The Tatars of the Sūdān:
Race, Place, and Power in Ibn Saʿīd's Geography

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Abstract

Scholars in the medieval Islamicate world occasionally compared peoples of the far south and the far north, referencing their barbarity to illustrate the effects of extreme climate on human bodies and societies. This article discusses a specific north-south comparison: the portrayal of the Damādim as "the Tatars of the Sūdān," introduced by Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī in his thirteenth-century geography. He used it to connect the Chinggisid devastation of Khwarazm in the thirteenth century with the Damādim's devastation of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha in Northeast Africa. Analyzing this comparison in a historical and discursive context tells us little about the Tatars, Northeast Africa, or the Damādim. Instead it reveals Ibn Saʿīd's work as a racemaker. His comparison emerged in a historically specific moment: it was shaped by the imposition of Tatar rule in the Islamicate East and the constructs of the intellectual community in which he participated. The fact that Ibn Saʿīd invented entirely new content for the term "Damādim" and that this came to be adopted by his peers illustrates how racial stereotypes could change. Finally, the comparison reveals the power dynamics of racialization, as Tatars and Turks holding power in the Islamicate world could intervene in Islamicate racial discourse in a way that Black Africans could not.

It is not news that Islamicate ethnographic discourse has exhibited an exceptionally strong negative bias against Black Africans.[1] To understand how this bias came about, it is useful to

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1. R. Schine, *Black Knights: Arabic Epic and the Making of Medieval Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024); K. Richardson, "The Boundaries and Geographies of Medieval Blackness," in *Islam on the Margins: Studies in Memory of Michael Bonner*, ed. R. Haug and S. Judd, 220–34 (Leiden: Brill, 2023); N. Kadhem, *Africanism: Blacks in the Medieval Arab Imaginary*, trans. A. Al-Azraki (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023); E. Urban, "Race, Gender, and Slavery in Early Islamicate History," *History Compass* 20, no. 5 (2022): e12727; L. Balafrej, "Domestic Slavery, Skin Colour, and Image Dialectic in Thirteenth-Century Arabic Manuscripts," *Art History* 44, no. 5 (2021): 1012–36; M. Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); J. T. Olsson, "The World in Arab Eyes: A Reassessment of the Climes in Medieval Islamic Scholarship," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2014): 487–508, at 501–7; C. El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); B. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); J. Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); B. Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: The Politics of 'Race' in the Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali," in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. B. Tezcan and K. Barbir, 73–95 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007); D. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); E. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley:

examine the racemaking processes of specific authors whose works have become canonical. This article is devoted to a single racemaking phrase, "the Tatars of the Sūdān" (تتر السودان). The phrase appeared for the first time in a geography written between 666/1267 and 685/1286 by a scholar named Ibn Saʿīd. He used "the Tatars of the Sūdān" to describe a group called the Damādim, whom he located in Northeast Africa. He reported that they inhabited a city called Damdama, from which they burst out in 617/1220–21 to attack the lands of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha at the same time as the Tatars attacked the Persians.

Ibn Saʿīd's act had consequences. "The Tatars of the Sūdān" was a catchy phrase and a compelling thought. It captured the imagination of medieval scholars and demanded comment. The phrase was taken up by later authors including Abū al-Fiḍā, al-ʿUmarī, Ibn Khaldūn, and al-Qalqashandī, each of whom reworked it to fit their own purposes. Some of their reworkings were subtle. Others dissociated "the Tatars of the Sūdān" from the Damādim and relocated its geographical referent to West Africa.

In order to understand what Ibn Saʿīd meant by "the Tatars of the Sūdān," the phrase must be situated in its historical context. By mentioning the date 617/1220–21, Ibn Saʿīd indicated that the Tatars he had in mind were the Chinggisid invaders of Khwarazm. Their invasion of 617/1220–21 was well known in the Islamicate world. It had become widely associated with violence, destruction, speed, the military victory of infidels over Muslims, and the Persian East. Yet if Ibn Saʿīd's remarks on "the Tatars of the Sūdān" are read alongside his remarks about Tatars elsewhere in his geography, a distinction emerges between the violent, infidel Tatars who invaded the East in the 610s/1220s and the orderly, Muslim Tatars who ruled the North by the 660s/1260s. This distinction fits the triadic classificatory model of civilized, intermediate, and barbarian societies proposed by Paulo de Moraes Farias, with Muslim Tatars filling the intermediate role between infidel Tatars and civilized Muslim Persians.[2] Ibn Saʿīd articulated this distinction by selecting different elements from the pool of available Turkic-Tatar stereotypes. In this way he was able to express nuanced judgments about Tatars as a group and as individuals.

Connections between Ibn Saʿīd's Sūdān and Northeast Africa in the thirteenth century are harder to reconstruct. Archeological as well as written sources shed some light on the relationships between the kingdoms of ʿAlwa, the Zāgʷē, and Damot, but all three polities are poorly documented compared to their predecessors and successors in the region. ʿAlwa, one of the Nubian kingdoms along the Upper Nile, suffered violence and instability in the early thirteenth century. It is not clear whether they were caused by invasion as opposed to or in combination with other factors. The Zāgʷē dynasty, which ruled part of what is now northern Ethiopia and Eritrea, flourished during the early thirteenth century, though it experienced conflict with the kingdom of Damot, located in what is now part of southern Ethiopia. Ibn Saʿīd's report that the lands of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha had been devastated by the Damādim can therefore be only loosely connected to actual Northeast African events

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University of California Press, 2003); B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

2. P. de Moraes Farias, "Models of the World and Categorical Models: The 'Enslavable Barbarian' as a Mobile Classificatory Label," in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, ed. J. R. Willis, 1:27–46 (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 39–41.

of the thirteenth century. In particular, Ibn Saʿīd's decision to lump the Nūba and the Ḥabasha together says more about the discursive habits of Islamicate geographers than it does about Northeast African history.

The Damādim also require contextualization. By highlighting characteristics shared by the Damādim and the Tatars, Ibn Saʿīd was participating in a discourse of environmental racism rooted in the works of Hippocrates and Galen.[3] This discourse posited a symmetry between northern and southern barbarians, whose bodies, minds, and societies were shaped in paradoxically similar yet opposite ways by the extremes of climate. However, from the analytical perspective of the triadic classificatory model, the Damādim were the southern counterparts of barbarian Tatars specifically; intermediate Tatars were paralleled by the Christian peoples of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha. Modern scholars have usually treated southerners classified as barbarian, such as the Damādim (or Damdam), the Lamlam, the Namnam, and others as interchangeable. But although Ibn Saʿīd used all three of these ethnonyms to denote southern barbarian societies, he did not present them as interchangeable. Reading his description of the Damādim alongside the descriptions of previous scholars, such as al-Masʿūdī, al-Bakrī, al-Idrīsī, and others, makes clear the degree to which Ibn Saʿīd discarded characteristics previously attributed to them and reimagined them for his own ends. This intervention was successful in shaping Islamicate texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The image of the Damādim in Islamicate ethnographic discourse was thus more simplistic and malleable than was the image of the Tatars, which was more nuanced and difficult to remake.

Finally, the entire comparative phrase "the Damādim are the Tatars of the Sūdān" must be situated in a discursive context. Although Ibn Saʿīd coined this version of the phrase, he based it on an established grammatical and conceptual construction. "X is the Y of the Z" was used by other scholars in the medieval Islamicate world to make ethnographic and geographical comparisons. Perhaps the best-known example comes from al-Jāḥiẓ, who declared in the ninth century that the Turks "are the Bedouin of the ʿAjam, just as the Hudhayl are the Kurds of the Arabs."[4] In the tenth century, al-Muqaddasī's geography described Zabid as the Baghdad of Yemen and Marw as the Umm al-Qurā (Mecca) of Khurasan.[5] Al-Zuhrī, a twelfth-century Andalusi geographer, asserted that the Genoese were

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3. J. Hunwick, "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 103–36, at 126, 130; S. Maqbul Ahmad, *A History of Arab-Islamic Geography (9th–16th Century A.D.)* (Amman: Al al-Bayt University, 1995), 340–44; Olsson, "World," 500–507; Gomez, *African Dominion*, 51; A. al-Azmeh, "Barbarians in Arab Eyes," *Past & Present* 134, no. 1 (1992): 3–18, at 7–11; Z. Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94–95.

4. Al-Jāḥiẓ, "Manāqib al-Turk," in *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. A. M. Hārūn, 1:1–86 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964), 70–71; see also U. Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (1988): 175–96, at 179. According to al-Jāḥiẓ, this was because Turks were interested solely in raiding, hunting, and horses, not in agriculture, crafts, trade, or any constructive activity. Thanks to Luke Yarbrough for sharing this reference with me.

5. Antrim, *Routes*, 40–41.

"the Quraysh of the Rūm,"[6] and in the thirteenth century Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī reported that "Fars and the Rūm are the Quraysh of the ʿAjam."[7]

These comparisons all make use of the same structure and logic. X (the Turks, the Hudhayl, Marw, the Genoese) is an unknown entity that must be described through comparison. Y (the Bedouin, the Kurds, Mecca, the Quraysh) is an entity with whom the reader is expected to be familiar. Z (the ʿAjam, the Arabs, Khurasan, the Rūm) is an umbrella, a vague and capacious category that contains the unknown entity X but not the familiar entity Y. *Sūdān* (سودان) is the plural of *aswad* (أسود), meaning black. In an ethnographic context it refers to Black people, including Africans and South Asians.[8] *ʿAjam* (عجم) may refer to Persians, to all non-Arabs, or to all people who are neither Arab nor Sūdān.[9] *ʿArab* (عرب) in this case is an umbrella term for various Arabian tribes, including the Quraysh (the Prophet Muḥammad's tribe) and the Hudhayl, although it can have other valences in other contexts.[10] *Rūm* (روم) may refer to the Byzantines, to the inhabitants of the Anatolian region, or to all northern Christians.[11]

The construction "X is the Y of the Z" invites the scholarly reader to apply what they know about Y, the familiar group, and Z, the umbrella group, to X, the unknown group, in order to expand their knowledge. Although the comparison highlights the common qualities of disparate groups, it operates in only one direction. Certain qualities of the Quraysh may apply to the Genoese, but the qualities of the Genoese do not reflect on the Quraysh. Ibn Saʿīd's construction thus encouraged his readers to apply what they knew about the Tatars and the Sūdān to the Damādim but not the reverse.

Ibn Saʿīd Coins a Phrase

ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Maghribī, the inventor of the phrase "the Tatars of the Sūdān," was a prolific scholar and poet from a prominent Andalusi family.[12] Born in 610/1213 near Granada, he

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6. For al-Zuhrī, the content of this comparison included genealogy, physiognomy, sea trade, and a great city. Al-Zuhrī, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyya*, ed. M. Ḥ. Ṣādiq (Port Said: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1989), 77. Thanks to Mohamad Ballan for sharing this reference with me.

7. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb Muʿǧam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866), 3:836–37, attributed to the eighth-century scholar Ibn Lahīʿa. Thanks to Thomas Carlson for sharing this reference with me.

