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A Vision of a Historian: Hanania al-Munayyir in *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf*

[The Paved Treasures in the Events of al-Shuf]

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Resumen: Este artículo presenta a un sacerdote griego católico, historiador de Líbano, Hanania al-Munayyir (1756-1823) y su obra *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf*. Al-Munayyir será analizado como cronógrafo seguidor de la secuencia anual de eventos, como un neocronógrafo que interpreta y ofrece su opinión, así como un historiador metódico cuyo enfoque analítico, versatilidad y comprensión de la historia de Líbano en su contexto local, regional e internacional refleja la historia del cristianismo de Bilad al-Sham escrita en el s. XVIII. Al-Munayyir fue capaz de liberarse de los límites de su comunidad religiosa y observar a Líbano como una entidad única, pero frágil, continuamente vulnerable por causa de las luchas internas y las interferencias externas en sus asuntos.

Abstract: This article introduces a Greek Catholic priest, a historian from Lebanon, Hanania al-Munayyir (1756-1823) and his book *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf* (The paved Treasures in the Events of al-Shuf). Al-Munayyir will be discussed as a chronicler who followed the yearly sequence in relating the events, as a neo chronicler who interpreted and gave his opinion, and as an analytical historian whose thematic approach, versatility, and understanding of the history of Lebanon in its local, regional and international context reflect Christian historical writing in 18th century Bilad al-Sham. Al-Munayyir was able to rid himself of the confines of his religious community and to view Lebanon as a unique, but fragile entity continuously vulnerable to internal strife and external interference in its affairs.

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Palabras clave: Hanania al-Munayyir. Líbano. Cronología. Historiografía.

Keywords: Hanania al-Munayir. Lebanon. Chronology. Historiography.

Introduction

In his book, *History, Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, Ernest Breisach writes:

> Every important new discovery about the past changes how we think about the present, and what we expect of the future; on the other hand, every change in the condition of the present and in the expectation of the future revises our perception of the past. In this complex context, history is born ostensibly as reflection on the past; a reflection which is never isolated from the present and the future. History deals with human life as it 'flows' through time... History cannot for long remain the record of changes alone because that would deny the true nature of human life in which the experience of change is counterbalanced by that of continuity. This continuity contributes to human life a sense of stability, security and even comfort.[1]

[1] See Ernest Breisach, *Historiogaphy, Past, Present and Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

It is in this context of reconciliation between past, present, and future and their recognition of both change and continuity, that this paper introduces a Greek Catholic priest, a historian from Lebanon, Hanania al-Munayyir (1756-1823), and his book *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf (The Paved Treasures in the Events of al-Shuf),*[2] which relates the story of the *Shihābī* Emirate in Lebanon from the year 1697 to 1807. Al-Munayyir will be discussed as a chronicler who followed the yearly sequence in relating the events, as a neo-chronicler, who, not only registered the events within the chronological framework of their original occurrence, but narrated as well, and revealed the events as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, in addition to interpreting the events and giving his opinion when fit, and an analytical historians whose thematic approach to the events, versatility, and understanding of the history of Mount Lebanon in the context of regional and international history reflects Christian historical writing in 18th century Bilad al-Sham. Al-Munayyir writes as a Lebanese regarding Lebanon an entity in its contacts with the West and as a country having indigenous roots of its own.

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[2] Hanania al-Munayyir is a Roman Catholic priest, a historian, a physician and a poet. His work includes a *History of the Basilic Order*, *Bkirki Manuscript* on the history of Lebanon from 1736 till 1801, a *Commentation on the Beliefs of the Druzes*, translated into French by Henry Guys, *A Summary of King Suleiman Proverbs*, *A Collection of Proverbs from Lebanon and Damascus*, *A Collection of Maqamat* and a book of poetry. See Introduction in *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf*, ed. by Ignatius Sarkis (Gros Bros), p. 3 and p. 17; See also, Georg Graf, *Geschichte Der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur* (Cità del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vatiana, 1949), vol. 111, pp. 242-244. I am also using an undated edition for *al-Durr al-Marsuf* by the same editor. It contains additional information worth mentioning. I will refer to it as *Masadir*.

Al-Munayyir belongs to a group of literary men who gathered around Bashir 11 (1788-1840) and for whom the writing of history was only one aspect of a multiple literary activities. They not only produced the histories of their age, but were the fathers of the poetic and linguistic movement of 19th century Lebanon.[3] As an eye witness to both periods, the 18th century and the 19th century, al-Munayyir was able to be aware of the factors that were to constantly disturb the structure in the Lebanese entity. He was therefore able to form a vision of an autonomous but fragile Lebanon, which would continually be subject to local, regional, and international influences disturbing its peace and shaking its reason of existence. Al-Munayyir was among other Christian historians who were able to acquire well-grounded education in the fields of philosophy, polemics, historiography, and philology. Those men, as mentioned before, can be regarded as forerunners of the famous Arab literary and intellectual renaissance of the 19th century.[4] However, before discussing al-Munayyir the historian, let us examine the main features of this transitional period in 18th century Bilad al-Sham.

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[3] On 18th century historians of Bilad al-Sham as precursors of 19th century *Nahḍa*, see, Hayat El Eid Bualuan, *Mu'arrikhu Bilad al-Sham fi-l-Qarn al Thamin 'Ashar* (Beirut: Dar al-Furat, 2002); also, see the discussion in Kamal Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Mediaevel Lebanon,* col. «Oriental Series» 34 (Beirut: AUB, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 1959); and Usama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 40-41.

[4] On the monastery of Shwayr as an Intellectual center and a precursor of Arab *Nahḍa*, see Carsten-Michael Walbiner, "Monastic Reading and learning in Eighteenth Century Bilad al Sham: Some Evidence from the Monastery of Al Shuwayr (Mount Lebanon)", *Arabica*, TS 1, Fasc 4, (2004), pp. 462-477.

