

# In Other Worlds? Mapping Out the Spatial Imaginaries of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām)

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*Osmanlı Biladü's-Şamı'nda Yaşamış Olan 18. Yüzyıl Vakânüvislerinin Mekân Tahayyülleri Öz* ■ Bu makalede 18. yüzyıl Osmanlı Levant'ı/Biladü's-Şam'ından (günümüz Suriye, Lübnan, Ürdün, İsrail ve Filistin'den) yedi vakânüvisin küresel mekân tahayyülleri incelenmektedir. Farklı sosyal, dinî ve meslekî kökenlerden gelen söz konusu vakânüvisler, Biladü's-Şam'ın Arapça konuşan ahalisinden olmaları hasebiyle ortak bir kimlik altında birleşseler de, Osmanlılıkla olan alakalarının da bilincindeydiler. Bu çalışmada, vakânüvislerin kökenlerindeki ortaklıklar ve farklılıklar göz önüne alınarak her bir yazarın mekânsal tahayyülündeki “gerilimler” incelenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, yazarların tahayyüllerindeki dünya, grafiklere ve haritalara aktarılıp karşılaştırılarak, farklılık gösteren ve birbiriye örtüşen coğrafi kimlikler görselleştirilmiştir. Devletlerin sınır temelli kimliklerin inşasında çok az dahlinin olduğu ulus-öncesi bir çağda, Biladü's-Şam'lı Osmanlıların aynı dünyada yaşayıp yaşamadığı sorusuna cevap aranmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: 18. yüzyılda Osmanlı Biladü's-Şam'ı, Arapça Kronikler, Ulema Olmayan Tarihçiler, Mekân Tahayyülü, Bölgesel Kimlik, Görselleştirilmiş Mekân Algıları.

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This essay is a revised and abridged version of a chapter from my dissertation, “Peripheral Visions: The Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers from the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Levant” (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 2002), Chapter Three, “Author and Space”. My deepest gratitude is owed to the following people at O’Neill Library, Boston College: Barbara Mento (for Map 1), Constantin Andronache (for both graphs), Benjamin Florin for various trial maps that were not used, and Bill Donovan and Lindsay Skay Whitacre for Map 5. Austin Mason of Boston College History Department came through at the last minute and created maps 2.1-2.8. It should be noted that Maps 1 and 3 have not been geocoded and as such represent approximations of places.

In our modern nationalist moment, territoriality is definitive, and is constituted by a spatial imaginary of every inch of the homeland, an imaginary visualized in maps taught in school textbooks.<sup>1</sup> While spatial markers were a standard feature through which pre-moderns (in our case, Arabic-speaking early-moderns) identified themselves, such as an individual's city of provenance, a consensual or hegemonic spatial regime of identity was not the order of the day. In other words, in pre-national times, politics, identity, and geography did not "triangle" off, or at least, not very precisely.

Still, geography mattered. Even in the absence of spatial visualization techniques to orient the imagination, and a modern state apparatus to condition the citizens into a collective identity that is territorially bound, pre-moderns did identify with spaces outside their immediate environment. They too employed their imagination in constructing spatial identities. However, what is intriguing is not the fact of the existence of a pre-modern spatial imaginary as such, but rather how variegated these imaginaries were.

This essay offers an experiment of sorts, an examination of how people, in a pre-national and pre-cartographic time,<sup>2</sup> recalled spaces, which they may or may not have seen, and arranged these spaces into a coherent imaginary. This is an inquiry into, literally, people's "worldviews": how they viewed the world, and hence, where they located themselves in it. In order to do this, I have consulted a group of chronicles, all of which were written in eighteenth-century Levant (Bilād al-Shām).<sup>3</sup> These particular chronicles because they are composed by individuals whose backgrounds are markedly different from the profile of the usual authors of such works: the *ʿālim* (scholar) or high-level Ottoman bureaucrat. This motley crew of new historians are a soldier from Damascus, two Shiʿī agriculturalists from Jabal ʿĀmil (in southern Lebanon), a judicial court scribe from the town of Ḥimṣ, a barber from Damascus, a Greek Orthodox priest from Damascus, and a Samaritan scribe from Nablus. For good measure, I have also included the chronicle of a Damascene scholar into the mix. (See Map 1 for the cities/towns/regions of provenance of the authors). Given these historians' differing social, professional,

1 Clearly, this is in the vein of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

2 Recent studies have shown that Ottoman cartography was quite developed. See for example, Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). That said, the average Ottoman subject did not seem to have been exposed to or conditioned by maps.

3 I use "Levant" as a shorthand for Bilād al-Shām (the area covering the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan).

and communal backgrounds, the overarching question in this essay is: though all of these authors came from the Ottoman Levant, did they live in the same Syrian or Ottoman world?

In order to answer this question, I have scoured each of the chronicles under discussion for spatial references, the frequency of these references, and the reasons for their mention. I did so with the purpose of finding out what it was that impelled each author's mind to wander off outside his city or away from his hometown. In other words, I have tried to find out the "operating principles" that allowed the constitution of global horizons as imagined by regular people from the eighteenth-century Levant, and plotted those visions of the world and juxtaposed them on maps.



Map 1: The Chroniclers' Places of Origin

### The Scholar, Ibn Kannān: The House of Osman and the House of Islam.

The scholar and Sufi, Muḥammad Īsā Ibn Kannān (d. 1740),<sup>4</sup> was a wealthy man and a minor notable from Damascus, who spent much of his life teaching Ḥanbalī jurisprudence (though he himself had switched to the state official rite, Ḥanafism, as it was the habit of aspiring Levantine scholars).<sup>5</sup> Although well connected to the elites of his city, Ibn Kannān was not beneficiary to direct imperial patronage. A thoroughly loyal Ottoman subject, Ibn Kannān's chronicle is organized around the Ottoman "system". He starts his entry for each year with an iteration of the same formula:

And the Sultan of the *rūmī* (Roman/Turkish) '*arabī* (Arab) and some of the '*ajamī* (Persian) lands is... the Grand Vizier (in Istanbul) is ... the Governor (of Damascus) is ... the *qāḍī* of Damascus is... the *muftī* of Istanbul is... the *muftī* of Damascus is ... the teachers (of Damascus) are... and the Hajj commander (in Damascus) is ..."<sup>6</sup>

This is how Ibn Kannān orders *his* world. Not only does he demarcate the geographical borders of the empire through the reiteration of the Ottoman domains, but given his vested interest in the judicial-academic system, this teacher of jurisprudence establishes a hierarchy of authorities that connects the imperial center to the provincial capital. It is a hierarchy to which he belongs in his capacity as a scholar and teacher in Damascus. In other words, even if Ibn Kannān did not have imperial patronage, he manages to discursively insert himself in a "system" that connects him directly to the Sultan.

Given his investment in the Ottoman system, it is no surprise that Ibn Kannān's vision of the world is, at least in part, a direct effect of the territorial ebb and flow of the empire. The borders of the Ottoman world acquire names and definition in his chronicle when they are captured, lost, or recaptured by the Ottoman sovereign, or when war threatens. Thus, Temesvar appears in Ibn Kannān's world for the first time when it is lost from the Ottoman realms, and reappears for the second and last time when he reports its recapture in 1739.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the Morea (*bilād al-mūrī*) appears only when it is recaptured by the Ottomans from the Venetians

4 Muhammad Ibn Kannān al-Ṣāliḥī, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, ed. Akram Aḥmad al-'Ulabī (Damascus: Dār al-Tabbā', 1994). The chronicle covers the years 1699-1740.

5 For the life and work of Ibn Kannān, see my "Ibn Kannan", <http://www.ottomanhistorians.com>; eds. C. Kafadar, H. Karateke, C. Fleischer (January 20, 2013)

6 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 7. Variations of the same formula are in almost every annual entry.

7 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 511 Ibn Kannān was, in fact, misinformed: the Ottoman reconquest included Belgrade, but not Temesvar.

in 1127/1715;<sup>8</sup> while Malta is mentioned due to reports of incursions by Maltese pirates on the eastern Mediterranean coast.<sup>9</sup> As a geo-political consequence of this, the borders of Ibn Kannān's chronicle extend to Morocco as he learns that "Mawla-y Sulṭān Ismā'īl of al-Maghrib is waging a war against Mālṭa" to deliver it from Christian hands.<sup>10</sup> The "land of the Tatars" (Crimea) is mentioned when there is a rumor that the Russians are building fortresses nearby and thus threatening Ottoman sovereignty in the area,<sup>11</sup> while in the east, Isfahan enters Ibn Kannān's sphere when Ottoman armies mobilize in response to the sacking of the Safavid capital by the Afghan usurper Maḥmūd Ghilzāy in 1722.<sup>12</sup>

However, Ibn Kannān's spatial horizons and the mechanisms through which he conceived of far away places were not limited by the borders of Empire. Ibn Kannān's spatial vocabulary included areas that were neither part of the Ottoman Empire, nor impinging directly on the Ottoman domains, such as India (*al-hind*), and the Ozbeg-ruled Khurāsānī city of Balkh (which Ibn Kannān calls *bilād yazbik*, not to be confused with Ozbeg Transoxiana). These places hold a certain exotic value for Ibn Kannān – they are different, distant, and wondrous. India, for Ibn Kannān, is a place where people have reliably been known to live for several hundred years,<sup>13</sup> and where rulers build great cities around which it takes several days to journey.<sup>14</sup> *Bilād al-yazbik*, or Balkh, made it into Ibn Kannān's geographical vocabulary through the arrival (and eventual settlement) of a Balkhī community in Damascus. Ibn Kannān was sufficiently curious about the Balkhīs to have visited them at their lodgings shortly after their arrival.<sup>15</sup> Of *bilād al-yazbik*, he

8 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 242-43.

9 For this and other references to Malta (all of which refer to the same piracy incident) see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 200, 211, 216, and 217, respectively.

10 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 200.

11 Ibn Kannān reports that the Ottoman had raised an army against "the Christians" as, "they had built a fortress between the (land of the) Rūmīs and (the land of) the Tatars," *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 171. Here, the author is speaking of the Pruth Campaigns (1710-1713), one of the causes of which was Russian fort building activity along the Dnieper.

12 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 356. The usurpation of Maḥmūd Ghilzāy, whom Ibn Kannān calls Uways, ended the rule of the Safavid dynasty; see David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 152.

13 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 303.