8. Richardson, "Boundaries."

9. O. Kommer, S. Liccardo, and A. Nowak, "Comparative Approaches to Ethnonyms: The Case of the Persians," *Hungarian Historical Review* 7, no. 1 (2018): 18–56.

10. P. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

11. C. Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum," *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 7–25. Note that the Rūm function as the unknown group in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's comparison but as the umbrella group in al-Zuhrī's comparison.

12. C. Pellat, "Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012); G. Potiron, "Un polygraphe andalou du XIIIᵉ siècle," *Arabica* 13, no. 2 (1966): 142–67; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, ed. I. al-ʿArabī (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1970), 5–15; M. J. al-Anṣārī, *al-Tafāʿul al-thaqāfī bayna al-Maghrib wa-l-Mashriq* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1992), 79–106.

studied in Seville and left to perform the hajj with his father in 639/1241. He traveled to the major cities of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, where he met rulers, befriended scholars, and visited libraries. Upon his return to the Maghrib in 652/1254, he settled in Tunis. He made a second journey to the East in 666/1267, returning to Tunis around 675/1276. He died in Tunis in 685/1286.[13]

Ibn Saʿīd's geography, in which he introduced the phrase "the Tatars of the Sūdān," goes by several titles. It exists in two full manuscripts, five abridged manuscripts, and one incomplete manuscript.[14] Even in the abridgments, the passage on the Tatars of the Sūdān is copied in full. There are also two complete printed editions and a partial English translation; the latter lacks this passage.[15]

I was able to consult the following manuscripts:

- BL – MS London, British Library, Oriental Manuscripts, Or 1524: a complete manuscript, dated 700/1300–1301, titled *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-aqālīm al-sabʿa* (The book of marvels of the seven climes)[16]
- OB – MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Selden superius 76: an abridged manuscript, dated 704/1304, titled *Basṭ al-arḍ fī ṭūlihā wa-l-ʿarḍ* (The exposition of the earth according to its longitude and latitude)[17]
- P1 – MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, arabe 2234, fols. 1–116: a complete manuscript, dated 714/1314–15, titled *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā fī al-aqālīm al-sabʿa wa-zād fīhi al-aṭwāl wa-l-ʿarūḍ ziyāda* (The book of geography according to the seven climes and the extension in it of the longitudes and the latitudes), which belonged to Abū al-Fidā,

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13. Some medieval biographers recorded the date of his death as 673/1274, others as 685/1286. Al-ʿArabī notes that since the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya holds an autograph manuscript of one of his works dated 683/1284, the 685/1286 death date must be correct. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 14.

14. C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898–1902), 1:336–37 and Supplement 1:576; J.-C. Ducène, "La source cartographique d'Ibn Saʿīd al-Maġribī (m. 1286): L'énigmatique Kitāb ğuġrāfiyā [sic] fī-l-aqālīm al-sabʿa," in *Orbis disciplinae: Hommages en l'honneur de Patrick Gautier Dalché*, ed. N. Bouloux, A. Dan, and G. Tolias, 649–60 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). I did not consult MS Istanbul, Carullah, 1581/1 (the citation in Ducène, "La source," was not helpful); MS London, British Library, Oriental Manuscripts, Or 9585/2 (an eighteenth-century copy of IS, inaccessible because of a ransomware attack; see P. Stocks, *Subject-Guide to the Arabic Manuscripts in the British Library* [London: British Library, 2001], 387, and A. Y. al-Ghunaym, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-jughrāfiyya al-ʿarabiyya fī al-Matḥaf al-Brīṭānī* [Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1974], 18–19); or MS St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies, C 591 (a fragment, dated 1686, inaccessible to me because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine; see A. B. Khalidova, *Arabskie Rukopisi Instituta Vostokovedeniya. Kratkiĭ Katalog* [Moscow: Izdatelstvo "Nauka" GRVL, 1986], 1:446, no. 9599).

15. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ fī al-ṭūl wa-l-ʿarḍ*, ed. J. V. Ginés (Tetouan: Maʿhad Mūlāy al-Ḥasan, 1958). Ginés consulted P1, OB, and BL. He relied mainly on P1 but borrowed the title of OB for his edition. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, relied on P1, OB, and IS. The translation in N. Levtzion and J. F. P. Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2000), 181–94, used both printed editions. J. Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes concernant l'Afrique occidentale du VIIIᵉ au XVIᵉ siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1975), 201–19, offers a French translation of the material concerning West Africa in the first, second, and third climes, but it does not include the Tatars of the Sūdān. Cuoq based his translation on the Ginés edition, checking it against BL and P1.

16. A digitized version is available online.

17. See the catalogue entry here. A digitized file is available by request.

the ruler of Hama and a geographer in his own right[18]

- IS – MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Fatih 3412: an abridged manuscript, dated 723/1323, catalogued as *Kitabü'l-Akalim's-Se'ba* (The book of the seven climes), incorrectly attributed to Aḥmad b. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, son of the famous geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī[19]
- P2 – MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, arabe 6070: a copy of IS created in the mid-1800s and sent to Paris, titled *Kitāb al-Aqālīm al-sabʿa* (The book of the seven climes)[20]

The date of composition of Ibn Saʿīd's geography is not mentioned by his contemporaries or noted in any of the surviving manuscripts, but al-ʿArabī, the work's editor, argues that it must have been written between 658/1260 (the fall of Aleppo to the Tatars, referenced in the text) and 685/1286 (Ibn Saʿīd's death).[21] I propose to narrow the likely period of composition to 666–85/1267–86, since Ibn Saʿīd also refers to Berke's son as the Jochid khan in several passages.[22] Möngke Temür, Berke's successor (though not in fact his son), took power in 666/1267.

In his geography, Ibn Saʿīd divided the surface of the earth into seven latitudinal climes (إقليم), from the first clime in the south to the seventh clime in the north. Each clime was then subdivided into ten longitudinal sections (جزء), extending from the first section in the west to the tenth section in the east. In the text, he assigned coordinates of latitude and longitude to each place so that they could be located on a grid. In doing so, he followed the practice of earlier geographers such as Ptolemy (the seven climes) and al-Idrīsī (the ten sections).[23] Ibn Saʿīd also acknowledged the presence of human inhabitants in the Far South (south of the first clime) and the Far North (north of the seventh clime). He divided these areas, too, into ten sections and assigned coordinates to their important locations.

It was in his discussion of the fourth section of the Far South that Ibn Saʿīd introduced the Damādim as the Tatars of the Sūdān. That square of the grid also contained the eastern end of the Mountains of the Moon; the city of قلجور , which was famous for its swords; the Berberā people; and Indian Ocean ports from Merca and Mogadishu to Guardafui (all in present-day Somalia). The next square to the north, the fourth section of the first clime, was home to the Nūba, the Ḥabasha, and the Zanj. Aden and the southern tip of Yemen lay in the fifth section. Continuing north, the fourth section of the second clime covered Upper Egypt from the Nūba in the south to Bulaq (now part of Cairo) in the north and from the Hijaz in the east to Fayyum in the west. The landmarks that Ibn Saʿīd placed near the Damādim thus indicate a location in what we would today call Northeast Africa.

There are two versions of Ibn Saʿīd's description of the Damādim. The first appears in four of the manuscripts I consulted: "And in this [fourth] section, among the cities of the Sūdān is Damdama, from which the Damādim emerged to attack the countries of the Nūba

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18. A digitized version is available online.

19. A digitized file is available by request. Thanks to Mesut Sayan for helping me access this manuscript.

20. A digitized version is available online.

21. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 26–27.

22. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 197, 204, 206.

23. Antrim, *Routes*, 88–90; Ahmad, *History*, 193; Ducène, "La source."

and the Ḥabasha in the year 617, at [the same time as] the rising of the Tatars to attack the countries of the ʿAjam. They are the Tatars of the Sūdān."[24] The OB manuscript is an outlier. It reads: "And in the fourth [section] is Damdama, from which the Damādim emerged to attack the countries of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha—and they are the Tatars of the Sūdān—in the year 617."[25] The OB copyist thus changed the order of the information, dropped the identification of Damdama as a city, and omitted the reference to the Tatar invasion of Persia.

The Tatars in the East

Since the Tatars function as the familiar entity in the "Tatars of the Sūdān" construction, our starting point for understanding the implications of this description must be common knowledge about the Tatars among Ibn Saʿīd's audience—namely, scholars living in the Islamicate world in the second half of the thirteenth century.

The Tatars were known in the Islamicate world before the era of Chinggis Khan, but the information that was available about them consisted of brief remarks, mainly in Persian, recorded by scholars in the East.[26] The earliest extant reference is found in *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, a late tenth-century geography written in Persian in Guzgan (now Afghanistan) under the Samanids. Already in this text, the Tatars were classified as a type of Turk. They were mentioned again, and again classified as Turks, by the historian Gardīzī, writing in Persian in the mid-eleventh century in Gardez (now Afghanistan) under the Ghaznavids; the lexicographer Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī, writing a Turkish-Arabic dictionary in the late eleventh century in Baghdad; and the anonymous history *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, written in Persian in the twelfth century in Hamadan (now Iran) under the Saljuqs. To this list, compiled by Peter Golden, I can add the Persian mirror for princes composed by the Ziyārid ruler Kay Kāʾūs b. Iskandar in the late eleventh century in the Caspian region of Iran. He mentioned Tatars among the various kinds of enslaveable Turks.[27] The Tatars also appeared in a verse genealogy composed in the twelfth century by Marvrūdī, writing in Persian for the Ghurids in Ghur (now Afghanistan).[28]

After the near-annihilation of the Tatar confederation by Chinggis Khan in 598–99/1202, scholars within and beyond the Islamicate world began to use the term *tatar*, *tatār*, or

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24. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 81.

في هذا الجزء من مدن السودان دمدمة التي خرج منها الدمادم على بلاد النوبة والحبشة، سنة سبع عشرة وستمائة في طالع خروج التتر على بلاد العجم. وهم تتر السودان.

25. OB, fol. 3r. "وفي الرابع دمدمة التى خرج منها الدمادم على بلاد الحبشة والنوبة وهم تتر السودان في سنة سبعة عشر وستمائة."

26. Joo-Yup Lee, "The Historical Meanings of the Term Tatar: A Critical and Comprehensive Examination," *Golden Horde Review* 13, no.1 (2025): 240–61 at 243–4; P. Golden, "Tatar," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. A. Miquel, in *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11ᵉ siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), surveyed Islamicate ethnographic texts up to the mid-eleventh century without noting any reference to Tatars.

27. Ibn Iskandar, *A Mirror for Princes: The Qābūs Nāma*, trans. R. Levy (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1951), 103.

28. M. Hope, "The Mongols in the Eyes of the Iranians," in *The Mongol World*, ed. T. May and M. Hope, 814–25 (New York: Routledge, 2022), 815; C. E. Bosworth, "Ghurids," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012.

ṭaṭar in a general way to refer to the subjects of Chinggisid rulers.[29] The term *mughūl*[30] was used less frequently, sometimes as a rough synonym for *tatar* and other times to identify members of the political elite.