1. Historical writing in 18th century Bilad al Sham: The main features of a transitional period

As one delves into the historical writing of 18th century Bilad al-Sham, a mixture of the old and the new, becomes evident, where the chronicler, the descriptive, and the analytical historians stand side by side paving the way to a novel approach and new horizons in the following century.

One cannot, as a result, describe the 18th century as a period when history was not cultivated by the intellectual elite.[5] On the contrary, one encounters in the said century historians who were 'ulama' and men of learning like Mikhail Breik, 'Abbud al-Sabbagh, Niqula al Turk, Ibn Kin'an al-Salihi, and Khalil al-Muradi, Yuhanna al-'Ujaimi, and Yusuf Sim'an al-Sim'ani among others. These historians mentioned the purpose of their historical writing and discussed various subjects. Ibn Kin'an gave us a picture of the times he was living in as he acquainted us with the shrines and historical places in his city al-Salihiyya and described the events and personalities of the time. This is how he described al-Falaqinsi's palace and the festivities he was engaged in[6] giving a picture of the society of high culture at that time to enable the reader to contrast it with the commoner society represented by al-Budayri al-Hallaq

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5 See Bruce Masters, "The View from the Province: Syrian Chronicles of the 18th Century", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114, 3(1994), pp. 353-362.

6 See Muhammad Ibn Kinʿan al-Salihi, *al-Muruj al-Sundussiah fi Tarikh Akhbar al-Salihiyyah* (Damascus: Mudiriyyāt al-Athar al Qadimah al-'Amah, 1947); on his description of al-Falaqinsi's palace, see *al-Hawadith al-Yawmiyyah fi Tarikh ahad Ashar wa-Alf wa-Miyyah*, edited by Akram al-Ulbi (Damascus: Dar al-tabba', 1994), pp. 172-173; See also Hayat el-Eid Bualuan, "Mu'arrikhu Bilad al-Sham fi-l-qarn Thamin 'Ashar", on Ibn Kin'an, pp. 33-39.

in his *Hawadith Dimashk al Yawmiyyah*,[7] Haydar ibn Rida al-Rukaini in *jabal 'Amel fi qarn* and others.[8] Those commoners concentrated on the daily life in society to drive the reader to a better understanding of 18th century society in Bilad al-Sham and to make him/her see the link between what we call the high literary culture and the culture of the market place and the common people. [9]

Eighteenth-century historians trespassed the boundaries of their immediate concerns, be they local or religious, to talk about secular matters like Abbud al-Sabbagh in relating the story of Daher al-Umar,[10] Niqula al-Turk in describing Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt[11] or again Mikhail Breik in his interest to relate the history of the Muscovite or describe the earthquake in Lisbon[12]. Last but not least,' Uhanna al' Ujaimi and Yusuf Sim'an al Sim'ani's debate on the Maronite question, an example of what we call dialectical historiography in 18th century Bilad al-Sham.

Historical writing in Bilad al-Sham in the 18th century was then versatile and varied. One of those historians was Hanania al-

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7 For a detailed description of this work, see: Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

8 See Hayat Bualuan, *Mu'arrikhu*, pp. 97-104.

9 See T. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pess, 1994), p. 332; Hayat Bualuan, "Mu'arrikhu", pp. 85-127.

10 See Hayat el Eid Bualuan, " 'Abbud al-Sabbagh and his Biography of Daher al-'Umar", *Parole de L'Orient* 24 (1999), pp. 339-356.

11 See Hayat el-Eid Bualuan, "The Image of the European in Niqula al-Turk's *Muddakarat (Chronique d'Egypte 1798-1804)*" in Bernard Heyberger und Carsten-Michael Walbiner (Eds.): *Les Europeéns vus par les Libanais a l'epoque Ottomane,* «Beiruter Texte und Studien» Bd. 74 (Beirut: Ergon-Verlag GmbH, 2002).

12 See Hayat el-Eid Bualuan, "Mikhail Breik, A Chronicler and a Historian in 18th Century Bilad al-Sham", *Parole de l'Orient* 21 (1996), pp. 257-270.

Munayyir who, as a Greek Catholic, was aware of the cultural and intellectual orientation of his community characterized by its geographical expansion in Syria and Egypt, its involvement in local affairs through close association with local rulers, its contact with Europeans through commercial links, and its personal success in acquiring wealth and education. He was aware of the importance of this period in the history of Lebanon as a basis for future developments and of the momentous changes that were occurring in the formation of autonomous political centers, in addition to their relation with the neighboring areas of Egypt and the Province of Damascus and with the economic and cultural contacts with the West. One has to mention here that the |central government could no longer control the Empire nor serve as a focus of loyalty and solidarity where local rulers in Egypt and in Palestine started to assume power and independence. In northern Palestine for example Dahir al Umar built up a little kingdom and used the Bedouins to protect the peasants and encourage French merchants to move from Saida to his new capital at Acre. One could see in the eighteenth century the spread of new ideas from the West, a new form of identity, ethnic nationalism, liberalism and territorial autonomy which shattered the old conceptions the Ottoman Empire had relied on and led to the growth of Christian power who found in the new developments their lost status. [13] These developments were an impetus for Hanania al-Munayyir to cross the boundaries of history as narrative, move towards identifying himself on a wider space, and subsequently cross the confines of his restricted religious community towards a concept of a political one,

[13] See Albert Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century", *Studia Islamica* 8 (1957), pp. 89-122.

possessing its own continuous historical tradition.[14] As such, al-Munayyir can be considered a stepping stone from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century in Bilad al-Sham, a pioneer who visualizes Lebanon as a distinct community, of a separate identity vacillating incessantly between local, regional, and international tendencies.[15]

