rather as a continuation and development thereof. Indeed, some classical universal histories, notably al-Masʿūdī's *Murūǧ al-ḏahab* and al-Maqdisī's *al-Badʾ wa-l-taʾrīḫ* (both from the 4th/10th century), already show a blend of *taʾrīḫ* and *adab*, and cf. Khalidi, 1994, especially the third and fourth chapters. In his review of Radtke's work, published in *JAOS* 115, 1995, pp. 133-135, Haarmann criticizes Radtke's perception of continuity in the modes of historical writing as derived from a "static world view" (p. 134).

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The folk epics mentioned by Haarmann gained significant popularity during the Mamluk period, and some of them (especially *Sīrat ʿAntar* and *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*) draw on *Ayyām al-ʿArab* traditions and share many common motifs with them (as well as with brigand narratives).[25] As noted by Konrad Hirschler, these *siyar* were often treated as harmful by Mamluk scholars, since they often dealt with historical topics by presenting an unauthorized version of the past. Since scholars saw historical topics as their exclusive domain, they perceived the *siyar* as a threat to their authority of knowledge.[26] It might be suggested that the absorption of *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives into historiography in the 7th/13th century (and later of brigand narratives) was partly due to a scholarly attempt at reclaiming their authority by saving this material that was lost on folk-epics.

I suggest that al-Maqrīzī's chapter on the brigands in the *Ḫabar*, with its literary source material and its correspondence with *Ayyām al-ʿArab* and folk-epic themes, reflects the historiographical conventions of its time. However, in order to understand how and to what ends al-Maqrīzī used these materials, a closer look at the contents of the chapter is required.

Death of a Brigand

What, then, is the function of a chapter on ancient brigands in the framework of al-Maqrīzī's universal history? Can the reports included in it be portrayed merely as anecdotes picked at random and meant only as entertaining literary embellishments? While one cannot ignore the entertaining aspects of this chapter, I would like to suggest that more inheres in it.

Overall, the subsections devoted to each of the brigands in the chapter appear in chronological order, starting with the oldest pre-Islamic brigands and ending with the latest early Islamic ones. There are several recurrent topics in the material that al-Maqrīzī included in the chapter, among which mention should be made of: 1) stories on raid expeditions; 2) etiological narratives explaining the origins of brigand nicknames; 3) narratives depicting strange or supernatural encounters in the wilderness; 4) accounts of brigands' deaths. A close inspection of this last category, i.e. accounts of brigands' deaths—not least among them some rare details concerning the death and burial of Taʾabbaṭa Šarran—offers a key to understanding the inclusion of this chapter as a whole in the *Ḫabar*. How, then, does a brigand die?[27]

Cf. also Guo, 1997, pp. 33-36; and K. Hirschler, 2013, p. 168. Hirschler, who seems to side with Radtke, criticizes Haarmann's terminology as it implies "a dichotomy between literary fictional texts on the one hand, and historical factual texts on the other". However, he admits that "U. Haarmann's observations on the Mamluk period gain new significance because he had rightly observed that changes did take place in the way authors crafted their narratives".

25. See for example Lyons, 1995; Cherkaoui, 2003; Kruk, 2006; Reynolds, 2006, and 2009; Heath, 1996, esp. pp. 22-30. Al-Maqrīzī himself describes the Ḫuṭṭ Bayna al-Qaṣrayn in Cairo as a place where many gathered to listen to popular *siyar*, see his *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār*, III, p. 53.

26. See Hirschler, 2012, pp. 165-196.

27. The following discussion includes a close reading of the accounts given on seven of the brigands dealt with in the chapter (ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb, Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, al-Šanfarā, al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka, al-Muntašir, al-Uḥaymir and Yazīd). The chapter does not include reports about the deaths of the remaining three

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The Many Deaths of ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb

After a brief lexicographical introduction to the chapter dealing with the nomenclature of different types of brigands (*luṣūṣ*) and brigandage (*talaṣṣuṣ*),[28] al-Maqrīzī turns his attention to ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb of the Huḏayl tribe. Following some explanations regarding the origin of his peculiar nickname ("the dog master"), al-Maqrīzī quotes three different accounts regarding his death. One account is a summary of an elaborate story found in Kušāǧim's *Kitāb al-maṣāyid wa-l-maṭārid*, according to which ʿAmr died from a snakebite while slaying a lion.[29] The two other versions are based—by al-Maqrīzī's own admission—on reports from *Kitāb al-aġānī*.[30] According to the first, while on a plundering expedition against the rival tribe of Fahm, two leopards attacked him and devoured him. The tribesmen of Fahm found his body and later claimed that they were the ones who had killed him.[31] The second, longer, version, also involves the tribe of Fahm:[32] it is said that ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb had a love affair with a Fahmī woman called Umm Ǧulayḥa. When her tribesmen found this out he fled from them. During his flight, he encountered a man in the wilderness sitting next to a bonfire. ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb asked him the name of the place, and the man told him that he had reached *al-Sudd*. ʿAmr then realized that he was lost, because *al-Sudd* (the barrier) is impassable.[33] He then found refuge in a cave in the *Sudd*. The Fahmīs tracked him down and besieged him in the cave. He had managed to kill one of them with his arrows before they pierced a hole in the cave's wall through which they shot their arrows and killed him. They took his booty and presented it to Umm Ǧulayḥa, who at first refused to believe they had managed to kill him, becoming convinced only when presented with his shirt that still retained his scent.[34]

(Awfā ibn Maṭar, ʿAmr ibn Barrāqa, and Niẓām ibn Ǧušam), nor about the death of al-Uḥaymir, whose appearance in the chapter is nonetheless significant, as I intend to show.

28. The term *ṣuʿlūk* (pl. *ṣaʿālīk*) is conspicuously absent from the introduction. I shall return to this point later on, while discussing the absence of ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward from the chapter.

29. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 1a: *wa-fī Kitāb al-maṣāyid annahu summiya Ḏā al-Kalb li-anna al-asad qatala aḫan lahu wa-walaġa fī damihi wa-kāna ʿAmr yaqtulu al-usud wa-yalaġu fī dimāʾihā wa-raʾāhu ʿAmr ibn Maʿdī-Karib yalaġu fī dam asad ṭumma nahašathu ḥayya fa-māta wa-kāna ʿAmr yaqūlu innamā al-asad kalb fa-li-ḏālika summiya Ḏā al-Kalb*. Cf. Kušāǧim, *Kitāb al-maṣāyid wa-l-maṭārid*, pp. 172-173. The same report appears in al-Muʿāfā ibn Zakariyyā, *al-Ǧalīs al-ṣāliḥ*, I, pp. 545-547, the first few lines of which al-Maqrīzī quotes towards the end of the section devoted to ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb (Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 2a: *wa-qāla al-qāḍī Abū al-Faraǧ al-Muʿāfā ibn Zakariyyā* etc.). The end of the story does not appear in the holograph, but it seems to have been completed in one of the other manuscripts of the *Ḫabar*, as evinced by its inclusion in ʿAbd al-Ġanī and al-Suwaydī's edition, V, pp. 284-285. According to this version, transmitted on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih (alluded to in the *isnād* only by his *nisba*—al-Ḍimārī; d. 110/728 or 114/732), the *muḫaḍram* poet ʿAmr ibn Maʿdī-Karib told the story of ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb's death to the second caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb, upon the latter's request that he tells him the most astonishing thing he saw (*aḫbirnī yā Abā Ṭawrin bi-aʿǧabi ma raʾayta*).