14 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 18. The Indian city to which Ibn Kannān is referring in probably Awrangābād, named for its builder, the Mughal emperor Awrangzīb; see "Aurangābād," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

15 He went there in the company of two friends, and reported that the Balkhīs fed him pistachios and raisins; Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 114.

says, “Between it and Damascus is (a distance of) approximately one year,” while of the newly settled Balkhī community he says, “They have customs (*ādāb*) that make no sense to the people of these lands.”<sup>16</sup>

Strikingly, Ibn Kannān’s nomenclature for regions outside the Ottoman domains exhibits a discriminating tendency that privileges Muslim rule. If the region is under Muslim rule, such as India or Balkh, or even the “heterodox”-ruled Isfahan, he accords it due respect by calling it by its proper name. Non-Muslim ruled regions fall under the undifferentiated categories of *bilād al-naṣārā* (the land of the Christians) or *bilād al-kuffār* (the land of the infidels), that is, a geographical area that contains the epitome of the Ottoman “other”: Christendom.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the places to which Ibn Kannān refers fall within the uncontested regions of the Ottoman Empire: from Crete, to Istanbul, to Erzurum, to Diyarbakir, to Baghdad, to Yemen, to Cairo and to Mecca and Medina.<sup>18</sup> In the Levant itself, Ibn Kannān refers to numerous cities, towns, and villages. The question to be asked is: what is it that takes Ibn Kannān to all these places? More often than not, the places he mentions suggest themselves to him because they occur in the itinerary of a person about whom he speaks in his chronicle, whether recording the activities of an Ottoman official, or providing a biographical notice (*tarjama*) upon the death of a scholar.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Kannān follows the footsteps of scholars as they travel in pursuit of knowledge, of governors on military campaigns, of government officials traveling to take up appointments, and even of merchants on business trips. In other words, it is as though places, towns, and regions exist only after one of Ibn Kannān’s personalities set foot there.

If the sheer number of references to a city in a text is an acknowledgement of the city’s importance in the author’s mind, then the staggering 107 references to Istanbul (with Jerusalem a distant second with 29 references) is testimony that Ibn Kannān knew very well where the heart of the empire was.<sup>20</sup> The imperial capital pressed itself upon the consciousness of an upwardly-mobile Damascene like Ibn Kannān: the Damascus-Istanbul traffic he recorded included imperial appointees - such as the various *qādīs*, treasurers, and other officials - arriving in Damascus to

16 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 114, and 312.

17 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 171 and 178, respectively.

18 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 162 (Crete); 379 (Erzurum); 432 (Diyarbakir); 204, 372 and 483 (Baghdad); and 216, 357 (Yemen). References to Istanbul, Cairo, Mecca, Medina, are too numerous to cite.

19 Examples are: Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 129, 483, and 96.

20 For examples of biographies that include Istanbul as a station, see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 31, 96, 100, 134, 267, 483, and 388.

take up their posts or returning to Istanbul upon the completion of their tenure,<sup>21</sup> imperial messengers dispatched with notices ranging from orders of appointment, to death warrants, to pardons, to general announcements,<sup>22</sup> and even the occasional severed head belonging to an imperially-condemned personality.<sup>23</sup> However, it is not only the caravans on the Damascus-Istanbul road that prompted Ibn Kannān to write the imperial capital into his chronicle, but also important events in that city, ranging from rebellions, to the assassination of *shaykh al-Islām*, to the enthronement and deposal of the Sultans. As the center of the imperial structures by which Ibn Kannān sought to orient his life, Istanbul lay at the center of Ibn Kannān's world beyond Damascus.<sup>24</sup>

Jerusalem (29 references) and Cairo (26 references) are the two major cities Ibn Kannān mentions most after Istanbul. Ibn Kannān takes an active interest in events taking place in Cairo and Jerusalem, more so than he does in other frequently mentioned cities such as Sidon, Tripoli and Aleppo, which generally appear in the context of people's itineraries. Ibn Kannān is particularly concerned about civil and military strife in Cairo and Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup> On one occasion, Ibn Kannān displays a detailed knowledge of the urban geography of Cairo. In 1118/1706, he reports drought in Egypt and the subsequent prayer for the inundation of the Nile by Cairenes, and his imagination roams in sympathy through the city.<sup>26</sup> Even ubiquitous Istanbul is never treated by Ibn Kannān as intimately, which may indicate that the author may have spent some substantial amount of time in Egyptian capital.

Like many other chroniclers in our sample, Ibn Kannān's spatial horizon were also defined by "state rituals": He often announces the arrival of the Egyptian Treasury (*al-khazna al-miṣriyya*), the caravan bearing Egypt's financial dues to the imperial capital, which made a ceremonial stop in Damascus.<sup>27</sup> Another ritual that stitched the empire together was, of course, the annual pilgrimage caravan. Ibn Kannān's attention to the pilgrims' progress prompts him to mention places that are unlikely to resonate with modern readers, such as al-'Ulā (mentioned 28 times). This site happened to be one of the more important halting stations for the Hajj ca-

21 For example, see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 37-38, 142, and 378.

22 For example, see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 16, 76, 221, 224, 356, and 364.

23 For example, see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 54-55, 149, 213, and 247.

24 For example, see Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 67-68, 72-73, 75, and 324.

25 For example, Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 178 and 401, respectively.

26 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 106.

27 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmīyya*, 133, 203, 247, and 378.

ravan, from which pilgrims sent letters of reassurance back to Damascus.<sup>28</sup> Naturally, Mecca, the final destination of the pilgrimage caravan, has an indelible place on the mental map of Ibn Kannān and most of the other chroniclers in our sample.<sup>29</sup>

Generally, our Levantine-Ottoman *‘ālim*’s spatial horizons were wide: he mentions a total of 110 villages, towns, cities, and regions dispersed in the geographical area between the Crimea in the north to Yemen in the south, and from Morocco in the west to India in the east. (See Map 2.1). His geography was considerably determined by his position as an *‘ālim*, and as a loyal subject of the Ottoman Sultan. For Ibn Kannān, the world is geographically divided into the undifferentiated lands of the infidel, and various differentiated Muslimdoms. As an *‘ālim*, his eyes followed fellow Muslim scholars as they traversed the *dār al-Islām*, the House of Islam, between Istanbul, Cairo, India, and Balkh. While some parts of the Muslim world held little more than exotic value for Ibn Kannān, on others, like Jerusalem, and Cairo, he kept a most empathetic eye.



Map 2.1.

28 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 41, 86, 102, 135, 160, 187, 197, 205, 277, 361, 366, 375, 388, 395, 402, and 505.

29 Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt shāmiyya*, 53, 131, 196, 357, and 366.



### The Barber, Ibn Budayr: A Cultural World and an Imperial World

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Budayr (fl. 1762) was a practicing barber, who shaved and coiffed, and probably circumcised and healed in Damascus.<sup>30</sup> It is not so much the fact of the literacy of this barber that is astounding, but that he wrote his chronicle in emulation of the scholarly form. In his history, he makes thorough use of the literary form of the *tarjama* (death notices/biographies). Let us briefly explore a couple of Ibn Budayr's *tarjamas* to note a particular spatial pattern in Ibn Budayr's imagination.

In a death notice for the teacher, scholar and notable, Ismā'īl al-'Ajlūnī, Ibn Budayr says:

Neither in Damascus nor in any other city did anyone equal, resemble, or compare to him; he was known among people in Cairo, Damascus, and in Istanbul.<sup>31</sup>

Elsewhere, when eulogizing Ibrāhīm al-Jabāwī al-Sa'dī al-Shāghūrī (d. 1749), the Shaykh of the Sa'diyya Sufi order, Ibn Budayr says, "He made for himself a huge following in Istanbul, Cairo, Aleppo, and Damascus".<sup>32</sup>

Ibn Budayr thus seems to see Istanbul and Cairo as the *horizons of his cultural world*. Cultural recognition is marked not only by reference to the great cities of the Levant – Damascus and Aleppo - but also to these two great metropolises of the empire.

Like Ibn Kannān, Ibn Budayr also stitches this world together through the medium of imperial ritual: he too awaits the arrival in Damascus of the Egyptian Treasury on its journey to Istanbul, and notes any irregularity in its schedule.<sup>33</sup> But,

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30 Aḥmad al-Budayrī al-Ḥallāq *Hawādith Dimashq al-yawmiyya 1154-1175/1741-1762*, in the recension of Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qāsimī, ed. Aḥmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1959). This is a bowdelerized version. The paper here uses the original version of the barber as found in the unique manuscript. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Budayr al-Ḥallāq, *Hawādith Dimashq al-Shām al-yawmiyya min sanat 1154 ilā sanat 1176*, MS Chester Beatty, Arabic 3551/2, Dublin. The chronicle covers the years 1741-1762. For the life of Ibn Budayr, see my "Ibn Budayr", <http://www.ottomanhistorians.com>; (eds.) C. Kafadar, H. Karateke, C. Fleischer (January 20, 2013). Also, my *Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Levant* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013).

31 Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 51b.

32 Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 81b.

33 Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 7a, 18a, 36a, 44a, 55a, 61a, 68b, 74b, and 76b. For a delay in the arrival of the treasury, see 36a.

While Cairo is an important feature in the spatial composition of Ibn Budayr's chronicle (14 references), unlike Ibn Kannān, the city does not seize Ibn Budayr's imagination. It exists for him only as one of the poles of his cultural world, and as the source of the Egyptian Treasury that proceeds annually to Istanbul. He is not interested in the events of the city itself. Also, while Istanbul is mentioned more often than any other city in Ibn Budayr's chronicle, the imperial capital is clearly not as important to Ibn Budayr as it is to Ibn Kannān. Whereas Ibn Kannān mentions Istanbul more than four times as often as the next city (Jerusalem), Ibn Budayr cites Istanbul 25 times, Tripoli 17 times, Cairo, Sidon and Tiberias 14 times, and Aleppo 13 times.<sup>34</sup> Also, Ibn Budayr's interest in Istanbul, which he also calls "Islāmbūl" and "Islānbūl", is limited to its imperial function.<sup>35</sup> That Istanbul exists for Ibn Budayr overwhelmingly in the dimension as the seat of imperial government is illustrated in Ibn Budayr's sublimation of the city to the imperial institutions of *al-bāb al-'ālī* (the High Porte) and *al-dawla al-'aliyya* (the Exalted State).<sup>36</sup>

In Ibn Budayr's chronicle Istanbul is the place from which things imperial emanate. The barber notes the arrival of all sorts of manifestations of officialdom from Istanbul, ranging from the bearers of imperial *firman*s, to new members of the Janissary corps, to the *Şurra* (the annual gift sent by the Sultan to the Sharīfs of Mecca), to a construction team sent to renovate the Umayyad mosque.<sup>37</sup> Istanbul is also the imperial source to which officials, such as the Ḥanafī *qādīs* of Damascus, return after their tenures in service,<sup>38</sup> or after performing the Hajj, as did the *shaykh al-Islām* in 1160.<sup>39</sup>

34 The references are too numerous to cite.

35 For "Iṣṭanbul" (which he spells with *ṣād* and *ṭā'*, unlike some of the other chroniclers who use *sin* and *tā'*), see Ibn Budayr, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, 6a, 11b-11a, 73a, 21a, 44a, and 61b; for "Islāmbūl", see 7a, 27b, 36a, 41a, 63a, 73a, 76a, 81b, 84b, and 93b; for "Islānbūl", see 68b. For the provenance of the nomenclature "Islāmbūl," ("where Islam abounds"), see the entry "Istanbul," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

36 Ibn Budayr, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, 11b-12a, 80a.

37 Ibn Budayr, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, 27b, and 32a, 44a and 73a, 7a, 93a-94b, respectively. The arrival of the renovation team is an occasion when Ibn Budayr distinguishes between the city of Istanbul and the imperial institution: "An imperial messenger, called Sabanikhzada, arrived from Istanbul on behalf of the state (*min ṭaraf al-dawla*), to inspect the Umayyad mosque" (93a-94b).

