



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 10: TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE OTTOMAN STATE STRUCTURE: REBELLION AGAINST THE *TANZIMAT* FINANCIAL AND MILITARY REFORMS

The events of 1860 in many ways can be seen as a rebellion against the local and imperial government. The attacks against Christians was an attack upon those who were associated with the government as they turned into symbols of everything that was deemed wrong in the reforming project of the *Tanzimat*. They became associated with the taxation reforms, conscription, and the transformation of the social order. The violence of 1860 is exceptional in its scope and duration. However, it is not the only occasion of violence against Christians in the mid-19th century. In many cases, violence against Christians was a consequence of rebellions against taxation, conscription, and the centralization policies of the governor. An exploration of the violence of 1860 through the perspective of the previous events of violence will highlight the causal link between popular rebellion, military mutiny and inter-confessional violence.

We will first explore the deterioration of state-society relations through the imposition of taxation and conscription, which led to attacks on intermediaries. Then, we will examine how these policies caused widespread revolts in *Bilād al-Šām* in 1850 which ended up targeting Christians. Finally, we will examine the violence of 1860 as a consequence of the governor Ahmed Paşa's double standard policies in the end of the 1850's.

1. Taxation and Conscription

Rebellion against taxation and conscription was widespread in the *Tanzimat* period in peripheral regions such as Bosnia, Serbia and *Bilād al-Šām*. Some types of rebellions were accepted by the government as part of larger negotiation process, as a bargaining chip, which

did not threaten the government directly.¹ Tensions resurfaced yearly around the time of collection of taxes,² that is March or the *hiğrī* month of Muḥarram depending on the tax. Yet the intensity of these tensions and the conflicts that resulted were not of equal intensity every year. The terms of the discussion and the concepts used evolved with the transformation of imperial governance, international relations and local dynamics.

It is difficult to draw a general picture of the taxation system in the Ottoman Empire, for it depended greatly on the context and region. The different taxes applied and the relation between tax-farmers and the government witnessed great variation in time and place. Some taxes were formerly obligatory services, such as providing housing for visiting army officers, forced labor, providing crops and cattle to the government or supplies to the army. In time, because of the difficulty of providing these services, they were converted into obligatory taxes. There was thus a large array of taxes in the 15th and 16th century.³ In the later centuries, there were additional taxes imposed on Ottoman subjects. Some of them were variable, yet others were permanent such as the tax on agricultural production and land, custom duties, and the *ğizya* for non-Muslims.⁴ Inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire had also often paid the *ihtisāb* tax on industrial and commercial revenue and the tax on housing called *avarizhane*.⁵

During the *Tanzimat* period however a new type of tax was introduced, which was considered illegitimate by a large part of the population. In 1831, the governor of Damascus Salim Paşa attempted to collect a tax on urban property. This tax, called the *salyan*, was to be collected from each quarter twice a year. In 1819, there had already been an attempt to demand its payment in Aleppo but it failed because the inhabitants of the city campaigned against it. In order to impose this tax in Damascus, Salim Paşa planned to conduct a census to

¹ Fatma Sel Turhan, *The Ottoman Empire and the Bosnian uprising: Janissaries, Modernization and Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 4.

² Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity : Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 98.

³ Shmulevitz, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 97-100.

⁴ Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 415.

⁵ Okawara, "The urban fabric," 170.

correctly assess the share of the tax owned by commercial offices, workshops, cafes, farms, etc.⁶ The specificity of this tax was that it was to be imposed on shops, storage and other commercial properties which were previously exempt of taxation. It was the first tax on wealth and property,⁷ which would effectively allow the government to have a direct view into the urban wealth in Damascus. It would affect mostly the merchants and grain traders. While notables and ulema met with Salim Paşa and agreed to help him impose the tax, they secretly planned an uprising.⁸

In addition, Salim Paşa had been instrumental in the abolition of the Janissaries in Istanbul. He came to Damascus with a large amount of troops. Damascenes feared that he was instructed to get rid of the local Janissaries, residing in the Maydān neighborhood. Salim Paşa's taxation and military policy led to the siege of the castle and eventually cost him his life.⁹ When the rebellion took place, Christians in the city were worried about their safety, they thus reached out to *āḡāwāt* and paid for their protection during these troubled times.¹⁰ The government considered that rebellion took place because the Damascene Janissaries were too used to the old system in which they received a salary of 110 *quruş* and were reluctant to let go of their privileges.¹¹ The issue of taxation was not brought forward to explain the violence.

Ibrāhīm 'Alī, the son of the governor of Egypt Muḥammad 'Alī, took advantage of this rebellion against Salim Paşa and managed to win over the support of Damascenes for his conquest of *Bilād al-Šām*. He promised the population that he would abolish the taxes of agricultural production on *miri* land, which increased his popularity, and he entered Damascus victorious. Yet, the population soon realized that the new taxation practices of the Egyptians

⁶ Ibid, 170.

⁷ al-Qasāṭlī, *al-Rawḍa*, 87.

⁸ al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 37.

⁹ Ibid, 37.

¹⁰ *Muḍakkirāt tāriḥīya*, 29; Christians and Jews used to give an annual fee to guards and *āḡāwāt* to protect them from possible threats, al-Dimašqī, *Tāriḥ ḥawādīṭ*, 113.

¹¹ Virginia H. Aksan, "The Ottoman Military and state Transformation in a Globalizing World," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no.2 (2007): 267.

were far more demanding. Ibrāhīm ‘Alī introduced a new tax called the *ferde* (*farda*), or headcount tax.¹² Previously, only the *avariz* on housing and the *ġizya* were taken according to headcount. Then, those who were formerly exempted from taxes such as ulema, *āšrāf* and *‘ayān* were also subjected to the *ferde*. This universal taxation had no precedent in Damascene history. To be sure, Damascenes did pay taxes, but they were based on specific commercial actions and revenues, such as customs, *avariz*, etc.¹³ These taxes were not universal and applied to a specific area or function. A personal individual tax, in the manner of the *ġizya*, had never been implemented before. The anonymous Christian author of *Muḍakirāt Tariḥīyya* mentioned that when the Egyptian government first applied the *ferde*, Damascenes were angry because they were not used to paying taxes. Furthermore, the *āġāwāt* and *āšrāf* were especially shocked because they had always been exempted due to their privileged status.¹⁴ What especially angered the population was that the taxpayers were given a paper to show that they paid the *ferde*, which reminded them of the *ġizya* papers. Some Muslims complained that they had become like *ḍimmī*.¹⁵ They thus refused to pay this tax that they found humiliating.¹⁶

The resemblance between the *ġizya* and the *ferde* did not stop here, as the *ferde* was also used to pay for the recruitment of the army and its maintenance. Thus, even those benefiting from *‘askerī* status had to pay for the maintenance of the army, which had previously been ensured by the *ġizya*. This innovation challenged the previous understanding according to which Muslims would contribute to the military force of the empire and non-Muslims would pay a tax to support the military efforts.

¹² Büssow and Safi, *Damascus affair*, 88.

¹³ Okawara, “The urban fabric,” 170.

¹⁴ Büssow and Safi, *Damascus affairs*, 87.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁶ A.E., 67/CPC, Ratti-Menton- Guizot, November 30th 1843.

In 1841, a tithe on income was imposed by the Egyptian regime,¹⁷ thus consolidating the previous attempt of Salim Paşa to tax property and wealth. The taxation methods of the Egyptian government created strong resentments among the population.¹⁸ The imposition of a headcount tax was detrimental both to the poor, who would have been exempted from lump sum taxes, and to the elite who lost their position as members of the government and were turned into simple subjects. This resentment was later directed towards Christians, who had been associated with the Egyptian regime, but also towards tax-collectors including neighborhood shaykhs. After the departure of the Egyptians in 1841, the property of many of these shaykhs was plundered by the population and some of them were killed.¹⁹

In addition to the introduction of new modes of taxation, Ibrāhīm ‘Alī also introduced conscription. Ibrāhīm ‘Alī was the first one to attempt to levy conscripts from Damascus and to impose a general disarmament of the population. Many regions rebelled against conscription, including Palestine, Tripoli and Karak. The revolts led to attacks on government officials and soldiers but also on Christians or Jews.²⁰

Ibrāhīm ‘Alī decided to focus on the conscription of Druze.²¹ However, he was unable to defeat them. This caused a blow to the Egyptian troops’ reputation.²² Druze and Bedouins ended up allying against Ibrāhīm ‘Alī²³ further challenging his rule in the Ḥawrān. He had to rely on local forces rather than his foreign army to crush the rebellion of Druze in Ḥawrān. He used Christians from Mount Lebanon to coerce Druze into conscription.²⁴ In 1839, he got the

¹⁷ Büssow and Safi, *Damascus affairs*, 165.

¹⁸ al-Dimaşqī, *Tārīḥ ḥawādīṭ*, 276.

¹⁹ A.E., 67/CPC vol. 1/2, Ratti-Menton-Guizot, January 6th 1841.

²⁰ Büssow and Safi, *Damascus affairs*, 90-98.

²¹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, January 17th 1838.

²² A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, March 9th 1838.

²³ These two groups had a special relationship. Indeed, Druze were exempted from the compulsory protection fee taken on Ḥawrānī peasants by Bedouins. It was due to the fact that the Druze had their own militias and this could ensure their own protection. Then, the solidarity existing between Druze, whether from Ḥawrān or Mount Lebanon, was a show of strength against attacks. Finally, Druze could block Bedouin tribes’ access to the grain markets of the Ḥawrān and thus threaten their access to food, Pierre de Ségur Dupeyron, “La Syrie et les Bédouins sous l’administration turque,” *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 2nd serie, vol. 9, (1855): 1281.

²⁴ Abkāriyūs, *Kitāb Nawādir*, 59.

son of Emir Bashir II, Emir Ḥalīf, to send 4000 Christians to help the Egyptians.²⁵ These endeavors however were complete failures.²⁶ The participation of Christians into government's attempts to coerce the Druze into conscription is often pointed to as the cause of Druze animosity towards Christians.²⁷ During their attacks against the Druze, Christian militias plundered a Druze sanctuary at Wadī al-Taym, bringing into the open Druze books which had been kept hidden, in accordance with Druze' beliefs. Their secrets were thus revealed, an offense which the chronicler Iskandar Abkāriyūs linked to the violence of the following years.²⁸

Similarly to the dynamics in Ḥawrān, 1500 Christians from Mount Lebanon were also sent to Damascus to keep order in the city.²⁹ Thus, while Damascenes were subject to disarming and conscription, they saw armed Christians from Mount Lebanon parading in the city.³⁰ This image of Christian collaboration with the Egyptian government to enforce conscription was hard to erase and influenced the meanings associated with conscription. For this reason the French consular agent Jean-Baptiste Beaudin reported that Muslims started to hate Christians and Europeans whom they saw as the cause of the recent changes and especially of conscription.³¹ When in 1837 there were rumors that the Druze had defeated the soldiers in the Ḥawrān, both the soldiers in Damascus and the Christians were attacked by the population.³² Revolts against the Egyptian regime often included attacks and pillages of Christian or Jewish houses. For example, in 1834 Jews of Safed, Hebron and Tiberias suffered multiple pillages during the insurrection of the peasants and the Druze against the newly

²⁵ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, January 17th 1839.