30. See Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXII, pp. 351-353.

31. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 1a: *wa-kāna ġazā Fahman fa-waṭaba ʿalayhi namirān fa-akalāhu fa-ddaʿat Fahm qatlahu*.

32. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 1a-2a.

33. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 1b: *fa-ʿarafa annahu qad halaka wa-aḫṭaʾa wa-l-sudd šayʾ lā yuǧāwazu*.

34. According to another version of the last story (which al-Maqrīzī does not mention), ʿAmr had managed to kill three hundred Fahmīs with his arrows before they besieged him, and thirty-nine more from within

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Whether he died of a snakebite while slaying a lion, was devoured by two leopards, or was killed at the hands of his Fahmī rivals, it is quite clear that ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb did not die of old age. Leading what appeared to be a violent life, raiding tribes and taking booty, led him to a violent, perhaps demeaning, death.[35]

*Taʾabbaṭa Šarran – an Anti-*šahīd

The next brigand to whom al-Maqrīzī turns his attention is from the above-mentioned tribe of Fahm and is both the most notorious *ġāhilī* brigand and the most celebrated poet among the *ṣaʿālīk*. His birthname is sometimes given as Ṯābit ibn Ǧābir, but he was mainly known by his nickname—Taʾabbaṭa Šarran.[36] Al-Maqrīzī quotes ibn al-Aʿrābī's (d. 231/845) statement that he was of the *Aġribat al-ʿArab* ("the ravens of the Arabs") that is of black African ancestry.[37]

Al-Maqrīzī recounts several stories regarding the source of his ominous nickname, following closely the reports found in *Kitāb al-aġānī*. As mentioned earlier, according to some he hunted down a ram-shaped ghoul and carried it under his armpit; others say that after his mother had asked him to pick some truffles for her, he went out to the desert, gathered the largest vipers

the cave. The Fahmīs then burned him alive in the cave; see Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ aš'ār al-Huḍaliyyīn*, II, pp. 854-856.

35. Adam Talib turned my attention to an interesting interplay of motifs between the story of ʿAmr's death and the Qurʾānic and Biblical story of Yūsuf/Joseph (Qurʾān, XII; cf. Gen., XXXVII): aside from a phonetic similarity between the names of Zulayḫa and (Umm) Ǧulayḫa, the garment thrown to Umm Ǧulayḫa as proof of ʿAmr's death is reminiscent of the bloody shirt presented to Yaʿqūb as falsified evidence of Yūsuf's death. Furthermore, both Yʿaqūb and Umm Ǧulayḫa react skeptically to the news of the death of their loved ones. It can be noted that as opposed to the righteous Yūsuf, who was treacherously abandoned by his brothers but kept alive, ʿAmr was indeed killed. The motifs present in *Sūrat Yūsuf* are thus turned upside-down in the story of ʿAmr's death, presenting the *ġāhilī* brigand ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb as a mirror image of the Qurʾānic prophet Yūsuf.

36. For general information about him and his poetry, see Arazi, 1998. On the meaning of this nickname see above.

37. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 2b. The same is said about al-Šanfarā (fol. 8a) and al-Muntašir al-Bāhilī (fol. 10b); al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka is said to have been born to a black captive woman (fol. 9a). Neither Taʾabbaṭa Šarran nor al-Šanfarā are counted among the *aġriba* in other classical sources. See for example Abū ʿUbayda, *Kitāb al-dībāǧ*, pp. 40-41; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Šiʿr wa-l-šuʿarāʾ*, p. 131 (on ʿAntara); Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, VIII, p. 240. Ibn al-Aʿrābī's statement is quoted also in Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. *ġrb*, and mentions Taʾabbaṭa Šarran and al-Šanfarā among the *aġriba* who lived during Islam (!) in contradiction to other sources about them. Furthermore, the evidence regarding Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's pedigree seems to point to the contrary, that he was rather of a purely Arab lineage. See e.g. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 127; cf. also p. 170; and al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ aš'ār al-Huḍaliyyīn*, II, p. 846. Al-Ǧāḥiẓ mentions Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's mother in *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, I, pp. 286-287, as one of the wisest among Arab women (*min ʿuqalāʾ nisāʾ al-ʿArab*), and states that she had a noble stature among them (*muqaddamatan fīhim*). The evidence regarding al-Šanfarā and al-Muntašir is somewhat less conclusive (cf. *infra*). Bernard Lewis seems to be right in making the point that "[b]y a confusion between the two groups—the 'crows of the Arabs' and the brigand poets—several of the latter are described by some early sources as having been black, though this is not supported by the main tradition". See Lewis, 1985, p. 92.

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he could find and brought them to her in a leather bag tucked under his armpit.[38] The famous lexicographer al-Ḫalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 170/786) is quoted saying that he carried a knife under his arm, while the Basran philologist Abū Ḥātim al-Siǧistānī is of the opinion that he used to carry his quiver under his arm.[39]

Most of the reports given by al-Maqrīzī on Taʾabbaṭa Šarran speak of his raids on enemy tribes and his narrow escapes from them.[40] According to al-Maqrīzī's account he found his death following such a raid against Huḍayl (ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb's tribe):

> *ṯumma ḫaraǧa Taʾabbaṭa li-yaṯʾara bi-aṣḥābihi fa-raʾā baytan li-Huḍalī fa-qāla li-aṣḥābihi aġnamūhu ṯumma raʾā ḍabuʿan ʿan yasārihi fa-qāla abširī ušbiʿuki min al-qawm ġadan ṯumma aġāra ʿalā al-bayt wa-qatala šayḫan wa-ʿaǧūzan wa-ttabaʿa ġulāman fa-ramāhu al-ġulām fa-ntaẓama qalbahu wa-lāḍa al-ġulām bi-qatāda fa-qaṭaʿahā Taʾabbaṭa bi-ḫušāšatihi wa-qatala al-ġulām ṯumma māta wa-qīla inna allaḍī ramāhu lāḍa minhu bi-ranfa.*[41]

> Taʾabbaṭa Šarran went to avenge the death of his companions. He saw a house belonging to a man of Huḍayl and said to his companions: "Plunder it!" Then, to his left, he saw a she-hyena. He said to [it]: "Rejoice! I shall satisfy your hunger with [corpses] of the tribe tomorrow." Then he raided the house and killed an old man and an old woman. He went after a boy. The boy shot him and pierced his heart. The boy sought shelter under an astragalus bush. Taʾabbaṭa Šarran cut it in his dying breath and killed the boy. Then he died. Others say that the one who shot him found shelter under a willow.

