

ZAYDE ANTRIM  
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## Making Syria Mamluk: Ibn Shaddād's *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*

The consolidation of the Mamluk Empire in Egypt and Syria in the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century provided a new context for what I have called a "discourse of place" among Syrian intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> Representations of Syria and Syrian cities in the Arabic written record, the earliest extant examples of which date back to the geographical literature of the third/ninth century, had proliferated by the turn of the seventh/thirteenth century. This proliferation marked the maturation of a discourse, or an established area of scholarly inquiry characterized by intertextuality and a set of common, if changing, terms and conventions, about "place." The concept of place has been subject to increasing scrutiny in the past few decades in the fields of geography, anthropology, and literary criticism, a scrutiny that has generated complex and varied theoretical frameworks for understanding the human relationship to physical, economic, social, political, and cultural environments.<sup>2</sup> In this article, however, place is defined simply as a locality, most often a town or region, represented in writing. Since representations are, by their very nature, constructed and contingent, this definition of place implies a relationship between the representer and the locality being represented. In other words, some type of belonging, often but not limited to that of the resident or native, is always tied up with the representation of a locality. To participate in the discourse of place in and about medieval Syria, therefore, was to evoke various categories of belonging by composing geographies, topographies, local histories, or other works from established genres of Arabic literature that treated the locality as their prime focus.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See my "Place and Belonging in Medieval Syria, 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>See, for examples, Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires, eds., *Space & Place: Theories of Identity and Location* (London, 1993); James Duncan and David Ley, eds., *Place/Culture/Representation* (London, 1993); Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, 1996); Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis, 2001); and David Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America* (Baltimore, 2002).

<sup>3</sup>The other genre of Arabic writing most commonly used by participants in the discourse of place was a branch of literary anthology listing the *faḍā'il* ("merits") of a town or region. For more on *faḍā'il* literature in general, see R. Sellheim, "Faḍā'il," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:728; and Ernst August Gruber, *Verdienst und Rang: Die Faḍā'il als literarisches und gesellschaftliches*

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Appearing after a period of more than a century distinguished by the active production of written representations of Syria and Syrian cities, the multi-volume historical topography *Al-A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah fī Dhikr Umarā’ al-Shām wa-al-Jazīrah* (Valuable and important things on the subject of the princes of Syria and the Jazīrah), composed by the Aleppo scholar ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, marked a major shift in the discourse of place. Ibn Shaddād’s work subsumed the territorial referents for belonging evoked by earlier participants in the discourse, such as Ibn ‘Asākir’s Damascus or Ibn al-‘Adīm’s northern Syria, into a new territorial referent for belonging, a unified “al-Shām” increasingly integrated into the broader geopolitical context of Mamluk rule.<sup>4</sup> What made the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* unique in the discourse of place up to its time was that it represented the region of Syria through topographies of *both* of its major cities, Damascus and Aleppo, as well as through descriptions of its secondary towns and rural areas, while making its author’s loyalty to a regime based in Cairo explicit throughout. Thus, the political and military history of the first decades of Mamluk rule in Syria is inseparable from the new direction in which Ibn Shaddād’s *Al-A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* took the discourse. It was Mamluk rule that made Ibn Shaddād’s representation of Syria possible, and it was Ibn Shaddād’s representation that, at least in the discursive sense, made Syria Mamluk.

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century, the experience of decades of Ayyubid infighting, persistent Crusader aggression, and a devastating Mongol invasion had created an increasing sense of vulnerability among Syrians, many of whom must have looked to the early Mamluk sultans, despite their origins as slave-born usurpers, for relief. Indeed, after sacking Baghdad and killing the Abbasid caliph, a Mongol army under the leadership of Hülegü, grandson of Genghis Khan, marched into northern Syria in the winter of 658/1259–60 and occupied Aleppo. Having negotiated secret deals with several remaining Syrian Ayyubids, including an off-and-on relationship with al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, prince of Aleppo and Damascus, the Mongol advance southward in Syria met little resistance. Over the next six months, the Mongols set up a skeleton occupation of Damascus and embarked upon a mission of looting and terror in the districts of Palestine and Jordan. The Mamluk sultan in Cairo, Quṭuz, after reconciling with his rival and commander of the formidable Baḥrīyah faction, Baybars, mobilized an army to

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*Problem in Islam*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 35 (Freiburg, 1975).

<sup>4</sup>See the introductory volumes of the *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* by Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176) and of the *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab* by Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn al-‘Adīm (d. 660/1262). Various published editions of both works exist.

confront the Mongols in Syria. The historic confrontation occurred at a Palestinian site called ‘Ayn Jālūt in the fall of 658/1260, and the resounding Mamluk victory carried symbolic significance far beyond its practical repercussions. Syria would be harassed for another half century by Mongol forces and, even in the short run, would see violent confrontations between Mongols, Mamluks, and Crusaders on its soil. Nevertheless, the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt proved for the first time that the Mongols were not unstoppable and helped portray the Mamluk regime as the defender of Syria and of Islam.

When Baybars took over the sultanate soon thereafter, he prioritized the development of a top-notch military machine to keep the Mongols at bay and initiated the renovation and repair of Syrian fortifications and urban infrastructure destroyed by the Mongols. At the same time, he sought to strengthen the regime’s legitimacy in the eyes of its Muslim subjects through the installation of an Abbasid puppet caliph in Cairo and the adoption of hard-line rhetoric targeting infidels, both Mongol and Crusader, as its enemies. Under his successors Syria would be stabilized and divided into administrative provinces of a centralized, bureaucratic Mamluk state with its capital in Cairo. By the early eighth/fourteenth century, the last Crusaders would be definitively expelled from the Syrian coast, and the Mongol threat on Syria’s eastern borders eliminated for the foreseeable future. It is not difficult to see why many Syrian Muslims welcomed this new “Pax Mamlukia,” some like Ibn Shaddād actively pledging their loyalty to the Mamluk sultans by entering their service.

