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Author(s): Philip S. Khoury

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Philip S. Khoury

SYRIAN URBAN POLITICS IN TRANSITION: THE QUARTERS OF DAMASCUS DURING THE FRENCH MANDATE

For urban politics in Syria, the interwar years were pivotal. The country was in a transitional phase, uncomfortably suspended between four centuries of Ottoman rule and national independence. Although the Empire had collapsed and new forms of social and political organization were available, there remained a distinctive Ottoman cast to Syria's urban elites. Meanwhile, France had occupied the country, but was ruling clumsily and with a growing measure of uncertainty. The Mandate system itself dictated that the French could not remain in Syria indefinitely and Arab nationalism, however inconsistent and inarticulate, had become the reigning political idea of the age. The cry of independence rang across much of Syria, and nowhere more loudly and clearly than in her cities, the traditional centers of political life.

As late as the French Mandate, the Syrian city retained several of its important medieval focal points: a congregational mosque, a citadel, a central market place, and a complex of ancient residential quarters. It was still characterized by deep cleavages between different religious sects and ethnic groups, between the rich and the poor, between the various trades, and between long-settled urbanites and recent in-migrants from the countryside. Artisans remained loosely organized in corporations (*aṣnāf*), each craft grouped together, often on a single street or alley. The religious minorities, Christians and Jews, were also clustered in their own quarters with their own places of worship. "Except for a very small number of educated [and wealthy] people . . . [quarter residents] were pretty much absorbed in the narrowness of their life, and seldom if ever thought of the community at large or of its interests. . . ." In some senses, the most acute cleavages were those between the different quarters, which were separated from one another by walls and gates, locked tight at dusk by watchmen. This physical separation had come about for many reasons, but was above all "an expression of the innate impulse for protection through unity."¹

Even though the quarters² retained their distinctiveness and purpose in the early twentieth century, their cohesiveness had already begun to be eroded by new social forces. This was a direct consequence of the structural changes that had been sweeping the Middle East since the early nineteenth century – changes

in administration and law; in commerce, industry and agriculture; in the movement of goods, peoples and ideas; and, most notably, in the Ottoman state's relations with Europe. Not only did a shift occur in the relative importance of Syria's cities away from the interior and toward the coast but there were also shifts in the relative importance of different sections of the city and changes in their primary economic and administrative functions.

The integration of the Middle East into the world economy meant that, with different speeds and rhythms, old local economies decayed as pastoral and subsistence agriculture "gave way" to settled, market-oriented farming. Meanwhile, an economic and legal framework became established for the appropriation and extreme concentration of property, and cities were able to extend an influence far beyond the countryside in their immediate vicinity, creating larger, more fully integrated regional economic and political units.³ New landholding patterns uprooted peasants and encouraged increased migration to the cities. New patterns of trade and production hastened the impoverishment of some quarters and the enrichment of others. New concentrations of wealth coupled with the spread of modern education accelerated the process of class differentiation. In-migrants moved into quarters vacated by the recently rich and educated, or the state settled refugee populations in those areas. Other in-migrants and refugees settled on the outskirts of the city, creating poor suburban quarters.

Population movement in and out of Syrian cities was also affected by new and cheaper means of travel, and by World War I, which stimulated emigration to neighboring lands and to the West. The growth of a market economy gradually served to lower the barriers between quarters and between ethnic and religious communities, and hence encouraged higher forms of social integration and organization in the city at large. Supporting this process was a reinvigorated and modernized state, which became increasingly able to assert its authority in ways which had never been felt before.

However, although the winds of change in Syria intensified after World War I, their impact on urban politics should not be exaggerated. For instance, the exercise of local political power was marked by a remarkable degree of continuity, which was not disrupted by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and its replacement by the French Mandate. For the most part, the men who were important in local affairs under the Ottomans were the same men, or the sons of the same men, who wielded political influence under the French. Political leaders continued to organize their personal support systems as they had in late Ottoman times. Urban leadership remained the basic building block of political influence in Syria. And near the heart of urban politics were the quarters, the traditional domain in which political leadership operated and from which it derived much of its support.

Yet, despite the continuity of aims, of personnel, and even of organizational methods, political leaders under the Mandate were obliged to broaden the range of their operations in order to retain independent power and influence. Their relations with an openly hostile Christian and imperial power were never as smooth as they had been with the Ottomans. The French were perceived to be an illegitimate authority. Fortunately for urban leaders, the forces of change had

made available new methods, mechanisms, institutions, and classes to which they could turn to consolidate their positions and supplement their power. New loyalties to the city, the state, and ultimately to nationalism began to corrode traditional ties to the quarter, family, clan, and confessional group. Nationalism produced movements and organizations of greater complexity and territorial scale.⁴

The older quarters – marked by their mosques, fountains and baths, small shops, and cafés – could not remain untouched by the changing circumstances. Some maintained a certain stability but many others did not. Ironically, as their inhabitants attained their highest levels of political consciousness and organization, they also experienced a steady erosion of control over urban politics and the active forces of society. Outside the quarters, modern institutions and classes claimed greater amounts of the urban leadership's attention and time, becoming in the process new and dynamic focal points for nationalist resistance. Although the quarters remained one of the crucial foundations of urban politics, during the French Mandate the center of political gravity in Syrian cities began to shift irreversibly.

THE QUARTERS OF DAMASCUS

There is no more important or suitable city in which to examine the changing character of Syrian urban politics than Damascus. In its capacity as the premier metropolis, capital, and center of the national independence struggle against the French, Damascus embodied, shaped, and reflected nearly all the major political trends of the period. In terms of the erosion of old urban patterns and the formation of new ones the experience of Damascus is representative of the experience of other major Syrian cities during the interwar years.⁵

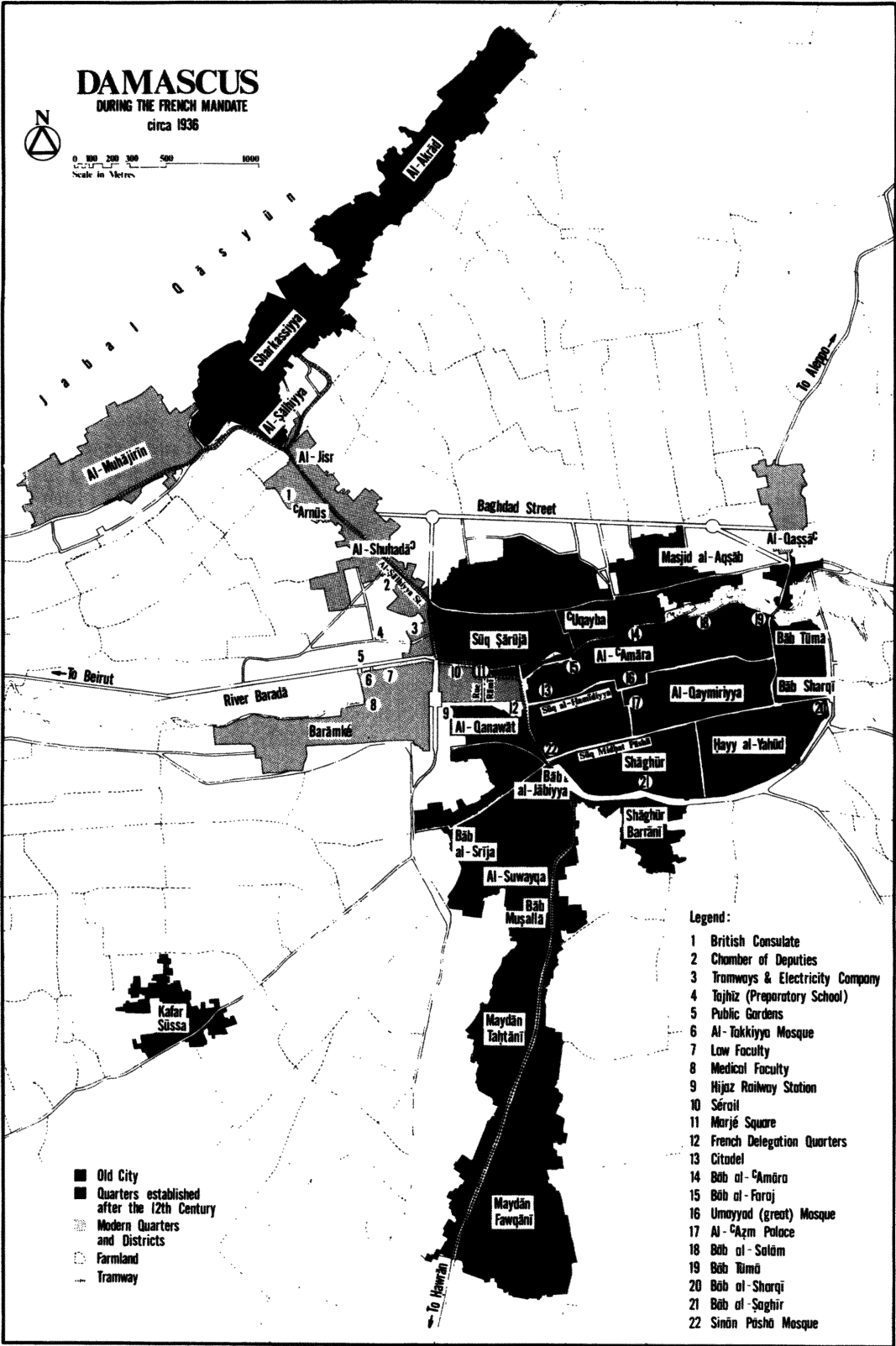
By the 1930s, Damascus contained nearly forty identifiable quarters (see Table 1 and Map 1), although several were no more than neighborhoods within larger quarters of the city's northwest and south. Most quarters and much of the town population were located on the southern bank of the Barada, a river which conditioned the very history of Damascus as it irrigated the gardens (known as al-Ghūṭa) to the city's east and west.⁶ For the sake of convenience, however, the city can be divided into four sections or districts.

The first section is old Damascus (see Table 1, Group 1), a maze of ten quarters encircled by the ancient wall. Some quarters (like ʿAmāra and Shāghūr) were subdivided, part of each falling inside the wall and part lying just outside.⁷ The residents of the Muslim quarters were active in the traditional religious, political, and commercial life of the city, to which the neighboring Great (Umayyad) Mosque, Citadel, and suqs of al-Ḥamīdiyya and Midḥat Pāshā (also known as Sūq al-Ṭawīl or The Street Called Straight) were central. Because quarters were almost exclusively residential (they did contain nonspecialized shops and markets [*suwayqa*] and some limited craft production) many of their male inhabitants were employed elsewhere, usually nearby in the old commercial district. This was also true for the two quarters containing the ancient religious minorities of Damascus: Bāb Tūmā, which housed sixty percent of the Christian

TABLE 1 *The quarters of Damascus and their population by religious community, circa 1936*

Quarter	Muslims	Christians	Jews	Total
<i>Group 1</i>				
al-Qaymariyya	5,817	241		6,058
Bāb Tūmā [Bāb Sharqī]		6,750		6,750
Ḥayy al-Yahūd			9,706	9,706
al-Kharāb	1,849			1,849
Madhnat al-Shahm	7,750			7,750
al-Jūrra	1,378	591		1,969
Bāb al-Barīd	1,715			1,715
Bāb al-Salām	1,599			1,599
Amāra Jawāniyya	4,044			4,044
Shāghūr Jawānī	6,383			6,383
<i>Group 2</i>				
Sūq Sārūja	6,868			6,868
Uqayba	5,095			5,095
Bahṣa Sanjaqdār	2,655	310		2,965
al-Qaṣṣā ^c		1,872		1,872
Amāra Barrāniyya	7,980			7,980
Maṣjid al-Aqṣāb	6,900			6,900
Shāghūr Barrānī	12,332			12,332
al-Qanawāt	8,625			8,625
Bāb al-Jābiyya	1,933			1,933
Bāb al-Srīja	12,000			12,000
Qabr Ataka	8,027			8,027
Birka Ḥaṭṭāb	2,020			2,020
al-Suwayqa	5,620			5,620
Tayāmna	—	—	—	—
<i>Group 3</i>				
Mūṣallī	2,826			2,826
Sūq al-Maydān	7,015			7,015
al-Haqla	1,493			1,493
Maydān Fawqānī	10,595			10,595
Maydān Taḥtānī	1,730			1,730
al-Qā ^c a	3,400			3,400
al-Sāḥa	3,040			3,040
Bāb Muṣalla	5,279	1,217		6,496
<i>Group 4</i>				
al-Akrād	6,650			6,650
Sharkasiyya	9,610			9,610
Abū Jarash	9,600			9,600
al-Ṣālḥiyya	2,622	182	10	2,814
al-Muhājirīn	3,442			3,442
Total	177,892	11,163	9,716	198,771

Source: René Danger, Paul Danger, and M. Ecochard, *Damas: Rapport d'enquête monographique sur la ville 1936* (unpublished), adapted from Table 13. These population figures are derived from a cadastral survey which the French High Commission conducted in the mid-1930s. They do not necessarily correspond to the exact boundaries of the quarters but they do reflect approximate population sizes of quarters.