Thus far, the account given by al-Maqrīzī regarding Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's death is a summary of similar reports found in several 3rd/9th-4th/10th century sources.[42] The rest of the account, which relates the brigand's burial, though also based on these earlier sources, calls for special attention as it contains some details that appear uniquely in the *Ḫabar* and are not paralleled in any other source known to me. These details seem to hold the key to al-Maqrīzī's decision to include brigand narratives in his universal history. Here is his version (the new material added in al-Maqrīzī's report is underlined in tansliteration and bold in the translation):

> *fa-lam yaʾkul min Taʾabbaṭa sabuʿ wa-lā ṭāʾir illā māta* <u>*wa-qīla inna rāʾiḥatahu kānat iḏā mālat ʿalā ḥayy mariḍa fa-ḫaraǧa fityān*</u> *min Huḍayl li-yadfinūhu* <u>*fa-lam yaǧid aḥad rīḥahu illā māta fa-talaṭṭama qawm wa-saddū manāḫirahum*</u> *wa-ramawhu fī ġār Raḥmān* <u>*fa-raǧaʿū wa-kulluhum urimmū ṯumma ʿamū ʿan āḫirihim wa-kānat ǧumǧumatuhu min qiṭʿa wāḥida wa-kānat ʿiẓāmuhu ṣumman lā muḫḫ fīhā*</u>.[43]

38. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 2b; and cf. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, pp. 127-128.
39. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 2b. The explanations quoted on the authority of al-Ḫalīl ibn Aḥmad and Abū Ḥātim al-Siǧistānī appear, *inter alia*, in Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. *ʾbṭ*.
40. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 3a (a raid against the Baǧīla with ʿAmr ibn Barrāq[a]); fol. 4a (on a raid against the Huḍayl); fol. 4b (a raid against Ḫaṯʿam); fol. 5a (a raid against Azd); fol. 5b (a raid against Nufāṯa). Most of these stories are based on reports found in Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, pp. 127-173.
41. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 5b.
42. Cf. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, pp. 166-168 and 169-170 (a slightly different version); Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmāʾ al-muġtālīn*, pp. 221-223; Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ ašʿār al-Huḍaliyyīn*, II, pp. 843-848.
43. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 5b.

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> Every beast or bird of prey that scavenged on him [=his corpse] died. **It is said that whenever the malodor [of his corpse] reached a living thing, it fell ill. Some young men** of Huḏayl went out to bury him, **but each of them fell dead upon sensing his malodor. Then some people wore veils around their faces and plugged up their nostrils.** They threw him in the cave of Raḫmān, **and then went back [to their tribe]. [The bones of] all of them decayed and soon after every last one of them became blind. His skull was made of a single piece [of bone], and his bones were hard and solid, without any marrow.**

Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's death as it is recounted here is a violent one; he is killed while killing others. Furthermore, he is depicted as a monstrosity: his physique grotesquely deformed with its jointless skull and its solid, marrowless bones.[44] Most importantly, we are told that he continues killing even after his death: birds and beasts that prey on his venomous body die, and the stench of his corpse kills the people who approach it, or afflict them with a disease.

The details of this report might be understood against the background and antithesis of Islamic traditions regarding the corpses of martyrs (*šuhadāʾ*, sg. *šahīd*). These traditions, in particular those regarding the body of the Prophet Muḥammad, claim that a martyr's body does not decay in the tomb, but stays intact and lifelike, while giving off a sweet fragrance.[45] Michael Lecker notes, moreover, that according to some traditions, leaving a Muslim warrior's body in the battlefield so that it will "resurrect from the bellies of the beasts of prey and birds" was considered a privilege.[46] Thus, a certain Hadith recounts that the Prophet, upon seeing the mutilated corpse of his uncle, Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, who was killed at Uḥud (3/625), cried: "Had it not been for the women's grief and the fear that this would become a *sunna* after my time, I would have left him until God resurrected him from the bellies of the beasts of prey and the birds (*min buṭūni al-sibāʿi wa-l-ṭayri*)".[47]

44. A similar wording is used by al-Masʿūdī (d. *ca.*345/956) in his description of the rhinoceros (*karkaddan* or *bišān*), see *Murūǧ al-ḏahab*, I, p. 204, § 430: *wa-laysa fī anwāʿ al-ḥayawān wa-Llāhu aʿlam ašadd minhu ḏālik anna akṭar ʿiẓāmihi ḍumm* (read: *ṣumm*) *lā mafṣil fī qawāʾimihi*.
(The form *ḍumm* is unattested in the dictionaries I consulted. The reading *ṣumm* seems to be justified both here and in the passage quoted from the *Ḫabar*; cf. Lane, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 1734c, s.v. *aṣamm*: "[as that which is without a cavity is generally non-sonorous] one says *ḥağarun aṣammu* meaning *Hard and solid stone*" etc.). Furthermore, al-Ǧāḥiẓ mentions in his depiction of the ostrich (*naʿāma*) that its bones are hollow and have no marrow (*lā muḫḫa fīhā*): see *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, IV, p. 326. It can also be mentioned that according to a report preserved in al-Anbārī's (d. *ca.*304/916) *šarḥ* on the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, two of Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's toes were conjoined (*wa-kānat iṣbaʿāni multaṣiqatāni min aṣābiʿi riǧlihi*), see al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, p. 195.

45. See for example al-Ḏahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, IX, p. 161. On the Late Antique (especially Christian) precursors of these traditions see Harvey, 2006, pp. 11-21, 206-210 and *passim*. On traditions surrounding martyrs and martyrdom in Islam, see Kohlberg, 1997; and Lecker, 2000. On traditions concerning the Prophet's death, see Szilágyi, 2009. The same theme famously appears in the third part of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, regarding the hideous stench of Starets Zosima's corpse.

46. See Lecker, 2000, pp. 48-49.

47. The translation follows Lecker's translation; see 2000, p. 48, quoting al-Qurṭubī, *al-Ǧāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, X, p. 201. Cf. another report mentioned by Lecker, 2000, pp. 48-49, found in al-Muʿāfā ibn Ẓakariyyā,

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A comparison between the traditions about martyrs on the one hand, and the information regarding Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's death and burial on the other, reveals that like martyrs, Taʾabbaṭa Šarran died a violent death, but unlike them, his death was clearly not for the sake of God. While the bodies of martyrs are blessed, spreading the sweet fragrance of holiness, his body, according to al-Maqrīzī's version, spreads the unbearable malodor of sin and vileness; and while martyrs may be resurrected from the entrails of birds and beasts, his body poisons every bird or beast that tries to feed on it.[48] Seen in this light, the story of Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's death and burial as told by al-Maqrīzī portrays him as an antithesis of the figure of the *šahīd* in Islamic tradition and as an epitome of corruption and moral decay.