38 Ibn Budayr, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, 63a, and 76a.

39 Ibn Budayr, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, 36a.

The geographical space that is most articulated in Ibn Budayr's chronicle is the Levant. This regional space is marked for Ibn Budayr in different ways, one of which is the appointments of governors and district governors to the various cities and provincial capitals.<sup>40</sup> Ibn Budayr's relationship with the cities of the Levant is far more intimate than it is with Cairo and Istanbul, and he reports events there that are not associated with governors and dignitaries. For example, Ibn Budayr mentions bread price inflation and a flood in Tripoli, a shipwreck off the coast of Sidon, and a minor mutiny in Aleppo.<sup>41</sup> It is doubtless their proximity to Damascus that renders these places more sympathetic to Ibn Budayr. The barber's imagination, however, does venture east of the Levant to Iraq, Persia and India, on account of the military campaigns of Nādir Shāh of Persia whom Ibn Budayr mistakenly knows as "the Khārījī called Tahmās."<sup>42</sup> Nādir Shāh had initially ruled Iran in the name of the Safavid Tahmāsp II, and had taken the name Tahmāsp-qūlī (the slave of Tahmasp), but in 1148/1736 he had himself proclaimed Shāh and ceased to be known by his *nom de service*. Ibn Budayr was apparently somewhat confused by the number of Tahmāsp's floating around Persia - he noted that "Tahmās had defeated the king of the Persians and taken his country." Ibn Budayr also recounted Nādir Shāh's attacks on Baghdad, Kirkūk ("Kirkūt", in Ibn Budayr's parlance), Mosul and India.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the activities of this "khārījī" (seceder, i.e. heretic) mark Ibn Budayr's world as one defined by Sunnism and Shī'ism.

The barber's chronicle also encompasses a passing mention of the *bilād al-ifranj* (the Land of the Franks) in the context of the rebel al-Zāhir al-'Umar's dealings with European traders.<sup>44</sup> Finally, as with Ibn Kannān, the Hijaz constitutes a prominent feature of Ibn Budayr's spatial landscape as he follows the progress of the Hajj caravan.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 16a (Ibrāhīm's appointment in Sidon); 35a and 76b, 63b, and 84a (Sa'd al-Dīn in Tripoli, Aleppo, and Marash, respectively); 16a, 80a, and 84a (Sa'd al-Dīn in Tripoli in Ḥamāh, Jerusalem, and Aleppo, respectively); 78b-79a, 81a, (Muṣṭafā in Sidon and Adana, respectively). Beyond the Levant, Sa'd al-Dīn was also appointed in Jeddah (82b), and Muṣṭafā in Mosul (84a).

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 58a and 52b, 7a, and 84a, respectively.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 19a.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 19a, 22a, and 42a.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 9a.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Budayr, *Hawādith Dimashq*, 86b-87b; 81a and 81b; 3a, 11b, and 68a (the al-'Ulā letters).



Map 2.2.

Thus, while for Ibn Kannān the Ottoman world overlaps with, but does not encompass the Islamic world, in Ibn Budayr's geography, the imperial world and the Islamic world are one and the same. Ibn Budayr constitutes the Islamic world in cultural terms, and the Ottoman world in official terms, with Istanbul a landmark in both (See Map 2.2). While Ibn Kannān drew his borders primarily to exclude "infidel" Christendom, Ibn Budayr drew his primarily to exclude "heretic" Shī'ī Persia. Aside from its Sunnī Ottoman delimitation of his world geography, Ibn Budayr's landscape is mainly one of the Levant. Thus, there is almost nothing about Ibn Budayr's vision of the world that is positively reflective of his position as an artisan. The sole correspondence between Ibn Budayr's social location and the constitution of his spatial horizons lies in the barber's anti-Shī'ī bias.

### **The Priest, Burayk: Oecumene and Empire**

Mikhā'il Burayk al-Dimashqī (*fl.* 1782)<sup>46</sup> was a Greek Orthodox priest, who started out as a deacon and climbed up the church ladder to become the archimandrite

<sup>46</sup> Mikhā'il Burayk al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh al-Shām, 1720-1782*, ed. Aḥmad Ghassān Sabānū (Damascus: Dār Qutayba, 1982). His chronicle covers the years 1720-1782. For the life of Burayk, see my "Peripheral Visions", 148-153.

and vicar of the revered Ṣidnāyā Monastery, one of the most prestigious ecclesiastical appointments in the Levant.<sup>47</sup> It is perhaps no surprise that the universal Christian world, including the Latin West, constitutes the geography of the Greek Orthodox priest's chronicle. Of all the chroniclers in the sample, Burayk is the only one who looks West: his chronicle takes us to France, England, Portugal, Spain, and even the Canary Islands<sup>48</sup> (See Map 2.3). The southernmost limit of Burayk's geographical vision is Christian Abyssinia.<sup>49</sup> In particular, Burayk looks to the Greek Orthodox regions to the north and northwest of the Black Sea, and above all to imperial Russia. In 1758, he mentions an attack by the Muslim Crimean Tatars (*al-Tatār*) on the city of Jassy (*Yāshī*) in Moldavia (*al-Bughdān*) - and his sentiments, naturally, lie with the Moldavians.<sup>50</sup> Good relations between the Levantine Orthodox community and their co-religionists in Wallachia (*al-Flākh*) are attested by Burayk's report concerning an endowment in Wallachia of a church and monastery for the financial support of the See of Antioch.<sup>51</sup> However, the part of the Orthodox Christian community that most excites Burayk is Russia, the sole Orthodox imperial power. In 1769, Burayk celebrates a Muscovite (*al-Maskūb*) victory over the Poles (*Bilād al-Lāh*)<sup>52</sup> and Tatars in 1769 - "victory and great pride was to the Muscovites."<sup>53</sup> The arrival of Muscovite ships off the coast of Beirut in 1772 gave Burayk hope that the Eastern Christian oecumene might be re-established within the boundaries of a Christian empire. However, Burayk's "hopes became void" with the signing of the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca between Russia and the Ottomans.<sup>54</sup> Therein lies Burayk's existential problem, a point to which I shall return.

47 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 95-96. On the history and importance of the Ṣidnāyā Monastery, see Habīb al-Zayyāt, *Khabāya al-zawāya min tārikh Ṣidnāyā* (n.p.: al-Kursī al-Milkī al-Antākī, 1932), where Mikhā'il Burayk is briefly mentioned, 248.

48 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 42-43 (France), 45-46 (England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Canary Islands).

49 Burayk mentions a letter from the King of Abyssinia to the Patriarch of Alexandria asking him to establish a diocese in Abyssinia, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 41.

50 See Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 72-73. Unfortunately, I have not been able to ascertain the historicity of this incident.

51 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 42-43.

52 For the etymological derivation of Bilād al-Lāh ("Lehistān" in Ottoman Turkish) for Poland, see the article, "Leh," *EP*.

53 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 102. Perhaps, Burayk is referring to Catherine II forcing the Poles to sign the Polish-Russian Treaty of 1768. It is interesting that although he mentions the takeover of the Crimea, Burayk does not mention the concurrent Muscovite takeover of Wallachia and Moldavia.

54 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 102, 109 (Muscovites at the coast of Beirut), and 111 (the Treaty).

Burayk certainly does not view the Christians of the Latin West with the same feeling that he has for the Orthodox. He informs us of his agreement with the opinion expressed by two Muscovite priests that Latin missionary activity has been “tricking and corrupting the minds (of the Christians) in the countries of the East.”<sup>55</sup> Significantly, Burayk mentions Rome (*Rūmya*) and its Pope in connection with the quarrels among the emerging Greek Catholic community of the Levant.<sup>56</sup> However, while Burayk is suspicious of the Latin West, it is extremely striking that the Christian priest is the only one of our chroniclers who does not reduce this region to the generic category of *bilād al-ifranj* (Land of the Franks) that is customary in the Arabic-Islamic historiography of the time. Unlike Ibn Kannān, for whom all of Europe beyond Muslim rule was an undifferentiated *bilād al-naṣāra* (Christendom) or *bilād al-kuffār* (land of the infidels), Burayk’s Europe - *bilād Awrūbya* - is thoroughly differentiated. In 1755, Burayk reports on the Lisbon Earthquake: “a great and terrible earthquake in Lisbon (*Lizbūnā*), a great city under the King of Portugal (*al-Būrtughāl*).” The earthquake, he tells us, resulted in the burning of the city, the deaths of 100,000 people, flooding as far away as France and England, and the submerging in the ocean of some of the Canary Islands (*juzur al-kanāryā*), which Burayk locates, with impressive accuracy, “in the *bilād al-maghāriba* (the Lands of the Maghribis), towards Africa (*Ifriqiyya*).” He adds that in the aftermath of the earthquake, the King of Portugal sought the aid of both the king of Spain (*malik Isbānya*) and the king of England (*malik al-Inklīz*).<sup>57</sup> Burayk also reports on what are probably the beginnings of the Seven Years War: “And in this year 1755 [*sic*] there took place a great war between the English and the French.”<sup>58</sup> Burayk got his news of Europe not only from visiting Muscovites, but also from Frankish merchants in the Levant, with whom he seems to have had some contact.<sup>59</sup>

55 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 42-43.

56 Apparently, in 1762, the already ordained Patriarch, Athnāsūs (or Ibn Jawhar), is rejected by the Aleppines who wanted to ordain their own candidate. Athnāsūs takes a journey to Rome in the hope of getting reinstated, “but he got nothing but distress and returned (from Rome) disappointed with the (lack of) support he got from the Westerners.” Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 82.

