# MAMLŪK STUDIES REVIEW

## XXV


2022

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MIDDLE EAST DOCUMENTATION CENTER (MEDOC)
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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2014: Noah Gardiner, University of Michigan, "Esotericism in a Manuscript Culture: Aḥmad al-Būnī and His Readers through the Mamlūk Period."

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**Anthony T. Quickel**
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## Introduction

While the field of Mamluk studies continues to mature and deepen, the period's environmental history remains undeveloped. Environmental history generally is still relatively emergent and growing, but the discipline is especially in its nascence across the histories—geographically, thematically, chronologically—of the Middle East and Islamicate world. Considering this, the EGYLandscape Project[1] was started in 2019 with financing from the German Research Foundation, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and the French National Research Agency, Agence nationale de la recherche. Cohosted by the University of Marburg in Germany and the University of Aix-Marseille in France, under the direction of Profs. Albrecht Fuess and Nicolas Michel respectively, the project has brought together scholars of Egypt's environmental history studying the period between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. Among other things, the project has hosted collaborative workshops and training sessions, supported and facilitated research for a number of its affiliated scholars, and created a web-based GIS that maps Egypt during its medieval and premodern period. This mapping will be an indispensable resource for future researchers as they try to locate their work geographically and will continue to grow and deepen as a resource in the coming period. The current phase of the EGYLandscape Project is now in its final year, and this issue of *Mamlūk Studies Review* is a selection of its scholarship from the project's midterm. Two subsequent related publications will follow in the coming years: the proceedings of the environmental history themed day of the Eighth School of Mamluk Studies, which was hosted at the University of Marburg in July 2022, and the project's final publication, which will be based on its September 2022 closing conference.

Until now, the focus of studies of Egypt's environmental history, across periods, has been centered on agriculture and primarily framed within its function as an economic activity. This is not to understate or diminish the importance and value of these works, and they continue to remain critical to the field of environmental studies. However, Egypt's nature and landscape—with all that entails—has rarely been center stage in its his-

[1] https://www.egylandscape.org/


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tory's telling. In fact, most studies have sidestepped Egypt's environmental history, which usually appears in nothing more than a supporting role in the grand narrative or not at all. Another issue is a problem of sources; like elsewhere in the world, the predominance of sources for the study of Egypt's past are a product of a generally small group of educated elites, who were primarily based in urban centers. It is therefore no wonder that most contemporary historical work, although this is changing, has been based in the happenings—social, political, economic—of Cairo and Damascus, especially. Environmental history is often told, therefore, in relation to its urban impact. Other topics in the study of Egypt's premodern past remain nearly untouched upon or only just so, including its flora and fauna, weather and climate, hydrological and irrigation systems, and many aspects of rural life. It is critical to widen the scope of study beyond the cultivator or the village and begin to explore the interplay between the urban and rural as well as intra-village relationships. Large geographic tracts of Egypt remain nearly unstudied throughout the Mamluk period, especially the Western Desert and the Middle Nile Valley; the Nile Delta is only slightly better understood. Finally, there is a gap in the historical record regarding demographic settlement patterns, and how these patterns were driven by ecological factors and catastrophes, such as the plague, as well as regime direction. Towards this end, the EGYLandscape Project has endeavored to help expand the current corpus of studies of Egypt's natural past and to advance the conversation about environmental history across the late Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods. The present issue of *Mamlūk Studies Review* is a cross-section of some of the work of the project team and highlights the different avenues of inquiry that we have begun to undertake.

Among the issue's articles are two that explore various questions relating to *waqf*—by Albrecht Fuess and Zoe Griffith. Both of these contributions approach the topic in light of attempts by the Mamluk regime in Fuess's case and by local and imperial notables in Griffith's—to increase and stabilize sources of revenue. They both explore the ways in which *waqf* was figured into "socio-economic and legal logics," as Griffith puts it. Fuess's article proposes reasons surrounding the increased "*waqfization*" of the later Mamluk period and gives context to it vis-à-vis the rising Ottoman threat. Griffith moves away from Cairo, turning instead to the Northern Delta and the notables of the port cities of Rosetta and Damietta and their surrounding lands. Her article also looks at the limitations of *waqf* as it relates to the stability and viability of the land regime in the eighteenth century.


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Nicolas Michel and Yossef Rapoport both look at various aspects of Mamluk Egypt's demography in connection to other issues. Michel's contribution explores the hierarchy and patterns of settlement in Middle Egypt across the Mamluk-Ottoman transition and the evolutions therein. Further, it offers a valuable discussion about toponyms and their development and usage, as well as a detailed and important overview of the sources and challenges for the study of topography and landscape, especially with regards to Egypt's cadastral surveys of the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and early Ottoman periods. Rapoport's article also makes a critical contribution to understanding the settlement and transformation of the Egyptian countryside during the mid-fourteenth century until the Ottoman conquest of 1517. In particular, it explores the origins and rise of provincial ruling Arab families and adds greatly to our understanding of some of the major demographic changes of the period, especially with regards to the expansion of Arab and Berber tribal groups throughout the countryside. Importantly, Rapoport links these developments to the political events of the fourteenth century and the changes in the *iqṭāʿ* regime in the fifteenth century.

While not thematically linked, the articles of Heba Mahmoud Saad Abdelnaby and Omar Abdel-Ghaffar show other pathways for the continued study of Mamluk Egypt's environmental past—the former looking at birds in the Mamluk period and the latter discussing the legal debate over sharecropping. As one of the very first studies of fauna in the Mamluk period, Heba Mahmoud Saad Abdelnaby uses two Mamluk texts in exploring the medical and various pharmacological uses of birds. Ranging from the health benefits of eating certain birds to their usage in direct medical interventions, the study looks at both the implementation of this knowledge by the skilled—druggists and physicians—as well as in the popular sphere. Omar Abdel-Ghaffar's article seeks to understand the relationship between the peasant sharecropper and the jurists whose opinions governed their legal status in sharecropping or *muzāraʿah*. The article shows how sharecroppers were not passive serfs at the mercy of regime authority, as has so often been presented, but were rather engaged in questions of their status. Likewise, Abdel-Ghaffar demonstrates the intimate knowledge of jurists of rural affairs and the goings-on of the countryside.

Like all undertakings, this project is very much a work-in-progress, but we are hopeful that this issue may contribute to and spur on the continued study of Egypt's environmental past. Finally, all of the contributors—and I in particular—would like to thank the Editor of *MSR,* Marlis Saleh, for her


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enthusiasm in accepting the idea of this special issue and her patience and guiding hand in bringing it into existence.

Anthony T. Quickel, Guest Editor
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# The Urgent Need for Cash: Thoughts on the Taxation of Land in the Late Mamluk Sultanate

## Introduction

Like any state, the Mamluk realm depended on the organization of its income to ensure the functioning of the realm and provide inner and outer security for its citizens.[1] The main source of revenue was constituted by the agricultural production of its landscape. It was, therefore, important to know how much cultivable land there was, how much of it could be taxed, and at what rate, so land had to be measured by state officials. In Egypt, this measurement was called *rawk,* even prior to the High Middle Ages, after the Coptic word *rōsh* (land survey).[2] The Mamluks continued this medieval practice; the most famous and long-lasting Mamluk survey was the *rawk al-Nāṣirī* under Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1293, 1299–1309, 1310–41) in 1315.[3] It apparently remained the basis for land taxation until the arrival of the Ottomans, so it seems to have been quite accurate. Through the *rawk,* the surveyors determined the exact area *(misāhah)* and quality of the cultivable land of villages and districts, which were then officially authenticated by the qadis and witnesses.[4] The so-called *ʿibrah* (tax value) of a specific piece of land was determined as a product of its quality and the corresponding area.[5] The income of the land and its products were taxed in Mamluk times by the *kharāj* tax (the land tax) which usually amounted to around 20% of the income.[6] This is a bit oversimplified, of course, as different products could be taxed differently, and the harvest depended on the actual weather and environmental conditions of a specific year.

[1] Some of the following issues have been already dealt with in: Albrecht Fuess, "Waqfization in the late Mamluk Empire: A deliberate policy or chaos management?" *EGYLandscape Working Paper* 1, https://www.egylandscape.org/papers/June2020_Fuess/.

[2] Nicolas Michel, *L'Égypte des villages autour du seizième siècle* (Leuven, 2018), 109.

[3] Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn 1310–1341* (Leiden, 1995), 142; see also: Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam, Muqṭās and Fallahun* (Leiden, 1997), 135–61.

[4] Heinz Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern,* vol. 1, *Oberägypten und das Fayyūm* (Wiesbaden, 1979), 37.

[5] Ibid., 40.

[6] Albrecht Fuess, "Taxation and Armies in the Medieval Middle East: 11th-17th Centuries," in *New Cambridge History of Islam,* vol. 2, ed. Maribel Fierro (Cambridge, 2010), 608–9.


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In the Egyptian part of the Mamluk realm, where it hardly rained, environmental conditions meant agriculture depended exclusively on the Nile, through irrigation and floods, which peaked in September until early October. The inundation was measured by the Nilometer *(miqyās)* on the southern end of the Nile island al-Rawḍah until the twentieth century. Coptic solar calendars were used to describe the river's cycles of flood and retreat and which kinds of plants to sow and reap at a given time of the year. As can be deduced from these calendars, written by Arab authors of the Middle Ages and published by Charles Pellat, in the month of Tūt, i.e., September, the floods came, canals were opened, and predictions were made about the outcome of the growth of the crops as a tool to predict the tax of the year. Officials then wrote these numbers on scrolls and sent them to the government. At the same time, seeds were distributed to the peasants. Some land remained uncultivated and was put therefore into a different tax scheme. In April/May *(Baramūdah/Bashans)* taxes started to be paid, as the harvest came in and the autumn predictions were adjusted.[7] The famous author al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), a scribe in the Mamluk chancery, explains this adjustment process as follows: "Then it is the custom that if one of the crops brings less yield than predicted it has to be substituted by the yield of other crops." He goes on to explain in detail how this could work; for example: an *irdabb* of barley could be replaced by half an *irdabb* of chickpeas, and so on.[8]

The officials would then check the cultivators' September predictions for the year against the actual outcomes in early summer. Through a complicated system of mixed compatibility *(mukallifah),* both numbers were brought together by balancing the two measurements and taking into account any taxes that had already been paid to the authorities, the costs of seeds, and similar expenses.[9] The local tax administration would then receive agricultural products or money. To these payments to the local officials were added, in rural areas and smaller cities, the poll tax for non-Muslims *(al-jawālī).* In the larger cities, special institutions levied the poll tax.[10]

The questions to be dealt with in the following are how the land was classified, what kind of income was produced for the state, and what events led to a considerable change in the Mamluk taxation system over the fifteenth century. In answering these questions, this article will first discuss the different kinds of

[7] Charles Pellat, *Cinq calendriers égyptiens* (Cairo, 1986); idem, "Le 'Calendrier agricole' de Qalqašandī," *Annales Islamologiques* 15 (1979): 165–85.

[8] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ,* ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 2000), 3:521–22; Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Die Geographie und Verwaltung von Ägypten nach dem Arabischen des Abul-ʾAbbâs ben ʾAlí el-Calcaschandí* (Göttingen, 1879), 156.

[9] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 3:525–26; Wüstenfeld, *Geographie,* 158–59.

[10] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 3:530; Wüstenfeld, *Geographie,* 162.


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land categories in the Mamluk taxation system. Special attention will be given to the balance between indirect land taxation, as seen in the classical *iqṭāʿ* system, and other forms of dealing with land income, which, as we will see, favored the so-called *waqfization* of land holdings in the Mamluk realm.

The question of how to redistribute taxes throughout society, such as by securing education or investing revenues in relevant industries or the security sector, is not unique to modern states; Mamluk rulers had to develop such strategies as well.

## Categories of Land in the Taxation System of the Mamluks

**Iqṭāʿ:** By *iqṭāʿ* is generally meant the granting of the right to tax a certain piece of land to a *muqṭāʿ* (fief holder), who was usually a high-ranking Mamluk. The *muqṭāʿ* had to determine for himself how his taxes were collected and how to use them to finance his living and his contribution to the army. *Iqṭāʿ* land was not hereditary and fief holders did not live on the land; they were usually in the large military cities like Cairo, Alexandria, or other big towns.

The Mamluks inherited the Ayyubids' *iqṭāʿ* system and initially left it unchanged.[11] Sultan Qalāwūn (r. 1279–90) ordered his governors to draw up detailed lists of the revenue of individual *iqṭāʿ*s in their provinces,[12] and other attempts to reform and reorganize the fiscal administration followed,[13] including, most famously, *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī*. With these reforms, the sultan's share of cultivable *iqṭāʿ* land was increased from 4/24 to 10/24, from which the sultan was supposed to pay his own royal mamluks.[14] The *rawk* remained in action after the sultan's death, but aspects of the financial administration had to be adjusted due to shrinking revenue in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the Black Death devastated the Mamluk Sultanate.[15] Distribution of *iqṭāʿ* land to amirs was handled by the *dīwān al-jaysh* (army bureau).

**Khāṣṣ:** *Khāṣṣ* land, or *khāṣṣ al-sulṭānī* (royal land), was the land that the sultan, as head of the state, held as his personal domain and could use to finance

[11] Robert Irwin, "*Iqṭāʿ* and the End of the Crusader States," in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades,* ed. Peter. M. Holt (Warminster, 1977), 66–68; Peter M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), 147.

[12] Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998), 267.

[13] Heinz Halm, "Die Ayyubiden," in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt,* ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Munich, 2005), 201.

[14] Levanoni, *Turning Point,* 142; Sato, *State,* 135–61.

[15] See: Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977).


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additional public expenditures and buy military slaves (mamluks) for his own troops. This land was administered by the *dīwān al-khāṣṣ.* When the Ayyubids incorporated all *kharāj* (i.e., tax generating) land into the *iqṭāʿ* system and established *iqṭāʿ* as a completely non-hereditary fief, the sultan became the largest fief holder *(muqṭāʿ)* of the realm. That is, of course, perfectly compatible with Mamluk logic, in which the sultan should rule for life but the office of sultan should not be hereditary (a concept that was not always abided by, especially in the fourteenth century). In several instances, as discussed under the heading of *iqṭāʿ,* sultans tried to increase royal lands in order to have more money for central affairs or private expenditures. Under Sultan Barqūq (r. 1382–89 and 1390–99), for example, the *iqṭāʿ* of his son Muḥammad, who had died in 1395, was transformed into the special *dīwān al-mufrad,* which gave succeeding sultans more room for financial maneuvers.[16]

**Waqf:** *Waqf* is the endowment of land for the sake of public or private charity. In Mamluk times we find *awqāf ḥukmīyah* (endowments that benefit the public and specific philanthropic causes) especially in social housing estates. These *awqāf* mainly catered to the poor or were intended to be used to free Muslims from Christian captivity. A second category was *awqāf ahlīyah,* or family endowments, which targeted the building and ongoing maintenance of mosques and madrasahs and would continue to be administered by—and financially support—the family of the founder.[17]

The incentive to endow was, of course, the benefit for the afterlife, but a general tax exemption in this life was also a motivating factor. Generally, *awqāf* land should have been out of the reach of the state, as it now belonged to God. In Mamluk times, however, it meant that confiscation of the land was made legally more difficult but not impossible.

**Rizqah:** *Rizqah* (livelihood) was, according to Halm, a kind of smaller endowed land and could also be found as *rizqah al-aḥbasīyah.* Whereas *waqf* endowed public and private charitable institutions, the *rizqah al-aḥbasīyah* supported persons, such as mosque personnel, sons of mamluks or retired soldiers, etc. Furthermore, *waqf* was administered by the legal administration around the qadis, whereas *rizqah al-aḥbasīyah* belonged to the military administration.[18] Nicolas Michel has recently highlighted an additional *rizqah* category in the Mamluk period, the *rizqah jayshīyah,* which catered especially to military relatives. He argues that this kind of *rizqah* could have presented a small-scale possibility to use land and its income outside of the more inflexible *waqf* and *iqṭāʿ* systems.[19]

[16] Halm, *Ägypten,* 43–44.

[17] Ibid., 51.

[18] Ibid., 52–53.

[19] Michel, *L'Égypte,* 132.


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**Musta'jarah:** In his impressive study of land tenure in medieval Syro-Egypt, Daisuke Igarashi has pointed out that by the late fourteenth century amirs and sultans increasingly leased land among themselves. These leased lands *(musta'jarāt)* quite often came out of the *iqṭāʿ* holdings of the sultans' *dīwān al-khāṣṣ.* The *musta'jarāt* added another facet to the Mamluk real estate and financial industry. An important amir like the *atābak al-ʿasākir* Shaykhū al-Nāṣirī (d. 1357) is said to have earned an income of over 200,000 *dirham*s from his *iqṭāʿ*s, *amlāk*s, and *musta'jarāt.*[20]

**Milk:** *Milk* is private property and as such is usually outside the military taxation system, but of course products of *milk* land were taxed. There were no restrictions when it came to selling or inheriting *milk* property, as it was not included in the state systems but registered as individually owned land.

Looking at these categories, which were, more or less, the state of the situation in the first half of the fifteenth century, we can imagine the growth of a formal and an informal bureaucracy to keep track of all possible transactions between the different categories of land and their owners, fief holders, endowment administrators, or lenders. While the *iqṭāʿ* system largely dominated the land taxation in the Mamluk Sultanate after *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī* in 1315, it transformed—at first slowly but then very quickly throughout the fifteenth century—into a more *waqf*-based economy. The question remains: how did this transformation happen? Maybe more importantly, why?

## *WAQFIZATION* IN THE EYES OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

Around the end of Qalāwūnid rule in the 1380s, *iqṭāʿ*s had been increasingly transformed via legal procedures into religious foundations *(awqāf).* The usual process was that the *iqṭāʿ* land was transformed to *milk* by the authorities, who then sold it to a buyer who was then allowed to endow it. In many instances, the former *iqṭāʿ* holder was the future endower, who had thereby obtained more lasting rights to the land. The advantage for the *iqṭāʿ* holder was that he still obtained money from the land through management fees and selling products. The advantages for the state were that it received short-term money in the transaction and that *waqf* land was known to be a stimulus for the local economy and helped to build religious infrastructure. On the negative side, however, the state lost its direct influence over the land and could not give it to new soldiers as an *iqṭāʿ.*

[20] Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt* (Chicago, 2015), 119.


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In theory, this should have prevented these former *iqṭāʿ* lands from being reclaimed by the authorities, as they now officially belonged to God.[21] However, this practice did not go unchallenged. Sultan Barqūq (r. 1382–89 and 1390–99) summoned religious scholars in 1379, when he was still *atābak al-ʿasākir,* and demanded that many *waqf* deeds from previous years be nullified.[22] Apparently, he insisted on this policy especially in the second half of his reign and again tried to bring *waqf* land that had been "illegally" endowed back under the control of the sultanic fisc.[23] Despite this, gradual *waqfization* continued before accelerating tremendously around the 1450s. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, 10/24 of the overall cultivable land was already transformed into *waqf* property, thereby leaving only 14/24 for the Mamluk state's *iqṭāʿ* system.[24]

This subject of Mamluk financial and estate economies, and especially the interplay of *waqf* and *iqṭāʿ,* has attracted the attention of many contemporary scholars of the Mamluks. The issue was first put into the general notion of Mamluk decline, especially from the late fifteenth century onwards, as it was common to see everything the Mamluks did during that time as connected with their downfall in 1516. David Ayalon was among the first contemporary scholars who remarked upon this phenomenon, writing: "an interesting problem, which deserves a much deeper study than the scope of the present paper permits, is the existence of a constant antagonism between the financial interests of the army and the institution of religious endowments *(waqf).*"[25] He did not delve further into the matter, but it was followed up by others. Carl Petry intensively used documentary evidence in his 1994 work on the last great Mamluk sultans Qāytbāy (r. 1468–96) and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–16). He points out the politics of extortion and forced measures used by both sultans, which, despite being legalized in the documents by religious scholars, were apparently perceived by contemporaries as forced measures. Petry is not sure about the insight of the sultans when taking these measures: "In their sum, the trust deeds compiled by Egypt's last autocrats tell a sobering tale of short-range ingenuity but long-term

[21] Lucian Reinfandt, *Mamlukische Sultansstiftungen des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: Nach den Urkunden der Stifter al-Ashraf Īnāl* (Berlin, 2003), 27–28; Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 177.

[22] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1972), 3:345.

[23] Ibid., 3:878. Cf. Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 92.

[24] See on this: ʿImād Badr al-Dīn Abū Ghāzī, *Fī tārīkh Miṣr al-ijtimāʿī: Taṭawwur al-ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah zamān al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisah* (On the social history of Egypt: the development of landholding in the age of the Circassian Mamluks) (Cairo, 2000); Reinfandt, *Mamlukische Sultansstiftungen,* 32–36.

[25] David Ayalon: "The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1, no. 3 (1958): 291.


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myopia."[26] However, he then goes on to ask whether there could be something essential behind this policy: "Do all these disparate phenomena, once pieced together, reveal a budding master plan by which the *iqṭāʿ* system would be scrapped outright once the sultan garnered the means to replace it?"[27] Building upon this finding in a later article called "Waqf as Instrument of Investment," he points out that the *awqāf* income of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī produced up to ninety percent clear profit. Other endowments of the contemporary Mamluk elite were extremely profitable as well. He then hypothesizes that this surplus money was used to finance the army.[28]

The Egyptian scholar ʿImād Abū Ghāzī has also worked with archival documentation. He analyzed forty original Mamluk sale documents and another five hundred thirty deeds from the Ottoman archives in Cairo, publishing his findings in 2002.[29] He found that the majority of endowments he examined came from former *iqṭāʿ* lands and were issued after 1453 during the reigns of the sultans Īnāl, Khushqadam, Qāytbāy, and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī.[30] For him, the results of the analysis were that land tenure went from the monopoly of the Mamluk military class toward ownership by the urban elite. Further, he argued that as the *iqṭāʿ* system collapsed, the social structure of the land changed in favor of the new urban elites, and corruption became extremely widespread.[31] While Abū Ghazī's study has contributed to increasing our knowledge of the land tenure transformation process as such, there were some critical reactions to its conclusion. There is, for example, the idea that without the Ottoman conquest, the Mamluk Sultanate would have turned into a proto-capitalistic society, which seems highly hypothetical.[32]

Finally, it was Daisuke Igarashi who coined the term *"waqfization"* in his 2006 article on the establishment of the *dīwān al-mufrad*.[33] A series of articles pro-

[26] Carl Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 196.

[27] Ibid., 208–9.

[28] Carl Petry, "Waqf as an Instrument of Investment in the Mamluk Sultanate: Security vs. Profit?," in *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa,* ed. Miura Toru and John Edward Philips (London, 2000), 105.

[29] Abū Ghāzī, *Fī tārīkh.*

[30] Ibid., 11, 16. For a thorough discussion of the work, see: Adam Sabra, "The Rise of a New Class? Land Tenure in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: A Review Article," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004): 207.

[31] Abū Ghāzī, *Fī tārīkh,* 80, 103.

[32] Ibid., 112.

[33] Daisuke Igarashi, "The Establishment and Development of al-Dīwān al-Mufrad: Its Background and Implications," *MSR* 10, no. 1 (2006): 121.


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foundly elaborated on the financial organization of the Mamluk realm, culminating in his 2015 book, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt.*[34] In the book, Igarashi argues that *waqfization* was ongoing from the middle of the fourteenth century, as land regularly changed its status between *iqṭāʿ, waqf,* leased land, and *milk* from then on. This mixed system was, according to Igarashi, especially prevalent under Barqūq, who had initiated new financial institutions to cope with the challenges of his time. These institutions were then adjusted by subsequent sultans. In general, Igarashi explains that there was an overall tendency to move from the granting of land income from *iqṭāʿ* holdings toward direct payment of Mamluk soldiers.[35] Following up on Igarashi's work, one might consider that it was maybe this diversification of the Mamluk financial system that best suited the sultanate. It might not have been a question of *iqṭāʿ* versus *waqf* but maybe more about finding the right balance between the two. In this context, one might interpret the financial institution of *al-dhakhīrah* (treasury provisions) initiated by Qāytbāy as an individual financial backup system by which the sultan sought to balance the financial systems and help the divans function properly.[36] *Al-dhakhīrah* might therefore have been Qāytbāy's additional resource for financial maneuvering just as the *dīwān al-mufrad* had functioned for Barqūq.

## Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī on Land Tenure in the Fifteenth Century

Having viewed the general outline of how modern scholarship has approached these phenomena and their repercussions, some prominent voices from the Mamluk fifteenth century shall now be heard to see how *they* evaluated the financial issues related to land tenure and its taxation.

Al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), the well-known religious scholar and historian, held numerous positions in Cairo at madrasahs and within the fiscal administration alike; after 1417, he declined any new position in order to concentrate on his historical writing. Nonetheless, his experience as a financial official helped him in his writings and might explain his special interest in the economy.[37] When Sultan Barqūq, as explained above, tried to bring *waqf* land back under the control of the sultan, al-Maqrīzī quoted the sultan in his discussion with the ulama as saying, "This is the matter [i.e., the *waqfization*] that has weakened the army

[34] Igarashi, *Land Tenure*.

[35] Ibid., 57, 140.

[36] Ibid., 151.

[37] F. Rosenthal, "al-Maḳrīzī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4838.


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of the Muslims."[38] Although al-Maqrīzī is generally highly critical of the financial administration, he acknowledges that Barqūq undertook adjustments in the financial system in the mid-1390s when he introduced the so-called *Dīwān al-amlāk wa-al-awqāf wa-al-dhakhīrah (Diwan of possessions, awqāf, and provisions).* This *dīwān* unified the income Barqūq received as sultan through the channel of royal *waqfs,* his *milk* property, and his so-called *dhakhīrah* (provisions). After his reforms, Barqūq tried again to bring the *waqf* land, which had been "illegally" endowed, back under the control of the sultanic fisc.[39]

With Ibn Taghrībirdī (1409/10–1470) we encounter another kind of Mamluk historian. He was the son of a powerful amir and former commander-in-chief of the Mamluk army (who died when Ibn Taghrībirdī was around three years old),[40] and had—as a member of the ruling class—many insights about what was actually happening in the interior power system of the Mamluks. In several instances, he remarks about rioting Mamluk soldiers demanding more cash, a demand to which the sultans usually complied after some days of struggle.[41] The cash problem and shortage of fiefs, however, continued. Ibn Taghrībirdī praises Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (r. 1412–21) for asking soldiers (in 1418) who both held *iqṭāʿ*s as members of the "standing" army *and* were employed with salaries by amirs to make a choice: keep the *iqṭāʿ* and leave the amir or stay with the amir and give up the *iqṭāʿ*. If either choice would lead to a loss of income, the sultan offered compensation. Ibn Taghrībirdī comments: "This was reckoned as an element in al-Malik al-Muʾayyad's good government and his procedure was in accordance with old principles."[42] Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Īnāl (r. 1453–61) had to deal with the same cash flow problem and in 1454 planned to take away the stipends of the *awlād al-nās,* the sick, and orphans, but he was restrained from this by his counselor. "This was accounted among amir Bardak's good deeds," comments Ibn Taghrībirdī.[43] Another interesting story related by Ibn Taghrībirdī deals with Sultan Khushqadam (r. 1461–67) and his giving of *iqṭāʿ*s, including from *awqāf* lands of the former sultan Īnāl and his followers. That meant sultans were able to retrieve land from the *waqf* system and put it back into *iqṭā* circula-

[38] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:345.

[39] Ibid., 3:878. Cf. Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 92.

[40] W. Popper, "Abu 'l-Maḥāsin Ḏj amāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Tag̲ h̲ rībirdī," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0227.

[41] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt 1382–1469,* trans. William Popper (Berkeley, 1954–60), 18:64; 23:145.

[42] Ibid., 17:59.

[43] Ibid., 22:46.


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tion. Moreover, Khushqadam apparently split *iqṭāʿ*s into small pieces in order to curb the demand by the Mamluk soldiers.[44]

## Ibn Iyās on *Iqṭāʿ* and *Waqf*

While the financial issues were known to other Mamluk scholars, the negative attitude toward *waqfization* can be traced especially to the writings of Ibn Iyās (1448–1524), who, as a grandson of a leading mamluk, was not as near to power as Ibn Taghrībirdī, nor did he have the same scholarly reputation as al-Maqrīzī. Further, we do not know of any office held by Ibn Iyās.[45] He studied under the famous al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), of whom he was highly critical, and under ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl al-Ḥanafī (d. 920/1514), the Hanafi jurist and historian. In general, he is of great importance for this study as an eyewitness to the final period of the Mamluk Sultanate and the transition to Ottoman rule. However, as someone who apparently lived on the incomes of an *iqṭāʿ* and other stipends—to which he was entitled as a descendent of a Mamluk household—he was highly critical of the ongoing attempts at financial reform being undertaken by the last Mamluk sultans, as these threatened his own economic situation. In several instances he complains about the hardships that fell on people like him, meaning the *awlād al-nās,* whose right to their *iqṭāʿ*s increasingly came under question as they received stipends but were seldom capable of any efficient service for the state.

Ibn Iyās usually mentions *iqṭāʿ* in connection with disputes among fief holders (mamluks or descendants of mamluks, i.e., *awlād al-nās*) and the sultan. In this context, he recounts an episode in 1468 when Qāytbāy made stipend holders draw a bow to assess their capabilities. Those who could not draw the bow were excused from participating in an expedition but had to pay a penalty to the royal treasury instead.[46] He relates four similar stories about cutting off money from people who did not participate in war, and apparently he experienced such shortages as well. It got even worse for Ibn Iyās under Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī when his personal *iqṭāʿ* came under pressure. In 1508, he reports, mamluks entered the houses of the *awlād al-nās* and beat them in order to take away their *iqṭāʿ* documents. Ibn Iyās was one of the victims of this treatment. He lost his *iqṭāʿ* to four mamluks but recovered it later.[47] Ibn Iyās was furious, and since, as an eyewitness to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, he knew the fate

[44] Ibid., 23:36, 37.

[45] Brinner, W. M., "Ibn Iyās," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3225.

[46] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-ẓuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr,* ed. Mohamed Mostafa (Wiesbaden, 1963), 3:22.

[47] Ibid., 4:136.


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of Mamluk rule, he counted these measures as being among the causes of the Mamluk Sultanate's downfall.

There are stories in Ibn Iyās's works of crimes related to *iqṭāʿ*, which show the sensitivity and danger of financial matters. In 1484, an archer cut his own throat, and another mamluk hung himself in 1488 after being refused an *iqṭāʿ* and better income.[48] Some stories speak of elderly mamluks who were killed by younger recruits so that they could have the *iqṭāʿ* of the dead.[49] In one instance, two young mamluks incited two slave girls to kill their master, who had already retired from his service, in order to get hold of his *iqṭāʿ*. All four were apprehended and hung in the summer of 1515.[50] There are also narrations that relate to changes within the whole *iqṭāʿ* system. The first time an amir of one hundred (by the name of Uzdamur) received a direct payment of 1000 dinars out of the provision funds *(al-dhakhīrah)* instead of an *iqṭāʿ* was in 1481.[51] After this, we read quite often of direct payments or of mamluks wanting to receive direct payments. This, then, is a hint that soldiers might increasingly have gotten their pay directly rather than through *iqṭāʿ*s.

In 1490 the province of Sharqīyah had to pay an extra 20% on top of the usual taxes in order to equip a Bedouin cavalry troop for a military expedition against the Ottomans. Ibn Iyās comments that this was a special hardship for the *iqṭāʿ* holders of the region as it diminished their income, and as it had already happened twice in a short period. Qāytbāy had apparently done this before in previous military expeditions to the north.[52]

The son of Qāytbāy, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qāytbāy (r. 1496–98), in the summer of 1496 initially gave out all of the *iqṭāʿ*s that his father had stocked in reserve in *al-dhakhīrah.*[53] Then in January 1498 he initiated a reform concerning *iqṭāʿ*s that Ibn Iyās considered an abominable act no sultan had ever done before: al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ordered an increase in the number of mamluks each officer had to maintain. Commanders of a thousand had to finance an additional thirty men, amirs of forty had to sustain ten more, and amirs of ten had to add an additional five.[54] The amirs' finances were not augmented, however, so it was a hard blow that increased their financial burden by 30%.

[48] Ibid., 3:212, 258; idem, *Histoire des mamlouks cirassiens, tome II (872–906),* trans. Gaston Wiet (Cairo, 1945), 237, 288.

[49] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:107, 358; idem, *Journal d'un bourgeois du Caire: chronique d'Ibn Iyâs,* trans. Gaston Wiet (Paris, 1955), 1:104, 334.

[50] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:461; idem, *Journal,* 1:425–26.

[51] Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 140; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:190.

[52] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:269; idem, *Histoire,* 302.

[53] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:335; idem, *Histoire,* 375.

[54] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:385; idem, *Histoire,* 425.


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Ibn Iyās mentions *waqf*s around thirty-one times after 1468 and Qāytbāy's ascension to the throne. The bulk of these mentions deal with changes at the head of *waqf* administrations, complaints against unjust officials, and questions about how to proceed with a *waqf* and its income after the death of a noble person, as sultans had a tendency to try to take in these *waqf*s again, or at least to get money for not doing so. However, there are two remarkable cases. One deals with the fortress Sultan Qāytbāy constructed in the harbor of Alexandria in 1479. Ibn Iyās recalls that it cost more than 100,000 dinars and that numerous *awqāf* were allocated to fund its construction and maintenance.[55] This shows that *waqf*s could be used to reinforce military infrastructure. Another case dates from the spring of 1512, when Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī planned to retake *awqāf* from descendants of the Prophet, especially near Birkat al-Fīl (the Elephant Pond). The four main qadis were in this instance instructed to look into the documents of some *sharīf*s in order to find out if they were still entitled to *waqf* income.[56]

Importantly for our current study, Ibn Iyās provides descriptions of large scale *waqf* taxation under Qāytbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī that show their appetite for cash. At the beginning of 1489, the sultan had the four qadis agree to extra taxation of the *waqf*s of Old Cairo and the city of Cairo.[57] In January of 1491, his ambition grew to include a general taxation of *waqf*. He had the four qadis come to the dome of Yashbaq, in the Ḥusaynīyah quarter, and talked to them at length about the Ottoman threat and the need for money to fight them and pay the recruits. "After this introduction the sultan swore that his treasury was empty, that there were absolutely no other resources available, and, in consequence, that it was absolutely necessary to tax the *awqāf* and properties of Old Cairo and Cairo as well as the fields, baths, gardens, boats, and so on, an extra tax of the income of one whole year. Only with the collection of this sum could the costs of the necessary mobilization be handled. A long moment of complete silence followed this declaration, then the Shafiʿi qadi said 'God will certainly provide for this necessity.' To this the Maliki qadi replied: 'The taxation of an extra year is extremely heavy and the population is not in the state to support it. If necessary, we might ask for five months and in case of need maybe two more, in all a maximum of seven, which should not be extended.' The sultan was hesitant for a long moment. Finally, the council agreed with the proposition of the Maliki qadi and the council was dismissed."[58] In the light of all that we have seen regarding Ibn Iyās, it is not surprising that he was not happy about this outcome. He went on to explain that this was a horrible hardship on the popula-

[55] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:156; idem, *Histoire,* 172–73.

[56] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:260; idem, *Journal,* 1:243.

[57] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:260–61; idem, *Histoire,* 292.

[58] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:278; idem, *Histoire,* 313.


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tion and that every inhabitant trembled with fear, because these tax collectors were brutes without any conscience. People were furious with the officials, and Ibn Iyās reiterates his critique several times. He even renews his hatred in a long passage in his obituary of Qāytbāy where he speaks of the negative deeds of the sultan.[59] Regardless of how anyone felt about it, a precedent for such taxation had been set and the example could be followed in the future.

Shortly after he ascended to the throne, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī did just that. Ibn Iyās tells that he asked the qadis to the Citadel in July of 1502 and told them his plans for the extra taxation of *awqāf.* At first only three qadis were present. They disapproved of the plan, which made the sultan angry. After they had gone, "In that moment, at the end of the day, the Hanafi qadi, ʿAbd al-Birr, came and the sultan told him his plans, to which the qadi voluntarily agreed and signed. Then a second council was held with leading amirs about how to proceed. Finally, it was agreed on the following: *waqf* deeds should not be altered, but a whole year of their revenues should be taxed in advance. Moreover, the rent of ten months of houses, shops, gardens, baths and boats was to be paid. Even the *waqf* of the Manṣūrī hospital was not spared, as all *awqāf,* from very large to very small, were to be taxed. Orders to that effect were sent to Damietta, Alexandria, Aleppo, Damascus, and all the Syrian provinces."[60] It does not seem that Ibn Iyās agrees with this plan but, unlike his strong critique against Qāytbāy and his taxation, he remains silent in the aftermath of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī's announcement. This may mean that people had become used to this, or at least saw the necessity of providing the sultan with sufficient means to fight external foes.

In contrast to his predecessors, Ṭūmānbāy (r. 1516–17), the very last Mamluk sultan, rejected the idea of taxing *awqāf* in order to restructure the army ahead of the Ottoman attack on Egypt. According to Ibn Iyās, when an advisor urged him to do as his predecessors had and tax *waqf, iqṭaʿāt,* and pensions in order to expel the Ottoman foe from Egypt, he declined: "The sultan rejected such a point of view right away. 'This injustice will never happen in the days of my reign.' The people were very thankful and prayed for him a lot."[61] As we know, these prayers were not of much help to him.

We see in these stories that Ibn Iyās personally disapproved of *iqṭāʿ* and *waqf* policy at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but we can also clearly observe the sultans' consistent strategy toward the goal of increasing their military power. In general, Mamluk authors depict a fluid system in which land tenure could and did change its status between *iqṭāʿ, waqf,* leased land, and *milk* on a regular basis.

[59] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:308, 320, 332; idem, *Histoire,* 348, 362, 370.

[60] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:14; idem, *Journal,* 1:12–13.

[61] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 5:127.


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## Fighting the Ottomans: The Urgent Need for Cash

As we have seen, direct payments—rather than the granting of *iqṭāʿ*s—became increasingly common practice in the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate, starting in 1481 with Uzdamur Qarīb al-Ashraf Qāytbāy, previously mentioned as the first amir of a hundred to receive a direct payment instead of an *iqṭāʿ*.[62]

But what reason was there to change the state financial system? One of the main challenges—perhaps the primary challenge—facing the Mamluks in the second half of the fifteenth century was the expanding Ottoman Empire after its conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In this context, it does not seem to be sheer coincidence that *waqfization* accelerated with Sultan Īnāl's ascension to the throne in the same year. The mighty Ottoman army was known for its cannons and for its foot soldiers (the Janissaries) who were paid in cash. We know that Mamluk spies and delegations were present in Istanbul. They certainly informed the Mamluk sultans about the organization of the Ottoman state and its army.[63] Since the fifteenth century and the major conquests in the Balkans, the intense use of *waqf* was "omnipresent in all levels of Ottoman society, urban and rural, both in the form of individually functioning units and as [part of an] institutional system."[64] Moreover, Randi Deguilhem has stated that "it is now a well-documented fact that sums of cash were also widely possessed by Ottoman *waḳf*s," and she explains further:

> Primary research has also dismantled the misconception of *waḳf* as a secure tax shelter. Ottoman administrative records reveal that both buildings and agricultural properties belonging to the foundations were indeed subject to taxes. Work by Barkan clearly demonstrates that *waḳf* and freehold lands (calculated together as a unit) contributed rather more than 13% in the form of taxes to the overall revenue budget for the Ottoman Empire in 1527–28.[65]

Therefore, I would hypothesize that it was this kind of *waqf* system that the Mamluks were trying to install to generate more cash. Still, they had to adjust to the local circumstances, causing the reforms to oscillate back and forth. Nonetheless, the positive effect of *waqf* for the state's income situation was, as Heidemann has already shown for the late Abbasid and Ayyubid periods, im-

[62] Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 140; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:190.

[63] See for example: Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany, 1994), 84.

[64] Randi Deguilhem, "Waḳf: IV. In the Ottoman Empire to 1914," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1333.

[65] Ibid.


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portant in the overall process of generating wealth.[66] The Mamluks would have known this as well. The need to generate more cash for direct payments was urgent and can be witnessed as well by reforms in the trade sector. From the 1450s onwards, the Mamluk sultans agreed to a so-called "stock system," whereby Venetian merchants had to buy a certain stock of spices from the sultan each year before being allowed to buy on the free market. The sultans sold this stock below the price of the free market, however, as their interest was in having a fixed and steady yearly source of revenue that they could rely on in advance for their budget. The Venetians' interest in this arrangement is obvious as well.[67] Francisco Appelaniz has argued that Qāytbāy was looking for alternative funding methods for the military, as the *iqṭāʿ* system seemed less and less appropriate for his military needs.[68] In several recent articles, I have shown that starting during the reign of Qāytbāy there was a continuing military policy to create units of foot soldiers with firearms, who were directly paid. Moreover, training and material were costly, and firearms, cannons, and other supplies had to be imported.[69]

Ibn Iyās dates the first use of rifles *(al-bunduq al-raṣāṣ)* to 1490, during the Ottoman-Mamluk conflict, when Qāytbāy deployed *awlād al-nās* and other soldiers equipped with guns. After having shown the sultan their newly acquired expertise in a public display, they were sent off to the north.[70] Thereafter, guns are increasingly mentioned by Mamluk authors. The units carrying them seem to me to have been modelled after the Ottoman Janissaries, which they had encountered on the battle field.

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[66] See on this: Stefan Heidemann, "Charity and Piety for the Transformation of the Cities: The New Direction in Taxation and Waqf Policy in Mid-Twelfth-Century Syria and Northern Mesopotamia," in *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions,* ed. Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev (New York, 2009), 153–74; Stefan Heidemann, "How to Measure Economic Growth in the Middle East? A Framework of Inquiry for the Middle Islamic Period," in *Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Interdisciplinary Studies of the History of the Middle East,* ed. Daniella Talmon-Heller and Katia Cytryn-Sylverman (Leiden, 2015), 30–57.

[67] Francisco Javier Appellániz Ruiz de Galarreta, *Pouvoir et Finance en Méditerranée pré-Moderne: Le deuxième état mamelouk et le commerce des épices (1382–1517),* Anuario de Estudios Medievales Anejo 66 (Barcelona, 2009), 239.

[68] Ibid., 172.

[69] Albrecht Fuess "How to Cope with the Scarcity of Commodities? The Mamluks' Quest for Metal," in *The Mamluk Sultanate and its Neighbors: Economic, Social and Cultural Entanglements,* ed. Reuven Amitai and Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2019), 61–74; Albrecht Fuess, "Mamluk Politics." in *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies: State of the Art,* ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2013), 95–117; Albrecht Fuess "Les Janissaires, les Mamlouks et les armes à feu: Une comparaison des systèmes militaires ottoman et mamlouk à partir de la moitié du quinzième siècle," *Turcica* 41 (2009): 209–27.

[70] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:269.


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In the turbulent times of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qāytbāy (r. 1496–97), we hear of an Italian cannon caster who lost his life in a military fight in 1497.[71] In this context, we encounter another Italian military expert in the Mamluk service: Ludovico de Varthema, about whose life prior to his appearance in the Mamluk service little is known. His knowledge of military techniques, which appears in his travel description, leads to the assumption that he might have been a mercenary in the Italian wars of the late fifteenth century, as he describes himself as "the most skillful maker of large mortars in the world."[72] For these experts and other European mercenaries, receiving an *iqṭāʿ* holding in the backwaters of the Egyptian countryside would certainly have been less attractive than cash.

Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī inaugurated an infantry unit with guns called *"al-ṭabaqah al-khāmisah"* ("the fifth troop")[73] in order to cope with the military challenges of the early sixteenth century.[74] They were composed of *awlād al-nās,* Turkmans, Persians, and mariners,[75] and their first objective was to fight the Portuguese on the Red Sea. Moreover, in the spring of 1503 he sent five hundred black slaves with guns on a military expedition to the Hijaz.[76] All of them and their equipment required cash payments. To make things worse, he had to import goods from the Ottomans to fight the Portuguese. There is clear evidence that from 1507 on, the Ottomans provided the Mamluks with war materials such as wood and copper, and sent marine soldiers.[77] In 916/1510–11, a Mamluk embassy requested material help from the Ottomans and received 300 guns, 30,000 arrows, copper, iron, timber, and large quantities (40 *qanṭar*) of good quality saltpeter *(bārud muṭayyab).*[78]

[71] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:375.

[72] Ludovico de Varthema, *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508* (repr. Frankfurt, 1994), 50; see as well: Albrecht Fuess, "Ludovico de Varthema," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Biographical History,* vol. 6., Western Europe (1500–1600), ed. David Thomas (Leiden, 2014), 405–9.

[73] According to Ayalon the name was given because they received their payment on the fifth day, after the other troops that were paid on the previous four days; see: David Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Kingdom: A Challange to a Mediaeval Society* (London, 1956), 71–83.

[74] Albrecht Fuess, *Verbranntes Ufer: Auswirkungen mamlukischer Seepolitik auf Beirut und die syro-palästinensische Küste in mamlukischer Zeit (1250–1517)* (Leiden, 2001), 59–60.

[75] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:308, 331, 335, 369, 458, 466; Petry, *Protectors,* 195.

[76] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:109.

[77] *Chroniques de Garcia de Resende, João de Barras, Damião de Goes, Gaspar Correa, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda,* ed. Virgínia de Castro e Almeida, Les grands navigateurs et colons portugais du XVe et du XVIe siècles, vol. 5 (Paris, 1940), 186–91; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 115; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:156. News of the defeat led to despair in Cairo.

[78] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:201.


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While the money flowed through the hands of the Mamluk sultans in their quest to save their empire, they were actually quite successful. They withstood the Ottoman pressure for some decades by reforming many aspects of their society, including the land tenure fiscalization.

## CONCLUSION

All these military reforms and changes must have been extremely costly and time consuming, so it is perhaps not surprising that the financial system got out of hand. It is, however, far-fetched to say that it is a matter of decline. We might consider it more as an example of coping with and adjusting to crisis. From 1485, the Mamluks faced intense conflicts with the Ottomans for control of eastern Anatolia, where their grip diminished due to their technical and military disadvantages in relation to gunpowder. On their eastern border, the threat of first the Aq-Qoyunlu and then the emerging Safavids put the Mamluks under considerable stress, as did the appearance of the Portuguese in the Red Sea at about the same time.[79] No wonder, then, that the state reacted with reforms, coercions, and so on. There could be no long-term strategy in the face of such rapid changes, and the necessity of making short-term decisions fueled the need for cash, which then transformed the estate system in favor of *waqf* holdings. The last decade of Mamluk rule was under a "war economy," with all its advantages and disadvantages, profiteers and victims.

There might, however, be explanations other than military needs for the transformation process. Nicolas Michel and ʿImād Abū Ghāzī point to the fact that the transformation of *milk* land into *waqf* by the *bayt al-māl* (treasury) did not correspond immediately with military expeditions.[80] They argue for deeper transformation processes in Mamluk society in the fifteenth century and an increase of local religiosity, which led to increased financing of places of worship of local saints and related *rizqah iḥbāsīyah*s. Moreover, they see increasing tendencies of the Mamluk elite to merge with the local urban bourgeoisie and religious scholars in the late Mamluk period. These local notables were, of course, more interested in pious foundations than in the *iqṭāʿ* system, which kept them out of the equation.[81] However, the question is whether this is a contradiction to the military needs of Mamluk society as a whole in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These times needed, as has been shown above, a more cash-

[79] See on this: Albrecht Fuess, "Three's a Crowd: The Downfall of the Mamluks in the Near Eastern Power Struggle, 1500–1517," in *The Mamluk Sultanate and its Neighbors,* ed. Amitai and Conermann, 431–50.

[80] Michel, *L'Égypte,* 138; Abū Ghāzī, *Fī Tārīkh,* 33–101.

[81] Michel, *L'Égypte,* 139.


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based military system than a land-based tax system, and the conversion to *waqf* generated just that, while benefitting the urban elite as well.

That there are no clear correlations between transactions of the Bayt al-Māl with military expeditions shows, on the other hand, that such a bureaucratic legal state as the Mamluk Sultanate was bound by juristic procedures; it is no wonder that sultans resorted to ad hoc coercive measures in times of war. Beginning with Qāytbāy, sultans started to reorganize the state's finances, as Igarashi has shown, in order to "concentrate cash from all over Egypt and Syria into his own hand."[82] Under Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī, the sultanic fisc even witnessed a "substantial growth amidst a deteriorating general financial situation." This was done largely through confiscations and the sale of offices and so on, in order to keep the financial situation fluid for the sultan's needs.[83] What we also have to bear in mind is that the decline of the *waqf* system was beneficial to many Mamluks as they were very much involved in the establishment and management of *waqf*s. That meant that the military elite kept their status and could ensure inner and outer security, despite the decay of *iqṭāʿ*.[84]

When the Ottomans conquered the Mamluks, however, the whole administration was in complete chaos as the conquerors chased Mamluks through the streets and killed many among them. It is striking that even after the governorship of Egypt was handed to the former Mamluk governor of Aleppo, Khayr Bek—who had changed sides during the Ottoman advance—the old Mamluk system of land tenure was not re-installed in Egypt. The Ottomans had, with the help of former Mamluk officials, carried out new land surveys for tax reasons, but they did not introduce the *timar* system in Egypt, which would have been an indirect taxation method equivalent to the Mamluk *iqṭāʿ* system.[85] In contrast to the Syrian part of the Mamluk state, where the *timar* was implemented by the Ottomans, they instead opted in Egypt for a more centralized taxation system, which could be seen as the result of the Mamluks' changes to the financial administration. Of course, the Ottoman system would face its own series of exemptions, special regulations, and so on, but that is another story.

[82] Igarashi, *Land Tenure,* 174.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., 177.

[85] Michel, *L'Égypte,* 114.


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# Environment, Political Ecology, and the Culture of *Waqf* in the Eighteenth-Century Northern Egyptian Delta

In the summer of 1200/1786, following more than a decade of political stalemate with Qazdağlı Mamluk rulers in Cairo, the Ottoman central government launched a military and naval campaign to reclaim Egypt's provincial revenues and reassert the authority of Istanbul. The campaign was spearheaded by the Grand Admiral of the Ottoman navy, Ghāzī Ḥasan Pasha, who assumed the role of governor following the successful (but temporary) ousting of the Mamluk leaders from power. He spent a year reorganizing Egypt's finances and administration—lifting irregular taxes imposed by the Mamluk beys and imposing new ones benefitting the imperial treasury—before he was called away in August 1787, at the age of 74, to lead a naval campaign against the Russians.[1]

One of Ḥasan Pasha's first acts in Egypt was personal and pious, rather than military or fiscal. It was also certainly political. He appeared at the highest court in Cairo, al-Bāb al-ʿĀlī, to register the endowment deed *(waqfīyah)* for a pious endowment *(waqf,* pl. *awqāf)* in the Nile-Mediterranean port city of Rosetta (Ar. Rashīd). The endowed property consisted of irrigated land southeast of the city, near the village of Kom al-Afrāḥ, and its proceeds were dedicated to the upkeep of a mosque complex that Ḥasan Pasha had built on the Aegean island of Kos (Tr. İstanköy) earlier that year.[2] Like many other property holders in Rosetta and its surrounding villages, Ḥasan Pasha endowed a mixture of orchard land (a garden planted with date palms, citrus trees, mulberries, sycamores, and grape vines) and irrigated agricultural land "dedicated to growing clover and other things," that included a well, waterwheel, and underground cistern.[3]

[1] For Hasan Pasha's tenure in Egypt, see ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Jabartī's History of Egypt: ʿAjāʾib al-athār fī'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār,* ed. and trans. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann (Stuttgart, 1994), 2:108–47 (13 Ramaḍān 1200/10 July 1786–23 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1201/5 October 1787); Daniel Crecelius, "Orders of Ghazi Hasan Pasha to the Egyptians (1200–1201 AH/1786–1787 AD)," *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies* 17–18 (1998): 23–32.

[2] Dār al-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmīyah (hereafter DWQ) Maḥkamat Rashīd 346, case 215 (3 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1200/26 September 1786). The case was copied into the *sijill*s of Rosetta at the end of October: DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 346, case 237 (8 Muḥarram 1201/31 October 1786). The property he endowed consisted of three-quarters (18 *qirāṭ*s out of 24) of a garden known as Ghayṭ al-Razzāz, the Rice-Merchant's Plantation.

[3] *Al-qiṭaʿah al-arḍ al-mawʿūd bi-dhikrihā aʿlá al-muʿiddah li-zirāʿat al-barsīm wa-ghayrihi.* Clover was frequently grown as a fodder crop in rotation with valuable cash crops, providing food for beasts of burden and binding vital nitrogen in overtaxed soil.


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Ḥasan Pasha's *waqf* in Rosetta is evidence of Egypt's position within an Ottoman statesman's mental geography of the reach of imperial power across the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the eighteenth century.[4] But on a more fundamental level, Ghāzī Ḥasan Pasha's decision to endow orchards and irrigated land in Rosetta in perpetuity was simply following local custom. The countryside around Rosetta was controlled by local households who held rights to land, irrigation infrastructure, and horticultural property endowed as *waqf.* Households from across the spectrum of provincial property holders, including ulama and village elites, were well represented in the local landscape of *waqf.* Additionally, households affiliated with beylicate and the Ottoman military regiments *(ojāq,* pl. *ojāqāt)* had been establishing estates of *waqf* property in the northern Delta since the second half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, Ḥasan Pasha had obtained the land and irrigation equipment for his *waqf* from a member of the local ʿAzabān regiment.

This article explores the appeal of *waqf* as a property regime for the control of land and water resources in the eighteenth-century Egyptian Delta. Specifically, it focuses on the socio-economic and legal logics that informed local households' use of *waqf* around the cities of Rosetta and Damietta (Ar. Dimyāṭ) in the northwestern and northeastern Delta, respectively (Fig. 1). *Waqf* was part of a strategy of capital accumulation, household formation, and social reproduction in Egypt, as it was throughout the early modern Ottoman Empire. Drawing on the rich surviving records *(sijillāt,* sing. *sijill)* of the Islamic courts *(al-maḥkamah al-sharʿīyah,* pl. *maḥākim)* of Rosetta and Damietta, I analyze a market in *waqf* property that in many ways approximated a regime of private property. The culture of the Islamic courts and the priorities of property holders in the northern Delta form the subject of the first three sections of this article.

I also explore the environmental, geographic, and political limits of *waqf* property for creating and maintaining a stable land regime in the Delta at the end of the eighteenth century. In the final two sections, I discuss a divergence in the economic fortunes and political profiles of Rosetta and Damietta, two seemingly similar regions in the Egyptian Delta. This comparison sheds light on the local factors that shaped the implementation of *waqf* as a strategy for controlling land and water prior to the widespread introduction of private property on agricultural land in the nineteenth century.

[4] For further discussion, see Zoe Griffith, "Egyptian Ports in the Ottoman Mediterranean, 1760–1820," Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 2017.


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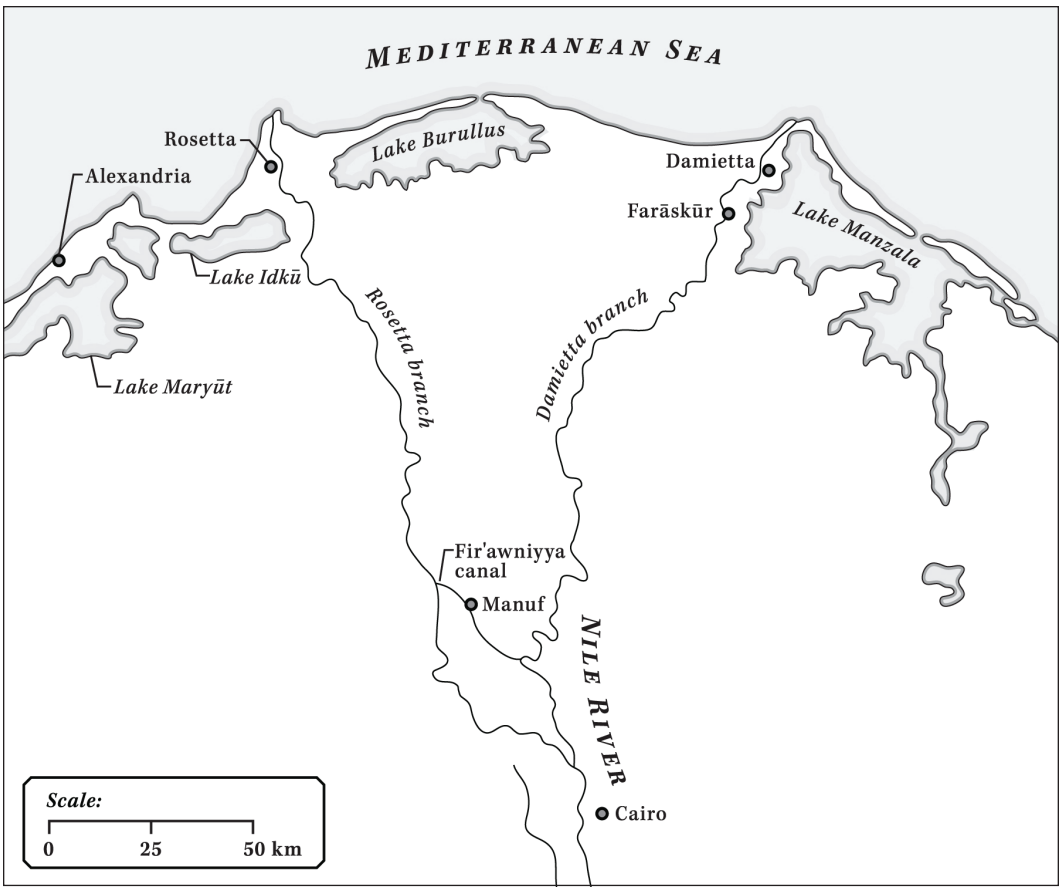


Fig. 1. Map of the Egyptian Delta showing the location of Rosetta and Damietta as well as coastal lakes and major canals.

## *Waqf* in the Land Regime of Ottoman Egypt

*Waqf*—personal property placed in trust as a pious endowment—has been a favored lens for historians of Islamicate societies since the field's turn to economic and social history in the 1980s and 1990s. By the Ottoman period (extending from the fourteenth century to World War I in some regions), *waqf* was widespread in the empire's major and secondary cities; *waqf* provided for the poor and the sick, supported education and the learned ulama, erected and embellished cityscapes, and immortalized personal and family legacies from the Balkans to the Hijaz.[5] Prior to the Tanzimat reform period (1839 to 1876), between

[5] Scholarship on *waqf* in the Ottoman Empire, even limited to the Arab provinces, is too extensive to list here. For a recent discussion of the "Centrality of *Waqf*s" in Ottoman society and historiography, see Beshara B. Doumani, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History* (Cambridge, 2017), 83–100. For important volumes bringing together scholarship on *waqf,* see *Le*


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one-third and one-half of arable land and urban property throughout the Ottoman Empire was endowed as *waqf.*[6] Not all types of property were equally eligible for endowment, however. According to Islamic jurisprudence, a *waqf* could only be created out of property that was already held by its owner as fully alienable private property, or *milk*. Urban real estate (houses, shops, ateliers, and industrial property) was classified as *milk* by default, and its conversion into *waqf* was unproblematic. By contrast, the default status of agricultural land was *mīrī,* or state land, taxation of which was essential to public welfare, and it was therefore not generally eligible for endowment as *waqf.*

Nevertheless, at the time of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1516, approximately 40 percent of the province's agricultural land was said to be endowed as *waqf.*[7] During a process of "waqfization" of taxable *(kharājī)* agricultural land in the second half of the fourteenth century, revenues from Egypt's productive land were endowed to the *waqf*s of the Mamluk sultans.[8] The Ottomans put forth legal claims—based on Hanafi jurisprudence and Ottoman administrative law *(kanun)*—to the land they found tied up in *waqf* and succeeded (from Istanbul's perspective) at reclassifying some of this as taxable state land.[9] Nevertheless, more than 20 percent of arable land in Egypt was still classified as *waqf* at the turn of the nineteenth century.[10]

Meanwhile, Ottoman jurists expanded the classification of *milk* to include the intensively irrigated lands encircling many of the empire's cities and towns: the

*Waqf dans l'espace islamique: outil de pouvoir socio-politique,* ed. Randi Deguilhem (Damascus, 1995), and *Held in Trust: Waqf in the Islamic World,* ed. Pascale Ghazaleh (Cairo, 2011).

[6] Astrid Meier, "*Waqf* Only in Name, Not in Essence: Early Tanzimat *Waqf* Reforms in the Province of Damascus," in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire,* ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Beirut, 2002), 202. Efforts to monitor and systematize revenues endowed to the imperial *waqf*s in Istanbul began as early as the 1770s, opening the door to more extensive efforts to centralize authority over provincial *waqf*s during the Tanzimat period.

[7] Muḥammad ʿAfīfī, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-ḥayāh al-iqtiṣādīyah fī Miṣr fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī* (Cairo, 1991), 9, citing the seventeenth-century historian Isḥāqī.

[8] ʿImād Badr al-Dīn Abū Ghāzī, *Taṭawwur al-Ḥiyāzah al-Zirāʿīyah fī Miṣr Zaman al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisah* (Cairo, 2000); Igarashi Daisuke, *Land Tenure and Mamluk Waqfs* (Berlin, 2014).

[9] For an important discussion of the juridical debates over the legal status of *waqf* property in the former Mamluk territories of Egypt and Syria, see Kenneth Cuno, "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk?* An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School," *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995). For a more in-depth treatment of the legal-juridical debates among scholars of different Sunni *madhhab*s, see Baber Johansen, *The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent: The Peasants' Loss of Property Rights as Interpreted in the Hanafite Legal Literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods* (London, 1988), 81–82.

[10] Kenneth Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants: Land, Society, and Economy in Lower Egypt, 1740–1858* (Cambridge, 1992), 103.


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*bostan*s of Istanbul, the Ghouta region outside of Damascus, and the "green belt" around Tripoli in modern-day Lebanon are some of the better-known examples of these semi-rural landscapes of gardens, orchards, vegetable patches, and agricultural land.[11] As *milk,* this property was eligible for endowment, and represented reliable and lucrative investments for households engaged in both trade and commercial agriculture.

The widespread conversion of irrigated semi-rural land into *waqf* has been documented as part of a process of "re-Ottomanization" in the provinces of Greater Syria in the seventeenth century.[12] A related phenomenon can be observed in Egypt around the port cities of Rosetta and Damietta where, beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, households affiliated with the Ottoman regiments (especially the ʿAzabān and Mustaḥfiẓān—the Egyptian term for the Janissaries) converted land and irrigation infrastructure into pious endowments that would embed their descendants on the Egyptian coast for a century or more.[13] The timing of these endowments corresponds to the arrival in Egypt of waves of demobilized Anatolian troops following the (long but successful) Ottoman campaign in Crete from 1645 to 1669 and the second (failed) siege on Vienna in 1683. As Anatolian soldiers joined the Ottoman regiments in Egypt, it elevated the status and clout of officers of the Mustaḥfiẓān and ʿAzabān corps.[14] Military office brought access to tax farms, including the customs offices of Egypt's ports and control of the booming Red Sea coffee trade. The profits generated by these endeavors could be safely secured as *waqf* in the fertile zones around Egypt's bustling Mediterranean ports.

Following a tumultuous period in the early seventeenth century in which the local regiments and beylical households vied amongst themselves and with the Ottoman government for control in Cairo, the Ottoman central state stabilized its grip on Egypt's revenues and administration. The reassertion of Ottoman sovereignty in late seventeenth-century Egypt has been documented through the lens of political households, legal culture,[15] and attention to public irrigation works.[16]

[11] Doumani, *Family Life,* 231. Doumani draws here on the work of Baber Johansen, *Contingency in a Sacred Law: Legal and Ethical Norms in the Muslim Fiqh* (Leiden, 1999). For Istanbul's Ottoman-era *bostan*s, see Aleksandar Shopov, "When Istanbul Was a City of *Bostāns*: Urban Agriculture and Agriculturalists," in *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul,* ed. Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafesçioğlu (Leiden, 2021), 279–307. For the Ghouta region of Damascus, see James A. Reilly, "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828–1880," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 4 (1989): 517–39.

[12] Doumani, *Family Life,* 165–69.

[13] Griffith, "Egyptian Ports," Chapter 2.

[14] Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge, 1997), 13.

[15] James E. Baldwin, *Islamic Law and Empire in Ottoman Cairo* (Edinburgh, 2017).

[16] Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge, 2011).


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Egypt's "re-Ottomanization" can also be observed through the lens of property, kinship, and a legal culture of *waqf* endowment in regions of the northern Egyptian Delta that were tightly integrated into Ottoman circuits of domestic trade and provisioning at this time. Ottoman sovereignty remained relatively stable in Egypt until at least the 1740s, with the consolidation of the Qazdağlı Mamluk household and its rise from the ranks of the Mustaḥfiẓān into the beylicate.[17]

*Waqf* was a ubiquitous institution throughout the Ottoman provinces, but the "culture of *waqf*"—what kinds of things could be endowed, with what tools, toward what end, and over whose objections—was regional, if not intensely local.[18] The Islamic court was meticulous in recounting the details of any transaction involving *waqf* property, since these details could prove crucial to the claims of dozens or even hundreds of living and future beneficiaries enmeshed in sometimes elaborate networks of kin and clientage. The court recounted (and, in a sense, constituted) entire family trees in order to protect the beneficiary claims of rightful heirs, as much as to preclude unlawful claims by those excluded from the *waqf.*[19] In sufficient numbers, these transactions can provide a surprisingly clear portrait of the local social order, including kinship networks, business relations, intermarriage, status, and changing fortunes, at least among the property-holding echelons.[20] Ultimately, attention to the domain of *waqf* proves invaluable to reconstructing the social history of provincial "secondary cities" like Damietta and Rosetta, for which no local histories or chronicles have survived.[21]

[17] Hathaway, *Politics of Households*.

[18] For example, Murat Çizakça notes that cash *waqf*s (endowments of cash that could be loaned out at interest), were relatively widespread in the Balkans and Anatolia, but long believed to be absent in the "more pious Arab regions." This view has been disproven by evidence of cash *waqf*s in Aleppo. Murat Çizakça, "Cash *Waqfs* of Bursa, 1555–1823," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 (1995): 313. Beshara Doumani explores the importance of local political economy and norms of social reproduction for the gendered realm of *waqf* beneficiaries in "Endowing Family: *Waqf,* Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800–1860," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 1 (1998): 3–41.

[19] Doumani elaborates on the "mutually-constitutive relationship between kin and court" in *Family Life,* for example, p. 48. These transactions thus nearly always detailed the name of the founder of the *waqf* and the foundation date, the precise contents and demarcation of boundaries of the property, in addition to sometimes dizzying lines of succession down to fractions of fractions of a share *(qirāṭ,* pl. *qirārīṭ).*

[20] Pascale Ghazaleh discusses the significance of these extra-familial networks, which often led to unexpected endowments left to non-biological kin in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cairo, in *Fortunes urbaines et stratégies sociales: généalogies patrimoniales au Caire, 1780–1830* (Cairo, 2010), Chapter 7.

[21] Egypt's surviving literary output from the early modern period is notably Cairo-centric. Nelly Hanna believes there may be a rich manuscript tradition awaiting discovery, possibly includ-


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Rosetta and Damietta were both Nile-Mediterranean ports representing vibrant centers of commercial, social, and political life in early modern Egypt.[22] The lowlands of the northern Delta enjoyed almost year-round access to the Nile, the waters of which were distributed through an intricate capillary system of canals, wells, and irrigation ditches. Reliable and plentiful access to water, as well as easy access to the markets of the enormous population centers of Cairo, Istanbul, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, primed the Delta for intensive cultivation of cash crops like rice and linen. Damietta had a long history as a port city, but Rosetta's fortunes were entirely transformed under Ottoman rule. Rosetta had been a minor riverside settlement prior to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, but its importance rose rapidly as the site of the Ottoman imperial storehouses (Tr. *Anbar-ı Amire*) for Egyptian produce awaiting shipment to Istanbul. (Figs. 2–3).

These port cities were home not only to maritime merchants and seamen, but to households of political grandees, agricultural brokers, and ulama who invested in landed wealth as well as in Mediterranean trade. Rural elites—village shaykhs as well as Bedouin leaders—also invested in agricultural and horticultural property in the cities' outskirts. Private property-holding in Rosetta and Damietta included irrigated land—gardens, orchards, and even agricultural land for cash crop production—and the accoutrements of rice production in the towns—industrial structures such as bleaching mills, storerooms, and livestock facilities.

We turn now to the landscape of *waqf* property in the eighteenth-century northern Delta, which exhibited clear patterns reflecting the interests of Ottoman-era provincial elites. By the end of the eighteenth century, very few surviv-

ing more provincial chronicles and "commoner chronicles," written by figures outside of the military and religious sectors, but these still await discovery. Nelly Hanna, "The Chronicles of Ottoman Egypt: History or Entertainment?," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt, c. 950–1800,* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 237–50. Compare with Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford, 2013).

[22] Scholarship on Rosetta and Damietta is uneven, although Rosetta remains better studied in Arabic-language scholarship and Damietta better studied in Western languages. For Rosetta, see Jalīlah Jamāl al-Qāḍī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ṣādiq, and Muḥammad Ḥusām al-Dīn Ismāʿīl, *Rashīd: al-nashʾah, al-izdihār, al-inḥiṣār* (Cairo, 1999); Nīvīn Muṣṭafá Ḥasan, *Rashīd fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī: dirāsah tārīkhīyah wathāʾiqīyah* (Alexandria, 1999); ʿAlī Ṣalāḥ Aḥmad Harīdī, "Al-Ḥayāh al-iqtiṣādīyah wa-al-ijtimāʿīyah fī madīnat Rashīd fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī, dirāsah wathāʾiqīyah," *Egyptian Historical Review* 30–31 (1983–84): 327–78; A. Lezine and A. R. Abdul Tawab, "Introduction à l'étude des maisons anciennes de Rosette," *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (1972): 149–205. For Damietta, see Niqūlā Yūsuf, *Tārīkh Dimyāṭ mundhu aqdam al-ʿuṣūr* (Damietta, 1959); Daniel Crecelius and Ḥamzah ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Badr, "French Ships and Their Cargoes Sailing Between Damiette and Ottoman Ports, 1777–1781," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, no. 3 (1994): 251–86; Peter Hill, "The First Arabic Translations of Enlightenment Literature: the Damietta Circle of the 1800s and 1810s," *Intellectual History Review* 25, no. 2 (2015): 209–33.


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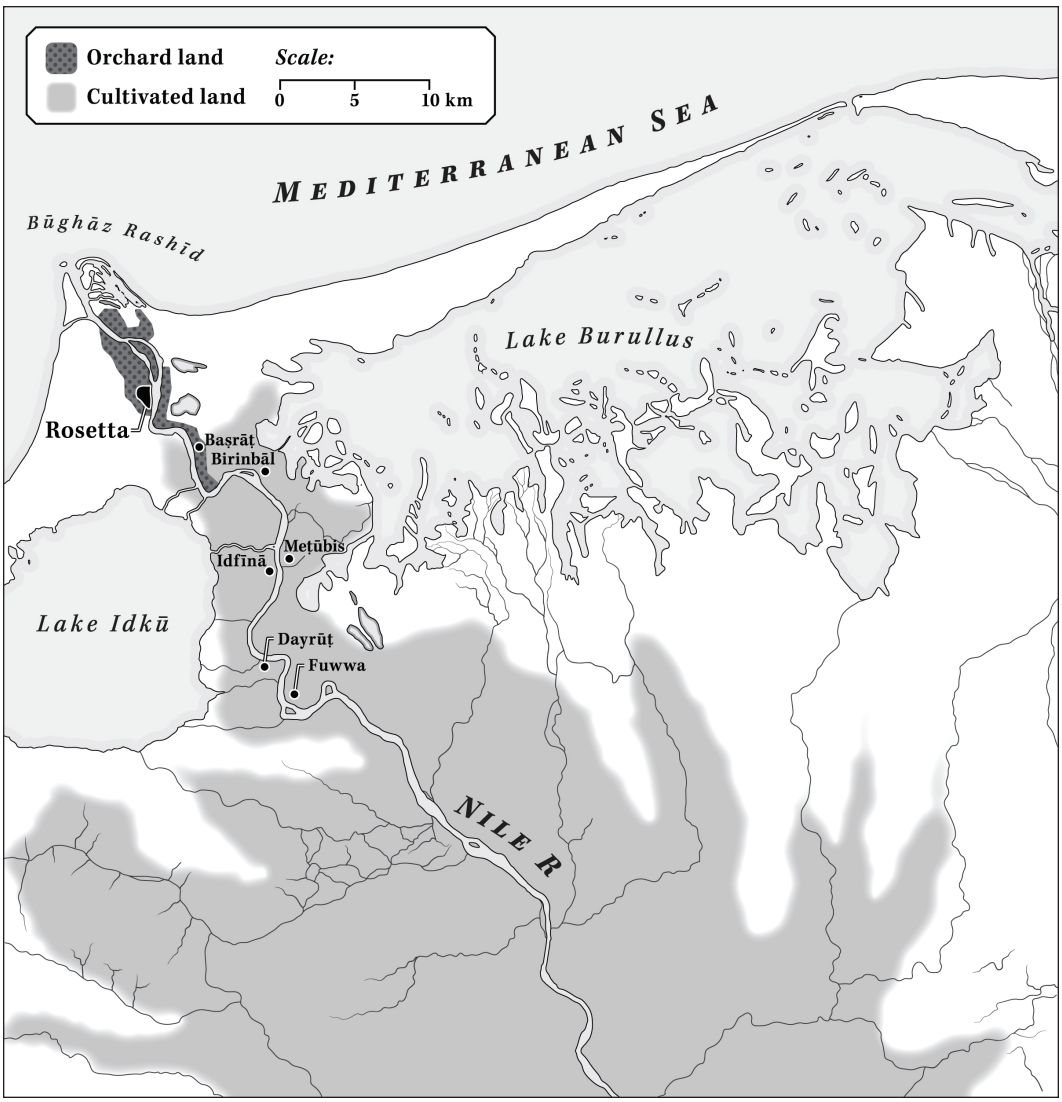


Fig. 2. Map of Rosetta and surrounding area indicating land use.

ing *waqf*s in and around Rosetta and Damietta dated to the sixteenth century or earlier. Notable exceptions include properties endowed to the Mamluk-era sultanic *waqf* of Qāytbāy (r. 1468–96).[23] Endowing personal property to a chari-

[23] For example: DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 83 (11 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 1204/23 July 1790): Ṣāliḥah Khāṭūn bint Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, the wife of Amir Muṣṭafá Aghā, *qāʾimmaqām* of Birinbāl, rented a piece of irrigated land northwest of Rosetta endowed to the *waqf* of Qāytbāy from Amir Khalīl Aghā, commander of the Rosetta citadel. For Qāytbāy's *waqf* properties in Damietta, see DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 272, case 231 (date missing, sometime between the end of Jumādá I and the beginning of Rajab 1187/mid-August to mid-September 1773), in which Badawī ibn Shaykh


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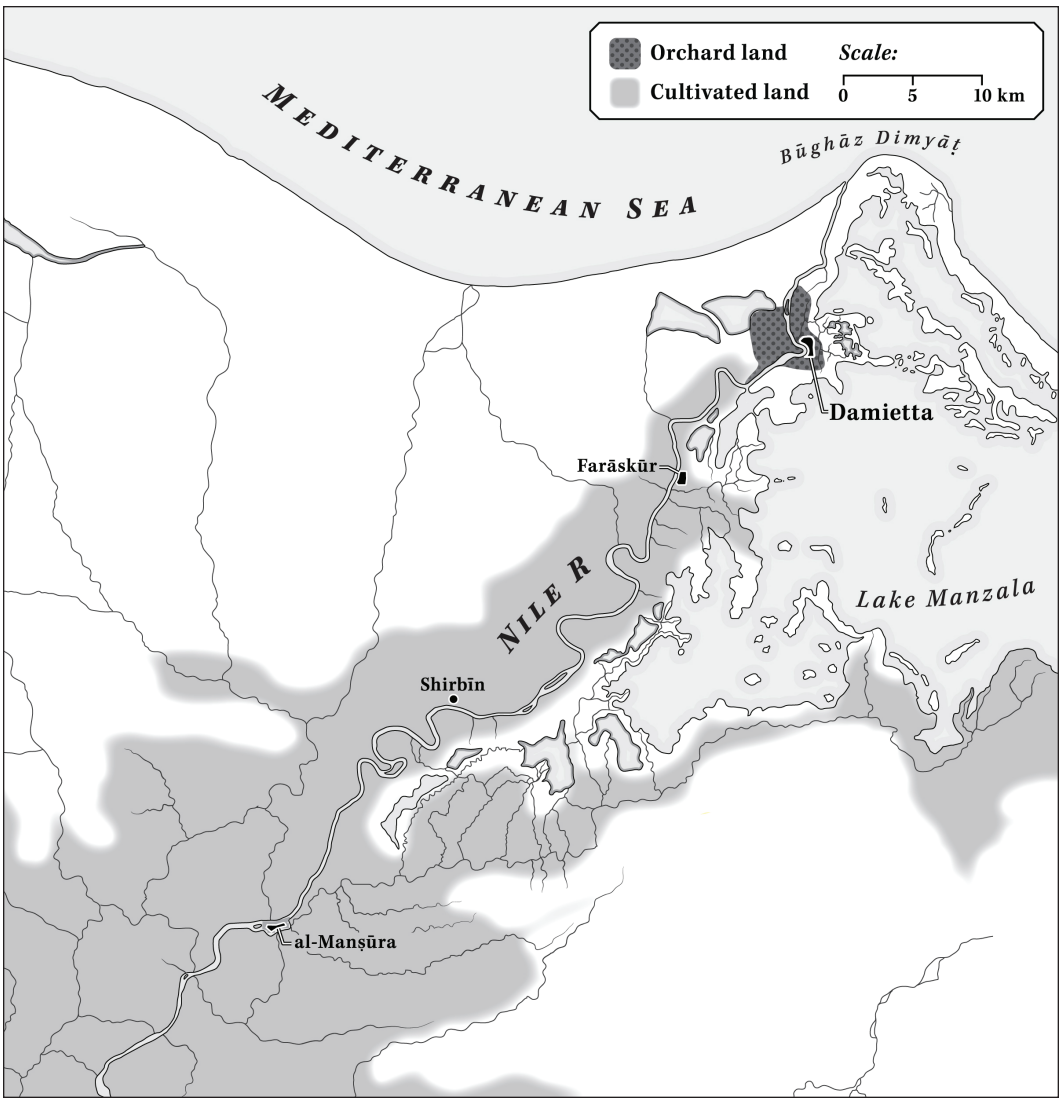


Fig. 3. Map of Damietta and surrounding area indicating land use.

