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CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS AND RELIGIOUS  
COMMUNITIES IN OTTOMAN SYRIA  
(XVI-XIX CENTURIES)

1. Introduction. 2. Structure and functions of the craft organizations: an overview.  
3. The religious communities and their work ethics. 4. The impact of industrial Europe on the relations of the communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of geographical Syria (known to the early Arabs as *Bilād al-Shām*), which extended between the Taurus Mountains in the north and the Arabian desert in the south, the Mediterranean in the west and the Euphrates in the east, witnessed cultural continuity throughout the ages. The Muslim Arabs who conquered Syria from the Byzantines in the 630s and liberated their fellow Arab eastern Christians from Byzantine persecution were easily accommodated in the local culture of which they were an integral part. Under the rule of the Muslim Arabs, the Christians and Jews of Syria, who shared with their new rulers a common cultural base and who ultimately made major contributions to Arab-Islamic culture, preserved their existence and enjoyed protection and tolerance for a special poll tax (*jizya*) and a land tax (*kharāj*). The continued payment of especially the poll tax was considered as financially beneficial to the Muslims. In the opinion of several Arab Muslim jurists it entitled the *dhimmīs* (non-Muslims), like the Muslims, to go to Paradise (*al-Janna*). The famous *ṣūfī* and *ʿālim* Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī (1641-1731) ridiculed a Rūmī

(Turkish) 'ālim who opposed this view. Nābulṣī maintained that by paying the *jiḏya* the *dhimmīs* aided the Muslims and made them happy which qualifies them to go to Paradise where all become Muslims according to the rules of the hereafter (*fa-yadkhulūn al-janna bihā ma' al-Muslimīn wahum Muslimūn ḥina'idhin fī aḥkām al-ākḥira dūna aḥkām al-dunyā*)<sup>(1)</sup>. Given this tolerance it is no wonder that under Arab Islam «The numerical predominance of the Christians [in Syria] appears to have continued in the towns and the rural countryside (in the latter case mainly among the manorial-type *fallāḥīn*, but also among some 'ashā'ir) for several centuries»<sup>(2)</sup>. Conversion to Islam of Syria's non-Muslim population accelerated under the rule of non-Arab Muslims, who themselves were new converts to Islam, such as the Mamluks who were recruited as heathens from the steppes of Russia, converted to Islam, and then governed Egypt and Syria from 1260 to 1517. However, despite the intolerance of mainly alien rulers, the local population of Syria composed of Muslims, Christians, and Jews had shown a large measure of tolerance towards each other, maintained traditional coexistence among them, and together made lasting achievements to Arab and world civilizations.

Under Ottoman rule (1516-1918), whose main concern was to institutionalize society and the economy, the religious communities in Syria maintained their traditional cooperation from within the new institutions. This cooperation was most evident in the craft organizations which cut across religious barriers. Earlier under Arab Islamic rule, there were crafts and craftsmen but no craft organizations. Jurisconsults (*mufīīs*) then issued rulings regulating the affairs of the crafts and the artisans, and the market-inspector (*muḥtasib*) enforced uniform prices and checked weights and measures in addition to the quality of production.

(1) 'ABD AL-GHANĪ AL-NĀBULSĪ, *Hadhā kitāb al-qawl al-sadīd fī jawāz khulḥ al-wā'id wa l-radd 'alā al-Rūmī al-jāhil al-'anīd*, Ms. Berlin National Library, Mq. 1581, fol. 35b, cf. fols. 35a-36a.

(2) K.S. SALIBI, *Syria under Islam. Empire on trial, 634-1097*, Delmar, N.Y. 1977, 27.

## 2. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CRAFT ORGANIZATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

The craft organization was referred to in the court records of Ottoman Syria by the Arabic term *ṭā'ifa* which means a group of persons bound together by profession. The term was also used for religious and ethnic groups. The English equivalent to this term is 'guild' which was used in medieval Europe for craft organization. The major difference between the two institutions is that the guild in Europe was established by the government by virtue of a patent whereas the *ṭā'ifa* was an autonomous body. For lack of a better term, the word *ṭā'ifa* is used here as the equivalent of guild.

According to the extant court records, the *ṭā'ifas* made their appearance in Syria in the second half of the 16th century. In the course of the two succeeding centuries, the *ṭā'ifas* became fully established as economic and social institutions. The main features of the *ṭā'ifas* which are of relevance to this study will be discussed here <sup>(3)</sup>.

Members of the same craft organized themselves into a *ṭā'ifa*, elected their own *shaykh* (head), usually from among their ranks, and notified the *qādī* (Muslim judge) of their nominee. The *qādī* accordingly endorsed the *shaykh* and legalized his election. The same procedure was followed in the deposition of the *shaykh*. The *ṭā'ifa* can dissolve itself, and merge with, or separate from, another *ṭā'ifa* according to the interests of its members. Representatives from the *ṭā'ifa*, acting as a delegation usually chosen from among the elderly and high-ranking members, irrespective of their religious affiliation, as a rule notified

(3) For a detailed study of the *ṭā'ifas* in Ottoman Syria, see my article: «Mazāhir min al-tanzīm al-hirfī fī Bilād al-Shām fī l-'ahd al-'uthmānī», *Dirāsāt Ta'rikhiyya*, no. 4 (April, 1981), 30-62, reprinted in my *Buhūth fī l-tā'rikh al-iqtisādī wal-ijtimā'ī fī Bilād al-Shām fī l-'asr al-hadīth*, Damascus 1985, 160-192; see also my: «Lineamenti dell'organizzazione professionale nell'area Siro-Palestinese in epoca Ottomana», (trad. dall'arabo di A. Arioli), *Il Veltro. Rivista della Civiltà Italiana*, 3-3 Anno 28 (1984), 365-382.

the *qāḍī* of the decisions taken by the majority of the members of the *ṭāʿifa* in matters concerning their organization, the pricing of their commodities, and the disputes within their ranks or with other *ṭāʿifas*.

Government intervention in the affairs of the *ṭāʿifas*, with certain exceptions, was by and large insignificant. This explains the diminishing role of the *muḥtasib* in the affairs of the market especially during the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when the economic power of the *ṭāʿifa* was fully established. On occasions, however, the Sultan intervened on behalf of a favored candidate for the office of *shaykh* of a *ṭāʿifa* much to the displeasure of its members. In at least two *ṭāʿifas*, the *qaṣṣābīn* (butchers) and the *mīmāriyya* (builders), the government maintained certain control through the appointment of a *bāsh* (head), hence *qaṣṣāb bāshī* and *mīmār bāshī*. Both *ṭāʿifas* were of great importance to the government and the public: the *qaṣṣābīn* provided the household of the governor, the army, and the public with meat, and the *mīmāriyya* looked after the safety of the public and the private buildings. Thus the *qaṣṣāb bāshī*, who figures alongside the *shaykh al-qaṣṣābīn*, regulated the distribution of meat and supervised its prices. The *mīmāriyya*, on the other hand, did not have a *shaykh*, but only a *mīmār bāshī*, which means that they were under the full control of the government. The majority of the *mīmāriyya* were Christians whether in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, or even Egypt <sup>(4)</sup>. The *mīmār bāshī* was usually a Muslim official and not necessarily an expert builder. In Damascus, in 1844, for instance, a Damascene Christian expert builder, Mu'allim Ibrāhīm Barbāra, was named by the authorities as assistant to Mīmār Bāshī al-Ḥājj Ismā'il Riḍā Jāwīsh which suggests that the latter lacked expertise in this profession <sup>(5)</sup>.

(4) A. RAYMOND, *Artisans et Commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe Siècle*, 2 tomes, Damas 1973, 1974, II, 457.

(5) Law-court Records (LCR), Damascus 384, 10-11, case dated 7 *Dhu l-Hijja* 1260/(18 December 1844).