57 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 45-46. It is noteworthy that Burayk’s account of the earthquake is largely sound: seismic disturbances were felt in Spain, North Africa, France, North Italy, Brittany, and Normandy, and high waves caused by the earthquake reached England and Ireland. See T.D. Kendrill, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1956), 25.

58 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 46 The Seven Year War started not in 1755, but 1756.

59 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 46.

Burayk's curiosity about the Frankish trading communities is best illustrated in his report on Penny Richards, the extraordinary equestrian daughter of the English consul in Acre.<sup>60</sup>

Burayk also cites verbatim a letter dated March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1756, from the imperial Russian governor of Astrakhan (*Aṣṭrahān*) to the governor of *Dūrghūrā* (?),<sup>61</sup> a copy of which presumably arrived in Damascus after having traveled almost the whole of the Eastern Christian world (Astrakhan, Moscow, Istanbul, Cyprus and Jerusalem).<sup>62</sup> The letter tells the story of two old travelers who mysteriously appear in and later disappear from Astrakhan, leaving behind them a prophecy of the end of the world which, not surprisingly, includes a defeat of the Ottomans and a Christian takeover of Constantinople.<sup>63</sup> Mentioned in the letter are the cities of Paris (*Bārīz*), Moscow (*Muskā*), and St. Petersburg (*Bitrūbūlī*); the Caspian Sea (*Bahr Qasbyān*); Georgia (*al-Kurj*), India (*Hindustān*), and Masulipatam/Masulipatnam (*Masūlabāṭān*) in India.<sup>64</sup>

Most cities and towns mentioned by Burayk happen to be situated in the Levant: Aleppo (11 references), Sidon (10 references), and Ṣidnāyā (9 references), Acre (9 references), Ḥimṣ (7 references), Beirut (6 references), and Ma'lūlā (6 references). Most of Burayk's references to places shared by Oecumene and Empire are in relation to the affairs of the Christian community, both laymen and clergy.<sup>65</sup> Taken together, these towns and cities may be said to constitute Burayk's often-

60 Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 47-48.

61 Although Burayk says that the letter is addressed to Empress Elizabeth, the letter is, in fact addressed, to the "ruler of *Dūrghūrā*" and ends with the declaration that a similar letter had been sent to "the Empress in St. Petersburg"; see Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 65, 66, and 69, respectively. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate "*Dūrghūrā*," which is probably a Russian province whose name has been unrecognizably corrupted in transliteration from Russian to Greek, and thence to Arabic.

62 Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 66-69.

63 Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 69.

64 Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 66 (Paris, Moscow, Georgia, and India), 67 (St. Petersburg), and 68 (Caspian Sea). I am reading *māsūlabāṭān*, for *māsūla yātān*, Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 66. There are several other place names which seem to have been corrupted in the process of translation into Arabic which I could not reconstruct, such as "*Birghūldā* in the episcopate that is under the Great Mūghūr (*sic*) King of Hindustān," "*Īnastārūn*," "*Sirda nūs*, near Paris," "the *Rāwti* river," and "*Bilād Turkbūn*" by the Caspian Sea; see Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 66 and 68.

65 For references to Ṣidnāyā, see Burayk, *Tāriḫ al-Shām*, 42, 74, 79, 83, 96, 99, 102, 120, and 122. for the Christians of Beirut, 99, 42, 87, and 93; for the Christians of Aleppo, 19, 20, 22, 24, 38, 42, and 91; for the Christians of Ma'lūlā, see also 40, 42, 74, and 96;

troubled *micro-Oecumene* where a Levantine Orthodox Christian community had suffered a (Greek Catholic) schism and dwelt within a Muslim Ottoman Empire. Before exploring Burayk's idea about his *micro-Oecumene*, it is worth noting the priest does mention places that concern both the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim community at large. Burayk, for example, reports on, and is very much moved by, the 1757 Hajj disaster.<sup>66</sup>

The Levant is not only the domain that is most marked in Burayk's spatial imagination, but also seems to be, as we shall see below, a solution to his existential problem. One peculiar spatial concept articulated by Burayk is his precise delimitation of "Arab lands" (*al-bilād al-'arabiyya*) offered in a historical geography of an earthquake in 1759:

News came that this earthquake was acute in all of the Arab lands (*al-bilād al-'arabiyya*), both the coasts and the hinterlands, from the border of Antioch to 'Arīsh Mişr, cities and villages alike ...<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Burayk's "Arab lands" covers the area from Antioch to al-'Arīsh: it is, in other words, precisely the Levant. Burayk's use of the term *al-bilād al-'arabiyya* has caught the attention of modern historians, especially in view of his classification of the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan, Makāryūs Şadaqa, as *ibn 'Arab* ("son of Arabs")<sup>68</sup> and the al-'Aẓm governors of Damascus, as *awlād 'Arab* ("sons of Arabs").<sup>69</sup> Bruce Masters understands Burayk's use of "Arab" as expressive of "a particularistic Arab ethnic consciousness,"<sup>70</sup> while Hayat Bualuan notes, "When he uses the term 'Arab' ... it certainly connotes a certain ethnic identity in contrast with, or in opposition to, Ottoman and Greek."<sup>71</sup> Neither Masters nor Bualuan, however, attempts to understand what this "ethnic" category has to do with the

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for the Christians of Acre, 82, 91, and 96; for the Christians of Sidon, 26-27, 31, 42, 85, 86, and 99; for Christians of Ḥimş, 23, 38, 39, 42, and 96.

66 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 57-59.

67 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 78.

68 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 85.

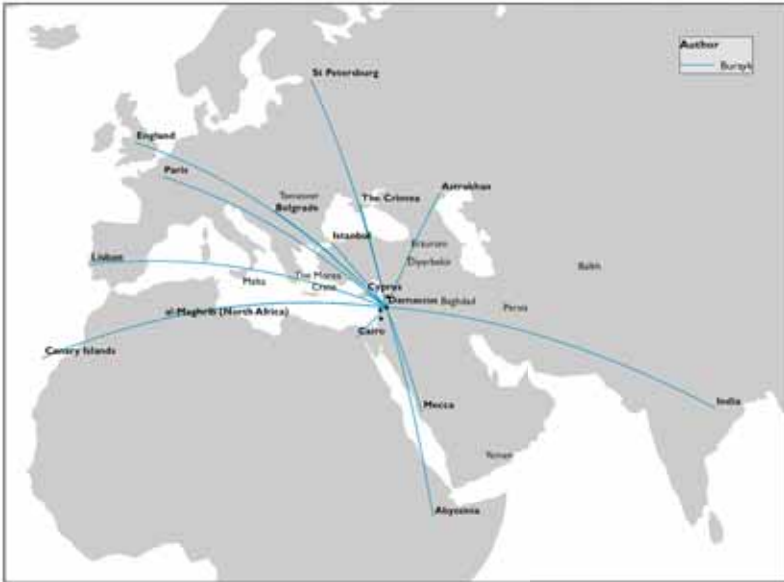
69 Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, 49.

70 Bruce Masters, "The View from the Province: Syrian Chronicles of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (1994): 359-60.

71 Hayat Bualuan, "Mikhā'il Breik: a Chronicler and a Historian in 18<sup>th</sup> Century *Bilād al-Shām*," *Parole de l'Orient* 21 (1996): 267. See also the observations of Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus* (Beirut: Khayyats, 1970), 324; and Robert Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 67-68.



geographical space between Antioch and ‘Arīsh. Thus, in the parochialism of a Levantine geography, Burayk seems to have found a spatial identity that transcended both Oecumene and Empire.



Map 2.3.

### The Soldier, Al-‘Abd: Military Zones

Ḥasan Āghā al-‘Abd (*fl.* 1826) was a soldier,<sup>72</sup> who probably started out as a minor member of the local Janissary corps (Tr. *yerli*, Ar. *yarliyya*) of Damascus and ended up no less than the sub-district governor of Şafad.<sup>73</sup> Friction, conflict, skirmishes and warfare are the stuff of this soldier’s history. Consequently, al-‘Abd’s vision of space is one-dimensional and military. The cartography of his chronicle delineates space as stations for armies, locales of mutinies and factional strife, fields for battle, and property for pillage. Overwhelmingly, the villages, cities and regions mentioned in al-‘Abd’s chronicle - such as Nablus, Jabal ‘Akkār, Jabal al-Shūf, Kisrawān, Mu’addamiyya (Mu’azzamiyya), ‘Arṭūz, al-Jadīda, Qaṭana, al-Barza, al-Qadam, al-Ramla, Tyre, Beirut and al-Mazza – appear on the occasions

<sup>72</sup> Hasan Āghā al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan Āghā al-‘Abd: Ḥawādith Bilād al-Shām wa al-imbaratūriyya al-‘uthmāniyya*, ed. Yūsof Nu’aysa (Damascus: Dār Dimashq li-al-Ṭibā’a wa al-Nashr, 1986). His chronicle covers the years 1771-1826.

<sup>73</sup> For a reconstruction of al-‘Abd’s life, see my “Peripheral Visions”, 118-130.

that they are the sites of military encounters.<sup>74</sup> Acre, Tripoli, Ḥamāh and Sidon appear as prizes being fought over by vying Levantine governors and contenders for power.<sup>75</sup> The obscure town of al-‘Assālī (probably located in the district of Jubbat al-‘Assālī) receives six separate mentions simply because it serves as the camping ground of various armies.<sup>76</sup>

Cairo and Alexandria are associated with the Napoleonic occupation, while Mecca and Medina figure primarily because of the Wahhābī occupation of the Hijaz.<sup>77</sup> Cairo - which for Ibn Kannān is a city whose news is noteworthy in and of itself, which is a cultural pole for Ibn Budayr, is treated by Ḥasan Āghā al-‘Abd solely in military-political term.<sup>78</sup> Al-‘Abd mentions Egypt in the context of a French military strategy in which Egypt is a gateway to the Levant. Al-‘Abd follows the news of the advance of the French armies into Gaza, al-Ramla, Jaffa, and Acre, and their eventual departure from Cairo and Alexandria in 1800.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, Mecca, Medina and the Hijaz, first appear in the chronicle as the sites of the Wahhābī rebellion, and the subsequent obstruction by the Wahhābīs of the Hajj.<sup>80</sup> Before the disruption to imperial security caused by the appearance of the Wahhābīs, both Mecca and the Hijaz are only mentioned once, and Medina not at all.<sup>81</sup> Conspicuously absent from al-‘Abd’s dominantly military vision is the reportage on the arrival in Damascus of the pilgrims’ letters from al-‘Ulā that constitute a standard feature of the worlds of the other Muslim Damscene authors, Ibn Kannān and Ibn Budayr. And while al-‘Abd’s focus is limited primarily to the Levant and military events strategically related to the Levant, his spatial horizons seem to widen near the end of his chronicle

74 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 165 (Nablus); 144-45 (Jabal ‘Akkār); 167 and 178 (Jabal al-Shūf); 178 (Kisrawān); 112, 151-2, 178 (Mu‘aḍḍamiyya); 112 (‘Arṭūz); 112 (al-Jadīda); and 151(Qaṭana); 15 (al-Barza); 16 (al-Qadam); 49 (al-Ramla); 179-80 (Tyre); 179-80 (Beirut); 112-178 (al-Mazza).

