

# Couscous or Cartography: A Moroccan Jurist and an English Trader Visit Seventeenth Century Palestine

Nabil Matar

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In 1516, the Ottomans incorporated Palestine into the *wilayat al-Sham*. During the first century after the conquest, the Ottomans, with their highly efficient administrative machinery, conducted surveys of the demography, taxation, food production, and religious communities of Palestine. Although Palestine did not become a separate administrative unit, it remained, as Uriel Heyd noted, “in some respects distinct from its surroundings,”<sup>1</sup> and the name “Filastīn,” which had always been used in Arabic sources, continued to be used by the Ottomans. The last Ottoman survey was conducted in 1596-97,<sup>2</sup> after which information in the Ottoman sources about Palestine decreased dramatically.

As a result, historians of early modern Palestine must turn for information to travelers’ accounts, both Arab, Ottoman, and European. Until recently, the only Arab account from the seventeenth century believed to have survived was ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi’s description of Palestine in 1690.<sup>3</sup> But there is another account about Palestine, written three decades earlier, that remained largely unknown to modern historians<sup>4</sup>—the account by Abu Salīm ‘Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-‘Ayyashi

Ard Filistin (Palestine) noted on seventeenth century map. Source: *Tuhfat al Kibar fi Esfar al Bihar*, 1729, Istanbul (detail).

(1628-79).<sup>5</sup> ‘Ayyashi was a jurist from Morocco who traveled through Palestine from Safar to Rabi’ al-Thani—from the second to the fourth months of the Islamic calendar—in A.H. 1074 (1663) and produced a first hand description of the land by an Arab after the Ottoman conquest.<sup>6</sup> His account, very much in the strain that al-Nabulsi was to employ later, provides significant information about Palestine in the second half of the seventeenth century.

In this regard, it is interesting to compare ‘Ayyashi’s account to that of an English traveler, identified by his initials, “T. B.,” who sojourned in Palestine in 1669. Both travelers reached Palestine from far-away regions: Morocco and England, although T.B. was then serving in the factory of Aleppo belonging to the East Levant Company. Both believed themselves to be traveling to a ‘holy’ land; and both took with them their religious culture and scriptures. While these similarities are important, the dissimilarities reveal the different attitudes that an Arab-Muslim and an English Anglican showed toward the land. Most strikingly, ‘Ayyashi always prayed at holy sites, seeking spiritual guidance, and studying to earn certificates/*ijazat* from learned scholars. At no point in the account did T.B. ever mention that he prayed or that he sought other than observation and verification.

This essay will examine the accounts by these travelers about Palestine: what did the ‘holy’ land mean to them, if it meant anything at all?

## ‘Ayyashi’s Account

Upon arriving in ‘Aqaba from his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, ‘Ayyashi decided to visit “*al-ard al-muqadassa al-mubarak*”/the blessed and holy land (2:423). He had not originally intended to make such a journey, fearing hardship and danger in a region where he had no acquaintances. But the holy land of Palestine seemed too close to miss. Thus, instead of cutting across the Sinai desert via the well-established pilgrimage route, Ayyashi sent his books by ship to Cairo and turned north. In preparation for his voyage, he asked for a letter of introduction from a shaykh who had accompanied him from Medina: it was addressed to the foremost of Gaza’s religious scholars, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir ibn Qasir. Throughout his journey, ‘Ayyashi depended on such letters of introduction to ensure him accommodation, religious interaction, and a sense of community and familiarity. ‘Ayyashi’s account reveals the historical and theological networks that existed in the printless world of Islam, where jurists were known to each other from Mecca to Jerusalem and from Baalbek to Fez.

Soon after the caravan started its trek toward Gaza, it was accosted by the Bedouin, who, living in dire conditions, habitually extorted “taxes” from travelers. (It should be noted that the travelers always impinged on the meager water supplies in the desert wells.) In ‘Ayyashi’s account, however, the Bedouin were not presented as merciless brigands intent on pillage and murder, as they were often described in European and Ottoman sources. When they stopped the caravan and their leader, the “*shaykh al-Arab*,” demanded money, the leader of the caravan, Hasan al-Maghribi, explained that

the travelers were poor pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem from Mecca (2:406-407). The Bedouin chieftain let them pass.