Muḥammad al-Aṣīlī claimed that Ḥasan Aghā ibn Yūsuf Shaqdaf owed him 172 *riyāl*s for use of agricultural land *(arḍ filāḥah),* a well, and a waterwheel endowed to the *waqf* of Qāytbāy; DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 83 (16 Rabīʿ II 1202/24 January 1788), in which al-Zaynī Maḥmūd ibn ʿAlī al-Ghayṭānī purchased 2.25 shares of a field endowed to the *waqf* of Qāytbāy from Aḥmad al-Badawī ibn Ramaḍān al-Jazīrī for 200 *riyāl*s. See also DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 245 (date missing, around May 1788); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 288, case 206 (date missing, around fall 1789). Mamluk-era *waqf*s were more common in Damietta, which had been an important port prior to Egypt's incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. The ʿAbbāsī coast near Damietta (al-shāṭiʾ al-ʿAbbāsī) housed the estates of many of the port's urban elites, including the *waqf*-estate of Shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Dayrūṭī al-Shāfiʿī, established in 1504.


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table cause *(waqf khayrī),* such as the upkeep of a mosque or support for the poor, was a pious act. A number of households in Rosetta endowed date palm orchards surrounding the port to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina[24] and at least one endowed rice paddies to benefit the Mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo.[25] Ḥasan Pasha endowed his *waqf,* as we saw at the beginning of this study, to the upkeep of the mosque he had recently erected on the island of Kos. Denizens of Rosetta and Damietta generally kept their charity close to home, endowing rents from shops, apartments, rice mills, gardens, and plantations to the upkeep of smaller, local mosques.

Even closer to home, in fact, the overwhelming majority of *waqf*s in Rosetta and Damietta were so-called "family *waqf*s," *(waqf dhurrī* or *waqf ahlī),* the proceeds of which went to the benefit of the endower and his or her descendants.[26] Endowing a family *waqf* carried the same pious association as any other *waqf,* since its proceeds would eventually devolve to a charitable cause upon the death of the endower's final heirs.[27] The benefits to endowing personal property—orchards, shops, mills, waterwheels, gardens, the family house, even agricultural land—were obvious. *Waqf* property was protected from confiscation by the state or political rivals. This was important for elites affiliated with the Ottoman regiments or Mamluk households, since the wealth of statesmen could be seized by the treasury *(bayt al-māl).* This could also be a consideration for wealthy civilians who had no living heirs and wanted to leave their wealth to unrelated household members like manu-

[24] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 346, case 1034 (15 Shawwāl 1203/9 July 1789): Ibrāhīm al-Jammāl rented eight shares of a plantation called al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn planted with date palms; DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 709 (*ghurrat* Jumādá I 1198/22 March 1784) ʿAbd al-ʿĀl ibn ʿAlī Faraḥāt endowed a *waqf* including seven shares of a plantation that had originally been included in the al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn *waqf.*

[25] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 141 (*ghāyat* Jumādá I 1208/3 January 1794). The details of this *waqf* (endower and endowment date) are unavailable. The Janissary *waqf* of ʿAbdallāh Çorbacı Tutmaksız, established in Rosetta in 1763, contained rice mills and caravansaries *(wikālāt)* along with orchards and irrigated fields—a fairly typical profile for a household *waqf* in Rosetta in the eighteenth century. The commercial structures were constructed alongside rice fields endowed by a different household to the Mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo.

[26] Van Leeuwen notes that this function developed early in *waqf* jurisprudence, allowing families to retain trusteeship over household wealth in perpetuity despite having given up legal ownership. Legally speaking, however, there was no difference in Islamic jurisprudence between a "charitable" *waqf* and a "family" *waqf;* all *waqf*s were considered charitable (Richard Van Leeuwen, *Waqfs and Urban Structures: The Case of Damascus* [Leiden, 1999], 12). Ghazaleh discusses the modern distinction between "charitable" and "family" *waqf*s in *Fortunes urbains,* 436, n. 42.

[27] Meier, "*Waqf,*" 205.


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mitted slaves.[28] *Waqf* property was not subject to Islamic laws of inheritance, which demanded the division of wealth, including real estate, among heirs according to strict proportions. Endowing property as *waqf* was thus an opportunity to enforce or reshape the contours of family: one could stipulate that sons and daughters should benefit from the *waqf* equally, or that daughters should not benefit at all. Manumitted slaves could be included as beneficiaries, linking the fortunes of the formerly enslaved and their descendants to the endower's household in perpetuity. Taken together, these features of *waqf* property offered households greater control over wealth both during the endower's lifetime and in future generations.[29]

On the other hand, once a property was endowed, it could no longer be alienated since its revenues were dedicated to the upkeep of a pious cause. In this sense, *waqf* property was less flexible (a less liquid form of capital) than *milk* property. However, as the work of innumerable social and economic historians of the Islamic world has demonstrated, the loss of flexibility that came with the formal exclusion of *waqf* property from the market was easily overcome through the use of specialized contracts executed in the Islamic court. It is to the legal practice of *waqf* in the northern Egyptian Delta that we now turn.

## Legal Cultures of *Waqf* Property in the Delta

The privatization of land controlled as tax farms *(iltizām)* is key to understanding the hegemony of Mamluk households in eighteenth-century Egypt.[30] Indeed, privatization of state revenues underpinned the rise of local power holders throughout the Ottoman empire in the seventeenth century, and intensified after the introduction of life-term tax farms *(malikâne)* in 1695.[31] It is in this context—the privatization of public revenues—that we can better understand a concurrent process by

[28] Ghazaleh, *Fortunes urbains,* 455.

[29] Doumani, "Endowing Family," 6.

[30] ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ʿAbd al-Raḥman ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *Al-Rīf al-Miṣrī fī al-qarn al-thāmin ʿashar* (Cairo, 1974), 69; Cuno, *Pasha's Peasants,* 33.

[31] Under the *iltizām* system, land remained legally in the possession of the Ottoman imperial treasury, which sold the rights to collect taxes on a particular parcel of land to the highest bidder in exchange for a cash payment up front. Though bidding was supposed to occur at regular intervals (originally 1–3 years), tax farms became functionally heritable by the eighteenth century. Taxation rights could be held by an individual for life, and could pass to his (or, less often, her) heirs for a fee. The Ottoman government introduced the *malikâne* (which continued to be called *iltizām* in Egypt) to raise cash and encourage good stewardship by tax farmers. See Mehmed Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (Istanbul, 2000); Ariel C. Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: Privatization and Political Economy in the 18th-Century Otto-


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which valuable irrigated property was obtained by members of the state apparatus (Ottoman regiments and Mamluk households) in the Arab provinces and endowed as *waqf* in perpetuity for the benefit of their descendants.

While reaping benefits such as protection from confiscation and flexibility in matters of inheritance, the endowers and beneficiaries of *waqf* used specialized contracts to transact *waqf* property much like private property. Using legal contracts like long-term lease *(tawājur),* exchange *(istibdāl),* and relinquishment of beneficiary rights *(isqāṭ), waqf* holders could liquidate their real estate holdings in what Nelly Hanna has termed "semi-alienation": *waqf* property circulated easily on the market without violating the legal non-alienability of *waqf* status.[32] These contracts are especially evident in the court records from Rosetta, where regimental households began to liquidate their rice mills, plantations *(ghayṭ),* and even agricultural land along the Nile towards the end of the eighteenth century. Much of this property was scooped up by Rosetta's rice brokers, who had cash in hand but lacked political title that offered access to other forms of landed property.[33]

The most common type of semi-alienation contract in the Egyptian Delta was the long-term lease, or *tawājur,* which could be signed for up to 90 years on property endowed as *waqf.* Muḥammad ʿAfīfī has posited that one- to three-year leases were typical for property endowed as *waqf* in Egypt, but I have seen almosts no examples of leases shorter than 10 years in the court records of Rosetta and Damietta in the eighteenth century; most rentals were longer than 40 years.[34] In fact, long-term leases were so common on *waqf* land in Rosetta that short-term leases were a distinct anomaly requiring specific provision. In 1703, Ḥājj Abū al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās endowed several waterwheels and land for the cultivation of rice and clover.[35] He wrote a condition *(sharṭ)* into the endowment deed stipulating that no part of the *waqf* could be rented out for more than three years at a time and explicitly forbade the stringing together of multiple three-year contracts. In 1772, ʿĀʾishah Khātūn, the great-granddaughter of Ḥājj Abū al-ʿIzz and the superintendent *(nāẓirah)* of his *waqf,* raised a claim in al-Bāb al-ʿĀlī in Cairo against one Ḥājj Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Nūr al-Rashīdī. She accused Ḥājj Ḥusayn of taking possession of one-third (eight *qirāṭ*s) of the property seven years prior and withholding the land tax *(kharāj)* levied on the property for himself. She demanded that he cede his claim to the property and repay 760 *riyāl*s of tax and 10 *ardabb*s of rice produced

man Empire," *Politics & Society* 21 (1993): 393–423; Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge, 1997), Chapter 4.

[32] Nelly Hanna, *Habiter au Caire: la maison moyenne et ses habitants au XVII et XVIII siècles* (Cairo, 1991), 32. See also ʿAfīfī, *Al-Awqāf,* 155–56.

[33] Griffith, "Egyptian Ports," Chapter 2.

[34] ʿAfīfī, *Al-Awqāf,* 145–47.

[35] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 333, case 272 (8 Jumādá II 1186/5 September 1772).


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by the land on behalf of the *waqf*. Ḥājj Ḥusayn protested that he had obtained legal rights to the property from ʿĀʾishah's cousin Ibrāhīm; specifically, Ibrāhīm had rented his share of the property to Ḥājj Ḥusayn in a 40-year lease and relinquished his beneficiary rights for a large sum of 1,400 *riyāl*s. However, the court declared the transactions between Ḥājj Ḥusayn and Ibrāhīm invalid *(bāṭil)* and sided with ʿĀʾishah Khātūn on the basis of the three-year maximum condition written into the endowment deed. This is the exception that proves the rule in Rosetta; only in a case involving an air-tight stipulation against the practice of long-term lease was the court called on to intervene. Apart from this example, the use of multi-decade contracts on *waqf* property, including life-term (90-year) *tawājur* contracts, was exceedingly common.

The frequency of semi-alienation contracts in Rosetta's Islamic court is striking and requires interpretation. On a basic level, it reflects a socio-legal sphere well-equipped to handle an economic regime based on *waqf* property, and a population carefully attuned to the nuances of *waqf* as a means of capital accumulation. For example, the rule of *istibdāl* ("exchange" or "substitution" of *waqf* property) allowed *waqf* holders to convert their property into a marketable asset. Rosettans used *istibdāl* to transact irrigated land with a freedom that belied the legal status of *waqf* property. The rule of *istibdāl* held that "a *waqf* object can regain its status of *milk* [private property], on condition that it is exchanged for another object which then becomes *waqf*," or even that, "an *istibdāl* for money is allowed if a substitute is bought and subsequently turned into *waqf*."[36] In Rosetta, the practice of "exchange" nearly always involved the transfer of a piece of *waqf* property for a cash sum, little different from an outright sale. ʿAfīfī notes that some Muslim scholars considered such exchanges "legally reprehensible" *(makrūh).*[37] But in practice, these mechanisms were often sanctioned by the local ulama, who presided over the signing of these contracts, and employed these same rules to manage their own landed properties. For example, Aḥmad al-Razzāz ibn ʿAlī Abū al-Suʿūd used such an exchange to alienate urban waqf property to Shaykh Ṣāliḥ ibn Shaykh Aḥmad al-Bannā, a Hanafi mufti in Rosetta, in 1796.[38] These contracts were not just a reflection of Rosettans' legal and economic savvy; Beshara Doumani describes the frequent appearance of *istibdāl* cases as a sign of "the rapid rise or grafting of a new elite on to the existing power structure," as actors with access to cash and influence vied for control over limited propertied assets.[39] This was certainly the case in Rosetta at

[36] Van Leeuwen, *Waqfs and Urban Structures,* 41, citing the opinion of the eighth-century Hanafi scholar Abū Yūsuf (d. 798).

[37] ʿAfīfī writes extensively on the use of *istibdāl* for urban property (*Al-Awqāf,* 174–81) and for land (ibid., 198–200).

[38] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 812 (3 Rabīʿ I 1211/5 September 1796).

[39] Doumani, *Family Life,* 99.


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the end of the eighteenth century, as a longstanding Ottoman regimental elite was supplanted by commercial and Mamluk interests.

Similar to *istibdāl,* the rule of *isqāṭ* ("relinquishment") enabled beneficiaries of a *waqf* to renounce their beneficiary rights for a cash sum.[40] Ghāzī Ḥasan Pasha's *waqf* provides an example of the rule of *isqāṭ*. The endowment deed stated that the properties endowed to Ḥasan Pasha's *waqf* in Rosetta had already been endowed to the *waqf* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan Çavuş; the land had been held in a 90-year lease by Amir Sulaymān Çorbacı, a commander in the ʿAzabān corps, since 1765. If the deed is to be believed, the buildings and fruit trees endowed to the *waqf* had fallen into ruin and neglect—the implication being that the property was no longer generating revenues intended for the upkeep of the *waqf*. Ḥasan Pasha had gained possession of these properties "via legal *isqāṭ*" from Amir Sulaymān, giving him the right to endow them as his own *waqf*. Such claims of ruination and decrepitude were common in legal cases involving the transfer of *waqf* property, though it is impossible to know whether this was a description of fact, or mere pretext.[41] Signs certainly point to pretext in the case of Ḥasan Pasha's *waqf;* if the orchard and structures were too decrepit to support the *waqf* of a provincial *çavuş,* why should they be suitable for the triumphant Ottoman governor of Egypt?

The semi-alienation of *waqf* property, including irrigated land, was a notable feature of Rosetta's legal and economic culture by the second half of the eigh-

[40] The use of *isqāṭ* to turn *waqf* property into a more freely transactable form of property right was widespread among Rosetta's property-owning households towards the end of the eighteenth century. In 1792, Muḥammad al-Ḥasrī relinquished his rights to two *qirāṭ*s of a property containing an orchard and waterwheel to Ṣāliḥah bint Shaykh Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, the wife of the deputy governor *(qāʾimmaqām)* of the rice-producing village of Birinbāl (DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 419 [*ghurrat* Ṣafar 1207/17 September 1792]). In 1797, the brothers Muṣṭafá and ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿAbbāsī relinquished their cousin's share in the *waqf* that they co-supervised (DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 908 [6 Shaʿbān 1211/3 February 1797]). This share consisted of one-third (eight *qirāṭ*s) of a garden called Awlād Rūm containing date palms and other fruit-bearing trees, a well with its wooden waterwheel, and a storeroom for tobacco. ʿUthmān Aghā Khojā gave the brothers 1,450 *riyāl*s for the property. Later in the same year, ʿUthmān Khojā returned to the court with the ʿAbbāsī brothers to draw boundaries across the property, dividing it into equal thirds (DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 976 [no date]). ʿUthmān Khojā received the westernmost third bordering another property in his possession and measuring approximately half a *faddān* (about 2,400 square meters).

[41] For example, DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 272, case 198 (12 Jumādá I 1187/1 August 1773); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 282, unnumbered after case 83 (16 Rabīʿ II 1202/24 January 1788); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 282, case 221 (9 Shawwāl 1202/12 July 1788); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 346, case 926 (no date but around January–February 1789); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 290, case 69 (28 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 1210/3 June 1796); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 918 (27 Ramaḍān 1211/25 March 1797); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 934 (23 Shawwāl 1211/21 April 1797); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 1062 (14 Jumādá II 1212/3 December 1797); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 355, case 37 (18 Rabīʿ II 1219/26 July 1804).


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teenth century. The frequency of these transactions challenges the view of institutionalists like Timur Kuran, who have interpreted the legal injunction against the alienation of *waqf* property at face value.[42] Legally speaking, there was little standing in the way of Rosettans who wished to profit from their wealth in *waqf.* But we should not therefore assume that individuals and households endowed their homes, orchards, plantations, and mills as cold investments or objects of speculation. As noted above, and as I have written about at greater length elsewhere, the frequency of semi-alienation contracts in Rosetta likely represents a degree of upheaval in the political and economic fortunes of one group of local elites (the Ottoman regiments) and the rising fortunes of another (specifically the city's Muslim agricultural brokers and perhaps higher-ranking Mamluks.) Rather than evidence of nascent capitalism or a "modern" regime of private property, we should understand privatization in the eighteenth-century Delta as a response to many of the same factors that fueled the rise of private property elsewhere during the early modern period: commercialization creating new alliances of wealth and power within and against the patrimonial state.[43]

## Horticultural Wealth on Irrigated Estates

In light of the unique geography of Rosetta and Damietta, situated at the water-rich, commercialized nexus of the Nile and Mediterranean, one important feature of land transactions in the local *sijill*s was the nearly ubiquitous inclusion of the tools necessary for intensive artificial irrigation: wells, waterwheels, dikes, canals, and corrals for housing large livestock. Alan Mikhail has argued that Egypt's agricultural economy in the early modern period relied on a system of great ("sultanic," or *sulṭānī*) and subsidiary ("local," or *baladī*) irrigation canals, built and maintained through the coordination of state resources and local labor and knowledge.[44] Here we find that wealthy households in the low-lying landscape of the northern Delta also held irrigation infrastructure—wells, waterwheels, cisterns, and water use rights—for private use, as an important component of their landed estates.

Until the final years of the eighteenth century, the *sijill*s from Damietta and Rosetta provided detailed descriptions of irrigated properties, elaborating upon their attributes and boundaries, but did not systematically measure their size or

[42] Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton, 2010), Chapters 6–7.

[43] See Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2010).

[44] Mikhail, *Nature and Empire,* 42.


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dimensions.[45] One way to gauge the relative size of an irrigated estate is by the description of multiple wells and waterwheels required to irrigate the land. For example, the Dayrūṭī *waqf,* endowed near Damietta in 1504, included five irrigation wells by the end of the eighteenth century, each affixed with its own wooden waterwheel.[46] The age of the *waqf* and the need for five waterwheels suggests that this was a sizable property, certainly larger than the average plot, which typically made do with one or two waterwheels. The *waqf* of Amir Sulaymān Çorbacı ʿAbāza, endowed in Damietta's hinterland in 1677, contained seven wells and waterwheels by the end of the eighteenth century.[47] The agricultural land endowed to the *waqf* of Ḥājj Abū al-ʿIzz, who embedded the three-year maximum lease condition in his endowment deed from 1703, included 12 waterwheels, individually named and collectively known as "the Mothers" *(ummahāt).*[48]

As Nile-Mediterranean ports with rice-growing hinterlands, Rosetta and Damietta had similar political ecologies. However, norms and techniques surrounding irrigation differed between the two regions, perhaps according to local legal culture, or perhaps due to topography and proximity to the Nile. When the beneficiaries of the Dayrūṭī *waqf* alienated the property via an *istibdāl* contract in 1787, the alienation of water use rights was specified along with the material tools of irrigation: included along with the land, wells, and waterwheels was also "the flow of [the land's] waters and the rights to [the water] entering the property and leaving it" *(majārī miyāhā wa-huqūqahu kullahā al-dākhilah fīhi wa-al-khārijah ʿanhu)* along with a canal *(jisr)* connecting the property to the public canal *(al-jisr al-ʿāmm).*[49] When a fourteenth-century *waqf* containing irrigated

[45] Further research would be needed to establish precisely when (and why) the use of area measurements became standard in the court records, but the shift seems to have begun in the 1790s. While the *faddān* was the typical measure of agricultural land held as *iltizām,* this unit almost never appears in the court. When area measurements begin to appear in the court records, the units given are the *qaṣabah* (a length ranging from 3.5 to 4 meters) and the *dhirāʿ* (between 58 and 68 centimeters). At the turn of the nineteenth century, the *faddān* ranged in size from 4,200 to nearly 6,000 square meters depending on the quality of the land. There were between 267 and 333 *qaṣabah*s per *faddān,* and between 6.5 and 6.75 *dhirāʿ*s per *qaṣabah.* For the complicated and variable relationship between the *dhirāʿ, qaṣabah,* and *faddān,* see Stanford Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517–1798* (Princeton, 1958): 72–73.

[46] The endower's descendants effectively alienated a majority share of the land along with its wells and waterwheels to Mustafa Çelebi ibn Amir Ismail Odabaşa, the grandson of one of the tax farmers of Damietta's rice market, in 1787. DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 285, case 151 (no date, 1201/1786–87).

[47] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 66 (7 Jumādá II 1202/15 March 1788), and DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 285, case 195 (undated, 1201/1787).

[48] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 350, case 604 (25 Jumādá II 1210/6 January 1796).

[49] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 285, case 151 (date missing, 1201/October 1786–October 1787).


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Fig. 4: "Vues de Beni Salameh et d'un puits sur la branche de Rosette" (Views of Beni Salameh and one of the wells on the Rosetta branch). From *Description de l'Égypte,* État Moderne I, 82. (Scan provided by The Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2021669727)

land outside of Damietta was rented for 90 years in 1816, the rental also included "what [goes with the land] in terms of benefits and obligations and the rights to water flowing onto the property and out of it."[50] This phrasing, specifying the landholder's right to the use of water flowing on the land, appeared regularly in court cases in Damietta, but never in Rosetta. Whether this represents a difference in recording practices between the two Islamic courts, or whether Damiettans in fact claimed greater control over water resources on their property is a question for further research.

Local terminology for irrigation equipment also differed. In describing the irrigation wells located on elite estates, the Damietta court records always refer to "wells enclosed with brick and mortar" with wooden waterwheels erected over their openings.[51] In Rosetta, meanwhile, the court exclusively refers to "*baḥrānī* wells" *(biʾr baḥrānī)* with wooden waterwheels as the standard tools of irrigation on local landed estates.[52] The meaning of *baḥrānī* here is unclear, but may be a reference to the Nile *(Baḥr al-Nīl)* itself as the water source, rather than a canal. Fig. 4 comes from the *Description de l'Égypte* and depicts a well and waterwheel

[50] *Wa-mā li-dhālik min al-manāfiʿ wa-al-lawāzim wa-al-huqūq majārī miyāhihi huqūqahu kullahā al-dākhilah fīhi wa-al-khārijah ʿanhu.* DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 305, case 94 (9 Jumādá I 1232/27 March 1817). The *waqf,* consisting of a garden and plantation, was endowed by Qadi ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣamīdī al-Nūrī al-ʿAnṣārī in 791/1389.

[51] *Biʾr maṭwī bi-al-ājar wa-al-mawn al-murakkab ʿalá fūhatihi sāqiyah min al-khashab.*

[52] *Biʾr baḥrānī murakkab ʿalá fūhatihi sāqiyah min al-khashab.*


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constructed directly on the banks of the Rosetta branch of the Nile to draw up water from the river.

The French engineer Pierre-Simon Girard remarked that irrigation wells in the northern Delta were dug very shallow, allowing for the use of water-wheels with affixed buckets to raise the water from the river, rotated by oxen or buffalo. This was likely the method used on the rice paddies that dominated the region. Plots of land located further away from the banks of the river were irrigated using water "drawn up from the bottom of wells by means of a circle of rope affixed with ceramic pots" and rotated by beasts of burden. The pot-wheel system was used for "all the enclosed gardens near the cities, especially the most affluent ones."[53]

Irrigation infrastructure was included in every land transaction in the *sijill*s for Rosetta and Damietta in the eighteenth century. This is unsurprising, since control of irrigation represented a crucial element of agricultural and horticultural productivity on elite estates. A more perplexing feature of legal culture found only in Rosetta was the listing of date palms *(inshāb nakhīl balaḥ),* vines, and other fruit trees in every transaction regardless of the category of the land—garden *(bustān, junaynah),* plantation *(ghayṭ),* or farm lands *(ṭīn,* pl. *aṭyān)*—or quality of the soil—sandy *(arḍ raml),* arable *(sawād),* or rice paddy.

References to fruit trees vastly outnumber references to rice or any other agricultural product, creating a sort of dissonance between the forests of trees thicketing the *sijill*s and French and Ottoman observers' obsessive focus on the Delta's production of rice and grain. This is a distortion created by a legal culture, which highlights deeper challenges of understanding agricultural production and consumption through Islamic court records. Although productive trees dominate local land transactions, these records almost never mention the economic profit of their fruits, let alone the process of cultivation.[54] Recounting his travels in the 1780s, Constantin-François Volney called the gardens and orchards surrounding Rosetta "astonishingly delightful" but does not comment on their economic importance. One of the authors of the *Description de l'Égypte* noted "the remarkable sobriety of the inhabitants of Rosetta" for whom "the fruit of the date palm seems to be the principal food, formed into thin,

[53] *Description de l'Égypte: ou, receuil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française* (Paris, 1809–28; digital edition, access via Library of Congress), vol. 5, État Moderne I, 508–10.

[54] Cuno notes that under Mehmed Ali Pasha's system of agricultural monopolies, the tax levied on date palms rose from .5 to 2 piasters *(ghurūsh)* per year in 1821–22 to 1 to 2.5 in 1836–44. Part of this tax was levied in kind, and products of the bark and fronds were placed within the pasha's monopoly system (Cuno, *Pasha's Peasants,* 130). This suggests that the state considered the date palm an important part of its strategic inventory, presumably for necessary items like rope and storage baskets.


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little, round cakes and eaten with a bit of unleavened bread."[55] But local consumption probably did not motivate the landed elite's investment in trees. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dates were exported from Egypt to the Ottoman imperial pantry, albeit as more of an incidental than a principal item of commerce. Evliya Çelebi, the famous Ottoman traveler and a notorious gourmand, known for making special note of local delicacies on his travels, had once admiringly noted the seventeen distinctive varieties of dates cultivated in Egypt that were not found in Basra or Baghdad. The Ottoman kitchens demanded 500 woven palm baskets-full each year.[56] In the nineteenth century, ʿAlī Mubārak described the quality and variety of Rosetta's date harvest, most of which by that time was destined for markets in Cairo and Alexandria.[57] The annual produce of a healthy date palm was valued at around 150 silver *para*s in 1800, less than half the value of an *ardabb* of wheat in the same period.[58] Date trees were undoubtedly a valuable form of wealth, but their towering profile in the Rosetta *sijill*s still seems disproportionate to the relatively modest economic importance of date production.

One challenge in establishing the value of horticultural property relative to other types of property (land and irrigation infrastructure) in the Delta economy is simply the nature of plants themselves. Fruit-bearing trees were almost never enumerated, even when the boundaries and contents of a given property were otherwise meticulously described to prevent future disputes in court. This may be because the natural growth cycle of trees and vines made it difficult to keep accurate tallies on landed property that might be rented out for decades.

[55] Constantin-François Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt, in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1785* (New York, 1798), 12; Jean-Baptiste Prosper Jollois, in *DE,* vol. 7, État Moderne II, 351.

[56] The woven palm baskets used to transport dry goods were called *zenbil* in Turkish, *qafaṣ* in Arabic. Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi,* ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, and Robert Dankoff (Istanbul, 2007), 10:242.

[57] ʿAlī Pāshā Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqīyah al-jadīdah li-Miṣr al-Qāhirah wa-mudunihā wa-bilādihā al-qadīmah wa-al-shāhirah* (Bulaq, 1886–89), 11:76. He lists the varieties of dates produced around Rosetta. The thin, oblong Zaghlūl dates, bright red when fresh, are still some of the first to ripen and most popular in Cairo markets. Because of the more temperate climate of the Mediterranean coast, Rosetta's date crop ripened about a month later than harvests elsewhere in the country.

[58] The silver *para* (also called the *niṣf fiḍḍah* in Arabic or the *médin* by the French) was the most commonly used coin in eighteenth-century Egypt. For the *para* and other currency at the turn of the nineteenth century, see Cuno, *Pasha's Peasants,* 211–13. The *ardabb* was a unit of dry volume that differed according to locality (the Cairo *ardabb* being different from the Rosetta *ardabb,* for instance) and for each grain (wheat, rice, etc.). In 1800, the Cairene *ardabb* for wheat was 184 liters (ibid., 209). For the value of dates, see *DE,* vol. 6, État Moderne II, 551. For the value of wheat, see André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIè siècle* (Damascus, 1973), 1:53.


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The average productive lifespan of a date palm is about 40 to 50 years, while many long-term rentals lasted 80 to 90 years. In mid-summer 1773, the qadi of Damietta launched an investigation *(kashf)* of *waqf* property at the behest of a rescript (Tr. *buyuruldu*) from the governor's council in Cairo, al-Dīwān al-ʿĀlī.[59] The governor had ordered the investigation to examine the old trees of the orchard endowed to the *waqf* of one ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Mutāʿ Allāh Rajīḥ. The trees at that time were in the possession of a Janissary officer, Amir Muḥammad Çorbacı al-Ḥammāmī, but the *waqf* was supervised by two of the endower's grandsons; presumably it was they who had requested the investigation in the first place. A party of local notables, deemed to be experts in such matters (mostly members of the local regiments), went out to inspect the trees.[60] Upon their return to the courthouse, they testified that the trees endowed to the *waqf* of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Rajīḥ had grown old, and listed the new trees that had sprouted up in their place: thirty lemon trees and two bitter oranges *(naranj),* an olive tree, a carob, and a tamarind.[61] The experts declared that, according to the "customary law in such situations," *(al-qānūn al-jārī bi-hi al-ʿādah fī mithl dhālik)* half of the newly sprouted trees belonged to the *waqf* of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd "according to their origins" *(ṭabʿan li-aṣlihā),* while the other half belonged to Muḥammad Çorbacı according to the rule of *musāqāh,* a type of sharecropping contract.

Given the value and prevalence of horticultural property as a form of wealth, it is not surprising that Ottoman and Islamic law developed specific rules to manage the ownership and care of productive plants. The private property status of fruit trees and vines in Ottoman law *(kanun)* was established under the Hanafi jurisprudent Ebüssuûd Efendi (d. 1574) in the mid-sixteenth century.[62] The *milk* status of trees and vines was independent of the status of the land (whether *mīrī, waqf,* or *iltizām*) on which they grew. Productive trees and vines could easily be endowed as *waqf,* but trees held as *milk* just as often grew on *waqf* land, retaining their separate legal status. In such cases, productive trees were generally sold to the party who had acquired long-term lease rights to the underlying land without acquiring outright ownership of the land itself. Horticultural property constituted a valuable sector of the "layered" system of property rights that dominated Ottoman land law until the mid-nineteenth century: legal title to the land could be held separately from the legal right of surplus

[59] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 272, case 198 (12 Jumādá I 1187/31 July 1773).

[60] The qadi was accompanied by Amir Muḥammad Çorbacı, the *sirdār* of the ʿAzabān; Hājj Ḥusayn Ayık Çavuş of the Mustaḥfiẓān; ʿAlī Çelebi al-Ḥammāmīzādah; and Abū Bakr al-Jūkhdār.

[61] *Anna al-ashjār al-qadīmah al-jāriyah bi-waqf ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-madhkūr uzilat min ṭūl al-muddah wanabbata min uṣūlihā....*

[62] Colin Imber, "The Status of Fruit Trees and Orchards in Ottoman Law," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1981–82): 763–74; idem, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford, 1997).


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extraction, from the legal ownership of trees and irrigation infrastructure, and from the rights of usufruct.[63]

The rule of *musāqāh* was a form of co-cultivation or sharecropping contract that applied exclusively to the upkeep of trees and vines requiring irrigation (the term *musāqāh* deriving from the same Arabic root as the verb *saqá,* to irrigate.) In theory, a *musāqāh* contract was valid for one harvest but applied to the upkeep of "anything planted with the intention of leaving it in the ground for a year or more."[64] In other words, it applied to orchards and vineyards, but not to annual crops like wheat or rice that had to be sown anew for each harvest. The owner of the trees (typically the landowner or tax farmer) would contract the work and expenses of their maintenance (irrigation, pruning, and harvesting) to a laborer in exchange for a designated portion of the harvest (for example, one-half or three-quarters of the fruit). In some parts of the Ottoman Empire, such as the green belts around Damascus and Tripoli, *musāqāh* contracts regulating the relationship between the owner of productive trees and rural labor were codified into modern legal systems as part of the Ottoman Land Law of 1858.[65]

But *musāqāh* took on a different function in the hands of Rosetta's plantation and estate holders in the eighteenth century. These contracts are a staple feature of Rosetta's legal culture, but never, as far as I have seen, to deal with hired labor.[66] Instead, such arrangements were set up to facilitate the transfer of horticultural property endowed as *waqf* in cases of long-term rentals of the underlying land. Instead of a contract signed between a landholder and rural laborer, a Rosettan *musāqāh* defined the relationship between a *waqf* and a wealthy lessee. A *musāqāh* agreement signed in 1793 between Ibrāhīm ibn Yūsuf Zaytūn and Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Çorbacı, the superintendent of the *waqf* of his great-grandfather Qāsim Çorbacı, is perfectly typical of the role of *musāqāh* in Rosetta's legal regime. Ibrāhīm Zaytūn, a rural shaykh, signed a 90-year lease on a garden and

[63] Martha Mundy and R. A Pottage, eds., *Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social: Making Persons and Things* (Cambridge, 2004), especially Chapter 5: Martha Mundy, "Ownership or Office? A Debate in Islamic Hanafite Jurisprudence over the Nature of the Military 'Fief', from the Mamluks to the Ottomans."

[64] M. J. L. Young, "Musāḳāṭ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5574.

[65] For Syria, where the *musāqāh* survived enshrined in the local legal system into the French Mandate period in the 1930s, see André Latron, *La vie rurale en Syria et au Liban: étude d'économie sociale* (Beirut, 1936), 51–58; for Lebanon, see Kais Firro, "Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 2 (1990): 151–69.

[66] If Rosettans also used *musāqāh* contracts for rural labor, then we must assume that these contracts were recorded elsewhere than in the *sijill*s, perhaps kept in the records of private households.


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a sandy field near the Rosetta citadel, and an adjacent piece of fertile land prepared for rice cultivation containing wells and waterwheels.[67] All of the properties—land, water, and fruits of the garden—were endowed to the *waqf* of Qāsim Çorbacı. As in all such cases, the 90-year lease (semi-alienation, tantamount to a sale) covered Ibrāhīm Zaytūn's rights to the land and irrigation infrastructure, but not to the date palms, citrus trees, and grape vines which presumably constituted a significant part of the property's overall value. To bring this horticultural wealth under Ibrāhīm Zaytūn's control, the two men signed a separate *musāqāh* contract: the lessee, Ibrāhīm, would be responsible for the maintenance of the trees endowed to the *waqf,* whose land was now in his long-term possession. For the duration of the contract (90 years), the produce of the trees was to be divided into one thousand shares. One share of the produce would go to Ḥasan the superintendent for the benefit of the *waqf,* while the remaining 999 shares of the produce were for Ibrāhīm Zaytūn to keep. This 1:999 split is the only form of *musāqāh* contract found in the Rosetta *sijill*s in the eighteenth century, and is also tantamount to a sale of horticultural *waqf* property in cases of long-term rental of the underlying land.[68]

I did not find any examples of *musāqāh* contracts in the records from eighteenth-century or early nineteenth-century Damietta. Perhaps Damietta's legal culture simply extended the terms of a land rental to the trees and vines that grew on it. Damietta's "green belt" of horticultural land was smaller than Rosetta's (compare Figs. 2 and 3), but this would not account for a complete absence of *musāqāh* contracts on its own. The absence of *musāqāh* may reflect deeper absences, such as a lack of interest among people with ready cash to acquire horticultural property in Damietta for reasons that I discuss below. In any case, this is one of several stark differences in the legal culture of *waqf* between two cities with otherwise similar political ecologies.

The relationship between agriculture and horticulture on landed estates in the Ottoman Arab provinces merits further research. In their composition, combining wealth in date palms and rice paddies, Rosetta's landed estates were strikingly similar to what Dina Rizk Khoury has documented during "a strong

[67] DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 656 (17 Ramaḍān 1207/28 April 1793).

[68] ʿAfīfī treats this 1:999 split as typical for the produce of *waqf* property placed under *musāqāh* in Egypt, although this practice seems to have differed significantly in greater Syria. For other examples of *musāqāh* featuring this 1:999 split: DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 330, case 260 (13 Jumādá I 1178/7 November 1764); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 346, case 1282 (6 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 1204/19 July 1790); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 264 (*ghurrat* Ramaḍān 1206/23 April 1792); DWQ Maḥkamat Rashīd 348, case 656 (17 Ramaḍān 1207/28 April 1793).


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commercial revival" in seventeenth-century Ottoman Basra.[69] Although rice was king in the irrigated economy of the northern Egyptian Delta, it was the date orchards shading Rosetta's agricultural estates that left their mark most clearly in the *sijill*s. The prevalence of horticultural property in the *sijill*s was at least in part a matter of legal and archival practice: dates and other fruit-bearing trees had to be listed as attributes of every parcel of land on which they grew—whether there were two trees or 200, and whether the land was classified as *waqf, milk,* or *iltizām*.

The *sijill*s depict a city obsessed with palms. Visitors to present-day Rosetta might come away with the same impression, as the city is still surrounded by miles of date orchards—an ocean of palms stretching from the Nile's west banks to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. But there is a risk of missing the forest for the trees, at least when studying the eighteenth century. Rice, sown anew in the spring and harvested in the fall, had no legal status on the land. As far as the Islamic court was concerned, rice represented property in the form of agricultural credit during the spring planting season, and then as woven crates full of harvested grain in the fall, but paddy rice was not itself an attribute of landed estates. If the Islamic court during the Ottoman period primarily represented the interest of the propertied classes, then the "absence" of agricultural production in the historical land record raises methodological questions for historians: when does wealth becomes "property," and what types of property needed to be documented for posterity?

## Crisis and Divergence in the Northern Delta

So far, this study has explored the ways in which propertied households in the northern Delta employed *waqf* as a form of property right on land, trees, and the tools of irrigation, at once more secure and more flexible than other forms of property in eighteenth-century Egypt.

In simple geographic terms, it is easy to consider Rosetta as the mirror image of Damietta. Both cities performed dual functions as river ports for goods traveling up the Nile, and also as Mediterranean seaports connected to wider regional markets. Both cities combined these port functions with diverse other industries, particularly textile manufacturing.[70] Both cities cultivated rich

[69] Dina Rizk Khoury, "Administrative Practice Between Religious Law *(Shari'a)* and State Law *(Kanun)* on the Eastern Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Early Modern History* 5, no. 4 (2001). She notes that "It is not clear what legal underpinnings defined ownership rights on these estates. In other words, we do not know whether there was a regime of absolute ownership of land or a regime of entitlement to rents of the land (as was the case in other parts of the Empire where commercialization took place)" (ibid., 317).

[70] ʿAlī Pāshā Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqīyah,* 11:72.


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"green belts" of orchards, gardens, and date palm groves, which constituted a substantial bank of investment for the wealth of local inhabitants. Both were urban centers of regions dedicated to the capital-intensive endeavor of cultivating rice, the most lucrative product of the northern Delta.

But by the final decades of the eighteenth century, similarities between Rosetta and Damietta were clouded by an apparent divergence in their functions and fortunes. From the mid-1780s, Egypt weathered a series of ecological troubles: after a serious famine in 1784 and 1785, the province was hit by a major epizootic that decimated the livestock population, the motor of Egypt's rural economy.[71] Livestock were imported from Anatolia to plow the fields and turn the water-wheels and millstones on which Egypt's human population depended for their livelihood, but scarcity, high food prices, and alternating years of excessive and insufficient Nile inundation left populations vulnerable to outbreaks of plague in Cairo in 1787 and 1788. Another outbreak that swept through the capital in 1791 was more virulent than any in living memory.[72] It claimed the life of Ismāʿīl Bey, the Qazdağlı ruler elevated to power following Ghāzī Ḥasan Pasha's campaign in 1786, and decimated his household. The void at the Cairo citadel was filled once again by Ibrāhīm and Murād Bey, whose tyranny and misrule had spurred Ḥasan Pasha's "reconquest" of Egypt in the first place.

During this period, French observers noted drastic depopulation in Rosetta, Damietta, and the surrounding countryside. In 1794, Guillaume-Antoine Olivier, a French naturalist traveling through Egypt, noted that famine and plague had roughly halved Rosetta's population: only 12,000 inhabitants remained, down from 25,000 in 1780.[73] In Damietta, Napoleon's *savants* blamed depopulation on the breakdown of the canal system and the impact of repeated Bedouin invasions on villagers and cultivated land.[74] Such observations should be read critically, since they were part of a larger French discourse seeking to justify French interference in Egypt, a province that still very much belonged to their Ottoman allies. The Beys' neglect of Egypt's irrigation system is cited along with their oppression of the local and European merchant communities as their greatest contribution to the collapse of Egypt's economy and French imaginings of Egyptian conquest in the 1790s.[75]

[71] Alan Mikhail, "Unleashing the Beast: Animals, Energy, and the Economy of Labor in Ottoman Egypt," *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (2013): 317–48.

[72] For a description of the 1791 plague, see Mikhail, *Nature and Empire,* 221–26.

[73] G. A. Olivier, *Voyage dans l'empire Othoman, l'Égypte et la Perse* (Paris, 1800), 51.

[74] *DE,* vol. 5, État Moderne I, 280. The author lays blame on the Bedouin tribes, but one could, of course, consider the military campaigns of the Ottomans in 1786 and the French in 1798.

[75] For the Beys' abuse of the urban commercial population and dramatic price inflation, see Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants,* 2:806–8 and 2:817–20; Daniel Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern*


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But such observations also offer a valuable framework within which to consider local particularities of geography and *histoire evenementielle* as they relate to the widespread use of *waqf* as an instrument for capital accumulation and social reproduction in the early modern Ottoman Empire. I have already remarked that populations in Rosetta and Damietta employed different language and different tools in establishing and maintaining irrigated estates of *waqf* property. By tools, I am referring both to infrastructure, such as different types of wells, as well as legal instruments like the common use of *musāqāh* in Rosetta and its absence in Damietta. Local differences infuse the material realm of the court records themselves: one is struck by the poor condition of Damietta's *sijill*s for the 1780s and 1790s, which are sparse and disorganized. While this may reflect archival practice and poor preservation from later decades, there is also evidence of divergence at the time of composition: entries in the Rosetta *sijill*s are significantly longer, and recount more extensive lineages of household wealth dating back generations. The value of land and urban property in eighteenth-century Damietta was lower on average than what we find in Rosetta. The Damietta *sijill*s recorded few property transactions in the 1780s and 1790s, and structures like waterwheels and rice mills were often described as *"khirbah"* or *"mutakharrab"* (in ruins), echoing the observations of outside observers.[76] The general picture that emerges is that the port city of Damietta suffered significant economic ruination by the 1790s.

In the absence of local chronicles, the extent, value, and transactability of landed *waqf*s can offer clues into the fortunes of local populations during a period of political and environmental turbulence at the end of the eighteenth century. In Rosetta, the late eighteenth century saw the displacement of some of the town's longstanding regimental households by a rising Muslim commercial elite who used the legal tools of *tawājur, istibdāl, isqāṭ,* and *musāqāh* to acquire productive *waqf* property. No equivalent social reshuffling occurred in Damietta, where the intensification of French trade and the strength of Mamluk-allied Syrian Christian customs officials suppressed the rise of a local Muslim bourgeoisie.[77]

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*Egypt: A Study of the Regimes of ʿAli Bey al-Kabir and Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, 1760–1775* (Minneapolis, 1981), 82–86.

[76] The above observations are based on a close reading of the records of the Islamic courts of Rosetta and Damietta for nearly all of the years between 1780 and 1805 for which the records were available at the time of research. For Rosetta, those years covered 1774–76 and from 1785 onwards. For Damietta, the years covered are 1780–1803 and 1805. Research for this project was conducted in the Egyptian National Archives between July 2011 and July 2015.

[77] Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725–1975* (Stuttgart, 1985).


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The one group that apparently benefitted from urban instability in Damietta was the Bedouin rulers of the region around Lake Manzala, as they expanded their authority into Damietta's hinterland. The household of the Bedouin chief (Shaykh al-ʿArab) Ḥasan Ṭūbār used the same strategies as contemporary urbanites to form irrigated estates out of *waqf* property. Ḥasan Ṭūbār held the tax farm for fishing and hunting rights on Lake Manzala, making him one of the most powerful figures in the eastern Delta. Juan Cole claims that Ṭūbār was "one of the few to accumulate large estates under the nose of the Cairo magnates [the Qazdağlıs]," because he paid significant tribute to the Ottoman government in Istanbul, rendering him an "Ottoman vassal."[78] One way that the Ṭūbār household acquired and maintained these estates seems to have been through its members' concerted interest in accumulating *waqf* property in Damietta's irrigated green belt.

In the decade leading up to the French invasion, men of the Ṭūbār household acquired shares in over a dozen orchards and irrigated fields containing at least 22 wells and waterwheels in the district of Qubbat al-ʿAbbās, concentrating their holdings along one of the major sultanic canals linking the villages of Damietta's hinterland to the Nile.[79] In 1787 and 1788, Ṭūbār's son rented several parcels of irrigated land from the seventeenth-century *waqf* of Muḥammad Çorbacı, a member of the Janissary (Tr. Yeniçeriye) regiment in Cairo.[80] The Ṭūbārs purchased wells, waterwheels, and the water use-rights to a garden attached to the *waqf* of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Shaykh ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdu.[81] In 1788 and again in 1796, the Ṭūbārs entered into life-term leases on several properties endowed to the *waqf* of Qadi Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Khaṭīb al-Ḥanafī, established in 1614.[82] The rentals included a number of gardens, extensive horticultural property, and at least six waterwheels. This was an old and prominent *waqf,* apparently such a fixture in Damietta's social and legal geography that the court scribe cut himself some slack as he noted that, "the boundaries of all these gardens are well known and do not need to be described." Another Bed-

[78] Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York, 2007), 162. Cole calls him the "virtual king of the northeast Delta region." Ṭūbār is best remembered for waging a resistance campaign against Napoleon's forces in Damietta during the French occupation of Egypt.

[79] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, unnumbered (but following case 83) (date missing, but probably sometime between Rabīʿ II and Ramaḍān 1202/January–June 1788); Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 289, case 282 (29 Jumādá I 1201/19 March 1787).

[80] The *waqf* was established in 1073/1662–63. DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 285, case 47 and case 456 (undated, 1201/1787); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 68 (16 Rabīʿ II 1202/25 January 1788).

[81] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 288, case 91 (12 Jumādá II 1203/9 March 1789); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 288, case 219 (28 Rajab 1202/3 May 1788).

[82] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 34 (10 Rabīʿ II 1202/19 January 1788); DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 291, case 2 (13 Ṣafar 1211/17 August 1796).


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ouin family from al-Manzala, Shaykh al-ʿArab Salāmah ibn Niʿmat Allāh ʿAjlān and his brother ʿAlī, acquired land in the rice-growing region of Fāraskūr from the late seventeenth-century *waqf* of Amir Ḥusayn Çorbacı Arnavut, *baş çavuş* of the Gönülliyân regiment.[83] It seems that, amidst the political and economic re-orderings of the Ottoman empire and the province of Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century, *waqf* became a less tenable investment for political grandees, but a more attractive prospect for agricultural brokers in the northwestern Delta and for powerful Bedouin families around Lake Manzala.

## Lessons from the Firʿawnīyah Canal

While it is difficult to gauge the local impact of the overlapping crises that befell Egypt in the 1780s and 1790s (drought, famine, plague, and political dysfunction), a conflict over one of the Delta's largest canals may offer some insight into the divergent fortunes of Rosetta and Damietta. The long-running saga of the Firʿawnīyah (Pharaonic) Canal is an illustration of the contingent and interconnected effects of local geography, commercial interests, and political power in the northern Delta at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Firʿawnīyah Canal was a major *sulṭānī* canal that traversed the Delta diagonally, southeast to northwest, to connect the Damietta branch of the Nile to the Rosetta branch (Fig. 1). According to customary usage in the eighteenth century, the levees on the Damietta branch would be closed at the beginning of the Nile's yearly inundation, directing floodwaters north to the rice growing lands of Fāraskūr and al-Manzala. The levees would be cut when the waters began to subside, allowing water to cross the Delta.[84] By the end of the eighteenth century, however, observers commented that the levees were allowed to remain perennially open, allowing the waters of the Damietta branch to flow towards the lower-lying lands of the Rosetta branch and north to the Mediterranean Sea.[85]

The Qazdağlı commander, Murād Bey, went to inspect the levees in April 1786 as they "had not held water back for years."[86] Al-Jabartī describes "tremendous piles of sand from the Nilometer to the Mediterranean" where the Nile waters

[83] DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 131 (9 Ṣafar 1202/20 November 1787). Shaykh Salāmah rented shares in the property for 70 years from the *nāẓir* of the *waqf,* who was the grandson of the endower's manumitted slave and one of its beneficiaries. DWQ Mahkamat Dimyāṭ 287, case 152 (2 Rabīʿ II 1202/11 January 1788). Shaykh Salāmah's brother ʿAlī rented additional shares in the same property for 90 years from the descendant of another of the endower's manumitted slaves.

[84] Alexandre Berthier, chef de l'État-major general, in *DE,* vol. 5, État Moderne I, 115.

[85] *DE,* vol. 6, État Moderne II, 521. Rice cultivating land around Rosetta was at lower elevations than Damietta, and thus required less animal and human energy to move water to the land.

[86] Al-Jabartī, *Al-Jabartī's History,* 2:105 (1 Rajab 1200/20 April 1786).


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were supposed to run. The level of the Damietta branch had been so depleted that seawater from the Mediterranean had encroached as far south as al-Manzala and Fāraskūr, ruining agricultural land and causing peasants to flee their villages.[87] In 1795, the Ottoman Porte remarked with alarm that failure to repair the levees on the Firʿawnīyah Canal had led to decreased rice harvests in Damietta and al-Manzala.[88] As Stuart Borsch has illustrated for early fifteenth-century Egypt, the breakdown of the province's *sulṭānī* canals (whether due to population loss from *Yersinia pestis* or, here, to political dysfunction) was a matter of existential concern, rendering cultivation impossible on any lands not directly abutting the Nile.[89]

And yet, efforts to repair the levees had been stalled by competing interests on the ground: while villagers, landholders, and revenue collectors on the eastern branch of the Nile suffered, those to the west saw the situation as a boon. Al-Jabartī blamed one of the amirs, Ayyūb Bey al-Ṣaghīr, for undermining repairs of the dams on at least two occasions. He held tax farms in villages that had prospered from the free flow of the canal towards the west, so he ordered the dams pierced anew—in 1792 and again in 1797—after they were freshly repaired under the orders of Ibrāhīm Bey and Murād Bey.[90]

French engineers studied the canal closely during the French occupation, keen to understand both its importance for cultivation in the Delta and its potential as part of a larger scheme to link the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.[91] Under French supervision, dikes were constructed on the Damietta branch, and the governor of the province of Manūfīyah stationed a permanent guard to prevent further interference. Now it was the turn of populations in Rosetta and Alexandria, along with notables in the western province of Buḥayrah, to complain of a lack of water, prompting an investigation under the supervision of Napoleon's deputy in Manūfīyah. They assembled the commanders of all the Delta provinces to determine the impact of rerouting the Nile's course and the possibilities

[87] *DE,* vol. 5, État Moderne I, 120–21.

[88] Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA) Cevdet Saray 15.795 (*ghurrat* Jumādá I 1210/12 November 1795); BOA Mühimme-i Mısır Defteri 10.502 (*awāsiṭ* Jumādá II 1210/late December 1795). They called upon the seated Ottoman governor, Ṣāliḥ Pasha, to purchase rice and lentils directly from the cultivators and merchants to make up the shortfall from what had been missing from the annual remissions from the previous two years.

[89] Stuart J. Borsch, "Environment and Population: The Collapse of Large Irrigation Systems Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 3 (2004): 458–61, and idem, "Nile Floods and the Irrigation System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 4 (2000): 131–45.

[90] Al-Jabartī, *Al-Jabartī's History,* 2:240; 4:9.

[91] *DE,* vol. 5, État Moderne I, 114–18.


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for cultivation on either side of the Delta.[92] During the summer inundation in 1799, M. Le Père, the chief engineer, promised to weigh the self-reported benefits and harm on each side, and to compile a report "within the year."

Controlling the flow of the Nile along its western and eastern branches had direct consequences for the Delta economy into the first decade of the nineteenth century. By 1806, improper repairs on the Firʿawnīyah canal meant that rice fields were still "left uncultivated, the countryside on the eastern branch became parched and the people drank…from wells and irrigation ditches."[93] One year after Mehmed Ali Pasha assumed the governorship of Egypt, the *shāhbandar* of Cairo's merchant community, Muḥammad al-Maḥrūqī, took command of efforts to fix the Firʿawnīyah Canal once and for all.[94] Al-Maḥrūqī held an *iltizām* in Fāraskūr until Mehmed Ali Pasha abolished the tax farming system in 1810.[95] His personal investment in the prosperity of Fāraskūr, one of the regions most affected by the breakdown of the Firʿawnīyah Canal, would explain why he assumed responsibility for its repair and upkeep after 1806. Of course, it was villagers who paid the ultimate price, as they were forced to haul stones for the dam from the Muqaṭṭam hills outside of Cairo. The task was completed in April 1809 "at an enormous cost" of 800 purses and much human suffering.[96]

We cannot know with any precision how the saga of the Firʿawnīyah Canal impacted Rosetta, Damietta, and their respective hinterlands at the turn of the nineteenth century. To the best of my knowledge, Napoleon's engineers never filed the report that they promised, in 1799, to compose "within the year" on precisely this question. What the saga does reveal, however, is a complex landscape of local differences—in geography, legal culture, social structure, and political clout—that shaped how land and water resources were managed in the Delta's twin cities of Rosetta and Damietta. From the competing interests of tax farmers in large-scale irrigation projects like the Firʿawnīyah Canal to the private fortunes secured by the religio-legal system of *waqf,* it is important to recognize contingency at different levels to avoid

[92] "Ordre du jour, du quartier general de Menouf, le 5 fructidor an 7 (22 August 1799)," *DE,* vol. 5, État Moderne I, 115.

[93] Al-Jabartī, *Al-Jabartī's History,* 4:9.

[94] See BOA Cevdet Maliye 523. 21398 (18 Shaʿbān 1219/19 January 1805). Pascale Ghazaleh analyzes the networks of Egypt's great merchants, including the al-Maḥrūqī household, from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries in *Fortunes urbains*.

[95] Fāraskūr was seized from al-Maḥrūqī's possession and given to the Bedouin chief Aḥmad al-ʿAshmāwī. DWQ Maḥkamat Dimyāṭ 301, case 559 (18 Jumādá I 1225/20 June 1810).

[96] Al-Jabartī, *Al-Jabartī's History,* 4:91 (18 Rabīʿ I 1224/30 April 1809); 4:98 (1 Jumādá I 1224/13 July 1809).


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the teleology that looms over Egypt's history at the turn of the nineteenth century. The invasion of Napoleon's army in 1798 and the violence of Mehmed Ali Pasha's encroaching bureaucracy after 1805 both attempted to dominate and standardize a large and diverse province. As we have seen in the case of the northern Delta in the eighteenth century, local populations employed strategies suited to local conditions in their attempts to capitalize on the obstacles before them. When households in Damietta and Rosetta came to the local courthouse to secure their wealth as *waqf,* or to cash out, they did so with the painful knowledge that disease had carried off their livestock and that of all their neighbors, that the patriarch of the household had recently succumbed to plague, or that their once-fertile lands were turning to salt.

Ultimately, the northern Delta was an important region of the Ottoman-Egyptian political economy, one in which the inhabitants of Rosetta in particular employed the legal tools of *waqf* to protect their property rights in the context of a highly commercialized but politically and environmentally tumultuous regime of cash crop production. The point is not to discourage readers by arguing that "nothing is like anything else," or that observations based on one local setting cannot be generalized beyond their local context. Rather, it is to highlight the historical magnitude of even seemingly small differences in local topography, culture, and demography in the years prior to the centralizing state reforms of the nineteenth century.


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# Chefs-lieux et dépendances. La hiérarchie des agglomérations en moyenne Égypte, XIVe-XVIe siècle

En survolant en avion la campagne égyptienne, on plus simplement en observant les photos satellite, on est frappé par le tissu continu de gros villages, dont l'étalement apparaît phénoménal.[1] Ce tissu reprend un maillage bien visible sur les premières cartes topographiques, notamment celles du *Survey of Egypt* (publiées à partir de 1908), ainsi que sur les cartes du XIXe siècle telles que celles de Linant de Bellefonds (1854) et de la *Description de l'Égypte* (dressées en 1798–1800)[2]. La comparaison entre les cartes du début du XIXe siècle et celles du *Survey* un siècle plus tard[3] montre que l'habitat plus dispersé qui se décèle dans ces dernières est pour l'essentiel apparu durant le XIXe siècle, avec la multiplication des *ʿizba*-s ou grands domaines, dont les bâtiments d'exploitation ont fixé de nouveaux habitants, et des *kafr*-s ou *naǧʿ*-s créés, souvent en lisière de l'oekoumène, par sédentarisation des Bédouins[4]. Les cartes antérieures à 1800, quant à elles, ne sont pas assez précises et exhaustives pour restituer visuellement l'aspect des campagnes égyptiennes. En revanche, nous disposons de documents cadastraux complets, issus de deux cadastres à but fiscal, le *rawk ṣāliḥī*[5] conservé à travers la recension d'Ibn Mammātī (m. 1209), et le *rawk nāṣirī* (1315) à travers

[1] Abréviations utilisées dans l'article pour les séries de registres conservées à Dār al-Waṯāʾiq al-qawmiyya, Le Caire :
DǦ = dafātir al-ǧusūr
DT = dafātir al-tarbīʿ
RI = dafātir al-rizaq iḥbāsī
RǦ = dafātir al-rizaq ǧayšī

[2] *Atlas de la Description de l'Égypte*, feuilles 14 (Miniet), 15 (Abou Girgeh), 16 (Fechn), 18 (Benisouif), 19 (Faioum), 21 (Memphis) ; *Carte hydrographique de la Moyenne égypte, gravée au Dépôt de la Guerre en 1854 d'après les travaux de Mr Linant de Bellefonds et complétée en 1882 pour les chemins de fer* ; Public Works Ministry, Inspection General of Irrigation, *Beni Souef Province,* 100.000°, 1890.

[3] Survey of Egypt, cartes au 50.000° n° 105 à 125, révisées en 1909–1913, 2de édition en 1913–1917.

[4] Les types d'habitat résultant de ces évolutions ont été étudiés et richement illustrés par Jean Lozach & Georges Hug, *L'habitat rural en Égypte,* Publications de la Société royale de géographie d'Égypte (Le Caire, 1930).

[5] Sur le *rawk ṣāliḥī,* Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564–741 / A.D. 1169–1341,* London Oriental Series, vol. 25 (Londres, New York, Toronto, 1972), p. 51 ; Sato Tsugitaka, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqtaʿs and Fallahun,* Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, vol. 17 (Leyde, New York, Cologne, 1997), p. 60–63, conclut que le *rawk* a été achevé en 577/1181.


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celles d'Ibn Duqmāq (m. 1406) et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān (m. 1480)[6]. En outre, al-Nābulusī a recopié un rapport d'inspection systématique de la province du Fayyūm, réalisé en 1245[7]. Ces auteurs ont agencé des listes de villages par ordre alphabétique à l'intérieur de chaque province, et ces listes, comme les cartes ultérieures, renforcent de manière redondante l'impression d'un habitat concentré en villages.

Une vision superficielle peut ainsi conduire à imaginer que l'Égypte mise en culture était recouverte d'un manteau uniforme de gros villages, au statut administratif identique. Cette vision est encore confortée par l'*Atlas* de la *Description de l'Égypte,* dont les graveurs ont soigneusement représenté le talus du monticule sur lequel était installée chaque agglomération afin de la protéger de la crue annuelle du Nil : la difficulté à aménager ces terrasses expliquerait leur antiquité, que confirme la toponymie largement héritée de l'époque copte, c'est-à-dire du Ier millénaire ap. J.-C., voire de l'époque pharaonique. L'habitat très concentré, en élévation, serait donc l'héritier direct du réseau d'agglomérations rurales de l'Antiquité. « Ce village en acropole a fière allure, quand on l'aperçoit de loin » écrivait en 1929 George Hug[8]. Cependant, au milieu du XIIIe siècle le *Tārīḫ al-Fayyūm* d'al-Nābulusī révèle dans cette province l'existence d'agglomérations secondaires, de taille parfois limitée[9], et dont la plupart n'ont laissé aucune trace à l'époque contemporaine. Il mentionne un peu moins de cent unités fiscales (*nāḥiya*-s), plus une quarantaine de sites abandonnés (parfois de longue date), et classe les villages, unités morphologiques qu'il appelle *balda,* pl. *bilād*[10], en trois catégories : petits, moyens et grands[11], auxquels s'ajoutent 52 dépen-

[6] Ibn Mammātī, *Kitāb Qawānīn al-dawāwīn,* éd. Aziz Suryal Atiya, Ṣafaḥāt min tārīḫ Miṣr, vol. 12 (reprint Le Caire, 1411/1991) ; Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār li-wāsiṭat al-amṣār,* vol. IV et V, éd. K. Vollers (Būlāq, 1309/1892) ; Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya bi-asmāʾ al-bilād al-miṣriyya,* éd. Bernhard Moritz, Publications de la Bibliothèque khédiviale, 10 (Le Caire, 1898 ; reprint Frankfurt am Main, 1992).

[7] al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb Tārīḫ al-Fayyūm wa-bilādihi,* Maṭbūʿāt al-Kutubḫāna al-ḫīdiwiyya, vol. 11 (Le Caire, 1899). Les circonstances précises de cette inspection, diligentée par le sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, sont analysées par Yossef Rapoport, *Rural Economy and Tribal Society in Islamic Egypt: A Study of al-Nābulusī's* Villages of the Fayyum, The Medieval Countryside, vol. 19 (Turnhout, 2018), p. 9–16. L'inspection a eu lieu de mars à mai 1245, et al-Nābulusī a compilé les informations pour l'année fiscale 641/1243–1244, complétées par des renseignements recueillis sur place et par des registres du Trésor qu'il a consultés au Caire.

[8] Lozach & Hug, *L'habitat rural en Égypte,* p. 143. Voir aussi pl. XV entre p. 160 et 161.

[9] Sato, *State and Rural Society,* p. 180, a le premier attiré l'attention sur ces « small hamlets ».

[10] Rapoport, *Rural Economy,* p. 173. Al-Nābulusī utilise de préférence *balda* pour l'unité administrative ou fiscale, et indifféremment *balda* et (plus rarement) *nāḥiya* pour l'agglomération elle-même. Par exemple, à Sinnūris il note à propos d'un pressoir de canne à sucre qu'il est situé *bi-ẓāhir al-nāḥiya min ġarbiyyihā* « à l'extérieur du village, à l'ouest de celui-ci » : al-Nābulusī, p. 107, l. 14.

[11] Sur les villages abandonnés du Fayyūm, dont la superficie cultivée s'était sévèrement contractée depuis l'Antiquité classique, Rapoport, *Rural Economy,* p. 54–60. Sur la classification des vil-


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dances *(minšāt,* pl. *manāšī,* ou *kafr,* pl. *kufūr)*[12] dont certaines de très petite taille : l'un de ces hameaux avait moins de dix maisons[13]. Pour signaler qu'un village est sous la dépendance d'un autre, il utilise les expressions *kafr* de X, *minšāt* de X, ou encore *min ḥuqūq X*[14]. La définition de ces termes de *kafr* et *minšāt* ne souffre pas d'ambiguïté : il s'agit toujours d'une agglomération ou d'un groupement humain, dépendant d'un autre. Le terme de *kafr* ne vient ni du copte, ni de l'arabe le plus classique, mais des langues sémitiques anciennes de Syrie[15] par l'intermédiaire du syriaque, dans le sens de village ; il se trouve à trois reprises dans la Bible[16]. On peut penser qu'il s'est diffusé en Égypte après la conquête arabe. Peut-être son usage générique était-il récent à l'époque d'al-Nābulusī : dans la documentation papyrologique arabe du Fayyūm aux Xe-XIe siècles, les seuls termes utilisés sont *qarya*, qui semble le terme générique pour le village, et *nāḥiya*[17].

Cependant le Fayyūm était très spécifique par son mode d'irrigation, et il semble délicat de généraliser ses caractéristiques aux autres provinces, régulièrement irriguées par la submersion au moment de la crue du Nil. Qu'à l'époque ayyoubide les autres provinces aient connu, de manière plus ou moins sporadique, une hiérarchie similaire des agglomérations est toutefois confirmé par

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lages par al-Nābulusī, *ibid.,* p. 68–69. Au total, le Fayyūm rural de 1243–1244 comportait 92 unités fiscales, dont 89 payaient l'impôt en grains, p. 79 et 83.

[12] Par exemple la notice de Babīğ Andīr débute par : *Babīğ Andīr wa-kufūruhā ḫamsat manāšī* (...) « Babīğ Andīr et ses *kufūr,* cinq *minšāt*-s » ; les cinq dépendances sont nommées un peu plus loin, et le nom de chacune d'elles débute par Minšāt (c'est-à-dire *Minšaʾa* écrit, et sans doute prononcé, sans la *hamza*) : al-Nābulusī, éd. Moritz, 1898, p. 77 l. 26 et 29 à p. 78 l. 1. Liste des *manāšī al-nawāḥī* p. 174 l. 10 à p. 176 l. 25. Al-Nābulusī utilise le terme de *balda* indifféremment pour les agglomérations principales et secondaires.

[13] Rapoport, *Rural Economy,* p. 174–175 sur les *kufūr* dans al-Nābulusī. Le hameau en question est Aḥṣāṣ Abī ʿAṣiyya, *kafr* de Minyat Karbīs, qu'al-Nābulusī décrit comme *ʿibāra ʿan kufayr ṣaġīr yakūnu dūna ʿašrat abyāt,* « consistant en un petit hameau de moins de dix maisons ». Le diminutif *kufayr* est très rare.

[14] Par exemple, Šasfa est dite *min ḥuqūq* Sinnūris : al-Nābulusī, éd. Moritz, p. 119 l. 16. À l'inverse, le terme de *kafr,* comme l'expression *min ḥuqūq,* peuvent être utilisées pour d'autres sens de la dépendance : Šašhā par exemple est dite *min ḥuqūq ḫalīğ Dalya,* dépendante du *ḫalīğ* (cours d'eau dérivé du Baḥr Yūsuf) Dalya, p. 124 l. 3 ; Bulğusūq est *min kufūr ḫalīğ Tanbaṭawiyya,* fait partie des dépendances du *ḫalīğ* de ce nom, p. 82 l. 7.

[15] Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Glossary of Old Syrian, volume 1,* Languages of the Ancient Near East, vol. 8,1 (Eisenbrauns, 2019), p. 315, racine *kpr (A)* « village », avec nombreuses références aux textes de Mari.

[16] *Kofer,* pl. *kefarim,* apparaît dans 1 S, 6, 18 ; Ct 7,12 ; 1 Ch, 27, 25. Je remercie Benjamin Lellouch pour ces références.

[17] Christian Gaubert & Jean-Michel Mouton, *Hommes et villages du Fayyoum dans la documentation papyrologique arabe (Xe– XIe siècle),* École pratique des hautes études. Sciences historiques et philologiques – II. Hautes études orientales – Moyen-Orient et Proche-Orient, vol. 52 (Genève, 2014), p. 173–175. L'unité administrative de base s'appelait quant à elle *ḍayʿa,* terme qui a disparu à l'époque ayyoubide.


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Ibn Mammātī (m. 1209), dont les *Qawānīn al-dawāwīn,* sorte de manuel pratique à destination des chefs de bureau, incluent une précieuse liste des *nāḥiya*-s d'Égypte par ordre alphabétique (p. 84–200) ; un petit nombre d'entre elles sont signalées comme *kafr* ou *min ḥuqūq* d'un autre, ou comme ayant des *kufūr.* Ibn Mammātī ne reprend en revanche pas le terme de *minšāt* dans un sens générique, qui peut avoir été propre au Fayyūm. Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān signalent à leur tour l'existence de *kufūr,* agglomérations secondaires dépendant des villages principaux. Ils le font sans insister, c'est-à-dire de la même manière qu'Ibn Mammātī. Nous en resterions là, si les registres établis à partir du seul cadastre opéré par les Ottomans en Égypte, le *tarbīʿ* de 1528, ne nous fournissaient sur ces *kufūr* une foule d'informations absentes des sources médiévales à notre disposition. C'est grâce à eux qu'est possible une étude plus approfondie de la hiérarchie des agglomérations et des unités administratives.

Les données du cadastre de 1528 nous sont conservées dans leur intégralité ou leur quasi-intégralité pour quatre provinces seulement : la Qūṣiyya — province la plus méridionale de haute Égypte —, la Bahnasāwiyya, devenue, sans doute dans les dernières décennies du XVI^e^ siècle, la province de Banī Suwayf (Beni Soueif), le Fayyūm, et la petite province de Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr dans le Delta. Ailleurs, les données ne sont plus que fragmentaires. Il se trouve que dans la Qūṣiyya, les *nāḥiya*-s ou unités administratives de base étaient plutôt des cantons que des villages : l'étude du cadastre de 1528 n'y renseignerait pas sur l'habitat réel. Des trois autres provinces, la Bahnasāwiyya était de loin la plus étendue, aussi l'ai-je choisie pour explorer à partir d'un exemple précis la répartition de l'habitat dans l'Égypte pré-moderne.

Nous trouvons ainsi dans la Bahnasāwiyya, depuis Ibn Mammātī c'est-à-dire depuis le règne de Saladin, des listes de *nāḥiya*-s, unités administratives dont certaines disposent de dépendances ou *kufūr.* Les étudier revient à aborder de front l'écart qui pouvait exister entre les découpages administratifs, leur labellisation dans des catégories homogènes, et la réalité physique du peuplement. Aussi importe-t-il de choisir avec soin ses mots[18]. Afin de suivre au plus près l'usage commun du français, j'appellerai ici *village* la réalité physique d'un habitat aggloméré, à caractère rural c'est-à-dire aux activités principalement agricoles. *Agglomération* (anglais *settlement*) désignera toute sorte de regroupement, du village au *hameau* (quelques dizaines d'habitants) et à l'*écart* (un ou quelques

[18]Présentant son étude des agglomérations *(centri abitati)* du nome Oxyrhynchite d'après les papyrus grecs, Paola Pruneti, de même, établit des équivalences avec le lexique italien : ainsi des *kômai* (sg. *kômè*), « villaggi » : « Questi centri corrispondono, più o meno, ai nostri 'paesi' e, amministrativamente, ai nostri 'comuni'. » Paola Pruneti, *I Centri abitati dell'Ossirinchite. Repertorio toponomastico,* Papyrologia Florentina, vol. 9 (Florence, 1981), p. 10–11 et note 6 p. 10.


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foyers). Comme nous ne pouvons nous promener dans la réalité matérielle de l'Égypte rurale des XIVe-XVIe siècles, et qu'il nous est même fort difficile de l'imaginer[19], je postulerai dans la suite, par manque d'information contraire, qu'à tout toponyme apparaissant dans les sources fiscales correspondait une agglomération, ou du moins un regroupement humain. Je laisse ouverte la question inverse de savoir si tout regroupement, marqué dans la toponymie, apparaît dans les sources écrites, réputées exhaustives. Je conserverai l'expression d'*unité administrative* (parfois *unité* ou *entité*), ou le terme le plus fréquent dans les sources écrites, *nāḥiya,* comme son équivalent. Toute *nāḥiya* avait un nom, qui pouvait être double : X et Y, parfois même triple, X et Y et Z, signalant ainsi deux ou trois groupes distincts de peuplement ou agglomérations. Lorsque les sources parlent d'une *nāḥiya* constituée de X et ses *kufūr,* X est le village éponyme de la *nāḥiya* ; je l'appellerai le *chef-lieu,* une importation sans doute abusive, mais commode, de l'usage français (l'adjectif *éponyme* relève de la langue savante), et étendrai le terme de chef-lieu à toute unité administrative qui n'était pas elle-même un *kafr.*

Comme nous venons de le voir, les sources de l'époque contemporaine, mais aussi les récits de voyageurs plus anciens, tendent à faire de l'Égypte un pays de villages, et cette représentation prégnante postule implicitement la congruence entre l'unité physique, c'est-à-dire le village, et l'unité administrative, la *nāḥiya*. La fréquentation des sources montre qu'au moins pour la basse et la moyenne Égypte, l'administration concevait de même le territoire : la norme était l'unité discrète, l'exception les autres combinaisons : X et Y, X et son *kafr,* ou X et ses *kufūr.* Nous allons bientôt découvrir que ces combinaisons étaient si fréquentes qu'elles ne peuvent être qualifiées d'exceptions. Le constat conduit à s'interroger sur l'intérêt qu'aux époques considérées on a pu trouver à placer une agglomération, et plus généralement une collectivité, et son terroir, dans la dépendance d'une autre ; ou à l'inverse, à l'en retirer. La question est d'autant plus pertinente en termes historiques que les sources écrites dont nous disposons se situent de part et d'autre d'une longue catastrophe démographique, la Peste noire et ses suites. L'histoire rurale se déploie sur le long terme ; et les structures du peuplement visent, par excellence, à assurer aux regroupements humains la résistance la plus appropriée aux aléas que leur fait subir le milieu naturel ou humain. Nous allons voir cette structure à l'épreuve.

[19] À ma connaissance, aucun établissement rural de la fin du Moyen Âge n'a encore été fouillé en Égypte.


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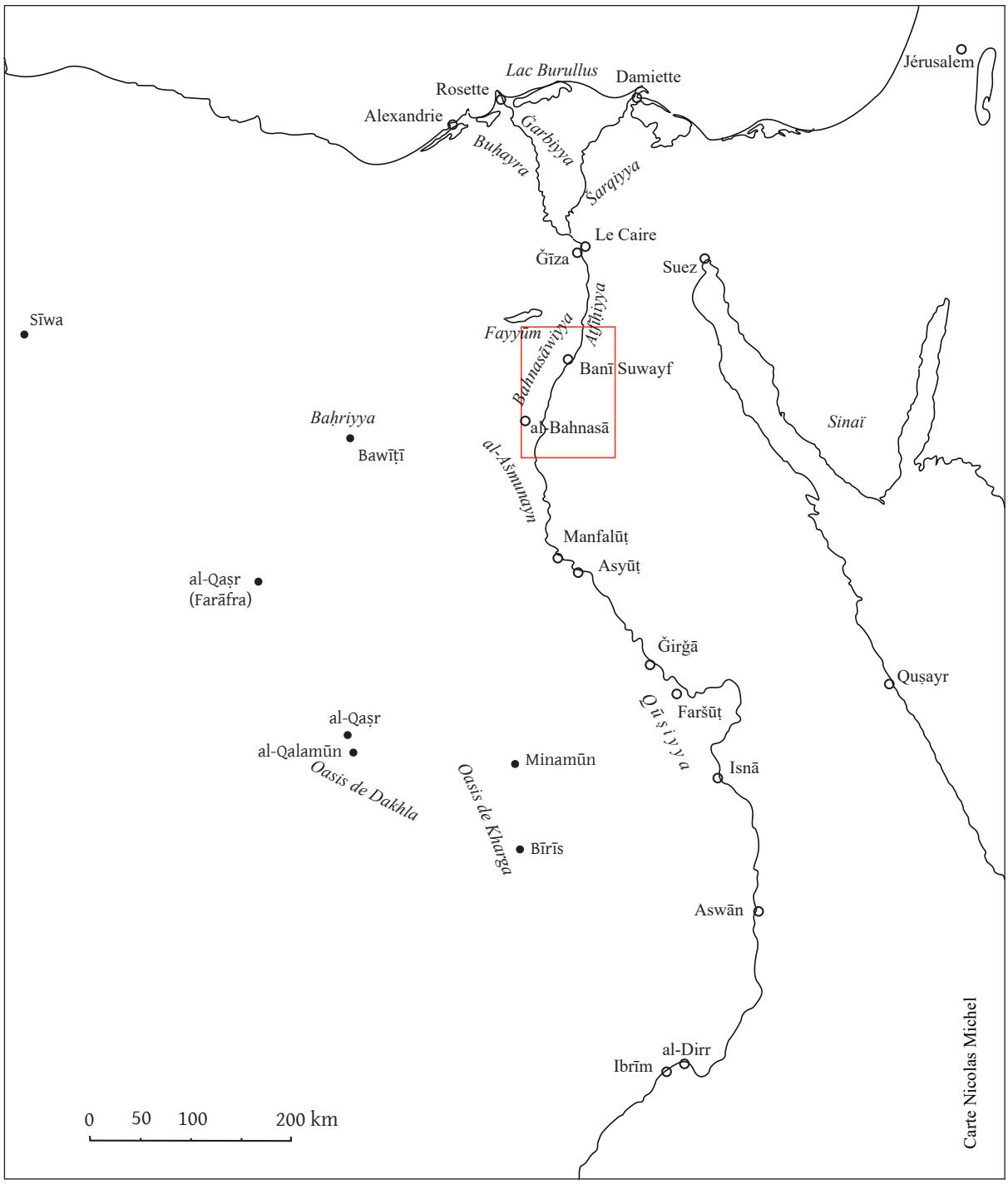


Carte de situation de la Bahnasāwiyya dans l'Égypte des XIV^e^-XVI^e^ siècles.