Because the Tatars had already been classified as Turks, thirteenth-century scholars could easily fit the new Chinggisid Tatars into their preexisting ethnographic systems.[31] The Turks were generic inhabitants of the steppe and the mountains. They were stereotyped as infidels threatening Islam; tent-dwelling nomads in vast, open spaces; uncouth, uncivilized barbarians lacking proper food, clothing, sexual mores, and cities; excellent hunters; tough and courageous warriors skilled in archery and horsemanship; generous hosts; and untrustworthy and duplicitous foes. On the other hand, if removed from their homes (often through slavery) and cultivated properly (including conversion to Islam), they had the capacity to shine like pearls as loyal soldiers and defenders of Islam.[32]

Though othered, by the thirteenth century the Turks were familiar others.[33] They were linked with the north and with cold and humid climates. In the genealogical tree of Adam, they were classified as descendants of Noah's son Japheth. In apocalyptic texts, they were associated with Yajūj and Majūj (Gog and Magog), the ravening hordes confined by Dhū al-Qarnayn (Alexander) behind a barrier of iron and brass until God permitted them to break through.[34] Muslim scholars were divided about the precise role of the Turks in this

29. P. Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 62–63, 92–93; I. Togan, "Mongolia before Chinggis Khan," in May and Hope, *Mongol World*, 33–50, at 39–43; J. van den Bent, "Mongols in Mamluk Eyes: Representing Ethnic Others in the Medieval Middle East" (PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2020), 31–37; I. Rachewiltz, "The Name of the Mongols in Asia and Europe: A Reappraisal," *East Asian History* 43 (2019): 89–94, at 90; K. Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred: (Changing) Attitudes towards Mongol and 'Christian' *Mamlūks* in the Mamluk Sultanate," in *The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History*, ed. R. Amitai and S. Conermann, 149–214 (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2019), 156–60; Lee, "Historical Meanings," 246.

30. The N in Mongγol was dropped by Uighur scribes working for Mongol rulers because in the Uighur language, *muŋγul* meant "fool." Rachewiltz, "Name," 92.

31. Lee, "Historical Meanings." On the Turks in Islamicate ethnography, see Haarmann, "Ideology"; Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, 203–55; Y. Frenkel, "The Turks of the Eurasian Steppes in Medieval Arabic Writing," in Amitai and Biran, *Mongols, Turks, and Others*, 201–44; Jackson, *Mongols*, 51–54, 68–69.

32. Jackson, *Mongols*, 52–53; Haarmann, "Ideology," 181–82.

33. Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, 204.

34. D. Cook, "The Image of the Turk in Classical and Modern Muslim Apocalyptic Literature," in *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. W. Brandes, F. Schmieder, and R. Voß, 225–38 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); idem, "Gog and Magog in Islam: A Permanent Geographic Problem," in *Gog and Magog: Contributions toward a World History of an Apocalyptic Motif*, ed. G. Tamer, A. Mein, and L. Greisiger, 277–88 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023); T. Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the ʿAbbāsid Empire* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 144; E. van Donzel and A. Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63–87. This tradition built on the hadith "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Turks"; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 2928. Apocalypticism was also an area of comparison for northern and southern barbarians, building on the hadith "Let the Abyssinians alone as long as they let you alone, and let the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone"; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, no. 4302. On the Ḥabasha in early Islamic apocalyptic texts, see S. Bouderbala, "Al-Ḥabasha in Miṣr and the End of the World: Early Islamic Egyptian Apocalypse Narratives Related to Abyssinia," *Northeast Africa Studies* 19, no. 1 (2019): 9–22. Thanks to Mehdi Berriah for suggesting this connection.

scenario, however. Some depicted them in purely negative terms as those "left behind" (*taraka*, hence Turk) when Dhū al-Qarnayn built the barrier. Their attacks were a foretaste of the absolute devastation to be expected when Yajūj and Majūj broke through. Others depicted the Turks as a buffer against Yajūj and Majūj, or as a purifying force carrying out God's punishment of bad Muslims. Over time, medieval authors applied the label "Turk" to a stunningly wide range of people. In addition to those who spoke Turkic languages, "Turk" was used in reference to Hungarians, Rus, Circassians, Bosnians, Italians, Greeks, and Indian Muslims, among others.[35]

From this pool of associations, thirteenth-century scholars chose several to emphasize in relation to the Chinggisid Tatars.[36] They immediately characterized these new Tatars as violent, destructive, barbaric infidels. The Chinggisid Tatars did not simply take power; they slaughtered Muslims in uncountable numbers and wiped major cities off the map, exposing the haplessness of Muslim rulers. Outbreak narratives linked catastrophic disease to their violence.[37] Physiognomists described them as brown, broad-chested, broad-faced, narrow-eyed, flat-nosed, quick, strong, and brave, with big backsides from spending so much time on horseback.[38] Apocalyptically, the Tatars were an excellent fit for the vanguard of Yajūj and Majūj.[39] The Tatars themselves had access to this story and seem to have developed their own version of it.[40] From the Islamic perspective, even al-Dajjāl, the Antichrist of Islamic tradition, was capable of constructive action and offered benefits to lure in followers, whereas the Tatars, like Yajūj and Majūj, were purely destructive.[41] Other Turks, many of whom had converted to Islam centuries earlier, were now reclassified as the first victims

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35. Jackson, *Mongols*, 52; Haarmann, "Ideology," 177; H. Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 49.

36. Jackson, *Mongols*, 16–22; Hope, "Mongols," 815–17; van den Bent, "Mongols in Mamluk Eyes," 70–77.

37. Whether the disease in question was plague is a matter of current debate. It is clear, however, that contemporaries of Ibn Saʿīd, most notably Ibn Wāṣil, believed that disease outbreaks in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt in 1258 were caused by the Tatar siege of Baghdad, either directly through the miasma and pollution generated by the bodies of the dead or indirectly through famine, the movement of refugees, and the breakdown of sanitation systems. M. Green and N. Fancy, "Plague and the Fall of Baghdad (1258)," *Medical History* 65, no. 2 (2021): 157–77; J. Brack, M. Biran, and R. Amitai, "Plague and the Mongol Conquest of Baghdad (1258)? A Reevaluation of the Sources," *Medical History* 68, no. 4 (2024): 392–410; M. Green and N. Fancy, "Plague History, Mongol History, and the Processes of Focalisation Leading up to the Black Death: A Response to Brack et al.," *Medical History* 68, no. 4 (2024): 411–35. On the rhetoric of disease as violence in outbreak narratives, see H. Barker and C. Chen, "Pandemic Outbreaks and the Language of Violence: Discussing the Origins of the Black Death and COVID-19," *CHEST* 162, no. 1 (2022): 196–201.

38. Van den Bent, "Mongols in Mamluk Eyes," 49–80. The stereotypes discussed in Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 165–67, come from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts.

39. Cook, "Image," 229; idem, "Gog and Magog," 282–84; Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers*, 146.

40. An early fourteenth-century fragment in Mongolian describing the adventures of Sulqarnai (Dhū al-Qarnayn or Alexander) has survived in Turfan, probably copied by Uighur scribes. In addition, Rashīd al-Dīn, Hayton of Armenia, and Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, all writing in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, independently recorded a Tatar legend concerning the Tatars' escape from imprisonment in a valley by melting through an iron mine. J. A. Boyle, "Alexander and the Mongols," *Central Asiatic Journal* 24, no. 1/2 (1980): 18–35, at 24–25, 29–32.

41. Cook, "Gog and Magog," 283.

of Yajūj and Majūj or as the bulwark of Islam against them. In other words, Islamicate ethnographers shifted the Turks into the role of an intermediate society as they assigned the role of a barbarian society to the Tatars.

Although Ibn Saʿīd had been educated in the West, which did not have a local tradition of knowledge about the Tatars predating the thirteenth century, his travels in the East gave him access to old scholarly traditions and new information circulating in the wake of the Chinggisid conquests.[42] His first visit to the East took place in 639–52/1241–54, well after the initial shock of the Tatar conquest of Khwarazm in 618/1221. He spent a decade with Ayyubid scholars and libraries in Cairo and Aleppo. After a falling-out with one of his friends in Aleppo, he traveled to Damascus, Homs, Hama, Mosul, and Baghdad, where he visited thirty-six libraries. He then departed for Basra and Persia, although his itinerary in this period is less clear. His autobiographical entry in a biographical dictionary mentions Rayy, Qazwin, and Khurasan, but he may have collapsed his first and second journeys in this account.[43] In any case, in Khurasan he composed a poem about "a beautiful slave from the Turks, with peach fuzz and a beauty mark on his cheek."[44] In 651/1253, he finally visited Mecca and completed the hajj, his ostensible reason for leaving home. In the same year, the Mongol commander Hülegü embarked on a campaign against the Ismaʿili Assassins and the ʿAbbasid caliphate.[45] Perhaps not coincidentally, Ibn Saʿīd returned to the safety of the West in 652/1254.

By the time of Ibn Saʿīd's second journey to the East in 666–c. 675/1267–c. 1276, the political landscape had changed entirely.[46] Cairo, Damascus, and Mecca were governed by the new Mamluk state under Baybars. Iraq and Iran formed the core of a new Tatar state, the Ilkhanate, under Abaqa. The major cities of Syria were caught in an ongoing Mamluk-Ilkhan war. The Jochid Tatars of the Golden Horde had just begun to cultivate an alliance with the Mamluks that was based on Berke Khan's profession of Islam.[47] Although Ibn Saʿīd's itinerary is not known,[48] he seems to have traveled in the Ilkhanate rather than in Mamluk territory, and he visited Baghdad. As a result of his travels, Ibn Saʿīd could draw on personal knowledge of Tatars and Turks as well as the reactions of Eastern scholars to the initial

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42. Hope, "Mongols," 814; Potiron, "Un polygraphe," 146; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 11–12; al-Anṣārī, *al-Tafāʿul*, 94–101.

43. Ibn Saʿīd, *Ikhtiṣār al-Qidḥ al-muʿallā fī al-tārīkh al-muḥallā*, ed. I. al-Abyārī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿĀmma li-Shuʾūn al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyya, 1959), 1–2, 9; al-Anṣārī, *al-Tafāʿul*, 102.

44. Ibn Saʿīd, *Ikhtiṣār al-Qidḥ*, 9. "مملوك وسيم من الأتراك، بخده خالٌ وهو معذَّر."

45. Jackson, *Mongols*, 126.

46. Potiron, "Un polygraphe," 147; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 13; al-Anṣārī, *al-Tafāʿul*, 102–5.

47. Jackson, *Mongols*, 148, 150; M. Favereau, ed., *La Horde d'Or et le sultanat mamelouk: Naissance d'une alliance* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 2018); I. Vásáry, "'History and Legend' in Berke Khan's Conversion to Islam," in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III: Proceedings of the Thirtieth Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference*, ed. D. Sinor, 230–52 (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1990).

48. He mentions visiting Armenia, but the timing is unclear. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 13, assigns the visit to his second journey, whereas Potiron, "Un polygraphe," 146, assigns it to his first journey. The second journey seems more plausible to me, since Armenia would fit better into an itinerary in the Ilkhanate.

conquest of Khwarazm, the later conquest of Baghdad, and the differing stances of Berke and Abaqa with respect to Islam and Muslims.

