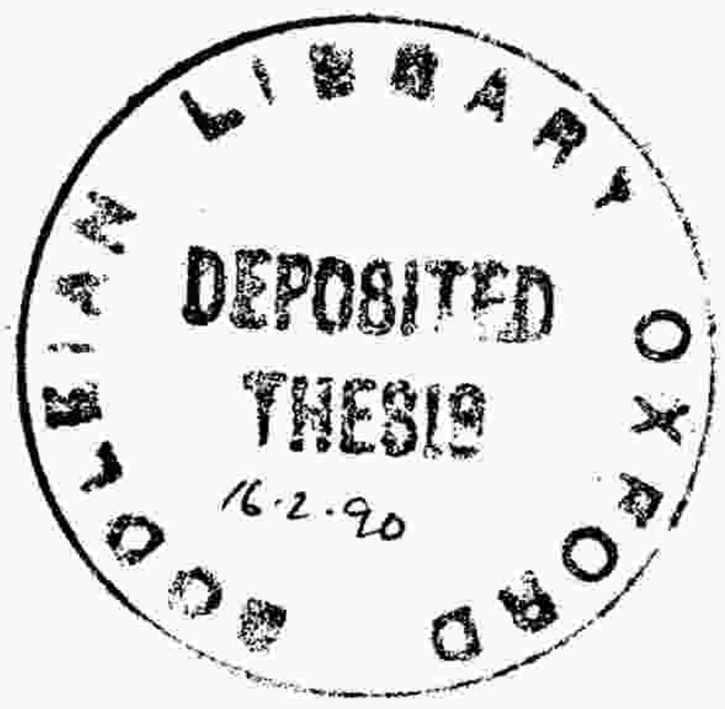
THE TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL SOCIETY: THE SYRIAN INTERIOR 1830-1930

CAROL ANNE FRANK
ST. ANTONY'S COLLEGE, OXFORD



Submitted for the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy
Faculty of Oriental Studies,
University of Oxford
Michaelmas Term, 1989.

Carol Anne Frank
St Antony's College

D. Phil.
Michaelmas Term

THE TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL SOCIETY: THE SYRIAN INTERIOR 1830-1930

ABSTRACT

The subject of this study concerns the transformation of the traditional rural society and economy of Syria in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The research focuses on the important agricultural regions of the Homs-Hama plain and the Ghuta of Damascus while examining the wider developments of the 'transitional period', taken as the century spanning from 1830-1930. These regions are to be considered in terms of the particular and varied response of each to changing conditions brought about in large measure by the gradual absorption of the Levant into a world economic order emanating from an industrialized Europe.

European economic penetration in the 19th century and the expansion of merchant and usurious capital linked to this process unleashed forces which led to the creation of new relations of production. The study considers the extent to which capitalist forms of production and enterprise could take root because they were placed into the framework of traditional agrarian arrangements, such as the sharika contract and musha[c]. The principal developments of the period: an increased emphasis upon production for the market and the growth of an export oriented agriculture, the evolution of a private property regime and the emergence of huge estates upon which peasants were transformed into mere share croppers and the sedentarization of nomadic society are examined in terms of the forces European economic expansion and Ottoman reform set in motion.

Much of this study is devoted to the social implications of the development of private land ownership in Syria from the mid-19th century onwards. In this context, the effects of the Ottoman Land Code, which is closely associated with the increased privatization of land holdings, are examined. This process was frequently accompanied by the dispossession of the peasantry and their transformation from small proprietors and partners in communal landholdings into share-cropping tenants. In the 1870's, in particular, much of the land of the Ghuta and the Homs-Hama plain passed into the hands of urban-based notable families and merchant-moneylending groups. This process accelerated during the Mandate period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assistance and encouragement of many people have contributed to make this work possible. I owe the greatest debt to Mr. Norman Lewis for his generous help in giving me invaluable information with regard to research. I am indeed fortunate to have had the opportunity to discuss my subject with him on a number of occasions and to have benefited from his vast knowledge of matters relating to rural Syria. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Albert Hourani for his advice and suggestions for the topic of this study and to my supervisor, Roger Owen, for his helpful comments on my work over the years.

Others deserving special mention are Dr. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, Dr. Phillip Khoury and Sherry Vatter for their many useful suggestions and important leads for source material. To the people of the Ghuta, I owe my deepest thanks for their warm and generous hospitality.

I am indebted to Jim Mungal of the Official Publications Library and the Department of Oriental Manuscripts, British Library, for going beyond the call of duty in hunting down many books and documents which stubbornly resisted detection and to my typist, Sarah Huddart, who insisted on completing the task,

although she required hospitalization and suffered considerable discomfort during the final stages of preparing the manuscript.

Above all else, this work would not have been possible without the unfailing support and encouragement of my husband, Michael, who was daily sent into exile with our baby son for months on end while I struggled to put the text into presentable form.

Note on transliteration

Arabic transliteration has been kept simple in the text. Only ʿayn and hamzah have received diacritical marks throughout. In addition, some commonly accepted English forms have been used for Arabic names, places and terms which are mentioned frequently. In the bibliography, however, a full transliteration of Arab authors and titles has been given.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Historical Geography and Regional Characteristics	28
III.	Rural Society in the Syrian Interior: The Pre-Modern Period	60
IV.	Peasant Production and Regional Trade 1800-1850	132
V.	The Ghuta of Damascus	168
VI.	The Homs-Hama Plain	286
CONCLUSION		421
BIBLIOGRAPHY		430

APPENDIX

I.	The Population of the Province of Damascus in the First Half of the 19th Century	452
II.	Census for the State of Damascus, 1922	453
III.	Census for the State of Damascus, 1922	454
MAPS		455

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

It is no secret among social and economic historians of the Middle East that due to the seemingly intractable problems encountered in confronting some of the most basic questions which arise, the rural history of the region has remained one of the most neglected areas of research. Accurate and detailed information concerning land tenure arrangements, social structure and agrarian practices derived from 'on the spot' sources are notoriously hard to come by. As one French scholar remarked, "Les campagnes sont fort mal connues et n'ont fait l'objet, contrairement aux villes et en raison d'une documentation réduite, d'aucune étude approfondie," acknowledging somewhat regrettably, that the picture must be filled in with Western consular reports and the accounts of European travellers, sources which are "souvent rapides, superficielles, et mal informées."[1] Udovitch has observed that major difficulties in the study of the rural history of the 'pre-modern' period stem from the fact that "our sources are focussed on a narrow range of urban, polictical and religious life in which references to rural and agricultural realities are quite casual and sporadic."[2]

Indeed, the scarcity of reliable statistics - particularly the lack of a census of landownership in rural districts and

the often contradictory and Eurocentric evidence of Western residents are just some of the obstacles the student of the rural scene must grapple with. Such problems have been compounded by widespread assumptions that the history of the region has its proper domain in the urban world and that primacy should be given to the study of the life of the cities. Thus a prominent social scientist and economic historian such as Samir Amin was able to argue that "what is essential here is not the country but the town," asserting that at their best periods, Aleppo and Damascus had embraced the majority of the population in the region.[3]

Although a number of other historians have stressed the centrality of land tenure and agrarian relations to an understanding of Middle Eastern society and its transformation in the 19th century (Karpat, for one, has argued that control of the land was key to the entire social and political framework of the Ottoman Empire [4]) there have been strikingly few regional studies on this question. This study is thus a modest attempt to redress the balance.

The subject of this study concerns the transformation of the rural society of Syria in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is generally acknowledged that there is a considerable need for research which concentrates on specific agrarian regions

and their transformation over time, involving an examination of local socio-economic structures. The regions of the Syrian interior, in particular, have received very little attention. Thus I have chosen to concentrate upon two important, but very different, agricultural districts - the Ghuta and the Homs-Hama plain - while examining the wider developments of the 'transitional period'. This, for the purposes of this study, will broadly be taken as the century spanning from 1830-1930. These regions are to be considered in terms of the particular and varied responses to changing conditions brought about in large measure by the gradual absorption of the Levant into a world economic order emanating from an industrialised Europe.

A number of studies, such as those of Firestone, Chevallier, Batatu, Graham-Brown and Schatkowski [5] have shown the value of focusing on specific regions as a means of rendering the wider socio-economic forces more comprehensible. Each of these historians, from their different perspectives, has been able to shed light on the consequences of European economic penetration in the 19th century (and the expansion of merchant moneylending capital linked to this process) in examining its impact upon the indigenous social formation. Firestone's works, in particular, raises important questions

about the wider role of traditional systems of land tenure in the process of socio-economic transformation.

The aim of the study is to shed light on the specific character of this historical process as it was manifest at the level of the locality. The rural history of Syria in the late 19th and early 20th century is characterized by a succession of crucial developments: an increased emphasis on production for the market and the growth of an export-oriented agrarian economy, the rise of private property in land with an increased interest in the rural sector on the part of urban merchants and moneylenders, the subsequent emergence of very large estates associated with the steady erosion of the peasants' customary rights and the widespread phenomenon of landlessness and rural indebtedness. Together with important factors such as the growth of the rural population and the considerable expansion of the cultivated area,these central features of social change need to be systematically inter-related in order to be rendered meaningful. What is required here is an examination of the differential impact upon the specific regions of these processes.

In the late Ottoman period, two major (albeit related) factors which dominated the economy were the world market,

as expressed through Syria's participation in foreign trade and the increasing political and economic 'presence' of Europe. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these combined pressures caused a number of dislocations and structural changes and it is the task of the rural historian to identify these and their local manifestations. Taking inspiration from the work of Caglar Keyder, a priority will be to determine the differing paths of rural transformation under the impact of the increasing penetration of the world market. Keyder has stressed the development implications of the fact that different regions are characterised by the dominance of different social structures.[6] At the beginning of our period the evidence seems to suggest that inside a specific region - such as the Ghuta - villages exhibit a rather uniform or 'homogenous' picture. However, in the late 19th century and the Mandate period, a growing diversity of rural socio-economic structures can be observed within the same geographic region. In fact progressive landlessness, indebtedness and the increasing disparity of wealth among peasant cultivators were major features of the Syrian countryside at the close of French rule.[7]

The character of change which resulted from the gradual attachment of Syrian's agrarian regions to a world economic

order and particularly the new social forces associated with this process is the primary focus of the study. It is essential to take full account of the ruptures and conflicts which surfaced from this encounter. Chevallier's research into the history of Mount Lebanon reveals that the social upheavals of the 1850's reflected the profound economic changes taking place. Chevallier links various agrarian disorders to "the crisis of pre-industrial society faced with the consequences of the industrial development of Europe".[8]

What is interesting here is how the transformation of traditional power structures is related to the genesis of new conflicts. That the encounter of a pre-capitalist society with a capitalist system deepened traditional social hierarchies and often reinforced them is an important issue also raised by Batatu and Keyder. Chevallier sheds light on the social tension that developed on the local level when commercial capitalists gradually assumed the wealth, status and power of the traditional ruling families: "The extent of the unrest which in the mid-19th century swept across Middle Eastern society was proportionate to the confrontation of its pre-industrial structures with the effects of European innovation during the industrial

revolution."[9] However, it is important to view rural transformation not only in terms of the political and economic penetration of Europe into the Levant, but also in the context of the reformist policies of the Ottoman authorities in Syria from 1840 onwards. As put by Owen, "The nature of this impact can only be properly understood by an examination of a complex set of interactions between outside influences and local economic and social forms."[10]

The question of the effects of these various developments on land tenure is an important one and has rarely been considered except in the most general manner. This involves an examination of rural society and economic structurs as they existed before the process of transformation began. For example, an understanding of what Sedon has referred to as "the social-structural constraints of capital formation in peasant communities" is important in determining the character of subsequent developments.[11] The emergence of private ownership of rural property after the mid-19th century as a major phenomenon is generally linked to forces which European penetration set in motion, but, in fact, there has been very little detailed discussion as to how the consolidation of land in the hands of powerful urban groups actually took place. As stressed by Sluglett, the process

whereby absentee landlordism came to dominate the agrarian economy of the plains, and the movement whereby peasants, who for generations held land in usufruct rights, now became sharecroppers are developments which can only be made clear by detailed local studies. [12]

Land tenure is best approached in its broad sociological sense and not in a legalistic manner, as has all too often been the case. The conflicting relationship between law and custom should be borne in mind when confronted with much of the literature on the subject. Firestone has been able to reveal the tensions which arise in the legal/ideological domain under the pressure of new economic forces in his analysis of the acquisition of capital by ordinary peasant cultivators and the ideological context by which this was made socially acceptable. Thus anyone coming to terms with land tenure in the 19th century Middle East must deal with an area of immense scope, encapsulating the complex world of agrarian relations. As observed by Khalidi, "The varieties of land tenure ... rural topography, ecology, the delicate balance between the desert and the sown, the changes wrought upon the countryside by infusions of wealth or capitalized reorganization, the dynamics of interdependence among peasant classes and between them and the city, the dramatic

effects of new crops are important facets of a subject which claim the attention of today's historians and social scientists."[13] Thus a most complex picture emerges of the domain of land tenure, the nature of which is increasingly shaped in the 19th century by the confrontation of different systems which tied rural society to factors outside its control and experience.

Any local study on the Levant's rural economy must attempt to tackle a notoriously difficult subject: how the various systems of land tenure and agricultural production actually worked in the Ottoman and Mandate periods. Keyder, Firestone and Islamoglou[14] have shown how Boserup's concept of a dynamic relationship between population and land can be profitably put to use in the analysis of the development of land tenure in Ottoman history. Boserup's theory that an increase in population pressure and the resulting decline in agricultural output per unit of labour is crucial to the development of land tenure systems, peasant technologies and various share-cropping arrangements is of potentially great value in shedding light on the development in the rural society of the Levant.[15] These writers in particular have seized upon her theory of the important role of 'relative input scarcities' in shaping the framework in

which production is conducted. Indeed, the 'relative scarcity approach', which has been employed in a most inventive way by Firestone, has been applied to areas of the Levant subject to conditions of deficient rainfall and excessive impositions and considerably widens our notion of agricultural production. As put by Firestone:

> "This limitation is so basic to that particular stage of production that it enters the consciousness of the society of the time and stamps its productive institutions. This, in turn enables the historian the cue in on current input scarcities by examining the the language the society uses."[16]

Inextricably linked to this issue is the problem presented by a key agrarian institution in the Syrian interior: the land equalizing settlement known as musha[c]. Firestone has made a pioneering attempt in examining the origins and operations of musha[c] by subjecting local usages and terminology to careful scrutiny. He is able to show that it was not an institution incapable of responding to change, as is so often held to be the case. Musha[c] was, in fact, highly adaptable and its essential features retained in response to the challenge presented by the progressive penetration of a market economy. European residents and travellers in the 19th century were all unanimous in assuming it was an immutable inheritance from the past

rather than a product of historical change and thus subject to transformation. Unanimous also was their damning indictment of its effects upon agriculture.

The use of key concepts in constructing an interpretive framework for the study of social change in the Middle East raises a number of difficult questions. As we have acknowledged, the study of rural transformation requires an examination of the far reaching social implications of European economic penetration and Ottoman reform. Khoury has argued that agricultural commercialization in Syria "encouraged rival and socially differentiated networks of local and influential families in Damascus to merge into a socially cohesive upper class."[17] Khoury traces the evolution of the "land-owning bureaucratic class" which began to take shape in the last half of the 19th century, which produced the leadership in the major Syrian towns for many generations. The problems of conceptualising the land-owning notables as a 'class', properly speaking, are also raised in the work of Hourani and Schatkowski from different perspectives.[18]

Like Khoury, I have found it valuable to draw upon Batatu's ideas on the validity of class analysis for Ottoman Arab society. Many historians have leaned heavily on an approach

based on 'ethnicity' and have maintained that the concept of class is inappropriate when applied to the pre-modern Middle East. Batatu has argued that the concept of class is the best framework within which to observe the process of transformation as experienced by various social groups for "in these shifts were involved not only individuals and housholds but whole groups."[19] However, before the mid-19th century, an analysis of class is notoriously difficult and pre-supposes a solid grasp of the mass of detail involving "economically effective individuals and households and their inter-relationships."[20] Following Batatu, it is useful to approach the problem by employing the famous Weberian distinction between classes and status groups. Weber enjoins us to conceptualize class as a differentiated phenomenon; it exists in a distinct form on its own or as an element within a status group.[21] Thus in the Syrian interior we are able to observe the process whereby the accumulation of landed wealth by many tribal shaykhs at the expense of their tribes weakened tribal bonds, undermining their traditional status position.[22]

Thus "classes" in pre-modern Syria - if we are to use the term in the sense of clearly identifiable social strata - have multiple and divisive components - ethnic, religious,

differences in land distribution, degree of political influence and prestige and most importantly, after the mid-19th century, the degree of consistency with European economic interests. From Batatu's analysis, it is possible to conceive of the various social groups: the Ottoman officials, the landed aristocrats, the new class of landed speculators, merchants, moneylenders and tribal shaykhs as bearing the imprints of social forms from different historical periods. The social tension and conflict which arose from this complex situation in the rural districts is an important object of historical enquiry.

It is clear that throughout most of the Ottoman period, property was not the only basis of social stratification.[23] The relative geographic isolation and regionalism of the agrarian districts of the Syrian interior makes analysis of the socio-economic structure an extremely difficult task. The social formations of the regions under study differed considerably in their historical roles and their geographic contexts. Thus a number of observers have concluded that it is only after the mid-19th century that we witness the creation of social classes on a significant scale - the expression the country's gradual economic integration into the world economy.[24] Khoury maintains that classes did

exist before this period but that "they were much more difficult to identify and their lifespans shorter because their relations to the means of production and especially to property were much less stable."[25] But this lack of social and political cohesion should not preclude the examination of clearly identifiable strata in the early 19th century, bearing in mind that, "the existence of a class should not pre-suppose that it need at every point of its historical existence act or feel as a unit - it need not be an organised or self-conscious group."[26]

Closely related to these issues and an important dimension of this study are the problems posed by the transformation of tribal society. A development of major importance involves the process whereby the traditional bonds binding nomadic tribes to their shaykhs were gradually dissolved under the pressure of a centralised Ottoman state and military apparatus which placed a premium upon pacifying the countryside and sedentarizing the tribes on the steppelands. But military coercion was far from the only element in this changing picture: financial incentives were given to chiefs in the form of land grants and indefinite relief from tax burdens. In the late Ottoman and French Mandate period, many of these shaykhs were turned into big landlords of

considerable estates and their tribesmen transformed into share-cropping tenants and (at the end of our period) wage labourers on their lands.[27] The crucial change here is the gradual redefinition of the shaikh's role with regard to his tribesmen. His increasing proprietorial rights over tribal land and progressive estrangement from the tribe or village community are best examined in the context of the Ottoman - and later the French - authorities' constant search for property and "proper" landlords.

Above all, the dichotomy between the internal and external aspects of the Syrian rural economy needs to be properly understood. Penetration of the world market created many new social and economic forms that were neither wholly capitalist nor 'traditional' but rather a half-way house where over a considerble period, capitalist relations (in terms of production for the wider market) co-existed with pre-capitalist social formations and relations of production.[28] As one student of this process in Lebanon has observed, "this contradictory movement expresses itself in the growth of commercialized agriculture and an export economy but also in the fundamental backwardness of technique and organisation which in the agricultural spheres remained unchallenged throughout the entire period in which

the absolute volume of production was growing."[29] Indeed, throughout our period, ordinary peasant cultivators continued to use their traditional tools and technologies. However, in the Ghuta of Damascus and the Orontes Valley, small regions of intensive irrigation, the picture is somewhat different.[30] That the internal organization of agricultural production was notoriously resistant to change is one of the major unanswered questions in the agrarian history of the region.[31]

A major theoretical problem, then, is to find an adequate interpretive framework within which to conceptualize the major developments in Syrian agriculture in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As observed by Owen in his study of Egyptian agriculture, "the problem stems largely from the fact that these developments do not neatly fit into any pre-existing categories, such as capitalism pure and simple."[32] Indeed, what is known about the working of the estates in the plains - particularly the 'feudalized' character of the Homs-Hama region and the complex tenancy and sharecropping arrangements - precludes the categorical imposition of such terminology as "capitalist" (or "feudal") upon the evidence. In Syria the materials, equipment and organization of production were essentially unmodified

throughout our period, despite the considerable increase in total production.[33] It is clear that in many regions central features of the pre-capitalist mode of exploiting land and methods of coercion persisted and were even strengthened. [34]

Amin and Keyder, in particular, have pointed out that merchant and moneylending capital are forces which ensure the 'peripheral structuring' of the productive forces employed in agriculture and industry. The theory of peripheral capitalist development raises questions which necessarily focus on the modes of integration of the pre-capitalist formations into the capitalist system and on the resulting patterns of transformation. Keyder's contention that "dependence consisted of a set of hierarchical relations within the world economy and rather than stagnation it engendered a particular kind of growth" merits closer examination on the local level.[35] For with the participation in the world market came new patterns of specialization in specific areas, and the stratification of rural society is very much bound up with this issue. It cannot be overstressed that the external element is crucial to change after the mid-19th century, but it is the interaction between the 'outside' and indigenous factors

which is of interest here. To quote Keydar again: "This hierarchical ordering of the world economy begins to condition the history of the periphery and the internal dynamic of the peripheral formation is no longer sufficient to account for its structure."[36]

An adequate understanding of the peripheral formation requires some examination of the political and economic role of the Ottoman state. Many of the historians cited above have stressed the primacy of the political in bringing about the transformation of Middle East rural society. Udovitch has gone so far as to assert that "the degree to which economic process factors were absorbed and compressed into a political framework is striking and must be considered one of the prominent characteristics in the history of Middle East agriculture."[37] Indeed, the intensification of Ottoman indebtedness to European powers after the mid-19th century gave rise to an endless search for more revenues from the rural sector, which prompted widespread reform. However it is my intention to consider the role of the state only in so far as its policies influenced patterns of economic activity and social relations as they were manifest in the Syrian countryside.

To conclude these introductory remarks, it is my opinion

that the best way to approach the articulation of a capitalist within a non-capitalist mode of production in the case of Syrian rural society is by careful examination of a series of developments within a limited structure of production and exchange. The rise of new social classes and the progressive stratification of rural society are among the most important concomitants of change. Thus it is intended that the character of this study be in broad agreement with Abdel-Malek's conviction that "we should study history not as a record of events but as a sequence of socio-economic forms."[38]

The sources

As pointed out above, contemporary research - with a few notable exceptions - has focussed to a much greater extent on urban history with scant attention given to rural society. The archival documentation relating to rural affairs is considerably less voluminous and thus research into local agrarian history of the Middle East is beset by the most basic problems, many stemming directly from the lack of adequate local records and official statistics. A major problem for the researcher is presented by the fact that the Ottoman land records were destroyed or lost in the First World War. Thus the primary source materials

available to construct the local picture - are limited and fragmentary. It is also necessary in this context to take into account the fact that very few records were kept on a day to day basis in the conduct of agrarian affairs. It is widely acknowledged that in traditional peasant societies many key activities such as systems of land management and agrarian contracts between landlords and cultivators were never submitted to record but were transacted in accordance with local custom and transmitted orally.[39]

Principal sources for the study of European economic expansion and political domination and their effects upon Syrian society are the dispatches and commercial reports of the British and French consuls in the country. The problems and limitations of this type of material have been the object of considerable discussion among Middle East economic and social historians. As Albert Hourani warns us, "Diplomatic and consular reports must be treated with caution because those who wrote them were themselves actors in the political process and wrote their reports not just as an historical record of events, but often to justify themselves to their government or to persuade it to adopt a certain line of action."[40] From the mid-19th century these dispatches contain particularly valuable information for

economic and commercial history. From an examination of such documentation we are afforded insight into the process of 'opening up' Syria to the demands of an industrializing economy and European priorities. The growing preoccupation with Syrian grain, for example, becomes striking after 1850. The increasing volume of foreign trade after that date meant that European governments insisted on being kept well informed of commercial and agricultural developments.

The French consuls and resident-merchants generally displayed a greater attentiveness to rural affairs than their British counterparts and kept a vice-consul from 1853 in the important grain-growing region of Hama who regularly submitted detailed reports on agrarian developments and regional trade involving important transactions with the nomadic population. It is wise to treat the data contained in these sources as estimates and indicative of general trends - even when there are contradictions and yawning gaps in the information provided by the various consulates. We are also forced to rely on the detailed observations of the numerous European travellers of the period, but on the whole their works are only of sufficient value if the writer in question resided in the region for a considerable period and was thus better able to grasp the nature of the society

he or she was observing. But taken together - and with a critical approach to the evidence as it is presented - a picture of the specific character of Syria's rural society and its transformation gradually emerges.

For the Mandate period, the voluminous documentation of the French administration housed in the Archives du Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, is, of course, indispensable - as are the numerous 'on the spot' reports by a whole host of agrarian advisors, Beduin 'experts' and other specialists in rural questions linked to the Mandatory regime.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER I

1 J-P Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane: Le XIXe siècle," in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980, p. 34.

2 A.L. Udovitch, "Technology, Land Tenure and Rural Society: Aspects of Continuity in the Agricultural History of the Pre-Modern Middle East," in A.L. Udovitch (ed.),The Islamic Middle East 700-1900, Princeton, 1981, p. 11.

3 S. Amin, Unequal Development: Social Formations on the Periphery of the Capitalist System, London, 1976, p. 41.

4 K.H. Karpat, "The Land Regime, Social Structure and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire," in W. Polk and R. Chambers (eds.), The Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968.

5 Y. Firestone, "Crop-sharing Economics in Mandatory Palestine," Middle East Studies XI, 1975 and "Production and Trade in the Islamic Context: Sharika Contracts in the Transitional Economy of Northern Samaria, 1843-1943," International Journal of Middle East Studies, VI, 1975; D. Chevallier, La Société du Mont Liban a l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe, Paris, 1971; H. Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq, Princeton, 1978; S. Graham-Brown, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus: 1920-1948," in R. Owen (ed.), Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Oxford, 1982; L. Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism: the Damascene Notables 1785-1870, unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1978.

6 C. Keyder, "Paths of Rural Transformation in Turkey," unpublished ESA Working Paper, Jan. 1980; The Definition of a Peripheral Economy: Turkey 1923-1929, Cambridge, 1981.

7 D. Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, London, 1948; also see Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Série E: Syrie-Liban: 1918-1929.

8 D. Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis in the mid-19th century: Syria confronted with the European Economy," in W. Polk and R. Chambers (eds.), 1968, p. 205.

9 Ibid., p. 205.

10 R. Owen, The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914, London, 1981, p. ix.

11 D. Seddon, Moroccan Peasants: A Century of Change in the Eastern Rif: 1870-1970, London, 1981, p.48.

12 P. Slugglett and M. Farouk-Slugglett, "The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria," in T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

13 T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure, p. vii.

14 H. Islamoglu-Inan, "Paths of Socio-Economic Transformation in Ottoman Rural Society: the Case of North Central Anatolia in the 16th Century," unpublished paper, Harvard University, 1981.

15 E. Boserup, The Conditions of Agricultural Growth - the Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure, Chicago, 1965.

16 Y. Firestone, "Faddan and Musha: Agricultural Holdings and the Burden of Impositions in Late Ottoman Palestine," paper presented to the Middle East Economic History Conference, Princeton University, 1974.

17 P. Khoury, Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus: 1860-1920, Cambridge, 1983, p. 2.

18 A. Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables, in W. Polk and R. Chambers (eds.), 1968; Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism

19 Batatu, The Old Social Classes, p. 11.

20 Ibid., p. 13.

21 This problem is discussed in M. Weber, Economy and Society, New York, 1968.

22 See Capitaine Caserane, "Nomadisme et Sédentarisation," Centre des Hautes Etudes Administratives sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes, Paris, No. 1559; n.d. hereafter cited as CHEAM.

23 See Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism; A-K Rafeq, The Province of Damascus, 1723-1783, Beirut, 1970; and Batatu, The Old Social Classes.

24 On this point see ᶜAbdullah Hanna, Al-qadiyya al-ziraᶜiyya waᶜl harakat al-fallahiyya fi suriya wa lubnan: 1820-1920, Vol. I, Beirut, 1975, Chapters 2 and 3.

25 Khoury, Urban Notables, p. 4.

26 H. Batatu, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society," Arab Studies Quarterly, 1 1979, p. 234.

27 P. Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Syria," Middle East Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1982.

28 A detailed analysis of the articulation of a capitalist mode of production within a pre-capitalist social formation is to be found in S. Amin, Unequal Development, London, 1976, chapters I and II.

29 P. Saba, The Development and Decline of the Lebanese Silk Industry, unpublished B. Litt. thesis, Oxford, University, 1977.

30 J. Weulersse, Paysans de Syrie et du Proche-Orient, Paris, 1946; A. Latron. La Vie Rurale en Syrie et au Liban, Beirut, 1936; R. Hilan, Culture et développement en Syrie et dans les pays retardés, Paris, 1969.

31 R. Owen analyzes this problem in detail in the Egyptian context in "The Development of Agricultural Production in 19th century Egypt: Capitalism of What Type?" in A.L. Udovitch (ed.), The Islamic Middle East 700-1900, Princeton, 1981.

32 Ibid., p. 521.

33 J. Hannoyer, "Le monde rural avant les réformes," in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie, pp. 277-281.

34 See Amin, Unequal Development, Chapters II and III and Batatu, The Old Social Classes, pp. 65-150.

35 Keyder, The Definition, p. 1.

36 Ibid., p. 6.

37 Udovitch, "Technology," p. 25.

38 A. Abdel-Malek, "Sociology and Economic History: An Essay on Mediation," in M.A. Cook (ed.), Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, London, 1970, p. 56.

39 See, for example, T. Shanin (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Societies, London, 1971 and R. Redfield, The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture, Chicago, 1965.

40 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform," p. 44.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AND REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

A certain degree of confusion in researching the pre-modern history of the Levant arises from the fact that the name "Syria" has referred to a number of different political and administrative entities at different periods in history. Before the 20th century, the term Syria or Bilad al-Sham designated the geographic area defined by the Taurus Mountains in the north, the Sinai peninsula to the south, the Mediterranean to the west and the Syrian desert or the 'Badiya' to the east. Indeed the existence of a Greater Syria or Bilad al-Sham has deep roots in history, which reflects its geographic unity. As put by Andre Raymond, "Sa réalité profonde apparait aussi avec évidence sur le terrain à quiconque parcourt cette région de Beyrouth à Jérusalem de Amman à Damas et Alep, et peut en constater l'homogénéité géographique, économique, humaine et culturelle."[1]

For the purposes of this study "Syria" will be used in its broader historical application, as the various regions of Bilad al-Sham were subject to similar pressures and patterns of social and economic transformation. But the region which is the focus of this study concerns that part of the country

which formed the Ottoman Province of Damascus (Wilayat Suriya) and (with altered boundaries) the State of Syria under the French Mandate. However, in constructing the local histories, it is essential to maintain a wider perspective with regard to the relationship between the various agricultural regions and developments affecting Syria as a whole.

Clearly, any examination of agricultural conditions in the Syrian interior must begin with a preliminary study of the region's geography. By briefly considering such factors as climate, topography and water resources, we are in a better position to grasp how natural conditions act upon agrarian institutions. In approaching the regional histories it will first be necessary to conceptualize Syria as comprising a number of distinct geographic and agricultural zones,[2] each displaying its own characteristics and subject to a specific pattern of development. Before we can determine what can be said about agricultural production and change in the framework of wider historical forces, it is important to construct a clear picture of the geographic features of the regions in question.

In investigating the key relationships in rural society and

the various paths of development, it is crucial to bear in mind that Syria's geography and climatic conditions display great variations for different parts of the country. Unlike Egypt, rural Syria cannot be reduced to a specific type of terrain or agriculture. Diversity is to be emphasised here, particularly with regard to conditions of rainfall. These factors must be considered together with the historic conditions which have always determined the population densities and settlement of the various regions.[3]

What is refered to as the Syrian interior can be taken as that geographic unit (roughly corresponding to the Ottoman provinces of Aleppo and Damascus) extending north to the rich agricultural lands of the Taurus Mountains and Kurdistan, to the east and south-east to the desert frequented by nomadic tribes and bordered on the west by Mt.Hermon and the Anti-Lebanon. There are a number of important common features here. One is that throughout our period the Syrian interior - as oppposed to Egypt or Lebanon - was a strikingly underpopulated area in relation to its land fertility and resources.[4] Obviously the aridity of the climate is a very basic factor which conditioned agricultural development. Equally important is the fact

that throughout the centuries, access to the sea was rendered extremely problematic by the existence of the double mountain chain of the Lebanon. Historically, this situation, in which the great grain-growing plains were cut off from the Mediterranean coast, is reflected in the fact that the great commercial centres and much of the economic life of the country were to be found in the interior. As pointed out by one French geographer, "La Syrie est donc un domaine essentiellement continental, davantage tourné vers l'Euphrate que vers la Mediterranée."[5]

A number of geographers have remarked upon the heterogeneity of the character of the countryside which is composed of very dissimilar regions and appears to lack a natural centre. Some observers, indeed, have gone so far as to assert that this diversity accounts for the fact that there has rarely been in Syrian history (with the notable exception of the Umayyad period) a political configuration with Damascus as its base.[6] That being said, the region which Weulersse has depicted as "le croissant céréalier" best typifies Syrian agriculture and extends over vast expanses. But even this, as we shall see, does not present a homogenous picture.

Climatic conditions have traditionally made Syria and the Fertile Crescent a region of grain farming. Without irrigation, extensive grain cultivation is the only agriculture possible in this region, a great semi-circle of cultivable land defined by the 200-250mm rainfall line. With the exception of the coastal and mountain regions, rainfall is too low for more intensive land use. Situated between the 'Mediterranean' zone of the coast and mountainous regions, characterized by orchard cultivation and the desert, frequentd by pastoral nomads, the cereal-growing plains and steppelands are best conceived as a 'hinge' or intermediary region, the domain of contact and complex relations of exchange between nomads and settled cultivators.[7]

Above all else, the process of agricultural expansion and the constraints placed upon production were deeply influenced by the limitations presented by the rainfall patterns. The zone of rainfall adequate for cereal cultivation covers an extensive area, but the various regions of Greater Syria display great divergences in this respect.[8]

Aleppo	350-420 mm
Beirut	870 mm
Damascus	200-230 mm
Biqaʿ	630 mm

Obviously the amount and regularity of rainfall rapidly diminishes as one approaches the desert to the east. Situated 100 miles from the coast, the Damascus region, with an average of 200-230 mm of rainfall per year, is situated virtually on the edge of the desert.

Three areas of rainfall distinguish themselves for the interior:

1. The elevated hill region of the north-west (600 mm).

2. The plains and steppe zone of the interior which forms a crescent, receiving 250-500 mm of rain.

3. The 'desert' which occupies the south and east of the country, receiving under 250 mm of rain.

The hilly region of the north-west and the Alawite and Anti-Lebanon mountain chains serve to enclose important, though limited zone. These slopes and the terraces which were carefully built upon them were traditionally places of

refuge, providing secure havens from nomadic incursions which at the beginning of our period, devastated vast expanses in the plains and steppe regions.[9] A continuous belt of dry-farming stretches across the plains of the Orontes at the foot of the mountains and in the plain of Aleppo. Extensive areas of dry farming are also to be found among the volcanic mounds and basaltic tracts of the Hawran as well as in the hollows of the Jabal Druze, where average rainfall is approximately 250-300 mm per year. Wheat and barley are the traditional crops in all the dry farming districts, while the cultivation of olives and vines often formed extensive orchards surrounding the villages.

Much of Syria receives less than the critical annual average of 240-250 mm of precipitation with inter-annual variabilities put at more than 37%.[10] Permanent cultivation thus becomes increasingly difficult as one progresses south-east. But beyond the 200-250 mm line, precipitation is usually sufficient to produce extensive seasonal grazing in various parts of the Syrian desert, the home of many thousands of nomads. Outside the zone of permanent dry farming, cultivation takes place only where irrigation is possible - as in the oasis regions. The Barada and Awaj

rivers flow from the Anti-Lebanon to provide the intensive orchard cultivation of the Ghuta of Damascus with abundant water resources. However, throughout our period, the expansion of agriculture was not able to break away from the critical isohyets and inter-annual fluctuations.

It is important to remember that the water resources of Syria are far from negligible. A number of rivers provide a permanent and important supply of water: the Euphrates, Orontes and Barada. The two regions under study are provided with rivers which are relatively modest in size, but the management and distribution of which were less problematic than the Euphrates.[11] The Orontes, or Nahr al-ᶜAsi, which has its source in the Anti-Lebanon and runs from south to north through the Homs-Hama plain before descending into the Ghab region, has a distance of 140 kilometres. Also having its source in the Anti-Lebanon and flowing through the deep and narrow gorge of Mount Qassyun, the Barada and its tributaries spread throughout the plain of Damascus, sustaining the orchard agriculture and lush gardens of the Ghuta, the total length of its principal branches approaching 90 kilometres.

Clearly, these geographic features would appear to indicate

a very favourable environment for irrigation. Yet one has to acknowledge that political stability and rural security are primary requirements for the undertaking of the construction of major canal works. Nevertheless, the agriculturalist has traditionally resorted to a number of locally developed techniques such as the redirecting of rivers, the sinking of multiple wells or qanawat, and the construction of water-wheels set in motion by the current of the river - particularly characteristic of the Orontes).

There are a number of ways to approach the division of the interior of the country into agricultural regions. Taking into account the various factors of climate and geography, it becomes clear that distinct zones present themselves. These roughly correspond to different types of production - the dry farming of grains, irrigated gardening and pastoral production, the latter of which must be considered an integral part of agriculture in the Syrian context. Most regions are characterized by the predominance of one of these types, but it is important not to simplify the matter. Often two or more types of production were practised together. But the major zones - the mountainous regions, the plains and oases or ghutas and the desert steppe - are

very unequal in extent and agricultural importance.

The Anti-Lebanon and the Alawite mountain chain comprise a very limited agricultural area. Here, as on Mt.Lebanon, massive social and economic organisation has been necessary to render the soil cultivable.[12] In the southern regions of the Alawite mountains the population is dense and is distributed in a multitude of small villages. These mountains - like Jabal Druze - were traditionally a place of refuge attracting different minorities since the Middle Ages; the main community, the Alawis, established their settlements from the 10th to 11th centuries. But from the mid-19th century, the scarcity of resources on the mountain precipitated an exodus of many peasants to the Homs-Hama plain,[13] an important development to be examined when considering the local history of the region.

It is the fertile grain growing plains and the steppe regions to the east of the mountain chains which comprise the most important regions from the agricultural point of view; grain covers roughly 75% of the cultivated area. This most extensive and "core" region of Syrian agriculture is defined by the crucial 250-500 mm rainfall band and presents itself in the form of a vast arc around the Syrian desert

which extends from Jabal Druze and the Hawran, past the plains of Damascus and the Homs-Hama region to the Euphrates in the north-east. As we have seen, variation in rainfall varies considerably within this interior arc, being the most abundant in the Aleppo plain and the least in the Hawran and the Damascus region. Despite the not inconsiderable water resources of the region, it is dry-farming which constitutes the basis of agricultural activity here (with wheat generally cultivated on good and barley on poor land). However, although dry-farming of winter cereals has been the rule, it was traditionally complemented in many regions by the cultivation of summer crops: cotton, tobacco, sesame, fruits and vegetables. The cultivation of cotton, in particular, which was practiced in the plains of the interior since very ancient times, was almost entirely for the wider market and supplied the active weaving and spinning industries of Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Damascus.[14]

The steppelands along the desert fringe can be taken as a distinct agricultural zone, although these regions are so inextricably linked to the agrarian life of the central plains that the distinction between them, in some respects, is quite arbitrary. As one travels east, orchard and garden

agriculture becomes increasingly scarce and only cereal cultivation is possible. In the steppe regions, the question of the complex relationship between the sedentary and nomadic populations present itself. It is an extremly important one for our period, which witnessed the gradual settlement of the Beduin after centuries of struggle on the part of the sedentary population and the Ottoman authorities to keep the nomadic tribes on the fringes of the cultivated zone.

It was in the plains and steppe region that there appeared, probably for the first time in human history, sedentary agriculture involving the domestication of livestock and cereals. From ancient times, a complex urban network tied to commerce and the development of a state apparatus emerged here, reflecting the urgency of maintaining security in the cultivated zone.[15] There has always been a theoretical boundary separating the 'peasant' world of sedentary cultivation from that of the nomadic Beduin. But it is important to stress that there has been between nomads and peasant cultivators, not only relations of violent conflict but also extensive networks of exchange and reciprocity.

The fact that the frontier of settled agriculture has varied

greatly at different historical periods, not only reflects the power relations between the tribesmen and the sedentary population, but is also a response to climatic changes such as successive years of drought.[16] It is clear that for a considerable length of time before the mid-19th century, the frontier of cultivation was pushed back and that sedentary cultivators almost disappeared in the plains to the east of Homs and Hama and in much of the Hawran to the advantage of the nomads.[17]

Thus we might best conceive of the steppelands as a zone of contact, where the capacity of the government to control depended very much on the advance or retreat of sendentary cultivation. It was along this area, extending from the extreme north-east to the south of Syria - between the plains traditionally controlled by important urban centres and the desert - that we find the major regions of agricultural recolonization from the mid-19th century.

From the historical point of view, it is important to understand that the Syrian desert, the Badiya, is not a 'pure' desert. Clearly, this zone has always supported a considerable population; there are pastures in many areas where nomads have traditionally brought their flocks to

graze. Between the central plains, the steppe and the desert, a vast movement of population has circulated from the earliest times.[18] The steppe has served as a transitional zone, where demographic pressure and sedentarization of the nomads have forced a reoccupation of the land and cultivation despite the extreme uncertainty of harvests. Throughout the period under study, the desert was frequented by Beduin and sheep-rearing nomads caught up in a great movement of seasonal migration, which took tribes from the Hawran to the Euphrates during the winter and brought them back to the fringes of the cereal-growing zone where their flocks could find pasture in summer - and where, increasingly towards the end of our period, the tribesmen could also find work as agricultural labourers.[19]

Another zone (or rather sub-zone) encapsulated in the steppe-regions are the ghutas or oases, of which the Ghuta of Damascus is the largest example. In these irrigated regions, where dry-farming is also practiced as a rule, a certain level of affluence favours the attachement of the peasant to his fields on which he was able to develop more initiative than his counterpart in the plains.[20] Irrigation in the ghutas of Syria can be seen in terms of individual

initiatives in the absence of organised government power. The mode of operation of the canal works is generally small scale, but testifies to the existence of an elaborate complex of customs which very possibly date back to antiquity.[21] In de Boucheman's major study of peasants and semi-sedentary cultivators in an oasis region, we are afforded a glimpse into the social implications of a precarious oasis agriculture encapsulated in a nomadic domain. The 'peasants' often veered between sedentary agriculture and pastoral nomadism.[22] De Boucheman also shows how water use was the subject of bitter disputes between local shaykhs.

The central region of Syrian agriculture presents itself as a vast plain, but within this seemingly endless expanse, definite regions distinguish themselves. If the relative permanence, stability and homogeneity of the population of the Ghuta of Damascus is acknowledged, one can also assert that in the plains of the Homs-Hama region and the Hawran there was a much greater irregularity of harvests and the inhabitants open to not just Beduin incursions but the profound cultural influence of the nomadic population. Here the mixed peasant/nomad economy had long dominated the countryside and a merging of the two traditions is

characteristic of the plains. As observed by Weulersse, "A la sédentarisation des nomades correspondra une certaine nomadisation des sédentaires et les deux mouvements concourront à une mise en valeur moins extensive et de plus en plus eloignée des coutumes du désert."[23] This is confirmed by the agrarian practices found in countless communities in the eastern plains. Livestock rearing was often as important as cultivation and the live-stock contracts between peasants and semi-nomads played a huge role in the rural economy.[24]

Now we will briefly turn to the regions which will be the subject of local histories in this study, the Homs-Hama Plain and the Ghuta of Damascus.

The Homs-Hama Plain

The Homs-Hama region is an important grain growing area which has so far received very little attention from historians. The Orontes Valley is supplied with abundant water resources and provides some of the most fertile land in Syria.[25] Along the course of the Orontes, and intensive irrigated agriculture had long existed alongside the dry-farming of cereals. After the mid-19th century, the

agricultural land of this region was increasingly consolidated into exceptionally large estates and this is the outstanding feature of its agrarian history.[26]

The Homs-Hama plain displays all the classic characteristics of Syrian agriculture whereby the labour of the fellah has long been subjected to the needs of the large towns. Like the Hawran, it was a zone of migration, best exemplified by a colony like Salamiya. The notables of Hama directed the labour of the Alawis who, after the mid-19th century, colonized the plains and steppelands to the east. The region was also a principal arena for the settlement of nomadic tribes.

Here we are confronted with a socially very complex region, its population being essentially composed of Alawi, Sunni Muslim and Greek Orthodox peasants and semi-nomadic tribesmen. The area was the domain of complex exchange relations between nomads and sedentary cultivators,[27] the latter of which were widely considered to have nomadic origins, sedentarized at different periods.[28] The system of communal land tenure or musha^{c}, which was widespread in the Homs-Hama region, was usually cited as providing firm evidence for this. This conclusion, it must be said, is

open to serious question and is bound up with the perception of 'survivals' in the agrarian system on the part of Western observers.[29]

Most importantly, after the mid-19th century, the Homs-Hama plain became the heartland of the great estate system. Rural transformation here has much to do with the concentration of land in the hands of a few Hama-based notable families, such as the ᶜAzms, Kaylanis, Barazis and Hirakis - widely regarded as the biggest landowners in Syria. According to Weulersse, these four great families who dominated the plain controlled between them more than 100 villages by the time of the French Mandate period. It is clear from the testimony of many observers that the estate system as it functioned here acquired a magnitude and a domination unknown in other parts of the country.[30] With Keyder's analysis in mind, the Homs-Hama region is a good example of the progressive 'feudalization' of agriculture. For, unlike other regions of the interior, land does not appear to have changed hands frequently among different urban groups. On the other hand, continuous sales or compulsory ceding of villages and tribal lands by tribal shaykhs to the Hama landlord is an important feature here.[31]

The movement of migration by Alawis descending from their

mountain villages and putting the lands of the plain to cultivation is also an important development. This was the source of new social conflicts, as much of the land fell into the hands of the Hama landlords who colonized the area, bringing peasants from the Alawi mountains to farm their huge estates.[32]

A number of interconnected factors contributed to the formation of the great estates, but, with respect to the peasantry, the effects were invariably to transform them into share-cropping tenants of a notoriously subjugated variety. It is argued by Klat that, as a consequence of this system, this exceptionally fertile region was reduced to relative insignificance in terms of agricultural production by the first decades of the 20th century.[33] Indeed, a major movement of population from rural to urban areas, resulting in the depopulation of villages and the abandonment of fields by cultivators, was a feature of the Homs-Hama region in the Mandate period.[34] Warriner's studies, in particular, have testified to conditions of extreme poverty as characteristic of the villages on the landlords' estates in the region.[35]

This region provides one of the best examples of the

encroachment of the urban notables and the subjugation of the rural world to the powerful new forces emanating from the towns. As observed by Hannoyer, "Cité par excellence de l'aristrocratie foncière, Hama mesurait son pouvoir au nombre de villages qu'elle controlait."[36]

The Ghuta

The Ghuta of Damascus, the biggest 'oasis' in Syria, has traditionally been a densely populated region, in striking contrast to the plains districts. This intensively irrigated region of orchards, gardens and vineyards is sustained by the Barada river which divides into seven branches spreading in every direction, making the Ghuta one of the most fertile areas of Syria. The vast irrigation system of canals branching off from the Barada at different levels throughout the Ghuta is an inheritance from the ancient past, the origins of which are uncertain.[37]

The Ghuta of Damascus is closer to the ideal type of an oasis than what one finds in the Orontes region, in the sense of being an islet of irrigated agriculture in the midst of steppeland or desert. Yet it still does not completely conform to this ideal type. The desert fringe is

at one end, but hardly surrounds it. The volcanic mountain chain of the Jabal Druze shelters the Ghuta from the scorching desert winds. The hills extending from this chain form a basin which is sheltered on the north and west but is open to the steppe. Bounded by the Kalamun plateau, Mount Hermon and the approaches to the Hawran, the Ghuta of Damascus is situated well within the confines of the sedentary world.

The irrigated agrarian economy of the Ghuta represents a distinct type of agriculture in Syria. It differs greatly from the irrigated gardens of the coastal regions, the production of which was long devoted to cash crops. Necessities in these regions were increasingly purchased from the 'outside' in the 19th century.[38] The production of the Ghuta, despite the presence of commercialized agriculture, was more geared towards local consumption. The cultivators of this relatively self-contained region were more concerned with ensuring subsistence as a primary task and were engaged in cereal production as well as orchard cultivation. The Ghuta traditionally sustained a double production in this respect.

The agrarian economy and social organisation here is complex

and varied, displaying the characteristics of an oasis economy and at the same time possessing a very ancient peasant-cultivator tradition. In the barren steppe zone where it is situated (receiving 200-230 mm average annual rainfall), it is water above all else that is the basis of its existence. Here the rural community has evolved a highly developed and specialized collective organisation to exploit the water resources beneficially. However, dry-farming was not unknown and was sometimes indispensable, although subject to risks. The existence of threshing floors near every village of the area reveals the importance of grain farming.[39]

The city of Damascus and the Ghuta developed together; the intensive cultivation of the oasis made the life of the city possible while the existence of the city historically assured the constant security of the sedentary population of the Ghuta. This relationship characterized the development of the region.[40] The agrarian system of the Ghuta consisted of an accumulation of very ancient rights and customary practices legitimized by usage. The system rests upon the availability of the water supply, the control over which is a crucial dimension of social organization.[41] But from the social point of view, the difficulties begin with the

division of water and the problems of keeping a reasonable degree of equality in the distribution between landholders - the principle being that each holding must receive the same amount of water for the same area.[42] However, the tradition that the distribution of water was proportional to the extent of each agricultural field was increasingly challenged during our period. When it became possible to buy and sell shares in water and when cash was necessary for the upkeep and extension of the irrigation works, the hydraulic community proved to be deeply dependent on city merchants and moneylenders, who alone could provide them with sufficient capital.[43] The purchase and usurpation of water rights succeeded rapidly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[44]

It is clear that the agricultural production and, hence, the agrarian society to be found in the Ghuta was of a radically different type from that of the plains regions. Many observers stress the greater economic well-being and independence of the peasant-cultivators of this region compared with their counterparts in the Homs-Hama region.[45] The rural sociology and agricultural production was more complex and varied. It is to be expected, then, that the

more favourable agricultural conditions would allow for a greater diversity in social structure, but this is a question which must be subject to closer examination. The phenomenon of the 'planting contract' or mugharasa is bound up with the question of the stratification of peasant society - as is clearly brought out by Firestone's analysis of the Palestinian rural economy.[46] The mugharasa contract (under the terms of which a peasant clears a plot of land for its owner, plants trees, tends them until they mature and is thereupon awarded a share in the grove) often involved access to capital by ordinary peasant producers. Firestone argues that the cultivation of fruit and olive groves was one of the main activities in the rural economy of the Levant where real improvement was possible. Furthermore, it is clear that, as a result of this agrarian institution, a certain strata of peasant society in the Ghuta were able to become small proprietors.[47]

The distinct features and various types of agricultural production of these agrarian regions are to be taken into account when evaluating socio-economic change in the Syrian interior. In the Homs-Hama plain, as we have observed, the cultivation of cereals constitutes almost a monoculture. It

is clear that the fellah of the plain was in a situation of greater social and economic subjugation than his counterpart in the Ghuta or the mountainous regions. As observed by Weulersse, as there is only one easily controlled crop in the plains, the fellah could not easily deceive his lord. The irregularity of rainfall only increased the peasant's dependence on him.

In the Ghuta, by contrast, the variety of crops and the greater complexity of agricultural production requires a greater refinement of technique and expertise. As a consequence, the landlord could not do without a significant degree of co-operation on the part of his tenant cultivators. Clearly, the more diverse the crop pattern, the more surveillance and supervision is rendered problematic. This is particularly the case with orchards, which is why mugharasa is a significant factor here.[48] The generally higher standard of living afforded the peasantry of the Ghuta can also be attributed to the fact that the irrigation system suppresses or controls the risk of the seasons and that the region historically has been protected from nomadic incursions.[49] These factors support the general impression of contemporary observers that the peasantry here

preserved a greater social independence than elsewhere in the interior. However, in both regions under study it is necessary to differentiate between different types of peasant producers, as the stratification of rural society is an important feature of our period.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II

1 A. Raymond, La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, p. 8.

2 Z. Kanzadian and de Berthelot, Atlas de Géographie Economique de Syrie et du Liban, Paris, 1926 and J. Weulersse, Paysans de Syrie et du Proche Orient, Paris, 1946, are invaluable sources for determining the agricultural zones.

3 See. N. Lewis, "The Frontiers of Settlement in Syria, 1800-1950" in C. Issawi (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966; Hannoyer, "Le monde rural," p. 275; G. Bell, The Desert and the Sown, London, 1909; M. Seurat, "Les populations, l'état et la société," in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie, pp. 108-112.

4 On this question see P. Beaumont and G. H. Blake, The Middle East: A Geographical Study, London, 1976, pp. 350-370; M. Samman, "La situation démographique de la Syrie," Population, 6, 1976; M. Seurat, 1980; P. Klat, Land Tenure in Syria and Lebanon and its Social and Economic Effects, B. Litt thesis, Oxford University, 1948.

5 P. Sanlaville, "La personnalité géographique de la Syrie," in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, p. 15; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 205-237.

6 L. Cardon, Le Régime de la propriété foncière en Syrie et au Liban, Paris, 1932, pp. 20-25; Sanlaville, p. 17; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 30-37.

7 See N. Daker, Sédentarisation des bedouins nomades en Syrie, Paris, 1973; Bell, pp. 109-111; Capitaine Caserane, "Nomadisme et Sédentarisation," CHEAM No. 1559, 1938.

8 S. B. Himadeh (ed.), The Economic Organization of Syria, Beirut, 1936, p. 31; A. Latron, La Vie Rurale en Syrie et au Liban, Beirut, 1936, p. 141; Syria, Statistical Abstract, Damascus, 1955.

9 See N. Lewis, "The Frontiers of Settlement;" D. Segur, La Syrie et les Bédouins sous l'administration Turque, Paris, 1855; C. Volney Travels through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783, 1784, 1785, (trans.), 2 Vols., London, 1787.

10 Beaumont and Blake, p. 350.

11 Sanlaville, "La personnalité géographique."

12 Sanlaville, p. 22; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 310-340; Latron, pp. 210-233.

13 For a general description of this development, see, [Anon], "Notes sur la propriété foncière dans la Syrie centrale," L'Asie Française, April 1933, No. 309, pp. 130-137.

14 J. Tabet, La Syrie Historique, Géographique, Economique, Paris, 1921, pp. 53-64; D. Chevallier, "Un example de résistance technique de l'artisanat Syrien aux XIXe et XXe siecles," Syria, 1962, p. 300-324; C. Issawi, "Population and Resources in the Ottoman Empire and Iran," in T. Naff and R. Owen (eds.), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, Carbondale, 1977.

15 H. MacAdam, "Some Aspects of Land Tenure and Social Development in the Roman Near East: Arabia, Phoenicia and Syria," in Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

16 P. Sanlaville, p. 21; N. Lewis, "The Frontiers of Settlement," p. 337; B. Spooner, "The Desert and the Sown: A new look at an old relationship," in Naff and Owen (eds.), Studies.

17 See Volney, pp. 86-119 and J. S. Buckingham, Travels among the Arab Tribes Inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine, London, 1825.

18 A. de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins en Syrie," CHEAM, No. 126, 1937, pp. 15-18; H. MacAdam, pp. 50-52.

19 A. de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins en Syrie," pp. 36-41, Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 97-100; Daker, pp. 290-322.

20 Hannoyer, pp. 275-280; A. M. Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," in A. Raymond (ed.) La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, p. 357; Latron, pp. 141-158.

21 Latron, pp. 150-158.

22 A. de Boucheman, Une petite cité caravanière: Sukhné, Damascus, 1939.

23 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 310.

24 Ibid., p. 289; Latron, pp. 109-119; Daker, pp. 77-109.

25 See Kanzadian and de Berthelot, pp. 26-27 and W. B. Fischer, pp. 199-210, The Middle East, a Physical, Social and Regional Geography, London, 1975.

26 J. Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur de la région du 'Caza' de Homs," CHEAM, No. 249, 1938, pp. 4-5.

27 Ibid., pp. 38-41; "Notes sur la propriété foncière," 135-40; Bell, pp. 190-222.

28 Weulersse p. 337; Bell, pp. 150-156; Latron, p. 235.

29 See Y. Firestone, "Faddan and Musha: Agricultural Holdings and the Burden of Impositions in late Ottoman Palestine," Unpublished paper presented to the Middle East Economic History Conference, Princeton University, 1974.

30 Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur," p. 14; P. Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 99-103; A. Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire dans la region de Homs-Hama," Bulletin de l'Association des Géographes Français, March, 1950, pp. 53-59.

31 "Notes sur la propriété foncière," p. 135.

32 Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur," pp. 39-42.

33 Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 150-160.

34 See: Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Serie E: Syrie-Liban, 1918-1929: "Evènements de Damas et de Hamah," 1926, Vol. 125. (Hereafter cited as AAE).

35 D. Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, London, 1948.

36 Hannoyer, p. 278; Seurat, pp. 113-120; also see: H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society and the West, Vol. I, London, 1950.

37 On the evolution of the system of canalization see R. Tresse, "L'irrigation dans la Ghouta de Damas," in Revue des Etudes Islamiques, 3, 1929, pp. 459-462.

38 Weulersse, Paysans p. 135.

39 Latron, p. 98; R. Tresse, "L'irrigation," p. 105.

40 A-M Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," pp. 359-361; A-K Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside: 1743-1771" in A. L. Udovitch (ed.), Land Population and Society: Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, Princeton, 1982.

41 A-M Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," p. 362; Kurd ʿAli, Ghutat Dimashq, Damascus, 1953; A. Tower, The Oasis of Damascus, Beirut, 1935.

42 A.-K. Rafeq, "Economic Relations," p. 556; R. Tresse, "L'irrigation," p. 125.

43 Hannoyer, p. 278.

44 The best illustration of this point is to be found in the study of I. Antaki, "Deir-Atieh, essai d'ethnologie rurale," Cahier 5, Journal d'Agriculture Tropicale, Paris, 1973. This study shows how each cultivator availed himself of water rights, the ownership of which was calculated in hours. In the late and 20th centuries, the village shaykh appropriated the property and water rights, pp. 5-10.

45 See, for example, the observations of J. L. Porter, Five Years in Damascus, Vol. I, London, 1855, for the mid-19th century.

46 Y. Firestone, "Crop-sharing Economics in Mandatory Palestine," Middle East Studies, XI, 1975 and "Production and Trade in the Islamic Context: Sharika contracts in the transitional economy of northern Samaria, 1843-1943," International Journal of Middle East Studies, VI, 1975.

47 Latron, pp. 65-70.

48 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 317; also see: Firestone's articles on this point.

49 R. Thoumin, "Notes sur l'aménagement et la distribution des eaux à Damas et dans sa Ghouta," Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, V, 1934, pp. 40-45.

CHAPTER III: RURAL SOCIETY IN THE SYRIAN INTERIOR: THE PRE-MODERN PERIOD

The way Syrian rural society and the local economies were transformed in the latter part of the 19th century clearly had much to do with the way they previously existed. In this chapter we will examine what can be said about the central features of agrarian life as they were expressed in the system of land tenure, surplus appropriation and the extent of the cultivated zone up to the time of the Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831-1840) which was to initiate a period of substantial socio-economic change. It must be stated from the outset that to separate the "pre-modern" from the "transitional" period is a somewhat arbitrary task,as many of the basic characteristics of rural society which will be discussed here persisted long after the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-19th century.

A major obstacle is presented by the paucity of detailed information on rural social and economic organization in Syria before the late 19th century; before 1830 our knowledge is only fragmentary. However, notwithstanding these considerable problems, it is essential to attempt to grasp nature of the social formation before the dual processes of European economic penetration and Ottoman

reform worked to promote significant changes in rural society.

