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**The Historian and the  
City: Al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb  
al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-  
Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār***

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## **The Historian and the City: Al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār***

by Nasser Rabbat

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## The Historian and the City: Al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*

### Abstract

Taqiyy al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442) is one of the most important medieval Islamic historians. Chief among his books is the *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, abbreviated as the *Khiṭaṭ*. Written between 1415 and 1440, it is the most elaborate repository of topographic and historical information on Cairo and Egypt in general and, arguably, the first true urban history written in any language. My book aims to re-present al-Maqrīzī as a historian with an exhaustive and structured historical project that follows the changing fate of Egypt in time through annals, biographical dictionaries, and short treatises. The plan culminated in the *Khiṭaṭ*, with which al-Maqrīzī started his project and which he was continuously redacting until his death. The *Khiṭaṭ* represents the conclusion of the cumulative narratives on the history of Cairo and illustrates in an almost visual way the ravages of immoral and unjust rule, which al-Maqrīzī blamed on the Mamluks of his time, on its architecture and urbanization. This was al-Maqrīzī's critical stance as it were, conceived and presented from within the epistemological framework of a medieval Muslim thinker; in other words, moralizing and inherently teleological, but still redolent with an anguished search for truth.

## Introduction

Sometime in late 1413, the pious Egyptian scholar Taqiyy al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī suffered what would appear to us today as a severe mid-life crisis. He had spent the previous twenty-six years trying to navigate the treacherous waters of clientage in the Mamluk court in pursuit of positions in the administration or the religious establishment. But having endured a series of blows in rapid succession during the previous few years that forced him to reconsider his notions of work, friendship, patronage, and the quest for success, he decided to quit the whole rat race. He retired to his family home in a venerable section of Cairo where he spent the remainder of his life, thirty years in all, studying, writing, and teaching history.<sup>1</sup> The outcome of his labors is an outstanding series of works that aim to capture everything known about the history and geography of Egypt and the lives of its noteworthy citizens from the beginning of Islam until his own time. A parallel writing project that covers about a fourth of his scholarly output was to recover the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad and honor him and his descendants.

Chief among al-Maqrīzī's books is the *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār* [*The Book of Moral Sermons and Lessons derived from the Remembrance of Cities' Traces and Building Remains* abbreviated as the *Khitat*, and meaning more or less "urban settlements"], the largest and most elaborate repository of topographic and historical information on Cairo and, to a lesser extent, other Egyptian cities up to its time.<sup>2</sup> This masterpiece is also the first of al-Maqrīzī's large historical oeuvres (he had written only about 5 short treatises and a few abridgments before)<sup>3</sup>, and it is not even clear whether he completed it as intended before his death or not. He seems to have originally meant it to tell the entire history of Islamic Egypt through the history of the evolution of its capital city, Cairo, and its landmarks. He also seems to have realized the difficulty of including all the historical data he collected in one book primarily focused on topography, urbanization, and architecture. He thus embarked on a more ambitious project that netted a number of historical and biographical works all dealing with Egypt. He wrote three comprehensive annals arranged in chronological order: the first, *'Iqd Jawāhir al-Asfāt fī Tārīkh Madinat al-Fuṣṭāṭ*, on the early Islamic period up to the tenth century (lost today), the second, *Itti'az al-Hunafā' bi-Akhhbār al-A'imma al-Faṭimiyyīn al-Khulafā'*, on the Fatimid period (tenth to twelfth century), and the third, *al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, on the Ayyubids and the Mamluks up to his own time (1171- ca. 1440).<sup>4</sup> He supplemented the annals by concise works on various types of important players in the history of the city, such as the

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief biography of al-Maqrīzī see my, "Who Was al-Maqrizi? A Biographical Sketch," *Mamluk Studies Review* 7, 2 (2003): 1-19; see also al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid, ed. 4 vols. in 5 tomes (London: al-Furqan Foundation, 2002-2004), Introduction, 1: 30-40.

<sup>2</sup> A general introduction is Claude Cahen, "Khitat," *IE*<sup>2</sup>, 5: 22; see also al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, Sayyid edition, Introduction, 1: 8-30.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Maqrizi, *Ighāthat al-Umma bi-kashf al-Ghumma, aw Tārīkh al-Maja'at fī Miṣr*, ed. Badr al-Din al-Siba'i (Homs, Syria: Dar Ibn al-Walid, 1957), 87; Gaston Wiet, "Le traité des famines de Maqrizi," *JESHO*. 5, (1962): 1-90, p. 1. For the probable date of the *Ighāthat*, see Adel Allouche, tr. and ed., *Mamluk Economics: a Study and Translation of al-Maqrizi's Ighathat al-Ummah bi-Kashf al-Ghummah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 4-7. For al-Niza', see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *al-Maqrizi's 'Book of contention and strife concerning the relations between the Banu Umayya and the Banu Hashim'* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1983), Intro. The book was reedited by al-Maqrīzī in Shawwal 841/March-April 1438 as he notes on the autographed manuscript in Leiden (no. 1888).

<sup>4</sup> Frédéric Bauden, "Maqriziana II: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method, Analysis," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12, 1 (2008): 51-118, esp. 71-72.

viziers and the *kuttāb al-sirr* (royal secretaries).<sup>5</sup> He also compiled a major biographical dictionary, *al-Muqaffa al-Kabir*, in which he wanted to group the biographies of all the important people who have lived in or visited Egypt since the Islamic conquest,<sup>6</sup> but appears to have died before its completion, in addition to a more intimate biographical dictionary, *Durar al-'Uqūd al-Farīda*, in which he listed the people he knew during his lifetime, most of whom lived in Cairo.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. Composition of the *Khiṭaṭ*

Despite its topographical focus, the *Khiṭaṭ* has lofty pedagogical or, more precisely, exhortative goals, albeit ones that are articulated through the moral prism of a strict medieval Muslim scholar. The book is highly opinionated and melancholy in its coverage, morally critical in its tone, and inherently teleological in its conclusions, which are dispersed throughout the text. Its style is literary and legalistic, reflecting the educational and professional background of its author, although it is clear that al-Maqrīzī is trying to keep his prose as direct and matter-of-fact as possible avoiding intricate language and limiting both the use of poetry and Qur'anic quotations, the two mainstays of medieval scholarly prowess and affectation.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī states in the introduction that he divided his book into seven sections:

