

## Blood libels, Elite Competition and Inter- Confessional Violence: Jewish-Christian Relations in Ottoman Damascus in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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# Blood libels, Elite Competition and Inter-Confessional Violence: Jewish-Christian Relations in Ottoman Damascus in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Anaïs MASSOT

In July 1860, the Christian quarter of the city of Damascus was attacked. Houses were plundered and many Christians lost their lives.<sup>1</sup> This attack was underlined by inter-confessional tensions between Christians and Muslims but also revealed the deteriorating relationship between Greek Catholics and Jews in the city. Indeed, Jews were accused of participating or at least benefiting from the violence against Christians.<sup>2</sup> These accusations reveal specific aspects of the Jewish Damascenes' social and economic position. It also points to the development of sectarian narratives and reveals the increasing confessional consciousness of Jews and Christians. The focus on the relationship between non-Muslim communities allows us to present a more complex picture of inter-confessional tensions during the *Tanzimat* period, usually approached solely through the relationship between Christians and Muslims. In doing so, this article underlines the intertwined nature of relations between religious groups and points to the way in which state-society relations participate in shaping communities' ascribed or asserted identifications.

This chapter seeks to analyse the relationship between Christians and Jews in Damascus in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and inscribes them in the larger confessionalization of the society. First, we will address the accusations against the Jews in the aftermath of the violence of 1860. Second, this chapter will delve into the interpersonal competition between some Jewish and Greek Catholic families in the Ottoman administration which affected inter-confessional relations. Third, it will explore the financial role of the Jewish Damascene elite especially after the Crimean War and the blood libels which followed.

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1. For a detailed account of the events see Leila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.
  2. Public Record Office, Foreign Office Archives (FO), London, Serie FO 195/601, Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860 and Brant-Bulwer, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.

## Jews and Christians during the massacre of 1860

Damascus was the head of a province of the Ottoman Empire called *wilāyā al-Šām*. It was composed of a variety of religious communities. After Muslims, the largest communities were the Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a schism separated the two communities and resulted in the election of two Patriarchs, a Catholic one recognized by Rome and an Orthodox one recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and the Ottoman government. There were also smaller Christian denominations such as Syriac Catholics, Maronites, Syriac orthodox, etc. In addition, approximately 4 000 Jews lived in Damascus in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews and Greek Catholics feature among the main actors of the political and economic life of Damascus. This period was characterized by a profound transformation of the state and society called the *Tanzimat* reforms. Officially announced in 1839 through the Gülhane decree, although it had roots in the earlier decrees, this program of reforms altered state-society relations through a centralization of resources. Religious minorities were also institutionalized into the *millet* system, which attributed to each community a single representative at the head of an official and defined hierarchy, under the umbrella of the state. This institutional change facilitated existing efforts on the part of the religious leadership to homogenize communities and reinforce confessional borders.<sup>4</sup> The encounter of this internal impetus to emphasize the religious distinctions and internal homogeneity with the top-down institutionalization of the millet system encouraged the political confessionalization of Ottoman society.<sup>5</sup> Then, the legal inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims was gradually, albeit incompletely, abolished. While the basic power relations underlying Ottoman society were being reshuffled, foreign intervention into the empire intensified to unprecedented levels. Foreign protection was awarded to Jews and Christians, who became tools of influence for foreign consuls. At the same time, this protection awarded them some level of extraterritoriality, commercial advantages, tax exemptions and an important political lever.<sup>6</sup> Foreign protection had the tendency to transform interpersonal conflicts between members of different communities into diplomatic conflicts, increasing their visibility and repercussions in terms of inter-confessional relations. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by Ottoman military defeats, conscription and increasing taxation. These transformations led to resentments against

3. Šams al-dīn al-‘Ağlāni, *Yahūd Dimašq al-Šām*, Damascus, Maktabat al-‘Ulubī, 2008, p. 60.

4. On the subject of the confessionalization in the context of the Ottoman empire see Bernard Heyberger, “Catholicisme et construction des frontières confessionnelles dans l’Orient ottoman”, in Francisco Bethencourt and Denis Crouzet (eds), *Frontières religieuses à l’époque moderne*, Paris, Presses universitaires de la Sorbonne, 2013, p. 123; Tijana Krstić, “State and Religion, ‘Sunnitization’ and ‘Confessionalism’ in Süleyman’s Time”, in Pal Fodor (ed.), *The Battle for Central Europe*, Boston, Brill, 2019, p. 66.

5. Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism. Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, p. 6.

6. Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System. Qadis, Consuls and Beraths in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, p. 8.

the reforms from various parts of Ottoman society and reinforced the impression that non-Muslims, and particularly Christians, were the only beneficiaries of the reforms at the expense of the Muslim population. The relation between Muslims and non-Muslims was thus affected by the reforms, leading to tensions and at times violence. However, these transformations also affected the relation between non-Muslim communities and especially between Christians and Jews.

The violence of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus is a well-known consequence of these transformations of state-society relations and competition between religious communities. In Damascus, the Christian quarter of Bāb Tūmā was attacked, plundered and massacres ensued, which cost the life of thousands of Christians. Jews were not directly involved or targeted by the violence but they were eventually brought in the trial which followed the massacre. Fuad Paşa, the Ottoman Foreign Minister dispatched to Damascus, asked Christians to denounce their attackers who were immediately arrested and punished without serious trial. These arbitrary proceedings encouraged some individuals to take advantage of the situation to settle old scores, get rid of competitors or ransom accused parties for funds. Some Christians accused Jews which led to their imprisonment.<sup>7</sup> One month after the violence, the British consul James Brant reported that Jews were harassed by Christians who attempted to obtain money by threatening to accuse them of participation in the violence.<sup>8</sup>