The diverse aspects of the Syrian traditional economy, whether with regard to trade, agriculture or the local handicraft industries, were subject to differential impact under the pressures of an expanding Europe in the 19th century. In the early 19th century, it was primarily the long distance and urban trade which felt the impact.[1] Agriculture, the backbone of the traditional economy, was not to be significantly affected until after the mid-19th century. The forces set in motion by European penetration took much longer to make themselves felt in the domain of agrarian relations and the organization of production.[2]

It is in this context that the question of the nature of pre-capitalist economic formations in the non-European world presents itself. This has been the topic of considerable debate, the validity of the concept of the 'Asiatic mode' and the notion of the co-existence of different modes of production within a single socio-economic formation being the main areas of contention.[3] In examining social and economic change in Syrian rural society, it is necessary to carefully scrutinize many of the widespread assumptions embedded in the historical literature (not least

that of 19th century observers) with regard to the 'stagnant' or 'arrested' state of pre-capitalist Ottoman society.[4] All too often, scholars have tended to ignore the implications of foreign trade and internal developments. There is evidence that the peasant economy in various regions of the Ottoman Empire did - at different periods - make a significant response to the demands of a wider market. Changes in productivity and increased yields in response to population growth and greater commercial demand were not unknown in pre-19th century Ottoman history.[5]

Rural social and economic developments do not take place in a vacuum and, as Islamoglu-Inan rightly argues, these cannot be understood in isolation from historically evolved socio-political relations of surplus extraction and exchange:

> "In the Ottoman Empire these relations were structured by the political-juridical practices of the state that made possible the production, appropraition and distribution of surplus production by peasants who had direct access to the means of production - the land."[6]

Crucial here is an examination of the evolution of the state apparatus as it impinged on the rural areas and the complex and shifting relationship between urban centres and the countryside. In the Syrian context, the changing

position of nomadic society is equally important.

A number of studies which have attempted an analysis of the pre-modern Middle East, particularly those with a Marxist approach, have been primarily concerned with fitting all aspects of the pre-capitalist society into the conceptual framework of modes of production - be this 'Asiatic' or 'feudal' - rather than to grasp the complex structures of the pre-capitalist formations in the period prior to European economic penetration.[7] The Asiatic mode of production is typically characterized by a form of tax-rent which derives from state ownership of the means of production, principally in land. The primacy of the political in economic arrangements is consistently stressed. As conceived by Hindess and Hirst:

> The mode of appropriation of the surplus product corresponds to two distinct sets of forces of production, that is independent peasant cultivation and communal cultivation. These are determined by the mode of tax and tenure which are, above all, politically determined. It is characterized by the mode of surplus product appropriation: the tax-rent nexus.[8]

Most contributors to the debate take their point of departure from Marx's theory of historical periodization and evolution based upon his comparative study of the development of European and 'Asiatic' societies.[9] What is

significant here is Marx's elaboration of historical stages, conceived in terms of systems which favour and those which resist historical evolution and social change. The inter-related features of the Marxist concept of the Asiatic mode of production and what is commonly referred to as 'Oriental despotism' are the apparent absence of landed property and the existence of the self-sustaining village or tribal community. Marx argued that the central feature of the system was the "self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture" within the village commune, which contains all the conditions for reproduction within itself: "At bottom," he argued, "every individual household contains an entire economy, forming as it does an independent centre of production."[10] Manufacture, widely regarded as a major vehicle for social change by European historians, is seen by Marx as merely the domestic "subsidiary" labour of women of the peasant household in the Asiatic context. Thus, it was his contention that the Asiatic system " resisted disintegration and economic evolution more stubbornly than any other system."[11] As an interpretive framework, it is clear that this model is incapable of explaining changes in production and social structure.

Be that as it may, it might be useful for us to

conceptualize the Asiatic mode (as exemplified by 16th and 17th century Ottoman society), as distinguished by a strong state over a largely rural economy with the bureaucracy in the seat of the central authority as the class that receives the entire surplus in the form of taxes. By controlling the revenue and the production of the rural surplus, the state emerges as a dominant force in the agrarian economy.[12] The disjuncture between the use and ownership of property is held to be an essential characteristic. As argued by Keyder, "the users of agricultural or urban manufacturing property are not its owners, a situation which precludes any private accumulation of the surplus."[13]

Keyder considers the potential for structural change in the Ottoman 'Asiatic' system:

> "The contradictions of this formation result from the growing needs of the central bureaucracy for surplus, which requires stronger local representation and greater disciplinary power in the hands of the local representatives of the central authority."[14]

It is suggested where we should look for change: in the 18th and early 19th centuries a succession of developments and conflicting interests worked to increase the power of the local forces and landed intermediaries at the expense of the central authority, thus generating a tendency towards

feudalization.[15]

This situation is hardly expressive of the traditional and unchanging 'Asiatic' inheritance, but is a product of historical forces. It is clear from the various studies undertaken by Keyder, M.S. Kalla, Hanna Batatu and A-K Rafeq, to name but a few, that it is wholly artifical to isolate the internal characteristics of the Asiatic mode from the impact of long distance and regional trade within the Ottoman Empire, and, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the increasing foreign trade with Europe. Furthermore, the ability of the state to extract taxes and tribute fluctuated greatly. These shifts were important and require analysis.

Rural surpluses were appropriated by the state through the Ottoman army representatives or local notables and village shaykhs. This was characteristically transacted through a system of official concessions or grants, the iqta^{c} or timar. It is true that the beneficiary of the iqta^{c} resembles the fief-holder of the European feudal system in some respects, but there were crucial differences. As put by Lacoste:

> In Western Europe, the beneficiary of a fief received with definite title and specific location a percentage of political authority over each peasant and a share in the rights of ownership of the land. In the Arab world, the beneficiary of an iqta received only a delegated and temporary right to extract taxes from a named group, and he possessed no rights over the land which remained the formal possession of the ruler and continued to belong in practice to the community or tribe that had the usufruct. He received no additional rights in the government of the administration of the tribesmen.[16]
> (My emphasis)

According to Samir Amin, "we cannot speak of feudalism in Syria even if semi-feudal forms did develop during periods when large scale trade was in decline."[17] As we have acknowledged in the previous chapter, in the open plains urban groups could dominate the rural population more easily. Thus in times of commercial difficulty they could compensate for their loss of income from long-distance trade by the surplus taken from the rural population. The plains of Homs-Hama and the Hawran were brought under control by urban landlords in the late Ottoman period, "which was a long period of commercial decline."[18] Amin maintains that the social formation of the pre-capitalist Arab world is characterized by substantial developments in long-distance trade together with a small surplus production within agrarian society.

Chevallier has also criticized the translation of the term iqta[c] as synonymous with "feudal" and has stressed that this only impairs our comprehension of a system so different from that of Europe.[19] In this context, Gilsenan's warning that "the construction of ideal types of feudal society can all too easily lead to a reification of a very static model in which it is difficult to account for historical changes"[20] is well worth considering. What is more important are the local manifestations as they present themselves in the evidence before us.

Population

One of the most difficult - if not to say insurmountable - problems for the historian of Syrian society in the late Ottoman period has been that of determining the state of the population. With regard to the estimates of European consuls, largely based upon figures provided by the provincial authorities, a number of historians have warned that these must be viewed with a certain degree of scepticism as, in the words of Shaw, these functionaries often made "self-serving estimates of the population to support their own political or diplomatic ambitions, using methods such as multiplying by pre-set figures the number of males found in neighbourhood coffee-houses or religious

services."[21] A census was, in fact, undertaken as part of the efforts of Sultan Mahmud II (1809-1839) to create a new army and bureaucracy following the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826. However, only men were included - as only they served in the army and were subject to taxation. The count was completed in 1831, but the census takers inevitably failed to reach remote rural areas, leaving the agrarian and nomadic populations unaccounted for.[22]

What, then, can be broadly inferred from a reading of contemporary sources concerning the population of various regions in Syria in the early 19th century? A number of important factors should be taken into account - the most basic of these being what is known to be the widespread depopulation of the rural districts in the 18th century, a process which continued in certain areas well into the 19th century.[23] The strength of the urban in relation to the rural population must be considered, along with the occurrence of famines and plagues which raged in the 18th century with exceptional ferocity and were known to have a devastating effect in many regions.[24]

Historians of the Middle East have, in the past, shown relatively little interest in the impact of plagues and

famine and other natural catastrophes in the development of the pre-modern era, although recently there have been a few good examples of scholarship on this subject.[25] Rotter, in a study of rural Syria in the Medieval period, asserts that most of the population died in the two plagues,or ta^{c}un, which swept through the countryside in the late seventh century and argues that one can assume that the amount of taxes collected shrank dramatically, resulting in the near impossibility of conscripting large armies during the plagues. A significant contraction of the cultivated area during the period was the outcome.[26] Dobbs and Ashtor have pointed out that one of the immediate effects of plague and the consequent loss to agriculture was nearly always famine. 19th century observers in Syria are in agreement that the plague always affected the nomadic much less than the settled population.[27] However, famine and droughts obviously had a much greater effect on the nomadic population, setting into motion a chain reaction of population pressure until tribes eventually encroached on settled cultivators.[28]

Plagues were recurrent in the Fertile Crescent from the 12th to early 19th century and took a particularly heavy toll in human life. There were a number of particularly violent

visitations of plague and epidemics in the 18th century. Aleppo, whose population had been established at 230,000 before the visitations of the plague, did not have, according to Eton, more than 40-50,000 inhabitants by the end of the 18th century. He attributed the sharp decline in the population of Syria as a whole to the plagues of 1757 and 1773.[29] Volney, in particular, has left us an eloquent testimony on the plague of 1783 and its devastating effects on the rural districts.[30] In the 1750's, the Damascus region also suffered a series of major earthquakes. Waves of violent plagues are known to have followed these tremors, the one which appeared after the quake of 1760 "engulfed a region extending between Antioch and Symrna in the north and Gaza in the south".[31] Local chroniclers make clear that the earthquakes made conditions favourable to its spread. Budayri speaks of 1,000 people dying in Damascus daily during one week at the height of the epidemic, which was reported to have lasted six months.[32] According to a contemporary Syrian source, the epidemic of 1813 was particularly savage as a quarter of the country perished.[33]

Besides the numerous population estimates of European travellers, we have the figures of the European consuls established in Syria during the Egyptian occupation and

after the re-imposition of Ottoman rule. One of the earliest estimates for our period comes from Consul Werry, who had access to Egyptian tax registers and population statistics for the various districts. Werry in 1836 suggested the figure of 1,500,000 "sedentary people" for all of Syria including Palestine.[34] From the returns of the 1831 census, Issawi has established the Syrian population in the 1830s as 1,300,000. However, he stresses that this figure does not account for Christians or Jews.[35] Consul Moore, taking note that the total Syrian population paying the Ferdeh or the capitation tax was 237,737 - according to the public register kept at Damascus - put the figure at 2,000,000 - the very highest estimate given.[36] But as most contemporary observers put the population of Greater Syria somewhere between 1,500,000 and 1,800,000, this estimate may safely be given a degree of credibility.[37]

Of greater interest, for the purposes of this study, is the distribution of population between the cities and rural areas. The major urban concentrations of Syria were traditionally found in the interior. In the first half of the 19th century, Damascus is believed to have had between 100,000 and 110,000 inhabitants.[38] Aleppo had perhaps as few as 80,000 after the earthquake of 1822 which destroyed

much of the city.[39] The central towns of Homs and Hama - always much smaller than either Damascus or Aleppo - probably had a population of around 20,000 each.[40] The ratio of rural to urban population must be a matter of specualtion. According to Bowring, "the small villages and rural districts of northern and central Syria contain one fourth the population of the towns."[41] And Consul Moore observed that "the population of towns in Syria exceed in all proportion that of the countryside owing to the greater security which towns afford the inhabitants."[42] On the other hand, contemporary observers are in agreement that the proportion of mortality was greater in the towns than in the rural areas. This was especially the case when visitations of the plague attacked dense populations.[43]

A major factor concerning the strength of the rural population is bound up with the phenomenon of the widespread depopulation of the plains districts in the 18th and early decades of the 19th century. There is evidence that there were many deserted villages in the Syrian countryside from the late 17th century onwards, as sedentary cultivators moved progressively to the west under the pressure of nomadic incursions.[44] From that period, the Syrian plains were the setting for important migratory movements of

nomadic tribesmen reflecting overpopulation and severe drought conditions in the Arabian peninsula over long periods of time.[45] In the 17th century successive waves of tribal migration succeeded one another and in the latter part of the 18th century, this movement accelerated under the pressure of the Wahabis, a powerful tribal movement composed of the ᶜAnaza and Shammar confederations. The ᶜAnaza, in particular, had a dramatic impact on rural life as they established themselves on the Homs-Hama plain and the outlying regions of Aleppo, pushing the weaker, semi-sedentary tribes to the centre of the cultivated zone.[46]

Contemporary sources put the nomadic population at about 500,000 in the first half of the 19th century.[47] M.S. Kalla maintains that from the 18th century up to 1850, the non-sedentary percentage of the population remained stable. The limited resources of the desert account for this, as any increase would lead to the sedentarization of the weaker elements of the nomadic population.[48]

In the first decades of the 19th century, the sedentary population often retreated to the relative safety of the mountains, towns and large villages in proximity to urban areas where their security was more assured. In the

mountains and the Ghuta the densest concentrations of the rural population were found. In the Province of Damascus, the mountain regions were inhabited by Muslim minority sects: the Druze, who established a semi-autonomous life on Jabal Druze and the Alawis, concentrated on Jabal ᶜAlawiyin in the mountains of the Latakia region. Together these accounted for some 10% of the population in geographic regions highly unfavourable for agriculture.[49] Volney's observations provide some kind of clue to population densities and distribution in the various regions in the late 18th century:

> "The part of Syria which is best peopled - that of the Druze and the Maronites, gives 900 inhabitants each square league, which computation will serve for the countries of Nablus, Hasbeya, Adjloun and the Ghouta of Damascus. The other which is the least populous is that of Hama and Aleppo, which gives from 300 to 400 per square league - an estimate which suits the greater part of Syria."[50]

Rural depopulation and the shifting margins of cultivation

A major phenomenon in the Syrian provinces throughout the 17th and 18th centuries was the abandonment of the countryside by peasant cultivators. As we have observed, population had diminished considerably, which was the case throughout the Fertile Crescent. The direct consequence of

this was the steady shrinkage of the area under cultivation.[51] It is asserted by Issawi that in this period, "the margin of cultivation in Syria had moved much nearer the coast than in Roman or early Arab times."[52] This must be seen in the context of the loss of central government authority over huge areas of the countryside and the emergence of local forces which came to rule the province independently of Istanbul. For while local dynasts and powerful chieftains such as the ᶜAzms of Damascus, Zahir alᶜUmar and al-Jazzar in southern Syria and northern Palestine may have been in a position to provide a greater degree of security than the Ottomans before them in the areas under their immediate control,[53] a plethora of petty rulers clearly lacked the power to provide rural security for the Syrian interior as a whole. The growing insecurity of the desert steppe and the eastern plains due to increased Beduin incursions was a major factor and clearly had very dramatic effects on rural life - as amply testified by contemporary observers. In the late 18th century, the Beduin raided as far as the Palestinian coast and the cities of Aleppo and Hama and their surrounding villages were forced on a number of occasions to pay protection money to Beduin tribes.[54] It can be said with reasonable certainty

that the margins of cultivation had receded to the Aleppo-Damascus-Muzayrib line by 1800.[55] The numbers involved in the rural exodus were clearly enormous for some regions and negligible for others, such as the Ghuta.[56]

Although the general trend is clear, a note of caution should be introduced. The situation with regard to the pattern of settlement was subject to constant fluctuations, as peasants migrated in search of safety from nomadic raids or shelter from the tax-gatherer. Villages reported to be deserted one year would be found suddenly inhabited only a short period later.[57] "Ironically, the financial obligations that caused many peasants to flee their villages were also responsible for bringing many of them back," observes Rafeq. He argues that peasants left behind in the same village had an active interest in coercing the fugitives back, as the system of collective taxation meant that still greater burdens had to be paid by the peasants remaining in the village.[58] Yet, it is clear that in many cases peasants were driven off the land altogether and migrated to the towns in search of a living.[59]

Norman Lewis has described Syria in the early 19th century as a "half-empty land", but acknowledges that the

abandonment of cultivation did not affect the western part of the country. The process of depopulation and abandonment of agricultural land went furthest in the Hawran and the Homs-Hama plain, where the regions adjoining the desert were continually vacated with only brief periods of repopulation.[60] These regions were occupied by nomads and semi-nomads and were clearly transformed by the effects of the immigration of powerful tribes.[61]

Beduin incursions in the 18th century were definitely the largest single factor which contributed to abandonment of the countryside. In the late 18th century, Budayri, repeatedly mentions that the countryside suffered greatly from the insubordination of both Ottoman troops and the Beduin, forcing a large migration of the rural population who flocked into Damascus.[62] That the situation became particularly acute at this time is also well documented by French consular sources of the period, the dispatches of which reveal anxieties that the incursions of the Beduin and the continuous depopulation of rural regions were dealing severe blows to commerce.[63] Parts of the Homs-Hama plain and the Hawran reportedly lost all their population, while in the western areas there was a marked recession of the

cultivated area. According to Volney,

> "along the whole road from Aleppo to Hama, we discover nothing but the ruins of villages. Instead of the cultivation that might be expected one meets with nothing but waste and desolate lands."[64]

Buckingham, on a long journey through Syria in the early 19th century, found the emptiness of the Homs-Hama plain 'remarkable'. He noted that "the fertile soil only begins to be well cultivated about four hours by mule from Hama in approaching the town from the plain" and alleged that the mutassarif of Hama "comprises 120 inhabited villages and 80 which have been abandoned." The English traveller observed that the area between Homs and Tartus was "reasonably well cultivated" as was the region around Husn, where he remarked on the predominance of semi-sedentary cultivators "with stationary tents made of woven mats."[65]

Constant shifts in the rural population are also well documented. When Burckhardt passed through the Marj district on the outskirts of Ghuta in 1810 he found a single family living there. On his return to the area in 1812 he found eight to ten families, most of them Druze who had emigrated from Shara in the Hawran, "a well peopled village in 1810 - but now deserted," adding that the Druze "brought

the fertile soil into cultivation around the Marj and sowed 8 ghararas of wheat - or about 120 cwt English."[66] This movement was especially pronounced in the Hawran, where Burckhardt found one village after the other which was 'inhabited' in 1810 but 'abandoned and ruined' upon his return to the region in 1812. Almost all the towns and villages of the Laja^{c} were said to be deserted - as was, reportedly, the town of Dar^{c}a.[67] Burckhardt took note that the many ruined towns of the Balka^{c} and the Hawran were inhabited by tribes "who live in tents and are half cultivators and half beduin."[68]

During the Egyptian occupation of Syria this situation was temporarily reversed with Ibrahim Pasha's attempts to settle the Beduin and establish greater rural security in order to promote trade and agriculture.[69] A number of regions experienced an expansion of the cultivated area, the Hawran in particular, where 150 villages were reportedly resettled. Much of the agricultural activity was in response to the great demand for Syrian grain created by the presence of a huge occupying army.[70] However, contemporary sources testify to the enormous burden of impositions including the widespread use of the corvée, and the massive conscription of the male population in this period.[71]

In 1838 Bowring reported that

> "the exhaustion of the rural population by constantly returning conscriptions is perpetually checking the tendency towards improvement. In scarcely any part of the rural districts are hands enough left to cultivate the soil. Almost all the young and strong male population has been drafted into the Nizam and there are some villages in which 1/4 of the population has been so taken possession of."[72]

The following observation of Colonel Campbell, however, is in striking contrast with the above statement:

> There can be no doubt that since the conquest of Syria by Mehemet Ali - the agriculture of the country has made considerable progress. Many villages which under the former government had been deserted are now again inhabited and their lands cultivated with considerable advantages. One of the great benefits obtained by the Egyptian government is the settlement of the wandering tribes, which lived in the desert to the East of Syria. Ibrahim Pasha has granted lands, free of taxes for a certain number of years to all the Bedaweens who have consented to settle and has advanced them cash to buy oxen and tools ... nearly on the same conditions as those between proprietors and farm servants in Syria.[73]

The French consul in the early 1840's compared the situation under Egyptian rule with the unfortunate state of affairs under the returning Ottomans:

Pendant l'occupation égyptienne, le gouvernement avait fait effort pour apeupler le Hawran dont les plaines fertiles fournissent à Damas presque toutes les céréales nécessaires à sa consommation. Le nombre des bourgs et villages habités s'était progressivement élevé à 400 dans cette province et tel était ce nombre lorsque la Syrie a été replacée sous la domination ottomane. Il n'en restait plus que 35 au commencement de l'année courante.[74]

The record of the Egyptian achievements in the countryside - however shortlived - is an uneven one. What is apparent, however, is that with the reassertion of Ottoman control over the Syrian provinces in 1840 any progress made in the agrarian sector - particularly with regard to the Beduin encroachments - was quickly reversed. This indeed was to be the great theme of the European consular reports when discussing the situation in the countryside.[75]

In the aftermath of the Egyptian withdrawal, the Ottoman inability to keep the Beduin beyond the fringes of the cultivated zone emerges as a major factor in rural depopulation and migration in the plains of the interior. A series of devasting droughts in the early 1840's made the problem all the more acute. [c]Anaza tribesmen appeared deep into the cultivated zone of the Homs-Hama plain evicting peasants and destroying villages.[76] Consul Wood reports that the peasantry of the Homs- Hama plain emigrated "almost in

body" and that "the grandees of the town followed them in the hope of persuading them to return, yet few have done so."[77] Indeed in the 1840's, the district was described as 'half deserted.' The allegation that "50,000 Bedouins have entered the area of Homs and Hama to the walls of which towns they carried their depredations"[78] is some indication of just how far the Beduin managed to extended their sway over the very heart of the cultivated zone. In 1845, the governor of Hama was forced to abandon his post and return to Damascus in consequence of the massive emigration of the population in these regions.[79]

The Damascus region also suffered Beduin incursions and a shrinkage of the settled area in this traditionally most secure of cultivated districts. Wood observed that "although the villages for the first ten leagues to the north-east of Damascus are populous and appear to be in a prosperous condition, for the next 40 leagues only the solitary village - that of Karatein - occurs. ... In this manner, the nomadic tribes will have successfully driven the sedentary cultivators from 50 to within 10 leagues of Damascus."[80] Consul Beaudin reported in 1847 that the ʿAnaza Beduin raided as far as Wadi al-Ajam, a fertile district on

the edges of the Ghuta.[81]

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the plains regions in the Syrian interior continued to suffer depopulation and a high level of migration throughout the Tanzimat period (1840- 1860). Only with the emergence of conditions of greater rural security in the latter half of the 19th century did the margins of settlement gradually shift eastwards making possible a large increase in the cultivated area and a significant growth of the rural population.[82]

A degree of reserve, however, should be adopted before completely endorsing the bleak picture conveyed by the testimony of the contemporary travellers and European consuls. The effects of the decline in population and shrinkage of the area of cultivation upon the peasant economy is open to question. As has been pointed out the resilience of Syria's rain-fed agriculture raises certain doubts about the total devastation of agriculture.[83] Issawi has argued that "a decline in population even if accompanied by an equal shrinkage does not necessarily imply a fall in the level of living. Assuming that the least fertile lands are abandoned first, it may lead to higher

marginal productivity per man. This allows real wages to rise and labour shortage may induce landlords to offer higher wages."[84] In the last analysis, we must account for the fact that the countryside of the Syrian interior managed to provide raw materials for a considerable handicraft industry and agricultural produce for the towns and limited export trade.[85]

Land tenure: surplus appropriation and peasant cultivators

The nature of the land tenure system in the late Ottoman period represents one of the most striking gaps in our understanding of social and economic processes in the modern history of the Levant.[86] There was also a high degree of regional variation as regards agricultural practice, thus a study of land tenure in the pre-modern period is faced with a number of major problems. Not least is that of the fundamental discord between Islamic or Ottoman law and what one might call 'the facts on the ground'. There were a multitude of customs and usages observed at the level of locality which either escaped the attention of the jurists or were in open contradiction with the tenets of the Shari^{c}a. Many local usages, in particular that of musha^{c}, were never submitted to writing and tended to vary greatly

according to region and period. They did not have a 'legal' existence, and are thus all the more difficult to perceive. Moreover, there was no cadastral survey before the imposition of the French Mandate in 1920.[87] Thus we will approach the question of land tenure - which has been described by Klat as "a bundle of rights" - in its widest sociological sense, with less emphasis placed upon its legalistic aspects. It can be taken to encompass - in addition to the definition and determination of property rights in land - all relationships which arise among the rural population resulting from the ownership, occupancy and use of land. Thus the land tenure system includes, on one level, the peasant's relationship to his land, the management of the cultivated area and community organisation and, at another, the relationship of the peasant communities to the world outside: the state as represented by the tax-farmer or tax collector and the local shaykh or landlord. Thus there are always two dimensions to the problem we are discussing. As argued by Udovitch, "these relationships are important to clarify because they affected not only the mechanism of revenue collection and transmission, but also the daily, seasonal and annual rhythms of agrarian life as they interacted with both the natural environment and the

socio-political environment of the state."[88]

If it is acknowledged that the changes brought about by the Land Code of 1858 had their origins in developments which were rooted in an earlier period, it is essential to grasp the agrarian relationships which constituted the base from which changes took place. The land history of Syria therefore must be viewed in two different periods: one, before the Tanzimat reforms, when state ownership and communal forms prevailed; and after the mid-19th century, when a private land regime gradually evolved. It is important to realise that the large landed estates which characterized the Syrian interior in the late 19th and early 20th century did not originate in the timar system and crown estates of the Sultan, but as a result of the new social and economic order established as a result of Ottoman reforms and the effects of European economic penetration.[89]

The land system of Syria has a long and complex heritage bearing the imprints of many successive civilizations that dominated the region long before the Islamic conquest in the seventh century.[90] It has been subject to continuous change under the influence of economic necessity, military occupation, shifting climatic conditions and, perhaps most

important of all, the relationship of settled cultivators with the nomadic population.

From the purely legal point of view, agricultural land in the Ottoman period was subject to different statuses. In theory, land tenure was based on the classical Islamic distinction formulated in the early days of the Umayyads whereby Syrian lands fell under two principal categories: privately owned mulk land, "belonging to those who had converted to Islam at the time of the conquest or who chose to retain their own religion and submitted without resistance,"[91] and "State land", the great preponderance of the agricultural domain, left in the hands of its previous occupiers against payments of the kharaj tax, which became known as miri under the Ottomans.[92] In 1800, mulk land was confined to small areas, most typically comprising gardens and orchards around villages. This form of landholding was most prominent in the mountainous regions and in the Ghuta of Damascus on small irrigated plots and intensively cultivated land.[93]

On miri land, the cultivator enjoyed usufruct rights (tasarruf) upon communally held fields. These usufruct rights, well established for countless generations, allowed

the peasant to cultivate his land and transfer this right to his sons.[94] It is argued by Owen that "for most part, these rights were respected, especially in the first half of the 19th century, as there was actually competition for cultivators on the lands controlled by tax farmers."[95]

The usufruct rights were granted on condition of payment of the miri dues, which was a fixed percentage of the total agricultural output. But, it has to be stressed that there were enormous local variations. Contemporary sources reveal how widely divergent the amount collected and the methods of collection could be from one district to the next.[96] Most importantly, it was on miri land that a 'feudal' intermediary was interposed between the peasant-cultivator and the state. Thus, while the owners of mulk had absolute right of possession, miri tenants enjoyed the right of usufruct only. Hence the Syrian saying, "He who owns the land does not till it and he who tills the land does not own it."[97] Conveying the common distinction between possession and use.

Another important category of landholding was the waqf (religious or charitable endowment), the revenues of which were dedicated to religious foundations - such as mosques, hospices or madrasas and often served as rents for the

families of the founders. Increasingly in the 18th and 19th century, permanent control by such families over large estates was established by its conversion into waqfs.[98] As Burckhardt observed in 1812:

> Edlib is held by the Kuperly Zaade family of Constantinople, but part of its revenue is a waqf. It contributes to defray the expenses of the holy cities of Mekka and Medina. The town pays annually to the above family 20 purses for themselves and 15 for the holy cities, which were formerly sent to Mekka with pilgrim caravan and has now paid into the hands of the Kuperlys. ...The town of Djissr Shoghr near Latakia belongs to the same family and is also a waqf. The revenue from 14 villages around Djissr have been assigned to support numerous hospitals which the Kuperlys have built in this town. Neither Edlib nor Shoghr pays and land tax in miri in consequence of their being attached to Mekka.[99]

Although the waqf did not constitute private property, the rights to its revenue and agricultural surplus could be made hereditary. Unlike the tax-farm it could not be seized by the state and, as Burckhardt's description suggests, it was rarely subject to taxation. It could not legally be sold, although this was not entirely unknown.[100]

In the Province of Damascus, this type of landholding was most frequently encountered in the Ghuta[101] and the Orontes Valley region. By 1800, whole villages or parts of villages in the Ghuta were turned into waqfs. (The water assigned

for irrigation was also leased with the waqf in the same contract). In the early 19th century, peasant cultivators were known to have rented waqfs in this region.[102]

In the late 18th and early 19th century, the situation with regard to landholders and surplus appropriation was characterized by a bewildering array of intermediaries on the rural landscape. The collection of land revenue through an intermediary was in fact one of the key characteristics of the Ottoman land system. Throughout most of the Ottoman period, two successive forms of grant or assignment were widely used. The first was the Ottoman military grant by which the revenues were drawn from rural areas and assigned to sipahis in return for services due to the Ottoman state.[103] These assignments were generally known as timar; the very large assignments were known as zi^{c}amet. According to Inalcik, this organisation began to break up as early as the 16th century as the timar-holders increasingly sought to escape the military obligations attached to their grants and tended to transform these into personal estates.[104] However, there is evidence that up to the mid 18th century at least, the holders of timar and zi^{c}amet played an important role in the rural economy.[105]

It was principally in response to this tendency towards

feudalization that the Ottomans promoted the iltizam system, or the farming of revenues.[106] This system and the malikane or tax farm "for life" dominated the rural economy of Syria in the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. However, an absolute distinction between the two systems should not be over-emphasised, as the Ottomans always found it necessary to accommodate local power structures which they were not able to suppress and iqta^{c} holders often served as tax-farmers.[107] The important point is that as the 18th century progressed, land revenues were allocated to locally-based power groups. As Hourani has shown, the economic rise of the $a^{c}yan$ (or locally based notable) was facilitated by the tax collecting privilege granted by the government to notables who principally live in towns. The power of the local $a^{c}yan$ families was often based on the control of agricultural production through the possession of malikanes and the supervision of waqfs. This aspect proved crucial to the building of local power bases, as it enabled the $a^{c}yan$ to control the grain supplies to the cities. Many areas of the Ghuta and the Homs-Hama plain, in particular, were held by notables who exploited them in this way with the object of controlling the grain trade.[108]

By the early 19th century, the Ottomans controlled only

very small areas of rural Syria - the rest was under the control of local a^{c}yan. Thus the government interfered with the rural districts only indirectly: the Hawran and Jabal al-^{c}Alawiyin were in fact, very nearly autonomous regions.[109] Despite the fact that land was held to belong to the state and its cultivation subject to taxation - and peasants to conscription - the Ottomans were forced to condone the existence of the locally based notables and paramilitary chieftains to whom the land revenues were granted through the iltizam system.[110] The main advantage of this indirect system of tax-collection was that it enabled the government to calculate with reasonable accuracy the amount of revenue it would receive each year. This it could not do if it collected taxes directly, as the rate of miri was fixed by Islamic law at 10% of the year's harvest.[111] The amount of collectable revenues varied each year depending on such factors as drought, locusts, epidemics and Beduin incursions. By adopting this system, the central government passed on whatever losses occurred as a result of a bad harvest to the tax-farmer or multazims. Yet these stood to reap good profits in years of plentiful harvests, which presumably led them to take risks.[112]

From the perspective of the tax-farmer, the iltizam was not

merely a method of collecting revenue; it was also an entrepreneural activity. Multazims were men of wealth who possessed the necessary capital to invest in an iltizam and they did so in the expectation of realizing a profit.[113] These profits did not necessarily derive from the tax collecting privilege itself but from estimating the peasant's harvest as greater than it really was and then taxing the higher value.[114] The multazims paid the government cash for their iltizams, but collected their taxes in kind. The large quantity of grain and other produce which thereby fell into their hands were then used for speculation - to be stored when prices were low and sold when prices were high.[115] Theoretically, the multazim was to deduct a fixed sum corresponding to the tithe (ushr) of the harvest and the livestock tax or aghnam (the two main agrarian taxes), but in reality, local power relations and regional conditions dictated the character of the institution.[116] There is sufficient evidence to show that the sipahis and multazims were often directly engaged in the process of agricultural production itself, in loans of seed and tools or in money lending activities.[117] Pascual has shown that as early as the 17th century, the multazim in the Damascus region became a virtual landlord, exploiting the peasant who became a tenant or share-cropper on his land.[118]

Each year, usually in the month of March, bidding took place in the law courts of each sanjak capital as well as in Damascus for assignments of iltizams in the province. Bids were made in accordance with how successful the speculators thought the harvest would be.[119] Authority to farm the taxes of an iltizam went to the highest bidder, who in turn paid the sums they had bid to the local governor. The newly appointed multazims then recouped their expenses by collecting taxes from the peasantry at the time of the harvest.[120] In some cases, iltizams were issued for a fixed yearly payment for an indefinite period.[121]

Most multazims engaged in moneylending to the peasantry. As Rafeq's study of the Ghuta region in the late 18th century shows, this was already an important force in the rural economy. Thus, as early as the 18th century, we witness a situation wherein, "Influential urban people who had become richer through the exploitation of land, moneylending and commerce had extended their influence over the countryside, lending more cash to villagers and eventually expropriated much of their property when they were unable to pay back their debts."[122]

By the early decades of the 19th century, the development of iltizam or malikane had progressed to the extent that the

Ottoman state had effectively relinquished its authority concerning the amount and mode of revenue collected in the agrarian districts of the interior. The period leading up to the Egyptian occupation is characterized by the fact that the tax-farmers tended to withhold ever-greater amounts of what was due to the central government and retain the land revenues to build up power bases. Hourani has argued that the malikanes "created a new class of landowners whose exactions and very existence increased the distance between the government and the people."[123] Baer has shown that the increasing conversion of agricultural land into waqfs, thus depriving the Ottoman government of an important source of revenue, worked to reinforce this situation.[124]

It has to be acknowledged that very little is known about how the multazims and their numerous agents actually administered the areas under their control or how they managed to collect the revenues and maintain rural security. It is clear, however, that there were a few localities , most notably in the Ghuta, where the villagers themselves had the option to buy the privilege of collecting their own taxes. According to contemporary observers, this often lightened the burden.[125] In the 1840s, the Ottoman authorities granted peasants in the Damascus region the

option to pay their tithes through the shaykh, in an attempt to weaken the force of the tax-farmer, but "the village shaykh would usually decline such arrangements and prefer to be in league with the powerful multazim in exploiting the peasants, for which he would receive a share in the tax collection and sometimes a special grant."[126] Yet despite official decrees and practical steps taken in the 1840's by the returning Ottomans to abolish iltizams, it is clear that the institution persisted throughout the Tanzimat period.[127]

Rural taxation and the weight of impositions

In the Levant in the late 18th and early 19th century, what concerned the state above all was how much the multazim paid and not how he obtained his sum.[128] Although the amounts paid may have, in theory, been expected to bear some relation to the villager's wealth and tax-producing capacity, it is known that in the early 19th century, multazims sometimes paid ten times as much miri to the state for one village as they did for another with the same stated revenue from the peasants.[129] A number of reports in the 1840's suggest that the multazim extracted a much higher rate than the fixed tithe by setting a higher price for his crops, or when the tax payment was in kind, by forcing the

peasant to give him wheat at a lower rate than the market price. If any resistance from the peasant was encountered, the multazim could easily withhold the necessary grain required to sow the fields for the next year and impose fines. A number of reports speak of the impounding of crops in the Damascus region.[130]

The striking discontinuity between peasant exactions and taxes paid to the multazim has led some observers to consider the tax-farmer as more of a 'seigneur' than a tax-farmer. As put by Firestone:

> Just as in the West the manorial dues imposed by the lord bore little relation to his own obligations within the feudal system, so in the Ottoman Empire there was no necessary connection between what a multazim collected from his peasants and his commitments to the state fiscal system of which he was the base.[131]

Evidence of an enormous burden of impositions for the Syrian rural population in this period is well established.[132] Burckhardt observed that the taxes to which "all classes of Fellahs" in the Hawran were subject fell under four categories: the miri, "the expense of feeding soldiers" (mubaya^{c}a), tribute to Beduin tribesmen, and a "multitude of extraordinary contributions."[133]

The fact that the financial obligations of the landholders

to the state are grouped in the law court registers of the Province of Damascus in the first decades of the 19th century as regular taxes (mal al-miri) and impositions (takalif) is sufficient evidence that the situation had received official recognition by that period.[134]

As we have seen, many local shaykhly families, nomadic chiefs, urban notables, and ulama members were awarded the iltizam in their domain of local influence, wherein "their overlordship may well have become assimilated to their multazim role when it came to impositions - so that we may speak of an assessment system common to taxes and landlord impositions."[135] On the other hand, there were many villages which had no multazim, wherein the villagers were obliged to pay the overlord various levies, or fixed crop shares, quite apart from any tax obligations to the state.[136]

Village responsibility for payment of land revenue and impositions was collective; peasants had to contribute their share in accordance with their number and the amount of the harvest.[137] This situation is generally regarded as being characteristic of the pre-Land Code period, but as late as 1900 it was observed that "taxes are not assessed in most cases on individual villagers - but on the village as a

whole."[138] It has been suggested that the pressure of the various impositions was so great that this in itself was a major reason why the tax remittances of peasant holdings were apportioned by the entire community.[139] In the Damascus region, Wood alleged that, "the tax-farmer instead of being satisfied with their collection, establishes the quantity of the produce while still on the ground and forces the peasant to give him promissory notes for two times its value. He therefore receives 20 instead of 10% of the produce."[140] Wood observed that for the central plains regions, taxation varied between 40 to 60% upon the agricultural production "to the huge benefit of the tax-farmers."[141]

The situation appears to be quite different for mulk land, which as we have noted, chiefly concerned the Ghuta and the Orontes valley in the agrarian regions under study. Although taxes were apparently collected in much the same way as on miri lands, the tax-farmers here clearly never developed enough power to exploit the occupiers or violate their rights to the same extent.[142]

Late 18th and 19th century observers were in general agreement that the khuwa or levy imposed by the Beduin constituted one of the most crushing impositions for the settled cultivators. In return for the khuwa, the Beduin

would agree to refrain from seizing the harvest crops and driving off the cattle.[143] As described by Burckhardt: "Each village pays khuwa to one shaykh in every tribe. The village is then known as ukhta (sister) and the Arabs protect the inhabitants against all the members of his tribe."[144] Contemporary observers often alleged that the Beduin exactions imposed on villages tended to be cumulative.[145] In the mid-19th century, the French Consul noted that of all the causes for the "agrarian ruin" of Syria the most important was the depredations of the Beduin, to whom the peasant must pay annual revenues which could be up to one half of the impositions levied by the government.[146]

Another heavy imposition for the peasantry was that of the mubaya^{c}a. This was a common practice whereby peasants were obliged to provide wheat, barley and fodder for the use of troops passing through or stationed in the village.[147] To gain some idea of the enormity of this imposition in the Egyptian period, one has only to consider this statement of Richard Wood:

> The amount of revenue, including the capitation tax collected during the last year of Ibrahim's administration was 162,000 purses. The other arbitrary exactions in kind - which every village was obliged to furnish under the name of Mubaya for consumption or use of troops amounted to

> 200,000 purses more, making 362,000 purses or 1,600,000 sterling.[148]

Every village was required to supply a substantial quantity of grain for the Egyptian army at a price fixed by the government, "constraining the agriculturalist to sell the remainder of his crops at a high rate to cover the losses sustained by this imposition."[149] One contemporary observer calculated that the losses suffered by the cultivator due to forced sales of grain and straw to the Egyptian government was between 40 to 60%.[150] In the 1840's, the Tanzimat Hariye abolished the mubaya'a and a serious loss of revenue was quickly recorded.[151]

We must assume that there were peasant strategies to cope with what can only be considered overwhelming impositions. Consul Werry, in particular, stressed the concealment of crops by the peasants.[152] A number of observers, noting that the miri was paid in cash and kind, remarked that the peasants invariably preferred cash "by which they are always trifling gainers."[153]

The mid-1840's, witnessed a huge fall in grain prices from the levels they reached under the Egyptian occupation. To accommodate differences, peasants were obliged to extend cultivation to meet the demands of the ushr and the various

impositions. The fall in prices was attributed to "the fact of not now being obliged to furnish large supplies which the Egyptians required for their army."[154]

Musha[c]

In the grain-growing plains of the Syrian interior, the peasant community generally resided upon and directly exploited its cultivated lands according to a system of communal landholding or musha[c], whereby "village land was held jointly by villagers but worked by component households whose heads were linked to one another by agnatic ties, which defined mutual obligations and customary shares in the land from one generation to the next."[155] Musha[c], clearly a dominant form of agrarian organization until recent times,[156] receives very little attention in the contemporary literature of the 19th century and is generally overlooked when considering the transformation of the region's economy.

The system is best understood as a customary arrangement whereby a large area of land is held as a unit by peasant-cultivators of a village and apportioned among its different members by a number of complex schemes which appear to have varied considerably according to region.[157]

The working of the system as it was manifest in the Syrian plains involved the division of the village land in to small parcels which were redistributed - usually at the beginning of each agricultural year - among all the peasant households of the village in proportion to the number of its male members, including children. When an individual died or left the village, his rights reverted back into the community. The whole system was expressed as a share in the totality.[158]

As far as we can determine from the very limited source material available, musha^{c} was communal only as far as the peasant holding was concerned, the cultivation of land being carried out on a strictly individual or family basis. It is this combination of collective ownership and individual use which constitutes the central features of musha^{c}. The periodic redistribution of lands ensured the persistence of this double aspect.[159] Above all, the rotation of parcels reflected the egalitarian concerns of village society which strove to ensure its subsistence.

Each peasant parcel constituted a fiscal unit, upon which the village shaykh usually oversaw the equitable distribution of land revenue, which, as a rule, was

determined by the area of cultivated land per family.[160] MacGreggor, observing this institution in the 1830s, asserted that "were it not for the relief afforded by the whole village or district taxing themselves equally, however high the exaction, the corrupt and tyrannical fiscal administration of the interior would have utterly ruined the Syrian Provinces of the Ottoman Empire."[161]

It is widely assumed that the system has its origins in the sedentarization of pastoral nomads over long expanses of time.[162] Warriner's view, in this respect, is characteristic:

> As tribes settled, they allocated the arable land to tribal subgroups and clans on an equal basis, dividing up the land of the village communities into different zones according to its quality and allotting sections in each zone to different groups ... To maintain equality between tribes and between members of the tribe, the land was redistributed at intervals between the subgroups and between the members of the groups. In this way, musha[c] originated.[163]

Klat and Weulersse also contend that the presence of similar systems of tenure in other countries of the Fertile Crescent - the plains of which are largely populated by descendants of Beduin nomads - constitutes proof of the inherent relationship between musha[c] tenure and the corporate life of tribal organization.[164] The argument is that at the time of

settlement, after occupying a large area of land, the tribe decided to hold the land communally to safeguard its internal cohesion and organization. But "as the deeply rooted individualistic feelings of the Arab nomads prevented any form of collective exploitation - the land had to be regularly divided among the tribesmen for their individual and exclusive use."[165] This interpretation, it has to be said, relies heavily on psychological assumptions resting on the perceived attitudes of tribal groups.

More convincingly, Firestone maintains that it is just as likely that the 'land equalising community' owes its logic to the conditions of excessive impositions, which, as we have observed, were characteristic features of the late 18th and 19th century. He argues that the need to pool resources arising from the scarcity of factors of production was a powerful force in the formation of such communities.[166] Baer has also stressed the connection between the origin of musha[c] and the tax burden.[167] The fact remains, however, that due to the lack of historical documentation, any consideration of the origins and the inner workings of the system must remain a matter of speculation. As musha[c] is an institution firmly in the domain of custom and local usage, it rarely attracted the attention of the jurists and, hence,

it remained largely outside the scope of historical analysis and research.

According to most 19th century descriptions, the musha[c] village was characterized by minute fragmentation of land into holdings which generally took the form of long and often exceedingly narrow strips, stretching from one end of the village to another. The general practice was for the village shaykh to divide the area into as many equal parcels of theoretically equal agricultural quality as there were males in the community. By lot a definite parcel or sahm "of scrupulously identical worth" was assigned to each member.[168] Burckhardt's observations in 1812 provide some idea about this practice in the plains:

> In the spring of every year - or if no strangers have arrived - in the second or third spring, the ground of the village is measured by long cords, when every fellah occupied as much of it as he pleases, there being always more land than is sufficient .... The amount of his tax is then fixed by the sheikh at the ratio which his number of Fedhans 169 bears to the whole number of Fedhans cultivated that year .... Whether the quantity of seed sown or land cultivated by the owner be more or less is not taken into consideration.[170]

Bergheim, some 80 years later, maintained that each shaddad, or co-cultivator of musha[c] lands, receives an allotment of land according to the number of faddans he intends to employ, "one man receives an allotment of land for one

faddan, another for two faddan ... Sometimes the land is divided into one half faddan for a villager who only owns one ox.," implying that, for late 19th century Palestine at least, shares were allocated according to the ownership of basic factors of production.[171]

Post at the turn of the century acknowledged that the Homs-Hama plain was a stronghold of the musha[c] system, while "in the Ghuta and Bekaa, there are no more lands held in common and each proprietor has his own real-estate."[172] Rafeq, however, suggests that communal ownership of property was a major feature of mulk land in the region before the mid-19th century. He argues that the tendency of extended families to live and work together encouraged the continuation of musha[c]. Equally important were the factors of limited economic resources at the disposal of the individual and the high mortality rate among the population in the perpetuation of this type of organization.[173]

Musha[c] can be seen as an attempt to elaborate a solution to the various demands imposed upon peasant society. The pressing need of the community to pool resources and to impose a strict internal cohesion in the face of increasing encroachment of the city - as represented by the often overlapping roles of the landowner, merchant and moneylender

- is clearly borne out by 19th century observers of the institution. As testified by Bergheim:

> No stranger is allowed to cultivate or to use any of the lands of a village but with the consent of the whole community or its elected representatives. No member of a village or shaddad is allowed to let the land allotted to him for cultivation to a stranger, but he may enter into partnership with one who will supply him with the necessary oxen and seed for the cultivation of the land... Such a partnership must be entered into before the allotment or division of lands. Such a stranger is then regarded as a member of the community for the time being and is subject to all the tax dues and outlays of the village community.[174]

As we have acknowledged, cultivation is individual only in the sense that each family labours for itself, but it is a individualism that must be placed within the context of the considerable constraints placed upon the community, since the shaddad did not have the right to dispose of one's parcel in the pre-Land Code period. One was obliged to cultivate the same crops as one's neighbour, following the same methods.[175] Bergheim observed that, "The portion of land allotted to the shaddad belongs to him for that year, but his rights are with respect to the crop only his rights as far as the land is concerned, cease."[176]

The multistranded character of musha[c] increases our difficulty of observing it. As Latron and Weulersse have pointed out, it had contradictory characteristics.[177] From

one perspective musha[c] appears as an ancient institution which served to socially integrate the peasant holdings and defend the village community (not always successfully) against outside interferenc expropriation. However, after the mid-19th century, musha[c] appeared to lend itself easily to the dominance of the great estate system: musha[c] lands in particular became the domain of the city-based absentee landlord.

Musha[c] organisation was consistently held responsible for the "stagnant" or "backward" character of much of the Levant's agriculture. Warriner, for one, argues that musha[c] represents "an obstacle to any attempt at progress ... the individual cultivator being precluded from undertaking any improvement."[179] Yet there is evidence to suggest that musha[c] was, in fact, highly adaptable and its essential features retained in response to the challenge presented by the encroachment of urban landlords and the progressive penetration of a market economy into village life.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

1 See: R. Mantran, "Transformation du commerce dans l'empire ottoman au 18ème siècle" in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies.

2 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy: The Case of Damascus, 1840-1870," Unpublished paper prepared for the IIe Congres International d'Histoire Economique et Sociale de la Turquie, Strasbourg, July 1980.

3 See: T. Asad and H. Volpe, "Concepts of Modes of Production," in Economy and Society, V, 1976; C.Keyder, "The Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode of Production", in Economy and Society, V, 1976; B. Hindess and P. Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, London, 1975; D. Seddon (ed.) Relations of Production, London, 1978; S. Amin, Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism, London, 1976.

4 This view is most authoritatively expressed by H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, Islamic Society and the West, Vol. I, London, 1957, pp 114-203. A similar perspective is to be found in S. Shamir, "The Modernisation of Syria: Problems and Solutions in the Early Period of Abdulhamid", in W. Polk and C. Chambers (eds.), Beginnings of Modernisation in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968.

5 See H. Islamoglu-Inan, "Paths of Socio-Economic Transformation," pp. 1-5.

6 Ibid., p.1.

7 For a discussion of this problem see D. Seddon (ed.) Moroccan Peasants: A Century of Change in the Eastern Rif, 1870-1970, London, 1981, pp. 28-52.

8 Hindess and Hirst, p.82.

9 Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, translated and edited by E.J. Hobsbawm, London, 1964.

10 Ibid. pp. 34-36.

11 Ibid. p. 83.

12 On this point see C. Keyder, "Surplus", in Journal of Peasant Studies, II, 2, 1975.

13 Keyder, "The Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode", p. 566

14 Ibid. p. 558.

15 Feudalization in this sense denotes a specific type of development, the central feature of which is the localised exploitation of the peasantry, independent of the central bureaucracy.

16 Lacoste quoted in Seddon, Moroccan Peasants, p. 39.

17 Amin, Unequal Development, p. 51.

18 Ibid. pp. 38-51. In this context, Amin argues that the examples of the pre-modern Arab world and Sub-Saharan Africa are sufficient evidence that large scale trade "does not engender capitalism and is not in itself capitalist", p. 51. For a wider discussion of these issues see M. Rodinson, Islam and Capitalism, London,1974.

19 Chevallier puts forward this argument most clearly in 'Les cadres sociaux de l'économie agraire dans le Proche-Orient au début du XIXe siècle' in M. A. Cook (ed.) Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, Oxford, 1970.

20 M. Gilsenan, "A Modern Feudality? Land and Labour in North Lebanon" in T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure, p. 452.

21 S.J.Shaw, "The Ottoman Census System and Population 1831-1914," in International Journal of Middle East Studies, 1978, p. 325.

22 Ibid. p. 326.

23 See: Volney, pp. 347-357; J.S. Buckingham, Travels among the Arab Tribes inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine, London, 1825, pp. 80-86 and 122-125. Compare with J.L. Porter, Five Years in Damascus, Vol. II, London,1855, pp. 171-175, 187-188, 245.

24 C. Issawi, "Population and Resources in the Ottoman Empire" in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies, p. 145, and "The Decline of Middle East Trade" in D.S. Richards (ed.), Islam and the Trade of Asia, London, 1966, pp. 246, 250. D. Panzac, La Peste dans l'Empire Ottoman 1700-1850, Louvain, 1985, pp. 120-130.

25 Notably, Panzac, La Peste; See also M. Dobs and E. Ashtor, A Social and Economic History of of the Near East in the Middle Ages, Berkeley and London, 1976, and M. Dols, The Black Death in the Middle East, Princeton, 1971.

26 G. Rotter, :"Natural Catastrophies and their Impact on Political and Economic Life during the Second Fitna" in T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure, p. 220.

27 J. Bowring, Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol. XXI, p. 5 (hereafter cited as GBPP); Archives des Affaires Etrangères (AAE), B1, 1026, Sidon, 25/5/44 and Col. Campbell's remarks in PRO,FO 78/283, "Report on Syria," Turkey, 1836.

28 See B. Spooner, "The Desert and the Sown: a new look at an old relationship" in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies, pp. 236-239.

29 W. A. Eton, A Survey of the Turkish Empire, London, 1798, quoted by Issawi in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies, p. 153, See also A. Russel, The Natural History of Aleppo, Vol. II, 2nd Edition, London, 1794, pp. 229-253, for a vivid description of the effects of the plague.

30 C. F. Volney, "Etat du commerce du Levant en 1784," Oeuvres, Paris, 1825, p. 199; See also: AAE: B1 1020: Sidon, 25/5/44; and Public Records Office, SP 97/32, Istanbul, 12/8/44.

31 A-K Rafeq, The Provinces of Damascus, 1723-1783, Beirut, 1966, pp. 227-9.

32 Shaykh Ahmad Budayri, Hawadith Dimashq al-yawmiyya, ed. Ahmad ʿIzzat ʿAbd al-Karim, Cairo, 1959, p. 139

33 Ahmad Ghassan Sbanu (ed.) Ta^{c}rikh hawadith al-sham wa lubnan, 1782-1841, Damascus, 1981, pp. 294-295; Schatkowski suggests that in the Damascus region in the 18th and early 19th century, plagues seem to have occurred every 10 to 11 years, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 11-12.

34 Public Records Office, Foreign Office 78/283 Turkey, 1836, 'Report on Syria' (hereafter cited as PRO, FO).

35 Issawi, "Population and Resources'" p. 156.

36 PRO, FO 195/127 Beirut, Moore to Ponsonby, 26/8/1835.

37 PRO, FO 195/118 'Report on Syria', Wood to Ponsonby, 18/9/1834, See also: M. Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861, Oxford, 1968, p. vi. Colonel Campbell in 1836 breaks the Syrian population down into various sects and religions:

997,000	Muslims
22,000	'Ansaries' (Alawis)
17,000	'Mutawalis' (Shi^{c}is)
48,000	Druzes
260,000	Catholics and Maronites
345,000	'Members of the Greek Church' (Greek Orthodox)
175,000	Jews
1,864,000	TOTAL

Source: PRO, FO 78/283 Turkey, 1836.

38 PRO, FO 78/283 'Report on Syria' Turkey, 1836; Schatkowski quoting figures provided by the French expeditionary force of 1799, considers the population of Damascus to have been 90,000 at the same period, The Decline of Syrian Localism, p. 16. Bowring, for the 1830s, is in general agreement with consul Moore in setting the figure at 100,000, p. 6. J. MacGreggor puts it at 140,000 in early 1840's, Commercial Statistics, Vol. II, 'The Ottoman Empire,' London, 1847, p. 72. Also AAE: Correspondence Commerciale (CC), Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot, 14/6/1842. The French Consul puts the Damascus population at 172,000, the highest figure reported.

39 Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane," p. 33; Consul Moore puts the population of Aleppo at 60-85,000 in 1835, in Bowring, p. 111.

40 AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 13/7/1842, (thereafter cited as M.A.E.); Consul Moore gives a high figure of 44,000 in Bowring, p. 7; J. L. Porter maintains that the two cities had population of 20,000 each at mid-century. Five Years in Damascus, Vol. I, p. 344.

41 Bowring, p. 7.

42 PRO, FO 78/718 Moore to Palmerston, 8/12/1847.

43 PRO, FO 195/127 Moore to Ponsonby, Beirut, 3/7/1839, PRO, FO 195/226 Wood to Canning, Damascus, 2/9/1843.

44 The definitive study on this subject is that by N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 3-25. N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement" pp. 259-268; Segur, La Syrie et les bédouins, pp. 79-85.

45 Pascual, "La Syrie a l'époque ottomane", p.33; N. Cozma, "La sédentarisation des Nomades en Syrie," CHEAM, No. 4208, 1968, pp. 39-42; Segur, pp. 92-95.

46 J.L. Burckhardt, Travels in Syria and the Holy Land, London, 1822, pp. 8, 42-43, 56, 70, 74-76; Buckingham, Travels among the Arab Tribes, pp. 87-98,138, and 169-170; Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement", pp. 259-261.

47 PRO,FO 78/283 'Report on Syria' Turkey, 1836; PRO,FO 195/196 Damascus, Wood to Aberdeen, 6/6/1842; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot 4/6/1842; Anon, Rambles in the Deserts of Syria, London, 1864, pp. 45-68; Segur, pp. 23-24.

48 M.S. Kalla, pp. 103-110.

49 K. Baedeker, Palestine and Syria: A Handbook for Travellers, London, 1876, p. 212; Burckhardt, pp. 291 and 305-308; Ma'oz, pp 5-8; Pascual, "La Syrie à l'epoque ottomane", pp. 33-34.

50 Volney, p. 472. Volney puts the population of the Province of Damascus at 1,200,000 and that of Aleppo at 320,000.

51 Issawi, "Introduction", Economic History, p. 3. As early as 1653, Ottoman officials reported that many villages were abandoned throughout the Ottoman Empire, B. Lewis, "Ottoman Land Tenure and Taxation in Syria," Studia Islamica, Vol.50, 1979, pp. 122-123; see Muhammad al-Muhibbi, Khulasat al-athar fi a^{c}yan al-qarn al-hadi ^{c}ashar, Cairo, 1867, Vol. IV, p. 339.

52 Issawi, Economic History, p. 3. Also compare the description of MacAdam, "Some Aspects of Land Tenure", pp. 45-62, with Burckhardt's Hawran.

53 Rafeq, The Province of Damascus, p. 190. Abbe Mariti, Travels through Cyprus, Syria and Palestine, 2 Vols., London, 1771, pp. 157-161.

54 Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement", p.262; Buckingham, p. 21

55 N. Lewis, "The Frontiers of Settlement", p. 260; Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane", p. 38; AAE, B1, 1171, Saida 2/8/89; Volney, pp. 342-343, 347 and 352. Both Volney and Burckhardt make clear that there were few villages to the east of the Sultan's Road from Aleppo to Damascus.

56 See: J-P Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the beginning of the 17th century according to the Archives of the City's Military Tribunal" in T. Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure, p. 365.

57 Volney, p. 240; Buckingham, pp. 172-173; Burckhardt, p. 85; C. G. Addison, Damascus and Palmyra: A Journey to the East, Philadelphia, 1838, p. 78.

58 A-K Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems and their Social Impact in Syria around the Middle of the 19th Century," in T. Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure, pp. 371-380.

59 Gibb and Bowen, p. 258; A. Hourani, "The Fertile Crescent in the 18th Century" in Studia Islamica, No. 8, 1957, p. 99; C. G. Addison, Damascus and Palmyra; A Journey to the East, Philadelphia, 1838; R. Burton and F. Tyrwhitt-Drake, Unexplored Syria, Vol. I, London, 1872, pp. 202-231.

60 Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement," p. 263, See also: A. al-Najjar, Banu Ma'ruf fi Jabal Hawran, Damascus, 1927, on the depopulation of the region, pp.1-27; A. Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur de la région du caza de Homs," No. 249, pp. 12-23.

61 Ségur, pp. 72-78.

62 Budayri, pp. 93-102. Volney and Burckhardt also confirm that droves of cultivators left their villages for the security of the towns.

63 AAE:B1 94, Alep, 1777; AAE:B1, 1030 Sidon, 17/11/1777.

64 Volney, p. 342.

65 Buckingham, pp. 146, 147 and 506-508. The last observation is also made by M. Seetzen, 'Mémoire pour arriver à la connaissance des tribus Arabes en Syrie,' Annales des Voyages de la géographie et de l'histoire (Paris, 1809), pp. 281-324.

66 Burckhardt, pp. 213-214.

67 Burckhardt, p. 160; Al-Dimashqi, Ta^{c}rikh hawadith al-sham wa lub^{c}an: 1197-1257 (1782-1842), ed L. Ma^{c}luf, Beirut, 1912, p. 37.

68 Seetzen, p. 230.

69 S. Abu ^{c}Izz ad-Din, Ibrahim Basha fi suriya, Beirut, 1929 pp. 45-6; M. Sabry, L'Empire Egyptien sous Mohamed Ali et la question d'Orient, Paris, 1930; A. Rustum, Al-Mahfuzat al-malikiyya al-misriyya, 4 Vols., Beirut, 1940-3, IV, pp. 190-230.

70 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to M.A.E. 2/9/1839; PRO, FO 78/283, Campbell to Palmerson, 4/9/1836; Bowring, p. 9; Figures given for the Egyptian army in Syria in 1836 are: 60,000, according to Egyptian officials and 45,000 as according to British sources PRO, FO 78/283, Moore to Palmerston, 7/2/1834.

71 Bowring states that in the 1835 conscription, 27,000 Syrians were enlisted in the Egyptian army. The total of the 1835 and 1838 conscriptions amounted to 45,000 men. Bowring, pp. 25-26. These figures are consistent with those given in PRO,FO 78/283 "Questions on Syria" Turkey 1836, and PRO,FO 195/118 "Summary Report on Syria" Wood to Ponsonby 18/9/1834. However, these sources claim that there were a large number of desertions. Whether these men returned to cultivate their fields or abandoned the country altogether is not entirely clear. See also: C.G. Addison, Damascus and Palmyra, p.99; E.B. Barker, Syria and Egypt Under the Last 5 Sultans 1876, pp.49-60; Richard Wood's private papers, "Commonplace Book on Syria, Palestine and Lebanon", St. Antony's College, Oxford.

