



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

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

Massot, A.K.J.M.

### **Citation**

Massot, A. K. J. M. (2021, January 26). *Socio-political changes, confessionalization, and inter-confessional relations in Ottoman Damascus from 1760 to 1860*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3134736>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3134736>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3134736> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Massot, A.K.J.M.

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

**Issue Date:** 2021-01-26

## CHAPTER 8: THE ISSUE OF THE CALENDAR: INTRA-CONFESSIONAL TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE IN THE GREEK CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Inter-confessional relations are often approached from an inter-group perspective. Accounts of inter-confessional violence in particular tend to speak of communities as actors or victims of aggression. This is as true today as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire. Arabic chronicles mention ‘Islam’s’ aggression against *al-Naṣārā*<sup>1</sup> when speaking of the attack against the Christians quarter in 1860.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation grid was also favored by foreign representatives.<sup>3</sup> In these descriptions where individual or subgroups’ actions are taken as representatives of the larger religious groups, obliterating differences, divisions and various political and economic trajectories among these groups, only larger entities of Muslims and Christians remain.

When discussing inter-confessional relations in the Ottoman Empire, we are tempted to focus on the power imbalance between what is perceived as the majority, Muslims, and what is perceived as the minorities, Christians and Jews. These categories are however quite recent and were born with the development of representative institutions in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> The dichotomy majority/minority can confuse our understanding of inter-confessional relations in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, this analysis ignores the importance of class, locality, family networks and patronage links in defining in-groups and out-groups in the Ottoman period. While Muslims did feel a sense of commonality with

---

<sup>1</sup> Christians.

<sup>2</sup> *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5, 30; al-Uṣṭwānī, *Maṣāhid*, 152; *Kitāb al-āḥzān*, 18-21.

<sup>3</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1859; Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (George Square, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 209.

the Ottoman State because of their religious identification, they did not all feel part of the ruling class. In the same manner, Christians and Jews could feel part of the ruling class without identifying with the state on religious grounds. Social and economic distinctions divided religious communities and caused internal tensions.<sup>5</sup>

The shifts in the balance of power between and amongst non-Muslim communities was an important dynamic which punctuated daily life in the Ottoman Empire. This balance of power was further transformed by the *Tanzimat* reforms and foreign intervention. Communities were given new tools in conflict for resources and access, which created new divisions in their realms. These observations point to the need to reconsider the widespread notion that inter-confessional relations are only a question of interactions between well-defined religious groups.<sup>6</sup> We will see that they were shaped by internal divisions and power struggles.

This chapter will highlight these developments by focusing on a specific conflict which divided the Greek Catholic community in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. The conflicts regarding this change led to violence and even threatened to cause a new schism within the Church. It also caused a crisis of clerical authority and raised the question of identity and authenticity of the Greek Catholic Church in the age of modernization and internationalization. These disputes reveal the interaction of ideological and ecclesiastical disputes with factionalism which informed strategies of power and shaped the specific forms of the modernization of the Church. These conflicts eventually played a role in the violence of 1860.

The affair of the calendar called for the involvement of foreign powers, apostolic delegates and Ottoman officials into the internal affairs of the Church on an unprecedented

---

<sup>5</sup> Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 6, 7; Recent works on inter-confessional relations pay attention to this aspect, see for example Katsumi Fukasawa, Benjamin J. Kaplan and Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, eds., *Religious Interactions in Europe and the Mediterranean World* (London: Routledge, 2017).

level. Greek Catholics were asked to define their political belonging and their loyalty and to chose between their various patrons, moving away from the system of overlapping loyalties which had existed beforehand.

This chapter will delve into the issue of the calendar by analyzing how internal conflicts of the Greek Catholics were intertwined with notions of sovereignty, political loyalty and identification dynamics. First, we will explore the opposition of notables and parts of the clergy to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar. Then, we will see how the issue of the calendar brought to light conflicting conceptions of freedom and popular will. Finally, we will look at the politicization of this conflict by the intervention of various foreign and local actors.

## **1. Issue of the Calendar: Defining the Identity of the Greek Catholic Church in a Time of Factionalism**

### *1.1 Notables and Bishops against the Calendar*

The issue of the calendar took place during the patriarchate of Maḥlūm's successor Āklīmīntūs Baḥūṭ. It reinforced the factionalism which had already appeared under Maḥlūm. All the institutions of the Church were divided on this subject which touched upon the core identity of the Greek Catholic Church oscillating between the east and the west.

Maḥlūm died in 1855 and the Holy See was worried that a bishop from the protégés of Maḥlūm would be elected and carry on with this conflictual relationship with Rome by insisting on an autonomous decision-making process. Āklīmīntūs Baḥūṭ, the former bishop of Acre and a Salvatorian was elected patriarch in 1856, with to the help of the apostolic delegate.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to Maḥlūm, he did not have any links to the secular clergy and was

---

<sup>7</sup> *S.C.P.F. (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 24, p. 150, Secret note, November 1855.

Ṭīyūdūsīyūs Kuyūmḡī, as a procurator. Ṭīyūdūsīyūs Kuyūmḡī was the brother of the Salvatorian procurator in Rome. They were both opponents to Maḥlūm.

concerned primarily with his religious order.<sup>8</sup> The bishops close to Maḏlūm were disappointed by this election and by the role played by the apostolic delegate. The new patriarch was in their eyes too subservient to the apostolic delegate and not enough concerned with protecting the rights of the Oriental patriarchs vis à vis Roman interventionism.<sup>9</sup> They took advantage of a dispute which arose regarding the required profession of faith when the patriarch was given the pallium from Rome to show their opposition to the election of Baḥūt.<sup>10</sup>

In this context of factionalism, the new patriarch Āklīmintūs Baḥūt decided to impose the change of calendar from Julian to Gregorian, according to Roman will. Rome had already asked the previous patriarch Maḏlūm to change the calendar but he had avoided taking this risky step.<sup>11</sup> The change of calendar which would have completely changed the dates of the holy days of Greek Catholics, which would have prevented them from celebrating and fasting with other local Christians, depriving them of this important moment of sociability. Indeed, Maronites were the only Christians of the region who had adopted the Gregorian calendar, representing the Latin rite. Adopting the Gregorian calendar was also seen as a step closer to adopting the Latin rite and as betraying the Greek rite and the specific identity of the Greek Catholic Church. Finally, the adoption of the calendar was perceived by many as surrendering to Roman will and weakening the prerogatives of the oriental patriarchs.<sup>12</sup>

Patriarch Baḥūt discussed the change of calendar with the bishops and the apostolic delegate. Some of them refused to apply it, claiming that their population was not ready for the change. They found a common ground by allowing the bishops whose population was favorable to the new calendar to change it, while others would be given more time to convince

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 2, Delegazione apostolica in Sira, Paolo Archbishop of Jaran- Cardinal Barnabo, October 1856.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 541, Paolo Archbishop of Taran and Apostolic vicar, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1856.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Verdeil, *La mission jésuite*, 60.