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## 1. LES CADASTRES DE 1315 ET 1528

Le terme français de cadastre vient de l'italien *catasto,* lui-même dérivé du grec, et employé depuis le début du XV^e^ siècle pour désigner un recensement exhaustif[20]. En France, sous l'Ancien Régime, il était en concurrence avec plusieurs autres termes, tels que *terrier,* pour désigner plus spécifiquement le relevé des terres, par exemple d'une seigneurie ou d'une paroisse, sous forme de liste et/ou de plan. C'est seulement avec Napoléon et le « cadastre » entrepris à l'échelle nationale, comme document de référence pour la localisation et la description des propriétés foncières, que le mot s'est définitivement imposé en français. C'est ce mot de cadastre qui a été choisi pour traduire le terme *rawk,* d'origine copte, utilisé en Égypte de l'époque omeyyade à l'époque mamelouke. Il s'agissait d'un relevé exhaustif des revenus fiscaux de l'ensemble de l'Égypte, sous forme de listes des unités administratives de base, et non pas d'un descriptif systématique des propriétés immobilières. Seul le dernier *rawk* a été préservé, celui de 1315, sous la forme des deux recensions postérieures établies par Ibn Duqmāq (entre 797/1394–1395 et 800/1397–1398) puis Ibn al-Ǧīʿān (entre 1475 et 1478)[21].

Ces deux ouvrages ne sont pas des copies des registres d'origine, mais une sélection d'informations présentée sous une forme proche de celles des manuscrits littéraires et non pas sous la forme visuelle « par paquets » qu'affectionnait l'administration[22]. Les données chiffrées, par exemple, apparaissent en toutes lettres et non pas en chiffres *siyāq* comme les employaient les bureaux de l'administration[23]. Les éditions imprimées des deux ouvrages ont été utilisées par Heinz Halm pour sa compilation des données cadastrales de l'époque

[20] Venise a entrepris en 1411 un *catasto,* recensement systématique des personnes et des biens, imitée en 1427 par Florence. Seul le *catasto* de Florence est conservé, source extraordinaire pour l'histoire démographique, sociale et économique. Cf. David Herlihy & Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leur famille. Une étude du catasto florentin de 1427* (Paris, 1978), notamment p. 56–58 et note 31 p. 56. Les contemporains utilisaient le terme *catasto* dans trois sens : « les relevés du recensement, la cote particulière de chaque contribuable et le total de toutes ces cotes, enfin l'impôt établi à partir de ces cotes », *ibid.,* p. 43 note 99.

[21] Sur la date de la recension par Ibn Duqmāq, Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale : Qūṣ* (Le Caire, 1976), p. 454 et note 1 ; par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, *ibid.,* p. 456 et note 3. Biographie de Šaraf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Ibn al-Ǧīʿān par Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'État militaire mamlūk (IX^e^/XV^e^ siècle)* (Damas, 1991), p. 297–298, 315.

[22] Exemples de documents fiscaux émis par l'administration fatimide, reproduits par Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue,* Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton, Oxford, 2020), doc. 3.1. p. 87 (daté 405/1015), 3.6. p. 98, 3.9. p. 101 ; et un exemple plus ancien, papyrus découvert à Samarra (donc rédigé entre 836 et 892), doc. 7.2. p. 177.

[23] Dans l'introduction de son édition d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, 1898, Moritz, p. IV, précise que dans les manuscrits qu'il a utilisés les nombres étaient écrits en toutes lettres ; lui-même a pris le parti de les publier en chiffres indiens.


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mamelouke[24]. Muhammad Shaaban a attiré mon attention, et je l'en remercie vivement, sur la plus ancienne copie connue de la *Tuḥfa saniyya* d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, le ms. Huntington 2 de la Bodleian Library, Oxford. Ce manuscrit de luxe a été commandé par l'homme fort du temps, l'*amīr dawādār* et *ustādār* Yašbak min Mahdī, et copié en šaʿbān 883 / 28 octobre – 25 novembre 1478[25], soit du vivant même de l'auteur, mort en 1480. Bernard Moritz, éditeur de la *Tuḥfa saniyya* en 1898, connaissait l'existence de ce manuscrit mais n'a pu utiliser que la page qui contient le titre de l'ouvrage[26]. Ses leçons permettent de rectifier quelques points de l'édition Moritz[27].

Les unités administratives appelées *nāḥiya* (Ibn Mammātī), *balad* ou *balda* (Ibn Duqmāq, Ibn al-Ǧīʿān) sont regroupées par province *(iqlīm)* et, à l'intérieur de chacune de celles-ci, sont classées par ordre alphabétique. Chez Ibn Duqmāq comme chez Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, les informations données portent usuellement sur : la superficie des terres cultivées, exprimée en feddans ; la *ʿibra* ou potentiel fiscal de la *nāḥiya,* exprimée dans une unité de compte appelée le *dīnār ǧayšī* ; et le statut fiscal de la *nāḥiya,* c'est-à-dire le ou les bénéficiaires de l'impôt foncier, à l'époque des deux auteurs et aussi, pour Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, à la date de fin šawwāl 777 / 22 mars 1376. Il y a lieu de croire que les chiffres de superficie sont, dans la plupart des cas, ceux du *rawk* de 1315 tels qu'Ibn Duqmāq puis Ibn al-Ǧīʿān les ont trouvés dans l'une ou l'autre des diverses séries de registres qui avaient été constitués par l'administration à partir des rôles originaux de 1315. Des opérations ultérieures de recadastration ont été ponctuellement enregistrées[28].

[24] Heinz Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern,* 2 vol. (Wiesbaden, vol. 1, 1979, 1982), p. 30–34. L'édition Vollers d'Ibn Duqmāq a été faite à partir du manuscrit autographe de la Bibliothèque khédiviale. L'édition Moritz d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān s'appuie sur trois manuscrits, dont celui de la BnF, Ms. Arabe 5965, 970/1563, et sur l'édition de Silvestre de Sacy, elle-même collationnée sur trois manuscrits : Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, éd. Moritz, 1898, p. II.

[25] Excipit de Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya bi-asmāʾ al-bilād al-miṣriyya,* ms Huntington 2, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[26] Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, éd. Moritz, p. II-III.

[27] Un des principaux apports du ms. de la Bodleian est de vocaliser un très grand nombre de toponymes, ce que les manuscrits collationnés par Moritz ne faisaient pas : Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, éd. Moritz, p. IV. Cependant j'ignore si ces signes vocaliques reflètent en effet la prononciation vernaculaire du temps ou sont une reconstitution plus ou moins arbitraire des bureaux du Caire, voire du copiste. À quelques exceptions près, j'ai préféré m'en tenir ici, de manière provisoire, à la vocalisation restituée par Halm à partir des leçons de Muḥammad Ramzī, *al-Qāmūs al-ǧuġrāfī li-l-bilād al-miṣriyya,* 6 vol., Markaz waṯāʾiq wa-tārīḫ Miṣr al-muʿāṣir (Le Caire, 1994) : celles-ci coïncident en général (mais pas toujours) avec la prononciation vernaculaire des années 1890–1950 telle qu'elle apparaît dans les documents issus des recensements et les cartes du Survey of Egypt.

[28] J'ai défendu cette hypothèse dans Nicolas Michel, « Villages désertés, terres en friche et reconstruction rurale en Égypte au début de l'époque ottomane », *Annales islamologiques* 36, 2002,


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Avant d'aller plus loin dans l'exposé des informations issues du cadastre de 1528, il faut signaler que ce dernier nous est aussi connu par une source indirecte : l'excellent dictionnaire géographique des agglomérations anciennes et récentes d'Égypte constitué par Muḥammad Ramzī (1871–1945)[29]. L'index et les notices elles-mêmes sont très utiles pour identifier les toponymes cités dans nos sources. Ramzī signale systématiquement, en reprenant ses sources (parmi lesquelles Ibn Mammātī, Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān), si une agglomération était une dépendance d'une autre. Il fait régulièrement référence au *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528. Cependant, la collation de ses informations avec celles des registres du XVIe siècle indique qu'il n'a pas utilisé directement ces derniers. Par exemple, il mentionne plusieurs dépendances *(tawābiʿ)* d'al-Fašn d'après le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528, alors que le registre RI 4618 (index et f. 173 r°), que nous présenterons plus loin, n'en signale aucune[30]. Nous pouvons être assurés qu'il ne connaissait pas de première main les index des registres du XVIe siècle, qui sont, comme nous allons le voir, une source clé, mais seulement à travers une source indirecte, qu'il appelle le *dalīl* de 1224/1809–1810[31]. Ce document, qu'il a consulté à Dār al-Maḥfūẓāt (à la Citadelle), n'est pas autrement connu. Son nom indique qu'il s'agissait d'un répertoire des *nāḥiya*-s fondé à la fois sur la réalité du temps et sur les registres antérieurs, notamment ceux du XVIe siècle. Sa constitution précède de peu les bouleversements du début du gouvernorat de Mehmet Ali (1805–1848) : l'extermination des Mamelouks du Caire (1811), leur expulsion de haute Égypte (1812), la suppression de la ferme viagère des impôts ou *iltizām* (1813), ainsi que le cadastre de la basse puis de la haute Égypte (1813–1814)[32].

Dans les premiers temps de la conquête ottomane de l'Égypte, et particulièrement sous le gouvernorat de Ḫāyrbak (1517–1522), l'administration tâcha

p. 235–240, Annexe 2 : « Les superficies données par Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān sont-elles bien celles du cadastre de 1315 ? »

[29] Biographie et exposé de son travail dans Ramzī, *Qāmūs,* vol. I, p. 35–40.

[30] Les dépendances d'al-Fašn signalées par Ramzī d'après le *tarbīʿ* de 933 sont al-Quḍḍābī (Ramzī, II, 3, 192) et Ǧazīrat al-Wakliyya (II, 3, 193). Je ne les ai pas incluses dans cette étude des *kufūr* de la Bahnasāwiyya, car celle-ci s'appuie avant tout et de manière directe sur les sources d'époque mamelouke et du XVIe siècle.

[31] Par exemple Ramzī, II, 3, 233, notice de Ǧawāda : « Elle est mentionnée dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933, comme le prouve [ou : d'après] sa mention dans le *dalīl* de 1224. » *Ṯumma waradat fī tarbīʿ sanat 933, bi-dalīl wurūdihā fī dalīl sanat 1224*. Plus précise, la notice de Dimšāw Šulūl (Ramzī, I, 251) note que le *dalīl* de 1224 cite lui-même *al-iḫbāsī,* c'est-à-dire le RI (que Ramzī lui-même n'a pas consulté, voir *infra*). Pouvons-nous généraliser, et affirmer que c'est à travers les RI et RǦ (voir *infra*) que le *dalīl* de 1224 connaissait les listes de villages du *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 ?

[32] Résumé de ces événements par Kenneth M. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants: Land, Society, and Economy in Lower Egypt, 1740–1858,* Cambridge Middle East Library, vol. 27 (Cambridge, 1992), p. 106–107.


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de gérer les impôts dans la continuité du régime précédent. Mais les troubles qui suivirent en 1523–1524 brisèrent cet effort, et la documentation sur laquelle s'appuyaient les bureaux semble ne plus avoir été qu'en partie disponible[33]. En 1525 la province d'Égypte fut dotée d'un règlement organique, le *kanunname-i Mısır,* et en 1528 on procéda à un nouveau cadastre qui fut appelé *tarbīʿ*[34]. Des inspecteurs dépêchés sur place rassemblèrent les informations que leur présentèrent les responsables, village par village, pour l'année fiscale 933/1527–1528. Quatre fragments de registres du *tarbīʿ* subsistent, dont un seul est d'origine ; les trois autres ont été copiés dans la seconde moitié du XVI^e^ siècle[35]. L'un des trois registres de copies, DT 4649, reprend des informations dont les plus récentes datent de l'année fiscale 962. Il porte sur une partie des *nāḥiya*-s du Fayyūm, de la Bahnasāwiyya et de la Manfalūṭiyya. 87 des *nāḥiya*-s de la Bahnasāwiyya ont été indexées ultérieurement, dans un ordre déroutant, qui n'est ni alphabétique, ni géographique. L'index distingue les *nāḥiya*-s qui paient l'impôt foncier en nature *(bilād al-ġilāl)* et celles qui l'acquittent en espèces *(bilād al-ʿayn)* ; les notices elles-mêmes ne s'intéressent qu'à ces dernières, pour lesquelles elles fournissent les superficies imposées — à l'exclusion des terres exemptées — et des informations plus ou moins détaillées sur le calcul de l'impôt. Pour dix de ces *nāḥiya*-s les confins *(ḥudūd)* sont précisés, information toujours de grande valeur. L'index, en outre, signale pour neuf *nāḥiya*-s[36] l'existence de dépendances, sous la forme *X wa-kufūruhā,* sans autre précision ; un des villages, al-ʿAṭf, quoique qualifié de *nāḥiya*, est précisé comme étant un des *kufūr* d'al-Basqanūn.

L'essentiel des données du *tarbīʿ* de 1528 nous a été transmis non par ces quelques fragments, mais par deux séries de registres appelées de nos jours

[33] Sur le devenir des archives fiscales d'époque circassienne après la conquête ottomane, Nicolas Michel, « "Les Circassiens avaient brûlé les registres" » *in* Benjamin Lellouch & Nicolas Michel, éd., *Conquête ottomane de l'Égypte (1517). Arrière-plan, impact, échos* (Leyde, Boston, 2013), p. 229–236, 247–258.

[34] Sur le terme même de *tarbīʿ,* Nicolas Michel, *L'Égypte des villages autour du seizième siècle,* Collection Turcica, vol. 23 (Paris, Louvain, Bristol, 2018), p. 122 ; sur les *tarbīʿ*-s menés à partir de 1525, *ibid.,* p. 123–125.

[35] Ces registres sont présentés par Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* Annexe 4, « Les registres du *tarbīʿ* », p. 441–446.

[36] Il s'agit de Bibā al-Kubrā, Šumusṭā, Safṭ Rašīn, Bilifyā, Iqfahs, al-Qāyāt, Safṭ al-ʿUrafā, al-Ṭayyiba, et Maydūm. La présence d'al-Ṭayyiba dans cette liste étonne. En effet, RI 4618, f. 162 r°-164 v°, donne la notice de la *nāḥiya* double d'al-Ṭayyiba wa-l-ʿArīn, puis de chacune des deux agglomérations, sans mentionner de *kafr,* non plus que l'index de ce registre. En revanche, la notice d'al-Ṭayyiba dans le registre de la province d'al-Ašmūnayn (RI 4629, f. 74 v°), faisant référence au cadastre de 1528 pour la Bahnasāwiyya, distingue bien le chef-lieu de ses deux *kufūr* (le mot est employé), al-ʿArīn et al-Manyal.


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*al-rizaq iḥbāsī* (désormais RI) et *al-rizaq ǧayšī* (RǦ), dont subsistent respectivement 24 et 13 registres. Elles correspondent à trois ensembles constitués simultanément à partir de 1550, et appelés alors *dafātir al-aḥbās, al-ǧarīda* et *dafātir al-amlāk wa-l-awqāf,* tous trois consacrés aux terres privilégiées, c'est-à-dire soit exemptées d'impôts, soit imposées au bénéfice de fondations pieuses[37]. Les deux premières séries ont été classées par sous-provinces[38] et, à l'intérieur de celles-ci, par ordre alphabétique de *nāḥiya*. La commission qui a été constituée à cette fin, et dont le règlement nous est parvenu[39], disposait des données du *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 ainsi que d'au moins deux séries complètes de registres d'époque circassienne, entretemps récupérés : ces deux séries étaient appelées *dafātir al-aḥbās* et *al-ǧarīda al-qadīma*[40]. Il ne s'agissait plus d'aller en tournée sur place pour récupérer les informations relatives à l'impôt de l'année en cours, comme on l'avait fait en 1528, mais de collationner la documentation écrite existante afin de vérifier la validité des exemptions fiscales et de tous les privilèges fonciers. La notice de chaque *nāḥiya,* après l'identification de celle-ci et parfois sa localisation (confins, *ḥudūd*), comprenait d'abord le récapitulatif de sa superficie et du statut de ses terres, puis le détail des terres exemptées ou privilégiées. Pour chaque rubrique la page était divisée en deux colonnes, celle de droite reprenant les informations des registres circassiens, celle de gauche du *tarbīʿ* de 933 ou, parfois, d'autres documents contemporains. La trame générale a été constituée dans un premier temps avant qu'on ne procède au remplissage spécifique de chaque rubrique. C'est ainsi que plusieurs mains ont pu intervenir dans le même registre. Les folios ont reçu une numérotation continue, reprise dans l'index des *nāḥiya*-s qui accompagnait chaque volume. Certains index originaux nous sont parvenus, d'autres sont des copies réalisées à une date ultérieure. Les chiffres sont presque toujours notés en *siyāq,* tandis que la foliotation est en chiffres indiens, une numération avec laquelle certains des rédacteurs n'étaient pas

[37] Sur la rédaction de ces trois séries de registres par une commission réunie en 1550, Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 150–154.

[38] L'Égypte étant elle-même, du fait de la conquête de 1517, devenue une province *(eyalet)* de l'empire ottoman, les anciennes provinces (*iqlīm,* terme que l'on a continué à employer) sont devenues des sous-provinces. Le terme ottoman de *sancak* dans un sens territorial n'était pas utilisé en Égypte.

[39] Il a été publié et traduit par Stanford J. Shaw, « The Land Law of Ottoman Egypt (960/1553): A Contribution to the Study of Landholding in the Early Years of Ottoman Rule in Egypt », *Der Islam* 38, 1963, p. 106–137.

[40] Sur ces registres d'époque mamelouke, qui ne nous sont connus qu'à travers les RI et les RǦ, Nicolas Michel, « Les *rizaq iḥbāsiyya,* terres agricoles en mainmorte dans l'Égypte mamelouke et ottomane. Étude sur les *Dafātir al-Aḥbās* ottomans », *AnIsl* 30, 1996, p. 169–172.


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familiers. Les registres de RI et RĞ ont été consultés jusqu'aux premières années du XIX^e^ siècle, complétés et mis à jour, ce qui a généré un nombre extraordinaire d'additions marginales et de feuillets intercalaires[41].

La quasi-intégralité des trois volumes des RI de la Bahnasāwiyya, avec leur index d'origine, est conservée[42]. Le troisième volume est en moins bon état que les deux autres ; il a perdu sa reliure en cuir à motif gaufré d'origine, et plusieurs cahiers ont été mélangés lorsqu'à l'époque contemporaine il a reçu une nouvelle reliure cartonnée. Seize folios manquent à l'intérieur du volume, ainsi que les derniers folios, qui correspondent aux quatre dernières *nāḥiya*-s par ordre alphabétique. Par bonheur, nous conservons une bonne partie du second et dernier volume de la *ǧarīda* consacrée à la Bahnasāwiyya, RĞ 4632, avec sa reliure et son index d'origine. Les fragments conservés représentent 102 folios sur un total supérieur à 239. Ils permettent de combler la majeure partie des lacunes du RI 4828 et de disposer ainsi d'une série quasi-complète d'informations cadastrales pour cette province[43].

Les index de RI 4618 (al-Bahnasāwiyya II) et RĞ 4632 ont quasiment le même titre. Celui du RI 4618 se lit : *fihrist al-nawāḥī min iqlīm al-Bahnasāwiyya bi-l-waǧh al-qiblī naqlan min daftar al-iǧmāl zaman al-Ǧarākisa al-mustaqarr ʿalayhi al-ḥāl ilā āḫir min ǧumādā al-awwal sanat 891* [en *siyāq*] « Index des *nāḥiya*-s de la province de la Bahnasāwiyya, dans la Face sud [*i.e.* la haute Égypte], collationné à partir du registre récapitulatif du temps des Circassiens, établi jusqu'à fin ǧumādā I 891 / 3 juin 1486 ». Ce registre récapitulatif *(daftar al-iǧmāl)* est fréquemment cité dans les index des registres de RI et RĞ[44]. Il s'agissait apparemment d'un document de synthèse élaboré par les bureaux du Caire, peu d'années après qu'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān avait rédigé son propre ouvrage ; il comprenait au moins les noms des *nāḥiya*-s, leur superficie, leur *ʿibra* et leur statut. Le titre des index des deux registres RI 4618 et RĞ 4632 laisse penser que les rédacteurs de ces registres ont suivi les listes alphabétiques constituées à l'époque circassienne pour organiser leurs propres registres. C'est bien ce que confirme la comparaison entre les listes d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān et les index des RI et RĞ : la liste de 1486 a vraisemblablement servi de base systématique, et a été complétée de diverses façons. Des noms supplémentaires ont été ajoutés, y compris en marge de l'index, par exemple Idrāsya[45], dont la colonne de droite dans la notice est restée vide : le village n'était pas encore une *nāḥiya* à l'époque mamelouke. Par ailleurs, l'index de RĞ 4632 ajoute

[41] Présentation détaillée des RI *ibid.*, p. 127–149.

[42] Présentation des trois registres RI 4618, 4624 et 4828 (al-Bahnasāwiyya I, II et III) *ibid.*, p. 155–156.

[43] Les manques qui subsistent portent sur les *nāḥiya*-s de Ṭarfayāna, Ṭaharšūb (*i.e.* Ṭaršūb) et Ṭirfā.

[44] Première approche de ce document disparu dans Michel, « Les *rizaq iḥbāsiyya* », p. 168–169.

[45] RI 4618, index, correspondant à la notice du f. 43 ; f. 43 r^o^ du registre. Sur Idrāsya, Ramzī, II, 3, p. 150.


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en queue de liste six noms « extraits du *tarbīʿ* » (de 1528) : *wa-bi-awāḫir hāḏihi al-ǧarīda / nawāḥī manqūla min al-tarbīʿ yaʾtī ḏikruhā fīhi*[46]. À l'inverse, la fidélité au document source de 1486 a conduit les rédacteurs à préparer le cadre de notices pour quelques *nāḥiya*-s pour lesquelles le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 ne donnait aucun renseignement, sans doute parce que le village avait disparu entretemps (voir *infra,* Tableau 4).

[46]Ces six villages occupent les f. 232 à 239 de RǦ 4632. La colonne de droite (informations extraites de la *ǧarīda qadīma* d'époque circassienne) en est vide, comme il fallait s'y attendre.


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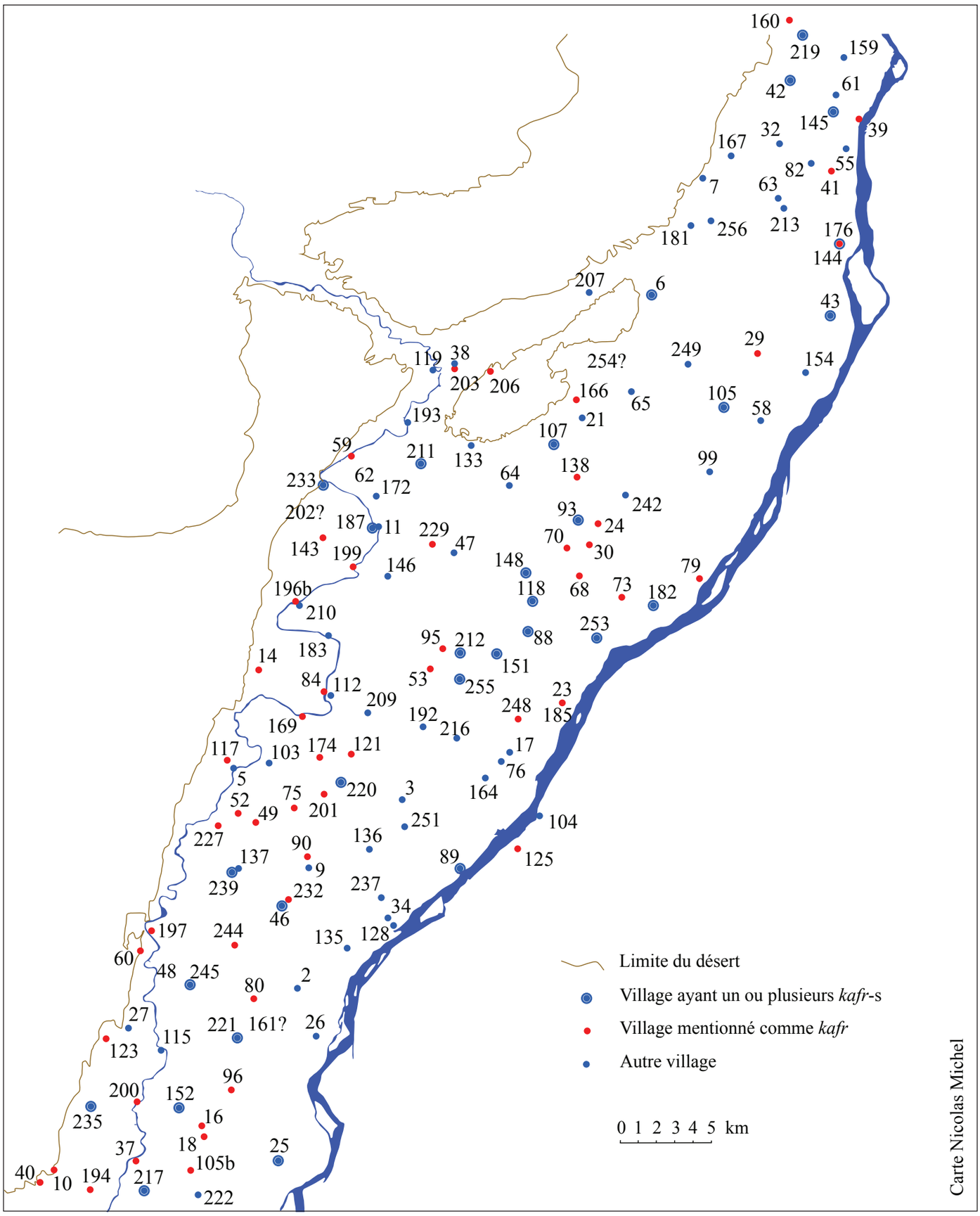


Cartes 1a et 1b. — Villages de la Bahnasāwiyya mentionnés dans les sources, 1315–1528, et localisables.
Les cartes de cet article ont été réalisées par l'auteur à partir du fond de cartes du Survey au 50.000e (2e édition, 1912–1913) géoréférencées et mosaïquées par Hakim Rakrouki pour le programme ANR-DFG EGYLandscape.


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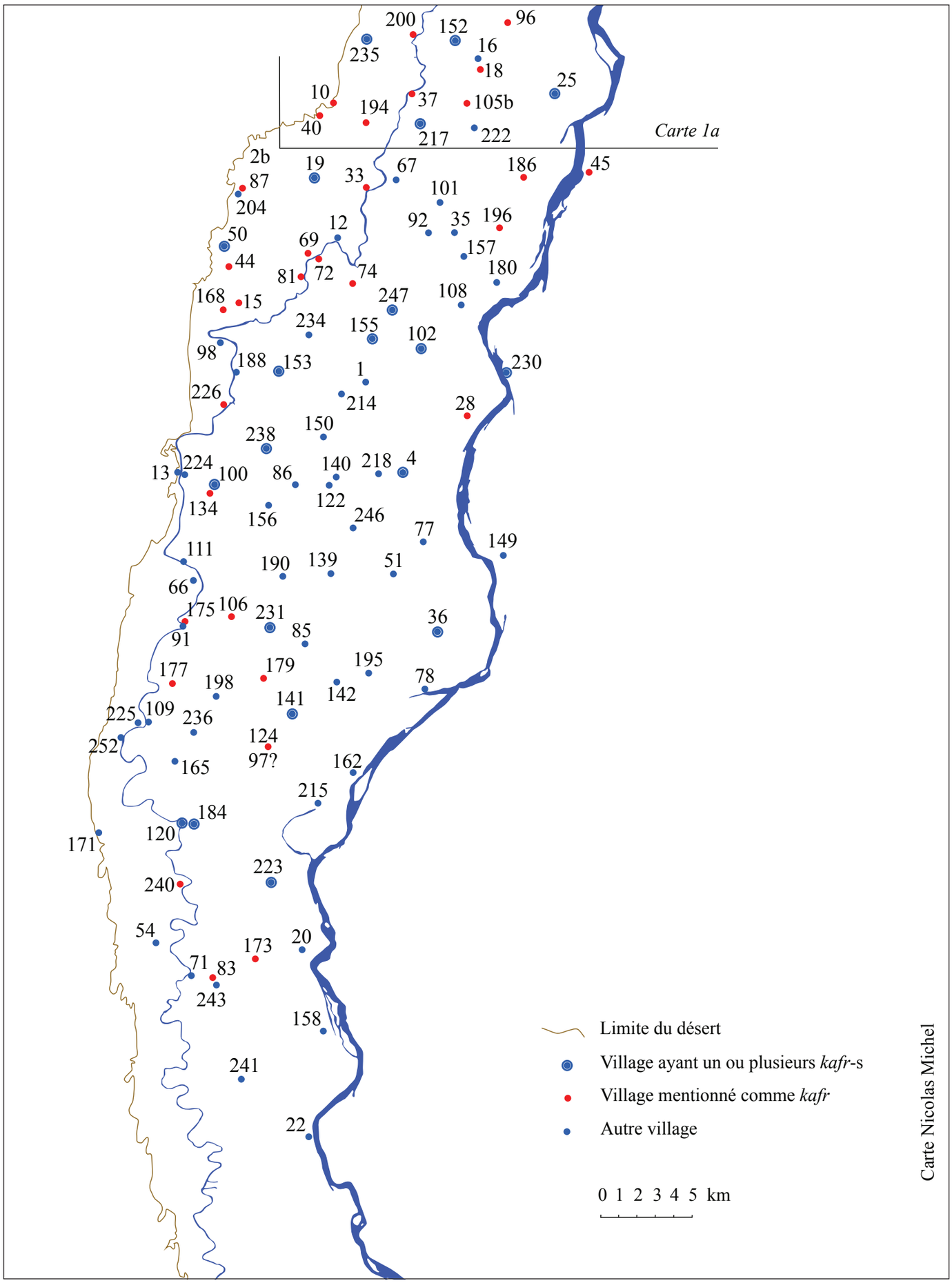



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## Liste des villages de la Bahnasāwiyya

(K) = village mentionné comme *kafr* dans l'une ou l'autre des sources des XIV^e^-XVI^e^ siècles.
(RI) = toponyme signalé seulement dans les registres des *rizaq iḥbāsiyya*.

1.. Āba (auj. Abā al-Waqf)
2. Absūǧ
2b. Abū Baṭīḫa (K)
3. Abū Duḫān (auj. Abū Širbān)
4. Abū Ǧirǧā
5. Abū Kaʿb (auj. ʿIzbat al-Šanṭūr)
6. Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdis (auj. Abū Ṣīr al-Malaq)
7. Abwīṭ
8. al-ʿArīn (K) (non localisé)
9. al-ʿAsākira
10. al-ʿAṭf (K) (auj. ʿAṭf Ḥaydar)
11. al-ʿAwāwna (RI)
12. al-Bahǧūr
13. al-Bahnasā
14. al-Bahsamūn (K)
15. al-Balāʿiza (K) (auj. al-Balāʿzatayn)
16. al-Balǧamūn (K) (auj. Nazlat Iqfahṣ)
17. al-Barāniqa
18. al-Barāqī wa-Ḏanab al-Timsāḥ (K)
19. al-Basqanūn
20. al-Bayahū wa-l-Naḫla
21. al-Burǧ
22. al-Burǧāya (RI)
23. al-Ḍabāʿna (K)
24. al-Dawālṭa (K)
25. al-Fant
26. al-Fašn
27. al-Ǧafadūnāt
28. al-Ǧindiyya (K)
29. al-Ḥāfir (K)
30. al-Ḥakāmna (K)
31. al-Ḥiṣāṣ wa-l-Faḍliyya (non localisé)
32. al-Ḥūmiyya (auj. al-Ḥūma)
33. al-ʿIdwa (K)
34. al-Kawāšira (auj. al-Fuqqāʿī)
35. al-Kawm al-Aḫḍar
36. al-Kufūr al-Ṣūliyya
37. al-Kunayyisa (K)
38. al-Lāhūn (du Fayyūm) (RI)
39. al-Masāʿda (K) (auj. Ǧazīrat al-Masāʿda)
40. al-Masīd (K) (auj. al-Masīd al-Waqf)
41. al-Maṣlūb (K) (RI)
42. al-Maydūm wa-l-Ḥūmiyya wa-l-Urṭuqiyya
43. al-Maymūn (de la Ǧīziyya selon RI)
44. al-Mifawwiz (K) (auj. Mifawwiz Ṭayba)
45. al-Murīǧ (Murayyiǧ?) (K) (auj. Zāwiyat al-Ǧidāmī)
46. al-Nāwiyya (à l'emplacement du cimetière d'auj. Zāwiyat al-Nāwya)
47. al-Nuwayra
48. al-Qalʿa (K) (auj. al-Qulayʿa)
49. al-Qaṣaba (K)
50. al-Qāyāt
51. al-Qays
52. al-Šanṭūr (K)
53. al-Šūbak (K)
54. al-Ṭayyiba
55. al-Wasṭā (RI)
56. al-Zamāzma (RI: *kafr* d'Ihwā) (non localisé)
57. al-Zāwiya (non localisé)
58. al-Zaytūn
59. al-Zirība (K) (auj. Banī Hānī)
60. ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ (K) (disparu, Naǧʿ Ġīḍān, terroir de Mazūra)
61. ʿAṭf Iṭwāb (auj. ʿAṭf Ifwa)
62. Babīǧ Ġīlān (du Fayyūm) (auj. Manyal Hānī, commune sans agglomération.)
63. Babīǧ Qīman (auj. Kafr Abǧīǧ)


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64. Bāhā
65. Bahafšīm
66. Ballā
67. Bām (auj. Bān al-ʿAlam)
68. Banī ʿAffān (K)
69. Banī ʿĀmir (K)
70. Banī Baḫīt (K) (auj. Minyat al-Ǧayyid)
71. Banī Ġanī wa-l-Dayr
72. Banī Ḫālid (K) (auj. Banī Ḫālid al-Baḥriyya)
73. Banī Hārūn (K)
74. Banī Ḫilf (K)
75. Banī Ḥilla (K)
76. Banī Māḍī
77. Banī Nazār (RI) (auj. Banī Mazār)
78. (Banī Muḥammad) (auj. Abū Ḥisayba)
79. Banī Qurayš (K) (auj. Manqarīš)
80. Banī Ṣāliḥ (K)
81. Banī ʿUqayl (K) (auj. al-ʿAqliyya)
82. Banī ʿUtmān (RI) (auj. Kafr Banī ʿItmān)
83. Baqarlanka (RI) (K) (auj. Banī al-Ḥakam)
84. Barāwa (K) (auj. Barāwa al-Waqf)
85. Bardanūha
86. Bardūna
87. Barmašā (K)
88. Barūṭ
89. Bibā al-Kubrā
90. Bidahl (K)
91. Biǧāǧ (auj. Ibǧāǧ al-Ḥaṭab)
92. Bilhāsa
93. Bilifyā
94. Birkat al-Asyād (non localisé)
95. Birkat Birrū (K) (auj. Nazlat al-Mašārqa)
96. Bisfā (K)
97. Bulṭiyya : dans la commune actuelle de 124 Ǧawāda
98. Burṭubāṭ
99. Būš Qarā (auj. Būš)
100. Buṭāš wa-Habšūr (ʿIzbat Aḥmad Sarī al-Dīn sur la carte du Survey)
101. Dahmarū
102. Dahrūṭ wa-l-Ǧindiyya
103. Daḥṭūṭ/Dağṭūṭ al-Ḥaraǧa (auj. Dašṭūṭ)
104. Daḥṭūṭ/Dağṭūṭ al-Ḥiǧāra (auj. Ǧabal al-Nūr)
105. Dalāṣ
105b. Ḏanab al-Timsāḥ (auj. Nazlat al-Barqī)
106. Danāza (RI) (K)
107. Dandīl
108. Darūṭ Bilhāsa (auj. al-Šayḫ Ziyād)
109. Dayqūf (auj. Dāqūf)
110. Dayr al-Ǧawʿ (non localisé)
111. Dayr al-Ḫādim wa-Kawm Mudrak (auj. Dayr al-Sanqūriyya)
112. Dayr al-Qaṣnūn (auj. Dayr Barāwa)
113. Dayr ʿAṭiyya (de l'Ašmūnayn) *hors carte*
114. Dayray Ṭirfa wa-Barhīǧ : dans la commune de 252 Ṭirfa
115. Dilhānis
116. Diqnāš (disparu, *ḫawḍ* de 197 Mazūra)
117. Dišāša (K)
118. Dimūšya
119. Dumuwwa al-Lāhūn (du Fayyūm) (RI) (auj. Hawārat ʿAdlān)
120. Dunqām (auj. Dulqām)
121. Fazāra (K)
122. Ǧalf
123. Ǧamhūǧ (K) (auj. al-Ǧamhūd)
124. Ǧawāda (K)
125. Ġayyāḍa (auj. Ġayyāḍa al-Šarqiyya)
126. Ǧazāʾir al-Kalbiyya = 176 Kawm Idrīǧa
127. Ǧazīrat al-Baṣaliyya wa-l-Muʿīn ? (non localisé)
128. Ǧazīrat al-Kawāšira (auj. Ǧazīrat al-Fuqqāʿī)


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129. Ǧazīrat Kufūr al-Ṣūliyya (non localisé)
130. Ǧazīrat Sawāqī al-Aš<sup>ʿ</sup>arī (non localisé)
131. Ǧazīrat al-Ṭayyiba wa-Ǧazīrat Bayāḍ (non localisé)
132. Ḥāfir Dalāṣ (RI) = 29 al-Ḥāfir
133. Ḥāǧir Banī Sulaymān
134. Hanšūr (K) (auj. <sup>ʿ</sup>Izbat al-Awqāf, terroir de Ṣandafā)
135. Harabšant
136. Hilliliyya
137. Hinitfa/Hinitfā
138. Ibšannā (K)
139. Ibšāq
140. Ibṭūǧa
141. Ibwān
142. Idqāq
143. Idrāsya (RI) (K)
144. Idrīǧa : même emplacement que 176 Kawm Idrīǧa
145. Ifwā
146. Ihnās al-Madīna
147. Ihnāsya al-Ṣuġrā = Ihnāsya al-Ḫaḍrā
148. Ihnāsya al-Ḫaḍrā (RI)
149. Ihrīt (auj. al-Šayḫ Faḍl)
150. Ihṭū
151. Ihwā
152. Iqfahs
153. Irǧannūs (auj. al-Ǧarnūs)
154. Išmant
155. Išnī (auj. Išnīn al-Naṣārā)
156. Išrūba
157. Iṭnāy
158. Iṭsā (RI)
159. Iṭwāb
160. Kafr al-Haram (K) (auj. al-Haram, proche de Maydūm)
161. Kafr al-Sanāra (K) (auj. al-Sanāyra, commune sans agglomération)
162. Kafr Banī Ḥakīm (devenue Nazlat Qulūṣnā, puis al-Tawfīqiyya)
163. Kafr Banī al-Manayn (RI)
164. Kafr Banī Qāsim = Banī Qāsim (RI)
165. Kawm Abī Sanābil (<sup>ʿ</sup>Izbat Šākir, terroir de 109 Dāqūf)
166. Kawm Abū Ḫallād (K)
167. Kawm Abū Rāḍī (RI)
168. Kawm al-Baqar (K) (auj. Kawm al-Ḥāṣil)
169. Kawm al-Ḥimīr (K) (auj. Kawm al-Nūr)
170. Kawm al-Nawāris (non localisé)
171. Kawm al-Rāhib (wa-Itnīda *in* RI)
172. Kawm al-Raml (auj. Kawm al-Raml al-Baḥrī)
173. Kawm al-Wafī (RI) (K) (auj. Kawm al-Lūfī)
174. Kawm Banī Mūmina (K) (auj. Banī Mūmina)
175. Kawm Ḥilwa (K) (auj. Ḥilwa)
176. Kawm Idrīǧa (RI) (K)
177. Kawm Marzūq (K) (auj. Marzūq)
178. Kawm Mudrak (non localisé)
179. Kawm Wālī (K)
180. Maġāġā (RI)
181. Manfasṭa (auj. Anfasṭ Banī Ḥibbīn)
182. Manfasawayh (auj. Banī Suwayf)
183. Manharā
184. Manqaṭīn
185. Manšiyyat Banī Ḍab<sup>ʿ</sup>ān (= 23 al-Ḍabā<sup>ʿ</sup>na)
186. Manšiyyat/Minyat Banī Ġarwāsīn/š (K) (auj. Malāṭiyya)
187. Manšiyyat Qāy (= Manšiyyat al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Awāwna RI) (auj. Minšāt al-Umarāʾ, en face de 11 al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Awāwna)
188. Manyal Abī Ša<sup>ʿ</sup>ra (= Banī Wallims RI) (auj. Banī Wallims)
189. Manyal Banī <sup>ʿ</sup>Abbās (non localisé)
190. Manyal Banī <sup>ʿ</sup>Alī (wa-l-Ma<sup>ʿ</sup>ṣara *in* RI) (auj. Banī <sup>ʿ</sup>Alī)
191. Manyal Banī Ḥabīb (non localisé, proche de 85 Bardanūhā)
192. Manyal Banī Mūsā (auj. Manyal Mūsā)


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193. Maʿṣarat Qāy (auj. Maʿṣarat Naʿsān)
194. Manyal Banī Warkān (K) (auj. Banī Warkān)
195. Maṭāy wa-Banī Muḥammad
196. Mayyānat Salaqūs (auj. Mayyāna al-Waqf)
196b. Mayyāna (K)
197. Mazūra (K)
198. Minbāl
199. Minhirū (K)
200. Minsāba (RI) (K)
201. Minšāt Abū Ṣāliḥ (K) (auj. Minšāt Abū Milīḥ ?)
202. Minšāt al-ʿArab (K) (Nağʿ al-ʿArab, terroir de 233 Sidmant)
203. Minšāt Ḫalbūṣ (K) (auj. Minšāt Hidīb)
204. Minšāt Ḥalfā (RI)
205. Minšāt Rabīʿa = Minyat Rabīʿa (RI) (non localisé)
206. Mūš al-Ḥaraǧa = al-Ḫaraǧa (K) (auj. al-Ḥaraǧa)
207. Nāmūsa (du Fayyūm *in* RI) (auj. al-Nawāmīs)
208. Namūy wa-Ǧazīrat al-Ḥaǧar = 180 Maġāġā
209. Ninā wa-Bahnanā
210. Qalahā
211. Qāy
212. Qilla
213. Qiman (auj. Qiman al-ʿArūs)
214. Qufāda
215. Qulūsanā
216. Qumbuš
217. Ṣafaniyya
218. Safṭ Abū Ǧirǧā
219. Safṭ Banī Waʿlā = Safṭ Maydūm
220. Safṭ Rašīn
221. Safṭ al-ʿUrafāʾ
222. Salaqūs
223. Samalūṭ (RI)
224. Sandafā
225. Sāqiyat Maḥfūẓ (auj. Sāqiyat Dāqūf)
226. Sāqūla (RI) (K)
227. Sarabū (K)
228. Šarāqī al-Aščarī *ou* Sawāqī al-Aščārī (non localisé)
229. Šarāhī (auj. Šarhā/Šarahī) (K)
230. Šarūna
231. Sayla (auj. Sayla al-Šarqiyya)
232. Sindādiyya (K) (auj. Zāwiyat al-Nawiyya)
233. Sidmant (RI)
234. Šimm al-Baṣal
235. Šinrā al-Qibliyya
236. Siṭāl (auj. Isṭāl)
237. Suds
238. Šulqām
239. Sumusṭā
240. Šūša (K)
241. Ṭaḥā al-Madīna (auj. Ṭahā al-Aʿmida)
242. Ṭaḥā Būš
243. Ṭahmāya wa-Banī Ġanī (de l'Ašmūnayn) (cimetière de 83 Baqarlank, devenue Banī al-Ḥakam)
244. Ṭalā (K)
245. Talt
246. Ṭambabū (auj. Ṭanbū)
247. Ṭambadī
248. Ṭansā al-ʿĀmira = Ṭansā Banī Mālū (RI) (K)
249. Ṭansā al-Malaq (RI)
250. Ṭarfayāna (non localisé, proche de 85 Bardanūhā)
251. Ṭaršūb
252. Ṭirfa
253. Tizmant wa-l-Sāḥil
254. Ṭūniyya (proche de 166 Kawm Abū Ḫallād)
255. Ṭuwwa
256. Wanā (auj. Wanālqis)


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## 2. Les *kufūr* dans les cadastres et les registres [47]

Les notices de *nāḥiya* sont plus nombreuses dans l'index des RI que dans les listes d'époque mamelouke : en tout 181 items [48], à comparer avec les 160 items chez Ibn Duqmāq et 154 chez Ibn al-Ǧīʿān. Cet accroissement résulte de plusieurs causes. En premier lieu, la province s'est étendue dans plusieurs directions. En amont, aux dépens de la province d'al-Ašmūnayn, le gain de superficie est considérable avec Samalūṭ **223**, al-Ṭayyiba **54**, Iṭsā **158**, Dayr ʿAṭiyya **113**, Ṭaḥā al-Madīna **241**, al-Burǧāya **22**. Au nord-ouest, en annexant plusieurs *nāḥiya*-s à l'entrée du Fayyūm : al-Lāhūn **38**, Dumuwwa al-Lāhūn **119**, Sidmant **233**, Babīǧ Ġīlān **62**. Au nord, al-Maymūn **43**, auparavant dans la Ǧīziyya. Par exception, la *nāḥiya* d'al-Ṭayyiba **54**, auparavant dans la province d'al-Ašmūnayn, a fait aussi l'objet d'une notice dans le premier volume de cette dernière [49].

En second lieu, apparaissent des *nāḥiya*-s que les index désignent explicitement comme la dépendance *(kafr)* d'une autre ; elles sont au nombre de 17, par exemple *Dišāša min kufūr Qāy,* « Dišāša **117**, une des dépendances de Qāy **211** ». Neuf *nāḥiya*-s sont accompagnées du nom de leur unique *kafr,* par exemple *Irǧannūs wa-Sāqūla kafrihā,* « Irǧannūs **153** et son *kafr* Sāqūla **226** ». Le tableau figurant en Annexe inclut les *kufūr* mentionnés seulement par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān ; le total des *nāḥiya*-s dotées de *kafr*-s passe à 41, et les *kufūr* à 164 [50]. Sur ces 164 *kufūr,* plusieurs ont un nom double ou triple, ce qui porte à 177 le nombre total des agglomérations dépendantes ou secondaires. Quatorze *nāḥiya*-s ont un seul *kafr* ; 7 en ont deux, 7 en ont trois, 12 en ont quatre et plus. Les *nāḥiya*-s ayant le plus de *kufūr* sont Qāy **211** (21 *kufūr*), Safṭ Rašīn **220** (17), Sumusṭā **239** (12), al-Basqanūn **19** (12), al-Qāyāt **50** (11), Manfasawayh **182** (10) : 83 *kufūr* à elles six, un peu plus de la moitié du total ! Notons, car rien n'est simple, que les dépendances de quelques villages sont désignées d'une autre manière, qui ne suggère pas l'existence d'une agglomération secondaire : *X wa-maʿṣaratuhā* « X et son pressoir » (2 cas), *X wa-ḥiṣṣatuhā* « X et sa part [de terroir ?] » (2 cas). Je ne les ai pas intégrées à la liste des *nāḥiya*-s avec *kafr.* Enfin, dans les index, 129 entrées

[47] Dans le texte et les notes de cet article, les chiffres en gras qui suivent les noms de village renvoient à la numérotation des villages de la Bahnasāwiyya adoptée dans les cartes 1a et 1b.

[48] Je compte dans ce total les cinq *nāḥiya*-s dont les noms ont été ajoutés à la liste préparée en index par la main principale α : il s'agit d'Idrāsya **143**, Kawm Abū Rāḍī **167**, al-Qays **51** wa-Banī Mazār **77**, Safṭ Abū Ǧirǧā **218**, Kafr al-Ḫarrāṭ.

[49] RI 4629, f. 74 v° : *bi-daftar al-Ǧarākisa al-iḥbāsī / kānat bi-l-Ašmūnayn ṯumma nuqilat ilā al-Bahnasāwiyya ṯumma uʿīdat ilā al-Ašmūnayn bi-marsūm šarīf tārīḫuhu ṯāliṯ al-qaʿda sanat 831.* Elle se trouvait dans l'Ašmūnayn, a été transférée à la Bahnasāwiyya puis est revenue dans l'Ašmūnayn par un *marsūm šarīf* du 3 ḏū al-qaʿda 831 / 14 août 1428.

[50] Šulqām **238** est la seule *nāḥiya* dans l'index, de même que dans la notice, pour laquelle l'existence de *kufūr* est mentionnée sans que leur nom soit indiqué. Le total des *kufūr* de la province serait donc en fait légèrement supérieur à 164 (et 177 agglomérations).


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Tableau 1 : Les *kufūr* dans les recensions d'époque mamelouke.

| | **Ibn Duqmāq** | **Ibn al-Ǧīʿān** | **Indices et en-têtes des RI et RǦ** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nombre total de notices | 160 | 154 | 186 |
| Notices de *kafr* d'une *nāḥiya* | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| Nombre total de *nāḥiya*-s non dépendantes | 151 | 145 | 168 |
| *Nāḥiya*-s avec *kufūr* | 29 | 24 | 38 |
| Nombre de *kufūr* identifiés dans les notices de *nāḥiya*-s | 21 | 5 | 162 |

ne correspondent ni à un village *kafr* d'un autre, ni à une unité administrative dotée de *kafr*-s : il s'agit dans 109 cas de noms uniques, dans 17 de noms doubles *X wa-Y,* par exemple *Kawm al-Rāhib wa-Itnīda* **171**, dans 2 cas de noms triples ; en tout, 152 agglomérations.

### 2.1. À quand remontent les informations de nos sources ?

La question la plus importante pour la suite de notre propos est de savoir sur quels documents s'appuyait la liste bien plus détaillée de 1486, connue par les index des RI et RǦ ; autrement dit, à quand remonte la source originelle utilisée par ce document de 1486.

Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān avaient déjà accordé une certaine attention à cette question des dépendances, mais ils l'avaient fait avec parcimonie, comme le montre le Tableau 1.

La comparaison entre les différentes listes de *nāḥiya*-s incite à envisager une source unique pour Ibn Duqmāq, Ibn al-Ǧīʿān et le document de 1486, source qui a dû faire l'objet d'ajustements ultérieurs, mais toujours par exception. Comme les superficies jointes à ces noms de villages remontent vraisemblablement au *rawk* de 1315, je suis tenté d'attribuer à la même date cette matrice des listes de *nāḥiya*-s. La question n'est pas aussi simple pour les listes de *kufūr.* Les incohérences internes aux deux compilateurs, Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān[51], incitent

[51] Par exemple, Ibn Duqmāq signale trois dépendances d'Iqfahs **152** (al-Balǧamūn **16**, al-Kunayyisa **37**, Bisfā **96**) mais ne mentionne pas, en tête de la notice d'Iqfahs, que cette dernière a des *kufūr* ; Ibn al-Ǧīʿān en revanche le note.


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Tableau 2 : *Kufūr* de quatre *nāḥiya*-s chez Ibn Duqmāq et dans les RI.

| | **_Kufūr_ nommés par Ibn Duqmāq** | **_Kufūr_ nommés dans les index des RI et RḎ** | **_Kufūr_ nommés d'après le _tarbīʿ_ de 1528** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ibwān | Dafanū<br>المطبح al-Maṭīḥ ?<br>al-Kawm al-Aḫḍar | Dafanū | — |
| al-Basqanūn | Abū Minnā<br>Dayr al-Ṭīn<br>Abū Baṭīḫa<br>برما Barm[aš]ā<br>المـــد al-Masadd/<br>Masīd ?<br>al-ʿIdwa<br>Ḥarīm al-Raml<br>al-ʿAṭf<br>القطعه al-Qiṭʿa | al-ʿAṭf<br>Kawm al-Raml wa-M...<br>al-Masǧid<br>Abū Baṭīḫa wa-<br>Bīrmāra ?<br>Kafr Bū Minnā<br>Barmašā wa-Maqāra<br>Dikrū wa-Dikarkāris<br>wa-l-Ṭawīl<br>al-Kunayyisa<br>Dayr al-Ṭīn<br>al-ʿIdwa<br>al-Masīd<br>al-Qaṭīʿa | al-ʿAṭf<br>Kawm al-Raml<br>al-Masǧid<br>Kawm Barmašā<br>Kafr al-ʿIdwa<br>Kawm al-Masīd<br>al-Qaṭīʿa<br>al-..ḥ.. [*en marge*]<br>al-Murāwisiyya ?<br>[*en marge*] |
| Bilifyā | Banī Ġayyāṭ<br>Umm al-Ḥakam<br>al-Ṣawāliḥa | al-Ḥakāmna<br>al-Ḍawālta | al-Ḥakāmna<br>al-Ḍawālta |
| Talt | Ṭalā<br>al-Ḥāfir<br>al-Qulayʿa | Ṭalā<br>al-Qalʿa<br>al-Ḥammām | Ṭalā |

à voir là un travail inachevé, peut-être du fait des documents sur lesquels ils s'appuyaient eux-mêmes.

Ibn Duqmāq a été plus complet qu'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān en notant quelles *nāḥiya*-s comportaient des *kufūr* (sous la forme *X wa-kufūruhā,* que l'on retrouve dans toutes nos sources) ; il a même énuméré les *kufūr* de quatre d'entre elles : Ibwān **141** (3 *kufūr*), al-Basqanūn **19** (9), Bilifyā **93** (3) et Talt **245** (3) (ci-dessous, Tableau 2), alors qu'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, ou du moins les copies de son œuvre qui nous sont parvenues, ne l'a fait pour aucune.

Une première liste de *kufūr* avait-elle été constituée dès 1315 ? L'hypothèse peut être défendue : al-Nābulusī avait déjà procédé ainsi. L'une des deux sources,


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Ibn Duqmāq ou l'index des RI, reflète-t-elle cette première liste ? Les différences entre ces listes de *kufūr* (Tableau 2) déroutent au premier abord, parce qu'elles ne vont pas dans le même sens. Dans les cas de Bilifyā et de Talt, l'index des RI paraît puiser à une source plus tardive que celle d'Ibn Duqmāq, car plus proche de l'état des dépendances en 1528. Dans le cas d'al-Basqanūn, c'est l'inverse : l'index des RI fait apparaître des toponymes anciens tels que Dikrū, disparus chez Ibn Duqmāq, dont l'information paraît pour le coup plus récente que celle de l'index. Là encore, j'avancerai l'hypothèse que les listes de *kufūr* chez Ibn Duqmāq et l'index des RI dérivent d'une source commune, vraisemblablement le *rawk nāṣirī* de 1315, mais qu'ils ne l'avaient pas sous les yeux et ont travaillé à partir de documents postérieurs, aménagés pour intégrer des mises à jour partielles, effectuées à plusieurs dates inconnues du XIV^e^ siècle. Je considèrerai donc l'index des RI non pas comme la photographie des choses à un instant donné, mais comme le reflet de plusieurs états successifs durant le XIV^e^ siècle.

Comme nous l'avons déjà vu, les rédacteurs des registres RI et RĞ travaillaient à partir de deux ensembles de documents de référence : les registres et autres documents d'époque mamelouke d'une part, de l'autre les registres du *tarbīʿ* de 1528. Or la situation en 1528 était très différente de celle du XIV^e^ siècle, et les registres constitués à partir de 1550 le montrent de manière claire. Seule une petite partie des *kufūr* énumérés dans l'index, 17 sur 164, ont fait l'objet d'une entrée distincte dans l'index puis d'une notice spécifique, en respectant l'ordre alphabétique des *nāḥiya*-s. D'autre part, certains des *kufūr* énumérés dans l'index ont fait l'objet d'une notice immédiatement à la suite du chef-lieu, d'autres non. Cela est tout à fait apparent dans le tableau publié ici en Annexe.

Prenons deux exemples parmi les *nāḥiya*-s ayant le plus de *kufūr* dans l'index : Sumusṭā **239** et Qāy **211**. Sur les 12 *kufūr* énumérés pour Sumusṭā, à la notice générale de la *nāḥiya* succèdent les notices du chef-lieu lui-même *(Sumusṭā ḫāṣṣatan),* puis d'au moins sept *kufūr*[52] ; Diqnāš **116**, Mazūra **197**, al-Bandala, al-Šanṭūr **52** et Kafr Ṭūḫ apparaissent dans l'index (qui orthographie Bandala et Ṭūḫ), tandis que deux autres, Sarabū **227** et al-Qaṣr, n'y figurent pas. Les récapitulatifs des notices du chef-lieu et des *kufūr* ont été préparés comme ceux des autres *nāḥiya*-s, mais dans la colonne de gauche seules les informations relatives aux terres exemptées, *rizaq* et « services communaux » *(maṣāliḥ al-nāḥiya,* voir *infra)* ont été complétées à partir du *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528.

Qāy représente un cas tout à fait remarquable. L'en-tête de la notice énumère de manière très lisible 11 *kufūr;* une autre main en a ajouté un douzième, Ḥāğir Banī Sulaymān **133**, qui n'apparaît nulle part ailleurs comme *kafr* de Qāy. Si le nom des onze premiers *kufūr* de Qāy est repris de manière fort lisible dans l'en-

[52] Sumusṭā et ses *kufūr* occupent les f. 109 r^o^ à 129 r^o^ du RI 4828. Les ff. 115 et 116 sont manquants.


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tête de la notice, il n'en va pas de même de sept mentions suivantes, presque indéchiffrables, qui ne figurent que dans l'index et non dans l'en-tête. En marge, une troisième main a noté, de biais, les renseignements cadastraux de quatre *kufūr,* dont trois n'apparaissent pas dans l'en-tête : Maʿṣarat Qāy **193** (qui fait par ailleurs l'objet d'une notice indépendante, sans mention de son statut de *kafr*), Minšāt Ḥalbūṣ **203** et al-Ḥarīǧa. Suivent de manière régulière les informations cadastrales pour l'ensemble de la *nāḥiya,* puis pour trois *kufūr,* dont al-Ḥarīǧa, sur deux folios intercalaires ; un seul des trois *kufūr* apparaît dans la liste de l'en-tête. Un autre folio, intercalé plus loin dans le registre, fournit encore deux autres *kufūr* de Qāy, dont Minšāt Ḥalbūṣ. Par ailleurs, Barāwa **84** et Dišāša **117**, l'une et l'autre ignorées de la liste comme de l'en-tête mais mentionnées par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, font l'objet de notices indépendantes dans lesquelles elles sont explicitement signalées comme *kafr*-s de Qāy. Au total, les huit *kufūr* de Qāy dont nous avons les données cadastrales de 1528 ne correspondent que pour deux d'entre elles (Mayyāna **196b** et al-Zirība **59**) à la liste de l'en-tête : sur les 11 toponymes de cette dernière, 9 se sont évanouis entre la date de cette liste et 1528. La quantité de documents de référence et de mains intervenues simultanément ou successivement sur cette *nāḥiya* (il est vrai exceptionnelle, comme nous le verrons plus loin) décourage.

Ainsi les rédacteurs des registres RI et RǦ ont-ils traité de manière différente les *nāḥiya*-s et les *kufūr* qu'ils trouvaient sur la liste de 1486. Chacune des *nāḥiya*-s a fait l'objet d'une entrée spécifique. En revanche, après la notice d'une *nāḥiya* dotée de dépendances, seules celles renseignées dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 ont fait l'objet d'une entrée, et souvent sur des feuillets intercalaires, c'est-à-dire après coup. Les rédacteurs des registres des années 1550 ont en somme cherché à combiner deux états différents : celui de 1528 et celui du XIV^e^ siècle, pour lequel ils disposaient d'un document apparemment exhaustif daté de 1486. Entretemps les modifications ont été profondes. Un grand nombre des *kufūr* du XIV^e^ siècle ne figuraient pas dans le *tarbīʿ,* et les rédacteurs des RI ne leur ont pas réservé d'entrée indépendante. Des *nāḥiya*-s ont ainsi perdu leur ou leurs *kafr*-s. D'autres *kufūr* sont devenus des *nāḥiya*-s à part entière ; enfin plusieurs sont apparus, surgis du néant pourrait-on croire.

Cela conduit à nous demander si les deux documents sources, celui du XIV^e^ siècle et le *tarbīʿ* de 1528, avaient bien enregistré la totalité des dépendances. La question est cruciale : avons-nous entre les mains, d'abord pour le XIV^e^ siècle puis pour 1528, un état exhaustif du peuplement, ou devons-nous imaginer un habitat plus éparpillé encore que ce que suggèrent ces listes ? En l'état actuel de la documentation, il ne me paraît pas possible de répondre pour la liste de 1486. En revanche, les données relatives au *tarbīʿ* de 1528 autorisent quelques hypothèses prudentes. En premier lieu, les données restituées par les RI et RǦ préser-


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vés ne coïncident pas absolument : le RĞ 4632 restitue des superficies qui n'ont pas été complétées dans les RI, et fait même apparaître quatre *kufūr* qui ne figuraient pas dans les RI. Il y a de ce fait apparence que les rédacteurs des années 1550 ont opéré pour le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 non pas à partir d'un document unique, mais de plusieurs documents dérivés, aux contenus sans doute sélectifs[53]. Cette hypothèse en entraîne une autre : que le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une mise en forme unique et aussi nette que celle qui, une génération plus tard, a produit les RI et RĞ encore conservés jusqu'à nos jours. En second lieu, certains *kufūr* de la liste de 1486 n'apparaissent pas dans les données du *tarbīʿ* telles que les ont compilées les RI et RĞ, alors que nous savons que ces villages existent encore. Soit ils avaient bel et bien disparu et c'est leur nom seul qui subsistait au début du XVI^e^ siècle ; soit ils ont été oubliés par les inspecteurs du *tarbīʿ* ; soit ces derniers ne les ont pas jugés dignes d'être dotés du statut de *kafr*.

Il faut imaginer que les inspecteurs du *tarbīʿ* en 1528, confrontés avec une certaine fraîcheur d'esprit aux réalités de terrain durant leur tournée de village en village, ont buté sur une question simple : quelles agglomérations pouvaient être considérées comme des entités indépendantes, quelles autres comme des dépendances ou *kafr*-s ? Ce n'était apparemment pas en vertu d'une décision officielle qu'une agglomération passait de l'un à l'autre statut : si cela avait été le cas, une copie de ces textes aurait été conservée quelque part, et nous en trouverions des traces, comme c'était le cas des *marsūm*-s qui transféraient une *nāḥiya* d'une province à une autre ; nous en avons vu plus haut un exemple. Sur quels critères les inspecteurs du *tarbīʿ*, et leurs informateurs locaux, pouvaient-ils se fonder ?

### 2.2. Que signifiait la dépendance ?

Il ne fait pas de doute que le mot *kafr* désignait une dépendance d'une autre entité administrative (X *kafr* de Y), et qu'à l'inverse, la plupart du temps c'était ce terme *kafr* qui était employé pour signaler que X était dépendante de Y ; dans de rares cas on préférait l'expression X *min ḥuqūq* Y, avec le même sens. Nous présumons qu'aux XIV^e^-XVI^e^ siècles un *kafr* était une agglomération physique, ou village, puisqu'à partir au moins du début du XIX^e^ siècle les anciens *kufūr* subsistants ont bien la forme d'agglomérations. En revanche, pour désigner l'entité dont dépendait un *kafr* les documents utilisent des termes variés : *nāḥiya, balad* ou *balda* semblent avoir été interchangeables aux époques ayyoubide et mamelouke, *nāḥiya* (le plus souvent) et *qarya* à l'époque ottomane. L'administra-

[53] Les rédacteurs des registres de RI ont d'ailleurs parfois précisé à partir de quel registre de *tarbīʿ* ils avaient travaillé : *al-ḫarāǧī al-turkī* (plusieurs références, par ex. RI 4618, f. 89 v°), *min ḫaṭṭ Taqī al-Dīn* (*ibid.,* f. 171 r°), et dans la province d'al-Ašmūnayn, *al-ḫarāǧī al-ʿarabī* (RI 4653, f. 274 r°).


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tion désignait de la même manière le village et le territoire qu'il exploitait ou disait exploiter[54], parce que la réalité physique du bâti (qui nous importe tant pour cerner la réalité du peuplement) ne présentait aucun intérêt pour le fisc. Par ailleurs, le terme de *nāḥiya* n'était pas exclusif de celui de *kafr,* comme le montrent fort bien, entre autres, les notices des RI. Si « X et ses *kufūr* » constituaient bel et bien une *nāḥiya,* ou unité administrative, il arrivait aussi, comme nous l'avons vu, que ces *kufūr,* du moins certains d'entre eux, soient désignés et traités comme des *nāḥiya*-s.

Nous devons d'emblée écarter l'hypothèse selon laquelle la spécificité des *kufūr* serait liée à leur statut foncier. D'après la documentation papyrologique, à l'époque romaine et surtout antique tardive, la campagne égyptienne comprenait des *kômai* (sg. *kômè*) « villages » et des *epoikia* (sg. *epoikion*) « hameaux, écarts », dont les mentions se multiplient à partir du IVe siècle. On a souvent vu dans les *epoikia* des agglomérations secondaires liées aux grands domaines, dont le mieux documenté, celui de la Maison des Apions, se trouvait justement en Oxyrhynchite : cette archive (fin Ve-début VIIe siècle) ne nomme pas moins de 58 *epoikia* liées à la production de vin[55] ; en somme, des établissements agricoles, ou avant tout agricoles, souvent comparés aux *ʿizba*-s qui, à partir du milieu du XIXe siècle, se sont multipliées dans les campagnes avec l'extension des grands domaines[56]. Rien de tel aux époques mamelouke puis ottomane. La propriété de la terre arable a disparu d'Égypte durant la seconde moitié de l'époque fatimide, et avec elle toute idée de grand domaine. À partir de l'époque ayyoubide, les concessions de terre en *milk* (pleine propriété) portent en fait sur les revenus fiscaux de *nāḥiya*-s ou de parts de *nāḥiya* et non sur les terrains eux-mêmes, et

[54] En revanche, dans les descriptions de confins *(ḥudūd),* on parle bien des « terres *(arāḍī)* de la *nāḥiyat* X ». De même, les papyrus grecs utilisaient le nom du village, suivi de *topoi* (les lieux) pour désigner la circonscription de celui-ci : Pruneti, *I Centri abitati,* p. 11–12.

[55] T. M. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and the State in Late Antique Egypt: The House of Apion at Oxyrhynchus,* New Texts from Ancient Cultures (Ann Arbor, 2012), d'après l'Annexe B, « Viticultural Sites », p. 165–185. Sur les *epoikia, ibid.,* p. 165 n. 2.

[56] Marianne Lewuillon-Blume, « Problèmes de la terre au IVe siècle après J.-C. », *Actes du XVe congrès international de papyrologie,* 4e partie, *Papyrologie documentaire,* Papyrologica Bruxellensia, vol. 19 (Bruxelles, 1979), p. 177–185, plaide en faveur d'un rattachement des *epoikia* aux grands domaines et d'une comparaison avec les *ʿizba*-s. Ariel G. López, *Shenoute of Atripe and the Uses of Poverty: Rural Patronage, Religious Conflict, and Monasticism in Late Antique Egypt,* Transformation of the Classical Heritage, vol. 50 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Londres, 2013), p. 86–90, de même, assimile franchement la multiplication des *epoikia* dans la documentation des IVe-VIe siècles avec l'expansion des grands domaines. La nature de ces grands domaines est très débattue : utile résumé historiographique *ibid.,* p. 77–83. Alan K. Bowman, commentaire de M. Lewuillon-Blume, 1979 in *Gnomon* 55, 5, 1983, p. 464a-b, défend l'opinion contraire, qu'il est difficile de distinguer *epoikia* et *kômai*. On consultera en dernier lieu sur les *epoikia* l'étude de G. Konstantinidis, « A Reconsideration of *Epoikion* in Byzantine Egypt », *Byzantiaka* 32, 2015, p. 23–38.


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nulle économie domaniale ne s'installe[57]. La dépendance du *kafr* ne profitait pas à un grand propriétaire ou à un grand domaine ; pour la comprendre, nous devons revenir à ce qui fait la spécificité des villages durant ces siècles.

Comme je me suis attaché à le montrer dans *L'Égypte des villages* (2018), les autorités mameloukes puis ottomanes ont reconnu aux *nāḥiya*-s une large autonomie. Celle-ci se manifestait notamment par la gestion interne de la répartition des charges fiscales et des prestations de travail, la connaissance des conflits que pouvait susciter cette répartition, la disposition d'un budget, celle de certaines terres dites « services communaux » *(maṣāliḥ al-nāḥiya),* assignées à des services spécifiques qui rentreraient dans la catégorie que nous appelons de nos jours des services publics[58]. C'est en raison de cette large autonomie que j'ai jugé pertinent l'emploi du terme de « communauté villageoise » pour parler des *nāḥiya*-s, et j'utiliserai dans la suite de cet article l'épithète « communal » pour m'y référer.

Or, l'autonomie communale était pesante. Le fisc considérait une *nāḥiya* et la superficie des terres qui lui était reconnue comme une unité liée par la responsabilité collective des principaux habitants, les *fallāḥ*-s, eux-mêmes attachés à la glèbe, c'est-à-dire interdits de migrer ailleurs[59]. Si les dépendances étaient englobées dans le même terroir que le village principal, l'obligation devait être commune et partagée, ce qui plaçait nettement les *kufūr* sous la coupe du chef-lieu, mais laissait en même temps les *fallāḥ*-s libres de s'y installer le cas échéant, et d'exploiter de manière ou d'autre des terres dans l'ensemble du terroir commun. Le *kafr* pouvait aussi bénéficier de la solidarité commune, par exemple pour les travaux de terrassement qui requéraient une importante main d'œuvre. Dans le cas extrême où un village se trouvait en voie d'abandon, l'ensemble ou une portion de son terroir pouvait être confiée en *zirāʿa* aux *fallāḥ*-s, ou à certains *fallāḥ*-s, d'un village voisin : le premier pouvait de cette manière passer

[57] Sur la disparition de la propriété de la terre arable durant la seconde moitié de l'époque fatimide, Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 238–250 ; Chris Wickham, « The Power of Property: Land Tenure in Fatimid Egypt », *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, 1, 2019, p. 67–107.

[58] Sur les « services communaux », Michel, « Les "services communaux" en Égypte au début de l'époque ottomane », *in* Mohammed Afifi *et al.* éd., *Sociétés rurales ottomanes / Ottoman Rural Societies,* Cahier des *Annales islamologiques,* vol. 25 (Le Caire, 2005), p. 19–46. La question de l'autonomie villageoise fait l'objet du chap. 4 de Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 257–339.

[59] Sur les obligations pesant sur les *fallāḥ*-s, Nicolas Michel, « Devoirs fiscaux et droits fonciers : la condition des Fellahs égyptiens (13e-16e siècles) », *JESHO* 43, 4, 2000, p. 521–578. Ils migraient cependant, cf. Idem, « Migrations de paysans dans le Delta du Nil au début de l'époque ottomane », *AnIsl* 35, 2001, p. 241–290. Cet attachement à la glèbe ne paraît pas avoir concerné la masse des petites gens : les *fallāḥ*-s responsables du paiement de l'impôt foncier constituaient la part la plus aisée de la population villageoise.


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sous la dépendance du second, s'il n'était pas entièrement absorbé par celui-ci[60]. Avantages et inconvénients de la dépendance dépendaient en somme des forces et faiblesses respectives du chef-lieu et de son ou ses *kafr*-s. Si un *kafr* était traité intégralement comme une unité fiscale indépendante, au contraire, ces liens se rompaient. Entre les deux, certaines charges ou prestations pouvaient être partagées entre chef-lieu et *kufūr,* tandis que d'autres obligations étaient dissociées. C'est ainsi que dans le cas de la fourniture d'instruments pour l'entretien annuel des grandes digues de la province[61], la plupart des villages sont énumérés « avec leurs *kufūr* », à charge pour eux de procéder à la répartition de la prestation globale entre les différentes agglomérations ; cependant dans un cas, celui d'al-Basqanūn **19**, les *kufūr* concernés sont présentés séparément[62]. Ainsi la dépendance était-elle à géométrie variable, et permettait-elle des ajustements en fonction de l'évolution du chef-lieu et de ses *kufūr.*

Prenons d'abord les 17 *kufūr* qui ont fait l'objet d'une notice indépendante dans les RI et les RĞ, autrement dit, ont été traités comme les autres *nāḥiya*-s. La notice de l'un d'eux, Šūša **240**, *kafr* de Dunqām **120**, manque dans le RI 4828 ; sur les 16 autres, un (al-Balğamūn **16**, *kafr* d'Iqfahs **152**) n'a pas été arpenté en 1528 — c'est explicitement consigné —, deux (al-Murayğ, *kafr* de Dayrūṭ, et Kawm al-Wafī **173**, *kafr* de Samalūṭ **223**) ont dû l'être, mais leurs résultats globaux n'ont pas été reportés. Les 14 autres ont des superficies comprises entre 330 et 1 593 feddans (unité de superficie, désormais f.)[63]. Or, huit seulement ont des superficies assignées aux « services communaux » ; parmi ceux-ci, trois ont des terres attribuées à la fonction de cheikh *(šiyāḫa)* et cinq à celle de *dalīl (dalāla),* le teneur de livre qui rendait compte de la répartition de la charge fiscale. Un tiers seulement de ces *kufūr* privilégiés par les rédacteurs des RI et RĞ assignaient donc des terres à leurs agents communaux. Prenons à titre de comparaison l'exemple de la Ğazīrat Banī Naṣr, petite province du Delta que j'ai étudiée précédemment : il montre qu'en 1528, sur 48 *nāḥiya*-s, 39 ont des « services communaux », dont 31 pour les cheikhs (avec une moyenne de 41,8 f.) et 26 pour le *dalīl* (en moyenne

[60] Sur la revivification du terroir d'un village par un autre, Michel, « Villages désertés », p. 221–225.

[61] Sur les travaux annuels d'entretien des digues, Idem, « Travaux aux digues dans la vallée du Nil aux époques papyrologique et ottomane : une comparaison » *in* Juan Carlos Moreno García éd., *L'agriculture institutionnelle en Égypte ancienne : état de la question et perspectives interdisciplinaires, CRIPEL* 25, 2005, p. 267–270.

[62] DT 4559, f. 12 v°.

[63] Le feddan est l'unité de superficie en Égypte depuis l'époque médiévale. À partir du XIX^e^ siècle il équivaut à 0,42 ha. À l'époque prémoderne, sa valeur tournait autour de 0,6 ha : voir en dernier lieu Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 435–436.


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Tableau 3 : Superficies assignées aux *rizaq* et aux « services communaux » à Safṭ Rašīn et ses dépendances, chiffres du *tarbīʿ* de 1528, en feddans.

| **Safṭ Rašīn et ses *kufūr*** | **Total des *rizaq*** | **Dont « services communaux »** | ***Šiyāḫa*** | ***Dalāla*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Safṭ Rašīn, chef-lieu | 449 | 54 | 30 | 9 |
| Banī Ḥilla | 31 | 14 | 10 | – |
| Banī Mūmina | 59 | 30 | 15 | 5 |
| Minšāt Abū Ṣāliḥ | 35,5 | 18,5 | 12 | |
| Kawm al-Ḥimīr | 27 | 13 | 9 | |
| Fazāra | 61 | 28 | 15 | 6 |
| Bidahl | 147 | 21 | 15 | 3 |

6,7 f.)[64]. L'absence de ces « services communaux » dans la majorité de nos 17 *kufūr* peut être interprétée soit comme le signe d'une absence complète de cheikhs et de *dalīl*-s — hypothèse extrême et à mon avis improbable[65], — ou plutôt comme le signe d'une moindre force des institutions communautaires, soit que la tutelle du chef-lieu ait été plus pesante, soit que la communauté, moins solidaire, ait éprouvé plus de difficultés à décider des assignations de terres.

La rareté des « services communaux » est plus nette encore pour les *kufūr* dont la notice suit immédiatement celle du chef-lieu. En règle générale, ils sont dénués de « services communaux ». Il y a cependant des exceptions, ainsi les nombreuses dépendances de Safṭ Rašīn **220** (Tableau 3).

Les *kufūr* de Safṭ Rašīn se comportaient pleinement comme des organismes autonomes, disposant d'agents communaux et les rétribuant. On s'étonne même de trouver Bidahl **90** parmi les dépendances de Safṭ Rašīn : parmi ses terres en *rizaq,* elle n'en consacre pas moins de 27 f. au service de sa mosquée (*ǧāmiʿ*) contre 44 au chef-lieu, et 10 f. à l'entretien de deux *sabīl*-s, contre 23 f. aux deux *sabīl*-s du chef-lieu ; les autres *kufūr* ont des mosquées bien plus modestes (comme d'ailleurs la plupart des *nāḥiya*-s ordinaires) et pas de *sabīl*.

C'était en somme un tableau aux nuances nombreuses, voire déroutantes, qui attendait les inspecteurs de 1528. Il mettait en échec une définition univoque des unités ou circonscriptions administratives. La commission de 1550 a dû faire

[64] Idem, « Les "services communaux" », tableaux 1 et 2 p. 41–44, et p. 28–30.

[65] Dans les villages dénués de « services communaux », nous pouvons imaginer que les cheikhs et autres agents communaux percevaient seulement des rétributions casuelles.


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avec ces données, au risque de la contradiction. Pour nous, la perplexité n'est pas moindre. Que sont devenus les *kufūr* de la liste de 1486 non mentionnés en 1528 ? Et en premier lieu, pourquoi ont-ils disparu ? Cette question soulève celle de la pérennité des agglomérations, en fonction de leur taille et de leur hiérarchie.

## 3. Hiérarchie et pérennité des agglomérations

Intuitivement, nous pouvons penser que plus une agglomération était peuplée et jouissait d'un terroir étendu, plus étaient élevées ses chances de traverser les siècles et de surmonter les calamités qui frappaient de temps à autre la population rurale. L'hypothèse conduit à nous demander si le fait de se placer dans la dépendance d'une autre agglomération voisine, mieux dotée, était une garantie face aux aléas. Pour vérifier ces assertions nous disposons de trois ordres d'informations : le nom même des agglomérations, les attestations de leur pérennité au cours du temps, enfin les superficies cadastrées.