72 Bowring, pp.25-26

73 PRO,FO 78/283, "Questions on Syria", 13/9/1836.

74 AAE:CC:Damas Vol.I, Deroize to Guizot, 7/9/1843.

75 AAE:CC:Damas Vol.I, Beaudin to Guizot, 11/7/1842. Beaudin observes: "Sous le gouvernement égyptien, les arabes n'osaient pas se presenter dans les villages du confin du désert - même avec de l'argent en main pour acheter du grain ... sans la permission du gouverneur de la province." On the resumption of Beduin insubordination upon the reestablishment of Ottoman rule and the reimposition of the khuwa or protection levy; See: AAE:CC:Damas Vol.I, Beaudin to Guizot, 11/7/1842 and 26/9/1843. Rustum, Al-Mahfuzat, Vol.IV, pp.220-221; PRO,FO 195/127 Moore to Ponsonby, Beirut, 10/5/1843.

76 PRO,FO 78/499 Wood to Aberdeen, Damascus, 28/9/1842; PRO,FO 78/1452 Skene to Bulwer, Aleppo, 30/9/1859; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol.II, Tippel to Guizot, 16/1/1845.

77 PRO,FO 195/226 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 4/7/1844

78 PRO,FO 195/226, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 4/1/1845.

79 PRO,FO 195/226, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 23/7/1845.

80 PRO,FO 195/226, Damascus, Wood to Earl of Aberdeen, 29/11/1843. The French consul also confirmed that the villages around Damascus had been pillaged, AAE:CC:Damas, Vol.II, Tippel to Guizot, 15/8/1845.

81 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol.II, Beaudin to Guizot, 3/6/1847.

82 Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform, p.165; Issawi, Economic History, p.258; N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement", p.258; Porter, Vol.II, pp.187-188; PRO,FO 78/1586, Damascus, Rogers to Bulwer, 26/8/1861.

83 Issawi, "The Decline of Middle East Trade", in D.S. Richards (ed.), Islam and the Trade of Asia, Oxford, 1970, p. 248.

84 Ibid., p.249.

85 D. Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis in the mid-19th Century", in Polk and Chambers, Beginnings, p. 201; Bowring, pp.107-108; MacGregor, pp.145-149.

86 For a discussion of this problem see: A.L. Udovitch, "Technology, Land Tenure and Rural Society", pp.11-19 and P. Sluglett and M. Stuglett, "The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria", in T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure. pp. 409-421.

87 Weulersse, Paysans pp.90-95.

88 Udovitch, "Technology, Land Tenure and Rural Society", p.19 See: Y. Firestone, "Faddan and Musha[c]: Agricultural Holdings and the Burden of Impositions in the Late Ottoman Palestine", Unpublished paper, 1974, for the effects of heavy impositions upon peasant land organisation.

89 K.H. Karpat, "The Land Regime, Social Structure and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire", in Polk and Chambers (eds.) Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968, p.88; C. Issawi, An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa, New York, 1982, p.4.

90 L. Cardon, Le Régime de la propriété foncière en Syrie et au Liban, Paris ,1932, pp.53-68. Also see: T. Khalidi, "Tribal Settlement and Patterns of Land Tenure in Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure, pp.181-188, for the influence of pre-Islamic forms on evolving land-tenure patterns.

91 P. and M. Sluglett, "The Application of the 1858 Land Code", p.410.

92 Klat, Land Tenure, pp.20-29; B. Lewis, "Ottoman Land Tenure and Taxation in Syria", in Studia Islamica, Vol.50, 1979, p.116.

93 R. Tresse, " L'irrigation", p.129.

94 Cardon, pp.107-109.

95 R. Owen, The Middle East in the World Economy: 1800-1914: London, 1981, p. 34.

96 PRO,FO 195/291, Wood to Canning, Damascus, 20/6/1849.

97 Hanna, p. 90.

98. For a good discussion of the economic role of waqfs for an earlier period, see: J-P Pascual, Damas à la fin du XVIe siècle, Damas, 1983. Also A. Poliak, Feudalism in Egypt, Syria and Palestine 1250-1900, London,1939, pp. 79-83.

99 Burckhardt, pp. 123-124.

100 Pascual, "La Syrie à l'epoque ottomane," p. 39.

101 Tresse, 'L'irrigation,' p. 140; Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 349; A-K Rafeq, "Damascus and the Dependent Countryside," in Udovitch (ed.), The Islamic Middle East, p. 669.

102 Rafeq, "Damascus and the Dependent Countryside" p. 670.

103 Sipahis are often described as feudal fief holders but as usual with European analogies, this description is misleading. The sipahi held his grant in return for services which were withheld when he failed to render them. The grants were always revokable and transfers were not infrequent. See Poliak, p. 103; B. Lewis, "Ottoman Land Tenure and Taxation," p. 122.

104 H. Inalcik, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies.

105 Rafeq, "Damascus and the Dependent Countryside," p. 666.

106 It is commonly held that the disintegration of the timar system at the end of the 16th century was the result of the flight of gold, the devaluation of Ottoman currency and the huge inflation in world wheat prices. See: Karpat, "The Land Tenure Regime," p. 75; Warriner, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent;" in Issawi (ed.) Economic History, p. 71 and Owen, The Middle East in the World Economy, pp. 11-12. For a challenge to these views see: A. Abu-Husayn, "The Iltizam of Mansur Furaykh: A Case Study of Iltizam in 16th century Syria," in Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure, p. 250. Abu-Husayn argues that "the fact that this system (iltizam) was well-established in Syria from the earliest years of Ottoman rule does not support the view that it was devised in response to the financial crisis resulting from world inflation."

107 Abu-Husayn, p. 251.

108 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables" in Polk and Chambers (eds.), Beginnings, p. 54. Some a'yan in the 18th century were janissaries and even villagers who began their social rise through monopoly of wealth through trade and then bought tax-collecting privileges.

109 Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 87-93.

110 The best study of this system is Poliak, Feudalism. A summary of the system is also found in S. J. Shaw, "The 19th Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System" in International Journal of Middle East Studies, 6, 1975, pp. 421-459; See also M. A. Ubicini, Letters on Turkey, London, 1856, Vol. I, pp. 278-283; Gibb and Bowen, Part 1, pp. 205 and 255, Ma'oz, pp. 158-163.

111 Grannot, The Land System in Palestine, London, 1952, pp. 27-33; Ubicini, p. 267; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 29/9/1843.

112 Consul Farren clearly observed this motivation for tax-farming when he wrote that "some of the government lands are farmed, including taxes charged on them, whereupon there is usually a speculator between government at the land occupiers," PRO,FO 78/283, "Questions on Syria," 9/8/1836.

113 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform" pp. 53-54.

114 M. Gross, Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus 1860-1909, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Georgetown University, 1979, p. 29.

115 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform," pp. 53-54; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 7/9/1843; A-K. Ghurayba, Suriya fi ᶜl qarn al-tasi al-ᶜashr, Cairo, 1961-2, pp. 45-46.

116 R. Mantran and J. Sauvaget, Règlements fiscaux ottomans: les provinces Syriennes, (Beirut, 1951), pp. 45-49.

117 Consul Werry, "Rural Syria in 1845," in Middle East Journal, Vol. 16, 1962. PRO,FO 195/94 Damascus Farren to Palmerston, 3/9/1838.

118 J-P Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the 17th Century," in Khalidi (ed.) Land Tenure, pp.357-8.

119 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 3/5.1843 and AAE:Pol:Damas Vol. VII, Hecquard to Thouvenal, 30/10/1862. Note that the crops were planted in November and would be harvested in June or July.

120 PRO,FO 195/226 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 3/9/1843.

121 PRO,FO 195/226 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 31/5/1845.

122 A-K Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside," pp. 174-177.

123 Hourani, "The Fertile Crescent in the 18th Century," Studia Islamica, No. 8, 1957, pp. 95-6.

124 G. Baer, "The Evolution of Private Landownership in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent," in Issawi (ed.), Economic History, p. 84.

125 Ibid., PRO,FO 195/207 Aleppo, Werry to Canning, 12/4/1845, Porter, Vol. I, pp. 49-50; A. Cunningham, The Early Correspondence of Richard Wood 1831-1841, London, 1966, pp. 79-80.

126 Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform, p. 156.

127 Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform, pp. 158-159. See: AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 7/9/1843 on Ottoman attempts to revive the tax-farming system after the Egyptian occupation.

128 Issawi has pointed out that the Ottoman state did not outgrow what he has called "the policy of provision." The main objectives of government policy here were "not to promote local production but to ensure fiscal needs would be met and that the principal towns would be adequately supplied." Issawi, "The Decline of Middle East Trade," p. 226.

129 Firestone, "Faddan and Musha," p. 18; Buckingham, pp. 221-229; Blondel, pp. 43-49.

130 Werry "Rural Syria in 1845," p. 90, FO 78/499 Wood to Aberdeen, Damascus, 1/6/1842.
AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Tippel to Guizot, 20/8/1845.

131 Firestone, "Faddan and Musha," p. 18.

132 Bowring, pp. 21-25, Cunningham, pp. 80-84 and 238-240; Werry, "Rural Syria in 1845," pp. 508-510, PRO,FO 195/226 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 4/1/1845.

133 Burckhardt, pp. 169-170.

134 Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 383.

135 Firestone, "Faddan and Musha," p. 18; Rafeq maintains that in the Biqa^{c} it was common for a multazim to reach agreement with a village whereby he would take 1/3 of its revenue and pay the miri requested from the villagers by the state: "The 1/3 here represented what he earned as a multazim and the miri dues." "Land Tenure Problems," p. 383.

136 Henri Guys, Statistique du Pashalik d'Alep, Marseille, 1853, p. 49.

137 Burckhardt, pp. 125-126; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Tippel to Guizot, 7/9/1843. Consul Werry observed that the miri for the entire province of Aleppo was apportioned among the different villages according to the size of their population or extent of land, noting that "it is the peasants themselves who make the repartition of the whole sum amongst the different villages and the villagers." PRO,FO 78/283, Werry to Palmerston, 19/3/1836.

138 C. T. Wilson, Peasant Life in the Holy Land, London, 1906, p. 291. Also, W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book, Vol. III, New York, 1885 pp. 85-7; Delbet, pp. 304-397.

139 Firestone, "Faddan and Musha," p. 19.

140 PRO,FO 195/291 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 20/6/1849.

141 PRO,FO 195/196 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 15/6/1842. PRO,FO 195/291 Damascus, Wood to Canning, 12/8/1848.

142 See: Ibn Adam, Khitab al-kharaj, Cairo, 1389, pp. 92-98 and P. Klat, "The Origins of Land Ownership in Syria," Middle East Economic Papers, 1958, p. 57.

143 C. Graham, "On the Hauran", Journal of the Royal Geographic Society, Vol. XXVIII, 1858, pp. 42-48; Ségur, p. 339; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 4/9/1842.

144 Burckhardt, p. 302.

145 Porter, Vol. II, pp. 113-115; M. Seetzen, "Mémoire," p. 289.

146 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to M.A.E., 12/1/1852.

147 Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 383.

148 PRO,FO 195/226 Wood to Ponsonby, 4/7/1834; Richard Wood's Private Papers, St. Antony's College, Oxford.

149 Richard Wood, "Report on the Political and Moral State of Syria and the Egyptian Government," 22/4/1836, in Cunningham (ed.), pp. 77-84.

150 PRO,FO 195/99 Aleppo, Werry to Palmerston, 3/8/1836.

151 Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (GBPP), 1843, LX, p. 11.

152 Werry, "Rural Syria" p. 509.

153 Burckhardt, p. 48; Also see: J. L. Farley, Two Years in Syria, London, 1859.

154 PRO,FO 195/207 Werry to Canning, Aleppo, 18/3/1845.

155 T. Asad, "Anthropological texts and ideological problems," Review of Middle East Studies, 1, 1975.

156 D. Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East: A Study of Egypt, Syria and Iraq, London, 1958, pp. 229-232; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 100-110.

157 Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 89-90; Weulersse, Paysans, p. 99.

158 D. Warriner, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent," in Issawi, Economic History, p. 75; L. Cardon, pp. 190-195; A. Granott, The Land System in Palestine, London, 1952, p. 65.

159 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 99, Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 89-90, Hannoyer, p. 283.

160 Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 374; G. Post, "Essays on the Sects and Nationalities of Syria and Palestine," Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1891, p. 98.

161 MacGreggor, Commercial Statistics, p. 98.

162 N. Daker, Sédentarisation des bédouins nomades en Syrie, Paris, 1973, p. 82. See: Burckhardt, p. 292; Rambles, pp. 75-78; Wilson, Peasant Life in the Holy Land, London, 1906, p. 49; Bell, p. 112

163 D. Warriner, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent," p. 75.

164 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 90; Weulersse, p. 108.

165 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 92;

166 Firestone, "Faddan and Musha," pp. 20-21.

167 G, Baer, Population and Society in the Arab East, London, 1964, pp. 148-149.

168 Latron, pp. 106-107; J. Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine, London, 1855; Post, "Essays" p. 105; Graham, "On the Hauran," pp. 211-212.

169 Faddan: in its ordinary sense this term refers to a yoke of oxen. In the plains it generally is taken to mean two yokes or a pair of oxen. A faddan of land is an area of land which takes a day for a yoke of oxen to plough. Its size is roughly the same in the plains as it is in the mountain districts. R. Mantran and J. Sauvaget, Règlements fiscaux Ottomans , les provinces syriennes, Paris, 1951, pp. 49-50; Gibb and Bowen reckoned the faddan to be 5.353 square metres. I, p. 262, fn. 4.

170 Burckhardt, pp. 300-301.

171 S. Bergheim, "Land Tenure in Palestine," in Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1894, p. 192.

172 Post, "Essays," p. 110.

173 Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 374.

174 Bergheim, "Land Tenure," pp. 192-193.

175 Weulersse, p. 100.

176 Bergheim, "Land Tenure," p. 195.

177 Latron, p. 295; Weulersse, Paysans, p. 107.

178 Warriner, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent," p. 185.

CHAPTER IV: PEASANT PRODUCTION AND REGIONAL TRADE 1800-1850

As discussed in the previous chapter, in the first half of the 19th century, agricultural production was largely undertaken by peasant families on small parcels of communally held land. Landless labourers and the practice of metayage, which were to become major features of the agrarian economy by the late 19th century, do not appear to be significant factors in this period although a number of observers note their existence in the 1840s.[1] Although the vast majority of peasants were subsistence producers who strove to meet their own needs after attending to the demands of the various impositions, cash crops and production for regional markets played their part in the local economies and were important features in a number of districts.

The village community

It was within the context of the village community that agricultural production took place: decisions concerning the types of cash crops and their supervision, the organization of labour in the harvest season and, in the Ghuta, the working of the exceedingly complex arrangements which centered around the irrigation system.[2] However,

the village community was at all times tied to the wider economic structures and historical forces affecting Syria as a whole: the Syrian village in which tax-collectors, multazims, urban-based merchants and moneylenders come and go can hardly be described as "self-sufficient" or autonomous as has often been the case. Impositions had the effect of binding the peasant to local shaykhs, money-lenders and merchants, which meant that the peasant family economy was inevitably caught up in networks of short-distance and long-distance trade. It is important to bear in mind these basic linkages before undertaking any discussion of agricultural production. As put by Hannoyer, "La société villageoise est à son tour plus ou moins tributaire de l'organisation économique et politique de la société globale."[3]

Village society was above all, composed of a totality of peasant families, ostensibly brought together by ties of common descent.[4] However, a web of relations and alliances was always elaborated outside the bonds of kinship, underlining the importance of external ties: patron-client relations were a powerful factor in rural life.[5] In the pre-modern period, the status of the rural notables was the primary source of their wealth; obligations to the community

ultimately precluded excessive capital accumulation.[6] This was to be gradually superceded in the course of the 19th century by the exercise of power based upon control of land, livestock and water rights.

Credit and cultivation

The cultivation of cash crops was invariably linked to the question of access to capital and the role of the local or urban moneylending intermediaries. The development of credit and usury at the local level is difficult to trace but was clearly a crucial element both of subsistence farming and porduction for the market. In the first half of the 19th century, the gradual growth of a more commercialized agriculture took place (although in the interior it was limited in scope compared to that of Mount Lebanon and the coastal regions), involving the peasant-producer, multazim, local shaykh and merchant in a web of usurous deals to do with production and trade.[7]

A number of urban-based figures: (such as members of the ulama[c], and Ottoman officials) engaged in moneylending practices to peasant cultivators. In the 17th and 18th centuries, an important activity of the Janissaries was moneylending to peasants on a large scale.[8] They were also

known to offer grain to them and debited their accounts with the value of it.[9] The money offered by the Janissaries to the peasants was an advance on the crops; the peasants would offer their lands or its produce as security for their debts.[10] There is evidence of the joint possession of land in the 17th century by rural inhabitants and the Janissaries in the Ghuta and the Homs-Hama region. This does not appear to be solely due to the needs of the villagers for protection from the Ottoman authorities; it is argued that the driving force behind such associations was the "growing practice of usury among the military classes as it was by this means that the Janissaries settled in the countryside."[11] According to Rafeq, from the mid-18th century, the Janissaries no longer figure in the Law Court Registers of Damascus in connection with economic activity in the countryside: wealthy notables take their place as moneylenders to peasants.[12]

From the mid-18th century there is evidence to suggest that the villagers in the Damascus region were consistently endebted to local officials and notables. The villager often offered his property, land and trees as security and as Rafeq has shown, that this property could be sold by the creditor even at this early date.[13] It is argued that the

perpetual borrowing from creditors indicated the "constant need of the villagers for cash."[14] The debt could also consist of the price of merchandise sold to the villages - such as the small amount of European-manufactured goods in circulation in the countryside in the first decades of the 19th century.[15] The recurrence of soap purchases in debts in the 18th and 19th centuries seems to indicate that the price of soap was used as a cover for interest money.[16]

The British vice-consul at Damascus reported that before 1850, each village confided its interests in the hands of a subashi, who was generally a moneyed man, resident in Damascus or a regional centre and who was responsible to the authorities for the taxes due from the peasants. The subashi of a village - as long as he met the legitimate needs of the peasants and the authorities - could not be supplanted by another moneylender. A field for his investments being secure, it was in his interest to foster the welfare of his clients. According to Consul Green:

> He could look at himself as the property of the village ... He was always prepared to receive payments in kind, never refusing even poultry and eggs as a set off for his claims ... He encouraged the opening of fresh soil by furnishing new lands with cattle and seed.[17]

The fact that these figures survived Egyptian rule in Syria is evidence of their importance in the production process

and village affairs generally.

In the first decades of the 19th century, the money advanced by the holders of malikanes and waqfs were chiefly for agricultural purposes. By the 1840s, money was lent at around 36% (as opposed to 25% under the Egyptians). In this connection, Werry observed that "grain for seed is frequently advanced to the villagers and in such cases they are partners with the peasants and divide the crop between them - the proprietor receiving the tithe as well.[18]

It is clear that rural indebtedness became a significant force by the 1840's.[19] The French consul was to complain on a number of occasions that as soon as the Egyptian forces evacuated Syria, a powerful Damascus-based Jewish family, the Farhis, established themselves as moneylenders to the peasantry of the Ghuta, particularly in the villages devasted by war:

> "Les villageois que la dernière guerre avait ruinés recourraient infailliblement aux capitalistes ... Les juifs saisissant le mo ment favorable, consentaient à solder les comptes de villages moyennant de solides, gages et un intérêt de 25% qui devait être payé ainsi que le capital, a l'époque de la prochaine récolte après 4 à 5 mois ce qui représentait un intérêt annuel d'environ 100%."[20]

Subsistence farming of wheat and other winter cereals was

usually carried out on a crop-sharing basis with local intermediaries. Until the late 19th century, these crop-sharing arrangements "reflected relations of dependence and mutual obligations that were social, political as well as economic in nature."[21] The Syrian conception of agriculture is best seen as a compact between factors of production: the owners of such factors as land, labour, seed and ploughing stock shared in the product in proportion to the number of factors each had contributed. The shaddad, the party supplying the ploughing stock and seed, was awarded the share of the product due to the input of such factors. Muslim law considered that in all crop-sharing relationships, the party supplying the land and labour respectively formed an association of "co-cultivation" or muzara'a.[22]

Partnerships in the cultivation of vineyards, olive groves, mulberry and fruit trees - called mugharasa - were also widespread in the first half of the 19th century. Under the terms of this contract a peasant undertook to do all the work necessary to establish and nurture an orchard for a share in the grove.[24] Such a system characterized agricultural production in the Ghuta in particular and was known to have existed in the 18th century.[25] This

undoubtedly contributed to the perpetuation of small peasant proprietors in the region. However, the small proprietor of the Damascus region was especially vulnerable to usury and was often forced down to the level of the tenant-farmer.[26] But whatever the particular arrangements, the situation of the tenant-farmer was in the view of Pascual "one of very narrow dependence on the landlord or tax-farmer. The owner provided for everything - not only land but housing, tool, yokes, seeds and clothing. The small peasant proprietor fared no better although his status was higher than that of the tenant-farmer."[27]

Crop yields and the margins of risk

In periods of abundant harvests, Syria produced enough food for its own consumption.[28] Contemporary observers provide some figures for the wheat crop: a ratio of twenty or twenty-five to one is often given for the Hawran and ten to one for the Homs-Hama region.[29] But these figures were cited in good years when rainfall was abundant and well distributed. Both the yields and quality of the harvest were clearly very different from one year to the next, production being wholly dependent on factors of high risk. The irregularity of the rains, invasions of locusts and the destruction of the harvest crops by mice meant that the

rural population often went through long periods of privation.[30]

A number of contemporary observers noted that the crops of the Hawran were frequently destroyed by mice - but not nearly so often or to the same extent as in the Homs-Hama plain.[31] Burckhardt remarked that "the western part of the Homs-Hama plain is the granary of north Syria, although the harvest never yields more than ten for one, chiefly because of the immense numbers of mice, which usually destroy the crops."[32]

Locusts were frequently cited as another major threat to the harvest crops. The effects were particularly destructive when they arrived too early and fed upon the unripe grain.[33] The insects were often reported as having devoured all the green summer crops in the Damascus region, such as millet, maize, cotton, sesame, hemp and melons.[34] To gain some idea of the destructive capacity of the locusts in the agrarian regions of the Province of Damascus, one need only consider this description by Volney:

> "the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. One would imagine that fire followed their progress ... Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears, as if a curtain had been removed. Trees and plants stripped of their leaves and reduced to their naked

> boughs and stems cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant the rich scenery of spring."[35]

In the mid-18th century, Budayri described As^{c}ad Pasha al-^{c}Azm's efforts to force every village to collect a specific quota of locusts by its inhabitants. To judge by the chronicler, the amounts gathered were enormous, but not nearly enough to eliminate the threat.[36] Ibrahim Pasha in the 1830's was known to organize a massive mobilisation of the rural population for the gathering and destruction of locusts.[37]

Not infrequently - for example, throughout the 1840's - a series of devastating droughts occurred during which up to two-thirds of the crop were regularly lost. This was primarily attributed to the scorching summer winds or khamsin, which dried out the nascent olive and fruit crops and destroyed the silk worm eggs of the Ghuta and Orontes Valley region as well as severely damaging the health of the rural population.[38] During such droughts in the Homs-Hama plain, the peasantry frequently revolted when demands were made upon their wheat crops.[39]

Peasant techniques and methods

Agricultural methods and implements remained essentially

unchanged throughout the 19th century.[40] As for tools, which were of extremely simple construction, most observers agree on the basics: the shovel or pick (ma^{c}wal), the hoe (majrafal), the spade (rifsh) and the hatchet (fas).[41] The swing plough which, according to Weulersse, "ne fait qu'égratigner la terre sans la retourner,"[42] was universally employed in the plains and usually drawn by cows and bullocks - although oxen and mules were sometimes yoked together for ploughing.[43] However, in the Ghuta and regions of garden farming the ma^{c}wal was generally used.[44]

In the grainlands of the Hawran and the Homs-Hama plain, the soil had to be laboriously picked over with a matlock and hoe and the stones taken out before it was ready for ploughing. This tedious and painstaking process was called naqb and consisted in prying out what were often enormous rocks and stones from the soil, building terrace walls out of the rubble and levelling off the terraces, which were often from a few feet to a few meters in width - the narrow ones adapted to trees, the wider ones to grain.[45]

The sowing period of the winter crop, called shatawiyya, took place throughout Syria at the time of the annual rains - usually at the end of October. In the Hawran, the wheat and barley harvest was gathered at the end of April and

throughout the entire month of May, but in the Homs-Hama region, the harvest period began in late June or July.[46] As the first third of the land revenue was generally due in March and the other two-thirds due in May, most villagers found themselves obliged to borrow to satisfy the demand, not having at their disposal the money they would have after the sale of the harvest.[47]

After the treading and winnowing of the grain took place on the threshing floor of the village ba^{c}idar, the grain was usually milled. As the perennial rivers were quite numerous, there was a large concentration of grain mills in the Ghuta and the Orontes region. (The Ghuta alone had 57 mills in the first half of the 19th century.[48]) Where there was no water power, one had recourse to hand mills, which according to many contemporary observers, were to be found in every home.[49]

In the fields planted with grain, manuring appeared to be unknown; the most common form of fertilizing the soil was to allow flocks of sheep to graze over recently harvested fields.[50] In the regions of the central plains almost devoid of trees, animal manure was needed for fuel,[51] however, it was used for orchards in the Ghuta.[52] The crop rotation system was frequently condemned by contemporary observers as

being immensely wasteful in terms of its use of good agricultural land with fields left to fallow, as a rule, every other year. But with the preponderance of cultivable land available before 1850, it is difficult to determine the effects of this.

Rain was so precious to the inhabitants of the plains that they collected it in wells and caverns. A typical Hawrani town or village had in its centre a reservoir or tank for water known as a birkit or lake.[53] The peasants of the Jabal Druze displayed considerable industry in turning the branches of the numerous streams near their villages through their fields and irrigating them by small canals, thereby avoiding the calamity brought on by the many droughts in the plain.[54]

The huge margin of risk which, as we have observed, determined the character of Syrian agriculture in the plains, often meant that the peasant was not prepared to experiment with other techniques in safeguarding his subsistence. It is difficult to speculate upon the effects of the low productivity of agrarian technology and methods upon the level of living of the peasantry. Eighteenth century observers often stressed the extreme destitution of the Syrian villager, yet in the 1830's, Bowring asserted

that the standard of living of the Syrian peasant could be favourably compared with that of his counterpart in England; noting that:

> "They feed on mutton several times a week, eat bread daily and sometimes bulghar, with cheese, eggs, olives and dried fruits and an abundance of vegatables. Their lodgings are good and each household has a separate house."[55]

Nomads and sedentary cultivators

Agricultural production in the Syrian village cannot be conceived simply in terms of settled cultivation: the constraints imposed by the climate and the preponderance of non-cultivable and steppleland culminated in a system combining both an agricultural and a pastoral economy. It is important to bear in mind that the nomad was not a completely alien and separate social category where local production was concerned.[56]

Much of the 19th century literature on the nomadic population emphasises their violent relationship with sedentary cultivators and focuses on the inclination to pillage and raid to the virtual exclusion of the strong links binding pastoralists to rural society.[57] In Syria pastoral production, agriculture and trade are interdependent parts of a single economic system: between

pastoralists and cultivators there were always important areas of co-operation and commonality. As innumerable reports throughout the 19th century amply document, popular rebellions in the plains often involved alliances between peasants and nomads. Most characteristically, Druze peasants together with Beduin tribesmen were often in open insurrection against the Ottoman authorities in the Hawran.[58]

Livestock rearing and cultivation are best seen as complimentary forms of economic organisation which develop at the village level. The pastoralists were bound to village society through engaging in contracts with landowners, merchants or peasant-cultivators. But here a distinction had to be made between the camel-raising nomads and the semi-sedentary sheep-grazing tribesmen, who often mixed pastoralism with cultivation. Burckhardt pointed out that the "Beduin" of the plains were of two classes: "those who are resident and those who visit there in spring and summer only," making clear that by 'resident' he meant those tribes residing at all times well within the confines of the agricultural districts.[59] In the early 1840's, the French consul estimated the Beduin population which lived in the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo at 500,000, of which

200,000 were "livestock rearers in close contact with sedentary cultivators and 300,000 belonging to Aneza."[60]

The category of nomadic tribes which were for long in a semi-settled state were subject to miri payments for use of summer pasturage. Apart from access to summer pastures, these "subject tribes" obtained authorization to sow barley and maize on the steppes near their pastures. It was these tribes to whom the villagers entrusted their livestock during the winter months. Their property consisted chiefly of sheep and goats.[61] A few early 19th century observers described the livestock contracts binding the nomadic population to the agriculturalists. Buckingham noted that the peasants of the Homs-Hama plain entrusted their sheep and goats to graze under the care of herdsmen "who regularly pitch their tents near Lake Tirimsi and each of whom receives a piastre a head from the owners" and described many 'mixed villages' of sedentary cultivators and tribesmen in the region.[62] According to Seetzen, "the Arabs receive for their trouble one fourth of the lambs and kids and a similar percentage of the butter. Losses in the flocks are borne equally by both parties."[63]

Thus in terms of the local population and production, the two spheres of settled agriculture and nomadic pastoralism

were closely interdependent. Subsistence farming in the plains greatly depended on pastoral production and the services of the nomadic population for its existence. Similarly, the population of the desert fringes depended on the agricultural zones. For example, a number of European consular reports reveal that Ottoman soldiers often attacked the "peaceful and innocent" Beduin tribes encamped on the edge of the Ghuta and the Marj who migrated to those regions every year for the purpose of having their wheat ground.[64] This interdependence was expressed in numerous other ways, but chiefly in the nature of the livestock contracts.[65]

Cash crops and production for the market

In the first half of the 19th century the peasant economy of the Syrian interior was far from a closed one. Peasant farmers regularly brought their agricultural produce and handicrafts to rural market places and regional centres. A network of local and regional markets and trade routes linked rural Syria to towns which were increasingly oriented towards foreign trade - particularly after 1830. Damascene and Hama merchants and their agents endlessly toured the agrarian hinterland buying up agricultural and pastoral produce.[66] It is clear that in some regions substantial surpluses were sold on a regular basis and even in areas

where cash crops were not particularly important, grain cultivation and pastoral production had a limited orientation to the market.[67] Thus one can only describe Syria's peasants in the first half of the 19th century as subsistence producers with certain qualifications.

What can be said about the relationship of subsistence to marketed production in the pre-modern period? It is clear that after large portions of the agricultural produce were consumed by the peasant household and the farm animals, the rest was often marketed.[68] As early as the 17th and 18th centuries, the marketing of fruits and vegetables assumed a special form known as daman or "sale of the remaining crops."[69] Contemporary Arabic sources describe the actions taken by the governor of Damascus in the late 17th century who attempted to introduce new kinds of fruit trees in the Ghuta, the produce of which was to be sold at local markets and exported to various provinces of the Ottoman Empire.[70] In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, cereals and legumes were mainly directed towards large regional markets, with a good proportion sent to Damascus. The Hawran in this period produced enough good quality wheat (which was more sought after than the soft Damascene variety) to sustain an export trade in years of abundant crops.[71]

In the first half of the 19th century, specialization in cash crops can be observed in a number of regions and towards mid-century there was a perceptible increase in marketable surplus.[72] However, over all specialization never excluded diversification within each major region or village community. Most peasants engaged in a varied agriculture producing (besides grains) some vegetables, fruit, tobacco, cotton and olive oil, most of which was consumed directly by the peasants themselves and the landowning families. Even in the Ghuta production was primarily oriented towards local needs and geared towards subsistence.

Although the range of cash crops produced in the Syrian interior for regional markets and towns was limited, they were very much in evidence in the local economies. From the late 18th century through the first decades of the 19th century and the cotton cultivated on the Aleppo, Homs-Hama and Damascus plain supplied the local village artisan, a small the export trade to Europe and most importantly, the major weaving industries of towns of the interior. During the same period, extensive mulberry plantations for the cultivation of silk worms were found throughout northern Syria and in some districts of the Anti-Lebanon and Zabadani

plain.[73] Fruit trees of every variety (particularly walnuts and apricots), tobacco and hemp were the speciality of the Ghuta. In the first half of the 19th century there were villages which produced fruit only, thus risking their revenues in times of frost.[74] Many villages in the Ghuta also produced olive oil for Damascus and regional markets, with certain villages such as Kfar Sussa specializing in this production virtually to the exclusion of other crops.[75] A number of villages in the Aleppo and Orontes regions chiefly produced grapes which were boiled into a syrup called dibs, and sold by peasants at regional markets and major towns throughout Syria.[76]

Madder roots, providing a popular red dye, were extensively cultivated in the Province of Damascus and were an important object of local trade and a small export commerce from the early 19th century. Damascus retained about a quarter of this production for its dye works, and a good percentage was exported to Mesopotamia and European markets through Beirut. Certain villages near the Ghuta, such as Nabk and Yabrud, specialised in this crop, but considerable amounts were also cultivated in the Homs-Hama plain. Most of the crop remained in the villages for the local weaving industry and some of it was milled in Ghuta villages, the pulverised

madder-root going to towns throughout the interior.[77] In the 1830's, Richard Wood reported that the returns for British manufactures sent to Syria were principally made in madder roots and wool.[78]

The development of cash crops generally is reflected in the greatly increased prices of the 1830's for articles of first necessity: In 1836 it was reported that wheat prices trebled from 20 piastres under the Sultan to 60 to 65 piastres under the Egyptian regime.[79] The most important agricultural exports for this period are cited as wheat, barley, tobacco, cotton, sesame and silk - all of which underwent enormous price increases.[80] In northern Syria and Jabal al-ᶜAlawiyin, tobacco assumed great importance as a cash crop but many observers remarked that there was scarcely a region in Syria where it was not grown.[81]

During the first decades of the 19th century, specialization in different regions began to change. In the 1830's, Muhammad ᶜAli promoted cotton exports from Egypt to the Levant, which began to affect local production.[82] At this time, roughly a quarter of the entire cotton production of northern and central Syria was exported to Europe.[83] That of the plain of Damascus generally only met local needs but when the harvest greatly exceeded this, it was exported to

French and Italian ports. The fate of this crop is a good example of how specialization in agricultural production was subject to increasing fluctuations as the century progressed. By the mid-1830s, local consumption of Syrian cotton had already decreased as a result of the introduction of British manufactured cotton yarn. By mid-century, Aleppo cotton had almost disappeared: the cultivation of cotton was now concentrated in the Ghuta and Damascus region. However, this crop was mostly short staple and was principally used in the local manufacture of mattresses, blankets and coarse cloths used in the villages. French and English merchants constantly stressed that it was generally unsuited for European manufacture.[84]

In the 1830's a major cash crop of the Damascus region, including the villages of the Anti-Lebanon, was silk; its production had greatly increased since the Egyptian conquest.[85] Yet in 1858, the French Consul, Outrey, acknowledged that twenty years previously, sericulture was widely practiced by many peasants in the Damascus region but that at the present time its extent was negligable. He blamed the internal strife in the province and Ottoman policies in attempting to eliminate local centres of power - particularly in the Anti-Lebanon - for the virtual

disappearance of mulberry tree cultivation, avoiding all mention of European competition.[86]

The domestic handicraft production carried out by the peasant-artisan who generally combined his craft with cultivation was important in satisfying village needs. This activity was essentially geared towards mere necessities: each household generally manufactured the coarse cotton cloth with which they were clothed and simple agricultural implements.[87] Local handicraft production, the volume of which it is impossible to assess, was mainly directed towards local consumption. However, as with agricultural activity, from the beginning of the 19th century a significant part of rural handicraft production was geared to a limited market - essentially to satisfy the needs imposed by the demands of the landowning stratum.[88] In the first decades of the 19th century, there is evidence that production for a wider range of consumers was taking place and that handicraft wares from specific regions were spread over a reasonably wide area.[89]

In Syria's barter economy of the last quarter of the 18th and and early 19th centuries, peasants brought crude linen, silk, and cotton textiles made in their villages to local markets. Numerous villages of the Ghuta produced silk and

cotton textiles which were much in demand among French merchants. Spun cotton from the villages of the Damascus, Homs-Hama and Aleppo regions figured among the main Syrian exports in the second half of the 18th century; villages in north Syria wove coarse cloth which was sent to Aleppo and then exported.[90]

The Ghuta, in particular, enjoyed an ancient and renowned artisan tradition. The peasants of the region wove linen, silk and cotton clothes for the Damascene notable and merchant classes. Certain villages specialized in the manufacture of canvas cloths to be used in the transport of goods.[91] The local handicraft industry of this and other regions also responded to the demands of the Beduin who exchanged the milk, cheese, meat and leather from their flocks for ropes, felt tents linen, cotton and wool cloth made in the villages.[92] From 1830 to 1840 hundreds of small weaving establishments sprang up in the Ghuta.[93] Urquhart estimated that half the peasant population of Syria was engaged in some aspect of textile production.[94]

Textiles were not the only industrial articles produced for the wider market. From the great mass of black basalt stone found among the ruins of the Hawran and the Laja[c], peasants made circular millstones and carried them

principally to the large Palestinian towns of Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah for sale. It is known that these stones were also exported to villages and towns throughout Syria - including Aleppo - and were even sent as far as Egypt.[95] In the Anti-Lebanon and Barada Valley, many villages specialized in crockery and earthenware which was marketed in the Hawran and the Jawlan. Ghuta villages were known to manufacture pottery for the Damascene market.[96] Also important was the trade in soap manufactured in the villages around Aleppo, Idlib and Damascus - particularly when an abundant crop of olives yielded sufficient oil. From the 1830's, many peasant artisans paid cash rents to master soap boilers, the proprietors of the workshops. The soda used in soapmaking was generally bought from peasants from the Hawran and the Homs-Hama plain and was the object of a small regional trade.[97]

The extent of the market for village handicraft wares is an indicator of the relatively high degree of development of small- scale commodity production in a number of villages of the Syrian interior early in the 19th century. However, it is important to bear in mind that the villagers continued to practice cultivation alongside handicraft production. These home industries continued to prevail in the agrarian

districts throughout the 19th century and were not seriously affected by European economic penetration until well after mid-century.[98] Yet in the 1840's, considerable quantities of European manufactured goods - cotton yarn for example - made their way to the regional markets of the interior. British calicoes, dyed blue to suit local tastes, made their appearance in rural markets for the use of peasants and the nomadic population with serious implications for the domestic weaving industry and local cotton production.[99] With this situation clearly in mind and underlying the very close relationship between the fate of agricultural production and the viability of the handicraft industry, Similianskaya has argued that the disruption of domestic industry was the inevitable precondition which made possible the disintegration of the barter economy and the increased commercialization of peasant farming.[100]

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV

1 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmatre 9/8/1839; Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 389; Blondel, pp. 109-119.

2 Tresse, "L'irrigation" p. 229; Latron, pp. 104-119.

3 Hannoyer, p. 271.

4 L. E. Sweet, Tell Toqaan: A Syrian Village, Ann Arbor, 1960, pp. 14-17.

5 Ibid., pp. 20-21; Hannoyer, p. 282; M. E. Delbert, "Paysans en communauté et en polygamie de Bousrah dans le pays de Haouran" in Le Play, Les ouvriers de l'Orient et leurs essaims de la Méditerranée, 2nd Edition, Vol. II, Tours, 1977, p. 139.

6 See: I. Smilianskaya, p. 302. "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations in Syria and Lebanon in the Middle of the 19th Century" in Issawi, Economic History; p. 99.

7 Firestone, "Production and Trade in an Islamic Context," pp. 185-186; R. Owen, "Introduction: Resources, Population and Wealth," in Owen and Naff (eds.), Studies, p. 140.

8 Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside," p. 371.

9 A-K Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the 17th and 18th Centuries," in V. J. Perry and M. E. Yapp (eds.), War, Technology and Society in the Middle East, London, 1975, p. 303.

10 Ibid., p. 319.

11 Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside," p. 380.

12 Rafeq, "The Local Forces," p. 315.

13 Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside," p. 670.

14 Ibid., p. 672.

15 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmatre, 7/6/1839; GBPP, 1843, Vol. LXIV.

16 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmatre, 8/15/1840.

17 GBPP, 1875, Vol. LXXV, Damascus, "Report by Vice Consul Kirby Green on Sources of Revenue for the Vilayat of Syria."

18 Werry, "Rural Syria in 1845," p. 512.

19 Rafeq has shown, for example, that the peasants of the village of Qusayr in the Ghuta were indebted to a Damascene Jew for 27,295 Piastres in 1845, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 390.

20 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Marechal de Dalmatre 4/3/1842.

21 Firestone, "Crop Sharing Economics in Mandatory Palestine," pp. 3-8.

22 Y. Firestone, "Production and Trade in an Islamic Context," p. 183; see Latron, pp. 189-210.

23 See C. G. Addison, Damascus and Palmyra; a Journey to the East, Philadelphia, 1838, pp. 75-76; A. Rustum, Al-Mahfuzat, Vol. IV, p.279. E. Blondel, Deux ans en Syrie et en Palestine, Paris, 1840. Richard Wood Papers, "Commonplace Book on Syria, Palestine and Lebanon". St. Antony's College, Oxford; Burckhardt, pp. 299-301.

24 Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside," p. 364; Latron, p. 222.

25 This is referred to in Najm al-Din al Ghazzi, Al-Kawakib al-sa'ira fi a'yan al-mi'a al-'ashira, ed. G. S. Jabbur, 3 Vols, Beirut, 1945 , P. 349.

26 Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside," p. 119.

27 Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside," p. 119.

28 Bowring, p. 10; Cunningham, p. 67.

29 Addison, p. 195; Rustum, al-Mahfuzat, Vol. IV, p. 118; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmarte, 8/11/1839. Burckhardt maintained that in the Jawlan and the Hawran "it was expected that grain would yield 25 times the quantity of seed sown ... In some areas of the Hawran, barley yields 50 or even 80 fold," p. 282. The English traveller was allegedly told by a Druze shaykh that "from 20 muds of wheat seed he was able to obtain 30 ghararas or 120 fold," p. 297.

30 On the effects of drought and crop failure on the peasant population see: GBPP, 1875, Vol. LXXV, "Report by Vice-Consul Kirby Green on the Province of Damascus."

31 Bowring, p. 16; Buckingham, p. 210; R. Burton and F. Tyrwhitt-Drake, Unexplored Syria, Vol. II, London, 1872, p. 97.

32 Burckhardt, p. 147.

33 The French Consul, Beaudin, noted that in the Hawran and Ajlun locusts had appeared but the wheat and barley were already too ripe for worrying about the insects. AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot, 10/5/1847.

34 GBPP, 1866, Vol. LXX, "Report by Consul Rogers on the Trade of Damascus for 1865."

35 Volney, p. 188.

36 Budayri, p. 209.

37 M. Sabry, L'empire égyptien sous Mohamed Ali et la question d'Orient, Paris, 1930, p. 95;
Bowring, p. 108.

38 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Segur to Toqueville, 2/6/1851.

39 PRO:FO 195/226, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 3/6/1842.

40 See Warriner, Land Reform and Development, p. 119;
Weulersse, Paysans, p. 209;
Hanna, pp. 89-91.

41 A good description and illustration of Syrian agricultural implements in this period is to be found in Post, "Essays," pp. 110-111.

42 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 91.

43 Post, "Essays," p. 114.

44 Latron, p. 116.

45 Post, "Essays," p. 116.

46 Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 55-56.

47 There were constant appeals by European consuls to the Ottoman authorities to realize the revenue after the harvest season. See AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Segur to Toqueville, 12/1/1852.

48 Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane," p. 40.

49 Volney, p. 516; Blondel, p. 206; Robinson, p. 144.

50 Bowring, p. 50.

51 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 85; Hannoyer, p. 219; Latron, p. 119.

52 Post, "Essays," p. 116.

53 Buckingham observed that these were "65 paces long and 40 paces wide," p. 225.

54 Ibid., p. 227;
AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 7/9/1843.

55 Bowring, p. 10.

56 For a discussion of the notion of separate cultural identities of nomads and sedentary cultivators see: Seurat, "Les populations, l'état et la sociétế" in A. Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie.

57 This is discussed in a Middle East context by T. Asad, "The Bedouins as a Military Force" in C. Nelson (ed.), The Desert and the Sown: Nomads in a Wider Society, Berkeley, 1973, p. 61; See: Ségur, pp. 90-125; C. M. Doughty, Travels in Arabia Deserta, 2 Vols, London, 1924.

58 The French Consul reported that, "Shaikh Djumblad" spent most of his time trying to create alliances with the Beduin of the Hawran with whom the Druze often sought refuge," AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 21/12/1843. Druze shaykhs in a letter to the Pasha of Damascus asserted that "there is no distinction or difference in the habits and customs of the inhabitants of these districts and the Bedouin - except that the former cultivate the soil ... Should the conscription be carried out in the desert." PRO,FO 195/368, Damascus, "Petition from the shaykhs of the Hawran to Amin Pasha," 18/8/1851.

59 Burckhardt, p. 306.

60 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 21/12/1843.

61 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to Toqueville, 26/11/1851, Burckhardt, p. 93; Buckingham, p. 492.

62 Buckingham, pp. 492-498.

63 Seetzen, "Mémoire," p. 289.

64 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Deroize to Guizot, 26/9/1843.

65 For example, in the Hawran, for each 100 ewes that the proprietor of the flocks entrusted to the nomad, the latter was given 25 measures of grain (850 litres). The nomad, for his part, gave back 63 fleeces for every 75 produced from 100 sheep. He kept 9 for himself and kept a quarter of the sheep, AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Segur to Toqueville, 26/11/1851.

66 Smilianskaya, "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations," p. 296; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmatre, 13/12/1839; Rafeq, The Province of Damascus, p. 207.

67 Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 106 and 210-220.

68 Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane," p. 40; Ghurayba, p. 119; Burton and Tyrwitt Drake, Vol. I, pp. 70-75; D. Urquhart, Turkey and its Resources, London, 1833, p.120.

69 For this type of sale see M. S. al-Qasimi, Qamus al-sinaᶜat al-shamiya, ed. Z. al-Qasimi, 2 Vols, (Paris, 1960, Vol. II, pp. 284-285), p. 44.

70 Muhammad al-Amin al-Muhibbi, Khulasat al-athar fi aᶜyan al-qarn al-hadi ᶜashar, 4 Vols., Beirut, 1970. At this point cereals became the object of an active trade and speculation in which the Janissaries played a particularly large role. This is evidenced in the numerous warehouses and grain mills they opened up. Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside," p. 363.

71 AAE:B1:1022, Sidon, 19/7/88; Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, p. 45.

72 Smilianskaya, "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations," p. 231. Hanna, p. 98; Hilan, p. 44-48; Kalla, p.34-38; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to Toqueville, 5/3/1851.

73 Richard Wood's Private Papers, "Commonplace Book on Syria, Palestine and Lebanon," St. Antony's College, Oxford.

74 Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems," p. 372.

75 Burckhardt, p. 90; Ibrahim Pasha made arrangements for the extension of olive cultivation and introduced an improved method of pressing oil as well as importing oil presses from France into Syria, Bowring, p. 16.

76 Burckhardt, p. 99; Urquhart, Turkey and its Resources, London, 1833, p. 120.

77 J. Morrison, "A concise account of the trade carried on by the European Nations to the Levant," 16 August, 1788, Liverpool Papers, M.S. 38-233; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to Toqueville, 13/11/1851.

78 Richard Wood, "Summary Report of Syria, 1834," in Cunningham, pp. 62-63.

79 Bowring, p. 9.

80 MacGreggor, p. 87.

81 Urquhart, Turkey and its Resources, p. 219; Anon, The Modern Syrians, London, 1844, p. 260, C. G. Addison, p. 185.

82 MacGreggor, p. 119; Richard Wood, "Summary Report of Syria, 1834," in Cunningham, p. 65.

83 Bowring, p. 12.

84 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to Toqueville, 13/11/1851.

85 PRO:FO 78/283 "Report on Syria," Campbell to Palmerston, 3/9/1836.

86 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. IV, Outrey to Walewski, 25/3/1858.

87 Volney, p. 516; Urquhart, p. 88; Robinson, p. 276.

88 Smilianskaya, "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations," p. 233.

89 Ibid., p. 235; Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane," p. 40; Issawi, "Syria: Introduction," in Economic History, p.208.

90 AAE:B1:1022, Sidon, 19/7/28; AAE, B111, 45, Marseilles; 6/8/28; Morrison, "A concise account of the trade carried on by the European nations to the Levant."

91 A. Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," in A. Raymond (ed.), p. 369.

92 AE B1 1026, Sidon, 12/11/42; Porter, II, p. 296.

93 A. Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," p. 370; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Ratti-Menton to Duc de Dalmatre, 5/7/1839.

94 Urquhart, p. 95.

95 Burckhardt, p. 57; Buckingham observed that "the diametre was 6 feet and placed on the camel's hump and strapped down in transport.. They are sold for 250 to 500 piastres per pair," p. 166.

96 Smilianskaya, "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations," p. 272. Burckhardt, p. 36; Robinson, p. 42.

97 Bowring, p. 19; MacGreggor, p. 115.

98 D. Chevallier, "Un exemple de résistance technique de l'artisanat syrien aux XIX at XXe siècles. Les tissus ikates d'Alep et de Damas," Syria XXXIX, 1962.

99 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Ségur to Toqueville, 12/7/1852.

100 Smilianskaya, p. 301.

CHAPTER V: THE GHUTA OF DAMASCUS

Introduction

The history of the Ghuta was at all times inextricably linked to the city of Damascus. The proximity of a major urban centre to the oasis, which is open to the steppe on its eastern boundary, was a political and economic necessity. Similarly, Damascus owed its existence to the Ghuta. Without the oasis, no urban centre of any importance could develop to the east of the Anti-Lebanon.

This interdependence was reflected in many ways. The presence of an abundant water supply adequate for the cultivation of the Ghuta and the needs of the city served to provide a vast region with food and furnish its artisans with raw materials for the local handicraft industries. The economic life of Damascus was always based upon close contact with the peasants of the Ghuta, the mountain dwellers of the Anti-Lebanon and the nomadic population of the desert fringe to the east.[1] Damascus and the Ghuta were situated on six major trade routes - including the Hajj route which was a major source of wealth for the region. It was in the villages of the Ghuta and in Damascus, the last city before the desert crossing, that tens of thousands of pilgrims gathered to form the Caravan each year.[2]

The term "Ghuta" in popular Syrian usage refers to oases of such altitudes that date palms cannot grow[3]; but more specifically it designates the region situated to the north-east and south-east of Damascus which is sufficiently irrigated so that fruit orchards grow successfully. It is essentially a collective creation of the rural community established near one of the many perenial sources flowing into a system of canalization. In its basic structure, it is composed of six major canals which lead the Barada River over the cultivated area, the most important being the Nahr al-Thawra and the Nahr al-Yazid. The even topography gave rise to a plethora of diversions and branches forming a seemingly endless network of basins which penetrate one another.[4]

The Ghuta extends for more than 20 kilometres along the Barada, but does not possess any well defined boundaries. The oasis forms a semi-circle around the city, being bounded on the west by the eastern slopes of the Anti-Lebanon and extending as far as the water sources emitted from the river allow for the survival of fruit orchards. The Barada flows through a series of narrow gorges and valleys and merges with a stream at ᶜAyn Fija, which provides most of the water utilised by the villagers of the Ghuta and the inhabitants

of Damascus. At Dumar, six kilometres from the city, the river fans out in seven branches and spreads out in every direction before expiring in the extensive marshland around the lake of Utayba. Although the Ghuta has no real defined limits but diminishes in this way bit by bit, it is believed that its actual extent has not significantly altered for a millenium. [5]

East and south-east of the Ghuta unfolds a wide plain, inundated with water in the winter and subjected to infernal heat in the summer. The Marj, which extends from the lake of Utayba, is a poor agricultural district whose economy was essentially based upon dry-farming. The two regions were interdependent and are best treated as a geographic unit. In the Marj, geographic conditions imposed a rural economy which combined the orchard cultivation of the Ghuta and the pastoral occupations of the Beduin tribes of the steppe. The agrarian traditions of the Marjis reflect this transition from sedentary fellah to semi-nomad. Thoumin, passing through the region, observed that, "Les familles bédouines, fixées dans les villages à coté des vieux sédentaires, ne renoncent à leurs habitudes qu'avec un regret à peine dissimulé". [6] A period of absolute drought from June to October afflicts the region which is completely

dependent on the irrigation waters draining off from the Ghuta for its existence. The expansion of the cultivated area and the widening of the frontiers of settlement on the plain of Damascus in the latter part of the 19th century took place here. [7]

The first human settlements of the Ghuta date back to antiquity, perhaps some 4,000 years. [8] In relation to other agricultural districts of the interior, the population density has always been considerable and habitation was originally organized in small settlements built on the edge of irrigated areas where a small proprietor regime tended to develop. The peasant lives near his fields in tightly packed villages, built out of walls of baked earth which gave the Ghuta village the impression of a fortress. Travellers in the region often remarked that the high mud walls bordering the orchards and the narrow lanes effectively shut out the view of those on horseback. [9] Lortet, like many other observers on the spot, was struck by the fiercely independent character of the Ghuta peasantry and noted that the local authorities and landlords alike were loathe to intervene directly in their affairs: "Ils sont, en effet, beaucoup moins maltraités par les Ottomans que les autres cultivateurs de la région, car ils savent

recevoir leurs oppresseurs à coups de fusil lorsque cela est nécessaire." [10]

Statistics are lacking which would enable us to establish the population of the Ghuta in the second half of the 19th century with any accuracy. On occasion, the Ottoman government carried out a census in the region for the purpose of ascertaining the number of taxable males. One such census was taken previous to the devastating wave of cholera in 1848 and it was found, on comparing the returns of the census with that of the scourge, that more people had died in many homes than were returned altogether. [11] Contemporary sources report a massive exodus out of Damascus and into the Ghuta during violent outbreaks of cholera, particularly in the mid-1860s. [12] In one outbreak alone - that of the summer of 1875 - some 10,000 people allegedly perished in the Damascus region. This visitation claimed so many victims that, according to Consul Dickson, "the excellent harvest found a poor sale in the local markets and the fruit of the Ghuta was left rotting on heaps. [13] The periodic ravages of the disease in this period make population levels difficult to determine and is just one example of the obstacles encountered in any attempt to gain a realistic assessment.

By the turn of the century, another important factor affecting population levels was emigration. In the Damascus region, this was taking place at increasingly high rates, peaking around 1900 to 1910. This movement was mostly directed towards North and South America. [14]

Be that as it may, for the mid-19th century, most contemporary sources are in broad agreement that the population of the Ghuta and the Marj was in the region of 45,000, distributed between approximately 85 villages. [15] According to an official census taken in the 1890s, the region contained about 55,000 people, giving it a density of roughly 120 inhabitants per square kilometre. [16] The census confirmed that the overwhelming majority of the Ghuta's population was Sunni Muslim. There were also small settlements of Circassians, who emigrated following the Turko-Russian war in the late 1870's, many of whom settled in Duma; sizeable communities of Syrian and Greek Orthodox Christians living in "mixed" villages (such as Irbin and Zamilka) throughout the Ghuta and small Druze and Jewish populations in Jaramana and Jawbar respectively.[17]

As no boundary limits the Ghuta on the east, Beduin tribesmen and semi-nomads have always lived in direct contact with the sedentary cultivators of the Ghuta and

Barada Valley. There were no fixed encampments of Beduin in the oasis, although several tribes periodically entered the area to escape the aghnam or livestock tax. [18] Furthermore, there were always direct relations with the peasants and petty-traders of the Hawran: Hawranis traditionally ventured into the Ghuta whenever they needed to procure by barter what they lacked at home - notably wood, fruit and cloth.[19]

During the second half of the 19th century, traditional social structures in the Ghuta underwent fundamental change. The development of the oasis revolved around the management and distribution of water, the control over which traditionally attracted the attention of powerful Damascene groups. However, this acquired another dimension with the powerful forces emanating from the cities in this period.

European economic penetration and its consequences for the countryside

During the second half of the 19th century, changes occurred in rural society which had their origins in the forces unleashed by the Egyptian occupation and the Ottoman Reform movement, (Tanzimat) but more directly in the consequences of massive European economic penetration in Syria.

In the 1840s, the effects of European economic penetration and political intervention were beginning to materialise. Yet each component of the Syrian traditional economy was subject to differential impact under the pressures of an industrialising West. As distinct from urban-based commerce and manufacture, agriculture was not affected to an appreciable extent until after the mid-19th century. By the turn of the century, Western capital had created the necessary infrastructure for the expansion of European interests in the various regions of the interior with the construction of the first carriage roads, railroads and the development of a modern port at Beirut.

Both urban and rural society reacted within the constraints of traditional socio-economic frameworks established over the centuries. A major problem for the historian is how the new influences managed to impose themselves and the specific forms they adopted. The nature of this impact - as well as the diversity of responses and their endless consequences - reveals itself, as Chevallier has suggested, "in the adaptation of this condition and relationship of inequality to natural and human conditions". [20]

On the eve of the Egyptian occupation in 1831, Syria's trade

relations with Europe were on a downward spiral. Syria's foreign trade was essentially carried on with the neighbouring provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In 1825, for example, Damascus bought Indian goods via Baghdad worth more than twice all Syria's purchases from Europe.[21]

The Egyptian authorities did much to promote economic development: rural security was established in the principal agricultural districts and new crops, such as cotton in the Ghuta, were introduced. In the Marj, marshes were drained and deserted lands recultivated. During the occupation some 70 villages and hamlets were reportedly reoccupied on the fringes of the Ghuta and in the Marj, as the army was put to use in protecting the cultivated zones.[22] Furthermore, peasants in the region were given tools, seeds and cash loans. Local trade was encouraged, not only because of the greater rural security but due to the enormous demands of the Egyptian army for supplies, principally in grain.[23]

During the Egyptian occupation there was also an enormous increase in Syria's trade with Europe. As a result of trade agreements ceded by the Ottomans and the introduction of a regular steamer service at Beirut in 1835, giving rise to an enormous influx of European goods, a rapid re-orientation of

the Syrian economy towards the world market took place. In the next 20 years, there would be an eight to ten-fold increase in trade between Europe and the Levant. [24] After 1850, it was possible to transport mass cargoes on steamers and European merchants were no longer limited to selling their merchandise for gold and silver currency. They developed and active interest in the agricultural and pastoral production of the country.

The main vehicle for European economic penetration in Syria was the Commercial Treaty of 1838 between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, the terms of which were later undertaken by other European states. [25] The terms of the convention dictated that customs duty on European imported merchandise should not exceed 5%. The liberal commercial policy was applied immediately after the Egyptian withdrawal, giving great impetus to European trading activity in the region. On the other hand, the internal trade of Syria was subject to a much higher customs duty, which damaged it considerably. Most importantly, the treaty authorised each merchant to buy agricultural produce throughout the Ottoman Empire for internal trade and export.