75 See al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 116-8, 178-9 (Acre); 87-88, 144-6, and 148 (Tripoli); 89-90 (Ḥamāh) and 180 (Sidon).

76 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 14, 53, 60, 90, and 91.

77 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 85, 87, and 119 (Mecca); and 119 (Medina). For Cairo and Alexandria, see below.

78 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 36.

79 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 36, 49, 54, 61, 62, 66.

80 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 85, 87, 119, 131 and 148.

81 al-‘Abd, *Tārīkh Ḥasan*, 66 (Mecca), and 67 (Hijaz).

alongside his promotion in the military hierarchy as he notes the insurgencies in faraway Morea.<sup>82</sup>

Al-'Abd's geography is not informed by a notion of "Islamic land" as such, but rather by the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike Ibn Kannān for whom, as we have seen, the world to the West of the Ottoman borders was an undifferentiated Christendom, al-'Abd carefully differentiates between the *naṣāra al-faransāwī*, the French Christians, who threaten Ottoman ruled lands, and the *naṣāra al-inklīz*, the English Christians, who help fight them.<sup>83</sup> His characterization of the French as *naṣāra*, and of the mutinous Christians of the Morea as *al-tāi'fa al-kafara al-rūm* ("the infidel Greek sect")<sup>84</sup> is thus not indicative of his hostility to all groups that threatened the Ottoman domains, not least among which are the Muslim Wāhhābīs to whom al-'Abd refers, in a manner parallel to *al-naṣāra al-faransāwī*, as *al-'arab al-wahhābiyya*.<sup>85</sup> Al-'Abd, a good Ottoman soldier, is concerned above all with the territorial integrity of the empire that gave him the opportunity to rise in its service.



Map 2.4.

82 al-'Abd, *Tārikh Ḥasan*, 166-167.

83 al-'Abd, *Tārikh Ḥasan*, 52.

84 al-'Abd, *Tārikh Ḥasan*, 166.

85 al-'Abd, *Tārikh Ḥasan*, 149-150.

### The Court Clerk, al-Makkī: All Roads Lead to Ḥimṣ

The world is certainly Ḥimṣ-centric for Muhammad al-Makkī (*fl.* 1722),<sup>86</sup> who worked in some capacity as clerk, scribe, and/or witness at the judicial court of Ḥimṣ.<sup>87</sup> His position at court – as a witness to all kinds of personal and commercial transactions – allowed al-Makkī privileged knowledge of the goings-on in his hometown. Thus, al-Makkī portrays Ḥimṣ as a place where all roads converge/bifurcate and where people arrive/depart. It is a starting point, a transit point, and a final destination. Al-Makkī’s chronicle abounds with notices such as: “the arrival of the Pasha of Damascus and his departure for the campaign,” “the arrival of al-ḥājj Ibrāhīm *qaṣṣāb bāshī* from Istanbul,” “the departure of ‘Alī Ibn al-Aqrā’ to Istanbul,” “the arrival of ‘Alī Ibn al-Aqrā’ from Istanbul,” “the arrival of Pasha of Egypt from Istanbul,” “the departure of ‘Alī Ibn al-Aqrā’ to Istanbul,” “al-Shaykh ‘Alī, the son of the *muftī*, arrived from Aleppo,” “the arrival of Ibn ‘Abduh from Ḥamāh,” “a messenger arrived from Istanbul,” “the Pasha of Damascus arrived from Istanbul,” “the arrival of the deposed governor of Damascus and his departure to Istanbul,” “Ibrāhīm al-Āghā left to Tripoli,” “Ibrāhīm Āghā, may God preserve him, went to Ba’albak,” “the arrival of the Pasha of Jeddah from Istanbul,” “the arrival of the Imperial Treasury from Cairo and al-Shaykh Sulaymān al-Sibā’ī’s departure along with it to Istanbul,” “the arrival of Ibrāhīm Āghā...along with Ibn ‘Abduh Pasha and his departure to Erzerum, and the arrival of Ibn al-Bakrī from Istanbul ...,” *ad infinitum*.<sup>88</sup>

While, like Ibn Kannān, it is the fact of human movement that prompts al-Makkī to mark places, al-Makkī differs from Ibn Kannān in that he is not interested in peoples’ itineraries, only in the role of Ḥimṣ as *the focal point* of traffic. Other towns and cities, such as Ḥamāh (the nearby twin sister of Ḥimṣ)

86 Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Sayyid al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ: yawmiyyāt Muḥammad ibn al-Sayyid ibn al-Ḥājj Makkī ibn al-Khanqāh*, ed. ‘Umar Najīb al-‘Umar (Damascus: al-Ma’had al-‘Ilmī al-Firansī li-al-Dirasāt al-‘Arabiyya, 1987). His chronicle covers the years 1688-1722. For al-Makkī’s biography, see my “Peripheral Visions”, 82-93, and James Reilly’s contribution in this collection of essays.

87 We know nothing about the workings of the courts in Ḥimṣ, not even if there was only one court or several. Al-Makkī once refers to *al-maḥkama al-‘ulyā* (“the high court”), however, all other references are simply to *al-maḥkama* (“the court”); see al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 51, and numerous references at 72-73. The likelihood is that there was only one court. Unfortunately, in their valuable documentary study on Ḥimṣ, Muhammad ‘Umar al-Sibā’ī and Na‘īm Salīm al-Zahrāwī do even mention courts, *Ḥimṣ: dirāsa wathā’iqiyya, al-ḥiqba min 1256-1337h/1840-1918m*, (Ḥimṣ: n.p, 1992).

88 al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 9-10, 10, 11, 11, 12, 12, 15, 17, 19, 24 35, 37, 38, 44, 50, and 52, respectively.

Damascus, Tripoli, Aleppo, and Ba'albak exist in al-Makkī's chronicle, first and foremost, as staging posts on the way to or as destinations from Ḥimṣ. Even the great cities of Cairo (43 references) and Istanbul (57 references) are in Makkī's text because they constitute a leg of some journey originating or ending in Ḥimṣ. Of the 57 references to Istanbul, 53 are straightforward reports of the arrival of someone to Ḥimṣ from Istanbul or vice versa.<sup>89</sup> Of the 43 references to Cairo, 28 are reports of people's journeys from Ḥimṣ to Cairo or vice versa and another 10 references are reports of the arrival of the Egyptian Imperial Treasury en route to Istanbul.<sup>90</sup> For al-Makkī, Istanbul and Cairo are not important for any intrinsic qualities, such as imperial glory or cultural significance, or on account of any political event, military skirmish, or naturally calamity that has befallen them, but solely by virtue of the fact that Cairo and Istanbul are points of embarkation to/destinations from Ḥimṣ. In other words, these two cities exist because Ḥimṣ exists. (See Map 2.5)

Like his fellow Levantines, al-Makkī devotes quite a bit of attention to other cities in the Levant, including, Damascus.<sup>91</sup> Alongside the major Levantine towns and cities, however, al-Makkī makes no less than 39 references to the small village of Ḥisya, south of Ḥimṣ. This puzzling idiosyncrasy (visualized in Figure 1) is dispelled when one learns that Ḥisya happens to be the home village of the person who seems to have been al-Makkī's patron: Ibrāhīm Āghā, "May God preserve Ibrāhīm Āghā, his progeny, his siblings, his relatives, his followers, and anyone associated with him, by the honor of Muḥammad, his family, and companions, Amen, Amen, Amen!"<sup>92</sup> Ibrāhīm Āghā was a several-time contender for the position of *mutasallim* (district governor) of Ḥimṣ and our scribe seems to have been the *āghā's* man at court. Our author dutifully follows the movement of his patron everywhere, but especially between Ḥimṣ and Ḥisya. That Ḥisya's importance to al-Makkī derives from Ibrāhīm Āghā is underlined by the fact that there are only four references to Ḥisya after the Āghā's death in 1709.<sup>93</sup>

89 For those references to Istanbul that are not associated with arrivals and departures, see, al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 79, 108, 113, and 183.

90 For those references to Egypt that are not associated with arrivals and departures, see al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 41, 67, and 162. For the Egyptian Imperial Treasury, see, 50, 83, 91, 100, 136, 194, 202, 210, 228, 242, and 257.

91 al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 31, 41, 81, 129, 168, 179, 180, 187, 214, and 215.

92 al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 71. For relationship between the scribe and his patron, see my "Peripheral Visions", 89-91.

93 See al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 149, 207, 244, and 265.

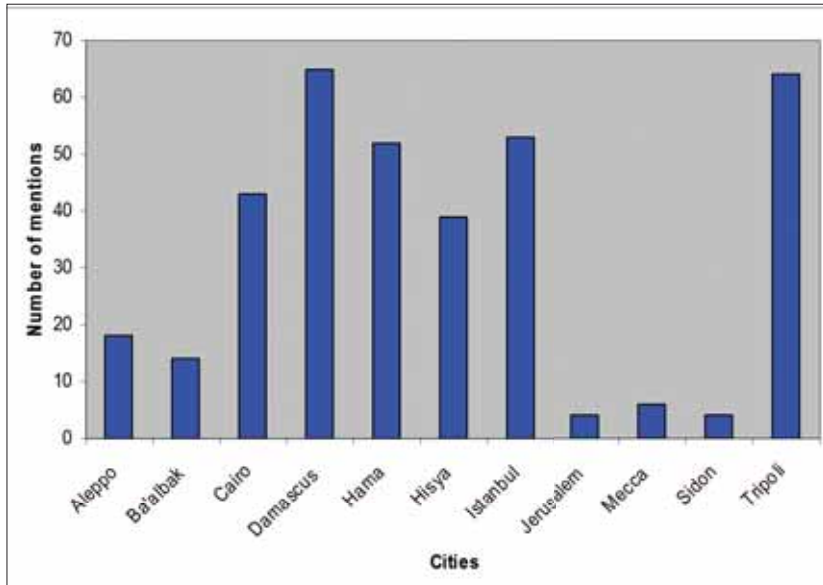


Figure 1: Cities Frequently Mentioned by al-Makkī including the Village of Ḥisya

Unlike the rest of the chroniclers in our sample, al-Makkī hardly ever reports on conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and non-Muslim powers. His geographical emphasis is overwhelmingly Ḥimṣ-centric, and secondarily regional. In his attempt to preserve his privileged position, al-Makkī surveys the movement of people in and out of Ḥimṣ like an intelligence officer on a border checkpoint, noting the identities of significant people who pass by him. And like the good court clerk, he records all salient information in his *sijill* (court record). Al-Makkī's emphasis on Ḥimṣ, then, mirrors an emphasis on the self and preserving the position of the self. In al-Makkī's chronicle other towns exist only because Ḥimṣ exists, and Ḥimṣ exists only because al-Makkī himself does.