MAP I. Residential quarters and suqs in modern Damascus.

community of the city, and the Jewish Quarter (Ḥayy al-Yahūd), in which nearly all Jews resided during the Mandate (see Table 1, Group 1). The central bazaars, in addition to including their prosperous shopkeepers and traders, comprised a vast array of productive activities – mostly handicrafts such as clothing, household goods, metal wares, and jewelry – grouped into tens of corporations, each located along a single street or alley.⁸ It is not clear whether these corporations ever provided a sense of solidarity and organization strong enough to allow them to be used for political purposes in the Mandate era. A number of them had already disappeared under the impact of the European commercial invasion, and many others had seen better days. Moreover, most had come under direct state supervision in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, a situation that French Mandatory authorities sought to reinforce. The great bazaars frequently went on strike during the Mandate era, but whether they did so under their own volition or because the nationalist leadership forced them to is a question worthy of further investigation.⁹

Some quarters had a significantly higher concentration of wealthy residents than did others – in particular, ʿAmāra (home of the local religious aristocracy) and al-Qaymariyya (known for its wealthy merchants) – and several displayed a certain economic homogeneity, although this was not true of the Christian and Jewish quarters. Residents of some exclusively Muslim quarters seem to have formed communities because of their involvement in similar occupations or trades. However, these individuals did not necessarily belong to the same ethnic group or come from the same place of origin. Their fairly high level of collective consciousness and purpose resulted from occupational and kinship ties that had developed over long periods of permanent residence in the quarter. Ties of descent and residence encouraged neighborhood and even quarter-wide solidarity and disposed local residents toward collective action.

The quarters of the old city are characterized by their walls, narrow and crooked streets, and inward-looking houses built around courtyards.¹⁰ By the mid-1930s, the old city contained about one-fourth of the Damascene population. But with rapid demographic growth in the interwar period, and the city's physical expansion to the northwest, old Damascus's share of the city's total population diminished considerably.

The second section of Damascus (Table 1, Group 2) includes the quarters and subquarters on the northern, western, and southern peripheries of the old city, which lay just outside the ancient wall. This section contained forty percent of the city's population in the mid-1930s. Most of its quarters were outgrowths of the old city which had begun to take shape in the later Middle Ages and eventually came to be fully integrated into the life of the town. Several were exclusively residential and catered to the wealthy classes. Sūq Sārūja dated from the fourteenth century and in the nineteenth became known as "Little Istanbul," owing to its popularity with the class of Ottoman functionaries; al-Qanawāt was established as early as the sixteenth century but assumed its cosmopolitan ambience in the nineteenth century. Both quarters housed prominent political leaders of the late Ottoman and Mandate periods. Others, like ʿUqayba, which was north of the old city and became in the 1930s one of the centers of modern industry, were

less exclusive.¹¹ Al-Qaṣṣā^c, to the northeast, became an appendage of Bāb Tūmā in the early twentieth century, housing wealthier Christian families who had found life in Bāb Tūmā's crowded ancient dwellings increasingly difficult.¹² The greater security provided by the Ottoman state after the 1860 massacres in Damascus, which the European powers reinforced, certainly contributed to the development of this new quarter beyond the old fortified walls of Bāb Tūmā.

The third section of Damascus (Table 1, Group 3), popularly referred to as al-Maydān, took its shape as a suburb after the Ottoman conquest of Syria in the sixteenth century.¹³ It is actually a long, narrow series of quarters and sub-quarters extending southwards into the grain-producing Hawran. Al-Maydān did not have as high a population density as did those quarters closer to the old city, and its commercial and residential buildings were rarely more than one storey high. Its population in the mid-thirties, which constituted nearly a fifth of the city's total, was the most socially heterogeneous in Damascus: it was filled with Hawrani peasants, Druze highlanders, Arab tribes in winter, and a small Christian community of artisans and merchant-moneylenders (in Bāb Muṣalla), all living a rather rudimentary lifestyle. It also housed a wealthy community of Muslim grain and livestock merchant-moneylenders which had grown out of the local janissary forces (*yerliyye*) that dominated the Maydān until the nineteenth century. As the wholesale provisions market of the city, the Maydān contained few bazaars or industries. Rather, it featured a significant number of storehouses (*ḥawāṣil*) that handled the grain and livestock trade that came from the Hawran and Palestine and for provisioning the annual pilgrimage to Mecca which originated in Damascus.¹⁴ Beginning in the nineteenth century, al-Maydān became slowly integrated into Damascus as the forces of agrarian commercialization in Syria developed, but during the Mandate it was still characterized by sharp social conflicts and a high crime rate. Because its largely immigrant population was poor, came from ethnically and geographically diverse origins, and were forced to settle in al-Maydān where land and dwelling rents were among the lowest in Damascus, the quarter was unable to develop a single collective consciousness, let alone a single identifiable political leadership. Certain communities in al-Maydān actively participated in nationalist resistance efforts during the Mandate, but it was virtually impossible to organize for collective action.

The fourth section of Damascus (Table 1, Group 4) was also its most sparsely and most recently settled section. In the mid-1930s its quarters lying to the northwest of the old city up to the slopes of Jabal Qāṣyūn housed only fifteen percent of the city's population. Several quarters within the section deserve special mention because each had its own distinctive characteristics. The closest to old Damascus in its physical and social features was al-Ṣālḥiyya. Originally a medieval village, it enjoyed a renaissance in the late nineteenth century. Here could be found the typical array of pious foundations, mosques, and *madrāsas* (religious schools) common in the older quarters across the Barada.¹⁵ Between al-Ṣālḥiyya and old Damascus arose during the Mandate several modern garden districts (the best known being al-Shuhadā³, ^cArnūs, and al-Jisr) which housed French officials and other members of the town's small European community in addition to a growing number of wealthy Muslim families. Built in this area were

new government schools, the parliament, European-style hotels and social clubs, and a burgeoning modern commercial district along the now-famous al-Ṣālḥiyya street. Closest to the old city were Marjé Square and the various buildings housing the French administration, including the Sérail. This new center of urban life was well laid out with paved roads; the absence of walls created a sense of openness and security.

Further up the hill lay al-Muhājirīn, a distant suburb settled by Muslim refugees from Crete in the late nineteenth century.¹⁶ The other significant quarter in section four was the Ḥayy al-Akrād, which was originally a village established by Kurdish settlers during the reign of Saladin and which became a refuge in the nineteenth century for immigrant Kurds who were not especially welcome further inside Damascus. There, on uncultivated terrain, they built their quarter and organized their own paramilitary forces. In contrast to the well-planned al-Muhājirīn with its prosperous inhabitants and its streets laid out at right angles, the Kurdish quarter was generally poor and its streets were a maze for protective purposes. In time the Kurds, who engaged in farming and the livestock trade, lost many of their particular customs and even their language as they became more fully a part of Arab Damascus. Their clan structure, however, was not as easily dissolved. Clan heads continued to exercise much local influence in the quarter even after some moved further inside the city into wealthier residential quarters like Sūq Sārūja in the last half of the nineteenth century.¹⁷

URBAN LEADERSHIP

The older quarters remained important focal points of social and political organization, despite various external pressures which broke through their self-contained and isolated structures. Moreover, each quarter tried to preserve its own personality during the Mandate. A typical older quarter had its own local leaders, including a *mukhtār* (headman, called *āghā* in some quarters), the *imāms* (prayer leaders) of the local mosque, and the *wujahā*³ (notables) who were usually the quarter's wealthy landowners and merchants. Together they sat on the council of the quarter (*majlis al-ḥayy*) which acted as a mini-government to protect quarter residents from excessive state interference, to represent the quarter in disputes with other quarters, and to mediate internal conflicts. Often one of these traditional leaders could be found on the Municipal Council (*majlis al-baladī*) of Damascus. At the lower end of the quarter's social scale, community life revolved around kinship groups, religious associations, and street gangs.¹⁸

Protection from government agents was one of the most important services that secular and religious dignitaries rendered their neighbors, friends, and clients. During the Mandate, when tax collectors in Damascus made their rounds to investigate individuals who had not paid their head or property taxes, they were not only accompanied by a police officer but also by the *mukhtār* and the *imām* of the quarter. In fact, in certain quarters tax collectors were not allowed to conduct their investigations unless they secured the agreement of the *majlis al-ḥayy* or its leading notable beforehand. In the case of Sūq Midḥat Pāshā, which received protection from the militant Shāghūr quarter, custom dictated that tax

collectors had to go to the home of the notable to request (“often beg for”) a written introduction before entering the *sūq*. Without this document, the tax collector could conduct no official business there.¹⁹

During the Mandate, the older quarters also maintained informal *dīwāns* (councils) where local dignitaries met with delegations from all classes, communities, and interest groups to discuss the critical issues of the day. These *dīwāns* were usually held in the outer salons (*maḍāfa* or *salāmlīk*) of the great residences of the quarter belonging to its wealthy landowning-bureaucratic and mercantile families. Such gatherings contributed far more than newspapers and other media to the formation and reinforcement of public opinion. Since the Mandate authorities frequently censored or suspended publication of newspapers and magazines, the *dīwān* served as a great storehouse of much fresher and more confidential information. Public political consciousness in the cities was advanced far beyond the level of education of the common people, who were largely illiterate and thus had little direct need for newspapers.²⁰

The contribution of prominent families in the quarter to the political life of the city was considerable. They were instrumental in mobilizing local forces to protest and resist or to support the government. They organized public gatherings in squares, cafés, theaters, and gardens; circulated petitions; boycotted elections and also foreign concessions and goods; shut down the great bazaars; raised funds; disseminated political information; and gauged the pulse of the city for the “beys” [*bēgawāī*] (the appellation given the nationalist leadership during the Mandate).²¹ These notable families had traditionally played the role of patron and broker, intervening on behalf of their clients with the government or mediating their personal disputes. By offering services to their neighbors and friends, they guaranteed loyalty and support and, in return, created for themselves an advantageous stability in the quarter. Their access to the state depended on their ability and willingness to maintain the social peace, which in turn depended on the degree of their independent influence in local society. Patronage was the source of this independent influence.²²

Because the population of Damascus nearly doubled in the two decades following the French occupation of Syria in 1920, the older quarters began to lose their intimacy and warmth, and their emotional support systems broke down. They became crowded and increasingly impersonal, owing to an unprecedented in-migration of peasants and tribes from outlying areas and to improved health conditions and facilities which lowered infant mortality rates.²³ The delicate balance of forces in the quarters and the positions of influence of the notable families was upset by the pressure of increased population. The great families found it increasingly difficult to absorb the growing number of newcomers to Damascus into their personal networks. Patronage became a more complex and competitive operation, which a number of the notable families could no longer manage satisfactorily. Feeling increasingly claustrophobic and threatened by the changing character of their quarters, especially their growing facelessness, some of the wealthier families in the old quarters left for the new garden suburbs to the town’s northwest.²⁴

Contributing to this flight during the Mandate was the widening social and cultural gulf between the modern educated and European-clad upper and upper-middle classes, which produced the urban leadership, and the largely unlettered and tradition-bound masses. The sweeping structural changes, initiated in the nineteenth century, helped to erode patronage systems, promoting instead an increasingly differentiated class structure. As class distinctions became more obvious, the wealthier and Europeanized classes found reason to distance themselves from the popular classes. One simple way was to move out of their ancestral quarters into the cleaner, safer, and more spacious areas on the outskirts of Damascus. Muslim notable families who linked their interests to the Mandate authorities or to European commercial enterprises were among the very first to leave. They could do so conveniently since their political influence was no longer dependent on building and maintaining patronage networks in the popular quarters.

A related factor precipitating this flight was the growing inadequacy of the ancestral courtyard house in the old quarter.²⁵ It became in time less able to accommodate the changes taking place in the structure and orientation of the upper-class family. In the course of two or three generations (that is, by the early twentieth century), the extended family or clan had developed its own distinct economic branches. Within the extended family, a hierarchy of power and influence became established and rival branches emerged.²⁶ Members of the wealthier branches preferred to move into their own homes, designed along European lines and reflecting the new patterns of social relations between the sexes and the generations. The availability of space in the gardens to the northwest of the city proved to be ideally suited to their needs. Moreover, improved technology brought new advantages for the privileged, such as running water and other sanitary devices which could not easily be installed in older homes. At the same time, paved roads and motorized vehicles brought the city-center within reasonable reach of outlying areas.

