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

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PROPOSITIONS

1. The way the various Damascene Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities were imagined and constructed in relation to socio-political changes affected inter-confessional relations in the city.
2. The long term dynamic of the construction of confessional cultures in the Ottoman Empire since the 17th century was intensified in the 19th century through the *Tanzimat* reforms and foreign intervention, leading to the confessionalization of Ottoman society and ultimately to inter-confessional strife. The analysis of the decades preceding the violence of 1860 that targeted some Damascene Christians reveals an increasing politicization of religious identifications.
3. Damascene Christians and Jews were not passive actors of the *Tanzimat* reform period but rather employed their agency to shape the local society in this period of social, economic and political transformations. They used their patron-client relationships with governors, local power-holders and foreign representatives as tools of power within their own community institutions or in the wider Damascene political sphere.
4. As the rise of the modern state changed the rules of access to resources, elite politics were replaced by popular mobilization. In this context, sectarian discourses were used by Damascenes of all religious groups as tools in the struggle for access to economic and political resources.
5. The two different traditions of religious history and social history, which differ in approaches and types of sources, can be bridged to address the interaction between socioeconomic transformations and religious dynamics.

6. Cross-cutting forms of belonging tend to weaken the political relevance of religious communities, ensuring some level of inter-confessional coexistence.
7. Inter-confessional relations can be deconstructed by looking at the internal divisions of religious communities which question the perception of communities as entities.
8. Cross-reading of various types of sources on a specific context allows for a micro-historical approach which highlights the agency of individuals in shaping the local structural transformations.
9. Admission of our limitations is an important step in the pursuit of academic knowledge.
10. Working in the historical archives is a transformative experience for a historian. One always finds more than what one was looking for. Yet, the importance of archives is not enough emphasized in our training.