The caravan continued toward the “coasts of Syria” and, after passing near Rujayba, reached Gaza. ‘Ayyashi sought out Ibn Qasīr to give him the letter of introduction, finding him in his school with a library of “learned books” at the east side of the Great Mosque. ‘Ayyashi was struck by Gaza’s “groves and trees, houses and palaces,” and spent five days walking and talking with people; he found Gaza a “spacious city” where prices were cheap and fruit was plentiful (2:408). A hillock overlooked the groves and orchards of dates, grapes, and many fruit trees. In the center of the city was “*al-masjid al-kabir*,” the Great Mosque, which had been built in the fourteenth century by the Mamluk ruler al-Jawli:

To the right of the *sahn* (courtyard) stands the Great Mosque, lifted on high walls of incised stone and separated from the *sahn* by beautifully crafted windows. They only pray inside it during winter. We found the workers zealously whitening it and sharpening its carvings. As for its structure, it needed no renovation and was majestic... Like most mosques on the coast, it had originally been a church, but when the Muslims took the land from the Franks, they turned it into a mosque. I heard from the inhabitants of Gaza that their mosque had been a church during the time of Christ, peace be upon him. (2:408).

Interested as he was in describing the mosque, ‘Ayyashi also had an eye for human detail. He mentioned a Gazan shaykh who told him that he had once eaten a Moroccan meal that he had liked very much, couscous, and wondered whether the Moroccans were going to prepare it (2:410). Later, ‘Ayyashi castigated a shaykh who had originally been a Shafi’ite but who had become a Hanafite in order to get the job of a Hanafite judge who had just died. “Scholars,” he commented, “even the Hanafites themselves, have warned against changing schools for worldly reasons” (2:410). ‘Ayyashi watched people closely and sometimes critically: he was offended at the sight of Gazans walking through mosques with their shoes on and smoking in the *sahn* (2:409).

Eager to visit holy sites, ‘Ayyashi discovered that many of the shrines on the outskirts of the city had been allowed to deteriorate (2:413-414): it seemed that the repeated attacks by the Bedouin, whom the Ottomans were unable to subdue, had frightened inhabitants and forced them to move to the security of Gaza’s center. Near the Great Mosque stood the shrine of Imam al-Shafi’i in “an underground grotto.” Historians, noted ‘Ayyashi, maintain that al-Shafi’i

Was born in Gaza, where there is also the tomb of Qasim ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet, God’s blessing be upon him. Gaza is ascribed to the Prophet’s grandfather, for it is called “Qasim’s Gaza.” The tomb is on the seaward edge of city... The writers of biography said that he

had died in Gaza, but it is difficult to be certain about the tomb of an Arab who died in the days of *jahiliyya* [pre-Islamic ignorance] in the land of the non-Arabs [*‘ajam*]. (2:414)

‘Ayyashi was pious but not uncritical of what appeared to him unsubstantiated history.

Before leaving Gaza, ‘Ayyashi took letters of introduction from Ibn Qasīr to the shaykhs in Ramla, Jerusalem, and Hebron. He then traveled northward, through the “groves and orchards of Gaza,” and passed by Asqalan, a city that had been in “the first age a mother of cities” (2:414). The caravan stopped at a khan used by travelers on the “Sultanic Highway” between Egypt, Damascus, and Istanbul (2:414). These khans were spread throughout the Ottoman Empire and served not only as inns but also as centers for tribute payment. As always, ‘Ayyashi inquired about mosques and shrines and was told that there was a tomb of a shaykh in one mosque and that under another lay,

The tomb of Salmān al-Fārisi. We stayed in the mosque and said the noon, dusk, evening, and night prayers, and we read what we could [from the Qur’an]. I tried to complete the reading, which I had started in Mecca al-Musharraffa, but I couldn’t complete it until al-Masjid al-Aqsa. (2:415)

The journey through Palestine was also a journey through the Qur’an. Following the Damascus-Cairo highway, ‘Ayyashi continued to Ramla, north of his chief destination, Jerusalem, for he evidently was eager to see other places as well. In Ramla, he showed his letter of introduction to a Shafi‘ite jurist and then joined him and his son-in-law at the mosque, where he listened to the shaykh recite Hadith and the opening of the Musnad of al-Shafi‘i and of Abu Hanīfa (2:415).<sup>7</sup> Inquiring about the town and its people, he learned from another shaykh, the Hanafite jurist Khayr al-Dīn Abu ‘Ali, that the latter had planted with his own “blessed hand over a hundred thousand trees, all of which bore fruit and of which he had eaten. And this was quite wonderful.” Later ‘Ayyashi discovered that the shaykh had started planting in the year A.H. 1017 (1608) and that “when he came to Ramla it had had little fruit, but he worked and planted... and now it is one of the most abundant of coastal cities” (2:416). The shaykh had also built more than a thousand lintels and most of the khans in Ramla. Ayyashi so admired the shaykh, whom he described as “a sea of knowledge” and a man of al-Azhar, that he composed a poem in praise to him. The shaykh took ‘Ayyashi on a tour of the town and showed him the “White Mosque [built by Ibn Qalawūn in 1340] which is famous among the Sufis. Sha‘rani has mentioned in many of his books that a group of devotees used to come to it from faraway lands to pray” (2:416). ‘Ayyashi then turned to the tomb of one of the Prophet’s companions, al-Fadl ibn ‘Abbās. “Historians,” explained ‘Ayyashi, “have stated that he was buried in Palestine, for Ramla was the capital of Palestine in the old period” (2:418).