<sup>12</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 24, p. 652, Letter of Agabios, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

their flock. However, not long after, the patriarch made an announcement in the cathedral declaring that the change was to be imposed on all. Some Damascenes and Beirutis, among others, rebelled against this order, which made Baḥūṭ recall it. However, the French consul of Damascus intervened in favor of the patriarch and obtained a petition from some Damascene notables demanding to apply the change. Baḥūṭ, strong of the French consul's support, again declared the change of calendar during the mass.<sup>13</sup>

Among the notables, those who refused to change the calendar protested and asked to be able to do the mass in their own houses according to the old calendar. When it was denied, the notables were irritated and argued that they had built the churches with their own funds and could thus decide which rite to follow. Since the calendar was not a question of dogma, in their eyes it was not important to apply it.<sup>14</sup> They claimed that they defended the right to keep their customs and habits.<sup>15</sup> These discourses highlight the notion of authenticity and the perceived need to defend their specific identity in relation to Roman reforms. Greek Catholics were passionate about this affair of the calendar. One of them even wrote a poem about it, printed in Cairo. It was a response to those who had attacked the supporters of the Julian calendar. Composed of 247 verses, it was an acid, but poetic attack against those who changed their calendar.<sup>16</sup> The use of the printing press contributed to the politicization of the Greek Catholic population and allowed for involvement of the flock into clerical affairs.

Those who were opposed to Baḥūṭ chose to denounce him to the Ottoman authorities, accusing him of trying to turn the Greek Catholics into Franks. The term Franks, meaning Europeans, was chosen on purpose to instill the notion of betrayal and connivance with foreign power in the mind of the governor, and obtain a punishment. Āklīmīntūs Baḥūṭ alarmed by this denunciation, called upon the French consuls of Aleppo and Damascus for

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 652, Letter of Agabios, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 652, Letter of Agabios, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, vol. 25, p. 1, Ibrahim and Nicolas Arkaci, Antonio Jared, Antonio Nasrallah Michel and Jaz Dehhan, Giorgio Giahel, undated.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 604, Anonymous, 1857.

help to convince the Ottoman governor that this was not a civil reform but a purely ecclesiastical one, which had nothing to do with the Ottoman authorities.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Ottoman authorities could not intervene in ecclesiastical issues, but had the right to play a role in civil issues, especially if it caused disorders and disturbed the social peace. It could be argued that the change of calendar however was quite a civil issue as it touched upon the public life of local Christians.

The allies of Mazlūm such as Ḥannā Frayḡ and Yūsuf ‘Ayrūt, under Austrian protection, led the opposition to the Gregorian calendar among the laity. On the other hand, the traditional elites, closer to France, tended to support the patriarch Baḡūt. Ḥannā Frayḡ attempted to raise the population against the traditional elite, including the Baḡrī family. To do so, he composed petitions signed by some five hundred Greek Catholics against these notables who supported the patriarch.<sup>18</sup> While petitions had beforehand been signed by a few notables, in the mid-19th century the number of signatures increased considerably, showing the relevance of displaying majority will rather than the support of a few notables.

For the commercial elite, the change of calendar would put an end to joint celebrations of holy days with their Orthodox counterparts. On the other hand, for the traditional elite which had close links to France and had married into Latin families, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar made more sense as many of them had already adopted the Latin rite informally. Then, the competition between of the traditional elite's and merchant's patrons, France and Austria, furthered the factionalism within the Greek Catholic laity.

There were multiple motivations among the laity for opposing the new calendar. Paradoxically, some of those who opposed the Gregorian calendar were actually those who

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 624, Clemente, February 27<sup>th</sup> 1857.

*S.C.P.F, Index delle Lettere, Greci Melchiti*, 1857, vol. 16, p. 203, Prefect Propaganda-French consuls Damascus and Aleppo, March 1857.

<sup>18</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, patriarch Clemente-Outrey, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1857.



had demanded to adopt the Latin rite beforehand and had seen their demands refused.<sup>19</sup> Some of the opponents had indeed attempted to adopt the Latin rite beforehand, probably to avoid the authority of their clergy members because of personal or general grievances. For example, some of the opponents to the Gregorian calendar in Alexandria agreed to give up their attacks against the patriarch if they were allowed to enter the Latin rite.<sup>20</sup> Their opposition to the new calendar; while seemingly in contradiction with their earlier demands to adopt the Latin rite, was a continuation of this effort to emancipate themselves from the increasing authority of their religious leaders.<sup>21</sup> Seeing that their efforts at finding a compromise bore no results, some of them became Greek Orthodox.<sup>22</sup> This observation points to the political stakes behind discourses of authenticity presented by the opponents. The question of rite was a tool of negotiation, a way to circumvent authority and to challenge power holders when they crossed what was perceived as the limits of their prerogatives, established by custom.

Beyond issues of authenticity and identity, the disregard for the opinion of the bishops in the application of the calendar was one of the main reasons for their opposition. It even cost Baḥūṭ his stronger supporter, the bishop of Beirut Agabios Rīyāšī. While Rīyāšī had first supported Baḥūṭ, mainly because he opposed Maḥlūm's party, he quickly turned against him. In a letter to the Propaganda, he explained that while he had helped to get Baḥūṭ appointed, his actions did not match his expectations. He especially criticized the fact that he omitted to ask the opinion of his bishops before enforcing the new calendar.<sup>23</sup> The issue of the power struggle between the bishops and patriarch regarding their relative authority took the precedence over factional politics. Rīyāšī thus allied with those who had supported Maḥlūm.

---

<sup>19</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p. 111, Brunoni-Barnabo, August 1st 1858.

