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Socio-political changes, confessionalization, and inter-confessional relations in Ottoman Damascus from 1760 to 1860

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**PART 2: CONFESSIONALIZATION AND THE *TANZIMAT*
STATE: COMPETITION FOR ACCESS TO RESOURCES,
SECTARIAN DISCOURSES AND POPULAR MOBILIZATION**

CHAPTER 5: THE CRIMEAN WAR, THE ISLAHAT FERMANI AND INTER-CONFESSIONAL RELATIONS

Religious communities were transformed internally by the Ottoman *Tanzimat* reforms. On a society-wide level, the reforms and especially the 1856 Islahat Fermanı which granted some level of equality to religious communities shook inter-confessional relations. The Islamic institution of the *dimma* which had regulated the status of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire was challenged by these reforms. Yet, the notion of citizenship and Ottomanism was not yet entrenched as a new social contract.¹ The end of the Crimean War which corresponded to the drafting of the Islahat Fermanı decree marked the arrival of new decision-makers in Istanbul and a shift away from the initial period of reforms moved by Naqşbandī ideals and represented by the Gülhane Edict of 1839. The 1856 decree caused considerable opposition in Istanbul and in the provinces and led some to question of the legitimacy of Sultan Abdülmecid. The Islahat Fermanı and the Crimean War that preceded it, marked a turning point in inter-confessional relations in the empire. These two events figure predominantly in chronicles as the initial cause of tensions between Christians and Muslims.²

In this chapter, we will explore inter-confessional relations in this specific period. First, we will examine the context of the Crimean War and the drafting of the Islahat Fermanı. Secondly, we will analyse the precedent of the Egyptian rule of Damascus, which shaped the inhabitants' perception of the war and the reforms. Thirdly, we will explore the transformations of social hierarchies at play through the reforms. Finally, we will look into the consequence of the Crimean War and the Islahat Fermanı in *Bilād al-Šām* and the political relevance of feelings of collective humiliation in the outbreak of the violence.

¹ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 9-10.

² *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5; Makāriyūs Šāhīn, *Ḥaṣr al-Liṭām 'an Nakbat al-Šām* (Cairo: Kutub Turath, 1895), 128; Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 226.

1. Crimean war and the Islahat Ferman

Following the Napoleonic wars in Europe, monarchic European powers reached a settlement in 1815 during the Congress of Vienna, aimed at reestablishing the balance of power between them and preventing further aggression. The Ottoman Empire was not present at the congress, yet it became subordinated to this system, occupying a strategic geographical position for the imperialist aims of European States.³ The Vienna system however broke down in 1853 with the outbreak of the Crimean War between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The war was fought under the pretext of the competition between the Russian Empire and France over the protection of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, and especially over the custody of the various Christian religious sites of Palestine.⁴ This issue had given place to lengthy negotiations with both powers in the 1840's. After taking power in 1852, the French emperor Napoleon III sought to increase his popularity at home through renewing his claims over the holy places of Palestine.⁵ The sultan agreed to French demands in 1852 and handed Catholics the keys of the Holy Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem while at the same time issuing a *ferman* to ensure that the Greek Orthodox would continue to enjoy the same rights as before.⁶ These claims of protection were used as tools to justify Russian and French imperialism into the Ottoman Empire, thus upsetting the balance of power established by the Congress of Vienna thirty years earlier. Russia was unhappy about the victory of the French emperor and was sure that the Ottoman Empire was going to fall and that a solution had to be found regarding the division of its territories among the other European powers. These declarations worried the Ottoman government but also France, Great Britain and Austria over the intentions of the Russian emperor. It led to negotiations regarding the protection of Greek

³ Candan Badem. *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 46.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁵ Ibid, 66.

⁶ Ibid, 65.

Orthodox Christians which lasted until 1853. The Russian representative, Alexander Menshikov, requested from the Ottoman government to be granted not only the custody of the holy places but also the official protection over all the Greek Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire. In case his demands were not agreed upon, he threatened to cut off diplomatic relationships.⁷

The Ottoman government did not cede to these demands as they would involve a considerable loss of jurisdiction over its subjects and contradicted the terms of the treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca signed in 1774 by the Ottoman Empire and Russia.⁸ The foreign minister Reşid Paşa obtained assurance that France and Great Britain would defend the Ottoman Empire in case of Russian invasion. These two powers even sent fleets to the Dardanelles in preparation for that eventuality.⁹ The Ottoman government drafted *ferman*-s safeguarding the rights of its Christians subjects according to tradition, in an attempt to win over their loyalty in the upcoming war.¹⁰ Russia invaded the Danube Principalities in 1853, yet it did not immediately lead to war as the Great Powers attempted to find a compromise, known as the Turkish note. However, this attempt was unsuccessful as the Ottoman Empire and Russia did not back down from their positions.¹¹

War was on the way, yet the Ottoman ministers continued to attempt to find a peaceful way out of this situation, as they feared the military might of the Russian Empire and were realistic about their lack of military preparedness. Public opinion however was rather pro-war and many saw in the approach of the government a sign of weakness.¹² Students of *madrassa*, and some among the ulema called for *ğihād* against the Russian state. The religious student of *madrassa*, called *softas*, who aspired to become part of the ulema, wrote bold petitions to the government imposing war for the sultan as an integral duty of his claims to the title of *‘āmīr*

⁷ Ibid, 76; Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (York: Metropolitan Books 2010), 109.

⁸ Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 77.

⁹ Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 457.

¹⁰ Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 80.

¹¹ Ibid, 83.

¹² Ibid, 91.

al-mū`minīn. The Ottoman ministers worried about the increasing involvement of the population in government affairs.¹³ The ministers called a meeting with the ulema, mufti, admirals and other decision-makers to discuss whether the war should be declared or avoided. While some ministers stressed the ill-preparedness of the Ottoman army, the ulema and other ministers rather pointed to the necessity to declare war. They also argued that allying with Christian powers against another Christian state challenged the notion of *ḡiḥād*. In the end, the declaration of war was accepted by Sultan Abdülmecid in October 1853.¹⁴ The Russian emperor Nikolai I in response declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The war started in the Danube on October 21st 1853 and officially ended with the signature of the Treaty of Paris in March 1856.¹⁵

These three years marked a turning point in the nature of inter-confessional relations in the empire but also in the shape of state-society relations. The Crimean War was for the first time conducted through military conscription and volunteering. In addition to joining the war effort, the population was well aware of all the developments of the conflict thanks to the involvement of new tools of communication such as newspapers, pamphlets, war photography, telegram and paintings. Because of these aspects, the Crimean war has often been referred to as the first modern war.¹⁶ These various information mediums contributed to the politicization of the population and made the war central to popular political imagination and discourses even on the margins of the empire. An overwhelming Ottoman victory during the Crimean war could have fostered the legitimacy of the young Abdülmecid, whose popularity was low due to the fiscal and military reforms. Yet, while the Ottoman Empire did eventually win the war, it did so only thanks to the intervention of France and Great Britain. As military

¹³ Ibid, 93.

¹⁴ Ibid, 97.

¹⁵ Ibid, 98.

¹⁶ Trudi Tate, *A Short History of the Crimean War* (London: I.B Tauris, 2019), 163.

advisers had predicted, the newly conscripted Ottoman army was not prepared enough to face the Russian forces.

The weakness of the Ottoman army was demonstrated early on. The battle of Sinop in 1853 imputed heavy losses on the Ottoman naval force, and marked the first victory of the Russian empire. French and British vessels were called to the rescue and entered the war against Russia.¹⁷ All through the war, the Ottoman government tried to sign a peace treaty with Russia to prevent further losses, yet it met with the opposition of the *softalar*, ulema and *madrassa* students, who threatened the government to lead a public insurrection. The Ottoman government curbed the rebellion by arresting *softalar*.¹⁸ The posture of negotiation that the sultan adopted was seen as a sign of weakness by the population and hurt his legitimacy as *'āmīr al-mū'minīn*.

The war imputed heavy losses on the Ottoman army, not only because of the battles, but also because of famine, cold and diseases. Eventually, the French and British forces were able to repel the Russian army. France came out as the main victor of this war because of its triumph against the Russian troops in Sebastopol, which marked the end of the war.¹⁹ Peace negotiations started in Paris in 1856, putting an end to the agreement of the Vienna Congress. The Congress of Paris secured the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which entered the Concert of Europe.²⁰ Yet, the Crimean war had been conducted through the granting of foreign loans to the empire, marking its endemic indebtedness to Europe.²¹ In this context of foreign intervention in the empire, Sultan Abdülmecid published the Islahat Fermanı in 1856, granting equal rights to non-Muslims.²² The origins of this decree and its intentions have been the subject of numerous contemporaneous debates but also contradictory interpretations

¹⁷ Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 129.

¹⁸ Ibid, 138, 139.

¹⁹ Ibid, 286.

²⁰ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 458.

²¹ Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 113; Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of The Bourgeoisie, Demise of the Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 49.

²² Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 458.

in the scholarship. Was it drafted just to please foreign powers and to favor the Ottoman entry into the Concert of Europe? Or did it fulfill the objectives of winning the support of the Ottoman Christian population to avoid further separatist movements and repel Russian and French imperialist ambitions?²³ In this chapter, we will analyse the decree, its implications and consequences on inter-confessional relations.