²⁶ Abkāriyūs, *Kitāb Nawādir*, 59.

²⁷ Ibid, 60.

²⁸ Ibid, 59.

²⁹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, May 10th 1839.

³⁰ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, January 17th 1839.

³¹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Beaudin-Roussin, May 2nd 1838.

³² Büsow and Safi, *Damascus affairs*, 103.

declared military draft and disarmament.³³ Rebellions against disarmament also took place in Ġabal Nāblus and the Ġabal Ānšārīya mountains.³⁴ The Maronite Emir Šihāb's troops were again used to put down the rebellion.³⁵

Eventually, a large-scale revolt erupted in *Bilād al-Šām* against Egyptian policies which compelled Ibrāhīm 'Alī to leave the territory in 1841. After the Ottoman return to Damascus, many inhabitants expected a return to the pre-Egyptian situation. However, the Ottoman governors rather chose to build on the measures taken by their predecessors. 'Ayān and ulema met after the Egyptian departure to draft a decree forbidding Christians and Jews to wear white turbans, to ride horses and to have slaves. The application of the decree was curtailed by the governor who confirmed the rights and freedom granted by the Egyptians.³⁶ The Ottoman government had indeed passed the 1839 Gülhane edict while Damascenes were under the Egyptian rule. The government also sought to foster the loyalty of its Christian subjects. Many Muslim Damascenes were thus disappointed by the return of the Ottoman governor who continued the political, economic and social reforms promulgated by the Egyptians.³⁷ This was also true for taxation. Since the lands of *Bilād al-Šām* had not been subjected to a large-scale survey beforehand, the government did not have a clear idea about its resources. It seems that with the Egyptian rule, and its ability to collect resources from this region, the Ottoman government realized its potential. Arrears of taxes unpaid to the Egyptians were even calculated into tax-collection and demanded from Damascenes.³⁸

Yet, although taxation was not reduced, the Ottoman government was not able to deliver on some of the promises made by the Egyptians. For example, peasants saw their taxes

³³ Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the state of Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 78.

³⁴ Dick Douwes, "Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance Against Conscription in Ottoman Syria," in *Arming the state: Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775–1925*, ed. Erik Jan Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 122.

³⁵ Dick Douwes, "Justice and oppression: Ottoman rule in the province of Damascus and the district of Hama, 1785–1841," PhD diss., (Nijmegen University, 1994), 133.

³⁶ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 1/2, Ratti-Menton-Guizot, January 6th 1841.

³⁷ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 18.

³⁸ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Aspick, , February 12th 1851.

double during the Egyptian period, because Ibrāhīm ‘Alī had promised to relieve them of Bedouin incursions and thus abolished the ‘protection fee’ they used to pay to Bedouin tribes. After the departure of the Egyptians, the Ottoman government kept the same taxation rate but was not able to continue protecting the peasants from Bedouin incursions. They thus had to pay a protection fee to the government in addition to the protection fee to Bedouins.³⁹

As per the *ferde*, it was not collected until 1843 for fear of rebellion.⁴⁰ In December 1843, the governor Ali Paşa revealed the order to apply the *ferde* in the *mağlis*. It was to be transformed into a property tax called the *vergi* (*wirqū*).⁴¹ Rather than the head-tax imposed by the Egyptians, this tax was to be imposed on revenue and property. It was thus the same tax that Salim Paşa had attempted to apply under the name *salyan*. However, the members of the *mağlis* who were in charge of distributing the tax among the social groups found a way to avoid it. They transformed the *vergi* back into *ferde*, thus avoiding the assessment of revenue.⁴² To do so they claimed that there were no census of property in the city. The governor hesitated to impose a census for his predecessor Salim Paşa had been murdered when he tried to do the same.⁴³ Then, *mağlis* members imposed on each community a certain percentage of the tax based on demographic proportions.

The Maydān neighborhood rebelled immediately against this new tax.⁴⁴ The same individuals who had been involved in the uprising against Salim Paşa in 1831 plotted to cause a city-wide rebellion. It was however discovered early and the intriguers were arrested.⁴⁵ Christians and Jews also refused to pay the tax. With the help of consuls, they contested the demographic basis of the calculation of their share of the tax, arguing that their numbers had

³⁹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Lavalette, January 14th 1852.

⁴⁰ F.O., 195/291, Timoni-Cowley, September 1st 1847.

⁴¹ F.O., 195/291, Timoni-Cowley, September 1st September; BOA, ML.VRD.CMH.d.253, 1834.

⁴² A. E., 67/CPC, vol. 1/2, Devoize-Guizot, December 8th 1843.

⁴³ Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 165.

⁴⁴ A. E., 67/CPC, vol. 1/2, Devoize-Bourqueney, March 6th 1844.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

been increased and the Muslim population's numbers had been reduced.⁴⁶ They sent a petition to the sultan demanding that the tax be imposed on revenue. They also claimed that a new census was necessary to determine the share of each individual.⁴⁷ Their interests were thus diametrically opposed to the Muslim elite's interests who attempted to avoid the conduct of a new census. According to the British consul, the overestimation of non-Muslims was caused by the fact that the disabled were counted in the number of non-Muslims while they were not for Muslims. He stated that 2000 Christians and Jewish men were counted by the *mağlis* members, while only 6000 Muslim men were accounted for. Non-Muslims thus represented 1/4 of the taxable population according to *mağlis* members.⁴⁸ When looking at the *ğizya* records of 1843 the number of non-Muslim men does not seem exaggerated for it counted 3771 non-Muslim men,⁴⁹ in 1848 it was reduced to 3692 men.⁵⁰ According to the statistics of the *Paşalık* of Damascus compiled by the French consul in 1842 there were 12500 Christians and 4850 Jews in the city, for 90500 Muslims.⁵¹ It is thus clear that it was the number of Muslim men which was underestimated. The government already had a headcount of non-Muslims because of the calculations of the *ğizya* but it did not have a headcount of Muslims. Without an accurate census, it could not assess the Muslim population and thus had to rely on *mağlis* members' calculations, which they twisted to their advantage. The British consul Wood stated that when he asked the governor why he did not base the tax on the income of corporations, trades and classes to alleviate the poor, he responded that the registers had been burned. Wood argued that he was misled by the members of the *mağlis*, because he had a copy of this register from the Egyptian period.⁵²

⁴⁶ Ibid ; FO, 195/226, Wood-Canning, February 21st 1844.

⁴⁷ F.O., 195/226, Wood-Canning, February 21st 1844.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ BOA, ML.VRD.CMH.d.253, 1834.

⁵⁰ BOA, C.ML.603.24869, October 6th 1850.

⁵¹ A. E., 67/CPC, vol. 1/2, Beaudin-Guizot, June 4th 1842.

⁵² F.O., 195/226, Wood-Canning, February 21st 1844.

The imposition of a tax to be divided among religious community was prone to inter-confessional conflicts. A document found in the Ottoman archives describes what took place during tax collection in 1843. The initial order called for 2000 purses of *quruş*⁵³ to be taken from Damascus, 240 were assigned to Christians and 90 to Jews, the remaining 1670 were assigned to Muslims. Thus Muslims had to pay 84% and non-Muslim 16% of the tax. Yet, at the time of collection 300 purses of *quruş* were taken by mistake from Christians and 200 from Jews, which amounted to 500 purses for non-Muslims, representing 25% of the tax. The error was only noticed in 1847.⁵⁴ This error in collection might have been the work of *mağlis* members. They obviously attempted to avoid the taxation of their own wealth as property holders and merchants.⁵⁵

The issue of the distribution of the tax between religious groups was closely linked to the distribution among social classes. In the end, across the religious spectrum, elites used strategies to avoid taxation while outwardly pretending to defend the poor from their *millet* by accusing the other religious groups of escaping taxes. This sectarian discourse contributed to inter-confessional tensions among commoners. Non-Muslims elites pointed to the Muslim notables, merchants and *āšrāf* as the ones to deserve taxation because of their wealth, while Muslim notables pointed to the Christian protégés, their luxurious appearances and residences. While the Muslim elite used the *mağlis* to avoid taxation, protégés were exempt from taxation, thus increasing the burden on the commoners, fostering popular mobilization. In addition, among Muslims, there was a general understanding that the *ferde* taxation was the work of foreign powers, adding to resentments toward foreigners and Christians.⁵⁶

⁵³ Currency.

⁵⁴ BOA, MVL.17.14, November 27th 1847.

⁵⁵ Regarding the distribution system of ancient-regime taxation see François Hincker, *Les Français devant l'impôt sous l'Ancien Régime*, Collection "Questions d'histoire", no. 22 (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), 34-37.

⁵⁶ A.E., CCC/98, vol. 1, Devoize-Guizot, December 30th 1843.

This conflict over the tax lasted for decades as the *ferde* also increased and arrears accumulated.⁵⁷ In 1849, the arrears had accumulated to 75 000 purses, which amounted to the revenue of the province for two years. The provincial treasury was no longer able to pay for the conduct of the hajj and had to borrow from the central treasury. Because of the increased taxes, peasants were leaving their lands uncultivated. This situation encouraged the central government to send its own tax-collectors to the province to smooth the process of tax-collection.⁵⁸

The conduct of a census was the only way to solve conflicting claims between Christians and Muslims, however, when a census was conducted in 1848 in the Ḥawrān, the peasants fled, the inhabitants rebelled and expelled their governor, just as the Damascenes had done in 1831.⁵⁹ Censuses were considered as indicators of conscription and taxation and thus met with opposition. Ironically, censuses were also required to access to the demands of the population to apply a progressive taxation based on personal income.

The reforms of taxation created intense tensions between Damascenes, the local government and Istanbul. They challenged the existing hierarchies and forms of government. However, intermediaries such as tax-farmers, irregular troops chieftains, emirs, but also *mağlis* members, had the advantage of distance from Istanbul and were well embedded in local patronage networks, which allowed them to thwart these attempts at leveling the various elements of Damascene society.⁶⁰ The negotiations regarding the distribution of the new taxes reveals a class conflict and the ability of the elite to escape taxation through foreign protection or the use of the new institutions created by the *Tanzimat*. However, rather than

⁵⁷ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Toppel-Bourqueney, April 16th 1845.

⁵⁸ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, June 20th 1849.

⁵⁹ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, November 8th 1848.

⁶⁰ On art of managing the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, see Marc Aymes, *A Provincial History of the Ottoman Empire*.

turning into a conflict between the elite and commoners, the taxation issue was shaped into an inter-confessional struggle through sectarian discourses and strategies of diversion.

2. The Revolts of 1850

Reforms in the domains of taxation and conscription encountered many obstacles, especially in provinces such as *Bilād al-Šām*, where different actors had enjoyed great autonomy in the 18th century. Direct taxation by government agents and conscription aimed at decreasing the power of irregular chieftains and other tax intermediaries as well as to integrate irregular troops into the state apparatus. The government was extending into new areas and domains which had previously been managed by indirect forms of rule. The rebellion led by some groups towards these measures and the government's incapacity to negotiate these reforms contributed to a situation of violence and struggle in the vicinity of Damascus, mainly in the Ḥawrān and Biqā'.