The *shaykh* of the *ṭāʾifa* was not necessarily the best expert in the profession. Good character, piety, and acceptance by the majority of the members were the necessary requisites for his election. In some *ṭāʾifas* spread over the city, such as that of the butchers, the butchers of a certain quarter had their local or divisional head referred to as *shaykh*, who was answerable to the *shaykh* of the whole *ṭāʾifa*. Also, in certain *ṭāʾifas* of mixed religious membership, such as the weavers (*ḥiyyāk*) of Aleppo, who were composed of Muslims and Christians, the Christian weavers in four quarters of the city had a separate Christian *yīḡit bāshī*, Ilyās *walad* Naṣīr al-Naṣrānī, appointed over them at the request of the members of the *ṭāʾifa* as a whole including its *shaykh*. The appointment was endorsed by the *qādī* in the court <sup>(6)</sup>.

The *shaykh* looked after the interests of the *ṭāʾifa*, regulated the affairs of its members, and collected taxes collectively imposed on the *ṭāʾifa*. He was aided by a number of officers, such as the *naqīb*, the *ketkhudā*, and the *yīḡit bāshī*. These officers were either appointed by the *shaykh* or more often elected by the members of the *ṭāʾifa* and endorsed by the *qādī*. Another officer, the *muqaddam*, was occasionally mentioned as head of several *ṭāʾifas* of related professions, each of which had its own *shaykh*. In this capacity the *muqaddam* resembles the *shaykh al-mashāyikh* (head of the *ṭāʾifas*' heads) whose authority seems to have been of a *ṣūfī* religious nature because he usually officiated at the ceremonies marking the promotion of a craftsman to a higher professional rank <sup>(7)</sup>. On one occasion, in 1845, the *shaykh al-mashāyikh* in Damascus was entrusted by the Higher Consultative Council in Damascus to bring about a reconciliation between the feuding masters and journeymen within the *ṭāʾifa* of *mulqiyya* (who prepare the tissues for weaving) <sup>(8)</sup>. In

(6) LCR, Aleppo 27, 410, 17 *Muḥarram* 1073/(1 September 1661).

(7) ILYĀS ʿABDUH BEK QUDSĪ, «Nubdha taʾrikhiyya fī l-ḥiraf al-dimashqiyya» C. Landberg, *Actes du VIe Congrès des Orientalistes*, t. 2, Leide 1885, 15-30.

(8) LCR, *Majlis al-Wilāya*, Damascus, no. 5, 373, 10 *Shābān* 1261/(10 August 1845).

assessing the taxes due from the members of his *ṭā'ifa*, the *shaykh* was aided by the *mu'arrif* (identifier). The problem with these administrators who aided the *shaykh* in one capacity or another is that their titles and functions had changed according to time and place, which makes it difficult to know to what extent the same administrators carried the same titles over a period of time in the same city and to what extent the same title-bearer had the same functions in other places.

The professional ranks within the *ṭā'ifa* are more uniform and stable and are similar to their European counterparts. There were, from the bottom up, the rank of *ajīr* or *mubtada'ī* (apprentice), the rank of *ṣānī* (journeyman), and the rank of *mu'allim* or *ustādh* (a Persian word abbreviated into *ustah*) which means master. The age limit for beginners, the period required for promotion within the ranks, the number of persons occupying each rank, and consequently the total membership of the *ṭā'ifa* are not easy to determine with any precision.

The *ṭā'ifas* adhered to the basic economic principle of the division of labor. As such the *ṭā'ifas* were involved in three major activities: production, services, and marketing. The workshop was the core of economic activity. Only the masters were entitled to run workshops. They had to buy or rent the equipment (known in Turkish as *gedik* and in Arabic as *kadak*) which was necessary for them to practice the profession. They also had to acquire the right to use the premises (known in Arabic as *khilū*, that is "evacuation money" or, roughly, key money) for a certain price. The price of both the *gedik* and the *khilū* varied according to the type of the craft, the size and location of the shop, and the market value of the commodities retailed or manufactured in the shop <sup>(9)</sup>.

Monopoly by craftsmen over the production or marketing of a certain commodity for the purpose of accumulating profit was

(9) A. RAFAQ, «The impact of Europe on a traditional economy: the case of Damascus, 1840-1870», *Économie et sociétés dans l'empire Ottoman (fin du XVIIIe-début du XXe siècle)*, eds. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont et Paul Dumont, CNRS, Paris 1983, 419-432.

prohibited by the regulations and practices governing the *ṭā'ifas* as well as by Islamic law. This prohibition insured fair prices for the consumers and a balanced income for the craftsmen engaged in the same profession.

With the consolidation of the role of the *ṭā'ifas* in the local economy of Ottoman Syria in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, certain *ṭā'ifas* of related professions, such as the makers of swords, knives, bows, and shields, or cooks, roasters, and pie-makers, merged, gave up their individual *shaykhs*, and had one *shaykh* in common to look after their interests. The move was intended to reduce competition and insure a better income. Other more influential *ṭā'ifas* to compensate for the rigidity of craft regulations upheld by the *qādī* which restricted the expansion of their business by adhering to the practices of the past, entered into a *yamak* (dependency) relationship with other related *ṭā'ifas*. Through this relationship, a major *ṭā'ifa* attached to it another *ṭā'ifa* for the purpose of making the dependent *ṭā'ifa* retail its by-products or rework them into marketable commodities. Another more important aim was to make the dependent *ṭā'ifa* share in the payment of taxes of the major *ṭā'ifa*. Thus, the *ṭā'ifa* of *masālkhīyya* (slaughterers) was *yamak* to the *ṭā'ifa* of *qaṣṣābīn* (butchers) in Damascus in 1690 <sup>(10)</sup>, the *ṭā'ifa* of *'iriqjiyya* (cap makers) was *yamak* to the *ṭā'ifa* of *khayyātīn* (tailors) in Damascus long before 1730 <sup>(11)</sup>, the *ṭā'ifa* of *būzjiyya* (ice makers) was *yamak* to the *ṭā'ifa* of *aqsamāwiyya* (ice cream makers) in Aleppo, again long before 1636 <sup>(12)</sup>, and the *ṭā'ifa* of *Tūtūnjiyya* (tobacco dealers) was usually *yamak* to the *ṭā'ifa* of *qahwiyya* (coffee-house owners). In certain cases, *yamak* relationship entailed the merging of the office of *shaykh* in both *ṭā'ifas*. In Aleppo in 1652, for instance, the *qādī* confirmed the *shaykh* of the *ṭā'ifa* of tailors as *shaykh* at the same time over the *ṭā'ifa* of cap makers at the request of members from both

(10) LCR, Damascus 21, 285, 15 *Jumādā* II 1101/(24 February 1690).

(11) LCR, Damascus 45, 58, 28 *Shābān* 1132/(5 July 1720).

(12) LCR, Aleppo 15, 805, 26 *Dhu l-Hijja* 1045/(1 June 1636).

*ṭāʿifas* <sup>(13)</sup>. The major *ṭāʿifas*, by attaching to them smaller, related *ṭāʿifas* were in fact aiming at diversifying their investment and consolidating further their economic power. Such economic practices attest to the growth of a local economy of dependency and to the development of capitalist approaches of sorts within the traditional economy.

The *ṭāʿifas* as such had played major economic and fiscal roles. Of more importance, however, is the social role they played. They exhibited a high level of religious tolerance among their members through a system of work ethics. Muslim and non-Muslim members within the same *ṭāʿifa* worked side by side, recognized the expertise of each other, and jointly represented the *ṭāʿifa* in official business on the sole basis of merit.

### 3. THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND THEIR WORK ETHICS

The *ṭāʿifas* mirrored, in their own way, the social and the religious structure of society. On the basis of traditional expertise and specialization among the religious communities, certain *ṭāʿifas* were restricted to the members of one religious community or another. Other *ṭāʿifas* were open to the members of more than one religious community. The structure of the *ṭāʿifas* along these lines largely explains, indeed reflects, the smooth relationship which existed in practice in everyday life among the various communities. European mercantilism at the time, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, accommodated itself in its commercial dealings with the traditional economy and society of Ottoman Syria. This balanced and stable relationship explains why in the period between the Ottoman occupation of Syria in 1516 and the occurrence of the first socio-economic and religious riots in Aleppo in 1850 and in Damascus in 1860, no such riots of similar character and magnitude had taken place in Syria. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Syria's economy and society were under the impact of capitalist Europe.

(13) LCR, Aleppo 24, 125, 6 *Rabīʿ* II 1052/(4 July 1652).