2. Hanania al-Munayyir the Chronicler

Should a historian be considered the son of at least two times, his own as well as that which he investigates, as Sigfried Kracauer[16] indicates, we would then be placed in a privileged position to explore the writings of al-Munayyir in the 18th century and relate them to our own time. Upon exploring al-Munayir's writing, one faces a complex narrative with disparate individual motifs intruding from different directions at different points to fuse into a whole. This is how the political, genealogical, religious, and sociological factors are chronicled by al-Munayyir to coalesce together and create a vulnerable structure in Lebanon ready to explode at any moment and invite foreign interference in its affairs. And as Kamal Salibi repeats, "The potential for conflict

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[14] On the modern methods of historical writing, see Jack A. Crabbs, *The Writing of History in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1984).

[15] See Hayat el-Eid Bualuan, *Mu'arrikhu*, pp. 82-83.

[16] See Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), p. 93.

existed and was open to external exploitation; therefore it was exploited".[17]

3. Al-Munayyir and Local Politics

In *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf* al-Munayyir projects his present time as being of great significance. In fact, in the introduction to this book, he affirms his intention to write in order to preserve the history of the events happening in al-Shuf, for what is not written down escapes the memory. He focuses on al-Shuf, even when he writes about other areas. Al-Munayyir thus, appears from the outset, to be aware of the history of Lebanon, in both its regional and international aspects.

As mentioned earlier, al-Munayyir focuses on the history of Lebanon in its local, regional, and international context considering the history of his community as a part of a general development, [18] concentrating on the economic activity, political history, and social organization of the community at that time.

Al-Munayyir asserts that his writings involve the recent history of his time and that he uses verified sources to support his claims, and at the same time links the past with the present and the future.

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[17] See Kamal Salibi, "Introduction, A History of Conflict and Consensus", edite by Nadim Shehadeh and Dana Haffar Mills (London: The Center for Lebanese Studies, 1992), pp. 5-6; This will eventually lead to a culture of secularism which was already existent before the 19th century. See the discussion in Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 1-14.

[18] See Thomas Philipp, "Class, Community, and Arab Historiogaphy in the Early Nineteenth Century- The Dawn of an Era", *International Journal Midddle Eastern Studies* 16 (1984), pp. 161-175.

In so doing, he demonstrates an objective trend by asking future generations to improve the content whenever necessary or continue in the same endeavor for the glory of God[19].

Al-Munayyir chronicles the events in their yearly sequence, focusing on the political affairs of the *imāra* and its ruling houses in whose orbit everything else revolves. He mentions the prominent families following their importance in society.[20]This, however, does not prevent him from alluding at times to the catastrophes of nature, the high prices, or other events in his attempt to reflect not only the political, but also the societal life and the complications of 18th century Lebanon. He seems aware that the period he is discussing is a formative period in the history of Lebanon and is worth reflecting upon. Al-Munayyir's scope widens as he looks at an entity called Lebanon and not only at a specific prince or religious community. He therefore extends his research and commentary to involve the Lebanese community with its own local tradition, which the author affirms should be preserved.

4. Qaysi Yamani Struggle

Al-Munayyir's account of the political situation reflects the struggle of power in the Emirate which opened doors before the external intrusion of outside forces in the affairs of Lebanon.[21] He introduces us to the society then as he relates the Qaysi-Yamani and the Yazbaki-Janbalati struggle which in his opinion constitutes a basis

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[19] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 8.

[20] Al-Munayyir lists the notable families according to their rank. He gives a detailed picture of the influential families at that time, Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 127-31.

[21] See al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 93

and prelude to religious and sectarian conflicts between the different sects during that time. This eventually allowed a split in the edifice of the Emirate and prepared it for an evolution towards a political entity that carried with it the vicious remnants of past problems and conflicts.[22]

5. The Battle of Ayn Dara

Al-Munayyir relates how the Qaysi-Yamani struggle in Lebanon had taken the character of rivalry between two dynasties, the Ma'n and the 'Alameddine. He goes on to explain how the struggle continued under the Shihabis culminating, in 1711, in the battle of 'Ayn Dara during which the Yamanites were defeated, under Mahmud Basha Bu Harmuch.[23]

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[22] See Salibi, *A History of Conflict*, pp. 5-6; also on 19th century Lebanon and the rise of sectarianism, see Usama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, pp. 11-12 and 52. According to Usama Makdisi, sectarianism is a modernist knowledge...produced by European hegemony and Ottoman reforms. One can see, however, that there were sufficient political and social ingredients before to create a potential for conflict in Lebanon. See "Introduction" in *History of Conflict and Concensus*.

[23] It is probably, according to Kamal Salibi, that in the conflict that developed in the *Gharb* (the West), during the 16th century, between the Buhturs and the Arslans that one must seek the origins of the division of the Druzes into Qays and Yemen factions – a division which dominated the politics of southern Lebanon until the early years of the 18th century; Kamal Salibi, "The Lebanese Emirate, 1667-1841" *al-Abhath* vol. 20 n. 3 (1967), pp. 5-6. On Mahmud Bu Harmuch and the battle of 'Ayn Dara, see Haydar Ahmad al-Shahabi, *al-Ghurar al-Hisan Fi Akhbar Abna' al-Zaman*, edited by Asad Rustum and Fuad Afra al-Bustani (Beirut: Lebanese University Publications, 1969), 1, pp. 9-14