In 1850, in this context of resistance against taxation, the governor attempted again to apply conscription.⁶¹ In Damascus, the inhabitants were quick to respond with a strike by closing their shops, coffee houses and khans. Seeing this turn of events, Christians feared to be the recipient of violence.⁶² However, conscription was applied and 300 soldiers were taken.⁶³

While conscription did not meet with serious rebellion in Damascus, Hama and Homs,⁶⁴ the situation in Aleppo, Ḥawrān and Baalbek was quite different. Widespread rebellions took place in these regions which ended up in an attack against Christians in both the Biqā' and the city of Aleppo. The violence of 1860 in Damascus, Rašayā, Ḥašbayā, Zaḥle and Mount Lebanon are to be read in the continuation of these events. These rebellions indeed feature some of the same actors.

⁶¹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-French Ambassador in Istanbul, January 2nd 1850.

⁶² F.O., 226/105, Calvert-Palmerston, September 26th 1850.

⁶³ F.O., 226/105, Calvert-Palmerston, September 26th 1850; F.O., 226/105, Calvert-Palmerston, October 9th 1850.

⁶⁴ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Aupick, January 8th 1851.

An association can indeed be made between rebellions against taxation, conscription and attacks against Christians. The author of *Aḥwāl al-Naṣārā* mentioned that those who resisted the reforms of the state were fomenting rebellion in Damascus, Mount Lebanon and in the Anṣārīya Mountain. He made the interesting comment that those who opposed the government often attacked Christians, because they became the target of resentment.⁶⁵ Featuring predominantly in these events of violence are *āḡāwāt* and some irregular troops. Violence against Christians and Jews often took place when the relation between the Muslim population and the government was tense, during rebellions and uprisings.⁶⁶ These various layers of rebellion which interacted are present in events of violence in the first part of the 19th century.

The Ḥawrān had been the center of rebellion against the Egyptians. Ibrāhīm ‘Alī had managed to reestablish order in Ḥawrān by using a combination of force and monetary deals. He relied on the Hannādī Bedouin under his protection.⁶⁷ After the Ottomans regained power, the governors had some trouble ensuring the control of the Ḥawrān, and especially to control Bedouins.⁶⁸ All means were used to prevent the joint rebellion of Bedouin tribes and Druze in the region.

The governor sought to handle Bedouins in a variety of ways. He used divide and rule policies,⁶⁹ led frontal attacks and attempted to humiliate them.⁷⁰ Finally, the governor attempted to replace Bedouins in the region with his own *āḡāwāt*. The Bedouins however refused this usurpation of their position and attacked these *āḡāwāt* in 1849.⁷¹ In 1850, Bedouins and Druze allied in the Ḥawrān against the measures of the government. The

⁶⁵ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, 5.

⁶⁶ Similar revolts took place in the Balkans in the 18th century which can shed light on the rebellions of the 19th century *Bilād al-Šām*, see Fikret Adanir, “Semi-Autonomous Provincial Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 172.

⁶⁷ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, April 11th 1849.

⁶⁸ F.O., 195/226, Wood-Ali Paşa, February 22nd 1843.

⁶⁹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Bourqueney- Toppel, May 20th 1845.

⁷⁰ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, October 4th 1848.

⁷¹ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, April 11th 1849.

Ḥawrān, difficult to access for the government, was a meeting place for youth fleeing military service, but also semi-autonomous groups who hoped to escape the increasing authority of the state. When conscription was announced in 1850, the state of the cities and countryside rapidly deteriorated. It led to a decline in trade as peasants avoided the towns full of soldiers for fear of being levied, and shopkeepers closed their shops or left town.⁷² The government resorted to instituting a passport system in order to avoid the flight of recruits.⁷³ Conscription was accompanied by campaigns of disarming, which left the inhabitants of the district unprotected in the face of plundering raids of the Bedouins or irregular forces.⁷⁴ The author of *Aḥwāl al-Naṣārā* blamed the weakness of the government and the corruption of its representatives for the political instability in the years after Ibrāhīm ‘Alī’s rule, which upset the power arrangements which had been set up in the region and encouraged Bedouin tribes to commit plunder and destruction.⁷⁵

In the Ḥawrān, Christians also allied with Druze in their rebellion.⁷⁶ The alliance of Christians and Druze in the Ḥawrān but also in Mount Lebanon was worrisome to the government but also to foreign consuls who saw in this alliance a threat of general insurrection which would compromise the Ottoman hold on these regions.⁷⁷ The governor thus adopted a divide and rule policy which had dire consequences for inter-confessional relations. The governor confided in Wood that he was planning to recruit Maronites to pacify the Druze in the Ḥawrān to avoid the alliance of these two groups. The British consul was instructed by his foreign minister to discourage the governor of this plan which would backfire.⁷⁸ This issue dragged over time, leaving the Ḥawrān in a state of ongoing rebellion

⁷² F.O., 226/105, Calvert-Palmerston, June 29th 1850.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Douwes, “Reorganizing Violence,” 111.

⁷⁵ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, p 3

⁷⁶ A.E., CCC/98, vol 3, Barrere-de Lhuys, July 26th 1853.

⁷⁷ A.E., CCC/98, vol 3, Barrere-de Lhuys, July 26th 1853.

⁷⁸ F.O., 195/368, Wood-Rose, December 8th 1852.

that lasted through the violence of 1860. In the summer of 1860, the Bedouins camped nearby Damascus were quick to join the violence and plunder.⁷⁹

In 1852, Bedouin tribes overcame their differences and allied against the governor.⁸⁰ Seeing his increasing power in the Ḥawrān, the governor planned to recruit Druze of Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon against the Bedouin.⁸¹ The Druze however refused to be used against Bedouins and in consequence, the government sent the army to fight them.⁸² Leaders of the Ḥawrān such as the Druze Āṭraṣ and Ḥamdān leaders, and the *āḡā* Muḥammad al-Rifāʿī wrote a petition to Wood complaining about the plunder of their goods by the army and the destruction of their villages.⁸³

From the 1850's onwards, the Druze of the Ḥawrān also allied with the Ḥarfūš tribe against the government centralization objectives.⁸⁴ They both demanded the protection of the British consul against the government. This alliance between Druze and the Ḥarfūš was again witnessed during the attacks of Zahle in 1860.⁸⁵ The imposition of conscription actually led to an alliance of all semi-autonomous groups against the governor.

The British consul of Damascus, Mr. Wood, turned into a spokesperson for the Druze. He saw that the Druze were increasingly gaining influence over the Ḥawrān, under the leadership of the Āṭraṣ family.⁸⁶ In 1852, Wood invited the Druze chiefs to meet in Ḥāṣbayā and warned them of rebellion against the government. He thereby imposed himself as an intermediary between the Druze and the government.⁸⁷ He built a large property in the Anti-Lebanon in Blūdān among the Druze and close to the Protestant missionary

⁷⁹ Büsow and Safi, *Damascus affairs*, 5.

⁸⁰ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Lavalette, January 21st 1852.

⁸¹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Lavalette, February 25th 1852.

⁸² A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Barbet de Jouy-Lavalette, September 15th 1852.

⁸³ F.O., 195/368, Wood-Earl of Malmesbury, November 18th 1852.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ F.O., 195/291, Calvert-Canning, May 2nd 1850.

⁸⁷ F.O., 195/368, Wood-Muşir Mehmed Paşa, November 25th 1852.

headquarters.⁸⁸ The assistance of Wood in the aftermath of the revolt of 1850 seems to have paid off for the Druze received a letter from the governor in 1853 ensuring them that they would not have to give conscripts if they were loyal subjects, meaning if they paid the taxes.⁸⁹

After the Ḥawrān, on October 15th 1850, Aleppines rose in rebellion against the *ferde* and the universal conscription. One of the main demands of the rebels was to base the *ferde* on property rather than individuals. Yet, unlike the rebellion of Damascus, the rioters, after failing to capture the governor, set out to the wealthy Christian quarter of al-Ṣalība and plundered it. Al-Ṣalība was an important center of trade and textile manufacture and represented the rise of a Christian commercial bourgeoisie.⁹⁰ Here again, discontent towards the government ended up in plunder and violence against the Christian elite of the city.

One day after the rebellion started in Aleppo, on October 16th, the Ḥarfūš rose in rebellion in the Biqā‘. The Biqā‘, together with the Ḥawrān and Baalbek, had been ruled by the Ḥarfūš emirs but were incrementally taken away from them. The Ḥawrān and the Biqā‘ had benefited from the profitable grain trade, raising the stakes of government interventionism in these areas.⁹¹ Since the Egyptian rule, the Damascene governors were engaged in a power struggle with the *āḡāwāt* of the areas around the city. They sought to put an end to the autonomy of these intermediaries who had contributed to the consolidation of power of local notables, or *‘ayān*, in the 18th century.

In 1844, the Ḥarfūš were replaced as sub-governors of the Biqā‘ by the Damascene Kurdish *āḡā*, Aḥmad āḡā al-Yūsuf, who was close to the Maronite Ṣihāb ruler.⁹² The British consul Wood, who had favored the Ḥarfūš was quite unhappy about this choice.⁹³ Afterwards,

⁸⁸ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Barbet de Jouy-Lavalette, September 9th 1852.

⁸⁹ F.O., 195/368, Wood-Ali Paşa, January 3rd 1853.

⁹⁰ 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), 154-155.

⁹¹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Toppel-Bourqueney, April 16th 1845.

⁹² A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 2, Toppel-Bourqueney, June 26th 1845.

⁹³ F.O., 78/579, Wood- Aberdeen, January 25th 1844.

the irregular troop leader Muṣṭafā āġā Ḥabīb was named sub-governor and remained in place in the Biqā‘ until January 1850. At that point, he was dismissed and replaced by the military officer Ali Yaver sent from Istanbul.⁹⁴ He represented the increasing centralization of the government control over peripheral lands.

The last pocket of Ḥarfūš power was Baalbek, which remained under the administration of the family. However, Christians foreign protégés complained about the sub-governor Muḥammad Ḥarfūš to the government because he frustrated their commercial interest, and they obtained his removal.⁹⁵ The French consul was eager to get rid of the Ḥarfūš, whom he accused of pillaging the population.⁹⁶ The Ḥarfūš family had indeed been beneficial to the British commercial and financial interests, while they had frustrated the attempts of the French protégés to obtain tax-farms.⁹⁷ The French consul played an important role in the Ḥarfūš’s dismissal.⁹⁸

In the beginning of October 1850, ten days before the rebellion erupted, an order was sent to take Baalbek away from the Ḥarfūš emirs because of their opposition to the conduct of conscription. Baalbek was to be put under the authority of the sub-governor of the Biqā‘, the aforementioned Ali Yaver, who now controlled Biqā‘, Baalbek and Hama.⁹⁹ Upset by this dismissal in 1850, Muḥammad and Ḥassan Ḥarfūš took their 500 irregular cavaliers and went close to Damascus, recruiting individuals for their rebellion.¹⁰⁰ However the city did not rise against the sultan as they had expected. Muḥammad and Ḥassan Ḥarfūš thus escaped. They met however with the strong will of the serasker of Damascus Emin Paşa and suffered various

⁹⁴ BOA, A.MKT.MVL.24.6, January 13th 1850; F.O., 195/291, Calvert-Canning, May 2nd 1850; Ali Yaver had been the *kaymakam* of Damascus during the pilgrimage in 1849 and in 1850 he was also named governor of Hama.