The low import duty of the Treaty forced the Ottomans to impose an exhorbitant duty of 12% on exports to compensate

for relinquishing inland taxes on European imports and the revenue derived from monopolies of local produce. This situation obviously discriminated heavily against local industry and agricultural enterprise and contributed to the great expansion of imports, particularly as all commercial treaties were energetically upheld by European consuls.[26]

The Commercial Treaty of 1838 essentially set the framework for Ottoman commercial policy that was to prevail with few important changes until the First World War. Not only did Syrian merchants complain bitterly about the 12% export tariff rate, but the Ottoman authorities applied it to all internal traffic. This heavy tax on domestic trade greatly reinforced the Treaty's main thrust in encouraging imports and discouraging local production.[27] The European consuls themselves took note of the harmful effects of the treaty in the Damascus region. As observed by Consul Beaudin:

> The articles of first necessity, local produce from the surrounding oasis which enter Damascus for local consumption are subject to a duty of 12%, while before the treaty of 1838, all these goods entered the city freely and paid nothing until it was exported abroad. This new system is very lucrative for the government and it pursues it vigorously. The Syrians constantly complain about this tariff and it inflames the hatred of the locals against the Europeans.[28]

At the start of the Egyptian occupation, Syria's foreign

trade was essentially regional in character. But with the rapid re-orientation of her trade during this period, Europe's share came to equal that of Egypt and Turkey. [29] At this time, European commercial houses opened their main offices in Beirut with branches in Damascus and Aleppo. By 1838, Damascenes were patronising 107 shops retailing in British textiles. Beduin tribesmen found they could buy their hattas and jalabas cheaper from factories at Liverpool and Manchester than they themselves could weave them. [30]

As Issawi has pointed out, the main beneficiary of the development taking place during the Egyptian occupation was Beirut, which developed with the great expansion of British and French trade. By the mid-1830's, Beirut's imports doubled and its exports had increased by 50%. [31] Instead of receiving British manufactured goods indirectly through Italy, Syria now began importing directly from England. The 1850's and 1860's saw major increases in the tonnage capacity of the ships and a marked reduction in costs. [32]

In the 1830's and 1840's, there was a growing realization on the part of Britain and France that Syria not only offered a large potential market for European wares but was also a potentially important source of supply of grain and raw materials. Consul Farren in the mid-1830's noted that,

> "the produce of Syria after being gradually sent to Great Britain indirectly as part returns is now coming so fully into play that British vessels have been lately freighted home with a full cargo of matter roots, wool, silk, cotton - the produce of the Damascus oasis." [33]

From this time the products of the Ghuta: dried fruits, sesame, flour milled locally from Hawrani grain, along with raw materials arrived on the coast for export. The export trade was mainly carried on with France and Italy, the former country being the greatest purchaser of olive oil and raw materials such as cotton, matter roots and gall nuts; in this respect France sustained certain sectors of the Ghuta's economy in periods of difficulty.[34]

Despite the presence of credit facilities, local merchants had to pay cash for European goods. In an earlier period, before the Egyptian occupation, a good part of the commercial dealings between foreign merchants and the local population were transacted through barter. In 1848, Richard Wood expressed his frustration with the lack of development in British trade with Syria and attributed this to the fact that there had been a

> "total withdrawal of all the specie, which the foreign and native merchants turn into bullion to make their remittances. Nothing could more effectively obviate these obstacles to the increase of foreign trade than a due encouragement to the exportation of native products. In return, Syria will consume a greater quantity of Britain's manufactured goods." [35]

Chevallier has argued that the extraction of silver and gold reached serious proportions until the mid-19th century and contributed to the general impoverishment of the Syrian economy. The situation made rural taxation particularly oppressive.[36] In the 1850's, with the introduction of American and Australian gold, there was no longer the same motivation to obtain precious metals from the Levant. During this phase, the increase in the amount of circulating medium, diffused by the purchase of produce for European markets and the credit extended to merchants in Syria, was an enormous encouragement to the development of an export oriented agriculture.[37]

In the 1860s, the products of the Ghuta appeared on the export lists in greater volume and with much greater regularity. In the market places of the oasis, this trade was carried out mostly by barter and consisted in the exchange of Manchester prints and calicos for dried fruit, olive oil, hemp, flour and wool provided by the pastoral nomads of the Marj. As put by one local resident observing trade in the oasis, "very little coin changes hands, so many yards of cloth are bartered for so many in their value of grain and fruit." [38] Local production was clearly beginning to respond to external developments and crises. For

example, the cultivators of matter roots - an important article of export and source of cash for the peasants of the Ghuta - sustained heavy losses in the 1870's owing to the sharp fall in the value of the dye in British markets, consequent to the discovery of alazarine. As a result, the export of this crop almost ceased.[39]

Attempts at agricultural specialization were made in response to the widening market for the region's products. Local raw materials which had traditionally been used by artisans in the Ghuta and Damascus were now often exported to Europe where they fetched higher prices. The rise in the world prices of cotton in the 1860's, due to the American Civil War, tripled its price in Damascus. It was more profitable to export it than to leave it for local use. Both Britain and France were interested in the introduction of American cotton in the Ghuta and as a result a commission was formed in the mid-1860's by the Ottoman authorities, which decided to distribute 7500 rotls of the seed of Lone Star cotton, considered to be of superior quality to the local short-staple variety. The peasants were exempted from taxes for their efforts. Yet in the aftermath of the Civil War, cotton cultivation in the Ghuta almost disappeared.[40]

The severe trade depression of the 1870's tied the Syrian rural economy even more closely to economic crisis abroad. A succession of devastating droughts culminating in massive crop failures also served to make this period one of great suffering for the rural population. Furthermore, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 proved to be extremely damaging to Syria's overland and transit trade. The subsequent diversions to the sea route of huge numbers of Moslem pilgrims from all parts of the Ottoman Empire and Iran, who had previously made Damascus and the Ghuta villages their point of arrival and departure, contributed greatly to the downward spiral of the region's trade. [41]

The general collapse in agricultural prices globally and in particular the sharp fall which took place in Europe in the aftermath of the Franco-German War of 1870 badly hurt Syrian exports. In fact, Syrian agricultural exports to Europe throughout the 1870's were halved from the levels they had attained in the previous decade. [42] To make matters more desperate still, war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia was declared in 1877 and a massive drain of the male population took place. We are told that in the Ghuta

"conscription has seriously diminished the number of tillers of the soil and the abstraction of so many bread winners has

reduced vast numbers of families to the verge of starvation." [43]

In the gradual restructuring of the local economy, contemporary sources suggest that in the Damascus region there was increased pressure on the land as many ruined artisans in the city returned home to their villages in the Ghuta. The implications of this process were not lost on Consul Moore who confidently declared:

> "now that the Syrians have discovered it to be in their interest to turn those hands, which in times past were employed in weaving cotton cloth, to agricultural pursuits and to exchange with advantage their produce for English manufacturers ... the consumption of British goods has extended to the peasantry and the Beduin and an increase in the import and export trade of Syria will necessarily follow". [44]

The last two decades of the 19th century were marked by a much greater integration of Syria's rural areas into the world economy with the accompanying exposure to economic crises abroad. Improved security conditions and rapid population growth stimulated internal demand which became a force in itself for agricultural expansion. There was a rapid rise in the export of fruit from the Ghuta to Europe and neighbouring lands. [45] In the 1890s, flour milled in the Ghuta (principally for the Beirut and Egyptian markets) tended to replace Syrian wheat exports, which, due to

increased competition from new sources of supply such as America, India and Argentina, had greatly diminished. [46] In the late 1890's and the early 1900's, the development of hemp and cord making in the Ghuta took on a much greater importance with a new crisis emerging in the textile industry: the Egyptian government, in attempts to develop an indiginous industry, placed a heavy tax upon Damascene textiles, which resulted in the unemployment of enormous numbers of weavers in the Damascus region. [47] Moreover, the easy credit terms granted by European exporters and manufacturers enabled a whole host of petty traders possessing virtually no capital to engage in commerce and penetrate the rural market. This served to further undermine the rural-based industries. [48]

The widening network of European-financed communication links clearly had a huge bearing on the direction of the import - export trade and accelerated the process of Western economic penetration. The construction of the first surfaced road connecting Beirut with Damascus was undertaken in 1859 and completed in 1863 by "Compagnie Ottomane de la Route de Beyrouth à Damas". It always kept its French character and its administration was based in Paris. [49] On the day of its completion a convoy of carts and wagons of

European mechandise rolled into the bazaars of Damascus. At the time, the French Consul declared that "cette compagnie dont tous les éléments sont Français a déjà contribué et contribuera encore à augmenter notre influence en Syrie". [50] The road was opposed by the Damascenes and the population of the Ghuta who, according to Rafeq, did not hide their hostility to anything which put them in contact with Europe.[51]

Less than two years after the construction of the Beirut - Damascus highway, Damascus was in daily communication with Beirut by a service of wagons, all transport along the road being monopolized by the French company. In the 1890's a railroad line connecting Beirut with Damascus and the Hawran was also constructed by French-owned companies. The line, which was opened in 1895, further strengthened the ties between the bazaars of the Syrian interior and the corresponding port. However, in some respects, the railroads had a limited success: the high costs of fares and freight forced merchants and petty traders to make much greater use of carts and pack animals for the transport of goods. [52] Most crucially, the European constructed railroad networks and highway system did not link the agrarian regions with their principal cities in any systematic way to

form an integrated national economy. The networks did not form any coordinated system of transport - the road communication between the villages of the Ghuta and Damascus remained extremely primitive - but rather separate branches linking agrarian districts directly to ports of export and thus to Europe.[53]

The local handicraft industry

Although by 1860, European manufactured textiles arriving in Damascus from Beirut only comprised about 15% of the total volume of goods imported into the city, it already had a profound effect on the traditional industry of Damascus and the neighbouring villages.[54] The decline of handicraft production in Syria due to the effects of European competition is well documented and does not require elaboration here.[55] However, we will briefly consider developments in this regard only in so far as they affected the rural population and the economy of the Ghuta. The manufacture of the two main fabrics of the region, alaja and qutni were the most important sectors of Damascene industry and had been the most devastated by the influx of British manufactures. The European cloth was known locally as Afarnji and was sold at the bazaars or in the numerous shops

which sold them exclusively.[56]

Before the Egyptian occupation, the cotton weft of the alaja cloth had been supplied by the local cotton spinning industry, largely carried on by the peasants of the Ghuta. At some point in the 1830's, British-manufactured cotton yarn was introduced into its production and there resulted an immediate and dramatic reduction in the manufacture of alaja using local cotton.[57] In the 1830's, 4000 looms in Damascus produced alaja and qutni; in the 1840's, this was reduced to 1000 looms. Over this period, the number of textile workers dropped from 5000 to 1000.[58]

It is worth noting that the artisans of Damascus and the Ghuta put up some resistance to this assault on their livelihoods. Qasimi, a local chronicler, describes the formation of sharika contracts between artisans and entrepreneurs in textiles in attempts to manufacture printed cottons similar to those imported from Europe.[59] Furthermore, we are told that weavers were still able to produce "coarse cloths, which by their cheapness command a sale only among the agricultural classes of the Ghuta and the Marj and among the nomadic tribesmen who frequent Damascus to find simple wants".[60]

Due to the disastrous effects that massive European imports had on the livelihood of artisans from the outset, a large number of city dwellers returned to their villages, creating over-population in the Ghuta by the mid-19th century. According to the Russian consul of Beirut, the population of Damascus decreased from 120,000 to 80,000 between 1820 and 1840 directly as a result of the decline of the weaving and other connected industries. Much of the migrating population settled in the Ghuta villages. [61] Both rural and urban artisans continued to reduce their prices and cut into their subsistence to survive. Because most artisans living in the Ghuta were only partly dependent for their livelihood on weaving and spinning, they could better afford to accept a cut in wages.[62]

In the Ghuta, British manufactured cotton goods were sold by hundreds of small itinerant traders, who meandered through the villages hawking their wares. British merchants resident in Syria never ceased to complain that a good or bad harvest exercised a "terrible influence" over the purchasing power of the peasantry. By the turn of the century, however, Consul Richards reported that as a result of British efforts in establishing a sufficient network of itinerant peddlars in the region "even the better class of

peasant in the Ghuta are now wearing European overcoats ... the progress here is very marked".[63]

In the last decades of the 19th century, however, considerable activity is reported in the local manufacture of cotton cloth and yarn. Vice-Consul Jago put the numbers of native looms working in Damascus at nearly 4,000, in 1879, "a huge increase over late years and approximately the number existing before the events of 1860". According to Jago, increased demand was explained by the considerable increase in the rural population since mid-century. Indeed, imports of indigo used for dying the locally woven coarse cotton cloth worn by the peasantry (kham) had doubled between 1880 and the turn of the century.[64]

One of the major consequences of the fate of the native textile industry under the impact of European economic penetration was the much greater domination of the city over its rural hinterland. With crippling blows dealt to the Damascene textile industry, the urban bourgeoisie were forced to tap other sectors of the economy to accumulate wealth. With the advent of commercialized agriculture and the development of foreign trade, the Ghuta was now a major source of wealth to the city and was, in the words of Khoury, "in a position of keeping the city viable".[65] All

these developments implied much greater linkage and control between Damascus and the surrounding countryside. The restructuring of the urban economy induced a whole host of merchants and moneylenders to invest in agricultural land for a secure source of income.

In the mid 19th century, the gathering crisis which emerged from the combined effects of the invasion of European textiles , a great rise in prices, the steady drain of specie and a number of key Ottoman reform policies designed to accommodate Western interests, deeply shook the socio-economic structures of the region. The reaction was violent, culminating in the Damascus riots of 1860. The economic supremacy of minority groups which was to characterize foreign trade until well after the first world war, had a huge bearing on the upheavals of 1860. Moslem merchants who specialized in local and regional trade and in the re-export of imported goods to other Ottoman provinces saw an increasing challenge to their interests with the greater prominence of European oriented trade in Syria.

In June 1860, civil strife between Druze and Christians on Mount Lebanon spread to the Damascus region, including the Ghuta. The Druze called upon recruits from their brethren living in the Ghuta villages who participated in the

massacres of Christians (many of whom were weavers and their families) in Damascus in July. European consuls resident in Damascus at the time of the outbreak put the number massacred at 7 - 8,000.[66] A severe blow was dealt to the textile industry by these events. The subsequent dramatic fall in production was largely due to the emigration of the Christian artisan community. From 1860 to 1861 Damascene cloth completely lost its Egyptian market due to the riots.

Much has been written about the underlying causes of the upheaval.[67] But for the purposes of this study, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of the events of 1860 in accelerating the pace of European economic expansion. For many generations the Damascene textile industry was sustained by powerful urban merchant families. With the steady decline of the textile industry, many merchants and moneylenders turned to speculative ventures in cash crops and land acquisition for profit. In the next quarter of a century, the entrenchment of a private property regime in the Ghuta would be well established.

The Land Code, rural indebtedness and land acquisition in the Ghuta

The development of the export trade in produce from the agricultural districts and the import of manufactured goods

from Europe meant that the Syrian economy became progressively dependent on foreign capital. A whole host of merchants, moneylenders and brokers sprung up around the import-export trade; the rise of a new class of middlemen and entrepreneurs began to emerge. And with the steady rise of this stratum, credit money became a powerful force in the local economy.

By the mid-19th century, the growing poverty of large sections of the population, notably artisans and peasants, and the greater frequency of cash transactions account for the greater prevalence of moneylending, even though the actual rate of interest was 25% - double the official rate at the time.[68] The increased commercialization of agriculture acted as a major incentive for urban groups who were already in possession of considerable properties in the Ghuta to expand and consolidate their holdings by usury and to legalise this process in the context of the new opportunities presented by the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. In the Ghuta small peasant proprietors would begin to decrease in numbers as large estates owned by urban merchants and money-lending groups were concentrated around Damascus.[69] Urban merchants tended to replace the locally-based landlords as providers of capital for the

peasants.

These developments are best understood within the context of the effects of the Ottoman reforms and the struggle on the part of the government to extend its grip over the rural districts. Equally important was the European financial control of the Ottoman Empire and Ottoman indebtedness, culminating in bankruptcy in the 1870's. In 1840, Sultan ᶜAbd al-Majid proclaimed the Hatti-Serif of Gulhane, marking the beginning of the Tanzimat era of reform. A central pillar of Tanzimat policy was the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. This aimed to centralize the Ottoman system of government, increase the control of the state over rural areas and, more specifically, to promote secure property rights. As the Ottomans fell ever deeper into debt with Europe with a major loan undertaken in 1858, European financiers were called in to preside over the direction of the reforms of the fiscal and financial systems. Ottoman policy at this period can be described as an endless search for revenue, while continuing to borrow ever greater amounts. [70] The ever-increasing European demand for raw materials and agricultural produce from the rural districts put mounting pressure on the Ottoman authorities to restructure the land tenure system.

The Land Code was thus the logical outcome of the constant

emphasis of European advisors on replacing communal land arrangements with a private property system to promote agricultural development. As put by Hourani, "Europeans were now in a position to put pressure on the Ottoman government to become the kind of government they needed".[71]

Thus, in response to increasing European pressure on the Ottomans to repay the debt undertaken in efforts to centralize and modernize the administration, the Land Code was enacted. This legislation was designed to assure the treasury regular revenue by suppressing the vast array of intermediaries which had emerged between the peasant-cultivator and the state in the collection of taxes. However, the repeated attempts to abolish the iltizam system and to substitute it with the direct collection of taxes remained ineffective, in so far as taxes generally did not return to the treasury.[72] Nevertheless the Land Code, which regulated the use of land in Syria up until the First World War, proved to be a milestone in the rural history of the region in its long-term effects on social stratification and land distribution. It was a measure which, above all else, intended to reassert state control over land ownership, yet culminated with the emergence of a private

landholding regime on a massive scale. [73] The consequences of the Land Code must ultimately be seen in terms of the failure to achieve its proclaimed objectives.

The cornerstone of the Land Code rested on the a land registration system involving the granting of titles which recognised the rights of usufruct on miri lands worked by the peasants. After its publication in 1858, the registration of lands was made obligatory, and a special department, the Deftar Khane was established for that purpose. Upon the registration, the occupier was to be given a title deed specifying the location, contents and limits of his holding. This was intended as a general system of individual ownership whereby peasants were encouraged to register miri land in thier own names to prevent intermediaries from emerging between the government and the cultivators of the land. [74] As argued by Warriner, "the Ottomans wanted to create a strong central administration over a large number of small cultivators, in order to be able to extract the maximum revenue and at the same time weaken all rival sources of power". [75]

But this was not to be. As is widely acknowledged, the villagers, suspecting that the measure was imposed to facilitate conscription or taxation, ignored the benefits

which might have accrued to them under the new system. Peasants of the Ghuta showed little interest in declaring their properties or, often induced by coercive measures, they registered them in the name of an influential figure who promised protection against the encroachments of the tax collectors and moneylenders. This was one of a number of ways in which powerful Damascene families, taking advantage of peasant indebtedness, acquired legal rights over large tracts of irrigated gardens in the Ghuta.[76] Thus, in its local manifestations, the Land Code facilitated an extraordinary extension of power and wealth by the very intermediaries that the Ottomans had originally set out to undermine.

In cases where peasants made serious attempts to register lands in their own names, the required registration fee often proved prohibitive. When peasants were unable to pay this, their lands generally reverted to the state and were put up for auction by the local majlis, whose members, according to Khoury, often fixed the bids.[77] Moreover, failure to cultivate the land for the three consecutive years stipulated in the Land Code, arising from lack of seed in the event of drought, was also a factor in peasant holdings reverting to the state and being auctioned off or

acquired by members of the majlis.[78]

To discourage communal and promote individual ownership of land, the Land Code provided against the registration of the entirety of the village land in the name of one person or a number of persons from the village. The legislation explicitly prohibited the recognition of any form of collective ownership as explicitly stated in Article VIII:

> "The whole land of a village ... cannot be granted in its entirety to all the inhabitants nor to one or two persons chosen from among them.. Separate pieces are granted to each showing their right of possession".[79]

In the registration process, the mere consent of the two parties to a sales transaction was sufficient proof of title, location and the extent of the piece of land.[80]

As a major objective of the Ottoman authorities was to establish direct contact with the cultivator in order to tax every piece of land, it was deemed essential to establish ownership by means of the sened tapu (granting of title) system. This process was noted by a local observer who reported that:

> "Those lands called miri and which are cultivated by the peasantry on sufference, are now being sold to them or to other people under the name of Taboo, so that all descriptions of land, whether freehold, waqf or miri should be put on the same footing as regards property taxes".[81]

Indeed, contemporary sources confirm that the cumulative effects of Ottoman indebtedness and the reform legislation led to a much higher rate of taxation of the rural population. As observed by Consul Brant, the necessary link between greater taxation and private property was the ultimate aim of the authorities:

> "The demands of the government are heavy beyond all precedent. At the time when taxation was increased it was said that the Porte had determined to sell the freehold of all the lands of the province, which would have entitled the purchasers to all improvements and the free disposal of their rights to their heirs or any party willing to purchase them."[82]

The most serious outcome of the Land Code for the rural population was that it made no provision to secure the position of the peasant cultivator and ultimately paved the way for their massive dispossession. It failed to ensure a satisfactory rural credit system; loans for agricultural pursuits could not be obtained except at usurous rates of interest. The tax-farmers, urban merchants and local shaykhs acquired landholding rights more easily than they might have done had the Ottoman attempts to settle title on the basis of individual ownership met with any success. European observers spared no opportunity to heap scorn upon the methods of implementing the new land leglisation and its consequences. This denunciation by Jago is characteristic:

"Concerning the records of the land registry offices ... erasures, irregular entries at the request of the interested, change of one name for another as the legitimate owner - resulting often in persons finding their names down in governmental books as owners of property (the existence of which was unknown to them, cause the validity of the deeds issued as they are by the mehkhamas to be a fertile source of litigation (such title deeds are drawn up with little regard to accuracy of detail in the question of boundaries and often in such vague terms as to be worthless as evidence of an impartial court".[83]

Thus rather than securing more control over the rural sector for the state, the Land Code, placing no limit on the extent of privately owned land actually lent itself to the formation and consolidation of large estates. The manifestations of the process set in motion by the new social forces at work were not widely felt in the Ghuta until the 1870s, when the severe trade depression obliged mercantile groups to invest in land. In this period, much of the Ghuta's land passed into the hands of a dozen Damascene families, many of whom were connected with the local administration.[84] Also in this decade, the user's right to mortgage the land or sell it to pay their debts was formally recognized by the Ottoman authorities. The governor of Damascus, Rashid Pasha, actively encouraged European capital in land investments as huge sections of the Ghuta were put up for auction.[85]

Descriptions of sales documents recorded in the Shar^{c}iyya

court registers in the second half of the 19th century confirm this movement in land acquisition.[86] According to research undertaken by Sherry Vatter, the contents reveal that for the Province of Damascus, most of the sales took place in the city of Damascus and the Ghuta: some 80% of all property transactions recorded in the 1850-1865 period were carried out in this region.[87] There was an enormous increase in land transactions in the aftermath of the events of 1860, when land sales in the Ghuta inevitably involved a Damascene figure, often cloth merchants, such as members of the Sukari family. According to Vatter, it is clear that the private ownership of agricultural holdings did not begin with the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 as these were present in the registers throughout the 1850-1858 period: "The kind of recognition of private property implicit in the Land Code confirms that this state of affairs was well established by the mid-19th century and suggests that the OLC was less a cause of change in the area than a belated recognition of it."[88]

Agricultural properties were identified in the registers by village and, increasingly - in the 1870's, - by the specific hanut or estate of a notable. However, in the 20th century, this was gradually replaced by the word Hawsh, signifying

the presence of very large estates and equally a mode of habitation. In the hawsh, the dwellings of the estate were grouped around one or two courtyards, including the home of the landlord and the often dilapidated lodgings of the metayers and their dependents. Most observers stress that these dwellings were of extremely poor quality compared with what was normally referred to as bayt (house); they were essentially one room mud structures where the peasants generally lived with their animals.[89]

From the 1860s onwards, the greater tax burden placed peasants at the mercy of the money-lender and rural indebtedness became a powerful force behind land acquisition by urban groups.[90] In the aftermath of the Damascus riots, a fundamental change in the system of taxation was underway, which dramatically increased the burdens formerly imposed. In the mid-1860's, the valuation of houses and agricultural land of the Ghuta villages took place and as a direct result, many peasants found themselves paying four to five times the amount they had previously. Consequently, many peasants from the Oasis took refuge in Jabal Druze where they were protected and where the tax collectors did not dare to venture.[91]

This system of direct taxation was intended to replace the

old semi-feudal system which constituted the basis of the rural notables' social and economic power. The old taxes were replaced by two others: the verghu or land tax - a fixed yearly payment calculated on the value of property (established at 5%) and the ushr - 1/10 of the produce levied in kind. According to local observers, the immediate effect in the Ghuta was to saddle the cultivator with burdens which amounted to approximately 35% of his income.[92]

In some cases, peasants were able to club together to purchase land or borrow cash to pay the 5% tapu tax, thereby securing for themselves the proprietorship of the village lands they had long cultivated. But where the payment of this tax was prohibitive, peasants were dispossessed or yielded a large share of their land to wealthy urban speculators for the required sum. The requirement of paying the land taxes in terms of the lunar calendar which often did not synchronize with the harvest season also meant that the peasant had to borrow heavily to meet their tax requirements.[93]

After a succession of disastrous harvests in the first half of the 1870's and little profitable sale for their produce abroad, peasant-cultivators found it nearly impossible to

ensure their subsistence, much less satisfy the creditors' demands. The cumulative rate of interest, now well established locally at 25% - caused the debts to assume dimensions beyond the remote possibility of liquidating them. Thus what was scornfully referred to by French Mandatory advisors as "l'acquisition forcée" became the standard means of land accumulation. At this time, members of the Damascene Christian and Jewish communities involved in the foreign trade with Europe (and usually European proteges) were prominent in this type of transaction. Little other employment for their capital existed, save to lend to the surrounding peasantry. The war with Russia, giving rise to a heavy war tax, drained the peasantry of what cash resources they might have had and "left the creditor with nothing to proceed against but the land itself."[94] Large Muslim merchant families suffered greatly from the collapse in the value of agricultural produce, the trade in which was their chief wealth.

European protégés had, since the early 1840's, been in the habit of making cash advances to Ghuta agriculturalists against future harvest crops.[95] By the 1860's, the provincial authorities were clearly anxious over the fact that so many Damascene villages were being transferred to

foreign protégés in the deepening financial crisis of the province. In 1864, a commission was formed by government officials and four representatives of European consulates with the aim of setting up an enquiry into the village debts of the Ghuta undertaken by European protégés. This supervisory body was to examine the accounts, fix the amounts of the claims and determine the means by which the debts should be paid. The commission declared that in the future, no village would be able to contract collective debts and settled on a compromise rate of 18%. Yet there is no evidence that its attempts to place some kind of restraint on the activities of the protégés was ever successful. In fact, Ottoman attempts to liquidate collective village debts met with considerable European resistence.[96] By the 1870's, the collective debts of the Ghuta villages involved in this way had gone well beyond their sale value. In such villages it was said that "with few exceptions, every peasant owes money and is in turn the creditor of others."[97]

One seemingly interminable dispute investigated by the commission involved that of the British protege, Ya^{c}acov Levi-Stambuli, the biggest creditor in the region. The sums due to him from Ghuta villages amounted to 3,700,000

piastres in 1869. The British were clearly anxious over the spectre of "the inevitable ruin of one of the richest and most influential British-Jewish subjects in Syria."[98] In 1879 when Levi-Stambuli attempted to recover his debts, which had by then been incurred for 25 years, the tribunal awarded him the proprietorship of 14 of the most prosperous and important villages of Damascus. The Wali responded to the crisis by asserting that it would be necessary to march battalions of troops into the Ghuta area in order to overcome the resistance "which would be expected when Moslem villages sought to be dispossessed of their all."[99] Previous rulings decided that Stambuli should be allowed to sequester the whole produce of the villages "with the exception of that strictly necessary to maintain the inhabitants."[100]

The system of money-lending usually employed by European proteges was to lend money to the villagers initially at a reasonable rate of interest to enable them to pay their taxes and buy seed. For this a bond or promissory note including the interest rate was given and dated so as to fall due at the time that the new taxes would be called for and seed required to be purchased. Unless the previous harvest had been unusually good, the villagers were now in

much greater difficulties as they had to pay the taxes and their debt from the previous year. The moneylender came forward with an offer to pay for them and to renew the former bond at a much higher rate of interest. To this the villagers readily consented, fearing that the government would enforce payment of both taxes and the bond. This situation apparently persisted from year to year until the original amount was so vastly increased by the yearly addition of taxes and the compound interest that the villagers were compelled to give up their property to the creditors and become their tenants. The Ottomans, alarmed at the course of events, often considered paying off all obligations which had been imposed on the villages and ordered the population of the Ghuta not to have recourse to borrowing from "Europeans". However, from the late 1850's onwards, the provincial treasury was far too low to be able to pay off the debts contracted by the peasants.[101]

The estate system and modes of land exploitation

The urban bourgeoisie rarely invested in local industry during the period of the rapid growth of foreign trade and commercialized agriculture; the import of European manufactures and speculation in agricultural production provided much higher returns. The world trade depression

and hardships of the 1870s, when drought and plague also severely eroded the bargaining power of the peasantry was an overwhelming factor in the formation of large estates. Powerful Damascene families, such as the ᶜAzms with their enormous properties at Duma and Masraba, carved out their domains in this period.

The transfer of agricultural lands to urban notables and merchant-moneylenders was not, however, accompanied by a fundamental change in the methods of land exploitation. Rather, we must look for socio-economic transformation in the changing structure of tenancy relationships and in the contractual arrangements affecting agrarian society. These underscore the significant shift towards conditions of greater dependency in which the peasants of the Ghuta found themselves.

By the turn of the century, small peasant proprietors who became landless constituted a considerable segment of the Ghuta's population. However, as opposed to the Homs-Hama plain and other regions of the interior, the great estates here were often in direct conflict with the small or "middle" proprietor. The Ghuta's orchard economy favoured the acquisition of property by ordinary peasants by means of a contract peculiar to the Islamic world: mugharasa. In

the plains regions, small properties almost invariably did not belong to peasant-cultivators but to two specific classes: the artisans and merchants of the towns and the "petty notables," of the countryside such as mukhtars.[102]

From the 1870s onwards, much of the capital at the disposal of the Damascene moneyed classes was invested in buying up the gardens. By 1900, the best orchard land was almost entirely in the hands of city landlords, who were primarily interested in investments in lands where strong local-notable influence was most fragmented. Many of the villages of the central Ghuta with extensive and prosperous orchards (such as Birza and Mizza) had become virtually part of the urban economy, in so far as they were subject to the same type of speculation and influences.[103] Very large estates became considerably more numerous after 1900. Yet it is important to bear in mind that the predominant mode of agricultural exploitation was not plantation farming but peasant cultivation. As defined by Issawi:

> "The word peasant here refers not to the form of ownership but to the mode of operation. It therefore covers not only peasant-owned farms but also those landlord estates which are leased out in small plots to tenants or worked by sharecroppers".[104]

Whatever the size of the property, most holdings from the

mid-19th century onwards were farmed on a share-tenancy basis; cash tenure or lease were very much the exception. Agricultural production was carried out under various forms of metayage. This institution was a reflection of the key relationships in the countryside; that of the subordination of the peasant-cultivators to the urban landlords.

The universal prevalence of metayage in Syria after the mid-19th century was due to a number of factors. As we have acknowledged, hard cash in the rural economy was scarce. Outside the towns, there was very little circulation of currency. (In the Ghuta, the peasant and the rural notables alike preferred jewels and gold, the worth of which he was certain.[105]) The peasantry, even in this most prosperous region of the Syrian interior, rarely had accumulated capital sufficient for the implements and animals required to operate production on a cash basis. Moreover, the mode of payment for metayage - in kind and according to the outcome of the harvest - was better adapted to the climate of the country.[106]

Metayage (muzara^ca) is defined in Article 1431 of the Ottoman Civil Code, the Mejelle as "une espèce de société dans laquelle l'un des associés met un fonds de terre et où l'autre apporte son travail, les produits du fonds étant

partagés entre les associés".[107] This wide definition allowed for the emergence of a great diversity of forms which were quite distinct in character. Even though the special features of this system in the Ghuta gave peasant-cultivators a certain degree of independence, it was still the case that liberty of action was greatly restricted, as the landlord - whose share was represented by a certain percentage of the produce - often had the power to dictate the choice of crops. The share tenants were considered permanent members of the estate, who were expected to depend on the wakils' advice and assistance.

All agricultural compacts on a part-profit basis were regarded as partnerships (sharika) to which each party made a clear and defined contribution. In these agreements which were, in reality, regulated by little other than custom, the actual share taken was established by economic and social factors, such as the pressure of the population on the land. The landlord's share was substantially less in areas of intensive cultivation and where population is dense.

When a landlord wanted to plant orchards on his land and could not afford or was unwilling to pay all the expenses of cultivation, he entered into a specific type of contract

with his tenant: the mugharasa. In the ideal form of this association, the landlord provided open ground and water and his tenant-partner contributed the agricultural labour and also undertook all the expenses of planting and tending the trees for a definite period of time. After a specific number of years, the grove was equally divided between the partners, each becoming full owner of his share.[108] However, in many instances, the mugharasa rewarded the tenant-partner by a right of ownership of the trees - to the exclusion of the ground upon which they stood. When the former arrangement prevailed, mugharasa inevitably resulted in the dismemberment of large estates arising from a claim by the tenant-cultivator over the area.[109]

The metayage contracts prevelant in the Ghuta were generally much more favourable to the cultivator because the landlord's wealth depended solely upon his care and expertise. In the orchards or vineyards, the fellah had in his hands the wealth of his landlord. According to the care the metayer invested in this enterprise, the value of the land increased or diminished. Thus the landlord had a direct interest in keeping his metayers, as the creation of orchards required years of work and expenses without any immediate return.[110] This is why mugharasa was so crucial

in the region's economy.

The Ottoman Land Code does not make specific reference to mugharasa, but the conditions for the creation of orchards and care of trees is set down several times as follows:

> "Tout individu qui greffera ou élèvera des arbres venus naturellement sur la terre en sa possession à titre unique ou collectif, en acquerra la propriété mulk."
>
> (Land Code, article 26.)

> "Les arbres qui poussent naturellement sur le terrain d'une personne appartiennent au propriétaire de ce terrain."
>
> (Civil code, article 1244.)

> "Celui qui greffe un arbre devient proprietaire des bourgeons de la greffe et des fruits."
>
> (Civil code, article 1245.)[111]

The mugharasa is always a long-term contract; its duration varies with the nature of the orchards. The use of the contract was greatly encouraged by the promise that it held out to the metayer of attaining property. However, in some of the poorer districts of the Ghuta and in the Marj, the landlord-notables, anxious to obstruct any accumulation of property by the metayer, succeeded in imposing a very restricted version of the mugharasa which resulted in the mugharasi attaining rights only over trees and their crops and not over the soil. In this case the mugharasi's rights

were only temporary , being suspended automatically with the destruction or death of the trees which he was forbidden to replace. In this situation, which was not uncommon, the metayer remained in a state of utter dependency.[112] In some districts such as Wadi al-Ajam, where the landlords were particularly powerful, the mugharasi did not acquire any rights over land or trees, being only allowed to grow crops among the trees rent free. Sometimes when the mugharasi acquired half the trees only, he chose to sell his share to the landlord or remain in the orchard as a musaqati, a metayer charged with the responsibility of tending a mature grove. In such cases, the peasant-cultivator was forbidden to cede his rights or his eventual share in the property to anyone other than the landlord or his own heirs.[113] In the case of musaqat contracts, not only did the landlord generally refuse to renew the contract upon its termination, but he reserved the right to evict the tenant at any time during the course of the year. This type of arrangement characterized the regions of the Ghuta where agricultural labour was particularly plentiful and the peasant was subject to a situation of narrow dependence on the landlord.

There is some evidence that during the Mandate period, the

terms of mugharasa deteriorated for the tenant-partner. There were instances where the landlord grew crops among the mugharasi's trees in order to weaken them and force the tenant to sell his share at a negligible price.[114] The landlord was often able to insert his own draconian clauses into the standard contract; for example, that the mugharasi, in the event of unsatisfactory results on the estate, had neither the right to a share of the property nor the right to compensation for his input of labour. In other cases, the share which accrued to the metayer would be only a quarter of the grove, rather than one half. And whatever the form of mugharasa employed, if the landlord died or sold his land, the contract was usually considered null and void.[115]

The situation was very different in villages where the mugharasi was awarded half the trees as well as the land. In this case, at the end of the contract, the mugharasi became an independent proprietor on his plot of land. This new status enhanced his bargaining power in his dealings with the landlord of the estate. Such mugharasis tended to form a small class of peasant-proprietors, who gradually came to acquire a greater percentage of the lands previously belonging to the big estates. By the end of the

Mandate period, many large estates in the Ghuta had been broken up into hundreds of small properties held by their former tenants.[116] In these villages, there was also evidence of some form of local organization which linked the cultivators to the buyers of produce and which did not allow the landlord easy access and control over the sale of produce.[117]

Generally speaking, whenever the landlord had need to collaborate with the fellah in the creation of orchards, the latter acquired property rights over the grove or the land itself. This was an important factor in the stratification of peasant society in the region. The proliferation of mugharasa contracts in the second half of the 19th century was symptomatic of the progressive dissociation of the landlord from the rural scene, divesting himself of any meaningful farming role and devolving authority and management decisions on to the sharika partner.[118] Furthermore, in periods of economic crisis, many landlords could only contemplate undertaking the creation of an orchard in the Ghuta if the cost to himself was negligible: this also accounted for the widespread use of mugharasa. From 1925 to 1930 there was an enormous amount of activity in planting olive and fruit orchards in the Ghuta.[119]

It is important to acknowledge that although mugharasa played a central role in the region's economy, wage labour was also increasingly important in the Ghuta, particularly after the First World War. In regions in close proximity to Damascus, landlords often preferred to undertake the farming of their estates directly, rather than to lease it out on a share-tenancy basis. By the end of the first decade of the Mandate period, day labourers were commonplace. In a town such as Ashrafiyya Sukhnaya, for example, only a quarter of the landlords employed share-tenants; the others farmed the land directly with the help of day-labourers. In the 1930's, the peasant who was not occupied with work in the orchards throughout the year more often than not hired himself out with his plough animals. The day-labourers worked in teams, the members of which usually belonged to a single family. But if no relative united the workers, they were grouped together by a broker, who was almost always of local peasant background. This entrepreneurial figure, who served as the head of the team, generally recruited his labourers in his village of origin so that he might have a better understanding with them and more easily supervise their work.[120]

Just what proportion of land in the Ghuta was owned by very

big urban landlords and peasant-proprietors respectively in the last decades of the Ottoman rule is not known. In 1875, the British Consul at Damascus maintained that there was much greater inequality in land holding in the region in comparison with the situation 40 years prior.[121] In the 1890's, a detailed French survey of the Kaza of Duma confirmed the widespread existence of small peasant holdings and reported that only 1/6 of the land was in the hands of wealthy Damascenes. These held about 100-300 hectares each, the largest estates in the Ghuta.[122] However, by the first decade of the 20th century, it was estimated that only a quarter of the land of this Kaza was in the hands of peasant-proprietors. Yet there were districts, such as the region of Ashrafiyya, where peasant-cultivators owned as much as 30-40% of the land.[123] In the Mandate period, it was observed that peasant-holdings of just over one acre was the rule and it was not uncommon to find peasants owning just one small terrace of vines or a defined number of fruit trees. Indeed, Latron noted the existence of a number of cases where "peasant-proprietors" owned only one tree. By the same token, it was rare in the Ghuta to encounter vast estates consisting of one continuous unbroken tract, as one witnessed in the central plains.[124]

The mugharasa arrangement, lent itself to the minute fragmentation of property. When the peasant-labourer was paid partly in ground and trees, he obtained a tiny fraction of land which he could freely dispose. The cultivation of valuable cash crops, such as apricots or almonds, brought certain villages enough prosperity to enable local mugharasis to purchase additional parcels of land.[125] Thus a contradictory process developed: On the one hand, powerful forces having their origins in European economic penetration and Ottoman reform culminated in a massive accumulation of the land of the Ghuta in the hands of urban notables and members of the merchant-money-lender class. On the other hand, the institution of mugharasa and succession within the landholding family encouraged the fragmentation and break-up of estates. This process particularly gained momentum in the Mandatory period.

The struggle over water

In the Ghuta, the question of access to irrigation water was obviously as crucial as the fate of the land-tenure system. Ultimately, it was the right to water rather than the mere possession of land which indicated a family's wealth. The soil of the Ghuta produced nothing if not irrigated; it was the canal network alone which brought

prosperity. Access to water in the late Ottoman and Mandate periods was the cause of countless quarrels and violent disputes between peasant-cultivators which not infrequently led to armed confrontations between village communities. The slightest disagreement over water-sharing arrangements characteristically gave rise to vehement evocations of "qadim" ("as before" or "according to tradition") on the part of villagers.[126]

Throughout the entire Ottoman period, the management of the irrigation works rarely went beyond the individual efforts of the village community. The basic structure of the irrigation system in the Ghuta reveals a total absence of any plan, not only in its original conception, but also in successive developments.[127] By the end of the Mandate period, a detailed plan and guide to the canal network and precise description of water rights still had not been carried out.

The peasant labour involved in the system of water distribution was enormous. Throughout the 19th century and the Mandate period, no mechanical devices for opening and closing the canals were used. With bare feet, the fellah obstructed the flow of the Barada in constructing a make-shift barrier out of gravel and mud.[128] Throughout

the Ghuta, water was led by simple gravity alone and the canals were maintained as high upon the slopes as possible. The main diversionary dams for the creation of new streams rarely extended across the river and were composed of rocks or branches of trees lying together. This was done skilfully so that sufficient water would pour over the barriers and flow onto the new side canals below. This was intentional: customary usage vigorously resisted the erection of cement walls. The people of Dayr Dayrani, for example, attempted to put in a concrete dam in 1908, but were forcefully obstructed from doing so by the villagers dependent upon the side canals.[129] Consequently, the French agricultural advisors in the region never ceased to complain that the barriers between the river and the canals were constructed in such a way as to allow water to escape everywhere and that there was no overall management for the system: each canal and its diversionary streams formed autonomous groupings.

The real changes which are to be found in the system lay in the amount of time appropriated for water access by those who had acquired rights over land or were able to buy additional hours. The right to water was, in principal, inseparable from the right to land, but appropriations

resulting from sales and exchanges of water rights further complicated the local picture from the late 19th century onwards.[130]

A highly elaborate system of customary rights regulated the diversion and distribution of water between villages. The terminology with respect to time, quantity of water and measurements varied from one locality to another and the researcher is faced with the problem of grasping multiple meanings of the same word. For example, qirat which generally represents 1/24 of the whole is not necessarily the same from one village to another. In Daraya, it expresses a volume of water but in other communities, such as Thawra, it represents half a unit of watering time.[131] Thus the peasant of the Ghuta had to be something of a translator and a mathematician to grasp subtle social conventions.

Water rights continued to be regulated by the village community which remained the main vehicle of control throughout the irrigation network. Each village appointed an agent known as the shawi (or "master of water") responsible to the mukhtar, to watch over the distribution of water and assure the rights of the various cultivators. In theory, the shawi presided over the opening and closing

of canals and prevented fraudulent diversions of water; he kept the village records, partly in written, partly in oral form. The decisions and interpretations of this figure, who was usually well-versed in the minutiae of precedent and custom, were pivotal in successive developments within the system. Each claimant received his share under the shawi's control. During periods of drought and economic duress, the water-users scrutinized him carefully as he was consistently the object of bribes.[132] Another functionary, the Shaykh al-Nahrain, (an hereditary post) regulated the conflicts which arose between villages.

Time-period and fraction-volume were the sole basis for the calculation of water-rights throughout the system. A family's wealth was increasingly calculated in terms of the number of hours that he possessed. The distribution of water from the main canals of the Barada always operated in proportional terms and not in absolute volume. The peasants generally had no idea of the quantity of water which watered their grove or the capacity of their canal. This, in any event, varied significantly with the seasons and years.

The path of the canals which led up to the lands to be watered, the measurements which regulated the flow to be directed to the diversionary canals and the time during

which that water supply was authorized, constituted the essential elements of the system. Every village of the oasis received each day, a given share of the total volume of a canal for a specific period of time, after which it received no more water until its turn, the caddan, came once again.[133]

Despite the variety of communities which comprised the system, there was, in many respects, an overarching unity between them and they operated according to the same basic framework and principles: the distribution of water between adjacent properties within the confines of a village community was always on a daily basis. Each day was usually divided into a number of parts - or caddans of specified duration, usually fixed at 12 hours. A proprietor had the right to service from a canal, either for an caddan or a fraction of an caddan, expressed in qirat. This was repeated from week to week.[134]

In the latter part of the 19th century, there is evidence to suggest that this rotational system began to break down and there are numerous reports of shawis being bribed to leave open irrigation ditches so that the estates of big Damascene landlords could be bettered watered. The shawi's integrity was severely tested during drought periods, such

as in the 1870's and the 1920's, when his influence was brought to bear and his position as the authority on water rights was often severely abused. In such contexts, the shawi himself often ended up appropriating water and land rights. When pressed, he often made it known that his village's canal could be closed off during the irrigation of a a big landlord's estate. There were numerous cases of intimidation and violence resulting in small proprietors having to cede their share.[135]

The conflicts between neighbours of increasingly unequal power usually expressed themselves in terms of the duration of the watering period. Thus the local proverb "say your prayers before going to your ᶜaddan" undoubtedly came about.[136] The entrenchment of large landlords invariably meant that there was less water available for the small proprietor and the disputes which raged with particular ferocity during the 1870's and 1920's were, in part, symptomatic of this. During these periods of exceptional drought, armed conflict between villagers in a bitter struggle over control of the Ghuta's waters was commonplace. In the 1920s, in particular, powerful landlords were known to use coercive methods to induce peasants residing upstream from their estates to close off their canals. In the

aftermath of the Great Revolt of 1925-1926, Tresse remarked on the brutality with which "des seigneurs feodaux, aidés de leurs métayers, imposer leur volonté a des villageois impuissants jusqu'au jour où l'autorité administrative fait tout rentrer dans l'ordre".[137] A major contributor to the unrest was the practice of buying water, widespread from the late 1870's, whereby landlords attempted to obtain a larger share than was envisaged at the time of purchase.[138]

From an historical perspective, it is difficult to examine the process whereby water rights in the Ghuta became an object of commerce and were consequently sold, inherited, rented or auctioned off - quite distinct from their association with the ownership of a specific piece of land. When, in the late 19th century, it became possible to buy or sell shares in water, the peasants of the Ghuta found themselves in a situation of even greater dependency on city merchants who alone could provide sufficient capital.[139]

The Mejelle clearly stated that waters were outside the sphere of commerce, and maintained that within an irrigation community, no one was permitted to exchange his c<u>addan</u> or sell or rent land which did not include the right to use water. The <u>Land Code</u> laid down penalties for those who indulged in fraudulent turns of water and "whomsoever

attempts to change for his own personal profit the distribution of water established ab antiquo".[140] Yet in the late 19th century customary usage had been disregarded to the point where bids were routinely cast for shares of water.

The necessary link between the possession of land and the water required to irrigate it was the basis of customary usage here. Yet this was increasingly at variance with the facts on the ground. By the turn of the century, there were a number of villages (for example, Yabrud and Ras al-ᶜAyn) where upon the purchase of a field the buyer and the seller signed two contracts: one for land and one for water. By this time, it is clear that the practice had acquired a certain legitimacy; the sale of water was generally conducted before an imam or mukhtar, assisted by the council of elders of the village. The presence of these witnesses was enough to validate the operation.[141]

The ceding of water, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, gave rise to heightened tension between villagers.[142] Small proprietors of certain villages reportedly risked social ostracization by frequently renting and selling their water, but other communities had no such resistance to this trend. There were villages which refused to sell, yet

habitually rented out their water. A village such as Birza, where water was abundant, was frequently the arena of active speculation. In this and other villages it was at times more profitable to rent out shares in water than to cultivate the land.[143]

There gradually emerged a brisk market in ᶜaddans. Spring and summer rains would cause their price to collapse; continuing drought it them to skyrocket. Local sources speak of a constant scramble among landlords and peasants alike to acquire all the irrigation hours possible.[144] At the time of the First World War, Ghuta peasants sold their water as a matter of course to buy themselves out of the Ottoman army.

The ideal for the peasant-cultivator of the Ghuta was to possess as many ᶜaddans as possible - not necessarily for his own irrigation purposes - but as a unique kind of capital. These were freely exchanged or rented out. This situation culminated in an extraordinary complexity in the distribution of water: any given village presented a duality of systems. For example, in the village of Akraba, the better part of the village land, reserved for the cultivation of cereals, received very little irrigation . This area was subject to musha[c] tenure and received a

specific quantity of water for each faddan - nothing could be changed in this system. Yet, for a different area of the village devoted to cash crops, the peasants freely engaged in the sale and renting out of water as they pleased.[145]

Precise details of how this complex system of selling and renting water came into being are not easy to come by. Both peasant-cultivators and large landlords alike thwarted all attempts to satisfy the enquiries of various investigating committees under the Mandatory regime. In 1924, a comprehensive project for the reconstruction and reorgani ation of the Ghuta canal network brought heavy impositions upon cultivators based on their water rights. The project was never completed but the alarm was sounded throughout the countryside and proved to be a factor in the Great Revolt of 1925-1926.[146]

Agricultural specialization and commercialization

The gathering storm over the question of access to water and its conversion into a commodity to be bought and sold has to be considered within the context of greater agricultural speciali ation and commercialization. The presence of a permanent water supply and the proximity of Damascus as a market meant that commercialized agriculture was more

developed in the Ghuta than elsewhere in the Syrian interior.[147]

Apricots brought in a larger income than any other single crop. In an average year, 15 - 17,000 tons of seven different varieties of the fruit were gathered. A major industry of countless Ghuta villages was qamar al-din, or apricot paste, made from the crushed pulp of the fruit and dried on enormous wooden boards. This product found a ready sale throughout Syria, Egypt and Anatolia,[148] and in the last decades of the 19th century, peasants were encouraged to prepare it for the European market with some success. In the 1890s, apricot prices rose sharply, causing a boom in the export of the dried fruit and paste, then in the region of 4,000 tons per year (half of which was sent to Egypt).[149] At this time, the increasingly lucrative trade induced a French company to establish themselves in the eastern Ghuta with the object of preserving, tinning and exporting apricots.[150] During the French Mandate period, apricot production nearly trebled and Syria ranked third in the world production of this crop after the USA and Iran.[151]

Olives, an important staple in the diet of the peasantry during the winter months, came next in importance with regard to income for the local population. The groves were

generally situated on the village lands receiving less irrigation and were essentially concentrated in the villages of Birza, Kabun, Duma, Mizza, Kfar Sussa and Harasta, where olive cultivation was the basis of the local economy. In the kaza of Duma alone, some 20 olive presses were located and the villages of Irbin, Jisrin, Amadiyya, Birza and Harasta specialized in the production of olive oil and soap for the wider Syrian market and export.[152]

The important rope-making industry of Damascus was sustained by the cultivation of hemp in the Ghuta. This was, perhaps, the most valuable crop in the region. Over a dozen villages of the central Ghuta have sufficient water resources for hemp, which requires frequent irrigation throughout the summer. Villages in the Zawr region, such as Jisrin, al-Aftaris and Kfar Batna specialized in hemp cultivation, as did other villages watered directly by the Barada: Bahdal, Blat, Mleha, Jaramana and Jawbar - some of which cultivated hemp almost to the exclusion of other crops. The longest fibres of the plant were sold to Europe, while the short ones remained in the region for local industry. The major obstacle to the development of the industry on a larger scale lay in the difficulty of stripping the bark off the stalks. Labour for such specialized work was scarce,

and it was the women of only one village, Nahiya, who carried out this task for the entire Ghuta.[153]

Vineyards were extensively cultivated in the Ghuta and were situated in the least well irrigated areas. A good number of villages, such as Duma, Harasta, Birza, Irbin, Kfar Batna and Kfar Sussa came to specialize in viniculture and the production of dried raisins and dibs, which were largely exported to Egypt.[154]

In the late 19th century, sugar beet also became an important cash crop in many villages of the Zawr district, with some communities concentrating almost exclusively on its cultivation. In 1901, a prominent Damascene notable and landlord of a number of Zawr villages, obtained a concession to establish a sugar refining factory in the city.[155]

What little information is available about the marketing of this local production suggests that it was almost entirely a speculative affair; an array of intermediaries sprang up around its development. Sometimes the peasants transported their own produce on mule to Damascus or established themselves at principal roads to sell their fruit and vegetables to passers-by. But, for the most part, the fellah was compelled to sell his crops to middlemen on the

spot or to transporters at regional markets who resold their produce in Damascus or Beirut.[156]

In the latter part of the 19th century, a number of factors contributed to the increasing distance separating the peasant from direct participation in the market.[157] Particularly when taxes fell due, a whole host of 'buyers' up' from Damascus would head for the Ghuta villages to take advantage of the pressing needs of the peasantry for cash. These tended to be European proteges or agents of European merchants. But most important from the perspective of rural social stratification was the emergence of middlemen and entrepreneurs from the ranks of the peasantry.

Because the commercial and artisan activity of Damascus was intimately bound up with the agricultural production of the oasis, a closed network of common interests linked landowners, merchant-money-lenders and the peasantry of the Ghuta. The small peasant-proprietors or mugharasis of the Ghuta only rarely brought their produce to Damascus themselves but consigned this task to a damman or broker, usually of local peasant background, who bought up the crop. The role of the broker was pivotal, as his services and business relations situated him on the point of contact

between agricultural activity, merchants and the export trade. According to the evidence of Qasimi, this figure thrived with the development of the greater commercialization of agriculture. In the latter part of the 19th century, the damman is mentioned with regard to the local economy with increasing frequency.[158]

The basic features of marketing involving the damman system consisted in advancing cash to peasant-cultivators in exchange for the coming harvest. Thanks to this mechanism, the merchants and creditors, who, as we have seen, enjoyed something of a revival in the latter part of the 19th century, were put in direct contact with the countryside and exercised considerable power over the villagers. The system of damman essentially reflected the growing commercial network which pervaded the countryside.

The merchants of the suq assured much of the financing for the production of the Ghuta, according to a system of advances on deliveries which bound the peasant to him.[159] The damman backed by the suq, usually bought the crop on the spot when the fruit first appeared on the branches, usually at the end of April. As the sale took place long before the crop ripened, it had a purely speculative character. This was done by public auction in the village: the proprietor

of an orchard who wished to sell his fruit ceded the entire crop to the highest bidder. According to Qasimi, the dammans often had an understanding between them not to outbid each other.[160] A deal was struck after the auction was held and the payment of the agreed amount took place in two or three instalments, extending over stages in the growth of the fruit, the last payment falling due before all the crops were to be removed. Thus the proprietor, in the event of default on payments, retained the means of keeping the rest of the crop. When dealing with fruit or vines which were sold on the branches in this way, the damman always harvested and delivered the crop to the merchants in the suq, who often bought the crop outright from the middleman or sold it at an agreed commission basis.[161]

The occupation of damman clearly had many attendant risks because the sale was concluded very early in the season. From that time on, the responsibility for the orchard and the harvest was entirely in his hands. Yet, as he only had to invest minimal expenses for packaging and transport, and employed the labour of his own household, he was usually able to accumulate capital as a result of his speculations, and, as a result, often purchased a small parcel of orchard land in his village. According to Bianquis, during the

Mandate period, the sums advanced to the dammans of the orchards in the Ghuta amounted to an average of 10 - 20,000 Syrian pounds per year.[162]

As the damman was a simple peasant, he himself did not own the sums that he gave to the proprietor of the grove. He was backed by the merchant of the suq, who advanced him the necessary cash with the undertaking to deliver the fruit harvest. The system generally satisfied the city merchants and the big landlords who managed to obtain the price they desired for their crops without having to worry about putting them on the market. Yet, like mugharasa, this system is an important example of how the prevailing economic climate encouraged access to capital on the part of certain peasants, resulting in the greater stratification of rural society.

The imposition of the French Mandate and its local consequences

The years immediately proceeding the First World War was a period of great deprivation and hardship for the population of the Ghuta. The near-total failure of the fruit and vintage crops in 1912, coupled with a violent cholera outbreak of the same year and the great bazaar fire of April 1911 - which destroyed the central fruit and vegetable

market in Damascus - foreshadowed disastrous years for trade.[163] Thus, the upheavals of the War descended upon a society already in a greatly weakened state.

The advent of the War and the subsequent collapse of Ottoman power in Syria had shattering local repercussions. The mass conscription of the peasantry into the Turkish army and the forced labour universally employed on roads and railroads, together with the seizure of animals and enormous quantities of agricultural produce, compounded the suffering of the local population. The massive destruction of trees by the army and the skyrocketing prices of foodstuffs culminated in widespread famine.[164] However, it was not only the activites of the retreating Turkish army which proved to be deeply destructive. The damage caused by the British blockade of Syrian ports (effective from August 1915 to May 1918) in their struggle to gain control of the area also dealt a severe blow to the local economy.[165]

Most critically, the situation of extreme food scarcity, exacerbated by widespread profiteering, forced peasants to borrow heavily from urban merchant - money-lenders. Inability to pay back these loans led to foreclosures on a massive scale. During the war, the wasit, or wholesale fruit and vegetable merchant (a privileged figure because of

the liquidity of his capital resources), could easily impose his law on the countryside, already impoverished by the cessation of normal economic relations. The peasants of the Ghuta were at the mercy of these speculators who paid depreciated paper money for the purchase of their produce and increasingly, their land. The conditions imposed by the war resulted in a huge turnover of land in the region, as many villages were annexed to huge estates. At this time, the land registers of the country were largely destroyed in fires and riots; those remaining were taken to Istanbul. The ensuing chaos, exacerbated by the departure of large numbers of Dhafter Khane officials, was exploited by those who sought to appropriate property and incidents of land seizures were commonplace.[166]

During the short period of King Faysal's reign in Syria (October 1918 to July 1920) agricultural production in the Ghuta and elsewhere was severely disrupted as the country continued to suffer from famine due to profiteering and hoarding. Severe disruptions in the communications network (the railroad system was at a virtual standstill) also contributed to the crisis. To make matters worse still, Damascus was overwhelmed with migrants fleeing famine in the Ghuta, Hawran and the Anti-Lebanon.[167]

In 1919, a French investigating commission into Syrian agriculture, confirmed that productivity in the Ghuta had declined dramatically since the war. This factor, together with the staggering rise in the cost of living, caused considerable numbers of peasants to leave the country.[168] Emigration from Syria as a whole (of which there was a trickle in the 1880's and 1890's) gained ground in the first 14 years of the 20th century. But in the after-math of the War, this reached huge proportions with thousands leaving the cities and villages of the Syrian interior. By early 1919, emigrants were now flowing steadily out of the Ghuta, which up till then was relatively unaffected by the migratory movement.[169]

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of Syria by the British army, with the participation of only a small French contingent, gave rise to heightened anxiety and frantic activity on the part of French industrialists and commercial groups with important interests to defend in Syria.[170] The dramatically altered political situation and anxiety over the recent agreements with Britain, limiting the zone of French influence to the coastal strip, provoked an intensified interest in the agricultural production of the Syrian interior and its potential value to French

industry. In the light of these developments, the Congrès Français de la Syrie, established in 1919 and backed by the Chambers of Commerce of Lyon and Marseille, prepared a detailed study of the economic capacity of Syria with special attention devoted to the "worth" of its agriculture. With the submission of their report, the result of an extensive fact-finding mission to Syria, the members of the Congres hoped to influence the negotiations over the future of the country and immediately put forward a succession of demands with regard to the Syrian economy.[171] Their ideas were to have wide currency with a host of advisors in the Mandatory regime. Most crucial was the Congres' conclusion that among all the reforms they had proposed, the most urgent was the restructuring of the land tenure system, involving the establishment of a cadastral survey.

This preoccupation was at variance with the officially declared aims of the French in Syria to preserve the existing order and to stress continuity of social structure in rural society. In fact, French policy in the countryside and in the Ghuta in particular often steered an uneasy course between the two objectives.

M. Achard, the agricultural advisor during much of the Mandate period, maintained that, as under the Ottoman

administration, Syria's budget was to consist primarily of returns derived from land taxes and the tithe: by these means the administration was to pay its own way. Pointing out that the existing Syrian industries were wholly based on the processing and transformation of the products of the soil, he declared "c'est donc un avenir purement agricole qu'il faut envisager pour la Syrie".[172] According to Achard and the other French administrators of Syria, that agricultural future very much depended upon the success of government policies in establishing and defining private property, particularly the creation of small peasant freeholds.