In Ramla, ‘Ayyashi visited “other friends” and stayed for three days at the house of another shaykh, Muhammad Ashqar; as elsewhere in Palestine, ‘Ayyashi was

introduced by one shaykh to another and then another, and hosted by all of them in turn. Leaving Ramla, ‘Ayyashi and his companions went a short distance northward to Lydda, “fair and spacious,” where they found “markets, mosques, and shrines” (2:419), and from there onward to Jerusalem, which they reached toward evening. They immediately went to the Dome of the Rock to pray and only afterward took their belongings to the Maghribi (Moroccan) quarter, where they settled in a room inside a mosque.

‘Ayyashi felt at ease in Jerusalem, for there were so many visitors from Morocco that to the west of the Dome there was an entire Moroccan quarter and a Sufi mosque/lodge (*zawiyya*) known as the “Mosque of the Moroccans.”<sup>8</sup> As for the Dome of the Rock itself, ‘Ayyashi pronounced it one of God’s marvels. He described its many fig and olive trees, under each of which was a *mastaba* (bench) carved in stone in the shape of a *mihrab* where people, including poor ascetics, came to pray and read. He gave a detailed account of the size and measurements of the “holy mosque,” and then described the octagonal rock, tilting in the air, with four entrances and noted that the floor, walls, and dome were all decorated with mosaics of various hues and strange designs. Some historians, he commented, believe that the rock had been bigger during the time of the Israelites, but that Christians had cut parts of it to build the Church of the Resurrection (2:421-422).<sup>9</sup> He also noted that the wall of the mosque had been built by the jinn for the Prophet Solomon and that the throne of Solomon was said to have once stood nearby, making prayers there efficacious (2:424). The tomb of Moses was far away, and he was eager to visit it to witness the many miracles that occurred there (2:425). One *karama*/miracle that was reported to him about the tomb was about a poor Bedouin. Upon visiting the shrine, he cried out to the Prophet about his poverty and children’s needs. The tomb entrance was suddenly opened and he took the covering on it to sell it in Damascus. When apprehended, he told his story, and was released (2:425). ‘Ayyashi loved telling stories.

‘Ayyashi was not interested only in the Islamic side of the city. Jerusalem had the largest Christian population in all of Palestine,<sup>10</sup> and like other Muslims, he knew that Christians venerated the city as well. He noted the carved stone known as the *minbar* of ‘Issa (Jesus) in the eastern wing of al-Aqsa Mosque, where the Caliph ‘Umar had prayed. As was the custom among his coreligionists, ‘Ayyashi visited Christian shrines, especially those associated with the birth of Jesus and with Mary. In the valley below the mount of Tūr, he and his companions (“respectfully,” as he explained) did not enter the tomb of “Mary, Peace be upon her,” but visited it from the outside (p. 317). Elsewhere in Palestine, ‘Ayyashi wanted to visit certain Christian shrines but sometimes felt uncomfortable doing so. “Most of the shrines in the country,” he wrote, “are in the hands of Christians. Bethlehem, where Christ was born, is in their hands. . . while the grave of Jonah, son of Matthew, peace be upon him, is in a village near Hebron. We visited it from afar, because we hesitated to enter a Christian place of worship and because we had little time” (2:424).