The decree had various articles which transformed the place of non-Muslims in society. First of all, it declared the equality of all Ottoman subjects in front of taxation, putting an end to the collection of the *ğizya* from non-Muslim subjects. In exchange, the decree mentioned the equality of all subjects in front of conscription, which meant that Christians and Jews could now join the army.²⁴ While this stipulation did not really materialize, partly because of the opposition of patriarchs, officers and soldiers, it did mark a turning point in the state-society relations for the government had previously relied on its Muslims subjects to conduct warfare, which was consistent with legitimatizing of the wars as *ğihād*. The incorporation of Christians and Jews into the Ottoman army challenged the very basis of the war effort.²⁵

A report from a special council of war in 1855, the *Meclis-i mahsus-i askeri*, highlights the difficulties and concerns of the government regarding universal conscription.²⁶ The question of loyalty was at the heart of the concerns of the decision makers. The *meclis* determined that non-Muslims should theoretically give 17500 soldiers but that in reality they would only be asked to give 3500 recruits annually and the rest would pay an exemption tax, the *bedel-i askeri* (also called *iane-i askeri*). The *bedel-i askeri* was also a tax that individual Muslims could pay instead of offering their service to the army. In each region, Muslim

²³ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey, a Modern History*, (London ; New York : I.B. Tauris : Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1998), 58; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 45.

²⁴ Jacob C. Hurewitz, ed. *The Middle East and North Africa in World politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975-79), vol. 1, 316-318.

²⁵ Odile Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes. Les hommes et les idées du « Nouvel ordre militaire », 1826-1914* (Paris: Institut Français d'études Anatoliennes/Maisonneuve et Larousse, 2007), 26.

²⁶ BOA, I.MMS.132.5647, June 5th 1855.

soldiers were recruited through lottery, and those who were called could either enter the army or pay the *bedel-i askeri*. In the case of non-Muslims however, they did not have the choice to serve and a certain amount of *bedel* was taken collectively on each community. It was justified by the fact that in some regions, war had created a lot of damages and resentments among Christians and thus if they were recruited from these places, there was a high risk of them escaping to join the opponent's camp.²⁷ The Ottoman army had witnessed such issues during the Crimean War when recruits from the Balkans escaped in front of battle.²⁸ The issue of doubtful loyalty can be observed in the discussion regarding non-Muslims forming independent blocks in the army. Should non-Muslims be dispatched into different battalions of the *nizamiye* army or should they be recruited as reserve militias? Should they be mixed with Muslims in blocks or have their own? While some argued that it would be easier for them to have their own battalions, other protested that this type of military organization might put the army at risk of treason and threatened its unity. A clear concern for the loyalty of those recruited interacted with a need to keep divisions within the army, which answered to the non-Muslim religious leadership's concerns but also the reticence of some Muslims soldiers to serve with non-Muslims.²⁹

The *meclis* also discussed the different regions of the empire, in which Christians and Jews might be recruited or not, depending on the state of the administration, the loyalty of the population, the ethnicity of the Christians, and the advancement of conscription of Muslims there. Certain ethnicities were considered more reliable than others or more war-like.³⁰

Then, an equally pressing problem was the financial void created by the abolition of the *ğizya*, which had been used in many cases to finance the army. The army was in dire need

²⁷ BOA, I.MMS.132.5647, June 5th 1855.

²⁸ Finkel, *Osman's dream*, 461.

²⁹ BOA, I.MMS.132.5647, June 5th 1855.

³⁰ BOA, I.MMS.132.5647, June 5th 1855, also in Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes*, 24, 42.

of a new source of financing, and the *bedel-i askeri* was created with this aim in mind.³¹ Although it was not imposed only on non-Muslims, this tax was explicitly mentioned in the *meclis* deliberations as a replacement of the *ğizya*.³² Yet, it was not just a continuation of the *ğizya*, for groups who refused military service, such as some of the Druze in Syria, were also liable.³³ The exact status of this tax, its relation to the *ğizya* and the populations that it concerned were points of contention that were the subject of long discussions.³⁴

To ensure that Christians and Jews would indeed join the military service, the government thought to reassure religious leaders that special precautions would be taken for them to be able to practice their religious rites, and that priests and rabbis would be brought at each stop of the army. The Sabbath and religious holidays would also be observed by the recruits. The non-Muslim religious leaders might have been worried that military service would lead to too much intermingling and to a loss of control over their flocks. They also worried that they could not impose conscription on their flock. The *meclis* sought to put the religious and secular leaders in charge of determining who was fit for military service and thus to work as military contractors for their community.³⁵ In the end, the conscription of even 3500 soldiers agreed upon by the *Meclis i-Vala* encountered various oppositions and the *bedel-i askeri* was imposed generally instead.

The Islahat Fermanı, in addition to abolishing the *ğizya* and imposing universal conscription, also highlighted freedom of religion and conversion. It also abolished restrictions associated with the *dimma* status such as sartorial laws or the punishment of blasphemy. It legally allowed non-Muslims to enter all the levels of the administration and the

³¹ BOA, I.MMS.132.5650, November 16th 1855.

³² Ibid.

³³ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, April 12th 1839.

³⁴ A.E. 67/CPC/ vol 5-6, Outrey-Comte Walewski, August 16th 1856; Moshe Ma'oz, *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 22-25.

³⁵ BOA, I.MMS.132.5647, June 5th 1855.

army. Finally, the decree institutionalized the *millet* system in which non-Muslim communities were put under the authority of their communal leadership.³⁶

There are conflicting narratives regarding the 1856 Islahat Fermanı because it had internal and external audiences. On the one hand, the decree was indeed influenced by foreign representatives. Lord Stratford Canning, the British ambassador to the Ottoman government participated in crafting the decree along Ali Paşa, the Ottoman delegate to the conference of Paris. It was then discussed by a council of Ottoman ministers. The participation of a foreign representative early on and the context of foreign intervention against Russia point to the possibility that the decree was written in part to please European powers. In the discussions regarding this decree, the Ottoman ministers insisted that this decree should not look like a victory for Europeans, but rather a favour to Christians in the empire.³⁷

Yet, in addition to the obvious external dimension, it is important to highlight that the Islahat Fermanı decree had an internal audience, and was fulfilling internal purposes. Its main articles were not drafted solely for the Conference of Paris. It was the consequence of internal discussions before the Conference. For example, the aforementioned discussion of the *Meclis-i Vala* regarding the feasibility and practicalities of the recruitment of Christians and Jews in the army took place in 1855, before the end of the war.³⁸ The reforms were a solution to keep the Empire's territorial integrity and guarantee the loyalty of the Christian subjects of the Empire in the face of increasing foreign intervention on their behalf. It was sought to put an end to foreign intervention in the empire by lifting the causes of discontent of its Christian constituents.³⁹

³⁶ Stamatopolous, "From Millets to Minorities," 259.

³⁷ Candan Badem, "The Question of the Equality of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War (1853–1856)", in *The Crimean War 1853–1856. Colonial Skirmish or Rehearsal for World War? Empires, Nations, and Individuals*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton Instytut Historii PAN, 2011), 79-80.

³⁸ BOA. I.MMS. 132. 5647, June 5th 1855; I.MMS.132 5650, November 16th 1855.

³⁹ Badem, "The Question of the Equality", 79-80.

The Islahat Fermanı introduced a completely different basis of state-society relations in the Ottoman Empire. It contrasted with the decree of 1839 which was clothed in a return to the Islamic tradition. This contrast can be explained by the factional change in Istanbul. The Crimean War indeed marked a break with the arrival to power of different individuals, who were not moved by Naqşbandī ideas, such as Fuad, Ali Paşa and members of the Palace faction.⁴⁰ They drafted the 1856 decree. These two aids of Mustafa Reşid Pasha took over and monopolized posts of responsibility in the government.⁴¹ The previous diplomatic approach, represented by Reşid Pasha, had failed to prevent the war and was thus delegitimized.⁴² Key members of the Naqşbandīya among bureaucrats and ulema lost their positions. The Naqşbandī *Şayḥ al-Islām* Arif Hikmet bey was fired from the position of Grand Vizier in 1854.⁴³ Sadik Rifat was also dismissed in 1854.⁴⁴

Both groups of statesmen saw the necessity of reforming the empire, however they had different objectives of reforms. On the one hand, for the bureaucrats around Mustafa Reşid Pasha, the observation of religious precepts and the strengthening of the bureaucratic apparatus was a way to return to a more glorious time. On the other hand, Ali and Fuad Paşa did not want religious restrictions to hinder the exercise of state power. They saw the army as the main institution that should run the empire. Ali and Fuad Paşa accumulated various positions within the state, increasing their monopoly on the decision-making process and gave a secondary role to ulema and judges.⁴⁵ While the Naqşbandīya had been favored previously as a way to reform the state and to foster loyalty, Ali and Fuad Paşa rather turned to their

⁴⁰ Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 106, 109.

⁴¹ Ibid, 113.

⁴² Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 79.

⁴³ Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 106.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 106, 109.

⁴⁵ Abu-Manneh, *The Islamic Roots*, 202; Abu-Manneh, *The Later Tanzimat*, 70.

opponents, the Mevlevi and Bektāṣi orders, who had been overshadowed by the Naqṣbandīya in the first part of the 19th century.⁴⁶

Contrary to the 1839 Gülhane edict which had benefited from a wide support among government officials, the 1856 aroused passionate oppositions from bureaucrats.⁴⁷ Reṣid Pasha, who had been instrumental in crafting the 1839 decree, wrote a *layiha*⁴⁸ to the Sultan criticizing the reforms.⁴⁹ The newly appointed *Ṣayḥ al-Islām* managed to give legitimacy to its most game-changing article, the abolition of the *ğizya*, by looking into early Islamic history and the agreement stroke by ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb with the Bani Ṭālib Christians who did not have to pay *ğizya* but simply paid double the amount of the tax imposed on Muslims. The *Ṣayḥ al-Islām* thought that if the name *ğizya* was stroke and replaced by *iane i-askeri* or *bedel i-askeri*, both foreign powers and Ottoman subjects would be contented.⁵⁰ Yet, while this name change was sought to be cosmetic only, it bore important meaning to the population. It came to be perceived not only as a privilege given to Christians but also as a victory of Europe, as ministers dreaded.⁵¹ Christians were seen as obtaining new rights and at the same time being freed from their obligations.