Ibn Shaddād had spent the early part of his career serving the last Ayyubid prince of Aleppo, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, in administrative posts that required him to travel him all over Syria and to undertake financial and diplomatic missions to the Jazīrah. He even conducted negotiations on behalf of his Ayyubid patron with the Mongols when they occupied Mayyāfāriqīn shortly before invading northern Syria. However, after the Mongol occupation of Aleppo, Ibn Shaddād fled to Egypt and quickly found employment with the new Mamluk sultan Baybars. He returned to Syria again in 669/1271 in the company of the sultan and spent most of the following decade composing the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah*. When Baybars died unexpectedly in 676/1277, Ibn Shaddād served his successors until his own death in Cairo in 684/1285. Thus, the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* was not only among the earliest compositions of the Mamluk era, but it was also the first representation of Syria dating after the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Although, like Ibn Shaddād, Ibn al-‘Adīm had been in the service of the Ayyubid rulers of Aleppo until he fled to Cairo after the Mongol invasion, where he lived until his death in 660/1262, Ibn al-‘Adīm’s representation of northern Syria, in the form of the topographical introduction to the *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*, was composed in Ayyubid Aleppo and completed by 655/1257 (see David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World* [Leiden, 1994], 169).

**IBN SHADDĀD'S "AL-SHĀM"**

As its full title implies, Ibn Shaddād's *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* took the territories known by the toponyms "al-Shām" and "al-Jazīrah" as the subjects of its representation. When the classical geographers of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries divided the Islamic world by region, or *iqlīm*, both "al-Shām" and "al-Jazīrah" figured among the twenty or so regions considered.<sup>6</sup> According to them, the region of "al-Shām," often referred to as "Greater Syria," "Geographical Syria," or the "Bilād al-Shām" in secondary scholarship but translated here simply as "Syria," was bound in the west by the Mediterranean Sea, in the north by the Byzantine Empire, in the north-east by the Euphrates River, in the east and south by the Arabian desert, and in the south-west by the region of Egypt.<sup>7</sup> The early geographers treated the territory to the east of the Euphrates, an "island" of land lying among its tributaries in north-western Mesopotamia, as a separate region called "al-Jazīrah." Though the neighboring Jazīrah would be frequently associated with Syria in the discourse of place, later authors tended to follow the classical geographers in treating the two regions as distinct, if related, territorial entities. In the context of the shifting allegiances and movements of people that characterized the late Ayyubid period, the Jazīrah formed a key corridor connecting northern Syria to the lands and peoples to the east and the north, a corridor that had been featured prominently, for instance, in Ibn al-'Adīm's writing. However, Ibn Shaddād consistently distinguished "al-Jazīrah" from "al-Shām," and there is no sense that the eastern bank of the Euphrates formed a sub-district of Syria in his representation. In fact, as will be discussed below, the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* suggested a fundamental shift in the representation of northern Syria, from an orientation toward the Jazīrah to an orientation toward southern Syria as its primary political partner.

At the most basic level, Ibn Shaddād's *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* may be distinguished from earlier works in the discourse of place by the detail and balance with which it represented the territory of Syria and its internal divisions. The work is divided into three major sections of more or less equal length and detail: the first dealing with Aleppo and northern Syria,<sup>8</sup> the second with Damascus and southern

<sup>6</sup>For an overview of classical Arabic geographical literature, see S. Maqbul Ahmad, "Djuḡhrāfiyā," *El<sup>2</sup>*, 2:575–90; for the intellectual origins of these divisions, see André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle* (reprint edition; Paris, 2001), 1:81–82.

<sup>7</sup>For English translations of the early geographers' descriptions of Syria, see Guy Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500 Translated from the Works by the Mediaeval Arab Geographers* (Boston and New York, 1890).

<sup>8</sup>See the following published editions and translations: Ibn Shaddād, *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, vol. 1, pt. 1, ed. Dominique Sourdel (Damascus, 1953) [on Aleppo; hereafter referred to as "Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo)"]; idem, *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, vol. 1, pts. 1–2, ed. Yaḥyá Zakarīyā 'Abbārah (Damascus, 1991) [pt. 1 on Aleppo and pt. 2 on northern Syria; pt. 2 will be referred to hereafter as "Ibn

Syria,<sup>9</sup> and the third with the Jazīrah.<sup>10</sup> The first two parts of the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, on Aleppo and northern Syria and on Damascus and southern Syria respectively, may be characterized as the first representation of "al-Shām" that neither situated it in the greater context of the Islamic world nor reflected the perceived or aspired-for regional dominance of Damascus or Aleppo. Instead, despite his Aleppan roots, Ibn Shaddād featured both cities as key focal points of the region of Syria, not as rivals, but as complementary urban nodes. Furthermore, he established the territory surrounding each city as an immediately relevant and integral component of the greater regional entity. In fact, Ibn Shaddād was one of the first authors in the discourse of place to use the terms "bilād al-Shām" and "al-bilād al-shāmīyah," as well as the simple toponym "al-Shām," regularly, underscoring his conception of Syria as a conglomerate of territories and localities. As such, Syria was not reduced to two urban landmarks on which abstract region-wide descriptions or generalizations were superimposed, but was represented as a collectivity of interrelated territorial entities—cities, towns, villages, mountains, and rivers—that together made Syria a comprehensive and inclusive (geographically, if not necessarily socially) referent for belonging.