<sup>20</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 477, Giaci, July 24<sup>th</sup> 1859. Such is the example of Ibrahim Nawfal of Alexandria, who was the main opponent of the calendar in the city and in 1859 decided to ask to pass to the Latin rite.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 25, p. 461, Guasco, 26 June 1859

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 24, p. 653, Agabios Riachi, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>23</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 247, Agabios Riachi- Cardinal Barnabo, February 1<sup>st</sup> 1858.

In his opposition to the patriarch, Rīyāšī created alliances with the new commercial elite who also opposed the calendar.<sup>24</sup>

### *1.2 Role of External Actors*

The attitude of the Propaganda in this affair was paradoxical. At first, its approach was inclusive and attempting to avoid scandals or rebellion. Delegates were instructed to try to bring as many Catholics as possible into their fold. However, faced with a strong resistance and claims from the local population, the delegates soon adopted an attitude of inquisition, trying to determine who was really Catholic and who remained Orthodox in their heart but wore Catholic clothes. Indeed, the apostolic delegate said that the application of the calendar was a way to differentiate the real Catholics from the fake ones.<sup>25</sup> These contradictory attitudes are rooted in the ambivalent position of the Holy See's regarding the question of the integrity of oriental rites. The oriental rites were to be preserved but at the same time the Latin rite, being condoned by the Roman Church, was considered as superior. The Holy See considered that it had the right to modify parts of the rites it identified as abuses or which had deviated from the tradition of the Oriental Churches.<sup>26</sup>

The dispute regarding the calendar was embedded in power dynamics in Damascus. The governor was closer to the Greek Catholics who opposed the calendar, as their leaders were employed in the administration.<sup>27</sup> Only one member of the administration and member of the traditional elite, Ġibrān Baḥrī, supported the patriarch. He was the representative of the Catholics on the tribunal of investigation. When he voiced his support for the patriarch in March 1857, he was demoted by the brother-in-law of the governor Izzet Paşa who was at the head of the tribunal. The opponents among the employees probably promoted this

---

<sup>24</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p 13-15, Brunoni-Barbano, September 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, vol. 6, p. 58, Brunoni-Valerga, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>26</sup> Heyberger, "Pro nunc," 547.

<sup>27</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1857.

destitution.<sup>28</sup> Ğibrān Baħrī wrote to Istanbul with the help of the French consul to contest this dismissal. In May 1857, Izzet Paşa gave Ğibrān Baħrī his post back after a *ferman* was issued to this effect. The *ferman* stipulated that Ğibrān Baħrī had been fired upon suspicion of partiality regarding the ideas of the Greek Catholic patriarch.<sup>29</sup>

Both sides wanted to obtain the exclusive use of the Greek Catholic cathedral of Damascus. The governor Izzet Paşa ordered the patriarch to put an end to the infighting between the two factions and threatened to call all the parties to the *mağlis* to arbitrate between them. The patriarch first resisted this intrusion in religious affairs and refused to appear in front of the *mağlis*. However, since civil disturbances had issued from the imposition of the calendar, the governor decided to ask Istanbul for instructions.<sup>30</sup> In March, the governor received a *ferman* ordering him not to intervene and to leave the cathedral to the patriarch who had more followers.<sup>31</sup> Yet, the division did not disappear. When two priests celebrated the office according to the Julian calendar in their private houses, they were suspended by the patriarch. They thus again asked Izzet Paşa, the governor, to intervene.<sup>32</sup>

Izzet Paşa, proposed the compromise of separating the cathedral in two parts, one for each party. This solution had already been used in Sidon in 1850 to find a solution for the fight between Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics.<sup>33</sup> However the separation was not to the liking of either party. The opponents then staged a protest in the seraglio in order to obtain the cathedral as a whole for their party. In their slogans, they also protested against the intervention of the European clergy in the affairs of their Church and its encroachment on the rights of the sultan. By presenting the issue of the calendar as a question of Ottoman jurisdiction and foreign intervention, they were sure to obtain the support of the governor.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. BOA, HR.MKT.186.23, April 12<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>29</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1857; BOA, HR.MKT.186.23, April 12<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>30</sup> F.O. 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>31</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 8<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>32</sup> F.O. 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1857.

<sup>33</sup> This solution had already been used in Sidon in 1850 to find a solution for the fight between Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics; BOA, A.DVN. 63.69.5, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1850.

However, seeing that this protest did not lead to a control of the cathedral, they decided to celebrate a mass according to the Julian calendar in its vicinity. Two masses thus took place next to each other. According to the French consul, when the pro-patriarch faction came out of the mass in the cathedral they were attacked by the opponents.<sup>34</sup> The Ottoman archives also record this event, but do not accuse the opponents of initiating the fight.<sup>35</sup>

When the policemen came to put an end to the fight, a foreign protégé pointed to them the attackers who were then arrested. As it turns out, the prisoners were exclusively from those who supported the patriarch and the new calendar. They were all inhabitants of the Maydān neighborhood. The governor and the *serasker*<sup>36</sup> Kerim Paşa, upon realizing this unfair treatment, planned to release the prisoners. However, they could not arrest the other side who had foreign protection statuses, especially from Russia, Austria and Prussia. In the meantime, when then inhabitants of the Maydān heard the news of their arrest, five hundred workers united and rose in rebellion, attacking the opponents' houses, with the support of their fellow Muslim Maydānī. When the governor saw the disorder caused by these arrests, he feared further trouble and freed the prisoner. However the Russian and Prussian consuls later accused the prisoners of having wounded some of their protégés.<sup>37</sup> This event points to fact that the conflict over the calendar was not solely a clerical issue but spread to the larger population. It led to various events of violence between the two parties, pointing to the increasing politicization of Greek Catholics. Then, a class dynamic is observable in this account. We find again the inhabitants of the Maydān, mostly middle class and poor, taking opposite positions to the former wealthy allies of Mazlūm. It also point to the strong neighborhood solidarity across religious borders in the neighborhood of Maydān. This

---

<sup>34</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>35</sup> BOA, HR.MKT.187.8 , April 16<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>36</sup> Army leader.

