PART II

EVERYDAY POLITICS
CHAPTER TWO

MAKING SPACES:
REGIONALISATION THROUGH EVERYDAY PRACTICES

The preceding chapter has described from a top-down perspective how and in what context the Ottoman central government fixed the boundaries of the District of Jerusalem, how the territory thus marked out was systematically covered by a network of administrative institutions according to the templates devised in the Tanzimat laws, and how this entity was increasingly identified with the notion of ‘Palestine’. This chapter attempts to complement this perspective by a bottom-up approach, asking how the people living in the District used the land and what spatial units mattered in their daily life. In human geography, such questions are discussed under the heading of ‘regionalisation’.¹ In contrast to concepts of region, which try to identify homogenous units by certain ‘objective’ criteria, actor-centred approaches do not start with ‘space as such’ but take the agency of human individuals as their starting point. Seen from this perspective, space is not a container of actors and actions, but is itself an aspect of action. The main research question is not how people act in a geographically defined space, but how they constitute and re-constitute spaces through their daily interactions, or, in other words, how they ‘make’ geography in everyday life.²