Al-Šanfarā's Deadly Skull

Al-Maqrīzī's next infamous brigand-poet appears in some reports as Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's close companion. He was named (or nicknamed) al-Šanfarā, and like Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, al-Maqrīzī states that he was one of the *Aġribat al-ʿArab* (the ravens of the Arabs).[49] According to al-Maqrīzī's sources, he was born to a clan of the tribe of Azd, but taken captive soon after by Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's tribe of Fahm. Later, he was ransomed by the Banū Salāmān, another clan of his native tribe.[50] Al-Maqrīzī has two versions regarding the rest of the story:

a.

wa-kāna al-Šanfarā fī Banī Sulāmān (sic) *yaḥsubu nafsahu aḥadahum ṭumma waqaʿa bayna ibn allaḏī kāna ʿindahu wa-bayna al-Šanfarā šarr fa-nafathu ʿanhum fa-atā allaḏī ištarāhu min Fahm fa-qāla iṣduqnī mimman anā fa-aʿlamahu fa-qāla lan adaʿakum ḥattā aqtula minkum miʾa bi-mā iʿtabadtumūnī fa-qatala minhum tisʿa wa-tisʿīn wa-lazima dār Fahm yuġīru ʿalā al-Azd fa-raṣadahu Usayd ibn Ğābir al-Sulāmānī* (sic) *wa-ṭalāṭa* (?) *ilayhi fa-raʾā al-Šanfarā al-sawād fa-ramāhu fa-aṣāba Usayd ṭumma waṯabū ʿalayhi fa-aḥaḏūhu wa-qālū inšudnā fa-qāla innamā al-našīd ʿalā al-masarra fa-ḏahabat maṯalan wa-qālū lahu ayna naqburuka fa-qāla:*

lā taqburūnī inna qabrī muḥarramun / ʿalaykum wa-lākin ḥāmirī Umma ʿĀmirī[51]

al-Ğalīs al-ṣāliḥ, II, pp. 455-456, on a warrior whose wish it was to be "resurrected from the bellies of the beasts of prey and the craws of the birds (*min buṭūn al-sibāʿ wa-ḥawāṣil al-ṭayr*)".

48. It should be noted that the passage on the birds and beasts of prey that died after scavenging on Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's corpse already appears in the older versions of the report, e.g. in Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 166-168. The new material found in the *Ḫabar* report is quite likely al-Maqrīzī's own interpolation, playing on motifs already found in the older version. On a similar interpolation (albeit in a smaller scale) see *infra*, in the discussion on al-Šanfarā.

49. For general information about al-Šanfarā and his poetry, see Arazi, 1996. Al-Šanfarā's genealogy is indeed unclear, but in a couple of verses attributed to him he boasts of his noble pedigree (*anā ibnu ḥiyāri al-ḥiǧri baytan wa-manṣiban wa-ummī bintu al-aḥrāri*); see: Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 179; and cf. p. 193; Tibrīzī, *Šarḥ Dīwān al-ḥamāsa*, II, p. 25). The evidence that he might have been of the *aġriba* is circumstantial.

50. The main source is again Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, pp. 181-182; and cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmāʾ al-muġtālīn*, pp. 242-243.

51. Var.: *abširī Umma ʿĀmir*.

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iḏā iḥtamalū raʾsī wa-fī al-raʾsi akṯarī / wa-ġūdira ʿinda al-multaqā ṭamma sāʾirī.[52]

Al-Šanfarā stayed among the Banū Sulāmān (*sic*), thinking that he was one of them. Then he fell into enmity with the son of the one with whom he stayed. [The Salāmān] banished him from among them. He came to the one who had ransomed him from Fahm and said: "Tell me the truth, to whom do I belong?" [The man] informed him [of his true origin], and he said: "I shall not let you [=the Salāmān] be until I kill a hundred of you, in retaliation for having enslaved me." He killed ninety-nine of them. He stayed in the tribal quarters of Fahm, carrying raids against Azd. Usayd ibn Ǧābir al-Salāmānī ambushed him with three[?] [of his companions]. Al-Šanfarā saw the black [of Usayd's eye] and he shot it and hit Usayd. Then they jumped on him and seized him. They said to him: "Recite to us!" He said: "Recitation is only done with joy" and it became a proverb. They asked him: "Where should we bury you?" upon which he recited:

Do not bury me, burying me is forbidden to you,
But hide yourself (*var.*: rejoice), Umm ʿĀmir,[53]
When they carry away my head, which carries the most of me,
And the rest of me is left behind in the battlefield."

b.

wa-qīla sabat Salāmān al-Šanfarā fa-qāla lahu āsiruhu law-lā annī aḫāfu an yaqtulanī Banū Salāmān la-zawwaǧtuka ibnatī fa-qāla in qatalūka qataltu minhum miʾa fa-zawwaǧahu fa-qatalathu Banū Sulāmān fa-ṣanaʿa al-Šanfarā al-nabl wa-ǧaʿala afwāqahā min al-qurūn li-tuʿrafa fa-qatala minhum tisʿa wa-tisʿīn ṭumma raṣadūhu ʿalā māʾ wa-qatalūhu wa-ṣalabūhu wa-baqiya ʿāman maṣlūban wa-ʿalayhi min naḍrihi raǧul fa-marra bihi raǧul wa-qad saqaṭa fa-rakaḍa raʾsahū bi-riǧlihi fa-daḫala fīhā ʿaẓm fa-baġat ʿalayhi fa-māta.[54]

It is said that the Salāmān captured al-Šanfarā. His captor said to him: "Had I not been afraid that the Banū Salāmān would kill me, I would have wedded you to my daughter." He replied: "If they kill you, I will kill a hundred of them." So he wedded him [to his daughter] and the Banū Salāmān killed him. Al-Šanfarā made arrows, and made their notches out of horns, so that they would be recognizable. He killed ninety-nine of them. Then they ambushed him next to a water source. They killed him and crucified him. He [=his body] remained on the cross for a year, still having one more man [to kill] according to his oath. A man passed by him [=by his body] after he had fallen [off the cross] and struck [al-Šanfarā's] head with his foot. A bone entered it, it became infected, and he died.

52. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 8a. For other versions of the poem see e.g. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 182; al-Marzūqī, *Šarḥ Dīwān al-ḥamāsa*, I, pp. 487-491; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, p. 197. The poem is in the *ṭawīl*; the conspicuous omission of the initial short syllable (*ḥarf*) of the first metrical foot (*faʿūlun*) of the first line of the poem conforms to the phenomenon known as *ḥarm* in the science of *ʿarūḍ*: see Frolov, 2000, pp. 196-197; cf. Stoetzer, 1999; van Gelder, 2012, p. 347 (I thank Adam Talib for this reference).
53. A nickname for a female hyena.
54. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 8a. Cf. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, pp. 179-182; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, pp. 194-199; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmāʾ al-muġtālīn*, pp. 242-243.

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Al-Šanfarā's crucifixion corresponds to the Islamic punishment on brigandage as prescribed in the Qurʾān against *muḥāraba*, a term that closely parallels in Islamic law the term *qaṭʿ al-ṭarīq* (brigandary).[55] Furthermore, as with Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, al-Šanfarā's bloodlust carries on beyond the grave. His skull, which he boasts as "carrying the most of him", is also the poisonous vessel by which his oath to kill a hundred of the Banū Salāmān is fulfilled.[56]

In this respect, in describing the affair, al-Maqrīzī's phraseology calls for special attention. The parallel report in *Kitāb al-aġānī*, al-Maqrīzī's apparent source for this report, uses the passive form of the verb *ʿaqara* to describe what happened to the person who accidentally hit al-Šanfarā's skull with his leg: *fa-ʿuqirat riǧluhu*—"his leg was wounded".[57] Al-Maqrīzī however substitutes this verb with a rarer, more salient form: *fa-baġat ʿalayhi*—"it became swollen and infected". This substitution does not seem accidental: the phrase *baġā ʿalā* usually denotes "to act wrongfully or tyrannically towards s.o."[58] When used to convey the meaning "to swell" or "to become infected", the verb *baġā* is not usually complemented by a prepositional phrase.[59] The infinitive, *baġy*, is used in Islamic law to denote acts of transgression or rebellion against religious authority, following the usage of verb in the Qurʾān, and as such, it is closely associated with the term *muḥāraba* mentioned above.[60] Furthermore, as noted by Caskel and Oller, *baġy* is a recurrent trope in *Ayyām al-ʿArab* narratives, where unlawful and wrongful doings are the chief characteristic of some of the heroes.[61]

55. See Qurʾān, V, 33. For references to and discussion of exegetical literature on this famous verse, see Kraemer, 1980, esp. pp. 61-70; and cf. Heffening, 1995.