<sup>37</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

solidarity is also illustrated by the fact that during the violence of 1860, the Greek Catholics of the Maydān were protected from the attacks by the *āgāwāt* of the neighborhood.<sup>38</sup>

In April 1857 came the fast of Lent, the divisions between the two camps regarding the calendar were highlighted by the visibility of the distinction between those fasting and those who did not. It is in that period of fasting that the Grand Vizier wrote an order to the governor of Damascus not to tolerate the division between what he describes as the ‘Damascenes and the Catholics’. The *ferman* emphasized the need to preserve public peace and security. However, the Ottoman government did not give clear directions regarding the actual policy to be followed by governors. This order stated that communities were free to practice their religious rites without outside intervention but that internal divisions were disturbing social peace. It especially blamed the party opposed to the patriarch. The decree stated that: ‘the faction opposed to the supporters of the patriarch is having bothersome behaviors, like attacks and corruption’. Furthermore the order emphasized that peace should be fostered and that the patriarch should be maintained and protected.<sup>39</sup> Given the emphasis put on the authority of the patriarch as the main intermediary of the *millet* in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this direction taken by the central government was expected. However, the actions of the local governor rather seemed to be influenced by his alliances built locally than by official orders coming from Istanbul.

The French consul Max Outrey went to see the governor Izzet Paşa to discuss this *ferman* but then he heard rumors coming from the seraglio that the *ferman* actually supported the action of the opponents. Given the clearness of the *ferman* it is doubtful that it could be interpreted in this manner.<sup>40</sup> Although Izzet Paşa received instructions not to favor the

---

<sup>38</sup> al-Bou’i, *Nubda Muhtaşara*, 119.

<sup>39</sup> BOA, HR MKT 184 43 1273 SH 06 2 Shabban 1 april 1857, “ve hususiye orada bulunan patrik tarafına fark-ı mühalif canıbindan su-ı fasad ve hucum gibi muamalet namurdiye vuku’-I hiss olunur ise” “gerek asayış-ı memleketin vikayesi ve gerek patrik-i mumaileyhin sıyanet muhafaza olurunda kamaliye takayyud ve itina olunması lazem geleceğinin tekid ve bayanile”

<sup>40</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Walewski, April 8<sup>th</sup> 1857.

opponents, he was engaged in a patron-client relationship with the notables opposed to the patriarch and thus decided not to act against them.

The opposition to the calendar was not limited to Damascus but actually caused issues all over *Bilād al-Šām*. Almost all cities which had a Greek Catholic population suffered from these divisions. In the bishopric of Yabroud, Homs and Hama led by the bishop Mīḥā'il 'Aṭā, there were divisions regarding the calendar which led to violence in regards to the control of the places of worship in the villages of Ma'ara and Ṣaydnāyā.<sup>41</sup>

The governor of Aleppo, in a letter to the governor of Damascus, mentioned that conflicts also arose in the city after the spread of the news regarding the calendar. But there the French consul intervened quickly to stop the rebellion against the patriarch. The consul of Aleppo then wrote to the consul of Damascus that this issue was only a religious affair, and that nothing could be done by the government.<sup>42</sup>

In the large cities of the Lebanese coast the Greek Catholic community was also divided. The governor of Sidon wrote to the governor of Damascus, stating that the intelligentsia of the *millet* was against the change of calendar.<sup>43</sup> In the same period, the sub-governor and tax-collector of Jerusalem sent a letter to the governor of Jaffa warning him of the division in the Greek Catholic Church. He told him not to interfere in this ecclesiastical issue but that order and security should be maintained. He stated that in Jerusalem the members of the *millet* were no more than four families, while in Jaffa there were at least fifty families and thus the division could take a more dramatic turn. Indeed, when the patriarch sent the order to change the calendar in Jaffa, some Greek Catholics protested and a fight occurred

---

<sup>41</sup> F.O. 195/458, Wood-Redcliffe, August 19th 1857. Interestingly, in the same village in 1846 a married Greek Catholic woman was seduced by an officer in the service of the Porte and she asked to convert to Islam, a diplomatic conflict followed involving France and the Damascene governor; F.O. 195/226, Timoni-Canning, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1846.

<sup>42</sup> BOA, HR.MKT.186.11, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid; The Greek Catholic elite was influential in Sidon and often created alliances with the governor, see for example Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 117.

in front of the church. Efforts were made by the governor to keep security and to prevent fights during the Sunday mass.<sup>44</sup>

While the archives of the Propaganda seldom mention Greek Catholics of Egypt through the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of the calendar brought them back into the center of the community. The main actors of the Egyptian Greek Catholic community wrote a letter of protest directly to the pope in 1857. Members of the ‘Ayrūt, Zuğīb, Kaḥīl, Būlād, ‘Awād, Dahān, Nawfal families, described the division of the community caused in their eyes by the patriarch’s innovations and his unilateral decision-taking process. They also argued that changing the calendar was particularly difficult for Greek Orthodox who had recently became Greek Catholics and had been told by missionaries that they could keep their calendar as part of Roman policy in regards to the preservation of the integrity of the oriental rites. Seeing that the patriarch was not compromising, they went to the Greek Orthodox patriarch and were offered a church. However, they waited to see if they could find another solution.<sup>45</sup> The leaders of the Greek Catholic community in Alexandria also accused the French consuls of having encouraged Baḥūṭ to change the calendar.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, Rome was called upon by both parties and a delegate arrived to take a decision regarding this affair. The delegate first went to Alexandria together with the French consul and convinced the Egyptian government to punish those who did masses in their houses according to the Julian calendar. The bishop of Cairo, Bāsil Kfūrī, who had been ordained by Mazlūm, favored the opponents.<sup>47</sup> He managed to counter the influence of the French consul and delegate on the local government by obtaining a letter from the Grand Vizier to the viceroy of Egypt to allow the opponents to do masses as they wished.<sup>48</sup> In July, Baḥūṭ felt overwhelmed by the opposition and chose to resign. He took refuge in the

---

<sup>44</sup> BOA, HR.MKT.186.11, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>45</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 24, p. 688, Leaders of Alexandria, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 794, Agabios Riachi, August 1857.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, vol. 24, p. 903, Consul general of France in Alexandria, September 20<sup>th</sup> 1857.