It is difficult to survey in detail, for any length of time, the religious structure of the *ṭā'ifas* except in the cases where it is traditionally known that certain communities specialized in and monopolized certain crafts. Other crafts were shared by one or more religious communities. It is likely that in the course of time the ranks of a certain *ṭā'ifa* which were originally restricted to one religious community had been open to other religious communities, thus bringing about a mixed membership of the same *ṭā'ifa*. The reverse could also be true. Also, certain *ṭā'ifas* tended to die away because of the diminishing demand for their products due to the change in certain fashions as in the case of makers of headgear. On the other hand, new *ṭā'ifas* were established because of the growing need for their products as in the case of the *ṭā'ifa* of the *muḥammisī al-bunn* (coffee-roasters) which emerged after the religious ban on coffee-drinking was finally lifted in Syria in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century <sup>(14)</sup>. Likewise, the *ṭā'ifas* dealing with tobacco started to flourish after tobacco-smoking was legalized by the Muslim jurisconsults in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century <sup>(15)</sup>. The religious communities either profited or suffered from such changes depending on their investment in the affected *ṭā'ifas*.

The non-Muslim members in the *ṭā'ifas* can be easily distinguished by the titles given to them in the court records, such as *al-dhimmī* (a non-Muslim enjoying protection of Muslims), *al-Nasrānī* (Christian), and *al-Yahūdī* (Jew). A non-Muslim can

(14) N. al-GHAZZĪ, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi-āyān al-mī'a al-'āshira*, 3 vols., ed. Jibrā'īl Jabbūr, Beirut 1945-1959, v, 133-134, II, 39, 198, III, 22, 36, 205; AL-MUḤIBBĪ, *Khulāṣa al-athar fī āyān al-mī'a al-'āshira*, 3 vols., ed. Jibrā'īl Jabbūr, Beirut 1945-1959, V, 133-134, II, 39, 198, III, 22, 36, 205; M. AL-MUḤIBBĪ, *Khulāṣa al-athar fī āyān al-qarn al-hādī 'ashar*, 4 vols., Cairo, 1284/(1869), I, 166, 302, 420.

(15) The legalization of tobacco smoking took place in several places in the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Syria, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulṣī issued his famous *fatwā*-treatise legalizing smoking at that time. It is entitled: *al-Ṣulḥ bayna al-ikhwān fī ḥukm ibāḥa al-dukḥkhān*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahmān, al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, Damascus 1343/(1924).

also be identified by the term *walad* (son of) whereas the term *ibn* (son of) was used for a Muslim. The same terms were used in Ottoman Turkish court documents <sup>(16)</sup> which suggests that they were of Ottoman usage because in the earlier Arab-Islamic literature the word *ibn* was used for all people.

According to Redhouse's *Turkish and English Lexicon*, the Arabic meaning of the term *veled* is child, the Turkish meaning is mischievous, impudent, audacious <sup>(17)</sup>. Likewise, the Ottoman court records referred to a deceased non-Muslim by the term *al-hālik* (perishing, especially dead in unbelief, according to Redhouse) <sup>(18)</sup>. The deceased Muslim was referred to as *marhūm* (admitted to God's mercy) <sup>(19)</sup>. Both terms *walad* and *hālik* were dropped in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottomans introduced the *Tanzīmāt* reforms and advocated equality among the religious communities. Proper names also reveal the religious identity of a person, but this is not always the case, as Christians and Jews used typical Muslim names such as 'Abd al-'Azīz and Khalīfa.

The Muslim members of the *ṭā'ifas* were not classified according to their *madhhab* (school of law) or their sect. Thus a Shī'ī craftsman was not distinguished from a Sunnī craftsman. In the countryside Muslim sects are easily recognizable because they tend to live together as a compact unit, often in defensible mountainous regions where they sought refuge. In the urban centers where Sunnites predominate there is no way of distinguishing a Sunnite from a Shiite in the court records. They can be distinguished, however, in their places of residence. But in the *ṭā'ifas*, it is likely that the Shiites specialized in certain professions and inherited them through their families, much like the other Muslims and non-Muslims. But there is no way of di-

(16) R. JENNINGS, «Women in early 17th century Ottoman Judicial Records – the Sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri», *JESHO* 18 (1975), 53.

(17) SIR JAMES W. REDHOUSE, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, Constantinople, 1890, 2148.

(18) *Ibid.*, 2155.

(19) *Ibid.*, 1807.

stinguishing them from fellow Sunnī Muslims in the same way as Muslims at large are distinguished from non-Muslims. Thus Shiism in Ottoman Syria was more a historical rural phenomenon than it was an urban one.

One way of ascertaining the mixed religious membership in the *tā'ifas* is by surveying in the court records the professional titles of the various craftsmen. Samples selected at random from the Damascus court records of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example, indicate the following crafts which were practiced by both Muslims and Christians: tailors (*khayyāṭīn*), spinners (*fattāla*), weavers (*ḥiyyāk*), repairers of firearms (*bunduqjīyya*), and weavers of crêpe (*kreishātīyya*). Examples of crafts in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews worked are those of dyers (*ṣabbāghīn*) and blacksmiths (*ḥaddādīn*). Goldsmiths (*ṣiyyāgh*), engravers (*naqqāshīn*), and soap makers (*maṣābniyya* or *ṣabbāna*) included only Christian and Jewish members. Muslims later on figured among the soap makers. Druggists (*aṭṭārīn*) and butchers (*qaṣṣābīn* or *lahḥāmīn*) were exclusively Muslims and Jews because of the monopoly of drugs by both communities and their keenness on slaughtering according to their religious law. The crafts in which Christians predominated are those of surgeons (*jarrāḥīn*), medical doctors (*aṭibbā'*), veterinarians (*bayāṭira*), coppersmiths (*naḥḥāsīn*), inspectors of dyed silk (*mzaykīn* or *mzaykiyya*), regulators of running water (*shāwiyya*), nail makers (*masāmīriyya*), and stone cutters (*ḥajjārīn*). Crafts restricted to the Jews are those of smelters of silver and gold (*murawbiṣīn*), sellers of poultry (*bayyā'īn al-jāj*), and cloth washers (*ghassālīn al-qimāsh*).

Using the professional title which is attached to a person's name as indicating the craft which he practiced, we find that the Christians in Damascus also practiced the following crafts: cap maker (*tawāqī*), maker of horse-cloth placed under the saddle (*dakdakjī*), maker of knives (*sakākīnī*), sculptor (*naḥḥāt*), seller of oil (*zayyāt*), baker (*khabbāz*), collector of garbage for fertilizing gardens, or collector of animals refuse for heating the water of public baths (*zabbāl*), seller of broadcloth (*khawwām*), maker of cakes (*ka'ikātī*), maker of a brand of headgear (*'iriqjī*),

and provider of ash from public baths used as cement in building (*qiṣirmillī*). Among top trusted merchants (*mafākhīr al-tujjār al-mu'tamanīn*) in two key markets in Damascus, Sūq Jaqmaq and Sūq al-Silāḥ, figures the name of Jubrān walad 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Naṣrānī <sup>(20)</sup>.

The Jews in Damascus also practiced the following crafts: grinders of madder (*tahhānī al-fuwwa*), silk weavers (*harīriyya*), and sellers of woolens (*jūkhiyya*). According to Qāsimī, Jews in Damascus specialized in selling woolens with solid colors; Christians sold patterned woolens <sup>(21)</sup>.

While the above crafts do not cover all the crafts in which Christians and Jews participated, the fact remains that most of the *ṭā'ifas* were composed of Muslims who constituted the majority among the population. Also, despite the predominance of Christians and Jews in a number of *ṭā'ifas* in Damascus, the heads of most of these *ṭā'ifas*, including the goldsmiths who were solidly Christians and Jews, were mostly Muslims.

