

The Ottoman City
between East
and West
Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul

EDHEM ELDEM
DANIEL GOFFMAN
and
BRUCE MASTERS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Ottoman City between East and West Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul

Studies of early modern Middle Eastern cities, whether classified as Islamic, Arab, or Ottoman, have stressed the atypical, the idiosyncratic, or the aberrant. This bias derives largely from orientalist presumptions that these cities were in some way substandard or deviant. One purpose of this volume is to normalize Ottoman cities, to emphasize how, on the one hand, they resembled cities in general and how, on the other, their specific historical situations individualized each of them. The second is to present a challenge to the previous literature and to negotiate an agenda for future study. By considering the narrative histories of Aleppo, Izmir (Smyrna), and Istanbul during their Ottoman periods, the book offers a fundamental departure from the piecemeal methods of previous studies, emphasizing the importance of these cities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and highlighting their essentially Ottoman character. While the essays provide an overall view of the three cities, each can be approached separately. Their exploration of the available sources and the agendas of historians and social scientists who have conditioned the scholarly perception of these influential cities makes fascinating reading.

EDHEM ELDEM is Professor of History at Boğaziçi University. His publications include *A 135-Year-Old Treasure: Glimpses from the Past in the Ottoman Bank Archives* (1998) and *Banque Impériale Ottomane: inventaire commenté des archives* (1994). DANIEL GOFFMAN is Professor of History at Ball State University. He is the author of *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642–1660* (1998) and *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650* (1990). BRUCE MASTERS is Professor of History at Wesleyan University. His publications include *Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East* (1989).

Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization

Editorial board

DAVID MORGAN (general editor)

VIRGINIA AKSAN MICHAEL BRETT MICHAEL COOK PETER JACKSON

TARIF KHALIDI ROY MOTTAHEDEH BASIM MUSALLAM

CHASE ROBINSON

Titles in the series

STEFAN SPERL, *Mannerism in Arabic poetry: a Structural Analysis of Selected Texts, 3rd Century AH/9th Century AD–5th Century AH/11th Century AD* 0 521 354854

PAUL E. WALKER, *Early Philosophical Shiism: the Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* 0 521 441293

BOAZ SHOSHAN, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* 0 521 43209X

STEPHEN FREDERIC DALE, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750* 0 521 454603

AMY SINGER, *Palestinian peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth-century Jerusalem* 0 521 452384 (hardback) 0 521 476798 (paperback)

MICHAEL CHAMBERLAIN, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* 0 521 565069

TARIF KHALIDI, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* 0 521 465540 (hardback) 0 521 58938X (paperback)

REUVEN AMITAI-PREISS, *Mongols and Mamluks: the Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260–1281* 0 521 462266

LOUISE MARLOW, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* 0 521 564301

JANE HATHAWAY, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: the Rise of the Qazdağlıs* 0 521 571103

THOMAS T. ALLSEN, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: a Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* 0 521 583012

DINA RIZK KHOURY, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* 0 521 590604

THOMAS PHILIPP AND ULRICH HAARMANN (eds.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society* 0 521 591155

PETER JACKSON, *The Delhi Sultanate: a Political and Military History* 0 521 404770

KATE FLEET, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: the Merchants of Genoa and Turkey* 0 521 64221 3

TAYEB EL-HIBRI, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate* 0 521 65023 2

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Ethem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Times 10/12 pt [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Eldem, Ethem

The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul / Ethem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Aleppo (Syria) – History – 17th century.
 2. Aleppo (Syria) – History – 18th century.
 3. İzmir (Turkey) – History – 17th century.
 4. İzmir (Turkey) – History – 18th century.
 5. Istanbul (Turkey) – History – 17th century.
 6. Istanbul (Turkey) – History – 18th century.
- I. Goffman, Daniel, 1954– . II. Masters, Bruce Alan, 1950– . III. Title. IV. Series.

DS99.A56E43 1999

956.2–dc21 98–43855 CIP

ISBN 0 521 64304 X hardback

For our teachers,
Halil İnalçık
and
Robert Mantran

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>List of maps</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
Introduction Was there an Ottoman City?	1
1 Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire's caravan city BRUCE MASTERS	17
2 Izmir: from village to colonial port city DANIEL GOFFMAN	79
3 Istanbul: from imperial to peripheralized capital EDHEM ELDEM	135
Conclusion: contexts and characteristics	207
<i>Works consulted</i>	215
<i>Index</i>	228

Illustrations

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Camel caravan passing one of Aleppo's khans as it enters the city. (Postcard, authors' collections.) | page 42 |
| 2 | A view of Aleppo's citadel from the northwest, overlooking the rooftops of Judayda. (Postcard, authors' collections.) | 74 |
| 3 | Panorama of late-seventeenth-century Izmir from the Gulf. (From Cornelis de Bruyn, <i>Reizen van de Bruyn, dorr de vermaardste deelen van Klein Asia, de Eylandin, Scio, Rhodus, Cyprus, Metelino, Stanchio . . .</i> , Delft, 1708 ?, authors' collections.) | 106 |
| 4 | A street scene in early-nineteenth-century Izmir. (From Edmund Spencer, <i>Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia</i> , London, 1854, authors' collections.) | 131 |
| 5 | The steps of Yüksek Kaldırım, leading to the heart of "Western" Istanbul (Pera). (Postcard, authors' collections.) | 146 |
| 6 | The roofs and domes of the Grand Bazaar, with the towering structure of the eighteenth-century Nuruosmaniye mosque and Hagia Sophia in the background. (Postcard, authors' collections.) | 168 |

Maps

- | | | |
|---|----------|---------|
| 1 | Aleppo | page 18 |
| 2 | Izmir | 80 |
| 3 | Istanbul | 136 |

Preface

This book was conceived in the fall of 1993 during conversations between the authors at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and during an ARIT (American Research Institute in Turkey) sponsored tour of early Ottoman sites in northwestern Anatolia. The three authors agreed that there was a lack of synthetic works on Ottoman cities and that, having each recently completed monographs on our respective cities, it would be interesting and perhaps useful to write surveys of Ottoman Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo. These studies might not only provide students and non-Ottoman historians with practical introductions to these important Ottoman cities but also produce a framework to think about the shapes these and other Ottoman urban centers took, how they functioned, and how they compared and contrasted to other cities.

During the next year the authors wrote drafts surveying the histories of these cities before reconvening at a one-day conference, "Three Ottoman Cities," held at Ball State University in the spring of 1995. The structure for this meeting was somewhat unusual for we were not only looking for feedback on our work but also trying to arouse curiosity about Ottoman studies and generate as wide an interest as possible. We presented summaries of our works and asked historians from outside of our field to respond to drafts of our writings. Then, at the end of a rather full day, a panel of Ottomanists remarked on the inter-specialty give-and-take.

The format generated a fascinating, indeed invaluable, discussion. Professor Kenneth Hall, a southeast-Asian specialist, reviewed Bruce Masters's presentation on Aleppo; Professor Miriam Usher Chrisman, who studies Strasbourg and other early modern European cities, considered Daniel Goffman's examination of Izmir; and Professor Andrew R. L. Cayton, who has written extensively on early national US history, reflected on Edhem Eldem's exploration of Istanbul. Each of these historians critiqued our ideas insightfully and incisively, as did our chair, Professor Leslie Peirce, and Professors Molly Greene, Jane Hathaway, Donald Quataert, and Sarah Shields, who made up our panel of Ottomanists.

The contributions of the commentators were helpful in several ways. First

was the confirmation that a need exists for such surveys as this book attempts. Each of our outside commentators expressed a certain wonder at the hidden richness of the Ottoman universe. The depth of their remarks and their enthusiasm for this project were confirmation that comparative studies have a place in Ottoman history and that Ottoman history has a great deal to offer Asian, European, and US historians and *vice versa*.

Each commentator also refined and broadened the conference's thinking about the Ottoman city. Ken Hall reflected upon how, despite a series of economic and social transitions, over the centuries both Aleppo and certain southeast Asian cities managed to keep themselves in the "middle" of both culture and commerce. Socially, residents did so by turning outsiders – in the Aleppan case, Ottomans – into partners with local inhabitants; economically, they did so by nurturing networks between communities within cities and between urban dwellers and inhabitants in their hinterlands. Hall further observed that Aleppo seemed to have shared with southeast-Asian port cities the ability to turn "outside" into "inside," that is, to seize for themselves the institutions, techniques, and commodities of foreigners, citing as an example the appropriation and transformation of local market textile patterns and materials.

Whereas Hall emphasized similarities between southeast and southwest Asia, Miriam Chrisman found marked differences between the social and commercial structures of Izmir and western European cities. Particularly noticeable to her was the Ottoman emphasis on "provisionism" (that is, state regulation of the production and marketing of goods and especially foodstuffs) and the lack in Izmir of the autonomous political infrastructure typical of medieval European burghs. Chrisman did not derive from this assertion the Weberian conclusion that this lack of a civic culture made Izmir somehow less a city than its European companions. Instead, she speculated that it may have been Izmir's relative independence from legacies, conventions, and bureaucracies, its openness and plasticity, that enticed European merchants to settle in that port town in the early seventeenth century. She also suggested that western Europe's movement toward a more rigid orthodoxy and its expulsion of infidels and heretics after the Protestant Reformation may have helped inspire merchants to flee that sub-continent and re-establish themselves in more broad-minded venues on commercial and cultural borderlands in western Anatolia, the eastern American seaboard, southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

Cayton extended the comparative motif to North America. He found interesting the similarly parasitic natures of eighteenth-century Istanbul and Cincinnati, especially the manner in which goods seemed to be sucked into each. He then proceeded into a fascinating discussion of the idea of "contact" as a neutral way to think about cultural overlap and interplay in both the eighteenth-century midwestern United States and the Ottoman Empire's capital. As he pointed out, historiography now shies away from

reducing groups to pawns and strives to endow *all* individuals, communities, and civilizations with agency and status. In American historiography, this emphasis means exploring the worlds of native Americans, French settlers, African-Americans, and women as well as British conquerors. In the case of Istanbul, it requires examining the intersections between the multitude of communities and organizations that lived in the city, working out how they co-existed and how power was distributed among them. In each case, Cayton argued, the perception even more than the reality of power was what mattered. In both Istanbul and the American middle west, for example, the leverage of the French government and settlers was far greater than their real capacities seemed to warrant. Cayton did not push this similarity too far, however. He noted one important difference in the Ottoman linkage of power to diversity rather than to uniformity. In Istanbul, a cacophony of convictions existed in place of the ideological unity that was becoming so much a part of American history.

The contributions of the Ottomanist commentators, perhaps inevitably, tended to be less speculative than were the comments of our non-Ottomanist colleagues. Nevertheless, they too focused upon comparisons and contrasts. Both Molly Greene and Sarah Shields, albeit in quite different ways, deduced from the presentations the difficulty of discovering a normative "Ottoman city" (much less an Islamic one) or even meaningful shared characteristics. Greene further observed that despite the importance of commerce in sustaining the vigor of Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul, these Ottoman cities all died political rather than economic deaths. Jane Hathaway elaborated upon Cayton's observations about contact through a discussion of constructed identities in the Ottoman context, suggesting that particularly in Ottoman Arab lands the interplay between the Arab and Ottoman cultures was more complicated and deeply embedded than heretofore imagined. Finally, Donald Quataert emphasized how important it is to continue drawing upon the work of non-Ottoman historians and to repudiate an approach toward Ottoman studies that has overemphasized the unique and the idiosyncratic. Quataert implicitly and rightly asserted that Ottoman Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo were first and foremost cities; their Islamic, Arab, Turkish, Ottoman, or Mediterranean characteristics remain secondary.

It is a pleasure to thank those organizations and individuals who have supported us financially and through access to their facilities. We have drawn upon the resources of many archives in France, Syria, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Without exception, their staffs have been unstinting in their assistance. Connie McOmber, the Ball State University cartographer, skillfully devised the three maps of Aleppo, Istanbul, and Izmir and their surroundings.

Edhem Eldem would like to acknowledge ongoing and enthusiastic support from the Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes d'Istanbul and

his home institution, Boğaziçi University, particularly its Department of History. He also wishes to thank Ms Araks Şahiner for kindly letting him use her findings on Yakub Hovhanessian.

Dan Goffman thanks the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Fellowship for College Teachers and Independent Scholars that, together with matching monies from Ball State University's Office of Research, funded his 1993–94 academic year in Istanbul. The Department of History at Ball State University generously granted him release time and Boğaziçi University provided housing and rank in its Department of History, where Selim Deringil, Selçuk Esenbel, and Tony Greenwood were particularly kind and supportive. He also thanks Amy Singer and EHUD Toledano of Tel Aviv University and its Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern & African Studies for hosting him for a month in the summer of 1994, during which he wrote much of his contribution to this book.

Bruce Masters would like to thank the Fulbright Commission, the Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs First Fund, and the American Research Institute in Turkey for providing funds and the Trustees of Wesleyan University for sabbatical time off that made the research of his section possible. He wishes also to thank Abdul-Karim Rafeq for a thoughtful reading of his chapter on Aleppo and Tony Greenwood and Gülen Aktaş for their hospitality during his research visits to Istanbul.

INTRODUCTION

Was there an Ottoman City?

The study of the Ottoman city is rooted in the historiography of the Islamic city, which in turn has long been mired in attempts to respond to Max Weber's exclusion of an Islamic class from his typology of the city in world history.¹ Weber, who defines the "city" as a self-governing commune whose inhabitants possessed a distinct sense of collective identity, argues that such an entity evolved, and thus becomes meaningful, only in Christian Europe. In contrast to the normative European city, Weber characterizes Islamic and other non-European urban conglomerates as lacking the defining tradition of civic culture. Rather than enjoying the political autonomy characteristic of their European or even classical Greek and Roman counterparts, Weber contends that Middle Eastern cities were governed by bureaucratic representatives of an imperial power who were often ethnically and/or linguistically distinct from those they governed. Furthermore, Muslim cities were inhabited by distinct clan or tribal groups who competed with one another, rather than joining together for the common civic good in the creation of an identity that was specifically urban.

Weber perceives a reflection of this social alienation and political fragmentation of Islamic cities both in their physical structures and in the very nature of Islam. He contrasts the winding streets, blind alleys, and walled, secretive houses of Middle Eastern cities to the open public spaces and rational topographies that characterized European cities moving toward modernity. He also stresses the inherently urban nature of Islam as a religion and the decisive role it played in the development of urban institutions and space in the Islamic city, distinguishing it from the inherently secular development of European cities. Weber concludes that whereas diversity became a hallmark within and between European cities, Islamic cities all share certain fundamental characteristics due to the pervasive role of Islamic law in both the public and private spheres of their

¹ Max Weber, *The City*, trans. and intro. Don Martindale and Gertrud Neuwirth (Free Press, 1958), especially pp. 80–89.

inhabitants' lives. In short, Weber's Islamic cities are monolithic and undifferentiated.

Weber published his findings in 1921 and they remained essentially unchallenged until quite recently. One may attribute the lack of dissent in part to a long-standing assumption in academia that western (that is, European) civilization holds a virtual monopoly over growth, over our very ability to innovate.² Equally important, though, was the paucity of concrete information on the historical development of Middle Eastern cities that might have provided fodder for a response. In short, Weber's model of the "Islamic city" shares with the Marxian paradigm of "oriental despotism" an almost total lack of evidence. The attempts of these and other nineteenth-century scholars to generalize about Islamic social and political formations were speculative ventures into the unknown.

Whereas challenges to and refinements of Weber's depiction of the European city began almost immediately, this lack of data checked similar early twentieth-century responses from specialists on the Near East. Instead, orientalist scholars began the laborious process of discovering the "real" Islamic city, first producing case studies that stressed topographical and architectural developments in specific Islamic, usually Arab, cities. It was not until the 1940s that anyone attempted even to fuse architectural into social and political history, much less mount a viable challenge to Weber's sweeping assessment of the Islamic urban matrix.

Aleppo, which boasts a history that long predates Islam, was one of the first Islamic cities that modern scholars focused upon, and writings about it suggest how scholarship has evolved in the decades since Weber's tentative explorations. In the early 1940s, Jean Sauvaget attempted an integrated picture of that city from its foundation until the nineteenth century.³ His multidimensional approach to the city's development and the historical sweep of his discussion established an archetype for other scholars. However novel and significant his approach toward Aleppo may have been, however, it did little to challenge Weber's model. Not only does Sauvaget display little interest in establishing an overarching schema in which to place his city, but his work focuses on pre-Islamic Aleppo. Sauvaget shares his predecessors' disdain for that city's Islamic period and certainly does not question the eurocentric framework of Weber's construct. Such bias would not dissipate until the 1980s, when, strongly influenced by Edward Said's critiques of orientalist scholarship, studies by Jean-Claude David, Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, Bruce Masters, Abraham Marcus and others pulled Islamic (and especially Ottoman) Aleppo out of its historiographic

obscurity.⁴ These works have traced the development of Aleppo's history, and have documented the relationship between architecture and topography, and social and economic history to a degree not available for any other Arab city in the Ottoman period, with the possible exceptions of Cairo and, most recently, Jerusalem.⁵

Most studies of Aleppo, Cairo, Jerusalem, and other cities within the Islamic ecumene bear some conceptual shape. Their authors, however, focus on particular cities rather than the idea of whether an Islamic type of city might exist or what its characteristics might be. They do not confront directly Weber's "Islamic city," as has another body of work that has arisen simultaneously. While not entirely abandoning earlier characterizations of the city and Islam, in the late 1960s Ira Lapidus proposed a more nuanced view of Islamic city governance.⁶ In two important works, the author extrapolates from a careful examination of social, political, and economic life in cities in the Mamluk state (Syria and Egypt, 1260–1517) to explore similarities in urban life across the Muslim Middle East in the late medieval period. Lapidus accepts Weber's characterization of disaggregate residential quarters as comprising the basic components of Islamic cities. His principal theoretical contribution lies in his novel contention that such fragmentation did not intimate that Islamic cities were administered entirely by an exogenous and imposed bureaucracy. Rather he describes an indigenous class of notables who emerge in the Mamluk period to constitute a cross-quarter-based urban elite. This powerful class could speak for the civilian interests of the city and serve as an intermediary class between the urban masses and their distant rulers. It consisted principally of members of the Islamic intellectual establishment – the *ulama* – and merchants, men who shared a privileged world view engendered by their common educational experience. This group acted as the regional interpreters of Islamic law for the Mamluk rulers and thereby fulfilled many of the functions of urban administration.

It must be emphasized that Lapidus shares with previous scholars the image of the Islamic city during the Mamluk period as being vertically segmented into ethnic or religious quarters (*mahalles*); they thus lacked a

⁴ Jean-Claude David, *Le waqf d'Ibšir Paša à Alep* (Damascus, 1982); Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo: historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole* (Wiesbaden, 1984); Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750* (New York, 1988); Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1989).

⁵ On which see Nelly Hanna, *Construction Work in Ottoman Cairo (1517–1798)* (Cairo, 1984); and Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden, 1994).

⁶ Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1967) and "Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies," in *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium on Ancient, Islamic, and Contemporary Middle Eastern Cities*, ed. Ira Lapidus (Berkeley, CA, 1969).

² The occasional challenges to this construct were not heeded until the late 1970s with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York, NY, 1978).

³ Jean Sauvaget, *Alep; essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne des origines au milieu XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1941).

true civil society. Nevertheless, he argues that this notable class could transcend those divisions and represented, especially in times of crisis, interests that encompassed each community within the city. In this designation of an urban elite that not only shared a residence, ethnicity and language with the urban masses but also represented them to outside communities and authorities, Lapidus implicitly challenges Weber's assertion that the Islamic city lacked civic or communal spirit.

At just the time Lapidus was attempting to generalize from the Mamluk case, another scholar, Albert Hourani, was thinking along related if subtly distinct lines.⁷ Focusing upon a more recent time – the late Ottoman era – Hourani posits that a gradual Ottoman military and political withdrawal from its Arab lands in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries generated a vacuum into which a group of local notables – designated *ayan* – stepped. Although the individuals who comprised this “patriciate” (to use the term Hourani, still responding to Weber, suggests) often struggled against each other politically, collectively they shared a strong sense of urban identity. For Hourani and the many who follow his conceptualization, this *ayan* not only provided an indigenous elite during the late Ottoman period, but (and here the author's political agenda, in which the Ottoman Empire is envisioned as an impediment to progress, becomes apparent) they also facilitated the post-Ottoman Arab states' passage into modernity.

Hourani's vision of the Arab-Ottoman city has proven resilient and fertile. Perhaps most indicative of its influence is that during the thirty or so years since it was proposed, scholars have responded to, elaborated upon, and critiqued it, but have not effectively overthrown its central theses. In the process, not only has our understanding of the Islamic city – or at least its Arab rendition – grown more detailed and sophisticated, but the search for evidence to support or deny Hourani's model has focused our attention on important if underutilized sources.

The most fruitful of such sources have been the collections of urban biographies and chronicles and the records of the kadi courts (*sicils*) extant in various Ottoman Arab cities. The first of these were written and survive as a result of that very civic pride that Weber proclaimed not to exist in Islamic cities. The numerous extant biographies and chronicles demonstrate that Ottoman Arab cities boasted distinct and strong collective identities which the cities' intellectual classes relished and commented upon. These sources seem most abundant, or at least most accessible, for Damascus, and intense scrutiny of this Syrian city has served to focus our research on this

⁷ Most concisely presented in Albert Hourani, “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*, eds. William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago, IL, 1968).

elite class and confirm, elaborate upon, and qualify Hourani's archetype of a politically active and indigenous elite.⁸

Just as biographies and chronicles have refined our understanding of urban elites in Arab cities, the records of the kadi's courts have provided us with insight into the histories of non-elite communities. In every Ottoman city a kadi served as municipal judge – as an administrator of Islamic, customary, and sultanic law – and researchers such as André Raymond and Abdul-Karim Rafeq soon realized that the records of his deliberations might reveal much about the social structure of the Ottoman city. Most pertinently, these documents might allow us to test the speculations of Lapidus, Hourani, and others by providing concrete data on linkages between notables and other city citizens.

In 1973, Raymond published a ground-breaking study on eighteenth-century Cairo that exhaustively exploits the court records in order to help provide a comprehensive look at the economic life of Cairo.⁹ He was able to identify that city's principal social and economic communities – both ethnic and class-based – and explore how they interacted amidst the political chaos that sporadically plagued Cairo during its Ottoman centuries. Raymond's work not only introduces the human element into an Ottoman Cairene landscape that had previously seemed static and devoid of humanity, but also painstakingly recreates a society that both lends flesh to and provides opportunities to refine and critique the skeletal model of the Islamic city. In an important series of books and articles Rafeq undertakes a similar study of Damascus.¹⁰

Once these pioneers had shown how crucial the court records are in recovering the history of urban masses, a number of scholars began using them to explore the histories of various Arab-Ottoman cities; most such studies have only in the past decade or so reached fruition.¹¹ Recent

⁸ See as instances Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723–1783* (Beirut, 1966); Karl Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708–1758* (Princeton, NJ, 1980); Linda Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Stuttgart, 1985); and Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁹ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1973).

¹⁰ See for example “Economic Relations Between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside, 1743–71,” in *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900*, ed., A. L. Udovitch (Princeton, NJ, 1981), pp. 653–86; “The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy: The Case of Damascus, 1840–1870,” in *Economie et sociétés dans l'Empire ottoman*, eds. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Paris, 1983), pp. 419–32; and *Buhuth fi ta'rikh al-iqtisadi wa-al-ijtima'i li-bilad al-Sham fi al-'asr al-hadith* (Damascus, 1985).

¹¹ These include works on Jerusalem such as Amnon Cohen, *Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1989) and *Jewish Life Under Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 1984); Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1994); and Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Albany, NY, 1996). On Damascus, James Reilly has augmented some of Rafeq's studies in his “Damascus Merchants and Trade in the Transition to Capitalism,” *Canadian Journal of History* 27 (1992): 1–27, while Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual's *Familles et fortunes à Damas: 450 foyers damascains en 1700* (Damascus,

examinations of Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Hama, and Mosul both refine our knowledge of Ottoman Arab cities, demonstrate their diversity, and make evident certain underlying likenesses between them.

Embedded in this proliferation of studies are some critiques of Weber, Lapidus, and Hourani. Philip Khoury for example cautiously suggests that Hourani's paradigm, while fundamentally sound, misleadingly places notables at the center of discussions of Ottoman Arab cities.¹² Even though this bias may inevitably have arisen from the chronicles and biographical dictionaries that form the bedrock of our understanding of these cities, the result is an unfortunate "top down" approach toward their history. While Hourani's approach privileges the notable classes, whole other classes of people – women, non-Muslims, peasants, artisans, and merchants – are largely ignored.

Other specialists have gone further in their critiques. Jane Hathaway for one questions Hourani's inclusion of Cairo in his model of the politics of the notables.¹³ She argues incisively that the politics of the Ottoman capital of Istanbul more closely resembled the politics of the households of the Mamluk beys of Cairo than did those of other Arab cities. In light of her conclusions the politics of Baghdad also may take on a different shading, for similarly to Cairo, Mamluk households rather than the "civilian" elites envisioned by Lapidus and Hourani dominated that Iraqi city.¹⁴ Although the recent studies of Khoury, Hathaway, and others do not essentially challenge (usually electing rather to ignore) the Weberian paradigm of the "Islamic city," they do question a second assumption of these and other works on the Ottoman Islamic city – that the Arab city is in some fundamental sense more normatively Islamic than are its Persian, Ottoman (or for that matter Indonesian or sub-Saharan African) variants.

These urban studies have contributed to our collective understanding of city life in some of the most important Ottoman Arab cities. Some have increased our knowledge of local politics; others have moved toward a

1994) and Brigitte Marino, *Le faubourg du Midan à Damas à l'époque ottomane: espace urbain, société et habitat (1742–1830)* (Damascus, 1997) also have made good use of the court records. Those of Aleppo have been employed by Masters, *Origins of Western Economic Dominance*; Marcus, *Middle East on the Eve of Modernity*; and Margaret Meriwether, "Women and Economic Change in Nineteenth Century Syria: The Case of Aleppo," in *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*, ed. Judith Tucker (Washington, DC, 1993), pp. 65–83, and "Urban Notables and Rural Resources in Aleppo, 1770–1830," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1987): 55–73. Most recently, Dick Douwes employs the court records of Hama in his *The Ottomans in Syria: A History of Justice and Oppression* (London, 1999), and Dina Rizk Khoury those of Mosul in her *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge, 1998).