In addition, there was no effort at explaining the Islahat Fermanı of 1856. The interpretations effort of the *Ṣayḥ al-Islām* to legitimize the transformation through Islamic law were not given publicity. The decree was imposed but not explained, thus hindering its acceptance by the population.⁵² This pedagogic failure is reminiscent of the reforms promulgated under Selim III (1789-1807). He enacted a series of fiscal, administrative and diplomatic reforms. He opened Ottoman embassies in the major capitals of Europe. He had

⁴⁶ Abu-Manneh, *The Islamic Roots*, 202; Abu-Manneh, *The Later Tanzimat*, 72; Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, 128.

⁴⁷ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 459.

⁴⁸ Treatise

⁴⁹ Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 346.

⁵⁰ Candan Badem, “The Question of the Equality”, 81-83.

⁵¹ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 459.

⁵² Recep Senturk, “Intellectual Dependency: Late Ottoman Intellectuals between Fiqh and Social Science”, *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 3-4. (2007): 293.

also planned to reform the military establishment and created a new infantry corps the *nizam-i-cedid*, trained by European officers with European weapons and techniques. It was recruited from among the Muslim youth of Anatolia, contrary to the *devşirme* system which was based on the forced recruitment of Christian youth from the Balkans. The Janissaries, issued from the *devşirme* system, saw in the *nizam-i cedit* a threat to their institution and rose in rebellion against the sultan and ultimately murdered him. They also resented the influence of France over the sultan. Selim III's reforms were perceived as illegitimate and ultimately criticized as against Ottoman tradition and Islamic law.⁵³

2. Precedent of Egyptian Rule: Shaping the Understanding of the Reforms

Local contexts shaped the interpretation of imperial transformations. The Egyptian rule of Damascus (1831-1841) affected how Damascenes perceived the *Islahat Fermanı*. Indeed, resentments among Damascenes regarding the place of Christians in the empire were intrinsically linked to their role during the Egyptian rule.

The ulema of the city, among others, had predominantly negative assessments of the Egyptian rule. While some of them had allied with the Egyptians at first, towards the end of the rule, they ended up dissatisfied by the measures taken by the rulers. Ibrāhīm 'Alī adopted symbolic measures against the ulema. For example, he requested mosques and Quranic schools and used them as barracks for soldiers, animal feeding places or biscuit factories. Most of these mosques were situated in the Maydān and Qanawāt⁵⁴ neighborhoods, home of the two main political factions of the city.⁵⁵ The first was the general quarter of the local popular ulema and the second was the residence of numerous elite ulema and notables. Both

⁵³ Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes*, 16.

⁵⁴ See map in Annex 1.

⁵⁵ Muḥammad Ğamīl al-Šaṭṭī, *Rafad al-bašir fī a 'yān dimašq fī al-qarn al-tālāt 'ašr 1200 H.-1300 H.*, Damascus: Dār al-yaqḍā al-'arabīya, 1943, 12-19; Weber, *Ottoman Damascus*, vol. 1, 116.

neighborhood hosted the influential individuals of the city.⁵⁶ These symbolic policies ended up alienating all political factions of the city.

The Egyptian rule also led to the transformation of the hierarchies and the loss of privileges of the *āšrāf*. The descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad benefited from the status of *šarīf*, *p. āšrāf*. In Damascus there were 26 *āšrāf* families.⁵⁷ This status granted them tax exemption, dispense from military service and a specific role in society. Instead of the *qāḍī* court, they were judged by a court presided by their representative, the *naqīb al-āšrāf*.⁵⁸ They also had their specific guilds. They had preferential access to a variety of positions such as *qāḍī*, mufti, *madrasa* teacher, supervisor of the *waqf*, shaykh of *ṭarīqa* or *naqīb al-āšrāf*.⁵⁹ They were also often in charge of managing the *āwqāf*.⁶⁰ This special status however was challenged by the *Tanzimat* reforms. Already in the 18th century, the governor of the city, Cezzar Ahmed Paşa, had dealt the first blow to this status group by choosing himself the *naqīb*, executing some *āšrāf* of the city and confiscating the belongings of those among them who were involved in trade. They were jailed, tortured and forced to hand over their resources to win their freedom.⁶¹

During the Egyptian rule (1832-1841), Ibrāhīm ‘Alī dealt the final blow to the *āšrāf* by changing the rules of the tax-farming, or *iltizam*, of the imperial *miri* lands which affected them directly. He also chose his own favorites to the positions of *qāḍī* and *madrasa* teachers and tried to distance the *āšrāf* from these positions. Finally, he abolished their privileges.⁶² Some see in the events of 1860 a revenge of the *āšrāf* towards their loss of position during the Egyptian rule.⁶³

⁵⁶ *Muḍakkirāt tāriḥīya*, 65-66.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 448-450.

⁵⁸ Yūsuf Ġamīl Na‘īsa, *Muḡtama‘ Madīna Dimašq 1772–1840*, vol. 2 (Damascus: Dar Tlas, 1994), 448; Khoury, *Urban notables*, 14.

⁵⁹ Na‘īsa, *Muḡtama‘*, 455.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 454.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 456.

⁶² *Ibid*, 453.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 453.

In terms of political administration, the Egyptians set up a *mağlis* instead of the *dīwān* existing beforehand. The *dīwān* was previously composed of ulema and *‘ayān*. Although ulema were present in the new *mağlis*, their role was diminished compared to the *dīwān*. The few ulema who sat in the *mağlis* and showed their loyalty to the Egyptians, as the *‘ayān*, saw their situation improving as they reached high positions in the administration.⁶⁴ The new *mağlis* was composed mainly of notables and property-owners as well as non-Muslim representatives. Christians and Jews were officially incorporated into the decision making process.⁶⁵ Ibrāhīm ‘Alī left a Greek Catholic, Buṭrus Karamā, in charge of organizing the *mağlis* while he left to Homs.⁶⁶ The Egyptians favored the recruitment of Christians in the financial administration.⁶⁷ The Greek Catholic Ḥannā Bīk Bahrī, occupied a predominant position in the *mağlis*. His colleagues were not fond of him because they considered that his considerable influence in the decision-making process was not legitimate. Rumors had it that he was the real ruler of *Bilād al-Šām*. He received all the honors and public rewards.⁶⁸ The fact that the financial department was handled almost exclusively by Christians,⁶⁹ coupled with the tax increases of the Egyptians, diverted popular resentments against the Egyptian rule towards Christians.

We have seen that Christians and Jews had reached such positions of the power in the 18th, yet these nominations were not seen as a question of balance of power between Christians and Muslims and thus did not meet with the same reactions. With the Egyptian rule, the idea that Christians could overpower Muslims was increasingly seen as a real threat. The actions of Christians elites were no longer perceived on the individual level but rather

⁶⁴ Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 12.

⁶⁵ A.E. 67/CPC, vol.1, Ratti-Menton-Guizot, January 18th 1841.

⁶⁶ al-Qasāṭlī, *al-Rawḍa*, 89.

⁶⁷ *Muḍakkirāt tāriḥīya*, 59

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Yitzhak Hofman, "The Administration under Egyptian Rule," in *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 326.

represented the role/power of the whole community. It points to the rise of a sectarian interpretation of local events and individual actions.

The public attitude towards the Egyptians also revolved around their politics in the city. They introduced various administrative, political and economic reforms. The introduction of universal taxation based on individuals rather than groups, was one of the most hated measures.⁷⁰ The population also suffered economically in this period because of the war with the Ottoman government but also because of these new taxes.⁷¹

Ibrāhīm ‘Alī attempted to yield to his power all the semi-autonomous groups of the countryside of *Bilād al-Šām*. He sent Druze into exile, subjugated Bedouins, and led an attack on other groups such as the Alawis. He attempted to restrict the autonomy of para-military groups such as deli forces and *tufenkciler*,⁷² by incorporating them into the army and by imposing the disarming of the population and other irregular military groups.⁷³

Animosities towards the Egyptian rulers shaped discourses regarding the Christian elite, which came to be associated with the Egyptians. This perceived closeness between the Egyptians and Christians was caused by international dynamics, such as the support of France to Muḥammad ‘Alī against the Ottoman government, but also by more local dynamics. Ibrāhīm ‘Alī was seen as allying with Christians against Muslims. Symbolically, the alliance was represented by the arrival in Damascus of Christians of Mount Lebanon riding on horses as part of Egyptian forces.⁷⁴ This was a strong image which shocked the population. Some Damascene Christians had welcomed them with excitement. The Egyptian regime also used Christian forces of Mount Lebanon to collect taxes in a context of rebellion which increased resentment towards them.⁷⁵ In the sectarian interpretations of these dynamics, foreigners and

⁷⁰ Ḥalid Banī Hānī, *Tārīḥ Dimašq wa ‘ulamā’uhā ḥilāl al-ḥukm al-Mis’rī, 1831-1840* (Damascus: Dār Safah’āt, 2007), 191; Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 135.

⁷¹ Ibid, 135.

⁷² Ottoman riflemen

⁷³ Dick Douwes, *The Ottomans in Syria, A History of Justice and Oppression* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 130.

⁷⁴ Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 10.

⁷⁵ *Mudakkirāt tārīḥīya*, 55.

Ottoman Christians were seen as the cause of all changes introduced by the Egyptians and especially conscription.⁷⁶ When Egyptian troops were defeated in their attempt to recruit the Druze in the Ḥawrān in 1838, the Damascenes took advantage of the situation to insult the soldiers together with Christians and foreigners, thereby pointing to popular perception of an Egyptian alliance with Christians.⁷⁷ The famous *‘ālim* Muḥammad Āmin ibn ‘Ābidīn criticized the Egyptian rule mostly because he argued that it benefited only non-Muslims, who took advantage of the situation to defy Muslims.⁷⁸ He also mentioned that non-Muslims had united against Muslims during the Egyptian rule.⁷⁹ The Egyptian divide and rule policies, instrumentalizing one religious group against another, thereby contributed to the politicization of religious identities in Mount Lebanon and in Damascus.