In the Aleppo court records from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the following *ṭā'ifas* included Muslims and Christians: bleachers (*qaṣṣārīn*), dyers of red (*ṣabbāghī al-aḥmar*), tailors, weavers, sellers of cloaks and shawls (*bā'ī al-'ibī wa al-shalāt*), furriers (*farrāyīn*), blacksmiths, nail makers, manufacturers and sellers of satin (*bā'ī al-atlas wa-al-atlāsjiyya*), bakers of loaf bread and *barmaq* (?) (*khabbāzī al-ṣamūn wa-al-barmaq*), and makers and sellers of saddles (*barād'iyya and samarjiyya*). Muslims, Christians, and Jews shared in the membership of the *ṭā'ifas* of silk spinners, silk weavers, and makers of red sandals (*ṣarmajiyya* or *ṣarmāyātiyya*).

As in Damascus, the membership of druggists and butchers in Aleppo was exclusively Muslim and Jewish. So were the bakers of pastry (*khabbāzī al-ma'rūk*). Also, as in Damascus,

(20) LCR, Damascus 59, 33, 14 *Ṣafar* 1139/(11 October 1726).

(21) *Qāmūs al-ṣinā'at al-shāmiyya*, I by Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qāsimī, II by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and Khalīl al-'Azm, ed. Zāfir al-Qāsimī, Paris-The Hague 1960, I, 85.

goldsmiths were invariably Christian and Jewish. But money-changers in Aleppo included Christians alongside a majority of Jews. Sellers of cooked chick peas (*ḥumṣāniyya*) seem to have been all Christians in Aleppo.

In Hama in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, according to a study based on its court records <sup>(22)</sup>, Christians worked as blacksmiths, silk weavers, medical doctors, pounders, i.e. softeners, of cloth (*daqqāqī al-qimāsh*), and dyers. Goldsmiths had a majority of Christian members, and also included Jews. The Jews, as elsewhere, monopolized the profession of money changing, and they also figured among the druggists. Medical doctors were drawn from all three communities. Christians and Jews produced and marketed wine, but they consumed it together with Muslims.

While many craftsmen, no matter to what community they belonged, tended to teach their children their own profession, this was not always the case. There are many cases, for instance, among the various communities, where the son's profession differed from that of his father. Thus, 'Abd al-'Azīz the Christian dyer (*al-ṣabbāgh al-naṣrānī*) was the son of Maṣṣūr the builder (*al-mīmārī*) <sup>(23)</sup> and Mikhā'il the tailor (*al-khayyāt*) was the son of Mūsā the spinner (*al-fattāl*) <sup>(24)</sup>.

Certain expert crafts which had limited membership and were restricted to members of the Christian or Jewish communities had their *shaykh* chosen from among their ranks. Thus Shamwīl *bin* (a slip of the pen for *walad*) Ḥayīm al-Yahūdī (the Jew) was endorsed by the *qādī* of Aleppo on 29 *Rajab* 998, (3 June 1590) as *shaykh* of the *tā'ifa* of smelters of silver and gold in Aleppo upon the request of the members of this *tā'ifa* who were all Jewish <sup>(25)</sup>. The *shaykh* of the nail makers in Dama-

(22) 'ABD AL-WADŪD YŪSUF BARGHŪTH, *Liwā' Hamāh fī l-qarn al-sādīs 'ashar*, M.A. thesis, 'Ayn Shams University, Egypt, typed copy, Damascus 1970, 111-141.

(23) LCR, Damascus 65, 80, 1 *Dhu l-Qa'da* 1143/(8 May 1731).

(24) LCR, Damascus 90, 104, 8 *Rabī' I* 1151/(26 June 1738).

(25) LCR, Aleppo 7, 4.

scus on 5 *Shawwāl* 1164 / (27 August 1751) was the Christian Jirjis *walad* Manṣūr<sup>(26)</sup>. It is not known for how long these *ṭā'ifa*s continued to be the monopoly of non-Muslims and to have their *shaykhs* chosen from among their ranks. Nor is it known whether the same crafts were monopolized in other Syrian cities by the same communities. It seems, however, that the expertise, hence the monopoly, of the non-Muslim communities in these crafts was not limited to a single city because these communities were anxious to keep these professions within their own ranks. However, the office of *shaykh*, as already indicated, was not necessarily occupied by a person belonging to the same community as the members of the *ṭā'ifa*. In Aleppo, for instance, the *shaykh* of the nail makers on 6 *Ṣafar* 1069 / (3 November 1659) was a Muslim 'Aṭā' Allāh b. Khalīfa<sup>(27)</sup>.

The *ṭā'ifa* of bakers of loaf bread and *barmaq* in Aleppo whose members were predominantly Armenian Christians (hence the bread they prepared was later on known after them as *Armanī*) requested the *qāḍī* on 27 *Rabī' I* 1068/(16 December 1657) to appoint as their *shaykh* Ramaḍān b. 'Abdallāh al-Aslamī. The request was made by a twelve-member delegation of this *ṭā'ifa*, eleven of whom were Christians and one was apparently a Muslim soldier, a certain Mūsā bāshā b. 'Abdallāh<sup>(28)</sup>. Ramaḍān b. 'Abdallāh al-Aslamī, as his name indicates, was a Christian convert to Islam as another court case in which he was involved clearly states by referring to him as *al-mutashar-rif bi-dīn al-Islām* (the one honored by *Islām*)<sup>(29)</sup>. About six months later, twelve members of the same *ṭā'ifa*, including three persons from the previous twelve delegates, declared before the *qāḍī* on 6 *Ramaḍān* 1068 / (7 June 1658) that they have deposed their *shaykh* al-Aslamī because of his poor qualifications and lack of integrity. The *qāḍī* then appointed at their request

(26) LCR, Damascus 133, 222.

(27) LCR, Aleppo 27, 119.

(28) LCR, Aleppo 27, 50.

(29) LCR, Aleppo 27, 153, 29 *Sha'bān* 1069/(22 May 1659).

Hājj Muṣṭafā b. Nāṣir, the *onji bāshī* (a high rank in the *ṭā'ifa*) as *shaykh* in place of al-Aslamī<sup>(30)</sup>.

Although the *ṭā'ifas* with mixed membership usually had Muslims appointed as their *shaykhs*, non-Muslims were appointed to high positions in these *ṭā'ifas*. Thus in the *ṭā'ifa* of bakers of loaf bread and *barmaq Ustādh* (master-baker) Rūmān walad Ya'qūb *al-dhimmī* was appointed by the *qāḍī* on 14 *Muharram* 1060/(17 January 1650) as *yiğit bāshī* (assistant to the *shaykh*) of the *ṭā'ifa* at the request of a delegation composed of Shaykh Hājj Muṣṭafā and nine members (eight of whom were Christians and one Muslim)<sup>(31)</sup>. In another example, the *qāḍī* of Aleppo, on 4 *Rabī' II* 1043/(8 October 1633) appointed a Jewish druggist, Ḥabīb al-Yahūdī al-'Attār, as *yiğit bāshī* of the *ṭā'ifa* of druggists in Aleppo. The appointment was made at the request of the *shaykh* of the druggists in Aleppo, Muḥammad Bölük Bāshī b. Rajab, and twelve members of the *ṭā'ifa* who testified before the *qāḍī* that Ḥabīb was capable of discharging his duties with efficiency. What is significant is that seven of the twelve members who nominated Ḥabīb the Jew were Muslims. Two of these Muslim members carried the title of *hājji*, one was a *shaykh* (religious scholar), another a *chelebī* (gentleman of the pen), and the other three had no titles. The remaining five members were Jewish<sup>(32)</sup>. In yet another previously quoted example from Aleppo (footnote 6) Christian weavers belonging to the general *ṭā'ifa* of weavers (*ṭā'ifa al-Naṣārā min ṭā'ifa al-ḥiyyāk*) from four quarters in Aleppo, Maḥalla Aqyül, Maḥalla Tātārlār, Maḥalla al-Shaykh 'Adī, and Zuqāq al-Hazzāza, had a Christian Ilyās walad Naṣīr al-Naṣrānī appointed *yiğit bāshī* over them. His appointment by the *qāḍī* was done at the request of the *shaykh* of the *ṭā'ifa* of weavers Hājj 'Alī b. 'Atā' Allāh and fifteen members of this *ṭā'ifa*. Six of these were

(30) LCR, Aleppo 27, 95.

(31) LCR, Aleppo 27, 114.

(32) LCR, Aleppo 15, 288, 4 *Rabī'* 1043/(8 November 1633).