### 3.1. Les enseignements de la toponymie

L'arabisation complète de l'Égypte, qui eut lieu graduellement à la fin de l'époque abbasside (750–969) et au début de l'époque fatimide (969–1171), constitue un marqueur chronologique sûr de l'ancienneté d'une foule de toponymes. On distingue ainsi classiquement toponymes « non arabes » et « arabes ». Ils peuvent concerner des agglomérations, mais aussi des lieux-dits, notamment ces quartiers *(ḥawḍ* ou *qabāla)* par lesquels étaient divisés les terroirs[66]. C'est d'ailleurs en consultant les listes de noms de *ḥawḍ*-s — à ne pas confondre avec les bassins d'irrigation, beaucoup plus étendus — que Muḥammad Ramzī a retrouvé la trace de bien des villages disparus.

Sophia Björnesjö définit ainsi les toponymes « arabes » : « tous les toponymes qui se rattachent à des racines arabes attestées ou à des noms de tribus arabes, ou à des noms propres (anthroponymes) »[67]. Ces toponymes « arabes » sont pour la plupart déterminés, soit par l'article défini *al-*[68], soit par l'annexion. On y trouve notamment des ethnonymes, ainsi que des noms composés avec un premier terme clairement toponymique tel que Ǧazīra (lit. « île », terroir nouveau

[66] Sur les quartiers de terroir à l'époque médiévale et ottomane, Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 362–364.

[67] Sophia Björnesjö, « Quelques réflexions sur l'apport de l'arabe dans la toponymie égyptienne », *AnIsl* 30, 1996, p. 24.

[68] L'article défini *al-* se rencontre aussi dans un grand nombre de toponymes anciens (« non arabes »), où il redouble souvent ce qui avait été un article copte : l'exemple paradigmatique est justement al-Bahnasā. On retrouve un oubli grammatical similaire dans les termes arabes en *al-* passés en castillan : on dit ainsi *algodón,* coton et *el algodón,* le coton, *almacén,* magasin et *el almacén,* le magasin, etc.


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créé par les atterrissements du fleuve) ou Manyal (lit. lieu de la crue ou du bord du Nil, et de manière dérivée, nilomètre). Lorsque le second terme est non arabe, on parle de toponyme mixte. Les ethnonymes pouvaient être isolés (ex. Fazāra **121**), adopter la forme d'un pluriel quinqualitère (ex. al-Masāʿda **39**, de Masʿūd) ou l'expression « Fils de », Banī X ou, plus rarement, Awlād X. Désignant probablement un groupe tribal, ils pouvaient donner leur nom à un territoire sans agglomération pérenne, lorsque le groupe éponyme vivait sous la tente ou dans des habitats précaires : encore au tout début du XX^e^ siècle, les cartes du Survey révèlent en moyenne Égypte quelques unités administratives dénuées d'agglomération[69], et nous avons toute raison de penser qu'il en allait de même quatre ou cinq siècles plus tôt. Ainsi le village actuel d'al-Balāʿzatayn, ethnonyme typique et ici passé au duel, se fait l'écho de deux *kafr*-s signalés dans l'index des RI : al-Balāʿiza **15**, dépendance d'Išnī **155** wa-Ṭambadī **247**, avec une superficie de 844 f. au cadastre de 1528, et une dépendance d'al-Qāyāt **50** appelée Qabālat al-Balāʿiza, « le quartier des Balāʿiza » dans le *tarbīʿ*. Enfin, on signale aussi classiquement des phénomènes de pseudo-arabisation par captation toponymique, notamment en Abū, Bū ou Banī : ainsi Manfasawayh **182** est-elle devenue dès le XV^e^ siècle Banī Suwayf[70] ; ou des étymologies fantaisistes[71]. Il s'agit d'exceptions dans la province qui nous occupe ici. Quant aux toponymes « non arabes », ils renvoient quelquefois au grec, le plus souvent au copte — l'usage des noms grecs étant tombé à l'époque abbasside, avec la langue elle-même — et, à travers le copte, à l'égyptien ancien. La résistance des toponymes coptes peut s'expliquer en partie par le fait que pendant une très longue période ils ont été « parlants », car ils avaient un sens en égyptien ancien : Marie Drew-Bear a ainsi remarqué que la plupart de ceux du nome Hermopolite (correspondant plus tard, *grosso modo,* à la province d'al-Ašmūnayn) « ont une étymologie égyptienne, en rapport avec un type de sol ou de végétation, avec un culte, ou encore avec une

[69] Je remercie Ghislaine Alleaume qui a la première attiré mon attention sur ces entités administratives sans village.

[70] Voir notamment Ramzī, II, 3, p. 155–157. Ibn al-Ǧīʿān ne la connaît encore que sous le nom ancien de Manfasawayh. Ramzī cite al-Saḫāwī (1427–1497), *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ,* qui évoque déjà le nouveau nom. À l'inverse, j'ai du mal à croire que le toponyme Manqarīš **79**, village toujours connu sous ce nom, soit une déformation vernaculaire d'un ancien Banī Qurayš, nom prestigieux s'il en est : cette hypothèse est défendue par Ramzī, II, 3, 168 ; le village est appelé Banī Qurayš et Banī Maqraš dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528, qui le signale comme *kafr* de Banī Suwayf, puis Manqarīš depuis au moins un document de 1071/1660–1661.

[71] Exemples *in* Sophia Björnesjö, « Toponymie et processus identitaire dans l'Égypte arabe » *in* Christian Décobert, éd., *Valeur et distance. Identités et sociétés en Égypte,* L'atelier méditerranéen (Paris, 2000), p. 168.


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forme d'activité agricole »[72]. À partir des Xe-XIe siècles au contraire, avec l'arabisation des campagnes, ces toponymes désormais dénués de sens littéral sont devenus des signes d'antiquité, rejoignant les vestiges ruinés d'un passé païen ou chrétien qui abondaient dans le paysage.

Comme nous allons le voir, l'examen de la toponymie de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya est riche d'enseignements. Distinguons les unités administratives telles qu'elles figurent dans Ibn Duqmāq et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, des *kufūr* qui apparaissent dans les index des RI et RǦ puis dans le corps des notices de ces registres. Comme ailleurs, on trouve parmi les *nāḥiya*-s un certain nombre de toponymes composés en Kawm (7), Dayr (5, dont deux réunis : Dayray Ṭirfa wa-Barhīǧ), Ǧazīra (5, dont trois n'apparaissent que chez Ibn Duqmāq, avec des superficies limitées), Manyal (5), Safṭ (4)[73], Manšiyya (3), ʿAṭf (2), Birka (2), Kafr (2), Sāqiya (1) : en tout 36 toponymes sur 182, soit 20 %, une proportion limitée si nous la comparons à d'autres provinces. C'est au contraire la quantité de toponymes non arabes, remontant donc au moins au premier millénaire ap. J.-C., qui frappe, comme les noms commençant par Ba- ou Bi- (à l'exception de Birka et Banī) (23, dont al-Bahnasā), Da-/Di-/Du- (sauf Dayr) (13), Ma-/Mi- (9, dont Manfasawayh arabisée en Banī Suwayf), Ta-/Ṭa-/Ti-/Ṭu- (11). Ces quatre lettres correspondent aux formes masculine (p-), féminine (t-) et plurielle (m-/n-) de l'article défini copte[74]. L'abondance de la toponymie ancienne souligne une des spécificités de la province, à savoir la pérennité millénaire d'une grande partie de son habitat. Depuis les travaux pionniers d'Aristide Calderini, les papyrologues ont cherché à retrouver dans cette toponymie ancienne les noms d'agglomérations mentionnés par les papyrus grecs dans les nomes Oxyrhynchite et Hermopolite[75]. Paola Pruneti en a ainsi identifié vingt, sans compter le chef-lieu, pour le nome Oxyrhynchite[76]. Le constat est encore plus net pour les *nāḥiya*-s dotées de *kufūr* dans

[72] Marie Drew-Bear, « À propos des toponymes du nome hermopolite », *Actes du XVe congrès international de papyrologie,* 4e partie, *Papyrologie documentaire,* Papyrologica Bruxellensia, vol. 19 (Bruxelles, 1979), p. 256–257.

[73] Safṭ, prononcé et écrit à l'époque contemporaine Ṣafṭ, vient du copte *Sobt,* « mur, muraille » : J. Yoyotte, « Études géographiques », *Revue d'égyptologie* 15, 1963, p. 87–119, cité par Björnesjö, « Quelques réflexions », p. 22 et note 10.

[74] Je remercie Anne Boud'hors pour ses éclairages sur ces questions grammaticales et toponymiques.

[75] Aristide Calderini, « Riserche topografiche sopra il nomo Ossirinchite », *Aegyptus* 6, 1925, p. 79–92 ; Marie Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite. Toponymes et sites,* American Studies in Papyrology, vol. 21 (Missoula, Montana, 1979) ; Pruneti, *I Centri abitati*.

[76] Pruneti, *I Centri abitati,* carte h.-t. ; Farouk Gomaà, Renate Müller-Wollermann & Wolfgang Schenkel, *Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ und dem Gabal Abū Ṣīr. Beiträge zur historischen Topographie der pharaonischen Zeit,* Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients. Reihe B (Geisteswissenschaften), vol. 69 (Wiesbaden, 1991), p. 79–103. Les identifications reposent sur


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les diverses sources que nous utilisons ici : toutes sans exception sont d'origine non arabe[77] ; et toutes existent encore de nos jours.

La liste des 164 *kufūr,* soit 177 agglomérations, qui peut être établie à partir de l'index des RI et RĞ, donc de la liste de 1486, offre un tableau tout différent. La lecture d'une bonne vingtaine de ces noms me paraît douteuse. Pour les autres, 52 — soit environ un tiers — sont assurément non arabes : on en trouve en particulier 13 commençant par Ba-/Bi- (ex. al-Balğamūn, Bisfā), 8 par Da-/Di- (ex. Diqnāš, Dināza), 7 par Ma-/Mi- (ex. Mayyāna, Manhalīt), 5 par Ṭ- (ex. Ṭalā, Ṭansā). Parmi les autres, on trouve plusieurs toponymes typiquement arabes composés d'un seul mot, comme al-Duwayr (« Le petit couvent »), al-Ḥammām, al-Kunayyisa (lit. « La petite église », 3 occurrences), al-Masğid (« L'oratoire »), al-Qalʿa (« La citadelle »), al-Ṣufūf (« Les rangées »), al-Zirība (« L'enclos »). Plusieurs autres sont des pluriels quinqualitères pouvant faire penser à un nom tribal, comme al-Masāʿda, pluriel de Masʿūd, ou al-Zamāzma, pluriel de Zamzam. La majorité des toponymes « arabes » sont composés : en Kawm (17, dont trois Kawm al-Raml « Le monticule de sable »), Minyat (6), Manyal (5) et son pluriel Manāyil (1), Ğazīrat (4), ʿAṭf (3), Manšiyyat (2), Minšāt (2), Tall (1, même sens que *kawm*), Kafr (1 seulement), Sāqiyat (1) : en tout, 43 toponymes manifestement descriptifs. Les autres toponymes composés sont ethniques ou pseudo-ethniques, en Banī (16), Abū (7), Bū (1) ; plusieurs d'entre eux suivent des termes topographiques, comme Kawm Abū Ḫallād. Au total, ces *kufūr* apparaissent souvent comme les témoins de l'arabisation progressive de ce que nous pouvons appeler la toponymie secondaire, plus récente et en général plus mouvante que les points d'ancrage que représentaient les chefs-lieux.

### 3.2. Disparition des *kufūr* et effondrement démographique

Sur les 164 *kufūr* mentionnés dans les index des RI à partir de la liste de 1486, seuls 74 se retrouvent dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528, qui fait par ailleurs apparaître 14 autres *kufūr* non mentionnés jusque-là. Entre la date inconnue des sources auxquelles a puisé la liste reprise en 1486, et le cadastre de 1528, se sont produits deux mouvements majeurs : la disparition de 57 % des agglomérations secondaires (101 sur 177), et un renouvellement limité, mais non négligeable.

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les rapprochements phonétiques (ex. Burṭubāṭ/Artapatou) et sur les listes de villages, qui permettent de supposer des relations de voisinage ; ces dernières ont été synthétisées sous forme de graphiques par Julian Krüger, *Oxyrhynchos in der Kaiserzeit. Studien zur Topographie und Literaturrezeption,* Europäische Hochschulschriften III. Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, vol. 441 (Frankfurt am Main, Berne, New York, Paris, 1990), p. 51–53.

[77] Parmi elles, Abū Ğirğā **4**, Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdis **6** et al-Kufūr al-Ṣūliyya **36** sont, de même que Banī Suwayf, des captations toponymiques.


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L'hécatombe touche autant les *kufūr* aux noms anciens que ceux à nom arabe : sur les 52 agglomérations de la première catégorie, 23 seulement se retrouvent mentionnées soit comme dépendance, soit comme entité indépendante, dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528. Plusieurs, il est vrai, réapparaîtront à l'époque contemporaine, tels Minhirū **199**, *kafr* de Qāy **211**, ou al-Bahsamūn **14**, *kafr* de la même *nāḥiya* ; et parmi les *kufūr* mentionnés pour la première fois en 1528, un seul porte un nom incontestablement ancien : Sarabū **227**, *kafr* de Sumusṭā **239**. Il ne s'agit cependant que de nuances dans un tableau général très sombre. Le tissu des agglomérations secondaires, qu'elles portent ou non des noms anciens, a été lacéré au cours de l'époque mamelouke. Nous y verrons les effets de la Peste noire de 1347 et de ses retours récurrents durant le siècle et demi qui a suivi[78].

L'épidémie s'est-elle fait sentir avec la même violence sur les *nāḥiya*-s que nous pouvons qualifier de moyennes, celles qui n'étaient dépendantes d'aucune autre et n'avaient pas de *kafr* ? Tout au contraire, pour cette catégorie c'est la continuité qui domine, comme le montre le Tableau 4. Parmi les unités administratives répertoriées par Ibn Duqmāq et/ou Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, seules six ne se retrouvent pas dans les listes des RI de la Bahnasāwiyya : Daḥṭūṭ/Daǧṭūṭ al-Ḥiǧāra **104**, village en *waqf* d'une mosquée fondée par Saladin en 579/1183–1184 [79], non arpenté et sans *ʿibra* ; deux *nāḥiya*-s dont le nom débute par Ǧazīrat X, mentionnées seulement par Ibn Duqmāq, et trois autres en Kawm X, Manyal X et Šarāqī X (est-ce une erreur pour Sawāqī X ?), par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān seul. Aucun de ces six villages n'a pu être localisé par Muḥammad Ramzī. Ces agglomérations tout à fait secondaires présentaient le même faciès que bien des *kufūr* et ont disparu de la même manière.

Par ailleurs, 13 des *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr* font bien l'objet d'une entrée dans l'index des RI, et d'une notice dans le corps même du registre, mais celle-ci n'a pas été complétée : dans quatre cas, les rubriques de la colonne de gauche — relatives au *tarbīʿ* de 1528 — ont été laissées en blanc, dans neuf autres une autre main a apposé ultérieurement la mention *lam tarid bi-l-tarbīʿ li-sanat tārīḫihi* « ne figure pas dans le *tarbīʿ* de la susdite année ». Aux yeux des inspecteurs de 1528 elles avaient bel et bien disparu.

[78] Sur la Peste noire en Égypte, Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977), notamment p. 57, 60–61, et chap. V « The Demographic Effects of Plague in Egypt and Syria », p. 143–235, en particulier les p. 154–169 sur la dépopulation rurale. Stuart J. Borsch, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study* (Austin, 2005), propose une estimation des effets macro-économiques de la peste, fondée principalement sur les données d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān et les indications de prix de grains relevées chez les chroniqueurs.

[79] Cette précision figure dans RǦ 4632, f. 1 v°, notice du village, qui est orthographié Daǧṭūṭ avec le point sous le *ǧīm*. La notice enregistre un *ḥukm ifrāǧ* du 1er šawwāl 971 / 13 mai 1564 qui confirme le *waqf*.


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Tableau 4 : *Nāḥiya*-s mentionnées par Ibn Duqmāq et/ou Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, absentes du *tarbīʿ* ou non cadastrées en 1528.

| **Nom de la *nāḥiya* dans l'index des RI** | **Superficie chez Ibn Duqmāq** | **Superficie chez Ibn al-Ǧīʿān** |
|---|---|---|
| *Nāḥiya-s absentes des RI* | | |
| Dağṭūṭ al-Ḥiğāra | | – |
| Ǧazīrat Kufūr al-Ṣūliyya | 608 | |
| Ǧazīrat al-Ṭayyiba | 263 | |
| Kawm al-Mawāris | | – |
| Manyal Banī ʿAbbās | 876 | |
| Šarāqī al-Aškʿārī | | – |
| *Nāḥiya*-s *présentes dans les RI, mais notice non complétée* | | |
| Bulṭiyya | | 323 |
| al-Ḥiṣaṣ al-Faḍliyya | | 228 |
| al-Murīğ *min kufūr* Dayrūṭ | | 158 |
| al-Qays wa-Banī Nazār | | 2842 |
| *Nāḥiya*-s *présentes dans les RI, non cadastrées en 1528* | | |
| al-Balğamūn | | 463 |
| Birkat al-Asyād | | 200 |
| Buṭās | | 593 |
| Dayr al-Ǧawʿ | | 50 |
| Dayr al-Ḫādim | | 353 |
| Dayray Ṭirfā wa-Barhīğ | | 376 |
| Ǧazīrat al-Baṣaliyya | | 315 |
| Ǧazīrat al-Kawāšira | | 340 |
| Ǧazīrat Qabālat Sawāqī al-Aškʿārī | | *ʿibra* : 300 dīnār ğayšī |


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Le Tableau 4 fait tout de suite apparaître une anomalie : al-Qays **51** wa-Banī Nazār **77**, vaste *nāḥiya* dans les sources mameloukes. Sans doute a-t-elle été victime d'une omission. Pour le reste, cinq des six *nāḥiya*-s en Ǧazīrat X listées dans l'index des RI figurent dans le tableau 4, de même que trois des quatre *nāḥiya*-s en Dayr ou Dayray X : les hameaux agrégés dans ou autour des ruines (d'un monastère ?), non plus que ceux formés sur de nouvelles terres conquises par les atterrissements du fleuve, n'avaient guère de chance de survie. Le nom de Bulṭiyya **97** a survécu dans un quartier du terroir de Ǧawāda **124**[80] ; al-Balǧamūn **16** est identifiée à Nazlat Iqfahs, nommée ainsi dans le cadastre de 1230/1814–1815 [81] ; les autres villages ont disparu.

L'examen des superficies indiquées par Ibn Duqmāq ou Ibn al-Ǧīʿān est significative : à l'exception de Manyal Banī ʿAbbās, il s'agit de *nāḥiya*-s d'une superficie inférieure ou égale à 600 feddans (env. 360 ha). Ce constat frappant suggère une forte corrélation entre la taille des *nāḥiya*-s ou des *kufūr* et leur capacité de résistance aux aléas du sort.

### 3.3. Superficie des *nāḥiya*-s et des dépendances : les seuils de survie et de viabilité

Nous disposons pour la Bahnasāwiyya de trois ensembles complets ou presque complets de données cadastrales : celles fournies par Ibn Duqmāq, par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān et par le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 (connues à travers les RI et RǦ). Ces données ne peuvent être exploitées sans précaution. Comme je l'ai rappelé plus haut, les chiffres utilisés par Ibn Duqmāq comme par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān sont, sauf exception, ceux du *rawk nāṣirī* de 1315 ; des révisions cadastrales ont d'ailleurs pu avoir lieu dans un nombre limité de cas, pour des entités précises. Or le *rawk* de 1315 avait été entrepris non pour fournir une photographie de l'état des choses, mais pour calculer le potentiel fiscal *(ʿibra)* de chaque *nāḥiya* ; les superficies y ont en conséquence été calculées de manière maximaliste, et parfois en chiffres ronds. L'optique des inspecteurs du *tarbīʿ* en tournée en 1528 était opposée : c'était bien un état précis des lieux qu'ils ont cherché à consigner, destiné à sortir de la situation confuse qu'avait créée la disparition (temporaire) des registres du régime précédent[82]. Le tableau de 1315 est embelli, il donne l'illusion d'un monde plein ; celui de 1528, dans les portions d'Égypte pour lesquelles les informations qui nous sont parvenues sont les plus détaillées, est sombre, c'est celui d'un pays au

[80] Ramzī, I, 168.

[81] Ramzī, II, 3, 191.

[82] Sur la différence d'approche entre les cadastres de 1315 et 1528, Michel, « Villages désertés », p. 209–214.


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début seulement de son redressement après les ravages effroyables de la peste depuis le milieu du XIV^e siècle.

Nous savons par les fragments les mieux conservés du *tarbīʿ* de 1528 que la superficie globale de chaque terroir fut classée selon des catégories éprouvées : *muzdaraʿ* (en culture), *būr* (en friche), *šarāqī* (non arrosé cette année 1527–1528), *mustabḥar* (trop arrosé cette année), *ḫirs* (envahi par une végétation coriace)[83]. Malheureusement, pour la Bahnasāwiyya, les RI ne précisent cette répartition que pour huit *nāḥiya*-s, auxquelles s'ajoutent sept autres dans le RĞ 4632. Ces quelques cas sont cependant significatifs. Ils sont rassemblés dans le Tableau 5.

Le statut de *waqf* n'a pas protégé des villages de taille relativement modeste. Banī Ullims/Manyal Abī Šaʿra **188** était en *waqf* du calife abbasside. Namūy ou Namaway wa-Ğazīrat al-Ḥağar **208**, appelée aussi Maġāġā, nom par lequel elle est aujourd'hui bien connue, a été constituée le 10 šawwāl 917 / 31 décembre 1511 en *waqf* par Ḫāyr Bak min Īnāl al-Kāšif. Les chiffres sont tout aussi impressionnants pour des unités administratives étendues, comme Samalūṭ **223** et ses *kufūr*. Cas extraordinaire, al-Fant **25** : le cadastre mamelouk le créditait de 2 688 f., dont 2 376 (88 %) en *naqā* c'est-à-dire de bonne culture, et 312 f. (12 %) en *ḫirs*. En 1528, la superficie est passée au chiffre énorme de 24 000 f., répartis en 803 f. cultivés (3,3 %), 1 179 f. en *būr* (4,9 %), 14 020 f. en *ḫirs* (58 %) et 8 000 f. en *šarāqī* (33 %). Or, en 1528, le village — qui n'avait pas de dépendance — était entièrement en *waqf* de la Dašīša šarīfa, chargée de l'approvisionnement en grains des Lieux Saints[84]. La constitution du terroir au profit des Lieux Saints avait sans doute pour but de créer une sorte de front pionnier, mais on ne sait où a été prise ou rêvée cette superficie extravagante de 24 000 f. (environ 144 km$^2$). Au reste, même en faisant abstraction des superficies indiquées à al-Fant comme *ḫirs* ou *šarāqī,* la régression de la superficie cultivée par rapport à 1315 est frappante : elle est passée de 2 376 à 803 f. Enfin, le village de Ṭūniyya **254**, 700 f. chez Ibn al-Ğīʿān, relevant vers 1480 du *dīwān mufrad,* est crédité dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 de 1 013 f., mais le registre RI précise qu'il est abandonné *(ḫarāb)* à cette date. De fait, il a disparu depuis : un *ḥawḍ* de Kawm Abū Ḫallād **166** perpétue seul son nom (Ramzī, I, 317). C'est le seul village que les registres signalent comme *ḫarāb,* mais, comme les indications de la situation réelle ne concernent qu'environ une *nāḥiya* sur dix, il est possible que plusieurs autres se soient trouvés dans le même cas.

Dans le Tableau 5, les totaux avec et sans le cas aberrant d'al-Fant ne sont donnés que pour mémoire, puisque cet échantillon de quinze villages est trop limité pour que nous puissions le tenir pour représentatif. Néanmoins, l'impression d'ensemble qui s'en dégage est claire. Que les terroirs aient été étendus ou

[83] Sur les catégories fiscales de terres, en dernier lieu Idem, *L'Égypte des villages,* p. 178–182.

[84] D'après RĞ 4618, f. 188 r^o. Ibn al-Ğīʿān signale, vers 1475–1478, que la *nāḥiya* était en *rizqa* [sous-entendu, *ğayšiyya*] du fils du sultan Lāğīn al-Ẓāhirī et de ses mamelouks.


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Tableau 5 : *Nāḥiya*-s avec superficies par catégorie de terres, en feddans, dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528.

| *Nāḥiya* | Source | Sup. totale | *Muzdaraʿ* | % de la sup. totale | *Šarāqī* | % de la sup. totale | *Būr* | % de la sup. totale | *Ḫirs* | % de la sup. totale |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdis | RI 4618 f. 32 v° | 5478 | 968 | 17,7 | | | 4509 | 82,3 | | |
| Iṭwāb | RI 4618 f. 89 v° | 1335 | 236 | 17,7 | | | 1098 | 82,2 | | |
| Ifwā (chef-lieu) | RI 4618 f. 91 r° | 1619 | 580 | 35,8 | | | 305 | 18,8 | 698 | 43,1 |
| al-Fant | RI 4618 f. 188 r° | 24000 | 803 | 3,3 | 8000 | 33,3 | 1179 | 4,9 | 14020 | 58,4 |
| Ihnāsya al-Ḫaḍrā | RI 4624 f. 43 r° | 2724 | 1037* | 38,1 | 143 | 5,2 | 1159 | 42,5 | 378 | 13,9 |
| Bilhāsa | RI 4624 f. 133 r° | 675 | 45 | 6,7 | 203** | 30,1 | | | 400 | 59,3 |
| Samalūṭ et *kufūr* | RI 4828 f. 91 r° | 2525 | 448 | 17,7 | 270 | 10,7 | 800 | 31,7 | 1008 | 39,9 |
| Ṭūniyya | RI 4828 f. 153 v° | 1013 | Village ruiné *(ḫarāb)* à la date du cadastre | | | | | | | |
| Manšiyyat Banī Ġarwāš | RI 4828 f. 233 v° RĞ 4632 f. 187 r° | 210 | 20 | 9,5 | | | | | 190 | 90,5 |
| Manyal Banī Ḥabīb | RĞ 4632 205 r° | 446 | 40 | 9,9 | 100 | 22,4 | 106 | 23,8 | 200 | 44,8 |
| Namūy = Maġāġā | RĞ 4632 f. 217 r° | 830 | 180 | 21,7 | 400 | 48,2 | | | 220 | 26,5 |
| Maʿṣarat Samalūṭ | RĞ 4632 f. 232 r° | 350 | 100 | 28,6 | 100 | 28,6 | 50 | 14,3 | 100 | 28,6 |
| Banī Wallims = Manyal Abī Šaʿra | RĞ 4632 f. 204 v°, 232 v° | 601 | 114 | 19,0 | 487 | 81,0 | | | | |
| al-Qaḍāfa ? | RĞ 4632 f. 233 r° | 58 | 45 | 77,6 | | | 13 | 22,4 | | |
| Malqat Idrāsya | RĞ 4632 f. 234 v° | 1000 | 404 | 40,4 | | | 596 | 59,6 | | |
| Total | | 42864 | 5020 | | 9703 | | 9815 | | 17214 | |
| Total sans al-Fant | | 18864 | 4217 | 22,4 | 1703 | 9,0 | 8636 | 45,8 | 3194 | 16,9 |

* S'y ajoutent 5 feddans en *nabārī* (cultures d'été).
** *Sic* ; on attend une superficie de 230 f.

étroits, aient dépendu d'un *waqf* ou du Divan, se soient trouvés en amont ou en aval, proches du Nil, du Baḥr Yūsuf ou entre les deux, le cadastre de 1528 a partout enregistré un spectacle de désolation. À la crue insuffisante de 1527, qu'enregistrent les superficies en *šarāqī,* s'ajoutent des surfaces très étendues, majoritaires dans chaque cas, de friches plus anciennes *(būr, ḫirs).* Il faut garder ces chiffres en tête pour comprendre que la province entière était beaucoup moins peuplée que ce que semblent indiquer les chiffres de superficie de 1528. Qu'elle ait perdu la moitié ou les deux tiers de sa population par rapport à l'optimum démographique supposé des premières décennies du XIV^e^ siècle paraît une hypothèse vraisemblable. Dès lors c'est, à l'inverse, la résistance du tissu villageois à cet effondrement démographique qui étonne, et dont il importe de préciser les contours.

Les chiffres de superficie fournis par Ibn al-Ǧīʿān peuvent être considérés comme des valeurs optimales plutôt que réelles en 1315, trois décennies avant la Peste noire. Ils sont connus pour 144 unités administratives de ce qui était alors la Bahnasāwiyya[85]. Le total est de 340 349 f., ce qui donne une moyenne de 2 363 f. par *nāḥiya,* environ 1 420 ha. En ajoutant de manière arbitraire 10 % de surface non cultivée (bâti, chemins, étangs, digues, etc.)[86], la superficie moyenne d'un terroir communal aurait été de 1 560 ha, l'équivalent d'un cercle de 2,2 km de rayon.

Sur ces 144 chefs-lieux, 18 portent un nom double[87], et deux un nom triple : cela fait 166 agglomérations. De plus, sur les 144 chefs-lieux, 32 ont un ou plusieurs *kafr*-s : dans la liste de 1486 qu'a exploitée l'index des RI, ces 32 *nāḥiya*-s comptent 135 *kufūr,* correspondant (en prenant en compte les noms doubles) à 148 agglomérations ; encore le chiffre devait-il être un peu supérieur, car nous

[85] J'ai utilisé pour ce calcul les chiffres tels qu'ils figurent dans Halm, *Ägypten,* à partir de l'édition imprimée de la *Tuḥfa saniyya,* à trois exceptions près. (1) Daḥṭūṭ/Daǧṭūṭ al-Ḥaraǧa **103** : Ibn al-Ǧīʿān donne 1 280 f., Ibn Duqmāq 2 686 f., la colonne de droite du RI (recopiant les registres circassiens) 2 682 f. : le chiffre d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān me semble une simple erreur de lecture des chiffres *siyāq*. (2) Pour Dandīl **107**, autre erreur manifeste : l'édition imprimée d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān donne 686 f. (chiffre qui a surpris Halm), mais le manuscrit de la Bodleian 4 286 f., de même qu'Ibn Duqmāq et le RI. (3) Enfin, pour Saylā **231** et ses *kufūr,* les chiffres divergent franchement : 4 576 f. chez Ibn Duqmāq, 1 870 f. dans la version imprimée d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān mais 4 260 f. dans le manuscrit de la Bodleian, 4 260 f. en RǦ 4632, f. 98 r°, et 4 066 f. en RI 4828, f. 86 r°. L'incertitude entre 4 260 et 4 066 provient de confusions de lecture des chiffres *siyāq*. J'ai retenu le chiffre de 4 260 f.

[86] Le recensement agricole de 1929 donne les chiffres suivants pour la province de Beni Soueif : 227 382 f. de terres cultivées, 28 190 f. de terres incultes (bâtiments, voirie, irrigation, friches, étangs, etc.) soit l'équivalent de 12 % de la superficie cultivée. On peut supposer sans risque que la superficie du bâti, de la voirie et des ouvrages d'irrigation était en 1929 supérieure à celle de l'époque pré-moderne.

[87] J'en exclus Šūša wa-Kafr Dunqām, erreur manifeste de Halm : les RI, comme Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, permettent de rectifier et de lire Šūša *kafr* Dunqām.


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Tableau 6 : Superficie moyenne des *nāḥiya*-s d'après le *rawk* de 1315.

| | % de la superficie totale | Superficie moyenne par *nāḥiya* | Superficie moyenne par agglomération |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr* | 57,8 | 1755 | 1501 |
| *Nāḥiya*-s avec *kafr*-s | 42,2 | 4491 | 785 |

ne disposons pas du nom des dépendances de l'une de ces *nāḥiya*-s, Šulqām. C'est donc un total minimal de 314 agglomérations que portait la province aux beaux jours de l'époque mamelouke, soit une superficie moyenne de 1 084 f. par agglomération[88]. On aimerait aller plus loin, mais nous ne disposons pas des superficies de ces *kufūr* connus seulement par la liste copiée en 1486. Il est aisé en revanche de distinguer les *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr,* au nombre de 112 (et 131 agglomérations), de celles avec *kafr* (Tableau 6).

La superficie moyenne pour les *nāḥiya*-s avec *kafr*-s, qui comptent 35 agglomérations de chef-lieu et 148 agglomérations dépendantes, masque une forte différence entre chefs-lieux et dépendances. Si nous posons en hypothèse pour chacune des 32 *nāḥiya*-s avec *kafr*-s une superficie pour le chef-lieu égale à celle des *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr,* soit 1 755 f., ce qui paraît intuitivement un minimum, les 143 711 f. de ces *nāḥiya*-s se décomposeraient en 56 610 f. pour les chefs-lieux et 87 551 pour les dépendances ; la superficie moyenne de ces dernières passerait à 648 f. par *kafr* et 592 f. par agglomération. Le chiffre réel était vraisemblablement inférieur.

Nous sommes bien là aux confins de la viabilité d'un village à la fin du Moyen Âge. Nous avons vu plus haut (Tableau 4) que, parmi les 19 *nāḥiya*-s disparues entre les recensions médiévales et 1528, nous connaissons la superficie de 15 d'entre elles ; l'une, al-Qays, ne figure probablement là qu'à la suite d'une omission ; toutes les autres ont une superficie inférieure ou égale à 600 f., à l'exception de Manyal Banī ʿAbbās **189** (876 f.), qui, de *nāḥiya* indépendante chez Ibn

[88] Il est intéressant de noter que cette superficie, qui équivaut à 650 ha cultivés, est légèrement supérieure à celle qui peut être calculée pour le nome Oxyrhynchite au IVe siècle. On sait en effet (par SB XIV 12208, première moitié du IVe siècle, édité par H.C. Youtie, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 32, 1978, p. 237–240) que la terre arable imposable dans le nome était alors de 202 534 aroures, soit 560 km$^2$. Le nome comportait à la fin du IIIe siècle environ 120 villages *(kômai)* et hameaux ou écarts *(epoikia),* soit une superficie moyenne de 560 ha par agglomération, auxquels il faut ajouter les vergers et jardins, peut-être plus étendus à l'époque romaine qu'à l'époque pré-moderne. Voir Dominic Rathbone, « Villages, Land and Population in Graeco-Roman Egypt », *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society,* 36, 1990, p. 125 ; Jane Rowlandson, *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt: The Social Relations of Agriculture in the Oxyrhynchite Nome,* Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford, 1996), p. 8, 17.


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Duqmāq, est devenue *kafr* d'Abū Ǧirǧā **4** dans l'index des RI (et pour cette raison, a disparu chez Ibn al-Ǧīʿān). Rappelons-nous aussi que sur les 164 *kufūr* (177 agglomérations) énumérés dans l'index des RI, seuls 74 se retrouvent dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 : plus de la moitié ont disparu, ce qui correspond bien à ce seuil autour de 600 f., au-dessous duquel devait se situer une bonne moitié des agglomérations dépendantes.

À quoi correspondaient ces six cents feddans ? 360 ha environ, une superficie (augmentée de 10 %) de 400 ha, soit un cercle de 1,13 km de rayon : le maillage des agglomérations aurait été plus serré dans les unités administratives avec *kufūr* que dans les zones où elles en étaient dépourvues. On aimerait pouvoir en déduire le chiffre de la population. Deux comparaisons sont possibles : avec l'époque du premier recensement de la population égyptienne, en 1848 [89], et avec l'époque romaine durant laquelle avaient lieu des recensements réguliers. Pour 1260/1844, Helen Rivlin a estimé l'ensemble des terres cultivées d'Égypte à 3,9 millions de feddans (de 0,42 ha)[90], soit environ 1 640 000 ha. Le recensement de 1848 a fourni un chiffre proche de 4,5 millions d'habitants, dont 15 % au maximum peuvent être considérés comme citadins ; cela fait une moyenne de 2,3 habitants des campagnes par ha, ou 1,4 par feddan de 0,6 ha (valeur du feddan aux époques mamelouke et ottomane)[91]. Cette moyenne incluait, bien entendu, des différences sensibles d'une province et d'une région à l'autre. Pour l'époque romaine, nous ne disposons pas de recensements généraux, mais les papyrus apportent quelques coups de projecteur. Le gros village de Theadelphia dans le Fayyūm avait vers 150 ap. J.-C. une superficie cultivée de l'ordre de 6 800 aroures, soit 1 874 ha, et entre 680 et 750 hommes adultes libres payaient la capitation[92], ce qui permet de supposer une population totale de 2 100 à 2 325

[89] Les matrices du recensement de 1848 sont conservées à Dār al-Waṯāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, Le Caire. Le soin avec lequel elles ont été constituées souligne la grande qualité de ce recensement. Il a été présenté en détail par Ghislaine Alleaume & Philippe Fargues, « La naissance d'une statistique d'État. Le recensement de 1848 en Égypte », *Histoire et mesure* 13, 1/2, 1998, p. 149–154.

[90] Helen Ann B. Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt* (Cambridge, MA, 1961), tableau 11, Annexe I, p. 256–257 ; Annexe 2, p. 268–270.

[91] Cette moyenne a rapidement crû ensuite. Le recensement agricole de 1929, que l'on peut tenir pour une référence sûre, fait état de 5,6 millions de feddans (de 0,42 ha) effectivement cultivés : Ministry of Agriculture, *Agricultural Census of Egypt, 1929* (Bûlâq, 1934), tableau récapitulatif p. 6–7. La population totale du pays était au recensement de 1927 de 14,2 millions d'habitants, dont 1,8 million dans les quatre gouvernorats urbains (Le Caire, Alexandrie, Port-Saïd, Suez), soit 12,4 millions de population « rurale » et une moyenne de 2,2 hab/feddan (de 0,42 ha) cultivé, ou 5,3 hab/ha cultivé.

[92] M. Sharp, « The Village of Theadelphia in the Fayyum », *in* Alan K. Bowman & Eugene Rogan éd., *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times,* Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 96 (Oxford, New York, 1999), p. 161 et note 10, p. 164 et note 22. L'aroure faisait 2 756 m$^2$.


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hab. et une moyenne de 1,12 à 1,24 hab/ha cultivé. Dominic Rathbone a calculé la densité de deux autres villages du Fayyūm à la même période à 0,92 hab/ha (Kerkeosiris, 118 av. J.-C.), 1,20 à Philadelphia (v. 150 ap.), 1,0 à Karanis (v. 150 ap.)[93]. Ces résultats homogènes et, de ce fait, vraisemblables, se situent dans une fourchette de 0,9 à 1,25 hab/ha cultivé, soit 0,54 à 0,75 hab par feddan (de 0,6 ha). Ce sont des chiffres étonnamment bas par rapport aux données de 1848.

On peut penser — mais cela reste conjectural — qu'au début du XIV^e^ siècle la densité de population dans la Bahnasāwiyya était plus proche de celle du Fayyūm au Haut-Empire que de l'Égypte au milieu au XIX^e^ siècle[94] ; la population d'un village de 360 ha cultivés se situait entre 430 et 830 hab. C'est beaucoup : quelle autre population rurale, dans l'ancien monde, pouvait se targuer d'une telle concentration ? Plus remarquable encore est l'absence dans les données d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, à une exception près, de village d'une superficie inférieure à 150 feddans (soit 90 ha), ce qui correspond d'après les chiffres du Fayyūm gréco-romain à une population d'une centaine d'habitants. Il y avait là un seuil minimal, de l'ordre d'une vingtaine ou une trentaine de foyers, en deçà duquel la création d'une nouvelle agglomération paraissait déraisonnable. La dimension essentiellement collective des agglomérations se trouvait posée d'emblée : leur destin n'était semble-t-il pas de croître à partir d'un noyau obscur, mais de s'imposer dès leur commencement comme des collectivités capables de prendre en charge les obligations qui s'imposaient à elles. Et les travaux collectifs ne manquaient pas : défrichement des terres redevenues incultes, drainage, entretien des digues pendant et après la crue, surveillance des champs et des aires à battre. Sans doute fallait-il aussi pouvoir se protéger des maraudeurs, et des Bédouins toujours redoutés. Lorsqu'à la suite de la Peste noire et de ses retours la population diminua massivement, la surface cultivée se réduisit de manière drastique. Le seuil apparent des 600 feddans dont nous avons parlé plus haut ne signifiait plus que 150 à 300 feddans effectivement mis en culture : le seuil minimal fut franchi par un nombre alarmant d'agglomérations. Elles ont disparu. Et l'on peut imaginer que les foyers subsistants, s'estimant trop peu nombreux, ont préféré se replier dans un autre village plus sûr.

[93] Rathbone, « Villages, Land and Population », p. 108. Les chiffres, et leur comparaison avec ceux du XIX^e^ siècle, sont de nouveau discutés par Andrew Monson, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans: Political and Economic Change in Egypt* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 36–49.

[94] Monson, *ibid.,* p. 43–49, discutant les chiffres du XIX^e^ siècle, insiste à juste titre sur les variations régionales de densité au XIX^e^ siècle, qui allaient du simple au double (cf. tableau 2.3. p. 43). Au recensement de 1897 le Fayyūm et la province de Beni Soueif figuraient parmi les régions de plus faible densité du pays. Mais cette constatation ne peut être sans examen reportée aux époques précédentes.


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Tableau 7 : Anciens *kufūr* à l'époque mamelouke, devenus indépendants en 1528.

| | **Ancien *kafr* de :** | **Superficie d'après le *tarbīʿ* de 1528** |
|---|---|---|
| Kawm Adrīğa | Adrīğa | 1119 |
| al-Barāqī wa-Ḏanab al-Timsāḥ | Iqfahs | 716 |
| Bisfā | Iqfahs | 2794 |
| Minyat Banī Ġarwāš | al-Fant | 210 |
| Minyat al-Ḍabāʿna | Barūṭ | 484 |
| al-Ḥāfir | Dalāṣ | 1034 |
| ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ | Sumusṭā | 275 |
| Maʿṣarat Qāy | Qāy | 1346 |
| Total | | 7978 |

Et de fait, le tissu des *kufūr* tel qu'il s'est reconstitué à l'issue de ce siècle et demi calamiteux offre un tableau sensiblement différent de celui que laissait deviner la liste de 1486, c'est-à-dire en fait, la situation avant la Peste noire ou dans les premiers temps de celle-ci. Parmi les 80 *kufūr* relevés dans le cadastre de 1528 [95], les RI et RĞ donnent la superficie de 61 d'entre eux. Elle s'échelonne de 95 à 1 971 f., avec une moyenne de 753 f. et une superficie totale de 45 936 f. Vingt-neuf de ces *kufūr* ont moins de 600 f., dont un seul a moins de 200 f. ; quinze de 600 à 1 000 f., douze de 1 000 à 1 500 f., et cinq de 1 500 à 2 000 f. La majorité de ces *kufūr* (42 sur 61) sont déjà mentionnés dans l'index des RI, et la majorité existe toujours. Ajoutons à ces 61 *kufūr,* huit autres qui figurent encore dans le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 mais ne sont plus mentionnés comme *kafr* d'une autre unité (Tableau 7).

Dans cet ensemble hétéroclite la présence de Manšiyyat Banī Ġarwāš **186**, comme celle de ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ **60**, sont peut-être des erreurs par omission. Au total, en 1528, sur 69 *kufūr* ou ex- *kufūr,* 37 ont plus de 600 f., et 21 plus de 1 000 f. Leur taille

[95] Banī ʿAffān **68** apparaît à deux reprises dans les RI, avec les mêmes indications cadastrales : comme *nāḥiya,* et en même temps *kafr* d'Ihnāsya al-Ḥaḍrā **148** (RI 4624, f. 177 v°), et comme *nāḥiya,* et en même temps *kafr* de Dimūšiyya **118** (*ibid.,* f. 175 v°). Je ne l'ai comptée qu'une fois dans ces statistiques de superficie. Par ailleurs, j'en ai exclu les huit villages qui figurent comme *kafr* dans les index, mais que le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 ne mentionne plus comme *kafr* d'une autre *nāḥiya* : nous les étudierons dans un instant (Tableau 7).


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est comparable à celle du tout venant des terroirs de *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr*. La tendance a été de manière claire à un regroupement du peuplement ; de sorte que le facteur qui décelait désormais si un village devait rester dans la dépendance d'un autre ou s'en affranchir, n'était pas ou plus lié de manière essentielle à sa taille.

Cette tendance est confirmée par les superficies des chefs-lieux dotés de *kafr*-s, telles qu'elles apparaissent dans les RI et RĞ selon le *tarbīʿ* de 1528 (voir Annexe). En dépit de l'accroissement de la province elle-même, les unités à *kafr*-s ne sont plus que 31. Parmi celles-ci, les RI et RĞ nous donnent la superficie de 17 chefs-lieux, dont un double, pour lequel nous disposons aussi de la superficie de chacune des deux agglomérations : Išnī **155** (1 651 f.) et Ṭambadī **247** (2 939 f.). Le total pour ces 17 chefs-lieux est de 40 964 f., la moyenne de 2 276 f. par agglomération, avec des valeurs extrêmes de 701 f. (Manfasawayh **182** = Banī Suwayf) et 3 887 f. (Irğannūs **153**). Il y avait des chefs-lieux dont la superficie des terres était inférieure à celle de leur *kafr* ou d'un de leurs *kufūr,* ainsi Manšiyyat Qāy **187** (907 f.), chef-lieu, à comparer avec Šarāhī **229** (1 127 f.) son *kafr,* ou Sayla **231** (995 f.) avec son *kafr* Kawm Ḥilwa **175** (1 028 f.). Si en 1528 on trouvait encore des unités administratives géantes[96], comme en avait la province à l'époque mamelouke, il ne semble pas qu'il y ait eu de chefs-lieux géants : villages et dépendances semblent avoir tendu vers une taille raisonnable comprise entre 800 et 3 000 feddans. Cela peut expliquer pour une large part la pérennité ultérieure du réseau d'agglomérations tel qu'au début du XVI^e^ siècle il émerge du cataclysme démographique. Mais cela rend plus obscures encore les raisons du regroupement de ces agglomérations, souvent de taille moyenne, en entités administratives plus vastes. Les conditions locales ont certainement joué. C'est ce que nous allons examiner en cartographiant chefs-lieux et dépendances, là où ces dernières peuvent être identifiées.

## 4. Géographie des regroupements d'agglomérations

La carte des *nāḥiya*-s avec *kufūr,* à l'époque mamelouke comme en 1528 (cartes 1a et 1b), montre une dispersion sur l'ensemble du territoire de la province, ainsi qu'à l'est comme à l'ouest de la vallée, et ne permet pas de dégager une tendance générale. Le coup d'œil global sur la province n'est manifestement pas la bonne échelle d'analyse. Il faut nous rapprocher.

L'ensemble de la vallée du Nil est passé à l'irrigation pérenne avec la mise en service du Haut Barrage d'Assouan. Cette conversion était en cours en moyenne

[96] Toutes les unités administratives d'une superficie supérieure à 3 800 f. sont dotées de *kufūr,* à deux exceptions près : Qiman al-ʿArūs **213** (4 048 f.) et Būš Qarā **99** (6 654 f.), toutes deux situées dans la partie aval de la province, sur laquelle nous reviendrons plus bas, 4.4.


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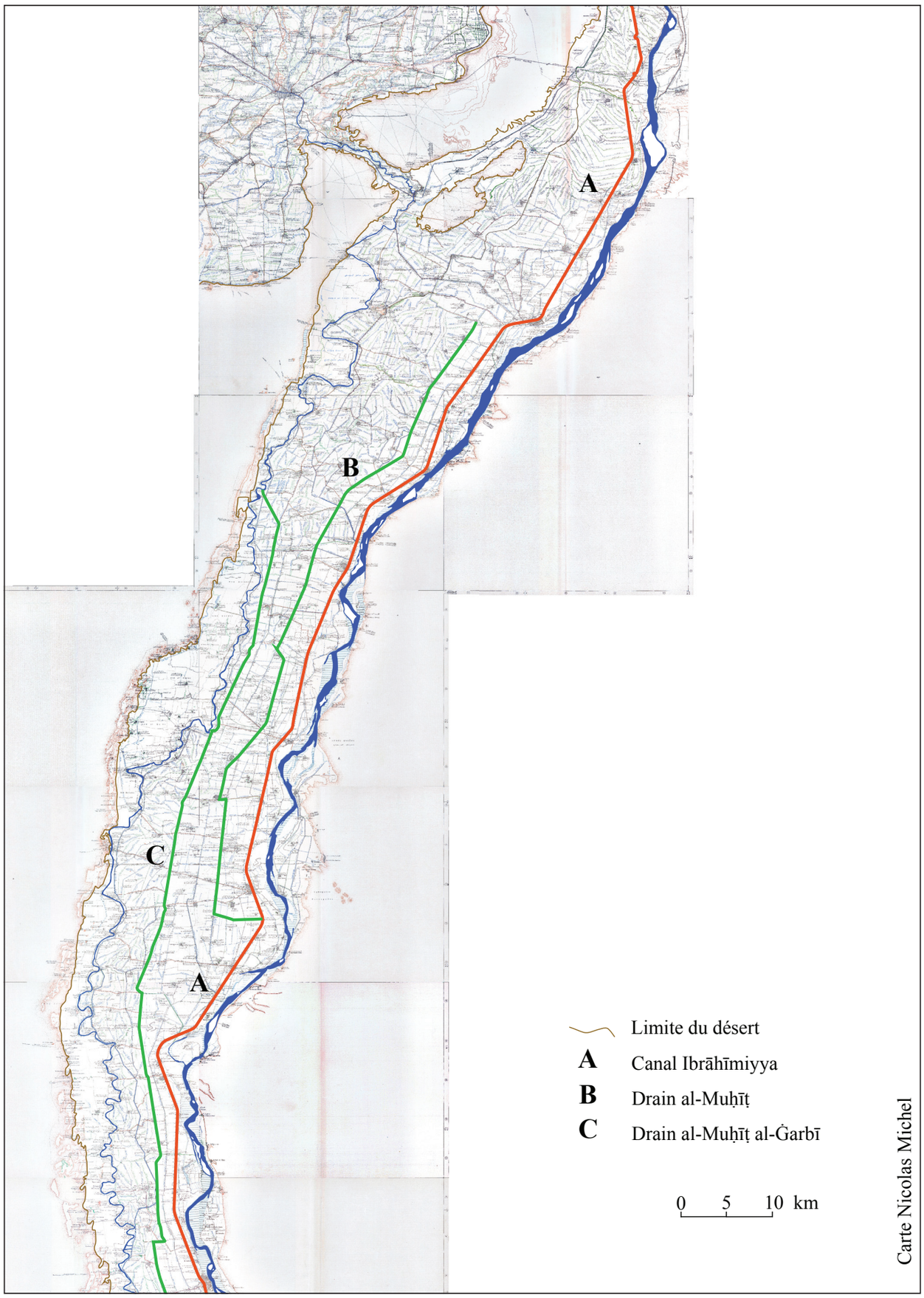


Carte 2. — Hydraulique de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya : principales réalisations de la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle.
Le fond de la carte est constitué par la mosaïque des cartes du Survey au 50.000^e (2^e édition, 1912–1913).


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Égypte depuis le creusement du canal Ibrāhīmiyya en 1873[97]. Lorsque le Survey of Egypt a réalisé les premières cartes topographiques précises de la région, dans les premières années du XX^e^ siècle, l'ancienne province de la Bahnasāwiyya était sillonnée par de puissantes saignées rectilignes : les principales étaient, de l'est vers l'ouest, le canal Ibrāhīmiyya lui-même, le drain d'al-Muḥīṭ et celui d'al-Muḥīṭ al-Ġarbī (carte 2). Les cartes du Survey montrent que les tracés anciens avaient été presque entièrement effacés à l'est du Muḥīṭ et de l'Ibrāhīmiyya, le passage à l'irrigation pérenne entraînant là une géométrisation radicale du réseau hydraulique et du parcellaire. À l'ouest du Muḥīṭ et, dans la partie sud, à l'ouest du Muḥīṭ Ġarbī, la géométrisation était seulement en cours, et les cartes montrent encore bien des tracés sinueux — cours d'eau temporaires, canaux, drains, chemins, digues, — à travers lesquels affleure l'organisation des terroirs à l'époque pré-moderne (carte 3). Tâchons d'en reconstituer ici les grandes lignes.

On sait que la vallée du Nil est affectée par un double pendage : d'amont en aval, et du Nil vers le désert. La province occupait la rive gauche du Nil ; la rive droite, beaucoup plus étroite, relevait de l'Aṭfīḥiyya. Un cours d'eau dérivé du Nil, le Baḥr al-Manhī ou Baḥr Yūsuf, coulait de manière pérenne à l'ouest de la vallée[98] : quasiment contre le désert en amont, il obliquait vers l'intérieur des terres après al-Bahnasā **13** et Sandafā **224**. Plusieurs indications consignées dans les registres du XVI^e^ siècle confirment qu'il avait déjà pris ce cours à l'époque que nous étudions[99]. Il rejoignait de nouveau les abords du désert à al-Ǧafadūn **27**, puis décrivait une courbe sinueuse qui dégageait parfois des terres cultivables en rive gauche, jusqu'à ce qu'il bifurque vers le nord-ouest à l'entrée du Fayyūm. Les premiers relevés systématiques des altitudes dans la vallée ont été effectués pour les cartes du *Survey of Egypt* au 25 000^o^, publiées à partir de 1925. Ces

[97] Sur l'évolution du système hydraulique de cette portion de la moyenne Égypte au cours du XIX^e^ siècle, cartes dans E. Subias, I. Fiz & R. Cuesta, « The Middle Nile Valley: Elements in an Approach to the Structuring of the Landscape from the Greco-Roman Era to the Nineteenth Century », *Quaternary International* 312, 2013, p. 32.

[98] P.D. Martin, « Description hydrographique des provinces de Beny-Soueyf et du Fayoum », *Description de l'Égypte. État moderne,* t. XVI (Paris, 1825), p. 13, observe en 1800 une largeur moyenne de 100 m pour le Baḥr Yūsuf. Voir les remarques de Ghislaine Alleaume, « Les systèmes hydrauliques de l'Égypte pré-moderne. Essai d'histoire du paysage » *in* Christian Décobert éd., *Itinéraires d'Égypte. Mélanges offerts au père Maurine Martin s.j.* (Le Caire, 1992), p. 306 et note 15 sur la largeur considérable de ces cours d'eau dérivés ou *baḥr.* Les cours d'eau étaient alimentés à l'étiage par la nappe d'eau souterraine, *ibid.,* 1992, p. 306.

[99] Il est cependant possible qu'un cours secondaire du Baḥr Yūsuf, beaucoup plus proche du désert, ait été utilisé occasionnellement, de manière volontaire ou accidentelle. Sur ce cours ancien, Subias *et al.*, « The Middle Nile Valley », p. 36–37, fig. 7 p. 37, et carte de synthèse fig. 10 p. 40.


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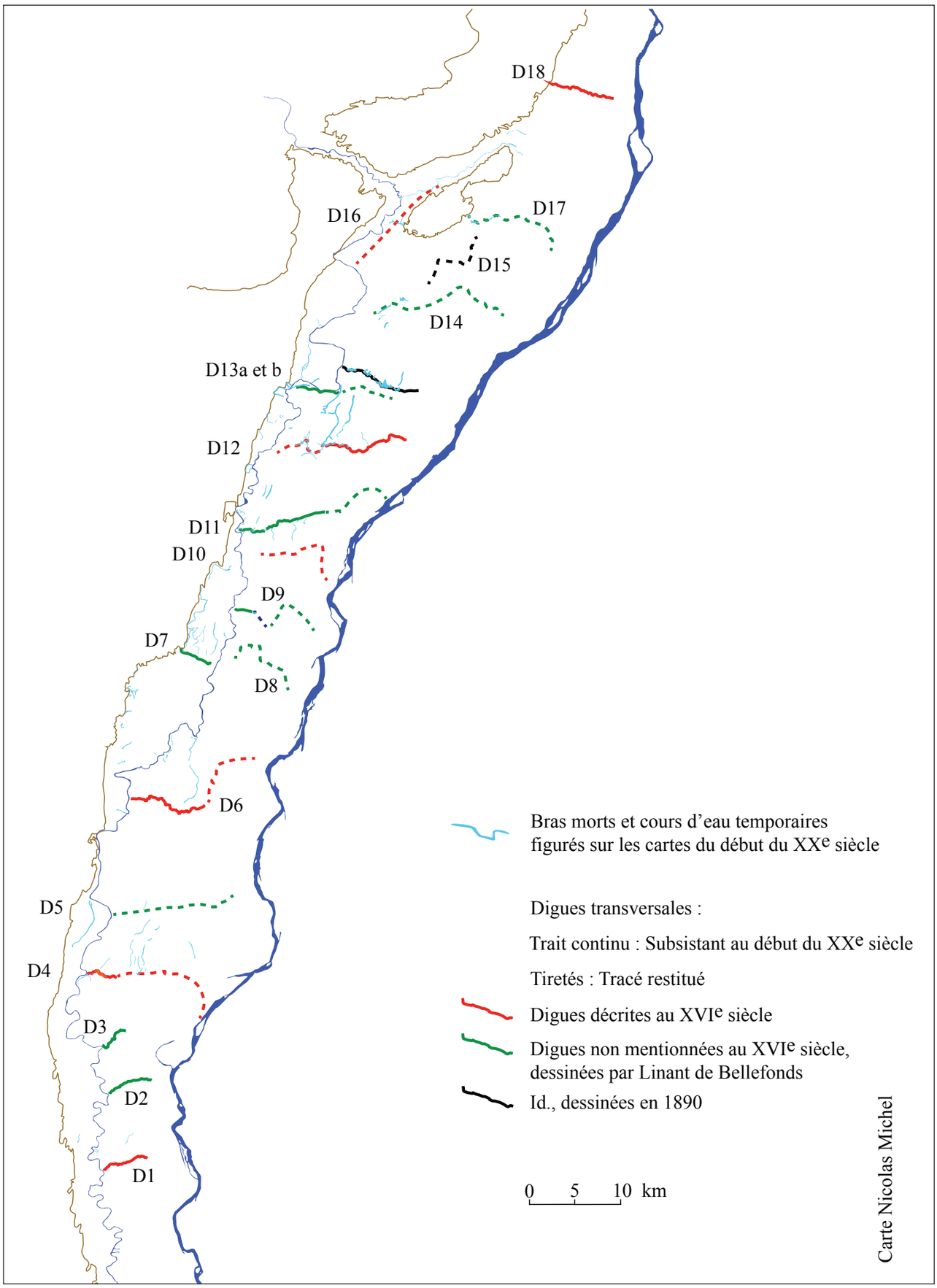


Carte 3. — Hydraulique de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya : reconstitution des tracés anciens à partir du registre des digues du Ṣaʿīd (XVIe siècle), des cartes de Linant de Bellefonds (1854), de la carte *Beni Souef Province* de 1890, et du Survey of Egypt (1912–1913).


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cartes montrent que le Baḥr Yūsuf avait construit un bourrelet alluvial bien visible partout, sauf sur deux segments de son parcours : lorsqu'il s'écarte du désert entre al-Bahnasā et Iqfahs **152**, puis en aval entre Sidmant **233** et l'entrée du Fayyūm (il est représenté schématiquement sur la carte 4). Le bourrelet du Baḥr Yūsuf a créé vers le centre de la vallée, ou dans son tiers ouest, une sorte de dépression longitudinale[100]. Celle-ci était certainement la zone de tous les dangers : c'est en effet là que les eaux tendaient à converger lors de la décrue.

La gestion de l'hydraulique à l'époque pré-moderne, soit avant le début du XIX^e^ siècle, nous est connue principalement par les cartes de l'Expédition d'Égypte, au premier chef celle de Martin[101], et certaines indications des ingénieurs hydrauliciens ultérieurs, notamment Linant de Bellefonds. Ces sources permettent de nous former une idée générale d'un dispositif que Ghislaine Alleaume (1992) a brillamment décrit. Elles éclairent rétrospectivement les indications fournies par les sources en arabe, en premier lieu le registre des digues du Ṣaʿīd compilé peu après 1606 et particulièrement précieux pour la moyenne Égypte. Ce registre inclut une copie de deux *daftar*-s de la Bahnasāwiyya datés de décembre 1549 et juin 1596, ainsi que d'extraits d'un autre *daftar* des contributions en nature pour l'année fiscale 933/1527–1528, c'est-à-dire l'année du *tarbīʿ,* avec les quantités de grains, par village, destinés à l'entretien des digues[102].

Je rappellerai simplement ici, à la suite de Ghislaine Alleaume[103], qu'à l'époque pré-moderne l'hydraulique de la vallée du Nil n'était pas régie selon le « système des bassins » qui a été décrit par les ingénieurs hydrauliciens de la fin du XIX^e^ siècle et avait été mis en place à partir des années 1820. Lorsque la crue du Nil avait atteint une hauteur suffisante, les eaux étaient déversées dans la Vallée par des saignées transversales, que nous ne pouvons qualifier de canaux (les documents ne le font pas), et qui traversaient le bourrelet alluvial ou digue naturelle du Nil. Au moment de la décrue, une partie de ces eaux rejoignait le Nil, l'autre s'écoulait dans la Vallée, vers l'ouest, le nord-ouest ou le nord. Il est possible, mais moins assuré, que l'on ait opéré de même à partir du Baḥr Yūsuf.

[100] Dans toute la suite de l'article, *longitudinal* s'entend dans la direction du Nil et du Baḥr Yūsuf (amont-aval), et *transversal* dans la direction perpendiculaire. La dépression longitudinale a été décrite par Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 14. Sur ces dépressions longitudinales, Alleaume, « Systèmes hydrauliques », p. 306–307.

[101] Martin, « Description hydrographique ». Il s'est rendu sur place en juillet 1800, et a levé par triangulation la carte du nord de la province de Beni Soueif : *ibid.,* p. 4–6.

[102] DĞ 4559, B, f. 4 v°-21 r°, F, f. 33 r°-35 v°, et G, f. 36 r°-37 v° ; présenté par Nicolas Michel, « Les *Dafātir al-ǧusūr,* source pour l'histoire du réseau hydraulique de l'Égypte ottomane », *AnIsl* 29, 1995, p. 160–163.

[103] Alleaume, « Systèmes hydrauliques », p. 301–302, 307–308.


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Afin d'éviter que les eaux ne glissent en continu le long de la pente[104], celles-ci étaient retenues par des digues. Ces dernières consistaient en levées de terre[105] ; elles étaient ponctuées par des ouvertures (*maqṭaʿ*, lit. « lieu de la coupure »), beaucoup plus nombreuses que ce ne sera le cas dans les digues réaménagées par les ingénieurs au XIX^e^ siècle[106]. Les ouvertures étaient débouchées en une seule fois — il n'y avait pas de dispositif régulateur — afin d'assurer la vidange vers l'aval. Cette vidange créait des cours d'eau temporaires au tracé capricieux, parfois des affouillements, et les inégalités de terrain avaient tendance à faire stagner l'eau dans des zones dites *mustabḥar,* « submergées ».

En raison du double pendage on trouvait deux sortes de digues : les unes, appuyées sur le bourrelet alluvial du Nil ou les unes sur les autres comme des écailles, plutôt dans la partie Est de la vallée en rive gauche, compensaient la pente est-ouest[107] ; les autres, transversales, traversaient toute la vallée, du bourrelet alluvial du Nil au Baḥr Yūsuf, afin de faire obstacle à la pente d'amont en aval. Les premières (*ǧusūr baladiyya,* digues communales) étaient gérées par les villages seuls, les secondes (*ǧusūr sulṭāniyya,* digues sultaniennes, c'est-à-dire publiques) par les villages et les gouverneurs de province, *kāšif*-s à partir du XV^e^ siècle. Nous disposons pour la Bahnasāwiyya de quatre listes des digues sultaniennes, en 1549, 1596, 1631, et dans l'article de Martin qui reprend une étude de terrain effectuée en 1800[108]. La majorité d'entre elles apparaissent encore sur la carte hydrographique de Linant de Bellefonds (1854) et, pour certaines et en partie, sur les cartes du *Survey of Egypt*. D'autres ont disparu ; de même, certaines des digues transversales de la carte de Linant ne figurent pas sur la liste de Mar-

[104] L'effet du double pendage, qui « empêche [les eaux de la submersion] de séjourner assez longtemps sur les terres », a été très bien décrit par Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 7.

[105] Voir les photographies de plusieurs digues subsistantes dans Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* pl. h.-t. XXVI à XXXIII. Ces digues ont été consolidées au XIX^e^ siècle, et c'est dans leur dernier état d'utilisation, aujourd'hui dégradé, que nous les voyons.

[106] Sur les ouvertures ou *maqṭaʿ*-s à l'époque prémoderne, Michel, « Travaux aux digues », p. 262–265.

[107] Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 8, les décrit ainsi : « Les moyennes digues, qui n'intéressent que quelques territoires, partent ou des bords du Nil, ou des grandes digues même, pour aller s'attacher à l'un des monticules sur lesquels sont construits les villages. » Les cartes bien levées de la *Description de l'Égypte* pour la province de Minya montrent que plusieurs d'entre elles contournaient les villages au lieu de s'y attacher. À ce sujet, je renvoie aux observations de Georges Hug dans les villages de la zone des bassins au début du XX^e^ siècle : les villages qui jouxtent une digue « s'en écartent un peu » pour ne pas les détériorer ; pour les autres, durant la crue « la population (…) ne communique avec la digue voisine que par une chaîne de bateaux. » Lozach & Hug, *L'habitat rural en Égypte,* p. 172 ; voir aussi *ibid.,* p. 143 et note 2.

[108] Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 8. Voir Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* tableau 8 p. 371, et commentaire p. 370–372. Voir aussi Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* p. 40–43, à partir de la *Description de l'Égypte* et de la liste de Martin.


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tin[109]. Et cela conduit à une observation fondamentale : les digues transversales apparaissaient et disparaissaient ; soit parce que l'on n'avait plus les moyens de les entretenir[110], soit parce qu'un autre dispositif considéré comme plus efficace, ou plus adapté aux évolutions du milieu, avait été mis en place.

Le dispositif hydraulique de la moyenne Égypte avant le XIX^e^ siècle a fait l'objet de deux études approfondies : Subias *et al.* (2013) pour l'ancien Oxyrhynchite (*grosso modo* les deux tiers amont de la Bahnasāwiyya), et Willems *et al.* (2016) pour la province ottomane d'al-Ašmūnayn/al-Minya. La première s'appuie sur les cartes publiées depuis le XVIII^e^ siècle, sur des photographies aériennes des années 1960–1975 et sur les images satellite ; elle vise à reconstituer et expliquer les tracés sinueux que met en évidence l'analyse de ces images. Elle se fonde malheureusement sur trois postulats : que les digues cartographiées au XIX^e^ siècle sont toutes, ou la plupart, antiques ; que la vallée était irriguée selon le « système des bassins » (mis en fait en place au XIX^e^ siècle)[111], avec des digues transversales et des canaux d'amenée ; que ce système concernait toute la largeur de la vallée, ce qui exclut de fait les digues secondaires. L'étude de Willems *et al.,* au contraire, s'appuie sur les apports de l'article de Ghislaine Alleaume et propose une reconstitution fine de l'hydraulique de la province de Minya à partir des cartes remarquables de la *Description de l'Égypte,* sans se risquer à remonter à l'Antiquité. Cette reconstitution propose une sorte de « système des bassins » d'échelle beaucoup plus limitée que celle des chaînes de bassins de la fin du XIX^e^ siècle ; les digues secondaires, proches du Nil et du Baḥr Yūsuf, y jouent un rôle essentiel. L'étude met en particulier en évidence les zones de faiblesse structurelle du dispositif, marquées sur les cartes de la *Description de l'Égypte* par des étendues d'incultes et parfois des villages ou des portions de digues en ruines.

Les cartes de la province de Beni Soueif dans la *Description de l'Égypte* sont bien moins précises que celles de la province de Minya[112], mais l'étude comparée de la documentation permet de saisir, là aussi, d'une part l'importance des digues secondaires — qu'il nous est hélas impossible de cartographier —, d'autre

[109] Subias *et al.,* « The Middle Nile Valley », p. 34 fig. 5, cartographie les digues transversales mentionnées par Martin et celles dessinées par Linant. Il n'est cependant pas certain que toutes les digues de 1854 existaient déjà en 1800.

[110] Les digues faisaient l'objet d'un entretien annuel qui entrait dans le cadre des prestations coutumières dues par les villages. Sur la nature de ces travaux, Michel, « Travaux aux digues », p. 260–264, 267–271.

[111] L'équipe de Subias ne connaissait pas l'article d'Alleaume, « Systèmes hydrauliques » (2012) ; celle de Willems l'avait au contraire lu attentivement.

[112] Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* p. 32–40, étudie en détail la construction de ces cartes par l'ingénieur Schouani en 1798–1799 ; voir aussi les pl. h.-t. X à XXIII.


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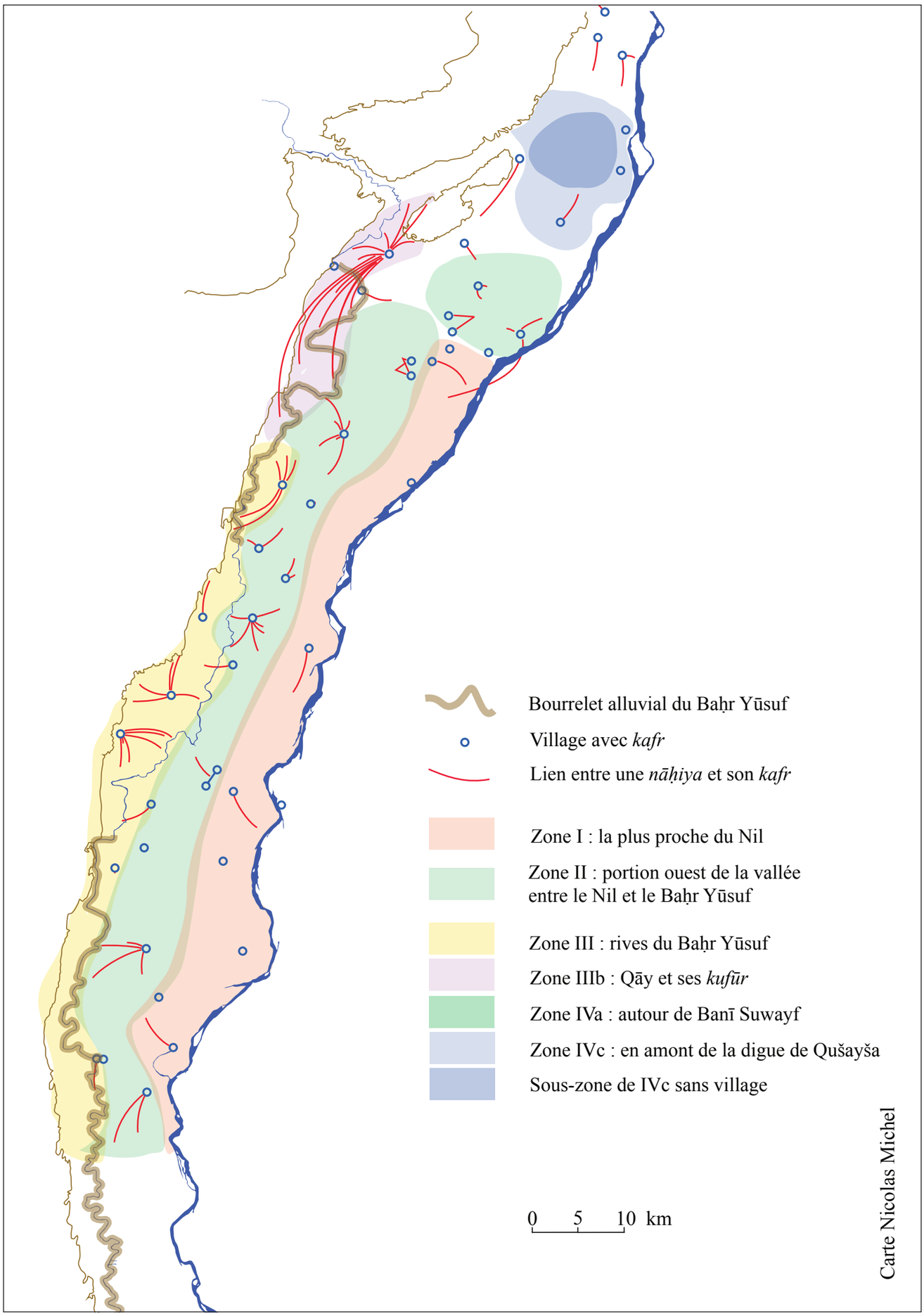


Carte 4. — Proposition de découpage en zones de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya.


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part le caractère évolutif, à long terme, du dispositif. Dès lors, mise en corrélation avec le paysage hydraulique tel que nous pouvons tenter le reconstituer à partir d'une documentation éparpillée entre les époques mamelouke, ottomane et contemporaine, la carte des agglomérations des XIVe-XVIe siècles prend sens. Cette corrélation permet de dégager quatre zones selon une logique pour l'essentiel longitudinale (carte 4) : 1) la zone la plus proche du Nil ; 2) la partie ouest du ruban de terre compris entre le Nil et le Baḥr Yūsuf ; 3) la zone riveraine du Baḥr Yūsuf ; enfin, 4) la zone en aval à partir de Banī Suwayf, aux caractéristiques singulières.

### 4.1. Zone la plus proche du Nil (carte 5)

Dans la province voisine d'al-Ašmūnayn (al-Minya à l'époque ottomane), cette zone était par excellence celle des digues communales adossées au Nil, comme le montrent les cartes de l'*Atlas* de la *Description de l'Égypte,* particulièrement soignées pour cette province[113]. Les cartes de la *Description de l'Égypte* pour la Bahnasāwiyya, en revanche, pas plus que celles du *Survey,* ne permettent de reconstituer le réseau des digues communales : les premières sont loin de la précision et de l'exactitude de celles de la province de Minya ; les secondes arrivent pour ainsi dire trop tard, car cette zone parallèle au fleuve est passée précocement à l'irrigation pérenne, ce qui a entraîné un remodelage complet du paysage, désormais géométrisé. Cependant, le registre des digues du Ṣaʿīd pour le XVIe siècle permet de dresser la liste de 40 digues communales dans la Bahnasāwiyya [114] : elles portent le nom de *nāḥiya*-s situées en grande majorité près du Nil. Cette responsabilité forte renforçait probablement leur autonomie, aussi ne nous étonnerons-nous pas que ce soit près du Nil que l'on trouve le plus fréquemment des *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr,* ainsi que des *nāḥiya*-s doubles : Qulūsanā **215** et Kafr Banī Ḥakīm **162**, Maṭāy et Banī Muḥammad **195**, al-Qays **51** et Banī Nazār **77**, Suds **237** et Hililliyya **136**. On y trouve aussi trois blocs de *nāḥiya*-s sans *kafr,* ayant subsisté jusqu'à nos jours :

(a) Au sud, l'ensemble formé immédiatement en aval de Darūṭ Bilhāsa **108**, incluant Bilhāsa **92**, Namūy (= Maġāġā) **180**, Iṭnāy **157**, al-Kawm al-Aḫḍar **35**, Mayyānat Salāqūs **196**, Dahmarū **101**, jusqu'à Bām **67** (auj. Bān al-ʿAlam) proche du Baḥr Yūsuf. Cette zone se trouvait entre deux grandes digues effacées par le passage à l'irrigation pérenne, mais dessinées sur la carte de Linant. En aval de Maġāġa le Nil prend une direction rectiligne nord-nord-est ; le double pendage

[113] *Atlas* de la *Description de l'Égypte,* cartes 13 (Manfaloût), 14 (Miniet, Antinoë), et bas de la carte 15 (Aboû Girgéh).

[114] DĞ 4559, f. 38 rº (liste de 18 digues communales, 1004/1596), complété par 33 rº-34 vº (prestations en grains d'après le *tarbīʿ* de 1528) et des indications éparses dans les f. 4 vº-21 rº (digues sultaniennes, 956/1549).


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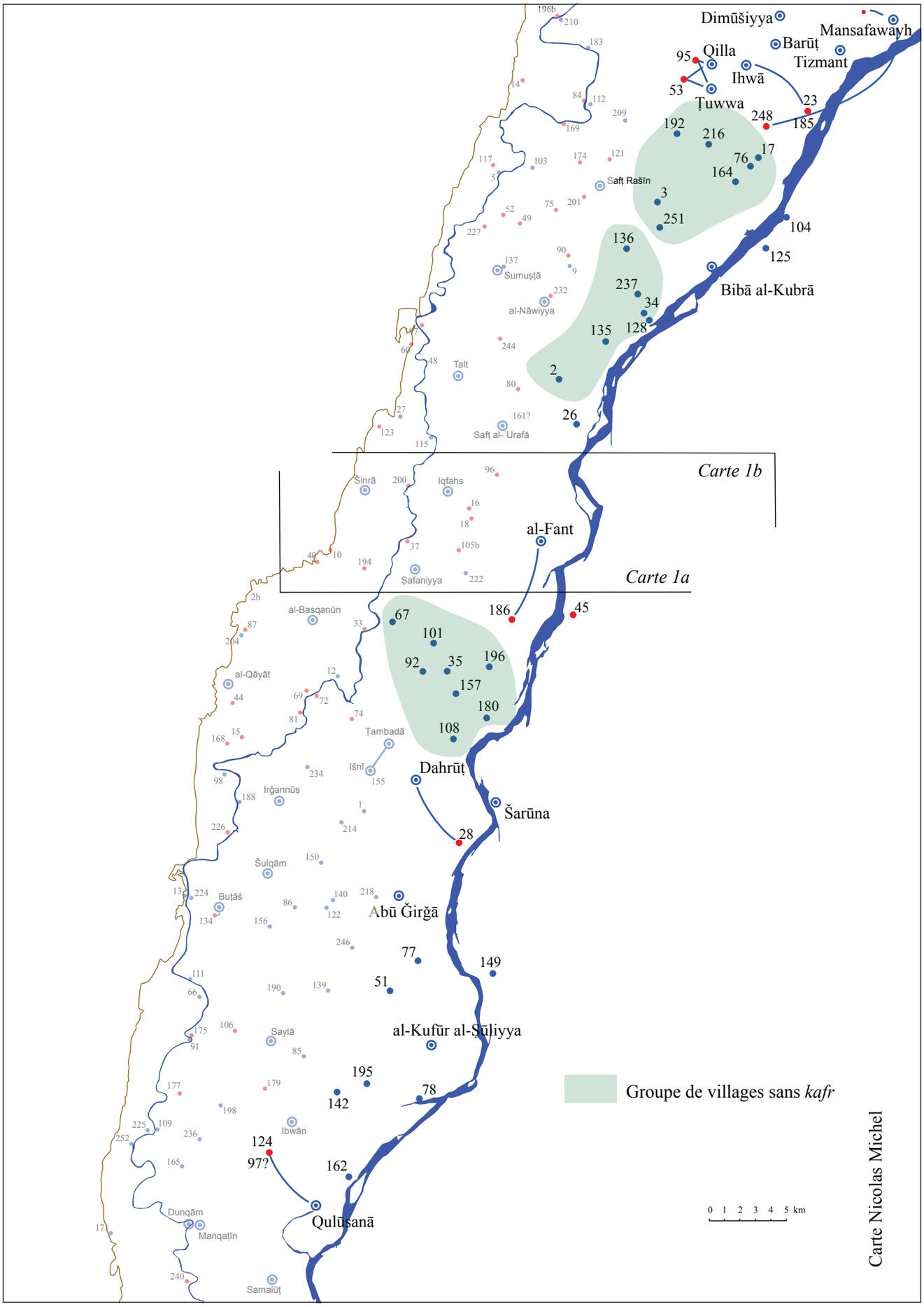


Carte 5. — Sud et centre de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya : zone I.