Al-Munayyir draws a picture of society, its customs and norms as he goes into details in describing the said battle and in recounting how the notable Druze shaykh families objected to Haidar killing Mahmud Basha Bu Harmuch so as not to set a precedent for killing notable families.[24] As a result, the Emir cut Bu Harmuch's tongue and fingers.[25] Al-Munayyir seems content with the victory of the Qaysis, believing that their triumph is God's will manifest. He says "The Qaysis prevailed in the country and the Yamanites were defeated".[26] In fact, al-Munayyir stresses, on more than one occasion, his utter satisfaction with regards to the Qaysis' victory. This is evident specifically when he recounts how Emir Haidar took the Yamanites' land and money and distributed them among his supporters. He proceeds to recount how the latter further bestowed on the Abu Lama' family the title of Emir and on the Talhouks and 'Abd al-Maliks that of Shaykh.[27]

Writing in the 18th century, al-Munayyir was not completely aware either of the importance of the battle of 'Ayn Dara as a turning point in the history of the Emirate or of the repercussions that were to ensue as a result on the future of Lebanon. Viewed at a later date, however, the ascendancy of the Druzes, which until then had been prominent in the Mountain, soon began to fade. The expulsion of the Yamanites reaped drastic consequences in decreasing the number of the Druzes and increasing the numerical

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[24] See al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 16.

[25] Haydar al-Shihabi intended to kill Bu Harmuch, but the other noble families (*Mashāyikh*) objected so as not to set a precedent in killing the noble families, who when punished, used to be expelled or have their property confiscated. See al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 15-16.

[26] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr,* p. 15.

[27] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr,* p. 16.

strength of the Maronites.[28] Al-Munayyir as a chronicler recounts how the Druzes rallied around Haidar Shihab with the intention of dividing among themselves the spoils of battle without mentioning how the Druzes were unaware of the future changes that would affect their status in the Emirate. Al-Munayyir, however, draws a complete picture of the incident when he alludes to the fact that Haidar Shihab took advantage of the unstable situation to reorganize the Lebanese feudal system. As such, old Qaysi feudal families were promoted to a higher rank and newly created ones were given titles. Al-Munayyir seems aware of the importance of the period when he mentions these new families with a tone of expectation: these families were to play a major role in the Emirate and later in the history of Lebanon.[29]

Al-Munayyir is content to describe the Shihabi Emir's power and his skill in taking advantage of the feud between the feudal families and play on this conflict to achieve his goal in paying the arrear taxes. The Emir, ruling from 1730 till 1753, was able to instigate intrigues among these notables to prevail and gain support himself.[30] Al-Munayyir here moves further in his style of narrating events, to explain, reflect and give his opinion on the various issues taking place, either directly or by insinuation. One can say he was endeavoring to write what Gaston White calls: Proper history".[31]

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[28] Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Caravan Books, 1993), pp. 8-9.

[29] On the importance of these families in the history of Lebanon, see al-Munayyir, *al-Durr,* pp. 127-131.

[30] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 18-21.

[31] See Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 1-25.

6. Al-Munayyir as a neo Chronicler

As a neo Chronicler, al-Munayyir moves to a more elaborate description of the events occurring in his time, to show a kind of involvement in their sequence. This is, however, a trait that marked al-Munayyir's writings from the start, but was more pronounced when he sets on discussing the Yazbaki Junblati struggle and on placing the history of Lebanon in its local and international context.

7. Yazbaki Jumblati Struggle

Describing the Yazbaki Junblati struggle al-Munayyir stresses on the theme of struggle for power, manifest in the Yazbaki-Janbalati conflict which caused a split in the Emirate that was duly enlarged with time. He realizes that the existence of this division left the mountain not short of disturbances especially when the Ottomans sowed strife among the chieftains (the Yazbakis and Janbalatis) in order to bring about their fall.[32] Al-Munayyir here is a neo chronicler who searches into the cause and significance of the events, as well as into the Ottoman rule and its danger on the security of the country. He explains how the Ottomans kept their control over the Emirate, electing and changing governors, imposing taxes and trying to take advantage of the Lebanese

[32] On the consequences of this rift, see Tannus al-Shidyaq, *Akhkbar al-A'yan fi Jabal Lubnan* (Beirut: Nazir Abbud, 1997), pp. 185-87; Mishaqa, *Mayhem*, pp. 289-298, n. 51-52.

situation in order to bring about the fall of all competing factions, thus, following a policy of "divide to control".[33]

One has to note here that The Ottomans, and in spite of their policy, were not always successful in imposing their control. What is known as the Druzes "Long Rebellion"[34] continued under the rule of the Shihabis. In al-Munayyir's work, we read how, on different occasions, the Ottomans failed in their endeavor to subdue the Mountain. In 1792, for example, al-Munayyir states that following the battle of Samqanieh, which he considers the last of the great battles, and when the Ottomans realized that they could not conquer the Druzes, the army chief addressed al-Jazzar, the minister then, saying: "We are unable to subdue the Mountain because of its difficult problems and numerous men".[35]

8. Al-Munayyir and regional politics

Al-Munayyir chronicles the minute details while commenting and dwelling on the context of the regional events under study. He provides fullness and continuity in the order of those events and endows them with meaning. Upon reading him, we receive a history and an ample picture of al-Jazzar's rule whose reign marked a climax of Ottoman interference in the Shihabi Emirate. Al-Munayyir dwells on al-Jazzar's personality focusing on the turbulent Lebanese situation during his rule. He also extends his interest to other areas, such as Palestine and Egypt, insinuating the

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[33] Mishaqa, *Mayhem*, p. 46.

[34] Abd al-Rahim Abu Hussein, "The Long Rebellion: The Druzes and the Ottomans, 1516-1697", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001), pp. 165-191.