Muslims who included three Hājjis. The other nine members were Christians <sup>(33)</sup>.

Religious tolerance based on work ethics is thus best illustrated in the *ṭā'ifas* which had mixed membership. Delegations composed of elderly members who included Muslims, Christians, and/or Jews representing the *ṭā'ifas* appeared before the *qāḍī* and voiced the consensus of the *ṭā'ifa* regarding the appointment or deposition of the top officers in the *ṭā'ifa* and other matters of common interest. The proportion of the delegates with regard to their religious affiliation probably reflects the proportion of the communal membership within the *ṭā'ifas*. It may also indicate the communal composition of the top members (the elderly) in the *ṭā'ifa*, who, one would suppose, were drawn from among the masters in the profession. The following table is based on the court records of Aleppo which give detailed information on the *ṭā'ifas*, especially concerning the names and titles of the mixed delegates appearing before the *qāḍī*. The membership is broken down in this table into the broad categories of Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

The total number of the members in the mixed delegations who represented the *ṭā'ifas* before the *qāḍī*, mostly in matters related to the appointment or deposition of their *shaykhs*, is 242. Eighteen delegations representing as many *ṭā'ifas*, some of which went to the court more than once, span a period of thirty-seven years. The bulk of the cases, however, fall within the last four years, between 1658 and 1662. The number of Muslims in the delegations total 145 which equals 59.92% of the total. The number of non-Muslims is 97 (40.08%), which breaks down into 79 Christians (32.64%) and 18 Jews (7.44%). The high proportion of the representation of non-Muslims on the top delegations of the *ṭā'ifas* indicates the important role which non-Muslims played in the mixed *ṭā'ifas* which far

(33) LCR, Aleppo 27, 410, 7 *Muharram* 1073/(22 August 1662).



TABLE 1. — *The make-up of the delegations of the tā'ifas of Aleppo.*

<i>tā'ifa</i>	<i>number of delegates</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>court records vol. p. date</i>
bleachers	5	3	60.00	2	40.00			15.205.6 <i>Qa'da</i> 1036/19 July 1627
druggists	12	7	58.33			5	41.67	15.288.4 <i>Rabī II</i> 1043/8 Oct. 1633
bakers of pastry	16	13	81.25	1	6.25	2	12.50	27.18.26 <i>Shaww.</i> 1067/7 Aug. 1657
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	13	2	15.38	11	84.62			27.50.27 <i>Rabī I</i> 1068/2 Jan. 1658
tailors	21	15	71.43	6	28.52			27.65.20 <i>Jumād. I</i> 1068/23 Feb. 1658
weavers	21	13	61.90	8	38.10			27.65.20 <i>Jumād. I</i> 1068/23 Feb. 1658
druggists	9	6	66.67			3	33.33	27.71.9 <i>Jumād. II</i> 1068/14 Mar. 1658
sellers of cloaks & shawls	24	14	58.33	10	41.67			27.71.10 <i>Jumād. II</i> 1068/15 Mar. 1658
dyers of red	5	3	60.00	2	40.00			27.72.11 <i>Jumād. II</i> 1068/16 Mar. 1658
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	10	2	20.00	8	80.00			27.73.13 <i>Jumād. II</i> 1068/18 Mar. 1658
grocers of Bāb al-Naṣr	13	11	84.62	2	15.38			27.76.21 <i>Jumād. II</i> 1068/26 Mar. 1658
furriers	11	8	72.73	3	27.27			27.110.21 <i>Hijja</i> 1068/19 Sept. 1658
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	11	2	18.18	9	81.82			27.114.14 <i>Muh.</i> 1069/12 Oct. 1658
sellers of satin & lace cushions	20	13	65.00	7	35.00			27.173.9 <i>Muh.</i> 1070/26 Sept. 1659
druggists	17	9	52.94			8	47.06	27.207.26 <i>Jumād. I</i> 1070/8 Feb. 1660
saddlers	13	10	76.92	3	23.08			27.351.16 <i>Hijja</i> 1071/12 Aug. 1661
sellers of satin	11	7	63.64	4	36.36			28.371. end <i>Qa'da</i> 1072/17 July 1662
saddlers	10	7	70.00	3	30.00			27.431. 7 <i>Jumād. I</i> 1073/18 Dec. 1662
Total	242	145	59.92%	79	32.64%	18	7.44%	

exceeds their numerical proportion among the population. It also signifies the expert craftsmanship achieved by the non-Muslims and the recognition they received from their fellow Muslim members and from the religious authorities which received the delegations and respected their representation.

The Christians in the samples figure in fourteen out of eighteen delegations whereas the Jews participated in only four of them. This probably reflects the traditional polarization of each community in certain professions. Other mixed *ṭāʿifas* not represented in the samples were also open to non-Muslims as already indicated. It would, therefore, be interesting, in this regard, to survey similar samples at other times and places to ascertain what changes if any had occurred in the percentage of the communities represented on the delegations. Of special importance in the above samples is the high percentage (over 80%) of Christians, mostly Armenians, in the *ṭāʿifa* of bakers of loaf bread and *barmaq*. This percentage has not fallen down in three delegations which appeared before the *qāḍī* in the period between 2 January and 12 October 1658. It would be interesting to see for how long this high percentage of Christian Armenians has continued beyond these dates.

The high Jewish representation in the delegations of the druggists deserves special mention. Their proportion in the first delegation which appeared before the *qāḍī* on 4 *Rabīʿ II* 1043/ (8 October 1633) amounted to 41.67%. This percentage rose to 47.06% in the delegation which appeared before the *qāḍī* twenty-seven years later, on 26 *Jumādā I* 1070/ (8 February 1660). No Christian figured on the delegations of the druggists which suggest that this *ṭāʿifa* was monopolized by Muslims and Jews. Its members were expert chemists who also functioned as folk doctors which explains why its ranks were limited to these two communities and why the Jews played such a prominent role as druggists.

The joint Muslim-Jewish delegation of druggists which appeared before the *qāḍī* on 26 *Jumādā I* 1070/ (8 February 1660) discussed the financial obligations of the druggists. Both the Muslim and the Jewish members of the delegation agreed be-

fore the *qādī* that when extra taxes are imposed on them, the Jewish druggists will pay 60% of them (*min al-'ashra sitta*) and the Muslims will pay 40%. If the taxes are increased, the same ratio applies. It was also agreed that the imported drugs (*al-bidā' al-'itriyya*) have to be distributed among them in the same proportion. The delegates also agreed among themselves that if the *shaykh* of the druggists was requested by the authorities (*al-ḥukkām*) to supply them with drugs, the druggists will authorize him to collect the requested amount from all of them. If the authorities paid the price of the drugs to the *shaykh*, he has to distribute it among the contributors <sup>(34)</sup>.

It is significant in this case that although the Jewish members of the delegation amounted to 47.06% of the delegates, the Jewish druggists agreed to pay 60% of the extra taxes imposed on the *ṭā'ifa* as a whole. This can be explained by the fact that although the Jewish druggists were lesser in numbers than their Muslim colleagues on the delegation, they were more active in the profession which needed expertise because the traditional druggist prescribed medication and acted like a medical doctor. The amount of drugs they were to receive, which equalled 60% of the total, further attests to the fact that the Jewish druggists were handling 60% of the total business of the *ṭā'ifa*.

The bleachers (*qaṣṣārīn*) in Aleppo also provide an interesting example of the functioning of a mixed *ṭā'ifa*. A delegation of them appeared before the *qādī* of Aleppo on 6 *Dhu l-Qa'da* 1036/ (19 July 1627). Forty of the delegates were Muslim, 40% were Christian. They agreed among themselves that cloth sent for bleaching in the city of Aleppo is to be divided into six parts: four parts to go to the Muslims and two to the Christians. This shows that the Muslim bleachers were to receive a slightly higher percentage of cloth (66.66%) than their percentage on the delegation. The agreement, however, was cancelled by the bleachers three months later on 5 *Ṣafar* 1037/ (16 October 1627). The bleachers then agreed that cloth

(34) LCR, Aleppo 27, 207, 26 *Jumādā* 1 1070/(8 February 1660).

brought for bleaching was to be distributed equally among them with no privilege for any member (*lā mazīd li-aḥad minhum ‘alā al-akhar*). The distribution was to be done under the supervision of the *shaykh* of bleachers. The members who violate this agreement were to be punished <sup>(35)</sup>.