Agrarian policies under the Mandate were often formed by very specific attitudes about the nature of rural society in the Middle East, already well formulated from the French experience in ruling North Africa.[173] A thorough working knowledge of Arabic and local customs and religious practices were required of French officials in the Ghuta and other agrarian regions. A considerable number of these 'men on the spot' prepared detailed ethnographic studies for use by the administration. Most importantly, close links were encouraged between the 'native affairs' officers and rural dignitaries and landlords. In times of upheaval, such as

the Great Revolt of 1925-1926, it was believed that these links could be activated to serve as a countervailing force to the more sophisticated and potentially seditious sections of the urban population. As put by Burke, "it was felt that the effects of social change could be muffled and slowed down by strengthening the position of the traditional native elites".[174] To this end, the notion of the moral superiority of the countryside over the cities was vigorously promoted: the peasantry were upheld as a bastion of social stability in contradistinction to the explosive and hostile urban masses. These declarations were backed up by gestures designed to win over the peasantry, such as the provision of a certain level of agricultural credit, schools and medical care - yet the vast majority of the rural population remained unaffected by these.[175]

Thus a major theme in French agrarian policy was to "faciliter l'accession des paysans à la propriété du sol qu'ils cultivent"; the Ghuta in particular was the target for such policies.[176] The 1923 decrees, establishing a federal system of autonomous states in Syria, gave disproportionate representation to rural interests in the Representative Council. Indeed, at the heart of the ideological stance of Syria's new rulers was the theme of

the inherent and irreconcilable antagonism between the urban and rural populations. This they considered to be so great as to be able to speak of two distinct populations. The fellah, it was argued, was always the weaker party in this conflict because the socio-economic edifice was based upon the uncontested primacy of the cities.[177] As shown by Khoury, a major strategy of the French in Syria was to contain the Arab nationalist movement by pitting rural areas against the more politically conscious urban centres: "the focus of such a strategy was to apply certain structural changes to the existing land system on which rural populations were dependent and on which the Arab nationalist leadership resource base rested".[178]

Achard laid down the blueprint for French agricultural policy in his Rapport sur l'organisation foncière de la Syrie of 1925, in which he castigated the estate system. Not only did the urban landlords refuse to undertake any direct cultivation of their domains, but the situation had deteriorated to the extent where the landlords had become exploiters of metayers and not their land. Furthermore, Achard was preoccupied with the fact that there was no basis on which to establish mortgages; the creditor in the Syrian countryside had no genuine guarantees save the condition to

seize the peasant's property. The acknowledgement of the right of cultivation was backed by inadequate guarantees: this state of affairs was the work of agents of the Dhafter Khane, mukhtars and members of the administrative council (majlis), who were all under the influence of big landlords. Achard singled out this social stratum as essentially comprising the Arab nationalist leadership, and strongly advocated that French policy should at all costs attempt to marginalize their influence.[179]

To achieve this central objective of creating privately-owned peasant properties, the state had to intervene directly. The Mandatory administration embarked on a programme of land legislation, the central feature of which was a cadastral survey, involving the settlement of all rights to land and a system of registration of titles. An intended result of the new land-registration system was the provision of an equitable basis for the new land tax. French officials were concerned that the tithe, to which the Syrian rural population was subject, should be terminated and replaced with a tax system more equitable in calculation, distribution and collection. The French saw the tithe, the main imposition on agriculture, as a prime culprit, as it was levied on net produce without taking

account of the area cultivated. With a reorganization of the land tax, the French believed they would see many big landlords alienate their land, relying on the eventuality that taxation would be too much of a burden to leave it unproductive. Furthermore, the introduction of the new system of taxation applied solely to parcels of land with individual titles and not to villages as a collectivity, in an attempt to dissolve the musha[c] system.[180]

The French administration envisaged the creation of small properties through the implementation of the cadastral survey, which would allow plots to be sold on a massive scale; the aim was to weaken the grip of the huge estates in the countryside. The declared objectives of this undertaking were to establish greater security of tenure, the avoidance of land disputes (particularly explosive in the Ghuta at this period), the provision of mortgageable land as a basis for agricultural credit, and the consolidation of viable units of holding as an improved basis for land taxation.[181] Registration of lands was made compulsory and the Cadastre covered most of the older settled regions, such as the Ghuta, the Homs-Hama and Aleppo plains.[182] The project was undertaken by a private

French concern, with M. Duraffourd as the director of the Bureau du Cadastre. By 1923, the work of triangulation and delimitation for the Cadastre (with the aid of aerial maps provided by the French airforce) was well underway. In the course of this operation, a great deal of information was collected with regard to the natural limits of cultivation, the nature of the soil, position of the villages and construction of the dwellings, population density, origin of the inhabitants and the area of small and medium properties. After delimiting the existing parcels on the new block plans, the law courts proceeded to determine rights to land in terms of title deeds presented by the owners. The final decision served as a basis for title registration in a national land register. It was hoped that this procedure would provide a remedy for the faults of the Ottoman system, which lacked maps and plans.[183]

The Cadastre officials on the site demanded that each proprietor in the Ghuta should present himself on the spot at a specific time and specify the boundaries of his property by the markings of a plough. He was then instructed to erect stone walls on the boundary to mark it. The village mukhtars were obliged to survey the execution of this work and to levy the expenses of the cadastral

operations upon the proprietor.[184] The landlord or peasant-proprietor then signed a declaration in which he made known his rights, indicated the dimensions and boundaries of his property, and made clear all charges and taxes due on his land. Registration of title by this procedure conferred absolute rights of ownership upon the individual concerned. Yet despite the elaborate edifice of the cadastral operations, the new measure brought no significant change in the distribution of property in the Ghuta. The benefits of these procedures overwhelmimgly accrued to the existing big landlords.[185]

The execution of the Cadastre ran into formidable problems, not least of which were the enormous costs of such a vast survey in a country with so few infrastructural resources. Adequately trained personnel were also lacking. The outbreak of the insurrection in the Ghuta in 1925-1926 brought the Cadastre operations to an abrupt halt; it was not to resume again until the late 1920's. The small class of peasant-proprietors which emerged as a direct result of the reforms proved unable to resist encroachment from urban landlords who expropriated the peasant holdings - often as soon as registration took place - through the well-established vehicle of money-lending.[186] Above all

else, French control relied on the maintenance of good relations with the landlord class and, in effect, the Mandate authorities rarely scrutinized the validity of old titles.

Intent on reorganizing the system of water distribution and clarifying water rights in the Ghuta (and aiming to quadruple the area under irrigation in Syria as a whole) the French created the Service d'Études Hydrauliques in 1929. This undertook the important work of data collection in the Ghuta for five years. The French were convinced that the Ottoman law which considered water to be public property was largely responsible for the primitive condition of irrigation and the endless feuding in the Ghuta. However, capital investment in the Ghuta's canal system was negligible in the 1920-1940 period.[187]

The Mandate period, as acknowledged previously, witnessed increasing incidents of violent disputes over water rights and appropiations, particularly during the summer months. The French authorities generally refrained from intervening directly in such conflicts, despite the loss of life and destruction of property, taking refuge in the argument that their law courts were unfamiliar with the tangled web of custom as it existed in the Ghuta.[188] A commission would be

appointed to settle the dispute by arbitration, before which a shawi for each party would appear to plead its case. The shawi, in fact, had emerged as an officially recognized representative of the irrigation communities of the Ghuta under the Mandatory regime, which bolstered his position. Arreté 101 of March 1929 of the government of Damascus pledged political support and financial backing to the shawi and other village dignitaries of the "communauté hydaulique" on the condition that they play a direct role in the equitable distribution of water and deposited the funds which they received for repairing the canal works in the Banque de Syrie. In principle, the shawi was only to have recourse to this reserve fund upon the authorization of the director-general of public works. Yet it was commonly alleged that shawis frequently enriched themselves and acquired local power in this way.[189]

As for public works initiatives undertaken by the French authorities in the Ghuta, the record is, for the most part, unremarkable. The state of the Ghuta's canal system remained very primitive throughout the Mandatory period. Peasants of the region had long suffered the ravages of malaria, which thrived in the stagnant pools of water formed from the seepage coming from the canals. The mud

embankments of the multitude of small streams and rivers allowed for the escape of enormous quantities of water which formed large cess-pools on the pathways of the villages. The Direction de Service de l'Hygiene led an anti-malarial campaign in the region for eight years. This programme was successful in so far as it required peasants to erect properly constructed barriers to prevent seepage coming from the canals. However, this initiative was not undertaken within the framework of a public works project; the expenses were borne exclusively by the local communities.[190] The drainage of the marshland around the Lake of Utayba in the Marj was undertaken directly by the Mandate authorities. This proved to be important for the region's agriculture: by 1940, some 24,000 hectares had been reclaimed and the settlement of peasant-cultivators in this formerly sparsely inhabited region acquired a great momentum.[191]

French tariff policies proved highly damaging to the export trade in agricultural produce. In 1920, Syrian produce was banned in France. General Gouraud vigorously protested against this measure, asserting that the capacity of Syria to export had already been dramatically reduced since the war. He underlined the urgency of developing strong commercial relations between the two countries, which could

only serve to reinforce the political influence which France was about to exercise with the imposition of the Mandate.[192]

In the early 1920s, a major contributor to the deepening economic crisis affecting the agrarian districts was the erection of customs barriers between the former Ottoman provinces, now under the control of different European Mandatory powers. Affecting the Ghuta in particular was the Syria-Palestine accord of 26 August 1921 which gave rise to fears among Damascene commercial groups and producers in the Ghuta alike, who saw it as placing grave obstacles to the export of agricultural produce to the area under British Mandatory control.[193]

In the early 1920s, a serious decline in the region's trade resulted with the erection of tariff barriers with Palestine and Egypt. In this period, Damascene vegetable merchants bought very little from the orchards, keeping stocks very low. Until this time, Egypt and Palestine were the principal markets for the Ghuta's grapes, but now tariff barriers gradually phased out these markets, with very damaging consequences for villages such as Kfar Sussa, which almost wholly specialized in this crop.[194]

Local artisan industries were similarly affected. In the inter-war period, soap manufacture in the Ghuta suffered from the competition presented by Jewish soap industries in Palestine, which came to pose a major threat to the local industry. In 1925, a direct threat to the important flour milling industry of the Ghuta presented itself when customs duty on foreign (principally Australian and American) flour fell by 50%. The millers of the Ghuta begged the French authorities for protection for their industry, but their pleas went largely unheeded.[195]

But most damaging of all to the local economy, however, was the devaluation of the French franc, (to which the Syrian pound was forcibly tied) in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The collapse of the franc led indirectly to a great increase in taxation. Previously, land taxes had doubled during the terrible drought and frosts of 1924-1925, contributing powerfully to the climate of agrarian unrest which set the stage for the general uprising.[196]

The revolt and its aftermath/consequences

The Syrian Revolt of 1925-1926, in which the Ghuta and its inhabitants played a major role, has to be seen not only against a background of the various aspects of the French

agrarian policy but equally in the light of the long-term socio-economic developments affecting rural society. There were a number of immediate contributory factors. The winter and spring of 1924-5 were exceptionally harsh, and culminated in a period of severe drought. February and March were the two coldest months in living memory and a devastating frost in April destroyed much of the emerging fruit harvest in the Ghuta. The loss was estimated at over 50%, with apricot trees suffering the worst damage.[197] 1925 proved to be a year of particularly violent disputes between villages and landlords over water rights in the Ghuta, claiming a number of casualties.[198]

In the years immediately following the war, unemployment in the Damascus region was increasingly visible and was cited by local observers as a festering social problem. Many artisans and wage-labourers who failed to find work in Damascus returned to their villages in the Ghuta, where they also faced grave difficulties in securing employment in the orchards. This floating army of the landless and homeless living in deplorable conditions became increasing identified in the eyes of the French with the alarming level of banditry and lawlessness which was rife in the Ghuta.[199]

In September 1925, the villagers of the Ghuta found

themselves joining the insurrection which began months earlier in the Jabal Druze. The revolt, led by a local peasant, Hassan al-Kharrat, gradually gained ground and intensified. Most of the guerilla bands were recruited on the spot from the peasantry and quickly multiplied. It was al-Kharrat's band which most worried the French, particularly as it captured a number of French troops.[200]

The French army quickly launched an organized campaign to crush the resistance in the Ghuta. A particularly brutal attack in the region occurred on 15 October, with Circassian and Moroccan troops participating in the burning of a number of villages and the destruction of Jaramana, an Arab nationalist stronghold. This proved to be a critical phase in the insurrection, causing droves of villagers to throw in their lot with the rebels. The bombing of Damascus on 20 October and the continued raiding of villages, particularly those owned by Damascus-based nationalist leaders, only served to fuel the insurrection, by greatly increasing the numbers of homeless and destitute.[201] The Ghuta rebels were joined by those from Jabal Druze who sought refuge in the Oasis. By the end of 1925, the Ghuta had become the very epicentre of the revolt.

Villages which were found supporting the rebels in any way

faced harsh collective punishments. French officials involved in carrying out massive military operations consistently spoke of the necessity to "nettoyer les jardins". In fact, the Ghuta's densely packed gardens proved to be virtually impenetrable for the French forces and served as a refuge for the insurgents for nearly two years.

The ruthlessness of the French forces and their determination to pursue a "scorched earth" policy in crushing the uprising is best summed up by Col. Besnard's reflection on the crisis:

> "En temps de guerre ou d'insurrection, il suffirait de détruire les canalisations de Fije et de Doumar pour condamner à mort le cheptel et les cultures de l'oasis pour affamer la ville de Damas et faire subir le supplice à ses habitants."[202]

The events of 1925-1926 brought into the open the deepening conflict with the local Circassian community in the Ghuta, which had established itself in the region in the second half of the 19th century. Their role in the revolt was clearly spelt out by one official in the Ghuta, when he asserted that, "elles nous ont rendu les meilleurs services pendant l'insurrection de 1926, les escadrons Tcherkesses ont fait merveille contre les bandes de rebelles".[203] Local Circassians fought against the insurgents and participated

in the destruction of a number of villages, such as those of Jaramana, Mleha and Batna. They were also prominent in random attacks on villagers and the looting of their property. They proved to be the only significant element of the Ghuta's population involved in open collaboration with the French forces at the time of the rebellion.[204]

The ascendancy of the "rich peasant" - associated with rural dignitaries - and also linked with the institutions of mugharasa and damman - is indicative of the greater stratification of rural society. This phenomenon also played its part in the crisis. On the spot observers reported a genuine conflict of interest between the members of this loosely defined group (with respect to water rights, terms of sale of agricultural produce, etc.) and the rest of the local peasant population. Many mukhtars and shawis - officially recognized representatives of their communities under French rule - tended to collaborate with the authorities during the uprising, as the solidarity of the village community was steadily undermined by the divisive new forces at work. In a number of incidents in the Ghuta, villagers openly challenged their authority.[205] Many of these "middle peasant" proprietors were only able to accumulate land in conditions created under French rule, and

this appears to have been well understood by the majority of the local population.

In July 1926, after many villages had been bombed by air, French columns finally massed on the edge of the Oasis and attacked it from the north, east and south, converging towards Damascus. The French army launched a final and massive attack by ground and air involving some 8500 men supported by shells and artillery. For the next three weeks, French troops raked through the Ghuta, attempting to eradicate signs of the resistance wherever it was found. The civilian casualties were huge.[206] Towards the end of July and during the month of August, Damascus was subject to an enormous influx of refugees, estimated at 18 - 20,000, from the devastated villages of the Ghuta and Anti-Lebanon.[207]

The extent of the devastation brought upon the Ghuta by the French army was vast. At the end of the revolt, the Mandate authorities ordered the destruction of the high mud walls which characterized the region. The French also decided to block up a number of important canals which irrigated large sections of the region in order to bring the insurgents to their knees. The trail of destruction was attributed by French officials to the fact that each village in the Ghuta was well armed and in the aftermath of the insurrection the

French continued to face formidable problems in disarming the region.[208]

In response to French anxieties over security in the aftermath of the revolt, a concentrated effort was made to tie the many villages of the Ghuta together by vehicle roads. A major preoccupation of the French from the start had been to establish a viable means of communication in the area. During the uprising, the French command was clearly mortified to find the Ghuta a veritable labyrinth of trails and pathways. From a military point of view, the warren-like quality of the Ghuta was to prove a deadly mire for the French forces. It was common knowledge that Damascenes were often reluctant to enter the Ghuta, as the local peasantry were loathe to familiarize the outsider with the intricacies of the trail network.

In the aftermath of the revolt, the French military authorities paved a number of roads in the region. In 1926, General Vallier presided over the construction of a road leading from one end of the Barada Valley to the other. Shortly after this road was finished, a main road leading from Damascus to Homs, which passed through Harasta and Duma, was built. However, by the end of the Mandate period, most villages in the Ghuta were only linked by trails.[209] A

host of important villages such as Misraba, Madira and Bayt Sawna had virtually no access to them and were essentially enveloped in a mesh of winding paths, trails and enclosed walls. Daraya and Arbin - among the largest villages of the Ghuta, with populations of 8,000 and 4,000 respectively - were only linked to their neighbours by one or two narrow trails. There were only two major exceptions to this general picture: that of Kfar Sussa, with 1,800 metres of road tying it to Damascus, and Jaramana, where the French, in attempting to eradicate the resistance in this Nationalist stronghold, built a road going through the heart of the village out of military expediency.[210]

In the final years of the Mandate, the construction of a network of roads surrounding Damascus encroached on the Ghuta. The subsequent penetration of the automobile in the countryside rapidly lent itself to a system of taxi services transporting both people and agricultural produce, thus substantially transforming the relationship of the peasant with the city.[211]

The 1930s are dominated by the greater encroachment of the city on the life of the Ghuta. In this period, a number of factors combined to alter the traditional role of the oasis as the principal supplier of food to Damascus. As the

population increased in the inter-war period, the city expanded well beyond its historic limits, laying down concrete over the farmland and orchards and absorbing the outlying villages of the Ghuta.[212] In this period, Damascus was in the grip of an energetic building boom: public works, paved roads and drinking water systems were all projects requiring huge amounts of manpower, absorbing manual labourers from the Ghuta and other neighbouring districts. But when these projects came to an end, the peasants more often than not returned to rural unemployment in their villages.[213] The 1930s saw the construction of the first large factories - of confectionaries and textiles - in the Barada Valley region. However, the amount of local labour employed was negligible in comparison with the now huge numbers of Ghuta peasants who found themselves without a livelihood.[214]

This state of affairs is partly due to the fact that by the 1930s there was a definite pressure on land resources; the limits of intensified agriculture appear to have been reached. The Ghuta had become a quasi-urbanised landscape, possessing the largest villages in Syria, with a density of more than 200 inhabitants per square mile by the end of our period. The population figures for the major villages of

the region reveal that they were, in fact, small towns:

Duma	11,000	
Harasta	4,000	
Daraya	8,000	
Mizza	4,000	
Kabun	4,000	
Birza	4,000	215
Arbin	4,000	

A large part of this village population began to supplement their income by migrating to Damascus.

In the inter-war years, the expropriation of the Ghuta's lands by members of the Damascene bourgeoisie greatly accelerated. For all its official rhetoric, the measures taken by the French administration did not halt the growing tendency towards the domination of big landlords in the region. The cadastral survey presented fresh opportunities for existing big landlords to acquire communally-held land.[216] In this way, a number of wealthy merchant families who dominated the wholesale fruit and vegetable trade acquired and developed the vast orchards of the Zawr region in the south and east of the Ghuta and were responsible for the great expansion of cultivation to the outer confines of the Ghuta which took place in the 1930's.[217]

However, one of the most striking developments affecting the social structure of the Ghuta, which gained momentum with

the outbreak of the First World War, is the appearance of a clear middle stratum of peasant-proprietors. This was at the expense of the small proprietors - always the first victim of the moneylender - and also a result of the break up of large estates through the mugharasa system. The emergence of this new intermediary class on the rural scene was an important factor underlying the deepening social conflict which affected the region.

The multi-faceted pressures and subsequent transmutations to which agrarian society in the Ghuta were subject in the "transitional period" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries thus acted unequally upon the diverse components of the social fabric. There were those among the peasant population who, placed in the strategic position as intermediaries and brokers for the new economic order, clearly profited. For these few, access to water and the fruits of agricultural production were increasingly objects of speculation. Most importantly, new social divisions and antagonisms came into being without any evidence of the disappearance of the old ones.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER V

1 A. Tower, The Oasis of Damascus, Beirut, 1935, p. 16; Kurd ᶜAli, Ghutat Dimashq, Damascus, 1953, pp. 5-8

2 R. Thoumin, Géographie humaine de la Syrie Centrale, Tours, 1936, p. 41; R. Tresse, Le pélerinage syrien, Paris, 1937, p. 269-71.

3 "Ghuta" is the term traditionally used by Arab geographers to designate a region of hollows where waters collect. Tower., p. 17.

4 R. Tresse, "L'irrigation dans le Ghouta de Damas", Revue des Etudes Islamiques, 1929, p. 411.

5 Kurd ᶜAli, Ghutat Dimashq, pp. 49-50; N. Elisseef, "Ghuta" in L'encyclopédie de l'Islam, (new edition), p. 1124.

6 Thoumin, Géographie humaine, p. 233.

7 Bianquis, "Damas et le Ghouta", p. 362.

8 Tower, p. 19.

9 Thomson, W.M., The Land and the Book, p. 192; J. Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine, London, 1858, p. 74.

10 Dr. Lortet, La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1884, p. 573.

11 J. L. Porter, Book I, p. 138.

12 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. IV, Hecquard to de Lhuis, 7/9/1865.

13 GBPP, 1877, Vol. LXXXI, Vice-consul Dickson, "Trade and Commerce in Damascus in 1875.

14 PRO,FO 195/2144, "Quarterly Report for the Province of Damascus," Richards to O'Conor, 10/1/1903; N. Saliba, "Emigration from Syria", Arab Studies Quarterly, Vol. 3, no. 1, Winter 1981 pp. 56-67.

15 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, de Ségur to MAE 15/3/1852, J. L. Porter, Book I, p. 179; PRO,FO 195/368, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 28/1/1852.

16 France, Rapports Commerciaux des Agents Consulaires de France, 1892, Vol. II, no. 72, "Damas: etude sur la caza de Duma" M. Guillois, 1891.

17 Ibid; PRO,FO 195/1201, Damascus "Circassians in Syria," Jago to Earl of Darby 4/3/1878.

18 V. Cuinet, Syrie, Liban et Palestine, Paris, 1896, p. 386 .

19 Thoumin, Géographie humaine, p. 235.

20 D. Chevallier, "Un exemple de résistance technique de l'artisanat syrien aux XIX^{e} et XX^{e} siecles." Villes et Travail en Syrie du XIXe au XXe siecle, Paris, 1982, pp. 90-93.

21 Schatkowski , The Decline of Syrian Localism, p. 87. Still, in 1833, Damascus' imports from Iraq were 30% higher than its European imports through Beirut, Kalla, p. 10; MacGreggor, p. 49.

22 Rustum, Mahfuzat, II, No. 2696 and No. 2811.

23 PRO,FO 78/243, Damascus, Farren to Palmerston, 7/2/1843. Q. Al-Basha, Mudhakkirat ta'rikhiyya, Lebanon, n.d. pp. 95-96.

24 Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis" p. 225 Ali al-Hasani, Ta'rikh Suriya al-iqtisadi, Damascus, 1924, p. 45.

25 For the text of the treaty see: I. de Testa, Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères, Paris, 1865, p. 45-46.

26 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot, 5/8/1842 The entry duty was later raised to 8% in 1861 which reduced the export duty, but these interventions came too late; the urban artisans were already severely debilitated from massive imports.

27 Rafeq, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy", p. 3; Hilan, p. 67; Hasani, pp. 37-8

28 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot, 6/7/1842.

29 Hasani, p. 35; Bowring, p. 85.

30 PRO,FO 78/243, Damascus, Farren to Palmerston, 7/2/1834; PRO,FO 78/283, Damascus, Turkey, "Report on Syria" Campbell to Palmerston, 3/8/1836; MacGreggor, p. 7.

31 C. Issawi, "British Trade and the Rise of Beirut, 1830-1860" International Journal of Middle East Studies, 8, 1977, p. 92.

32 In 1853, 39 British vessels embarked at Beirut carrying 8,546 tons of Manchester cotton goods. In the following year, there were already 57 British ships which called at Beirut carrying 15,392 tons of cotton goods. GBPP, 1854-1855, Vol. LVII, Consul Moore, Beirut, 1854; Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis," p. 206-207.

33 MacGreggor, p. 154.

34 Rafeq, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy," p. 3.

35 PRO,FO 195/291, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 22/11/1848.

36 Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis", p. 210.

37 GBPP, 1857, Vol. XXXVIII, Consul Moore, Beirut, 1856.

38 GBPP, 1878, Vol. LXXIII, Consul Eldridge, Beirut,1876.

39 GBPP, 1874, Vol. LXVII, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus.

40 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. IV, Rogier to MAE, 3/8/1863; See also: AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, de Ségur to MAE, 31/3/1851 and PRO,FO 195/368, Damascus, Wood to Palmerston, 10/11/1851 for earlier attempts by Europeans to promote cotton cultivation in the Ghuta.

41 GBPP, 1878, Vol. LXXIII, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus. Jago reported that "the Baghdad overland trade is now virtually extinct."

42 GBPP, 1878, Vol. LXXIII, Consul Moore, Beirut; Kalla, p. 15.

43 GBPP, 1878, Vol. LXXIII, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus.

44 GBPP, 1858, Vol. LXXII, Beirut, Consul Moore.

45 France, Rapports Commerciaux, Vol. I, 1892, "Movement commercial de Damas en 1890-1891" M. Guillois.

46 Grain prices in Europe fell after improvements in ocean transport reduced freight on bulk grain shipments, bringing the produce of grain-producing lands such as USA, Argentina, Russia and India to the European markets. N. Verney and G. Dambmann, Les Puissances Etrangères dans le Levant en Syrie et en Palestine, Paris, 1900, pp. 150-1; Kalla, p. 15

47 France, Rapports Commerciaux, Vol. I, 1892 "Movement commercial de Damas en 1890-1891." M. Guillois; Hasani, p. 108.

48 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. VI Gilbert to Ferry 8/2/1884; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. VI Gilbert to Freycinet 19/14/1886. See also: Chevallier "Western Development and Eastern Crisis" p. 206-7 on this point.

49 W. Shorrock, "The Origin of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon: The Railroad Question, 1901-1914" International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, I, 1970, 134; AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. IV Hecquard to de Lhuis 12/6/1863.

50 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. IV, Hecquard to de Lhuis, 12/6/1863.

51 Rafeq, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy", p. 3.

52 PRO,FO 195/2075 "Quarterly Report on the Economic State of Damascus" Richards to Currie, 26/4/1900.

53 On the railroad network and its effects on the regional economy see: P. Huvelin (ed.), Que vaut la Syrie? Congrès Français de la Syrie, Paris, 1919 p. 35; Verney and Dambmann, pp. 205-328.

54 Rafeq, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy" p. 2; Ghurayba, p. 75.

55 This issue is dealt with at length by: Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 194-6; Saba, pp. 24-38; R. Hilan, Culture et développement en Syrie et dans les pays retardés. Paris, 1969, pp. 42-9; Chevallier "Un exemple de résistance technique de l'arisanat syrien au XIXe et XXe siècles", Villes et Travail en Syrie, 1982, pp. 89-121; M.A. Ubicini Letters on Turkey, 1856, Vol. II, pp. 339-44.

56 On the organization of the trade in British manufactured cloth and its impact on the textile industry generally: see Zafir al-Qasimi (ed.) Qamus as-sina'at ash-shamiya, 2 vols, Paris, 1960.

57 Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, p.102-3.

58 AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. IV, Outrey to Walewski, 2/10/1856; Hilan, p. 50.

59 al-Qasimi, p. 95-6.

60 GBPP, 1872, Vol. LXII, Damascus, Jago to Earl of Granville. In the late 1870s, 50,000 pieces of British cloth were arriving every year, three-quarters of which were dyed blue by artisans in Damascus and used exclusively by the Ghuta peasantry and the Beduin; AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. VI Gilbert to Waddington, 24/4/1879.

61 G. Baer, "Village and City in Egypt and Syria, 1500-1900", Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East, London, 1982, p. 80.

62 AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. IV, Outrey to Walewski, 2/10/1856.

63 GBPP, 1902, Vol. LXXIX, Damascus, Consul Richards.

64 GBPP, 1879, Vol. LXXIV, Jago, "The Trade of Damascus"; GBPP, 1902, Vol. CX, Damascus.

65 P. Khoury, The Politics of Nationalism: Syria and the French Mandate, Ph.d. thesis Harvard University, 1980, p. 218.

66 AAE: Turquie: Damas, Vol. IV, 1860, Outrey to Thouvenel, 20/7/1860; AAE: CC: Damas, Vol.IV, Hecquard to M. de Lhuis, 5/3/1863.

67 M. Emerit, "La Crise Syrienne et l'expansion économique française en 1860", La Revue Historique, CCVII, 1952, pp. 117-116; F. Steppat, "Some Arabic Manuscript Sources on the Syrian Crisis of 1860"; J. Berque and D. Chevallier Les Arabes par leurs Archives, Paris, 1976, pp. 183-191; Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 198-200; J. Farley, The Massacres in Syria, London, 1861; Gharayba, pp. 72-3.

68 AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. IV, Outrey to Walewski, 18/7/1860; Chevallier, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis", p.209; R. Edwards, La Syrie, 1840-1862, Paris, 1862, pp. 37-8.

69 In the first decade of the 20th century, Weakley observed that the Moslem merchant population of Damascus tended to enrich themselves from the agricultural sector: "Many of them are landlords or owners of gardens or orchards and are content to live on the revenues they receive from such properties", Weakley, p. 35.

70 D.C. Blaisdell, European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire, New York, 1929pp. 45-50; Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, p. 110.

71 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables", p. 65.

72 Iltizam remained a widespread practice in the collection of land taxes up to the end of the 19th century in most regions of the Syrian interior. Hanna, p. 91; Ma'oz, Ottoman Reform, pp.37-47.

73 Karpat, p. 110.

74 On the Ottoman Land Code and its effects on rural society generally see: B. Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, London, 1968, pp. 117-8; R.H. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1850-1876, Princeton, 1963; English text in S. Fischer, Ottoman Land Laws, London, 1919.

75 Warriner, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent" in Issawi (ed.), Economic History, p. 68.

76 M. Gross, Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus, 1860 - 1909, Ph.d. Thesis, Georgetown University, 1979, pp. 113-114; P. Klat, "The Origins of Landownership in Syria", Middle East Economic Papers, 1958, p.62; R. Montagne, 'Le Pouvoir des chefs et les élites en Orient', CHEAM, No. 17, 1938, pp. 3-4.

77 Khoury, Urban Notables, pp. 27-8. On Ottoman officials gaining access to land and surpassing in wealth and status the traditional rural-based elite see: A.R. Sami, Safar al-salam fi bilad al-Sham, Cairo, 1896, pp. 65-66.

78 Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables", p.63.

79 Fischer, pp. 75-6.

80 S.L. Williams, "Ottoman Land Policy and Social Change: the Syrian Provinces", Acta Orientalis Acadamiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Vol. XXXV (1), 1981, pp. 89-120.

81 PRO, FO 78/1920, Damascus, Rogers to Earl of Clarendon, 1/6/1866.

82 PRO, FO 195/601, Damascus, Brant to Bulwer, 16/11/1859.

83 GBPP, 1880, Vol. LXXIV, Damascus.

84 Sami, pp. 66-7. On the formation of large estates in the Ghuta in this period see: A.A. Awad, Al-Idara al-Uthmaniyya fi Wilaya Suriya, 1864-1914, Cairo, 1969, pp. 72-3. On the trade depression of the 1870s see Owen, The Middle East, pp. 171-2

85 Karpat, p. 88.

86 For this information I am indebted to the research undertaken in the Shariyya Court Registers of Damascus by Sherry Vatter: "The Use of Sales Documents in Writing the History of 19th Century Damascus", (unpublished paper), the contents of which are quoted with the kind permission of the author.

87 Ibid, p. 20.

88 Ibid, p. 20.

89 Ibid, p. 25; Thoumin, "La maison syrienne dans la plaine hauranaise, le bassin du Barada et sur le plateau du Qalamoun", Documents d'Etudes Orientales, Vol. II, Paris, 1932, p. 22

90 Kalla, p. 98.

91 AAE: CC: Damas, Vol. IV, Heyquard to de Lhuis, 11/6/1866; PRO, FO 78/1929, Rogers to Lord Lyons, 25/7/1866; GBPP, 1880, Vol. LXXIV, Damascus, Vice-Consul Jago, "The Trade and Commerce of Damascus."

93 GBPP, 1877, Vol. LXXXI, Damascus, Vice-Consul Jago, "Taxation in the Vilayet of Damascus; GBPP, 1880, Vol. LXXIV, Damascus. United States, Consular Reports, Vol. XV, No. 50, 1885, Damascus, Consul Robeson 30/9/1884; (hereafter cited as US CR), US CR, Vol. XXIII, No. 84, Beirut, 1887.

94 US CR, Vol. 13, No. 43. Beirut, Consul Robeson, 1883; GBPP, 1880, Vol. LXXIV, Damascus.

95 PRO,FO 195/368, Damascus, Wood to Canning 28/1/1852. The British protégé, D. Hariri, "one of the most respected merchants in Damascus" advanced over a period of time the sum of LT 105,000 to various Ghuta villages, which the inhabitants refused to pay, pleading poverty. PRO,FO 195/226, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 4/12/1845.

96 PRO,FO 78/1829, Damascus, Wrench to Russell, 21/1/1864; PRO,FO 78/2103, Damascus, Rogers to Elliot 2/1/1869. On European resistance to the liquidation of collective debts: PRO,FO 195/806, Damascus, Wrench to Erskine 21/1/1864.

97 GBPP, 1875, Vol. LXXV, Vice-Consul Jago, "The Trade and Agriculture of Syria for 1878;" Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 158-9.

98 PRO,FO 195/1263, Damascus, Jago to Malet 14/4/1879.

99 PRO,FO 78/2103, Damascus, Rashid Pasha to Wood, 7/12/1879.

100 PRO,FO 195/994, Syria and Palestine, Green to Elliot, 21/7/1872.

101 See: N. Qasatili, Al-Rawda al-ghana fi Dimashq al-fayha Beirut, 1879, pp. 76-9 on the effects of the Ottoman debt in the province of Damascus and the inability to repay bond-holders; PRO,FO 195/976, Beirut, Eldridge to Elliot, 16/5/1863; PRO,FO 195/601, Damascus, Brant to Bulwer, 16/11/1858.

102 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 120.

103 Latron, p. 218.

104 C. Issawi, "Economic Growth in the Arab World since 1800: Some Observations" Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1964.

105 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 122.

106 Share-tenants were more easily coerced into accepting the landlord's directives, Klat, Land Tenure, p. 116; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 90-3; Hanna, p. 135.

107 G. Young, Corps de droit Ottoman, Oxford, 1906, p. 92.

108 J. Mullender, "Un aspect du développement dans un pays agricole," CHEAM, No. 300, 1960, p. 12; Hanna, p. 45; Hannoyer, p. 287.

109 Latron, p. 204.

110 Ibid; Weulersse, Paysans, p. 129. The period required before the partners could reap the first harvest: 4-6 years for vines, 7-8 years for figs, 6-7 years for apricots and 10-12 years for olive groves.

111 Young, Vol. I, pp. 82-3.

112 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 130.

113 Klat, Land Tenure, pp. 129-130; Latron, p. 67.

114 Latron, p. 205.

115 Code foncier syro-libanais, promulgated in 1933, made an attempt to eradicate these desperate conditions in forbidding the dissociation of the trees from the soil from the juridical point of view. See AAE: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 387 Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1934; Latron, p. 71.

116 Bureau de Documentation Syrienne et Arabe, Etudes sur L'Agriculture Syrienne, Damascus, 1955; Mullender, p. 25; Klat, Land Tenure, p. 130.

117 Latron, p. 74.

118 J. Weulersee, "Régime agraire et vie agricole en Syrie", Bulletin de l'Association de Géographes français, no.113, April 1938, pp. 60-1.

119 Ibid.

120 Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, London, 1948, pp. 48-50. The peasant-broker undertook the harvest and other work such as weeding and tending to the summer crops for a set price. Cuinet, pp. 338-40.

121 GBPP, 1873, Vol.LXIX, Damascus.

122 France, Rapports Commerciaux, 1892, Vol. II, no. 72, "Etude sur la caza de Duma"; M. Guillois, 1891.

123 France, Rapports Commerciaux, 1907, Vol. III, no. 94, Damas.

124 Latron, p. 207

125 Warriner, Land and Poverty, p. 85.

126 Thoumin, Géographie humaine, p. 106.

127 Thoumin, "Notes sur l'aménagement et la distribution des eaux à Damas et dans sa Ghouta", Bulletin d'études orientales, V, 1934.

128 Tresse, "L'irrigation", p. 473; Kurd ʿAli, Ghutat Dimashq, p. 47.

129 Tower, p. 4.

130 France, Rapport sur le recensement et l'établissement des droits sur les eaux, M. Duraffourd, Aug. 1929.

131 Tresse, "L'irrigation", p. 480.

132 Bianquis, "Le problème de l'eau" p. 35.

133 The ᶜaddans or periodic turns at the water generally followed the division of the day according to religious dictates. The mezzaz, the kingpin of the water system, was often left open from the time of the early morning prayers to those in the afternoon. At Birza, the peasants gathered at dusk at the base of the village minaret after the first calls of the muᶜezzin and surged forward to the canals, where, reportedly, the more agile among them won a few minutes over the others. Tresse, "L'irrigation", p. 478; R. Thoumin, "Un Village Syrien: Adra", Mélanges géographiques, 1932, Grenoble.

134 Rapport sur le recensement, p. 8; Latron, p. 208; Tower, p. 36

135 I. Antaki, "Deir-Atieh, essai d'ethnologie rurale", cahier 5, Journal d'Agriculture Tropicale, Paris, 1973, p. 283; Tower, p. 23; Warriner, Land and Poverty, p. 58.

136 Kurd ᶜAli, Ghutat Dimashq, p. 87; Tresse, "Usages saisonieres," p. 27.

137 Tresse, "l'irrigation," p. 491.

138 R. Thoumin, "Notes sur l'aménagement et la distribution des eaux à Damas et dans sa Ghouta," Bulletin d'études orientales, V, 1934.

139 Hannoyer, p. 284.

140 Young, p. 68.

141 Rapport sur le recensement, p. 8, Thoumin, Géographie humaine, p. 100.

142 From the 1850s onward, the Shari^{c}a courts dealt with a multitude of disputes on this question. As early as 1853, a dispute arose between the villages of Tell and Mnin, the latter of which attempted to sell its surplus water to Birze. Tell opposed this. The villagers of Mnin accused Tell of openly challenging their ownership of the village water. Tresse, "L'irrigation," p. 421; Thoumin, "Notes sur l'aménagement," p. 36-7.

143 Tresse, "L'irrigation," p. 507.

144 Kurd ^{c}Ali, Ghutat Dimashq, p. 82; Zakariya, p. 89.

145 Thoumin, Géographie humaine, p. 103.

146 Tresse, "L'irrigation," p. 497.

147 Hanna, 136; Khayr, Ghutat Dimashq; Latron, p. 217.

148 GBPP, 1873, Vol. LXIX, Damascus, Report by Vice-Consul Kirby Green.

149 France, Rapports Commerciaux, Vol. 72, "Mouvement du commerce de Damas en 1893" M. Guillois.

150 GBPP, 1902, Vol. CX, Damascus, Consul Richards.

151 In 1931, 2,800 hectares were planted with apricot trees; by 1938 this had expanded to 6,200 hectares. E.C. Achard, "Notes sur la Syrie" in L'Asie Française, 1922, p. 109.

152 France, Rapports Commerciaux, No. 72, Damas: "Etude sur la caza de Douma: 1891."

153 Weakley, p. 74; GBPP, 1902, CX, Damas, Consul Richards; Académie Agricole de France, "Les résultats" p. 111.

154 US CR, Vol. XII, March 1884, No. 412. Report by Consul Robeson; France, Rapports Commerciaux, "Etude sur la caza de Douma," 1891.

155 GBPP, 1909, Vol. XCVIII, Damascus, Consul Devey.

156 Latron, p. 123-4.

157 Smilianskaya, p. 234; GBPP, 1879, Vol. LXXIV, "On the Trade of Damascus."

158 Qasimi, pp. 150-1. In 1875 Consul Dickson in Damascus observed that "the dealers in the market are already making contracts with the peasants for the purchase of fruit when ripe, in the hope of making a large profit." GBPP, 1877, Vol. LXXXI, Damascus, Consul Dickson.

159 A-M Bianquis, "Le marché en gros des fruits et légumes à Damas," Revue Géographique de Lyon, 1978, Vol. III, p. 204.

160 Al-Qasimi describes in detail the process of bidding for fruit in the orchards and explains how the dammans made agreements among themselves to stave off an increase in prices, p. 87.

161 Bianquis, "marché en gros," p. 204.

162 Ibid, p. 205.

163 GBPP, 1912-1913, Vol. C, Damascus, Consul Devey.

164 Kurd ᶜAli, Khitat al-Sham, p. 145; S. Khayr, Ghutat Dimashq, p. 129.

165 The port of Beirut was not opened for traffic until 29, November, 1918. On the blocade and its effects on the Syrian population: AAE:Série E, Syrie-Liban, "Commerce," Vol. 78. Gouraud to MAE. 6/7/1919.

166 Latron, p. 30; AAE: Série E; Syrie-Liban, Vol. 340, "Rapport sur l'organisation foncière de la Syrie, 1925." S.B. Himadeh (ed.), The Economic Organization of Syria, p. 62.

167 Safuh Khayr, Madinat Dimashq: Dirasa fi jughrafiyya al-mudun, Damascus, 1969, p. 213; Khoury, Urban Notables, p. 81.

168 Philip K. Hitti, "al-Suriyyun fi al-wilayat al-muttahiddah", al-Muqtataf, , 1922, p.60

169 Phillip K. Hitti, "Al-Suriyyun fi al-wilayat al-muttahidda", al-Mugtataf, 1922, p. 60

170 On the eve of the First World War, French business interests held some 82% of the total Ottoman internal debt and 59% of the Ottoman Public debt, much of which concerned Syria. In October 1918, the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon launched an appeal to the Foreign Minister declaring that "la Syrie entière y compris les vilayets de Damas et Alep et les ports de Caiffa, d'Acre et d'Alexandretta, soit comprise dans la zone d'influence directe de la France", D. Chevallier, "Lyon et la Syrie en 1919: les bases d'une intervention", Villes et Travail, p. 72-3. Also on this point see: J.P. Spagnolo, "French Influence in Syria Prior to World War I," Middle East Journal, 23, 1969. Much of the anxiety in French business circles stemmed from the fact that on the eve of World War I, French trade with Syria was at a standstill, while that of Germany, Italy and Britain was increasing. What the French bought in Syria far outweighed the products she sold to the country. Shorrock, p. 143. For a summary of French economic interests in Syria see: "L'importance des intérêts Francais dans l'empire Ottoman", L'Asie Française, 1920, pp. 179-83.

171 Huvelin, p. 35; Chevallier, "Lyon et Syrie en 1919", p. 75. The Mission, led by Huvelin, left Marseille 6 May 1919 and returned the following September.

172 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, Vol. 340, Achard, "Rapport sur l'organisation foncière de la Syrie et du Grand-Liban", 1925.

173 Stephen Roberts, The History of French Colonial Policy: 1870-1920, Hamden, Conn., 1963. Burke has argued that French policy in Syria was strongly influenced by the experience of Lyautey's administration of Morocco from 1912 to 1925 and modelled itself upon it. E. Burke, "A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912-1925", Middle Eastern Studies, 1920, pp. 179-83.

174 Ibid, p. 177.

175 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, Vol. 238, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1926-7.

176 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, "Etats Autonomes", Vol. 125, Millerand to Gourraud, 6/8/1920.

177 J. Weulersse, "La primauté des cités dans l'économie syrienne", Congrès International des Géographes français, no. 113, April 1938, pp.58-61.

178 Khoury, The Politics of Nationalism, p. 179.

179 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, "Rapport sur l'organisation foncière de la Syrie", vol. 340

180 E.C. Achard, "Notes sur la Syrie", L'Asie Française, 1922, p. 109; AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, Travaux du Cadastre et d'Amélioration des états de Syrie, des Alouites et du Grand Liban, 24/12/1925, hereafter cited as Travaux du Cadastre; France, Cadastre des Etats, "Notice sur le démembrement des Mouchaa, 1935.

181 S. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate, London, 1958, p. 280; Travaux du Cadastre, pp. 21-6.

182 Neither the Hawran, Jabal Druze or the Jazira were surveyed due to the unsettled political and military situation in these districts. Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East, pp. 97-98; Hannoyer, p. 287.

183 AAE: Série-E: Syrie-Liban, Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1923, vol. 244; Khoury, Economic Organization, pp. 63-66. in Himadeh (ed.),

184 "Rapport sur l'organisation foncière"; Travaux du Cadastre, pp. 10-12.

185 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol. 242, Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1930; Khoury, The Politics of Nationalism, p. 223; J. Weulersse, "Régime agraire et vie agricole en Syrie", Bulletin de l'Association des Geographes Français, no. 113, April 1938, pp. 122-3.

186 AAE: Série-E: Syrie-Liban, vol. 72, 17/6/1925; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 196-7; Klat, Land Tenure, p. 39.

187 Khoury, "Agriculture", p. 81; Longrigg, p. 280.

188 Tower, p. 23; Rapport sur le recensement, p. 16.

189 Tresse," L'irrigation", p. 483; AAE: Serie-E, Syrie-Liban, vol. 75, Agriculture, Achard to MAE, 4/8/1922.

190 Tresse, p. 551-2.

191 AAE:Série E, Vol. 249, Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1925.

192 AAE:Série E: Levant: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 79, Gouraud to Millerand 5/6/1920.

193 AAE:S rie E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 60, Situation Economique," Oct. 1921. AAE:Serie E: Syrie-Liban Vol. 61, Bulletin Economique, 1920.

194 Khoury, "Agriculture," p. 84.

195 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 341, 2/12/1925.

196 Longrigg, p. 272; W. Shorrock, French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon 1900-1914, Madison, 1976, p. 180; Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade, Economic Conditions in Syria, July, 1930, p. 19.

197 PRO,FO 371/5252, Smart to Department of Overseas Trade, 17 August, 1925.

198 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 242, Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1924; Duraffourd, Rapport sur le recensement, p. 19.

199 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 234, "Rapports sur les évènements de 1925, 10/9/1926; AAE: Syrie-Liban, "Rapport d'enquête de Damas," Vol. 237, 28/9/1926.

200 E. Rabbath, "L'insurrection syrienne de 1925-1927," Revue Historique, No. 542, April, 1982, p. 421.

201 See: Rabbath, pp. 420-447 and Khoury, The Politics of Nationalism, pp. 461-7, for the military details of the revolt; PRO,FO 371/729, Smart to Chamberlain, 15/12/1925.

202 Col. G. Besnard, "Damas, son oasis, ses inhabitants," L'Asie Française, 1931, pp. 95-6.

203 Ibid.

204 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, "Note sur les Tcherkess," Vol. 237, 3/7/1926; Rabbath, 421.

205 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 244, Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1923.

206 The number of dead are put at between 1,500 and 2,000. AAE:Serie E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 235, "Rapports sur les évènements de 1925"; Rabbath, 433.

207 Permanent Mandates Commission, minutes 11th Session; AAE:Serie E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 238, "Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1923.

208 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 77. Weulersse maintains that in the early 1940's, the French were still engaged in disarming the population of the Ghuta; PRO,FO 371/4684, Air Minister to F.O. 22/7/1926.

209 Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," pp. 230-231.

210 Besnard, "Damas, son Oasis," p. 101; Thoumin, Geographie humaine, pp. 230-1.

211 Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," p. 363.

212 Bianquis, "Marché en gros," p. 195.

213 Latron, p. 206.

214 E. Longuenesse, "L'Industrialisation et sa signification sociale," in A. Raymond (ed.) La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, p. 330.

215 Thoumin, Géographie humaine; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 269, "Recensement dans l'état de Damas, 1923."

216 Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade, Economic Conditions in Syria, July, 1930; Longrigg, p. 280.

217 Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," p. 378; I. Traboulsi, L'agriculture syrienne entre les deux guerres, Beirut, 1948, pp. 78-9.

218 Bureau de Documentation Syrienne et Arabe, Etudes sur l'Agriculture Syrienne, Damascus, 1955, p. 195; P. Klat, "Report on Land Tenure in Ashrafiyya Souhnaya," Unpublished MS. prepared for the Middle East Supply Centre, 1944.

219 Tower, p. 44.

CHAPTER VI: THE HOMS-HAMA PLAIN

Introduction

In the present study, the region in question displays very different characteristics of geography and rural sociology: the contrast with the Ghuta could not be more stark. As opposed to a region of peasant cultivators settled since ancient times and not appreciably altered in terms of geographic boundaries or the character of its population, the history of the Homs-Hama plain in the late Ottoman and Mandate periods is essentially one of an enormous expansion of the cultivated area by waves of new settlers and the progressive sedentarization of the nomadic population. Within this arena of migration vast estates emerged, yet remarkably little attention has so far been devoted to the way these were created, organized and constituted.

The agrarian societies of the Homs-Hama plain were communities in which the traditions of pastoral nomadism were particularly strong. A village here was characteristically a point of contact between the desert steppe of the nomadic beduin tribes, the semi-sedentary zone of shepherd pastoralists and the "sedentary" world of agriculture, commerce and handicraft production. An analysis of the agrarian system here reveals that the

domain sedentary peasant, pastoral nomad and urban merchant were not autonomous spheres but reflect what Sweet has called "a genuine intra-regional social and economic dependence."[1]

The cities of Homs and Hama, traditionally major centres of textile production, depended on the villages of their hinterlands for raw materials for their industries. Much of the region's history from the mid-19th century onwards revolves around the way the notables and merchants of these towns - particularly those of Hama - safeguarded their own interests through the control of agricultural production and the ownership of villages. Contracts undertaken with shepherd nomads also ensured that the profits from pastoral production were kept firmly in the hands of urban groups.

In the eastern part of the plain and in the Ma^{c}mura, where pastoral nomadism was a dominant force well into the 20th century, the merging of the agricultural and nomadic worlds gave rise to semi-sedentary social formations, such as the Mawali and the Hadi$^{\delta}$iyyin. This pastoral society depended on sedentary peasants and the townsfolk for crucial provisions and services - particularly grain, worked metals and fabric for clothing and tents. From the mid 19th century onward, there was the increasingly familiar figure of the itinerant

peasant-trader who accompanied a caravan of merchants laden with European manufactures departing from the towns to trade with the nomadic populations of the steppe.[2]

The Homs-Hama plain, formed between the mountain chain of the Anti-Lebanon and the confines of the Syrian desert is situated in the 500 to 250 millimeter rainfall band, the 250 mark indicating the absolute limit for the dry-farming of grains. Here ground waters are fed by infiltration from the surface during winter rains and are contained at the impermeable level of subsurface rock strata.[3] The plain, a series of basaltic plateaux, is characterized by a near total absence of trees and shrubs with the exception of those planted for gardens by its inhabitants.

In the late Ottoman period only a small percentage of the arable land of the region was actually cultivated, although cereals and cotton were known to thrive in the terra rosa soil. Midway through the French Mandate period, the percentage of cultivated land in relationship to the total area did not surpass 50% in the dry-farming regions and even less in periods of drought when peasants only managed to procure grainseed with difficulty.[4] The agricultural production of the plain chiefly consisted in wheat, maize and barley with cotton and tobacco subject to varying

fortunes. In the kaza of Hamidiya situated on the edge of Jabal Ansariyya, the cultivation of mulberries and the rearing of silkworms was practiced. Cuinet, in the 1890's, reported that this had only recently been a principal resource of this area but that it had been largely abandoned due to the raiding by the Alawis.[5] But despite the few cash crops requiring irrigation, the extent and value of grains by far exceeded all other crops in the region and usually provided for the basic needs of the population with a small surplus for export.[6]

Unlike the Ghuta, the region's agricultural history has been greatly influenced by the fact that crop yields are wholly dependent on the chance amount of rain that the area receives. The French, in particular, never ceased to express their irritation at the dilapidated state of the ancient irrigation system. By the late Ottoman period, the canal works, which date back to Roman times, only served the gardens which surrounded the urban centres of Homs and Hama. As put by de Berthelot, "...on peut dire sans guere exagerer que l'eau de l'Oronte s'ecoule jusqu'a la mer, a peu pres sans profit."[7]

There is evidence, however, that at one time a considerable part of the plain was irrigated. The square Roman towers

described by a number of 19th century travellers were intended to raise the water to such a height that it would enable peasants to conduct it in irrigation canals over the entire plain surrounding Homs. J.L. Porter observed that some of these canals were still in repair and carried water to the gardens and fields along the banks of the Orontes, but most were neglected and in ruins.[8] Some irrigation was traditionally achieved by means of water-wheels to be found throughout the length of the Orontes. These were most numerous in the Hama region, resulting in islots of orchard farming with some of the characteristics of an oasis economy juxtaposed to the grain lands.[9] In contrast to the Ghuta, the Aleppo plain and the Hawran, Europeans had little contact with this region before mid-19th century. Even up to the French occupation that contact was extremely limited.[10] The French were the first Europeans with consular representation in the region, establishing their agent, M.Bambino, in Hama in 1853. His reports contain detailed descriptions of agrarian society in the region. Initially, French interest in the region appears to have been aroused by the presence of many Christian communities, particularly numerous in the Homs region. As with other regions in the Levant, French involvement centred around a preoccupation with their fate and "protection". Thus Consul Hecquard was

to report with satisfaction, that Hama "...cette ville autrefois citée pour son fanatisme est devenue fort tolérante et les Chrétiens n'y sont plus tourmentés. Ce résultat est du en partie à la présence de notre agent, M. Bambino, qui s'y est fait respecter et y jouit d'une immense influence."[11]

The French were also interested in the grain from the Homs-Hama plain and the silk from the Alawite mountains. The French consul at Damascus quickly acknowledged that establishing Bambino - a merchant of considerable standing - as consular agent for Homs and Hama was a decision, "...qui ne peut que favoriser le développement que prend le commerce français dans cette partie de l'intérieur de la Syrie où il s'est fait l'année dernière pour plusiers millions de piastres en exportations pour Marseille - en huile, sésame, coton, soie, laine, céréales etc."[12]

There are very few reliable sources (and an almost total lack of official statistics) which serve to provide us with an accurate picture of the size of the region's population in the second half of the 19th century. However, contemporary observers are in complete agreement that the Homs-Hama plain was an extremely sparsely settled area. Most European commentators at the time were adamant that after a

brief period of genuine progress in the direction of sedentarization and rural security under the Egyptian occupation, the situation in the plains had completely reversed itself under Ottoman rule.[13] Consul Hecquard estimated in the 1860's that about 169 villages had been abandoned in the plain since the departure of the Egyptians,[14] but we have no way of knowing if the villagers in question simply regrouped in larger, better protected settlements nearby or if they vacated the area altogether. A characteristic impression of the density of settlement is provided by Richard Burton in the 1870's, who came upon "... a rich plain, dotted with villages, where most of the soil is untilled for want of hands and I imagine that a population at least seven times as large as the existing one might be maintained."[15]

One must also recognise the important demographic dimensions to major epidemics which plagued the region with considerable regularity in the 19th and early 20th century. In the 1860's, cholera raged throughout the plain and whole village populations perished. In one year alone, Hecquard reported 2,000 deaths in the villages surrounding Hama and claimed that the villages near Homs had lost up to half their population.[16]

In contrast to the cultural homogeneity of the population of the Ghuta, the Homs-Hama plain displays great diversity - being populated by Alawis, Isma^{c}ilis, Greek and Syrian Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslim peasants, Circassian immigrants and semi-sedentary nomads. The Alawis, who descended onto the plain from the near-by mountains in great numbers after the mid 19th century, were the most important group of migrants settling in the region and are concentrated in the villages to the west and South of Hama. From the early Mandate period, they also began to populate numerous villages of the Ghab Valley in the north-east of the region, where they were brought by Hama landlords to work the land recently bought from tribal shaykhs.[17] The important Alawi shrine of Zayn al-Abdin, situated on a summit north-east of Hama, also was a factor in attracting and keeping Alawis in the area.

French consular sources in the last quarter of the 19th century give the following figures for the distribution of the population of the Homs-Hama plain (including that of the urban centres) with regard to religious community:

Sunni Muslims	110,000
Alawis	70,000
Greek Orthodox	33,000
Syrian Orthodox	4,000
Greek Catholic	3,000
Maronite	3,000
Syrian Catholic	15,000

[18]

The large nomadic population was not included in this figure, but if they were taken into account, Gilbert concludes that the population of the central plains would be somewhere in the region of 300,000.[19]

The grain trade and the commercialization of agriculture

An understanding of the socio-economic history of the Homs-Hama plain in the late Ottoman period requires some consideration of the impact of the development of the grain trade and the commercialization of agriculture on agrarian society. Greater rural security and population growth contributed to the dramatic eastwards expansion of the cultivated area.[20] Most of the extension of frontier settlement which accompanied this process took place between 1850-1914; but the most important phase of colonialization of the Maʿmura and desert fringe proceeded

during the French mandate. During this 60-70 year period, the area under cultivation doubled, although only about one third of this was actually put to agricultural use.[21] Most of this land, reclaimed from deserted areas, was planted with grain.

A remarkable expansion of grain cultivation and export occurred in the 1830's in response to the needs of the 90,000 strong Egyptian occupation army. The high prices which then ruled in European markets greatly encouraged agricultural output. The withdrawal of the Egyptians in 1840 led to a general collapse in grain prices yet the area under cultivation continued to expand. In the late 1840's and 1850's the Homs-Hama region exported its grain in response to greater foreign demand: cultivation of wheat and cotton were extended in proportion to a rise in prices.[22]

The grain of the Homs-Hama plain was not as high yielding as that of the Hawran, but it was a hard, superior quality wheat. Enormous chalk caverns were used to store grain for many years if necessary and this was brought out onto the market when high prices so dictated. The great landowning families of Hama owed their wealth to a large extent to their involvement in the grain trade.[23]

The developing export trade in grain from the region was soon to attract the attention of European merchants and consuls in Syria, often giving rise to bitter condemnation of Ottoman policies. In 1845, Consul Wood reported that several thousand camels which were ordinarily used for the transport of grain from Homs and Hama were requisitioned for the service of the Mecca Caravan and that "...in consequence of the demand that was made upon the Hama district for wheat, the inhabitants showed a disposition to revolt, but their insubordination was suppressed by the prompt arrival of two battalions of the Nizam."[24]

The Governor of Damascus, actually forced the Governor of Hama to rescind the order at Wood's request. During this period there are frequent expressions of indignation by European consuls as a result of Ottoman restrictions on the purchase and export of grain. In this pursuit, the Governor of Hama was often cited as placing obstacles in the way and violating the commercial convention of 1838.[25]

However, it was when grain exports from Russia to Western Europe ceased on account of the Crimean war that Western demand for Syrian grain greatly intensified. Exports nearly doubled during the "grain boom" of the mid-1850's that the war brought about.[26] Still, at this time, commercial

transactions in the Homs-Hama region were not undertaken with Europe directly. This was done through agents in Tripoli, which absorbed most of the agricultural production of the area. The lack of good communication with the ports at this time acted - to a certain extent - as a check on grain exports, which were only possible when high prices ruled in the European markets.[27]

In the aftermath of the disastrous trade depression and the severe economic hardship caused by drought and famine in the 1870s, the grain of the Homs-Hama plain began to come onto the world market in greater quantities. However in the 1880s and 1890s, grain prices fell dramatically in Europe after improvements in shipping reduced the freight on grain exports, bringing American, Argentinian and Russian wheat within easy access of European markets.[28] Syrian grain found it very difficult to compete with these developments and protectionist tariff policies adopted in Europe only compounded the difficulties. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, about 18,000,000 kilogrammes of wheat from the region was available for export. Much of this went to the markets of North Lebanon and Tripoli, and European markets were largely confined to Italy, (which used the hard grain of the Homs-Hama region in the manufacture of pasta).[29]

Huge stockpiles of the grain of the region were reportedly gathering in the early 1890ś, largely due to the stringent quarantine measures imposed by the local authorities as a result of the huge cholera outbreaks of 1891 and 1893 which greatly impeded all grain exports.[30] According to European commercial reports from the area, the export of wheat from the region had been reduced to a trickle by the mid 1890s. As local consumption was unable to absorb the production, a large part of the crop remained with the landlord who, if the price did not rise, reportedly coerced the peasants into cultivating a more profitable crop.[31]

The impetus for the commercialization of agriculture came from the towns. Hama, in particular, was the connecting point for an extensive entrepreneurial system, at the centre of which was the urban-merchant who generally specialized in one product: grain, cotton, leather, sesame or olive oil. His agents would scour the countryside for the sought-after commodities.[32] Urban merchants often engaged in patron-client relations on a formal basis. Typically a grain-merchant/speculator loaned landlords or peasant-cultivators cash on the wheat crop; it was by such measures that in times of drought and crop failure they managed to secure large tracts of land and control valuable

resources in the plains.[33]

Homs and Hama were important centres of handicraft production with renowned textile industries in silk and cotton cloth. Its wares were sold throughout Syria, Anatolia and Egypt.[34] In the latter half of the 19th century, the raw material for this industry was furnished partly by the villages of the Homs-Hama plain and, increasingly by European imports. Throughout most of the 19th century, there was very little direct trade between Tripoli and Britain or France; the cotton twist imported annually for the looms of Homs and Hama was the exception.[35]

The fate of cotton cultivation in the Homs-Hama plain is a good example of how peasant production became increasingly tied to fluctuations in the world market. From 1862-64 the sudden rise in prices brought about by the American Civil War resulted in vast tracts of land being planted with cotton. In this period, cotton from the Homs-Hama plain and Aleppo ranked above all other items on the export lists (the quantity sent to Europe reaching 4,000,000 lbs in 1869).[36] However, by the 1870's and 1880's, the amounts leaving the plain was insignificant, and by 1890 the cotton raised in the region essentially only served the local weaving

industries of Homs and Hama (with only 140,000 lbs shipped off to France).[37]

Other cash crops were developed in the region and arrived in the ports of Latakia or Tripoli for export. Sesame was cultivated extensively in the plain and shipped to Marseille and Genoa in great quantities.[38] Olive oil was another major export of the region but in the 1870's its value rapidly decreased with the introduction of petroleum. (Before this period, olive oil was universally used for lighting and now was almost entirely superceded by the more luminous and less expensive product which found its way into every village.[39]) Large quantities of chick peas and maize were sent off to France and Great Britain.[40]

Until the last quarter of the 19th century, the lack of passable roads to communicate freely with Tripoli and Beirut presented a real obstacle to the development of the area as a major grain exporting region. During the winter months communication between Homs and Hama and the coastal towns was often disrupted. Merchants frequently speculated on this and "it was usual in winter to see grain sold at famine prices at Tripoli while abundance is lying in the interior."[41] That the roads linking Tripoli with the interior provinces of the plains were considered to be "mere

bridle paths" is borne out by the following description of Vice-Consul Jago after a visit to the region in 1875:

> "Roads do not exist and the means of communication are simply the tracks made in the course of ages by camels, mules and other beasts of burden. In winter, these paths are often obliterated, becoming morass or treacherous bog, thus requiring a long detour... Of bridges fit to be used, there now exist three, although the ruins of others are visible on the banks of every stream. Consequently, traffic is often cut off for weeks between one district and another during the rainy season." [42]

In this period, the camel was the principal means by which the transport of grain was accomplished. Reportedly, out of three bushels of wheat carried from a village of the plain to the sea, the camel consumed one and the camel driver claimed another as his pay, leaving one out of three available for the market.[43] Even if such information is exaggerated, it does provide some idea of the huge cost of bringing production to the market.