¹² "The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited," in *Villes au Levant: homage à André Raymond*, vols. 55–56 of *La revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* (Aix-en-Provence, 1990), pp. 214–27.

¹³ *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹⁴ On which see especially Tom Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq: Mamluk Pashas, Tribal Shayks and Local Rule between 1802 and 1831* (The Hague, 1982).

correction of the "top down" studies of the *ayan* school; still others have begun to question the very existence of an Arab-Ottoman type of city. In none of these studies, however, has there been much attempt at synthesis or model-building. In other words, few of these works seek either to question or support the long-standing paradigm of the Islamic city with its insistence upon non-local, bureaucratic leadership and primarily tribal identities.

Two scholars have attempted to bring some of this new information into a comparative framework.¹⁵ Even though Antoine Abdel-Nour focuses his study upon the kadi's court records, his vision extends beyond the borders of a single city. Rather, he strives to bind Syrian cities to their adjoining hinterlands, and in so doing challenges particularly Lapidus's dichotomous paradigm of two Islamic societies, one urban and the second rural, that retained autonomous cultural, political, and even economic existences. Thus, Abdel-Nour envisions the Islamic city as no different from contemporary European ones in the sense that it constituted a cultural metropolis which served and drew upon the natural and human resources surrounding it. Although Syrian cities are his subject, the author makes no claim that they were in any way distinct from other Ottoman cities.

In his French-language writings Raymond does make such a claim of Arab exceptionalism, engendered not only by the Arab city's crucial association with an Islamicate civilization that long predated the arrival of the Ottomans but also by the linguistic bonds that both united them and sustained a persistent disunion with the non-Arab speaking Ottoman city. He further sees a commonality in an important shared experience of the inhabitants of Arab cities: each was dominated by people who were ethnically distinct from the civilian inhabitants. Although Raymond seconds Lapidus's stress on the significance of an indigenous civilian elite in the maintenance of an urban culture and identity, he also explores economic and social developments in the Ottoman-Arab city. In his English-language works Raymond switches his emphasis to architecture and the use of public space, weighing common Ottoman experiences against distinctive, pre-Ottoman traditions. Although never abandoning the Arab world, in both works he ranges from city to city within it, drawing examples not only from Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo, but also from Mosul, Baghdad, Sana'a, Tunis, and Algiers.

So far this introduction has emphasized the Arab world in its discussion of the historiography of Islamic urban forms, a stress which reflects the state of the field. For a number of reasons most scholars have envisioned the *Arab* instance as the normative type of Islamic city. In part, this vision goes back to Weber, who marked Islam as the organizing principle of a type of urban conglomerates. Since Islam arose in Arabia and Arabs formed the

¹⁵ Antoine Abdel-Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècle)* (Beirut, 1982); and André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris, 1985) and *The Great Arab Cities in the 16th–18th Centuries* (New York, NY, 1984).

first Islamic city, it perhaps implicitly is argued, it is to this world we must turn in order either to prove or disprove Weber's thesis.

Modern attitudes toward the Ottoman period determine a second cause for this insistence on a discrete Arab world separated from the Ottoman one. Each modern Arab nation-state tends to imagine itself in a kind of dialectic tension with the Ottoman Empire, its predecessor and progenitor. In other words, what the Ottoman Empire was, the political elites of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt want not to be. Consequently, it is important to their national pride and imagined histories that Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo be irrefutably Arab cities. National scholarship, in imitation of these ideologies, has been wont to perceive any indisputably Ottoman elements as alien implants overlaying a pristine Arab-Islamic structure. In short, euro-centrism and modern nationalism have conspired to help generate and isolate an Arab ideal of the Islamic city.

These tendencies are perhaps most clearly manifested in a chronic reluctance of scholars working on Arab cities to explore Ottoman documentation. Only a handful of works have attempted to complement local biographies and chronicles and kadi court records with the voluminous administrative materials that the Ottoman government generated. This avoidance of that source most likely to expose overlays and syntheses between the Arab and Ottoman civilizations has furthered the inclination to distance Arab cities from the imperial norm, and to deem them natural and archetypal Islamic cities.

The unavailability of a key source for those studying Ottoman cities outside of Arab lands has exacerbated these tendencies toward an Arab distinctiveness. Few of those urban chronicles and biographies that proved so decisive in establishing the presence of an indigenous elite in the Arab lands have survived from – or perhaps even were written by the inhabitants of – the Anatolian or Balkan cities of the Empire.¹⁶ This dearth is difficult to understand. Perhaps in the case of Anatolia at least the lack of a notable class that was ethnically and linguistically (but not religiously) distinct from its Ottoman overlords – like the one that Lapidus and Hourani note in the Arab-Islamic city – did discourage the rise of a civic responsibility that might have produced a clear urban identity and literature.

Chronicles, in particular, are generally written to establish some sort of political claim, such as occurred in Arab reaction to the Ottoman conquest. Arab notables may have formulated an intellectual resistance in terms of an urban identity which, to some extent, overlapped with ethnic/cultural and political identities. Political claims of Anatolian Ottoman subjects may have revolved around other issues and discourses – *tarikât*, networks of power or

patron and client, and religious and ethnic identities. Whatever its cause, the lack of such a literature does help explain why we have so many more city-based articles and monographs on the Arab than Anatolian or Balkan provinces. Which is not to say that there is no historiographic tradition of Anatolian cities. It has, however, been neither as theoretical nor as prolific as its Arab rendering.

Without a biographical tradition to draw upon, Anatolian city studies have been forced to rely almost exclusively upon kadi court records and materials from the central archives of the Ottoman state. This dependency has helped reverse the patterns found in Arab city studies. Whereas the latter have emphasized uniqueness and indigenous developments, research on Anatolia has followed available documentation and stressed integration into Ottoman civilization and political and economic subservience to Istanbul and the Ottoman state. In other words, these sources have contributed to a perhaps misleading impression of Ottoman-Anatolian cities that lacked those very characteristics – autonomy and civic pride – that according to Weber defined and distinguished the Christian European city.

Western-Anatolian cities probably were more closely bound to the Ottoman capital than were Arab ones. Nevertheless, the rugged Anatolian plateau isolated interior cities such as Kayseri, Konya, and Van from the political and cultural influences of Istanbul perhaps even more decisively than did distance and civilization seclude Arab cities. It is probably the want of non-official chronicles and biographies from such cities that cloak vigorous local identities and autonomies, the realities of which we can only surmise.

Just as Ottoman Arab cities long received scant attention because of their Arab Islamic heritages, so did probes into the history of western-Anatolian Ottoman cities such as Manisa and Izmir suffer from their Greek legacies. Scholars, particularly in the West, long stressed the classical Ionian and Byzantine civilizations in western Anatolia. In contrast, they viewed the Ottoman period as culturally and architecturally barren. The type of architectural study that dominated the early-twentieth-century study of Arab cities also exist for western- and southern-Anatolian ones.¹⁷ Nevertheless, despite the paucity of local sources, it is dilettante provincial historians who dominated early twentieth-century studies of Ottoman-Anatolian cities. Scholars such as M. Çağatay Uluçay published voluminous collections from the court records of Manisa, Bursa, and elsewhere.¹⁸ Others such as İbrahim Hakki Konyalı have outlined the physical histories of such Anatolian cities as Konya Ereğlisi, Niğde Aksaray, Şereflikoçhisar,

¹⁶ Many studies on cities in the Ottoman Balkans have been published, but often in languages inaccessible to us and employing unfamiliar techniques and models. Thus, a type of “parallel universe” of Ottoman-Balkan studies exists that currently eludes synthesis and makes discussion of Balkan cities particularly speculative.

¹⁷ See, for example, M. Münir Aktepe's series of long articles on Ottoman Izmir's public buildings and infrastructure that appeared in *Tarih Dergisi* between 1955 and 1976.

¹⁸ *XVIIinci yüzyılda Manisa'da ziraat, ticaret ve esnaf teşkilâtı*. (Istanbul, 1942).

Konya, and Erzurum through “static” materials such as monuments and inscriptions.¹⁹ With few exceptions these studies themselves constitute little more than undigested raw material. Any ventures at argument, much less synthesis, are few and crude.

The professionalization of Ottoman Anatolian urban studies has progressed in fits and starts. One of its earliest surges emphasizes a series of early modern Ottoman cadastral surveys (the *tapu-tahrir* registers) that, almost miraculously, seemed at first to fulfill the social historian’s dream of reconstructing, quarter by quarter, the demographic, social, and economic make-up of Anatolian cities.²⁰ This ambition has proven largely chimerical. Most researchers now deem these cadastral surveys (and even their nineteenth-century heirs, the *salnames*), too incomplete, too formulaic, and too detached from other sources to do much more than provide rough indicators of the density of populations. They are not, however, without other values. The presence of information on village production, market dues, and other such statistics has enabled us to quantify the relationship between Anatolian cities and their hinterlands far more thoroughly than we have been able to do for Arab lands, where such cadastral surveys are often lacking.²¹

In the 1950s and 1960s scholars such as Fahri Dalsar, Halil İnalçık, and Ronald Jennings drew upon kadi court and central-governmental records to produce a series of more balanced topical studies on the societies and economies of Bursa, Kayseri, and other Anatolian cities.²² These works on the one hand expose the vast potentials of these sources for Anatolian urban studies; but on the other they reveal glaring defects, particularly in a

¹⁹ Konyalı, *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Erzurum Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1960); *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Konya Tarihi* (Konya, 1964); *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Konya Ereğlisi Tarihi* (n.p., 1970); *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Şereflikoçhisar Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1971); *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Niğde Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1974).

²⁰ Two examples of urban studies based on this source is Heath Lowry, “The Ottoman *Tahrir Defterleri* as a Source for Urban Demographic History: The Case Study of Trabzon (ca. 1486–1583)” (Ph.D. diss.: University of California at Los Angeles, 1977) and chapter two of Daniel Goffman, “Izmir as a Commercial Center: The Impact of Western Trade on an Ottoman Port, 1570–1650” (Ph.D. diss.: University of Chicago, 1985). On this series itself, see Heath Lowry, “The Ottoman *Tahrir-Defterleri* as a Source for Social and Economic History: Pitfalls and Limitations,” *Sonderdruck aus Türkische Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte von 1071 bis 1920* (Wiesbaden, 1995), pp. 183–96.

²¹ See especially Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520–1650* (Cambridge, 1984).

²² On Bursa, see Halil İnalçık, “Bursa: XV. asır sanayi ve ticaret tarihine dair vesikalar,” *Belleten* 24 (1960): 45–102; and Fahri Dalsar, *Türk sanayi ve ticaret tarihinde Bursa’da ipekçilik* (Istanbul, 1960). On Kayseri, see Ronald C. Jennings, “Loans and Credit in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16 (1973): 168–216; “Urban Population in Anatolia in the Sixteenth Century: A Study of Kayseri, Karaman, Amasya, Trabzon, and Erzurum,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 21–57; and “Kadi, Court and Legal Procedure in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Kayseri,” *Studia Islamica* 48 (1978): 133–72.

lack of provincial and urban voices. Attempts in the 1980s by Suraiya Faroqhi, Haim Gerber, Daniel Goffman, and others to use and combine these same sources in order to produce more synthetic studies of Anatolian cities and urban life had some success. It is now clear that there was the type of ongoing dialogue between local persons and outsiders – both Ottoman and foreign – that signals a distinct local voice. Nevertheless, these works floundered in identifying and defining these regional identities.²³ One cause for this failure probably is the distracting appeal of the seemingly endless materials in the Ottoman archives. More important, though, is the aforementioned lack of Anatolian biographies and local chronicles.

As we become more aware of such lacunae, imaginative scholars will perhaps discover means to situate and describe local identities. Some such explorations already have begun. For example, the resourceful use of kadi court records are beginning to yield portraits of the beliefs, actions, and social roles of men, women, and children, guildsmen, tradesmen, and apprentices, Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Ottoman Anatolian cities.²⁴ Such representations may prove the existence of more complex, more regional, and subtler senses of horizontal identities than “Turk” and “Greek,” “Muslim” and “Christian,” “Arab” and “Turk” as well as a better sense of who urban notables actually were and how closely they identified themselves with their own cities and regions.

Istanbul of course looms like a titan behind the historiographies of both Anatolian and Arab-Ottoman cities. In one sense, its shadow is justified, for it was the Empire’s capital and thus at the heart of this political, economic, and civilizational entity. Nevertheless, Istanbul’s dominance in the scholarly literature is more a product of myth than historical realities. Whether in admiration or in condemnation, political philosophers from Machiavelli, to Montesquieu, to Marx, to Weber have used the Ottoman polity to exemplify the despotic state with its arbitrary rulers and tightly controlled society. Such a government, it was assumed, possessed both the power and the resolve to deny other cities within its empire any kind of autonomy, unique character, or identity.

This enduring representation is, of course, a fantasy. In reality, this archetypically “despotic” government had little direct control over even its enigmatic capital city, much less the rest of its empire. What the Ottomans accomplished was not rigid central control. Rather, they brilliantly cobbled together a mélange of provincial officials and Islamic, imperial, and local laws into an intricate but flexible and surprisingly decentralized political order. In cities in the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Arab lands, Istanbul

²³ Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*; Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600–1700* (Jerusalem, 1988); and Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650* (Seattle, WA, 1990).

²⁴ Personal communication with Leslie Peirce, who is working on such a study of Aintab.

represented only the most prominent of various strands of power and authority.

Istanbul's historiographic heritage is just as varied as is the city itself. There are a multitude of studies on its government, its commerce, its quarters, its architecture, its art and poetry, its diplomacy, and its Armenian, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, and foreign communities.²⁵ There have been few efforts, however, to integrate these various parts, to examine Istanbul as a unified whole. This piecemeal approach probably reflects not an innate urban chaos but is a consequence of the city's intimidating complexity and the bewildering abundance and often problematic nature of its documentation. Poetic chronicles, of which there are several for the capital city, are an interesting case. These texts can hardly be considered chronicles, since they generally treat the city as a mere backdrop, as an aesthetic frame for the poetry. In other words, these works are just as static as Istanbul's majestic skyline in the sense that they refer to and reflect scenery and monuments rather than the living city – its denizens and society.

Most studies of the Ottoman capital, concerning whichever of its aspects, argue its uniqueness. It was the commercial and political capital of the Empire, and, among Ottoman cities at least, only Cairo rivaled its size. When this giant is compared to other cities at all, they typically are the capitals of other European and world states and empires – Rome, Venice, Vienna, Paris, London, Delhi, Beijing. Much of the literature views each of these sites as culturally and economically rich and parasitic, as cities that combine political and commercial functions. They much less commonly are labeled in terms of religion or location.

Even though both Anatolian and Arab lands remained part of the same empire from 1517 until World War I, the study of cities within the two regions have taken markedly different trajectories. This bifurcation is partly the result of extant sources and partly a consequence of authoritative theoretical frameworks and aggressive ideological and political agendas. This book does not pretend to provide an answer to the quandary created by uneven sources. Nor does it render a theoretical paradigm to rival the idea of the Islamic city, or even, explicitly at least, to challenge the notion of a normative Arab-Islamic city. Its intent, rather, is to present detailed surveys of one Arab Ottoman city, one Anatolian Ottoman city, and the Ottoman capital not only to suggest their distinctive personalities, but also to insist that there exist a multitude of ways in which to imagine them both as unique sites and as types.

Model building has long distinguished urban studies everywhere. Such approaches are fruitful, for they provide typologies and concrete agendas for research. Nevertheless, they also tend to exclude the particular and filter

²⁵ Many of these works are cited in Part Three of this book.

out what makes a city unique and engaging. Urban historians, who often devote their careers to a single city and who are acutely aware of that city's distinctiveness, have searched for alternative procedures. For example, in the 1930s some American urban historians rejected what is often referred to as the "Humanistic" tradition (strikingly similar to the approaches of Lapidus and Hourani), championed particularly by Lewis Mumford, in favor of an urban biographical approach, which "comprehensively tells the 'story' of a single city" and strives to make it almost mortal.²⁶ In the 1960s, a related technique, labeled "New Urban History," examined cities as process and as manifestations of specific types. Such approaches imagine the city, however complex it may seem, as a consummate and almost living social entity in which people live, flourish, and build together. It is in a similar spirit that we envision Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul.

Given our tendencies to regard Istanbul, the "Arab city," and the "Anatolian city" as distinct types of Islamic municipalities, the choices of the Arab Aleppo, the Anatolian Izmir, and the anomalous Istanbul as case studies of Ottoman cities may seem misguided or arbitrary. We believe, however, that there are sound reasons to match these three cities. There is first of all the very fact that we (and several others) have chosen them as the loci of our researches. There is a general paucity of information about Ottoman cities (and even more about Ottoman town and village life). We possess monographs touching certain periods, communities, or structures of virtually every Ottoman municipality; in each case, however, enormous gaps remain. For example, although we know a lot about nineteenth-century Beirut (a city that shares many commercial characteristics with the three we have chosen), its earlier history remains obscure.²⁷ Or, whereas our information about the Jewish communities of Salonika, Safed, and Jerusalem is vast, our grasp of these communities' urban contexts remains uncertain.²⁸ In short, the cities of Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo may be the only Ottoman sites about which we possess enough knowledge even to attempt narrative surveys.

It probably is more the relative richness of sources on these three cities than their anomalous, even deviant, personalities that has drawn researchers

²⁶ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, NY, 1938). A provocative study of the historiography of American urban history is Eric H. Monkmon, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of US Cities and Towns, 1780–1980* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), especially pp. 9–30. A persuasive interdisciplinary approach toward study of the Middle Eastern city is in Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach*, 3rd edn. (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1998), pp. 92–122.

²⁷ Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Cambridge, 1983) and *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley, CA, 1994).

²⁸ Although thanks to Cohen's *Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem*, Singer's *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials*, Ze'evi's *Ottoman Century*, and others our understanding of early modern Jerusalem is rapidly being fleshed out.

to them. The plentiful documentation derives in part from their prominence within the Ottoman Empire. It is due even more, however, to their shared places, which became more pronounced as the Ottoman era progressed, as “middle grounds” between East and West, between the Ottoman and Christian European worlds. In other words, Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul each in its own way constituted a borderland, whether between ethnicities (Aleppo, for example, was not only a hub for international commerce, but also was a middle ground between the Arab and Turkish worlds), between civilizations (Izmir served as an overlap between western European and Ottoman society), or between periods (Istanbul epitomized the movement from Byzantine to Ottoman civilization).

Our three cities were each distinctly innovative and unique. They also were united, perhaps most significantly through the presence in each of an enclave of influential and at times dominant foreigners. Such districts were principally commercial, and most of their inhabitants either served or were themselves Genoese, Venetian, and later French, Dutch, and English merchants. Nevertheless, there also was in each a diplomatic and religious presence, which helped build political and cultural links between the enclaves and the Ottoman state and society. In other words, they were transcultural, and as such served as intense intersections between peoples: cultural fusion as much as anything distinguished the sites.

This continuous presence of Christian Europeans in Ottoman Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo has the profound and practical consequence of providing the researcher with a uniform collection of sources. Comparing and contrasting Istanbul to Ottoman Arab and Anatolian cities is problematic when relying only upon Ottoman documentation, from which one learns so much more about the Arab than the Anatolian notables, or the Anatolian than the Arab relationship between town and country, or the capital city’s than the Anatolian or Arab city’s association with its government. In the cases of our three cities, however, we can circumvent some of these difficulties by complementing these Ottoman sources with Venetian, French, Dutch, and English ones. Through them, we can learn a great deal about intercommunal and international relations and trade in all three of these cities.

One of our foremost purposes is to establish and discuss the various ways in which Arab and Anatolian cities are also Ottoman cities and in which Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul are also Mediterranean cities. Similar statements of course could be made about other cities inside and exterior to the Empire. To try to include such exemplary cases as Salonika, Cairo, Venice, and Dubrovnik, however, would take us beyond our expertise, bring about an unwieldy volume, and defeat our other purpose of furnishing narrative histories of these three unique and extraordinary cities.

Even though we believe that both the Weberian exclusion of and the Arab model for Islamic cities are wanting, our intent in this book is not to

erect a model to counter them. Nor do we mean explicitly to argue that the “Islamic” city is more like the “European” city or that the “Anatolian” city is more like the “Arab” city than previously assumed. Rather, we reject the very definition of European or Arab cities as normative, as the ideal against which other urban civilizations must be measured. Certainly there exist *types* of cities – some of which emphasize the religious more than the profane, some of which are more autonomous than others, some of which boast a stronger civic spirit than others, some of which emphasize commerce more than administration, some of which organized communities around religious buildings and others around markets or town squares, and some of which are more ethnically or religiously diverse than others. Nevertheless, there does not exist a *typical* Ottoman, Arab, or Islamic city that imposes fundamentally unique and thus ghettoizing characteristics upon all such urban centers and their inhabitants.

The search for normative and distinct types of cities has also invited a focus upon the formative and final eras of Ottoman history. On one hand scholars have sought and found certain institutions – the mosque, the bedestan, the market, the fortress – that characterized the establishment of Ottoman sites. On the other they have discovered attributes – the railroad, ethnic and religious tension, and increasingly national identities – that seemed to distinguish Ottoman cities in the Empire’s waning decades. In this volume, we have chosen a different course, emphasizing Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo’s middle periods in order to observe Ottoman cities that were neither taking shape nor perishing. If the fifteenth and sixteenth were the formative centuries for the Ottoman state and society and the nineteenth was the century of decline, then the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries feature a mature stability. Surely we should turn to this middle period in order to explore the nature and character of the Ottoman city.

Such investigations suggest many things, not least of which is the existence of particular public cultures (if not necessarily civic ones) of the very sort that the legacy of Weber’s typology has obscured. To give one example, our three texts each describe a particular association between foreign and indigenous urban communities. The colonies of Europeans in early modern Istanbul (the labyrinthine Galata and Pera), Izmir (the exposed Street of the Franks), and Aleppo (the semi-fortified khans) each took different forms as they followed the distinctive cultural contours of their particular milieus. As a result of the characters of the cities in which they were embedded, in each case foreign inhabitants related with other urban communities in dramatically disparate ways, ranging from a shared and essentially cosmopolitan co-habitation in Izmir to a compelled seclusion in Aleppo. Such foreign communities not only enriched each of these Ottoman cities but also contributed to the formation of a particular public culture.

Finally, a word about the styles and approaches of this work. We

intentionally have not tried to standardize our three studies in the belief that the individual forms underline our central point about urban diversity, personality, and process. Thus, the display of a living and ever-mutating early modern Aleppo proves a powerful antidote to other relatively static depictions of the city; the presentation of an eighteenth-century interplay between provincial, imperial, and foreign forces in Izmir remedies the deceptive sense that the city was little more than a Western outpost where Englishmen and Frenchmen “acted upon” an inert Ottoman backdrop; and the use of imagined biography presents and particularizes the distinctive and engrossing links between Istanbul’s many quarters and communities.

CHAPTER 1

Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire’s caravan city

BRUCE MASTERS

Aleppo, the present metropolis of Syria, is deemed, in importance, the third city in the Ottoman dominions. In situation, magnitude, population, and opulence, it is much inferior to Constantinople and Cairo; nor can it presume to emulate the courtly splendor of either of those cities. But in the salubrity of air, in the solidity and elegance of its private buildings, as well as the convenience and neatness of its streets, Aleppo may be reckoned superior to both . . .

Alexander Russell, eighteenth-century English resident¹

The day will come when one must part from you, city of Aleppo.
It is most appropriate that there will be no joy then
For the truth is, beauty can be found here
In her well-built grandeur.
There are all sorts of merchandise to be found here.
The grace of wealth and goods is beyond counting.
But more than this, her water and air are enchanting
As are her river and her buildings.