### The Shī'ī Agriculturalists, The Rukaynīs: A Small World

Ḥaydar Riḍā al-Rukaynī (d. 1198/1783) and his unnamed son (*fl.* 1247/1832)<sup>94</sup> were Shī'ī agriculturalists from an Jabal 'Āmil (in southern Lebanon). They consecutively wrote a chronicle covering the years 1749-1832. The authors do not inform the reader when the transfer of authorship from father (henceforth, al-Rukaynī

<sup>94</sup> Ḥaydar Riḍā al-Rukaynī, *Jabal 'Āmil fī qarn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1997). For the biographies of authors, "Peripheral Visions", 130-143.



Map 2.5.

the elder) to son (henceforth, al-Rukaynī the younger) occurred, but based on stylistic and content comparisons, I was able to detect that the al-Rukaynī the younger took over the writing of the chronicle around the year 1778.<sup>95</sup> As in the case of the barber, Ibn Budayr, the fact of the literacy of these agriculturalists is not surprising given that the region of Jabal ‘Āmil is historically known for a long tradition of college-building activities and Twelver Shī‘ī scholarship.<sup>96</sup> However,

<sup>95</sup> See my “Peripheral Visions”, 130-133.

<sup>96</sup> On the Shī‘ī scholarly tradition of Jabal ‘Āmil, see Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: the History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 144-5; and Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shī‘ī Islām: the History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi‘ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 123. It will be remembered that when the Safavid dynasty was established in Iran at the beginning of the 16th century, the Safavid state imported scholars from Jabal ‘Āmil to assist in entrenching Twelver Shī‘ism in their domains; see Halm, *Shī‘ism*, 87; and Momen, *Shī‘ī Islām*, 111. On the *madrassa* building activity in Jabal ‘Āmil in the 18th century, see al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Khiṭaṭ Jabal ‘Āmil*, 2 vols., ed. Ḥasan al-Amīn (Beirut: Maṭba‘at al-Inṣāf, 1961), 1:150-153; and Muḥammad Qāsim al-Makkī, *al-Ḥaraka al-fikriyya wa al-adabiyya fī Jabal ‘Āmil*, with an introduction by Fu‘ād Afrām al-Bustānī (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1963), 140

this chronicle by the Rukaynīs happens to be the sole (surviving?) chronicle from the community. It is noteworthy that the authors themselves called the area in which they lived “Bilād al-Matāwila” (the Lands of the Matāwila) denoting their own tribal and religious affiliation.

Let us start with how the al-Rukaynī the younger defines his region:

On Monday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of Shawwāl, there was a battle between (the forces) of al-Shaykh Nāṣif and the forces of Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār in the land of Yārūn. Shaykh Nāṣif was killed, and the all the lands of the Matāwila, to Marj ‘Uyūn, mourned over him.<sup>97</sup>

In this passage from his entry for 1780, the author proclaims the importance of Shaykh Nāṣif al-Naṣṣār, the Shaykh of the sub-district of Bilād Bishāra. Proudly, our author announces that the Shaykh was not only mourned in his own sub-district, but in “all the lands of the Matāwila, to Marj ‘Uyūn.” These are the areas of Bilād Bishāra, Iqlīm al-Shawmar, Iqlīm al-Tuffāḥ and al-Shaqīf, which lie between the Mediterranean in the West and the Druz region of Marj ‘Uyūn in the East. Al-Rukyanī the younger thus connects a specific community, the Shī‘ī Matāwila, to a defined area of land. While this is the area usually referred to by earlier and later authors as Jabal ‘Āmil, it is noteworthy that the Rukaynīs never once mention this term.

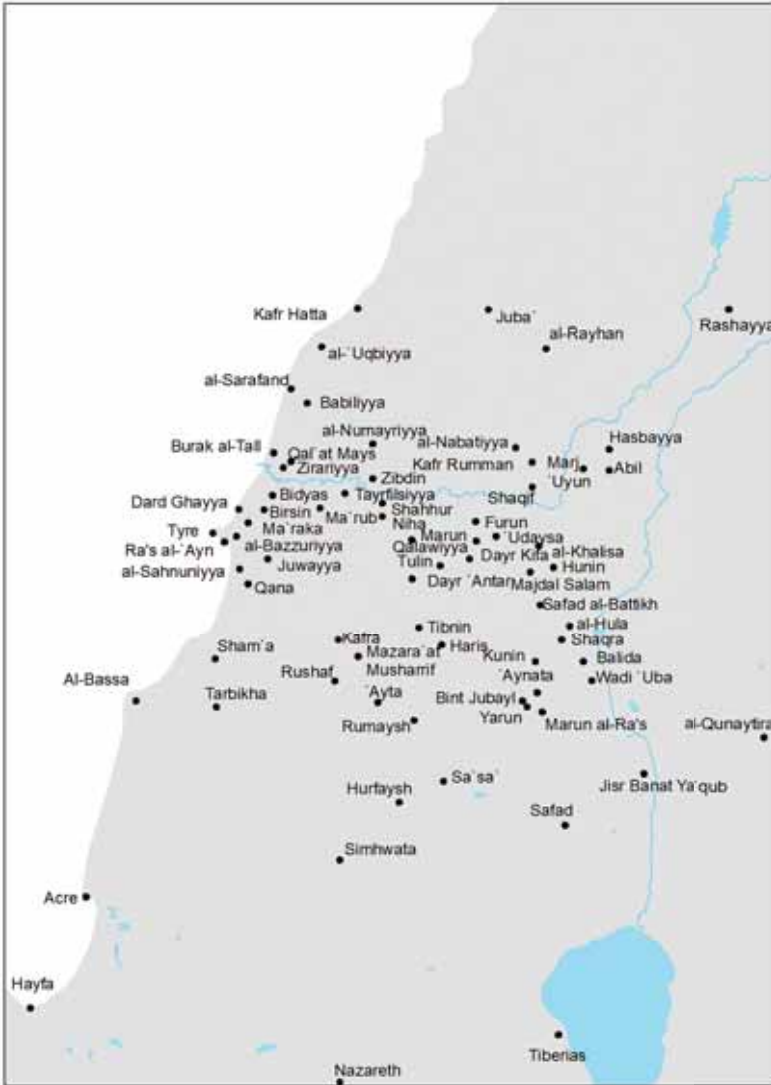
The overwhelming majority of geographical references in the chronicle are to places within this small region, which emerges as the primary world of the Rukaynīs’ chronicle. The prodigious number of towns and villages mentioned by the Rukaynīs within this small region is tellingly indicative of the concentration of the Rukaynīs’ geographical vision, which is filled with the names of places obscure to anyone save a Mitwālī: Ba‘dharān, Bidyās, Dard Ghayya, Ḥarfīsh, ‘Inqūn, Majd Salam, al-Qalawiyya, Ṣafad al-Baṭṭīkh, Ṭallūsā, Tarbikhā, Shahīm and Ṭayrfilsīyya (Map 3). It is also significant that the Rukaynīs never inform us as to which one of the multitude of villages they belong; it is thus their regional surroundings, the Bilād al-Matāwila, that emerge as their immediate world.<sup>98</sup>

The Rukaynīs were preoccupied with documenting the military and political developments in those parts of the Levant whose affairs impinged upon the

<sup>97</sup> al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 98.

<sup>98</sup> The fact of their living within Bilād Bishāra is something I have had to deduce (my “Peripheral Visions”, 133-134). Al-Rukaynī the elder’s references to the Bishāriyya – the people of Bilād Bishāra – may be taken as an expression of a more local identity; see, al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 67 and 69.





Map 3. The Parochial World of the Rukaynīs

domains of the Matāwila. It will suffice here to say that, as with al-‘Abd, the Rukaynīs’ chronicle posits space as the commodity over which the various power players fight their battles. Within the Bilād al-Matāwila, this is the context for several of the references to Sidon and al-Shaqīf. Beyond the Bilād al-Matāwila, Damascus (37 references), Acre (26 references), Tyre (17 references), Ba‘albak (13 references), Şafad (10 references), regularly appear as sites of contestation, or as places where power players are appointed and deposed, and where they halt in preparation for the next fight.<sup>99</sup>

Beyond the Levant, the Rukyanīs mention Cairo (12 references), Istanbul (6 references), Iraq (3 references), Mecca (4 references) and Medina (1 reference). As Shī‘īs, the Rukaynīs report on pilgrimages to Iraq, the burial place of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, the fundamental martyr of the Shī‘ī tradition.<sup>100</sup> Al-Rukaynī the younger duly reports the Wahhābī desecration of al-Ḥusayn’s grave.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, while al-Rukaynī the elder reports the attacks on Mecca of Muḥammad Bey Abū Dhahab of Egypt, he hardly ever mentions the Holy City in connection with Hajj.<sup>102</sup> Al-Rukaynī, the son, on the other hand, mentions his own return from Mecca (after performing the Hajj), and also reports the Wahhābī obstruction of the Hajj at Medina in 1806.<sup>103</sup> Istanbul is mentioned a mere 6 times in a chronicle that covers the span of 83 years; 4 of the references have to do with the dispatch of defeated mutinous personalities (or of their severed heads) to the imperial capital.<sup>104</sup> (See Map 2.6)

Al-Rukaynī the younger announces his move to Damascus in his entry for the year 1803. Since he does not report any further change of address thereafter, one assumes that he continued to live there until 1831, the last year covered by the

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99 For references to military skirmishes or the appointments or movements of military-political personalities, see, al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 65, 76-78, 80, 92, 120, 127, and 139 (Acre); 34, 61, 56-57, 61, 93-94, 99, and 108 (Ba‘albak); 39, 41-42, 43, 45, 64-65, 72, 78-79, 83, 91, 92, 97-98, 99, 108, 117, 118, and 130 (Damascus); 43, 54, 57, 61, 76, 79, and 81 (Şafad); 38-39, 48, 53, 69, 74, and 98-99 (al-Shaqīf); 33, 37, 43, 72-73, 76, 83, 92, and 94 (Sidon); 38, 56, 77, 80, 89, 120 (Tyre).