Not all wealthy families found it convenient to make such a move. The landed families who already owned the garden districts, which were to become modern Damascus, had a distinct advantage and interest in doing so. But an important determinant was the source of a family's wealth. Many could meet the financial demands of moving but were unable to leave because of the source of their livelihood. For instance, merchants whose enterprises depended on their daily presence in the city-center could not risk such a move. By contrast, families who lived off of farm or urban real estate rents, (and who thus had much less of a need to be in daily contact with the old commercial center of the city) could more easily afford the comforts of suburban life. Merchants in traditional businesses not directly linked to European commercial interests also tended to be those who had not acquired a modern education, Ottoman trappings, or European tastes, and who therefore were set apart from the absentee landowning-bureaucratic families that had served the Ottoman state as a provincial aristocracy of service.²⁷ Muslim merchant families tended to be more tradition-bound and, hence, more quarter-bound. Meanwhile, a cosmopolitan, landed upper crust, with a new attitude toward property relations, and newly acquired European

tastes in dress and creature comforts, encouraged intimate social relations only with the wealthiest and most sophisticated merchant families, and increasingly with members of a rising educated middle class. The exclusive social and cultural proclivities of the members of this class encouraged them to live together at a distance from the rest of urban society.²⁸

By the mid-1930s, not only had several of the great families in regular collaboration with the French moved out of their ancestral quarters but eight of the ten principal nationalist leaders had also done so. Most had moved to the north-western suburbs. Jamīl Mardam, the architect of nationalist strategy in the 1930s, had left the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya area where the Mardam-Beg palace was situated; Shukrī al-Quwwatī and the only merchant in the Bloc leadership, Luṭfī al-Ḥaffār, had moved out of the popular Shāghūr quarter. Only Fakhrī al-Bārūdī and Nasīb al-Bakrī continued to be permanent fixtures in their quarters: Bārūdī in al-Qanawāt, which was still a very comfortable residential quarter and conveniently located for his many political and economic enterprises, and Bakrī in the old city, to better service his personal network, which consisted of popular quarter bosses and veterans of the Great Revolt of 1925.²⁹

Unlike those notables who collaborated with the French, the most influential nationalist leaders were careful not to sever ties with the popular quarters. They retained large personal followings which cut across class and even confessional lines. However, their actual physical presence became more infrequent. At election time, on feasts, and at other commemorative occasions, such as the annual Maysalūn memorial or the Prophet's birthday, Jamīl Mardam and Shukrī al-Quwwatī could always be seen amongst the common people in the old quarters, where they opened the outer salons of their spacious family residences to supporters and well-wishers. Nationalist chiefs always listed their ancestral quarters as permanent residences and in election primaries they ran on their quarter's list. Because their new suburban houses were inconveniently and sometimes inaccessible, it was necessary to maintain their traditional homes for social and political purposes.³⁰ On lesser occasions, nationalist chiefs were rarely present. Surprisingly, the task of organizing strikes, demonstrations, and nationalist rallies did not require their presence.

During the Mandate period, a growing division of labor developed within the independence movement, particularly after the failure of the Great Revolt, which was followed by the nationalist elite's decision to adopt the different but clearly more comfortable strategy of "honorable cooperation" with the French. This strategy placed a greater emphasis on diplomacy, supported by carefully orchestrated strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations which aimed to discredit rival factions of notables collaborating with the French High Commission and to convince the French that the nationalists alone should be invited to form a national government in Syria.

The collapse of the Great Revolt had discredited revolutionary armed struggle as a viable strategy. It not only heavily damaged the material interests of the nationalist elite but it caused massive hemorrhaging in the ranks. Afterwards, the nationalist leadership no longer sought immediately to overturn the French-controlled system of rule, but something rather less: the modification of the

existing system and the gradual relaxation of French control. To survive, nationalists had to pursue more delicate relationships with the French. Meanwhile, the French High Commission, under pressure from Paris to develop a more consistent and hence less offensive imperial policy in Syria, welcomed and encouraged this new strategy.³¹

After the suppression of the Great Revolt in 1927, nationalist leaders in Syria's major cities organized themselves into a new political organization, the National Bloc (*al-Kutla al-Waṭaniyya*). In each town, the Bloc was not a unified or well-integrated political party but rather was an alliance of like-minded urban political leaders, each heading an autonomous machine which was used in the common cause of national independence.³² During the Mandate, a combination of elements drawn from the traditional and modern sectors of urban society powered these political machines. Although the lines between the traditional and modern sectors were often blurred because urban society was still evolving gradually and unevenly, one distinction was clear: the support of the traditional sectors of society stemmed less from ideological considerations than did the support of the modern sectors. In his own quarter, the Bloc chief built and reinforced his personal network by using his inherited wealth and family connections to funnel crucial benefits and services to a broad array of individuals from classes beneath his own. Despite an ongoing process of class polarization and hence an increased opportunity for class conflict, society in the popular quarters was still organized according to relations of personal dependence. At the top of the social pyramid stood the great urban-absentee landowning families, such as Mardam-Beg, Al-Quwwatī, Al-Bārūdī, Al-Bakrī, and Al-Ghazzī, from which the nationalist leadership of Damascus emerged and, in particular, the National Bloc, the most effective political alliance of the Mandate era.

As National Bloc chiefs became increasingly preoccupied with diplomatic bargaining at the summit of politics, they were obliged to leave the day-to-day task of organizing and maintaining their patronage systems to members of their families, personal secretaries, and other prominent personalities in their political orbit. In other words, as Bloc leaders began to distance themselves socially and physically from the city-center, they turned to other intermediaries who could more conveniently maintain face-to-face contacts and purvey the material benefits and services which buttressed each leader's personal network. Prominent merchants and religious leaders in the quarters were two such natural intermediaries.

Merchants and *imāms* in the popular quarters supported the National Bloc for a variety of reasons, but mainly because they perceived foreign rule as the primary cause of their seemingly endless misfortunes. The French-imposed banking and tax systems were inimical to the financial interests of the Muslim commercial bourgeoisie. The partition of greater Syria severely damaged commerce and industry, and the French were either unwilling or unable to permit merchants and industrialists to have access to foreign capital, giving them few investment outlets. Many, although by no means all,³³ saw the French as robbers of Syria's national wealth and the major obstacle to economic development. At the same

time, the upper layers of the Muslim commercial bourgeoisie were closely intertwined with the absentee landowning class in the Syrian capital from which the major National Bloc leaders emerged. They maintained social and financial relations through marriage and joint ventures. Merchants provided loans to landowners and often handled the distribution of their crops. They generally responded promptly to the Bloc's call for strikes and boycotts. The new strategy developed by the Bloc in the wake of the Great Revolt, with its emphasis on patient diplomacy, appealed to a commercial bourgeoisie that had suffered considerable financial misfortune during the Revolt and therefore feared continued political instability. The merchant classes had reason to support the Bloc's new tactics. The Bloc would not resort to violent confrontations or full-scale rebellion again, unless the French proved completely intransigent and purposely closed off all access to the High Commission. However, although merchant families supported the National Bloc with funds and their own personal networks of artisans, small shopowners, and peddlers in the quarters and bazaars, rarely did they become official members of the Bloc or of any other nationalist organization. Their participation in nationalist politics came about through their personal association with individual nationalist leaders.³⁴

Muslim religious leaders in Damascus, a number of whom belonged to mercantile families, were also of invaluable service to the nationalist movement. In general, the religious establishment's interests and influence had been declining for several generations, owing to increased government control over their institutions and a much altered intellectual climate. Traditional ideas – historically the monopoly of the *ʿulamāʾ* – began to lose their influence with the educated elites, and the traditional activities of the *ʿulamāʾ*, as interpreters of the law, educators, and heads of the mystic orders, declined in social value. Less and less significance came to be attached to posts in the religious institutions whereas greater wealth, power, and status accrued to those individuals in the new, modern branches of administration, and from large-scale landownership. This is not to suggest that religious solidarity among the Arabs had vanished; it still existed alongside other loyalties to family, tribe, ethnic and confessional group, neighborhood, and village. But all these ties had been challenged by the rise of new loyalties, such as the rise of secular nationalism, that had accompanied the general structural changes begun in the nineteenth century.³⁵ Religious leaders suffered further humiliations under the French, who, as a Christian power, tried to impose direct supervision over such religious institutions as the *awqāf* (pious trusts), which often provided a major portion of their incomes. Equally damaging to their interests was the French effort to denigrate the influence of Islam by relegating it to the status of one religion among many. A beleaguered religious establishment, ranging from ranking legal scholars and judges to preachers in the local mosques, supported the resistance to foreign hegemony in Syria.

Although the influence of religion and the status of religious leaders had declined, these individuals had not lost their ability to shape public opinion among the illiterate and the uneducated in the popular quarters. For most urbanites, the mosque and *masjid* continued to be the central institution in their

lives, giving preachers the opportunity to argue for resistance to the French and defense of traditional society in religious terms. To the common people, nationalism was still only a code word for the defense of Islam against foreign aggression, despite ongoing efforts by secular nationalists, including the National Bloc leadership, to dilute the Islamic content of nationalist ideology. As long as Islam had a grip on the minds of the common people, religious leaders were able to reinforce their own positions as guardians of the faith and the culture, if not of the nation.³⁶

Although wealthy merchants and *imāms* recruited clients, financed various nationalist activities, and helped to organize their quarters and the bazaars on a political footing, neither group was able to pose a challenge to the National Bloc's control over nationalism or its domination of local politics during the Mandate. Whereas merchants and *imāms* remained bound up in the closeness of quarter life, the marketplace, and the mosque, having little or no opportunity to break out of this restrictive environment, the nationalist leadership was able to devote its undivided attention to politics on a grander scale. Because many nationalist chiefs could live off land rents collected by their families, they had little need to seek full-time employment. It was during the Mandate that a class of professional politicians arose in Damascus and other Syrian towns. Hailing from affluent families, with a long history of administrative service and with a common upbringing, education, and set of political experiences, the nationalist elite was eminently (and almost exclusively) qualified to represent Damascus at the summit of politics. Therefore, as long as urban society continued to regard these individuals as the "natural" leaders of the opposition to the French, they could expect the continued support of merchants and the religious establishment.

Merchants and *imāms* enhanced their personal status by associating with nationalist chiefs. But this enhancement alone was not sufficient to ensure their long-term loyalty. It was also expected that once a nationalist leader reached the heights of government, he would reward his followers. Hence, allegiance might be offered with the knowledge that returns in the form of government contracts, licenses, jobs in the central administration and municipality, new mosques, paved roads, sewage systems, and other facilities might be in the offing in the long run.

There was fierce competition among nationalists for access to the French. Only this access would give a leader control of government offices and services – the most valuable form of patronage. Competition for clientele networks was equally fierce, for only those networks could prove a leader's local power and indispensability to the French. Competition in both arenas was closely intertwined; success in one depended on success in the other.

QABAḌĀYĀT

One figure in the quarters who could give the nationalist leader a decisive edge in competition for clientele during the Mandate was the local gang leader, the *qabaḍāy* (pl. *qabaḍāyāt*), or, in the patois of Damascus, the *zgrirtī*.³⁷

Probably no individual with independent influence in the quarters was closer to the common man than was the *qabaḍāy*. He was something akin to an institution. Each quarter had its own set of historical figures who were glorified from

one generation to the next. In time, an ideal type was formed, one that characterized the *qabaḍāy* as strong, honorable, the protector of the feeble and the poor as well as of the religious minorities, the upholder of Arab traditions and customs, and the guardian of popular culture. He was hospitable to strangers, always pious, and a clean liver.³⁸ This image placed far less emphasis on the *qabaḍāy*'s darker side, his shady dealings, his preference for physical coercion, and even his "mortal" crimes for personal gain. The common people clearly differentiated between the *qabaḍāyāt* and the *zu^crān* or hoodlums who ran protection rackets (*khūwa*) in the quarters and bazaars, although in reality such distinctions were hazy.³⁹

A *qabaḍāy* might eventually become fairly well-to-do, but what distinguished him from the dignitaries of the quarter were his significantly lower social origins, his general want of formal education, his outspoken preference for traditional attire and customs, and the much narrower range of his interests and contacts, all of which accorded him a less exalted status than that enjoyed by merchants or religious leaders.⁴⁰ He survived best in the traditional milieu of the self-contained quarter with its inwardness and narrowly defined interests. There he was needed to provide physical protection from hostile external forces and extra-legal mechanisms for settling personal disputes. But, by the time of the Mandate, the *qabaḍāy* had begun to feel threatened by the pressures of change created by rapid urbanization, the growth of a market-oriented economy, and the rise of new classes and institutions outside the popular quarters. This period was a transitional phase in the life of the Syrian city, and in the organization and functions of its quarters; the *qabaḍāy* survived it, although not without difficulty.