When Fuad Paşa left Damascus to Beirut in the winter of 1860, a larger number of Jews were accused of participating in the plunder and massacres. They were arrested by the temporary government set up by Fuad Paşa.<sup>9</sup> The accusations against the Jews and the difficulty with which their innocence was proven, shows a dysfunction of the extraordinary tribunal set up by Fuad Paşa to punish the guilty parties. The simple denunciation of a Christian was enough to lead to the arrest of the accused party. Non-eyewitness testimonies were also sufficient to get someone arrested. Then, the plaintiff would have to bring proofs of his allegations. However many plaintiffs did not show up and the prisoner was kept in jail until proofs could be brought.<sup>10</sup> While foreign powers agreed to this system of arrest on simple denunciation when it came to judge Muslims, they protested that it was unfair when it came to the Jews.<sup>11</sup> These long trials were an occasion for bribes and financial exaction. Some Jews were tortured and at least one of them died from the conditions of the imprisonment.<sup>12</sup>

The accusations and arrests of Jews involved specific Greek Catholic government employees whose actions reveal the competition between members of the

7. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AE), La Courneuve, CPC/50.MD, vol. 122, Minutes of the Beirut commission, November 14<sup>th</sup> 1860.

8. FO, 195/601, Brant-Bulwer, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1860 and Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.

9. *Ibid.*, Brant-Bulwer, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860 and Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.

10. Ottoman Imperial Archives, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), Istanbul, Turkey, HR.SFR.3.55.21, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1860; FO, 195/601, Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.

11. (AE), CPC/50.MD, vol. 122, Minutes of the Beirut commission, November 14<sup>th</sup> 1860.

12. FO, 195/601, Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860, Brant-Bulwer, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860; FO 78/1520, Brant-Russell, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1860.

two communities. The enmity between two families, the Greek Catholic Baḥrī and the Jewish Farḥī family, was especially fierce and lasted through the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the Christians behind the accusations against the Jews was Ibrāhīm Karamī, an employee of Fuad Paşa. He was related to the Baḥrī family.<sup>13</sup> When he came to Damascus, Fuad Paşa had employed him as a secretary and Arabic interpreter. Fuad Paşa had imposed an extraordinary tax on the Muslim population to give reparations to Christians. He had put Ibrāhīm Karamī in charge of distributing the revenue of the tax among Christians. When Fuad Paşa left, Ibrāhīm Karamī treacherously presented himself as his delegate. The British consul accused him of taking bribes to give reparations, embezzling the exemption tax, and freeing prisoners.<sup>14</sup> He was also instrumental in imprisoning Jews for their alleged complicity in the violence and made sure they were not freed. He refused to accept witnesses other than Christians and thus Jews had no opportunity to defend themselves.<sup>15</sup> He also did not allow Jews to have representatives during the investigations.<sup>16</sup>

After Fuad Paşa returned to Damascus from Beirut in November 1860, he was called upon by the British consul to look into the matter of the imprisoned Jews. A few days after almost all the Jews were freed. Five Jews had been kept in jail for weeks because of these accusations, and one had passed away.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, Ibrāhīm Karamī's accounts were examined and he was arrested in Damascus and then sent to Beirut. In his luggage some 130 000 piasters were found<sup>18</sup> and in his house stolen objects and money was also discovered.<sup>19</sup> To be sure, he was probably not the only member of the tribunal to engage in such acts but he might have been more easily disposed of than Muslim members.

Christian chroniclers also accused Jews of either participating in the violence or benefiting indirectly from it. Jews were not attacked during the violence, the only Jewish house which was destroyed was located in the Christian quarter.<sup>20</sup> The fact that they were not bothered by the attackers, although many of them were very wealthy, made them suspicious in the eyes of some Christians who

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13. Maxīmūs Mazlūm, *Nubḍa tāriḥiyya: Fimā ḡarā li-tā' ifat al-Rūm al-Kātūlik munṭu sanat 1837 fimā ba'dabā*, edited by Quṣṭanṭīn al-Bāšā, Damascus, 1907, p. 288-290; Mikhā'il Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder: The History of Lebanon in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, W. M. Thackston (trans.), Albany, State University of New York Press, 198, 108, 170. Caesar E. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861*, Oxford-London-New York, Centre for Lebanese Studies - I. B. Tauris, 2000, p. 118; FO 196/601, Brant-Russell, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860; Richard Edwards, *La Syrie 1840-1862, histoire, politique, administration, population, religion et moeurs, évènements de 1860 d'après des actes officiels et des documents authentiques*, Paris, Amyot, 1862, p. 251.
14. FO 195/601, Brant-Russell, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860 and Wrench-Bulwer, November 5<sup>th</sup> 1860.
15. *Ibid.*, Brant-Bulwer, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1860 and Brant-Russell, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.
16. AE CPC, Alexandria, Laurin-Vice Roy, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1840.
17. FO 78/1520, Brant-Russell, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1860.
18. FO 195/601, Wrench-Bulwer, November 5<sup>th</sup> 1860.
19. Richard Edwards, *La Syrie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
20. Yaron Harel, *Syrian Jewry in Transition, 1840-1880*, Dena Ordan (trans.), Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2010, p. 176.

accused them of complicity with the attackers.<sup>21</sup> The author of *Kitāb al-Āḥzān* included Jews in his accounts of the events of 1860. He narrated that the crosses that were hung on the neck of dogs right before the violence were fabricated by the Jews.<sup>22</sup> He also accused Jews of slaughtering Christians and taking part in the plunder.<sup>23</sup> He mentioned that they threw Christians who were still alive in the Baradā river together with Muslim attackers.<sup>24</sup> Mr. Spartalis, the Greek consul of Damascus also made similar accusations. He said that all the murdered Christian priests were thrown into the fire by the Jews. He also accused them of hiding many Christian children to sell them as slaves.<sup>25</sup> The Greek Catholic chronicler Miḥā'il Mišāqa also gave them a direct role in the violence by narrating that Jews were giving fresh water and lemonade to the attackers. Then, both the author of *Kitāb al-Āḥzān* and Mišāqa reported that firefighters came to turn off the fire affecting Jewish houses but not Christians'.<sup>26</sup> Actually, Jews were able to pay off the *āḡāwāt* to protect the neighborhood while Christians relied on the ineffective protection of the consuls.<sup>27</sup>