100 al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 55, 62, 81, and 127.

101 al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 129.

102 On the attack of Muḥammad Bey Abū al-Dhahab, see al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 62. Other references to Mecca by al-Rukaynī Snr. are about the departure of al-Shaykh Muqbil, one of the Shaykhs of the Matāwila to and the arrival of a certain ‘Alī Khātūn from the Holy City; see, 65, and 76, respectively.

103 al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 119 and 131, respectively.

104 al-Rukyanī, *Jabal ‘Āmil*, 40-41, 79, 81, and 130.



Map 2.6.

chronicle. After the move to Damascus, al-Rukaynī's chronicling activities dwindle. Even now, however, although he occasionally reports on events in Damascus,<sup>105</sup> his eyes remain firmly fixed on the Bilād al-Matāwila from where he duly reports the deaths of the next generation of local leaders. Thus, it is not the neighborhoods of Damascus that occupy the later pages of al-Rukaynī's chronicle, but rather the villages of Şiribbīn, Mazra'at Musharrif, al-Nabaṭiyya, Juwayyā, al-Şarafand, Mays, and al-Bāzuriyya.<sup>106</sup> In sum, neither "Islamic lands," nor "Arab lands," nor "Ottoman Empire" informs the Rukaynī's geography. Even when al-Rukaynī, the son, moved to the greatest city in the Levant - which produced a barber who studied *fiqh*, and a priest who wrote of the Canary Islands - al-Rukaynī remained oriented to the land of the Matāwila.

<sup>105</sup> For references to the Janissary skirmishes, see, al-Rukyanī, *Jabal Āmil*, 130.

<sup>106</sup> al-Rukyanī, *Jabal Āmil*, 134-135.

### The Samaritan, al-Danafi: A Nabulsi World

The vision of the world contained in the chronicle of the Samaritan<sup>107</sup> scribe, Ibrāhīm al-Danafi (*fl.* 1783), is even more parochial than that of the Rukaynīs.<sup>108</sup> (Map 2.7) Al-Danafi was one of the 200 Samaritans who lived in Nablus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>109</sup> and worked as the secretary of Muṣṭafā Beg Ṭūqān. Like al-Makkī's patron, Muṣṭafā Beg aspired to acquire the position of the *mutasallim* of Nablus, which desire was fulfilled (and is accordingly re-entitled "Pasha" by al-Danafi). Whether a Beg or a Pasha, Muṣṭafā belonged to one of the Nablus' most venerable and illustrious families: the Ṭūqāns.

The geographical horizons of al-Danafi's chronicle *rarely* extend beyond the town of Nablus. Even Istanbul, which made it into the geographical index of the Rukaynīs, does not find its way into al-Danafi's chronicle. The furthest point mentioned by al-Danafi is Egypt, which occurs only because 'Alī Beg al-Kabīr of Egypt poses a military threat to Palestine. Al-Danafi notes the Sultan's assignment of 'Uthmān Pasha al-Miṣrillī, the commander of the Ottoman forces in the Levant, as governor of Egypt to subdue 'Alī Beg al-Kabīr (after he has completed his initial task of defeating al-Zāhir al-'Umar in Palestine).<sup>110</sup> He also records the

107 The ancient Samaritan community exists today in very small numbers in Nablus, Palestine, and Holon, Israel. Samaritanism can be considered a schism from ancient Judaism. The most important difference between Samaritanism and first-century Judaism is the Samaritan reverence of Mount Gerizim in Nablus (as opposed to the Jewish reverence for Jerusalem). While Samaritans believe in the Torah as a whole, for them only the Pentateuch holds canonical force, and they reject the entirety of the oral law (the Mishna and Talmud). As such, all of their feasts are of Pentateuchal origin. Until the third century, Jews and Samaritans were not differentiated in religious terms and there is no definite point at which the schism took place. For a fuller discussion, see my *Barber of Damascus*, 86-87. General works on Samaritan history are Moses Gaster, *The Samaritans, their History, Doctrine, and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925); I. Ben Zvi's, *The Book of the Samaritans*; and Nathan Schur, *History of the Samaritans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992)

108 Ibrāhīm al-Danafi (al-Sāmīrī), *Zāhir al-'Umar wa ḥukkām Jabal Nāblus, 1185-1187/1771-1773*, ed. Mūsā Abū Diyya (Nablus: Jāmi'at al-Najāh, 1986). The chronicle covers the years 1771-1773. For his biography, see my "Peripheral Visions", 147-153.

109 This was the population estimate of the Western traveler U.J. Seetzen, who visited Nablus in 1806 (20 years after al-Danafi's death), *Reisen durch Syrien, Palestina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petrea und Unter-Aegypten*, ed., Fr. Kruse, 4 vols. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854-9). For the reference, see Schur, *History of the Samaritans*, 152.

110 al-Danafi, *Jabal Nāblus*, 35-37, see also 44, 48. For 'Uthmān Pasha's career, see, Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 126-7.



Map 2.7.

expulsion of ‘Alī Beg from Egypt by Muḥammad Beg Abū al-Dhahab, and his subsequent arrival in Gaza where he posed a military threat to the inhabitants of Jaffā.<sup>111</sup> Like the Rukaynīs, then, the spatial landscape in al-Danafi’s chronicle follows military conflict.

Outside of Nablus, the main town involved is Acre, the stronghold of the rebel, al-Zāhir al-‘Umar.<sup>112</sup> The fight with al-Zāhir al-‘Umar involved not only al-Danafi’s patron, but also the governor of Damascus, Muḥammad Pasha al-‘Azm.<sup>113</sup> Jaffā is mentioned more than any other town because al-Danafi accompanies the army of his patron, Muṣṭafā Beg Ṭūqān, on a successful expedition there.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> al-Danafi, *Jabal Nāblus*, 38.

<sup>112</sup> al-Danafi, *Jabal Nāblus*, 35-36, 40, 42, 51. The best study on Acre and al-‘Umar is Thomas Philipp, *Acre: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730-1831* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). See also Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1973).

<sup>113</sup> al-Danafi, *Jabal Nāblus*, 37, 44-45, 47, 48.

<sup>114</sup> al-Danafi, *Jabal Nāblus*, 38-45.

Al-Danafī's chronicle is, however, firmly concentrated on his immediate locale, the town of Nablus. As such, he has no "horizon". Strikingly, not only does al-Danafī identify with the town in his function as the mouthpiece of its leader, Muṣṭafā Beg Ṭūqān, but he also identifies with a community defined in terms of the town. Al-Danafī's category *al-Nawābilsī* (Nābulsīs) is not a religious group like the Matāwila, but rather a community defined by virtue of their inhabiting the town of Nablus.<sup>115</sup>

While al-Danafī offers an intimate topography of the city of Nablus itself, missing in it is any statement on the city in personal terms, on the one hand, and in Samaritan terms, on the other.<sup>116</sup> Al-Danafī speaks of Nablus in terms of Muṣṭafā Beg, and in terms of the Nawābilsī, but never in terms of the Samaritan community to which he belonged, and for whom Nablus lay at the foot of the sacred Mount Gerezim. The absence of the personal and Samaritan dimensions is well illustrated in the fact that while al-Danafī describes physical space in relative terms - the outskirts in relation to the town, the gates of the city in relation to the house of the Beg - when he mentions the Samaritan temple, he does not relate it to any other physical space: it is somewhere in Nablus, but its exact location is a mystery.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, we have no answer to the question of where, exactly, al-Danafī himself lives. As long as al-Danafī is writing as the subordinate of his master, these dimensions of space remain empty.

### Conclusion: In Other Worlds?

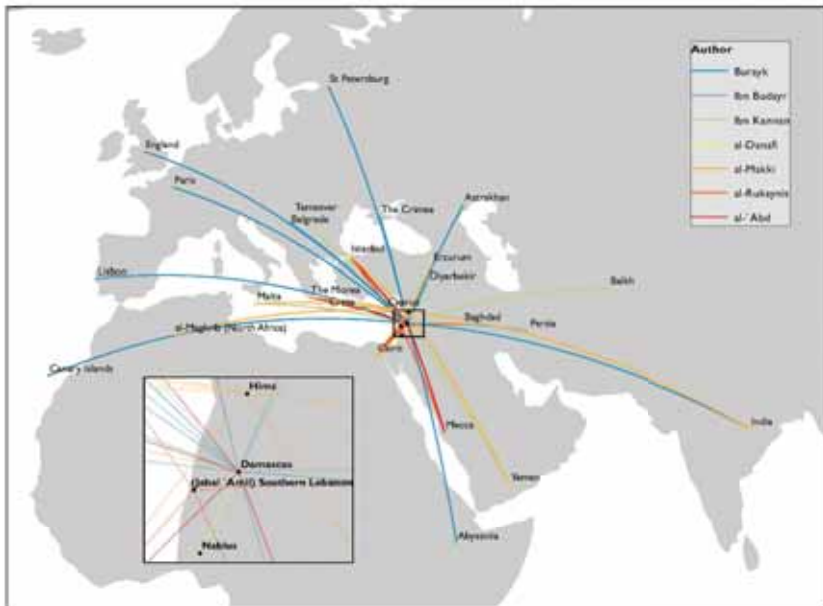
Our authors' individual visions of space are an expression of their social location, professional occupation, political alignments, religious identity, and/or personal aspirations. Their global spatial vocabularies vary significantly and are not an effect of a clearly demarcated territorial identity as illustrated in Map 2.8. The *ʿālim*, Ibn Kannān, was heavily invested in the Ottoman Empire and consequently mapped its shifting borders against an undifferentiated Christendom. While the spatial horizons of the Greek Orthodox priest are as wide as those of the *ʿālim*, their visions are diametrically opposed. Mikhāʿil Burayk is invested precisely in what is *not* the Ottoman Empire, and his imagination ventures beyond the borders of the empire to the thoroughly differentiated Christendoms of the Latin West and the Orthodox East.

<sup>115</sup> al-Danafī, *Jabal Nāblus*, 29.

<sup>116</sup> For al-Danafī's vision of Nablus, see my "Peripheral Visions," 287-291.

<sup>117</sup> al-Danafī, *Jabal Nāblus*, 32.