A *qabaḍāy* might rise to leadership in the quarter by several different paths, and it is difficult to separate myth from reality when tracing the emergence of any particular strongman. It is, however, possible to trace the career of at least one prominent *qabaḍāy* of the Mandate period in Damascus, his links to the National Bloc, and his contribution to the independence movement.

Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī [al-Gilāwī]⁴¹ claims to have been born in 1897, in Bāb al-Jābiyya, an old popular quarter situated near the entrance to Sūq Miḍḥat Pāshā and which included the charming Mosque of Sinān Pāshā. The origins of the Kilāwī family are obscure. They seem to have first settled in al-Maydān some time in the early nineteenth century where they were engaged in the transport of wheat from their native Hawran to flour mills in al-Maydān. They may have belonged to one of the tributaries of the Rwala Beduin who roamed with the Rwala chieftains of Al-Sha^clān before the Mandate.⁴² The Kilāwīs also claimed descent from Abū Bakr, the Prophet's companion and first Caliph, and billed themselves as members of the *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet), although the great religious families of Damascus did not recognize their claim. According to Abū ʿAlī, the family's surname had originally been al-Bakrī until the end of the nineteenth century. When his father died unexpectedly, the family dropped al-Bakrī for some inexplicable reason and adopted instead the surname of Abū ʿAlī's maternal grandfather. During the Mandate, the Kilāwīs were not regarded as members of the aristocratic al-Bakrī family of Damascus; however, they were

very partial to the Bakrīs and especially close to Nasīb Bey of the National Bloc.⁴³

Abū ʿAlī had two older brothers. He happened to be much closer to the oldest, Abū Ḥasan, who assumed the leadership of the family upon their father's death, and under whose wing Abū ʿAlī grew up learning the ways of the quarter. Abū ʿAlī attributes his rise to the status of a *qabaḍāy* to several factors, all of which suggest that he did not inherit the title. One factor was his own physical strength, which he displayed early in life despite his slight build. The youth of Bāb al-Jābiyya and other quarters engaged in different forms of informal competition which helped lay the groundwork for the rise of a *qabaḍāy*. Abū ʿAlī, for example, excelled in wrestling (*muṣāraʿa*). To the beat of two drums, the youth of the quarter would congregate in an open field or garden where wrestling matches were staged between boys dressed in leather shorts worn above britches. By the age of sixteen, Abū ʿAlī was reputed to be the best wrestler in his quarter.⁴⁴

By this age, the youth of the quarter had already begun to practice the martial arts and in particular swordsmanship. Wielding a long, silver-handled sword in one hand and a small metal shield (*turs*) in the other, two young men would face each other, twirling their swords through different orbits over and around their heads while interspersing blows against their own shields and those of their opponents in a complicated cadence.⁴⁵ The boy who could handle his sword most adeptly and innovatively advanced in the competition, and the best five or six contestants were asked to form a troupe. This troupe would then have the honor of performing on all festive occasions in the quarter, such as weddings and the Prophet's birthday.⁴⁶ In his day, Abū ʿAlī was the leader of such a troupe of swordsmen and from it he began to build his own personal following.

Horsemanship was Abū ʿAlī's other forte. After their father's death, his brother, Abū Ḥasan, used his family's relations with the beduin tribes south of Damascus to convert the Kilāwī transport business into a horse-breeding and trading concern. The center for their new activities was a small stud farm which the family owned just south of al-Maydān. In time, the Kilāwīs became renowned horse-dealers throughout the Arab East, purveying purebred show animals and racehorses to the royal families of Transjordan and Saudi Arabia, and to other Arab dignitaries. By the time he was twenty, Abū ʿAlī was considered to be the best horseman in his quarter, a reputation which soon spread throughout Damascus and the rest of Syria. By the mid-1930s, the Kilāwī stable of show horses had become an attraction at all national parades, and Abū ʿAlī always rode at the head.⁴⁷

Successful business enterprises helped to vault the Kilāwī family into the social limelight of Bāb al-Jābiyya. Neighbors began to ask for favors or assistance and in no time they built up a solid core of followers and clients from among the poorer elements of the quarter, some of whom were personally loyal to Abū ʿAlī. The result was that Abū ʿAlī was able to put together his own gang, composed mainly of unemployed youth and casual laborers.

In the early 1920s, as the Kilāwīs began to accumulate capital, they were able to purchase a fairly large apartment in the heart of their quarter, one with a

special salon for entertaining. This salon also was used as an informal courtroom where the Kilāwīs, now much trusted in Bāb al-Jābiyya, served as administrators of extra-legal justice, arbitrating or mediating disputes between individuals and families who for one reason or another were not comfortable going before the religious or civil courts. The Kilāwīs also lent their salon to poorer families for wedding parties and other social functions, and it eventually became one of the meeting places of the roving *dīwān*. Abū ʿAlī claimed that he and his brothers never asked for money or other material rewards for their hospitality and services. But they did expect personal loyalty to the family, which they acquired as the Kilāwī network grew and the family name came to be mentioned with both reverence and fear.

One of the most prominent features of urban life in Damascus was the *ʿarāḍa* or traditional parades held in the quarters to celebrate some religious event such as a circumcision, the return of the pilgrimage, or the Prophet's birthday. These occasions allowed the youth of one quarter to compete with the youth of neighboring quarters in wrestling matches, sword games, horseracing, and the like. The honor of the quarter was always at stake in these events, as were specific controversies over turf and freedom of movement. Certain quarters were known to be long-standing rivals, most notably Sūq Sārūja and al-Ṣālhiyya,⁴⁸ and Shāghūr and Bāb al-Jābiyya. Yet another way in which Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī reinforced his status in the quarter was to lead his stalwarts in street fights against rival gangs of Shāghūr.

By the early twentieth century, however, the parades had begun to assume secular dimensions as they came to mark political events such as the election of a deputy, the return of an exile, the Young Turk revolt of 1908, or the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911.⁴⁹ This politicization accelerated during the Mandate, and acts of defiance against the French and their collaborators highlighted the continued independence of life in the quarters. But, equally important, as political consciousness rose in the quarters, the fierce rivalries between them were transformed into an alliance of quarters against the French. The narrowness and insularity of quarter life began to break down as the scope for political activity widened.

The Great Revolt of 1925 hastened the erosion of many of the traditional social and political barriers and rivalries between quarters and helped to bind them together in a common front against the French. There is little doubt that the many stories of individual heroism which quickly became part of the local history and mythology of the Revolt helped many a young man to enhance his reputation in the popular quarters of the city, enabling him to achieve the status of *qabaḍāy*. In fact, there was a noticeable turnover of *qabaḍāyāt* at this time, owing to the emergence of new heroes during the Revolt who replaced those who had been killed. Probably the most respected and esteemed *qabaḍāy* of his day was Ḥasan al-Kharrāṭ, the nightwatchman of Shāghūr, who led a rebel attack on French positions in the Syrian capital and was later killed by French troops.⁵⁰ His elimination permitted another rising star of the Revolt, Maḥmūd Khaddām al-Srīja, to assert himself as the undisputed strongman of Shāghūr.

Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī frankly admitted fifty years after his own participation in the Great Revolt that it also enabled his family to consolidate their position as the *qabaḍāyāt* par excellence of Bāb al-Jābiyya.⁵¹ When the Revolt erupted, the Kilāwīs and their armed gang prepared their quarter for insurrection against the French. Abū ʿAlī joined the rebel band of Nasīb al-Bakrī, whose family had patronized the Kilāwīs for some time. After the French regained control of most of Damascus in October, Abū ʿAlī followed Bakrī's forces into the gardens around the Syrian capital. One particular episode at this time contributed to his immortalization in the minds of future generations. Seriously wounded in a single-handed attempt to liberate his rebel comrades imprisoned in the Citadel of Damascus, he managed to flee on horseback, taking refuge among his traditional enemies in Shāghūr. Two days later, a weak but determined Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī recruited some young men of Shāghūr and rode back with them to Bāb al-Jābiyya, where he rounded up more followers and returned to the Ghūṭa to rejoin the Bakrī band.⁵²

Like the great merchants and the *imāms* of the local mosques, the *qabaḍāyāt* rarely joined the National Bloc or any other political organization. Rather, their affiliation and loyalty was to one or another of the Bloc chiefs. Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī's allegiance was to Nasīb al-Bakrī not to the Bloc's executive council.

The *qabaḍāyāt* were typically more important to a nationalist leader's political machine in the quarters than were the merchants or religious figures. The Bloc chief's resources were limited, especially when in and out of jail or in temporary exile; therefore the recruitment and maintenance of his clientele required considerable finesse. He generally preferred to devote his personal attention to winning and sustaining followings among the wealthier families of the quarters; and, with these he made certain that he was able to maintain regular personal contacts at all times. When the National Bloc chief began to distance himself from his ancestral quarter, he had to depend more heavily on intermediaries to dispense favors and services to the larger mass of poorer residents with whom he probably never came into direct contact. Merchants, whose status was based on wealth, philanthropy, and religious piety, were among those intermediaries who assumed this function for the politicians. But as class differentiation evolved during the Mandate, merchants increasingly began to take less and less interest in the poor and their individual problems. They neither found ample time for, nor were they well-disposed toward, the poor. Philanthropy, after all, did not require regular contact with the lower classes. Some members of the Muslim religious establishment also placed a greater distance between themselves and the common people. Others, however, including preachers in the popular quarters, actually strengthened their influence among the destitute and the illiterate. Although leading religious dignitaries and lower-ranking *imāms* generally supported the nationalist chiefs, they also formed benevolent societies (*jamʿiyyāt*) which assumed a militant anti-western and anti-secular political character by the mid-1930s and which eventually posed an unwelcome challenge to the authority of the nationalist leadership in the quarters.⁵³

The *qabaḍāy*, in contrast, posed no such threat. He hailed from the common people, was under the protection of the *bey*, was often indebted to him for loans and services, and, in any case, lacked the education, status, and statesman-like

qualities to reach the *bey*'s level of political leadership. Thus, while the National Bloc leader, assisted by his personal secretary and family, policed the core of his patronage network, the *qabaḍāy* looked after its periphery, servicing it directly whenever possible and guaranteeing its support when the *bey* required it.⁵⁴

Although some *qabaḍāyāt* were able to attract their own personal followings by performing such services as the mediation of disputes, the protection of the neighborhood, and small philanthropic activities, they had neither direct control nor access to large material resource bases which might have allowed them to build their own independent patronage networks. In the final analysis, they were beholden to the politicians in many of the same ways that other clients were. The only significant difference was that the *qabaḍāy*'s apparatus for recruiting and policing his *bey*'s clientele gave him direct access to the *bey*'s immediate entourage, in particular to his personal secretary. In this way, the *qabaḍāy* could count on preferential treatment and a few more privileges than could the average client on the periphery of the *bey*'s network.⁵⁵ Although the scope for social mobility was not wide, a number of *qabaḍāyāt* managed to enrich themselves through connections with their patrons.