- I. A geographical survey of Egypt.
- II. Description of its people and many of its cities.
- III. History of al-Fustat and its rulers.
- IV. Chronicle of Cairo and its Fatimid caliphs, and the monuments they have left.
- V. What he personally saw of Cairo and its suburbs.
- VI. History of the Citadel of the Mountain (the Cairo Citadel) with a rundown of its kings.
- VII. Analysis of the reasons for the decline of Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Although al-Maqrīzī planned two books on viziers and kuttabs, it is not clear that he ever completed them. The first *Talqīh al-'Uqūl wa al-Ārā' fī Tanqīh Akhbār al-Jullat al-Wuzarā'*, is mentioned in his *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, (hereafter *Khiṭaṭ*) Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid, ed. 4 vols. in 5 tomes (London: al-Furqan Foundation, 2002-2004), 2:452, but is nowhere listed in his publications inventories. The second, *al-Tā'rīf fī man Wuliyya Wazīfat al-Inshā' wa Kitābat al-Sijillāt fī Miṣr*, is mentioned on the margin of the manuscript of 'Alī ibn Sa'id al-Maghribī, *al-Mugharrib fī-Hilly al-Maghrib, al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī-Hilly Hadrat al-Qāhira*, ed. H. Nassar, Cairo: 1970), 249, see Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid, *al-Muntaqa min Akhbār Miṣr li Ibn Muyassar* (Cairo, IFAO, 1981), n., where Sayyid identifies al-Maqrīzī's sources for these two works as Ibn Muyassar and Ibn Sa'id.

<sup>6</sup> See al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Muhammad Ya'lawī, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1991); Jan Just Witkam, 'Reflections on al-Maqrīzī's Biographical Dictionary', in Obada Kohela ed., *History and Islamic Civilisation. Essays in honour of Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Misriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 2014), 93-114.

<sup>7</sup> The book was strangely published three times in the span of ten years. The first two editions depended on the incomplete autograph manuscript preserved in the library of Ghota (Ar. 270), which contains 330 biographical entries. Then the reluctant owner of the unique complete manuscript of the *Durar*, Mahmoud al-Jalili, published his valuable manuscript in 2002 in 4 volumes complete with profuse notations. As to the dates of composition, al-Maqrīzī states in his introduction that he began the book when he reached fifty years of age, which in Hegire would be around 816/1413 (an important date in his life), and in the biography of Abu al-Hasan b. al-Ṣayrafi al-Dimashqi, he writes down the date of his death in Damascus as Monday (sic.) 11 of Ramadan 844/February 3, 1441 less than a year before his own death on 16 Ramadan 845/January, 28, 1442.

<sup>8</sup> For a more elaborate analysis of the book see my, "Al-Madina, al-Tarikh, wal-Sulta: al-Maqrīzī wa Kitabuhu al-Ra'id 'al-Mawa'iz wa al-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khitat wa al-Athar, (The City, History, and Power: al-Maqrīzī and his Pioneering Book 'al-Mawa'iz wa al-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khitat wa al-Athar)" *Annales Islamologiques* 35 (2001): 77-100; Sabri Jarrar, "Al-Maqrīzī's Reinvention of Egyptian Historiography," in *The Cairo Heritage: Essays in Honor of Laila Ali Ibrahim*, 30-53.

Al-Maqrīzī explains that his book follows neither a chronological nor an alphabetical order, as was the norm, because it is neither a chronicle nor a biographical dictionary. He specifies that he instead arranged his material according to site, and allowed himself some repetition so that each section can be read independently with no need for excessive cross-referencing. On the whole, al-Maqrīzī kept this arrangement in his book, although the last three sections dealing with his own time seem to have grown beyond his original plan, and were clearly left unfinished and not fully structured by the time of his death.<sup>9</sup>

The book opens with a brief topographic survey of Egypt, followed by a summary of its pre-Islamic history mostly culled from the sources available in Arabic, which had subsumed many folkloric accounts transmitted by Jewish, Coptic, and Classical sources.

The urban history section begins with a succinct review of the major Egyptian cities. Only two receive more than a cursory treatment: Alexandria, the Classical capital of the country for a millennium, and al-Fayyum, which was traditionally associated with the Patriarch Joseph. Al-Maqrīzī then quickly moves to the site of the Islamic capital and reviews its ancient history, then examines the first appearance of an Islamic city, al-Fustat, on the site of the ancient Roman fort of Babylon and its growth and ruin. Next, he analyzes the founding of Cairo as the center of the self-consciously religious Fatimid caliphate in the 970s and spends a sizeable segment of the book describing the many spectacular structures and the order and decorum the Fatimids established in and in Egypt in general. Moreover, al-Maqrīzī provides a broad account of the Fatimid mission (*da'wa*) and its hierarchical structure while maintaining a balanced approach that neither condones nor condemns it, in complete contrast to his contemporaries who were by and large openly hostile to the Isma'ili Fatimids. In this section, al-Maqrīzī spends a great deal of care verifying and collating his sources, many of which are known to us solely through his meticulous citations.<sup>10</sup>

The second half of the book deals with Cairo in the Ayyubid and Mamluk period. Following a clear typological structure, Cairo's quarters, streets, squares, famous mansions, hammāms, khāns, apartment buildings (*rab's*), markets, urban zones (*ḥukrs*), bridges, ponds, hippodromes, citadels, mosques, madrasas, hospitals, khanqahs, shrines, and zawiyas, cemeteries and mausolea, and synagogues and churches are arranged in this order, and are each recorded, dated, and its location described. The lists are neither exhaustive nor complete, especially for the buildings erected during the last twenty years of al-Maqrīzī's life, which suggests that he was not done with the book's preparation when he died.<sup>11</sup>

Section six of the book's original structure, the history of the Citadel of the Mountain, bisects the architectural inventory. It consists of an extensive but derivative architectural history of the citadel up to the fifteenth century, followed by succinct exposés on the origin and evolution of the highest positions in the Mamluk army and administration, and descriptions of the major royal ceremonies held in and around the citadel. Woven into the typological narrative are short biographies of the Ayyubid and Mamluk sultans and shorter biographical notices of other patrons of the city's monuments, which are usually attached to the descriptions of the buildings they

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad 'Abdallah 'Inan, *Misr al-Islamiyya wa-Tarikh al-Khitat al-Misriyya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1969), 37-49; al-Maqrizi, *Musawwadat Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*, ed. Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid (London: al-Furqan Foundation, 1995), Introduction, 6-22; Sayyid published a French summary of his introduction as, "Remarques sur la composition des Hitat de Maqrizi d'après un manuscrits autographe," in *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron, 1927-1976, II: Égypte post-pharaonique* (Cairo, IFAO, 1979), 231-58.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, Introduction, 2: 19-49.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, Introduction, 3: 70-81, and Introduction, 4: 106-18.