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de la vallée s'efface, toute la zone est comprise entre 32 et 33 m d'altitude, sauf aux abords immédiats du lit du fleuve. Nous sommes dans une zone de villages de taille moyenne et de peuplement exceptionnellement stable.

(b) Un autre bloc de plus petite taille, de structure identique, peut être repéré entre al-Fašn **26** et Bibā **89**, avec les *nāḥiya*-s de taille moyenne d'Absūğ **2**, Harabšant **135**, al-Nāwiyya **46** (la seule avec une dépendance), al-Kawāšira **34**, al-ʿAsākira **9**, Suds **237** et Hililliyya **136**.

(c) Contournant Bibā, ce bloc se prolonge dans un troisième, jusqu'à Tizmant **253** en amont immédiat de Banī Suwayf : la moitié Est de la vallée entre le Nil et le Baḥr Yūsuf s'y divise entre une douzaine d'unités administratives, la plupart sans *kafr*, de taille moyenne, avec quelques noms arabes (Kafr Banī Qāsim **164**, Manyal Banī Mūsā **192**) ; une seule a un nom double, avec un *kafr* : Qilla **212** et Ṭuwwa **255**, et leur dépendance al-Šūbak **53**. Nous sommes là encore devant une zone de belle stabilité, ancrée sur un dense maillage de villages distants entre eux de deux à quatre kilomètres.

### 4.2. Portion ouest de la vallée entre Nil et Baḥr Yūsuf (carte 6)

Cette zone, caractérisée par une dépression longitudinale, est celle des plus grands dangers, à la fois lors de la crue — elle risquait d'être moins bien irriguée en cas de crue faible[115], car plus éloignée du Nil, – et de la décrue — toutes les eaux y convergeant. Elle était coupée par une succession de digues transversales, dont certaines marquent encore le paysage de leurs sinuosités caractéristiques (carte 3)[116]. Vers 1910, cette zone n'était pas encore passée à l'irrigation pérenne, qui a géométrisé le paysage et effacé la plus grande partie des anciens tracés ; aussi les digues anciennes sont-elles encore clairement visibles sur les plus vieilles cartes du Survey. Les cartes des XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles permettent d'en reconstituer douze entre le sud de l'ancienne province et Ninā **209** ; parmi celles-ci, nous sommes assurés que cinq fonctionnaient déjà au XVI^e^ siècle.

C'est dans cette zone longitudinale que l'on rencontre les *nāḥiya*-s à *kufūr* multiples groupés autour du chef-lieu, tels que permet de les reconstituer la localisation des dépendances mentionnées comme telles en 1528. D'amont en aval, c'est le cas de Samalūṭ **223**, Sayla **231**, Iqfahs **152**, Sumusṭā **239** et Safṭ Rašīn **220**. D'ordinaire, l'ensemble des *kufūr* d'une même *nāḥiya* sont regroupés entre deux

[115] Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 9–10, a souligné particulièrement les effets désastreux de l'exhaussement du sol dans les chenaux transversaux d'amenée d'eau de la crue, lorsque ceux-ci n'étaient pas régulièrement curés. À l'inverse, lorsque le niveau de l'eau était suffisant, les eaux « descendent, pour ainsi dire, en cataracte, et couvrent instantanément les terres sur une très-grande hauteur. »

[116] Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* p. 44–69, est à ce jour la plus importante étude sur l'état actuel de ces digues.


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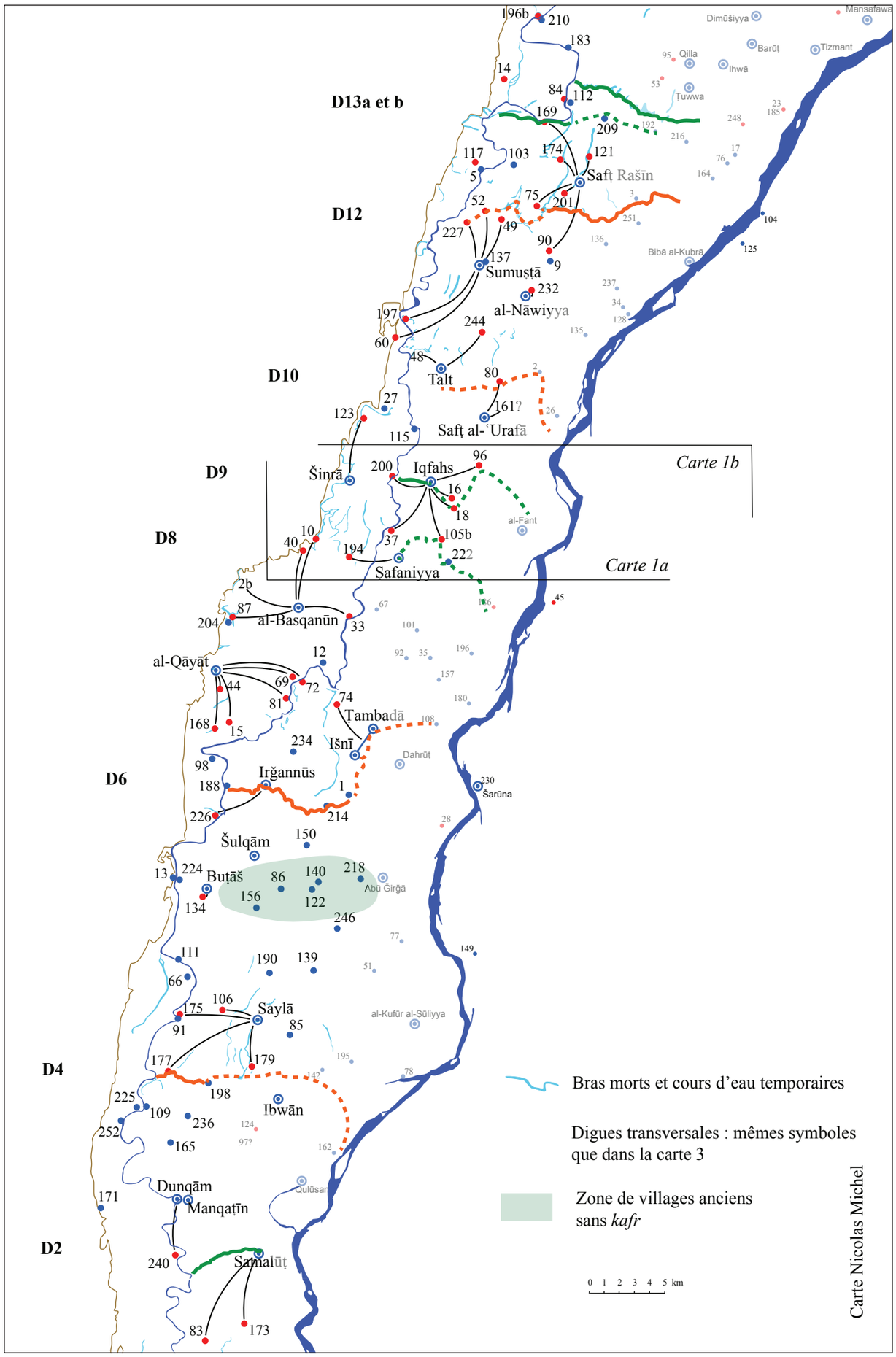


Carte 6. — Sud et centre de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya : zones II et III.


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digues transversales : Samalūṭ et ses deux dépendances Baqarlanka **83** (auj. Banī al-Ḥakam) et Kawm al-Wafī **173** (auj. Kawm al-Lūfī) entre deux longues digues encore bien visibles sur les cartes de la *Description de l'Égypte* et du Survey, celles de Nazlat al-ʿAmūdayn et de Samālūṭ (carte 3, D1 et D2) ; Saylā et ses dépendances entre les digues de Minbāl **198** (attestée depuis le XVI^e^ siècle ; carte 3, D4) et d'Ibšāq **139** (connue seulement par les cartes du XIX^e^ siècle : carte 3, D5) ; Iqfahs et en aval Safṭ al-ʿUrafā **221**, toutes deux en aval d'une grande digue disparue qui passait au nord de Ṣafaniyya **217** et au sud de Salaqūs **222** (carte 3, D8). Exception, Bidahl **90**, *kafr* de Safṭ Rašīn, se trouve en amont de l'ancienne digue d'al-Šanṭūr, au tracé encore très apparent aujourd'hui (carte 3, D12) ; mais ce village a vite pris son autonomie.

À l'inverse, le tracé même des digues transversales paraît avoir fixé des sortes de lignes de villages sans *kafr,* ou à nom double, ou de villages à *kafr* unique, marqués par la prévalence de toponymes anciens, « non arabes » : par exemple (d'ouest en est) Minbāl **198**, Kawm Wālī **179**, Idqāq **142**, Maṭāy **195** ; ou Irǧannūs **153** (auj. al-Ǧarnūs), Qufāda **214**, Abā **1**, Išnī **155** et Ṭambadī **247**. Ces deux ensembles correspondent aux digues sultaniennes dites de Minbāl et d'Irǧannūs (carte 3, D4 et D6) bien attestées depuis 1549. C'est à la digue d'Irǧannūs que nous devons lier le remarquable ensemble de villages anciens, proches et pour la plupart dénués de *kafr,* qui occupe toute la largeur de la vallée entre Ṣandafā **224** (en face d'al-Bahnasā, en rive droite du Baḥr Yūsuf) et Abū Ǧirǧā **4** (voir carte 6) : il comprend Šulqām **238**, Bardūna **86**, Išrūba **156**, Ǧalf **122**, Ihṭū **150**, Ibṭūǧa **140**, Safṭ Abū Ǧirǧā **218** seul toponyme mixte. En 1549, chacun de ces sept villages devait contribuer au service de surveillance *(darak)* de la digue sultanienne d'Irǧannūs, dont le tracé récent se trouve de 4 à 8 km en aval, ainsi qu'à d'importantes livraisons en grains et en instruments tractés[117]. Les cartes du XX^e^ siècle montrent que la dépression longitudinale de la vallée, ici fort nette et d'orientation sud-nord, passait entre Šulqām, Išrūba et Bardūna du côté ouest, et Ǧalf, Ibṭūǧa, Ihṭū et Qufāda du côté est ; elle scellait entre ces villages une communauté de risque et d'intérêt. Nous pouvons faire l'hypothèse, à confirmer par d'autres sources textuelles ou par l'archéologie, d'un dispositif local éprouvé sur le long, voire le très long terme, qui liait une digue puissante et un groupe de villages de taille moyenne, à proximité de la digue et en amont de celle-ci : la stabilité des uns et de l'autre se confortant pour ainsi dire mutuellement.

En revanche, la grande digue qui sinue en aval de Ninā **209**, signalée par Martin en 1800 puis dûment cartographiée par Linant et les cartes ultérieures (carte 3, D13a et b), n'a fixé aucun village au nom ancien. C'est qu'elle ne figure ni dans

[117] DĞ 4559, f. 9 v°-11 v° (956/1549), 33 r°-34 v° (prestations en grains d'après le *tarbīʿ* de 1528), 36 v° (1004/1596). Les mêmes sources nous signalent l'existence de digues communales à l'est, à Abū Ǧirǧā **4**, et à l'ouest, à Ṣandafā **224** et à Buṭāš **100**.


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les *daftar*-s du XVI^e^ siècle ni dans la liste de 1639 : il s'agit d'un exemple remarquable de grande digue sultanienne édifiée durant l'époque ottomane, à une date inconnue entre 1639 et 1800[118].

Ainsi cette zone longitudinale de tous les dangers voyait alterner les chaînes de villages anciens, de taille moyenne, stabilisés, le long ou à proximité (amont et aval) des digues sultaniennes ; et les zones intermédiaires entre ces digues, où de vastes unités administratives réunissaient un chef-lieu ancien et de nombreuses dépendances, certainement destinées à assurer une cohérence et une plus grande efficacité d'intervention dans de vastes terroirs à l'irrigation et au drainage difficiles.

### 4.3. Les deux rives du Baḥr Yūsuf (cartes 6 et 7)

Comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, en aval d'al-Bahnasā **13** le tracé du Baḥr Yūsuf devient complexe. A Burṭubāṭ **98**, le lit se creuse dans la vallée au lieu de former un bourrelet alluvial, bourrelet que l'on va retrouver seulement bien plus en aval. Une large portion de terre cultivable est dégagée en rive gauche entre Burṭubāṭ et al-Ǧafadūn **27**, puis les méandres, souvent actifs, créant des anastamoses (carte 3), éloignent de nouveau le cours d'eau du désert à partir d'Abū Kaʿb **5** et Dišāša **117**. C'est une zone de *nāḥiya*-s géantes, en rive gauche (al-Qāyāt **50**, al-Basqanūn **19**) ou droite (Sumusṭā **239**, Qāy **211**) du Baḥr Yūsuf. Alors que les *kufūr* des deux premières s'étalent de manière concentrique pour former un terroir compact englobant l'ensemble des terres entre le Baḥr Yūsuf et le désert, ceux de Sumusṭā et plus encore de Qāy s'étendent de manière longitudinale, Sumusṭā en rive droite du cours d'eau, Qāy sur ses deux rives.

La rive gauche du Baḥr Yūsuf entre Burṭubāṭ et al-Ǧafadūn était assez large pour être structurée par plusieurs digues transversales, entre le *baḥr* et le désert : Linant de Bellefonds (1854) en a représenté trois. En 1549 il y avait là une digue sultanienne, appelée digue d'al-Basqanūn. Sa surveillance *(darak)* était assurée par les *nāḥiya*-s de Bām al-ʿAlam **67**, al-Qāyāt **50** « et ses *kufūr* », Ṣafaniyya **217**, puis al-Basqanūn **19** et certains de ses *kufūr* de manière autonome : al-ʿIdwa **33**, Barmašā **87**, al-Zāwiya **57**, al-Masīd **40**, enfin Birqā et Banī Wallims **188**[119].

[118]La digue de Ninā pose un problème : le tracé sinueux, très visible sur les cartes du Survey (carte 3, D13b) et encore de nos jours sur les photos satellite, ne correspond pas à celui qu'a dessiné Linant en 1854 (carte 3, D13a). J'ai pris le parti de figurer les deux tracés sur la carte 3. On peut défendre l'hypothèse selon laquelle le tracé le plus récent résulte d'un réaménagement, en aval de la digue que connaissait Linant, postérieur donc à 1854. — Nous sommes assurés qu'il n'y avait pas là de grande digue transversale au XVI^e^ siècle, parce que les diverses prestations aux digues dues par les villages voisins et répertoriées dans le DǦ 4559 n'en mentionnent aucune.

[119]DǦ 4559, f. 11 v^o^-13 r^o^.


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Deux traits frappent l'observateur. (a) Les dépendances de Sumusṭā incluent al-Šanṭūr **52**, al-Qaṣaba **49** et Sarabū **227**, au point de départ d'une grande digue sultanienne, et proches du Baḥr Yūsuf, dont le lit ici se creuse dans la vallée ; en amont, elles incluent Mazūra **197** et Diqnāš **116** (cette dernière a disparu), ainsi que ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ **60** que Ramzī situe dans le terroir de l'actuelle Mazūra. Sumusṭā ne comptait pas moins de dix *kufūr* au XIV^e^ siècle, dont six portent des noms « non arabes », et encore huit en 1528 (ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ n'est plus mentionnée à cette date comme *kafr*) : il s'agit d'une zone de peuplement ancien mais vulnérable, qui avait été restructurée autour d'un village central, en l'occurrence Sumusṭā. Immédiatement à l'est, le terroir de Sumusṭā était pour ainsi dire enveloppé par celui de la *nāḥiya* double de Talt **245** et Hinitfā **137**, qui incluait entre ses deux chefs-lieux le *kafr* de Ṭalā **244**. Ce dernier terroir présentait ainsi une forme allongée de direction générale nord-nord-est, qui correspond sur les cartes du *Survey* à l'orientation des drains dans cette partie de la vallée ; il enjambait la grande digue transversale en amont de Sumusṭā (carte 3, D11), et s'étendait vraisemblablement jusqu'au Baḥr Yūsuf en amont de Mazūra[120]. Nous avons là un exemple de fort esprit de clocher qui a articulé de manière non conventionnelle un espace particulièrement vulnérable.

(b) Qāy **211** offre le cas d'une entité administrative extraordinairement allongée (carte 7) : en amont, Dišāša **117** se trouve à 22 km à vol d'oiseau du chef-lieu, en aval Minšāt Ḥalbūš **203** à 6 km. En rive droite du Baḥr Yūsuf elle s'étendait dans une zone homogène autour de Qāy (notons que Maʿṣarat Qāy **193**, inconnue des sources de l'époque mamelouke, apparaît en 1528 comme une *nāḥiya* indépendante, de 1 346 f.), tandis qu'en rive gauche elle s'étirait depuis Dišāša jusqu'à l'entrée du Fayyūm, sans englober d'ailleurs tous les villages. Barāwa **84**, indépendante en 1315, est passée sous la dépendance de Qāy en 1528 ; Dišāša (1 134 f. en 1528) est dans le même cas : la *nāḥiya* de Qāy a donc été volontairement étendue en amont. Al-Bahsamūn **14**, mentionnée comme *kafr* de Qāy sur la liste de 1486, disparaît du *tarbīʿ* de 1528, alors que le village existe toujours ; peut-être était-il abandonné au début de l'époque ottomane, de même qu'Idrāsya **143** et Minhirū **199** dans la même zone. Ces remaniements nombreux n'étaient pas liés à l'importance même du chef-lieu Qāy, qui n'est crédité que de 1 904 f. en 1528.

On peinerait à comprendre cette forme extraordinaire si l'on ignorait qu'au XVI^e^ siècle se déployait là une digue sultanienne, non pas transversale, mais longitudinale en rive droite du Baḥr Yusuf : le *daftar al-ǧusūr* la décrit comme « la

[120] Au début du XX^e^ siècle Sumusṭā était divisée en trois agglomérations qui se jouxtaient : Sumusṭā al-Sulṭān, Sumusṭā al-Waqf et Hinidfā. Le terroir de cette dernière, détaché, s'étendait au nord-nord-est, englobant al-Qaṣaba, jusqu'aux abords d'al-Šanṭūr. Cette configuration curieuse paraît suggérer que Hinidfā/Hinitfā était un groupement tribal, qui se serait sédentarisé tardivement aux abords de Sumusṭā.


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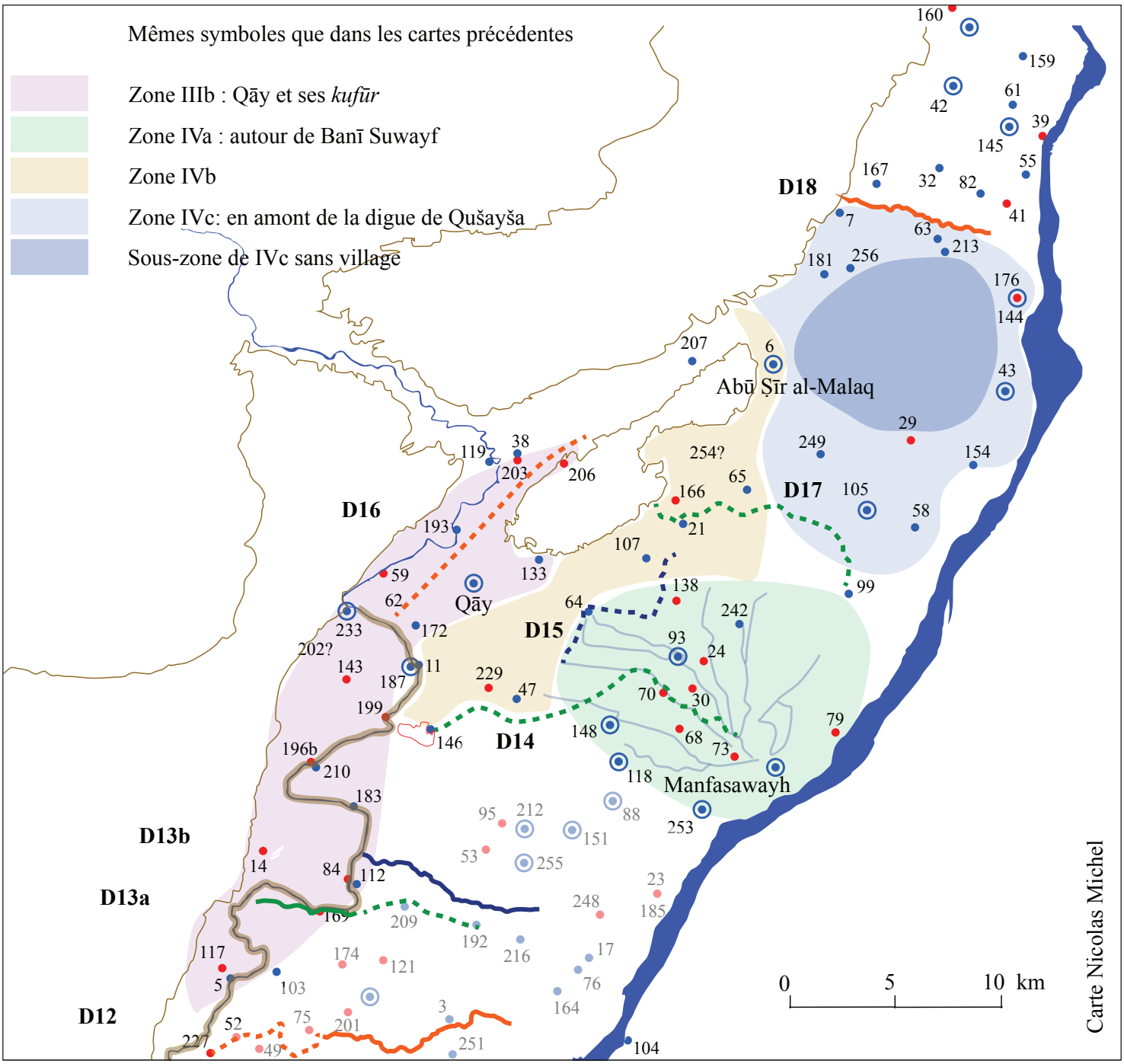


Carte 7. — Partie nord de l'ancienne Bahnasāwiyya.


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digue du village d'al-Ḥarīğa, débutant par l'ouverture dite al-Durayhima (?) au *ḫirs* de Manyal Abū Hānī, et se dirigeant vers le nord jusqu'auprès de Ḥammām al-Lāhūn, à la digue transversale *(al-muʿtariḍ)* »[121]. Manyal Hānī est aujourd'hui le nom de la partie ouest du terroir de Kawm al-Raml al-Baḥarī, près d'al-Zirība. Le document de 1596 recopié dans le *daftar al-ğusūr* donne à cette digue une longueur de 3 488 *qaṣaba*-s (env. 14 km)[122], cohérente avec la distance à vol d'oiseau qui sépare al-Zirība **59** d'al-Ḥammām. Le tracé vraisemblable de cette digue en rive droite du Baḥr Yusuf (carte 3, D16), à partir d'un segment où ce dernier a constitué un bourrelet alluvial, suggère nettement que l'on a voulu empêcher les eaux du cours d'eau de se mêler à celles du Nil en provenance de l'est-sud-est, puis de la vidange des digues situées plus en amont. L'extension des dépendances de Qāy à proximité de la digue, puis en amont le long du Baḥr Yusuf, montre le souci de coordonner la gestion du cours d'eau sur une portion qui a fini par atteindre une trentaine de km. Nous sommes en présence d'un cas extrême de hiérarchie des agglomérations directement articulé au réseau hydraulique.

### 4.4. La partie aval de la province (carte 7)

À partir de Manfasawayh/Banī Suwayf vers l'aval, la vallée présente un faciès original. Le cours du Baḥr Yūsuf dévie vers le nord puis vers le Fayyūm. La zone cultivée s'élargit à une vingtaine de km. Une masse de désert, appelée de nos jours Ğabal Abū Ṣīr, s'interpose entre la vallée et l'entrée du Fayyūm. Le versant sud-est de ce *ğabal* est creusé par une nette dépression empruntée par les eaux de décrue, tandis qu'au nord-ouest, la partie des eaux du Baḥr Yūsuf qui n'a pas été captée par l'ouvrage régulateur contrôlant à toutes les époques l'entrée du Fayyūm, poursuit sa route vers le nord-est, formant de nouveau, en bordure du désert, un cours d'eau secondaire appelé à l'époque contemporaine le Baḥr al-Libaynī. C'est à la hauteur de la grande digue transversale de Qušayša (carte 3, D18), déjà bien attestée au XVI^e^ siècle, que la vallée retrouvait son faciès classique, avec un double pendage et des digues transversales qui se succédaient jusqu'aux abords du Caire. Cette vaste zone comprend trois portions sensiblement différentes.

(a) Sur les cartes du *Survey* des années 1930, les courbes de niveau de 28 et 27 m présentent un tracé concentrique, à fort rayon (jusqu'à 10 km), autour de Banī Suwayf ; cette configuration est sans exemple ailleurs dans la province. L'éventail ainsi formé, rappelant un cône de déjection, est strié régulièrement de rayons représentés par des canaux et des drains à peu près rectilignes, jusqu'à ce qu'ils rejoignent une sorte de ceinture de gros villages aux noms anciens,

[121] DT 4559, f. 17 v°.

[122] DT 4559, f. 37 r°.


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situés entre 5 et 7 km de Banī Suwayf : Barūṭ **88**, Dimūsya **118**, Ihnāsya al-Ḥaḍrā **148**, Bilifyā **93**, Ṭaḥā Būš **242**. Certains de ces cours d'eau apparaissent déjà sur la carte hydrographique de Linant de Bellefonds (1854). Plus près de Banī Suwayf, les toponymes arabes abondent. C'était déjà le cas de la majorité des dix *kufūr* de Manfasawayh au XIV^e^ siècle ; six d'entre eux avaient disparu avant 1528.

Harco Willems et son équipe ont mis en évidence des phénomènes identiques d'élargissement concentrique des courbes de niveau, à partir d'un point de la rive du Nil. Ils les interprètent comme un point de rupture catastrophique du bourrelet alluvial du fleuve, ayant entraîné d'une part un alluvionnement intense, de l'autre le creusement de saignées naturelles plus ou moins rayonnantes ; le phénomène est appelé *crevasse splay*[123]. Il est impossible de dater cette catastrophe : Moyen Âge, Antiquité ? On peut tenir pour assuré en revanche que la gestion de ces saignées par lesquelles s'écoulait l'eau de la crue, irriguant directement une zone de 100 à 150 km$^2$, devait impérativement être coordonnée ; et cela peut expliquer pourquoi Manfasawayh s'est retrouvée dès 1315 à la tête d'un terroir étendu (3 420 f.) réparti en un grand nombre de *kufūr* de petite taille, qui géraient, chacun, une de ces micro-zones dépendant de l'une des amenées d'eau de la crue.

(b) On observe un dénivelé de plus de 3 m entre Banī Suwayf et la dépression longeant le Ǧabal Abū Ṣīr. Cette zone devait impérativement être protégée des eaux venues du Nil par une ou plusieurs digues longitudinales. Il n'en reste rien sur les cartes du *Survey,* mais la carte hydrographique de 1890 permet de reconstituer une digue au tracé complexe, proche de la courbe de niveau de 27 m et passant par Bāhā **64** (carte 3, D15). À l'ouest, toute la zone qui débute en amont par le vaste site d'Héracléopolis Magna (Ihnāsya al-Madīna **146**) et inclut Qāy **211**, al-Nuwayra **47**, Bāhā, Dandīl **107**, al-Burǧ **21**, Bahafšīm **65**, devait être particulièrement difficile à irriguer. Outre le cas exceptionnel de Qāy, on y trouve beaucoup de *nāḥiya*-s étendues, sans dépendance ou avec un seul *kafr,* comme Dandīl avec Ibšannā **138** sur la digue de Bāhā, ou Minšāt Qāy **187** avec Šarāhī **229** : un habitat très concentré pouvait seul résister, à long terme, aux alternances fréquentes d'inondations insuffisantes ou excessives.

(c) En aval de la ligne concave reliant Abū Ṣīr al-Malaq (jadis Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdis **6**), Ṭansā al-Malaq **249**, al-Ḥāfir **29** et al-Maymūn **43**, et sur une superficie d'une cinquantaine de km$^2$ se développe une zone remarquable, vide de tout village, hormis sur ses bordures, jusqu'aux abords immédiats de la grande digue

[123] Harco Willems *et al.,* « The Analysis of Historical Maps as an Avenue to the Interpretation of Pre-Industrial Irrigation Practices in Egypt » *in* Harco Willems & Jan-Michael Dahms, éd., *The Nile: Natural and Cultural Landscape in Egypt* (Mainz, 2017), p. 255–343, p. 274, 287, 290–291. La zone autour de Mallāwī offre sur la carte de la *Description de l'Égypte* un schéma rayonnant proche de celui de Banī Suwayf un siècle plus tard, cf. la carte *ibid.,* fig. 6, p. 290.


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de Qušayša (carte 3, D18). La carte de Beni Soueif publiée par l'*Atlas* de la *Description de l'Égypte* en donne une image précise. En amont, l'émissaire du Baḥr Yūsuf à l'entrée du Fayyūm était relié au Nil par un cours d'eau que la carte nomme « Canal de Beni Adi »[124], et dont le tracé sinueux est encore bien visible sur les cartes du *Survey,* sous le nom de Turʿat al-Maǧnūna et de Turʿat Qušayša. En aval de ce cours d'eau, la carte de la *Description de l'Égypte* a dessiné une vaste zone inculte qui correspond au vide signalé plus haut : les courbes de niveau montrent qu'il s'agissait d'une vaste dépression très difficile à drainer. En 1800, au témoignage de Martin, aucune digue transversale ne se rencontrait en amont avant celle de Behâbchyn (Bahafšīm **65**), à 14 km de la digue de Qušayša, de sorte que « la plaine pour laquelle [celle-ci] a été construite (...) comprend une superficie d'environ dix mille hectares, sur laquelle sont répartis dix-huit villages. »[125] Il est impossible de savoir si cela était déjà le cas aux XIVe-XVIe siècles. Cette zone a été assainie à la fin du XIXe siècle par un vaste réseau de canaux d'amenée et de drains parallèles, disposés en épi renversé de part et d'autre du grand drain axial du Muḥīṭ. La carte au 50.000o d'al-Wāsṭa (dressée en 1906–1907, révisée en 1908–1909 pour la province de Banī Suwayf) la montre encore presque vide de *ʿizba*-s : la mise en valeur intensive de la zone ne date que des décennies suivantes. De même, à la fin du Moyen Âge, la zone était vide de *kafr*-s : les *nāḥiya*-s qui l'entouraient n'en comportaient pas, à l'exception d'Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdis, dont le terroir paraît avoir été développé en amont, le long du Ǧabal, de manière à englober al-Kawm al-Aḫḍar / Kawm Abū Ḫallād. Tout ici suggère une sous-région laissée en friche, ou mise en culture seulement de manière intermittente, pendant une période de nombreux siècles.

## 5. Quelques éléments de comparaison

Immédiatement en amont de la Bahnasāwiyya, la province d'al-Ašmūnayn nous est connue par les mêmes sources que celle-ci, mais les RI et RǦ y sont plus fragmentaires et ne permettent de couvrir qu'une partie de ses *nāḥiya*-s. L'index, heureusement conservé dans son intégralité (RI 4640 = al-Ašmūnayn II) ne fait pas mention du document de 1486 ; néanmoins il est organisé comme celui de la Bahnasāwiyya. Il recense 121 *nāḥiya*-s en incluant al-Ašmūnayn même, dont 6 sont présentées comme des dépendances d'une autre *nāḥiya*. Sur les 115 unités administratives restantes, 17 seulement sont présentées, soit dans l'index, soit dans les en-tête des notices, comme ayant un ou plusieurs *kafr*-s : la proportion est bien plus faible que dans la Bahnasāwiyya. Dans 6 cas sur 17, la liste des *kufūr*

[124] Il est décrit par Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 11 : cours d'eau navigable du 15 août au 15 octobre, large en général de 25 m.

[125] Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 8 ; voir aussi p. 11–12.


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n'a pas été complétée. Deux unités seulement montrent un nombre élevé de dépendances, Banī ʿUbayd (4 *kufūr*) et surtout Dalǧā (9, dont cinq encore attestées par le *tarbīʿ* de 1528). Ce sont parmi les seules *nāḥiya*-s géantes de la province : d'après Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, Banī ʿUbayd avait 8 468 f. Les chiffres pour la Dalǧā mamelouke varient selon les sources[126] ; ajoutons Darūṭ Sarabām (5 360 f. d'après Ibn al-Ǧīʿān) et Safṭ al-Ḫammāra (6 356 f.).

Dalǧā se trouve sur la rive gauche du Baḥr Yūsuf au début de son cours, et ce terroir immense rappelle beaucoup ceux d'al-Qāyāt, al-Basqanūn, voire même de Qāy. La plupart des *kufūr* de Dalǧā à l'époque mamelouke portaient des noms arabes ; tous ont disparu, ce qui témoigne des vicissitudes d'une micro-région sans doute d'irrigation particulièrement irrégulière[127]. Banī ʿUbayd présente les caractéristiques classiques, si l'on peut dire (*supra,* 4.2.), de l'unité administrative très étendue sise dans la partie ouest de la vallée, entre le Nil et le Baḥr Yūsuf ; comme le chef-lieu lui-même, les agglomérations qui l'entourent portent des toponymes arabes, ce qui était déjà le cas des *kufūr* d'époque mamelouke.

L'hydrographie de la province d'al-Ašmūnayn à l'époque pré-moderne a été étudiée en détail par Harco Willems et son équipe à partir des cartes de la *Description de l'Égypte,* ici d'une qualité exceptionnelle : le dispositif était proche de celui des deux tiers amont de la Bahnasāwiyya (*supra,* 4.1 et 4.2), avec une multiplication des digues moyennes dans la région proche de la prise du Baḥr Yūsuf dans le Nil. De sorte que, de manière attendue, on trouve dans la province une proportion élevée de toponymes anciens (non arabes), de chefs-lieux sans *kafr,* parfois doubles, ou avec un seul *kafr.* La province d'al-Ašmūnayn confirme le rôle clé des facteurs hydrauliques dans la pérennité et la hiérarchie des agglomérations à l'époque pré-moderne.

Les conditions hydrauliques étaient différentes en basse Égypte. Les branches du Nil et les principaux cours dérivés *(baḥr)* jouaient là un rôle majeur dans la submersion puis la décrue. Les documents du XVI^e^ siècle sont malheureusement moins fournis et ne permettent une vue d'ensemble que d'une province de petite

[126] Ibn Duqmāq : 13 333 f. ; Ibn al-Ǧīʿān : 5 320 f. ; RI 4631 f. 153 r^o^ : à l'époque mamelouke 15 849 f., et selon le *tarbīʿ* de 1528, 13 893 f., dont 6 222 f. pour le chef-lieu et 7 670 pour les *kufūr.* On peut penser qu'Ibn Duqmāq a donné la superficie de la *nāḥiya* entière et Ibn al-Ǧīʿān celle du seul chef-lieu, quoiqu'il ait porté en tête de sa notice *Dalǧā wa-kufūruhā.*

[127] La superficie étendue que nos sources, à l'exception d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān, assignent au terroir de Dalǧā implique que celui-ci incluait une partie de la zone dunaire au nord-ouest et au nord du village lui-même. Cette zone, qui rencontre le cours du Baḥr Yūsuf à quelques kilomètres en aval de Dalǧā, pouvait en partie être mise en cultures ou servir de pâturage. Elle a été étudiée par Gert Verstraeten, Ihab Mohamed, Bastiaan Notebaert & Harco Willems, « The Dynamic Nature of the Transition from the Nile Floodplain to the Desert in Central Egypt since the Mid-Holocene », *in* Willems & Dahms éd., *The Nile,* p. 248–252.


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taille, la Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr, entre la Minūfiyya et la branche de Rosette, ainsi que de la Buḥayra, au nord-ouest, représentative des terres basses (comme le nord de la Ġarbiyya) et en bordure du désert. La Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr, qui s'allonge en rive droite de la branche de Rosette, dispose de sols riches. La résilience de cette petite province à la Peste noire et à ses retours a été remarquable, en dépit de la rétractation des terroirs effectivement cultivés[128]. Au début du XVI^e^ siècle c'est une région d'immigration : sa reconstruction économique et démographique y a sans doute été plus précoce qu'ailleurs[129]. Le tissu serré de villages, pour la plupart anciens, a tenu bon. Très peu avaient des *kafr*-s : l'occupation de l'espace était arrivée de longue date à maturité.

La Buḥayra offre le tableau inverse, d'une province gravement sinistrée à la date du *tarbīʿ* de 1528. Les superficies effectivement en cultures se sont terriblement rétractées. Beaucoup de villages ont disparu, « désertés » *(ḫarāb),* plusieurs de manière définitive[130]. Sur les 55 villages que permet d'étudier le fragment conservé du registre du *tarbīʿ* pour cette province, 25 ont été touchés par l'émigration des *fallāḥ*-s, 8 sont désertés ; or, sur ces 55 villages, 29 ont un toponyme arabe en Kafr, Maḥallat X ou Minyat X, et parmi ceux-ci 6 ont été désertés[131]. Particulièrement nombreux dans le Delta, ces toponymes dérivés indiquent soit des créations ou des revivifications, soit des villages secondaires qui, avec le temps, s'étaient autonomisés : car ici, comme dans la Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr, les *kufūr* proprement dits sont rares. Dans sa recension de la Buḥayra, Ibn Duqmāq, par exemple[132], sur 291 entrées, soit autant de *nāḥiya*-s (dont 13 doubles, en tout 304 agglomérations), n'a noté que quatre villages *kafr* d'un autre, et quatre autres avec des *kufūr.*

Ces deux exemples opposés pris dans le Delta montrent qu'au XIV^e^ comme au XVI^e^ siècle, placer un village sous la dépendance d'un autre y relevait de l'exception : il semble que de longue date se soit constitué un tissu de *nāḥiya*-s dont la grande majorité était de taille moyenne, plus élevée d'ailleurs dans la Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr que dans la Buḥayra[133]. Tout se passait comme si une sorte de cercle

[128] Sur la Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr entre 1315 et 1528, Michel, « Villages désertés », p. 206–214 et carte 4 p. 213.

[129] Idem, « Migrations de paysans », étude des migrations de paysans de la Buḥayra à partir du cadastre de 1528, notamment carte 2, p. 258–259, et p. 261–262 sur les zones attractives.

[130] Sur la situation catastrophique de la Buḥayra en 1528, idem, « Villages désertés », notamment p. 205–206, 214–218, cartes 2 p. 207 et 5 p. 216. Sur les villages désertés, *ibid.,* p. 199–204.

[131] Idem, « Migrations de paysans », p. 251 et tableau 5.

[132] Ibn Duqmāq, V, p. 102–113. L'exploration d'Ibn Mammātī et d'Ibn al-Ǧīʿān donne des résultats similaires.

[133] Voir Michel, « Villages désertés », tableaux 6 à 8 p. 241–246. La Buḥayra en 1315 : 114 986 f. pour 89 *nāḥiya*-s, soit 1 292 f. en moyenne, avec seulement 17 *nāḥiya*-s de moins de 600 f. et 17 de


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vertueux renforçait dans les zones les plus prospères l'homogénéité du tissu villageois.

## 6. Conclusion : Force et vulnérabilité du réseau des agglomérations rurales

### 6.1. La force de la *nāḥiya*

Ainsi des dizaines d'agglomérations secondaires, abandonnées à la fin du Moyen Âge, gisent-elles effacées, inconnues, sous la surface des champs de la moyenne Égypte. Peut-être un jour l'archéologie trouvera-t-elle un moyen d'en repérer les traces. La plupart de ces agglomérations étaient des dépendances d'autres villages, pas nécessairement plus grands. L'étude a montré que la plupart des chefs-lieux ont résisté à la catastrophe démographique engendrée par la Peste noire et ses retours, tandis que la majorité des *kufūr* ou dépendances ont sombré. Le tissu des villages principaux, ou chefs-lieux, était pluriséculaire, comme le montre le nombre élevé de toponymes « non arabes ». Il a résisté à un effondrement démographique d'ampleur inimaginable : il était donc solide et, selon toute vraisemblance, avait été consolidé, peaufiné au cours des siècles, à l'épreuve de calamités diverses. À quoi sa solidité était-elle due ? Sans doute à l'expérience de terroirs de taille adaptée, le plus souvent comprise entre 600 et 3 000 f. (360 à 1 800 ha) ; et surtout, à la cohérence de la répartition géographique des agglomérations en fonction du réseau hydraulique, des zones de force et de faiblesse définies par la pente générale des sols et le tracé des digues destinées à en contrer les effets. Les zones les plus proches du Nil, organisées autour d'un dense réseau de digues communales, étaient le domaine des villages anciens, indépendants ou réunis en *nāḥiya*-s doubles, éventuellement avec un *kafr*. C'était de longue date la zone la plus résistante aux aléas de la crue. La zone ouest de la vallée, à droite comme à gauche du Baḥr Yūsuf, cumulait les risques ; c'est là qu'on rencontrait de vastes regroupements de chefs-lieux et de dépendances multiples, parfois même étirés le long du *baḥr*. Plusieurs digues transversales avaient contribué à fixer un habitat ancien, intimement lié à l'entretien de celles-ci. L'étude confirme l'existence, bien attestée à partir de 1800, de vastes zones vides de peuplement, sans doute retournées de très longue date à l'inculte.

L'articulation entre chefs-lieux et dépendances apparaît comme réfléchie ou, pour mieux dire, éprouvée au fil des siècles. Elle souligne dans cette province la force de la *nāḥiya* en tant qu'entité administrative, soit confondue avec un

plus de 2 000 f. Pour la Ǧazīrat Banī Naṣr, les chiffres sont respectivement 94 746 f., 47 *nāḥiya*-s, une moyenne de 2 016 f., 2 et 16 villages.


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village unique, soit plus étendue que le chef-lieu. Le lien entre la répartition des *kufūr* et le réseau hydraulique, dont l'entretien incombait en partie ou en totalité aux *nāḥiya*-s, souligne une fois de plus la portée de l'autonomie accordée par les pouvoirs publics à celles-ci. Cette autonomie, dont l'un des terrains d'exercice était précisément l'hydraulique, n'était pas distribuée au hasard, puisqu'elle impliquait à son tour la dépendance, ainsi qu'une gestion pensée, et certainement porteuse de conflits, du territoire à une échelle plus large, que nous pouvons qualifier de micro-régionale.

La Peste noire et ses récurrences meurtrières ont été, là comme ailleurs, la plus grande épreuve subie par le peuplement de la province. Elles n'ont affecté qu'à la marge le tissu des chefs-lieux, alors que le nombre des dépendances s'est effondré ; et cela confirmait à la fois la solidité du cadre communal et la pertinence d'un seuil de viabilité que l'on peut situer à 600–800 feddans. Le tissu des agglomérations secondaires qui a émergé de cette catastrophe était plus resserré autour de *kufūr* de plus grande taille. Dans les siècles suivants, la majorité d'entre eux ont prouvé leur pérennité et acquis à leur tour le statut de *nāḥiya*.

### 6.2. Le visible et l'invisible

Nous avons déjà rencontré à plusieurs reprises des agglomérations ou plus exactement des toponymes qui, apparaissant dans une source médiévale, s'évanouissent des suivantes pour resurgir à l'époque contemporaine, d'ordinaire dans les listes du début du XIX^e^ siècle qu'a exploitées Ramzī. Le cas est particulièrement intriguant lorsque ces agglomérations portent un nom ancien, non arabe, qui indique à coup sûr qu'elles existaient déjà aux IX^e^/ X^e^ siècles, avant l'arabisation du pays. Que leur est-il arrivé ? Jusqu'à présent l'archéologie n'a pu apporter d'élément de réponse : les prospections de surface menées de manière systématique dans la région par l'équipe de Farouk Gomaà n'ont relevé de tessons du Moyen Âge islamique que sur quatre sites[134], contre 59 sites pour l'époque gréco-romaine. Soit ces agglomérations ont bel et bien disparu pendant quelques siècles, et leur souvenir seul s'est conservé sous la forme d'un toponyme, qui a été réinvesti ultérieurement. Soit elles sont devenues si petites qu'elles ont été

[134] Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* p. 246. Il s'agit de Ṣafṭ al-ᶜUrafā **221**, Ṭaḥā **242** (céramique des XIV^e^-XV^e^ siècles), Kafr Abū Šahba (id.) et Tizmant al-Šarqiyya **253**. Seule l'identité ancienne de Kafr Abū Šahba reste mystérieuse ; il est le seul village sur la digue de Ninā, *ibid.,* fig. 12 entre p. 60 et 61, or il n'apparaît dans la documentation qu'en 1230/1814–1815, cf. Ramzī, II, 3, p. 147. Pour la période gréco-romaine, liste des sites ayant livré de la céramique p. 245–246, carte p. 250 fig. 97. Le nombre très réduit de sites reconnus comme islamiques par l'équipe de Farouk Gomaà ne peut s'expliquer que d'une manière : dans les années 1980 on ne savait pas reconnaître la céramique commune d'époque médiévale ou moderne.


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ravalées au rang de *kafr,* non mentionné par les auteurs médiévaux, voire moins qu'un *kafr,* ce qui expliquerait qu'elles n'apparaissent pas dans les listes de 1528.

Cette dernière hypothèse pose la question de l'existence d'un troisième ordre d'agglomération, ni chef-lieu, ni *kafr* : des écarts de quelques familles seulement, voire d'une seule, dont le découpage administratif aurait englobé les terres à l'intérieur d'un chef-lieu ou d'un *kafr* plus étendu. En somme, un peuplement invisible dans nos sources. Afin d'en cerner la vraisemblance il nous faut interroger de manière concrète les deux composantes de l'habitat : les gens, et les lieux.

Nous pouvons imaginer bien sûr que la population entière d'une petite agglomération disparaissait à la suite soit d'un conflit local féroce, soit d'une épidémie particulièrement meurtrière, ou plus sûrement, d'une famine qui aurait dénoué tous les liens de solidarité. Ces cas, possibles, devaient être rares ; le plus souvent, les survivants se maintenaient sur place ou partaient et, s'ils s'installaient à proximité, le souvenir du lieu désormais en ruines subsistait, et pouvait s'incruster dans la micro-toponymie des quartiers de terroir. Les ruines devenaient au fil du temps un réservoir de *sibāḫ,* l'engrais que forme le conglomérat de terre et de matière organique issu de la décomposition de la brique crue ; exploitées par les gens du voisinage, elles finissaient par s'effacer tout à fait ou devenir des *kawm*-s, investis par un cimetière ou par quelque lieu saint. En moyenne Égypte, parmi les agglomérations les plus anciennes seuls ont survécu les *kawm*-s des plus grandes d'entre elles (comme Ihnāsya al-Madīna/Héracléopolis Magna) et de celles édifiées à la lisière du désert (comme al-Bahnasā/Oxyrhynchos).

L'habitat devait être à l'abri de la submersion annuelle des champs, donc élevé sur une terrasse. Une fois celle-ci édifiée, l'élévation s'entretenait d'elle-même, les maisons étant au fur et à mesure reconstruites sur leurs propres ruines, ce qui est encore bien visible de nos jours dans le noyau ancien de bon nombre de villages en Égypte[135]. On a souvent avancé qu'il était très difficile de créer des terrasses sur lesquelles bâtir une nouvelle agglomération, et cette difficulté aurait constitué le facteur majeur de la concentration de l'habitat[136]. Cependant l'effort de terrassement que cela supposait n'était pas insurmontable, comparé à la réfection annuelle ou à la construction de digues[137]. D'ailleurs, l'effort était

[135] Voir les photos publiées dans Gomaà *et al., Mittelägypten zwischen Samalūṭ,* pl. h.-t. LIIIb et LIVb (Idqāq al-Misk **142**), LXIIa (Iṭnayh **157**), LXIII (Ṣafāniyya **217**), LXXIV (Qumbuš al-Ḥamrā **216**).

[136] Par ex. Rowlandson, *Landowners and Tenants,* p. 8.

[137] Une terrasse d'une superficie d'un hectare, bien suffisante pour un hameau, et haute de 2 m au-dessus du niveau des champs, ce qui est une estimation généreuse, nécessitait un peu plus de 20 000 m³ de terre. Ce volume est l'équivalent de 1,66 km de longueur d'une digue qui ferait


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faible ou nul si l'on s'installait à la lisière du désert, ou sur le bourrelet alluvial du Nil ou du Baḥr Yūsuf, hors d'atteinte de la crue.

Nous ne pouvons donc exclure l'existence entre l'époque d'Ibn Mammātī et l'époque ottomane d'un habitat d'écarts, invisible à nos sources. Aux constructions en dur, c'est-à-dire en brique crue, nous devons aussi ajouter les diverses variétés d'habitat non permanent : les tentes des groupements tribaux, dont la présence peut être seulement soupçonnée ; les huttes (appelées à l'époque contemporaine *ʿišša,* pl. *ʿišaš,* et en haute Égypte *ʿizba,* pl. *ʿizab*) des cultivateurs, notamment à l'époque des moissons et du battage, et peut-être aussi celles de travailleurs mobiles louant leurs bras et leurs outils de terroir en terroir — catégorie de la population dont nous ne savons rien, mais dont l'existence est probable. Enfin, les ruines elles-mêmes pouvaient abriter un habitat précaire, commode notamment pour ceux qui souhaitaient se dérober aux regards. Cet habitat que nous pouvons qualifier de tertiaire n'est pas sans analogie pour notre propos avec les plus petites digues, dont Martin avait signalé l'existence en moyenne Égypte[138]. Cette troisième catégorie de digues, contrairement aux grandes digues sultaniennes et aux digues moyennes ou communales, n'entrait pas dans le champ de vision de l'administration ; et de même, à quelques exceptions près elles n'ont pas été cartographiées, ni par l'*Atlas* de la *Description de l'Égypte,* ni par la suite au XIX^e^ siècle. Elles resteraient tout à fait fantomatiques si nous n'en trouvions des traces dans les descriptions de confins des XV^e^-XVI^e^ siècles[139]. Les belles listes transmises par les sources médiévales ou par les registres du XVI^e^ siècle, de même que la cartographie ultérieure, résultaient d'une sélection et rejetaient dans l'invisible beaucoup d'aspects jugés secondaires, marginaux ou inutiles.

De très longue date l'habitat était concentré, pour des raisons plus fortes que la difficulté à élever des terrasses. J'y verrais plutôt pour raison principale la convergence entre les soucis de sécurité, la contrainte sociale engendrée par l'organisation communautaire, et la force d'attraction du modèle de la *nāḥiya*. Le poids relatif de ces divers facteurs devait varier selon les temps et les lieux, mais tous tendaient à conférer au chef-lieu l'efficacité la plus probante face aux contraintes multiples qu'il devait gérer. Et dans ce dispositif le rattachement d'agglomérations secondaires au chef-lieu, ou leur détachement si leur autonomie paraissait viable, de même que l'appariement de villages dans des entités administratives uniques, offraient autant d'options soupesées en fonction d'un objectif essentiel : renforcer les communautés.

2 m de hauteur, 3 m de largeur au sommet et 9 m à la base. Or les digues transversales, de même que les digues proches du Nil, se développaient sur plusieurs kilomètres, parfois plus de dix.

[138] Martin, « Description hydrographique », p. 8–9.

[139] L'équipe de Willems *et al.,* « The Analysis of Historical Maps », p. 270–271, a reconnu l'existence de digues non cartographiées par la *Description de l'Égypte* dans la province de Minya.


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## ANNEXE

Tableau des *kufūr* mentionnés dans les registres du milieu du XVI^e^ siècle (RI et RĞ)

**Abréviations :** ID = Ibn Duqmāq ; IĞ = Ibn al-Ğīʿān ; IM = Ibn Mammātī ; RĞ = *daftar al-rizaq ğayšī* 4632 ; RQ = Muḥammad Ramzī, *Qāmūs*.
R + MN = superficie des *rizaq* et des services communaux *(maṣāliḥ al-nāḥiya)* ; MN = superficie des services communaux seuls.
Références à Ramzī, *Qāmūs* : volume en chiffres romains, tome en chiffres arabes, page.

Le signe = indique que la source signale que le village est aussi connu sous un autre nom.
L'astérisque signale les *kufūr* qui, dans les registres du XVI^e^ siècle, font l'objet d'une entrée indépendante de celle du chef-lieu.
En rouge, les *kufūr* mentionnés comme tels par Ibn al-Ğīʿān (IĞ).
En bleu, les informations contenues seulement dans le RĞ 4632.
En violet, les agglomérations qui cessent d'être des *kufūr* entre le XIV^e^ siècle et le cadastre de 1528.

Mes commentaires figurent en italique.

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e^ siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ibwān al-Zabadī | Dafanū *ou* Ğafanū | | *Ne pas confondre avec Dafanū II, 3, 84 dans le Fayyūm* | | | |
| Abū Ğirğā | Dakūda | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Manyal Bū ʿAbbās | | IM, ID : Manyal Banī ʿAbbās (RQ I, 426) ; *dalīl* de 1224 h. : Manyal Ibn ʿAbbās, *min kufūr Abū Ğirğā* = al-Barāniqa | | | |
| | Manyāl Abū Tumās wa-Banī al-Barāniqa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Abū Ṣīr Qūrīdīs | Kawm al-Mawāris / Kawm al-Nawāris | | IĞ ; RQ : I, 395 = al-Kufr, dépendance d'Abū Ṣīr al-Malaq | | | |
| | Kawm Abū Ḫallād = al-Kawm al-Aḫḍar (wa-l-Maǧdab dans ms Bodleian) | *[al-]Kawm al-Aḫḍar = Kawm Abū Ḫallād | Kawm Abū Ḫallād II, 3, 162 | 1286 | 91 | 31 |
| Adrīğa | Kawm Adrīğa | *Kawm Adrīğa *sans indication de kafr* | Kawm Idrīğa II, 3, 133 | 1119 | 58 | |

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irğannūs | Sāqūla | Sāqūla | Sāqūla II, 3, 223 | 536 | 102 | 20 |
| Išnī wa-Ṭambadī | Banī Ḫilīf | Kafr Banī Ḫilf | Banī Ḫilf II, 3, 247 | 770 | 65 | |
| | Kawm al-Ramlī | Kawm al-Rūm | *Pas dans RQ* | 95 | 12 | |
| | al-Balāʿiza | Kafr al-Balāʿiza | al-Balāʿzatayn II, 3, 244 | 844 | 44 | 11 |
| | al-Quṣayʿa | | | | | |
| | | Kafr al-Nuwā/al-Nūr | *Pas dans RQ* | 270 | | |
| | | Kafr Banī Ramaḍān | *Pas dans RQ* | 964 | | |
| Ifwā | al-Masāʿda | | IM, ID, IĞ al-Masāʿda wa-ğazīratuhā = Ğazīrat al-Masāʿda II, 3, 130 | | | |
| | Abū al-Rabīʿ | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Maṣlūb *min kufūr Ifwā* | *al-Maṣlūb | al-Maṣlūb II, 3, 134 | 1593 | 44 | 11 |
| Iqfahs | al-Barāqī wa-Ḏanab al-Timsāḥ | *al-Barāqī wa-Ḏanab al-Timsāḥ *sans mention d'Iqfahs* | al-Barqī II, 3, 186 ; Nazlat al-Barqī II, 3, 191 | 716 | 34 | 10 |
| | al-Kunayyisa | *al-Kunayyisa | al-Kunayyisa II, 3, 189 | 370 | blanc | |
| | al-Balğamūn | *al-Balğamūn | Nazlat Iqfahs II, 3, 191 | *lam tumsaḥ* | | |
| | Bisfā | *Bisfā *al-muğāwir li-nāḥiyat Iqfahs* | Bisfā II, 3, 190 | 2794 | 0 | |
| | al-Wāḥ wa-l-Hīš | | *Pas dans RQ ; peut-être référence à l'oasis de Baḥriyya, Wāḥ al-Bahnasā* | | | |
| | Minsāba *min kufūr Iqfahs* | *Minsāba | Kafr Minsāba II, 3, 193 | 558 | 5 ? | |
| | al-ʿArīn *min kufūr Iqfahs* | *al-ʿAriyya / al-ʿArīn | *Pas dans RQ* | 595 | 63 | |
| al-Basqanūn | al-ʿAṭf | al-ʿAṭf | ʿAṭf Ḥaydar II, 3, 191 (référence à ID) | 939 | 53 | |
| | al-Mustağidd | al-Mustağidd | *Pas dans RQ* | 420 | | |
| | Kawm al-Raml wa-M... | Kawm al-Raml | *Pas dans RQ* | 358 | | |

| *Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ | *Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle) | *Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 | Identification par Ramzī | Superficie du *kafr* | R+MN | MN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Abū Baṭīḫa wa-Bīrm/bāra? | | R I, 6 : ḥawḍ d'Abū Baṭīḫa proche de ʿIzbat Ṣāliḥ Pacha Lamlūm al-Saʿdī, terres de Zāwiyat Barmašā | | | |
| | Kafr Bū Mannā | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Barmašā wa-Ma[n]qāra | Kawm Barmašā | Barmašā II, 3, 246 | 1101 | 43 | |
| | Dikrū wa-Dikarkāris wa-l-Ṭawīl | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Kunayyisa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Dayr al-Ṭīn | | disparu I, 258 | | | |
| | al-ʿIdwa | Kafr al-ʿIdwa | al-ʿIdwa II, 3, 245 | 877 | 216 | |
| | al-Masīd | Kawm al-Masīd | al-Masīd al-Waqf II, 3, 245 | 320 | 52 | |
| | al-Quṭayʿa | al-Quṭayʿa | *Pas dans RQ* | blanc | | |
| | | al-..ḥ.. *En marge* | | 1200 | | |
| | | al-Murāwisiyya? *En marge* | | 864 | | |
| al-Fant | Manšiyyat Banī Ġarwāš | *Minyat Banī Ġarwāš *non mentionnée comme kafr* | Malāṭiyya II, 3, 250 | 210 | 0 | |
| al-Qāyāt | al-Mifawwiz | al-Mifawwiz | Mifawwiz Ṭība II, 3, 254 | 353 | | |
| | al-Balāʿiza | Qabālat al-Balāʿiza | al-Balāʿzatayn II, 3, 244 (identique selon R au *kafr* d'Išnī wa-Ṭambadī, ont fusionné par la suite) | blanc | | |
| | Banī Ḥağğāğ | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Kawm al-Baqar | | Kawm al-Ḥāṣil II, 3, 254 (référence au *tarbīʿ* de 1528) | | | |
| | al-Laqīna al-Ġarbiyya | Kafr al-Laqīna | *Pas dans RQ* | 376 | | |
| | Banī Ḫālid wa-l-Laqīna al-Šarqiyya | Kafr Banī Ḫālid | Banī Ḫālid al-Baḥriyya II, 3, 253 | 231 | | 10 |
| | Banī ʿUqayl | Kafr al-ʿUqayl | al-ʿAqliyya II, 3, 252 | 375 | | |

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e^ siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Minyat al-Rawāsīn | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī Warmals?/Warṭās? wa-Dilmīna | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Barāwī | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī ʿĀmir | Kafr Banī ʿĀmir | Banī ʿĀmir II, 3, 253 | 323 | | |
| | Mandawān | Kafr Mandawān = *en marge* Maqṭūl | *Pas dans RQ* | 243 | 18 | |
| al-Kufūr al-Ṣūliyya | Salaqūs | * Salaqūs | *À ne pas confondre avec Salāqūs II, 3, 190* | 1583 | 223 | 9 |
| [al-Maymūn *sans mention de kafr*] | | *Kafr al-Manhal | *Pas dans RQ* | 1032 | 13 | |
| al-Nāwiyya | Sindādiyya | | Zāwiyat al-Nāwya II, 3, 146 (al-Nāwiyya, ruinée, se trouve à l'emplacement du cimetière de Zāwiyat al-Nāwya) | | | |
| [Ihnāsya al-Ḥaḍrā *sans mention de kafr*] | | * Banī ʿAffān | Banī ʿAffān II, 3, 166 | 570 | 94 | 6 |
| Ihwā | al-Zamāzima | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Bibā al-Kubrā | Ṭimā | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Balāṣ | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī Baḫīt = Minyat al-Ǧayyid | Minyat al-Ǧayyid | Minyat al-Ǧayyid II, 3, 149 — *À ne pas confondre avec Banī Baḫīt II, 3, 165 qui aurait été une dépendance de Bilifyā* | 400 | 20 | |
| | Kawm al-Ḥammām | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī Salām | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Minyat Yazīd | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |

| *Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ | *Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle) | *Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 | Identification par Ramzī | Superficie du *kafr* | R+MN | MN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barūṭ wa-Manyaluhā | al-Ḍabāʿna | * Minšāt Banī Ḍabʿān = Minšāt al-Ḍabāʿna *non mentionnée comme kafr* | al-Ḍabāʿna II, 3, 146 | 484 | 5 | 3 |
| | Banī Misrā | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Buṭāš | Hanšūr | | disparu I, 471 = ʿIzbat al-Awqāf, terroir de Ṣandafā | | | |
| | Sāqiyat Manūsa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Bilifyā | al-Ḥakāmna | al-Ḥakāmna | al-Ḥakāmna II, 3, 151 | 852 | 39 | 9 |
| | al-Ḍawālta | al-Ḍawālta | al-Dawālṭa II, 3, 152 | 906 | 68 | 22 |
| Talt wa-Hinitfa (Talt IĞ) | Ṭalā | Ṭalā | Ṭalā II, 3, 191 | 1248 | 65 | 5 |
| | al-Qalʿa | | al-Qulayʿa II, 3, 189 | | | |
| | al-Ḥammām | | *Pas dans RQ ; à ne pas comprendre avec al-Ḥammām à l'entrée du Fayyūm* | | | |
| [Dayrūṭ *sans mention de kafr*] | Al-Marīğ = Marğ Banī ʿAfīf *kafr Dahrūṭ* [IĞ seul] | *al-Marīğ = Marğ Banī ʿAfīf = Zāwiyat al-Ğidāmī | Zāwiyat al-Ğidāmī II, 3, 248 | blanc | 24 | 8 |
| [Dimūšya *sans mention de kafr*] | | * Banī ʿAffān | Dimūšya II, 3, 160 *mentionnée aussi comme kafr d'Ihnāsya : c'est bien le même village* | 570 | 94 | 6 |
| Dandīl | Ibšanna | Ibšanna | Ibšannā II, 3, 150 | 1247 | 70 | 17 |
| [Dunqām *sans mention de kafr*] | [Šūšiyya *kafr Dunqām* dans le ms Bodleian] Šūša | * Šūša *kafr Dunqām* | Šūša II, 3, 233 | 1953 | 154 | 32 |
| Dahrūṭ | al-Ğimmīza | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Ğindiyya | al-Ğindiyya | al-Ğindiyya II, 3, 213 | 1971 | 167 | 10 |
| | al-Marāğ | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Burğ al-Šarqī | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Dalāṣ | al-Ḥāfir *min kufūr Dalāṣ* [ms Bodleian] | * al-Ḥāfir *non mentionné comme kafr dans le texte* | al-Ḥāfir (WS) II, 3, 127 ; a changé de nom : auj. al-Riyāḍ | 1034 | 0 | |

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sidmant | Minšāt al-ʿArab | * Minšāt al-ʿArab | I, 417 = Naǧʿ al-ʿArab terroir de Sidmant | blanc | 121 | |
| Safṭ al-ʿUrafā | Kafr al-Sanāra | Kafr al-Sanāra | al-Sanāyra II, 3, 192 | blanc | 20 | 9 |
| | Banī Ṣāliḥ | Kafr Banī Ṣāliḥ | Banī Ṣāliḥ II, 3, 192 | blanc | 98 | 18 |
| [Safṭ Maydūm *sans mention de kafr*] | | Kafr al-Haram | al-Haram II, 3, 128 | 753 | 17 | |
| Safṭ Rašīn | Banī Šarbā wa-Qarūna wa-l-Rabīs ? | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Manšiyya | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Kawm Banī Mūmina | Banī Mūmina = Kafr Banī Mūmina (RĞ) | Banī Mūmina II, 3, 145 | blanc | 59 | 30 |
| | Kawm al-Ḥimīr | Kawm al-Ḥimīr = Kafr al-Ḥimīr (RĞ) | Kawm al-Nūr II, 3, 147 | blanc | 27 | 13 |
| | Kawm Mʿtīn/Maġnīn ? | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Bidahl | Bidahl = nāḥiyat Bidahl (RĞ) | Bidahl II, 3, 144 | 1078 | 149 / 146 | 21 / 20 |
| | Daqhīf | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Sabʿ Wuǧūh = Minyat Ḥarrār | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Ǧazīrat al-Ḥammām | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Ǧazīrat Abū al-Ḥasan | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Ḥaqāf | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Manāyil Safṭ | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Ǧazīrat Ǧabbāna | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Minšāt Abū Ṣalīḥ/Malīḥ | Minšāt Abū Ṣalīḥ = Kafr Minšāt Abū Ṣalīḥ (RĞ) | Minšāt Abū Milīḥ ? II, 3, 148 | blanc | 35 | 18 |
| | Kawm al-Nawāwīs | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |

| *Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ | *Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle) | *Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 | Identification par Ramzī | Superficie du *kafr* | R+MN | MN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Banī Ṣā../Ḥā.. *ajouté par une autre main* | Banī Ḥilla = Kafr Banī Ḥallī (RĞ) | Banī Ḥilla II, 3, 145 | 201 | 31/14 / 31 | |
| | Fazāra *ajouté par une autre main* | Fazāra = Kafr Fazāra (RĞ) | Fazāra II, 3, 147 | blanc | 61 | 28 |
| Saylā | Kawm Wālī | Kawm Wālī | Kawm Wālī II, 3, 224 | 783 | 62 | 8 |
| | Kawm Marzūq | | Marzūq II, 3, 224 | | | |
| | Kawm Ḥilwa | Kawm Ḥilwa (RĞ) | ID, IĞ = Ḥilwa II, 3, 217 | 1028 | 150 | |
| | Danāza al-Qibliyya | Danāza | al-Rawḍa (depuis 1930) II, 3, 221-222 | blanc | blanc | |
| | Danāza al-Baḥriyya | | *id.* | | | |
| Samalūṭ | Baqarlanka | * Baqarlanka | Banī al-Ḥakam II, 3, 231 (changement de nom en 1931) | 572 | 20 | |
| | Kawm al-Wafī | * Kawm al-Wafī | Kawm al-Lūfī II, 3, 241 | blanc | 47 | 3 |
| Šarūna | Minyat Banī Ḫālid | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Ǧazīrat ʿĀmir | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Šulqām | *blanc* | | | | | |
| Sumusṭā | Mazūra | Mazūra | Mazūra II, 3, 148 | 1594 | 181 | |
| | Bahlūl | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Diqnāš | Diqnāš | disparu I, 247 : *ḥawḍ* Diqnāš, terroir de Mazūra | | | |
| | Ṭūḫ | Kafr Ṭūḫ | *Pas dans RQ* | 455 | 33 | 20 / 17 |
| | al-Bandalā | al-Bandala | *Pas dans RQ* | 668 | 56 | |
| | al-Duwayr | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ | * ʿAṭf Ḫallāṣ *pas de mention de kafr* | disparu I, 337 : Naǧʿ Ġīḍān, terroir de Mazūra | 275 | 7 | |
| | ʿAṭf Ǧamāḥa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Kunayyisa | al-Kunayyisa | disparu I, 102 | 448 | | |

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e^ siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | al-Qaṣā | al-Qaṣaba | al-Qaṣaba II, 3, 143 | 339 | 35 | 14 |
| | al-Ḥaraǧa | | al-Ḥaraǧa II, 3, 151 : Mūṣ al-Ḥaraǧa dans ID, Mūš al-Ḥaraǧa dans IĞ, Mūša dans le *Muʿǧam al-Buldān* | | | |
| | al-Šanṭūr | al-Šanṭūr | al-Šanṭūr II, 3, 136 (première mention dans un acte de *waqf* de 841/1437–1438) | 719 | 55 | 15 |
| | | Sarabū | Sarabū II, 3, 146 | | 15 | 3 |
| Šinrā | Šarāhiyya | | *Pas dans RQ ; ne pas confondre avec Šarahī II, 3, 161* | | | |
| | Ǧamhūǧ | Ǧamhūǧ | al-Ǧamhūd II, 3, 186 | *lam tumsaḥ* | | |
| | Kawm al-Raml | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Ṣafaniyya | Manyal B.rūrkām (?) | | Manyal Banī Warkān II, 3, 192 | | | |
| | al-Masība wa-arāḍīhā | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Qabālat al-ʿĀmil | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Qāy | al-Zirība | al-Zirība | Banī Hānī II, 3, 166 dépendance de Babīǧ Ġīlān (change de nom en 1934) | 876 | 10 | |
| | Mayyāna | Mayyāna | Mayyāna II, 3, 164 | 1023 | 65 | 34 |
| | al-Bawāqa wa-Halāla wa-Ḫalīǧ al-Laban | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Manyal Ilyās Abī al-Ṭayyib | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Manyal Ilyās Abī Sālim | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Idrāsya | | Idrāsya II, 3, 150 | | | |
| | al-ʿAǧāʾiz | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Bahsamūn | | al-Bahsamūn II, 3, 143 | | | |

| *Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ | *Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV[e] siècle) | *Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528 | Identification par Ramzī | Superficie du *kafr* | R+MN | MN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ġayyāḍa | | *Ne pas confondre avec Ġayyāḍa II, 3, 141 (al-Šarqiyya) et 146 (al-Ġarbiyya), sur les deux rives du Nil* | | | |
| | Minyat Banī Rabīʿa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Minhirū | | Minhirū II, 3, 169 | 858 | | 12 |
| | *autre main* : Ḥāğir Banī Sulaymān | | Ḥāğir Banī Sulaymān II 3, 159 | | | |
| | *7 autres kufūr (10 noms) presque illisibles dans l'index* | | | | | |
| | | * Maʿṣarat Qāy *non mentionnée comme kafr* | Maʿṣarat Naʿsān II, 3, 163 | 1346 | 98 | |
| | | Minšāt Ḫalbūs | Minšāt Hidīb II, 3, 168 (change de nom en 1938) | 373 | 19 | |
| | | al-Ḥarīğa | al-Ḥarağa II, 3, 151 | 498 | 17 | |
| | | Minšāt Abū ʿUmar | *Pas dans RQ* | 782 | 124 | 79 |
| | Dušāša (ms Bodleian) | * Dišāša | Dišāša II, 3, 138 | 1134 | 79 | 10 |
| | Barāwa (ms Bodleian) | * Barāwa | Barāwa al-Waqf II, 3, 137 | 1088 | 87 | 14 |
| Qilla wa-Ṭuwwa | Birkat Barāw / Birkat Tirrū *min ḥuqūq Qilla wa-Ṭuwwa* dans le ms Bodleian] | * Birkat Barāwa | Nazlat al-Mašārqa II, 3, 164 | 324 | | |
| | Uḏun al-Fār | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Šūbak | | al-Šūbak II, 3, 152 | | | |
| Qulūsunā | Ğawāda | * Ğawāda | Ğawāda II, 3, 232 | 363 | 30 | 12 |
| | al-Sanīsa/Sabsiyya ? | | al-Sirīriyya ? II, 3, 229–230 | | | |
| | Tall Maġāyis | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| Minšāt Qāy = Minšāt al-ʿAwāwna | Šarāhī | Šarāhī | Šarahī II, 3, 161 | 1127 | 176 | 15 |

| ***Nāḥiya* avec *kufūr* dans IĞ, RI et RĞ** | ***Kufūr* dans les index des RI (date probable : XIV^e siècle)** | ***Kufūr* dans le texte même des RI, *i.e.* dans le *tarbīʿ* de 933/1528** | **Identification par Ramzī** | **Superficie du *kafr*** | **R+MN** | **MN** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manfasawayh = Banī Suwayf | Kawm Abū Turkī | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Barānqa | | *Est-il identique à al-Barānqa II, 3, 136 ?* | | | |
| | al-Qarāṭiṭa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī Hārūn | | Banī Hārūn II, 3, 157 | | | |
| | al-Mazīra ? | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Manhalīt | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Banī Qurayš | Banī Maqraš wa-Banī ʿAzāz = Banī Qurayš (RĞ) | Manqarīš II, 3, 168 | 982 / 382 | 43 | 18 |
| | Ṭansā | *Ṭansā al-ʿĀmira = Ṭansā Banī Mālū | Ṭansā Banī Mālū II, 3, 141 | 1648 | 69 | 9 |
| | al-Šakāliba | al-Šakāliba (RĞ) | *Pas dans RQ* | 265 | | |
| | al-Baḫīsa ? | al-Baḫīsa ? | *Pas dans RQ* | 769 | 35 | 15 |
| | | al-Raf... (RĞ) | | 366 | | |
| Manqaṭīn | Šarfa | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Ṭarṭara | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Umm Kamāl | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Balāda | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | Kannada ? | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| | al-Ṣufūf | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |
| [Maydūm wa-l-Ḥūmiyya wa-l-Urṭuqiyya *sans mention de kafr*] | | * Banī ʿUṯmān | *Pas dans RQ* | 330 | 0 | |
| Tazmant wa-l-sāḥil bihā *(IĞ seule)* | Barwa *(IĞ seule)* | | *Pas dans RQ* | | | |

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# The Rise of Provincial Arab Ruling Families in Mamluk Egypt, 1350–1517

The fifteenth century was an age of Arab power in the Egyptian countryside.[1] During the final century of Mamluk rule, Arab or Berber groups acquired power and authority in most provinces of the Delta and Upper Egypt, and become more visible to us than in previous centuries, both in chronicles and in biographical dictionaries. Arab elite families were also the beneficiaries of more *iqṭāʿ* grants and acted as officials of the Mamluk state, in some places replacing the *kāshif*s or governors. Their prominence was noted by European pilgrims and merchants, who described them as the "lords of the countryside." Their status was then endorsed by the Ottoman conquerors, who formalized the key role of Arab and Berber ruling houses in provincial administration.

This rise in the power of provincial Arab elites is now well known, but it has not yet received a systematic study. While scholarship acknowledges that many Arab groups were engaged in sedentary cultivation and that Arab houses were co-opted into Mamluk bureaucracy, it still views them as chiefly pastoralist and opportunistic, "existing almost in parallel to Mamluk society."[2] Thus, the Arabs are seen as preying on the weakness of the Mamluk state, as opposed to settled agriculture, and as a cause of economic and political decline. This is also reflected in terminology: modern historiography uses the term "Bedouin," even though the fifteenth-century Arabic sources mostly call the Arab (and Berber) clansmen of the fifteenth century *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* and almost never *badw*.

This essay makes three broad arguments that seek to better integrate the history of the Arab and Berber elites within wider trends in fifteenth-century Mamluk history. First, I argue here that the Arab families that came to power in

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[1] See a good recent summary of the secondary literature in Amina Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (New York, 2015), 48–51, mostly relying on Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt,* vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 290–317; and Stuart Borsch, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study* (Austin, 2005), 51–53. On the Ottoman endorsement of Arab and Berber provincial power, see N. Michel, *L'Égypte des villages autour du seizième siècle* (Leuven, 2018), 45ff.

[2] Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans,* 48.


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the fifteenth century emerged from within the peasantry, either as the armed elements of village society or landless peasants who lost their tenancy rights. The spread of Arab identities among Egyptian peasants is well-attested for the Ayyubid and earlier Mamluk periods, as is shown in the Fayyum tax register of al-Nābulusī from 1245 and in the genealogical treatises of al-Ḥamdānī (d. ca. 1280) and al-ʿUmarī (d. 1349).[3] According to these Ayyubid and early Mamluk bureaucrats, Egyptian Muslim village communities almost always self-identified with Arab or Berber clans. This revised understanding of Arab identity in the Mamluk Egyptian context allows us to view the Arab provincial elites of the fifteenth century as arising within this milieu of village clans, effectively the shaykhs of territorial confederacies.

Second, I argue that the prominence of provincial Arab and Berber ruling families in the fifteenth century should be seen as coming on the heels of a series of earlier major Arab revolts against Mamluk rule, mainly—but not exclusively—in Upper Egypt, with mass peasant participation. Between 1250 and 1350, these armed uprisings by Egyptian Arab clansmen presented the Mamluk sultans with their most persistent domestic challenge. The first major Arab revolt was directed against al-Muʿizz Aybak, and led by the Sharīf Ḥiṣn al-Dīn Ibn Thaʿlab from his base in Dayrūṭ in Upper Egypt. The suppression of Ḥiṣn al-Dīn's rebellion was followed by smaller-scale conflicts, peaking in a major outburst of violence circa 1300, when government granaries were targeted and tax collection disrupted. The largest Arab rebellion of the Mamluk period, which took place in the aftermath of the first outbreak of the plague, was led by an Upper Egyptian Arab leader called al-Aḥdab ("the hunchback"). Although al-Aḥdab's rebellion was quelled in 1354, its leader was subsequently co-opted by the Mamluk state as a provincial administrator with responsibility for tax collection in parts of Upper Egypt, ushering in a new stage in the relationship between the Mamluk regime and the Arab elites of the Egyptian countryside.