Miḥā'il Mišāqa mentioned that only Jews benefited from the violence because Muslims had to pay a heavy tax which ultimately was used to pay back the Jewish money-lenders what the government had borrowed from them.<sup>28</sup> He then accused Jews of benefiting from the misery of Christians in the aftermath of the violence by speculating on the plundered items which Muslims gave them or which they found in the streets.<sup>29</sup> Rabbis of the city made a declaration forbidding such a speculation on stolen items, which indicates that at least some Jews were involved in this trade of stolen objects.<sup>30</sup>

## Competition between Jews and Greek Catholics in the Provincial Administration

These accusations and arrests have to be read on the background of inter-confessional tensions between the two communities fostered by an economic and political competition. In *Bilād al-Šām*, among the employees of the governors, two families competed for power and influence. The Greek Catholic Baḥrī and

21. FO 78/1520, Brant-Russell, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1860.

22. *Kitāb al-āḥzān fī tāriḥ wāqī'āt al-Šām wa mā yalibuma bi mā' āšāba al-Masiḥiyyin min al-Durūz wa al-Islām fī 9 Tammūz 1860*, Beirut, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut, p. 22.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

25. Salo Baron, "The Jews and the Syrian Massacres of 1860", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, n° 4, 1932, p. 7.

26. Miḥā'il Mišāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 252; *Kitāb al-Āḥzān...*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

27. Miḥā'il Mišāqā, *Muntaḥabāt min al-Ġawāb 'ala Iqtirāḥ al-Aḥbāb*, Asad Rustum and Ṣubḥi Abu-Šaqrā (eds), Beirut, 1955, p. 381.

28. Miḥā'il Mišāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 263; Baptistin Poujoulat, *La vérité sur la Syrie et l'expédition française*, Paris, Gaume Frères et J. Duprey Editeurs, 1861, p. 112.

30. *Ibid.*

the Jewish Farḥī family alternatively obtained the most sought-upon positions in the administration. Their competition went beyond interpersonal issues and came to represent the power relation between the Jewish and Greek Catholic elite. It informed sectarian discourses presenting the relation between Christians and Jews as based upon innate enmity.<sup>31</sup> Behind this cleaving discourse, this competition was embedded in the interplay of political alliance and patronage networks.

The competition for power and jurisdiction between the governor of Sidon and the governor of Damascus was particularly fierce in the end of beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> It was matched by the competition between their respective advisors. On the one side, the famous Jewish advisor Ḥāyīm Farḥī had been the *ṣarrāf* of the governor of Sidon and Damascus Cezzar Ahmed Paşa (1777-1804). Ḥāyīm Farḥī's popularity among the governors derived from his talents as an administrator but also on the fact that he could have access to large resources, especially through his links with bankers in Istanbul. He could also obtain the appointment of his allies to the post of governor.<sup>33</sup>

Both Farḥī and Cezzar Ahmed Paşa were disliked by French merchants and consuls for they frustrated their commercial interests in Bilād al-Shām and its integration into the larger Mediterranean trade network by strengthening monopolies and limiting foreigners' access to land.<sup>34</sup> After the death of Cezzar Ahmed Paşa, the Farḥī family found employment with the governor of Sidon Sulayman Paşa al-ʿAdil (1805-1819).

On the other side, members of the Greek Catholic Baḥrī family were the main advisors of the governor of Damascus. The Kurdish *mütesellim*, Yusuf Genç Paşa al Dalī, through his alliance with the Greek Catholic ʿĀbūd Baḥrī, managed to secure his appointment as the governor of Damascus in 1807 (1807-1811).<sup>35</sup> ʿĀbūd Baḥrī got extensive power and seemed to overshadow the Farḥī family, who resorted to bribes to counter Baḥrī's attempts to discredit them.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, Yusuf Genç Paşa was fired for embezzlement and died in 1810.<sup>37</sup> His rival, Sulayman Paşa al-ʿĀdil was awarded the governorship of Damascus until 1812. He installed the Farḥī family in power in that city and sidelined the Baḥrī family who fled to Egypt.<sup>38</sup> The Farḥī family managed to keep the upper hand until the Egyptian rule of Damascus in 1831. This enmity between the Baḥrī and Farḥī families was interpersonal but also came to influence perceptions of the relationship between

31. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAwra, *Tārīḥ wilāya Sulaymān Bāšā al-ʿādil yaštamilu ʿalā tārīḥ Filastīn wa Lubnān*, Quṣṭanṭīn al-Bāšā (ed.), Ṣaydā, Maṭb, Dār al-muḳallīš, 1936, p. 90.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 63, p. 90, p. 93.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 105; Ibrāhīm al-ʿAwra, *Tārīḥ wilāya...*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

34. BOA, C.HR.159.7926, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1792; AE 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 1, Chaboceau-French Ambassador, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1795, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1796 and October 12<sup>th</sup> 1796; Thomas Philipp, *Acre: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730-1831*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 87; Miḥāʿil Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

35. Miḥāʿil al-Dimašqī, *Tārīḥ ḥawādiṯ ḡarat bil-Šām wa al-Ġabal 1782-1841*, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Karīm Muḥāfaẓa (ed.), Amman, Dār Ward al-Urdaniya lil-našr wa al-Tawziʿ, 2004, p. 109.

36. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAwra, *Tārīḥ wilāya...*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

37. Miḥāʿil al-Dimašqī, *Tārīḥ ḥawādiṯ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

38. Miḥāʿil Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 70.



Greek Catholics and Jews. Both Ibrāhīm al-‘Awra, a Greek Catholic, and Miḥā’il Mišāqa, a Greek Catholic who converted to Protestantism, wrote chronicles in this period and mentioned the enmity between the Greek Catholics and the Jews, albeit in different terms. Ibrāhīm ‘Awra was the son of the Greek Catholic Ḥanā al-‘Awra. Ḥanā worked for Hāyīm Farḥī in the service of Sulaymān Paşa and had a good position as chief writer of the treasury.<sup>39</sup> Al-‘Awra depicted Hāyīm Farḥī as the competitor of the Greek Catholics. Some level of resentment towards his higher position in comparison to his father is observable in his account. But he also had good words for him, and presented him as an exception among the Jews, which points to the otherwise bad image of Jews among Greek Catholics. He described the enmity between Farḥī and Baḥrī as a consequence of their professional competition but also because of the enmity between Jews and Christians in religious and mundane matters.<sup>40</sup> Mišāqa on the other hand, described Hāyīm Farḥī in flattering terms, without even mentioning that he was Jewish. He remarked that Hāyīm had nothing against Greek Catholics and employed them but had an issue with the Greek Catholics of Damascus who allied with the Baḥrī family.<sup>41</sup> It is thus clear that the issue was interpersonal, however it was interpreted through a sectarian perspective.

Upon Hāyīm Farḥī’s death in 1820, his brothers succeeded him in the leadership of the community and the role of *ṣarrāf* of the governor.<sup>42</sup> When the Egyptian army of Ibrāhīm ‘Alī, son of the governor of Egypt Muḥammad ‘Alī, took over the city, the situation changed dramatically. They had the tacit support of the French government in their challenge to Ottoman rule. Rather than relying on the dominant Jewish *ṣarrāfīn*, Ibrāhīm ‘Alī instead favored their opponents under French protection, the Greek Catholic Baḥrī family. Ḥanā Baḥrī was awarded the post of financial administrator, which had previously been in the hands of the Farḥī family.<sup>43</sup> The house of the *mufti* of Damascus was made into Ḥanā Baḥrī’s residence.<sup>44</sup> The Egyptian governor ruled through a series of symbolic displays and unprecedented direct attacks against specific societal groups such as *ashraf*, *aghawat*, *ulema*, etc. At the same time, he granted official recognition to the Greek Catholic *millet* who were finally able to escape the authority of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch. The governor’s over-reliance on Hana Baḥrī as advisor created resentments from Muslims but also from Jews. More than even, the influence of *ṣarrāfīn* and advisors had repercussions for the economic, social and political role of religious communities. Greek Catholics managed to obtain political recognition, positions of power but also to exert their revenge against their Jewish

39. Thomas Philipp, *Acre...*, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

40. Ibrāhīm al-‘Awra, *Tārīḥ wilāya...*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

41. Miḥā’il Mišāqa, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 54, 58.

42. Ibrāhīm al-‘Awra, *Tārīḥ wilāya...*, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Walter J. Fischel (ed.), *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands, the Travels of Rabbi David D’Beth Hillel (1824-1832)*, New York, Ktar Publishing House, Inc., 1973, p. 66-67.

43. *Mudakkirāt tāriḥīya*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

44. Ḥālid Banī Hānī, *Tārīḥ Dimašq wa ‘ulamā’ uhā ḥilāl al-ḥukm al-Miṣri, 1831-1840*, Damas, Dār Safahāt, 2007, p. 157.



competitors. They obtained the ownership of a Jewish synagogue and turned it into a church. It started a prolonged conflict with the Jewish leadership over what they perceived as an illegal purchase.<sup>45</sup> Favoring alternatively Jewish or Greek Catholic advisors tended to polarize these communities. It led them to analyse the situation as a zero sum game in which the improvement of the condition of one community was necessarily at the expense of the other.

A blood libel against the Jews took place in 1840 in this context of Greek Catholic alliance with the Egyptian rule and development of sectarian discourses posing Jews and Christians as enemies in the empire. Father Tommaso, a Capucin Franciscan priest under French protection, disappeared together with his assistant Ibrāhīm 'Amāra after visiting the Jewish neighborhood of Damascus. The French consul Benoit Ulysse de Ratti-Menton and his agent Jean-Baptiste Beaudin were convinced of the guilt of the Jews in this murder. They were instrumental in convincing the Ottoman government of their guilt.<sup>46</sup> They argued that it was committed to use their blood for religious purposes related to Passover.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned before, the French consuls of the city had always been quite critical of the Jewish notables and especially of the Farhī family who frustrated French commercial interests.<sup>48</sup> French consuls in Alexandria and Damascus spread stories of ritual murders in these cities, intending to instill fear among the population.<sup>49</sup> The Egyptian governor Şerif Paşa, upon French insistence, arrested eight Jewish notables and tortured them. Among them were members of the leading Harārī and Farhī family.<sup>50</sup> The arrest or execution of some of the important members of their community during the blood libel further curtailed the power of the Jews in the city, already threatened by the Egyptian rule.<sup>51</sup>

The event took an international dimension when the Austrian consul in Aleppo called upon the international community to intervene. Jewish communities in Europe were outraged by the event and called on their government to intervene. Eventually, the prisoners were released but some had died under torture.<sup>52</sup> This event was given great publicity in Europe and divided the public opinion. In France, while the Jewish community was mobilized to free their coreligionists, various newspapers engaged in an anti-Jewish campaign and revived the accusations of blood libels.<sup>53</sup> This event encouraged the solidarity of European Jews with

45. Muḥammad Āmin ibn 'Abdīn, *Radd al-Muḥtār 'ala al-Dar al-Muḥtār Šarāḥ Tanwīr al-Ābšār*, Riyadh, Dār al-Kutub al-Īlmiyya, 2003, p. 330.

46. Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 58.

47. Jonathan Frankel, "Ritual Murder' In the Modern Era: The Damascus Affair of 1840", *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 3, n° 2, 1997, p. 8-10.

48. Thomas Philipp, *Acre...*, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Mikhā'il Mishāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

49. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991, p. 199; AE CPC, Alexandria, Consul Alexandria-Consul Damascus, August 30<sup>th</sup> 1840.

50. Jonathan Frankel, "Ritual Murder...", *art. cit.*, p. 8-10.

51. For a description of the accusation of blood libel, see Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, *op. cit.*

52. Jonathan Frankel, "Ritual Murder...", *art. cit.*, p. 8-10.

53. Rina Cohen, "L'Affaire de Damas et les prémices de l'antisémitisme moderne", *Archives Juives*,

their coreligionists in the Empire and beyond. It also marked the involvement of the international community in the affairs of the Jewish community of the city, creating a sense of commonness with European Jewry. As such, it heightened the confessional consciousness of Damascene Jews.