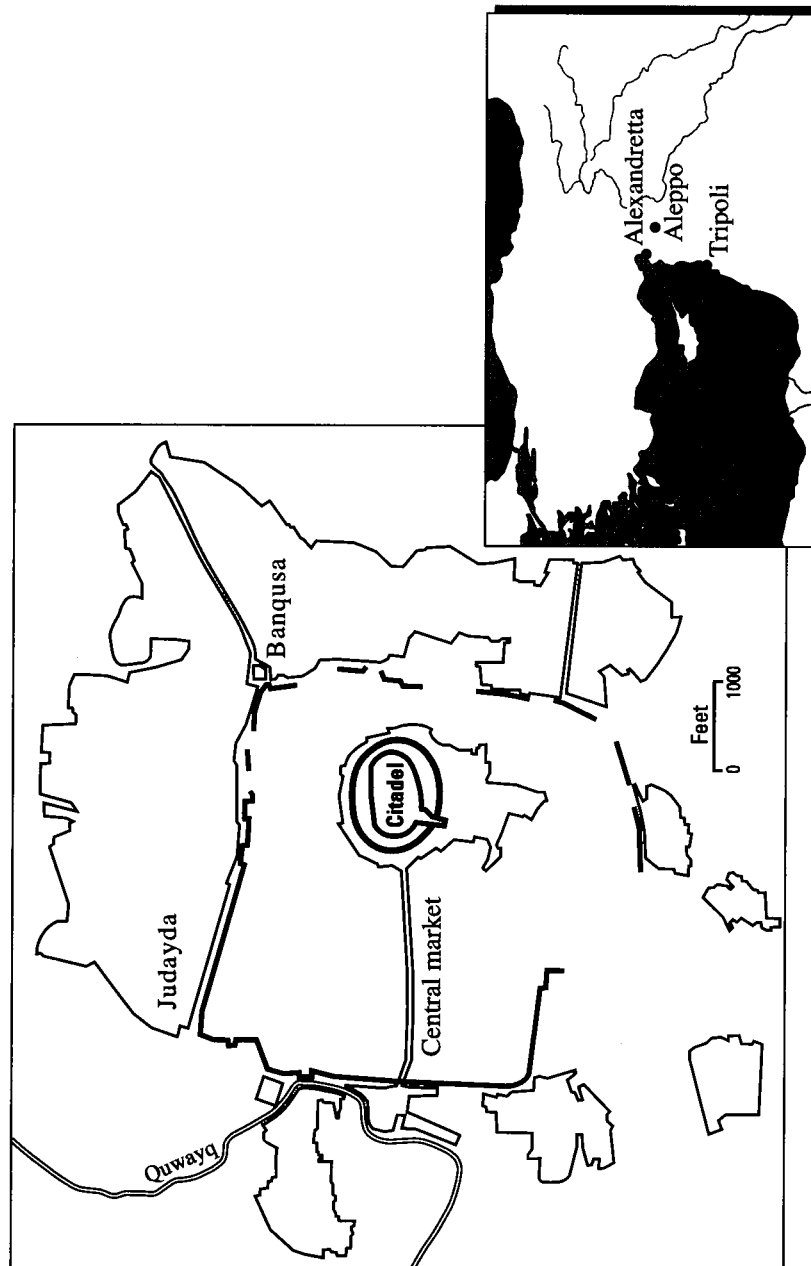
Nâbî, eighteenth century Ottoman divanî poet²

Crowned with an imposing citadel, Aleppo made a lasting impression on all who caught their first glimpse of it during the Ottoman period. Many of the city’s houses, mosques, churches, and markets were built of locally quarried stone. This feature provided the city both with an air of permanence and its sobriquet, *Halab al-Shaba’*, “Aleppo, the milky-white.” The nickname presumed a pun on the city’s name which in Arabic is also the word for milk. This linguistic coincidence, in turn, fit well into the local myth of origin, current in the Ottoman period, that held that the city had been founded when the Prophet Abraham had milked his goats on the citadel mound. In fact, the association of some form of that name to the site goes back to the beginnings of recorded history

In the Ottoman centuries, Aleppo had surrounding gardens, watered by

¹ Alexander Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo* (London, 1794), vol. 1, pp. 1–2.

² Mene Mengi, *Divan Şiirinde Hikemî Tarzın Büyük Temsilçisi, Nâbî* (Ankara, 1987), p. 24.



Map 1 Aleppo

the now largely vanished Quwayq River, but they lacked the verdant appearance of Damascus's Ghuta. From a distance, the city struck most visitors as austere and with little charm. All whose impressions have survived commented on its solidity, order, and cleanliness. Few besides Nâbî, however, penned odes to its beauty. The Aleppines themselves responded to the somber vision their city projected. In their poetry and folk-sayings, they evoked and then carefully cultivated a self-image of themselves as townsmen blessed with sobriety, frugality, and honesty. Most foreign visitors agreed the stereotype was appropriate. These were traits suitable for inhabitants of a city whose renown was vested neither in political nor cultural greatness, but in its trade.

Aleppo's importance as a commercial center in the Ottoman period arose both from its geographical setting and historical developments. The city's probable beginnings stretch back to the origins of urban life in the Middle East. Aleppo was already a major regional market center at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E., when the archives of the Hittites and of those of the kingdom of Mari recorded its name as Halab or Khalappa. One reason for the city's longevity was its tell (the artificial mound upon which its citadel now sits) which was buttressed by several smaller, surrounding hills. Together, they provided one of the best defensive positions in the region. Adding to its defenses, the Quwayq and underground wells provided an abundant and dependable water supply to the site. The combination proved irresistible and guaranteed the location's almost unbroken habitation. Often devastated by marauders, Aleppo was always rebuilt.

The wider geography of the region also served to establish Aleppo as a commercial center. The city is almost equidistant from the Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea which together provided a route water borne traffic could follow with only a short dry land portage passing by Aleppo. The wisdom of this route was evident to many and it formed the most traveled path for trade along the fabled Silk Road between Asia and Europe from at least the early Bronze Age until the arrival of the Ottomans. Adding to the viability of the site, extensive areas of fertile soil surround the city. Beyond them, lie the olive and mulberry orchards of the hill country to the west, and southwest. Aleppo's craftsmen fashioned the fruits of these into soap and silk cloth, the quality of which gained a regional reputation for excellence. To the north, east, and south, the region's diverse tribal peoples: Bedouin, Kurds, and Turkomans, utilized the steppe lands bordering the desert as pasturage for their herds. The tribals sold wool, meat, and rugs to the city-dwellers and provided the pack-animals and the expertise necessary for the caravan trade. They, in turn, were consumers of the manufacture of the city's renowned tent, sword, and saddle-makers. This symbiotic relationship between "desert and sown" allowed Aleppo to function as a desert "port city." But at the same time, resources of water and easily accessible food, coupled with a defensible location, afforded the city's inhabitants an

independence from the tribal chieftains who often interfered in the politics of the less self-sufficient market towns to Aleppo's north or south, Killis and Hama.³

Despite its geographical advantages and antiquity, Aleppo rarely served either as the pre-eminent economic or political center of greater Syria. Usually, a more successful rival – Antioch in the classical period, Damascus in most of the Muslim centuries – overshadowed it. After its occupation by a Muslim army in 637, Aleppo stood on the borders of Christendom and Islam. During the Crusades, Aleppo's citadel which was rebuilt by the Zangids (1128–83) and strengthened by the Ayyubids (1183–1260) stood as a bulwark of Islam against the Franks who held nearby Antioch. The Crusaders besieged the city on several occasions, but its garrison, secure behind the citadel's walls, was able to resist until help arrived. Aleppo was not as lucky with invaders from the east. The city was sacked with much of its population killed or carried away into slavery by the forces of Hülegü (1260) and then Timur (1401). In between, a particularly devastating outbreak of the bubonic plague struck its population in 1348. Nonetheless, people returned and rebuilt the city after each trauma.

Following the Crusades and again in the wake of Timur's devastation, the Mamluk dynasty (1260–1517) with its capital in Cairo sought to revive Aleppo as the northern anchor of the realm. Enjoying the patronage of the Mamluk beys, the city entered into a period of prosperity, previously unparalleled in the Muslim centuries. Although the shift in trade routes that would bring this about were already in motion before Timur's visitation, the prolonged peace that followed it provided the necessary climate for commerce to flourish. An important boost to Aleppo's position as a commercial center came with the fall of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia to the Mamluks in 1375. With the destruction of Ayas, its port city, merchants carrying Asian merchandise to the Mediterranean shifted their route south to Aleppo. In recognition of Aleppo's position in its expanding trade network, the Venetian senate appointed a vice-consul to the city by the end of the fourteenth century, in time to witness the city's sack by Timur. That office was upgraded to a full consulate by 1422.⁴ The principal products the Italians sought in Aleppo's markets were ginger and pepper from India and the East Indies (earning the town the nickname, "Little India"), Iranian raw silk, and Syrian cotton. The leading European exports to Syria in this period were Italian silk cloths, tin, and specie.

Although Damascus remained the paramount provincial capital of greater Syria throughout the Mamluk period, Aleppo benefited architecturally from the patronage of the Mamluk beys who built mosques and

³ Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskân Siyasetleri ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi* (Ankara, 1988); Dick Douwes, *The Ottomans in Syria: A History of Justice and Oppression* (London, 1999).

⁴ Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), pp. 121, 325.

madrassahs, and perhaps more importantly for the city's commercial future, embarked on a building program to expand and improve the city's markets. This patronage reflected their recognition that Aleppo was already beginning to surpass Damascus as the regional emporium for Asian products. This development had not occurred out of any conscious policy the Mamluks had implemented, but rather came from the growing insecurity on the alternative land routes. The overland caravan routes from the Hijaz and Baghdad that had helped to make Damascus and its satellite port of Beirut major Levantine emporia in the early Mamluk period were increasingly plagued in the fifteenth century by a resurgence of Bedouin military power and were no longer entirely safe or reliable.

Despite the commercial prosperity Aleppo enjoyed, the final decades of Mamluk rule were despotic and often cruel for its inhabitants. Aleppo's citizenry were, therefore, not at all sorry when the army of the Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Selim I (1512–20) defeated the Mamluk Sultan, Qansuh al-Ghawri, on the field of Marj Dabiq in 1516. After the battle, the local notables welcomed the Ottoman sultan with feasts that lasted several days and gifts of silken robes. With the conquest of Syria and Egypt a year later, the entire eastern littoral of the Mediterranean was firmly in Ottoman hands, leaving the Ottoman state as the only major Muslim Mediterranean power. Sultan Kanûni Süleyman (1520–66) extended Ottoman hegemony even further, to Iraq and both coasts of the Red Sea. With Ottoman suzerainty projecting over the sea lanes and caravan routes to the east, the Empire had become a world power, ready to challenge the expansion of European interests into the Indian Ocean.⁵

The replacement of one sultan by another did not initially signal any major revision of Aleppo's historical political subordination to Damascus. Following the precedents established by the Mamluk regime, the Ottomans placed Aleppo under the authority of Damascus's governor. This decision most probably reflected several realities. First, the Ottomans were politically conservative and rarely altered pre-existing administrative practices in the regions they conquered. This was especially true for regions that were already under a Muslim government at the time of their conquest. In addition, Damascus held the prestige both for having once served as Islam's capital under the Umayyads (681–750) and as the principal starting point for the annual pilgrimage caravan to the holy city of Mecca. It would be reasonable, therefore, for the sultans to recognize Damascus's regional position by naming its governor as the paramount governor of Syria. But events would prove that decision short sighted.

With the accession of Süleyman to the Ottoman throne in 1520, the governor of Damascus, the former Mamluk Janbirdi al-Ghazali, rose in

⁵ Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany, NY, 1994).

rebellion, declaiming that his oath of fealty to Selim did not extend to his son. The officer in charge of Aleppo, Karaca Ahmed Paa, refused to follow al-Ghazali's standard. When the Damascene forces reached the city, he barred the city's gates and rallied the townspeople to support the Ottoman claim to Aleppo. Damascus was soon after subdued and sacked by an Ottoman army sent to relieve Aleppo. Perhaps in recognition that the Empire needed an alternative power center in Syria to forestall any equally ambitious governor in Damascus, Aleppo was upgraded to a full provincial capital by 1534, with its governor and chief judges appointed directly from Istanbul and responsible, in turn, to authorities in Istanbul rather than in Damascus.⁶

The treasury of the province, however, remained linked to that of Damascus for some time to come, under the rubric of the *Arabistan defterdari*. This office was located in Aleppo, but held the responsibility for the collection of all the revenues of greater Syria and northern Iraq until 1567.⁷ Besides a generalized Ottoman tendency toward bureaucratic inertia, the reasons for the maintenance of the older Mamluk practice in regards to revenue are unclear. Even more uncertain are the reasons why Aleppo was chosen to house it over Damascus. That decision, however, continued to confuse the issue of the individual prerogatives of each provincial governor in Syria. After the separation of the two provincial treasuries, the governors of Damascus would periodically claim the right to collect taxes in Aleppo's hinterlands. This situation was aggravated by an unequal balance of forces available to each governor. For most of the sixteenth century, the sultans garrisoned their special infantry units in Syria, the janissaries, primarily in southern Syria: Damascus, Palestine, and along the hajj route, rather than in relatively tranquil northern Syria.⁸ As such, the province of Aleppo was continually subjected to forays by Damascus based troops to collect taxes while its governors were either hard pressed to respond or completely impotent to stop them.

The sixteenth century: becoming Ottoman

Before their conquest of Syria, the Ottomans had accumulated several centuries of experience in empire building. This led them to absorb newly

conquered territories in either of two ways. Either they incorporated the territories directly into their provincial administration, or they left them in the hands of regional political elites who predated the conquests. In the latter case, the locals collected revenues in the sultan's name, but otherwise enjoyed a high degree of regional autonomy. By contrast, the first method always entailed a careful survey of the territory conquered and its subsequent subdivision into agricultural units (*timars*). These *timars* might consist of entire villages which the state would assign to loyal, often Turkish-speaking, cavalrymen as salary in return for military service. Through this method, the cash-strapped state could avoid paying its military with coin. At the same time, the fiscal system helped to incorporate the conquered region into the body-politic of the empire through the settlement of individuals faithful to the sultan. In the Balkans, this process could hasten a cultural Turkification of the local population as in the case of parts of Bulgaria, or their conversion to Islam, as happened in Bosnia and Albania.

The absorption of Syria into the Ottoman Empire presented challenges different from those previously experienced by the state. Historically, the Empire had expanded as a result of *gaza* (holy war) into the Christian Balkans, or wars against other Turkic dynasties in Anatolia with whom the Ottomans shared a language and a political culture. With the conquest first of Syria, then Egypt, and later still Iraq, the Ottomans found themselves ruling over a subject people who, even though they were fellow Muslims, were heirs to a sophisticated urban culture, expressed in the Arabic language. The Ottomans arrived in Syria with an equally well-articulated vision of Islam and the political nature of the sultanate, as well as with a rich, secular, artistic culture of their own. The Ottoman tradition had evolved in Anatolia under the influence of myriad, and very diverse, traditions: Persian, Byzantine, Turkic, Mongol, but had drawn little direct inspiration from the Arab lands. As a result, the Ottomans and their new Arab subjects could have divergent understandings of what it meant to be Muslim. Of course, Ottoman culture also contained a strong strain of Sunni legalism which the Ottoman elite shared with urban Syrians. Significant differences existed even there, however, as the Syrian Muslims historically followed the Shafa'i school of Islamic law while the official law school of the Ottoman state was Hanafi.

Although all the Syrian lands were surveyed almost immediately following their conquest, the Ottomans showed some initial ambivalence about which provincial system was to be implemented. After al-Ghazali's revolt in 1520, however, the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo were provided with Turkish-speaking Ottomans as governors and the *timar* regime was instituted. The application of the conventional Ottoman patterns of provincial governance drew interior Syria securely into the

⁶ There is some debate as to when the province was divided. In their classic *Règlements fiscaux ottoman: les provinces syriennes* (Beirut, 1951) Robert Mantran and Jean Sauvaget state the separation occurred right after the revolt, but İ. Metin Kunt published in his *The Sultan's Servants* (New York, NY, 1983) a document from the Ottoman archives that indicates that all of greater Syria, and even Adana, were still under the jurisdiction of a governor general in Damascus in 1527.

⁷ Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine, 1552-1615* (Oxford, 1960), p. 42.

⁸ Adnan Bakhit, "Aleppo and the Ottoman Military in the 16th Century," *Al-Abhath* 27 (1978-79): 27-38.

Ottoman orbit.⁹ Their provincial administrations were headed by Turkish-speaking Ottomans and Turkish-speaking cavalymen were settled in many of the villages of the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo. The governors of other Arabic-speaking provinces were often drawn, by contrast, from local elites: mamluks in the case of Egypt and Baghdad, tribal chieftains in the provinces of Tripoli in Lebanon and Basra in Iraq.

This absorption of Aleppo into the Ottoman Empire introduced a new class of individuals, Ottoman, i.e. Turkish-speaking, soldiers and bureaucrats into the city's population mixture. These were collectively called "*rijal al-Bab*" (men of the gate)¹⁰ by the native Aleppines. Although twentieth-century Arab historians often see these Ottomans as occupiers and the precursors of later European imperialists,¹¹ it is not at all evident that Arabic-speakers in Aleppo in the first centuries of Ottoman rule considered their new masters to be completely alien. They clearly recognized, however that the "Ottomans" were ethnically differentiated from themselves as is indicated by their general assignation of "*Rum*" (Anatolian) to the Ottomans. That difference was especially noted when Ottoman jurists proposed interpretations of Islamic law that ran counter to the tradition of law as practiced in the Arabic-speaking urban centers.¹² The actual Arabic word for "Ottoman," either '*Uthmani* or '*Uthmanli*, was rarely used in Aleppo until the eighteenth century.

The differences and similarities that existed between these two formidable Sunni cultures, one articulated in Ottoman Turkish and represented by the "men of the gate," and the other in Arabic, no doubt created ambivalence for the contemporary Syrians over their incorporation into the Empire. While the Mamluks and their predecessors had relied on the Muslim intelligentsia of Syria's cities to define the state, the Ottoman sultans already had a Turkish-speaking Sunni elite to advise them on matters pertaining to law and political traditions. Rather, it was up to the Syrians to negotiate a middle ground for themselves that would allow for the maintenance of their positions of influence through service to the state. But Syria's own Islamic traditions and history also gave it a pedigree the Ottoman could not ignore,

nor the Syrians forget. Some sort of balance had, by necessity, to be reached by both sides.¹³

Surprisingly, perhaps, linguistic differences between ruler and ruled never apparently engendered ethnic conflict, at least not until the late nineteenth century. This has at least two plausible explanations. First, the Muslims in the city regarded the regime in Istanbul as being legitimately Muslim and its sultan was, therefore, their sultan. Here the role of Muslim Holy Law (*Şeriat*) as the ideological underpinning of the state was crucial in winning the allegiance of the sultans' Arab subjects. A second, and perhaps equally important reason was that the Ottoman administration in Aleppo had, at its fringe, a large number of local people who benefited from that regime's control of their city. The Turkish-speaking governors were rotated so frequently that some of those assigned to the city never arrived. In their stead, effective administration was administered by the *kaim-makam* (literally, "standing in the place of") and the *muhassil* (tax-collector), both of whom were often of local origin. Similarly, while the chief kadi of the city was always a Turkish-speaking appointee from the capital, most of his lieutenants, as well as the city's lesser kadis were local Arabs. In this way, the Aleppines were able to mediate the Ottoman centuries, taking over the *de facto* running of their city, even while serving under the supervision of the "men of the gate."

Yet there can be no question that the presence of these official Ottomans from Istanbul had an impact on the city in ways that the presence of the Mamluk emirs had not. Aleppo's Muslim elite sent their sons to be educated in the madrassahs of Istanbul and other Anatolian religious centers, especially Konya. The inevitable result was an "Ottomanization," i.e. Turkification, of much of the popular culture of Aleppo as the two languages and traditions came face to face in daily interactions. Typical of this hybridization, Syrian mosques built in the Ottoman period reflected Ottoman architectural tastes: Byzantine domes and pencil-shaped minarets, but retained indigenous architectural details in their wall tiles and the characteristically Syrian black and white striped exteriors. They were, in effect, like the elite who helped design and later staffed them, both Ottoman and Syrian. From music to food, from political and legal theory to coffee-house entertainment, in the sufi religious orders that flourished in the city and the religious heresies adopted by villagers in the countryside, there was little in northern Syrian culture that was not in some way influenced by the cross-fertilization from Anatolia, a process accelerated by Ottoman control of both sides of the linguistic divide between Arabs and Turks.

Having secured Aleppo as an integral province of the Empire, the

⁹ Margaret Venzke, "Syria's Land-Taxation in the Ottoman 'Classical Age' Broadly Considered," in *V. Milletarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Konresi: Tebliğler* (Ankara, 1990), pp. 419-34.

¹⁰ This reflects a commonplace Ottoman synecdoche for the Sultan in that his authority is represented as the "bab-ı Hümayûn" (Imperial Gate) and predates the general western metaphor for Ottoman government, "the Porte" which was derived from the High Gate (bab-ı âli) of the Grand Vezir. See Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford, 1996), p. 23.

¹¹ For example, D. 'Abdallah Hanna, *Harakat al-'amma al-dimashqiyya fi al-qarn al-thamin 'ashar wa al-tasi' 'ashar* (Beirut, 1985).

¹² Michael Winter, "A Polemical Treatise by 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi against a Turkish Scholar on the Religious Status of the *Dhimmi*," *Arabica* 35 (1988): 92-103.

¹³ I derive this conception of mediation between two cultures from Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991), p. x.

Ottoman elites viewed the city and its commerce as a good investment for both this world and the next. Over the course of the first decades of Ottoman rule, successive governors added greatly to both the city's skyline and commercial infrastructure. Hüsrev Paşa in 1546 and Mehmed Paşa in 1556 established pious endowments (*waqf*) which financed the construction of new mosques in the Ottoman style. Mehmed Paşa, established a *waqf* for the caravansary (*khan*), known locally as the Khan al-Gumruk in 1574. The Khan al-Gumruk was the city's largest commercial edifice and served as the residence for many European merchants over the following three centuries. Yet another governor, Behram Paşa, established both a mosque and extensive market complex in 1583. All told, construction in the first half century of Ottoman rule more than doubled the commercial core of Aleppo, called by locals simply "the city" (*al-madina*). This mercantile hub included fifty-six separate markets and fifty-three caravansaries.¹⁴ Together, the new construction, when added to that formerly erected by the Mamluks, lay at the city's commercial heart. This commercial core consisted of over a square kilometer of interlocking streets, filled with shops, workshops, mosques, baths, and caravansaries, all under one contiguous roof. The Aleppo *suq* was a marvel to all who visited the city, and in their minds it was surpassed only by Istanbul's famed *Kapalı Çarşı*.

It was not just the Ottomans who recognized Aleppo's commercial importance in the sixteenth century. In 1545, the Venetians transferred their consul for Syria from Damascus to Tripoli, closing down their direct operations in Damascus, and from Tripoli to Aleppo in 1548. This move came in recognition that the pepper and other spices from the East Indies were increasingly following the Persian Gulf/Euphrates route, rather than using the Red Sea passage that had favored Damascus. But Aleppo's markets also offered another attraction – silk. Iranian silk from the Caspian Sea region of Gilan was especially prized by the Europeans, but locally produced silk from Antioch and the Euphrates, and from further afield in Anatolia was also available. Local weavers preferred the silk from Bursa and Tokat above all others and so they were rarely in competition with European bidders for Iranian silk. But their willingness to pay high prices for Anatolian silk often caused supply problems for the Empire's other silk weaving centers such as Istanbul and Bursa.¹⁵

The presence of the silk market in Aleppo in the sixteenth century was not new. The city had emerged as the market of choice for the Armenian merchants bringing Iranian silk to the west in the fifteenth century. The reason for their choice of Aleppo over its competitors was largely pragmatic; it was closer to their center in Julfa on the Araxes River, the current border between Azerbaijan and Iran, than other comparable emporia. It

was also safer as central Anatolia often proved to be a violent place in the fifteenth century. Although these merchants remained loyal to Aleppo throughout the sixteenth century, a changing economic and political climate in the seventeenth century would tempt them toward Aleppo's emerging rival for the trade – Izmir.

The attraction of Aleppo's silk market was fueled by an upturn in the demand for silk in Europe as local textile manufacturing increased in northwestern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In London alone, it was estimated that the number of people employed in the manufacture of silk cloth rose from three hundred in 1600 to over ten thousand in 1640.¹⁶ To supply the growing demand for raw silk, English and French merchants sought to challenge the virtual Venetian monopoly over the Levant trade. The French established consular representation in the city by 1557. In 1581, the English Levant Company received its charter from Queen Elizabeth I, marking the beginning of a long and profitable relationship between it and Aleppo.¹⁷

Damascus was listed as one of the cities in which the Company was chartered to operate, but no company factor ever took up residence there. Rather, the first Levant Company consul in Syria arrived in Tripoli in 1583. A vice-consul, William Barrett, settled in Aleppo in the same year. By 1586, Aleppo was designated as the consul's chief residence for Syria, a reflection of the city's central role in the silk trade. Aleppo remained the Company's headquarters in Syria until the Company itself was dissolved in 1825. In the last decades before the Company's demise, however, the consulship in Aleppo was often vacant. The Dutch, following their European trading rivals, established a consul in Aleppo in 1613, but they never established a major trading presence in Aleppo. Rather, they preferred Izmir where they concentrated their commercial activity in the Levant. The lack of a consistent Dutch presence in Aleppo has been ascribed to the uncertainties of the silk trade in Syria and to the fact that the Dutch lacked the broadcloth which the English and French successfully bartered for silk in Aleppo. They, therefore, had to pay for their purchases in Aleppo with cash. Faced with a potential bullion drain if they were to remain competitive in Aleppo, the Dutch specialized instead on the primary products available in Izmir.¹⁸

Aleppo had won its place as an international emporium largely because of its convenience for the caravans from the east. It was already an

¹⁶ Alfred Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London, 1935), p. 76.

¹⁷ Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1967).

¹⁸ G. R. Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the Threshold of Felicity: Ottoman–Dutch Relations During the Embassy of Cornelius Calkoen at the Sublime Porte, 1726–1744* (Istanbul, 1975); Niels Steensgaard, "Consul and Nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15 (1967): 13–55.

¹⁴ André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris: 1985).

¹⁵ Damascus, Awamir al-Sultaniyya (hereafter AS), Aleppo vol. II, p. 124.

established commercial center when the Europeans arrived in the Levant, thanks to the investments made by the Mamluk emirs in its commercial infrastructure. It could offer such amenities as public baths and well-maintained caravansaries, as well as protection, to the merchants traveling with the caravans. Other incentives for traveling merchants to choose the city's markets as their final destination were the fine locally produced cloth, soap, and leather work. These goods, as well as coffee brought into the city by pilgrims returning from the hajj, were purchased by the merchants from Iran or India and transported back on the camels which had brought the silk from Iran or indigo and printed cotton cloth from India via Basra. Despite the availability of these other goods, the major draw for the Iranian merchants was silver. Both local merchants and the Europeans were willing to pay for Iranian silk with bullion, although the English, in particular, sought to avoid doing so if at all possible. This created a continual eastward drain of specie throughout the Ottoman period, a potentially damaging economic reality of which the sultans were aware.¹⁹ But while they reduced tariffs on imported bullion to encourage its import into their realm, the Ottomans never forbade its export.

As long as the potential for profitable exchange remained possible, the caravans continued to wind their way to Aleppo carrying Iran's silk and the Europeans followed suit. One of the disadvantages facing Aleppo for trade with Europe, however, was that it, alone among the Levantine commercial cities that thrived in this period of exchange between East and West, was not a port. Initially, the Europeans opted to use the port facilities offered by Tripoli. Tripoli was, however, ultimately unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The most compelling were its distance from Aleppo, eight days by donkey or camel, and the conditions along the routes to the city. There were two possible caravan trails that led from Aleppo to Tripoli: an interior one that passed through the towns of Hama and Homs and a coastal one along the Mediterranean littoral. The first option, although a part of the hajj route and, therefore, subject to the surveillance of, and protection by Ottoman forces, was often exposed to Bedouin attacks. The coastal route was not much safer as it was subject to exaction by Alawi clans operating out of their mountain redoubts.