In the preface to the work as a whole, Ibn Shaddād presented four hadith-based tributes to "al-Shām." Together the first three constituted what can only be described as a gesture toward the deep reservoir of hadith material tapped extensively by authors in the Syrian branch of the discourse of place up to his time.<sup>11</sup> The fourth, however, made explicit the geographical parameters within which Ibn Shaddād conceived the subject of his representation in the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*. Commenting on a hadith from Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab* in which the Prophet defined the land God blessed as that stretching between al-'Arīsh and the

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Shaddād (northern Syria)"]; idem, *Description de la Syrie du Nord*, trans. Anne-Marie Eddé-Terrasse (Damascus, 1984) [French translation of Ibn Shaddād on northern Syria]. See also the translator's corresponding Arabic edition: Anne-Marie Eddé, ed., "La description de la Syrie du Nord de 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 32–33 (1980–81): 265–402; and the following Arabic edition of the chapters on the 'Awāṣim from this section: Charles Ledit, "Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah li-'Izz al-Dīn b. Shaddād," *Al-Mashriq* 33 (1935): 161–223.

<sup>9</sup>See the following published editions: Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān (Damascus, 1956) [hereafter referred to as "Ibn Shaddād (Damascus)"]; idem, *Tārīkh Lubnān wa-al-Urdun wa-Filasṭīn*, ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān (Damascus, 1963) [hereafter referred to as "Ibn Shaddād (southern Syria)"].

<sup>10</sup>Ibn Shaddād, *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, vol. 3, pts. 1–2, ed. Yaḥyá Zakarīyā 'Abbārah (Damascus, 1978) [hereafter referred to as "Ibn Shaddād (al-Jazīrah)"]. See also Muḥammad Sa'īd Raḥnā, "Ibn Shaddād fī Kitābat *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* 'Qism al-Jazīrah," *Majallat al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabī* 14 (1980): 124–204; and Claude Cahen, "La Djazira au milieu du treizième siècle d'après 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Chaddad," *Revue des études islamiques* 8 (1934): 109–28.

<sup>11</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 5–8.

Euphrates, an exegetical tradition as good as ubiquitous in earlier representations of Syria, Ibn Shaddād clarified the location of the region's borders in all four directions: "Those who pay close attention to the delimitation of 'routes and realms' specify that [Syria's] southern border is al-'Arīsh, in the direction of Egypt; its northern border is the territory of the Byzantines; its eastern border is the desert from Aylah<sup>12</sup> to the Euphrates; and its western border is the Mediterranean Sea."<sup>13</sup> This description of Syria's borders was reminiscent of that provided by the classical geographers and defined Syrian territory with more specificity than had, for example, Ibn al-'Adīm or Ibn 'Asākīr.<sup>14</sup>

Next, Ibn Shaddād drew from al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* and Qudāmah ibn Ja'far's *Kitāb al-Kharāj* to sketch a brief history of the division of Syria during the caliphate of Abū Bakr into four *ajnad* (sg. *jund*).<sup>15</sup> The term *ajnad*, which can be translated as "armies," came to refer directly to the geographic districts in which the original armies of conquest had been based, i.e. Homs, Damascus, Jordan, and Palestine, the former two districts taking their names from their principal cities.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the fifth *jund*, Qinnasrīn, created under the Umayyad caliph al-Yazīd, and the sixth *jund*, the 'Awāšim, created under the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, initially owed their existence to the exigencies of military conflict with the Byzantine Empire but quickly came to signify, particularly in the case of Qinnasrīn, the extension and consolidation of the political and economic administration of Syria in the second/eighth century. The *jund* of the 'Awāšim, often associated with a further set of frontier outposts, the Thughūr, as in the oft-repeated phrase "al-'Awāšim wa-al-Thughūr," retained its military purpose and remained more loosely administratively integrated into Syria until much later than the rest of the *ajnad*.<sup>17</sup> By the Saljuq period, however, the Syrian *ajnad* were no longer a political or military reality, and Syrian territory was divided according to the shifting spheres

<sup>12</sup>Modern-day Eilat.

<sup>13</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 8.

<sup>14</sup>The Ayyubid-era geographer/gazetteer Yāqūt al-Rūmī (d. 626/1229), in his entry on "al-Shām" also provided a more specific description of Syria's borders than those found in works since the great geographical treatises of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries: Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, (Beirut, 1957–95), 3:312.

<sup>15</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 8–9.

<sup>16</sup>For two different views on the origins of the *ajnad*, see Irfan Shahid, "The Jund System in Bilād al-Shām: Its Origin," in *Bilād al-Shām fī al-'Ahd al-Bīzanī*, vol. 2, ed. Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt and Muḥammad 'Aṣfūr (Amman, 1986), 45–52; and John Haldon, "Seventh-Century Continuities: the *Ajnad* and the 'Thematic Myth,'" in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3, *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton, 1995), 379–423.

<sup>17</sup>For more on the emergence of this frontier zone, see Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, 1996).

of influence of a succession of sovereigns. Syrian cities served as centers of *mamālik* (sg. *mamlakah*), here best translated as “kingdoms” or “principalities,” and the Ayyubid period saw an increased regularization of the Syrian *mamlakah* system. In the Mamluk period, the *mamlakah* divisions of the empire’s Syrian territories became more systematized and the structures of provincial government more consistent.<sup>18</sup>

During the first decades of Mamluk rule, however, as the last Ayyubids were being divested of their Syrian holdings, the Mamluk system for Syrian provincial administration was not yet solidified. Thus, Ibn Shaddād’s highlighting of the origins of the *jund* system and his subsequent use of the *ajnād* to organize his representations of northern and southern Syria could be seen as an early Mamluk-era attempt to bring some sort of order to a region that was in marked disorder.<sup>19</sup> This is not to say that Ibn Shaddād’s use of the *ajnād* to organize the *A’lāq al-Khaṭīrah* acted as a policy recommendation for the Mamluk sultans, but it seems possible that Ibn Shaddād aspired to discursive order in making Syria Mamluk, even if the only ordering system at hand was the admittedly archaic *ajnād*. Furthermore, in the absence of contemporary administrative divisions by which to proceed in his representation, Ibn Shaddād’s chapters cataloguing the towns, citadels, and rural areas associated with each of the six *ajnād* allowed him to provide a counterweight to the lengthy stand-alone representations he devoted to the cities of Aleppo and Damascus.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Ibn Shaddād established the geographical parameters and internal structure of the *A’lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, geographical parameters that explicitly demarcated Syria’s borders and an internal structure that used the *jund* system to address each constituent part of the region systematically.