sponsored. In addition, the text is speckled with copious entries on Cairo's wonders and religious merits and the ceremonies observed by its religious groups. Further digressions add to the impression of a work-in-progress that was still in need of extensive editing when its author stopped working on it, most probably because of his prolonged final illness.<sup>12</sup>

The book as it stands is a cumulative work, both in its scope and its depth of treatment of the various topics it comprises. The different strata in the text that reached us reflect not only al-Maqrīzī's evolving methods and views on history, but also his changing mood and circumstances, which were getting gloomier by the year, and the growth and diversification of his data on Egypt during the book's long period of gestation and composition. The book's main motifs, however, seem to have been set from the beginning and maintained, if not reinforced, with every redaction. Three themes that can be gleaned in the first draft: homage to the Fatimids and their patronage in building Cairo, nostalgia for the bygone days of the city at its apogee (presumed to be the period of al-Nasir Muhammad in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), and occasional prediction of perdition under the Burji or Circassian Mamluks anticipate the full-blown memorial and elegiac character of the last draft that we have.<sup>13</sup> They in fact seem to have been among the most important motivations behind the writing of the book in the first place, which would have been further inscribed had he had the time to complete the section on *kharab* (decline and ruin) that he promised in the introduction.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Scope of the *Khiṭaṭ*

Although the abbreviated title of al-Maqrīzī's book, the *Khiṭaṭ*, has almost always been taken as a straightforward description of its content, an analysis of the full title, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-l-Itibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār*, reveals the real scope of the book which goes beyond the historical-typographic survey to subordinate that survey to higher moral and memorial aims. The title clause delves straight into the reasons behind the writing of the book, and perhaps the reasons behind history writing itself from the perspective of the pious al-Maqrīzī, which in a way represent the contemporary conception of the function and virtue of history writing.<sup>15</sup> More than a hundred years ago, Émile Galtier raised the same issue in an article that analyzed the meaning of every term in the book's title and concluded that its best translation into French would be "*Livre des enseignements et des leçons utiles que nous pouvons retirer de la description des quartiers successivement bâtis et des vestiges subsistants du passé.*"<sup>16</sup> Around the same time,

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<sup>12</sup> Al-Maqrizi, *Khiṭat*, Introduction, 5: 15-18

<sup>13</sup> Examples in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2: 122-46, 2: 241-43, 2: 432-36, 2: 476-77, 2: 606-12; 3: 356-68, 4: 1087-88.

<sup>14</sup> See my, "Maqrizi's *Khiṭat*: An Egyptian *Lieu de Mémoire*" in *The Cairo Heritage. Papers in Honor of Layla Ali Ibrahim*, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ed. (Cairo, AUC Press, 2001), 17-30.

<sup>15</sup> One of the major functions of the literary title is "focusing." "What a focusing title does is select from among the main elements of core content one theme to stand as the leading one of the work. What a focusing title does then is suggest which of the contending themes should be given center place in interpreting the work and organizing one's appreciation of it." Jerrold Levinson, "Titles," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44 (1985): 35; Gerard Genette, "Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988): 708, distinguishes three major functions of the title: designation, indication of the content, and seduction of the public; John Fisher, "Entitling," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 288, 289, says that titles "are names for a purpose, but not merely for the purpose of identification and designation, in spite of the important practical role which indexical names play in the designative process. The unique purpose of titling is hermeneutical: titles are names which function as guides to interpretation."

<sup>16</sup> Émile Galtier, "Maqrizi a-t-il écrit une 'Description historique et topographique de l'Égypte et du Caire?'" *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 5 (1906): 156-64 [reprint in Fuat Sezgin et al., *Studies on Taqiyyaddin al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) : collected and reprinted (Dirasat hawla Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi)* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute

Paul Casanova tried his hands at a translation of the *Khiṭaṭ*, which never went beyond the Fatimid part of the original, and suggested as a title, “*Livre des admonitions et de l’observation pour l’histoire des quartiers et des monuments, ou description historique et topographique de l’Égypte.*”<sup>17</sup> Both suggestions, the rhymeless and clearly steeped in late nineteenth-century positivism title of Galtier’s translation and the direct and literal one of Casanova’s, underscore the importance of capturing the meaning of every term in the title before attempting to understand its full implication.

The use of the two terms, *al-mawā’iz* (moral sermons, exhortatory talks) and *al-i’tibār* (deducing moral lessons), in Islamic historical writing has a long and venerated history. To begin with, its origin is Qur’anic. Throughout the sacred text, numerous historical examples (*qiṣaṣ*, sg. *Qiṣṣa*, story or tale) of the nations of yore are cited to the believers as model lessons (*‘ibar*) that should either be emulated because of their inherent moral value in order to win God’s favor or avoided because of their wickedness in order to prevent God’s punishment.<sup>18</sup> The *qiṣaṣ* include the long and torturous history of the Bani Isra’il (the Israelites) path to monotheism, and other Biblical and para-Biblical examples of wicked nations such as ‘Ad and Thamud (most probably Gog and Magog) and some non-Biblical examples such as Bani Salih who were all punished for their denial of divine messages and persecution of divine messengers by annihilation.<sup>19</sup> These examples furnished the foundation of the Islamic notion of history itself, and more precisely the sacred history of the relationship between God and humanity up to the final Muhammadan revelation.