Salvatorian monastery. However, his resignation was not accepted by the Holy See and the delegate was instructed to orchestrate his return.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Popular Will, Freedom and Self-determination

The issue of the calendar brought to light the contested notions of popular will and freedom which had been favored indirectly by the *Tanzimat*. While the institutionalization of the *millet* system at first reinforced the authority of the patriarch, the discourses of equality embedded in the *Tanzimat* reforms encouraged demands for a participative decision-making process within the Church.<sup>50</sup> These notions underlined the conflict which took place regarding the calendar in Tyre. When Baḥūṭ passed through the city, he asked the bishop Aṭanāsīyūs Šabbāḡ to declare the application of the Gregorian calendar to the flock. The opponents to the new calendar rebelled against this order and expelled violently Aṭanāsīyūs Šabbāḡ from the bishopric.<sup>51</sup> They forbade him from celebrating the mass.<sup>52</sup> The governor of Tyr intervened after the insistence of the French consul and apostolic delegate and agreed to give the bishop the keys of the church again, only if he refrained from imposing the new calendar. Aṭanāsīyūs Šabbāḡ refused and so the affair was referred to Istanbul.<sup>53</sup> At that point, Šabbāḡ, angered by the intervention of the governor in his jurisdiction, wrote a letter to the government threatening to abandon his Ottoman citizenship and to become French. Outraged, the Ottoman government asked him to take back his threat.<sup>54</sup> Religious identity as well as political loyalty was used as a negotiation tool. The question of the calendar installed a variety of political strategies which in the long term damaged the image of Greek Catholics in the eyes of the government and other Ottoman subjects.

---

<sup>49</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p. 120, Brunoni-Barnabo, August 15<sup>th</sup> 1858.

<sup>50</sup> A process described by Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 196; S.C.P.F. (S.C.) Greci Melchiti, vol. 25, p. 639, Henry de Prunier- General Jesuits, January 31<sup>st</sup> 1860.

<sup>51</sup> S.C.P.F. (S.C.) Greci Melchiti, vol. 25, p. 247 Agabios Riachi-Barnabo, February 1<sup>st</sup> 1859.

<sup>52</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p. 162, Valerga-Barnabo, December 9<sup>th</sup> 1858.

<sup>53</sup> S.C.P.F. (S.C.) Greci Melchiti, vol. 25, p. 344, Annex to Valerga, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, vol. 25, p. 358, Hassun, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1859.



The relationship in Tyre between the bishop and the notables got worse in May 1859 when the bishop went out of the city to do a pastoral visit during Easter. The American vice consul James Lacad, the Austrian protégé Bešāra Ṭo'ma and the British protégé Paolo Ellez went to the house of the bishop with other Greek Catholics and stole his belongings, as they considered them to belong to the flock who financed the bishopric. The bishop left Tyre enraged.<sup>55</sup> Ecclesiastical property was increasingly contested by the population, who developed the notion of popular ownership rooted in the role of the laity in financing the construction of the churches. They saw this economic contribution as awarding them a role in the decision-making process.

Different power-holders had opposed conceptions of the greater good and of the decision-making process. The apostolic delegate Valerga stressed that for this issue, the decision-making power lied in the majority among bishops only. Since the issue had been brought to the synod and the majority of bishops had agreed to it, it had to be enforced.<sup>56</sup> By kicking out the bishop, the inhabitants of Tyre thus left the Catholic realm. He mentioned that the constitution of the Catholic Church was based upon the authority that bishops inherited from God, not on consent.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, the governor of Beirut decided that the Greek Catholic population of Tyre would be surveyed and if the majority opposed the bishop he would have to step down or give up the calendar. If, on the other hand, the majority supported him, he would be given the keys of the church.<sup>58</sup> This was a radical change from a governmentality based upon enforcing the will of the patriarch which was in place in the earlier years. This previous top-down policy had indeed failed to solve divisions and the Ottoman government had shifted towards more inclusion of the laity in the affairs of the churches, as exemplified by the *Islahat*

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, vol. 25, p. 421, Valerga, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, vol. 25, p. 379, Valerga-Agabios, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1859.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, Vol 25, p. 393, Valerga, April 4<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>58</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p. 200, Valerga-Barnabo, March 30<sup>th</sup> 1859.

Fermanı of 1856 and the announcement of the creation of lay councils to help the patriarchs rule.<sup>59</sup> While the central government seems to have continued to support outwardly the rights of the patriarch, some governors rather adopted a policy of supporting majority will and countering the authority of the patriarchs or bishops if they lacked legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents. In the affair of Tyre, in the eyes of the governor the decision-making lied in the popular will of each bishopric. For the first time, the patriarch did not play a role in the decision-making process of the governor. This approach was confirmed by the French ambassador who informed the apostolic delegate that under Ottoman law, the patriarchs or bishops cannot impose any innovation on the nation without the agreement of the majority. The Ottoman central government decided that a provincial *mağlis* was to determine the will of the majority in each district.<sup>60</sup> The apostolic delegate Valerga saw the necessity of popular consensus for innovation as potentially destructive for the Catholic church.<sup>61</sup> It reflected on developments in Europe which threatened the authority of the pope.<sup>62</sup> The development of the notion of popular sovereignty and majority will was thus being challenged by the Propaganda, yet encouraged by the Ottoman government to remedy the severe divisions within the community.

These conflicting notions also brought to light the multiple interpretations of the question of freedom of religion. Religious freedom granted by the decrees was interpreted in a variety of ways. It could mean that religious communities were free to conduct their religious affairs without intervention of the Ottoman government, as the French consul and the Greek Catholics clergy saw it. The opponents to the calendar took this understanding of freedom a step further and argued that individuals were free to decide what they believed and that they

---

<sup>59</sup> On the decree see: see Aylin Koçunyan, *Negotiating the Ottoman Constitution, 1839-1876* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018); Aylin Koçunyan, "The Millet System and the Challenge of Other Confessional Models, 1856–1865," *Ab Imperio* 2017, no. 1 (2017): 59-85.