In addition to structural changes introduced to the city of Damascus, the public displays of loyalty of some Christians towards the Egyptians through parades entrenched the perception of their betrayal of Ottoman authority. The victory of the Egyptians against the sultan’s army at the beginning of the rule encouraged Christians to stage a parade in the city. According to the Christian author of *Mudakirāt Tariḥīyya*, this was done by the ‘ignorants’⁸⁰ among the Christians who decorated a camel and put a Muslim on it, they decorated it with bottles of arak and crosses. They sung songs such as “Ibrāhīm Paša yā Maṣūr, Allah yal’an al Maqḥūr”, translating to “Oh Ibrāhīm Pasha the victorious, may God destroy the curses ones” which Muslims understood as a reference to themselves. Christians notables forbade this parade but when the ‘ignorants’ asked the deputy governor for his authorization, he gave it to them. The itinerary they traced in the city reveals the audience of this procession. They started by Bāb Šarqī,⁸¹ composed of a mixed population but home to churches and synagogues, then

⁷⁶ A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, May 2nd 1838.

⁷⁷ A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, March 9th 1838.

⁷⁸ Weismann, *Sufism on the Eve of Reform*, 72.

⁷⁹ Ibn ‘Ābidīn, *Radd al-muḥtār*, vol. 6, 336.

⁸⁰ In line with interpretations of popular violence by the elites, see Makdisi, “Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate,” 199.

⁸¹ See the map of Damascus in Annex 1.

went towards the marketplace to end up in Surūḡīya and came back from ‘Amārā, Māzz al-Kasāb which are Muslim majority neighborhoods of industry and commerce, to finally return to Bāb Tūmā. They thus passed through the main markets of the town and circled around the city center. When inhabitants of Surūḡīya closed the neighbourhood doors to prevent them from entering, the Christian paraders managed to get the deputy governor to open it by force and sent to prison the shaykh of the neighbourhood. They were under the influence of alcohol and regretted it afterwards.⁸² The author of *Muḏakkirāt Tariḥīyya* suspected the deputy governor Aḥmad Paša al-Yūsuf to have favoured such a procession to push Damascenes to rebel against the Egyptians.⁸³ Such processions in the cities, passing by the different neighborhood of the city, were part of the traditions of Damascene societies. They took place for a variety of reasons, such as religious holidays, but also for the marriage of sultans, the birth of their children or their military victories.⁸⁴ However, this parade was quite different as it celebrated the defeats of the Ottoman government.

After another victory of Ibrāhīm ‘Alī in Konya some Christians again paraded in the city with arak and with their finest clothes saying ‘ Pray to Jesus! Who can stand against us! Our swords are drawn! The Lord is with us!’.⁸⁵ In 1833, after the signature of the treaty of Kütahya between the Egyptian and Ottoman armies, the same group of Christians staged a parade around the city, this time however they entered inside the city center, in the artisan neighbourhood of Qaymayrīya and the markets of Buzūrīya⁸⁶ close to the Omayyad Mosque.⁸⁷ These parades were thus displays of strengths and provocation towards the Muslims of the city, especially merchants. They were also displays of loyalty towards the

⁸² *Muḏakkirāt tāriḥīyya*, 72, 73.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Mathieu Eychenne, “La nuit mamelouke. Contribution à l’histoire du quotidien au Caire et à Damas à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 136 (November 2014): 38; See also Louis Pouzer, *Damas au VIIe/XIIIe siècle. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dār al-Machreq, 1991).

⁸⁵ *Muḏakkirāt tāriḥīyya*, 79.

⁸⁶ See map in Annex 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

Egyptian regime. Later on, when discussions regarding the freedom of procession for Christians and Jews took place, this precedent of political parades was in the everyone's minds. These events also point to the increasing inability of the elite to impose their authority on the commoners and act as intermediaries to diffuse conflicts.

The Egyptian period, through its symbolic transformations, marks a turning point for inter-confessional relations. It is not surprising to find among the attackers of the Christian quarter in 1860 mentions of a need for revenge for the Egyptian period. Indeed, a merchant declared that Muslims had suffered enough under the Egyptians and that Christians had to be punished for this reason.⁸⁸ Violence towards Christians already took place during the Egyptian rule. An anonymous Christian chronicler wrote that in this period, a coffee-place in Bāb Tūmā filled with Christians playing music had been attacked. The attack started by a threat against Christians and an affirmation that this favorable situation towards them will never last. The author also mentioned popular mobilization in support of the Ottomans which targeted Bāb Tūmā, a Christian quarter, pointing to the association made between Christians and the Egyptians.⁸⁹ Because the French government had supported the Egyptians, and because of the central role of Greek Catholics, Catholic institutions were the targeted.⁹⁰ For example, in 1841 a project was discussed to destroy the Greek Catholic church built in the Egyptian period. The governor heard about it and immediately sent his irregular troops to protect it.⁹¹

3. World Upside Down

The changes introduced by the decree of 1856 were perceived as a complete reconstruction of the social order. These transformations were understood through the prism of the changes introduced by the Egyptian rule, which were both sudden and brutal. The

⁸⁸ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 85.

⁸⁹ Banī Hānī, *Tārīḥ Dimašq*, 156; *Mudakkirāt tāriḥīya*, 64.

⁹⁰ Banī Hānī, *Tārīḥ Dimašq*, 158.

⁹¹ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 1, Ratti-Menton-Guizot, January 6th 1841.

Egyptian rule also created the impression of a zero-sum game, in which success and victory of Christians meant an automatic loss for Muslims. For the inhabitants of Damascus, the reforms represented a world upside down. Christians and Jews who had been tributary subjects were now put on an equal footing with Muslims. Because of the unprecedented aspect of the *Islahat Fermanı*, it has come to the forefront as the defining decree of the *Tanzimat* period. However, for Ottoman subjects the decree of 1856 was only part of a larger transformation of state-society relationships, which tended to abolish not only the privileges of Muslims in an Islamic state, but rather the whole range of privileges and exemptions awarded to various status groups which had been the basis of Ottoman society.⁹² The statesmen who drafted the reforms did not aim to abolish all social hierarchies. On the contrary, they emphasized the importance of respecting one's status in society. Yet, the reforms by by-passing intermediaries and centralizing power did give rise to consistent and at times violent challenges to privileges and inequality of statuses. The reforms were understood by some as instituting a complete equality among all Ottoman subjects.⁹³

Indeed, the Ottoman reforms aimed at improving the management of resources, which it was increasingly lacking, through a direct intervention into fields which had been delegated to a vast array of intermediaries. In addition, it was coupled with a centralization of political power which aimed at preventing challenges to the central government from within the Ottoman state structure. While in the 18th century, the Ottoman government had adopted the strategy of trading autonomy of local power-holders for loyalty and revenue, in the 19th century, the state had to encompass the various functions which had been assumed by these intermediaries. This process was especially visible in the management of taxation and land ownership.

⁹² Such as tax exemptions, legal exemptions, rights to wear specific colors, rights of property or access to resources.

⁹³ Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 105; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 458; Stanford J. Shaw, "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (1975): 421-59. Hill, "How global was the age of revolution?," 12.

Taxation had been an accurate representation of the hierarchy of Ottoman society. The taxation of *ancien régime* was perceived as a sort of tribute, which explains why elites including members of the *askeri* or *ilmiye* group were exempted. Tax exemption was a privilege granted to allies and clients in exchange for loyalty or other service to the state. It was granted graciously from the sultan and could be revoked. Those elites who had enjoyed these tax exemptions beforehand were now gradually called to participate financially in the empire, thus losing this status which made them part of the state apparatus. Those who had seen themselves as part of the state were gradually affiliated with the *reaya* rather than the *askeri* or *ilmiye* status group. The term *reaya* had been applied to tax-paying individuals, that is the general population including Muslims and non-Muslims. Those groups who had seen themselves as part of the state were thus estranged and lowered to the status of simple subject, just as non-elite Muslims, Christians and Jews.

At the same time however, because of universal conscription, all Muslims could be recruited into the army and thus were increasingly considered as members of the *askeri* group, albeit without any of its former privileges. As it was widened, the *askeri* class lost its privilege status. In this way, the status of all Muslims was somewhat equalized. If non-Muslims would have joined the army, they would have entered the *askeri* class as well, thus equalizing the status of all Ottoman subjects. In the end however, their participation into the army was halted, and they were instead asked to pay a tax, the *bedel i-askeri*. This failure to participate in the war effort, due to circumstances meant that they did not enter the *askeri* class but rather were stuck into the *reaya* class. *Reaya* increasingly came to mean non-Muslim.⁹⁴ The status of Muslims was equalized while non-Muslims were pointed to as others. The hierarchical structure of the Ottoman State had previously allowed for a variety of

⁹⁴ The vocabulary used in the orders of the government point to their vision of society, the statesman Ali Aşkar Paşa, when discussing taxation stated that both “Muslim and *reaya* of Damascus provide equipment and necessities for the soldiers” « ahl-i islam ve reayasinin gerek asker tecviz ve tertibinde » in BOA, I.DH.295.1858 March 24th 1854,

cross-cutting cleavages and status groups which blurred the divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims, privileging the distinction between elite and non-elite.⁹⁵ In the 19th century, because of the leveling of the distinction between elite and non-elite, the religious division became more salient and came to define one's relationship to the state.⁹⁶

In the context of the city of Damascus, the *Tanzimat* and the abolition of the privileges of certain social groups together with the equality granted to non-Muslims starting with the Egyptian period were perceived not as an act of justice but as the world upside down, as a sort of positive discrimination, where those on the lower level of society were now promoted to its higher echelons. The *āmīn al-fatwā* Muḥammad Āmīn ibn 'Ābidīn wrote a poem complaining about the bad time in which he lived where the low became high and vice versa.⁹⁷ It was seen as a proof of the downfall of the social order, but also of morality which became symbolized by the increasing public visibility of women and *dimmīs*. Attacks on morality were also linked to the new freedom of Christians and foreign intervention. In 1845, individuals fought each other in front of the taverns operated by the dragoman of the Greek consulate. The French consul mentioned that the consumption of wine was already hated by the Muslims inhabitants but it was even more unbearable as it was operated by a protégé of the Greek consulate, originating from the Islands and dressed as European. In his opinion, the behavior of these foreign Greeks reflected badly on Europeans.⁹⁸ Sa'īd al-Uṣṭwānī mentioned that in 1859 there was a rumour that the inhabitants of the city were increasingly turning to drinking alcohol and causing problems because many Christians opened taverns.⁹⁹

The new class of Christian merchants which had developed thanks to their interaction with foreign houses of commerce, trade with Europe or their positions in the administration of

⁹⁵ Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 36; Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 6; See Tezcan, "Ethnicity, race".

