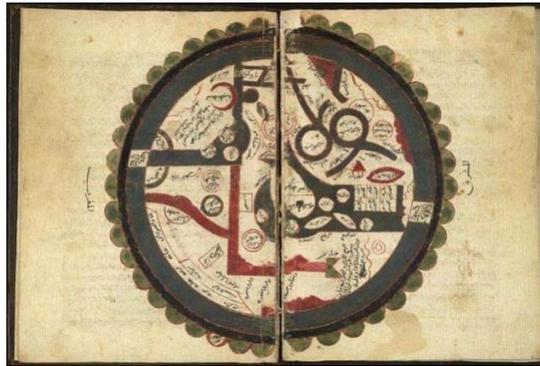


Abū Ḥafs Zayn al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī

[Ibn al-Wardi](#) was a writer, philosopher, and historian born in Palestine (c.1290-1349).

The passage below is from his *An Essay on the Report of the Pestilence*. Here, he describes the effects of the plague on the city of [Aleppo](#) in Syria. Ibn al-Wardi himself died from the plague.



a 17th-c. copy of Ibn al-Wardi's map of the world
(Wikipedia)

God is my security in every adversity. My sufficiency in God alone. I not God sufficient protection for His servant? Oh God, pray for our master, Muhammad, and give him peace. Save us for his sake from the attacks of the plague and give us shelter.

The Plague frightened and killed. It began in the land of darkness. Oh, what a visitor! It has been current for fifteen years. China was not preserved from it nor could the strongest fortress hinder it. The plague afflicted the Indians in India. It weighed upon the Sind. It seized with its hand and ensnared even the land of the Uzbeks. How many backs did it break in what is Transoxiana? The plague increased and spread further. It attacked the Persians . . . and gnawed away at the Crimea. It pelted Rum with live coals and led the outrage to Cyprus and the islands. The plague destroyed mankind in Cairo. Its eye was cast upon Egypt, and behold, the people were wide awake. It stilled all movement in Alexandria. The plague did its work like a silkworm. It took from the [tiraz](#) factory its beauty and did to its workers what fate decreed.

Oh Alexandria; this plague is like a lion which extends its arm to you. Have patience with the fate of the plague, which leaves of seventy men only seven.

Then, the plague turned to Upper Egypt. It also sent forth its storm to Barqah. The plague attacked Gaza, and it shook Asqalan severely. The plague oppressed Acre. The scourge came to Jerusalem and paid the [zakat](#) [with the souls of men]. It overtook those people who fled to the al-Aqsa mosque, which stands beside the Dome of the Rock. If the door of mercy had not been opened, the end of the world would have occurred in a moment. It, then, hastened its pace and attacked the entire maritime plain. The plague strapped Sidon and descended unexpectedly upon Beirut, cunningly. Next, it directed the shooting of its arrows to Damascus. There the plague sat like a king on a throne and swayed with power, killing daily 1000 or more and decimating the population. It destroyed mankind with its pustules. May God the Most High spare Damascus to pursue its own path and extinguish the plague's fires so they do not come close to her fragrant orchards.

Oh God, restore Damascus and protect her from insult. Its morale has been so lowered that people in the city sell themselves for a grain.

Oh God, it is acting by Your command. Lift this from us. It happens where You wish; keep the plague from us. Who will defend us against the horror other than You the Almighty? . . .

How many places has the plague entered. It swore not to leave the houses without its inhabitants. It searched them with a lamp. The pestilence caused the people of Aleppo the same disturbance. It sent out its snake and crept along. It was named the "Plague of the Ansab." It was the sixth plague to strike in Islam. To me it is the death of which our prophet warned, on him be the best prayers and peace.

. . . The plague caused the people of Aleppo the same disturbance. Oh, if you could see the nobles of Aleppo studying their books of medicine. They follow its remedies by eating dried and sour foods. The buboes which disturb men's lives are smeared with Armenian clay. Each man treated their health to make life more comfortable. They perfumed their homes with camphor, flowers, and sandal. They wore ruby rings and put onions, vinegar, and sardines together with the daily meal. We ask God's forgiveness for our bad souls; the plague is surely part of His punishment. Some said: the air's corruption kills. I said: the love of corruption kills. . . .

One man begs another to take care of his children, one says goodbye to his neighbors.

A third perfects his works, and another prepares his shroud.

A fifth is reconciled with his enemies, and another treats his friends with kindness.

One is very generous; another makes friends with those who have betrayed him.

Another man puts aside his property; one frees his servants.

One man changes his character while another mends his ways.

For this plague has captured all people and is about to send its ultimate destruction.

There is no protection today from it other than His mercy, praise be to God.

Nothing prevented us from running away from the plague except our devotion to the noble tradition. Come then, seek the aid of God Almighty for raising the plague, for He is the best helper. Oh God, we call You to raise from us the petulance and plague. We do not take refuge in its removal other than with You. We do not depend on our good health against the plague but on You. We seek your protection, Oh Lord of creation, from the blows of the stick. We ask for Your mercy which is wider than our sins even as they are the number of the sands and the pebbles. We plead with You, by the most honored of the advocates, Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy, that You take away from us this distress. Protect us from evil and the torture and preserve us. For You are our sole support; what a perfect trustee!

Michael W. Dols, trans., in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History*
(1974)