Blood libels, originating in medieval Europe, had already occurred elsewhere during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839). These accusations were countered by various orders from the sultans forbidding such libels.<sup>54</sup> However, it was the first time that it reached Damascus. The accusations of blood libel were increasingly believed by a large part of the population. Arabic chronicles are valuable sources of information regarding the pervasiveness of this myth and the proofs used to sustain it. The Greek Catholic Ibrāhīm 'Awra, in his chronicle written after the blood libel, used very harsh words against the Jews in general, and claimed that the Talmud allows them to kill and steal from non-Jews. He also accused them of claiming to be allowed to hurt non-Jews and steal from them on the account that they are to inherit everything on earth.<sup>55</sup> 'Awra thus presented the religious beliefs of Jews as a threat to Christians, participating in the construction of a sectarian discourse in Damascus. On the other hand, the Greek Catholic Miḥā'il Mišāqa refuted the accusations of the blood libel by saying that the Talmud forbids Jews to drink blood, and thus inferred that they could obviously not drink human blood for Passover.<sup>56</sup> This exact argument is found in the *ferman* promulgated in 1840 by the sultan in order to forbid accusations of blood libels.<sup>57</sup> Mišāqa, narrating the events of 1840, stated that a Jewish notable's servant simply killed Father Tommaso out of greed.<sup>58</sup>

The two chroniclers represent two different groups of Greek Catholics of the city. Mišāqa was involved in trade and took advantage of foreign protection to increase his socioeconomic and political position. In addition, as a doctor, he was in daily and intimate contact with members of all religious communities. He obtained British foreign protection and became Protestant. Later on, he became the American vice-consul.<sup>59</sup> 'Awra rather belongs to the administrative elite whose influence declined in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was close to the Baḥrī family and under French influence.

The Greek Catholic community was indeed divided along two main lines. On the one hand there was a distinction between commercial and administrative elites, although there was a certain degree of overlap. Commercial elites were rather newcomers compared to the administrative elites established since the

vol. 34, n° 1, 2001, p. 120.

54. Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Jewish Lay Leadership and Ottoman Authorities during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in Aron Rodrigue (ed.), *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry*, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1992, p. 96.

55. Ibrāhīm al-'Awra, *Tāriḥ wilāya...*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews...*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

58. Miḥā'il Mišāqah, *Murder, Mayhem...*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

59. For a complete portrait of Miḥā'il Mišāqa see Erdoğan Kesinkiliç and Ebubekir Ceylan, "Her Majesty's Protected Subjects: The Mishaqa Family in Ottoman Damascus", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 51, n° 2, 2015, p. 175-194.

18<sup>th</sup> century. Then, they were divided according to family alliances which competed for the control of communal institutions. These divisions resulted in different political strategies. France and Austria competed for influence over Catholics in the empire. The established Greek Catholic scribal elite tended to rely on French protection, while the merchants tended to put themselves under Austrian protection. Prominent Jews were also found in the employment of consul or agent of Austria and Prussia.<sup>60</sup>

This distinction in terms of protection affected how Greek Catholics responded to the blood libel. Greek Catholics close to France, such as the Baḥrī family, tended to side with the French consul. Greek Catholics who were employed or benefited from the protection of the Austrian consul were very critical of the French consul's actions and sided with the Jews. Indeed, the Austrian consul Caspar Merlatto defended the Jews and proclaimed their innocence to his superiors and the Egyptian authorities.<sup>61</sup> The most prominent members of this group were Yūsuf 'Ayrūṭ and Ḥanā Frayḡ.<sup>62</sup> 'Ayrūṭ was also employed in the provincial administration. These two individuals played a central role not only in Damascene politics but also in the competition for control over the Greek Catholic institution in this period. The French consul Ratti-Menton was angered by Frayḡ and 'Ayrūṭ's opposition. He ordered to search Yūsuf 'Ayrūṭ's house to look for the Jews allegedly involved in the murder of Father Thomas.<sup>63</sup> The animosity between these two individuals and the French consul continued with his successors, who saw them as threatening French influence in the city.<sup>64</sup>

After the return of Ottoman rule to Damascus in 1841, relations between Jews and Greek Catholics close to France were tense. France, which had supported Muḥammad 'Alī, lost its influence in the empire, which affected negatively Catholics. The Baḥrī family, associated with the Egyptians, fell in disfavor.<sup>65</sup> After the return of Ottoman rule, Rūfā'il Farḥī was initially reinstated in his position of *ṣarrāf*, and assumed a dominant role in the financial administration. He was able to replace some Greek Catholic employees with Jews.<sup>66</sup> He had extensive powers in the city and influential relations in Istanbul.<sup>67</sup> In addition, the balance of power between foreign consuls tilted in favour of Great Britain, who had participated in the Ottoman recovery of the region. British preeminence also benefited some Jewish notables and merchants who increasingly placed themselves under British protection after the blood libel of 1840.<sup>68</sup> The increasing competition for influence between the British and French consuls reinforced this idea of antagonism of interests between Greek Catholics and Jews.