Further weakening Tripoli's attraction for the Europeans was its government. For most of the sixteenth century, members of the Sayfa family held the governorship of Tripoli. This family provided the Turkoman paramount chieftains of the Kisrawan region of present day Lebanon and could raise a sizable army of mounted kinsmen at their beck and call. The family, their clan, and clients were only intermittently under direct Ottoman control as

they had become adept at using the central government's weakness to promote their own interests. Outside the direct control of the Porte, they extracted as much revenue as they could from the Europeans. They then used this cash to secure their political position, by proffering bribes to Istanbul and gifts to their retainers.²⁰

Faced with the drawbacks inherent in using Tripoli as a port due to its rulers and distance from Aleppo, the Europeans surreptitiously began to use the bay at Alexandretta (İskenderun) as an anchorage for their ships. Despite the fact that its shoreline was a swamp infested by mosquitoes, the bay was only a three or four day mule journey from Aleppo. Furthermore, the pleasant hill town of Antioch broke the journey and provided shelter from marauders. Alexandretta held another advantage in that it was under the direct administration of the governors in Aleppo. Despite imperial orders to the contrary, they generally looked the other way as the Europeans off-loaded their goods in the bay. The motive behind this lax attitude was transparent. The governors could collect customs duties on the European imports twice: once in Alexandretta and again in Aleppo.

By 1590, the Europeans were almost exclusively using Alexandretta as their port for Aleppo. It was not until 1593, however, that an imperial order established a customs station there. Both the governor and local merchants in Aleppo welcomed this move which they had helped to engineer. It was bitterly resisted by the Sayfas who rightly saw the transfer as greatly reducing the attraction of their home base for trade. They succeeded in getting a counter-order closing Alexandretta down in 1605, but Aleppo was in open rebellion in that year and did not heed the Porte's directive. A second order was issued in 1609. The Europeans found the closure of Alexandretta intolerable and acted in a rare show of solidarity to bring pressure on the authorities in Istanbul for a reversal. Their efforts worked, as the customs station in Alexandretta was restored to operation in 1612.²¹ From that date until 1939 when it was annexed into the Republic of Turkey, Alexandretta remained Aleppo's chief outlet to the Mediterranean. Although the Europeans built warehouses, homes, and even churches in Alexandretta, there was no local interest in developing the site and the port remained for most of the Ottoman period little more than a European village, a way station on the road to Aleppo.

The silk trade of the seventeenth century

Two major challenges to Aleppo's prosperity emerged at the start of the seventeenth century. The first was locally based, brought on by the rebellion

¹⁹ Naima, the Aleppo born seventeenth-century Ottoman historian, warned of the consequences of this silver drain in his history. Lewis Thomas, *A Study of Naima*, ed. Norman Itzkowitz (New York, 1972), pp. 144-45.

²⁰ Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, *Provincial Leaderships in Syria, 1575-1650* (Beirut, 1985), pp. 11-66.

²¹ London, PRO, *Calendar of State Papers: Venice* (London: 1900, 1904), vol. X, p. 318; vol. XI, pp. 267, 284.

of the Kurdish chieftain Ali Canpulatoğlu. The second was unleashed by Shah Abbas (1587–1629) who sought to divert Iranian silk away from the Ottoman Empire, his ideological enemy. Although the rebellion of Ali Canpulatoğlu arose out of a personal grievance, it was also linked to Aleppo's importance as a commercial center. Ali and his uncle, Hüseyin, had achieved a local renown that extended beyond their home town of Killis by organizing the defense of Aleppo against the janissaries from Damascus who had continued their tax-collecting activities in Aleppo throughout the sixteenth century. In 1599, Aleppo's governor, Hacc Ibrahim Paşa, petitioned Istanbul to establish a permanent janissary garrison in the citadel. The beneficial effect of the sultan's having granted Ibrahim Paşa's request was immediate. The new garrison succeeded in resisting the Damascus based troops that year, but with the governor's removal from office in the following year, the garrison was disbanded and chaos returned.²²

Hüseyin's tribesmen were drawn into the conflict in 1601 and again in 1603. In recognition that his forces were all that stood between order and anarchy in Aleppo, the sultan granted him the governorship of Aleppo province in 1603, the first local figure to be so honored. His elevation was bitterly opposed by the governor already in place, Nasuh Paşa, who reportedly fumed that if the sultan had appointed a black slave to replace him, he would acquiesce but he could not do so for a son of the Canpulats. This remark was interpreted by contemporary Ottoman historians as representing the resistance of a member of the Ottoman military elite to a tribal upstart. His resistance was more than verbal, however. In order to claim his office, Hüseyin's troops had to fight their way into the city. The question of which governor would command the citadel was eventually resolved by a delegation of local notables who insisted that the sultan's writ be recognized and Nasuh Paşa withdrew.

The step of awarding a Kurdish chieftain the governorship of one of the Empire's largest cities came, no doubt, as the sultan recognized that his administration no longer possessed the military might to secure his vast domains. Indeed this period in Ottoman history witnessed a series of provincial revolts known collectively as *Celâli* in which the very future of the dynasty was threatened. In response, the state had to rely on locally recruited military forces to maintain a semblance of order in the provinces, even if that meant a reduction in the sultan's ability to claim absolute sovereignty. Hüseyin's well-armed Kurdish kinsmen had moved to fill the political void in northern Syria and the state reciprocated by awarding him a governorship. Istanbul remained wary of Hüseyin's local power-base, however, and shortly thereafter, ordered him to aid the Ottoman campaign against Iran in 1605. Before his Kurdish forces could arrive at the front, the

²² Bakhit, "Aleppo and the Ottoman Military in the 16th Century."

Ottoman army suffered a major defeat at Urumia. When Hüseyin showed up on the battlefield after the debacle, the angry, defeated general accused him of treason. He was summarily executed and his head sent to the Porte.

The leadership of the clan passed to Ali, who raised the standard of revolt in revenge for what he considered to be the unjustified execution of his uncle. Seeking to secure the trade routes of northern Syria, Ali quickly moved southward and defeated the rival Sayfa family. In control of northern Syria and with Aleppo as his capital, Ali entered into direct negotiations with the various European consuls in the city, guaranteeing them that trade would be protected and unlawful exaction and bribery ended under his regime. For two years the sultan played a careful diplomatic game with Ali. At one point, he even recognized Ali's governorship of Aleppo. But as soon as the sultan could raise an army to suppress the rebel, he dispatched it against Aleppo in the autumn of 1607. Defeated on the field of battle, Ali accepted the Ottoman terms for surrender. He was taken to Rumania where he held a titular government office until his execution for treason in 1610 at Belgrade.²³

After Ali's ignominious departure from the region, the Canpulatoğlu clan split in two when one collateral branch moved to Lebanon where they would re-emerge as the Druze clan of Janbulad. The remainder of the family stayed in the Jabal al-Kurd, astride the current Syrian-Turkish frontier, where they dominated the politics of Killis down through the eighteenth century. Although Ali has remained a mythic hero in the Kurdish ballads sung in the Killis region until the present, the Kurds never again posed a serious challenge for the political dominance of northern Syria. Nevertheless, the period of the Canpulatoğlu rebellion demonstrated to the Ottoman leadership that Aleppo was far too important to be allowed to slip into autonomy, much less independence. To ensure this, the Ottoman state rotated the city's governors frequently to disallow precisely the type of power base that governors were able to establish for themselves in other parts of the sultan's Arab domains. While this policy helped to heighten the political anarchy in the city's streets in the eighteenth century, it prevented the rise of any locally based political force that could challenge directly the sultan's ultimate authority over the city and its inhabitants. For the sultans, institutionalized anarchy was better than order, especially if political order might lead to secession.

Shah Abbas proved a more serious challenge to Aleppo's status as a major commercial center than did Canpulatoğlu Ali Paşa. At the close of the sixteenth century, the Europeans no longer found the cost of spices

²³ Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The Revolt of Ali Pasha Janbulad (1605–1607) in the Contemporary Arabic Sources and its Significance," in *VII. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* (Ankara: 1983), pp. 1515–34; William Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion 1000–1020/1591–1611* (Berlin, 1993); Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: the Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY, 1994).

available in Aleppo's markets to be competitive with those on offer in either Lisbon or Amsterdam as the cost of sea transport had finally undercut that of the caravans.²⁴ Instead, they began to focus their acquisitive intentions in Aleppo almost entirely on Iranian silk. This is not to say that spices no longer followed the ancient trade routes to the Mediterranean. For at least another century and a half, spices and coffee brought by caravan were still cheaper in Syria than those brought into the Levant by European ships. Nevertheless, although the English factors continued to monitor the costs of spices and coffee in Aleppo throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, silk, either Iranian or Syrian, was the principal commodity of interest for the English merchants in Aleppo. Other items purchased in the city's markets, locally produced raw silk and cotton yarn, as well as gall-nuts from Kurdistan, were of secondary importance and most probably would not have alone drawn European traders to the city.

The ambitions of Shah Abbas threatened Aleppo's central role in the silk trade as he sought to divert the transport of Iranian silk away from his arch-rivals, the Ottomans. He was abetted in this by the actions of European trading companies, such as the English East India Company and the Netherlands VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie), which held charters from their respective governments for trade in the Persian Gulf, but not the Mediterranean. The stock-holders of these companies viewed the prosperous Iranian silk trade as an integral component of the Indian Ocean trading zone and they sought to divert the shah's silk to Persian Gulf seaports from where it could be loaded on to their ships. Their attempts were resisted by the smaller English Levant Company and its sister Dutch *Directie van den Levantschen Handel en de Navigatie op de Middellandsche Zee* (Directorate of Levantine Trade and Navigation in the Mediterranean).

All the cards were in Shah Abbas's hands, however, and for a decade between 1619 and Shah Abbas's death in 1629, very little Iranian silk reached Aleppo.²⁵ Faced with a dramatic demise of the silk trade in Aleppo, the Europeans contemplated closing down their operations in the city. The French and Venetians attempted to open their own direct trading links to Iran, but the more powerfully armed Dutch and English commercial fleets denied them access beyond the Straits of Hormuz. The French, in particular, began to view Lebanese raw silk as a practical substitute for that of Iran and many French trading houses shifted their factors to Sidon and Tripoli so as to be closer to its source. The English, almost alone, maintained a stoic presence in Aleppo, but their factors suffered sustained losses on their investments for over a decade. With Shah Abbas's death,

²⁴ C. H. Wake, "The Changing Pattern of Europe's Pepper and Spice Imports, ca. 1400-1700," *Journal of European Economic History* 8 (1979): 361-403.

²⁵ Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: the East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago, IL, 1973).

however, trade resumed its former channels, largely due to the wishes of the Iranian merchants, and Aleppo re-emerged, as the primary market for Iranian silk.

The chief purveyors of Iran's silk in this period were members of the Armenian community of New Julfa, that had been built by Shah Abbas outside of his capital, Isfahan, after he had destroyed the original Julfa. Abbas enhanced the central role the Julfa merchants already played in the trade by giving them a virtual monopoly over the marketing of his country's silk output. In this way, he established the merchants of New Julfa as "his merchants" whom he apparently hoped would increase his revenues while reducing those that would accrue to the Ottoman Treasury.²⁶ Their importance to Aleppo's trade was recognized by the Ottoman authorities who by 1690, granted the Julfa community in Aleppo several exemptions from customary Muslim legal practice in regards to paying the tax assessed on non-Muslim (*jizya*) and inheritance procedures,²⁷ and by the English Levant Company factors who referred to all Iranian merchants indiscriminately as "Chefalines" in their letters.

The court records of Aleppo provide evidence, however, that Anatolian Armenians and Christian Arabs from Aleppo were also involved in the trade, traveling to Iran on their own, or as agents for Muslim investors in Aleppo. Interestingly, Muslim merchants from either side of the frontier rarely traveled between the two often warring states. There were isolated exceptions to this observation, as in the case of the disposition of the estates of two Iranian Muslim merchants who died en route to Aleppo from Baghdad in 1610 and the registration of a settlement of a trade agreement between a merchant and his two Aleppo Muslim agents who had returned from Iran to the city in 1707.²⁸ These are, however, exceptions that accentuate the general trend. The paucity of such cases registered in the courts when compared with a very active Muslim involvement with trade to Egypt or India, for example, is striking. This suggests that Muslim merchants on either side of the Sunni-Shi'a religious divide were wary about crossing into the domain of the "heretic," although Iranian Shi'a merchants continued to visit Baghdad and were found even as far afield as Bursa.²⁹

In return for Iran's silk, the Europeans offered the Armenians silver specie or woolen broadcloth. The broadcloth was used in Syria to make

²⁶ R. W. Ferrier, "The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review* 2nd ser., 26 (1973): 38-62; Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities in Isfahan: the Armenian Community of Isfahan, 1587-1722," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974): 652-80.

²⁷ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXXIV, p. 206.

²⁸ Istanbul, BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver (henceforth MM) 7439, also reported by Halil Sahillioğlu, "Bir Tüccar Kervanı," *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi* 2 (1968): 63-69; Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. II, p. 117.

²⁹ Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 117-21.

outer garments for both men and women, and in Iran as cheap floor coverings. The almost insatiable demand for broadcloth in the Levant helped fuel a nascent English textile industry. By the end of the seventeenth century, the English clearly dominated the European side of the trade in Aleppo. Laurant d'Arvieux, the French consul in the city in 1683, estimated France imported a million livres of goods from Aleppo, while England's trade amounted to six million. This total trade volume for France was further reduced to only 400,000 livres in value by 1700.³⁰ The decline of French commercial activity in Aleppo was the apparent result of several conditions: the increasing availability of Iranian silk in Izmir, the re-deployment of French merchants to exploit the Lebanese market, and the inability of French broadcloths to compete with the English product among the Aleppine consumers. In contrast, Aleppo accounted for almost half the total imports to London from the eastern Mediterranean carried by the Levant Company in the second half of the seventeenth century. Aleppo's importance for England's trade was reflected by the number of Englishmen acting as factors in the city. Henry Maundrell, the English chaplain to the Levant Company in the city, reported over forty of his countrymen resident there in 1697, while only sixteen French merchants and two Dutchmen lived in the city.³¹

We learn from the city's Islamic court records that there were resident merchant communities in the city from North Africa, India, and Bukhara, as well as the Europeans and the Iranian Armenians. The Indian community, in particular, seems to have received a degree of official recognition from the Ottoman state. In 1639, they produced a *fatwa* (judicial ruling) from Aleppo's mufti which stated that all the members of the community were Muslim and therefore exempt from paying the *jizya*.³² Such non-Ottoman Muslim communities were, for the most part, composed of small-scale peddlers whose economic activity was overshadowed by that of the Europeans and the Armenians. There was at least one exception to this generalization as well, however.

In 1645, an Indian merchant named Muhammad Nasir was involved in lengthy negotiations over the customs duties for which he was assessed in Aleppo. From the testimony registered locally and a final ruling on the case registered in Istanbul, we learn that he served as an agent for an Indian prince named Mir Zarif. For his patron, Muhammad Nasir had brought 50 loads of indigo worth 12,500 *ghurush* that were sold in Istanbul and another 40,000 *ghurush*-worth of unspecified Indian goods shipped out of Alexandria for Venice. Returning from Venice, he had imported goods worth 60,000 *ghurush* that he intended to take by caravan to Basra and from there

to India.³³ The volume of those transactions dwarfed anything registered by either European or Iranian merchants in the seventeenth century, but at the same time, it survives as the only recorded example of a large-scale transaction conducted by an Indian merchant in the city.

As significant as "international" trade was to Aleppo's commercial fortunes in the seventeenth century, it should not overshadow our appreciation of Aleppo's role as a regional trading center in the same period. Although the seventeenth century was clearly more violent for northern Syria than the preceding century of Ottoman rule, the two centuries taken together represent what might be termed a *pax ottomanica* in the region. Tribal elements were largely kept in check by Ottoman troops and trade moved, more or less, freely throughout the Empire. As a result, merchants from throughout the Empire visited the city bringing linen cloth and rice from Egypt, coffee from Yemen, dried fruits and silk cloth from Damascus, mohair from Ankara, and woolens from both Mosul and Salonika. Aleppo was, in turn, renowned for the quality of olive oil available in its markets and its by-product, soap, was exported as far afield as Cairo and Istanbul. It also had a reputation for the high quality of its *alaja* cloth, a satin mixture of cotton and silk. Contracts registered in the courts, in turn, speak of Aleppo-based merchants who set out for India, Iran, Baghdad, Egypt, and the numerous smaller market towns of southeastern Anatolia. Although this side of Aleppo's commercial life was rarely noted in the letters that the European factors wrote home, we must assume based on the preponderance both in the volume of contracts relating to such "internal" trade and the amounts of money involved when compared to similar registry of contracts from the Iranian-European silk trade, Aleppo's prosperity in this era was linked to the former, even though the latter provided the basis for the city's international reputation.

The city's attraction to foreign merchants was undoubtedly aided by the relative tranquillity it enjoyed after the revolt of Canpulatoğlu Ali Paşa. In 1657, the city's governor, Abaza Hasan Paşa rose in revolt against the newly installed grand vizier, Köprülü Mehmed Paşa. His revolt was put down in 1659 and Wolfgang Aigen, a German merchant resident in the city, reported that commerce in Aleppo, was only marginally affected by the insurrection and quickly returned to its normal routine after the rebel governor's death.³⁴ A decade after the revolt, the incomparable Turkish traveler, Evliyâ Çelebi, visited the city on his way to the holy cities in the Hijaz. He described it as a bustling commercial city where all sorts of goods were available and that boasted sixty-one mosques, 217 Qur'an schools, 5,700 shops in the central market, 7,000 gardens, 105 coffee-shops (one of

³⁰ Adel Ismail, *Documents diplomatiques et consulaires relatifs à l'histoire du Liban et pays du Proche Orient du XVIIe siècle à nos jours* (Beirut, 1975), vol. III, p. 203.

³¹ Henry Maundrell, *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter 1697* (London, 1832), p. 148.

³² Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXI, p. 213.

³³ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXIV, pp. 202, 212; Istanbul, BBA, MM 2765, p. 100.

³⁴ Wolfgang Aigen, *Sieben Jahre in Aleppo (1656-1663)*, ed. Andreas Tietze (Vienna, 1980), pp. 99-101.

which he claimed could seat 2,000 patrons at a time), and 176 Sufi convents. Its people, he said, were frugal and god-fearing, even if the Arabic they spoke was inelegant.³⁵

Evliyâ gave the city's population at the time of his visit as 400,000. Although Aleppo's commercial fortunes in this period were reflected in the city's population which reached its zenith in the second half of the seventeenth century, this was, like much of what Evliyâ reported in his account, an exaggeration. Nevertheless, the city's pull, coupled with the push of a growing insecurity in the countryside, helped fuel an expansion in the population that was unparalleled in the city's history until the twentieth century. From approximately 80,000 inhabitants in the last decades of the sixteenth century, the population grew steadily, despite recurring and often devastating visitations of cholera and plague, to about 120,000 at mid-seventeenth century.³⁶ This would make Aleppo the third largest urban center in the Ottoman Empire, after Istanbul and Cairo.

Given the high mortality rate caused by disease, this large urban population had to be sustained by a steady influx of rural migrants from throughout southeastern Anatolia and northern and central Syria who sought protection, fortune, or both, within the city's walls. Correspondingly, this rural to urban migration helped to fuel a downward cycle leading to a major depopulation of much of rural Syria, a situation that became a cliché in Western descriptions of the region. Typical is the following made by the Abbé Carré who visited northern Syria in 1672:

A very old man, who was nearly a hundred years old, told me that this country used to be one of the richest, most fertile, and well-populated parts of all Syria, and that, when he was young, he could count 50 towns and 400 villages, which now lay in ruins for a stretch of fifteen or twenty leagues around. This was due to the bad government of the Ottoman empire, whose policy was to destroy the country for fear of strangers mastering it, as I have remarked with astonishment throughout the empire. They seem by this means to contribute to their own ruin, for they now have nothing left but their chief towns, and even these could not subsist without the help of foreign nations, who by their trade, merchandise, caravans, and travelers contribute the principal revenues of those places.³⁷

Although the Abbé's observations of rural population decline are confirmed by Ottoman sources, he was wrong about the lack of Ottoman concern over rural flight. Provincial towns and villages flooded Istanbul with petitions asking to have either their tax assessments reduced or, failing that, the right to collect taxes from former residents who had moved to Aleppo. Despite Ottoman secular (*kanun*) law to the contrary, Islamic law

³⁵ Evliyâ Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Mehmed Zillioğlu (Istanbul, 1984), vol. IX, pp. 151–55.

³⁶ André Raymond, "The Population of Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984): 447–60.

³⁷ Abbé Carré, *The Travels of the Abbé Carré, 1672–74* (London, 1947), vol. I, pp. 40–41.

did not demand that peasants stay on the land and Aleppo's judges were reluctant to make the former peasants return to their villages.³⁸ They were not alone in this subversion of imperial writ. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, prominent jurists in Damascus issued *fatwas* condemning the practice as contrary to Islamic law.³⁹ Even the taxes that they were required by law to contribute to their former villages were seemingly seldom ever collected as peasants became urban dwellers. In extreme cases, such as those involving villages contributing revenues to prestigious *waqf* endowments, however, the central government would intervene and demand that Aleppo's governors track down the errant villagers and resettle them in their former villages. There is scant evidence, however, that this was ever done.⁴⁰

These extant cases, involving peasants who left their villages, are only anecdotal evidence for the migration of individuals or small groups and we, unfortunately, have few Ottoman sources to indicate the actual size of the overall migrations. Figures for the growth of the non-Muslim populations which were more carefully monitored for tax purposes, however, give us some indication of trends that were undoubtedly reflected among Muslims as well. In 1640, there were 2,500 adult male Christians in Aleppo; by 1695, their number had grown to 5,391; in 1740, there were 8,120 adult Christian males. Furthermore, in the 1695 count, 1,234 individuals were identified with a notation indicating they were recent migrants, supplying an indication of the importance of migrants in the composition of the city's total Christian population.⁴¹

The sources and causes of this Christian immigration to Aleppo are again anecdotal. We learn from the city's court records that there were three major points of origin for the migrants: the Armenian villages of eastern Anatolia, Suryani (i.e. Arabic-speaking Jacobite Christians) settlements in southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq, and Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox Christian villages in the Tripoli and Hama regions of Syria.

³⁸ Among the many such cases brought before Aleppo's judges and dismissed: Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. III, p. 287; vol. XX, p. 289; vol. XXXI, p. 28; vol. LI, pp. 167, 263.

³⁹ Antoine Abdel-Nour, "Traits et conflits du monde rurale syrien au XVIII^e siècle d'après les *fatwa* de Hamid al-'Imadi," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 50 (1984): 71–84; Bakri Aladdin, "Deux *Fatwa*-s du Şayh 'Abd al-Gani al-Nabulsi (1143/1731): présentation et édition critique," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 39–40 (1987–88): 9–37; Samir Seikaly, "Land Tenure in 17th Century Palestine: The Evidence from the *al-Fatawa al-Khayriyya*," in Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1984), pp. 397–408.

⁴⁰ Istanbul, BOA, Ahkâm-ı Halep, vol. III, pp. 199, 244. It was perhaps not only Arabic-speaking jurists who felt moral qualms about the sultan's law in regards to peasant flight. Suraiya Faroqhi reports similar reluctance in Kayseri in the seventeenth century in *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 267–71.

⁴¹ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records vol. XXII, p. 21; Istanbul, BOA, MM 3498; Ferdinand Taoutel, "Watha'iq ta'rikhiyya 'an Halab fi al-qarn al-thamin 'ashar," *al-Mashriq* 41 (1947): 252–53.

Simeon of Lviv, the Polish–Armenian traveler of the early seventeenth century, reported that many Armenian villagers fled Anatolia for Aleppo during the Celali revolts. In a deposition registered in the Aleppo Islamic courts in 1661, seventy-seven Armenian males from the Sasun region of Anatolia said that they had left their villages as the land there could no longer support their families.⁴²

Many of the Suryani migrants came from either the towns of Mardin or Diyarbakır and were skilled weavers of a type of black and white striped cloth marketed as “Iraqi.” Their arrival in Aleppo was linked undoubtedly to a desire to widen the market for their wares. Religious tensions in the community between “traditionalists” and Catholics in the provincial towns of southeastern Anatolia may have also played a part in helping those who migrated to decide on Aleppo, however. Due to the presence of French merchants in the city, Catholic priests had been continually resident in Aleppo from 1627 and some of these had reached as far afield as Diyarbakır and Mardin. Aleppo served as a magnet for religious dissenters among the Suryanis and by the end of the eighteenth century, the Suryanis in Aleppo were overwhelmingly Catholic.

Whatever the reasons for their arrival, the migration of rural Christians into urban centers was a seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon in seventeenth century Syria.⁴³ This was especially true in northern Syria where by the nineteenth century, Christians could only be found in the region’s cities and market towns. In addition to these more permanent Christian migrants to Aleppo, the city also served at least as temporary home to a significant population of Armenians from New Julfa. By 1600, the presence of Julfa Armenians in Aleppo was already substantial and they constituted a majority of the city’s Armenian population.

The presence of these wealthy Iranian Armenians helped to spark a general cultural renaissance in the larger Armenian community in the city. A number of illuminated manuscripts produced in the city in the first half of the seventeenth century, the enlargement and embellishment of Aleppo’s Armenian church, Surp Asduadzadzin, and the unprecedented construction in 1616 of a new cathedral, Surp Karsunk, served to make manifest the community’s wealth and its cultural revival. A sign of the community’s larger influence in the affairs of Ottoman Armenians was the move by Azaria, the Catholicos of Sis (1581–1601), of his see to the city. The existence of an Iranian Armenian community in Aleppo, in turn, encouraged Anatolian Armenians to migrate to the city as well. Although there were clearly many more Greek Orthodox Christians in the city at any time during the seventeenth century, the Armenian community of some three

⁴² Polonyalı Simeon, *Polonyalı Simeon Seyahatnamesi*, translated into Turkish by Hrand Andreasyan (Istanbul, 1964), p. 93; Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. II, p. 234.