Following this venerated Qur’anic treatment of history, Muslim historians used the two terms or their derivations, especially *al-i’tibār* which is the verbal noun of *‘ibar*, in the titles of their books to express the same notion. One of the earliest examples we have is *Kitāb al-I’tibār*, the famous autobiographical book of Usama ibn Munqidh (1095-1188), the Syrian prince from Shayzar in Syria. Usama justifies his work by saying that he felt his life was worth reporting not because his own deeds were exceptional —although indeed they were in that crucial period of Islamic history— but because lessons could be learned from the events he witnessed and recorded, thus the choice of the term *al-i’tibar*. He stresses this point further by stating that at the end of an exceptionally long and adventurous life, he realized that nothing could advance or delay death, the only unpredictable and unavoidable truth. He thus philosophically offers the story of his life as an illustration and confirmation of that overarching conviction.<sup>20</sup>

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for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1992), 138-47. *Livre des admonitions et de l’observation pour l’histoire des quartiers et des monuments, ou Description historique et topographique de l’Égypte*, Makrizi ; traduit par Paul Casanova. Translation of v. 1, p. 1-397 of the Bulaq ed. of 1270. No more published.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Makrizi, *Kitab al-Mawa’idh wa’li’tibar bidhikr al-Khitat wa’lAthar*, *Livre des admonitions et de l’observation pour l’histoire des quartiers et des monuments, ou description historique et topographique de l’Égypte*, Paul Casanova, ed., vols. 3-4, Mémoires de l’institut francais d’archeologie orientale du Caire (MIFAO), (Cairo: IFAO, 1906).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Surat Yusuf: 111. Also Ayman Fu’ad Sayyid, "Manahij al-Naqd al-Tarikhi ‘ind al-Mu’rrikhin al-Muslimin," *Annales Islamologiques* 32(1998): 1-40, esp. 26-27; but especially the collection of traditions on *‘ibar* in Jamal al-Din Abi Ja’far al-Idrisi, *Anwar ‘Uluwwy al-Ajram fi al-Kashf ‘an Asrar al-Ahram*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Beirut, commissioned from Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1991), 5-11.

<sup>19</sup> Examples and explanation in Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Usama ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I’tibar*. Philip Hitti, ed. (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1930), 160-62; André Miquel, *Ousama, un prince syrien face au croisés*, (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 7-11.

### 3. Al-Maqrīzī's Notion of History

But the full significance of the two terms, *al-mawā'iz* and *al-i'tibār* in al-Maqrīzī's title, cannot be grasped until we understand how they resonate with al-Maqrīzī's comprehension of the import of history (*tarikḥ*) itself. To him, and to practically all medieval Muslim scholars, history writing is not simply to report and present events for the pure purpose of knowing them, or the more modern one of interpreting them; it is also a reportage with moral, religious, and in an indirect way, social intentions.<sup>21</sup> In fact, history is, in al-Maqrīzī's words but also in those of many of his contemporaries, first and foremost the reservoir of moral lessons. As such, it belongs to the domain of Islamic knowledge as understood by the ulama of the period, although its origin was acknowledged by all Muslim historians to have been pre-Islamic and its position among other religious sciences required of a true scholar was precarious.<sup>22</sup> Al-Maqrīzī himself is fully aware of this Islamic dimension of the ethical purpose of history writing. He presents it in a summary form in the introductory remarks to his *Khiṭaṭ*, and in a fuller form in the preface of his *Durar al-Uqūd al-Farīda*

Praise be to God who created all human beings and assigned to each of them a finite age, and endowed them with hearing, eyesight and conscience so they may thank Him. He entrusted them with His Earth so that He can judge their doing. He made them so that one generation would come after the other and each group follow in the footsteps of the former. The first ones would thus leave their stories to those after them as exhortations and moral examples (*Mawa'iz wa 'Ibar*), and the later ones would keep alive the memory and spread the fame of their predecessors. As a result, intelligent persons will be deterred from doing things which evoke criticism and which are recognized as evil. The educated will go after the best and finest character qualities. And when the time is over for life on Earth and the Day of Judgment is near, He will gather all humans to Him and revive them in His Presence to punish those who did evil and reward those who did good.<sup>23</sup>

The shorter version of al-Maqrīzī's definition of history in the *Khiṭaṭ* adds the ultimate Islamic exhortatory purpose: "to forewarn the reader of the ephemerality of this world as opposed to the next." But his ultimate aim in stating this admittedly common opinion is less fatalistic and more actively moral for he goes on to list other benefits that rational men (*'uqala'*, sg. *'aqil*) [al-Maqrīzī most probably means *ulama*, but also other effective individuals in the society especially advisors to rulers] can reap from studying history: "to appreciate the ethical criteria of their predecessors in order to follow them, and to distinguish their vile deeds in order to advise those in power against them."<sup>24</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī's understanding of the historian's function, however, did not stop at the operative level of his introductory statement. It seems to have developed over time to reach rather supra-historic dimensions, not so different from that of the philosopher or the ethicist, if we were to believe a report by his nemesis al-Sakhāwī. In his *al-'I'lan bi al-Tawbikh li man Zamma*

<sup>21</sup> Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 215-19.

<sup>22</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 2d ed., 1968), 30-54; George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh, 1990), 163-70.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-Uqūd al-Farīda fī Tarājim al-A'yān al-Mufīda*, ed. Mahmud al-Jalili, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), Mahmud al-Jalili, " *Durar al-Uqūd al-Farīda fī Tarājim al-A'yān al-Mufīda li al-Maqrīzī*," *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Iraqī* 13 (1965): 201-14, p. 207, partially translated in Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 317.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭat*, 1: 4.

*al-Tarikh*, al-Sakhawi records a hand-written definition of the historian copied by one of al-Maqrīzī's most devoted companion, Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Fahd (1409-80), who was a close companion of al-Maqrīzī during the latter's *mujāwaras* in Mecca toward the end of his life.<sup>25</sup> In that difficult-to-translate statement, al-Maqrīzī defines the historian, or more correctly the chronicler, as the one who existentially identifies with the time he is chronicling, and assigns to him the role of witness and educator of future generations. He says:

The person who writes the history (of his time) is tallying the days [that is time itself] on the days of his life (*hasaba al-ayyam 'ala 'umrihi*), and the one who writes the events of his time is making later generations witness his own age (*ashhada 'asruhu man lam yakun min ahl 'asrihi*). He is presenting the virtuous of the future additional lives to live and is opening to their eyes and ears places that had not been available to them. [poetry citation] I could not see the houses with my own eyes, maybe I will see them with my ears.<sup>26</sup>

Based on this gradually evolving series of definitions of history writing, the use of the two terms *mawā'iz* and *i'tibar* in al-Maqrīzī's title aims to elevate the book's inquiry from the realm of the descriptive and reconstructive alone to that of the socially and ethically instructive and exhortative, and, at times, and given al-Maqrīzī's background and disposition, the religiously reprimanding and chastising as the limit of criticism as understood by a medieval ulama frame of mind. In other words, rhyme is not the main reason of the coupling of the two pairs of terms, *mawā'iz* and *i'tibār*, and *khiṭaṭ* and *āthār* in al-Maqrīzī's title. The aim is to link the purpose of the inquiry, which is ethical and moralistic, with the tools and physical embodiments of that inquiry, that is the urban and architectural evidence of *khiṭaṭ* and *āthār*.