Ibn Saʿīd's geography therefore belongs among other thirteenth-century attempts to describe the new Tatars. Its closest point of comparison is the geography of al-Qazwīnī. As already noted, Ibn Saʿīd composed his geography between 666/1267 and 685/1286, during or after his second visit to Baghdad. Al-Qazwīnī lived in Baghdad, composed the first version of his geography in 661/1262–63, and completed the second version in 674/1275–76.[49] Ibn Saʿīd and al-Qazwīnī met at some point in the course of Ibn Saʿīd's travels.[50] Both authors discussed the Tatars explicitly.

Nevertheless, there are significant differences between Ibn Saʿīd's and al-Qazwīnī's portrayals of the Tatars. Ibn Saʿīd did not assign the Tatars a climatic home,[51] whereas al-Qazwīnī placed the land of the Turks (Turkistān) in the east, where it extended all the way from the first to the seventh clime.[52] According to al-Qazwīnī, the Tatars "are a great generation of Turks, inhabitants of the eastern sixth clime, very much like the lion in hardness of heart, crudeness of character, sturdiness of body, and roughness of nature and in their love of disputes, bloodshed, and tormenting of animals. Their emergence is one of the miracles of the Prophet of God."[53] Al-Qazwīnī then repeated a hadith about apocalyptic attacks by Turks[54] and extended it by implication to the Tatars, adding his own assessment of their role as instruments of divine punishment. He commented on the Tatars' lack of religion and the distinctiveness of their language and script.

In contrast to al-Qazwīnī, Ibn Saʿīd did not offer a collective description of the Tatars. Instead, he made scattered references to Tatar violence throughout his geography, conveying the ubiquity and inescapability of their conquests. In the passage on Damdama, he attached Tatar violence to a specific date, 617/1220–21. It was in late 616 that Tatar armies embarked on the conquest of Khwarazm, and the ensuing events of 617 and 618 captured the attention of people across the Islamicate world. They included the fall of Bukhara, Samarqand, Marw, Nishapur, Urgench, and Herat, after which the defenders were killed, drafted, and enslaved in large numbers; the capture of the mother, wives, and children of the Khwarazmshah, who had taken refuge in the fortress of Mazandaran; and

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49. T. Lewicki, "Al-Ḵazwīnī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. Abū al-Faraj (Bar Hebraeus) included a chapter on the earth's geography in his treatise on astronomy, composed in 1279 in Syriac, but it does not mention the Tatars. Bar Hebraeus, *Le livre de l'ascension de l'esprit sur la forme du ciel et de la terre cours d'astronomie*, trans. F. Nau (Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1899), 2:112–30.

50. Lewicki, "Al-Ḵazwīnī."

51. A phantom reference to a Tatar home in the seventh section of the fifth clime appears in the Ginés edition, but I was unable to find a basis for this reading in any of the surviving manuscripts. According to Ginés's reading, the lands between Kashgar and Barskoon belonged to the "infidel Tatars" at the beginning of the ninth century, during the time of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī: Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ*, 108. Among the surviving manuscripts, BL lacks the description of the seventh section of the fifth clime entirely. P1 and OB refer to "infidel Turks," not Tatars, and al-ʿArabī's edition follows them. IS and P2 lack the passage in question.

52. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-ʿibād* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1960), 514–18, 589–90.

53. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād*, 581.

54. Cook, "Image," 226. See note 34 above.

the death of the Khwarazmshah in the Caspian Sea after fleeing across the breadth of his kingdom.[55] Ibn Saʿīd described these events as the Tatars "rising . . . to attack the countries of the ʿAjam." He thus suggested a set of associations between the Tatars, military success, uncontrolled violence, overwhelming speed, and the Persian East that the reader could then apply to the unknown Damādim.

Yet the analogy between the Tatars and the Damādim was not perfect. This may have troubled the copyist of the OB manuscript, who identified himself in the colophon as ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Māligh al-Tūnisī al-Kutubī and reported completing his copy in Alexandria in 704/1304. Ibn Māligh changed Ibn Saʿīd's text, removing the references to Damdama as a city and to the Tatar attack on the ʿAjam. The reason for the first omission was perhaps that the Tatars, like all Turks, were supposed to be nomads. Their lack of cities signified their lack of civilization. Non-urbanism was also a defining characteristic of the barbarians of the Far South, where the Damādim were supposed to be located.[56] With his deletion of the reference to the city of Damdama, Ibn Māligh may have sought to preserve the analogy and reinforce the depiction of the Damādim as a properly barbarian society. As for the second omission, although the Tatar invasion of Khwarazm had been widely characterized as a terrifying, apocalyptic threat to Islam, some thirteenth-century scholars considered the Christian crusades to be even worse.[57] Ibn Māligh, positioned in Alexandria, may have been reluctant to compare a Muslim ruler such as the Khwarazmshah with the Christian rulers of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha.

The Tatars in the North

A further reference to the Tatars can shed additional light on Ibn Saʿīd's "Tatars of the Sūdān." It occurs in the mirror of the Damdama passage, Ibn Saʿīd's description of the fourth section of the Far North, which extended from the Crimean port of Sudaq to the shore of the northern ocean, encompassing the Volga Bulgars and the Rus. This square of the grid contained a large lake, Lake Ṭūmā. "In its middle is the island BBN. . . . On it is a stronghold against the mountains, which contains the treasures of the ruler of the lands of the Ṭūmāns. Today it holds the wealth of the son of Berke."[58] All of the manuscripts that I was able to consult mention an island with a stronghold located in the middle of Lake Ṭūmā,[59] and all except IS and P2 (which are heavily abbreviated) report that the stronghold contains the wealth of the son of Berke.

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55. M. Favereau, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 49–62; D. Morgan, *The Mongols* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 68–74; Jackson, *Mongols*, 75–81; B. Manz, "The Mongol Conquest of Iran," in May and Hope, *Mongol World*, 196–212.

56. Olsson, "World," 505.

57. These scholars included Ibn al-Athīr in Baghdad and Ibn Abī al-Damm in Hama. Jackson, *Mongols*, 17, 21.

58. " من وسطها جزيرة الببن... فيها قلع مانع على جبل يكون فيها خزائن سلطان بلاد الطومايـن وفيهـا اليـوم امـوال ولـد بركـة." P1, fol. 113r.

59. The printed editions do not handle this passage well. Ginés locates the island between two branches of a river, rather than in a lake, and does not report its name. Al-ʿArabī places the island in Lake Ṭūmā but spells its name أليـس. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ*, 137–38; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 204.

Ibn Saʿīd portrayed the Tatars in the north, the Jochid khans of the Golden Horde, as a nonthreatening intermediate society governed by Muslims. At the time of Ibn Saʿīd's second journey to the East in 666/1267, the Jochid khan Berke had recently died and been succeeded by Möngke Temür. Berke had been a Muslim, and this had shaped his relationships with both the Mamluks under Baybars, who claimed legitimacy as defenders of Islam, and the Ilkhans under Abaqa, who ruled a large Muslim population but did not incline personally or politically toward Islam. Berke had negotiated an alliance with Baybars shortly before Ibn Saʿīd's second journey to the East. Ibn Saʿīd's identification of Berke's successor as the latter's son was incorrect, since Möngke Temür was the son of Berke's half brother Batu and thus a nephew of Berke. Ibn Saʿīd may have been misinformed, or he may have chosen orderly patrilineal succession as a characteristic appropriate for intermediate societies. In any case, in addition to highlighting Möngke Temür's treasury and protective fortress, Ibn Saʿīd mentioned the mosques and madrasas of his cities[60] and contrasted "the son of Berke of the Muslim Tatars" with "the son of Hülegü, sultan of the infidel Tatars."[61] In this passage, then, Ibn Saʿīd articulated a clear distinction between the violent, infidel Tatars of the Ilkhanid East and the orderly, Muslim Tatars of the Jochid North. In Ibn Saʿīd's geography, Tatars fulfilled both barbarian and intermediate roles, depending on the polity to which they belonged.

In three abridged manuscripts (OB, IS, and P2), the description of the island in Lake Ṭūmā ends with the reference to Berke's son. In BL it continues: "This island relates to the tiger (الببـر) because on it is found an animal resembling a lion in its power and in its insolence a leopard. It is said that it is born between them."[62] In P1, the passage reads: "This island relates to the Tatars (التتـر) because on it is found an animal resembling a lion in its power and in its insolence a leopard. It is said that it is born between them."[63] The spelling of the island's name also varies across manuscripts: in BL it is النّبـر, in P1 it is البيـن, in IS and P2 it is البيـن, and OB does not name the island.[64] Since we lack an autograph manuscript, I postulate that the copyist of BL, Muḥammad b. al-Muʾayyad, conveyed Ibn Saʿīd's text more accurately. *Al-Nibr* (النبـر storehouse, warehouse) is a logical name for an island with a treasury, and *al-babr* (الببـر tiger) makes sense as both a lion-leopard hybrid and as a word visually resembling the name of the island. The P1 copyist's slip of the pen, from *al-babr* to *al-tatar* (الببـر to التتـر), significantly alters the meaning of the passage.

The tiger-Tatar slip is not likely to have originated in Tatar self-fashioning. Berke, Möngke Temür, and other Chinggisid rulers claimed a hybrid animal ancestry, but it did not involve big cats. The Mongol *origo gentis* myth portrayed the Chinggisid lineage as arising

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60. In the description of the city of Saqsīn in the fifth section of the Far North under Berke's son. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 206.

61. Seventh clime, fifth section. "بركـة سـلطان التتـر المسـلمين... ابـن هلاون سـلطان تتـر الكفـار" Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ*, 130. Or else "ابـن بركـة ﴿مـن﴾ التتـر المسـلمين... ابـن هلاون، سـلطان التتر الكفـار" Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 197.

62. وانمـا نسـبت هـذه الجزيـرة الـى الببـر لانـه موجـود فيهـا وهـو حيـوان شـبه الاسـد وهـو فـي قوتـه وفـي قحة النمـر ويقـال انـه متولـد بينهمـا" BL, fol. 71v.

63. وانمـا نسـبت هـذه الجزيـرة الـى التتـر لانـه موجـود فيهـا وهـو حيـوان شـبه الاسـد وهـو فـي قوتـه وفـي قحة النمـر ويقـال انـه متولـد بينهمـا" P1, fol. 113r.