‘Ayyashi experienced Palestine through poems and shaykhs, history and devotion. He met many people and engaged a community of Sufis and ascetics from all over

the world of Islam, unhindered by national or linguistic borders. There was an internationalism in Palestine that attracted people from far and wide: the qadi of Hebron, whom ‘Ayyashi met, was a Tunisian who had lived in Istanbul until he was sent to the *qada’*/jurisdiction of Jerusalem (2:425). He always scrupulously registered the names of the people he met, describing both the good and the bad among them. He met a man called Shihab al-Dīn al-Hanafī, who had come from Egypt and who had been teaching Hadith in Jerusalem for the previous two months. ‘Ayyashi had heard about him earlier, in Gaza and then in Ramla, and had sought him out. But after entering into a theological discussion with the man about the Hanafīte school, he became convinced that the man was both ignorant and stupid and that the reputation he had gained was a result of people’s ignorance. After soundly refuting him in disputation, ‘Ayyashi was pleased to hear that the man left Jerusalem, allegedly for Egypt, but later he found him in Hebron and later still in Gaza and then in Khan Yūnis. Palestine was too small for a religious charlatan to lose himself (2:428-29).

Throughout his Jerusalem sojourn, ‘Ayyashi met many Sufi shaykhs and *faqirs*: there were strong followings for the numerous Sufi *tariqas* in the city, and ‘Ayyashi wrote down their names and their areas of scholarship (2:441-455). After spending a week in Jerusalem, ‘Ayyashi and his companions left for Hebron. The road was so hot that they cut some palm branches to protect themselves from the sun. The local inhabitants began to taunt them because they took them for European Christians—for only Europeans, explained one of the guides, did that. The travelers passed Bethlehem, through forests with numerous desert trees (2:457), until they reached Hebron toward sunset. The deputy *qadi* of Jerusalem accommodated them in a house near the mosque:

We entered the mosque to pray and to visit. We saw the tomb of the friend of God, our master Ibrahim, may peace be upon him, along with the tombs of his children, Ishaq and Ya‘qūb, and Yusuf, peace upon them all. We also saw the tombs of their wives in a grotto under the mosque floor. In the grotto, there was a small open window, from which hung lanterns lit day and night. In the floor of the mosque, there were windows in the shape of tombs covered with curtains of damask. Only the tomb of Yusuf, peace be upon him, was at the end of the mosque, in the western corner, in a place that is closed, and is only opened on special occasions. (2:457-58)

The shaykh in whose house they were staying was one of the imams of the mosque:

And he led the session of *dhikr* [Sufi chanting] in which prayers are raised, as is the custom in this land. For the people have replaced learning with *dhikr* so much so that rarely does a mosque not have a *dhikr* session in which communal voices are raised and hymns chanted in the manner of the Sufis... As a result, learning has declined in the land and in the Syrian littoral to a level I have not seen elsewhere. (2:459)

After spending three days in Hebron, ‘Ayyashi prepared to leave. With his traveling companions, he awaited the arrival of some cavalry to accompany them because the area was dangerous and “most of its people thieves” (2:462). Some of their fellow travelers from Hebron told them that robbers (who were also from Hebron) had confided that they were planning to rob “those Moroccans: once we do so, we will take their luggage, and you can take their gold.” But no attack occurred. After crossing mountainous terrain, ‘Ayyashi and his companions

Were met by a flat land with many rich farms. We walked for two days, fearful of the Arabs [Bedouin]. Toward the evening, we stayed in a village called Sawafir, where we were well hosted... We continued until we approached the city of Gaza, where we saw a *batrīk* [military commander] with many soldiers who had been sent by the pasha to fight the Bedouin. (2:462)

But ‘Ayyashi soon realized that the situation had deteriorated: the Bedouin were on a pillaging rampage, and the pasha was unable to subdue them. Although he was frightened, it is interesting that ‘Ayyashi never railed against these Bedouin or denigrated them. Some of his companions who were physically strong, and who had no belongings for which to fear, avoided the Bedouin by leaving during the night and walking parallel to the coast toward Egypt. Unable to do the same, ‘Ayyashi and his companions bought four donkeys for twelve pieces of silver and the next day headed toward Khan Yunis, which they reached after “much labor and fear.” For the next three days, they stayed in an upper room at the entrance of the khan. They left, “fearful of the thievery” of the Bedouin, and headed for al-‘Arīsh, “a city on the coast in which there are many palm trees and orchards, a large mosque, hostels, and souks. It is the last city in Sham and the first of Egypt: for as historians have stated... the borders of Sham stretch from ‘Arīsh to Euphrates, or about a two-month [journey]” (2:465-467).<sup>11</sup>

## **T. B.’s Journey**

Six years after ‘Ayyashi’s sojourn, a group of Englishmen journeyed to Palestine and visited some of the same holy places that the Moroccan had seen. The account that T.B. wrote contrasts significantly with ‘Ayyashi’s and shows the difference in the two travelers’ understanding of the ‘holy’ land. To start, T.B. wrote in order to furnish information: his was not a journey of devotion but of inquiry about “Curiosities, and Rarities” (80) – since British merchants in the Levant, of whom he was one, were in need of a new description. Although the land was a “Holy Land” (1), T.B. did not furnish his readers with a description of a religious experience, but a guided tour of sites, villages, administrative practices, payments, and routes. That is why when an anonymous publisher came across T.B.’s account, he published it in 1672. But finding it too detached and information-laden, he added a long introduction that emphasized the religious value of the land, if not the journey of T.B.