At any given time the residents of a quarter might refer to several individuals as *qabaḍāyāt*. A quarter could support more than one strongman, although it was not uncommon to associate the *qabaḍāyāt* with a single family. Residents of Bab al-Jabiyya referred to "*wilād al-Kilāwī*" (the sons of al-Kilāwī) as frequently as they did to any one member of the family. It was the family, through its connections, which provided protection and assistance to the quarter. Abū ʿAlī did make a name for himself in particular as the family rabble-rouser, the gifted equestrian, and the local enforcer. But he frankly admitted that his oldest brother, who had some education, made the family's major decisions, ran its business, and dealt with the National Bloc politicians and their deputies. Abū ʿAlī was in effect Abū Ḥasan's lieutenant, prepared to execute his commands. When Abū Ḥasan died, the leadership of the Kilāwī family passed to Abū ʿAlī (his other brother was regarded as a high-liver and a playboy, which disqualified him), who had already begun to educate his eldest son to fill the role of family lieutenant.⁵⁶

Part of the mythology surrounding the *qabaḍāy* was that he never took money from politicians or their secretaries, or from merchants in the quarter for carrying out various instructions, such as mobilizing the youth of the quarter to demonstrate or enforcing a strike or boycott. Abū ʿAlī admitted that the Bloc offered him money at various times and cited several attempts by merchants close to the Bloc to pay him to keep the General Strike of 1936 going.⁵⁷ Defending the ideal image of a *qabaḍāy*, he also claimed that to accept such offerings ran against his honor. He did not deny, however, that some *qabaḍāyāt* broke this code of personal honor and morality by accepting cash and other benefits for merely fulfilling their duties. For example, after the National Bloc took office in 1936, in the wake of the general strike and the Franco-Syrian treaty negotiations in Paris, Shukrī al-Quwwatī, the Minister of Finance and the National Defense, saw to it that Maḥmūd Khaddām al-Srīja, probably the most renowned *qabaḍāy* of the 1930s in Damascus, received a regular stipend from a

waqf originally designated for the poor in his native Shāghūr for services to al-Quwwatī, the leading politician of that quarter.⁵⁸

Given the combination of resources which fed any Bloc chief's political machine, the support that these leaders received from the quarters was uneven. A politician like Nasīb al-Bakrī was extremely well-connected to numerous *qaba-ḍāyāt* like the Kilāwīs, the Dīb al-Shaykh family of the ʿAmāra quarter, and to other veterans of the Great Revolt in which Bakrī featured so prominently. Bakrī, who cut a much more socially and religiously conservative figure than did his more cosmopolitan Bloc comrades, and who had the religious prestige of his family behind him, moved easily among the tradition-bound masses of the popular quarters. By contrast, Shukrī al-Quwwatī, Jamīl Mardam, and Fakhrī al-Bārūdī (the other major Bloc figures in Damascus) were all extremely influential in their respective quarters and particularly with merchants, but could not claim large personal followings in other quarters, despite the respect they commanded. Unlike Bakrī, however, they serviced much more diversified political machines; each had a significant following in the modern sectors and institutions of Damascus, especially among the educated youth and emerging middle classes.⁵⁹

No National Bloc chief could claim to have considerable influence in the two popular quarters on the periphery of Damascus, Ḥayy al-Akrād and al-Maydān. In the Kurdish quarter, where clan loyalties persisted, the great Kurdish families of Al-Yūsuf and Shamdīn still held sway. Although Arabized in the course of the nineteenth century, they were never particularly well-disposed toward Arab nationalism, which threatened to erode the ethnic and clan loyalties on which their influence was in part based. Furthermore, the role that Kurdish auxiliary troops had played in suppressing the Great Revolt strained relations between nationalists and the Kurds of Damascus for the duration of the Mandate.⁶⁰

In the long, narrow, socially heterogeneous al-Maydān to the city's south, the Bloc's problems were of a different order and magnitude. There, the social tensions and dislocations produced by the unsettling effects of increasing immigration kept political power fragmented. Although the Maydān, unlike Ḥayy al-Akrād, contributed heavily in blood and sweat to the cause of independence (the French bombarded it from the air twice during the Great Revolt, nearly destroying the entire quarter), those al-Maydānī families who could claim influence were never closely linked to the National Bloc. Some, like the great merchant *āghāwāt* of Sukkar and al-Mahaynī, assisted the Bloc only when they wanted to and were not intimately tied to any Bloc chief's political machine. Others, like the Ḥakīm family, opposed the National Bloc, supporting its major rival faction headed by Dr. ʿAbd al-Rahmān Shahbandar, the recognized leader of the Great Revolt.⁶¹

Although there is no single explanation for why the Maydān evaded the influence of the National Bloc, the Bloc was clearly ill-equipped to mitigate the Maydān's social contradictions, to ameliorate its poverty, general squalor, and unsettledness, and hence to integrate and organize its population for political action. This left the area vulnerable to politicization by more socially conscious forces, ranging from Muslim benevolent societies to modern radical political organizations like the Communist and Baʿth parties, which could better provide

a suitable and effective framework for integration. In a wider context, the rapid pace of urbanization during the Mandate was not accompanied by the kind of industrialization that could have provided this growing pool of unskilled labor with jobs which would have brought it under some form of social and political control.⁶²

BEYOND THE QUARTERS

Although the popular quarters remained important units of political and social organization as their internal structures and interrelations changed during the Mandate, their importance to the independent movement declined. The advancement of urban political life had produced new focal points outside the quarters. These were the modern institutions which, from their inception, were closely identified with the growth of a professional middle class whose fundamental interests lay beyond the quarters. The dominant sentiments of this class of lawyers, doctors, engineers, educators, journalists, and other members of the intelligentsia transcended the narrowness of quarter life; their primary loyalties were to the city, state, and the nation rather than to the family, clan, confessional group, or quarter.

The importance of the modern middle class to the development of the independence movement in Syria grew with time. Although it was intimately involved in the birth of the Arab nationalist movement in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, and its members could be found in all secret nationalist societies before and during World War I, it really only began to have a significant impact on political life in the 1930s.⁶³ Many factors were behind its ascent at this time, all of which were connected to changes in the structure of Syrian society that had been occurring since late Ottoman times. But among the most important factors was the development of modern secular education, which only became available to social strata below the upper class during the Mandate period. The addition of the professional middle class to the ranks of the nationalist movement involved a generation of individuals who were younger than the leadership of the National Bloc. Moreover, this generation was not as tainted by the Ottoman experience and legacy, and it possessed a higher level of education than that of its elders in the Bloc.

The number of primary and secondary school students in government institutions nearly doubled between 1924 and 1934.⁶⁴ The Syrian University also expanded in this period, and opportunities opened for the brightest high school and university graduates to go to France on scholarships for advanced studies in a wide variety of fields, (in particular, law, medicine, and teacher-training). All of these factors certainly played a role in broadening the horizons of the urban youth and in shifting the focus of their activities out of the quarters and into modern institutions and structures. This new focus, in turn, helped to supplant their traditional loyalties with new ones, most notably with nationalism. But although modern education paved the way for social mobility and afforded middle-class status, it did not necessarily guarantee middle-class incomes. Rising

but unfulfilled expectations created a vast reservoir of frustration and antagonism which the Syrian nationalist leadership had to channel to its own ends. Otherwise, it stood to sacrifice its potential influence in what was rapidly becoming the most dynamic sector of Syrian society. The National Bloc also recognized that the new educated cadres were in need of leaders with whom they could identify socially, culturally, and intellectually. Traditionally educated and attired merchants and religious leaders, and the semi-literate *qabaḍāyāt* of the popular quarters, were bound to be ineffective as role models for the rising middle classes. A new set of leaders, more closely attuned to their needs and conscious of their aspirations, had to emerge to service the educated youth.

The National Bloc discovered early on that the major source of disaffected, educated youth in Damascus (and in other cities) was the expanding government school system. There, already grouped together, were thousands of students being inculcated daily with patriotic ideals by Syrian instructors and, as a result, drifting away from the influence of the traditional quarters with their increasingly archaic and outmoded social and cultural norms. School life temporarily freed these young people from the entanglements of family obligations and careers.⁶⁵ Their growing political awareness coupled with their youthful lack of inhibitions could be translated into major support for the National Bloc. All that was wanting was some force to harness their unbridled energy.

Not long after its establishment, the National Bloc began to turn its attention to developing a youth wing from among high school and university students. In 1929, such an organization was born – the Nationalist Youth (*al-Shabāb al-Waṭanī*). As was often the case with the more innovative National Bloc projects, the propelling force behind the Nationalist Youth was Fakhrī al-Bārūdī. His interest in the educated young stemmed from several sources. His own fairly broad intellectual interests in literature, the arts, and Arabic music enabled him to stay in close touch with the main intellectual currents and fashions that attracted the young between the wars. His personal inheritance, which included large revenues from his family's farms around Damascus, allowed him to offer patronage to young talented journalists, poets, and musicians whom he encouraged to frequent his large home in al-Qanawāt. It is not surprising that he preferred to spend much of his time cultivating the young, the educated, and the talented instead of building relations with *qabaḍāyāt* as did his cousin and major rival in the National Bloc, Nasīb al-Bakrī. Bārūdī was neither as conservative nor as rigid as Bakrī, and although conscious of Arab traditions, he was much more discriminating in his choice of those he emphasized. He was clearly a politician with a vision of the future as well as one of the past.⁶⁶

In addition, Bārūdī's immediate environment conditioned his decision to cultivate the educated youth. Al-Qanawāt was largely populated by upper and upper-middle class Muslim families like his own who afforded their children the best local education available in Arabic. It seems that Bārūdī was impressed by the youth of his quarter and especially by their social and political awareness. He held out great hope for the coming generation of leaders. But he also felt that it was incumbent upon his generation to develop the talents and direct the energies

of the young and educated who were forced to grow up in a tension-ridden and unsettling era of foreign dominion. For Bārūdī, the National Bloc had a very important role to play alongside the educational system in developing and refining the national consciousness of Syrian youth.

Immediately after the Great Revolt, Bārūdī began to devote greater attention to the problem of forming a youth organization affiliated to the National Bloc. Meanwhile, efforts to mobilize students in the government schools were already underway, especially at the *tajhīz*, the major government preparatory school in Damascus.⁶⁷ The central figure in this activity was Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī, a man in his late twenties who had already acquired a reputation in Damascus for leading several important demonstrations and strikes, always with a small personal following of elementary and high school students at his side.

Bayrūtī, the son of a low-ranking functionary in the Damascus municipality (*al-baladiyya*) from Sūq Sārūja, was born in 1903. He belonged to a new generation of nationalists. From an early age, he aspired to a military career and, on completing his primary education, he enrolled at the War College (*al-Kulliyya al-Harbiyya*), graduating just before the French occupation in 1920. Although qualified to become a second lieutenant, Bayrūtī was unwilling to cooperate with French military authorities. Instead, he joined a group of school chums in secret political activities against the French which were soon uncovered. To avoid arrest, Bayrūtī took refuge in Amman, where he tried to become an officer in Amīr ‘Abdullah’s army, only to discover that his political record in Damascus and his want of proper connections disqualified him. Fortunately, he was able to return home after the French granted their first general amnesty in 1921. By now, Bayrūtī had developed a fairly high degree of political consciousness which he ascribed to his career setbacks and to the patriotic ideals instilled in him by his instructor at the War College, Nuzhat al-Mamlūk, an Istanbul-trained army officer who was to play a key role in organizing the National Bloc’s paramilitary wing in the mid-1930s.⁶⁸

Like other young men of his generation whose dreams had been shattered by the political convulsions rocking Syria, Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī expressed deep disappointment over the lack of effective political leadership in Damascus. His hopes were temporarily raised by the founding of the nationalist Iron Hand Society in 1922, under the command of Dr. Shahbandar. But these too were dashed later in the same year when the French broke up the Iron Hand organization and arrested and eventually exiled its leadership. He was among the many young men who spent the next two years interned with the nationalist leadership. After his release, Bayrūtī decided to resume his education and enrolled at the Damascus Law Faculty, but the outbreak of the Great Revolt in 1925 disrupted his education. His participation in the Revolt led to a brief stint in prison. Disappointed by the outcome of the Revolt, he decided not to resume his studies and opted for a career in commerce. With a small family stake he established a novelties store on rue Rāmī in the immediate proximity of the Sérail (French High Commission headquarters) and Marjé Square. His store could not have been more conveniently located; most nationalist manifestations during the Mandate focused on the Sérail. To attract students, Bayrūtī added a small library

on the second floor of his shop, and in no time it became a popular place in which to congregate. Its location beyond the quarters also afforded youngsters a certain degree of freedom from the watchful eye of the family, from traditional religious figures, and from *qabaḍāyāt*.

Eventually Bayrūtī began to encourage small groups of students to gather at his store after school where they met older students from the university, especially the Law Faculty. They listened to discussions of critical political issues, talked over common problems, and read newspapers and the regular decrees of the High Commissioner. At these gatherings and, under Bayrūtī's guidance, various courses of political action were plotted. By the late 1920s his shop had become a springboard for student demonstrations. With the *Sérail* nearby, protesters did not have to go far to make their opinions heard.

As his following increased with each political activity born on the rue Rāmī, Bayrūtī felt a greater need to offer his students some regimentation. Impressed by the *esprit de corps* of the one Boy Scout troop in Damascus, the Ghūṭa Scouts, but unhappy that its leaders refused to engage the troop in political activities, Bayrūtī and a young activist medical student from al-Maydān, Miḍḥat al-Bīṭār, formed their own Umayyad Scouts in early 1929. Many of the young visitors to his store became the troop's first members.