64. BL, fol. 71v; P1, fol. 113r; IS, fol. 39r; P2, fol. 37r; OB, fol. 76r.

from the union of Börte Chino (Blue-Gray or Gray-White Wolf, the male ancestor) and Qo'ai-maral (Beautiful Doe, the female ancestor).[65] Lupine progenitors played a role in many Inner Asian nomadic origin myths.[66] Wolves represented warriors; in myths, they were ancestors, protectors, and guides for the people, with a strong link to the supernatural and the spirit world.[67] Among the Turks' sedentary neighbors, the symbolism of the wolf as Turkic nomad had an ambivalent meaning: "a brave, energetic, and skillful hunter, but also a cunning thief and killer whose thirst for blood seems to know no bounds."[68]

When big cats appeared in Arabic texts in connection with Turks or Tatars, it was usually in the context of physiognomy. Al-Qazwīnī listed among the characteristics of Turks "greatness in numbers, an excess of courage and endurance, and the form of a lion, broad of face, flat of nose, fat of forearm,"[69] and as already noted, he described the Tatars as "very much like the lion" in their physical and mental toughness.[70] Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288) described the Tatars as having large chests and upper limbs because of the cold climate in which they live and "also because these characteristics are the characteristics of the courageous, and therefore the constitution of the lion is like this [as well]."[71] The physiognomic association of Turks, lions, broad flat faces, power, and hard-heartedness goes back at least to the eleventh century.[72] Although the physiognomy of individuals and groups was considered to have a hereditary component, it was also believed to be affected by the environment, astrological signs, diet, and a host of other nongenealogical factors.

The tiger-Tatar slip may have had a personal meaning for the P1 copyist. Although we do not know the copyist's name, P1 was created in 714/1314–15 for Abū al-Fidā, the ruler of Hama, who used it as a source for his own geography.[73] Abū al-Fidā had good reason to

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65. U. Onon, trans., *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Life and Times of Chinggis Khan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2001), 39. In later Mongol tales female wolves nursed heroic figures, including the Oirat hero Jangar and the Buddhist monk Jiambel Jöngdui. N. Jila, "Myths and Traditional Beliefs about the Wolf and Crow in Central Asia: Examples from the Turkic Wu-sun and the Mongols," *Asian Folklore Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006): 161–77, at 166.

66. The Türk qaghanate (sixth to eighth centuries) claimed a female wolf and a male human as ancestors in its *origo gentis* myth. The Wusun origin myth also included a female wolf, who nursed but did not give birth to the male ancestor of the people. The Uighur origin myth featured a male wolf and a female human. Many scholars have noted parallels with Roman and Zoroastrian *origo gentis* myths, but it is unclear where the motif of a lupine parent or nurse first emerged. M. Drompp, "The Lone Wolf in Inner Asia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 4 (2011): 515–26, at 517–18, 526; P. Golden, "The Ethnogenic Tales of the Türks," *Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 291–327, at 307–9; Jila, "Myths," 170–74.

67. Drompp, "Lone Wolf," 516; Jila, "Myths," 169; Frenkel, "Turks," 228.

68. Drompp, "Lone Wolf," 516.

69. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād*, 514 and similar remarks at 589.

70. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād*, 581.

71. Van den Bent, "Mongols in Mamluk Eyes," 66.

72. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-awāʾil ṣināʿat al-tadhjīm: The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, ed. and trans. R. Ramsay Wright (London: Luzac, 1934), sections 360, 361, 365, 366; Ibn Ḥassul quoted in van den Bent, "Mongols in Mamluk Eyes," 66n68.

73. Ahmad, *History*, 196.

dislike Tatars. His grandfather had defended Hama during the initial Tatar invasion of Syria, and his father continued to defend it through decades of Mamluk-Ilkhan conflict.[74] At the time of Abū al-Fidā's birth in 672/1273, his family had taken refuge in Damascus to escape a rumored Tatar attack.[75] As an adult, Abū al-Fidā himself participated in and wrote about the Mamluk-Ilkhanate conflict in Syria, including the Ilkhan Ghazan's brief occupation of Hama in 699/1299 and an invasion attempt in 702/1303.[76] Perhaps the P1 scribe, in copying Ibn Saʿīd's phrase about Berke's civilized, Muslim successor, was reminded of the uncivilized, infidel Tatars closer to home.[77] Berke's successor, as well as a number of the mamluks with whom Abū al-Fidā served, were Muslim Tatars, trained to defend. It was thus logical to cast their enemies, the predatory Tatars of the Ilkhanate, as a mixture of leopards, aggressive and resistant to training, and lions, powerful and hard-hearted.[78]

Another possibility is that the copyist was aware of a story not available to Ibn Saʿīd. The Mamluk chronicler Ibn al-Dawādārī, writing in 709–32/1309–32, recorded an *origo gentis* myth for the Mongols that was previously unknown to Mamluk scholars. It involved a Tibetan woman whose baby was stolen by an eagle and nursed by a lioness.[79] As an adult in human society, he was named Son of the Black Lion (*Alb Qarā Arslān Biljikī* or *Farkh al-Asad al-Aswad*).[80] Ibn al-Dawādārī said that he had encountered this myth in *The Book of the Great Ruling Father*, a rare volume in the collection of his friend Amīn al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī in Bilbays, and that the volume attributed the myth to a person from Azerbaijan.[81] On one hand, Ibn al-Dawādārī described this as a rare book containing a previously unknown story. But on the other, if Amīn al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī knew the story in the early decades of the fourteenth century, a scribe working for the ruler of Hama in the same period may also have known it. He may have been inspired by the juxtaposition of Tatars and lions in Ibn Saʿīd's text to insert a more direct reference to lionlike Tatars.

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74. Abū al-Fidā, *The Memoirs of a Syrian Prince: Abu'l-Fidāʾ, Sultan of Ḥamāh (672–732/1273–1331)*, trans. P. M. Holt (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), 3–5.

75. Abū al-Fidā, *Memoirs*, 8.

76. Abū al-Fidā, *Memoirs*, 35–37, 41–42.

77. Öljeitü, the reigning Ilkhan when P1 was copied, was a Shiʿi. Jackson, *Mongols*, 335. Peace between the Mamluks and a Sunni Ilkhan, Abū Saʿīd, was not achieved until 720/1320, well after the creation of P1.

78. F. Viré, in "Namir and Nimr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., comments on the reputation of leopards as difficult to train.

79. The first version of this story appears in *Durar al-tījān*, written 709–32/1309–32, and the second version appears in *Kanz al-durar*, finished after 735/1335. In this article, I am concerned with the earliest date at which Ibn al-Dawādārī could have encountered the story. J. van den Bent, "Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts: An Origo Gentis in Ibn al-Dawādārī's Durar al-Tījān and Kanz al-Durar," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 24 (2021): 39–70, at 41. Mythical snow lionesses raised the Tibetan culture heroes Gesar and Milarepa in some stories about their origins; see M. Schrempf, "The Earth-Ox and the Snowlion," in *Amdo Tibetans in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. T. Huber, 147–72 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 160. The Gesar story also circulated in other parts of Inner Eurasia, including Mongolia. Thanks to Michael Drompp for this suggestion.

80. Van den Bent, "Mongol Origins," 46.

81. Van den Bent, "Mongol Origins," 43–44.

The Damādim in Northeast Africa

With his use of the phrase "the Tatars of the Sūdān," Ibn Saʿīd implied that an act of swift, violent aggression by infidels had taken place in the lands of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha at around the same time as the Tatar attack on Khwarazm. While the destructiveness of the Tatar invasion was and remains widely known, the history of medieval Northeast Africa has received comparatively little attention from modern scholars. To what conquest was Ibn Saʿīd referring?

The year 617/1220–21 falls within an unusually opaque period of Northeast African history. The Nubian region along the Nile south of Egypt was home to two Christian kingdoms. Makuria lay to the north, bordering on Egypt, with its capital at Dongola (now Old Dongola). The southern kingdom was ʿAlwa, which had its capital at Soba (a site located within present-day Khartoum). Makuria was invaded multiple times during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, first by the Ayyubids in 568/1172–73 and then by the Mamluks, with the occasional cooperation of desert Arabs, beginning in 674/1276.[82] Although the twelfth through fourteenth centuries were certainly a period of insecurity for Makuria, as evidenced by the construction of fortified castle-houses in this period, the kingdom's conflicts with Egypt were well documented in Egyptian sources.[83] The early thirteenth century was relatively quiet.

The early thirteenth century for ʿAlwa, however, was a troubled time. At its peak in the tenth and eleventh centuries, ʿAlwa had been described in Arabic texts as the richest and most powerful kingdom of the Nūba.[84] It was located in an agriculturally productive region with access to long-distance trade routes,[85] and both the archaeological record and local memory associate it with distinctive styles of red brick architecture and pottery. Only one ʿAlwan settlement site, the capital city of Soba, has been systematically excavated by archaeologists. These excavations are ongoing.[86] At its peak, the city covered more than

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82. R. Seignobos, "L'Égypte et la Nubie à l'époque médiévale: Élaboration et transmission des savoirs historiographiques (641–ca.1500)" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2016); D. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia: Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile* (London: British Museum, 2002), 75–77, 242–53.

83. W. Y. Adams, "Castle-Houses of Late Medieval Nubia," *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 6 (1994): 11–46. Ayyubid chroniclers say nothing about Nubia in the early thirteenth century. Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms*, 76–78.

84. D. Welsby, "The Kingdom of Alwa," in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond: Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, ed. J. Anderson and D. Welsby, 183–99 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 183, 197. M. A. Zarroug, *The Kingdom of Alwa* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991), remains the only monograph devoted to the history of ʿAlwa.

85. On imported glass, see D. Welsby and C. Daniels, *Soba: Archaeological Research at a Medieval Capital on the Blue Nile* (London: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1991), 9, 246–59. Celadon imported from China was found at Abu Geili. G. Gerhards, "Some Notes on the Christian Medieval Heritage of the Gezira (Central Sudan)," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 30 (2021): 439–60, at 447.

86. See Welsby, "Kingdom of Alwa," 191–92, on past excavations. See also M. Drzewiecki, R. Ryndziewicz, T. Michalik, et al., "Soba Expedition: The Preliminary Report on the Season of Fieldwork Conducted in 2021–2022," *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne* 22, no. 1 (2022): 1–59; M. Drzewiecki, J. Ciesielska, et al., "Soba Expedition: Preliminary Fieldwork Report (2022–2023)," *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne* 23, no. 1 (2023): 1–10.

2.75 km² and had a population of up to 30,000 people.[87] Its palace, many churches, and other important buildings were built of red brick and stone. Almost all of these bricks were subsequently reused, not least for the construction of Khartoum in the nineteenth century. Less important buildings were made of timber or mud brick; those have been largely destroyed by rain and flooding or built over by later inhabitants of the area.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Soba experienced a severe decline in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[88] Two of its major churches were already in ruins by the early thirteenth century. In one of them, several richly dressed bodies were exhumed from their graves and dumped in the church's crypt. No imported pottery dating to the thirteenth century has been found in Soba, nor has pottery produced locally in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Robbery and the removal of red bricks for reuse began sometime after the beginning of the thirteenth century. The city may not have been entirely abandoned, but it was certainly depopulated and impoverished. What triggered this collapse is unclear. Intrusive burials in a preexisting Christian cemetery signal continued recognition of the site as a holy place but a change in mortuary practices. It is not known whether this change was triggered by the arrival of newcomers or a cultural shift among locals.