#### PERSONAL LOSS AND POLITICAL LOYALTY

The second major difference between Ibn Shaddād’s representation of Syria and those prevalent in the discourse of place up to his time lies in the preface to the *A’lāq al-Khaṭīrah* in which Ibn Shaddād personalized his relationship to his native country and highlighted nostalgia as a prime motivation for his composition of the work. Juxtaposed with this evocation of nostalgia was a panegyric to his newfound Mamluk patron in Cairo, Sultan Baybars. Ibn Shaddād’s firsthand experience of

<sup>18</sup>For more on the Mamluk “*mamlakah* system,” see Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks* (Beirut, 1953), 11–24; and Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, 24–43.

<sup>19</sup>It must be said here, however, that Ibn Shaddād was not the first participant in the discourse of place to feature the obsolete *ajnād* in his representation of Syria. See, for instance, Yāqūt, *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, 3:311–15.

<sup>20</sup>No manuscripts survive of his chapter on the *jund* of Homs, and it may never have been completed, but mention of it occurs in the table of contents Ibn Shaddād supplied at the beginning of the volume on northern Syria. See Ibn Shaddād (northern Syria), 7; and idem, *Description*, 1.

Mongol aggression, which coincided for most Syrians with the shift from the decentralization and instability of Ayyubid rule to the centralization and militancy of Mamluk rule, infused the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* with a sense of personal vulnerability mitigated by political optimism.

Although Syrian authors in the past had composed poetic representations of their hometowns that evoked feelings of nostalgia or homesickness, prose representations of Syrian localities had not generally communicated such explicitly personal perspectives.<sup>21</sup> One exception was Usāmah ibn Munqidh's preface to his monumental anthology of poetry dedicated to loss and place, *Kitāb al-Manāzil wa-al-Diyār*, in which he described his decision to collect such poetry as a strategy for dealing with his own grief after the loss of his hometown of Shayzar in an earthquake in 552/1157.<sup>22</sup> Not unlike Usāmah, Ibn Shaddād explained that the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* was inspired by the destruction of his hometown of Aleppo. However, unlike Usāmah's Shayzar, lost to a natural disaster, Ibn Shaddād's Aleppo—and with it most of Syria—was lost to a political and military enemy against whom retaliation was possible. Consequently, Ibn Shaddād combined nostalgia with a strong statement of political loyalty to Baybars, whose aggressive response to the Mongol occupation restored strong and legitimate Islamic rule to Syria.

On the subject of the sultan, Ibn Shaddād gushed:

I pastured among his flocks from rainy season to dry season, and I swaggered in the garments of his beneficence. And I made peace with my fate, now that it smiles upon me after the period of its scowling.<sup>23</sup>

However, clearly Ibn Shaddād had not forgotten his previously scowling fate, as

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<sup>21</sup>Like Ibn Shaddād, Ibn al-'Adīm fled Aleppo after the Mongol invasion and settled in Cairo. He did return once to Aleppo before his death in Cairo in 660/1262, and on that occasion he composed a poem mourning the Mongols' destruction of his hometown preserved in the as yet incompletely published *Iqd al-Jumān* of the ninth/fifteenth-century Egyptian historian al-'Aynī. For the manuscript reference and an excerpt from the elegy, see the editor's introduction in Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān (Damascus, 1951–68), 1:37–38. However, unlike the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, neither the *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* nor the *Zubdat al-Ḥalab* features nostalgia or the Mongol invasion in their representations of Aleppo and northern Syria. For earlier Crusader-era examples of nostalgic poetic representations of Syrian cities, see the poems cited in Emmanuel Sivan, "Réfugiés Syro-Palestiniens au temps des Croisades," *Revue des études islamiques* 35 (1967): 135–47.

<sup>22</sup>Usāmah ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Manāzil wa-al-Diyār*, ed. Muṣṭafá Ḥijāzī (Cairo, 1992), 3–4.

<sup>23</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 2.



he continued:

The reason for my leaving a country in which I passed my childhood and in which I had brothers and friends, a country that I will never forget, even with the passing of time, and the name of which will continue to be repeated by the mouths of inkwells and the tongues of pens, was the entry of the God-forsaken Mongols into my country and their rupturing of the union of Muslims inhabiting it.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Ibn Shaddād identified Syria with childhood memories, never to be recovered, and the Mongol invasion with the disappearance of Muslim unity in Syrian territories.

After explaining that his composition of a history and topography of Syria sprang from his appreciation for the patronage of the Mamluk sultan, Ibn Shaddād switched back to a nostalgic note, adding that another motivation for his work was the love and longing he felt for his hometown of Aleppo and homeland of Syria. Anthologizing material on the subject of *al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*, or “longing for homelands,” had been a conventional practice in the early centuries of Arabic belletristic writing.<sup>25</sup> Harking back to this material, Ibn Shaddād justified his decision to open the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* with a volume dedicated to the topography of Aleppo by quoting ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Qurayb al-Aṣma‘ī, a philologist of early third/ninth-century Baghdad:

I have heard a Bedouin say that if you want to know a man, look at the manner of his showing love for his homeland, the manner of his longing for his brothers, and the manner of his crying for what has passed of his days.<sup>26</sup>

Then Ibn Shaddād described his own manner of longing:

If it were not for the beneficence of the sultan and what God Almighty has made possible for him, I would spend all my time yearning for my homeland, and my soul would have become bewildered. But there is in his benefaction that which makes the

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>See Albert Arazi, “*Al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*: Entre la Ġāhiliyya et l’Islam: Le Bédouin et le citadin reconciliés,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 143, no. 2 (1993): 287–327; and Kathrin Müller, “*Al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* in Early *Adab* Literature,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth et al. (Beirut, 1999): 33–58.