[35] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, pp. 80-81.

reality without which understanding of the events occurring would not be possible if it were devoid of its local, regional, and international context.[36] Such a period, no doubt, propagates a continuity from a previous order carrying with it the seeds which will thrive to grow later on, on fertile ground, to blossom and interact with new elements that would lay the basis for a new chapter in the history of Lebanon.

Al-Munayyir is conscious of the importance of the period as he proceeds to situate the history of Lebanon within its regional context and duly mentions Dahir al-'Umar, the governor in Palestine.[37] He delves into the causes and consequences of the events when he enumerates the details on the weariness and fear of the Ottomans from Daher's ambitions and their endeavor to take precautionary measures. He assumes the role of vigilant observer when he mentions how Russia, then at war with Turkey, sent a naval squadron in support of Daher, and when he alludes to the interest of 'Ali Bey, of Egypt in Syria, to declare himself independent of the Porte in 1768 and join action with Daher against the Ottomans. Al-Munayyir is not only relating the events he is witnessing, but also seems to aware of the dangers awaiting a small country like Lebanon from its involvement in this regional and international conflict. He relates this story in full, mentioning the alliance between Daher and the Shiites while hinting at the agreement to conquer Palestine, initiated between the princes of

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[36] On the changes in the 18th century, see Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press - Hebrew University, 1973), pp. 316-19.

[37] Amnon Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press - Hebrew University, 1973), pp. 78-90; see also, Mikhail al-Sabbagh, *Tarikh al-Sheikh Daher al-'Umar al-Zaydani*, edited by Qustantin al-Basha (Harisa: s.n., 1936).

the Shuf and Daher's enemy, the governor of Damascus 'Uthman Pasha al-Sadiq,[38] and, continuing with this precautious and warning method, he mentions the arrival of Abu-l-Dahab, 'Ali Bey's general, his control of Damascus, and his agreement with the Ottomans to turn against 'Ali Bey.[39]Al-Munayyir, through this approach, initiates the readers to learn and acquire wisdom from the events he himself is relaying.

As he proceeds to give his opinion whether in describing 'Ali Bey as dignified, respectful, experienced in battles, and very courageous and just,[40] or when he describes Emir Yusuf's involvement in the regional and international affairs, al-Munayyir's character is manifest in his writings. He mentions the latter's alliance with Daher al-'Umar against al-Jazzar and focusses on the important role of the notable families at that time relating how Emir Yusuf was supported by 'Abd al-Salam al-'Imad and Shaykh Hussein Talhouk, in addition to others. Al-Munayyir is aware of Lebanon's vulnerability becoming acute when the Russian squadron was sent to Beirut by Daher al-'Umar. The chronicler and the neo chronicler join here as al-Munayyir relates minutely the events and comments on the sound of canons reaching Damascus for four consecutive days without affecting the city's sandy stones, or when describing the siege and the suffering of those people who were forced to eat donkey meat to sustain themselves. Al-Munayyir is the storyteller, the observer, the reporter and the preacher who advises people to draw lessons from the events. Al-Munayyir's didactic tone continues as he relates how Al-Jazzar, held Bachir's destiny in his

38 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 39.
39 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 38-44.
40 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 37.

hands, and with him that of the whole emirate. We receive here a complete picture not only of al-Jazzar's power, but also of the vulnerability of a Lebanon caught between internal tension and external exploitation. The governors profiting from the situation exploit the country, its resources, and its rulers. On three occasions, in 1793, 1794 and in 1798, al-Jazzar recalled Bachir from the Emirate and replaced him with the three sons of Yusuf – Husayn, Saʿd al-Din, and Salim – who ruled the country jointly. It was such that every time a civil war breaks in Lebanon, al-Jazzar interfered in the country to drive the Druzes against the Christians and one political faction against another.[41] This is, according to al-Munayyir, a sample of an alien ruler desiring to exploit the country, taking advantage of the uncertainties of the situation and its complexities, as well as profiting from the internal situation when the leaders of Lebanon, whether Emirs or notables, were struggling for power and lacking an allegiance to a common cause.

9. Al-Munalyyir and International politics

Al-Munayyir places the history of Lebanon in its international context as he describes Napoleon Bonaparte's arrival to Acre in 1799. He expresses the positive attitude of the Christians who praised the French in admiration for their skills.[42] He seems delighted when he writes, "They defeated kingdoms and kings, they

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[41] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 148-149. Al-Munayir calls al-Jazzar *Ṭāghiya* (Oppressor). He adds: "He was no doubt a messenger of wrath in this country to revenge people's evil".

[42] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marsuf fi Hawadith al-Shuf* (*Masadir*), edited by Ignatius Sarkis, Gros Bros (Beirut: al Maṭba'a-l-ʿArabiyya, sd), p. 113 (henceforth *Masadir*).

subdued and frightened the enemies and opened the fortified cities and inaccessible fortresses and they established their reign thanks to their strength and might".[43] He relates how the French intervention created further division in the country as al-Jazzar ordered the Christians to leave the coasts.[44] Al-Munayyir exclaims, "The Christians dwelling in cities suffered immensely that year.[45] Al-Munayyir is aware that the tension would intensify to cause a new division among the people: those who support the Europeans against those who consider them apostates (*kuffār*)".[46]

The European intervention created another tension and this was between al-Jazzar and Bashir II. Al-Munayyir investigates into the meaning and significance of the events as he relates how the European intervention furthered the tension between al-Jazzar and Bachir II when the latter refused to join the governor against the French and to join General Smith, the British general. He focuses on Bachir's relation with Smith who interceded for him with al-Jazzar.[47] One has to mention what al-Munayyir said about al-Jazzar when the latter did not react positively to Smith's demand concerning Bachir. Smith wrote to the Ottoman authorities describing al-Jazzar's oppressiveness and wicked character adding that he might inflict additional misunderstanding between the two countries.[48] Al-Munayyir here is no more an observer following the

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43 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 114.