There is nothing new in attempting to deduce moral lessons from historical inquiry. All medieval Muslim historians, who had theological training as the basis of their education, come across as moralist in their historical treatises. In fact, modern disregard of medieval Islamic historical theorizing is almost totally predicated on the perception of an inherent teleological, divinely ordained trajectory to every medieval Islamic historical narrative. Even the great Ibn Khaldun, al-Maqrīzī's teacher, is accused of an underlying fatalism in his conception of history in his *Muqadima*, and of strong, rigid determinism in his theory of historical cycles.<sup>27</sup> What is new in the scope and content of al-Maqrīzī's book is the juxtaposition of the pedagogical and moral aim with the topographical and urban description. This is in fact one of the main aspects that distinguishes al-Maqrīzī from both historians and *khiṭaṭ* authors of his tradition.<sup>28</sup> Other historians

<sup>25</sup> For the biography of Ibn Fahd, see al-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 6:126-31. Ibn Fahd has an autograph on the cover of al-Maqrīzī's oldest surviving manuscript of *Sulūk* dated 846/1442, a year after al-Maqrīzī's death. The editor of *Sulūk*, Muhammad Mustafa Ziyada, noted that Ibn Fahd, according to al-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 6:128, was living in Mekka between 838/1435 and Jamada al-Akhar 850/ Sept. 1446, which suggests that al-Maqrīzī's book made it to Mekka after his death, see al-Maqrīzī, *Suluk*, 1, 1: 3. Ibn Fahd, Najm al-Dīn Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Hashimi al-Makki, *Mu'jam al-Shuyūkh*, Muḥammad al-Zahī ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāmah, 1982), 64, does not indicate whether he read the *Suluk* in Mecca or Cairo but reveals a very close relationship with al-Maqrīzī.

<sup>26</sup> My translation; original quoted in al-Sakhāwī, *al-'Iḥṣān bi al-Tawbīkh li man Zamma al-Tarikh*, ed. al-Qudsi, (Damascus: al-Maqrīzī Publisher, 1931), 35; translated differently in Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 316-17, who reads the first part as indicating the historian of the past, whereas I see it as speaking of the chronicler of his own time. Rosenthal identifies the poet cited as al-Sharīf al-Rādī (d. 1015), perhaps one of the most reflexive and philosophical medieval Arab poets.

<sup>27</sup> Hayden White, "Ibn Khaldun in World Philosophy of History (Review Article)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1959-60): 110-25.

<sup>28</sup> Sylvie Denoix, *Decrire le Caire Fustat-Misr d'apres Ibn Duqmaq et Maqrizi* (Cairo: IFAO, 1992), 15-16, sees in the invocation of the Divine benediction of Egypt an attempt on al-Maqrīzī's part to legitimize his writing of a history

sought their moral lessons in the actions of kings and holy men; al-Maqrīzī is locating his in the marks of these actions on the face of the city, on its *Khiṭaṭ* and *athar*. Other *Khiṭaṭ* authors stop at the level of Galtier's utilitarian definition. Their books were composed to preserve the actual memory of quarters and buildings. They did not use the inscription of memory to advance a larger design, i. e. the deduction of moral lessons, which was a critical program on the part of al-Maqrīzī, conceived and presented from within the epistemological framework of a medieval Muslim thinker, in other word, a pre-humanist framework.

The two terms *khiṭaṭ* and *āthār* have their period-specific meanings as well, although both of them retained more or less several technical and physical denotations from earlier times, and both appear to have acquired some connotative significance by the time al-Maqrīzī was writing. *Khiṭaṭ* especially is a word that has faded out of modern-day Arabic, probably because the legal and urban means by which settlements were established in classical and medieval Islamic history has changed so much as to not allow the word to easily migrate with the new changes. A *Khiṭa* is a piece of land acquired by a person or a group for the purpose of developing it for their dwelling. As such, the *khiṭa* preserves the memory of its inhabitants, which in the case of Cairo meant that the names of tribes or individuals who had their own *khiṭaṭ* at foundation time were preserved long after those tribes or individuals were gone.<sup>29</sup> A *khitta*, thus, is the physical reminder of an act of building and the legal proof of a territorial claim of certain people, which is preserved in the act of naming itself. After the expiration of the legal claims by the disappearance of the claimants, the name of the *khitta* becomes a historical document, an index of a presence in the city at a certain point in its history. The accumulation of these documents and the reconstruction of their peregrinations through time in order to reconstruct the history of the city and the people who built and inhabit it is what al-Maqrīzī is trying to achieve in his book.

From this perspective, the term *athar* is both complimentary to *khiṭaṭ* and different from it. The basic meaning of *āthār* is trace, vestige, or effect. In architecture, an *āthār* is the remains of a building. It connotes erasure and incompleteness and requires a process of remembrance or mental reconstruction on the part of the historian wishing to use it in an historical inquiry. The word is also often invoked in Arabic poetry to describe the physical traces of the departed, be it the buildings of the ancients or just the disused scraps of the tribe of the beloved. Both constituted favorite topoi, especially in the Classical period: one pensive, reflecting upon the inevitable effects of the passage of time, the other melancholic, lamenting the separation from the beloved.<sup>30</sup> Like all literati of his age, who memorized large corpora of poetry as part of their education, al-Maqrīzī was certainly aware of the emotional charge contained in these two connotations of the term *athar*. He uses it to the same effect not only in the book title, but also twice in his introduction to indicate both the traces of ancient monuments and those not-so-old remains of the Fatimids in al-Qāhira. His statement, whose tone is explicitly and deliberately romantic and elegiac, uses the word *athar* as one of many words —such as *balā'* (erosion), *fanā'* (annihilation)— that engender that feeling. It reads, "I wanted to gather the reports on what is

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of the country. I think that it could be better understood as an adherence to the convention that governed all writings on cities. Al-Maqrīzī's originality, as I am arguing, lies elsewhere.

<sup>29</sup> The term *khitta* is studied in Jean-Claude Garcin, "Toponymie et topographie urbaines médiévales à Fustat et au Caire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 27, (1984): 113-55, esp., 113-17, 132; also Patricia Crone, art. "Khitta," *ET*, 5, 23-24.