<sup>26</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 3.

émigré forget his homeland and that which returns one to the prime of his youth.<sup>27</sup>

Ibn Shaddād's representation of Aleppo as his hometown and Syria as his homeland, a representation infused with nostalgia as well as political aspirations and hopes for the future, revealed a sense of belonging to a territorial entity at once local and increasingly translocal. Ibn Shaddād was, in effect, explaining that he was growing out of his former category of belonging, that of hometown and homeland, and growing into his new category of belonging, that of the Mamluk Empire.

Throughout the rest of the work Ibn Shaddād reinforced the dual motivations for composing the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, memorializing the losses imposed upon Syria by the Mongols and celebrating the future of Syria as part of a Mamluk state under Baybars. The volume on Aleppo is full of premonitions and portents of the city's destruction by Mongol armies in 658/1260. In one passage a prominent Aleppan Shi'i remembers an ancient prophecy foretelling the ruin of his city:

When the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf began to rebuild the walls and towers of the city of Aleppo and to restore the two markets that had been constructed on the eastern side of Aleppo's Great Mosque, transferring the silk merchants to one of them and the coppersmiths to the other, one of the notables, chief men, and bigwigs of Aleppo, Bahā' al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'īd ibn al-Khashshāb al-Ḥalabī, said to me: "I am afraid that this prince is the one who settles in [Aleppo], renovates its walls, and restores its markets, only to have it all taken away." And that is exactly what happened, as predicted, in the year 658 [1259–60].<sup>28</sup>

Ibn Shaddād's many descriptions of the destruction wreaked by the Mongols in Syria are often followed by accounts of Baybars' subsequent rehabilitation of the landscape, as in the following example dealing with the citadel of Damascus:

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 14. Although the skepticism of the Ayyubid prince of Aleppo, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, implied by the recounting of this prophecy may have been prompted by Bahā' al-Dīn ibn al-Khashshāb's position as a Shi'i, according to his biography in Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* he enjoyed warm relations with al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's grandfather, al-Zāhir Ghāzī, who appointed him supervisor of the Mashhad al-Ḥusayn, a Shi'i shrine dating from the Ayyubid period in Aleppo. See Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Tārīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut, n.d.), 5:2247; Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable*, 72; and Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park, 1997), 112.

When the Mongols seized the country and occupied Damascus, they destroyed its battlements, tore down its towers, and demolished a lot of it. Then when our patron Sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir took possession of the citadel of Damascus, he renovated it, rebuilt it, and repaired what the cursed Mongols had destroyed of it.<sup>29</sup>

In juxtaposing the devastation visited upon Syria, particularly upon its urban infrastructure, with the restoration and renovation for which Syrians had the Mamluk sultan Baybars to thank, Ibn Shaddād represented Syria as simultaneously lost to the Mongols and won to the Mamluk Empire.

Ibn Shaddād did not, however, associate depictions of the Mongol invasion with images of salvation and rehabilitation in his representation of the Jazīrah. By the time the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* was written in the mid to late 670s/1270s, Syria had been rid of Mongol occupation for over a decade, but the lands east of the Euphrates were either under Mongol suzerainty or were deserted no-man's-lands that hosted border skirmishes between Mamluks and Mongols through the first decades of the eighth/fourteenth century. Though Ibn Shaddād's Syria, once lost, found itself rescued, his al-Jazīrah remained lost. Ibn Shaddād opened the section on the Jazīrah with the following explanation:

In what has preceded of our book we have presented an account of Syria and the passing down of its towns from the hands of one king or prince to another. Here, we are awakening sympathy for [Syria] with an account of the Jazīrah and its first and last rulers until the time of its passing out of the hands of Muslims into the hands of the Mongols, may God deliver it from them.<sup>30</sup>

Ibn Shaddād's representation of the Jazīrah in the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, therefore, was intended as an admonition, a cautionary tale meant to inspire continued vigilance along Syria's eastern borders. Consequently, he portrayed the Jazīrah as a corridor that had been effectively closed off for northern Syria, forcing Aleppo and its surroundings to look elsewhere—namely to the rest of Syria, Egypt, and the Mamluk Sultanate—for sustenance.

### **HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY**

In emphasizing the rehabilitation of the Syrian landscape and redemption of the

<sup>29</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Damascus), 40.

<sup>30</sup>Ibn Shaddād (al-Jazīrah), 1:3–4.

Syrian people by the Mamluk sultans, Ibn Shaddād produced what may be the first fully integrated historical topography of Syria—in other words, the first detailed physical description of Syria blended with a political and institutional history. The structure and organization of the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* strongly suggest that Ibn Shaddād considered the way Syria “looked” a function of its recent history, particularly the history of the architectural patronage of its rulers.<sup>31</sup> A comparison with Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* and Ibn al-‘Adīm’s *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* will clarify Ibn Shaddād’s contribution to the discourse of place in terms of historical topography. Whereas both Ibn ‘Asākir and Ibn al-‘Adīm followed their topographical descriptions of Damascus and Aleppo with voluminous biographical dictionaries of the religious scholars and notables of each city, Ibn Shaddād embedded prosopography and a paean to each city’s scholarly tradition in the topographical description itself through his innovative madrasah chapters; and whereas Ibn al-‘Adīm dedicated a separate work, the *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab*, to the recent political history of northern Syria and Ibn ‘Asākir satisfied his historiographical impulse with a lengthy chronicle of the early Islamic history of Syria in his introductory volume, Ibn Shaddād combined historiography and topography by explicitly tying political patronage to transformations of the urban and rural landscapes. Furthermore, though neither section survives, evidence from the extant manuscripts of the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* indicates that Ibn Shaddād appended or intended to append lists of the Islamic rulers of Damascus and Aleppo to their topographies.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as the full title of the work, *Al-A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah fī Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa-al-Jazīrah*, implies, Ibn Shaddād saw places and princes as inextricably linked.