On 3 May 1669, T. B. and thirteen of his compatriots set off from Aleppo, where they were serving with the Levant Company, on their journey through the Holy Land, which was to last until 2 July. *A Journey to Jerusalem: Or, A Relation of the Travels of Fourteen English Men in the Year 1669. From Scandaroon, to Tripoly, Joppa, Ramah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, the River Jordan, the Dead Sea; And back again to Aleppo. With the Exact Account of all the Remarkable Places and things in their whole JOURNEY* opens with an address to the reader that explains its purpose: because no accurate accounts have been available about Palestine since that of George Sandys in 1615, and since many Catholic “legends” have been added to the description of Palestine, the author felt a need to write a correct (i.e., Protestant) account of the land.<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly, T. B. seemed not to be aware of numerous accounts about Palestine and the rest of the Levant that had appeared since the beginning of that century by his compatriots: William Biddulph (1609), Wiilliam Lithgow (1614, full version 1632), Fynes Moryson (1596, published in 1617), and Sir Henry Blunt (1636). Although these travelers wrote about the Levant in general, they all included sections on Palestine. It may be that T. B. and the author of the introduction had another agenda: to show that despite the passage of time and the Muslim conquest, the land remained Christian. The name of the land, he affirmed, was “The Holy Land, so named by the Christians” (p. A3v). The land belonged to the community of Christian believers, notwithstanding the “Moors, Arabians, Greeks, Latines, Turks, Jews,” and others there (p. A9v). Not surprisingly, therefore, T. B. described not what he saw but what was recorded in classical and biblical sources: “Judea,” he wrote, “is the Chiefest part of Palestina, and is of the same extent now, as it was when it was the Kingdome of Judea” (p. A3r)—as if the Ottomans had retained the biblical demarcations. “In this Land, especially in and about Jerusalem, there were many Stately and Magnificent Buildings, as Namely Mons Domus, and the Castle of the Jebusites, into which King David brought the Ark of the Lord” (p. A5v). There was no mention of the Dome of the Rock, nothing of the Moors or the Arabs or anybody else. The map of “Jerusalem as it now is,” with which T. B. opened his account, showed an al-Aqsa Mosque dwarfed by the “Temple of the Sepulcher.” For T. B., there was no geographical Palestine, but, to use the term with which the lengthy introduction to the reader concluded, only “the Holy Land, or Land of Promise.”

Upon arriving in Jerusalem on 25 May 1669, T.B. and his fourteen English companions went to the Latin convent, which they used as their pied-à-terre: just as ‘Ayyashi had sought Muslim shaykhs with whom to stay, so did the English seek accommodation at Christian foundations. Just as ‘Ayyashi felt somewhat awkward as a guest of coreligionists who differed jurisprudentially from him, so did the Protestant Englishman feel somewhat awkward as a paying guest of Catholics. But, both being strangers in a foreign land, they had no choice but to rely on religious institutions for shelter and information. The Englishmen’s visit to Jerusalem began on 27 May. The visit was conducted by the Latin fathers who presented them “every one a Book of Holy Songs, for every place in Latin.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, despite the Protestant impetus behind the journey, T. B., like other English travelers before him, was forced to see Palestine

through Catholic eyes. This is how he recalled his visit to Jerusalem:

We went to these places following:

1. To the Pillar to which our Saviour was bound when he was scourged
2. To the Prison, wherein our Saviour was put.
3. To the place where the Soldiers divided our Saviours Garments.
4. The place where St. Hellena found our Saviours Cross.
5. The Pillar to which our Saviour was bound when he was Crowned with Thorns.
6. To Mount Calvary, where he was Crucified.
7. The place where our Saviour was Nailed to the Cross.
8. To the place where He was Anointed.
9. To the Sepulcher of Christ.
10. To the place where our Saviour appeared to Mary Magdalen in the shape of a Gardiner.
11. To the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, where our Saviour first appeared to her after his Resurrection. (pp. 24-26)