Like the bleachers, the dyers in red in Aleppo asked their *shaykh* to distribute the cloth brought for dyeing equally among them. However, a delegation of these dyers, composed of 60% of Muslim members and 40% of Christians, appeared before the *qāḍī* on 11 *Jumādā* II 1068/ (16 March 1658) and requested that this agreement be annulled on the ground that its application was burdensome to the *shaykh*. They agreed, instead, that each bleacher works independently and whatever he dyes will be his alone because God, as they put it, is the provider of livelihood (*bi-muqtaḍā anna Allāh huwa al-razzāq*) <sup>(36)</sup>.

A blend of work ethics, religiosity, and social morality dictated the regulations within and among the *ṭāʿifas*. The smooth relationship which existed between the Muslim and the non-Muslim members in the mixed *ṭāʿifas* reflects the prevalence of such relationships in society at large. Acts of sale of residential property revealed in the court records of Syria amply demonstrate the mixing of communities and the smooth relationships existing between them. The craft delegations to the court are but one aspect of these relationships. The Muslim members of the delegations who appeared in the court side by side with their non-Muslim colleagues and made important decisions affecting the affairs of the *ṭāʿifa* and indeed its existence were mostly persons of no mean social and religious standing. Many of them were holders of prestigious religious titles who did not shy away from appearing with fellow non-Muslim craftsmen before the *qāḍī* and sharing with them common decisions. The following table shows the titles of the Muslim members of the delegations as they occurred in the previous samples:

(35) LCR, Aleppo 15, 239, 5 *Ṣafar* 1037/(16 October 1627).

(36) LCR, Aleppo 27, 72, 11 *Jumādā* II 1068/(16 March 1658).

TABLE 2. — *Titles of the Muslim members in the delegations.*

<i>tā'ifa</i>	<i>no. of deleg.</i>	<i>hājī</i>	<i>shaykh</i>	<i>sharīf</i>	<i>chelebī</i>	<i>military</i>	<i>no title</i>	<i>Christians</i>	<i>Jews</i>
bleachers	5	1					2	2	
druggists	12	2	1		1		3		5
bakers of pastry	16	8		2		1	2	1	2
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	13					1	1	11	
tailors	21	6		1		4	4	6	
weavers	21	3	1				9	8	
druggists	9	6							3
sellers of cloaks & shawls	24	6	2			1	5	10	
dyers of red	5	2				1		2	
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	10						2	8	
grocers of Bāb al-Naṣr	13	4		2		5		2	
furriers	11	2		1	1		4 ( <i>ustādh</i> )	3	
bakers of loaf bread & <i>barmaq</i>	11	1				1		9	
sellers of satin & lace cushions	20	5			1		7	7	
druggists	17	6			1 ( <i>sayyidī</i> )		2		8
saddlers	13	4				1	5	3	
sellers of satin	11	2			1 ( <i>sayyidī</i> )		4	4	
saddlers	10	3					4	3	
Total	242	61	4	6	5	15	54	79	18

Holders of the title of *ḥājj* on the delegations constitute 61 persons (42.07%) of the total of 145 Muslim members. Taken together with the holders of the other distinguished religious and civilian titles (*shaykh*, *sharīf*, and *chelebī*), the percentage of distinguished religious and civilian members rises to 52.41%. The military account for 10.34%. The persons who have no religious, civilian, or military titles and who amount to 37.24% actually included highly placed professionals, such as shaykhs of *ṭā'ifas* and masters (*mu'allims*). The statistics indicate that top persons in the religious and the professional establishments were cooperating fully and freely with fellow members from the non-Muslim communities. It is significant in the case of the druggists that in their first delegation two *ḥājjs*, one *shaykh*, one *chelebī*, and three other Muslims appeared in the court with five Jewish members. The second delegation of druggists shows six *ḥājjs* alongside three Jews; the third delegation is composed of six *ḥājjs* and three other Muslims in the company of eight Jews. Thus specialization and tolerance form the basis of work ethics.

The number of Muslims on the delegations which amounts to 145 (59.92%) of a total of 242 is supplemented by 79 Christian members (32.46%) and 18 Jewish members (7.44%). The percentage of the non-Muslim communities far exceeds their actual numbers among the inhabitants, whether taken separately or together.

The *qādī* in his capacity as top religious official, by witnessing and legalizing the decisions made by the joint delegations, was inherently implementing the basic tenets of Islamic *Sharī'a* which respects the rights of *dhimmīs*. Furthermore, he was giving credibility to the *ṭā'ifas'* motto that expertise was the major criterion for appointment and promotion within the craft. The *qādī* of Damascus, for instance, confirmed on 20 *Rabī* II 1145/ (10 October 1732) two expert Christian doctors (*al-ṭabībayn al-ḥādhiqayn*), who were brothers, Mu'allim Ḥanna and Mu'allim 'Ubayd, sons of Mu'allim Luṭfī, son of Mu'allim 'Abd al-Muḥsin *al-ṭabīb*, in half of the positions of chief-doctor (*wazīfa al-ṭabāba al-ūlā*) and of doctor (*wazīfa al-ṭabāba*) in

the Bimāristān (hospital) al-Nūrī in Damascus. Both positions were voluntarily relinquished by 'Abd al-Muḥsin *walad* 'Abd al-Mu'ī, the cousin of the two doctors <sup>(37)</sup>. Thus expertise was recognized and recompensed irrespective of the religion of its acquirers. The case also indicates that certain professions involving expertise had been monopolized by certain families.

Non-Muslims also enjoyed special privileges within certain *ṭā'ifas* of mixed membership. The Jewish butchers in Aleppo who functioned within their own quarter were authorized by the *qāḍī* of the city to charge an extra *dirham* over the price of meat which was fixed by the *ṭā'ifa* of butchers. The *muḥtasib* (market-inspector) did not oppose the increase which was assigned to the poor Jews <sup>(38)</sup>.

Non-Muslim craftsmen did not acquiesce in the injustice committed against them. A case in point is the attempt by the druggists in Aleppo, who included many Jewish members, to attach to them as *yamak* the Jewish *'addāsa* (apparently a separate *ṭā'ifa* made up of Jewish members), who process gall-nuts, and prepare madder, orpiment, and olum in their workshops (*adasātihim*). *Yamak* relationship entailed the contribution by the *'addāsa* towards the extra taxes levied that year (1068/1658) from the druggists and other *ṭā'ifas* for the army of the governor of Aleppo. The Jewish *'addāsa* denied having *yamak* relationship at any time with the druggists. The druggists failed to substantiate their claim. The *qāḍī* accordingly upheld the stand of the Jewish *'addāsa* <sup>(39)</sup>. By contrast, the *ṭā'ifa* of *ḥarīriyya* (silk weavers), which included a majority of Christian and Jewish members, agreed to the demands of the *ṭā'ifa* of *'aqqādīn* (makers of trimmings), to whom they were apparently linked in *yamaq* relationship, to share with them the payment of the gov-

(37) LCR, Damascus 64, 222, cf. Damascus 52, 190, 5 *Shā'ban* 1138/(8 April 1726).

(38) LCR, Aleppo 15, 265, end *Ṣafar* 996/(end January 1588), cf. 27, 90, 160.

(39) LCR, Aleppo 27, 83, 16 *Rajab* 1068/(19 April 1658).

ernment extra taxes (*al-takālīf al-'urfīyya*) in the ratio of one-third for the *ḥarīriyya* and two-thirds for the *'aqqādīn* <sup>(40)</sup>.

The work ethic which permeated the ranks of the *ṭā'ifas* and provided them with a common work culture based on mutual respect can best be exemplified in the ceremonies staged on the occasion of the promotion of craftsmen from one professional rank to another. The promoted member had recourse to his appropriate religious rituals in these celebrations. If he were a Muslim, the *fātiḥa* (the first *Sūra* from the *Qur'ān*) was recited. For a Christian, the Lord's Prayer was read, and for a Jew the Ten Commandments were uttered <sup>(41)</sup>.