Only at the end of the 19th century did the region benefit from a good carriage road between Tripoli and its two principal towns. In 1879 work on the project began on the orders of Midhat Pasha and was completed by 1883. This undertaking was granted to a local company based in Tripoli, the Shirketi Wataniyya, which obtained the sole rights to organize transport on the road for a period of 50 years.[44]

Apart from the revenue derived from transport, the Company also had the right to levy tolls on animals using the road. A decision was taken by its directors - in agreement with the Ottoman authorities - that the inhabitants of the surrounding villages would be requisitioned to furnish without payment the necessary labour needed for its construction.[45] In 1896, a road between Latakia and Hama was also built by local initiative. During the same period, the towns of Homs and Hama were tied together by 50 kilometres of carriage road by the Shirketi-Wataniyya. By the turn of the century, Weakley reported that 13 waggons carrying two tons of merchandise each left Tripoli daily for Homs and the same number would return. The waggons took about three days to cover a distance of 97 kilometres.[46] The widening market for the agricultural and pastoral production of the plains the slowly improving system of transport gradually brought many small isolated districts of the region into a network of much wider exchange, promoting agricultural specialization in many villages and an increase in output.[47]

In 1902 Hama was connected to the new French-constructed railroad, the Damas-Hama et Prolongements (DHP). This extension gave a new stimulus to agricultural production of

central Syria, but its impact on the local economy was very uneven.[48] The rapid development of the port of Tripoli after the opening of the Homs-Tripoli Railroad line in 1911 gave rise to the possibility of that town emerging as a serious rival to Beirut in the export of grain from the Syrian interior. Yet Tripoli's capacity of absorption remained weak and the port was not fully operating until the 1920's.[49]

Despite these developments, the provincial road system remained very rudimentary. The railroads served to expand foreign trade, however, their presumed benefits to the people of the region, as asserted by European observers,[50] remains to be proven.

Land acquisition

With the increased interest in land and agriculture as a source of profit, notables and merchants from Homs and Hama began to invest in land, particularly after the 1870's, on a massive scale. As the Damascus region, capital accumulation through greater involvement in foreign trade was used by merchants and moneylenders to acquire rural property.

After 1870, the Ottoman state acquired immense domains in the Homs-Hama plain, particularly in the Ma^{c}mura. Here huge

tracts of land reverted to the government which often lent them out to settlers for a share of the yearly produce. These lands, when financial necessity pressed, were, according to one observer in 1880, "...put up to auction and bought by wealthy purchasers for a song. Presently many such sales are taking place at Hama,"[51]

It was the trade depression and unprecedented drought of the 1870s which must be considered a critical turning point in the land history of the Homs-Hama plain. These disasters served to turn much trading capital into land acquisition on a massive scale.[52] The huge decline in the trade of Syria was partly due to the war in France, but was more specifically the result of the dramatic failure of the harvests. By the mid-1870s the poverty and suffering of the rural population had clearly reached alarming proportions. The state of semi-starvation to which most villages in the plain were reduced was further aggravated by the export of the surplus crops of previous harvests to Egypt and Cyprus. The Ottoman edict prohibiting the export of grains came too late.[53]

Another factor contributing to the collapse of foreign trade and the deepening economic crisis was the great decrease in the amount of coinage in circulation. This appears to have

been largely brought about by the remittance of major portions of provincial revenues to Istanbul which were given in pledge for foreign loans. As a result, exporters lacked the ready cash to speculate with.[54] During the crisis, the credit obtainable by the peasants from the merchants of the towns had ceased, owing to the difficulties in securing repayment. A number of villages in the western portion of the plain lost their inhabitants, who chose to live in the Maᶜmura and less settled districts, leaving their debts behind them.[55]

Hama commercial and money-lending groups, whose fortunes were traditionally bound up with the fate of the handicraft industries, turned to investment in agricultural land after the trade depression of the 1870's. At the height of the crisis, land investments in the Homs-Hama plain reportedly returned 15-20% per year on capital even with the very rudimentary forms of cultivation then in practice; where irrigation made possible the cultivation of summer crops - as in the Orontes Valley - 25% or more was virtually guaranteed.[56] Moreover, debts carried exceedingly high interest rates in this region and were a huge source of added income to landlords. The value of the capital thus loaned to peasant-cultivators became an integral part of the

real value of property.[57] The proximity of the property in question to lands which the buyer already had in his possession also proved to be an essential consideration in the formation of estates. Thus it was in this period that the powerful landowning families of Hama, the ᶜAzms, Barazis, Kaylanis and Tayfurs, who formed the true aristocracy of the region, acquired vast expanses of the agricultural land of the area. These notables, who exerted an enormous influence over the administration of the town were for the most part unrestrained by the Ottoman authorities in creating veritable fiefdoms for themselves.[58]

Europeans also began to acquire extensive properties in the Homs-Hama plain - particularly after the Ottoman decree in 1867 permitting foreigners to purchase land.[59] By 1870, M. Bambino, the French Consul at Hama (described by Consul Robin as "un des principaux proprietaires non-rayas en Syrie") had allegedly acquired 20 villages, most of which were the subject of disputes between the local authorities and the new proprietor. The Ottomans continuously challenged Bambino's ownership of these villages, acquired at the height of the terrible drought at very low sums. Local peasants dispossessed by the sale of lands acquired by him were encouraged by the local authorities to revolt and

re-occupy them.[60]

The provincial authorities were, in fact, genuinely alarmed by the spectre of great expanses of valuable agricultural land falling into the hands of European proteges. Thus, in 1868, a French protege, M. Edde, (a drogman at the Hama consulate) acquired vast estates by public auction and was allegedly "..the object of harassment by the Wali, who has placed obstacles on the new acquisition of lands by Christians".[61] In the 1870's, a number of French merchants who formerly carried out trade in Damascus and Hama decided to invest their capital by purchasing a number of important properties around the latter town, buying half the agricultural lands and orchards of two large villages. They later appealed to the French consul for help, fearing an uprising against them.[62]

The sedentarization of nomadic society

For obvious reasons,the information obtained from 19th century sources on rural society overwhelmingly describes the life of the sedentary population. It is true that we do not possess any first hand documentation coming from the Badiya itself, thus our understanding of the history of the nomadic population must remain limited. As a rule, the Beduin are only portrayed very impressionistically in the historical literature and often in the context of posing a threat to the sedentary world.[63]

How to approach the question of sedentarization is equally problematic. Many late 19th and early 20th century writers on the subject have treated the reality of pastoralism as a transitional stage leading inevitably towards integrated sedentarization. Nomadic society was often described - particularly in the face of modern systems of transport - as if it was destined to disappear altogether.

Indeed the standard, tri-zone conception of socio-economic relations in the Levant (urban/agricultural/ pastoral-nomadic) "allies the shepherd culturally to the Beduin, whereas it seems more likely that there is a greater cultural distinction between camel nomads and shepherd pastoralists than between the latter and peasant

cultivators."[64] Alongside the entire fringe of the desert edge, one could say that rural society is not so much composed of settled peasants but of sedentary nomads. Thus the tri-zone idea with its arbitrary definition of socio-economic boundaries tends to obscure a dynamic system which links the peoples of the cities, the agrarian villages and nomadic pastoralism. Quite apart from provisions of food, the tribal population has been at all times dependent on people outside their community for virtually all specialized work. Chatty has interpreted the tribute/raid relationship as "a simple business proposition whereby the pastoralists received a needed product (grain) and the cultivator a scarce commodity (security)."[65] One must also take into account the all pervasive trading network wherein pastoral products - wool,leather, cheese, milk, - were exchanged for grain.

The Ottoman and French authorities, who struggled bitterly with the problem of subjecting the nomadic population of the region to their rule, always displayed a strong bias towards sedentarization as a means of achieving this aim. The cultivable lands put at the disposal of tribal nomads by both regimes were eagerly accepted by their shaykhs - but, for the most part, they settled on these lands

sedentary and semi-sedentary tribesmen,not nomads properly speaking.[66]

It is important to differentiate between the "Beduin" (a term generally reserved for the inhabitants of the Syrian desert), who comprised ~number of camel-rearing tribes which undertake long migrations and those sheep-rearing, semi-sedentary tribes whose migrations are relatively limited in scope. The latter group lived in tents along the Maᶜmura and engaged in cultivation as well as raised flocks of sheep.[67]

There are two kinds of migration: that of winter, al-tashariq ("to go to the east") and that of summer, al-tagharib ("to go west/i.e. to the Maᶜmura"). The latter movement began in April or May when the rains cease and the hamad (the steppe) which previously was filled with grass for pasturage, rapidly takes on the characteristics of a desert. When the area could no longer sustain the tribal population due to the intense heat, the nomads began to leave in small stages for the inhabited regions of the Maᶜmura and the Homs-Hama plain. Once in the Maᶜmura, the nomads usually rented their camels out to peasant-cultivators to transport crops in the harvest season. They would also sell their camels and buy provisions

of grain. The end of the harvest season enabled them to profit from new pasturage in the months of August, September and October. At this time, nomadic encampments could be found throughout the Homs-Hama plain.[68] When the rain season drew near - 'al-tasharig' resumed and the nomads again crossed the ill-defined boundary of the sedentary-agricultural world and returned to their traditional watering sources and places of pasturage.

The majority of tribes populating the Maᶜmura originate from Najd in Central Arabia. The first wave in the early 18th century involved the Hasana, Fidᶜan, Ruwala and their 'satellite' tribes such as the Wuld ᶜAli. These all formed part of the powerful camel-raising ᶜAnaza confederation. Under the pressure of over-population and inter-tribal wars, the successive arrivals of nomadic encampments spread themselves out over the Maᶜmura and the Homs-Hama plain, pushing back the previous occupants. The Hasana tribe took over the pasture and agricultural land in the Homs region; the Fidᶜan continued north to graze around Hama. These two tribes formed alliances with the Mawali who had long established their supremacy in the Maᶜmura, and were now pushed to the confines of the cultivated zone.[69]

The various tribes of the ᶜAnaza confederation had firmly established themselves on the edge of the Homs-Hama plain by the early 19th century. Their forays into the Maᶜmura and the sedentary zone were marked by considerable inter-tribal strife and violence which devastated agriculture throughout the entire region. The havoc which the attacks by nomadic tribes - particularly that of the Mawali - wrought upon the towns of Homs and Hama and the surrounding agricultural districts is well documented. In 1848, Richard Wood reported that:

> "Such was the devastation of the Beduin that the inhabitants of all the villages of Hamah (400 in number) ran away and it was only with very great difficulty that six or seven hundred families were persuaded to return from the Province of Aleppo."[70]

The frequent attacks by nomadic upon semi-nomadic tribesmen could be particularly disruptive to the region. According to Wood,

> "...the Anazee Beduin attacked and plundered the sedentary Arabs of the Beni-Khalid in the district of Hama. The property carried off by them consisted of 50,000 sheep, 1,000 camels and 69 mares... the loss is too considerable not to be felt by the whole district."[71]

Soon after the Egyptian withdrawal from Syria it was reported that:

> "Disputes have arisen between the Anazy that occupy the districts of Homs and Hama and the Hadidiin Arabs, who were driven off their pasture ground. About 200 women and children drowned in the Orontes in their flight ... yet the Anazy carried away the crops of 20 villages bringing about the hasty departure of General Kara Aly Pasha with 2000 men. The Anazy who were scarcely allowed to approach the Eastern confines of Syria during Egyptian rule have lately appeared in incredible numbers."[72]

During the same period, Consul Tippel - a close observer of the Homs-Hama area - noted that 40 tribes of beduin had come to establish themselves in the villages around Homs and Hama and that as a consequence the Pasha had sent a number of battalions to the area. He claimed that the Pashalik was actually threatened with famine because the peasants of the Homs-Hama plain and the Hawran - its two principal grainlands - had abandoned most of their land, not being defended by the government against the nomads who had sacked their villages.[73] Some of this activity, to be certain, was in response to repressive policies in dealing with the tribal population. Thus, for example, in retaliation for the killing of the shaykh of the Hasana by the Ottoman authorities, members of the tribe "...drove off the cattle of the villages from the north of Homs and south of Damascus."[74]

Until the 1870's, the panic that the ʿAnaza inspired in the

region was evidently such that even one hour's distance from the two main towns in an easterly direction was almost deserted and few inhabitants apparently ventured to travel beyond this. In this state of affairs, agriculture was localized and almost confined to the area surrounding Homs and Hama.[75]

The tide was turned irreversibly in the last quarter of the 19th century. After 1870, the balance of power between the central authority and the tribal population shifted decidedly in favour of the former. From this time onwards, sedentarization was to become a permanent feature which dominated much of the region's agrarian history. This was due to the combined effects of a number of developments. The expansion of the grain trade and agricultural production for a wider market, combined with the effects of the Tanzimat reforms resulted in an important increase in the area under cultivation and eastwards extension of the agricultural zone. Most significant all, however, was the establishment of much greater rural security in the countryside. This was achieved by both military measures and specific settlement policies pursued by the Ottoman authorities.[76]

It was in the Homs-Hama plain and the Maᶜmura that the

Ottomans could claim their greatest success in controlling Beduin pressure on the sedentary area. In the Tanzimat period, the authorities undertook a long-term strategy of greater use of armed force and the construction of a series of armed fortresses commanding important points at regular intervals on the steppe. After 1870, the pacification of the nomads was rapid and an active encouragement of sedentarization for the smaller, semi-nomadic tribes was pursued.[77]

The vast areas reverting to government control on the desert edge were declared crown estates on which the settler cultivators were granted attractive terms. By the 1880's, the Ottoman army had succeeded in establishing a cordon of small posts held by the regular soldiers on the Sultan's estates in the Ma^{c}mura. Under the protection of such posts, defeated and impoverished nomads often had little choice but to take up cultivation.[78] The authorities encouraged the tribesmen to turn to agriculture by distributing crown estate lands and granting military and tax exemptions on them for many years to come. The protection of the cultivators was confined to petty chieftains of the semi-sedentary tribes of the Ma^{c}mura, who had at their disposal hundreds of irregular cavalry.

Although these chieftains had themselves an uneasy relationship with the Ottoman authorities, they were often locked in bitter conflict with the Beduin and were therefore useful.[79]

This general process could be observed in the area as early as the 1860s, for, according to one European traveller:

> "The Shaikh of the Ferdoon tribe is in a state of transition between nomadism and location... The Shaikh has obtained exemptions from tithes for two years and is preparing lands for sowing. The Ferdoon are still under tents but they say they will build cottages next year if their agricultural experiment should succeed. If that is the case, this position will then form the second in a proposed cordon of settled tribes which will protect the plains behind them from the inroads of nomadic tribes and gradually extend in width to the desert."[80]

Segur was quick to grasp the strategic significance in such early attempts to settle nomads and semi-nomads. According to him :

> "On pourrait les considérer comme des colonies militaires, faisant fonction d'obstacle à la marche des nomades, s'il prenait un jour à ceux-ci l'idée d'envahir et piller."[81]

Once the Ottomans were sufficiently confident that sedentarization was taking hold and rural security reasonably established, they uprooted the posts forming the present cordon and moved them a bit further east into the

nomadic zone. In this way the whole process would repeat itself.

To maintain communication with the desert, the Ottomans posted muleteers in small units along the principal watering places. As a rule, these were installed every 30 kilometres and consisted of 20-30 soldiers each who travelled across the desert paths. The muleteers attempted to levy taxes on the nomadic tribes who by the 1870's were not in so strong a position to refuse. This was partly due to the fact that the Ottoman forces began to equip themselves with modern Winchester rifles in the 1860s, providing the agriculturalists with security while they increased in numbers. The Beduin, on the other hand, were only equipped with lances, swords and crude flint locks.[82]

At the same time a vigorous policy of winning over tribal shaykhs was pursued. To ensure the security of the trade routes, the Ottomans now began to grant the shaykhs the right to levy taxes on caravans (the baj), which played a very important role in ensuring beduin co-option and continued to do so in the French Mandate period.[83]

Furthermore, numerous political agreements and deals served to constrain the tribesmen from raids and induce them to settle the land. It was, for example, a cornerstone of

Ottoman policy to co-opt the shaykhs into the army: there is the case of Shaykh Jeddan ibn Muhid of the Fid^{c}an tribe, who was appointed major in the Ottoman forces. This shaykh consented to have his tribe pay the sheep tax, and as a reward, the members of his tribe received permission to trade with Homs and Hama. Furthermore, the shaykhs of the Mawali and Sba^{c}a were known to have accompanied the Ottomans pursuing their own tribesmen for a levy on camels and other taxes in return for favours such as grants of land.[84] Another standard way of obtaining loyalty from tribal shaykhs was to allow them access to a school established in Istanbul for the education of their sons. Here young ambitious men, from the most influential shaykhly families, trained to serve as officers in the Ottoman army. In many cases, they would return to the region and establish themselves as intermediaries between the world of Ottoman officialdom and that of their sedentarizing tribesmen, who often attempted to secure concessions from them.[85]

However, the military and coercive aspects to Ottoman policy were equally important. In the 1870s government forces - now well-armed - conducted repeated campaigns against the nomadic population. Tough, well-armed Circassian colonists were settled all along the desert

fringe. The army often resorted to a number of repressive measures such as the massive confiscation of tents and animals, and the filling up of wells.[86] Furthermore, a strategy of encouraging smaller tribes to risk raiding the more powerful ʿAnaza tribesmen was actively pursued. Ottoman Beduin policy did not always bring results. There is evidence that after a period of two or three years - as soon as the military power of the government weakened or the soldiers simply went away - the nomadic and even semi-nomadic tribes would retreat back into the Badiya. It must be said that attempts to settle the powerful camel-rearing nomadic tribes largely failed, but a great number of smaller, semi-nomadic tribes took to a sedentary life.[87]

The network of garrisons did prove effective in preventing Beduin incursions into the settled areas of the Homs-Hama plain. By the end of the 19th century, rural security was reasonably assured and in the early 1890ś it was possible for European travellers to venture to Palmyra from Hama without fear of Beduin attack for the first time.[88] At this time Bambino, grasping the historic significance of the recent changes, confirmed that over the past two decades the Homs-Hama plain slowly began to fill up with rebuilt and

newly constructed villages, as the population of the region increased. According to the vice-consul,

> "La province doit à la vigilance du gouvernement le calme dont elle jouit aujourd'hui. En effet, les bédouins du Dire, devenus cultivateurs, s'occupent en général de mettre leurs terrains en rapport... Les nomades Anazes sont rélégues au fond du désert. Ils paient leurs taxes sans régimber. Désormais, les nomades ne pouvaient opérer de razzias qu'entre-eux, et même bien au loin dans le grand désert." [89]

Thus there is evidence of a kind of dual process at work. On the one hand, the nomadic population was encouraged or coerced to settle in the Maᶜmura as a result of Ottoman policies or inter-tribal conflict. On the other hand, the settler-colonists, pushing eastward and given new impetus from the recently established rural security and widening market for their produce, became a powerful force of their own. It is very likely that they exerted a restraining influence on the tribes.[90]

The peasant-colonists of the Homs-Hama region - mostly Circassians and Alawis - fought off the Bedouin and were often in violent conflict with the semi-sedentary Haddidiyin and Mawali villagers situated just east of their settlements. Such incidents sometimes led to the eviction of the tribesmen, who were forced to revert to a nomadic

existence.[91] But this is not to say that a relationship of economic inderdependence did not develop. A major feature of the transformation of nomadic society was the hiring out of the semi-nomadic tribsemen on livestock sharika contracts. The Haddidiyin, in particular, increasingly assumed the role as the hired shepherd of villagers, landlords and wealthy Hama merchants. In establishing himself as the shepherd of the sedentary population, the Haddidiyin tribesman often retained his tent and cultural traditions. However, in other cases, an entire faction of the tribe committed itself to cultivation, adopting the appearance and customs of the fellah and gradually lost its social cohesion over a generation or two.[92]

The Beduin tribes clearly faced a genuine crisis with respect to the continuity of their mode of existence, as the Ottoman, then French military authorities penetrated deeper into areas they had controlled for generations. Tribes such as the Hasana and the Fidʿan had no alternative but to retreat into the Badiya or accommodate themselves to the relentless advance of the cultivated zone under the protection of soldiers. In the Maʿmura, sheep gradually began to replace camels as the herding animals of such tribes.[93]

By 1900, ancient sites of villages in the Homs-Hama plain were now re-occupied by semi-sedentary Mawali tribesmen. According to Gertrude Bell, "...all along the western edges of the desert the Beduin are beginning to cultivate the soil and establish themselves in some fixed spot near their crops."[94] The villages built out of half-tent, half-beehive huts became a familiar sight. Indeed, many of the newly "rebuilt" villages of the time were, in reality, half encampment.

One of the most striking social consequences of the sedentarization process and Ottoman tribal policy generally was the radically altered role of the shaykh in relation to his tribesmen. This largely revolved around his new identity as landlord, turning his tribesmen into tenant-cultivators on his lands in the Maᶜmura. The belief was widespread among contemporary observers that customary tribal rights and the old loyalties dramatically deteriorated as the tribal members gradually dispersed among other cultivators and were transformed into share-croppers on the shaykh's lands.[95] Traditionally, rights to use tribal land involved a complex web of mutual obligations to maintain tribal interests. The collective property rights of a tribe presupposed an elaborate military organization to

defend contested pasture land. But by the turn of the century, many shaykhs, assuming a landlord's role, often settled in Hama or Damascus where they increasingly engaged in politics.

It was Ottoman policy to cede the tribal shaykhs the income from Ma^{c}mura villages or grant them title deeds to lands. In the aftermath of the promulgation of the Ottoman Land Code, many areas of state domain became private property as shaykhs registered lands which were previously their tribal dirah. Many enriched themselves enormously as they acquired vast tracts of land and encouraged the cultivation of lucrative crops. In the 1870ś, an observer in Hama who witnessed the investiture by the Wali of 37 Beduin shaykhs confirmed that "...all these shaykhs are now chiefs of their own properly constituted villages."[96] There are countless examples of this process from this period onwards. The case of the Hasana (largely concentrated between Homs and the Biqa^{c}) who had their tribal land registered in the name of their shaykh in the Mandate period is characteristic: Shaykh Milhem distributed his land to those members of his tribe who declared some interest in agriculture, while roughly half the tribe continued to live as pastoralists.[97] By no means were all members of the tribe prepared to settle on

the shaykh's land in the vast majority of cases. He was usually obliged to hire peasants and other semi-sedentary labourers to undertake cultivation on his estate. It usually took one or two generations to settle a tribe.[98]

The tribal shaykh also became a landlord by way of his engagement in patron-client relations in what were often destitute villages in the Maᶜmura. Here he would foster protéges in the non-tribal villages, offering his protection in return for a specified share of the harvest. But in this respect he was in competition with the Hama landlords who also had strong interests in this region and had often succeeded in establishing a more powerful network of patron-client relations. Thus the recently sedentarized zone became an arena of conflict between tribal and urban notables.[99]

Of the 60-70 years during which most of the sedentary process took place, some tribes, most notably the Mawali, drifted into sedentarization keeping the option open to return to the steppe if the situation presented itself. Some factions of the Mawali tribe remained nomadic but the Haddidiyin was formed out of a number of loosely-knit groups which were more or less sedentary or semi-nomadic.[100] The two tribes present different aspects of the sedentarization

process.

Around 1860, the Ottoman authorities ceded to the Mawali amirs large tracts of land for cultivation in the kaza of Ma^{c}arrat al-Nu^{c}man, where they traditionally passed the summer. In return for this concession, they were obliged to maintain security on the trade route from Aleppo to Hama.[101] The region of Ma^{c}arrat al-Nu^{c}man (with Jatra as the capital of its amirs) was thus the central focus for Mawali sedentarization. Here the tribesmen were traditionally assured work in the transport of grains for the sedentary peasants with the help of their camels. However, the results of the Ottoman efforts were not particularly successful. the Mawali shaykhs lacked the expertise - and the resources - to transform their land into prosperous farms. Furthermore, the obligation to pay taxes forced them to resort to big landlords and money-lenders for survival. The over-reliance on the capital resources of Hama notables culminated in placing both the land and the livestock of the Mawalis firmly in their hands.[102] This type of scenario was largely responsible for the formidable accumulation of landed property by Nuras Pasha Hiraki in Ma^{c}arrat al-Nu^{c}man. According to one local observer, when a mortgage on a property attained one-fifth of its total

value, the notable would inevitably communicate to the shaykh that he had urgent demands for cash and must have the land or the amount due to him. Invariably the land would pass into the hands of the Hama notable. This process greatly accelerated during the First World War and for sometime after.[103] In this way many Mawali tribesmen were driven to destitution and had little choice but to become hired shepherds of Hama landlords and merchants. The villages the Mawali occupied were in fact regarded as among the poorest of the Syrian interior.[104] Yet they had among them a number of extremely wealthy shaykhs, such as Ahmad M^{c}Faddi and the Ghazzis, who gradually abandoned their following and set up an independent life in the city. From 1914 onwards, the effects of extreme poverty forced the Mawalis in the direction of permanent sedentarization and by the French period, their pastoral migrations were substantially reduced in scope. According to de Boucheman, the percentage of Mawali tents which still migrated to the steppe in the 1930's was about 50%.[105]

It would be difficult to date with any precision the first agricultural settlements of the Haddidiyin, but it is known that certain villages date back to the 1840's.[106] The focus for Haddidiyin settlement was the valley of Kharij and

al-Hamra. As a rule, Haddidiyin agricultural communities tended to expand to the north and north-east of the Maᶜmura as contacts with the Mawali , with whom they were once in a vassal-like relationship , diminished.

From the 1880's to the 1920's, the Haddidiyin underwent a dramatic shift towards sedentarization. By the Mandate period, some clans were wholly sedentary, but the majority veered between pastoralism and settled cultivation, or combined the two. Like the Mawali, they avoided solidly constructed homes which would tie them down to a purely agricultural life; but they also avoided migrations of any extent. The case of the Haddidiyin clearly illustrates the precariousness of the position of sheep-rearing semi-nomads who had no rights to pasturage except upon payment of tribute to the great nomadic tribes and who must keep on equally good terms with the merchants of Hama and government authorities in order to have access to the urban markets.[107]

The French authorities were quick to exploit the Haddidiyins' reputation for loyalty to the regime and promoted their leader, Shaykh Nawaf. In the 1920's, when the French were pre-occupied with the fear that Arab nationalism was winning over the tribal population, Shaykh Nawaf remained loyal to the administration. As a result of

practising what French officials referred to as "the politics of sedentarization" he was able to secure many concessions for himself and his tribe. Great numbers of Haddidiyin sedentarized on his lands and with his resources in this period the shaykh was able to rent state lands on advantageous terms and managed to successfully farm them, making enormous profits from the sale of their crops. In the 1920s he bought much of this land including some of the most important villages in the Maᶜmura. Yet, although he managed in this way to maintain a certain cohesion among his tribal subjects, in the last analysis he exercised the only influence that was possible with his agricultural workers, that of a money-lending landlord.[108]

The Haddidiyin factions which gravitated around Shaykh Nawaf undertook the original work of colonization in the Kharij region. His tribesmen set to work on the restoration of the Roman canals network and planted large tracts of land with cotton which gave good results. At the time when the livestock industry, through the vehicle of "l'Union Ovine Coloniale", attempted to construct a number of sheep farms in Kharij, Nawaf quickly seized upon the possibility of reaping enormous profits from the venture. To this end, he made embryonic villages where he settled his clans.

Moreover, he was known to lend cash with interest to various clan leaders with the aim of eventually acquiring their lands in ways identical to the Hama landlords. Unlike the experience of the Mawali *amirs*, the *shaykh* of this tribe actually succeeded in replacing the Hama notables, becoming the money-lender and landlord of his own subjects.[109]

Thus, a multitude of diverse pressures and historical forces at work in the region culminated in the sedentarization process. The principal cause generally cited is that of the presence of a strong central government which was capable of providing security in the plain and in the zones of pastoral nomadism. Traditionally, an important source of income for the tribes was derived from raids. By the turn of the century, this had ceased to be the case. Furthermore, nomads were forced at certain critical periods to retreat to the cultivated zones under government control when it was a question of the survival of their flocks. At these times they were vulnerable and were forced to accept the conditions imposed upon them. Years of drought (such as the 1870's, 1925-26 and 1931-32) decimated flocks and this proved to be a very decisive factor. The poorest members of nomadic society would invariably find themselves in the "policed" zone without the means or transport or livestock

for pastoral migrations. Thus they had little choice but to remain permanently in the Ma^{c}mura and rent themselves out as metayers to landlords on terrain where they had traditionally passed their summer.[110]

Migration and the case of the Ghab.

The pacification and sedentarization of the tribal population was a central, but by no means the only force behind the great expansion of the settled and agricultural zone of the Homs-Hama plain. As we have acknowledged, there were other participants in the widening arena of settlement: Alawis and Isma^{c}ilis descending from their impoverished mountain villages and Circassian refugees from Central Asia who settled principally in the Salamiya area. Previously inaccessible areas, such as the Ghab, were opened up for colonization by the Hama landlords, where 'mixed' villages of Mawali and Haddidiyin semi-sedentary tribesmen, local Christians, Sunni peasants from the plain and Alawis from the adjacent mountains developed.

The Alawi peasants were the most important of the various groups who colonized the plain. A number of factors encouraged Alawis to migrate from their mountain villages to undertake cultivation on the vast estates of the Hama landlords. According to Lewis, "... it is clear that the

new security, government encouragement, relative over-population in the West and rising prices were chiefly responsible for the movement".[111]

The Alawis occupy the mountains to the west of Hama and numerous villages in the plain, principally to the West of the Orontes. In the last quarter of the 19th century,their population was estimated at between 70-80,000.[112] A number of theories have been put forward as to the history of their settlement on the mountain and the origin of their religion [113] but very little hard evidence has emerged. Historically, the valleys on the Mediterranean side of the mountain provided a sufficient livelihood for its inhabitants while the eastern slopes and craggy peaks which dominate the Orontes region harboured villages and hamlets of extreme poverty - a reality never overlooked by European travellers in the region. While the Alawis inhabiting the southern part of the mountain were generally considered to be "subject citizens of the Ottoman empire", in so far as they paid taxes and were conscripted into the army, those concentrated in the north-east of the mountain were consistently portrayed as open rebels and the perpetrators of spectacular acts of plunder. These peasants viewed the rich plains from their mountain tops and

routinely carried out devastating raids in the Ghab and the Homs-Hama plain to sustain themselves at critical times.[114]

Very little was done to stop them. In the first half of the 19th century, the Ottomans - depleted of troops - were powerless to conquer the mountain and put an end to the Alawi incursions into the plain.[115] Local chronicles and reports of foreign travellers abound with tales of their punitive expeditions, massacres, thefts of entire harvests and razing of villages. How much is accurately described it is impossible to say. Vice-consul Jago's account is typical in expressing European despair at the Ottomans' lack of 'muscle' in the area:

> "The power of the Porte near this part of the country has been at all times nominal and despite frequent expeditions in former years to assert the Sultan's authority, little was ever done of permanent character. The Ansariehs contrive to preserve a quasi-independent state and to render ineffective all attempts of the Ottoman authorities to make them amenable to the laws and regulations in the question of payment of taxes and conscription.... The villages of the plains were constantly attacked and plundered by them while brigandage and assassination became common throughout the area."[116]

By mid-century much land in the western districts of the plain was reportedly put out of cultivation by repeated attacks by Alawis. This was particularly the case in a

number of Christian villages lying close to the mountain, the inhabitants of which emigrated en masse to less exposed villages.[117]

In the late 1850's, after the death of the Alawi governor, Isma'il Khayr Bey, the scale and frequency of the raiding diminished. The Ottomans undertook the first substantial measures to subordinate the population of the mountain. The strategy consisted in exploiting inner rivalries and co-opting certain mountain chieftains and, most importantly, the launching of military campaigns.[118] But the Ottoman expedition to the Jabal in 1870 proved to be a crucial turning point: as a number of columns of regular troops encircled the mountain, Alawi resistance collapsed. The authorities secured a number of rebel chieftains as a dozen of their mountain strongholds fell and were razed to the ground. As a result of various repressive measures, the villages on the mountain took no time in offering their submission to the terms imposed upon them. Vast quantities of arms were surrendered and men were conscripted into the army.[119] From this time, Alawi raids abated or were much less damaging than they had been previously.

In 1870, a road from Hama to Latakia was constructed which passed through the heart of Alawite territory. As

acknowledged by the British Vice-Consul at Latakia, "The Alawis know they cannot revolt as before, for now they can easily be pursued by the Turkish authorities".[120] The recent developments proved to be a crucial turning point and emigration to the plain began in earnest.

Under the reign of ᶜAbdul-Hamid, (1876-1908) the tendency for the Alawis to descend from their impoverished mountains and take up residence in the plain greatly accelerated. The progression of Alawis towards the east was realized in a number of stages. In some phases they set to work peaceably establishing villages on long-abandoned land. At other times, they evicted the local peasantry, pushing them out further into better protected sites on the plain.[121]

In the 1870's, a wave of Circassian immigration to Syria was being directed by the provincial authorities to various localities along the eastern frontier where non-cultivated steppeland was granted to them. Circassians, described as the "most aggressive group of colonists,"[122] were Muslims who had fled their homeland in the Caucasus during the Russo-Turkish wars and the subsequent Russian occupation. In this period they built villages all along the desert edge from the Aleppo plain to Amman. Their activities conformed perfectly with Ottoman policies: they occupied cultivable

land and served as a defence against the Beduin. By the late 1870's, two major Circassian colonies were well established in Syria - one near Homs and the other at Kunaytra, each comprising about 3-4,000 people.[123] According to the observations of Jago,

> "...the colony near Homs is located among the sedentary arabs to the east of the town, with which it soon came in contact by reason of its turbulent conduct... they are both detested and feared by the natives."[124]

The new settlers were notorious for their toughness and ruthlessness in their dealings with the local population. In this respect, it is worth noting that the settlement of the Circassians took place within the context of the severe economic hardships of the 1870s.

Many contemporary observers admired the initiative and industry evidenced in the creation of these settlements, such as Misharfiyya near Homs. This area was colonized by Circassians due to the joint efforts of the landlords, the Tabet family of Beirut.[125] Here cotton cultivation was undertaken on a large scale after the First World War.

Throughout the 1880's more Circassians poured in; there appeared to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the authorities to inundate the Homs-Hama plain with the

refugees. As put by one observer, "In the hope that by the introduction of new races it will be able to keep down the native ones."[126] This is precisely what happened. The Circassian colonists not only rebuilt abandoned or ruined villages on land which the government had assigned them; in some instances they took possession of a number of Alawi villages both on the mountain and the plain after ousting the inhabitants.[127] The same situation applied to the tribal population. In 1900, Gertrude Bell observed that "...the summer quarters of the tribes are gradually being filled up with fellahin and still worse, their summer watering places are now occupied by Circassian colonists settled by the sultan."[128] By this time, there were some 30,000 Circassians in the Syrian interior, mostly in the Homs-Hama plain and the Maᶜmura.[129]

An important arena of migration into which the diverse population of the region was drawn was the Valley of the Ghab - a long depression through which the Orontes travels in the northern part of the Hama plateau. The Ghab, at the foot of the Jabal, was by-passed by the trade routes of the Syrian interior and was thus cut off from major centres of population and commerce. The region was to a great extent covered with swamp and its inhabitants suffered from a

malaria-ridden environment. Ghab villagers were consistently described as living in a state of destitution very much more acute than their neighbours in the Alawi mountains and the districts immediately surrounding Homs and Hama. Travelling through the region in 1875, Jago noted that "...the physical condition of its few dwellers is much lower than anything I had so far seen on my journey through Syria"[130] The valley's inhabitants chiefly sustained themselves by fishing and raising buffaloes; cultivation was largely limited to vegetable gardening but grain cultivation took place on the slopes leading to Hama.[131]

For centuries, a mix of Sunni, Alawi and Christian peasants resided in the region. But, in the first half of the 19th century, most of the Christian population, which had been established in the Ghab since Byzantine times, fled the central area due to a succession of damaging Alawi raids. Yet, the eastern confines of the plateau provided sanctuary for two large Greek Orthodox villages, Skalbiyya and Mahada, the populations of which had earlier fought off the Alawis and fled.[132] The indigenous Sunni community was largely concentrated in towns such as Qala^{c}t al-Midiq and Sijar. The central marshland steadily received streams of uprooted or defeated semi-nomads. According to Thoumin, the only

explanation for their presence in the Ghab is that they were forceably deported from their lands on the banks of the Euphrates on the orders of the Ottomans.[133] Indeed, the mode of land occupancy in the heart of the Ghab would appear to confirm this legacy of forced transfer: not one Mawali tribesman was known to possess a single plot of land.

In the latter part of the 19th century, the Ghab offered refuge for Alawi peasants seeking a level of subsistence denied to them in their mountains. They gradually descended from their villages and even migrated in small numbers from the Hama plain to fish, raise water buffaloes and to work the lands which proved capable of cereal cultivation. The Ghab settlements established in the 1880's and 1890's were populated largely by Alawis and uprooted Mawalis working on the estates of Hama landlords on the basis of share-cropping arrangements.[134]

At all times, the crucial problem for the Hama landlords was to find the manpower to work all the cultivable land acquired by them. Villagers often refused to work in many areas of the Ghab - as much out of fear of Mawali raids as of malaria. The constant search for Bedouin or semi-nomadic labour by the Hama landlords gave rise to a unique relationship between the latter and the tribal shaykhs (in

this case, the Mawali (_umirs), who provided them with workers for their fields. By coercive means - or in some cases voluntarily - the poorest people in the tribe became agricultural labourers. The tribal _shaykhs agreed to furnish a specific number of workers and had the decisive say over where and in which village a Mawali family should settle. The landlord would characteristically reward the _shaykh for arranging the move by payments of gold and grain.[135]

In the Ghab, the _shaykh long remained the undisputed master of the tribal population settled on the Hama notable's land; he played a huge role in dictating which men (and their families) should cease to be nomads and authorized others already settled on estates to return to the steppe. In each village the _shaykh kept an agent who upheld his authority in levying a tax on his tribesmen on the estates.[136]

After the turn of the century, Hama notables began buying up state land in the area; this was hired out to the Mawali tribesmen who were usually made to construct the dwellings and clear the fields. Apparently, the "true" peasants from the long-established Christian and Sunni communities would have nothing to do with such work and rarely settled on these new estates. Only a few years later, when the

exacting labour of the Mawali was finished and the tribesmen "sent back" to their encampments, did Alawi peasants from the mountain or the Orontes Valley settle there as metayers.[137] These peasants arrived in the Ghab and in the rest of the Homs-Hama plain with farming skills that the tribal population could never attempt to compete with. This probably accounts for the much greater state of subjection in which the Mawalis found themselves on the estates.

The Alawis, who in the course of 60 to 70 years, gradually replaced the original Christian and Sunni population of much of the Ghab, acquired a certain level of subsistence - if not prosperity - that they could not have achieved in their impoverished hamlets on the mountain. However, it is a matter of speculation if this marginal improvement economically justified the great hardships they undoubtedly endured in abandoning their villages. In the Ghab, Alawi peasants had to face the ravages of malaria and the debilitating heat. Their housing was apparently of a much inferior, flimsier quality than that to which they were accustomed on the mountain.[138] Nevertheless, most of the migrants, from the poorest sections of Alawi society, apparently found life in the Ghab with its severe disadvantages preferable to the state of semi-starvation

they frequently knew on the eastern slopes of the mountain. The marshland of the Ghab, where fishing, hunting and buffalo raising were easily adopted for a livelihood, adequately protected them from famine. We may conclude that simply the need for food was sufficient motivation for the Alawi peasants to descend onto the Ghab.

The formation of the great estates.

The prevailing reality of agrarian life in the Homs-Hama plain was the overwhelming predominance of huge estates in the region. Their expansion and proliferation was the expression of a political order which reflected the socio-economic primacy of the city and the centrality of landed wealth.

As we have observed, the Ottoman Land Code was advantageous for urban notables and tribal shaykhs. The relentless process of land accumulation in the hands of a small number of notables, giving rise to enormous estates, was much more marked in the Homs-Hama plain than elsewhere in the Syrian interior. "Few, if any, fellahin own land of their own - they work for hire on the estates of the rich", observed by Gertrude Bell on her tour through the region.[139] The lack of available figures for small peasant properties in the

French official records only serves to underline the near-total disappearance of peasant holdings in favour of massive estates by the 1920's and 1930's.

In the appropriation of the countryside by Hama notables, money-lending and the related phenomenon of patron-client relations proved decisive.[140] The offer by a landlord or creditor to absolve the peasant from his debts if he ceded part of his holding was a standard way by which lands were accumulated by urban notables and merchants. However, the new landlord virtually never evicted the peasant. He continued to work the same lands, relieved of the burden of debt. But from a small proprietor, he had become a metayer.

The lion's share of the land in the plain was owned by a finite number of Hama notables - principally the ᶜAzm, Barazi, Kaylani, Tayfur and Hariri families. Most of the enormous estates owned by these families were held in joint-ownership and, during our period, very little initiative was taken to divide up these holdings. Moreover, there were few sales from one notable family to another.[141] The domination of a particular family entrenched in a specific locality reached a magnitude unknown elsewhere in Syria. It is thus possible to speak of the "feudalization"

of the region.[142]

The emergence of vast estates is of relatively recent date. At the time of the enactment of the Ottoman Land Code, villages in the Homs-Hama plain belonged, for the most part, to its peasant-cultivators. The properties of the great notable families consisted chiefly in irrigated farms concentrated around and in the two towns.[143] Estate formation and its socio-economic consequences were the outcome of new forces which emerged with the promulgation of the Land Code and the Ottoman reforms.

At the time of the general census of property, it was compulsory for tribal chiefs, notables and mukhtars of musha[c] villages to register in their own names properties which were the collective property of the village. The peasant-cultivators apparently were led to believe that they were consolidating their rights and placed their trust in the hands of their mukhtar or shaykh, as representative of their community. Moreover, to many tenants, the protection of a powerful effendi or city notable was indispensable - they relied on their help not only in defence against the claims of ruthless land officials, but also against neighbouring landlords, money-lenders and nomadic incursions. In exchange for such services, the patrons at first often

agreed to yearly payments in kind, which represented an agreed percentage of the produce, but in the end generally claimed private property over village land.[144]

Equally important in the estate-forming process were the villages bought from nomadic or semi- nomadic tribes and recently put to cultivation, such as the Mawali villages in the Ma^{c}mura. The ceding of these villages by the tribal shaykhs to Hama notables often had a destructive effect on the tribesmen in depriving them of their traditional pasturage which often forced them to drive their flocks much further into the cultivated zone. This led to violent conflict in periods of drought.[145]

According to one close observer of the estate system in the Hama district in the Mandate period, the process of encroachment characteristically took place in two distinct stages: the notable would introduce himself in the village on behalf of peasants soliciting his intervention in a violent dispute among themselves. After a period of time, he would often claim a piece of land as a price of his arbitration. This was particularly the case in villages which were eventually bought up bit by bit by the Barazis, after numerous conflicts between peasants were arbitrated by the head of this family. There are countless instances of

the same outcome when the conflict was with a notable. In the village of Jadiya, for example, the peasants ceded one third of their property to a 'minor' notable of Hama, who had defended them against the appropriation of the village by the ᶜAzms. By 1900, there was mass emigration by its dispossessed peasant-proprietors, reducing a previously large village of over 2,000 people to 40 peasant families. The inhabitants of a neighbouring village, Taksis, sold their land to Hama notables during the First World War to procure seed and the necessary advances for carrying out religious ceremonies. In the end, they only retained the property immediately surrounding their homes.[146]

The end result, whatever path led to the appropriation of village lands by notables, was the formation of huge estates with domains of several hundred and even thousands of hectares comprising whole villages.[147] In one of the first reports on land tenure produced by the French administration in 1922, it was claimed that most of the land of the Homs-Hama plain was divided into domains which extended over several thousand and even tens of thousands of hectares.[148] However, figures given in the cadastral survey include both cultivated and uncultivated land and this ambiguity diminishes its value as a guide to the distribution of

property.

It is clear that the direct and systematic purchase of lands with the aim of forming large estates was, in fact, quite rare. This only occurred in times of exceptional crisis, such as during World War I - particularly in the famine conditions of 1917-1918. At this time, merchants and speculators from Homs and Beirut who, as a result of famine speculation, had an enormous amount of ready cash, acquired villages and parts of villages in the plain at dramatically lowered prices from destitute peasants. At this time, the Kaylani, Barazi and Barudi families acquired their vast estates in the south and east of the Sanjak of Hama.[149]

There are few examples of any of the big urban landlords managing the farms on their estates themselves (although there are a number of cases where this did happen in the immediate vicinity of Homs). The vast majority of landlords delegated management of agriculture and labour to a wakil. They almost invariably lived in Homs or Hama and rarely visited their villages, except to collect their revenues a few days each year.[150] Agrarian advisors to the Mandatory regime were astonished to hear the big landlords of Homs responding in terms of the number of hours required to

travel across their land when questioned as to the extent of their estates.[151] But most importantly, it was the number of villages supplying them with scarce labour, rather than the extent of their domains, which appeared to concern them.

Before the French period, there was very little wage-labour in existence; a form of salaried proletariat emerged in the 1920's and 1930's, but its development was limited. Moreover, rental of farmland was out of the question for peasants because of the scarcity of liquid capital in the countryside.[152] The universal form of land exploitation was metayage.

The metayage system, particularly in the form it assumed on the estates of the Homs-Hama plain, is regarded as a notoriously inequitous form of agrarian relations: the very essence of a relationship of domination and subjugation. This institution undoubtedly resulted in the progressive rigidifying of the human relationship between landlord and peasant. As the landlord was entitled to a large percentage of the crop, he or his agent had the power to supervise and control all aspects of cultivation to the minutest degree.[153]

The institution of crop-sharing compacts, practised in

certain contexts for countless generations, was widespread by the late 19th century. According to one observer of the estate system in the 1880's, "...in the Homs-Hama plain, the fellahin prefer the share system as by it no capital is required ... The huge estates are always worked on the share or profit system, the landlord giving use of the land, furnishing the seed, oxen, the expenses of reaping as well as the tithes tax, taking for his share of the profit 3/4 of the produce."[154]

Although the arrangement briefly described above appears to have been the general rule, the landlord's share of the harvest crops varied in relation to his contribution to production: i.e. whether in addition to land, he supplied water and the needed draught animals, implements and seeds. The fellah's share in this region appears to have been invariably $^{1}/_{4}$ when the landlord provided all these factors of production. The rate was partly a function of climatic conditions because it had to take into account the vital minimum that must remain with the cultivator. But it is clear from the scanty first-hand evidence available that only the barest subsistence was left for the tenant after payment of the rent. Even after an excellent harvest, the landlords called in their loans and deprived the tenants of

any possible capital accumulation.[155]

The estate was divided up into minute units of cultivation, the extent and composition of which were always based on the farming capacities of a peasant household. Any given unit was restricted to the amount of land the average family could realistically exploit with a team of plough animals and a swing plough. In the Homs-Hama area this was generally 30 hectares, 40-50 hectares in the Ma^{c}mura.[156] According to Weulersse, it was always calculated to the absolute limit of what was considered the vital minimum for the peasant family.

This society of cultivating metayers working on minute plots of land formed the basis of the agricultural system. It was by their numbers that one could evaluate the magnitude of the estate. Locals spoke in terms of a village of twenty, thirty or forty metayers. Indeed, the price of an estate - both in late Ottoman times and during the Mandate period - was often estimated not in terms of the intrinsic quality of the land but according to the number of metayers.[157] In the Ghuta, metayers clearly possessed a greater degree of independence and mobility, in so far as after the harvest they were able to change estates. It is some measure of the serf-like subjugation of the peasants of the Homs-Hama plain

that the metayer formed an integral part of the property of the estate. Even death did not terminate or modify the terms of the formal association with the landlord, which was imposed upon the metayer's heirs.[158]

Contracts of metayage - always verbal agreements in the grainlands of the plain - were formally renewable each year. But it was overwhelmingly the case that continuity of tenure over many generations was well established. On the great estates, . . many metayers cultivated the same lands as their parents and grandparents and were often descendants of the original peasant-proprietors.[159]

The conditions of the local form of metayage known as the Hamawiyya contract varied in a number of details but had the same principles: the landlord provided the ground, the metayer the labour. If the landlord also provided seed, livestock and implements, the share of the fellah was regularly set at a quarter of the harvest crop. (Thus the name muraba given to this form - literally "he who receives 1/4"). The tithe was automatically paid out upon the threshing floor. The peasant was always paid in kind, received clothing and was invariably housed in lodgings belonging to the landlord.[160] The landlord's share of the crops was also to some degree determined by the density of

the population of the locality, being highest immediately surrounding the towns and lowest in the Ma^{c}mura. In the immediate vicinity of Hama it appears that the significant increase in the population of an already relatively densely populated area resulted in reducing the cultivator's income.[161] It is, however, worth noting the important exception of the Munassafat contract, practised in the irrigated gardens around Homs, wherein the landlord and the cultivator shared the expenses equally and the harvest divided between them.[162]

The result was that the metayer, deeply in debt, was thus at the complete mercy of his lord and earmarked for abuses and exactions of all kinds.

Payment exclusively in kind naturally dictated that the metayer remain on the estate at least until the end of the harvest. Moreover, if the fellah ran away, he was almost always brought back to the landlord's estate. This was also due to the fact that debts in this region carried enormous rates of interest. De Berthelot, reporting on the area in the 1930's, maintained that it was often as high as 60% and never below 25%.[163] The cycle of indebtedness had the function of perpetuating and lending stability to the metayage system. If, for example, a peasant wished to go

elsewhere, he was forced to find another landlord who, before accepting him onto his estate, consented to negotiate the payment of his debt and thus became his creditor.[164]

Musha[c]

The hierarchical system of landholding through landlord/tenant contracts tightly controlled the entire system of surplus production in the village. Yet it had not managed to obliterate the prevalent form of peasant land management or musha[c], which "...represented a close adjustment of land use by a small peasant community to the local variation of soils and their productivity in a precarious climate for agriculture."[165] The musha[c] system was an agrarian arrangement whereby the holders of the land did not have any fixed property; land was held by a corporate body - usually a village-and was temporarily divided among its individual members. The individual peasant did not occupy the same plot permanently, rather this was redistributed between two to three-year intervals. Each peasant possessed in the collective domain a kind of social share which gave him access to a certain cultivable area in each section of land of a similar agricultural quality. The area was proportional to the number of men in

the peasant household.[166]

This is not to say that there was no social and economic differentiation among peasants of any given village (although this was much less striking in the Homs-Hama region than in the Ghuta), but simply that the property of each family did not consist of a specific fragment of land. It remained temporary, as one proceeded every few years to a new redistribution of land when the shares of all members of the community were taken into account. Such a system had for its aim the perpetuation of the collective rights of the community, yet musha[c] was not resistant to the domination of the huge estates.

As we have seen, it was not the individual, but the collectivity - the entire village community - which solicited the intervention of the notable. Protection against the taxman, the defence of the village community against the encroachment of a powerful neighbour or nomads imposing the khuwa or the mediation of conflicts which arose between peasant families in the periodic reallocation of plots, were services inevitably paid by the cessation of communally-held land.

A major objective of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 was the

break up of collective forms of landholding and redistribution and to establish a system of private property rights based upon the registration of title. In reality, peasant resistance and the strength of communal ties went some way in thwarting the Land Code's aims; musha[c] persisted well into the Mandate period.[167]

During the general Ottoman census of properties in 1880, musha[c] holdings were stabilized in principle; land was legally partitioned between families in proportion to the number of male members of the household. Each family received a nominal share without a specific parcel. Yet the custom of periodic reallocation every 2 - 3 years was not abandoned. Throughout the villages of the plain, land continued to be divided each year among the male members of the peasant families, with a new child automatically acquiring a right to his share in the land. This was the form of musha[c] prevalent in the Homs-Hama plain up to the end of the Mandate period. Essentially, it functioned in the same way with very little variation in a village of metayers as in those increasingly rare villages of peasant proprietors.[168]

In a characteristic musha[c] village, each male member of a peasant family possessed a certain number of faddans. This

represented not a unit of area, but the amount of land which could be brought under cultivation by a team of plough animals. The totality of village lands were divided in as many parts as faddans. As far as possible, each claimant received a part proportional to the number of faddans in his possession in each one of the quarters of unequal agricultural value (for example, he would typically receive a separate plot for vines, wheat, barley and fallow). It was crucial that the parts be composed of the same proportion of good and bad agricultural land. It is important to bear in mind that each member of the village owned a share of the total only in the sense of a **claim** to a fraction of the entire area, not to a specific piece of land. This was held in scattered strips throughout the village, which was regularly interchanged with others of an identical extent and area. There is very little evidence available concerning how crucial changes in the system were introduced; but it is clear that in many villages, well before the end of the Ottoman period, these faddans had become veritable personal property, and as such could be freely sold or rented.[169]

There were in fact two major forms of musha^{c} which were observed in the region upon the collapse of Ottoman rule,

the first being the type broadly described above with no fixed parcels and was widespread on all the huge estates of the Hama notables. The second form with fixed and permanent parcels (what the French called "musha^{c} stabilisé") was largely restricted to the Valley of the Orontes on irrigated (or irrigable) land. Here one can be reasonably certain that the structure of musha^{c} as it was found at the onset of French rule - regardless of type - was only of very recent date.

According to Naaman's research, the musha^{c} system was only radically transformed (or disappeared altogether) on the irrigated lands of the Orontes Valley. The permanent partition of lands and the delimitation and stabilization of parcels went furthest in this area, especially around Homs. Here irrigated parcels were distributed to peasants proportional to their nominal shares in the musha^{c} land of the village; the villages in the valley reserved most of their land for the dry-farming of grains and only a small percentage of village property was irrigated. However, the partition of irrigated lands subsequently had an enormous influence on the functioning of the 'normal' musha^{c} system, based on dry-farming. And, as Naaman has shown, these villages were the first in the Homs-Hama region during the

Mandate period to stabilize the part of each peasant-holder in each of the major sections of musha[c] land and the first to achieve permanent partition and the introduction of a private property regime on the non-irrigated parcels.[170]

Throughout the plain, the first breach in the integrity of the communal system occurred whenever the most powerful members of the community managed to abolish the purely temporary character of the holdings. If the village decided to plant fruit trees or embark upon any long term investment, the decision would be taken to "stabilise" possession in one quarter. In this case the communal plots became individualised and gradually lost all connection with the others. This partial stabilisation inevitably preceded a general one, and almost always began with the lands immediately surrounding the village. Only in extremely rare cases was an entire village stabilized at once. In some village communities, the time involved in the passage from collective ownership to individual property was only a question of a year or two, for others the process continued over a generation.[171]

Such villages were divided into different zones, inside each of which a different mode of tenure prevailed. A 'stabilized' quarter did not differ physically from one

comprised of the traditional rotating plots; both were subdivided into long narrow strips and in both the number of strips differed from one peasant to the next.[172] The difference was only in the period of tenure, which was indefinite for the stabilized plots. Stabilization was generally not a process internal to the community and was often the result of intervention from the powerful figures beyond the confines and control of the village. As observed by Klat, "...whereas peasants find it relatively easy to accept the permanent partition of a section or two, it is almost impossible for them, with the usual village feuds and sways of influence to agree among themselves on the stabilization of the whole village."[173] Only when an urban notable who had acquired property rights over the village lands insisted on some kind of permanent settlement, was an agreement reached, often by means of considerable coercive measures.[174]

It must be said that the musha[c] system, harshly criticised by contemporary observers, did possess a number of valuable aspects, most notably the pooling of resources in times of scarcity and hardship. There were, of course, a number of serious disadvantages, the one most frequently cited by Mandate advisors being that due to periodic redistribution

of plots, the cultivator is automatically discouraged from undertaking any long term improvements, such as terracing against erosion. The system could only continue as long as extensive grain cultivation prevailed.[175] Warriner and Klat have partly attributed the low yields and general neglect of agriculture in the Homs-Hama plain to the fact that the peasant did not receive a piece of land which he could pass on to his heirs, but only a right over a share of the estate.[176] Moreover, the preoccupation with equalizing in productive value and area the numerous different parts, led to an extraordinary fragmentation of strips in bizarre dimensions. Some strips were, according to de Berthelot, several kilometres long and a metre wide. The same cultivator was forced to labour in places very remote from one another resulting in considerable time losses.[177]

It is interesting to note that virtually all the Christian villages of the Homs region - generally very large communities - have largely remained the property of its peasant-proprietors. In the instances where this did not happen, it was a question of parts of villages only being ceded to a notable.[178]

The enormous estates of thousands of hectares were entirely in the hands of notables from Hama. On the other hand, the

'medium' properties (under one hundred hectares) were largely in the hands of the bourgeoisie of Homs.[179] According to Naaman, "L'emiettement d'une propriété par partage successoral permet l'arrondissement d'une autre propriété bourgeoise - on voit rarement des terres passer aux mains des paysans."[180]

With this in mind, it is important to grasp the crucial difference between Homs and Hama in terms of landholding. For the Hama notables, property took on the character of latifundia. This city clearly dominated the plain in land ownership and the notables in question formed something of a locally-based caste.[181] On the other hand, the Homs region witnessed a considerable development of small and middle properties; a number of villages in the vicinity of the town remained entirely the property of their peasants.

In the late Mandate period and in the early 1950's, the work of land improvement and irrigation benefited a number of villages of peasant-proprietors in the Homs region - such as Tell Bissa, Dayr Mali, Duwayr and Rastan. However, villages affected by identical irrigation schemes on the estates dominated by the Hama notables kept their traditional agrarian structure. As opposed to the villages of peasant proprietors in the Homs region, on the estates of metayers

projects of land survey and improvement only resulted in confirming the rights of the urban notables on their land, without in any way affecting the pre-existing power relationships. Here metayage and musha[c] remained the basis of agricultural exploitation.[182]

By the time the Cadastre operations were underway in 1925-26, it would be no exaggeration to say that - with the notable exception of the few Christian villages near Homs - no peasants on the Homs-Hama plain cultivated lands of which they were legally the proprietors.[183] In the process of their transformation into metayers, the crucial difference in the life of the peasantry was not only the annual rent which they were now forced to pay to be permitted to cling to their traditional shares. Equally important was the marked deterioration in the socio-economic status of the peasant and the erosion of any bargaining power he might have had.

The Homs-Hama plain under the French Mandate

In this concluding section, we will primarily examine the contribution of the French Mandatory regime with regard to both policies and the attitudes of rural "advisors" - in bringing about social and economic change in the region. The French, upon assuming power in Syria in October 1920, immediately declared their intentions to break up the great estates for the benefit of the tenant-cultivators. Yet at the same time, they consistently asserted that they could not undertake any fundamental reform of existing Ottoman laws and warned of the political dangers of alienating the owners of the estates.[184]

In his reports on the region, Achard castigated the apparent lack of interest on the part of the Hama landlords in intensive cultivation and in improving the volume and quality of their agricultural output. This was routinely attributed to the Ottoman land regime and what he consistently referred to as the "social state of the population". It was only, he argued, by an association between Syrian landlords and French capitalists that one could envisage agricultural development and the widespread use of uncultivated land. Achard was on many occasion to refer to the central importance of measures "benefitting

Syrians as much as foreigners." [185] The French were to remain faithful to such vision throughout their period of rule in Syria.

The French administration sought the advice of prestigious scientific societies such as Académie Agricole de France and Congrès Français de la Syrie, which prepared extensive studies on the possibilities of agricultural development in the Syrian interior particularly with regard to the much sought after cotton crop. Such associations put forward a number of proposals as to how the Homs-Hama plain could best flourish with the director of the Académie Agricole, M.Avigdor, declaring that "La Syrie deviendrait ainsi le grenier de la France." [186]

Under the Mandate, the peasant economy entered the orbit of the world market to a greater degree, and as one French observer acknowledged, "ce ne fut, malheureusement pas toujours sans rompre certains équilibres traditionnels."[187] As observed previously, the French were determined to establish individual ownership and to accelerate the break up of musha[c] communities under a system of land survey and registration. Furthermore, measures were taken to award the long-term lease of state lands to persons who undertook the cultivation of certain crops, such as cotton. An emergency

decree of 1926 permitted land expropriations to this end. Extra encouragement was given to this enterprise such as exemption from taxes for a number of years.[188]

The French officials anguished over the socio-economic obstacles to the realisation of their targets on cotton and grain. In this respect, they were preoccupied with the shortage of agricultural labour as one of the major problems in developing the economy of the Homs-Hama plain. They were particularly concerned about the growing exodus from the countryside to the towns.[189] Many argued that the solution lay in greater efforts towards the sedentarization of the Beduin and the vigorous recruitment of migrant labour into the region.[190] As a result, the authorities did much to encourage the movement - already underway - of Alawi peasants descending onto the plain.