Ibn Shaddād’s volumes on the cities of Damascus and Aleppo make explicit their large debt to the earlier works by Ibn ‘Asākir and Ibn al-‘Adīm, thus reinforcing the importance of intertextual authority in producing and reproducing a discourse of place in and about Syria, but reflect an increased attention to the architectural patronage of each city’s elites during Ibn Shaddād’s lifetime, particularly the last Ayyubids and the first Mamluks. Ibn Shaddād opened these volumes with short chapters on the etymology of the toponyms “Dimashq” and “Ḥalab,” précis of the ancient settlement of the sites, quick enumerations of their gates, and short descriptions of the construction and significance of their citadels. The citadel of Aleppo, commanding such a central position in that city’s topography and playing such an important role as both military fortification and royal habitation,

<sup>31</sup>For more on Ibn Shaddād’s interest in architecture, see Nasser Rabbat, “Perception of Architecture in Mamluk Sources,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 155–76.

<sup>32</sup>See Ibn Shaddād, *Description*, xiv–xv; idem (Damascus), 10.

understandably received a longer treatment than that of Damascus.<sup>33</sup> In this treatment, Ibn Shaddād demonstrated the close association of architectural patronage and urban topography that dominated the work as a whole, detailing the building projects initiated at the citadel complex by the Ayyubid prince of Aleppo al-Zāhir Ghāzī and his son al-‘Azīz. These projects included both the renovation of military fortifications and the expansion and elaboration of the palace complex within the citadel, in addition to repairs and improvements made after a fire in 609/1212, until the Mongols’ destruction of the citadel in 658/1260.<sup>34</sup>

From the citadel sections, both topographies move immediately to accounts of the Great Mosques of Aleppo and Damascus and then enumerations of all the other mosques both inside and outside the walls of the two cities. The volume on Damascus reproduces Ibn ‘Asākir’s famous history of the construction of the Umayyad Mosque, as well as his inventories of the other mosques of Damascus, to which Ibn Shaddād simply appended brief enumerations of the mosques constructed since Ibn ‘Asākir’s time.<sup>35</sup> Ibn Shaddād’s main addition to this information was a chapter on the renovations and other building projects sponsored by the Ayyubid princes of Damascus and then by Baybars, including the *awqāf* established by the Mamluk sultan to support scholarly and socioeconomic activities in and around the Umayyad Mosque.<sup>36</sup> He also described four new Friday mosques constructed in the immediate suburbs of the city during the Ayyubid period, testifying to the urban sprawl associated with the influx of immigrants and refugees to Damascus during this period.<sup>37</sup> The chapter on the Great Mosque of Aleppo cobbles together similar information, relying mostly on material supplied by Ibn al-‘Adīm.<sup>38</sup> However, as the *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* provides no comprehensive list of Aleppo’s mosques in the manner of the *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, Ibn Shaddād’s mosque list for Aleppo, which consists merely of the name of each mosque, was probably based on his personal familiarity with the city.<sup>39</sup>

The centerpieces of Ibn Shaddād’s urban topographies, however, are without a doubt their chapters on the madrasahs. These chapters, which may have been the first of their kind in the discourse of place, divide the madrasahs of Aleppo and

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<sup>33</sup>See Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power*, 53–96.

<sup>34</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 24–27.

<sup>35</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Damascus), 127–31, 157–66.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 75–81.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 86–88.

<sup>38</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 30–42. Since the *A’lāq al-Khaṭīrah* was composed after Ibn Shaddād’s emigration from his hometown, his mosque list for Aleppo may have been compiled primarily from memory.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 59–93.

Damascus by school of law and then provide for each entry the name of the founder and the chief ulama active in the madrasah from the date of its foundation up to and, especially for Damascus, beyond the Mongol invasion of Syria in 658/1259–60.<sup>40</sup> In the *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, Ibn ‘Asākir mentioned those madrasahs housed in or connected to one of the mosques he inventoried, but furnished no other detail about their foundation or function. The three Madrasah al-Nūrīyahs that made it into Ibn ‘Asākir’s mosque inventory, however, substantiate the conclusion reached in recent secondary scholarship that the reign of Nūr al-Dīn in Damascus marked the start of an efflorescence of the madrasah in Syrian cities.<sup>41</sup> Ibn Shaddād’s lists reinforce this conclusion and capture the subsequent development of the madrasah system in Syria’s two major cities.

Out of some ninety madrasahs Ibn Shaddād listed for Damascus, only a handful date from before Nūr al-Dīn’s reign,<sup>42</sup> and only one of the approximately fifty listed for Aleppo predate the Zangid prince.<sup>43</sup> The vast majority of the madrasahs Ibn Shaddād described in both cities carried endowments established during the Ayyubid period, and, unlike his other topographical chapters, the madrasah chapters feature no building projects either carrying a new endowment or expanding an older one that date from the Mamluk period. Thus, these chapters celebrate the architectural legacy of the Ayyubid era, both the princely patronage of madrasahs and the increasing frequency of private patronage of such structures among both cities’ civilian elites.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the nearly equal numbers of Shafi’i and Hanafi madrasahs—and a significant number of Hanbali madrasahs in Damascus—endowed between the reign of Saladin and that of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf testify to the varied sources of such patronage in this period.