<sup>60</sup> *S.C.P.F. (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 390, Valerga, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 25, p. 393, Valerga, April 4<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>62</sup> Raymond Grew, "Liberty and the Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard Helmstadter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 202.

were free from intervention not only from the Ottoman government but also from the clergy's authority and the Holy See's interference. These 'subaltern' interpretations of the reforms are not limited to Greek Catholics but are rather a defining feature of the *Tanzimat* period in the region.<sup>63</sup> These interpretations, which contrasted with the intentions behind the drafting of the *Tanzimat* decrees, transgressed the rigid social order and challenged various types of inherited privilege, including religious and lay elite leadership within non-Muslim communities.<sup>64</sup>

The affair of the calendar and the violent interactions around it points to a variety of dynamics. First, the conflict at hand involved conflicting conceptions of authority, Church hierarchy and community which developed in the period of the *Tanzimat*. It became the locus of the factionalism which had been observed under the patriarchate of Mazlūm. Then, the division of the ecclesiastic community over the issue of the calendar had spread beyond the clergy and affected directly the population. As it became an issue of identification and political belonging, it aroused popular passions and mobilization and led to violence between opponents and supporters of the new calendar.

### **3. Patronage and the *Millet*: Eastern and Western Greek Catholics**

Foreign powers were involved in the issue of the calendar on an unprecedented level. The consuls, representatives of the Holy See and the Ottoman governors took advantage of this dispute to obtain the upper hand in their competition for influence. These various external actors were sought upon by different factions as patrons to increase their influence on the institutions of the Church. This involvement contributed to the polarization of the Greek Catholic community and even led to an attempted schism within the Church.

The opponents to the calendar suffered a setback when on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1857 a council of ministers met in Istanbul in order to agree on a plan of action regarding the division within the Greek Catholic church. It was attended by the French, British, Greek and Iranian ambassadors.

---

<sup>63</sup> Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 196.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 195.

The council of ministers finally decided in favor of the patriarch.<sup>65</sup> This decision was a severe blow to the opposition. The governor of Damascus, İzzet Paşa, saw that he had no other choice than to abandon the opponents given the numerous decisions taken against them. At the same time, Austria also demoted the opponents from its protection, probably because they lost their official support.<sup>66</sup>

From that point onwards, the opponents understood that the government would always support the head of the *millet* and thus decided to change their strategy and ask for their own *millet*. They decided to appeal directly to Istanbul and sent an envoy.<sup>67</sup> He was instructed to ask to form a new community called the *Rûm Kāṭūlîk Şarqî*, the Eastern *Rum* Catholic, and to have their own patriarch.<sup>68</sup> They framed their desire for autonomy on claims of authenticity against the process of ‘Latinization’ exemplified by the calendar and foreign influence. They referred to the patriarch and his followers as the Western Greek Catholic, pointing to their closeness to the Europeans.<sup>69</sup> The institutionalization of the *millet* system turned religious distinction into a legitimate basis of claims of access to resources and political power, encouraging the multiplication of demands for emancipation from the religious authorities.

While the opponents had lost the support of the governor and the Austrian consul, soon a new actor intervened in the internal divisions of the Greek Catholic Church. Russia had named in 1857 Cyril of Melitopolis as the first Russian bishop of Jerusalem. This nomination marked the return of Russia in the Ottoman Empire after the defeat of the Crimean war.<sup>70</sup> The Russian Foreign minister Prince Alexander Gorchakov and the Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich directed the foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire after the war, and they believed it was essential to revive the Russian Mission to Palestine in March

---

<sup>65</sup> BOA.HR.MKT.187.8, April 16<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>66</sup> A.E, 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1857; BOA, HR.MKT.186.23, April 12<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>67</sup> A.E, 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>68</sup> A.E, 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1857.

<sup>69</sup> Argument used by the opponents against the patriarch A.E, 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>70</sup> Denis Vovchenko, “Creating Arab Nationalism? Russia and Greece in Ottoman Syria and Palestine (1840–1909),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no.6 (2013): 904.

1857 in order to counter the declining influence of Russia in the region.<sup>71</sup> Russia's envoy to Syria and Lebanon found these lands empty of Russian presence while other powers were very active in the region.<sup>72</sup> A Russian consulate was also established in Damascus in this period.

While Āklīmīntūs Baḥūt was touring the coast, the Russian bishop of Jerusalem took advantage of the opportunity and visited Damascus. The city was the theatre of a conflict between the patriarchal vicar Bāsil 'Abdo, the Salvatorian monks and the notables.<sup>73</sup> Damascene notables were not convinced by 'Abdo, and the notable Ḥanā 'Anḥūrī argued that the vicar had to be a bishop.<sup>74</sup> The opponents to the calendar were especially critical of 'Abdo who had imposed the Gregorian calendar and refused to assist his mass.<sup>75</sup> In this context of contested clerical authority, the arrival of the Russian bishop opened new perspectives for the opponents. The bishop met with them and promised to finance a church for them. At the same time, a notable opposed to Baḥūt, Ḥanā Musamirī was touring Mount Lebanon to obtain support for the opposition. He managed to rally the support of the Greek Catholics of Dayr al-Qamar. The Russian bishop then visited the bishop Rīyāšī in Beirut, raising worries from the apostolic delegate and French consuls.<sup>76</sup> Contacts between the opponents and Greek Orthodox clergy were also worrisome for the apostolic delegates.<sup>77</sup> In March 1859, the link between Russia and the opponents was strengthened when the opponent Ḥannā Frayḡ was given the post of intermediary vice-consul of the Russian consulate in the absence of its titular.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Kildani, *Modern Christianity*, 72.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, Valerga-Barnabo, August 7<sup>th</sup> 1858.

<sup>74</sup> *S.C.P.F., (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, P 212, vol 25, 28 sept 1858,

<sup>75</sup> Vatican Apostolic Archive: Delegazione apostolica al Libano, vol. 6, p. 165, Valerga-Barnabo, December 19<sup>th</sup> 1858.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, vol. 6, p. 159, Valerga- Barnabo, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1858.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, March 31<sup>st</sup> 1859.

Russian strategy of influence in the region coincided with the interests of the opponents among the Greek Catholics. In general, Greek Catholics felt sidelined from the protection of Britain awarded to Druzes and France to Maronites.<sup>79</sup> Given the pockets of Greek Catholics in Zaḥle and the Anti-Lebanon, they were an interesting community to turn to for those who tried to compete with French and British influence in the region. Russia thus turned to the Greek Catholics as possible protégés in addition to Greek Orthodox, which explains their efforts to support the opponents and counter French protection given to the patriarch.<sup>80</sup> Then, if they could be brought to union with the Greek Orthodox, they could unite with Greek Orthodox of Hāṣbayā and Rāṣayā and form a whole region under the influence of Russia which could then ask to have their own *kaymamam*. These plans for Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon were obvious to Ottoman decision-makers. In January 1861 the Ottoman ambassador Anstarchi Bey wrote to Ali Paşa mentioning a confidential letter of the Russian cabinet to create a *kaymakam* for the Orthodox in Mount Lebanon to increase their influence.<sup>81</sup> The schism of the Greek Catholic church allowed Russia to impose itself as a possible patron of Catholics in the region and was part of a larger demographic policy to carve a zone of Russian influence between French and British protégés in Mount Lebanon and the coast.