⁹⁶ Fuat Dundar, "Empire of Taxonomy: Ethnic and Religious Identities in the Ottoman Surveys and Censuses," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51 (2015): 146, 147; Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 46.

⁹⁷ Ibn 'Ābidīn, *Radd al-muhtār*, vol. 6, 336.

⁹⁸ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Toppel- Bourquency, August 1st 1845.

⁹⁹ al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 168.

governors came to represent this world upside-down. Not only did these merchant build luxurious houses and dress accordingly, but they also benefited from the protection of foreign powers and thus often escaped taxation. Their situation was not seen as a consequence of equality but rather of their monopolizing politico-economic privileges.

Clothing was an important marker of distinction in the Ottoman Empire. The changes introduced to the clothing patterns during the *Tanzimat* reforms represented this transformation of the social order. During the *Tanzimat* reform period in the Ottoman Empire, clothing became an important tool of social change and the focus of power struggles. The turban and its colors, shapes, and accessories that represented different levels of the social hierarchy was gradually replaced by a universal headgear, the *ṭarbūs*. It came to illustrate the downfall of the ancient-regime. It also pointed to the development of a new horizontal citizenship called Ottomanism, in which all citizens were theoretically at equi-distance to the state. Visual distinctions between officials and subjects but also between religious groups were to be diminished.¹⁰⁰ The decree of 1856 abolished clothing distinctions between religious groups, which meant that the clothing of non-Muslims were not to be restricted anymore. Thus, Christians and Jews could wear certain colors previously reserved for Muslims such as green. Interestingly, in Damascus many Christians wished to continue marking their religious identity even in the face of the abolition of clothing restrictions, for example by adapting the *ṭarbūs*¹⁰¹ by adding a *mandīl*¹⁰² to it, or with a yellow scarf wrapped around it to show their distinctiveness from Muslims.¹⁰³

The same feeling of loss was shared through all the echelons of the social hierarchy. For example, the elites which had enjoyed power until the mid-19th century, such as the *‘ayān* or military leaders, now had to share their economic and political monopolies with a new

¹⁰⁰ Quataert, “Clothing Laws,” 403-404.

¹⁰¹ Brimless cap.

¹⁰² Handkerchief.

¹⁰³ Na‘īsa, *Muḡtama‘*, 625.

class of civil servants who owed their career to their education in new institutions (*mekteb-i harbiye*, etc) who formed bureaucrats and military leaders. They climbed the social ladder through other routes than the traditional client-patron relationships, which had ensured the centralization of power. Their promotion to the elite rank of the Ottoman government was considered as illegitimate by those who saw their privileges escape them.¹⁰⁴ Then, the same dynamic is observable among Christians. Greek Orthodox, who had previously been represented at the higher echelons of the social order and saw themselves as the elite of Christians complained that they were now at the same level than Jews.¹⁰⁵ The transformation of the economic and social structure was resented by those who saw their privileges escape them.¹⁰⁶ In the political imagination of Ottoman subjects, the sultan was responsible for maintaining the social order, as well as the economic structure and good government.

4. Consequence of the Crimean War and the 1856 Decree in *Bilād al-Šām*

4.1 Inter-confessional Tensions

How were the war and the following *Islahat Fermanı* perceived in *Bilād al-Šām*? The experiences of the war differed according to the provinces and the social group. In Damascus, the war was seen as a catastrophe and was not welcome with fervent calls for *ğihād*, except among the Kurdish Naqšbandī community, which sent many volunteers.¹⁰⁷ This chapter will look at the social, political consequences of the war in a specific place by relying mostly on contemporary chronicles, and consular reports. These points of view allow us to determine the effects of the war based on the local context, while the secondary literature tends to focus on the reaction in Istanbul. What did the war mean for local Muslims and Christians, for consuls and governors? How did these interpretations shape inter-confessional relations?

¹⁰⁴ Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes*, 206.

¹⁰⁵ Ismael Kara, "Turban and fez: *ulema* as opposition," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elizabeth Özdalga (London/New York: SOAS/ RoutledgeCurzon Studies on the Middle East, 2005), 183.

¹⁰⁶ Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 459.

¹⁰⁷ Riedler, "Opposition to the Tanzimat state," 39.

The author of *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā* explained that Muslims in Damascus were against the war because they could not see any benefit to it.¹⁰⁸ The war was only going to extend the conscription to a larger part of the population. The author mentions that already during the premises of the war, attitudes towards Christians were becoming more and more hostile, including insults.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Christians were blamed for the outbreak of the hostilities between Russia and the Ottoman Empire because Russia claimed it was acting for their benefit. The author was convinced that the Ottoman government held rancor towards Christians because of the war.¹¹⁰ In addition, Muslims were the only ones who had to bear the cost of the war by sending soldiers to the front. The *Islahat Fermanı* which followed the war also met with strong resentment on the part of the Muslim population. It was read publicly in the *mağlis* to which consuls were invited. The French consul mentioned that the members of the *mağlis* saw it as a result of the insisting of foreign powers and a victory for Christians over Muslims and Islam itself.¹¹¹

The fact that the Ottoman Empire had been saved by European armies during the Crimean War was considered by some as a humiliation because it revealed the weakness of the empire and its subservient position to the Great Powers. It also emphasized the strength of European powers and indirectly of Ottoman Christians. As a consequence, consuls and ambassadors became bolder in their demands and in relation to the local Muslim population. The French consul in Beirut started to behave arrogantly after the war, asking for Muslims to stand up in front of him and punishing them when they did not comply. Some consuls also took the liberty of giving orders to notables.¹¹² The role of the consuls indeed changed after the Crimean war as they became more active to extend their jurisdiction and power on the ground. The changing balance of power between consuls and governors was apparent.

¹⁰⁸ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5, 29.

¹¹⁰ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5.

¹¹¹ AE. 18/PO/serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, May 28th 1856.

¹¹² Šāhīn, *Haṣr al-Liṭām*, 128, 129.

Consuls repeatedly obtained the dismissal of governors who did not fit their interests.¹¹³ When the new British consul James Brant arrived in Damascus in 1858, he demanded to be able to fly the British flag. The French consul Max Outrey advised him against it and explained to him that Muslims didn't forgive the superiority of foreigners over them, and even less the privileges that foreign powers managed to obtain for Christians, creating resentments in the Muslim population. Outrey warned the British consul Brant that showing the British flag would cause a humiliation of the Muslim population of city and would lead to a strong reaction.¹¹⁴ The chronicler Macārīyūs Šāhīn mentioned that following the war, those who were discontented by this situation attempted to oppress all those who seemed to have favored or were associated with foreigners. There was a backlash against Christians and foreign consuls in the city, blamed for the war and for its outcome.¹¹⁵ During and after the war, tensions were high against foreign agents across *Bilād al-Šām*. There were petitions written to the Ottoman government to get rid of foreign consulates in the city.¹¹⁶ It led to a events of violence against Christians and foreigners.¹¹⁷

The decree of 1856 mentioned that foreigners could now buy land in the empire, marking a break not only with previous legislation but with Islamic jurisprudence which prevented a *must'amīn* from possessing land. Land possession was indeed a prerogative of *ḍimmīs* and Muslims.¹¹⁸ This transformation was seen by some as the prelude of the territorial conquest of foreign countries over the empire.¹¹⁹ In chronicles, the idea that Europeans were taking power in some regions such as Mount Lebanon was present. They report the fear

¹¹³ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 2, Vallegue-de la Hitte, September 6th 1850 and August 18th 1850; al-Ust̄wānī, *Mašāhid*, 580; BOA, I.MVL.212.6956, June 9th 1851.

¹¹⁴ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey- Walewski, March 31st 1858.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 128.

¹¹⁶ F.O. 195/368, Wood-Stratford de Redcliffe, July 13th 1853.

¹¹⁷ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5.

¹¹⁸ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 68-69.