60. Yaron Harel, *Syrian Jewry...*, *op. cit.*, p. 203, 210, 214.

61. Cohen, "L'affaire de Damas..." , art. cit., p. 160.

62. Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

63. AE CPC, Alexandria, French Consul-Thiers, April 24<sup>th</sup> 1840.

64. AE 67/CPC, vol. 1, Baron de Bourquency-Guizot, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1842.

65. Yaron Harel, *Syrian Jewry...*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

66. FO 78 /447, Werry-Palmeston, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1841.

67. AE ADP/75, vol. 4, Ratti Menton-Thiers, April 17<sup>th</sup> 1840.

68. FO 78 /447, Werry-Palmeston, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1841.

After the Egyptian retreat from Syria, the different foreign powers attempted to take advantage of the political confusion to create zones of interests. While in the case of France and Russia it passed through the protection of Catholics and Greek Orthodox, in the case of the British it was more versatile. After failed attempts at gaining the loyalty of Maronites of Mount Lebanon, Great Britain saw more fitting to use Druzes and Jews as a gateway to Syria. In this period, Jews were accused of mistreating Christians.<sup>69</sup> There were even claims that they attacked Algerians because of their French *protégé* status.<sup>70</sup> Christians petitioned the authorities in order to protect them from the Jews.<sup>71</sup> In this context of societal transformations, accusations of blood libels continued to occur in Damascus in the following years.<sup>72</sup> Blood libel were instrumentalized as tools of delegitimization in the political and economic competition between elites.

In 1847, a Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was established, strengthening the political weight of the Latin millet, recognized in 1840. A series of blood libels took place in the same year. As with similar changes in the balance of power, it resulted in inter-confessional tensions with Jews. For instance, in April, a young Christian man from Baalbek who worked for a French *protégé* disappeared in the market of the Christian quarter of Damascus. At the request of the boy's employers, Beaudin, the French agent in charge of the consulate who had already been instrumental in the blood libel of 1840, sent a letter to the governor asking for an investigation. He reminded the governor that Jews had been suspected of such crimes beforehand.<sup>73</sup> Beaudin even informed the governor that the Jewish practice of stealing children had increased.<sup>74</sup> Blood libels point to the increasing influence of consuls, not only in political terms but also in shaping perceptions of in and out-groups among Damascenes. These accusations furthered the increasing political involvement of British Jews on behalf of their Damascene coreligionists, both contributing to British interventionism in the region and to the politicization of the Jewish Damascene community. In September 1847, the Jewish British Philanthropist Moses Montefiore went to Paris and met with Foreign Minister François Guizot and King Louis Philippe I showing them the letter that Beaudin had addressed to the governor. They both ensured Montefiore that they disapproved of their agent's actions and that Jews should be protected by the French consulate just as Christians were.<sup>75</sup>

A month later another blood libel occurred. A dispute between a Jewish peddler of used clothes and a Muslim from Maydān took place. The peddler called two soldiers to arrest the Muslim man who had attacked him. However, the Muslim man accused the Jewish peddler of stealing a baby while he had entered the

69. FO 78/447, Werry-Palmerstone, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1841.

70. AE CPC, Alexandria, Mourad Ali-French consul, April 24<sup>th</sup> 1840.

71. FO 78/447, Werry-Palmerstone, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1841.

72. *Ibid.*

73. FO 195/291, Timoni-Wellesley, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1847.

74. AE 67/CPC, vol. 3, 4, Beaudin-Safveti Pasha, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1847; FO 195/291, Timoni-Wellesley, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1847.

75. FO 195/291, Timony-Cowley, September 1<sup>st</sup> 1847.

house to sell used clothes. The mother testified that she saw the crime from her window. A physical fight ensued and both parties were brought to the governor. On their way, some passers-by who learned of the dispute insulted the Jewish man. A crowd composed of Muslims and Christians was formed, and they attacked random Jews in the streets.<sup>76</sup> As demonstrated by these events, blood libels contributed to popular mobilization and violence in the public sphere. While the blood libel of 1840 had targeted the rich members of the community, pointing to the competing interests of Greek Catholic and Jewish elites, in these later cases, the accusations targeted the commoners. This dynamic reveals that the myth of the blood libel entered the imagination of the population in general.

The Jewish leadership asked the English consul for help in this affair. He called upon the governor asking him to protect the Jews. The governor summoned the Muslim man and his relatives and accused them of lying. He then sent them to be taken as soldiers. The rioters who had attacked Jews in the streets, including Christians, were arrested. Then, soldiers were sent to protect the Jewish quarter. It was announced publicly that anyone who slandered the Jews or bothered them would be punished.<sup>77</sup> The governor Safveti Paşa told the English consul that Muslims considered that he had betrayed them in the way he dealt with this issue by siding with the Jews.<sup>78</sup> Blood libel accusations which were previously predominantly brought forward by the French consuls and Christians, had also entered the imagination of Muslims inhabitants of Damascus because of the publicity given to the affair in 1840.<sup>79</sup>

In 1847, various accusations of blood libels took place in Mount Lebanon.<sup>80</sup> The multiplication of accusations of blood libels turned them into effective tools of delegitimization used in cases of interpersonal disputes and to get out of difficult situations. For example, in 1850 during Ramadan, three Jews were arrested for mistreating a Muslim man. According to the French consul, they did so to use his blood.<sup>81</sup> The English consul rather argued that the Muslim man was a thief who had repeatedly robbed the house of Mr. Romanov, a Jew under Prussian protection. One night, together with two of his neighbors he managed to catch the thief. However when the police arrived to his house, one of the guards accused Mr. Romanov and his neighbors of attempting to murder him in order to use his blood for a religious ritual.<sup>82</sup> They were arrested and punished by lashes. Romanov died soon after his arrest, but not from the wounds of the lashes.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, after being freed from jail, he asked to be cured by a barber who actually infected him with tetanus.<sup>84</sup>

76. FO 195/291, Timoni-Wellesley, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1847.

77. *Ibid.*

78. FO 196/291, Timony-Wellesley, May 29<sup>th</sup> 1847.

79. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews...*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 202; James Finn and Elizabeth Anne McCaul Finn, *Stirring Times: Or, Records From Jerusalem Consular Chronicles of 1853 to 1856*, London, C. K. Paul & Co., 1878, p. 107-115.

81. AE 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Valberg-French Minister in Istanbul, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1850.

82. FO 195/291, Calvert-Canning, August 28<sup>th</sup> 1850.

83. *Ibid.*, September 7<sup>th</sup> 1850.