56. An interesting forerunner of the symbol of a brigand's skull appears in a famous passage of the *Mishnah*. Tractate *Avot* II, 6 reads: "He [=R. Hillel] also saw a skull floating on the water. He said to it: Because you caused [others] to float (i.e. because you drowned others), they made you float, and those that made you float will end up floating [themselves]." (*ʾaṯ hûʾ rāʾâ gulgōleṯ ʾaḥaṯ ṣāṯâ ʿal pənê ha-māyim wə-āmar lāh: ʿal da-ʾăṯîṯ ʾăṯîṯûḵ wə-sôṯ məṯîṯayiḵ yəṭûṯûn*). According to the exegete Rashi (Salomom Isaacides, d. 1105, France), the skull was that of a brigand (*məlasṭēm ha-bəriyyôṭ*), see e.g. Kinstlikher, Spitzer (eds.), *Masekhet Avot*, p. 48. Maimonides's (d. 1204) commentary on this passage is especially interesting, since it fits well also with the story of al-Šanfarā's death: "'Because you caused [others] to float you were made to float, and the one who made you float will be made to float [himself]'—it means that you were killed because you killed others, and the one who killed you will be killed [himself]. The intention of this maxim is that wrongful deeds turn back against their doers. […] It is discernible and evident in every time and every place that he who does wrongful deeds and contrives types of tyranny and vileness is himself [eventually] afflicted with the harm caused by the very same mischiefs he contrived, because he teaches a craft that will [eventually] be applied unto him and unto others." See Maimonides, *Masekhet Avot ʿim perush rabenu Mosheh ben Maimon*, pp. 131-132 (in Judaeo-Arabic).

57. See Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XXI, p. 186. The same appears in Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmāʾ al-muġtālīn*, p. 243.

58. See Lane, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 231b-c s.v. *baġā*.

59. See Lane, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 231c-232a. s.v. *baġā*: "*baġā al-ǧurḥu* […] the wound swelled […] and became in a corrupt state."

60. See Qurʾān, XLIX, 9. See discussion of the term in Kraemer, 1980, p. 48ff. The verb is also used in *ʿahd al-umma*, on which see Lecker, 2004, pp. 110-112.

61. See Oller, 2005.

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It appears that al-Maqrīzī intentionally uses the semiotic wealth of the verb *baġā*, denoting both "to swell, to become infected" and "to act tyrannically, to transgress". While accentuating themes already present in older versions of the report, he seems to interpolate it, so as to create an intertextual reverberation of multifaceted connotations. In this way, the reader is led to judge al-Šanfarā as a *bāġī* or a *muḥārib*, namely, according to the moral norms of Islam, a transgressor and a rebel against God.

Al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka's Unavenged Death

Regarding al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka of the Banū Saʿd (Tamīm), al-Maqrīzī mentions that his mother was a black captive and a servant of the Banū al-Ḥāriṯ ibn Kaʿb, and that he was nicknamed Sulayk al-Maqānib ("Sulayk of the rapacious wolves"). Like Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, he was also one of the *ruǧaylā*ʾ (the fleet-footed brigands), and according to one story, he remained fleet-footed even as an old man.[62] Here are al-Maqrīzī's versions of the story of his death:

> *wa-kāna al-Sulayk yuʿṭī ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Muwaylik al-Ḫaṯʿamī itāwa min ġanāʾimihi fa-yuǧāwizu bilād Ḫaṯʿam wa-yuġīru fa-marra qāfilan bi-bayt min Ḫaṯʿam fihi imraʾa šābba fa-tasannamahā fa-aḫbarat bi-ḏālika fa-ttabaʿahū Anas ibn Mudrik fa-qatalahu fa-qāla Ibn Muwaylik la-aqtulanna qātilahu aw la-yadiyannahu fa-qāla Anas wa-Llāhi lā adīhi wa-qāla: innī wa-qatlī Sulaykan ṯumma aʿqiluhu* […] *wa-fī šiʿrihi annahu kāna sabā imraʾa min Ḫaṯʿam wa-waladat lahu waladan wa-azārahā qawmahā fa-lammā raǧaʿa ittabaʿahu Anas fa-qatalahu wa-qāla Ibn Qutayba waṭiʾa Sulayk imraʾa min Ḫaṯʿam ahluhā ḥulūf fa-qatalahu Anas wa-ṭūliba bi-qatlihi fa-qāla qataltuhu bi-stiḥqāq fa-kayfa aʿqiluhu.*[63]

> Al-Sulayk used to pay ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Muwaylik al-Ḫaṯʿamī tribute from his booty in order to cross the lands of Ḫaṯʿam and carry out raids. On his way back [from a raid], he passed by a house of Ḫaṯʿam. Inside was a young woman [of the tribe]. He raped her.[64] She informed [the tribesmen] of that. Anas ibn Mudrik [=a chieftain of Ḫaṯʿam] chased him and killed him. Ibn Muwaylik said: "I shall kill his killer unless he pays the bloodwit." Anas then said: "By God, I shall not pay the bloodwit for [killing] him", and composed [the following]: "It was my right to kill Sulayk—why should I pay the bloodwit for this?" […] According to his poetry, he captured a woman of Ḫaṯʿam and she bore him a son. He took her to visit her people. When he returned Anas followed him and killed him. Ibn Qutayba said: Sulayk raped a woman of Ḫaṯʿam while her tribesmen were absent. Anas killed him and was demanded [to pay the bloodwit] for killing him. He said: "I had every right killing him, why should I pay for it?"

62. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 10a.

63. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 10a. Cf. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XX, pp. 386-387; Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-šiʿr wa-l-šuʿarāʾ*, p. 215; Abū ʿUbayda, *Kitāb al-dībāǧ*, pp. 44-45.

64. Literally: "He mounted her" or "took her by surprise".

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Al-Maqrīzī's version leaves it unclear whether or not Anas finally paid the bloodwit (according to another version he did).[65] However, his refusal to pay is justified by the fact that *diya* or *ʿaql* was paid only in cases of unjustified killing. Since al-Sulayk appears to have betrayed the code of *ǧiwār* sacred to the pre-Islamic tribal society by raping (or taking captive) a girl from the tribe that gave him protection, killing him for that was not perceived as wrongful.[66] Once more, we encounter a brigand who led a violent life that ended in a violent death.