⁹⁵ F.O., 195/291, Calvert-Canning, October 15th 1850.

⁹⁶ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Barrere-Ali Paşa, November 22nd 1854.

⁹⁷ French protégés.

⁹⁸ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Barrere-Ali Paşa, November 22nd 1854.

⁹⁹ BOA, A.AMD.22.48, October 6th 1850; AMD.22.67, October 6th 1850. Moritz Sobernheim, “Baalbek”, in *E.J. Brill’s First Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1913-1936), 544; BOA, AMD.22.67, October 6th 1850.

¹⁰⁰ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-Lavalette, October 28th 1850.

losses. Other members of the family came to Damascus to surrender to the government. As Muḥammad and Ḥassan Ḥarfūš were followed by the governor's troops, they took refuge in the mostly Christian village of Ma'lūlā, on the road between Damascus and Yabrud.¹⁰¹ Both the Ḥarfūš emirs and the army soldiers entered Ma'lūlā. What happened next is the subject of controversy, but it resulted in the pillage of churches, Christians and Muslim houses, and led to the murder of a Greek Catholic priest and the wounding of a Greek Orthodox priest by the army.¹⁰² The responsibility for the plunder bore predominantly on the government troops.

According to the governor, the inhabitants had given refuge to the Ḥarfūš emirs. Then, troops followed them into the churches and houses of Christians and plunder took place. In this narrative, the damage was caused by the alliance of the inhabitants with the rebels. The inhabitants however denied that they had given refuge to the Ḥarfūš.¹⁰³ They claimed that Salmān Ḥarfūš had written to them asking them to rise against the government under threat of violence, but that they had refused.¹⁰⁴ The town's Christian inhabitants, pushed by Great Britain and Russia, asked for reparations from the Ottoman government. They claimed that their share of taxes, which had been kept in the church had been stolen.¹⁰⁵

Among the irregular troops used by Emin Paşa to catch the Ḥarfūš figured Muḥammad Sa'īd āgā Zakarīyyā'. He was known to the inhabitants of Ma'lūlā because he had sought refuge in the city a few years earlier when he had been fired from the position of *kethüda* of the governor. The population however had refused to give him shelter. In 1850, he was accused by the Russian consul of having led the *başıbozuk* to plunder Ma'lūlā after the defeat of the Ḥarfūš.¹⁰⁶ It can be seen as an act of revenge. In the end, the two emirs Muḥammad

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Pichon, *Maaloula*, 110.

¹⁰³ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg- French Ambassador in Istanbul, October 30th 1850.

¹⁰⁴ F.O., 195/291, Calvert-Canning, November 8th 1850.

¹⁰⁵ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Minister Plenipotentiary, January 14th 1851.

¹⁰⁶ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Basily-Titof, November 27th 1850, Annex to de Ségur- Ministre Plenipotentaire, January 14th 1851; A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-French Ambassador Istanbul, March 27th 1850.

and Ḥassan were arrested and paraded in shackles in the Damascus.¹⁰⁷ Part of the Ḥarfūš family was sent to Crete as a punishment. After these events, conscription in the Ḥawrān was suspended.¹⁰⁸

In spite of the strong orders received by the governor against the Ḥarfūš, the British consul Wood managed to obtain the return of Salmān Harfush to power in 1854.¹⁰⁹ In 1854, Salmān Ḥarfūš had created disorders in the Biqā' and was called to Damascus by the governor Ali Askar Paşa . One of the instruments in the hands of the *āḡāwāt* against their replacement by regular forces was their ability to cause disorders that only they could solve. He came to Damascus, supposedly to be judged for his actions, but actually the governor gave him the district of Baalbek. According to the French consul, the Christians of the region but also the Muslim notable were quite worried about this decision. Those who had helped dismiss the Ḥarfūš emirs by bearing witness of their oppressive rule, especially the French consul and his protégés, were quite worried about their return.¹¹⁰

There were apparently high tensions between Zahliotes and the Ḥarfūš after their return to power, for the French consul deplored various killed among the Greek Catholic Zahliotes and accused the Ḥarfūš. In the same manner, he deplored the murder of the procurer of the French protégé and tax-farmer, Mr Gedei, who had actually come to Damascus to be a witness against the Ḥarfūsh.¹¹¹ The Ḥarfūš were taking revenge against those who encouraged their dismissal. The relationship between Zahle and the Ḥarfūš was linked to internal division among the Ḥarfūš family. Salmān Ḥarfūš had had a fairly good relationship with Zahliots, while other members of the family such as the emir Ḥussayn resented this relationship which had strengthened his rival Salmān. Ḥussayn thus had a conflictual

¹⁰⁷ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-Lavalette, October 28th 1850.

¹⁰⁸ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, de Ségur-Aupick, January 8th 1851.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ F.O., 195/368, Wood-Barbet de Jouy, March 26th 1853.

¹¹¹ Gedei was first a French protégé and later on took on British protection when his commercial ambitions were frustrated by the French consul. Ibid.

relationship with Zaḥle. In 1854, the memory of the father of Ḥussayn Ḥarfūš was insulted by a young Christian Zahliot from a respectable family. Ḥussayn took his troops to Zabadānī to punish the young man. The inhabitants of Zaḥle, hearing of the plan of Ḥussayn, sought to intercept him and stop him. The leaders of Zaḥle tried to prevent them from doing so, yet they were unable to control the crowd. As mentioned before, in the *Tanzimat period*, traditional intermediaries such as elites were increasingly challenged in their ability to exercise social control. False rumors spread that the Emir Ḥussayn had killed Greek Catholics in Zabadānī. Zaḥle's inhabitants thus sent 300 armed men to Zabadānī and 600 others to attack the Ḥarfūš in their villages.¹¹² The conflict between Zaḥle and the Ḥarfūš continued until 1860 and played a determinant role in the involvement of the Ḥarfūš in the attack against the city.

The government efforts to replace traditional intermediaries with officials sent from Istanbul were often unfruitful, encouraging the state to often revert to former forms of indirect rule. This is especially true for military chieftains, such as the Ḥarfūš, who were alternatively fired and re-hired to the dismay of certain foreign powers who insisted on their dismissal.

3. Ahmed Paşa's Policies and the Violence of 1860

3.1 Double Standard Policies

In 1859, the *muşir* Ahmed Paşa was given both the civil and military power in Damascus as the former governor Ali Paşa left for Jeddah. He decided to deal with semi-autonomous groups and traditional intermediaries with an iron fist. Conscription had been declared again in 1858, and he wanted to make sure that this rebellion would be avoided. He had received orders which supported his ambitions. The Ottoman governor had taken the decision to push the Ḥarfūš away from Hama once and for all.¹¹³

Ahmed Paşa had more chances of succeeding in this enterprise than his predecessor Namiq Paşa in 1850 because the British consul Wood had left the region in 1857. All those

¹¹² F.O., 195/458, Wood-Redcliffe, August 16th 1854.

¹¹³ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 31st 1858.

who had benefited from the support of the British consul Wood: the Ḥarfūš, the Druze, but also *āḡāwāt* suffered from his departure. They were now left at the mercy of the governor. Wood had managed to mediate between these individuals under his protection and the governor by using his diplomatic influence.¹¹⁴ The participation of Wood's protégés in the violence of 1860 is not a coincidence but rather point to their loss of authority and their strong resentments towards Ahmed Paşa's policies against them.

The governor, supported by the French consul, declared the Ḥarfūš as rebels against the Ottoman government.¹¹⁵ A few weeks after, in January 1859, he arrested Salmān Ḥarfūsh.¹¹⁶ Just afterwards, a rebellion took place in Hama.¹¹⁷ The French consul was satisfied about Salmān's arrest, whom he accused of pillaging the country with the help of soldiers paid for by the government.¹¹⁸ His negative appraisal of Salmān however had a lot to do with the latter's support of British influence in the region. The manner in which Salmān was arrested sowed the seeds for the attacks of Zaḥle in 1860. When Salmān heard that the governor had called for his arrest, he took refuge in Zaḥle as he entertained a good relationship with the inhabitants.¹¹⁹ Ahmed Paşa, thinking that Salmān might be there, sent the army against the village. The governor however entered into an agreement with the notables of the city who indicated him Salmān's place of hiding.¹²⁰ This betrayal explains in part why Salmān Ḥarfūš was involved in the attacks against Zaḥle in 1860.¹²¹ The dismissal of semi-autonomous chieftains such as the Ḥarfūš challenged the existing patron-client relationships which they had built with Christians in the countryside. Christians were increasingly turning to foreign powers or the governor for protection. However, even in a period of centralization, the government was unable to ensure the protection of its subjects in

¹¹⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, December 21st 1858

¹¹⁵ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, October 27th 1858 and December 21st 1858.

¹¹⁶ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, October 24th 1858.

¹¹⁷ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, April 29th 1858 and August 11th 1858.

¹¹⁸ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 12th 1859.

¹¹⁹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 19th 1859.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ A.E., 166/PO-SerieD/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, September 12th 1861.

the countryside, mostly because of a lack of resources. The inhabitants of the countryside were thus left at the mercy of dismissed military chieftains who had managed to escape the repetitive sanctions against them.

In the summer of 1860, before the massacres of Damascus, while Salmān was attacking Zahle, Muḥammad Ḥarfūš went to Baalbek, which had previously slipped from his authority and set out to kill the sub-governor Jayrūdī Fāris āgā. In his absence however he killed all the people in his house.¹²² He then killed Christians and members of the government, probably out of revenge for having lost the district.¹²³ The Ḥarfūš's involvement in the violence can be seen as a consequence of their loss of power in the region and thus as a rebellion towards the state.

Ahmed Paşa dealt harshly with other semi-autonomous groups in the countryside and the city, pointing to a will to get rid of traditional intermediaries. After defeating the Ḥarfūš, he turned towards the Ġabal Ānṣarīya, populated by members of the Alawī community. He destroyed the influence of the Ḥayrī family in the region and killed Ismā'īl Bey, the chiefs of the Alawis. Eighty leaders of the Alawis were brought to Damascus and sent to Istanbul for judgement.¹²⁴ The French consul again was happy about this turn of events, which he saw as the remedy to the ills of the country.¹²⁵ In December 1859, Ahmed Paşa decapitated seven of the Alawis leaders and hang their heads in the seven quarters of Damascus. The French consul mentioned that this act of severity was uncalled for, especially after the Ġabal Ānṣarīya had already been brought under control.¹²⁶

¹²² al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 171.

¹²³ F.O., 78/1520, Brant-Bulwer, June 13th 1860.

¹²⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, December 21st 1858; For a history of the Alawis see Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

¹²⁵ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 12th 1859.

¹²⁶ A.E., 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey- Walewski, December 19th 1859.