<sup>30</sup> The two topoi were related: the pensive developing out of the melancholic as is apparent from the famous poem of al-Buḥturī in which he is inspired by the ruinous state of the Iwan Kisra to reflect on life, death, and vanity as opposed to the usual cliché of missing the beloved. See 'Abd al-Salām A. Fahmi, *Īwān al-Madā'in Bayn al-Buḥturī wa-l-Khāqānī: Dirāsa Adabiyya Muqārana bayn al-Qasidatayn al-'Arabiyya wa-l-Fārisiyya, Siniyyat al-Buḥturī wa Nūniyyat al-Khāqānī* (Jeddah, 1983), 11-18.

left in Egypt of the remains (*al-āthār al-bāqiya*) of past nations and bygone centuries, and what is left in al-Fustat of institutions that are about to be erased by erosion and old age and have but a little time before they are engulfed by annihilation and nothingness, and to mention what is left in the city of al-Qāhira of the remains (*āthār*) of the luminous palaces (i. e., the Fatimid palaces) and what it comprised of *khiṭaṭ* and areas (*asqā'*) and contained of finely designed buildings...<sup>31</sup>

But this is not the only meaning the use of *āthār* in al-Maqrīzī's title signifies. As a correlate of *khiṭaṭ* in the title, *āthār* also means the actual marks of those *Khiṭaṭ*, which are by definition only spatial. Thus, the two words together encompass the urban space in its totality: as a system of apportioning the city's territory among its different groups of inhabitants, both individuals and collective, and the establishing of legal claims over the land and property that can be transmitted over time, as well as the signs of that human occupation, *āthār*, in whichever state of preservation they might be. Coupling *khiṭaṭ* and *āthār* in the title is al-Maqrīzī's way of indicating that he plans to cover both the urban and architectural dimensions of his city in his book, which indeed he does. But his is a historical inquiry, aimed primarily at recovering the architecture of the past, the *āthār*, not of the present, for which he would have used another term, such as *mabānī* or *'imrān*. It is also a didactic inquiry whose purpose is to deploy all sorts of ethical and exhortative lessons from the fate of past dynasties and rulers as they were inscribed on the spaces and forms of the city.

#### 4. The Patriotic Impulse

In his introduction, al-Maqrīzī stresses the principal impulse that led him to write his *Khiṭaṭ*. He was drawn to the topic because of his filial attachment to his country, his city, and even his *ḥāra* (neighborhood), Ḥārat al-Burjuwān, a venerable *ḥāra* in the heart of Fatimid al-Qāhira, which prompted him since his youth to collect all pieces of information on its history he came upon. He says:

Miṣr (in this context meaning both the country and the city) is the place of my birth, the playground of my mates, the nexus of my society and clan, the home to my family and public, the bosom where I acquired my wings, and the niche I seek and yearn to. Ever since I sought knowledge and God gave me intelligence and understanding, I have wanted to know its events (*akhbārahā*), to draw from its wells (of information), and to question travelers on the inhabitants of its countries. So, over many years, I recorded in my own handwriting and collected many accounts that are seldom gathered in a book or held between two covers because of their rarity and their peculiarity.<sup>32</sup>

In this one sentence, al-Maqrīzī packs a series of powerful concepts of belonging that constitute a good portion of any romantic definition of patriotism. To a committed nationalist of any stripe, a homeland is indeed the place of birth, the environment of socialization, the setting of personal experience and growth, and the locus of memories and passions. Deploying his mastery of rhyming prose so favored in medieval literature, al-Maqrīzī still manages to express his love of country in a direct, heartfelt, and moving way. His feelings are so surprising for the time that they could pose a challenge to the conventional thesis maintaining that full-fledged patriotic notions will have to wait for a couple of centuries and a few major revolutions to truly find their expressions in literature. In fact, many modern Egyptian writers have found a suprahistorical intellectual and emotional

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<sup>31</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 1: 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 1: 4.

fellowship with al-Maqrīzī as a "true Egyptian citizen," and a "patriot," essentially because of this remarkable declaration.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout his text, al-Maqrīzī asserts that he has set out to record and describe each and every street and important structure in Cairo before their imminent destruction, which he pessimistically predicts and bitterly blames on the rapaciousness and greed of the Mamluks. In one of his most inspired analytical passages, al-Maqrīzī argues that the underlying cause of the sultanate's and Cairo's decline is the disintegration of the Mamluk training system under the sultans of his own time starting with Faraj ibn Barqūq (r. ???). They allowed the importation of new recruits at a fairly advanced age, after their character had already been formed, and no longer required them to undergo an extensive religious education before their manumission. They thus laid the ground for the emergence of a new class of acculturated, uncouth, and corrupt Mamluks, hungry for power and wealth and flagrantly uninhibited by the acquired respect for Islamic *sharia* that had guided the actions of their more disciplined predecessors. Al-Maqrīzī goes on to satirize the Mamluks of his time as "more lustful than monkeys, more ravenous than rats, and more harmful than wolves," all-extravagant attributes that have left their woeful marks on the well-being and appearance of his beloved city and country.

Al-Maqrīzī's anxiety, melancholy, and moral indignation at the general state of affairs may have contributed to the *Khīṭaṭ*'s elegiac tone and its expansiveness and meticulous attention to little architectural, topographic, and historical details. He was trying to create through his book what Pierre Nora, in a not so different context —albeit a modern and excessively nationalistic one—termed a *lieu de mémoire* ("realm of memory"), where memories can be saved, recorded, and later recalled.<sup>34</sup> Al-Maqrīzī's Cairo, whose sad degradation he was chagrined to witness in his mature years, was under a multi-pronged attack from neglect, economic strife, recurrent plagues, and Mamluk venality. It was in fact at risk of no longer being the *milieu de mémoire* (environment of memory) it had been just a few years back.

Al-Maqrīzī, perhaps a bit too theatrically, tells of many mosques, madrasas, and palaces resplendent in all their opulence and their illustrious occupants, or of streets filled with the bustle of city life where he played as a child and which no longer existed when he wrote his *Khīṭaṭ*. In their place were empty alleys and vacant lots with the dilapidated remains of deserted structures. Gone, too, in al-Maqrīzī's words, were the manifestations of the leisurely and carefree life of the Mamluk capital of yesteryear, with its public festivities, religious processions, and markets stuffed with luxury goods brought from near and far. This heightened notion of loss imbued him with an urgent need to capture cherished memories, both his own and the community's, as they had attached themselves to places and buildings before they slipped away with the disappearance of their settings. It also fired

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<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Mustafa Ziyada et al., *Dirāsāt 'an al-Maqrīzī, Majmū'at Abḥāth*, (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li-l-Ta'lif wa-l-Nashr, 1971), where al-Maqrīzī is repeatedly called a "true Egyptian citizen," and a "patriot." The same kind of feeling must have influenced the choice of Salah 'Issa's book title *Hawāmish al-Maqrīzī, Hikāyāt min Miṣr (The Margins of al-Maqrizi, Stories from Egypt)* 2 collections (Cairo: Dār al-Qāhira, 1983). The book is a collection of essays in which history and sociology are rhetorically conscripted to advance an ardent nationalistic message. For the author, al-Maqrīzī's name seems to have presented a model both of a historian and a nationalist to whom he can relate.