44 There was a lack of confidence with regards to the Christians' attitude, accusing them to be ever ready to pledge support to the French at any moment.

45 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 116.

46 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 114.

47 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 118.

48 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 118-119.

sequence of events, but an actor on the stage and a partisan of Bashir and Smith against al-Jazzar. Al-Munayyir shows his approval when he comments with pride while describing the arrival of Smith to Beirut: "He raised a flag in the city with a cross in front of everybody (*'alā ru'ūs-l-mala'*)".[49]At the death of al-Jazzar in 1804 al-Munayyir expresses his satisfaction in a poem where he enumerates al-Jazzar's atrocities and wishes him hell and damnation.[50]

Al-Munayyir then recounts how Emir Bashir started to consolidate his rule by curbing the power of the feudal families and profiting from the prevalent religious circumstances to become the sole authoritative master in Lebanon, following a policy of divide to control. Al-Munayyir is now the analytical historian who penetrates the meaning of the events and sees beyond the façade to draw lessons and visualize a vision of a Lebanon whose future will continue to be exploited by regional and international powers and involved in matters beyond its control. Bachir was able to fully control Mount Lebanon for fifty-two years, but the Emir's entanglement in foreign affairs added to the weakness of his internal structure, led to the collapse of the Emirate. A new organization for Lebanon was to come forth, one which would carry with it the germs, which, at any moment, could inflict the body of the whole edifice and throw it asunder.[51]

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[49] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 118.

[50] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 146-147.

[51] See the discussion in Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*, pp. 18-52; Also, Yasin Sweid, "Al-'Imarah al-Shahabiah fi Jabal Lubnan" in Adel Ismail (ed.), *Lubnan fi Tarikhihi wa Turathihi* (Beirut: s.n., 1993), pp. 307-333.

Al-Munayyir is not only describing and commenting, but he is at the same time analyzing the events, searching into the causes and significance of those events, offering criticism, and drawing conclusions and wisdom for future generations to follow. Al-Munayyir the analytical historian comes to the fore.

10. Al- Munayyir as an analytical Historian

Al-Munayyir asserts that his writings involve the recent history of his time and that he uses verified sources and at the same time links the past with both the present and the future. He utilizes the elements of the past in the cultural construction of the present and future.[52] In so doing, he demonstrates an objective trend by asking future generations to improve the content whenever necessary or continue in the same endeavor for the glory of God.[53]

Al-Munayyir tends to be objective in relating events, he also analyses and comments, presenting his opinion, drawing lessons when necessary from the errors of the past. He criticizes al-Jazzar and calls him a traitor based on his oppressive policy. He, at the same time, acknowledges al-Jazzar's ability in subduing the dissidents and his skill in directing political affairs.[54] This praise also appears in the writings of another 18th century historian of

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[52] See the discussion in C.E. Schorske, *Thinking with History* (Princeton: University Press, 1998), pp. 3-6.

[53] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 8.

[54] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 20.

Bilad al-Sham, Ibn Trad.[55] Al-Jazzar was in fact praised by the Greek Orthodox as Ibn Trad exclaims on more than one occasion.[56]

11. Religious Tendencies in al-Munayyir

Al-Munayyir's objectivity extends itself to his insistence on recounting the church's negative conduct. In fact, such is the written promise he makes in his introduction, namely to tell the truth and rely on God's omnipotent mercy. This theistic approach in writing history puts the historian's writings in the realm of linear history where the events are directed towards eternity. In this way, one can learn from the righteous and evade the path of the sinful. Writing objectively puts the events in their proper perspective. Thus, it justifies why al-Munayyir relates a 1773 incident in which a priest from al-Shuf killed another older priest.[57] In 1786 he again writes about a priest near the convent of Ghusta who killed his cousin at night because he replaced him as the superior of that monastery.[58] Al-Munayyir comments, "God save us from pride and love of leadership".[59] Here the historian transcends

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[55] 'Abdallah Ibn Trad, *Mukhtasar Tarikh al-'Asaqifa*. edited by Nayla Kaid Bey (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2002), pp. 134-138.

[56] See Naila Kaidbey, " 'Abdallah Ibn Mikhail Trad al-Beyruti, a historian in 18th Century Bilad al-Sham", *Parole de L'Orient* 27 (2002), pp. 147-160.

[57] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir,* p. 85.

[58] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, pp. 54-55; See details on this story and the controversy around this incident in Sabine Mohasseb Saliba, *Les Monasteres doubles du Liban* (Paris: Geuthner, 2008), pp. 123-126.

[59] For a detailed clarification and analysis of this event, see: Sabine Mohassib Saliba, *Les monasteres maronites doubles du Liban* (Paris: Geuthner, 2008), pp. 123-126.

the realm of narration, making it possible for his readers to draw wisdom from the related events. This tendency is also manifested when the author writes about the suppression of the Jesuit order in 1774. He provides reasons behind Pope Benedictus' decision back then. He says, "The reason for its ruin is the interference of its superiors, in the affairs of kings and kingdom, their love for glory and world prestige, and their love for money and great riches."[60] The suppression of the Jesuit order was a decree from Rome. In the words of Mikhail Breik, "This was in a joint agreement between the kings and princes in Europe to abolish the Jesuit order from every part of the globe. The pope would not allow any investigation on this subject".[61]

What is significant in al-Munayyir's writing is his attention to the importance of the separation between Church and state, a "secular" trend reflecting the openness of the Christian historians to the new ideas arriving from Europe. This secular trend is mostly manifested when al-Munayyir does not confine himself to relating the story of his own community and also in placing the history of the Greek Catholics in the context of the history of Lebanon as a whole. This also does not contradict his philosophy of history when he considers the events as leading to a purpose beyond the realm of the visible universe. Al-Munayyir's liberal and modern ideas are also manifested in his attitude towards women. He declares, for example, that 'Ali Daher did not allow his daughters to marry so as not to put them under men's control.[62]

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[60] Sabine Mohassib Saliba, *Les monasteres maronites doubles du Liban* (Paris: Geuthner, 2008), p. 17.