As for textual evidence, a description of ʿAlwa and its capital in Abū al-Makārim's *Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, composed at the beginning of the thirteenth century, says,

> Here there are troops and a large kingdom with wide districts in which there are four hundred churches. The town lies to the east of the large island between two rivers, the White Nile and the Green Nile. All its inhabitants are Jacobite Christians. Around it there are monasteries, some at a distance from the stream and some upon its banks. In the town there is a very large and spacious church, skillfully planned and constructed, and larger than all the other churches in the country; it is called the church of Manbalī.[89]

By contrast, in 685/1287, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir reported that the Mamluk sultan sent an ambassador to the king of al-Abwāb, a region on the border of ʿAlwa and Makuria that had evidently become independent, and eight other lords.[90] ʿAlwa itself no longer had a king. ʿAlwan territory south of al-Abwāb was occupied by a previously unknown people called the ʿAnaj.[91]

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87. Welsby, "Kingdom of Alwa," 192; Gerhards, "Some Notes," 445; M. Drzewiecki, R. Ryndziewicz, J. Ciesielska, et al., "The Spatial Organisation of Soba: A Medieval Capital on the Blue Nile," *Antiquity* 96 (2022): 213–20, at 214.

88. Welsby and Daniels, *Soba*, 9, 34; Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms*, 255; Drzewiecki, Ryndziewicz, Ciesielska, et al., "Spatial Organisation," 215–18.

89. G. Vantini, *Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften and Polish Academy of Sciences, 1975), 326; B. T. A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries Attributed to Abû Ṣâliḥ the Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 120. Evetts, the first person to produce a printed edition of this text, attributed it to Abū Ṣāliḥ the Armenian. It was actually written by a Copt, Abū al-Makārim, who died sometime after 1208. F.-C. Muth, "Abū Ṣāliḥ," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 1:54–55 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

90. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir in Vantini, *Oriental Sources*, 426. See also Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms*, 244, 254–55; M. Drzewiecki, "The Southern Border of the Kingdom of Makuria in the Nile Valley," *Institut des cultures méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences: Études et travaux* 24 (2011): 94–107.

91. G. Vantini, "Some New Light on the End of Soba," in *Acta Nubica: Proceedings of the X International*

Precisely what happened to Soba remains unclear. Local written chronicles and oral traditions focus on the arrival of the Funj in the early sixteenth century.[92] The Funj conquered the ʿAnaj, introduced Islam to the region, and in 910/1504 established a sultanate with its capital at Sennar. Their history is therefore of greater interest than ʿAlwa's is to the present-day Muslim residents of Khartoum. The one ʿAlwan event that has retained a prominent place in local memory is the destruction of Soba.[93] Local chronicles and oral traditions place this event in the sixteenth century, whereas archaeologists place it in the thirteenth century. Some traditions attribute the destruction of Soba to the Funj coming from the south, others to the Abdallab Arabs[94] from the north, and yet others to the machinations of Ajoba,[95] a beautiful but deceitful woman who pitted kings against each other for the privilege of marrying her daughter, prompting the surrounding tribes to unite and destroy the city. The idiom "to be destroyed like Soba" means total annihilation.[96] Although the temporal reference point for this idiom is ambiguous, it does echo thirteenth-century laments about the annihilation of Khwarazm by the Tatars.

In the region of present-day Ethiopia, associated in Islamicate ethnographic discourse with the capacious and unstable category of the Ḥabasha,[97] the year 617/1220–21 falls during the reign of Lālibalā, a king of the Zāgʷē dynasty. Although the Zāgʷē dynasty is poorly documented compared to the preceding Aksumite dynasty and the following Solomonic dynasty, a small set of internally produced texts have survived, including land donations and inscriptions on crosses, altar furnishings, and manuscript covers.[98] These can be combined with archaeological evidence and with texts produced as a result of the regular contact between kings of the Zāgʷē, Coptic patriarchs of Alexandria, and Fatimid and Ayyubid rulers of Egypt.

In 1270, the Solomonid dynasty emerged from a period of political strife among Ethiopian elites. It was around this time that Ibn Saʿīd wrote his geography. However, the Solomonids were not external conquerors, their advent did not entail a religious change, and their reign began fifty years after the Tatar conquest of Khwarazm. Therefore it is unlikely that Ibn

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Conference of Nubian Studies, Rome 9–14 September 2002, 487–91 (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2006), 487–88; Gerhards, "Some Notes," 443, 454; Seignobos, "L'Égypte," 312–13.

92. The *Funj Chronicle* was written in the early nineteenth century but draws on older material. Oral traditions were recorded in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries by local people and by travelers. Vantini, "Some New Light," 487.

93. Vantini, "Some New Light"; Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms*, 255; Gerhards, "Some Notes," 453–54; Drzewiecki, Ryndziewicz, Ciesielska, et al., "Spatial Organisation," 215.

94. A neighboring Arab tribe, the Jaaliyin, are said to have been founded in 1260 by a refugee who had fled Baghdad when it was besieged by the Tatars in 1258. Vantini, "Some New Light," 489.

95. Drzewiecki, Ciesielska, et al., "Soba Expedition," includes images of Ajoba drawn by primary school students and discusses how this tradition has evolved in light of the recent protest movement in Sudan.

96. Gerhards, "Some Notes," 454.

97. For multiplicitous uses of Ḥabasha, including locations in both East and West Africa, see Moraes Farias, "Models," 36–7; Hunwick, "Region," 105.

98. M.-L. Derat, *L'énigme d'une dynastie sainte et usurpatrice dans le royaume chrétien d'Éthiopie, XIᵉ au XIIIᵉ siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 17.

Saʿīd meant "Damādim" to refer to them. Many texts from the Solomonic period discuss events and people from the Zāgʷē period, but Marie-Laure Derat has argued convincingly that they must be used with caution and that any history of the Zāgʷē kingdom must be grounded in contemporary sources.[99]

Fortunately, Lālibalā is the best-documented king of the Zāgʷē. Land donations indicate that his reign began before 1204 and ended after 1225.[100] He had at least one successor, who received formal notification of the investiture of the Coptic patriarch Cyril III b. Laqlaq shortly after 1235.[101] Moreover, there was a continuity of cultural and religious practice in the region during the first half of the thirteenth century. Lālibalā is well known as the patron of ten beautiful rock-hewn churches at a place that now bears his name. A written document confirms that at least one of the churches, Medhane Alem, was built during his reign,[102] and churches in the same style were built after his reign as well.[103]

The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, composed in Egypt, does not mention the Zāgʷē kingdom in 617/1220–21. For that year, it records a plague of red locusts, the ongoing Frankish occupation of Damietta, and the arrival of news "of the coming out of a king from the East, called King of China, and with him people from the Turks, the Kata and the Kipchaks, and that he had overcome Khwarzim Shah, King of Persia. And he conquered Khwarzim, and Bukhara and Al-Maraghah and many cities from the Land of Persia and had made captive their inhabitants."[104] It would thus appear that from a Coptic perspective, the Zāgʷē did not experience an attack in 617/1220–21 comparable to the Tatar attack on Khwarazm.

However, references to wars and the Zāgʷē do appear in the biography of the patriarch John VI. He died in 1219, and his biography was added to the *History of the Patriarchs* in 1221.[105] Enemies of the Zāgʷē are mentioned twice in the narrative about John VI's nomination of a metropolitan for Ethiopia. First, the text reports that when Mikāʾēl (or Kil), the first metropolitan sent by John VI, fled back to Egypt, he claimed that the queen's brother had tried to kill him when "the king had gone out from his city with his army to make war against his enemies."[106] In subsequent diplomatic exchanges, Lālibalā countered that Kil had fled because he was accused of killing a priest. The second reference appears in a passage describing how the Ayyubid sultan al-Kāmil was impressed by a golden crown

99. Derat, *L'énigme*, 195–256.

100. Derat, *L'énigme*, 54 and 57.

101. Derat, *L'énigme*, 82–83.

102. F.-X. Fauvelle-Aymar et al., "Rock-Cut Stratigraphy: Sequencing the Lalibela Churches," *Antiquity* 84, no. 326 (2010): 1135–50, at 1137.

103. M. Gervers, "Churches Built in the Caves of Lasta (Wallo Province, Ethiopia): A Chronology," *Aethiopica* 17 (2014): 25–64, dates the nearby church of Yemrehanna Krestos to the thirteenth century; Fauvelle-Aymar et al., "Rock-Cut Stratigraphy," suggests a development sequence for the Lālibalā complex without determining whether the latest phase occurred in the thirteenth or the fifteenth century.

104. A. Khater and O. H. E. KHS-Burmester, ed. and trans., *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Publications de la Société d'archéologie copte, 1974), 35.

105. Derat, *L'énigme*, 78.

106. A. Khater and O. H. E. KHS-Burmester, ed. and trans., *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, vol. 3 pt. 2 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1970), 111.

sent as a gift to the patriarch and began to question the Zāgʷē ambassador. The ambassador declared, "If I began to describe to you his virtues, his armies, his wars, and God's support for him and granting him victory over his enemies, the description would be long."[107] The passage thus presents Lālibalā as a champion of the Copts whose power should command respect.

Who were Lālibalā's enemies? The *History of the Patriarchs* does not identify them, but other sources do. One such source is Ibn Khaldūn's fourteenth-century *Kitāb al-ʿIbar*, another is the Acts of Yared of the early fifteenth century, and a third is the life of Täklä Haymanot, written in the early sixteenth century. All three describe Damot, a powerful and aggressive pagan kingdom on the Šäwan plateau.[108] Its ruler took the title *motälämi*. Damot was neighbored by Christians (the Zāgʷē) to the north and Muslims (Ifat and Šäwa) to the east. According to the life of Täklä Haymanot, an evil idolator named Motälämi devastated Christian villages, destroyed Christian churches, and captured the mother of the future saint around 1214.[109] According to the Acts of Yared, a *käḥenatä däbtära* (an itinerant Christian priest and singer) was captured with a group of soldiers sent by one of the last rulers of the Zāgʷē to extract tribute from Damot. Prayer and the songs of Yared saved him during a trial by fire, after which the evil king Motälämi and all his subjects converted to Christianity.[110] And according to Ibn Khaldūn, a Christian ruler named Walašma (perhaps a late ruler of the Zāgʷē dynasty or the founder of the Solomonid dynasty) first submitted to Damot but later attacked and conquered it.[111] Together, these anecdotes point to conflict between Damot and the Zāgʷē in the early and mid-thirteenth century. In addition, the Muslim-ruled state of Šäwa disappeared between 1230 and 1270, apparently absorbed by Damot.[112]

For scholars of ʿAlwa, therefore, Ibn Saʿīd's phrase provides one more sliver of evidence for violence and instability in the early thirteenth century. For scholars of the Zāgʷē dynasty, it reinforces the evidence for hostilities with the kingdom of Damot. Though the name Damādim certainly echoes the name Damot, Damot was not responsible for the fall of ʿAlwa.[113] If Ibn Saʿīd collapsed the enemies of ʿAlwa and the Zāgʷē into one group, this merely shows the extent to which the Nūba and the Ḥabasha were lumped together in the Islamicate ethnographic imagination.

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107. Khater and KHS-Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs*, 3(2):114.