¹¹⁹ Šāhīn, *Ḥaṣr al-Liṭām*, 129.

among Muslims of passing under a *Frenj* government and link this fear to the violence of 1860.¹²⁰

Chroniclers agree that at that point, confident that they all benefited from the protection of foreign powers, Christians were no longer cautious not to provoke the rest of the population. They thus started to invest the public space and engage in behaviors which they would have kept private before hand. The frontier between public and private behavior was erased. They engaged in public drinking and interactions between men and women deemed inappropriate by the local population. The Christian chroniclers were quite critical of their coreligionists' behaviors, usually presented as the work of commoners.¹²¹ The French consul advised Christians to refrain from acts of provocation, and lamented the imprudent actions of some of them who insisted on demonstrating their triumph over Muslims.¹²² Yet foreign protection was unable to protect Christians from attacks, all it could do was to obtain retribution afterwards. Chroniclers mention that those who had been favourable to equality between religious groups started to resent it, especially from among the non-elites.¹²³

The French consul was quite worried about the repeated occurrence of fights between Christians and Muslims in the streets of Damascus. He mentions that the same issues were taking place in Homs and that the French inhabitants of the city fled and came to Damascus. Various Christian bishops also wrote a petition demanding the help of the French consul to ensure their protection in these troubled times.¹²⁴ Yet the governor Mahmud Paşa was quite active and managed to maintain social peace through a firm attitude.¹²⁵

The press had played a large role in spreading the news of violence and aggression towards foreign agents all over the empire. The press was developed in the 18th century and

¹²⁰ Ibid, 129, 239.

¹²¹ Iskandar Abkariyūs, *Kitāb Nawādir al-zamān fī waqā'i' ġabal Lubnān*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Al-Samak (London Riyad el-Reyyes Books, 1987), 253-256.

¹²² AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, May 28th 1856.

¹²³ Abkariyūs, *Kitāb Nawādir*, 253-256.

¹²⁴ AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, May 28th 1856.

¹²⁵ AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Waleski, May 28th 1856.

by the mid-19th century journals based in Beirut were operating, as well as presses in Alexandria and Malta run by Protestant missionaries. These journals, such as *Ḥadīqāt al-Āḥbār*, reported world events as well as local happenings. As Benedict Anderson explains in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, the press was a fundamental tool of the construction of nationalism, as it allowed the development of a conscience of commonality among inhabitants of the same region who had previously thought of themselves as part of villages, or region but not as belonging to the same fatherland. In the case of *Bilād al-Šām*, the participation of the press in the creation of a public sphere can also be observed.¹²⁶ This public sphere became increasingly polarized as rumors and sectarian discourses circulated across the region. This circulation of news was also facilitated by the introduction of the telegram and the steam boat which made news reach the ends of the empire much faster. It contributed to the confessionalization of the society in the region as the population was increasingly politicized through this information network. Articles published in Europe which provided negative views of the Ottoman Empire and Muslims also circulated, feeding tensions and resentment at Europeans and Christians.¹²⁷

In 1856 a conflict involving foreigners took place in Marash, north of Ayntab. Tensions were high because of tax distribution among Christians and Muslims in the city. Christians were asked to carry a larger share of the burden of taxation than Muslims. When they complained, the tax share was equalized, however, it caused discontent among Muslims leading Muslim merchants to close their shops.¹²⁸ In this context, in September 1856, a dispute arose around a monetary transaction between a British agent and an Ottoman Muslim subject. The court legislated in favour of the Ottoman subject. The British agent, outraged,

¹²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

¹²⁷ Farah, *Politics of Intervention*, 587.

¹²⁸ Göçek, *Rise of Bourgeoisie*, 113.

insulted the *qādī*. The latter then ordered for the punishment of the British agent, who hid in his house. The house was set on fire and the whole family perished.¹²⁹

In Jerusalem, a series of conflicts regarding foreign presence also took place in 1856 and ended up in violence against Christians. The Protestant Anglican Archbishop of the Jerusalem, Mr Gobat, hung a bell upon the mission school in Nablus, and rang it, thinking that the *Islahat Fermanı* granted him such right. When asked by the governor if he had any official authorization to do so, he simply mentioned the rights given by the decree of 1856. Soon after, French, Prussian and British flags were raised upon private houses, to celebrate the birth of Emperor Napoleon III's son. It reinforced the perception of a political alliance of Christians and foreign powers.¹³⁰ Then, a missionary got into an altercation with a Muslim beggar, and he eventually shot him. It led to an outbreak of violence targeting the British mission. Plunder and burning of Protestant houses followed. The mission church was destroyed.¹³¹ There was however little loss of life.¹³²

The narration of these events spread over the empire and caused great worry to foreign agents. The French consul in Damascus, Max Outrey, reported that the events of Marash, Nablus and Jerusalem and described the discontent of the population towards the *Islahat Fermanı* as a cause of great worry among foreigners.¹³³ He worried that if disorders took place, they would be hard to control in the absence of a regular army.¹³⁴ The French consul advised Christians to be careful not to upset Muslims. He blamed some of the Christians for taking advantage of these new privileges to humiliate Muslims.¹³⁵ The

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 162; Charlotte van der Leest, "Conversion and conflict in Palestine : the missions of the Church Missionary Society and the protestant bishop Samuel Gobat," PhD diss. (Leiden University, 2008), 43.

¹³¹ Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 162.

¹³² Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 33.

¹³³ AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, May 28th 1856.

¹³⁴ AE. 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, May 23rd 1856.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

circulation of rumors and news of such conflicts entrenched religious distinctions and politicized religious identities.¹³⁶

In these conflicts, the use of the public space by Christians and foreigners was contested. Objects such as crosses and bells were used to demonstrate markers of inter-confessional power dynamics. Christian monasteries had the habit of hitting a board with a hammer to call for prayer.¹³⁷ Bells were introduced to Mount Lebanon by missionaries in the 18th century, they were imported from Europe and became the symbol of Christian identity and freedom in the mountain.¹³⁸ They were introduced in Damascus in the mid-19th century. The presence and ringing of church bells marked the sound landscape and imprinted not only a Christian but a Catholic identity on the public space of the city. Putting up bells or taking them down were part of the repertoire of inter-confessional conflict between Maronites and Druzes in the 18th century.¹³⁹ From the 1850's onward, many bells were installed on churches in *Bilād al-Šām*. The author of *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā* mentioned that in 1856 the government allowed Christians to ring bells and display crosses in the street, creating resentments among Muslims.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the British consul Brant mentions that in 1858, the Catholic convent of Damascus was recently adorned with a large bell,¹⁴¹ which they intended to use for the French Emperor holiday. In the same year a large bell was also placed on the Maronite church, displeasing the population.¹⁴² Then, some inhabitants of Damascus complained that since two years Christians started to ring bells in their churches. They asked the shaykh 'Abdāllah al-Ḥalabī to remove them.¹⁴³ Yet, he was unable to do so. A letter found in the Ottoman archives from a Muslim of Damascus, although its origin is unknown, describes the fact that

¹³⁶ Göçek, *Rise of Bourgeoisie*, 113.

¹³⁷ Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 59.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Karamā, *Ḥawadit*, 31.

¹⁴⁰ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 23.

¹⁴¹ F.O. 195/601, Brant-Malmesbury, August 21st 1858.

¹⁴² F.O. 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, September 12th 1860; F.O. 78/1520, Bulwer-Brant, August 30th 1860.

¹⁴³ A.E., 67/CPC, vol.5/6, Outrey- Lallemand, August 1st 1858.

on the day of the outbreak of the violence of 1860 in Damascus, the insurgents took a bell from one of the churches and put it upside down in the streets.¹⁴⁴

The end of the Crimean war and the decree of 1856 marked the birth of a new visibility and audibility of Christianity in the public sphere. This visibility however was intertwined with displays of loyalty or at least commonality with foreign powers, and was thus read as political gestures rather than issues of religious freedom.

The potential for conflict embedded in the use of bells was clear in the eyes of Christian chroniclers. The author of *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā* claims that at the end of the Crimean war, the Ottoman government ordered Christians to ring the bells in their churches in order to create inter-confessional conflict.¹⁴⁵ This accusation is also found in the account of Macārīyūs Šāhīn.¹⁴⁶

The ringing of bells, beyond causing resentments among Muslims, was also a tool in the competition between Christian communities. Ringing bells was a way to obtain legitimacy through marking a community's presence in the sound landscape. Each clergy attempted to win over the hearts of local Christians. The increasing number of bells installed on churches is thus both a consequence of missionary influence and of the larger inter-Christian competition for followers, especially between Catholic and Orthodox branches. Olivier Christin observes similar developments in the case of religious conflicts in Europe in the early modern period. He highlights the shift from religion as practice to religion as display, with a need to mobilize believers to increase the credibility to the religious belief.¹⁴⁷ In the end however, this intra-Christian competition was a source of Muslim-Christian tensions.

The display of crosses was also a symbolic marker of Christian identity in the public space. The author of *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā* provides a list of the changes introduced by the Islahat

¹⁴⁴ F.O. 226/131, "Copy of a Letter from a Turkish Muslim"

¹⁴⁵ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 26.

¹⁴⁶ Šāhīn, *Haṣr al-Lithām*, 225-226.

¹⁴⁷ Christin, "Introduction", 15.

Fermanı of 1856. He mentions the interdiction to insult Christians, their entry into government office, their granting of Muslim titles such as *effendi* and finally their ability to put crosses in the street, which he mentions was what angered Muslims the most.¹⁴⁸

The Crimean war and the decree of 1856 were thus seen negatively by Muslim Damascenes as it represented the intensification of foreign intervention. Similar negative reactions to the reforms led to violence in various cities of the Ottoman Empire. In these conflicts, visible markers of Christian religious identity such as bells and crosses were politicized as they were intertwined with questions of political loyalties. They marked the change in the balance of power brought about by the Crimean war.