⁴³ Amnon Cohen, “The Receding of the Christian Presence in the Holy Land,” in Thomas Philipp, ed., *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century* (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 333–40.

hundred households in 1620⁴⁴ was by far the most influential Christian community in the city with many of its members holding positions in the Ottoman administration.

Aleppo’s Jewish population enjoyed a rate of growth comparable to that of the city’s Christian population: 450 adult males were registered in 1672, of whom seventy-three were identified as “Franks.” The number of adult Jewish males had risen to 875 in 1695, when almost half of those listed were designated as being “Franks” (*Yehud-ı Efrenc*) as opposed to “Arabs” (*Yehud-ı Arabân*).⁴⁵ The trend reflected in these two population registers confirms the attraction Aleppo held for Sephardic Jews who had earlier settled in Italy, having been expelled from Spain. We know from contemporary European sources the Sephardic Jews were active in the city’s commerce, marketing Italian goods in the city and transporting local products, especially cotton, to the Italian port of Livorno/Leghorn. The Ottoman records demonstrate that these Spanish-speaking Sephardim were settling permanently in Aleppo as well as simply trading there.

As their numbers in the city grew during the seventeenth century, the Jews began to challenge the Armenians in Aleppo for the one prestigious government position in the city open to non-Muslims: the tax farmer for the Imperial customs (*gümrük emini*). In 1640, a certain Musa w. Ishaq al-Khakhham succeeded in wresting the post from a Julfa Armenian.⁴⁶ From that date on, Jews figured prominently in the customs office in Aleppo even when the tax farmer of customs was a Muslim. Their presence became so entrenched that in a deposition registered in 1712, they asserted that all the positions in Aleppo’s customs house were theirs by inheritance.⁴⁷ This monopoly apparently lasted until 1830 when the Porte issued an order removing them from Aleppo’s custom house.⁴⁸ The order did not give a reason for this draconian step other than to say the community was guilty of treason and gross misconduct, but it was most probably engineered by the then highly successful Catholic community who had emerged as the major commercial rivals to the Jews in the city.

Aleppo continued to grow in physical size in the seventeenth century to accommodate this population growth. Aleppo’s wealthy Christian merchants (Armenians in the seventeenth century, Arabic-speaking Catholics in the eighteenth century) and more prosperous artisans expanded the city’s physical size with the additions to the prosperous suburb of Judayda to the northeast of the city’s walls. This neighborhood contained numerous, elegant two-story stone houses built around gracious interior courtyards

⁴⁴ Polonyalı Simeon, p. 155.

⁴⁵ Istanbul, BOA, MM 9849, MM 3498; Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. LXXXVII, pp. 13–31

⁴⁶ Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXVI, p. 229; Istanbul BOA, MM 9829, p. 36.

⁴⁷ Istanbul, BOA, MM 2777: 5.

⁴⁸ Damascus, AS Aleppo, vol. XLIV, pp. 91–92.

with fountains and fruit trees. While other quarters in the city had a mixed population with adherents of differing faiths living as neighbors, Judayda remained an almost exclusively Christian quarter.⁴⁹ In addition to Judayda, poorer suburbs consisting of houses made of sun-dried brick and inhabited by rural migrants and tribal people grew up along the caravan routes to the east and north of the city. These neighborhoods' residents had a reputation for violence and disorder. Many of the tribals living there were recruited into the city's janissary garrison or its criminal gangs that were often one and the same. When violence erupted in the city, as it did in 1818 and 1850, residents of the eastern suburbs were the primary instigators.

Further evidence of the city's growth in the seventeenth century is reflected in the continued construction of major *waqfs* in the city. Ibsir Paşa, who was one of the "good" governors of Aleppo's chronicles, endowed one of the city's largest complexes, consisting of markets, store-houses, and a huge coffee-shop in the Judayda quarter in 1653, in a seeming failed attempt to lure Muslims into the neighborhood.⁵⁰ In 1681, the governor, later Grand-Vizier, Kara-Mustafa Paşa endowed a caravansary, named in his honor by later generations of Aleppines as the *Khan al-Wazir*, outside the central market, specifically to serve as a residence for merchants coming from Iran. The latter structure is considered by many to be the loveliest example of Ottoman civil architecture in the city.

Sadly, given the fact that it was built as an investment in the Iran trade, the Khan al-Wazir's construction came at a time when that trade was already beginning to decline. This is evidenced by a series of complaints lodged by Kara-Mustafa's daughter, Âbide Hanım, in 1736 with the central kadi court in Aleppo. At that time she was the executor of her father's *waqf* of the caravansary. She produced government decrees granting the Khan al-Wazir a monopoly as hostel for merchants arriving in the city from Iran and demanded that they be enforced as the caravansary could no longer be maintained off the revenues she was receiving. There was, however, little the judge could do as the trade itself had diminished and Iranian merchants had become scarce in the city.⁵¹

Life and the pursuit of profit in a caravan city

Aleppo had been a Muslim city for almost nine centuries when added to the empire and its trade was governed by institutions and practices that predated the arrival of either the Ottomans or the Europeans. The chief institution of commerce was undoubtedly the kadi court system as Islamic

law regulated the conduct of trade in Aleppo from its conquest by the Arabs in the seventh century to the middle of the nineteenth century, when a commercial code along European models was instituted in the city by a reformist Ottoman regime.⁵² The Ottomans did not directly confront the extant legal system in Aleppo that had courts administering all four of the established Sunni Muslim legal schools. Rather, the Ottoman authorities privileged the Hanafi school of law, favored by the sultans, over all others and appointed the chief judge of the central Hanafi court in Aleppo. This was a clear break with the political tradition of Syria whereby the state had not privileged one school over the others, as well as with the established preference of the Syrians for the Shafa'i rite.

Throughout the Ottoman period, the individuals serving as judges on the central Hanafi court in the city, known locally as the *mahkamat al-bab* or "the Court of the Gate" were always Ottomans and they served as the intermediaries between Aleppo's civil population and the sultan. According to local biographical dictionaries, many were fluent Arabic speakers, and their presence in the city did not seem to engender the linguistic tensions among Muslims that were, for example, present among the city's Greek Orthodox community where the occasional presence of monolingual, Hellenophone clergy was resented by an Arabic-speaking laity. Over time most of the leading Sunni Muslim families of Aleppo shifted to the Hanafi law school and by the end of the seventeenth century, even the influential leaders of the *Ashraf* faction (descendants from the Prophet's family) were adherents to the Hanafi rite, displacing the venerable family of Zuhrawi who had long held the post.⁵³ By the early seventeenth century, there were three separate courts with differing geographical jurisdictions administering the Hanafi version of Islamic law in Aleppo. With this rise in the prestige of the Hanafi rite, only the Shafa'i rite continued to co-exist in the city along with the dominant Hanafi rite, while the other two Muslim legal traditions ceased to be represented.

The central role played by the Islamic courts in the commercial life of the city is affirmed by its use by the city's non-Muslims. The non-Muslims were entitled to recourse to either ecclesiastical or rabbinical courts for cases arising out of questions of domestic status (marriage, divorce, inheritance) that did not involve Muslims. The various Christian groups seemed rarely to have availed themselves of that option as they appear frequently in the pages of the Islamic court registers. In part, this was due to the existence of four distinct Christian communities: Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Syrian Jacobite, and Armenian. Except for the Maronites who were already

⁴⁹ Jean-Claude David, "L'espace des chrétiens à Alep: ségrégation et mixité, stratégies communautaires (1750–1850)," *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 55–6 (1990): 152–70.

⁵⁰ Jean-Claude David, *Le waqf d'Ibsir Paşa à Alep* (Damascus, 1982).

⁵¹ Damascus, AS, Aleppo, vol. I, pp. 200, 201, 210.

⁵² There is some confusion on when the commercial court started functioning. Aleppo's court registered orders to establish it in 1850 and further orders outlining its functions in 1852, but the British consul in the city reported that it had still not come into being in 1860. London, PRO, FO 861, p. 82, dated February 2, 1850.

⁵³ Marco Salati, *Ascesa e caduta di una famiglia di Aşraf Sciiti di Aleppo* (Rome, 1992).

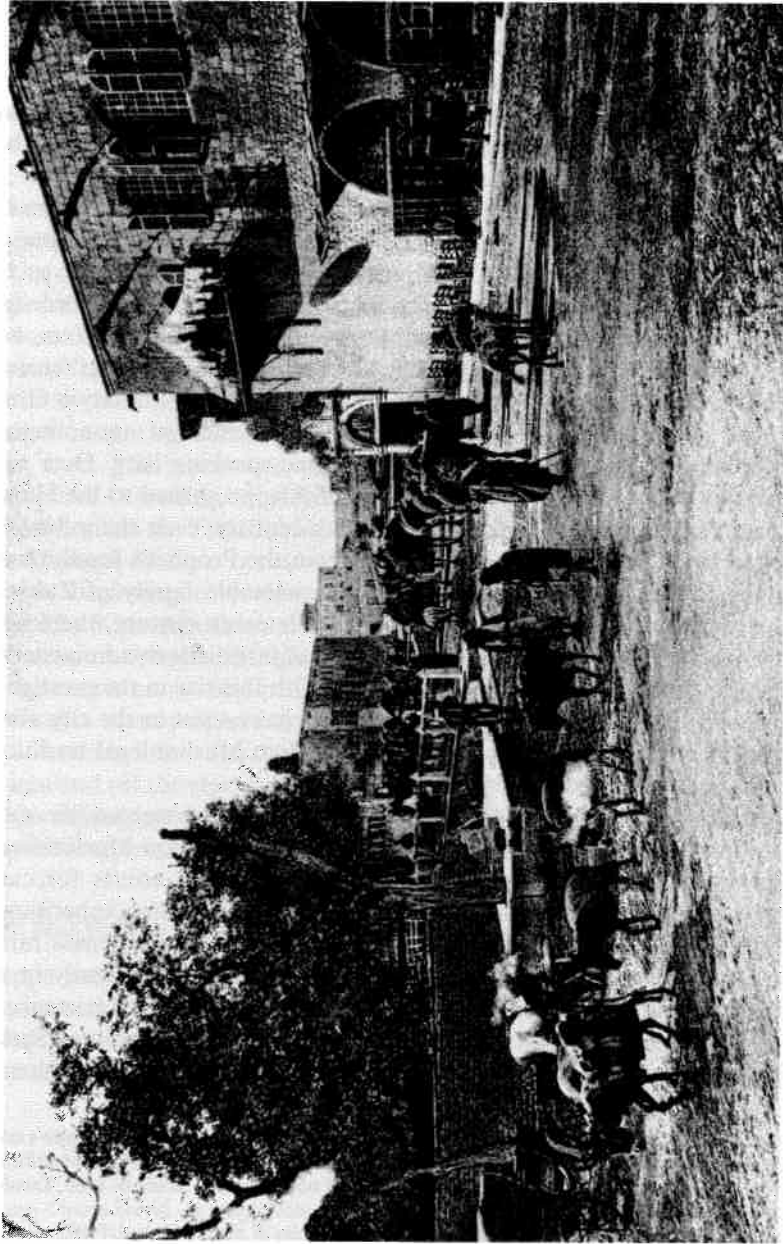


Figure 1 Camel caravan passing one of Aleppo's khans as it enters the city

Catholic, these communities were increasingly eroded by conversion of their communicants to Catholicism, a process that could only work to reduce communal solidarity among the various Christian communities. The many cases involving Christians may have reflected these internal ecclesiastical tensions within the Christian communities. But they might also represent the assimilation of Arabic-speaking Christians to the legal and cultural milieu of their Muslim neighbors. This is evidenced by the many cases registered wherein local Christians admitted to Muslim practices in areas of personal law such the establishment of the bride price (*mahr*) and in inheritance procedures, i.e. granting daughters a share of their deceased parents' wealth.

In contrast to the Christians, the Jewish community in Aleppo was more conservative of its traditions and less eager to bring internal community disputes before the kadi. As a result, there are very few cases registered in the Islamic court registers of Aleppo reflecting internal strife among the city's Jewish population. This internal cohesion by Aleppo's Jewish community was a pattern that was apparently in evidence elsewhere in the Syrian provinces and indeed in the empire at large as well.⁵⁴ An English factor in Aleppo wrote in 1671 that the city's Jews were told by their rabbis not to bear witness against each other in the Muslim courts.⁵⁵ Non-Muslims were, however, required to turn intracommunal criminal cases over to the Muslim judges, even if they might have been hesitant to do so.

The European trading communities, or "nations" as they referred to themselves, were governed by their own consuls who were appointed by the trading companies' directorates in the mother country.⁵⁶ In cases of internal disputes, however, the consuls might appeal to the kadis to bring recalcitrant nationals into line with company trading policies. In 1616, the new French consul in Aleppo presented a *fatwa* from Istanbul attesting to his legitimacy. This was followed by the governor's troops enforcing a ruling by the city's chief kadi that ordered the former consul off the consular premises in the Khan al-Gumruk.⁵⁷

In cases involving Europeans and Ottoman subjects, whether Muslim or not, however, the Porte established the kadi court as the ultimate arbiter. This requirement was bitterly resented by the Europeans and they, with the apparent exception of the Venetians who seemed resigned to the system with which they had over a century of experience,⁵⁸ sought to avoid the courts whenever possible. George Dorrington, the English vice-consul in the

⁵⁴ Amnon Cohen, *Jewish Life under Islam* (Cambridge, 1984); Joseph Hacker "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: its Scope and Limits," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 153–202.

⁵⁵ London, PRO, SP 105/113, p. 263, dated June 23, 1671.

⁵⁶ Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations."

⁵⁷ Istanbul, BOA, MD, vol. LXXXI, p. 55.

⁵⁸ *Calendar of State Papers: Venice*, vol. IXX, p. 174.

city in 1596, voiced the following apprehensions in defense of his countrymen's reluctance to go before the kadi for arbitration:

Lastlie, your defence against Turks we cane in no case allow of; condemninge your abilitie therin, both in the order of your proceedings, in the manner of your behaviour, and your unorderlie speakeinge, or not speakeinge at all. And to your waunt therin you have to take a turchman of so simple of witt and ignorant of languagdes that you speake amisse and he makes it wourse; whearby, when you come before a magistrate, you ar a laughinge stocke to all the audience . . .⁵⁹

Another reason for this apparent discontent and apprehension at facing a kadi involved the Muslim rules of evidence whereby physical evidence such as written contracts were not valid without actual witnesses present in court to testify to their authenticity. In a case registered in 1660, an English merchant brought a case against a Muslim merchant for the retrieval of money owed him by the now deceased father of the Muslim. Even though the Englishman had a contract with the seal of the deceased imprinted on it, the son denied its validity and demanded witnesses to prove it was genuine. Three days later, the Englishman again appeared at court saying he could find no witnesses and the case was dismissed.⁶⁰

In 1675, the English won the rights from the sultan to have any commercial disputes between Englishmen and Ottoman subjects involving values of more than four thousand *akçe* to be heard in Istanbul with the English ambassador present. This treaty was soon followed by similar agreements between the Porte and France, the Netherlands, and eventually all the European states. Although there were still frequent rejoinders from Istanbul to the Aleppo courts and the European ambassadors that the Europeans were subject to the regulations of Islamic law, the capitulatory treaties greatly reduced their presence in Aleppo's kadi courts as the threshold sum established for imperial intervention was so low that most commercial cases in which the Europeans were involved fell within the purview of their ambassadors' jurisdiction. Once in Istanbul, the Europeans enjoyed the same advantages of influence and bribery they once had ascribed to Muslims in the local Aleppo courts.

The other great institution of Aleppo's trade was the caravan. The caravans were of two types: the large trans-desert caravans and smaller teams of camels, mules or donkeys. The first could range up to 2,000 camels in size and plied the routes to Baghdad and the Hijaz; the latter serviced Anatolia, the Syrian coast, and Egypt. The largest caravans to the Hijaz set out during the annual pilgrimage, although merchants sometimes organized smaller caravans specifically for the transport of coffee. Those to Baghdad were governed by the seasonal availability of forage for the camels. The

⁵⁹ John Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584–1609* (London, 1931), p. 152.

⁶⁰ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXVIII, p. 159.

Bedouin managing the Baghdad caravans usually traveled twice a year in each direction. They would leave in December and again in early April and take approximately forty-five days to make the crossing. As the European travelers found the experience of the caravan exotic, we have a number of surviving descriptions that vary remarkably little in their detail over the course of three centuries.⁶¹

The size and infrequency of the trans-desert caravans arose out of fear of the merchants of Bedouin raids. Throughout most of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Ottomans followed the earlier Mamluk practice of paying the paramount chief of the Mawali tribe, titled "the Prince of the Arabs" or "lord of the desert," to protect the caravans as they traversed the dangerous stretch of the Euphrates between Birecik in present-day Turkey and 'Anah on the border with Iraq where settlements were non-existent and there was no shelter from marauders. Although this agreement could occasionally break down as in 1644 when the Mawali virtually wiped out Aleppo's garrison,⁶² it provided the security to keep the route to Iraq open. In the eighteenth century, however, the powerful 'Anaza confederation displaced the weaker Mawali as lords of the Syrian Desert. They were unwilling to sell their services to the Ottomans and preferred to raid the caravans for plunder. This led to frequent raids on even the hajj caravans with disastrous loss of life. The deteriorating situation in the desert led the Ottomans to attempt to settle first Turkoman tribes and later in the second half of the nineteenth century, Circassian refugees along the desert's edge to police the Bedouin.⁶³ The failure to subdue the Bedouin and the resulting insecurity of the desert routes that failure created would contribute to the eventual collapse of the caravan trade and its replacement by sea transport in the nineteenth century.

Once the caravans arrived outside Aleppo, the merchants' wares were unloaded by porters from the city and evaluated by agents of the city's customs house who then registered the merchants' names, their merchandise, and its value. After the formalities were over, the goods were loaded on to the backs of donkeys or porters and brought into the city center where they were taxed. From there, if the merchants were not native to the city, porters who were typically Kurds would load the merchandise on their backs and take it to one of the city's many caravansaries. These structures served both as the merchants' residence and place of business. Almost all were funded by *waqf* endowments and managed by an employee termed the

⁶¹ For example, Douglas Carruthers, ed., *The Desert Route to India: being the Journals of Four Travellers by the Great Desert Caravan Route between Aleppo and Basra, 1745–1751* (London, 1921); Pedro Teixeira, *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira* (London, 1902); Jean Thevenot, *Voyages du Monsieur de Thevenot en Europe, Asie, et Afrique* (Paris, 1689); and Aigen, *Sieben Jahre in Aleppo, 1656–1663*.

⁶² Mustafa Naima, *Tarih-i Naima* (Istanbul, 1864–66), vol. IV, pp. 104–10.

⁶³ Norman N. Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*.

oda baş ("head of the room"). Most of these were multilingual Armenians who served as cooks, commercial agents and hoteliers, all in one. Alexander Russell, the eighteenth century English doctor who resided in Aleppo, provided a description of the caravansaries of his day:

The khanes are spacious solid stone buildings, usually constructed in a quadrangular form, and one story high; of which the ground floor on each side is divided into apartments, arched above, and lighted only by a window in front, and the door. The story above, instead of windows, presents an open gallery, or piazza, from which is a range of rooms like the back rooms below. The stair cases leading to the first story are on each side of the gate way; and the roof, as in most other buildings, is flat and terraced. The ground floor serves for warehouses, counting houses, lodgings, and sometimes for stables; the other floor is chiefly for the reception of travelers, who find lodging there at very moderate expense.⁶⁴

If goods were destined to stay in the city, wholesalers would purchase them from the merchants and distribute them, according to formalized agreements among the various guilds of retailers. Each product would then go to the individual retail merchants who were located in small shops along the various lanes of the covered bazaar. Although these agreements were sometimes challenged, if the records of the kadi courts reflect the reality of commercial life in the city, the markets were generally very orderly places. Despite the stereotype of haggling in a bazaar, prices were relatively uniform, except in times of real or rumored shortages, as they were established by the membership of the guilds themselves. The merchants' shops were organized by the goods they sold, with each product having its own section of the bazaar. The shops themselves were often owned by *waqf* and the retailers rented them from the endowment's supervisor. Aleppo's markets were roofed and relatively cool in summer and, by all accounts, remarkably clean all the year round. Rubbish was collected by yet another guild who sold it to the operators of the city's public bath houses. The market was served by numerous fountains, public baths, mosques, and a large public lavatory, all maintained as beneficiaries of yet other pious foundations.

Life for the European factors in Aleppo was perhaps more circumspect than it was for their contemporary counterparts in other Ottoman trading cities. There was no equivalent of Galata, nor even of Izmir's "Street of the Franks." Most European merchants lived on the second floors of the city's caravansaries above the noise and bustle of daily commerce. Although Islamic law and imperial edict prohibited the Europeans from owning property in the sultan's realms, it is clear from the court records that some did so. They most commonly acquired property in the largely Jewish neighborhood of Bahsita which was set against the northwest corner of the city's walls.

⁶⁴ Russell, vol. I, pp. 18–19.

Until the nineteenth century when open sectarian tensions started to flare up in the city, European travelers and residents usually remarked on the general level of tolerance displayed by Aleppo's Muslims, both toward European visitors and their own non-Muslim neighbors. Typical of such comments are those of the Frenchman Constantine Volney:

The People of this city, both Turks and Christians, are, with reason, esteemed the most civilized in all Turkey; and the European merchants no where enjoy so much liberty, or are treated with as much respect.⁶⁵

The same sentiment was expressed a century and a half before by the Polish-Armenian traveler, Simeon of Lviv, who wrote that in all of the Ottoman realms, it was only in Istanbul and Aleppo that non-Muslims were tolerated with equanimity.⁶⁶ Tolerance was, of course, not the same thing as an open and ready acceptance of differences. Dr. Russell, one of the few resident Europeans who ever penetrated the cultural divide that separated Islam from Christendom, noted that despite the surface toleration between the communities, there were underlying tensions:

An aversion to the Franks, as enemies of the true believers, is certainly not imaginary. I have remarked it not only among persons unconcerned in commerce, but also among the women and children as depend on it, who, in my presence, would unwarily drop expressions, which sufficiently indicated the notion they entertained of the Franks. It is true they always on recollection made an apology, and would check the children, who knew not that they were talking before one of those who had been painted to them in such terrible colours. The commercial Turks, and others depending on, or connected with the Europeans, conceal this disposition, and many of them, in the course of familiar acquaintance, and interchange of good offices, get the better of it.⁶⁷

This quote suggests that the Europeans were simply suffered by Aleppo's Muslims and that few lasting friendships developed across community lines. The letters of the English factors are largely silent on the subject and so we can not be certain to what extent Russell's observations reflect the reality of social conditions in Aleppo. In business dealings with Aleppine or Armenian merchants, the Europeans relied on local Christian or Jewish dragomans (derived from the Arabic, *turjuman* "translator") to serve as intermediaries. Faced with an alien culture, most of the Europeans chose to be self-contained, residentially and socially, with very few ever bothering to learn the local language or customs. The Protestant Europeans: Englishmen, Dutch, and the occasional German, did not, as a rule, marry local women and very few ever brought wives from home. Russell's characterization of the English factors' social life was bleak:

⁶⁵ Constantine Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt in the years 1783, 1784 and 1785*, 2 vols. (London, 1787), v. 2, p. 152.

⁶⁶ Polonyalı Simeon, p. 134. ⁶⁷ Russell, vol. 1, p. 216.

The female society is very confined; for the native Christian ladies know no other language other than Arabic and only a few of the Mezza Razza speak French. Some of the English gentlemen never visit the natives of their acquaintance but at the new year; and even those who speak the Arabic, seldom visit in the Jideida. None of the English are married; nor any of the French Factory, the Consul and one of the Drugoman excepted. The distance of the Porte of Scanderoon is an obstacle to many of the sea faring people undertaking the journey to Aleppo; and unless it be a few gentlemen who cross the Desert, in their way from India, the English seldom have the pleasure of being visited either by their countrymen, or by other European travellers.⁶⁸

One of the few social activities which was generally available to the European factors in the city was hunting. Besides that, the European merchants entertained each other, relying on the all too rare arrival of shipments of wine, beer, and hams from home as a diversion from the general tedium. An English factor wrote home in 1725 to say that while he appreciated the shipment of bacon, tea, cider, and beer which had recently arrived, he still missed butter and cheese.⁶⁹ Alcohol was a problem for many. It was both imported and home-brewed, the English having had their right to distill liquor from grapes affirmed by imperial order in 1718.⁷⁰ Boredom was a constant problem as the factors had large amounts of time on their hands in between the infrequent arrivals of the major caravans. The production of plays and public readings helped to pass the time, with factors from the different nations participating. It comes as no surprise then that a book order placed to London in 1753 by an English factor in Aleppo included titles such as: *A History of a Woman of Quality*, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, *Boccaccio's Tales*, *Shakespeare's Plays*, but also *Clarke's Sermons*.⁷¹

The changing face of commerce and politics in Aleppo in the eighteenth century

The European traders found it increasingly difficult to make profits in Aleppo's markets in the first decades of the eighteenth century. This was due, in part, to a reduction in Iranian silk available. Not only had Izmir become the destination of choice for the merchants bringing silk from Iran, but silk production in Iran itself fell off in the wake of the prolonged collapse of the Safavid dynasty which began in 1722 with the Afghan sack of Isfahan. In addition, the English, who had become the dominant European commercial presence in Aleppo, were finding it more difficult to sell the broadcloth that had been the staple of their side of the trade in the

⁶⁸ Russell, vol. 2, pp. 12–13.

⁶⁹ London, PRO, SP 110/25, p. 132, dated December 22, 1725, and p. 138, December 24, 1725.