[61] Breik, *Tārīkh al-Sham*, p. 105.

[62] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 65.

The author's inclination to express his opinion or present interpretations of his own is demonstrated throughout his book. Writing in 1777, he does not shy away from calling the nun Hindiyya[63] a liar and crooked,[64] and fearing that the reader will accuse him of superficiality or bias, he refers him/her to his book the *History of the Religious Orders* where details and answers to his accusations are made available.[65] Before that time, in 1775, when Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, Daher al-'Umar's assistant, was hanged, he comments, "This is a warning for all stingy people",[66] and when in 1769 he relates the attack of Hijaz by 'Ali al-Kabir, he provides the apparent purpose of the attack: to overthrow the Sharif of Mecca, and then ʿAli's hidden goal, to subdue the whole area.[67] When, alas, Abu-l-Dahab persecuted the Christians and destroyed the convent Mar Elias in al-Karmel, al-Munayyir does not hesitate to point out God's wrath which would be brought down on Earth as a result of such acts. On his death bed, Abu-l-Dahab had a nightmare of an old man trying to kill him. Al-Munayyir sees in this a punishment for Abu-l-Dahab's hatred of the Christians. He writes, "His spirit gone, he died and went to hell, what a wretched death".[68]

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[63] Hanna Ajami (1720-1798), see Bernard Heyberger, *Hindiyya, Mystique et criminelle* (Paris: Aubier, 2001). Also, Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chretiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la reforme Catholique* (Paris: Ecole Francaise de Rome, 1994), pp. 473-474.

[64] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 66-67.

[65] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 67.

[66] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 60.

[67] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 38.

[68] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 57-58; On Abu al-Dahab's campaign to Bilad al-Sham, in 1775, see Hayat el Eid Bualuan, *Mu'arrikhu*, pp. 215-228.

This vogue of commenting, voicing his opinions and analysis is not confined to political events. It is part of al-Munayyir's style in being not merely an observer, but a crucial actor on stage. In 1781, he was among those priests imprisoned by the governor of Bekaa for one day because they went fishing.[69] In 1792 he was present when the Damascene soldiers attacked Zahleh.[70] In 1804 he declared his satisfaction with the death of al-Jazzar composing poems on the occasion.[71] This involvement, however, is mostly manifested, as we have seen before, when he digresses from his political or religious occupation, either to give a history of a locale in a kind of flashback or to concentrate on the affairs of daily life.

In 1772 while he was discussing Abu-l-Dahab's seizure of Beirut, he alludes to the importance of the city and relates its history going back to the times when it was under Christian rule, then Muslim rule. He relates how the king of Venice destroyed the city when his son was killed by an ambush.[72] He adds that the city was rebuilt by the Ma'n and then the Shihabis.[73] Al-Munayyir even provides considerable information revealing the conditions behind the founding of what later came to be known as Dayr al-Qamar. Above the forest facing B'akline where the Tannukhs used to rule was a

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69 Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 34.

70 Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 77.

71 Al-Munayyir, *Masadir,* p. 152.

72 The king's son visited Beirut. The Moslems were afraid of a conspiracy and were afraid that the Europeans might besiege the city again. One of those present, an old blind shaykh, volunteered to get rid of the boy. He appeared like a beggar asking for charity and when the lad was preoccupied to respond, the shaykh attacked him together with the other Muslims that were with him. The king of Venice attacked Beirut and punished its inhabitants. Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 51.

73 Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, pp. 50-52.

devastated convent, the Christians were unable to restore.[74] They used to gather at night under the moonlight, to make up for the lost hours of the day. Later, the place came to be called the convent of the moon, Dayr al-Qamar, al-Munayyir adds, "Banu Ma'n later lived there".[75]Tannus al-Shidyak adds that that there was a picture in the form of a moon carved on a rock on the wall of what was called the church of the hill (*Kanisat al-tallah*).[76]

The author's involvement in the religious events does not prevent him from dwelling on the affairs of the daily life showing his ability and wits in adding a spark to the routine of political and military tensions. In 1756, he recounts how the Arabs robbed a pilgrimage and cooked pearls thinking it was rice.[77] In 1792, speaking of high prices and famine, he recounts the story of a man who tried to eat his daughter, but was not able to slaughter her. He then went to one of his neighbors where he ate preserved meat and died. Al-Munayyir wit is manifested here as he exclaims: "Afraid to die from starvation, he died from saturation".[78]

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[74] The seat of governorship at the time of Banu Tannukh and before them was in B'akline. The village lacked water, but on the other side of the valley there was a forest where a fountain of water was found. At the top of that forest was a Christian convent which was ruined throughout the years. The Christians were weak and were not able to restore it. See Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 53.

[75] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr*, p. 52.

[76] Tannus al-Shidyak, *Akhbar al-Ayan fi Jabal Lubnan*, edited by Maroun Raad (Beirut: Dar Nazir Abbud, 1997), p. 29.

[77] Tannus al-Shidyak, *Akhbar al-Ayan fi Jabal Lubnan*, p. 23.

[78] Al-Munayyir, *al-Durr,* p. 105.