108. L. Berry, "Damot," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 1:78–79; A. Bouanga, "Le Damot dans l'histoire de l'Éthiopie (XIIIᵉ–XXᵉ siècles): Recompositions religieuses, politiques & historiographiques" (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2013). Damot and the *motälämi* are mentioned in additional sources, but only these three include details datable to the early thirteenth century.

109. She was miraculously rescued by the archangel Michael. Bouanga, "Le Damot," 35.

110. Zena Petros, the ruler of the Zāgʷē named in the Acts of Yared, cannot be identified but was probably seen as a son of Lālibalā. Despite the intervention of Yared, the Acts conclude that the real savior of the people of Damot was the Solomonid king Amdä Seyon. Bouanga, "Le Damot," 160–62.

111. Bouanga, "Le Damot," 162–63.

112. Bouanga, "Le Damot," 39–40.

113. Ibn Khaldūn mentioned both Damot and the Damādim without confusing the two. His Damādim (الدمادم) lived southwest of the Berbera, whereas he described the city of Damot (داموت) as lying west of the Ḥabasha. Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique septentrionale*, ed. W. M. G. de Slane (Algiers: Imprimerie du gouvernement, 1847), 161–62.

The Damādim in the South

The earliest references to the Damādim appear in al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab*, completed in 332/943 and revised in 345/956.[114] According to al-Masʿūdī,

> When the progeny of Nūḥ dispersed over the earth the descendants of Kūsh son of Kanʿān went to the west until they crossed the Nile of Egypt and then separated. One group turned to the south, between the east and the west; these were the Nūba, the Buja, and the Zanj. Another group went towards the west; they were many peoples such as the Zaghāwa, the Kānim, Marka, Kawkaw, Ghāna and other peoples of the Sūdān and the Damādim.[115]

This scene in which the descendants of Kush go their separate ways is taken from al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*, but al-Yaʿqūbī did not include the Damādim in his list of peoples.[116]

Al-Masʿūdī also mentioned the Damādim in his chapter on al-Hind (India). Drawing on Galen, he asserted the superiority of the people of Hind over the Sūdān even though both were located in the south. "In their intelligence, their administration, their wisdom, the healthiness of their temperaments, and the clarity of their complexions, the Hind stand apart from the rest of the Sūdān—the Zunūj, and the Damādim (الدمـادم), and the rest of the peoples."[117]

The second text to mention the Damādim is al-Maqdisī's *Kitāb Badʾ wa-l-taʾrīkh*, completed around 355/966 in Bust (now Afghanistan) under the Samanids. Damdam (دَمـدَمُ) appears in a line attributed to Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt, a pre-Islamic poet, alluding to Mary, the mother of Jesus: "She dropped the veil of the tent before her people, hiding from them in the deserts of Damdam."[118] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's *Muʿjam al-buldān* also quotes this line, giving the correct form and voweling for Damdam and classifying it as a toponym. Since the poem about Mary makes obvious use of Quranic material, modern scholars have judged it a forgery. It therefore cannot be counted as an attestation of Damādim before the tenth century. Further, the geographical information it provides is scanty: Damdam is a place, in the desert, isolated. The Quranic parallel says: "She withdrew from her family to an eastern place. And she veiled herself from them."[119] The "eastern place" is usually interpreted as a

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114. R. Mauny, "Lamlam," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 379n5.

115. English translation from Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 31; original Arabic in al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. C. Pellat (Beirut: Presses de l'Université Libanaise, 1965–79), 2:110, section 844; French translation in Cuoq, *Recueil*, 59–60.

116. Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Ibn-Wādhih qui dicitur al-Jaʾqubī Historiae*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 1:217; Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *The Works of Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī*, ed. and trans. M. Gordon et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 2:494.

117. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 1:91, section 170. Ayana, "Northern Zanj," 59, 80–81, misreads this list of ethnonyms (the Zunūj and the Damādim and the rest) as a single ethnonym (Zanj ed-Damadim).

118. T. Seidensticker, "The Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Umayya Ibn Abī al-Ṣalt," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart, 87–101 (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 90; "Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maḳdisi," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Kitāb Muʿğam al-buldān*, 2:587.

119. S. H. Nasr et al., eds., *The Study Quran* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 19:16–17.

location east of her home, east of the Temple sanctuary in Jerusalem, or a metaphorical and spiritual east. There is no implied geographical connection to Africa.

The third text in which the Damādim are mentioned is al-Bakrī's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, composed in the eleventh century. On the route from Tadmekka (modern Essouk) to Ghadames, it says,

> when a traveller goes from the country of Kawkaw[120] along the bank of the river in a westerly direction he reaches the kingdom called Damdam , the people of which eat anyone who falls into their hands. They have a great king to whom minor rulers are subject. In their country there is a huge fortress surmounted by an idol (*ṣanam*) in the form of a woman which they worship as their God and to which they go on pilgrimage.[121]

This passage corresponds phrase for phrase (though not word for word) to the description of the kingdom of Dahdam (ملك الدهدم) given in the anonymous tenth-century *Akhbār al-zamān*.[122] The only major change is that in *Akhbār al-zamān*, Dahdam and Kawkaw are at war. No other references to Dahdam exist, so the passage from *Akhbār al-zamān* has been folded into scholarship on the Damādim without comment.

The Damādim next make an appearance in the twelfth century in al-Idrīsī's *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq.* Al-Idrīsī placed the Damādim in the third section of the second clime: "The southern part of this [third] section includes the remaining parts of the lands of Kawkaw and the Damādim."[123] The editors of the Arabic edition note spelling variants across manuscripts: Damdam (الدمدم) appears three times and Daydam (الديدم) appears once. Al-Idrīsī also described in some detail a port called Dendama (دندمة), located on the East African coast in the eighth section of the first clime.[124] This town has sometimes

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120. Kawkaw has been identified as Gao on the Niger River, but it can also refer to generic barbarians. N. Levtzion, "The Early States of Western Sudan to 1500," in *History of West Africa*, ed. J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, 1:120–57 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 143; Moraes Farias, "Models," 41; Devisse and Sidibé, "Mandinka," 144.

121. English translation from Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 86–87. Al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* (Carthage: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Kitāb, 1992), 2:883, section 1477; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 108. Out of ten surviving manuscripts, one calls the kingdom Rusūm (رسوم) instead of Damdam (دمدم).

122. Al-Masʿūdī, *Akhbār al-zamān*, ed. A. al-Ṣāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), 89; Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 36; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 61. This text was not authored by al-Masʿūdī, although it has sometimes been attributed to him and the Arabic edition was published under his name. *Akhbār al-zamān* was written between the 330s/940s and the 350s/960s, around the same time that al-Masʿūdī was revising *Murūj al-dhahab*. U. Sezgin, "Al-Waṣīfī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; C. Pellat, "Al-Masʿūdī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. In its history of the rulers of Egypt after the Flood, *Akhbār al-zamān* mentions a battle between al-Rayān and the king of the Zumūm (الزموم), a group of naked Black cannibals with iron spears. In a sixteenth-century copy of this passage, al-Zumūm was changed to al-Damdam. Levtzion and Hopkins chose this variant for their English translation, but it does not appear in older copies of the text and was therefore not available to medieval ethnographers. Al-Masʿūdī, *Akhbār al-zamān*, 255; Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 37 and 381n11.

123. English translation from Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 123. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī ikhtirāq al-āfāq* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1990), 116; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 156.

124. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, 67–68; L. M. Devic, *Le pays des Zendjs: La côte orientale d'Afrique au moyen-âge (géographie, moeurs, productions, animaux légendaires) d'après les écrivains arabes* (Paris: Hachette, 1883), 82–83. Al-Idrīsī located Dendama near Sofala, on the coast of Mozambique south of modern

been conflated with the lands of the Damādim, but al-Idrīsī's passage on Dendama does not match anything found in al-Masʿūdī or al-Bakrī, whereas his passage on the Damādim is harmonious with both.

One more twelfth-century reference to the Damādim is found in the anonymous *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*. It is a close paraphrase of al-Bakrī:

> One who travels from the city of Kawkaw along the bank of the river in a westerly direction reaches a kingdom called al-Damdam, the people of which eat any white men who fall into their hands. They have a great kingdom and extensive lands. In their country there is a huge fortress surmounted by an idol (*ṣanam*) in the form of a woman, which they worship and which they keep veiled (*yaḥjubūnahu*).[125]

The only fresh details offered by *Kitāb al-Istibṣār* are that the Damādim eat white men specifically and that they veil their idol.

In sum, when Ibn Saʿīd wrote his geography, there were three strands of knowledge about the Damādim on which he could draw. The first strand, found only in al-Masʿūdī, associated the Damādim with the sons of Noah, Blackness, and West Africa, as well as Galenic environmental racism. Although al-Masʿūdī did not mention the Curse of Ham, the enslaveability of the Damādim could easily be inferred from the information given. The second strand, based on a forged poem attributed to Umayya, evoked not Africa but the desert and the spiritual seclusion of Mary. And the third strand, linking al-Bakrī, al-Idrīsī, and the anonymous authors of *Akhbār al-zamān* and *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*, portrayed the Damādim as a kingdom located in West Africa, in the second clime, on the bank of a major river, next to the Kawkaw. They characterized the Damādim as cannibals, subjects of a powerful king, worshippers of a female idol located in a fortress, and Black.

Faced with three interpretive strands, Ibn Saʿīd chose to create a fourth one. His Damādim lived in a city in Northeast Africa, in the Far South clime, next to the Nūba and the Ḥabasha. He made no mention of cannibalism, rivers, or a ruler. From the three earlier strands, his description incorporated only Blackness, paganism (implied through the comparison with the Tatars), and the name Damādim. His decision to place the Damādim in a city undermined their barbarity, a move that the OB copyist rejected by deleting this part of the passage. At the same time, Ibn Saʿīd chose to characterize the Damādim as aggressive in a way that the earlier descriptions had not. Even *Akhbār al-zamān*, which mentioned warfare between the neighboring kingdoms of Dahdam and Kawkaw, characterized that war as mutual ("they are fighting each other"), whereas Ibn Saʿīd's Damādim "emerged to attack."[126] We know that Ibn Saʿīd used information from al-Masʿūdī, al-Bakrī, and al-Idrīsī in other parts of his text.[127] Why did he choose to reimagine the Damādim to such a degree?

It is implausible that Ibn Saʿīd reinvented the Damādim for no reason. Some combination of the destruction of Soba, conflicts between Damot and the Zāgʷē, and the disappearance

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Beira. Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, 170n10.

125. English translation from Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 151. S. Zaghlūl ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, ed., *Kitāb al-Istibṣār fī ʿajāʾib al-amṣār* (Alexandria: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat al-Iskandariyya, 1958), 225.

126. Al-Masʿūdī, *Akhbār al-zamān*, 89 vs. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 81.

127. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 29–50; Ducène, "La source."

of Šäwa evidently struck him as noteworthy. These events reminded him of the Tatar invasion of Khwarazm, but since they happened in the countries of the Sūdān, he needed an ethnographically appropriate name to assign to the perpetrators. In the triadic classificatory model, the Damādim fit neatly as barbarians who could be placed in opposition to any intermediate society. Other geographers had placed the Damādim in opposition to Kawkaw, but placing them in opposition to the Nūba and the Ḥabasha, with Egypt as the civilized society, fit the model equally well, with the added benefit of alliteration between Damot and Damādim.