⁷⁰ Aleppo Court Records, vol. XLV, p. 116.

⁷¹ London, SP 110–72, ff. 28, September 20, 1753.

Levant. In 1765, the British consul in Aleppo offered a glum assessment of his nation's trade in the city:

The causes of this decrease are various but chiefly attributed to the depopulation of Persia from whence very considerable quantities of sherbasse, ardasette and other sorts of silks were brought to this market, in return for which the Persians took off the chiefest part of our cloth, but none of the Persian silk has been seen since the year 1750.⁷²

The changes in market patterns induced a decrease in the presence of the consul's countrymen in Aleppo. Alexander Russell reported that while there had been eight English merchant houses active in the city in 1753, there were only four in 1772. The French, in contrast to their earlier position in the city's trade, had adapted to these changes more successfully than the English and supplanted them as the largest European community resident in the city, although their trade also suffered decline over the century. Dr. Russell reported that the nine French merchant houses in Aleppo in 1753 had shrunk to "six or seven" by 1772.⁷³

The reasons for the relative French success were several: French factories produced a lighter woolen cloth that was cheaper than that offered by the English merchants and in the brighter hues the Aleppines preferred. The French were also able to make use of the products that were still available in Aleppo's markets, mainly Syrian grown cotton and silk, for their textile industries. But even with these adaptations, French trade in Aleppo at the end of the eighteenth century was well below what it had been at the end of the preceding century. French commercial interests in Syria were further weakened with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. In retaliation, the Ottoman sultan ordered the expulsion of French merchants from his realms and the confiscation of their wealth.⁷⁴ Even though French merchants returned to Aleppo after the evacuation of French forces from Egypt in 1801, the scale of their activities was greatly reduced.

This retraction of European merchants from Aleppo did not mean that all commerce came to an end. Rather, trade in Aleppo continued to follow many of the same regional patterns that it had known before, although the Iran trade went into a prolonged slump and only revived in the middle of the nineteenth century. Trade with Europe diminished, but obviously did not come to an end with the withdrawal of the European factors from the city. There was still a demand for European manufactured goods in Syria and a corresponding European demand for northern Syria's raw cotton and silk. In the place of the European merchants, a locally based merchant community emerged to handle European imports, often traveling to the

⁷² London, PRO, SP 110/29, p. 211, July 30, 1765.

⁷³ Russell, vol. 2, pp. 3–5.

⁷⁴ Yusuf Dimitri 'Abbud al-Halabi, "al-murtad fi ta'rikh Halab wa Baghdad," ed. Fawwaz Mahmud al-Fawwaz (M.A. thesis, University of Damascus, 1978), pp. 195–99.

Mediterranean ports to purchase European manufactured goods directly. Aleppo's native traders who participated directly in the European trade consisted of three distinct groups: Roman Catholics of primarily Italian or Austrian origin (the Levantines), Sephardic Jews, and Arab Catholics. Muslims, by contrast, kept a much lower commercial profile. They remained active as traders in the Ottoman internal market and as occasional financiers for the trade to Europe, but they rarely engaged in it directly. These non-Muslim merchant communities will be discussed in more detail below, but we must first examine the political and economic milieu in which they emerged.

The eighteenth century witnessed profound transformations in the social and political fabric of Ottoman Aleppo. Political control in Aleppo had been vested in the hands of Ottomans during the first two centuries of the sultans' rule. These included the governor, his entourage composed of bureaucratic and military professionals sent out from the capital, and the chief judges who were of ethnic origins representing the diversity of the Empire's peoples and were Ottoman Turkish speakers. Economic power lay in a much more complicated layering of social groups: Muslim merchants, members of the locally based Muslim religious elite (the *'ulama*), political office holders, and the European trading communities. With the exception of the Europeans, these elite groups often overlapped and intermarried. By the middle of the eighteenth century, those patterns, while maintaining the façade of the older order, were in flux.

One of the most important of these changes for the balance of political power in the city was that the military forces stationed in the province were increasingly of local origin. This transformation had occurred gradually as the Empire suffered fiscal and military downturns. With this retraction of the center's power, Aleppo province, inhabited by various tribal groups, became increasingly ungovernable. In the city itself, the reduction in troops that the capital could provide led to the swelling of the ranks of the janissaries with the enlistment of locals, as well as rural migrants. Locally recruited janissaries quickly emerged in a vacuum that the state could no longer fill. The seizure of political power by local military units was not unique to Aleppo as it occurred in many cities of the Empire during the eighteenth century. Aleppo was atypical, however, in that the opposition to the janissaries arose from the *Ashraf*. The *Ashraf* enjoyed privileges under the Islamic legal system, involving exemptions from certain taxes, but rarely did that status evolve into political cohesion. In Aleppo where there had seemingly always been numerous people claiming to be descended from the Prophet's lineage, their titular representative, *Naqib al-Ashraf*, was historically among the most influential civilian authorities in the rough and tumble of the city's politics. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, several astute individuals had managed to transform the office into a base of power, rallying around it the five to ten thousand people in the city who

claimed to be *Ashraf*. At various times in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the *Naqib* could call out hundreds of armed "kinsmen" onto the streets of Aleppo in bloody faction fights with the janissaries.⁷⁵

It is tempting to see the janissary and *Ashraf* rivalry as having both ethnic and socio-economic origins. The janissaries were, by and large, drawn from tribal and rural migrants to the city and were the consummate "outsiders" in the urban social fabric. The vast majority of them lived in the eastern suburbs of the city and they were most often to be found in service guilds associated with products supplied by the tribals: muleteers, butchers, and tanners. The *Ashraf*, by contrast, were concentrated in the older *intra muros* quarters of the city and were most typically members of guilds involved in textile production. But such characterizations fail to account for the many exceptions to the rule, or indeed for individuals who over a lifetime switched their primary loyalty from one group to the other. What is clear is the existence of the two factions provided continual upheaval in the city's streets as each group tried to dominate the other.

An equally important, though less dramatic, evolution in Aleppo's power structure during the eighteenth century was the emergence of a dozen or more prominent local families as active participants in the city's economic and political life. From at least the beginning of Ottoman rule, and presumably earlier, local notable *'ulama* families had acted as representatives of the city's population. Their status had sprung from their position as religious authorities and as administrators of many of the city religious endowments, *waqfs*. Much of the city's commercial infrastructure was financed by such endowments and those who were in place to administer them benefited materially as well as spiritually. These included the Jabiri, Kawakibi, Mudarris, Qudsi, and Taha clans. These families marked their ascendancy by adding the Ottoman/Persian suffix "*zadah*" to their Arabic surnames, i.e. Jabirizadah, Qudsizadah. Other local Muslim families profited from Aleppo's location as a trade entrepot and served either as merchants engaged in, or financiers of, long-distance trade. These included members of the Labaq, Muwaqqit, and Amiri families. The distinction between commercial and religious elites, and indeed between local civilian Muslim elite families and Ottoman households, was relevant only in terms of origins of a particular family's wealth as over time the prominent Sunni families intermarried. Formerly merchant families sent their sons to madrasahs, *'ulama* families dabbled in trade, and descendants of Ottoman officials settled in the city and became a part of the civilian elite.⁷⁶

While these civilian elite families could be wealthy, real economic power was vested in control of the revenues of Aleppo's agricultural hinterlands.

⁷⁵ The now classic study of this phenomenon is Herbert Bodman's *Political Factions in Aleppo* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1963).

⁷⁶ Margaret Meriwether, "The Notable Families of Aleppo, 1776-1830: Networks and Social Structure" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1981).

Throughout the seventeenth century, those were largely in the hands of Ottoman officials and soldiers who held direct control over the revenues of the villages through possession of either *timars* or tax farms. The economic position of this Ottoman class was further ameliorated by indirect control of the peasants' agricultural output through the dependent credit relationships they had established with the region's villagers.⁷⁷ As the central government began to sell off its tax farms to life-time tenants (*malikâne*) at the end of the seventeenth century, however, new opportunities for wealth in Aleppo appeared. The first beneficiaries of the new fiscal system were the Ottoman officials and their descendants who had earlier lent money to the villages that they then received as *malikâne*. They were followed by local families who had accumulated wealth and sought to better their investment portfolios. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the process was well under way and much of the province's revenue had been diverted into the hands of the tax farmers. Those holding the purse strings were increasingly local Muslim families. By the middle of the century, this transferral of much of the fiscal system of the province into local hands was consolidated.

By the end of the century, leading local families such as the Jabiris, the Amiris and the Tahas were in effective control of much of the agricultural hinterlands of Aleppo. This shift in the local balance of power was legitimized with the repeated appointment of individual Aleppines to the important provincial posts of *kaim-makam* or *mütesellim* (acting governor) and *muhasil* (chief tax-collector), reflecting a *de facto* if not *de jure* capture of the provincial administration by local interests. These local Muslim tax farmers then pushed their dependent peasant clients into producing the agricultural products: tobacco and cotton, most desired by the remaining European merchants and helped to usher in Aleppo's new trading relationship with Europe.⁷⁸

Comprehensive and effective political power did not accompany this increase in status, however. Rather, the Muslim elite remained divided against itself.⁷⁹ Each extended family saw itself in direct competition with its neighbors. That sense of distrust was often manipulated by the Porte's representatives in the city who, failing to take control of the city politically for themselves, sought to prevent any countervailing local nexus of power from coalescing. Not perceiving a community of interests, individual Muslim families wielded little direct political power and were limited solely

to serving as mediators between the warring street factions of janissaries and *Ashraf*, or between those factions and the government. The only political opposition that could emerge at those times when the governor was either absent, or oppressive, were the armies of the street. These were drawn from the poorer quarters and marshaled by street toughs claiming either *Ashraf* or janissary affiliations. These faction fighters rarely perceived the wealthy families as either allies or potential leaders. Indeed, street violence often exhibited the characteristics of an incipient *jacquerie* as members of the Sunni elite became targets of mob anger.

The emergence of a Catholic and a Sephardic Jewish commercial elite

Aleppo's wealthy Muslim families had emerged by the end of the eighteenth century as the dominant economic force in the region, but they had failed to translate that success into comparable political power. Parallel to the growing economic importance of a new Muslim elite, a number of Catholic Arab families were able to take advantage of the changing economic conditions to attain new-found eminence in the eighteenth century. Their precipitous rise was all the more remarkable as European visitors to Aleppo in the previous century invariably described the local, Arabic-speaking, Greek Orthodox (also known as Melkites in the Arabic-speaking provinces⁸⁰) and Jacobite Christians, as contrasted with the Armenians, as living in abject poverty.

A key element in the emergence of a sense of community among these merchants was the role of Catholicism in their collective identity. The emergence of Catholic communities in Aleppo and their concomitant rise to prominence in commerce was undoubtedly the consequence of the presence of European merchants in the city. Latin Catholic missionaries had followed the European merchants to the city and found fertile ground in Aleppo's mix of immigrants, cast adrift from the institutions of their home-towns and villages. Their reports to superiors chronicle a continual movement of women and men who made an individual choice of conscience to switch their allegiance in things spiritual from patriarch to pope.⁸¹

It is hard to know, however, what percentage of the Christian population were taking their sacraments from the Latins at any given time. One source estimated that by the end of the seventeenth century, three-quarters of the Suryanis were Catholic.⁸² The Armenians, united behind the Catholicos of Sis who conveniently had his see in the city, were also largely Catholic in

⁷⁷ Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750* (New York, 1988).

⁷⁸ Jean-Pierre Thiécke, "Décentralisation ottomane et affirmation urbaine à Alep à la fin du XVIIIe siècle" in *Passion d'Orient*, ed. Gilles Kepel (Paris, 1992), pp. 113–76; and Rhoads Murphey, "Tobacco Cultivation in Northern Syria and Conditions of Its Marketing and Distribution in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Turcica* 17 (1985): 35–50.

⁷⁹ Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, pp. 100–2; and Margaret Meriwether, "Urban Notables and Rural Resources in Aleppo, 1770–1830," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1987): 55–73.

⁸⁰ This was largely a neologism with a dubious historical tradition that was employed by the Arabic-speaking Greek Catholics to create a distance between themselves and the ethnic Greeks who were in Ottoman disfavor after 1821.

⁸¹ These are contained in *Documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire du Christianisme en Orient*, ed. Fr. Antoine Rabbath, 2 vols. Paris, 1905–1911.

⁸² Rabbath, vol. II, pp. 87–88.

their sympathies by the end of the seventeenth century. A British factor writing as late as 1749, however, guessed that only ten percent of the Greek Orthodox in the city were Uniates.⁸³ The missionaries themselves recorded much higher figures. The Jesuits claimed that between 5,000 and 6,000 individuals were already taking communion from them in Aleppo by 1714.⁸⁴ If that figure were true, it would mean that almost half the city's Christians were Catholic. A report sent by the Orthodox patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Antioch to the sultan, most probably in 1733, acknowledged that most of the Melkites in Aleppo had embraced the "religion of the Franks," but they insisted that there was only a hard-core of Catholics consisting of fifty individuals, with perhaps another hundred individuals complicit in "heresy." The rest of the flock, they insisted, remained loyal to orthodoxy and the sultan, but had been simply misled by a corrupt local clergy.⁸⁵

Whatever the total number of Catholic communicants, alarm at these defections caused the hierarchy of the established churches to petition the sultan for redress. In an order received in 1709, the Porte informed Aleppo's governor that he was to forbid local Christians from attending Latin mass that was regularly being offered at the Shaybani Khan, ostensibly for the French merchant community. Subsequent arrests, resulting in imprisonment for those apprehended, occurred.⁸⁶ Similar orders would be received throughout Syria for the next century. The Latin challenge within the Greek Orthodox community came to a head in 1724 when the Patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius III Dabbas died. The clergy in Aleppo eventually came to support Kyrillos Tanas who both favored links to Rome and was an Arab, while those of Damascus submitted to Sylvestros, a Greek from Cyprus and the choice of both the Patriarch of Constantinople and the sultan. Although Kyrillos was forced to flee to the refuge of Shuwayr in the Druze controlled Mount Lebanon, he was invested as the Catholic Patriarch of Antioch by the Pope in Rome in 1729.

The open split between Damascus and Aleppo marked the triumphal emergence of an independent Uniate movement in the latter city. Although their newly acclaimed Patriarch was in exile, they were able to secure, with the help of testimony from prominent Muslims, an order from Aleppo's governor and chief judge naming Maksimus al-Hakim, an Aleppine, as their metropolitan in 1729.⁸⁷ Catholics would occupy that post for most of the century helping to secure the position of the Catholic faith among the

Melkites even as their patriarchs remained in exile in Lebanon. The popularity of the Uniate movement in Aleppo clearly lay in the defection to Rome by the majority of the Greek Orthodox clergy in the city before 1724. The reasons for their switch in allegiance are not entirely clear, however.

The active proselytism by Latin Catholic religious undoubtedly played a part. This was the view of the Patriarch of Constantinople and his opinion informed official Ottoman reaction. In response, the sultans banned both visits by Latin clergy to Orthodox households and their medical ministrations to all but European merchants to stem defections to Catholicism. While this ban led to the removal of Latin clergy from Damascus, the continuing presence of European Catholic merchants in Aleppo provided a convenient excuse for a large number of activist clergy to remain in the city. In 1681, for example, there were twenty-eight French priests in the city, clearly many more than were required by the French merchants currently resident in the city.⁸⁸ By 1760, that number had been reduced to twelve missionary priests, but they were augmented by thirteen native Melkite Catholic clerics, four Armenian Catholics and three Syrian Catholic priests. The Catholic faith was by then firmly entrenched in Aleppo and decidedly local in its hierarchy.⁸⁹

Once a nucleus of Catholic clergy had emerged in one Christian sect in Aleppo, they provided support to others who would make the same choice of conscience.⁹⁰ Additionally, the Maronite clergy, a group largely absent from the religious politics in Damascus, played a crucial role in the growth of Catholicism in Aleppo. They often stepped in to serve the communicants of other Catholic sects when their clergy had run afoul of the law. Correspondingly, the clergy of the traditional churches recognized the Maronite clergy's subversive role and pressured the sultan to ban the attendance at Maronite liturgies by other Christians. The state did so on several occasions, offering as justification that such defections hurt already poor communities' ability to meet their tax obligations to the sultan.⁹¹

One explanation for the attraction of the Unia for Aleppines lay in the possible use of theology as an expression of the inter-urban rivalries that existed between the Christian elites in Aleppo and Damascus. This, at least, seems to have been the underlying reason offered by Mikha'il Burayk, an Orthodox priest and chronicler of Damascus, for the schism in the Church of Antioch.⁹² There may also have been ethnic tensions contributing to the rupture as the Greek Orthodox hierarchy in Istanbul was seeking to

⁸³ Rabbath, vol. II, pp. 87–88; and London, PRO, SP 110/29, April 18, 1749, p. 25.

⁸⁴ Bernard Heyberger, "Les chrétiens d'Alep (Syrie) à travers les récits des conversions des Missionnaires Carmes Déchaux (1657–1681)," *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome* 100 (1988): 461–99. For a full discussion of the Catholic missionary movement in Syria, see Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du proche-orient au temps de la réforme catholique* (Rome, 1994).

⁸⁵ Istanbul, BOA, Cevdet Adliye 6212.

⁸⁶ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. II, p. 27; vol. LI, p. 95.

⁸⁷ Istanbul, BOA, Cevdet Adliye 516

⁸⁸ Warren Lewis, *Levantine Adventurer: the Travels and Mission of the Chevalier d'Arvieux, 1653–1697* (New York, NY, 1962), p. 41.

⁸⁹ Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du proche-orient*, p. 294.

⁹⁰ For example, in 1774 when the governor imposed a heavy tax on the Syrian Catholics for their loyalty to Bishop Jarwah, the Armenian, Greek and Maronite Catholic communities contributed to the fund ('Abbud, "al-Murtad" p. 26).

⁹¹ Damascus, AS, Aleppo vol. II, p. 3; Istanbul BOA, Ahkâm-ı Haleb vol. II, p. 203.

⁹² Mikha'il al-Damashqi Burayk, *Ta'rikh al-Sham, 1720–1782*, ed. Qustantin al-Basha

subordinate the Patriarchate of Antioch to an ethnic Greek clergy to the linguistic exasperation of Arabic-speaking laity. As early as 1678, a group of Greek Orthodox Arabs in the city had declared that they would not accept the authority of Neophytos, the Patriarch of Antioch, as he could not speak Arabic. Instead they swore before the city's chief Muslim judge that their true Patriarch was Kyrillus, a native of Aleppo.⁹³ The appeal of localism rather than ethnicity seems a more satisfactory explanation, however, as Arabic-speaking Damascus remained loyal to orthodoxy and Neophytos while of Chiote origin had been born and educated in Damascus. Furthermore, the Suryanis and Armenians who suffered no linguistic divide between their established hierarchy and laity were equally affected by the lure of the Unia. In support of the localism hypothesis, the Uniate hierarchy in all three churches in the city were largely Aleppine. The fact that they also happened to be Arabic-speakers was most probably only secondary.

A further attraction lay in the foundation by European religious of schools in Aleppo that offered courses in the new knowledge coming from Europe, science and mathematics, as well as Western languages. These schools were taken over by Arabic-speaking Uniate clergy as the Porte clamped down on overt religious activity by the Europeans, but the curricula stayed largely unchanged. Following in this opening to the West, Athansius Dabbas, a pro-Catholic metropolitan who had studied printing in Rumania, established the first Arabic printing press within the Ottoman Empire in Aleppo by 1706. It remained in operation for about a decade before opposition from the orthodox faction led to its transfer to Mount Lebanon in 1720.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, another printing press would not be established in the city until the Maronites installed one in 1857.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, with this innovation, Uniate clergy were able to benefit from printed texts of the new catechisms, Bibles, and other devotional materials in Arabic.⁹⁶ Secular sciences would have to wait another century for publication, but scientific works published by the Uniates in Lebanon would later have a profound impact on the Arabic cultural renaissance in Aleppo in the nineteenth century.

With the separation from Damascus, Aleppo's Melkite Catholic clergy enjoyed almost a century of government neglect, broken only by occasional attempts by the Patriarch in Istanbul to bring them back to orthodoxy. These were almost always deflected by bribes paid by the Catholic

merchants. Although there were periods when the orthodox faction was temporarily in ascendancy and the Catholic metropolitan of the city had to join his Patriarch in exile in Lebanon, the Catholic faction was eventually triumphant in all such confrontations. Once Uniates had filled the various ecclesiastical positions in the city with their own partisans, it was difficult for the traditional churches to exercise retaliatory moves against them. A unified clergy could enlist the support of Aleppo's governors, often through the intervention of the French consul in the city and help from the Muslim notables who threw their support consistently behind the Catholic faction, to balance off attacks arising from the Patriarch in Istanbul. By contrast, periodic requests by the Orthodox Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem for state intervention in the preservation of orthodoxy in southern Syria forced the local authorities to enforce the ban on Catholic activities there and prosecute those locals who persisted in the Latin "heresy."⁹⁷

The clergy in Aleppo were, nevertheless, periodically reminded of the prohibition on Ottoman subjects attending mass offered by Frankish clergy. These orders, however, failed to address the central question of the local clergy's allegiance to pope rather than patriarch, as Catholicism was no longer being spread by foreign priests alone.⁹⁸ The Patriarch in Istanbul was aware of this development and an imperial order sent from the Porte to Aleppo in April 1781, at his bequest, stated that the metropolitan of Aleppo had been lax in ensuring that his clergy conformed to Orthodox practices and it demanded reform.⁹⁹ The metropolitan in that year was Jarmanus Adam an outspoken supporter of Catholicism. The fact that his holding the post was not contested in the complaint indicates that the Patriarch had written Aleppo off as lost to heresy, at least temporarily. Potentially harmful, this order was seized by Aleppo's governor simply as an excuse to extort bribes from the Uniate communities in return for his looking the other way in regards to their non-compliance to the sultan's order. Weighing the availability of ready money against the sultan's displeasure, most Ottoman officials seemed to have opted for the cash. Once the money had been paid, the community was free to do as it wished.

Even with this governmental "blind eye," Catholicism in its myriad forms had to win the hearts and minds of the city's newly emerging Christian merchant elite if it were to flourish. Although the Aleppo Christians had carved out an economic niche for themselves in the seventeenth century by serving as commercial agents for Muslim investors, improved opportunities for the accumulation of wealth came in the employ of the European

(Harissa, 1930), pp. 3–7. This is a view supported by Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725–1925* (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 19.

⁹³ Damascus, Aleppo Court Records, vol. XXXIV, p. 39.

⁹⁴ Muhammad Raghīb al-Tabbakh, *A'lam al-nubala bi-ta'rikh Halab al-shaba'*, reprinted edition (Aleppo, 1977), vol. III, pp. 247–48.

⁹⁵ al-Tabbakh, vol. IV, p. 355.

⁹⁶ In 1725, the kadi and governor of Aleppo received an order from the Porte that said the Melkites were free to use and distribute in their school educational materials and Bibles printed in Greek and Arabic characters (AS Aleppo, vol. III, p. 234).

⁹⁷ Istanbul, BOA, Ahkâm-ı Şam-ı Şerif, vol. II, pp. 28–29, concerning the defection of the laity in Jaffa and Acre prompted by complaint from the patriarch of Jerusalem (p. 98), prescribing punishment of monks in Damascus for Catholic tendencies, prompted by the patriarch in that city.

⁹⁸ For example, Istanbul, BOA, Ahkâm-ı Halep, vol. IV, p. 31.

⁹⁹ Istanbul, BOA, Ahkâm-ı Halep, vol. IV, pp. 31–32.

mercantile houses in the city. This was possible as the commercial treaties between the Ottomans and Europeans, after 1675, allowed the foreign commercial companies to designate locals as translators (dragomans) who would enjoy the same limited rights of extraterritoriality as did the European factors. These persons, known as protégés (in Turkish *berâth*, i.e. one holding a patent *berât*), enjoyed legal, and therefore economic, privileges and political influence where formerly they had none.

These advantages, combined with access to information on European markets, garnered through contact with the resident European merchants, and astute investment decisions on their part, led to the emergence of several wealthy mercantile families over the course of the eighteenth century. The most prominent of these were the families 'A'ida, Ghadban, and Dallal, all of whom had family members in the employ of the English consul in Aleppo at some time during the first half of the eighteenth century. As the English presence diminished over the second half of the century, individuals from the three families worked for the French and Dutch as well. While employment by the Europeans was not a foolproof stratagem for economic advancement, it clearly did provide the vehicle for the first Christian families to emerge from economic obscurity.

But by the end of the century, additional Christian mercantile families: Balit, Kusa, Kubba, Tutunji, Ghazzala, Kabbaba had emerged as actors on Aleppo's commercial stage. While not all had secured protégé status, all had made their fortunes in the trade between east and west. Perhaps more significantly, almost all were Catholics. I do not want to suggest, however, that Catholicism was causal to the economic rise of a Christian merchant class in Aleppo, a "Catholic Mercantile Ethic" to stand in opposition to that of Weber's. Rather, it would seem that as merchants, they found in Catholicism a link to Europe that was political, as well as intellectual or spiritual. Furthermore, the Catholic hierarchy was amenable to their interests as it was often drawn from those same families. As in their contemporary Catholic Europe, it was not unusual for a bishop and a leading merchant in Aleppo to be brothers. Once established, Catholicism became an important voice for and provided a sense of identity to what was an emerging merchant bourgeoisie. It provided a new sense of community that transcended boundaries that had formerly existed between diverse religious/ethnic communities and created a new identity anchored in its loyalty to Rome and the Arabic language. Sons of the merchant houses went to seminaries in Italy or France and returned to Aleppo to guide their community, both culturally and spiritually.