Third, I argue that the rise of Arab elite families was a side effect of the decline of the *iqṭāʿ* regime in Egypt. The fifteenth century saw a sharp drop in the number of villages given out as *iqṭāʿ,* and a steep rise in the number of villages either endowed as *waqf* or handed over to the sultan's private fisc, the *Dīwān al-Mufrad*.[4] As long as the *iqṭāʿ* regime was in its heyday, between 1250 and 1350, the officers of the Mamluk army went out to the countryside to collect the land tax

[3] Yossef Rapoport, *Rural Economy and Tribal Society in Islamic Egypt: A Study of al-Nābulusī's* Villages of the Fayyum (Turnhout, 2018); Sarah Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen der Mamluken: Beduinen im politischen Leben Ägyptens im 8./14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2016).

[4] On this process, see Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt* (Chicago, 2015); Adam Sabra, "The Rise of a New Class? Land Tenure in Fifteenth-Century Egypt," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004).


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directly, bypassing the need for a large provincial bureaucracy and garrisons, but this structure was based on the ability of individual *iqṭāʿ*-holders to exert sufficient leverage vis-à-vis the peasant communities. After 1350, and especially from the beginning of the fifteenth century, that leverage was eroding and Mamluk power in large parts of the Egyptian countryside was increasingly limited.[5] Instead, the state often devolved provincial powers to Arab ruling families, in an admission of Mamluk inability to collect taxes in several provinces in Upper and Lower Egypt. Arab elites, brutally suppressed in the first century of Mamluk rule, were now indispensable for maintaining control and delivering agricultural surpluses.[6]

The following essay follows the rise of Arab and Berber provincial houses in Egypt from 1350 up to the end of Mamluk period. The aim is not a comprehensive history. The sources for the fifteenth century, both documentary and literary, are very rich and cannot be exhausted here. Rather, the aim is to trigger a paradigm shift by highlighting key trends and texts. The structure of the essay is as follows. The first section examines al-Aḥdab's uprising and its consequences. The following two sections discuss the rise of the Berber Hawwārah in Upper Egypt and the Arab ʿĀʾidh of the eastern Delta (al-Sharqīyah), the latter examined through the lens of the St. Catherine documentary corpus.[7] The second part of the essay presents other evidence for the rise of Arab power from cadastral registers and from European accounts. The final section examines the impact of the cooptation of Arab and Berber elites into provincial administration on their relationship with the wider peasantry.

[5] On this withdrawal from the perspective of the center, see Jo van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: A Critical Edition, Annotated Translation, and Study of* al-Ḏahab al-masbūk fī ḏikr man ḥağğa min al-ḫulafāʾ wa-l-mulūk, Bibliotheca Maqriziana vol. 4. (Leiden, 2017), 21.

[6] Stuart Borsch has argued that the Mamluk military class responded by closing ranks against the villagers. As for the rise of the Arab tribes, he argued that these were nomads who benefited from more pasturage areas in areas that were no longer fit for cultivation. Part of the problem with this argument is that in Egypt, unlike in Europe, unirrigated lands do not provide good pasture, certainly not for horses and camels. See Borsch, "Thirty Years after Lopez, Miskimin, and Udovitch," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004): 191–201; idem, "Plague Depopulation and Irrigation Decay in Medieval Egypt," *The Medieval Globe* 1, no. 1 (2014): 125–56.

[7] The St. Catherine documents are presented in Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai,* Publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, 1 (Baltimore, 1955). The documents of the St Catherine corpus that have been edited to date are available through the Arabic Papyrology Database website (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp), both in Arabic and in translation. Microfilms of the documents are available from the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov) under the heading "Arabic Firmans."


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## The al-Aḥdab Uprising

In 1350, Upper Egypt was the focus of a full-scale Arab uprising, for the third time since the establishment of the Mamluk state. This revolt was led by Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil, nicknamed al-Aḥdab, of the previously unknown ʿArak tribal group. The rebellion was quashed only in 1354 or 1355, after five years of disobedience and in the face of a large military expedition from Cairo.[8] Al-Aḥdab's rebellion coincided with the outbreak of the plague, and undoubtedly exploited that moment of crisis: al-Maqrīzī pairs the plague and al-Aḥdab's rebellion as two calamities that afflicted the reign of Sultan Ḥasan.[9] The long-term consequences of this uprising for the history of Upper Egypt cannot be overstated. It represented the rise of new Arab elites at the expense of the groups that had dominated the area since the late Fatimid period. The rebellion also signaled the beginnings of an organic alliance at the local level between Arab provincial elites and Sufi saints. Ultimately, al-Aḥdab's rebellion was focused on establishing his authority to collect taxes on behalf of the Mamluk elites. Despite his military defeat, that aim was achieved. Al-Aḥdab was granted the responsibility of maintaining order and delivering taxes in parts of Upper Egypt and was remunerated by an *iqṭāʿ* taken from these local tax revenues.

It has been argued that al-Aḥdab's uprising was made possible because nomadic Bedouins proved more resilient to the plague, making them relatively more numerous and powerful.[10] This demographic explanation is, I believe, unfounded. First, as pointed out by Büssow-Schmitz, Bedouin communities were no less impacted than other groups; in fact, both al-Buḥayrah and al-Sharqīyah, two provinces with significant mobile populations, had reports of very high mor-

[8] See the narrative of the events in Jean-Claude Garcin, "al-Aḥdab, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3rd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573–3912_ei3_COM_25005; idem, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Egypte médiévale, Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976), 381–85; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen;* idem, "Rules of Communication and Politics between Bedouin and Mamluk Elites in Egypt: The Case of the al-Aḥdab Revolt, c.1353," *Eurasian Studies Journal* 9, nos. 1–2 (2011): 67–104.

[9] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934–58), 2:3:843. The late 1340s saw other *ʿurbān* disturbances in Upper Egypt, only briefly reported by al-Maqrīzī: see ibid., 2:731 (highway robbery by *ʿurbān* in Upper Egypt and the Fayyum), 2:752 (Mamluk expedition fails to capture the culprits, who had fled to the desert, and instead loots and kills the agriculturalists *[aṣḥāb al-zurūʿ]* left behind). See also Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 75–80.

[10] Lawrence I. Conrad, "Die Pest und ihr soziales Umfeld im Nahen Osten des frühen Mittelalters," *Der Islam* 73, no. 1 (1996): 81–112; Borsch, *Black Death,* 53; Raymond Ruhaak, "An Analysis of What Fostered Resilience of the Irish Sea Gaels and the Bedouin of the Mamluk Frontier Leading up to the Black Death," in *Living with Nature and Things: Contributions to a New Social History of the Middle Islamic Periods,* ed. Bethany J. Walker and Abdelkader Al Ghouz (Bonn, 2020), 221–58.


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talities.[11] The St. Catherine documents also show that the Sinai Arabs suffered a sustained period of dearth and shortages instigated by the plague.[12] Second, hypothesizing about Arab empowerment due to the differential demographic effects of the plague rests on an untenable equation of Arab identity and nomadic way of life. As a matter of fact, the rebelling Arabs, during al-Aḥdab's rebellion and during its Upper Egyptian precursors in the earlier Mamluk period, were mostly sedentary peasants.

We owe everything we know about this rebellion to al-Maqrīzī. The brief accounts by Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Duqmāq, while written closer to the events they describe, do little more than confirm the mere existence of the rebellion.[13] Al-Maqrīzī, on the other hand, gives us an exceptionally detailed and informative account. He first narrates the events of al-Aḥdab's rebellion as brief notices interspersed within the annals of the years 749–54/1348–54. He then provides a long, sustained narrative of Amir Shaykhū's military expedition aimed at suppressing the rebellion, which took place between Dhū al-Qaʿdah 754 and Muḥarram 755 (December 1353 and February 1354). This narrative begins with lamentation about the neglect of the affairs of Upper Egypt after the death of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, then expands on al-Aḥdab's increasing hold over the region of Asyut in the years leading to Shaykhū's expedition, and ends with three poems composed by members of the Mamluk elite that celebrate Shaykhū's military success. Al-Maqrīzī relied on a fourteenth-century source, probably from within the military elite. There are no eye-witnesses accounts and the material appears to be derived from the reports relayed back to Cairo at the time.[14]

[11] Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 14–17.

[12] The years 1347–53 show an unprecedented wave of harassment by local Arabs, pressing the monks for petty provisions, as attested in several documents of the St Catherine corpus. See P.AtiyaHandlistSinai35 (= P.St.Catherine I 12); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 37 (= P.St.Catherine I 13 A; re-edited and translated in P.SternMamlukPetitions 2 verso); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 36 (= P.St.Catherine I 14); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 30 (= P.St.Catherine I 15, re-edited and translated in P.SternMamlukPetitions). Here and throughout the article, references to the St Catherine documents follow the system of identification established by the Arabic Papyrology Database (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp).

[13] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar wa-dīwān al-mubtadaʾ wa-al-khabar fī ayyām al-ʿArab wa-al-ʿAjam wa-al-Barbar wa-man ʿāṣarahum min dhawī al-sulṭān al-akbar* (Beirut, 1956–61), 5:968; Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah fī al-dawlah al-Turkīyah: min Kitāb al-jawhar al-thamīn fī siyar al-khulafāʾ wa-al-mulūk wa-al-salāṭīn (min sanat 637 ḥattá sanat 805 H.),* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 1999), 173; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Wiesbaden, 1960–75), 1:1:550–51.

[14] The long narrative account is found in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:911–15; idem, *Al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut, 1997) 4:191–96.


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Al-Maqrīzī traces the beginning of the revolt to Rajab 749, with fighting between the state-sponsored Banū Hilāl, supported by the Mamluk *kāshif* of Upper Egypt, and the ʿArak, a group not previously mentioned in any of our extant sources. This battle ended with the victory of the ʿArak, who entered the provincial capital of Asyut, and with the death of the Mamluk *kāshif.* Two years later, the ʿArak won another major battle against the Hilāl, in which a second Mamluk *kāshif* sent from Cairo was stripped of his possessions.[15] Al-Maqrīzī also reports inter-clan fighting in the Middle Egyptian regions of al-Bahnasāwīyah and al-Aṭfīḥīyah, leading to the deaths of many Arabs *(ʿurbān).* The date of these clashes is not clear, although the leaders were executed by the Mamluks in 755/1354–55.[16] Garcin insisted that the inter-tribal conflict in Upper Egypt was split along Qays and Yaman lines, with the Hilālī Qays siding with the government in Cairo, but al-Maqrīzī's narrative has no trace of such divisions, nor any evidence that the ʿArak considered themselves Yaman.[17]

The ʿArak uprising exposed the weakness of the Banū Hilāl, the state-sponsored *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt, who were repeatedly defeated by al-Aḥdab's forces. After a Mamluk force attacked the ʿArak in Shawwāl 752/November–December 1351, causing the men to flee to the mountains, the Banū Hilāl were invited to take revenge on the defenseless ʿArak sites. The Hilālīs captured the women and looted grains, flour, small cattle, and water-skins. The sultan was thereafter informed that "the land is sown, its *ʿurbān* are in obedience, and its inhabitants have settled" *(al-bilād qad khuḍḍirat arāḍīhā wa-aṭāʿa ʿurbānuhā al-ʿuṣāh wa-tawaṭṭana ahluhā).*[18] The ʿArak retaliated by attacking the Hilālīs in the strategic town of Ṭimā, forcing the Mamluk authorities to establish a military presence there in the spring of 1352 so as to secure the harvest.[19] This seems to have convinced the Mamluk authorities that the Banū Hilāl were no longer of any value. During Amir Shaykhū's major expedition, he summoned four hundred Hilālī

[15] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:79, 121.

[16] Ibid., 191 (on the clashes), 195 (executions). Al-Maqrīzī compares the eruption of these clashes with the successful policies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who used to plow the lands of disobedient Arabs with oxen and kill them.

[17] Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 363, 372ff; idem, "al-Aḥdab"; Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 74.

[18] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:149 (for Shawwāl 752/November–December 1351); ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:855.

[19] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:153 (for 753/1352–53). In later decades, al-Aḥdab's son Abū Bakr (d. 1397) established a commercial *qayṣarīyah* in Ṭimā, demonstrating its economic importance (Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 49).


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cavalry under the pretext of seeking their support, then executed them, seizing their horses and weapons.[20]

A key feature of al-Aḥdab's rebellion was its explicit association with large-scale tax collection. According to al-Maqrīzī, al-Aḥdab established himself as a local potentate, displaying rudimentary regalia and ruling over the peasantry *(nafadha amruhu fī al-fallāḥīn).*[21] This meant that taxation was subject to his approval. Whenever an *iqṭāʿ*-holder did not receive the land-tax from the village assigned to him, he would ask al-Aḥdab to write a note to the *fallāḥ* in question and to the people of his village *(balad).* Al-Aḥdab would then ensure that the soldier received his due. Beyond his interactions with individual *iqṭāʿ*-holders, al-Aḥdab presented himself to the *kāshif* and to the governor as their local fixer, promising to sort out any problems they had. Al-Maqrīzī places this account in the annals of 755/1354–55, but it may have been an aspect of al-Aḥdab's career even before the hostilities began.[22]

By Shaʿbān–Shawwāl 754/September–December 1353, *ʿurbān* associated with al-Aḥdab mounted an attack against local sugar presses owned by either the state or by senior amirs. Al-Maqrīzī reports that they attacked the presses near Mallawī, north of Asyut, and looted all the sugar products, from candy to molasses. They also destroyed the waterwheels, used for irrigating the sugar cane, and slaughtered the oxen used to drive the presses *(wa-mālū ʿalá al-maʿāṣir wa-al-sawāqī fa-nahabū ḥawāṣilahā min al-qunūd wa-al-sukkar wa-al-aʿsāl wa-dhabaḥū al-abqār).* This was an unusual act, and al-Maqrīzī mentions it twice in his narrative.[23] As the most lucrative rural investment in Upper Egypt, the presses were symbols of Mamluk power. In addition, they might have been diverting water away from the arable lands of nearby villages. Another attack on infrastructure targeted the dams of the province of al-Ashmūnayn.[24] Al-Maqrīzī also mentions

[20] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193.

[21] Ibid., 191 (for 755/1354–55); See also Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 76ff.

[22] Al-Aḥdab was not the first Arab leader to offer *iqṭāʿ*-holders tax collection services. A certain Miqdām ibn Shammās al-Badawī operated in a similar fashion in Upper Egypt in the first decades of the fourteenth century. He was captured by Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and then told to settle on new lands reclaimed from the desert through the Alexandria Canal. Miqdām brought these lands under cultivation and established waterwheels for permanent irrigation (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah,* ed. Sālim al-Karnūkī (Hyderabad, 1929–31), 4:356–57). Ibn Ḥajar emphasizes his wealth and extraordinary number of slaves and progeny, as well as his control of agricultural lands. Miqdām was identified as a *badawī,* one of the *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt. Yet his specific clan affiliation is not mentioned, suggesting that he did not belong to any existing elites. This is another similarity between Miqdām and al-Aḥdab, who also emerged among the previously undistinguished ʿArak.

[23] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:896, 911.

[24] Ibid., 896.


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other more standard targets: highway robbery and depriving Mamluk amirs and soldiers of their land tax revenues *(mughall).*[25]

When the *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt gained knowledge of Amir Shaykhū's impending expedition in Shawwāl 754/November 1353, many of al-Aḥdab's supporters fled southward to Nubia, while others hid in caves and hideouts prepared in advance. Al-Maqrīzī reports that some decided to go on pilgrimage, with the caravan to Mecca leaving around that time. Informants recognized a group of ten of them, and they were arrested and executed. Their property was confiscated and handed over to the Mamluk *amīr jandār,* "since they were his *fallāḥ*s" *(li-anna kānū fallāḥīhi).* As Muḥammad Ziyādah, the modern editor of the *Sulūk,* notes, this anecdote demonstrates that the *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* of Egypt were peasants, and that their revolts were driven by economic issues and by the violence of the Mamluk *iqṭāʿ* regime.[26] In al-Bahnasāwīyah, the Mamluk forces tortured the women and children until they revealed the hiding places of the men. Here too, the context is surely that of sedentary villagers.[27]

Al-Aḥdab himself headed towards Aswan, leading a coalition of several Arab groups, some identified by name (Juhaynah and Kalb) and others by territory (Arabs of Manfalūṭ). Al-Aḥdab's men were accompanied by their families, their grains, and their cattle; they must have learned not to leave them behind at the mercy of the Mamluk soldiers. Al-Maqrīzī gives the number of al-Aḥdab's army at 10,000 cavalry and many more infantry; these numbers may well be exaggerated in order to amplify Shaykhū's eventual victory. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the Mamluks faced a serious challenge. The expeditionary force consisted of twelve senior amirs, of which the majority went to Upper Egypt (a few were sent to the Delta to suppress the Arabs there, who were acting independently of al-Aḥdab). Once Shaykhū arrived in Asyut, the reported size of al-Aḥdab's army made him send for reinforcements from Cairo. Five hundred cavalry were made available to him, but Shaykhū changed his mind, worried that such a move would raise the morale of the rebels.[28] Another indication of the size of al-Aḥdab's army is the booty Shaykhū brought back from Upper Egypt at the end of his campaign: 2,300 horses, 2,500 camels, 700 donkeys, and numerous small cattle, as well as 100 loads of spears, 80 loads of swords, and 30 loads of leather shields.[29]

[25] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:191.

[26] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:899 and note; idem, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:183.

[27] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 195. Ibn Duqmāq reports the same figures for the loads of arms, and somewhat lower figures for the booty of riding animals: 1,700 horses, 500 camels, 700 donkeys (*Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173).


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The final showdown between al-Aḥdab and Shaykhū's army took place in a place called Wādī al-Ghizlān, probably near Aswan. The account of the battle itself appears somewhat embellished. Mamluk victory is explained by the dust *(ghibār)* raised by the attacking cavalry blinding the Arab forces; this is reminiscent of the dust that conventionally precedes battle scenes in the popular epic of Sīrat ʿAntar. Shaykhū also managed to attack the Arab infantry from the rear, where their families and goods were placed. By morning Shaykhū sent forces to collect the booty—cash and jewelry, waterskins, textiles, and cattle—and enslave the women and children, who were subsequently sold in the markets of Cairo. The Arab men who fled to the desert died of thirst or threw themselves from the mountaintops to avoid being captured. Those who hid in caves suffocated in smoke from fires lit by the Mamluk army at the entrances to their hideouts. Ibn Duqmāq reports that the amirs assembled the severed heads of executed *ʿurbān* into *masṭabah* platforms. Ibn Iyās, repeating the story half a century later, evokes a comparison with Hulegu's skull pyramids of Baghdad.[30] Al-Maqrīzī is slightly less dramatic, stating that the soldiers threw the bodies of the Arabs into a communal pit and raised the *masṭabah* over it with their insignia.[31]

Beyond the direct military confrontation, the Mamluk authorities turned the campaign into a country-wide effort to disarm village communities. In the Delta provinces of al-Sharqīyah, al-Gharbīyah, and al-Buḥayrah, Mamluk raids rounded up hundreds of captives and horses. It was optimistically announced that no horses were left with the *ʿurbān* in the Delta.[32] Following the victory over al-Aḥdab, Shaykhū's forces combed Upper Egypt for arms and horses. This led to further executions, with poles carrying the bodies of captured Arabs lining the banks of the Nile from Ṭimā to Minyat Ibn Khaṣīb, some 100 kilometers to the north of Asyut. Two thousand captives were taken, though only 1,200 made it to Cairo alive, and most of those died in jail over the coming months. Such mass executions led al-Maqrīzī to declare that no *badawī* remained in Upper Egypt.[33]

The use of the term *badawī* here is significant, as it is meant to distinguish fighting, mobile Arabs from the rest of the Arab peasantry. It is also reflected in the language of an order sent out to all provinces preventing any *badawī* or

[30] Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 86–88; Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173. Ibn Iyās reported that the Mamluks "cut off the heads of the Bedouin and the peasants *(fallāḥīn)* of the villages of Upper Egypt, using their skulls to build *maṣṭabah* monuments and minarets on the bank of the Nile like those built by Hulegu in Baghdad *(fa-lā zāla yaqṭaʿu min ruʾūs al-ʿurbān wa-al-fallāḥīn alladhīna bi-ḍiyāʿ al-ṣaʿīd ḥattá baná min ruʾūsihim maṣāṭib wa-maʾādhin ʿalá shāṭiʾ baḥr al-Nīl kamā faʿala Hūlākū bi-Baghdād)*" (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 1:1:550).

[31] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193–94.

[32] Ibid., 193.

[33] Ibid., 195.


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*fallāḥ* from riding a horse, with the sole exception of guards responsible for road security *(arbāb al-adrāk).* To prevent confusion, qadis and professional witnesses of the countryside were ordered to ride mules and cart-horses *(akādīsh).*[34] Headmen *(mashāyikh)* of the *ʿurbān* and road protectors *(arbāb al-adrāk)* were asked to identify whether those found with horses or swords were local residents; the locals were released while the rest remained in custody. At a second stage, all the confiscated horses were presented and any peasant *(fallāḥ)* who recognized his horse was compensated by deducting its sale price from his land tax.[35] As this account suggests, all elite members of rural society owned horses as a matter of course; the only difference between a peasant and a *badawī* was the level of obedience to the central authorities.

Instead of suppressing Arab power, however, what actually emerged after the rebellion was a new Mamluk-Arab *modus vivendi,* in which al-Aḥdab was recognized as responsible for tax collection and security in the regions of Upper Egypt under his authority. In Rabīʿ I 755/April 1354, al-Aḥdab appeared in Cairo accompanied by a Sufi saintly figure called Abū Qāsim al-Ṭaḥāwī, who interceded on al-Aḥdab's behalf with the amir Shaykhū, the de facto authority in Cairo at the time and commander of the expeditionary force that had defeated al-Aḥdab a year earlier. Through the mediation of al-Ṭaḥāwī, al-Aḥdab was given the responsibility for provincial security *(darak al-bilād)* and for collection of all grains and revenues *(yaltazimu bi-taḥṣīl jamīʿ ghilālihā wa-amwālihā)* in the lands under his authority. He undertook a personal guarantee for any show of disobedience in these lands and pledged to receive governors and *kāshif*s sent by the sultan.

After this agreement, al-Aḥdab was given robes of honor and an *iqṭāʿ,* and sent back to Upper Egypt to assume his newly confirmed duties.[36] According to Ibn Khaldūn's very brief note, al-Aḥdab received an *amān* in return for his promise that the Arabs would avoid riding horses and carrying weapons and would occupy themselves with cultivation *(wa-yuqbilū ʿalá al-filāḥah).*[37] Ibn Duqmāq simply says that al-Aḥdab was reinstated in his previous position.[38] Thus, after the

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 192, 195. According to the shorter account of Ibn Duqmāq, the decree specified that no *fallāḥ* should be riding a horse or purchase one (*Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173). Tadmurī, the modern editor of the *Nafḥah,* read here *lā yarkibu faras wa-lā yashtarī qimāsh* ("not to ride horses or purchase textiles"), but the variant *wa-lā yashtarī farasan,* which is found in Ibn Duqmāq's *Al-Jawhar al-thamīn fī siyar al-mulūk wa-al-salāṭīn* (ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī [Beirut, 1985], 2:204), makes more sense in this context. See Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 65; idem, "Rules of Communication," 93.

[36] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:197.

[37] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar,* 5:968.

[38] Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173.


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frenzy of bloodshed against the rural population of Upper Egypt, al-Aḥdab had come back to his role as a local fixer for the Cairo government, overseeing the collection of taxes in return for a share of the local revenue.

The involvement of a Sufi shaykh as a companion of an Arab leader was a precedent which would become commonplace in the following centuries. Al-Ṭaḥāwī's saintly presence created common ground between the Mamluk amirs and the rural rebel. On the one hand, he was seen as a saint of the "Arabs," and he stayed in a Sufi lodge known as *zāwiyat al-ʿurbān* in the Qarafa cemetery (this lodge is not previously attested). Shaykhū then renovated the *zāwiyah,* so the Sufi enjoyed patronage from both sides.[39] Sufi saints spread in the Egyptian and Syrian countryside during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, simultaneously with the spread of Arab identities in the same regions. Now, with the cooptation of provincial elites, saints were interwoven into the structure of Arab ruling houses, forming a mutually beneficial alliance.

## The Hawwārah in Upper Egypt

Al-Aḥdab's revolt and his cooptation into the provincial administration were a harbinger of things to come. As the fourteenth century came to a close, and especially under the reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, Arab provincial leaders assumed responsibility for tax collection and local security in return for extensive, localized *iqṭāʿ* grants. In Upper Egypt the descendants of al-Aḥdab gave way to the Berber Hawwārah, who would go on to become the most successful provincial clan in the history of Islamic Egypt. By the 1410s, the Hawwārah leaders became the effective rulers of much of Upper Egypt, with official appointment from the Mamluk sultan. At the same time, other Arab houses established themselves in the Delta provinces, becoming the de facto governors of the Sharqīyah, and major power brokers in al-Buḥayrah, Gharbīyah, and Minūfīyah, as well as in the hinterland of Gaza in Palestine.

Hawwārah dominance in Upper Egypt dates to 782/1380–81, when a leading family migrated from al-Buḥayrah in the western Delta to Jirjā in Upper Egypt. The Hawwārah were present in al-Buḥayrah from 662/1263–64, when Baybars provided Hawwārah groups with written permissions *(ḥujaj)* for the cultivation of the province.[40] Ibn Khaldūn reports, probably for the middle of the four-

[39] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:197; Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 89.

[40] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo, 1923–), 30:107; cited in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 2:13. Baybars also sent a *muqaddam* of the Hawwārah to force the Arabs of Barqa, further west, to pay taxes on their cattle and fields. In 672/1273–74, a force led by Muḥammad al-Hawwārī defeated the Arabs of Barqa and compelled them to pay their dues (Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd ʿAllāh ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar,* vol. 8, ed. Ulrich Haarmann [Cairo, 1971], 173). Prior to the Mamluk period, groups of the Hawwārah are


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teenth century, that the Hawwārah were one of several transhumant Berber groups cultivating lands in Buḥayrah *(wa-yuʿmirūna arḍahā bi-al-sukná wa-al-falḥ)* and paying land-tax on them *(wa-ʿalayhum maghārim al-falḥ),* while maintaining seasonal migration towards Barqa.[41] Their move to Upper Egypt coincided with Barqūq's ascent to the throne. Al-Maqrīzī states that the move was initiated by the sultan, who gave Ismāʿīl ibn Māzin al-Hawwārī the right to cultivate the desolate lands of Jirjā.[42] According to al-Qalqashandī, a contemporary observer of the same events, the Hawwārah were driven out of al-Buḥayrah by an Arab rebel called Badr ibn Sallām.[43]

The installation of the Hawwārah in Jirjā was part of novel Mamluk experimentation with provincial tax collection, whereby officials were given responsibility for delivering local taxes in return for a share in the revenue. In 781/1380, appointments to the governorships of al-Gharbīyah, al-Ashmūnayn, and al-Minūfīyah were made after the chosen Mamluk officials committed to pay a fixed sum *(māl iltazama bi-hi)* from the tax revenues.[44] At around the same time, a similar arrangement was offered to the aforementioned Badr ibn Sallām in al-Buḥayrah. Following his defeat at the hands of an army sent by the new sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, Badr sought reconciliation, guaranteeing the security of the lands and the cultivation of land that had become desolate *(iltazama tadrīk al-bilād, ʿimārat mā kharaba minhā).* Like al-Aḥdab before him, Badr presented himself in the provincial capital of Damanhūr, and was granted a safe-conduct and a

attested in Jabal Nafūsah (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 1:186, for 574/1178–79) and in the Fayyūm (Rapoport, *Rural Economy,* for 643/1245).

[41] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar,* 6:10. The other groups mentioned are Muzātah, Zunārah, and a clan *(baṭn)* of Lawātah.

[42] Al-Maqrīzī, "Al-Bayān wa-al-iʿrāb ʿan mā fī arḍ Miṣr min al-aʿrāb," in al-Maqrīzī, *Rasāʾil al-Maqrīzī,* ed. Ramaḍān al-Badrī and Aḥmad Muṣṭafá Qāsim (Cairo, 1998), 148. Al-Maqrīzī's account of the settlement of the Hawwārah in Upper Egypt is found in a short insert, in al-Maqrīzī's handwriting, added to the original copy of the "Bayān." It is preserved at the end of Leiden MS Or. 560, a collection of opuscules by al-Maqrīzī copied by a scribe at al-Maqrīzī's request in 841/1438 (on this manuscript, see van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship,* 109–11).

[43] Al-Qalqashandī only reports that the Hawwārah came to dwell in Jirjā and its surroundings during the days of Barqūq, after the Zunārah wrested al-Buḥayrah away from them (Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿarab,* ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī [Baghdad, 1958], no. 1635; idem, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* [Cairo, 1913–18], 1:364). Al-Maqrīzī mentions that the Hawwārah's migration occurred after Badr's revolt, but makes no causal connection ("Bayān," 148).

[44] Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 406; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 3:371–72. Al-Maqrīzī laments the inefficiencies of the system: when a new governor is appointed, all the property of the previous governor has to be confiscated.


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robe of honor.[45] The term used in these appointments, as well as in the previous settlement with al-Aḥdab, is *iltazama;* it anticipates the frequent use of the term *iltizām* in sixteenth-century Ottoman Egypt, where it referred to the responsibility of both provincial governors and Arab leaders *(šeyhülarab)* for the correct collection of taxes in their districts.[46]

The cadastral register of Ibn Duqmāq confirms that the Hawwārah held Jirjā as their *iqṭāʿ* by the end of the fourteenth century.[47] After receiving the lands of Jirjā, the leaders of the Hawwārah soon became the most powerful family in Upper Egypt, profiting from their control of village lands, and in particular from the production of sugar. Al-Maqrīzī states that Ismāʿīl ibn Māzin was already wealthy when he died in 787.[48] By 799, his position was taken up by his grandson Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Abū al-Sunūn, who "excelled in the sowing of village lands, and the setting up of waterwheels for sugar-cane and sugar presses."[49] Whereas the *ʿurbān* loyal to al-Aḥdab had previously targeted the sugar presses as symbols of state power, less than fifty years later the Hawwārah were coopted into provincial administration as the lawful owners of these works.

Economic success was accompanied by accumulation of political power. The Hawwārah's capital of Jirjā (Girga) replaced Qūṣ and Asyut as the most important town in Upper Egypt.[50] By the 1410s, Muḥammad Abū al-Sunūn and his brothers,

[45] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1969), 1:176–77; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:53. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:213–14; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:88–90. He was then accused of supporting a failed coup led by the caliph (on the failed coup, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:275, 785/1383–84; Banister, *The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo, 1261–1517* [Edinburgh, 2021]). Badr was executed in 789/1387–88, after escaping from jail in Alexandria (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:333; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:201). For other references to Badr, see ibid., 5:95; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:232. On his identification as Zunārah, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 1:420.

[46] On *iltizām* in sixteenth-century Egypt, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* 308ff.

[47] See Ibrāhīm Dasūqī Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah lil-ʿurbān fī al-rawk al-nāṣirī (715/1315) wa-atharuhā fī istiqrār al-qabāʾil al-ʿarabīyah bi-Miṣr* (University of Minyā, n.d.), 16 (https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=1Z5ERrIAAAAJ&hl=ar); Heinz Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern* (Wiesbaden 1979–83), 1:80 with reference to Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat ʿiqd al-amṣār,* ed. Karl Vollers (Cairo, 1893), 27, and Ibn al-Jīʿān, *Al-Tuḥfah al-sanīyah bi-asmāʾ al-bilād al-Miṣrīyah,* ed. B. Moritz (Cairo, 1898), 189.

[48] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:202; see also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī,* ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984-), 2:460, where he is called shaykh and amir of the *ʿurbān* in Upper Egypt.

[49] Al-Maqrīzī, "Bayān," 148 (part of the same insert in al-Maqrīzī's hand added to Leiden MS Or. 560). For biographies of these leaders of the Hawwārah, see idem, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:397, 5:403; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963–72), 12:156; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:526.

[50] See discussion of the rise of the Hawwārah in Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 468–77.


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known collectively as Awlād ʿUmar, had control over lands from Aswan in the south to the northern edges of al-Ashmūnayn. A second Hawwārah family, that of Banū Gharīb, controlled the province of al-Bahnasāwīyah in Middle Egypt. Al-Qalqashandī, writing during that decade of swift Hawwārah ascendancy, states that "the other *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt bow to their will, side with them, and obey them."[51] As a result, many villagers came to identify themselves as Hawwārah. While al-Ḥamdānī knew of only four Hawwārah clans in the middle of the thirteenth century, al-Qalqashandī lists the names of about thirty different Hawwārah clans in Upper Egypt. The more powerful the Hawwārah grew, he explains, the more numerous they became.

Much of the fighting in Upper Egypt concentrated on the rivalry between the two leading Hawwārah families: Awlād ʿUmar and Banū Gharīb. The Mamluk provincial governors were relegated to the background and could only exert power if they allied themselves with one of these branches. In 791/1389–90, the governor contrived with the Hawwārah to keep agricultural revenues in Upper Egypt.[52] The arrest of the leader of the Banū Gharīb family in al-Bahnasā in 798/1395–96 caused his supporters to rise against the governor and kill him, and the new governor could only act with the support of the Awlād ʿUmar.[53] Soon afterward, the *kāshif* of Upper Egypt required the protection of the Awlād ʿUmar from an alliance of the Banū Gharīb with heirs of al-Aḥdab.[54]

Through the following decades, the Hawwārah monopolized power in Upper Egypt by eliminating other Arab elites. The descendants of al-Aḥdab were defeated in 802/1399–1400 by Muḥammad Abū al-Sunūn, despite having been given promises of support from Cairo. A government attempt to send a punitive force failed, since the amirs refused to go on campaign, underlining the degree to which the Mamluk state had lost control over Upper Egypt.[55] The Hawwārah then annihilated the Awlād al-Kanz in Aswan in Muharram 815/April–May 1412, taking their women and children captive. The Kanz had held power over Aswan since the early eleventh century, the last remnant of several Arab groups installed in Upper Egypt by the Fatimids. In previous centuries the Kanz had bounced back from defeats—by the Ayyubids in the 1170s, and later by a Mam-

[51] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 4:69 (also on the territorial division between Awlād ʿUmar and Awlād Gharīb).

[52] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:258; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 11:353.

[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:384, 388; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:512–13.

[54] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:435.

[55] Ibid., 6:19–20; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 12:198. Previously, the leaders of Banū al-Aḥdab and the Hawwārah came before the sultan to seek a state-approved settlement for Upper Egypt (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:439).


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luk attempt to impose their own governor in Aswan in 1365[56]—but not this time. The Hawwārah were there to stay and the Kanz completely disappear from our sources.

The Hawwārah's expansion effectively ended Mamluk rule in Upper Egypt. Two successive military campaigns in the harvest seasons of 821/1418 and 822/1419 no longer aimed to impose law and order but only to extract resources. The commander of the 821/1418 campaign, the amir Ibn Abī al-Faraj, imposed a tribute in cash, with some villages having to pay up to 2,000 dinars. This must have been in lieu of unpaid land tax. He also imposed a tribute of 25,000 dinars on the leaders of the Hawwārah. The booty he brought with him included, in addition to camels and horses, 6,000 oxen and 2,000 *qinṭār* of sugar.[57] The subsequent campaign the following year brought back 3,000 oxen, 9,000 water buffalo, sugar (both *qind* and *ʿasal*) and a large quantity of grains. The Hawwārah troops traveled to Aswan and then to the oases to avoid capture.[58] As al-Maqrīzī acknowledged, this was a state-sponsored raid that crippled the economy and deprived the peasantry of their working animals. Mamluk troops brought back thousands of male and female slaves, including many enslaved by the troops. The mass enslavement of peasants, also seen at the end of al-Aḥdab's rebellion, was possibly triggered by a decreasing supply of slaves from the Black Sea. Given the legal prohibitions against enslavement of Muslims in general, and of subject Muslims in particular, this further indicates how much the Mamluks came to view Upper Egypt as enemy territory.[59]

As the Hawwārah's hold on Upper Egypt became entrenched, Hawwārah leaders routinely paid appointment fees in return for the official decrees they received from the central government in Cairo. In 844/1440–1, the sultan appointed Ismāʿīl ibn Yūsuf as amir of the Hawwārah for a total payment of 70,000 dinars, of which 40,000 were a down payment. Ismāʿīl also promised the obedi-

[56] Al-Maqrīzī summarizes the history of the Banū Kanz in his *Kitāb al-mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār al-maʿrūf bi-al-khiṭaṭ al-Maqrīzīyah,* ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut, 1998), 1:366–67. He states that they regained complete control of Aswan after 790/1388–89, and that no Mamluk governors were appointed there after 806/1403–4. On the Mamluk deposition of the Kanz in 1365, see idem, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:294. See also P. M. Holt, "Kanz, Banu'l," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3876; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 100–5.

[57] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 6:435.

[58] Ibid., 6:466, 470, 491; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:161, 167, 191. See also the discussion in Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans,* 51–54.

[59] On the decreasing supply of Black Sea slaves in this period, see Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500* (Philadelphia, 2019). For another example of Mamluks enslaving free people in Upper Egypt, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:271 (annals of 825/1422–23, following infighting among the Hawwārah).


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ence of the Hawwārah that his predecessor had been unable to deliver.[60] Nonetheless, when Hawwārah leaders were snubbed or arrested, the Hawwārah and their supporters targeted grain warehouses and waterwheels.[61] As reported in the final pages of al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk,* internal fighting among the Hawwārah continued as well.[62] They were without doubt the dominant military force in Upper Egypt. *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik,* composed in 857/1453, lists the Hawwārah as mobilizing 24,000 riders for royal campaigns, far more than any other Egyptian Arab or Berber group.[63]

Like al-Aḥdab before them, the Hawwārah were closely aligned with provincial Sufi or saintly figures. In 834/1430–1, the "shaykh of the Sufis *(al-fuqarāʾ),*" a certain ʿAbd al-Dāʾim, came to intercede on behalf of Mūsá ibn ʿUmar, the shaykh of the Hawwārah.[64] Eight years later, a group of saints *(ṣulaḥāʾ)* accompanied Hawwārah leaders meeting the commander of a Mamluk raid into Upper Egypt.[65] The association with Sufi shaykhs must have granted the Hawwārah an element of legitimacy, both toward the Mamluk authorities and, perhaps more importantly, in the eyes of the local Muslim peasantry. Sufi shaykhs would become an integral part of Arab provincial power in the sixteenth century. At the same time, it should be noted that the Islamization of Upper Egypt was not complete. According to al-Ẓāhirī, writing as late as the middle of the fifteenth century, Upper Egypt had over a thousand churches and monasteries, and the majority of the population was Christian.[66]

The Hawwārah provided the Mamluk central government in Cairo with provincial security and support for tax collection, and in return received formal rights to a significant share in the local revenues—significant enough for Hawwārah amirs to pay appointment fees of tens of thousands of dinars in the middle of the fifteenth century. Some of the Hawwārah's wealth came from sugar production and other agricultural investment. Another source of wealth was probably local *iqṭāʿ* holdings, although Ibn al-Jīʿān's cadastral survey of the 1480s shows very limited Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Upper Egypt. According to this survey,

[60] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:460, 469. See Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 488.

[61] See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:459–60 (834/1430–1); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:408 (842/1438–39).

[62] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:282–83 (838/1434–35), 7:408, 413.

[63] Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik; tableau politique et administratif de l'Égypte, de la Syrie et du Ḥidjâz sous la domination des sultans mamloûks du XIIIe au XVe siècle,* ed. Paul Ravaisse (Paris, 1894), 103–6; idem, *La zubda kachf al-Mamālik de Khalīl az-Zāhirī,* ed. Jean Gaulmier (Beirut, 1950), 174.

[64] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:459–60. The agreement was overseen by Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī.

[65] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:408; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 15:308.

[66] Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik,* 33.


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even the Hawwārah powerbase of Jirjā was no longer listed as their *iqṭāʿ*.[67] This may, however, reflect an unusually low point in relations between Cairo and the Hawwārah. Inscriptions on the Friday mosque of Qūṣ refer to the temporary imposition of direct Mamluk rule in the 1480s, as well as to preparation of a cadastral survey; on the basis of these inscriptions, Garcin convincingly argued that Ibn al-Jīʿān's data did not represent the ordinary pattern of *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Upper Egypt over the course of the fifteenth century.[68] The Ottoman registers of the 1550s show that about 10% of the village fiscal units in the region of Qūṣ (ten out of 103) were directly in the hands of the Banū ʿUmar of the Hawwārah.[69] That was likely also the share of the local tax revenues to which the Hawwārah normally had rights during the fifteenth century.

## The ʿĀʾidh of the Eastern Delta

Another well-attested example of an Arab provincial ruling house is the ʿĀʾidh, who rose to dominate the eastern Delta and the Sinai in the second half of the fourteenth century. The ʿĀʾidh Arabs had been present in the Sinai since the late Fatimid period, acting in the service of the local governor of al-Ṭūr and providing security to travelers on the road from Suez to Karak and ʿAqabah. In the final decades of the fourteenth century, however, the power of the shaykhs and amirs of the ʿĀʾidh grew, and they took over most functions previously held by Mamluk governors. In 787/1385, the sultan appointed Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī as the inspector of irrigation *(kāshif al-jusūr)* of al-Sharqīyah. Seven months later the same al-ʿĀʾidhī was promoted to the governorship of the province, although he was demoted from this position within a couple of years[70] and subsequently executed in 796/1394.[71] Nonetheless, the appointment of an Arab leader as provincial governor was unprecedented and was part of the experimentation with novel models of provincial administration seen throughout the 1380s. Alongside the settlement of the Hawwārah in Jirjā in Upper Egypt, the promotion of the ʿĀʾidh represented a countrywide policy of cooptation of Arab elites.

By the early fifteenth century, the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs of al-Sharqīyah acted as de facto governors, and were supported by an expanding and unprecedented

[67] Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah,* 49, citing Ibn al-Jīʿān, *Tuḥfah,* 149.

[68] As argued by Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 493.

[69] Nicolas Michel, "Les rizaq iḥbāsiyya, terres agricoles en mainmorte dans l'Égypte mamelouke et ottoman: Étude sur les Dafātir al-aḥbās ottomans," *Annales Islamologiques* 30 (1996): 159. The numbers refer to villages in the provinces of Qūṣīyah, Asyūṭīyah, and Ikhmīmīyah.

[70] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:185, 212, 215; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar,* 1:354.

[71] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1994), 3:509, 511, 537; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 108.


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*iqṭāʿ* allocation.[72] The shift was formally achieved in 805/1403, when the Mamluk regime stopped appointing its own governors.[73] From then on, as attested in the St. Catherine corpus, royal edicts were regularly addressed to the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs. The first decree of this kind is dated Rajab 805/January–February 1403, and is addressed to *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān al-ʿIsāwīyah,* that is, the descendants of ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī.[74] In this edict, the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs were instructed to prevent subordinate, local *ʿurbān* from grazing their animals in the vicinity of the monastery (incidentally, the earliest mention of animal husbandry in the St. Catherine corpus). Progressively, the ʿĀʾidh leaders acquired the kind of lofty titles previously reserved for the Mamluk military elite. In a royal decree of 870/1466, for example, *amīr ʿurbān* al-ʿĀʾidh in Sharqīyah is given honorary titles of *al-majlis al-sāmī* and *al-amīr al-ajall.*[75]

The ʿĀʾidh in al-Sharqīyah were now responsible for the protection of the monks from other *ʿurbān.*[76] They did that by introducing Arab protection, or *khafārah,* as an instrument of local security. In 874/1469, following complaints against the *ʿurbān* of Awlād ʿAlī, the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah drafted a legal contract of protection with the monastery. This contract is the earliest of its type in the St. Catherine corpus. In it, two men of the Awlād ʿAlī, identified as protectors *(khufarāʾ)* in the region of al-Ṭūr, undertook to provide security to the monastery. They stood as guarantors for losses suffered by the monks and promised to reimburse the monastery for transgressions by any of their relatives. The concluding part of the document confirms that this legal obligation was undertaken at the instigation of the shaykh of the *ʿurbān* in al-Sharqīyah.[77] The position of formal protectors of the monastery then carried on until the end of the Mamluk

[72] On the allocation of *iqṭāʿ* to Arabs of al-Sharqīyah, see also Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans,* 49–50, and the sources cited in note 80 below.

[73] Wakako Kumakura, personal communication, June 2022. Professor Kumakura is currently finalizing a research paper on Arab provincial administration in fifteenth-century Egypt, titled "Irrigation and Tax Collection in Mamluk Egypt: Arab Tribes, Peasants and Sultans" (in Japanese).

[74] P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 47 = P.St.Catherine I 23. This edict also addresses government officials *(shādd* and *mutaṣarrifūn)* in the coast of al-Ṭūr.

[75] As found in royal decrees by Sultan Khushqadam (P.St.Catherine I 38 and 39). Stern's reading of al-Raqqah had been corrected to al-Sharqīyah by Richards (D. S. Richards, "St. Catherine's Monastery and the Bedouin: Archival Documents of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Le Sinaï de la conquête arabe à nos jours,* ed. Jean-Michel Mouton (Cairo, 2001), 151.

[76] Other decrees from the turn of the century protect the monks from transgressions by generic Arabs, or from troops known as *rāmikah* (P.AtiyaHandlist 29, 45 = P.St.Catherine I 21, 46 = P.St. Catherine I 22).

[77] P.AtiyaHandlist 79.


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period,[78] and is also mentioned by European travelers of the last decades of the fifteenth century.[79] Formal contracts of protection between monasteries and Arab clansmen are known from the early Fatimid period, but they disappear from our records in the intervening centuries, and their return in the late fifteenth century was linked to the emergence of an Arab provincial ruling class.

The Arabs of al-Sharqīyah were supported by generous *iqṭāʿ* allocations. As recorded by Ibn al-Jīʿān's cadastral survey of 1480, Arab groups held *iqṭāʿ* grants in nearly half the villages of the eastern Delta: 176 out of 382 villages. They were the sole *iqṭāʿ*-holders in about 60 villages, with a total surface area of 91,000 feddans. This represented a quadrupling of the number of villages held as *iqṭāʿ* by Arab leaders in al-Sharqīyah, as compared to the 1378 register. By 1480 the Arabs of al-Sharqīyah were the major landholding group in the province, but also received more *iqṭāʿ* grants than any other Arab group in Egypt.[80] The register does not record the names of individual Arab families, but it seems likely that the ʿĀʾidh, acting as de facto provincial governors, were the main beneficiaries. The St. Catherine corpus shows that the rise in Arab *iqṭāʿ* also coincided with the disappearance of other *iqṭāʿ*-holders, who were formerly a powerful presence in the region of al-Tur. The last mention of non-Arab *iqṭāʿ*-holders in the corpus occurs in a decree dated 815/1413.[81]

In return for their *iqṭāʿ* grants, the ʿĀʾidh were given the responsibilities of guarding the roads and local security. The ʿĀʾidh were expected to use their resources for road safety and providing for travelers between Egypt and Syr-

[78] For example, P.AtiyaHandlist 69 = P.St.Catherine I 37, dated 1469. On *darak* and *khafārah* in the early Ottoman period, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* 149, 271. Two sixteenth-century documents refer to *khufarāʾ* in connection with *arbāb al-adrāk* (P. Vind.Arab. III 35, P. Vind. Arab. III 7).

[79] According to Adorno, the Bedouin took upon themselves not to destroy the monastery and to defend it from other Arabs, in return for bread which was given to them through a high gated window (Nicole Chareyron, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages,* tr. W. Donald Wilson [New York, 2005], 149–50). Obadiah Da Bertinoro (1487–90) reported that the Bedouin did not harm the monks because they had an arrangement with them and with the sultan (Elkan Nathan Adler, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts* [New York, 1987], 225).

[80] As much as 65–75% of Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Egypt were concentrated in al-Sharqīyah. See Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah;* Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes entre bédouins et fallahs à l'époque mamluke," *Annales islamologiques/Ḥawlīyāt Islāmīyah* 14 (1978): 156–57 n. In the late fourteenth-century cadastral survey, where admittedly information is often incomplete, Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings are mentioned in only 47 villages of al-Sharqīyah.

[81] See a major inspection conducted by a certain Sayf al-Dīn al-Radādī, the *iqṭāʿ*-holder in al-Tur, in 700/1301 (P.AtiyaHandlist 933 = P.St.Catherine II 4 and 934 = P.St.Catherine II 56–58). For the last document in which *iqṭāʿ*-holders are mentioned, see P.AtiyaHandlist 49 = P.St.Catherine I 24.


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ia.[82] Al-Qalqashandī explains that the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah, like those of al-Buḥayrah, received *iqṭāʿ* grants because of their role as route protectors *(arbāb al-adrāk),* and because they supplied horses for the postal stations.[83] In fact, the Mamluk postal system was no longer in use after 1400, reflecting the general withdrawal of the regime from the countryside.[84] In 921/1515, the shaykh of the ʿĀʾidh testified in the court of the *dawādār* in Cairo that he was responsible for the safety of the monks and their property when they were traveling to and from the monastery, as had been his predecessors who held the leadership *(mashyakhah)* of the *ʿurbān*. He was also responsible for reimbursing the monks, out of his own pocket, for property that was stolen from them.[85]

*Arbāb al-adrāk,* or route protectors, acquired an increasingly important role in the administration of al-Sharqīyah, as well as other Egyptian provinces. Edicts sent to St. Catherine from 797/1394–95 onward include the *arbāb al-adrāk* in their formal lists of addressees, alongside the leaders of the *ʿurbān*. Late fifteenth-century examples identify the Banū Sulaymān as the route protectors in al-Ṭūr.[86] This was true elsewhere, as narrative sources attest to the growing visibility of *arbāb al-adrāk* throughout the Egyptian countryside. They are mentioned as offering the sultan presents during a hunting excursion toward Upper Egypt, chasing a rebellious amir, and guarding the corpses of executed brigands in al-Gharbīyah.[87] The *arbāb al-adrāk* are invariably identified as Arabs or *ʿurbān,*

[82] According to Ibn Khaldūn, the ʿĀʾidh of Judhām guarded the travelers between the Egyptian capital and ʿAqaba (*Kitāb al-ʿibar,* 6:8). On the services provided by the ʿĀʾidh in this period, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:367; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:226; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 11:277 (Muḥammad al-ʿĀʾidhī as responsible for the provisions of a military campaign towards Syria, delivering 14,000 irdabbs of barley, 8,000 loads of hay, and 200 loads of timber); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 6:273 (in 813/1410–1, Shaʿbān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī guided the soon-to-be sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh from Upper Egypt toward Suez, al-Ṭūr, and through the desert road to Karak). See also ibid., 5:282, 5:353 (imprisonment of ʿĀʾidh leaders).

[83] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 3:457–58.

[84] Adam J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007), 184.

[85] P.AtiyaHandlist 94 (= P.St.Catherine II 13).

[86] P.AtiyaHandlist 45 = P.St.Catherine I 21 (797H); P.AtiyaHandlist 49 = = P.St.Catherine I 24 (815/1413); P.AtiyaHandlist 50 and 114 = P.St.Catherine I 25 (850/1446); P.AtiyaHandlist 69 = P.St. Catherine I 36 (873/1468); P.AtiyaHandlist 67 = P.St.Catherine I 46 (891/1486); P.AtiyaHandlist 72= = P.St.Catherine I 52 (895/1490). The ones addressed to Banū Sulaymān are P.AtiyaHandlist 76 = P.St.Catherine I 54 (898/1492); P.AtiyaHandlist 109 = P.St.Catherine II 9 (898/1492).

[87] See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:339 (hunting excursion in the direction of Upper Egypt, 771/1369–70); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 14:170, and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Cairo, 1934–36), 10:167 (following a rebellious amir from Siryāqūs to Ṭīnah, 824/1421–22); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:119 (guarding corpses in al-Gharbīyah, 828/1424–25); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 15:185 (preventing rebels from reaching Qaṭyā, 837/1433–34). On the positive role of the *arbāb al-adrāk* of Juhaynah on the pilgrimage


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and mostly seen in a positive light. When a Mamluk official killed "many leaders of the *ʿurbān* and *arbāb al-adrāk*" and took over their property, he "brought about the desolation of the land."[88]

Contemporary European pilgrims to the Sinai confirm the policing roles of local Arabs, who were previously mentioned only as guides. Since the second half of the fourteenth century, pilgrims had had to pay tolls to official and non-official Arab armed men on the route to Mt. Sinai and back to Gaza. Frescobaldi encountered the "official of the Lord of the Arabs," who checked their safe conduct documents.[89] His fellow traveler, Gucci, was robbed by a group of Saracens who claimed to be officials of the "grand interpreter of the Arabs."[90] A century later, Adorno met Sinai Arabs who demanded *gaphyr,* derived from Arabic *ghafārah,* protection payment.[91] Bertrandon de La Brocquière, who had fallen ill on the way to St. Catherine, was taken back to Gaza by one of the Arab guides. He was shown generosity and spent the night at an Arab camp with his money and provisions untouched.[92] European travelers still commented on the extreme poverty of the Sinai Arabs,[93] but the weakly, thieving, and treacherous Arabs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were now often replaced with powerful, sometimes honorable, individuals.

Compared to the Berber Hawwārah of Upper Egypt, the Arab ʿĀʾidh in al-Sharqīyah offer a different model of fifteenth-century provincial elites. The

route, see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:291 (838/1434–35). On *arbāb al-adrāk* in the direction of Nubia, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 8:5 (referring to the 1360s).

[88] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 13:175 (812/1409–10).

[89] Leonardo di Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage of Lionardo di Niccolò Frescobaldi to the Holy Land," in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384,* trans. Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti (Jerusalem, 1948), 65.

[90] Giorgio Gucci, "Pilgrimage of Giorgio Gucci to the Holy Land," in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt,* 121.

[91] Anselme Adorno, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre sainte, 1470–1471,* ed. Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer (Paris, 1978), 239–43.

[92] Bertrandon De La Brocquière, *A Mission to the Medieval Middle East: The Travels of Bertrandon de la Brocquière to Jerusalem and Constantinople,* ed. Robert Irwin (London, 2019), 129.3/357. Bertrandon also explains that the interpreter in Gaza negotiates safe passage with the Arabs, who enjoy the right of conducting the pilgrims. They were not always obedient to the sultan, and one had to use their camels (ibid., 124.9/357).

[93] In 1290, the Maghribi traveler al-ʿAbdarī wrote that the Sinai Arabs are wretched people (*ṣaʿālīk),* pastoralists who subsist on plundering lonely travelers (*Riḥlat al-ʿAbdarī al-musammāh al-riḥlah al-Maghribīyah,* ed. Muḥammad al-Fāsī [Rabat, 1968], 153). In 1384, Frescobaldi described them as "almost nude and without arms," living with their animals in low tents or caves, and always asking for bread or biscuits (Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage," 56–57, 59). Fabri described an armed but starving Bedouin standing at the gate to the monastery (Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 149). See also Adorno, *Itinéraire,* 211–13; Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 121–22.


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ʿĀʾidh were not expected to make significant contributions for royal campaigns. When called upon to fight against Tamerlane, the combined forces of the ʿĀʾidh ʿĪsāwīyah and of another group, the Banū Wāʾil, numbered only 1,500 riders.[94] In *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik,* the ʿĀʾidh are said to have mustered only 1,000 riders, compared with 24,000 expected from the Hawwārah.[95] The Hawwārah were local landowners, deriving revenue from investments in sugar presses and waterwheels; the extent of their *iqṭāʿ* is unclear. The ʿĀʾidh, on the other hand, were mainly supported by *iqṭāʿ* and provided regional security in return; the number of troops they were able to mount appears limited, and there is little evidence of the spread of ʿĀʾidh lineage throughout the eastern Delta. The Awlād ʿAlī of the Sinai, who appear frequently in the St. Catherine corpus in the final decades of the sultanate, once refer to themselves as ʿĀʾidh, but mostly do not.[96]

## Arab Houses and the Decline of the *Iqṭāʿ* Regime

The rise of Arab ruling families was not limited to Upper Egypt or al-Sharqīyah. In other Delta provinces, the leaders of Arab groups were given the rank of *shaykh al-ʿArab* (or *amīr al-ʿArab*), a title not widely used in Egypt before the middle of the fourteenth century.[97] Al-Qalqashandī reports such positions in al-Minūfīyah and al-Gharbīyah. He adds that the amirs of al-Minūfīyah are not amirs in the ordinary sense of military commanders, but rather in the sense of leadership over Arab clans *(wa-lakin imāratuhum fī maʿná mashyakhat al-ʿarab).*[98] Provincial Arab leaders were now important enough to earn a place in biographical dictionaries. Al-Sakhāwī provided entries for the *shaykh al-ʿArab* of al-Minūfīyah, two *shaykh al-ʿArab*s in al-Gharbīyah, and one of the *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* in al-Buḥayrah.[99] By the end of the fifteenth century, Ibn Iyās reports such a position

[94] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 12:251.

[95] Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik,* 103–6; idem, *La zubda* (1950), 174.

[96] The explicit identification of Awlād ʿAlī as part of the ʿĀʾidh occurs in P.AtiyaHandlist 189 = P.RichardsBedouin 5, dated 901/1496. But this was 25 years after the Awlād ʿAlī had been first mentioned in the decrees and petitions from St. Catherine. During that period, they were mentioned seven times without ever been identified as a clan of the ʿĀʾidh (P.AtiyaHandlist 79 = P.St. Catherine I 37, 874/1469; P.AtiyaHandlist 58 = P.St.Catherine I 38, 875/1471; P.AtiyaHandlist 59 = P.St.Catherine I 40, 877/1472; P.AtiyaHandlist 67 = P.St.Catherine I 46, 891/1486; P.AtiyaHandlist 304 = P.RichardsBedouin 4, 891/1486; P.AtiyaHandlist 76, P.St.Catherine I 44, 898/1492. See also the unpublished Scroll 16, firmans 316, dated 902/1497.

[97] See Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 135–37.

[98] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 4:71.

[99] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ,* 6:161 (Ibn Nuṣayr al-Dīn from al-Minūfīyah, d. 866/1462); 3:78 (Jamīl ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, *shaykh al-ʿArab* in villages of al-Gharbīyah, d. 865/1461); 2:34 (Aḥmad ibn


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in al-Qalyūbīyah too.[100] Like the Hawwārah, these Arab houses allied themselves with Sufi saintly figures. The *shaykh al-ʿArab* of al-Minūfīyah was known for his respect and generosity toward Shaykh Madyan and his *zāwiyah*. Al-Sakhāwī was doubtful about his sincerity.[101] The alliance went both ways, since Sufis readily afforded their blessing to Arab ruling families.[102]

Arab provincial leaders in the central and western Delta paid fees in return for their appointments, which entitled them to some *iqṭāʿ* grants, although not at the scale of the Arab *iqṭāʿ*-holding in the eastern Delta. The *shaykh al-ʿArab* in al-Gharbīyah had to pay 30,000 dinars in return for his appointment, suggesting that he could expect to recoup this investment through access to a significant portion of local tax revenues.[103] The primarily financial dimension of these positions is highlighted by al-Qalqashandī, who says that the Arabs of al-Buḥayrah used to boast of the bravery of their amirs, but that in his time (the 1410s) they were led by a group of enormously wealthy *ʿurbān*.[104] As for *iqṭāʿ*, Arab clansmen held 20% of the villages of the western province of al-Buḥayrah. As in al-Sharqīyah, this was conceived as a reward for their role in guarding the main routes from Alexandria.[105] Arabs held about 10% of the cultivable land in the Delta provinces of al-Gharbīyah, Minūfīyah, and Daqahlīyah. Elsewhere, including in Upper Egypt, their share was marginal, although, as noted above, the *iqṭāʿ* holdings of the Hawwārah may have been underrepresented in this survey.[106] As shown by Lisa Blaydes, the villages held by the Arabs were smaller (on average less than 1,000 feddans) and of lesser value than the typical Egyptian village.[107]

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ʿAlī ibn al-Sābiq, *shaykh al-ʿArab* in villages of al-Gharbīyah); 2:34 (Ismāʿīl ibn Zāyid, one of the shaykhs of the *ʿurbān* in al-Buḥayrah, executed 853/1449–50).

[100] For the identification of leading regional families in the fifteenth-century Delta, based on the chronicle of Ibn Iyās, see Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 157. These include Banū Abī al-Shawārib in al-Qalyūbīyah; Banū Baghdād in al-Gharbīyah; and Banū Ṣaqr of the Hilāl in al-Buḥayrah, whose capital was in al-Busāt, near Tarūjah. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 4:121, 5:453.

[101] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ,* 6:161.

[102] Ibid., 2:114 (a biography of a Sufi scholar who afforded hospitality to one of shaykhs of the Arabs).

[103] Ibid., 2:34 (Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Sābiq. His year of death is left blank in the text. He was replaced by his half-brother Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar, to whom al-Sakhāwī dedicated a separate entry).

[104] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 4:71, 7:161.

[105] Ibid., 3:457

[106] See Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah;* Garcin "Note sur les rapportes," 156–57 n.; Lisa Blaydes, "Mamluks, Property Rights and Economic Development: Lessons from Medieval Egypt," *Politics and Society,* 47 no. 3 (2019). However, Michel's study of the 1528 Ottoman register showed that, alongside the eastern Delta, the *iqṭāʿ* of the *ʿurbān* was concentrated in Upper Egypt (*L'Égypte des villages,* 149).

[107] Blaydes, "Mamluks."


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*Iqṭāʿ* grants were most prominent in al-Sharqīyah and al-Buḥayrah, two provinces which came to be identified as having a significant *ʿurbān* population and lower soil quality. Al-Qalqashandī reports that there were hardly any orchards in al-Sharqīyah because of its proximity to marshlands and the "bedouin" nature of its population *(illā anna al-basātīn fīhi qalīlah bal takādu an takūna maʿdūmah li-ittiṣālihi bi-al-sibākh wa-badāwat ghālib ahlihi).*[108] Orchardists were less likely to adopt Arab identities; this was indeed the case in other contexts known to us, such as Ayyubid Fayyum. In *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik,* written in the middle of the fifteenth century, al-Ẓāhirī states that the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah established many settlements in the steppe *(bādiyah)* areas of the marshes that were not suitable for cultivation, and that these villages were not registered in the records of the *dīwān.*[109] He also notes the dominance of *ʿurbān* among the population of al-Buḥayrah, mentioning reports of internal fights that led to the deaths of more than 3,000 men.[110] It is possible that the decline of the irrigation system following the Black Death caused an increase in the extent of marshlands in al-Sharqīyah, as argued by Borsch and others.[111] In these two provinces, low soil quality has become associated with *ʿurbān* identity and a large number of *iqṭāʿ* grants given to Arab leaders. Yet even in al-Sharqīyah and al-Buḥayrah the *ʿurbān* were a sedentary population, made distinct from other peasants by the type of land they settled on. Despite the statement by al-Ẓāhirī, al-Sharqīyah had hundreds of land tax paying villages by the end of the fifteenth century; only 18 of them had substandard soil completely unfit for cultivation.[112] Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the rise of Arab provincial houses was not limited to these two provinces; Arab leaders were in charge of the collection of agricultural revenues, not a product of the abandonment of agriculture.

Comparison of the cadastral registers of 1376 and 1480 shows that *iqṭāʿ* grants for Arab leaders rose across all Egyptian provinces. While in 1376 Arab rural elites held about 5% of all Egyptian *iqṭāʿ* holdings, their share doubled to 10% in 1480.[113] Overall, however, the greater amount of *iqṭāʿ* handed over to Arab groups was coming out of a smaller pool of *iqṭāʿ* grants, reflecting the general collapse of the *iqṭāʿ* regime during the fifteenth century. The Egyptian countryside went through a radical transformation during this period, involving a steep rise in the number of villages either endowed as *waqf* or handed over to the sul-

[108] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ,* 3:404.

[109] Al-Ẓāhirī, *La zubda,* 52; idem, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik,* 34.

[110] Al-Ẓāhirī, *La zubda,* 35–36.

[111] Borsch, "Plague Depopulation"; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 43; Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah.*

[112] Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah,* 31.

[113] For these estimates, see the calculations in ibid.; Blaydes, "Mamluks."


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tan's private fisc, the *Dīwān al-Mufrad*. The Ayyubid and early Mamluk model of allowing army officers direct rights over tax collection in far-flung corners of the empire gave way to an alternative model where provincial, local elites had a much greater role to play.

The increasing role of Arab families in provincial administration was accompanied by the parallel rise of civilian, non-Arab tax farmers, known as *mutadarrikūn*. As shown by Daisuke Igarashi, the *mutadarrikūn* were merchants or scholars who were awarded contracts of tens of thousands of dinars for collection of taxes from prosperous Delta villages or towns. The localities known to have been handed over to *mutadarrikūn* are al-Manzalah, Fāriskūr, Jawjar, and Ziftā, all found in al-Daqahlīyah and al-Gharbīyah. These towns do not seem to overlap with the villages under the control of Arab elite families, and it seems likely that the unarmed *mutadarrikūn* were responsible for tax-collection in market villages and towns, while the Arabs were responsible for delivering the taxes in smaller, grain-producing settlements.[114] *Mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* and the *mutadarrakīn* are jointly mentioned as presenting tribute to Sultan Qāytbāy upon his accession to the throne in 873/1469.[115] These twin branches of the rural elites were also mentioned together as present in al-Gharbīyah by the time of the Ottoman conquest.[116]

## European Travelers on the "Arab Nation"

The increase in the power of Arab provincial elites did not go unnoticed by fifteenth-century European visitors, who were now much more likely to comment on the prestige attached to men of Arab stock. Adorno states that the Arabs were considered to be the most noble among Muslims since Muḥammad was one of them.[117] Fabri, twice stopped for toll payments on the short trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, quotes the Arabs as saying that "they are the lords of

[114] Daisuke Igarashi, "Who Were the *Mutadarrikūn*? Tax-Farming and Rural Society in Circassian Mamluk Egypt," EGYlandscape presentation, September 2019, Marburg. Here, the key text is al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik,* 130, listing localities and prices of tax-farming contracts. For biographies of individual *mutadarrik*s, see al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ,* 11:93–94 (tax-farming of al-Manzalah); 10:29 (Ziftā); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:96 (Jawjar). For campaigns to extract money from *mutadarrik*s, see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 7:75 (825, in al-Buḥayrah and al-Gharbīyah).

[115] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 3:33.

[116] Ibid., 5:437.

[117] On the Arab lineage of Muḥammad as a source of ethnic pride, see also the thirteenth-century Thietmar (Denys Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291* [Surrey, 2012], 130); and in the fifteenth century Adorno (*Itinéraire,* 95) and Felix Fabri (*The Wanderings of Felix Fabri,* trans. Aubrey Stewart, The Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, vols. 7–10 [London, 1897], 9:484).


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the wilderness, and of all the places which are not enclosed by walls, covered by roofs, or fenced by ditches, and so forth."[118] Therefore, "they take no heed of safe-conducts, but extort toll from all those who pass through the desert."[119] He ends his account by comparing them to Schwabian nobles who would not admit any townsmen to their tournaments.[120] According to Adorno, the "Benetye" (Banū Ṭayyʾ) took no notice of sultanic protections, and only spared those travelers who were accompanied by a member of their own tribe.[121] Their claim to be masters of the open country overrode the authority of the sultan.

If Crusader-era European accounts had the Arabs "turning like reeds in the wind," later authors tended to see the Arabs as a useful thorn in the side of the sultanate. Mandeville, writing circa 1350, says that the Arabs would fight the sultan if they were aggrieved.[122] Ghillebert de Lannoy (ca. 1420) states that they were brave people who fought the sultan, although they tended mostly to fight each other.[123] Adorno believed that it was precisely their incessant infighting which made them pay no attention to the sultan.[124] Santo Brasca (1480) wrote that the Arabs fought the "Moors" and usually beat them through regular use of bows.[125] The use of bow and arrow by Arabs is also mentioned by Fabri and other travelers of the 1480s.[126] This departs from earlier authors who made much of the Arabs' exclusive reliance on spears and lances.

Emmanuel Piloti, a merchant resident in Alexandria and writing in 1420, provides us with an observant perspective on the Arabs of his time.[127] Piloti divided the population of Egypt into three "nations": the Mamluk military elite, the local "Egyptians," and the Arabs who were the lords of the countryside. The three

[118] Fabri, *Wanderings,* 9:479.

[119] Ibid., 9:64. See also Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 124; Yehoshua Frenkel, "The Contribution of European Travel Literature to the Study of the Environmental History of the Levant (13th–15th centuries)," in *Living with Nature,* ed. Walker and Al Ghouz, 712.

[120] Fabri, *Wanderings,* 9:483. But there are also less favorable comparisons in the same passage. Fabri compares the Arabs to gypsies, and says that they come out of the wilderness to commit theft, sometimes forming troops to raid a village or a town, or "pitch their tents in green pastures, build themselves huts, and dwell there harming the people of the region by stealing all the cattle that comes their way" (9:482–83).

[121] Adorno, *Itinéraire,* 215.

[122] Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 122.

[123] Ibid., 124.

[124] Adorno, *Itinéraire,* 95 (the context is the Arabs of Ifriqya).

[125] Chareyron, *Pilgrims,*123.

[126] Ibid., 106; Fabri, *Wanderings,* 7:449–51.

[127] Emmanuel Piloti, *L'Égypte au commencement du quinzième siècle, d'après le traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (Incipit 1420),* ed. P.-H. Dopp (Cairo, 1950), 56–61, fols. 11–20. This important text by Piloti is discussed in Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 1–2.


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groups fought each other, like Guelfs and Ghibelins in Italy, as each had its own claim to hegemony over the land; the Arab claim was based on genealogy, as they said "that power and lordship should belong to them, for Muḥammad was Arab of their nation."[128]

Piloti was personally familiar with the Arabs who inhabited the lands between Cairo and Alexandria, and states that these Arabs provided Alexandria with grains and all manner of animal products, while they depended on the city for textiles, oil, honey, and soap.[129] The Arabs weighed on the sultan because they refused to pay him the tribute due from them, and the sultan was therefore forced to campaign every few years with the aim of capturing the Arab chiefs and demanding ransom for their release. Piloti emphasizes the ideological aspect of the Arab resistance, which he compares to the resistance of Bologna to the Church in Rome. The Arabs refused to pay tribute because the Mamluks were a blameworthy nation, slaves that were bought and sold with money taken from the Egyptian peasants, while the Arabs themselves had been in charge of the land since ancient times.[130] The Arabs publicly said that the lords of Cairo were infidel dogs, renegade Christians, and bought slaves.[131] In a flight of fantasy, Piloti then argues that "the Arab nation is the closest to the Christians out of all the pagans," and reports that certain Arabs told him how they were only waiting for the European Christians to take over Alexandria so they could join forces with them.[132]

## Al-Asadī on Arabs and Peasants

The most insightful account of the co-optation of Arab elites into the Mamluk regime is found in *Al-Taysīr wa-al-iʿtibār wa-al-taḥrīr wa-al-ikhtibār fīmā yajibu min ḥusn al-tadbīr wa-al-taṣarruf wa-al-ikhtiyār,* composed by the otherwise unknown Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Asadī in 855/1451.[133] Al-Asadī composed the treatise in response to what he perceived as the maladministration of the Mam-

[128] Piloti, *L'Égypte,* 33, fol. 11v. On the Arabs as lords (seigneurs) of the countryside and of large villages, see 56, fol. 18r.

[129] Ibid., 58–59.

[130] Ibid., 57.

[131] Ibid., 58.

[132] Ibid., 59.

[133] Al-Asadī, *Al-Taysīr wa-al-iʿtibār wa-al-taḥrīr wa-al-ikhtibār fīmā yajibu min ḥusn al-tadbīr wa-al-taṣarruf wa-al-ikhtiyār,* ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Ṭulaymāt (Cairo, 1968). Al-Asadī's text has been studied in John L. Meloy, "The Privatization of Protection: Extortion and the State in the Circassian Mamluk Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 2 (2004): 195–212, focusing on al-Asadī's description of *ḥimāyah,* and by Abdul Azim Islahi, "Al-Asadi and His Work al-Taysir: A Study of His Socio-Economic Ideas," MPRA Paper No. 80122, posted


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luk Sultanate, with particular focus on monetary reforms and on the decline of Egyptian agriculture, which he attributed to the neglect of irrigation, the oppression of the peasantry, and the ubiquity of bribery.

This neglect and oppression led, according to al-Asadī, to the transformation of peasants into *ʿurbān:* "Many of those disobedient *ʿurbān,* who are [now] steppe people of the open country, used to be tax-paying cultivators and peasants, inclined to willfully obey the rulers" *(kathīran min hādhihi al-ʿurbān al-ʿuṣāh, alladhīna hum ahl bawādī fī al-falāh, kānū ahl zarʿ wa-rafʿ wa-filāḥah maʿa al-inqiyād bi-ḥusn al-ṭāʿah lil-wulāh).*[134] The cause of this shift from law-abiding cultivators to disobedient *ʿurbān* was the neglect of irrigation works by the authorities. Destruction and incessant local fighting ensued *(al-tanāfus wa-al-taḥāsud thumma al-ḍirāb wa-al-ḥirāb).* The local governors took the side of those who had money and power and capacity to cultivate *(qudrah ʿalá al-ʿamal).* The weak, on the other hand, were forced to migrate away from the land: "Those who were afflicted with weakness and deficiency, endured much harm and suffering. When this situation continued, some of them of migrate from the land due to their meekness, and to the predominance of harm and disturbances" *(ʿalá man ḥaṣala fī ḥālihi ḍuʿf wa-ikhtilāl, wa-kathura iḥtimāl al-ḍayim wa-al-ṣabr wa-al-iḥtimāl, wa-tamādá ʿalá hadhā al-ḥāl, ilá an raḥala man raḥala min ḍuʿf al-quwwah wa-tasalluṭ al-adhá wa-dukhūl al-khalal).*

Eventually, the peasants forced from their lands were integrated into the *ʿurbān* who lived outside of the agricultural areas: "This has led to resentment by those who left the land *(al-rāḥilīn),* and to their disobedience; they agreed with the people of the steppe *(al-bawādī)* to rebel and disobey the community. For there is no doubt that life among the people of the steppe is tougher compared to sedentary life *(ahl al-ḥaḍar),* and the former cultivators *(ahl al-zarʿ wa-al-rafʿ)* remember the ease of civilized life *(al-ʿumrān).* Their want for sustenance for themselves, their families, and their animals was a source of constant harm for them."[135] Therefore, concludes al-Asadī, these landless migrant peasants had no choice *(lā budda)* but to gather their forces, and set out together to destroy, fight, and loot.

After explaining the motivations of the peasants-turned-*ʿurbān,* al-Asadī expands on the co-optation of Arab elites into the provincial administration. Faced with uprisings by those who were forced off the land, the authorities opened criminal trials against them and called up every person, both *badw* and *ḥaḍar,*

11 July 2017 (https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80122), focusing on al-Asadī's suggestions for monetary reforms. I am grateful to Daisuke Igarashi for bringing this passage to my attention.

[134] Al-Asadī, *Taysīr,* 93. The term *rafʿ* here means bringing crops to the floor, and more generally delivering agricultural taxes.

[135] Ibid., 93–94.


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to fight the rebels. The rebels were put under constant watch and regular expeditionary forces were sent against them. However, the success of the authorities was limited, because whenever the rebels felt they were beaten, they took refuge in the mountains and fortified themselves there. Failing to quell these rebellions, the state administrators decided to appoint amirs and *mutadarrik*s (here, either tax farmers or in the sense of *arbāb al-adrāk,* route protectors) throughout the land. The Mamluk authorities also decided to side with the *ʿurbān* that they found loyal and obedient and handed them stipends and *iqṭāʿ* grants in return for their obedience, for watching over the roads, and for their protection *(fa-lam yasaʿ ahl al-tadbīr fī al-dawlah illā an aqāmū umarāʾ wa-mutadarrikīn fī kull makān wa-mālū maʿa ahl al-ṭāʿah min al-ʿurbān wa-jaʿalū la-hum ʿalá qiyāmihim bi-al-ṭāʿah wājib al-idrāk wa-al-khafr al-arzāq wa-al-iqṭāʿāt fī al-dīwān).*[136]

As provincial power was delegated to Arab elites, says al-Asadī, Arabs and peasants parted ways. The enmity between the state-sponsored Arab elites and those who had to leave their lands *(al-rāḥilīn ʿan al-awṭān)* increased, and so did the internal fighting among the *ʿurbān*. He describes the peasants who were left on the land as being stuck between a rock and a hard place: "The *fallāḥ*s have become stuck *(qaffan)* between two opposing forces, unable to satisfy both sides simultaneously—the people of the state *(ahl al-dawlah)* are in front of them, demanding what they have and what they do not; while the belligerent Arabs *(al-ʿarab al-muḥāribūn)* are to the back, right and left." Under these conditions, many of the peasants abandon their lands *(tasaḥḥaba),* and even those who stayed could not practice agriculture. Anyone who could leave did so and joined other groups *(aqwām);* the only ones who stayed did it out of necessity. The final outcome, says al-Asadī, is that the countryside grew even more impoverished and depopulated.

Al-Asadī's account, written circa 1450, describes four stages of the relationship between the peasantry and the Mamluk state. First, peasants who were forced out of their lands, through the neglect of irrigation or the injustice of Mamluk officials, joined the ranks of the *ʿurbān* who lived outside of the agricultural areas. As we have seen with al-Ẓāhirī, the *ʿurbān* were now identified with villages of lower soil quality. Second, these former peasants expressed their frustration by waging guerrilla warfare against provincial Mamluk institutions, and provoking military responses from the regime. Third, the Mamluk authorities, realizing that they were unable to win against these mobile forces on their own, delegated provincial authority to loyal *ʿurbān* elites and rewarded them with generous *iqṭāʿ*s, hoping they would be able to quell the unrest. The re-

[136] Ibid., 94.


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sult, however, was that the peasants left on the land were now subject to double pressure: by the tax collectors sent by the state and by the provincial Arab elites.