In comparison to the respective geographies of the Muslim *‘ālim* and the Christian cleric, the other authors in our sample display varying degrees of parochialism. The barber’s geography seems to be determined by the borders of its *Sunnī* world: unlike Ibn Kannān, whose geography excludes Christendom, Ibn Budayr maps his horizons in exclusion of Shī‘ī Persia. While possessing a notion of “Islamic lands,” al-Makkī’s interests are too local for him to venture beyond Ḥimṣ. Subsequently, his geography is markedly regional, with Ḥimṣ as the center of the world. Unlike his fellow Sunnī Muslim authors whose identification with the Ottoman imperial geography is legitimized in religious or sectarian terms, the geography of the soldier, Ḥasan Āghā al-‘Abd, does not seem to be constituted in terms of Islamic territoriality. Rather, our soldier is invested in imperial geopolitics. Subsequently, the incursion of “French Christians” on Ottoman soil is not viewed as a *Christian* incursion, but, like the “Arab Wahhābī” revolt, as an *incursion*, pure and simple. In their identification as a distinct Shī‘ī community, the Rukaynīs’ spatial horizons are no wider than their land of the Matāwila. As for the Samaritan scribe, Nablus is the beginning and end of a world ruled by the Ṭūqān family, and in which his tiny Samaritan community exists without spatial bearings. Taken together, the cartographies that emerge in this study and the motivations behind these imaginaries are as varied as the identities of the authors: our Levantine chroniclers did live in different worlds as indicated in Maps 2.8 and 4.



Map 2.8. A Juxtaposition of the Chroniclers' Worldviews

However, despite these strikingly varied geographical horizons, almost all of our authors share a regional core world constituted by the Levant – Bilād al-Shām. For those authors who did not live in Damascus, the provincial capital and cultural center of the Levant is naturally a major reference point. Even the Nabulsi-bound world of al-Danafī, Damascus is mentioned a couple of times. In addition to Damascus, Levantine cities, such as Aleppo, Ba‘albak, Jerusalem, and Sidon are also marked in our authors’ geographies as in Figure 2.

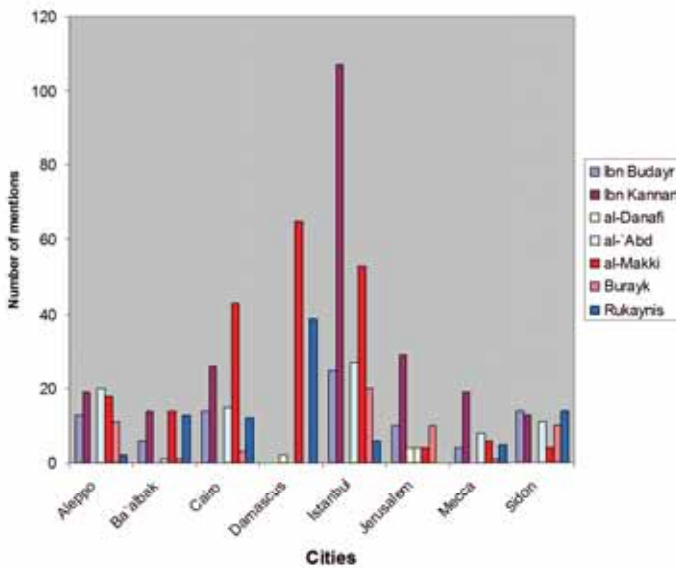


Figure 2: The Cities Frequently Mentioned by Most Chroniclers

The common emphasis on the Levant is, of course, readily explained in terms of proximity and a shared regional identification. However, nobody articulates the Levant as a territorially-marked entity as well as the priest: Burayk’s Levant is an “Arab Lands” where a Levantine geography extends from Antioch to ‘Arīsh. It is a world for Burayk where he found a resolution for his existential dilemma of being a Christian under Muslim dispensation. Thus, examined from the “Levantine lens”, we can easily see that the chroniclers in this study did share a world and a home. Even if they themselves had not visited Sidon or Jerusalem, their imagination, for all kinds of reasons, made journeys to these cities.

Outside the Levant, the major urban centers that make it to the spatial consciousness of most of our chroniclers are Istanbul, Mecca, and Cairo (Figure 2 and Map 4). With Istanbul being the imperial capital, and Mecca the spiritual



one, it is understandable that the two cities constitute significant landmarks in most Levantine cartographies. However, the unanimous presence of Cairo in this shared core world is less self-explanatory. Cairo figures in all the chronicles, even of that of the Rukaynīs who mention it twice as often as they do Istanbul, and of al-Danafī, who does not mention Istanbul at all. Even Burayk, despite his clearly delineated “Arab lands” which stop at al-‘Arīsh, mentions the great Egyptian city. The ubiquity of Cairo, as opposed to say, Baghdad, also an important city with which all of our authors had the connection of a common language, is striking.<sup>118</sup> The reasons are several. To start with, Cairo seems to have simply been a common destination for the Levantines in the eighteenth century, whether to study, as was the case for Ibn Kannān’s colleagues, or to trade, which is the reason for which I suspect al-Makkī’s acquaintance, Ḥājj Sa’d al-Dīn, went so frequently to Egypt.<sup>119</sup> The cultural significance of Cairo is evidenced in Ibn Budayr’s positing the city as one of the metropolitan poles of the proverbial cultural world. Further, Egypt was in the eighteenth century a constant military threat to the Levant, as evidenced by the incursions of ‘Alī Beg al-Kabīr and Muḥammad Abū al-Dhahab which reached the doors of Damascus, the French expedition from Alexandria which besieged Acre, and the Egyptian occupation of the Levant under Ibrāhīm Pasha, respectively recorded by al-Danafī, al-‘Abd and the Rukaynīs. In short, while the Levant was no longer ruled from Egypt, as it had been prior to the Ottoman conquest at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the political and cultural linkages continued. Thus for 18<sup>th</sup> Century Levantines, Istanbul was the capital, Mecca was the *ka’ba*, and Cairo ... it was simply Cairo!

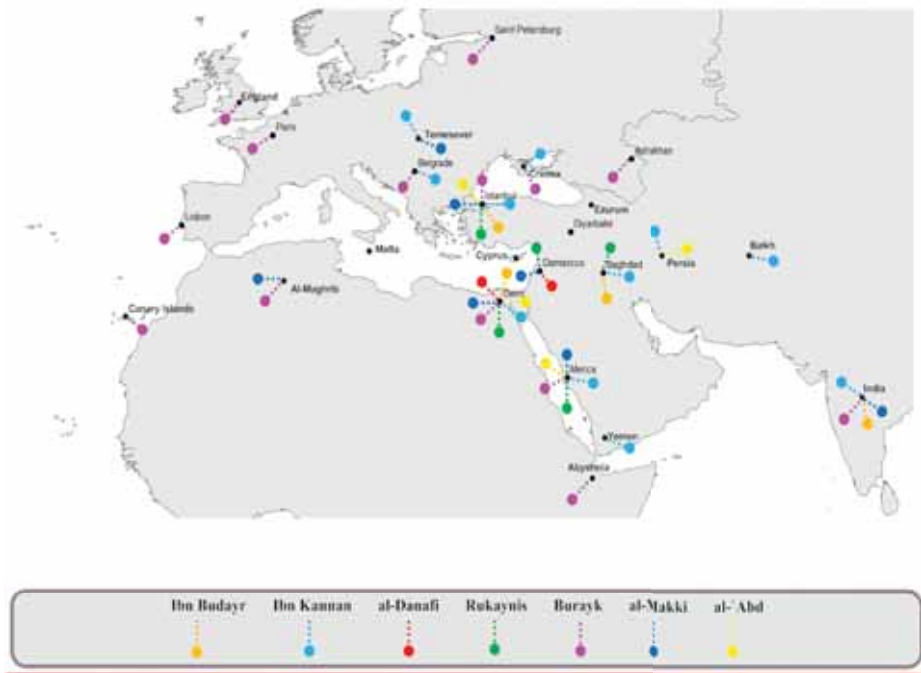
If we are to juxtapose both the “breadth” and “depth” of our various authors’ worldviews as visualized in Map 4 – showing not only the horizons of their respective geographical visions, but also the overlap of their visions with respect to some major regions or urban centers – it becomes visually clear what cities “mattered” in the spatial imaginaries of our chroniclers.

The three great cities – Mecca, Cairo and Istanbul – were significant not only due to each city’s distinct role and function in the world in which our chroniclers lived. The cities are imprinted in the spatial imaginaries of the Levantine chroniclers also because they were *connected*. This connection is achieved through imperial practice. The passage of the Hajj and the Egyptian Treasury caravans through Damascus was a ritual of political performance. For Damascenes, the arrival of these caravans signified the vassalage of the Egyptian province to the

<sup>118</sup> Baghdad is mentioned by 5 of the 7 authors in our sample; however, the references to it are paltry compared to those of Cairo.

<sup>119</sup> al-Makkī, *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*, 100, 118, 127, 135, 198, and 227.

MAPPING OUT THE SPATIAL IMAGINARIES OF 18<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY CHRONICLERS



Map 4. A Juxtaposition of the Chroniclers' Worldviews Showing Overlaps in Place Mention

Ottomans while the Hajj caravan underscored the religious legitimacy of the House of Osman. The performance of these rituals in Damascus, of which the citizens were ready consumers, is perhaps the closest that a state could come to imposing a spatial regime in a pre-modern pre-nationalist age. The annual arrival of the caravans not only oriented and conditioned the subjects spatially, but were, in the minds of our Damascene chroniclers, markers of time. They are testaments to the orderly, rhythmic functioning of the empire. The success of this “spatial regime” is evidenced by the fact that our Damascene chroniclers anxiously awaited and recorded these caravan passages with striking regularity. Although none of our chroniclers imagined every inch of the Ottoman Protected Domains, many were cognizant of and imagined some kind of Ottoman spatiality.

*In Other Worlds? Mapping Out the Spatial Imaginaries of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām)*

Abstract ■ This essay is about the global spatial imaginaries of seven chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām/Syria and Palestine) in the eighteenth century. While being unified in an Arabic-speaking Levantine identity, on the one hand, and conscious of their Ottoman affiliation, on the other, the authors came from decidedly different social, religious, and occupational backgrounds. Given the unity and diversity of the backgrounds of the authors, this essay examines the consequent tensions found in each author's spatial vision. By plotting and juxtaposing these authors' horizons into maps and graphs, both the differing and overlapping concepts of geographical identities are visualized. In a pre-national age, when the state's intervention in creating a territory-bounded identity was minimal, did eighteenth-century Ottoman Levantines live in the same world?

Keywords: 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Ottoman Levant, Arabic chronicles, non-scholarly historians, spatial imaginary, geographical identity, visualized worldviews.

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