Strong of Russian support, the bishops who opposed the patriarch planned to send priests to all the bishoprics to officiate according to the old calendar.<sup>82</sup> In this context, another meeting took place in Zaḥle with bishop and notables. Both Ahmed Paşa, the governor of Damascus and the governor of Beirut sent envoys to this reunion to try to exert their influence.<sup>83</sup> The meeting in Zaḥle apparently had the purpose of creating a new territorial organization of the Greek Catholic church and placing at its head one of the

<sup>79</sup> *S.C.P.F., (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 626, Ambassador Austria-Cardinal Antoneli, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1860.

<sup>80</sup> F.O, 78/1520, Brant-Bulwer, November 15<sup>th</sup> 1860.

<sup>81</sup> Sinan Kuneralp, *Ottoman diplomatic documents on "the Eastern question"* (Istanbul : Isis Press, 2009), 207

<sup>82</sup> *S.C.P.F., (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 492, Bishops Agabios, Meletios, Teodosio, August 12<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>83</sup> *S.C.P.F., (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 499, Valerga, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1859.

opponents. The bishops proceeded to divide between themselves the various patriarchal bishoprics. The bishopric of Beirut would include Alexandria, Zahle would include Cairo, Baalbek would include Damascus, and Sidon the bishopric of Tyre. They wrote these decrees and published them in the various bishoprics. Then, they planned to ask for an archbishop to represent them in Istanbul.<sup>84</sup> However, the fragile union of bishops with otherwise conflicting interests was soon to be tested. The meeting did not lead to an agreement for the other bishops resented Rīyāšī' monopoly on the decision-making process.<sup>85</sup>

Assisting the meeting, Ḥannā Frayḡ, in a secret letter found in the French consular archives, allegedly said to another notable, Ḥalīl Āyūb,<sup>86</sup> that he should take his orders from Sadık Effendi. Sadık Effendi was the special agent of the Ottoman government sent in order to advise the governors in their relation with foreign consuls. He arrived in Damascus in 1859.<sup>87</sup> Sadık Effendi was present at the meeting and intervened. According to the French bishop of Beirut Comte de Bentivoglio, Sadık Effendi related to the participants that the Ottoman government looked negatively upon the supporters of the calendar as it did upon those who demanded foreign protection. He allegedly mentioned that Catholics were the most suspicious in the eyes of the government because they called upon France to intervene in their internal issues while they were Ottoman subjects. According to him, the Ottoman government voluntarily frustrated the interests of the Catholics when they called upon France in their issues. He reminded the crowd that the Ottoman Empire was independent according to the Treaty of Paris, and foreign powers could no longer intervene in the affairs of the mountain with the pretext to establish order. He then mentioned that the bishop of Tyre had asked for French protection and for this reason the Ottoman government did not take his side. Sadık

---

<sup>84</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Clemente-French Ambassador in Istanbul, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1859.

<sup>85</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 499, Valerga, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>86</sup> Antoun Ayoub had been the civil procurer of Maḡlūm in Jerusalem.

<sup>87</sup> F.O, 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1859.

Effendi demanded to create a civil patriarch to deal with the government directly, thus by passing the patriarch.<sup>88</sup>

The actual directions given to Sadık Effendi cannot be easily determined. The Ottoman government however sent a letter of blame to the governor of Damascus, Ahmed Paşa, for sending envoys to the meeting.<sup>89</sup> Ahmed Paşa, responding to the Grand Vizier's letter of reprimand, recognized that he recorded the declarations made at Zahle and reported them, but for him it didn't mean that he was preferring one party over another. He argued that he just wanted to tell the government about the foreign interference taking place in Zahle.<sup>90</sup> Ahmed Paşa argued that the intervention of foreign powers, especially France, was detrimental to the execution of justice. He stated that the issue would have ended long time ago if it wasn't for foreign intervention in favor of one group or the other.<sup>91</sup>

The views of Ahmed Paşa regarding the calendar indeed seemed to favor the opponents. On April 11, Ahmed Paşa wrote to the Grand Vizier about the issue of the calendar. Enclosed was a letter from the governor of Aleppo, a letter from the governor of Damascus to the Grand Vizier, a letter of the governor of Damascus to the governor of Sidon, and a letter from the governor of Sidon about the calendar.<sup>92</sup> Ahmed Paşa accused foreigners and the Latin priests to have corrupted the loyalty of members of the Greek Catholic community, with the tacit support of the patriarch.<sup>93</sup> Ahmed Paşa clearly favored to opponents and was opposed to the policies of the patriarch because it invited foreign intervention. Ahmed Paşa's support of the opponents was underlined an attempt to become their patron with the objective to use their political influence to bring the anti-Lebanon and especially Zahle under his jurisdiction. When Ahmed Paşa sent Sadık effendi to Zahle, the

---

<sup>88</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 506, Bentivoglio, August 28<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 25, p. 515, Thouvenel-Barnabo, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>90</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Ahmed Paşa-Grand Vizir, November 18<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>92</sup> BOA, HR.MKT.186.11, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1857.

<sup>93</sup> BOA, HR.MKT.196.98, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1858.