Al-Muntašir al-Bāhilī – A Limb for a Limb

Al-Muntašir ibn Wahb al-Bāhilī is also said to have been one of the *ruǧaylāʾ* and the *aġriba*. It is said that he used to raid the Yemenite tribe of Banū al-Ḥāriṯ ibn Kaʿb, and that he killed ʿAmr ibn ʿĀhān. The latter's mourner then composed an elegy in which she lampooned al-Muntašir:

> *wa-aġāra al-Muntašir fa-qatala nāʾiḥa ʿAmr wa-asara Ṣalāʾa ibn ʿAmr al-Ḥāriṯī wa-kāna sayyidan fa-qāla lahu iftakka (!) nafsak fa-abā fa-qāla la-uqaṭṭiʿannaka anmalatan anmalatan wa-ʿuḍwan ʿuḍwan mā lam taftakka (!) nafsak ḥattā qatalahu ṯumma raṣadat Banū al-Ḥāriṯ al-Muntašir ḥattā ḥaǧǧa Ḏā al-Ḫalaṣa fa-dallat ʿalayhi Banū Nufayl al-Ḥāriṯiyyīn fa-aḫaḏūhu fa-qaṭaʿūhu ʿuḍwan ʿuḍwan* […] *wa-kānat Banū al-Ḥāriṯ tusammī al-Muntašir muǧaddiʿan.*
>
> Al-Muntašir then raided [the Banū al-Ḥāriṯ]. He killed ʿAmr's mourner and captured Ṣalāʾa ibn ʿAmr al-Ḥāriṯī, who was a chieftain (*sayyid*). He said to him: "Pay your ransom!" but [Ṣalāʾa] refused. So he said: "I will tear you apart fingertip by fingertip and limb by limb until you pay your ransom!" He then tore apart his organs until he killed him. Banū al-Ḥāriṯ then watched for al-Muntašir till he went on a pilgrimage to [the shrine of] Ḏū al-Ḫalaṣa. The Banū Nufayl [ibn ʿAmr ibn Kilāb] led the Banū al-Ḥāriṯ to him, and they captured him and tore him apart limb from limb. […] The Banū al-Ḥāriṯ used to call al-Muntašir *muǧaddiʿ* (one who amputates).[67]

This gruesome story demonstrates once more the dynamics of a violent life that ends in a violent death, in accordance with ancient tribal codes of mirror-punishment.[68] It is noteworthy that al-Muntašir is captured while performing the pagan pilgrimage to the shrine of Ḏū al-Ḫalaṣa (also known as al-Kaʿba al-Yamaniyya), that is, while participating in what Muslims would consider a heathen ritual.[69]

65. See for example Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmāʾ al-muġtālīn*, p. 237; Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, XX, p. 387. In both these sources, it is explicitly said that al-Sulayk was a *ǧār* of the Ḫaṯʿam.
66. See Lecerf, 1963; Tyan, 1962.
67. Ms Fatih 4340, fols 10b-11a. Cf. Abū ʿUbayda, *Kitab al-dībāǧ*, pp. 35-38; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, II, pp. 750-751; Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Simṭ al-laʾālī*, I, pp. 75-76.
68. The same is of course reflected in the Old Testament "an eye for an eye" (Ex., XXI, 24; Lev., XXIV, 20).
69. See Fahd, 1961.

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Al-Uḥaymir and Yazīd – Repentance and Redemption

We now come to al-Uḥaymir al-Saʿdī and Yazīd ibn al-Saqīl/Siqqīl al-ʿUqaylī, the eighth and tenth brigands (respectively) in al-Maqrīzī's chapter. Al-Maqrīzī's accounts of them are considerably shorter than the lengthy accounts he dedicated to others. This is hardly surprising, as his sources do not have much to say about them. Both of these brigands lived during early Islamic times, and both of them are said to have repented. Regarding the first of the two, al-Uḥaymir, al-Maqrīzī quotes Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī who says that he was a brigand of the tribe of Saʿd. He then quotes one of his brigand poems, and remarks:

ṯumma tāba wa-qāla:
aškū ilā Allāhi ṣabrī ʿan zawāmilihim / wa-mā ulāqī[70] *iḏā marrū min al-ḥazanī*
qul li-luṣūṣi Banī al-Laḫnāʾi yaḥtasibū / bazza al-ʿIrāqi wa-yansaw ṭurfata al-Yamanī
wa-yatrukū al-ḥazza wa-l-dībāǧa yalbasuhū / bīḍu al-mawālī ḍawī al-surrāti wa-l-ʿukanī
fa-rubba ṯawbin karīmin kuntu āḫuḏuhū / min al-qiṭāri bi-lā naqdin wa-lā ṯamanī.[71]

Then he repented and composed the following:
I complain to God of my restraining from [seizing] their loaded camels
And the grief I encounter (*var*. endure) when they pass by.
Tell the brigands, those bastards, to content themselves with
The clothes of Iraq and to forget the rare [gowns] of Yemen,
And to leave the silken brocades to be worn by those
Whose clients are white and whose bellies are fat.
I took many a precious garment
From the caravan without money or payment!

No account of al-Uḥaymir's death is given. As a repentant, he may have died a peaceful death; in the verse that follows immediately after the verse of *Muḥāraba* mentioned earlier, the Qurʾān excludes those who repent before being captured from the punishments allotted to brigands.[72]

The report on the last brigand in the chapter, Yazīd, is even shorter. Before quoting some of his verse, al-Maqrīzī says:

Yazīd ibn al-Ṣaqīl […] *al-Qaysī al-ʿUqaylī kāna yasriqu al-ibil ṯumma tāba wa-qutila fī sabīl Allāh.*[73]

Yazīd ibn al-Ṣaqīl… al-Qaysī al-ʿUqaylī… he used to steal camels, but then he repented and was killed in the cause of God.

Thus the chapter ends, with a reformed brigand who died a *šahīd*.

70. Var.: *uqāsī*.
71. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 13a; Cf. Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī, *Kitāb al-amālī*, I, p. 49.
72. See Qurʾān, V, 34.
73. Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 15a; cf. al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, I, pp. 59-60; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, s.v. *bʿr*.