4.2 Humiliation

The year 1858 was marked by various events of inter-confessional violence in the Ottoman Empire. Because of the publicity given to these events through the press, they created a tense climate in *Bilād al-Šām*. First, the Ottoman government suffered a defeat at the hands of Montenegrin forces in 1858, which ended in a loss of territory for the Ottoman side. This news was received with a public uproar in the city.¹⁴⁹ Then, the revolts in Belgrade and Crete in which Christians were pitted against Muslims resonated negatively in the city¹⁵⁰ In Jeddah a commercial dispute turned into a riot against foreign interests in which twenty-two Christians were killed, including the British consul.¹⁵¹ In retribution, important notables were executed and the British steamship bombarded the city. The French consul mentioned that the Damascenes saw Great Britain as the only country to support the Ottoman Empire. Its bombing of Jeddah was met with disillusion and disappointment. Great Britain was no longer seen as a foreign ally. As a consequence, the position of foreigners in the city was

¹⁴⁸ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ F.O. 195/601, Brant-Malmesbury, August 21st 1858.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid; Farah, *Politics of intervention*, 525.

¹⁵¹ On the events of Jeddah see Ulrike Freitag, “Symbolic Politics and Urban Violence in Late Ottoman Jeddah,” in *Urban Violence in the Middle East: Changing Cityscapes in the Transition from Empire to Nation state*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Nelida Fuccaro, Claudia Ghrawi and Nora Lafi (New York; Berghahn Books, 2015), 123.

threatened.¹⁵² The author of *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā* also mentioned the disappointment of Muslims who used to see Great Britain as the country of freedom.¹⁵³ These events on the imperial and local scale fostered resentment towards Christians and resulted in the mistreatment of Christians in Homs¹⁵⁴, in Gaza¹⁵⁵, Jaffa and Iraq.

Humiliation was a central theme in the chronicles and is described by the observers as an immediate cause of violence. Humiliation was first a subject of inquiry on the personal level in clinical psychology. In the recent years however, it has also received attention by anthropologists, sociologists and historians as a social process linked to genocides and mass killings.¹⁵⁶ In social psychology, the link between humiliation and violence towards an out group is referred to as a process of splitting and projection, through which the unbearable feelings of humiliation and shame are separated from the acceptable ones and projected onto the out-group, leading to aggression towards this out-group. Ted Robert Gurr points to the hypothesis of relative deprivation: he links collective violence to feelings of being deprived of economic, social or cultural benefits that one feels entitled to. He underlines the importance of impressions and perceptions. The key here is the discrepancy between one's actual position and what he/she feels entitled to.¹⁵⁷

Humiliation is the feeling of being belittled, lowered, humbled. Evelin Lindner defines the concept of humiliation as: “the enforced lowering of a person or group: a process of subjugation that damages or strips away pride, honor, and dignity. To be humiliated is to be

¹⁵² AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey- Walewski, August 30th 1858, AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, August 11th 1858.

¹⁵³ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 2

¹⁵⁴ AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 9, Outrey- Walewski, May 12th 1858.

¹⁵⁵ Farah, *Politics of Intervention*, 526.

¹⁵⁶ See Linda M. Hartling, “Humiliation: Real Pain, a Pathway to Violence,” *Brazilian Journal of Sociology of Emotion* 6, no. 17 (2017): 466–479; Linda M. Hartling and Tracy Luchetta, “Humiliation: Assessing the Impact of Derision, Degradation, and Debasement,” *Journal of Primary Prevention* 19, no. 4 (1999): 259–78; Evelin Lindner, *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict* (Westport, CN: Praeger Security International, 2006); Alexander Laban Hinton, *Annihilating difference: the anthropology of genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis : history of a genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁵⁷ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 13.

placed, against one's will (...), and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is markedly at odds with one's sense of entitlement."¹⁵⁸

Sociologists such as Lindner point to the link between humiliation and violence. She explored cases of genocides of majorities against minorities in the 20th century and points to the importance of humiliation as a trigger of these events of violence. She also argues that contrary to common expectations, the strong can also be humiliated by the weak. She also argues that the mere threat of belittlement rather than the actual process can be enough to foster humiliation. According to Lindner "a fear of imagined future destitution, and of humiliating subjugation at another's hands, figured as a core justification for genocidal killing."¹⁵⁹

In the case of Damascus, while the context of genocides in the 20th century differ from imperial dynamics, this analysis does shed some light on the processes at play in the violence of 1860. Discourses regarding the violence of 1860 labeled it as a revenge against the humiliation felt during the Egyptian period, the Crimean war and the decree of 1856. The author of *Kitāb al-āḥzān* discussed the events preceding the violence in which Muslim youth were arrested by the government for drawing crosses on the pavement of the Christian quarter. They were paraded in the city in chains and taken to swipe the Christian quarter. As a reaction, a crowd formed and yelled: "Where is the jealousy of Muslims? Muslims get up! This is the time to get revenge from the Christians."¹⁶⁰ A chronicler mentioned that the Muslim youth arrested for drawing crosses screamed at their coreligionists: "I ask your help oh John, the flag of honesty, help us ya Allah, Islam is dying. The iron is in our legs and the sweeps in our hands, and we are going to go and clean the infidel Christians".¹⁶¹ The fact that they were humiliated by being forced to clean the Christian quarter was what illustrated in their eyes the

¹⁵⁸ Lindner, *Making enemies*, 141.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 140.

¹⁶⁰ *Kitāb al-āḥzān*, 22.

¹⁶¹ Father Ferdinand Toula al-Bou'i, trans., *Nubḍa Muḥtaṣara fī ḥawādiṯ Lubnān wa 'l-Šam (1840-1862)*, (Beirut: imprimerie Catholique, 1927), 116.

fact that Islam was dying. It represented the notion of the world upside-down. Violence was thus perceived as a way to reestablish order, avenge humiliation, to punish arrogance and to reestablish justice. It was also perceived as a way to preempt a situation in which Muslims might be belittled even further, thus pointing to the mechanism of fear of further humiliation.

The assignment of cleaning the streets was an important marker of social hierarchies and featured in other cases of inter-confessional conflict. A conflict took place in M'alaqa a year before the violence of Damascus where the same symbol of humiliation featured. Jesuits had opened their first monastery in M'alaqa near Zaḥle.¹⁶² During the events of 1860, the monastery was plundered although it was near a military outpost. The inaction of the army and their probable participation in the plunder can be explained by the conflictual relationship between the army base in M'alaqa and the Jesuit monastery.¹⁶³ This relationship even escalated into violence in 1859. In the aftermath, soldiers were publicly humiliated, which played a role in their involvement in the violence of 1860.¹⁶⁴

M'alaqa had an army garrison, in which 500 soldiers were kept. As with all military outposts, the cohabitation between civilians and army garrison was not without difficulties. Soldiers repeatedly annoyed the population, either by requisitioning food, disturbing the peace or requiring forced services, which was part of their prerogatives. One Sunday, the *Bimbaşı* of the garrison of Zaḥle, Haşem Agha, asked the M'alaqa Christian population to clean the streets of the bazaar. They even went to the Maronite and the Jesuit monastery near their garrison, disturbing the mass, asking for individuals to submit to the order.¹⁶⁵ Two contradictory accounts of what followed are found in the archives. What both narratives agree upon is that the soldiers were looking for men who had taken refuge either in the houses of Jesuits or in their church in which mass was taking place. When soldiers asked to be delivered

¹⁶² Carlos Hage Chahine and Nevine Hage Chahine, *C'était Zahlé* (Beirut: Carlos & Nevine Hage Chahine, 2008), 42, 173. Verdeil, *La mission jésuite*, 189.

¹⁶³ Verdeil, *La mission jésuite*, 136.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 141.

¹⁶⁵ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, August 10th 1859.

the men, Father Billotet, the superior of the Jesuit monastery answered that the mass was in progress and that the soldiers had to wait for after the mass to get a hold on the men. An altercation followed during which Father Billotet claimed to have been mistreated by the soldiers.¹⁶⁶ While in his letter to the French consul he does not mention what this mistreatment was, according to letters of the French chancellor he was pulled by his beard.¹⁶⁷ The deacon of the Jesuits intervened to protect Father Billotet and was thus arrested by the soldiers. They accused him of attacking the soldiers first. He was eventually freed by the *kaymakam*. Michel Lanusse, the French consular chancellor of Damascus, argued that while some said that the deacon was hurt by the army, he actually had done a cupping therapy the day before, which was the reason for his wounds.¹⁶⁸ After this incident, Christians of Zahle closed their shops, which was always a sign of upcoming uprising.¹⁶⁹ The religious leaders however used their influence to prevent a violent encounter between the soldiers and the population.¹⁷⁰

The French consul in Damascus complained that soldiers were mistreating missionaries while they had always benefited from the respect of the Muslim population beforehand. After receiving letters from the various Christian clergies of Zahle and M'alaqa, the French consul wished to obtain public redress for this affair.¹⁷¹ While the governor sent his political agent Sadik effendi to Zahle, the French consul sent his chancellor to gain information on the affair.¹⁷² They both came back with contradictory reports. On the one side, Sadik effendi reported that the priests had attacked the soldiers.¹⁷³ He tried to play down the encounter and argued that it was a simple conflict between civilians and soldiers. The

¹⁶⁶ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, Annex : Letter of the superiors of the Jesuits in Zahle to Outrey, August 10th 1859.

¹⁶⁷ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, August 10th 1859.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, August 14th 1859.

¹⁶⁹ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5 Outrey-Lallemand, August 10th 1859,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, August 23rd 1859.