Initially, with the flush of newly won protection provided by the European powers, the Christian dragomans had undoubtedly acted in the eighteenth century with the arrogance ascribed to them by Western observers. The governors of the city, reflecting Muslim discontent with what they must have considered as brazen behavior by Christian upstarts,

responded periodically by imprisoning Christian merchants, enforcing the dress code for minorities to humiliate them, or in one case, slapping a dragoman in the face in public.¹⁰⁰ As the Western merchants withdrew from the city, however, opportunities for advancement under their protection were reduced. Furthermore, that protection increasingly proved ephemeral as the European powers went to war with the armies of the sultan in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1788, war between Austria and the Ottomans led those who were Austria's protégés in Aleppo to scramble to find other protectors. Similarly, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt nullified the patents (*berats*) from either France or the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ To further complicate matters, the Porte became increasingly suspicious of the proliferation of patents in Aleppo and began to order periodic investigations to make sure all those claiming European protection were, in fact, actually in the employ of the European consuls.

Uncertainties over the continuation of European protection led prominent Christians to pursue alliances with local Muslims. By the end of the eighteenth century, most leading Muslim families had equally prominent Catholic families associated with them. The Catholic families supplied individuals who served as bankers, business partners, and even influence peddlers in Istanbul for the Muslims. The Muslims, in turn, opened up the lucrative business of tax farming to their Christian allies. Aleppo's elite families, whether Muslim or Christian, were often in bitter competition for power with one another and this led them to conclude alliances across sectarian lines. A prominent Muslim family would typically have a Catholic family as an ally against another Muslim family with its own Catholic supporters. The Ghadbans, for example, were the sometime allies of the influential leader of the city's *Ashraf* faction, Sayyid 'Abd al-Wahhab Tahazadah while the 'A'idas, who were themselves in competition with the Ghadbans, were his sometime competitors.¹⁰² The 'A'ida family, in turn, was usually in alliance with the Jabiri family, while the governor İbrahim Katırağası, their rival, employed as his agent in Istanbul Nasr-Allah Dallal who had once served as a dragoman for both the Dutch and the French.¹⁰³ These business connections led to closer co-operation in other arenas, as well, as the political self-interests of Christian and Muslim elites converged in the faction fighting of late eighteenth century Aleppo.¹⁰⁴ In 1791, when janissary hooligans threatened Christian neighborhoods with acts of vandalism and physical abuse, the *Ashraf* faction led by Tahazadah intervened to clear them off the streets. Conversely when the *Ashraf* faction marched off

¹⁰⁰ 'Abbud, "al-Murtad," pp. 18, 24, 41, 82.

¹⁰¹ 'Abbud, "al-Murtad," pp. 108–10, 195–99.

¹⁰² Istanbul, BOA, Ecnebi series, İngiltere, vol. XXXVI/2, pp. 147–48, 160.

¹⁰³ 'Abbud, "al-Murtad," pp. 193, 213.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Masters, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 62 (1991–94): 151–58.

to Egypt in 1800, vandalism against the Christians increased in their absence.¹⁰⁵

Members of Aleppo's Jewish community also prospered in this time of reduced direct European involvement in the trade of northern Syria. An influx of Sephardic Jews from Italy beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing throughout the seventeenth greatly augmented the Jewish community in Aleppo. Some of these Sephardim were able to retain foreign citizenship, usually from one of the Italian states or Austria who held sway over a large part of Italy. Others who had family ties to the port of Livorno could claim French protection.¹⁰⁶ Enjoying connections of family or trade with co-religionists throughout the Mediterranean, many of Aleppo's Jewish families actively engaged in trade between Aleppo and the Italian port cities. These included the families of Silvera, Altaras, Bigio, and de Picciotto, who would continue to play an important role in Aleppo's import trade with Europe throughout the nineteenth century. The English merchants bitterly resented Jewish involvement in the Levant trade and factors were often warned to avoid any commercial dealings with Jews. This was, in large part, due to their fear that the Jews who had their own trading links to Europe, as did the Armenians, might be able to best the English factors in the Levant trade. French merchants were also wary of the possible competition of Jewish merchants, but the smaller trading nations in Syria such as Prussia and the Italian states relied heavily on their services as brokers, agents, and translators. These *Signores Francos*, as the leading Sephardic-Jewish merchant families were collectively called, served as important transmitters of westernization to the larger Jewish community in Aleppo in much the same way as their Catholic counterparts did to the city's Christians.

The defection of Christian merchants to Catholicism had led to bitter internal divisions among Aleppo's Christian communities and the Jewish community of Aleppo was not entirely free of internal factional strife either. In the seventeenth century, one of the leading rabbis of Aleppo, Shlomo Laniado, embraced the teachings of the charismatic Shabbetai Tzvi as did a number of the Sephardic merchants. After the "False Messiah"'s apostasy, some of Aleppo's Jewish community followed their prophet into Islam. These either eventually left the city, or were absorbed into the general Muslim population as Aleppo had no comparable *dönme* community as that which continued to exist in Salonika into the twentieth century.

The more important potential fault line among the approximately five thousand Jews who inhabited Aleppo at the end of the eighteenth century lay between the *Signores Francos* and the rest of the community. Until the

¹⁰⁵ 'Abbud, "al-Murtad," pp. 121, 211–12.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Philipp, "French Merchants and Jews in the Ottoman Empire during the Eighteenth Century," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton, 1994), pp. 315–25.

eighteenth century, there was only one synagogue in the city, located in the Bahsita quarter. Although Sephardic chief rabbis had been the rule, there was apparently little evidence of open friction between Spanish and Arabic-speaking members of the community in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, although there had been strife between the two communities in the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁷ In 1765, however, Aleppo's chief rabbi Shlomo Raphael Laniado, himself a Sephardi and a direct descendant of the Shlomo Laniado who had followed Shabbatai Tzvi, insisted that the *Signores Francos* contribute to the collective taxes imposed on the Jewish community by Aleppo's governors. Most of the Sephardic merchants held patents from the sultan establishing them as foreign protégés exempt from taxation and they rejected the claim that they were liable for contributions. Unlike similar disputes among the Christian communities, this controversy never reached the Muslim courts which undoubtedly would have sided with the merchants, as they did repeatedly with Christian merchants who held *berâts* from the European consuls.¹⁰⁸ Rather, Aleppo's rabbis settled the matter among themselves, establishing that the Sephardic merchants would make "voluntary" contributions to the community at large. The compromise left a bitterness on both sides, however, and in 1778, the Sephardic merchants started a charitable foundation for Sephardim alone. Following this, they built synagogues in their own homes, thereby avoiding the necessity of attending the main synagogue.¹⁰⁹

As the European merchants withdrew from the city in the latter half of the eighteenth century, members of the Sephardic community often took over consular functions for them. Some of these forged their own trading alliances with some of the Arab Catholic merchant families. Members of the Melkite Catholic Dallal family were often found in the employ of Raphael de Picciotto for example. But there were also tensions between the two communities deriving from their sometime competition for the same markets and compounded by the theological anti-Semitism imported by the missionaries from Europe.¹¹⁰ Undoubtedly, the most successful Sephardic family in this period were the de Picciottos. Raphael de Picciotto was appointed consul for Austria in 1784. When Austrian consular representation in the Empire was withdrawn due to war in 1788, he assumed consular

¹⁰⁷ Hacker, "Jewish autonomy in the Ottoman Empire," pp. 168–69; and Joseph Sutton, *Magic Carpet: Aleppo-in-Flatbush* (New York, NY, 1979), p. 175.

¹⁰⁸ Istanbul, BOA, Ecnebi series, İngiltere, vol. XXVI/2, p. 18; and Damascus, Aleppo Court records, v. 89, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Sutton, *Magic Carpet*, pp. 173–75; Walter Zenner, "Jews in Late Ottoman Syria: External Relations," in *Jewish Societies in the Middle East: Community, Culture, and Authority*, eds. Shlomo Doshen and Walter Zenner (Washington, DC, 1982).

¹¹⁰ Yaron Harel, "Jewish-Christian Relations in Aleppo as Background for the Jewish Response to the Events of October 1850," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30 (1998): 77–96.

representation for Tuscany and Naples.¹¹¹ Raphael's descendants continued in the niche he established and served as consuls for Austria, Sicily, Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and the United States at various times throughout the nineteenth century. As late as 1880, another Raphael de Picciotto was Russia's consul in Aleppo while his brother Elia de Picciotto served the same function for Austria.¹¹² In addition to the *Signores Francos*, members of the Arabic-speaking Jewish community also prospered in this period of transition, most notably the Sittun, Harari, and Kibay families. Although they reached neither the pinnacles of wealth nor influence attained by the Catholic merchants or their Sephardic co-religionists, they were able to move in the specialized niche of trade with Baghdad which they shared apparently with little outward rancor with Muslim merchants.

The Levantine Catholic merchant families who perhaps numbered no more than ten in Aleppo were even more successful, according to the fragments of Ottoman customs registers surviving from early nineteenth-century Aleppo, than either the Catholic Arab or the Jewish merchants in replacing the European merchants. These families had collateral branches established in Salonika, Rhodes, Cyprus, Istanbul, and Izmir. Due to their consular protection, however, little direct evidence of their activities remains as they operated their businesses outside the purview of the kadi courts. Members of three of the most prominent Levantine families, Marcopoli, Durighello, and Poche, like their sometimes rivals and allies the de Picciottos, often served as consular representatives for various states, including the USA, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and Austria, until the First World War. Extant family commercial papers of several Levantine families survive from the late nineteenth century, preserved in the archives of the Poche family in Aleppo, but these have not yet been utilized by researchers. Until they are, the activities of these Levantine merchants will remain largely enigmatic.

Aleppo's unsettled transition to modernity

Unfortunately for Aleppo's inhabitants, the first half of the nineteenth century was extremely unsettled, both economically and politically. Tribal groups – the 'Anaza Bedouin, the Rashwan and Shaykhlu Kurds, and the Turkomans – were periodically able to mount prolonged sieges of the city, threatening the caravan trade. The political chaos of ongoing armed confrontations between janissaries and the *Ashraf* made the reinstatement of direct control by the central government nearly impossible. The House of Osman was plagued first with the janissary *coup d'état* that brought down Sultan Selim III in 1807, and then preoccupied by the attempts of his

successor Mahmud II (1808–1839) to crush the various warlords (*derebeys*) who had emerged as power brokers in Anatolia and the Balkans. In this time of chaos, the janissary faction was in ascendancy in Aleppo and it resisted attempts by the city's governors to implement the imperial writ. The climate of political instability, in turn, forced many of the leading Christian and Jewish merchants to transfer their operations elsewhere: Izmir, Istanbul, Mosul, and Baghdad.

In an attempt to curb the janissaries' power in Aleppo, the Porte appointed a scion of one of the very Anatolian *derebey* families it sought to control, Çapanoğlu Celalettin Paşa, as governor in 1813. Not long after his arrival in the city, Celalettin Paşa invited a number of the prominent janissary leaders to a conference at his home. It was reported that as they stooped to enter the gate house leading to his home, he had them beheaded. This extreme measure was only temporarily successful, however, as during the reign of Hürşid Paşa, the poor of the city rose in rebellion in October 1819. Their revolt came at a time of severe food shortages in the city, in part due to the insecurity of the countryside, and was reportedly sparked by rumors of grain hoarding by Ottoman officials. The governor was out of the city at the time and Aleppo fell into rebel hands. A group of *Ashraf* notables whom at least one contemporary account blamed for instigating the revolt,¹¹³ organized the administration of the city by quarters in order to suppress looting. A council, headed by the janissary Muhammad Ağa Koca, was formed and it supervised the selling of grain at a fixed price. It also sent a petition to the governor, outlining the reasons for the rebellion and pledged the council's loyalty to the sultan. Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39) could not allow this insurrection to succeed, however, and he dispatched an army to help Hürşid Paşa quell the rebellion.¹¹⁴ Faced with a prolonged siege and potential devastation of the city by the Sultan's troops, the European consuls brokered a surrender in January 1820. Aleppo's short-lived experiment in local government capitulated and a repressive period followed with a number of arrests, executions, and deportations of Aleppines accused of treason.

Aleppo had little time to recover from this man-made disaster before the city was hit by the devastating earthquake of August 1822, described by the resident British consul, Edward Barker:

On the 13th August 1822, at half-past nine in the evening, Aleppo, Antioch, Idlib, Reehah, Derkoush, Armanas, every village and every detached cottage in the Pashalic, and some towns in the Pshalics of Damascus and in Mesopotamia, as far as Baghdad, were in ten or twelve seconds entirely ruined by earthquake, and became heaps of stones and rubbish, in which, at the lowest computation, twenty

¹¹¹ 'Abbud, "al-Murtad," p. 108.

¹¹² London, PRO, FO 226/107, Rose to Canning, Beirut, October 24, 1880.

¹¹³ Bulus Qara'ali, *Ahamm hawadith Halab fi nifs al-awwal min al-qarn al-tasi'* 'ashar (Cairo, 1933), pp. 37–40.

¹¹⁴ Cemal Tukin, "Mahmud II. Devrinde Halep İsyani, 1813–1819" *Tarih Vesikaları* 1 (1941): 256–65.

thousand human beings (about a tenth of the population) lost their lives, and an equal number were maimed or wounded.¹¹⁵

A comparable account of devastation was reported by the Polish rabbi, David D'Beth Hillel, who visited the city in 1830 and gave a figure of 50,000 dead.¹¹⁶ There had been previous earthquakes in the city's long history, but none seemed to have produced the wide-scale destruction of property and loss of life wrought by the 1822 tremors.

Throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Sultan Mahmud II was acutely aware of the problems facing his sovereignty in northern Syria. All attempts to re-assert control in the region were, however, stymied by a more serious challenge in Greece, beginning with the insurrection of March 1821. The war in Greece was seemingly an all-consuming concern for the state as reflected in the yearly requests for extra funds from Aleppo's merchants and guilds and for recruits from the city. The Empire's vulnerability at that time was not necessarily disadvantageous to all sectors of Aleppo's population, however.

In 1818, the city's Melkite Catholics had suffered a temporary set-back when the Porte, at the insistence of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul, had ordered the Melkite clergy in Aleppo to conform to orthodoxy. With the insurrection in Greece in 1821, however, Aleppo's Catholic merchants petitioned the Porte to recognize their autonomy from a church that the sultan increasingly viewed as disloyal. In 1822, the Aleppo Catholics received an imperial order recognizing their loyalty which was contrasted with the "treachery and rebellion" of the Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul and granting them autonomy in Aleppo.¹¹⁷ The order further granted the Catholic community the right to collect thirty-five out of every forty *para* levied as tax on the *Rum* (Melkites) of Aleppo as a whole. This concession recognized that by that date almost all the Melkites in Aleppo were Catholic. This was affirmed a year later in a deposition of Muslim notables before the city's chief judge in which they claimed that only thirty to forty of the households among the *Rum* were still orthodox while the remaining 1,500 households followed the Catholic rite.¹¹⁸ Although the Melkite Catholics would not be recognized as an official *millet* (religious community) until 1848, in Aleppo they had secured their undisputed control of their internal affairs in the city, free from the intervention of the orthodox hierarchy in either Istanbul or Damascus.

In another move to reign in opposition to the sultanate, the janissary

corps was disbanded in Istanbul in 1826 in the infamous *vaka-i hayriye* (Auspicious Occurrence). Orders were received soon after in Aleppo abolishing the corps there, but it occurred without the wholesale executions that had accompanied the dissolution of the janissaries in the capital. In fact, prominent janissaries seemed to have left the city for provincial towns for only a few months and then returned to Aleppo. Their power was diminished but not eliminated as they continued to give voice to the discontent of the city's poor.

Experiencing such political and natural upheavals, it comes as no surprise that the city's fortunes were in decline in the first half of the nineteenth century. The city walls already in a state of disrepair, were heavily damaged in the earthquake of 1822 and never repaired. As in earlier centuries, the city was continually stalked by outbreaks of plague and cholera, but unlike the situation in the preceding centuries, the losses were not made up with new arrivals from the villages as those villages themselves were largely depopulated. Paralleling this wholesale regional depopulation, the city's own population declined to its nadir in the Ottoman period. A British consular estimate put the total of the city's inhabitants at between 65–80,000 in 1840.¹¹⁹

This physical decline was also reflected in the city's European trade. By 1814, the level of Aleppo's trade with France was only a fifth of what it had been in 1789. Although the Napoleonic Wars had reduced France's abilities to trade with the Ottoman Empire in particular, the decline of French trade with Syria mirrored a general reduction of European interests in Syrian products. Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Jacques Rousseau, the French consul in Aleppo, reported that there were only thirteen Europeans living there in 1812: three Frenchmen, five Italians, three Austrians, and two Tuscans.¹²⁰ For most of the first three decades, British presence in the city was reduced to John Barker, who served as both the last representative of the Levant Company in the city and Britain's consul-general, and he was often absent for extended periods of time.

Despite recurring crises, however, Aleppo continued to serve as an important regional market center and one of the major manufacturing centers of the Empire. Its soap and *alaja* cloth continued to be well regarded in the Empire and were shipped to the major cities of Egypt, Syria, and Anatolia. French consular reports indicated that in 1812, the volume of trade between Baghdad and Aleppo was at least four times as great as the volume of trade between France and Aleppo. This trade all carried on camel back consisted of imports to the city: Iranian cloth and tobacco, Indian cotton cloth, spices, and indigo, and coffee from Yemen, and exports

¹¹⁵ Edward Barker, *Syria and Egypt under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), vol. 1, pp. 321–22.

¹¹⁶ Walter Fischel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands: the Travels of Rabbi David D'Beth Hillel (1824–32)* (New York, NY, 1973), p. 69.

¹¹⁷ Damascus, AS, Aleppo, vol. XXXVIII, p. 141; also Hidemitsu Kuroki, "The Orthodox–Catholic Clash in Aleppo in 1818," *Orient* 29 (1993): 1–18.

¹¹⁸ Damascus, AS, Aleppo, vol. XXXVIII, p. 184.

¹¹⁹ John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* (London: 1840), pp. 3–4.

¹²⁰ Eugen Wirth, "Alep dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 62 (1991): 131–149.

from it: European imports, especially sugar, silk cloth and soap.¹²¹ This regional trade was described by Rabbi D'Beth Hillel:

There are European, Persian, and Indian merchants who bring goods from their respective countries. There is abundance of grain, good meat, very good cheese, and good wine, and abundance of vegetables at a moderate price . . . There are also manufactories of soap and of olive oil.¹²²

One of the city's biggest boosters in this period when Aleppo was fast fading from the geographical imagination of European traders was Barker. He envisioned the re-opening of the Euphrates route, through the employment of steam-boats on the Euphrates, or in a later brain-storm in 1839, by constructing a railroad, linking Aleppo to Basra. This was all tied to a rather grandiose colonial vision of the Levant's future:

And if the valley of the Euphrates and Mesopotamia be taken as a field for emigration, we can safely say there is no country under the sun which appears to us to offer the same number of advantages. It is healthy, has a temperate climate, regular seasons, abundance of rain, plenty of sun, a fertile soil, perfect security (if a sufficient number of emigrants go out together, from the mutual support they would render each other). And as soon as any number of emigrants had established themselves, there could not be a question of Arabs interfering with them, for union is strength.¹²³

A more realistic assessment of Aleppo's then current conditions and future potential was included in an undated memorandum (*layiha*) received at the Porte in 1245 A.H. (1829–30) from the *mütesellim* of Aleppo who was not identified by name. He recalled that in the days of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, the country between Aleppo and Iraq was filled with flourishing and, therefore, revenue-producing villages. By contrast, he went on, these places were now empty and in ruin. This was a result of Bedouin tribes from Arabia who had entered the region and driven the peasants away. Interestingly more for the political view-point it represents than its historical accuracy, the *mütesellim* blamed the Wahhabis rather than the 'Anaza for this destructive behavior. In fact, the Wahhabis had not raided as far north as Aleppo, nor had the Bedouin tribes in the vicinity fallen under the siren call of their ideology. Furthermore, he went on to say that the situation in the countryside had deteriorated so badly of late that villages in the Homs–Hama region and in regions closer to Aleppo were also abandoned. Aleppo was, as a result, completely encircled by potentially hostile tribesmen, and even formerly more tractable tribals: the Kurds of Azaz and Killis, the Alawi mountaineers, and the Turkomans of the Amq plain were raiding and pillaging both the remaining villages and the caravans coming to the city.

¹²¹ Wirth, "Alep dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle."

¹²² Fischel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands*, p. 69.

¹²³ Barker, *Syria and Egypt*, vol. II, pp. 247–48.

Having delineated the deterioration of the central government's ability to protect Aleppo, the *mütesellim* ended with an optimistic note that seemed to prefigure Consul Barker's vision. Pointing to the wealth that had accrued to England, France, and Spain from their possessions in the Americas and the East Indies, he cited the potential wealth that would become available to the sultan by re-opening the old trade routes and the re-establishment of villages in the plains of northern Syria. Such measures would bring revenue to the House of Osman equal to that the Europeans had gained from their overseas possessions. Despite many similarities, there was one crucial difference between the *mütesellim's* and the consul's vision of the future. He, clearly, envisioned Ottoman rather than English colonists.¹²⁴

The Ottoman state had little time to act, however, as Ibrahim Paşa, son of Mehmed Ali, the rebellious governor of Egypt, invaded Syria in 1831. The period of Egyptian occupation, lasting until 1840, was both a traumatic rupture in Aleppo's history and a crucial watershed in Syria's history. The Egyptian administration tried to implement statist policies, created government monopolies, and directed Syria's agricultural and industrial output toward Egypt. In the case of Aleppo, this meant a disruption of its trade to Anatolia and northern Iraq, both of which remained in Ottoman hands. As a result many of the prominent Christian and Jewish merchants left the city to spend the duration of the Egyptian occupation in Anatolia, Cyprus, or Iraq. Muslims had other reasons to leave as Ibrahim introduced universal conscription for Muslims, causing hundreds of young men to flee into areas still under Ottoman control.¹²⁵

Despite its being almost universally detested by Syria's Muslim population, British observers such as John Barker and John Bowring viewed Ibrahim Paşa's regime as progressive. His regime implemented what the British perceived as a fairer system of justice than what the Ottomans had provided. Furthermore, it sought to modernize the commercial infrastructure of Syria by building or improving upon the country's ports and roads, control banditry, and give the non-Muslim minorities a larger role in local affairs. Many of the Christians of Aleppo were inclined to view Ibrahim in an equally favorable light. In 1835, a Syrian Catholic school teacher, Na'um Bakhkhash began to keep a diary in which he would continue to write until his death in 1875. His entries for the years of the Egyptian occupation show an appreciation for the fairness with which his community was treated. The old prohibition against the building of churches was relaxed and Christian notables' counsel was sought along with that of their Muslim counterparts.¹²⁶

The return of Ottoman rule to Aleppo followed closely the proclamation of two historically important documents. The first was the Anglo-Ottoman

¹²⁴ Istanbul, BOA, HH 48006.

¹²⁵ Istanbul, BOA, HH 3190.

¹²⁶ Na'um Bakhkhash, *Akhbar Halab*, Fr. Yusuf Qushaqji, ed., 3 vols. (Aleppo, 1985–1992).

Trade Agreement of 1838 which opened the Empire up to Western exploitation through the implementation of virtual free-trade for British merchants. The second was the Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane issued in 1839. This proclaimed the sultan's intent to promote such principles as the security of life and property of his subjects, regular and just recruitment into the army, public trials of all persons accused of crimes, and equal justice to all his subjects, regardless of their religion. The position Aleppo might play in British ambitions in this newly reconfigured Ottoman Empire was summarized by John Bowring:

Aleppo is by far the most important of all interior Syrian depots, and is the only inland town where any British merchants have permanently fixed themselves. The habits and traditions of the inhabitants of Aleppo are more commercial than those of any parts of Syria. They are fond of talking of the mercantile greatness of their forefathers, and of the many in the East and West with whom they formerly carried on extensive transactions . . . The local position of Aleppo is in many respects admirable for trade. It has an abundance of warehouses, which are to be obtained at low rental; it communicates at the distance of a few hours with the Euphrates and its khans and coffee-houses are crowded with travelers from the east. There are habits of luxury in the city itself which create a considerable demand for articles of consumption . . . it is likely to grow in wealth and influence, if commerce be allowed to establish its various ramifications, and if security of person or property give those feelings of confidence without which all enterprise is checked and destroyed.¹²⁷

Bowring's optimistic assessment of Aleppo's role in a reviving economy of the Ottoman Asian provinces echoed a report written in 1837 when the city was still under Egyptian occupation by A. Durighello, a local Levantine acting as consul for the United States. His report was clearly designed to lure American merchants into Aleppo's trade. He stated that the chief import from Europe was British cotton thread which he argued was the inferior of the American product. In outlining Aleppo's attraction as a mercantile center from which American merchants might exploit trade networks that reached across Asia, Durighello pointed to the continuing arrival of caravans from Baghdad carrying indigo and cotton cloth from India and silk and tobacco from Iran. He also stressed Aleppo's export of its own manufactured goods to Izmir and Istanbul and its central role in the commerce of southeastern Anatolia, a region he delineated as consisting of Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Urfa.¹²⁸

American merchants did not flock to Aleppo, however, and in 1840 the consulate was closed down not to be re-opened until the 1850s. Even if American merchants did not view northern Syria as fertile ground for exploitation, others of their fellow countrymen did. American Congregationalist missionaries arrived permanently in the city in 1849 and had

established a school in the city by 1855. They were frustrated in their mission, however, by the indifference the city's Catholics showed to their evangelism. After a decade of trying to win the city's Catholics to the new dispensation, the Americans settled on a mission that would concentrate its efforts on the Armenian migrants who were again arriving in Aleppo in substantial numbers from southeast Anatolia and among the Armenian population of nearby 'Ayntab (Gaziantep) where the headquarters of their mission effort in northern Syria were moved.