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ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward and the *ǧāhilī* Brigand-Paradigm

It is noteworthy and surprising that one of the most famous figures of the pre-Islamic *ṣaʿālīk*, ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward, is entirely absent from al-Maqrīzī's text. I would like to offer an explanation for this conspicuous absence. ʿUrwa, a near contemporary of other pre-Islamic brigands mentioned in the chapter, is one of the best-known *ṣaʿālīk* poets; indeed, he is sometimes nicknamed ʿUrwa of the *ṣaʿālīk* (*ʿUrwat al-ṣaʿālīk*). The origin of this nickname is explained in *Kitāb al-aġānī*:

> He was nicknamed ʿUrwa of the *ṣaʿālīk* because he used to gather them and take care of them when they were unsuccessful in their raids and had neither livelihood nor a place to plunder.[74]

The *Aġānī* further reports that during years of drought, ʿUrwa would gather the poorest of his tribe and provide for them, while taking those who were strong enough on raids and giving them their share of the booty; he was therefore nicknamed ʿUrwa of the *ṣaʿālīk*.[75] The term *ṣuʿlūk*, it should be noted, originally denoted "poor, destitute" and was not necessarily associated with unlawful behavior. This is in accordance with its usage here.[76] ʿUrwa is nicknamed "ʿUrwa of the poor" (or "ʿUrwa of the brigands") not because he was a petty brigand, but because he was a noble tribal leader who took care of the poor and needy, leading his men on raids for the benefit of the poor among them, not for his own personal gain.[77]

Two Umayyad caliphs are quoted in the *Aġānī* expressing their high esteem for ʿUrwa. Muʿāwiya II (64/684) is quoted as saying: "If ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward had progeny, I would have liked to ally myself with them in marriage";[78] and ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86/685-705) says: "Among the Arabs from whom I am not descended, the only one whom I would be happy to have as an ancestor is ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward"; and also: "He who claims that Ḥātim (al-Ṭāʾī) was the most generous of men does injustice to ʿUrwa ibn al-Ward".[79]

Thus, the image of ʿUrwa seems to stand in stark opposition to images of other pre-Islamic brigands dealt with in al-Maqrīzī's chapter: his behavior is neither sinful nor vile, but rather noble and honorable, one that deserves the praise of rulers. Indeed, he seems to embody the *ǧāhilī* ideal of virility and generosity known as *murūʾa*.[80]

74. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, III, p. 73.
75. See Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, III, pp. 78-79.
76. The term is mentioned in al-Maqrīzī's text only three times: once with regard to ʿĀmir ibn al-Aḫnas, *sayyid al-ṣaʿālīk*; and twice in a poem attributed to ʿAmr ibn Barrāqa (Ms Fatih 4340, fol. 12a). Arazi, 1997, notes that during the Umayyad period the term *ṣuʿlūk* was gradually replaced with the term *liṣṣ*.
77. In this his figure resembles those of the noble bandits dealt with by Eric Hobsbawm, 1972 (see especially pp. 41-57). It should be noted, however, that Hobsbawm limits his discussion of social bandits to their role in rural agrarian societies, considering that "[t]ribal or kinship societies are familiar with raiding, but lack the internal stratification which creates the bandit as a figure of social protest and rebellion" (p. 18).
78. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, III, p. 73.
79. Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, III, pp. 73-74.
80. On which see Goldziher, 1967-1971b.

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By excluding ʿUrwa from the chapter—whether intentionally or not—al-Maqrīzī retains the structural integrity of the *ǧāhilī* brigand-paradigm, according to which the main qualities of such brigands are cruelty and sinfulness; ʿUrwa has no place here.

Conclusion

Drawing on a wealth of anecdotes scattered in disparate older sources, many of the stories that al-Maqrīzī gathered in this chapter from the *Ḫabar* seem to be emblematic of the "literarization" of Mamluk historiography, or its "mixture of salvationist, cultural, and world history as entertainment", as noted before. However, the novelty of the synthesis in which al-Maqrīzī handles these materials makes it more than an anecdotal compilation of brigand stories meant for amusement, as it clearly shows editorial discretion on al-Maqrīzī's part. The moralistic line of thought behind his arrangement of materials is evident: while the chapter begins with *ǧāhilī* brigands portrayed as semi-diabolical figures, who hold values antithetical to Islamic virtues and die a variety of violent deaths, it ends with reformed brigands, the last of whom dies as a Muslim martyr, no less. The chapter thus embodies a central theme in Islamic Salvationist history, namely, the moral and spiritual contrast between *ǧāhiliyya* and Islam.

Neither the materials embedded in the chapter nor the contrast between *ǧāhiliyya* and Islam that arises from it are original. The reports cited in the chapter are not al-Maqrīzī's own literary creation, and he certainly was not the first to introduce into Islamic historiography the contrast between the *ǧāhiliyya* and Islam (he was not a *mubdiʿ*).[81] The novelty of his rendering rather lies in his choice of materials and in his subtle and astute editorial adjustments of the older materials he had at hand. As I have shown, al-Maqrīzī accentuated known and available themes in order to achieve the effect of demonstrating the contrast between the *ǧāhiliyya* and Islam.

The reason behind al-Maqrīzī's choice of brigand stories remains unclear, however. Why was he fascinated with brigands to the extent that he would dedicate a whole chapter to them, with no precedent in Arabic historiography? I would like to offer two lines of explanation in accordance with al-Maqrīzī's socio-cultural setting.

Firstly, among the major threats to the integrity of the Mamluk regime during al-Maqrīzī's times were rebellions of Bedouin tribes, which were often accompanied by acts of plunder and brigandage.[82] Al-Maqrīzī recorded some of these rebellions and raids in his other works, and commented on the destruction wrought by Bedouin tribes upon the land. Thus, in his *al-Bayān wa-l-iʿrāb ʿammā bi-arḍ Miṣr min al-Aʿrāb*, on the genealogy and history of the Bedouin tribes in Egypt, he mentions the great corruption (*fasād*) of the Ǧuḏām, the loathsomeness of the ʿUḏar (*qawmun lā ḫalāqa lahum wa-lā ḏimāmun*), and the destruction wrought by

81. As noted earlier, during the early Abbasid period the *ǧāhiliyya* was rather perceived a model of an idealized past. Webb, 2014, locates during the 4th/10th century a "shift towards an interpretation of *al-Jāhiliyya* as the 'bad old days' of a pagan and anarchical pre-Islamic Arabia", p. 84.

82. See e.g. Marsot, 2007, p. 40; Rapoport, 2004; Martel-Thoumian, 2012, passim.

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other tribes.[83] In his *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* there are numerous records of Bedouin rebellions, plunders, and acts of brigandry. Al-Maqrīzī's description of the reign of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (784-791/1382-1389 and 792-801/1390-1399) is especially negative, and among other charges made against Barqūq, al-Maqrīzī accuses him of overturning the social order by advancing men of lower classes to power, debasing the old elites (and the scholars among them), and antagonizing internal and outside sources such as the Bedouin tribes in Egypt and Syria, which caused them to rebel and bring whole parts of the land to ruin.[84] As noted by S. Massoud, al-Maqrīzī "felt that he was witnessing the end of an era and the dawn of another fraught with a breakdown in the traditional order, social turmoil, danger at the borders, an increasingly predatory regime, etc."[85]

Al-Maqrīzī's records for the years following the reign of Barqūq also abound with mentions of Bedouin rebellions, attacks, and brigandage. A short example would suffice; according to al-Maqrīzī, during Ǧumādā I 818/July 1415:

> The damage of the brigands (*quṭṭāʿ al-ṭarīq*) in all of Egypt, north and south, became severe, because the Bedouins rebelled (*li-ḫurūǧ al-ʿurbān ʿan al-ṭāʿa*) and attacked travellers on land and on sea. Many people were killed.[86]