Ahmed Paşa had wielded Hama, Baalbek and the Ğabal Ānşarīya to his will and prepared to do the same in the Ḥawrān.¹²⁷ Previous governors had tried to get rid of the Bedouin leader Muḥammad al-Duḥī but repeatedly failed to do so. However, Ahmed Paşa was not willing to compromise. When al-Duḥī refused to provide camels for the caravan, Ahmed Paşa took his camels and his tax share by force.¹²⁸

Then, Ahmed Paşa led an attack against the Druze leaders of Mount Lebanon and the Ḥawrān.¹²⁹ Facing this frontal attack against Druze, the leader Ismāʿīl al-Āṭraş came to the forefront as the champion of Ḥawrān's rebellion against the government. In 1860, he led the attack against Raşayā, killed the Şihāb emir and participated in the plunder and violence.¹³⁰ In Ḥaşbayā, the attack was led by the *kethüda* of the Druze emir Ğunblāt,¹³¹ who was also in direct competition with the Şihāb emirs and Christians landowners. The violence of 1860 in the Anti-Lebanon which targeted the Şihāb stronghold can be seen as reactions to a short term dynamic which is the governor Ahmed Paşa's policies. It was also linked to long term dynamics such as the general change in the balance of power between Druze and Christians in the Anti-Lebanon since the end of the 18th century.

Finally, Ahmed Paşa tackled the rebellious character of the Maydān neighborhood. In 1859, he led a full fledged attack against some neighborhood chiefs who acted as police officers and arrested them. The prisoners were judged by a mix civil and military court, and thirty-two of them were sent to Acre.¹³² The participation of the Maydānī in the violence of 1860 can be linked to this earlier affront to their leadership by the governor.

The events of 1860 can be seen partly as a consequence of the harsh policies of Ahmed Paşa vis a vis Druze, Ḥarfūş, Bedouins and Maydānī. The situation was similar to the

¹²⁷ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, October 24th 1858.

¹²⁸ A.E., 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, June 21st 1858.

¹²⁹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 19th 1859.

¹³⁰ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Russell, June 18th 1860.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 14th 1859, February 14th 1859.

political conditions under the governor Namiq Paşa just before the violence of 1850. The violence can thus be considered as a rebellion towards the state. Those who had benefited from the downfall of these autonomous groups to take control in Baalbek, the Ḥawrān and the Anti-Lebanon, such as the Šihāb emirs, Christian notables and military officers were attacked by the rebels.

However, the violence, in addition to being a rebellion against the governor, had an inter-confessional aspect as the general Christian population, not just the elite, was affected by the violence and plunder in the Anti-Lebanon, the Biqā' and Damascus. It is the consequence of long term dynamics described in the previous chapters,¹³³ which led to a politicization of religious identities, but also of short term dynamics such as the Ahmed Paşa' double standard policies. Indeed, Ahmed Paşa had started his governorship with a strong hand. He had a strong status, he was the *muşir* of the army of Arabistan and assumed civil responsibilities in the absence of a governor.¹³⁴ He had brought the Ġabal Ānṣarīya to its knees, he had arrested the Ḥarfūš, controlled the Maydān. He then turned to tackle the last issue: the collection of the payment of the *bedel-i askeri* from Christians.¹³⁵ In comparison, it seemed like an easy task. However, he ultimately failed to do so because of the opposition of some Christians.

Governors had previously tried to collect the *bedel-i askeri* in Damascus from non-Muslims. In 1856, Jewish and Christians representatives met in the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of the city and discussed the issue. They saw this tax as contrary to the decree of Islahat fermanı, which opened the ranks of the army to non-Muslims. Those present thus decided to refuse its payment. Soon after however, Jews backed down from the argument and decided to pay.¹³⁶ Some Christians wrote petitions to foreign powers claiming that they

¹³³ See Chapter 5 and 6.

¹³⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, January 12th 1859.

¹³⁵ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, February 14th 1859.

¹³⁶ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, August 16th 1856.

preferred to send soldiers than to pay the *bedel-i askeri*.¹³⁷ The agitation of Christian against the *bedel-i askeri* in the mid-19th century, rather than an act of open rebellion, shows continuity with earlier complaints regarding taxation. However, the context, means of opposition and vocabulary used had changed, transforming an usual negotiation regarding taxation into what was perceived as a rebellion against the state.

Christians in Damascus rebuked the governor's demands for the payment of this tax. The French consul explains this rebellion as a consequence of the proximity with Mount Lebanon, from which news had arrived that Maronites would not pay the tax.¹³⁸ Rumors also circulated regarding the rebellion of non-Muslim communities of Aleppo who had allegedly written a letter to Damascus ensuring them that they would not pay the *bedel*.¹³⁹ They benefited from the support of some consuls in the area, such as the French consul of Beirut and the Austrian consul in Damascus.¹⁴⁰ The rebellion against the payment of the *bedel-i askeri* however did not attract the support of the Christian chroniclers, who were quite critical of their coreligionists and saw the rebellion as originating from the commoners.¹⁴¹ As Christians elites blamed the masses for their rebellion, the petitions sent to the Ottoman central government from Christian peasants rather argued that they were in the incapacity to pay because of their elite escaping taxation through foreign protection.¹⁴² These arguments points to the increasing participation of the larger population into local politics, a domain which had previously been dominated by the elite. Among Muslims and non-Muslim chroniclers, rebellion and violence was seen to the work of the masses, the 'ignorants' among the population.¹⁴³ As such, it reveals the elite's increasing inability to control the population

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ A.E. 67/CPC, vol 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, August 28th 1856.

¹⁴⁰ A.E. 67/CPC, vol 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, August 16th 1856.

¹⁴¹ Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 226; *Mudakkirāt tārīhīya*, 244.

¹⁴² BOA, A.DVN.115.75, 1855-1856 ; BOA, MVL.302.100, December 30th 1856.

¹⁴³ Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 44, 53; al- Bayṭār, 'Abd al-Razzāq. *Hilyat al-bašar*, 261; al-Bou'i, *Nubḍa Muḥtašara*, 122.

and function as intermediaries to diffuse conflict and violence through the traditional routes of negotiation and politics of reciprocity.

When Ahmed Paşa asked the patriarchs to pay the *bedel-i askeri*, they explained that their community would not pay but rather send men. He arrested eight Catholics and ten Orthodox. He threatened to send them to Istanbul and accused them of rebellion against the state. Christians complained to the French consul about these arrests and threats. The French consul considered this use of force as illegal and demanded that Ahmed Paşa free them, to which he agreed. He demanded instead that the leaders of each community come to sign a paper saying that they will pay.¹⁴⁴ The double standard in the harsh treatment of Alawis, Maydānī and Ḥarfūš on the one side and the weakness of the governor's actions against Christian rebels on the other side increased the resentment of the former towards the latter.¹⁴⁵

As argued by Ussama Makdisi, popular rebellion against the elites based upon a 'subaltern' interpretation of the reforms, represented a new type of violence which he identifies at the root of sectarianism. These rebellions subverted the existing social order based on the distinction between elite and commoners. As such, such events were deeply troubling for the elites of Damascus and Mount Lebanon.¹⁴⁶ This event is mentioned by Mīḥā'il Mišāqa as a cause of the violence of 1860.¹⁴⁷ Some chroniclers also see in the inaction of Ahmed Paşa in 1860 a revenge against the actions of Christians a year earlier.¹⁴⁸

Peter Hill analyses the transformation of the local political culture in the first part of the 19th century through the development of commoners collective political action. He interprets the increased role of commoners into what was previously the domain of elite as a consequence of the military and fiscal reforms enacted to meet support the repeated wars of

¹⁴⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, February 14th 1859.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 196.

¹⁴⁷ Mišāqah, *Murder, Mayhem*, 248.

¹⁴⁸ Šāhīn, *Ḥaṣr al-Liṭām*, 223.

the end of the 18th and early 19th century.¹⁴⁹ The increased taxation demands on the population as a consequence of these wars, the raising prices, and bad harvest led to economic hardship. Yet, at the same time, the expansion of trade created new economic opportunities and generated prosperity for the merchant elite. The gap between poor and rich was thus widened and its visibility was increased, which challenged the elite's legitimacy in the eyes of the commoners.¹⁵⁰ In addition to the widening gap between rich and poor, the question of the *bedel-i askeri* shows that for non-Muslims, the institutionalization of the *millet* system challenged the role of the traditional elites which had functioned as intermediaries with the government by favoring instead the political role of the religious leadership, at least in the first part of the 19th century. The reconstruction of communal institutions broke down the interdependence between the notables and the religious leadership. Then, as the increasing demands on the general Ottoman population fostered popular mobilization, the increasing demands of the heads of the *milel* on their flocks, such as the reforms encouraged by Patriarch Mazlūm,¹⁵¹ encouraged commoners' rebellion. The new commercial elites were not able to play the same role as the traditional elite because they lacked the same type of legitimacy and networks within their community, were often involved in a conflict with the religious leadership and relied on foreign protection to escape various responsibilities.

In the affair of the *bedel-i askeri*, Ahmed Paşa eventually agreed to negotiate and demanded to be paid only a quarter of the amount. Yet, many Christians refused and sought the help of the French and British consuls to push the government to completely renounce to apply the *bedel-i askeri*. The French and British consuls in Damascus thought that it was not prudent to do so and refused. Muslim Damascenes who observed the situation closely were shocked by this indulgence of Ahmed Paşa towards Christians given his energetic action to

¹⁴⁹ Hill, "How global was the age of revolution," 12.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 12.

¹⁵¹ See Chapter 2 and 3.

impose conscription and to defeat intermediaries and semi-autonomous groups.¹⁵² Muslims resented the fact that they had to pay for the *bedel* individually for not going to the army, while Christians whose *bedel* was less than the amount demanded from Muslims, refused to pay and faced no consequences.¹⁵³ To prevent disorders and rebellions of Muslims, the French consul advised strong action on the part of Ahmed Paşa to obtain the payment of taxes from Christians.¹⁵⁴

Ahmed Paşa obtained an order from the *Meclis-i vala* in Istanbul that allowed him to collect the tax by force.¹⁵⁵ In Istanbul, a special assembly was put together to discuss the issue of the *bedel* of Damascus. Its members came to the conclusion that the rebellion of some Christian leaders, against the orders of their patriarch, had to be considered as an act of rebellion and corruption,¹⁵⁶ in contradiction with the tradition.¹⁵⁷ The chiefs of the rebellion had to be exiled from the city.¹⁵⁸ The *bedel-i askeri*, being the continuation of the *ğizya* as it compensated an exemption from military service, was considered by the government as a legitimate demand established by custom.¹⁵⁹ The amount itself could be negotiated but the payment could not be refused.¹⁶⁰ In Damascus however, negotiations were put to a halt by the arrival of the new governor Kamil Paşa, who took over the civil responsibilities of the government from Ahmed Paşa.¹⁶¹ Ahmed Paşa's loss of the civil leadership might have been caused by his inability to solve the question of the *bedel*. The governor's unwillingness to punish rebels among the Christians and the important role some Greek Catholics in his

¹⁵² Mišāqā, *Mašhad*, 171.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, February 14th 1859.