Thus the prevalence of a high standard of craftsmanship and morality within and among the *ṭā'ifas* and the emphasis on merit rather than on religious affiliation explain the major role which non-Muslims had played in the traditional economy and society of Ottoman Syria. No wonder, therefore, that for over three centuries prior to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century no socio-economic and communal riots took place in Syria which glaringly illustrates the integration of the religious minorities in local economy and society.

#### 4. THE IMPACT OF INDUSTRIAL EUROPE ON THE RELATIONS OF THE COMMUNITIES IN THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

The destabilization of Syria's traditional economy and society under the impact of industrial Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century dealt a heavy blow to the amicable relations among the religious communities, albeit for a short period and for a variety of reasons. Due to a number of factors, such as the use of steam power in production and transport, the decrease by the Ottoman authorities under European pressure (1838 treaty with England) of the customs duties imposed on imported European goods, and the resultant competitiveness of these goods on the

(40) LCR, Aleppo 28, 452, 4 *Muḥarram* 1073/(19 August 1662).

(41) QUDSI, *op. cit.*, 15-30.



local market, Syrian textiles in particular, which were subjected to a higher customs duty, suffered tremendously from this situation. The cheapness and good quality of European goods enabled them to dominate the Syrian market as elsewhere. Steam navigation at the time allowed large quantities of European goods to be transported to Syria largely through the modernized seaport of Beirut. These goods were diffused in the interior through the creation of roads (the Damascus-Beirut road of 1863) and later on railways. Competition among European manufacturers tended also to make the prices of European goods even cheaper on the local market. The spread of European fashions among the Syrians also contributed to the abandonment of many local fabrics in favor of European ones.

Under Egyptian rule in Syria (1831-1840), the country was wide open to European goods and influences. In the late 1830s, we are told, 107 shops sold British goods in key markets in Damascus. Muslims, Christians, and Jews were all involved in selling European goods and acting as middlemen for European manufacturers. They amassed big fortunes from their role as agents for Europeans <sup>(42)</sup>.

Several *tā'ifas* accounting for about one-fifth of the working force in Damascus, for instance, were involved in the manufacture of the local textiles which were exposed to European competition. Looms used in the production of local textiles were put on sale much more frequently than before which indicates the difficulties these textiles were going through. The *gedik* (equipment) and the *khilū* (key money) of the shops that retailed local commodities likewise dropped in value. Bankruptcies became common among local manufacturers. Many of them were unable to pay their taxes and honor their debts and several sought the protection of European consulates. The com-

(42) JOHN BOWRING, *Report on the commercial statistics of Syria*, London 1840 (reprinted Arno Press, New York 1973, 94), ABDUL-KARIM RAFEQ, «al-Iqtisād al-dimashqī fī muwājaha al-iqtisād al-awrūbbī fī l-qarn al-tāsī 'ashar», *Dirāsāt Ta'rikhiyya*, nos. 17,18 (1984), 115-159, see 118-119, *Buhūth*, 241-285, see 244-245.

plaints addressed to the Higher Consultative Council of Damascus in 1261/(1845) came from bankrupt master craftsmen and journeymen, including spinners, dyers, cloth-printers, *mulqīs* (preparers of the weft for weaving), and the Jewish washers of cloth (*Yahūd ṭāʿifa ghassālīn al-qimāsh*)<sup>(43)</sup>, among others, whose work in the local textiles was dealt a heavy blow by the competition of European goods. The Council reacting to the plea of an insolvent tax-farmer who complained of the inability of the *ṭāʿifas* involved in textile production to pay their taxes acknowledged the reasons given by these *ṭāʿifas* for the drop in their sales, namely the growing competition of European goods (*hāla al-kār wa-qilla tashghīlihi min qibal takāthur wujud ajnās al-baḍāʿiʿ al-afrañjiyya fa l-aqmisha al-Shāmiyya kullmāla ʿalā tadannī*)<sup>(44)</sup>. As a result of this situation much tension developed within the *ṭāʿifas*. Impoverished journeymen rose in protest against their masters who tried to reduce their wages or even sack them. A contemporary of these events, Ilyās Qudsī, characterized the protests as revolts (*thawrāt*) within the *ṭāʿifas*<sup>(45)</sup>.

Although Muslims and Jews as well as Christians were involved in retailing European goods and making money from acting as agents for European businesses, only the wealthy Christians in both Aleppo and Damascus were the targets of the mob. Viewed in a wider perspective, the riots in Aleppo (1850) and in Damascus (1860) were basically caused by economic, social, and political factors. Religion was invoked as a catalyst to whip up the emotions of the Muslim poor against the wealthy Christians. It is to be recalled in this context that Egyptian rule in Syria not only allowed European influence to penetrate the country but went to the extent of emancipating the Christians from a variety of restrictions that were imposed on them earlier. The Ottomans themselves in their bid to modernize the state and to introduce equality among their Muslim and

(43) LCR, *Majlis al-Wilāya*, 30, 205, 211, 212, 216, 221, 248, 277, 283, 336, 350, 361, 373, 383.

(44) *Ibid.*, 98-100, 5 *Muharram* 1261/(14 January 1845).

(45) QUDSĪ, *op. cit.*, 15.

non-Muslim subjects issued edicts to this effect in 1839 when they needed Europe to help them in ousting the Egyptians from Syria, and also in 1856 when European help was again needed against Russia in the Crimean War. Equality remained mostly on paper, but it infuriated the conservative Muslim masses especially because the non-Muslims were excluded from military conscription which was applied only to Muslims. The intervention of European powers in Syria in the aftermath of the massacres in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860 was quick. Britain was anxious to secure its trade route to India and gain markets and raw materials for its industrial products and France under Emperor Napoleon III was seeking glory abroad to divert attention from its difficulties at home. The Ottomans, on their part, were anxious to tighten their control over Syria. The riots, therefore, served several interests.

That the riots were not basically caused by religious fanaticism, although this was lurking at the time, is well evidenced by the fact that the Jews in general and the poor Christians whether in Aleppo or Damascus were not molested. The mob was directed only against the wealthy Christians in the Judayda quarter in Aleppo and in the Bāb Tūmā quarter in Damascus. Although many members of the Jewish community in Syria, especially the Farhī family in Damascus, engaged in financial businesses, acted as agents for Europeans, and amassed great wealth, they kept a low profile and attempted not to show off their wealth. Furthermore, the majority of the Jews were poor which explains why the mob in Damascus, for instance, upon bypassing the Jewish quarter on its way to Bāb Tūmā was served with refreshments by the 'friendly' or perhaps frightened Jews<sup>(46)</sup>.

The Maydān quarter in Damascus had a substantial Christian community which did not suffer in the riots. The inhabitants of the Maydān were a mixture of Muslims, Druzes, and Christians

(46) MIKHĀ' IL MISHĀQA, *Mashhad al-ā'yān bi-hawādith Sūriyya wa-Lubnān*, eds. Muḥīim Khalīl 'Abduh and Andrāwus Hannā Shakhāshīrī, Miṣr 1908, 179; MOSHE MA'OZ, *Ottoman reform in Syria and Palestine 1840-1860*, Oxford 1968, 238.

drawn from many regions, principally the Ḥawrān, Mt. Lebanon, and as far as the *Maghrib* (Arab north Africa), especially Algeria after its conquest by the French (1830). These communities were bound together by common rural origins, a culture of poverty among the rank and file, quarter solidarity, and good neighborliness. Their mixed residences spread over several alleys in the Maydān <sup>(47)</sup>.