Damdam and the Damādim have usually been analyzed as part of a pool of doubled names that includes Lamlam, Namnam, Tamtam, Yamyam, and others. Modern scholars have treated these names as interchangeable with regard to their referent[128] and interpreted them as insulting, onomatopoeic nonsense evoking unintelligible speech. Modern scholars have also identified a pattern of associations between these names and a set of characteristics including Blackness, idolatry or unbelief, a location in Africa south of the Muslim-majority zone, a river, a powerful ruler or state, an incomprehensible language, cannibalism, nakedness, enslaveability, lack of individual identity, and general barbarism.

Ibn Saʿīd, however, did not use doubled names interchangeably in his geography. In the first section (far west) of the first clime, he juxtaposed the Lamlam as a barbarian society with Takrūr, an intermediate society with a Muslim ruler. The Lamlam had absorbed the villages on the south bank of the Niger, while the villages on the north bank belonged to Takrūr.[129] According to Ibn Saʿīd,

> [The Lamlam] are abandoned infidels who eat people. . . . The ruler [of Takrūr] captures the slaves of the Lamlam. The Lamlam are nomads. In books they are said to have a town more like a village called MWYH where is the house of their *dakākīr*—that is, their idols. It is situated on the Atlantic Ocean where the latitude is 6 degrees.[130]

Discussing the area immediately to the east of this region, the second section of the first clime, Ibn Saʿīd also mentioned a town on the river Lamī near Barīsā that "owes obedience to the Lamlam infidels. Its inhabitants are Jews of a kind known among the slaves of the Maghrib."[131] The name Lamlam had appeared first in the geography of al-Idrīsī, but Ibn Saʿīd's description of the group mixed elements of al-Idrīsī's description with elements from

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128. Schine, *Black Knights*, 248–53; Mauny, "Lamlam"; N. Levtzion, "Slavery and Islamization in Africa: A Comparative Study," in *Islam in West Africa: Religion, Society and Politics to 1800*, 182–98 (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1994), 185–86; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 14, 108n1, 205n3; Hunwick, "Region," 114; Gomez, *African Dominion*, 45; Ayana, "Northern Zanj," 81–82; Z. Szombathy, "Eating People Is Wrong: Some Eyewitness Reports of Cannibalism in Arabic Sources," in *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qurʾān to the Mongols*, ed. R. Gleave and I. Kristó-Nagy, 200–224 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 211; Devisse and Sidibé, "Mandinka," 144–45.

129. Moraes Farias, "Models," 27–28, discusses how to interpret rivers.

130. My translation, drawing on Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 184; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 91. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ*, 24, mispells لملم as لمسلم. Cuoq, *Recueil*, 203.

131. My translation, drawing on Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 185; Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 92. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb Basṭ al-arḍ*, 25, spells لملم correctly.

older descriptions of the Damādim.[132]

Ibn Saʿīd was the first to use the name Namnam in a geography. He placed the Namnam somewhat east of the Lamlam, in the second section of the first clime, and juxtaposed them with the kingdom of Ghāna, which, like Takrūr, was ruled by a Muslim. "The Namnam are related to the Lamlam and similar to them in their habits," but "to the south of the Nīl of Ghāna is the area where wander the Namnam aforementioned."[133] This framing illustrates Ibn Saʿīd's use of the triadic classificatory model. Takrūr, Ghāna, the Nūba, and the Ḥabasha were all intermediate societies, ruled by monotheists but not fully civilized by Ibn Saʿīd's standards. All three needed barbarian foils. Since Ibn Saʿīd had only two suitable names available and the Damādim may have been an especially good fit for Northeast Africa because of the alliteration with Damot, he introduced a third name, Namnam, for West Africa. He put noticeably less effort into creating fresh content for the Namnam than he did for the reinvented Damādim. The Lamlam, the Namnam, and the Damādim were thus not interchangeable in Ibn Saʿīd's text. They were conceptual cousins rather than clones.

Conclusion

The acclaimed cultural theorist Stuart Hall has argued:

> Unless one attributes to race a single, unitary, transhistorical character—such that wherever and whenever it appears it always assumes the same autonomous features, which can be theoretically explained, perhaps, by some general theory of prejudice in human nature (an essential argument of a classic type)—then one must deal with the historical specificity of race in the modern world.[134]

This article has dealt with the historical specificity of race by exploring a specific racial category (the Damādim) as it was developed by a specific person (Ibn Saʿīd) at a specific time (666–85/1267–86) within a specific discourse (learned Islamicate ethnography) using a specific set of intellectual constructs ("X is the Y of the Z"; Galenic environmental theory; the triadic classificatory model of civilized, intermediate, and barbarian societies; the duality of the Turks and the Tatars; the unity of the Nūba and the Ḥabasha; etc.).

132. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, 19, 24; Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 108, 110; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 130–32, 137; Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, 149n3; Mauny, "Lamlam." Al-Idrīsī, but not Ibn Saʿīd, said that the Lamlam had two towns, Do and Malel. On the basis of those names, Levtzion has identified the Lamlam with the twelfth-century Malinke before the emergence of a united Mali. Levtzion, "Early States," 132; Devisse and Sidibé, "Mandinka," 145.

133. English translation from Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus*, 186. Ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyyā*, 92–93; Cuoq, *Recueil*, 205. "The Nile" as used by Islamicate geographers conveys a concept—a river large enough to support human habitation in the extreme heat of the far south—not necessarily a location. Linking the various "Niles" to actual rivers is possible in some cases but not others. Hunwick, "Region," 110–14; Moraes Farias, "Models," 27–28; N. Levtzion, "Arab Geographers, the Nile, and the History of the Bilad al-Sudan," in *The Nile: Histories, Cultures, Myths*, ed. H. Erlich and I. Gershoni, 71–76 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

134. S. Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," repr. in *Race Critical Theories: Text and Context*, ed. P. Essed and D. T. Goldberg, 38–68 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 42. See also J. Stearns, "Race in the Islamicate Middle East: Reflections after Heng," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (2022): 114–21, at 120.

Thinking in generics by articulating groups and attaching generalizations to them plays an important role in human social cognition.[135] Only a subset of generics are racialized. What is race, as opposed to any other method of putting people in groups or expressing their internal sense of groupness? According to an anthropologist, race "characterizes situations in which an ethnic group (1) dominates, or attempts to dominate, another set of people and (2) seeks to impose on those people a categorical identity that is primarily defined by reference to their purported inherent and immutable differences from, and/or inferiority to, the dominating group."[136] From a philosopher's perspective, race "has to do with how appearance and ancestry, in the right setting, provide entry conditions for certain social locations and certain modes of treatment."[137] A scholar of comparative literature defines race as "a repeating tendency . . . to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups."[138] These definitions emerge from three distinct intradisciplinary conversations. One feature they share is the function of race as a means of creating, marking, and enforcing hierarchies of power. What the discipline of history can contribute to the study of race is an analysis of historical specificity and change. How and why were specific versions of race thinking developed and implemented? How and why have they changed over time?

Asking who the Damādim were is a badly posed question.[139] Instead, we should ask what function the Damādim served in Ibn Saʿīd's text. Something happened in Northeast Africa in the early thirteenth century. It was swift, violent, destructive, and perpetrated by non-Muslims. It might have been accompanied by an outbreak of disease; it might have had apocalyptic overtones; it might have been several events rolled into one. It was significant enough that Ibn Saʿīd compared it to the Chinggisid attack on Khwarazm and mentioned it in his geography. By assigning the name Damādim to this event, Ibn Saʿīd signaled the Blackness of the perpetrators and highlighted the barbarity, violence, and unbelief that could appear at either climatic extreme.

This microhistorical case reveals both the power dynamics inherent in racemaking and a moment of change in racial construction enacted through comparison. "The Damādim are

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135. D. Wodak, S.-J. Leslie, and M. Rhodes, "What a Loaded Generalization: Generics and Social Cognition," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 9 (2015): 625–35, at 626.

136. R. Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2008), 23.

137. P. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 55.

138. G. Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3.

139. My focus in this article has been on "knowledge of categories" rather than on "knowledge of the world"; see Moraes Farias, "Models," 28. Readers interested in "knowledge of the world" might consult Lee, "Historical Meanings," and T. Skrynnikova, "Hierarchy of Identities in Chingis-Khan's Mongolian Ulus," in *Central Eurasia in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of Peter B. Golden*, ed. O. Karatay and I. Zimonyi, 337–50 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), for the Tatars, and J. Devisse and S. Sidibé, "Mandinka et mandéphones," in *Vallées du Niger*, ed. J. Devisse, 143–50 (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993), for the Damādim. D. Ayana, "The Northern Zanj, Demadim, Yamyam, Yam/Yamjam, Habasha/Ahabish, Zanj-Ahabish, and Zanj ed-Demadam: The Horn of Africa between the Ninth and Fifteenth Centuries," *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 57–104, is helpful up to a point but contains errors rooted in the use of Arabic sources in translation.

the Tatars of the Sūdān" is a comparative phrase. It creates knowledge about the Tatars and the Damādim simultaneously but differently. Ibn Saʿīd's power to make and remake African signifiers was unchecked. He bundled the Ḥabasha together with the Nūba regardless of the distinctive political situations of ʿAlwa, Damot, and the Zāgʷē. He unilaterally changed the content associated with the Damādim and invented a new name, Namnam, to take the place of the Damādim alongside the Lamlam in West Africa.

By contrast, Ibn Saʿīd's power to make and remake Tatar signifiers was checked by the power of Tatars as rulers, patrons, and scholars. Although Ibn Saʿīd did not write for Turkic or Tatar patrons, many of his peers did. Indeed, a few of his peers self-identified as Turks or Tatars. As a result, there was pressure to maintain some kind of a relationship between a coherent, self-identifying community of (elite) Tatars and the portrayal of Tatars in scholarly texts. This does not mean that portrayals of Tatars by Ibn Saʿīd or any other medieval scholar were unracialized. But it does mean that Ibn Saʿīd could not invent new content for the name Tatar and expect his peers to accept and perpetuate it uncritically. Moreover, his portrayal of Tatars had to be sufficiently nuanced to address change over time, distinguish individuals from the group, and admit the possibility of nonbarbarian Tatars.

The rulers of the Damādim were not patrons of Islamicate learning, and there is no indication that any prominent scholar of Ibn Saʿīd's generation self-identified as Damādim. As a result, there was no pressure on Islamicate scholars to portray the Damādim as individuals, acknowledge changes in their society, or categorize them as anything other than barbarians.[140] Ibn Saʿīd's power to racialize the Damādim was thus unconstrained by the scholarly peer pressure that limited his ability to racialize the Tatars. The tensions inherent in this situation came to the surface a generation later with the arrival in Cairo of Mansa Musa, a Black African patron of Islamicate scholarship.

Acknowledgments

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140. Portrayals of fictional individuals, such as the king Damdamān in *Sīrat Dhāt al-himma*, are discussed in Schine, *Black Knights*.

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