84. AE 67/CPC, vol. 2, Vallegue-de la Hitte, September 6<sup>th</sup> 1850 and August 18<sup>th</sup> 1850; Muḥammad

## Crimean War, Money-lending and Blood Libels

The Ottoman government borrowed extensively from abroad and from Jewish bankers in the years after the Crimean War.<sup>85</sup> Jewish *şarrāfîn* in Istanbul improved their position in this period. It allowed them to recover their dominant position lost after the abolition of the Janissaries in 1826.<sup>86</sup> Among Jewish bankers, the government relied extensively on loans from Abraham Salomon Kamondo.<sup>87</sup> He was an important Jewish banker who had survived the downfall of the Jewish elite in 1826.<sup>88</sup> His bank financed the British and French army operations during the Crimean War. Then, after the war, he benefited from the full protection of Reşid Paşa, the Sadrazam Ali Paşa and the finance minister Fuad Paşa who employed him.<sup>89</sup> This protection allowed Jews to gain access to more positions in the Ottoman financial administration.<sup>90</sup>

In Damascus, this change in the power balance translated in a new bargaining power for Jewish *şarrāfîn* in front of the local treasury. From the time of the Crimean War, Jews in Damascus easily obtained orders of payment from Istanbul for the loans they had granted to the local government, while they had struggled to do so in the previous decades.<sup>91</sup> They were particularly called upon by the government for loans in this period of economic difficulties.<sup>92</sup> The Damascene money-lender 'Azrā Şamāya functioned as an agent of Kamondo.<sup>93</sup> He lent considerable amounts to the local treasury.<sup>94</sup> He became an important notable of the city and his son used his influence to protect the Jews during the violence of 1860 by obtaining guards sent by the governor.<sup>95</sup>

Sa'īd al-Uşṭwānī, *Maşāhid wa 'ahdāt Dimaşqīya fī muntaşaf al-qarn al-tāsi' 'aşar, 1256-1277 H, 1840-1861*, As'ad Al-'Uşṭwānī (ed.), Damascus, 1994, p. 580; BOA, I.MVL.212.6956, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1851.

85. Yaron Harel, *Zionism in Damascus, Ideology and Activity in the Jewish Community at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, D. Gershon (trans.), London, I.B. Tauris, 2015, p. 2; Joseph Glass and Ruth Kark, *Sephardic Entrepreneurs and the Valero Family in Eretz-Israel during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Jerusalem, Gefen Publishing House, 2013, p. 88; AE 189/PO, vol. 9, Outrey-Thouvenel, March 7<sup>th</sup> 1856, April 7<sup>th</sup> 1856.

86. Yaron Harel, *Zionism...*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

87. Nurdan Ipek, *Selanik ve İstanbul'da seçkin Yahudi bankerler (1850-1908)*, Istanbul, Istanbul Üniversitesi, 2011, p. 248.

88. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews...*, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Stanford J. Shaw, "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System", *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, n° 6, 1975, p. 421-459.

89. Nurdan Ipek, *Selanik...*, *op. cit.*, p. 248; Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews...*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

90. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews...*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

91. FO 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

92. AE 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, Lalberg-Minister of France in Istanbul, March 27<sup>th</sup> 1850; FO, Wood-Canning, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1849; AE CCC, vol. 1, Ratti-Menton-Marechal Sault, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1842.

93. *Lütfi Efendi, Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lütfi Efendi Tarihi*, Abridged by Münir Aktepe, vol. 10, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988, p. 18.

94. BOA, A.DVN.133.40, August 9<sup>th</sup> 1858; BOA, I.DH.409.27103, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1858; BOA, A.AMD.81.55, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1857; BOA, A.MKT.MHM.758.46, July 31<sup>st</sup> 1858; BOA, A.MKT.UM.216.84, November 26<sup>th</sup> 1855; BOA, A.MKT.UM.177.33, January 8<sup>th</sup> 1855.

95. Moise Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire ottoman depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, Alliance Israélite universelle-Éd. du Nadir, Gordes, La Lettre sépharade, 2007, p. 210.



In 1860, some Jewish *šarrāfūn* were accused of complicity with Ahmed Paşa, the governor of Damascus, because of their financial relationships. Ahmed Paşa had refrained from action in the midst of the violence. Fuad Paşa strengthened the rumor which stated that Jews held a great amount of the governor Ahmed Paşa's fortune and that Jacob Levy, a merchant who had British nationality, had given him bills on Istanbul. He was accused of lending him money personally and thus of having a great influence over him. However, the British consul Brant denied these accusations as senseless. Jacob Levy denied all the charges and explained that he had good relations with Ahmed Paşa solely because he lent money for the treasury, not to him personally.<sup>96</sup> As the influence of some Greek Catholics on the governor of Damascus under Egyptian rule had led to resentments on the part of the Muslim population, the influence of some Jewish money-lenders on the governors also led to tensions with Christians, revealing the perception of a zero-sum game. The new reliance of the government on Jewish bankers to ensure the day-to-day functioning of the local administration created resentment from Christians which are reflected in the accusations of 1860.

Then, in addition to connivance with the governor, Jews were accused of being close to the *āğāwāt* who had had a role to play in the violence. These accusations can be explained by the fact that loans were contracted by the state from Jewish money-lenders to pay for the salary of military and paramilitary officials.<sup>97</sup> The army had years of arrears of payment and thus the government was under the threat of mutiny. When the governors would receive the orders to pay the soldiers, if they did not have the funds in the treasury they would borrow from a *šarrāf* who would pay in one lump. The governor was then indebted to the *šarrāf*.<sup>98</sup> In addition, loans were not only made to the government but also directly to *āğāwāt* to pay for their troops and expenses.<sup>99</sup>

In April 1857, an order from Istanbul arrived for the payment of Jewish money-lenders who had lent money to the treasury. A closer examination of these orders shows that a part of these loans had been used to pay the salaries of the imperial army and other *yuzbaşılar*<sup>100</sup> or emirs. In the same documents, a loan provided by Āzār Šamāya includes the salary of Sulaymān Āğā Ĥarfūš and Da'as Āğā, both guilty of violence against Christians in 1860.<sup>101</sup> The fact that most of these loans concerns the salary of irregular troops leaders created a relationship of dependency between the debtors and lenders.<sup>102</sup> This inter-dependency was taken as a proof of their complicity with the attackers.