<sup>34</sup> See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989), 7-25, which is the theoretical introduction to his collaborative project on the national memory of France, published in 7 vols. as *Les Lieux de mémoire*; vol. 1, tr. Arthur Goldhammer, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, (New York, 1996). Please use whether a hyphen or an en dash to indicate the number ranges. Please check this throughout your paper.

up his deep sense of right and wrong, which translated into vocal and unmitigated criticism, aimed at the main agents of decline as he sees it, the predatory Mamluks and their corrupt sultans.

## 5. Al-Maqrīzī and the Khaldunian Cyclical History

A powerful influence on al-Maqrīzī's method and scope were the sociohistorical theories of his revered teacher, the great Ibn Khaldun. 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was a pioneer in the critical study of history. His brilliant and unprecedented *Muqadimma* (Prolegomenon [to his Universal History, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*]) is one of the world's first analytical studies of human civilization (which he terms *'imran*, a concept encompassing both civilization and urbanization). In it, Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) examines the political and environmental factors that contribute to the emergence and development of structured human societies and the causes of their decline, and presents a theoretical framework for the understanding of history. To him the historical process is one of cyclical change, reflecting basically the conflict between two groups, the nomads and the city dwellers.<sup>35</sup> His cycle goes roughly as follows. The nomads, united by kin solidarity (Ibn Khaldun's famous *'aṣabiyya*), conquer the softer city and establish a dynasty. The first generation of rulers retains tribal virtues and solidarity. The second is forced to depend on bureaucrats and military recruits to manage its domain and preserve its hold on power. The third generation loses its ethical bearings and succumbs to corruption, oppression, and the decadent luxuries of city life. This leads to the ruin of the city and the fall of the dynasty at the hand of more rigorous new nomadic conquerors.<sup>36</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn was one of the most influential figures in al-Maqrīzī's education and most probably in the formulation of his analytical streak and worldviews.<sup>37</sup> The two men appear to have met shortly after Ibn Khaldūn arrived in Cairo in 1382 and stayed in touch until Ibn Khaldūn's death in 1406. A young man with a traditional ulama education and a pronounced eagerness to learn, al-Maqrīzī seems to have become a regular in the circle of Ibn Khaldun and benefited from his knowledge in many topics. This is clear from the dates and contexts of several accounts and personal anecdotes directly copied from the master's dictation, which are scattered throughout al-Maqrīzī's extensive oeuvre. These passages and the lengthy biography al-Maqrīzī wrote of Ibn Khaldun shed light on the true extent of the relationship between the two men and its emotional and intellectual ramifications.<sup>38</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn's biography is exuberantly complimentary, though not in any way overly glorifying. Most of its factual information is in fact summarized from Ibn Khaldun's own words in his autobiographical book, *al-Ta'rif bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Riḥlatihi Gharban wa-Sharqan*, which indicates that al-Maqrīzī was familiar with Ibn Khaldun's work, even late compositions such as this one. The biography's second part, moreover, offers a series of stories Ibn Khaldun told directly to al-Maqrīzī that reveal some usually overlooked common aspects in their characters.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Irwin, "Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, 3 (July 1997), 461-79. Please use whether a hyphen or an en dash to indicate the number ranges. Please check this throughout your paper.

<sup>36</sup> Akhtar Husain Siddiqi, "Ibn Khaldun's Concept of Urbanization," *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* 1, 2 (1984): 41-55; Manzoor Alam, "Ibn Khaldun on the Origin, Growth, and Decay of Cities," *Encyclopedic Survey of Islamic Culture* (New Delhi, 1997), 5: 229-47.

<sup>37</sup> Anne Broadbridge, "Royal Authority, Justice and Order in Society: The Influence of Ibn Khaldun on the Writings of Maqrizi and Ibn Taghribirdi," *Mamluk Studies Review* 7, 2 (2003): 231-45; Nasser Rabbat, "Was al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* a Khaldūnian History?" *Der Islam* 89, 1-2 (November 2012): 118-140. Please use whether a hyphen or an en dash to indicate the number ranges. Throughout your paper.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Maqrizi, *Durar*, 2: 383-410. The biography was published initially by Mahmud al-Jalili, "Tarjamat Ibn Khaldūn li-l-Maqrīzī," *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Iraqī* 13 (1965): 215-42.

Ibn Khaldun's anecdotes are filled with predictions of perdition, popular wisdom, vernacular beliefs, and incredible happenings, most of which he is reported to have witnessed personally. Al-Maqrīzī, for whom the supernatural is an integral part of the real, cites them with all seriousness, and never doubts their truthfulness or plausibility. He even draws moral lessons from them, a pattern that recurs in many biographies of other influential teachers in his life. Seeking the moral messages in happenstances and historical events characterizes all of al-Maqrīzī's writing. It, in fact, forms the backbone of his notion of the importance of historical writing in general, a rationale that was shared by the majority of the medieval Muslim historians, and most probably by Ibn Khaldun himself.<sup>39</sup> Al-Maqrīzī's biography of Ibn Khaldun only shows it to have informed his thinking about the most mundane things as well as the most reflective ones, namely the structure of human history.