Such enumeration was at the heart of T. B.'s experience. Palestine was a place that had been organized into an itinerary with an orderly sequence. Over half a century earlier, Fynes Moryson had also approached Palestine through numbers: in describing "the Citie and the Territorie" of Jerusalem, he listed the ninety-six stops that he made—all, of course, Christian/Biblical sites.<sup>14</sup> The approach to the land was as methodical as a paint-by-numbers exercise: the traveler was to follow the geographical diagram of the scriptures, 'checking off' sites after he was finished with them. But while Moryson wandered around, and as a result was able to draw a far richer map of Jerusalem,<sup>15</sup> everything T. B. deemed worthy of being seen in Jerusalem appeared to be inside a church. Thus, when T. B. two days after his arrival went "a Marking" in the labyrinth of the Mamluk souks, he found nothing to record. The human interaction that he must have had, the smells and sounds of inner Jerusalem, did not matter since the city was biblical not contemporary, archeological not experiential.

Exactly two lines after mentioning the market visit in Jerusalem, he jumped to his trip to Bethlehem. Again T. B. enumerated what he saw: "Davids House, where he was when he spied Bathsheba Washing her self; on the right Hand a little out of the Road, is old Simeons house and Elias House; and a quarter of a Mile further you come to a Well, where the Wise Men first saw the Star..." and so it continues (pp. 34-35). What T. B. saw was the Old Testament, the New Testament, and sometimes crusader sites ("a hill like a Sugar Loaf: where the Franks remained forty Years, after they were driven out of Jerusalem" (p. 35). Entering the Church of the Nativity,

The Places we Visited were these:

1. The place where our Saviour was Born.
2. The Tomb of St. Joseph to whom the Virgin Mary was espoused.

3. St. Innocents Tomb.
4. The place where St. Jerom lived, when he translated the Bible into Latin.
5. St. Jeroms Praying place.
6. St. Jeroms Tomb.
7. St. Pauls Tomb.
8. St. Eustachias her Daughter.
9. The Sepulcher of St. Eusebius, Abbot of Bethlehem.
10. We return to the Chappel of St. Catherena, which they say was built by St. Paula. (p. 40)

Later that day, T. B. and his companions returned to the same site and T. B. recorded a detailed description of the manger, the picture of St. Jerome, the place where the three wise men stood, and the precipio where “our Saviour was Circumcised” (p. 43). Every item mentioned in the biblical list had been checked. The Church of the Nativity had been ‘done.’

On 2 June, T. B. wrote, “We began to search for the Holy places, which are the following.” And what follows are disjointed sites mentioned in the Old and New Testaments or in crusader legend and history: the site of the immolation of Isaac; Peter’s prison; the Monastery of the knights of Malta; Solomon’s Temple, the Judgment Gate. The list continues until T. B. reaches the forty-second site: the Fountain of Bathsheba. All in one day. No wonder T. B. was irked that at the Fountain of Bathsheba they had to wait fifteen minutes for a drink of water.

Unlike ‘Ayyashi, and unlike Lithgow earlier in the century when pilgrims had to hire Turkish soldiers to protect them, T. B. at no time during his journey felt himself to be in danger. Still, the very first time he mentioned Arabs, he attached the adjective “Savage” (p. 16), and a few pages later he confirmed them as dangerous and thieving “molesters” (p. 20). The “thieving” mostly took the form of the payments forced on him: fourteen livers to see the Church of the Resurrection, as he called it, clearly translating from the Arabic (p. 24); one liver to see Jeremiah’s well (p. 31); “Money” to see the Shepherds’ Field; one liver to visit a grotto (p. 38); five livers to enter Bethlehem; one liver to enter a grotto; one liver to visit St. Hellena’s Hospital; and so on. T. B. would probably not have mentioned the local population at all in his account had it not been for their interruptions, particularly for the payments required to visit many of the sites. When “the Arabs espy any Franks going thither,” he noted, they “Ride post before to take Possession of the place, and get something from them” (p. 35).

Despite having witnessed the veneration Muslims showed at Christian sites—both Muslims and Christians, he observed, light lamps in the church of St. Mary (p. 56)—T. B. remained hostile to the Arabs and the Turks: “Villains,” he wrote, inhabited a castle he and his companions visited (p. 38). He reported that the Muslims had forced the male inhabitants of an entire Christian village to convert to Islam (p. 46) and that some fathers lived in a church “till they were Murdered by the Arabs” (p. 75). The Muslims were also intent, according to T. B., on obliterating all evidence of Christianity from the land: the Turks “have endeavoured to break in pieces but could not” the stone

on which John the Baptist had preached (p. 45). T. B. never paused to question why Muslims would wish to destroy the stone of the prophet they venerate as Yahya. He had no time for skepticism when Arabs and Turks were concerned. All mosques, asserted T. B., had a half moon on them, but the Dome of the Rock had a “Cross through the middle: The fathers reporting it would not stand till the Cross was made” (p. 53). T. B. had not seen the inside of the Dome, as he himself admitted. But that did not matter: truth did not consist in empirical evidence but in a belligerent faith.