¹⁷³ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, September 7th 1859.

chancellor of the French consul, on the other hand, reported that the soldiers mistreated a priest without any prior provocation. The French consul did not agree that this was just a simple conflict between civilians and soldiers and asked his ambassador how to obtain redress.¹⁷⁴ With the involvement of the French ambassador, this affair became a diplomatic issue. He obtained a *ferman* from the Grand Vizier ordering retributions towards the Jesuits. The governor Ahmed Paşa however failed to punish the guilty parties.¹⁷⁵ When the French consul asked for satisfaction in the affair of Father Billotet, showing the Grand Vizier's *ferman*, Ahmad Pasha answered that this was a military affair and thus he awaited for the instructions of the Minister of War.¹⁷⁶ The conflict in Istanbul between the military and the bureaucrats was represented in the provinces by the competition between the civil governor and the *muşir*, or army leader. In many instances the *muşir* tried to create disorders in order to show the weakness of the civil governor and to step in to save the day, thereby increasing his power.¹⁷⁷ This conflict explains many policies adopted by both functionaries. Ahmed Paşa was in charge of the Army of Arabistan, including the garrison of M'alaqa. The soldiers were thus under his authority. Military discipline was his prerogative, and he must have resented the intervention of foreign consuls in his treatment of soldiers.

The French consul was surprised by the reaction of Ahmed Paşa and his unwillingness to give redress in this affair, although he had a *ferman* to this purpose.¹⁷⁸ He observed that the military pride of Ahmad Pasha must have been hurt by this affair, explaining his behavior. The French consul also remarked that the lack of resources of the provincial administration had prevented the payment of soldiers who had 24 months of arrears.¹⁷⁹ It was thus difficult to punish them without giving them more reasons to form a mutiny.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, August 10th 1859; Ibid, Lanusse-Outrey August 14th 1859.

¹⁷⁶ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Ahmad Pasha, November 11th 1859.

¹⁷⁷ See the attempts of the interim commandant general Izzet Pasha to get the wali Warmick Paşa recalled in F.O. 195/458, Wood- de Redcliffe, January 16th 1856.

¹⁷⁸ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, November 16th 1859.

¹⁷⁹ AE. 18/PO/Serie A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, November 16th 1859.

While the French consul initially had a good relationship with Ahmed Paşa,¹⁸⁰ this affair of M'alaqa marked a turn in their relationship. From September 1859, the French consul saw Ahmed Paşa increasingly negatively.¹⁸¹ The consul insisted that Haşem Agha the *Bimbaşı* had to be judged in Istanbul for this affair.¹⁸² In the end, he managed to obtain the removal of *mutasalim*¹⁸³ or tax collector of M'alaqa, Şakir Bey. The soldiers were publicly humiliated by being hit in public and payed the equivalent of 5000 francs of indemnities to the victims.¹⁸⁴ Then, the commander of the troops was sent to Istanbul and Haşem Agha was imprisoned in Damascus for a month.¹⁸⁵ The French consul said that Ahmed Paşa had finally yielded because he saw the influence that the French had in Istanbul.¹⁸⁶ This affair provoked the indignation of many in Lebanon.¹⁸⁷ In Hāsbayā, Christians were worried about attacks from Druze following this affair.¹⁸⁸ Father Billotet himself complained about the disproportionate reaction of the French consul, who in his eyes had intervened solely to increase French influence.¹⁸⁹

This public humiliation of the army to satisfy the French consulate marked the spirits of the soldiers as well. In 1860, the soldiers in the barracks of M'alaqa did not intervene to save the Zahliots from the attack of the Ḥarfūš and Druze in 1860. This inaction can be seen as a revenge on the part of the soldiers. In the same manner, Ahmed Paşa did not take the necessary steps to protect Zaḥle. Father Billotet was killed in the violence of 1860, which might have a been a revenge for his role in 1859.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁰ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, July 20th 1859; AE. 18/PO- Serie A, vol. 10, Outrey-Lallemand, February 23rd 1859 and March 23rd 1859.

¹⁸¹ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, September 7th 1859.

¹⁸² AE. 18/PO- Serie A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, November 23rd 1859.

¹⁸³ Tax collector, district governor

¹⁸⁴ Chahine, *C'était Zahlé*, 173.

¹⁸⁵ F.O. 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, December 20th 1859.

¹⁸⁶ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, November 30th 1859.

¹⁸⁷ Chahine, *C'était Zahlé*, 173.

¹⁸⁸ A.E. 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Thouvenel, August 23rd 1859.

¹⁸⁹ Verdeil, *La mission jésuite*, 136.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 141.

The punishment used against the Muslim youth in Damascus just before the violence of 1860 resonates with the events of M'alaqa. In M'alaqa, the Ottoman army had requisitioned Christians to sweep the streets, which was seen as a humiliating action and led to a physical fight with the Jesuits. In 1860, it is not a coincidence that the same punishment was used towards the Muslim youth. The governor had used exemplary punishment before, but it targeted Druze or Alawis, or troublesome neighborhoods outside the city. Exemplary punishment often took the form of communal punishment through an extra taxation or imprisonment of neighborhood leaders. The punishment to sweep the streets of the Christian quarter in the summer of 1860 was unusual and quite symbolic. This punishment was so unacceptable in the eyes of the Muslim merchants probably because it referred to the events of M'alaqa. It highlighted the fact that because of their foreign protection, Christians had immunity vis à vis the Ottoman government, they could hit a soldier and obtain excuses from the government. For Muslims, this was quite the contrary. This double standard encouraged resentments towards Christians. The feeling of humiliation was linked to the concern regarding the declining social status, the upsetting of traditional hierarchies understood to represent justice. Justice meant the superiority of Islam in the public sphere, the special status of Muslims in a Muslim state. The loss of this special status was seen as an injustice but also a humiliation.

Various accounts point to the fact that the initial idea for the punishment came from a group of Greek Catholics. These Greek Catholics had some influence over the Ottoman government and its guards, and they managed to obtain this punishment. The chronicles identify these Christians as Greek Catholics, and often point to Ḥannā Frayġ, the dragoman of the Russian consulate Ḥalīl Šaḥāda, Āntūn Šāmī and Dīmītrī Šalhūb.¹⁹¹ They were the most

¹⁹¹ Al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mashāhid*, 173.

prominent members of the Greek Catholic elite of the city.¹⁹² Ḥalīl Šahāda he was one of the first killed during the violence, the Russian consul was particularly hated by the Damascene population.¹⁹³ We have encountered Ḥannā Frayḡ before as an important actor of the internal struggles of the Greek Catholic community, as he represented the new elite involved in commerce and in the administration upon which the patriarch relied. All the other Christians mentioned belonged to this faction.

These Greek Catholics were simultaneously employed by the local government and under foreign protection. They were scribes, landowners, money lenders, and grain merchants. In the span of twenty years they managed to centralize such resources that they were became the Christian elite of the city. Frayḡ and the likes of him had capitalized upon the opportunities given by the *Tanzimat* and foreign intervention to assert their political and economic power in the city. As such, in the eyes of the population, they represented the rise of a new Christian elite who had enough power to influence the governors in their favor. They also represented the increasing foreign intervention and the various privileges enjoyed by protégés. They attracted the resentment of the general population, who saw their economic success as a sign of the privileges accorded to Christians, of foreign intervention and of their own loss of status.¹⁹⁴

The Latin priest Sac Augusto Autirs wrote an account of the events of 1860 to the apostolic envoy Valerga blaming Ḥannā Frayḡ for the whole affair. He explained that Frayḡ paid off the prison guard to make the youth clean the street of the Christian quarter. For this reason, Muslims were angered and asked for Frayḡ to be delivered to them, but they could not

¹⁹² Grégoire Balivet, *Damas à la fin de l'Empire Ottoman (vers 1875) : d'après la description du "Kitāb al-Rawda al-ghannā' fi Dimashq al-fayhā'" de Nu'mān Efendi Qasātli (1854-1920)* (Istanbul : Les Éditions Isis, 2014), 12, 13.

¹⁹³ Josias Leslie Porter, *Five Years in Damascus : With Travels and Researches in Palmyra, Lebanon, the Giant Cities of Bashan, and the Hauran*. 2nd ed (London: J. Murray, 1870), 351; BOA A.MKT.UM, 535/84, February 28th 1862; For more information on the Russian dragoman see BOA, HR.MKT.228, February 19th 1858. Farah, *The Politics of Intervention*, 588.

¹⁹⁴ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, August 25th 1860.

reach him, thus the attack against the Christian quarter ensued.¹⁹⁵ A similar pattern to the events of 1850 in Aleppo is observable, the public anger targets one individual who is not found and thus the violence turns against a more general target, or his whole community.¹⁹⁶

In conclusion, the Crimean war inaugurated a new period in the history of the Ottoman Empire. It led to a shift in the power relations in Istanbul, bringing to power individuals who differed from their predecessors in their approach to the role of the *şarī'a* and the ulema in the decision-making process. They also transformed state-society relations through the *Islahat Fermanı* in 1856. The comprehensibility of these reforms by the population was compromised by the lack of pedagogical effort to explain the transition of state-society relations. In addition to changing the role of non-Muslims in the empire, the decree came to represent the abolition of privileges of a variety of intermediaries and status groups. The reforms were resented as a loss of status, a humiliation for many Muslims while it was seen as a privilege awarded to Christians. The Crimean war displayed the military power of European powers and the weakness of the Ottoman State, and marked the increasing foreign influence in the empire. It further entrenched this feeling of humiliation and loss. These dynamics played a large role in the outbreak of violence. In Damascus, the change in the balance of power between religious communities was represented by the economic and political success of a few Greek Catholics, who were targeted during the violence of 1860.

¹⁹⁵ *S.C.P.F. (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 766, Sac Augusto Aurtis to Valerga, July 18th 1860.

¹⁹⁶ Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 5, 6; On the events of Aleppo see Feras Krimsti "The 1850 Uprising in Aleppo. Reconsidering the Explanatory Power of Sectarian Argumentations," in *Urban Violence in the Middle East. Changing Cityscapes in the Transition from Empire to Nation state*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Nelida Fuccaro (New York / Oxford: Berghahn, 2015) and *Ibid, Die Unruhen von 1850 in Aleppo: Gewalt im urbanen Raum* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2014).