Al-Maqrīzī reserves his highest praise, however, for the *Muqaddima* of his master, about which he says:

Nothing like it has been written before and it would be difficult for anyone to try to achieve something like it in the future... It is the cream of knowledge and sciences and the creation of sound minds and intellects. It informs about the essence (*kanh*) of things and reality of happenings and events, as if it is manifesting the condition (*ḥāl*) of being and exposing the origin of everything in existence in a style which is brighter than a strand of pearl and purer than water fanned by a zephyr.<sup>40</sup>

This sentence has been dismissed as rhymed prose and verbal acrobatics that do not reveal any deep understanding of Ibn Khaldun's interpretation of civilization (*'imrān*) and its relation to the movement of history on the part of al-Maqrīzī. Modern historians have even quoted the guileful reports of al-Maqrīzī's detractors accusing him of having misunderstood the *Muqaddima*, although they brazenly cite him testifying to its uniqueness while at the same time they doubt that uniqueness.<sup>41</sup> Of course, there is no way to verify how much al-Maqrīzī read of the *Muqaddima*, although he had ample time to do so during his many years in the company of Ibn Khaldun. Robert Irwin has recently raised the more intriguing possibility that not only did al-Maqrīzī read the *Muqaddima*, but he might have had a say in its revisions since Ibn Khaldun seems to have continued working on it until 1404, long after al-Maqrīzī had become his student and eventually his colleague.<sup>42</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, though he claims no role in the redaction of the *Muqaddima*, intimates a close, mutually respectful relationship with Ibn Khaldun, especially when both were serving in the Mamluk administration, which provides a plausible context for Irwin's hypothesis, even though the haughty Ibn Khaldun never mentions al-Maqrīzī's name in his autobiographical text, *al-Ta'rif*.

A weightier indication of al-Maqrīzī's understanding of the conceptual core of the *Muqaddima*, however, emerges from the analysis of a number of his thematic treatises, such as

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<sup>39</sup> His views of the moral function of historical inquiry are introduced in his preface to the *Khitat* 1: 4-8; and more elaborately recorded in his preface to his still-unpublished large book, *al-Khabar 'an al-Bashar*, which deals with the universal history until the coming of Islam, see Muhammad Kamal al-Din 'Izz al-Din, *al-Maqrīzī: Mu'arrikhān* (Beirut: Alam al-Kutub, 1990), 63, 215-16 where he published the preface from ms. Tunis National Library, no. 3558. For the widespread view of history as a moral lesson, see Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 216-19.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar*, 2: 403.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Inbā'*, 5: 331; idem, *Raf' al-Isr*, 2: 348; al-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, 4: 148

<sup>42</sup> Perhaps al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Khaldun after all talked about knowledge *tout court* rather than knowledge of the past or of the future when they met as Irwin, "Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Khaldun," 230, wonders.

those on the causes of famine and the strife between the Umayyads and the ‘Alids.<sup>43</sup> But it is most conspicuously evident in the structure and argument of the *Khiṭaṭ*.<sup>44</sup> There, al-Maqrīzī seems to have subsumed the overarching cycle of dynastic rise and fall — which forms the basis of Ibn Khaldun's interpretative historical framework — to organize the vast amount of material he collected over the years into a general discourse on Egypt's history and topography. He also devised an analogous cycle of prosperity and urban expansion followed by decay and urban contraction to frame his exposition of the fate of Cairo under the successive dynasties that ruled Egypt in the Islamic era. The political fortune of each ruling dynasty is plotted against the fluctuations of the urban and architectural prosperity of Cairo during the same time in a way that echoes the Khaldunian view of history.<sup>45</sup>

All apparently was meant to culminate in the depiction of the most irreversibly devastating —according to the pessimistic al-Maqrīzī— ruin of the city and the country under the sultans of his time, especially the ill-fated Faraj ibn Barquq, al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh, and al-Ashraf Barsbay. Al-Maqrīzī's deep disappointment in these sultans translated into breaking all measures of caution and consideration in reporting their failings, especially after he withdrew from public life in despair of ever reconciling his moral indignation with his professional ambitions. To him, these contemporary sultans were no longer the deserving leaders their glorified early Mamluk predecessors had once been, skillfully and thoughtfully managing a great empire and fighting for the cause of Islam. Their insatiable greed, neglect of their Mamluks' training, and overall un-Islamic policies had led to the devastation of the economy and the impoverishment of the people.<sup>46</sup> This in turn halted the growth and prosperity of the city and caused many of its structures to become abandoned and dilapidated.

## Conclusion

Perhaps this is why the *Khiṭaṭ* stands today not just as an invaluable historical source but also and more powerfully, as an overtly emotional and particularistic historical analysis of the consequences of human action on the urban and natural landscape. Within its own tradition, the *Khiṭaṭ* appears almost as an anachronism, as no Mamluk historian managed to capture the critical mood and intensity of feelings displayed in al-Maqrīzī's text.<sup>47</sup> Nor did any *Khiṭaṭ* compiler in the

<sup>43</sup> M. Mustafa Ziyada, "Tārīkh Ḥayīt al-Maqrīzī," in *Dirāsāt ‘an al-Maqrīzī*, 13-22; Adel Allouche, *Mamluk Economics: A Study and Translation of al-Maqrizi's Ighathat al-Ummah bi-Kashf al-Ghummah*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 4-7; C. E. Bosworth, "al-Maqrizi's Exposition of the Formative Period in Islamic History and its Cosmic Significance: The *Kitab al-Niza' wa-al-Takhasum*," in *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge: In Honour of William Montgomery Watt*, ed. A. T. Welsh and P. Cachia (Edinburgh, 1979), 93-104, reprinted in idem, *Medieval Arabic Culture and Administration* (London, 1982) as no. XI; Anouar Louca, "Pèlerinage à trois voix: lecture d'un texte de Maqrīzī," *Arabica* 36, (1989): 93-108, esp. 107-108.

<sup>44</sup> References to Ibn Khaldun in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 1: 130, 3: 605-606 and note 1, where he quotes a long passage from the *Muqaddima* on the Arabs' relationship to the sea, 4, 2: 921 suggest that he was familiar with the *Muqaddima* and its propositions.

<sup>45</sup> The most clearly structured cycles are those of Tulunid al-Qata'i' and Fatimid Cairo. See al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 2: 80-114, 2:122-46 respectively.

<sup>46</sup> Examples in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 1: 256, 4,2: 456. This is where Ibn Taghri-Birdi's repeated remarks on al-Maqrīzī's hostility toward Barsbay gain their full meaning. See Ibn Taghri-Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī-Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, 16 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1930-56); particularly Vol. 14, pp. 200-1, 245, 310-11; and Vol. 15, pp. 109-10.

<sup>47</sup> Characterized as "History in the Service of Faith," by Amalia Levanoni, "Al-Maqrizi's Account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950-1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 93-105. Please use whether a hyphen or an en dash to indicate the number ranges. Throughout your paper.

late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods juxtapose the pedagogical and moral aims with the topographical and architectural descriptions. As such, al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* may be considered a truly pioneering urban history, perhaps long-winded, cosmocentric, and melancholy, but certainly methodical, reflective, and imbued with a strong sense of purpose.

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