Al-Asadī's account gives the impression that those villagers who remained on the land did not see themselves as Arabs. There is good evidence, however, that Muslim peasantry continued to espouse Arab identities throughout the late Mamluk period. A good example comes from an autobiographical note by al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418), born in Qalqashandah in Qalyūbīyah, who self-identified with the Banū Badr of the Fazārah, together with his fellow villagers.[137] Ibn Khaldūn, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, states that clans of the Banū Hilāl, Banū Kilāb, and Banū Rabīʿah were found in Upper Egypt *(bi-nawāḥī al-Ṣaʿīd).* They rode horses and carried weapons, while at the same time cultivating the land and paying the land tax to the sultan *(yuʿmirūna al-arḍ bi-al-filāḥah... wa-yaqūmūna bi-al-kharāj).* He then notes that the internal fighting among them was acute, worse than the internal fighting among the Arab clans of the desert.[138]

Other examples of overlapping peasant and Arab identities in Upper Egypt date to the early decades of the fifteenth century. In 820, peasants and *ʿurbān* were lumped together as victims of unjust exactions. A few years later, the land tax of the peasants could only be delivered after overcoming the opposition of the Arabs.[139] An anecdote reported by Ibn Taghrībirdī in his annals of 822, when Upper Egypt was already dominated by the Hawwārah, exemplifies peasants' continued appropriation of lineage claims as a means of resistance:

> A trustworthy person from Upper Egypt told me: most of the cultivators *(muzāriʿīn)* in our village *(balad)* were Ashraf of ʿAlid descent, while the tax collector *(ʿāmil)* in the village was Christian. When the tax collector came, the peasants *(fallāḥūn)* used to come out to greet him, some of them greeting him as customary while others refraining, and some of the poor and needy, or those fearful of the landowner *(ṣāḥib)* of the village even kiss his hand and ask for easing the burden of the land-tax. But when al-Malik al-Muʾayyad [Shaykh] prevented the employment of Christians in tax collection, all of this ended.[140]

[137] Yossef Rapoport, "Al-Qalqashandī's Lost Tribes: Mamluk Genealogy, Identity and Administration," EGYLandscape Working Paper 4 (2021), https://www.egylandscape.org/papers/April2021_Rapoport/#al-qalqashandi%CC%84s-lost-tribes-mamluk-genealogy-identity-and-administration/.

[138] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar,* 6:10.

[139] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 6:432 (820/1417–18); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:239 (824/1421–22).

[140] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 14:83 (822/1419–20).


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This diatribe against the Christian tax collector, a familiar trope in the history of Islamic Egypt, is accentuated by the Sharifian lineage claims of the villagers. The distressing image of Muslim peasants prostrating before a Christian tax collector is augmented by their noble descent. By this period, Arab identities had been established in in Upper Egypt for centuries, so that peasant claims of descent from the Prophet had become normalized in ways that were unimaginable under the Abbasids or the Fatimids.

Another indication of the continued clan identities in Egyptian villages is collective leadership by groups of headmen, a form of social organization attested throughout the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. Three edicts from the later decades of the fifteenth century address collective groups of headmen and peasants *(jamāʿat al-mashāyikh wa-al-fallāḥīn)* in Egyptian villages. One was sent in 875/1470 from the senior amir Khāyirbak to the headmen and peasants of the village of Ṭūbhār in the Fayyum; he ordered them to cultivate the land and to prepare the land tax and customary hospitality dues.[141] Another edict from the same period was sent to the headmen and peasants of Shaybat Shaqqārah in al-Sharqīyah.[142] The institution of the collective village headmen, which overlapped with the spread of Arab identities, endured until the end of the Mamluk era.

Thus, the co-optation of Arab and Berber ruling families into Mamluk provincial administration did not lead to the erasure of clan identities among the peasantry. Instead, a hierarchy of dominant and subservient clans emerged, one that reflected dynamics of power on the ground. When the Hawwārah took over Upper Egypt, the number of villages attaching themselves to them grew from four to nearly thirty, as reported by al-Qalqashandī. Over time, however, power came to be monopolized by individual houses, whose names distinguished them from the rest of the clans that identified with the larger Hawwārah confederacy. Fifteenth-century sources often speak of the Banū ʿUmar of Upper Egypt, or the Awlād ʿĪsá in the Sharqīyah, to separate them from other rural people who identified as Hawwārah or ʿĀʾidh. Muslim peasants in Egypt continued to share a genealogical worldview and an Arab or Berber identity, at least until the end of the Mamluk period.

Nonetheless, as al-Asadī observed, the increasing power of Arab ruling families created a tension with the mass of the peasantry over which they came to rule. Their co-optation into state administration also marked the end of the great Arab rebellions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was now the

[141] P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 1.

[142] P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 2, sent from Yashbak al-Muhammadī al-dawādār. P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 3, sent from the same senior amir to the headmen and peasants in a village called al-Jumayzah, informs them that he now holds the *iqṭāʿ* of the village.


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prerogative of the Hawwārah of Upper Egypt or the ʿĀʾidh of the Sharqīyah to collect tribute and impose law and order in the villages. While the Hawwārah continued to resist attempts by the Mamluk regime to infringe on their autonomy, there is little direct evidence of support by the wider population. As Garcin pointed out, fifteenth-century accounts of clashes between Arab groups and the Mamluk regime do not regularly refer to the participation of peasants or to the targeting of land tax.[143] At the same time, unequivocal examples of Arab clansmen attacking peasants are very rare up to the end of the Mamluk period. A fully drawn-out conflict, resulting in a massacre of peasants by Arabs, is reported from al-Sharqīyah only in 1516, immediately following the news of the Mamluk defeat by the Ottomans.[144]

## Conclusion

The Ottoman conquest appears to have driven a wedge between Arab elites and the peasantry. The Ottomans formalized the role of the provincial Arab families, and granted them a share of local tax revenue in return for securing tax collection.[145] The Kanunname of 1525 recognized the role of Arab shaykhs in "promoting agriculture, collecting revenues, and maintaining order in the villages under their control by not harboring rebels or runaway slaves."[146] It also allowed the Hawwārah clan of the Banū ʿUmar to pass their position in Upper Egypt among the members of the clan, as long as they paid a customary accession fee.[147] The same privileges were accorded to the Arab leading families of al-Sharqīyah (no longer the ʿĀʾidh but rather the Banū Baqar[148]), al-Gharbīyah, and al-Buḥayrah. Appointments for the leadership of Arab clans in the provinces came directly from Istanbul, bypassing the governor of Egypt, who also had no authority to dismiss them. Thus, the Ottomans enshrined in law the semi-autonomous status of Arab ruling houses over much of Upper Egypt and the western and eastern sections of the Delta—a culmination of processes that

[143] Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 147–63.

[144] Ibid., 162, citing Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ,* 5:82.

[145] On this, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* 45ff; Adam Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics in Early Ottoman Egypt" in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century,* ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen, 2022), 471–88.

[146] Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics," 476, based on Ahmed Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukuk Tahlilleri,* vol. 6 (Istanbul, 2006–), 113–15.

[147] Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, 6:115.

[148] On the Banū Baqar in al-Sharqīyah, see Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics"; Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 159. They were based in Minyat Ghamr, and are first mentioned in 1472. They fought the ʿĀʾidh in 1506.


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started in the aftermath of the Black Death and matured over the course of the fifteenth century.

The Arab provincial elites, accompanied by local Sufi shaykhs, could now become the immediate oppressors. The situation in the Egyptian Delta in the early Ottoman period is known to us through the extensive writings of the Sufi al-Shaʿrānī, as studied by Adam Sabra.[149] Al-Shaʿrānī was a life-long associate of the Banū Baghdād clan in al-Minūfīyah, and his writings make clear that the Banū Baghdād held the right to the agricultural revenues of many local villages and complete autonomy in terms of enforcing this payment. Al-Shaʿrānī tells of his attempts to rein in what he saw as ruthless practices of the Banū Baghdād towards local cultivators in the villages under their control. This influence was limited, and the Sufis needed the support of Arab leaders as much as the other way around. Al-Shaʿrānī quotes a member of the Banū Baghdād as saying about one of the Sufis: "He is a shaykh only because I accept his intercession. If I refused, no one would have faith in him or make him a shaykh."[150]

In his magisterial study of the Egyptian countryside in the sixteenth century, Nicolas Michel found that peasant society was not tribal or segmentary, unlike the Arab clans who coexisted alongside them.[151] For Michel, the distinction made in the Ottoman kanunname between the peasants and the Arabs—the *fellah taifesi* on the one hand and the *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* on the other—suggests that peasants did not possess clan organization and Arabian genealogy.[152] The kanunname specifically prohibits peasants, but not Arabs, from carrying arms (art. 86).[153] In this Ottoman blueprint for rural administration, *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* have the most important responsibilities, alongside the official *kāshif,* and are subject to the most severe punishments in case of non-fulfilment; while the peasants and their headmen are rarely subject to punishments.[154] As in the Mamluk period, the burden of village taxes was divided into shares, with each share undertaken by a subgroup of peasants led by one of the headmen. Despite this continuity, Michel's interrogation of the composition of individual peasant groups led him to conclude that peasant associations were not primarily based on clans.[155] This seems to indicate an erosion of village Arab and clan identities compared with the medieval period.

[149] Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics."

[150] Al-Shaʿrānī, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb irshād al-mughfalīn min al-fuqahāʾ wa-al-fuqarāʾ ilá shurūṭ ṣuḥbat al-umarāʾ,* ed. Adam Sabra (Cairo, 2013), 130.

[151] Michel, *L'Égypte des villages,* 2.

[152] Ibid., 72.

[153] Ibid., 229ff.

[154] Ibid., 202.

[155] Ibid., 295–301.


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Provincial Arab houses continued to dominate Egyptian provinces until the end of the eighteenth century. In his study of the rural notables of the Ottoman Delta, based on Ottoman court records up to 1800, Riḍā Sharīf found enduring Arab elite families in the Delta, where official positions continued to be passed from father to son.[156] The Hawwārah maintained their primary role in the administration of Upper Egypt throughout the sixteenth century. The Ottoman governors took direct control of Upper Egypt in the seventeenth century, but the Hawwārah regained some of their power up to 1760.[157] Zeynab Abul-Magd argued that the Hawwārah were perceived as sharing common descent with the Muslim peasantry, and represented a "native regime," based on a social contract with their subjects.[158] Al-Shaʿrānī's writings, on the other hand, suggest that the gulf between Arab ruling families and Arab villagers had become accentuated in the sixteenth century. Arab shaykhs, accompanied by local Sufi shaykhs, were both kinsmen as well as immediate oppressors.

[156] Ibid., 296, n. 85, citing Riḍā Asʿad Sharīf, *Aʿyān al-rīf al-Miṣrī fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī* (Cairo, 2010), 451–52.

[157] Zeinab Abul-Magd, *Imagined Empires: A History of Revolt in Egypt* (Berkeley, 2013), 17 (based on Ahmed Cezzâr paşa, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizâmnâme-i Misir of Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha,* ed. and trans. Stanford J. Shaw [Cambridge, Mass, 1962], 44).

[158] Abul-Magd, *Imagined Empires,* 19.


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# Treating with Birds: The Insights of Two Mamluk Sources about the Medical Benefits of Birds

## Introduction

Animals always played prominent roles in Arab culture, with connections to worship and religious practices, diet and feasts, sports, and more. The desire to acquire knowledge about animals was, therefore, natural. The major Greek zoological works, by authors such as Aristotle, were translated quite early into Arabic. Literary treatment of zoological knowledge by Arab authors began in the third/ninth century. Some of what we can call animal books were systematic zoological works, while others were philological studies. Numerous authors wrote about animals, and their books varied in their approaches to the subject. Some of the most significant works include: *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), *Ṭabāʾiʿ al-ḥayawān* by al-Marwazī (d. ca. twelfth century), *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt* by al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283), and *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* by al-Damīrī (d. 1405).[1] These books vary in style, content, and details, but—aside from al-Marwazī's book, which was described as a doctor's book on zoology—can be generally described as works on zoology with literary and artistic merits as well as scientific value.[2] The common feature that marked all these books was the method by which they were compiled: their writers collected and grouped together the zoological knowledge and data of their period, adding all they had picked up from their own readings and observations.

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The author and editors have made every effort to associate Arabic bird names with their modern English equivalents. It is, however, not always easy to know with certainty which species of bird was meant by a particular term at a given point in time or in a given place. It is common for the same name to designate different species in different places or at different times, for a single species to have multiple names, or for a name to have been used in a non-specific way, indicating numerous birds of similar appearance or size.

[1] Abd al-Rahman Ibriq, "Zoology and Veterinary Science," in *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture,* vol. 4, Science and Technology in Islam, part 1, The Exact and Natural Sciences, ed. A. Y. al-Hassan (Paris, 2001), 425–31. Aristotle's major zoological work, *Historis Animalium,* was translated into Arabic with the title *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* in the ninth century.

[2] Joseph de Somogyi, "Ad-Damīrī's Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān: An Arabic Zoological Lexicon," *Osiris* 9 (1950): 34–35; Albert Z. Iskandar, "A Doctor's Book on Zoology: al-Marwazī's Ṭabāʾiʿ al-ḥayawān (Nature of Animals) Re-assessed," *Oriens* 27/28 (1981): 266–312; M. V. MacDonald, "Animal-Books as a Genre in Arabic Literature," *Bulletin of British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 1 (1988): 3–10.


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My interest is in birds and how they were presented and discussed, specifically in Mamluk sources.[3] From the sources above, therefore, the current study will focus on al-Damīrī's book, highlighting only his discussion of birds. Another important work from the same period, also considered here, is al-ʿUmarī's *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār,* as its twentieth volume was devoted to animals and plants. Only the medical usage—both as nutrition contributing to the patient's health and as medicine consumed in various ways to treat diseases—of birds within these two sources is addressed in the current study's investigation of the use of birds during the Mamluk period. The study also aims to explore the usage of birds in folk medicine and magical practices.

## The Sources and Their Methodologies

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī[4] is the author of *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār,*[5] which is considered one of the most important Mamluk sources. It is encyclopedic, covering geography, history, literature, religion and law, and politics and administration in twenty-six volumes. It is divided into two main parts: the first is for the earth—including a section for *al-masālik* and another for *al-mamālik*—and the second is for the earth's inhabitants, of all nations and religions. It also includes chapters about natural sciences, animals, plants, and the history of nations.[6] In the twentieth volume, al-ʿUmarī discussed animals, birds, insects and vermin, and plants.

He elucidated sixty-one birds and arranged them in alphabetical order. Al-ʿUmarī adopted no clear classification system, but after describing fifty-one

[3] My book, *Al-Ṭuyūr fī al-ʿaṣr al-Mamlūkī: Dirāsah fī al-tārīkh al-ijtimāʿī wa-al-bīʾī wa-al-funūn* (Cairo, 2021), discusses several aspects about birds based on the study of Mamluk sources and artifacts.

[4] Al-ʿUmarī was born in Damascus in 700/1301 to a family already distinguished in the Mamluk civil service. His father was head of the chancery in Damascus and then in Cairo, and al-ʿUmarī started his carrier as his assistant. He was served as head of the chancery in Damascus 741–43/1340–42. Other than his official position he was known for his brilliance as a writer and expertise on a wide variety of subjects related to politics and administration. His prominent works are *Masālik* and *Al-Taʿrīf bi-al-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf,* in addition to a number of minor essays and letters. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1958), 2:3:792; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 2008), 10:234–35; idem, *Al-Dalīl al-shāfī ʿalá al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1998), 1:96; K. S. Salibi, "Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573–3912_islam_SIM_3153.

[5] For the content analysis in this research I consulted the manuscript: BnF Ar. No. 2771, and the edition: Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār,* ed. Kāmil Salmān al-Jabūrī, vol. 20 (Beirut, 2010).

[6] Maḥmūd Rizq Salīm, *ʿAṣr salāṭīn al-Mamālīk wa-nitājuhu al-ʿilmī wa-al-adabī* (Cairo, 1962), 171; al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār,* ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Cairo, 2015), 35–40.


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birds he classified only ten birds into two categories: nine birds of the eastern lands, also arranged in alphabetical order, and birds of the western lands, including only the parrot.

His methodology in presenting the birds was to describe the physical properties of each, such as shape, size, and the colors of features and beak, followed by what characteristics separate the bird from others. In many cases he mentioned the original homeland of the bird and quoted verses of poetry describing it[7] and popular proverbs highlighting its qualities and features. Moreover, he listed the medical benefits of forty birds based on several zoology books and medical sources.

Unlike al-ʿUmarī's encyclopedic book, al-Damīrī's *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* is a single-topic, specialized work focusing on animals, birds, insects, and vermin, and covering unprecedented numbers of each type. Al-Damīrī[8] did not classify these creatures into categories but arranged them all in alphabetical order. He included 281 names of birds, most of them explicitly described (some were briefly mentioned as variant names of other birds or under names of their chicks).

Al-Damīrī's descriptions of birds were generally detailed and followed an organized methodology that started with philological aspects of the bird's name then described its physical properties, highlighting what distinguished it from other types of birds. He enriched the description with stories and historic events in addition to verses of poetry related to the bird, and followed that with the traditions *(ḥadīth)* relative to the bird. Moreover, he explained the bird's lawfulness as human food according to the different *madhāhib (ḥukm),* any proverbs *(amthāl)* related to the bird, medical benefits of the bird and its parts *(khawāṣṣ),* and its meaning when appearing in dreams *(taʿbīr).*[9] The book's literary nature dominates, but its scientific value is apparent in the medical coverage.

I chose to focus on these two sources in this study for several reasons. First, they are both attributed to the Mamluk period, a prosperous era marked by a rich production in various sciences and other fields of knowledge. Second, despite coming from two different categories of books, both have detailed discussions of birds and highlight the benefits of birds and their use in the treatment of diseases. Finally, both also cover the magical benefits of birds and their usage

[7] In his description of birds al-ʿUmarī mentioned verses of poetry by Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī (d. 69/688), Bashshār ibn Burd (d. 167/784), Abū Saʿīd al-Ṣīrāfī (d. 368/979), and Jarīr ibn ʿAṭīyah.

[8] Muḥammad ibn Mūsá ibn ʿĪsá Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī was born in Cairo in 742/1341 and died there in 808/1405. He started his career as a tailor in his native town, then decided to become a professional theologian. He was taught by famous scholars such as al-Subkī and al-Asnawī and took up posts in several places of learning and devotion. He gained fame as an author, in the east and the west, for his compendium of Arabic zoology, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* which he wrote to correct false notions about animals. Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrá,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Fāḍilī (Beirut, 2004), 5–6; L. Kopf, "al-Damīrī," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1685.

[9] Somogyi, "Ad-Damīrī's Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān," 38–41; MacDonald, "Animal-Books," 8.


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in preparing amulets, talismans, and special remedies used in magical practices and folk medicine, which gives us valuable information about prevailing beliefs and public practices in Mamluk society.

## Islamic Medicine: Its Evolution and Basic Theory

Muslims paid attention to medicine and pharmacy, among other sciences, because of their importance in preserving the life and health of humans. The interest in medicine was consistent from the time of the Prophet, who encouraged people to treat diseases when he said, "O worshipers of Allah! Seek treatment, for Allah does not create any disease but He also creates with it the cure, except for old age."[10]

Islamic medicine in its formative period depended mainly on Greek medicine and was much influenced by the works of Hippocrates and the most important Greek physician, Galen. It was also influenced by the practices of the medical school of Alexandria, the theories and practices of the Persians and Indians, and Syriac medical knowledge.[11] Translation played a pivotal role in the formation of Islamic medical traditions as the Abbasid caliphs induced physicians, many of whom were Nestorian Christians, to translate fundamental medical works into Arabic. Among these are Ibn Bakhtīshūʿ,[12] al-Biṭrīq,[13] Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh,[14] and Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq.[15]

[10] *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 3436, book 31: Chapter on Medicine, Hadith 1. https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:3436.

[11] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (New York, 1969), 188–92; Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Washington, 2007), 6–22; Rāghib al-Sirjānī, *Qiṣṣat al-ʿulūm al-ṭibbīyah fī al-ḥadārah al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo, 2009), 21–25.

[12] Jurjis ibn Bakhtīshūʿ was a famous physician from Jundīshāpūr who was invited to the Abbasid court by the caliph al-Manṣūr and became his personal physician. He translated several books from Greek into Arabic for the caliph. Nasr, *Science and Civilization,* 193; George Saliba, *Al-Fikr al-ʿilmī al-ʿArabī: Nashʾātuhu wa-taṭawwuruhu* (Balamand, 1998), 65; Ahmad Y. al-Hassan, "The Age of Translation and the Beginning of the Scientific Renaissance," in *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture,* 4:1:89; D. Sourdel, "Buk̲ h̲ tīs̲ h̲ ūʿ," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1514.

[13] Abū Yaḥyá al-Biṭrīq was ordered by al-Manṣūr to translate some of the ancient books. Many translations of medical books by Hippocrates and Galen were attributed to him. Rihāb Khiḍr ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb ʿind al-ʿArab* (Lebanon, 1994), 170; al-Hassan, "Age of Translation," 97.

[14] Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh was a member of a family of physicians. He was a court physician and contributed to the translation of Greek scientific works. Nasr, *Science and Civilization,* 194; Paula De Vos, "The Prince of Medicine: Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh and the Foundation of the Western Pharmaceutical Tradition," *Isis* 104, no. 4 (2013): 667–712; J. C. Vadet, "Ibn Māsawayh," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3289.

[15] Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq was a Nestorian Christian physician who was fluent in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. He was considered the master of translation and was the chief physician of the caliph


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By the late third/ninth century, Muslim physicians had incorporated these translations into their understanding, analyzed them, added their own observations, and started to correct their errors. The physicians benefited from the emergence of hospitals *(bīmāristān)* that also functioned as medical schools with a teaching system based on both theory and practice. This was the second stage in the evolution of Islamic medicine, which witnessed the appearance of great physicians whose works were very influential,[16] such as al-Rāzī,[17] al-Zahrāwī,[18] Ibn Sīnā,[19] Ibn al-Nafīs,[20] and too many others to list. Their writings spread widely and were used by generations of physicians who practiced medicine in different regions.

The basic explanatory medical principle of Islamic medicine was that of humoral pathology, inherited from the Greeks, which holds that the body is made up of four humors *(akhlāṭ):* blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Each humor

al-Mutawakkil. ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 170–71; Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 25; al-Hassan, "Age of Translation," 99; G. Strohmaier, "Ḥunayn b. Isḥāḳ al-ʿIbādī," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0300; Peter E. Pormann, "The Development of Translation Techniques from Greek into Syriac and Arabic: The Case of Galen's On the Faculties and Powers of Simple Drugs, Book Six," in *Medieval Arabic Thought: Essays in Honor of Fritz Zimmermann,* ed. Rotraud Hansberger, M. Afifi al-Haytham, and Charles Burnett (London, 2012), 143–47.

[16] ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 236–42; Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 96–101; Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul, *Medieval Islamic World: An Intellectual History of Science and Politics* (New York, 2018), 54.

[17] Al-Rāzī (250–313/865–925) was a major philosopher, physician, and alchemist. He was famous for his book *Al-Ḥāwī,* which included 30 volumes documenting his clinical observations of patients. Sāmī Ḥaddād, *Maʾāthir al-ʿArab fī al-ʿulūm al-ṭibbīyah* (Beirut, 1926), 42–48; A .Z. Iskandar, "Al-Rāzī, al-ṭabīb al-iklīnīkī," *Al-Mashriq* 56 (1962): 217–59; ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 205–7; L. E. Goodman, "al-Rāzī," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6267.

[18] Abū al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī was an important Andalusian physician (d. after 400/1009). He was famous for his encyclopedic book *Al-Taṣrīf li-man ʿajiza ʿan al-taʾlīf,* which included three sections on medicine, surgery, and medications. Ḥaddād, *Maʾāthir al-ʿArab,* 54–58; ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 313–17; Emilie Savage-Smith, "al-Zahrāwī," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8089.

[19] Ibn Sīnā (370–427/980–1037) was a famous physician and philosopher whose greatest contribution to Arabic medicine is his book *Qānūn fī al-ṭibb.* This book came to dominate as a major source of knowledge about medicine in the medieval Islamic world, and eventually in Europe, for a long period. Ḥaddād, *Maʾāthir al-ʿArab,* 52–54; ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 207–8; A. M. Goichon, "Ibn Sīnā," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0342.

[20] Ibn al-Nafīs was a distinguished physician of the seventh/thirteenth century (d. probably 687/1288). His most important achievement in medicine was his theory of the lesser or pulmonary circulation of the blood, which contradicted the accepted ideas of Galen and Ibn Sīnā. ʿAkkāwī, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 280–84; M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht, "Ibn al-Nafīs," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3319.


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was associated with two of the four primary qualities (hot, cold, dry, or moist), one of the four seasons (summer, spring, winter, or autumn), and a temperament (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, or phlegmatic). According to this theory, health means balance and harmony between the humors, while illness is caused by the excess of one of the humors and the disruption of their balance. Restoring wellness, therefore, required the reestablishment of balance between the humors through treatment using diet or medication.[21]

Islamic pharmacology is inseparable from medicine and applies the same theory. All substances were classified according to their qualities and according to their intensity and potency. Moreover, the administration of drugs considered the temperament of the patient based on long experience and observation, which meant that a drug could be useful for one patient but have an opposite effect on another.[22] Islamic sources distinguished between simple medicines (plant, animal, or mineral substances in their natural states) and compound medicines (simple medicines mixed together, known as *aqrabādhīn*). Some physicians devoted parts of their books to pharmacology, including al-Rāzī, al-Majūsī (probably d. 385/995),[23] and Ibn Sīnā, while other scholars dedicated some of their writings to pharmacy in particular, such as al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) and al-Ghāfiqī (d. 560/1164).[24] Many influential works on pharmacology were written during the Mamluk period, marking the summit of pharmacology, as will be explained.

## Analysis of the Two Sources

### Regimen and Diet: Their Role in Treatment

Islamic medicine established strong ties between diet and health, as dietetics was understood as "the systematic control of food and drink in order to con-

[21] Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb wa-al-ṣaydalah ʿind al-ʿArab* (Cairo, n.d.), 38–43; Seyyed H. Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (Kent, 1976), 159–62; Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 43–44; Peter E. Pormann, "The Formation of the Arabic Pharmacology Between Tradition and Innovation," *Annals of Science* 68, no. 4 (2011): 494–95.

[22] Ḥusayn, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 340–48; Nasr, *Science and Civilization,* 228; Nasr, *Islamic Science,* 185; Sami Khalaf Hamarneh, "Pharmacy and Materia Medica," in *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture,* vol. 4, Science and Technology in Islam, part 2, Technology and Applied Sciences, ed. A. Y. al-Hassan (Paris, 2001), 548; Pormann, "The Formation of the Arabic Pharmacology," 500.

[23] Georges Anawati, *Tārīkh al-ṣaydalah wa-al-ʿaqāqīr fī al-ʿahd al-qadīm wa-al-ʿaṣr al-waṣīt* (Beirut, 1996), 167–72; C. Elgood, "ʿAlī b. al-ʿAbbās," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0509.

[24] For more details about the important books on pharmacy and their content see: Nasr, *Islamic Science,* 187–90; Anawati, *Tārīkh al-ṣaydalah,* 153–81; Hamarneh, "Pharmacy and Materia Medica," 552–60; Bsoul, *Medieval Islamic World,* 81–84.


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serve health or combat disease."[25] Physicians preferred to use food for treatment before using medicines, as is shown by the saying of al-Rāzī: "Whenever you can treat with food, do not use medicine, and whenever you can treat with a simple medicine, do not use a compound one."[26] This indicates an understanding that health could be maintained by many factors, and that a major one was a balanced diet. From a physician's viewpoint, the principle of a sound diet was based on moderation in consumption and balance in quantities of food consumed. Muslim physicians also recognized the difference between nutrients *(ghidhāʾ)* and medicinal nutrients *(ghidhāʾ dawāʾī).* Nutrients were food and drinks in general, which contributed to bodily growth, while medicinal nutrients were food and drink that were able to correct some imbalance in the individual's temperament or constitution. Therefore, Muslim physicians discussed the properties of foodstuffs, which foods were compatible with or contrary to the individual's constitution, how to avoid the ill effect of foodstuffs by adjustment in their preparation, and how to use food and drink to counteract a malady or stimulate a desired effect.[27]

For Muslims, the basic rule that governs the consumption of food is being lawful, which means being good food for humans. The distinction between lawful and unlawful food is mentioned in the fourth verse of Sūrat al-Māʾidah: "They ask you, [O Muhammad], what has been made lawful for them. Say, 'Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allah has taught you. So, eat of what they catch for you, and mention the name of Allah upon it, and fear Allah.'"[28] Based on that verse and others, as well as hadiths, it was agreed that lawful birds were chickens, cocks, ducks, geese, pigeons, sparrows, ostriches, and collared birds. On the other hand, birds of prey that hunt with their claws, such as eagles *(ʿiqbān* sing. *ʿuqāb),* goshawks *(bawāzī* or *buzāh,* sing. *bāzī),* peregrine falcons *(shawāhīn,* sing. *shāhīn),* and vultures *(nisr),* were deemed unlawful. Birds that eat carrion, such as the black crow *(ghurāb),* were unlawful, as were other birds such as hoopoes *(hudhud),* swallows or kingfishers *(khuṭṭāf),* and bats *(khuffāsh).* Wild birds that ate dirty things were unlawful because it was believed that the impurity of their food was mixed with their flesh and affected their smell, making them no longer good foods, while those that ate grain remained lawful.[29]

[25] David Waines, "Dietetics in Medieval Islamic Culture," *Medical History* 43 (1999): 228.

[26] Ḥusayn, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 77. A similar practice was also followed by Ibn al-Nafīs: Kaspars Klavinš, "Diet and Reception Thereof in the Context of Middle East Medicine: a Historical Excursion," *Latvijas Universitātes Raksti* (2016): 36.

[27] Waines, "Dietetics," 238–39.

[28] Quran 5:4.

[29] Al-Qurashī, *Maʿālim al-qurbah fī aḥkām al-ḥisbah* (Cairo, 1976), 169–70.


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The sources under study made it clear that most of the lawful birds were useful as nutrients *and* beneficial as medicinal nutrients, so they highlighted the properties of their meat, the temperaments with which they coincided, the best times for their consumption, their medical benefits, and their side effects, if any (see Table 1 for details). Domestic birds, such as chicken (*dajāj,* i.e., hen), cock (*dīk,* i.e., rooster), and goose *(iwazz),* were widely used due to their availability, so both sources elucidated their benefits and how to prepare them to treat different diseases. Lawful wild birds were also consumed, but were classified into categories according to their quality, digestibility, and benefits. The best of the wild birds was the palm dove *(dubsī),* second were the quail *(summānī)* and *shaḥrūr* (a type of blackbird), and in the third category were the partridge *(ḥajal),* francolin *(durrāj), ṭayhūj* (a type of francolin or partridge), pigeon chicks *(firākh al-ḥamām),* and ring-dove *(warshān).*[30]

Analysis of data about the consumption of lawful birds as medicinal nutrients (Table 1) revealed that domestic birds were eaten for their digestibility, their nutritive and strengthening effect on bodies, and their positive effect on common gastrointestinal diseases such as colic, stomach bloating, stomach gases, and constipation. The meat of chickens and cocks was also used to treat other diseases, such as chronic fever and joint pain.[31] On the other hand, wild birds—such as *sūdānīyah* (a wild bird, identification unknown), peacock *(ṭāwūs),* sparrow *(ʿuṣfūr),* partridge *(qabaj),* curlew *(karawān),* and starling *(zarzūr)*—were usually eaten for their aphrodisiac effects, but other medical benefits were also considered, including their effect in treating dropsy, hemiplegia, and facial palsy.

## The Parts, Extracts, Products, and Droppings of Birds as Treatment

The use of animals not only as food but in treatment was witnessed in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, and the practice left its mark on various societies that later arose in the Levant.[32] The medieval Islamic world could draw on a vast treasure-house of knowledge of plants, animals, and minerals that were used alone or in combination with other elements to produce medicines. Parts, extracts, products, and droppings of birds were among the materia medica used by physicians and pharmacists to restore the health of patients and to return balance to their temperament if proper diet failed to achieve that.

[30] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:413, 421; 3:127.

[31] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:84–86; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:418, 437.

[32] Efraim Lev, "Traditional Healing with Animals (Zootherapy): Medieval to Present-day Levantine Practice," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 8 (2003): 107; idem, "Healing with Animals in the Levant from the 10th to the 18th Century," *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 2, no. 11 (2006): 1–2. Also see the important study of Joseph de Somogyi: "Medicine in ad-Damiri's Hayat al-Hayawan," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2, no. 1 (1957): 62–91.


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Each drug had three levels of qualities. Primary qualities were the simplest (hot, cold, wet, dry) and each could appear in one of four degrees, becoming progressively stronger. Secondary qualities derived from the general appearance and affected the entire body. Tertiary qualities derived from the secondary ones but influenced only a specific part of the body.[33]

Based on the understanding of these qualities and the understanding of the various diseases, simple or compound medicines were used either to treat the symptoms or, hopefully, the underlying causes of the disease. Such simple and compound medicaments were found in two types of books: books of materia medica, and pharmacopias known as *aqrābādhīn,* which are compilations of compounded prescriptions for many ailments. During the Mamluk period, the most famous books of these two types were, for the first category, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiyah wa-al-aghdhiyah* by Ibn al-Bayṭār,[34] and *Al-Dustūr al-bīmāristānī* by Ibn Abī al-Bayān and *Minhāj al-dukkān wa-dustūr al-aʿyān* by al-Kūhīn al-ʿAṭṭār[35] for the second category.[36] The first book served as a basic guide to botany and other materials that could be used in preparing medicines, while the last book was intended to be a manual for pharmacists, chemists, drug sellers, and *ʿaṭṭārūn* (perfumers), and became popular and widespread in and outside of Egypt. These were specialized books for pharmacists and physicians and were considered essential for practicing pharmacology. Surprisingly, the authors of zoology books considered knowledge about medications prepared using an animal's parts and products, though specialized, essential to give a holistic perspective about the importance of the animal. This explains why al-ʿUmarī quoted large parts from

[33] Efraim Lev and Leigh Chipman, *Medical Prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections: Practical Medicine and Pharmacology in Medieval Egypt,* Cambridge Genizah Studies Series, vol. 4 (Leiden, 2012), 10.

[34] Ibn al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1249) was an Andalusian botanist and pharmacologist born in Malaga at the end of the sixth/twelfth century. He emigrated to the East in about 617/1220. He was famous for his works: *Al-Mughnī fī al-adwiyah al-mufradah,* dedicated to al-Ṣālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, and *al-Jāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiyah wa-al-aghdhiyah,* with the same dedication. The latter had a considerable influence on pharmacy both within and outside the Islamic world. Ḥusayn, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 414–18; Anawati, *Tārīkh al-ṣaydalah,* 189–92; J. Vernet, "Ibn al-Bayṭār," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3115; Bsoul, *Medieval Islamic World,* 81.

[35] Al-Kūhīn al-ʿAṭṭār was a Jewish pharmacist about whose life little is known. His book *Minhāj al-dukkān* is an extended pharmacopia intended for chemists and pharmacists. The book was written in 658/1260 and consists of 25 chapters discussing all types of medicines, focusing on compound ones and how to prepare them. Ḥusayn, *Al-Mūjaz fī tārīkh al-ṭibb,* 418; Anawati, *Tārīkh al-ṣaydalah,* 193–95; A. Dietrich, "al-Kōhēn al-ʿAṭṭār," *EI2,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4424; Wrūd Nurī Ḥusayn, "Al-Ṣaydalānī fī al-ʿaṣr al-Mamlūkī (Kūhīn al-ʿAṭṭār namūdhajan)," *Journal of the Faculty of Education of al-Qādisīyah University* 21 (2015): 108–10.

[36] Efraim Lev and Zohar Amar, *Practical Materia Medica of the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean According to the Cairo Genizah* (Leiden, 2008), 16–19; Lev and Chipman, *Medical Prescriptions,* 10–13.


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Ibn al-Bayṭār's book in addition to other older sources, and why al-Damīrī followed a similar methodology.

Both of our sources—*Masālik* and *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*—reveal that the parts of birds used for treatments included brains, heads, hearts, eyes, livers, feathers, gizzards, crops, testicles, combs, and tongues (see Table 2 for details). The most widely used part was the head, as the heads of fifteen birds were included in different remedies. The extracts of birds used in treatments included bile, blood, and fat. Of these, bile is the most commonly mentioned: the bile of nineteen birds was included in different remedies. The sole product of birds—eggs—and their droppings were both widely used: the eggs of eleven birds and the droppings of eighteen were included in a large number of remedies.

Our sources are rich in data about the medical benefits of birds, yet no classification was adopted according to the type of the disease, type of medication, or effect of the treatment. This data is compiled and classified in Table 2 in order to form a clear idea about how the different parts, extracts, and products were used. As a complete inventory is beyond the scope of this article, in the following pages I will present some representative examples, classified according to the types of diseases.

**Gastro-intestinal diseases** were widespread and birds were part of many treatments for such ailments. Colic was treated by eating the grilled meat of the lark *(qubrah),*[37] the grilled meat of the crow *(ghurāb),*[38] or the meat of the hoopoe *(hudhud)* cooked with water and dill,[39] or by drinking chicken droppings mixed with water and vinegar.[40] Diarrhea was treated by mixing equal parts of dried meat of cock with tannins and sumac *(summāq)* to form chickpea-sized pills to cure the patient.[41] If diarrhea became chronic, it was treated with pills made from the fat of the bustard *(ḥubārá)* mixed with salt and dried; five pills were to be taken with water on an empty stomach.[42] Jaundice and dropsy are two examples of diseases caused by liver failure, the treatment of which included parts of birds: the former was treated with the head of a partridge *(ḥajal)* drunk with wine,[43] while the latter was treated by coating the painful area with pigeon droppings mixed with vinegar[44] or by eating sparrows *(ʿaṣāfīr)* or sandgrouse

[37] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:102.

[38] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:220.

[39] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:106.

[40] Ibid., 85.

[41] Ibid., 87.

[42] Ibid., 77.

[43] Ibid., 78.

[44] Ibid., 81; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:336.


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*(qaṭā)* to reduce the symptoms.[45] Diseases of the intestinal tract, such as hemorrhoids and dysentery, were difficult to treat. Patients with hemorrhoids were advised to eat foods that digested quickly and to avoid hard meats and spices. Dysentery and hemorrhoid patients were to drink the brain of the kite *(ḥidʾah)* boiled with leeks and honey,[46] and topical treatments useful for hemorrhoids included the dried blood or eggs of a raven (*zāgh,* sometimes translated as jackdaw, a smaller member of the crow family)[47] and the dried blood of a crow.[48]

Topical treatments that included parts of birds or their droppings were widely used for **dermatological diseases**, some of which were minor skin problems while others were more severe. Freckles on the face and body were coated with burned bustard *(ḥubārá)* gizzard, finely ground and mixed with the water of green coriander,[49] or with the droppings of the *zummaj* (a small eagle or falcon, possibly steppe eagle)[50] or *ʿuqāb*[51] (eagle) to be cured. Melasma was coated with the dried, burned bones of a peacock *(ṭāwūs)*[52] or the brain of a *ṣaqr* (falcon)[53] to change its dark color. Albinism and vitiligo were more serious skin conditions that could be treated with birds. Albinism was treated with an ointment made of dried pigeon droppings, barley flour, water, and tar applied to the skin with a linen bandage for three days and repeated,[54] with an ointment made of the bile of a crane *(kurkī),*[55]with the droppings of the Egyptian vulture *(rakham)* mixed with wine,[56] with the bile of the quail *(salwá),* with the blood of the collared dove *(fākhitah),* or with the blood of a black pigeon.[57] For vitiligo, the meat and crop of the raven *(zāgh)* were dried and mixed with honey to be drunk by the patient for three consecutive days,[58] or his skin was coated with the bile of quail *(salwá)* mixed with saffron.[59] Another severe disease was leprosy, which was

[45] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:85, 103; sandgrouse meat is generally useful for patients with weak livers.

[46] Ibid., 79.

[47] Ibid., 89.

[48] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:220.

[49] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:77–78.

[50] Ibid., 92; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:13.

[51] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:97.

[52] Ibid., 94; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:114.

[53] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:87.

[54] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:81.

[55] Ibid., 111.

[56] Ibid., 88; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:461.

[57] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:36; 4:240.

[58] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:89.

[59] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:36.


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treated with the fat of chickens fed on safflower *(qurṭum)* for 12 days.[60] Similarly, alopecia, which causes hair loss on the head and other parts of the body, was treated by coating the skin with goose fat[61] or the ashes of burned sandgrouse *(qaṭā)* bones mixed with oil from unripe olives *(anfāq).*[62] The droppings of several birds—bat *(khuffāsh),*[63] starling *(zarzūr)* fed on rice,[64] and ostrich *(naʿām)*[65]—were used for the treatment of ringworm by spreading it on the red area of the infection. Other droppings, such as those of peacocks *(ṭāwūs),*[66] sparrows *(ʿaṣāfīr),*[67] and lark *(qubrah),*[68] were used for the treatment of warts.

**Ophthalmic diseases** were also very common in Egypt, and the heads, bile, and droppings of several birds were common components of many treatments. Cataracts, or the clouding of the lens of the eye, were treated with the brain of an owl *(būm)*[69] or the head of a pigeon burned with its feathers and crushed.[70] The condition was also treated with eye medications, or *akḥāl,* made from the bile of the partridge *(ḥajal),*[71] *zummaj* (a small eagle or falcon),[72] sparrow hawk *(bāshiq),*[73] raven *(zāgh),*[74] or vulture *(nisr),*[75] the last two mixed with honey, or the droppings of the parrot *(babaghāʾ).*[76] Watery eyes—the production of excessive tears—was treated with *akḥāl* that could be made from the bile of various birds (partridge *[ḥajal],*[77] eagle *[ʿuqāb],*[78] partridge *[qabaj],*[79] vulture *[nisr],*[80] or goshawk

[60] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:85.
[61] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:137.
[62] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:103; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:308.
[63] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:83; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:381.
[64] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:92.
[65] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:428.
[66] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:94; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:114.
[67] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:96; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:149.
[68] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:290.
[69] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:76.
[70] Ibid., 80.
[71] Ibid., 78; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:293.
[72] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:93; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:13.
[73] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:146.
[74] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:89; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:7.
[75] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:105.
[76] Ibid., 112; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:150.
[77] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:78.
[78] Ibid., 97; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:165.
[79] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:101; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:288.
[80] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:104; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:419.


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*[bāzī]*),[81] from the head of a bat *(waṭwāṭ)* mixed with honey,[82] or from the head of a bat *(khuffāsh)* mixed with onion water.[83] In that case, the heads of birds were usually burned and crushed with a substance that had an astringent or moderating effect. On the other hand, to remove pus from the eye and accelerate healing after eye surgery, the blood of birds such as pigeon *(ḥamām), shifnīn* (uncertain, possibly turtle-dove), and ring-dove *(warshān)* was useful.[84]

Some **neurological diseases** were also treated with parts of birds. For facial palsy, the heart of an owl *(būm)* was eaten or the blood of the same bird was used for coating the face.[85] The bile of the goshawk *(bāzī)* or crane *(kurkī)* was used to prepare inhalable medications that proved effective for treating the same disease.[86] For epilepsy, the liver of partridge *(ḥajal)* or of grilled partridge *(qabaj)* was eaten, while for migraine, the bile of the Egyptian vulture *(rakham)* mixed with violet fat was dropped into the ear opposite the side of the headache.[87] Hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the face or body) was treated with the head of a bat mixed with lily fat and cooked for a long period, after which the fat produced was coated on the patient. Alternatively, the whole bat would be cooked and the cooking water poured in a basin in which the patient sat to be cured.[88]

The field of **toxicology, burns, and ulcers** involved many remedies that employed birds or their extracts and droppings. The bites of scorpions and vermin were treated by cutting a live pigeon, chicken, or cock and putting it—while still warm—on the bitten area.[89] Dog bites were treated by coating the bitten area with cock droppings mixed with vinegar,[90] while snakebite was treated with the bile or gizzard of an Egyptian vulture *(rakham).*[91] Pigeon droppings proved useful: to treat fire burns they were burnt in linen and the ashes were mixed with oil and coated on the burned area, and to treat bed sores they were mixed with honey and linen seeds and applied on sores.[92] Sores and ulcerations were similarly treated by coating them with the blood of peacock *(ṭāwūs)* mixed with

[81] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:108.
[82] Ibid., 106.
[83] Ibid., 83.
[84] Ibid., 80.
[85] Ibid., 76.
[86] Ibid., 108, 111.
[87] Ibid., 88.
[88] Ibid., 83; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:377.
[89] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:80, 84; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:336.
[90] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:85.
[91] Ibid., 88; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:461.
[92] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:81; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:336.


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*inzarūt* (a bitter, red tree sap) and salt[93] or by sprinkling the dried droppings of quail *(salwá)* on them.[94]

Medications for many other diseases also included parts of birds in their ingredients, such as an inhalable medicine for diphtheria that used the dried meat of starling *(zarzūr)*[95] or an emetic made from chicken droppings.[96] Pigeon droppings were part of a medicine for gout.[97] In addition to the many diseases mentioned above, our sources reveal that birds were also useful for rupturing tumors, facilitating delivery, causing pregnancy, relieving various body pains, enhancing erections, removing kidney stones, and removing, restoring, or dying hair. It is apparent that birds (whole or partial) were employed in the treatment of a list of diseases so long that it is hard to accomplish an exact count (see Table 2 for details).

## Folk Medicine: Amulets, Talismans, and Magical Practices

Magical and folkloric practices formed part of the medical pluralism during medieval times. Muslims inherited many beliefs and customs from older civilizations, and these continued to be used at all levels of society. It was generally perceived that both natural and unnatural causes could lie behind an illness. Belief in the evil eye and the harm that could be caused by evil beings resulted in the use of talismans, amulets, and magical practices in addition to invocations and prayers addressed to God or one of his intercessors to protect people from harm and evil powers.[98]

Ibn Khaldūn identifies magic and talismans as "sciences of how humans affect the world of elements with or without an aid" and added that these sciences were common among the Babylonians and the Copts of Egypt.[99] Magic, in this context, aims to change one's situation, or that of another, by using magical objects such as amulets and talismans to utilize a powerful entity. An amulet can be described as an object endowed with magical powers used by the person who carries it; it can be used by anyone to target all sorts of problems. A talisman, on the other hand, is only meant to perform one specific task and is intended for a particular user in a defined situation.[100] Both amu-

[93] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:94; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:114.

[94] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:36.

[95] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:92.

[96] Ibid., 85.

[97] Ibid., 81.

[98] Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 144.

[99] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn* (Alexandria, n.d.), 348.

[100] Marcela A. Garcia Probert and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "Introduction: Transmission, Efficacy and Collections: Amulets in Interaction with Their Environment," in *Amulets and Talismans of the*


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lets and talismans were categorized as active magical texts through which magic was performed.[101] They could be marked with features such as Quranic verses and/or the word of God, the names of angels and/or demons, magical symbols, Arabic letters, and sometimes drawings.[102] These inscriptions and drawings transmitted divine or magical power to the amulet or talisman so it could maintain or re-establish well-being or protect from harm or illness. Amulets and talismans were hung around a person's neck, bound to some part of the body, hung on the wall, or kept hidden in a certain place[103] in order to fulfil their intended purposes.

A number of general magical manuals that included incantations, prayers, and talismans for different illnesses, mannerisms, and misfortunes were composed as early as the twelfth century by healers who compiled their experiences, practices, and insights that combined magic and medical recipes. The magical treatise of the Egyptian author al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) achieved foundational status among scholars in the Muslim world.[104] A separate genre focusing on the magical employment of animals, plants, and minerals, called *khawāṣṣ,* revolved around the idea that each element in nature had hidden properties that could be activated and used to cure disease, obtain good fortune, or protect from harm.[105] Many treatises of that genre were composed, usually with the title *Kitāb al-khawāṣṣ* (Book of occult properties), and Mamluk Cairo witnessed a renaissance of occultism from the late eighth/fourteenth century.[106] The remedies and formulae of such treatises became popular, especially since they offered solutions not only for medical but also for social and behavioral problems. This explains why other books that were non-magical in nature, such as those studied here, considered such remedies to be integral parts of knowledge concerning the medical benefits of animals, plants, and minerals.

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*Middle East and North Africa in Context,* ed. Marcela A. Garcia Probert and Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden, 2022), 5.

[101] Ursula Hammed, "Arabic Magical Texts in Original Documents: A Papyrologist Answers Five Questions You Always Wanted to Ask," in *Amulets and Talismans,* ed. Garcia Probert and Sijpesteijn, 219.

[102] Ibid., 219–23.

[103] Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 145–146; Garcia Probert and Sijpesteijn, "Introduction," 3.

[104] Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "Arabic Medical-Magical Manuscripts: A Living Tradition," in *Amulets and Talismans,* ed. Garcia Probert and Sijpesteijn, 80.

[105] Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine,* 148.

[106] Sijpesteijn, "Arabic Medical-Magical Manuscripts," 90.


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In terms of birds exploited in folk or magical remedies, al-ʿUmarī mentions twenty-two birds and al-Damīrī mentions twenty-seven (fifteen of these birds are mentioned by both authors). At the top of the list of birds that were commonly used in folk medicine are: hoopoe *(hudhud),* cock *(dīk),* Egyptian vulture *(rakham),* crow *(ghurāb),* owl *(būm),* swift or swallow *(khuṭṭāf),* and bat *(khuffāsh).* Popular remedies that exploited birds (partly or wholly) were plentiful and miscellaneous, some aiming to solve social problems, others aiming to protect from harm, cure illness, overcome unpleasant traits, or achieve a desire. Some of the remedies described how to prepare an amulet or a talisman while others described a magical practice or a medication intended for consumption. The analysis of our sources resulted in a long list of remedies (see Table 3 for details) and I intend to highlight only a few examples to give an overview of such usage of birds. In all cases, the person doing the practice or making the remedy is using it to cause an effect on the receiver or the person intended to receive the impact.

Remedies to cause love were the most frequently mentioned in the studied sources. The hoopoe *(hudhud)* was used in several of them, such as burning the left wing of a hoopoe and sprinkling the ashes on the pathway of the intended target. Another involved putting a hoopoe's beak and a feather from its right wing in a leather pouch with a paper on which are written the names of the targeted person and his/her mother (to avoid affecting some other person with the same name). A talisman made by using the tongue and beak of a hoopoe wrapped in antelope leather (inscribed with certain magical words) and buried under someone's door was also used to cause love. The head of a hoopoe could be cooked with flour and made into a dough that was dried and fed to someone. As a result of any of these, the person targeted by the practice would love the person doing it.[107] More examples: if a person mixed the eye of an owl *(būm)* with musk, whoever smelled it would love the person carrying it,[108] and similarly if the dried eye of the swift or swallow *(khuṭṭāf)* was mixed with a good fat, a woman who drank it would love the person who gave her the drink.[109] The same effect would result from drinking wine to which the heart and head of a crow *(ghurāb)* were added.[110] Some remedies were made to regain love. After a quarrel between a husband and wife, for example, putting the head of a black chicken under their bed would recover the love between them.[111] By the same token, if

[107] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:453.

[108] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:76.

[109] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:374.

[110] Ibid., 3:220.

[111] Ibid., 2:419.


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a woman hated her husband, he could coat his male organ with lark *(qubrah)* fat before intercourse and she would love him again.[112]

In contrast, practices that caused dispute and hostility were also common. The blood of a cock *(dīk)* or a parrot *(babaghāʾ),* when dried and sprinkled between two people, would cause hostility and quarreling between them.[113] The same result could be caused by sprinkling dried owl *(būm)* meat on someone's food,[114] by sticking the droppings of a black chicken on the door of their house,[115] or by fumigating them with the eye of a raven *(zāgh)* or crow *(ghurāb).*[116]

Many remedies intended to cause sleep or wakefulness used parts of birds, and especially their eyes. It was believed that one eye of an owl, a nocturnal bird, caused sleep and the other caused wakefulness. To distinguish between the two, they were tested by putting them in water: the one that sank caused sleep and the one that floated did the opposite. To achieve these effects, the former was put under a pillow and the latter was inserted as an amulet in a ring.[117] The same effect was attributed to the eye of the stork *(luqluq).*[118] Wakefulness could be caused by putting the head and heart of bat *(khuffāsh)* under a pillow,[119] hanging the eye of a swallow *(khuṭṭāf* or *sunūnū)*[120] on a bed, or mixing the blood of a collared dove *(fākhitah)* with pigeon blood, oil, and tar and using it for fumigation.[121]

Protections against the evil eye and magic were also frequently provided. If a hoopoe *(hudhud)* was slaughtered and hung on a house door, it would protect its inhabitants from magic and the evil eye,[122] while the beak of a crow *(ghurāb)* could be hung on a person to protect him from the evil eye.[123]

Parts of birds were used in many remedies intended to acquire good traits: the meat or the tongue of a parrot *(babaghāʾ)* helped a person become fluent and outspoken,[124] the head of an eagle *(ʿuqāb)* helped a person achieve courage, and the bile or bones of a *tannūṭ* (identification uncertain, aside from being a small

[112] Ibid., 4:290.

[113] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:86, 112; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:150.

[114] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:76.

[115] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:418.

[116] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:88, 99.

[117] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:76; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:208.

[118] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:381.

[119] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:83; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:377.

[120] Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 2:374; 3, 49.

[121] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:100.

[122] Ibid., 106; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 4:453.

[123] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 3:220.

[124] Ibid., 112; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:150.


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bird) helped a person be well-mannered.[125] Bird parts were also used to reverse negative traits, behaviors, or problems: the blood of a crow *(ghurāb)* caused a person to dislike wine,[126] and the meat of an Egyptian vulture *(rakham)* was an impediment to coition.[127] Strengthening memory, curing insanity, eliminating anxiety, protection against drowning, assistance achieving goals and needs, and facilitating delivery are only some of the many other reasons behind folk and magical remedies that used birds' body parts, extracts, or droppings (see Table 3 for details).

## Discussion

The two sources that this study focuses on derived their information about birds from older sources. Al-ʿUmarī's sources were varied, as he referred frequently to zoological books such as al-Qazwīnī's *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* and al-Jāḥiẓ's *Al-Ḥayawān,* medical books by al-Rāzī and Ibn Sīnā, agriculture books such as *Al-Filāḥah al-Nabaṭīyah* by Ibn Waḥshīyah, and older sources by Greek authors. Al-ʿUmarī's most important source was Ibn al-Bayṭār's *Al-Jāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiyah wa-al-aghdhiyah,*[128] which served as a basic guide in botany and materia medica. Al-ʿUmarī quoted verbatim from Ibn al-Bayṭār to the extent that a copy of the twentieth volume of his book—which is devoted to animals—preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France was wrongly attributed to Ibn al-Bayṭār.[129] Because of the diversified character of al-Damīrī's book, he depended on and quoted from such a huge number of sources that counting them is beyond the scope of this research.[130] When it comes to his discussion of the benefits of birds, however, his sources did not differ much from those of al-ʿUmarī. Neither of the two authors approached his sources critically; on the contrary, they accepted all their information and copied protracted passages from them. As a result, the knowledge about animals presented in these works was a mixture of scientific and practical knowledge related to how different practitioners and healers had

[125] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:108; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 1:213.

[126] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:99; al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān,* 3:220.

[127] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik,* 20:88.

[128] This book listed about 1400 simple drugs and plants, 400 of which were not known to the Greeks. The drugs were of animal, plant, and mineral origin, arranged alphabetically in a simplified form, and divided into 20 chapters. Ibn al-Bayṭār reviewed 150 works by other scholars and physicians, benefiting from their works, avoiding their mistakes, and adding to them based on his practical experience. Thus, his book was one of the main botany sources that gained fame in the Islamic world and Europe.

[129] BnF Ar. No. 2771.

[130] For more details about al-Damīrī's sources, see: Joseph de Somogyi, "Index des sources de la Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān de ad-Damīrī," *Journal Asiatique* 213 (1928): 5–128.


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used them. Legality was also essential to include with the general knowledge about animals as it regulated their usage.

Analysis of information in these two sources revealed that only lawful birds were used as nutrients or medicinal nutrients, while the usage of unlawful birds depended on the properties of their parts, extracts, products, and droppings, as well as their effects on the human body and its temperaments when used in medication. They were part of the prosperous diversified materia medica that marked medieval Islamic medicine and highlighted its merit and evolution over Greek medicine. The medical benefits of birds (wholly or partly used) ranged to cover the treatment of a wide variety of symptoms and diseases of different types and categories. Some were simple, common symptoms while others were severe or chronic diseases.

Birds were used in both simple and compound medicines. Sometimes the studied sources give a remedy's method of preparation and quantities of its components in detail, but in many cases they only mention that a certain item is useful for a certain disease or symptom. In both cases, the language used in the descriptions of remedies is simple enough that it could be comprehended by non-experts. In terms of their means of application, the medications varied widely, including topical, inhalable, and oral medicines, including—but not limited to—oils and fats *(dahān),* syrups *(sharāb),* liniments and ointments *(ṭilāʾ* or *marham),* pills *(ḥubūb),* dusting powders *(zurūr),* snuffs *(suʿūṭ),* powders *(sufūf),* eye powders or ointments *(kuḥl, akḥāl),* suppositories *(fatāʾīl),* eye or nasal drops *(qaṭrah),* and pastes *(maʿjūn).*

Generally, both al-ʿUmarī and al-Damīrī, but especially the former, were keen to mention the sources from which they quoted the uses of birds. In some cases the remedy was followed with an affirmative phrase to ensure its effectiveness such as *"mujarrab"* (tried or tested), *"nafiʿahu inshāʾ Allāh"* (useful for him, God willing), or *"yabraʾ waḥyan inshāʾ Allāh"* (he is cured immediately, God willing). Of course, neither author was a practitioner, and they had not tried the remedies themselves but were quoting from the physicians and experts they relied on, such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Rāzī, and Ibn al-Bayṭār. Such comments from authoritative sources who were considered masters in their field undoubtedly added credibility to the remedies. Moreover, taking care to mention the names of the original authors conferred scientific integrity on the two authors and implied that they considered themselves outsiders to the field of medicine who were simply transmitting existing knowledge to their readers.

The fact that both sources presented folk/magical remedies side by side with medical remedies implies the widespread use and acceptance of folk medicine at the time. In fact, folk medicine satisfied social needs that traditional medicine could not, and was thus of no less importance than tradition-


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al medicine. It helped the public to face their fears, achieve their desires, and cure their intractable illnesses. It provided magical solutions to family problems, unfavorable traits, and unexplained fears. Folk medicine represented a field of knowledge where ancient traditions intertwined with talismans, invocations, and prophetic medicine. It also exhibited some of society's prevailing beliefs, such as belief in the harmful effects of the evil eye and the existence of evil beings that could harm humans. In the same vein, it was believed that animals and certain parts of their bodies had hidden powers that could be activated, and that such powers were generally associated with the features of the animal itself. For example, the owl and the bat, which are nocturnal, have powers to cause insomnia and wakefulness, while the parrot, which is marked by its ability to mimic sounds, has power to cause fluency. Similarly, some kinds of cocks known for hostility and fighting have the power to cause dispute and hostility between friends and family, and the eyes of some birds have the power to protect from the evil eye.

This analysis also sparks other important questions. For example, were the many different birds mentioned in our sources actually available in Egypt and thus able to be used in preparing medicines? The chronicles of the Mamluk period prove that a wide variety of birds was, in fact, available. Sources show that incubators were used in Egypt for the mass production of chickens at least as early as the twelfth century, ensuring the abundance of chickens in markets. Domestic birds were bred by the sultan to be used for daily consumption and for special ceremonies[131] and were also bred by farmers and sold in the markets of Cairo and other large cities. Therefore, chickens, geese, and ducks were always available except in times of famine and scarcity. Al-Maqrīzī mentioned that other birds were sold in Cairo's markets on Fridays, such as turtle-doves *(qumarī),* sandgrouse *(qaṭā),* parrots *(babaghāʾ),* quail *(summānī),* sparrows *(ʿaṣāfīr),* pigeons *(ḥamām),* and starlings *(zarzūr).*[132] Other types of wild birds, such as crows *(ghurāb),* collared doves *(fākhitah),* owls *(būm),* eagles *(ʿuqāb),* vultures *(nisr),* and falcons *(ṣaqr),* in addition to migrating birds such as cranes *(kurkī),* were also available in Egypt.[133] From this we may conclude that a large number of the birds that were needed for dif-

[131] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (Cairo, 1999), 3:229; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 9:119–21; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* (Cairo, 1982–87), 1:1:449; Heba Abdelnaby, "And Meat of Birds that They May Desire," *EGYLandscape Working Papers* 2 (October 2020): 1–3; 6–9.

[132] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* 3:29, 96.

[133] For more details about the availability of different types of birds in Egypt see: Heba Abdelnaby, *Al-Ṭuyūr fī al-ʿaṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Cairo, 2021), 50–54, 67–69, 71–73.


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ferent remedies were already available in Egypt and that those that were not available were probably provided through trade.

Another question raised by this study is why so many details about the medical benefits of birds would appear in sources as general in nature as these two. In my opinion, although medicine is perceived as a specialized field, it seems that there was a distinction between knowledge and practice. Medicine was practiced by educated, trained physicians that were authorized to do that work. Nevertheless, other professions related to medicine also existed, such as *ṣaydalānī* (pharmacist) and *ʿaṭṭār* (perfumer, druggist, or herbalist), who dealt with medicine preparation. The former usually depended on patients coming to him with a physician's prescription, while the latter relied for his sales on his own diagnoses and suggested treatments. Very often, patients did not consult a physician but depended on self-medication according to personal knowledge, family traditions, or private medicine books.[134] In that case, a patient would go to an *ʿaṭṭār* to prepare a remedy that the patient or one of his acquaintances had tried before and found successful or to ask the *ʿaṭṭār* to suggest a remedy based on his experience. In rural areas a physician might not be available in the first place. Therefore, it seems that the authors believed that the knowledge itself, as distinct from the practice, should not be restricted to physicians and pharmacists but rather should be available to general or common readers, especially since there was an interest in knowing about diseases and their treatments based on prevailing practices in the society. As al-ʿUmarī was trying to collect all useful—from his point of view—knowledge in one encyclopedic book, a brief overview of the medical benefits of the animals and plants he discussed was a necessity. Al-Damīrī, whose book was zoological in nature, tried to present science side by side with literature so that his book would be beneficial and entertaining at the same time.

## CONCLUSION

*Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār* (vol. 20) and *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* are two Mamluk sources of high importance. They both provided detailed descriptions of animals, including birds, that can be considered a mix of scientific, literary, and historic information. Their coverage of the medical benefits of birds reflects the broad, deep knowledge of Muslims about a wide variety of diseases and symptoms of maladies. They showed that not only the whole bird but also its extracts, droppings, and products were part of the diverse materia medica used for the

[134] Efraim Lev, "Medieval Egyptian Judaeo-Arabic Prescriptions (And the Edition of Three Medical Prescriptions)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18, no. 4 (2008): 458–59.


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preparation of both simple and compound medications during the Mamluk period. Further, they clarified that folk medicine was as important as formal medicine since it treated problems that formal medicine could not. The fact that folk medicine dealt with mysterious powers, incurable diseases, individual needs and desires, personal traits, and behavioral and social problems illustrates the prevailing beliefs and traditions in Mamluk society at the time.


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Table 1: The Properties, Benefits, and Side Effects of the Meat of Lawful Birds

| Bird | Its properties | Suitable temperament | Suitable time to eat | Benefits | Side effects | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Iwazz (Goose)** | Very hot and moist | Hot | | Nutritious; fattening and strengthening; has aphrodisiac effect; emits stomach gas | Hard to digest; causes fever | U. 74<br>D. 1:137 |
| **Ḥubārī (Bustard)** | Hot and moist | Cold | Winter | Useful to emit gas | Harmful for joints and colic | U. 78<br>D. 1:291 |
| **Ḥajal (Partridge)** | Moderate meat | | | Nutritious; digests quickly | | U. 78<br>D. 2:293 |
| **Ḥamām (Pigeon)** | Drier than chicken meat | | | Good for kidneys; increases semen and blood | | U. 80<br>D. 2:336 |
| **Ḥawṣal (Pelican)** | Low in heat and high in moisture | Hot and choleric | | | | D. 2:348 |
| **Dubsī (Palm Dove)** | Hot and dry | | | The best wild bird to eat | | D. 2:413 |
| **Dajāj (Chicken)** | Moderate in temperature | Moderate | Spring | Increases mind and semen; clears the voice; moistens the body; treats chronic fever, stomach bloating, and colic; meat and broth enhance lust; broth has purgative effect | | U. 84<br>D. 2:418 |
| **Dīk (Cock)** | Moderately hot and moist | Cold | Winter | Good for colic; has purgative effect; good for joints, chronic fever, and tremors | | U. 87<br>D. 2:437 |
| **Summānī (Quail)** | Hot and dry | Cold | | Useful for joint pain; breaks up stones and has diuretic effect | Harmful for hot liver; causes hot blood | D. 3:36 |
| **Sūdānīyah (unknown)** | Cold, dry, and bad | Cold | Spring | Has aphrodisiac effect | Harmful for brain | D. 3:49 |
| **Shifnīn (possibly Turtle-dove)** | Hot and dry | | | Preferable to eat its chicks<br>Useful to release blood; useful for hemiplegia | Causes hot and dry blood;<br>Causes wakefulness | D. 3:68<br>U. 107 |

| Bird | Its properties | Suitable temperament | Suitable time to eat | Benefits | Side effects | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ṭāwūs (Peacock)** | | Hot | | Good for hot stomach; increases sexual intercourse; useful in stomach pain; repairs stomach | Hard to digest | U. 93<br>D. 3:114 |
| **Ṭayhūj (unknown, possibly a francolin)** | Very hot and moist | Moderate | Spring | Has aphrodisiac effect; repairs stomach; causes moderate blood; good for diarrhea; fattening | | U. 94<br>D. 3:127 |
| **ʿAṣāfīr (Sparrow)** | Hot and dry (harder than chicken meat) | Cold | Winter | Has aphrodisiac effect; heats the body; has purgative effect on stomach; useful for dropsy, hemiplegia, facial palsy, and relaxation | Causes yellow bile humor | U. 95<br>D. 3:149 |
| **Qabaj (Partridge)** | | | | Fattening; has aphrodisiac effect; useful for dropsy | | U. 101 |
| **Qaṭā (Sandgrouse)** | | | | Useful for liver weakness and bad temperament; useful for dropsy | Hard to digest; not nutritious | U. 103<br>D. 4:308 |
| **Kurkī (Crane)** | Cold and dry<br>Has fibrous meat | Hot | Winter | Facilitates release of sediments | Hard to digest; causes thick blood | U. 111<br>D. 4:333 |
| **Karawān (Curlew)** | | | | Has powerful aphrodisiac effect | | U. 103<br>D. 4:334 |

Table 2: Uses of Birds and Their Parts, Extracts, Excrement, and Products in Treatment

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Iwazz (Goose)** | Head/brain | | Colorectal tumors | U. 75 |
| | Gizzard | | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 1:137 |
| | Tongue | | Eases difficulty with urination | D. 1:137 |
| | Fat | | Alopecia | D. 1:137 |
| | | Droppings | Scrofula | U. 75 |
| **Bāzī (Hawk)** | Bile | | Watery eyes; facial palsy | U. 108; D. 1:146 |
| **Bāshiq (Hawk)** | Head/brain | | Heart palpitation | U. 75 |
| **Babaghāʾ (Parrot)** | | Droppings | Cataracts; ophthalmia | U. 112<br>D. 1:150 |
| **Būm (Owl)** | Head/ brain | | Hair restorer and hair depilatory | U. 76 |
| | Heart | | Cataracts | U. 76 |
| | Bile | | Colic; facial palsy | U. 76; D. 1:208 |
| | Blood | | Bladder stones; incontinence of urine; cataracts | U. 76 |
| | | Eggs | Facial palsy | U. 76 |
| **Tudruj (Pheasant)** | Bile | | Madness | D. 1:210 |
| **Abū Jarādah (unknown)** | Flesh | | Hemorrhoids | D. 1:288 |

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ḥubārī (Bustard)** | Fat | | Sprue | U. 77 |
| | Gizzard | | Freckles; cataracts | U. 77 |
| | Blood | | Asthma | U. 77 |
| | | Eggs | Dye hair black | D. 1:291 |
| **Ḥajal (Partridge)** | Head/ brain | | Jaundice | U. 78 |
| | Liver | | Headache | U. 78 |
| | Bile | | Cataracts; watery eyes | U. 78; D. 2:293 |
| | Blood | | Scabies | U. 78 |
| | Eggs | | Stomach ache; gripes | D. 2:293 |
| **Ḥidʾah (Kite)** | Blood | | Asthma | U. 79; D. 2:296 |
| | Head/brain | | Hemorrhoids | U. 79 |
| | Feathers | | Gout | U. 79 |
| | Bile | | Stings | U. 79; D. 2:296 |
| | | Eggs | Leukoderma | U. 79 |
| **Ḥamām (Pigeon)** | Flesh | | Scorpion sting; increases semen | U. 80 |
| | Blood | | Eye surgeries; epistaxis (nosebleeds); eye inflammation; cataracts; burns | U. 80; D. 2:336 |
| | | Droppings | Gout; alopecia; hard tumors; burns; dropsy; dysuria; leprosy | U. 81; D. 2:336 |
| **Khuṭṭāf (Kingfisher or Swallow)** | Bird and chick | | Diphtheria | U. 82 |
| | Head/ brain | | Cataracts; watery eyes | U. 82 |
| | Heart | | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 2:374 |
| | Blood | | Headache | D. 2:374 |
| | Bile | | Dye hair black | U. 82; D. 2:374 |
| | | Droppings | Cataracts | U. 83 |

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Khuffāsh (Bat)** | Blood | | Has depilatory effect | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| | Flesh | | Incontinence of urine; hemiplegia | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| | Head/brain | | Gout; hemiplegia; tremors; swelling; asthma; cataracts; watery eyes | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| | Bile | | Dystocia (difficult labor) | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| | | Droppings | Ringworm | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| **Dajāj (Chicken)** | Head/brain | | Cut bleeding; vermin stings; madness | U. 84 |
| | Fat | | Hemorrhoids; leprosy; has aphrodisiac effect | U. 85; D. 2:418 |
| | | Droppings | Diphtheria; colic; dog bite | U. 85 |
| **Dīk (Cock)** | Bile | | Cataracts | U. 85 |
| | Blood | | Cataracts; has aphrodisiac effect; vermin bites | U. 85; D. 2:437 |
| **Rakham (Egyptian Vulture)** | Bile | | Migraine; ear pain; scorpion stings; cataracts | U. 88 |
| | Gizzard | | Anti-poison | U. 88; D. 2:461 |
| | | Droppings | Leprosy | U. 88; D. 2:461 |
| **Zāgh (Raven)** | Bile | | Cataracts; dye hair black | U. 89; D. 3:7 |
| | Flesh and crop | | Vitiligo | U. 89 |
| | Blood | | Hemorrhoids | U. 89 |
| | Crop | | Watery eyes | D. 3:7 |
| | | Eggs | Hemorrhoids | U. 89 |
| | | Droppings | Spleen pain | U. 89 |
| **Zarzūr (Starling)** | Blood | | Abscesses | D. 3:9 |
| | | Droppings | Ringworm | U. 92 |

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Zummaj (a type of falcon or small eagle)** | Flesh | | Heart weakness; heart palpitation | U. 92; D. 3:13 |
| | Bile | | Cataracts | U. 92; D. 3:13 |
| | | Droppings | Freckles; melasma | U. 92; D. 3:13 |
| **Salwá (Quail)** | Eye | | Liver pain | D. 3:36 |
| | Bile | | Vitiligo | D. 3:36 |
| | | Droppings | Erosive sores | D. 3:36 |
| **Summānī (Quail)** | Flesh | | Has diuretic effect; breaks up stones | D. 3:36 |
| | Blood | | Earache | D. 3:36 |
| **Shifnīn (unknown, possibly Turtle-dove)** | Fat | | Deafness; cataracts; ophthalmia; eye swelling | U. 92; D. 3:68 |
| | | Eggs | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 3:68 |
| | | Droppings | Uterine pain | D. 3:68 |
| **Ṣaqr (Falcon)** | Head | | Has aphrodisiac effect; melasma | D. 3:87 |
| **Ṭāwūs (Peacock)** | Bile | | Chronic abdominal pain; vermin stings | U. 93; D. 3:114 |
| | Blood | | Sores | U. 94; D. 3:114 |
| | Bones | | Melasma | U. 94; D. 3:114 |
| | | Droppings | Warts | U. 94; D. 3:114 |
| **ʿAṣāfīr (Sparrow)** | Blood | | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 3:149 |
| | | Droppings | Melasma; facial warts | U. 96; D. 3:149 |
| **ʿUqāb (Eagle)** | Bile | | Watery eyes; cataracts | U. 97; D. 3:165 |
| | | Droppings | Melasma; facial warts | U. 97 |

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ghurāb (Crow)** | Head/ brain | | Headache | U. 99 |
| | Liver | | Cataracts | D. 3:220 |
| | Blood | | Hemorrhoids | D. 3:220 |
| | Flesh | | Colic | D. 3:220 |
| | | Droppings | Diphtheria; scrofula | D. 3:220 |
| **Ghurnīq (Heron)** | | Droppings | Nose sores | U. 100; D. 3:224 |
| **Ghawās (Loon)** | Blood/bones | | Spleen | D. 3:234 |
| **Qabaj (Partridge)** | Bile | | Watery eyes; eye whitening; night blindness (nyctalopia); fever | U. 101 D. 4:288 |
| | Blood | | Eye surgery; night blindness | U. 101 |
| | Fat | | Apoplexy; facial palsy | D. 4:288 |
| | | Eggs | Eye pain | U. 101 |
| **Qubrah (Lark)** | Flesh | | Colic; has aphrodisiac effect | U. 102; D. 4:290 |
| | Comb | | Colic | U. 102 |
| | | Droppings | Warts | D. 4:290 |
| **Qaṭā (Sandgrouse)** | Bones | | Alopecia; hair restorer | U. 103 D. 4:308 |
| **Nisr (Vulture)** | Flesh | | Spasms | U. 104 |
| | Bile | | Watery eyes; cataracts; eye scabies | U. 104 D. 4:419 |
| | Fat | | Deafness | U. 104 |
| | Liver | | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 4:419 |
| | | Eggs | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 4:419 |

| Bird | Part or Extract | Product | Targets of Treatment | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Naʿām (Ostrich)** | Fat | | Has anesthetic effect on tumors; scorpion stings | U. 105 |
| | | Droppings | Ringworm | D. 4:428 |
| **Hudhud (Hoopoe)** | Chicks (alive) | | Stings | U. 106 |
| | Intestines | | Dye hair black | U. 106 |
| **Waṭwāṭ (Bat)** | Head/ brain | | Watery eyes | U. 107 |
| **Kurkī (Crane)** | Head/ brain | | Night blindness (nyctalopia); swelling of hands and feet | U. 111 |
| | Bile | | Facial palsy; ringworm; scabies; leprosy | U. 111 |
| | Testicles | | Eye whitening caused by smallpox | U. 111 |
| **Yuʾyuʾ (a type of falcon)** | Head/brain | | Eye whitening | D. 4:487 |
| | Bile | | Headache | D. 4:487 |

Table 3: Use of Birds, Their Parts, and Their Products in Folk Medicine

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bāzī (Goshawk)** | Droppings | Mixed with water and drunk warm by sterile woman | Helps her get pregnant | D. 1:146 |
| **Babaghā' (Parrot)** | Tongue | Eaten | The eater becomes fluent | D. 1:150 |
| | Bile | Eaten | The eater has difficulty speaking | D. 1:150 |
| | Blood | Dried and sprinkled | Causes enmity between friends | U. 112; D. 1:150 |
| | Flesh | Eaten | The eater becomes fluent | U. 112 |
| **Būm (Owl)** | Eye | Mixed with musk and carried | Whoever smells it will love its carrier | U. 76 |
| | Eye (floats) | Set in a ring | Has awakening effect | U. 76; D. 1:208 |
| | Eye (sinks) | Put under a pillow | Has soporific effect | U. 76 |
| | Flesh | Dried and eaten | Causes rivalry between those who eat it | U. 76 |
| | Bones | Fumigated among wine drinkers | They become wild and boisterous | U. 76 |
| | Heart | Put on the left arm of a sleeping woman | She speaks of what she did all day | D. 1:208 |
| | Heart | Put in fox leather and tied to the upper arm | The carrier is safe from thieves and vermin | D. 1:208 |
| **Tannūṭ (unknown)** | Blood | Drunk by reveler while intoxicated | He will stop such behavior | D. 1:213 |
| | Bile | Cooked with sugar and drunk by a young boy | He will behave well and his character will improve | D. 1:213 |
| | Bile | Eaten by a boy | He will become well-behaved and loved | U. 111 |
| | Bones | Hung on a boy at time of full moon | He is loved by people | D. 1:213 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ḥubārī (Bustard)** | Heart | Hung on a person who sleeps a lot | Sleep decreases | U. 78; D. 2:291 |
| | Stone from the gizzard | Hung on a person who has nosebleeds | Stops nosebleeds | U. 78 |
| | Stone from the crop | Hung on a person who has diarrhea | Stops diarrhea | D. 2:291 |
| **Ḥajal (Partridge)** | Liver | Swallowed hot with flesh | Effective for dread and panic | D. 2:293<br>U. 78; D. 2:293 |
| | Bile | Nasal application once a month | Decreases forgetfulness, sharpens eyesight, improves the brain | |
| **Ḥamām (Pigeon)** | Droppings | Fumigating women with labor contractions | Hastens labor and delivery | D. 2:336 |
| **Khuṭṭāf (Kingfisher or Swallow)** | Eye | Put in a piece of cloth in a bed | Whoever lies on the bed will be unable to sleep | D. 2:374 |
| | Eye | Dried, crushed with fine fat, and drunk by a woman | She will love the one who gives it to her | D. 2:374 |
| | Blood | Drunk by a woman without her knowledge | Inhibits lust | U. 82; D. 2:374 |
| | Heads of a male and a female | The ashes are added to a drink | The user never gets drunk | U. 82 |
| | Two stones | Tied to the chest or neck of an epilepsy patient | Has curing effect | U. 82 |
| | Two stones | Not identified | Cures sexual impotence, obsession, and dysuria (difficult or painful urination) | D. 2:374 |
| **Khuffāsh (Bat)** | Head | Put inside a pillow | Causes wakefulness | U. 83; D. 2:377 |
| | Head | Rubbed on feet | Has aphrodisiac effect | U. 83 |
| | Heart | Hung on a person | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 2:377 |
| | Heart | Burnt in a house | Repels snakes or scorpions | D. 2:377 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dajāj (Chicken)** | Eggs | Certain words are written on a sword that cuts the egg in half and it is eaten by a man/woman | Removes an impediment to coition | D. 2:418 |
| | Stone from the gizzard | Not specified | Has aphrodisiac effect; cures epilepsy; protects from the evil eye; protects children from dread and panic | D. 2:418 |
| | Droppings | Stuck on the door of a house | Causes rivalry and dispute in the house | D. 2:418 |
| | Head | Buried in a cup under the bed of a man in a quarrel with his wife | They reconcile | D. 2:418 |
| **Dīk (Cock)** | Comb | Burnt and drunk | Cures incontinence of urine | U. 87; D. 2:437 |
| | Comb | Fumigate a mad person | Madness is cured | U. 87; D. 2:437 |
| | Tail feathers | Put in the wash water | Has aphrodisiac effect | D. 2:437 |
| | Wing bones | Hung on a person | Cures fever, fatigue, and sleepiness | U. 87; D. 2:437 |
| | Testicle | Grilled and eaten by a sterile woman during menstrual period | She will get pregnant | D. 2:437 |
| | Testicle | Put in paper and tied to the left arm of a man | Has a powerful aphrodisiac effect | D. 2:437 |
| | Bile | Mixed with lamb broth and eaten | Treats forgetfulness, helps memory | U. 87; D. 2:437 |
| | Blood | Mixed with honey and rubbed on the male sex organ | Has aphrodisiac effect | U. 87; D. 2:437 |
| | Blood | Eaten by a group of people | Causes dispute between them | U. 87 |
| **Rakham (Egyptian Vulture)** | Liver | Grilled, crushed, and eaten by a mad person | Madness is cured | U. 88; D. 2:461 |
| | Head feathers | Hung by a woman suffering dystocia | Hastens her labor | U. 88; D. 2:461 |
| | Head bone | Hung on a person | Cures headache | D. 2:461 |
| | Meat | Fumigated on a man suffering impediment to coition | He is cured | U. 88 |
| | Droppings | Fumigated on a pregnant woman | Causes abortion | U. 88 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Zāgh (Raven)** | Eye | Fumigated between two people | Causes rivalry and dispute between them | U. 88 |
| | Tongue | Dried and eaten | Removes thirst (even in July) | D. 3:7 |
| | Heart | Dried, crushed, and drunk by a traveler | The traveler will not feel thirst | U. 88; D. 3:7 |
| | Fat | Rubbed on forehead before meeting the sultan or other authority | The request will be accepted | U. 88 |
| | Egg | Eaten by a person who drinks wine | The person will hate wine | U. 88 |
| **Salwá (Quail)** | Eye | Hung on a person suffering from insomnia | Insomnia is cured | D. 3:36 |
| | Head | Fumigated in a place | Removes termites | D. 3:36 |
| **Summānī (Quail)** | Heart | Eaten | Softens a hard heart | D. 3:36 |
| **Sunūnū (Swallow)** | Eye | Hung on a bed | Whoever lies on the bed will not be able to sleep | D. 3:49 |
| | Eye | Fumigating a person with fever | Fever is cured | D. 3:49 |
| **Shifnīn (unknown, possibly Turtle-dove)** | Blood | Rubbed on the male sex organ | His wife will not marry after his death | D. 3:68 |
| **Ṭāwūs (Peacock)** | Bile | Drunk | Causes madness | D. 3:114 |
| **ʿAṣāfīr (Sparrow)** | Head | Melted with sesame oil and drunk by a wine lover | The person will hate wine | D. 3:149 |
| **ʿUqāb (Eagle)** | Feather | Fumigating a woman with uterine asphyxia | It is useful | U. 97 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ghurāb (Crow)** | Eye | Fumigated between a group of people | Causes enmity between them | U. 99 |
| | Heart | Dried, crushed, and drunk by a person | The person will not feel thirsty | U. 99 |
| | Bile | Added to wine | The drinker is intoxicated from the first cup | U. 99 |
| | Bile | Coated on a bewitched person | The magic is stopped | D. 3:220 |
| | Spleen | Hung on a person | Stirs up love | U. 99 |
| | Blood | Added to wine | The drinker will hate wine | U. 99 |
| | Beak | Hung on a person | Protects from the evil eye | D. 3:220 |
| | Head and heart | Added to wine | The drinker will love the person who gave the wine | D. 3:220 |
| | Droppings | Put in a piece of cloth and hung on a young boy | Cures chronic cough | U. 99; D. 3:220 |
| **Fākhitah (Collared Dove)** | Blood | Mixed with pigeon blood, oil, and tar, and fumigated | Whoever smells it will not sleep | U. 100 |
| | Droppings | Hung on a boy with epilepsy | It is useful | U. 100; D. 4:240 |
| **Qabaj (Partridge)** | Bile | Nasal application once at the beginning of the month | Sharpens eyesight and improves the brain | U. 101 |
| | Liver | Grilled and eaten by a boy | Protects against epilepsy | U. 101 |
| **Qubrah (Lark)** | Fat | Rubbed on the sex organ of a man whose wife hates him | She will love him | D. 4:290 |
| **Qaṭā (Sandgrouse)** | Head | Put in a linen cloth and hung on the thigh of a woman | She will tell everything she has done | D. 4:308 |
| | Stomach fat of two birds | Rubbed on a person (without their knowledge) | They will deeply love the person who applies it | D. 4:308 |
| **Kurkī (Crane)** | Bile | Mixed with the head and mercury and used as nasal medicine | The user will remember forgotten things | U. 111; D. 4:333 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Luqluq (Stork)** | Head | Melted with rennet of rabbit and eaten | Stirs up love | D. 4:381 |
| | Bones | Carried by a person | Removes concerns | D. 4:381 |
| | Eye | Carried by a person | The left eye causes sleepiness, the right causes wakefulness, and the carrier will not drown—even if he cannot swim | D. 4:381 |
| **Nisr (Vulture)** | Heart | Put in fox leather and hung on a person | He will be loved and his requests granted | D. 4:419 |
| | Feather | Put under a woman with dystocia | Hastens delivery | D. 4:419 |
| | Feather | Fumigate a house | Expels vermin | D. 4:419 |
| | Bones | Hung on a servant of kings or sultans | He is secured from their anger and is loved by them | D. 4:419 |
| **Naʿām (Ostrich)** | Fat | Smelled | Whoever smells it will faint. | U. 105 |

| Bird | Part, extract, or product | Method of usage | Reason for use/effect on user | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hudhud (Hoopoe)** | Eye | Hung on a person | Helps to remember what was forgotten; causes love; prevents leprosy | U. 106; D. 4:453 |
| | Feather | Carried by a person | Leads to victory over a rival | U. 106; D. 4:453 |
| | Feather | Put in a ruined house | It will never be rebuilt | D. 4:453 |
| | Feather | Burnt, ashes sprinkled on the road of the one you love | Causes deep love | D. 4:453 |
| | Heart | Grilled and eaten | Good for memorization | D. 4:453 |
| | Beak | Carried by a person before meeting the sultan | The carrier will be treated well and his request granted | D. 4:453 |
| | Wing | Burned and used to fumigate an ant colony | Ants are removed | U. 106 |
| | Flesh | Fumigation of a bewitched person or someone suffering from impediment to coition | They are cured | U. 106 |
| | Comb | Fumigation of a mad person | It is useful | U. 106 |
| | Claw | Hung on a boy | He is protected from the evil eye and harm | D. 4:453 |
| | Tongue with beak | Put on leather (with magic words), buried under entrance | Causes love, compassion, and acceptance to whoever passes over it | D. 4:453 |
| | Whole bird | Hung on a house's door | Secures the house from magic and the evil eye | U. 106 |

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# *Taqlīd* and Tillage in the Works of Two Taqī al-Dīns

Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (683–756/1284–1355) and Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymīyah (661–728/1263–1328) were two prominent scholars that shared a name, a time period, and a geographic locale. They were, however, anything but colleagues: al-Subkī embodied the Cairo Sultanate's administrative normativity; a chief judge and the father of a chief judge, al-Subkī stood in stark contrast to the oft-dissenting Ibn Taymīyah, the latter being no stranger to the Sultanate's jail cells. The two scholars also diverged legally on many points: al-Subkī's biography is replete with mentions of polemics against Ibn Taymīyah and vice versa. Despite their famous differences on points ranging from the eternality of hellfire[1] to the legal status of oaths of divorce,[2] the two men had a shared position on *muzāraʿah,* the sharecropping contract. The Hanbali Ibn Taymīyah concurred with his *madhhab*'s position on the topic, offering a new rationale to the classical position. The Shafiʿi al-Subkī, in contrast, admits that by adopting the opinion he articulates on sharecropping, he dissents with the dominant position of the *madhhab,* including the opinion of its revered eponymous scholar, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820).