Ibn Shaddād did not order the madrasahs he listed for Aleppo and Damascus

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 96–122; idem (Damascus), 199–266. See also the following partial translation and commentary on Ibn Shaddād’s chapter on Aleppo’s madrasahs: Dominique Sourdel, “Les professeurs de madrasa à Alep aux XIIe–XIIIe siècles,” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 13 (1949–51): 85–115.

<sup>41</sup>For the history of the madrasah as an institution, see J. Pedersen (G. Makdisi), “Madrasa,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 5:1123–54; and George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh, 1981). For a study of architectural patronage, of which the madrasah formed a significant part, in Ayyubid Damascus, see R. Stephen Humphreys, “Politics and Architectural Patronage in Ayyubid Damascus,” in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton, 1989), 151–74. For the architectural innovations and symbolic meanings of madrasahs in Ayyubid Aleppo, see Tabbāa, *Constructions of Power*, 123–61.

<sup>42</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Damascus), 199–203 (nos. 1–3), 229–32 (nos. 35–37), 246–47 (no. 64).

<sup>43</sup>Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 96–98.

<sup>44</sup>This is a topic addressed in Humphreys, “Politics and Architectural Patronage”; and in Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 27–90.

in terms of their physical layout in the city, and consequently the role the lists played in the representation of the two cities rested much more on their inscription of a scholarly tradition into an urban landscape than on their ordering of that landscape. Similarly, despite his interest in architectural detail manifested in frequent descriptions of recent building projects sponsored by, in particular, the last major Syrian Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and the Mamluk Baybars, Ibn Shaddād's chapters on the madrasahs include very few descriptions of the structures themselves, apart from mentioning mausoleums, gardens, or other physical additions to their endowments.<sup>45</sup> The text under each entry in Ibn Shaddād's lists, rather, was devoted almost completely to the ulama assigned to teach in the madrasahs. Some entries furnished detailed biographical information about these scholars, including birthplace, education, travels, accomplishments, relationship to the founder, and teaching posts occupied earlier or concurrently.

Thus, these lists functioned in much the same way, though on a smaller scale, as did the biographical volumes of the *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* and the *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*, representing the city through its human heritage of Islamic scholarship. What was different about the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, however, was that it embedded this human heritage in the urban topography, rather than appending it to an introductory topography. Ibn Shaddād's madrasah lists represented Damascus and Aleppo by plotting their scholarly elites directly onto a prose map of the city. Furthermore, the distinctive features of these prose maps, particularly the madrasahs, reflected the very recent past, specifically the Ayyubid period, rather than any perceived former apex of Islamic learning or civilization, such as that suggested by the attention Ibn 'Asākir lavished on the construction of the Umayyad Mosque. Ibn Shaddād's madrasah chapters, therefore, exemplified his approach to representing cities by integrating recent history, biography, and topography and highlighting the human role, particularly the elite role, in defining place through architectural patronage and religious scholarship.

As mentioned above, however, Ibn Shaddād did not reduce his representation of Syria to its two urban centers and their immediate hinterlands. The *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* also represented the towns, villages, and, to a certain extent, the rural landscape of Syria in volumes that divided the region by *jund* and furnished micro-historical topographies for each site mentioned. In these sections, Ibn Shaddād devoted more space to the social, economic, and political status of the towns and villages that made up Syria than to basic topography.<sup>46</sup> In the cases of the sizable towns, however, the building projects endowed by a succession of princes remained

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<sup>45</sup>See Rabbat, "Perception of Architecture," 168–70.

<sup>46</sup>For an exception, see his chapter on the mountains of the *jund* of Damascus: Ibn Shaddād (southern Syria), 35–38.

chief components of Ibn Shaddād's representations of localities, representations that, as we have seen, married architectural and political history.<sup>47</sup>

Ibn Shaddād's treatment of northern Syria took the topographical information supplied by the introduction to Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* and some of the historical material from his *Zubdat al-Ḥalab* and brought it up to date, recording military and political events of note for the sites listed in each *jund* through the reign of Sultan Baybars.<sup>48</sup> The chapter on the Thughūr, while starting like the previous chapter on the *jund* of Qinnasrīn with a site-by-site inventory, ends with a chronicle of the military campaigns conducted by the armies of Islamic regimes in the district as a whole, starting with the conquest period and listing the campaigns by year, and then vaulting forward in history through the Hamdanid period and beyond. These later sections convey the gradual loss of territory in the region and a waning zeal for confrontations along this frontier.<sup>49</sup> The length of this chronicle testifies to Ibn Shaddād's emphasis on historiography within a topographical framework and suggests his preoccupation with the contested status of the land of Syria, an undisputable reality as well as a touchstone for the collective memory of Syrians during his lifetime.

One of the discursive innovations of the *A'lāq al-Khaṭīrah* was not simply that Ibn Shaddād subjected Syria's towns, villages, and rural areas to both historical and topographical study, but that in presenting a systematic geography of southern Syria at all he was undertaking a relatively new enterprise, as, to my knowledge, no one had performed for southern Syria what Ibn al-'Adīm had for northern Syria since the time of the third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century geographers.<sup>50</sup> Ibn Shaddād's volume on southern Syria reflected an even more recent historical perspective than did that on northern Syria, presumably because Ibn Shaddād was active in Baybars' retinue in southern Syria throughout the 670s/1270s. While he carried the histories of most of the northern Syrian localities up through 674/1275, he recorded events for most of the southern Syrian localities through 678/1279. It was in these chapters that Ibn Shaddād displayed his abiding interest in the building and renovation projects sponsored by Baybars in the aftermath of Mongol

<sup>47</sup>See Rabbat, "Perception of Architecture," 168–70.