News of this development delighted Fakhrī al-Bārūdī who had already begun to hear good things about Bayrūtī's activities with students; especially pleasing was Bayrūtī's willingness to politicize the Boy Scout movement. Soon thereafter, Bārūdī began to extend personal invitations to Bayrūtī and his followers through one of his minions, a young law student from al-Qanawāt, Khālid al-Shiliq. Bayrūtī quickly developed a warm relationship with Bārūdī and began to reap the benefits of his patronage. At Bārūdī's encouragement, Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī, assisted by Khālid al-Shiliq, established the Nationalist Youth before the end of the decade, putting it under the direct responsibility of the National Bloc.⁶⁹

Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī, who visibly prospered through his National Bloc connection, virtually monopolized the leadership of the Nationalist Youth in Damascus until the mid-1930s, when his Bloc patrons decided that his organization desperately needed a new, more attractive face. Already, rival political organizations led by a rising generation of radical nationalists were bidding for the increasingly critical student population in Damascus and other towns. Bayrūtī was ill-equipped for the intensifying competition. He had performed an important service, but the National Bloc had to provide a more authentic role model for the educated youth if it intended to retain its grip on the independence movement, especially after the Bloc gained control of government in the late 1930s and was more subject to criticism from rival nationalist organizations.⁷⁰ It therefore became necessary to turn to a group of articulate, young, European-schooled lawyers, doctors, and engineers for the critical task ahead.

Despite his comparatively limited education, and a certain roughness around the edges, Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī lived and operated in a social and political milieu more akin to that of the National Bloc leadership than that of a *qabaḍāy* like Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī. Clad in European clothes and proudly sporting the fez of the

effendi class of politicians and bureaucrats, he was literate and ideologically motivated. With a political base outside the popular quarters among the young educated elites, Bayrūtī was an early representative of the forces of political modernization in Syria which had begun to shift the center of political life out of the popular quarters and into new more sophisticated institutions and structures such as the government schools, the university, and various youth organizations. Unlike Abū ʿAlī and other *qabaḍāyāt*, Bayrūtī was a “party man,” a title he revered but one that Abū ʿAlī clearly did not respect.

Both men held each other in low esteem. Bayrūtī saw Abū ʿAlī as a relic, an obstacle to progress, whereas Abū ʿAlī saw Bayrūtī as a party hack, a man whose highest commitment was to his organization, not to the common people.⁷¹ Interestingly, as other youth leaders began to eclipse Bayrūtī in importance, he became more dependent on individual Bloc chiefs, especially Jamīl Mardam, for his patronage and, in this sense, began to resemble the *qabaḍāy*. Yet he remained closely linked to and identified by the Bloc organization which he continued to serve. Although his age and lower social origins prevented him from joining the Bloc’s inner political circle or participating in critical strategy sessions, he nevertheless operated on a higher political level than did any *qabaḍāy* and was duly accorded greater recognition from his Bloc mentors. Like the *qabaḍāy*, he served as an intermediary, but more for the Bloc organization than for any single Bloc leader. Unlike the *qabaḍāy*, his base of operations was fundamentally outside the popular quarters among the educated elites. Consequently, he worked in a milieu that ultimately proved to be more important to the future of the Syrian national independence movement and to urban politics in general.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD THE END OF AN ERA

The Mandate years were a critical transitional phase for urban political life in Syria. Rapid population growth, an inflated cost of living, the spread of agrarian commercialization, the accelerated collapse of traditional industries and the retarded development of new ones, the growing polarization of class forces, and the shaping of a new intellectual climate contributed to a rearrangement of social and political forces in Damascus and in other cities. Physical and psychological barriers between the older residential quarters began to break down. In some instances, the walls separating the quarters literally came tumbling down, as during the Great Revolt, when the French bombarded a large area in the old city (al-Ḥarīqa) and large sections of al-Maydān.⁷² The political realities of life under an “illegitimate” and capricious foreign ruler elevated the political awareness of the common people. It also allowed the urban leadership of Damascus to divert the attention of the popular quarters away from their traditional rivalries and new class conflicts by channeling their competitive energies toward the goal of national independence. In aligning together, quarters contributed to the growing complexity and scale of urban politics.

The focus of political activity moved, however, outside the quarters altogether, to French High Commission headquarters and to other symbols of foreign control and influence, from the foreign-owned concessions to French cultural centers.⁷³ When individuals from the quarters marched they did so by quarter,

chanting each quarter's traditional slogans and carrying its traditional banners, but they marched alongside men (and now women)⁷⁴ from other quarters, demonstrating for a common purpose. This was a new wrinkle in urban political life.

The *qabaḍāyāt* seemed to enjoy a new lease on life and a new importance in politics during the Mandate period. They remained an important component in the *beys*' political machines at a time when nationalist leaders required extraordinary support to remain in the political game orchestrated by the French. But, in fact, the *qabaḍāy* was merely enjoying a reprieve from political obsolescence. This could perhaps best be seen in the changing composition of the active forces demonstrating against the French and their local collaborators in the 1930s. Greater numbers of young men, organized by Boy Scout troop or by political affiliation, could be found at the head of these manifestations. Everything about them seemed different, from their secular slogans denouncing French imperialism and invoking pan-Arab unity, national liberation, and (by the end of the Mandate) even socialism, to their European dress and modern uniforms.⁷⁵ More and more such individuals belonged to the rising middle classes and hailed from the wealthier or new quarters of Damascus. But even those who did not, when they marched did so under the banner of their youth organization or school, and not with their quarter. Although the national independence movement, headed by the National Bloc, formed a set of broad alliances which linked together different elites, classes, and confessional groups, the dynamic element in the movement had become by the thirties the new modern educated classes whose base and activities were beyond the older popular quarters and even the ancient commercial district.

This emerging generation of young men, who belonged to the professional middle class and who came from mercantile backgrounds, the old aristocracy of officials, or, increasingly from lower social origins, were inspired by ideologically advanced political organizations, which a number of them had witnessed during their student days in Europe in the twenties and thirties. On returning to Damascus and other cities they quickly grew impatient with the manner in which the popular classes were politically organized. They found the old-fashioned merchants, *imāms*, and, above all, the *qabaḍāyāt* to be out of step with the changing times and hence to be obstacles to progress. But the more radical of these young men also became impatient with the loose and shifting associations of the absentee landowners and wealthy merchants who in alignment formed the effective leadership of the independence movement. They were disturbed by many facets of the National Bloc's organization: the clubby atmosphere and the panoply of family ties and personal relations binding it together; the maintenance of individual followings and the lack of subordination to party will and policy; and, by the 1930s, the lapse of the most critical principle of the movement – Arab unity. These young men were discouraged by the Bloc's narrowly focused strategy whose principal aim was not liberation but rather patient negotiations with the French in the hope of gradually relaxing their control over Syria, all without upsetting the political status quo.

In such circumstances, it was not long before the National Bloc leadership found its control over urban politics and the independence movement threatened

by these rising elites. In order to survive, nationalist leaders had to stay in step with the times. This meant adjusting not only to the changes taking place in the older quarters, but even more particularly to the new institutions and organizations of urban political life that had arisen alongside the quarters, creating in the process a new balance of local power. By the end of the Mandate era, to maintain control of the independence movement and of the reigning idea of nationalism required, above all, a concentration of attention and resources in these new areas. The traditional style and methods of urban politics had reluctantly but clearly begun to give way.

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NOTES

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¹Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 19–22. Scholars are not in agreement on the question of how much should be attributed to “insecurity” as a factor in the creation of the walled quarter in the Arab or Islamic city. See T. H. Greenfields, “‘Quarters’ and Ethnicity,” in G. H. Blake and R. I. Lawless, eds., *The Changing Middle Eastern City* (London, 1980), p. 124. Pre-modern quarters were often, but not always, separated by fortified walls and gates. They were characterized by a maze of narrow crooked streets. Off of an irregular series of dead-end streets and alleys were houses hidden behind high walls, and turned away from the street around internal courtyards. This achieved maximum privacy for the family. The traditional Arab courtyard house was designed to seclude family from family and to segregate women [in the *ḥarāmlik*] from men, though only the affluent were able to uphold this ideal. It appears that these patterns reflected the quarter’s desire for internal privacy and seclusion as much as it did its desire for protection from external forces. Recent scholarship by André Raymond, among others, suggests that pre-modern quarters were not irrationally (and hence inferiorly) organized, as an earlier generation argued, but conformed logically to the ideals and values of Islamic society regarding family and economic organization. These enforced a strict differentiation between residential areas and commercial areas. In contrast to residential quarters, commercial areas were more “regular,” open, and accessible to the public, something that would be expected of a business district. See André Raymond, “Remarques sur la voirie des grandes villes arabes,” in R. Hillenbrand, ed., *Proceedings du 10ème Congrès de l’UEAI* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 72–85. Eugen Wirth goes a step further by suggesting that many of the physical structures in the Arab and/or Islamic city, such as the courtyard home, existed previous to the appearance of Islam in the Middle East. Arab Muslim society adapted and reinforced these ancient patterns and structures but did not invent them. [“The Middle Eastern City: Islamic City? Oriental City? Arabian City? The specific characteristics of the cities of North Africa and Southwest Asia from the point of view of Geography,” lecture by Wirth, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1982.] On this subject also see Roberto Berardi, “Espace et ville en pays d’Islam,” in Dominique Chevallier, ed., *L’Espace social de la ville Arabe* (Paris, 1979), pp. 99–123.

²Scholars are far from agreement on a precise definition of the term “quarter” in the Arab, Middle Eastern, or Islamic city. To start with, the Arabic equivalent of “quarter” differs from city to city and region to region: *ḥāra* in Cairo and Damascus; *maḥalla* in Aleppo and in Baghdad; and *ḥawma* in much of North Africa [Raymond, “Remarques,” p. 74] including Algiers and Fez, but also *darb* in some parts of Morocco [see Dale F. Eickelman, “Is There an Islamic City? The Making of a Quarter in a Moroccan Town,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (1974), 278]. I agree with

Greenshields that the "term has been used rather loosely . . . as though a quarter is a readily identifiable unit, representative of a certain pattern of social organisation, and possessing a certain structure and set of distinguishing characteristics which it shares with other quarters." Greenshields, "'Quarters'," p. 124.

³For a penetrating analysis of the Ottoman Empire's (including Egypt's) commercial and financial encounter with Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800–1914* (London, 1981); also see Hanna Batatu, "The Arab Countries from Crisis to Crisis: Some Basic Trends and Tentative Interpretations," in American University of Beirut, *The Liberal Arts and the Future of Higher Education in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1979), pp. 3–7; and Philip S. Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy, and the Nationalist Movement in Syria Between Two World Wars," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 18 (April 1982), 180–193.

⁴See Philip S. Khoury, "Reinterpreting the Character and Objectives of Political Movements in the Interwar Arab East: The Great Syrian Revolt of 1925," in Ira M. Lapidus and Edmund Burke, eds., *Islam and Social Movements* (forthcoming).

⁵On the structure of Damascus in different historical periods see the following: Samir Abdulac, "Damas: les années Ecochard (1932–1982)", *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, no. 10/11 (April 1982), 32–43; Karl K. Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1708–1758* (Princeton, 1980); G. Besnard, "Damas, son oasis, ses habitants," *L'Asie française*, 31 (1931), no. 292, 239–250; Anne-Marie Bianquis, "Damas et la Ghouta," in André Raymond, ed., *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1980), pp. 359–384; Dominique Chevallier, "À Damas. Production et société à la fin du 19^e siècle," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 11 (1964), 966–972; René Danger, "L'urbanisme en Syrie: la ville de Damas," *Urbanisme (Revue mensuelle)* (1937), 123–164; K. Dettmann, *Damaskus. Eine orientalische Stadt zwischen Tradition und Moderne* (Nürnberg, 1967); N. Elisséeff, "Damas à la lumière des théories de Jean Sauvaget," in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City: A Colloquium* (Oxford, 1970) and "Dimashq," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition); Saḫūh Khayr, *Madīnat Dimashq. Dirāsa fī juḡhrāfiyya al-mudun* (Damascus, 1969); Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920* (Cambridge, 1983); A. von Kremer, *Mittelsyrien und Damaskus* (Wien, 1853); Irène Labeyrie et Muhammad Roumi, "La grande traversée de Damas," *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, no. 10/11 (April 1982), 44–51; Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Louis Massignon, "La structure du travail à Damas en 1927," *Cahiers Internationaux de sociologie*, 15 (1953), 34–52; J. M. Proust-Tournier, "La population de Damas," *Hanon. Revue Libanaise de Géographie*, 5 (1970), 129–145; Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qāsimī, *Qāmūs al-ṣināʿat al-shāmiyya*, ed. by Zāfir al-Qāsimī, 2 vols. (Paris, 1960); Abd al-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723–1783* (Beirut, 1966); ʿAbd al-Qādir Rihāwī, *Madīnat Dimashq* (Damascus, 1969); Jean Sauvaget, "Esquisse d'une histoire de la ville de Damas," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 8 (1934), 421–bis–480; J. Sauvaget and J. Weulersse, *Damas et la Syrie sud* (Paris, 1936); R. Thoumin, "Damas. Note sur la répartition de la population par origine et par religion," *Revue de Géographie Alpine*, 25 (1937), 633–697; Thoumin, "Notes sur l'aménagement et la distribution des eaux à Damas et dans sa Ghouta," *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 4 (1934), 1–26; Thoumin, "Deux quartiers de Damas: Le quartier chrétien de Bab Musalla et le quartier kurde," *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 1 (1931), 99–135; Jacques Weulersse, "Damas. Etude de développement urbain," *Bulletin de l'Association de Géographes français*, no. 107 (June–October 1937), 102–105; K. Wulzinger and C. Watzinger, *Damaskus*, 2 vols., (Berlin, 1921–1924).