¹⁵⁵ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, February 16th 1859.

¹⁵⁶ « *pişrev ve fesad* ».

¹⁵⁷ « *yolsuz hareket* ».

¹⁵⁸ BOA, A.MKT.388.81, December 5th 1859.

¹⁵⁹ BOA, MVL.753.35, September 21st 1859; The same argument is brought forward by some peasants of Mount Lebanon to justify their refusal to pay taxes, see Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 48.

¹⁶⁰ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, February 14th 1859; BOA, A.MKT.388.81, December 5th 1859. Mišāqāh, *Murder, Mayhem*, 226; On negotiations regarding taxation in the Ottoman Empire see Turhan, *The Ottoman Empire*, 4 and Gara Eleni, Erdem Kabadayi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., *Popular protest and political participation in the Ottoman Empire : Collective volume in honor of Prof. Suraiya Faruqi* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2011).

¹⁶¹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Lallemand, March 23rd 1859.

administration reinforced the association between the *Tanzimat* state and Christians, turning them into targets of popular resentment.¹⁶² The events of 1860 thus intertwined political rebellion and inter-confessional violence.

3.2 Rebellion and Economic Difficulties

The negotiations regarding the *bedel-i askeri* took place in a period of economic troubles for the city of Damascus. The French consul's reports got bleaker as the year 1859 advanced. After Ahmed Paşa lost the civil leadership, the administration came to a halt. Civil servants were not paid. The attacks against intermediaries had borne heavy costs on the local treasury, yet revenue was very low. The financial situation was critical.¹⁶³ The province was indebted to the central government and paid an interest of 2% by month. To increase the revenue of the province, the government increased taxes and resorted to a public loan. It took from the population and especially corporations half of the yearly tax as a loan that it promised to give back in 1861. However, the population knew that the reimbursement of the tax was hypothetical.¹⁶⁴ The year preceding the violence, prices went up and the currency was devalued.¹⁶⁵ The chronicler al-Uṣṭwānī also mentioned that the governor changed the currency to the lira in 1859, which had bad repercussions on the economy.¹⁶⁶ The French consul worried that because of economic issues and the rebellion of Christians against taxation, the Muslim population and the government officials wished for the downfall of Christians, and turned against consuls because they supported them.¹⁶⁷

The fiscal reforms led to wide-scale criticism on the part of the population. On the one hand, each individual was called upon to contribute both financially and militarily to the government. On the other hand, the sultan and his court were spending conspicuously. The

¹⁶² A.E., 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, August 25th 1860.

¹⁶³ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Lallemand, November 16th 1859.

¹⁶⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, July 20th 1859.

¹⁶⁵ *Aḥwāl al-naṣārā*, p 3

¹⁶⁶ al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 169.

¹⁶⁷ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, September 7th 1859.

sultan was travelling on the Mediterranean amid these economic problems. Damascenes saw this travel as causing unnecessary spending, and the French consul feared it might lead to troubles in Istanbul and to an inevitable catastrophe.¹⁶⁸ The discrepancy between demands made on the population and the lifestyle of the sultan caused great uproar in Istanbul but also in Damascus and contributed to his delegitimization.¹⁶⁹ The cost of the caravan in 1858 had also been very high because of the presence of the widow of the sultan Mahmud who accompanied it.¹⁷⁰ The provincial treasury was in charge of these costs, thus adding to the critical economic situation.

The agriculture was also in a critical state.¹⁷¹ The year of 1859 had seen a poor harvest of grains in the countryside because of the drought. The actions of speculators made the price rise even more. It reached a crisis in February when the *mağlis* of Damascus forbade the export of wheat outside the province. It set a maximum price and sent an intermediary to collect the wheat from peasants and bring it to shops in the city. Seeing these unfavorable buying terms, peasants stopped bringing their wheat to the city. The governor thus sent police forces to take the reserves by force. Then, the *mağlis* members, who were also shop owners set a high price for the resell of wheat. Bakers and other professions who used wheat for their production rebelled. In consequence wheat could not be found in the city, leading to acts of violence.¹⁷²

Drought and agricultural disasters which often took place in the late 1850's often led to attacks on peasants. For example, in the summer 1856 the Bedouins in the Ḥawrān could not feed their animals because of the drought. They lost the main part of their income. They thus took it upon the villages to compensate their losses of animals.¹⁷³ In his article sent to

¹⁶⁸ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, July 20th 1859.

¹⁶⁹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Lallemand, September 27th 1859; F.O., PRO/30, 22/88, Pisani-Bulwer, September 27th 1859.

¹⁷⁰ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Alison, June 2nd 1858.

¹⁷¹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, July 17th 1859.

¹⁷² A.E., 166/PO, Serie D/20, vol. 5, Lanusse-Lallemand, February 29th 1860.

¹⁷³ A.E. 67/CPC, vol. 5/6, Outrey-Walewski, August 1st 1856.

the newspaper *Ḥadīqāt al Āḥbār*, Mīḥā'il Mišāqa also described the bad situation of peasants. He deplored the abandoned villages and argued that peasants fled the land because of insecurity and bad economic conditions and left the land uncultivated, thus contributing to the food shortage. Peasants had various causes of resentments, including the increasing taxes collected by tax-farmers to whom they were increasingly indebted, yet unable to pay back because of the bad harvest.¹⁷⁴ These tax-farmers and other intermediaries' authority had already been challenged by the increasing involvement of the government in the countryside. These repeated attacks against their positions as intermediaries opened the space for peasants and subalterns to rebel against their authority.¹⁷⁵ The revolt of Keserwān in 1858 represents these dynamics. Peasants rebelled against tax-farmers by whom they felt cheated.¹⁷⁶ In 1858, Alawi peasants also rose against their Muslim tax-farmers in Hama and killed them.¹⁷⁷

The violence in Mount Lebanon in the summer of 1860 can be seen in the continuity of these earlier rebellions. Indeed, in Mount Lebanon, taxes were collected by tax-collectors¹⁷⁸ chosen from among the local elites. Peasants riddled with debt and facing bad crop production could no longer bear the burden of taxation. They especially resented the privileges of the elite class of tax-collectors who managed to enrich themselves in this time of economic difficulties.¹⁷⁹

In addition, the competition for influence over Mount Lebanon between the French and British consular representatives contributed to these economic tensions. Both consuls attempted to obtain the nomination of their protégé as *kaymakam* by the governor, each promising bribes that they would obtain through raising taxes. Their intervention thus worsened the economic burden on the peasants. The peasantry, faced with this increased

¹⁷⁴ *Ḥadīqāt al Āḥbār*, issue 105, (Beirut), January 5th 1860

¹⁷⁵ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil*, 72.

¹⁷⁶ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil*, 72.

¹⁷⁷ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Alison, May 4th 1858.

¹⁷⁸ Mukataaci.

¹⁷⁹ Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 101.

taxation due to the competition between the two rivals, revolted against their tax-collectors, the Ḥazīn shaykhs.¹⁸⁰

Under the leadership of Ṭānyūs Šāhīn, Maronites peasants managed to oust the Maronite Ḥazīn shaykhs from the region in 1859. Ṭānyūs Šāhīn demanded the end of traditional privileges and the equalization of status between the elite and commoners, which he perceived as the goal of the *Tanzimat* reforms.¹⁸¹ His economic rebellion was accompanied by a sectarian political project aimed at asserting Maronite domination of Mount Lebanon.¹⁸² After ousting the Ḥazīn shaykhs, he then turned against the Druze tax-collectors in areas under the control of the Druze *kaymakam*. The peasantry was armed and supported by the clergy. Thus, the Druze tax-collectors prepared their defence by arming their irregular troops. Skirmishes followed under a tense climate between the two communities in the various regions of Mount Lebanon throughout the spring of 1860. Both sides expected an imminent attack of the other and read too much into each other's actions. Initially, Maronites from Keserwān raided Druze villages, leading to retributions from the part of the Druze. Although Druze suffered the most casualties and were put at difficulty in this battle, they eventually had the upper hand.¹⁸³

The Muslim Šihāb Emirs of Ḥāšbayā and Rāšayā, who had ruled Mount Lebanon and were seen as having favoured Christians over Druze during their rule, were also targeted and lost their lives or escaped to Damascus.¹⁸⁴ The murder of Šihāb emirs, who were part of the Ottoman administrative structure, together with the plunder of villages in the Hauran, shocked the Damascene elite, who feared the violence would now turn against the elites. In Damascus, while many among the general population saw with some degree of satisfaction the Druze attack against the Anti-Lebanon, elites of all religious denominations were worried of the

¹⁸⁰ *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Siri*, vol. 18, p. 22, Giustinio Giusti, June 21st 1860.

¹⁸¹ Maksidi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 97-99.

¹⁸² Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 196.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 110-112, 118-120; *S.C.P.F, (S.C) Siri*, vol. 18, p. 978, Valerga, June 20th 1860.

¹⁸⁴ Salibi, "The 1860 Upheaval," 192.

repercussions in case the Druze, encouraged by plunder, decided to come to Damascus to do the same.¹⁸⁵

Peter Hill places the commoners rebellions of Mount Lebanon which arose as a response to the politico-economic crisis of the mid-19th century into the larger framework of the Euro-Atlantic “age of revolutions” of the late 18th and early 19th centuries which saw popular rebellions oppose the expansion of the military and revenue-extracting power of states.¹⁸⁶ While popular rebellions in the beginning of the 19th century were not characterized by sectarianism,¹⁸⁷ Ussama Makdisi argues that this popular mobilization and rebellion against elites subsequently endorsed a discourse of religious distinction, contributing to the politicization of religious identities.¹⁸⁸

3.3 Mutiny

Rebellions often coincided with military mutinies and at times it was quite difficult to distinguish them.¹⁸⁹ These mutinies tended to occur in certain contexts, including: late pay, corrupt army commanders, long service away from home, tension between high and low ranks, inflation, debasement, artificial shortage of food, wars, or the impression that sultans violated laws of justice. The same factors were determinant of rebellion as well.¹⁹⁰ These elements causing resentment were all present in 1860.

Every eye witness of the violence in Damascus or in Ḥāṣḥbayyā, Raṣayā and Zaḥle mention the inaction of the official army or its involvement in the pillage. Some attribute it to an Ottoman plot to return Mount Lebanon to central rule by creating chaos, others to the venality of certain officers.¹⁹¹ However, one might consider this inaction as a type of mutiny.

¹⁸⁵ al-’Uṣṭwānī, *Mashāhid*, 172.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 11.

¹⁸⁸ Makdisi, “Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate,” 183.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 4.

¹⁹¹ al-’Uṣṭwānī, *Maṣāhid*, 174; al-Bou’i, *Nubḍa Muḥṭaṣara*, 116; Miṣāqā, *Tabrīya al-mathūm*, 252.