12. Al-Munayyir the Lebanese historian

In his book *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Sociale Chez les Historiens Libanais Contemporains* (*Confessional Identity and the Social Times in Contemporary Lebanese Historians*), Dr. Ahmad Beydoun writes, "Le Liban des historiens s'allonge ou se rétrécit non seulement suivant la période considérée, mais aussi suivant les appartenances diverses des auteurs".[79] (The Lebanon of the historians expands or shrinks not only depending on the period of time considered, but also following the diverse affiliations of its authors).

To what extent can Beydoun's statement be applied to al-Munayyir's writing? Did al-Munayyir really present the events according to his Christian or Greek Catholic affiliations or did he try to present the events as they happened without bias or preconceived ideas? Al-Munayyir lived in a political structure in Lebanon where the ruler was striving to preserve his autonomy against external encroachment and the ambitions of the notable families who were struggling for power. Druzes and Christians were competing for lands and political influence, the Ottomans were striving to preserve their control, and the European powers were profiting from the situation commercially, politically, and ideologically to penetrate the area defending one sect against the other to help in augmenting the religious tension and await the slightest occasion to bring this tension to the service with ease and vehemence. Hanania al-Munayyir, with other Christian historians around Bachir II, was aware, as it seems, of the internal and

[79] Ahmad Beydoun, *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Sociales Chez les Historiens Libanais Contemporains* (Beirut: Université Libanaise, 1989), p. 68 (The translation is mine).

external political situation of that period and was, at the same time, conscious of the importance and uniqueness of Lebanon. They, as a result, produced a "secular" and political history focusing on the struggle for political power, trying not merely to describe, but also to explain and give messages, hinting to the importance of harmony and agreement in maintaining the state. Al-Munayyir, in his description, tries to present the events truthfully because he considers those events as paved treasures (*Durr Marsuf*) to be preserved in the memory as didactic experiences in the future. In this way the events of the past are not mere spectacles to be observed o related, but are activities of thought and experiences to reflect upon and learn from to set a better future. One can truly say in this context that "history writing and historical consciousness are not spheres of praxis that are simply determined in terms of the past; they are present activities aimed essentially at posterity...the inherited text or thing does not solely belong to the origin from which it emerged, but in its originary character as what presences with us, it is also destined communicatively towards us by virtue of being in our world...".[80]

It is here that al-Munayyir appears as a man of his age and of future ages as well.

[80] Nader el-Bizri, "Modernity Tradition and Renewal in Arab Thought: A Review Essay of Saud M.S. Al-Tamamy's *Averroes, Kant and the Origin of the Enlightenment*", *Journal of the Society for contemporary Thought and the Islamic World, SCTIV Review* (2015).

Conclusion

Al-Munayyir's history stands at a cross road between the 18th and the 19th century. As a historian he was able to combine the old and the new: the chronicler who relates the events in its yearly sequence, the neo chronicler who delves into the meaning of the events, and the analytical historian who rethinks the meaning of his data, interprets, gives his opinion, and predicts consequences for the various events. Al-Munayyir was not only the theistic "eschatological" historian who views the events of history as leading to a definite purpose beyond the visible world but also the heuristic and innovative historian who was able to rid himself of the confines of his religious community and think on a wider scale to explore new horizons, penetrate new spaces and examine several subjects, economic, political, social, and genealogical and provide details to inform, warn, edify, and entertain.

Al-Munayyir was able, based on the events he was witnessing, to view Lebanon as a unique reality, an entity and a community with a continuous historical tradition. This entity, as he viewed it, was fragile and torn between internal, regional, and international tendencies. Aware of the importance of the period he was witnessing as a basis for the understanding of later events in Modern Lebanon, Al-Munayyir draws a panoramic picture not only of the political struggle evident during that time, or of the family feuds, but also of the social and other factors that would later develop to form what may be regarded as a country unique of its kind in the Arab world. He observed with sadness, however, that this entity was suffering from internal struggle and inviting foreign interference in its affairs. He predicted the outcome to make him

form a vision of a turbulent, agitated, and restless future that will continue to trigger this unique entity.

Al-Munayyir describes the Christian mountain as having strong relation with the West and a Druze mountain with Christians living in its midst and enjoying social and religious liberties. He also describes the Beirut harbor alongside a mountain inhabited by Druzes, Christians, and Muslims as well. On the other hand, he talks about the Christian missionaries opening schools in different localities, as well as their role as advisors to the rulers which he stressed as one not to be ignored. It also seems rather intrinsic not to forget the thriving silk produce which maintained an economic relation with Europe and made of Beirut, not only a centre of trade, but also a place of interaction in the area.

Al-Munayyir forms a vision through his writings and the exclusive approach with which he handled narrating events. He seems be aware that this glowing picture carries within it the seeds of conflict and dissension. Failing to direct their allegiance towards the right cause, the Lebanese might at any moment disrupt this structure and direct its uniqueness towards destruction instead of construction. This is why in 1800, following a struggle between Emir Bachir and the sons of Emir Yusuf, when an agreement was reached whereby Bachir would govern the Druze mountain, and Husayn and his brother Jbeyl (Byblos), al-Munayyir comments: "I do not think this will last for a long time for as usual these people lack integrity and straightforwardness of opinion".[81] He then quotes a poet – without mentioning his name – who warns people

[81] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 127.

to preserve the heart from grief for like a broken glass, it is always hard to repair what was once broken.[82]

More than two centuries have elapsed since a Christian historian from Lebanon, Hanania al-Munayyir, had uttered these words. History is somehow still repeating itself. The descendants, so to speak, of the same actors are, at present, on stage. New ones have joined and are struggling for predominance and power inviting regional interference and furnishing a fertile ground for international intervention. History, to go back to our introduction, is continuity and change, but in the case of Lebanon continuity is indeed not contributing any sense of stability, security, or comfort to human life. The vision of al-Munayyir is alas actualized.

[82] Al-Munayyir, *Masadir*, p. 127.

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