As A. Broadbridge notes, al-Maqrīzī, who was a student and an admirer of Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 808/1406), appears to have been influenced, at least in part, by his famous teacher's cyclical theory of history and "its assumptions about… the connections among strong royal authority, justice, and an ordered society, with the consequent assumption that weak royal authority led to the spread of injustice and societal disorder".[87] She further remarks that al-Maqrīzī and his student Ibn Taġrībirdī (d. 874/1470) "appear to have felt that they were living in a period of societal decline", and that "al-Maqrīzī… argued powerfully that his own day and time suffered from societal, administrative, and financial dysfunction and disarray".[88]

83. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Bayān wa-l-iʿrāb*, pp. 20-21, 60, 70.
84. See Massoud, 2003.
85. Massoud, 2003, p. 120; cf. Broadbridge, 2003, pp. 233-234.
86. See al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, IV, p. 319. For other reports on Bedouin rebellions, brigandry, etc., see e.g. IV, pp. 44 (a Bedouin siege on Damanhūr in Ḍū al-Qaʿda 809/April 1407), 316 (a rebellion of the Aḥāmida in the Ṣaʿīd in Rabīʿ II 816/July 1413), 320 (Ǧumādā II 818/August 1415: *wa-l-nās min kaṯrat fasād al-ʿurbān bi-nawāḥī Miṣr fī ǧahd*), 330 (year 818/1415-1416: *wa-šamilat maḍarrat al-ʿurbān ʿāmmat al-nās*), 386 (Ṣafar 820/March-April 1417: *wa-fī hāḏā al-šahr kaṯura fasād al-ʿurbān bi-bilād al-Ǧīza wa-kūrat al-Bahnasā*), 387 (Rabīʿ II 820/May-June 1417: *sāra al-amīr… li-yatbaʿa al-ʿurbān fī al-barriyya fa-innahu kaṯura ʿabaṯuhum wa-fasāduhum*), 394 (year 820/1417: *fa-fī arḍ Miṣr min ʿabaṯ al-ʿurbān wa-nahbihim wa-taḫrībihim wa-qaṭʿihim al-ṭuruqāt ʿalā al-musāfirīn min al-tuǧǧār wa-ġayrihim šayʾ ʿaẓīm qubḥuhu šanīʿ waṣfuhu*), 601 (year 825/1422: *wa-bilād al-Ṣaʿīd qad ʿāṯa bihā al-ʿurbān wa-kaṯura fasāduhum*), 678 (year 828/1424-1425: *wa-l-ṭuruqāt bi-Miṣr wa-l-Šaʾm maḫūfa min kaṯrat ʿabaṯ al-ʿurbān*), 908 (Year 837/1433-1434—a rebellion of the Buḥayra Bedouins).
87. See Broadbridge, 2003, p. 232.
88. Broadbridge, 2003, pp. 233-234.

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Against this background, it is plausible that al-Maqrīzī saw his time, with its breakdown of power, moral decay, and lack of personal security, as a return to what he perceived as the anarchic and heathen *ǧāhiliyya*. His *ǧāhilī* brigands thus stand not only as a dim reminder of the pre-Islamic past, but as a shadow still lurking, still threatening the peace of the land and the souls of its people. As such, al-Maqrīzī's "Chapter on the Brigands Among the Arabs" can be read as an admonitory reminder of the dire situation at hand.

Secondly, as was earlier suggested, the absorption of *Ayyām al-ʿArab* (and subsequently also brigand) narratives in Arabic historiography from the 7th/13th century onward may have resulted, among other factors, from the increased popularity of folk epics. Konrad Hirschler argues that this tendency was perceived by contemporary scholars as a threat to their authority. He further notes that the *Sīrat Ḥamza* was perceived by scholars as "particularly problematic" because "it undermined, among others, the *jāhilīya* paradigm that saw pre-Muḥammadan Mecca as the pagan and disdained 'Other' in contrast to the alternative monotheistic order brought by the Prophet".[89] As I have shown, the same "*ǧāhiliyya* paradigm" underlies the arrangement of al-Maqrīzī's chapter on the brigands.

However, as noted by Hirschler, medieval scholars directed their attacks mainly against two other epics—the *Sīrat ʿAntar* and the *Sīrat Dalhama*.[90] It is noteworthy that the pre-Islamic poet ʿAntara Ibn Šaddād, on whom the figure of the folk-epic ʿAntar is based, was one of the *Aġribat al-ʿArab*, like some of the brigands mentioned in al-Maqrīzī's chapter, and that ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb and al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulaka, who feature in al-Maqrīzī's chapter, also make an appearance in *Sīrat ʿAntar*.[91] Their portrayal in the popular epic, it should be noted, is quite different than that given in the old *aḫbār* material utilized by al-Maqrīzī in composing his text; aside from their names, there is little that connects their figures in the *Sīrat ʿAntar* to the reports about them in early Arabic literature.[92]

By going back to these early *aḫbār*, which are the supposed source of the popular *Sīra*, and collecting them from the various belletristic sources in which they are scattered, al-Maqrīzī both re-appropriates materials that have fallen into the hands of folk-epic narrators, and rectifies the false and harmful portrayal of the *ǧāhiliyya* in these folk-epics, thus defending his authoritative scholarly status. Al-Maqrīzī employs here a 'hidden polemic', to use a term coined by Bakhtin,

89. Hirschler, 2012, p. 181. Incidentally, the eponymous hero of the *Sīrat Ḥamza* is none other than Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib mentioned earlier, the Prophet's uncle.

90. Hirschler, 2012, p. 181.

91. See Lyons, 1995, vol. 2, pp. 18-44; vol. 3, pp. 17-76; Heath, 1996, pp. 168-231.

92. Al-Sulayk appears in the epic as a black brigand, "known as 'the ghoul of the desert', a wanderer without a homeland, and a womanizer who is too proud to consort with slave-girls but who rapes Arab ladies". See Lyons, 1995, vol. 3, p. 42 (§ 42); cf. Heath, 1996, p. 194; ʿAmr Ḏū al-Kalb appears as a warrior who had forced the Arabs to pay tribute to his dog. He becomes ʿAntar's close companion, and ʿAntar marries his sister, Hayfāʾ, who bears him a daughter named ʿUnaytira. See Lyons, 1995, vol. 3, pp. 72-76; Heath, 1996, pp. 225-228, 253, 272. Both al-Sulayk and ʿAntar/ʿAntara were, of course, among the most famous of the *Aġribat al-ʿArab*, and it is worthwhile mentioning in this context that their names appear in conjunction several times in *Kitāb al-aġānī*, among other sources. See Abū al-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aġānī*, VIII, pp. 240, 246; XV, pp. 214-215; and cf. the sources quoted regarding the *Aġriba* in the section on Taʾabbaṭa Šarran.

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directed against the popular epic. According to Bakhtin, in a hidden polemic "[t]he other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied, but the entire structure of speech would be completely different if there were not this reaction to another person's implied words".[93]

Through these two converging explanations for the composition of the "Chapter on the Brigands Among the Arabs", the text emerges as a scholarly response both to socio-political events of al-Maqrīzī's time, as well as to popular cultural practices that prevailed during the period. Al-Maqrīzī's own voice, though barely audible from behind the thick curtain of quotations that make up his text, is constantly engaged in a double dialogue: with Arabic belletristic and historiographical tradition on the one hand and with popular literature on the other.

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