A common cause of mutiny among soldiers was dissatisfaction towards the choice of officers under which they had to serve. Some events indicate that they were resentments towards military officers in general in Damascus. In 1857, there were attacks against military officers' houses.¹⁹² A pattern of centralization can be observed in the organization of the armed forces in the countryside where local intermediaries were replaced either by regular army officers or even foreigners.¹⁹³ When irregular troops were put under the leadership of Christian generals or officers, conflict could take place.¹⁹⁴ The recruitment of soldiers in *Bilād al-Šām* to serve for foreign armies created resentment as well.¹⁹⁵

Military officers themselves were also harboring negative feelings towards foreign intervention. An officer called Şakir Paşa is often mentioned as particularly vehement against foreigners, probably because foreign officers were increasingly obtaining positions in the Ottoman army. Şakir Paşa arrived in Damascus in 1856 and was put in charge of the pilgrimage in 1858.¹⁹⁶ In 1859, he was the president of the war council of Damascus.¹⁹⁷ The French consul Lavalette linked Şakir Paşa's hatred towards foreigners with his resentment at the superiority of Christians since the Crimean war and the decree of 1856.¹⁹⁸ The French consul even accused him of having participated in the violence in Damascus in 1860, and deplored that he was not arrested with the other guilty parties. When he indicated to Fuad Paşa that Şakir Paşa should be arrested, he said that he could not do so, probably because of his high position.¹⁹⁹ During the 6th seance of the international commission set up to determine the guilty parties in the aftermath of the violence, the members accused Şakir Paşa of being

¹⁹² BOA, HR.TO.52.109, January 16th 1857.

¹⁹³ For example, Hama and Homs, which had been under the government of the Harfūsh, were now entrusted to a foreign military chief: General Schwarzenberg (Emin Paşa). The French consul argued that this was a difficult position for a Christian. A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, September 7th 1859. Another Hungarian refugee became general in the Army of Arabistan in 1850 although he did not even convert to Islam, A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-French Ambassador in Istanbul, July 25th 1850.

¹⁹⁴ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, April 14th 1856.

¹⁹⁵ al-Ustḡwānī, *Mašāhid*, 169.

¹⁹⁶ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, August 30th 1858.

¹⁹⁷ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Ahmad Paşa, September 15th 1859.

¹⁹⁸ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 31st 1858.

¹⁹⁹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Lavalette, August 22nd 1860.

present near the Christian neighborhood on the first night of attack and of having done nothing to prevent it. However, he was acquitted by the war council.²⁰⁰

The involvement of the soldiers during the violence of 1860 can be understood by looking at the military dynamics in the first part of the 19th century. The composition of the military forces, both official and unofficial is actually quite complex and diverse. Before the *Tanzimat*, the Ottoman government relied on professional Janissaries and to a lesser extent irregular forces led by *āḡāwāt* to maintain order and security. Members of the military establishment were part of the elite of the city of Damascus. They were involved in a myriad of economic activities. They monopolized most of the agricultural lands in the grain producing regions around Damascus and also lent money to villagers. *Āḡāwāt* also acted as patrons for the merchants who accompanied the pilgrimage.²⁰¹

The government had favored the recruitment of outsiders for the provincial Janissaries for fear of conflicting loyalties. Yet, it was not always able to do so and many locals integrated these troops.²⁰² In the 17th century, after the arrival of new Janissaries from Istanbul, two forces composed the Janissaries in Damascus, the ‘locals’ (or *yerliyya*) and the imperial forces referred to as *kapıkul*. The leaders of the *kapıkul* were appointed directly from Istanbul.²⁰³ The distinction between these two groups was not clear cut, and was based more on integration into the city than on ethnicity.²⁰⁴ In the countryside, there were also irregular militias which were composed of autonomous bands from certain regions which were accessed by the government only with difficulty, such as Ġabal Ḥawrān or Ġabal Nablūs or Mount Lebanon. They were composed of ethnic groups such as Druze, Maronites, Bedouins, Turkmen, Kurds, ect. They were autonomous in that they ensured their own security and

²⁰⁰ BOA, IMMS.020.090401, Meeting no. 9, October 26th 1860.

²⁰¹ James A. Reilly, “The End of an Era,” 211.

²⁰² Douwes, *Arming the state*, 113.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 114.

protection, but could also be hired by the provincial government for specific purposes.²⁰⁵ They also had links to the local Janissaries (*yerliyya*). Through the *Tanzimat*, these forces were challenged and the state sought to replace them with an army based on conscription and organized police forces. Ideally, the soldiers were to be recruited and sent to a different province to avoid any prior relationship with local elements.

However, by examining the different events of violence around Damascus throughout the 19th century, it becomes clear that the government did not have the resources to form an adequate military force, with proper salaries and trained into military service, because it was only the beginning of conscription. Then, the revolts against conscription forced the government to compromise and allow soldiers to remain in their province. In some areas, when the government was unable to enforce conscription, it continued to recruit from other irregular troops, albeit temporally. For example, to subdue the Ḥarfūš leaders, rather than using the army, the government called upon Kurdish paramilitary groups under the leadership of Muḥammad Saʿīd āgā Zakarīyyā'.²⁰⁶ The governor often used one irregular troop to subdue another. Because these irregular troops often had an ethnic basis, this strategy caused ethnic conflict afterwards.

Irregular troops, or *başıbozuk*, had multiplied since the Crimean War. The Crimean War was a test for the newly recruited military, it was also a turning point for its organization. It had given irregular soldiers the opportunity to expand their power as they were recruited into the regular troops.²⁰⁷ Irregular soldiers constituted in militias were sent from communities that refused to submit to the laws of conscription and refused the common bond.²⁰⁸ Unlike the regular soldiers, they remained in separate units within the regular

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Basily-Titof, November 27th 1850, Annex to de Ségur- Ministre Plenipotentiaire, January 14th 1851.

²⁰⁷ James Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire : Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878* (Stuttgart : Franz Steiner, 2000), 12.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 247.

army.²⁰⁹ Irregulars were to provide their own horse, weapon, clothes, food and could plunder anyone who was considered an enemy.²¹⁰ The Ottoman officers were often unable to control them.²¹¹ Irregulars thus took advantage of the war to commit plunder, which was in a way their salaries, explaining the massacres and pillages in the Balkans during the Crimean War but also in Damascus.²¹² After the war, when the irregular troops were discharged from the army, they were left with no resources from the government and resorted to continue to plunder the countryside.

During the *Tanzimat*, new institutions were created to centralize the use of force and get rid of these irregular troops. The Janissaries and irregular cavalry troops had previously been used as policemen to ensure order in the city.²¹³ It was especially the role of the irregular *deli* troops, led by a *deli-başı* and paid by the governor. These duties fell under the Ministry of War. These groups saw their positions threatened by the creation of a new police force in 1846. After the abolition of the Janissaries, new police forces were created in the capital. In 1845, a *tezkere* ordered the creation of a police force under the authority of the Tophane-i Amire Muşiri²¹⁴ to ensure security and order in Istanbul. In 1846 a *nizamname* established the Zabtiye Muşiriyeti as an independent directorate in charge of the police forces, the *zabtiye*, in the city and the provinces. The maintaining of order was thus no longer a function of the Ministry of War. In the provinces, the police agents were to be nominated by the provincial *mağlis*, which allowed its members to chose individuals from among their own networks.²¹⁵

In Damascus, the competition to obtain such a position was high. The police forces of the city were first entrusted to the Irish mercenary Eugene O'Reilly, who took the name of

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 156.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 106.

²¹¹ Ibid, 267.

²¹² Ibid, 112.

²¹³ F.O., 195/291, Wood-Canning, June 20th 1849.

²¹⁴ Noémi Lévy-Aksu, *Ordre et désordres dans l'Istanbul ottomane (1879-1909). De l'Etat au quartier* (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 128.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 130.

Ḥassan Bey al Mağar. The fact that the police force which sought to replace the Janissaries was led by a foreigner must have created resentment on the part some of the *āḡāwāt* who already opposed the creation of such a force. However, the successor to O'Reilly was a man of considerable influence among the *yerliyya*: the *āḡā* Muṣṭafā al-Ḥawāṣilī. After being pensioned from the army he was put in charge of the *zabtiye* (police) force in the city.²¹⁶ Muṣṭafā al-Ḥawāṣilī was influential in the Christian neighborhood of Bāb Tūmā where he resided. His estate was considerable, he was involved in a variety of trades, including barley, coffee, livestock, silk and cloth.²¹⁷ Muṣṭafā al-Ḥawāṣilī was indebted towards Christian notables and money lenders of Bāb Tūmā.²¹⁸ He was protected by the British consul Wood who had helped him build his fortune.²¹⁹

The *zabtiye* recruited from among the unemployed irregulars.²²⁰ These forces were used to maintain order during the violence of 1860 but they were afterwards accused of committing crimes.²²¹ Indeed, just before the violence of Damascus in 1860, the governor Ahmed Paşa called irregular troop leaders such as Ṣaliḥ āḡā al-Mahāyinī of the Maydān, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf āḡā, the Kurdish *āḡā* of Ṣālḥiye Muḥammad Sa‘īd Bey and his son Ismā‘īl āḡā Ṣamdīn, together with the chief of the *zabtiye*, Muṣṭafā al-Ḥawāṣilī.²²² They were to gather their irregular troops and the *zabtiye* to ensure the security of the city. These were the police forces that were sent to guard the Christian quarter. Apparently when these forces were sent to guard Bāb Tūmā, the population knew that trouble was coming for they were known for their

²¹⁶ He was the son of Nassif Paşa, a descendant of the ‘Azīm family who had fought against Général Kléber in Egypt. He had been promised the government of Damascus by Cezzar Paşa, who instead betrayed him and arrested him. He eventually escaped to Damascus. Nassif Paşa owned a large house in Hama and received a large pension from the state; Ibid, 326; Josiah Conder, *The modern traveller : a description, geographical, historical, and topographical, of the various countries of the globe*, vol. 2 (London : James Duncan, 1827), 28; Salibi, "The 1860 Upheaval," 189; Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 95.

²¹⁷ Grehan, *Everyday Life*, 77.

²¹⁸ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 142.

²¹⁹ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lavalette, August 16th 1860; Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 92.

²²⁰ Salibi, "The 1860 Upheaval", 189.

²²¹ F.O., 196/601, Mishaqa-Brant, January 27th 1858.

²²² Salibi, "The 1860 Upheaval," 189. Lütfi, *Vak'a-nüvis*, 19.

tendency to plunder.²²³ The British consul Brant wrote that these troops were first sent to Ḥaṣḥbayā and Raṣayā, engaged in plunder and then were assigned to Bāb Tūmā, which he considered to be a mistake for they originated from the city and were embedded in local power struggles. According to the British consul, Ahmed Paşa used these troops because he was scared that they might turn against him and wanted to keep them at bay while relying on his own soldiers for his protection.²²⁴

Şaliḥ āgā al-Mahāyinī was a military chieftain from the Maydān neighborhood. He sat on the *mağlis*. His family was involved in grain trade,²²⁵ and was part of the *āṣrāf*. He had family links with the Naqṣbandī Ḥassan al-Bayṭār.²²⁶ He apparently forbade attacks against the Maydān Christians.²²⁷ However, he was also accused to have encouraged his Kurdish soldiers to commit violence against Christians in Bāb Tūmā. After the violence he was hung on order of Fuad Paşa.²²⁸ The fact that the same individual prevented aggression against the less fortunate Christian of the Maydān while encouraging violence against their wealthy coreligionists of Bāb Tūmā points to the class aspect within this dynamic of inter-confessional violence.