The riots in the quarter or Bāb Tūmā which lasted for about a week beginning on July 9 1860 and caused heavy casualties and much destruction were caused mainly by the disparity in wealth between the Muslim poor and the wealthy Christians. The fact that the Ottoman governor of Damascus and a host of other officials and local notables were executed by the Ottomans attests to their complicity in the riots. Also, the *greater* part of the atrocities which occurred in Bāb Tūmā were committed by the irregular troops (*ḡabṭiyya*) which were under the command of the Damascene notable and military Muṣṭafā Bey Ḥawāsilī who had his residence in Bāb Tūmā. The *ḡabṭiyya* were described by the contemporary Damascene chronicler Ḥasībī, an eyewitness of the events and also accused of involvement in them, as composed of every troublemaker, smoker of waterpipes, and unemployed. Muṣṭafā Bey himself was described by Ḥasībī as being reckless and very hateful to all the Damascenes <sup>(48)</sup>. Upon the execution of Muṣṭafā Bey and the referral of his estate to the *qassām* judge (divider of inheritance), it turned out that the net value of his tangible and intangible property was 140,820 piasters. His outstanding debt amounted to 187,760 piasters. He owed a

(47) For a detailed study of the socio-economic structure of the Maydān quarter during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see ABDUL-KARIM RAFEQ, «The social and economic structure of Bāb al-Muṣallā (al-Midān), Damascus, 1825-75», *Arab Civilization, challenges and responses. Studies in honor of Constantine K. Zurayk*, eds. George N. Atiyeh and Ibrahim M. Oweiss, New York 1988, 272-311.

(48) MUHAMMAD ABU L-SU'UD AL-ḤASĪBĪ, *Hādītha al-sittīn*, Ms. Zāhiriyya (currently Asad Library), Damascus, no. 4668, fols. 5b, 10b; see also K.S. SALIBI, «The 1860 upheaval in Damascus», *Beginnings of modernization in the Middle East*, eds. William Polk and Richard Chambers, Chicago 1968, 185-202, see 195.

large percentage of his debts (44.18%) to Christian creditors. It was therefore in his interest that Christians be eliminated by his troops <sup>(49)</sup>.

The religious communities in Syria soon put these events behind them and, once more, went back to their traditional co-operation in business, this time largely through partnership which cut across the religious barriers as before. They pooled resources, developed local industry in imitation of European industry, imported European looms, notably the jacquard loom which produces patterned designs, and ultimately adapted themselves to the challenge of capitalist Europe.

The contemporary Damascene chronicler Nu'mān al-Qasāṭlī who worked with the Palestine Exploration Fund and described the economy and society of Damascus and Palestine in the 1870s mentions an expert Damascene artisan 'Abd al-Majid al-Aṣfar who, subsidized by wealthy Ḥasan al-Khānjī, evolved a new type of striped cotton cloth called *dīmā* which became very popular and benefited thousands of people who produced it. Christian artisan Yūsuf Khawwām introduced changes in the loom producing *dīmā* and a new brand was produced which suited the making of trousers (*pantalone*, a word of Italian origin still in use) whose fashion was imported from Europe. Qasāṭlī comments that the fabric produced by Khawwām was better than its European counterpart. He also gives credit to a partnership between the Muslim Darwīsh al-Rūmānī and the Christian Jurjī Māshṭa who together produced a patterned cloth for women. Their venture, however, was not a success because women refused to wear the cloth which was not honored by a European mark. Qasāṭlī also mentions the establishment in Damascus of a factory run by water for cotton spinning. After initial reverses, the factory became a success <sup>(50)</sup>.

(49) For a detailed study of this aspect of the 1860 riots in Damascus, see A.K. RAFAQ, «New light on the 1860 riots in Ottoman Damascus», *Die Welt des Islams*, 28 (1988), 412-430.

(50) NU'MĀN AL-QASĀṬLĪ, *al-Rawḍa al-ghannā' fī Dimashq al-fayhā'*, Beirut 1876, 123-124; see also A.K. RAFAQ, «The impact of Europe», 429.

Alongside the efforts at economic cooperation and partnership among the religious communities, the ideology of Arabism was evolved at the time by the emerging bourgeoisie. Its initial aim was to provide a common denominator for all the communities in a bid to re-create their shared Arabic culture which their ancestors had founded and developed since the earliest times. Cultural and political groupings bringing together members from the various communities soon emerged and called for the creation of the Arab nation.

1. LCR, Aleppo, vol. 27, p. 71, case dated 9 Jumādā II 1068/(14 March 1658):

ختم  
 ودون  
 مبدوء  
 قوله  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع

إمام  
 الفقهاء  
 الأئمة  
 المعصومين

2. LCR, Aleppo, vol. 27, p. 110, 21 Dhu l-Hijja 1068/(19 September 1658):

ختم  
 ودون  
 مبدوء  
 قوله  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع

إمام  
 الفقهاء  
 الأئمة  
 المعصومين

3. LCR, Aleppo, vol. 27, p. 207, 26 Jumādā I 1070/(8 February 1660):

ختم  
 ودون  
 مبدوء  
 قوله  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع  
 وبتنا  
 وتبع

إمام  
 الفقهاء  
 الأئمة  
 المعصومين

4. LCR, Damascus, *Majlis al-Wilāya*, vol. 5, p. 99, 5 Muharram 1261/(14 January 1845):

## تابع مجلس يوم الاثنين في محرم الحرام

تقرضه عبد القادر اغا خض بن زاهد الى المجلس المذكور

انه قد صار اطلاقه وتخصيمه على اخلصه كما ورد من اليدوان بتغيره فلو لم يدفعه والمكتسبات  
 المتعلقين وري اللوم لعنه الدين بطلان والهم قياس السنة السابقة وذلك بتعقبات استبان  
 سعادة افندينا اوليا انتم العفتم حسب فلولهم فخلصه المتداوله فبذلك اوليا انتم  
 اهم المعنى فكذلك يكون فيه سابع الميري غير انه بحسب يورثنا لهم وخذنا منها ايها سابع  
 جمع وصيانة احوال الميري وتأديتها على اخر باره فعادتهم لا يورثوا فبذلك  
 حالنا كونه هذه الاقدام بالنسبة السابقة حاصل لهم خساره تخويفهم من غير معلوم  
 سعادتهم ان حال الميري لا يتغير منه باره الفرد ولا يندفع عن ذلك جوان والى غير  
 وهذه الاقدام لكل منها عهدهم فجمعها ورفقتها وازالم سدوقهم بطلان فاسد فبذلك  
 السيد محي الدين فالتسوية وبان كتاب الاقدام والاطلوع على الدفاتر يظهر في هذه  
 اقرنا نفي هذه السنة بحسب حاله الكار وقله انقباض من قبل تكاثر وجود اخصا من اخصا  
 الوفير بحسب فالقوله السابقه كلما لها على يدني ومن ذلك يزيد بالاقلام المذكوره  
 حاصلتها وهنوت معلوم عند حضراتكم وليس له تدبير فان حسم ابيهم كبتنما على  
 لعل ولا حفظه حاله وتخصيمه ورفع المفدويه عنه الموصله بحسب حاله هذه الاقدام  
 بالاقلام السابقة بالتخصيم على تاديه فالحال ان ذلك ليس له تدبير فان حسم ابيهم على  
 يورثهم بدين ذلك في خلاصه الاقدام لئلا يحصل من قبل دفع اجرتهم من الميري بتعلق  
 بالنسبة السابقة ثم عرض المكتسبات بغير ابيها بيان انها على جانب الميرز حسب ادائها بالنسبة  
 السابقة ثم كون دفع المكتسبات من طولة الماء وتكرار العمل صافية اذ به الامعة وهي  
 ذلك لعدم اخلاص من عملهم الكار لكي يحصل مصلدكم للاحتفاظ ودفع اخر فكر اذا عملت  
 على غفله يكون عوضه حاضر يوضع عوضه ولا يصلح لعل الى اكتنفا لونه ويغيره دفع لا يوضع  
 تقاضى قلمنا ثم بيعه واذا عمل على غفله فليتها بغير استحقاقه وعرضه عز وان طويل فبذلك  
 ان حسم بغيرها مصادره وكذلك حسم في خلاصه الاقدام اعني ان المكتسبات تقبلها بها المكتسبات  
 من قبل المدفع فيكون خصم حاله التقطيل على جانب الميري من جميع ما تقدم اعني  
 نترجم البصر والخطي قرأ حسم من حضراتكم في ذلك لعل لتعطل الاقدام الميرز ولا يعيدتم  
 ونجوه ملاحظة الطرفين لانه في الكار الكور حسم في تقدمه فبذلك لا يندخله ويون الى  
 احوال وانظر بحسبكم والامر ليس له الامر اقدم