The decade that followed the return of Aleppo to the sultan's sovereignty witnessed, as predicted by Bowring and Durighello, a gradual improvement in Aleppo's economic position as security was slowly extended to the countryside. The changing economic environment did not work to ameliorate the living standards of all segments of Aleppo's society equally, however. Merchants who were mostly Christian and Jewish, but not exclusively so, prospered as European merchandise flooded into the country and Aleppo served as the conduit through which it reached southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. The reforms enacted under the seal of Sultan Abdül-Mecid provided the Christians with relief from some of the more onerous restrictions they had faced in the past. Not only were their voices heard in the newly constituted *şura-ı belediye* (municipal advisory council), but the Uniate hierarchies were officially recognized as *millets*, the Armenians in 1831 and the Melkite Catholics in 1848. More importantly, after 1848, the Uniate communities were permitted to build new churches. This departure from centuries of tradition was greeted enthusiastically by the Catholics who began to construct several new imposing edifices, celebrating their recently achieved status and wealth. Their approval of the new order was also demonstrated by their acceptance of that sartorial symbol of the Tanzimat, the fez. Bakhkhash reports that when orders to wear the fez arrived in Aleppo in 1844, no one complied. But in 1847, a group of young Christians decided collectively to throw off their turbans in favor of the fez and make their support for Abdül-Mecid visible.¹²⁹

The Muslim poor of the city, however, were hit by rising prices and in some cases with loss of livelihood as traditional crafts lost out to imports. Further eroding their perceived status, the state was changing its traditional relationship with its Muslim subjects. They, in turn, increasingly viewed the sultan as having sold out the patrimony of Islam to the Franks. Adding to their discontent, the state was asking for an increase in the responsibilities they owed it in the form of individual taxation and universal conscription, while reducing their privileges vis-à-vis their non-Muslim neighbors. Christian advances were perceived by disgruntled elements of the Muslim population as losses to their traditional legally sanctioned superiority. Some

¹²⁷ Bowring, *Commercial Statistics*, pp. 77.

¹²⁸ Washington, National Archives, Microfilm Publications, T188 (Aleppo, 1835-40).

¹²⁹ Bakhkhash, *Akhbar Halab*, vol. I, p. 255; vol. II, p. 47. Their fashion statement was gradually followed by other Christians as well, vol. II, p. 191.

of these Muslims attempted to get imperial orders preventing the building of new churches and when these efforts produced only temporary halts to the construction, Muslims occupied one of the new structures and declared it a mosque.¹³⁰

Tensions between the communities continued unabated despite warnings from the governors that no sectarian outbursts would be tolerated. These were exacerbated by the triumphant procession of the Melkite Catholic Patriarch Maksimus Mazlum through Aleppo in August 1849 and his enthronement in a new cathedral with much pomp and ceremony. The procession carrying him to the cathedral had featured both the outward display of large crucifixes and the traditional Syrian celebratory display of firing off rifles into the air. These were taken by some Muslims to be a sign of impending Christian political domination of the city. The presence of rifles in the procession only served to enforce the fear that the Christians were arming themselves. Further unsettling the situation, there were rumors abroad in the Muslim community that the Christians were about to rise up as they had in the Morea in 1821.

The traditional political compact between the sultan and his Muslim subjects was unraveling. Deteriorating sectarian relations between Muslims and non-Muslims would plague all of the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution in 1918, but the first major outburst of inter-communal violence in the Ottoman Asian provinces occurred in Aleppo. Muslim discontent with the new order erupted on October 17, 1850 with the rumor that the draft was about to be instituted in Aleppo. A large crowd quickly formed and went to see Mustafa Zarif Paşa, the governor, to demand his assurances that there would be no conscription in the city and that the poll-tax on all adult males which had recently been implemented would be abolished. Fearing trouble, the governor fled to the new barracks in the Shaykh Yabrağ district outside the city walls as the crowd became a mob that started to sack shops in the central city. The target for the mob's fury quickly became the affluent Christian suburbs to the north of the city. Newly built churches and Christian homes were looted and gutted. Actual loss of life was kept low through the intervention both of the European consuls and leading Muslim notables. No more than twenty persons were reported killed initially, although a few dozen more died of injuries received in the riots later on. The damage to property as well as to Christian morale in the city was quite high, however. An Ottoman commission in 1851 drew up a list of the damage: 688 homes and thirty-six shops looted and partially destroyed, along with six churches including the patriarchate of the Melkite Catholics and its library and archives.¹³¹

Calm returned to the city within a week, but with the governor still

¹³⁰ Bakhkhash, *Akhbar Haleb*, vol. II, pp. 142–46.

¹³¹ Istanbul, BOA, İ Dahiliye 13493/7.

besieged in the barracks, the mob instituted its own government with 'Abdullah al-Babinsi, a local janissary leader as its head. This uneasy situation continued until November 5, 1850 when an Ottoman army, supplied with British artillery, bombarded the quarters of the city from which the rebels had come. The city was subdued with great loss of life. British consular estimates were that five thousand people had been killed and several quarters devastated. With this brutal, if decisive, action, Ottoman control had been definitively established in the city and it would not be challenged again until 1918. A collective psychological trauma persisted among the Christian population for at least a decade after the outburst of violence in 1850 and was described by the British consul J. H. Skene in 1860:

The Christians of Aleppo are a keen, money-making people, clever in trade, miserly at home, abject without support, and insolent when unduly protected. The great mass of them live in a state of chronic terror. This was merely a reflex of what they suffered in the massacre of 1850 . . .¹³²

The last half century of Ottoman rule

Having suffered the disruption of inter-communal violence in 1850, Aleppo avoided the descent into the sectarian anarchy that rocked much of Syria in 1860. Nevertheless, anonymous letters circulated among the Muslim community in Aleppo in the summer of 1860, calling on the young men to rise up against the Christians, following the lead of the Muslims of Damascus. In response to rumors of an imminent rising, the Christians collected bribe money that was distributed among key figures in the city's poorer neighborhoods.¹³³ In the end, however, it was the keen desire of Aleppo's military governor and leading Muslim notables that kept the peace. As noted by the British consul in the city this was due to a changing attitude toward the Christians by the leaders of the Muslim majority:

Religious tolerance is professed by the Government authorities in this province, and there is no practical violation of the principle of any importance. It has even been evinced recently in a very striking manner by the Ulema: Mussulmans insulting Christians in the streets having been severely rebuked by them, and some of the most revered Imaams having publicly in the mosques preached the equality before God of all mankind, as proved by quotations from the Koran.¹³⁴

¹³² Consul Skene to Sir H. Bulwer, August 4, 1860, contained in Bilâl Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol. I (1856–80) (Ankara: 1982), p. 24.

¹³³ London, PRO, FO 406/8, p. 378, Consul Skene to Lord Russell, November 27, 1860; Leila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley, CA: 1994), p. 77.

¹³⁴ Consul Skene to Sir H. Bulwer, Aleppo August 20, 1860, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, ed. David Gillard (University Publications of America, 1984), part I, ser. B, vol. VI, pp. 1–3.

After the “events” of 1850 and 1860, Aleppo moved comfortably into the role Bowring had predicted for it. Both commercially and economically, it began to recover from the disastrous first half of the century. This is demonstrated, in part, by the renewed growth of its population, aided in part by a new wave of migration to the city. Most of these migrants were from southeastern Anatolia who were drawn by the city’s reviving economy. A survey of the non-Muslims who paid the *jizya* in 1849 listed 727 adult males as “stranger” (*yabancı*). A majority of these had Armenian names and over half were registered as coming from two places: Arabkir and Sasun. The first Ottoman census of the city, conducted in 1850 slightly before the riots, returned 34,000 adult male Muslims, 7,800 adult male Christians, and 1,800 adult male Jews. Although these numbers are problematic as indicated by the clear undercount of the Jewish males, when compared to the totals given in the provincial yearbook (*salname*) for 1908, they indicate a substantial growth in the city’s population over the second half of the nineteenth century: 83,679 Muslims; 19,320 Christians; 9,353 Jews; 2,562 foreigners; and 4,897 temporary residents, or a total of 119,811 persons.¹³⁵ Interestingly, the city’s population in 1908 had returned to the approximate level the city had known in the seventeenth century.

While there is no doubt that Aleppo rebounded in terms of its population in the second half of the nineteenth century, there has been debate over the question of the ability of its local industry to keep pace with British imports. In terms of its foreign trade, the city ran a deficit in the period. Figures provided by a British consular report represent its dimensions: 1885, imports £1,558,368, exports £998,476; 1887, imports £1,618,881, exports £884,895; 1889, imports £1,764,510, exports £980,642.¹³⁶ There is more question, however, about the state of Aleppo’s balance of payments with the rest of the Empire. The consular report for 1890, for example, stated that the city’s trade figures registered therein did not include goods either brought in from, or sent to, Ottoman ports.

Most contemporary scholarship has accepted British consular reports of the decline of number of looms at work in Aleppo without question and used that characterization as an index of the devastation wrought by the importation of British manufactured cloth on the local economy.¹³⁷ The 1890 report claimed that textile output in the city in that year was only

thirty percent of what it had been only thirty years before. It pointed to the impoverishment of the people of Anatolia due to the war with Russia and new tariffs on trade to Egypt as the primary causes for the decline. Recently, however, Donald Quataert has challenged this reading and argued that Aleppo’s production of cloth remained strong throughout the period. In fact, he suggests that it might have even have increased in the early twentieth century.¹³⁸ The British consular report of 1890, while asserting a decline in production, supports Quataert’s contention that Aleppo cloth manufacturers retained much of the same markets in Anatolia and Iraq that they had enjoyed at the beginning of the century. Other British consular reports from the closing decades of the nineteenth century report that Aleppo’s merchants enjoyed a healthy balance of payments with the regional centers of its economic hinterland: Gaziantep, Diyarbakir, and Mosul and the smaller market towns of northern Syria and southeastern Anatolia.¹³⁹

The reign of Sultan Abdül-Hamid II (1876–1909) marked the high point of Ottoman political control over Aleppo and its surrounding countryside, equalled perhaps only by the authority it had exercised during the “golden age” of its rule in the sixteenth century. The government’s military power was sufficient either to drive the once dominant Bedouin tribes deeper into the desert or to subdue them entirely. After 1860, there was a major export boom to Europe of both wheat and cotton from northern Syria. Taking advantage of the provisions of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 that allowed for establishing private title to agricultural lands that had been abandoned, prominent Aleppo families moved in to take control of large tracts of arable territory stretching to the Euphrates.¹⁴⁰ The families who were in a position to take advantage of these changes were, by and large, descendants of the same families who had emerged in control of tax farms at the end of the eighteenth century. They were aided in what quickly became a land grab by the creation of a new sub-province (*sancak*), later to be a province, at Dayr al-Zawr on the Euphrates in 1864. This administrative device, backed by a garrison, served to anchor Ottoman control over the steppe land of northern Syria and encouraged cultivation of lands that had been abandoned to the Bedouin from the end of the sixteenth century.

While Aleppo’s Muslim elite found new opportunities for wealth in a now pacified countryside, the Christian and Jewish elite began to move further afield. Already in the early nineteenth century, Christian merchants from Aleppo had moved their operations to Europe. In the period before and after İbrahim Paşa’s occupation of Syria, Jirji w. Yusuf Himsi, a Greek

¹³⁵ Istanbul, BOA, ML.VRD.CMH, 1177; Edward Barker, ed., *Syria and Egypt under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey: being Experiences, during Fifty Years, of Mr. Consul-General Barker* (London, 1876. Reprinted New York, NY, 1973), vol. 2, p. 297; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Halep 1326* (Istanbul, 1909), p. 224.

¹³⁶ London, PRO, FO 861/22.

¹³⁷ Abdul-Karim Rafeq “The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy: the Case of Damascus, 1840–1870,” in *Economie et sociétés dans l’Empire Ottoman*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Paris, 1983), pp. 419–32; Meriwether, “Women and Economic Change,” in *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*, ed. Judith Tucker (Washington, DC, 1993) pp. 65–83.

¹³⁸ Donald Quataert. *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 77–79.

¹³⁹ Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole* (Wiesbaden, 1984), pp. 256–72.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, pp. 46–53.

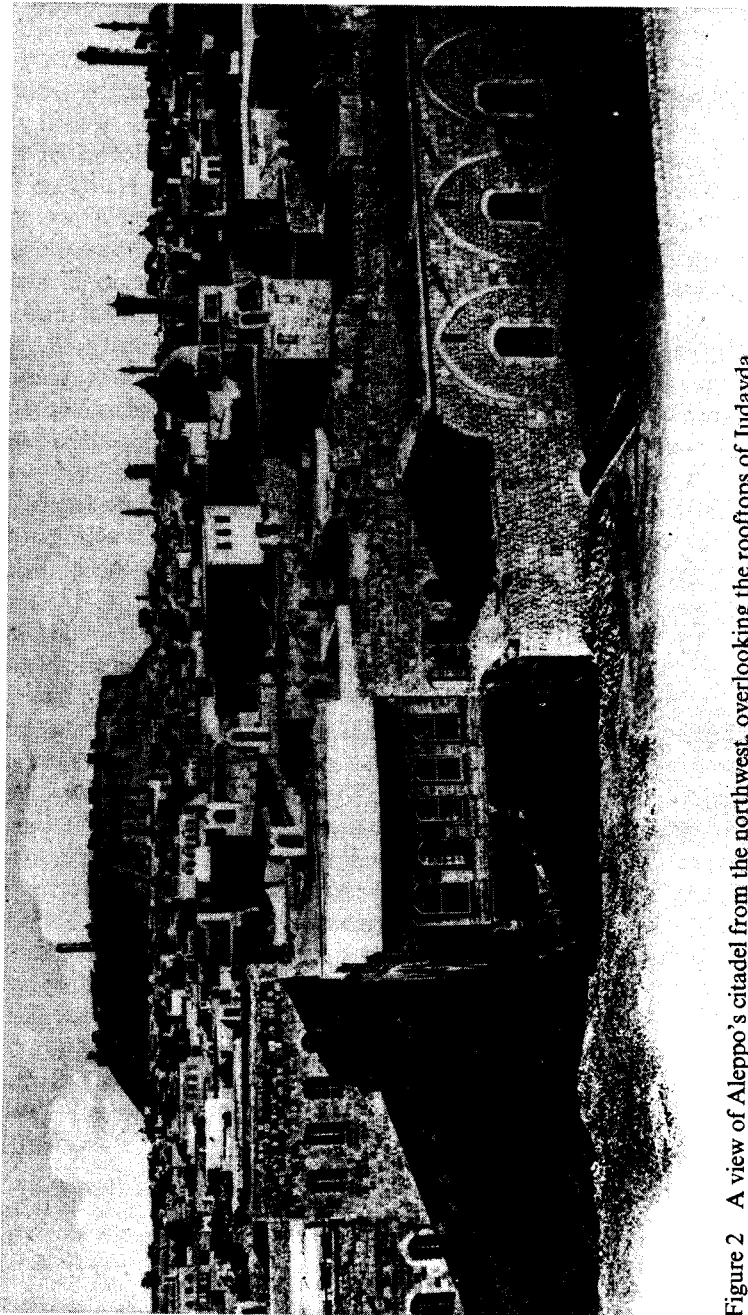


Figure 2 A view of Aleppo's citadel from the northwest, overlooking the rooftops of Judayda

Catholic, who had obtained French citizenship after a prolonged stay in Marseilles was one of the leading merchants involved in Aleppo's export trade. By the end of the century, his odyssey to Europe was followed by many more. As reported by an English consul in the city:

Native Christians and Jews have settled in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Marseilles, and thence forward goods to their partners in Aleppo, and the latter having a greater knowledge of the country and language, and in general possessing better means of disposing profitably of their goods, can cope with advantage with the European houses who import for wholesale at Aleppo.¹⁴¹

These émigrés included besides the Himsis, the Greek Catholic family of Hawwa and the Jewish family of Sittun, both of whom settled in Manchester. Many of the prominent Jewish families also began to move to New York City, an ongoing emigration that would eventually lead to the formation of the largest Arabic speaking Jewish community in the city. A smaller number moved to Palestine in the same period. Although they seemed reluctant to move to the New World, many of Aleppo's Greek Catholics chose Beirut and Istanbul as a new home. Two of the families that had risen to prominence first, 'A'ida and Ghadban, moved permanently to Istanbul. Other families maintained collateral branches in both cities as in the case of the houses of Kusa and Tutunji, who had family members serving as governors of the *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon.¹⁴² In Istanbul, these Aleppo Catholics were absorbed into the general Levantine Roman Catholic population. At first this had been out of necessity, but even after the Melkite Catholics were legitimized as a *millet*, the Aleppo Catholics continued to attend the Roman Catholic churches in Galata/Beyoğlu, inter-marrying and blending in with the Levantine Catholic population of the capital.

Aleppo's population was much more quiescent in the second half of the century than it had been in the first. But there remained a residual resistance to Ottoman authority that could reassert itself if conditions permitted. The winter of 1878–79 was particularly hard for Aleppo's people. The weather was severe and there were major food shortages brought on by the Russo-Turkish war in Anatolia. In response to increased prices and rumors of impending shortages of flour, the poor of the city rose up as they had many times in the past, storming the shops of the central bazaar and looting them. At the point of flare up, Cemal Namık Paşa, the military commander of the city's garrison, swiftly moved into the town and restored order, in stark contrast to the events of 1850. The elite Muslim families whose investments were thus secured responded enthusiastically. They began to lobby for

¹⁴¹ London, PRO, FO 195/741, quoted by Gaube and Wirth, *Aleppo*, p. 256. A similar assertion was made by the British consul, James Skene, in 1872 in his general report on Aleppo. FO 226/174, p. 4.

¹⁴² Engin Akarlı, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), pp. 193–99.

Cemal's promotion to provincial governor and that was accomplished in 1880.¹⁴³ Given his subsequent initiatives toward land reform, however, many of Aleppo's elite Muslim families were to regret their initial support. Cemal Paşa occupied his post for seven years, one of the longest governorships in the city's history as an Ottoman province. His regime was also remembered as one of the best Aleppo had known. Part of the nostalgic glow that surrounded his regime was due, in part, to his role in introducing the new government schools, both the *rüşdiye* and the *iptidadiye* (secondary and primary, respectively), into the city and to his attempts to provide sufficient foodstuffs to the city's markets to end hoarding and price gouging.¹⁴⁴

Cemal Paşa was not universally admired, however. Shortly after his appointment as governor, he closed down an independent newspaper, *al-İtidal*, published in both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish and which had been established by a Muslim businessman, Hashim al-Kharrat, and was edited by the prominent Muslim intellectual, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi. The same pair had previously attempted to publish an Arabic language newspaper, *al-Shahba*, in the city in 1878 and had met with similar results. The governors of Aleppo, as Sultan Abdül-Hamid's servants, could not tolerate possibly subversive opposition to the official bilingual provincial newspaper, *Furat/Firat*, which was established in 1867.¹⁴⁵ Although underground newspapers would briefly appear only to disappear, no other newspapers emerged to challenge *Furat's*, later renamed *Halab/Halep*, monopoly.

In November 1886, an Armenian lawyer named Zirun Çikmakiyan attempted to assassinate Cemal Paşa. Having failed, he was condemned to thirty years in prison. Cemal Paşa who was publicly unconvinced that Çikmakiyan had acted alone, moved to arrest a number of the Muslim elite, including Husam al-Din al-Qudsi, Nafi' al-Jabiri and al-Kawakibi for having put Çikmakiyan up to the failed assassination attempt. In truth, his probable intent was to curb the leading families' opposition to some of the reforms he was implementing, including initial attempts at land reform.¹⁴⁶ No formal charges were ever brought against the men and they were soon released. Soon after, however, al-Kawakibi went to Cairo where he became one of the leading voices of Arab opposition to Ottoman rule, publishing his *Umm al-Qura* (Mother of Villages, a sobriquet of Mecca) which questioned the right of the House of Osman to claim the caliphate.

In the closing two decades of Ottoman rule, Aleppo was firmly integrated into the empire. The last years of Abdül-Hamid's reign saw the introduction

¹⁴³ Kamil al-Ghazzi, *Nahr al-dhahab fi ta'rikh Halab al-shabha'* (Aleppo: 1923–26), vol. III, pp. 409–10.

¹⁴⁴ al-Tabbakh, *A'lam al-nubala*, vol. III, pp. 372–73.

¹⁴⁵ al-Tabbakh, *A'lam al-nubala*, vol. III, pp. 393–94, 404, 409.

¹⁴⁶ al-Tabbakh, *A'lam al-nubala*, vol. III, pp. 381–83; al-Ghazzi vol. III, pp. 410–11.

of new rail lines that connected the city both to the coast at Tripoli and to Damascus, gas lights for some of the city's streets, and even tram lines. Aleppo's new twentieth century face was described enthusiastically by yet another European visitor, Mark Sykes, who visited the city in the decade before the Great War:

When I visited it first, eight years ago, it was a typical North Syrian town. Dirt and disease reigned in its crowded and crumbling bazaars; decay and poverty were the most notable characteristics of its buildings . . . The half-starved soldiers who slouched about casting hungry glances toward the bakers' counters, the arid, uncultivated fields lying at the very city gates, the half-built buildings, the ruined streets and the savage and stupid fanaticism of the Moslems composed a picture of want, ignorance, and decadence. In 1906, however Haleb presents a very different appearance. The old town is indeed much as it was, but many of the bazaars have been rebuilt, the streets have been repaired, and work and business are steadily increasing. Beyond the walls, houses of great beauty and originality are springing up in every direction – indeed many of the brakes and gardens which once surrounded the place have vanished and have been replaced by whole new quarters of the growing city . . . Wealth, business, movement, and traffic have increased beyond all expectation and the progress in every direction may, I think, be attributed to one cause – the general revival of agriculture in the plains to the east of the city.¹⁴⁷

The revival of their city and its slow march toward modernization must have given cause for pride to many Aleppines at the start of the twentieth century, but at the same time, as in other Ottoman-Arab cities, the elites of the city, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish must have had mixed opinions over the odds of survival for the Empire and what its demise might mean for them. Perhaps typical of the general ambivalent mood toward empire that seemed to be prevalent among the city's elite were the literary productions of the remarkable children of the Melkite Catholic intellectual, Fath-Allah Marrash: Fransis, Maryana, and Abd-Allah.

Fransis Marrash, the most prolific of the trio, traveled as a youth with his father to Paris and continued to travel back and forth between Beirut, France, and Aleppo throughout his life while he produced a number of essays on science, mathematics, and education. His brother lived more permanently in Europe where he was involved in various Arabic-language newspaper ventures in London and Paris and even dabbled in the rising tide of Arabism that was affecting Arab émigrés in both Europe and North America. Maryana who is perhaps the best known Syrian woman poet of the century remained in her native city and composed a number of poems in the classical *qasida* mode that have survived. These included one written on the enthronement of Sultan Abdül-Hamid II in 1876, dedicated to his mother, and others written to various governors of Aleppo.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Mark Sykes, *The Caliphs' Last Heritage: a Short History of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1915), pp. 298–300.

¹⁴⁸ al-Tabbakh, vol. VII, pp. 568–69.

As reflected in Maryana's choice of the subjects of her poems, some form of Ottomanism seemingly remained the dominant ideology in the city. Unlike other Ottoman Arab cities such as Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad, scant evidence of any Arabist activity has come to light in Aleppo in the final years preceding the First World War. Despite al-Kawakibi's personal journey toward Arabism, separatist sentiment seemed to have been largely absent in the waning days of empire. When war did come, hundreds, if not thousands, of Aleppo's young men were conscripted into the Ottoman army. While these did not defect to join the Arab Revolt, there is no evidence of any enthusiasm on their part for the cause for which they fought and died.

With the end of empire in 1918, Aleppo's population remained ambivalent and even divided over the future. Many of the Christians and Jews favored French control while others looked to Faysal's Arab kingdom. Among the Muslims there was no support for a French presence and some even hoped for a restoration of the empire by Mustafa Kemal. Once the French occupied the city in 1920, armed resistance led by Ibrahim Hannanu broke out in the countryside. Aleppo, itself remained quiet and its population acquiesced to the city's new status as a provincial capital within the French mandate for Syria. With the loss of its traditional markets behind the borders of sometimes hostile states, Turkey and Iraq, Aleppo went into deep economic crisis, graphically illustrating the traditional importance of those markets throughout the Ottoman period to the city's economic prosperity.

CHAPTER 2

Izmir: from village to colonial port city

DANIEL GOFFMAN

Two-thousand houses in this city cling to the slopes below the castle [Kadifekale]. They are situated among the airy gardens of various palaces and mosques. Most of the public buildings, however, are located below, along the seashore. According to the register that İsmail Pasha made of Izmir in 1657–58, this city had ten Muslim districts (*mahalles*), ten Greek Orthodox, ten Frank and Jewish, two Armenian, and one Gypsy. Within these *mahalles* are 10,300 glorious stone buildings, and countless magnificent houses, decked out with red-tiled roofs and sumptuous tulip beds. It is a fabulously rich port city, with shops and solid stone houses, boasting every type of mosque, religious school, dervish lodge, and spiritual folk. And within it are forty coffeeshouses, seventy soap factories, two-hundred taverns, twenty *boza* halls, twenty dyehouses, one harness shop, one candle factory, and one customs shed. But, there is no bedestan.

Evliyâ Çelebi (1671–72)¹

Smyrna [Izmir], as is sufficiently well-known, has been for several centuries the most important scale, or place of trade, in the Levant.

Macfarlane (1829)²

Passages such as these, the first written by an Ottoman eyewitness to Izmir's condition and the second by an English one, have enticed historians into grave miscomprehensions about the size and influence of the town. Evliyâ Çelebi's observations on the late-seventeenth-century city are brazenly hyperbolic, as was his habit in his massive and extraordinary travelogue. Despite such plain exaggerations, scholars often have reproduced his comments and inflated statistics, and accepted them uncritically, perhaps because the distinctiveness of his reflections makes them seem so precious. Macfarlane's statement, made one and a half centuries later, is characteristic of an entire genre, whose authors were rarely professional scholars, usually were tourists, and sometimes were businessmen. As a merchant, Macfarlane's obsession was trade; he cared little about the development or causes of Izmir's nineteenth-century commercial vigor. Despite their very different purposes, these statements both constitute static "snapshots" of a rapidly changing place. Historians long have

¹ Evliyâ Çelebi *Seyahatnamesi* (Istanbul, 1984), vol. IX, pp. 92–93 and 96.

² C. Macfarlane, *Constantinople in 1828* (London, 1829), p. 32.