Arrete 171 of 3 March, 1926, provided for the dismemberment of collective holdings between co-proprietors and formally forbade the periodic redistribution of lands. The enactment of this law sometimes involved an abrupt interference with village custom, which contributed to the agrarian unrest which surfaced in the early Mandate period.[191] However, Duraffourd, who headed the cadastral operations, himself concluded that musha^{c} had an important basis in the social

life of the region.[192]

The French administration immediately set to work in studying conditions by which musha^{c} lands could be dismembered. When establishing title to land in a village, the Bureau du Cadastre registered each cultivator's share in the village land as a certain percentage of the total area, without attaching any title to a specific piece of land. There were a number of attempts to regroup holdings too small and dispersed into single plots and units in efforts to form individual farms.[193] The cadastre officials were emphatic that the aim of the reforms was to create individual property, the notion being that such measures would allow peasant-proprietors to undertake long-term investments in their land, such as the planting of orchards, "...choses qui leur sont impossible à réaliser dans la forme actuelle de possession et de répartition périodique des terres", in the view of Achard.[194]

They encountered stiff resistance from the start. In the course of 1925 - often at the height of the insurrection - the Travaux du Cadastre was carried out in 49 villages of the Homs region alone. Here the cadastral survey teams surveyed some 68,000 hectares in which musha^{c} lands were divided and boundaries fixed. In musha^{c} villages the

stabilization of plots proceeded according to fixed rules: the survey teams first carried out the delimitation of the different zones or categories of agricultural land. In each of these, they proceeded with the partition of land among the various claimants.[195] The complete dismemberment of musha[c] land was effected in a number of villages such as Kattini, Duwayr, Dayr al-Kabiri, Ghantu and Tarmali by the 1930's. Such villages were often at the centre of the struggle against French rule during the Great Revolt of 1925-26.[196]

Cadastral work in the Kaza of Ma[c]arrat al-Nu[c]man was put into effect immediately after the survey was underway in Homs. Here it was confined to the western part of the district, where the density of the villages was greatest and the area inhabited by a largely sedentary population. This work was in progress when the uprising broke out in Hama and the surrounding countryside where many cadastral brigades were attacked by Mawali tribesmen. Many boundary posts were destroyed and on more than one occasion, members of the cadastral team were killed.[197]

Homs and Hama were the only districts in Syria where the cadastral works covered all of the cultivated area. Detailed topographical plans were made and the rights of

proprietors defined in an unprecedented way without greatly affecting the pre-existing social structure.[198] However, the district of Homs was the main beneficiary of the efforts by the Bureau du Cadastre with regard to satisfying the aspirations of the peasantry for individual plots of land. Out of 67 villages officially dismembered in Syria up to 1945, Homs had 33, while Salamiya and Hama together had only four.[199] In special cases, such as that of the Homs-Rastan irrigation project, land registration was followed by the consolidation of plots. In the mid-1930's, these lands were subject to a number of innovations, whereby each holder received a single plot equal in size to the total area he previously had in his possession in the different quarters of the village land. Such reforms virtually dismantled the existing musha[c] structure.[200]

In most cases, however, the stabilization of musha[c] holdings largely served the interests of the Hama landlords and rarely led to the creation of small peasant properties. Naaman has shown how urban landlords increasingly suppressed plot rotation in certain quarters of the village and consistently intervened to disrupt communal practices.[201] The minute division of the fields into a multitude of strips was replaced by consolidated rectangular parcels with direct

access to pathways. The traditional musha[c] quarters disappeared and with it the traditional methods of supervision and communal discipline.

The Alawi question

The migration of Alawi peasants from their mountain strongholds onto the plain greatly accelerated in the Mandate period. When the Allied Forces occupied the region in 1918, the French met stiff resistance when they tried to establish their domination over the mountain. (Under Ottoman rule, as we have seen, the Alawis enjoyed a near-autonomous existence.) From the French perspective, Sharifian anti-French propaganda was particularly virulent on the mountain. The resistance was headed by Shaykh Salah, appointed by Amir Faysal as the leader of Alawi territory, from his home village of Rasta. From the start, the French felt a great urgency to pacify the mountain and only managed to subjugate the numerous Alawi clans with great difficulty.[202]

After their initial uprising against the French occupation in January 1919, the Alawis proclaimed the independence of Jisr and seized the French garrison at Babanna the following year. The French now considered pacifying the mountain as their priority in Syria; the concerted French campaign

against the Alawis from December 1920 to May, 1921 - culminated in the disarmament of the mountain.[203] From this time onwards the Alawi population was firmly under the authority of the Mandate administration and subject to taxation. As with the Ottoman military victory over the mountain, a programme of road construction was immediately put into force, most importantly the building of an east-west route leading from Latakia, Sahyun, Jisr, Qadmus, Misyaf to Hama.[204]

The Territory of the Alawites became a special administrative region under French protection and was proclaimed a separate state in 1922. According to Khoury, "The French set out to split the Alawi majority of the territory from the more politically sophisticated and economically dominant Sunni absentee landlord class of the coast and in Hama by attempting to break up the system of latifundia in the districts under its control."[205] In the same year, many prominent Hama landlords and merchants were to sign a declaration protesting to General Gouraud against his decision to attach a number of populous Alawi villages in the plain, belonging to the district of Hama, to the newly formed Territory of the Alawites. In this document these dignitaries tried to

convince the High Commissioner that grave political, economic and agricultural consequences would inevitably follow.[206]

Alawi migration to the plains of northern and central Syria acquired a much greater momentum at this time. General Gouraud himself acknowledged that the Alawi population had adopted the migrating patterns of the Kurds with whom they laboured in gathering the cotton harvest in Cilicia. He was concerned that a greater proportion of the migrants should be redirected to the Homs-Hama plain. In the 1920's, a number of attempts were made by the authorities to this end; the big Hama landlords were closely involved in this development.[207]

French policy towards the Alawis - like that towards the Beduin population - revealed a classic 'divide and rule' strategy. This was consistent with their refusal to recognize the political and cultural unity of Greater Syria. A priority of Mandate officials was to cultivate regionalism and cultural particularism as against Arab-nationalist sentiment. It is only in this context that French policy towards the tribal population and more specifically, the promotion of the tribal shaykh is fully comprehensible.

The transformation of nomadic society

In the first few years after the imposition of the French Mandate, the eastern region of the Homs-Hama plain had become a theatre of inter-tribal warfare and insurrection. This was largely due to the altered balance of power on the steppe as a direct consequence of the war, but equally the result of the French policy of coercing tribes to settle in ever more restricted zones and placing them under much greater surveillance. Indeed, the First World War brought about important developments for the Beduin: they were enriched by European currency and coinage, but most crucially they were saturated with European arms.[208] This was a major contributing factor to the perpetual warfare which flared between the Mawali and the Haddidiyin throughout the 1920's. In 1921, the French decided to lead a column against the Mawali whose violent encounters with the Haddidiyin in the Maᶜmura preoccupied them during the summers of 1922, 1923 and 1924.[209]

During the Mandate period, the administration of the tribal population was undertaken by the Contrôle Bedouin. The officials of the Contrôle Bedouin formed part of the Service des Renseignements under the general command of Troupes du Levant. This organization had authority over the Maᶜmura and

the confines of the desert and had extensive powers. Its main role was to transmit a constant flow of information of a political or economic nature to the High Commissioner as well as to the Commander of the army.[210]

With the creation of Contrôle Bedouin, new regulations prohibiting the tribal population from carrying arms into the settled areas and forcing them to pay the aghnam or livestock tax went into effect.[211] The Contrôle also insisted that they exclude agricultural regions from terrain on which to settle scores with one another. But this was not to be. In the constant feuding between the Mawali and Haddidiyin, a number of damaging raids were carried out in the plain and the Maᶜmura. In 1921, the Mawali cut the railroad line near Al-Hamra and this was taken as an act of open rebellion against the authorities. Indeed, the Mawali consistently opposed and resisted French control, while the French authorities often supported and protected the Haddidiyin against Mawali transgressions.[212] The French crushed this resistance with great brutality: a number of tribal settlements in the Maᶜmura were razed to the ground; the Mawali sustained heavy casualties and their flocks confiscated or dispersed.[213] As a result of the activities of the Contrôle Bedouin, the institution of levying tribute

from caravans and the collection of khuwa from weaker tribes and sedentary peasants was now a thing of the past.

Perhaps the most significant development affecting the movement and trading activities of the nomadic population was the division of the Badiya by the Mandate powers after the First World War. As a result, there was now a great crisis in the migratory system. Up to this time, the domain of pastoral nomadism knew no boundaries; now the Beduin were confronted with the different governments of Syria, Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine and the Hijaz.[214]

Some of the most striking features of the transformation of tribal society are associated with the changing role of the shaykh during this period. The strategy of Contrôle Bedouin was to establish him as an intermediary for his tribe - a middle-man between the Mandatory authorities and his people. The authority of the shaykh over his people was formalised and narrowly defined: traditional representatives of various nomadic or semi-nomadic communities now were transformed into institutional links between the tribe and the government.[215]

In 1927, the French authorities convened an assembly of shaykhs at Hama in an effort to effect a reconciliation

between the Mawali and the Haddidiyin that would put an end to the inter-tribal violence. On that occasion, the French imposed peace treaties with the payment of monthly subsidies to the shaykhs.[216] Such payments - ostensibly granted to enhance the role and prestige of the shaykh vis-a-vis his tribesmen - may have had, ironically, just the reverse effect.

The granting of subsidies to the tribal leaders of the government's choice - and the subsequent mass emigration of dissident tribes to regions beyond the jurisdiction of the French authorities - was an indication of the complete triumph of the Contrôle Bedouin as a supervisory body in control of the nomadic population. This organization played a huge role in selecting the shaykhs the authorities wished to promote and ensured their survival. In return for complete co-operation with the Contrôle Bedouin, influential shaykhs were granted automatic parliamentary representation in the Constituent Assembly of 1928.

A major feature of the Mandate period was the growing estrangement of the shaykh from the life of his tribe. The shaykh began to spend the better part of the year in Hama or Damascus, where he could spend the considerable sums of money he now received in land rents. In town, the shaykh

associated with government officials and, more importantly, formed alliances with absentee landlords, with whom they often intervened in water disputes on behalf of the tribal villagers of the Maᶜmura. It was also through such alliances that the shaykhs sought to secure a sedentary clientele in that region. In brief, they ceased to live within the context of the tribe and the steppe and began to actively participate in the political life of the towns.[217]

By the late 1920's, business associations between city merchants, landlords and tribal leaders flourished in the rural economy of the region. Hama merchants began to invest considerable amounts of capital in the cultivation of the Maᶜmura. As prominent shaykhs began to reap the benefits of commercialized agriculture, they threw their weight behind the drive towards sedentarization in the region. Thus they became unambiguously identified with the interests of the big absentee landlords and the merchant-money-lending class in Hama.[218]

Another aspect of the altered position of the shaykh resides in the fact that under the French, he had become uniquely responsible for administering justice and the policing of his own people. Under pressure from Contrôle Bedouin, he was expected to carry out arrests among his tribesmen (often

rebels or politically suspect persons) and deliver them to the gendarmerie. This state of affairs ran counter to traditional Beduin norms regarding the right of refuge and hospitality and contributed to the shaykh's diminishing popularity and prestige.[219] According to de Boucheman, "Les chefs participent à une justice qui ne suit pas exactement la loi des tribus. C'est une raison pour qu'ils soient plus particulièrement mal vus."[220] Ironically,with the shaykh's formal assumption of a policing role, his power over the tribe correspondingly diminished. Greater numbers of tents escaped his authority - whether due to sedentarization or the dispersal of the tribe.[221] In many cases, the relationship between the shaykh and his tribe had ultimately become one of landlord to tenant.

State lands on the desert edge of the Maᶜmura were never systmatically settled until the Mandate period. After the Great Revolt of 1925, the French authorities made a concerted effort to settle Syria's 300,000 Bedouin on this domain.[222] From 1926 to 1931, 182 villages (comprising some 181,000 hectares) were colonized or recolonized in small holdings ceded or leased out to 6,000 tribal families.[223] Thus some tribes - such as the Bani Khalid of the Hama district were able to acquire small parcels which were

registered in the names of individual families in their traditional zone of migration. They began to cultivate these plots of land by simple methods alongside the rearing of sheep.[224] In 1928-29, an area of 2,000 hectares of state land north-east of Hama, which had traditionally been occupied by the Sbaca beduin, was formally rented out to them "with promise of sale for the purpose of sedentarizing the tribe."[225] There are many similar examples.

However, it was overwhelmingly the case that the grazing land of the tribe, traditionally held communally, was registered during this period in the name of individual tribal leaders. Some tribal territory as we have seen, was registered in the late Ottoman period, but the most of this land was only registered under the French administration. Special emergency legislation (such as Arretés 132 of 1940 and 141 of 1941) was passed assigning this unregistered state land east of the desert line to the shaykhs, granting them registered title to vast expanses of land.[226]

From 1920 to 1945, the vast expansion of the road network and the use of trucks, automobiles and buses, together with the greatly intensified drive to settle the tribes, culminated in vast expanses of state land being put to cultivation. For the tribal population, these developments

signalled a decisive break with the past. In 1920, Syria had only 700 kilometres of paved roads; by 1940 this had expanded to 2,900 kilometres.[227] Clearly the implications for the Beduin and their traditional monopoly of the transport of agricultural produce and merchandise were enormous.

Thus French policy towards the tribal population must be seen in the context of an endless search for landlords and "natural leaders" and a pre-occupation with the increase in agricultural production. As more and more tracts of land in the Ma^{c}mura came to be registered in the name of tribal shaykhs, French access to Syrian produce, particularly grain, cotton and wool - was reasonably assured.

It is worth briefly considering the shifting relationship of nomads or semi-nomads to 'sedentary' society. The fundamental changes which resulted from sedentarization and the displacement of the great trade routes gave rise tc new patterns of relationships between the nomads, the peasantry and the urban population.

The expanding foreign trade of Syria, particularly from the last decades of the 19th century up to the First World War, facilitated the process of integrating the desert

tribes into the economic life of the country. Pastoral production, such as wool, leather and butter, was stimulated by a great increase in prices; by 1914 this accounted for over 20% of all exports to Europe and America.[228] This greater commercialization brought tribes into greater contact with merchants in Homs and Hama who turned them into hired shepherds.

The tribesmen increasingly relied on middlemen for marketing their produce and found themselves caught up in a web of patron-client relationships. The Hama merchants who bought wool and livestock from the nomads also provided them with yearly provisions of grain, cloth, metal tools and coffee. It was only a matter of time until the tribes fell deeply in debt with the merchants and were at the mercy of moneylenders and "buyers-up" who often took huge profits from pastoral production.[229]

The production of the nomads was increasingly organised through the live-stock sharika. Many weakened tribes who underwent sedentarization could not have secured a livelihood without engaging in contracts with landlords, city merchants or sedentary peasants. Such associations became exceedingly important in the rural economy of the Homs-Hama region after the 1880's and appear to have rapidly

proliferated in the Mandate period.[230] The hiring out of nomads and semi-nomads for livestock rearing brought with it much greater specialization, as production was controlled by those who possessed capital.

Each year the nomad or semi-nomad would lead his flocks to the steppe and only returned to the village of his sharika-partner in the summer. It was in this period that the villagers traded with the Beduin. In a typical arrangement in the Hama region, a landlord of a village would lease out a flock to the shepherd-tribesman and the products were divided between them after a pre-determined time. The lambs usually remained with the flock and the aghnam was paid by the nomad. If the landlord had any reason to distrust him, the shepherd, (who in this situation was transformed into a metayer), was considered the debtor and was obliged to reimburse the proprietor in payments of milk, cheese and wool. After seven years the contract was renewed or broken. If the latter was the case the sharika partners proceeded to divide the flocks in two. The urban landlord together with a merchant arranged to bring the pastoral products to Hama as the nomad returned to the desert fringe.[231]

French officials placed great hope in a dramatic increase

in commercialized sheep-rearing as an outcome of the sedentarization process and the altered structure of nomadic society. As expressed by Le Grange, an advisor on "Bedouin affairs," this was inevitable "parce que le chameau étant progressivement battu par la concurrence de l'automobile, son élevage tend à devenir moins rémunérateur pour les tribus qui s'y adonnent." Great numbers of nomads adopted sheep-rearing for a livelihood and became temporary day labourers on the great estates.[232]

The quest for cotton and the settlement of the Ghab

There were attempts by the French authorities to promote the development of cash crops in the region and they embarked on a few infrastructural projects - mostly to do with irrigation - to this end. Important cash crops in the region were relatively few in comparison with the Ghuta. In the 1890's, the Orontes Valley had become an important centre of cotton production with the revival of the local textile industry. However, in the first decades of the 20th century, the great expansion of cotton cultivation and the opening of a number of spinning mills in Cilicia (which produced cheaper textiles than those from the looms of Homs and Hama), resulted in a sharp decline in cotton cultivation throughout the Orontes region.[233]

Cotton was at the centre of French preoccupations with regard to the procurement of raw materials from the Syrian plains. In the early 1920's French industrialists had experienced great difficulty in procuring sufficient quantities on the international market and from their African colonies.[234] Mandate advisors such as de Berthelot and Achard were quick to point out that this was potentially a major resource of the Homs-Hama plain. But cotton was produced here only on a very small scale and almost exclusively in the immediate area of Homs (and in a variety of limited industrial use) by the end of the First World War.[235]

An advisor for public works with the Mandate administration, M. Wilhelm, believed that the Ghab was especially suited for this purpose. As it was, three quarters of the cotton reaching France was imported from the U.S.A. (the rest came from India and Egypt). To protect the French textile industry from the vagaries of the market, he argued, a solution must be found on Syrian soil. In his approach to this problem, Wilhelm reassured the Foreign Ministry that the costs of a major venture in cotton cultivation in the region would in no way be financed by the administration:

"Sans doute, il ne saurait être question d'accorder des subventions à des enterprises d'irrigation ou autres, les charges qu'impose l'exercice du Mandat etant deja suffisamment lourdes. Mais il est possible de pousser à la réalisation de ces entreprises si utiles, par des conseils, des études et surtout en attirant l'attention des industriels et des capitalistes français sur l'intérêt que présentent en Syrie, certaines opérations agricoles, i.e. la culture en grand du coton." [236]

Cotton cultivation in the immediate region of Homs and Hama expanded from 300 hectares in 1922, to 7,000 hectares in 1929. But already by the mid 1920's, big estates, encouraged by the authorities, were responsible for the over-cultivation of cotton and the excessive use of water, which dramatically lowered the water table. Neighbouring villages were frequently short of drinking water.[237]

The first major project of irrigation undertaken by the French to this end was in the Ghab. This was a large state land reclamation scheme first promoted in 1927. At the beginning of the French occupation, the agricultural production of the Ghab was negligible, the region being very sparcely populated with mostly destitute villages and hamlets. Nonetheless, the French were convinced that the Ghab possessed lands of great fertility which were favourable to cotton cultivation on a huge scale - as plantations already established at Qalat Sayjar had proved.[238] The

project was chiefly to drain the swamp and open up some 75,000 hectares of land to irrigated cultivation. This involved the damming of the Orontes and the draining of marshland by means of a network of canals and ditches. Faithful to the declared committment of the administration to conceive of such projects in terms of fresh opportunities for French enterprise, it was not the Mandatory government which was called upon by the High Commissioner to realise this undertaking, but rather a private concessionary company.[239]

However, the dense population required for the cultivation of the Ghab was non-existent in the immediate area. The French encouraged emigration on a large scale, but this was only partially successful. The architects of the project discussed at length their plans to establish a sedentary labour force, to be occupied throughout the year, along with a pool of migrant labour, to be employed only at crucial periods. Besides Alawi peasants, it was also envisaged that huge numbers of Armenians fleeing persecution in Turkey would be attracted to the region.[240] In the end, it was almost wholly the Alawi population from the mountains which supplied the needed labour. Some 13,000 Alawi peasants descended on the Ghab in the 1920's.[241]

Such schemes for agricultural expansion were not without coercive measures and threats of expropriations. On lands that were already under cultivation, the cadastral survey was carried out; the main purpose being, according to Wilhelm, that it would establish

> "... dans bien des cas que des superficies plus ou moins importantes sont occupées indûment par les propriétaires. Ces terrains pourront également être revendiqués par l'état." [242]

The state, in turn, ceded these lands to the concessionary company. Landlords and peasants were made to pay an annual tax representing their share of the costs of the execution of the drainage project and many - particularly those who expressed opposition to the scheme - were forced to cede their land to the concessionary company.[243]

By the end of the Mandate period, the cultivated land of the Ghab was overwhelmingly the possession of big Hama notable landlords. According to Métral, only one example of peasant proprietorship survived, that of the village of Mabarda, which had been able to buy back its lands from the Ahdah family of Hama between the wars. This was only made possible by the steady flow of remittances sent from emigrés.[244]

Conclusion

In the 1920-1945 period, the population of Syria as a whole grew from 2 to $3^{1}/_{2}$ million and the rural population more than doubled as did the area under cultivation.[245] One and a half million hectares of state domain were granted, sold or rented out to small proprietors - and much of this was in the Homs-Hama and Ma^{c}mura region.[246] In the Homs district alone more than 250,000 fruit trees were planted and cotton cultivation expanded enormously. However, the introduction of Australian wheat severely threatened production in the Homs-Hama plain in the 1930's, causing a dramatic retreat of its cultivation in a number of areas.[247]

A record of some striking successes in agricultural expansion and improvements in rural infrastructure must be carefully counterbalanced with what most contemporary observers regarded as a situation of deepening rural poverty with widespread underemployment and the emergence of a considerable migrant labour force in search of menial work in the towns, formed from the landless peasantry of the great estates.[247] As there was no appreciable change in the notoriously harsh conditions on the estates, the stage was set for massive social unrest.

However, with the crucial exception of the Great Revolt of 1925-1926, the peasantry of the Homs-Hama plain, did not as a whole, engage in significant or concerted political action during the Mandate period. The fierce resistance of Mawali nomads and semi-sedentary tribesmen was perhaps the most important non-urban activity to take place in the region. Tribal 'experts' such as de Boucheman, found it significant that during the uprising, the camel-raising tribes of the desert remained largely loyal to the regime, while groups which had been affected by sedentarization for a number of generations, such as the Mawali, displayed a much more hostile attitude towards French domination. This was attributed to the close and continuous contact between the semi-sedentary nomads and urban merchants with Arab nationalist sympathies.[248] However, the French continued to worry about "socialist agitation" on the great estates during and after the revolt.[249]

In June, 1926, the urban masses of Hama, supported by the villagers of the plain who had descended on the town, were in revolt. All establishments identified with the French administration were burned down as the revolt spread to Homs. Leading Hama notable landlords, such as Rahman al-Mutt, Ahmad Agha Barazi, Mukram Kaylani, Mahmud Bey ᶜAzm,

were held responsible for events at Hama and a number of them condemned to death by the French authorities.[250] In the view of one official, the principal cause of the revolt in the region was due to "...la politique d'emancipation paysanne qui effraie les feodaux et n'est pas comprise de leurs serfs, appelés à en beneficier."[251]

Peasant manipulation by the notables who wanted the huge estates to escape the scrutiny of the cadastral survey then in progress was also cited as a principal cause in the involvement of the rural masses. Furthermore, agitation by big landlords who were determined to see their Alawi villages - recently placed under the jurisdiction of the separate Alawi state - attached to the sanjak of Hama was also considered by the authorities as a contributing factor.[252] But even the administration could not wholly discount the deteriorating economic situation (including the dramatic devaluation of Syrian currency) and the fact that the simmering unrest on the poverty-stricken estates could easily lend itself to an insurrectionary situation.[253]

The Great Revolt of 1925-26 was, in part, the culmination of various forces reflecting agrarian change and the transformation of the structure of landholding. The few peasant properties remaining by the end of Ottoman rule,

were further reduced in the 1920's.[254] Observers in the region in the inter-war period were struck by the fact that the Hamawi peasant lived on the edge of destitution; he was characteristically described as undernourished and prone to illness.[255] The history of the region would appear to affirm Warriner's argument that "so long as collective types of ownership and semi-nomadic forms prevailed, cultivators had some security, but with settled cultivation and the introduction of a market economy, the individual cultivator is now exposed to excessive risk and resorts to borrowing."[256] The coercive nature of the landlord-tenant relationship was rooted in the fact that the metayer had to borrow in the course of his agricultural work; but credit in this case did not serve the usual requirements of cultivation; it was used almost exclusively for the subsistence of the peasant.

The encounter of Syrian rural society with a Western economic system and European political power only intensified this tendency. The French administration in Syria relied on the power of landlords and shaykhs to a much greater extent than did the Ottomans to establish their control over the countryside. The inevitable conflict which arose over legal title, the basis of French land policy,

gave the urban-based landlords the opportunity to dispossess the peasant-occupants. As we have observed, whole village communities came into possession of groups of city notables directly as a result of peasants seeking their assistance in disputes over establishing title to land they had occupied for generations.[257]

In the densely populated regions immediately surrounding Homs and Hama, one increasingly witnessed a seasonal displacement of labour - often very considerable in extent.[258] Migrant labour from the villages of the plain to Homs, Hama and Aleppo greatly accelerated in the inter-war period. In some cases, large villages, such as Habarmi, had totally disappeared or were reduced in population by three-quarters.[259] An increasing number of villages and towns on the plain grew to depend on the help of migrant labour from neighbouring communities for economic survival. Besides the dispossessed peasantry, the nomadic population descending on villages to help with the harvests also constituted an important reservoir of manual labour.[260]

Indeed, by the inter-war period, the demand for 'outside' wage labour was considerable: there were a number of villages where wage labourers without any tenancy rights whatsoever were the vast majority of the inhabitants by

the 1930's. According to Warriner, this strata of peasant society was not able to acquire a reasonable standard of subsistence.[261] These peasants, along with the poorer tenants invariably lived in one or two roomed mud and straw huts, often sharing these quarters with their animals. The landless labourers (whose income in cash and kind generally amounted to about 30 Syrian pounds per year by the end of the Mandate period - a starvation wage) were only nourished adequately in the harvest season and lived almost exclusively on bread in winter.[262]

The percentage of land owned by big urban landlords was greater here than in any other region of Syria. The evidence suggests that by the 1930's this was roughly 80% for the Homs-Hama plain as a whole.[263] However, each district presented a somewhat different picture. In the Hama district, for example, 110 out of 114 villages belonged to big urban landlords (4 landlords owned 86 villages between them) while in the Kaza of Homs, some 55% of the properties were in the hands of large proprietors from Homs and Hama.[264] De Berthelot's findings reveal that in 45 of the 110 villages comprising huge estates (of 100-2,000 hectares) in the Kaza of Homs, the metayer-peasants possessed their own homes and a few strips of land, while in the remaining

65 villages, all comprising huge estates, the tenants who laboured in the fields possessed absolutely nothing of their own.[265]

The years which followed the termination of the Mandate were characterised by the political mobilization of the peasantry on the estates. The insurrectionary fervour often led to a total breakdown in the working relationship between landlords and their metayers. Landless labourers were more numerous in the post-independence period in the Homs-Hama plain than they were in other areas of Syria, and the region proved to be a bastion of peasant radicalism and political opposition.[266] In the Homs area, the position of small tenants became precarious as a result of mechanization and irrigation schemes whereby landlords were increasingly identified as entrepreneurs.[267]

In the 1950's, the legacy of bitterness was to erupt in open revolt. In a number of incidents, fellahs on the estates refused to hand over the landlord's customary share and even succeeded in driving them off their estates.[268] At this time the Ghab was also an arena of conflict as the process of land reclamation continued. Here Hama landlords opposed the distribution of land to small peasant-farmers by the government, as there was already a shortage of labour on

their estates. The post-independence governments continued the Ottoman and Mandate policy of promoting the resettlement of poor Alawis from the adjacent mountains onto the farmland of the Ghab and the Homs-Hama plain, invoking the wrath of displaced Hamawi landlords and peasants alike, thus inflaming the sectarian troubles which persist in the region to the present day.[269]

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER VI

1 L.E. Sweet, Tell Toqaan: A Syrian Village, Ann Arbor, 1960, p. 2.

2 A. de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie", CHEAM no.126, 23 March 1934, p. 35.

3 W.B. Fischer, The Middle East: A Physical, Social and Regional Geography, London, 1975, p. 130.

4 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur de la région du caza de Homs", CHEAM no.249, 1940, p. 2.

5 Cuinet, p. 451-3.

6 Longrigg, p.35; Weakley in 1910 put the production of cereals in the Homs-Hama plain at 2,500,000 Kilos in a normal year, p. 48.

7 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 9.

8 J.L. Porter, Book II, pp. 342-3

9 Na'uras, the large water-wheels furnished with clay buckets and tin containers, were used for lifting water from the river for irrigation. The wheels were set in motion by mules and donkeys or by the force of the current itself. Some 7,350 Na'uras were used in the Orontes and the Euphrates in the Mandate period. Khouri, "Agriculture" in Himadeh (ed.), p. 103.

10 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.125, "Etats Autonomes de la Syrie", 12/11/1920.

11 AAE: Turquie, Damas, vol.VII, "Rapport sur les districts de Homs et Hama", Hecquard to de Lhuis, 18/12/1864.

12 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.III, de Jouy to M.A.E., 29/4/1853.

13 AAE: Turquie: Damas, vol.7, Hecquard to de Lhuis, 18/9/1862. The district of Homs was described by the French consul as "le foyer du brigandage". J.L. Porter reported that the road from Homs to Sudud was constantly exposed to Beduin incursions. Book II, p. 342.

14 AAE: Turquie: Damas, vol.VII, Hecquard to de Lhuis, 18/9/1862.

15 R. Burton and F. Tyrwhitt Drake, Unexplored Syria. Vol. I, London, 1872, p. 191.

16 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.IV, Hecquard to de Lhuis, 11/1/1866.

17 Anon, "Notes sur le propriété foncière dans la Syrie Centrale", L'Asie Française, Paris, 1933, vol.309, p. 131.

18 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.VI, "Rapport sur le commerce, l'industrie et l'agriculture du Mutessarifat de Homs et Hama", Gilbert to Waddington, 31/7/1979.

19 Ibid; Cuinet reached the same conclusion but stressed that the 'floating' population of the plain was chiefly composed of Beduin whom it would be impossible to enumerate precisely, Cuinet, p. 499.

20 See: N.N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980, Cambridge, 1987.

21 Under the crop rotation system used in the musha[c] holdings, about 1/3 to 1/2 of this land lay fallow every year. Kalla, p. 161; Weulesse, p. 193.

22 Hasani, p. 199; Smilianskaya, p. 229.

23 Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, p. 128; "Notes sur la propriete fonciere", p. 138.

24 PRO, FO/226, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 4/2/1846.

25 PRO, FO 195/458, Damascus, Consul Wood's "Letter to the Wali of Damascus", 1/8/1855.

26 Schatkowski, The Decline of Syrian Localism, pp. 107-8; Issawi, "British Trade and the rise of Beirut", pp. 100-1.

27 Verney and Dambmann, p. 264.

28 Kalla, p. 17; Weakley, p. 34.

29 France, Rapports Commerciaux, "Mouvements Commerciaux de Latakie de Homs et Hama pendant l'année 1893", from Vice-Consul Geofroy, vol.I, 1894.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. However, Geofroy reported that in 1891, wheat and barley exports of the region increased by 1,000,000 kilogrammes on the export of 1890 because of the huge provisions made by the Ottoman Government for the expeditionary forces in Yemen.

32 GBPP, 1875, vol.LXXVII, Tripoli, Vice-Consul Hordern; Latron, p. 142.

33 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.VI, "Rapport sur Homs et Hama", Gilbert to Waddington, 31/7/1879.

34 This industry received an extra boost in the 1890s with the pacification of the Sudan, a major market for the textiles of Homs and Hama, Verney and Dambmann, p. 280.

35 AAE: CC: Damas, vol. VI, Gilbert to Waddington; GBPP, 1875 vol.LXXVII, Tripoli, Vice-Consul Hordern; France, Rapports Commerciaux, "Mouvements Commerciaux de Latakié, de Homs et Hama pendant l'année 1893".

36 US CR, Beirut, 1886, vol.23, no.84, Report by Consul Bissinger; AAE: CC: Damas, vol.IV, Hecquard to Thouvenel' 16/10/1862.

37 France, Rapports Commerciaux, 1891, vol.I, Hama, Geofroy.

38 US CR, Beirut, 1886, vol.23, no.84, Report by Consul Bissinger.

39 GBPP, 1875, vol.LXXVII, Tripoli. Vice-Consul Hordern.

40 In the 1880's and 1890's, this accounted for about 3,000,000 kilogrammes per year. France, Rapports Commerciaux, Hama, Vice-Consul Geofroy, 1891, vol.I, Hama, Geofroy.

41 GBPP, 1875, vol.LXXVII, Tripoli, Vice-Consul Hordern, 1874. See also: GBPP, 1858, vol.LXXII, Tripoli, Vice-Consul Mercer. The British consul expressed his disbelief at the state of the roads in "the most fertile province of the Ottoman Empire".

42 GBPP, 1875, vol.LXXV, Beirut, Consul Jago.

43 US CR, 1886, vol.23, no.84, Beirut, Report by Consul Bissinger.

44 Weakley, p. 85; GBPP, 1880, vol.LXXIV, Damascus, Vice-Consul Jago.

45 The expenses of the purchases of tools, materials, equipment and the costs of constructing bridges was the responsibility of the three cities in question. AAE: CC: Damas, Vol.VI, Gilbert to Waddington, 4/5/1879.

46 Weakley, p.85. Also see: Verney and Dambmann on the organisation of transport on the Tripoli-Homs road, p. 265.

47 Kalla, p. 134; Hilan, pp. 78-9.

48 Huvelin, p. 45; Shorrock, "The Origin of the French Mandate" p. 138.

49 Achard, " Notes sur la Syrie", p. 111; Verney and Dambmann, p. 265.

50 Ibid, p. 110; Verney and Dambmann, p. 265; J. Ducruet, Les Capitaux Européens au Proche Orient, Paris, 1964, p.142.

51 GBPP, 1880, vol.LXXIX, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus. See also Latron on this question, p. 131.

52 A. Naaman, Le pays de Homs: étude de régime agraire et d'économie rurale, Doctoral thesis, 2 vols., Université de Paris - Sorbonne, 1951; GBPP, 1871, vol.LXV, Consul Skene, Aleppo; Zakariya, p. 132; Hanna, p.94

53 GBPP, 1880, vol.LXXIV, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus. The harvests of 1870 and 1871 were the worst in living memory.

54 GBPP, 1871, vol.LXV, Aleppo, Vice-Consul Skene; Ghurayba, p.87; Hilan, p. 102.

55 GBPP, 1877, vol.LXXXI, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus.

56 GBPP, 1880, vol.LXXIV, Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus

57 Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, p. 86.

58 Bell, p. 230; Latron, p. 138.

59 For the text of the firman of June 1867,authorising foreigners to buy land see: J.A. Farley, Modern Turkey, London, 1872, appendix. According to Lewis, the European land purchases were "proof of the development of the economy of the region", Nomads and Settlers, p. 69.

60 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.V, Bertrand to MAE, 20/10/1871. Also AAE: CC: Damas, vol.V, Robin to Comte de Remusot, 8/8/1872.

61 GBPP, 1869, vol.LXII, Damascus, Consul Rogers.

62 AAE: CC: Damas, vol.V, Bournville to Robin, 8/8/1872.

63 For a short bibliography on this question see: A. de Boucheman, "Note sur la rivalité de deux tribus moutonnières de Syrie: Les Mawali et les Hadidiyn", Revue des Etudes Islamiques, No. 1, 1934, fn. 1, p. 1.

64 Sweet, p. 2.

65 D. Chatty, From Camel to Truck: the Bedouin in the Modern World, New York, p. xxi

66 A. La Croix, "Le Contrôle Bédouin de Syrie", CHEAM, No.1147 9/4/1947.

67 Although this distinction was very real, it was apparently less so for the members of "sedentary" society in the Homs-Hama region. In the 1930's, de Boucheman observed that even if an individual had been sedentary for ten generations he was still considered a "bedawi" by townsfolk and peasants alike. A. de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins en Syrie", CHEAM, no.126, 1937, p. 17.

68 N. Cozma, "La Sédentarisation des nomades en Syrie", CHEAM, no.4208, December 1967, p. 4.

69 Ibid, p. 5; Chatty, p. 12; N. Daker, Sédentarisation des Bédouins nomades en Syrie, Paris, 1973, pp. 53-4.

70 PRO, FO 195/320, Damascus, Wood to Rose, 7/8/1848.

71 PRO, FO 195/458, Damascus, Wood to Redcliffe, 12/4/1854.

72 PRO,FO 195/196, Damascus, Wood to Earl of Aberdeen, 25/6/1842.

73 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. II, Tippel to Guizot, 12/2/1845.

74 PRO,FO 195/291, Damascus, Wood to Canning, 15/11/1848.

75 AAE:N.S. Syrie-Liban, Vol. 105, 1897, "Rapport Concernant la Province de Homs et Hama," Bambino to Hanataux, 18/12/1897.

76 P. Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Syria between two World Wars," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 18, 2, April 1982; N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers, p. 61.

77 M. Gross, Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus: 1860-1909. Ph.D. thesis, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 1979, pp. 102-3.

78 de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins en Syrie," pp. 4-5.

79 Ibid, p. 5; N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers, p. 61; A.M. ᶜAwad, Al-idarah al-ᶜUthmaniyah fi wilaya suriya 1864-1914, pp. 87-90.

80 Rambles, pp. 178-180.

81 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. III, Segur to M.A.E. 13/10/1851.

82 Gross, p. 139; N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement," p. 233.

83 ᶜAwad, p. 97; de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 5.

84 de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 5-6; Chatty, p. 16.

85 Gross, p. 198; ᶜAwad, p. 101.

86 PRO,FO 195/1067, Aleppo, Skene to Elliot, 16/8/1875.

87 A. de Boucheman, "Note sur la rivalité de deux tribus moutonnières de Syrie, p. 67-8. pp. 13-18; GBPP, 1873 LXIX, Damascus, Vice-Consul Kirby Green. On the transitory character of semi-nomadic settlements see: N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers, pp. 69-70.

88 Seurat, p. 111.

89 AAE:N.S. Syrie-Liban, Vol. 105, 1897, Bambino to Hanataux, 18/12/1897.

90 N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement," p. 263; AAE: N.S. Syrie-Liban, Vol. 105, "Rapport concernant la Province de Homs et Hama," Bambino to Hanataux, 18/12/1897.

91 Chatty, p. 16; Caserane, p. 35.

92 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 100; de Boucheman, "Note sur la rivalité de deux tribus," p. 43.

93 Chatty, p. xviii; Bell, 256; Caserane, p. 26.

94 Bell, 256.

95 PRO,FO 195/994. Syria and Palestine, Green to Earl of Granville, 9/12/1872, pp. 191-192; Cuinet 207; C.M. Doughty Travels in Arabia Deserta, 2 Vols, London, 1921, p. 84; Also see: Baer, Fellah and Townsman, p. 127.

96 PRO,FO 195/994, Syria and Palestine, Green to Earl of Granville, 9/12/1872.

97 Chatty, p. 69.

98 Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh," p. 180; de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," pp. 26-7.

99 Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh," p. 179.

100 The Mawali, among the most numerous of the ᶜAnaza tribes, were known to possess enormous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. In the 1860's, they reportedly possessed over 2,000 tents. In the contemporary literature, they are generally portrayed as plunderers of caravans between Hama and Aleppo. A much more charitable attitude was adopted towards the Haddidiyin, who assumed the role of the shepherds of Hama, the inhabitants of which invested large amounts of capital in flocks entrusted to their care. They traditionally supplied Hama with butter, milk and cheese and carried on an important trade in wool. They are often characterized as being submissive to the government, often giving warnings of hostile intentions on the part of the Mawali. They possessed roughly the same number of tents as that tribe. AAE:Turquie, Damas, Vol. VII, Bambino to Hecquard, 16/9/1862; Anon, Rambles, p. 162; Sweet, p. 45.

101 Caserane, p. 7; Daker, p. 42; Burton and Tyrwhitt-Drake, Vol. I, pp. 117.

102 Caserane, p. 12.

103 Ibid, p. 13.

104 de Boucheman, "Notes sur la rivalité de deux tribus," p. 46; AAE: Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 242, "Rapports sur les évènements de Hama," 9/12/1926.

105 de Boucheman, "Notes sur la rivalité de deux tribus," p. 46.

106 Ibid, p. 47; See PRO,FO 195/196, Damascus, Wood to Earl of Aberdeen, 8/7/1842.

107 Bell, p. 58; H. Yedid, 'Crise et régression du système pastoral bédouin dans la region de Hama,' in O. Aurenche (ed.) Nomades et Sedentaires, perspectives ethnoarchéologiques, Paris, 1984, p. 38.

108 Caserane, p. 17.

109 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 339, Achard to M.A.E. 6/5/1925; Caserane, p. 20.

110 H. Yedid, "Crise et régression du système pastoral bédouin" p. 42; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1925-6. 111 N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement," p. 264.

112 AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. VI, Gilbert to Waddington, 22/10/1879; AAE:N.S. Syrie-Liban, Vol. 105, 1897, Bambino to Hanataux, 18/12/1897.

113 For the various theories on the origins of the Alawi religion see: M.A. Tawil, Ta'rikh al 'Alawiyin, Latakia, 1924. R. Thoumin, "Le Ghab," Revue de Géographie Alpine XXIV, 1936, p. 528; Also see: J. Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, 2 Vols., Tours, 1940, for the geography, demography and cultural features of the Jabal.

114 AAE:N.S. Syrie-Liban, Vol. 105, Bambino to Waddington, 4/12/1897; See Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, p. 48. N. Lewis observes, "Too many people were competing for scant resources and the standard of living was very low," Settlers and Nomads, p. 67.

115 Isma^{c}il Bey exercised enormous influence over the Alawi mountain, becoming its veritable master between 1850-1855. Under his leadership the Alawis, conscious of their renewed power with many of the Ottoman regular troops diverted to the front in the Crimean War, undertook a number of damaging raids in the Homs-Hama plain, Thoumin, "Le Ghab," p. 530; See Gross on repeated Ottoman attempts to subjugate the mountain, p. 159; Tawil, p. 73-4.

116 PRO,FO 195/965, Jago to Elliot, Beirut, 24/6/1870.

117 PRO,FO 195/601, Damascus, Brant to Allison, 6/4/1858. Most contemporary reports confirm that the situation concerning Alawi raiding and depopulation was at its worst in 1854, when the Crimean War led to a withdrawal of troops from many regions of Syria. See N. Lewis, Nomads and Settlers, pp. 67-8; Thoumin, "Le Ghab", p. 189.

118 PRO,FO 78/1033, Vice-Consul in Latakia to Werry, 30/11/1858; Tawil, p. 60; Gross, p. 92.

119 PRO,FO 195/965, Beirut, Jago to Elliot, 24/6/1870.

120 PRO,FO /976, Lattakia, Vitab to Eldridge, 25/9/1871.

121 E. de Vaumas, "Le Djébel Ansarieh", Revue de Geographie Alpine, 48, (1960), pp. 267-311. Tell Sahab, established around 1860, is considered to be the oldest village settled by the Alawis in the Homs-Hama plain. Thoumin, "Le Ghab", p. 531.

122 N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement", p. 266.

123 POR,FO /1201, Damascus, Jago to the Earl of Derby, 4/3/1878.

124 Ibid.

125 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 5.

126 PRO,FO 195/1448, Damascus, Block to Wyndham, 15/8/1883.

127 Tawil. p. 98; H. Lammens, "Voyage au pays des Nosairis", Revue de l'orient chrétien, 5, (1900), pp. 313-423.

128 Bell, p. 209.

129 Ibid, p. 210.

130 GBPP, 1875, vol.LXXV, Beirut, Vice-Consul Jago.

131 Thoumin, "Le Ghab", p. 495.

132 Lammens, p. 385; Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, p. 87.

133 Thoumin, "Le Ghab", p. 517.

134 Ibid, p. 488; Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, p. 92.

135 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.339, "La culture du coton en Syrie", Wilhelm to Poincare, 19/3/1923.

136 Ibid; Thoumin, p. 512.

137 Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, p. 100; AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.76, "Questions Agricoles", Achard to MAE, 17/1/1921. Thoumin notes that the Alawis tended to be khamas tenants, in that they gave $^{1}/_{5}$ of the harvest crops to the landlord after paying for all the expenses of cultivation, while the Mawalis were muraba[c] tenants, only keeping $^{1}/_{4}$ to $^{1}/_{5}$ of the harvest after the landlord furnished grain seed and tools. The Mawalis workers generally laboured in more oppressive conditions than their Alawi counterparts. For example, Alawis and other 'sedentary' peasants were permitted to freely distribute the seed grain amongst themselves. This apparently never happened in the case of the Malawi, where the landlords' control appears to have been total. "The Ghab", p. 513.

138 Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, p. 87; Thoumin, p. 514; Lammens, pp. 345-6.

139 Bell, p. 201.

140 Weulersse, in the 1930's, maintained that an interest rate of 15-20% was moderate for loans extended to the fellahs of the Homs-Hama plain. Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 114-115.

141 "Notes sur la propriété foncière", p.133.

142 See: C. Keyder, "The Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode of Production", Economy and Society, Vol.V, on this point.

143 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 2-3; Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, p.87-8.

144 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 53; Latron, p. 214.

145 "Notes sur la propriété foncière", p. 147; Yedid, pp.107-8.

146 "Notes sur la propriété foncière", p. 142.

147 Weulersse, "Régime agraire et vie agricole en Syrie", Bulletin de l'Association Géographes Français, no.13, April 1938, p. 110.

148 AAE: Série-E: Syrie-Liban, vol.75, Achard to M.A.E., 17/12/1922; Klat, Land Tenure, p. 56.

149 D. Desloges, "Aperçu sur la vie rurale dans la Syrie du Nord", CHEAM, no.876, 1946, p. 10; de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p.12; Latron, p. 212.

150 Desloges, p. 7; Sweet, p. 60; C. Massa, "Notables de Syrie", CHEAM, no.1618, 1949, p. 1.

151 Desloges, p. 15. One landlord is recorded as saying that the extent of his estate from one end to the other was "six hours by horse". Achard calculated that this must be roughly equivalent to an area of 205,000 hectares on the basis of seven kilometres per hour. Achard, "Notes sur la Syrie", L'Asie Française, 1922, p. 100.

152 Hanna, p. 142; Weulersse, p. 60.

153 This was the distinct impression of the vast majority of direct observers of the institution. On this subject see: J. Mullendar, "Un aspect du développement dans un pays agricole", CHEAM, no.610, 1960, p. 11; P. Klat, "Whither Land Tenure in the Arab World", Middle East Economic Papers, 1955, p. 52.

154 US CR, vol.23, no.84, Report by Consul Bissinger, Beirut, 1887.

155 Klat, "Whither Land Tenure", p. 53.

156 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 122-3.

157 Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, p. 97-8; Zakariya, p. 109.

158 Weulersse, Paysans, p. 123.

159 Desloges, p. 12.

160 "Notes sur la propriété foncière", p. 40; de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 23; Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East, p. 116.

161 Naaman, Le pays de Homs, p. 158; Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East.

162 Naaman, Le pays de Homs, p. 88-9; de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 24.

163 Ibid.

164 Massa, p. 2; Latron, p. 54-5.

165 Sweet, p. 60.

166 Mullendar, p. 4; Khoury, "Agriculture" in Himadeh (ed.) Economic Organization, p. 61; Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire dans la région de Homs-Hama", p. 54.

167 Article 8 of the Ottoman Land Code specified that the whole of the lands of a village community held in musha[c] could not be ceded - en bloc - to all its inhabitants. Fischer, p. 49; Latron, p. 199.

168 Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire", p. 54; Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 116.

169 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 25-6; Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 19; Latron, p. 184.

170 Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire", p. 55.

171 Latron, p. 190; Klat, Land Reform, pp. 95-8; Weulersse, Paysans, p. 102; Hannoyer, p. 281.

172 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.255, M. Duraffourd, Rapport général concernant les travaux du cadastre et d'amélioration agricole effectués en 1925; Cadastre des Etats de Syrie et du Liban, Notice sur le démembrement et l'aménagement des terres 'Mouchaa', 1935.

173 Klat, Land Reform, p.99.

174 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p.25-6; Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, pp.87-8; Hanna, p. 97.

175 Notice sur le démembrement, p. 12; Rapport général concernant les travaux du cadastre, pp. 18-19.

176 Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 19; Klat, "Whither Land Tenure in the Arab World", p. 53.

177 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 26.

178 Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire", p. 56.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid, pp. 58-9.

181 "Notes sur la propriété foncière", p. 142; J. Weulersse, "La primaute des cités dans l'économie syrienne", Congrès International des Géographes Français, no.113, April 1938, pp. 58-61.

182 Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire", p. 59; P. Klat, "Report on Land Tenure in Misherfe", Unpublished MS prepared for the Middle East Supply Centre, November 1944, p. 19

183 "Rapport général concernant les travaux du cadastre"; AAE: Série-E: Syrie-Liban, vol.228, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1923-4.

184 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.76, Achard to MAE, 17/1/1921; AAE: Serie-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.60, "Valeur Economique de la Syrie", de Berthelot, 5/6/1920.

185 AAE: Série-E, Levant, Syrie-Liban, vol.76, Achard to MAE, 17/1/1921.

186 Anon., "La Syrie au point de vue agricole", Académie Agricole de France, 1925, p. 312.

187 Mullendar, p. 19.

188 AAE: Série-E, Levant, Syrie-Liban, vol.339, "Agriculture", 23/5/1926.

189 "La Syrie au point de vue agricole.", 1925, p. 312; Académie Agricole Française, "Les résultats de la collaboration Franco-Syrienne", 1922, p. 110.

190 Huvelin, who influenced many French advisors, argued this at length in Que vaut la Syrie?, p. 19. See also: AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.339, "La culture du coton en Syrie", Wilhelm to Poincaré, 19/3/1923; L. Achard, "Le coton en Cilicie et en Syrie", L'Asie Francaise, June 1922, p. 97.

191 Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, vol.II, p. 107; Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 91.

192 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.255, Travaux du Cadastre, p. 10.

193 Ibid, pp. 12-12; "Notice sur le démembrement des Mouchaa", pp. 19-20.

194 AAE: Série-E: Syrie-Liban, vol.253, Achard to MAE, 9/12/1928.

195 Travaux du Cadastre, pp. 13-14; "Notice sur le démembrement des Mouchaa", pp.21-2.

196 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur", p. 22; AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.242, "Rapport sur les évènements de Hamah", 12/11/1926.

197 Travaux du Cadastre, pp. 7-8.

198 Klat, "Report on Land Tenure in Misherfe", pp. 37-8.

199 Naaman, "Précisions sur la structure agraire", p. 57.

200 F. Metral, "Land Tenure and Irrigation Projects in Syria", in Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure, p. 467.

201 Ibid, p.468.

202 Col. Nieger, "Choix de documents sur le territoire des Alaouites," Revue du Monde Musulman, Vol. XLIX, 1922, pp. 2-3.

203 During this period some 20,000 rifles were recovered from the various clans, Ibid, p. 3-4.

204 Ibid, p. 9; Tawil, p. 103; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 126, "Territoire des Alaouites," 9/11/1926.

205 Khoury, The Politics of Nationalism, p. 22; See also, PRO,FO 371/145, Beirut Consul to F.O. 9/1/1925; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 127, "Etats Autonomes," 9/11/1922 on the background to the French decision to carve up the Syrian interior into separate states.

206 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 127, "Etats Autonomes," 18/1/1922.

207 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Gouraud to Millerand, 11/6/1920, Vol. 75; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 127, Général Billette to M.A.E., 21/1/1922. During the 1920s, the interests of the Alawi population on the mountain were closely linked to Cilicia. Economic ties between the two regions had long been established. Silk from the Jabal was sent to Cilicia for the local weaving industry along with olive oil, tobacco, olives and soap. Grain and cotton from Cilicia had long been sent to the mountain. de Vaumas, p. 187; Weulersse, Le Pays des Alaouites, pp. 49-50.

208 This not only included rifles - Shaykh Nuri Sha'lan of the Ruwala came into possession of a cannon after the war. de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 7.

209 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 228, Rapports à la Société des Nations, 1923, Caserane, p. 8-9.

210 A. La Croix, Le Controle Bédouin de Syrie, pp. 13-14.

211 Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh," p. 186; Chatty, p. 33.

212 Chatty, pp. 33-34. There were, however, reports that members of the Hadidiyin were ordered to leave the French zone because of pillaging near Homs. PRO,FO 371/6454, Palmer to F.O. 23/4/1921.

213 Eye-witness reports from the area at this time convey the chaos and destruction created by the inter-tribal feuding and the clashes between French troops and the Beduin in the region. The British consul reported that "Bolshevik propaganda has been discovered in the Homs-Hama districts... Every civilian train between Homs and Aleppo is preceded by hostile tribesmen. Hama was recently full of Beduin and was very restless... Two caravans between Hama and Aleppo have been completely pillaged." PRO,FO 371/6454, Sataw to F.O., Beirut, 15/2/1921.

214 de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 4; Lewis, Nomads and Settlers, pp. 148-169; La Croix, p. 16.

215 Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh," p. 186.

216 La Croix, p. 10; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 126, 4/2/1927.

217 Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh," p. 187; de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 10; La Croix, p. 37.

218 Yedid, p. 48; Chatty, p. 40; Cozma, p. 26.

219 La Croix, p. 41; de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," pp. 10-11; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol.298, "Frontiers", 1926.

220 de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie," p. 10.

221 Daker, p. 151; Yedid, p. 37.

222 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 126, Gouraud to MAE, 2/7/1921.

223 AAE:Serie E: Syrie-Liban, Rapport du Gouvernement Français à la Société des Nations, 1932; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 253, Rapports Commerciaux et Agricoles 1928.

224 Cozma, p. 9.

225 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 253, Rapports Commerciaux et Agricoles 1928.

226 Chatty, p. 307; T. Petran, Syria, London, 1969, p. 195.

227 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Rapport du Gouvernement Français à la Société des Nations, 1940, p. 37.

228 Kalla, p. 158.

229 Chatty, p. 122; Weulersse, Paysans, pp. 115-116.

230 Latron, p. 60; Hannoyer, p. 274; AAE:Serie E: Vol. 340, "L'élevage du Mouton dans les états du Levant," Le Grange to MAE, 2/12/1929.

231 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 340, "L'élevage du Mouton dans les états du Levant," Le Grange to MAE, 2/12/1929.

232 Ibid.

233 Achard, "Le coton en Cilicie et en Syrie," p. 47; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 76, Achard to MAE, 17/1/1921.

234 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 60, "Valeur économique de la Syrie," de Berthelot to MAE.

235 The annual production of Syrian cotton had fallen to around 2,000 tons. AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 339, "La Culture du Coton en Syrie: Note sommaire au sujet d'un projet d'organisation sur une grande échelle," Wilhelm to Poincaré, 3/19/1923.

236 Ibid.

237 Warriner, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East, p. 25.

238 Thoumin, "Le Ghab", p. 495; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 3, Wilhelm to Poincaré. 3/19/1923.

239 AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.339, Weygand to Poincaré, 13/12/1923. The terms of the Mandate dictated that all nationals of the great powers comprising the League of Nations were on the same footing with those of the Mandatory power and were to be given equal consideration in economic, commercial and industrial affairs. Thus, in theory, French financial and commercial interests were not to receive any preferential treatment in the question of concessions, a situation which was a constant source of anxiety to Mandate officials. See also: AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol.339, "La culture du Coton en Syrie", Wilhelm to Poincaré, 19/3/1923.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid.

243 Ibid; AAE: Serie-E, Syrie-Liban, vol. 340, 10/7/1929.

244 Metral, p. 467.

245 Desloges, p. 7.

246 Ibid; Anon, "Les résultats de la collaboration franco - syrienne", Académie Agricole Française, p. 110.

247 Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 140; Klat, Land Tenure, p. 109; A. Hanna, al-harakat al-ʿumaliya fi suriya wa lubnan, 1900-1945, Damascus, 1973, pp. 87-88; AAE: Série-E, Syrie-Liban, vol. Rapport du Gouvernement Français à la Société des Nations, 1932.

248 de Boucheman, "Les Bédouins de Syrie", p. 7; Caserane, p. 9.

249 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 242, Rapport à la Société des Nations: "Evènements de Hama," 7/10/1925; C. Caserane, pp. 8-9.

250 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 242, Rapport à la Société des Nations: "Evènements de Hama," Daclin to Gamelin, 17/7/1926; cU. al-Haddad and H. al-Qattan, Thawra Hamah cala al-tughyan al-faransi, Hama, 1945.

251 AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, "Rapport à la Société des Nations: "Evènements de Hama," Daclin to Gamelin, 3/9/1926. Other prominent notables detained during the insurrection were Fuad and Najib al-Barazi, Ibrihim Tayfur, all big absentee landlords of the plain.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.

254 Hanna, al-Qadiyya al-ziraciyya, p. ; de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur," pp. 22-23.

255 Weulersse, "Régime agraire," p. 61; Naaman, Le Pays de Homs Vol. II, p. 77; Klat, "Report on Land Tenure in Misherfe," pp. 87-9.

256 Warriner, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, p. 22.

257 Ibid; 86; Mullendar, p. 26.

258 Latron, p. 258; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 420, "Questions agricoles," 1929.

259 "Notes sur la propriété foncière dans la Syrie centrale," p. 136.

260 Latron, p. 112.

261 Warriner, Land and Poverty, p. 87. Warriner has established that the usual consumption of wheat or barley is 14 kilogrammes per month. To achieve this end it was necessary to crop about 45 acres. Anything under 3 feddans, (roughly 115 acres) was not sufficient for the peasant's subsistence as only 1/3 of this could be cultivated - owing to a shortage of live-stock. Yet the majority of the peasants of the Homs-Hama plain possessed under this amount.

262 Ibid; Klat, "Report on Land Tenure in Misherfe," p. 53; AAE:Série E: Syrie-Liban, Vol. 420, "Questions Agricoles," 1929.

263 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 58; Naaman, Le Pays de Homs, p.195.

264 Klat, Land Tenure, p. 58; Klat, "Report on Land Renure in Misherfe," p. 57; Warriner, Land and Poverty, p. 85.

265 de Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur," pp. 22-3.

266 F. Lawson, "The Social Bases for the Hama Revolt," MERIP Reports No. 110, Nov-Dec, 1982, p. 26.

267 Metral, p. 467.

268 G. Baer, Population and Society in the Arab East, pp. 151-3. In 1951, Akram Hourani was the main proponent of agrarian reform, openly supporting the fellahs in the 1951 revolt. The essence of the programme consisted in "limiting landed property in keeping with the extent to which the landlord is able to exploit it to the full" - without exploiting anyone else. In 1952 came the decree that the state domain was to be divided among the landless in holdings not exceeding 50 hectares in dryfarming areas; 10 hectares on irrigated land. The post-war land reform activities were more successful in the Homs-Hama plain than elsewhere in Syria. By the 1960s, the average size of the peasant's holding was the highest in the country. Lawson, p. 26; Petran, 136.

269 See A. Drysdale, "The Assad Regime and its Troubles," MERIP Reports, No. 110, Nov-Dec, 1982.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have attempted to assess the long-term effects of the gradual attachment of Syria to a world economic order dominated by Europe upon the pre-existing norms and structures of rural society. In this encounter, it was the interaction between developments internal to Syrian society and the powerful forces having their origins in the industrializing world which ultimately defined the direction of change and the character of the new social structures which emerged at the local level.

It is simply not a question of the older forms unravelling upon contact with a dynamic capitalist order. Many features of the pre-modern social formation, such as "feudal" modes of domination and coercion persisted and were even strengthened. Similarly, traditional agrarian arrangements, such as musha^{c}, proved to be highly adaptable and their essential features retained in response to the challenge presented by the progressive penetration of a market economy and the concentration of village lands into the hands of a small number of urban-based landlords.

The various strands of the social fabric, the traditional rural notables, the new class of urban-based landlords and merchant-moneylenders, the tribal shaykhs and the emerging strata of rural 'intermediaries' and 'middle' peasants who were able to

profit from the increased commercialization of the local economy can be perceived as bearing the stamp of different historical stages. The social conflict which this engendered is amply documented.