In this context of shifts in the balance of power after the Crimean War, Damascene Jews were again subjected to a blood libel. In June 1856, inhabitants

96. FO 195/601, Brant-Russel, November 8<sup>th</sup> 1860.

97. BOA, HR.MKT.186.46, April 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

98. Haim Gerber, *Crossing Borders, Jews and Muslims in Ottoman Law, Economy and Society*, Istanbul, ISIS Press, 2008, p. 141.

99. BOA, A.MKT.DV.199.75, August 24<sup>th</sup> 1861.

100. Captain.

101. BOA, HR.MKT.186.46, April 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.

102. FO 195/458, Wood-Redcliffe, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1857.



of the Maydān accused a Jewish antiquarian of stealing a baby. He was dragged by a crowd of inhabitants from the Maydān to the governor Mahmud Paşa, and on their way they harassed other Jews. The British acting-consul Mr. Misk complained to the Paşa, who arrested all those who insulted or hurt the Jews. He also sent soldiers to guard the Jewish neighborhood.<sup>103</sup> The accusation of blood libel corresponded to the time of Aid, just as the attacks against the Christian quarter in 1860.<sup>104</sup> It was a time prone to conflict as the city flowed with strangers and the police was overwhelmed. A month later a *ferman* was published to forbid the accusations of blood libels against the Jews in Damascus.<sup>105</sup>

Again in the same year, an argument took place in the Maydān between a Greek Catholic man and the son of the Jewish grand rabbi Aaron Jacob. The former publicly insulted the Jewish religion and accused Jews of committing murders for religious rituals. The governor Mahmud Paşa brought the case to the tribunal of investigation, but one of its members, probably the Greek Catholic Ğibrān Baħrī who represented Catholics, interfered against the Jews.<sup>106</sup> However, after the intervention of the English vice-consul, the Greek Catholic man was imprisoned. The Greek Catholic patriarch promised that he would warn his flock during the mass against accusations of blood libels. Satisfied with the punishment and promises of the patriarch, the grand rabbi Aaron Jacob forgave the Christian attacker who was freed.<sup>107</sup>

In two of these cases, the initial fight occurred in the Maydān, similarly to the blood libel of 1847. It should be noted that this neighborhood was inhabited by commoners, both Greek Catholics and Muslims, which points to the increasing involvement of the commoners of all communities in inter-confessional conflicts. Then, neighborhood solidarity between Christians and Muslims in the neighborhood of the Maydān was strong,<sup>108</sup> which could explain the involvement of Muslims in these blood libels.

The timing of the blood libels can also be linked to the political activities of European Jews in the Ottoman Empire. In December 1850, the French banker Gustav de Rothschild had come to Damascus to erase the inscription on the tomb of the Father Tommaso that read: "Here rest the bones of Father Thomas da Sardegna, Mgr Capucin murdered by the Jews on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1840." However Rothschild's visit was to no avail. Indeed, rather than finding an agreement, his visit and the ways in which Jews welcomed him rather displeased the Greek Catholics and the French consul.<sup>109</sup> In April 1856, Moses Montefiore, who had been instrumental in giving publicity in Europe to the blood libel of 1840, came

103. FO 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, July 29<sup>th</sup> 1856.

104. FO 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1856.

105. BOA, HR.MKT.16.6, August 24<sup>th</sup> 1856; HR.MKT.156.6, August 24<sup>th</sup> 1856.

106. FO 195/458, Misk-Redcliffe, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1856.

107. *Ibid.*

108. Illustrated by the protection awarded to Christians of the neighbourhood during the violence of 1860, Ferdinand Toula al-Bou'i (trans.), *Nubda muhtaşara fi hawādiṯ Lubnān wa'l-Şam (1840-1862)*, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1927, p. 119.

109. AE 166/PO-Serie D/20, vol. 3, De Segur-Lavalette, December 5<sup>th</sup> 1850.

to Damascus and demanded again to change the tombstone of Father Tommaso.<sup>110</sup> The blood libel took place in the aftermath of this visit. The visit of Jewish philanthropists and the competing historical narratives regarding the disappearance of Father Tommaso stirred up the tensions between the two communities.

In conclusion, the accusations against the Jews in the aftermath of the violence of 1860 point to the tense relationship between some Jews and Greek Catholics in Damascus and the development of sectarian discourses based upon the assumed enmity between the two religious communities. These tensions were heightened by the competition between notables of both communities in the provincial administration, which affected larger inter-confessional relations. The competition for influence between France, Austria and Great Britain and their interventions in favor of their respective *protégés* also strengthened the impression of a zero-sum game between the two communities. The repeated blood libels took place during shifts in the balance of power between the elite of the two communities. The accusations were used as tools to delegitimize opponents or gain access to resources, yet they affected how both communities perceived each other, contributing to the confessionalization of the society. The circulation of antisemitic and anti-Jewish materials originating from Europe participated in the construction of sectarian discourses based upon the idea of hostility between Jews and Christians. It highlights the increasing influence of the European press over the public opinion in the Ottoman empire. The blood libels and accusations against Damascene Jews in the aftermath of 1860 led to a sense of togetherness among Ottoman Jews. It encouraged solidarity between European Jews and their coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire, reinforcing the political strength of religious identifications. The financial activities of the Jewish elite and the increasing reliance of the local treasury on their loans made them susceptible to accusations of complicity with the governor and with the irregular military. These links were used against them in the aftermath of the violence of 1860. The analysis of the relation between Jews and Greek Catholics adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of inter-confessional tensions and violence by shifting the focus from the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims to the relations between non-Muslim communities. Inter-confessional relations can be considered as a multi-leveled phenomenon which brings into interaction dynamics of community-building, competition between elites, the permeable relationships between various religious communities, and state-society relations.

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110. AE 67/CPC, vol. 5, 6, Outrey-Compte Walewski, April 20<sup>th</sup> 1856.