The Kurdish āgā from Şālḥiye, Muḥammad Saʿīd āgā Şamdīn was in charge of irregular troops in the Ḥawrān in 1858.²²⁹ In his memoirs, Mikhāʿīl Mishāqa accuses the Kurds to have killed hundreds of Christians. He particularly accused his son Ismāʿīl āgā Şamdīn and Farḥāt āgā.²³⁰ Muḥammad Saʿīd āgā Şamdīn had had issues with Mikhāʿīl Mishāqa, the British dragoman, because of a repayment of debts that Şamdīn tried to avoid.

²²³ F.O., 195/601, Mishaqa-Brant, January 27th 1858.

²²⁴ F.O., 78/1520, Brant-Bulwer, August 30th 1860.

²²⁵ Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 208.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Abkāriyūs, *Kitāb Nawādir*, 256.

²²⁸ al-Uṣṭwānī, *Maṣāhid*, 185.

²²⁹ F.O., 195/601, Mishaqa-Brant, January 27th 1858.

²³⁰ Miṣāqā, *Maṣhad*, 178.

The issue involving the British consul dragged for years.²³¹ The fact that these various *āḡāwāt* were indebted to Christians might have had a role to play in the outcome of plunder.

The Kurds from Şālḥiye indeed feature as main actors in the various accounts of the violence. In the beginning of June, a month before the massacres of Damascus, the irregular troops of Şālḥiye had joined the Ḥawrāni Druze in the attack against Christian villages in Mount Lebanon.²³² Then, the first days of the attack of Damascus from the 9th to the 12th of July 1860 consisted mostly of plunder but little loss of life. The situation got worse however on the 3rd day of the violence, when the Kurdish inhabitants of Şālḥiye came down from their neighbourhood to the city. From that point onwards, the violence reached unprecedented levels.²³³ Five hundred Kurds from Şālḥiye came to the city center because they were told that the house of the *‘alim* ‘Abdallah Ḥalabī had been attacked by Christians.²³⁴ They were apparently led by Ismā‘īl āḡā Şamdīn.²³⁵ According to the chronicler of *Kitāb al-Āḥzān*, al-Ḥalabī had rather called his students from Şālḥiye claiming that the Omayyad mosque had been put on fire by Christians. According to the chronicler, he did so to foster violence towards Christians.²³⁶

It was also on this day that an incident took place. Some Christians builders were employed in a house. Firemen came to the house to put off the fire, but the employees thought they were plunderers and killed them. At that point, the violence morphed into murders.²³⁷ The British consul mentioned that everyone was scared of the violence, Muslims also worried that Druze would kill those who had protected Christians.²³⁸

In the aftermath of the violence of 1860, Fuad Paşa came to Damascus to reestablish order and punish the guilty parties. He arrested many members of the *zabtiye* and their

²³¹ F.O., 195/601, Mishaqa-Brant, January 27th 1858.

²³² A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Lanusse-Lavalette, June 6th 1860.

²³³ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Lavalette, August 22nd 1860.

²³⁴ Mişāqā, *Mašhad*, 177.; al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 175.

²³⁵ al-Uṣṭwānī, *Mašāhid*, 185.

²³⁶ *Kitāb al-āḥzān*, 37-38.

²³⁷ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, July 11th 1860.

²³⁸ Ibid.

aforementioned leaders. One of the first measures adopted by Fuad Paşa during his rule of Syria under martial law was the creation and financing of a Syrian police directly under his orders.²³⁹ He thus identified that the mode of recruitment of the *zabtiye* was problematic. The leader of the *zabtiye*, Muşafā al-Ḥawāşilī²⁴⁰ was arrested together with his brother ‘Alī Bey, his nephew and Ḥassan Bey. His *zabtiye* troops were either executed or sent to the army.²⁴¹

One might wonder why irregular troops had been used to maintain order, given the attacks against their chieftains through the mid-19th century? Horshid Paşa, the governor of Beirut, had also recruited *başibozuk* from Akkar (Tripoli) to function as police in Beirut.²⁴² The governor Ahmed Paşa had to resort to the recruitment of irregular troops because 3/4th of the army of Arabistan had been sent away to help the war effort in the Balkans.²⁴³ The author of *Aḥwāl al-Naşārā* mentioned that when the conflict took place in Mount Lebanon and Christians asked for the help of the government, the troops had already been sent away.²⁴⁴

That the attack of 1860 took place after the departure of the troops to the Balkans is not a coincidence. Why did the two governors, both of Beirut and Damascus fail to act strongly as they had done with conscription? Ahmed Paşa had been quite active in his combined role of *muşir*²⁴⁵/governor in January. However, a new civil governor arrived in March 1859 and thus Ahmed Paşa was demoted of his civil functions, to the great regret of the French consul. After that he was not able to continue on the same path.²⁴⁶ In addition, it turns out that Ahmed Paşa was also deposed from his position of *muşir*. A document found in the Ottoman archives brings some light to this issue. It is a letter by the Grand Vizier to the sultan demanding the replacement of Ahmed Paşa as *muşir* of the army of Arabistan with

²³⁹ Leila Hudson, *Transforming Damascus : space and modernity in an Islamic city, Library of Middle East history* (London ; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), 19.

²⁴⁰ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 142.

²⁴¹ Salibi, *The 1860 Upheaval*, 189.

²⁴² *Les massacres du Mont Liban*, 23

²⁴³ *Aḥwāl al-naşārā*, 22; *Les massacres du Mont Liban*, 18.

²⁴⁴ *Aḥwāl al-naşārā*, 32

²⁴⁵ Military leader of the army.

²⁴⁶ A.E., 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 5, Outrey-Lallemand, March 23rd 1859.

Abdülhamid Paşa, because of concerns about Mount Lebanon. Ahmed Paşa was to be given the title of *muşir* of the army of Anatolia, replacing Abdülkerim Paşa who was to leave for retirement. New battalions were to be sent to the new *muşir* of Arabistan.²⁴⁷ Before this official order which arrived one day before the violence, a letter containing the same information had arrived on June 20th.²⁴⁸ Ahmed Paşa was actually the one who had asked to resign because of the dismissal of his troops. The authorization had been given to him in the beginning of June, but he was to stay put until the appointment of a new governor and a new *muşir*.²⁴⁹ An eye-witness account of the violence ensured that the governor of Damascus Ahmed Paşa and the governor of Beirut Hurşit Paşa wrote to Istanbul about the lack of security of the region but that Istanbul failed to answer.²⁵⁰ The Ottoman government had the habit of concentrating its army alternatively on certain regions, leaving a void behind. This situation explains his inaction in the face of violence.

The rest of the army which had not been sent away to the Balkans had not been paid since twenty-four months and was suffering from lack of food.²⁵¹ The newly recruited soldiers which completed the army forces were also natives to the region and had been stationed close to home for their first year. Their participation in the plunder might thus be understood as a way to recover their salaries. When soldiers were not paid by the state, they usually ransacked the population.²⁵² The French commissaries to the commission set up after the violence rightfully remarked that the violence only took place in cities or villages where army garrisons were present.²⁵³ Then, the rebellion versus taxation on the part of the Christian population fostered resentment from soldiers. Indeed, the *bedel-i askeri* had been

²⁴⁷ BOA, A.AMD.92.72, July 8th 1860.

²⁴⁸ F.O., 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, June 20th 1860.

²⁴⁹ BOA, A.MKT.409.14, July 5th 1860; Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 145.

²⁵⁰ *Les massacres du Mont Liban*, 18.

²⁵¹ A.E., 18/PO/A, vol. 10, Outrey-Thouvenel, November 16th 1859; Sinan Kuneralp, *Ottoman diplomatic documents on "the Eastern question"* (Istanbul : Isis Press, 2009), 22.

²⁵² James Silk Buckingham, *Travels among the Arab Tribes Inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine* (London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 379; Alain Blondy, *Chrétiens et Ottomans de Malte et d'ailleurs* (Paris: Editions PUPS, Paris Sorbonne, 2013), 783.

²⁵³ BOA, I.MMS.020.0904, Meeting no. 1, October 9th 1860.

attributed in the provincial budget for the payment of the soldiers. In 1857, a letter was sent by the Damascene *mağlis* to the central government. It highlighted the fact that because Christians did not pay the *bedel*, soldiers could not receive their salaries.²⁵⁴ A direct link was thus made between the lack of payment by Christians and the late salaries of soldiers, which explains in part their role in the violence of 1860.

The central government worried about the role of the army in the violence as we can see in a letter sent to the governor of Erzurum and the *muşir* of the Army of Anatolia just after the violence of 1860 to inform them that secret agents would be sent to Erzurum in order to prevent the occurrence of events resembling what took place in Damascus.²⁵⁵ Why was Erzurum, miles away from Damascus, at risk of seeing the same violence than in Damascus? It had a large Armenian population, but most importantly it was often the headquarters of the Army of Doğu Anatolia (4th)²⁵⁶, just as Damascus was the camp for the Army of Arabia.²⁵⁷ Similar orders were sent to the sub-governor of Adana, asking to increase the number of *zabtiye* to avoid a similar situation as in Damascus.²⁵⁸ The presence of the headquarters of the army in these cities was thus seen by the central state as one of the underlying causes of the violence, mostly because of the poor state of the military and the lack of payment of soldiers, which put them at risk of mutiny.

In conclusion, the introduction of universal taxation and conscription challenged existing hierarchies and caused rebellion in various regions of the Ottoman Empire. The tax reforms were vehemently opposed by the population. While the issue at stake was the taxation of the elite, notables managed to escape it through the newly created institutions of the *Tanzimat* or through foreign protection, leaving the burden of the tax to fall upon the less

²⁵⁴ BOA, I.MMS.11.437, September 26th 1857.

²⁵⁵ A.MKT.UM.424.16, September 1st 1860.

²⁵⁶ Although officially it was supposed to be quartered in the nearby town of Erzincan.

²⁵⁷ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 283.

²⁵⁸ A.MKT.MHM.194.4, September 5th 1860; A.MKT.UM.428.52, October 24th 1860.

wealthy. However, this class dimension was soon turned into an inter-confessional conflict through the discourses and strategies of Christian and Muslim elites. Then, the centralization of military power in the hands of governors threatened the livelihood of *āḡāwāt* who had operated semi-autonomously in the countryside and built patron-client relationship with villages. The revolt of 1850 which spanned across *Bilād al-Šām* contested these transformations of state-society relations. During these times of political upheaval, Christians increasingly sought to rely on foreign consuls or the governor for protection, which proved ineffective in times of violence. The strong attacks of Ahmed Paşa against *āḡāwāt* and semi-autonomous groups contrasted with the lenience he displayed towards Christians who rebelled against the payment of the *bedel-i askeri*. This double-standard exacerbated resentments towards both the governor and Christians who were perceived as the new elite which could rebel without consequences. Then, the association made between the lack of payment of the *bedel-i askeri* and the late payment of the soldiers explains the participation of soldiers in the violence.