This study explores the ways the two scholars dealt with this legal question and uses the question of sharecropping to better understand how scholars dissented or concurred with their *madhhab*s based on both legal and extra-legal factors. We are interested here in how scholars understood their position within the legal schools and how they understood the status of peasants within the polity. The two views, strikingly enough, are deeply intertwined. Considering that "under the *muzāraʿa* contract, the unequal distribution of the means of production must necessarily lead to an unequal and hierarchical relationship between the partners to the contract,"[3] studies of relations to the means of production can enrich our understanding of social category and hierarchy among the various subjects inhabiting the Cairo Sultanate's countryside.

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[1]Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Sanʿānī, *Rafʿ al-astār li-abṭāl adallat al-qāʾilīn bi-fanāʾ al-nār,* ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Beirut, 1984).

[2]Carolyn Baugh, "Ibn Taymiyya's Feminism?" in *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians* (Frankfurt, 2013), 181.

[3]Baber Johansen, *The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent: The Peasants' Loss of Property Rights as Interpreted in the Hanafite Legal Literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods* (London, 1988), 58.


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I argue that the overlap between al-Subkī and Ibn Taymīyah on this point of normative law demonstrates the complex ways in which jurists could navigate delicate legal and political questions. The two jurists reached the same position using different methods, and positioned themselves differently vis-à-vis their respective legal schools. This demonstrates, first, that jurists found various methods to reach a desirable legal position on the topic of sharecropping, a desirability that was rooted in socio-political as well as moral necessities. Second, the positions of the two Taqī al-Dīns demonstrate that deference to the *madhhab* did not strictly fall in the *taqlīd-ijtihād* dichotomy. In fact, they do not fall in the triumvirate proposed by Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, where he proposes to break the dichotomy by introducing the term *ittibāʿ*.[4] For Ibrahim, *ittibāʿ* "refers to the verification of the evidentiary grounds of a legal rule, whether performed by a jurist or a layperson."[5] Instead, I propose that we think of the dominant position of the *madhhab* as a hegemonic opinion within a certain legal community, an opinion that top jurists could concur with or dissent from, often using fatwas to articulate their position. The methods and reasons jurists cited for their concurrence or dissent allowed for a subtle and ongoing evaluation of moral and social questions. Not every return to the foundational sources of Islamic law was an attempt to dissent from the dominant opinion, and not every attempt to adhere to the *madhhab*'s position was a strict concurrence with that opinion. Sharecropping is an important case study because it offers an opportunity to examine a point where questions of morality, politics, law, and administration came together for jurists in tangible ways.

The importance of the smallholding farmer's knowledge, the cohesion of the rural community, and the realities of farming in the Nile Valley and the Levant were as influential on each jurist's legal position as *madhhab* affiliation or administrative position. Apart from the political and economic realities, I point to how the metaphors for farming that permeate several genres of late medieval literature recur in legal literature across *madhhab*s, and how these metaphors may have also led the two jurists to similar conclusions. I agree with the work of Sherman Jackson[6] and Mohammed Fadel,[7] who have stipulated that *taqlīd* was important for the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, respective-

[4] Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, "Rethinking the Taqlīd–Ijtihād Dichotomy: A Conceptual-Historical Approach," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136, no. 2 (2016): 285, https://doi.org/10.7817/jameroriesoci.136.2.285.

[5] Ibid., 288.

[6] Sherman A. Jackson, *Islamic Law and the State: The Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī,* Studies in Islamic Law and Society, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1996).

[7] Mohammad Fadel, "The Social Logic of Taqlīd and the Rise of the Mukhtaṣar," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (1996): 193–233, https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519962599122.


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ly. I work with both their theses to posit that within the "régime of *taqlīd*" there existed a subtle and intricate way that legal thinkers could articulate their moral and legal positions. The question of sharecropping, as it played an essential role in the Cairo Sultanate's politics and involved the downtrodden peasants, elegantly demonstrates these possibilities. Bilal Ibrahim has previously argued for the egalitarian intentions of the juristic revisions that took place during the period of the Cairo Sultanate.[8] This paper corroborates that argument and considers both *how* and *why* jurists articulated this "egalitarian import."

This article begins with an overview of the Hanbali position on *muzāraʿah,* showing how the flexibility of the *madhhab* may explain its centrality to Mamluk agricultural administration, followed by an overview of al-Subkī's life, as his background may shed light on his position on sharecropping. Finally, it will explain al-Subkī's opinion and how it differs from the Hanbali opinion as presented by Ibn Taymīyah. I do not invoke Ibn Taymīyah as a standard, orthodox scholar but precisely because he dissented so readily with his peers. The overlap between the two scholars is noteworthy because they represent two distinct sides of the legal community under the Cairo Sultanate. The study will conclude with a brief overview of agricultural practices and conceptions of cultivation in administrative and practical sources, indicating the legal necessities of such a system, to suggest that the literary milieu and political exigencies of the time may have led the two scholars to similar conclusions. I argue that the shared values, political background, and literary education of the jurists intersected with the material realities surrounding them, pushing them to similar hermeneutical conclusions. These conclusions however ultimately point to the flexibility that existed within the "régime of *taqlīd*."

## Keep the Seeds

### Administrative Adoption of Hanbali *Fiqh*

Modern scholars cannot read legal or administrative texts from the early fourteenth century outside the context of an increasingly centralized economic system under the Cairo Sultanate. The Mamluk Sultanate functioned with four Sunni legal schools, Baybars I having instituted this system soon after his ascent to power in 1260. The goal from the elevation of the first Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki "chief judges" in Dhū al-Ḥijjah of 1265 was to retain the primacy of the Shafiʿi jurists while preventing a legal hegemony that could lead to disadvantageous rulings. As Sherman Jackson argues, "the Sultan was responding to

[8]Bilal Ibrahim, "Beyond State and Peasant: The Egalitarian Import of Juristic Revisions of Agrarian and Administrative Contracts in the Early Mamlūk Period," *Islamic Law and Society* 16, no 3 (2009): 337–82.


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the need, on the one hand, to retain chief justice Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz in a highly visible public office while, at the same time, responding to complaints about the latter's inflexibility and his exclusivist policies as head of the judiciary."[9]

Texts from the period provide insight into how the sultan negotiated his position vis-à-vis the legal community. The period of the Cairo Sultanate was one where scholars consolidated *madhhab* positions through *mukhtaṣar*s and other legal genres.[10] Chancery manuals, however, can give us solid clues to actual legal practice because they at least claim to depict the legal documents that actual officials issued. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī al-Fazārī's (d. 821/1418) magnum opus, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* (Daybreak for the night-blind in the craft of chancery, completed 1412), is one such work, shedding light on (among other things) the relationship between law, power, and administration. Al-Qalqashandī takes many of his documents, including the administrative texts under question in this section, from *Kitāb al-taʿrīf bi-al-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 1349). Al-ʿUmarī, like al-Qalqashandī, was an administrator under the Cairo Sultanate whose work also offers instructions on the drafting of chancery documents.[11] The text is a formulary model for a judge's *waṣīyah,* or a judicial investiture decree. Al-ʿUmarī begins his accounts of judicial investitures with a generic formula and recommends that a scribe include a different ending for the appointment of a judge from each *madhhab,* each culmination adding points specific to the various schools of law.

The secretary, in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá,* is instructed to list the points about which each judge is to take special care, or, in other words, to outline the jurisdictions between the various schools of law. In the case of Hanbalis, he includes matters involving *waqf* trusts and divorce as it relates to the abandoned wife. The judge is told to give verdicts in accordance with the rulings that are agreed upon in the Hanbali *madhhab* on each issue. Finally, the very last point upon which the judge is instructed is: *al-muʿāmalah allatī lawlā al-rukhṣah ʿindahum fīhā lamā akala akthar al-nās illā al-ḥarām al-maḥḍ, walā ukhidha qism al-ghilāl wa-al-muʿāmil huwa alladhī yazraʿ al-budhūr wa-yaḥrith al-arḍ* ("[On t]he conduct which, without the dispensa-

[9] Sherman A. Jackson, "The Primacy of Domestic Politics: Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz and the Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in Mamlûk Egypt," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 1 (1995): 52–65.

[10] Fadel, "Social Logic."

[11] The period of the Cairo Sultanate witnessed a flourishing of encyclopedic works, of which al-Umarī and al-Qalqashandī are just two examples. These examples are more explicitly formed for chanceries, although, as Muhanna has argued, the other encyclopedic works of the period were likely also part of an expanding realm of knowledge associated with the sultanate's chancery. See Elias Muhanna, *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, 2018).


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tion presented by them [i.e., the Hanbali jurists], would have caused most people to consume food that is prohibited outright, and would have prevented them from partaking in the harvest. The conduct [refers to] the laborer who plants seeds and tills land"). We do not have an exact date for this draft document, but the arguments that our two Taqī al-Dīns put forward toward their fellows in the *madhhab* indicate that the document represents the status quo at the time they were writing.

From the early years of Islamic jurisprudence, the sharecropping contract had been controversial because of the contrast between its moral questionability and the pressing social and economic need for it. Johansen reports that "the generation of Muslim jurists who created Islamic law as a specialised discipline and a literary genre condemned the *muzāraʿa* on the grounds that it violated religious, moral, and legal principles. Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfa, and Shāfiʿī made it clear that, with regard to arable lands, they considered only the contract of tenancy to be admissible."[12] Of the predominant opinions within the four schools of law at the time of the Cairo Sultanate, the most laxity with regard to the terms of the sharecropping contract could be found in the Hanbali school, hence the decree we find in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá*. The Hanbali stance gave unique flexibility to sharecroppers and, therefore, lessened the responsibility of absentee landowners. What distinguished the Hanbalis from the Hanafis (the second most lenient school on the issue) was that the Hanbalis unanimously permitted the sharecropper to own the seeds himself. By entrusting the questions of sharecropping to the Hanbali judge and explicitly mentioning the position of the seeds, the sultan ensured that sharecroppers could draft contracts where they themselves owned the seeds, meaning those who owned the land had minimal contact with or responsibility to it. As I will demonstrate later, such an arrangement would have been convenient for an absentee *iqṭāʿ*-holding government official or army general.

The Hanbali ruling gives the sharecropper a right to the harvest both as a function of his labor and of his ownership of the seeds. The landowner, then, is not simply purchasing the sharecropper's labor by giving him part of the harvest, nor can the landowner replace him with privately owned labor. Legally, the landowner enters a cooperative with the sharecropper where he is needed for his seeds as well as his labor.

Al-Subkī, al-ʿUmarī, and Ibn Taymīyah all wrote around the start of the fourteenth century. An important contemporaneous event was the Nāṣirī *rawk* of 1313–25. These vast cadastral surveys were commissioned and personally overseen by the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and were followed by dramatic changes

[12] Johansen, *Islamic Law,* 53.


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in the economic, political, and social configuration of the Sultanate's military elite.[13] The sultan was convinced to commission this survey by his Coptic viziers (the word *rawk* is Coptic, not Arabic), claiming that such reforms would curb the power of his amirs, who were amassing great wealth through land grants and tax farms. The *rawk* was, therefore, not just a land reform: taxes on cattle, prostitution, and sales were amended, and the goal, ultimately, was a centripetal one.[14] However, in order to centralize power in his own hands, the sultan needed to designate certain prerogatives to the peasants, who, unlike his amirs, posed no administrative threat to him. Giving more flexibility to the peasant would necessarily detract from the power of the amir.

On the surface, the Hanbali ruling seems to govern only the relationship between landowner and sharecropper, but the ruling also governs the relationship between landowner and sultan. Al-Qalqashandī does not go into detail regarding the implications of this ruling in terms of agricultural power structures, but we can extrapolate that such a ruling may have been connected to attempts at diffusing the power of large land grant-holding military amirs by giving sharecroppers increased mobility and independence. In cases regulated by such rulings, landowners needed to convince sharecroppers to tend their land, since the peasants had both the means (the labor) and the products (the seeds) necessary to farm. The extralegal taxes that Mamluk amirs levied on their peasants, taxes that characterized agricultural relations prior to the fourteenth century *rawk*s, would not be helpful in such an endeavor. As such, though the sultan may have been using the Hanbali ruling to confirm a common practice, he was also checking the monetary power of his amirs. Through this decree the sultan bolstered his own authority, forming a connection between the rights of sharecroppers and his own authority. By giving the sharecroppers this flexibility, the sultan prevented his amirs from taxing them illegally, thereby closing off all potential funds that were not directly tied to his person.

## Ibn Taymīyah's Rationale

A brief analysis of Ibn Taymīyah's opinion on *muzāraʿah,* he being himself a jurist working within the Cairo Sultanate, will shed light on the logic and implications of the ruling endorsed by the sultan, while also showing how a jurist as contrarian as Ibn Taymīyah did not dissent on this particular point of law. He famously did not shy away from dissenting with the consensus when he saw the need. In fact, his position on divorce got him put in prison, where he died. Regarding that

[13] Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995).

[14] Amīn Sāmī, Faḍl Ṣalāḥ, and Aḥmad Zakarīyā Shalaq, *Taqwīm Al-Nīl* (Cairo, 2002), 2:173.


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opinion, al-Subkī accused him of dissenting from the consensus not only of the *madhhab* but of all Muslims.[15] True to his character as depicted by Jon Hoover, Ibn Taymīyah does not just declare his allegiance to the *madhhab*. Although not averse to *taqlīd,* he uses the fatwa as a chance to reiterate and present a more personal rationale for his opinion. In effect, his fatwa is in concurrence with the dominant position of his legal school. Another scholar might have simply asserted that a position was the opinion of the *madhhab* and moved on, but Ibn Taymīyah takes the opportunity not only to explain his own logic, but to appeal across *madhhab*s. Unlike al-Subkī, who we will explore shortly, Ibn Taymīyah's logic extends beyond the hermeneutical methods of the school, and he does not appeal to the opinions of his Hanbali forbears. Instead, Ibn Taymīyah reaches out to a larger Muslim consensus. *Taqlīd,* then, is not only toeing the school's line: Ibn Taymīyah turns it into both a personal process and a universalist project by adhering to the school's position but also returning to the foundational legal texts to rethink the morality of the position. At the center of his thought process is the question of fairness and the position of the peasant.

Felicitas Opwis analyzes Ibn Taymīyah's project of assigning a *ratio legis* to existing Hanbali rulings, a trend she identifies in other of his opinions.[16] This process "combines both adherence to the actual ruling and innovative interpretation regarding the legal principles underlying that ruling."[17] In doing so, Ibn Taymīyah may have been restructuring authority within the school, but he was also giving the Hanbali opinion a rationale that would appeal even to those outside of the *madhhab*. Unlike al-Subkī, Ibn Taymīyah's opinion on this topic does not meditate extensively on the history of sharecropping in the *madhhab*. Instead, he chooses to assign his own, new *ratio legis*. The administrative implications and the Hanbali judge's monopoly on the contract must not have escaped the scholar's mind. Ibn Taymīyah may have been using a point of law securely within Hanbali jurisdiction to assert his own position with the *madhhab,* as Opwis shows with other cases. His way of doing this was colored by his own legal style, as described by Hoover: innovative, moralizing, and eager to cross *madhhab* lines.

Ibn Taymīyah says in his fatwa on sharecropping that a common misconception among scholars (all scholars—he does not identify them according to *madhhab*) is that *muzāraʿah* is a contract of compensatory employment *(muʿāwaḍah)*

[15] Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya* (London, 2019).

[16] Felicitas Opwis, "The Construction of Madhhab Authority: Ibn Taymiyya's Interpretation of Juristic Preference (Istihsān)," *Islamic Law and Society* 15, no. 2 (2008): 219–49, https://doi.org/10.1163/156851908X290592.

[17] Ibid,, 244.


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rather than one of cooperation *(sharikah).*[18] He discusses his school's ruling in a fatwa he offers during his time in Damascus. He conceives of three distinct factors in any sharecropping *(muzāraʿah)* contract. First, he describes what he calls the permanent foundations *(uṣūl bāqiyah)* of cultivation: the land, the body of the laborer, the bodies of his livestock, and the tools.[19] These are foundations that, at the end of the term of the contract (typically one year), return to each party.[20] Second are the impermanent portions *(ajzāʾ fāniyah)* necessary for cultivation, the material parts of the various foundations that are lost in the process of sharecropping: the nutrients of the soil that seeds consume, the seeds themselves, and "parts of the laborer and his livestock," meaning manure used as fertilizer. The third factor is impermanent goods *(manāfiʿ fāniyah):* the labor of the laborer and the means of maintaining this labor, namely his own food and shelter. These three aspects, according to Ibn Taymīyah, are necessary for any cultivation to take place. Both the land and the body of the laborer must offer a partial sacrifice for cultivation to be successful.

To illustrate the threefold factors of cultivation, Ibn Taymīyah draws an analogy between sharecropping and Quran 2:223, particularly the section of the verse that reads "women are your tilth." He claims that if God makes such an analogy, it must be taken as an accurate description of the cultivation process. He says that a human child appears like his mother, and that when an animal gives birth, the owner of the mother is legally the owner of the offspring. A human child, however, inherits their state of freedom or servility from the father, not the mother. Thus, Ibn Taymīyah argues, neither the seed nor the land is dominant in the cultivation process, and in the case of crops—as in the case of children—"there is no doubt that it [the harvest] is a creation of both of them" *(lā rayb annahu makhlūq minhumā jamīʿan).* He reasons that crop cultivation requires effort from both parties, making the contract one of cooperation, not employment. Payment cannot be in the form of set compensation *(muʿāwaḍah);* but rather each party must be allotted a portion of what they produce. Ibn Taymīyah returns to the revealed scriptures to produce a legal case for the sharecropping contract. The anthropomorphization of the environment is taken as a basis for legal rulings and the division of the fruits of labor. This anthropomorphization echoes the land-as-mother image that will appear in other, non-legal genres I will present shortly.

In drawing a parallel between sharecropping and procreation, Ibn Taymīyah places the sharecropper and the landowner on an equal footing, even placing

[18] Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmūʿat al-fatāwá,* ed. ʿĀmir al-Jazzār (Mansoura, 1998), 30:61.

[19] Ibid., 29:68.

[20] Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqtaʿs and Fallahun* (Leiden, 1997), 189.


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the sharecropper in the position of the male partner in a marriage. He was surely aware of the social and political realities that regulated the relationship between Mamluk amirs and the farmers that tilled their land. By articulating the legal relationship thus, he sought to emphasize the legal equality of the two parties, an equality that was probably more aspirational than reflective of reality. Ibn Taymīyah claims that just as the landowner has agency over the land, the laborer has agency over his body. The landowner needs the laborer—who is an independent agent—to enter a contract *with his body* for cultivation to take place. This formulation creates two parties that are mutually dependent on each other; the laborer is not depicted as a propertyless peasant, but an owner of a permanent and essential foundational source of cultivation: their own body.

Although the theoretical outline that Ibn Taymīyah creates presents the two parties as equal, he seems to be creating a discursive equality that had no real bearing on the ground. Even without delving into other sources, someone who has sovereignty over land clearly has more power than a person who has sovereignty over only their own body. The two parties were anything but equal. Ibn Taymīyah, however, is using the process of writing a concurrence to create a discursive framework where scholars can confront the morality of the contract and consider the theoretical equality of the parties.

On the controversial point of who owns the seeds to be cultivated, Ibn Taymīyah argues that seeds do not count as property and are not analogous to land or cattle. According to him, this analogy is false because seeds cannot be retrieved; they, like labor, are contributed to the process of cultivation, and the same seed that was placed in the ground will never return to the cultivator. Seeds are closer in nature to the labor than to the land, Ibn Taymīyah argues, so sound logical deduction would yield a decision wherein laborers should contribute the seeds because they share more attributes with labor than with land. In his fatwa, Ibn Taymīyah claims that the seed "goes [into the process of cultivation] irretrievably, as does the labor of the laborer and the labor of his cattle, and for this reason it is within the category of [impermanent] goods, not of [permanent] property, and so stipulating that [the seeds] come from the laborer is closer to [sound] analogy." As a result, seeds are of the same type *(jins)* as labor, not capital.[21]

Here, Ibn Taymīyah refers to the three categories he mentioned previously: permanent foundations, impermanent portions, and impermanent goods. Neither the laborer's efforts nor the seeds can be retrieved if the contract is dissolved, so they come to be understood analogously. Just as the land offers its

[21] Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmūʿah,* 30:65: *"yadhhab bi-lā badal kamā yadhab ʿamal al-ʿāmil wa-ʿamal baqarih bi-lā badal fakān min jins al-nafʿ lā min jins al-māl wa-kān ishṭirāt kawnihī min al-ʿāmil aqrab fī al-qiyās."*


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nutrients to the crops, the body of the laborer offers its labor. By conceptually alienating the laborer from his body, Ibn Taymīyah allows for a discussion about the abstracted body *(badan al-ʿāmil)* and the land *(al-arḍ)* as two permanent foundational sources owned by the two parties that are privy to the contract: the laborer and the landowner respectively. Each source "loses" some substances, and so the ownership of the crop by the two parties is a function of this cooperative investment. By mentioning the loss of nutrients in the soil due to processes of cultivation *(ḍaʿf al-arḍ),* Ibn Taymīyah allows the body and the land to be analogous, so the landowner and sharecropper are theoretically equal contributors to the cultivation process.

In closing his fatwa, he remarks that *muzāraʿah* is preferable to compensatory employment[22] because when a set compensation is established, one party or the other may feel wronged if the endeavor does not yield the anticipated results. This creates a type of social danger *(khaṭar)* because such relations may lead to resentment. By splitting the harvest into ratios, *muzāraʿah* satisfies both parties as they ultimately share the same fate. Ibn Taymīyah conceives of sharecropping as a form of comradery between landowner and farmer, this time by dividing the crops in ratios. His sensitivity to the danger of unjust agricultural practices shows that he was no stranger to the tumultuous history of the rural areas of the Sultanate and that he sought to create a more sustainable system through the law.

This "shared fate" logic is Ibn Taymīyah's final argument for why *muzāraʿah* is not only permissible but favorable, even if not explicitly mentioned in the Quran. He argues that because the harvest is split, the contract is one of cooperation rather than rent or employment. There is no purchase of labor in the contract, but rather cooperation between two parties. The landowner cannot stipulate that the farmer farm a specific crop, and the farmer cannot stipulate that the land yield a specific amount, so the joint venture is between two parties that must have mutual trust. The prosperity of one is a condition of the prosperity of the other. For such a relationship to be sustainable, there must be an underlying sense of justice, so Ibn Taymīyah ends the fatwa with the pithy statement: "*muzāraʿah* is built upon justice" *(al-muzāraʿah mabnāhā ʿalá al-ʿadl).*

This view of the relationship between sharecropper and landowner contrasts sharply with twentieth-century Arab historiography. Amīn Pāshā Sāmī, for example, claims that since the Ayyubid period the *fallāḥīn* of the Delta have been effectively enserfed by the military landowning elite.[23] These peasants may well have been in unjust and unfavorable conditions (commentaries on al-Subkī's

[22] Ibid., 66.

[23] Sāmī, *Taqwīm al-Nīl,* 123.


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fatwa seem to confirm this); jurists were pushing back on the enserfment of these peasants, perhaps with sultanic support.

## "Formed on a Sunday"

Sabk al-Aḥad is a small village near the town of Ashmūn in the Nile Delta. The name is composed of two words; the second, *aḥad,* means Sunday, and the first, *sabk,* is defined in Lane's lexicon as "to found, to cast (metal)." In 2017, the village made headlines across Egypt when protests broke out due to record levels of disease and an unbearable stench that loomed over the agricultural village. The Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation had failed to differentiate the sewage canals from the irrigation canal that ran through the village, a canal overlooked by most homes. The result was a sanitary disaster that is not unique to Sabk al-Aḥad and has not been resolved. The crisis epitomizes the issues that can arise when a legislating centralized authority fails to consider local knowledge and needs.[24]

In the fourteenth century, Sabk al-Aḥad would have been known for a very different reason: it offered the locative *nisbah* to one of the Mamluk Sultanate's most prominent and illustrious Shafiʿi scholarly and bureaucratic households: the al-Subkīs. Stationed in Cairo and Damascus, the al-Subkīs were deeply informed by their Delta village; though the family were Arabs of the Khazraj tribe, the members were identified not with their tribal lineage but their rather provincial locale. One of the most prominent al-Subkīs of the Mamluk era was Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, carrying the titles *qāḍī al-quḍāh* (chief judge) and *shaykh al-Islām,* as well as *Shāfiʿī al-zamān* (the Shāfiʿī of our times).

Taqī al-Dīn's son, Tāj al-Dīn, describes his father's formation in great detail: we know that the young al-Subkī first learned law at the hands of his father and that al-Subkī's uncle was a prominent judge who had an important role in educating him. Tāj al-Dīn describes how the entire family cooperated to ensure that al-Subkī was forged into an exceptional scholar: he was not allowed to eat red meat until he reached the age of twenty-one, out of fear that eating mutton would render his mind less sharp.[25] His paternal uncle arranged for his marriage to the uncle's daughter on the condition that she "not ask of him anything of the world." The day the cousin did ask her husband for money, the uncle—her own father—made al-Subkī divorce her.[26] For the al-Subkī family, producing scholars was a matter of grave concern that involved all members of the clan.

[24] Maḥmūd Shākir, "Ṣuwar maṣārif al-Minūfīyah maṣdar taṣdīr al-amrāḍ lil-ahālī," *Al-Yawm al-sābiʿ* November 20, 2017. https://www.youm7.com.

[25] Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrá,* ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulū (Cairo, 1964), 10:144.

[26] Ibid., 144.


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Tāj al-Dīn also mentions his father's various opinions along with the positions he took. One character appears and reappears in the entry: Ibn Taymīyah. The son mentions his father's involvement in Ibn Taymīyah's imprisonment.[27] Later, he reports that al-Subkī honored his *madhhab* with his erudite rebuttals to Ibn Taymīyah's opinions on the unilateral dissolution of marriage *(ṭalāq)* and grave visitation *(ziyārah).*[28] For the latter, he dedicated the rather colorfully named treatise *Shann al-ghārah ʿalá man ankar al-ziyārah* (Launching a raid upon he who condemns grave visitation). The one who condemned this visitation was, predictably, Ibn Taymīyah.

Al-Subkī is hailed as a great Shafiʿi jurist, defending the opinions of the *madhhab* and upholding its principles, but he was hardly a passive member of the school: he reviewed and challenged various opinions, many of which were held by Imām al-Shāfiʿī himself. In dissenting with accepted opinions of the *madhhab,* al-Subkī often seems to actually be promoting and strengthening its cohesion and identity. For example, in contrast to his peers within the school, he declared a marriage officiated by a Hanafi judge to be invalid if the contract was not officiated by a guardian on behalf of the woman *(walī).* He explained his position by saying, "I would be ashamed *(astaḥī)* to sanction a marriage which we know from the Prophet to be invalid. [I cannot allow it to] be elevated to heaven simply based on an opinion held by a judge from among the people *(ḥākim min al-nās),*" meaning none other than Abū Ḥanīfah.[29] Al-Subkī was dissenting with a commonly held Shafiʿi opinion at the time, but in doing so he was bolstering the group identity of the school. Similar situations include his deviation from the *jumhūr* of the Shafiʿis in removing all restrictions from the irrigation contract *(musāqāh)* and allowing *muzāraʿah.*[30] That his sanctioning of sharecropping is mentioned in his biographical dictionary entry indicates that the change in legal position was a noteworthy development in the school.

On his deathbed, as chief judge of Damascus, al-Subkī was asked what his final wishes were. He responded, "I want three things: for my son Aḥmad to return from Ḥijāz, for [my son] ʿAbd al-Wahhāb to be appointed chief judge of Damascus, and for me to die in Cairo after the accomplishment of those two."[31] Those words provide a deep insight into al-Subkī's motivations and views: he was a man who wanted to meet his Lord only after ensuring that his family's position of influence would endure and he returned to the political center of the Sultanate. I argue that this intelligent and bold man, formed in the Nile Delta,

[27] Ibid., 149.

[28] Ibid., 167.

[29] Ibid., 233.

[30] Ibid., 232.

[31] Ibid., 218.


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was aware of the legal realities that surrounded him, his family, and the school of law with which their name was so deeply associated. As such, he was able to forge an opinion on *muzāraʿah* that was novel and sensitive to the realities that surrounded his community. Until his decision, the only school that the sultans found flexible enough to engage the complexities of sharecropping was the Hanbalis, but al-Subkī managed to articulate the permissibility of *muzāraʿah* in a way that was distinct from Hanbali doctrine and logic, entering a previously monopolized space of legal administration.

Al-Subkī's fatwa, unlike Ibn Taymīyah's, is a dissent from the opinion of his school. He reaches an opinion similar to Ibn Taymīyah's, but his method attempts to be more Shafiʿi than al-Shāfiʿī; to argue against the Shafiʿi opinion through the eponymous scholar's logic. Here, we see a different form of *taqlīd:* al-Subkī does not reject al-Shāfiʿī's authority but attempts to use Prophetic traditions that al-Shāfiʿī would have presumably accepted to reform the dominant position of the school. He is, in this sense, interested in harmonizing between social needs and the opinion of the *madhhab*. I agree with Mohamed al-Dhfar's recent dissertation that al-Subkī's reviews of the dominant opinions of the school were motivated by a certain social concern.[32] This concern, however, may have been for the dominance of the Shafiʿi *madhhab,* and opening a new jurisdiction to Shafiʿi judges.

## No Strings Attached

Within the Shafiʿi legal tradition up until al-Subkī, *muzāraʿah* was only permissible as an accompaniment to *musāqāh*. This position seems to have been well-rooted in the tradition: ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī (d. 660/1262), the leading Shafiʿi jurist of the previous generation in Cairo and Damascus, refers to *muzāraʿah* in a *maqāṣid* text, presenting several possible reasonings for the prohibition of sharecropping.[33]

Al-Subkī frames his fatwa on *muzāraʿah* as a personal intervention in an ongoing conversation. He says that remarks about the topic have *ittasaʿa wa-ṭāl,* "grown expansive and prolonged."[34] As a result, he felt inclined *(māl khāṭirī)* to explain his argument for *muzāraʿah*'s permissibility, citing first and foremost the narrations about Khaybar, and telling us from the outset that he viewed the contract as a nonbinding one that did not require a certain party to own the

[32] Mohammed al-Dhfar, "A Case Study: An Analysis and Interpretation of Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī's Legal Evolution" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2020).

[33] Al-Sulamī, *Qawāʿid al-aḥkām fī maṣāliḥ al-anām,* ed. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Beirut, 1971), 2:95.

[34] Al-Subkī, *Fatāwá al-Subkī,* ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Beirut, 1992), 1:389.


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seeds.[35] He is also explicit about the methodology of his argument: he says that he will provide and explain all the hadiths about the topic, and in doing so "the truth will become clear."[36]

*Refuting Dominant Opinions*

Using the content of hadiths, al-Subkī levels several attacks on the dominant Shafiʿi opinion. He says that the Shafiʿi view that *muzāraʿah* is permissible only if performed along with *musāqāh* is baseless because permissibility is an essential quality, *aṣl,* and so cannot be attributed to something by association *(bi-ṭarīq al-tabaʿīyah).*[37] He tackles al-Shāfiʿī's opinion that *muzāraʿah* is impermissible due to the fact that there is no set price exchanged for the labor[38] and the Hanafi anxiety that there is unnecessary risk, *gharar,* in sharecropping[39] only after presenting all of the hadith evidence. In both cases, jurists prohibit sharecropping out of a concern that an injustice will occur if the parties do not stipulate clear compensation. Al-Subkī argues that if the two parties agree to split the harvest, the laborer and landowner reach a deal agreeable to both parties and there is no injustice.

Risk *(gharar)* is not a valid grievance, according to al-Subkī, because the *ʿādah,* or custom of the land, is to bear fruit each year. The definition of *gharar* according to him is *mā taraddada bayna jāʾizayn* ("that which vacillates between two equally possible outcomes"), not that which is highly improbable. Thus, *gharar* is not applicable in the case of sharecropping.[40] Here we see al-Subkī invoking a recurring concept in discussing *muzāraʿah: ʿādah*. Later, he writes that portions are to be split according to social *ʿādah,* but here we see al-Subkī developing an argument dependent upon attributing an *ʿādah* to the very soil. The root of the word, often translated as "custom" or "tradition," has to do with repetition. As someone who lived in the Nile Delta, al-Subkī would have been familiar with the importance of *wafāʾ al-Nīl,* the loyalty, constancy, or trustworthiness of the Nile, that being the term used to describe the annual flooding of the river. Al-Subkī writes with language and imagery that are sensitive to his environment, and the soil's customs, tied to the river's trustworthiness, are the basis for his legal argument. The similarity to Ibn Taymīyah's anthropomorphization of the elements is worth noting, but al-Subkī adds another layer as the environment

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 390.

[37] Ibid., 418–19.

[38] Ibid., 418.

[39] Ibid., 419.

[40] Ibid.


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around him has a repetitive, dependable rhythm. He uses this rhythm to defend his legal opinion.

Whether out of reverence for al-Shāfiʿī's position or out of genuine conviction, al-Subkī argues that the various hadiths cited by al-Shāfiʿī that appear to prohibit sharecropping amount to *nahy tanzīh,* precautionary prohibition. An example of this precautionary prohibition is the oft-cited account regarding the famously pious ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar's (610–93) refusal to partake in the practice, instead choosing to grant the land to the peasants. Al-Subkī argues that this case cannot be considered as grounds for prohibition because Ibn ʿUmar was "at the summit of piety" *(fī ghāyat al-waraʿ).*[41] He does say toward the end of the fatwa that he does not believe abandoning *muzāraʿah* is a form of piety *(lā naqūl anna al-waraʿ fī tarkihā).* His suspicion that the Prophetic hadiths prohibiting the practice are of weak legal grounding[42] echoes almost verbatim the anxieties of Ibn Qudāmah, Ibn Taymīyah, and other Hanbali jurists.[43]

*Time*

Al-Subkī is concerned about the question of whether a specific time limit must be placed on the contract *(taʾqīt),* and whether the contract is binding *(lāzim)* or nonbinding *(ghayr lāzim).* The question of *luzūm,* the binding nature of the contract, revolves around whether the contract can be dissolved unilaterally. Al-Subkī argues that the *muzāraʿah* contract is *ghayr lāzim,* a statement that generally destabilizes the contractual relationship between peasant and landlord. The peasants can be turned off the land, or they can abandon the property, resulting in a disruption of the agricultural process. Al-Subkī is arguing against the legality of tying peasants to the land.

To advance his argument, al-Subkī presents evidence agreed upon by hadith scholars regarding the condition of the Jewish community of Khaybar: the Prophet allowed them to stay, but ʿUmar I had them expelled against their will.[44] Significantly, al-Subkī does not draw from this example the conclusion that the contract is non-binding to the landowner but binding to the laborer. Rather, according to him, the contract is non-binding to both parties. Such a relationship was probably more detrimental to the landowners than the villagers. After all, villagers often belonged to the same tribes as Bedouin nomads, and therefore could depend on forms of solidarity and belonging that transcended the tax-

[41] Ibid., 422.

[42] Ibid., 423.

[43] Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-mughnī,* ed. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Riyadh, 1997), 7:555.

[44] Al-Subkī, *Fatāwá al-Subkī,* 391.


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farm.[45] The landowner, on the other hand, needed villagers to till and cultivate the land, so being abandoned by his peasants meant financial ruin.

Al-Subkī preemptively responds to a group of unidentified Hanafi jurists who claim that there must be some form of time stipulation since particularly summer vegetables like "watermelon, cucumber, and Armenian cucumber *(qithāʾ)*" require tending and cultivation *(taḥtāj ilá al-khidmah wa-al-tarbiyah).*[46] Such produce would be harvested immediately prior to the flooding of the Nile, when much of the prime agricultural land was submerged, so the sense of urgency on the part of the Hanafi jurists is understandable. Al-Subkī's response, however, is striking: there need not be a time stipulation because if the harvest is split (echoing Ibn Taymīyah's shared fate thesis) then the interest of the farmers will lie in seeing to the completion of the harvest cycle.[47] The unstated concern in his explanation is that the peasants would abandon the farm, not that they would be evicted by the landlord. This implies that the legal infrastructure al-Subkī calls for allows the peasants to escape and requires landlords to entice the laborers. Thus, for al-Subkī, environmental factors made time stipulations irrelevant; indefinite irrigation was an absolute impossibility, at least in the Nile Valley.[48] The stipulation of time was inherent not through a legal contract but by virtue of environmental factors. Al-Subkī takes both the custom of the land (here literally the soil, not the people on the land) and the Nile's fulfillment of its promise to flood as helping form the set of required stipulations for the contract.

Al-Subkī says that only Ibn Ḥanbal opined explicitly that there need not be a time stipulation for the validity of the *muzāraʿah* contract, "and I would have loved for one of our associates to have said this, so that I could agree with him" *(wa-kuntu awaddu law qāl bihī aḥd aṣḥābinā ḥattá uwāfiquhu).*[49] Overall, however, he is aware that, as far as this topic is concerned, he is breaking ground and sowing seeds that no previous Shafiʿi scholar had done. He does this apologetically, almost resenting that he alone among his associates is aligned with Imām Aḥmad. Perhaps al-Subkī's yearning to have his associates agree with him is directly connected to the jurisdictions of the Shafiʿi and Hanbali judges. Al-Subkī's ad-

[45] Yossef Rapoport, "Invisible Peasants, Marauding Nomads: Taxation, Tribalism and Rebellion in Mamluk Egypt," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004): 1–22.

[46] Al-Subkī, *Fatāwá al-Subkī,* 1:422.

[47] Ibid., 423.

[48] From the historical context, we can clearly understand why al-Subkī finds time stipulations to be unnecessary: until the construction of the Aswan Low Dam in 1902, perennial irrigation was unknown in the Nile Valley. Jennifer L. Derr, *The Lived Nile: Environment, Disease, and Material Colonial Economy in Egypt* (Stanford, 2019).

[49] Al-Subkī, *Fatāwá al-Subkī,* 1:425.


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ministrative intellect must have thought that if Shafiʿi judges could also oversee sharecropping contracts, their role in the Sultanate would expand. An important question arises, however, particularly regarding his prolonged discussion of time stipulations. Considering the analogies al-Subkī, Ibn Taymīyah, and others provide about the relationship between marriage and agriculture, revisiting marriage and farming contracts could be an important parallel to draw. Although none of them make this explicit connection, a marriage contract with a time stipulation would be invalid for all Sunni schools of law.

*Seeds*

One case where al-Subkī does use the metaphor of sexual procreation in both Hanbali law and the farming handbooks is the question of seed ownership. He writes that although the farmer can own the seeds, he must have the explicit permission of the landowner to cultivate the land. The harvest of the *ghāṣib* or usurper (someone who farms the land without a contract) belongs to the landowner because "through [drawing an] analogy from the case of the child of a female slave, whether it [the child] be from her husband or from an ambiguous copulation or any other situation, it belongs to her master. The female slave is like the earth, and the fluids of the husband or the ambiguous copulator are like the seeds, there is no difference between the two, save that their bodily fluids are not capital *(māl)* but the seeds are ... otherwise the two are precisely the same."[50] The occurrence of this metaphor here is important because through a valid *muzāraʿah* contract, the laborer becomes metaphorically the legal husband of the land, providing his seed in order to create plants that in turn need care and attention. By entering the contractual relationship, the laborer guarantees that the seeds do not produce a harvest that belongs by default to the landowner (who owns the land as he owns a slave) but rather enters into a sanctified union that produces legitimate "offspring," over which he has legal custody.

Al-Subkī refutes his Shafiʿi colleagues who consider *muzāraʿah* simply a form of *muḍārabah,* or sleeping contract. Their rationale is that in *muzāraʿah,* capital is handed over to the laborer for some profit to be made. Al-Subkī says that the two cases are distinct because the *muzāraʿah* contract is based on the planting of new seeds "which are not of the land, but are outside of it."[51] Therefore, according to him, the *muzāraʿah* contract is a distinct contract subject to its own rules. It is clear that al-Subkī conceives that the farmer owns the seeds by default. Unlike Ibn Taymīyah, who elaborately argues that the seeds are not property and so allows the farmer to own them, al-Subkī rationalizes ownership of the seeds

[50] Ibid., 427.

[51] Ibid., 418.


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by fully embracing the farmer's ownership of some property. This distinguishes al-Subkī's rationale from Ibn Taymīyah's and means that al-Subkī understands the conditions for cultivation as creating the conditions for a unique relation of power and property.

As for how the portions are to be divided, al-Subkī leaves it up to custom—this time social custom. He cites Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 1245) approvingly, saying that the portions ought to be divided "as is the custom right here in Damascus" *(kamā hiya al-ʿādah hāhunā fī Dimashq).* Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ argues that in having handed the land over to a peasant, the landowner forfeits even the right to own the harvest of the *ghāṣib* mentioned above, because the land and its production are under the control of the laborer. In this point, al-Subkī rather climactically says, "is a glorious benefit that will enhance rulings" *(wa-hādhihi fāʾidah jalīlah tanfaʿ fī al-aḥkām).*[52] The benefit of this point clearly comes at the cost of the landowner. Al-Subkī would not point to how beneficial such a ruling would be were he not appealing to a very specific relationship, probably between landowner and sultan.

Al-Subkī sees usurpation as an important point to bring up in association with leaving the exact portions to be regulated by custom. By governing the division by local custom but emphasizing that the contract alienates the landowner from his land, al-Subkī echoes Johansen's point (mentioned at the start of this article) that "the sharing of the crop is largely determined by the distribution of the means of production between the partners to the contract."[53] Here we see the handing over of means interwoven with discussions on sharing of the crop. This custom may not necessarily support the farmer, but it definitely takes portioning the harvest out of the hands of the landowner. Al-Subkī also stipulates a temporary situation where the "distribution of the means of production" is at least theoretically monopolized by the laborer. This fatwa provides a paradigm that is distinct from the Hanafi notions of the power dynamic between landowner and laborer, ultimately allowing local custom to dictate an essential part of the contract and setting up (at least textually) a situation where the landowner is alienated from the land.

Al-Subkī's fatwa deviates consciously from the dominant position within the *madhhab,* but he attempts to maintain the methods of the school, appealing to its scholars and their standards of hadith analysis. He dissents apologetically, falling short of claiming that if al-Shāfiʿī knew what al-Subkī knew, the two would not disagree. Al-Subkī's polite, *maddhab*-conscious dissent provides an excellent counter example of how jurists could tackle pressing social and economic issues under the régime of *taqlīd.* In a way, the legal schools provided scholars with an additional layer of eloquence to their legal opinions: if and how they deviated

[52] Ibid., 427.

[53] Johansen, *Islamic Law,* 69.


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from their schools could tell us about their administrative positions, their relationships to their associates, and their views on the larger legal community.

## Cultivation Under the Cairo Sultanate

Any legal opinion, or fatwa, is given in a political, scientific, and cultural context. The various textual forms that constitute the Islamic legal tradition include both a "library" of theoretical texts and a more colloquial "archive" composed of questions and answers that confront the jurist.[54] In developing their opinions, rationalizations, and analogies, premodern jurists would engage both canonical and vernacular knowledge. Brinkley Messick, discussing the relationship between various genres and knowledge formation, writes that "in considering the relation of elite and vernacular knowledge, we must go beyond an emphasis on either 'trickle-down' or 'trickle-up' effects...and stress instead dialectical interconnections. Each type of knowledge should be thought of as standing in a complex, constituting/constituted relation to the other."[55] Scholars like al-Subkī and Ibn Taymīyah would have been exposed to some amount of scientific and practical knowledge regarding agriculture. Various manuals and encyclopedias that engaged agricultural knowledge circulated among elite circles, chief among them the fourth chapter of Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá al-Kutubī al-Warrāq al-Waṭwāṭ's (632–718/1235–1318) *Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar,* titled *Al-Fann al-rābiʿ fī al-filāḥah*. Ibn Taymīyah's rationale has striking parallels to al-Waṭwāt's writing, as I will demonstrate presently. Though both al-Subkī and Ibn Taymīyah were centered for many years in Cairo and Damascus, agriculture and the countryside would not have been foreign to either of them, particularly considering that neither scholar hailed from the capital cities themselves. The content of their fatwas demonstrates that just as elite theory engages the vernacular experience, so too does the urban engage the rural.

### Handbooks

An important source that may have informed the sensitivities of these scholars would have been the large body of agricultural handbooks circulating in the period. These texts combined the mythical with the practical, the traditional with the protoindustrial. However, the metaphors and anxieties expressed in these texts would interest a legal scholar. Al-Waṭwāṭ, for example, poses the question of whether or not plants are alive: he says that a farmer can observe whether his

[54] This duality is borrowed from Brinkley Messick's *Sharīʿa Scripts: A Historical Anthropology* (New York, 2018).

[55] Brinkley Messick, "Kissing Hands and Knees: Hegemony and Hierarchy in Shariʿa Discourse," *Law & Society Review* 22, no. 4 (1988): 639.


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plants are satiated or in need, and so plants may possess some type of expressive capacity.[56] The author also relates a debate contemporary to his own time about whether one can attribute the quality of movement, *ḥarakah,* to plants: some say that plants do not move, as they cannot avoid the scythe of the harvester, or avoid being trampled upon. Others, however, claim that they can digest nutrients in the soil *(haḍm)* and they do in fact lean towards the sun, and therefore can be considered to have the capacity for movement.[57]

The metaphors that appear in legal literature also appear in the agricultural manual literature. The metaphorical connection between farming and marriage that Ibn Taymīyah uses to stipulate the marriage contract, and al-Subkī uses to explain the functions of ownership, feature prominently in al-Waṭwāṭ's texts. For example, al-Waṭwāṭ writes that farming is "just like marriage" because two parties contribute some substance, and when one side is dominant the child comes out a male or a female. Likewise, the four elements come together to form a plant, and depending on these elements, the plant develops its humor.[58] He also says that "the soil is to plants what the pregnant mother is [to her child.] Water occupies the position of nutrients and air, and fire and air are like the two nurturing protectors."[59] We see here the integration of the metaphor of earth-as-mother with Aristotle's four elements of matter such that they function seamlessly together. As we have seen above, this metaphor features prominently in the legal writings of both Taqī al-Dīns and is central to how they reach their legal conclusions.

Each year, after the Nile floods receded, village headmen and government officials evaluated the quality of the soil in various plots of land and redistributed the land to the peasants who farmed it. This process was known as "preparation" or "rendering present" *(taḥḍīr).*[60] Al-Waṭwāṭ describes the process of evaluation, categorizing all arable land into either "good," "medium," or "poor" quality. Evaluators would dig a hole, one handspan by one handspan by one handspan and remove all the soil from the hole. Once the hole was cleared, they were instructed to put the soil back into it without pressing it down. If the hole filled up and soil was left over, the land was deemed to be of the best quality. If it filled the hole with no leftover soil, then the land was of medium quality. A hole that did not fill signaled poor soil quality.[61] If one did not have very good

[56] Ibn al-Waṭwāṭ, "Mabāhij al-fikar wa-manāhij al-ʿibar," Oxford University MS 4:184.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 185.

[59] Ibid., 184: *al-arḍ lil-nabāt bi-manzilat al-umm al-ḥāmil wa al-māʾ bi-manzilat al-ghidhāʾ wa-al-hawāʾ wa-al-nār bi-manzilat al-murabiyayn al-muṣliḥayn al-ḥāfiẓayn.*

[60] Sato, *State and Rural Society,* 193.

[61] Ibn al-Waṭwāṭ, "Mabāhij al-fikar," 202.


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soil, one would need fertilizer, which al-Waṭwāṭ claims provides warmth for the seeds, paralleling the warmth of the sun. This insight explains Ibn Taymīyah's care to mention and discuss the legal status of manure in his fatwa.

Al-Waṭwāṭ tells his readers that a seed itself is cultivated by all the four elements and contains within it all four humors. Through the process of growth, a plant acquires a specific humor.[62] Here, the question of the "seed," a question that will play an important role in legal discourses, is understood as a microcosm of all the elements. Scholars of the period would have seen the seed as an almost self-sustaining phenomenon, mythical and profound. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, a sixteenth century Sufī and Shafiʿi scholar, echoes the mythical aspect of the seed when he discusses *muzāraʿah* in his own treatise: the first seeds were sent down with Adam from Paradise, and were "as large as ostrich eggs, whiter than milk, softer than butter, and sweeter than honey." As people sinned more and more, however, seeds became smaller and harder.[63]

## Conclusion

Much historiography of rural life in the Mamluk period characterizes the life of the peasants as indistinguishable from slavery or serfdom.[64] I have attempted to show two phenomena by tracing the fatwa of al-Subkī in relation to contemporary Shafiʿi and Hanbali law, as well as to agricultural manuals from the period. First, I sought to demonstrate that the legal status of sharecroppers was complicated, dynamic, and far from passive. In fact, they were consistently portrayed as the active partner in the legal analogies with marriage that so often accompanied discussions of *muzāraʿah*. Second, I argued that legal scholars were intimately aware of rural life, and that, though there is little scholarship on the topic today, the Mamluk countryside occupied the minds, writings, and debates of Mamluk-era scholars. The stakes were very high: in an agricultural society, regulating sharecropping in a just and practical way was essential for the continued function of the circle of justice.

Ibn Taymīyah and al-Subkī provide us with two distinct examples of jurists. Their relationships to sultanic authority, grave visitation, and even marriage differed starkly, but their opinions converged on the question of *muzāraʿah*. Whereas Ibn Taymīyah used a complex analogy to demonstrate his point, al-Subkī relied primarily on hadiths and environmental factors. Both scholars, however, saw the farmer as an active partner in the contract, with full agency. The notion that rural farmers were, from time immemorial, serfs at the mercy

[62] Ibid., 184.

[63] ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *Kashf al-ghummah ʿan jamīʿ al-ummah* (Beirut, 1977), 2:31–32.

[64] Qāsim ʿAbduh Qāsim, *Al-Ḥayāh al-yawmīyah fī Miṣr: ʿaṣr salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* (Giza, 2019).


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of a strong, militarized authority simply does not hold true in the Mamluk period. The image that Timothy Mitchell presents of peasants tied to the land by a centralized authority[65] is an early nineteenth-century development that would not have had the legal infrastructure to support it in the premodern period.

To close, I present an excerpt from a book by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, Taqī al-Dīn's son. In a handbook dedicated mainly to the description of the roles of government officials, Tāj al-Dīn mentions with outrage what he has heard of forced restrictions on the movement of *fallāḥīn*. His response is swift, harsh, and damning, no doubt echoing the concerns of his father. That such a complaint arose means that the impetus to tie peasants to the land existed under the Cairo Sultanate, and that the scholars we have mentioned were striving against a very possible injustice. Tāj al-Dīn however ties the farmers' right to freedom of movement directly to the position of God as a sovereign legislator:

> the *fallāḥ* is a free man, no human hand has any authority over him; he is the commander of his own self... none of this [confinement] is permissible to implement *(yaḥillu iʿtimādihi),* and the towns *(bilād)* are to be administered without this practice, indeed they [the towns] will be ruined by this practice, because they [the military commanders] constrain *(yuḍayyiqū ʿalá)* the people *(al-nās)* and so God will constrain the[se commanders]...they say, "this is the legislation *(sharʿ)* of the sultan's court *(dīwān),*" while the court has no legislation of its own, indeed legislation belongs to Allāh, the Sublime, and to His Prophet, and so this speech leads ultimately to disbelief.[66]

[65] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, 1991), ix.

[66] Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Muʿīd al-niʿam wa-mubīd al-niqam,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī Najjār, Abū Zayd Shalabī, and Muḥammad Abū al-ʿUyūn (Cairo, 1948), 33: *al-fallāḥ ḥurr lā yad li ādamī ʿalayhi wa-huwa amīr nafsihi...kull dhālik lā yaḥil iʿtimādihi wa-al-bilād tuʿmar bidūn dhālik bal inmā takhrib bidhālik li-annahum yuḍayyiqūn ʿalá al-nās fayudayyiq Allāh lahum...yaqūlūn hathā sharʿ al-dīwān, wa-al-dīwān lā sharʿ lahu, bal al-sharʿ lillāh taʿālā wa-lil rasūl fahāthā al-kalām yantahī ilá al-kufr.*


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## Book Reviews

Gül Şen. *Making Sense of History: Narrativity and Literariness in the Ottoman Chronicle of Na'ima* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022). Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, vol. 74. Pp. xvi, 387.

Reviewed by Yehoshua Frenkel, University of Haifa

"The science of histories *(ʿilm al-tawārīkh),*" says the Ottoman chronicler Ṭāshkubrīʾzādah [Taşköprü-zade], "is knowing the conditions of different human groups, their lands, ceremonies, and practices as well as the deeds of prominent personalities amongst them, their lineages, their lives and so on. The topic of this field is the conditions of past notables, such as prophets, saints, scholars, philosophers, poets, kings, sultans and so on. It aims to clarify past circumstances, learning lessons from those situations and gaining sound advice from these teachings".[1]

The importance that Ottoman scholars and sultans attached to the writing of chronicles is illustrated from an episode that is said to have taken place at the end of the fifteenth century. It is narrated that the sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) demanded that his court produce historical works that glorified the Ottomans. This anecdote allowed İnalcık, in the early 1960s, to maintain that history *(tārīkh/tawārīkh)* befitted the sultans as an important tool, by means of which the past and present of the Ottoman polity were discussed and reconceived.[2]

The book under review aims to analyze an Ottoman court chronicle, the *Tārīkh-i Naʿīmā (Chronicle of Naʿīmā)* by Naʿīmā Muṣṭafá Efendi (1065–1128/1655–1716), a name not unfamiliar to learned eighteenth-century West European audiences. Aiming to excavate the process whereby a chronicle is transformed into a story, we are given a study in narratology. Investigating the representation of the events in a narrative text is a research methodology that enriches our perspectives on the historical sources.

Here is not the place to enter into Hayden White's *Metahistory*[3] and the effects of the cultural turn on the study of Islamicate history. It is sufficient to note that the book under review follows in the trail of this analytical shift. In

[1] Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafá ibn Khalīl Ṭāshkubrīʾzādah (901–68/1495–1561), *Miftāḥ al-saʿādah wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyādah fī mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm* (Beirut, 1998), 344–45.

[2] Halil İnalcık, "The Rise of the Ottoman Historiography," in *Historians of the Middle East,* ed. B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (London, 1962), 152–67.

[3] (Baltimore, 1973).


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the general introduction, Şen reviews the state of the art and offers a succinct survey of narratology, evaluating the pros and cons of this literary methodology in the field of chronicles. This is followed with a detailed study of the history of Naʿīmā's *Chronicle,* its manuscripts, printed editions, and reception in Europe.

Following Thomas's study of Naʿīmā,[4] the first chapter dwells on several biographical points. The first section provides a report of the author's life in seventeenth-century Aleppo, which due to its strategic location and cross-borders economy became in this time a central Ottoman city. Next, the author follows Naʿīmā's relocation to Istanbul. Court politics affected his position in the Ottoman capital, and he was exiled to Crete. Although able to secure a permit to return, Naʿīmā's position did not improve. He was forced to move to the port city of Patras, in modern Greece, which was to be his final resting place.

The second section investigates Naʿīmā's literary production, his original compilations and the works copied by him. Depending upon earlier studies, Şen enriches this chapter with references to original Ottoman documents. She provides an in-depth picture of a mid-ranking clerk who served in the sultanate's bureaucratic apparatus.

Chapter Two opens with the question: what literary criteria should be used to classify a compilation as *tārīkh*? Şen points out that Ottoman historiography was institutionalized. Patronage by the sultan's court is a recurring feature of the authors of these writings. They were players with a *siyāsah* orientation. Indeed, Ottoman chroniclers were not distant from earlier historiographical tradition. Most of the Mamluk chronicles were arranged annalistically. Some reports were dotted with stanzas. Several historians produced, in addition to a chronicle, a short biography of the sultan of their own age. In their reports on "historical events" Ottoman chroniclers followed such arrangements, which provided them with opportunities to use a fictional style while narrating "facts." Hence, they arranged the data along the timeline without hierarchy. Naʿīmā worked according to these guidelines.

Chapter Three opens three consecutive sections that focus on fictional-historical dimensions of Naʿīmā's book. The first deals with literary features of his chronology. The chapter opens with a detailed investigation of the book's style and language. Investigating a primary Ottoman source and analyzing it, Şen's survey is woven with a close reading of theoretical studies, as well as of premodern Arabic and Persian rhetoric research. It places a seventeenth-century Turkish chronicler within a wider picture of history production in the Abode of Islam. Chapter Four follows with an examination of poetry and chronograms, features that are visible in Mamluk historical texts. And indeed, readers of this

[4]Lewis V. Thomas, *A Study of Naima* (New York, 1972).


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journal will also find interest in the piece that investigates Arabic insertions of the chronicle. This reinforces the impression of Islamicate historiographical continuity.

In Part 3 of the book under review here, which is divided into two chapters (4 and 5), Şen analyzes the narratology of Naʿīmā's chronicle. Using critical literary methods, she dwells upon the structure of the work that covers the events of the period from AH 982 to 1071 (1574–1660). In order to present the events *(waqāʾiʿ),* the text is arranged in chronological order ("the events of the year"; *veḳāyiʿ-i sene-i* in Ottoman Turkish). Arranging vast quantities of material, this literary technique enabled Naʿīmā to consolidate the narration's framework. Mamlukists may find it resembles *ḥawādith al-zamān*.

Part 4 (chapters 7–9) deals with Naʿīmā's concept of tārīkh and the purpose of his chronicle. This part of Şen's informative and in-depth study provides the backbone of her research project. She points out that throughout the chronicle the term *tārīkh* is most frequently used in the sense of a certain date. This fits the chronicler's working method well. Naʿīmā uses his annalistic compilation to support the legitimacy *(Herrschaft)* of the House of Osman. "In the Ottoman Empire," Şen concludes, "the writing of history in general was closely intertwined with the legitimacy of Ottoman rule." This is visible in the broad pictures of court ceremonies, as well as in reports on exchange of gifts.

In the introduction to *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650,*[5] Metin Kunt tells of his studies at Princeton. Among the courses that encouraged him to look closer into the Islamic background of Ottoman institutions he mentions David Ayalon's seminar on the Mamluk state. And indeed, students of Mamluk historiography would benefit from Şen's meticulous research. Her insights into the motives, structure and style of Naʿīmā's chronicle serve as an inspiring study.

[5] (New York, 1983).


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Mohamad El-Merheb, *Political Thought in the Mamluk Period: The Unnecessary Caliphate* (Edinburgh, 2022). Pp. vii, 216.

Reviewed by Yehoshua Frenkel, University of Haifa

El-Merheb's work revolves around five compilations by Mamluk authors: Ibn Jamāʿah, al-Qarafī, al-Subkī, Ibn Ṭalḥah, and an anonymous Sufi author. He opens with a critical review of past scholarship on the "Constitutional Organization of Islam" (Gibb): a popular historical theoretical frame that he tags a *longue durée* view of Islamic political jurisdiction, which is actually an essentialist and unhistorical approach. As early as the tenth century, Muslim jurists were aware that the utopian ideal of a united Muslim *ummah* was unrealistic. Al-Ashʿarī opens his heresiography with the historical evaluation "the first thing that divided the Muslims was their disagreement regarding the community's leadership *(imāmah)*".[1]

Chapter 1, "Reading Islamic Political Thought," provides a critical review of studies on the institution of the caliphate. To illuminate the deficiency of the research, El-Merheb opens with a fresh view, drawn by a comparison of the fourteenth-century European political theory of Marsilius of Padua with the study of Islamic constitutional writings of Ibn Jamāʿah. He criticizes the legal lineage that several Western scholars have (incorrectly) reconstructed. At this juncture he highlights, inter alia, the important place that should be assigned to al-Jūwaynī (419–78/1028–85). Based upon his reading of the primary sources, El-Merheb disagrees with the interpretation of the caliphate's history advocated by Mona Hassan and disapproves of studies about the post-1258 Islamic political theory by Ann Lambton, in particular.

El-Merheb turns next to a Persian "mirror for princes" attributed to al-Ghazālī. I believe that we should differentiate between this text and the Arabic title that is accredited to the great scholar. This pseudo-Ghazālī circulated among Mamluk readers, who did not question its authenticity. Summarizing the state of the art, El-Merheb argues that the prevailing *longue durée* research method into the basic principles and law of the "Islamic state" has resulted in limited success. In its place, he offers a contextualizing interpretation of the political thinkers, drawn against the background of their distinctive intellectual and empirical worlds, their social, cultural, and political contexts. Such a historian identifies the political language of the texts he investigates. A survey of the Ashrafīyah Library serves to parse this working method. This institution illuminates the importance of the governing military elite in the educational

[1] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn,* ed. Hellmut Ritter (Wiesbaden, 1400/1980), 2 (ll. 3–4).


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and religious spheres. The religious establishment relied on the patronage of military officers. The complier of the Arabic pseudo-Ghazālī articulated his constitutional theory under the shade of their canopy.

Chapter 2 deals with Ibn Jamāʿah, a Shafiʿi jurist whose theory of rulership, legitimacy, and power attracted scholarly attention as early as 1868.[2] Resembling al-Subkī, Ibn Jamāʿah was an observer-participant, a man of the pen who occupied legal-administrative positions. El-Merheb analyses *Drafting Ordinances towards Running the Affairs of the People of Islam,* certainly Ibn Jamāʿah's best known work. Highlighting the originality of this compilation, he examines it as a political and constitutional text *(tadbīr),* as well as an administrative guide *(taḥrīr),* while taking into consideration the compiler's political position.

Although the term *tadbīr* itself is not used in the Quran, the present tense of its verbal form *yudabbiru* is repeated four times: Sūrat Yūnus (10:3 and 31); Sūrat al-Raʿd (13:2); and Sūrat al-Sajadah (32:5). In these verses, the Quran informs the believers that the Lord created the Heavens and he directs the affair *(yudabbiru al-amra). Dabbara amran* signifies "he executed an affair with consideration." *Dabbara al-bilāda* means "he conducted the affairs of the country." This meaning of the root v*d.b.r.* (to guide, to lead) can be traced in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. It resembles the Greek *oikonomia* (management of the house).[3] In the Middle Islamic Period, books entitled *tadbīr* dealt with politics, economy, and ethics *(akhlāq).*[4] It has been claimed that the earliest title on these topics is *Sulūk al-mālik,* a book attributed to Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ (presumably died 227/842). Yet, this early date should be rejected. Jirjī Zaydān suggests the early Mamluk period, a date that indeed seems more plausible.[5]

El-Merheb turns next to examine the jihad manuals composed by Ibn Jamāʿah. Also cataloged as *furūsīyah* and military guides, these two short booklets are closely related to the compiler's political world view and his administrative duties. In line with the Islamic "mirror for princes," these works display the importance of just government. El-Merheb here offers fresh insight into the study of middle Islamic-period political writings. This is followed with critical remarks on past scholarly studies of Ibn Jamāʿah's *taḥrīr/tadbīr.* According to El-Merheb's interpretation, Ibn

[2] Alfred von Kremer, *Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islams: der Gottesbegriff, die Prophetie und Staatsidee* (Leipzig, 1868), 416.

[3] W. Heffening, "Tadbīr," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed.

[4] Hellmut Ritter, "Ein Arabisches Handbuch der Handelswissenschaft" (Phil. Diss., Bonn, 1914); Claude Cahen, "A propos et autour d'"Ein arabisches Handbuch der Handelswissenschaft,'" *Oriens* 15 (1962): 168.

[5] Frédéric Bauden and Antonella Ghersetti, "L'Art de servir son monarque: Le Kitāb Waṣāyā Aflāṭūn al-ḥakīm fī ḫidmat al-mulūk, édition critique et traduction précédées d'une introduction," *Arabica* 54, no. 3 (2007): 298.


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Jamāʿah legitimates the coercive imamate. Being a Qurayshite is not a prerequisite qualification for one who aspires to hold the position of sultan. He then surveys Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī's *History* (Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 839).

Chapter 3 is based on deep investigation of two manuscripts that articulate a Sufi position on political power and authority: (1) Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamawīyah's *Al-Siyāsah al-mulūkīyah* and (2) the anonymous (not al-Khiḍr) *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāyah fī ṭarīq al-imāmah,* a treatise that represents an early attempt to set down a juristic interpretation in the light of Baybars' successful Abbasid restoration.[6] The author examines the close relations between the ruling military aristocracy and *al-ṣūfīyah*. Their play in the political arena is narrated in contemporary chronicles. The *Miṣbāḥ* is a Sufi political treatise that validates the rule of a non-Qurayshite imam. Its anonymous author departs from earlier Sunni political theory, a turn that can be identified in writings of Muslim scholars who lived under the early Saljuqs. Moreover, it is an additional example of the reception of Persian scholarly works in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria and Egypt.

Chapter 4 concentrates on two jurists, Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Ṭalḥah al-Wazīr al-Nuṣaybī al-Shāfiʿī (582–652/1186–1254)[7] and Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Qarāfī al-Mālikī (626–84/1228–85). Their literary production is, according to El-Merheb, representative or archetypical of Sunni constitutional jurisdiction in thirteenth-century Syria and Egypt. He provides a condensed account of these works and their political-administrative contexts. While analyzing Ibn Ṭalḥah's text, he refers to other works in this genre, highlighting their place in the genealogy of advice-to-the-ruler literature, although he refrains from cataloguing this book as belonging to the *Fürstenspiegel* library.

Recent years have seen a growing interest in Mamluk historical narratology. Chapter 5 dwells upon this topic. This is in line with the author's working thesis that the "Political thought of the Mamluk period should be studied in conjunction with the historical writing." The first case study examines al-Subkī's biography of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, who is portrayed in the Mamluk sources as an exemplary model. These texts are used to emphasize the methodology of contextualism. Reading a political text requires the reader's acquaintanceship with the historiography and with the prevailing conventions that governed the political discourse of the time. The author outlines Shafiʿi political thought.[8] This

[6] Mustafa Banister, *The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo (1261–1517): Out of the Shadows* (Edinburgh, 2021), 231–32.

[7] For his contribution to occultism see "Al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī al-sirr (al-ism) al-aʿẓam," National Library of Israel MSS Yahuda 471 (fol. 367) and 482.

[8] Cf. Michael Winter, "Inter-madhhab competition in Mamluk Damascus: al-Tarsusi's counsel for the Turkish Sultans," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (David Ayalon Memorial Volume 2001): 195–211.


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is followed by a concise study of al-Subkī's *The Restorer of Favors,* which is characterized as "a source of political thought that clearly upholds Shāfiʿī's constitutional concerns for the rule of law and limited government."

Mohamad El-Merheb's book opens a new path in the study of Islamic constitutional theory. By adding new genres he enlarges the data sources that historians of Sunni political thought may draw upon. He provides fresh analysis and calls out commonly accepted paradigms, such as Lambton's and Crone's well-received interpretations of Islamic government.


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# Arabic Transliteration System

Romanized Arabic in *Mamlūk Studies Review* follows the Library of Congress conventions, briefly outlined below. A more thorough discussion may be found in *American Library Association–Library of Congress Romanization Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991): http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/arabic.pdf.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ء | ʾ | خ | kh | ش | sh | غ | gh | م | m |
| ب | b | د | d | ص | ṣ | ف | f | ن | n |
| ت | t | ذ | dh | ض | ḍ | ق | q | ه | h |
| ث | th | ر | r | ط | ṭ | ك | k | و | w |
| ج | j | ز | z | ظ | ẓ | ل | l | ي | y |
| ح | ḥ | س | s | ع | ʿ | | | | |
| | | ة | h, t (in construct) | | | ال | al- | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ـَ | a | ـُ | u | ـِ | i |
| ـً | an | ـٌ | un | ـٍ | in |
| آ | ā | ـُو | ū | ـِي | ī |
| ـَا | ā | ـُوّ | ūw | ـِيّ | īy (medial), ī (final) |
| ى | á | ـَو | aw | ـَي | ay |
| | | | | ـَيّ | ayy |

Avoid using apostrophes or single quotation marks for *ʿayn* and *hamzah*. Instead, use the Unicode characters ʿ (02BF) and ʾ (02BE).

Capitalization in romanized Arabic follows the conventions of American English; the definite article is always lower case, except when it is the first word in an English sentence or a title. The *hamzah* is not represented when beginning a word, following a prefixed preposition or conjunction, or following the definite article. Assimilation of the *lām* of the definite article before "sun" letters is disregarded. Final inflections of verbs are retained, except in pausal form; final inflections of nouns and adjectives are not represented, except preceding suffixes and except when verse is romanized. Vocalic endings of pronouns, demonstratives, prepositions, and conjunctions are represented. The hyphen is used with the definite article, conjunctions, inseparable prepositions, and other prefixes. Note the exceptional treatment of the preposition *li-* followed by the article, as in *lil-sultān*. Note also the following exceptional spellings: Allāh, billāh, lillāh, bismillāh, miʾah, and ibn (for both initial and medial forms). Words not requiring diacritical marks, though following the conventions outlined above, include all Islamic dynasties, as well as terms which are found in English dictionaries, such as Quran, sultan, amir, imam, shaykh, Sunni, Shiʿi, and Sufi. Common place-names should take the common spelling in American English. Names of archaeological sites should follow the convention of the excavator.

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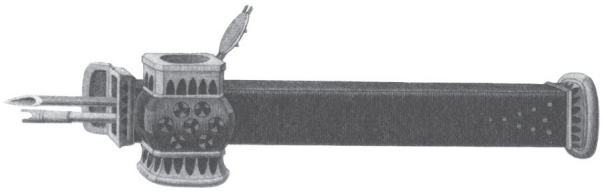

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