At no point did T.B. show interest in learning about Islam or about why Muslims venerated Christian sites. He was traveling in the heart of the Muslim world but his guide was the Bible, a text that was more than adequate to verify religious sites, and to explain past, present, and future. He was not traveling to experience the intersections of religions or the cultures of difference – simply to see and then describe “all that was Remarkable” (64), not sites of belief and spiritual transformation.

## Two Palestines: Real and Virtual

Both ‘Ayyashi and T. B. were travelers in a holy but foreign land. Along with other travelers from Europe or the Maghrib, both had had to cross long distances to reach Palestine, where both found themselves to be strangers: ‘Ayyashi, after all, came from an environment that was significantly different from Palestine in mores, jurisprudence (the Moroccans were Malikites, whereas the Palestinians were Shafi’ites, and the Ottomans were Hanafites),<sup>16</sup> and political identity (Morocco was the only Mediterranean Muslim country not to come under Ottoman domination). Both were also critical of unsubstantiated traditions and were inspired by their scriptures, which they read throughout their journeys.

Although they shared certain similarities, the two travelers produced accounts that could not have been more different. ‘Ayyashi, after all, was a jurist, interested in religion and history, while T. B. was a trader, interested in enumerating and listing. The former spoke Arabic, the latter relied on a Greek guide/dragoman—and not a very honest one, as he complained. ‘Ayyashi went with his Qur’an in and the Prophetic traditions in mind, T.B. with his Bible in hand – and the two scriptures had very different impact on the travelers. The Qur’an offered no geographical description of Jerusalem or Palestine: but there was a vast body of writing about these regions in the *Fada’il al-Quds* tradition with which ‘Ayyashi was familiar. As he traveled and visited sites, ‘Ayyashi saw them as pointers to the divine revelation that promoted piety and worship. In every place, he and all other jurists, nationalities, and communities, were in the presence of God. Meanwhile, the Bible furnished T.B. with place names, regional demarcations, itineraries, and specific locations. As he identified every location mentioned in the New and Old Testaments, as well as in ecclesiastical tradition, he not only ‘proved’ that the Bible was historically accurate – not many Englishmen believed otherwise in the seventeenth century - but also affirmed the ‘Englishness’ of the land. Since the Bible was the patrimony of the English, the only

true Christians, and since the Bible confirmed places and villages, then the Bible appropriated the land for those who upheld the Bible – the English. Patrimony of the Bible led to patrimony of the land.

But the most significant difference between them was not the result of cultural and religious variants but of distinct approaches to history. For ‘Ayyashi, history was to be experienced; it was a continuity that began in the past and stretched into the here and now. Though he had read about many of the locations on his journey, which had significance in Islamic tradition, when he actually visited the sites he relied not only on what he had read but on direct observation as he explored and talked and prayed. Palestine confirmed historical texts but also had a present: ‘Ayyashi was as interested in a shrine as he was in the local flora, as pious in a mosque as he was argumentative in a religious debate, as eager about couscous as he was about composing a poem to his host. The meaning of Palestine lay in the “process” (to use Nietzsche’s term) of discovery in which the past was made to engage geography and people, diverse religious communities, and Bedouin danger.

For T. B., the present was subservient to the monumentality of the past. As he moved from site to site, T. B. saw no temporal sequence and no meaningful coherence. There were no people in T. B.’s Palestine, no nature, no terrain to link them. He saw what the text told him to see. The sites he visited remained part of the past: not only could they not be brought into the present, but they could not be apprehended without traveling back into the past. In such an abstracted land, T. B. experienced not history but myth, not Palestine, but a “Land of Promise” that had never changed, that had always been and will ever be. In place of living Palestine was a virtual “Holy Land” designed by a text that imbued the traveler with its bibliolatry—much like the map of Palestine T. B. was likely to have seen in the work of Abraham Ortelius, the influential Dutch cartographer and the maker of the first modern atlas.<sup>17</sup> Everything that T. B. saw belonged between the covers of a book: he lacked the “plastic power,” that capacity to transform and incorporate into himself what was past and foreign.<sup>18</sup> A site of holiness evoked the distance of biblical description and pulled him back in time to the chapters and verses that had made that place holy. The land was a text. In English. And for the English as rightful patrimony.