French consul suspected the aforementioned intrigue of Ahmed Paşa and Sadık Effendi to create a Greek region in the Anti-Lebanon who would be put under the direct rule of the Ottoman government.<sup>94</sup>

The status of Zaḥle was indeed the object of power struggles on many levels in 1859, a year characterized by chaos in Mount Lebanon. Both the Maronite and the Druze *kaymakamates* were led by acting-*kaymakams* because the real leaders had to escape. As per the Maronite *kaymakam*, Bašīr Aḥmad, his authority was challenged by the Maronite Ḥāzin shaykhs who did not accept his predominance and his attempts to get rid of the tax-collectors. In addition, the peasants were rebelling against the Ḥāzin shaykhs, forcing them to escape.<sup>95</sup>

The inhabitants of Zaḥle, who were under the leadership of the Maronite *kaymakam* felt sidelined by the institutions which were based upon Druze and Maronite dominance.<sup>96</sup> They had already asked in January 1859 to be put under an Ottoman governor because they rejected the leadership of the *kaymakam* Emir Bašīr Aḥmad.<sup>97</sup> In April, the inhabitants of Zaḥle once again asked to be ruled by an Ottoman governor. In consequence, they were put under the authority of the governor of Sidon. However there was a strong competition between the governor of Sidon and Damascus over the control of the city. Aḥmad Paşa thus obtained in July, the attachment of the Zaḥle to the *paşalık* of Damascus, yet the application of this measure was delayed.<sup>98</sup> It is in this context that the meeting of the bishops took place. This meeting reveals the plans that the governor had for the Šarqī opponents to the patriarch. Indeed, at the issue of that meeting, the opponents asked the authorities for a sub-governor unrelated to the Maronite *kaymakam*. In response, Ahmed Paşa attached Zaḥle to the region of Damascus. In this manner, Zaḥle, Baalbek, Beirut and Sidon were combined in one

---

<sup>94</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Lanusse-Lavalette, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1860.

<sup>95</sup> Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, state Papers, Volume 69, enclosure no. 86, p. 66, General consul Moore to H. Bulwer, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>96</sup> *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Greci Melchiti*, vol. 25, p. 626, Ambassador Austria-Cardinal Antoneli, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1860.

<sup>97</sup> Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, state Papers, Volume 69, enclosure no. 2 in 82, p. 65, British Consul Brant to Bulwer, January 26<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>98</sup> Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, state Papers, Volume 69, enclosure no. 96, p. 74, British consul Brant to Bulwer, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1859.

administrative district, which could have been the domain of the Greek Catholic Šarqī.<sup>99</sup> These four cities were not included in the double kaymakamate but surrounded it. The Šarqī, with four bishops in cities governed by the governor of Damascus, could thus pose a serious threat to the Maronite *kaymakam* of Mount Lebanon.<sup>100</sup> Ultimately, under French pressure, the inhabitants of Zaḥle changed their mind and refused their inclusion in the region of Damascus. Ahmad Paşa blamed the French for this change of mind which frustrated his interests.<sup>101</sup> The interest of various actors in the meeting of the opponent bishops in Zaḥle in September 1859 can thus be understood in the general context of the fight for influence in Mount Lebanon. The attempted schism was instrumentalized by the governor of Damascus as a tool for his political and territorial ambitions. His ambitions were frustrated by the internal divisions of the Greek Catholics, which can be seen as one of the causes of his inaction during the violence of 1860.

Ahmed Paşa had another cause of resentment towards Greek Catholics: their rebellion against taxation. The dispute over the calendar created a crisis of authority within the Greek Catholic community, which challenged the patriarch authority to collect taxes from the Greek Catholics. Indeed, just as the question of the calendar issue was unraveling and the community was divided, Āklīmintūs Baḥūt was again asked by the Ottoman government to pay for the *bedel-i askeri*. The crisis of authority suffered by Āklīmintūs Baḥūt rendered the collection of taxes by the patriarch an impossible affair. Indeed, to remit taxes to the patriarch meant to recognize his authority and legitimacy, which the opponents refused to do. In February 1859, the governor of Damascus Ahmed Paşa tried again to collect this tax and when the Christians refused he arrested some of their leaders from the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics. As it turned out, it was only the members of the pro-patriarch party among Greek Catholics that were put in jail. He then forced community leaders to sign a document

<sup>99</sup> Farah, *The Politics of Intervention*, 530.

<sup>100</sup> A.E, 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, September 7<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>101</sup> Farah, *The Politics of Intervention*, 530.

swearing that they would pay the taxes and he demanded that they made a census of their flocks.<sup>102</sup> Arresting leaders when communities failed to pay taxes was a common practice in the Ottoman Empire as community leaders, be it lay or religious, were held responsible for the payment of taxes.<sup>103</sup>

The French consul saw the hand of the Greek Catholic employees of the seraglio behind this demand to collect tax and the subsequent arrests.<sup>104</sup> The governor, Ahmed Paşa might indeed have been misled by these employees. The opponents were either working for the administration or were protégés of foreign powers, in either case they could escape to pay the *bedel-i askeri*. They thus had all the reason to push Ahmed Paşa to use violence in order to collect the *bedel-i askeri*, and thus weaken their adversaries. The poor Greek Catholics were to bear the consequences of this conflict between elites. In response, they pushed their representatives to rebel against the tax. They allied with the poor Greek Orthodox and even attacked the Greek Orthodox bishop, who had to escape through the roof of the patriarchal residence. His assistant then complained to the governor that the Christian lower classes were trying to kill him and were in open rebellion.<sup>105</sup> This event is mentioned as one of the causes of the violence of 1860 and presented as a way for the governor to punish Christians for their rebellion.<sup>106</sup>

In conclusion, the affair of the calendar and the internal division of the Greek Catholic Church came to be at the center of a conflict of sovereignty between European powers, the Holy See and the Ottoman government. Greek Catholics were increasingly asked to define more precisely their political loyalty and to identify the border between civil and religious realms. Increasing incentives to define these communities' place in an increasingly internationalized environment were used by local Christians as tools of power to either

---

<sup>102</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>103</sup> Borstein-Makovetsky, *Jewish Lay Leadership*, 92.

<sup>104</sup> A.E, 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1859.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 248.

reinforce or challenge the existing clerical and lay hierarchy. These dynamics challenge our ability to speak of Greek Catholics as a unit and highlights the importance of other identification basis which informed individual behavior, solidarities, narratives of community and political strategies. Behind questions of authenticity and identity, the issue of the calendar was also underlined by a crisis of clerical authority. The population was mobilized on the two sides of this conflict in an unprecedented manner, pointing to the increasing popular participation into internal affairs and the politicization of sub-identifications within the religious community. The strife around the imposition of the calendar and the inability of the patriarch to collect taxes due his lack of legitimacy were a strong cause of resentments among the Muslim population and the governor Ahmed Paşa towards Greek Catholics and featured as a cause of the violence of 1860.