⁶Thoumin, "Deux quartiers de Damas," p. 99.

⁷Referred to as ʿAmāra Jawāniyya [inner] and ʿAmāra Barrāniyya [outer], and Shāghūr Jawāniyya and Shāghūr Barrāniyya. See René Danger, Paul Danger, and M. Ecochard, *Damas: Rapport d'enquête monographique sur la ville 1936*, (unpublished), Table 13. I wish to thank Jean-Paul Pascual of the Institut Français d'Études Arabes in Damascus for making the Danger report available to me. It is an extremely important document for the study of interwar Damascus in nearly all its facets.

⁸Scholars seem to agree that in the pre-modern cities, quarters varied widely in size, both in terms of space and population, and that the religious minorities (Christians and Jews in the Arab cities) inhabited their own separate quarters both because the state wanted to contain (and keep an eye on) them and because minorities naturally sought protection through clustering. Otherwise, scholars are still divided over the degree of social and economic homogeneity in the quarters. Their research suggests a wide variety of forms, depending on city and quarter. For example: (1) Although most

quarters were not ethnically homogeneous, there were important exceptions, such as the Kurdish quarter of Damascus. (2) The distribution of inhabitants in most pre-modern quarters seems to have been along a rich-poor axis, in the sense that the vast majority of quarters were inhabited by the poor and there were a small number of quarters in which the wealthier classes and strata resided. Yet, at the same time, there were quarters which contained different economic classes and strata. The poorest quarters were frequently on the city periphery and developed with the influx of migrants from the countryside and refugee populations from other regions or countries; where land prices and housing rents were cheapest; and where much of the city's noxious industries (furnaces, tanneries, slaughterhouses) were located. (3) An earlier generation of scholars has argued that quarters were homogeneous in the sense that their inhabitants belonged to the same or a related economic activity or profession. They even suggested a direct link between the guilds and certain residential quarters. Recent research by André Raymond on Cairo and Algiers and Jean-Claude David on Aleppo suggests quite the opposite: residential quarters were not grouped or unified by occupation or trade as previously thought, and their inhabitants worked in separate commercial areas, outside the quarters but often nearby them. Although all residential quarters had their nonspecialized shops (*suwayqa*), hawkers, peddlars, and small artisans, they did not constitute economic units as such; in other words, quarters were not organized along economic lines. See André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle* (Damascus, 1973, 1974); "Remarques," pp. 73–77; "The Residential Districts of Cairo During the Ottoman Period" in *The Arab City. Its Character and Islamic Heritage* (n. pl., 1980), pp. 100–110. "Le Centre d'Alger en 1830," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 31 (1981), 73–84; and J. C. David, "Alep," in André Raymond, ed., *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1980), pp. 385–406, and David, "Alep, dégradation et tentatives actuelles de réadaptation des structures urbaines traditionnelles," *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 28 (1975). In the case of Damascus, some of the quarters of the old city seem to have been economically and socially homogeneous, while others, including the Christian and Jewish quarters, were not. The more recently established quarters (between the fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries), which encircled the old city, were more easily identifiable by their major class component.

⁹Information on the labor movement in Syria during the French Mandate can be found in ʿAbdullah Ḥannā, *al-Ḥaraka al-ʿummāliyya fī sūriyya wa lubnān 1900–1945* (Damascus, 1973) and Elisabeth Longuenesse, "La classe ouvrière en Syrie. Une classe en formation," 3ème cycle Dissertation. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris, 1977).

¹⁰On the foundation of these quarters and their density during the Mandate see René Danger, "L'urbanisme en Syrie: la ville de Damas," *Urbanisme (Revue mensuelle)*, (1937), 129, 136; Abdulac, "Damas," pp. 32–33.

¹¹Danger, "L'urbanisme," p. 143. Jean-Paul Pascual has pointed out to me that wealthy residents of Sūq Sārūja even constructed houses with facades which purposely resembled those found in Istanbul.

¹²Greenshields writes that in Middle Eastern cities "... the partial or complete departure of an ethnic group [he includes religious communities in his definition of ethnic groups] from its original quarter ... leaves a vacuum which in many cities is filled by the invasion of new population elements, often of a different group, and results in an intermixing of populations" "'Quarters' and Ethnicity," p. 131. This process had begun to take place during the Mandate era in the Ḥayy al-Yahūd as Jews began to emigrate to Palestine or to the West. See Danger, "L'urbanisme," pp. 123–164.

¹³Bianquis, "Damas," p. 362.

¹⁴Danger, "L'urbanisme," pp. 136, 143. On the origins and adaptation of the *ḥawāṣil* and *khāns* (caravanserais) in Damascus see George Saba, Klaus Salzwedel, "Typologie des caravanserais dans la vieille ville de Damas," *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 10/11 (April 1982), 52–59.

¹⁵See *ibid.*, pp. 129, 136. Al-Ṣālḥiyya dates from the twelfth century.

¹⁶See Sauvaget, "Esquisse," pp. 473–474; Greenshields, "'Quarters,'" p. 122; Bianquis, "Damas," p. 374.

¹⁷Thoumin, "Deux quartiers," pp. 116–20, 131; Also see Khoury, *Urban Notables*, chapter 2.

¹⁸Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq fī maṭlaʿ al-qarn al-ʿashrīn*, ed. by ʿAlī Jamīl Nuʿaysa (Damascus, 1976), pp. 41–43.

¹⁹J. Grellet, "La Fiscalité municipale en Syrie," *Centre de Hautes Etudes Administratives sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes [CHEAM]* (Paris) no. 331, n.d., pp. 31–32.

²⁰Conversation with the late Farīd Zayn al-Dīn (Damascus, 14 April 1976). According to Zayn al-Dīn, a radical nationalist leader during the Mandate, there was another informal council which met in the quarters. It was called *majlis al-shiyūkh* (Council of Shaykhs), composed of leading intellectuals who met in different homes to discuss political strategy. Occasionally, quarter notables would attend in order to learn how to explain to the common people what was going on at the summit of nationalist politics.

²¹Zafer Kassemī [Zāfir al-Qāsimī], "La participation des classes populaires aux mouvements nationaux d'indépendance aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles: Syrie," in Commission Internationale d'histoire des mouvements sociaux et des structures sociales, ed., *Mouvements nationaux d'indépendance et classes populaires aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles en Occident et en Orient* (Paris, 1971), p. 348.

²²I have been deeply influenced by the theoretical and empirical studies on patron-client relations of James Scott and, in particular, his "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review*, LXVI, no. 1, 91–113. More of Scott's work and that of a number of prominent social scientists can be found in the excellent collection: Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London, 1977). On the political and social behavior of urban notables in the Middle East see Albert Hourani, "The Islamic City in the Light of Recent Research," in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 9–24; Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in W. R. Polk and R. L. Chambers, eds., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 41–68; and Khoury, *Urban Notables*, pp. 1–55.

²³The population of Damascus in 1922 (beginning of Mandate) was estimated at 169,000 [169,367]. In 1943 (end of the Mandate), it was estimated at 286,000 [286,310], meaning that the population increased 1.7 times in two decades. The increase in the 1930s was more rapid than it was in the 1920s. Similarly, the population of Aleppo doubled (2.05 times) in the same period. For statistical information and sources on the population of the cities (and countryside) in Syria during the French Mandate see Philip S. Khoury, "The Politics of Nationalism; Syria and the French Mandate, 1920–1936," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980, vol. 3, pp. 1160–1168.

²⁴See N. Elisséef, "Dimashk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition), p. 290.

²⁵On the changing architectural style and social functions of houses in Syrian cities, see R. Thoumin, *La Maison syrienne dans la plaine hauranaise, le bassin du Barada et sur les plateaux du Qalamoun* (Paris, 1932); A. Abdel-Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie Ottomane (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Beirut, 1982); Jean-Charles Depaule, "Espaces lieux et mots," *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 10/11 (April 1982), 94–101; and Jean-Claude David, Dominique Hubert, "Maisons et immeubles du début du XX^e siècles à Alep," *Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 10/11 (April 1982), 102–111.

²⁶See Khoury, *Urban Notables*, chapters 2 and 3.

²⁷*Ibid.*, chapter 2.

²⁸This information and analysis is based on conversations with Wajīha al-Yūsuf (Beirut, 15 and 29 August 1975), and with ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Dandashī, Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī, Fuʿād Sidawī, and George Sibāʿ (Damascus, 13 and 14 February 1976 and 9 and 10 March 1976). One of the most prized of the creature comforts found in the new homes constructed in the bourgeois suburbs of towns like Damascus or Aleppo was the modern (private) bathroom. Unlike the new suburban quarters for the poor (often filled with recently arrived in-migrants from the countryside) where public baths (*ḥammāmāt*) had to be constructed, the wealthy suburban quarters did not require public baths; indeed, their inhabitants did not want them. Another such creature comfort was the modern kitchen. See David and Hubert, "Maisons," pp. 64–65 and Muhammad Roumi, "Le hammam domestique: nouvelles pratiques et transformations de l'espace," *Le cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 10/11 (April 1982), 74–79.

²⁹Fakhrī al-Bārūdī, Personal Papers, "Al-Bārūdī File 1922–47," in Markaz al-Wathāʿiq al-Tārīkhiyya [Damascus], *al-Qism al-Khāṣṣ*.

³⁰The first President of the Syrian Republic, Muḥammad ʿAlī al-ʿĀbid saw to it during his tenure in office (1932–1936) that a tramway line connected the center of Damascus with the bourgeois suburb of al-Muhājirīn where the ʿĀbid family had moved during the Mandate, after leaving Sūq Sārūja. This enabled the ʿĀbids, one of the most prominent notable families and possibly the wealthiest family in Damascus, to service their original clientele in Sūq Sārūja in addition to the

poorer residents of their new district, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, when they fed hundreds of people nightly at their al-Muhājirīn palace. Conversation with Naṣūḥ [Abū Muḥammad] al-Maḥayrī. (Damascus, 12 March 1976.)

³¹See Philip S. Khoury, "Factionalism Among Syrian Nationalists During the French Mandate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13 (November 1981), 462–469; and Khoury, "Re-interpreting the Character and Objectives of Nationalist Movements in the Interwar Arab East." (forthcoming)

³²The National Bloc was the preeminent nationalist organization of the Mandate era. Its influence on political life in Syria can be compared to that of the Wafd Party in Egypt in the interwar period. For information on its organization, headquarters in Damascus and branches in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Latakia, rivalries with the French, with other nationalist organizations and within the Bloc itself, ties to the rest of the Arab world, and its ascent to government, see Khoury, "The Politics of Nationalism," vols. 2 (especially chapter 8) and 3.

³³Naturally, not all merchants were anti-French. Numerous merchants engaged in the import-export trade with Europe (many of whom belonged to the religious minorities) collaborated rather freely with the French. Furthermore, the structural constraints of colonial rule necessitated some degree of collaboration with the Mandatory authorities by nearly everyone engaged in commerce and industry. The question is: to what degree did merchants and industrialists collaborate? The answer is to be found in the character and orientation of the enterprises they ran. Similarly, there were, at times, serious disputes between merchants and industrialists over which commercial or financial policy they wished the French to pursue in Syria. The best example of such a split occurred in the early 1930s when Syrian merchants wanted easy access to cheap Japanese cloth as it sold so well locally, whereas industrialists wanted the French to put an end to what they claimed was "dumping" by raising import duties on foreign cloth. Roger Owen has kindly reminded me of this example. Specific information on Japanese competition, which reached its height in 1934 (protective measures began to be introduced at the end of that year), can be found in PRO: FO 371/4188, vol. 19023.

³⁴Conversations with ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Dandashī and Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī (Damascus, 9 and 10 March 1976).

³⁵See Khoury, *Urban Notables*, chapter 3 and Conclusion.

³⁶Conversation with Zāfir al-Qāsimī (Beirut, 24 and 26 July 1975). Al-Qāsimī's father was the leading religious figure of Bāb al-Jābiyya. Also see Philip S. Khoury, "Islamic Revivalism and the Crisis of the Secular State in the Arab World: an Historical Appraisal," in I. Ibrahim, ed., *Arab Resources: The Transformation of a Society* (Washington, D.C., 1983), pp. 213–236.