Ayyashi experienced one Palestine; T. B. constructed another.

*Nabil Matar is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota. His book, Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727, the second volume in a trilogy on Arabs and Europeans in the early modern world, was published by Columbia University Press in 2009.*

## Endnotes

- 1 Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 41
- 2 Wolf-Dieter Hatteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16<sup>th</sup> Century* (Erlangen: Erlanger Geographische Arbeiten, 1977): see also Amnon Cohen and Bernard Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).
- 3 ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya fi al-Rihla al-Qudsiyya*, ed. Akram Hasan al-‘Ulabi (Beirut: al-Masadir, 1991). There are numerous accounts, however, about Palestine and Jerusalem in the literature of fada’il al-Quds: see Mahmūd Ibrahīm in *Fada’il Beit al-Maqdis fī Makhtūtāt ‘Arabiyyah Qadīmah* (Kuwait, 1995).
- 4 The work was known, however, to later Moroccan historians: see Evariste Levi-Provencal, *Les Historiens des Chorfa* (Paris: Emile Laross, 1922), p. 262, n 2.
- 5 All quotations are from the edition of *al-Rihla al-‘Ayyashiyah*, ed. Sa ‘ūd al-Fadili and Suleyman al-Qarashi (Abu Dhabi, 2006).
- 6 For medieval accounts of Palestine by Arabs, see Guy Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650-1500* (London: Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1890); and Father Marmargee al-Dumaski, *Buldaniyyat Filastin al-Arabiyya* (Beirut, 1947; reprinted Abu Dhabi: Cultural Foundation Publications of Abu Dhabi with the assistance of the Palestine Ministry of Culture, 1997). See the study of these geographical writings by Shukri ‘Arraf, *Jundā Filastīn wal Urdun fī al-Adab al-Jughrāfī al-Islami* (Jerusalem: Matba‘at al-Sharq al-‘Arabiyya, n.d.).
- 7 The Hadīth are authenticated sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and traditions from his life; the Musnad of al-Shafi‘i and of Abu Hanifa are, respectively, the books of jurisprudence of the founders of two of the four great Islamic schools of jurisprudence, the Shafi‘ite and the Hanafite.
- 8 The *zawiyya* had been established by a benefactor in the eighth century as part of a religious endowment: see ‘Abd al-Latif Tibawī, *The Islamic Pious Foundations in Jerusalem* (London: Islamic Cultural Centre, 1978), pp. 12-13. Sadly, this *zawiyya*, along with the entire Maghribi quarter, was bulldozed by the Israelis in the wake of their June 1967 invasion.
- 9 Mujīr al-Dīn al-Hanbali stated in 1496 that the Franks “hacked pieces from the rock and carried some of them to Constantinople and others to Sicily where, it is said, they sold them for their weight in gold.” *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tarīkh al-Quds wal Khaīl*, introd. Muhammad Bahr al-‘Ulūm (Najaf: al-Matba‘a al-Haydariyya 1967), 1:339.
- 10 Cohen and Lewis, *Population and Revenue*, p. 31.
- 11 For the “borders” of Palestine, see Haim Gerber, “‘Palestine’ and Other Territorial Concepts in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30, no. 4 (November 1998), pp. 563-72.
- 12 T.[homas] B., *A Journey to Jerusalem*, p. A6v. I am using the edition mentioned above, published by Nathaniel Crouch. All further references in parentheses in this section will be to this text.
- 13 For a detailed description of the Catholic guides and orders, see the “Prologue to the Reader” (“the hissing of snakish Papists”) and chapters 7 and 8 in *The Rare Adventures and Painful Peregrinations of William Lithgow*, ed. and introd. Gilbert Phelps (1632; reprinted London: Folio Society, 1974).
- 14 Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Swweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England, Scotland and Ireland*, 4 vols. (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1907), 2: 6 ff.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 2:19.
- 16 For differences between Moroccan and Middle Eastern Islam, see Edmund Burke, “Morocco and the Near East: Reflections on Some Basic Differences,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 10 (1969), pp. 75-83.
- 17 Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570; reprinted in facsimile, Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1964), pl. 51, and the 1584 expanded edition, pl. 36. For studies of his maps of Palestine, see R. V. Tooley, “Maps of Palestine in the Atlas of Ortelius,” *The Map Collector*, June 1978, pp. 28-31.
- 18 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Introd. J. P. Stern (New York: Cambridge University press, 1983), p. 62.