The development of a widening network of money-lending transactions among the peasants of the interior resulted in a much greater linkage between the towns and the surrounding countryside and the absorption of rural society into a cash economy directly tied to international markets. The increased money transactions ultimately enlarged the scope for small accumulations among a certain strata of the peasantry and rural artisans of the Ghuta, thus involving them in the expanding sphere of trade and exchange. The most striking characteristic of this network was the way goods and cash flowing through it were converted into usurious capital.

The mugharasa contract, which in the majority of cases gave cultivators anything from a quarter to a half of a newly-planted parcel of land after a specific period of time, also favoured capital accumulation among the peasants of the Ghuta. The mugharasi can be placed at the centre of the whole question of the formation of new classes from the ranks of the peasantry. Such contracts flourished in the agrarian economy from the late 19th century onwards and the mugharasi is linked to the decline of an active role of the landlord in the economic life of the village; indeed, the period under study witnessed his increasing dissociation from the agrarian scene.

The urban-based landlords had largely opted to disengage themselves from the complex network of patronage and obligation which had characterized agrarian society in the pre-modern period.

A more passive role on the part of the great landowning families had important implications in terms of the space which opened up for the rise of new social strata from among the peasant population, groups which were able to acquire a degree of control over the means of production and agricultural surplus. A partnership which required a much greater degree of responsibility on the part of the tenant-cultivator than was the case in the grain-growing plains, was well suited to an increase in commodity production. The fact that the peasant gained access to capital the moment the mugharasa contract went into effect and the absence of a debt to the landlord in the event of crop failure accounts for its great popularity. In many cases, the working partner was effectively co-opted into the landed class.

In the Homs-Hama region, the preponderance of vast estates and the changing structure of tribal society were the basic features of rural transformation. An important feature here was the redefinition of the shaykh's role with regard to his tribesmen. His increased proprietorial rights over tribal land and the gradual estrangement from his tribe took place within the context of Ottoman and later French strategies to bring the nomadic population under their control and their preoccupations

with establishing private property. The relationship of the shaykh to the semi-sedentary tribesmen gradually assumed the character of class domination, especially after the conversion of the former into proper landlords. The dispossession of many tribesmen from lands upon which they once exercised collective rights and their subsequent transformation into metayers was the outcome of this process. Consequently, the shaykh came to view his tribesmen in a new way, as a source of profit, with the ceding of entire villages to his control. With the weakening of the ties of obligation and dependence between shaykhs and their tribesmen, the shaykhs began to compete with one another and with the Hama notables for peasants on their estates.

A seemingly paradoxical process appears before us: the legacy of Ottoman rule was a decline of the military political power of the Bedouin shaykhs; yet at this time and during the French Mandate period, new conditions created the basis for the growth of the economic power of the shaykhs, who were able to have vast estates registered in their names. The way the French, in particular, intervened to rehabilitate the shaykh's position reveals their perpetual quest for "natural leaders" who could be of use to them in maintaining their rule over Syria. The formal structure of the tribe was maintained, while, at the same time, its internal relations were radically transformed. While propping up the tribal leaders, French imperialism in fact made them vulnerable: the shaykh became increasingly

superfluous to the settled tribesmen who, as a result of the communication structure established during French rule, was now not quite so dependent upon an intermediary in his dealings with the outside world.

These developments had, on the whole, very negative effects upon the region's agriculture, especially during the interwar period. At this time, the Homs-Hama plain was characterized by much uncultivated land and yet great numbers of peasants abandoned agriculture altogether.

The movement to the towns, which arose principally as a consequence of the impoverishment of peasant agriculture and the oppressive land production relationships on the great estates, is an important feature of the inter-war period. In contrast to the case of Mount Lebanon, where similar forces to those which operated in Syria in the second half of the 19th century and resulted not merely in the disintegration of the feudal order, but the ruin of the aristocratic families themselves, rural transformation in the Homs-Hama plain involved the formation of rigid social structures akin to a feudal system. As the Hama landlords settled their Alawi peasants (and the tribal shaykhs settled their tribes) onto the land, their powers of coercion over the latter greatly increased.

The Ghuta was one of the few regions of the Syrian interior where there was a broad class of peasant proprietors. However,

a glance at the distribution of agricultural property in the Syria interior before the reforms of 1958 reveal the true latifundia character of the structure of land distribution.

Land Distribution in 1945:

Ghuta & Marj	21	34	42	3
Homs	4	12	15	17
Hama	1	24	31	44

Source: Bureau de Documents Syrienne et Arabe, Etudes sur l'Agriculture Syrienne, Damascus, 1955, p.245

It is important to acknowledge that state domain during the Mandate period was largely composed of vast estates held by urban and tribal landlords. In the Hama district, for example, four big landlords possessed 86 out of 114 villages[1], thus the official figures representing large properties may be somewhat misleading.

Of the estimated 600,000 peasant families in Syria by the end of the Mandate period, more than half did not possess any land whatsoever[2]. Peasant properties represented about 13% of the total area. These were especially prominent in the Ghuta, yet they were only 4% in Homs and 1% in the Hama district.

Figures for the distribution of agricultural property for Syria as a whole before and after the Mandate period reveal the demise of peasant proprietorship.

	Before World War I		1945	
Types of Property	%	hectares	%	hectares
small 10ha.	26	1,557,350	15	1,097,491
medium 10-100ha.	15	2,226,700	33	2,892,414
large 100 + ha.	60	2,312,200	29	2,348,783
state domaines	?	1,815,000	23	1,593,000

Source: Bureau de documents Syrienne et Arabe, Etudes sur l'agriculture Syrienne, Damascus, 1955, p.245; J. Sorel, Le Mandat Francais et l'expansion economique de Syrie et Liban, Paris, 129, p.127.

In absence of a substantial entrepreneurial middle class and investment in agriculture and industry characterized the late Ottoman period, which witnessed the retreat of small peasant proprietors and artisans. The conditions created under French rule only accelerated this trend and hastened the process of social differentiation. The invasion of cheap European textiles and the stagnation of the region's trade caused by the division of the Ottoman Empire ultimately brought about the closure of hundreds of village mills and small workshops, culminating in a proletarianization of peasant-artisans, "who could no longer hope to be masters of their own trade" and saw themselves slotted into the position of wage-labourers[3].

The specific character of rural change in the Syrian interior clearly reveals that all structures are narrowly interdependent: a significant shift in one sphere gave rise to the transformation of all the others. Equally striking is the fact that traditional agrarian institutions and arrangements

eased the way for the penetration of capitalist relations in the countryside. But the resulting structure, to judge from the evidence before us, was neither 'capitalist' nor 'traditional', but rather a halfway house where the past was often evoked in the creation of new social and economic relations which were, in fact, without precedent.

FOOTNOTES CONCLUSION

1 Khader, B., "Réforme agraire en Syrie" Revue Française d'Etudes Politiques Méditerrannéens". July/August, 1975, p.77.

2 Ibid.

3 Longuenesse, E., "L'Industrialisation et sa signification sociale" in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980, p.357.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

European Archives and Documentary Sources

France, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, (Paris). Correspondance Politique et Commerciale des Consulats de Beyrouth et de Damas, 1839-1913, (inclusive of "Nouvelle Série" volumes); Levant 1918-1929, Série E: Syrie-Liban, vols 1-450.

Great Britain, Foreign Office Archives, Series F.O.78 and F.O.195 for the Damascus and Beirut Consulates 1840-1913; F.O.371 (Syria) 1921-1930.

_____, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, Reports from Beirut and Damascus for the years 1850-1913.

Richard Wood, Private Papers, St Antony's College, Oxford.

Official Documents and Sources (published)

Bureau de Documentation Syrienne et Arabe, Etudes sur l'Agriculture Syrienne, Damas, 1955.

Cadastre des Etats de Syrie et du Liban. "Notice sur le démembrement et l'aménagement des terres 'Mouchaa' possédées dans l'indivision collective". 1935.

Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade. Economic Conditions in Syria, July, 1930.

France. Rapports Commerciaux des Agents Diplomatiques et Consulaires de France, 1892-1896 (8 vol), Paris.

Syria. Statistical Abstract, Damascus, 1955.

United States. American Consular Reports on Syria, 1880-1900.

Mémoires en stage of the Centre de Hautes Etudes Administratives sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes (CHEAM), Paris.

Berthelot, "Notes sur la mise en valeur de la région du 'Caza' de Homs." #249. Homs, February, 1938.

de Boucheman, A., "Les Bédouins en Syrie", #126. 23 April, 1937.

Caserane, Capitaine. "Nomadisme et sédentarisation", #1559.

Cozma, Nayet, "La sédentarisation des nomades en Syrie, #4208, December, 1967.

Desloges, Delelée, "Aperçu sur la vie rurale dans la Syrie du Nord", #876. June 6, 1946.

La Croix, André, "Le Contrôle Bédouin de Syrie", #1147. April 9, 1947.

Massa, Cdt., "Notables de Syrie", #1618. June 23, 1949.

Mullendar, Jacques, "Un aspect du développement dans un pays agricole", #610, 1960.

Weulersse, Jacques. "La géographie humaine du Proche-Orient". #754. October 26, 1945.

Arabic Sources

Abū ᶜIzz ad-Dīn, S., Ibrāhīm Bāshā fī sūriyā, Beirut, 1929.

Abū-Rāshid, Ḥannā, Jabal al-durūz, Cairo, 1925.

Al-Bāshā, Qustantin, (ed.), Mudhakkirāt ta'rikhiyya, Lebanon, n.d.

Al-Budayrī, Aḥmad, Ḥawādith Dimashq al-yawmīya A.H. 1154-1176, (ed.), A. ᶜAbd al-Karīm, Cairo, 1959.

ᶜAwaḍ, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, al-Idāra al-ᶜUthmānīya fī Wilāyat Sūriyā 1864-1914, Cairo, 1969.

Al-Dimashqī, M., Ta'rīkh hawādith al-Shām wa-lubnān 1197-1257, 1782-1842, (ed.) L. Ma'lūf, Beirut, 1912.

Al-Ḥaddād, ᶜUthmān and Ḥasan al-Qaṭṭān, Thawra Ḥamāh ᶜalā al-ṭughyān al-faransī, Hama, 1945.

Al-Ḥaṣanī, Alī, Ta'rīkh sūriyā al-iqtiṣādī, Damascus, 1924.

Al-Muḥibbī, Muḥammad, Khulāṣāt al-āthār fī aᶜyān al-qarn al-ḥadī ᶜashar, Vol.IV, Cairo, 1869.

Al-Najjar, ᶜAbdullah. Banū Maᶜrūf fī Jabal Ḥawrān. Damascus, 1927.

Al-Qāsimī, Muḥammad Saᶜīd. Qāmūs al-sināᶜat al-shāmīya, ed. Ẓāfir al-Qāsimī, 2 Vols. Paris, 1960.

Ibn Adam, Khitāb al-Kharāj, Cairo, 1920.

Ghurāyba, ᶜAbd al-Karīm, Sūriyā fi'l qarn al-tāsiᶜ al-ᶜashr, Cairo, 1961-2,

Ḥannā, Abdullah, Al-Haraka al-ᶜummalīya fi sūriyā wa lubnān, Damascus, 1973.

_____, al-Qaḍīyya al-zirāᶜīyya wa al-harakat al-fallahīyya fi sūriyā wa lubnān, Vol.I, 1820-1920. Beirut, 1975.

Hitti, Philip, "al-Sūriyyūn fi al-wilayāt al-muttahida", al-Muqtataf, 1922.

Khayr, Ṣafūḥ, Madīnat Dimashq: Dirāsa fī jughrāfīya al-mudun, Damascus, 1969.

Kurd ᶜAlī, Muḥammad, Khiṭaṭ al-Shām, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1969. Damascus, 1925.

_____, Ghūtat Dimasḥq, Damascus, 1953.

Qaṣāṭilī, Nuᶜmān, al-Rawḍa al-ghanā fī Dimashq al-fayḥā, Beirut, 1879.

Rustum, A.J., Al-Maḥfūzāt al-Malikyya al-Miṣrīyya, 4 Vols. Beirut, 1940-3.

Sāmī, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, Safar al-salām fī bilād al-shām, Cairo, 1896.

Sbanu (ed), Aḥmad Ghassan, Ta'rīkh hawādith al-shām wa lubnān 1782-1841, Damascus, 1981.

Tawil, M.A., Ta'rīkh alᶜAlawīyīn, Latakia, 1st edn 1924, (3rd edn), 1979.

Zakariya, W., Al-rīf al-sūriyā, Vol.I. Damascus, 1953.

Accounts of Contemporary Observers and Travellers

Addison, C.G., Damascus and Palmyra; a Journey to the East, Philadelphia, 1938/repr. New York, 1973.

Anon., Rambles in the Deserts of Syria, London, 1864.

_____, "La Province Turque de Latakié" in Annales des Voyages, 1 Feb, 1867.

Baedeker, K., Palestine and Syria: A Handbook for Travellers, London, 1876.

Bell, Gertrude, The Desert and the Sown, London, 1907.

Bergheim, S., "Land Tenure in Palestine" Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly, 1894.

Blondel, E., Deux ans en Syrie et en Palestine, Paris, 1840.

Bowring, John, Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1840, Vol XXI.

Buckingham, James Silk, Travels among the Arab Tribes Inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine, London, 1825.

Burckhardt, J.L., Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys, 2 Vols, London, 1831.

_____, Travels in Syria and the Holy Land, London, 1822.

Burton, Richard F., and Tyrwhitt-Drake, F., Unexplored Syria, Vol.I & II. London, 1872.

Conder, C.R., Tent Work in Palestine, London, 1887.

Cuinet, Vital, Syrie, Liban et Palestine, Paris, 1896.

Cunningham, A., The Early Correspondence of Richard Wood, 1832-1841. London, 1966.

Delbet, E.M., "Paysans en communauté et en polygamie de Bousrah dans le pays de Haouran (Syrie-Empire Ottoman) in Le Play", Les ouvriers de l'Orient et leurs essaims de la Mediterranée, (2nd edn.), Vol.II. Tours, 1877.

Doughty, C.M., Travels in Arabia Deserta, 2 Vols. London, 1924.

Ewing, Rev. W., "A Journey in the Hauran" Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1895.

Farley, J.L., Modern Turkey, London, 1872.

_____, The Massacres in Syria, London, 1861.

_____, Two Years in Syria, London, 1848.

Graham, Cyril, "On the Hauran", Journal of The Royal Geographic Society, Vol.XXVIII, 1858.

Guys, H. (French Consul), Statistique du Pashalik d'Alep, Marseille, 1853.

Lammens, H., "Voyage au pays des Nosairis", Revue de l'Orient Chrétien #5. 1900.

Lortet, Louis, La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1884.

MacAlister, R.A.S., "A History of the Doings of the Fellahin During the First Half of the 19th Century from Native Sources", Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, London, 1905.

MacGregor, John, Commercial Statistics, Vol.II. "Ottoman Empire". London, 1847.

Medawar, Wady, La Syrie Agricole, Beauvais, 1903.

Murray, John, A Handbook for Travellers in Syria & Palestine, London, 1858.

Oliphant. L., The Land of Gilead, Edinburgh, 1880.

Porter. J.L., Five Years in Damascus, Vols.I & II. London, 1855.

Post, Rev. George E., "Essays on the Sects and Nationalities of Syria and Palestine" (1 & 2), Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, Jan, 1891.

Robinson, George, Three Years in the East: Syria 1829-32, London, 1837.

Russel, A., The Natural History of Aleppo, Vol.II, (2nd edn.), London, 1794.

Seetzen, M.V.J., "Mémoire pour arriver à la connaissance des tribus Arabes in Syrie" in Annales des Voyages de la Géographie et de l'Histoire #8. Paris, 1804.

de Ségur, Dupeyron, La Syrie et les Bédouins sous l'administration Turque, Paris, 1855.

de Thevenot, Jean, Voyages de Monsieur de Thévenot en Europe, Asie et Afrique, (3rd edn.), 5 Vols. Amsterdam, 1727.

Thomson, W.M., The Land and the Book III: Lebanon, Damascus and Beyond Jordan, New York, 1885.

Ubicini. A., Etat présent de l'empire Ottoman, Paris, 1876.

_____, Letters on Turkey, (trans. Lady Easthope), London, 1856 II.

Volney, C.F. Travels Through Syria and Egypt in the Years 1783,1784,1785, (trans.) 2 Vols. London, 1787.

_____, "Etat du Commerce du Levant en 1784", Oeuvres, Paris, 1825. Reprod. in C. Issawi (ed) Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966.

Weakley, E., "Report on the Conditions and Prospects of British Trade in Syria". Great Britain, Accounts and Papers, 1911, LXXXVII.

Werry, (Consul), "Document; Rural Syria in 1845", Middle East Journal, Vol.16. 1962.

Wilson, C.T., Peasant Life in the Holy Land, London, 1906.

Studies and General Works in Western Languages

Abdel-Malek, Anouar, "Sociology and Economic History: an Essay on Mediation" in M.A. Cook Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, Oxford, 1970.

Abu-Husayn, Abdul-Rahim, "The Iltizam in 16th Century Syria" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure & Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Amin, Samir, Unequal Development, London, 1976.

_____, The Arab Nation: Nationalism & Class Struggle, London, 1978.

Anon., "Notes sur la propriété foncière dans la Syrie centrale", L'Asie Francaise, #309, 1933.

_____, "Le Coton en Syrie", L'Asie Francaise, 1920.

_____, "Ce Que les Syriens Attendent de la France", L'Asie Française, 1920.

_____, "Les résultats de la collaboration Franco-Syrienne", Académie Agricole Français, 1922.

_____, "La Syrie au point de vue agricole ", Académie Agricole Française 1925.

Antaki, I., "Deir-Atieh, essai d'ethnologie rurale", #5. Journal d'Agriculture Tropicale, Paris, 1973.

Archard, E.C., "Notes sur la Syrie", L'Asie Française, 1922.

Asad, Talal, "Two European Images of Non-European Rule" in T. Asad, (ed.), Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter, London, 1973.

_____, "The Bedouins as a military force" in C. Nelson (ed.), The Desert and the Sown: Nomads in a Wider Society, Berkeley, 1973.

_____, "Anthropological Texts and Ideological Problems: an analysis of Cohen on Arab Villages" in Review of Middle East Studies, Vol.I, 1975.

_____, and Volpe, H., "Concepts of Modes of Production" in Economy and Society, V. 1976.

Ashtor, Eliyahu, A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages, Berkeley and London, 1976.

Baer, Gabriel, "Iltizam" in Encyclopaedia of Islam, (new edition).

_____, Population and Society in the Arab East, London, 1964.

_____, "Village and City in Egypt and Syria, 1500-1914" in Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East, London, 1982.

_____, "The Evolution of Private Landownership in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent" in C. Issawi (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966.

Batatu, Hanna, "Syria's Muslim Brethren", Merip Reports #110. Nov-Dec, 1982.

_____, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq, Princeton, 1978.

_____, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society". Arab Studies Quarterly 1. 1979.

Beaumont, P and Blake, G., The Middle East: A Geographical Study, London, 1976.

Bernard, A., "Les populations de la Syrie et de la Palestine d'après les derniers recensements", Annales de Géographie, 33. 1924.

Besnard, Col. G., "Damas, Son Oasis, Ses Habitants", L'Asie Française, 1931.

Bianquis, Anne-Marie, "Le problème de l'eau à Damas et dans sa Ghouta", Revue Géographique de Lyon, 1. 1977.

_____, "Le marché en gros des fruits et légumes a Damas", Revue Géographique de Lyon, Vol.III. 1978.

_____, "Damas et la Ghouta" in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

Blaisdell, D.C., European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire, New York, 1929.

Boserup, Ester, The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure, Chicago, 1965.

de Boucheman, A., Un petite cite caravanière: Sukhné, Documents d'Etudes Orientales. Damas, 1939.

_____, "Note sur la rivalité de deux tribus moutonnières de Syrie: Les Mawali et les Hadidiyn", Revue d'Etudes Islamiques, #1. 1934.

Bulliet, R.W., "Le Chameau et la roue au Moyen Orient" in Annales, 24, #5. Sept-Oct, 1969.

Burke, Edmund III, "A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912-1925", Middle Eastern Studies, May, 1973.

Cardon, Louis, Le régime de la propriété foncière en Syrie et au Liban, Paris, 1932.

Chatty, Dawn, From Camel to Truck: the Bedouin in the Modern World, New York, 1986.

Chevallier, Dominique, Villes et travail en Syrie du XIXe au XXe Siècle, Paris, 1982.

_____, "Production et société à Damas à la fin du XIXe siècle", Annales, XIX. 1964.

_____, "Signes de Beyrouth en 1834", Villes et Travail en Syrie du XIXe au XXe siècle, Paris, 1982.

_____, "Lyon et Syrie: les bases d'une intervention", Villes et Travail en Syrie du XIXe au XXe Siècle, Paris, 1982.

_____, "Aux Origines des Troubles Agraires Libanais en 1858", in Annales, Paris. January, 1956.

_____, "Les Cadres Sociaux de l'Economie Agraire dans le Proche-Orient du début du XIXe Siècle: Le cas du Mont Liban", in M.A. Cook (ed.), Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, London, 1970.

_____, "Un exemple de Résistance Technique de l'Artisanat Syrien aux XIXe et XXe Siècle, Les Tissus 'ikates' d'Alep et de Damas" in Syria, #30, 1962.

_____, "A Syrian Craft" in Middle East Forum, June, 1963.

_____, "Techniques et Société en Syrie, le Filage de la Soie et du Coton à Alep et à Damas" in Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, Tome XVIII. 1963-64.

_____, "A Damas, production et société à la fin du XIXe siècle" in Annales, XIX, 1964.

_____, "De la Production lente à l'économie dynamique en Syrie" in Annales, XXI, 1966.

_____, "Western Development and Eastern Crisis in the Mid-19th Century: Syria confronted with the European Economy" in Polk, W.R. and Chambers, R.L. (eds.), Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East of the Nineteenth Century, Chicago, 1968.

_____, La Société du Mont Liban à l'Epoque de la Révolution industrielle en Europe, Paris, 1971.

Cohen, Amnon, Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration, Jerusalem, 1973.

Cook, M.A., (ed.) Studies in the Economic History of The Middle East, Oxford, 1970.

Daker, N., Sédentarisation des bédouins nomades en Syrie, Paris, 1973.

Davidson, Roderick H., Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876, Princeton, 1963.

Dols, Michael, The Black Death in the Middle East, Princeton, 1971.

Ducruet, J., Les Capitaux Européens au Proche Orient, Paris, 1964.

Ebied, R.Y. and Young, M.J.L., (eds.), Some Arabic Legal Documents of the Ottoman Pd, Leiden, 1976.

Elisseef, N., "Ghuta" and "Dimashk" in l'encyclopédie de l'Islam (new edition).

Emerit, M., "La crise syrienne et l'expansion économique française en 1860", La Revue Historique, CCVII. 1952.

Firestone, Ya'akov, "Production and Trade in an Islamic Context: Sharika Contracts in the Trasitional Economy of Northern Samaria, 1853-1943", Vols.I and II. International Journal of Middle East Studies, 6. 1975.

_____, "Land Equalization and Factor Scarcities: Holding Size and the Burden of Impositions in Imperial Central Russia and the late Ottoman History", Journal of Economic History, Vol.XLI,4. December, 1981.

_____, "Faddan and Musha: Agricultural Holdings and The Burden of Impositions in the Late Ottoman Palestine", Unpublished paper presented to the Middle East Economic History Conference. Princeton University, 1974.

Fischer, Stanley, Ottoman Land Laws, London, 1919.

Fischer, W.B., The Middle East, a Physical, Social and Regional Geography, London, 1975.

Gerber, Haim, "Modernization in 19th Century Palestine - the Role of Foreign Trade" in Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.XVIII. July, 1982.

Gibb, H.A.R. and Bowen, H., Islamic Society and the West, Vol.I and II. London, 1950 and 1957.

Gilsenan, Michael, "A Modern Feudality? Land and Labour in North Lebanon" in T. Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Godelier, Maurice, "The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and Marxist Models of Social Evolution" in David Seddon (ed.), Relations of Production, London, 1978.

Graham-Brown, Sarah, "The Political Economy of Jabal Nablus, 1920-1948" in R. Owen (ed.), Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Oxford, 1982.

Granott, A., The Land System in Palestine, London, 1952.

Gross, Max, Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus, 1860-1909, Ph.D. thesis. Georgetown University, Washington DC, 1979.

Habib, Hassan, "Land Tenures in the Middle East", Pakistan Horizon, Vol.III. 1956.

Hakim, George, "Land Tenure Reform", Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1954.

Hannoyer, Jean, "Le monde rural avant les réformes" in A. Raymond (ed.), La Syrie d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

Hasan, M.S., "The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq: 1864-1964: A Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy" in M.A. Cook (ed.), Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, London, 1970.

Hilan, Riskallah, Culture et developpement en Syrie et dans les pays retardés, Paris, 1969.

Himadeh, Saᶜid, B., (ed.), The Economic Organization of Syria, Beirut, 1938.

Hindess, B. and Hirst, P., Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, London, 1975.

Hitti, P.K., "Syria and Lebanon in the 19th Century" Journal of World History, Vol.II, #3. 1955.

Hourani, Albert, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables" in W.R. Polk and R.L. Chambers (eds.), Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968.

_____, "History" in L. Binder (ed.), The Study of the Middle East, Chicago, 1970.

_____, Syria and Lebanon, London, 1946.

_____, "The Fertile Crescent in the 18th Century", Studia Islamica, #8. 1957.

_____, A Vision of History, Beirut, 1961.

Hurewitz, J.C., Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, Princeton, 1956.

Hutteroth, W.D. and Abdulfattah, K., Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria, Erlangen, 1977.

Huvelin, Paul, (ed.), Que vaut la Syrie?, Congrès Français de la Syrie. Paris, 1919.

Inalcik, Halil, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration" in T. Naff and R. Owen, (eds.), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

_____, "The Ottoman Economic Mind and Aspects of the Ottoman Economy" in M.A. Cook (ed.), Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, London, 1970.

_____, The Ottoman Empire; the Classical Age 1300-1600, London, 1973.

Islamoglu-Inan, Huri, "Paths of Social and Economic Transformation in Ottoman Rural Society: the Case of North-Central Anatolia in the 16th Century". Unpublished paper; Harvard University, 1980.

Issawi, Charles, (ed., The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, Chicago and London, 1966.

_____, "British Trade and the Rise of Beirut; 1830-1860", International Journal of Middle East Studies, #8, 1977.

_____, "Economic Growth in the Arab World Since 1800: Some Observations", Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1964.

_____, "Population and Resources in the Ottoman Empire" in T. Naff and R. Owen, (eds.), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

_____, "The Decline of Middle East Trade" in D.S. Richards (ed.), Islam and the Trade of Asia, Oxford, 1970.

Kalla, M.S., The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Syria 1831-1914, Ph.D. thesis, American University. Washington DC, 1969.

Kanzadian, Z. and de Berthelot, A., Atlas de Géographie Economique de Syrie et du Liban, Paris, 1926.

Karkar, Yakub N., "Economic Development in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1914" in Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1968.

Karpat, Kemal H., "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/2-1893" International Journal of Middle East Studies, #9. 1978.

_____, "The Land Regime, Social Structure and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire" in Polk and Chambers, (eds.), Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968.

Keyder, Caglar, "The Dissolution of the Asiatic Mode of Production", Economy and Society, V, 1976.

_____, The Definition of a Peripheral Economy: Turkey 1923-1929, Cambridge, 1981.

_____, "Paths of Rural Transformation in Turkey", ESA Working Paper. January, 1980.

_____, "Surplus" in Journal of Peasant Studies II, #2. 1975.

Khader, B., "Reforme agraire en Syrie", Revue française d'etudes politiques mediterranéennes, July-August, 1975.

Khalidi, Tarif, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

_____, "Tribal Settlement and Patterns of Land Tenure in Early Medieval Palestine" in Tarif Khalidi (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Khoury, Philip S., The Politics of Nationalism: Syria and the French Mandate 1920-1936, Ph.D. thesis. Harvard University, 1980.

_____, Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus: 1860-1920, Cambridge, 1983.

_____, "The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Syria Between Two World Wars", Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.18, #2. April, 1982.

Klat, Paul, Land Tenure in Syria and Lebanon and its Economic and Social Effects, B.Litt, Oxford University, 1948.

_____, "Whither Land Tenure in the Arab World", Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1955.

_____, "Musha Holdings and Land Fragmentation in Syria", Middle East Economic Papers, Beirut, 1957.

_____, "The Origins of Land Ownership in Syria", Middle East Economic Papers, 1958.

_____, "Report on Land Tenure in Ashrafie Souhnaya", unpublished ms. prepared for the Middle East Supply Centre. October, 1944.

_____, "Report on Lane Tenure in Misherfe", unpublished ms. prepared for the Middle East Supply Centre. November, 1944.

Laffey, J., "The Roots of French Imperialism in the 19th Century: the case of Lyon", French Historical Studies, VI,I. Spring, 1969.

Latron, André, La vie rurale en Syrie et au Liban, Beirut, 1936.

Lawson, Fred, "The Social Bases for the Hamah Revolt", Merip Reports, #110. Nov-Dec, 1982.

Lewis, Bernard, "Some Reflexions on the decline of the Ottoman Empire", Studia Islamica, 1958.

_____, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, London, 1968

_____, "Ottoman Land Tenure and Taxation in Syria", Studia Islamica, Vol.50. 1979.

Lewis, N.H., "Malaria, Irrigation and Soil Erosion - in Central Syria", Geographical Revue, XXXV, Vol.39. April, 1949.

Lewis, Norman N., "The Frontier of Settlement in Syria: 1800-1950" in C. Issawi (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East, Chicago, 1966.

_____, Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980, Cambridge, 1987.

Longrigg, Stephen, Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate, London, 1958.

Longuenesse, Elizabeth, "L'Industrialisation et sa signification sociale" in A. Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

MacAdam, Henry, "Some Aspects of Land Tenure and Social Development in the Roman Near East: Arabia, Phoenicia and Syria" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Mantran, Robert, "Transformation du commerce dans l'empire Ottoman au 18ème siècle" in R. Owen and T. Naff, (eds.), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

_____, and Sauvaget, J., Reglements fiscaux ottomans; les provinces syriennes, Beirut, 1951.

Ma'oz, Moshe, "Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period Between 1840 and 1861", Bulletin of Oriental and African Studies, #29. 1966.

_____, Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861, The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society, Oxford, 1968.

Marx, Karl, Pre-capitalist Economic Formations, E. Hobsbawm (ed.). London, 1964.

Métral, Françoise, "Land Tenure and Irrigation Projects in Syria" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Montagne, N., "French Policy in North Africa and Syria", Royal Institute of International Affairs, #2, Vol.XVI, March-April, 1937.

Naaman, Anwar, "Précisions sur la structure agraire dans la region de Homs-Hama (Syrie)", Bulletin de l'Association des Geographes Francais, March-April, 1950.

_____, Le pays de Homs: etude de regime agraire et d'economie rurale, these de doctorat, 2 vols. Universite de Paris - Sorbonne, 1951.

Naff, T. and Owen, R., (eds.) Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

Nieger, Colonel, "Choix de documents sur le territoire des Alaouites", Revue du Monde Musulman, Vol.XLIX. Mars, 1922.

Owen, Roger, "Introduction: Resources, Population and Wealth" in R. Owen and T. Naff, (eds.), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

_____, "The Middle East in the 18th Century - an Islamic Society in decline: a critique of Gibb and Bowen's Islamic Society and the West", Review of Middle East Studies, #1. 1975.

_____, The Middle East in the World Economy: 1800-1914, London, 1981.

_____, "Islam and Capitalism: a Critique of Rodinson", Review of Middle East Studies, #2. 1976.

_____, "The Development of Agricultural Production in 19th Century Egypt: Capitalism of What Type?" in A.L. Udovitch (ed.), The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900, Princeton, 1981.

_____, "Agricultural Production in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of the Period 1890-1939" in P.J. Vatikiotes, (ed.), Egypt Since the Revolution, London, 1968.

Padel, W. and Steeg, I., De la législation foncière Ottomane, Paris, 1904.

Panzac, Daniel, La Peste dans l'Empire Ottoman 1700-1850, Louvain, 1985.

Pascual, Jean-Paul, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane: Le XIXe siècle" in A. Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

_____, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the 17th Century according to the Archives of the City's Military Tribunal" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Petran, Tabitha, Syria, London, 1972.

Poliak, A.N., Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and the Lebanon 1250-1900, London, 1939.

Puryear, Vernon J., France and the Levant, University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1941.

_____, International Economics and Diplomacy in the Levant, Stanford, 1935.

Rabbath, Edmond, "L'insurrection syrienne de 1925-1927", Revue Historique, #542. April-June, 1982.

Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, "Land Tenure Problems and their Social Impact in Syria Around the Middle of the 19th Century" in Tarif Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

_____, "Les Registres des Tribunéaux de Damas comme source Pour l'Histoire de la Syrie", Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, Tome XXVI (1973), Damas, 1974.

_____, "Economic Relations Between Damascus and The Dependent Countryside, 1743-1771" in A.L. Udovitch, (ed.), The Islamic Middle East 700-1900, Princeton, 1981.

_____, "The Local Forces in Syria in the 17th and 18th Centuries" in V.J. Perry and M.E. Yapp, (eds.), War, Technology and Society in the Middle East, London, 1975.

_____, The Province of Damascus 1723-1783, Beirut, 1970.

_____, "The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy: The Case of Damascus 1840-1870", unpublished paper prepared for the IIe Congres International d'Historie Economique et Sociale de la Turquie. Strasbourg, 1-5 July, 1980.

Raymond, André, "La Syrie, du Royaume Arabe à l'indépendance (1914-1946)" in A. Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

_____, La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

Redfield, R., The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture, Chicago, 1965.

Roberts, Stephen, The History of French Colonial Policy: 1870-1920, Hamden, Connecticut, 1963.

Rodinson, M. Islam and Capitalism. London, 1974.

Rotter, Gernot, "Natural Catastrophies and their Impact on Political and Economic Life During the 2nd Fitna" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Ruppin, A., Syria, New York, 1918.

Saba, Paul, "The Development and Decline of the Lebanese Silk Industry", B. Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1977.

_____, "Creation of the Lebanese Economy - Economic Growth in the 19th and 20th Centuries" in R. Owen, (ed.), Essays on the Crisis in the Lebanon, London, 1976.

Sabry, M., L'Empire Egyptien sous Mohamed Ali et la question d'Orient, Paris, 1930.

Saliba, Najib E., "The Achievements of Midhat Pasha as Governor of the Province of Syria, 1878-1880", International Journal of Middle East Studies, #9. 1978.

_____, "Emigration from Syria", Arab Studies Quarterly, Vol.3, #1. Winter, 1981.

Samman, M., "La situation démographique de la Syrie", Population, #6. 1976.

Sanlaville, Paul, "La Personnalité Géographique de la Syrie" in André Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

Sarc, O.C., "Ottoman Industrial Policy, 1840-1914" in C. Issawi, (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966.

Schatkowski-Schilcher, Linda, "The Hauran Conflicts in the 1860s: A chapter in the Rural History of Modern Syria", International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol.13, #2. May, 1981.

_____, The Decline of Syrian Localism; the Damascene Notables 1785-1870, D.Phil thesis. Oxford University, 1978.

Scholch, Alexander, "European Penetration and the Economic Development of Palestine, 1856-82" in Roger Owen, (ed.), Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine, London, 1982.

Seddon, David, Moroccan Peasants: A Century of Change in the Eastern Rif: 1870-1970, London, 1981.

_____, (ed.), Relations of Production, London, 1978.

_____, and Margulies, R., "The Politics of the Agrarian Question in Turkey: A Review of the Debate", unpublished paper, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, 1982.

Seurat, Michel, "Les Populations, l'état et la société" in A. Raymond, (ed.), La Syrie d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, 1980.

Shamir, Shimon, "The Modernization of Syria: Problems and Solutions in the Early Period of Abdulhamid" in W. Polk and R. Chambers, (eds.), Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, Chicago, 1968.

_____, "Belligerency in a Disintegrating Society: Factional Warfare in Ottoman Syria on the Eve of the Period of Modernization", Abr Nahrain, #2. 1972.

Shanin, T., "The Nature and Logic of the Peasant Economy" (Pts 1 and 2), Journal of Peasant Studies, #1, 1 - October, 1973; 2 - January, 1974.

Shaw, Stanford J., "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914", International Journal of Middle East Studies, #9. 1978.

_____, "The 19th Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System" in International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol.6. 1975.

Shorrock, Wm., "The Origin of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon: the Railroad Question, 1901-1914", International Journal of Middle East Studies, 1970.

_____, French Imperialism on the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon, 1900-1914, Madison, 1976.

Sluglett, P. and Farouk-Sluglett, M., "The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria: Some Preliminary Observations" in T. Khalidi, (ed.), Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East, Beirut, 1984.

Smilianskaya, I., "The Disintegration of Feudal Relations in Syria and Lebanon in the Middle of the 19th Century" in C. Issawi, (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966.

Spagnolo, J.P., "French Influence in Syria Prior to World War I", Middle East Journal, #23. 1969.

Spooner, B., "The Desert and the Sown: A new look at an old relationship" in T. Naff and R. Owen, (eds), Studies in 18th Century Islamic History, London, 1977.

Springborg, Robert, "Baathism in Practice: Agriculture, Politics and Political Culture in Syria and Iraq", Middle Eastern Studies, 1981.

Steppat, F., "Some Arabic Manuscript Sources on the Syrian Crisis of 1860" in J. Berque and D. Chevallier, (eds.), Les Arabes par leurs Archives, Paris, 1976.

Sulva, Rafii-Sukru, "The Ottoman Debt, 1850-1939" in C. Issawi, (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914, Chicago, 1966.

Sweet, Louise E., Tell Toqaan: A Syrian Village, Ann Arbor, 1960.

Tabet, J., La Syrie Historique, Géographique, Economique, Paris, 1921.

de Testa, I., Recueil des traités de la porte ottomane avec les puissances etrangères, Paris, 1865.

Thoumin, Richard, Géographie humaine de la Syrie Centrale, Tours, 1936.

_____, "Un Village Syrien: Adra", Mélanges géographiques, Grenoble, 1932.

_____, "Le Ghab", Revue de Geographique Alpine, XXIV. 1936.

_____, "La maison syrienne dans la plaine hauranaise, le bassin du Barada et sur les plateaux du Qalamoun", Documents d'Etudes Orientales, Tome II. L'institut Francais de Damas. Paris, 1932.

_____, "Notes sur l'amenagement et la distribution des eaux à Damas et dans sa Ghouta", Bulletin d'etudes orientales, V. 1934.

Tibawi, A.L., A Modern History of Syria, London, 1969.

Tower, Allen, The Oasis of Damascus, Beirut, 1935.

Traboulsi, I., L'agriculture syrienne entre les deux guerres, Beirut, 1948.

Tresse, R., "Usages saisonniers et dictons sur le temps dans la région de Damas", Revue des Etudes Islamiques, Vol.II. 1937.

_____, "L'irrigation dans le Ghouta de Damas", Revue des Etudes Islamiques, 1929.

_____, Le pélerinage syrien, Paris, 1937.

_____, "Histoire de la route de Beyrouth à Damas: 1857-1892", Géographie, #65. 1936.

Udovitch, A.L., Land, Population and Society: Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the 19th Century, Princeton, 1980.

_____, "Technology, Land Tenure and Rural Society: Aspects of continuity in the Agricultural History of the pre-modern Middle East" in A.L. Udovitch, (ed.), The Islamic Middle East: 700-1900, Princeton, 1981.

Vatter, Sherry, "The Use of Sales Documents in Writing the History of 19th Century Damascus", unpublished paper, U.C.L.A.

de Vaumas, E., "Le Djebel Ansarieh", Revue de Géographie Alpine, #48. 1960.

Verney, N. and Dambmann, G., Les Puissances étrangères dans le Levant, en Syrie et en Palestine, Paris, 1900.

Warriner, Doreen, Land and Poverty in the Middle East, London, 1948.

_____, Land Reform and Development in the Middle East: A Study of Egypt, Syria and Iraq, London, 1958.

_____, "Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent" in C. Issawi, (ed.), The Economic History of the Middle East, Chicago, 1966.

Weber, Max, Economy and Society, New York, 1968.

Weulersse, Jacques, Le Pays des Alaouites, 2 Vols. Tours, 1940.

_____, "Régime agraire et vie agricole en Syrie", Bulletin de l'Association des Géographes Francais, #113. April, 1938.

_____, "La primaute des cites dans l'economie Syrienne", Congrès International de Géographes Français, #113. April, 1938.

_____, Paysans de Syrie et du Proche Orient, Paris, 1946.

Williams, Sherry Lee, "Ottoman Land Policy and Social Change; the Syrian Provinces", Acta Orientalis Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Vol.XXXV, #1. 1981.

Yedid, H., "Crise et régression du système pastoral bédouin dans la région de Hama (Syrie)" in O. Aurenche, (ed.), Nomades et sédentaires, perspectives ethnoarchéologiques, Paris, 1984.

Young, G., Corps de droit Ottoman, Oxford, 1906.

APPENDIX I

THE POPULATION OF THE PROVINCE OF DAMASCUS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF			RELIGIOUS SECTS					
	TOWNS	VILLAGES	INHABITANTS	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS	JEWS	DRUZES	SHIAS	ALAWITES
DAMASCUS	1	-	111,552	89,500	11,772	5000	500	4,000	150
HOMS	1	78	46,005	38,000	8,010	-	-	-	-
HAMA	1	400	90,256	58,000	18,256	-	-	-	14,000
NABLOUS	2	225	14,083	11,880	1,006	200	-	1,000	-
HASBEYA	1	19	15,970	1,550	6,070	33,00	4,950	100	-
RASHAYA	1	16	10,798	480	5,318	-	3,000	-	-
KUNAITRA	-	64	13,000	12,950	50	-	-	-	-
HOULA	-	20	3,430	1,300	100	-	1,680	-	350
KARAMOUN	-	40	32,626	27,998	4,658	-	-	-	-
WADI BARADA	-	49	14,400	11,000	1,670	-	1,790	-	-
MARJ AL-GHOUTA	-	83	42,900	42,800	100	-	-	-	-
WADI AL-AJAM	-	50	27,902	26,400	902	-	600	-	-
IKI KAPOU	-	9	7,500	4,500	3,000	-	-	-	-
MARAT-AL-NU´MAN		60	8,000	7,980	20	-	-	-	-
BA´ALBEK	-	72	11,000	-	1,500	-	-	9,500	-
BIQA	-	65	10,300	7,000	3,300	-	-	-	-
JAIDOUR	-	46	11,000	11,000	-	-	-	-	-
HAURAN	-	85	28,490	16,980	10,740	-	-	770	-
JEBEL-HAURAN	-	31	6,400	-	1,400	-	3,500	1,500	-
IRDEB-AJLOUN	-	110	21,140	17,750	390	-	-	3,000	-
TOTAL	**8**	**1522**	**526,812**	**387,068**	**78,262**	**14,500**	**18,020**	**19,870**	**14,500**

SOURCES: PRO FO 196/226 Wood to Canning "Statistical Report of the Pashalik of Damascus" 19/5/1842

AAE:CC:Damas, Vol. I, Beaudin to Guizot, 4/6/1842

APPENDIX II

CENSUS FOR THE STATE OF DAMASCUS, 1922

Religious affiliation	City of Damascus	Kaza of Damascus	Wadi al-Ajam	Nabk	Jarud	Zabadani	Duma	City of Hama	Kaza of Hama	Kaza of Salamiya	City of Homs	Kaza of Homs
Sunnis	122,469	42,972	8,265	23,140	19,361	11,751	31,234	31,231	16,931	4,760	35,407	25,515
Shi^{c}is	150						360		5,298	1,226	94	
Greek Orthodox Christians	6,026	838	1,674	697	351	1,018	1,273	1,883	6,140	13	7,036	1,112
Other Christians	14,208	3	493	3,238	939	222	1,794	569	231	2	2,841	5,072
Isma^{c}ilis										8,641		
Druze	170	881	1,728									
Jews	5,943	4										
Immigrants;												
Armenians	5,997	8	51				17	5		28	1,593	
Foreigners	20,484	1,074	1,776	1,801	1,484	1,149	349	1,752	1,506	676	10,089	2,185

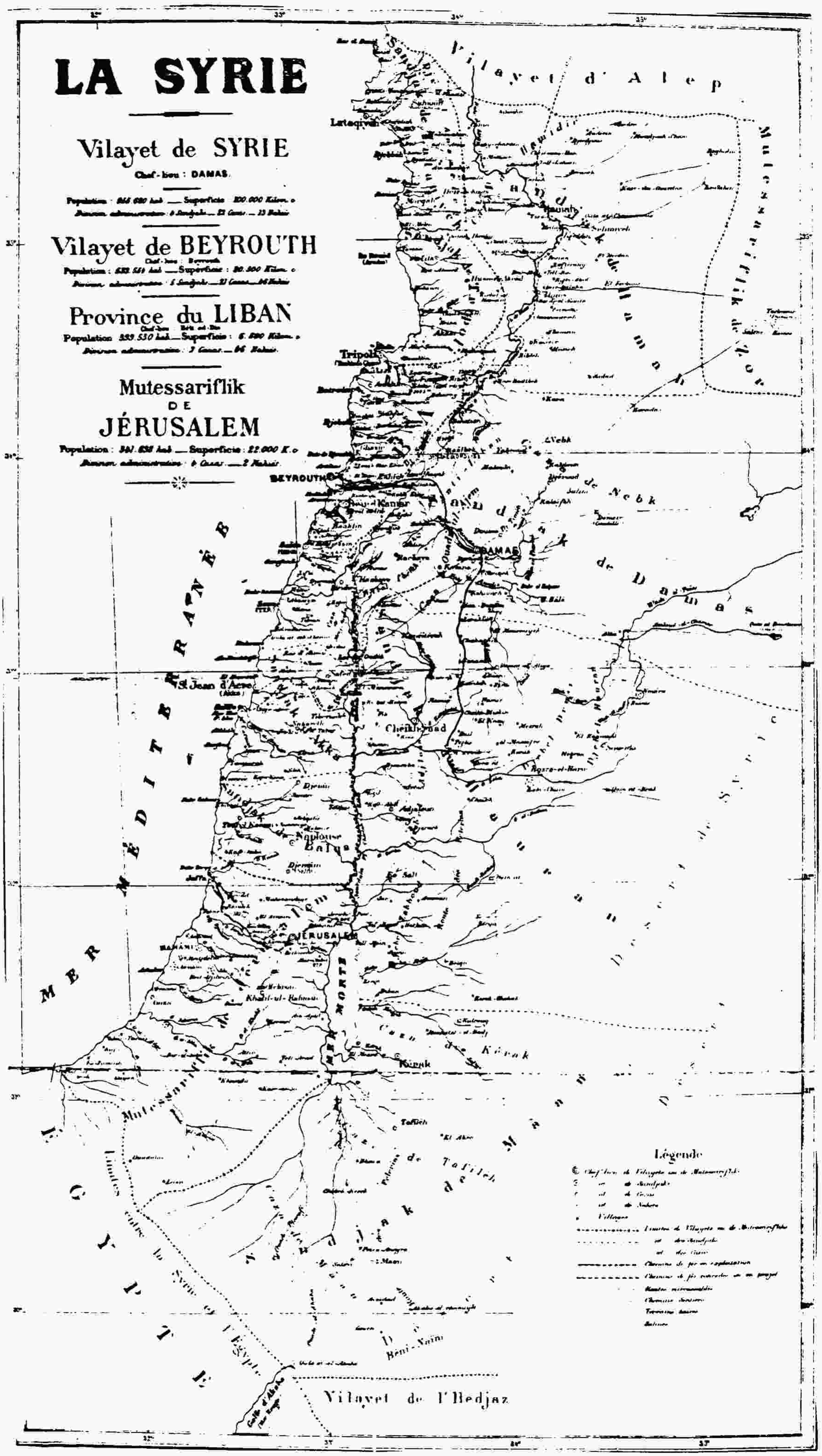
Source: Serie E: Syrie-Liban, 1918-1929, Vol.269, Recensement dans l'etat de Damas, 1922.

APPENDIX III

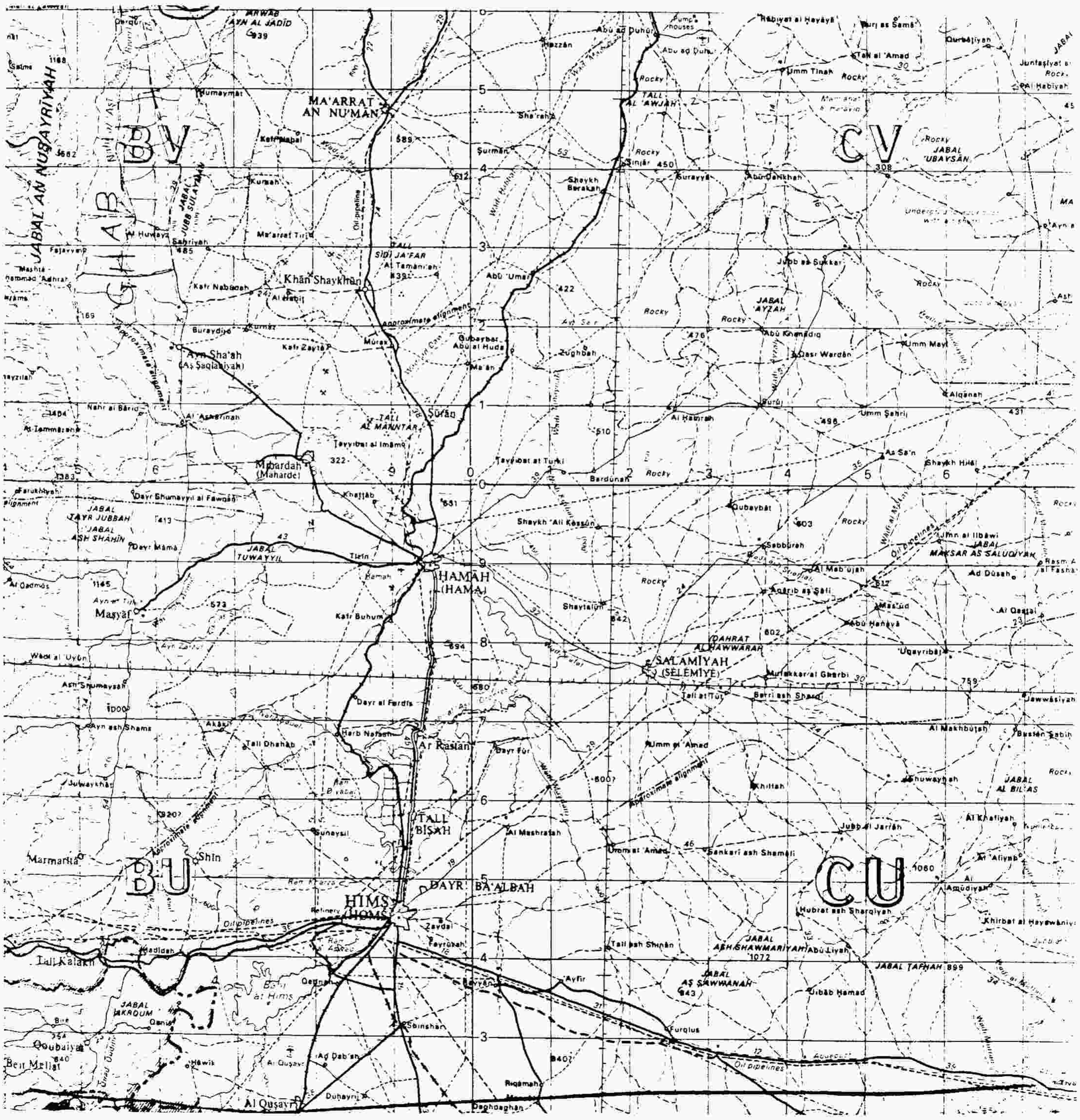
CENSUS FOR THE STATE OF DAMASCUS, 1922

	Sanjak of:		
	DAMASCUS	HAMA	HOMS
Homes	52,938	14,399	19,184
Churches	60	12	35
Mosques	466	68	84
Schools	189	27	68
Factories	28	2	12
Illiterates	246,273	70,297	66,266
Literates	78,396	10,117	13,794

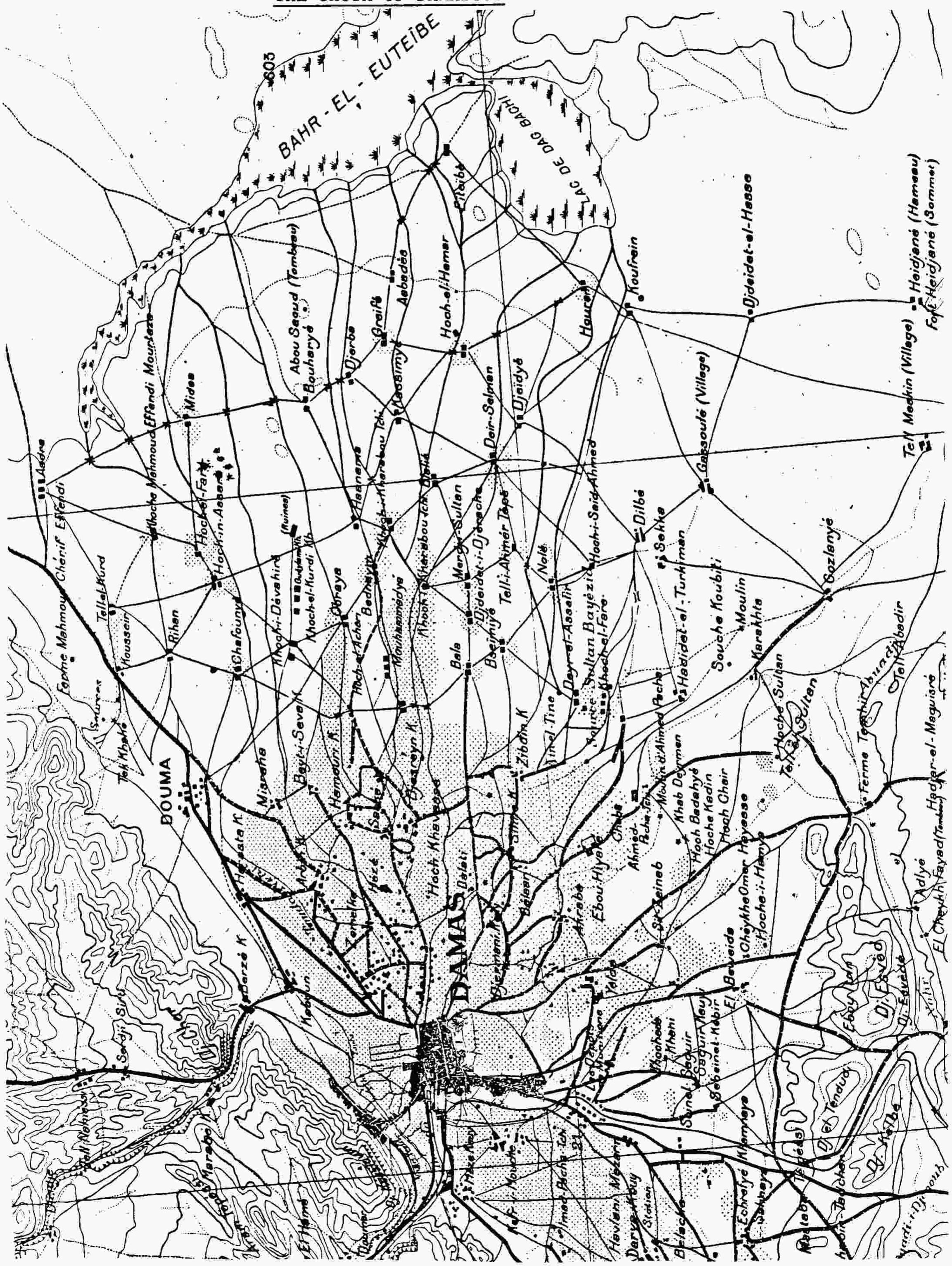
Source: Série E; Syrie-Liban, 1918-1929, Vol.269, Recensement dans l'etat de Damas, 1922.


LA SYRIE
Vilayet de SYRIE
Chef-lieu : DAMAS.
Vilayet de BEYROUTH
Province du LIBAN
Mutessariflik
DE
JÉRUSALEM
Population : 311.650 hab. — Superficie : 22.000 K.c
Vilayet d'Alep
Tripoli
BEYROUTH
DAMAS
St Jean d'Acre
Cheikh-Saad
Naplouse
Balua
JERUSALEM
Kerak
Vilayet de l'Hedjaz
MER MEDITERRANÉE
Légende

THE HOMS-HAMA PLAIN


BV
CV
BU
CU
JABAL AN NUBAYRIYAH
MA'ARRAT AN NU'MAN
HAMAH (HAMA)
HIMS (HOMS)
SALAMIYAH (SELEMIYE)
Khān Shaykhūn
Ayn Sha'ah (Aş Şaqlabiyah)
Maşyāf
Mhardah (Mahardé)
Ar Rastan
TALL BISAH
DAYR BA'ALBAH
SIDI JA'FAR
TALL AL 'AWJAH
TALL AL MANNTAR
JABAL AYZAH
JABAL 'UBAYSAN
DAHRAT AL HAWWARAH
Abū 'Umar
Shaykh Barakah
Jubb as Sukkar
Abū Khanādiq
Qubaybāt
Sabburah
Al Mabūjah
Aqārib aş Şāli
Masʿūd
Abū Hanāyā
Uqayribāt
Shaytalūn
Kafr Buhum
Dayr al Ferdis
Herb Nafsah
Tall Dhahab
Umm al 'Amad
Khiltah
Tall ash Shihān
Furqlus
Jubb al Jarrāh
Sankarī ash Shamālī
Hubrat ash Sharqiyah
Abū Liyah
Ayfir
Qabāsīyah
Shuwayhah
Ad Dūsah
Al Qastal
Jawwāsiyah
Al Makhbūjah
Bustān Şabīh
Al Khaliyah
Al 'Afiyah
Al Amūdiyah
Khirbat al Hayawānīyah
Umm Mayl
Alqānah
Umm Shahrī
Al Hamrah
Burūj
As Sa'n
Shaykh Hilāl
Bardūnah
Tayyibat at Turki
Tayyibat al Imām
Khattāb
Shaykh 'Ali Kassūn
Sunaysil
Al Mashrafah
Ar Rāshidīyah
Ar Rāshidīyah
Ar Rāshidīy

THE GHUTA OF DAMASCUS


BAHR-EL-EUTEIBE
LAC DE DAOUDAOU BAGHI
603
Abou Saoud (Tombeau)
Bouheryé
Djerba
Graiss
Aebadés
Hoch-el-Hamar
Ghabé
Kaoussimyé
Mides
Effendi Mountzo
Effendi
Hocha Mahmoud
Hoch-el-Fara
Hoch-el-Kurdi Kh.
Khoch-el-Kurdi Kh.
Khoch-i-Dévahiré
Chafouniyé
Rihan
Tell-el-Kurd
Ferme Mahmoud Chérif Effendi
Tell Khalké
Hoch-el-Achari
Bedrayia
Mouhamédyé
Merdj-el-Djeideit-i-Djeida
Tell-i-Akmer
Nolé
Bala
Beimiyé
Djeideit-el-Hassé
Kouiréin
Hauran
Deir-Salman
Djaidyé
Sultan Bayézid
Deyr-el-Assafir
Hoch-el-Fara
Hoch-i-Sultan
Tell-el-Turkman
Hadidet-el-Turkman
Souche Koubiti
Moulin
Kerakhta
Gabsoulé (Village)
Djeideit-el-Hassé
Heidjéné (Hameau)
Tell Medkin (Village)
Fort Heidjéné (Sommet)
Gozlanyé
Tell Abbadir
Ferme Tcherkess
Hoche Sultan
Tell Abbadir
Adlyé
Hadjer-el-Maguiré
Sultan
Hoche Sultan
Hoch Khaled
Hoch Khaled
Zibdin K.
Tinel-Tino
Nolé
Bala
Bedrayia
Merdj-el-Djeideit-i-Djeida
Tell-i-Akmer
Hoch-el-Achari
Bedrayia
Mouhamédyé
Khoch-i-Dévahiré
Khoch-el-Kurdi Kh.
Chafouniyé
Rihan
Tell-el-Kurd
Ferme Mahmoud Chérif Effendi
Tell Khalké
Housseiniyé
Hoch-el-Fara
Hoch-el-Kurdi Kh.
Hoch-el-Achari
Bedrayia
Mouhamédyé
Khoch-i-Dévahiré
Khoch-el-Kurdi Kh.
Bala
Beimiyé
Djeideit-el-Hassé
Merdj-el-Djeideit-i-Djeida
Tell-i-Akmer
Nolé
Deyr-el-Assafir
Hoch-el-Fara
Hoch-i-Sultan
Sultan Bayézid
Tell-el-Turkman
Hadidet-el-Turkman
Souche Koubiti
Moulin
Kerakhta