³⁷See al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq*, pp. 244–247. According to the author, who wrote during the early Mandate, *al-zgritiyya* is a Turkish word referring to the "courageous of the quarter."

³⁸These characteristics have been isolated in an inspiring article on the power structure in Beirut's Muslim quarters in the early 1970s, and in particular the role of *qabaḍāyāt* in these quarters. See Michael Johnson, "Political bosses and their gangs: Zuʿama and qabadayat in the Sunni Muslim quarters of Beirut," in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London, 1977), pp. 207–224. Conversation with Fuʿad al-Sidawī, *qabaḍāy* of the Christian quarter of Bāb Tūmā during the Mandate (Damascus, 13 February 1976). A list of some nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century *qabaḍāyāt* of Damascus is provided by al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq*, pp. 247–251.

³⁹*Zuʿrān* featured prominently in the medieval Muslim city [see Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*]; in Damascus during the Mandate [al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq*, p. 244]; and in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war of the 1970s [based on my personal observations]. Also see Johnson, "Political Bosses," p. 212.

⁴⁰Conversations with Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Dandashī, and Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī (Damascus, 3, 9, 10 March 1976).

⁴¹The following information on the personal life and career of Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī is based on several days of conversations with him and with several other *qabaḍāyāt* of the Mandate and early independence eras whom I met at his home in Bāb al-Jābiyya (Damascus, 14 February, 3 and 15 March 1976).

⁴²On the Al-Shaʿlān, see Khoury, "Tribal Shaykh," pp. 183–185.

⁴³For the rise on the Bakrī family see Khoury, *Urban Notables*, pp. 34–35.

⁴⁴See al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq*, pp. 242–243.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 240–243.

⁴⁶Al-Kilāwī was also an accomplished Arabic musician who played a three-stringed guitar and sang popular beduin ballads. His dialect reflected his long years of association with tribes south of Damascus.

⁴⁷As late as 1976, Abū ʿAlī was still riding and showing his horses in national parades in Damascus, despite his antipathy toward the current Syrian regime.

⁴⁸al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq*, pp. 259–262.

⁴⁹On the transformation of ʿarāḍa into political manifestations in the twentieth century, see J. Lecerf and R. Tresse, “Les ʿarāḍa de Damas,” *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 7/8 (1937–1938), pp. 237–264; and Zāfir al-Qāsimī, *Wathāʾiq jadīda min al-thawra al-sūriyya al-kubrā* (Damascus, 1965), pp. 63–74; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Syrie-Liban 1930–40*, de Martel to MAE, 5 July 1935, vol. 491, pp. 31–33.

⁵⁰On al-Kharrāṭ and other hero/martyrs of the Revolt, see Adham al-Jundī, *Tārīkh al-thawrāt al-sūriyya fī ʿahd al-intidāb al-faransī* (Damascus, 1960).

⁵¹Besides the Kilāwīs, other noted *qabaḍāyāt* of the Mandate era were Abū Ghāssim ʿAbd al-Salām al-Ṭawīl (al-Qaymariyya quarter); Abū Rashīd Khūja (al-Kharāb); Abū Ḥaydar al-Mardīnī (Bāb al-Srīja), Maḥmūd Khaddām al-Srīja (Shāghūr); and Abū ʿAbdū Dīb al-Shaykh (ʿAmāra).

⁵²Information on the Great Revolt and Abū ʿAlī's role in it comes from his personal memoir which his eldest son, ʿAlī, had recorded, and which Abū ʿAlī kindly made available to me. The memoir is entitled: *Thawra ʿamma 1925. al-Faransiyyīn fī sūriyya* (n.p., n.d.).

⁵³The *jamʿiyyāt* were the prototype for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (founded in the 1940s). See Johannes Reissner's groundbreaking study *Ideologie und Politik der Muslimbrüder Syriens* (Freiburg, 1980). In Damascus, their leaders included *shaykhs*, teachers, lawyers, and doctors. Their principal goals were the spread of Muslim education based on modernist and *salafīyya* ideas; the spread of Muslim ethics and morals and nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments. They were especially involved in the affairs of Palestine at the time of the Arab revolt of 1936–1939. The earliest of the societies was the *jamʿiyyat al-Gharrāʾ* (founded in 1924). Others included *jamʿiyyat al-tamaddun al-Islāmī* (1932), *jamʿiyyat al-hidāya al-Islāmiyya* (1936), and *jamʿiyyat al-ʿulamāʾ* (1938). By the mid-1930s, they were leading violent campaigns against the influx of foreign goods and culture into Syria; the proliferation of cabarets serving alcohol, permitting gambling, and featuring female dancers; the increasingly liberal dress code adopted by bourgeois women (including the wives of National Bloc leaders); women frequenting public places, in particular cinemas; and the holding of lotteries. See Markaz al-Wathāʾiq al-Tārīkhiyya [Damascus], *Dākhiliyya*, File 33/5431–3098. Shaykh Ḥamdī al-Safarjalānī to Minister of Interior (Damascus): *niẓam nādī*, 5 May 1932; Jamīl Ibrāhīm Pāshā, *Mudhakkirāt Jamīl Ibrāhīm Pāshā* (Aleppo, 1959), pp. 78–79; *Oriente Moderno*, 14 (1934), p. 438; *ibid.*, 15 (1935), p. 636; *ibid.*, 18 (1938), pp. 532–533; *ʿĀdil al-ʿAzma Papers* [Syria: Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut], File 16/398, 7 February 1939 and File 16/398a, 9 February 1939.

⁵⁴See Johnson, “Political Bosses,” pp. 214–220.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 218–220.

⁵⁶Conversation with Abū ʿAlī al-Kilāwī (Damascus, 3 March 1976).

⁵⁷On the General Strike of 1936, which lasted nearly fifty days, and which led the French to open up direct negotiations in Paris with National Bloc leaders on the subject of a Franco-Syrian treaty, and which ultimately allowed the Bloc to get control of the Syrian government by the end of the year, see Khoury, “Politics of Nationalism,” vol. 3, Epilogue-Conclusion.

⁵⁸Information on al-Srīja and his gang was found in Markaz al-Wathāʾiq al-Tārīkhiyya [Damascus], *Registre correctionnel*, 5 October 1932 – 8 February 1934, pp. 216–218.

⁵⁹On the formation, composition, and operation of individual political machines in Damascus during the Mandate, and in particular those of Shukrī al-Quwwatī and Jamīl Mardam, see Khoury, “Politics of Nationalism,” vol. 3, chapters 12, 13, and Epilogue-Conclusion.

⁶⁰On the origins of the Kurdish notable families of Damascus in the nineteenth century see Khoury, *Urban Notables*, chapters 3 and 4. This information has been supplemented by conversations with Wajīha al-Yūsuf [Ibish], daughter of ʿAbd al-Rahmān Pāshā al-Yūsuf (the leading Kurdish notable of Damascus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and wife of Ḥusayn Ibish (the leading Kurdish notable of the Mandate era, and the biggest landowner in the province of Damascus) (Beirut, 15 and 29 August 1975). Another political force to draw support from the

Kurdish quarter by the late 1930s was the Syrian Communist Party. The Party rank and file in Damascus included a number of Arabized Kurds owing to the fact that its leader, Khālid Bakdāsh, was a Kurd from the quarter. See Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, chapter 24.

⁶¹See Khoury, "Factionalism among Syrian Nationalists," pp. 460–465.

⁶²This same phenomenon seems to have appeared in Palestine during the British mandate. The major difference, however, was that Jewish capital and the British administration were able to provide a framework and opportunities for in-migrants which the French administration in Syria could only provide on a much less developed scale. Therefore, in Damascus, those in-migrants who remained on the periphery of the city had to await the appearance of new forces: in the case of political integration, the Ba'ath and Communist parties; in the case of economic integration, the development of industrialization on a significant scale which only occurred at the end of World War II. On developments in Palestine, see Joel S. Migdal, "Urbanization and Political Change: The Impact of Foreign Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 19 (July 1979), 328–349. On French involvement in the Syrian economy, see Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 1, chapter IV.

⁶³On the contribution of this class to the independence movement, see Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 3, chapters 12 and 13.

⁶⁴1.7 times. See Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban 1924*, Appendix 4, p. 95; PRO: FO 371/625, vol. 19022, MacKereth to F.O., 7 January 1935.

⁶⁵Conversation with Qustantin Zurayq (Beirut, 10 January 1976).

⁶⁶On al-Bārūdī's upbringing and career see Fakhri al-Bārūdī, *Mudhakkirāt al-Bārūdī*, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1951–1952); Nahāl Bahjat Šidqī, *Fakhri al-Bārūdī* (Beirut, 1974); Aḥmad Qudāma, *Ma'ālim wa a'ālām fī bilād al-'Arab* (Damascus, 1965), vol. 1, p. 10; George Fāris, *Man huwa fī sūriyya 1949* (Damascus, 1950), p. 54; Virginia Vacca, "Notizie Biografiche su Uomini Politici Ministri e Deputati Siriani," *Oriente Moderno*, 17 (October 1937), p. 478; and Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 2, pp. 664–667. More information comes from conversations with 'Alī 'Abd al-Karīm al-Dandashī and Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī (Damascus, 9 and 10 March 1976).

⁶⁷On the contribution of the *tajhīz* of Damascus to the independence movement see Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 3, chapter 12.

⁶⁸Information on Bayrūtī's upbringing and career comes from a long conversation with him in Damascus on 10 March 1976; and conversations with other youth leaders of the Mandate era, including 'Alī 'Abd al-Karīm al-Dandashī. I have also depended on *al-Mudḥik al-mubkī*, [Damascus weekly satirical magazine] no. 18 (1929), p. 12; and George Fāris, *Man huwa*, pp. 70–71. On Mamlūk's career, see *ibid.*, p. 429.

⁶⁹Conversation with Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī (Damascus, 10 March 1976); Fāris, *Man huwa*, pp. 70–71; *al-Mudḥik al-mubkī*, no. 103 (21 November 1931), p. 14.

⁷⁰Conversation with Munīr al-'Ajlānī (Beirut, 2 September 1975). On the development of the new "nationalist youth" leadership, see Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 3, chapters 13 and Epilogue-Conclusion.

⁷¹Conversations with Abū 'Alī al-Kilāwī and Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī (Damascus, 15 February and 10 March 1976).

⁷²See Khoury, "Politics of Nationalism," vol. 2, chapter 6.

⁷³The Franco-Belgian owned Société des Tramways et d'Électricité was the most visible foreign concession visited by nationalist demonstrations during the Mandate. The cinemas, located in the modern districts, were another focal point. On the one hand, political organizations that wished to start a demonstration could find a ready-made crowd afternoons and evenings coming out of films. The Roxy cinema was used most frequently. On the other hand, some Muslim benevolent societies led demonstrations against cinemas which permitted the attendance of women. Most cinemas were Christian-owned. 'Ādil al-'Azma Papers [Syria], File 16, no. 398, 7 February 1939 and File 16, no. 398a, 9 February 1939.

⁷⁴See R. Tresse, "Manifestations féminines à Damas au XIX^e et XX^e siècles," in *Entretiens sur l'évolution des pays de civilisation arabe*, III (Paris, 1939), pp. 115–125.

⁷⁵The Nationalist Youth was transformed into a paramilitary organization in 1936, called the Steel Shirts (*al-Qumṣān al-Hadīdiyya*), with nearly 5,000 members by the end of the year. Khoury, "Politics," vol. 3, Epilogue-Conclusion. It was around this time that the French-controlled Syrian army (*Troupes*

Spéciales) began to attract young “talented” nationalists and the civilian nationalist elite finally saw the importance of encouraging their sons and young men from the rising middle classes to enter the military academy at Homs. Since the early nineteenth century, the notable families of Damascus and other Syrian towns had actively discouraged their sons from pursuing military careers which they felt were beneath their dignity and standing in society. This traditional bias and the fact the military was under French sway helped to preserve this attitude, until the possibility of Syrian independence grew in the thirties and nationalists began to think seriously about the institutional future of Syria. However, the military academy and the army itself, unlike the high schools and law faculty, were not important politicizing forces for Syrian youth before independence. For one thing, the French made concerted efforts to keep the military apolitical and most political agitation within the military seemed to focus on issues of promotion and pay scale and not on entering the political arena as such. Furthermore, it is likely that many of the young men who entered the military academy from the mid-thirties till the French left Syria in 1946 were already politicized in high school. In any case, the academy only graduated approximately 150 men between 1935 and 1946, a third of whom came from Damascus. The Syrian Army on independence was, itself, only 12,000 strong. Michael H. Van Dusen, “Intra- and Inter-Generational Conflict in the Syrian Army” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1971), pp. 45–46, 165–66, 382–89.