<sup>48</sup>Another new feature of these chapters is his inclusion of information on the revenues of certain towns and districts, starting with Aleppo, information to which he had access as a financial inspector for the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. See, for instance, Ibn Shaddād (Aleppo), 150–53; idem (northern Syria), 26–28, 470–71.

<sup>49</sup>Ibn Shaddād (northern Syria), 196–349.

<sup>50</sup>The inventory of pilgrimage sites for southern Syria presented in 'Alī al-Harawī's early seventh/thirteenth-century *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilá Ma'rīfat al-Ziyārāt* could be seen as a specialized exception.



depredations in Palestine and Jordan.<sup>51</sup> Ibn Shaddād also paid particular attention in these chapters to the citadels and urban fortifications of southern Syria and their role in the conflicts of the era, including their destruction and refortification by successive rulers.<sup>52</sup> As in the volume on northern Syria, Ibn Shaddād, like Ibn al-‘Adīm before him, included towns and areas not under Muslim control in his topographical inventory; however, unlike Ibn al-‘Adīm, Ibn Shaddād provided detailed information on and histories of these localities despite their having yet to reenter the Muslim fold.<sup>53</sup> The representation of these localities suggests Ibn Shaddād’s optimistic outlook, a confidence in the Mamluk Empire as the reigning power in Syria, if not quite yet in all of its constituent parts.

### MAKING SYRIA MAMLUK

In a recent article, Yehoshu‘a Frenkel examines evidence from epigraphical, documentary, and literary sources to argue that Baybars vigorously endowed *awqāf* to construct shrines, mosques, and Sufi lodges throughout the Syrian countryside, associating new territories with Islam in general and with Mamluk rule and patronage in particular.<sup>54</sup> In so doing, Baybars was not only “Islamizing” the Syrian landscape by superimposing Islamic institutions and memorials on existing sites commemorating pre-Islamic figures but also integrating rural areas into the newly consolidated Syrian provinces of the Mamluk Empire through construction projects that had been confined in earlier periods primarily to urban areas. Though Frenkel uses the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* in his study, the literary sources upon which he relies most heavily are two biographies of Baybars, one of which was written by Ibn Shaddād, the other by an Egyptian contemporary of his, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir.<sup>55</sup> These works take Baybars himself as the object of representation and his architectural patronage in Syria as one aspect of that representation. The *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, on the other hand, takes Syria as the object of its representation and the architectural

<sup>51</sup>For one example, see Ibn Shaddād (southern Syria), 237.

<sup>52</sup>For examples, see *ibid.*, 53–54 (Baalbek), 55–64 (citadel of Ṣarkhad), 69–81 (al-Karak and al-Shawbak), 83–91 (al-Ṣalt and ‘Ajlūn), 115–20 (Ḥiṣn al-Akrād “Crac des Chevaliers”), and 146–51 (Ṣafad).

<sup>53</sup>See, for instance, *ibid.*, 113–20. While Ibn al-‘Adīm indicated when and how various northern Syrian towns or strongholds fell into the hands of the Crusaders or Armenians, he did so in an almost perfunctory manner and then proceeded to describe the sites using material dating from before the non-Muslim occupation, as if to gloss over the reality of that occupation.

<sup>54</sup>Yehoshu‘a Frenkel, “Baybars and the Sacred Geography of *Bilād al-Shām*: A Chapter in the Islamization of Syria’s Landscape,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2002): 153–70.

<sup>55</sup>Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1983); Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (d. 691/1292), *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976).

patronage of its rulers as one aspect, albeit a central one, of that representation.

Thus, Frenkel has amassed considerable evidence of an “Islamization” of the Syrian countryside that was intended to legitimize Baybars’ rule in the provinces—in a political and physical sense, to make Syria Mamluk. Ibn Shaddād’s *Al-A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* can be seen as the discursive corollary to this political and physical campaign. Drawing on a centuries-old discourse of place, Ibn Shaddād constructed a historical topography that integrated recent political history and architectural patronage with site-by-site inventories of Syrian cities and countryside. He self-consciously relied on his predecessors in the discourse of place, notably Ibn ‘Asākir and Ibn al-‘Adīm, to fill out his representations of Damascus, Aleppo, and northern Syria, but furnished new information throughout the work, though especially on southern Syria, to bring his representation up to date, reflecting the most recent transformations of the Syrian landscape initiated by Mamluk sultans.

Though its timing, explicit dedication to Baybars, and details of Mamluk-sponsored construction projects in Syria rendered the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* a discursive corollary to what Frenkel describes as Baybars’ “Islamization” of Syria, the strong presence of Ayyubid patronage in the work suggests significant continuities between the Ayyubid and Mamluk period in terms of Ibn Shaddād’s aforementioned association of princes and place. Particularly in the chapters dealing with northern Syria and those on the madrasahs of Damascus and Aleppo, Ayyubids appear as often as—if not more often than—Mamluks as founders, endowers, and patrons of the built environment. Though it was composed after the Ayyubid period had all but drawn to a close, the relationship between the Ayyubid princes and Syrian topography is much more explicit in the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* than it is even in the introduction to Ibn al-‘Adīm’s *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*, a product of Ayyubid-era Aleppo. Nonetheless, it was Baybars who was, in Ibn Shaddād’s frequent formulation, “*Ṣāhib al-Diyār al-Miṣrīyah wa-al-Shāmīyah*” (Lord of the Egyptian and Syrian Districts), uniting Egypt and Syria as separate but equal—and equally Mamluk—territorial entities. And it is the presence of Baybars throughout the *A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah* that evokes its dominant category of belonging: that of the Mamluk Empire.